



# CITY OF NOVATO

## Department of Community Development

### Downtown Specific Plan

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Amendments](#)

[List of Chapters](#)

[List of Figures](#)

[Preface by Chair](#)

[Executive Summary](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Plan Framework and Background](#)

[Recommendations for Improvement and Development](#)

[Infrastructure](#)

[Design Guidelines](#)

[Implementation](#)

[Appendices](#)

Please check with the Community Development Department on the status of the Downtown Specific Plan regarding updates and recent amendments subsequent to adoption.

[Back to Community Development Department Home Page](#)



# **DOWNTOWN NOVATO SPECIFIC PLAN**

**Adopted by Novato City Council on July 14, 1998  
by Resolution Numbers 97-98 and 103-98**

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by Resolution Number 119-99**

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by Resolution Number 33-01**

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**Adopted  
July 14, 1998**

*Please check with the Community Development Department on the status of the Downtown Specific Plan regarding updates and recent amendments subsequent to adoption.*

## **DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE (DSPSC)**

**Ned Lagin, Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee Chair; Planning Commission Chair  
Cynthia Murray, Councilmember**

**Lee Leardini, Parks and Recreation Commissioner**

**John Granlee, Downtown property owner and business owner**

**Gary Gustafson, Chamber of Commerce, past President; business owner**

**Lin Hines, President, Downtown/Old Town Business Association; business owner**

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Sonia Seeman, Deputy Redevelopment Director

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 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

## DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENTS

The Downtown Specific Plan was adopted as an amendment to the General Plan. The General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document, providing guidance on major policy issues, but also flexible enough to allow amendment from time to time. The following amendments have been approved since the Downtown Specific Plan was originally adopted in 1998. Refer to the resolutions listed below for the actual changes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Element</b>	<b>Description/Summary</b>
8/24/99	116-99	Land Use	Text amendments to General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan.
3/27/01	33-01	Specific Plan Text	Clarify permit process for uses of sidewalks and variances.

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A NEW INITIATIVE FOR DOWNTOWN
- 1.2 LIMITS OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA
- 1.3 WHAT IS A SPECIFIC PLAN?
- 1.4 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION
- 1.5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
- 1.6 PLAN APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

## **2. PLAN FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 THE VISION FOR THE DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN
- 2.2 LAND USE PLAN

- 2.2.1 Land Use Classifications
- 2.2.2 General Groupings of Similar Land Uses
- 2.2.3 Land Use Issues
- 2.2.4 Change in Land Use Designations
- 2.2.5 General Targeted Land Uses in the Specific Plan

- 2.3 APPLICABLE POLICIES OF THE GENERAL PLAN
- 2.4 RELATION TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE
- 2.5 URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER

- 2.5.1 Downtown Size and Scale
- 2.5.2 Open Space
- 2.5.3 Climate
- 2.5.4 Gateways to Downtown
- 2.5.5 Street Life
- 2.5.6 Historic Structures
- 2.5.7 General Design and Architectural Styles
- 2.5.8 Streetscapes/Street Trees
- 2.5.9 Signage
- 2.5.10 Lighting
- 2.5.11 Pedestrian Amenities
- 2.5.12 Public Art

- 2.6 CIRCULATION AND PARKING

- 2.6.1 Pedestrian Circulation
- 2.6.2 Vehicular Access to Properties in Downtown
- 2.6.3 Effect of Left Turns from Two-Way Median on (West) Grant Avenue
- 2.6.4 Existing Traffic Flow

- 2.6.5 Transit Service
- 2.6.6 Bicycle Circulation
- 2.6.7 Parking
- 2.6.8 Streets, Drainage and Parking Improvements in the Adopted Capital Improvements Program for Fiscal Years 1997/98 through 2001/02

## 2.7 INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

- 2.7.1 Water Supply and Distribution
- 2.7.2 Sewer System
- 2.7.3 Storm Drainage and Flooding
- 2.7.4 Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities

## 2.8 POLICE AND OTHER SERVICES

- 2.8.1 Police Services
- 2.8.2 Trash/Litter Graffiti
- 2.8.3 Storm Drain Pollution (Particularly North of Grant/Mulligan Lane/Nugent Lane)
- 2.8.4 Fire and Other Disaster Areas

## 2.9 MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

## 2.10 MAKING IT HAPPEN

# 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

## 3.1 RAILROAD DEPOT AND PINI MILL AREA

## 3.2 MISSION LODGE

## 3.3 SOUTHEAST CORNER OF DE LONG AND REDWOOD

## 3.4 TOWN PLAZA

### 3.4.1 Proposed Town Plaza Sites

### 3.4.2 Preferred Site/Plan: Town Plaza with Rerouting of Southbound Lanes of Redwood Boulevard to East Side of Median

### 3.4.3 Alternative Plaza Sites

## 3.5 "THEATER DISTRICT" REVITALIZATION AND TACO BELL SITE RESTAURANT/RETAIL

## 3.6 REDWOOD/VALLEJO/MACHIN/SWEETSER DEVELOPMENT AREA

## 3.7 "YOUNG BROTHERS" AND ADJACENT PARCELS

## 3.8 "TOYOTA" PARCEL COMMERCIAL/RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

## 3.9 NORTHEAST CORNER OF FOURTH AND GRANT DEVELOPMENT

## 3.10 "GOODMAN'S" BUILDING REUSE FOR A GYMNASTICS CENTER AND

## TEEN CENTER

### 3.11 INDUSTRIAL WAY

### 3.12 COMMUNITY HOUSE PARKING STRUCTURE

### 3.13 SHERMAN AVENUE PLAZA AND NEARBY AREAS

### 3.14 VACANT LOT AT 858 GRANT AVENUE

### 3.15 SCOWN LANE

### 3.16 LOT ADJACENT TO "LAS GUITARRAS" RESTAURANT OUTDOOR DINING

### 3.17 USE OF SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES ON MACHIN

### 3.18 POTENTIAL SITES FOR NEW HOUSING

### 3.19 GATEWAYS

### 3.20 MURALS AND PUBLIC ART

## 4. INFRASTRUCTURE

### 4.1 STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

4.1.1 Grant Avenue Pavement Repairs, Fourth Street to Scott Court

4.1.2 Sidewalk Improvement Between Sweetser and Grant

4.1.3 Rerouting of Redwood Boulevard for One to Two Blocks for Plaza Development

4.1.4 Extension of Sweetser Avenue West to Redwood Boulevard

4.1.5 Vehicular Access from De Long to the Pini Mill Area

4.1.6 Access to Mission Lodge Area

4.1.7 No Extension of Reichert Avenue Across Railroad Right-of-Way

4.1.8 Cain/Blodgett

4.1.9 Scown Lane Connection at Old Town Glass

4.1.10 Mulligan Lane

4.1.11 Sherman Avenue Traffic Direction

4.1.12 Retain Stop Signs at Fifth and Grant

4.1.13 Vacate Nugent Lane

4.1.14 Bicycle Routes

4.1.15 Trip and Parking Demand Reductions

4.1.16 Non-Pedestrian Sidewalk Transportation

### 4.2 PARKING

4.2.1 Community House Parking Structure

4.2.2 Parking Standard for Restaurants on Grant Avenue

4.2.3 Machin Avenue/Vallejo Avenue Lot

4.2.4 Zenk Lot Improvements

4.2.5 Combined Parking Lot Along Industrial Way

4.2.6 Sweetser Avenue/Reichert Lot

4.2.7 Excess Bank Parking

- 4.2.8 Diagonal Parking on (West) Grant
- 4.2.9 Diagonal Parking in the Industrial/Commercial Area
- 4.2.10 Parking Behind Buildings
- 4.2.11 Trip Reduction Programs
- 4.2.12 Increase in Private On-Site Parking

### 4.3 RAIL AND TRANSIT

- 4.3.1 Multiple Use of the NWPRR Right-of-way

### 4.4 UTILITIES

- 4.4.1 Water and Sewer Lines
- 4.4.2 Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities

### 4.5 STORM DRAINAGE

## 5. DESIGN GUIDELINES

### 5.1 UD 11: OVERALL DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

- UD 11.1 Site Planning
- UD 11.2 Architecture
- UD 11.3 Parking and Circulation
- UD 11.4 Sidewalks

- 11.4.1 Public Sidewalks and Improvements
- 11.4.2 Sidewalk Cafes and Outdoor Dining
- 11.4.3 Pedestrian Passageways

- UD 11.5 Streetscape Elements
- UD 11.6 Landscaping

- 11.6.1 Plant Materials
- 11.6.2 Street Trees
- 11.6.3 Planting Near Buildings
- 11.6.4 Planting in Parking Areas
- 11.6.5 Landscape Screening

- UD 11.7 Signage

- 11.7.1 Public Informational Signs
- 11.7.2 Commercial Signs

## UD 11.8 Lighting

### 5.2 UD 12: BUILDING ENHANCEMENT STANDARDS

UD 12.1 Building Design and Facades

UD 12.2 Landscaping

UD 12.3 Accessories

UD 12.4 Signs

UD 12.5 Utilities

UD 12.6 Parking

### 5.3 DESIGN GALLERY OF PHOTOS

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION

### 6.1 IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

6.1.1 Creating a Positive Revitalization Environment

6.1.2 Actions Already Underway

6.1.3 Implementation Responsibilities

### 6.2 PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

6.2.1 Public (City) Actions to Implement the Plan

6.2.1.1 Public Infrastructure and Facilities Improvements

6.2.1.2 Administrative and Regulatory Streamlining  
Consistent with Development Standards and Design  
Guidelines

6.2.1.3 General Plan and Zoning Changes

6.2.1.4 Parking Management Program

6.2.1.5 Expansion of Police and Other Services

6.2.2 Public/Private Actions to Implement the Plan

6.2.2.1 Development Agreements

6.2.2.2 Facade Improvements Program

6.2.2.3 Marking of Downtown for Desired Development

6.2.2.4 Building Community Support/Media Awareness  
and Support for Downtown

6.2.3 Private Actions to Implement the Plan

- 6.2.3.1 Business Improvement District
- 6.2.3.2 Merchandising
- 6.2.3.3 Downtown Promotion Programs
- 6.2.3.4 Parking Improvement District

## 6.3 FINANCING MECHANISMS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- 6.3.1 Financing Mechanisms
- 6.3.2 Potential Funding Sources

## 6.4 SCHEDULING AND PHASING

- 6.4.1 Projects Implemented Primarily by Property Owners or Developers Over an Indeterminate Time Frame
- 6.4.2 Preliminary Implementation Cost Estimate

## APPENDICES

- A Public Participation Process
- B Major Improvement Concepts Investigated and Not Recommended for Study
- C Parking Study, May 1997
- D Architectural Stylistic Glossary
- E Reference Documents
- F Mitigated Negative Declaration

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

# LIST OF FIGURES

## Figure Number

- 1 Vicinity Map
- 2 Specific Plan Area
- 3 Land use Map
- 4 Downtown with Specific Plan Boundary
- 5 Existing Generalized Land Use
- 6 Existing Zoning
- 7 Hills Surrounding Downtown
- 8 East Grant Looking East
- 9 West Grant Looking East
- 10 Existing Trees
- 11 Building Locations and Vehicular Access to Parking
- 12 Existing Traffic Flow
- 13 Proposed Capital Improvements Projects
- 14 Flooding at Sweetser and Reichert
- 15 Key Map of Improvement Sites
- 16 Railroad/Pini Mill Area
- 17 a/b/c - Railroad Depot Blueprints & Historic Railroad Depot
- 18 Depot Area Mixed Use Project Policy Plan
- 19 Depot Area Mixed Use Project Illustrative Plan
- 20 Concept Multi-Use Path Adjacent to Depot Project Area
- 21 Intersection of De Long/Redwood
- 22 Mission Lodge Area Development Policy Plan
- 23 Mission Lodge Area Development Illustrative Plan
- 24 Plaza Area
- 25 Plaza Site
- 26 Preferred Town Plaza Area Illustrative Plan
- 27 Plaza Site
- 28 Novato Theater
- 29 Novato Theater Preliminary Concept
- 30 Parking Structure at Community House Development Policy Plan
- 31 Parking Structure at Community House Development Illustrative Plan
- 32 Sherman Avenue Plaza Illustrative Plan
- 33 Sherman Avenue Plaza Character Sketch

- 34 Zenk Lot Improvements
- 35 Pocket Park and Parking on Vacant Lot at 858 Grant
- 36 Community House Parking Structure
- 37 Potential West Grant Traffic Calming
- 38 Street and Sidewalk Improvements
- 39 Recommended Style of Manufacturers Street Furniture
- 40 Recommended Historic Style Street Lights
- 41 Example Parking Lot Screening at Town and Country Center
- 42 Example of Historical Sign Content
- 43 Example of Store Front Improvements - Southeast Corner of Second and Grant
- 44 Summary of Financing Mechanisms
- 45 Implementation Cost Matrix
- 46 Summary List of Downtown Specific Plan Policies and Programs

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

# Preface

This Specific Plan is the tangible result of the community process by which our vision for Downtown has been crafted into a plan for action.

Our vision for Downtown is not only a vision of the future, but also a vision of the past and of the present. In fact, it is a vision in which the past, present and future are all alive and intertwined.

While we are officially a "city," our community has a unique and vibrant small town character, a character all its own that cannot be duplicated in any other downtown nearby. This is primarily true because of who we are as a community today, because of all the generations of our community that have gone before, and because we live within the landscape that gives our community its character and sense of place. Our Downtown is the heart of our community.

If you study some of the historic photos made of the Downtown over the preceding century, you can discern how its land use patterns were determined by the prevailing mode(s) of transportation, and perhaps more importantly, by how and where people worked and lived their lives. Prior to 1900, Novato was agriculture (one lived and worked at home); contact with the rest of the world was first on foot or horse or wagon, and then by railroad. At the turn of the century, the first automobiles appeared, allowing more goods and people to get to and from the railroad (and the outside world). By 1910, the town was transitioning from a small rail stop for farm produce to a place where people worked and lived. By 1920, rail and auto were taking people to work outside Novato, students were riding the train to San Rafael for high school, grids for streets and residential development had been laid out, and "Main Street" (East Grant Ave.) was filling in with buildings whose facades all faced out onto the street and autos. Through the Depression of the 1930's, the town moved further away from agriculture and town work, residents depending more on mechanized transportation to carry them to the shifting employment locations and opportunities. By the 1940's, with the growth of jobs in San Francisco, the town had moved even further from jobs at home towards automobile transit and wide separation of employment areas from residential areas. However, there were no shopping malls or super highways yet, so Downtown remained the important economic and social hub around which the community revolved. During the post-war boom of the 1950's and 1960's, railroad uses declined and disappeared, and land use shifted entirely in the direction of separate and decentralized residential, community, and economic activities, Downtown's streets became high-volume, high-speed thoroughfares and Downtown became essentially a linear collection of auto destinations. In the 1970's, Highway 101 bypassed Downtown, and in the 1980's regional shopping and employment centers further weakened any linkage between the community and its historic center.

Now in the 1990's, a new balance of how and where people live, work, and socialize is emerging (acceptance that there is more to life than immobility on the freeway and being far away from home and community). Novato is creating high-paying jobs at home, and more and more people want to live and work in their community. The new mode of "transportation" which will possibly shape land use is telecommunications - transporting work to people, rather than people to work, and bringing the

entire world to Novato. Once again, the Downtown is becoming the center of the community.

In crafting this Specific Plan, we have tried to create a series of alternative future images to be made real over the next decade or two. The Specific Plan is meant to be an organic, living document, meant to provide comprehensive direction and guidance for decision makers, business and property owners, residents, and investors in order to realize the goals of the community.

The Specific Plan acknowledges our historic community character, that the past and the future both live in the present, and that we must think in terms of whole systems: the landscape, the townscape, and the community. Also, that we must harmonize with the surrounding neighborhoods and natural environment, and continue to focus on the human scale to preserve the look and feel of a small town (grown up) and not an increasingly urbanized city. The Plan recreates the concept of private and public space as focal points for the economic and social interaction of a small town. The Plan recognizes the need to support our local businesses and good jobs at home, and that this will require new partnerships because too often property owners, business owners, and City officials all work in isolation from one another, sacrificing the benefits that can be realized from working together toward shared goals. The Specific Plan relies to a great degree on the agrarian metaphor of "seeding" specific uses and architectural designs at specific sites and nurturing them to grow and develop. It seeks to achieve a higher level of quality in design, public environment, and social interaction and connection in our Downtown. It creates a shared sense of community identity through the emphasis of the traditional elements of Downtown designs developed before the automobile and high-speed thoroughfares separated the community from the Downtown.

The Specific Plan is a plan which can be acted upon, a plan we can pay for, a plan we can implement. It invites all participants in the process to use their experience and creative talents for continuing improvement of a Downtown that visitors are attracted to, business people find profitable, will ultimately stimulate Novato's growing and sustainable economic base, and will be a source of pride for the entire community. It's Our Downtown!

/s/Ned

Ned Lagin

Downtown Specific Plan

Steering Committee

## **Novato**

# **1892 Through 1976**



1892

Before



1900

Circa



1908



1908



1910



1913



1913



1915



1920

Circa



1920

Circa



1930

Circa



1940

Circa



1950



1950



1958

Circa



1976

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# Downtown Novato Specific Plan

## Executive Summary

The Downtown Specific Plan presents improvements, policies and programs to revitalize and enhance the Downtown. The Specific Plan promotes the mission of 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 build 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.

The community-based planning process which has created the Downtown Specific Plan evolved out of the efforts of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, an ad hoc citizens group drawn together in late 1992 by their desire to revitalize downtown through a variety of initiatives and programs. The City Council in July 1993 funded the Specific Plan development effort and appointed the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee (DSPSC) out of this ad hoc group composed of downtown and community stakeholders. The DSPSC has guided the public process in shaping this plan through extensive public participation, engagement of the community and consensus building among various stakeholder interests over the past four years.

When formally approved by the City Council, the Downtown Specific Plan will be incorporated into the General Plan, and will serve as the Downtown "constitution" providing regulatory and design guidance to public and private decision makers. The Specific Plan encourages and provides incentives for coordinated public/private improvements and programs within the designated Specific Plan area. For projects and programs consistent with the Specific Plan and within the Specific Plan area, the approval/entitlement process is intended to be streamlined. The Specific Plan identifies planning time horizons, funding strategies and projects to be accomplished or to show substantial progress during the time periods of 1-3 years, 3-7 years and beyond 7 years. The City can consider the list of public projects within these time horizons for capital improvements programming, funding and short-, mid- and long-term planning. Business and property owners and citizens can consider the time horizons in their own plans for improvement of their properties and new development and to make decisions about their participation in bringing projects and programs to fruition. Because of the importance of early implementation, key "catalyst" sites have been designated to generate momentum for other improvements (the "seeding concept").

The Specific Plan is organized into six chapters: Introduction, Plan Framework and Background, Recommendations for Improvement and Development, Infrastructure, Design Guidelines, and Implementation. Throughout the Plan, policies and programs of the Specific Plan are highlighted in the text with a symbol. 

The proposed land use component of the Specific Plan aims to preserve and strengthen the current pattern of commercial land uses. Though no significant changes in use or intensity are proposed, the Specific Plan recommends that the designation of Medium Density Multiple Family for the parcels along the west side of First Street be changed to Mixed Use (see [Figure 3](#) Land Use Plan).

Chapter 2 highlights the applicable policies of the General Plan and the current Zoning Ordinance as they relate to the Specific Plan area and describes existing conditions (both assets and deficiencies) and proposed policies and programs addressing those conditions. A primary policy recommended to preserve Novato's small town character is the "village design" concept, designated for many of the major "catalyst" sites where opportunities for development exist. In each of these cases the development of multiple uses associated with multiple buildings, or single buildings with multiple facades and entryways, are given preference over large single use structures. This multiple use/multiple structure concept helps to create and maintain the small town, human scale, pedestrian friendly, attractive vision for the Downtown.

Chapter 3 contains the recommendations for the eighteen "catalyst" sites where there are opportunities for improvement or development consistent with the overall plan framework and the land use classifications. Included in the discussion of each of the site improvement ideas are recommendations for site-specific development policies which the City would apply to conditions of approval or to more detailed design and feasibility analyses. Examples of key opportunity sites the development of which can serve as catalysts in seeding other Downtown improvements are: the Railroad Depot and Pini Mill area, Novato Theater District, Community House parking structure, Scown Lane, Mission Lodge, and Town Plaza.

The Specific Plan recognizes the importance of the Railroad Depot and Pini Mill area as a historical focus for Novato and the eastern anchor of the Downtown. The Plan recommends the depot buildings be carefully replicated/restored using the original blueprints on file with the City, while not precluding any potential future use for transportation purposes. The Pini Mill site is to be redeveloped with multiple historic village scale commercial spaces. It is critical that the properties in this area be planned together to create an integrated commercial node with a distinct character that coordinates with the rest of the Downtown, as well as taking advantage of an opportunity for shared parking and effective vehicular circulation. Though planned in a coordinated manner, implementation of specific projects, such as the replication/renovation/restoration of the Railroad Depot, should proceed independently when ready.

The Plan recommends the development of a parking structure on the City-owned parking lot next to the Community House to provide more parking for the City Hall campus area and downtown businesses. This additional parking could support the proposed "Town Plaza" and adjacent community facilities at Grant and Redwood, the renovated Novato Theater, the Farmers Market, and other downtown activities.

It is anticipated that the renovation of the Novato Theater and potential future conversion of the Taco Bell franchise directly across Grant could contribute a great deal to the social and cultural life in the Downtown. The theater is a valuable Downtown asset, and the Plan recommends that it be renovated

to reflect its Art Deco design of the 1940's/50's.

Scown Lane is an example of a catalyst site that will evolve over time. Scown provides an opportunity to develop new second story residential units over ground floor commercial/industrial space, creating an "enclave" for live/work space for artists and crafters. The Plan recommends that Scown become one-way traveling from east to west and that garages and other buildings opening onto Scown could become crafters studios, art galleries and live/work spaces for artists. It would be connected to Grant and Sweetser by pedestrian breezeways. Scown will also serve as a pedestrian corridor linking several of the catalyst sites such as the Railroad Depot area, the Novato Theater district and a future Town Plaza and other community facilities.

The Mission Lodge site is underutilized and does not take advantage of its prominent location at one of the key gateways to Downtown. The development concept for the site includes replacement of the Mission Lodge with multiple commercial uses in the "village design" concept. An incentive for development of this "village design" is the closure of Front Street adjacent to the site, incorporation of the night-of-way into the project site, and a suitable dedication of property along the First Street boundary to allow for the widening of First Street to two-way traffic, construction of a sidewalk on one side, and appropriate landscape buffers to the adjacent neighborhood.

The development of a Town Plaza with predominately green space and possible ancillary community facilities would function as the civic heart of Downtown convenient to other civic, cultural and commercial facilities. The Plaza could host a variety of public/social uses and activities including the City Christmas Tree, the Farmers' Market, July 4th parade reviewing stand, outdoor shows, awards and memorial events and a central place for the community to gather. The preferred site is at the northeast corner of the intersection of Redwood Blvd. and Grant Ave., within close walking distance of the City's Community House on Machin Ave. and the historic Novato Theater on Grant. This location serves to bridge the division of Downtown created by Redwood Blvd. and provides opportunities for public/private partnerships in developing appropriate buildings around the plaza.

Chapter 4 of the Specific Plan identifies physical improvements, required in a specific plan, to the major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy and other essential facilities proposed to be located in the specific plan area and needed to support the uses described in the plan. Significant expansion of roadway capacity or utilities capacity are not needed or anticipated to support planned new development in the Specific Plan area; however, improvements to streets, sidewalks, parking and storm drainage are proposed. A number of infrastructure improvements discussed in this chapter are incorporated in the City's Five-Year Capital Improvements Program.

The design guidelines for development and improvement presented in Chapter 5 in the Specific Plan apply to public as well as private projects and establish the physical design/aesthetic parameters for all of Downtown. They emphasize quality architecture and development and place a high value on historic, human scale building designs; sensitive treatment of historic resources; generous landscaping to accent buildings and public spaces; and high quality materials and construction. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist property owners, developers and designers in creating projects which are

consistent with the Downtown character that the community wants to preserve and perpetuate. They are also intended to facilitate communication between applicants and the City to expedite the design review process. Projects consistent with these guidelines would receive the benefit of streamlined approvals and thereby hasten implementation of this plan.

The design guidelines reflect the desire of the community that future development maintain Novato's "small town" character. They are presented in two categories. Overall Downtown Design Guidelines relate uniformly to the downtown area as a whole and involve site planning, parking and circulation, architecture, signs, lighting, and landscaping. Building Enhancement Standards are intended to guide building owners desiring to upgrade their existing improvements. Improvements in the downtown will most likely take place in the form of remodeling and restoration. As uses change and remodeling projects are proposed, owners are urged to upgrade their property consistent with the scale of existing projects. Minor improvements are encouraged such as exterior painting, landscaping additions, street tree planting, mechanical equipment screening, sign upgrading, repair work, etc. These can have a very positive visual and marketing impact. Examples of facade improvements, architectural styles and representative design features are showcased in the design gallery of photos concluding this chapter.

Chapter 6 deals with a wide range of programs and actions that are recommended for the successful revitalization of Downtown Novato. Major strategic components are outlined, public and private responsibilities and actions are described and phasing of projects/programs and funding options are identified. The Specific Plan will be implemented through existing and new funding and financing mechanisms and existing and new regulatory measures. Most importantly, it will be implemented through active and ongoing cooperation among property owners, business owners, citizens and the City of Novato. Public actions recommended for the successful implementation of the Specific Plan include public infrastructure and facilities improvements, administrative and regulatory streamlining consistent with development standards and design guidelines, General Plan and Zoning changes, enactment of funding mechanisms, parking management program, and expansion of police and other services. Other implementation efforts will require coordinated public/private actions such as City/developer interest in pursuing a development agreement for complex projects; City/business and property owners participating in a facade improvements program; City/DOTBA marketing the Downtown for business retention and attraction; and building community support/media awareness for Downtown. The active participation of the private sector in supporting and participating in funding the construction and maintenance of parking and streetscape improvements will be critical. Private actions will include rehabilitation/restoration of existing buildings, construction of new development, strengthening the DOTBA by active participation in Downtown marketing and promotion efforts, and in establishment and support for a Downtown Business Improvement District.

An implementation cost matrix summarizes the preliminary range of cost estimates to implement the Downtown Specific Plan over the three time horizons, the allocation of funding resources, and implementation responsibilities among the public and private sectors.

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan](#)  
[Home](#)

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 A NEW INITIATIVE FOR DOWNTOWN

The City of Novato is embarking upon an exciting new program to revitalize and enhance economic cultural, social and recreational development in Downtown. Citizens, merchants, property owners and visitors have long voiced support for improvements to Downtown which would enhance its role as the heart of the community - a place welcoming to all, attractive, accessible, and economically and culturally vital. It is the goal of the Specific Plan to bring the community together and provide the tools to encourage all members of the community to apply their creativity and particular abilities to create a vibrant Downtown. With adoption of this Specific Plan for Downtown, the community will have an important tool to implement these goals. It knits together a variety of new policies, programs and ideas, some of which may be acted upon in short order, some in a mid-length planning horizon, and others which are part of a long term vision.

Nearly four years in the making, the Downtown Specific Plan defines objectives, strategies and guidelines to make Downtown more exciting and convenient for residents and visitors, to support existing and potential new businesses, and to strengthen Novato's cultural and community life. The plan is also a challenge to the entire community to support new private development and public community facilities in Downtown. Business owners, property owners, residents and the City of Novato need to work together to attract and retain businesses, by improving streets, sidewalks, street drainage, parking, landscaping and storefronts. The Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee is pleased to present a plan which sets the stage for a variety of compatible improvements and programs to help create a Downtown in which all can take pride, and which can take its place among Marin's unique, charming and desirable Downtown centers.

 **This symbol represents a Specific Plan Policy or Program. It is followed by one of the following category abbreviations for ease of identification and reference:**

LU	Land Use
UD	Urban Design
CP	Circulation & Parking
IU	Infrastructure & Utilities
PS	Public Services
IM	Implementation

## 1.2 LIMITS OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

[Figure 1](#) shows the location of the Specific Plan Area in the central portion of the City. The specific plan area is bordered by the Northwestern Pacific Railroad on the east, De Long Avenue on the south including vacant parcels that wrap along the eastside of Redwood Boulevard, parks, school district building and Downtown Novato Center on the west, at Seventh Street; and mostly vacant land beyond Olive Avenue to the north.

As shown in [Figure 2](#) Downtown Specific Plan Area, "Old Town" is the name given to the historic retail and service sector focused on Grant Avenue between the railroad and Redwood Boulevard (the plan refers to this section of Grant as (east) Grant and the segment between Redwood Boulevard and 7<sup>th</sup> Street as (west) Grant.)<sup>(1)</sup>. The commercial/industrial sector which includes building materials, contractors and auto services is located "North of Old Town." The group of buildings which comprise most of the City offices are on Machin and Sherman, south of Grant Avenue, and are known as the "City Hall Campus." (West) Grant is a retail corridor which also includes a number of banks, financial institutions and real estate services. The Redwood Boulevard corridor, which divides Downtown into east and west halves, serves mostly auto-oriented commercial, food businesses, and office buildings. The boundary of the Specific Plan Area in [Figure 2](#) shows how the boundary of the Downtown Specific Plan area on General Plan Community Identity Map 2 will have to be amended (see proposed amendment in Chapter 6).

### **1.3 WHAT IS A SPECIFIC PLAN?**

Under California Statute [Government Code Sec. 65450], Specific Plans are tools to implement the goals and policies of the General Plans for selected areas of towns and cities. Specific Plans call for a level of detail and specificity in planning a designated area greater than the General Plan. Due to the increased specificity and comprehensive planning done, the Specific Plan can create a streamlined entitlement process for a wide variety of both public and private projects and programs. This plan contains objectives, policies, and concepts for potential public and private development which reflect the community's hopes and aspirations for Downtown. Chapter 6 discusses requirements for adoption of the Specific Plan and amendment of the General Plan.

### **1.4 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

In 1996 the City adopted an update to its General Plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The certified EIR incorporated assumptions about development in the Downtown Specific Plan area which were provided by the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee. Land use proposals and build-out assumptions which are now incorporated into the Specific Plan were evaluated as part of the impact analysis. Therefore, the General Plan EIR should serve as required environmental documentation for the Downtown Specific Plan, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). However, before this Draft Specific Plan is finalized, the City will conduct an environmental compliance review to assess whether or not the Plan would result in any potential adverse impacts to the environment not already addressed in the General Plan EIR.

Where new impacts are identified, measures to mitigate those impacts will be defined. If the environmental compliance review requires the preparation of additional documentation pursuant to CEQA, citizens and public agencies will have the opportunity to comment on the documentation, before it is approved and action is taken on the Specific Plan by the City Council.

## 1.5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In preparing the Specific Plan, the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee sought out the ideas and comments of the community, business and property owners. Since the committee began its work in 1994, field trips, walking tours, workshops, surveys and over 80 meetings attended by the public have been held. Trips to over 20 other downtowns and communication with still others to determine their economic and land use strategies for downtown revitalization added to the deliberations of the Committee. Further information on the public outreach and involvement program undertaken to date may be found in Appendix A Public Participation Process.

## 1.6 PLAN APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION

The next steps in the process focus upon review and refinement of the draft plan. Following various presentations and workshops by the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee, and review by various boards and commissions, the City Council is expected to consider the plan in the fall of 1997.

In Chapter 6 the importance of early implementation of a few key projects which generate momentum for the Specific Plan (the "seeding" concept"), and other improvements are discussed.

**IM 1: Specific Plan Implementation Schedule/Priorities.** Programs and projects implementation shall occur over three overlapping planning time horizons: 1-3 years, 3-7 years and beyond 7 years. The City shall consider the list of projects within these time horizons for capital improvements programming, funding, and short-, mid- and long-term planning. Business and property owners and citizens can consult the project time frames in their own plans for improvement of their properties or new development. Citizens can consider the time horizons to make decisions about their possible participation in bringing projects to fruition or endless public comment and review.

For further information on public meetings on the draft plan, contact:

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 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan](#)

[Home](#)

## 2. PLAN FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

### 2.1 THE VISION FOR THE DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN

The Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee (DSPSC) adopted a set of objectives for Downtown on April 7, 1994, which the City Council approved in May 1994, to assist in preparation of the Specific Plan. It was based upon an original draft prepared by the Downtown Revitalization Committee, a grass-roots citizens group (from which the entire DSPSC was drawn).

The Vision for the Downtown Specific Plan has been adapted from the Steering Committee's Mission Statement, Value Statement, and Goals Statement, as discussed below.

#### **Downtown Mission Statement**

The mission of Downtown Novato is to be the heart of the community to:

- Be Novato's thriving multi-faceted economic hub;
- Serve as a social, cultural, historical and transit center;
- Attract people for commerce and community affairs from Novato and the surrounding region;
- Maintain and enhance its small town feel, historical character, and charm;
- Reflect quality in its built environment and in the personal services provided there; and
- Be an active gathering place, providing the focal point for the community.

#### **Downtown Value Statement**

Novato's Downtown should be a place for people where we can:

- Provide our own leadership to achieve our goals and mission, enhance commerce, build a strong economic future and maintain the diversity of Downtown;
- Gather, stroll, visit with friends;
- Conduct business in an easy, friendly manner;
- Enjoy quality social, cultural and recreational opportunities;
- Experience a visually pleasing environment;
- Appreciate our natural surroundings and historic setting;
- Feel safe and secure in a small town atmosphere, and
- Belong!

#### **Downtown Goals Statement**

## **AESTHETICS**

- Keep Downtown clean, and free of litter and graffiti.
- Undertake seasonal street cleaning and clean-up.
- Provide more pedestrian-oriented amenities, including street benches, planters, drinking fountains, public toilets, etc.
- Maintain a safe and secure Downtown and control vandalism and crime.
- Tie old (east) and new (west) Grant Avenue together visually. Provide easier and safer pedestrian access and linkage.
- Provide level, attractive sidewalks.
- Provide street trees, installed properly, maintained and trimmed to allow views of stores and businesses.
- Preserve historic buildings.
- Provide an environment for the artistic and the cultural aspirations of the community.

## **LAND USE**

- Maintain City Hall Downtown.
- Establish a Downtown branch post office.
- Locate appropriate recreational and park facilities Downtown.
- Locate a museum in Downtown.
- Locate a small hotel in Downtown.
- Maintain a diversity of businesses, services and multi-ethnic restaurants in Downtown.
- Improve and maintain retail at street level, with potential offices and/or residences above the street.

## **CIRCULATION AND PARKING**

- Provide ample, convenient parking throughout Downtown.
- Plan and implement needed improvements to the traffic circulation system.
- Improve bicycle access and bicycle parking.
- Create a pedestrian-oriented Downtown built and maintained at a human and village scale.

## **SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING**

- Provide clear street signs and more directional signs.
- Provide better and more attractive street lighting.
- Develop and maintain the City Hall (church building) logo of the City as a symbol of the feel and character we want for Downtown.
- Improve freeway signage and local street signage leading to Downtown.
- Provide street banner standards for Downtown (lower priority).
- Provide street directory of businesses in Downtown (lower priority).

## IMPLEMENTATION AND ORGANIZATION

- Involve Downtown property and business owners, as well as the larger community in Downtown activities.
- Provide an environment for a healthy business climate with helpful regulations to encourage fast permit processing to reduce the cost and time for approvals.
- Encourage Downtown/Old Town businesses to work together.
- Do not condemn private property for non-City use.
- Consider a Main Street type program.
- As part of project implementation, encourage the use of affordable housing resources, where appropriate and feasible, as an incentive for Downtown projects to include long-term affordability in appropriate land use designations.

## PROMOTIONS AND EVENTS

- Encourage more nightlife and cultural, recreational, social, and fun activities.
- Promote more community gathering events in Downtown.
- Encourage more Downtown promotions by store with well-thought-out, planned, and successful merchandising.
- Extend business hours into the evening and weekends.
- Engage a "Shop Novato" local marketing campaign.
- Draw in new business, keep all building spaces occupied.
- Emphasize high-quality, family-oriented merchandising and services.
- Capitalize on Vintage Oaks and attract their patrons into Downtown.

## 2.2 LAND USE PLAN

The land use concept for Downtown aims to preserve and strengthen the current pattern of land uses. No significant changes in use or intensity, as prescribed in the General Plan, are proposed (see [Figure 3](#)).

[Figure 4](#) - Downtown Specific Plan Boundary

### 2.2.1 Land Use Classifications

The land use designations used in the Specific Plan are the same as those used in the General Plan. Applicable land use categories include Downtown Core (DC), General Commercial (GC), Commercial/Industrial (CI), Mixed Use (MU), Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R-10), and Community Facilities (CF). The "roles" to be played by each of these uses in meeting the Specific Plan goals and objectives for Downtown are summarized below: Relevant policies of the General Plan are quoted; new policies of the Specific Plan are *italicized*.

Downtown Core (DC) Properties designated DC encompass the traditional retail, office and financial services core in Downtown, focused on Grant Avenue. The Core also extends for a short distance along Redwood Boulevard, north and south of Grant, where there are some pedestrian oriented buildings.

- Pursuant to the General Plan, the DC designation "permits office, commercial and retail uses, mixed

commercial/residential use with commercial uses located principally on the ground floor, and other similar uses. The designation allows a floor area ratio of 0.4 for commercial uses with a maximum of 1.0 for mixed uses where the difference between 0.4 and 1.0 is used for housing."

- *The Specific Plan designation for the Downtown Core shall permit cultural facilities, museums, public libraries, public meeting facilities, auditoriums/stages with kitchen/banquet facilities, public plazas and parks, and other similar uses, with supporting parking. These uses are also allowed on properties designated Community Facilities (CF), but because sites designated CF are mostly built-out, community facilities are also permitted in the DC district. This specifically applies to DC designated properties in the vicinity of the intersection of Grant Avenue/Redwood Boulevard where community facilities and a town plaza are proposed (see Chapter 3).*
- *Lot assembly to create larger projects in the Downtown Core is discouraged, in order to retain Downtown's small town character.*
- Although the General Plan allows residential development in the Downtown Core, the Specific Plan discourages residential development in that portion of the Downtown Core which fronts on Redwood Boulevard. These parcels oriented to Redwood are less suitable setting for housing, because of the auto-oriented nature of commercial uses along Redwood, night-illumination and the noise from through-traffic.

General Commercial (GC). Properties designated GC focus upon Redwood Boulevard near its intersections with De Long Ave. and Olive Avenue. These auto-oriented sites can support larger scale development, designed with special care as entrances to Downtown (see Chapter 3).

- Pursuant to the General Plan, uses allowed in the GC designation include "established commercial areas with off-street parking and/or clusters of streetfront stores; regional and local-serving retail establishments; specialty shops, banks, professional offices; motels; businesses and personal services; and other similar uses. This designation is typically assigned to larger parcels, located on a major arterial street."

Mixed Use (MU). Upon adoption of this plan, several parcels located at the southeast corner of DeLong/Redwood Boulevard and on the west side of First Street between Grant and Olive would be designated MU. (See Chapter 3).

(2)

- Pursuant to the General Plan, the MU designation "applies to sites where the surrounding area is currently developed with both commercial and residential land uses [and] office, commercial and retail uses and residential uses. The combination and intensity of land uses shall be compatible with the development pattern and character of the surrounding neighborhood and existing adjacent land uses. Commercial only, office only or residential only land uses are also permitted."
- Lot consolidation to create larger parcels and more efficient development is acceptable in the MU district. Shared access to some parcels at the southeast corner of the De Long Avenue/Redwood Boulevard intersection would be appropriate from the standpoints of traffic safety, shared parking, and potentially reduced sitework than would be required for two separate projects (see Chapter 3).

Commercial/Industrial (CI). Properties with the CI designation are clustered along Sweetser Avenue and along Vallejo Avenue in what is known as the "North of Old Town" area. One other parcel designated CI is located adjacent to the north of the Plan area (Shamrock building materials and feed mill).

