

Land Use and Redevelopment Strategies

I. Vision for the Mission Street Corridor

The community's vision is to re-establish Mission Street as a vibrant commercial corridor that recognizes and carefully balances its functions as both State Highway and local-serving commercial street. The community envisions Mission Street as "Main Street" for the Westside: an attractive, pedestrian-friendly shopping district where local residents can fulfill many of their daily shopping needs without having to drive, as well as a nighttime destination for dining and entertainment. At the same time, it is also envisioned as a distinctive commercial corridor that contains visitor-serving uses typical to a regional travel corridor, but also interesting shops, one-of-a-kind restaurants, and well-designed streetscapes that entice the out-of-town traveler to stop for more than fuel and fast food.

II. Urban Design Concepts/First Principles

A. Land Use

The corridor should maintain a predominantly commercial mixed-use character. Residential uses should be restricted to multi-family residential units, and to residential above ground floor retail or office. The remaining single-family residential uses should be allowed to eventually phase out.



Many residential structures along the corridor have been converted to commercial uses.

B. Circulation

Through traffic on Mission Street should be facilitated, but traffic-calming measures should be introduced to reduce traffic speed and improve pedestrian safety. Measures also should be implemented to reduce the incursion of commercial truck traffic into adjoining residential neighborhoods.

The desire is to create a more balanced multi-modal circulation system that accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit in addition to both local commercial and through vehicular traffic.

C. Gateways

The Mission Street Corridor should provide an attractive and distinctive entry to the City of Santa Cruz from the west (i.e., from southbound Highway 1). A physical gateway feature should be developed at the west end of the corridor to mark this important entrance. In addition, the entire corridor should be designed to enhance the entry sequence and convey a positive first impression to those entering the City.

D. Major/Minor Intersections

The intersections of local cross-streets with Mission Street represent important nodes along the 2.25-mile corridor that should be designed to redefine the long, linear corridor as a series of distinct and recognizable districts or segments. As crossroads, the intersections are important activity centers of both vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic. The concept is to utilize land use and urban design strategies to intensify and enhance pedestrian activity at these nodes, and use streetscape design and traffic-calming measures to minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic. The concept is also to take advantage of these loci of activity to develop and local gateways to neighborhoods north and south of the corridor.

E. Linkages and Connections

In order to create a more vibrant commercial district and re-integrate the Mission Street corridor with the surrounding neighborhoods, it is important to create a system of connections and linkages that allows for the free flow of people to and through the area. The emphasis should be on creating a network of sidewalks, crosswalks, alleys, and rear parking zone passages that provide for safer and more convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections.

F. Pedestrian and Transit Orientation

The Mission Street corridor is a busy arterial street that carries both regional and local traffic. Every effort should be made to reduce the number of local vehicle trips along the corridor by enhancing the pedestrian environment and encouraging transit use. Pedestrian and transit use can be enhanced by improving the safety, convenience, and attractiveness of the pedestrian environment. Transit use should be enhanced through provision of more convenient and attractive facilities, and more frequent service.

G. Development and Architectural Character

Future development should maintain a pedestrian scale in terms of building height, massing, and level of detail. The desire is to move away from design for the car (i.e., designed to be viewed from a moving vehicle) to a design for people. Without needing to be bound to a single architectural style, new development along the corridor should be responsive to the rich historic fabric of this former residential area, preserving important architectural resources and converting them to other uses when possible.

H. Street and Landscape Character

The desire is not to create a single image for the entire corridor, but rather to create a series of attractive districts that build on existing landscape resources and patterns. The streetscape design should reflect Santa Cruz in both its diversity and uniqueness

III. Land Use and Redevelopment Strategies

A. Physical & Historic Context

Historically, Mission Street developed as a residential collector street. Even though land uses along the corridor are now predominantly commercial, the street's residential heritage is still very much reflected in the corridor's development character, and will continue to have significant implications for future redevelopment and revitalization efforts.

