



Agenda Item

DATE: SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

TO: CITY COUNCIL

**FROM: CARMELA CAMPBELL, ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: STATION DISTRICT SPECIFIC PLAN: REVIEW OF GUIDING
PRINCIPLES AND SUBAREA PLANNING ALTERNATIVES**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff is requesting feedback and direction from the City Council regarding the draft guiding principles for the Station District Specific Plan, along with planning alternatives for each of the Station District's five subareas. This report provides an overview of the Station District Specific Plan planning considerations, draft guiding principles, background conditions, and community feedback received to date (Attachment 1). The Planning Commission reviewed this item at its August 20, 2020 meeting. The Planning Commission Staff Report, Desk Item, and Meeting Notes are attached (Attachments 2, 3, and 4, respectively). Planning Commission feedback is also referenced in portions of this staff report.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This agenda item is in alignment with the following:

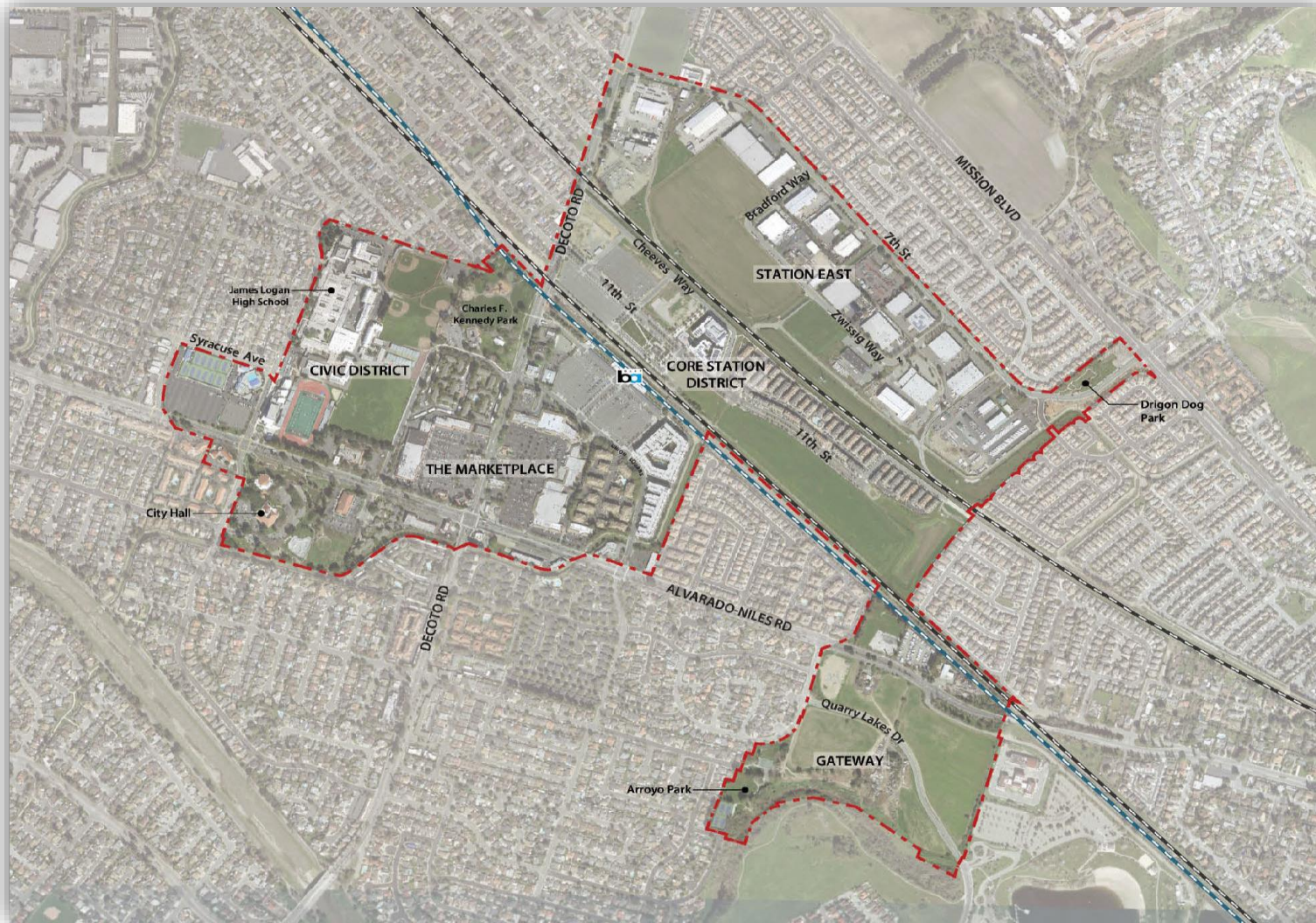
Goal C. Economic, Community Development and Public Safety - Institute forward-thinking business, land use development, housing, social services, and public safety strategies that promote community growth and innovation.

Strategy 3 - Facilitate the build out of the greater Station District Area through the construction of the Quarry Lakes Parkway, upgrades to the BART station, and completion of the pedestrian rail crossing and the sale and development of City-owned land.

BACKGROUND

The Station District is a 471-acre area surrounding the Intermodal Station. City staff and the consultant team has been working with stakeholders and community members to create an updated Specific Plan for the area identified below in Figure 1 (Station District Plan Area) with adoption anticipated in mid-2021. The process will include a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The "Station District Specific Plan" is intended to ensure consistency with the Union City 2040 General Plan, which was adopted

Figure 1. Station District Plan Area



in December 2019, while providing an opportunity to refine the vision, planning details, and implementation strategies for the Station District. The Union City General Plan 2040 envisions the Station District as a world-class, transit-oriented community with new retail, public amenities, and high-density housing and job centers, all linked by bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Specific Plan is anticipated to address a range of topics including land use, urban design, transportation, infrastructure, open space, and community amenities for the different subareas of the Station District.

In 2018, the City was awarded a Priority Development Area Planning Grant by the Metropolitan Commission to update the existing Decoto Industrial Park Study Area (DIPSA) Specific Plan. The Station District Specific Plan will replace and alter the boundaries of the existing Decoto Industrial Park Study Area (DIPSA) Specific Plan. The proposed Station District Specific Plan boundary is identical to the recently updated boundary for Union City's regional Priority Development Area (PDA), as well as the General Plan. The PDA boundary was updated in February 2020 by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in coordination with the City.

Land Use

The Station District Specific Plan area has a range of existing land uses, including residential, retail, schools, public uses, parks, and office space. General Plan allowed land uses enable a similar range of land uses. The 2040 Union City General Plan established a vision "to continue to transform the Station District into a dynamic, transit-oriented district with a diversity of uses that create a vibrant atmosphere where people live, work and socialize." The Station District Specific Plan is intended to enact that vision, while adding details of policy, design, feasibility, geographic specificity, and implementation that were not established by the General Plan.

