



NOTICE OF PREPARATION

DATE: August 27, 2021
TO: Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties and Organizations
FROM: City of Redwood City, Lead Agency
APPLICANT: City of Redwood City
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report regarding the Proposed Transit District

After holding several study sessions and conducting community outreach, the City of Redwood City (City) is leading a process to amend its General Plan and Downtown Precise Plan (DTPP) to plan for shopping, jobs and housing with a new transit center for trains and buses in the heart of downtown, which is collectively and commonly referred to as the Transit District. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City has determined that a program-level Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) will be necessary to evaluate the environmental impacts of the Transit District. The City is soliciting comments from the Redwood City community, the County of San Mateo, adjacent cities, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and other interested parties, as to the appropriate scope and content of the SEIR.

The SEIR will constitute a substantial revision of the Redwood City Downtown Precise Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR; State Clearinghouse No. 2006052027), a programmatic environmental analysis certified in 2011 and will analyze proposed amendments to the City's General Plan and DTPP that would, if adopted, create the Transit District, comprised of a subset of the area subject to the DTPP adopted in 2011 and amended in 2012, 2013, and 2016.¹

Pursuant to Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines, a SEIR is required if the City, as the CEQA Lead Agency, determines on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record that there have been substantial changes to the project and/or the circumstances under which the project is undertaken, or substantial new information has arisen, and that one or more of the foregoing will result in new or substantially more severe impacts and that thus necessitate major revisions to the prior environmental impact report and/or new mitigation measures or alternatives are now applicable.

In compliance with CEQA, the City will be the Lead Agency and will prepare the SEIR. Attached are the Transit District project description, location map, and preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be explored.

¹ The City is also considering broader General Plan and DTPP amendments. The Transit District is not dependent on those DTPP amendments. A separate SEIR is being prepared for those amendments. The Transit District is independently justified and serves the distinct purpose of creating and planning for the Transit District specifically.



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The City is requesting review and consideration of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) and comments and guidance on the scope and content of the program-level SEIR from the Redwood City community, responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies, organizations, and the general public (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082). If your agency is a responsible agency as defined by Section 15381 of the CEQA Guidelines, your agency may use the environmental documents prepared by the City when considering permits or approvals for action regarding the Transit District. Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but **not later than 30 calendar days** after receipt of this NOP. The 30-day comment period for this NOP is **August 27 to September 27, 2021**. The final date for responses to the NOP to be received by the City of Redwood City is **September 27, 2021, by 5:00 PM**.

Comments and responses to this NOP must be in writing and submitted by the close of business on the last day of the comment period. Please provide a contact name, phone number and email address with your comments. All comments must be sent by mail or email to:

Lindy Chan, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City
1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 780-7237 | lchan@redwoodcity.org

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(c) (Notice of Preparation and Determination of Scope of EIR) and Section 15083 (Early Public Consultation), the Redwood City Planning Commission will also conduct a scoping session for the purpose of soliciting views of the Redwood City community, the County of San Mateo, adjacent cities, responsible agencies, agencies with jurisdiction by law, trustee agencies, and other interested parties, as to the appropriate scope and content of the SEIR.

The scoping session will be conducted by the Planning Commission at its September 7, 2021, meeting, which begins at 7:00 PM via teleconference, which can be accessed by visiting www.redwoodcity.org/PC.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindy Chan".

Lindy Chan, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City

8/27/2021

Date



Notice of Preparation of a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report Regarding the Proposed Transit District

Project Title and Applicant

Transit District by the City of Redwood City (City)

Project Location:

See **Figure 1, Project Site Location**, at the end of this Notice of Preparation (NOP). The Transit District is generally located between Arguello Street and the Caltrain tracks to the east, Jefferson Avenue to the south; El Camino Real, California Street, and Perry Street to the west; and Brewster Avenue to the north in Redwood City, San Mateo County, California.

Project Description:

Project Background

On November 4, 2019, the City Council directed staff to create a Transit District in the area adjacent to the existing bus and train stations. On January 27, 2020, the City Council authorized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work with Caltrain and SamTrans and provided direction for community input and visioning to support transit-oriented development. On February 24, 2020, the City Council considered the Sequoia Station development project, which is located within the proposed Transit District. The Council directed staff to move forward with a City-led process, beginning with community engagement to consider priorities for land use to support a transit rich district. The Sequoia Station project would need to comply with the City’s vision for the Transit District.

