

IV. Public Improvements

Public improvements – streets, trails, and parks – can profoundly enhance the safety, enjoyment, and identity of a neighborhood. Their physical design and programming can solve pressing problems and enhance community life. These are the places where community members walk, gather, play, or simply relax. Community members have expressed a strong desire to improve their existing public open spaces, and to use redevelopment as an opportunity to create compelling new public places.

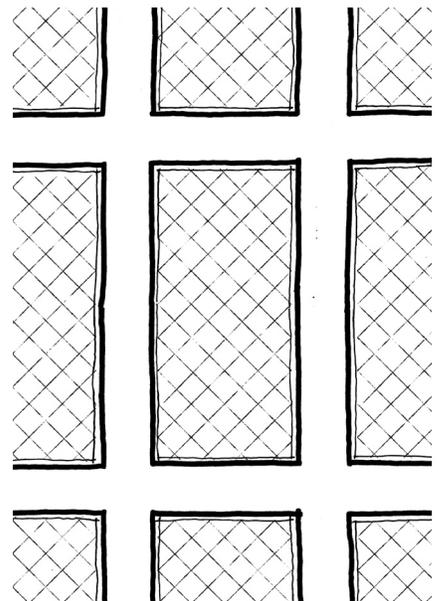
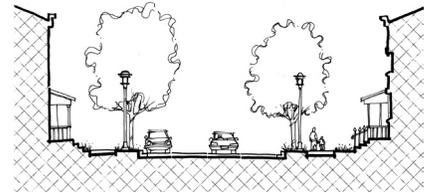
This chapter offers a “road map” for public improvements. It looks at public improvements from a “big picture” perspective, where the holistic needs of the community help direct the many actions that government agencies and others may take. These recommendations have been organized within four distinct, but related, systems: streets, trails, parks and transit. (Recommendations for private buildings and lots are contained in *Chapter V - Building Guidelines*.)

1. STREETS

Background

In a typical neighborhood, local streets comprise approximately 20 to 25% of total land area. The public right-of-way, which includes sidewalks and park strips, embodies 80 to 90% of the total public open space. In this way, the character of the residential street network is one of the most important factors in determining the character of a residential neighborhood.

A street network must support a wide range of uses. It accommodates vehicular motor vehicle access to properties and homes, ranging from private automobiles to large service trucks to emergency vehicles. It provides a framework for most utility systems, which are typically located above the street level (e.g. power lines), below the street surface (e.g. sewer lines) and on the street itself (e.g. storm gutters and drains). Streets and sidewalks also provide the primary means of pedestrian and bicycle movement, and are the arena where most community relationships and functions occur. A continuous network of sidewalks and healthy street trees are the most powerful factors for supporting pedestrian comfort and an attractive neighborhood character.



Streets as an open space network.
Streets account for about one-quarter of a neighborhood's total land area, and almost all of its public open space.

To be livable and functional, streets must accommodate many demands simultaneously. While vehicular movement and safety represents a critical concern, so is the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. In almost all instances, thoughtful design can result in streets where traffic flows but is calmed, and where pedestrians and bicyclists move comfortably but share the public right-of-way. Even city-serving arterials can balance vehicular demands with the needs of pedestrians and character-building features, such as street trees.

Goals

Improve pedestrian safety and comfort, especially for children.

Creating streets that are safe and comfortable for everyone can be enhanced through focused traffic-calming. These efforts can include a range of strategies such as adding “bulb-outs”, median islands, traffic circles and narrowing travel lanes. Even on city-serving streets (collectors and arterials), walkability can be improved by providing wide sidewalks, installing planting strips and parking lanes (to buffer the sidewalk from traffic), adding pedestrian-scale lighting, reducing traffic speeds, and providing clearly-marked, safe crossings.

Expand and enhance walkable connections throughout the area.

Many of the area’s neighborhoods are isolated from local amenities and conveniences because it is difficult to cross or walk along major streets. This discourages residents from walking to shops and parks, or forces them to walk in less desirable conditions. New sidewalks, trails, and crossings can help improve safety and stronger connections – and can reduce reliance on automobiles. Sidewalks are essential. The recent installation of sidewalks along McLaughlin is a step in the right direction. In addition, roadways can be narrowed to slow traffic and add protective elements, like planting strips and street trees.

Improve character of neighborhood streets.

One of the clearest directives of the NAC is to establish and enhance qualities that give the area a “small town” character. Today, however, many streets give a poor impression. Large-scale efforts, such as undergrounding of utilities, would be beneficial but are difficult to fund and implement. The most effective, practical, and long-term strategy for improving neighborhood character is the planting of trees along the street. (Toward this goal, The NAC applied for and received a grant to plant 200 new street trees.)

Calm traffic.

Many neighborhood streets reportedly experience excessive traffic speed. Traffic calming can reduce speeds, increase safety, and enhance quality of life. Traffic-calming must also maintain reasonable requirements for emergency vehicle access and traffic flow. It should be recognized, however, that risks associated with emergency response times should be balanced with risks to pedestrians when traffic is not calmed. Research has shown that pedestrian fatalities increase dramatically with an increase in average vehicle speeds, and that average vehicle speed increases with the width of travel lanes (Daisa, James M. and John B. Peers, “Narrow Residential Streets: Do They Really Slow Down Speeds?”)



Median Island Crossing.
Reduces street width by providing a safe landing place midway. Ideal for elderly and children.



Narrowed Lanes.
Reducing lane width slows traffic and increases street area dedicated to pedestrian.



Bulb-Out at Intersection.
Reduces street width at crossings to force cars to slow down and make crossing easier for pedestrians. Ideal for elderly and children.



Traffic Circle.
Slows traffic by forcing vehicles to turn. Creates prominent visual focal points and provides opportunities for landscaping and public art.

Street Trees



Value of street trees.

Perhaps the most practical and effective means of improving neighborhood character is through a neighborhood-wide street tree planting program. A vibrant tree canopy can transform a neighborhood's streets into a continuous and beautiful open space, making it an extension of gardens and parks. A healthy street tree canopy brings demonstrable psychological and economic benefits. It also helps obscure unsightly utility lines where overhead wires exist.



Tree canopy

Many neighborhood streets are balanced (at top), where tree canopies set the overall character and the pedestrian zone -- defined by sidewalk and planting strip -- is generous. Unfortunately, many other streets (above) lack the protection and enhanced character that street trees and planting strips afford.

Street tree planting promotes volunteerism, community leadership and sociability. A resident who plants a tree becomes literally "rooted" in the community. Someone who waters or tends a street tree is investing in a long-term future, and they can see their investment grow. Local volunteer resources, such as Our City Forest, and grant programs, are available to leverage community assets.

Planting street trees supports the multi-departmental Cool Communities Initiative approved by City Council in December 2000 and supports Department of Transportation's new City standards for making new roadway projects more pedestrian friendly. Because street trees impact many City goals and objectives, and because the study area is so deficient, street tree planting is a high priority.



Rooted in the community.

Planting street trees is a powerful tool for building neighborhood leadership, sociability, and an individual's interest in the continued care of the community.

Street tree planting criteria.

Street tree planting programs should address sub-areas with the greatest need, such as Bonita, Roosevelt, Five Wounds and Little Portugal North. At the same time, gaps in the canopy can be found on every street. During the SNI Planning Process, community members applied for and received initial grant funding to begin replanting. The City should continue to help facilitate grant writing, and help support tree-planting initiatives through direct funding and administrative support.

To remain healthy, street trees need to have a minimum unpaved area surrounding them of 25 square feet, with a minimum width of 5 feet. To minimize the tendency of root-heaving of adjacent sidewalks and curbs in tight locations, root barriers and structural soil techniques should be employed according to latest horticultural standards.

Traffic-Calming on Existing Streets

Streets within the study area can be classified into two categories: “city-serving” and “neighborhood streets”. This *Plan* outlines actions for traffic-calming on city-serving streets only. Changes on neighborhood streets are addressed through a separate City process led by the Department of Transportation at the request of neighborhood residents and associations.

Traffic-calming options are both psychological and physical. Psychological options influence a driver’s perception by changing street character. These options include gateways, street trees, and site amenities. Physical options force a change in the physical movement of vehicles (either horizontally or vertically), thus enforcing slower driving. These physical options include bulb-outs, median islands, speed humps, and raised crosswalks (see p. IV-6 to 10). Non-design approaches, such as increased speed limit enforcement and other prohibitions, can be useful tools to calm traffic, but rely on extended, continuous efforts. On the other hand, design modifications for traffic calming provide a permanent basis for changing driver behavior.

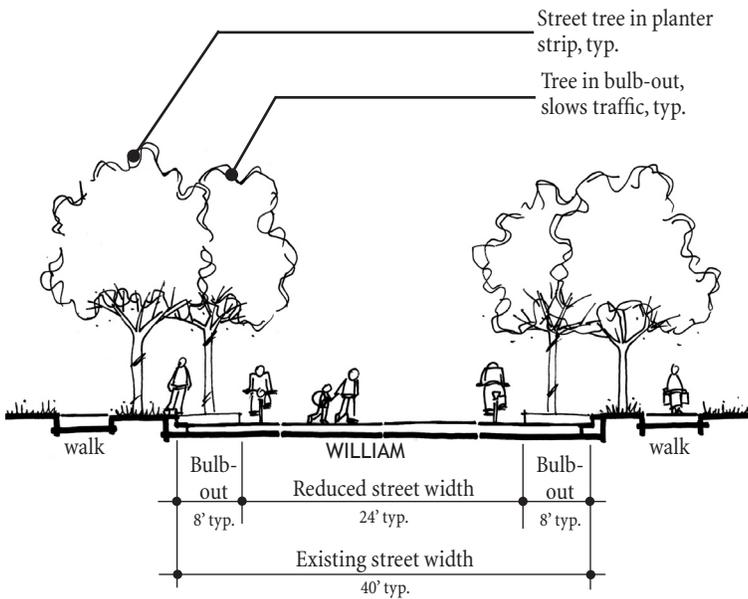
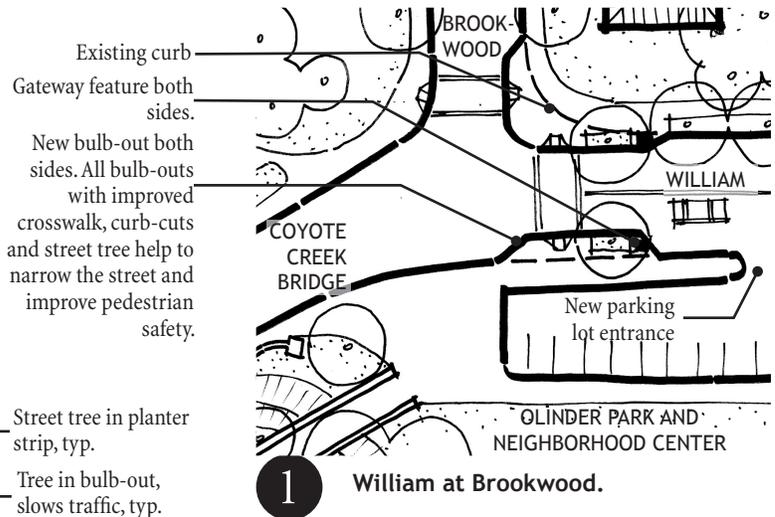
The specific measures described here have been developed with and endorsed by the NAC and Department of Transportation staff. They are intended to make the existing streets more attractive, safer, and more supportive of walking and neighborly activity.

William Street Traffic-Calming and Streetscape Improvements (Top Ten Priority #6).

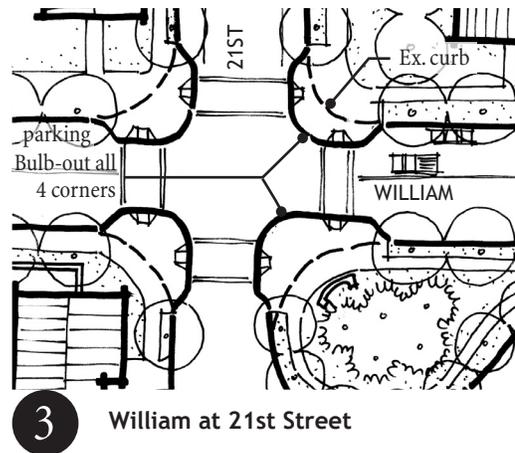
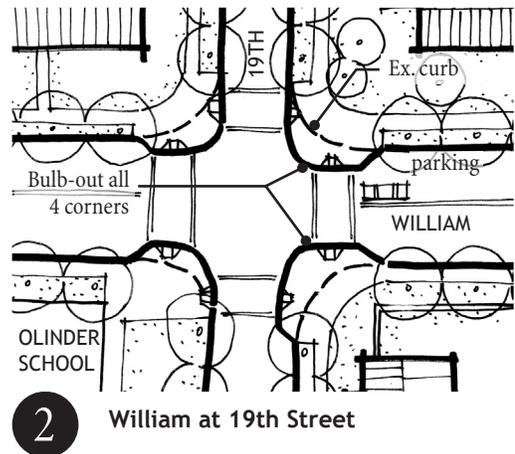
Improvements along William ranked high as a community priority. Two different design treatments are called for. Installation of bulb-outs at three locations between Coyote Creek and the Railroad will slow traffic and may improve pedestrian crossings (see following pages). Between the Railroad and 24th-McLaughlin, a “main street” streetscape with on-street parking and pedestrian-oriented enhancements will calm traffic while supporting street-facing retail.



1. William Street at Brookwood Drive.
Entrance to the residential neighborhood and the start of the pedestrian oriented section of the street.

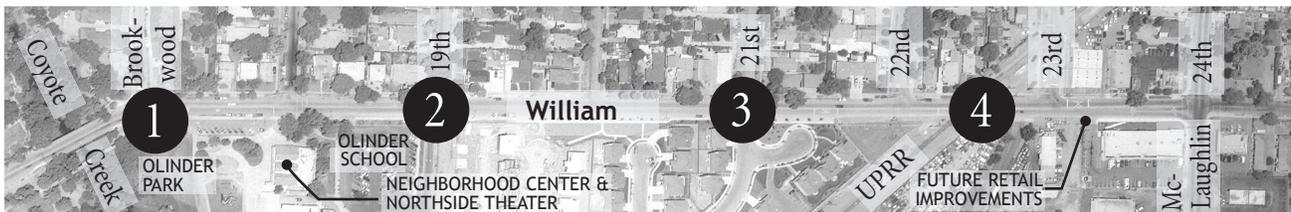


Typical Street section at corners with crosswalks.