Project Process and Schedule

The consultant team of Dyett & Bhatia was selected through a competitive bidding process to assist the City in completing work on the Station District Specific Plan. The City received a MTC / ABAG PDA Planning Grant to cover the cost of the Specific Plan update and related CEQA work. Work on the project commenced in 2019. Since that time, the project team of City and consultant staff have created a detailed report of existing conditions for the Station District area; established a 5-person Community Advisory Committee (CAC); created a project website (www.unioncity.org/SD); and conducted stakeholder interviews with property owners, neighbors, and others with an interest in the area. The existing conditions report for the Station District Specific Plan area includes background information regarding land use, urban design, transportation, environmental setting, and infrastructure and can be found on the Station District project website at <https://www.unioncity.org/423/Resources>. This background work was the foundation for the Station District planning alternatives and guiding principles, which are summarized in this staff report.

Community Engagement Process

The Station District planning considerations and guiding principles were presented to the Station District Community Advisory Committee (CAC) on July 9, 2020, at a citywide community workshop on July 21, 2020, and at a meeting of the Planning Commission on August 20, 2020. All meetings were held virtually, in accordance with the current Alameda County Health Officer Order and City policy and are summarized briefly below. In addition, the City conducted a community survey and a series of stakeholder interviews. Detailed feedback from these meetings and interviews is included as Attachment 1 to this staff report. A brief summary of community input received for specific subareas of the Station District is also integrated into the discussion and analysis of each subarea below.

July 9 CAC Meeting. The July 9 Station District CAC meeting was attended by all five CAC members. The CAC expressed support for the key strategies as presented. The CAC also expressed general support for the concepts presented for each subarea, with suggestions and refinements that were incorporated into the material presented to the community workshop. Specific subarea comments by the CAC included the following:

- Core Station District – Supportive of office/residential/retail mix and increased connectivity; need for design attention along Decoto Road across from the Decoto neighborhood. Concern over potential gentrification impacts to Decoto neighborhood from build-out of Station District.
- Station East – Supportive of increased connectivity and pathways through the area
- Marketplace – Interested in the potential to add a mix of uses while retaining retail, which is heavily utilized, and providing appropriate parking
- Gateway – Supportive of an “agrihood” concept with housing and community facilities integrated with community gardens and small-scale agricultural use
- Civic District – Interested in potential to increase public art in the district, such as with art on the pillars under the BART tracks.

July 21 Community Workshop. The City held a virtual community workshop on July 21, which had approximately 20 participants, to solicit feedback on the draft guiding principles and subarea planning alternatives. Community members were able to participate in live polling during the workshop and were able to type questions to the project team during the meeting. The project team provided responses in writing during the meeting as feasible, along with verbal responses at the end of the meeting. The results of these polling questions and a transcript of Questions and Answers from the community meeting are included in Attachment 1 to this staff report. Overall, participants expressed support for the range of guiding principles. Many comments were focused on the Marketplace, where the addition of mixed-use development and improved street frontage were identified as a priority and Station East where enhanced pedestrian connections and a network of parks and greenways were identified as a priority.

Community Survey. Community feedback on Station District planning alternatives was also provided through an online survey that was available on the project website from July 21 through

August 19, 2020. The survey was available to all community members and was advertised through email lists, social media posts, the July 21 Community Workshop, and the July 9 CAC meeting. The survey focused on key topics that will be addressed in the Specific Plan, and allowed for closed- and open-ended responses. The survey asked for input on similar planning alternatives material that is presented to the Planning Commission below. The survey was taken by 38 community members. Of these, the majority were Union City residents who have lived in the City for at least ten years. Most respondents were age 45 or older, and most were white. Eighty-four percent of respondents identified as Union City residents, 39 percent as property owners, and 10 percent as people employed in Union City. Complete survey results are available in Attachment 1 of this staff report. Some common themes in the survey feedback included the following regarding the Station District area:

- Support for the proposed guiding principles
- Support for increased connectivity and walkability
- Concern about a potential increase in traffic
- Support for recreational open space and programming
- Support for a range of housing types and levels of affordability.

August 20 Planning Commission Study Session. The City held a virtual Planning Commission meeting on August 20, for the Commission to review and provide direction on the Station District planning alternatives that had also been presented at the CAC, community workshop, and online survey. The Planning Commission expressed overall support for the guiding principles and subarea direction, while offering suggestions for refinement of language to more accurately reflect the unique Station District context in Union City. This feedback is referenced in the staff report below as well as in Attachment 3 (Planning Commission Desk Item), and led to refinements to the Draft Guiding Principles and Subarea goals that are presented to Council in the section below. The staff report for the August 20 Planning Commission meeting is included as Attachment 2, and detailed meeting notes from the August 20 Planning Commission meeting are included as Attachment 4.

ANALYSIS

Informed by existing conditions analysis, community engagement, and policy direction in the General Plan, City staff and the consultant team have developed a set of guiding principles for the Station District as a whole, along with planning considerations for each subarea. These are summarized below.

Guiding Principles

The project team developed five draft guiding principles for consideration at the July 9 CAC meeting, the July 21 community workshop, and the August 20 Planning Commission meeting. Following the August 20 Planning Commission meeting, the guiding principles were refined to reflect Planning Commission and other feedback received, and to more specifically reflect desired

direction for the Station District. The overall direction of the Guiding Principles presented to Council remains the same as what was presented at previous meetings, but the project team has refined specific wording and details to reflect input received from the Planning Commission and other community engagement efforts.

The guiding principles are intended to guide the overall strategy, policies, design, and investments that will be included in the Station District Specific Plan, and are integrated into concepts for each subarea of the Specific Plan. The guiding principles as they are currently formulated primarily relate to desired physical and design attributes for the Station District. It is anticipated that the Guiding Principles may continue to be refined as the Station District Specific Plan is further developed, and in response to feedback received. Additional guiding principles and/or goals related to social issues, economic development, sustainability, and potentially other topics will be added to the draft Specific Plan. The draft Guiding Principles are listed below:

Principle 1: Central Spine. Create an east-west spine that links the Marketplace, BART, the Core, and Station East, prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle connections. (See Figure 2.)

Principle 2: Well Connected District. Create an interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, pathways, and multi-use trails that knit the district together and enable people to easily and directly traverse the area on foot or bicycle. (See Figure 3.)

Principle 3: Open Space Network. Establish a cohesive system of parks and plazas to enhance the area's livability and provide open spaces within walking access of new homes, including linking greenways that enable active recreation. (See Figure 4.)

Principle 4: Diversity of Uses. Foster a "complete community" with a diverse mix of residential, commercial, office, industrial, and civic uses to promote self-sufficiency and urban lifestyles. (See Figure 5.)

Principle 5: High Quality Design. Promote building and landscape design that create a sense of place and reflect the district's unique contemporary identity, with unified streetscapes, signage and urban design elements that foster identify, and a sense of place.

