chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

IN THIS CHAPTER

1.1 Purpose and Definition of a Specific Plan

1.2 Regional Context and Planning Area Boundaries

1.3 Planning Context

1.4 Community-Based Planning Process and Involvement

1.5 Document Overview

The community of Napa is ready to enhance its unique, colorful and historically significant Downtown core to meet the needs of residents while continuing to draw visitors from around the region and the world. The Downtown Napa Specific Plan provides the guiding framework for realizing the vision of a vibrant, healthy and balanced pedestrian-oriented city center.

The Specific Plan is the culmination of a comprehensive community engagement, planning and design effort. It reflects the desires and aspirations of a wide range of community members, stakeholders, steering committee participants, City staff, and the Planning Commission and City Council. The purpose of the Specific Plan is to illustrate and bring to life the community-based vision; outline guidelines and development standards that support the vision; and create an implementation action plan to systematically achieve its key objectives.

The Downtown Napa Specific Plan area (referred to herein as either Downtown or the Planning Area) has many attributes to support a thriving city center. Assets upon which to build include the area's historic fabric, an active and engaged community, local festivals and events, and unique natural resources such as the Napa River.

There also are opportunities to develop new projects and rehabilitate existing buildings with commercial businesses and community facilities that will breathe new life into the heart of Napa. What is generally lacking, however, is a cohesive identity that ties these assets together and encourages complementary uses that can draw visitors and locals to the area at all times of the day.

To help achieve its objectives, the Specific Plan outlines a set of recommended improvements to cultivate a physically attractive, economically healthy and socially animated city center. This includes establishing an appropriate mix, density and orientation of uses to improve the business environment and provide people with more opportunities to live, work and play in Downtown. It also entails enhancing the auto, transit and bicycle circulation network and pedestrian streetscape. Such improvements will allow people to have easy and efficient access into and out of Downtown, as well as great mobility options throughout the city core.

Other specific objectives are to:

- Define a unique identity for Downtown Napa that builds on its existing historic elements and natural setting;
- Cultivate a Downtown that is welcoming and accessible to all modes of transportation by improving both bicycle and pedestrian routes of travel;
- Catalyze investment to support the economic vitality of the Downtown area through a customized financing and implementation plan;
- Improve connectivity within Downtown and to surrounding neighborhoods;
- Encourage uses and amenities that will promote activity throughout the day and night;
- Promote sustainable design and development and historic preservation by providing incentives to developers that offer green, environmentally sensitive projects as well as historic preservation and adaptive re-use projects;
- Ensure that Downtown embraces the Napa River through orienting new development toward the river and instituting river-friendly design and construction practices; and
- Bolster the environment as a destination for living, working and playing.

1.1 PURPOSE AND DEFINITION OF A SPECIFIC PLAN

The Specific Plan is a tool that will be used by the City of Napa, its residents and its businesses to shape and create a vibrant city center. A primary purpose of the Specific Plan is to outline a commonly agreed upon community-based vision for the future. The Specific Plan also provides the necessary steps to guide future public and private investment in the Downtown area.

In the State of California, a specific plan is one of the many policy and regulatory tools used by local governments as a complement to a general plan, which is the overarching policy document for the entire city. Specific plans implement a city or county's general plan through the development of more detailed policies, programs and regulations for a localized area. A specific plan can focus on a range of topics, from broad policy concepts to detailed development regulations, but it is required to address the following: land use, transportation and circulation, utilities and infrastructure, public facilities, development standards, and implementation and financing.

Because specific plans are mechanisms for executing the goals and policies of a community's general plan, state law requires that specific plans must be consistent with the general plan. Once adopted, the Specific Plan will guide all new development in Downtown, which will be required to follow the policies, programs, regulations and guidelines set forth in the Specific Plan.

The authority for preparation and adoption of specific plans is set forth in the California Government Code, Sections 65450 through 65457. The law stipulates that a specific plan must include text and diagrams detailing:

- The distribution, location and extent of land uses, including open space, within the area covered by the plan;
- The proposed distribution, location, extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy and other essential facilities proposed to be located in the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described therein;
- Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, as well as standards for the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, where applicable; and,
- A program of implementation measures, including regulations, programs, public works projects and financing strategies necessary to carry out the plan.

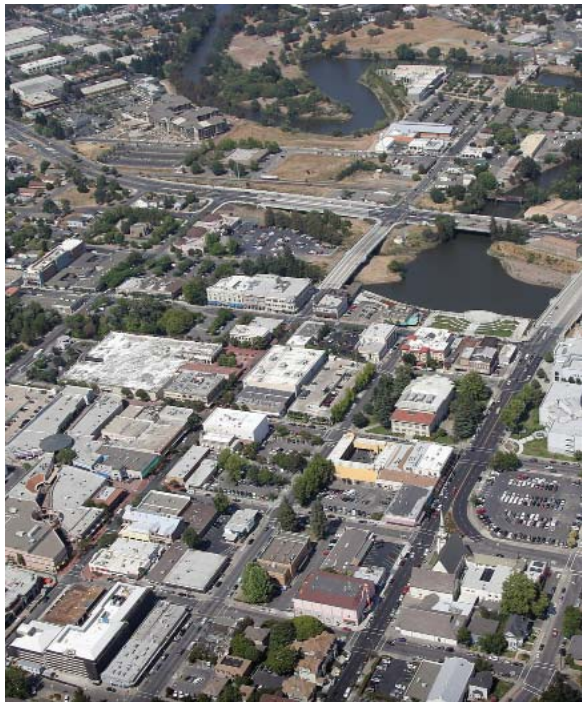
Any environmental impacts that may result from implementation of a specific plan, such as noise, traffic or school enrollment, are to be anticipated and analyzed in the state-mandated California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review prior to the specific plan's adoption.

