

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

23 Russell Boulevard, Suite 2 – Davis, California 95616  
530/757-5610 – TDD: 530/757-5666



**Date:** October 7, 2020

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report and Scoping Meeting for the Downtown Davis Specific Plan and Associated Form-Based Code

**To:** State Clearinghouse  
State Responsible Agencies  
State Trustee Agencies  
Other Public Agencies  
Organizations and Interested Persons

**Lead Agency:** City of Davis  
Department of Community Development and Sustainability  
Planning Division  
23 Russell Boulevard, Suite 2  
Davis, CA 95616  
Phone: (530) 757-5610  
Contact: Eric Lee  
Email: [Elee@cityofdavis.org](mailto:Elee@cityofdavis.org)

**Notice of Preparation:** This is to notify the public agencies and the general public that the City of Davis, as Lead Agency, will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the Downtown Davis Specific Plan and Associated Form-Based Code (referred to collectively as the “proposed project”). The City is interested in the input and/or comments of public agencies and the general public as to the scope and content of the environmental information that should be evaluated in the EIR. Public agencies will need to use the EIR prepared by the City when considering applicable permits, or other approvals for the proposed project.

**Project Title:** Downtown Davis Specific Plan and Associated Form-Based Code

**Project Location:** Commercial core and mixed-use area of Downtown Davis, University Avenue-Rice Lane neighborhood, the Amtrak Station, the Davis Commons site, and select parcels in the Old North and Old East Neighborhoods

**Scoping Meeting:** Thursday, October 29, 2020 starting at 6:00 PM, the City of Davis Department of Community Development and Sustainability will conduct a **digital** public scoping meeting to solicit input and comments from public agencies and the general public on the proposed EIR for the Downtown Davis Specific Plan and Associated Form-Based Code.

**This public scoping meeting will be held digitally via Zoom, an online video/audio conferencing platform. Meeting participants can join by desktop, tablet, or smart phone with Internet connection. The meeting will include a presentation describing the proposed Downtown Specific Plan and Associated Form-Based Code, followed by an opportunity for members of the public to comment on environmental topics which should be discussed and analyzed in the EIR. The public scoping meeting can be accessed online via this link: <https://zoom.us/j/99222857453>.**

If you have any questions regarding this scoping meeting, contact Eric Lee at [elee@cityofdavis.org](mailto:elee@cityofdavis.org), or (530) 757-5610. Additional information about the proposed project is available at the following City webpage:

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan>

**Comment Period: Consistent with the time limits mandated by State law, your input, comments, or responses must be received in writing and sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 5:00 PM on November 5, 2020.**

**Comments/ Input:** Please send your input, comments, or responses (including the name for a contact person in your agency, if applicable) to:

Attn: Eric Lee, Planner  
City of Davis Department of Community Development and Sustainability  
23 Russell Boulevard  
Davis, CA 95616  
[Elee@cityofdavis.org](mailto:Elee@cityofdavis.org)

**If sending input, comments, or responses via email, please write “Davis Downtown Specific Plan and Associated Form-Based Code NOP Comments” in the subject line.**

### **Project Location and Existing Uses**

The proposed project encompasses 32 blocks of approximately 132 total acres in the Davis Downtown Core Area (hereby referred to as “project area”). The project area includes the University Avenue-Rice Lane neighborhood and select parcels in the Old North and Old East neighborhoods. The boundary of the project area extends beyond that of the previous Core Area Specific Plan and includes the Davis Commons site and the Amtrak Station (see Figure 1).

Existing uses in the project area include residential, retail, mixed-use with retail on the ground floor, office, mixed-use with office on the ground floor, general commercial, industrial, parks, and public spaces. Surrounding uses include University of California, Davis to the west, residential to the north, residential to the east, and both residential and commercial to the south. The Amtrak rail line borders the south of the project area.

### **Project Background**

Development in the project area is currently overseen by the 1996 Core Area Specific Plan (CASP). The CASP was adopted as a visioning document for development in the Downtown, guided by a comprehensive set of maps, policies, guidelines, and implementation strategies. These included topics related to land use, circulation, streetscape, and implementation. While the CASP is comprehensive in nature, it is not a regulatory document and implementing the vision of the CASP has been difficult due to inconsistencies with the Core Area zoning designation. Furthermore, the City recognizes the need to update the CASP to reflect changes in the existing conditions and the community’s vision of the downtown area.

