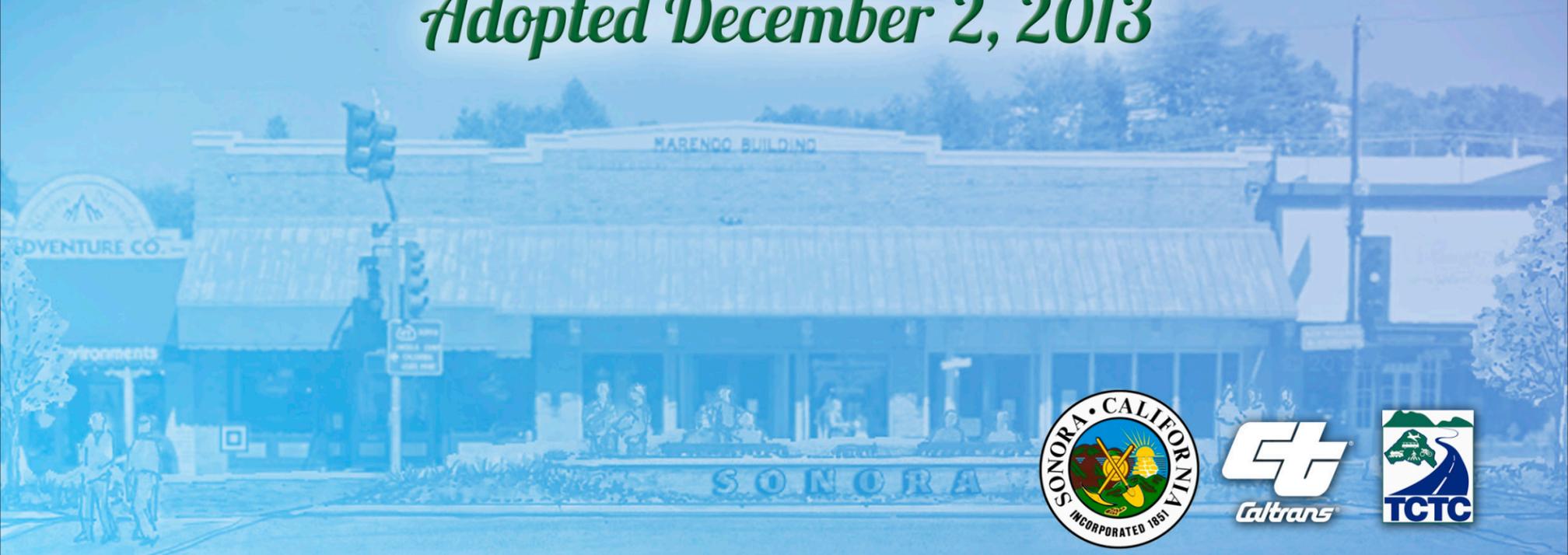
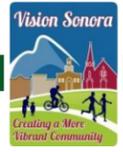


# *Vision Sonora*

*Adopted December 2, 2013*





# Acknowledgements

The project was initiated by the City of Sonora and the Tuolumne County Transportation Council and shall meet the requirements of the State Department of Transportation approvals per the State's Community-Based Transportation Planning (CBTP) grant requirements.

## **Vision Sonora Advisory Committee**

Lissa Anderson	Backspace, Business-At-Large
Larry Cope	Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority
Jim Garaventa	Tuolumne County Historical Society, Landmarks Committee
Judy Grossman	Resident-At-Large
Sharon Marovich	Tuolumne Heritage Committee
Shirley Sarno	Sonora Chamber of Commerce
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Ira Uslander	Tuolumne County Commission on Aging
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## **Vision Sonora Steering Committee**

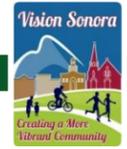
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 LL Consulting  
 MindMixer  
 Willdan Group, Inc.



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# Executive Summary

## Background

Funded by a grant from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) awarded to the Tuolumne County Transportation County and sub allocated to the City, the Vision Sonora project was initiated to provide Sonora with a plan for a more vibrant community by directing physical improvements along the Highway 49 and Washington Street corridors.

Specifically, the Vision Sonora Plan addresses the following through text descriptions as well as conceptual designs and renderings:

- Circulation and congestion management;
- Parking management;
- Gateway features and wayfinding signage;
- Transit facilities, including site selection and conceptual design of a community bus shelter;
- Aesthetics and beautification, including streetscapes and landscaping plans;
- Multi-modal connectivity; and
- Finance and implementation.

The plan also addresses downtown economic development and topics related to resident quality of life, as described further in Recommendations.

The Vision Sonora Plan study limits follow the alignment of SR 49 from SR 108 to Preston Place and S. Washington Street from SR 108 to SR 49, also including Green Street and Stewart Street in the historic downtown core.

To develop the plan, the City and project team worked in partnership with the Tuolumne County Transportation Council, Caltrans, a community Advisory Committee, a Steering Committee, and other members of the community.

## Community Visioning

The community’s vision formed the foundation of this plan. Community Visioning Week in January 2013 provided the Sonora community with four days of opportunities to create ideas for future improvements. An ongoing interactive website provided another forum for community idea generation and feedback.

The following goals capture the main points in the comments, concerns, and ideas of community members which are captured in the plan’s recommendations:

- **Strengthen Sonora’s Identity and History**
- **Attract and Welcome Visitors**
- **Create Places to Enjoy**
- **Boost Downtown Appeal and Commerce**
- **Enable Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel**
- **Take Care of Locals**

In the Vision Sonora Plan, Sonora finds new ways to showcase its unique identity and history; it is enriched with public spaces, parks, and green space; its streets actively support pedestrians, bicycles, and transit; it is a community that openly attracts and welcomes visitors, but still takes care of the locals; and at its core is a thriving and flourishing downtown.

## Plan Structure

The Vision Sonora Plan has the following key components:

**Executive Summary** – This overview of the planning process and recommendations.

**1. Background and Process** – Describes the process to create Vision Sonora.

**2. The Vision** – Provides a narrative overview of the intended future character of Sonora, and describes the origins of Vision Sonora in the city’s historic character and community ideas.

**3. Mobility & Community Design** – Findings and detailed recommendations to improve transportation on foot, bicycle, transit and vehicle, while using the design of streetscapes and public places to heighten the appreciation of Sonora as a unique and historic place, create places to host community events, and create excitement and activity in Sonora that boosts commerce.

**4. Tourism, Local Economy, & Community** – Findings and detailed recommendations to improve Sonora’s draw as a destination for tourism, boost economic development, promote the health and well-being of residents, grow a thriving arts and culture scene, and involve the community in making Vision Sonora a reality.



**Community Visioning Week activities and an ongoing interactive website involved hundreds of community members in generating ideas for Vision Sonora.**



**5. Implementation** – Discusses phasing, funding, and other guidance for carrying out the recommendations.  
**Vision Poster (Appendix H)** – Gives an at-a-glance overview of the recommendations for physical improvements.

### Recommendations

The Vision Sonora Plan provides recommendations to revitalize the local economy, enhance Sonora’s unique historic character, and improve the quality of life. These recommendations fall into two major categories:

- Mobility and Community Design**
- Tourism, Local Economy, and Community**

For a visual summary of recommendations including a bird’s eye view of physical improvements along Sonora’s streets, see the Vision Poster presented in **Appendix H**. The first chapter of this plan, **The Vision**, walks through the physical changes on the ground and provides a glimpse of how visitors might experience Sonora in the future.

### Mobility and Community Design

#### Key Findings

- **Gateways** into Sonora can be improved to provide a more positive impression and experience for travelers.
- **Conditions for pedestrians** are mixed, with areas in need of new or expanded sidewalks and better ADA accessibility. **Washington Street** has an appealing historic downtown core with shaded sidewalks but no street trees and few places for pedestrians to sit or linger; sidewalks are needed in some locations north and south of the core. **Stewart Street** is not ideal for walking due to the lack of business entrances and sidewalks that are narrow, obstructed, or need repair. **Stockton Street** has adequate right-of-way for a trail, new sidewalk segments, and new landscaped parkways to provide more comfortable pedestrian connections to the Fairgrounds, Woods Creek Trail, Dragoon Gulch, and businesses.
- **Pedestrian crossings** in many locations can be improved with more prominent striping as well as constructed improvements that shorten the crossing distance.
- **Coffill Park and Courthouse Park** are valued by community members, who also feel that they need improvement.
- **Bicycle facilities** are planned but not yet built within the study area. In much of downtown, there is limited street right-of-way width between the storefronts of historic

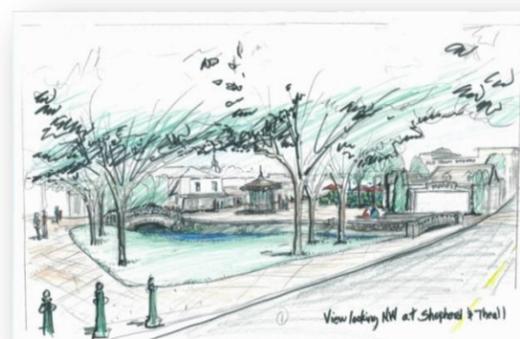
buildings. However, roadway markings and signage can be used to remind drivers to share the road with bicyclists through this area where vehicle traffic speeds are relatively slow and compatible with bicycle speeds.

- **Parking occupancy patterns** show that spaces close to the historic downtown core are underutilized while other spaces have higher than ideal occupancy rates; parking can be managed to better utilize existing spaces.
- **Congestion and speeding** are concerns in some areas. The Washington Street / Shaws Flat Road intersection is a good candidate for a traffic signal or roundabout
- **Transit route changes** are under consideration and potential transit stop relocations and additions are incorporated into this plan.
- **Wayfinding signs** in a variety of styles and locations point out major attractions, and would be easier to follow if the styles and placement were more consistent.

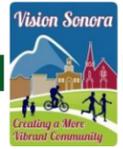
### Overview of Recommendations

Following is an overview of recommendations in the Mobility and Community Design chapter. Although summarized here by improvement type, the chapter presents most of these recommendations by corridor, with some area-wide recommendations.

- **Construct Gateway Enhancements** – Construct improvements at three primary gateways into Sonora, as follows. At the South Gateway (South Washington from SR 108) and West Gateway (Fairgrounds entrance), showcase historical features and provide pedestrian gathering areas. Reconfigure the intersection at the North Gateway (Shaws Flat / Washington intersection), and make aesthetic improvements; this is also a proposed transit shelter location.
- **Improve Corridors** – In conjunction with other improvements, install street trees, landscaped parkways, pedestrian-scaled lights, and street furniture including benches and waste receptacles. The chapter provides a landscape palette of trees and plants that thrive in conditions similar to the Sonora climate. Suitable styles for street lights and other street furniture are also identified in the chapter.
- **Create Downtown Public Spaces** – Create a plaza and park on Stewart Street and a network of pedestrian-oriented streets between this plaza and Coffill Park that can be converted into event space. Convert Linoberg Street into a pedestrian-only passageway and gathering space between Green and Stewart Streets. Construct small gathering spaces along Washington including “parklets” that convert two parking spaces into



**Stewart Plaza would have tuck-under parking and restrooms, and a park along daylighted Sonora Creek. Convertible streets and the Linoberg paseo provide additional public space between the plaza and Coffill Park.**



seating/dining areas in front of businesses. Use excess roadway width to create other landscaped seating areas on Washington.

- **Enhance Downtown Parks** – Make improvements to Coffill Park including increased visibility, seating, and food vending. Make minor improvements to Courthouse Park and expand the park by permanently closing the adjacent Jackson Street segment.
- **Improve Pedestrian Pathways and Crossings** – Construct, widen, and repair sidewalks as needed throughout the plan corridors. Provide landscaped parkways between sidewalks and roadways. Improve roadway markings for pedestrian crossings. Shorten crossing distances by extending street corners and constructing landscaped pop-outs and refuge islands.
- **Construct Bikeways and Install Bike Parking** – Create a north/south bicycling route on Stewart Street designated with pavement markings and signs; extend the multi-use trail along Stockton from the Fairgrounds to downtown; complete other planned multi-use trail segments. Install bike racks at popular destinations.
- **Manage Parking** – Manage overutilized and underutilized spaces to provide convenient short-term visitor parking in the historic downtown core, with longer-term and employee parking within a short walking distance. Identify alternatives for additional parking as a next step after new parking patterns have been established.
- **Improve Transit Connections** – Construct a bus transfer station at Church and Stewart. Provide new and relocated stops, including two with shelters and nearby waiting area enhancements.
- **Install Wayfinding Signage** – Install themed wayfinding signs and entry arches to guide visitors to attractions and parking. Install more interpretive signage, including historical markers and trail markers. Install informational kiosks.

### Tourism, Local Economy, and Community

#### Key Findings

- **Historic Downtown Sonora** enjoys a strong market position as one of Tuolumne County’s primary destinations for tourists and visitors while providing local residents with a variety of restaurant, art, culture, entertainment and specialty retail options.
- **Sonora is a regional center** that can do more to leverage local markets (residents, employees, and college students) and boost commerce.

- **Cultural and heritage tourism** in Sonora takes advantage of many historic assets that are showcased in local programs and marketing such as the trolley and tours. There are many ways to expand on this strength.
- There is a need for more **visitor information and promotion** about Historic Downtown Sonora and other attractions—including a visitor center presence in the historic downtown core and more online marketing.
- **Business support and recruitment** is ongoing thanks to the efforts of the City, Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, and other local organizations. Outreach efforts can be further coordinated and focused to fill commercial vacancies and support the success of current businesses.
- The **appearance of Sonora’s commercial areas** is an important component of their success. Attention is needed to convey a clean and well-cared-for image through buildings, facades, storefront displays, and landscaping.
- **Arts and culture** are strengths of Sonora that can be further developed. Sonora has live theaters, musical performances, and other arts events. Columbia College and Tuolumne County Arts Alliance are important arts and culture institutions.
- **Community health** can be improved through further opportunities for physical activity, more access to healthy food, and limits on exposure to secondhand smoke. Parks and recreation facilities as well as facilities for walking and biking contribute
- **Homelessness and drug use** are social issues that are being addressed at the County-wide level with active participation by the City of Sonora. These issues contribute to increased calls for police service and impact other departments.

#### Overview of Recommendations

- **Provide Visitor Information** – Establish a Downtown Visitor Center (implemented during development of this plan) and continue to provide information through individual businesses. Publish a downtown directory and a restaurant guide.
- **Improve Tourism Promotion and Marketing** – Develop a logo and slogan to strengthen Historic Downtown Sonora’s brand. Strengthen downtown’s Internet presence with a website and a social media campaign. Develop a 12-month calendar of events using downtown as a “stage”. Develop life-long relationships with visitors.



*The Sonora Farmers Market provides access to fresh, locally grown produce and is a great example of a small-scale event that regularly brings people to Historic Downtown Sonora.*

- **Expand Cultural and Heritage Tourism** – Expand cultural and heritage tourism showcasing the history, arts and culture of Sonora and the community’s role in California’s history. Develop tours, mobile/handheld guides, interactive activities, events, and tourism packages.
- **Highlight and Strengthen Sonora’s Historic Resources** – Evaluate registering Historic Downtown Sonora as a historic resource and request signage from Caltrans. Promote rehabilitation and re-use of historic structures. Explore ways to maintain a historic atmosphere.
- **Use Streetscapes and Public Places to Tell Sonora’s Story** – Add elements that call attention to Sonora’s history and unique attributes – including signs, historic artifacts, local materials, interpretive elements, and murals.
- **Promote Arts and Culture** – Focus efforts to create a vibrant arts and culture scene that develops and showcases local talent. Launch a public art program to create public art works and performances. Expand arts and culture activities and education. Explore opportunities for additional arts and culture spaces, and consider creating an artist-in-residence program.
- **Improve Image and Safety** – Create incentives for commercial building and site improvements. Clean up and install displays in empty storefronts. Work with businesses to improve their physical presentation including window displays, store interiors, and rear entrances. Enhance cleanliness and safety in Historic Downtown Sonora through regular walk-arounds to assess conditions, expanding community clean-up events, providing property owners with information about resources for cleaning and repair, and installing more waste receptacles. Consider establishing a foot patrol by the Sonora Police Department.
- **Strengthen Local Businesses** – Create a business visitation program to check in with businesses and understand their challenges and future plans. Continue to offer education and counseling to businesses, making sure there are offerings tailored to small downtown businesses.
- **Expand Downtown Business Hours** – In order to expand visitation to Historic Sonora, there must be a concentrated effort to get the majority of retail stores, restaurants, and cultural and historical attractions to expand the hours that they are open. Start with a coordinated campaign to promote new open hours on a particular evening or weekend day.
- **Develop Promotions Targeting Local Markets** – Target residents, area workers, and College students and faculty with a variety of discounts, special events, and a Shop Local campaign. Reach local customers through mailings, outreach, and online marketing.
- **Focus Business Recruitment Efforts** – Focused recruitment efforts are most effective. Conduct market analysis and establish priority recruitment targets and locations, then coordinate recruitment efforts among multiple partners.
- **Improve Resident Health & Well-Being** – Address social issues including homelessness, mental illness, and drug use through County-wide collaborative efforts and implementation of the Sonora Housing Element. Encourage physical activity through recreation activities and shared facilities, and providing better pedestrian connections. Provide smoke-free public areas. Use the farmers market and community gardens to promote access to locally grown produce.
- **Community Involvement** – Create opportunities for community members to volunteer in support of Vision Sonora, with particular emphasis on youth and seniors. Involve property owners in downtown improvement efforts, and build and sustain a strong downtown network and organizational structure. Keep the Vision Sonora Plan “alive” and the community engaged, by maintaining a consistent communication effort.

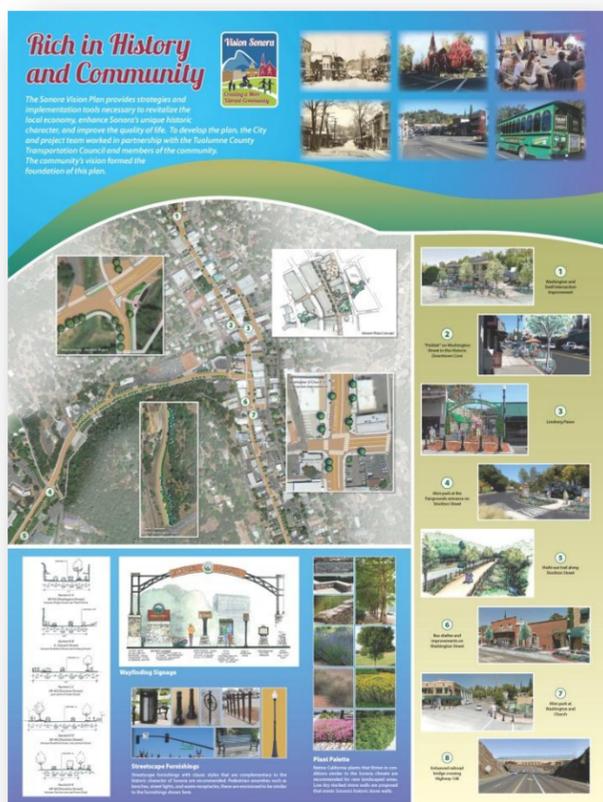
**Vision Poster**

The Vision Poster presented in **Appendix H** provides a visual summary of the Vision Sonora Plan recommendations. It is intended to be distributed in order to familiarize partners and community members with the plan—a key part of implementation.

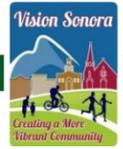
**Implementation**

The Vision Sonora Plan is an aspirational document that describes the steps that the City of Sonora, its partners, and community members believe should be taken to make Sonora a more vibrant community. It is not an engineering document or capital improvement program, and funding has not been committed to implement the plan. However, Community Visioning Week already sparked implementation of some of the program recommendations before the draft plan was released.

Implementation will be a long-term effort involving the City, community partners, and community at large. To assist in implementation, the Plan provides cost estimates, possible



*The Vision Poster provides a visual summary of the Vision Sonora Plan and should be distributed to communicate the plan concepts to partners and community members in the early phase of implementation.*



funding/financing sources, and an Implementation Matrix which lists all of the plan recommendations along with suggested implementation leaders and partners. The timeframe and status fields in this matrix should be completed and updated over time.

The general steps in a collaborative process to implement Vision Sonora should be the following:

1. **Plan Adoption** – Formal adoption by City of Sonora.
2. **Collaborative Priority-Setting** – City and partners determine what the first steps should be, and their roles in carrying out those steps. The community at large provides input, laying the groundwork for their future contributions as volunteers and supporters.
3. **Securing Funding** – Seek grants and other sources of funding or financing; some potential sources are provided in the Implementation chapter.
4. **Capital Improvement Programming** – Physical improvements to public property and other City projects will need to be planned for and incorporated into the City’s Capital Improvement Program. Other physical improvements may be completed as part of private development.

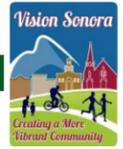
5. **Monitoring and Re-Prioritization** – On a regular basis, City staff should report to the City Council and community on progress in implementation, then initiate a new round of collaborative priority-setting to begin the next phase of implementation.



*Vision Sonora implementation will be a collaborative effort of multiple partners and community members. This diagram shows what several different partners currently contribute to building a successful business environment in Historic Downtown Sonora.*

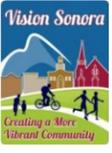


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- G. Cost Estimates**
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# 1 Background and Process

## Introduction

Funded by a grant from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) awarded to the Tuolumne County Transportation County and sub allocated to the City, the Vision Sonora project was initiated to provide Sonora with a plan for a more vibrant community by directing physical improvements along the Highway 49 and Washington Street corridors.

The Vision Sonora plan provides strategies and implementation tools necessary to revitalize the local economy, enhance Sonora's unique historic character, and improve the quality of life.

To develop the plan, the City and project team worked in partnership with the Tuolumne County Transportation Council, Caltrans, a community Advisory Committee, a Steering Committee, and other community members. The community's vision formed the foundation of this plan.

## Study Area

The Vision Sonora Plan study area follows the alignment of SR 49 from SR 108 to Preston Place and S. Washington Street from SR 108 to SR 49, also including Green Street and Stewart Street in the historic downtown core. **Figure 1-1, Project Study Area** demonstrates the project study limits. The corridors in the study area are characterized primarily by commercial uses and historic mixed uses, as well as the Mother Lode Fairgrounds, Sonora High School, Woods Creek Rotary Park and Coffill Park, and undeveloped land.

## Planning Process

### Steering and Advisory Committees

Two committees oversaw the development of Vision Sonora. The Steering Committee provided a forum for communication and oversight from the City of Sonora, Tuolumne County Transportation Council, and Caltrans. The Advisory Committee included volunteers representing community interests including youth, seniors, economic development and tourism, historic heritage, and businesses. These committees met several times to review progress and provide input on the plan development.



