

**HISTORIC CULTURAL RESOURCE REPORT**  
*for*  
**Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay**



*South side of B Street near 4<sup>th</sup>, future site of Rex Ace Hardware*

***Prepared for***  
EKN Development  
Newport Beach, California

***Prepared by***  
Diana J. Painter, PhD  
Painter Preservation  
Santa Rosa, California

September 22, 2023

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**Painter Preservation**  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION & URBAN DESIGN

September 22, 2023

Mr. Mike Jolly  
SVP Construction  
220 Newport Center Drive, Suite 11-262  
Newport Beach, CA 92660

**Re Historic Cultural Resource Report for the Petaluma Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay**

Dear Mike,

This Historic Cultural Resource Report (HCRR) is intended to accompany the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay* (previously called the *Petaluma Downtown Overlay Proposal*), which was first issued on May 17, 2023. The first overlay proposal included a map that was largely coterminous with what is now the Study Area for the Overlay Subareas, which was referred to as an area with a modification of zoning allowing for greater building heights. This was presented at a Planning Commission study session on June 13, 2023. A second overlay proposal reduced the Overlay to Overlay Subareas A, B and C, which are three areas within the Study Area that are largely outside the boundaries of the city's existing historic districts. This concept was presented in a public outreach session on July 12, 2023. This was followed by a study session with the Planning Commission on August 8, 2023 that presented similar information.

This HCRR presents an overview of Petaluma's downtown historic resources as well as presenting all three Overlay Subareas in a comparative manner.

It is intended for review at a study session of the Historic and Cultural Preservation Committee on October 3, 2023. Sincerely,

Diana J. Painter, PhD  
Owner/Principal Architectural Historian

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# HISTORIC CULTURAL RESOURCE REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

This Historic Cultural Resource Report (HCRR) is intended to accompany Petaluma's Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay (Overlay) proposal initially dated May 17, 2023. The proposed hotel site development at 2 Petaluma Blvd. South first appeared before the Historic and Cultural Heritage Commission (HCCP) on January 10, 2023 for conceptual review. A Historic Preservation Compliance Review for the hotel dated June 7, 2022 and prepared by Painter Preservation accompanied this proposal.

The first *Petaluma Downtown Overlay Proposal*, which is the subject of this Historic Cultural Resource Report (HCRR), was presented in a Study Session with the Planning Commission on June 13, 2023. It included a map that was largely coterminous with the Study Area for the proposed overlays, referred to as an area with a modification of zoning that allowed for greater building heights (see Figure 3). In a presentation to the public on July 12, 2023, three smaller overlays (Overlay Subareas A through C) were presented that were, for the most part, outside the boundaries of existing historic districts. At this time the document was entitled *Petaluma Building Form Overlay in Downtown*. It presented much of the same information in the *Petaluma's Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay* but included some minor changes to the development standards presented in the May 17, 2023 document. This HCRR is intended to accompany the current *Petaluma Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay*, providing a background discussion of existing conditions and historic resources in and adjacent to the respective Overlay Subareas.

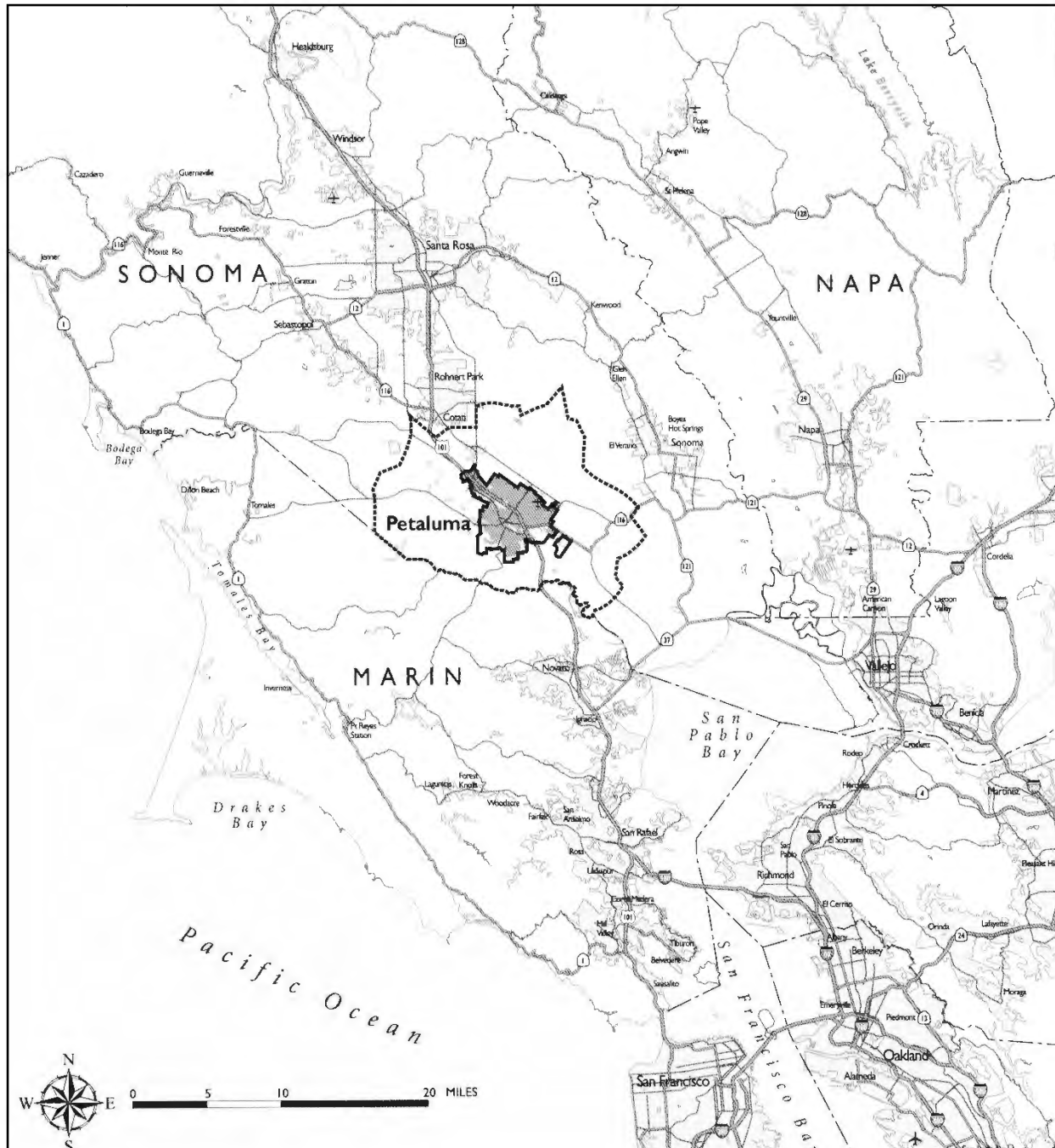
The following are the component parts of this HCRR. This introductory statement is followed by a brief discussion of existing Policies and Regulations that apply to historic resources in the city and includes a review of the *General Plan Update* that is currently underway and that will refresh the *General Plan 2025* policies. Preceding commencement of the *General Plan Update*, a series of existing conditions reports was prepared in various topic areas. The *Historic Resources Background Report* is directly relevant to this HCRR and will be reviewed here as part of the section on Plans, Studies and Special Districts.

The examination of applicable Policies and Regulations will be followed by a review of Plans, Studies and Special Districts and land use and development standards as they relate to historic resources. The *Petaluma Downtown Historic Commercial District*, which is adjacent to the Overlay Subareas B and C and may be affected by development here, is discussed next. Note that the proposed hotel at 2 Petaluma Blvd. South, which will be sited in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Petaluma Blvd. South and B Street, is within Overlay A.

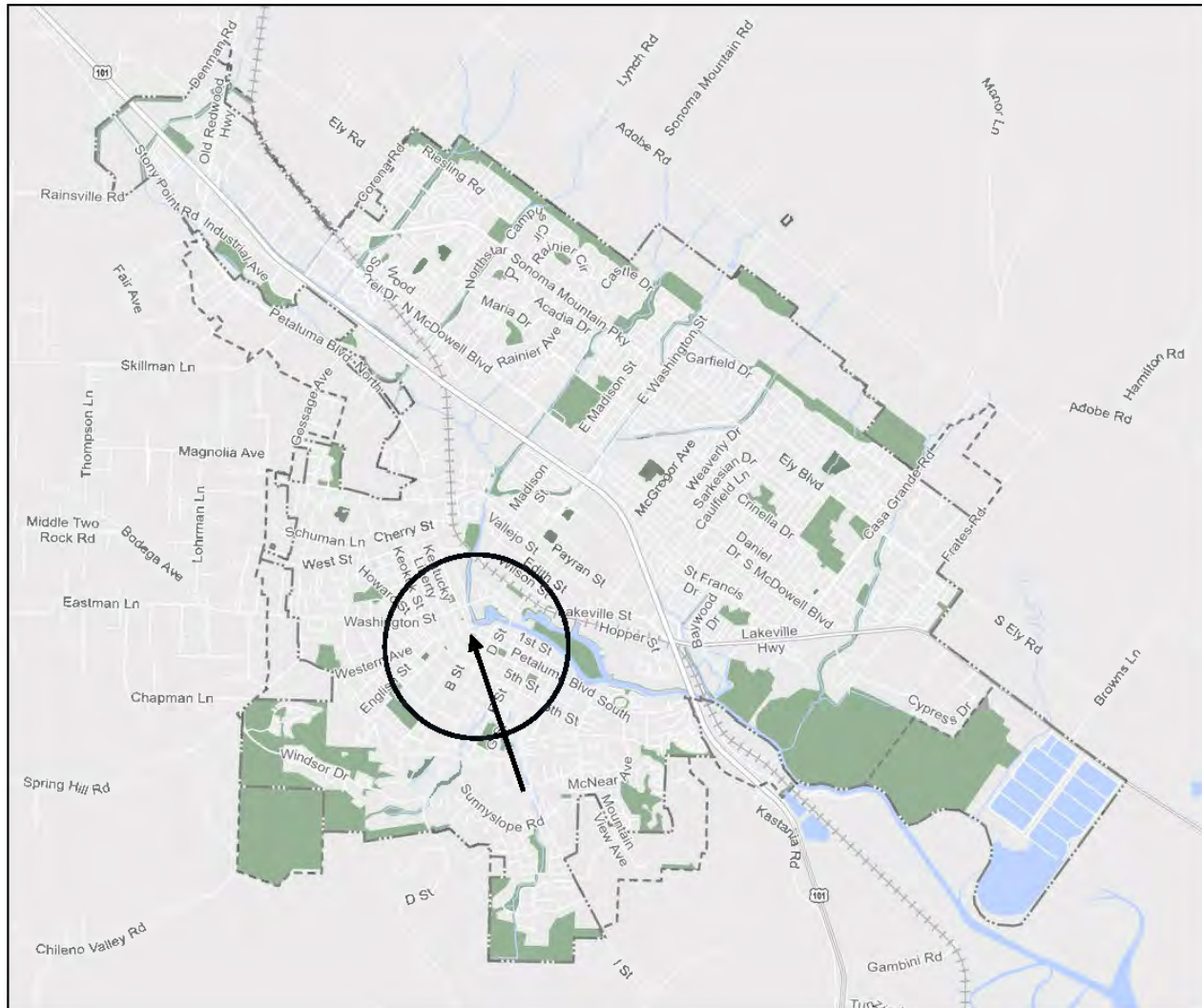
The discussion of relevant plans, policies, regulations, and design standards that apply in the Study Area is followed by a brief historic context of Petaluma and its historic character and developmental history. An overview of the subject site at 2 Petaluma Blvd. South is included. A table of properties for Overlay Subareas A through C and an accompanying parcel map showing the properties is included. The report concludes with recommendations and subjects for possible future consideration. A list of references is included, along with links for additional information.



**Figure 1: Regional location map**  
*Source: City of Petaluma General Plan 2025*



**Figure 2: City of Petaluma city boundaries with arrow pointing to the Hotel Development Site**  
*Source: City of Petaluma General Plan Update*



### Location and terminology

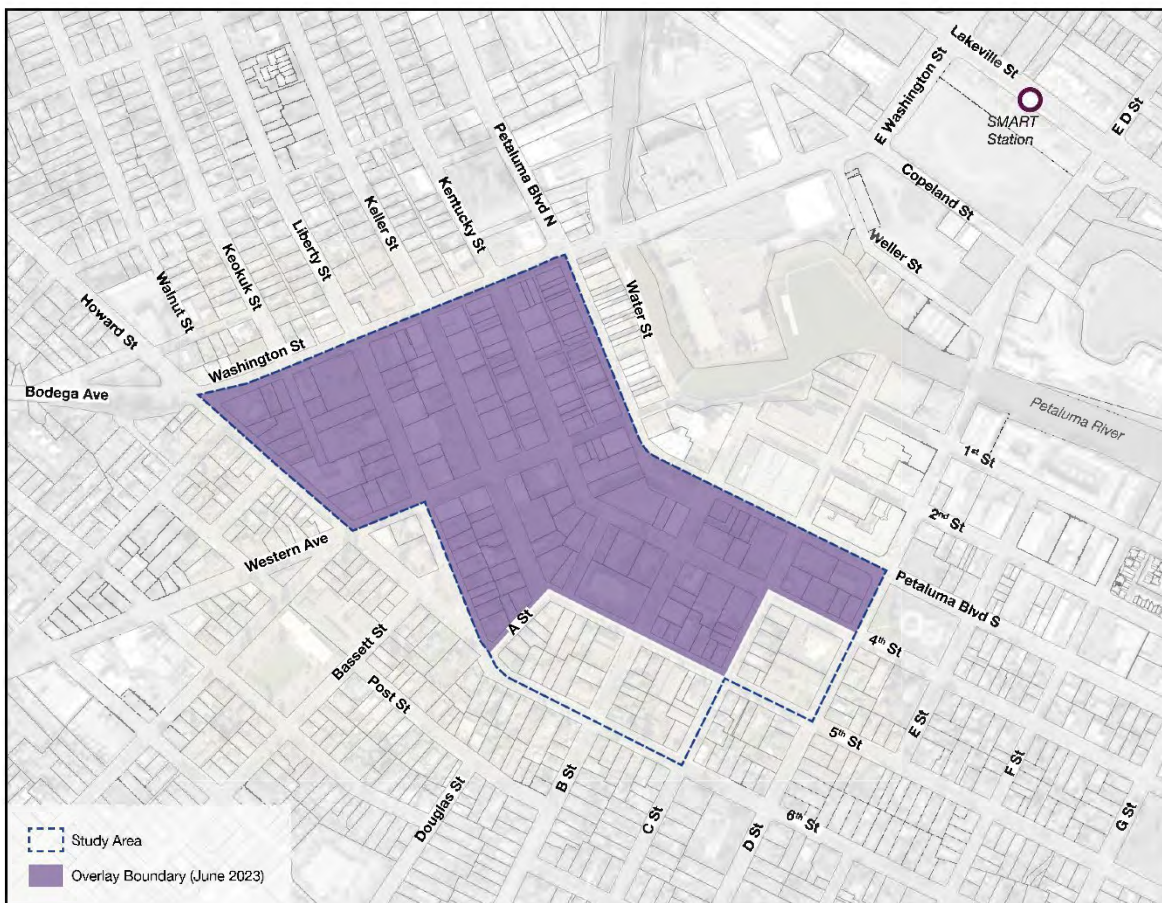
The three Overlay Subareas are located within the Study Area and Overlay Boundary Area that was presented in the May 17, 2023 report, *Petaluma Downtown Overlay Proposal* (see Figure 3). Overlay A is located south of the heart of downtown Petaluma and the Petaluma Downtown Commercial Historic District. It is bounded by Petaluma Blvd. South to the east, D Street to the south, 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, and B Street to the north. Overlays B and C are located south of the Oakhill-Brewster Historic District and north of the “A” Street Historic District; both west of the Petaluma Historic Commercial District (see Figure 4).