The large number of residential structures that remain along the corridor, whether they are still used as residences or have been converted to commercial uses, is perhaps the most obvious clue to the street's past. However, in terms of the corridor's future, a more significant remnant of the corridor's historic use is the parcelization pattern along the corridor. Although many parcels have been assembled over the years by enterprising land owners in order to create larger development parcels, the size and dimensions of the majority of the parcels along Mission Street still reflect those typical of early 20th Century residential subdivisions.

While the size and dimensions of these lots are adequate to accommodate the development of single-family homes with garage and ample front and rear yards, they are problematic for other types of use. The principal issue associated with the redevelopment and revitalization of the corridor with anything other than single-

family residences is the lack of room for parking. Whereas the standard residential lot in early 20th Century Santa Cruz needed to provide parking for a single automobile, at most; the re-use of these parcels with office, retail or higher density residential uses generates demand for significantly more parking space. The absence of adequate space for parking has much to do with the relatively low intensity development character that currently exists along the corridor, and with the apparently limited interest that has been shown in redeveloping properties that are underutilized, or whose condition is in decline.

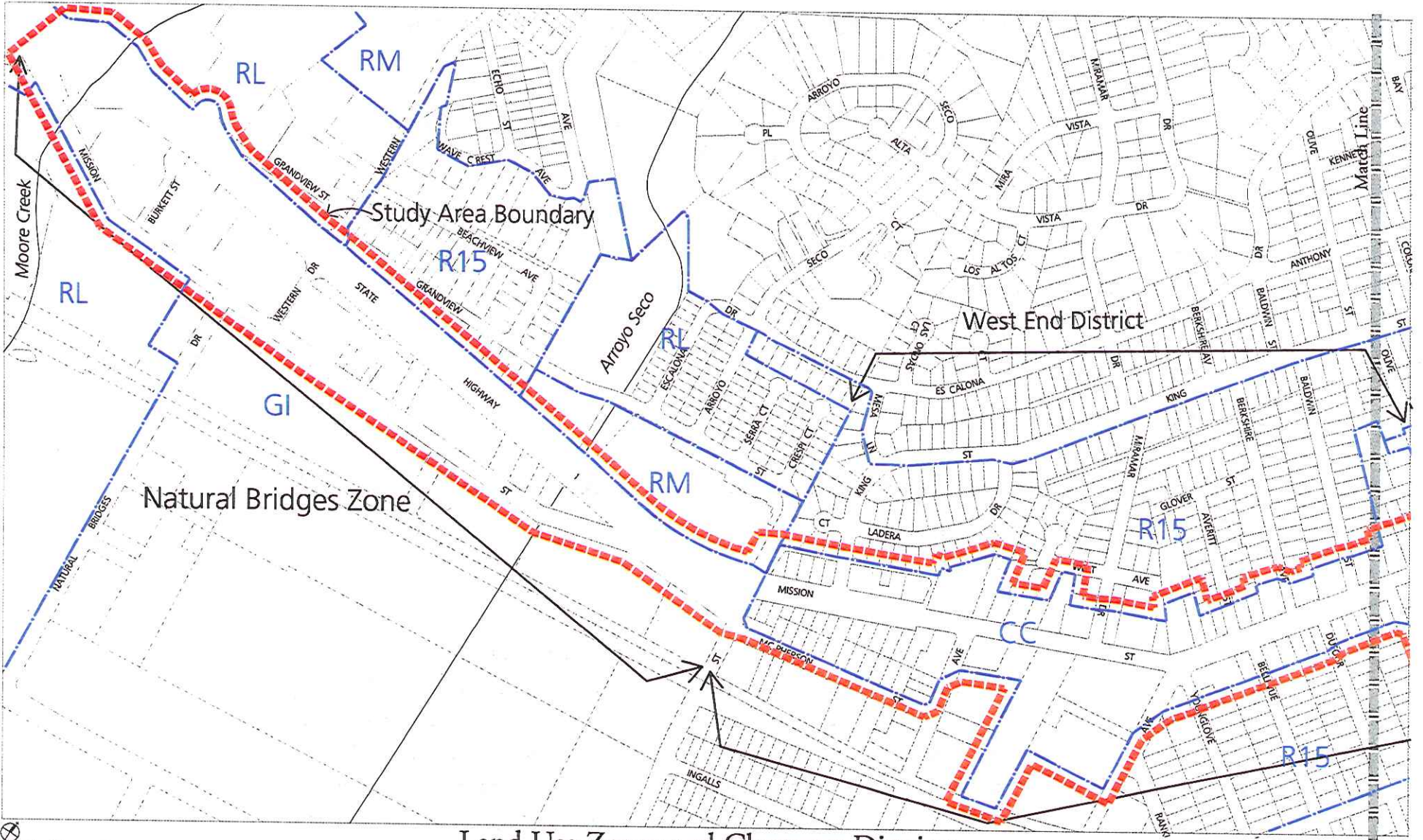
The limited parcel size also adversely affects the aesthetic character of development along the corridor. The small parcel sizes result in there being limited space available to accommodate the type of amenities that contribute to attractive commercial development, such as landscaping, public plazas and courtyards, and other streetscape improvements.