The classification is intended to preserve and strengthen the kinds of building supplies and contractors, and

automobile repair services for which the area is well known. It is also meant to encourage the burgeoning home improvement business, including product and design showrooms within an easy walk of Grant Avenue. By sharing the home improvement theme, retail outlets could create an identity for the North of Old Town area specializing in such products as windows, plumbing fixtures, lighting, flooring, hardware and related consultation in interior design and building technology.

- Pursuant to the General Plan, uses allowed in the CI designation include "a wide variety of manufacturing, office, wholesale, service and processing uses that do not generate excessive adverse environmental impacts. Other uses permitted include distribution, warehousing and agricultural products sales and services, auto sales and services, and repair, food and drink processing, local-serving retail, solid waste transfer facilities, recycling facilities, and other similar uses."
- *Lot consolidation to create larger parcels and more efficient development is acceptable in the CI district. For example, some extremely long and narrow parcels on Vallejo Street might be consolidated.*
- *Chapter 6 proposes a higher FAR for consolidated narrow parcels in the district. This policy is consistent with General Plan EC Program 11.4: "Consider fee reductions for processing of lot assembly applications for non-residential uses. This change would remove one obstacle to creating larger sites suitable for larger and more modern development projects in the Downtown area and other developed areas of Novato."*

Medium Density Multiple-family Residential (R-10). Properties designated R-10 in the Specific Plan Area are located in the "Northwest Quadrant." They include small single family homes along the west side of First Street, and a few parcels to the north of Downtown Core parcels located on the north side of (west) Grant Avenue. The First Street parcels are included because of their direct exposure to commercial sites on the east side of the street. The parcels north of commercial parcels on (west) Grant are included because they are owned by the same party which owns the adjacent commercial parcel. The General Plan stipulates that a Specific Plan shall be prepared for the entire Northwest Quadrant.

- Pursuant to the General Plan, uses allowed in the R-10 designation include "multiple-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, detached or attached single family dwellings, recreation, home occupations, community facilities and other similar uses."

Community Facilities (CF). Pursuant to the General Plan, uses allowed in the CF designation include "public buildings, schools, recreation and cultural facilities, museums, public libraries, utility facilities, transformer stations, water and sewage treatment plants, solid waste transfer facilities, recycling facilities and related easements, City offices, fire and police stations, hospitals, and privately-owned uses operating in conjunction with public uses."

*Properties designated CF include the "City Hall Campus" extending between the Police Station east to Reichert Avenue and the railroad depots. In addition to governmental functions, this designation would allow for occupancy by private uses, such as a leased restaurant in a restored railroad depot until such time as its primary use - transportation - would be required (see Chapter 3).*

See also the discussion above relating to the Downtown Core designation, where selected community facilities are also allowed. The allowance of public facilities in both the DC and CF districts will help to strengthen Downtown's desired role as the civic, cultural, educational core of Novato.

## **2.2.2 General Groupings of Similar Land Uses**

[Figure 5](#) shows the broad distribution of land uses in Downtown. There are generally six areas with different land use characteristics:

1. (West) Grant (Redwood to Seventh) - A diverse mix of Retail and Financial/Community Services exists: The majority of Downtown banks, offices, medical and other personal services are found in this section of the Downtown.
2. (East) Grant (Redwood to Railroad Tracks) - Retail and Restaurants: The area extends to the southeast along Scott Court to Pini Mill and the Railroad, and perhaps to the northwest up to Vallejo Ave. between Redwood Blvd. and Machin Ave.
3. Redwood Boulevard - Auto-Oriented Businesses and Services: Automobile sales and service, tires and some commercial retail businesses predominate. Most businesses are located in isolated buildings, with adjacent parking.
4. North of Old Town - Auto Repair, Building Supplies and Construction Services:
  1. Sub-area focused on Vallejo Avenue, emphasizing automobile repair businesses.
  2. Sub-area focused on Sweetser Avenue, emphasizing construction services and building supplies.
  5. City Hall Campus: In addition to City offices in separate buildings, this area includes some private office buildings on Reichert Ave. near De Long Ave., and two private residences.
  6. Single Family Residential: These are predominately small single family homes fronting along the west side of First Street. The parcels are designated as Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R-10) uses in the General Plan, and C-1 Retail Business on the Zoning Map. Several houses are currently being used for commercial business at this time.

### 2.2.3 Land Use Issues

Parcelization Patterns. Some adjacent parcels are owned by the same entity (person, business, etc.) and businesses operate on the combined parcels. For example, businesses have acquired adjacent lots to provide parking to serve the businesses.

There are a number of very narrow lots (25 ft to 35 ft) with frontage on (east) Grant Avenue and on Vallejo Avenue. Along Grant, the lots appear to be occupied by separate buildings; along Vallejo, a number appear to have been consolidated with adjacent parcels.

**■ LU 1: Incentives for Lot Consolidation**. Allow for incentives to encourage lot consolidation, such as allowing for greater development (usually expressed as a higher Floor Area Ratio) on consolidated parcels. The Specific Plan encourages development of commercial businesses in the North of Old Town area, such as retail home improvement centers, that may not be possible on small narrow lots.

Division Between East and West Grant Avenue. The Specific Plan fosters a pedestrian-oriented Downtown, where shopping on foot is easy and enjoyable. This can be difficult to achieve when a street front is interrupted by vacant lots and parking lots and frequent street crossings. For example, (east) Grant, which

has few such interruptions, is more pedestrian-friendly than (west) Grant which has many more interruptions, due to drive-through banks, driveways to parking lots, etc.

The biggest obstacle to pedestrian circulation in Downtown Novato is the gap between (east) and (west) Grant Avenue created by the 175 foot wide Redwood Boulevard right-of-way. A wide landscaped island in the middle of the four lane highway at the Grant Avenue intersection has been installed to help bridge the gap, but it is not entirely sufficient. This is because the island effectively creates two streets which must be crossed - the two northbound lanes and two southbound lanes.

The gap created by Redwood Boulevard is not the only reason that pedestrians may resist walking between (east) and (west) Grant Avenue. Examination of land uses on Grant Avenue on each side of Redwood Boulevard reveals that there are few businesses which might seem logically linked by pedestrian circulation. For example, auto-oriented uses exist on Grant between First Street and Redwood Blvd. A trophy shop, vacant theater, a jewelry store, florist, antique and two second hand stores are located on Grant between Redwood Boulevard and Machin Avenue. The closest potentially related businesses that might invite a walk between them are Taco Bell on the southwest corner of Machin and Grant Avenues and Pini's Hardware on the southwest corner of First Street and Grant Avenue. A walk between these businesses is about 700 feet one-way. People in low-density settings like Downtown Novato, where parking is generally available, are reluctant to walk more than 300-400 feet between their cars and destinations. The physical gap across Redwood is effectively expanded by the weakness of the land use linkage between (east) and (west) Grant Avenue. Potential solutions to encouraging pedestrian circulation between (east) and (west) Grant must recognize weak land use linkages between the areas as well as the lengthy walking distance across Redwood Boulevard.

Vacant Properties. Vacant properties in the Downtown area represent special opportunities for improvements supportive of the goals and objectives of the Specific Plan. Four vacant sites and uses which might be considered for them are listed below:

- The southeast corner of Vallejo Avenue and Redwood Boulevard: home improvement showroom or businesses which would help create an "entry" to similar businesses in the North of Old Town area; however, the Specific Plan recommends a parking lot on the Machin-fronting portion of the lot to serve customers and employees in the immediate vicinity.
- The southeast corner of Redwood at De Long: four adjacent parcels mixed use - office, commercial and residential.
- The northeast corner of Olive Avenue and Redwood Boulevard: retail/commercial that is pedestrian retail first floor and office commercial second floor and/or potential multimodal transportation center.
- The northeast corner of Sweetser Avenue and Redwood Boulevard: retail/commercial that is pedestrian retail first floor; office or commercial above.

#### **2.2.4 Change in Land Use Designations**

The Specific Plan recommends a change to the General Plan Land Use Designations Map (LU Map 1) for four areas discussed in this chapter. The property immediately north of the "Young Brothers" property, which is now occupied by a mobile home park is designated in the General Plan as Commercial/Industrial. The designation should be changed to General Commercial (GC), the same classification as the Young

Brothers site. This change will allow for and encourage consistent and compatible development of these two parcels (see Chapter 3).

The second area is at the northwest corner of the intersection of Redwood Boulevard and De Long Avenue. A portion of Front Street is proposed in Chapter 3 to be vacated and made part of adjacent parcels, including the property occupied by Mission Lodge. The vacated street would receive the same classification as these parcels, General Commercial (GC).

The third area is First Street (West Side) from Grant to Olive. The designation of Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R-10) should be changed to Mixed Use (MU).

The fourth area is the Goodman's building which should be changed from Downtown Core (DC) to Community Facilities (CF).

### 2.2.5 General Targeted Land Uses in the Specific Plan

The following land uses have been identified by the Committee as having the highest importance for Downtown, and are targeted for preferred treatment in the use permit and other licensing processes.

- Restaurants
- More retail stores (especially upscale men's apparel, children's clothing, kitchen supplies, bed and bath store)
- Performing Arts Center
- More Night-Life Activities
- Small Hotel, Bed & Breakfast
- Museum
- Branch Post Office
- Micro brewery/restaurant

An example of targeted use permit or other licensing preference: given that the concentration of licenses granted by the California Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) has already reached the ABC threshold for undue concentration, every future alcohol use permit in the Downtown would require an exception to the ABC guidelines and a letter of convenience to the ABC. The Specific Plan recommends those exceptions should be given only to restaurant uses rather than retail off-site consumption uses and/or bars which are not part of restaurants.

**■ LU 2: Retail Uses on Ground Floor.** Encourage retail uses on ground floor in all appropriate Specific Plan designations.

## 2.3 APPLICABLE POLICIES OF THE GENERAL PLAN

Government Code Sec. 65454 requires that the Specific Plan further the objectives and policies of the General Plan. The Specific Plan is consistent with the City of Novato General Plan, adopted March 8, 1996. Specific Plan Chapter 5 Design Guidelines elaborates upon the General Plan design guidelines and adds new guidelines consistent with the Objectives, Policies and Programs of the General Plan.

Applicants for projects subject to the policies, programs and guidelines of the Specific Plan must also comply with the goals, objectives, policies and programs of the General Plan. Chapters of the General Plan which contain policies relevant to Downtown are highlighted below. Unless otherwise noted, the General Plan Policies are fully applicable to the Specific Plan, except where *italicized text* defines a new Specific

## Plan policy.

### General Plan Chapter I : Land Use (LU)

Maximum Density. Pursuant to the Land Use Chapter of the General Plan, LU Policy 2 Development Consistent with General Plan "Allow development at any density within the range shown by the Land Use Designations Map provided applicable objectives, policies and programs of all chapters of the General Plan are met. Maximum densities (top of stated density range applied to total gross acreage) may in some cases be achieved, but there is no guarantee of achieving the maximum density."

### General Plan Chapter II: Transportation (TR)

TR Table 3: Committed Roadway Improvements, Downtown traffic signal and intersection improvements, proposes the "coordination of traffic signals on De Long Avenue from U.S. 101 to Diablo Avenue and coordination of signals on Redwood Boulevard from Lamont Avenue to Grant Avenue."

### General Plan Chapter III: Housing (HO)

*An increase in building height may be considered in conjunction with a mixed use (retail/commercial first floor required) project containing housing where the top floor is used for housing on sites designated Downtown Core or in areas designated Mixed Use, subject to Planning Commission and design review (see Chapter 6) and provided that all other policies of the Specific Plan are complied with (particularly views, surrounding uses, and built environment).*

### General Plan Chapter VI: Economic Development and Fiscal Vitality (EC)

EC Policy 15 Downtown. Improve the economic vitality of Downtown.

EC Policy 15.1: Implement the adopted Downtown Specific Plan.

EC Policy 15.2: Support and facilitate special events such as the Farmer's Market, Art & Wine Festival, July 4th Parade, and holiday-related promotions Downtown.

EC Program 15.3: Explore various financial programs to encourage existing businesses to renovate/retrofit existing commercial structures to meet market needs and thereby stay in Novato.

EC Policy 16 Tourism. Encourage the development of tourism in Novato.

EC Program 16.1: Sponsor and/or support public events Downtown that draw visitors from outside of Novato.

EC Policy 17 Retail Development Downtown. Encourage additional retail development Downtown.

EC Program 17.1: Assist in evaluating the market for desired retail uses.  
Identify incentives to attract targeted retail uses Downtown.

### General Plan Chapter VIII Public Facilities and Services (PF)

PF Program 3.2: Coordinate plans for community facilities with policies of the Downtown Specific Plan. *This program would apply to Chapter 3 of the Specific Plan, Town Plaza and Community Facilities.*

### General Plan Chapter IX: Community Identity (CI).

CI Program 1.1: Establish Design Guidelines to be applied as part of the design review process. *The guidelines for Downtown discussed in Specific Plan Chapter 5 contribute to implementation of CI Program 1.1.*

The guidelines may address: massing (the relationship between the size and bulk of buildings), use of colors, materials and detailing, landscaping, lot circulation, signage, and privacy, in order to promote attractive development that is compatible with surrounding land uses, emphasizing compatibility of uses and buildings in residential neighborhoods. Compatibility does not require that residential densities and building types be identical on adjoining properties.

Novato is primarily a residential community. The character and livability of its neighborhoods define, to a large extent, Novato's sense of place. New residential development must fit in harmoniously with its surroundings, support and enhance the City's identity, without necessarily conforming to any given architectural style or motif.

CI Program 1.2: Continue the Design Review process.

*The design review process recognizes the interdependence of land uses and aesthetics and provides a method to promote good site planning, building design, and sound land use development.*

CI Program 1.3: Adopt specific design guidelines for the Downtown, the North West Quadrant, and for mixed use development.

CI Policy 2: Explore the use of traditional site design and architectural principles in areas with established patterns or sufficiently large development areas to use those principles successfully. Elements of traditional site design and architecture include rounded street corners with "bulb outs" at key intersections and absence of large radius intersection corners. *Specific Plan Chapter 5 provides additional guidelines to supplement those listed in CI Policy 2.*

CI Policy 12. Parking Standards. Reduce the visibility of parking facilities and the amount of land necessary for them to the maximum extent feasible.

CI Program 12.1: Consider the following revisions to the Zoning Ordinance for parking facilities:

- a. Use continuous (except for wheelchair ramps) curbs around the perimeter of parking areas;
- b. Require motorcycle parking in all new parking facilities with more than five spaces;
- c. Encourage shared access to parking areas to reduce curb cuts and save space;
- d. Ensure that the glare from vehicular headlights in the parking lot does not have an adverse impact on adjacent land uses;
- e. Improve pedestrian movement and safety, by such means as signals, bollards, and other features;
- f. Require that parking facilities be located behind buildings wherever possible;
- g. Allow shared parking and driveways for commercial uses having day/night activity patterns.
- h. Review and evaluate the off-street parking requirements for commercial and multi-family areas to reduce on-street parking.

*Chapter 6 discusses the Specific Plan recommendation for enacting a shared parking ordinance.*

CI Policy 13 Lighting Design Guidelines. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate design guidelines for exterior lighting addressing issues such as security, appearance, and intensity. The guidelines shall provide the types of lights and lighting to be used in various types of development so that new projects mitigate impacts on open space or other valuable City views to the extent feasible. *Chapter 5 of the Specific Plan defines lighting for pedestrian areas and sidewalks in Downtown.*

CI Program 15 Pedestrian Paths. Provide for maximum feasible pedestrian circulation. Pedestrian paths and walkways should connect residential areas, parking facilities, schools and commercial areas.

CI Program 15.1: Consider adopting the following design guidelines for pedestrian facilities:

- a. Provide physical separation of vehicular and pedestrian movement wherever possible and plant street trees to create a safer and more pleasant environment for walkers;
- b. Provide pedestrian-oriented lighting to improve security and the sense of safety;
- c. Require convenient, secure pedestrian access from parking lots and entrances to commercial uses;
- d. Encourage commercial development to include pedestrian walkways

and street furniture at street level adjacent to buildings, public transit and parking facilities; and

- e. Encourage clustering of commercial buildings to create pedestrian zones and avoid wide expanses of parking between building entrances.
- f. Encourage landscaped open areas and outdoor furniture in areas to be provided as gathering places for employees and customers in commercial office and industrial areas.

*Specific Plan Chapter 5 includes design guidelines for sidewalks and the commercial streetscape.*

CI Policy 16 Downtown Specific Plan. Adopt and maintain a *Downtown Specific Plan*.

CI Program 16.1: Develop an education/information program for the *Downtown Specific Plan*. *Specific Plan Chapter 6 describes outreach programs for the community and media.*

CI Program 16.2: Coordinate development Downtown with the updated *Downtown Specific Plan*. Refer to CI Map: Downtown Specific Plan. *Chapter 2 of the Specific Plan includes Figure 1 which shows the boundary of the Specific Plan Area, which amends the boundary of the Specific Plan shown in CI Map 2.*

CI Policy 17. Downtown Diversity. Maintain and support the diversity of businesses and services Downtown.

CI Program 17.1: Consider establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) specifically for the area within the *Downtown Specific Plan* area. *Specific Plan Chapter 6 endorses this Program.*

CI Policy 20. City Hall. Maintain the City Hall campus and appropriate community facilities Downtown.

CI Program 20.1: Identify possible Downtown locations for additional community facilities.

CI Policy 22. Town Square/Plaza. Consider the establishment of a "Town Square/Plaza" Downtown.

*Specific Plan Chapter 3 includes concept plans for "Town Plaza" at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard.*

CI Policy 24. Additional Parking. Facilitate the provision of adequate parking, emphasizing a combination of public and private parking facilities.

CI Program 24.1: Encourage shared parking, trash and recycling agreements wherever feasible. Utilize, as appropriate, development agreements, conditions

of approval, and other means to encourage shared parking, trash and recycling arrangement.

CI Program 24.2: Consider revising parking requirements for mixed use developments in the Zoning Ordinance to account for alternate use times.

*Chapter 3 discusses a potential parking structure on the City Hall Campus, immediately north of the Community House. The Specific Plan recommends structured parking adjacent to the Community House on an existing parking lot, and additional diagonal parking on selected streets. Shared private parking is discussed in Specific Plan Chapter 6.*

CI Policy 31. Historic Buildings, Site and Districts. Identify, recognize and protect sites, buildings, structures and district with significant cultural, aesthetic and social characteristics which are part of Novato's heritage.

CI Program 31.1: Adopt a Cultural Resources Management Ordinance to define, identify, evaluate, protect and preserve sites, buildings, structures, districts and objects that reflect significant elements of Novato's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic and architectural heritage. Use the Novato History Museum documents identifying 80 historic buildings and sites in Novato as a resource in developing the ordinance as well as the information regarding the existing historical districts. This ordinance would supplement the present design review requirements for the Downtown Historic District shown in Figure 3. *Specific Plan Chapter 3 Railroad Depot Area discusses improvements to the historic railroad depots. Chapter 5 Design Guidelines discusses facade improvements to buildings which preserve historic buildings and respect the historic character of the Downtown.*

## 2.4 RELATION TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The Specific Plan contains design standards and guidelines, some of which represent changes to the Zoning Ordinance sign regulations, building height limits, and parking requirements. The Specific Plan also includes new guidelines not addressed in the Zoning Ordinance. Although Specific Plan requirements supersede underlying zoning, the City shall amend the Zoning Ordinance to make it consistent with the Specific Plan (see Chapter 6). While the City has adopted a new General Plan (1996), the Zoning Ordinance and map have not yet been revised to reflect the General Plan. For that reason we include [Figure 6](#) showing the current zoning.

## 2.5 URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER

### 2.5.1 Downtown Size and Scale

A report on Downtown Novato prepared nearly 25 years ago observed that the town appeared to be a community of around 5,000 population rather than a community of 30,000, its actual population<sup>(3)</sup>. Its apparent small size was attributed to dispersed residential development patterns and the lack of a concentrated and clearly identifiable commercial center. Perhaps the same observation could be made today, though the community has grown to about 50,000 persons - about the same size as San Rafael.

A further comparison between the size of Downtown San Rafael and the size of Downtown Novato is

instructive. San Rafael is more central to most of the developed areas and communities in Marin County. It is visibly located adjacent to Highway 101. Residents of communities like San Anselmo and Fairfax pass through San Rafael to reach Highway 101. By comparison, Novato is located in north Marin County and does not serve as a transportation or services hub to other communities (except to West Marin and Highway 37 east). Its Downtown is not visible from Highway 101 (its commercial visibility has been supplanted by the Vintage Oaks Shopping Center), and it is not necessary for many Novatans to travel through Downtown to reach their homes. Thus it has been easy for Downtown to be bypassed by commercial development, particularly by region-serving businesses.

The scale and intensity of development has not been influenced solely by the location of Novato in the region, or the location of Downtown within the city. Many property owners and merchants have not sought opportunities to broaden their customer base. There have been a number of factors which have kept Downtown small, including a desire on the part of most residents to retain Novato's small town character. It appears that these factors will continue to limit growth in Downtown. The Specific Plan recommends selective improvements and better use of land without expanding the limits of Downtown.

**■ LU 3: "Village Design" Concept for Catalyst Sites.** Require consideration of a "village design" concept for many of the major catalyst sites with opportunities for development. In each of these cases multiple uses associated with multiple buildings or single buildings with multiple facades and entryways are given preference over large single use structures. This multiple use/multiple structure concept will create and maintain the small town, human scale, pedestrian curious, friendly, attractive vision for Downtown Novato.

The major catalyst sites, if developed in this manner, become, by design, destination nodes in a pedestrian circulation network encompassing all the Downtown Specific Plan area. This design concept provides linkages in pedestrian circulation for currently fragmented retail, commercial and entertainment areas. Additionally, this concept creates many points of interest and destinations within the Downtown and a unifying global design theme for the entire Downtown.

The "village design" concept, because of its human scale and potential historic character would be consistent and harmonious when seen in the context of the surrounding hills and landscape as well as the surrounding residential neighborhoods. This design preserves and extends the small town feel of Novato while creating new retail and other business opportunities for some live/work spaces or mixed use residential. The uses within this concept are consistent with the uses identified in this plan including small cafes, restaurants, book stores, antique shops, bed and breakfast, micro brewery/pub, galleries, speciality retail with professional services on second floors or on first floor if not on primary street frontage. Sites designed in this way would consist of one or more structures each with one or more facades and/or entryways. Paseos and small, well-landscaped garden areas would separate structures and provide pedestrian circulation and permeability through the site. With this concept, opportunities are created for off-street business or commercial spaces.

Strategically, one or two larger anchor uses could "seed" each site provided they do not dominate the site and do not create a small shopping mall effect. The architectural styles or vernacular deemed appropriate are historical ones from the 1890's to 1930's. A hierarchy of different facades and roof lines is required as well as some mix of treatments and historic styles within the period mentioned. Street frontage will allow up to three stories on certain sites where view sheds are not an issue and height would scale back to two or one story to reflect neighboring residential or other uses. This type of scaling helps to accomplish the requisite buffering of different land uses (i.e., commercial adjacent to residential). The concept of buffering inherent in this design concept is one of creating some sense of both harmonious design and community or

neighborhood-oriented (serving) uses.

Novato is the one town in Marin County that has the opportunity to implement such a design making it far different from San Rafael and Petaluma as a retail, entertainment and social center. Novato is also the only town in Marin that has the opportunity to create such an ambiance and style. Examples of the key design components can be seen in Orinda, Danville and Sausalito (see the design gallery of photos in Chapter 5).

## 2.5.2 Open Space

Surrounding Hills. Downtown sits comfortably within a bowl surrounded on all sides by mostly open hills. Views east and west along Grant Avenue focus upon hills beyond Downtown. To the northwest is Mt. Burdell and the southwest is Big Rock Ridge. These and other promontories are shown in [Figure 7](#). They serve as points of orientation and as reminders of the natural hilliness of Novato. The existing General Plan contains policies to "preserve the hill forms immediately around Downtown to maintain the visual separation from nearby residential areas and the visual containment and definition of Downtown"; and to "provide an open space system throughout Downtown which provides an attractive setting." Some key elements are:

Open Spaces at Each End of Grant Ave. At the west end of Grant Avenue beyond Seventh Street, the confined street corridor opens up to the School District Education Center which is set back from Grant, and to the landscaped parking lot in the Downtown Shopping Center on the southwest corner of the intersection. This is an attractive transition between the open landscape and the street corridor.

At the east end of Grant Ave., the street meets the former Northwest Pacific Railroad Right-of-way and a hill rising abruptly just beyond Railroad Avenue, across the tracks. The existing passenger and freight depots (closed and in disrepair) sit in the right-of-way, with the passenger terminal nearly on axis with Grant Avenue. The distance between the tracks and private properties to the west is about 120 feet at this point. Owners of Pini Mill use a portion of the NWPRR right-of-way for vehicular access and parking adjacent to an antiques dealer on the back side of the mill. The Specific Plan recommends various alternatives to renovate the railroad structures and to create a suitable, park-like terminus to (east) Grant Avenue. Also, there are opportunities to provide landscaping and open space adjacent to the railroad ROW to the north.

[Figure 8](#) - East Grant Looking East

[Figure 9](#) - West Grant Looking East

Redwood Boulevard Landscape Corridor. The 175 ft. wide Redwood Boulevard corridor is an important open space which bisects Downtown. Heavy median landscaping and street trees successfully reduce the apparent width of the street. The Specific Plan recommends potential changes to the Redwood Boulevard corridor, including potential changes to landscaping.

Railroad Right-of-Way. The old Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks present an open space corridor along the east side of Downtown. The corridor could continue to be used for freight operations, possibly high-occupancy vehicles or light rail, and/or a commuter bike route.

**■ LU 4: Linear Park/Path Along Railroad Right-of-Way.** If feasible, retain a portion of the railroad right-of-way corridor to be landscaped and used for pedestrian traffic within a linear

park.

Tree covered parcels east of Goodman's Building. A large mass of trees appears on the property of the St. Francis Episcopal Church at 967 5th Street, extending south nearby to Park Court (see [Figure 10](#)). This grouping of trees is prominent in aerial photographs of Downtown, and is also prominent from nearby streets.

**■ LU 5: Retain Tree Covered Parcels East of Goodman's.** Retain the tree covered parcels east of the Goodman's building as open space.

Vacant Lots. Vacant parcels may provide opportunities to create small parks, add parking, or to incorporate gateway features to Downtown. Vacant portions of lots which are partially developed as well as entirely vacant lots may provide such opportunities.

### 2.5.3 Climate

Novato has a mean higher temperature range and less fog than southern Marin County. The mean daily maximum in July is over 80 degrees. It has pleasant summer and fall evenings. Westerly prevailing winds pick up during summer afternoons, and can be quite strong along Grant Avenue.

These climatic conditions argue for sun and rain protection along sidewalks, and outdoor areas with a southern orientation but protected from westerly winds.

Given the town's temperate climate, it is somewhat surprising that few outdoor cafes have been opened. Awnings for sun and rain protection are only intermittently provided. Shady places are provided by larger trees, narrow landscaped pedestrian passages between the sidewalk on (east)Grant and alleys behind. A particularly cool and inviting shaded walk is provided on the south side of WestAmerica Bank between First Street and Redwood Blvd. The Specific Plan recommends incentives and guidelines for building facade improvements which will include canopies, awnings, arcades and landscape features which will introduce shade and wind protection. The Plan also encourages more courtyards and landscaped "paseos" linking sidewalks with appropriate new development (such as outdoor dining) and off-street parking on the rear portion of properties.

### 2.5.4 Gateways to Downtown

The sense of arrival by car into Downtown Novato is weak. Some have said that unless one is looking for Downtown, it would be easy to miss it, because most major streets, with the exception of Redwood Boulevard, bypass it. The Specific Plan designates appropriate locations and designs for gateway features for Downtown.

Proceeding West on De Long Avenue from Highway 101. Driving west from the Highway 101 De Long off-ramp, old Pini Mill appears as the first evidence of Downtown, although it is not necessarily emblematic of Novato today. Soon, the NWPRR depot buildings come into view, although it cannot be discerned that nearby buildings are part of the central business district. There is a Chamber of Commerce sign on De Long welcoming visitors to Novato, although it is not prominent.

Proceeding North on Redwood Blvd. Approaching De Long, and Approaching Grant. As drivers approach De Long Avenue and the southern end of the Downtown area, there are no visual clues that the Grant

Avenue business district lies ahead. The generous landscaping along Redwood Boulevard north of De Long is attractive but conveys a suburban character rather than a Downtown character. The Specific Plan outlines strategies to encourage drivers, who might otherwise turn east or west on De Long, to continue north to Grant Avenue.

Proceeding South on Redwood Blvd. Approaching Olive Avenue, Approaching Vallejo Avenue. Oaks in the median, flowers in pots at street corners, and special crosswalk paving create an attractive setting for drivers approaching Downtown from the north. However, these features do not necessarily help orient drivers to the industrial/commercial area North of Old Town or to Grant Avenue. The Specific Plan recommends gateway feature(s) along Redwood Blvd. to direct visitors to the North of Old Town commercial/industrial area, as well as development of the vacant site at the southeast corner of Redwood and Vallejo.

Entry at the Intersection of Seventh and Grant. This is the strongest entrance into Downtown. There is an appealing shift from the open vista located west of Seventh to the well-defined street corridor to the east.

### **2.5.5 Street Life**

Gathering Places. The life of downtowns is frequently most evident in the places people gather. Whether a small park, town square or plaza, coffee shop or post office, such places provide the opportunity to expand upon their natural attraction with compatible nearby development or improvements. The most popular gathering area in downtown appears to be on Grant between Sherman and Reichert Avenues, where there are coffee shops, restaurants and specialty retail uses.

A pre-Christmas survey in 1993 conducted for the Downtown Revitalization Committee found that visits to banks were the number one reason people gave in response to a question about why they come Downtown. However, these people may be transacting business with Automatic Teller Machines or parking in bank parking lots for quick trips to tellers, rather than walking down Grant to conduct other business. In any event, there is little evidence of the kind of street life found at the other end of Grant.

**■ LU 6: Increase Opportunities for Gathering Places.** Reinforce existing gathering places and introduce new gathering places where people can meet. The Specific Plan also recommends the appropriate mix and intensity of uses which will generate and support increased activity to benefit businesses. (Note: tenant mix is a key ingredient in most shopping center management, and is frequently neglected in downtowns comprised of independent businesses).

Commercial Activity on Sidewalks. One of the demonstrable trends in the revitalization of downtowns across the country is increasing outdoor merchandising, seasonal events like farmers' markets, and special events such as arts festivals. The City of Novato passed an ordinance on January 11, 1994 allowing display, during daylight hours, of merchandise and "quasi-public improvements" (e.g., benches) on public sidewalks, subject to maintenance of commercial general liability insurance. The display must take place immediately in front of a merchant's place of business. Some businesses have responded to the new ordinance, introducing color and activity which encourages pedestrian activity.

Sidewalk Cafes. As suggested in the discussion of climate, above, Novato would appear to be an attractive place for outdoor cafes. Some restaurant owners have found locations which are less subject to late afternoon/early evening winds, which may be screened by walls or adjacent buildings. Examples include Cacti Restaurant on Grant at Fourth Street, Bongiovi Coffee on Grant, and the Las Guitarras restaurant on

Reichert Avenue just north of Scown Lane. Opportunities also appear to exist in courtyards and adjacent to rear alleys north of Grant Ave. The Specific Plan recommends mechanisms to encourage development of outdoor cafes.

Town Plaza, Pocket Parks and Landscaped Paseos. The DSPSC strongly advocates the creation of a Town Plaza, to help give identity and unity to Downtown and create a stronger sense of community. Pocket parks and landscaped paseos have been identified for many of the catalyst sites, particularly in conjunction with the "village design."

Public Restrooms. There are none at this time. Restaurants and merchants reluctantly meet this need in most communities. Although there are public restrooms in some City buildings, they are available only to persons doing business with the City. Restrooms in City parks have been frequently vandalized<sup>(4)</sup>.

### 2.5.6 Historic Structures

Many of the historic buildings in Downtown Novato could be characterized as being late Victorian era structures. There are two buildings in Downtown which are on the National Register of Historic Places: Dr. Insomnia, (formerly the Fashion Shoppe), at 800 Grant Avenue (a former blacksmith shop, built about 1890), and Le Cut of Marin (formerly the Stephan Porcella House), at 1009 Reichert Ave. About 25 additional historic sites have been identified within an Historic Preservation District designated by the City of Novato<sup>(5)</sup> (see [Figure 6](#)), excluding sites east of Railroad Avenue which are outside of the Specific Plan area. The following list identifies Downtown Novato Historical buildings with their present street numbers:

<b>Railroad Avenue:</b>	
869:	(was County Engineer's house)
900:	DeBorba c. 1900 (corner Rose and Railroad)
904:	Augere Hiribarren House
906:	Samuels c. 1906
910:	Oliver House c. 1894 (1906-World War I Novato Sanitarium - Dr. Kuser's Clinic)
<b>Scott Court (formerly Scott Street):</b>	
900:	Pete Magetti
906:	Yelmorini's other house
705:	Yelmorini's Saloon downstairs; family upstairs c. 1900
701:	Yelmorini built c. 1908 (so passengers getting off train could only see his saloon at 705)
730:	Pini Feed Mill c. 1922

<b>Reichert Avenue:</b>	
1005:	Stephen Porcella living quarters c. 1893
1009:	Stephen Porcella House c. 1897 ( <i>National Register</i> )
1017:	Periera House (now Las Guitarras Restaurant)
927:	Original Novato Railroad Depot (c.1879) moved to this location behind Druid's Hall)
853:	Carlisle House c.1896 (now Chamber of Commerce)
849:	Potter's House c. 1896
835:	Tom Sutton's House c.1896
<b>Sherman Avenue:</b>	
901:	Novato Presbyterian Church c.1896 (now Community Development Department)
905:	Pastors' House (now City Finance Department)
900:	Neilsen/Simmons House c.1906 (now City Administration offices)
908:	Hanen House c. 1923-former barn from Neilsen/Simmons House(now City Youth Services)
911:	George Morrison House (banker) (now City Central Receiving)
917:	A. D. Scott/Busher House c. 1912 (now City Parks & Recreation)
920:	Frederick Hamilton House/George Hall (banker) House c. 1904
<b>Machin Avenue:</b>	
908:	Novato Community House c.1922
1016:	Verissimo House
1024:	Albert Cain House
<b>DeLong Avenue:</b>	
815:	Postmaster's House c. 1850 (now Novato History Museum)
825:	Kuser/Silva House c. 1908
817:	Malfanti House
857:	?

<b>Scown Lane:</b>	
:	Concrete Building behind 1017 Reichert (Las Guitarras) (was Chinese Laundry - name currently unknown)
:	Water Tower behind 822-824 Grant (Silva Property)
<b>Cain Lane:</b>	
850:	Old House - Date/Original Owner Unknown
<b>Sweetser Avenue:</b>	
800:	Robert Trumbull Lumber Yard 1911; then Henry Hess Lumber (now Novato Builder's Supply)
821:	Simontacchi House
901:	IDESI Hall c. 1908 (Dance hall 1937 added 1937)
<b>Grant Avenue from Railroad to Redwood Boulevard:</b>	
695:	Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot c. 1917
701:	Flatiron Bldg. c.1908 (Wells Fargo Express Office - later in 1922 First Novato Advance (printing plant)
801:	Loustaunau Hall c.1899 (now Druid's Hall since 1937)
809-813:	Verissimo Bldgs. c. 1914
815:	Carlisle Hardware c.1910
819:	DeBorba's Saloon c. 1909 (Converted to billiards during Prohibition)
800:	Fashion Shop Porcella's Blacksmith Shop c. 1893 ( <i>National Register</i> ) (now Dr. Insomnia's)
812:	Torassa Building c. 1937
814:	Novato Bakery (bought by Torassa 1922)
818-824:	Dutra's Store 1893 (bought by Silva 1906)
822:	Silva Grocery & Saloon (Living quarters above)
824:	Judge Rudolff's Law Offices (1914-1947) and Justice Court in 1930's Silva Home Second Floor

826:	Novato Bank c. 1913 (First President James Black Burdell - bought by Central Valley Bank in 1950 - was first City Hall after Novato incorporated in 1960)
828:	Post Office (c. 1917)
868:	Novato Advance (c. 1922)
878:	Cain's Novato Utilities Company c. 1916-1917
881:	First National Bank of San Rafael Building (1951) (bought by Crocker Bank in 1962 - now All American Printing)
902:	Gross Radio & Electric Shop c. 1935 (now Now and Then Antiques)
906:	Charles Stafford, DVM Office 1936 (now Grant Avenue Barber Shop)
920:	Novato Theatre c. 1946 (built after Pini's store burned down in 1945)
928-930-932:	Nave Building c. 1922 (Nave Garage was 932; now Marin Trophies)
857:	Scott Hardware/Scott Hall c. 1890
863A-865:	Dr. Weseman's Medical Offices c. 1936 (now North Bay Chiropractic)
871:	Quonset Hut Building c. 1948 (site of Sutton's Livery Stable)
904:	Zunino's Shoe Repair (Ernie Zunino)
<b>West Grant Avenue:</b>	
1200:	Our Lady of Loretto Catholic Church c. 1937 (now Cacti Restaurant)
1107:	Pini Hardware c. 1945
1425:	Town & Country Center (Novato First Shopping Center)
<b>Redwood Boulevard:</b>	
7374:	People's Garage (in 1926 became Gordon Anderson's Chrysler Agency - just around the corner from Nave's Garage - now Old Town Import Automotive Service)
7532:	Atherton/Pinheiro House c. 1891 (Pinheiro's since 1940's)
<b>Second Street:</b>	
1100 Block:	Nave's Cabbage Patch Store (relocated here from South Novato)
1000 Block:	Fred Sweetser House

<b>Sites Where Historic Structures Formerly Existed</b>	
928 Grant Avenue	Site of original Angelo Zunino Shoe Repair Shop
916 Sherman Avenue	Site of Marvin Cain House
912 Railroad Avenue	Site of Dr. Armstrong's House then Captain Hiribarren House (first house in "New Town" of Novato)
901 Block Grant Avenue West on Redwood to DeLong	Site of all three Novato Grammar Schools c. 1859, 1875, 1922-58
830 Grant Avenue	Site of Rayburn's Grocery 1935 (also Pini's Store 1917, then DeBorba's Dry Goods in 1920's, and DeBorba's Grocery and Simmons Meat Market)
703 Grant Avenue	Site of Novato House Hotel, built 1899
1000 (West) Grant Avenue	Site of Novato first Fire Station 1930-1980 (historic plaque)
807 Grant Avenue	Yelmorini Meat Market (now Golden Egg Omelette House)
750 Grant Avenue	Samuel's General Merchandise (now Taj Marin Restaurant in recent building)
7369 Redwood Boulevard	DeBorba's Ice Cream Parlor (1925); in 1935 became Laura Rodoni's Village Inn, later sold to Grand Auto and moved to Redwood & Vallejo

The original Railroad Depot, now located on Reichert Avenue between De Long and Grant, was built in 1876 to serve the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company which used Novato as a stopover on its line between San Rafael and points north. The Specific Plan addresses the renovation/replication for adaptive reuse of the historic passenger and freight depots, respectively.

### **2.5.7 General Design and Architectural Styles**

There is no architectural theme which unites (east) and (west) Grant Avenue. However, buildings on both ends of the street have a similar small scale, with narrow store fronts, windows at similar head heights, occasional awnings and similar building heights. Even though buildings on (west) Grant frequently have longer facades, they are generally well divided into storefronts or bays that are similar in scale to buildings on (east) Grant. Fortunately, there are few buildings with blank walls along the sidewalk along either end of Grant Avenue.

A number of businesses have little architectural character. For example, some stores derive their identity by signs on or around doorways. Merchandise is not always attractively displayed. Little consideration is given

to night lighting. By contrast, successful stores consider the image of the entire facade of the building, which is much more memorable than advertising treatments just around store doorways.

Some businesses have allowed their facades to deteriorate. Peeling paint, non-operable awnings, windows obscured by posters or stored merchandise and other unattractive characteristics can not only affect the profitability of the deteriorating business, but also that of neighboring businesses.