### Existing Conditions Study

The Existing Conditions Study included an analysis of today's Sonora in the areas of urban design, history, economy, and transportation. Transportation topics covered in the study include the roadway network and traffic volume data, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit service, and parking. Key findings from this initial study and subsequent analysis are presented throughout the Vision Sonora Plan.

### Vision Sonora Website

An interactive website was provided from November 2012 to April 2013 as a forum for community idea generation and feedback. Using technology from vendor MindMixer, this website allowed contributors to share their ideas and comment on those of others. The website also showed which topics were generating the most discussion and which online contributors were most active on the site. Through the site, 200 active participants contributed at least 160 ideas and made over 400 comments.

### Community Visioning Week

The Community Visioning Week provided the Sonora community with four days of opportunities to create ideas for future improvements to Sonora's historic downtown core and commercial corridors. From Wednesday, January 16th through Saturday, January 19th, 2013, a team of community planners and transportation engineers worked alongside the community to develop concepts for the "Vision Sonora" plan. Approximately 200 people participated in the Community Visioning Week—not including online participation.

### Organizations Participating in Vision Sonora

- Board of Realtors
- Central Sierra Arts Council
- Columbia College
- Downtown Merchants Association
- Historic Sonora Chamber of Commerce
- Kiwanis
- Lodging Association of Tuolumne County
- Mother Lode Fairgrounds
- Sierra Repertory Theatre
- Sonora 49er Rotary
- Sonora Area Foundation
- Sonora Beautiful
- Sonora High School
- Sonora Regional Hospital
- Soroptimist
- Stage 3 Theater
- Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce
- Tuolumne County Commission on Aging
- Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority
- Tuolumne County Historical Society
- Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau
- Tuolumne Heritage Committee

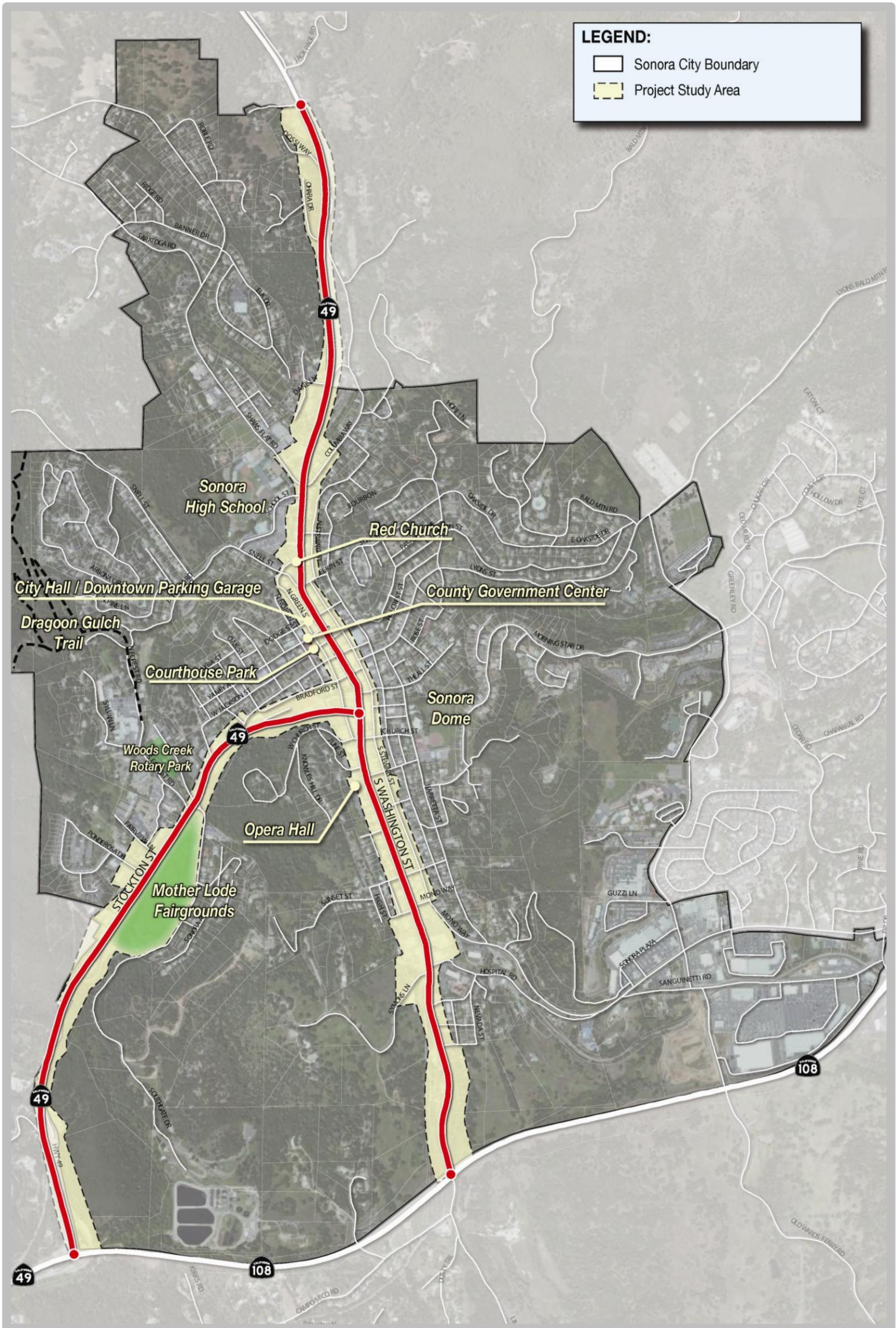
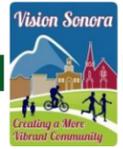


Figure 1-1. Project Study Area



Events during Community Visioning Week included the following:

**Community Workshops**

Three community workshops were held at the Sonora Opera Hall that built upon each other and the input received in other Visioning Week activities.

**Youth Workshop**

The project team had a special meeting with the Sonora High School Leadership Class to hear youth perspectives on Sonora’s future. Activities were similar to those in the first community workshop during Community Visioning Week.

**Corridor Walks and Trolley Talks**

Three “corridor walk” workshops and two “trolley talk” workshops toured the project area. Participants were asked to make observations about land use and development, character and feel, public spaces, pedestrian experience, bicycle and vehicle circulation, and parking.

**Discussion Groups**

Five sessions were held at Opera Hall to provide opportunities for focused discussions on particular topics. The City invited topic experts and stakeholders to participate in the discussion groups. The general public was welcome to participate as well. Topics were as follows:

- Downtown Businesses and Economic Development;
- Healthy Sonora;
- Historic Preservation;
- Parking and Signage; and
- Visitors and Tourism.

**Interviews**

Project team members conducted interviews with Council and Planning Commission members, and with Downtown businesses, to hear their particular perspectives.

**Parking Intercept Surveys**

Project team members conducted brief surveys with people as they walked to and from parking spaces and lots in the historic downtown core. These surveys included questions about parking, the purpose of their visit, and what they liked and didn’t like about the downtown.

**Vision Summary**

A full summary of community input received through the community visioning process is included in this document as **Appendix C**. The following goals captured the main points in the comments, concerns, and ideas of community members:

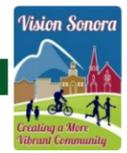
- **Strengthen Sonora’s Identity and History**
- **Attract and Welcome Visitors**
- **Create Places to Enjoy**
- **Boost Downtown Appeal and Commerce**
- **Enable Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel**
- **Take Care of Locals**

These goals and many community suggestions were the foundation of this Vision Sonora document, as described in the next chapter, **The Vision**.





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# 2 The Vision

## Historic Sonora



Sonora of yesteryear...



And today, with many historic buildings still standing

Sonora, the tenth oldest city in California, was founded as a mining town during the California Gold Rush and incorporated in 1851. Some buildings in Sonora have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the sense of history is a major draw for visitors. Downtown Sonora has a strongly historic character, with a charming “Old West” look that allows visitors to glimpse the past in a beautiful wooded setting in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada.

Contemporary life coexists with history in Sonora. As the seat of rural Tuolumne County, Sonora serves as a regional center for commerce, government, and medical services. Downtown Sonora serves as one of Tuolumne County’s primary destinations for tourists and visitors while providing County residents with a variety of dining, art, culture, entertainment, and specialty retail options. The Mother Lode Fairgrounds, Columbia College, Tuolumne County Arts Alliance, and the Opera Hall are important cultural assets in Sonora.

The community has successfully maintained its small town feel and historic character while continuing to adapt to changing economic trends and providing for residents’ quality of life. The City does this through restoration and adaptive re-use of Sonora’s buildings, organization of community events, and continued investment in the infrastructure in the Historic Downtown Core. Vision Sonora is another important step as the community preserves its past and defines its future.

## Vision Sonora Plan

The Vision Sonora effort began when local partners came together to seek a Community Based Transportation Planning grant from Caltrans to develop a plan for a more vibrant community, focused mainly on improvements along the Highway 49 and Washington Street corridors. Community members hoped that the plan would address the needs for increased pedestrian activity and safety, better transit access and facilities, more convenient parking, and improved traffic flows—and that the plan would boost economic vitality through these improvements, as well as through tourism promotion, beautification, and wayfinding signage.

Through a robust, community-based process, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders described their vision for the future of Sonora. Their vision is very much the foundation of the Vision Sonora Plan.

The people of Sonora recognize the close relationships between the character of Sonora’s streets, its attractiveness to visitors, the well-being of its residents, and the vitality of its businesses. Therefore, the Vision Sonora Plan recommends programs and physical improvements that address these interconnected points, and seeks to involve a broad collaboration of community partners in its implementation.

Sonora is a city rich in character, history, and culture. Rather than seeking to change Sonora, this plan acknowledges these community assets and seeks to make them stronger, more visible, and better appreciated.

***In this vision, Sonora finds new ways to showcase its unique identity and history; it is enriched with public spaces, parks, and green space; its streets actively support pedestrians, bicycles, and transit; it is a community that openly attracts and welcomes visitors, but still takes care of the locals; and at its core is a thriving and flourishing downtown.***



Community Visioning Week discussion group



Vision Sonora online discussion forum



## Reflecting Community Vision Goals

The following table provides a guide to the Vision Sonora Plan recommendations, organized by the goals that were articulated in the Vision Summary.

Community Vision Goal	Relevant Chapter & Recommendations
<b>Strengthen Sonora's Identity and History</b>	<p><b>Mobility &amp; Community Design</b> – Improve gateways and corridors to enhance Sonora's unique character and sense of history.</p> <p><b>Tourism, Local Economy, &amp; Community</b> – Grow cultural heritage tourism in Sonora, enhance historic resources, and improve the appearance of commercial areas.</p>
<b>Attract and Welcome Visitors</b>	<p><b>Tourism, Local Economy, &amp; Community</b> – Improve tourism marketing strategies and provide more information for visitors.</p> <p><b>Mobility &amp; Community Design</b> – Post wayfinding signs and information kiosks that guide visitors to Sonora's attractions and parking.</p>
<b>Create Places to Enjoy</b>	<p><b>Mobility &amp; Community Design</b> – Create new public spaces, including a new plaza that was conceived at one of the community visioning workshops, as well as several smaller gathering spaces and pedestrian streets. Make improvements to downtown parks.</p>
<b>Boost Historic Downtown Core Appeal and Commerce</b>	<p><b>Tourism, Local Economy, &amp; Community</b> – Improve the historic downtown core image and safety. Provide business assistance and encourage Sonora's businesses to flourish through coordinated marketing strategies.</p> <p><b>Mobility &amp; Community Design</b> – Increase pedestrian activity in the historic downtown core through streetscape improvements and new public spaces.</p>
<b>Enable Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel</b>	<p><b>Mobility &amp; Community Design</b> – Create better connections for walking and biking, as well as a better pedestrian environment. This chapter also addresses congestion, parking, and transit service, which were other issues raised by the community.</p>
<b>Take Care of Locals</b>	<p><b>Tourism, Local Economy, &amp; Community</b> – Create a better quality of life for Sonora's residents by strengthening the economy, providing for resident health and well-being, promoting use of the historic downtown core, and encouraging local arts and culture. Engage the community in Vision Sonora implementation.</p>

## Picturing the Future

The graphic on the next page is taken from the Vision Poster, which is a visual summary of Vision Sonora that is intended to be distributed in order to familiarize more community members with the plan. The graphic in Figure 1-1 illustrates many of the physical improvements recommended in this Vision Sonora Plan.

The vision graphic provides a bird's eye view of Vision Sonora. But what would the improvements look like on the ground? Read below to take a quick tour of the future Sonora as it might appear once the recommendations in this plan are implemented—along the “gateway corridors” that serve as Sonora's primary entryways, and in the historic downtown core. Images in this section are explained in more detail in later chapters of the Vision Sonora Plan: **Mobility & Community Design** and **Tourism, Local Economy, & Community**.

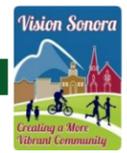
### Gateway Corridors

#### Stockton Street and Trail

From south of the Fairgrounds to Washington Street, the wooded slopes of Stockton Street are complemented by landscaping, trees, and a trail along the roadway. At the Fairgrounds entrance, a prominent welcome sign greets travelers, looking much like the stone monument sign that once stood in the middle of Washington Street. Stone walls and landscaping around the historic train engine create one of many new pedestrian spaces in Sonora where visitors can linger. Along the east side of the roadway, a trail allows bicycling and walking between the Fairgrounds and historic downtown core. Sidewalks and landscaped parkways on the west side of the roadway are also designed for easier pedestrian travel while beautifying the corridor and encouraging drivers to slow down. The pedestrian pathways on both sides of the street are lighted at night.



Fairgrounds entrance



**South Washington**

On SR 108, new artwork along the railroad bridge provides the visitor’s first taste of the “Sonora welcome” before turning onto South Washington. There, a linear park along the roadway provides a compelling place to stop and learn about the area from storyboards while strolling along a path and enjoying views of wooded hills. Heading north toward the historic downtown core, Washington is a walkable street with newly installed sidewalks, landscaping, and historic-style lighting.

Travelers reaching Washington from Stockton are greeted by a low stone wall and landscaping that announces their arrival in the historic downtown core.

**North Washington**

Southbound travelers on SR 49 see a stone monument and landscaping similar to those near the Fairgrounds, letting them know to slow down as they approach town. A reconfigured intersection at Shaws Flat/School Street is more comfortable for both drivers and pedestrians, and has landscaping that provides a striking gateway into town. The Red Church intersection at Snell has easier crossings and a landscaped gathering area that create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians. This intersection marks the northernmost point of the historic downtown core.

**Historic Downtown Sonora**

From the Red Church to Church Street, Washington is visibly more attractive for pedestrians than before, while still accommodating the passage of cars and providing on-street parking. Street trees and landscaping provide a soft green edge along the roadway, and there are several places for people to sit and enjoy the scene, lingering in front of businesses.

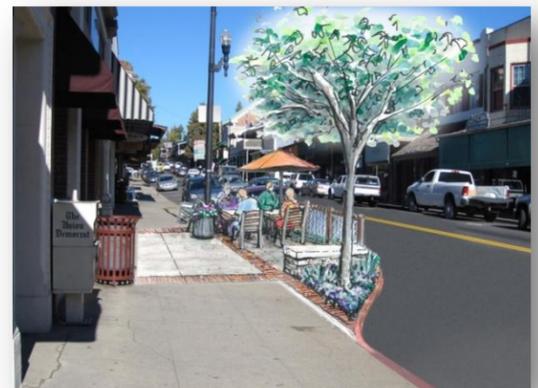
Directional signage and kiosks with a consistent visual theme assist visitors in finding parking and attractions. Visitors intending to stay for longer than an errand or lunchtime meal feel comfortable parking within a short walk of the historic downtown core, while residents making a quick trip have an easier time finding parking closer to their destination. Bicyclists use Stewart Street as their primary north/south route through downtown. Pedestrians find it comfortable to walk along Sonora’s sidewalks and cross the streets.

Property owners are fixing up their buildings and merchants take pride in their storefront displays. Vacant buildings are stages for exhibits of art and history, but they are not vacant for long. Regular cleanup efforts engage community members in taking care of their beloved downtown.

At night, historic-style street lights and decorative lights in the trees set the tone for an evening on the town. Businesses are open later, especially when there is an evening event downtown.

Thanks to Stewart Plaza and the network of streets around it that can be closed to vehicle traffic, the downtown is the staging ground for a growing number of events that draw residents and visitors. Many of these events showcase local creative and artistic talent. Historic re-enactments and festivals contribute to Sonora’s reputation as a destination for cultural and heritage tourism.

In more ways than before, historic downtown Sonora is the cultural heart of Tuolumne County.



Parklet on Washington



New public space at Stewart Plaza



Stockton Street and Washington Street before



Low wall and signage at Stockton Street and Washington Street

**A Visit to Sonora**

**One day in the not-too-distant future...**

A Bay Area woman sees photos online from her friend’s recent visit to Sonora and thinks it could be perfect for the weekend getaway that she and her husband have been talking about. She easily finds a website about downtown Sonora with more photos and information about upcoming events, places to stay, and things to do. The couple decides to stay in Sonora on a weekend when there will be a combined farmers market and art fair in Stewart Plaza, and an outdoor movie that evening. They are looking forward to the trolley tour and seeing the historic buildings, some of which have been beautifully renovated recently. Using a travel app, they find a nice place for dinner and then download the Sonora app so they can look up more information when they arrive.



Multi-use trail on Stockton

Driving to Sonora in the morning, they turn onto Stockton Street from Highway 108 and are intrigued by the trail along the roadway. It is too early to check in to their lodging, so they follow signs to find parking at Church and Washington. The kiosk there shows the way to Stewart Plaza where they enjoy the farmers market and art fair. The temporarily-closed streets near Stewart Plaza are lined with vendors and there is a group of music students from Columbia College playing by Sonora Creek in the little amphitheater where an outdoor movie will be shown that evening. Chairs and tables have been set up in the Linoberg Paseo, where people are eating food from vendors.

Strolling along Washington, the couple is surprised to find parklets like the ones they have seen in other cities. Colorful window displays draw them into stores; one of the windows has a historical exhibit from the Tuolumne County Museum with a recorded message that the couple listens to by calling a phone number. Ultimately their attention is drawn to Coffill Park where they find another food vendor and decide to have lunch at one of the picnic tables in the shade. Discovering the Dragoon Gulch trail on the Sonora app, they walk along the connection to the trail from the Historic Downtown Core and go for a hike before spending the evening in town. Their curiosity about Sonora’s history has been partly satisfied by the historical markers they have seen and information in the app, but they are still looking forward to Sunday’s trolley tour and learning more about California’s past.



Linoberg converted into a pedestrian space

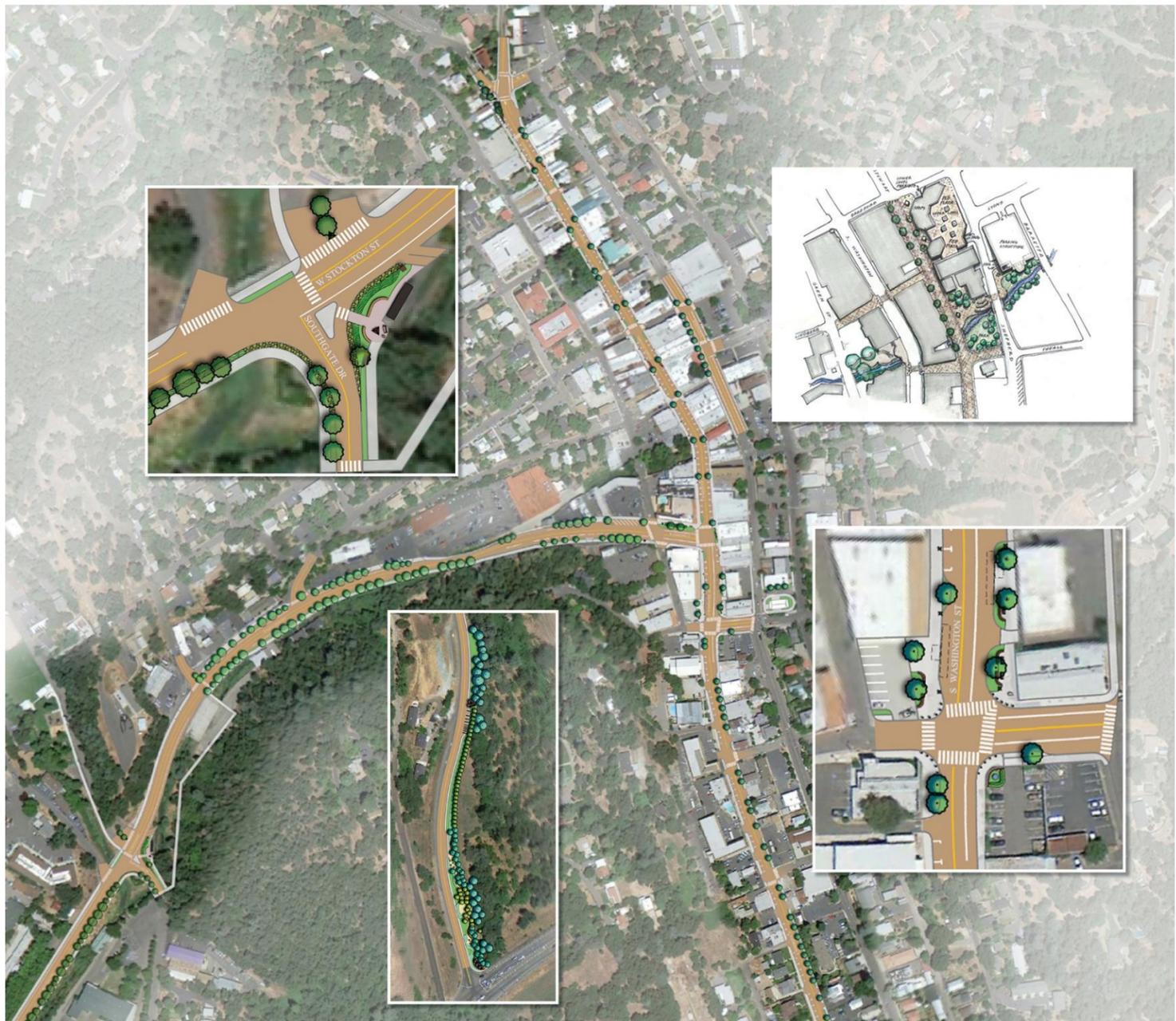
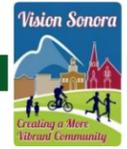


Figure 2-1 Vision Sonora Improvement Concepts

## *Vision Sonora*

### *Creating a More Vibrant Community*



# 3 Mobility & Community Design

## 3.1 Existing Conditions

### Key Findings

#### Corridors

The study corridors are made up of three major roadways- Washington Street, Stewart Street, and Stockton Street. Each roadway has distinct features which contribute to the character of the area and lends itself to different strategies for improvement.