B. Land Use Zones/Character Districts

The Mission Street corridor is characterized by three distinct land use zones, each with its own land use and development character and issues:

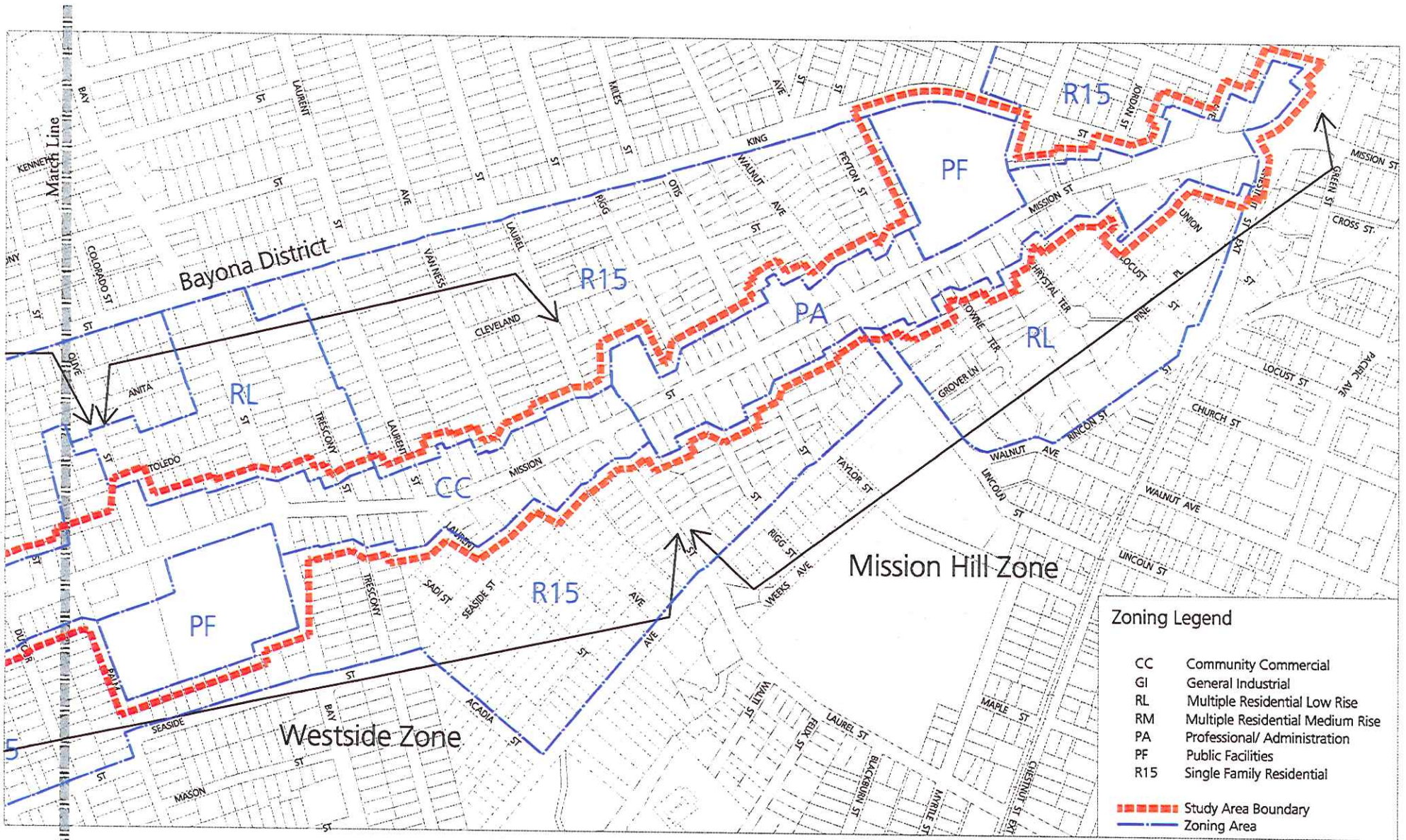
The Mission Hill Zone

The Mission Hill Zone, which extends from Chestnut Street to Laurel Street at the eastern end of the corridor, includes primarily administrative and professional office type uses, including a number of health care related uses. In addition to office uses, there are also scattered single-family and multi-family residences, institutional uses, and a few retail businesses. The concentration of professional office-type uses in this zone is closely associated with the rich inventory of historic and higher-quality residential structures that have been retrofitted to accommodate such uses. Given the predominance of older Victorian and Bungalow style structures, many of which are listed on the City's inventory of historic structures, the zone has an attractive "residential" scale and high-quality design character that distinguishes the area.



Land Use Zones and Character Districts

0 100' 200' 400' 1/4 Mile
 Wallace Roberts & Todd San Francisco, California
 The Sibbols Group San Francisco, California
 Pacific Group Burlingame, California
 Alca Transportation San Anselmo, California



The “residential” character of the development is so prominent and attractive, that those parcels that introduce other development patterns tend to conflict with and detract from the established physical character of the zone. The few retail uses in this zone, particularly the gas stations, are the most out-of-keeping in terms of design character and quality. As such they represent opportunities for design enhancement. Similarly, the newer buildings in the zone that have been built specifically for office uses (i.e., rather than being converted from residential uses) do little to support or enhance, the historic and high-quality physical character of the zone.

Objective 1: To protect and enhance the land use and aesthetic character of the district by encouraging office and other compatible uses that can maintain the “residential” scale and high quality physical design character of the zone.