Architectural styles are considered for three areas: (east) Grant Avenue, (west) Grant Avenue, and the industrial/commercial area North of Old Town.

(East) Grant Avenue. While (east) Grant contains some buildings with Victorian false fronts, it also contains stucco buildings somewhat representative of the Spanish revival style, and board and batten structures and corrugated metal structures characteristic of the early agricultural buildings in Novato.

The buildings east of Redwood Boulevard which the Zoning Ordinance designates with the overlay classification H-P Combining Historic Preservation cannot be altered without design review approval.

(West) Grant Avenue. Buildings on (west) Grant Ave. are of more recent vintage, most dating from the 1950s and 1960s. The Specific Plan evaluates facades of existing buildings representative of architectural styles found along Grant Avenue. Design guidelines for facade improvements address building bases, durable materials, color, screening of mechanical/ electrical equipment, awnings, colonnades and other features.

Industrial/Commercial Area. Buildings along Sweetser, Vallejo and Olive are typically nondescript industrial structures. There are some historic structures such as the IDESI Hall on the southwest corner of Machin and Sweetser.

Some newer buildings point in a potentially new design direction. The two commercial buildings in "Olive Plaza," immediately north of Mulligan Lane use standing seam metal roofing with metal wall panels. These materials are in the spirit of the corrugated metal structures historically used for agriculture. Unlike the galvanized material used in the Pini Mill, however, these new structures use panels with integral color. The vertical lines of the wall paneling also relate to the vertical board and batten of some older structures in this part of Downtown.

A parcel-by-parcel visual survey of exterior building conditions in the Specific Plan area was conducted by volunteers on the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee in June, 1994. The volunteers evaluated the following characteristics (roof and structural problems were not evaluated): paint condition, awnings condition, siding or wall condition, outdoor storage, and commercial signs condition.

The survey made the following summary conclusions:

- Sidewalks are uneven and potentially hazardous in places, particularly along Grant.
- Weeds are prevalent along the sides of some streets, in sidewalks, medians, and off-street parking lots.
- Some facades and signs are worn and dirty.

Other improvements recommended by the volunteers:

- Clean-up trash.
- Remove graffiti promptly.
- Repair fences, leaning and those which do not screen outdoor storage.
- Remove Christmas lights after the holiday season.
- Repair awnings.
- Prune vegetation, particularly where it blocks pedestrian movement.

Parcel by parcel information on the condition of particular buildings obtained from the volunteer survey has been used in devising improvement strategies for specific areas. Other information on building conditions was also reviewed. Building conditions in Old Town were evaluated in a 1985 redevelopment feasibility study.<sup>(6)</sup> Buildings were classified as either "standard," "deteriorating," "deteriorated" or "vacant." The 1985 survey emphasized the fire hazard inherent in old wood frame structures built to side property lines, without proper masonry fire walls separating them. This is a concern for all such buildings in the plan area, regardless of their physical condition. Information on deterioration of buildings in the Old Town and North of Old Town portion of the Specific Plan area were consulted as part of the alternatives phase of the project. In the west Grant area, information obtained from the volunteers was consulted.

Interruptions (gaps) in the "street - frontage" along Grant Avenue can discourage pedestrians from walking from business to business. Parking lots, vacant lots, and wide street crossings are examples (see [Figure 11](#)). Fragmentation of retail businesses, such as along [west] Grant Avenue, discourages development of new retail businesses.

### 2.5.8 Streetscapes/Street Trees

Existing Streetscape and Trees. There are a variety of street trees in the study area: sweetgum trees predominate along Grant Avenue; pear and Chinese pistache are found on Fifth; redwoods are used in the median and adjacent to the street on Redwood Boulevard near De Long. A group of redwoods screens parking and provides shade to the sidewalk east of Home Savings parking lot, located at the southeast corner of Seventh and Grant.

Other isolated examples of trees in the plan area include camphor, plum, olive, walnut, ash, canary island pines, elms, and magnolias.

Near the Downtown, native oaks and other riparian trees border Novato Creek, and oak trees dot the hillsides visible from Downtown. With the exception of the fine large oaks in the median of Redwood Boulevard north of Vallejo Street, such native trees are missing in Downtown. Principal street trees and significant groupings of trees are shown in [Figure 10](#)).

Tree Conditions and Maintenance. There is no irrigation system for street trees on Grant. Roots of sweetgums (Liquid amber) have caused heaving of the sidewalk in their search for water, nutrients and space to grow. Sweetgums were the street tree of choice in the 1970s, and many cities are now facing the same sidewalk and curb damage problems in evidence in Novato. Remedies to these problems using root barriers and deep watering techniques were not commonly used at that time.

**UD 1: Retain Existing Street Trees and Fill In with Additional Trees.** Retain the existing street trees (replacement of sweet gums with more suitable species to take place as they reach the end of their life span). Introduce new trees where they are missing to create larger areas shaded by trees, and use native tree types (such as live Oak, or native deciduous oaks like Valley, Oregon and Black Oaks) in conjunction with Downtown gateway features. Plants and trees which are drought-tolerant and do not require excessive maintenance will be required.

In order to keep sidewalks as open as possible, new trees are recommended for planting in small islands or bulb-outs in the street (careful layout of parking potentially avoids removal of on-street spaces).

**UD 2: Choose Plant Materials Compatible with Urban Setting.** The choice of plant materials shall be determined by the following considerations: tight urban spaces, pedestrian traffic, soils conditions, invasiveness of root structures, efficiency of water use, resistance to pests, disease, vehicle emissions and vandals, compatibility with building signs (avoiding obscuring the signs behind foliage), street/sidewalk lighting, building awnings and other factors.

Streetscape Master Plan. In October of 1991, the Council adopted a "Streetscape Master Plan" as a general guide for landscape improvements along principal streets and highways in Novato. The Specific Plan incorporates some of the recommendations of the Streetscape Master Plan where they support the overall vision for Downtown. Technical concerns about vegetation creating site distance problems for drivers, and the adequacy of land area for recommended plantings will be evaluated during the detailed design and implementation process. The dissimilar treatment to each side of the "Suburban Commercial II" section of Redwood Blvd. (the two "suburban" categories) however, is not consistent with the plan characterization of the corridor as a "country road" The plan characterizes the corridor as a "country road" (the landscape treatment is formal). In addition, there is no mention of saving the fine oak trees in the median, or carrying them north in the "country road" median. The Specific Plan remedies these deficiencies.

**UD 3: Use Approved Streetscape Plantings & Other Urban Design Components.**

Recommendations for locations in the Downtown area are as follows (some recommendations have already been implemented, such as tulip trees along the parking median on Redwood Boulevard). The following listing consists of approved streetscape plantings and other urban design components for the Specific Plan area as revised from the Streetscape Master Plan.

Redwood Blvd. North Zone, between De Long and Olive:

- Plant Tulip Tree to reinforce a small scale, pedestrian character.
- Plant Cork Oak in a random fashion in the median.

Redwood Boulevard/De Long Avenue Intersection:

- Plant leftover triangular median spaces with a formal bosque (dense grouping, usually on a formal grid) of small, upright flowering trees.
- Use a low stone wall at corners for a civic commercial look.
- Treat the intersection with special paving.
- Plant redwood trees in informal masses on each corner, to echo existing vegetation.
- Plant Columnar Flowering Pear in a formal bosque in the median.

De Long Avenue:

- Establish a unified, refined Downtown and civic character to this street.
- Plant Hornbeam in formal rows along the street.
- Plant upright Flowering Pear, double triangulated, in the median.

"Suburban Commercial I" area northwest of Olive/Redwood intersection:

- Plant formal pattern of street trees, spaced to allow views into retail uses.
- Screen parking with berms and shrubs.
- Plant a formal street tree pattern in the median: in wider medians carry the tree pattern along the street.
- Plant accent trees and shrubs at entries into commercial areas.
- Provide benches and other street furniture.

"Suburban Commercial II" area northeast of Olive/Redwood intersection:

- Strengthen the streetscape pattern with repetitive planting in the median.
- Plant masses of evergreen trees to define intersections or screen parking.
- Plant informal masses of deciduous trees; cluster to allow views of buildings and signs.
- Plant shrubs informally along the edge of the roadway.

Highway 101 On/Off Ramp (at De Long):

- Plant formal hedgerows of poplars to accent this and other interchanges.
- Plant masses of oaks.
- Plant sinuous masses of native shrubs.
- Plant freeway overpass structures with clinging vines.

Southeast Corner of DeLong and Redwood:

- Plant oaks on the open hillside, extending across Redwood including the median, to emphasize the historic oak/grassland ecology.
- Use special paving, specimen trees at corners, use trellis or other corner feature to set off this "major" intersection (similar treatment at other major intersections in Novato).

## 2.5.9 Signage

Public Informational Signs. There are no consistently designed public signs in Novato. Directional signs vary in size, design and location. There is a low wood monument sign provided by the Chamber of Commerce with a "Welcome to Novato" message, which is oriented to drivers proceeding west on De Long Avenue near Pini Mill.

**UD 4:Public Informational Signage Program.** Implement a public informational signage program. Specially designed signs shall be used at entrances to the City and to Downtown, and to identify off-street parking lots, City offices and parks, and business directories.

Commercial Signs. Business signs in Downtown Novato vary from wall-mounted, projecting, hanging blade, and free-standing. Some retail windows have so much signage that they are illegible, and mask any views of merchandise in the stores.

Some signs are internally-illuminated box signs and others are externally-illuminated. Some are "non-conforming" because they are mounted over the top of building parapets.

■ **UD 5: Amend Zoning Ordinance to Include Downtown Specific Plan Sign Guidelines.** Amend the zoning ordinance to include the sign guidelines in the Downtown Specific Plan. They emphasize visibility for pedestrians, as well as for automobiles. Representative building facades and design treatments are included as well. The recommendation for consistent signage placement (e.g., on the face of awnings) still allows for a variety of sign typography.

### **2.5.10 Lighting**

Street lighting fixtures along Grant Avenue are now mounted on wood utility poles and are oriented for automobile uses. The existing light fixtures are mounted at a height intended to illuminate the street - not the sidewalk. At some locations, street trees block lamplight from reaching the sidewalk. Poor sidewalk lighting discourages night-time business activity. Building lighting of window displays, signs and other architectural features can help to encourage more evening retailing, entertainment businesses and restaurants.

■ **UD 6: Install Human Scale Street Lights Using Historic Lamps.** Install, where feasible, appropriate human-scale lighting of sidewalks and businesses. Use the identified modular street lamp design that closely resembles the first street lights placed in Downtown early in this century. Additional lighting themes shall include uplights for trees and miniature lights in street trees year round.

### **2.5.11 Pedestrian Amenities**

Missing from the Downtown are the traditional amenities that support pedestrian uses and circulation, including benches, drinking fountains and awnings, shielding pedestrians from sun, wind, and rain.

■ **UD 7: Install Pedestrian-Oriented Street Amenities.** Install, where feasible and appropriate, benches, drinking fountains, awnings and other pedestrian amenities to make pedestrian walking and shopping easier and friendlier.

### **2.5.12 Public Art**

Colorful amenities like appropriate art work and banners can help to animate the pedestrian environment like attractive store windows. Such elements as wall murals, water features, sculptures, sidewalk treatments and street "furniture" can encourage people to walk and visit Downtown businesses and restaurants.

Art works should be considered for major gateways into Downtown, and at public plazas and parks. Also, private businesses can place art works where they can be appreciated by pedestrians, such as at building entrances. The recently decorated fire hydrants offer a sense of whimsy and delight.

■ **UD 8: Install Appropriate Art Work to Animate the Pedestrian Environment.** Install, where feasible and appropriate, water features, wall and sidewalk tiles, wall murals, benches, planters, drinking fountains and art works to lend identity, interest and charm to Downtown.

## **2.6 CIRCULATION AND PARKING**

### **2.6.1 Pedestrian Circulation**

Grant Avenue. Sidewalks are continuous and vary as to their state of repair along both sides of Grant Avenue. Cross-walks are clearly marked (see [Figure 11](#)). There are a number of locations where the sidewalk is raised and potentially dangerous to pedestrians.

Redwood Boulevard. Sidewalks are continuous and cross-walks are well defined in the Specific Plan area.

Side Streets. Sidewalks, where they exist, on side streets are in reasonably good condition. Sidewalks do not exist on Scott Court and Sweetser Avenue as well as sections of Machin and Reichert. Vallejo Avenue has sidewalks on both sides, except for the south side between Machin and Redwood, and on the north side in front of 904 Vallejo. On Sweetser there is a section of continuous sidewalk on the north side of the street between the PG&E substation and Novato Builders Supply, but there is only a short segment of sidewalk on the south side between Reichert and Redwood Boulevard.

**■ IU 1: Install Continuous Sidewalks on Side Streets.** Install continuous sidewalks for Sweetser Avenue and other streets to better and more safely serve retail customers.

There are a few narrow passageways between the sidewalk on Grant Avenue and parking lots and courtyards behind buildings. On (east) Grant, some narrow "paseos" or narrow courtyards connect the sidewalk on the north side of the street with Scown Lane, the alley to the north. However, there are no publicly-accessible pathways between Scown Lane and Sweetser Avenue.

Consequently, there is little interrelationship between land use area 2. (East) Grant Avenue and 4. North of Old Town (areas identified in Figure 5). Customers of businesses on Grant may not be customers of businesses on Sweetser. If they are, perhaps they drive between the two areas. But if they were to walk, they would use Machin or Reichert; Sherman Avenue does not extend north of Grant Avenue, resulting in a nearly 700 ft long block between Machin and Reichert. The Specific Plan recommends opportunities to create and/or strengthen walkways and visual connections between Grant Avenue and Sweetser Avenue businesses. Similarly, if better use is to be made of off-street parking behind buildings, particularly on (west) Grant, wider and clearer mid-block passageways may need to be installed. The same type of recommendations are made for the connection between West Grant and Industrial Way.

## **2.6.2 Vehicular Access to Properties in Downtown**

Vehicular access to businesses and other destinations in Downtown is generally satisfactory. However, access may not be clear at the following locations:

Access into Downtown, proceeding west on De Long. Access into Downtown (Grant Avenue) is not obvious for drivers proceeding west on De Long Ave. from the Highway 101 interchange.

East end of Scott Court. Pini Mill is visible for drivers proceeding west from the intersection of De Long and Highway 101, but it is not necessarily clear how to reach the Mill. Even at the intersection of Scott and Grant Avenue, it is not obvious.

Access to Mission Lodge. Mission Lodge is an old motel now used for housing. It occupies a visible site at the intersection of De Long and Redwood Boulevard. One-way streets surround the site (see [Figure 11](#)). Access to this site needs to be improved.

Sweetser Avenue from Redwood Boulevard. Sweetser Ave. may be the center of the commercial/industrial

area North of Old Town. However, access to the street by vehicles southbound on Redwood Boulevard is not possible, because there is a landscaped median in Redwood Blvd. which blocks left turns from Redwood onto Sweetser.

Access to Alleys and Rear-Lot Parking. Alleys serve Old Town and the commercial/industrial area North of Old Town. West of Redwood Blvd., extending from First Street to Fourth Street, Industrial Way functions as an alley for properties on the south side of Grant Avenue.

Alleys provide access to parking lots behind buildings. Where there are no alleys (west of Fourth Street), access to rear lot parking occurs from side streets or between buildings fronting on Grant Avenue.

While alleys allow access to rear lot parking without interrupting the street front with driveways, the parking may be invisible to persons looking for parking along (east) Grant Avenue. This makes most rear lot parking in Old Town and North of Old Town only suitable for employees. On the other hand, where there are no alleys behind buildings on (west) Grant Avenue, parking is more visible from side streets and driveways, and can be used by employees and the general public.

**■ CP 1: Provide Clear Pedestrian Passageways from Off-Street Parking and Proper Directional Signage.** Provide clear pedestrian passageways between the street and parking lots and provide signs to drivers directing them to off-street parking. It does not seem appropriate, however, to interrupt the street front with more driveways, because they would weaken, and possibly endanger, the pedestrian setting.

### 2.6.3 Effect of Left Turns from Two-Way Median on (West) Grant Avenue

As indicated in Figure 11, there are a number of driveways on (west) Grant Avenue which are accessible from the two-way left turn median. The frequency of potential left turns from the median can affect traffic flow and safety, particularly if the left turns take place close to street intersections.

**■ CP 2: Consider Closure of (West) Grant Median to Some Left Turns.** Consider closure of the median on (West) Grant Avenue for some left turns if traffic flow and vehicular and pedestrian safety can be improved. Closure of the median might allow for diagonal parking to be provided, and/or sidewalk widening, additional tree plantings and landscaping, and pedestrian amenities such as benches.

### 2.6.4 Existing Traffic Flow

[Figure 12](#) shows average daily traffic volumes on principal streets in the Downtown area. (West) Grant Avenue is an arterial which appears to function as a commuter route. (East) Grant is a local street with less through traffic. The Specific Plan recommends slowing the traffic on West Grant to achieve a more pedestrian-friendly ambience conducive to more intense retail economic activity. The lower volumes on (east) Grant accommodate diagonal parking; decreasing the traffic volume or speed though streetscape design will make possible similar parking on specific sections of West Grant where it does not interfere with bus circulation and intersection maneuvers.

Capacity of Redwood Boulevard. Redwood Boulevard is a four-lane divided road. The Specific Plan recommends the potential reconfiguration of Redwood Boulevard, while preserving its four-lane traffic carrying capacity.

Circulation Around Mission Lodge. There is a one-way loop surrounding the Mission Lodge. Circulation is awkward and warrants reconfiguration.

### 2.6.5 Transit Service

Golden Gate Transit. Downtown Novato is served by seven Golden Gate Transit routes. All seven routes use Redwood Blvd. Only one route follows (west)Grant, and one route follows Olive Avenue.

Potential Future Multi-Modal Transportation Center. The Marin Countywide Planning Agency and the Sonoma County Transportation Authority have completed a study of a potential transportation center at three candidate sites in Novato. The center would accommodate potential rail, bus transit, airporter service, a park and park-and-ride facilities.

One of the three sites is located in the Downtown, on Olive Avenue between the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way and Highway 101. The other sites are north of the Hwy 101/Hwy 37 interchange, and near Hamilton Field. The Olive Avenue location would support the revitalization of Downtown. The Specific Plan incorporates policies and recommends improvements which could support a transit center at the Olive Avenue location or at the existing railroad depots, including enhanced pedestrian access between Downtown and the transit center site. This access could take the form of a linear park alongside the rail alignment.

- **CP 3: Support Intra-City Jitney Linking Downtown to Other Novato Population Nodes.** Support the concept of an intra-City jitney service providing linkage between the Downtown, Vintage Oaks, Ignacio, Hamilton, Margaret Todd Center and various local employment and retail centers.

### 2.6.6 Bicycle Circulation

Downtown is not particularly well served by bicycle routes and lanes. A Class 2 bicycle lane (marked on pavement) is located on Redwood Highway. There are no other pathways, lanes or routes in Downtown. The Specific Plan recommends no additional bike lanes or routes in the Downtown, however, it does recommend bike racks at all transit shelters and additionally at key locations to allow for easy retail access by bicyclists.

### 2.6.7 Parking

On-Street Parking Configuration, Grant Avenue. All parking on (west) Grant Avenue is parallel. Parking is interrupted by frequent driveways and intersecting streets. Parking opportunities are also lost where intersecting streets are offset from one another (i.e., Second Street and Fourth Street).

Diagonal parking is located on both sides of (east) Grant Avenue between Reichert and Machin Avenues, and on the north side between Machin and Redwood Blvd. The diagonal parking results in a larger number of parking spaces than is possible in parallel parking. As part of Capital Improvements already funded, the City is planning to remove the extreme crown in the street along (east) Grant Avenue, which will make diagonal parking easier. The street will also be regraded between Redwood Blvd. and Fourth Street, but the crown is less extreme and parking is parallel.

The street width from curb to curb on Grant Avenue is about 52 feet between Scott Court and Fourth Street.

Between Fourth and Fifth the width is about 62 feet. Between Fifth and Seventh it is about 58 feet.

**CP-4: Consider Diagonal Parking on (West) Grant to Increase Parking Supply and Calm Traffic.** ~~To increase the supply of on-street parking spaces on (west) Grant Avenue, reconfigure/reduce or eliminate the median at specific locations and introduce diagonal parking such as is in place on (east) Grant. On the wider street sections between Fourth and Seventh, it is possible to maintain the median, or selected left turn pockets, and also convert parallel to diagonal parking. This configuration will tend to slow down traffic and discourage drivers from using (west) Grant for through travel, thereby encouraging a more pedestrian and small town ambiance.~~

Parking Configuration, Side Streets. Diagonal parking is also located on most of Machin Ave., Sweetser Ave and Vallejo Ave. Drainage ditches along Sweetser Avenue, and along Machin near Vallejo Avenue inhibit parking along the shoulder of the street. The frontage roads along Redwood Blvd. between Grant and Olive also have diagonal parking bays.

Vehicles sometimes double park on Vallejo, awaiting auto repair services which congregate along the street. If the cul-de-sac becomes blocked with parked vehicles, fire and emergency vehicles could be inhibited from reaching a fire. The Specific Plan recommends ways of accommodating demand for parking, as well as street and drainage improvements (particularly on Sweetser, Vallejo and Machin) which will widen the road to allow for more efficient parking.

On-Street Parking Inventory. Parking in Old Town and North of Old Town was inventoried in 1986<sup>(7)</sup>. City staff has updated the study and broadened it to include (west) Grant Avenue<sup>(8)</sup>. It identifies the location and number of spaces both on-street and off-street. A study of occupancy of spaces along (east) Grant Avenue and the Zenk parking lot has been conducted each year since 1986<sup>(9)</sup>.

Off-street Parking Inventory. The updated parking study also inventories the number of off-street parking spaces (larger lots which could be used by visitors).

Parking Demand. The Downtown Parking Study Update calculates parking demand by block generated by existing land uses. First, building square footage was calculated by type of business. Second, the parking required to serve the amount of building area was calculated based upon standards in the Zoning Ordinance. Blocks or areas with a deficiency of parking have been identified. The Specific Plan recommends strategies to create additional public parking where necessary.

Parking Standards. On October 26, 1993, the City Council approved a reduction in parking required for restaurants from 1 space/50 sf to 1 space/200 sf for restaurants in the C-1 district on Grant Ave. This provision was renewed by the City Council to September 22, 1999, or the effective date of the Downtown Specific Plan, whichever comes first. The provision recognized that actual restaurant parking demand on Grant Ave. has generally not exceeded 1 space/200 sf. Fast food restaurants continue to require 1 space/50 sf. The Specific Plan recommends permanent changes to the parking requirement for restaurants in the Downtown to 1 space/200 sf.

Shared Parking. Shared parking is not permitted in the Zoning Ordinance. Shared parking allows for aggregate parking requirements of separate, nearby uses to be reduced because the demand for parking occurs at different times (e.g., for residences and offices). The Specific Plan recognizes and recommends the merits of shared parking to encourage the kinds of mixed uses sought in Downtown by the General Plan.

Parking Time Limits. In order to discourage long term parking and to encourage turn-over of on-street parking spaces for shoppers, the City posts time limits for parking. Time limits and their enforcement appear to be serious, chronic problems on certain streets such as Vallejo in Old Town. There are no parking meters in Downtown. Time limits must be reasonable, given the kinds of trips which visitors make to Downtown. The Specific Plan recommends certain changes to time limits on the (east) Grant Ave. and Sweetser Ave. areas, as well as more rigorous and effective police enforcement in all areas of the Downtown.

Locations for Additional Parking. Some pedestrians are often unwilling to walk even short distances between their parked automobiles and their destinations. In a community the size of Novato, that distance might be about a block, or 300 feet. For purposes of illustration, Grant Avenue between Scott Court and Seventh Street is a distance of about 3,800 feet. If people are willing to walk a maximum radius of about 300 feet from their cars, parking would have to be provided every 600 feet along the corridor (assuming uniform demand). The Specific Planning emphasizes ways of making the Downtown more suited and interesting to pedestrians, as well as increasing the supply of on-street parking spaces, including spaces accessible from alleys. It recommends structured parking only when it appears that demand cannot be satisfied by on-street and surface parking on the rear portions of properties.

Parking Districts. Parking districts are allowed in Novato, although there are none in existence at this time. Under the concept of "district parking," businesses which cannot satisfy their required parking on-site can contribute to the capital and operating costs of a common public parking facility nearby.

■ **CP 5: Consider Parking District(s) to Meet Parking Demand.** Consider creating a parking district to help meet parking demand for businesses which cannot provide necessary parking on-site.

■ **CP 6: Require Trip Reduction Programs to Reduce Employees Parking Demand.** Require trip reduction programs for downtown businesses to reduce the demand for employee parking. Trip reduction programs provide incentives for transit use and ride-sharing programs. A reduction in the parking requirement may be allowed when a land use requires transit use. Land uses with ride-sharing programs, such as carpooling, vanpooling, or shuttle services, are often allowed an adjustment in parking requirements since they reduce the employee parking demand at a location.

In the past between 1984 and 1989, the City created a parking improvement area in Old Town, collected fees and expended some funds on the Zenk parking lot and added some diagonal spaces on Grant Avenue. A balance of \$25,000 remains and has been held in an account that can only be used for parking in the Downtown.

### **2.6.8 Streets, Drainage and Parking Improvements in the Adopted Capital Improvements Program For Fiscal Years 1997/98 Through 2001/02**

The following proposed capital improvements projects are located in the Downtown Specific Plan area (see [Figure 13](#)). The Specific Plan incorporates proposed capital improvements projects, as funding allows.

Grant Avenue Pavement Repairs, Fourth Street to Scott Court (Project No. 93-012). The excessive crown along Grant Avenue would be graded down and repaved. Construction is scheduled for calendar year 1999. This project is being funded by the Measure F General Obligation Bonds for street improvements which

was approved by the voters in 1989. The Specific Plan evaluates curb, gutter, tree planting, and sidewalk improvements which might be incorporated into this project, as appropriate. For example, sidewalks are narrow and damaged on (west) Grant, and gutter pans are missing.

Downtown Street and Drainage Improvements (Project No. 91-012). Pavement and drainage improvements would occur on Sweetser Avenue, Machin Avenue, Reichert Avenue and Vallejo Avenue in the north of Old Town area. Funding would come from Measure F bonds and participation by benefitting property owners through an assessment district or other appropriate funding mechanism for curb, gutter and sidewalk connections.

Downtown Intersection and Traffic Signal Timing Improvements (Project No. 95-004). A computer system would coordinate existing traffic signals, including three in the Downtown area: De Long/Reichert; De Long/ Redwood; and Grant/Redwood.

Downtown Parking Improvements - Unfunded. A parking structure would be built on a site in the City Hall Campus now occupied by 97 employee/public spaces. The demand was based upon the finding of a 56 space deficit in long term parking in this area.<sup>(10)</sup> The 1986 parking study has been updated in conjunction with the Downtown Specific Plan, to include (west) Grant Avenue. The study, by City engineering staff, volunteers and consultant includes recommendations for parking improvements, consistent with the overall Specific Plan.

Olive Avenue Street and Drainage Improvements, Phase III - Redwood Boulevard to Railroad Ave. (Project No. 97-001, Partially Funded). Phase III of this project would complete storm drainage and pavement improvement for Olive Ave., scheduled for preliminary engineering work to start in 2000. The CIP project description acknowledges that the project could be expanded to include other improvements such as sidewalks, street lights, turn lanes, bike lanes and utility undergrounding. It should also be noted that the large open site, Young Brothers and adjoining properties, north of Olive Avenue is being considered as a possible multi-modal transit center site, which could influence street improvement requirements. The Specific Plan evaluates these potential projects.

Traffic Signal on Redwood Boulevard at Olive Avenue (Unfunded). Traffic signal and turn lanes would be provided (from Olive) subject to payment of in lieu fees by benefitting property owners.

Retention of NWPRR ROW for Public Transit Use. Although the use has not been determined at this time (bus way, light rail and/or bike path) it is important to retain the property in public use for transportation improvements. Potential use could include excursion and/or commuter rail service between Larkspur and Santa Rosa and destinations farther north.

## **2.7 INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES**

Specific Plans must identify improvements to infrastructure necessary to serve planned new development. This section draws upon an evaluation of utilities in Old Town conducted as part of a 1985 redevelopment feasibility study<sup>(11)</sup>. More recent information as well as supplementary information on the (west) Grant Avenue portions of the plan area were obtained from City Staff in 1996. Sewer and water lines are generally in better condition on (west) Grant than on (east) Grant because they were installed more recently.

### **2.7.1 Water Supply and Distribution**

The North Marin Water District services the area. Downtown is served by a looped network of distribution

lines mainly installed during the 1960s and 1970s. Water lines are in good condition, with little leakage. Hydrants are well located throughout Downtown.

### 2.7.2 Sewer System

The Novato Sanitary Sewer District collects and treats sewage within the City. Treatment capacity is adequate. Collection lines date from the 1940's through the 1970's. A few lines are quite flat (Cain between Machin and Sherman, and Railroad Avenue), causing maintenance problems.

■ **IU 2: Consider Replacement/Upgrade of Flat Sewer Lines.** Any potential development in the vicinity of the flat lines (e.g., parking structure over Cain Lane) shall consider replacement/upgrade of these lines.

### 2.7.3 Storm Drainage and Flooding

Localized but serious flooding continues to be a serious problem in certain areas of the Downtown. Old Town drains north and east to Olive Avenue at the railroad crossing. Bay tides occasionally cause water to back up into the street system, contributing to localized inundations of one foot.

The biggest problems are areas of localized flooding at Sweetser and Reichert, Grant and Scott, Blodgett Lane, Vallejo, and along Mulligan Lane. The railroad ditch extending north from Sweetser is poorly maintained, overgrown in spots and appears to have insufficient change in elevation to provide proper drainage. Open ditches along the north side of Olive, south side of Sweetser, and Machin inhibit flow and take up street right-of-way that should be devoted to sidewalks and on-street parking. Capital Improvement project No. 91-012 is intended to make drainage improvements to Sweetser Avenue, Machin Avenue, Reichert Avenue and Vallejo Avenue. It is unclear whether this project alone is sufficient to rectify these flooding conditions.

## Flooding at Sweetser and Reichert



Before



After



Before



After

On the west side of the Specific Plan area, localized drainage problems occur on Mirabella Avenue at

Fourth Street. The Fourth Street Drainage Project, is intended to alleviate these problems.

#### **2.7.4 Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities**

Utilities are now undergrounded on all of Grant Avenue.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company set aside a portion of their rate return for utility undergrounding in accordance with Public Utility Commission Rule No. 20A. The City prioritizes undergrounding with other street improvement projects, where possible.

A number of other streets would be eligible for the Rule 20A underground utility program, including Olive Avenue, Sweetser Avenue and Reichert Avenue, south of Grant. However, the City is not expected to have Rule 20A funds available for new projects until 1999. Street improvements in the north of Old Town area may be completed without undergrounding if Rule 20A funds are not available.

### **2.8 POLICE AND OTHER SERVICES**

#### **2.8.1 Police Services**

Increased police services in the Downtown including bicycle patrols, foot patrols and parking enforcement will be required to support the vision of a clean, safe, hospitable Downtown both during the day and at night.

#### **2.8.2 Trash/Litter/Graffiti**

It is important that the Downtown present a clean as well as attractive environment. This may require not only more trash receptacles, but also some increased frequency and level of maintenance service. Standard response times for the removal of graffiti and repair to vandalized property need to be implemented.

#### **2.8.3 Storm Drain Pollution (Particularly North of Grant/Mulligan Lane/Nugent Lane)**

There are significant areas of the Downtown where storm water run-off and pollution are serious environmental and legal issues. Most notably, storm water pollution is occurring north of Grant on Mulligan Lane and Nugent Lane due to business activities and lack of enforcement. These situations need prompt attention, through all permitting and enforcement actions.

#### **2.8.4 Fire and Other Disaster Areas**

Several areas of the Downtown have fire and other disaster emergency access problems. One such area includes the blocks north of Sweetser where fire and emergency access lanes are often blocked by parked vehicles and dumpsters. To ensure fire protection and adequate emergency response times, these problems need to be addressed through both enforcement of existing regulations and the implementation of new regulations.

### **2.9 MARKET OPPORTUNITIES**

The Economic Development Master Plan, now in preparation, will discuss in detail the implementation, strategies and programs for business retention and attraction as well as other market support issues for the

## Downtown.

Part of the success of Downtown will depend upon the attraction of appropriate new commercial development. While physical improvements to Downtown will help to recruit such businesses, there must be sufficient market support in Novato in order for businesses to compete and succeed in the context of the broader north Marin market for goods and services.

As part of the development of the Specific Plan, an analysis was conducted by Keyser Marston Associates of the Downtown market for office development, cinema and other entertainment uses, and specialty retail uses. This analysis is separately bound. The Specific Plan recommends recognition of the value of a strategy that can be characterized as the "seeding concept." Each time a new use or activity appears somewhere in the Downtown, it has the potential to create a climate for further new activities or uses. For example, when one restaurant or cafe puts tables out on the sidewalk, others soon follow or when one person creates a delightful new facade treatment others do likewise. The Plan recognizes this as an important free market process and articulates where and when potential "seeding" opportunities could exist in the Downtown. Most significantly they are discussed within the concept of major catalyst sites (See Chapter 3).

## 2.10 MAKING IT HAPPEN

The Specific Plan was created through the work of the City Council-appointed Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee includes business owners, property owners, citizens and other stakeholders. To drive implementation of the Specific Plan with continuity and sustained energy over the different planning horizons requires maintaining and enlarging this group as the ongoing stakeholder entity, with additions and changes to the current membership.

 **IM 2: Maintain/Enlarge Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee to Guide Implementation.** Maintain and enlarge the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee to function as follows:

- in an advisory capacity to the City on Downtown Specific Plan implementation issues;
- as the Downtown Project Area Advisory Committee to the Redevelopment Agency, if Redevelopment is pursued;
- as the Board of Directors for a Downtown Business Improvement District, if the establishment of a Downtown Business Improvement District is pursued.

City staff to this Steering Committee should be both the Deputy Redevelopment Director and the City Manager to guarantee expeditious fulfillment of the Plan.

The success of the Specific Plan depends upon structures and processes which will move forward implementation and make real the Plan. It is, therefore, wise to empower a focused but well-representative stakeholders group collectively in the three areas outlined above.

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter recommends sites where there are opportunities for improvement or development consistent with the overall plan framework in Chapter 2 and the overall land use classifications in the Land Use Plan shown in Figure 3. The term "opportunities" is intended to convey the potential to connect or link separate Downtown areas and to increase or synergize economic and cultural activity. The key map in [Figure 15](#) shows the approximate locations of the eighteen opportunity sites.

The projects discussed in this chapter are subject to interpretation and refinement consistent with the development policies outlined for each. Some of the potential projects would be implemented by the City of Novato; some would be implemented by private developers; and some would be implemented by both. Chapter 6 outlines a variety of mechanisms for implementation of particular projects and types of projects.

The recommended timing and/or order of implementation for these improvements, including the City's Capital Improvements Programs for the Downtown are discussed in Chapter 6. The Downtown Specific Plan assigns key projects to a time horizon for implementation. Projects are grouped under those which should be initiated immediately (1-3 years), over a mid-term (3-7 years) or over the long term (over 7 years). The Specific Plan strongly encourages implementation of one or a few highly visible, but modest improvements as quickly as possible to seed progress on the Plan. Ideally, the initial project(s) would be chosen for their potential to act as catalysts for implementation of other projects.

Appendix B discusses improvement ideas which were considered by the Steering Committee and ultimately discarded as infeasible at this time.

Each of the following project recommendations is discussed in terms of its rationale and policies for its implementation. Discussion of some larger projects includes a schematic "policy plan" and an "illustrative plan." Illustrative plans are only intended to illustrate one potential way in which a project may comply with the Specific Plan and site-specific "development policies." The policies and any accompanying policy plan form the basis for action towards implementation. The policies may range from specific steps, to general guidelines for implementation. The City would apply the policies to conditions for approval or to more detailed design and feasibility analyses.

#### 3.1 RAILROAD DEPOT AND PINI MILL AREA (APN 153-057-01 through 153-057-07)

The Railroad Depot and Pini Mill Area (see [Figure 16](#)) is a roughly triangular site (2.55 acres) located at the extreme eastern end of Downtown, adjacent to the former Northwestern Pacific Railroad. The site contains the burned-out, historic passenger and freight buildings of the railroad, a grouping of historic corrugated metal structures (some in commercial retail use) which comprise Pini Mill, the Victorian Era "Flatiron" building and adjacent single family homes. Property ownership is divided

among three parties, including the railroad right-of-way. There is an opportunity to consolidate the parcels south of Grant and redevelop all or a portion of this site at the eastern gateway to Downtown visible from De Long Avenue. Although interest has been expressed in locating a multi-modal transit station at the Railroad Depot/Pini Miller Area, it was determined that the site cannot accommodate the amount of parking needed for such a facility (a minimum of 300 spaces), nor does this area provide adequate access and circulation for transit vehicles. However, it is recommended that the Railroad Depot and Pini Mill Area be considered for a transit stop.

The depots must be carefully replicated/renovated/restored using the historical blueprints on file with the City. This replication/renovation/restoration should not foreclose any potential long term use as a transportation center. In the interim, they could be leased for restaurant, café and/or specialty retail use (such as crafters/specialty manufacturing and retail bookstore, specialty foods, and fresh produce). If the transportation use of the depots occurs simultaneously with replication/renovation/restoration, the City could seek grant funding to replicate/renovate/restore the depots through the federal Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA) Program. Danville, Santa Rosa and other cities have obtained grants from this program. Replication/renovation/restoration for commercial/retail use would not be eligible under current grant guidelines. Note that the City would need to obtain property rights or long term ground lease to apply for the grant.

[Figure 17A](#) - Railroad Depot Blueprints

[Figure 17B](#) - Historic Railroad Depot

[Figure 17C](#) - Historic Railroad Depot

The railroad area provides an important opportunity to implement the village design concept as described in Chapter 2. The policy plan for development of the site is shown in [Figure 18](#). An illustration of one possible development of the site which would be consistent with the policy plan is shown in [Figure 19](#). For the project to be a success, all of the properties must be planned in concert to take advantage of opportunities for sharing parking, and for creating a center with distinct identity and character. Because the parcels included in this site are under three different ownerships, each parcel could be developed somewhat independently; when all three are completed, connecting streets and pedestrian paths would be linked.

Opposite the depots, the existing historical Flatiron Building should be preserved and could include additional retail uses. On the Pini Mill site, additional commercial uses, possibly with second and third story housing, or a small hotel could be built. The new uses which would replace most or all of the Pini Mill should be oriented to the north, instead of to Scott Court as they now are, in order to create a highly focused commercial node. The portion of Scott Court fronting on the mill, could be vacated by the City, and incorporated into the project, possibly for parking. The entire area should be well landscaped including special paving, street furniture, lighting and other amenities to impart a pedestrian, park-like setting. There should be a low-speed traffic loop through the complex with convenient short-term parking at curb-side.