Directions in Petaluma are generally referred to as follows. North is toward Petaluma Blvd. North and Santa Rosa; east is toward the Petaluma River (from the Study Area) and East Petaluma; south is toward Petaluma Blvd. South and San Francisco; and west is toward the Pacific Ocean.

The proposed hotel has been known as The Petaluman, the Hotel Weaver, and currently, the EKN Appellation Hotel. In this report it will be referred to as the “Hotel Development Proposal.” The proposed overlay zones will be referred to as the “Overlay” or Overlay Subareas A, B or C.

### Figure 3: Study Area and Overlay Boundary, May 17, 2023

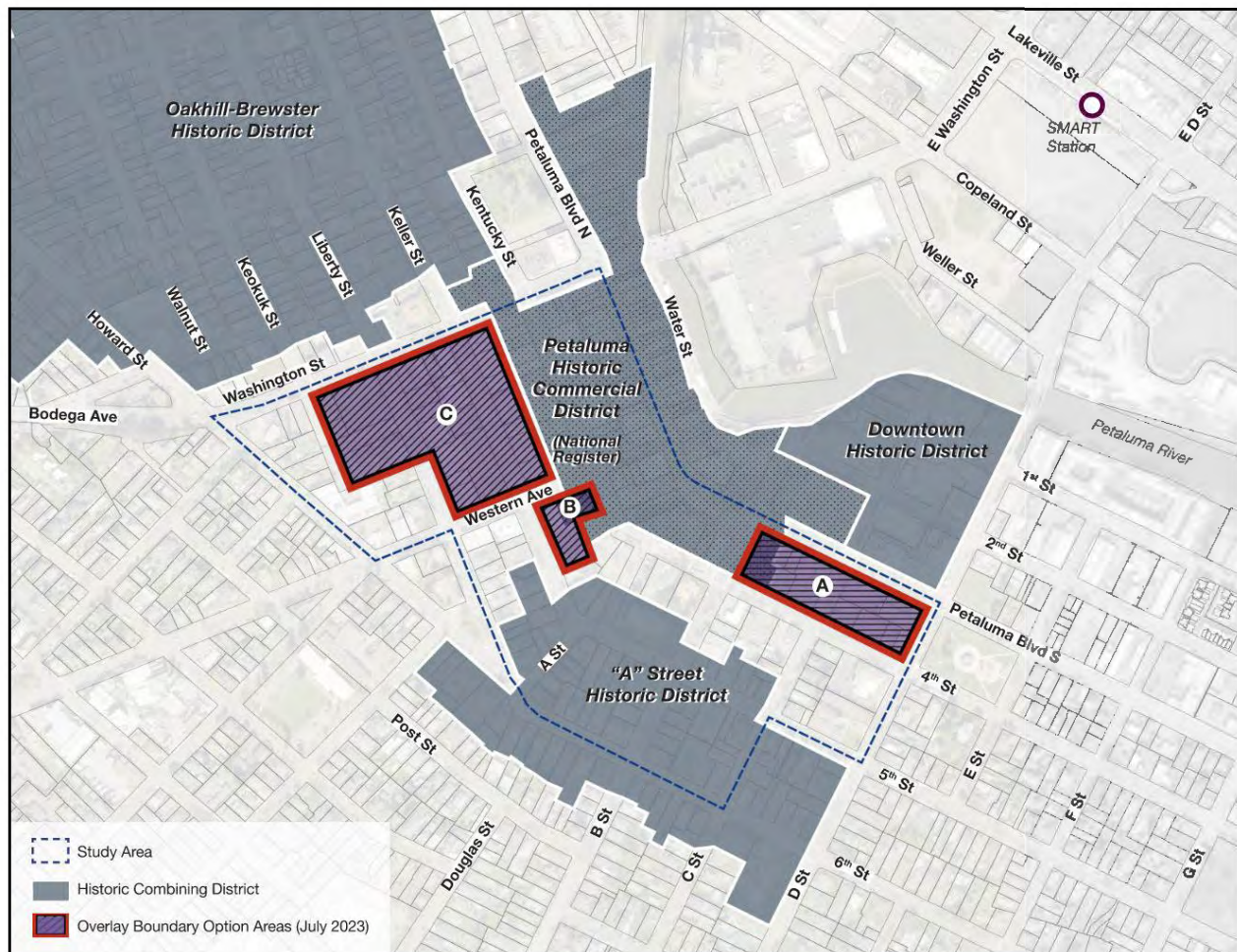
Source: Source: EKN Development and Page, *Petaluma Downtown Overlay Proposal*





**Figure 4: Overlay areas and Petaluma's historic districts, July 2023**

Source: EKN Development and Page



## POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

### General Plan 2025

Development throughout the city of Petaluma is guided by the *City of Petaluma General Plan 2025*, which was adopted in 2008 and amended in 2021. In the words of the City of Petaluma, the purpose of the General Plan is to identify current and future needs in areas such as land use, housing, transportation, public services, environmental quality, and economic viability. The General Plan is also a policy document that embodies the community's goals and guides decisions about physical development over the long term.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 3 in the General Plan, "Historic Preservation," addresses historic resources. The plan states that, "The overall goal [of historic preservation] is to ensure the preservation, protection, rehabilitation and restoration of historical and cultural resources by recognizing their inherent value in linking our present form to our community's roots and evolution."<sup>2</sup> The document continues, "The preservation of historic resources defines and fosters Petaluma's unique identity, increases property values, creates neighborhood stability, promotes tourism, and spurs economic development."<sup>3</sup>

These general statements are followed by a series of goals, policies and programs. Of particular relevance to this HCRR is the goal to, "Ensure that future plans, ordinances, and City programs are complementary to the historic preservation goals and policies contained in this plan" (Goal 3-G-1). Also relevant is the policy, "Develop floor area ratio and other design standards that relate overall building size and bulk to site area for Downtown . . ." (3-P-1-C) and "Ensure that new development adjacent to eligible historic and cultural resources is compatible with the character of those resources" (3-P-6). See Figure 5 for additional policies and programs from the *General Plan 2025*.

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<sup>1</sup> *City of Petaluma General Plan 2025*, adopted May 2008, revised May 12, 2021, <https://cityofpetaluma.org/general-plan/>, accessed July 2025.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 2021:3.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.



**Figure 5: General Plan Historic Preservation Policies and Programs**

Source: City of Petaluma Station Area Master Plan, 2013

<b>Table 7.5.B: General Plan Policies and Programs Related to Historic Preservation in the TOD Master Plan Areas</b>	
<b>POLICY 3-P-1</b>	Protect historic and archaeological resources for the aesthetic, cultural, educational, environmental, economic, and scientific contribution they make to maintaining and enhancing Petaluma's character, identity and quality of life.
Program 3-P-1-A	Maintain the historic-era integrity of the Petaluma Historic Commercial District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, by adhering to the City's Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines.
Program 3-P-1-B	Maintain the historic-era integrity within the Oak Hill – Brewster and "A" Street Historic Districts as adopted local historic districts.
Program 3-P-1-C	Develop floor area ratio and other design standards that relate overall building size and bulk to the site area for Downtown, Oak Hill – Brewster, and "A" Street Historic District neighborhoods.
Program 3-P-1-D	Conduct a comprehensive, citywide survey of historic and cultural resources for the purpose of creating an historic resource inventory. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include updated surveys of existing Historic Districts as well as their adjacent areas.</li> <li>▪ Identify individual resources for designation as local, State, or nationally designated landmarks.</li> <li>▪ The historic resources inventory shall be updated on a regular basis, per national standards. Inventories should be phased by prioritizing critical areas targeted for development through the Central Petaluma Specific Plan and this General Plan.</li> </ul>
Program 3-P-1-E	Develop historic preservation guidelines or standards for protecting resources that are not currently designated through initiating, requiring, and/or encouraging designation of additional historic districts, expanding the boundaries of existing districts, and identifying and designating local landmarks.
Program 3-P-1-F	Pursue Certified Local Government (CLG) status through the California State Office of Historic Preservation.
Program 3-P-1-G	Create a central repository for historic surveys, reports, guidelines, ordinances, etc. that is easily accessible to the public, while protecting confidentiality regarding archeological sites and Traditional Cultural Places.
<b>POLICY 3-P-2</b>	Provide incentives for encouraging the preservation and revitalization of historic and cultural resources.
Program 3-P-2-A	Continue and expand the Storefront Improvement Loan Program.
Program 3-P-2-B	Consider a reduced fee for projects that involve the preservation of historic resources.
Program 3-P-2-D	Encourage owners of historic resources to take advantage of the Rehabilitation Tax Credit; investigate the costs/benefits of applying limited use of the Mills Act within the City.
Program 3-P-2-E	Take advantage of the benefits of the Certified Local Government program such as grant funding available through the California Office of Historic Preservation.
<b>POLICY 3-P-4</b>	Foster appreciation for Petaluma's cultural heritage and encourage greater public participation in education regarding the preservation of resources.
Program 3-P-4-A	Create a program and standards for the installation of signs, kiosks, plaques, and/or interpretive art commemorating past events/sites of historical or cultural interest.

**Figure 5: General Plan Historic Preservation Policies and Programs (continued)**

Source: *City of Petaluma Station Area Master Plan, 2013*

Table 7.5.B: General Plan Policies and Programs Related to Historic Preservation in the TOD Master Plan Areas (continued)	
Program 3-P-4-C	Work with local groups and organizations to provide tours, educational opportunities, and other public information programs geared toward increased knowledge and understanding of Petaluma's historic and cultural resources.
POLICY 3-P-6	Ensure that new development adjacent to eligible historic and cultural resources is compatible with the character of those resources.
POLICY 3-P-7	Recognize landscape features, including trees in both their urban and natural environment as part of Petaluma's identity and part of the character defining features of the City's historic districts.
POLICY 3-P-8	Recognize the value of, and protect the operation of, active river-dependant and agricultural-support uses located within the City of Petaluma.

## General Plan Update

The General Plan is in the process of being updated, a process that is anticipated to take several years. To date, the Housing Element has been developed and was adopted on March 20, 2023. The city anticipates that following the adoption of the General Plan, updates to the City's Zoning Ordinance, Station Area Master Plan, Central Petaluma Specific Plan, and Urban Growth Boundary will occur. It is intended that historic preservation will be addressed in conjunction with the policies governing Land Use and Community Character.

Prior to commencing with the General Plan Update, the city held a series of visioning exercises to engage the public and help articulate its vision for the future. Among the guiding principles that spoke directly to historic preservation and economic development, followed by implementation guidelines, were the following:

“10. Enhance Petaluma's historic downtown by preserving its historic character, expanding pedestrian and bicycle access and safety, providing public gathering spaces, and promoting a diverse mix of uses.”<sup>4</sup>

11. Honor, celebrate, and preserve Petaluma's heritage and historic character and its place in the modern city.”<sup>5</sup>

Also included in the document is the guiding principle: “15. Advance a forward-looking economic development strategy that focuses on diversity, opportunity, innovation, and resilience,” which is implemented by a guideline that also relates to this HCRR document: “15.d. Support the creative reuse of vacant and underutilized spaces to build the local economy and support other city goals and initiatives.”<sup>6</sup>

A number of existing conditions reports were also prepared in conjunction with the General Plan Update, including one that addresses historic preservation, which is entitled, “Historic Resources

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<sup>4</sup> “Final Visioning Products,” *City of Petaluma General Plan Update*, February 17, 2002:8-9.

<https://www.planpetaluma.org/>, accessed July 2023. See for additional guidelines to implement these principles.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2002:10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2002:8.

Background Report,” dated June 16, 2022.<sup>7</sup> This report will be discussed in the next section, “Plans, Studies and Special Districts.”

### **Petaluma’s Municipal Code (Ch. 15 – Petaluma Implementing Zoning Ordinance)**

Petaluma’s historic preservation policies are implemented through Chapter 15 of the city’s Municipal Code or Implementing Zoning Ordinance (IZO) entitled, “Preservation of the Cultural & Historic Environment.”<sup>8</sup> The stated purpose of this chapter is to provide for, “The protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts, including archaeological sites, that are reminders of past eras, events, and persons important to local, state, or national history, or which provide significant examples of architectural styles of the past or area landmarks in the history of architecture, or which are unique and irreplaceable assets to the City and its neighborhoods, or which provide for this and future generations examples of the physical surroundings which past generations lived.”<sup>9</sup>

The IZO establishes the means by which the HCPC may designate historic structures and other resources and how they may be managed. It also establishes the procedures by which HCPC will:

- Review permit applications to construct or alter designated structures or structures in designated areas;
- Review applications for demolition permits; and
- Review applications to construct, alter, or demolish designated structures or structures in designated areas.<sup>10</sup>

The IZO also explains the powers and duties of the Historic and Cultural Preservation Committee (HCPC) and notes that both the HCPC and the Planning Commission may consider a joint hearing on a proposed project if both bodies require discretionary actions to address the project proposal.<sup>11</sup>

As an extension of the General Plan efforts, it is intended that the IZO’s chapter on historic preservation will be updated to implement the latest provisions of the General Plan update.

## **PLANS, STUDIES AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS**

Over time special plans have been developed in Petaluma that are typically applied to specific geographic areas and address specific planning goals or special conditions in the city. They are described below as they relate to the Overlay proposals and conditions around the Overlay Subareas. Note that these plan(s) may be implemented with specific policies, development regulations, and/or design guidelines, including the *Historic Resources Background Report*, which was prepared for the *General Plan Update*; the *Station Area Master Plan*; the *Central Petaluma Specific Plan*; and the *Petaluma River Access Plan*. They are discussed beginning with the most recent document.

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<sup>7</sup> “Historic Resources Background Report,” *City of Petaluma General Plan*. Prepared for the City of Petaluma. Prepared by Page & Turnbull, June 16, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 15, *Preservation of the Cultural and Historical Environment – Petaluma Implementing Zoning Ordinance*, December 19, 2022, <https://petaluma.municipal.codes/ZoningOrds/15>, accessed July 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 2022:15.020 (A).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 2022:15.050, 15.060, and 15.070.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 2022:15.020 (D).