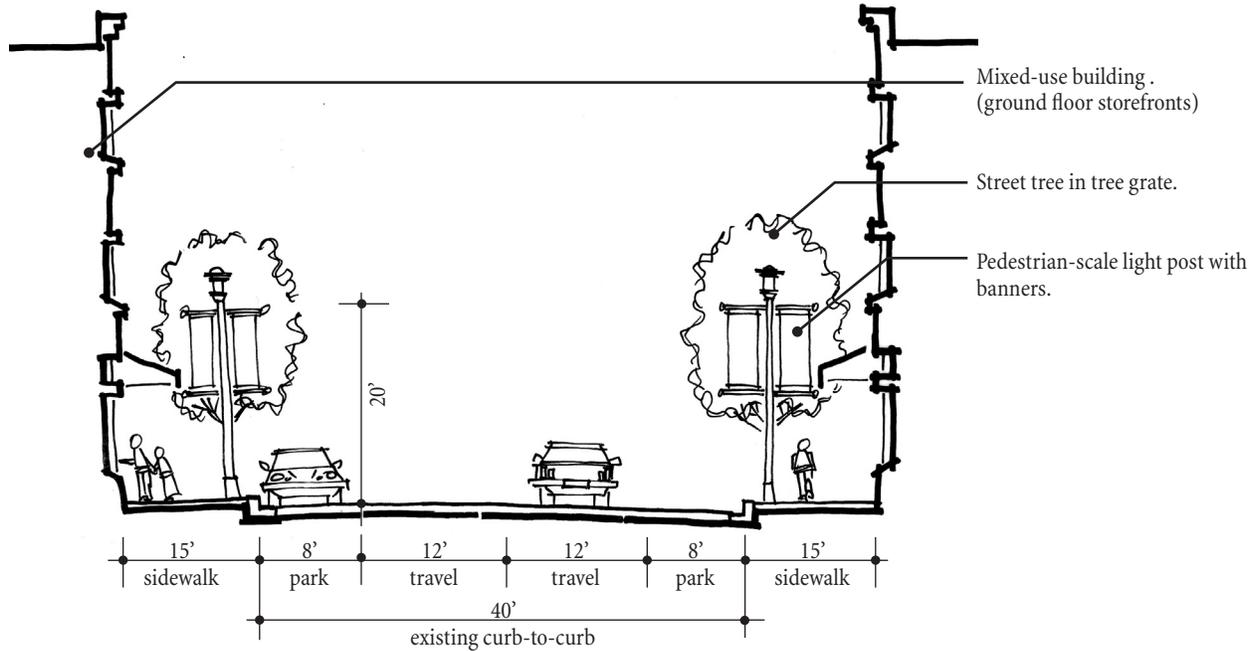
Locator Map

Proposed traffic-calming measures on William Street. All improved intersections to include curb-cuts and improved crosswalks.

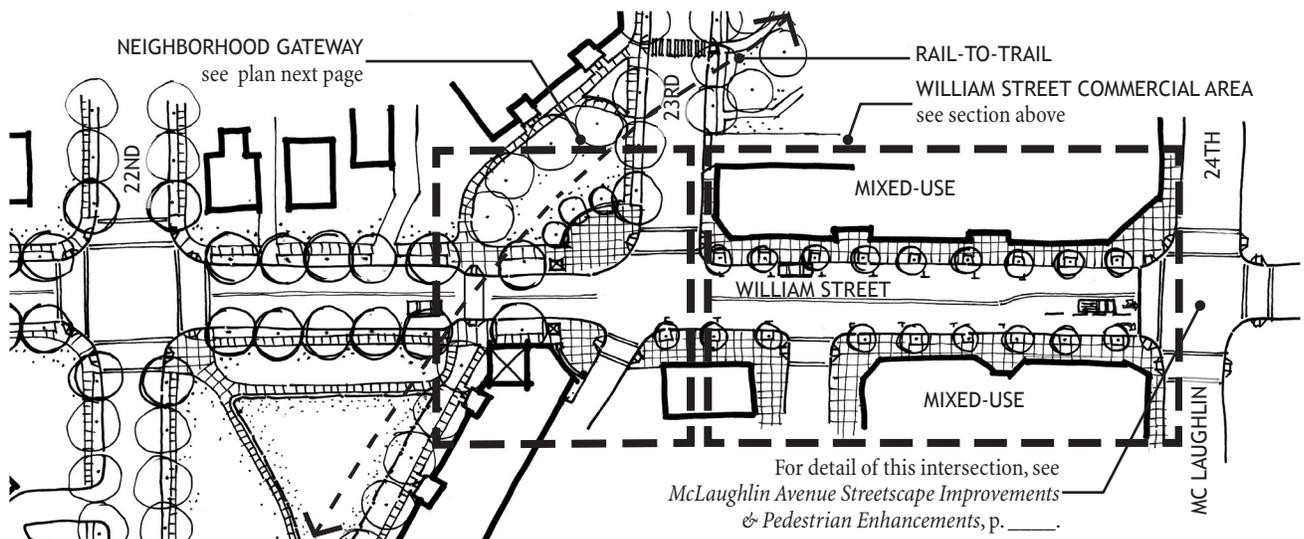


Note:

Improvement #4 is likely to occur with private development related to William-24th Street retail improvements (Top Ten Priority # 1) as well as development of the Rail-to-Trail.

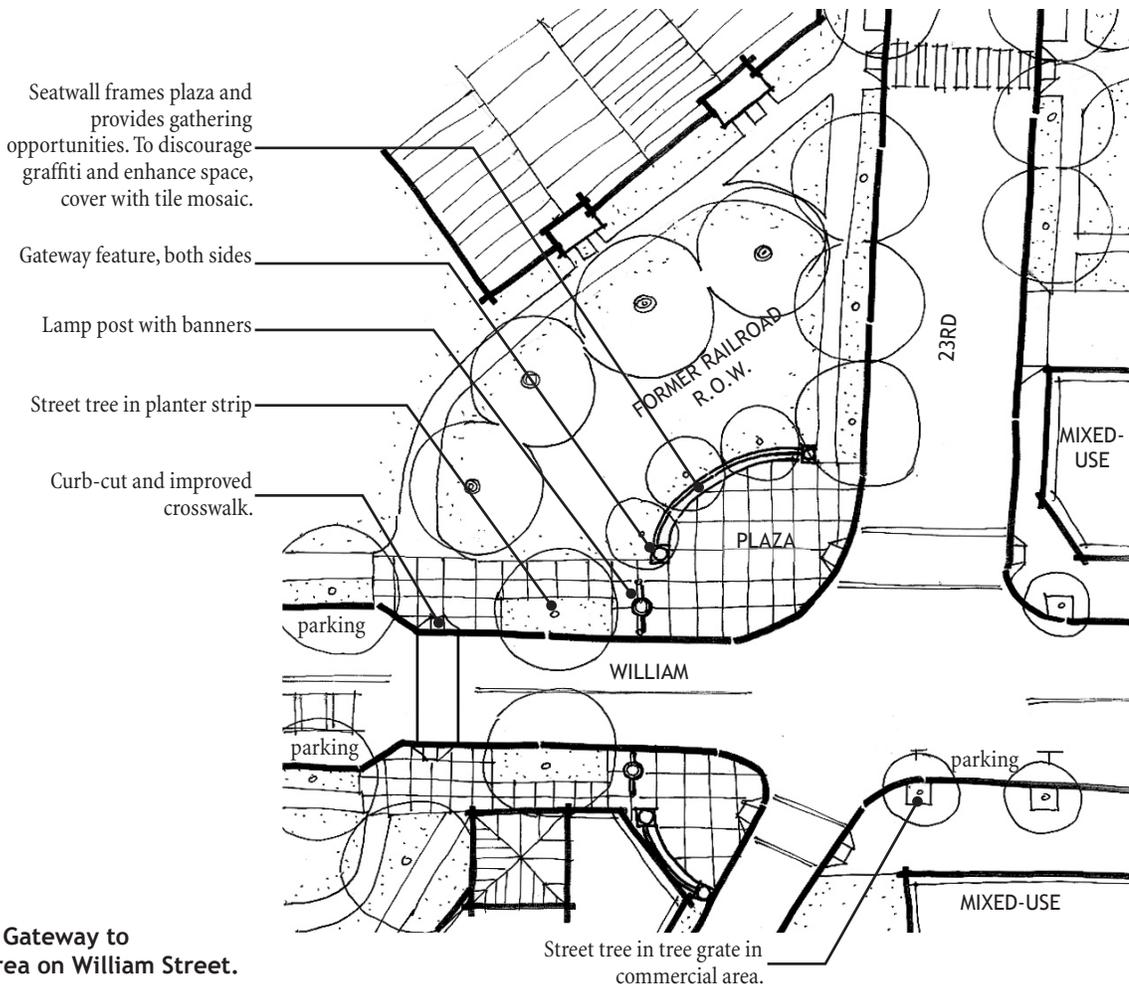


4 Typical "Main Street" section at William in Commercial Area.

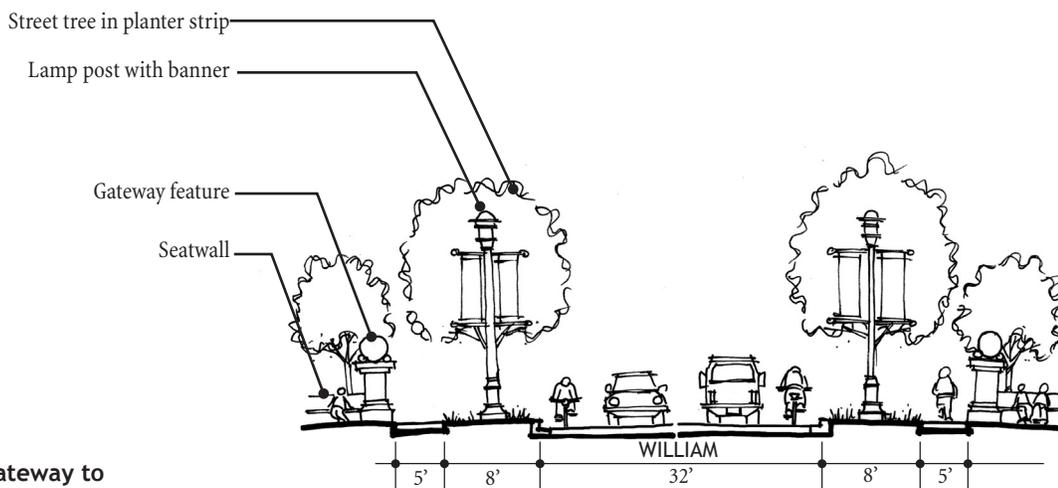


4 William from 22nd Street to 24th-McLaughlin Streets.

IV. PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS



Neighborhood Gateway to Commercial Area on William Street.

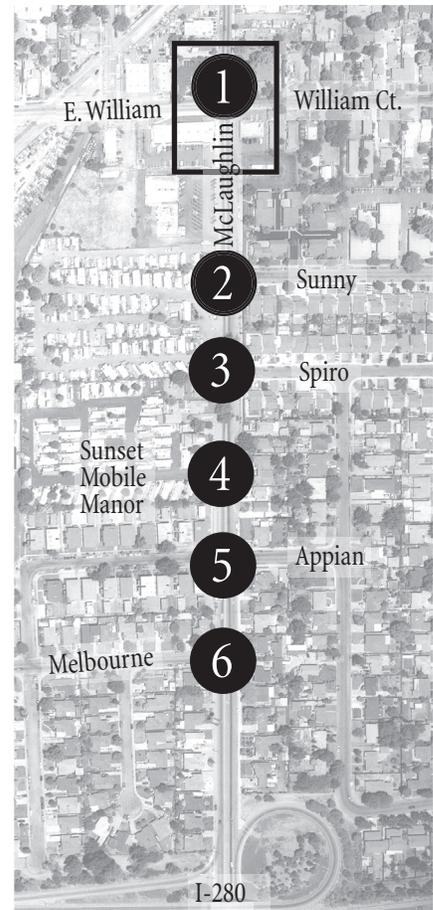
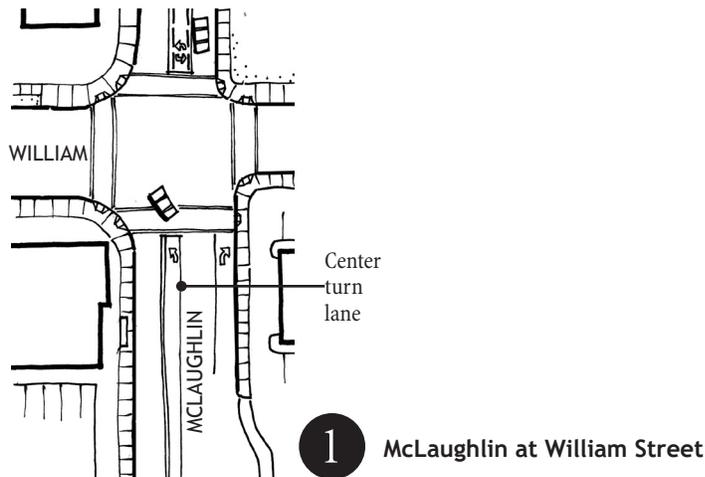


Neighborhood Gateway to Commercial Area on William Street.

The design of the Rail-to-Trail and associated redevelopment should establish a strong visual gateway.

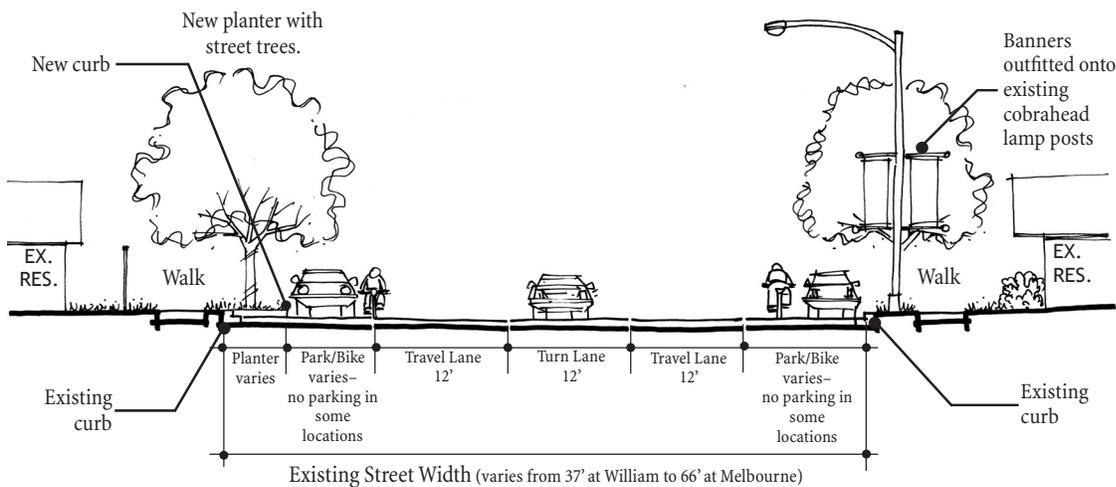
McLaughlin Avenue Streetscape & Pedestrian Enhancements (Top Ten Priority # 2)

During the SNI Planning Process, sidewalks and curbs were added to McLaughlin between William and Melbourne. Because of site conditions and cross-slope, McLaughlin's curb-to-curb width greatly exceeds that needed to accommodate the existing two travel lanes and one center turn lane. The NAC endorsed a retrofit concept to construct new curbs to make standard travel lane widths, along with bicycle lanes and some on-street parking. The narrower travel lanes will slow traffic and reduce pedestrian crossing distances, especially for children who frequently cross this street. The space between the existing curb and new curb will be used for landscaping and street trees, which in combination with banner and gateway elements (see illustration below) will make McLaughlin more attractive.



