

BOOK I: COMMUNITY INTENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES



1.1. THE VISION

At the outset of the 21st Century, Redwood City's Downtown is finally ready to live up to its long-awaited potential – to be the premier livable downtown on the San Francisco Peninsula, midway between San Jose and San Francisco. Downtown Redwood City has long been the Peninsula's forgotten urban gem, hidden by by-pass roads and buried within suburban expansion. Over the last decade, however, the City has worked hard to channel major public and private investment into Downtown, including new public buildings, housing, entertainment venues, transit facilities, and street improvements. These efforts are breaking through Downtown's past barriers to success and transforming it into an exciting regional city center. Its residents, customers, workers, and visitors will have the ideal combination of varied shops and services, rich cultural and civic opportunities, the presence of City and County government, Downtown workplaces, convenient transit connections to the region, and a spectrum of in-town living and working opportunities. All of these amenities will be within a welcoming, distinctive, and human-scaled walkable district – with the choices and sophistication of a larger center and the history, charm and livability of a medium-sized city.

Within a 3-block radius of Downtown's Historic Courthouse, you can now or will soon be able to:

- Borrow a library book
- Eat at an outdoor restaurant on a special dining street
- Visit a museum
- Catch an express train to San Jose or San Francisco
- Pick vegetables at a farmer's market
- Select an engagement ring
- See a movie
- Stock up on groceries at a supermarket
- Drop off your dry cleaning
- Work out at a gym
- Take a University of California extension class
- Enjoy live music
- Meet friends by the fountains in Courthouse Square
- Or, just buy an ice cream cone

Why is Downtown ready for success now, more than in the last three generations? Major changes in Americans' habits of shopping, dining, working, and residing are being driven by profound demographic and cultural transformations. With its good "bone structure" of walkable streets and blocks, landmark buildings, a climate which is "best by government test," a solid employment base in offices and businesses, convenient transit stations, recently built and renovated public facilities, civic activities, a rich variety of stores, and a new hub of entertainment and nightlife venues, Downtown Redwood City stands ready to benefit from the urban synergy that Americans now flock to experience at "Lifestyle Centers" and revitalized malls. But in contrast with the "instant places" of themed malls and shopping centers that the market has constructed to satisfy these growing demands, Downtown has and will continue to maintain the history, diversity and emotional depth of being the authentic heart of a vital community.

The *Downtown Precise Plan* (DTPP) is an important tool for the community's use in reaching its goals and achieving sustainable development by planning for the impact of economic growth on environmental resources and service infrastructure for Downtown. In re-tuning development policies, the Plan will take best advantage of demographic and market trends that bypassed Downtown in the past; this time, the Plan will bring them into "center stage" in the present and future, by:

- Bringing in Downtown housing which is affordable to a variety of income groups to provide previously unavailable residential lifestyle choices, to enhance security by adding "eyes on the street," and to also insure an active clientele for shops, restaurants, and services.
- Concentrating retail uses on Broadway and around "anchors" of civic activity, so that customers, transit access, parking facilities, and destination identity are shared.
- Shaping new buildings to define a distinctive, unique and livable form for a medium-sized city downtown on the Peninsula, well-scaled to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maintaining access, human scale, walkability, and the right "feel" for Redwood City - strongly rooted in its history but alive to the dynamic possibilities of Bay Area industry and culture.