### **Project Description**

The proposed project is intended to implement the community’s vision for the Downtown into a variety of opportunities for reinvestment and future development through a 2040 horizon year. The proposed project would replace the former 1996 CASP, and includes more regulatory authority, largely through the form-based code, which is included as part of the proposed project. For access to the entire proposed project, visit the City of Davis website at: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan>.

### Development

The proposed project allows for the addition of 1,000 residential units and 600,000 square feet of nonresidential development in the project area by 2040. The breakdown of recommended residential units and non-residential square feet of development for each area within Downtown is illustrated in Table 1 below. It should be noted that these numbers are estimates, and are not intended to serve as caps for development in each area. Central Park would be preserved with its current use. Because the project area is largely built out, the proposed project assumes development would occur as either infill of vacant lots, or as redevelopment of existing buildings or additional building on underutilized sites.

**TABLE 1            RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BY AREA**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Residential Units</b>	<b>Non-Residential Square Feet</b>
Heart of the Downtown	513	330,700
G Street	168	111,400
North G Street	102	59,800
North-West Downtown	78	34,000
South-West Downtown	106	48,700
University Avenue- Rice Lane	33	15,400

### Land Use and Development Characteristics of the Proposed Project

The Downtown Davis Specific Plan is proposed with the intent to provide for increased residential development and additional commercial opportunities while building on the unique character of Downtown Davis by ensuring future growth is compact, sustainable, supportive of a rich economy, and that necessary improvements are made to the transportation network to ensure safe and equitable access by all travel modes. The Downtown Davis Specific Plan reflects a community interest in maintaining and improving the character of the Downtown in its role as the community's retail and office core and as established by the remaining historic structures. The Downtown Davis Specific Plan pays special attention to the existing urban character and adjacent residential neighborhoods, proposes modifications to the public realm, and provides clear direction for future development that will ensure the Downtown has a rich character and sense of place.

The Form-Based Code is the mechanism by which the Downtown Davis Specific Plan would be able to assure these goals are met as development occurs. As shown on Figure 2, the proposed project includes eight primary land use designations, with additional regulations pertaining to existing resources and various design elements. Building configurations and maximum heights would include detached, attached, and a mix of both detached and attached, with heights ranging from between two- and five-stories with limited seven-story buildings permitted in select locations. A total of six special areas are identified in the proposed project as areas which because of their location or size, are deemed important to implementation of the proposed project. As shown on Figure 3, these sites include the Davis Commons, Davis Amtrak Station, E Street Plaza Block, E/F Street Parking Lot, East Transition Lots, and the North End Site: Seventh Street and G Street.

### Historic Resources

The proposed project identifies strategies to protect and preserve the existing historic resources in the project area while encouraging adaptive use and sensitive redevelopment. This would be achieved through designated conservation overlay districts which would protect the traditional neighborhood characteristics, discourage demolition of historic structures, identify historic preservation incentives, and plan for standards for infill construction that are compatible with existing historic structures, including adjacency to resources.

### Mobility

The proposed project includes several mobility provisions which encourage improvements to the public realm through a downtown circulation plan incorporated into the proposed project. These improvements would include preserving a safe and enjoyable pedestrian network, promotion of bicycling and transit, and the concentration of automobile transit on thoroughfare roadways. Improvements include streetscape improvements, grade-separated bicycle and pedestrian crossings, signalized intersections, intersection reconfiguration, protected and shared-use cycle tracks, and signal coordination. The proposed project additionally includes preparation for ride-hailing and autonomous vehicles and enhanced parking management

### Infrastructure

The proposed project includes policies which encourage the improvement of infrastructure within the project area. Such improvements include requiring low impact development and green infrastructure, stormwater management, water use, reuse, and conservation, and infrastructure for water supply and sanitary sewer water.

