

CHAPTER 3 - CITY AND COUNTY PLANS

The section of the project area between the San Mateo Caltrain Station and U.S. Highway 101, called the Gateway by the City of San Mateo Downtown Area Plan, is identified in multiple planning documents as an area of great development potential. It is said to have strong market potential for a higher density transit-oriented housing project in the County's Transit-Oriented Development Opportunity Study, and is classified as the main entry to San Mateo's downtown in the Downtown Area Plan. In addition, there are planned improvements to Poplar Avenue and Amphlett Boulevard, located in the northern- and eastern-most sections of the project area, mentioned in the City's most recent Five-Year Capital Improvement Program.

3.1 City of San Mateo General Plan

The City of San Mateo General Plan identifies several goals for the project area. However, since the City's General Plan is presently under revision and further development, the City of San Mateo Downtown Area Plan is a more current resource to the Community-Based Transportation Plan at this time.

3.2 City of San Mateo North Central Livable Streets Plan (2003)

The North Central Livable Streets Plan was approved by the San Mateo City Council in June of 2003. Its purpose was to guide future capital improvements within the neighborhood and "to increase the safety, convenience, and attractiveness of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit use." The Plan classified the North Central neighborhood as the area bounded by Peninsula Avenue to the north, Highway 101 to the east, 2nd Avenue and San Mateo Creek to the south, and Railroad Avenue to the west.

The Plan listed the following five primary goals:

- Establish street design that promotes pedestrian and bicycle connections, "healthy streets," and unification of street and public space character
- Create safe and direct access to transit centers for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles
- Encourage alternate modes of transportation, especially public transit
- Enhance pedestrian links to public transportation through pedestrian-friendly design in the neighborhood
- Provide opportunities for residents to become involved in the planning process

There were two community workshops held for residents of the North Central neighborhood in order to gain public insight during the planning process. There was also an initial survey of three representative streets within the neighborhood intended to help identify potential issues and opportunities for the area. Each of these three streets carried a different level of traffic volume: Delaware Street (an arterial road), Tilton Avenue (a collector road), and Grant Street (a local road). Early analysis concluded that the neighborhood is within easy walking or biking distance of the downtown area, where there is convenient rail and bus access to popular destinations within the Bay

Area. It also concluded that some arterial streets within the neighborhood, such as Delaware Street and Poplar Avenue, carry heavy traffic that impacts the neighborhood and threatens pedestrian and bicycle safety.

The Plan discussed several public projects that had recently been completed or were scheduled to take place in the area. Most notable of these projects were:

- The transit center at 1st and Railroad Avenue (the San Mateo Caltrain station)
- Scheduled railroad under-crossing replacements/retrofitings at Monte Diablo, Poplar, Santa Inez, and Tilton Avenues. These under-crossings were built between 1900 and 1902, provide less than nine feet of clearance, and are in need of repair
- Planned streetscape improvements between Tilton and 3rd Avenues, east of San Mateo Creek within the neighborhood

There were two recent private development projects mentioned in the Plan. First, the Classic Communities development at Humboldt Street and 2nd Avenue, which consists of 25 single-family two-story townhouses. Second, the Prometheus Project, located between 3rd and 4th Avenues and Eldorado and Grant Streets: a four-story luxury apartment complex consisting of 218 units.

Several major issues were identified by the Livable Streets Plan. Among them: the problem of narrow collector streets. The best example of this problem can be seen on Tilton, Monte Diablo, and Santa Inez Avenues between Delaware and Amphlett Streets – these collector streets are only 30 feet wide. Another major problem: the abundance of truck traffic in the neighborhood, generated by the commercial and industrial land uses along Amphlett Boulevard. According to the Plan, the City is looking into ways to improve this situation as part of its new General Plan.

There were several complaints from neighborhood residents mentioned in the Plan. Some of the most common of these complaints were that the planter strips are often paved or neglected, the sidewalks cracked in many places, and the streets unfriendly for pedestrians and bicycles. Another common complaint was that there is a serious lack of on-street parking, especially in the evenings. The Plan suggests that this is partially due to the relatively high household size in the area.