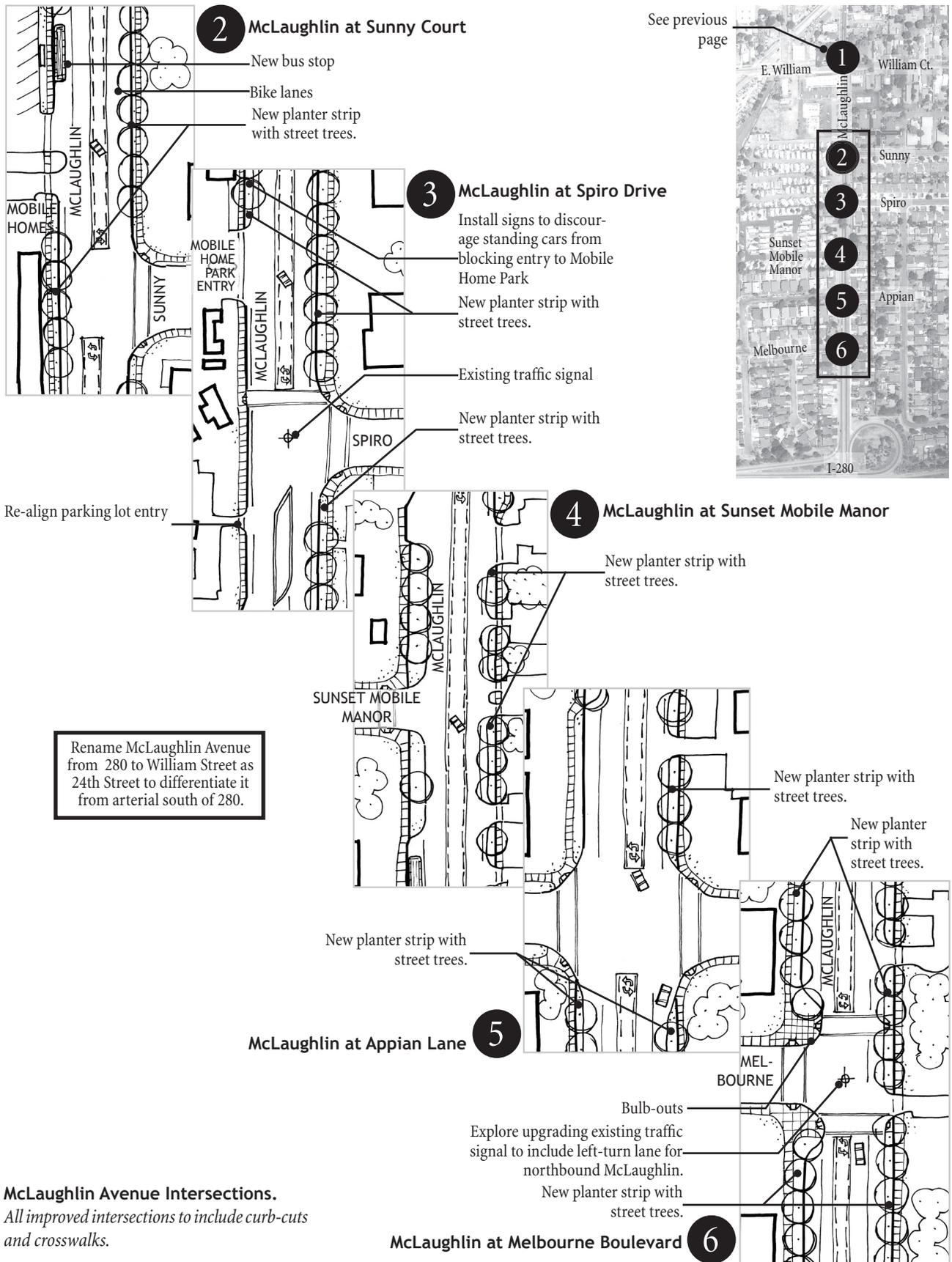
Locator Map

Locations of proposed traffic calming measures on McLaughlin. All improved intersections to include curb-cuts and crosswalks.



McLaughlin Avenue Traffic Calming Modifications

A new curb reduces the street to standard lane widths, calms traffic, and creates a planter strip for trees and groundcovers. This, coupled with installation of banners on existing cobra-head light poles, can improve walkability and makes the street more attractive.



McLaughlin Avenue Intersections.
 All improved intersections to include curb-cuts and crosswalks.

33rd and McKee Street Pedestrian & Traffic Improvements (Top Ten Priority # 3).

Maintaining student safety near Anne Darling School is a concern to parents and teachers. In addition, pedestrian-supportive redevelopment in the area will complement measures that calm traffic and help establish an attractive character.

A preliminary plan has been developed by the City Department of Transportation (DOT) to widen the intersection to add turn lanes on 33rd, to add median islands on McKee and to modify signal phasing. The preliminary plan focuses on installation of a concrete median island to control turning movements on McKee. As the plan is refined, additional attention will be given to community issues, aesthetics, and pedestrian amenities. Current recommended actions within DOT's preliminary plan include the following.

A. Short Term

1. Restrict left turn out of Gas & Shop with signage or chatter bars.

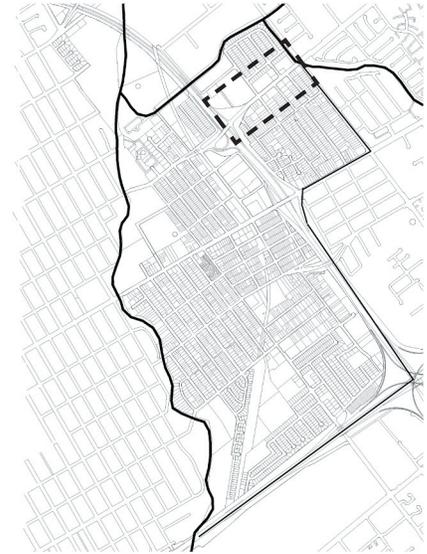
B. Mid-Term

1. Separate northbound and southbound movement on 33rd Street.
 - Split phasing signal (rewiring a signal modification).
 - Possible removal of west crosswalk on McKee Road.
2. New traffic signal and left turn lanes on 33rd Street for northbound and southbound movements.
 - Requires property acquisition on 33rd Street (Gas & Shop and old Arco Station).

C. Long Term

1. Install concrete median island on McKee Road.
 - Requires property acquisition on McKee Road (Anne Darling School, Food Bowl, Gas and Shop and old Arco Station).

In addition, community members expressed concern that the General Plan designates McKee as a future six-lane arterial between King and US 101. (It presently has four travel lanes.) Community engagement will be critical prior to serious consideration of this widening, and would suggest a clear demonstration of need and description of impacts.

**Locator Map.**

33rd-McKee, Area for Pedestrian and Traffic Improvements



Locator Map.

Julian Street, Area for traffic-calming.

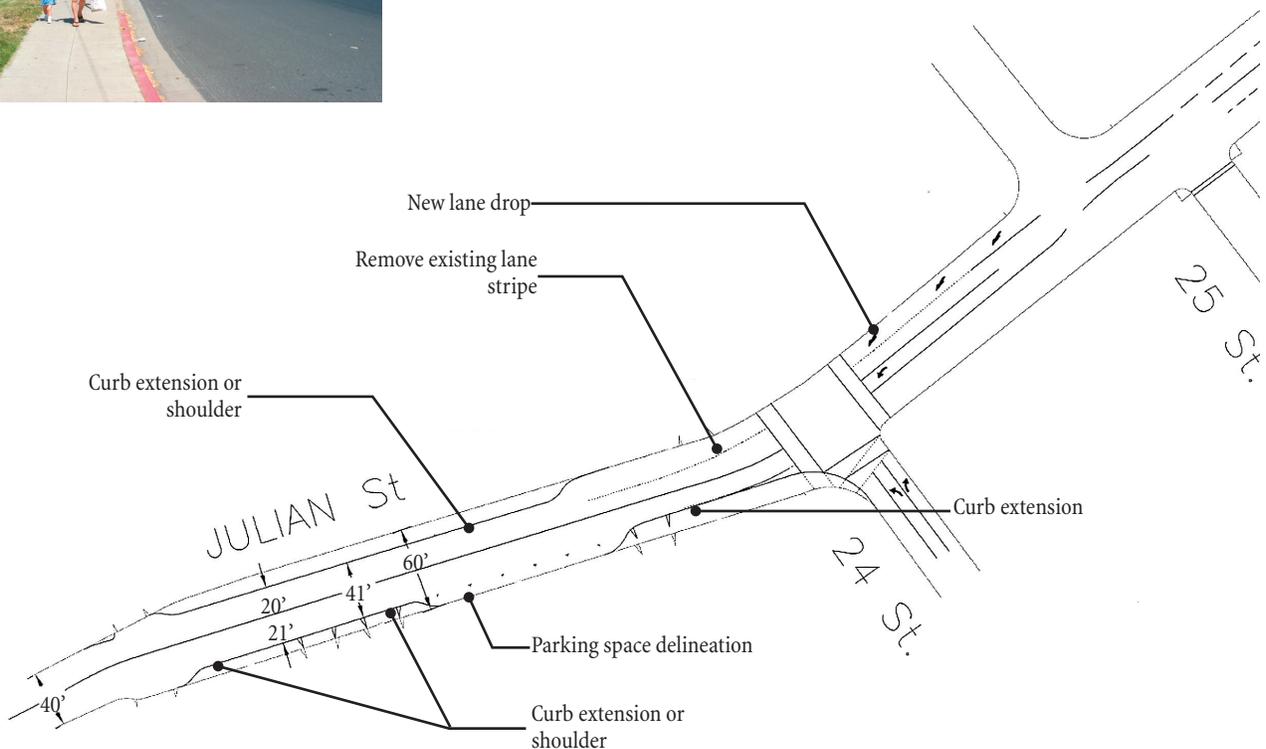
Julian Street Improvements

Julian Street between 25th and Coyote Creek presents another opportunity for traffic calming. Currently, wide travel lanes promote ambiguous merging and turning. Traffic-calming improvements that define turn and merge movements, that identify parking, and narrow lanes, would enhance pedestrian circulation near San José High Academy. These improvements can initially be implemented through simple striping. In the long term, installing new curbs would make the changes more effective by allowing additional landscaping, and minimizing curb-cut crossing distances for pedestrians.



Julian Street Improvements.

Re-striping will improve pedestrian safety by reducing the street width and reducing pedestrian crossing distance. In the long term, new curbs will allow for landscaping and street trees.



Julian Street Improvements.

Plan for re-striping (and ultimately curbs) along Julian Street between Coyote Creek and 25th Street. (Fehr & Peers Associates)

24th Street from William to Julian.

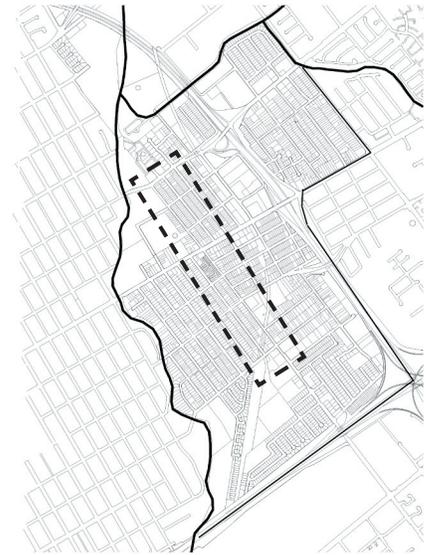
Community members report speeding along this stretch of 24th Street. Currently, the street cross-section is relatively narrow, making streetwide additional traffic-calming elements inappropriate. However, there may be an opportunity to construct bulb-outs or a traffic circle in the redeveloped area associated with the Railroad right-of-way. In addition, the City's NASCOP radar program may be beneficial in this area.

Other traffic-calming needs.

In addition to the specific recommendations listed above, the neighborhood will benefit by other traffic-calming efforts. These efforts may be achievable through City action, or may require coordination with other agencies, such as CalTrans. In all cases, continued community advocacy is needed.

Related issues on city-serving streets include:

- Enhancing pedestrian amenities on US 101 Overcrossings at Julian-McKee, San Antonio, and East Santa Clara/Alum Rock: in these locations it is necessary to work with CalTrans to study potential pedestrian improvements such as handrails, wider sidewalks, and signage for children walking to school.
- Explore creative solutions to break north-south traffic flow along 24th-McLaughlin at William Street.
- San Antonio Street has also been identified as in need of traffic-calming efforts.



Locator Map.

24th Street from William to Julian.