### Form-Based Code

The proposed project includes a Downtown Form-Based Code (the “Downtown Code”) which implements the vision in the Downtown Specific Plan and General Plan by setting forth standards for building form and land use while including design regulations such as signage and landscaping. The Downtown Code is established through Article 40.13: Downtown Zones and Article 40.14: Supplemental to Downtown Zones. The Downtown Code preserves several Articles in Chapter 40, Zoning, of the Davis Municipal Code. However, the Downtown Code replaces or modifies several Articles in Chapter 40, Zoning, of the Davis Municipal Code, which include:

- 40.05 Core Area Infill District
- 40.13 Core Area Design Combining District (only within the project area)
- 40.13A Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Overlay District (modifies)
- 40.14 Central Commercial District
- 40.15 Mixed Use District
- 40.25 Parking and Loading Area, Public Garages and Parking Lots (modifies)

For access to the entire Draft Form-Based Code, visit the City of Davis website at:

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan>.

### **Areas of Potential Impacts**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15128 allows environmental issues, for which there is no likelihood of significant impact, to be “scoped out” and not analyzed further in the EIR. Given the urban nature of the project area, the proposed project would not result in a significant impact on several environmental topics. Further, some environmental topics have been previously considered and evaluated as part of the City of Davis General Plan EIR. As all projects must be consistent with the General Plan, the General Plan EIR analysis will adequately address impacts of the proposed project in some environmental topic areas. The EIR will evaluate the following environmental topics.

Environmental Topics	Evaluated in EIR	Not Evaluated in EIR
Aesthetics	X	
Agriculture and Forestry		X
Air Quality	X	
Biological Resources		X
Cultural Resources		X
Historic Resources	X	
Energy	X	

Environmental Topics	Evaluated in EIR	Not Evaluated in EIR
Geology and Soils		X
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	X	
Hazardous Materials		X
Hydrology/Water Quality	X	
Land Use/Planning	X	
Mineral Resources		X
Noise	X	
Population/Housing	X	
Public Services	X	
Parks and Recreation	X	
Transportation	X	
Tribal Cultural Resources	X	
Utilities/Service Systems	X	
Wildfire		X

### Requested Actions

This section presents the discretionary and ministerial actions that would be required to implement the proposed project.

#### Discretionary Approvals

Implementation of the proposed project would require the following entitlements from the City of Davis:

- Certification of the EIR and adoption of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. Before the City can approve the proposed project, the City must certify that the EIR was completed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA, that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information in the EIR, and that the EIR reflects the independent judgement of the City of Davis. Approval of the EIR also requires adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), which specifies the methods for monitoring mitigation measures required to eliminate or reduce the project's significant effects on the environment. The City would also be required to adopt Findings of Fact, and for any impacts determined to be significant and unavoidable, a Statement of Overriding Considerations, as part of project approval.
- Downtown Davis Specific Plan. The project includes adoption of the Downtown Davis Specific Plan, which can be viewed on the City's website at: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan>
- Zoning Code Amendment. The proposed project would require an amendment to the City of Davis Zoning Code to adopt the proposed Form-Based Code for the project area.
- General Plan Amendment. The Downtown Davis Specific Plan is the General Plan land use for the downtown area with the specific plan land uses and policies incorporated by reference in the General Plan and would require a General Plan Amendment.

#### Ministerial Permits

Implementation of the proposed project would require ministerial permits from the City of Davis, which are included but not limited to the following:

- Demolition permits for any future redevelopment applications for buildings that are not historic or more than 45 years old.
- Administrative Design Review for projects that meet all Design Review standards and do not require any kind of discretionary action or interpretation.

