

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: April 17, 2024

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Kim Voge, Planner III
Subject: Downtown Specific Plan/Station Area Plan

Recommendation to Council:

Receive an informational presentation on the Downtown Specific Plan/Station Area Plan.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Livability. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

Background:

The Downtown Specific Plan/Station Area Plan (“Station Area Plan”) is the culmination of two years of intensive planning, community engagement, and technical analysis, including economics, urban design, and environmental impacts. The plan is built around the concept of developing a transit-oriented and diverse mixed-use downtown that supports and benefits from the future SMART train. The Station Area encompasses approximately 390 acres in downtown Windsor near the downtown Windsor SMART station. The Station Area Plan calls for approximately 1,200 new residential units and 700,000 square feet of new commercial space during the plan’s 25-year horizon ending in approximately 2035.

Town of Windsor Downtown Plan

In 1997, the “Downtown Plan” was initiated by the Town Council during a General Plan update process, which made clear that the Downtown area required special planning consideration. The Downtown Plan provided a comprehensive assessment of potential development in the Downtown, considering market forces, urban design, and opportunities for Transit Oriented Development. The focal point was a new 4 ½-acre Town Green. In 2005, the Downtown Plan was updated to add three areas (i.e., the Windsor Fuel site, NACO West/Waterslide area, and two parcels adjacent to the fire station).

Designation as a Priority Development Area (PDA)

In 2008, the downtown area of Windsor was designated as a regional focus Priority Development Area (PDA) by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). More than 100 PDAs were designated across 60 jurisdictions in the Bay Area. MTC is responsible for planning, financing, and coordinating transportation for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. ABAG supports regional land use planning among the cities and counties of the San Francisco Bay Area. MTC and ABAG are partner agencies that promote collaboration on common regional goals, including through their ability to approve and distribute funding.

Planning Grant Awarded/Request for Proposals Issued

In 2009, the Town of Windsor received a \$300,000 planning grant from MTC for the preparation of a station area plan, with the intention to increase land use development intensity around the transit station

and support transit ridership. On January 11, 2010, a Request for Proposals was issued for a qualified consultant to prepare the Station Area Plan and a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR). After the Town's Consultant Selection Committee interviewed four candidates, the contract was awarded to Dyett & Bhatia Urban and Regional Planners. Public outreach and consensus-building were key components of their scope of work. The consulting team's technical specialists included Economic & Planning Systems, Inc.; W-Trans; Green Valley Consulting Engineers; and Charles M. Salter Associates, Inc. The Station Area Plan team members are listed in Attachment 2.

Plan Development

The planning process involved a step-by-step process with interaction among the community, elected and appointed officials, town staff, and the team of consultants. In late 2009, prior to the Town's contracting with Dyett & Bhatia, the Planning Commission received two presentations on the "Lessons Learned" from the initial development surrounding the Town Green in downtown Windsor. On September 16, 2010, a public workshop was held to establish the baseline conditions in the Station Area. On November 29, 2011, a joint public workshop was held with the Town Council, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Senior Citizen Advisory Council to receive and discuss the draft Station Area Plan. The objectives for the Station Area Plan were developed as follows:

- Foster development that supports transit ridership.
- Improve connectivity between the SMART station and surrounding areas.
- Promote a walkable and livable environment.
- Complete a comprehensive EIR that could facilitate subsequent environmental review.
- Work collaboratively with the community.

Plan Adoption

In December 2011, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing and made recommendations to the Town Council for adoption of the Station Area Plan with amendments and approval of the Station Area Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR). On January 18, 2012, the Town Council conducted a public hearing and adopted the Station Area Plan, incorporating the Planning Commission's recommended amendments. The Station Area Plan's technical studies included an existing conditions report, market demand analysis, alternatives report, preferred plan framework, parking demand analysis, infrastructure needs assessment, and urban design standards and guidelines. The Station Area Plan land use map is provided in Attachment 1. The following sections are included in the Station Area Plan and are available for review on the Town's website

(<https://www.townofwindsor.com/DocumentCenter/View/14024/Station-Area-Plan-Rev-01-16-13>):

1. Vision, Guiding Principles, and Context
2. Land Use
3. Streetscape, Building Design, and Development Standards
4. Circulation and Access
5. Environmental Quality
6. Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure
7. Implementation

Guiding Principles

The land use plan centers around the concept of an expanded down core and Town Green loop, highlighting the public realm as the center of the downtown core. The following ten guiding principles were used to develop strategies and policies:

1. Enhance the Station Area's identity as Windsor's center; ensure economic sustainability.
2. Unique sense of place; develop Downtown/Station Area as mixed-use, pedestrian-scaled, transit-

oriented district. Improve pedestrian and bike connections.