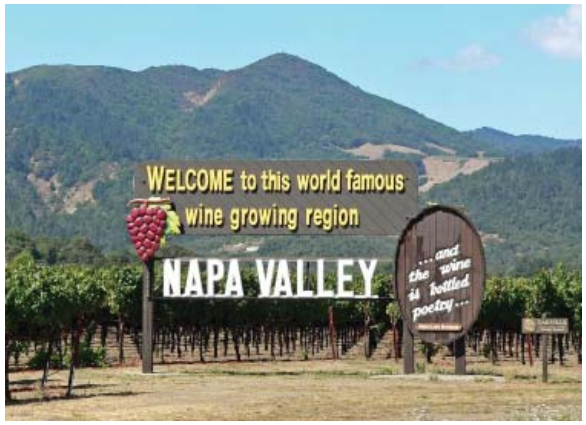
What is a Specific Plan?

A specific plan is a tool for the systematic implementation of the general plan. It effectively establishes a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area. A specific plan may be as general as setting forth broad policy concepts, or as detailed as providing direction to every facet of development from the type, location and intensity of uses to the design and capacity of infrastructure; from the resources used to finance public improvements to the design guidelines of a subdivision.

Governor's Office of Planning and Research
State of California

1.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT AND PLANNING AREA BOUNDARIES





The City of Napa is located at the southern end of the world-famous Napa Valley in Northern California approximately 50 miles north of San Francisco. Starting near Mount St. Helena and eventually emptying into San Pablo Bay, the Napa River cuts a dramatic path north-south through the city. Situated on the valley floor and surrounded by rolling hills, Napa's environs are predominantly rural and agricultural.

Napa is the largest city in the region and the gateway to the Napa Valley wine country for visitors coming from the San Francisco Bay Area and points beyond (see Figure 1.1: Regional and City Context).

Napa is the seat of Napa County and is the County's largest incorporated city. With about 77,000 residents in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau), the City of Napa houses approximately 56 percent of the County's population. Located on the west bank of the river near a large meandering oxbow, Downtown is in the central part of the city between Highway 121 and Highway 29.

The Planning Area, as defined for the Specific Plan, is bounded on the east by the eastern bank of the Napa River, on the south by Division and Third streets, and on the west by Jefferson Street. The northern boundary generally follows the zigzagging edge of the "Downtown Commercial" zoning area boundary adjacent to northern residential neighborhoods along Polk and Caymus streets west of Soscol Avenue (see Figure 1.2: Planning Area). Plan boundaries extend east to include the Oxbow Public Market and former Copia site east of Soscol Avenue. The Planning Area encompasses approximately 210 acres.