#### Washington Street

Washington Street has distinct character areas. Heading north from SR 108, it is largely undeveloped with some light manufacturing uses until reaching the historic railroad crossing at Hospital Road, which is primarily a resident-serving area with a post office and large commercial buildings. Sidewalks begin in this area. There are hopes of reviving the rail operations along this line for tourism, at which point there may be a passenger stop at this location. Commercial buildings become smaller at Restano Way, soon becoming interspersed with historic homes whose trees line the street. At the William Street intersection, Washington has a decidedly commercial feel again—at first with parking lots fronting the street, and then transitioning into the historic downtown core where historic buildings front directly on the street.

North of the Stockton Street intersection, Washington Street is most clearly recognizable as the historic downtown core, with sidewalks shaded by arcades, balconies, and other overhangs, but no street trees. Some utility poles are outfitted with historic-style lights and decorative banners. There are few benches or places to sit, some trash receptacles are provided, and the two parks provide shady resting places. Between the curbs, there are two travel lanes and street parking on either side—in peak season, the roadway is full of cars and trucks.

The Snell Street intersection at the Red Church marks the terminus of the historic downtown core, with the roadway taking on a residential character between the Red Church and Sonora High School. North of the high school and where Woods Creek

crosses under the roadway, there are some large commercial uses and a welcome sign for historic Sonora. The roadway is then largely undeveloped until the northern city limit where there is a cluster of public uses.

#### Stewart Street

Stewart Street serves as the secondary north/south connection through the historic downtown core and has an alleyway feel in that area. Downtown buildings for the most part turn their backs to Stewart on the west side and do not present as attractive an appearance as they do on Washington. The east side of Stewart is sparsely developed and has the largest surface parking lots in the historic downtown core. In many areas, walkways are narrow, deteriorating, or have obstructions such as utility poles. South of Church Street, Stewart Street becomes more residential with some services making this a mixed use area.

#### Stockton Street

Stockton Street has the least intense development of the study corridors. Near SR 108 it has a natural character as it hugs the City boundary, then passes low commercial buildings and a traditional welcome sign showcasing Sonora’s civic organizations. At the Fairgrounds entrance, a historic train locomotive, “Welcome to Historic Sonora” sign, pedestrian crossing, and roadway intersections create the first real sense of entry into Sonora. Woods and Sonora Creeks braid around Stockton Street and Knowles Hill rises on its east side as the roadway curves toward downtown. Commercial buildings along Stockton are set back from the street with parking lots in front, often without sidewalks and with little landscaping. There is a manmade rock wall on the west side where Stockton Street becomes a 4-lane street. At the intersection with Washington Street, Stockton Street is flanked by two-story buildings on either side: Sonora Inn and Bank of America. The sidewalk along Sonora Inn is narrow and the building side wall has few windows on the ground floor. Stockton Street terminates at Washington Street.



Washington Street in the Historic Downtown Core



Stewart Street



Washington Street in the Historic Downtown Core



Stockton Street

**Wayfinding**

Current wayfinding signage consists of welcome signs and various metal signs of different styles that are either affixed to utility poles or freestanding. Standard highway signage points out major visitor attractions such as the Fairgrounds, Columbia State Park, and Angels Camp. Other directional signs point out destinations including the Police and Fire Departments, Chamber of Commerce, some downtown attractions, and some public parking.

A sign listing Sonora’s civic organizations is the first official welcome on Route 49 heading north from Highway 108, followed by a “Tourist Information” sign for the Visitor Center. A monument-style “Welcome to Historic Sonora” sign with a stone base then greets visitors at the Fairgrounds. A wooden sign in a similar style greets drivers traveling south toward the high school intersection: “Welcome to Sonora – Queen of the Southern Mines”.

The utilization patterns of parking lots indicated that additional signage could help drivers to find their way into less-utilized lots. As suggested by community members, wayfinding signs could also be used to direct visitors to attractions such as downtown, the Fairgrounds, Dragoon Gulch trail, parks, recreation areas, and historic sites.



Sign in the Historic Downtown Core



North Gateway Sign



Sign on Stockton Street

Existing Signs

**Public Parks**

Coffill Park, once the site of a livery stable, is seen as a treasure in Sonora’s downtown, but its location below street level means that some people drive and walk past on Washington without noticing what it has to offer. Dense vegetation also makes it difficult to see in and out of the park from Green or Washington Streets, and raises potential safety concerns.

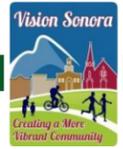
Courthouse Park, a County-owned park, is part of the Tuolumne County Courthouse, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the location for summer concerts in the park, although the landscaping is not ideal for use as an event space.

**Historic Character**

The historic character of early Sonora inspired many of the recommendations in this plan. Note the stone monument that once stood in the middle of Washington Street—this is the trapezoidal base used for the monument signs proposed in this chapter. Stone walls proposed in this plan are based on the historic stone walls that still stand throughout Sonora. The historic fountain that also stood in the middle of Washington now stands at the corner of Church and Washington, where this plan proposes additional landscaping and public space improvements. Proposed enhancements on the railroad



Historic Sonora



overcrossing on SR 108 just west of Washington Street would call attention the City's historic fabric.

### **Travel Speeds**

Speeding vehicles can create noise levels and a sense of danger that make it uncomfortable for pedestrians to walk along or cross streets. According to traffic observations for Vision Sonora, vehicles tended to travel 4 to 10 mph higher than the speed limits at the "gateway" locations and "gateway corridor" locations described in this chapter—that is, both near the city limits and in close proximity to downtown. Typically, posted speed limits are set at the 85th percentile speed, meaning that 15% of vehicles tend to exceed that speed. Traffic congestion occurs in the historic downtown core, resulting in vehicles traveling slower than the posted speed limit of 25 mph on Washington Street between Linoberg and Bradford Streets.

### **Traffic Congestion**

Congestion is a concern in Sonora. A traffic study of both roadway segments and intersections was conducted in early November 2012. Higher levels of congestion than the City's established thresholds were observed on the following roadway segments:

- South Washington Street between Tuolumne Street and Hwy 108
- South Washington Street between Gold and William Streets.

Today, traffic delays higher than the City's established thresholds occur at the following intersections:

- South Washington Street and Restano Way
- South Washington Street and Church Street
- South Washington Street and Stockton Street
- Washington Street and Snell Street
- Washington Street and Shaws Flat Road
- SR 49 and SR 108

At the unsignalized intersection of Washington Street and Shaws Flat Road, traffic volumes meet several of the Caltrans standards for installing a traffic signal. The presence of school aged children combined with poor geometrics, makes safety a concern. A conflict point occurs between motorists traveling from northbound Washington Street to Columbia Way and pedestrians crossing Washington Street. The intersection alignment allows motorist to travel at higher speeds at the crosswalk location. Improvements that mitigate poor traffic operations and safety concerns including a traffic signal or roundabout were investigated.



Historic 49 Trolley

Multi-modal improvements are recommended at intersections of Washington Street and Church Street, Stockton Street and Snell Street. Providing major roadway improvements, including additional travel lanes or turn lanes, are not feasible at these locations due to right-of-way constraints in the historic downtown core. The recommended pedestrian and bicycle improvements aim to encourage people to walk or bike between destinations in the downtown.

An extension of Greenley Road is planned to address congestion in Downtown Sonora. The Greenley Road extension will give travelers an alternative to traveling through the historic downtown core, resulting in lower daily traffic volumes on Washington Street. Although lower traffic volumes are anticipated, several intersections along Washington Street continue to experience delays higher than the City's established thresholds.

Traffic volumes for Washington Street and Stewart Street were investigated to determine if the streets could be made into one-way pairs. Traffic volumes on both roadway facilities are high, resulting in minimal traffic mitigation by converting to one-way pairs. In addition, geometric constraints occur at both the north and south ends making it difficult to go from one-way to two-way operation as you exit the historic downtown core.

### **Transit Service**

Sonora is served by three bus routes and the Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS). Potential changes to transit service are being considered during the development of this plan. Currently, Route 1 has stops within the City of Sonora. Route 2 connects Sonora to Sierra Village and Columbia, including Columbia College. Route 3 connects Sonora to Jamestown and Columbia, including Columbia College. Courthouse Park is a transit stop on all four lines, but this is a problematic location for service and alternatives are being considered. South Washington and Church Street is a stop on three of the lines and is likely to remain. The Historic 49 Trolley runs during special events. YARTS provides regularly scheduled public transit service into Yosemite National Park and the gateway communities along its routes in buses. The YARTS Highway 120 N. Route begins in Sonora.

### **Bicycle Environment**

Within the project limits, there are no existing bicycle facilities. However, several bicycle facilities are planned in the City of Sonora 2020 General Plan, Tuolumne County Recreation Plan, and Regional Transportation Plan. These planned bikeways include Class I off-street bike paths along Woods Creek (including a segment along Stockton Street and another near Columbia Way), Sonora Creek (including a segment which follows Stockton Street, then crosses downtown), and the Sierra Railroad (including a segment along South Washington near SR 108). Planned on-street bicycle facilities would create a



Bicyclist on Washington Street

north/south connection through Sonora along the South Washington corridor. These would either be on-street striped bike lanes (Class II) or Class III on-street bike routes (not striped) with bicycles sharing traffic lanes.

In much of downtown, there is limited street right-of-way width between the storefronts of historic buildings. The recommendations for downtown streetscapes in this chapter seek to expand the limited pedestrian space, provide more street trees and lighting, and preserve on-street parking as much as possible. These goals are not compatible with providing roadway width for dedicated bike lanes. However, roadway markings and signage should be used to remind drivers to share the road with bicyclists through this core area where vehicle traffic speeds are relatively slow and compatible with bicycle speeds.

As described above, off-street paths for bicycles and pedestrians are planned. Along Stockton Road, right-of-way is sufficient to provide an off-street trail for bicycles and pedestrians between the Fairgrounds and South Washington Street. Several other off-street trail connections are planned in Sonora, including trails along Sonora and Woods Creeks.

**Pedestrian Environment**

Sidewalks are provided throughout the historic downtown core, but several street segments have sidewalk on only one side and there are some segments with no sidewalk on either side—especially on streets outside the core corridors of Washington and Stewart Streets. Some sidewalks are in need of maintenance, and some sidewalk widths may not be adequate for pedestrians to move comfortably and avoid obstacles, especially pedestrians in wheelchairs.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures that public places and commercial facilities are equally accessible to everyone. Any new construction of sidewalks and curb ramps should aim to comply with ADA standards. ADA curb ramps include a maximum slope of 1:12, a minimum width of 3 feet, detectable warning surfaces and a flat landing area 5 feet by 5 feet. These dimensions ensure that a wheelchair can easily navigate the ramp. In certain cases where the maximum slopes cannot be met, handrails shall be provided.

The steepness of Sonora’s streets makes accessibility a challenge in many areas. Curb ramps exist at many intersections in the historic downtown core, but are not compliant with current ADA standards. Some ramps are not flush with the street pavement and other ramps do not align with the pedestrian path of travel across the street.

Improving crosswalk markings by providing more prominent treatments such as zebra or “Continental” stripes increases visibility of pedestrian crossings in high volume areas. Providing curb extensions, pop-outs, and pedestrian refuge islands can shorten the pedestrian crossing distance and improve the

pedestrian experience. Curb extensions at street corners make it easier for pedestrians to cross by shortening the distance between curbs. They also slow vehicles as they turn across those pedestrian crossings, giving drivers more time to notice pedestrians. Landscaped pop-outs around crosswalks shorten the roadway width where pedestrians are exposed to vehicle traffic. Pedestrian refuge islands are what the name suggests— islands in the roadway that allow pedestrians to cross a lane of traffic and wait on the island until it is safe to cross another lane.



Parking Structure Near City Hall

**Parking**

The total number of parking spaces in the Sonora historic downtown core is 1,626, of which 1,130 are publicly available. Analysis of parking occupancy rates in early November 2012 during the peak period of noon to 1 pm found occupancy rates of over 85% in the historic downtown core between Dodge and Theall Streets, while other areas within a few blocks were underutilized, as shown in **Figure 3-1, Downtown Parking Occupancy**. While 85% is considered an ideal occupancy rate, rates higher than 85% typically result in drivers circling to look for parking, contributing to congestion.

To get a better picture of the parking needs, the downtown parking area was divided into 3 sections. The first section is on the northwest side of town and includes the main parking for County and City services. The second section is on the northeast side of town and parking mainly serves people visiting, shopping and eating on Washington Street. In the southern portion of Sonora, properties typically provide private parking, resulting in less demand for public parking.

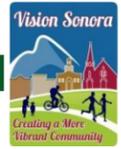


Sidewalk Curb and Ramp on Washington Street



Crosswalks at Washington Street and Church Street

**Pedestrian Environment**



The parking occupancy rates observed demonstrate different needs in each part of downtown Sonora. On the northwest side of town, on-street parking has high occupancy; however there are private lots with low occupancy. On the northeast side of town, it is the opposite; on-street parking is available in close proximity to the downtown shops. However, public parking lots are full. Due to a supply of private parking spaces south of Church Street, the southern portion of Sonora has underutilized on-street parking.

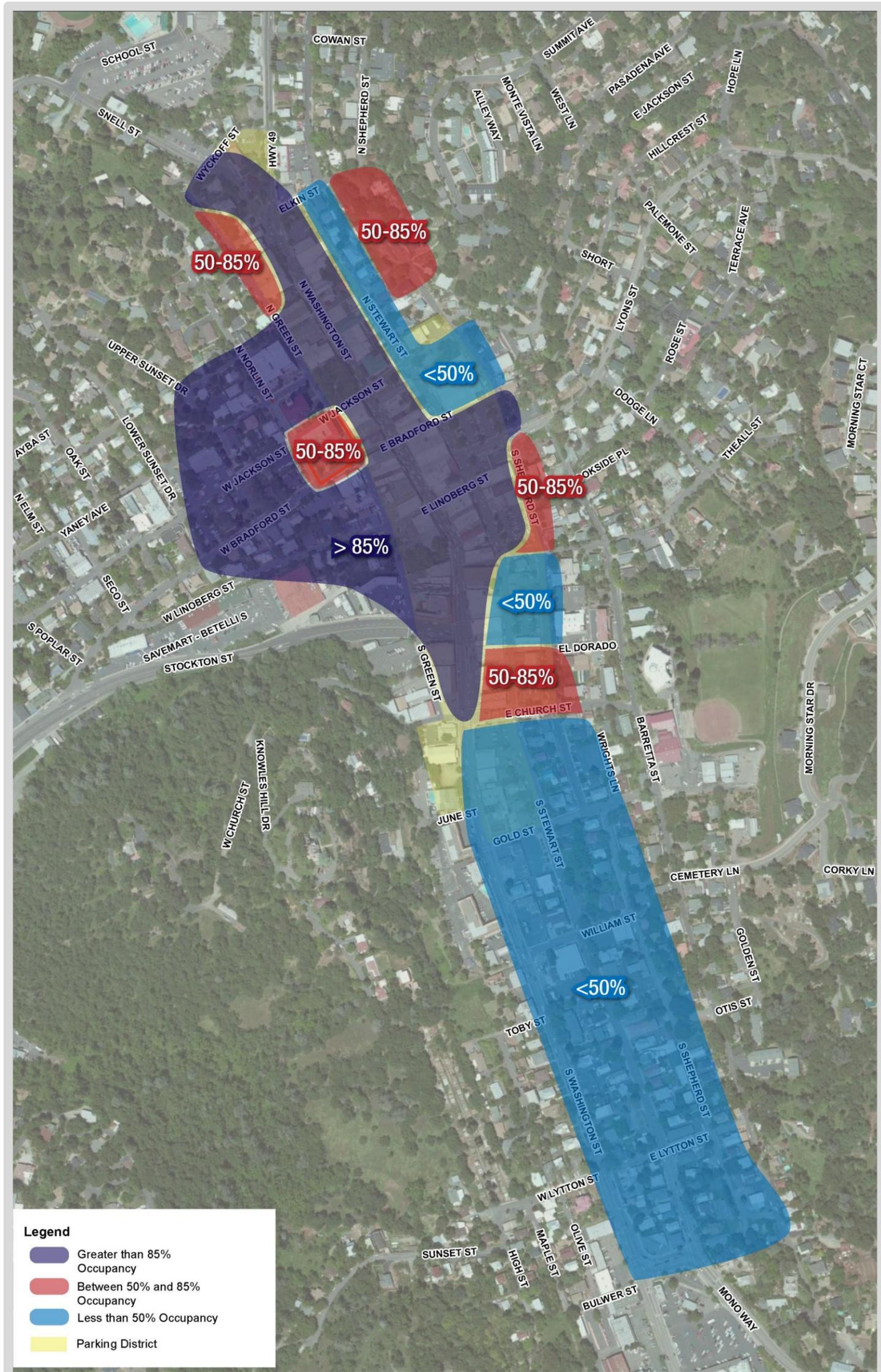


Figure 3-1 Downtown Parking Occupancy

## 3.2 Recommendations

### Improvement Concept

The recommendations in this chapter seek to improve transportation on foot, bicycle, transit and vehicle, while using the design of streetscapes and public places to heighten the appreciation of Sonora as a unique and historic place, create places to host community events, and create excitement and activity in Sonora that boosts commerce. Parking and wayfinding signage recommendations are proposed to make parking easier to find, thus alleviating the congestion caused by drivers looking for parking spaces. Wayfinding signage is also provided for attractions and as part of the gateway and public space improvements.

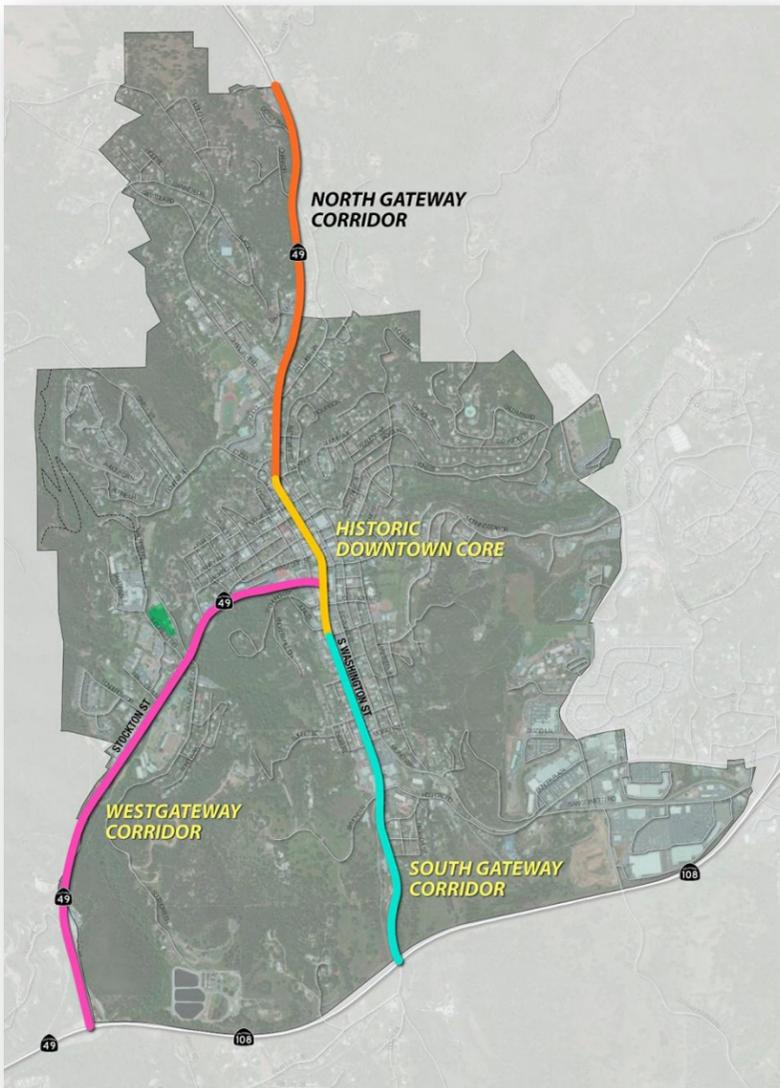
Recommendations are based on an understanding of the built environment in Sonora that is shown in the **Community Design Framework, Figure 3-2. Figure 3-3, Circulation Improvements**, provides an overview of the recommendations to improve mobility for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles and transit.

The recommendations in this chapter for pedestrian and bicycle circulation, intersection improvements, community design and streetscape are organized by location:

- **South Washington– South Gateway Corridor**
- **Stockton Street – West Gateway Corridor**
- **North Washington– North Gateway Corridor**
- **Historic Downtown Core**

In addition, area wide recommendations are provided for:

- **Bicycle Circulation**
- **Pedestrian Circulation**
- **Parking**
- **Transit**
- **Wayfinding Signage**



### Community Design Framework

The **Community Design Framework, Figure 3-2** shows major landmarks and the following important concepts:

#### Gateways.

Gateways are sites where people should notice that they are entering a new place—whether they are entering Sonora, a commercial district, or the historic downtown core. Gateways remind drivers to slow down because they notice that they are entering an area with more activity.

Gateways are indicated by the presence of major intersections or signage. In the case of the **downtown gateways**, there is a significant change in the roadway, the density of buildings, and the proximity of buildings to the street.

**Primary gateways** are opportunities to create a major impression that helps define how people perceive Sonora. **Secondary gateways** are less important but are still part of the entry experience. Gateway improvements proposed in this chapter include signage and landscaping.

#### Gateway corridors.

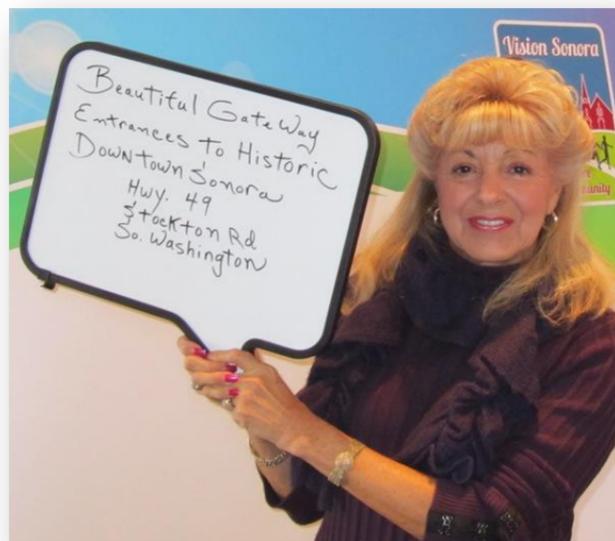
Sonora’s major corridors contribute to the image and identity of Sonora—not only for visitors, but how residents feel about their own community. SR 49 and South Washington can be thought of as **gateway corridors** that lead into and out of the historic downtown core. The experience of traveling along these corridors can be enhanced with streetscape improvements. Closer to downtown, improvements for pedestrians become more important.