Policy 1a: Single family residential uses should eventually be phased out in favor of uses that are more consistent with the intent of the Professional and Administrative Office zoning.

Program: Re-evaluate P-A zoning as it relates to finding single family residences to be in non-conformance with the zoning.

Policy 1b: New development should be designed to complement the predominantly “residential” scale, massing, materials and detailing of the existing development.

Program: Require applications for new development or redevelopment in the P-A zone to demonstrate design consistency with the residential scale and character of the Mission Hill zone.

Policy 1c: Encourage design enhancements (e.g., façade improvements, new signage, landscaping, etc.) that will elevate the design character and quality of commercial development in this zone to be more consistent with that in the rest of the zone.

Program: The Redevelopment Agency should continue to fund facade and sign improvement programs that encourage renovation in the P-A district.

Policy 1d: Although they are non-conforming uses in the P-A district, the three existing gas stations should be allowed to remodel as long as any proposed changes enhance the facade, signage, and landscape design in a manner consistent with the aesthetic character of the Mission Hill Zone. (see page 98 for gas station design guidelines)

The Westside Zone

The Westside Zone, which extends from Laurel Street to Swift Street and occupies the mid-corridor area, includes predominantly retail and service type uses with scattered residential, office and institutional uses. There are also a handful of vacant parcels. The zone has a very diverse development character, lacking the design quality or consistency of the Mission Hill Zone. There are still numerous residential structures, but there are many more non-residential structures developed specifically for retail type uses. In general, the design of these more contemporary retail developments can be characterized as fairly typical “strip commercial” development, that have been designed to serve an automobile-oriented corridor (i.e., emphasis on visibility from a moving vehicle and convenient parking, with very little attention to architectural character).