In conclusion, the Plan gives numerous recommendations for the street system in the area. The most relevant of these recommendations state that the North Central neighborhood should:

- Use streetscape improvements to distinguish major streets
- Develop pedestrian-scaled signage in the area
- Provide a minimum travel lane width
- Encourage bike travel on quieter streets parallel to major arterials
- Mark bike lanes at intersections
- Provide maps of recommended bicycle routes
- Reduce bicycle hazards
- Improve safety for school children
- Improve markings for pedestrian crossings
- Strengthen the pedestrian realm; increase buffers between sidewalk and moving traffic
- Implement curb bulb outs at crosswalks
- Increase signage and waiting areas at bus stops

- Increase clearances in bus stop waiting areas between the bus shelter and the curb

3.3 City of San Mateo Downtown Area Plan (2009)

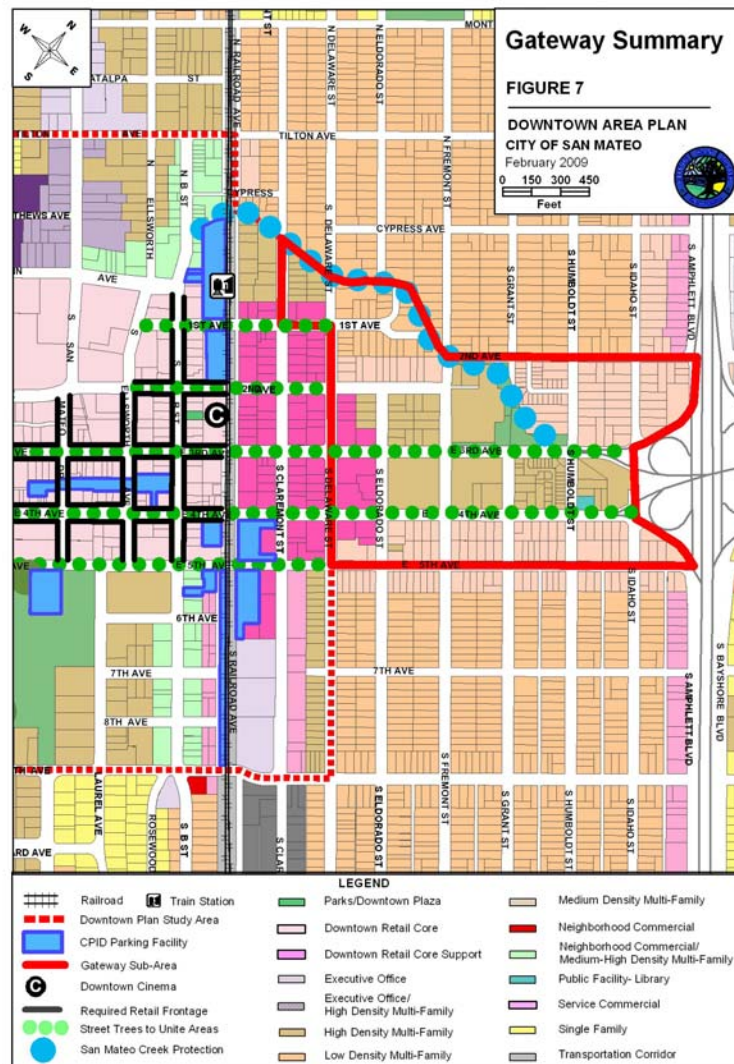
The City of San Mateo approved the Downtown Area Plan in May of 2009. In order to examine Downtown San Mateo more closely, the area was split up into several sub-areas. Two of these sub-areas overlap with the project area: the entirety of the Gateway sub-area, and a small portion of the Central Claremont sub-area. In this report, we will focus on the Gateway.