Current Project

The Transit District consists of amendments to the City’s General Plan and Downtown Precise Plan (DTPP) that would create a new district, the Transit District, within the DTPP area focused on transit-oriented development with approximately 17.5 acres of land located to the west of the Caltrain right-of-way. The district would include the Caltrain right of way, city streets, and the following three areas:

- Perry Parcel. Approximately 2.5 acres owned by the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB) (Caltrain)
- Transit Center. Approximately 3.0 acres owned by the JPB, Tiffit, and Terry L Family Trust (A-1 Party Rental store location)
- Sequoia Station Shopping Center. Approximately 12 acres owned by REG8 Sequoia Station (Regency Centers), Safeway, Inc., and the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans).

The proposed General Plan and DTPP amendments would create a vision for the Transit District that would allow for redevelopment of the existing Transit Center and Sequoia Station properties, reserve space for a potential future four-track Caltrain station north of the existing station, as well as circulation improvements to ensure adequate vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian connections. The Transit District is envisioned as a new hub of office, residential and retail. To that end, the Transit District would identify office and residential development caps specifically for the Transit District. These development caps, which would support transit oriented development, would represent an increase beyond what is currently permitted under the DTPP. These development caps would represent all new development potential.



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Currently, there are no existing office or residential uses in the Transit District. Existing uses within the Transit District include approximately 170,000 sq. ft. of existing retail space. No additional retail square footage is proposed to support transit-oriented development and no Transit District specific development cap on retail is proposed. The DTPP would continue to govern the Transit District with respect to retail development potential and other permitted uses (e.g., hotels, civic uses). Table 1 depicts the proposed increases to office and residential development specific to the Transit District.

Various elements of the Transit District have been the subject of numerous and on-going planning studies, and the City has been conducting notable outreach with the public in conjunction with interested stakeholders. Any relocation and/or expansion of the Caltrain station, proposed grade separations between the rail tracks and the street, or other specific development proposals (e.g., Sequoia Station) would be subject to separate project-level CEQA review.

The City is aware of the potential reconfiguration of California Street and Winklebleck Street to provide better roadway connectivity for all roadway users (i.e., vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians). This reconfiguration would generally be consistent with the circulation network that was included in the DTPP and evaluated in the Final EIR for the DTPP, certified in 2011. As a result, the boundary of the Transit District may be revised to align with the reconfigured streets. This revised boundary would not result in a substantial change to the size of the Transit District, compared to the area described herein.

**TABLE 1
PROPOSED LAND USE CAPS IN DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN FOR THE TRANSIT DISTRICT**

Land Use	Development Cap (Net New)
Office	1,630,000 square feet
Residential	1,100 units

SOURCE: City of Redwood City, 2021

In addition to creating the Transit District boundaries and identifying Transit District specific development caps for office and residential, the proposed Transit District includes adjustments to circulation and other development standards in the DTPP to support transit-oriented development.

SEIR Scope:

The City has determined, pursuant to CEQA, that the Transit District will require the preparation of a Subsequent EIR (SEIR) to substantially revise the Redwood City Downtown Precise Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (DTPP Final EIR), a programmatic environmental analysis certified in 2011. A SEIR is warranted because there is reasonable potential that the Transit District may result in new or substantially more severe significant environmental effects than those identified in the certified DTPP Final EIR for one or more of the following CEQA topics:

- Land Use and Planning
- Population and Housing



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- Aesthetics and Shadows
- Cultural and Historic Resources (including Paleontological and Tribal Cultural Resources)
- Public Services (including Recreation)
- Transportation
- Utilities and Infrastructure (including Hydrology and Water Quality)
- Noise and Vibration
- Air Quality
- Climate Change (Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Energy and Sea Level Rise)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Biological Resources
- Geology and Soils

The SEIR will also address:

Cumulative Impacts. Consistent with the format for the DTPP Final EIR, a separate cumulative impacts section will be provided in the SEIR. The cumulative analysis will assess where cumulative impacts are significant compared to baseline conditions, and when the Transit District's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable. The cumulative impact analysis in the SEIR will use the same approach as the DTPP Final EIR cumulative impact analysis, which relied on a combined projections/list-based approach. The cumulative impacts section will consider the broader General Plan and DTPP amendments that constitute a separate project for which a separate SEIR is being prepared. Additionally, the City is currently updating its General Plan Housing Element, and the cumulative analysis will consider those updates.