Community Feedback on Guiding Principles

Feedback elicited on the guiding principles through the Community Advisory Committee, the Community Workshop, and the Community Survey was generally supportive of the proposed Guiding Principles. Details of this feedback is included in Attachment 1. At the August 20 Planning Commission Study Session, the Planning Commission expressed support for the five identified guiding principles, while suggesting refinements to make the principles more specific to the Station District. Some of these suggestions, such as avoiding the use of the term "Neighborhood" to describe the Station District, are described in the Planning Commission Desk Item included below as Attachment 3, and are reflected in the refined Guiding Principles listed above.

Figure 2. Central Spine (Guiding Principle 1)

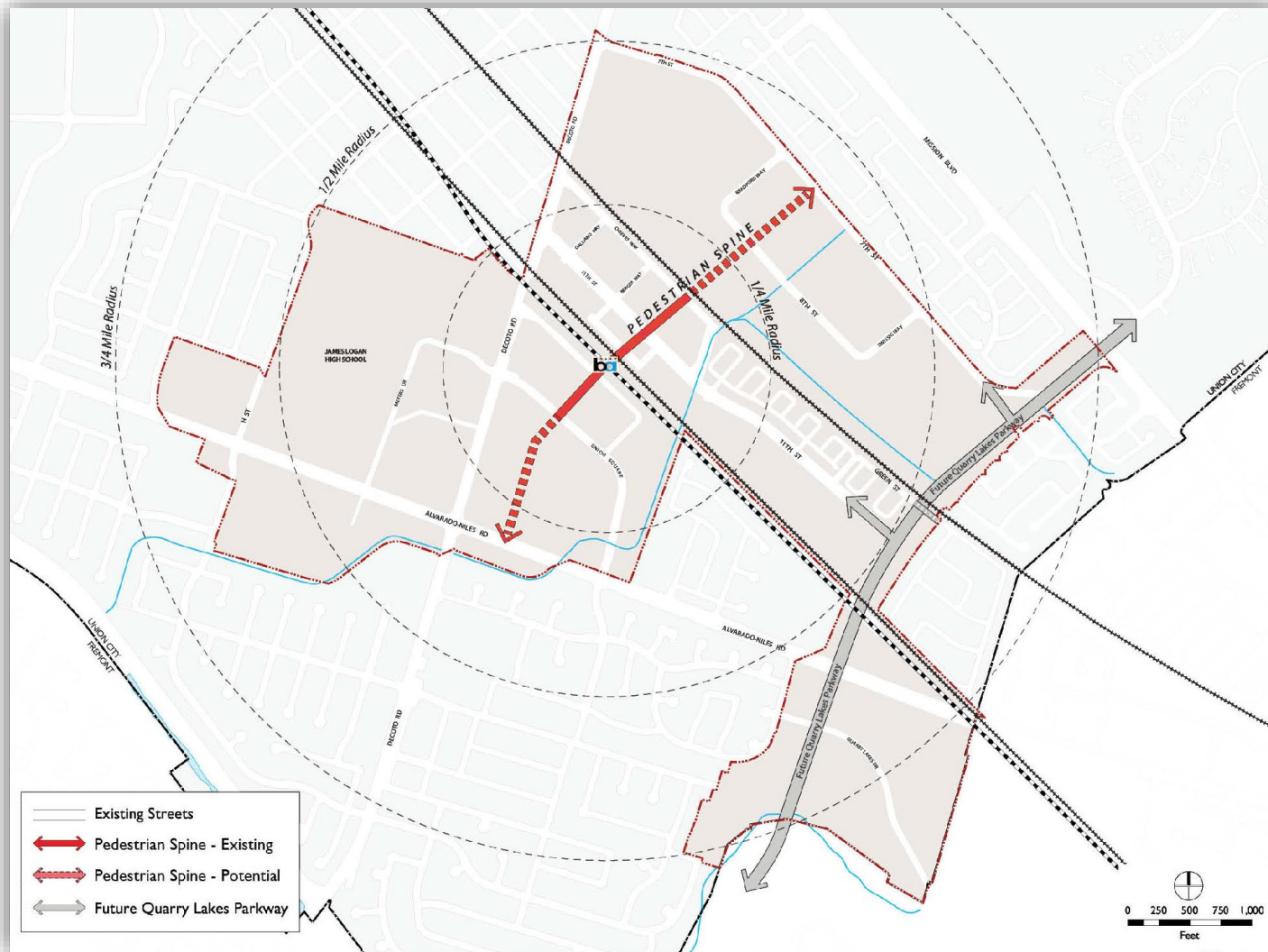


Figure 3. Well Connected District (Guiding Principle 2)