Within the Westside Zone, there are two discernible districts with different land use and development characteristics. The Bayona District extends from approximately Laurel Street to Olive Street. In this area the corridor tends to be characterized by smaller and more local-serving type businesses than is typical in the area west of Olive Street. The buildings also tend to be somewhat smaller in scale, and reflect older development patterns. For instance, the buildings are frequently set close to the sidewalk with access from the street frontage, and parking is generally not located between the street and the front door. The land use in the West End District, which extends from Olive Street to Swift Street, includes more automobile-oriented and visitor-serving commercial uses, such as convenience stores, fast food restaurants, gas stations,

motels, large chain stores, and quick stop retail uses. Development patterns tend to be characterized by large building setbacks from the street, large prominent parking lots, and numerous curb cuts.

Objective 2: To establish a stable, thriving commercial district for the Westside that provides retail and services for both residents and visitors.

Policy 2a: Prohibit the development of additional “drive-thru” businesses along the corridor.

Policy 2b: In order to enhance the distinctiveness of the corridor, new development shall be designed to be responsive to its specific context. Standard corporate designs for building facades or signage shall not be permitted.

Policy 2c: Encourage design changes to existing uses that enhance the pedestrian orientation of the development (e.g., landscaping, signage, lighting, parking, etc.).

Program: Require new development, redevelopment, and renovation projects to be consistent with the development standards and design guidelines set forth in this plan.

Policy 2d: Employ streetscape improvements such as street trees, lighting, street furnishings, and public art to visually unify this section of the corridor and enhance the pedestrian environment.

Program: Prepare a phased implementation strategy for the streetscape improvements identified in this plan, that identifies an appropriate balance between public-initiated improvements and those that can be effectively implemented by the private sector.

The Natural Bridges Zone

The Natural Bridges Zone, which extends from Swift Street to Shaffer Road at the City's western boundary, differs dramatically from the Westside and Mission Hill zones. This section of the Mission Street corridor has a much wider right-of-way, and no development fronts onto, or takes access directly from, Mission Street. Instead, this section of roadway has a parkway character, with substantial mature vegetation lining both sides of the corridor and limited views of adjoining development.

Objective 3: To preserve the Natural Bridges Zone as a lush, landscaped corridor that announces the entrance to the City of Santa Cruz from the west.

Policy 3a: Prohibit any future development from fronting on or taking access directly from Mission Street in this segment of the corridor, unless no other alternative exists.

Policy 3b: Enhance the landscape character of the sector by introducing additional native plant materials to the landscape treatment.

Program: Prepare and implement a detailed landscape plan to supplement existing landscaping along Highway 1 between Swift Street and Shaffer Road.

C. Areawide Land Use and Redevelopment Strategy

Although some residential uses still remain along the Mission Street corridor, commercial uses now clearly predominate. The intent of the Plan is to maintain and enhance the predominantly commercial character of the corridor, thus supporting the direction that market forces have taken the corridor, and to explore ways in which to strengthen its economic and social base by supporting a mix of complementary uses.

Objective 4: To enhance economic and social vitality of the Mission Street corridor by creating a more stable and sustainable mix of uses that serve both community and visitor needs.

In order to create a more vital social and economic environment along the corridor the Plan encourages the establishment of a more compatible and sustainable mix of uses that includes retail, office and residential, while also balancing local- and visitor-serving commercial. Given the high volumes of traffic that now use Mission Street, the corridor is an ideal setting for commercial uses that can benefit from the high visibility. At the same time, the level of vehicular traffic threatens to make this a predominantly visitor-serving, auto-oriented zone that is unattractive to those who live in the vicinity. The land use strategy for the corridor is to broaden the corridor's retail base by encouraging uses that serve the local community, and are not dependent on pass through traffic.

Policy 4a: *Encourage a mix of higher density residential and office uses along Mission Street that will complement and support the retail base, and contribute to the creation of a neighborhood with around-the-clock vitality.*

Program: Develop an incentives program that rewards developers and landowners who incorporate a complementary mix of uses within their properties.

Program: The pre-application process should be used as an opportunity to explain the City's vision for the Mission Street corridor and describe the benefits of mixed use development to project applicants.

Policy 4b: Establish the Mission Street corridor as an attractive pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district.