#### Public spaces.

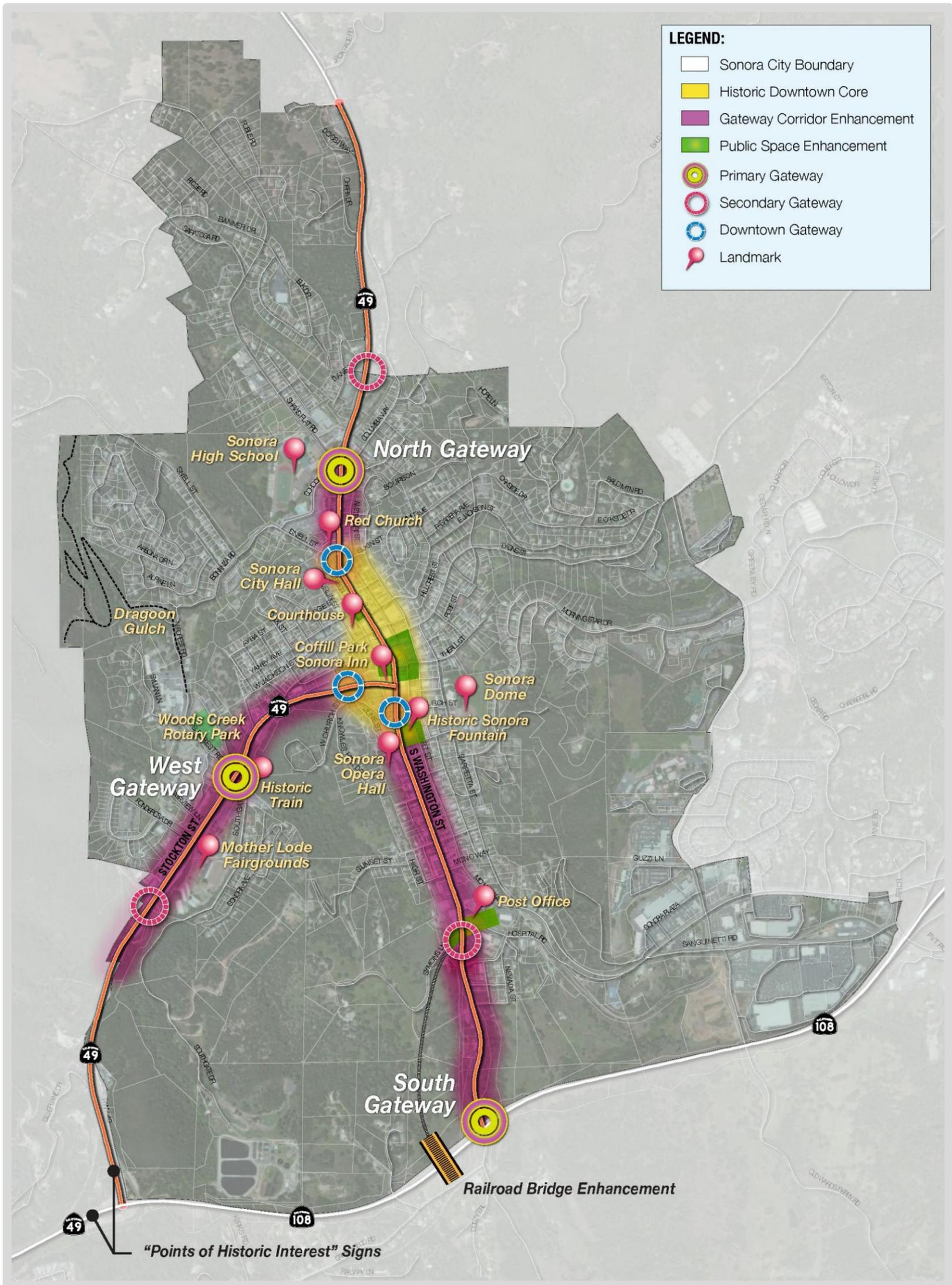
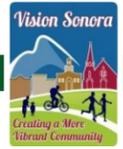
Public spaces are parks, plazas, and small gathering areas where people can attend events, gather around attractions, dine outdoors, or simply sit and enjoy the atmosphere of Sonora. These places allow visitors to rest and friends to meet for conversation. They work best when they are lively, easily accessible, and visible. Community members also expressed a desire for public places to be smoke-free.

#### RELATED VISION GOALS

- Enable Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel*
- Attract and Welcome Visitors*
- Strengthen Sonora’s Identity and History*
- Create Places for People to Enjoy*
- Boost Downtown Appeal and Commerce*



Community Visioning quote



**LEGEND:**

- Sonora City Boundary
- Historic Downtown Core
- Gateway Corridor Enhancement
- Public Space Enhancement
- Primary Gateway
- Secondary Gateway
- Downtown Gateway
- Landmark

Figure 3-2. Community Design Framework

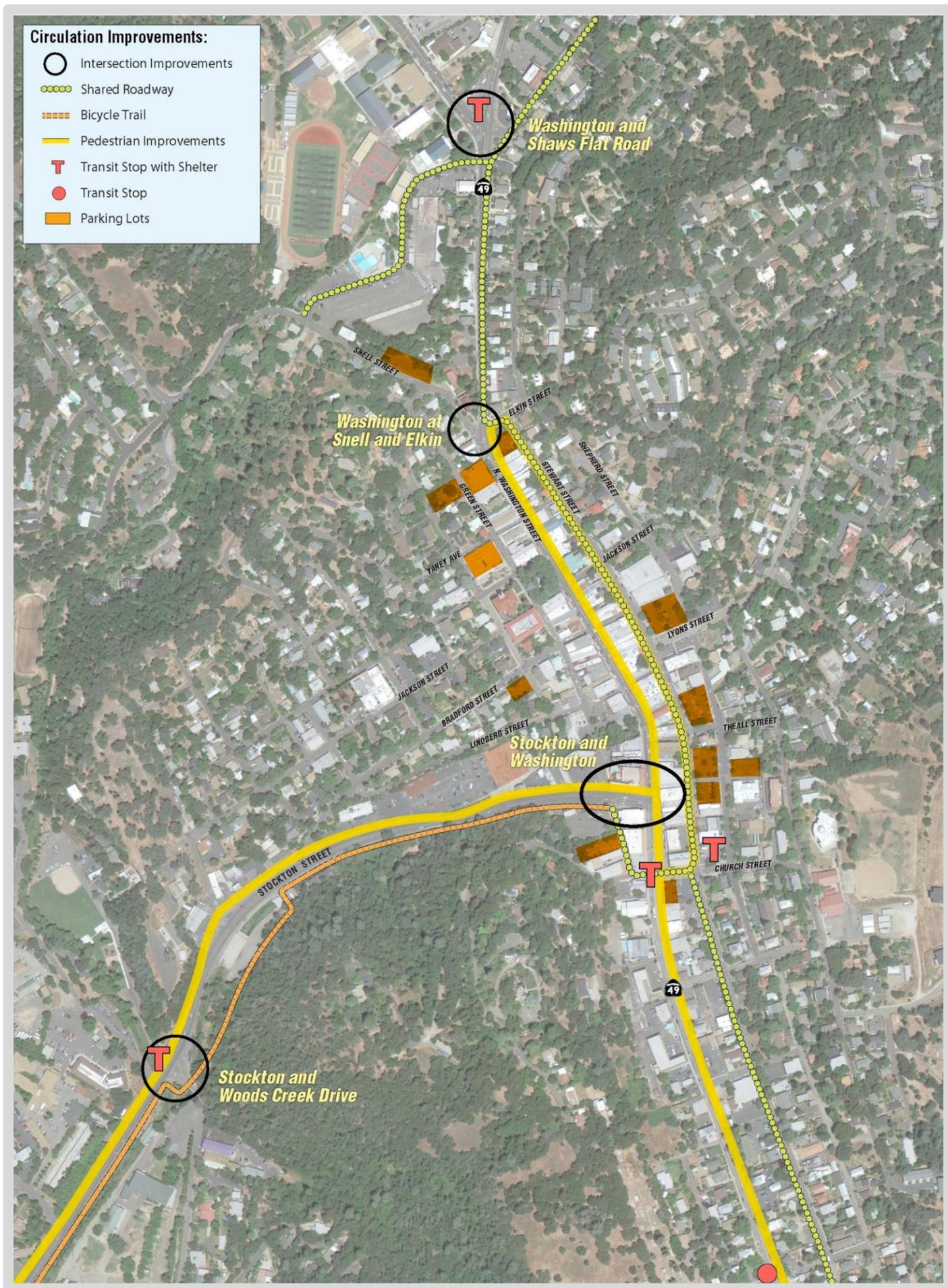
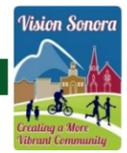


Figure 3-3. Circulation Improvements



### Streetscape Improvements

The following terms are used throughout this chapter to describe different types of streetscape improvements.

**Streetscape.** The streetscape consists of everything in the public right-of-way for a street, from building face to building face. This includes sidewalks, landscaping, signs, street trees, street lights, traffic lights, and street furniture. The definitions below describe other items that may be found in a streetscape. Together, these elements play a major role in shaping the image of the street and the experience for all its users.

**Landscaped parkways.** A parkway is the landscaped strip along a street, between the sidewalk and traffic lanes. Landscaped parkways create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians while making the street more attractive to drivers, often causing them to slow down and observe their surroundings—especially when there are trees in the parkway.

**Parklets.** Parklets are small areas within the roadway that create space for pedestrian amenities such as seating, outdoor dining, trees, and landscaping. They buffer pedestrians from moving vehicles, calm traffic, and beautify streets. They can be permanent or temporary installations that occupy one or two on-street parking spaces.

**Mini-parks.** Roadside mini-parks are created by expanding the pedestrian zone into available roadway space and installing landscaping, seating, and other pedestrian amenities to form a gathering place. Mini-parks are similar to parklets in concept but are not confined to the area of a parking space.

**Pop-outs.** A pop-out is a small landscaped area constructed to “pop out” into the roadway from the rest of the street curb, often in the shape of a semi-circle.

**Curb extensions.** Where the curb is extended into the roadway without landscaping but rather as an extension of the sidewalk, this is simply called a curb extension. These provide better visibility for pedestrians, shorten the length of roadway that they need to cross, and slow cars as they turn.

### Streetscape Furnishings

**Figure 3-4, Streetscape Furnishings** shows a set of streetscape furnishings with classic styles that are complementary to the historic character of Sonora. Wherever recommendations in this plan refer to pedestrian amenities such as benches, street lights, and waste receptacles, these are envisioned to be similar to the furnishings shown here.

The furnishings include **bollards**, short and decorative poles that are placed as barriers between vehicles and pedestrians which may have built-in lighting fixtures. **Waste receptacles** should be placed to allow for separating trash and recyclables.

### Dry Stacked Stone Walls

Throughout this chapter, a number of low dry stacked stone walls are proposed that mimic Sonora’s historic stone walls. While the types of rock or stone used in these walls may vary, the unifying feature is that they all appear to be without grout, and the rocks are simply stacked on top of each other. This gives them a more informal, rough look consistent with Sonora’s semi-rural character. The use of local rocks is recommended. **Figure 3-5** shows examples of rock walls with varying amounts of visible grout.



Figure 3-5. Dry Stacked Stone Walls

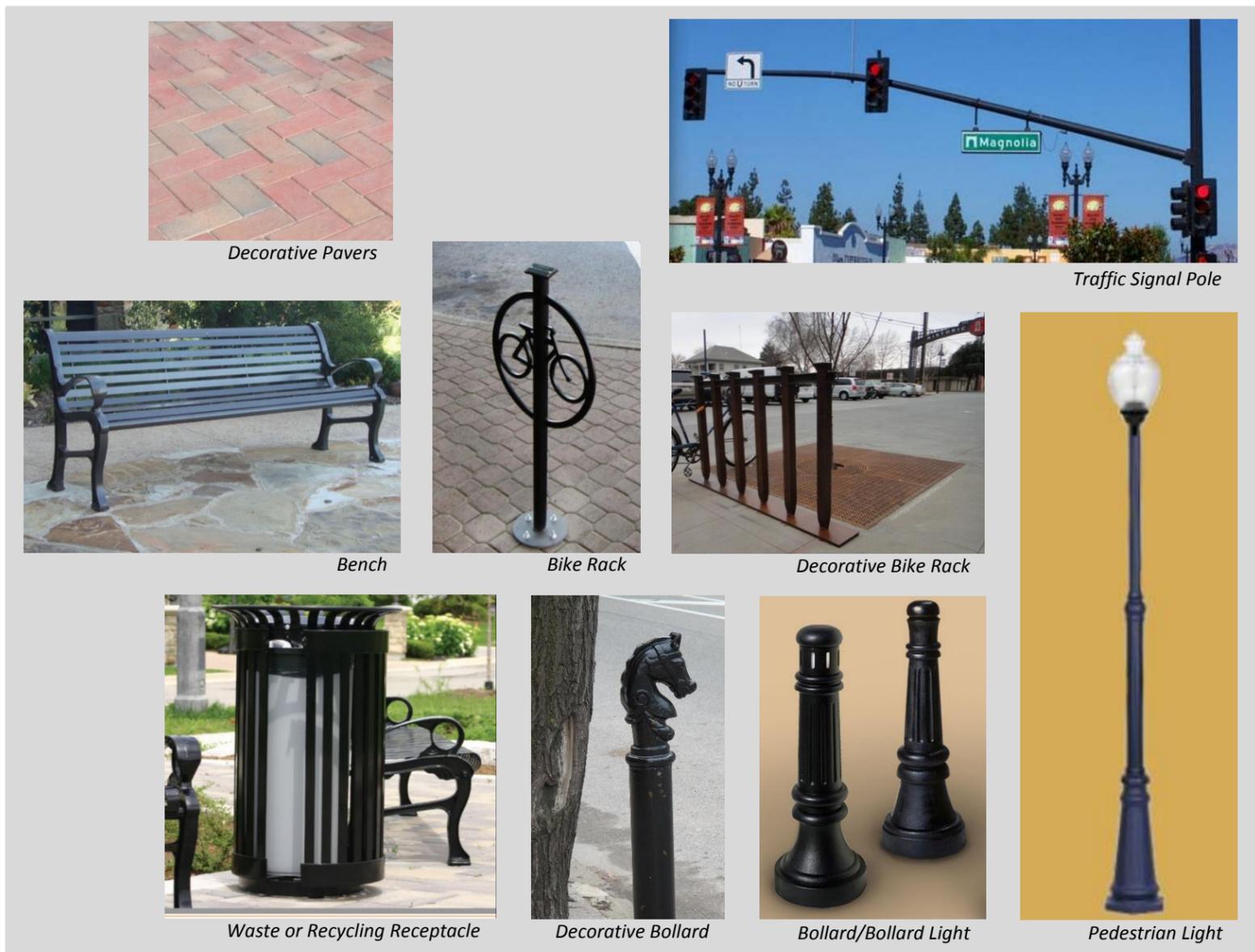
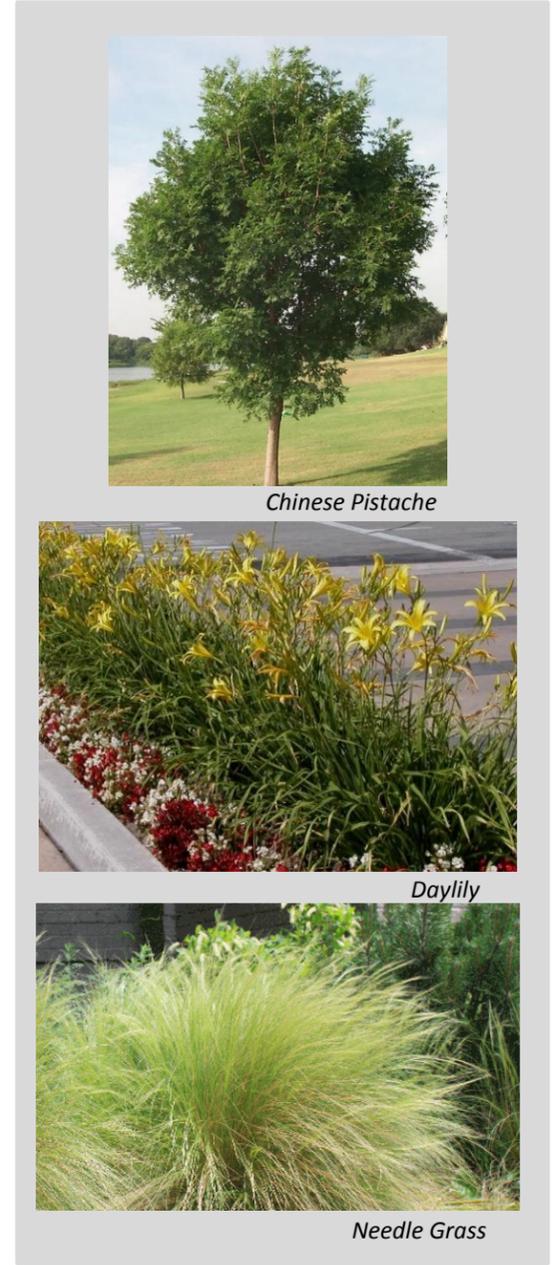


Figure 3-4. Streetscape Furnishings

**Landscaping**

**Figure 3-6, Landscape Palette** shows the types of trees and plants that are proposed for the new landscaped areas recommended in this plan. These species are native California plants that thrive in conditions similar to the Sonora climate.

Botanical Name	Common Name
<b>Trees</b>	
<i>Pistacia chinensis</i>	Chinese Pistache
<b>Low-growing shrubs and groundcover</b>	
<i>Arctostaphylos</i> species	Manzanita
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> species	Japanese Barberry
<i>Cotoneaster dammeri</i>	Bearberry Cotoneaster
<i>Hemerocalis</i> hybrids	Daylily
<i>Lavandula</i> species	Lavender
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i> 'Compacta'	Compact Oregon Grape
<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	Deer Grass
<i>Nassella</i> species	Needle Grass
<i>Pelargonium peltatum</i>	Ivy Geranium
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> 'Huntington Carpet'	Dwarf Rosemary
<i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i>	Lavender Cotton



**Figure 3-6. Landscape Palette**

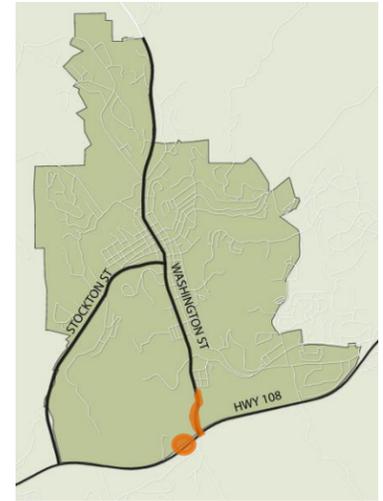
**A. South Washington - South Gateway Corridor (SR 108 to Hospital Road)**

**1. Improve the entry experience from SR 108.**

Improve the aesthetics for visitors entering Sonora via Washington Street.

**a. Install entry signage/artwork on the railroad bridge.**

Install gateway artwork on the railroad bridge that crosses SR 108 just west of the Washington Street intersection. Tell the story of the railway by depicting items used in mining or attaching actual tools to the artwork. See **Figure 3-7** for a sketch of what this could look like.



Key Map



Figure 3-7. Railroad Bridge Enhancement

**b. Enhance the streetscape and pedestrian environment north from SR 108.**

A landscape plan was developed in 1999 for the South Washington Street Gateway with the theme of “Pathway Through the Past” which is still relevant and has been incorporated into the streetscape improvement recommendations on **Figure 3-8**.