## Historic Resources Background Report

The *Historic Resources Background Report*, which was prepared for the *General Plan Update* in 2022, provides a brief historic context for Petaluma, followed by the regulatory framework that applies to historic resources from a national, state, and local perspective.<sup>12</sup> This includes discussions of Petaluma's primary plans, guidelines, and regulations that guide and govern Petaluma's historic resources. It also provides a catalogue of existing designated historic resources and past efforts to identify historic resources through survey processes. The study also defines potentially eligible resources, which are resources that have been identified through alternative survey processes, such as Section 106 reviews, and may be candidates for evaluation and listing in local or other historic registers or resources that may become eligible for listing in a register once they are 50 years of age.<sup>13</sup>

Key findings of this report include the statement that, "While Petaluma has a strong foundation built into its preservation planning program and regulatory framework, including the current General Plan, there is room for improvement that will ensure that Petaluma can retain its remarkable community character and historic resources even as the City is further developed within its Urban Growth Boundary."<sup>14</sup> The study recommends mechanisms whereby Petaluma's historic preservation policies are better implemented and its regulatory framework with respect to historic resources strengthened. Of potential relevance to this HCRR is the suggestion that *potential* historic resources affected by proposed projects be reviewed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, not just reviewed if they are already designated historic resources.<sup>15</sup> It also recommends that a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process be applied throughout the City of Petaluma and not just in the CPSP area for consistency and clarity in the process. The study notes, "Careful consideration of potential impacts to historic resources will be critical given the focus of the General Plan on infill development and increased density within the Urban Growth Boundary."<sup>16</sup> It is also suggested that policies be established to implement objective design standards for infill development within or adjacent to historic districts or sites containing historic resources."<sup>17</sup>

The study also recommends strengthening or creating incentive programs for historic preservation and augmenting existing incentive programs for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse and recognizing and protecting Petaluma's cultural or intangible heritage, in addition to its built environment.

In conjunction with the *Historic Resources Background Report* is a map of "Age-Eligible Properties In & Around Historic Districts" which is presented in Figures 6 and 7. The properties in this map are identified as Currently 76-181 Years Old (1840-1945); Currently 50-75 Years Old (1946-1971); Currently 45-49 Years Old (1972-1976); and Currently Less Than 45 Years Old (1977-2019). Two properties within Overlay Subarea A are identified as currently 50-75 years old and therefore age-eligible for consideration for listing at this time, and one is identified as in the 76-181 years old category and therefore age-eligible for listing. In Overlay Subarea B, one property is age-eligible, as it was constructed in 1962, and one is just short of age-eligible, as it was constructed in 1976. In Overlay Subarea B, 16 of the buildings are age-eligible, as they are 50 years of age or older, one is not age-eligible, and one is not dated.

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<sup>12</sup> "Historic Resources Background Report," 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

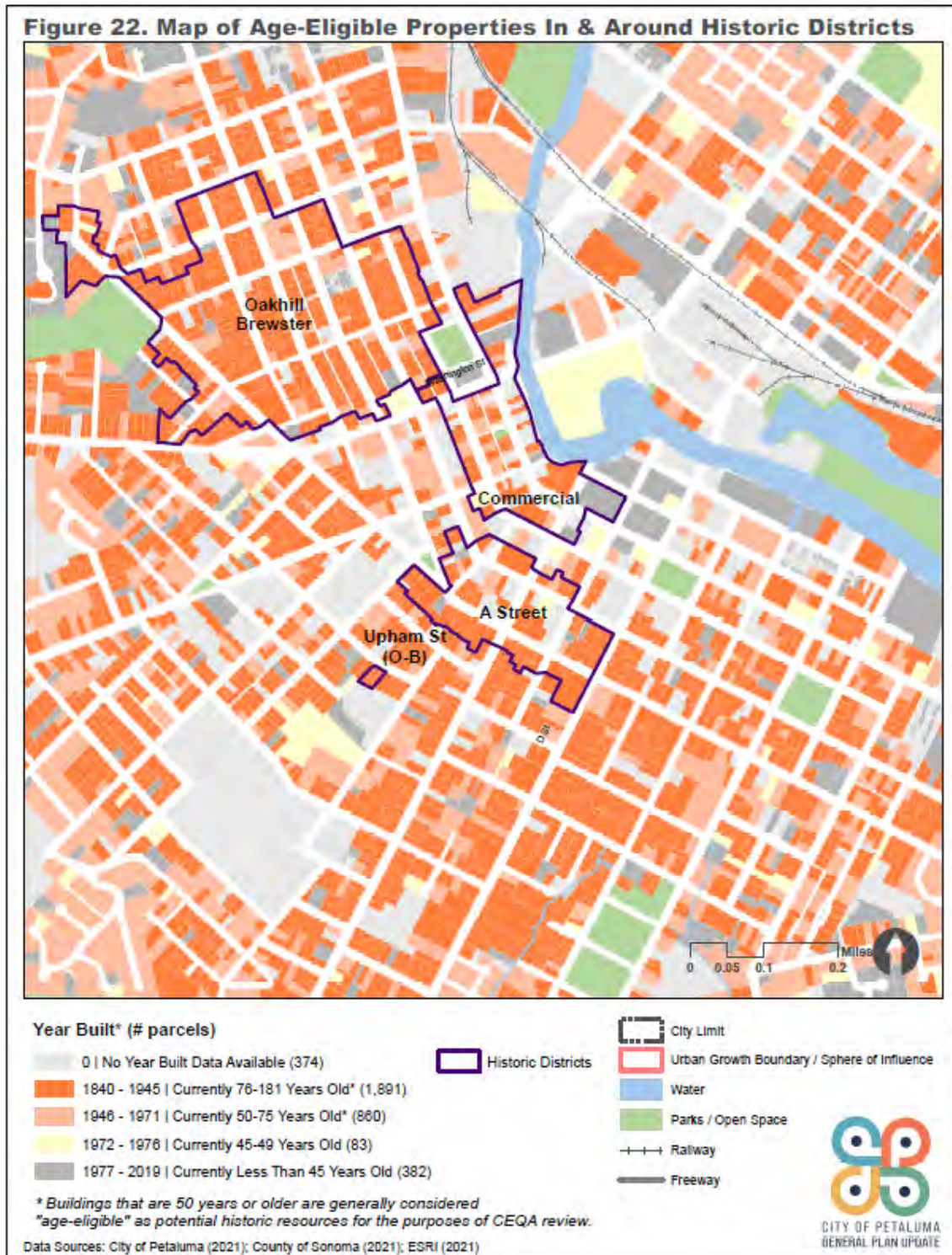
<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 2022:3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 2022:4. Note that CEQA provides for the evaluation of resources not previously identified as historic in conjunction with a proposed project.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 2022:5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

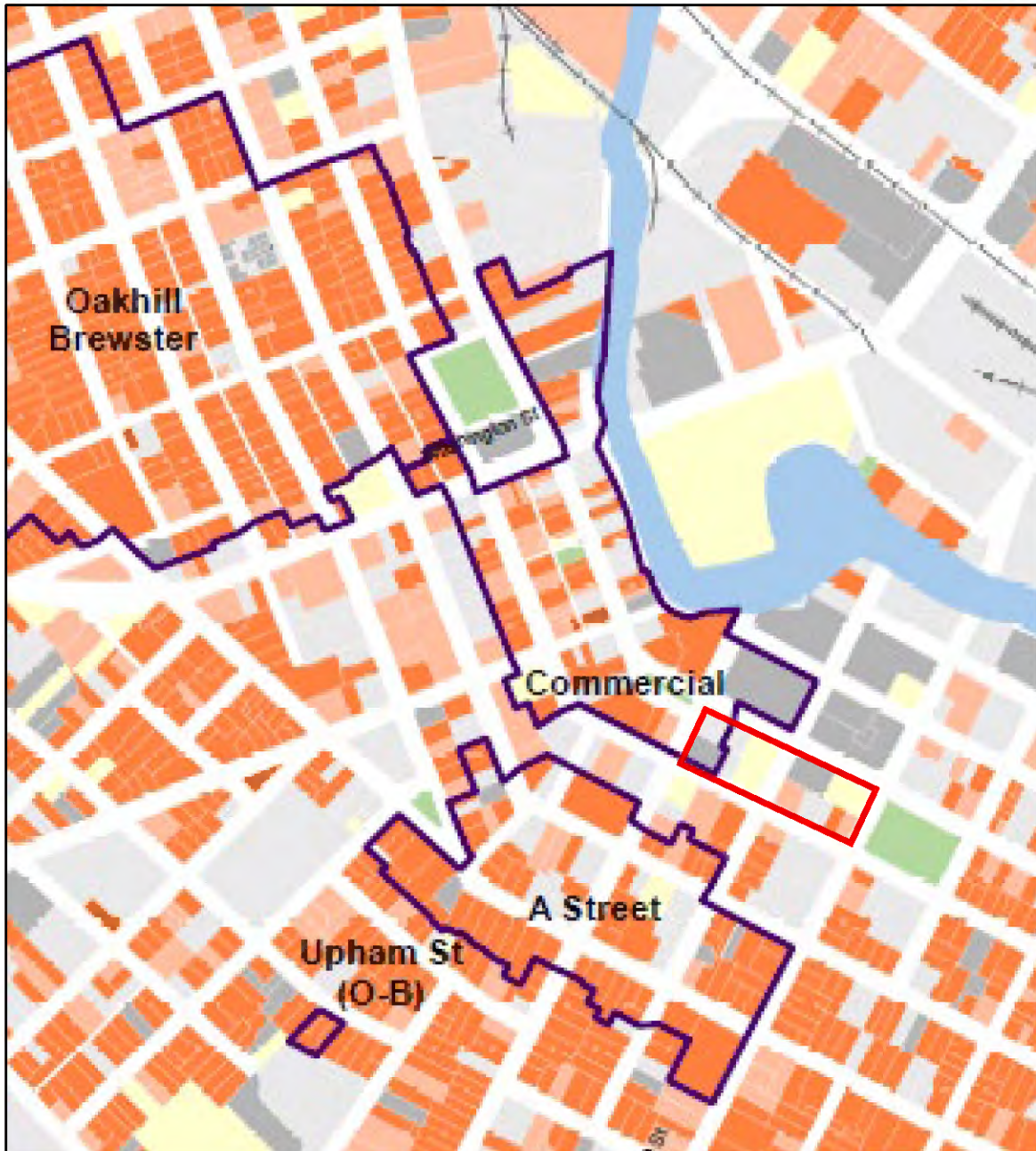
**Figure 6: Age-eligible properties in and around the historic districts**  
*Source: Historic Resources Background Report, 2022*





**Figure 7: Age-eligible properties in and around the historic districts, excerpt showing Overlay A in red for reference**

*Source: Historic Resources Background Report, 2022*



## Station Area Master Plan

The 2013 Petaluma *Station Area Master Plan* provides guidance for future development of the areas around Petaluma's two stations that serve the SMART train commuter rail line. It provides background information in such areas as market demand, housing, pedestrian and streetscape planning, parking, and financial incentives. It also includes a chapter on historic preservation (Chapter 7: Historic Preservation) in the station areas. The station area that is in proximity to the Overlay Proposal is the Downtown Petaluma Station, which is on the east side of the Petaluma River, adjacent to the train tracks and Lakeville Street, between E. Washington and E. D streets. The half mile radius around the station and associated bus transit area, which is a planning threshold for the provision of housing, takes in all of the Overlay proposals and beyond (see Figure 8).<sup>18</sup>

The chapter provides background on Petaluma's historical resources and general history. It also provides recommendations for future preservation activities, which are based on the extensive public outreach conducted for development of the plan, including input from citizen and technical advisory committees and interviews with city staff. It also provides information on funding sources and preservation incentives. Among the prioritized recommendations are to conduct a comprehensive, city-wide survey and inventory of historic or potentially historic properties in the station area and to develop a historic context statement. The chapter notes that areas with a higher potential for redevelopment should be prioritized for surveys, if funding is not available to do a comprehensive survey. Formal surveys may also be requested for specific overlay areas or subareas.

Establishing a Mills Act program and pursuing Certified Local Government status are goals that may generate additional revenue for the city and citizens, according to the plan, for pursuing future historic preservation activities. The administrative procedures for designating and administering the city's historic preservation process are outlined.

The document also discusses the intent and scope of the design guidelines that apply to Petaluma's historic districts. The *Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines* are the guidelines most relevant to the overlays. The plan suggests that they also apply to infill development designed to fit with surrounding historic buildings.<sup>19</sup> The portions of other planning documents that are relevant to historic preservation planning in the downtown station area and beyond are also summarized. A number of the goals that are summarized as part of this review of applicable planning documents are also repeated as a part of this station area planning document. Finally, the document lists all the relevant policies and programs from the General Plan 2025 (adopted in 2008 and updated in 2021) that are relevant to historic resources in the city.

The plan summarizes conditions, goals, and possible incentives for historic preservation that have been provided in other planning documents prepared for the City of Petaluma over time and does not contribute many new suggestions. An exception is the recommendation that the *Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines* be applied to new infill construction.<sup>20</sup>

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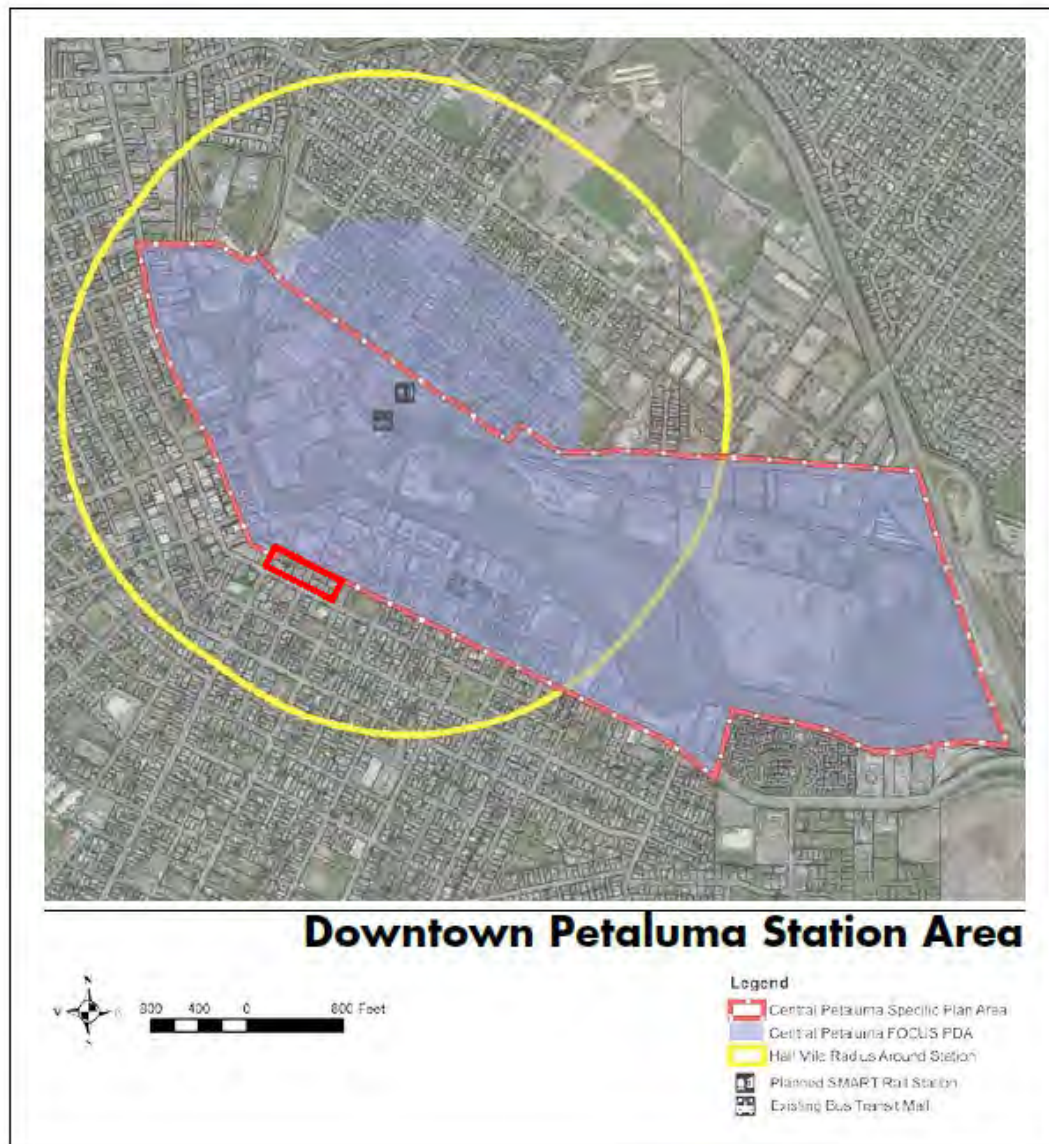
<sup>18</sup> *Petaluma SMART Rail Station Areas: TOD Master Plan, Station Area Master Plan*. Prepared for City of Petaluma, CA. Prepared by Opticos Design, Inc., et. al, June 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 2013:7-14.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 8: Petaluma Downtown Station Area planning area showing Overlay Subarea A in red for reference**