FIGURE 1.1: Regional and City Context

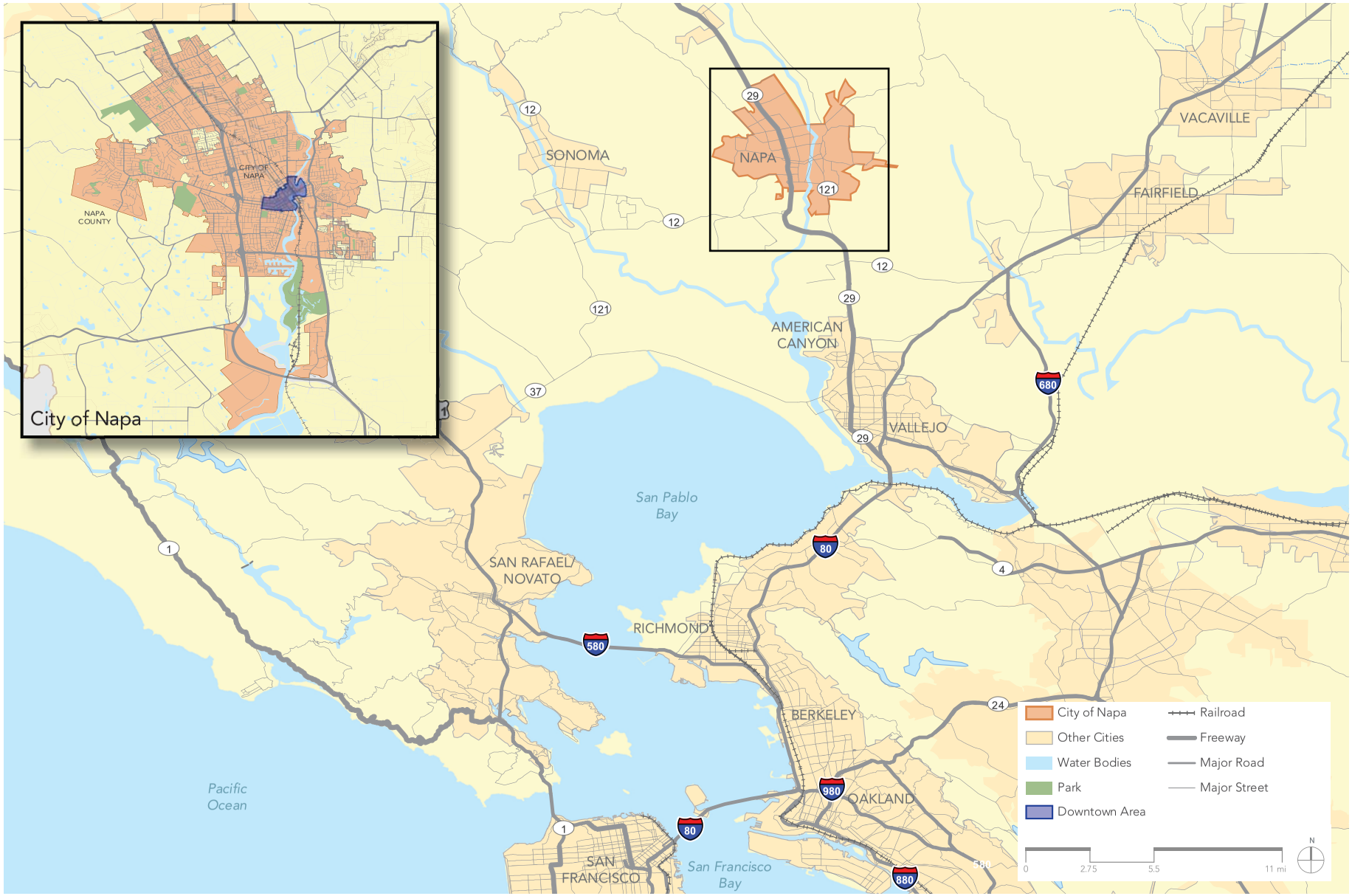
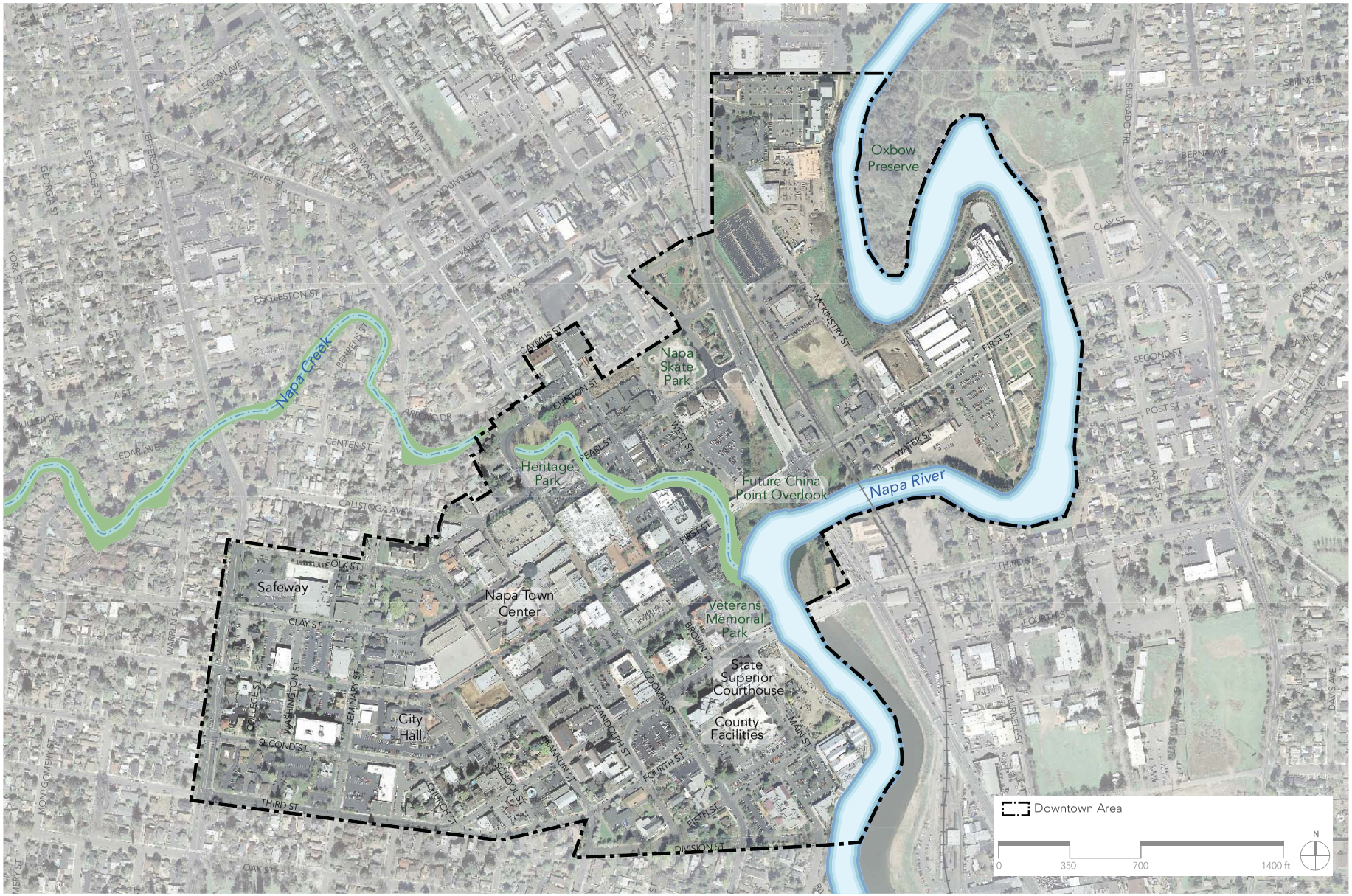