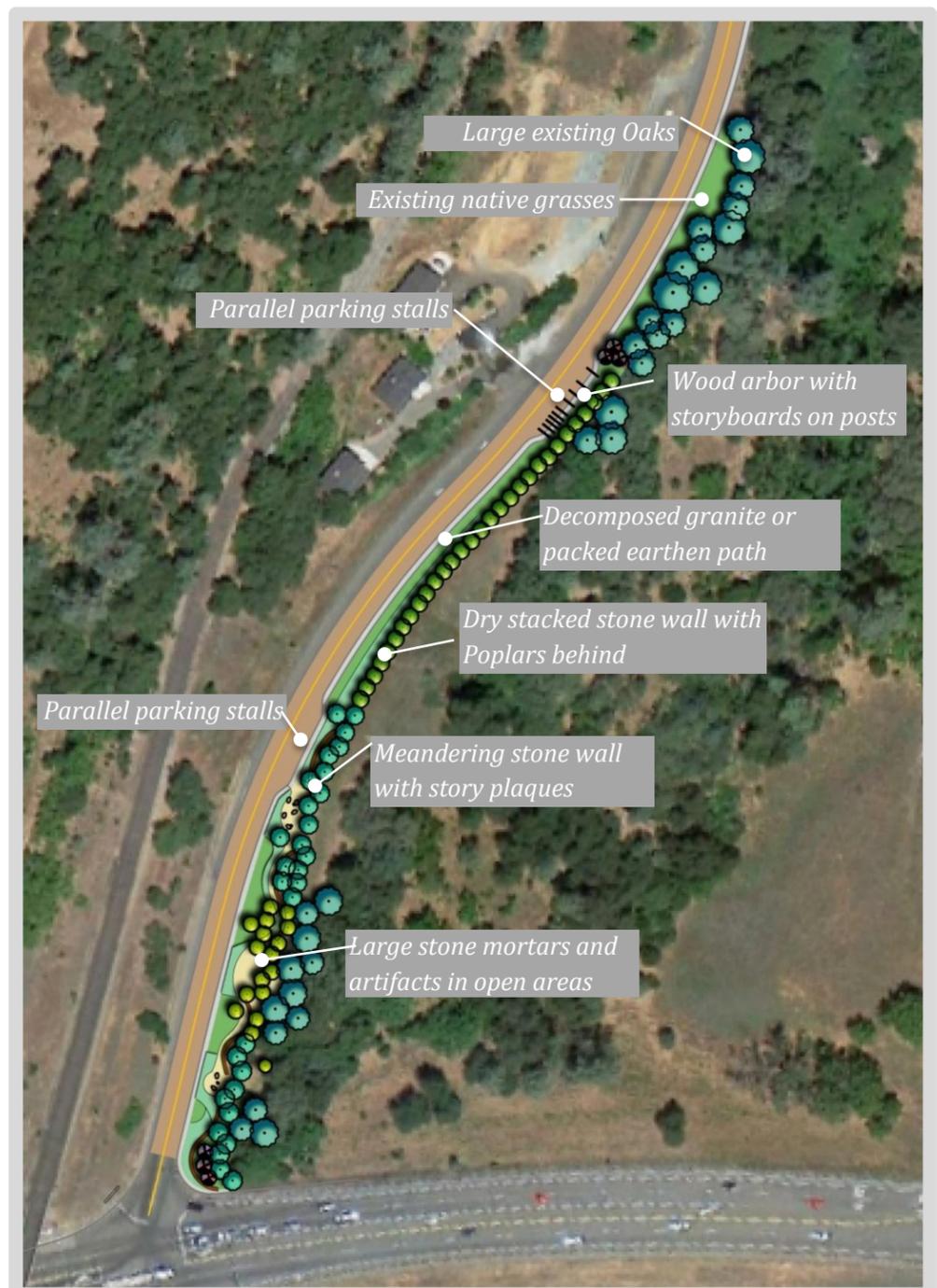


Figure 3-8. South Washington Gateway

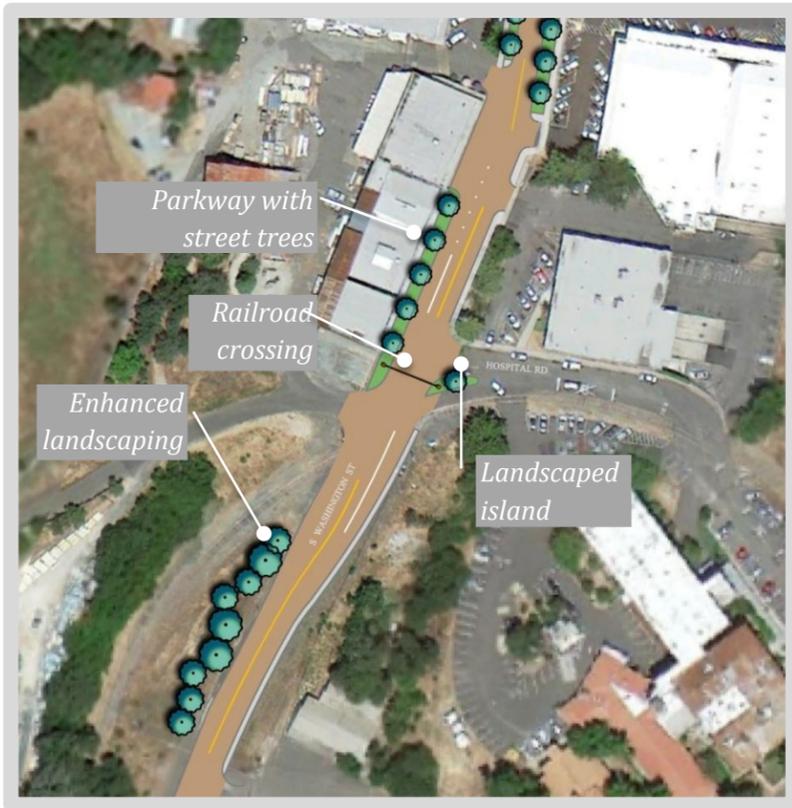
**A. South Washington – South Gateway Corridor  
(Hospital Road to Church Street)**

**2. Improve the pedestrian experience and aesthetics along Washington Street toward the historic downtown core.**

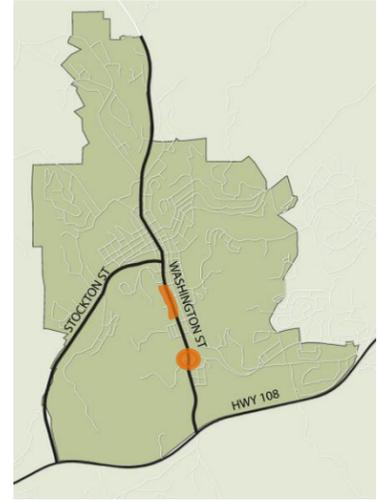
Install sidewalk, landscaped parkways, trees, and lighting. Provide enhancements at the Washington Street and Hospital Road intersection where there is a potential future train ride connection to Railtown along the unused tracks.

**a. Enhance the streetscape at the Washington Street & Hospital Road intersection.**

See **Figure 3-9**. Install landscaped parkways with street trees on the west side of the intersection, north of the railroad crossing arms. Install a landscaped island with a street tree in Hospital Road at Washington Street.



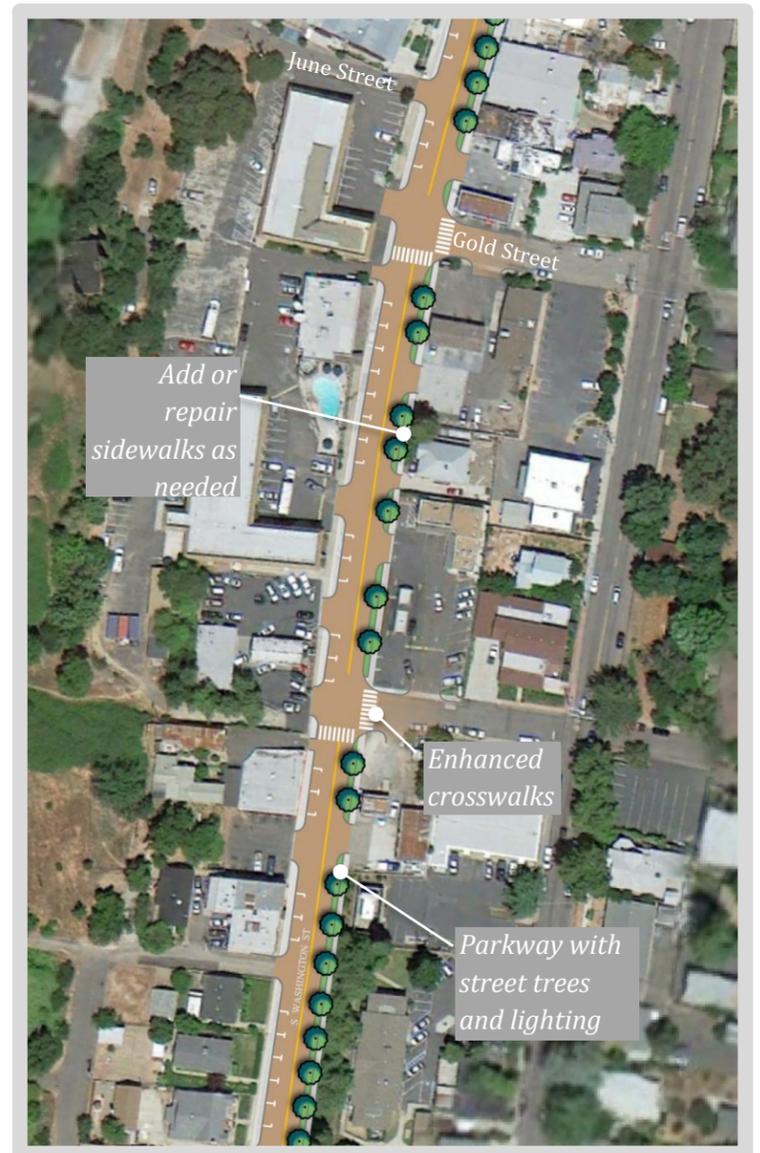
**Figure 3-9. Washington Street and Hospital Road**



Key Map

**b. Enhance the streetscape and pedestrian environment north to June Street.**

See **Figure 3-10**. Remove excess roadway width to add sidewalks where missing and create a landscaped parkway along the east side of Washington Street, from Lytton Street to June Street. Install street trees and street lights in the parkway. Add sidewalks and landscaped parkways on the west side of Washington Street where feasible. These improvements will replace the problematic pedestrian crossing on Washington Street at June Street with improved connections to the crossing at Gold Street.



**Figure 3-10. South Washington Street Corridor**

**A. South Washington – South Gateway Corridor (Church Street)**

**3. Improve the Washington & Church intersection.**

There is excess width in the Washington Street roadway north of Church Street which could be used for pedestrian activity. There is also an opportunity to enhance the existing fountain feature at the southeast corner of this intersection. Proposed improvements are illustrated in the plan view diagram **Figure 3-11** and the sketch **Figure 3-12**.

**a. Provide a mini-park with pedestrian amenities north of Church.**

Widen the pedestrian zone on the east side of Washington Street north of Church Street to create a better alignment with the southeast corner of the intersection and provide space for street trees, street lights, and pedestrian amenities such as an information kiosk, public art, benches, and a waste receptacle. Use low rock walls to frame the seating areas, and bollards at the street corners. Integrate a transit stop with a shelter into the design. Realign the crosswalk on the east side of the intersection and use a more prominent zebra or “Continental” striped crosswalk.

**b. Enhance the fountain feature south of Church.**

Provide a more dramatic frame for the historic fountain at the southeast corner with a low rock wall in front that can be used as seating, a hedge or other backdrop, and landscaping. Replace the current historic marker with a raised free-standing marker consistent with other new markers (see Wayfinding recommendations).



Key Map

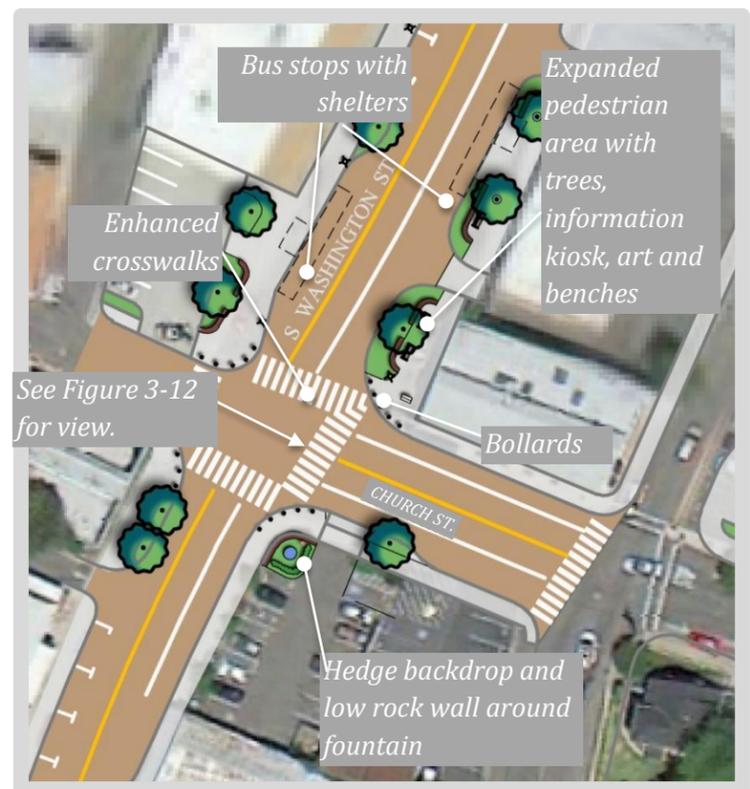


Figure 3-11. Washington and Church Mini Park



Figure 3-12. Washington and Church Facing East

**“Washington/Church St fountain: Have statues/bronze of miners with water running through their pans.”**



Photo copyright: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Community Open House Comment

**B. Stockton Street – West Gateway Corridor  
(SR 108 to Fairgrounds)**

**4. Improve the entry experience from SR 108.**

Improve the aesthetics for visitors entering Sonora via Stockton Street.

**a. Enhance the SR 108 underpass.**

Explore options to improve the appearance of the underpass for eastbound travelers as they exit onto Stockton Street, coordinating with Caltrans. Consider enhanced signage or planting additional trees if permitted by Caltrans.

**b. Enhance the commercial corridor south and west of the Fairgrounds.**

Encourage business and property owners to improve the appeal of the commercial corridor that is the first impression of Sonora for many visitors. Better signage and installation of planters, landscaping, and outdoor dining could make a big difference in this area—as well as additional interesting artifacts like the old wagon that currently sits in front of the restaurant on the west side. Consider renovating or relocating the sign with the emblems of civic organizations which some community members find unattractive.

**c. Improve the streetscape along the Fairgrounds.**

Install sidewalk along the west side of Stockton, from the southernmost commercial development north to South Forest Road. Install a landscaped parkway with trees on the east side of Stockton along the multi-use trail that skirts the Fairgrounds.

**5. Enhance the Fairgrounds entrance intersection.**

See Figures 3-13 and 3-14 for a sketch and plan view closeup of recommended improvements.

**a. Create a mini-park around Shay Engine #3.**

Create the feeling of a small park around the historic train engine by installing a ground treatment such as decomposed granite, framed by low dry-stacked rock walls and landscaping. Provide seating and an information kiosk (see Wayfinding recommendations).



Key Map

**b. Improve pedestrian crossings.**

The existing island on Southgate Drive can be reconfigured to serve as a pedestrian island to assist in crossing Stockton between the Fairgrounds and Woods Creek Drive. Stripe pedestrian crossings across South Forest, Woods Creek, and Southgate. Install a high visibility crosswalk across Stockton with flashing beacon lights that can be activated by pedestrians.

**c. Provide sidewalk on Woods Creek Drive.**

Provide sidewalk on one side of Woods Creek Drive to line up with the Stockton crossing.

**d. Install landscape improvements on the west side of Stockton.**

Install a low stone wall, landscaping, and directional signage across from the historic train engine on Stockton. Reconstruct the existing monument entry sign to create a larger, taller base.



Before



After

Figure 3-13. Fairgrounds Entrance Facing East

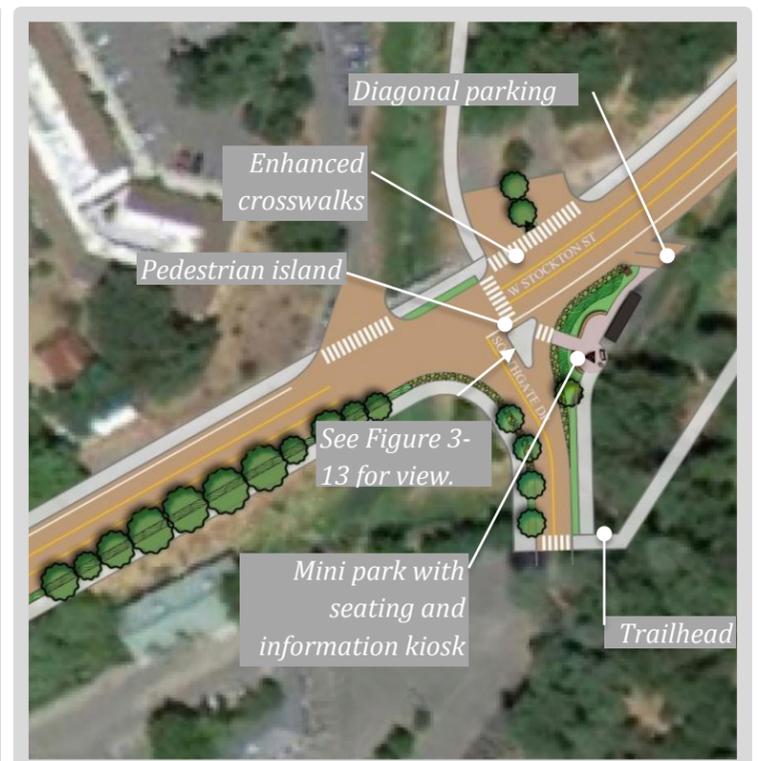
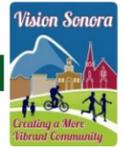


Figure 3-14. Fairgrounds Entrance



**B. Stockton Street – West Gateway Corridor (City Boundary to Washington)**

**6. Continue expanding Sonora’s trail network.** A more extensive multi-use trail network through Sonora, and connecting Sonora to Jamestown and Columbia, will provide more transportation options as well as a highly desirable recreation amenity—as demonstrated by the popularity of Dragoon Gulch. Along Stockton Street, the distance between Southgate Drive and South Washington Street is a half-mile. Turning this distance into an enjoyable stroll or easy bike ride will encourage Fairground visitors to come downtown without having to re-park, while providing a recreation amenity and valuable connection for residents.



Key Map

- a. Extend the multi-use trail from the Fairgrounds to downtown.** Build a trail on the east side of Stockton Street from Fairview Lane to Green Street where the sidewalk begins. The intended character of the multi-use trail along Stockton and potential materials is shown in **Figure 3-15, Multi-Use Trail**. The trail would be buffered from traffic by landscaping and trees, and railing. Refer to **Figure 3-16** for the existing and proposed cross section of Stockton between Fairview Lane and Forest Road, including the trail cantilevered at the creek crossing.
- b. Work with TCTC to extend the multi-use trail from the Fairgrounds to Jamestown.** Work with the Tuolumne County Transportation Council to determine the feasibility of different routes including following Stockton, following Woods Creek, or using other rights-of-way.
- c. Complete other planned trails.** Seek funding to implement other trail connections throughout Sonora, including trails along Sonora Creek, Woods Creek, and the Sierra Railroad.



Decomposed Granite

Colored Asphalt

Chip Seal



Railing



Wood Bench



Figure 3-15. Multi-Use Trail

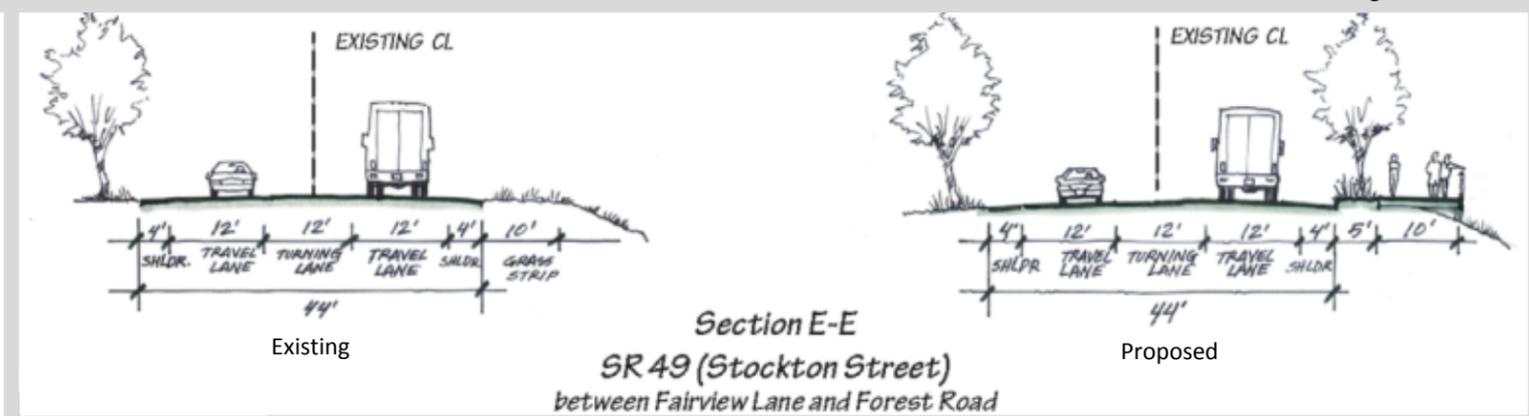


Figure 3-16. Cross Section at Trail Cantilever

**B. Stockton Street – West Gateway Corridor  
(Jackson Street to Green Street)**

**7. Improve the pedestrian experience and aesthetics along Stockton Street to the downtown approach.**

Install sidewalk, landscaped parkways, trees, and lighting. See **Figure 3-17** for a plan view of recommended improvements.

**a. Improve the streetscape between Jackson Street to the Woods Creek undercrossing.**

Replace the frontage road between Jackson and Bradford Streets with parking lot, wider sidewalk, and landscaped parkway. Provide driveways and street parking where needed along this segment. Install parkway with clustered street trees to produce a natural, informal effect— on both sides of Stockton from West Jackson Street to the point where Woods Creek crosses under Stockton and the roadway narrows. Refer to **Figure 3-18** for the existing and proposed street cross section at this location.

**b. Install street and trail lighting.**

Provide for evening and nighttime use of the trail and sidewalks on Stockton by installing pedestrian-scaled lighting lampposts along sidewalks and installing lighted bollards along the trail. Lighting fixtures should be consistent with the downtown fixtures and be designed to maintain dark night skies.



Key Map



Figure 3-17. Stockton Street- West Gateway Corridor

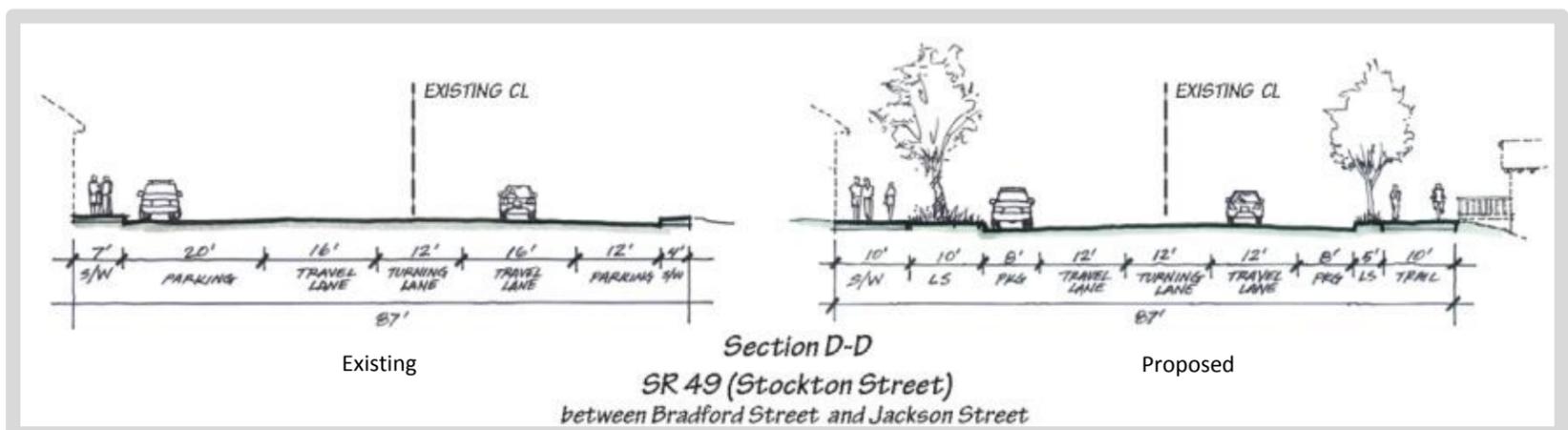
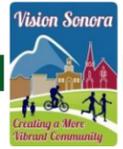


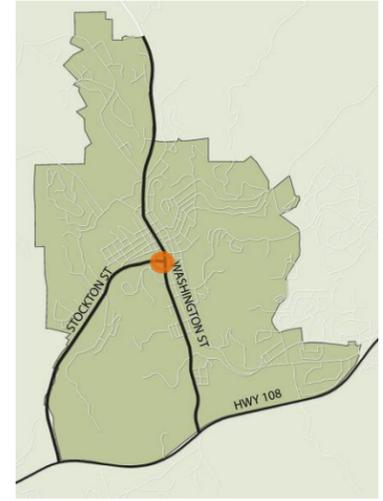
Figure 3-18. Cross Section along Stockton Street



**B. Stockton Street – West Gateway Corridor (Washington Street)**

**8. Enhance the entry into downtown.** Improve the pedestrian environment and sense of arrival through improvements around the intersection of Stockton Street and South Washington, as illustrated in the plan view diagram **Figure 3-19** and sketch **Figure 3-20**.