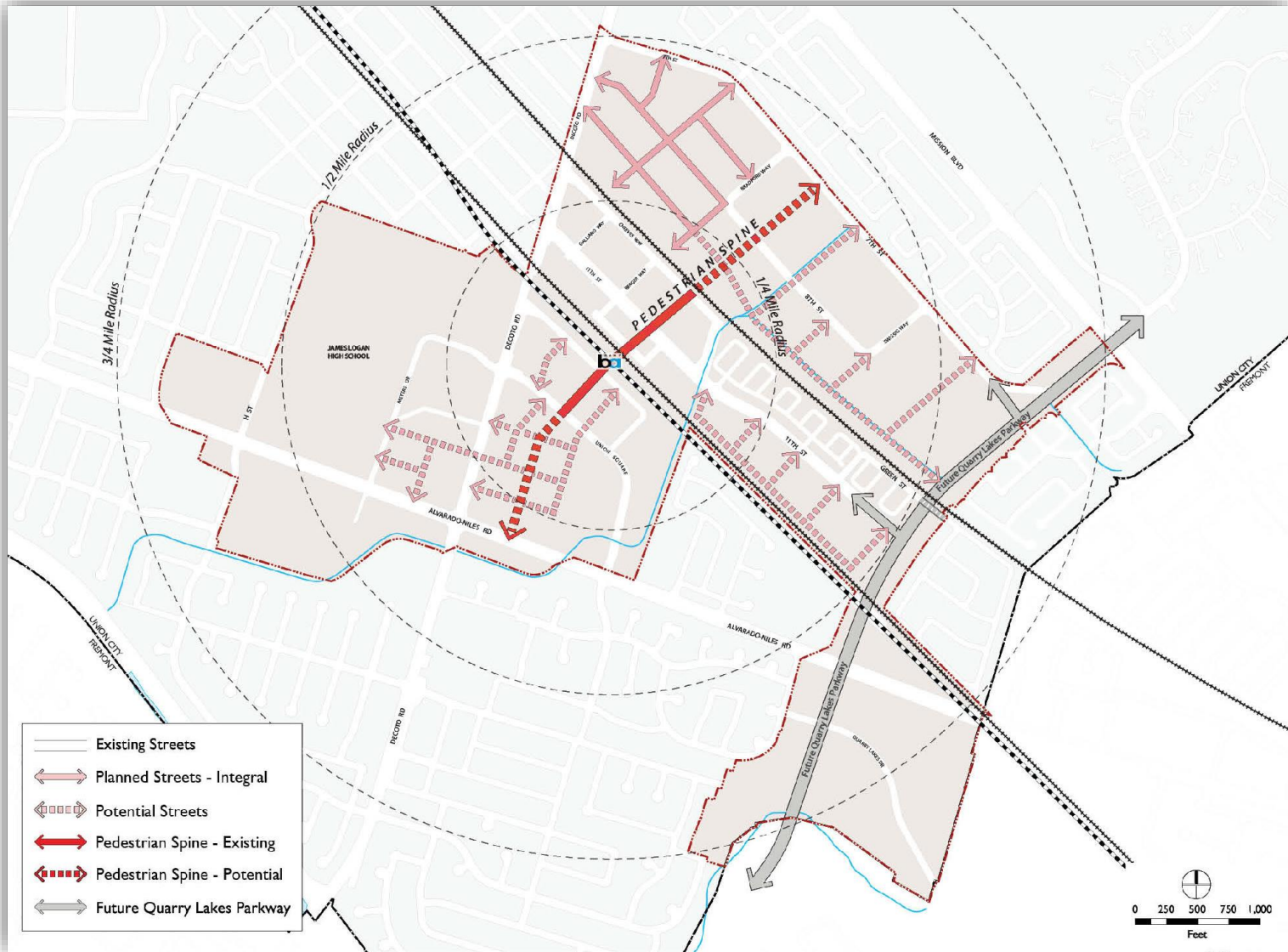
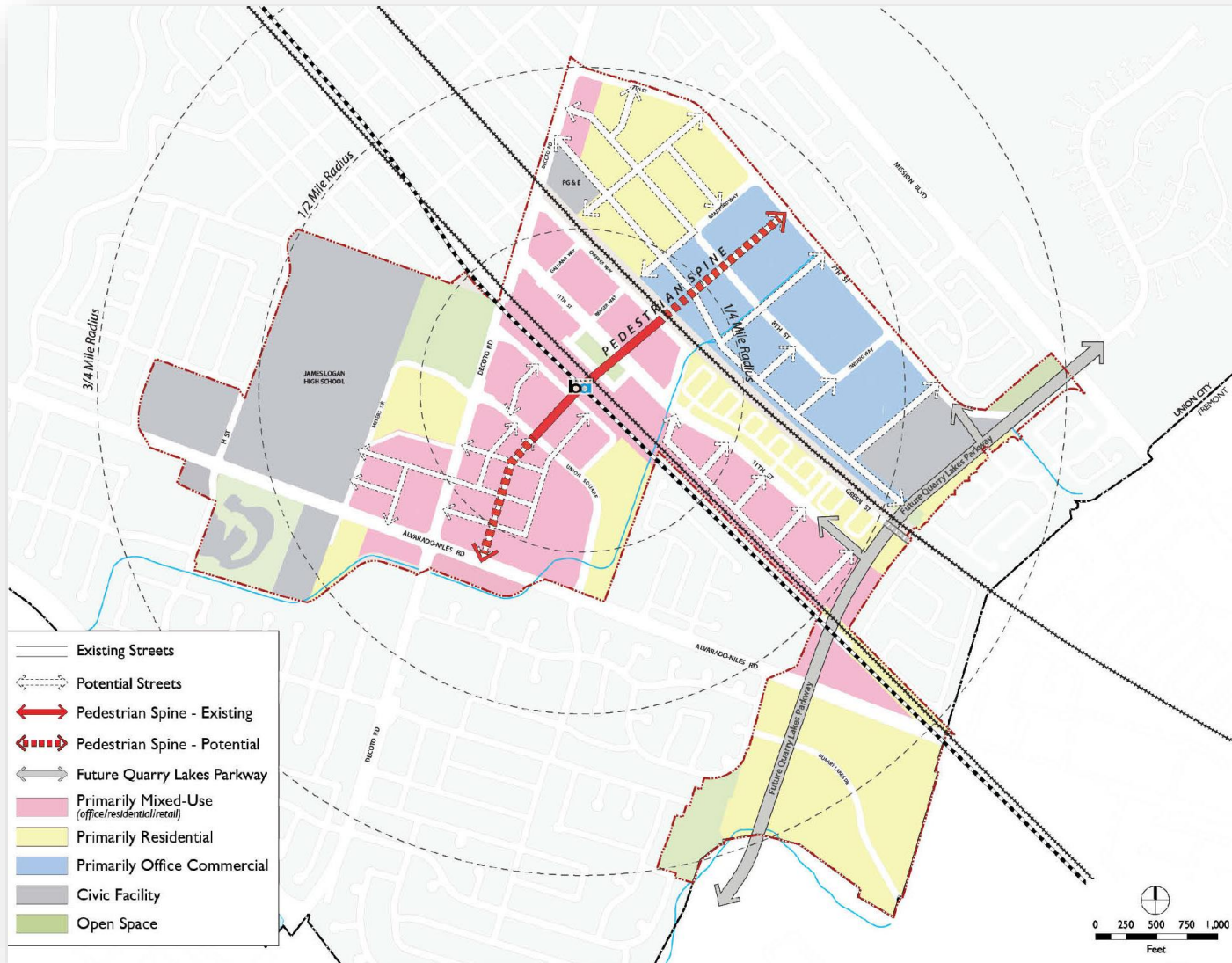


Figure 4. Open Space Network (Guiding Principle 3)



Figure 5. Diversity of Uses (Guiding Principle 4)



Planning Alternatives by Subarea

The project team has developed a set of planning considerations for each subarea of the Specific Plan. The subareas are consistent with those identified in the General Plan, with a small number of refinements to the various subarea boundaries. The subarea boundaries are shown in Figure 6 (Station District Subareas), followed by a summary of subarea goals and planning considerations for each area. Please note that the subarea goals have been slightly updated from prior outreach, based on feedback received from the Planning Commission and other community engagement processes.

The Core

Proposed goal statement for The Core: *The Core is envisioned as a major transit hub, business center, and residential community with a high intensity of uses, well connected to the rest of the city.*

The Core is anticipated to include a continuation of the land use pattern and development projects that have occurred in recent years, consistent with the General Plan. In addition to recent developments such as Union Flats and Station Center, and other existing housing like Avalon Bay, the Verandas, and Pacific Terrace, several development projects have been proposed or approved in The Core. This includes “Windflower 2”, which is the second phase of the Union Flats Apartments and includes 443 units as well as Union 1.2, which would include 1.2 million square feet of office development on three vacant sites located along 11th Street. See Figure 7 for an overview of the area.

The City-owned “Restoration Site,” between 11th Street and the BART tracks, is envisioned by the General Plan to include a flexible mix of residential, office, and/or retail with open space. The site consists of a mound rising approximately 22 feet above ground level that contains material (mostly slag, a byproduct of steel production) from the former Pacific States Steel Corporation (PSSC) site. While the overall property is approximately 16 acres, the developable area on top of the “cap” is approximately 7 acres. This site is seen as a longer-term development opportunity. The City’s preference is for the existing mound to be removed as part of a future development process to allow for development of the full 16-acre site.