FIGURE 1.2: Planning Area



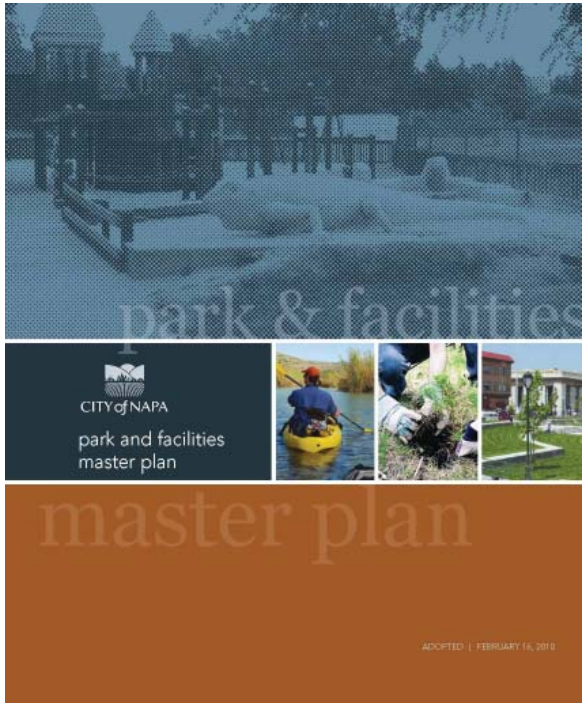
1.3 PLANNING CONTEXT

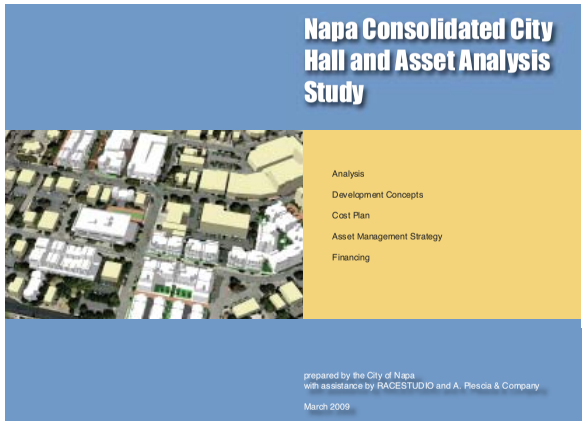
Building on the planning framework established by the City of Napa's General Plan, the Specific Plan provides a greater level of definition to the Planning Area's land uses, character of development and infrastructure than is articulated in the General Plan. It also builds on and incorporates initiatives from other relevant planning guidelines and studies.

The City of Napa's General Plan provides a number of policy objectives aimed at enhancing Downtown and strengthening its presence as the heart of the city. The General Plan describes Downtown as the civic and cultural center of Napa, containing most City and County government offices as well as the city's traditional retail and hotel uses along First and Main streets.

The Existing Conditions Report, in Appendix A of the Specific Plan, includes a comprehensive list of all the goals and policies in the City's General Plan that relate to Downtown. The General Plan emphasizes the need to foster a vital Downtown through:

- Characterizing Downtown as a place of social, entertainment, art, cultural, retail, residential, administrative and government uses;
- Emphasizing pedestrian orientation with active streets and open spaces;
- Promoting mixed-use projects as a means to reduce the need for automobile use and to support Downtown businesses;
- Encouraging rehabilitation and re-use of historic structures;
- Promoting the historic urban form of Downtown with new buildings compatible with the heights, street faces and building massing of older buildings;
- Designating the Napa River as the central defining feature of Downtown and the city;
- Enhancing public access to Downtown, including strong linkages to adjacent residential neighborhoods;
- Enhancing Downtown gateways;
- Studying access and circulation to and within the Downtown area;
- Supporting creative parking solutions;
- Creating incentive programs and regulatory ordinances that stimulate public and private investment;
- Encouraging specialty retail businesses catering to visitors and residents, and discouraging discount stores with high square footage and parking requirements; and
- Promoting hotel and conference facilities, 24-hour activity, art and cultural activities.