- a. Widen sidewalks and create diagonal parking.** Widened sidewalks on the north side of Stockton are intended to extend the pedestrian-oriented downtown atmosphere onto this street by converting underutilized roadway width into usable space for pedestrians. These extensions buffer pedestrians from moving vehicles and slow the turning movements of cars as they enter and exit the driveways. Diagonal parking could add two on-street spaces while calming traffic. Refer to **Figure 3-21** for the existing and proposed street cross section at this location.
- b. Improve trail access.** Use striping to make pedestrian crossings more visible and facilitate trail access at Green Street. Install directional signage at the trailhead.
- c. Create formal plantings of street trees.** From the narrow point of Stockton to Washington, the parkway should have a more formal character than along the rest of Stockton. Install street trees and landscape.



Key Map

- d. Improve the Stockton & Washington intersection.** Create a formal entry into downtown by installing a low rock wall / entry monument and landscaping in front of the Marenco Building, using special paving materials to extend the pedestrian area into the current no-parking zone. Create seating to encourage people to use this space. Install curb extensions at the northwest corner of the intersection to make pedestrians more visible while discouraging right turns on red. Consider removing or trimming landscaping around the Sonora Dome to make the Dome visible from Stockton approaching Washington.



Figure 3-20. Washington at Stockton Facing East

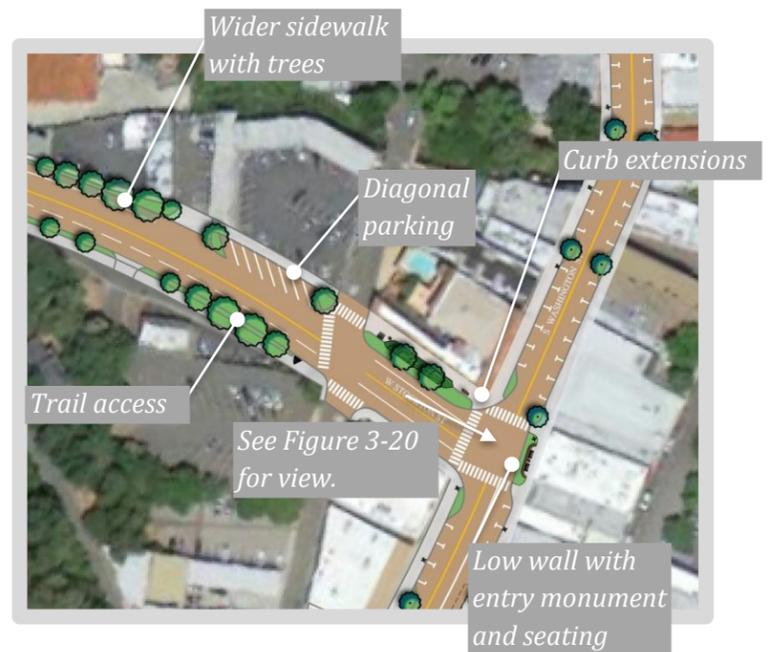


Figure 3-19. Intersection of Washington and Stockton

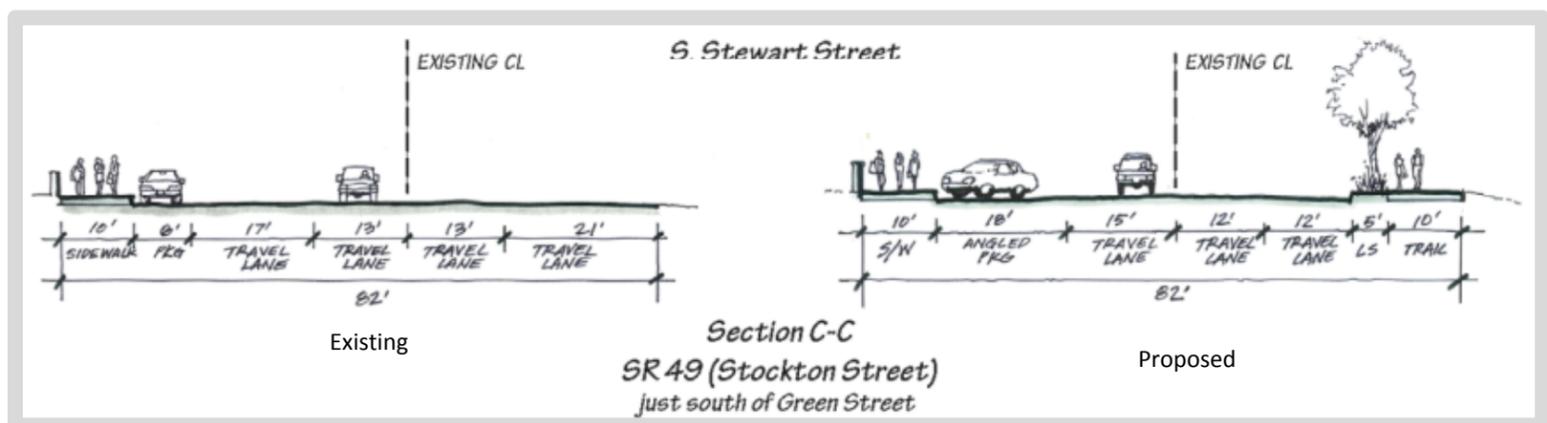
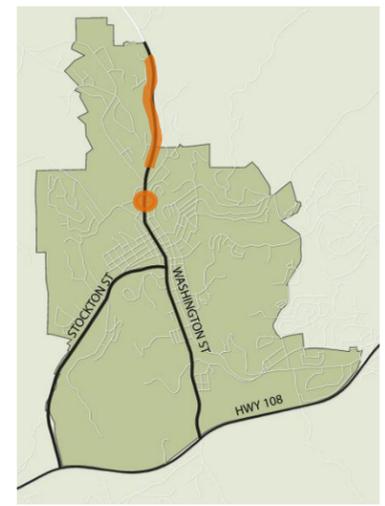


Figure 3-21. Cross Section along Stockton

**C. North Washington– North Gateway Corridor (City Boundary to Shaws Flat)**

**9. Improve aesthetics and sense of arrival at the North Gateway.** Slow traffic as it enters town and create an environment that is safer for pedestrians around the high school.

- a. Install a more prominent entry sign monument.** The welcome sign is a signal for travelers to slow down. While the current sign is attractive, it does not draw attention as much as the proposed entry monument signs with tall stone bases (see **Figure 3-22**). In the immediate area around the sign, use low flowering plants to set it apart from the rest of the landscaped area, and consider partially encircling it with a low rock wall.



Key Map

**10. Improve the Shaws Flat / School Street intersection.** The intersection of SR 49, Shaws Flat, Columbia Way, and School Street is a primary gateway into Sonora and should be reconfigured for better traffic operation, improved safety, and easier pedestrian crossings. Currently an unsignalized intersection, Washington Street and Shaws Flat Road traffic volumes were analyzed to determine if a traffic signal should be installed. Traffic volumes meet several of the Caltrans standards for installing a traffic signal. Therefore improvements including a traffic signal or roundabout were investigated and are shown in **Figure 3-23, Shaws Flat/School Street Improvement Options**. The reconfigured intersection should have shorter crossing distances for pedestrians, provide islands or other physical pedestrian refuges, and have clearly marked pedestrian crossings.



Figure 3-22. North Gateway Signage

- b. Improve the pedestrian environment on SR-49 near the high school.** Explore options for installing sidewalk on SR-49 to create a better pedestrian connection to the high school and downtown from the northern neighborhoods, the apartment complex, and office buildings north of the Shaws Flat/Sonora High School intersection. Currently the narrow shoulders north of the intersection make this a difficult area for walking.

- a. Identify and construct the desired intersection configuration.** The City of Sonora and Caltrans should continue to work together to identify the best alternative for this intersection and proceed with improvements. Once a new configuration has been selected, aesthetics should be a major consideration in any improvements.



Figure 3-23. Shaws Flat/School Street Improvement Options

**C. North Washington – North Gateway Corridor (Snell Street)**

**11. Improve the Snell / Washington intersection.**

Capitalize on the popularity of the Red Church to entice visitors to linger and walk into the downtown area. At the intersection of Snell and Washington Streets, improve the sense of arrival for drivers, and provide wayfinding for both drivers and pedestrians. Proposed improvements are illustrated in the plan view diagram **Figure 3-24** and sketch **Figure 3-25**.

**a. Create a mini-park where Snell meets Washington.**

Use decorative paving, native landscaping, bollards, and a low dry-stacked rock wall to extend the pedestrian zone into the street—creating a space for seating, an informational kiosk, bike parking, and outdoor dining. Install directional signage for drivers.

**b. Improve pedestrian crossings across Washington.**

There are different options being considered for improving east-west pedestrian crossings across Washington at this intersection. One option is to improve crossings at the south leg of the intersection by constructing a curb extension on the east side of Washington and striping the pedestrian crosswalk. Another option is to improve the mid-block crossing just south of the intersection by adding landscaped pop-outs and/or making this a high visibility crosswalk with flashing beacon lights that can be activated by pedestrians.



Key Map



Figure 3-24. Snell/Washington Intersection



Figure 3-25. Washington at Snell Facing Southwest

**D. Historic Downtown Core  
(Snell Street to Stockton)**

**12. Improve the Washington Street streetscape and pedestrian environment.** Recommendations for Washington Street from Snell to Linoberg are intended to improve the pedestrian environment and aesthetics of the street by adding greenery, lighting, and space for pedestrian activity—as well as improve pedestrian crossings. Proposed improvements are illustrated in the plan view diagram **Figure 3-26**.

**a. Add parklets that create more space for pedestrian activity.**

Create more space for customers to linger and dine outdoors by selectively converting parking spaces into “parklets” (see Definitions at the beginning of the chapter) as indicated on Washington Street. Refer to **Figure 3-27** for a sketch of a permanent parklet and **Figure 3-28** for the existing and proposed street cross section with a parklet. These parklets may be configured instead with the sidewalk along the street side with seating and planters closer to the businesses.

**b. Add mid-block pop-outs with street trees.**

Construct landscaped pop-outs to provide space for planting individual street trees, rather than a parkway that extends the entire length of the street. Consider the space needs for a healthy root system when specifying dimensions for these pop-outs. Pop-out locations indicated on the plan have been chosen to avoid conflicts between buildings or awnings.

**c. Add corner pop-outs.**

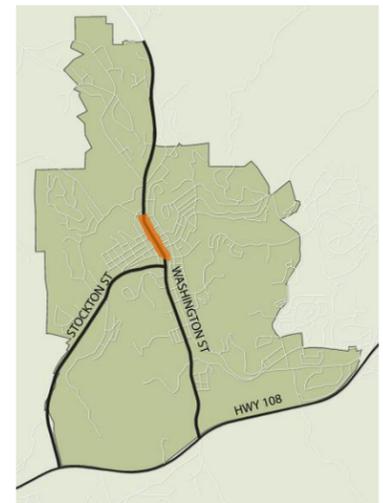
Framing each intersection, landscaped pop-outs at corners are intended to maintain the appearance of a narrower street while adding attractive greenery and providing a barrier between cars and pedestrians crossing Washington. Use plantings with lower heights in these pop-out areas.

**d. Provide additional crosswalk markings.**

Provide crosswalk markings on all cross-streets from Dodge to Linoberg, on both the east and west sides of Washington.

**e. Add pedestrian-scaled street lighting.**

Install additional pedestrian-scaled street lights along the sidewalk and in permanent parklets.



Key Map

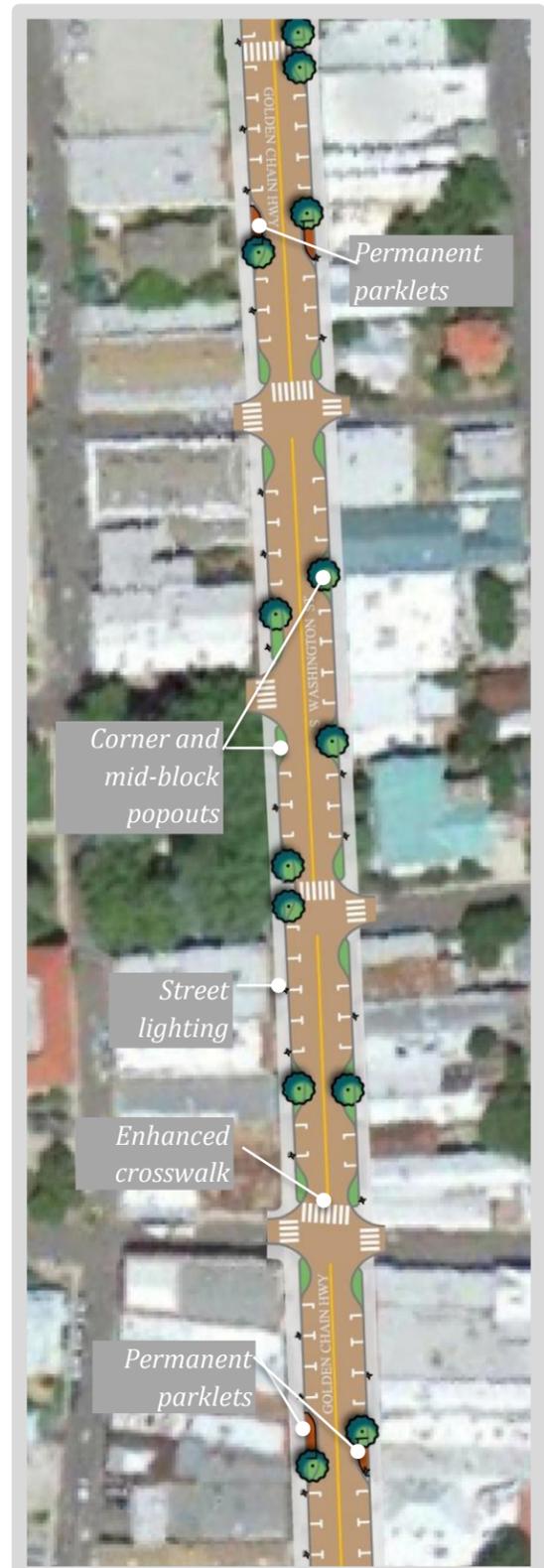
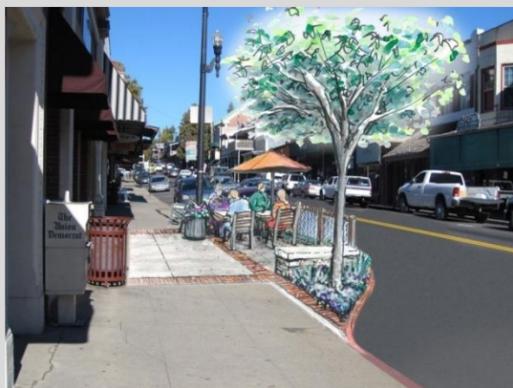


Figure 3-26. Washington Street in the Historic Downtown Core



Before



After

Figure 3-27. Permanent Parklet Example



Railing Detail

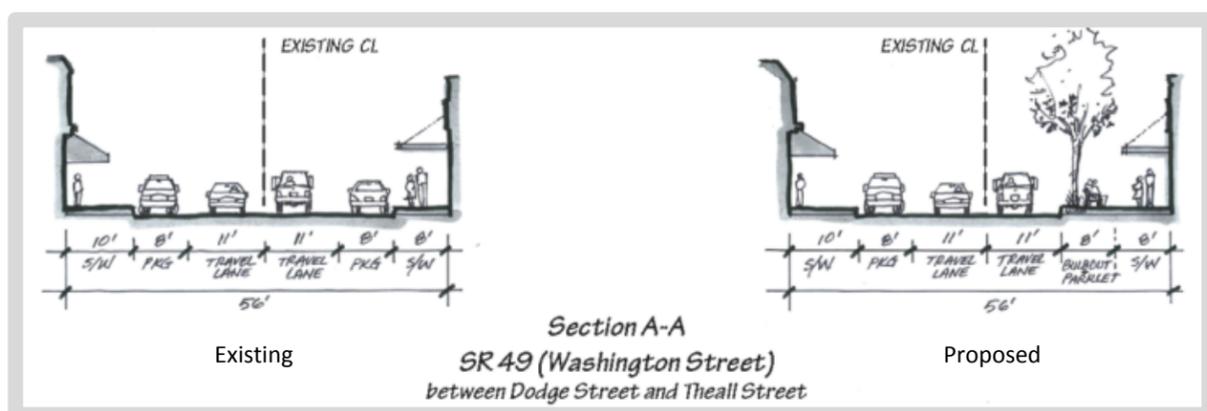
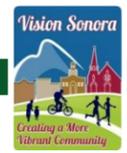


Figure 3-28. Cross Section on Washington with a Parklet or Popout



### Parklets: Important Factors for Success

Adapted from *Reclaiming the Right of Way: A Toolkit to Creating and Implementing Parklets*, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

**Parklets are small areas within the roadway that create space for pedestrian amenities such as seating, outdoor dining, trees, and landscaping. They buffer pedestrians from moving vehicles, calm traffic, and beautify streets. They can be permanent or temporary installations that each occupy one or two on-street parking spaces.** Parklets are typically created by building a platform on the pavement of a roadway to extend the sidewalk space, and retrofitting it with benches, planters, tables and chairs, umbrellas, and bike racks. Physical barriers such as sturdy railings, wheel stops, and bollards help provide safety for users.

#### Community Partner Roles

Typically, community partners such as adjacent businesses are the ones who apply for the necessary permits, pay for construction, and maintain parklets. Parklets produce a return on investment for these businesses by attracting more attention from customers. Groups of businesses or community groups can adopt parklets, but the group members should be in the immediate area of the parklet to keep a close eye on it. Parklet applicants should have the ability to take on \$1 million of insurance; most already hold this amount of business insurance.

#### A Public Process

Because the parklets are in the public right-of-way, their construction will require a temporary occupancy permit from the City of Sonora and will be subject to approval from Caltrans. Following the lead of other cities, Sonora could create a permitting process for parklets that includes specifications for design and operation, and that must be renewed annually.

#### A Test Run

The annual September event Park(ing) Day (launched in San Francisco and now an international event) can be a useful way to test the waters for a parklet by setting up a temporary installation. Use the opportunity to talk with passers-by about their impressions of the parklet, their interest in having a more permanent parklet in that location, and their ideas for the parklet.

#### Seasonal Parklets

When snow is a consideration, parklets can be designed to be taken down in the winter and re-installed in warmer weather. Philadelphia addressed this issue by developing a modular system that takes less than a day to install and works well in different locations. The system includes a steel railing, a wooden deck, and planter boxes. Seating and tables of different types can then be placed in the parklet.

For case studies and more information, please refer to the UCLA toolkit referenced above, which is available as a free download from [www.its.ucla.edu/research/parklettoolkit.pdf](http://www.its.ucla.edu/research/parklettoolkit.pdf).



Examples of Permanent and Temporary Parklets

#### Typical Design Guidelines for Parklets

Parklet Size and Relation to Curb	6' width, flush with curb (1/2" gap max.)
Load	Must support 100 to 759 lbs./ square foot
Drainage	Curbside drainage must not be impeded and must allow for easy access to the space underneath
Wind/Visibility	Visually permeable outside edge; railing may be required
Barriers	4' from parklet to wheel stop (behind) 3' wheel stop installed 1' from curb (ahead)
Licensed Engineer Stamp Required?	Yes, in some jurisdictions

**"I really think the parklet idea is great. Being a 15 year old, I can't drive yet, so I need to walk everywhere. It would be nice to have a little sitting area once in a while to rest on the way to walking somewhere."**

Community Open House Comment

**D. Historic Downtown Core (Stewart Street)**

**13. Make phased improvements on Stewart Street.** An initial phase of improvements would provide a more generous sidewalk for Stewart Street as well as provide trees and lighting. Stewart Street is also a candidate to become a convertible street to accommodate events adjacent to a new plaza, as described further in the plan.

**a. Make short-term pedestrian improvements to South Stewart Street.**

Recommended improvements to South Stewart Street between Bradford and Linoberg Streets are illustrated in **Figure 3-29**. Provide wider sidewalk on the west side, and install street trees and street lights on both sides. Add curb extensions and zebra or “Continental” crosswalks at intersections. Refer to **Figure 3-30** for the existing and proposed street cross section at this location.