While the land use concept promotes the establishment of a strong commercial core along the corridor, it also encourages complementary mixture of commercial, residential and employment uses. The rationale for this approach is part social and part economic. From an economic standpoint, the mixed-use concept is important, because of the support that residential and employment-generating uses can provide for new retail development.

From the social perspective, the mixed-use district provides a number of benefits. It supports the development of a more vibrant district, because the mixture of uses means that people can live, work, shop and socialize in the area at all times of the day, seven days a week. The mixed-use concept also supports the pedestrian-oriented concept because it places residences, employment and retail within convenient walking distance of each other. Thus, Westside residents can walk to stores, restaurants, and possibly even their jobs. While those who work in the area can walk to stores, restaurants and local businesses for lunch, shopping, services and after-work entertainment.

Policy 4c: Encourage "mixed-use" development and "local-serving" commercial uses as a means of reducing automobile use within the planning area. Development of complementary uses (retail and office, retail and housing, office and housing) in proximity to each other allows residents, employees, and visitors to walk and/or bicycle when undertaking many of the typical daily trips, whether it is going to lunch, running errands, or going out for the evening.

Currently, Mission Street is not an appealing destination for pedestrians. The corridor carries large volumes of traffic each day. This has resulted in development patterns along the corridor that are geared to the automobile rather than pedestrians. Commercial frontages along the corridor tend to be dominated by parking lots and driveways, and building entrances are frequently from the parking lots rather than the street frontage. Sidewalks along Mission Street are of minimum width, and do not have the benefit of either a planting strip or on-street parking to buffer the pedestrian from moving traffic. The current conditions provide a particularly inhospitable environment for pedestrians. If the corridor is to become a viable commercial district, as well as a vital and active center for the community's social life, it is essential that it be an area where people feel comfortable to walk and an appealing place to meet their friends and neighbors.

Creating a pedestrian-oriented district along Mission Street will involve more than regulating the speed and volume of vehicular traffic. It will also involve consideration of the types and distribution of land uses, the scale and orientation of development, the design of the streetscape, micro-climate control, etc. If the area is not perceived to be an attractive and appealing destination, there will be no reason for people to walk there. The Urban Design Plan establishes an integrated set of land use, circulation, and design policies, standards and guidelines that work together to create a safe and attractive pedestrian-oriented district.

D. Development Opportunities

Objective 5: Promote the revitalization and redevelopment of existing outdated, underutilized, or marginal uses or businesses in order to enhance the economic potential of the area as a whole.

Policy 5a: *Encourage the replacement of existing non-conforming and/or nuisance type uses with uses that will contribute to the creation of a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented mixed use district.*

Program: Conduct and maintain an inventory of non-conforming and nuisance type uses along the corridor.

Program: Establish an assistance program to work with landowners of non-conforming uses to bring their properties into conformance with the development standards, design guidelines, and overall intent of this plan.

The corridor presents a number of recurring development conditions that, due to their adverse effect on the aesthetic or functional character of the corridor, should be considered as primary target areas for redevelopment and revitalization efforts. These recurring conditions fall into three broad categories:

Vacant and Underutilized Parcels:

The corridor includes a number of vacant and underutilized lots and/or buildings that provide logical redevelopment and revitalization opportunities. These appear to be the areas where a significant positive impact on the corridor could be made in the near term through redevelopment consistent with the development standards and design guidelines set forth in this Plan. Examples of such sites include: the property adjacent to the west side of Safeway and the parcel at the southwest corner of Mission and Laurent streets.

Due to the small size of most of the parcels along the corridor, consideration should be given to the possibility of assembling vacant and underutilized lots with any adjacent parcels or buildings that are underutilized or have uses that are likely to phase out (e.g., single-family residential).

Program: The Redevelopment Agency should explore the feasibility of assembling vacant and underutilized parcels for the purpose of creating development sites with greater potential to meet the objectives of this plan.

Strip Malls:

The corridor includes a number of “strip malls” that detract from the character of the corridor. These retail centers are characterized by a series of contiguous storefronts that are set back from the roadway to accommodate parking between the street and the stores’ front doors. These low-slung commercial boxes generally lack architectural character, and typically have the entire frontage between building and sidewalk in pavement, creating a very unattractive and inhospitable pedestrian environment.