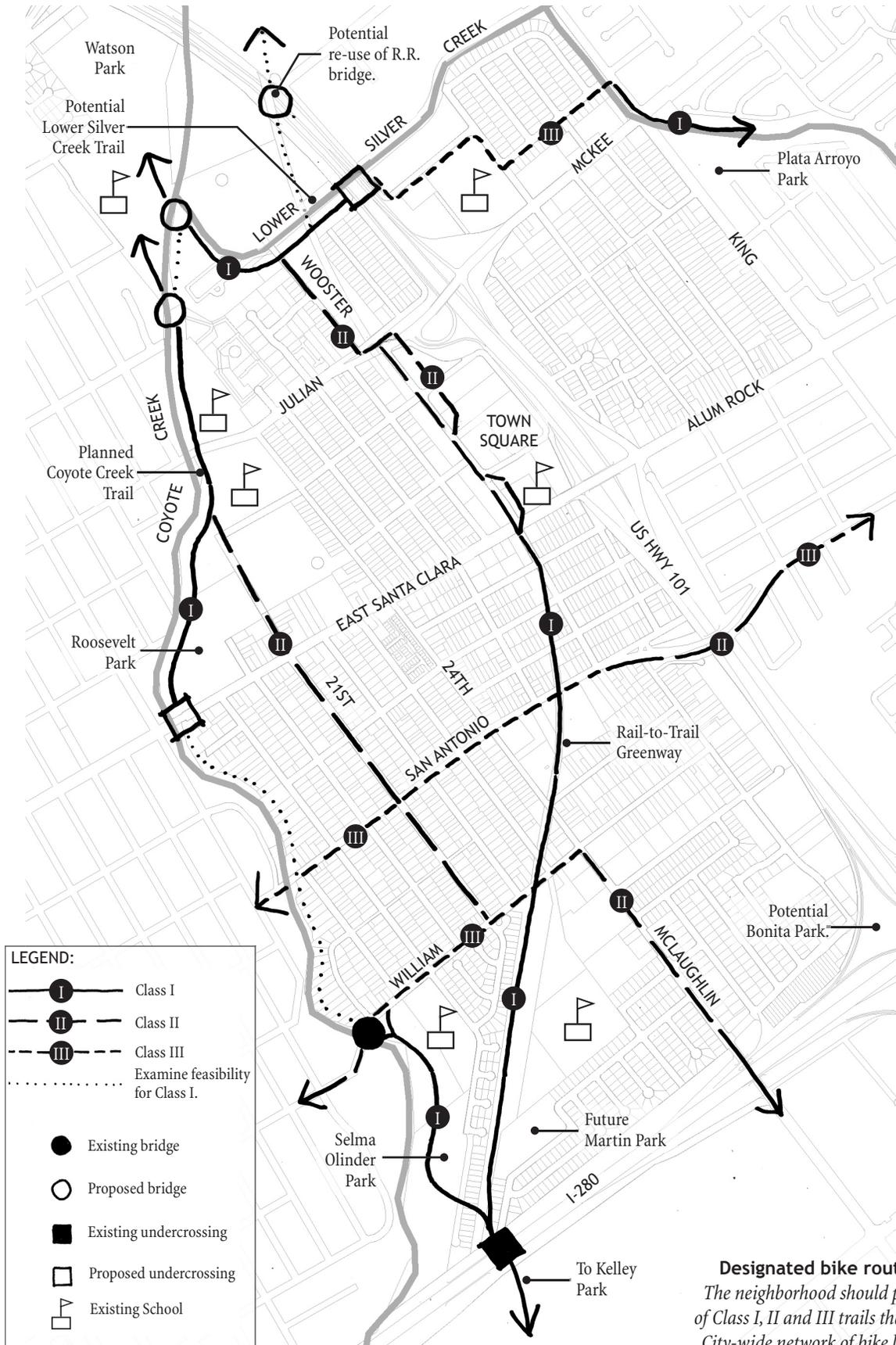
Bike Lanes.

Striped bike lanes are recommended where wider streets – in combination with off-street trails – will extend a continuous bicycling network. Existing streets that can easily accommodate bike lanes include: 21st Street, McLaughlin, and Wooster. The new Linear Park Street recommended for the San José Steel site also includes bike lanes. Bulb-outs should not interfere with bike lanes. A bike-lane width of 5 feet is preferred. In some instances, a bike route may be reduced in width and combined with on-street parking. These should connect into the City-wide network of bike lanes and routes to help ensure cyclists have safe, efficient transportation routes throughout the city.

Caltrans recognizes three types of bicycle facilities:

- Class I: bicycle/pedestrian path separated from vehicular streets
- Class II: on-street painted bicycle lanes
- Class III: on-street shared vehicular/bicycle lanes, with posted “Bike Route” signs.

The emergence of skateboards, scooters, and roller blades presents a challenge in designing for mobility, since they are prohibited by State law from using on-street bike lanes. Further study and coordination with government agencies is required to manage and facilitate the use of these new types of transportation.



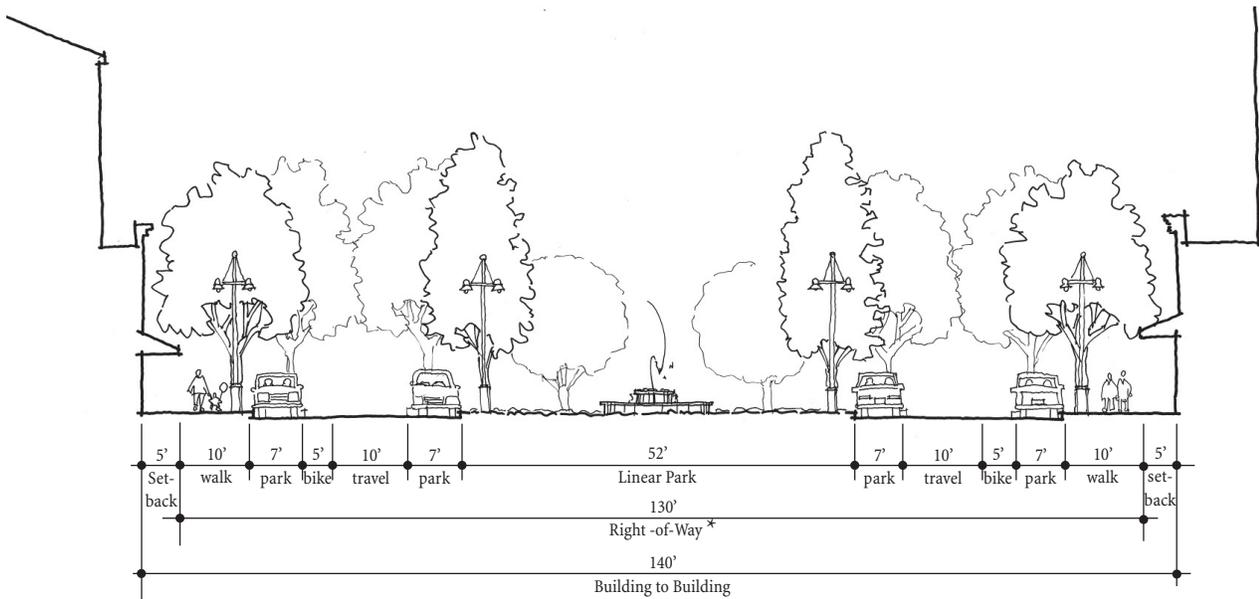
New Streets

Areas that might redevelop present significant opportunities to improve connections within the planning area, and help to “re-knit” areas that have been severed by aging Railroad, industry, and strip commercial uses. Recommended new street connections are described here.

Linear Park Street at San José Steel.

The Neighborhood Improvement Plan recommends a Linear Park Street from East Santa Clara to a new Town Square, and north to Julian (see *New Town Square and Linear Park at San José Steel*, p. IV-37). While the design of the San José Steel area will be subject to future studies, the Linear Park Street is a compelling idea set forth by the NAC to:

- provide a clear visual connection between the new Town Square and East Santa Clara Street (thereby helping to support new street-facing retail);
- increase the supply of on-street parking (which supports ground-floor retail);
- reduce pedestrian curb-to-curb crossing distances (by dividing traffic into two one-way lanes around the park);
- introduce a unique level of pedestrian comfort and amenity (within a cross-width similar to South Park in San Francisco or Cesar Chavez Park in San José); and,
- create a special place for community activities (by being designed to accommodate festivals, band performances, and farmers markets, as well as daily strolls).



* Existing Right-of-Way (combined width of 28th Street and portion of Railroad right-of-way).

Linear Park: Street Cross Section.

A proposed Linear Park lined by a couplet of one-way streets provides an attractive, accessible amenity that simultaneously meets a number of important community goals.

Linear Park Prototypes.



Southpark, San Francisco.

Southpark is a unique area in San Francisco's South of Market district. The linear park and surrounding mix of commercial and residential create a pleasant pedestrian environment. The park offers lawns, benches, shade trees, and a tot lot and is heavily used by both local residents and as a lunchtime destination for nearby office workers.



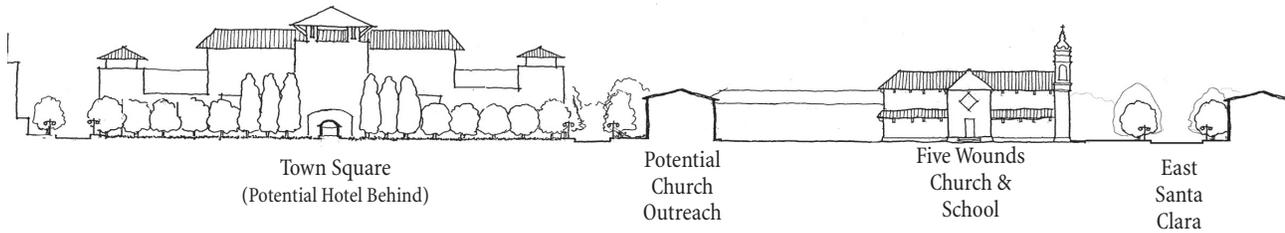
Mizner Park, Boca Raton.

Mizner Park is a successful commercial and residential area anchored by its popular linear park. The park features an amphitheater and is surrounded by cafes and restaurants, cinema, art galleries, residences and offices.



Las Ramblas, Barcelona.

The Ramblas is a vibrant pedestrian thoroughfare that is the heart of Barcelona's civic, commercial and cultural life. At all times of the day and night people young and old, locals and visitors, can be seen strolling and enjoying this historic pedestrian environment. The Ramblas is bound by a single auto lane (approx. 10' wide) with no parking lane.



North-South View of New Linear Park Through Town Square to East Santa Clara. (see Section 3. Parks and Plazas, below)

Town Square at San José Steel.

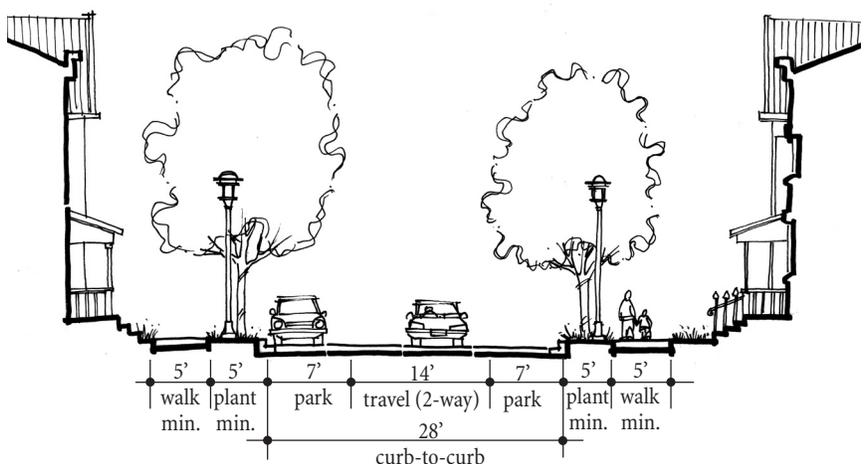
A Town Square has been recommended to provide a larger area for gathering and informal play (see *Parks and Plazas*, p. IV-32). Again, the design of the Town Square will be subject to future studies. As conceived by the community, the abutting two-way streets would have on-street parking and generous sidewalks to support pedestrians and ground-floor storefronts.

Typical Local Street

Redevelopment will present opportunities for new “Local Streets”. These new streets should be built on the traditional form similar to existing streets in the neighborhood, with a tree-lined parkstrip between the curb and sidewalk. The curb-to-curb width should be as narrow as possible to accommodate slow traffic, while maintaining adequate emergency access. The recommended cross-section for these new local streets uses the “yield street” concept– meaning that two-way traffic is permitted, but the center travel way is large enough only for one vehicle. On a “yield street,” cars in opposing lanes must edge slowly past. Driveway entrances and gaps in the parking lane provide “duck-out” opportunities. Because drivers must be more cautious, these “yield streets” are a proven method of creating safer Local Streets.

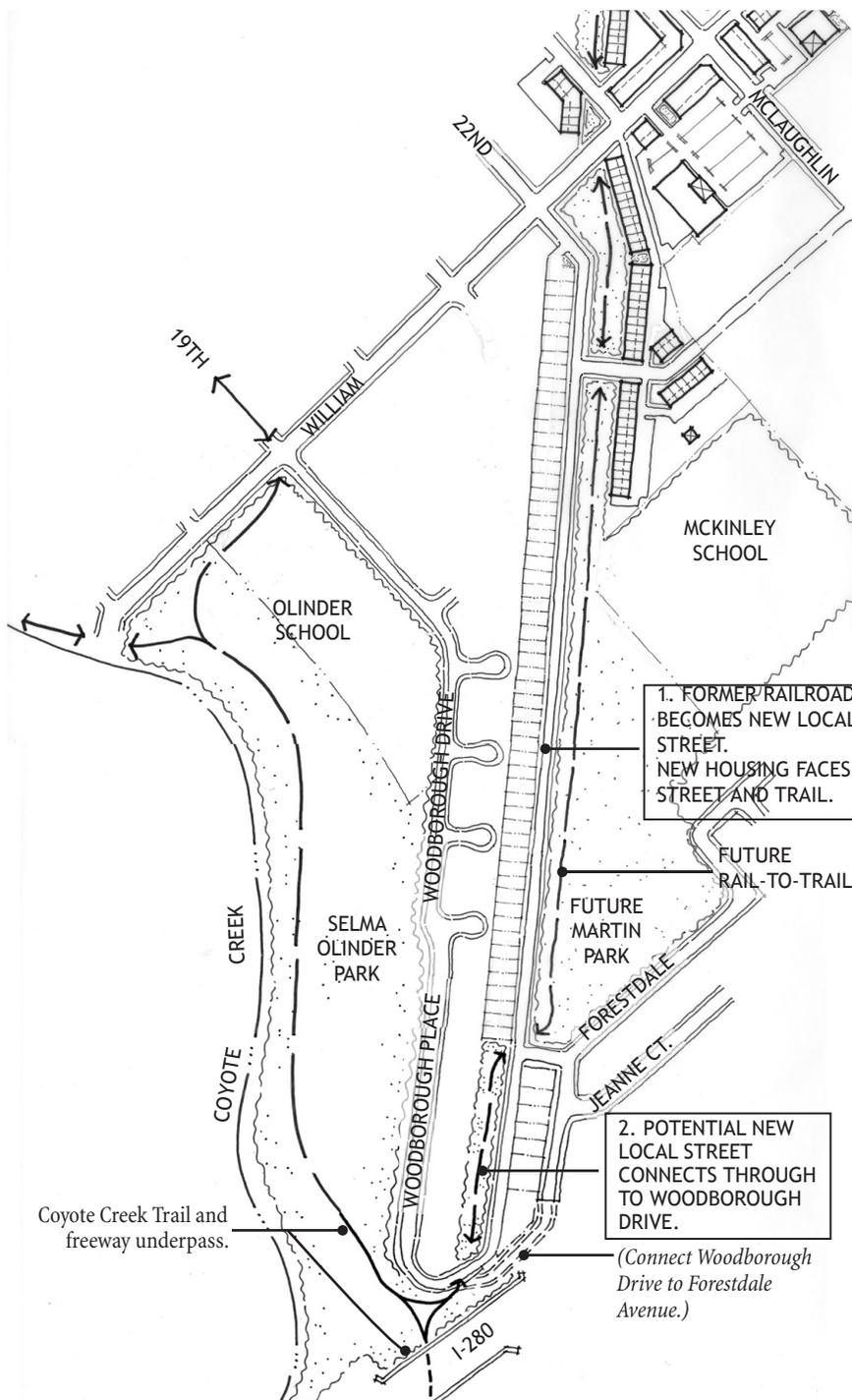
New Local Street Section.