Key Map

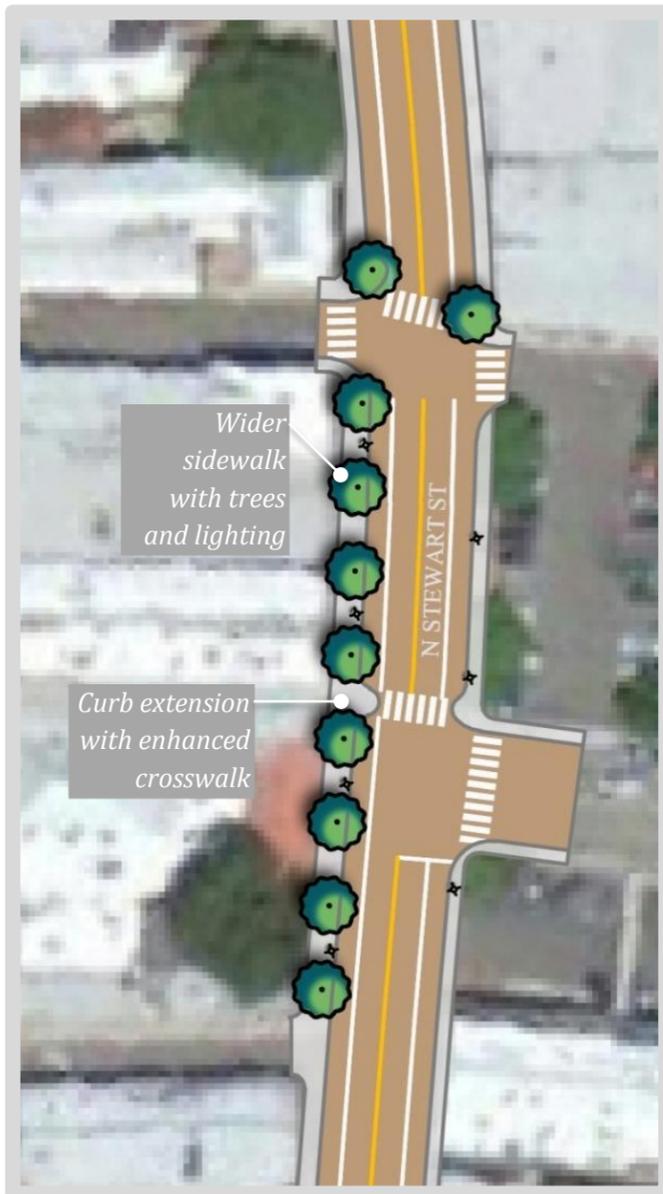


Figure 3-29. Stewart Street Improvements

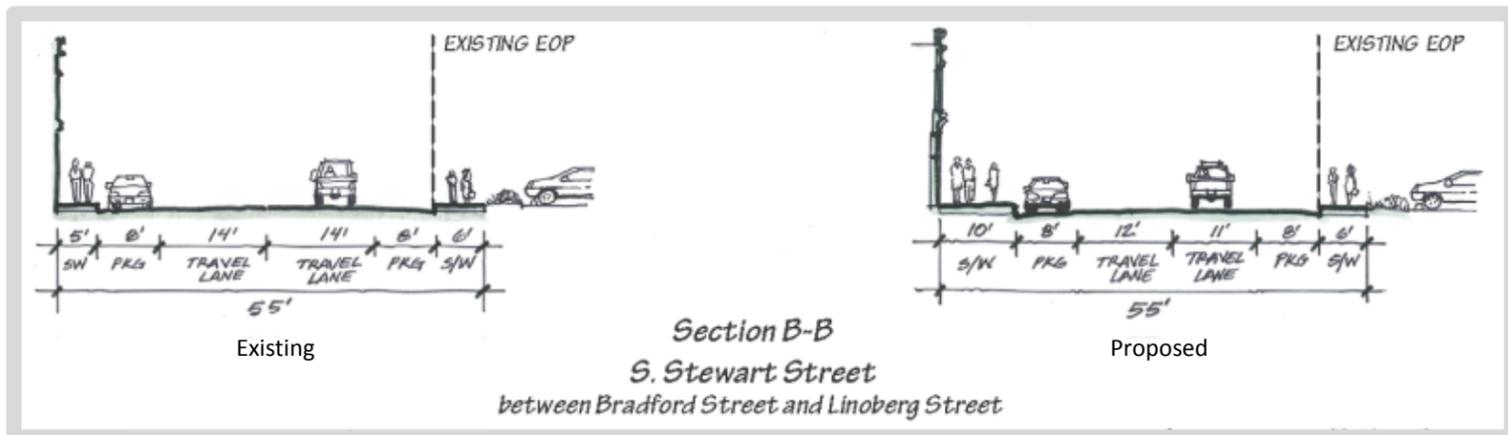
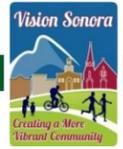


Figure 3-30. Cross Section at Stewart Street



**D. Historic Downtown Core (Stewart Street)**

**14. Create a plaza between Stewart and Shepherd Streets.**

There is a tremendous opportunity to create public spaces on the east side of Stewart Street between Bradford and Theall Streets, with additional shops and a park space around Sonora Creek. See **Figure 3-31** for a plan-view sketch of “Stewart Plaza”, **Figure 3-32** for the tuck-under parking and restroom access, and **Figure 3-33** for a view of the daylighted creek area.

**a. Create a public plaza with additional shops, tuck-under parking, and a parking structure.**

Close Lyons west of Shepherd and build a plaza in place of the parking lots and roadway. The slope at this site allows for tuck-under parking beneath the plaza. At the southern end, the plaza should connect to the second story of the existing buildings while the below-plaza parking provides access to the ground floor. Framed by new commercial buildings along Stewart Street and entry archways, the plaza will provide space for everyday outdoor dining and enjoying the outdoors, and can also be used for community events. Tables, seating, bike parking, art features, string lights, potted plants, and shade structures will add to the appeal for everyday use. Additional parking exceeding the existing parking is provided in a two-level structure immediately across Shepherd Street, northeast of the creek.

**b. Enhance restroom access.**

Enhance access to the restrooms beneath the parking lot with awnings, wall treatments and vines.

**c. Daylight Sonora Creek to create a small park.**

North of Theall, Sonora Creek should be daylighted with a gradual slope around it to create a natural feature that still provides flood control. This can be the focal point of a small park, overlooked by a tree-shaded hardscaped area with outdoor dining tables and seating. A small amphitheater could be used for outdoor movies projected onto the wall of one of the buildings, or for small performances. Install an informational kiosk in this area.

**d. Widen Bradford Street.**

Compensate for the lost segment of Lyons (between Shepherd and Stewart) by widening Bradford.



Figure 3-32. Tuck-Under Parking/Restroom Access

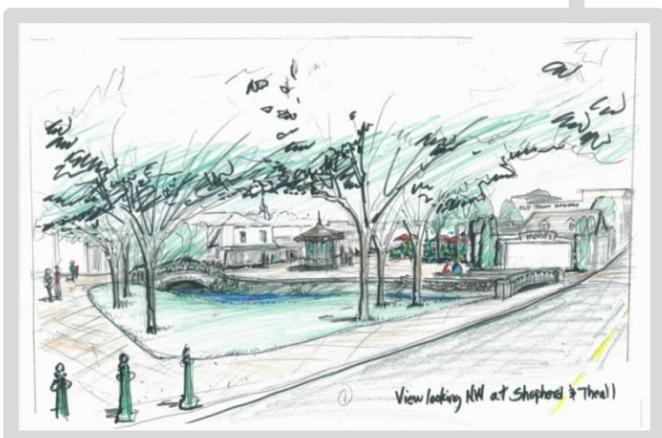


Figure 3-33. Sonora Creek Area



Figure 3-31. Stewart Plaza Concept

**D. Historic Downtown Core  
(Stewart, Theall, and Linoberg Streets)**

**15. Create a network of pedestrian streets.** Between Coffill Park and the proposed Stewart Plaza is a network of side streets and less-busy streets that are perfect candidates to serve as pedestrian streets and event spaces. These can become either permanent pedestrian “paseos” or convertible streets that can be closed to vehicles as needed for events such as the farmers market, art festivals, community fairs, and holiday activities. They can also be populated with street performers and vendors on a more regular basis, such as summer weekends. **Figure 3-34** is a series of photo examples of convertible streets and pedestrian paseos. These improvements can be phased over time.

- a. Create pedestrian zones using decorative paving, bollards, and entry arches.**  
Install decorative paving on streets intended for pedestrian use (whether permanent or temporary), preferably with pavers that create a slightly bumpy sensation for drivers to remind them that they should be driving slowly. Extend this decorative paving across other streets as needed to create crosswalks that connect the pedestrian areas. Block vehicle access with bollards; use removable bollards for convertible streets.
- b. Make segments of Stewart and Theall Streets into convertible streets.**  
As a convertible street from Bradford to Mehun, Stewart can serve as an extension of the new plaza and park to surface parking lots. Theall from Washington to Shepherd serves as a useful connection between Stewart Plaza and Coffill Park.
- c. Convert Linoberg Street into a pedestrian paseo.**  
Take advantage of this intimate space, with its rock and brick walls and glimpses into windows, to create a pedestrian-only passageway between Green and Stewart Streets. This can be used for seating, outdoor dining, and events. Lanterns and string lights make paseos feel special at night; potted plants and vines create a backyard patio feel. Adjacent businesses should take advantage of this space with window displays and doorways. The wall is a great canvas for public art. See **Figure 3-35** for a sketch of what the “Linoberg Paseo” east of Washington could look like. Planters could be used in place of the bollards shown at the front of the sketch.



Key Map



Before



After

**Figure 3-35. Linoberg Paseo Concept**  
**Figure 3-35. Linoberg Paseo Concept**



**Figure 3-34. Examples of Convertible Streets**

**D. Historic Downtown Core (Parks)**

**16. Enhance the appeal and function of Coffill and Courthouse Parks.** Improve the appeal and usability of these parks with some strategic changes.

**a. Improve Coffill Park.**

See **Figure 3-36** for a closeup view of suggested improvements to Coffill Park. This concept would create a three-level park space. For the top level, extend the Washington Street sidewalk to create a small plaza that overlooks the park, framed by a curved rock wall with open fencing in the middle; consider installing vault lighting in this plaza to allow light to shine down into the park below. A double staircase would lead to a second-level viewing area with amphitheater seating descending to the lower level. Frame the performance space with a curved rock wall and construct other rock walls to provide seating along the creek and landscaping. Trim the undergrowth of trees, vines, and bushes to allow for a higher canopy and improve visibility throughout the park. The lower level of the park should be raised slightly higher than its current grade to make it level with the parking lot access to the north and allow for handicap access. Allow small food vendors to set up in the parking lot, adjacent to the park. See **Figure 3-37** for examples of what improvements to Coffill Park could look like.

**b. Improve Courthouse Park.**

Courthouse Park, which is owned by Tuolumne County, is part of the historically significant Courthouse. It is protected from major changes; however, some minor alterations can be made to improve its function. Currently Jackson Street along the park’s south side is closed temporarily during events; the street should be permanently closed to become part of the park. In the park, the County can trim shrubs or replace them with lower-growing shrubs, and new benches can be installed.

**“The trellis work and fencing looks nice from above, but helps to isolate the park from the street... could open the site up and design something more inviting and integrate it with the streetscape, as well as the creek.”**

*Vision Sonora website comment*



Key Map

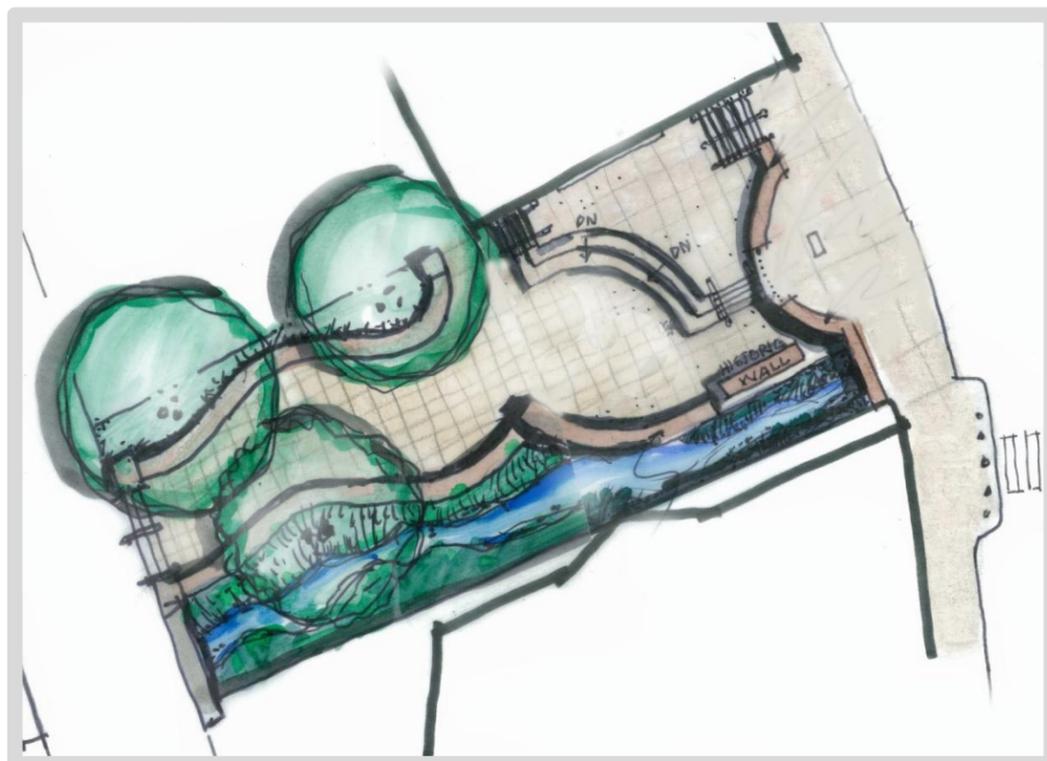


Sidewalk Vault Lighting



Food Vendor and Outdoor Dining

**Figure 3-37. Examples of Coffill Park Improvements**



**Figure 3-36. Coffill Park Concept**

**Area Wide Recommendations**

**E. Bicycle Circulation**

**17. Provide on-street bikeways and bike parking in the Sonora core.** See **Figure 3-38, Proposed Bikeways** to see recommended bikeways and already-planned bikeways.

**a. Create an on-street route through the Sonora core.**

Although Washington Street is indicated as the desired north/south cycling route, Stewart Street is less busy and therefore recommended for a Class III route. Paint sharrows on the roadways and provide bicycle route signage. Connect the route to the Stockton Street off-street trail to the west and planned Mono Way bikeway to the south. The route jogs west to Washington at the northern end of Stewart, then meets the Woods Creek on-street bikeway along School Street/ Columbia Way.



Example Sharrow



Bicycle Rack Designs



**b. Provide bike parking at popular destinations.** A suggested fixture for bicycle parking is included in the streetscape furniture recommendations. These fixtures should be installed at public gathering spaces at trailheads, and on sidewalks in commercial areas where bicycles will not interfere with pedestrian movement. Bike racks to accommodate multiple bicycles should be installed at parks and plazas.

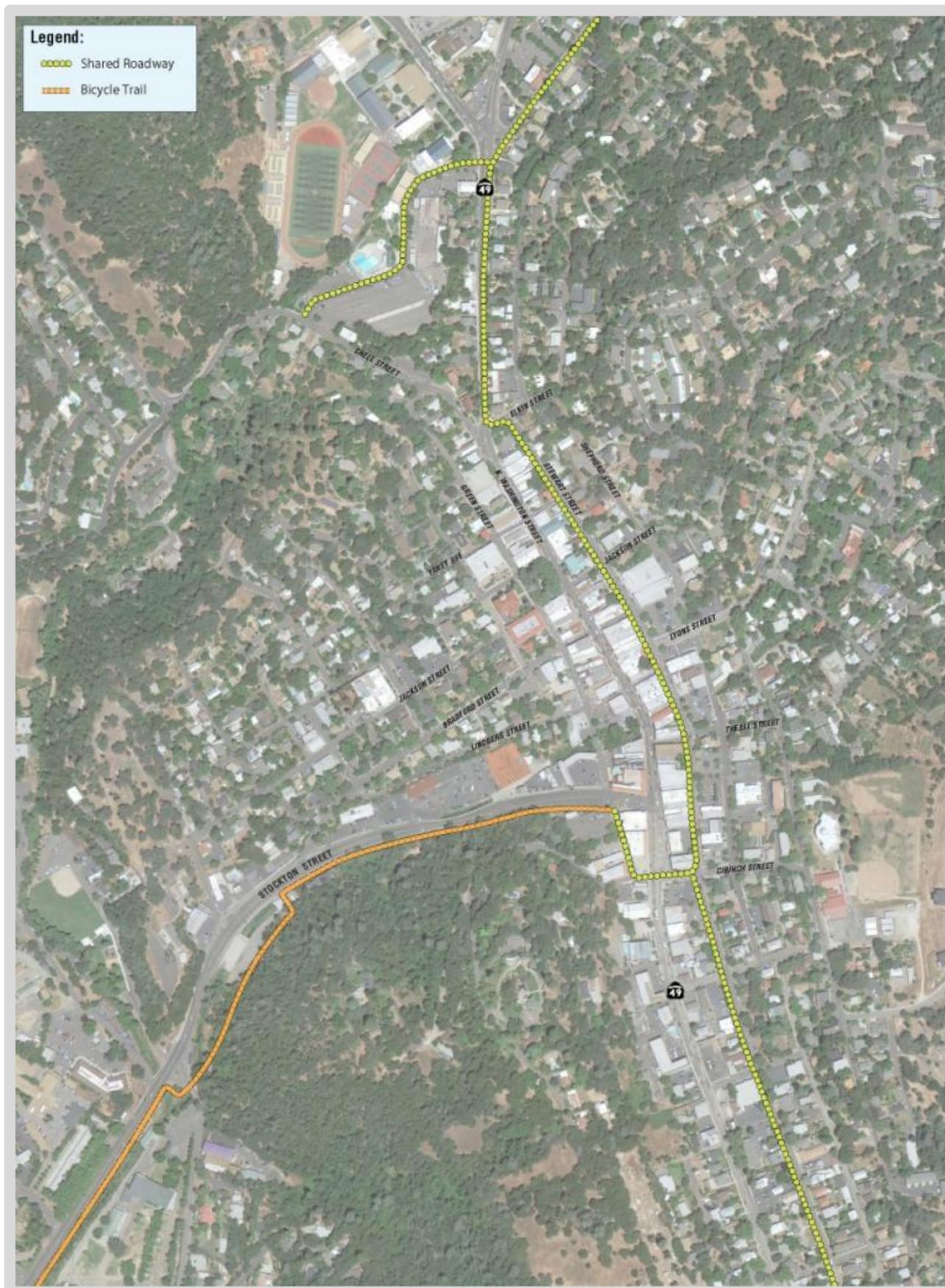


Figure 3-38. Proposed Bikeways

## F. Pedestrian Circulation

### 18. Improve sidewalks and construct new sidewalks.

Where sidewalks are lacking or discontinuous, providing new sidewalk segments will encourage pedestrian activity. Wider sidewalks allow pedestrians to walk comfortably while avoiding obstacles such as utility poles and other pedestrians.

#### a. Incorporate ADA accessibility into future improvements.

ADA accessibility requirements should be met in all sidewalk and pedestrian crossing improvements where feasible, especially around heavily-visited areas and where the roadway gradient is less steep. Continue to implement the ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan to better meet ADA standards.

#### b. Repair sidewalks where needed.

As new sidewalk segments are installed, nearby sidewalks should be evaluated and repaired as needed.

### 19. Underground or mask utility lines when possible.

The city currently requires all new utility service lines to be placed underground. Existing service lines should also be placed underground when possible, especially where they limit pedestrian movement. In some cases, landscaping may be needed to improve aesthetics around utilities.

### 20. Continue to evaluate pedestrian circulation improvements.

Periodically assess whether further interventions are needed for pedestrian circulation within the historic downtown core and to improve access to adjacent neighborhoods.

## G. Parking

### 21. Manage parking spaces to create convenient short-term parking in the historic downtown core.

Since there is a surplus of public parking spaces in the general downtown area, yet parking spaces closer to the core are heavily utilized during peak times, Sonora can benefit from strategies that redistribute parking patterns to maximize the use of available spaces. Parking space vacancies can be created through strategies that relocate most long-term parking out of the historic downtown core. Parking should be managed to maintain an 85% utilization rate in these core locations, so that short-term spaces are always easy to find without circling but spaces are not underutilized.

#### a. Designate the downtown core lots for public parking.

The lots that are in the downtown core should be made available for public parking, with employee permit parking in locations that are still convenient but farther away. Permit parking can be accommodated on underutilized lots such as the Red Church or Green Street lots.

#### b. Maintain parking time limits in the core.

Ensure that public parking within the historic downtown core is restricted to parking time limits of three hours and less. Increase parking time limit enforcement to discourage long-term parking that occupies the most convenient parking spaces throughout the day.

#### c. Provide loading zones and handicap parking.

Convenient access should be provided for deliveries and pickups, as well as for handicapped patrons or workers. Ensure that this is a consideration in any street improvement project.

**22. Manage employee parking.** Currently, downtown employees are asked to purchase parking permits while public spaces are available for free. This encourages employees to use public spaces, including convenient locations that should be reserved for short-term visitors.

#### a. Encourage employee use of permit lots outside the historic downtown core.

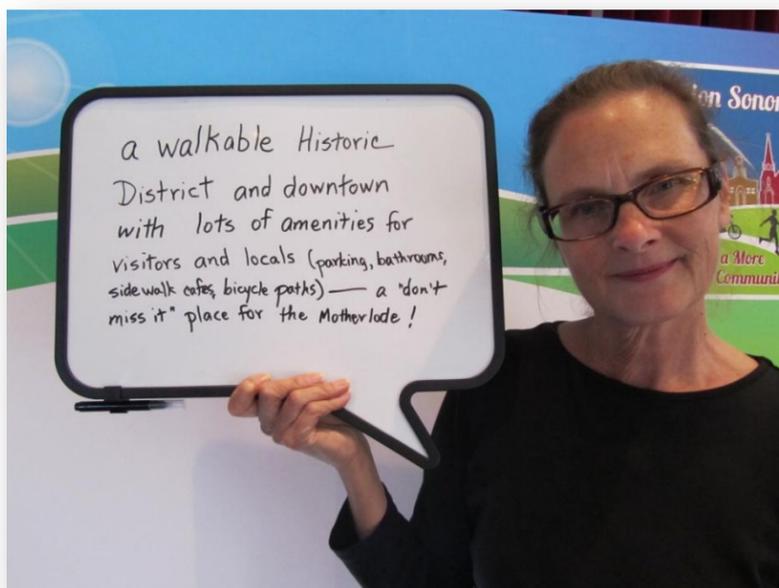
In conjunction with the re-assignment of historic downtown core parking lots to public use rather than permit use, incentivize employees to use the permit lots by keeping the permit cost low and allowing for employees to park without the time limits of public parking lots. Work with employers to communicate with employees about the importance of ensuring a supply of short-term parking spaces for customers.

#### b. Incentivize employee carpooling.

Employers of 25 or more employees should be required to set aside at least two convenient parking spaces for employees who carpool to work. Consider assigning a few spaces in the most convenient City off-street parking lots for employees who carpool to work.

#### c. Ensure safety of longer-term parking lots.

Provide for lighting and a sense of security in parking lots where people are expected to return to their cars at night, including employee permit lots.



**“Safe, healthy, walk-friendly, beautiful town”**

Community Visioning quotes

**23. Ensure that visitors find convenient parking.**

Underutilized parking lots are in close proximity to highly used parking lots, suggesting that motorists do not know how access these lots.

**a. Implement a parking way-finding program.**

Signage should inform visitors where parking facilities are located and provide improved signage at parking lot access points. Provide information about parking on Sonora promotional materials, including websites. Encourage use of the County parking on weekends.

**24. Plan for long-term and special event parking needs.**

As additional development and redevelopment occurs in the historic downtown core, there is an anticipated need for 40 to 50 more parking spaces. Special events during peak season also create spikes in parking demand. Plan for additional parking, as well as new vehicle technologies.

**a. Identify alternatives for additional parking.**

After the parking management recommendations have been carried out and new parking patterns have been established, potential sites for additional parking should be identified. Alternatives should include a trolley or shuttle service to carry visitors into the historic downtown core from outer parking sites. Parking lot owners such as Bank of America and Yosemite Title control valuable parking spaces that could be used for downtown employee or public parking. Some private lots are available during non-business hours for the public to use. Shared parking agreements allow private lot owners to pool their parking resources and improve utilization of spaces. Structured parking is another option that can be explored once available spaces are more fully utilized.

**b. Accommodate new vehicle technologies.**

Plan for parking to accommodate and encourage plug-in vehicles, neighborhood electric vehicles, car sharing vehicles, and other new technologies.

**H. Transit and Transit Stops**

**25. Relocate transit stops.** Locations of proposed transit stops are shown in **Figure 3-40, Potential Transit Locations and Routes**. The improvement concept for the Washington & Church Street bus stop is shown in **Figure 3-39, Bus Shelter Concept**.