In some instances, façade and sign improvements have been made to enhance these centers. However, the emphasis on parking, the lack of architectural detail, and the absence of landscaping in these strip malls all speak implicitly to the primacy of the automobile. The generally low aesthetic character and auto-orientation conflicts with the vision of the corridor as an attractive, pedestrian-friendly zone.

For a number of reasons, these strip malls may represent the most difficult condition along the corridor to change. The development patterns in these centers will need to be significantly reconfigured to achieve the desired character. Such reconfiguring will be made more difficult by the fact that multiple tenants would be affected. Also, parking is already quite constrained at these centers so increasing the intensity of development would not be an incentive for change, unless additional off-street parking were provided.

Policy 5b: Encourage the transformation of commercial strip malls to commercial mixed-use centers that are more in keeping with the long-term vision for the corridor.

Program: The City should work with owners of strip malls to identify incentives that will facilitate the aesthetic and functional changes addressed in this plan.

Residential Structures:

Consistent with its heritage, the development pattern along Mission Street continues to include numerous single-family residential structures. Many of these structures have been converted to non-residential uses, but many are still residences. While a majority of the residential structures east of Laurel Street have either significant historic or architectural merit, few of the single-family residential structures west of Laurel have either. The intent of the Plan is to support the pattern established east of Laurel Street, where residential structures with historic and/or architectural merit have been preserved and converted to compatible uses.

Residential structures that lack significant architectural or historic merit provide valuable opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization of the corridor. Generally, residential building setbacks (i.e., side yard and front yard) create an inefficient use of land for non-residential uses, so redevelopment of such areas can enhance development potential, site functionality, and the aesthetic character. In many areas, two or more residential structures are adjacent to each other. Consolidation of these adjacent properties into a single redevelopment site will provide significantly more flexibility in siting new development and in providing adequate parking. The residential development pattern also results in a high number of curb cuts, which redevelopment of multiple sites would help to reduce.

Program: The Redevelopment Agency should explore the feasibility of assembling underutilized residential parcels for the purpose of creating development sites with greater potential to meet the objectives of this plan.

Policy 5c: Encourage redevelopment and infill development along Mission Street that will improve the corridor's economic vitality, enhance the definition and character of the corridor, and create better pedestrian scale and orientation.

Program: The Redevelopment Agency should explore the possibility of undertaking model projects that demonstrate the economic potential of mixed use development and how implementation of design guidelines can enhance the aesthetic character of the corridor.

While Mission Street will continue to function as a commercial corridor with a strong orientation to vehicular traffic, new development of vacant and underutilized lots, and redevelopment of currently developed parcels, should be used to incrementally reconfigure and revitalize the street frontage as a more pedestrian-friendly and economically vital district.

From a land use perspective such redevelopment and re-use should encourage a transition from predominantly auto-oriented, convenience uses to more destination-type uses that are attractive to both pedestrians and those traveling by car. The intent is to both diversify the economic base and to add uses that will attract people to the area, rather than just opportunistically capturing pass-by dollars. Such uses need not be just retail, but can also include office and professional service type uses.

In terms of development character, the redevelopment of the street frontage is intended to enhance the overall image of the area, creating not only a more attractive entry to Santa Cruz, but also a more successful commercial district.

Policy 5d: Pursue a multi-faceted approach to the enhancement and revitalization of the Mission Street corridor that involves both public and private initiatives and short-term and long-term strategies.

The Plan recognizes the multiple-ownership pattern of the area and the need to ensure a gradual transition in uses and development character—from the existing strip commercial character to a vital mixed-use district. The Plan recognizes that the area is not a “blank canvas,” but rather a complex and dynamic mixture of uses, ownerships, leasees, and tenants. Over the years, the corridor has been resistant to significant change

even in the midst of one of the region’s strongest economic periods, so change will not occur overnight or without a consolidated effort and some additional incentive.