## **LU 7: Development Policies for the Railroad Depot & Pini Mill Area. Development**

policies for the Railroad Depot and Pini Mill Area are itemized below:

1. Replicate/renovate/restore the depots, using historic blueprints with leasable space for specialty-retail and/or restaurant use. No permanent improvements shall be permitted which would foreclose on future transit-related needs/uses. Replication/renovation/restoration shall follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation of historic structures.
2. Retain the at-grade Grant Avenue crossing of the railroad.
3. Retain the Flatiron Building with potential retail sales at ground level. Evaluate the necessity of raising the Flatiron Building and the adjacent residence to avoid local flooding, as part of the larger rehabilitation project.
4. Allow the addition of potential commercial space, either in a new building (with consistent historical style) or in a rehabilitated single family house on the south side of the Flatiron Building.
5. Allow an increased building height limit for mixed use commercial/residential projects only if the top floor is used for housing, pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance (see Chapter 6).[\(12\)](#)
6. Vacate the southern leg of Scott Court, which provides access to the site on the south and west sides, and incorporate it into the site, as an incentive for private redevelopment of the area (see [Figure 18](#)). Vacation would take place pursuant to procedures established in the Public Streets, Highways and Service Easements Vacation Law, located at Sections 8300-8363 of the Streets and Highways Code, requiring hearings and making findings for vacation. Findings would include consistency with the General Plan, demonstration that the street to be vacated is unnecessary for present or prospective public use, and demonstration that the vacation is in the public interest.
7. Consider locating a parking lot or garage on the south side of the site, possibly incorporating the east/west leg of Scott Court. A garage could be built, depending upon the intensity of the development necessary to financially support it. While a public parking structure at this location would probably not be warranted, because there is no significant parking shortage in the area, a public parking structure would become appropriate should the site or a part of it be used as a rail transportation center. Allow direct vehicular access from De Long to the second or third level of a parking garage. Vehicles could then ramp down to the level of Scott Court through the garage. A vehicular driveway from west-bound De Long would have an insignificant impact on traffic operation in the Downtown, if a turnout lane was designed to prevent queuing.[\(13\)](#) This

alternative is not shown in the figures.

8. Retain existing healthy, mature trees, where possible, including trees on the bank between Scott Court and De Long Avenue.
9. Site and design new buildings and additions to correspond to the scale and character of the depots, Victorian era housing and agricultural buildings of the Pini Mill, and consistent with the "village design" concept. Attempt to incorporate one or more of the tall corrugated metal buildings in the Pini Mill into the redevelopment of this area, as an identity feature for the project, whether or not the structure is rehabilitated for human occupancy, used for storage, or simply left empty as a monument. The Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee reached no consensus on altering the original Pini Mill structures, except to support a reduction in building massing for a project designed to retain some of the character of the mill. Mill site building could be redeveloped in mass and scale recreating an historical shell with modern interior.
10. Relocate the original railroad freight building, now located behind Druid's Hall, to the area between Old Town Glass and the Railroad. An historical agricultural exhibit might be included. Alternatively, the Old Town Glass storage area could incorporate a new retail business, which would be designed to take advantage of, and contribute to the Depot Area development. Finally, at a minimum, the glass company outdoor storage should be screened with a substantial fence with landscaping, because outdoor storage is not consistent with the image of Downtown and the depot area which is sought by the Specific Plan (see Chapter 5).
11. Consider a potential historical monument feature in front of the rehabilitated passenger depot. The monument would be sited to be visible on axis for eastbound vehicles on Grant Ave.
12. Evaluate the feasibility of a multi-purpose path alongside the railroad tracks leading north to Olive Avenue and potential new uses of the "Young Brothers" site, and south to Vintage Oaks (see [Figure 20](#)). A fence between the railroad tracks and the path would be located a minimum of 9 1/2 feet from the center-line of the tracks, if approved by the Northwest Pacific Railroad Authority. At some locations, the City might have to obtain easements across private properties on the west side of the tracks to build the pathway. In the case of the path south to Vintage Oaks, it would be necessary to retain a pedestrian/bicycle easement over the portion of Scott Court which is proposed to be vacated.
13. Designate a specific location near the depots as a local Novato transit (i.e., jitney) loading/unloading zone.

## 14. Encourage development of a small hotel on the site.

**3.2 MISSION LODGE (APN 141-303-03, 04, 06, 07)**

The Mission Lodge, located on the northwest corner of the intersection of De Long Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, was once a motel which is now used for short-term rental housing. The building is in poor condition, particularly on the west side adjacent to First Street. The large site is underutilized, and the current use does not take advantage of its prominent location at the southern entry to Downtown; vehicular access to the site is awkward and Front Street does not function well as a frontage road for southbound traffic on Redwood Boulevard (see Chapter 4). A commercial project known as "Diablo Plaza" has been built on the southwest corner of the intersection of First Street and Diablo Avenue, south of the Mission Lodge site.

[Figure 21](#) - Intersection DeLong/Redwood

The concept for the site includes removal of the Mission Lodge and its replacement with multiple commercial uses in the village design concept. A key component and incentive for a village concept project is the closure of Front Street adjacent to the site, incorporation of the right-of-way into the project site, and a suitable dedication of property along the First Street boundary of the site to allow for the widening of First Street to two-way traffic, the construction of a sidewalk on one side, and appropriate landscape buffers to the adjacent community. (See [Figure 22](#)). In conjunction with vacating Front Street, driveway access from Redwood Boulevard should be made at the north end of the site, replacing the existing exit to Front Street at the Redwood/De Long intersection. The closure of Front Street would provide the opportunity to develop a multiple use commercial project, coupled with better access to Redwood. Auto and pedestrian circulation would improve by the proposed relocation of the existing connection between Front Street and Diablo Avenue (located immediately adjacent to the intersection of Redwood Boulevard/Diablo Avenue/De Long Avenue) to a point near the Mission Lodge's northern property line.<sup>(14)</sup>

**■ LU 8: Development policies for Mission Lodge.** Development policies for Mission Lodge area are listed below:

1. Allow only multiple uses (not one single use) which support Downtown and the community, such as a mix of commercial/retail and professional offices. The Mission Lodge site is attractive for the "village design" concept because of its size and proposed Redwood Boulevard pedestrian and auto access, adjacency to mass transit, and as a key gateway to the Downtown. Additionally, the De Long/Redwood site is diagonally across the intersection and provides the opportunity to have coordinated development in style and scale.
2. Only for multiple use projects consistent with #1, above, vacate that portion of Front Street which is adjacent to the project site, as shown in Figure 22. Upon dedication of suitable property at the First Street boundary of the site to

implement Number 3, below, a new access drive from Redwood Boulevard (southbound) onto the site and to the retained section of Front Street north of the site is allowed. This new access drive would require some regrading, because Redwood is higher in elevation than Front Street at that location. Vacation of Front Street would take place pursuant to procedures established in the Public Streets, Highways and Service Easements Vacation Law, located at Sections 8300-8363 of the Streets and Highways Code, requiring hearings and making findings for such street vacation. Findings would include consistency with the General Plan, demonstration that the street to be vacated is unnecessary for present or prospective public use, and demonstration that the vacation is in the public interest. Convert First Street from existing one-way southbound traffic to two-way traffic. The street would be widened on the east side to approximately 24 feet from curb to curb, requiring reconfiguration of existing parking on First, between Elm and Mirabella, as a condition for development of the expanded Mission Lodge site. A sidewalk would be added to one side of First Street and landscape buffers and/or parkway plantings included. The traffic impacts of this modification would be limited to insignificant changes to volumes on First Street, Court Road and Elm Drive.<sup>(15)</sup>

3. The architectural focus of any development of the Mission Lodge site should be to the south portion of the property, because median trees in Redwood Blvd. block views of the north end of the site from vehicles traveling westbound De Long (see [Figure 22](#) and [Figure 23](#)). Views of Mt. Burdell and Big Rock Ridge should be preserved by limiting development on the site to single story.
4. Protect the residential neighborhood west of the property from disruption from vehicular traffic and parking, truck loading and site lighting. Screen parking and loading from residences. Install a potentially bermed and landscaped screening wall or fence where parking abuts First Street. Depress parking where feasible. Scale development back to single story on west side of site.
5. Retain all trees along the west side of Redwood Blvd.; minimize removal of trees for new access to Redwood Boulevard. To preserve sight lines and traffic safety, trees north and south of these access drives may be pruned.
6. Retain palm trees on the Mission Lodge site (notable historic entry feature, using them in paseos and garden courtyards); allow for relocation onsite, if feasible.
7. Require that facades facing Redwood Blvd. and Diablo Blvd. be articulated with windows, awnings, off-sets and/or other features to maintain a pedestrian scale and to avoid uninteresting blank walls. Retain mission-style, and/or use a mix of Specific Plan recommended facade styles. (See Chapter 5 Design Gallery).

8. The property owner should commit to a relocation program for the current residents of the Mission Lodge.

### **3.3 SOUTHEAST CORNER OF DE LONG AND REDWOOD (APN 153-064-16 and 17; 153-091-07; 153-121-03)**

Four adjacent parcels are located at the southeast corner of De Long Avenue/Redwood Boulevard; their frontage on Redwood extends south from the intersection a distance of about 1500 feet. Lot depth ranges between 300 and 400 feet. The site is prominent, in part for its size as well as its elevated position above surrounding streets and is considered by some a scenic resource. The hill rises up to a prominent row of Eucalyptus trees about 150 feet from the street, which serve to screen residences on adjoining parcels on the top of the hill.

This section refers to the properties as parcels #1, #2, #3, and #4, beginning with the north parcel, which is the only parcel which fronts primarily on De Long Avenue. Parcel #3 is fully developed with an office building which steps up the slope from Redwood Boulevard. The remaining three parcels are vacant. The four parcels are designated in the General Plan for Mixed Use development. It allows office, commercial and retail uses below and residential uses above.

The General Plan allows some flexibility in building intensity for mixed use projects that include a residential component: maximum residential densities shall be compatible with the developed residential densities of the contiguous neighborhood. In this case, existing residential densities on lots uphill from this site are approximately 3 units per acre. The General Plan designates these residential properties as Low Density Residential (R1), 1.1 to 5 units per acre.<sup>(16)</sup>

The General Plan requires that the combination and intensity of land uses shall be compatible with the development pattern and character of the surrounding neighborhood and existing adjacent land uses. Commercial-only, office-only or residential-only land uses are also permitted.

This site presents an excellent opportunity for the village design concept, because of its access to mass transit, and especially coordinated in style and scale with the Mission Lodge property diagonally across the intersection of Redwood and De Long. The village design could minimize grading through staggered pads with individual structures and stepped roof lines that fit into the hillside.

#### **■ LU 9: Development Policies for Southeast Corner of De Long and Redwood.**

Development policies for the southeast corner of De Long and Redwood properties are itemized below:

1. Encourage only consolidated development of parcels #1 and #2. A driveway entering the south end of parcel #2 could traverse the slope and access village design development on both parcels.

2. Allow vehicular access only from Redwood Boulevard for parcels #2, #3 and #4, with no access permitted from Hayden Avenue, the residential street at the top of the hill. Discourage access to parcel #1 from De Long, because of its proximity to the De Long/Redwood intersection.
3. Allow tree removal only if the retention of trees are shown to block development, or to conflict with other policies in this section. If any native trees are removed they are to be replaced on a 3:1 basis. Tree protection, removal and replacement shall be evaluated during the development review process, in accordance with adopted tree preservation policies.[\(17\)](#)
4. Allow parking in front of, under, or behind buildings as long as parking lots are depressed into the hillside so their visibility from surrounding streets are minimized. This goes beyond General Plan Community Identity Program 12.1 f. which requires that parking facilities be located behind buildings wherever possible.
5. Use village design elements and concepts on the site, possibly to complement development diagonally across intersection at Mission Lodge site. Require a small plaza gateway at intersection corner with steps or ramps up to site, and directory signage and colorful landscaping.

### **3.4 TOWN PLAZA**

The Specific Plan encourages development of a needed town plaza in the Downtown. Community facilities could border the town plaza, along with appropriate private development which would enliven use of the plaza, such as an outdoor cafe. General Plan CI Policy 22 urges consideration of a "Town Square/Plaza" Downtown. The intent is to create a civic heart of Novato, where citizens can meet, cultural events can take place and visitors can shop nearby.

This is a long term project. No specific City facility has been proposed in conjunction with a town plaza. Rather, the concept is outlined here to assist the City in decision-making about the use of land and rights-of-way in the heart of the City.

#### **3.4.1 Proposed Town Plaza Sites (APN 141-264-09, 10, 19, 20, 24, 25, 27)**

Sites for a multi-purpose town plaza and possible ancillary community facilities are limited. The generally preferred location is at the intersection of Redwood Boulevard and Grant Avenue, within close walking distance of the City's Community House on Machin Avenue, and the historic Novato Theater on Grant.

Alternatives for implementing a town plaza are proposed, each of which could be implemented, depending upon site constraints, financial feasibility, and traffic and parking impacts. Alternatives are

primarily defined in terms of land area potentially available for a town plaza and some supporting parking. The preferred Town Plaza site is created by recovering land now devoted to Redwood Boulevard by rerouting traffic lanes, and acquisition of some adjacent land, if offered for sale. The rerouting of southbound lanes of Redwood Boulevard would take place pursuant to procedures established in the Public Streets, Highways and Service Easements Vacation Law, located at Sections 8300-8363 of the Streets and Highways Code, requiring hearings and making findings. Findings would include consistency with the General Plan, and demonstration that the changes are in the public interest.

The Preferred Site/Plan and alternatives seek to accomplish the following objectives:

- Create a town plaza at Grant Avenue/Redwood Boulevard to function as the civic heart for Novato, convenient to other civic, cultural and commercial facilities in Downtown.
- Bridge the historical division of Downtown created by Redwood Boulevard (formerly Highway 101) by reducing its importance as a through-traffic arterial and encouraging more pedestrian circulation between (east) and (west) Grant.
- Encourage private investment, public/private partnerships and cooperation in developing appropriate commercial and other building(s) around the plaza.

Each alternative would include on-site parking, potential parking within a proposed parking facility north of the Community House and on-street parking in the vicinity. On-street parking should be available because performances and events would normally occur during evening hours when there would be reduced demand for parking for retail uses in Downtown.

Careful development around the intersection could help to foster a better pedestrian connection between East and West Grant Avenue, now divided by the 170 ft. wide Redwood Boulevard right-of-way, and effectively bridge together "Old Town" and "West Grant."

[Figure 24](#) - Plaza Area

[Figure 25](#) - Plaza Area

The Specific Plan recommends the concept of small public courtyards and green spaces along Grant Avenue, particularly a small park at 858 Grant Avenue to replace a parking lot used by various Downtown businesses, and a potential mini-park on that portion of the former Goodman's building property which fronts on Grant Avenue. However, these public courtyards and green spaces do not replace the need for a large civic plaza. The Specific Plan recommends that the City should proceed on the small parks while it continues to assess the merits of the town plaza/community facilities concept over time.

Preferred Site/Plan and alternatives are discussed below.

### 3.4.2 Preferred Site/Plan: Town Plaza With Rerouting of Southbound Lanes of Redwood Boulevard to East Side of Median

An illustrative plan of one possible development consistent with the Preferred Site/Plan framework is shown in [Figure 26](#). It shows the possible configuration of a community building, a town plaza, surface parking, extension of Sweetser Ave. to Redwood Blvd., bike lanes and other potential improvements.

The Preferred Site/Plan would reroute the two southbound lanes on Redwood Boulevard between Grant Avenue and the projection of Sweetser through the existing Redwood Boulevard median to First Street or to the east side of the existing Redwood Boulevard median. All four lanes of traffic would be on the east side, separated by double yellow lines and/or a through median strip. The east side parking island would be removed (short term parking and/or a delivery zone could be designated for the east side of Redwood Boulevard). Bike lanes would be re-routed through the plaza. The recovered west half of Redwood Boulevard plus the existing 50 ft. wide median (and trees) would create an initial plaza approximately 130 feet wide extending up to either Sweetser or Vallejo. If private property adjacent to the proposed initial plaza is offered for sale by the owners, the City may pursue the acquisition of same for the purpose of establishing or expanding the plaza. The City has no present plans to acquire any property on this site nor does it intend to condemn land for this purpose. Redwood Credit Union of Santa Rosa has leased the former Nissan Motors Parts and Service building on the northeast corner of the intersection of First and Grant. The creation of the Plaza could proceed without the acquisition of private land by using currently owned City property and right of way.

**■ LU 10: Development Policies for Preferred Town Plaza.** Development policies for Preferred Town Plaza area are itemized below:

1. The town plaza should be predominately a "green space," in keeping with the concept of a New England village Common. The area of the site devoted to paved walkways and surface should be subservient to the area in grass and other landscaping, but should be able to serve such uses as the Farmers' Market, parade reviewing stands, and award or memorial events. The existing trees on the present Redwood Boulevard median are to remain as existing landscaping and mature canopy and, therefore, serve to create a plaza ambiance immediately.
2. Install diagonal parking on the east side of First Street.
3. Install diagonal parking on Sweetser between Machin and Redwood Boulevard.
4. Construct a new building which would be oriented to the rear of the plaza and adjacent to the Sweetser projection. This building would ideally be a glass shell which could function as a community or civic display gallery or a small meeting facility. It could be used to complement outdoor shows and other activities.

5. Locate parking behind and to the north of the plaza. A parking lot would be primarily accessible from First Street and from the potential extension of Sweetser to First.

### 3.4.3 Alternative Plaza Sites

Other alternatives are identified if the Preferred Site/Plan proves infeasible. One alternative is to build town plaza/community facilities on the southeast corner of Grant and Redwood including the Taco Bell site and the unnamed roadway between Taco Bell and the Police building.

#### [Figure 27](#) - Plaza Site

Advantages of this site are:

- No street alignment changes
- Plaza would be across street from theater area
- Contains good trees and landscaping

Disadvantages are:

- Costly acquisition and removal of valuable office building
- Unlike the Preferred Site/Plan, City does not own any land in this area
- Plaza at this location does not bridge east and west Grant

Another alternative is to consider use of the southwest corner of Grant and Redwood.

Advantages of this site are:

- No street alignment changes
- Industrial Way would be extended to Redwood Boulevard creating traffic circulation around the site
- Does bridge gap between east and west Grant
- Contains good trees and landscaping

Disadvantages are:

- Costly acquisition and removal of valuable office building

Other sections of the Specific Plan discuss City efforts to provide community facilities in Downtown. In 1995, the City Council appropriated \$2 million for partial funding of a community center (See Chapter 6, Capital Improvement Program Project No. 96-013). In 1996 the City Council granted some of this funding for a joint project with the Novato Theater Restoration Committee to acquire and renovate the vacant Novato Theater, a movie theater on

the north side of Grant Ave., between Redwood Blvd. and Machin Ave., for movies and performing arts. The City Council has acquired the vacant Goodman's building supply store at 950 Seventh Street for reuse as a gymnastics and teen center. The City is also preparing a City Hall Rehabilitation Plan. If renovation and parking improvements are approved and completed, there would be the potential to host small conferences in Downtown, using the Community House, a renovated Novato Theater, and adjacent City meeting rooms.

### **3.5 "THEATER DISTRICT" REVITALIZATION AND TACO BELL SITE RESTAURANT/RETAIL (APN 153-046-02)**

Approximately midway between the Community House and the intersection of Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard are two sites which could contribute to the civic and cultural life of Downtown: the historic Novato Theater, and the site now occupied by the Taco Bell franchise. The sites are opposite one another on Grant just west of Machin Avenue.

#### [Figure 28](#) - Novato Theater

The Specific Plan deems it appropriate to renovate the theater to meet some of the needs identified for the Community Center, such as the performing arts facility. The City has evaluated the movie theater from the standpoint of building size, and identified code violations which would have to be corrected if the building were to be occupied by a new use. Financial support by the City has been granted to acquire and renovate the Novato Theater for performing arts and movies. Theater parking would be provided adjacent to the Community House with additional parking provided as part of any new community facilities ultimately developed north of the intersection of Grant and Redwood.

If the use of the Taco Bell site were converted to a restaurant with evening dining, it could help to support evening cultural and entertainment events nearby.

**■ LU 11: Development Policies for the "Theater District."** Development policies for the "theater district" are listed below.

1. The design for the renovated theater should be as consistent and close as possible to a 1940's/1950's style theater. Remove the mansard roof and cedar shakes on the roof, and replace with a masonry parapet, consistent with 1940's/1950's design. Install an elevated sign tower, typical of theaters built in the 1940's/1950's. Widen the sidewalk in front of the theater and surface it with special enhanced paving, and illuminate it with new marquee lighting. (See [Figure 29](#)).
2. Encourage replacement of the fast food use at the Taco Bell site with a sit down restaurant/retail project with parking behind (south) the building. The development of a new use should include the vacation of

the lane immediately south of the site and its consolidation into the site. The present building is set back from the street on Grant and on Machin, inconsistent with other shops and restaurants along Grant which are immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. A new building should be built with no setback from the back of the sidewalk, in order to maintain the continuity of the streetfront.

### **3.6 REDWOOD/VALLEJO/MACHIN/SWEETSER DEVELOPMENT AREA (APN 153-041-01; 153-043-02; 153-044-01, 02)**

The area delineated by Redwood Boulevard on the west, Vallejo Avenue on the north, Machin Avenue on the east, and Sweetser Avenue on the south, and including the south side of Sweetser between Machin and Redwood and the extension of Sweetser through to First Street (see the Town Plaza discussion) offers the opportunity for coordinated development and infrastructure improvements. The development area consists of three subareas: A, B, and C.

1. The half-block bordered by Redwood Boulevard, Vallejo Avenue, Machin Avenue and Nugent Lane is vacant except for "Capra's" Restaurant, located at 7426 Redwood Boulevard the northeast corner of Redwood and Nugent. Restaurant parking is located on-street and informally on the north side of the restaurant. The Vallejo and Machin frontages are bordered by open drainage ditches (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of drainage improvements proposed by the City).

#### **■ LU 12: Development Policies for Subarea A (Redwood/Vallejo/Machin).**

Development policies for Subarea A (Redwood/Vallejo/Machin) are itemized below:

A-1 Retain Capra's restaurant, possibly as part of a new, larger project, as long as adequate off-street parking is provided. Vacate Nugent and allow outdoor dining for Capra's.

A-2 Design a project at this corner to take advantage of its frontage on Redwood Boulevard wrapping around to Vallejo Avenue. Depending upon concept plans to close or partially close Redwood to create community facilities and plaza, the Redwood frontage should be oriented mostly to pedestrian traffic, and to parking within the Redwood Boulevard ROW.

A-3 The remainder of the property fronting on Vallejo and Machin should be acquired and designated as a public parking lot for customer and employee uses in the Vallejo/Machin/Redwood vicinity. Alternatively, a private project could be developed which created office space above a parking facility at this location. The lot would be private but could offer leased spaces to adjoining businesses to meet district parking demand. This lot should not be used for vehicle storage or for parking vehicles to be serviced by nearby automobile businesses. See Chapter 6 for project financing.

2. The vacant lot fronting on Redwood and Sweetser is proposed for pedestrian-oriented first floor retail with office/commercial above.

**■ LU 13: Development Policies for Subarea B (Vacant Lot on Redwood at Sweetser).** Development policies for Subarea B (vacant lot on Redwood at Sweetser) are itemized below:

B-1 Design a project at this corner to take advantage of its frontage on Redwood Boulevard wrapping around to Sweetser Avenue. Depending upon concept plans to close or partially close Redwood to create community facilities and plaza, the Redwood frontage should be oriented mostly to pedestrian traffic and to parking within the Redwood Boulevard ROW. Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this Plan; see Site Design Guidelines in Chapter 5.

B-2 Sidewalks and landscaping to be provided on Sweetser following the style guidelines in Section 5.3.

3. South side of Sweetser between Machin and Redwood is presently occupied by the IDESI Hall as well as wrap around commercial/retail from Redwood Boulevard. IDESI Hall occasionally serves as a publicly available meeting facility and its historic residential look is consistent with and complements the design guidelines for the Specific Plan.

**■ LU 14: Development Policies for Subarea C (Southside of Sweetser).** Development policies for Subarea C (Southside of Sweetser) are itemized below:

C-1 Retain the historic qualities of IDESI Hall and encourage its availability and use by civic and community organizations.

C-2 Sidewalks and landscaping to be provided on the south side of Sweetser from Redwood Boulevard wrapping around to Machin Avenue. Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this Plan; see Site Design Guidelines in Chapter 5.

C-3 Given the increased potential for community use of the IDESI Hall and the public benefits thereby provided, allow an increase in building intensity provided that public parking facilities are provided nearby (see A.3., above). Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this Plan; see Site Design Guidelines in Chapter 5.[\(18\)](#)

### **3.7 "YOUNG BROTHERS" AND ADJACENT PARCELS (APN 143-011-01 and 05)**

The "Young Brothers" and adjacent parcels are located at the northeast corner of the

intersection of Redwood Boulevard and Olive Avenue. The "Young Brothers" parcel is about 3.0 acres in size, with the old Young Brothers furniture store (now housing Green Mark) located in its northwest corner, with access to Redwood Boulevard. The adjacent parcel is an old trailer park with an empty lot fronting on Redwood Boulevard and is about four acres in size. Both sites make up the site referred to in this section of the Specific Plan as the "Young Brothers" site. Chapter 2 recommends that the trailer park parcel be reclassified in the General Plan from Commercial Industrial (CI) to General Commercial (GC), the same classification as the "Young Brothers" site. This change will allow for and encourage consistent and compatible development of these two parcels, perhaps combined into one 7-acre parcel sometime in the future.

**■ LU 15: Development Policies for "Young Brothers" and Adjacent Parcels.** Development policies for "Young Brothers" and adjacent parcels are itemized below:

#### Alternative 1:

The portion of the "Young Brothers" site adjacent to the railroad right-of-way is a potential site for an intermodal transit center for future light rail or passenger rail, bus and high-occupancy vehicles, and associated park-and-ride facilities [\(19\)](#). Sufficient parking needs to be provided to avoid using existing on-street parking by transit patrons. Installation of a signal at Redwood Boulevard/Olive Avenue would be required to facilitate movement of busses and transit patrons [\(20\)](#). The organization and space requirements for a multi-modal center have not been defined. While it is possible that a multi-modal transit facility would require the combining of both the "Young Brothers" and trailer park parcels, if the transit facility uses only the "Young Brothers" parcel, then the trailer park parcel could be developed.

#### Alternative 2:

1. The "Young Brothers" parcel is designated for commercial use, including both the Redwood Boulevard and Olive Avenue frontage. [\(21\)](#)
2. The trailer park parcel currently used for commercial purposes on the front and the rear is residential. The mobile home park has been officially closed and the site is designated for General Commercial use. The driveway entrance to the rear may be relocated to the northern boundary of the property. The median on Redwood Boulevard immediately in front of the new entrance location would be opened up and turn lanes provided both for this parcel and the Pinheiro property across Redwood Boulevard consistent with a traffic analysis. This area of the median would retain the Downtown landscape design guidelines

along Redwood Boulevard.<sup>(22)</sup>

3. Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this Plan (See Site Design Guidelines, Chapter 5).

### **3.8 "TOYOTA" PARCEL COMMERCIAL/RETAIL DEVELOPMENT (APN 141-234-16)**

A Toyota automobile dealership is currently located on the northwest corner of Redwood Boulevard and Olive Avenue. The owner has received approvals to relocate the dealership to Vintage Oaks.

**■ LU 16:** Development Policies for "Toyota" Parcel Commercial/Retail Development. Development policies for "Toyota" parcel commercial/retail development are listed below:

1. Encourage a comprehensively-planned mixed retail/commercial development, consistent with the General Commercial (GC) designation for the site.
2. The site should be designed to a scale that is not overly massive compared to the immediate residential uses behind and should be consistent and compatible with the site across Redwood Boulevard on the opposite corner. Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this Plan; see Site Design Guidelines in Chapter 5.

### **3.9 NORTHEAST CORNER OF FOURTH AND GRANT DEVELOPMENT (APN 141-261-29)**

A one story medical clinic (1320 Grant Avenue) is located at the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Grant Avenue. The building surrounds a small parking lot accessible from Grant and an additional parking lot is located at the rear, accessible from Fourth.

The building is set back from the street, with mostly blank walls and courtyard parking is exposed to the street. This seriously disrupts the continuity of storefronts and businesses along the sidewalk.

The property is also underutilized. The existing building is roughly 12,000 sq. ft. in area. General Plan building intensity standards for the Downtown Core would allow additional commercial retail as well as residential space.<sup>(23)</sup>

**■ LU 17:** Development Policies for Northeast Corner of Fourth and Grant

Development. Development policies for northeast corner of Fourth and Grant development are listed below:

1. Encourage replacement of the existing building with multiple storefront retail and/or restaurant uses with offices above consistent with the "village design" concept (See Chapter 2). Either a diagonal paseo from the corner extending into the property or mid-block perpendicular paseos from both Fourth Street and Grant Avenue meeting in a central courtyard area are encouraged to facilitate the "village design." The paseos would be used to provide internal retail and commercial business opportunities and to possibly connect multiple structures on the site. A mix of roof lines and facades is intrinsic to the "village design;" also allow three stories fronting on Grant but scaling back to the neighboring residential and other uses. Parking would be behind the building, accessible from Fourth Street. Depending upon the mix of commercial and office space (e.g., restaurant/office with different peak hours of occupancy), shared parking might be feasible and acceptable (see Chapter 6).
2. Residential use is allowed on the rear of the parcel, adjacent to the existing single family home on Fourth Street. Townhouses could be placed over parking. Some portion of required residential parking could be located in a surface lot where it could be shared with visitors to the commercial/office space.
3. Consider inclusion of the vacant lot on the west side of Fourth Street, opposite the rear portion of the clinic parcel for inclusion in this project, to accommodate required parking. The parking might be shared with the existing office buildings located on Grant between Fourth and Fifth Streets.
4. Install a well-landscaped, substantially opaque fence or wall six feet in height along the property line between any proposed parking or housing and adjacent residential properties. Additionally, locate dumpsters and other building support facilities away from the wall and/or property line to buffer the residential community from undue noise disturbance.

### **3.10 "GOODMAN'S" BUILDING REUSE FOR A GYMNASTICS CENTER AND TEEN CENTER (APN 141-271-34)**

The building which formerly housed the Goodman's building supply store is located at 950 Seventh Street immediately south of the Home Savings Bank at the corner of Seventh and Grant. The building now stands vacant. It is sited at the back of the parcel, with parking in

front. A portion of the site connects with Grant Avenue, and contains major utilities easements.

The existing building contains about 21,000 gross square feet. Parking to serve a new use in the existing building or a new building should consider the potential for shared parking with the adjacent bank.<sup>(24)</sup>

The City has acquired the building for a multi-use gymnastics center and teen center. Other potential uses within the structure include a basketball and volleyball court. The parking lot is being used on a temporary basis for a skateboard facility.

**■ LU 18: Development Policies for "Goodman's Building" Reuse for Gymnastics & Teen Center.** Development policies for "Goodman's Building" reuse for gymnastics and Teen Center are listed below:

1. Reconfigure and restripe the existing parking in front of the building for greater efficiency and potentially more parking stalls.
2. Assess the feasibility of having the teen center and the adjacent Home Savings Bank share parking, pursuant to the proposed shared parking ordinance (see Chapter 6). The peak parking occupancies of these uses may not coincide, thereby allowing for shared spaces.
3. It is very important to have a prominent entry point for pedestrians from Grant Avenue to the center. Retain the existing access point from Grant Avenue to serve the center, since this narrow corridor contains an underground utilities easement, a sewer main and a PG&E easement. It should be landscaped as an attractive paseo and courtyard.
4. Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this plan; see Site Design Guidelines in Chapter 5.

### **3.11 INDUSTRIAL WAY**

Industrial Way parallels Grant Avenue on the south side from First Street to Third Street. The block between Second and Third is an underutilized area; the parking that is available is not apparent to people traveling on Grant and therefore, is underutilized at all times of the day. The rears of the buildings with frontage on Grant Avenue are unattractive, in most cases, offer no opportunity for customer access through the rear, and the parking lots have no landscaping and are not consolidated. Industrial Way immediately parallels the property line of a residential neighborhood.

**■ LU 19: Development Policies for Industrial Way.** Development policies for Industrial Way are based on potential funding and project phasing and are

itemized below:

### 1. Initial Phase

- Reorganize and clean up parking areas and back sides of buildings.
- Stripe and landscape parking areas.
- Create attractive rear entrances to existing buildings.
- Use murals to attract folks to parking areas.
- Encourage current uses to provide clean, safe and friendly access for customers through rear entry ways.
- Require all new uses to provide clean, safe and friendly access for customers through rear entry ways.
- Provide signage on Grant Avenue at Second and Third Streets for traffic in both directions indicating "parking available" (see Chapter 5 design guidelines).

### 2. Later Phase(s)

- Implement a the "village design" concept through public/private partnerships to create some retail spaces in and around the present parking area and additional breezeways, walkways, paseos from the parking area to Grant Avenue.
- If and when needed, provide additional public parking opportunities; however, the goal here is to increase pedestrian-friendly retail sites and business opportunities for smaller new retail businesses. Design guidelines for any improvements shall be consistent with the guidelines in this Plan; see Site Design Guidelines in Chapter 5.

## **3.12 COMMUNITY HOUSE PARKING STRUCTURE (APN 153-062-10, 11, 16)**

City operations are a strong institutional anchor for Downtown. The "Economic Issues Background Report" prepared for the General Plan Update states that "City Hall [the City Hall Campus] not only draws people who have business with the City administration, but also provides a significant employment center that in turn supports Downtown/Old Town business uses." The Specific Plan assumes the City offices will remain where they are in the Downtown.

The City is preparing a City Hall Campus Rehabilitation Plan which includes improvements to City Hall, the former Presbyterian church located at the northwest corner of De Long Avenue

and Sherman Avenue. Expansion of the City Hall Campus may take place to the rear of the current Community Development building near the City's existing parking lot located north of the Community House. Remodeling of the Community House may be considered as a subsequent phase to rehabilitation of the City Hall Campus.

The Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee recommends development of a parking structure on the City parking lot, to serve the City Hall Campus and Old Town businesses. More parking on this lot would also support potential community facilities at Grant and Redwood Boulevard, a renovated Novato Theater, Farmers Market, and other activities on Sherman Avenue.

The number of spaces in the structure would depend upon demand for existing and potential future uses, site characteristics such as sloping topography, rehabilitation of the City Hall Campus, and financial feasibility. Considering demand for parking from existing uses within about 300 feet of the site, there is a shortfall of parking of about 35 spaces. If a 500 foot radius is considered, there is no shortfall.<sup>(25)</sup>

The approximate outer limits of the parking site would extend between the Community House and Cain Lane, and between Machin Avenue and the rear of City structures which front on Sherman Avenue. Cain Lane would be retained.

The size and number of parking levels should be determined in conjunction with planning for the City Hall Campus rehabilitation. The Specific Plan shows two options; one option is for a three-level, 132 car garage with two driveways from Machin only (see [Figure 30](#) and [Figure 31](#)). It would replace about 86 existing surface parking spaces, resulting in a net gain of 46 cars. The suggested structure would have two parallel aisles with about 22 spaces per aisle; three levels would bring the total to 132 spaces. Another option for a two-level structure could be a parking deck with access from Machin Avenue, and a lower deck with access from Cain Lane, as long as drivers can safely and efficiently drive from level to level.

**■ LU 20: Development Policies for the Community House Parking Structure.**  
Development policies for the Community House parking structure are listed below:

1. Consider the approximate garage site area to be about 124 feet wide by 160 feet in length. The long dimension would not impinge upon the proposed rehabilitation of the City Hall Campus.
2. Convert Cain Lane to one-way eastbound traffic between Machin and Sherman Avenues. The conversion to one-way traffic will improve vehicular access and delivery of merchandise. Loading/unloading should not be allowed except where pullouts are provided, as part of the garage project. Depending upon the final design of the garage, a maximum of

one point of access to the garage from Cain Lane would be allowed, with primary access from Machin Avenue.

3. Set back the garage approximately 15 to 20 feet from the back of curb on Machin in order to preserve views of the north facade of the historically and architecturally significant Community House. If retail space were provided as part of the project, as discussed in #4, it would not be subject to the garage setback requirement.
4. Consider a potential leasable space for a retail shop or small restaurant located in front of or incorporated within the garage structure.
5. Consider a structure with a tilt-plane ramp for one aisle, and a level plane for the other aisle, allowing vehicles to park on the gently-sloped plane and minimizing costly separate ramps.
6. Consider one parking level below grade, in order to minimize the height of a large structure which could be visually dominant or disruptive to the modestly scaled buildings in the City Hall Campus. The height of the structure should not exceed about 22 feet, exclusive of stair towers. The height of a retail component of the garage could extend to the height of the stair towers. Groundwater conditions must be investigated as part of project feasibility and factored into the design of the structure.
7. Design the garage to retain the architectural integrity of the Community House. Provide weather protected access through a second-story walkway between the Community House and the garage to facilitate production uses and public access.
8. Design the garage with landscaped screens or trellises to soften the visual effect of the building and to help screen parked cars from view. Notwithstanding the need to have the garage open and accessible for public safety and security and police surveillance, trees, shrubs, espaliers against blank walls of the structure, and vine-covered trellises to shade roof-top cars should be considered.

### **3.13 SHERMAN AVENUE PLAZA AND NEARBY AREAS (APN 153-062-07, 10, 11, 16; 153-063-01, 14, 15, 16)**

Improvements to streets and drainage are proposed in the vicinity of Sherman Avenue, a one-block street between De Long and Grant Avenue. The street is bordered by City Hall and other historic residences and buildings containing City offices, which make the street the center of the "City Hall Campus." It serves as the most important entrance drive into the center of Old Town from De Long Avenue. From May through October, the street is closed off one

afternoon each week for the Farmers Market. The street is in need of repair. Two alleys, Cain Lane and Blodgett Lane intersect Sherman Avenue. Both are two lane alleys, although they are narrow, and sometimes blocked by delivery vehicles. To the east of Sherman, the City-owned "Zenk" parking lot is bordered by Cain and Blodgett. The organization of parking in the lot is not efficient. Drainage around the lot is poor and the site periodically floods.

**■ LU 21: Development Policies for Sherman Avenue Plaza and Nearby Areas.** Development policies for Sherman Avenue Plaza and nearby areas are itemized below:

1. Beautify Sherman Avenue as a gateway to Downtown. Consider horizontal or vertical banners at Sherman and De Long welcoming visitors to Downtown (see Chapter 6 Capital Improvements Program). Use decorative paving to delineate diagonal parking lanes within an overall decorative pattern curb to curb. Install street trees, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, a City Hall Campus directory and interpretive signs for historic buildings.
2. Develop the Sherman Avenue Plaza (unfunded) prior to or in conjunction with proposed improvements to Grant Avenue (CIP funded project 93-012). (See [Figure 32](#) and [Figure 33](#)).
3. Construct a new storm drain pipe from a low point on City-owned property at 908 Sherman Ave., adjacent to Blodgett Lane. The pipe would connect to existing storm drains in Reichert Avenue (CIP project 96-006, funded).
4. Rehabilitate and convert Cain Lane from two-way to one-way east bound, and allow for potential pull-outs for delivery/service vehicles.
5. Reconfigure the "Zenk" parking lot to add 9-14 spaces, to a total of 39 spaces, by incorporating Cain and/or Blodgett Lanes into the parking lot, as aisles. (See [Figure 34](#)).

### **3.14 VACANT LOT AT 858 GRANT**

There is a small vacant lot on the north side of (east) Grant Avenue, just west of the Grant/ Sherman Ave. intersection. It is used for employee parking by various Downtown businesses. The site is not well suited to parking because it is only 50 feet wide at the front of the lot, and the standard for angled parking spaces on each side of an aisle is about 56 feet. Windows are located on the east side of this lot, while the west side is a window-less wall.

The vacant lot with a chain link fence across a portion interrupts the storefront "street-wall"

and pedestrian setting and presents an unattractive image to the street.

**■ LU 22: Development Policies for Vacant Lot at 858 Grant.** Development policies for vacant lot at 858 Grant are itemized below.

1. Convert the narrower front portion of the lot to a wind-protected pocket park, and the wider rear portion of the lot retain for parking (see [Figure 35](#)) with breezeway or walkway to Scown Lane.
2. Alternatively, consider retail on the west side of the narrow, front portion of the lot, if feasible, with a lighted walkway through the site to connect with Scown Lane.
3. Place landscaping and berms to provide privacy for occupants of the offices on the east of the lot.

### **3.15 SCOWN LANE**

Scown Lane is designated in the Specific Plan as a pedestrian-oriented, retail, live/work district in the village design concept. The desired uses are artists and crafts persons studios and galleries, photography studios, as well as toymakers, custom furniture, crafting and other decorative arts. The Scown Lane district extends from the railroad tracks to Machin; the part of Scown Lane between Machin and Redwood Boulevard will be left to serve as rear access to the theater. The Housing Element (HO) of the General Plan requires that a Live/Work Ordinance be prepared which identifies suitable sites in the City for such uses. The ordinance is to include development standards relating to permitted uses, exposure to noise and odor, standards for parking, and fencing.