Based on initial planning work for the Station District in the early 2000s completed by the City in conjunction with its transit partners, the Union City BART Station parking lots were identified for future office uses. These assumptions were carried through in the current 2040 General Plan. Since

Figure 6. Station District Sub-Areas

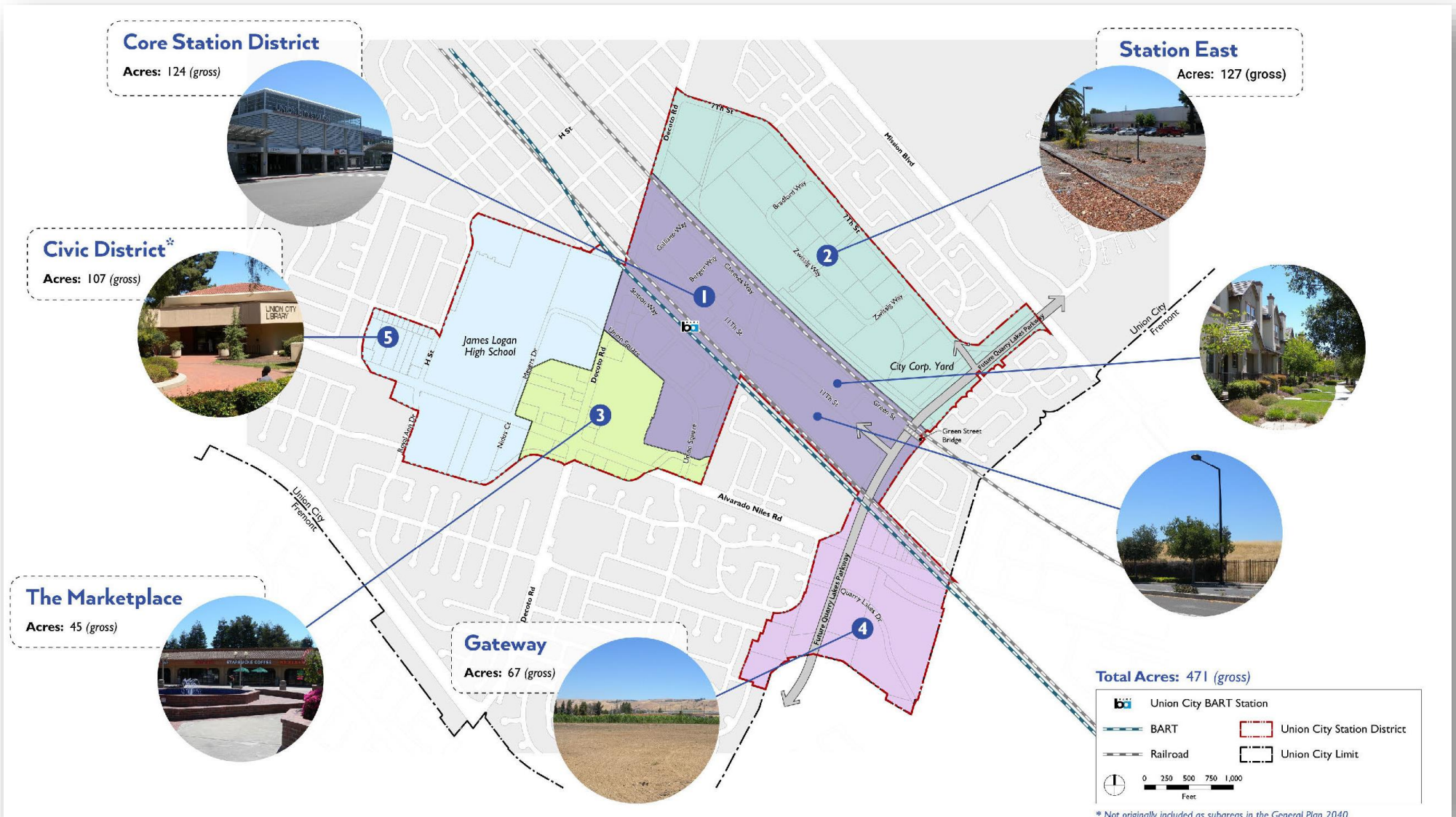
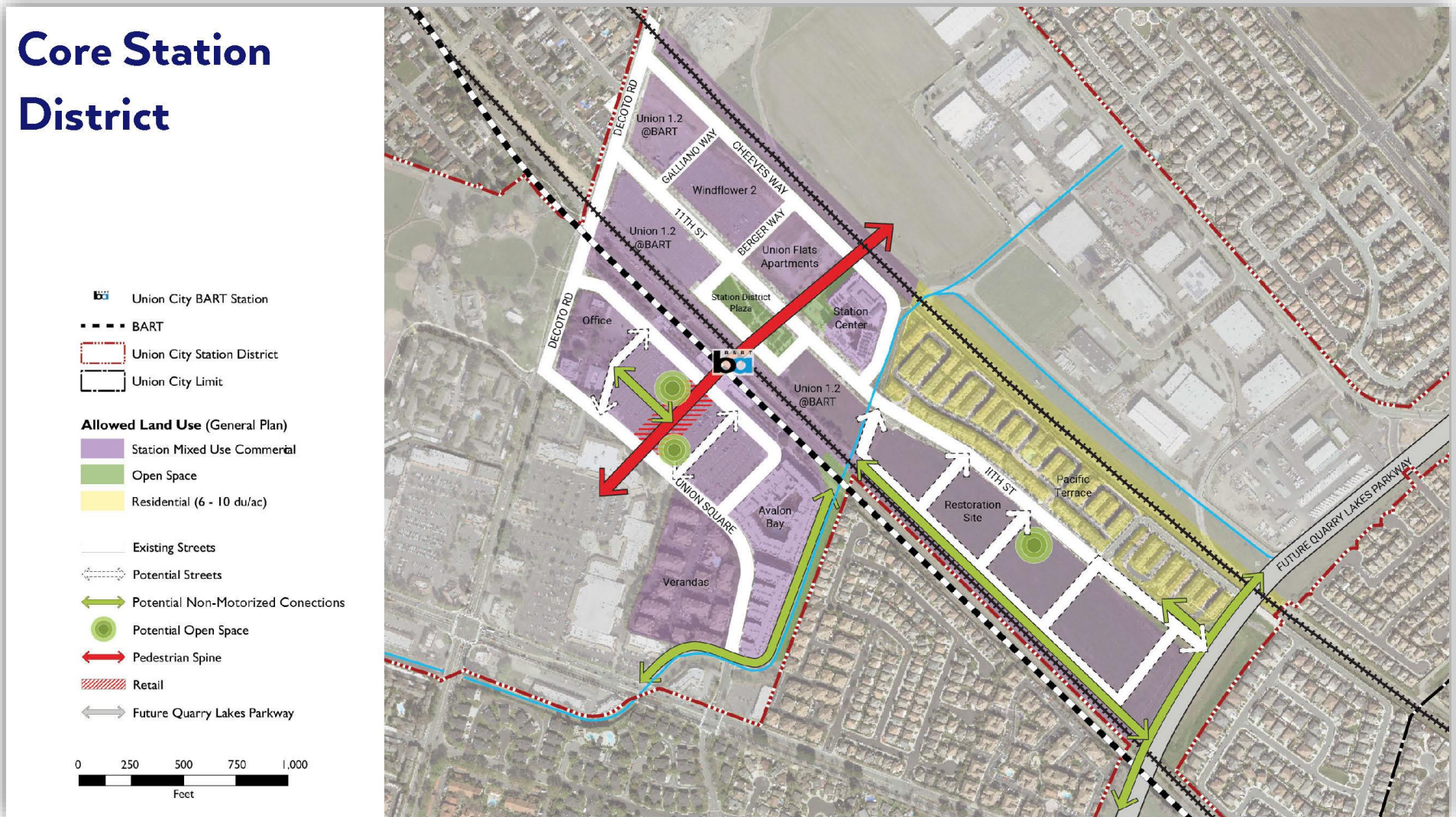