Current and Future Conditions

The Gateway stretches from Highway 101 to Delaware and Claremont Streets, and from the San Mateo Creek and 2nd Avenue to 5th Avenue (Map 11). The Gateway is the main entry to the downtown area. It includes several multi-family structures, a neighborhood shopping center, and service uses. To the north and south, there are lower density residential neighborhoods. However, the Plan states that the Gateway is a poor entryway and transition to the downtown core area. It also states that the sites located next to the freeway have access that is indirect and difficult, requiring passage through residential neighborhoods, and that office or hotel uses are inconsistent with the area's lack of access.

In addition to discussing the current conditions of the Gateway, the Plan also discusses four future conditions. First, the multi-family residential character of the area will be maintained and extended to include those blocks directly adjacent to Highway 101. Second, new construction and existing neighborhoods will be compatible due to the Gateway design guidelines that have recently been developed. Third, all new development along 3rd and 4th Avenues will be built to a consistent building setback line. Lastly, street trees will be planted along 3rd and 4th Avenues to create a more consistent, positive transition from the Gateway to the Downtown Retail Core.

Map 11: City of San Mateo Downtown Area Plan Gateway Sub-Area



Policies

The Downtown Area Plan lists 55 policies, many of which affect the project area, whether directly or indirectly. Specifically, eight of these policies directly affect the project area:

Entryways

Establish a main entry to the downtown along 3rd and 4th Avenues east of the railroad tracks. Define a natural boundary to the downtown along San Mateo Creek, which separates a higher density area to the south and a lower density residential area to the north.

Street Tree Plan

Update the Street Tree Master Plan, including consistent and prominent street tree plantings on key streets such as 3rd and 4th Avenues to provide a clear visual link to the downtown.

Gateway Design Standards

Continue to implement the Gateway Design Standards, which address design quality, architectural compatibility, pedestrian safety and aesthetics for the Gateway sub-area.

3rd Avenue/4th Avenue Widening

Support the widening of 3rd and 4th Avenues from 2 to 3 lanes between Humboldt and Delaware Streets due to projected peak hour traffic volumes.

Railway Improvements

Depress the rail line through the downtown with street crossings remaining at grade as Caltrain service is increased and high speed rail through the corridor is implemented. Any rail improvement should avoid physically dividing the community in “east” vs. “west” segments. All significant environmental impacts should be mitigated to minimize impacts on the adjacent community. Consider alternative design solutions to minimize the additional right of way required to construct proposed improvements and reduce impacts on adjacent properties.

Railroad Corridor Widening

In the event that separation of freight and passenger rail lines is necessary due to substantial increases in passenger service and incorporation of High Speed Rail, the rail corridor will need to be widened. The existing rail corridor is at its narrowest in the downtown primarily due to the existence of Railroad Avenue on the east side of the tracks, so redevelopment of sites with access only to Railroad Avenue must be limited.

Transit Services

Encourage increased transit use viability to and around Downtown by:

- Supporting an increase to rail service, including the “Baby Bullet”;
- Supporting coordination between multi-modal agencies (bus, train, etc.);
- Enhancing integration of mass transit into Downtown;
- Investigating the feasibility of a Downtown shuttle;
- Encouraging increased transit services and increased transit use for travel downtown, particularly by employees.

The City should encourage SamTrans service by considering the need for bus stops within downtown and provision of adequate space for bus movement when designing street improvements or reviewing private development projects. The City should also encourage expanded transit service by Caltrain and SamTrans.

Support Sustainable Transportation Initiatives

Implement Downtown Area Plan policies calling for use of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures, establishment of a Transportation Management Association (TMA), and other measures to reduce vehicle trips and encourage transit use and promote bicycle and pedestrian accessibility.