**■ LU 23: Development Policies for Scown Lane.** Development policies for Scown Lane are itemized below:

1. Allow new second and third story residential units over new ground floor commercial/industrial space on the north side of Scown Lane. Consider allowing inexpensive industrial materials and methods of construction in order to create larger live/work spaces than typical of most apartments.
2. Make Scown Lane one way westbound for traffic and pedestrian safety.
3. Consider a striped pedestrian walkway on one side of the alley.
4. Walkways or "breezeways" between Grant and Scown, Grant and Cain Lane, and between Scown and Sweetser are encouraged (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

5. The stylistic emphasis for lighting, signage and facades should reflect the scale, design character and charm of late 19th/early 20th century village character consistent with design guidelines. (See Chapter 5). Additional design elements/guidelines are as follows:
  - Scown Lane will need to have the limits of automobile use marked clearly (i.e., stripping) and it may be necessary to add bollards in certain locations or as part of new development to insure building and pedestrian safety.
  - Scown Lane should include a fair representation of citizens and residents public art to set the tone for the kind of use envisioned.
  - In certain junctures (i.e., breezeways) small horizontal banners would be appropriate (these are not shown on the Downtown-wide banner placement plan)
  - The City and/or the Downtown organization should sponsor outdoor shopping and artist events on Scown Lane in addition to those currently held on Grant Avenue. Consideration should also be given to seeding the Specific Plan concept for Scown Lane by extending the Art and Wine Festival set up area and circulation to include Scown Lane.
  - While the opportunities for landscaping are limited within the tight space constraints for Scown Lane, this area would benefit from simple beautification additions such as planter boxes and flower pots that are well-maintained.
6. The targeted live/work uses for Scown Lane can be incentivized and made successful over time through a conditional use permit associated with the live/work ordinance and the particular targeted uses designated for Scown Lane.

### **3.16 LOT ADJACENT TO "LAS GUITARRAS" RESTAURANT OUTDOOR DINING**

Las Guitarras Restaurant is located on the west side of Reichert Avenue immediately north of Scown Lane and serves to anchor Scown Lane. The restaurant uses a narrow strip of the adjacent parcel fronting on Reichert, for supplemental outdoor dining perhaps with acoustical instrumental music in the evenings.

 **LU 24:** Continue Outdoor Dining Use of Lot at Las Guitarras. Continue use

of the lot next to Las Guitarras for outdoor dining, and discourage its potential use for off-street parking.

### 3.17 USE OF SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES ON MACHIN

There are relatively few remaining single family houses in good condition in Downtown, whether they are in residential or commercial use. They help to retain the small town character of Downtown. There are two such single family homes on the east side of Machin Avenue between Grant and Sweetser. These homes provide an anchor for the western section of Scown Lane and uses could ultimately relate to the theater district concept.

**■ LU 25:** Encourage Ground Floor Commercial with Second Floor Office, Live/Work, Residential to Retain Existing Homes on Machin. Fix land use and zoning designation and encourage ground floor commercial uses combined with office, live/work or residential uses on second floors.

### 3.18 POTENTIAL SITES FOR NEW HOUSING

The Housing Element of the General Plan (adopted March 8, 1996) projects present and future housing development in Novato to meet the City's varied housing needs. Potential housing units are allocated to districts which allow residential development. The General Plan allocates up to 274 housing units to the Downtown Core district included within the Downtown Specific Plan Area. Property within the Mixed Use district located at the southeast corner of Redwood and De Long can accommodate additional units.

The General Plan creates an incentive for incorporation of housing into new mixed use projects in the Downtown Core (DC) district and in the Neighborhood Commercial district by allowing an increase in building intensity when the allowed increase is used for housing. [\(26\)](#)

Inherent in the village design concept is the potential for mixed use development. Residential would be above commercial or a small number of units could be clustered at the ends of paseos where the village vernacular development abuts existing residential. Residential development of this type would be consistent with the transit-oriented siting of village vernacular catalyst sites; parking requirements for this mixed use development could be relaxed given both the availability of mass transit and strict on-street parking restrictions and enforcement.

### 3.19 GATEWAYS

Downtown has several key gateways or entry points. A problem identified by the Committee and public comments was the need to identify the location of the Downtown through its entry ways by specific design treatments. When arriving at an entry way to Downtown, one should feel a sense of excitement, friendliness, and attraction whether as a pedestrian or using some

other mode of transportation. The Specific Plan does not recommend individual gateway treatments for all the designated gateways, nor does it recommend massive architectural elements such as arches or large monuments.

Each gateway shall indicate through vertical banners, historic lighting, flower arrangements and other landscaping and appropriate signage that each location is an entranceway into the Downtown.

Detailed designs for each individual gateway will be done at the project design phase for each gateway or district/area (See Chapter 6).

**UD 9: Designate Specific Design Elements for Key Gateways.** Designate as key gateways for specific design enhancements the following:

- De Long Avenue/Redwood Boulevard (east, west, south)
- Redwood Boulevard/Olive Avenue or immediately north
- Seventh Street/Grant Avenue
- Sherman Avenue/De Long Avenue

### **3.20 MURALS AND PUBLIC ART**

Murals and public art are not only a way to make the Downtown more interesting and attractive, they are a way to express the character of the town and the social and cultural diversity of its citizens, past and present. Often in murals and public art the vision that individuals have for their town are best expressed. The Specific Plan identifies a partial list of recommended sites for murals and public art. The mural(s) or public art(s) at each particular site listed should in some way harmonize or synergize with the other design guidelines and goals for those sites or provide an interesting contrast. The Civic Arts Commission could be responsible for an "Art in Public Places" program specifically targeted to accomplish the projects listed below.

Possible mural sites include:

- Pini Hardware building facing First Street
- "Scooters" building facing Pini Hardware parking lot
- Pocket Park at 858 Grant
- Rear of buildings facing Industrial Way
- Scown Lane
- Second Street side of Seedlings building
- Fifth Street side of Town & Country building (on side of Eve's Cafe;)
- West side of Bongiovi Coffee to face Sherman Avenue
- East side of Druids Hall to face Reichert\*
- Westside of Novato Rent-All

*\*This location may be augmented by either actual or painted historical architectural features in lieu of a "total coverage" mural design.*

**UD 10: Prepare List of Specific Mural Sites and Themes.** Prepare a list of designated mural sites and specific mural themes or content.

Historic as well as contemporary themes are suitable for public murals. The following identifies possible historic themes that could be depicted in murals:

1. Prehistory and Aboriginal Cultures/Ways of Life

2. European Invasion/Exploration

- Early encounters between the European exploration parties (English, Spanish) and the Coastal Miwok people.
- Drake's crew meeting with Miwok party on the Marin beach (perhaps the reaction of each group could be hand-lettered in sharply contrasting colors on, or near, this illustration).
- Contact between Drake's crew and the village of Olompali.
- Subsequent voyages of the Spanish leading to permanent settlement.
- Map of the World published in France in 1581 showing "Nova Albion" stretching all the way to the west coast of the Americas.

3. Euro-American Colonization and Settlement

- Waves of territorial and economic upheaval resulting from early exploration, all in a relatively brief period of time (1775-1848)
  1. A large population sharing an ancient, static culture (Miwok) are overwhelmed by the relatively few members of a religious, highly stratified, feudal one (Spanish/Mexican Colonial);
  2. Subsequent invasion and settlement by a territorially aggressive, dynamic, capitalistic culture (United States);
- Founding of the Bay Area Missions; their religious, political, land use and economic impact in the north Bay Area;
- Trading impact of Russian settlement at Fort Ross and as a protection for the

## Indians against the Spanish.

- Imported diseases and use of Miwok population as Mission labor force.
- Establishment and founding families of the five Mexican Land Grants touching the present City limits of Novato; Rancho de Novato (1839); Rancho Corte Madera de Novato (1839); Rancho de San Jose (1840); Rancho Olompali (1843); Rancho Nicasio (1844).
- Earliest American settlers (before 1848).
- Battle of Olompali on June 24, 1846; one of the few places in California where all cultural elements met in an historically important event. Camilio Ynita, the owner of Rancho Olompali was a Coast Miwok, an Omiomi from the Novato area. The Spanish soldiers camped at Olompali were reportedly stationed there at Ynita's request. The American "Bear Flag" forces led by Lt. Henry L. Ford, followed them there, initiating the *only* battle of the Bear Flag Rebellion.
- The Indian neophytes at the Missions; engraving of neophytes at Mission Dolores and Mission San Rafael, and plaque erected to Indian dead [see Paul Johnson, *Pictorial History of California* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1970) 46, 47].
- The most picturesque of the "disenos," crude maps of the ranchos that accompanied the petitions for land Grants (available from Bancroft Library or California State Archives). Make a simple key to translate Spanish words on map. As an interactive element, have a simple transparency made of a modern map of Novato that visitors can superimpose manually over the diseno map. This will visually demonstrate how much acreage was covered by each rancho.
- Sketch by Edward Vischer; believed to be Feliz Adobe at Rancho de Novato (original at Bancroft Library; see reproduction in *Novato Township*, 6.)
- Blowup of portions of the Rancho de Novato Plat Map 1859 (no #, hanging on south wall of Novato Historical Museum)

## 4. Sweetser and De Long/Home and Farm Company/Novato Land Company

- Acquisition of original land grants and the development of large scale commercial agribusiness (De Long and Sweetser, who had one of the largest areas of producing orchards in the world). Later the formation of part of these lands into the Home and Farm Company (which creates the "new town" of Novato) and the Novato Land Company.

- Original land auctions and subdivisions of the Home and Farm Company (1880's) and later the Novato Land Company (post 1908) into small and medium-sized ranches and farms.
- "Old Town" Novato (now an area on South Novato Boulevard) and its orientation for water transport.
- "New Town" Novato is oriented to take advantage of railroad.
- Chinese labor is used to build dikes and levees along perimeter of tidelands to reclaim farmland, and to tend De Long and Sweetser's orchards.
- The excitement of early land auctions.
- The fascinating economics of commercial agriculture and land subdivision/speculation in California. Point out that Novato illustrates the reverse of the normal pattern: where early small pioneer farms gradually become large scale agribusiness. Why did Novato go from large scale commercial agribusiness to smaller farms and dairies? Changes in transportation modes for produce (water to rail to truck) and sources of labor (Chinese to local to migrant) may be the answer.
- Enlarged reproductions of early newspaper ads and brochures for the Home and Farm Company and Novato Land Company. (The Museum archives has many examples of these collected under the archives file, *Novato Land Company*, or in the oversize document boxes).
- Reproductions of early Home and Farm Company and Novato Land Company Documents (Receipts, Ledgers, etc.)
- Framed originals of subdivision maps (in oversize document boxes).
- Development of large scale agriculture to supply San Francisco and other urban areas of California, centered on transportation by waterways.
  1. Joseph Sweetser and Francis De Long acquire Novato Rancho in 1856.
  2. From 1856 to 1888 it becomes one of the largest producing orchards in the world.
    - 1) Feature: Captain Hiribarren and his schooner, *California*

2) "Old Town" Novato near old wharf.

3) Cheap Chinese labor contributes to profits, and helps to reclaim farmlands for agriculture (building levees and dikes).

- Coming of the Railroad 1879/End of Chinese Labor. Building of California railroads in the late 1860's and 1870's makes it easier for more northern California towns to get produce to urban center like San Francisco and Sacramento. Novato, which had the advantage of water transport, now has to compete with other fruit producing regions.

1) Anti-Chinese campaign in mid 1880's contributes to loss of Chinese worker population; most leave or retreat to safety of "Chinatowns."

2) "New Town" Novato grows up around railroad depot.

- The above and increasing debts cause Frank De Long to sell the Black Point Ranch in 1888 to Chase to form Home and Farm Company. Chase then subdivides.
- Further De Long debts cause 1894 Novato Rancho sale to a syndicate which included W. S. Gage. This syndicate becomes the Novato Land Company (managed by Robert D. Hatch). Formation of a huge tenant-run dairy, chicken, and orchard operation.
- Novato Land Company begins to subdivide and sell beginning in 1908 (managed by Robert Trumbull). This leads to predominance of small/medium sized dairy ranches, chicken ranches, and orchards until well into the 1950's. This coincides with rise of farm automation, the automobile, and trucking.

## 5. Ranching Life

- A description of life on the small and medium sized farm or ranch in northern Marin County. How it changed from the 1880's to the 1950's, and why. The "ecology" of the ranching family: create as complete a picture as possible regarding why these families came to Novato, how they supported themselves, what their life was like.
- How and why these families came to Novato; where did they come from?
- How did they manage to acquire land and sustain themselves on the ranch?

- What life was like:
  1. For a child growing up
  2. For a mother/wife/housekeeper/cook/ranch hand
  3. For a father trying to manage the ranch and feed his family
- What was a typical weekday, Sunday? What did the family do for entertainment?

## 6. Novato: A Small Town Home

- The "town:" businesses, streets, organizations, institutions, etc. that made up the town of Novato.
- Essentials of the evolution of the town from about 1888 to about 1980.
- Photographic enlargements of early ads for Novato businesses (*Marin Journal* newspapers for pre-1920 businesses).
- Earliest Town Plats of Novato circa 1888.
- Photo Blowups of earliest obtainable Novato newspaper, the Banner (an early framed newspaper is currently missing from the Museum collection).
- First businesses (hotel, grocery store, saloons) and their relation to railroad depot and Home and Farm Company).
- Development of residential subdivisions 1890 - 1920.
- Expansion of population after Golden Gate Bridge, Hamilton Air Force Base, and Stafford Dam.
- Incorporation 1960.

Possible public art sites include:

- Town plaza and north and south along Redwood Boulevard median
- Railroad depot
- Seventh Street/Grant Avenue
- Mission Lodge
- Southeast corner De Long Avenue/Redwood Boulevard
- Pocket park(s)

- Scown Lane

The current fire hydrant decorative painting endeavor has added charm and art to the Downtown streetscape.

### *Historic Farm Equipment*

Novato Historic Museum and Guild Board members hope one day to have a museum campus large enough to display historic farm equipment. However, this does not preclude the placement of interesting pieces of historic agricultural equipment at other locations in the City, particularly the Downtown at new catalyst development sites and/or plaza or pocket park(s).

Also, appropriate public art or monuments might include the once ubiquitous Novato windmill and water tower. Scores of these "kinetic" sculptures once spun in the old Downtown.

The pieces selected should be inherently sturdy and resistant to weathering. Roof shelters of some kind should be provided to minimize direct soaking. It might be necessary to erect some type of low, semi-transparent barrier to discourage children from climbing on them. All pieces should be adequately captioned.

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

## **4. INFRASTRUCTURE**

Specific plans must identify improvements to "major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the uses described in the plan" [Government code 65451 (a) (2)]. Significant expansion of roadway capacity or utilities capacity are not needed or anticipated to support planned new development in the Downtown Specific Plan area. However, improvements to streets, sidewalks, parking and storm drainage are proposed. A number of streets and utilities improvements discussed in this chapter are incorporated in the City's Five-Year Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Particular CIP project numbers are identified, where applicable. A complete listing of all CIP projects in the Specific Plan Area is given in Chapter 6.

Other chapters address design issues related to infrastructure improvements. Chapter 3 discusses parking lots and garage improvements associated with some land use and development concepts. Chapter 5 discusses both general and site design guidelines.

### **4.1 STREETS AND SIDEWALKS**

Proposed improvements are discussed below.

#### **4.1.1 Grant Avenue Pavement Repairs, Fourth Street To Scott Court**

This improvement is included in the City's Capital Improvements Program. The excessive crown along Grant Avenue would be graded down and repaved. Bond-funded construction is scheduled for calendar year 1999. If feasible, damage to sidewalks on (west) Grant should be repaired, and missing gutter pans should be replaced. While funding for this improvement already exists, there is no funding presently for repair of damaged sidewalks and replacement of missing gutter pans as well as the curb, gutter and sidewalk improvements specified in this plan. (See Chapter 6 for further discussion of these issues).

#### **4.1.2 Sidewalk Improvement Between Sweetser and Grant**

Portions of the sidewalk on Machin and Reichert Avenues between Grant and Sweetser Avenues are incomplete. On Sweetser, the space which would normally be occupied by a sidewalk is now an open ditch. These interruptions may force pedestrians into the street and discourage the kind of pedestrian activity which is sought for Downtown and Sweetser Avenue businesses. These improvements are at present not funded, but are recommended for funding herein.

#### **4.1.3 Rerouting of Redwood Boulevard for One to Two Blocks for Town Plaza Development**

Chapter 3 proposes the creation of a City town plaza within a portion of the Redwood Boulevard right-of-way (ROW) between Grant Avenue and Sweetser Avenue. Under the Preferred Site/Plan,

Redwood southbound would be rerouted to the east side of the existing median with the loss of the parking island on the east side. The area for the plaza would occupy that portion of the vacant Redwood ROW (formerly the southbound lanes) and extend onto the site of the former Nissan automobile dealership and adjacent parcels.

The potential community facilities themselves would generate a significant number of vehicular trips, but primarily during non-peak weekday hours and on weekends.

#### **4.1.4 Extension of Sweetser Avenue West to Redwood Boulevard**

Sweetser Avenue is perhaps the most important street for business in the North of Old Town commercial/ industrial area. The street serves supply houses, lumber yards, contractors and similar uses. However, vehicles moving southbound on Redwood Boulevard cannot now turn left onto Sweetser to reach these businesses. Rather, they must first turn left onto either Vallejo Avenue or Grant Avenue and then find their way to Sweetser via Machin Avenue or Reichert Avenue.

Chapter 3 discusses changes to the street system on Redwood Boulevard between Grant and Sweetser in order to create a site for a town plaza and community facilities. The concept would extend Sweetser into new parking lots to serve the new town plaza and the community facilities.

Without development of the plaza, the extension of Sweetser to the southbound lanes of Redwood Boulevard would require a southbound left turn pocket, removal of a mature oak tree in the median, perhaps one or more trees for sight distance and the loss of parking.

**■ IU 3: Extend Sweetser Through to First Street Only If Plaza Area Developed.**

Consider the extension of Sweetser through Redwood to First Street *only* in conjunction with the Plaza area development.

#### **4.1.5 Vehicular Access from De Long to the Pini Mill Area**

Access to the Pini Mill Area is somewhat circuitous.

**■ CP 7: Development Policy for Vehicular Access to Pini Mill from De Long.** The development policy for vehicular access from De Long to Pini Mill area is as follows:

Consider the potential for vehicular access between De Long Avenue and Scott Court. Since there is a steep bank between the streets and as much as a 20 foot change in elevation, the connection would have to be implemented through a ramped parking structure. A right-turn lane on DeLong Avenue would have to be added at the driveway entrance to the parking garage to avoid queued traffic on DeLong Avenue. The connection would only be allowed if it were within a parking structure which is part of a railroad depot area mixed use project discussed in Chapter 3.

#### 4.1.6 Access to Mission Lodge Area

Front Street serves the Mission Lodge and businesses on parcels north to Mirabella Avenue. The frontage road is connected to Redwood Boulevard near the Redwood/De Long intersection, where southbound vehicles must loop northward onto Front Street to reach businesses north of Mission Lodge.

■ **CP 8: Development Policies for Access to Mission Lodge Area.** Development policies for access to Mission Lodge area are as follows:

1. For development consistent with the design concept and land use goals for this area eliminate Front Street between De Long and the northern property line of the Mission Lodge.
2. Only for projects consistent with the design concept and land use goals for this area, convert the closed section of Front Street to create a larger commercial site. The closure of Front provides a significant expansion of the Mission Lodge site which can be an incentive for private development of the site.
3. Only for projects consistent with the design concept and land use goals for this area, widen First Street on the east side of the street to accommodate one lane in each direction, replacing the existing one-way southbound street.

#### 4.1.7 No Extension of Reichert Avenue Across Railroad Right-of-Way

On March 27, 1972, Novato Builders Supply sold a small triangular piece of its property to the City for the purpose of extending Reichert Avenue across the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority right-of-way. The crossing has never been completed by the City. The Specific Plan proposes that the property be sold back to Novato Builders Supply, since the crossing is *not* essential to the implementation of the Specific Plan. The Specific Plan stipulates that the crossing of the NWPRR at Grant Avenue *is* essential to the implementation of the Specific Plan and a second crossing of the right-of-way on Reichert - just a block away - would not be acceptable to the operation of the railroad or any future transportation use of the corridor.

#### 4.1.8 Cain/Blodgett

The Specific Plan recommends the rehabilitation (paving) of Cain Lane and that Cain Lane be converted to a one-way street (traffic moves west) between Machin Avenue and Sherman Avenue.

Blodgett would be improved as part of the Zenk lot improvements (see Chapter 4.2.4) and would remain two-way.

#### 4.1.9 Scown Lane Connection at Old Town Glass

Approximately eight parallel parking spaces could be gained by connecting the eastern end of Scown Lane through the Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way to Grant Avenue. One of the ideas presented in the Draft Specific Plan is to relocate the original train depot to this area.

#### **4.1.10 Mulligan Lane**

This alternative would require that an outlet to the eastern end of Mulligan Lane be created so that Mulligan Lane could be converted into a one-way street with parallel parking on one side. The existing lane is approximately 20 feet wide, so eight feet could be used for parking, and a 12-foot lane could still be maintained. Approximately 27 spaces could be added through implementation of this alternative. This alternative would improve parking within a block that has an existing parking deficiency. However, to create the necessary outlet, property would need to be acquired, and the land use of the acquired property would have to be changed. Therefore, this alternative should be considered as a possible idea in the future.

#### **4.1.11 Sherman Avenue Traffic Direction**

Sherman Avenue is a two-way, one-block street between De Long Avenue and Grant Avenue. It is bordered by mostly City offices in historic buildings and a few commercial buildings and parking lots. Sherman serves as the entry point to the area known as the City Hall Campus, and also as an important entry to Downtown where it terminates at Grant Avenue. Chapter 3 shows the proposed beautification of this block, assuming the current two-way travel. The Steering Committee is concerned about the safety of drivers traveling south on Sherman Avenue to make a left turn across fast-moving, westbound traffic on De Long.

**■ CP 9: Sherman Avenue Traffic Direction and Control.** Consider installation of traffic control devices to prohibit left turns from Sherman onto De Long, or one-way only northbound on Sherman. One-way northbound travel would enhance the sense of arrival in Downtown, but it could also encourage speeding and would limit the ability of drivers on Grant from turning on to Sherman Ave. to find parking spaces.

#### **4.1.12 Retain Stop Signs at Fifth and Grant**

The Steering Committee considered and then rejected the removal of stop signs on (west) Grant. The stop signs discourage automobile speeding, and reinforce the pedestrian character of the street.

**■ CP 10: Stop Signs at Fifth and Grant.** Retain stop signs at Fifth and Grant.

#### **4.1.13 Vacate Nugent Lane**

**■ LU 26: Vacate Portion of Nugent Lane.** Vacate the section of Nugent Lane between Machin Avenue and Redwood Boulevard as part of the improvements to the block

between Vallejo and Sweetser. The portion of Nugent Lane at Redwood Boulevard could be conveyed to the adjacent property owner to increase the dining or retail opportunities fronting on Redwood Boulevard. However, the cork oak trees that have grown on Nugent Lane shall remain and be preserved as part of any development.

#### 4.1.14 Bicycle Routes

Redwood Boulevard provides the only marked and dedicated bike path through Downtown. Grant Avenue is too narrow and contains diagonal parking which can be dangerous for cyclists.

■ **CP 11: Development Policies for Bicycle Routes**. Development policies for bicycles routes are as follows:

1. Post Grant Avenue as a "Bike Route" (unstriped).
2. Continue the current prohibition of bicycles on sidewalks. Prohibit skateboards and rollerblades on sidewalks designated by stenciled sidewalk signage.
3. Retain marked bike lanes on Redwood, except where the street is reconfigured for the plaza (as proposed in Chapter 3), in which case the bike lane should be routed through the Plaza thereby maintaining requirements for street width.
4. Encourage bike racks in appropriate locations.

#### 4.1.15 Trip and Parking Demand Reductions

■ **CP 12: New Regulations for Trip and Parking Demand Reductions**. Consider the following new regulations for trip and parking demand reductions:

1. No employee parking on Grant Avenue
2. Implement through the use permit process and/or the business license process, employee trip reduction and parking demand reduction strategies such as use of mass transit and car pooling.

#### 4.1.16 Non-Pedestrian Sidewalk Transportation

■ **CP 13: Enforce Prohibition of Roller Blades and Skateboards on Sidewalks**. Continue the City prohibition of roller blades and skateboards on sidewalks and strictly enforce this prohibition.

## 4.2 PARKING

The Draft Downtown Novato Specific Plan implements the following Specific Plan goals related to parking:

- Provide ample, convenient parking throughout Downtown.
- Maintain a safe and secure Downtown.
- Improve and maintain retail at street level.

The parking study is intended to support the Downtown Specific Plan by incorporating the "recommendations for improvement and development" in the Draft Downtown Novato Specific Plan into the parking supply and demand model in order to determine the parking needs in Downtown Novato (see Parking Study, Appendix C). The objective of this study was to analyze the existing parking conditions in the Specific Plan Area and the parking impacts expected as a result of the land use changes and parking improvements identified in the Draft Downtown Novato Specific Plan and evaluate methods of meeting parking needs. Through the analysis of parking deficiencies, parking improvement projects which directly respond to parking needs have been developed. Although it is important to identify parking improvement projects which will eliminate or improve parking shortcomings in specific areas, it is critical that an entire parking system be created. Parking improvements must be integrated with pedestrian improvements and other parking features so that a functional parking system is established throughout the Downtown area. Therefore, issues such as parking time limits, pedestrian improvements, and parking safety have also been considered. Recommendations to improve parking are based on projected parking needs, as well as historical parking deficiencies which may still be perceived by visitors to the Downtown area.

Land use changes proposed in the Draft Downtown Novato Specific Plan and improvements planned for Grant Avenue will affect parking in the Downtown Specific Plan study area. There is currently a small (8) parking deficiency in the Downtown Specific Plan study area, and the planned changes and improvements will not eliminate the deficiencies. The East and West Grant Avenue areas have parcel parking shortfalls that cannot be offset by public and private lease spaces in the areas.

It is recommended that, for the most part, the parking supply to meet demand be provided off-street.

It is recommended that the Community House parking structure, the Machin Avenue/Vallejo Avenue lot, and the Zenk lot improvements be implemented. The City should take the lead in establishing a parking assessment district for the purpose of acquisition and development of parking facilities. Acquisition of additional property to provide parking is recommended.

In general, no changes are recommended for parking time limits. Two-hour parking time limits and increased enforcement should be considered throughout the study area. This would serve the needs of most customers. However, there is a need for long-term parking in Downtown as well. This should be accommodated in off-street public and private lots and structures.

#### **4.2.1 Community House Parking Structure**

The site boarded by the Community House, Cain Lane, Machin Avenue, and the back of the City structures on Sherman Avenue is one of the few locations with a large enough clear area to accommodate a parking structure. Also, it is located adjacent to several blocks with parking deficiencies, and it is relatively close to Grant Avenue. There are currently 86 spaces on-site. Although the sum of surplus parking within the 400-foot walking distance from the Community House parking structure site indicates an overall parking surplus in this area, this is not truly the case. To determine the actual parking balance within that area, the number of public and private lease spaces must be added to the parcel shortfalls. This means that when a parcel has a parking shortfall, the people left without a parking space can only park in public or private lease spaces within the immediate area. They cannot park in surplus parking in an adjacent block if that surplus parking is privately owned. Therefore, within the 400-foot walking distance, there will be a parking deficit of 40 spaces once the proposed land use and street improvement changes have been made. A parking structure at the Community House site is recommended. The construction of either a two-level or three-level structure would require that Cain Lane be converted to a one-way street between Machin Avenue and Sherman Avenue.

### *Two-Level Alternative*

A two level parking structure would provide approximately 138 parking spaces, five of which would be accessible parking spaces. Forty-three of the spaces would be provided for public parking. The net gain in parking at the City Hall Lot would be 52 spaces. The entrance to the parking lot deck would be provided at Machin Avenue. The entrance to the lower level of the structure would be from Cain Lane. A plan for this alternative is illustrated in [Figure 36](#). This alternative is recommended, based on cost and size considerations.

### *Three-Level Alternative*

A three level parking structure would provide approximately 176 parking spaces. It is possible that the layout of a three-level structure would provide the availability of more land for retail use than a two-level structure because of the reduced area needed for ramping. However, this alternative would be considerably more costly than a two-level structure.

## **4.2.2 Parking Standard for Restaurants on Grant Avenue**

In 1996, the City Council amended Ordinance 1346 amending the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the standard for parking for restaurants on Grant Avenue between Railroad Avenue and Seventh Street, to encourage development of restaurants and night life. The standard of one parking space per 50 sq. ft. of customer seating, waiting, or cocktail lounge area was reduced to one space per 200 sq. ft.

 **LU 27: Parking Standard for Restaurants on Grant.** The parking standing for restaurants in the Specific Plan area shall be one parking space per 200 square feet.

## **4.2.3 Machin Avenue/Vallejo Avenue Lot**

A new public parking lot could be provided on the southwest corner of the intersection of Vallejo Avenue and Machin Avenue. This vacant property could be acquired and designated as a public parking lot for customer and employee uses in the Vallejo Avenue, Machin Avenue, and Redwood Boulevard areas. This lot would not be used for vehicle storage or for parking vehicles to be serviced by nearby automotive service businesses. Approximately 39 spaces could be provided at this location. This would improve existing weekday parking deficiencies in the block bounded by Olive Avenue, Redwood Boulevard, and Vallejo Avenue. Night and weekend parking for the theater could be provided by this lot. The City has no present plans to acquire any property on this site, nor does it intend to condemn land for this purpose.

#### **4.2.4 Zenk Lot Improvements**

Improvements would pave the Zenk lot located on Reichert Avenue between Cain Lane and Blodgett Lane, would incorporate the lanes into the lot to improve circulation, and would increase the number of spaces by about nine. A plan for this alternative is illustrated in [Figure 34](#). Although the block where the Zenk lot is located does not have a parking deficit, all four of the surrounding blocks have parking deficits. This alternative is recommended to reduce parking deficiencies in the blocks around the site.

#### **4.2.5 Combined Parking Lot Along Industrial Way**

Improvement would consolidate the various parking lots behind businesses on the south side of Grant Avenue between First Street and Fourth Street into two parking lots with standard stalls. Industrial Way would be used for access, and would function as a parking lot aisle, although through traffic would still be accommodated. There are currently 141 parking spaces provided on the included parcels. Combining the parking lots would improve circulation in the lots but would actually result in a loss of parking. Aisles and standard stalls would eliminate space available for the provision of parking. At most, 127 spaces would be provided if the lots were consolidated. Since at least five of these spaces must be accessible parking spaces, approximately 120 spaces would be provided for general public use. This is a reduction of 21 spaces. The Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee rejected this alternative project because the cost to convert the parking lots would not alleviate parking problems. No net parking gain would be created, and, in terms of parking supply, the effect would be to create less efficient parking conditions than that which currently exists. This idea was discarded by the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee and is not recommended.

#### **4.2.6 Sweetser Avenue/Reichert Lot**

The paving and striping of the small lot at the northern end of Reichert Avenue would create approximately four marked parking stalls. However, this area is already used for parking. Therefore, this project would not add any parking.

#### **4.2.7 Excess Bank Parking**

Observations of bank parking lots on West Grant Avenue indicate that many of the bank parking lots are not fully utilized. It is possible that excess bank parking could be shared for public parking. However, in some cases, this may require that new entrances to the lots be constructed. This alternative is recommended.

#### 4.2.8 Diagonal Parking on (West) Grant

There has been no diagonal parking on (west) Grant since the early 1970's, when it was removed. There is diagonal parking on (east) Grant, Machin, Reichert and Sherman Avenues. Diagonal parking is well accepted by residents of Novato, although the extreme crown in (east) Grant makes it difficult for cars to avoid bumping into the curb and may make it difficult for drivers to back out of stalls and into traffic (traffic safety may improve when the City removes the crown as discussed in Chapter 4). The street width on (west) Grant Avenue between Fourth and Seventh Street (see [Figure 37](#), Potential West Grant Traffic Calming) would accommodate diagonal parking. While the Engineering Division has recommended against this design due to unresolved issues, the DSPSC still recommends diagonal parking in suitable locations between Fourth and Seventh.

The street width is about 62 feet between Fourth and Fifth; the width between Fifth and Seventh is about 58 feet and 52 feet between Scott Court and Fourth Street, where there is diagonal parking on both sides. The center lane would be removed from Grant Avenue except for turns, and loading zones (no parking during designated hours) would be considered, where appropriate. Other North Bay cities such as San Anselmo, Mill Valley and Healdsburg have successfully used diagonal parking in their pedestrian-oriented core areas.

The Specific Plan recommends more pedestrian and retail use of (west) Grant. This means the function of the street will change particularly in terms of traffic speeds (same number of trips, lower speed, potentially lower through trips use of (west) Grant for commuting). Some driveways connecting to (west) Grant Avenue may need to be eliminated to make any substantial gains in on-street parking.

**■ CP 14: Development Policy for West Grant On-Street Parking.** The development policy for West Grant on-street parking improvement is as follows:

Redesign Grant Avenue west of Redwood Boulevard to implement a diagonal on-street parking scheme. The goal of this scheme would be reduced traffic speeds, wider sidewalks, and more convenience for customers. As part of this redesign, provide bus stops, loading areas, and handicapped parking. Mitigate additional through traffic on alternate routes, if necessary. Proposed "bulb-outs" of sidewalks at corners will signal to drivers that they are entering a pedestrian area, so that traffic should move more slowly and the potential for parking accidents will be reduced. (See [Figure 38](#) and Chapter 5).

#### 4.2.9 Diagonal Parking in the Industrial/Commercial Area

■ **CP 15: Add Diagonal Parking in North of Old Town Area.** The policy for adding diagonal parking in Old Town and North of Old Town is as follows:

Replace parallel curb parking with diagonal parking on Machin, Vallejo and Sweetser Avenues, particularly where drainage ditches are proposed to be replaced by buried storm drains. When storm drainage is underground, the street will be effectively widened, allowing for diagonal parking.

#### **4.2.10 Parking Behind Buildings**

■ **CP 16: Development Policies for Parking Behind Buildings.** Development policies for parking behind buildings are listed as follows:

1. New parking shall be located behind buildings which front on streets in the Downtown Core district. Parking may be located adjacent to side streets for corner lots, subject to design review.
2. Require screening of existing parking which is located in the front of buildings in the Downtown Core, when properties participate in the proposed facade improvements program outlined in Chapter 6. (See Chapter 5 for design guidelines for such screening.)

#### **4.2.11 Trip Reduction Programs**

The Specific Plan recommends trip reduction programs for downtown businesses to reduce the demand for employee parking. Trip reduction programs provide incentives for transit use and ride-sharing programs. A reduction in the parking requirement may be allowed when a land use requires transit use. Land uses with ride-sharing programs, such as car pooling, vanpooling, or shuttle/jitney services, are often allowed an adjustment in parking requirements since they reduce the employee parking demand at a location.

#### **4.2.12 Increase in Private On-Site Parking**

It is possible that parking problems would be reduced, to a certain extent, by encouraging property owners to make more efficient use of their property. Lack of maintenance and use of potential parking areas for storage or other uses eliminates the potential for off-street parking. An estimated five percent increase in private, on-site parking could be created at many sites if more efficient use of property was encouraged. Employee parking on Grant Avenue should be prohibited to encourage the creative use of trip reduction programs.

### **4.3 RAIL AND TRANSIT**

### 4.3.1 Multiple Use of the NWPRR ROW

The railroad right-of-way is to be dedicated to long term public transit use (e.g., bus way, light rail, commuter rail service). The North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) and the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority (NWPRRA) are owners of the right-of-way. NCRA is a public entity representing Marin and Sonoma Counties and CalTrans interests; NWPRRA is a joint powers authority composed of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, Marin County and the NCRA. State funds for the acquisition of the ROW in June, 1996, were granted under the provision that a guideway or busway system shall be implemented. It is likely to be many years before one of these options is implemented.

**CP 17: Development Policies for NWPRR - ROW.** Development policies for the NWPRR ROW are as follows:

1. Work with NCRA and NWPRRA to allow multiple use of the corridor either on a temporary or permanent basis which preserves long term options for public transit.
2. Work with Vintage Oaks shopping center and NWPRRA to develop a multiple-use path and transit connection between Downtown and Vintage Oaks. The type of vehicle, frequency of operations and Downtown destinations have not been analyzed. The Railroad Depot Area includes a proposed multi-purpose use along the railroad which could provide for a non-motorized connection between Downtown and Vintage Oaks. In certain locations along this proposed path, there are opportunities for several small linear parks or rest areas with benches. An encroachment into the ROW for a linear park would require the approval of CalTrans. Signage at both ends of the path (i.e., Vintage Oaks and Railroad Depot) should indicate the length of the path and the shopping and other opportunities available to people using the path from either direction.

There exists a rich opportunity for the Downtown to capture additional customers from Vintage Oaks as well as to link important employment centers with retail and entertainment centers. Additionally, this path provides both recreational and wildlife viewing opportunities (including access for disabled persons).

3. Consider development of a multi-modal transit station at Olive Avenue or the Depot Area. Parking requirements (in excess of 300 spaces), and bus access requirements cannot be accommodated at a Grant Avenue Station, unless the entire area around the depots is converted to such a use (inconsistent with recommendations for a mixed use commercial project, as discussed in Chapter 3).
4. This plan requires attractive bus shelters consistent with this plan's design

guidelines, to encourage transit uses as well, as to assist pedestrians during inclement weather. These shelters, where feasible, should provide civic amenities such as community calendars, public telephones, and, where space is available and placement would not disrupt the flow of sidewalk circulation, bike racks.

## 4.4 UTILITIES

### 4.4.1 Water and Sewer Lines

This section draws upon an evaluation of utilities in Old Town conducted as part of a 1985 redevelopment feasibility study.<sup>(27)</sup> More recent information as well as supplementary information on the (west) Grant Avenue portions of the plan area were obtained from City staff in 1996. The North Marin Water District services the area. Downtown is served by a looped network of distribution lines installed mainly during the 1960's and 1970's. Water lines are in good condition, with little leakage. Hydrants are well located throughout Downtown. No significant changes in Downtown development patterns are anticipated in the General Plan and in this Specific Plan, so water supply and capacity improvements are not proposed. Individual projects, however, would be required to pay their fair share of off-site costs (as a facilities reserve charge).

The Novato Sanitary District collects and treats sewage within the City. Treatment capacity is adequate. Collection lines date from the 1940's through the 1970's. A few lines are quite flat (Cain between Machin and Sherman, and Railroad Avenue), causing maintenance problems.

Sewer and water lines are generally in better condition on (west) Grant than on (east) Grant because they were installed more recently. Potential parking garage development outlined in Chapter 3 should consider replacement/upgrade of sewer lines in Cain Lane.

### 4.4.2 Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities

Utilities are now undergrounded on all of Grant Avenue.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company set aside a portion of their rate return for utility undergrounding in accordance with Public Utility Commission Rule No. 20A. The City prioritizes undergrounding with other street improvement projects, where possible. A number of other streets would be eligible for the Rule 20A underground utility program, including Olive Avenue, and Sweetser Avenue and Reichert Avenue, south of Grant. However, the City is not expected to have Rule 20A funds available for new projects until 1999.

**■ IU 4:** Proceed with Downtown Street and Drainage Project Without Undergrounding of Utilities. The City's Downtown Street and Drainage Project in the North of Old Town area shall proceed without undergrounding of utilities.

## 4.5 STORM DRAINAGE

The biggest problems are areas of localized flooding (Sweetser and Reichert, Grant and Scott, and along Mulligan Lane). The overgrown railroad ditch extending north from Sweetser inhibits drainage. Open ditches along the north side of Olive, south side of Sweetser, and Machin inhibit flow and take up street right-of-way that should be devoted to sidewalks and on-street parking.