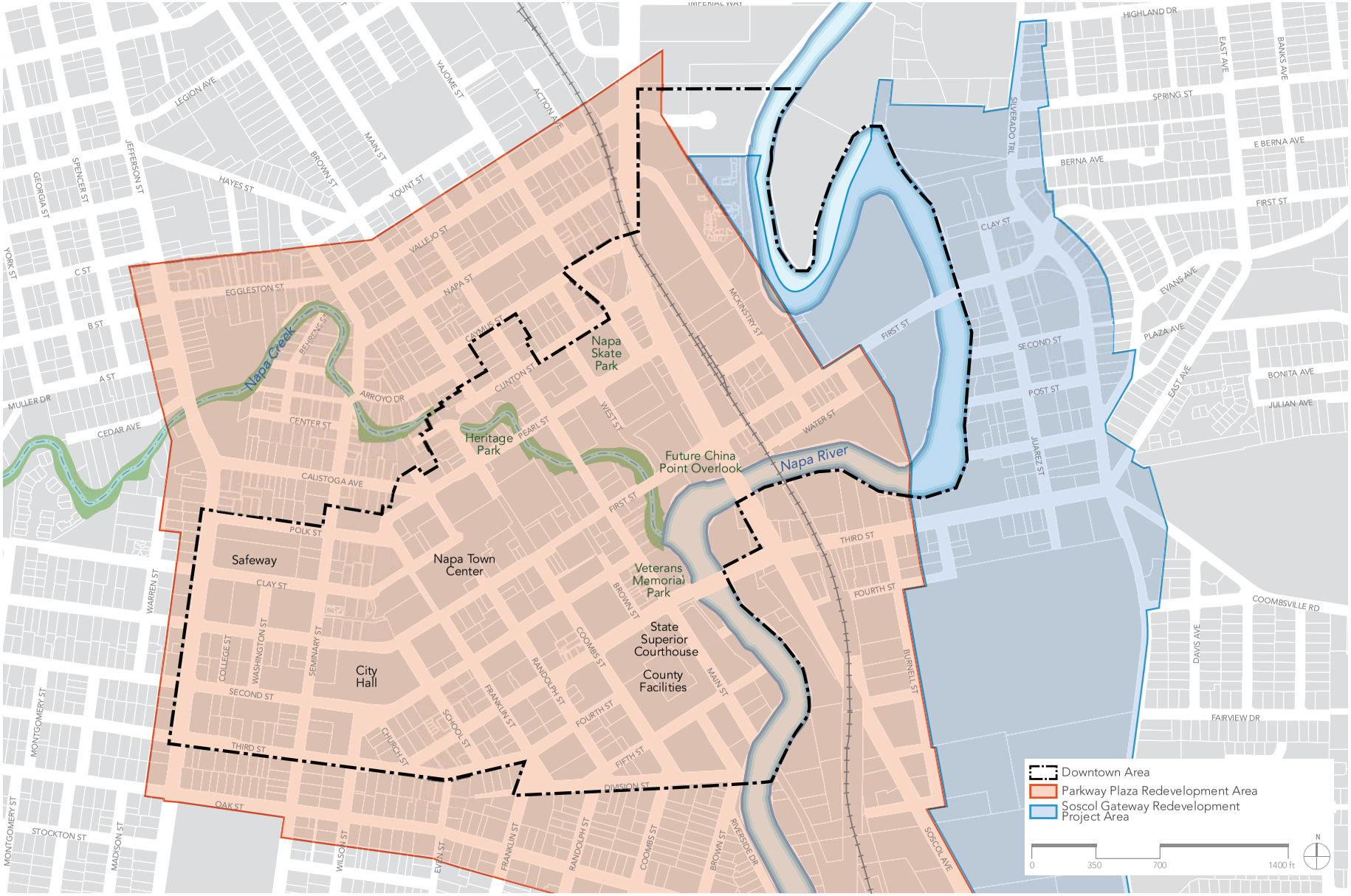
Other relevant documents with goals and policies that relate to the development of this Specific Plan include:

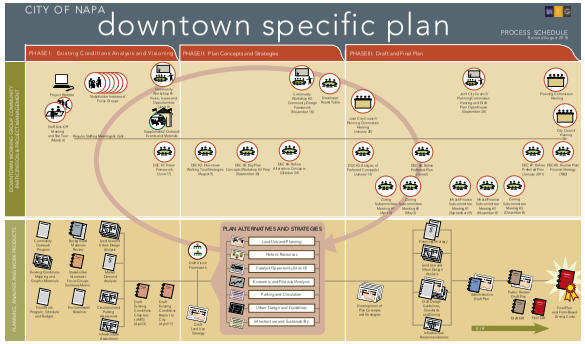
- City of Napa Residential Design Guidelines, November 2004;
- Downtown Napa Mixed-Use and Residential Infill Development Strategy, May 2004;
- Napa Parks and Facilities Master Plan, February 2010;
- Downtown Napa Historic Resources Design Guidelines, March 2011;
- Soscol Corridor/Downtown Riverfront Development and Design Guidelines, March 2009;
- Downtown Riverfront Urban Design Plan, February 2003;
- Napa River Parkway Master Plan, January 2005;
- Napa Consolidated City Hall and Asset Analysis Study, March 2009;
- Napa County General Plan, June 2008;
- Napa's Transportation Future, April 2009;
- Napa County Facilities Master Plan Studies, 2008 - 2011.