Alternatives. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the SEIR will also identify and conduct a comparative evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives to the Transit District. The alternatives assessment in the SEIR will tier from the alternatives analysis in the DTPP Final EIR, and will consider alternatives to the plan amendments proposed to accommodate the Transit District, including the CEQA-required no-project and environmentally superior alternatives.

Further, CEQA Guidelines section 15165 provides:

“Where individual projects are...to be undertaken and where the total undertaking comprises a project with significant environmental effect, the lead agency shall prepare a single program EIR for the ultimate project.”

As described above, the Transit District includes establishing the Transit District boundaries, establishing office and residential maximum allowable development caps specific to the Transit District, and modifying circulation to enhance access to the Transit Center and modifying other development standards for the Transit District. Therefore, the City has determined that a program-level SEIR would be appropriate. Like the programmatic DTPP Final EIR certified in 2011, this program SEIR will analyze General Plan and DTPP



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amendments that would, if adopted, govern future development in the Transit District. Future proposals, such as the relocation and/or expansion of the Caltrain station and proposed grade separations between the rail tracks and the street, would be subject to separate project-level CEQA review. Other specific development proposals (e.g., Sequoia Station development project) would be examined in light of the program SEIR to determine whether additional environmental review is required. The City anticipates using a checklist or similar device to determine whether the environmental effects of future development proposals are within the scope of the program EIR, as described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15168(c)(2), or further review is required.

SEIR Purpose

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (subsequent or otherwise) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental impacts of a proposed project that an agency (in this case, the City of Redwood City) may implement or approve. The SEIR process is intended to: (1) provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment; (2) examine methods (e.g., project-specific mitigations, uniformly applied development regulations) for avoiding or reducing significant impacts; and (3) consider alternatives to the proposed project.

In accordance with CEQA, the SEIR will include the following:

- A summary of the project, its potential significant environmental impacts, and mitigations required to avoid or reduce those significant impacts;
- A project description, with a focus on changes in the approved DTPP;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and mitigations for the project, with a focus on changes in impacts compared to those identified in the certified DTPP Final EIR;
- Alternatives to the proposed project, including an explanation of alternatives from the DTPP Final EIR that are no longer under consideration; and
- Other environmental consequences of the project, including
 - (1) growth-inducing effects
 - (2) significant unavoidable impacts
 - (3) irreversible environmental changes
 - (4) cumulative impacts, and
 - (5) effects found not to be significant.

Required Approvals

City of Redwood City Discretionary Approvals. Implementation of the Transit District would require the following discretionary approvals by the City of Redwood City:

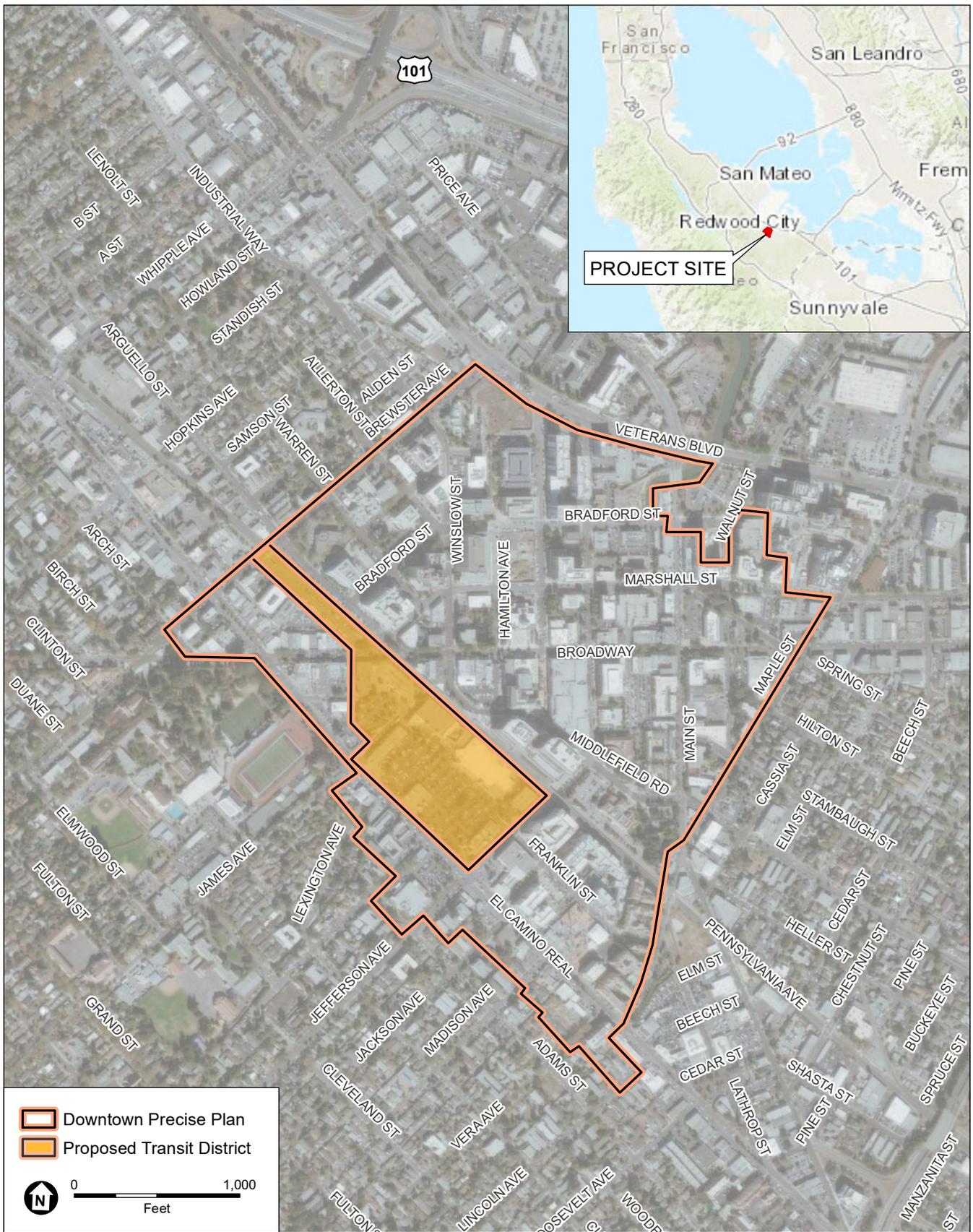
- Certification of the Final SEIR



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- Adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program
- Adoption of General Plan amendments, including revisions to the Downtown maximum allowable development caps for office and residential development therein, to implement the Transit District
- Adoption of DTPP amendments, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:
 - Amendment to establish the Transit District as an overlay within the DTPP, with supplemental controls in addition to those applicable elsewhere in the DTPP
 - Revisions to the DTPP New Streets (Circulation) Regulations and associated revisions to DTPP maps
 - Revisions to the DTPP maps to accommodate potential future relocation of the Caltrain station to the north side of Broadway and expansion of the station to four tracks as part of Caltrain's 2040 Service Vision plan (the station relocation would be a separate project).
 - Revisions to the DTPP to include the addition of utility and infrastructure requirements in the Transit District
 - Revisions to the DTPP Public Frontages and Use Regulations
 - Conversion of certain design-related Development Regulations from mandatory Standards to advisory Guidelines, from which the City, at its discretion, may grant exceptions; these changes could include, but not necessarily be limited to, build-to-corner requirements and stepdown height requirements
 - Potential addition to the DTPP's list of permitted architectural styles to include Contemporary design
 - Amendment of the maximum allowable development caps for office and residential development to create caps specific to the Transit District
- Potential approval of an associated Zoning Map amendment to reflect the amended DTPP

Other Government Agency Approvals. Amendment of the General Plan and DTPP to implement the Transit District is not anticipated to require review and/or approval from other jurisdictional agencies; however, related circulation improvements may require such approvals.



SOURCE: ESRI Imagery; City of Redwood City, 2021

Transit District DTPP Amendments SEIR

Figure 1
Project Site Location