 **IU 5: Development Policies for Storm Drainage Improvements.** Development policies for storm drainage improvements are as follows:

1. Improve storm drainage to control minor flooding on Sweetser, Scown Lane and Scott Court. Capital Improvement project No. 91-012 is intended to make drainage improvements to Sweetser Avenue, Scown Lane and Scott Court). Replacement of open ditches with underground lines will create a wider street section for on-street parking, and sidewalks for pedestrian safety. It is unclear whether this project alone is sufficient to rectify these flooding conditions.
2. Improve drainage at Blodgett Lane. Facilities should be installed to intercept drainage and direct it to Reichert (see Chapter 6 Capital Improvements Program).

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan](#)  
[Home](#)

## 5. DESIGN GUIDELINES

This chapter includes guidelines for development and improvement in the Specific Plan area which are to be applied through the Design Review process, defined in Subchapter 19-17 of the City of Novato Zoning Ordinance. The guidelines apply to public as well as private projects and establish the physical design parameters for all of Downtown. They emphasize quality architecture and development, and place a high value on varied and distinctive building designs; sensitive treatment of historic resources; generous landscaping to accent buildings; and high quality materials and construction.

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist property owners, developers and designers in creating, projects which are consistent with a character the community wants to preserve and perpetuate. These policies are further intended for use by the City Staff, Design Review Committee and Planning Commission as criteria for evaluating the merits of new projects on a uniform basis. They should, therefore, facilitate communication between applicants and the City to expedite the design review process.

Novato is situated within a group of secluded valleys surrounded by a distinctive backdrop of rolling hills accented by dense mature tree growth, open meadows and creeks. The downtown area has evolved within the center of the valley. These features have created a unique, semi-rural setting which is somewhat visually isolated from neighboring communities.

The downtown area has developed with a variety of architectural styles, including early California mission, ranch, traditional and contemporary themes dating from the 1890's-70's. Evolution of the downtown has resulted in a balance of mostly local office, retail and service related businesses. As a small, mature, suburban town straddling a major transportation corridor, Novato has had to respond to constant pressure for change. However, it is important that future development maintain Novato's "small town" character, preserve an eclectic mix of architectural styles, and yet promote visual coordination and functional, attractive designs. Appropriate use of these guidelines should serve to motivate and encourage creativity within the limitations of site constraints and compatibility with these design guidelines.

Improvements to the downtown will most likely take place in the form of remodeling and restoration. As uses change and remodeling projects are proposed, owners are encouraged to upgrade their property consistent with the scale of the existing projects. Minor improvements are encouraged such as exterior painting, landscaping additions, street tree planting, mechanical equipment screening, sign upgrading, repair work, etc. These can have a very positive visual and marketing impact. In response to such improvements, it is hoped that all of the merchants and property owners will join in an effort to further enhance and revitalize the downtown.

The guidelines are presented in two categories. First, Overall Downtown Design Guidelines relate uniformly to the downtown area as a whole, and involve site planning, parking and circulation, architecture, signs, lighting, and landscaping. Second are Building Enhancement Standards, which are intended to guide building owners desiring to upgrade their existing improvements.

### 5.1 UD 11: OVERALL DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The following guidelines shall be used for the review of both public and private projects requiring discretionary entitlement improvements.

#### UD 11.1: Site Planning

Site planning guidelines are listed below:

1. New or renovated buildings designated for first floor retail, particularly on Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, shall front with windows and entryways to the street. Street frontage is not allowed for parking lots or building walls with no windows or entryways. Additionally, street frontage of retail shall not be interrupted by mid-block driveways.
2. Emphasis shall be placed on orientation of buildings, walkways and landscape amenities for the safety, clarity and convenience of pedestrian movement. Attractive walkways between adjacent properties shall be developed at points in addition to those at common street frontages to enhance direct pedestrian flow.
3. Site and landscape designs shall incorporate outdoor pedestrian use areas, with such amenities as trellises, shade trees, raised planters, landscaped berms and fountains to create useable, inviting, semi-protected rest areas. Such courtyards and plazas shall be visible from street corridors and major pedestrian access routes.
4. Clusters of smaller structures, or one "shell" structure with multiple facades and uses with courtyards and other pedestrian amenities are preferred to large buildings in new development. Ensure that all buildings, regardless of their height, are comfortable for people at ground level by relating wall and window heights to the height of people, providing windows, building setbacks, landscaping and things for pedestrians to look at for visual variety, and orienting signs to pedestrians. This concept is identified in this plan as the "village design" concept.
5. Siting of buildings shall take into consideration preserving views of Mt. Burdell, Big Rock Ridge, and other surrounding hillsides for people in buildings and on the streets. Solar orientation and wind exposure of the entry area and outdoor pedestrian use areas shall also be considered.
6. It is of primary importance to protect adjoining residential neighborhoods from the impact of noise, lighting, and privacy intrusion. Special attention shall be given through the design of effective residential buffering, including appropriate setbacks, landscaping, mounding and fencing to provide a gradual visual transition into adjacent neighborhoods. (Item 4 above is meant also to address this issue).
7. Trash enclosures, ground-mounted transformers, gas meters, backflow prevention devices and other equipment shall be kept out of front areas and carefully screened from view. Care shall be taken to avoid locating trash enclosures near the boundary of residential properties. In general, trash enclosures shall be consolidated, yet located so as to equalize the distances from the buildings served. Enclosures shall be positioned with direct access for collection trucks. Parking shall be prohibited within the enclosure access area. Concrete pads shall be provided within the enclosures, and the access area shall be reinforced to avoid damage by collection trucks. Gates and doors shall be made to withstand heavy use and abuse. Design, materials and colors shall be consistent with building architecture.

## UD 11.2: Architecture

There are no consistent existing architectural themes within the Downtown, and particularly ones that unite (east) and (west) Grant Avenue. Existing conditions are briefly summarized below:

- East Grant/Old Town. East Grant buildings style include historic false front storefronts in the Victorian Era style, and the Mission Revival Style found primarily on (east) Grant Avenue and in Old Town. The Victorian influenced design generally includes horizontal wood cladding, vertically proportioned windows, and brick-a-brac ornament. The Mission Revival style employs stucco walls, recessed windows, curving parapets, and tile roofs. There are also some board and batten structures and corrugated metal structures characteristic of the early agricultural buildings in Novato.
- West Grant. Blockier International Style buildings are primarily located on (west) Grant. Buildings on (west) Grant Ave. are of more recent vintage, most dating from the 1950's and 1960's. Some buildings have been "modernized" with fins, unusual tilework, metal panels and other cladding which has robbed them of their original character.
- Industrial/Commercial - North of Old Town. The industrial area of Downtown north of Scown Lane has simple poured concrete or block buildings, wood warehouses designed with heavy timbers, and steel frame buildings, historically clad in corrugated metal. In recent years, designers have been inspired by industrial structures and materials, such as the two retail buildings with red, standing seam metal roofs, located in "Olive Plaza" on the east side of Redwood Boulevard, immediately north of Mulligan Lane. Unlike the galvanized material used in the Pini Mill, these new structures use panels with integral color. The vertical lines of the wall paneling also relate to the vertical board and batten of some older structures in this part of Downtown.

General design architectural guidelines are listed below:

1. Use the architectural styles discussed in this section as points of departure for design and design evaluation:
  - Historic architectural styles which have been identified in the Downtown or in the adjacent areas in Novato and Marin County are: Gothic Revival(s), Georgian Revival, Mission, Bungaloid, Mission Revival, Streamline Modern, Queen Anne Revival, Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, Greek Revival. (Appendix D contains a stylistic glossary and discussion of these styles.)
  - Examples of architectural styles or design found desirable by the DSPSC and/or from public comments at committee meetings or workshops include: Dr. Insomnia, Las Guitarras, Le Cut, Kapranos Construction office next to Dr. Insomnia with paseos, Courtyard Square, Tarassa Building (French Toast) and paseo, 1913 Old Bank Building, Solarium, Flat Iron, Cacti, City Hall/Church, Simmons House, Tresch House, Zunino House, Carlile House, Silva Kuser House, Postmasters House, Coldwell Banker corner Reichert and DeLong, and residence on Reichert south of Carlile House. Photographs of some of these styles are provided in this Specific Plan as examples. (See Section 5.3).
2. Preserve historic buildings. Remove alterations whose design and/or materials are not consistent with the underlying historic character of the building and its immediate surroundings. Uncover and repair original features. The buildings east of Redwood Boulevard which the Zoning Ordinance designates with the overlay classification Historic Preservation District cannot be altered without design review approval (see Figure 3).[\(27B\)](#)
3. Building height, bulk, style, period, proportions, materials and colors shall conform to local

design district guidelines.

4. Use of recessed entries, stepping of upper floor setbacks and varied roof lines consistent and coordinated with adjoining structures is strongly encouraged.
5. Roof materials shall be consistent with the residential character of the community with textured natural material such as shingles, slate or tile. Where flat roofs are required, they shall be architecturally screened from public areas. Flat roofs shall generally be covered with dark grey gravel.
6. Emphasis shall be placed on consistent use of architectural detailing *on all building elevations*, including fenestration, blending of materials, eaves, awnings and soffit treatments, shadow lines, etc., to avoid facing blank walls toward neighbors.
7. Mechanical equipment shall be enclosed within the building or architecturally screened from view. Generally, mechanical equipment shall not be permitted on roofs. Only when absolutely necessary, roof elements shall incorporate integral wells for the complete screening of all necessary roofmounted mechanical equipment. Roof penetrations for vents and ducts shall be grouped and combined in locations concealed from public view.
8. Visible wall and/or window-mounted air conditioning equipment is prohibited.
9. The use of awnings shall allow for individual expression of each business with compatible variations in color and graphics, compatible with the Downtown Style Guidelines. Multiple awnings shall be coordinated with variations emphasized or minimized depending on individual buildings where distinctive variations in size, color, placement and design may be important.

Encourage canvas awnings over display windows and store entries where they would not interfere with street trees or projecting signs. Awnings shall not extend over the public sidewalk more than 5 feet from the face of the building, and maintain an 8-foot vertical clearance over the sidewalk. Awnings shall slope downward on a straight angle, rather than a curve, except where the awning is placed within an arched opening in a building. Allow awnings over second story windows, if they extend no more than half way down the windows. Use colorful awnings to highlight individual stores. Individual awnings shall have a maximum of two colors, such as stripes. Prohibit vinyl awnings, back-lit awnings, and awnings with signs on the slope. Graphic imagery is acceptable on the sloping surface such as a logo unique to a business (not a franchise logo).

To avoid visual clutter, there shall be either an awning sign or a storefront sign but not both; lettering is allowed on the sides of awnings as a replacement for pedestrian-oriented hanging signs.

10. Storefront windows and displays are encouraged where compatible with surroundings.
11. Buildings located near street corners shall respond to their location by designing entries facing the corner, or by slightly recessing the first floor building face to create a small pedestrian use area.
12. Generally, restrict the number of paint colors in a project to three, with one color used for accents only. Many buildings in Downtown are painted in light, neutral colors. For accent and

detail colors, consider a range of rich, saturated colors such as brick red, deep blue/green, "Hunter" green and "Butternut" yellow.

13. Maintain the small town scale and pedestrian character of Downtown in the design of new storefronts and additions and modifications to existing buildings. Wall planes shall not extend in one continuous horizontal direction more than about 25 feet without an offset or interruption by a pilaster or structural frame, change in roof line or architectural materials.
14. Allow an increase in building height in the Downtown Specific Plan Area (Downtown Core, and the Mixed Use District) for mixed use projects in which housing is included and a top floor is used only for housing.[\(28\)](#)
15. Encourage decorative features, and fine, durable materials and detailing on building bulkheads, and around windows and doors where pedestrians can closely observe such features. Adapt such features from historical examples in Downtown Novato, where appropriate.
16. Encourage the use of industrial materials, such as metal panels with raised ribs in the North of Old Town area.
17. Consider murals on blank walls - public or private, subject to review by the Civic Arts Commission. Life-size, eye-tricking *trompe l'oeil* paintings shall be considered which use Novato history and the local setting as sources of inspiration. Murals may reference business activity by name only in an historical context.[\(29\)](#)
18. Install indirect lighting inside of storefront windows to creatively illuminate merchandise.
19. On-site outdoor furniture, telephone booths, ATM machines, kiosks and similar accessories shall be integrated into the architectural design of the principal structure they serve.
20. For mixed use development immediately fronting on Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard, prohibit residential balconies.

### **UD 11.3: Parking and Circulation**

Specific design guidelines for parking and circulation infrastructure in the Downtown (public and private) are listed below:

1. The majority of parking shall be located away from public view, but convenient to find via appropriate signage.
2. Long, straight uninterrupted rows of parking shall be avoided in favor of landscaped islands with no more than eight stalls in a row.
3. All parking areas shall be landscaped and provided with maintenance infrastructure (i.e., irrigation) as described in Section 11.6.4. While it is recognized that parking is constrained in the Downtown, there is no desire to have paved areas devoid of landscaping and tree canopy and their contribution to the microclimate and positive ambiance of the Downtown. Landscaping shall also include, where appropriate, view screening using vines and trellises and attractive shrubs and other plantings. Gravel and bark ground covers are to be avoided.[\(30\)](#)

4. All parking areas adjoining residential zoning districts shall be separated by a 5-foot minimum landscape buffer and a 6-foot solid wood fence or masonry wall. Preferable vegetation shall be evergreen trees spaced at 10 feet on center.
5. Parking spaces, curb-cuts, walks, ramps and signage for the accommodation of handicapped access, pursuant to state standards, shall be designed to integrate with the building architecture through the creative use of paving and building materials, landscaping, railing designs and signage systems. Handicapped access facilities shall be conveniently located adjacent to main building entrances in order to minimize the amount of contact with auto traffic.
6. Design provisions shall be made for proper repair and maintenance of paved surfaces.
7. Internal circulation and parking layout for all development shall avoid the backing of vehicles onto public streets.
8. All parking lots shall incorporate internally looped circulation systems where possible, so that drivers will not be dependent on public streets when making multiple passes through a parking lot.
9. Street access points shall be consolidated with shared access easements for adjacent commercial lots where possible to avoid multiple curb-cuts. On corner lots, curb cuts shall maintain a maximum separation from intersections.
10. Decorative, slip-resistant paving is encouraged for use on pedestrian walkways, which shall be grade separated from driveway and parking areas. Distinctive paving is also encouraged where these routes cross driveways.
11. Unobstructed visibility shall be maintained at all vehicular intersections and pedestrian crossings to assure safety.
12. Truck loading facilities shall be located off of major streets in such a manner as to avoid visual impact, noise impact to residential uses, and conflicts with pedestrian and normal vehicular traffic.
13. Bicycle racks shall be provided as appropriate for the nature and intensity of use.
14. Parking areas shall be graded, paved and drained to prevent storm water from running over public sidewalks and ponding on site.
15. Provide easily identified pedestrian drop-off points, close to building entries and linked to pedestrian walkways.
16. Where feasible, end row parking spaces shall be protected and screened from the turning movements of other vehicles with curbed landscape areas. (Development Standards Code Section 5-28.00863(d)).

 **UD 11.4: Sidewalks**

Improvements to sidewalks, particularly on Grant Avenue are essential to enhancement of the pedestrian character of Downtown. Street trees and other streetscape amenities are not necessarily funded under the City's Capital Improvements Program (see Chapter 6). While it would be desirable to include streetscape amenities in any program of funded street and sidewalks repairs, small areas needing concrete repair are allowed if funds for beautification are not available.

Specific Design Guidelines for sidewalk improvements are listed below:

#### **11.4.1 Public Sidewalks and Improvements**

1. Use removable pavers along curbs, where feasible, to accommodate electrical and water connections. Electricity may be used for mini-lights to be installed in trees, and water will be available for timed irrigation of trees and potential flower basket planters hung from light pole brackets.
2. Use sealed brick or pavers to accent entries into stores. For corner buildings, consider corner entries and enhanced paving such as the "Courtyard Square" building at the northeast corner of Grant and Reichert Avenues.
3. Repair sidewalks which have been raised by tree roots, for pedestrian safety.
4. "Bulb-out" sidewalks at corner crosswalks on Grant Avenue to provide areas for pedestrian circulation and sitting and to shorten street crossings for pedestrians and to encourage slower traffic speeds. This would best be accomplished in conjunction with planned reconstruction of the street (CIP project 93-012, discussed in Chapter 6) because lowering the street crown must anticipate the height of the curb of the bulbed-out sidewalks.

#### **11.4.2 Sidewalk Cafes and Outdoor Dining**

Outdoor eating areas often need protection from afternoon and evening winds along Grant Avenue during the summer. Some restaurant owners have found locations screened by walls or adjacent buildings. Examples include Cacti Restaurant on Grant at Fourth Street, Bongiovi Coffee on Grant, and the Las Guitarras restaurant on Reichert Avenue just north of Scown Lane. Opportunities also appear to exist in courtyards and adjacent to rear alleys north of Grant Ave. Encourage outdoor eating places that are visible from the street to enliven the Downtown.

1. Where there are no sidewalk bulb-outs, allow encroachments onto the public sidewalk for moveable outdoor café tables, shade umbrellas and seating, a distance from the face of the building only so far as to allow 5 feet of unobstructed access between the chairs and tables, and the curb or any other permanent obstacle such as a light pole, street tree, or waste receptacle.
2. Allow outdoor dining in sidewalk bulb-outs, as shown in Figure 38. Where feasible, use the landscaped areas in the bulb-outs to separate and screen the dining areas from the street and parking. Use hedges and other landscape materials, taking care not to block vehicular sight lines.
3. Install awnings or portable shade umbrellas to create an "outdoor room" for outdoor dining. Trees can also be used to create an a shady canopy, particularly in bulb-out areas.

4. Do not count public right-of-way encroachment area for outdoor eating for parking requirements.

### 11.4.3 Pedestrian Passageways

There are a few narrow passageways between the sidewalk on Grant Avenue and parking lots and courtyards behind buildings. On (east) Grant, some narrow "breezeways," "paseos," or narrow courtyards connect the sidewalk on the north side of the street with Scown Lane, the parallel alley to the north. However, there are no publicly-accessible pathways between Scown Lane and Sweetser Avenue.

Consequently, there is little interrelationship between businesses on (East) Grant Avenue and businesses in the North of Old Town area. Customers of businesses on Grant may not be customers of businesses on Sweetser. If they are, perhaps they drive between the two streets. But if they were to walk, they would use Machin or Reichert; Sherman Avenue does not extend north of Grant Avenue, resulting in a nearly 700 ft long block between Machin and Reichert.

Design guidelines for pedestrian passageways are:

1. Encourage private walkways between Grant and Scown, between Grant and Cain Lane, and between Scown and Sweetser. Such walkway improvements could be eligible for match funding under the proposed facade improvement program described in Chapter 6.
2. Encourage development of outdoor cafes in protected passageways or "breezeways" and protected courtyards. Strong west winds during summer afternoons can make outdoor dining uncomfortable along Grant Avenue (See Chapter 3). Adding outdoor dining to sidewalk, courtyard, or pedestrian passageways shall not require additional parking spaces above and beyond those required for the existing indoor dining area.

### UD 11.5: Streetscape Elements

Benches, trash receptacles, bollards, newspaper racks, public telephones and bicycle racks all constitute the furniture of the street. These elements add scale and character and invite people to stop and enjoy the space rather than just pass through. The furniture shall be carefully selected to complement historic buildings in the area and also to be compatible with the newer building additions.

Specific design guidelines for streetscape elements are listed below:

1. Prohibit placement of private improvements in the public right-of-way in the Specific Plan Area, including - but not limited to - waste receptacles, benches, planters and bicycle racks, without approval of an encroachment permit. Generally, the City should be responsible for the selection and placement of such elements in the street right-of-way, although the City could specify particular components which could be purchased by property or business owners and installed with City approval.
2. Install benches where people enjoy sitting (wind-protected, both shady and sun-exposed areas, close to "people places" such as cafes and coffee shops). Benches can be "nested" into street bulb-outs. Avoid benches on sidewalks facing traffic, except at bus stops. Choose a standard design with a cast iron frame (see [Figure 39](#)). Customize the benches (and compatibly-designed

light poles and incorporate the City's logo (City Hall image) in cast iron components, if feasible.

3. Use consistent and compatible sidewalk features such as lamp poles, trash receptacles, benches, tree grates, fences and railings as specified (see Figure 39). Consider dark blue-green, "hunter green" as the preferred color for metal components of these features.
4. Use the lightpole standard which is based upon "torch" style lamps which were historically used in Old Town (see [Figure 40](#)). The lightpoles shall be placed in the sidewalk at close interval (e.g., 75 - 95 feet), and at a low height for pedestrians (e.g., 14 feet).
5. Install banners across streets which serve as entries to downtown. CIP funded project 96-018 has been approved for gateway banners rigged from cables attached to steel poles, which are compatible in design with historically-derived pedestrian light poles. Banners can advertise special and seasonal events, as well as year-round welcoming signs to Downtown.
6. Encourage artworks in the public right-of-way and as part of projects-public or private- subject to comment by the Civic Arts Commission.
7. Consider decorative, bold, paving on Sherman Avenue to strengthen the street's role as a civic plaza. The street is now closed for traffic during special events, such as the weekly Farmers' Market and the annual Art and Wine Festival, and would continue to be used for these and other purposes when the street is paved (see Figures 32 and 33).

## **UD 11.6: Landscaping**

Specific landscaping guidelines for plant materials, street trees, planting near buildings, planting in parking areas and screening are listed below:

### **11.6.1: Plant Materials**

1. All plant materials shall be served by a City approved automatic underground irrigation system. All backflow devices, controllers, and other irrigation elements shall be screened.
2. Healthy, mature on-site trees shall be preserved whenever possible. Improvements (buildings, paving, grading, etc.) under the drip line of existing trees shall be minimized. Existing trees shall be fenced off during project construction to prevent soil compaction, root damage, bumping, etc.
3. All new trees shall be double staked or provided with a greater support design.
4. Ground cover shall be spaced to ensure total infill within six months of planting.
5. Only live plant materials (not simulated) shall be used in landscaped areas (trees, shrubs, and ground cover).
6. Selection of plant materials shall be based on year-round beauty (deciduous color, spring flower, branching patterns) as well as form, texture, shape, and ultimate growth.

7. Plant species shall be tolerant of the local environmental-conditions and relatively free from pests and disease.
8. Plant species which are native or well-adapted to local climatic conditions are recommended because they require less water and maintenance.
9. All street trees shall be deep-rooted, canopy-type trees suited to urban conditions.
10. Upon adoption, refer to the new Novato Tree and Community Forest Ordinance for development standards for street trees and other tree-related issues.
11. Street trees and on-site front yard trees shall be a minimum of 24 inch box size with a minimum 1-1/2 inch diameter. All other on-site trees shall be a minimum of 15 gallon container size. Shrubs not used as ground cover shall be a minimum of five gallon container size.

### **11.6.2: Street Trees**

The Background Report, Downtown Novato Specific Plan, Sept. 1994 describes the variety of street trees in the Downtown area, their condition and maintenance. The predominant sweetgum street trees are missing at some locations, and are causing invasive root problems where they still stand. Irrigation is lacking on Grant Ave.

1. Choose plant materials which can withstand tight urban spaces, pedestrian traffic, and potentially difficult soils conditions. Plants shall have non-invasive root structures, efficiency of water use, resistance to pests, disease, vehicle emissions and vandals, compatibility with building signs (avoiding obscuring the signs behind foliage), street/sidewalk lighting, building awnings and other features of the streetscape.
2. Install deep watering automatic irrigation for new and existing street trees and, where feasible, root barriers. Deep watering will help to discourage horizontal expansion of the tree roots, which frequently cause damage to streets, curbs and sidewalks.
3. Plant trees where they are missing to re-establish streetscape continuity. This would be a long term project to gradually remove sweetgums which are unhealthy and/or which are causing the buckling of sidewalks. In their place, a selected palette of deciduous street trees would be planted on Grant. (see below). Other streets would have different palettes in accordance with an updated Streetscape Master Plan.
4. The Specific Plan supersedes the City's Streetscape Master Plan. April, 1992, for the Specific Plan Area. Update the Streetscape Master Plan, as a general guide for landscape improvements along principal streets and highways in Novato, by incorporating the following recommendations for street trees along six streets in the Downtown. Trees have been chosen for their form, reliability, and maintainability:

Grant Avenue.

- Aristocrat Pear to infill and replace Sweetgums as they are gradually removed.
- Scarlet or Red Oak, as visually strong and spreading trees for bulb-out areas.

- Flowering Crabapples as accent trees in bulb-out areas.
- Linden, to continue the Lindens planted at Citibank.

#### Redwood Boulevard.

- Redwoods, Cork Oak and Tulip Trees are established. Tulip Trees should be used at locations where aphid droppings can be tolerated (droppings can be a nuisance on parked automobiles).

#### Sherman Avenue

- Scarlet Oak as the dominant canopy tree.
- Cork Oak as an evergreen background tree.
- Flowering Crabapple as a formal accent tree at the street entry.

#### De Long Avenue.

- Aristocrat Pear, Pin Oak, Linden, and Hornbeam as trees which are upright in character so as not to block views of City Hall and hills in the distance.

#### Cross Streets (Reichert, Machin).

- Trees used on Grant and Sherman, for continuity.
- Baywood Ash and Pistache where space allows (subject to street and drainage improvements) and variety and fall color is sought.

#### North of Old Town (Sweetser and Vallejo Avenues)

- Sweetgum trees already established on the north side of Sweetser, and Red Oak, Hackberry and Baywood Ash.
- Saratoga laurel and Swamp Myrtle as smaller evergreens which could be used to screen any unsightly industrial storage lots on Sweetser.
- Saratoga laurel and Swamp Myrtle as smaller evergreens to fit into tight spaces. Street trees may not be possible on Vallejo due to frequent curb cuts, and auto repair businesses.
- Baywood Ash on Vallejo, where space allows.

5. Discourage the use of planters in the public right-of-way, since sidewalks are narrow and planters may create obstacles for pedestrians and handicapped persons. Trees shall be placed in the ground, protected by tree grates, rather than in planters, and shall be automatically irrigated.

6. Encourage hanging flower planters on light poles, but only if automatically irrigated. Make hanging planters a project of a service club or another volunteer group.
7. Consider planting new trees in small islands or bulb-outs into the street rather than in the sidewalk in order to keep sidewalks as open as possible. Careful layout of parking could potentially avoid removal of on-street parking spaces for the trees.
8. Select distinctive canopy or accent trees for each potential Downtown gateway. Each gateway treatment shall acknowledge the surrounding landscape setting but also be distinctively different.
9. When trees which may be obscuring the visibility of signs have reached sufficient height above the sign to guarantee tree health and growth, lower limbs may be trimmed away, using the best arboricultural practices, to make signage visible. Topping of trees is strictly prohibited.

### **11.6.3: Planting Near Buildings**

1. Landscaping shall generally be provided to screen downtown buildings from views of surrounding hillside homes.
2. Planting shall occur around building perimeters to reduce building scale and to integrate development into surrounding neighborhood.
3. Deciduous trees shall generally be utilized on southern and western exposures to screen summer sun and permit winter light.
4. On-site useable open space shall be provided for special amenities such as courts, plazas, walkways, planting, fountains, sculptures, arbors, trellises, etc. Open spaces shall generally be visible from fronting streets, accessible to pedestrians, and separated from the car. Such spaces need to be located near high use areas, such as building entries or storefronts.
5. Landscape structures shall be incorporated into the building design i.e., trellises, arbors and planters.
6. Landscaping shall accent building entries.
7. Plant materials shall be used to soften the hard building lines and bulk.
8. Plant materials shall be used to define outdoor eating areas and pedestrian paths between parking and building entries.
9. Adequate sight distance for motorists and pedestrians entering and exiting the site must be provided. Landscaping shall not interfere with circulation effectiveness.

### **11.6.4: Planting In Parking Areas**

1. Areas adjacent to and within parking lots shall be landscaped to reduce the visual impact of automobiles. All unused areas of parking lots shall be landscaped. Landscape areas within parking lots shall not measure less than three feet in width, excluding curbs. Peripheral

landscaping shall be provided around the perimeter of parking lots in zones a minimum of five feet wide.

2. Canopy shade trees shall be planted in parking lots to achieve a minimum canopy coverage of 30 percent of the parking lot area at maturity.<sup>(31)</sup>
3. A minimum of five percent of the area within parking lots shall be landscaped with plant material.
4. Parking areas shall be screened from streets by using a combination of mounds, plant materials, low walls, fences, and by lowering the parking surface elevation. Screening of parking lots at street frontages shall have a minimum height of 3 feet above street grade.
5. Parking areas shall be designed and landscaped to minimize summer glare and the visual impact of large numbers of vehicles.
6. In addition to canopy trees, further reduction in glare and reflected heat from parking surfaces shall be accomplished by the use of arbors and overhangs.
7. No more than eight parking spaces shall be located in a row without a landscaped divider strip and canopy tree.
8. Concrete or masonry curbing (excluding asphaltic/concrete curbing) shall be installed around all landscaped areas to contain landscape material and to provide protection from vehicles.

### **11.6.5: Landscape Screening**

There are unsightly outdoor storage lots, parking lots and vacant lots fronting on Grant Avenue and Reichert Avenue. Some are bordered by 6 foot high chain link fences. The lots present an unattractive face to visitors to Downtown, and interrupt the pedestrian experience.

The following policies encourage the screening of these eyesores (see also potential funding for landscape screening under Chapter 6 Facade Improvements Program):

1. Screen parking lots with substantially-built low wood fences, with heavy wire mesh between supports, which will act as a trellis for climbing plants. Fences approximately 3 feet to 3½ feet high will screen most parked cars yet allow views over to commercial businesses beyond (see example in [Figure 41](#)).
2. Encourage replacement of 6 foot high chain link fences with wood fences set back from the sidewalk a minimum of 18 inches, within which suitable durable and drought resistant shrubs shall be planted.

### **UD 11.7: Signage**

Private signage in Downtown Novato, as in many downtown areas, currently lacks the character and quality necessary to support revitalization efforts. A variety of common problems can be found:

- Repetitive signage

- Signage too large for the building
- Crudely constructed and installed signage
- Individual signs poorly sized with respect to their surface of attachment
- Inappropriate signage for downtown environment
- Oversized signs with respect to the downtown pedestrian environment
- Visually chaotic temporary signage
- Old and outdated signs
- Board and Box signs unrelated to the architecture of the building
- Signage poorly related to background
- Inappropriate banner signs
- Too much information on a single sign

While few of the conditions and problems outlined above are exceptionally destructive to any single structure, the combination of problems contributes to an overall image which appears old, tired and is in marked contrast to many competing commercial centers. An overall improvement in private signage with well designed and imaginative graphics could do more than any other single element to improve the visual appearance of Downtown Novato.

The intent of the following signage guidelines is to assist downtown businesses in selecting appropriate signage and to allow downtown signage to be different from outlying commercial areas in recognition of its special role in a more pedestrian - oriented environment.

1. All signs must conform to the proposed amended Novato Sign Ordinance incorporating the Downtown Specific Plan area requirements. All signs shall be professionally designed and fabricated. Specially designed logos, symbols and icons shall be encouraged.
2. The design of all signs (including materials, colors, configuration and illumination) shall conform to the architectural style and period of the buildings they identify. Incompatible corporate logos or standardized script shall be avoided. With such a wide variety of materials to choose from, businesses are discouraged from using plastic signs which appear mass produced, and are encouraged to use more original interesting materials which enhance the unique visual quality of Downtown as pedestrian-friendly. Paper signs, except as temporary notices, are prohibited.
3. Free standing signs shall be designed in accordance with design guidelines, minimized in height, and integrated with the landscape by means of accent planting, the use of trees or other design elements.
4. The size, shape and location of all signs shall be compatible with the building proportions and features.
5. The preferred method of sign illumination involves use of soft exterior lighting, where the light source and all appurtenant devices are screened from public view. Internally illuminated cabinet signs are strongly discouraged. However, individual letter signs having internal illumination may be considered appropriate for larger buildings, and where consistent with local design guidelines.
6. Visible braces and other support devices shall be avoided, but, if required, shall be incorporated as a design feature.

7. Multi-tenant buildings shall all have master sign programs. Provisions shall be made for coordination of sign dimensions, materials, textures, colors, illumination, and method and location of mounting.
8. Signage shall be integrated with landscape elements such as walls, planters, and street furniture.

### **11.7.1: Public Informational Signs**

There are no consistently designed public signs in Novato. Directional signs vary in size, design and location. There is a low wood monument sign provided by the Chamber of Commerce with a "Welcome to Novato" message, which is oriented to drivers proceeding west on De Long Avenue near Pini Mill.

1. Design a sign system to orient people and drivers to the important features of Novato, including Downtown, and public and private parking facilities in Downtown. The logo of the former Presbyterian Church building - now City Hall - shall be incorporated into directional signs, and place names.
2. Install banners across main streets at key points of entry into Downtown to draw visitors into Downtown (see Chapter 6 Capital Improvements Program funded project 96-018). Although the CIP program refers to "community banner poles," the banners are to emphasize entrances to Downtown from perimeter streets (especially De Long and Seventh). Potential locations for banners include across De Long between Reichert and Highway 101, across Sherman at De Long, across Reichert at De Long, across Machin at De Long, across Redwood at De Long, across Grant at Seventh, and across Redwood at Olive. (See Figure 32 Sherman Avenue Plaza Illustrative Plan and Figure 37 Potential West Grant Traffic Calming). The banners would be stretched from steel poles consistent in design with historically-derived light poles. Banners could change from a message of welcome to Downtown Novato to a notice of the annual Art and Wine Festival and many other Downtown and community events.
3. There are opportunities for vertical banners as optional hardware add-ons to street light fixtures. This provides for a rich assortment of inexpensive, high quality banners to be situated at street light locations where new lamp poles have been installed. Additionally, where horizontal banners are impossible to install due to street width (for example, at the intersection of Grant Avenue and Redwood Boulevard), the lamp posts installed at each corner of the intersection could hold vertical banners.
4. Support installation of electronic information kiosks which identify businesses in Downtown. These kiosks would be located on public sidewalks in proximity to parking areas.
5. Historical Signage: Historic buildings and structures shall be noted with signage. (Structures would include bridges, water towers or other built objects.) Important sites may also be noted. Signage shall be attached to the building or structure in a highly visible location, if such attachment would not cause damage to the building or detract from an historic feature, and if such attachment does not cause the public to intrude on private property (for example: to enter the front yard of a private residence to reach a sign attached to a house). If attachment would damage or detract, then placement would be freestanding as close to the building as possible. If attachment to the building causes public intrusion, then the signage shall be placed where visible on public property.

Ideally signs shall fall into a vertical viewing range of about 4 - 5 1/2 feet from the ground and letters shall be one-half inch high if viewed from about five feet away. The vertical height of the lettering shall increase one inch for every 10 feet of distance from the viewer.

The content of the signs shall ideally be kept to 150 words or less including titles. Texts longer than this will discourage most casual observers and might impede the sale of more detailed walking tour brochures. [Figure 42](#) shows a sample of sign content. The font and format of this signage shall match or complement other signage in the City, and/or California State Historical signage. The Historical Guild shall be contacted in the review and approval process for all historical signage.

Section 2.5.6 identifies Downtown Novato historic buildings and their sites with their present street numbers.

### 11.7.2: Commercial Signs

Business signs in Downtown Novato vary from wall-mounted, projecting, hanging blade, and free-standing. Some retail windows have so much signage that they are illegible, and mask any views of merchandise in the stores. Some signs are internally-illuminated box signs and others are externally-illuminated. Some are non-conforming because they are improperly mounted over the top of building parapets.

 IM 17 requires that the Novato Municipal Code be amended to include sign regulations for the Downtown that promote pedestrian-scale signs. The following guidelines are intended to supplement the sign regulations that will be contained in the Zoning Code.[\(32\)](#)

1. Design signs with lettering sized to be seen primarily by pedestrians and relatively slow-moving cars.
2. Item 2 was deleted.[\(33\)](#)
3. For historic buildings, consider historic wood signs, constructed of marine-grade plywood, or solid wood, bordered with trim.[\(34\)](#)
4. Projecting Sign Guidelines: Projecting signs shall be graphically designed for pedestrians and shall be allowed conditional upon adequate design quality. Projecting signs shall not be mounted above the sill line of the second floor of multi-story buildings. Sign supports shall be well designed and compatible with the design of the sign. Interior illuminated boxed display signs shall not be allowed. Icon signs using shapes or symbols uniquely suited to the business, creative shapes and three dimensional signs shall be encouraged. Exterior lighting of the projecting signs shall be encouraged.[\(35\)](#)
5. Prohibit any signage which displays a company/firm/product name, logo, symbols, icons, or other identifying commercial markings other than those of the occupant of the business to which it is attached. This would preclude any suppliers, etc., from subsidizing a sign which might include a tawdry advertisement, logo, etc.
6. Prohibit freestanding signs in the Specific Plan Area, except for properties designated General Commercial, subject to design review.

7. Prohibit free-standing commercial signs (including portable sidewalk A-frame signs) in the public sidewalk except for those associated with Downtown special events (i.e., sidewalk sales, farmers' market, etc.). Upon adoption of the revised Zoning Ordinance and enforcement of new sign provisions, provide written notice to Downtown merchants informing them that A-frame sidewalk signs are no longer permitted, except for Downtown special events, and provide a 90-day amnesty period for removal of A-frame signs without citation. After the 90-day period, portable sidewalk signs not associated with Downtown special events shall be prohibited.[\(36\)](#)
8. Window signs shall be restricted to 20 percent of the total window area. Signage shall consist of individual letters, logos or symbols applied to the glass surface. Neon signs with transparent backgrounds shall be allowed when hung inside the window glass line.[\(37\)](#)
9. Awning Sign Guidelines: To avoid visual clutter, restrict signage to either an awning sign or a storefront sign, but not both. The use of logos or symbols depicting the unique nature of a business are encouraged on the sloped face of awnings. Translucent awning materials which are lit from within and appear as large lighted sign boards shall be discouraged.[\(38\)](#)
10. Wall Sign Guidelines: Any building with exterior walls adjacent to a street, an alley or an off-street parking area on which it has frontage shall be allowed to have a wall sign in each of those locations. Wall signs may include individual solid letters, individual internally illuminated letters, a boxed display (i.e., a metal frame containing internal illumination and a facing material containing the lettering), a board sign (i.e., individual letters displayed on a flat surface which is then mounted to the building face) or lettering painted directly onto the building face. Solid or internally illuminated individual letters shall be encouraged. Boxed or board signs shall be discouraged. If internally illuminated boxed signs are used, light letters on a dark background shall be encouraged. Light colored backgrounds which make the sign appear larger shall be discouraged.[\(39\)](#)

## UD 11.8: Lighting

Specific lighting guidelines are listed below:

1. In designated commercial districts, accent lighting for buildings and landscaping shall be designed to enhance the night time atmosphere.
2. Parking and walkway areas shall be illuminated by 1 foot candle minimum lighting to avoid dark spots and excessive dark/light ratios.
3. Only low level indirect lighting shall be used adjacent to residential properties. The level of lighting and location of light source shall not result in glare toward residential areas.
4. The approved lighting standard with modular add-on options for hanging flower baskets and public signage is VISCO #VI-C-C3-S/12'-0," 100 WHPS.
5. Any light source over 10 feet high shall incorporate a cut-off shield to prevent the light source from being directly visible from off site areas.
6. When seen from the outside, the lighting of interior spaces shall not brightly contrast with

adjacent buildings.

## 5.2 UD 12: BUILDING ENHANCEMENT STANDARDS

Many existing commercial buildings in Novato have distinctive architectural qualities which make important contributions to and compliment the "small town character" of the community. In many cases, these qualities could be further improved upon or emphasized in a variety of ways to their benefit. Improvements to building exteriors, landscaping, accessories, signs, utilities, and parking all add to the quality of downtown Novato. When considering such work, the following criteria shall be used as a guide:

### UD 12.1: Building Design and Facades

Building design and facade improvements to existing storefronts and other property frontages, are important to enhance the pedestrian character of the Downtown. Opportunities for business and property owners to potentially obtain matching funding from the City to improve their building facades are described in Chapter 6. Facade Improvements Program.