3. Establish unified image for Downtown; enhance public realm.
4. Promote retail diversification; attract an anchor tenant and high traffic establishments.
5. Balance housing, retail, office, and institutional uses in Downtown core; increase daytime population.
6. Encourage design diversity & visual richness; promote compact development patterns.
7. Attract more tourism-related establishments; highlight Downtown as center of activity; promote use of SMART train and trails.
8. Explore intensification or redevelopment of Civic Center site with multi-use development.
9. Continue to promote green leadership; encourage outdoor and active living.
10. Continue to promote more activities & attractions in Downtown; explore development of community activity center.

Environmental Review

On January 18, 2012, the Town Council certified the Station Area Plan EIR, adopted a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the EIR. Potentially significant environmental impacts were identified for traffic, noise, and water supply; and these impacts were mitigated to the extent feasible. All mitigation measures were incorporated into the Station Area Plan as policies.

Plan Amendment

On January 16, 2013, the Station Area Plan was amended to (1) clarify the regulation of non-conforming uses in the Station Area; and (2) approve the interim removal of the Active Use Frontage Overlay zone on Windsor River Road from Windsor Road to Old Redwood Highway. Concurrently, technical fixes to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance were made to ensure consistency among all three planning documents.

American Planning Association Award

On July 21, 2014, the American Planning Association (California Chapter) notified the Town that it was selected for the Award of Merit for the Comprehensive Plan Award: Small Jurisdiction, Windsor Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan. As part of this award, it was recommended that the Station Area Plan also be submitted for a potential award from the national American Planning Association.

Civic Center Visioning Study

The 11.5-acre Civic Center area encompasses the central area within the Station Area Plan around the Town Green. The area includes many public facilities, including the Windsor Town Hall, Town administrative office complex, Police department facility, Huerta Gymnasium, Windsor library, and lands owned by the Windsor Unified School District. Following a community visioning charette, technical reports, alternatives analysis, and concept development, and as part of a comprehensive General Plan update, the Town prepared and accepted the Civic Center Visioning Study on February 1, 2017. The Visioning Study is available on the Town's website:

<https://www.townofwindsor.com/DocumentCenter/View/29326/Windsor-Civic-Center-Visioning-Study-2017>.

The purpose of the Visioning Study was to provide guidance for future growth of the Civic Center area to activate all four corners of the Town Green. The vision is for the Civic Center to become the hub of civic and cultural activities of the community, while exemplifying the Town's ecological, social, and economic sustainability goals. The Town Council endorsed a plan that would relocate the Town Hall and Library; build a multipurpose event center on a small part of the existing Library site while retaining views to existing Town Green businesses from Old Redwood Highway; add shared surface

parking; incorporate a range of residential densities at the northern end; and advance the concept of a “four-sided” Town Green by adding mixed use development along the northern edge of the Town Green. The Visioning Study includes a sequencing program to help with implementation.

General Plan Update

The Town of Windsor 2040 General Plan was adopted in 2018. The General Plan designates seven “community places” with unique characteristics that require specific policies to address. The Downtown/Station Area Community Place encompasses, is consistent with, and helps to implement the Station Area Plan. The General Plan specifies that, “All new development within the Downtown is subject to the policies in this section, as well as other relevant sections of the General Plan, the Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan, and the Civic Center Visioning Study.” The following six land use policies are included for the Downtown Station Area Community Place:

LU-10.1. Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan. *Development within the Downtown shall comply with the Station Area/Downtown Specific Plan.*

Staff comments: This policy ensures that any potential inconsistency with General Plan policies would be resolved in favor of the Station Area Plan.

LU-10.2. Reinforce Downtown Identity. *The Town shall continue to reinforce and enhance the identity of Downtown as the commercial, civic, and cultural heart of Windsor by expanding the Downtown commercial core and accommodating a broader array of uses and activities.*

Staff comments: This policy is implemented by land use policies in the Station Area Plan and the Zoning Ordinance, as well as through the planning process when new development projects are reviewed.

LU-10.3. Enhance the Public Realm. *The Town shall maintain a unified image for Downtown and continue to enhance the public realm with high-quality buildings with active street frontages behind wide sidewalks, consistent streetscapes, improved sidewalks, and greater opportunities for outdoor dining.*

Staff comments: This policy is implemented by development standards in the Station Area Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. All projects within the Station Area are subject to Site Plan and Design Review.