*Source: City of Petaluma Downtown Station Area Plan*



## Central Petaluma Specific Plan

The *Central Petaluma Specific Plan* (CSPS) was developed over an approximately six-and-one-half year period with extensive public involvement and was adopted in June 2003.<sup>21</sup> The plan, which includes background information, policies, development regulations and design guidelines, was intended to “examine the existing conditions and future potentials of largely underutilized urban land comprising nearly 400 acres from the Highway 101 Bridge on the south to the Lakeville Bridge on the north.”<sup>22</sup> The western boundary of the plan area follows the east side of Petaluma Blvd. North/South (see Figure 9). The subarea closest to Overlay A is the Turning Basin Area, which extends from E. Washington to D Street on both sides of the Petaluma River. Historically, this area reflected the same characteristics that were present in Overlay A and the immediately surrounding area in the same time frame (the early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) along Petaluma Blvd. South. It contained auto-oriented uses from garages to automobile sales to gas stations. Unlike the west side of Petaluma Blvd. South, however, agriculturally oriented uses were located along the river, including The Great Mill at Petaluma Blvd. North and B Street. The agriculturally oriented uses in this subarea were found primarily in buildings along the Petaluma River, mainly warehouses, that took advantage of river and railroad transportation and in the mills in the area.

The historic character of the individual subareas is described in the CPSP and individual historic resources are listed, based on a survey of the plan area. The historic preservation and design goals of the Turning Basin subarea are somewhat outdated as a result of the destruction of many historic resources in the area in conjunction with the development of Theatre Square (exceptions are Bar Ale and Sanderson Ford). However, the regulatory framework provided by the CPSP, which was developed with extensive public input, remains valuable and may be amended in the future to reflect current conditions.

The plan also includes a SmartCode, a form-based code intended to guide development of the CPSP plan area.<sup>23</sup> The SmartCode includes “Section 7 – Historic Resource Conservation & Preservation,” which provides standards that are “intended to protect sites and structures identified by the community as culturally and/or historically significant, that contribute to Petaluma’s character and identity, and that should be preserved and/or restored.”<sup>24</sup> This section also provides for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process that may be valuable as applied to the preferred overlay and other historic districts in Petaluma. Of particular interest is the provision that requires COAs for non-contributing properties in addition to contributing historic properties. Other provisions of this code, which address demolition, demolition by neglect, and adaptive re-use, may be useful in other historic districts and as applied to individual historic resources, as it provides another layer of protection for historic resources.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The plan was adopted by resolution 2002-105 N.C.S. on June 2, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> City of Petaluma, *Central Petaluma Specific Plan*, June 2, 2003:3.

<sup>23</sup> “Appendix “A”, SmartCode,” *Central Petaluma Specific Plan*, June 16, 2003.

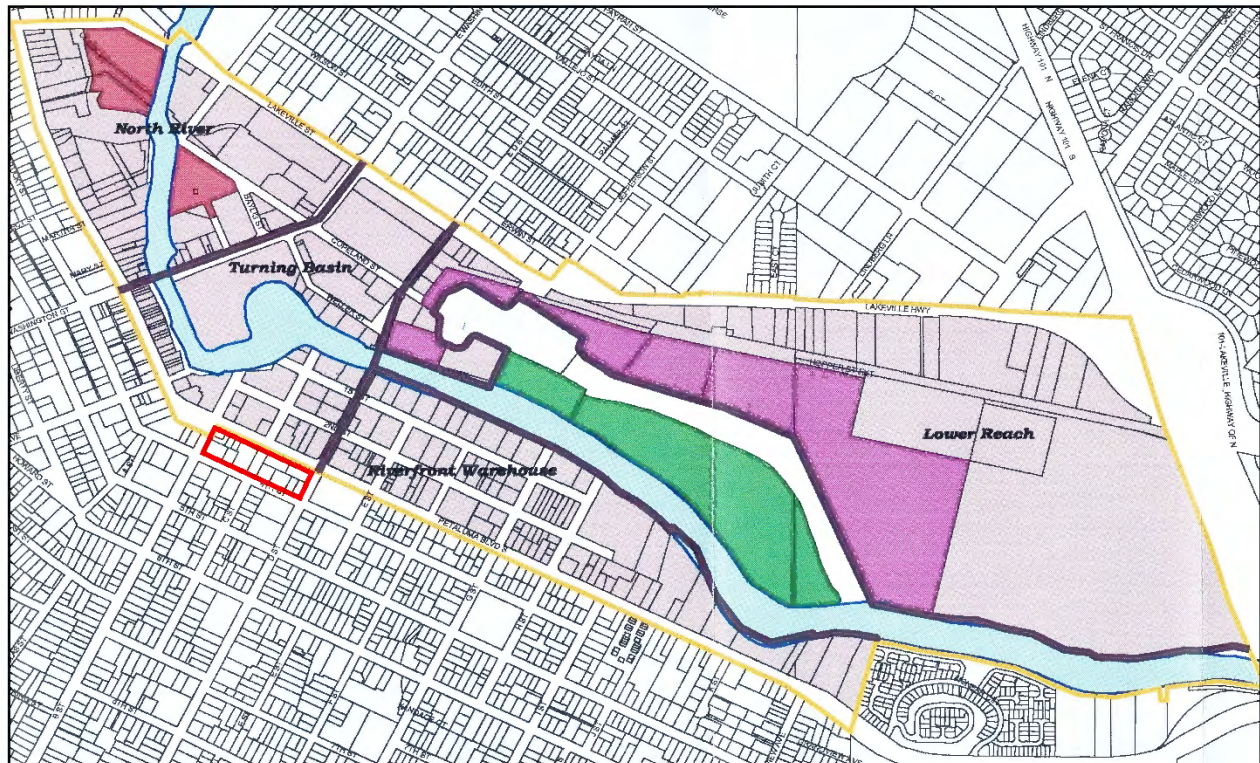
<sup>24</sup> “Historic Resources Background Report,” *City of Petaluma General Plan*. Prepared for the City of Petaluma. Prepared by Page & Turnbull, June 16, 2022:22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 2022:23.



**Figure 9: Central Petaluma Specific Plan sub-areas, showing Overlay Subarea A in red for reference**

Source: City of Petaluma Central Petaluma Specific Plan



### Petaluma River Access Plan

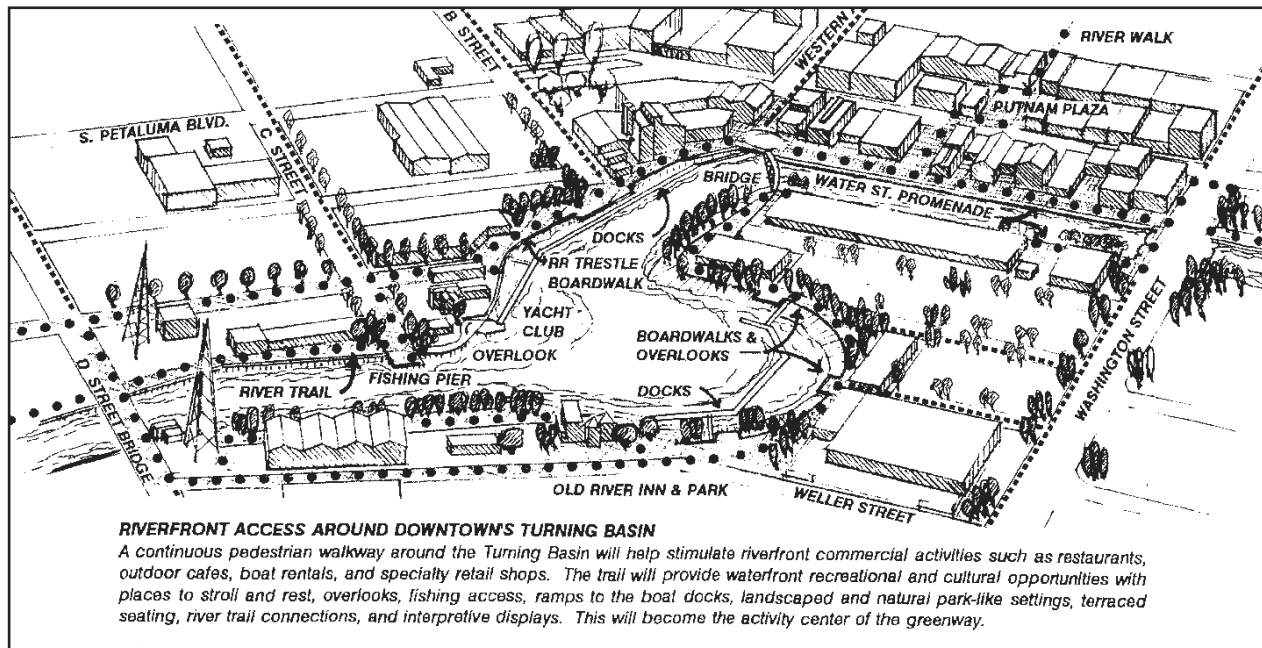
The 1996 *Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan* was developed to articulate Petaluma's vision for the Petaluma River, including its riverfront uses, activities, and developments. It also included the means and financial incentives to implement the vision.<sup>26</sup> While Overlay A is not directly on the river, it is located one block from the Downtown Segment of the Plan Area and may benefit from guidelines that have been put in place to improve access to the river and enhance and activate the spaces in this area. While the plan provides guidelines for establishing new uses for historic buildings that respects the historic building stock, their effectiveness have been diminished with the development of Theatre Square, for which demolition of a significant portion of the historic building stock in this area occurred. Nonetheless, the guidelines are useful and may be beneficial for envisioning improved connections to the Petaluma River from the Overlay Subareas.

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<sup>26</sup> City of Petaluma, *Area Plan, Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan*, May 1996.  
<https://cityofpetaluma.org/documents/river-access-and-enhancement-plan/>, accessed July 2025.

**Figure 10: Riverfront Access Plan at the Turning Basin, showing former gas station site for reference**

*Source: City of Petaluma River Access Plan*



## HISTORIC DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

### Petaluma's Historic Districts

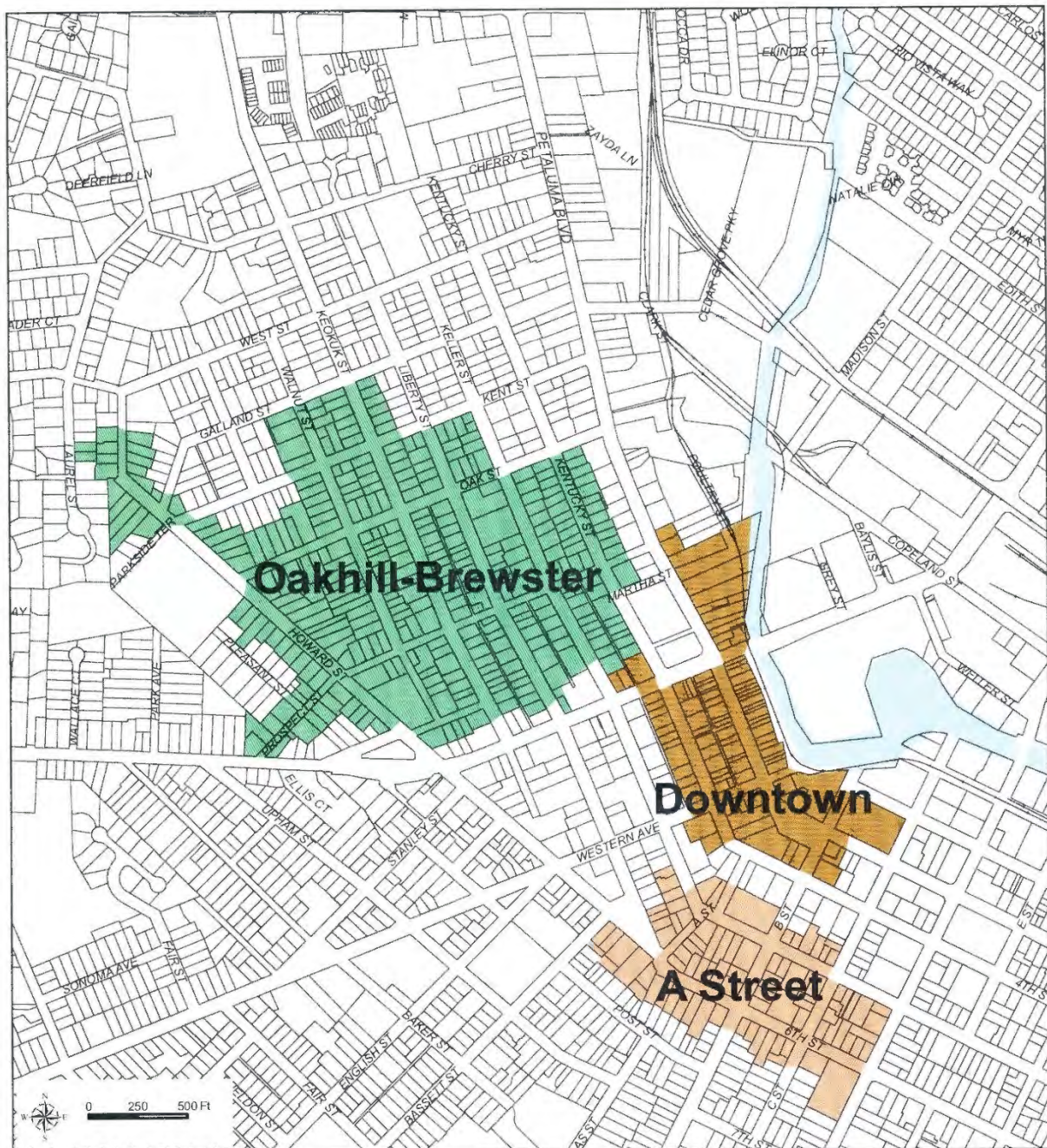
Petaluma has essentially three historic districts: the 1995 Petaluma Downtown Commercial District, which is both a National Register of Historic Resources historic district and a local historic district; the 1989 "A" Street Historic District, a local district; and the 1986 Oakhill-Brewster Historic District, also a local district. The "A" Street and Oakhill-Brewster historic districts are both primarily residential districts and are governed by design guidelines.<sup>27</sup> Proximities from the Petaluma Downtown Commercial District to the Overlay Subareas will be discussed in greater detail here than proximities between the Overlay Subareas and the residential historic districts, due to the potential of redevelopment to have a greater effect on the Petaluma Downtown Commercial District than the neighboring residential districts.