1. Exterior building surfaces shall be cleaned and repainted as necessary.
2. Color schemes shall be harmonious with surrounding structures consistent with the architectural time period of the building.
3. Deteriorated siding, trim, doors, windows, awnings and roof materials shall be repaired or replaced.
4. Original architectural features, fixtures and hardware shall be retained or replaced with compatible elements.
5. Unnecessary non-original attachments to the building shall be removed (such as antennas, air conditioners, electrical conduits, etc.)
6. New siding, awnings, trim and accents shall be consistent with the basic design of the building as reflected in its style and period of construction as well as being compatible with other buildings in the neighborhood.
7. Proposed changes from the original design of the building shall be carried out consistently throughout the project and in a manner that compliments the original design.
8. Additions and alterations shall reflect the same basic design theme of the building including scale, style, form, materials and color.
9. Encourage periodic upgrades and changes to storefronts, such as changes to awnings every 5 years. Periodic changes reflect the competitive, industry-wide practice of enhancing storefronts to attract new customers and retain old ones.
10. Remodel building facades to make them more attractive, including removal of elements which mask underlying historic features. Replace worn windows and doors, cracked tiles and stucco. (See [Figure 43A](#) and [Figure 43B](#), an example of renovation of businesses at the southeast

corner of Second Street and Grant Avenue.) Such facade improvements would be eligible for matching funding under the proposed Facade Improvements Program discussed in Chapter 6.

#### **UD 12.2: Landscaping**

1. When landscaping exists, dead and obsolete plant materials, irrigation equipment and planter boxes shall be repaired or replaced.
2. Unnecessary or inappropriate pavement in landscaped areas shall be replaced with plant material.
3. Sidewalks shall be repaired wherever necessary to avoid accidents and preserve aesthetic qualities.
4. Special attention shall be directed to adding street trees, planting strips, pavement treatment and street furnishings to enhance the overall landscape setting in the neighborhood.
5. Refer to Figures 38, 39, 40 for coordinated street tree planting details and grates, decorative pavement patterns, trash receptacles, newspaper racks, outdoor lighting standards, bicycle racks and other decorative "streetscape" improvement details.

#### **UD 12.3: Accessories**

1. Deteriorated fencing, retaining walls, trash screens, etc., shall be repaired whenever necessary.
2. Accessories shall be of a style, material and color which are harmonious with the building architecture and the neighborhood character.
3. Screening shall be provided for outdoor storage areas, trash containers, air-conditioners and other unsightly equipment.

#### **UD 12.4: Signs**

1. Unneeded, obsolete, unsafe and deteriorated signs and other similar advertising devices shall be removed for safety and aesthetic reasons.
2. New signs shall be of appropriate type, size, style, material, location, color and method of lighting to harmonize with the building architectural theme and time period as well as the nature of the business conducted in the building.

#### **UD 12.5: Utilities**

1. Necessary utility lines, meters, boxes, transformers, antennas, conduits, etc. shall be installed in areas that will require the least alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the building and which will be the least visible to outlying public areas.
2. Architectural screening shall be used to conceal publicly visible utilities and mechanical and electrical equipment.

**UD 12.6: Parking**

1. Pot holes and cracks in parking surfaces and pedestrian walks shall be repaired. Grease smudges shall be removed.
2. Worn and faded parking surface graphics (e.g., parking space lines, handicapped parking designations, etc.) shall be repainted and repaired where necessary.
3. Preserving and expanding parking shall be a primary consideration when planning changes to commercial property. Landscape solutions shall be integrated with existing or reconfigured parking whenever possible. A more efficient circulation and parking layout along with the addition of compact spaces can increase parking spaces and generate usable areas for landscaping to help screen and beautify parking.

### 5.3 DESIGN GALLERY OF PHOTOS



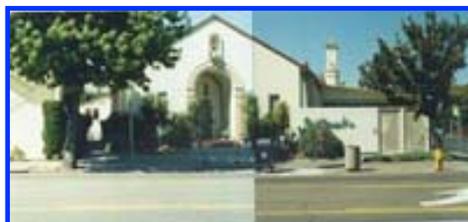
[1 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[2- Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[3 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[4 - Representative Architectural Styles](#)



[5 - Rep. Arch. Styles, Paseos, Inviting Facades, Mixed Use, Second Story Details](#)



[6 - Rep. Arch. Styles, Paseos, Inviting Facades, Mixed Use, Second Story Details](#)



7 - Western Facade Types



8 - Western Facade Types



9 - Representative Architectural Styles



10 - Representative Architectural Styles



11 - Little Awnings and Signage Details



12 - Signage Details - Simple Store Front



13 - Western Facade Types



14 - Western Facade Types



15 - Western Facade Type



16 - Pedestrian Scale Facades



17 - Facade Details



18 - Second Story Shades Sidewalk



19 - Lighted Paseo



20 - Paseo with Mixed Use and Farm Equipment



21 - Paseo



22 - Paseo



23 - Paseo and Courtyard



24 - Paseo, Courtyard, Street Furniture



25 - Signs, Banners, Mixed Use Second Floor



26 - Street Tree Treatment with River Rock



[27 - Tree Grate](#)



[28 - Tree Grate](#)



[29 - Street Tree Treatment with Brick and Flowers](#)



[30 - Tree Grate, Water Fountains, Information Sign, Planters](#)



[31 - Sidewalk Pavers and Entry to Stores](#)



[32 - Sidewalk Pavers with Utility Inset](#)



[33 - Pavers in Corner Bulb-Out](#)



[34 - Pavers with Water Feature](#)



[35 - Corner Pavers, Lighted Plaza Entry, No Curb](#)



[36 - Pavers, Decorative Fencing, Street Furniture, Utility Insets](#)



[37 - Hanging Signage](#)



[38 - Hanging Signage](#)



[39 - Directory Signage](#)



[40 - Directory Signage](#)



[41 - Historic Signage](#)



[42 - Historic Signage](#)



[43 - Historic Group Signage](#)



[44 - Paseo, Directory, Living Sculpture, Bird House](#)



[45 - Art and Planters](#)



[46 - Art and Planters](#)



[47 - Wall Mural](#)



[48 - Wall Mural](#)



[49 - Wall Mural](#)



[50 - Wall Mural](#)



[51 - Wall Mural](#)



[52 - Wall Mural](#)



[53 - Wall Mural](#)



[54 - Wall Mural](#)



[55 - Wall Mural](#)



[56 - Planters and Bollards](#)



[57 - Accent Planters](#)



[58 - Village Design Concept](#)



[59 - Village Design Concept](#)



[60 - Village Design Concept](#)



[61 - Village Design Concept](#)

[● Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

## **6. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **6.1 IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW**

This chapter deals with a wide range of programs and actions that are recommended for the successful revitalization of Downtown Novato. Major strategy components are outlined, public and private responsibilities and actions are described, and phasing and funding options of projects/ programs are identified.

The Downtown Novato Specific Plan will be implemented through existing and new funding and financing mechanisms, and existing and new regulatory measures. Most importantly, it will be implemented through active and on-going cooperation among property owners, business owners, citizens and the City of Novato.

A Specific Plan must be prepared, adopted and amended in the same manner as a General Plan, except that a Specific Plan may be adopted by resolution or by ordinance, and may be amended as often as deemed necessary by the City Council. No local public works project may be approved; no tentative map, final map or parcel map may be approved; and no zoning ordinance may be adopted or amended within an Area covered by a Specific Plan unless they are consistent with the adopted Specific Plan. No previous Specific Plan has been adopted for the Downtown.

#### **6.1.1 Creating a Positive Revitalization Environment**

The revitalization of Downtown Novato contemplated by this Specific Plan cannot be accomplished solely by public projects and programs. In all successful downtown revitalization programs, private initiative and investment in buildings, businesses and inventory greatly outweighs public investment in public facilities and infrastructure. Typically during the early stages of downtown revitalization a relatively high level of public involvement and assistance is needed to "seed" the revitalization efforts by implementing several key components which become catalysts to stimulate private initiative and confidence for investment. As implementation proceeds, private property owners and businesses are expected to assume an ever increasing role in this effort. The implementation strategy in this Specific Plan identifies a series of public, private, and some public/private actions designed to create a revitalized Downtown over the three implementation periods or time horizons described later in this chapter.

#### **6.1.2 Actions Already Underway**

Several actions, identified during the planning and community participation process for the Downtown Specific Plan, have been endorsed by the City and are already being implemented. Among these actions already underway:

1. An Economic Development Master Plan is in preparation, a primary component of which is

identification of key implementation strategies to achieve economic development goals focused on the Downtown and advocacy for immediate allocation of vital resources to implement those strategies.

2. The Novato Theater restoration feasibility study is underway, the results of which are expected to provide the basis on which the restoration project, consistent with the goals of the draft Specific Plan, could move forward; the study is expected to be completed this fall.
3. The City has allocated funding for preparation of a feasibility study for the train depot restoration project; the study is expected to be completed this year.
4. The City approved funding to be matched by the Chamber of Commerce for a part-time Economic Development Specialist position to initiate and implement a proactive business retention and attraction program and to provide some assistance to the Downtown/Old Town Business Association (DOTBA) in marketing and promoting the Downtown.
5. The vacant lot on the southwest corner of Grant Avenue and Seventh at the western gateway to Downtown has been developed with a use and building design and layout consistent with the goals of the draft Specific Plan which was communicated to the project developer through active involvement of the DSPSC Chair and staff during preliminary project review.
6. Private efforts are underway involving the automotive businesses in the "north of Old Town" area to develop a parking lot project addressing critical off street parking needs in that immediate area.
7. Private efforts have introduced a form of public art into the Downtown by creating decoratively painted fire hydrants that are attractive and whimsical artistic endeavors along Grant Avenue.
8. Several capital improvement projects in the Downtown are funded; some are proceeding to be activated this year and others are awaiting the adoption of the DSP to provide more definitive guidance on final project design and proper sequencing and coordination so as to least disrupt Downtown businesses.
9. Several special events focused in the Downtown (July 4th Parade, Art & Wine Festival, Farmers' Market and holiday-related retail promotions) have sustained and increased their draw of participants and have established a recognized identity in the Downtown.
10. So that prospective development projects in the Downtown will not be "delayed" (because the draft Specific Plan is not yet adopted), a coordinated communication system among various City departments about prospective development applicants has been implemented to allow for early discussions between applicants and the DSPSC Chair and staff around development and design matters that would ensure consistency with the draft Specific Plan. Several projects

within the Downtown are proceeding to be built such as Noah's Bagels/Peet's Coffee and the Redwood Credit Union at Grant and First.

11. The City Council has approved funding for a location of a banner spanning De Long between Reichert and Highway 101.

### **6.1.3 Implementation Responsibilities**

#### *Private Property Owners, Business Owners and Investors*

The long term success of any downtown revitalization program depends largely upon the actions of private property owners, business owners, and investors. Not only will there be a need for positive private actions involving building rehabilitation/restoration, facade improvements, new private development and the provision of private parking, but there will also be a need for a greater level of private financial support for the Downtown/Old Town Business Association, which will have a key role in Downtown revitalization. It is very likely that a business improvement or comparable assessment district will be needed to fund DOTBA programs and activities.

#### *Downtown/Old Town Business Association*

The Downtown/Old Town Business Association (DOTBA) has begun promotion of downtown revitalization and should assume an even greater role during the implementation of the Specific Plan. Among the efforts this Plan envisions for DOTBA are:

- Creation of a business improvement or comparable assessment district to bring the benefits of centralized management and coordination in marketing, merchandising and promoting the Downtown as a unique retail/commercial district.
- Generation of support for additional publicly and/or privately funded parking resources.
- Generation of support for public/private funding for construction and maintenance of streetscape improvements.

#### *City of Novato and Redevelopment Agency*

It is anticipated that the City of Novato will assume responsibility for the actual implementation of all public improvement projects identified in this Plan including public parking, streetscape improvements, street and drainage projects and community-serving facilities. In the event that downtown property and business owners (the Downtown stakeholders) request that the City Council create a Downtown Redevelopment Project to assist in funding the implementation of this Downtown Specific Plan, the Redevelopment Agency would assume responsibility for project implementation as authorized by the Redevelopment Plan proposed by the Downtown stakeholders. The Specific Plan was created through the work of the City Council-appointed Downtown Specific Plan Steering

Committee. The Steering Committee includes business owners, property owners, citizens and other stakeholders. To drive implementation of the Specific Plan, with continuity and sustained energy over the different planning horizons, requires maintaining and enlarging this group as the ongoing stakeholder entity, with additions and changes to the current membership.

**IM 2: Maintain/Enlarge Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee to Guide Implementation.** Maintain and enlarge the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee to function as follows:

- in an advisory capacity to the City on Downtown Specific Plan implementation issues;
- as the Downtown Project Area Advisory Committee to the Redevelopment Agency, if redevelopment is pursued;
- as the Board of Directors for Downtown Business Improvement District, if the establishment of a Downtown Business Improvement District is pursued.

City staff to this Steering Committee should be both the Deputy Redevelopment Director and the City Manager to guarantee expeditious fulfillment of the Plan.

The success of the Specific Plan depends upon structures and processes which will move forward implementation and make real the Plan. It is, therefore, wise to empower a focused but well-representative stakeholders group to serve collectively in the three areas outlined above.

## **6.2 PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS**

### **6.2.1 Public (City) Actions to Implement the Plan**

A broad range of public actions are recommended for the successful implementation of the Specific Plan. The priority and timing of these public actions are described more fully below.

**6.2.1.1 Public Infrastructure and Facilities Improvements.** The City of Novato's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is important for implementation of the Specific Plan. It includes the City's projects to improve streets and utilities over the next several years, and other longer-term public projects. (See the annually-updated CIP for the schedule for implementation.) Programmed projects in the five-year CIP Budget for Downtown are described below, beginning with funded projects, followed by partially funded projects and unfunded projects. These projects are also referenced in Chapter 3 projects.

#### Funded Projects

1. Grant Avenue Pavement Repairs, Fourth Street To Scott Court (Project No. 93-012). The

- excessive crown along Grant Avenue would be graded down and repaved. Bond-funded construction is scheduled for calendar year 1999. If feasible, damage to sidewalks on (west) Grant should be repaired, and missing gutter pans should be replaced. Construction will be phased to minimize disruption to retail businesses and other Downtown activities and to follow the Downtown Street and Drainage Improvements (Project No. 91-012). *(Estimated cost: \$732,945; contract award by June 30, 1999, to follow Project No. 91-012 - Drainage.)*
2. Downtown Street And Drainage Improvements (Project No. 91-012). Drainage improvements would occur on Sweetser Avenue, Machin Avenue, Reichert Avenue and Vallejo Avenue, but not Grant Avenue. Funding would come from bonds and participation by benefitting property owners. *(Estimated cost: \$1,175,363); contract award by June 30, 1998.)*
  3. Blodgett Lane Drainage Improvements (Project 96-006). This project would improve drainage from the City-owned property at 908 Sherman Avenue, adjacent to the alley, Blodgett Lane. A new storm drain pipe would be constructed to connect to existing drains in Reichert Avenue. The alignment should consider potential improvements to the Zenk parking lot. *(Estimated cost: \$50,375.)*
  4. Downtown Intersection And Traffic Signal Timing Improvements (Project No. 95-004). A computer system would coordinate existing traffic signals, including three in the Downtown area: De Long/Reichert; De Long/Redwood; and Grant/Redwood. *(Estimated cost: \$414,995; construction would occur in 1997/98).*
  5. Community Banner Poles Across De Long Between Reichert and Highway 101 (Project No. 96-018). One or more gateway banners would be stretched across streets between poles, designed to be compatible with proposed decorative lamp posts. The potential sites are discussed in Chapter 5. *(Estimated cost for De Long banner project: \$25,133.)*

#### Partially Funded Projects and Unfunded Projects

1. Gymnastics Center/Teen Center (Project No. 96-014 Partially Funded). Funds would be provided for a center for indoor gymnastics and youth/teen activities in the Downtown area. The former Goodman's building at 950 Seventh Street has been purchased by the City. Construction would begin in early 1998. *(Estimated cost: \$2,539,336 of which \$1 million is for project development and construction.)*
2. Community Center (Project 96-013, partially funded). In 1995 the Council appropriated \$2 million for a community center, preferably in Downtown. Funding in the amount of \$400,000 has been granted for acquisition of the Novato Theater for performing arts and movies. An unallocated balance of approximately \$1.5 million remains for other community facilities.
3. Olive Avenue Street And Drainage Improvements, Phase III- Redwood Boulevard To Railroad Ave. (Project No. 97-001, partially funded). Phase III of this project would complete storm drainage and pavement improvement for Olive Ave., scheduled for preliminary

engineering work to start in 2000. The CIP project description acknowledges that the project could be expanded to include other improvements such as sidewalks, street lights, turn lanes, bike lanes and utility undergrounding. It should also be noted that the large open site north of Olive Avenue is being considered as a possible multi-modal transit center site, which could influence street improvement requirements. (*Estimated cost: \$785,540.*)

4. Grant Avenue Sidewalk Repair and Beautification Between Seventh and Railroad Avenue (unfunded). This program is established to improve pedestrian safety, to beautify Grant Ave. and to enhance economic viability. If funded, this program would help to fund streetscape improvements, including historic streetlights, benches, decorative sidewalks, street trees, wider sidewalks at corners, and other pedestrian amenities. (*Estimated cost: \$950,000.*)
5. Downtown Parking Improvements (unfunded). Parking would be improved at the "Zenk" parking lot, and a public parking garage would be built adjacent to the Community House. The parking structure would be built on a site in the City Hall Campus now occupied by employee/public parking spaces. A new lot at Machin and Vallejo would serve the automotive/industrial area. The demand was based upon the finding of a deficit in long term parking in this area. (*Estimated costs: Zenk lot \$150,000; Community House parking structure \$1,059,500 - 1,500,000; Machin/Vallejo lot \$300,000 - 500,000.*)
6. Sherman Avenue Improvements and Beautification (unfunded). Pavement would be repaired and the street paved with an attractive paving pattern, as discussed under Chapter 3). (*Estimated cost: \$475,000.*)
7. Traffic Signal On Redwood Boulevard At Olive Avenue (unfunded). Traffic signal and turn lanes would be provided (from Olive) subject to payment of in lieu fees by benefitting property owners. (*Estimated cost: \$553,200.*)

**6.2.1.2 Administrative and Regulatory Streamlining Consistent with Development Standards and Design Guidelines.** Chapters 3 and 5 set forth land uses, development standards, and design guidelines for public and private development within the Specific Plan area. The successful implementation of the Plan requires effective and coordinated administration of these standards and guidelines by professional staff on a cooperative basis with property and business owners with the goal of expediting the entitlement/permit process for projects consistent with this Plan.

The revitalization of Downtown Novato requires both administrative and regulatory streamlining, as well as concerted cooperation of all affected parties: property owners, business owners, community business interests, the City of Novato, and interested citizens. Coordination among the multitude of planning and service districts throughout the region is also necessary to a sustainable local economy.

**■ IM 3: Implement Administrative and Regulatory Streamlining.** Implement administrative and regulatory streamlining for all projects and programs consistent with the Specific Plan. Encourage developers and property owners to contact City staff early

in the entitlement/permit process, so that City plans and ordinances and City expectations can be made clear. Identify opportunities to expedite decision-making, consistent with this Specific Plan.

An Economic Development Master Plan (EDMP) is being prepared that provides implementation strategies to achieve economic development goals, pursuant to Goal 5 of the Economic Development and Fiscal Vitality Chapter of the General Plan. The EDMP will provide further analysis of implementation strategies identified in this Specific Plan. Additionally, the EDMP will coordinate those strategies with other economic development activities in Novato to guarantee consistency, coordination and comprehensive fiscal planning.

**6.2.1.3 General Plan and Zoning Changes.** Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance (and General Plan, where necessary), are required to make them consistent with the Specific Plan. Specific ordinance amendments should facilitate the project review process, create incentives for property development and improvement, and help recruit and retain healthy businesses in Downtown.

■ **IM 4:** Amend the Downtown Specific Plan Boundary. Amend the Downtown Specific Plan boundary to include: the portion of the median island in Redwood Boulevard opposite the Redwood Trailer Park property, and all corners in the Redwood/DeLong intersection (to ensure stylist integrity).

■ **IM 5:** Deleted [\(39B\)](#)

■ **IM 6:** Amend the Land Use Designation for the Former "Goodman's" Property. The City has purchased the former Goodman's building for use as a gymnastics and youth activities/teen center. In keeping with the new use, the General Plan land use designation shall be changed from Downtown Core (DC) to Community Facilities (CF).

■ **IM 7:** Amend the Land Use Designation for Redwood Trailer Park. The Redwood Trailer Park parcel adjacent to the "Young Brothers" site shall be reclassified in the General Plan from Commercial Industrial (CI) to General Commercial (GC), the same classification as the "Young Brothers" site. This change will allow for and encourage consistent and compatible development of these parcels.

■ **IM 8:** Amend the Land Use Designation for First Street (West Side) Between Grant and Olive. The land use designation along the west side of First Street between Grant and Olive shall be reclassified in the General Plan from Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (R-10) to Mixed Use (MU). Existing single family residential structures may be retained. [\(40\)](#)

■ **IM 9:** Vacate Portion of Front Street Adjacent to Mission Lodge. Only for parcel consolidation to accomplish the specific multi-use/multiple facade policy plan as

described in Chapter 3.2 Mission Lodge, vacate Front Street between De Long and the northern property line of the Mission Lodge site and reclassify the closed portion of Front Street to General Commercial (GC), the same classification as the adjacent parcels.

■ **IM 10:** Amend the Ordinance Allowing Sidewalk Encroachments for Businesses. In the interest of encouraging outdoor merchandising and special seasonal events, the City of Novato passed an ordinance on Jan. 11, 1994 allowing display, during daylight hours, of merchandise and "quasi-public improvements" (e.g., benches), on public sidewalks, subject to the issuance of a License Agreement and maintenance of commercial general liability insurance. The display must be placed immediately in front of a merchant's place of business. Some businesses have responded to the new ordinance, introducing color and activity which encourages pedestrian activity. Unfortunately, some owners have created unattractive displays (e.g., miscellaneous sale items) which are a hindrance to pedestrians. Therefore, Chapter 15-4 of the Municipal Code shall be amended to add design standards. Private benches in the public right of way would be allowed provided that they conform to the DSP Streetscape Design Guidelines (wood bench with cast iron frame) and/or selected from a City-approved manufacturer's list of benches, and subject to the execution of a License Agreement with the City.<sup>(41)</sup>

■ **IM 11:** Enact Shared Parking. The City of Novato shall enact a shared parking ordinance by amendment to the parking provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, allowing shared parking in new projects where a parking study prepared by an applicant demonstrates that peak parking occupancies for different proposed uses on the same site would not conflict, and that parking requirements can be reduced by a specified number of spaces. General Plan Community Identity Program 12.1g. allows for shared parking and driveways for commercial uses having day/night activity patterns. Parking can be effectively shared if the uses sharing the parking have different periods of the day when their demands for parking peak.<sup>(42)</sup> For example, retail and office can often share parking, and office and residential uses can share spaces.

■ **IM 12:** New Permanent Parking Standard for Restaurants in Specific Plan Area. In 1996, the City Council amended Ordinance 1346 amending the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the standard for parking for restaurants on Grant Avenue between Railroad Avenue and Seventh Street, to encourage development of restaurants and night life. The standard of one parking space per 50 square feet of customer seating, waiting, or cocktail lounge area was reduced to one space per 200 square feet. The new permanent standard shall be one parking space per 200 square feet.

■ **IM 13:** Evaluate Parking Requirements for Banks During Periodic Updates to the Zoning Ordinance. Changes in the banking industry may reduce the number of vehicular trips which people make to banks. If this is the case, there may be excess

capacity in existing bank parking lots, and parking requirements in the zoning ordinance may be excessive. Such changes are normally monitored throughout the country by the Institute of Traffic Engineers, which provides trip generation and parking generation figures for all types of development. Evaluate parking demand for banks when there is the opportunity for existing and new nearby development projects to share bank parking, and incorporate standards into a shared-parking ordinance. Consider shared bank parking at the Home Savings Bank at the southeast corner of Grant Ave. and 7<sup>th</sup> Street (with the gymnastics/teen center in the former Goodman's building); and at WestAmerica Bank on the southwest corner of Grant/Redwood (with a potential community center on the north side of the intersection, and with a potentially refurbished Novato Theater).

**IM 14:** Amend Parking Time Limits. Consider establishing two-hour time limit on parking throughout the Downtown with increased enforcement.

**IM 15:** Allow Increased Height Limit for Housing. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for an increase in the allowed height of buildings in the Downtown Specific Plan Area for mixed use projects containing housing, where the top floor is used only for housing. This policy would apply to mixed use in the Downtown Core as well as to areas designated Mixed Use. This amendment is consistent with General Plan CI Policy, which states: "Consider amendments to the building height regulations in the Zoning Ordinance to allow additional height for well-designed structures Downtown that do not obstruct scenic views."

**IM 16:** Encourage Consolidate of Substandard Lots. Development in the Commercial/Industrial district, which combines up to two parcels each 25 feet or less in width, shall be encouraged. The Specific Plan discourages lot consolidation for larger development in order to preserve the small scale character of downtown (Downtown Core area). However, consolidation of very narrow and long parcels in the crowded Commercial/Industrial (CI) portion of Downtown is warranted to encourage clean-up of small sites, reduction in the number of curb-cuts and more efficient use of land, particularly on Vallejo Street, east of Redwood Ave.<sup>(43)</sup>

**IM 17:** Revise the Sign Regulations. Amend the Novato Municipal Code to include sign standards for the Downtown that promote pedestrian-scale signs.<sup>(44)</sup>

**IM 18:** Prohibit Free-standing Signs. Prohibit free-standing on premises or off premises signs in the Specific Plan Area, except for the General Commercial district, subject to design review.

**IM 19** and **IM 20** Deleted.<sup>(45)</sup>

■ **IM 21: Adopt a Live/Work Ordinance** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to designate appropriate land uses and other standards for live/work units. This is consistent with Program 9.1 of the Economic Development and Fiscal Vitality Chapter of the General Plan, which requires the definition of standards related to noise, dust, odors, traffic and related potential nuisances, and the designation of appropriate land uses for live/work units.

The Specific Plan specifies that live/work units are acceptable in the Commercial/Industrial (North of Old Town) area.

■ **IM 22: Revise Awning Regulations**. The placement of awnings on storefronts in the Downtown Specific Plan area will require awning permits. The Community Development Department has recently streamlined the process for reviewing awning permits to make it both cheaper and faster for the applicant. The process is as follows: 1) A business owner wishing to place an awning on a storefront first picks up the packet of information from the Community Development Department on how to apply for an awning permit. 2) The packet contains step-by-step procedures for submitting an awning permit. The permit includes an encroachment permit review (if necessary), a sign permit (if necessary), and a building permit. Counter staff at the Community Development Department are available to assist in preparing the application. 3) Once the application is complete, the review and issuance of permits can be done "over the counter" in a day.

Awnings for buildings in historic districts currently are required by City Code to be reviewed by the Design Review Committee. This process involves many of the same steps outlined above except that staff prepares a report for the Design Review Committee. The Design Review Committee will either approve the awning as proposed, disapprove, or approve with conditions. This process often takes a month to six weeks before the Design Review Committee completes their review and could take longer. Given the style guidelines in the Specific Plan, it is recommended that Design Review Committee be removed from the process and all awning permits be processed identically provided there is no alteration/modification/demolition of existing historic structures.

**6.2.1.4 Parking Management Program.** As the Specific Plan is implemented, pressures on available parking resources may be expected to increase. Although the development of new and expanded parking facilities may provide some relief, a parking management program should also be implemented.

■ **IM 23: Parking Management Program**. The City shall consider a parking management program which includes:

- Designation of areas for employee parking

- Adjustment of time zones
- Parking permit system
- Increased/targeted parking regulations enforcement

### **6.2.1.5 Expansion of Police and Other Services.**

■ **PS 1: Police Services.** Increase police services in the Downtown including bicycle patrols, foot patrols and parking enforcement to support the vision of a clean, safe, hospitable Downtown both during the day and at night. This is particularly important at all hours in locations where youths gather and intimidate passers by.

■ **PS 2: Trash/Litter/Graffiti.** The Specific Plan requires increased frequency and level of maintenance service. Standard response times for the removal of graffiti and repair to vandalized property need to be implemented.

■ **PS 3: Storm Drain Pollution (Particularly North of Grant/Mulligan Lane/Nugent Lane).** Promptly enforce all point and non-point sources pollution and storm water and drainage regulations. Point and non-point sources pollution in storm water run-off are serious environmental and legal issues. Serious storm water pollution by auto service and painting operations is occurring north of Grant on Mulligan Lane and Nugent Lane due to irresponsible business activities and lack of enforcement. These situations need prompt attention through all permitting and enforcement processes.

■ **PS 4: Fire and Other Disaster Areas.** Enforce existing regulations and consider implementation of new regulations to ensure fire protection and adequate emergency response times. Several areas of the Downtown have fire and other disaster emergency access problems. One such area includes the blocks north of Sweetser where fire and emergency access lanes are often blocked by parked vehicles and dumpsters.

### **6.2.2 Public/Private Actions to Implement the Plan**

Some implementation efforts will require coordinated public/private actions, such as City/developer interest in pursuing a development agreement for complex projects; City/business and property owners participating in a facade improvements program; City/DOTBA/Chamber of Commerce marketing the Downtown for business retention and attraction and building community support/media awareness for Downtown.

**6.2.2.1 Development Agreements.** Development agreements between cities and developers can be effective ways to facilitate implementation of Specific Plans, pursuant to Government Code 65865. Development agreements give developers, who have yet to attain a vested right to develop, a degree of assurance that their projects will not be nullified by some future local policy or regulation change (e.g., a rezoning). In exchange, the local jurisdiction may receive certain concessions (e.g., affordable housing as part of projects). Agreements are recorded and remain in effect for a specified period of

time.

Such concessions may exceed normal exactions, because the agreements are viewed as voluntary contracts rather than police power enactments. However, a Development Agreement does not prevent a city from applying new rules, regulations and policies in subsequent actions which do not conflict with the applicable rules, regulations and policies set forth in the agreement. The City of Novato should stipulate which existing rules, regulations and policies will be "frozen" by the agreement.

An agreement may stipulate the uses of the property, the density or intensity of use, the maximum height and size of proposed buildings. Other specified conditions, terms, restrictions and requirements for subsequent discretionary actions must not be so restrictive as to effectively prevent development that would otherwise meet an agreement's land use, density and intensity specifications.

**IM 24:** Encourage Appropriate Use of Development Agreements. The Specific Plan encourages the appropriate use of development agreements as follows:

1. Make potential developers aware of the City's willingness to consider development agreements for complex projects, where development specificity and timing are in the best interests of the City and developer.
2. Consider development agreements for the following projects described in Chapter 3, not to the exclusion of others:

Railroad Depot and Pini Mill Area.

Mission Lodge

"Young Brothers" and Adjacent Parcels

Northeast Corner of Fourth and Grant Development

Southeast Corner of De Long and Redwood

Potential Sites for New Housing

3. All development agreements shall have a term length or other "sunsetting" mechanism such that no development agreement term length is greater than 10 years maximum. For the sites/projects identified in 2 above, the term length of the development agreement shall be five years to create an incentive for timely development and to discourage leaving undeveloped or underdeveloped project areas under existing conditions.

**6.2.2.2 Facade Improvements Program.** Physical upgrades to the frontages of properties in Downtown are essential to enhancement of the pedestrian environment. The revitalization of Downtown cannot depend upon public street and sidewalk improvements alone. The obstacle to implementing upgrades is cost - the rent structure in Downtown does not make facade improvements financially feasible for most businesses at this time. Assistance by the City is necessary in order to implement initial upgrades until the rent structure rises to the level necessary to support private

investment. General Plan EC Program 15 states: "Consider financial programs to encourage businesses to renovate/retrofit commercial structures to meet market needs and stay in Novato."

■ **IM 25: Facade Improvements Program.** The City shall implement a Facade Improvements Program. Facade Improvements Programs, as administered by a number of other jurisdictions in the Bay Area,<sup>(46)</sup> involve matching grants by cities or redevelopment agencies to businesses who wish to participate in the program. Eligible improvements normally include storefront upgrades (e.g., historic preservation and modernization), signage and graphics, lighting, painting, plaster/stucco treatment, wood treatment, installation or repair of awnings and canopies, windows, doors, fences and gates, landscaping and irrigation, etc., and architectural design and construction documents for these improvements.

Routine maintenance and structural improvements are ineligible, as are improvements to sides of buildings not visible from public areas. This stipulation is to ensure that improvements are directly visible from public streets. Therefore, the Facade Improvements Program would not help to implement General Plan EC Program 11.1: "Consider establishing an administrative program to facilitate the renovation of existing commercial buildings to meet current code."

Some jurisdictions provide outright grants of \$500 for architectural design services or approved improvements, with no match required by the business or property owner. More typical are public grants to individual businesses of \$2,000 to \$5,000 to be equally matched by the businesses. Grants are awarded to projects which are consistent with adopted design guidelines. The public funding is provided directly to the contractor upon completion of the project.

The Downtown Specific Plan recommends implementation of a program which would allocate a sum of approximately \$100,000 in matching grant funding. Allocated on a 50% match basis, improvements to perhaps 20-25 businesses within the Downtown Specific Plan Area would be possible, if the maximum grant were \$4000 (resulting in an \$8,000 improvement, with match). The minimum grant should be about \$2,000. The funds would be available on a first-come, first-served basis within each of three areas: East Grant, West Grant and North of Old Town. If properly allocated around the Downtown, as few as 20 improved businesses could have a positive impact on their surroundings. If there were sufficient interest, the appropriation of additional grant money could be considered.

Principal guidelines for the program are as follows:

1. Emphasize improvements to storefronts, including awnings, signage graphics, lighting, and paint.
2. Emphasize landscaped fences to screen outdoor storage areas, particularly for properties

highly visible upon entrances to the Downtown.

3. Comply with the design guidelines defined in Chapter 5, and additional guidelines which may be adopted as part of the ordinance for the program.
4. Consider "breezeways" between the north side of Grant Avenue and Scown Lane and between Scown and Sweetser as eligible for matching grant funding under the proposed Facade Improvements Program. A condition of eligibility would include a requirement that breezeways remain open during the normal business hours of the participating business, and are maintained in a clean and safe condition.
5. Publicize the program. For example, encourage business owners on the north side of Grant between "Marvin's Restaurant" and the corner of First and Grant to participate in the program.

**6.2.2.3 Marketing of Downtown for Desired Development.** The City and Downtown/Old Town Business Association (DOTBA) and Chamber of Commerce should together actively seek out prospective new businesses to locate in Downtown.

**IM 26: Development Projects Desired By The City.** The City shall encourage the development of the following public and private uses at appropriate locations in Downtown.

This list does not preclude other potential development projects in Downtown, such as those listed under Chapter 6.

- Restaurants
- More retail stores (esp. upscale men's apparel, children's clothing, kitchen supplies, bed and bath store)
- Performing arts center (Theater and Community House renovation)
- More entertainment and night-life activities
- Small hotel, bed and breakfast
- Museum
- Branch post office
- Micro Brewery/Restaurant
- A food store featuring organic and upscale produce
- A bookstore

Some of these uses, such as retail stores and restaurants, could be accommodated within existing buildings; others, such as a small hotel, may require new development. There are many underutilized properties in Downtown where the suggested uses could be considered.

This list of targeted uses shall help to achieve some of the following Specific Plan objectives:

- Expanding of business activity hours into the evening.
- Bringing new customers to downtown who otherwise might not be attracted.
- Avoiding direct competition with Vintage Oaks.
- Reinforcing existing tenants in Downtown.
- Providing a pedestrian-oriented people place.

## Office Development Potential

There is limited potential for major office development in Downtown, with the possible exception of the properties designated Mixed Use at the southeast intersection of De Long Avenue and Redwood Boulevard. There are also many competing vacant and underutilized properties outside of Downtown which can accommodate demand for large office space users. Over the longer term (>10 years), demand for small office, executive suites-type space should increase, again predicated upon the creation of a lively, attractive, pedestrian-oriented Downtown. The Specific Plan assumes that most office space development will be done consistent with the "village design" concept.

### 6.2.2.4 Building Community Support/Media Awareness and Support for Downtown

■ **IM 27:** Implement Information Outreach Program. Implement a program of information outreach, consistent with General Plan CI Program 16.1, in order to facilitate implementation of the Specific Plan.

■ **IM 28:** Assist with Promotional Materials Attracting Businesses to Novato. Consistent with General Plan EC Program 12.2: "Assist in publishing and distributing promotional brochures and information about Novato to attract businesses to the City," include news and promotional stories in the City's quarterly newsletter to attract local residents to Downtown.

■ **IM 29:** Annual Design and Beautification Awards. Recognize the achievements of property and business owners through annual design and beautification awards, featured in the news media.

### 6.2.3 Private Actions to Implement the Plan

The successful implementation of the Downtown Specific Plan will require the active participation of the private sector. Support of and participation by property and business owners in funding the construction and maintenance of parking and streetscape improvements will be critical. Other private actions will include rehabilitation/restoration of existing buildings, construction of new development, strengthening the DOTBA by active participation in downtown marketing and promotion efforts, and

in establishment and support for a Downtown Business Improvement District.

- **Strengthening the Downtown/Old Town Business Association (DOTBA)**

A high priority for the private sector is strengthening the organization and effectiveness of DOTBA so that it is prepared to take a strong and active role in the revitalization of Downtown. The creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) is recommended. Major responsibilities of the BID could include:

1. The preparation and implementation of a Downtown marketing/promotion program including business attraction and retention.
2. Coordination of arrangements and active participation in street festivals, art shows, sidewalk sales, grand openings and other public events.
3. Hiring of a part- or full-time coordinator to manage the efforts of the BID.

- **Formation of Special Assessment District(s) (Parking, Landscaping, etc.)**

To ensure private participation in Downtown revitalization, special assessment district (s) may be recommended to assume responsibility for funding streetscape maintenance activities and some parking and streetscape improvements over time.

- **Rehabilitation of Existing Buildings**

Although public assistance may be provided through the implementation of a rehabilitation and facade improvement loan or matching grant program, primary responsibility for the financing and rehabilitation of buildings in Downtown rests with private property owners.

- **New Private Development**

A number of opportunities for new private development will become available during the implementation of the Downtown Specific Plan. Some of these opportunities may be the direct result of public actions, however most will result from private initiative.

### **6.2.3.1 Business Improvement District.**

 **IM 30: Business Improvement District.** The City shall assist business owners in their consideration and establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) for the Specific Plan Area, pursuant to General Plan CI Program 17.1. The General Plan notes that Downtown

suffers from lack of centralized retail management which is normally provided in shopping centers. Creation of a BID with a part-time or full-time staff could help to bring property and business owners together to receive some of the competitive benefits which centralized direction can provide. Such a district could be financed by all business owners and property owners within the district boundaries, or alternatively, a BID could be formed only by business owners.

**6.2.3.2 Merchandising.** A number of businesses display merchandise poorly, with unnecessary clutter. Window signs frequently exceed sign area requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Broken tiles, peeling paint, broken awnings and other building features which are easily observed by pedestrians go unrepaired. Out-of-date merchandising and lack of maintenance not only affects the profitability of the offending business, it also affects the profitability of nearby businesses. Just as vacant lots along the streetfront interrupt pedestrian traffic flow, so too do unattractive storefronts.

**IM 31: Merchandising.** The City shall assist in facilitating the Downtown/Old Town Business Association's (DOTBA) consideration of retaining a qualified retail expert to visit selected businesses to observe operations and to make specific recommendations on improving merchandising and display. At the end of the visits, the retail specialist could make a presentation to other interested merchants, property owners, and City officials on the subject of successful merchandising in Novato.