Typical Street section for proposed new Local Streets. The proposed section employs a shared travel lane, with traffic permitted in both directions. Drivers yield to on-coming traffic, using gaps in the parking lane, driveways, or intersections for duck-outs. The 14’ clear lane meets National Fire Code for emergency access.



Railroad Right-of-Way (south of William) & Woodborough Extension

A new Local Street should accompany new residential development along the western edge of the Railroad right-of-way. The street would provide access and on-street parking for new units and the proposed Rail-to-Trail. The street should extend from William Street, and connect with Woodborough Place and Forestdale Avenue. In doing so, the street will help to link once isolated areas to the adjacent community and improve emergency vehicle access. However, due to its length and straightness of the new street, the new street should calm traffic with a modest curb-to-curb width.



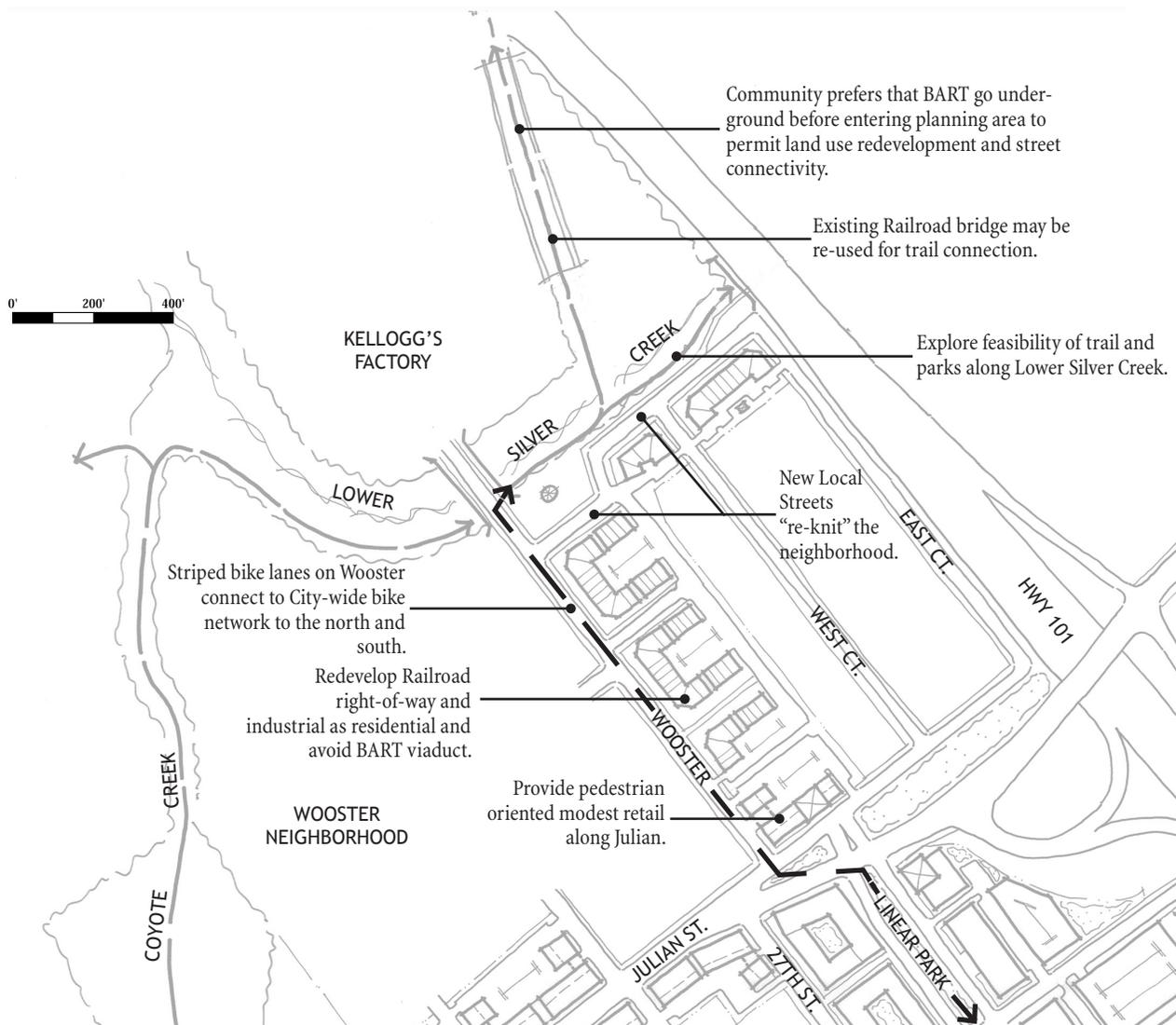
New Local Streets connect neighborhoods.

1. New Local Street replaces the Railroad right-of-way, with street facing housing, community recreation, and surveillance for proposed trail.

2. Potential new Local Street connects Woodborough cul-de-sac with adjacent neighborhood for improved emergency vehicle access and connectivity between neighborhoods.

East-West Courts Extension Along Lower Silver Creek.

With the acquisition of the Railroad right-of-way for BART, it becomes possible to connect East and West Courts directly to Wooster. A Local Street could run just south of Lower Silver Creek to abut a potential trail (see *East-West Courts Extension along Lower Silver Creek*, below). Note also that the NAC opposes BART alternatives that require a viaduct (or uncovered opening) between Lower Silver Creek and Julian, because it would prevent future opportunities for connection and limit redevelopment of incompatible industrial uses.

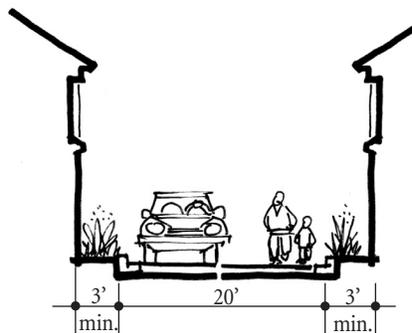


East-West Courts Extension Along Lower Silver Creek.

New Local Streets connect adjacent neighborhoods while designated bike lanes/routes provide connections to area wide bike network.

Rear Lanes (Residential Uses).

For new residential development, rear lanes provide acceptable vehicular access to the rear of residential properties and are described here as an option for future development. Rear lanes are suggested to avoid curb-cuts and garage doors along street frontages. A paved rear lane of 20 feet is needed for “back-up”, so long as garages and other obstructions are set away from the rear lane by at least 3 feet.

**Rear Lanes in residential neighborhoods.**

Rear lanes provide car access at the rear of the home, avoiding curb-cuts and garages at street front. They also provide opportunities for play and casual neighbor interaction in a protected space.

General Street Design Guidelines

Sidewalk and Tree Placement.

On all new streets, street trees and on-street parking should separate pedestrians from moving traffic. In Mixed-Use areas, where pedestrian activity is higher, sidewalks should extend to the curb, with tree grates around street trees. In Residential Districts, where pedestrian activity is lower, groundcovers and turf are recommended for the area between the sidewalk and curb.

To ensure continuous shade and pleasant canopy, street trees should be planted along any public sidewalk and should be spaced as close together as is advisable for a given species. As a general rule, street trees should not be spaced more than 30 feet apart.

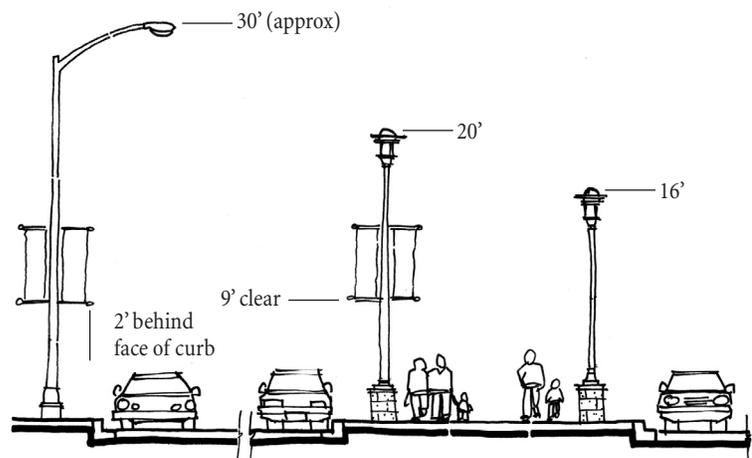
Street Lights.

Poles and fixtures should have a pedestrian scale and be well-crafted. Light standards of approximately 20 feet in height are recommended along City-Serving streets, which tend to abut Mixed-Use areas. Along Local Streets and within public open spaces, light standards should generally not exceed 16 feet in height. In parks and along trails, light bollards are also encouraged. Existing, non-conforming light standards should be replaced as development occurs on abutting properties. The City should replace cobrahead poles with pedestrian scale poles, when major street improvements or major revitalization programs are undertaken. All development shall conform to the City’s outdoor lighting policies.

Street lights and banners.

Street lights not only provide for safer night conditions, but contribute to the overall neighborhood environment, when they have a pedestrian scale.

Banners are recommended on key streets, where shopping or a “gateway” environment is desired (see facing page).



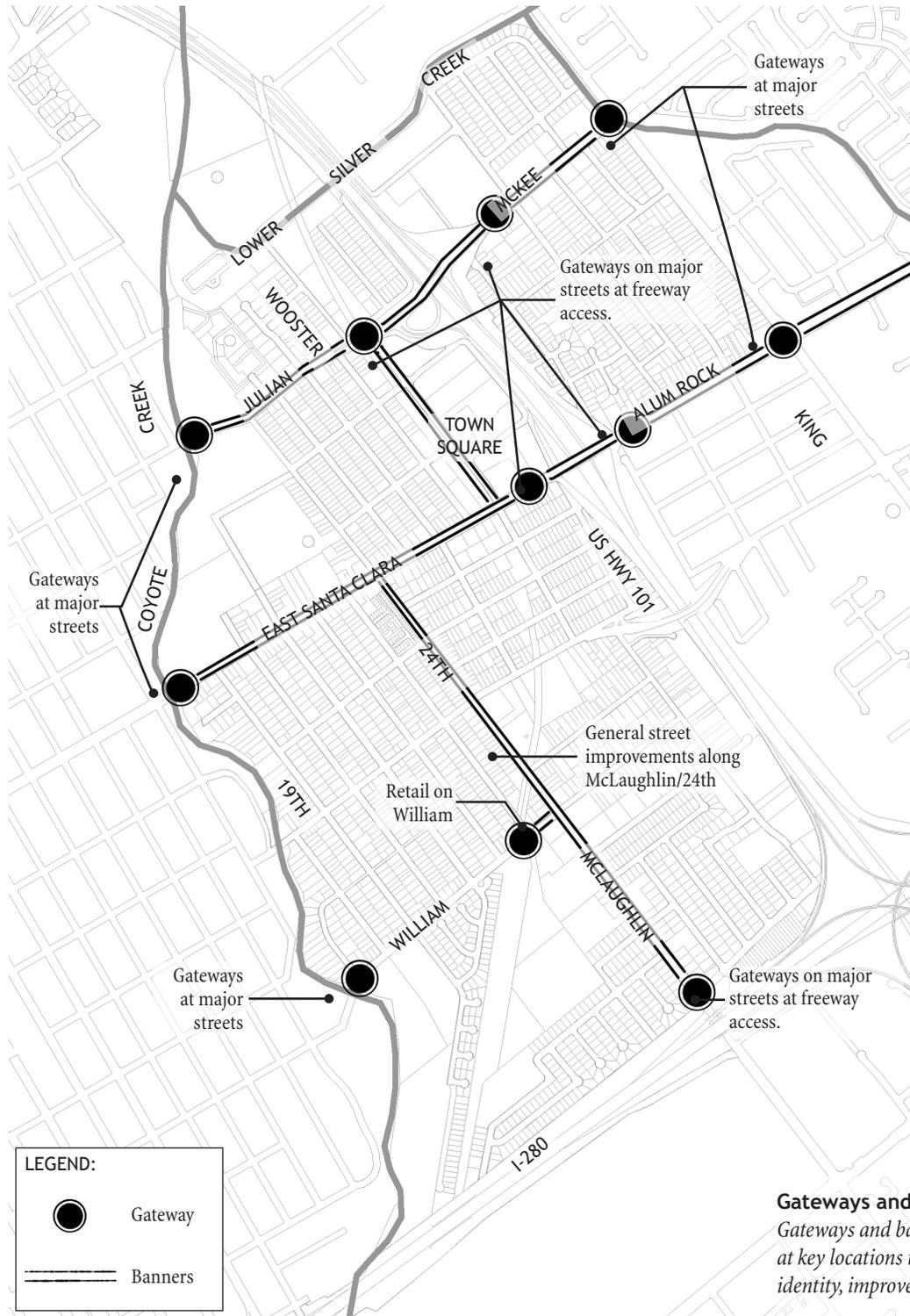
Existing Cobrahead Pole:
new installations not recommended

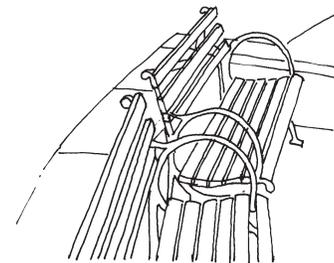
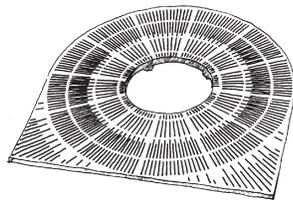
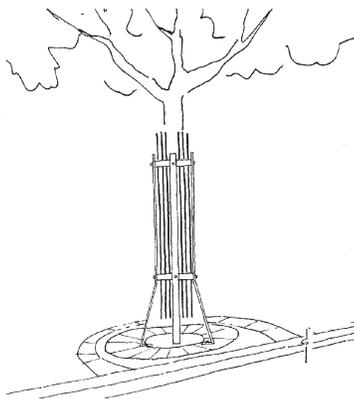
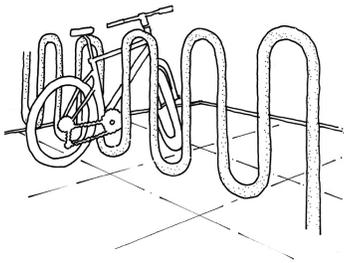
City-Serving Street Pole:
for Collector and Arterial Streets

Local Street Pole:
for residential streets and public open spaces

Gateways and Banners.