A full list and description of these documents is included in the Existing Conditions Report in Appendix A.

When the Downtown Specific Plan process was initiated, the City of Napa's redevelopment agency administered two redevelopment project areas called Parkway Plaza and Soscol Gateway, each with territory within the boundaries of the Downtown Specific Plan area. Redevelopment funding would have been a tool for implementing some of the infrastructure improvements identified in the Specific Plan, such as circulation and streetscape improvements, public parking, and open space enhancements. However, effective February 1, 2012, all redevelopment agencies in the State of California were dissolved. It will be some time before the State identifies new economic development tools and enacts legislation local governments can implement, such as infrastructure financing districts. In the meantime, the City of Napa will develop a funding strategy and continue to seek opportunities the City can employ to implement the Downtown Specific Plan.

FIGURE 1.3: Former Redevelopment Project Areas





1.4 COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING PROCESS AND INVOLVEMENT

To prepare the Specific Plan, the City of Napa led a broad community-based process that engaged local stakeholder agencies, business and property owners, neighborhood representatives, elected and appointed officials, and members of the public. The City hired a multi-disciplinary consultant team of planners, designers, engineers, historic resources specialists, transportation specialists, economists and environmental specialists to support the planning process and perform necessary technical analyses for the Specific Plan effort.

In order to garner input from the widest range of participants, the community outreach and engagement process was broad in its approach. The process included large community workshops, stakeholder interviews and focus groups, meetings of a steering committee, City Council and Planning Commission sessions, and special outreach events to specific segments of the Napa community such as youth and Latinos. Technical tools, including a comprehensive website and surveys, were also utilized.

The process began with an existing conditions analysis of the Planning Area. The consultant team conducted a thorough background analysis, drawing upon existing studies and data. This work was supplemented with additional field observations, stakeholder interviews and community surveys. A summary of the analysis is highlighted in Chapter 2 – Existing Conditions. The full report is included in Appendix A.

Building on the existing conditions work, the first broad community outreach effort focused on defining a vision for the future of the Downtown. Following the establishment of the community vision, the team developed draft catalytic focus area designs and overall alternative development scenarios for Downtown, analyzing their potential benefits and impacts. Then, through work with the Steering Committee and the community, the team developed final focus area designs and an overall preferred scenario for future development. This preferred plan and project description then informed the Specific Plan and CEQA review process.

Outreach and engagement efforts were tailored to connect with a broad range of people and provide community members with numerous opportunities to review key information and data, express input and share views, and refine plan materials. Feedback from community members was used to craft a Vision and key Vision Elements (see Chapter 3 – Vision), develop land uses and designs for focus areas and the overall Downtown, and shape the technical guidelines and standards of the plan.

The following is a summary of each of the key meetings and workshops, including topics that were covered at each meeting. For more detailed information on these sessions see Appendix B - Outreach Summary.

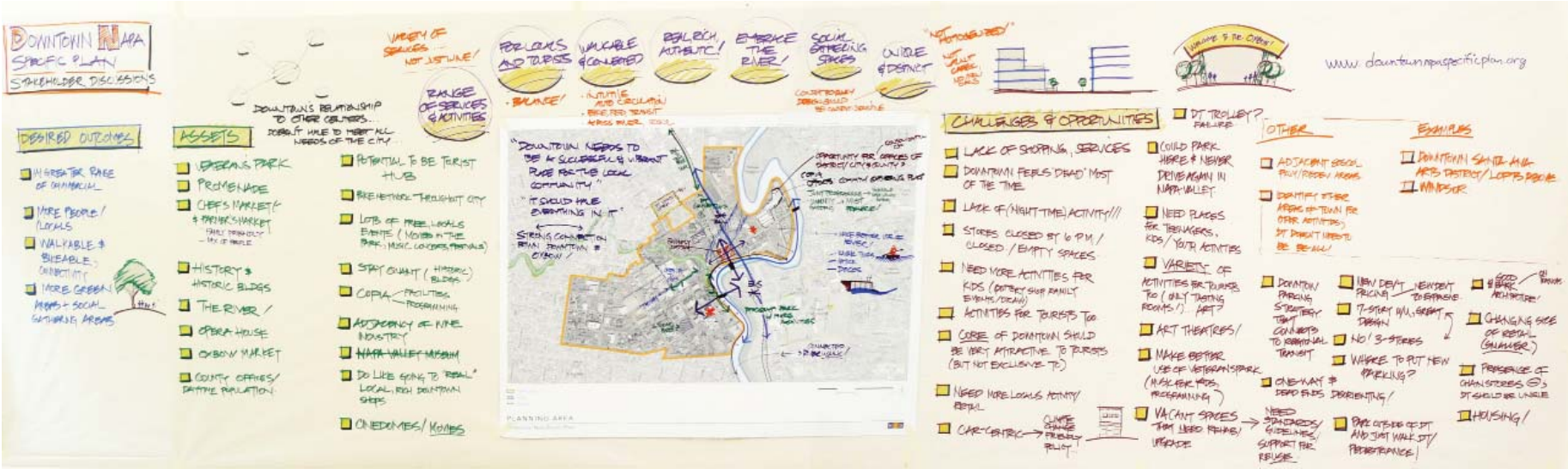
INITIAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