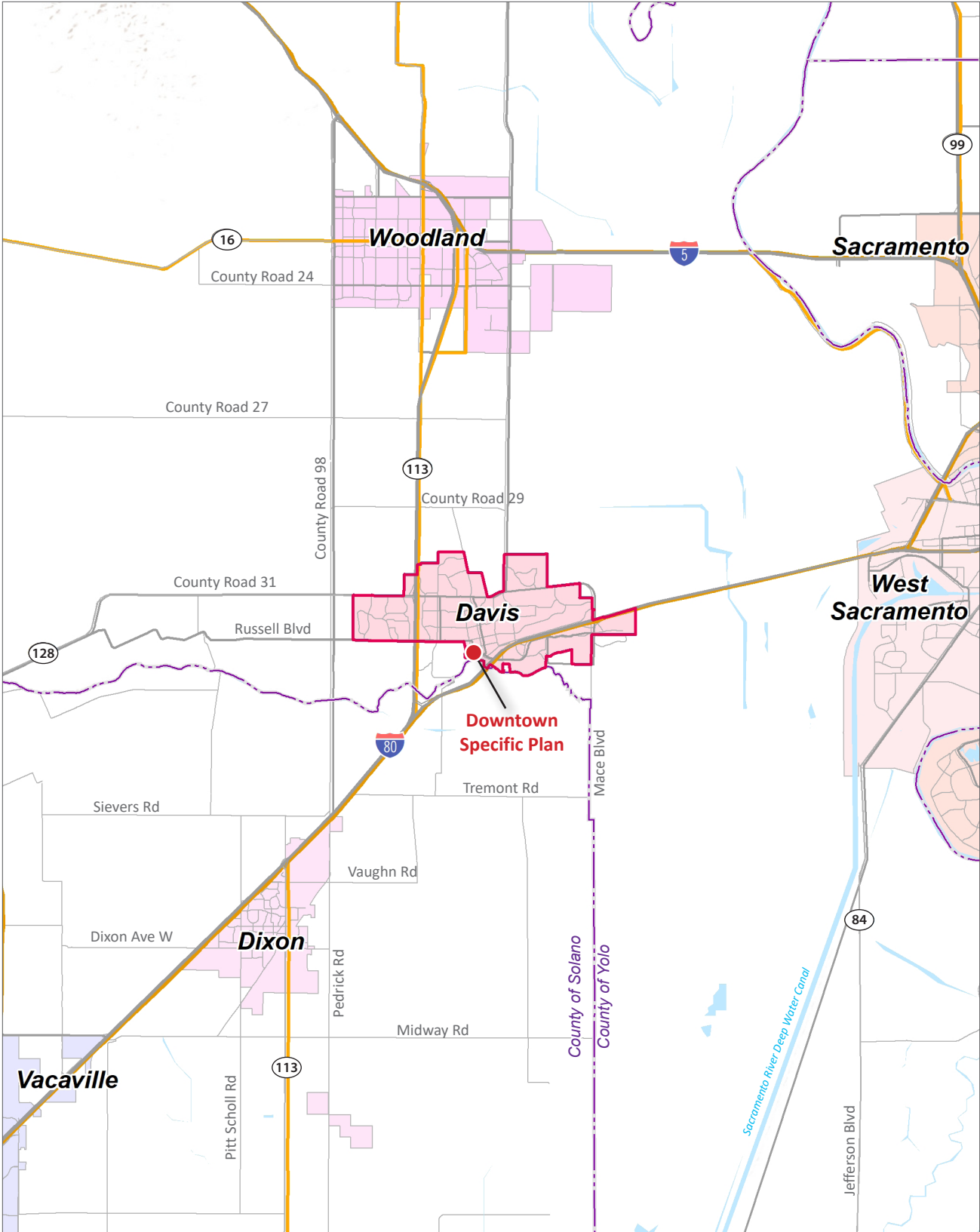
- Tree modification or removal permits for any trimming, modification, or removal of trees protected under Chapter 37 of the City of Davis Municipal Code.
- Encroachment Permit for any construction within the public rights-of-way.
- Building Permits for construction of new buildings consistent with the Form-Based Code.

### **CEQA Streamlining**

The Legislature has adopted several statutory provisions to streamline environmental review. CEQA Section 15183 is intended to streamline the environmental review for projects that are consistent with the densities established by existing zoning or general plan policies with a certified EIR. According to CEQA, because the proposed project is consistent with the General Plan and the General Plan EIR, it qualifies for the CEQA streamlined environmental review as allowed in Section 15183. It is the intent of the proposed project to result in streamlined project consideration and approval.