<sup>27</sup> City of Petaluma, "A" Street Historic District Preservation Guidelines and Standards, October 1986; City of Petaluma, Oakhill-Brewster Historic District Preservation Guidelines & Standards, April 1990.



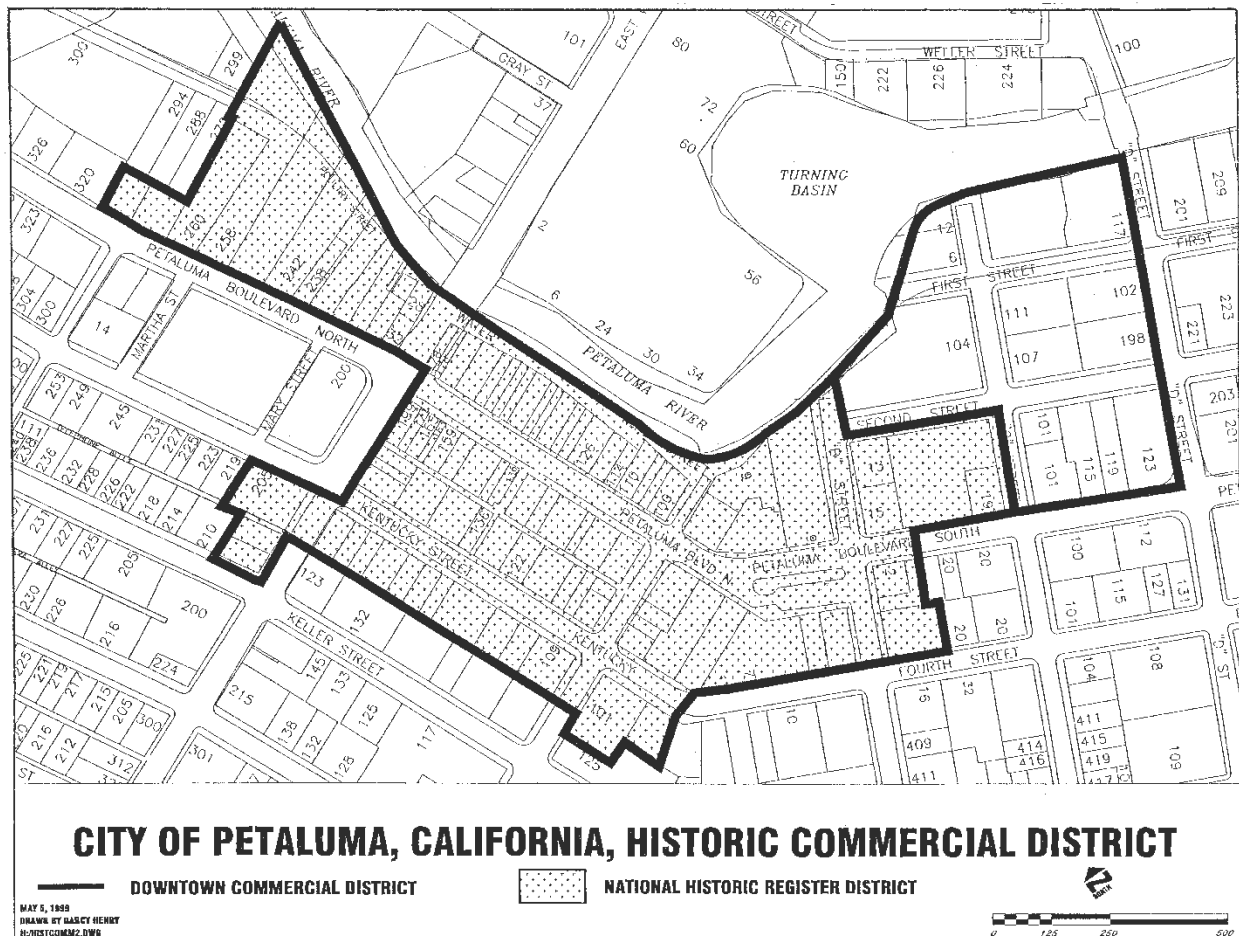
**Figure 11: Petaluma's Historic Districts<sup>28</sup>**

Source: City of Petaluma



<sup>28</sup> See Figure 4 for a map of the Overlay Subareas in juxtaposition to the historic districts.

**Figure 12: Petaluma Historic Commercial District**  
*Source: City of Petaluma Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines*



### Petaluma Historic Commercial District

The 1995 Petaluma National Register Historic District is largely coterminous with the local Downtown Commercial District, with the exception that the Downtown Commercial District extends approximately three blocks further south/southeast of the National Register district, taking in the potential historic resources at 6 C Street, a two-story house-turned-office, and at 198 E. D Street, the Art Deco Petaluma Fire Station. Collectively, the two districts are referred to as the Petaluma Historic Commercial District and are governed by the *Petaluma Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines*,<sup>29</sup> which were adopted under Ordinance No. 2097 in 1999.<sup>30</sup>

At the time the National Register nomination was drafted, the proposed district contained 99 resources, 64 of which were contributing, 35 that were non-contributing, and 14 were empty parcels. The period of

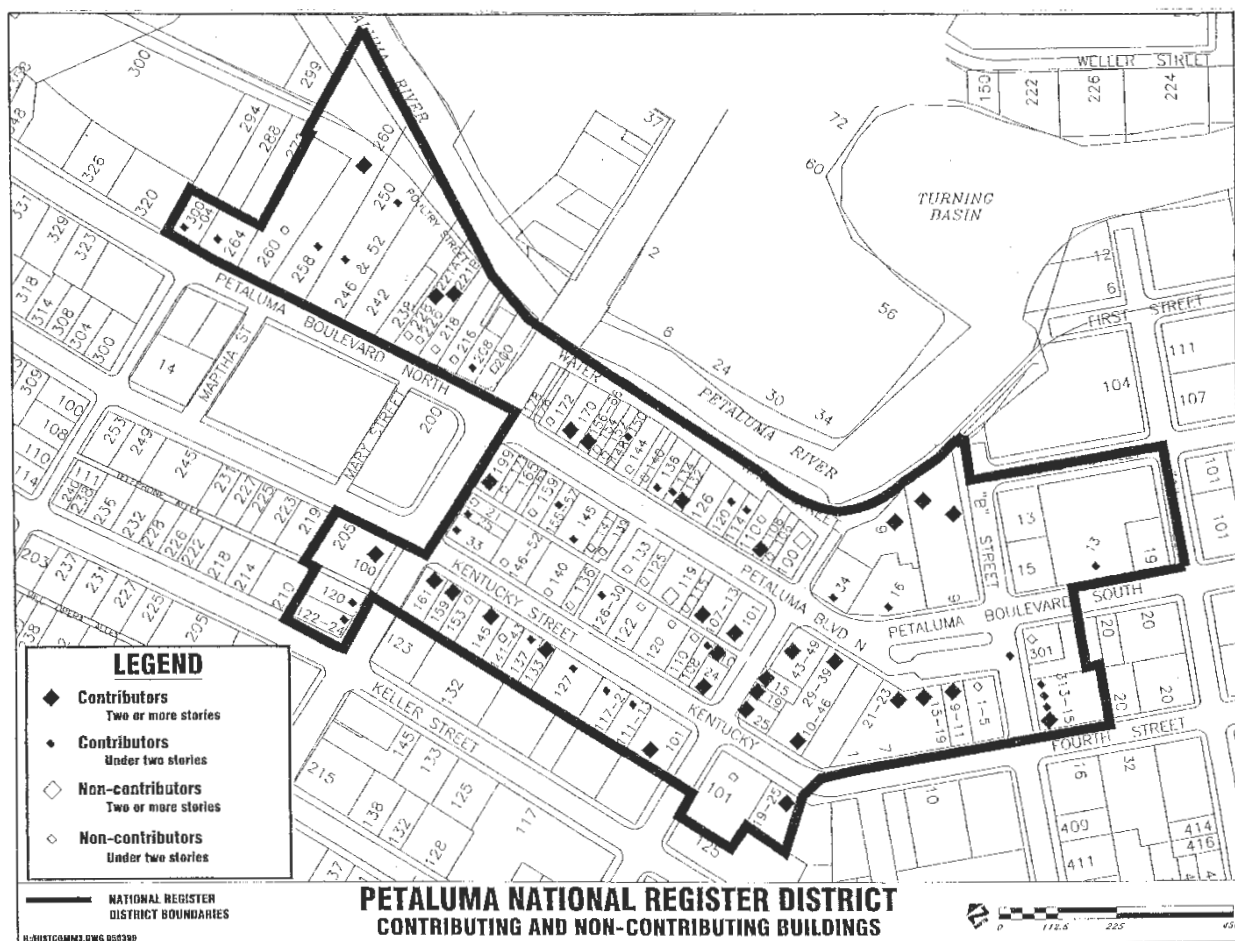
<sup>29</sup> City of Petaluma, *Petaluma Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines*, 1999.

<sup>30</sup> City of Petaluma, "Ordinance No. 2097, Amending Zoning Ordinance No. 1072 N.C.S., as amended, by Applying an Historic Overlay Zoning District to Parcels within the Petaluma Downtown Commercial District and Amending Article 17, Preservation of the Cultural and Historic Environment, of the Zoning Ordinance," October 7, 1999.

significance is 1854 to 1945. The significance of the historic district was defined as follows: "The Petaluma Historic Commercial District represents the development of commerce in the city from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of World War II. It also provides a diverse and well-designed collection of commercial buildings, the architectural importance which is unmatched in Sonoma County. Although the district has changed its appearance somewhat since 1945, it retains a high degree of architectural integrity and maintains its associations to the historic period."<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 13: Contributing and non-contributing properties in the Petaluma Historic Commercial District**

Source: City of Petaluma Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines



Three parcels within Overlay Subarea A are within the National Register Historic District. Two are within the Hotel Development Site. This property is shown as non-contributing in the "Contributing and Non-contributing Buildings" map that is included in the Design Guidelines document, because at the time the guidelines were adopted, the site was occupied by a modern service station.<sup>32</sup> However, the building was

<sup>31</sup> Donald S. Napoli., *Petaluma Historic Commercial District National Register of Historic Places Nomination*, November 2, 1994:27.

<sup>32</sup> City of Petaluma, *Petaluma Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines*, 1999.

demolished ca 2009 and the site has subsequently been vacant, so this is no longer the case. The third site within Overlay Subarea A that is within the National Register Historic District is the site occupied by Rex Ace Hardware at 313 B Street. This site is shown as contributing to the historic district. However, Rex Ace Hardware burned in 2006 and was replaced in 2007. As a result, the building is non-contributing to the National Register Historic District today. The site was historically made up of incrementally developed wood buildings. The replacement for the main portion of the site was constructed as one individual building of Hardiplank synthetic wood. As a result, it is not a true reconstruction as defined by the National Park Service's Secretary of Interior's Standards and is therefore not a historic resource today. Nonetheless, the site is culturally important in the city of Petaluma and is valued for this reason.

One parcel within Overlay Subarea B is in the National Register Historic District. It is occupied by Chase Bank today. The construction of Chase Bank occurred outside the period of significance for the historic district. As a result, it is not contributing to the historic district.

No sites within Overlay Subarea C are within a historic district.

**Figure 14: Rex Ace Hardware viewed from B and 4<sup>th</sup> streets, 1993**

*Source: Petaluma Camera Club*





**Figure 15: Rex Ace Hardware today, 2023**

*Photo by Diana Painter*



## HISTORIC CONTEXT

### Overview

The following brief overview of Petaluma's history is adapted from the *Petaluma Station Area Master Plan*. Petaluma was incorporated in 1858. The city got its start supplying game and other foodstuffs to San Francisco, which was settled after the California gold rush of 1848 and began to grow exponentially. This fact, along with Petaluma's rich agricultural lands and the presence of a navigable river, made it an active shipping hub for potatoes, hay, fruit, grain, and dairy products. In 1871 the city was linked to Santa Rosa and Tiburon by the San Francisco and Northern Pacific Railroad. The combined efficiency of river and rail shipping led to significant growth in the city's population and economy. In 1879, Petaluma resident Lyman Byce invented the first reliable incubator, which revolutionized the egg industry and gave Petaluma worldwide recognition as, "The World's Egg Basket." The city's historic downtown commercial district, which was adopted as a National Register Historic District in 1995, has survived through modernization, a freeway bypass, and an earthquake and continues to maintain its position as the major commercial, financial, and retail center of Petaluma.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Petaluma SMART Rail Station Areas: TOD Master Plan, Station Area Master Plan*. Prepared for City of Petaluma, CA. Prepared by Opticos Design, Inc., et. al, June 2013:7-4. Note that additional historic context materials are in the *Historic Resources Background Report*.