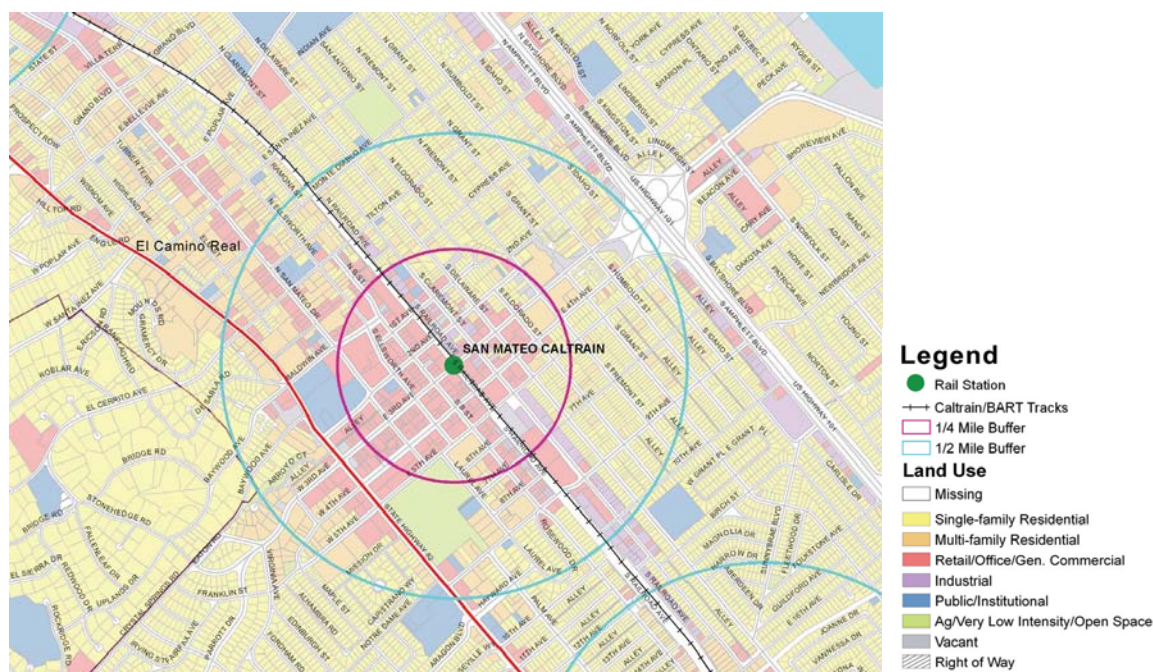
3.4 San Mateo County TOD Opportunity Study (2007)

The San Mateo County Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Opportunity Study completed in 2007 identifies the San Mateo Caltrain Station as a destination station that could benefit from added

transit and/or shuttle services. It also states that the station has strong market potential for a higher density transit-oriented housing product.

Currently, land use in the San Mateo Station area, defined as the area within half a mile of the Caltrain Station, is split about evenly between residential and combined commercial-industrial (Map 12). The Study states that, although the site is relatively built-out, there are still opportunities for infill development and intensifying of existing land uses, such as upgrading the office space in the downtown from Class B to Class A. According to the Study, such upgrading may hold the potential to attract a critical mass of the Class A users that prefer to be near transit and the amenities of the downtown area, but are locating in newer space outside of the downtown. In addition, office development that builds on an already concentrated employment center is more likely to generate transit ridership. Furthermore, new residential development may help to reinvigorate activity in the downtown.

Map 12: San Mateo Caltrain Station Area Land Use



The Study identifies two opportunities for continuing with TOD in the station area. First, the station area benefits from an existing critical mass of activity due to its centralized location in downtown San Mateo. Second, the City's policies are supportive of TOD in the station area.

The Study also identifies two constraints for continuing with TOD in the area. The station area is largely built out, and therefore, there is little opportunity for large-scale development. Also, station visibility is restricted from major thoroughfares.

Despite these constraints, the San Mateo Station has been recommended by the Study for the second phase of the TOD process. The purpose of the second phase is to develop a specific plan of action to initiate TOD at a station area where the first phase has already been completed. This recommendation is the next logical act following the steps the City has already taken towards implementation of TOD in the area.

The Study lists the following tasks as part of the second phase of the TOD process:

- Cost /feasibility analyses for developing small-scale infill development
- Assessments of TOD-generated benefits to rail transit, primarily potential ridership gains and shifts in transportation mode splits
- Identification and development of TOD-friendly planning policies and legislative initiatives to support infill development
- Development of outreach strategies to broaden and maintain a dialogue with stakeholders about ongoing planning efforts

According to the Study, the City of San Mateo has already helped to advance TOD in its communities by actively engaged in planning efforts to encourage mixed uses and higher-density development within its Caltrain Station areas.