Figure 7. Core Concept



the adoption of AB 2393¹, BART has been involved in a planning process to identify and prioritize development of land at its various stations. The project team has been coordinating with BART to better understand its long-term development intentions for their property, which are summarized in the draft BART's 10-Year Work Plan for Transit-Oriented Development (https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/docs/TOD_Workplan_FINAL_200814_reduced.pdf). This Plan identifies future land uses for the UC station as “flexible”, which means either residential or commercial could be developed. The Plan also identifies a “Mid-term (2025-2030)” development timeline. The Plan also ranks the Station in terms of readiness, local support and infrastructure, which was influenced by several factors. Staff has set up a meeting with BART staff to discuss their draft recommendations.

Future development in the Station District would also include new street and pedestrian improvements, creation of new public spaces, continued improvements to existing open spaces such as the Plaza area, and a range of public and private parking. This range of development activity is consistent with the direction of the General Plan and will be reflected in the Specific Plan.

Community Engagement Feedback

See below for high level feedback from various community engagement efforts (i.e. Community Advisory Committee, community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and community survey) focused on major themes.

- Support for a mix of office and residential with an emphasis on ground floor retail
- Support for increased bicycle and pedestrian connectivity
- Support for community gathering spaces such as parks, playgrounds, and food truck events
- Observation that existing retail along 11th Street is underutilized; with an increase in density and connections it is hoped that retail will be better utilized
- Need for attention to context-sensitive neighborhood design along Decoto Road across from residential uses in the Decoto neighborhood
- Need to address potential gentrification impacts on the Decoto neighborhood
- Concern about the impact of new development on traffic along Decoto Road and Alvarado-Niles Road during peak hours.
- Based on proposed density and intensity of uses, need for Quarry Lakes Parkway (Planning Commission)
- Need for BART to provide replacement parking if they develop their lots (Planning Commission)

¹ AB 2393 was signed into law in 2018 and require jurisdictions to rezone certain BART-owned property in support of TOD. The law further provided the ability for BART to have influence over this zoning and conferred upon BART's developer partners the ability to seek entitlement streamlining. While AB 2923 affects zoning, there are no mandates within the law that BART develop its properties.

A full summary of engagement feedback from the CAC, community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and community survey is attached (Attachment 1) along with the Planning Commission meeting summary (Attachment 4).

Station East

Proposed goal statement for Station East: *Station East is envisioned as a vibrant hub of prosperity and innovation, with a significant cluster of technology and office uses replacing economically obsolete uses, with a mixed-use residential area providing a range of housing options. New streets and pathways, buildings and plazas, and greenways along railroad spurs will foster a connected, urban quality, and provide direct access to BART.*

The 2040 General Plan updated the allowed land uses for a portion of the Station East area closest to Decoto Road to allow residential and commercial uses. Consistent with that direction, an application has been submitted by Integral Communities, Inc. for approximately 1,000 residential for-sale and rental multi-family units, approximately 30,000 sq. ft. of ground-floor commercial along Decoto Road, and new public and open spaces. The project proposes new roadway connections to Decoto Road and 7th Street and robust pedestrian and bicycle facilities throughout. The project EIR is currently underway for that project. It is anticipated that the project will be coming to the decision makers in late winter /early Spring 2021.

The remaining Station East area would be envisioned to include a range of employment uses over the longer term, including office and R&D uses, as well as public amenities to serve the future day-time population including plazas and recreational outdoor space. This range of land uses would be complemented by a network of new and expanded green spaces and pedestrian connections linking important destinations throughout the Station East area, and accessed through the Pedestrian Spine that extends west to BART and the Core Station District. See Figures 8 and 9.

Community Engagement Feedback

See below for high-level feedback from the various community engagement efforts focused on major themes.

- Support for increased connectivity and construction of pedestrian crossing over/under the Niles Subdivision railroad tracks to link Station East with the BART station
- Recognition that the connection to BART and connectivity to surrounding areas is essential for area's success
- Need for more affordable housing based on location near public transit
- Support for new retail uses in the area to serve the Decoto Neighborhood