### **Figures**

- 1 Regional Context
- 2 Proposed Land Use Designations
- 3 Specific Plan Area and Existing Downtown Neighborhoods



Source: ESRI, 2020

Note: Unincorporated county areas are shown in white.

Figure 1  
Regional Context

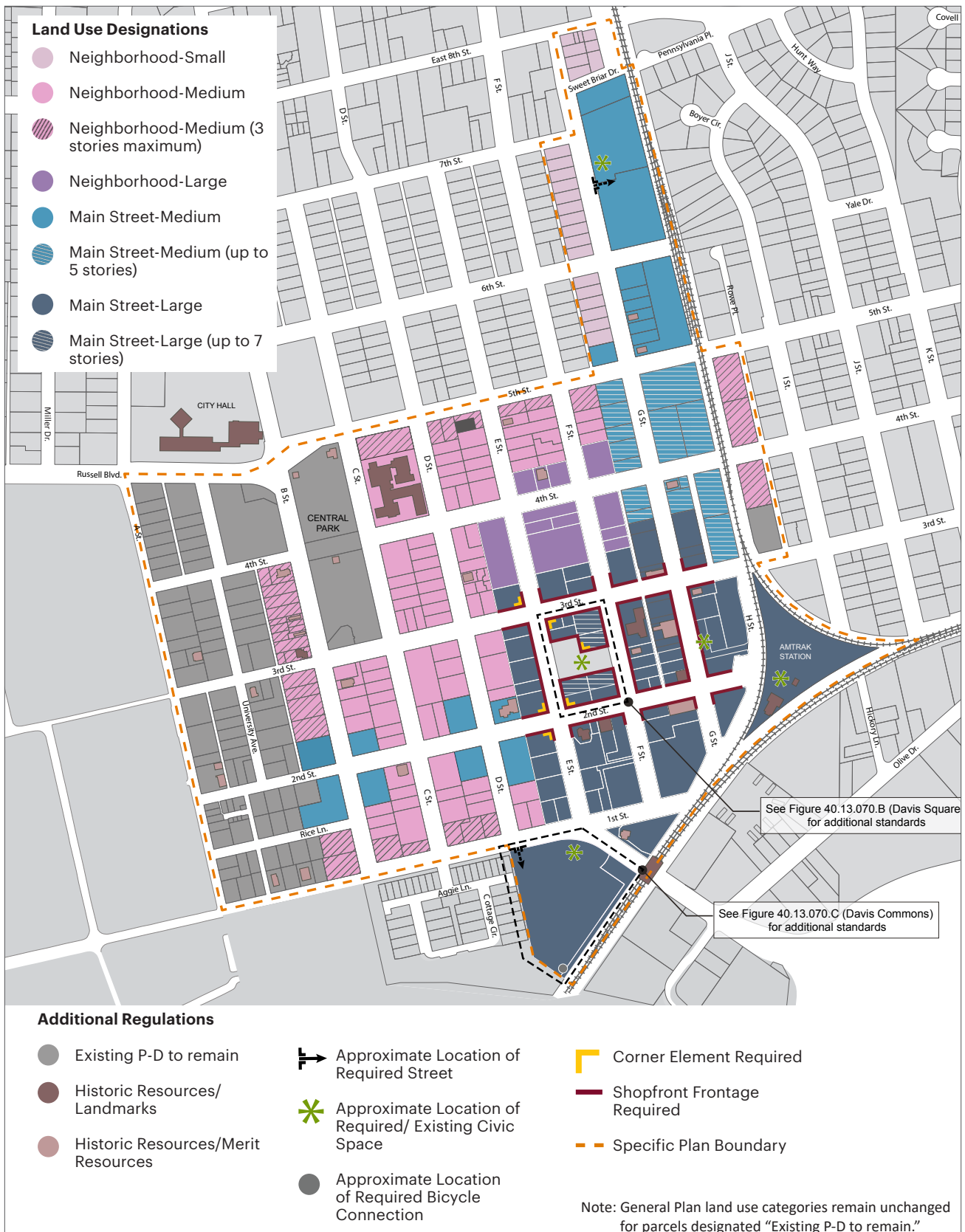