3.5 Capital Improvement Program Projects (2006-2008)

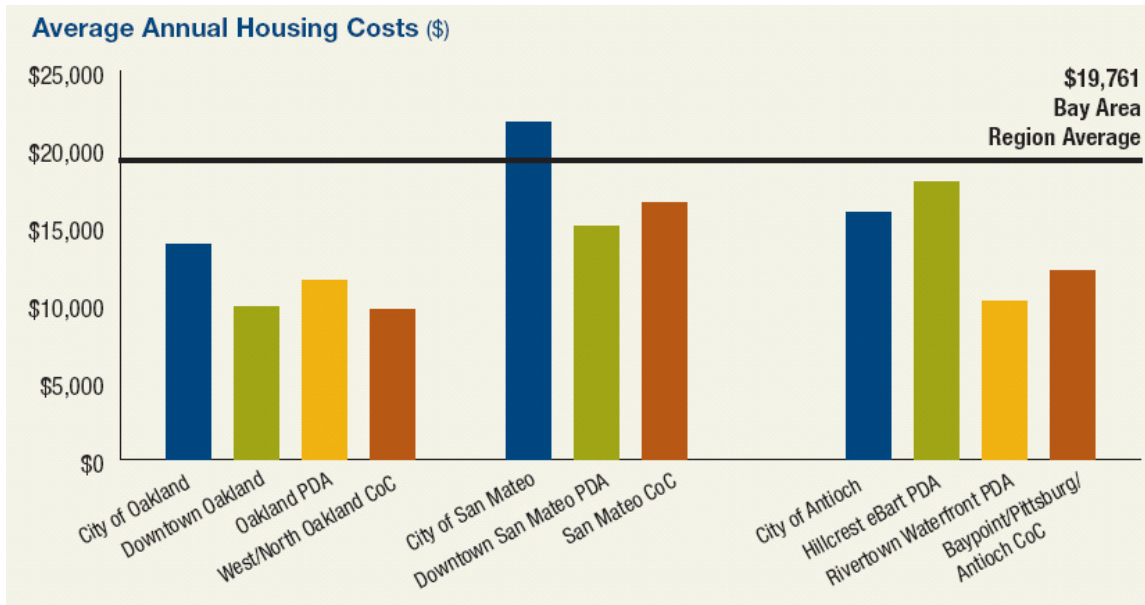
There are two projects affecting the project area included in the Five-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) from the 2006-2008 Business Plan by the City of San Mateo. The first consists of improvements to Poplar Avenue and Amphlett Boulevard, with a total fund of \$23,000 from a county grant and from Measure A, a half cent raise in sales tax. The second consists of bicycle detection loops along 3rd and 4th Avenues, with a total fund of \$44,000 from a TDA grant and the General Fund.

Housing and Transportation Affordability

In 2009 MTC conducted an analysis on Housing and Transportation Affordability in the Bay Area, where the city of San Mateo was included. Housing and Transportation Affordability looks at the expense of living in specific areas in relation to housing cost, transportation cost, and income level. The analysis looked at three distinctive areas in San Mateo: San Mateo Citywide, Downtown San Mateo Priority Development Area (PDA), and the San Mateo Community of Concern (CoC). A Priority Development Area is a project that is being created in order to better service residents through various amenities, transportation modes, and housing. The San Mateo CoC for this analysis was the North Central San Mateo community. A Community of Concern is the concentration of minority or low-income populations, having at least 70 percent minority or 30 percent low-income residents.