### **6.2.3.3 Downtown Promotion Programs**

**IM 32: Downtown Promotion Programs.** The City shall encourage coordination between the Downtown/Old Town Business Association (DOTBA), the Chamber of Commerce, and the prospective Business Improvement District in developing a theme and strategy for promoting the Downtown, including such programs as:

1. "Shop Downtown Novato First" campaign
2. Adopting annual calendar by month of Downtown promotional events, fairs and festivals
3. Developing a tourism stimulation program
4. Coordinated extended retail hours

### 6.2.3.4 Parking Improvement District.

**IM 33: Parking Improvement District.** The City shall provide staff services on a cost-recovery basis to facilitate the creation and operation of a parking improvement district(s). A parking improvement district would allow property and business owners who would benefit from additional parking to tax themselves for the necessary improvements. The district would have to undertake the debt. The boundaries of the district must be large enough so that the assessments are reasonable but not so large that the majority of the businesses do not receive a benefit. One or more districts might be established for different benefit zones. The board should include some membership from business and property owners.

Assessments would be designated for acquisition and development of off-street parking facilities.

If a number of adjacent parcels are acquired that would make the construction of a parking structure feasible, a joint use facility should be considered. A joint use facility would provide spaces for retail uses on the ground floor with parking on the upper levels.

One method of funding a parking improvement district is to have the assessment based on the number of spaces that are required for a business but not provided. For example, if a business had a requirement of four spaces it would pay twice the assessment as a business that had a requirement of two spaces. A business that provided all of its parking requirements on-site would not pay any assessment. A business with a surplus of parking on-site could rent the surplus spaces to the district, provided they were available to the general public.

In order for a parking improvement district to succeed, it must have public support. The City of Novato established the "Old Town Parking Improvement Area" in 1984 for the purpose of obtaining funds for "the acquisition, construction, or maintenance of parking facilities for the benefit of the area." Businesses within one of two zones were charged an assessment based on the zone in which they were located and the category of benefit to be received by the improvements. The area was bounded by Vallejo Avenue, De Long Avenue, Redwood Boulevard, and the railroad tracks. Zone 1 included the area south of Scown Lane, and Zone 2 included the area north of Scown Lane. Zone 1 was charged higher fees because it would receive the greatest benefit from parking improvements.

However, this improvement area had many problems and was disestablished in 1989. In the end, many businesses did not pay their fees. Some merchants felt that the zoning was unfair because they were located too far away from the one location where parking

improvements were made with assessed funds. Other businesses wanted a voice in the collection of fees and expenditures. It appears that the improvement area's main sources of downfall were the lack of long-range plans for parking solutions that would benefit the Downtown area and the nature of the parking improvement area, which was assessed fees imposed by the City Council. Funds from the parking improvement area were used to construct and maintain the Zenk lot and to provide five new parking spaces on Grant Avenue. However, the area was not established with a specific plan for parking solutions and, therefore, the funds were not adequate to support the implementation of any long-term parking strategies. In 1989, when the improvement area was disestablished the remaining unexpended balance of \$25,000 was placed in a separate account that can only be used for parking in the Downtown.

Under current law, the City must hold an election on a proposed assessment. Property owners and renters subject to the assessment may vote. If a majority of the ballots submitted opposes the assessment, it must be abandoned.

Parking improvement districts have been used in many locations. They can successfully benefit an entire downtown area by assessing properties within a determined area to provide parking improvements. Long-range parking solutions must be based on projected parking needs, and assessments should be established with specific goals in mind. Business and property owners should have representation in their district's organization. It is critical that the mistakes of the "Old Town Parking Improvement Area" be avoided when a parking improvement district is created.

## **6.3 FINANCING MECHANISMS AND POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES**

### **6.3.1 Financing Mechanisms**

There are a variety of bond financing and assessment district mechanisms available to cities in California for public improvements. (See [Figure 44](#)). The implications of Proposition 218 on these financing resources is being evaluated statewide.

1. General Obligation Bonds. Projects benefitting an entire jurisdiction are suitable for General Obligation Bonds. Measure F improvements to streets and drainage improvements in the Downtown area were funded by G.O. Bonds. Although they are a simple financing method, G.O. Bonds require approval of voters in the entire jurisdiction. For the Specific Plan, only improvements such as community facilities would be expected to garner support. Another problem is the skewed assessments caused by Proposition 13.
2. Lighting and Landscaping District: Eligible projects include:
  - Landscaping and lighting by the City;

- Land acquisition for parks and open space areas;
- Expenses associated with formation of a LL&D.

Funding is through annual assessments of businesses included in an assessment district, initiated by a local government. Assessment notes may be issued based on ten years of accrued revenue.

3. Improvement Bond Act of 1915 (Streets and Highway Code 88500 et seq.): Eligible projects include streets and other public improvements.

Funding is from bond revenues, normally issued in uniform denominations with level annual debt service.

Advantages include market acceptability of bonds, although they normally require a reserve fund.

Disadvantages include the negative effect of potential default, even with "Limited Obligation Bonds (which limit the contingent liability of the city as issuer of the bonds).

4. Special Assessment Districts. Eligible projects include physical improvements shared among benefitting property owners such as a parking assessment district.

Funding is from assessments levied on property owners to pay back bonds (e.g., issued under authority of the Improvement Bond Act of 1915). Advantages include no required election. The process involves preparation of an Engineer's Report, mailed notice and two protest hearings, and election by affected property owners.

Disadvantages include apportionment based on special benefit, which frequently varies among property owners, and funding which does not lend itself to project phasing.

5. Benefit Assessment Act of 1982 (Government Code 54703 et seq.). Eligible services include:

- Drainage and flood control;
- Street lighting;
- Street maintenance;
- Bond deficiencies in 1915 Act Type "A" bond issues (limited to \$30 per parcel per year).

Funding is from annual assessments for services. It requires a majority vote of

registered voters within the area of assessment. For street maintenance or bond deficiencies, the election may be avoided if opposition is slight at the public hearing.

6. Business Improvement District. Eligible projects include:

- Facade improvements;
- Parking facilities;
- Street lighting;
- Retain Part-time Downtown Director;
- Produce Downtown Directory in print and signage;
- Organize regular Downtown promotions;
- Recruit targeted businesses to complete targeted mix.

Funding is from annual assessment of businesses (which can include property owners) who are included in an assessment district, initiated by a local government or business and property owners. The district is approved by the local government but is subject to an annual 50% protest vote of assessed businesses and property owners.

7. Integrated Financing Districts (Government Code 53175 et seq.) Eligible projects include assessment district projects.

Funding is from contingent assessments. It allows a property to escape assessment until a trigger mechanism is hit (e.g., filing of a final map). Property owners are assessed their share of infrastructure costs. Advantages include a protest percentage which is figured on all property participating in the financing, not just that subject to the contingent assessment. There is no super-majority override of a majority protest. Disadvantages include required notice and hearing, and the contingent assessment is recorded against the property.

8. Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program. Eligible projects include acquisition, construction or conversion of land and buildings and equipment by small businesses. Funding is from long term fixed rate second mortgages.

9. Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) Eligible projects include:

- Rail modernization;
- Transit capital improvements, including multi-modal transit centers;
- Bicycle facilities;
- Pedestrian facilities;
- Historic preservation of rail stations for public use(10% of ISTEA funding for such "enhancements")

Funding typically involves an 80% Federal grant/20% local match. There is competition for funds with other jurisdictions through the Bay Area's Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which submits its transportation improvement program to the state for approval. An ISTEA program will be enacted in 1997 to become effective October 1, 1997.

10. Certificates of Participation. Eligible activities include public facilities and equipment. Funding is provided by third party investors who purchase COPs, which are used to fund a project's construction. This is a type of "lease/purchase" financing, in which investors are paid over time by the public agency. At the end of the lease period, title to the improvements transfers to the public agency. Lease agreements are not considered public debt and have no debt coverage requirement. COPs require only a 50% simple majority approval by the voters. Novato's Local Measure D imposes some restrictions on the use of COPs.
11. Downtown Redevelopment Project Area. Eligible activities include public facilities, parking, facade improvements, street lighting, street drainage, parks, beautification and infrastructure. The City does not have a redevelopment program/project area in the Downtown at this time. The Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee investigated/visited numerous Downtown areas in Bay Area cities as part of this planning process. Those Downtowns considered most successful in their revitalization efforts all used redevelopment funding from their Downtown Redevelopment Project area resources. The use of redevelopment does not require any new taxes or assessments. Funding is generated from the existing property tax base. Redevelopment can be limited to its use solely as a financing tool. It can be shaped by those stakeholders directly affected in the project area. Downtown stakeholders can recommend that the use of redevelopment in the Downtown exclude the power of eminent domain and any special planning authority that is unacceptable or inconsistent with the community's goals for the Downtown.
12. Mello-Roos Community Facilities District. Although Mello-Roos bonds have great flexibility as to the structure of a special tax, the area taxed and the facilities to be financed, it is unlikely that 2/3 of the voters in the district would consent to a special tax without additional value being created through new private development.
13. Revenue Bonds. Revenue bonds are repaid by income generated from the facility being bonded. No revenue-producing public facilities are anticipated in the Specific Plan, so this financing mechanism would be infeasible.
14. Infrastructure Financing District (Government Code 5395 et seq.) This is a new

mechanism. It allows the use of tax increment funds to help pay for infrastructure (may not include any area in a redevelopment project area). This can increase the funds available for infrastructure without additional burden on the property, but at the expense of the general fund. It may have limited potential, as each agency sharing in the property tax revenues may veto the use of its portion of the tax increment. Even motivated agencies would be taking what would otherwise be general fund revenues and spending them on infrastructure. This is a procedure almost identical to Mello-Roos bonding requiring a two-thirds vote.

**IM 34: Consider Enactment of Financing Mechanisms.** The City shall consider on a timely basis, all budgets, appropriations and other financing resources necessary for the City actions mandated by this Plan. Such considerations could include sponsorship of special assessment or other districts for parking, lighting/landscaping, business area improvements or other related purposes necessary to implement the Plan.

### 6.3.2 Potential Funding Sources

The following sources of funding are available to the City to help implement particular physical improvements, some of which are dedicated to Downtown improvements.

1. Vintage Oaks Owner Participation Agreement funds for Community Facilities. The Hahn Corporation funding of \$4,156,000 was received in 1991, and is earning interest for the City. Funds have been used for community recreational facilities (the "Goodman's" building for a gymnastics and teen center), and performing arts (renovation of the old Novato Theater). Although the funds may be used for street repair, park development, beautification, public signage, etc., there are many competing demands upon use of the remaining funds.
2. Measure F. Measure F Bond Funds are being used to fund most of the cost of capital improvements to streets and drainage in the Downtown area. The availability of additional funds from these bonds is limited.
3. Civic Center Improvement Fund. About \$2.2 million is available for construction of "a new Civic Center." Interest from this fund is being transferred to a separate fund for City Hall rehabilitation, which will implement General Plan Community Identity Policy 20, maintain City Hall campus and appropriate community facilities Downtown.
4. Parking Improvement Fund. About \$25,000 is currently available. This funding should be considered for implementation of the Community House parking structure or other Downtown parking improvements.

5. Street Light Depreciation Fund. About \$330,000 is available for major replacement/repair work on the City-owned street light system, in Downtown and elsewhere in Novato.
6. Redevelopment Housing Set Aside Fund. About \$200,000 is available to improve, increase, and preserve the supply of low and moderate income housing pursuant to the Housing Element of the General Plan, anywhere in the City.
7. Housing Opportunity Fund. About \$25,000 is available to subsidize some below-market-rate housing, consistent with the General Plan Housing Element and guidelines adopted by Council. These funds could be available for Below Market Rate (BMR) housing anywhere in Novato.
8. Housing Trust Fund. About \$350,000 is available for first-time home ownership housing anywhere in Novato.

**IM 35:** Consider Enactment of Funding Mechanisms. The City shall consider on a timely basis, all budgets, appropriations and other funding resources necessary for the City actions mandated by this Plan. Such considerations could include sponsorship of special assessment or other districts for parking, lighting/landscaping, business area improvements and other funding mechanisms necessary to implement the Plan.

## 6.4 SCHEDULING AND PHASING

Considerable flexibility will be needed throughout Specific Plan implementation. Of special significance will be the ability to respond effectively to private development initiatives while coordinating implementation of planned public improvements. As a consequence, project priorities for the allocation of implementation resources have been organized within three time frames: short-term (one to three years); mid-term (three to seven years); and long term (beyond seven years). The Steering Committee has identified some projects as having a higher priority than others. The criteria used by the Committee in highlighting these projects are as follows:

- They can be "seeds" or catalysts for other improvements.
- They are or would be highly visible, and call attention to the revitalization process.
- They can be implemented soon, because of availability of funding, some of which may be lost if the project(s) are not undertaken within a specific time-frame.

- They are eligible as part of other City programs, such as the Capital Improvements Program.
- They engender concrete interest by developers/property owners in cooperative private development of key parcels.

On the basis of these criteria, the Steering Committee has identified projects to be significantly accomplished or show substantial progress during the time periods of 1-3 years, 3-7 years and after 7 years.

**IM 1: Specific Plan Implementation Schedule/Priorities.** The following identifies the Plan implementation schedule prioritized within the three stipulated planning horizons.

### **One to Three Years**

- Administrative and Regulatory measures (see Chapter 6).
- Replication/Renovation of Railroad Depot (part of Railroad Depot Area, see Chapter 3).
- Community Banner Poles (see Chapter 3).
- Grant Avenue Sidewalk Repair and Beautification Between Seventh Street and Railroad Avenue (see Chapter 6).
- Downtown Street and Drainage Improvements (see Chapter 6).
- Goodman's Building Reuse for Gymnastics and Teen Center (see Chapter 3).
- Organization and Cooperation among business and property owners and the City of Novato; establish a Downtown Business Improvement District (see Chapter 6).
- Grant Avenue Reconstruction/Pavement Rehabilitation (see Chapter 6).
- Community House Parking Structure (see Chapter 4).
- Facade Improvements Program (see Chapter 6).
- Vacant Lot at 858 Grant Avenue (see Chapter 3) (Public/Private).

### **Three to Seven Years**

- Railroad Depot/Pini Mill Area (see Chapter 3).
- Sherman Avenue Plaza and Nearby Areas (Zenk lot/Cain and Blodgett) (see Chapter 3).
- Olive Avenue Sidewalk Repair and Beautification (see Chapter 3). (Public/Private)
- Scown Lane (see Chapter 3). (Public/Private)

### **Over Seven Years**

- Town Plaza and Community Facilities (see Chapter 3).
- "Young Brothers" Property and Adjacent Parcels (Closure on Multi-modal Transit Center) (see Chapter 3).

Projects may be implemented sooner or later than indicated by the time horizons, depending upon needs of the City of Novato, new private or public initiatives and funding, changing real estate market conditions, and decisions by the City Council through the development of the City's Economic Development Master Plan, consideration shall be given to balancing development with market absorption over time.

#### **6.4.1 Projects Implemented Primarily By Property Owners or Developers over an Indeterminate Time Frame**

There are a number of projects in the Specific Plan which require the initiative of the private sector, although the City can be instrumental in facilitating their development. The City's role ranges from assistance in assembling properties to guiding the site planning and design of projects consistent with the vision for Downtown. These projects include:

- Railroad Depot/Pini Mill Area (see Chapter 3)
- Mission Lodge Area Development (see Chapter 3)

- "Theater District" Revitalization and Taco Bell Site Restaurant/Retail (see Chapter 3)
- Northeast Corner of Fourth and Grant Development (see Chapter 3)
- Southeast Corner of De Long and Redwood (see Chapter 3)
- Redwood/Vallejo/Machin/Sweetser Development Area (see Chapter 3)
- Lot Adjacent to "Las Guitarras" Restaurant Dining (see Chapter 3)
- "Toyota" Parcel Commercial/Retail Development (see Chapter 3)
- Use of Single Family Houses on Machin (see Chapter 3)

#### **6.4.2 Preliminary Implementation Cost Estimate**

[Figure 45](#) summarizes the preliminary range of cost estimates to implement the Downtown Specific Plan over the implementation time periods.

Several sources of data have been used in compiling the preliminary cost estimate of programs and projects to implement the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP). Given the general level of detail identified in the plan for the various programs and projects, the costs represented to implement the plan are very preliminary. During the implementation process, further refinement of program and project components will be developed and more detailed cost information (on which more precise budgets will be based) will be prepared, accordingly.

The estimated range of one-time costs for implementing the regulatory and administrative programs during the timeframe of 1 to 3 years is \$243,500 - \$260,500. Those programs with ongoing costs (police, maintenance and intra-City jitney) will need further refinement of program components upon which to base increased operating budget allocations annually.

The estimated range of one-time costs for implementing the program components for downtown beautification/enhancements (facades, signage, gateways, streetscape, lighting, public art/murals) during an indeterminate timeframe is \$4,179,162 - \$4,229,162 and is dependent on the improvement/development proposals actually pursued.

The estimated range of one-time costs for implementing the public improvement projects identified in the plan over the life of the General Plan (into which the Specific Plan will be incorporated) is \$20,489,637 - \$22,390,137 (of which \$4,304,177 is already identified as funded) and is dependent on the development proposals actually

pursued given the funding sources and financing tools available.

[Figure 46](#) summarizes with page references all of the policies and programs identified in the Plan.

 [Return to Downtown Novato Specific Plan Home](#)

# APPENDIX A

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

### History

The community planning process to create the Downtown Specific Plan - a blueprint to revitalize Novato's downtown as the heart of the community - evolved out of the efforts of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, an ad hoc citizens group drawn together by their desire to revitalize Downtown through a variety of initiatives and programs. Out of this ad hoc group composed of Downtown and community interests came a draft of a mission, values, goals statement for the Downtown, initial efforts to "save and reuse" the train depot area, to restore the Novato Theater, to support efforts to strengthen the Downtown business association, to organize the first July 4th parade and the recommendation to the City Council to authorize and fund the process to develop a Downtown Specific Plan. In July 1993 the City Council approved funding for the planning effort to develop the Downtown Specific Plan and soon after appointed the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee (DSPSC), composed of key stakeholder representatives from the Downtown and the greater community to guide the public process in shaping a community-based plan. When completed and formally approved by the City Council, the Downtown Specific Plan will be a legal document and incorporated into the General Plan.

### Downtown Specific Plan Process

Since its appointment by the City Council, the DSPSC has actively engaged the community - property owners, business owners, community groups and associations, residents, city boards, committees, and commissions - in creating a community-based Specific Plan. Highlights of this community-based planning process are summarized below; comments received from the public which were considered in this process are incorporated in the appendix.

The DSPSC has:

1. Developed primary data on the Downtown through an in-store survey during December 1993 and a license plate survey in early 1994.
2. Participated in field trips in early 1994 to investigate, first hand, the design features and commercial/community dynamics of different Downtown areas in over 20 Bay Area cities.
3. Guided the selection process and recommended for City Council approval in March 1994 the consultant team that would work with the committee to prepare the draft plan.
4. Conducted a community visioning exercise that produced the Downtown Mission/Values/Goals statement in April 1994.

5. Conducted a walking tour of the entire Downtown area with the consultant team in April 1994.
6. Organized and hosted a unique interactive photo gallery of the Downtown which generated over 3000 "post-it" comments (written on yellow post-its and attached to the photos) from over 500 attendees during August, September, October of 1994 soliciting the community's ideas about what people did and did not like about the Downtown and how they would like to see it in the future.
7. Sponsored and led a series of public workshops, promotions, and presentations in August, October and November 1994 to inform and solicit from the community workable ideas for Downtown land uses, traffic circulation, parking, utilities and related infrastructure, special improvement areas.
8. Hosted workshops and business outreach by "Dr. Downtown", Dave Kilbourne statewide expert on Business Improvements Districts, downtown themes, designs, marketing and promotional activities and long range funding opportunities for revitalization projects and activities.
9. Meeting on an average of twice monthly, held over 80 publicly noticed Committee meetings with public participation from late 1993 through spring 1997 to develop preliminary land use recommendations on a parcel by parcel basis, identify catalyst sites and projects, establish a design framework, ensure proper identification and analysis of proposed downtown uses for incorporation in the General Plan EIR analysis.
10. Solicited direct individual input from over 200 Downtown businesses and over 100 Downtown property owners via individually addressed letters in June and July 1995 which resulted in over 30 one-on-one contacts (continuing into 1996 and 1997) to discuss opportunities for individual properties, consistent with the Committee's preliminary recommendations on land use and design guidelines.
11. Met with the Downtown/Old Town Business Association to include community events such as the Tuesday Farmers Market, the July 4th parade, and other seasonal events, in the Downtown planning process.
12. Conducted a thorough review of preferred land use alternatives for inclusion in draft plan and draft of design guidelines from January through August 1996, and forwarded to the consultant team to assemble into a draft document.
13. Consultant delivered pre-administrative draft document to committee chair and staff in mid-January 1997.
14. Committee Chair Ned Lagin and staff Sonia Seeman continued review and redrafting of the document, March - September 1997.

15. Committee resumes deliberations and conducts public workshops on draft specific plan, September - October 1997.

## APPENDIX B

### MAJOR IMPROVEMENT CONCEPTS INVESTIGATED AND NOT RECOMMENDED FOR STUDY

During its deliberations, the Downtown Specific Plan Steering Committee studied a number of potential improvements to downtown. Ideas came from the committee members themselves, citizens and persons who attended public workshops, and from urban design consultants retained by the City.

Some of the ideas were rejected because they were infeasible for a variety of reasons, did not generate community support, were of low priority, or were felt to be inappropriate for Novato. Among the ideas rejected, the following are mentioned because they were discussed at greater length than most, and citizens may have expected that they would have been made a part of the Specific Plan.

**Consolidation of Industrial Way and Parking.** The idea was to encourage consolidation of a number of existing, small adjoining parking lots behind retail businesses facing (west) Grant, between Second and Fourth Streets. Industrial Way, a narrow, two-way street which extends from First to Fourth Streets and provides access to the rear of commercial buildings which face Grant Avenue, would be vacated and incorporated into the parking lots. Consolidation would allow for shared parking among the businesses.

The idea was rejected because the number of parking spaces which would be created by consolidation, even when Industrial Way as incorporated, was only a few more spaces than now exist. That is because the current spaces are substandard in size, and the new spaces would have to meet larger City standards. Further, the existing parking lots rarely appear full, so the need for consolidated parking did not appear to be strong. Finally, this could be a costly conversion, and the Committee believed that there are other improvements more beneficial to these properties (such as facade improvements discussed in Chapter 6).

**Parking Lot Consolidation North Side of Grant, Sixth to Seventh.** This concept was to integrate two parking lots behind businesses on the north side of Grant Street, and thereby allow for shared parking.

However, it appears that parking occupancy does not vary significantly among the uses in the buildings throughout the day, so there may not be an incentive to share parking. Property owners could, however, seek to share parking if building tenants changed in the future, under the authority of the proposed shared parking ordinance discussed in Chapter 6.

**Round-Abouts at Redwood/Grant and at Redwood/De Long.** One-way traffic circles were studied as alternatives to signalized intersections. The idea was to allow for smoother traffic flow and to create a more ceremonial sense of arrival in Downtown, particularly at Grant/Redwood. A round-about effectively equalizes the streets that intersect it; this was thought to be valuable to reduce the importance of Redwood Boulevard and strengthen the importance of Grant, thereby encouraging drivers traveling north on Redwood to venture into the Downtown. The concept would have been more appropriate if Redwood Boulevard through Downtown were to be retained; however, it is proposed to be partially or fully closed on the north side of the intersection, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The round-about at Redwood/De Long was rejected because the streets intersect each other at a sharp angle, making it difficult to merge traffic into the intersection; additional right-of-way would be needed; and the level of service to pedestrians and bicycles would be reduced because of a longer travel distance and loss of signal protection. It would also be a very costly improvement at that intersection.

**Replacement of Pini Hardware Store Parking Lot with a Parking Garage.** The Pini Hardware store parking lot is located immediately west of the store on (west) Grant Ave., accessible from Grant and Industrial Way. The lot is bordered on both sides by blank walls, each about 20 feet high. A public/private parking structure was considered for the lot, to serve local businesses and potential future civic facilities/town plaza in the vicinity of Redwood Blvd./Grant Avenue. It was rejected as a somewhat difficult site for development of a garage with an efficient layout of spaces.

Also considered but rejected were:

1. Closure of Grant Avenue at Railroad.
2. Second crossing of Railroad at Reichert.
3. Gateway arches.
4. Full closure of Sherman Avenue.
5. Rezoning area north of Grant to general commercial.
6. Parking lot at Taco Bell site.
7. Removing stop signs at Fifth and Grant.
8. Housing units in three stories at Pini Mill/Railroad Development Area.
9. Parking Structure on Zenk lot.
10. Perpendicular/Parallel parking along West Grant.

## **APPENDIX C**

**DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN**  
**[PARKING STUDY \(PDF\) \(169,964 KB\)](#)**

## APPENDIX D

### ARCHITECTURAL STYLISTIC GLOSSARY

#### **Mission (1770's - 1850's)**

The mission churches built throughout California were provincial adaptations of late Churrigueresque neo-Classic designs, primarily of Mexico. Since these church buildings were design by untrained priests, they often mixed the elements of the neo-Classic with earlier Plateresque and Churrigueresque features or with other remembrances which the early fathers brought with them. As in any remote provincial area, the design of these church complexes was tightly conditioned by available resources limited or non-existent skilled labor, available materials and finally the desire to create a church as rapidly as possible. In the more sophisticated examples, domes, vaulting, and carved stonework occurred. Bell towers, usually of the tiered variety, occur singly or in pairs. One of the most common elements is the long, lower arcade with just a slight suggestion of piers supporting the spring of the arches.

The adobe style is, in a sense, not a style at all. It was simply the direct, logical manner of constructing secular buildings. These were normally one room wide, with the rooms arranged in a row, side by side. The width of a room was determined by the available length of timbers. Roofs were flat, shed, or gabled. They were covered with asphalt and later with tile. Exterior and interior walls were covered with white lime cement as soon as it was available and could be afforded. Floors at first were of packed adobe, later of tile, and finally of wood joists and flooring. The more elaborate of these Mission houses were L or U plans; very few were large enough to form a complete square forming an enclosed patio. Window and door openings were at first kept at a minimum; only with the coming of the Yankee and saw mills were glass (usually double-hung) windows and paneled wood doors made available. The coming of the Yankee brought other changes. Most exterior porches found on adobe houses are a later addition (generally after 1820). Other "innovations" introduced from the 1830's on, were clapboard sheathing, wood shingles, and fireplaces. The Yankee additions often transformed the Mission adobe buildings into something which was vaguely Federal or Greek Revival or, as it is often, labeled, Monterey.

#### **Greek Revival (1840's - 1860's)**

The arrival of the Yankee in California in the 1820's and later came at the very end of the popularity of the Greek Revival elsewhere in the country. As a fashionable form it ceased to be important in the larger urban areas of the East after 1850, though it should be noted that it continued as a provincial style in the rural/small-town East well into the 60's. Many examples which are loosely labeled as Greek Revival are, in fact, a late carryover of the c.1800 Federal style. The Greek Revival as manifest in California normally conjures up examples of the Monterey style two story buildings, generally with walls of adobe, cantilevered second floor balconies (or two-story porches supported by simple

thin square posts), double-hung windows and perhaps an entrance with sidelights and a transom light. These houses represent the additions of provincial Yankee Greek and Federal wood details to the earlier Mission adobe. The Monterey style occurs throughout California, and is in no way restricted to the Monterey area. Nor is it even specifically Californian, for 19th century examples are found throughout the Caribbean, in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico as well.

***Characteristics:***

- Rectilinear, gabled roof volumes, one or two stories, horizontal in character, roof at low pitch
- Symmetrical, balanced plan and disposition of windows and doors (the side-hall plan is simply one-half of a symmetrical unit)
- Wide entablature, occasionally with dentils
- Gable ends form classical triangular pediment with horizontal roof eave/cornice carried across gable end
- Frequent occurrence of engaged piers at corner
- Flat or pedimented windows and doors
- Use of Doric (occasionally Ionic) columns
- Entrances with side and transom lights
- Narrow wood porches and second floor balconies
- Roofs often covered with wood shingles

**Italianate (1860's - 1870's)**

The Italianate style represented the best of two worlds classical order and control, and the picturesque. It began in the mid-1830's and continued in popularity in the larger urban center of the East through the early 1860's. In the Midwest and far West it continued on well past the 1880's. As a style, its sources can be found in late 18th century paintings depicting the northern Italian landscape. Other more direct sources came from England via the work of John Nash and others, and via English pattern books. The Italianate can be divided into two phases: the Italianate Villa and the High Victorian Italianate. The first mode is fundamentally a rural or suburban form, usually characterized by an irregular mass its hallmark being a campanile-like tower placed within the L of two major wings. The High Victorian Italianate tended to employ a single volumetric form, richly articulated by sharp, angular details.

***Characteristics:***

- Emphasis on the vertical in volume and details
- Broadly projected roofs supported by elaborate, three-dimensional patterns of brackets
- Round, segmented, or straight-sided rectangular arched windows; groups of double-arched windows
- Frequent use of angular bays
- Quoined corners
- Use of thin (almost Gothic), arched colonnettes
- Classic spindled balustrades
- Tower with low-pitched, hip roof

**Gothic Revival(s) (1850's - 1900's)**

The Gothic provided one of the most intense of the picturesque styles which developed in the United States. Nineteenth century Gothic can be divided into three phases: Literary Picturesque, Victorian Gothic, and finally the Archeological Gothic which started toward the end of the century. The earliest Gothic Revival churches and houses were often classical Greek Revival buildings (horizontal emphases) with Gothic details attached; later in the Victorian Gothic phase (c. 1870's-1880's) the volumes and details accentuated the vertical.

***Characteristics:***

- Volumes covered by high pitched roofs
- Frequent occurrence of wall gables
- Use of barge boards on gable cornice
- Lancet, pointed windows
- Open Tudor arches, especially in porches
- Split pilasters (posts) for porches

- Occasional crenelated parapets
- Projecting pinnacles
- Board and batten walls often employed in early examples
- Multi-colored bands (especially in brick examples) characterized surfaces of the Victorian Gothic
- In final phase, elements of English perpendiculars predominate

### **Later Carpenter's Gothic Revival (1860's - Early 1900's)**

Most of California's late 19th century churches represent late Carpenter's Gothic Revival. The designs for these churches generally came from one or another of the numerous pattern books which were published throughout the 19th century. Sometimes the carpenter (with the local parson and building committee) would recreate a familiar design from the East or near East; often he would work out a free adaptation of the pattern book or previously known design. During the 70's and 80's these pattern book churches were almost always simple, rectangular, gable-roof structures with a central entrance tower attached to the front gable-end of the building. Later variations introduced the double tower, side towers and the like. Detailing in wood and glass was frequently derived from other contemporary popular styles, especially the Eastlake and the Queen Anne. At the end of the century, elements of both the Colonial Revival and the Arts and Crafts mode were incorporated into these buildings.

#### ***Characteristics:***

- Rectangular, gable-roof volumes; at first, of the entrance tower type; later with paired towers and corner towers
- Windows of the lancet (pointed) type
- Main entrance usually of segmented or lancet arch form
- Tower normally broken into superimposed levels; belfry openings usually of lancet type; tower roofs of pointed spire type

### **Eastlake (1870's - 1880's)**

The original concept of this style came from the writings and drawings of the English architect Charles Eastlake, though he strongly denied he had anything to do with the style to which his name was attached. (Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste* was first published in London in 1868, and then in New York in 1872). The pure Eastlake style was not widely popular in California, and there are only a few pure examples of it still around. In most examples, the elements of this style were mixed

with other styles, especially with the Italianate and the Queen Anne. The 1850's-60's stylistic features which historian Vincent Scully has combined under the heading "Stick style" share of number of similarities with the early Eastlake.

***Characteristics:***

- Thin, tenuous vertical volumes, surfaces, details; all of a fragile nature
- Exposure (in myth or fact) of structural members post, dentils, corner bracing, angled struts, etc.
- Surface divided into panels, each area defined by flat board molding, inner surface covered with lap siding, tongue and groove siding, diagonal siding, vertical siding and occasionally shingles
- Profusion of jigsaw and lath work in wood
- Ornament often rendered by the outline of cut out patterns, drilled holes, and thin, layer upon layer of wood (with all edges very sharp)
- Ornamentation often confined to gable ends and to porch posts and entablatures
- Frequent use of projecting turned knobs as single or repeated decoration

**Queen Anne Revival (1885 - 1900)**

The Queen Ann Revival came into popularity in England in the late 1860's in the work of Richard Norman Shaw and others. The first American architect to take up the mode was Henry Hobson Richardson in the mid-1870's. The American Queen Anne was the picturesque style in late 19th century America. The form of these building was highly irregular, and special emphasis was given to the picturesque silhouette of the roofs different gables, dormers, high chimneys, towers, turrets and pinnacles. Corner towers (often bay towers), round or hexagonal with conical pointed roofs, were essential to the style. So, too, were extensive entrance-living porches which often wrapped themselves around the house. In plan, the best of these houses were of the living-hall type with wide openings being provided between the hall and all of the other family living spaces. Most of the detailing tended to be directly and indirectly classical. By the early 1880's certain architects began to simplify the picturesque form, surfaces and detailing of the Queen Anne. Out of this developed the Colonial Revival and/or the Shingle style.

***Characteristics:***

- Irregular plan, elevations, roof silhouettes

- Vertical emphasis at first, later increasingly horizontal
- Surfaces covered with a variety of tactile patterns (clapboard, patterned shingles especially of fish-scale pattern)
- Extensive wrap-around porches on first floor
- Balconied porches cut into second floor and third floor attic
- Corner (sometimes bay) towers, roofed with a variety of different shapes: conical segmented concave bulbous
- Classical detailing: columns, dentils, scrolls, engaged columns and piers
- Tall, recessed paneled chimneys
- Increased use of Classical details
- Open plans with central living hall
- Leaded, stained glass windows; especially the stair landing window

### **Mission Revival (1890 - 1915)**

The Mission Revival began in California in the early 1890's and by 1900 examples were being built across the country. Its high point of popularity was in the ten-year period 1905-1915. As a style it was used successfully for a wide variety of building types, ranging from railroad stations and resort hotels to schools, service stations, apartments and single family dwellings. The style easily lent itself to available methods of construction, from stucco and wood stud to hollow tile and reinforced concrete. Since it relied on only a limited number of stylistic elements, it could readily be organized to satisfy new functional needs.

#### ***Characteristics:***

- White, plain stucco walls
- Arched openings usually with the pier, arch and surface of buildings treated as a single smooth plane
- Tile roofs of low pitch
- Scalloped, parapeted gable ends

- Paired bell towers, often covered with tile hip roofs
- Quatrefoil windows (especially in gable ends and accompanied by surrounding cartouches)
- Occasional use of domes
- Ornament when present cast in terra cotta or concrete; patterns often Islamic and Sullivanesque

### **Spanish Colonial Revival (1915 - Present)**

The Spanish Colonial Revival was a direct outgrowth of the earlier Mission style, and examples were built as early as the 1890's in Southern California. The symbolic beginning of the revival was the San Diego Fair in 1915 and the buildings designed for the fair by Bertram G. Goodhue and Carleton M. Winslow. By the 1920's it became the style for much of coastal California. Hispanic or, as they were often called, Mediterranean designs were employed for the full range of building types.

Many communities adopted the style. The term "Spanish Colonial Revival" actually entails a number of related styles including the Italian of northern Italy, the Plateresque, Churrigueresque and neo-Classic of Spain and her colonies, especially Mexico, and the Islamic from Spain and North Africa. Its most formal exercises looked to Italian while the Andalusian was employed for informal designs. The acknowledged master of the style was the Montecito architect George Washington Smith, but equally impressive was the northern California work of Clarence Tantau. The style's greatest period of popularity was 1915-1930.

During the 1930's and later, the Spanish Colonial Revival tradition provided a source for the Monterey Revival and for the California Ranch House. In the 1970's and 80's, variations of this style have frequently been used for the images of shopping centers and for condominium townhouses.

#### ***Characteristics:***

- Stucco surfaces which predominate over the openings
- Low pitched tile roofs
- Limited number of opening (best if deeply cut into the wall surfaces)
- Closely related to outdoors through use of French doors, terraces, pergolas
- Gardens designed in a formal axial manner
- Use of decorative ironwork for windows, doors, balconies and roof supports

- Glazed and unglazed tile used for walls and floors
- Commercial buildings generally organized their faces in deep-set vertical bands (with windows and spandrels recessed)
- Plateresque and especially rich Churrigueresque ornament of cast concrete or terra cotta occurred in many commercial buildings, and occasionally in domestic designs

### **Streamline Moderne (1928 - 1941)**

Before and during the presidency of Herbert Hoover and throughout the Depression years of the 30's, architects merged the Beaux Arts Classical (its neo-Classical phase) with Zigzag and Streamline Moderne. The style is most closely associated with federal government architecture, but it was also used for private commercial building. These buildings were fundamentally classical and formal, with just enough Moderne detailing injected to convey a contemporary feeling as well as the traditional authority of the Classical. California, along with the rest of the country, acquired a wealth of these buildings during the late 20's and the 30's. The largest number of these were public school buildings.

#### ***Characteristics:***

- Basic classical balanced and symmetrical form; classical horizontal proportions
- Piers used rather than columns; piers occasionally fluted, but generally had no capitals or bases
- Windows arranged as vertical, recessed panels
- Surfaces smooth and flat; terra cotta used for ornament
- Most examples sheathed in smooth stone; polished marble, granite, and terrazzo used both within and without
- Use of relief sculpture and interior murals

### **Georgian Revival (1860's - 1920's)**

The architects of the Georgian Revival worked in two distinct modes. One of them was the Neo-Adamesque, drawing its inspiration from the dominant style of the Federal Period, its products tend to be more elaborate and also larger than those of the Adam Style proper. The other is the Neo-Colonial, with its main source in Georgian Colonial architecture of the same period. Neo-Colonial buildings are strictly rectangular in plan, with a minimum of minor projections, and have strictly symmetrical facades. Roofs are hipped, double-pitched, or of gambrel form; their eaves are detailed as classical cornices. A hipped roof is often topped with a flat deck, with a surrounding railing or balustrade; sometimes there is a central cupola. Chimneys are placed so as to contribute to the overall symmetry.

The central part of a facade may project slightly and be crowned with a pediment, with or without support pilasters; more rarely, a portico with freestanding columns may form the central feature. Doorways have fanlights and are often set in tabernacle frames. The standard form of window in secular buildings is rectangular with double-hung sash; the Palladian window is often used as a focal incident. Churches have arched windows; the commonest type of steeple has a square tower with a superstructure built up in several stages, the upper ones octagonal in plan, and terminating in a spire.

### **Bungaloid (1900's - 1920's)**

The true bungalow is a small single-story house; the roof space may be made usable by a solitary dormer or by windows in the gables, but anything approaching a full second story disqualifies the building for the title of bungalow in the sense that was recognized by the builders and owners of this type of dwelling. The adjective Bungaloid is applicable also to the numerous houses that do their best to look like bungalows while having a second story houses "built along bungalow lines," as they were called.

Bungalows came in many styles and partook of their respective characters so far as their small size, simplicity, and the usual need for economy permitted. If one had to choose a single building to represent the type, it would be of the Western Stick Style and would present two broad gables to the street, the gable of a porch-veranda in front being echoed by that of the body of the house behind and to one side.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

1. Novato General Plan, March 1996
2. General Plan Environmental Impact Report, March 1996
3. Whitlock & Weinberger Transportation, Inc. Draft Report, General Plan Revision, Transportation Background Report #3; Evaluation of the Preferred Plan and Alternatives for the City of Novato, June 29, 1995
4. Downtown Novato Parking Study Update, Parking Data Survey, July 1995
5. Sonoma County Transportation Authority and the Marin Countywide Planning Agency, Study of Alternative Sites for a Novato Intermodal Transportation Center, 1995
6. Greiner Engineering Company, Novato Redevelopment Survey Area No. 2, Downtown Area Review, September 17, 1985

7. Urban Land Institute, Shared Parking, 1989
8. Facade Improvement Programs, San Carlos, San Jose, San Mateo, Daly City, San Ramon, Walnut Creek, Concord

## **APPENDIX F**

**DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN**  
**[MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION \(PDF\) \(5,808 KB\)](#)**

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