**Figure 16: Aerial view of Petaluma in 1969, arrow pointing to Hotel Development Site**

Source: Sonoma County Library



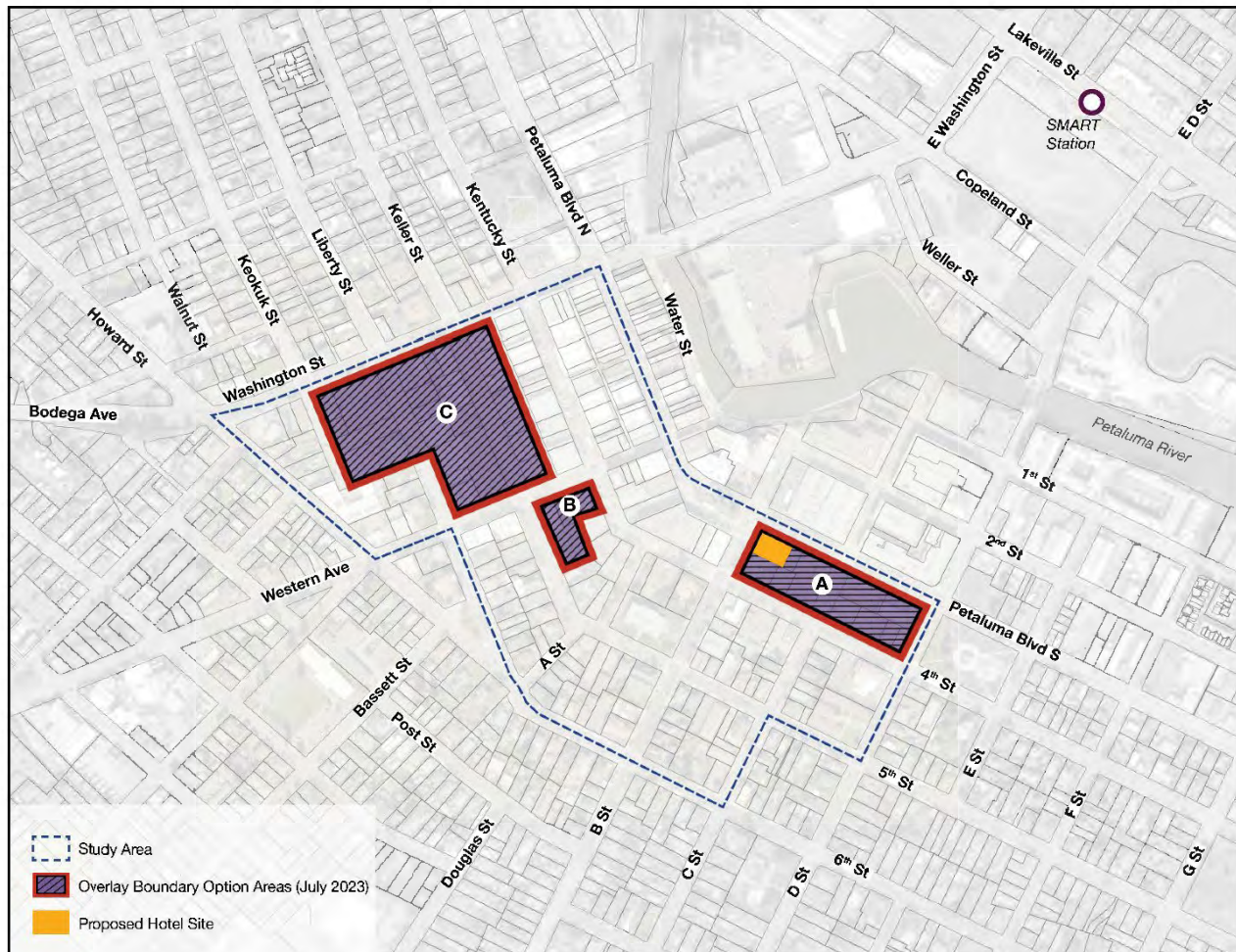
The three Overlay Subareas, A, B and C, are located within the Study Area and Overlay Boundary Area that was presented in the May 17, 2023 report, *Petaluma Downtown Overlay Proposal* (see Figure 3). Overlay Subarea A is located south of the heart of downtown Petaluma and the Petaluma Downtown Commercial Historic District. It is bounded by Petaluma Blvd. South to the east, D Street to the south, 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, and B Street to the north. Overlay Subareas B and C are located south of the Oakhill-Brewster Historic District and north of the “A” Street Historic District; both are west of the Petaluma Historic Commercial District (see Figure 4). Petaluma’s Downtown Commercial Historic District is best known for its iconic cast-iron district. Within this centrally located block between Petaluma Blvd. North, Western Avenue, Kentucky and 4<sup>th</sup> streets, and B Street, can be seen such local landmarks as the McNear Building and Mystic Theater, the Mutual Life Building, and the Masonic Building. Across Petaluma Blvd. North in this vicinity is the historic Great Petaluma Mill (G. P. McNear Co., Hay Grain & Feed) and Sanderson Ford, which is directly across the street from the Hotel Development Site. Overlays B and C are located between Oakhill-Brewster to the north and “A” Street, both residential historic districts, to the south. They are both located west of the Petaluma Historic Commercial District.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See below for additional details on Overlays B and C.



**Figure 17: Map showing proposed Overlay Subareas A, B and C<sup>35</sup>**  
*Source: EKN Development and Page, July 2023*



## OVERLAY SUBAREA

### History of Overlay Subarea A

*Note that Block 63, as referred to in the following discussion, is the block bounded by Petaluma Blvd. South, C Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and B Street, and is just south of downtown Petaluma. Block 64 is bounded by Petaluma Blvd. South, D Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and C Street and is south of Block 63.*

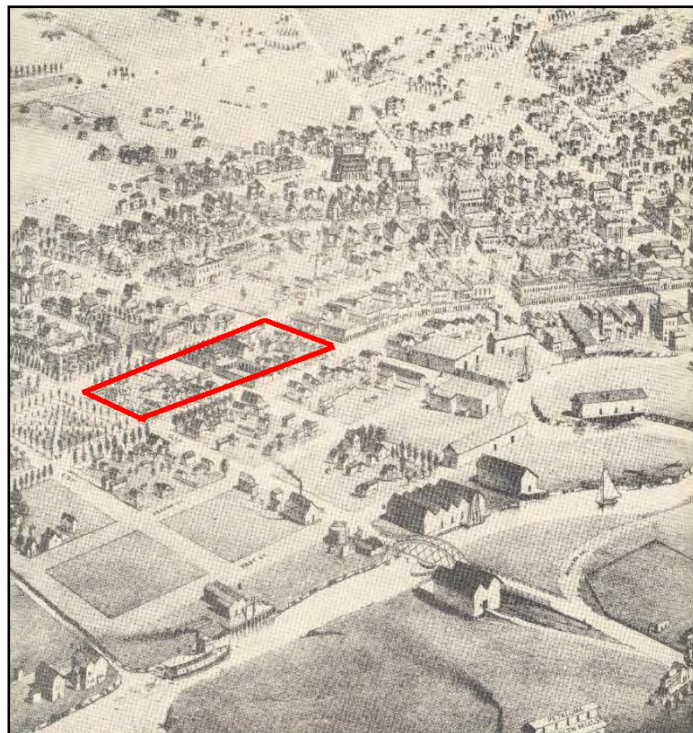
The land use history of the two blocks in Overlay Subarea A can be found in historical maps, including Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. The 1871 bird's-eye view of Petaluma shows that Block 63 contains primarily residential uses, with the exception of a few commercial buildings facing B Street. Block 64 was more densely developed, with large houses that were one-and-one-half to two-stories in height.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See Figure 4 for the Subareas in relationship to the historic districts.

<sup>36</sup> Bird's-Eye View of the City of Petaluma, Sonoma County, California, 1884 (map).

By 1884 Block 63 was very densely developed, with a series of gabled buildings facing B Street (the location of Petaluma's Chinatown), the Chinese School, and a large, enclosed courtyard in the southeast corner that contained John A. McNear's hay barn and stables. The courtyard enclosure comprised long narrow woodsheds and a coal shed. Block 64 to the south was primarily residential in character, with several stables. By 1888, Petaluma's Chinatown was gone, although the Chinese School was still present.<sup>37</sup> Also by this time, McNear's Stock Yard was clearly delineated in the northwest quadrant of Block 2 (where Foster's Freeze would be located in the future) and included a series of stables.

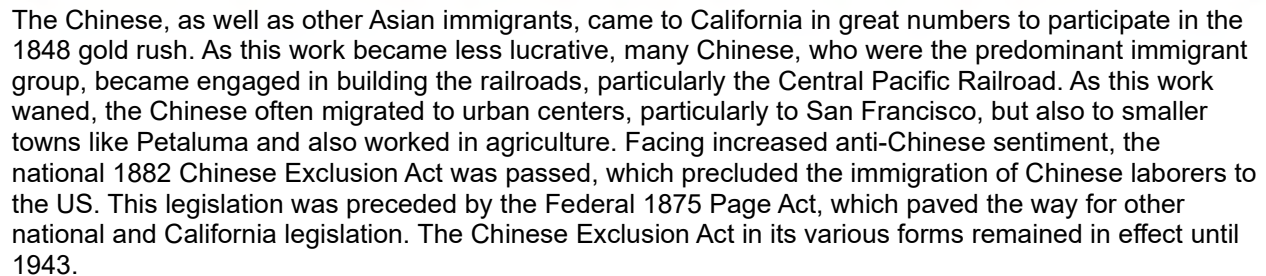
**Figure 18: Petaluma in 1884, showing Overlay Subarea A in red for reference**  
*Source: Petaluma Sonoma Co. Cal.*



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<sup>37</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, 1883, 1885, 1888, 1894, 1906, 1910, 1919, 1923, 1923, 1969, 1955, 1965.

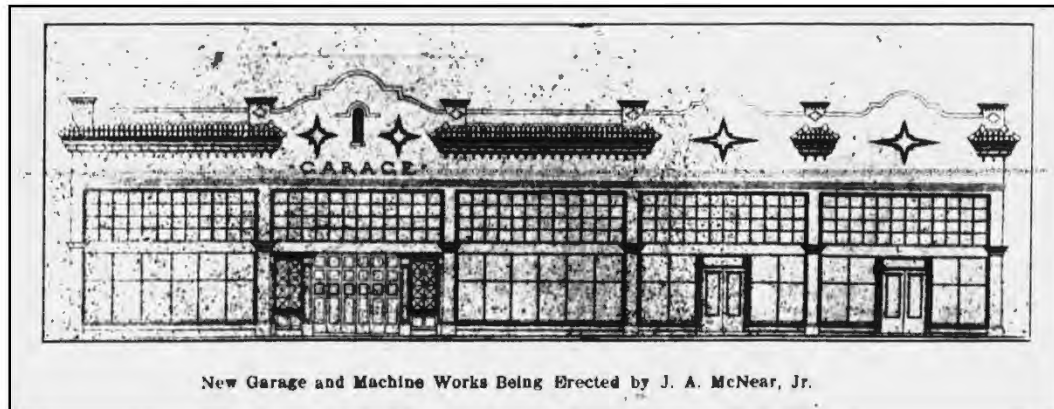




## PAINTER PRESERVATION

**Figure 20: John A. McNear's Garage at Petaluma Blvd. South and C Street, designed by Brainerd Jones**

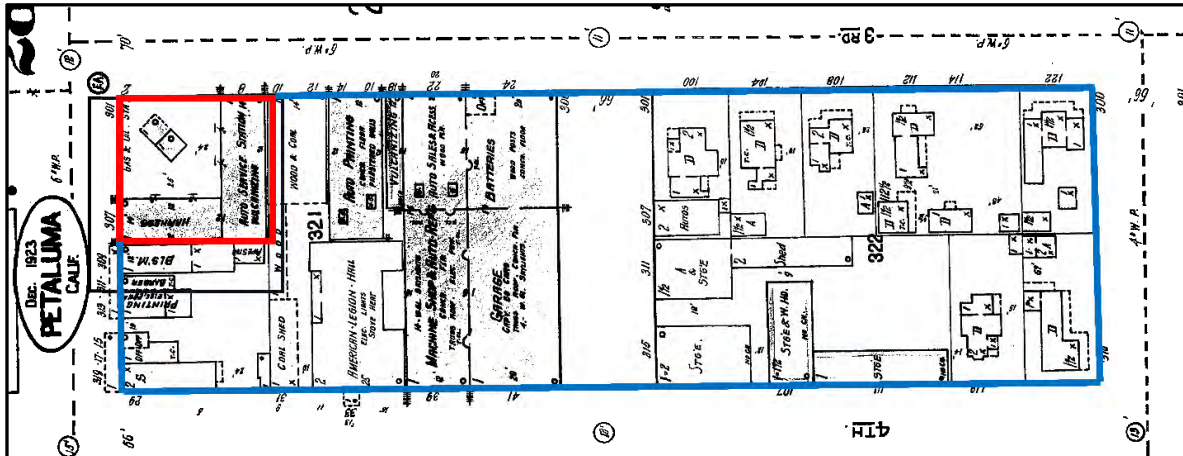
*Source: Petaluma Argus-Courier, June 11, 1907, courtesy Terry Park, Petaluma History Museum & Research Library*



By the time the 1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance map was published the land uses and buildings in Block 63 had begun the transition to auto-oriented uses (although a horse-shoeing shop remained), which would dominate the block in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. McNear had built his series of warehouses in the northeast corner of the block, the largest being a garage, which he had hired Petaluma's prominent architect Brainerd Jones to design. A gas station was located in the northeast corner (the Hotel Development Site), the first of several at this location over about a 100-year period (a wood and coal building also remained as a vestige of an earlier fuel business). Other uses on the block (in addition to the dance hall, a continuation of the earlier Turner Hall), were a vulcanizing business, a battery charging station, and an auto supply shop.

The transition to auto-oriented uses along both sides of Petaluma Blvd. South was complete by the time the 1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance map was issued. Among the uses in this four-block area were a used auto market, a motorcycle repair business, an auto painting shop, a battery shop, a machine shop with auto repair, a garage, two auto sales businesses, and four gas stations. Also present was a planing mill and lumber yard and two laundries, one a Chinese laundry. A few houses still existed.

**Figure 21: Overlay Subarea A area in 1923 in blue; Hotel Development Site in red**  
*Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance map*

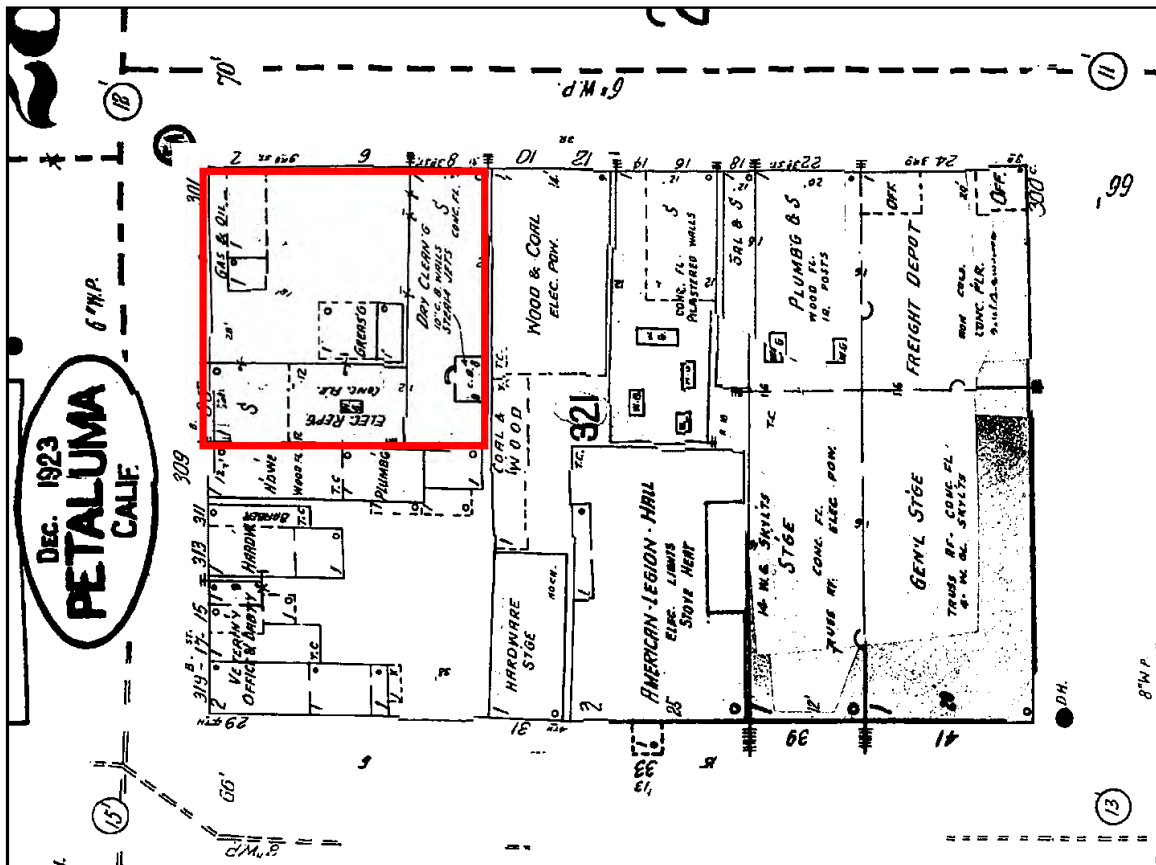


By the time the 1949 Sanborn Fire Insurance map was issued Block 64 was solidly developed with a great variety of mostly auto-oriented and industrial uses, with the exception of what was now the American Legion Hall. What is now the Rex Ace Hardware was present, in a series of buildings, including a veterinary clinic. The gas station in the northeast corner of the block (the Hotel Development Site today) was surrounded by an electrical repair shop and a dry cleaner. The wood and coal shop was still present and was combined with hardware storage. McNear's complex was devoted primarily to storage, with the exception of one saloon and the building in the southeast corner, which was a freight depot. Block 1 was about 50% occupied with a variety of uses, including an auto and truck service storage building in the northwest corner, the new doctor's office, three single family dwellings and one two-unit apartment, and two gas stations.