LU-10.4. Balance of Uses. *The Town shall strive to achieve a balance of housing, retail, office, and institutional uses in the Downtown core.*

Staff comments: Work to advance this policy is ongoing.

LU-10.5. Encourage Office Development. *The Town shall encourage opportunities for office uses, including business incubators and co-working/shared office spaces, to locate Downtown in an effort to increase the daytime population so that it supports Downtown businesses.*

Staff comments: The Station Area Plan may have overestimated the capacity for new office uses in Downtown Windsor. Minimal progress has been made to advance this policy.

LU-10.6. Adequate Downtown Parking. *The Town shall strive to maintain an adequate supply of parking spaces in the Downtown/Station Area to meet the demands of visitors and riders of the SMART commuter rail system and shall implement policies that adapt to innovations and technologies which may lessen the need for traditional parking models.*

Staff comments: While parking remains a challenge in downtown Windsor, opportunities for better parking management are frequently reviewed and implemented. Recently the Town implemented timed parking on some block faces to accommodate greater turnover of downtown parking spaces. Additional challenges may be forthcoming due to recent changes in State law. Once passenger service begins on

SMART, there will be no minimum parking requirements for residential and most commercial projects within a half-mile of the SMART station.

SMART Status

Passenger service is expected to begin in April 2025. Construction on the passenger rail and pathway extension to the Windsor SMART station resumed in December 2023, and key work has been recently completed or is currently underway. Railroad bridges were constructed between December 2023 and February 2024. Construction is underway for the passenger station platform, miscellaneous retaining walls, and drainage structures. When the weather allows, grading for the right-of-way and pathway will commence, followed by installation of utilities and construction of the grade crossing (new rail, surface panels, signaling/warning devices) and trackwork.

Discussion:

Implementation

The Station Area Plan includes an Implementation and Phasing Plan with 38 discrete actions and the designation of responsible departments and/or agencies, approximate timeframes, and estimated costs. Progress on the implementation items is provided in Attachment 3. Major development projects have been approved in the Station Area, although most of them have not yet been constructed. The Bell Village shopping center was constructed in 2014 and includes 22 retail spaces, 12 office spaces, and four restaurants. In addition, the following major projects were approved in the Station Area during the 14-year period following adoption of the Station Area Plan.

- Mill Creek (360 market rate condominiums):
- Vintage Oaks on the Town Green (387 apartments)
- Duncan Village (16 affordable single-family dwellings on small lots)
- Windsor Place (Mixed-use project with 30 condominiums and 4,200 square feet of commercial space)
- The McClelland Hotel Project (160-room hotel with restaurant, bar, retail, and meeting space)
- Chevron Gas Station (gas station/market/carwash replacement and two additional fuel pumps)
- Shell Gas Station (gas station/market/carwash replacement and elimination of two fuel pumps)

For reference, during the 11-year period prior to the adoption of the Station Area, 79 units were built (in 2002 and 2003) and 211 units were approved.

Next Steps

Future transportation funding may be increasingly tied to land use and housing policies at the local level. MTC is in the process of updating its Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) policies, for which final guidelines will be available in the next several months. Compliance with the TOC policies will be tied to regional transportation funding opportunities, particularly for the next round of One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) applications in January 2026. To qualify for the next round of OBAG funding, the Town will need to have its compliance with the TOC Policy Guidelines certified by MTC prior to January 2026. Based upon the draft TOC Policy Guidelines, the Town will need to update its policies and/or adopt new policies pertaining to affordable housing production, preservation, and protection; parking management; and station access and circulation. In addition, updates may be required to the allowable density and commercial development intensity for the remaining developable parcels in the Station Area.

The Town has been successful with previous OBAG applications, including the following grant awards:

- Windsor Road/Jaguar Lane Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements \$ 630,000

- Conde Lane/Johnson Street Pedestrian Improvements \$ 432,000
- Windsor Rd/Bell Rd/Market St Pedestrian Improvements \$ 410,000
- Windsor River Road at Windsor Road Intersection Imps \$3,000,000
- Downtown Bike/Ped US 101 Crossing - Underpass Widening \$2,000,000

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Environmental Review:

This report is not considered a “project” (pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15378) since it does not result in an action being taken or a physical impact to the environment. Therefore, no environmental review is required.

Attachment(s):

1. [Station Area Plan Land Use Map](#)
2. [Station Area Plan Team Members](#)
3. [Implementation Matrix Update](#)

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