In order for positive change to occur, it will be necessary to enlist public, as well as private, investment in the area. The objective is to use public investment in the area in a strategic manner that it will enhance the market appeal of the area, thus providing the necessary incentives for landowners to reinvest in their properties. While many of the existing uses will remain for the foreseeable future, it is assumed that underutilized land and under-performing businesses ultimately will be upgraded or redeveloped to capture the enhanced value created by the public corridor enhancements.

The redevelopment and revitalization of the corridor should be implemented through a series of near-term and long-term strategies that involve both cosmetic and structural changes. Near term activities will include public improvements such as street tree plantings, gateway treatments, and other aesthetic enhancements to the public realm, and private improvements such as façade improvements and new signage. Longer term activities should include public assistance in assembling parcels and participation in public/private partnerships to implement redevelopment projects. On the private side, long term strategies will need to include landowner investment in renovation, rehabilitation, and reconfiguration of individual properties.

Program: Develop an interdepartmental strategy for corridor investment and enhancement that includes immediate short-term actions that will provide an incentive and positive reinforcement for revitalization of the corridor.

Policy 5e: The City should identify ways to leverage public assistance and public funding to support redevelopment and revitalization activities along the corridor.

There are numerous means by which the City can and does support and encourage change in the corridor, including programs supporting façade improvements, signage improvements, street tree programs, utilities

undergrounding, etc. However, given the area's resistance to significant improvement over the years, more significant public assistance should be explored. As previously described, one of the constraints to redevelopment along the corridor is the small size of many of the parcels. The Redevelopment Agency could potentially facilitate redevelopment by using its funds and powers to assemble lands. It could also partner with a developer to build a model project that implements the objectives of the Plan while enhancing property values for surrounding areas. Another approach the City should employ is to encourage landowners to consolidate properties for redevelopment by offering incentives.

Program: Identify additional sources of funding (e.g., state, federal, private) that can be obtained to support recommended improvements such as public art, improved circulation (pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular), and higher density residential development.

Policy 5f: Development bonuses may be granted by the Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, or City Council to encourage the consolidation of parcels for redevelopment. Such bonuses may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Reduction in parking requirements*
- ii. Relaxation of building height limits*
- iii. Reduction or waiver of processing fees*
- iv. Expedited permit processing*
- v. Redevelopment Agency loan for infrastructure improvements*
- vi. Redevelopment Agency land purchase, lease or write-down.*

Program: Prepare a zoning ordinance amendment that specifies criteria for City approval of development bonuses.

Objective 6: To introduce limited amounts of new housing to the Mission Street corridor consistent with the City's General Plan, in order to reinforce the concept of the corridor as a place to live as well as work, shop and dine.

The ongoing need for housing in Santa Cruz, as in all of California, has been well documented. But beyond the quantitative need for housing, new residential development can make an important contribution to the revitalization of the Mission Street corridor by bringing more people to the corridor and adding to the diversity of activities that will take place there. These qualities will help to strengthen the vitality and richness of the urban environment.

The Mission Street corridor is generally not considered an appropriate setting for single-family homes. Given the large traffic volumes along Mission Street, the remaining single-family residential uses should be allowed to eventually phase out in favor of uses that are more consistent with the vision for the corridor. Residential uses along the corridor should be restricted to multi-family residential units and residential above ground floor retail or office.

Policy 6a: Explore the possibility of introducing higher density residential and live-work development into the area south of McPherson and Old Mission Streets that is currently zoned for industrial uses.

Program: Undertake a study to identify appropriate boundaries for introducing residential uses into the area south of McPherson Street and the implications for the City's inventory of industrially zoned lands.

The industrially-zoned area located just south of Mission Street near Swift Street has the potential to be a new pedestrian- and transit-oriented residential neighborhood that is within convenient walking, biking, and transit distance of Mission Street retail, Natural Bridges area employment, and the University. The introduction of residential development in this area would be complementary to the redevelopment of Mission Street, expanding the market base for new and existing businesses along the corridor and providing the residential population that is essential to establishing a vital mixed-use district. It would also be consistent with the City's policy to pursue land use patterns that reduce automobile dependence and support the use of mass transit and other modes of travel.