Conditions in the two blocks were largely the same in the 1965 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, with the exception that the two drive-in restaurants had been built within Block 2, Foster's Freeze and Quinley's, across from Walnut Park. Beginning about 1970, uses would begin to change in the Overlay A area, as two bank buildings joined the medical office building as professional office uses. The Hotel Development Site went from Petaluma's Chinatown and home of the Chinese School and then the Mission Church to a series of oil and gas stations, which remained the case until 2009, when the last gas station was demolished. Today Overlay Subarea A is more sparsely developed than at any time in its history since 1871.

Figure 22: Portion of Overlay Subarea A area in 1949 (Block 63), showing Hotel Development Site in red

Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance map



**Figure 23: View of Overlay Subarea A (blue) and Standard Station (lower corner) and Hotel Development Site (red) in 1973**

*Source: Sonoma County Library*





## Existing Conditions in Overlay Subarea A

**Figure 24 : Hotel Development Site in 2023, shown in red**

Source: Google maps



Today the two-block overlay zone is occupied by the following built environment resources. Parcels in Overlay Subarea A that were either vacant or parking lots were not included in this table.

**Table 1: Properties in Overlay Subarea A**

Block/APN	Historic name	Current name	Use	Address	Date 1	Date 2
63-007 63-009; 008; 011	Northbay Savings and Loan	Bank of the West	Bank	20 Petaluma Blvd S	1974	
	Kreger's Standard Station	Vacant	Vacant commercial Multiple stores in 1 structure	2 Petaluma Blvd S	1935	2009 demo.
63-012	Rex's Hardware Summit State	Rex's Hardware Fidelity National		313 B St	No date	2007
64-002	Bank	Title	One story office bldg	100 Petaluma Blvd S	1979	
64-007	Lewis Medico- Dental Bldg	Compass Real Estate	One story office bldg	127 4TH St	1935	1949
64-005	Quinley's	Walnut Park Grill	Drive-in restaurant	131 4TH St	1954	
64-008	Foster's Freeze	Fourth & Sea Fish & Chips	Drive-in restaurant	101 4TH St	1950	
64-010	Seven-Eleven	Seven-Eleven	Multiple stores in 1 structure	112 Petaluma Blvd S	1977	

**Figure 25: Parcel map for Overlay Subarea A**



Three buildings are age-eligible; that is, they are over 50 years old and provided they have significance and retain integrity, may be historic resources (highlighted in gray in the above table). They are as follows.<sup>38</sup> Note that this table is a summary with limited information about these properties and is not intended to represent the findings of a reconnaissance-level survey.

The **Dr. Mark L. Lewis Medico-Dental Building** (127 4<sup>th</sup> Street) was built in 1935; an addition was constructed in 1949. The one-story Colonial Revival office building was considered “the last word in modernity” when constructed. The significance of the building may be as an early modern professional office building in Petaluma, or it could be significant for its association with Dr. Mark L. Lewis. The building retains excellent integrity.

<sup>38</sup> Note that information on the three age-eligible buildings was provided by Katherine J. Rinehart, Consulting Historian.





**Dr. Lewis Medico-Dental Building, 2023**

*Photo by Katherine J. Rinehart*

The **Foster's Freeze** restaurant site was previously occupied by the large, two-story stable where John A. McNear kept his draft horses within the McNear Corporation Yard. The stable was demolished in 1949. At the time the *Petaluma Argus-Courier* stated, "Old time stable with historic past in the process of being razed to make room for a modern drive-in ice milk products plant at Fourth and C Street." The Foster Freeze Old Fashion Products, Inc. was a chain established by George Foster in California in 1946 that prided itself on the quality of its milk products. Foster, who would eventually run all the restaurants as franchises, fashioned them after Dairy Queen and featured soft serve ice cream. As a mid-century drive-in restaurant, the significance of the building may be as a good example of roadside architecture in Petaluma. The building retains good integrity.





**After 50 years in business Foster's Freeze became Fourth & Sea Fish & Chips**  
*Courtesy The Good, The Bad and The Inedible Restaurant Reviews*



**Foster's Freeze building today**  
*Photo by Diana Painter*

**Quinley's** was built by Alvin Quinley as PDQ in 1952.<sup>39</sup> The PDQ on Walnut Park was the second location for the restaurant. The first opened in 1945 on Petaluma Blvd. South at I Street and is considered the first drive-in in the North Bay.<sup>40</sup> Quinley was a restaurateur who owned several fast-food restaurants in the Bay Area and a chain of Quinley's "good food" restaurants in Petaluma, Santa Rosa and Marin.<sup>41</sup> Grandson Alvin Cooper restored the building about 1991 and re-named the PDQ "Quinley's." Quinley's closed in 2004 when Joe Cooper, Alvin Cooper's brother and business partner, was diagnosed with cancer. It re-opened as the Walnut Park Grill about 2004, which closed in 2020. As a mid-century drive-in restaurant, the significance of the former Quinley's may be as a good example of roadside architecture in Petaluma. The building retains good integrity.

**Figure 26: Quinley's in 1994**

*Photo courtesy the Petaluma Argus-Courier*



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<sup>39</sup> The PDQ on Walnut Park was the second location for the restaurant. The first opened in 1945 on Petaluma Blvd. South.

<sup>40</sup> Corey Young, "Remembering Joe Cooper, the man behind the Quinley's counter," *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, November 29, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Ann Frantz, "Quinley's carries on PDQ '50s tradition," *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, June 21, 1994.



**Quinley's became the Walnut Park Grill in 2006**  
*Photo courtesy the Petaluma Argus-Courier*

Connie Williams of the Sonoma County Library wrote in 2023 that, “The last remnants of drive-in culture were seen in Petaluma with Foster’s Freeze and PDQ continuing the tradition.”<sup>42</sup> Now both businesses are closed and the buildings remain shuttered.

## Hotel Development Site

The Hotel Development Site at 2 Petaluma Blvd. South was occupied beginning in the late 1800s by Petaluma’s Chinatown and Chinese School, which was later the Chinese Mission Church. This school/mission was no longer extant by 1906 and the site was occupied by a dwelling through at least 1910. The Sanborn Fire Insurance map of 1919 shows that the site was occupied by its first gas and oil station by that time, in addition to a cobbler shop and the dwelling.<sup>43</sup> This was the first in a series of gas stations on the parcel.<sup>44</sup> According to historian Terry Park, “A Union Oil station opened in 1917 and was replaced by a Standard/Chevron station in 1919. The station was demolished and rebuilt in 1935 and remained in business until 2008. This location boasted the longest operating gas station with 91 years in business.”<sup>45</sup> The building was demolished in 2009. The site remains vacant today.

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<sup>42</sup> Connie Williams, “Driving in and eating out Petaluma: 1950s and 60s,” (blog), *Sonoma County Library*, June 14, 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, 1883, 1885, 1888, 1894, 1906, 1910, 1919, 1923, 1923, 1969, 1955, 1965.

<sup>44</sup> An electrical repair shop and dry cleaners also occupied the site at mid-century.

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication, Terry Park, Petaluma History Museum and Research Library, July 12, 2023.



**Figure 27: Hoot Kreger's Standard Station, located at the Hotel Development Site from 1964 to 1983**

*Courtesy Terry Park, Petaluma History Museum & Research Library*



## **OVERLAY SUBAREA B**

### **History of Overlay Subarea B**

Overlay Subarea B is composed of a portion of a large block. It extends from Kentucky Street to Keller Street and is one parcel deep south of Western Avenue. The block between Kentucky and Keller Streets consists of Chase Bank (1962) and associated parking and a Wells Fargo Bank (1976) and a large parking lot.

The area that is occupied by Overlay Subarea B today was actually much more densely developed historically than it has been since about the late 1960s. The parcel at the corner of Kentucky Street and Western Avenue was occupied by a three story hotel from the mid-1850s until 1968, when the third version of what was by then called the New Continental Hotel burned.<sup>46</sup> The two-story building at the corner of Keller Street and Western Avenue, at the other end of the block, was occupied by various shops at the ground level over time and a social hall at the second level from about the turn of the century until

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<sup>46</sup> Katherine J. Rinehart, *Petaluma, A History in Architecture*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.



at least 1923. In the period from ca 1906 to ca 1949 what is the parking lot today along Keller was occupied by one or two businesses and two residences.<sup>47</sup>

**Figure 28: The New Continental Hotel at Kentucky and Western, looking southwest**

Source: Sonoma County Library



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<sup>47</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance maps.

## Existing conditions in Overlay Subarea B

**Table 2: Properties in Overlay Subarea B**

Block/APN	Historic name	Current name	Use	Address	Date 1	Date 2
51-024		Chase Bank	Bank	101 Western Ave	1962	
51-025		Wells Fargo Bank	Bank	125 Western Ave	1976	

One building is age-eligible; that is, it is over 50 years old and provided it is significant and retains integrity, may be a historic resource (highlighted in gray in the above table). Note that this table is a summary of limited information about these properties and is not intended to represent the findings of a reconnaissance-level survey.

**Figure 29: Parcel map for Overlay Subarea B**



The parcel on which the 1962 Chase Bank in Overlay Subarea B is located is within the Petaluma Historic Commercial District. While the Chase Bank building has the potential to be considered a historic resource, as it is over 50 years of age, it is not contributing to the Petaluma Downtown Commercial District, because its construction date lies outside the period of significance for the district.

## **OVERLAY SUBAREA C**

### **History of Overlay Subarea C**

Overlay Subarea C is bounded by E. Washington Street on the north; the alley between Kentucky and Keller Streets on the east (this is also the boundary of the Petaluma Historic Commercial District); an extension of Keokuk Street (also seen as Court Street) on the north side of this boundary and Liberty Street on the south side; and Western Avenue on the south. It encompasses portions of Keller and Liberty streets. The major streets are E. Washington Street and Western Avenue, which trend west to east.

Overlay Subarea C is located east of the Kentucky Street shopping district, extending west as it does from the alley between Kentucky and Keller streets between Western Avenue and Washington Street. This block is Petaluma's primary shopping street on the west side, both historically and today. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this area within Overlay Subarea C consisted primarily of residences and stables, although the Brooklyn Hotel, the City Livery Stable, Hill Opera House (still extant), the First M.E. Church, and Pepper Kindergarten also existed along Keller and Liberty streets.<sup>48</sup> These conditions were still in place in 1910.<sup>49</sup>

By 1923, the half-block bounded Liberty, Washington and Keokuk (Court) streets was still occupied by large residences and the Pepper Kindergarten, but the stables along Court Street in 1910 had been replaced by residences or were vacant. In the one-and-one-half block area bounded by the alley between Kentucky and Keller streets and Liberty Street, a number of the houses were gone, replaced by commercial buildings or vacant land. The City Livery had been replaced by Vonsen's office and feed store (see Figure 30). One garage was located in the area.<sup>50</sup>

Conditions were not dramatically different in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, according to the 1949 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps. Two one-story multi-family properties existed in the area, plus a combination of commercial/industrial and residential properties. Hill Opera House (now the California Theatre, still extant) and Pepper Kindergarten were still in place. Approximately 15 properties were vacant or had substantial open space (sometimes used for parking) around a building within the parcel.

Today the area is primarily known for one-story businesses, parking areas associated with the businesses, the two-story City of Petaluma Parking Garage, and the historic Phoenix Theater.

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<sup>48</sup> 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

<sup>49</sup> 1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

<sup>50</sup> 1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

**Figure 30: M. Vonsen Co. building by Brainerd Jones, now the City of Petaluma parking garage**  
*Source: Sonoma County Library*



### Existing Conditions in Overlay Subarea C

Overlay Subarea C is composed of a mix of office and retail buildings, with a few parking lots associated with businesses and the city's three-story parking garage. There is one residence in the district that serves as a retail space. Most of the buildings date to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest building in the overlay, the Keller Professional Office Building, is attributed to 1910 which does not appear to be the correct, with its stacked brick finish. In 1910 the space housed a feed store and mill; in 1923 it was part of a wholesale eggs sales space; and in 1949 it held the offices for the *Argus-Courier* newspaper, which is a more likely an approximate construction date. Aside from the Argus-Courier building at 135 Keller Street and the late Victorian residence, the 1925 Phoenix Theater at 201-205 E. Washington Street is the oldest building in the overlay. It was re-named the California Theatre sometime after 1924 and was rebuilt after a fire in 1957. The original building, which had Beaux Arts styling, was called the Hill Opera House, constructed sometime after 1910.

Even the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the Overlay Subarea have the appearance of being updated at some point. Most of the buildings are one-story in height. One site, at 131 Liberty Street, is currently being redeveloped with a mixed-use complex.



There are no individually nominated landmarks in this overlay area. The Petaluma Historic Commercial District (National and local registers) abuts the overlay on the east side, the boundary being the alley between Kentucky and Keller streets. The Oakhill-Brewster Historic District is adjacent to Overlay Subarea C in two places, where the Oakhill-Brewster district extends to E. Washington Street. As a result, Volpi's, an Italian restaurant and bar that was formerly a grocery and speakeasy at 124 E Washington Street, 120 Washington Street, and the two-story apartment building designed by Brainerd Jones at 226 E. Washington Street are adjacent to Overlay C on the north side of Washington Street. The overlay is about a half block from a small extension of the "A" Street Historic District. There are no known surveys of individual buildings in the overlay area.