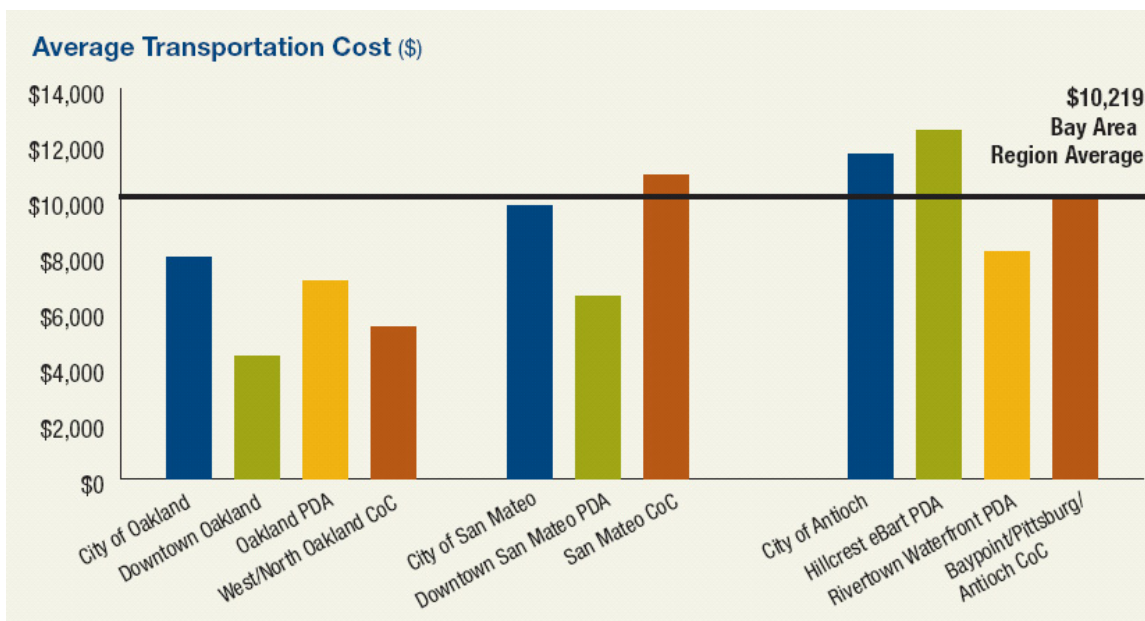
The Bay Area average for Regional Housing Costs is \$19, 761 per year (Figure 25). The city of San Mateo had the highest housing average annual costs of \$21, 721. The Downtown San Mateo PDA housing average annual cost was \$15,028 and in North Central San Mateo was \$16,515. The city of San Mateo has a 54 percent homeownership while North Central San Mateo has a homeownership of 36 percent.

Figure 25: Average Annual Housing Costs



The average Regional cost for Transportation in the Bay Area is \$10,219 (Figure 26). The San Mateo PDA had an average transportation cost of \$6,588 in comparison to North Central San Mateo at \$10,922. Even though the San Mateo PDA and North Central San Mateo are relatively near each other and provide alternative modes of transit the differences within the communities represent the contrast between their average transportation costs.

Figure 26: Average Transportation Costs



North Central San Mateo residents with an income less than \$50,000 annually are 51 percent in comparison to the city of San Mateo at 34 percent. The household vehicle availability of at least one vehicle per household is 89 percent in North Central San Mateo. The average income spent on transportation in the North Central San Mateo community is 23% (Figure 27). With high vehicle availability per household, residents incur higher transportation cost. The average cost for car owners is \$5000 per year for auto insurance and payments, excluding gas and repairs. If the Bay Area Region were to continue to increase adequate transit access and if car ownership were to be reduced by one car for those homes permitted for 1999 to 2006, there would be \$132.5 million dollars of disposable income created. Low-income households would be able to reduce their total cost in Housing and Transportation needs.

The MTC analysis on Housing and Transportation Availability revealed that within the three areas of San Mateo, the North Central San Mateo had the highest H+T costs (Figure 27). San Mateo citywide averages 47 percent of their income to H+T cost. Downtown San Mateo PDA residents average 51 percent of their income to H+T costs. North Central San Mateo resident's average 59 percent of their income to H+T costs. Further enhancements to alternative transportation modes and transit information provided to the community would be beneficial in lowering: congestion, green house emissions, and Housing and Transportation costs.

Figure 27: Average Percent of Income Spent on H+T Costs