As part of both community outreach and existing conditions research, the project team held interview sessions with six initial stakeholder focus groups. The goal of these interviews was to gather feedback for the Specific Plan from key community members representing different perspectives. Approximately 65 community members attended the meetings including residents, employees, community organization leaders, environmental activists, artists, business owners and property owners. During the interviews participants identified desired outcomes, specific assets, challenges and opportunities in the Downtown area. Feedback covered a range of topics, including housing, employment opportunities, environmental issues, economic development, and cultural and social interests.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

A critical component of the planning process was to engage the community at key milestones to foster valuable input and insight as plan components were developed. Four community workshops were held, starting with a visioning session at the outset of the project and concluding with an open house format to review and respond to the Specific Plan document.

On June 9, 2009, the City held the first community workshop at the Westin-Verasa Hotel in the Oxbow area of Downtown. The intent of the workshop was to begin constructing the community's vision for the Specific Plan and to identify preliminary design strategies to achieve the community's vision.



Approximately 90 community members attended the workshop including residents, employees, community organization leaders, business owners and property owners.

Following a large group presentation setting the framework for the plan and process, facilitated small groups were convened to conduct a visioning exercise. The exercise was organized into the following categories: land use, urban design, economic development, infrastructure and circulation. Each group was asked to create a vision statement for Downtown and identify specific elements that compose and/or define the overall vision. In the third segment of the workshop, the small groups reported back to the larger group, sharing main ideas and building further on the community's vision. Feedback from this workshop centered on topics like placing more value on the natural resources of Downtown (river, creek and mountains); promoting sustainability in all aspects of design and future policy; having a balanced Downtown for both residents and tourists; and creating an economic core that is attractive and livable.

The City held a second community workshop on the evening of November 18, 2009. The workshop took place at the Native Sons of the Golden West hall in Downtown Napa. This session provided an opportunity for the community to learn about the emerging vision and strategy framework for the future of Downtown and to provide their feedback. Approximately 90 community members attended the meeting.

Several different stations representing core features of the plan were set up around the room to foster input. The stations addressed the following themes: emerging vision; land use; Downtown focus areas (the Town Center, CineDome and Copia sites); entertainment district; circulation, pedestrian and bicycle plan; and building heights. Community members provided their feedback about the most desirable uses for each of the focus areas, as well as targeted feedback on each of the station area topics.

The City held a third community workshop on November 10, 2010 at Hatt Hall at the Napa River Inn in Downtown. At this workshop, the results of the Draft Historic Resources Survey of

Downtown historic structures were presented to the public, which included a detailed presentation of the methodology and recommendations in the document. This document supports the Specific Plan by identifying historic resources in the Downtown area for preservation and protection (this information was then integrated into the Downtown Napa Historic Resources Design Guidelines document, which is referenced in Chapter 5 – Design Guidelines and is Appendix G to this document). The workshop provided an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and provide comments. More than 40 members of the public attended this meeting and provided comments on changes, additions and deletions of buildings from the Draft Historic Resources Inventory.

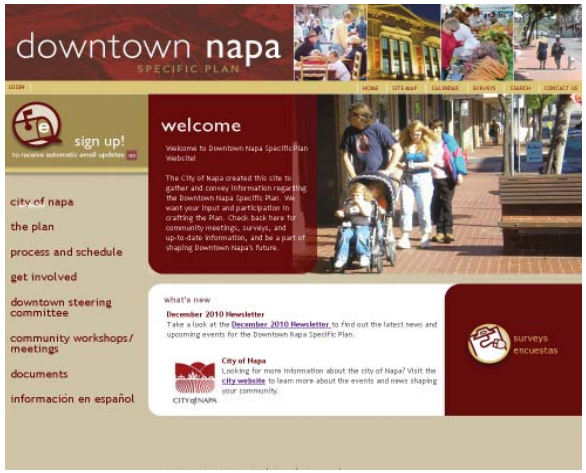
The fourth and final community workshop took place on November 15, 2011 as a City Council/ Planning Commission joint workshop to review and receive comments on the Draft Downtown Specific Plan.

A full summary of these meetings is provided in Appendix B.

DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Downtown Steering Committee was created to bring together representatives from the community to help guide the planning process and provide input on specific tasks. The committee was a 15 member group with four alternates. Members of the committee included property owners, business owners, residents from neighborhoods adjacent to the Planning Area, representatives of community groups, and a member from each of the City Council, Planning Commission and Cultural Heritage Commission. The varied perspectives of the committee members brought a depth and breadth of knowledge and interests to all aspects of the Specific Plan. The Steering Committee was specifically tasked with providing feedback to the planning team and served as a liaison between the team and the community at large.

The Steering Committee held a total of 10 meetings at key intervals throughout the planning process. All of the sessions were open to the public and included opportunities for public comment. Additionally, the Steering Committee was divided into two sub-committees: Zoning and Design Guidelines, and Infrastructure and Financing. Each sub-committee met separately to discuss specific issues in detail with City staff and consultants. A summary of these meetings is included in Appendix B.



PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

The City Council and Planning Commission held several meetings to review the Specific Plan during the planning process. The first was a joint session on February 2, 2010 during which the Council and Commission reviewed the vision framework and land use strategy elements and provided their input and direction. As noted on page 13, a second joint workshop on the Draft Specific Plan was held on November 15, 2011. The Council and Commission reviewed the final draft of the Specific Plan along with the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prior to the Commission recommending and Council approving and adopting the plan on May 1, 2012. Additionally, the Planning Commission and City Council were kept informed of the process through quarterly status reports made by City staff.

OTHER COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Additional community outreach meetings were held to include members of the public who represent different perspectives and experiences and might not typically be engaged in such a planning process. Sessions included a meeting with the Latino community, neighborhood meetings, and sessions with the city's youth. City staff met with Napa Valley Landmarks, Napa Valley Architects Exchange and various neighborhood groups to garner input on issues such as historic preservation, architectural design and neighborhood issues. A summary of these meetings is provided in Appendix B.

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

City staff also made presentations on the Specific Plan to other groups, such as the North Bay Business Association, Kiwanis Club and Napa County Board of Realtors and other organizations, to provide additional opportunities to engage the business community.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The outreach effort included a project website designed to reach the greatest number of community members. The project website (www.downtownnapaspecificplan.org) served as a publicly-accessible library of project documents, meeting summaries and upcoming event announcements and materials. Two web-based surveys were featured on the website during the project to solicit input from community members. The first survey was conducted in April and May 2009. This visioning tool focused on Napans' perceptions of the strengths and challenges of Downtown. More than 900 people took part in the survey, which was available in both English and Spanish. The second survey was a Visual Preference Survey in which more than 700 community members participated. The survey asked participants to rate and comment on imagery that represented a range of design components including architectural treatment and general character. A summary of the results of these surveys is included in Appendix B.

1.5 DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

The Downtown Napa Specific Plan is designed to be easily understood and referenced by both casual readers and everyday users of the plan. Chapters 1 through 3 set the stage for the future of Downtown by summarizing the existing conditions analysis and providing the visioning framework and development strategy for the Planning Area. Chapters 4 through 8 include the specific development standards and design guidelines to create the environment the community has envisioned. Finally, the appendices contain the supporting studies and reports that are referenced throughout the document.

The Specific Plan document is organized as follows:

Chapter 1. Introduction

The Introduction chapter outlines the purpose of the Specific Plan and defines the planning area and its context. This chapter also describes the community-based planning and engagement process that is the foundation for the project vision.

Chapter 2. Existing Conditions

The Existing Conditions chapter includes a summary of the Existing Conditions Analysis Report that provides a baseline analysis of the land use and urban design assets, market conditions, circulation, and infrastructure analysis.

Chapter 3. Vision

The Vision chapter includes the community's vision for the Planning Area in a Vision Statement. It also contains supporting elements that provide guidance for the Specific Plan's development standards and design guidelines.

Chapter 4. Land Use Designations and Zoning Districts

The Land Use Designations and Zoning Districts chapter provides the framework for future development within the Planning Area. The chapter describes land use designations and zoning districts as well as the character of Focus Areas. The chapter outlines allowable land uses, overlay districts, development standards, policies and development incentives that are designed to spur the desired change within Downtown Napa. Chapter 4 provides the regulatory framework for development in Downtown.

Chapter 5. Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines chapter provides both public and private realm guidelines through text and images that define the desired quality of architecture and character of development within the Planning Area. Chapter 5 is intended to advise and guide development in Downtown.

Chapter 6. Circulation and Parking

The Circulation and Parking chapter describes the existing and proposed circulation pattern for all modes of transportation in the Planning Area, including pedestrian and bicyclists. The chapter also includes a parking strategy and guiding principles that support the desired circulation improvements.

Chapter 7. Utilities

The Utilities chapter assesses the condition of existing infrastructure within the Planning Area (including water, sanitary sewer, stormwater and dry utilities) and analyzes the potential impacts of future development. The chapter also addresses the required upgrades and provides low impact development opportunities and policy recommendations.

Chapter 8. Implementation

The Implementation chapter is comprised of an action plan that prioritizes improvements and investments to achieve the Specific Plan's objectives. It outlines specific actions, funding mechanisms, funding sources and timelines, as well as responsible parties to achieve those objectives.