Figure 8. Station East Concept

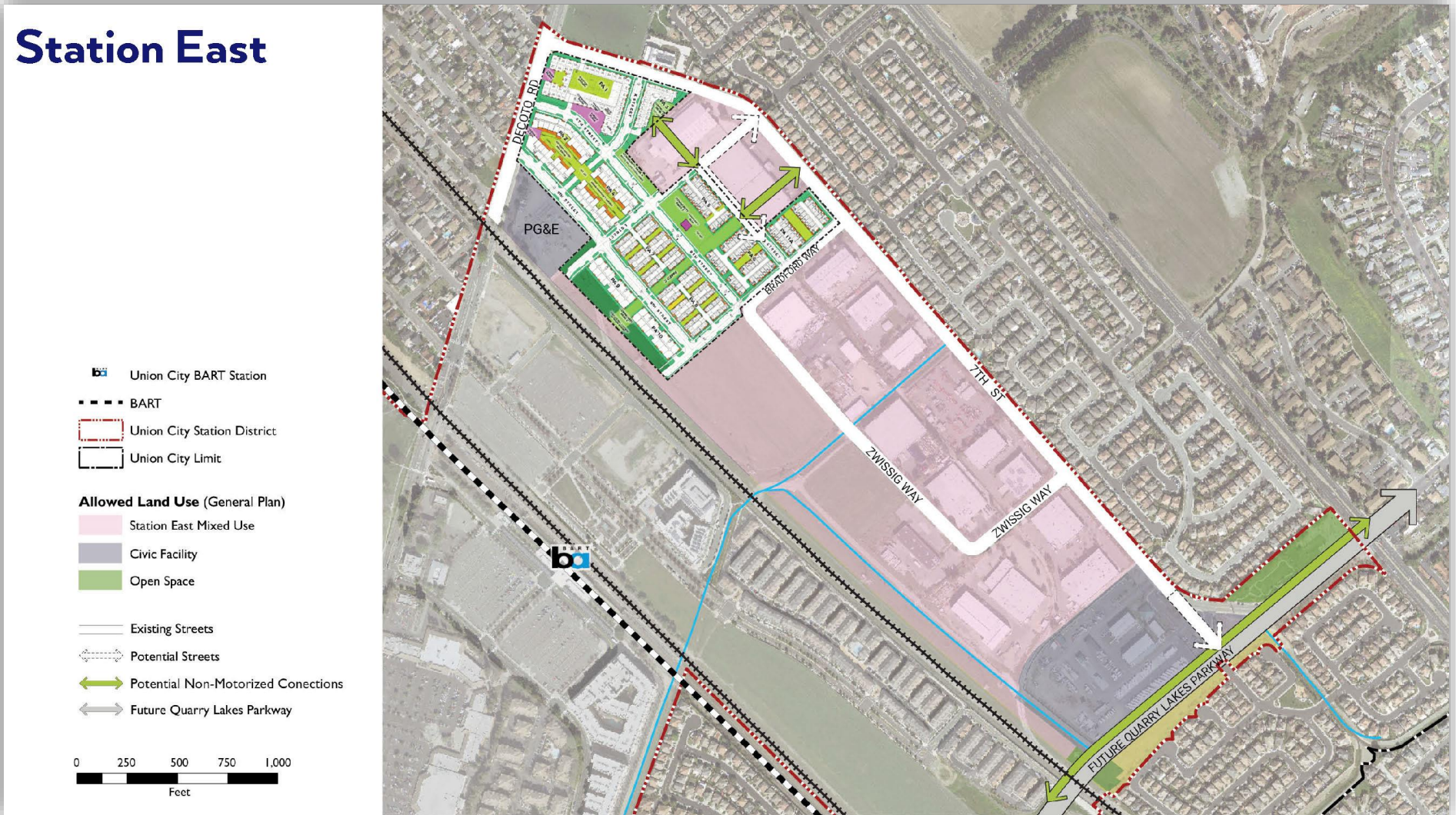
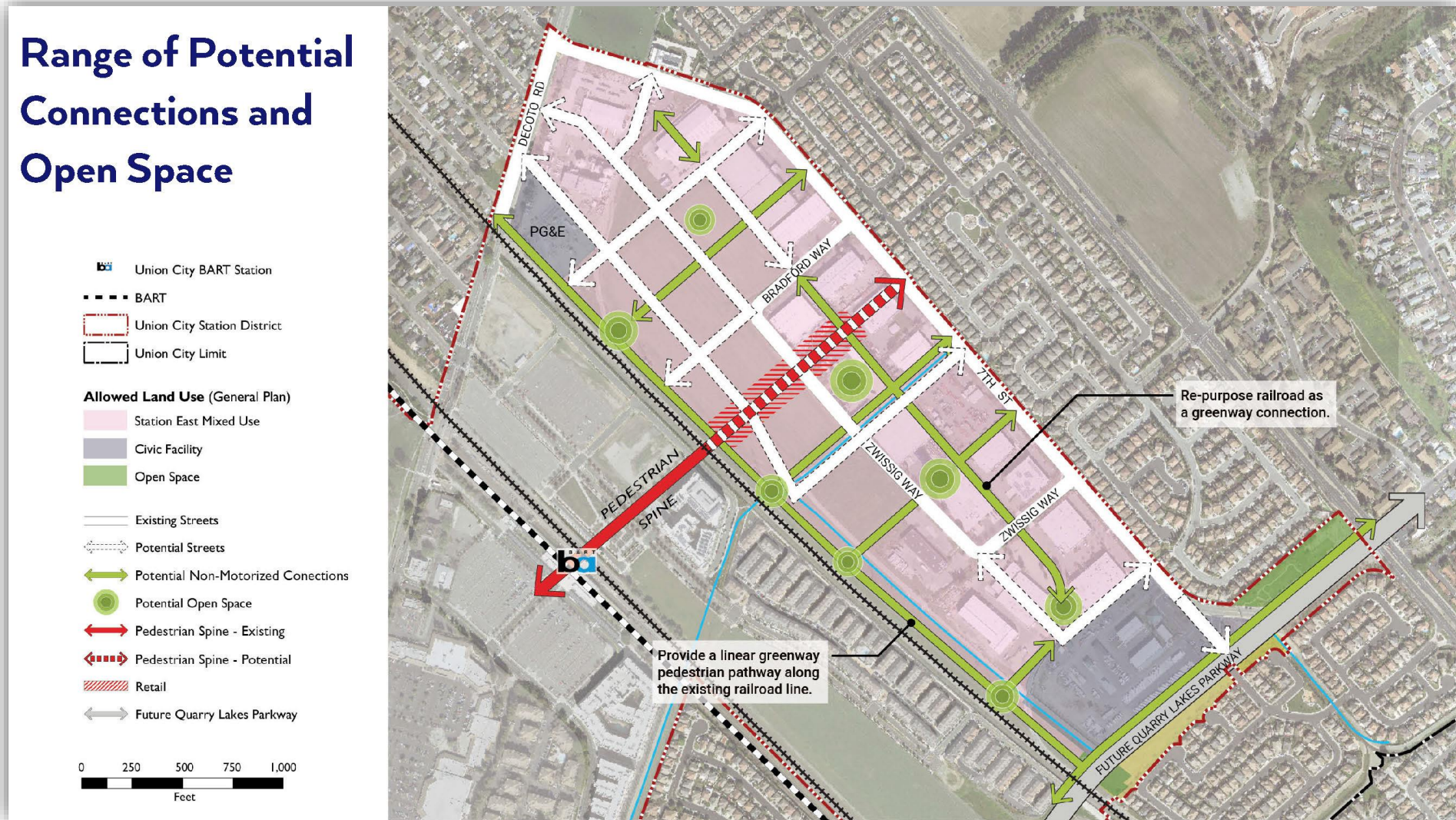


Figure 9. Station East Potential Connections and Open Space



- Emphasis on providing adequate parking for proposed uses
- Need for adequate separation/buffering between uses between residential and industrial uses (Planning Commission)
- Concern over displacement of existing businesses that provide jobs and sales taxes (Planning Commission)

A full summary of engagement feedback from the CAC, community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and community survey is attached (Attachment 1) along with the Planning Commission meeting summary (Attachment 4).