To communicate a district's unique identity, gateways and pole-mounted banners are recommended on streets that support commercial activity or are major arrival points. Streets with banners should include: East Santa Clara-Alum Rock, McLaughlin-24th, Williams (commercial area), Julian-McKee, and future parking associated with the San José Steel Property.





Street Furnishings.

A consistent collection of street furnishings helps unify districts. While many styles may be considered, acceptable materials and finishes should include wood with a natural finish, and dark metal finishes.

Street Features

Well-crafted streets, with quality design features, contribute to livability and walkability.

Street Paving & Furnishings. Special paving is recommended where very high levels of pedestrian activity are anticipated. Special paving should be durable and of textured concrete, brick, stone, or other appropriate materials. Stamped and colored concrete should generally be avoided as they wear easily.

Tree Grates. On Major streets, tree grates should occur along sidewalks and in plazas where a continuous walking surface is needed. Tree openings should be expandable. Grate sizes should be a minimum of 5 feet in diameter.

Tree Guards. Tree guards should extend vertically from tree grates to protect trees in highly active areas. Guards should be painted with multiple coats of a dark, low-luster enamel for durability.

Newspaper Racks. Newspaper racks can be consolidated into vending boxes as one rack, and located to avoid pedestrian congestion. Racks should be painted with multiple coats of a low-luster enamel.

Bicycle Racks. “Loop racks” and “ribbon bars” are recommended, and should be sized according to parking requirements. A durable finish is recommended. To deter theft, bicycle racks should be within a secured area or visible from a street.

Trash Receptacles. In commercial areas, trash receptacles should be provided at least every 200 feet. “Carry-out” food vendors and other litter-prone enterprises should also sponsor trash receptacles within the adjacent street right-of-way. Receptacles should be painted with multiple coats of a dark, low-luster enamel. Receptacles should have a capacity of at least 30 gallons, and should be properly anchored and regularly maintained.

Seating. The design of benches should be consistent with other street furnishings. Wood members should be exterior-grade, smoothly finished. Metal should be painted with multiple coats of low-luster enamel. Concrete seat walls are encouraged, where integrated into the design of plazas and planters and should include features such as tile mosaic to discourage graffiti.

2. TRAILS

Background

The planning area has three linear open spaces that lend themselves to future trails: Coyote Creek, Lower Silver Creek, and a new Rail-to-Trail along the former Railroad right-of-way (see *Potential Trail Network*, following page). Coyote Creek is the subject of a City-wide Creek Trail planning effort. Schools and parks lie adjacent to much of Coyote Creek—public uses that make trails easy to implement. In the longer term, Lower Silver Creek also represents an opportunity for a trail, especially west of 101. In addition, the community has recommended a Rail-to-Trail conversion along portions of the Railroad south of East Santa Clara. VTA's anticipated acquisition of the Railroad right-of-way creates a unique opportunity for a continuous trail, and will replace the Railroad's noisy physical barrier with a unifying neighborhood open space. Together, these new trails can offer an exceptional network for hiking and biking, especially when combined with in-street bicycle lanes and other pedestrian enhancements.

Goals

Offer continuous paths for pedestrians and bicycles that are more protected and have fewer street crossings than the existing system of streetside sidewalks.

The combination of Coyote Creek, Lower Silver Creek and the Rail-to-Trail will offer uniquely varied routes for hiking and biking, and will help complete a city-wide network.

Use trails (in combination with enhanced streets and bike lanes) to connect civic features, including schools, parks, and plazas.

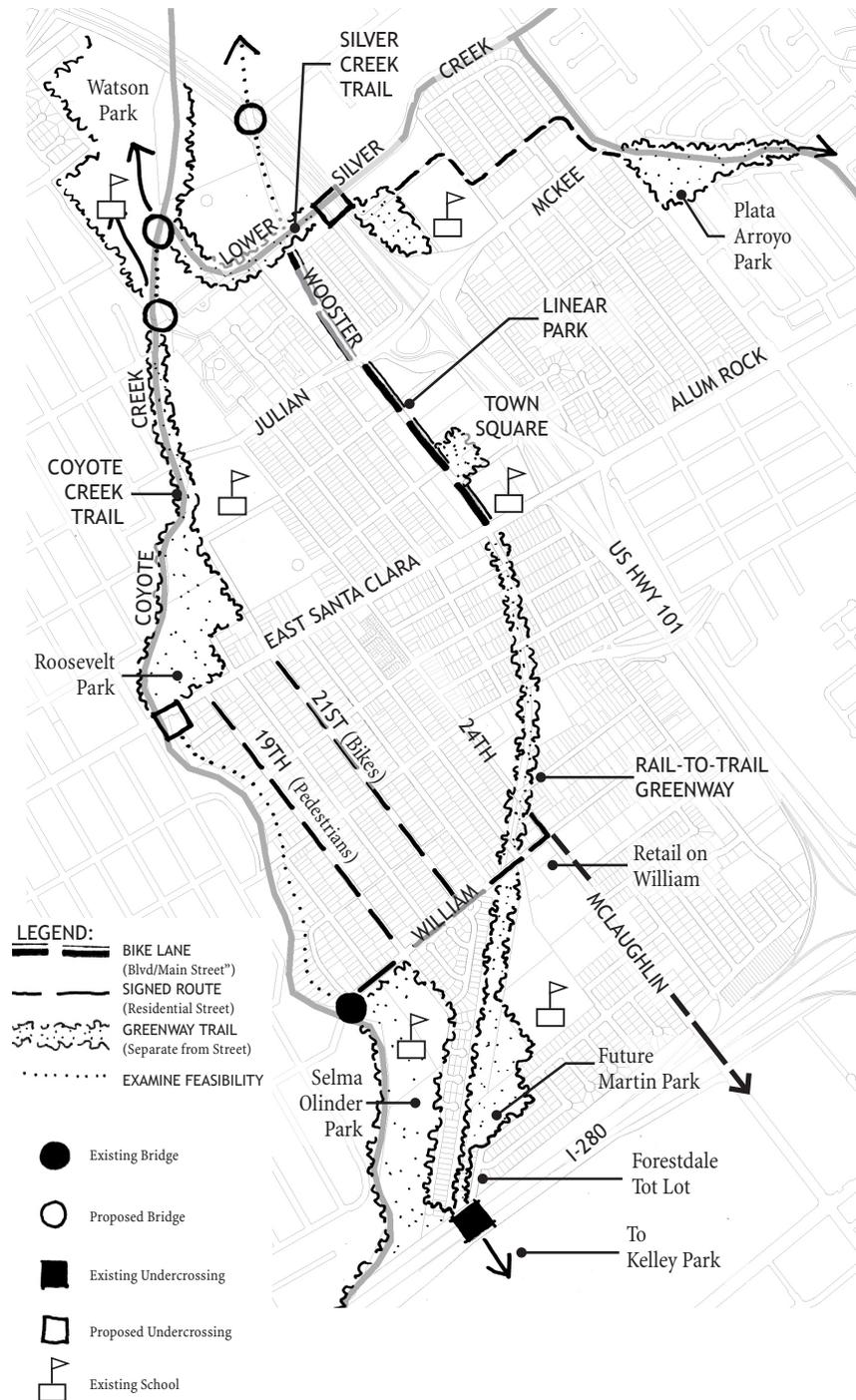
Most parks and schools can connect directly with the trail network, thereby offering amenities and protected routes for children and others. New parks and plazas are also possible, especially along the Rail-to-Trail and where the trails meet East Santa Clara Street.

Make natural environments more accessible, while protecting sensitive habitat areas.

Coyote Creek presents a unique opportunity for a natural setting within a dense, urban area. Trails should take advantage of such opportunities, and be paired with habitat restoration projects wherever possible.

Create safe trail environments through design and by supporting the development of pedestrian-supportive uses on adjacent property.

Designing the trail as a defensible space minimizes undesirable behavior and makes users feel comfortable. Ways of creating defensible space include providing adequate site lines and lighting, incorporating active uses (such as plazas and tot lots), and by establishing informal surveillance by having building entries and windows face the trail. New development should line trails with active uses, and trail alignments and designs should encourage direct connections to abutting property.



Potential Trail Network.

Trail network including Coyote Creek Trail, Lower Silver Creek Trail and Rail-to-Trail conversion. On-street connections direct bicycles down 21st Street, a wider street with room for on-street bike lanes. Pedestrians would use 19th Street, a narrower, tree-lined street, and the shortest route between Selma Olinder and Roosevelt Parks.

Coyote Creek

Several City documents support developing a trail and recreation corridor along Coyote Creek, including the City's *Greenprint*. A Coyote Creek Trail also ranked as a top priority for the FWBT community as well as some adjacent SNI areas. The NAC has asked that the City initiate a special study to determine a preferred Coyote Creek trail alignment and design, in coordination with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD), adjacent school districts, and other interested parties. Initial funding for this study has been obtained through the efforts of Walk San José.

Implementation will be easiest where the trail can run through publicly-held lands. Special challenges are presented where a significant portion of the route is bordered by private properties with sub-optimal setbacks from the Creek's "top-of-bank." Where it is determined that the trail cannot reasonably follow along the edge of Coyote Creek, local tree-lined streets offer an alternative route that can maintain continuity, if well signed (see, *Potential Trail Network*, facing page).

Lower Silver Creek

A trail may be feasible along portions of Lower Silver Creek, but must be confirmed through subsequent study. Within the planning area, Lower Silver Creek is channelized. West of 101, an existing maintenance road and vacant, undeveloped lands may present opportunities for a new trail. In addition, the viaduct under Highway 101 appears to have sufficient clearance to warrant exploration as an important pedestrian connection, especially since the safety of existing freeway crossings has caused concern. East of 101, the trail could connect with Marburg Way, since farther east the creek passes behind residential properties.



Coyote Creek at William.

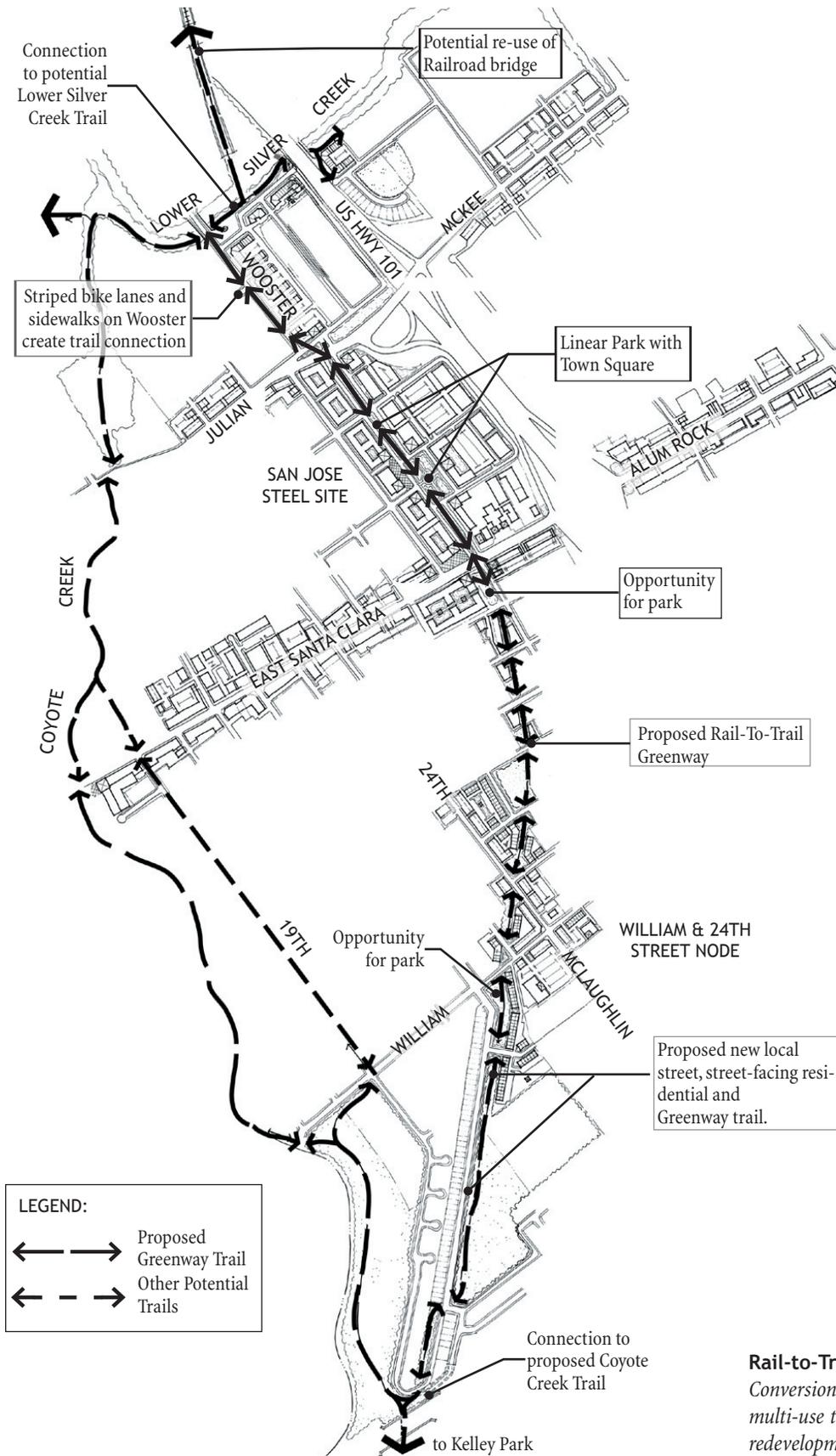


Lower Silver Creek at King Street.

“Rail-To-Trail”

The community has recommended a Rail-to-Trail conversion of the Railroad right-of-way, south of East Santa Clara Street. South of William Street, the Railroad right-of-way widens further and is sufficient to accommodate residential lots, a Local Street, and a trail with landscaping. Building entries and windows should face the trail wherever possible for activity and security, but will need to be accommodated through the alignment and design of the trail. (See *New Local Streets Connect Neighborhoods*, p. IV-19).

Depending on how BART is routed, there may also be an opportunity to re-use an existing railroad bridge over Highway 101 (at the northmost point of the study area). This bridge would connect the trail system to points north and east of the planning area.



Rail-to-Trail.

Conversion of the Railroad right-of-way to a multi-use trail creates opportunity for trails, redevelopment, and new parks.

Trail Design

Dimensions and Materials

Trails should generally consist of a 10-foot asphalt path with 2-foot shoulders made of fine gravel or crushed stone. Greater width may be needed where more intensive use has been demonstrated, or where “pause-points” are desired.