**Table 3: Existing conditions in Overlay Subarea C**

Block/APN	Historic name	Current name	Use	Address	Date 1	Date 2
363-024		Keller Street Co-Work	Professional offices	140 Keller St	1927	
363-		Restaurant	Restaurant	132 Keller St	1927	
363-001 <sup>51</sup>		160 Keller St	Retail & office spaces	160 Keller St	1954	
3636-023; 005; 007; 004 <sup>52</sup>	M. Vonsen Co. bldg. (no longer extant)	City of Petaluma Parking Garage	Parking garage	120 Western Ave	1960	
362-014	Argus Courier offices	Keller Street Professional Bldg.	Professional offices	135 Keller St	1910	ca 1949
362-012; 025	California Theatre	Phoenix Theater	Theater	Washington St	1925	1957
362-010		The Bagel Mill, Stockhome	Multiple stores in 1 structure	214 & 220 Western Ave	1940	
362-009		Sack's Thrift store	Retail store	128 Liberty St	1948	
362-022		Alpha Analytic Laboratories	One story office building	110 Liberty St	1949	
362-15	Motel & restaurant	Hallie's Diner	Multiple combo/stores & office	125 KELLER ST	1956	
362-001		Sonoma Autowerks	Auto repair	215 Washington St	1957	
362-023		Petaluma Market	Supermarket	210 Western Ave	1965	
362-003		Salon	Residence used for retail	132 Liberty St	1900	ca no date
362-024		ArtaLuma	Retail store	145 Keller St		
361-033	Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Bldg.	PTLMCA01 Central Office	Utility	125 Liberty St	1965	Ca
361-028		Chalet Florist	Retail store	311 Washington St	1950	
361-031		Petaluma Orthodontist	Dental offices	301 Washington St	1962	
361-033		Vacant	One story office building	131 Liberty St	1972	

<sup>51</sup>Also 184 and 186 Keller Street and 117-125 Washington Street

<sup>52</sup> Also 114, 120 and 126 Keller Street

**Figure 31: Map of Overlay Subarea C**



All buildings in Overlay Subarea C are age-eligible; that is, they are over 50 years old and provided they are significant and retain integrity, may be historic resources. Note that this table is a summary of limited information about these properties and is not intended to represent the findings of a reconnaissance-level survey.

## PROTECTING HISTORIC RESOURCES

It is the intention of this HCRR to assist in avoiding or minimizing adverse effects to historic resources in Petaluma's downtown and neighborhood historic districts that may result from redevelopment in the Overlay Subareas. To that end, the report provides information on the existing historic resources in the Overlay Subareas as proposed, information on their adjacencies, in terms of proximity to historic districts and potential historic resources, and in this section, recommendations and discussion points for achieving these goals. In the course of developing this HCRR, the proposed Overlay has been reduced from a broad overlay, coterminous with the Study Area within which zoning modifications were proposed to the reduced Overlay Subareas that are under discussion in this report (see Figure 4). Note that a base level of information is provided in this HCRR. Additional studies, including historic resource surveys and design

studies, would have to be conducted in order to assess impacts from say, for example, an impact to a historic resource due to its altered view resulting from a redevelopment project. These types of studies may be required as part of the redevelopment process.

### **Recommendations of the HCRR**

It is recommended here that a reconnaissance-level survey of the Overlay Subareas or area, if one area is pursued, be conducted to better review and address potential impacts to historic properties within the Overlay. Historic Resource Evaluations (HREs) or intensive level surveys should be prepared for properties that are targeted for redevelopment or rehabilitation, as well as adjacent properties when relevant. Note that this is consistent with best practices and CEQA requirements. If the property is found to be historically significant, redevelopment should proceed in compliance with CEQA. CEQA applies to discretionary projects and equates a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource with a significant effect on the environment (PRC Section 2108.1). Substantial adverse change is defined as demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration activities which would impair historical significance (Section 5020.1).<sup>53</sup>

Note that a reconnaissance or an intensive-level survey of the impact or potential impact on historic resources does not replace visual studies that might be required as part of the regulatory review process.

### **Recommendations of the Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay**

Two design strategies are proposed as part of the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay*. One involves incorporating setbacks or stepbacks in the proposed structure to protect views of the relevant historic façade when the new development abuts a historic resource. The other is to require a datum line in the proposed structure to recognize a datum line (or base) in a historic structure, or its height in the case of a one-story building.<sup>54</sup> This would be required as part of redevelopment within the relevant overlay when the new building abuts a historic resource.<sup>55</sup> Note that building to the property line, without setbacks on the ground plain, is already a characteristic of buildings in the Petaluma Downtown Commercial District.

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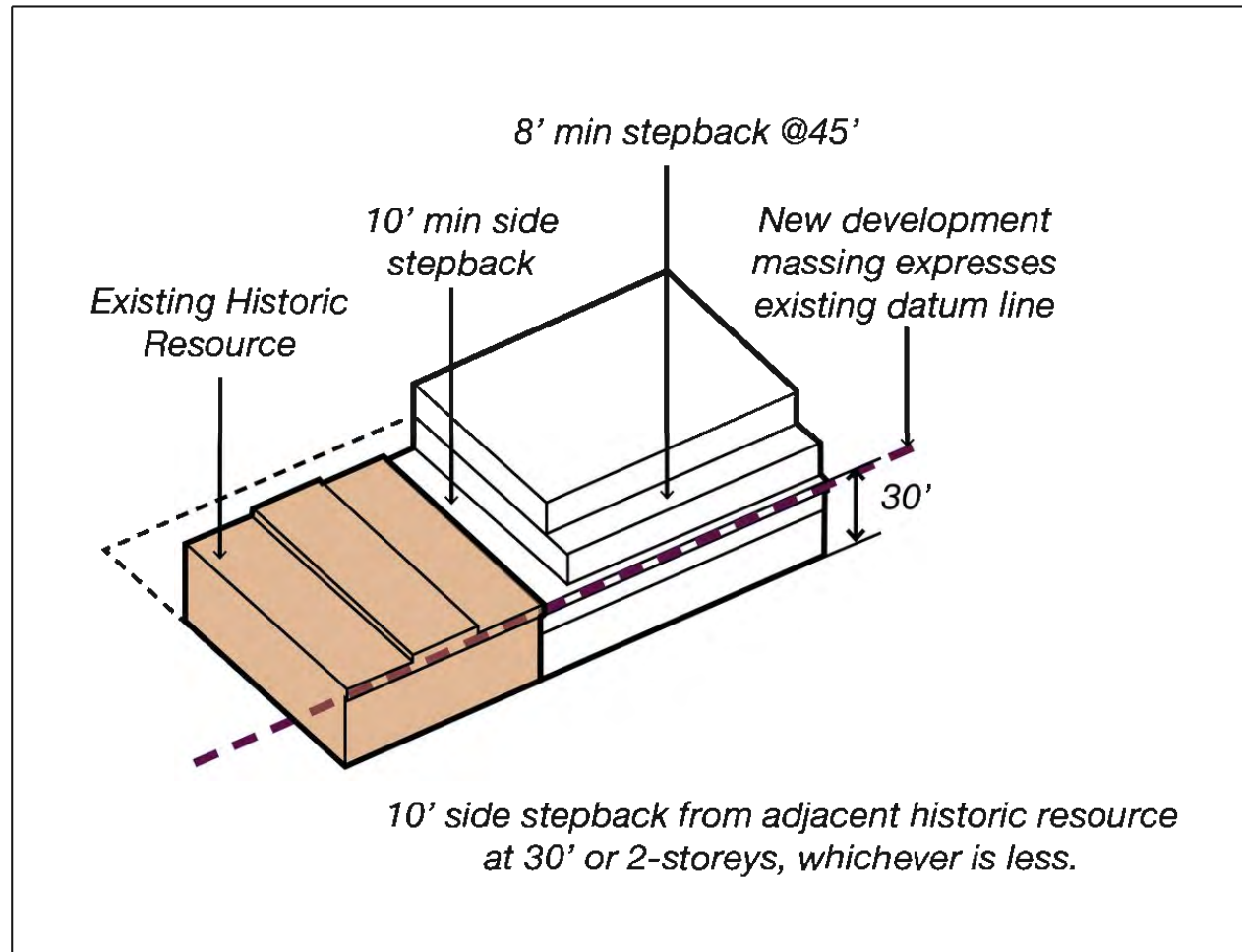
<sup>53</sup> "CEQA & Historical Resources," *CEQA Technical Advice Series*. Sacramento, CA: Governor's Office of Planning and Research (n.d.):1.

<sup>54</sup> Note that the first floor height of a new building proposed within an Overlay area would be 14'.

<sup>55</sup> *Petaluma Downtown Overlay Proposal*. Prepared for the City of Petaluma. Prepared by EKN Development and Page. May 17, 2023:45.

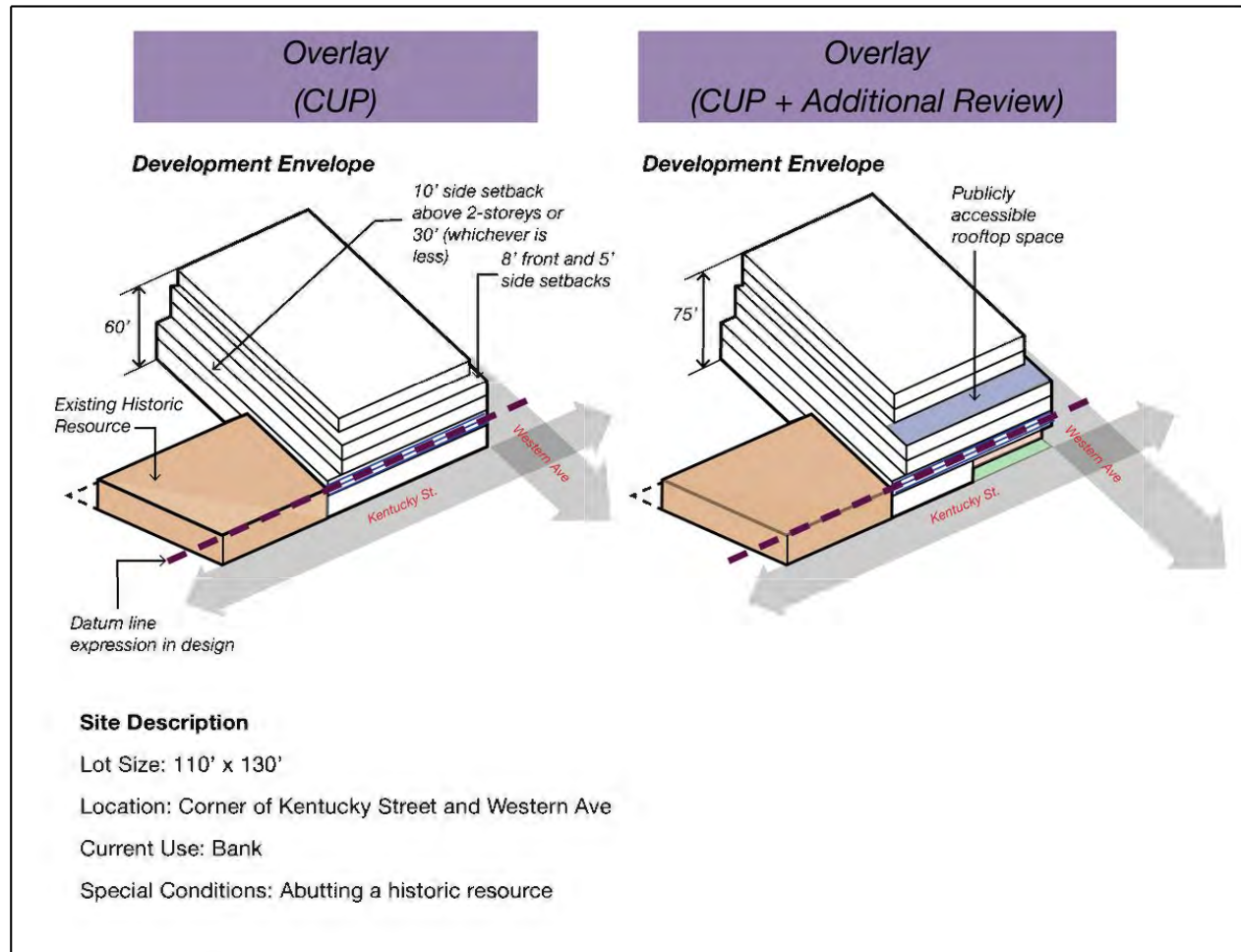
**Figure 32: Treatment of new construction adjacent to a historic building, July 2023**

Source: EKN Development and Page Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay





**Figure 33: Treatment of new construction adjacent to a historic building, July 2023**  
Source: EKN Development and Page Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay



### Further Considerations

Below are several topics for discussion purposes. These measures to protect historic resources in the Overlay areas, adjacent to the Overlay areas, and within portions of the historic districts in downtown Petaluma, are for discussion purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed as part of this HCRR. Significant study would have to take place to explore the advantages and disadvantages of some of these suggestions before they might be incorporated in redevelopment plans, with exceptions as noted below. Note that some suggestions have already been made as part of other planning documents prepared for the City of Petaluma, such as the *Historic Resources Background Report*, prepared for the *General Plan Update*, and some have been suggested as part of the public outreach process for the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay*.

- Consider an amendment to the *Central Petaluma Specific Plan* that includes the two-block Overlay A that is being considered as part of the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity*

*Overlay*, rather than adopting this overlay as a freestanding overlay area. The ensuing development standards could be crafted to be consistent with the vision presented for the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay*, distinct from the present standards for other subareas in the CPSP. This could have the advantage of 1) incorporating the type of standards found in this document that have been vetted by the public; 2) incorporating the measures to protect historic resources that are present in the SmartCode in *Chapter 7: Historic Resource Conservation & Preservation*; and 3) would require that new development in the proposed overlay be subject to a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA), as stipulated in the SmartCode.<sup>56</sup>

- Consider requiring compliance with the *Petaluma Historic Commercial District Design Guidelines*, including the Secretary of Interior's Standards, for any redevelopment projects proposed in the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay* area. This would have the advantage of ensuring that redevelopment adjacent to the Downtown Commercial Historic District is subject to the same protective measures that properties in the historic district are.
- Require a viewshed analysis of views from historic resources to redevelopment projects in the *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay* area as part of the permitting process. Note that this can already be done in conjunction with redevelopment but should be carefully defined on a case-by-case basis to take into account views from individually designated historic properties on adjacent or nearby parcels and key points in surrounding historic districts to any redevelopment proposal.
- The demolition ordinance should be amended to apply to properties 45 years old or older and that may be historic resources, rather than resources that were constructed in 1945 or earlier.<sup>57</sup> This is consistent with CEQA's definition of age-eligibility for potential historic resources, with the exception that an additional five years has been added to the standard 50 years or older to account for the time it takes for a redevelopment project to be realized.
- The *Historic Resources Background Report* for the *General Plan Update* has suggested that "Additional historic resources surveys should occur prior to adopted an updated housing site inventory or identifying specific sites for increased densities to ensure that there is a clear understanding of how these policy decisions may impact eligible historic resources."<sup>58</sup> This has been recommended as part of this HCRR.

This HCRR may be modified as consideration of the proposed Petaluma *Downtown Housing and Economic Opportunity Overlay* is considered. This report is based on the three Overlay Subareas for downtown Petaluma that have been presented to date. As the development of the Overlay(s) and their design strategies continue to be fine-tuned and presented to the city/public, there may be revisions to this HCRR. There also may be revisions if or when further historic research is undertaken in the relevant Overlay Subareas.

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<sup>56</sup> City of Petaluma, *Central Petaluma Specific Plan*, June 2, 2003, SmartCode, 2003:43. This has also been suggested as part of the findings for the "Historic Resources Background Report," 2022:4.

<sup>57</sup> This has also been suggested as part of the findings for the *Historic Resources Background Report*, 2022:4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2022:5.

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