Marketplace

Proposed goal statement for Station East: *The Marketplace is anticipated to be a vibrant, walkable citywide destination with community-serving and specialty-retail, dining, and entertainment uses, new streets, and plazas fostering a “downtown” feel, with a complementary mix of residential, office, and other uses.*

This shopping area is heavily used by residents that live on the east side of the City and has historically very low vacancy rates. It is a strong City and community priority to retain the amount and diversity of stores, services, and shopping options that currently exist in the Marketplace area. This is particularly true for residents of nearby areas such as the Decoto neighborhood and The Core, which rely on the area for important everyday needs such as grocery shopping. At the same time, there may be opportunities to enhance and complement the Marketplace’s existing retail character with improved public spaces, active street frontage, and the introduction of residential in targeted locations. This could occur at a range of scales and timelines. Staff interviewed the property owner for the Marketplace Shopping Center who expressed a desire to redevelopment their property at some point in the future. A summary of her feedback along with other stakeholders is summarized in Attachment 1.

The Marketplace concept (Figure 10) demonstrates a long-term illustrative concept for what could occur in the Marketplace area. The concept demonstrates potential redevelopment that could occur over a longer time period with phased development activity. This concept retains the existing amount of retail, but would provide it in a range of formats, including stand-alone retail, such as a public market concept to accommodate smaller businesses with artisan products, or retail integrated into the ground floor of residential buildings. It also includes enhanced connections, public realm improvements, and open green space, and is oriented around an extension of the existing spine that connects to the BART Station.

Figure 10. Marketplace Concept



This diagram is only conceptual, and a future development proposal would likely require a more detailed master planning process in close coordination with property owners. In addition, there is the option of partial or phased redevelopment of the area, with phased introduction of new open space, housing and/or mixed-use buildings on select parcels or portions of parcels in the Marketplace area, as they become available for development by interested property owners.

The concept also shows potential improvements to the creek trail, extending citywide connections between the BART Station and the Alameda Creek Trail to the west.

Community Engagement Feedback

See below for high-level feedback from the various community engagement efforts focused on major themes.

- Preference to retain small, local businesses
- Support for adding a mix of uses, including mixed-use residential, to the area while retaining retail
- Desire to ensure parking continues to be provided but in more innovative ways (e.g. parking on top of new buildings, smaller parking lots distributed throughout the area)
- Support for increased pedestrian and bicycle connections
- Support for mixed-use residential development (Planning Commission)
- Need for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle crossings on Decoto Road to connect shopping centers (Planning Commission)

A full summary of engagement feedback from the CAC, community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and community survey is attached (Attachment 1) along with the Planning Commission meeting summary (Attachment 4).

Gateway

Proposed goal statement for Gateway: *This area is envisioned to provide a new gateway to Union City that provides a variety of housing opportunities integrated with open space, park amenities, community agriculture, and enhanced facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, facilitated by construction of the Quarry Lakes Parkway.*

The Gateway includes property owned by Caltrans, which accommodates the planned Quarry Lakes Parkway (QLP). The QLP is a planned transportation corridor for the Station District area that extends from Mission Boulevard to Paseo Padre Parkway. The parkway provides enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities including a separated, multi-use path for pedestrian and bicyclists.

Of the approximate 35-acre site owned by Caltrans, approximately 25 acres is available for residential development with the remaining acreage identified for the QLP right-of-way and open

space/wetland mitigation areas. The City is in contract to purchase the entire property. Per the Surplus Lands Act, the City must first offer the property to developers for affordable housing development at a density of 30 units per acre. Staff anticipates presenting additional information on the Caltrans property at a future City Council meeting this fall.

The recently updated General Plan identifies the Gateway area for housing, consistent with the last several Housing Elements, as well as complementary open space and commercial uses located east of Alvarado-Niles Road. See Figure 11 for an overview of the land use. Open space could be provided as stand-alone public space as well as in coordination with residential development, and could occur within a range of scales, orientations, facility types, and programming options. These could include playgrounds, community gardens, recreational open space, passive open space, or other open space and ecological areas including potential connections to the adjacent Arroyo Park and Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area. Housing types currently allowed include townhomes and apartments but there is opportunity to expand housing types to allow mixed-use development, or even an integrated “agrihood,” where housing and on-site community facilities are integrated with agricultural uses that could be public or private.

Community Engagement Feedback

See below for high-level feedback from the various community engagement efforts focused on major themes.

- Support for a mix of housing types including an “agrihood” concept.
- Support for community gardens
- Concern over the loss of existing agricultural land
- Potential for the site east of Alvarado-Niles Road to include a mix of retail and residential
- Received public feedback on the planned QLP, which was forwarded to the City Manager and Public Works Departments who are managing the project.
- Clarified need for QLP to provide traffic relief to Decoto Road and provide uninterrupted emergency vehicle access (Planning Commission)

A full summary of engagement feedback from the CAC, community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and community survey is attached (Attachment 1) along with the Planning Commission meeting summary (Attachment 4).

Civic Center

Proposed goal statement for Civic Center: *In the Civic Center, civic uses are envisioned to become more cohesively integrated with the larger Station District, with new pedestrian and bicycle*

Figure 11. Gateway Concept



connections, and potential long-term improvements to existing public facilities and amenities should grant or other funding becomes available.

The existing mix of land uses is envisioned to largely remain in place within the Civic Center, as shown in the accompanying diagram (Figure 12). However, there may be opportunities to improve connections, open space, civic facilities, and community programming in the Civic Center.

Community Engagement Feedback

See below for high-level feedback from the various community engagement efforts focused on major themes.

- Potential to increase public art within the Civic District – such as the pillars under BART or art within Kennedy Park
- Desire to improve existing public open spaces
- Desire to improve existing facilities, such as the library
- Desire to improve safety in the area
- Create more active uses within Kennedy Park.
- Create an arrangement with Logan High School to share facilities

A full summary of engagement feedback from the CAC, community meeting, stakeholder meetings, and community survey is attached (Attachment 1) along with the Planning Commission meeting summary (Attachment 4).

Conclusion

Over the last few months, the City has completed an extensive outreach process to solicit feedback on the draft Guiding Principles and Planning Alternatives for the Station District subareas. Outreach efforts included a community workshop, a community survey, meetings with stakeholders, two meetings with the City's appointed Citizen Advisory Committee and an August 20th meeting with the Planning Commission. A summary of that feedback is included and labeled as Attachment 1, Summary of Station District Engagement Feedback, and Attachment 4, Planning Commission Meeting Summary. This feedback, along with feedback received from the City Council, will inform development of the draft Station District Specific Plan, which will be brought back to the community and decision makers in draft form for review early next year.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with this report.

Figure 12. Civic Center Concept



RECOMMENDATION

Staff is requesting feedback regarding the draft guiding principles for the Station District Specific Plan, as well as feedback for each subarea of the Station District.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of Station District Engagement Feedback

Attachment 2: Planning Commission Staff Report Dated August 20, 2020

Attachment 3: Planning Commission Desk Item Dated August 20, 2020

Attachment 4: Planning Commission Meeting Summary Dated August 20, 2020