Signage

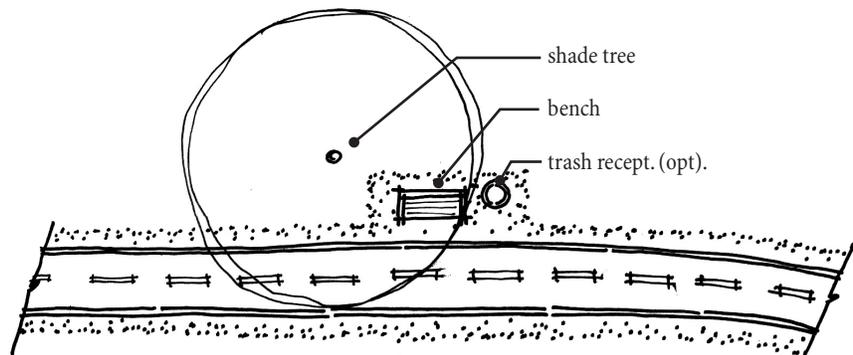
Trails should be clearly marked with consistent signage especially where they cross streets. Occasional signs should note distances to major destinations.

Lighting

Trails should be well lighted. Light bollards are encouraged to minimize glare. Light poles should not exceed 16 feet. Lamps should be designed to direct light to appropriate surfaces and away from residences and sensitive habitat areas.

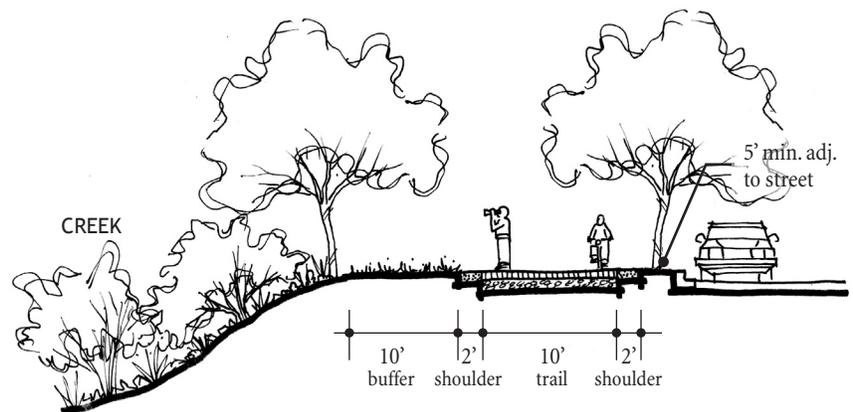
Pause point.

Pause points allow for rest and informal surveillance, enhancing both usability and security.



Class I Trail.

A Class I trail is separated from vehicular traffic, has an all-weather surface, and is wide enough for both bikes and pedestrians.



Parking

The extent of the trail system will permit most users to walk from homes and jobs. Users who drive should use on-street parking or existing parking lots associated with parks and schools--especially for evenings and weekends when demand will be greatest. New parking lots should be minimized, as they can disrupt the creation of a continuous open space.

Habitat Conservation

Trails should be aligned and constructed to minimize disruption of sensitive habitat areas. Restoration of riparian vegetation should be undertaken where human disturbance (including existing channelization) has severely degraded habitat. Landscaping between trails and creeks should use non-invasive, native species.

Access to Adjacent Uses

Connections from abutting private property should be encouraged. Barriers (such as berms or fences) between the trail and private property should be avoided. Where connections are most promising, trails (or associated sidewalks) should offer a direct path to encourage private residents to access the trail

3. PARKS & PLAZAS

Background

A great neighborhood needs great public places. These public places -- parks, plazas, open spaces -- are where people meet as equals, where they are exposed to new ideas, and where they come together to celebrate, to debate, and to relax. Whether in the form of transit centers, parks, boulevards, church courtyards, or civic plazas, public places can inspire, give comfort, and reflect the highest aspirations of the community. The FWBT neighborhood has many existing parks that are well used but can be improved. There are also opportunities for new parks within existing residential neighborhoods. New development will provide further opportunity for new parks and plazas.

Assessment of Funding for Proposed Park Improvements in the SNI Area.

Currently funded:

*Roosevelt Park Community Center
Forestdale Tot Lot upgrades
Martin Park Tot Lot upgrades*

Not Currently Funded:

*Roosevelt Park joint use
with San Jose Academy
Selma Olinder Park
Future Martin Park
Potential Bonita Park
Town Square
Linear Park
East West Court Open Space*

Existing parks are well-used. Citizens want to see opportunities expanded by implementing improvements to existing parks, as well as through the creation of new parks. While current funds offer partial funding for a few parks, additional funds and design work will be needed to implement pending master plans, as well as other community requests that have been identified during the SNI process.

Redevelopment and underutilized lands present opportunities for new parks. Assessment for new parks is based on a combination of factors including: excess land, community interest, new demand generated by redevelopment, and area of existing need. New parks may take a variety of forms, including neighborhood playfields, urban plazas and squares, community gardens, and pocket parks. This section seeks to address the needs of individual neighborhoods, site opportunities, and given constraints.

Goals

Offer a range of recreational opportunities, and provide parks and plazas that are well-suited to their location within the community.

The planning area should offer a range of opportunities, from the urban focus of the Town Square, to places for neighborhood recreation, to nearby respites.

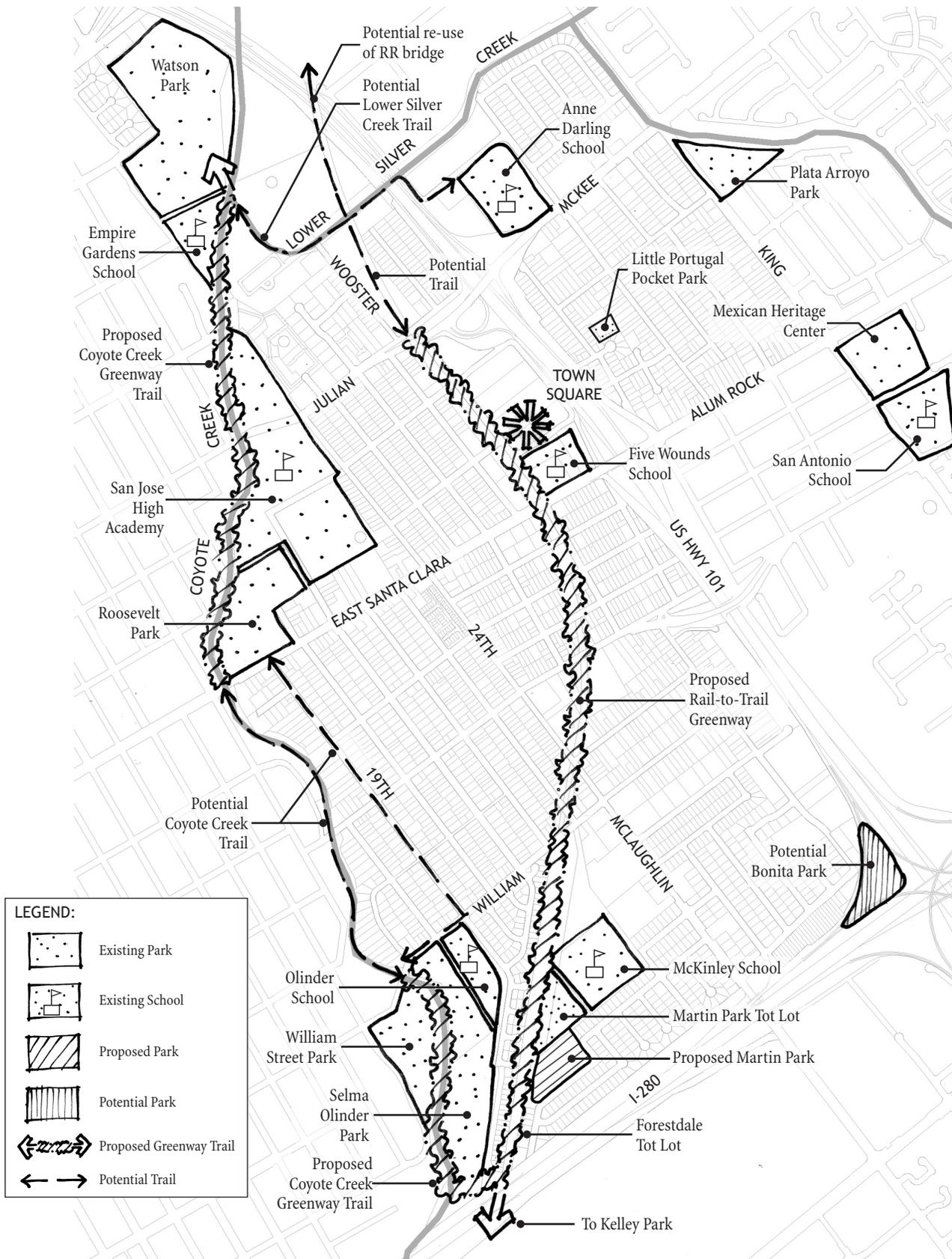
Improve access to parks and plazas.

Access is a function of both proximity and connectivity. Though parks may be within walking distance from all neighborhoods in the study area (proximity), pedestrian barriers such as US 101, McLaughlin Avenue, and the Railroad right-of-way make walking to these parks difficult (connectivity). While street improvements can help improve accessibility (see, *Traffic Calming on Existing Streets*, p. IV-5), new parks are also recommended, especially in neighborhoods that have no parks (i.e. Bonita, Five Wounds, Anne Darling, and Little Portugal North).

Create safe parks and plazas through design and by supporting the development of pedestrian-supportive uses on adjacent property.

Parks and plazas must be designed as “defensible spaces” to make users feel comfortable. As has been suggested for trails, parks and plazas should provide adequate sight lines and lighting, incorporate active uses, and establish informal surveillance by having building entries and windows face the open space.

IV. PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS



Existing and Proposed Parks and Schools.

Improvements to Existing Parklands

Selma Olinder Park

Improvements to Selma Olinder Park ranked as a top priority for the NAC. While a Master Plan has been adopted and partial funding has been obtained, additional funding is needed for construction. Park improvements can be thought of as five separate, but related projects:

- 1) trail and creek edge and footpath: alignment, benches, lighting, trash receptacles;
- 2) softball field renovation: renovation of existing fields & finalization of adjacent trail;
- 3) tennis and picnic area: courts, fencing, restroom, storage building, seating, shelter, tables;
- 4) open lawn area: turf, street trees along Woodborough; and
- 5) school ball fields and play area: renovate grounds, relocate and update play area, fencing.

Special consideration should be given to how the Coyote Creek Trail transitions to pedestrian crossings and bicycle trails at William Street, and how it connects to the Rail-to-Trail and I-280 undercrossing. (The I-280 undercrossing has the potential of becoming an “urban playground” for skateboarding, thereby transforming it from a poorly surveilled point along the Coyote Creek Trail, to an active amenity for the community.)

Roosevelt Park

Because of its location on Santa Clara Street and toward the center of the planning area, Roosevelt Park has significance as both a community park and as an urban focal point. A Community Center expansion and other improvements are planned; its design should continue to maintain sight lines toward the creek and the potential for improvements relating to the Coyote Creek Trail. Since the most direct on-street route for the Coyote Creek Trail is along 19th Street, a gateway feature is recommended to mark the end of the 19th Street vista. Potential redevelopment to the east and south should continue to surround the park with entries and windows.

New Parks and Plazas

Town Square at San José Steel.

A Town Square has been recommended to provide a larger area for gathering and informal play. It is a punctuation of the proposed Linear Park Street, lying midway between East Santa Clara and Julian Streets. The Town Square is framed by civic and commercial uses, and will become a focal community open space resource. A potential hotel, Mixed-Use buildings, and building facility for the Five Wounds Church outreach programs are envisioned facing the Town Square, along with a new plaza in front of the existing Portuguese Band building replacing the parking lot. These parking spaces could be accommodated either elsewhere on site or through a joint-use arrangement in close proximity to the Portuguese Band building. The maximum height of development will step down as it approaches existing residential uses to the west and Five Wounds Church to the south. These activities, all facing the Town Square, will create a vibrant center where people can gather for informal and formal activities.



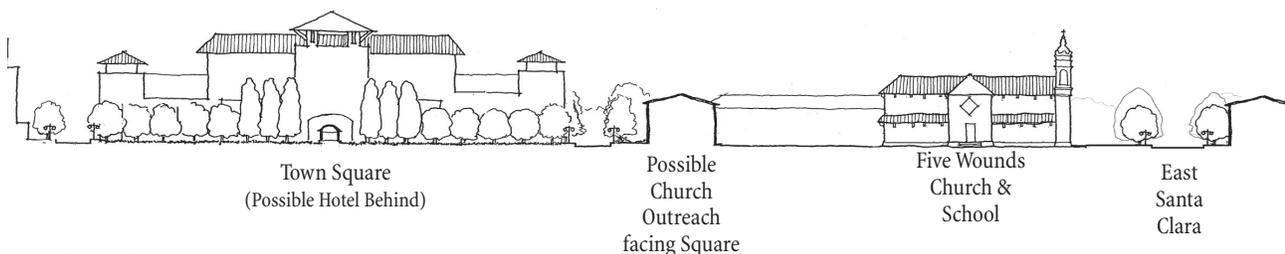
Locator Map.

Town Square at San Jose Steel. For complete map, see Existing and Proposed Parks and Schools, (p.IV-34).