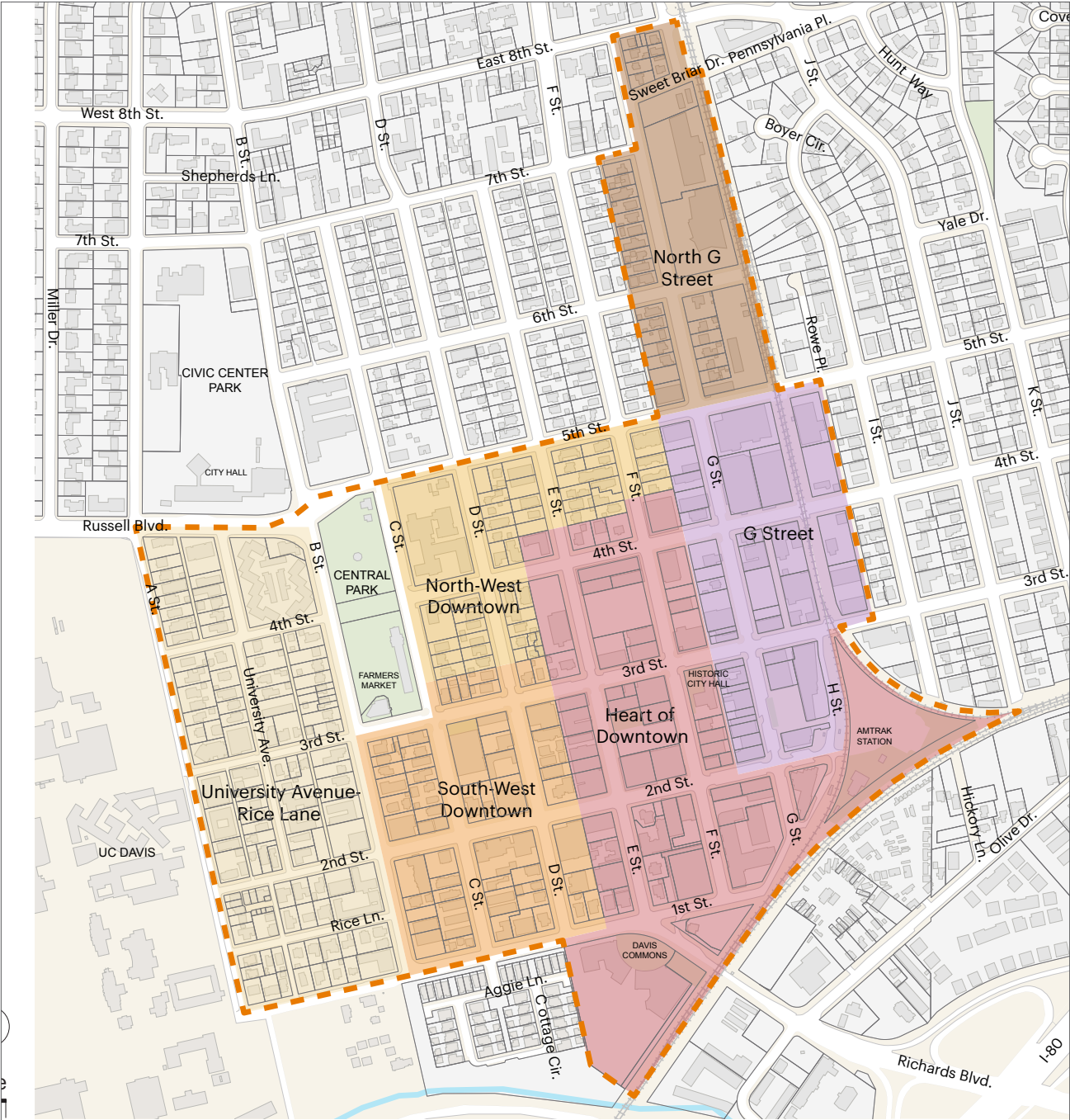


Figure 2

## Proposed Land Use Designations

Source: City of Davis, 2019





— Specific Plan Boundary

0 600  
Scale (Feet)



Source: City of Davis, 2019

PLACEWORKS

Figure 3  
Specific Plan Area and Existing Downtown Neighborhoods