The Town Square has several important design features:

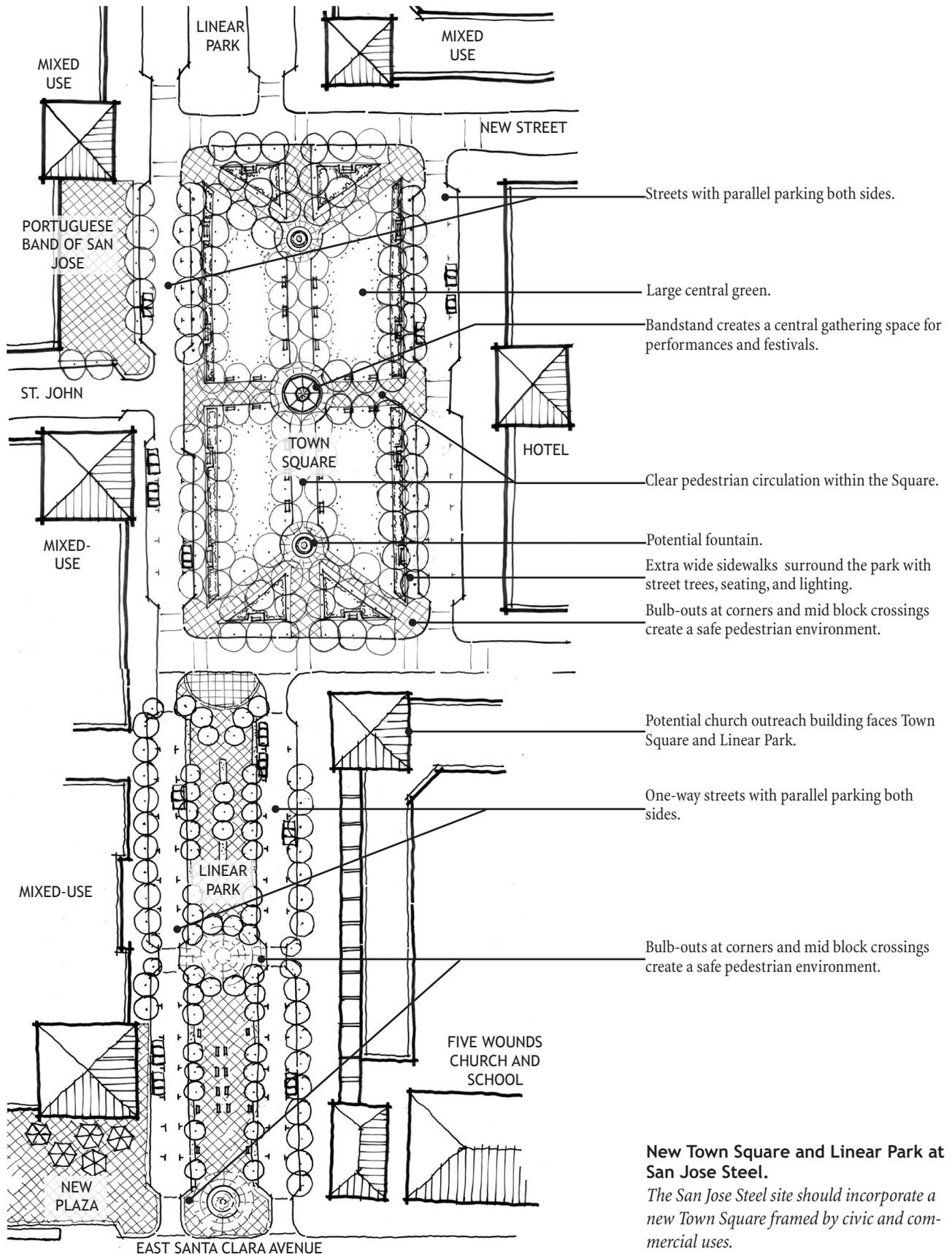
- a large central green;
- a bandstand for performances and festivals;
- a fountain or other focal element;
- wide tree-lined sidewalks with benches and other amenities; and
- clear pedestrian connections for circulation to adjacent buildings.

If a BART station is located in the vicinity, it is recommended that the station plaza entries be integrated with the Town Square and the Linear Park described in the next section.



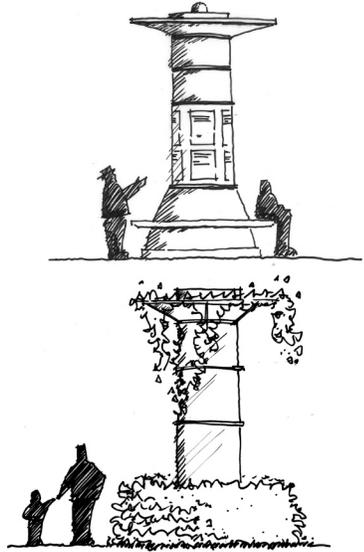
New Town Square at San Jose Steel.

The San Jose Steel site can be transformed to a new Town Square, surrounded by streets with parallel parking and framed by civic and commercial uses. The mass of future uses should step down towards Five Wounds Church.



New Town Square and Linear Park at San Jose Steel.

The San Jose Steel site should incorporate a new Town Square framed by civic and commercial uses.



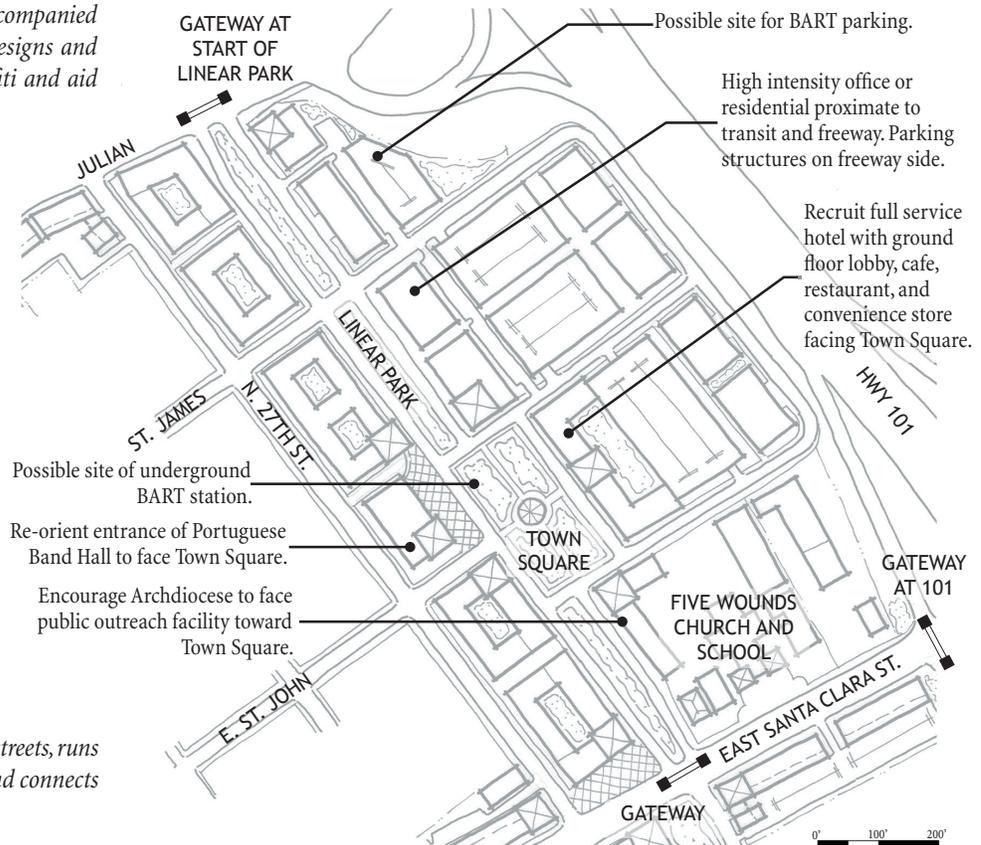
Ventilation shafts.

Tall ventilation shafts will be required to underground BART, and should be designed to make a positive contribution to the character of the community. In active urban settings, ventilation shafts can be designed as Parisian “kiosks.” Kiosks may include well-designed signage and, where easily monitored, seating. In less active areas, ventilation shafts should be designed as public art and/or accompanied by well-designed landscaping. Designs and materials should discourage graffiti and aid in its removal.

Linear Park at San José Steel.

The Neighborhood Improvement Plan recommends a Linear Park from East Santa Clara to a new Town Square, and north to Julian. While the design of the San José Steel area will be subject to future studies, the Linear Park is a compelling idea set forth by the NAC to:

- provide a clear visual connection between the new Town Square and East Santa Clara Street (thereby helping to support new street-facing retail);
- increase the supply of on-street parking (which supports ground-floor retail);
- reduce pedestrian curb-to-curb crossing distances (by dividing traffic into two one-way lanes around the park);
- introduce a unique level of pedestrian comfort and amenity (within a cross-width similar to South Park in San Francisco or Cesar Chavez Park in San José); and,
- create a special place for community activities (by being designed to accommodate festivals and farmers markets, as well as daily strolls).



Linear Park & Town Square

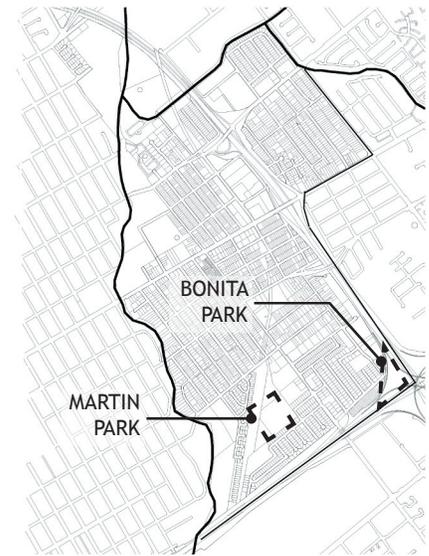
A Linear Park, framed by one-way streets, runs from East Santa Clara to Julian and connects to the Town Square.

Martin Park

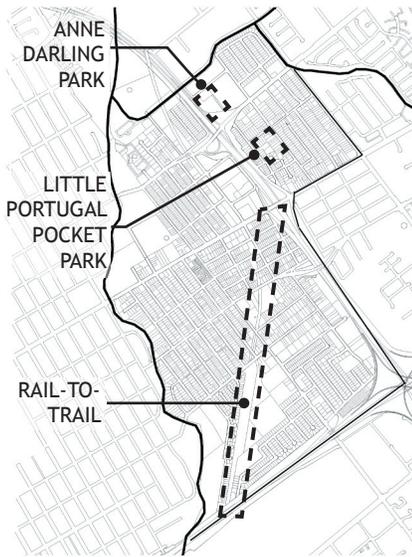
Martin Park Tot Lot exists adjacent to Franklin McKinley School. The undeveloped portion of Martin Park is the site of a former landfill. Once the ground has settled, it will present an important opportunity for recreation close to established high-density housing. In the interim, it is recommended that the perimeter, where this area abuts streets or the future Greenway Trail, be improved to enhance its visual quality and deter illegal dumping. Next to existing and new streets, a landscaped setback should contain a sidewalk, street trees, and occasional benches. This is especially crucial along Forestdale, an important route to school. Just behind the sidewalk and benches, shrubs and a well-designed fence should screen views (see *Chapter III - Guiding Principles and Organizing Concepts*, p. III-22).

Bonita Park

This potential park would be at the southern end of Bonita Street and extend below an elevated ramp for the Hwy 101 and I-280 interchange. With review from the community, a preliminary design has been explored by the City's Parks Division. However, the feasibility of this potential park is still being evaluated. This location presents several design challenges that must be adequately addressed, including noise, visual surveillance, and whether sufficient activity will occur in this relatively remote location. At the same time, dense housing and a high concentration of youth in the Bonita neighborhood call for vigorous consideration of this proposed park.

**Locator Map.**

Martin Park and Bonita Park. For complete map, see "Existing and Proposed Parks and Schools", (p.IV-34).



Locator Map.

Anne Darling Park, Little Portugal North Pocket Park, and Rail-to-Trail. For complete map, see “Existing and Proposed Parks and Schools”, (p.IV-34).

Anne Darling Park

A unique opportunity for a potential new park exists on a vacant parcel between Anne Darling School and US 101. Its feasibility must be examined. With active uses only to the north and east, this location presents similar challenges as Bonita Park, relating to noise, visual surveillance, and adequate levels of activity. Nevertheless, neighborhood need and the parcel’s adjacency to Anne Darling School (and the potential Lower Silver Creek Trail) warrant further consideration of this potential park.

Little Portugal North Pocket Park

A small underutilized parcel in the Little Portugal North area presents an opportunity to create a small pocket park. Access to other parks is difficult from this neighborhood, and the addition of a small pocket park here will enable residents to access open space more easily.

Park opportunities along Rail-to-Trail

Redevelopment of the Railroad right-of-way presents many opportunities for new parks. The Rail-to-Trail concept will provide a strong north-south pedestrian open space, transforming the Railroad right-of-way from a pedestrian barrier to a pedestrian feature.

Mixed-use and residential redevelopment within the Railroad right-of-way also should include parks and plazas. There are particularly important opportunities at the following locations along the Railroad right-of-way:

- just south of East Santa Clara Street, a promising location for an urban plaza, and,
- near the intersection with William Street where larger parcels likely to redevelop over time exist.

Parks Adjacent to FWBT

Watson Park, William Street Park, and Plata Arroyo Park are just outside of the planning area. While William Street Park is connected by a pedestrian bridge to William Street, access to the other two parks should be improved. Watson Park should be connected to Roosevelt Park via a new pedestrian bridge as part of the proposed Coyote Creek Trail (see *Roosevelt Park Master Plan*). For Plata Arroyo, pedestrian improvements to King Road at McKee should be explored to improve pedestrian access.

4. TRANSIT

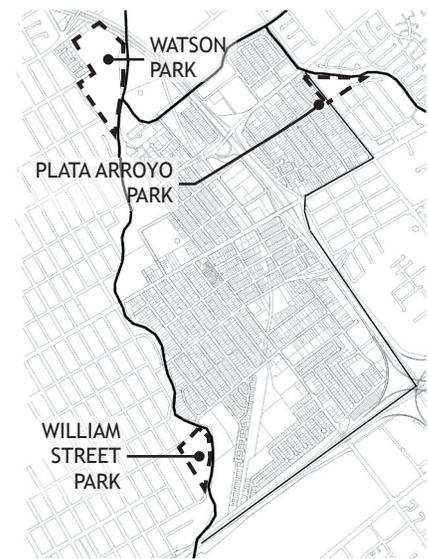
Regional transit is supported by the FWBT community. At the same time, the FWBT community expressed concern over the possible negative impacts from introducing light rail/street cars and BART within the area. (Many of the following concerns are also expressed elsewhere within the document.)

Support for East Santa Clara - Alum Rock Merchants.

Light rail construction will likely disrupt parking and access to shops in the area. VTA initiatives to create public parking lots in the area should be continued. Parking lots should be put in place prior to construction. Enhanced streetscapes and on-street parking should be encouraged for the continued viability of retail in the area.

Regional "Park & Ride."

Parking for the exclusive use of transit patrons may contribute to traffic congestion in the area. As such, some community members have expressed concern about having parking at the station within this area (currently referred to as the "Alum Rock" station in VTA documents). VTA is committed to continuing to evaluate options to minimize potential community impacts of parking related to the station, including the possibility for shared and/or reduced parking, the feasibility of freeway ramps feeding directly into the "park & ride" facilities, as well as the implementation of parking programs. In conjunction with this analysis, expanded parking will also be further analyzed at the proposed Berryessa Station.



Locator Map.

Parks adjacent to FWBT. Watson Park, Plata Arroyo Park and William Street Park. For complete map, see "Existing and Proposed Parks and Schools", (p.IV-34).

Nuisance Abatement.

The location and design of transit-related facilities should minimize the impact of noise, fumes and other nuisances on residential and community-supporting uses, like retail and parks.

Transit-Oriented Development.

Transit-related dollars should be used to leverage the types of uses and street-oriented activities encouraged by this Plan.