**a. Install signage at transit stops.**

Recommended transit stops requiring signage include the following locations:  
 (1) Washington Street and Dodge Street  
 (2) Washington Street and Restano Way

To provide a transit stop at Dodge Street, Dodge Street will be closed from Green Street to Stewart Street. Dodge Street could then be landscaped, with the potential to provide a pedestrian area with restrooms.

In addition, once future transit needs are established the following locations may require signage for transit stops:

- Washington Street and Toby Ln (Probation Center)
- Washington Street and Hospital Road

**b. Install bus shelters and waiting area improvements.**

Install a bus shelter and waiting area landscape improvements as part of the intersection improvements at the following locations:  
 (1) Washington Street and Shaws Flat Road  
 (2) Washington Street and Church Street  
 (3) Stockton Street and Southgate Drive

Far side stops (located so that the buses cross the intersection before pulling over) are recommended on Washington Street at the Shaws Flat Road intersection for either a signalized or roundabout improvement. Potential impacts to the structure north of the intersection may affect the location of the northbound bus shelter and waiting area.

Bus shelters and waiting areas are recommended on both sides of Stockton Street south of Southgate Drive.

**c. Provide a bus transfer facility.**

Construct a bus transfer facility in the northeast corner of the Stewart Street and Church Street intersection. This location should include restrooms and additional amenities to serve transit users. See **Figure 3-41** for the facility layout.

**26. Expand use of Historic 49 Trolley.** Consider reestablishing regular usage and routes for the Historic 49 Trolley serving historic and visitor destinations in Sonora and linking Sonora to nearby cities.

**“A great plus would be if we could have a major transit stop/hub next to the parking so that visitors could readily go from their vehicles to our transit system.”**

*Vision Sonora website comment*



**Figure 3-39. Bus Shelter Concept on Washington Street**

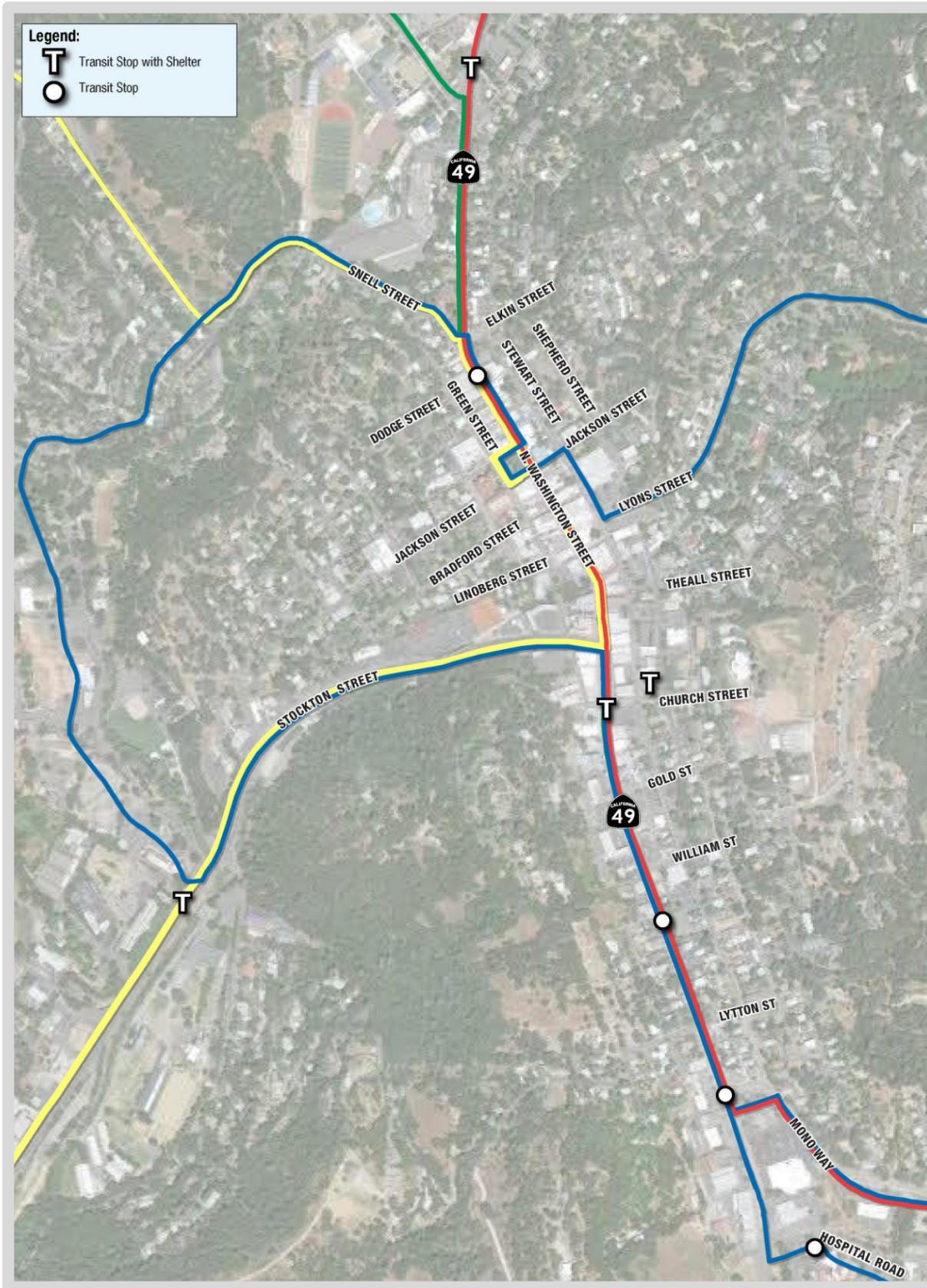


Figure 3-40. Potential Transit Locations and Routes



Figure 3-41. Bus Transfer Station and Bus Stops with Shelters

## I. Wayfinding Signage

### 27. Provide themed and coordinated wayfinding

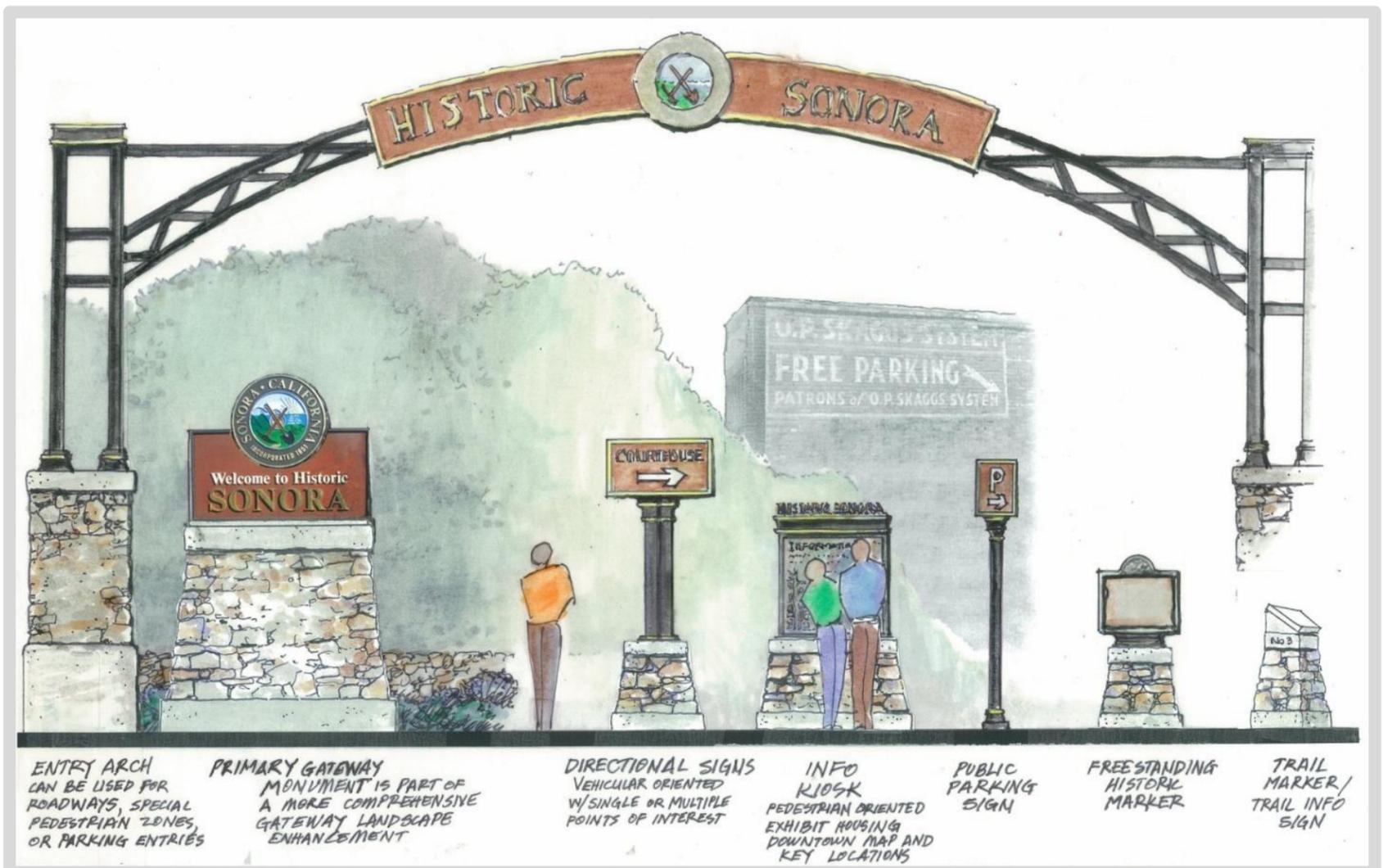
**signage.** Drawings for a “family” of themed wayfinding signs, kiosks, and markers are provided in **Figure 3-42**. Refer to **Figure 3-43** for recommended locations of directional signs, informational kiosks, and historic markers—as well as public parking lots that should be called out with signs. Take care to install these so that they do not obstruct sidewalks where they are already narrow.

- a. Design and install entry arches.**  
Identify locations for these arches to create a greater sense of place and awareness of entering pedestrian-oriented areas. They are especially appropriate as entries to plazas, pedestrian streets, or other public spaces (described in Community Design).
- b. Design and install primary gateway signs.**  
These roadway signs are based on the existing monument signs at the Fairgrounds entrance and northern gateway into Sonora on Washington, but have a taller rock base for greater visibility and are intended to be part of a more comprehensive gateway landscape enhancement. In addition to reconstructing the two existing signs, a sign should be installed at the South Washington gateway. Refer to Community Design for details about these gateway enhancements.
- c. Design and install freestanding historical markers.**  
Work with local historic groups to develop text for a set of interpretive signs to be installed at the sites of major historic landmarks. Where needed, replace existing signs with the new markers, such as at the historic Sonora fountain (described in Community Design).

- d. Design and install directional signs and public parking signs.**  
Develop a short list of key visitor attractions to be the subjects of roadway directional signs—including Historic Downtown Sonora, the Red Church, Courthouse Park, the Fairgrounds, Dragoon Gulch Trail, and others determined to be of importance. Install directional signage to help visitors find these attractions and parking lots.
- e. Design and install informational kiosks.**  
Develop an informational kiosk design that allows pedestrians to view and pick up materials including a downtown map and event information. Install kiosks at popular locations and downtown entry points (some are described in Community Design), and keep materials up to date.
- f. Design and install trail markers.**  
Work with local groups to develop and install a set of interpretive markers about the cultural and ecological significance of the multi-use trails and sights along the trails.

**“I’m always stopping downtown to draw maps for tourists on how to get to Dragoon Gulch. How about some signs that direct visitors there?”**

*Vision Sonora website comment*



**Figure 3-42. Wayfinding Signage**

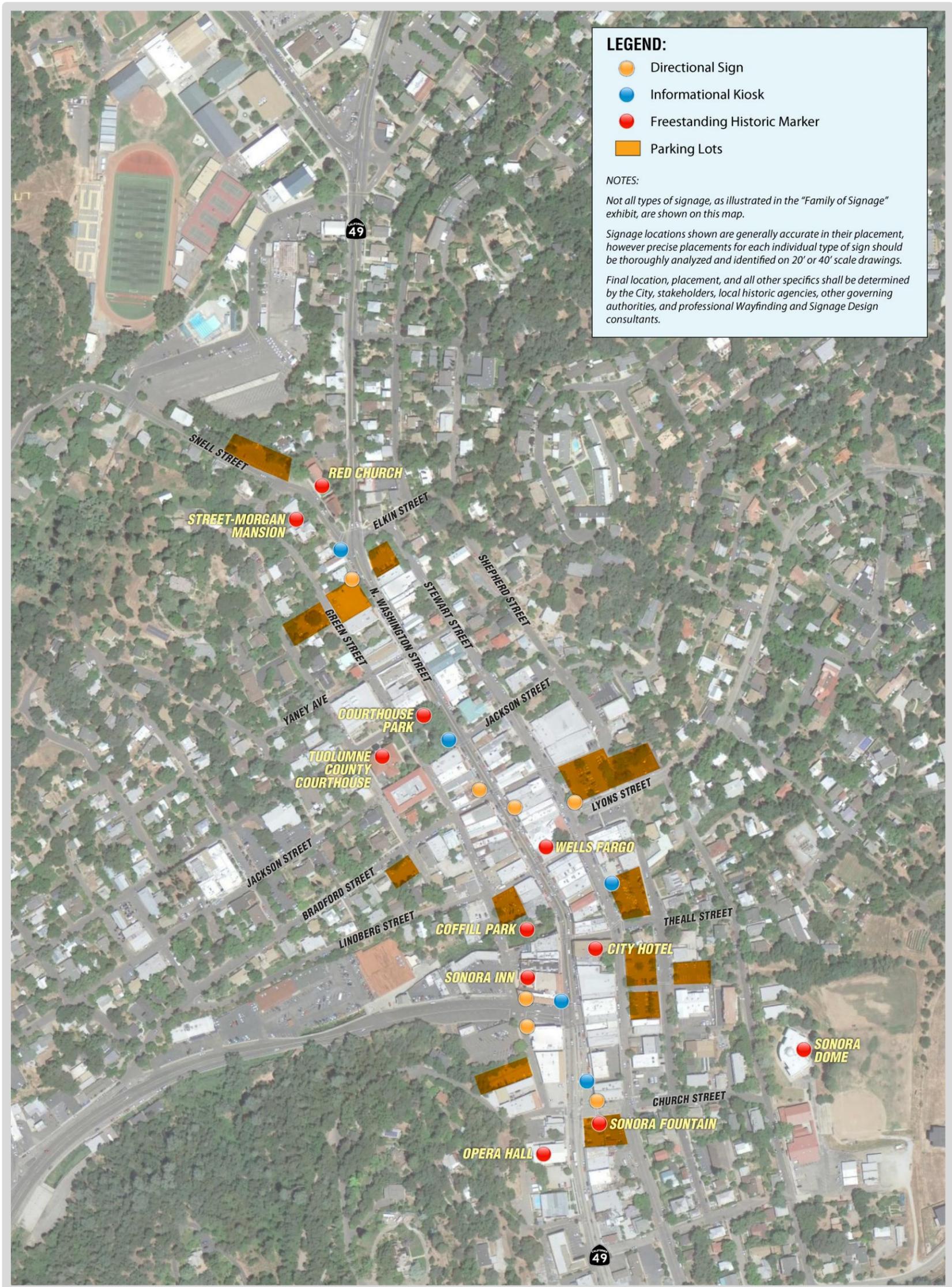


Figure 3-43. Wayfinding Signage Locations



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# 4 Tourism, Local Economy, & Community

## 4.1 Existing Conditions

### Key Findings

#### Market Position

Historic Downtown Sonora enjoys a strong market position as one of Tuolumne County's primary destinations for tourists and visitors while providing local residents with a variety of restaurant, art, culture, entertainment and specialty retail options. Sonora's target markets include:

- Over 51,500 residents within a 25 minute drive time from downtown;
- Over 13,000 employees within Sonora's primary and secondary trade area;
- An estimated 3 million visitors each year who make their way to Yosemite;
- A vibrant Fairgrounds that attracts both residents and visitors throughout the year; and
- A community college with 4,000 students.

#### Historic Assets and Tourism

Sonora, known as the Queen of the Southern Mines, was founded as a mining town during the California Gold Rush and incorporated in 1851. Along with its beautiful setting, Sonora's history is an important draw for visitors. Historic plaques provide ways for visitors to learn about this history.

The following are places within the City of Sonora that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Cady House – 72 N. Norlin Street
- City Hotel – 145 S. Washington Street
- Sugg House – 37 Theall Street
- Tuolumne County Courthouse – 41 W. Yaney Avenue
- Tuolumne County Jail – 156 W. Bradford Avenue

In addition, the "Red Church" is included on the California Historical Landmarks. St. James Anglican Church earned this nickname from the California Redwood. Built in 1859, it is the oldest Episcopal Church building in the state. It is located at the intersection of SR 49 (Washington Street) and Snell Street.



Historic Red Church



Downtown Storefronts

Sonora was also the commercial center of Tuolumne County and was and continues to serve as the County seat. As mining declined, the lumber industry brought a new vitality to the community. The Sierra Railroad came to Sonora in 1899. Over time, tourism became a key component of the local economy.

Sites and artifacts in the City of Sonora that community members feel are important in representing the City's unique history include downtown buildings, Sonora Dome (the only domed schoolhouse west of the Mississippi), rock walls, elements of the fairgrounds area, the foundry on South Washington, Indian camps on Stockton, the railroad tracks and train engine, parks, and Dragoon Gulch Trail—as well as underground tunnels that are still being investigated. Lumber trucks that come through town are also considered an interesting aspect of Sonora.

#### Regional Attractions

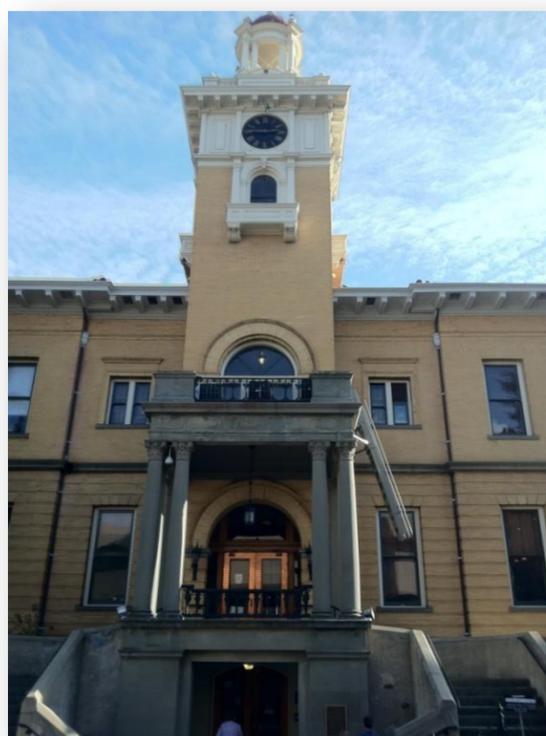
In addition to the dining, shopping and tourist destinations in Sonora, there are a number of attractions and activities in the surrounding area that lead visitors to pass through or stay in the city. Sonora is a short distance away from winter and summer outdoor activities in Stanislaus National Forest and Yosemite National Park and other destinations such as Columbia State Park and Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in Jamestown.

#### Higher Education

Columbia College is a valuable asset to the Sonora community, building a local workforce through degree and technical education programs while offering lifelong learning opportunities that allow community members to learn skills, travel, and improve their health. Arts and music programming at the College develops local talent and generates exhibits and performances that the community can enjoy.

#### Visitor Information

The Tuolumne County Visitor Bureau manages a Visitor Center about 3 miles outside of downtown and it was estimated that close to 8,000 people stopped in the Center last year. An additional Visitor Center was recently opened in downtown Sonora. In addition, the downtown hotels as well as many of the



Courthouse Building

downtown businesses operate as “mini” visitor centers, having collateral on hand, answering questions and providing guidance of what else there is to do while in Sonora. However, many of the businesses interviewed for Vision Sonora said that they are often busy with other customers and couldn’t always provide the quality time that tourists may need and deserve.

**Arts and Culture**

Sonora has a great foundation for a thriving arts and culture scene—with live theaters, musical performances, and other arts events. Columbia College hosts art exhibits and performances including a jazz festival, and offers community classes as well as an arts curriculum for enrolled students. The Sonora Opera Hall and event spaces within the historic downtown core such as Stage 3 Theater are venues for numerous arts, theater and music events each year. The Opera Hall also may be rented for events, partly filling the role of a community center.

During development of this plan, the Tuolumne County Arts Alliance (formerly Central Sierra Arts Council) was the proud recipient of funding from the California Arts Council designed to stimulate economic and social benefits through the arts. The TCAA is now located in the historic Dome Campus and provides a variety of programs for arts education and appreciation.

**Appearance of Commercial Areas**

A community’s overall image is key to its success in the competitive marketplace and achieving its vision. Throughout Community Visioning Week, Sonorans remarked how much they liked downtown’s historic character and its basic location. However, many also commented that downtown looked “tired;” that there were empty storefronts; that some commercial sites, buildings, facades, and signs needed repair; and that commercial corridors could be improved with attractive landscaping.

There are a number of empty storefronts in the heart of the historic downtown core as well as the surrounding streets that need repair and cleaning. These empty storefronts can be the first impression that a visitor or shopper has regarding downtown and its overall sense of pride. With some caretaking and clever programming, the community can market these available storefronts to potential investors while making them assets to the downtown area.

Many of the current business in Sonora have attractive window displays, but additional ways to contribute to a positive community image through include signage and overall exterior presentation. Cleaning, repair, and maintenance are important.

The community has made great strides in cleaning up downtown. Many community members commented that downtown is cleaner and safer than in years past. However, due to the fact that many of downtown’s buildings as well as infrastructure are aging, efforts need to be stepped up to keep downtown as clean and pristine as possible.

**Promotion**

Promotion for Historic Downtown Sonora could be strengthened by coordinating current marketing and advertising efforts and unifying them under a consistent brand and messages; creating new materials; and reaching more people online. Currently promotion is carried out separately by the City, Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Bureau, and individual businesses. The City produces a printed piece with a directory, events, and small map which could be expanded. A merchant group coordinates some joint marketing efforts.

**Local Economic Markets**

The City of Sonora plays a primary role in Tuolumne County residents’ lives. It is a multifunctional, regional commercial, social, medical and civic center that would be the envy of communities throughout the nation. Four of the County’s top 15 major employers are in Sonora, including Sonora Regional Medical Center, County of Tuolumne, Wal-Mart, and Save Mart.

Besides reaching out to visitors from outside the region, Sonora can do more to boost commerce by tapping local markets:

- Sonora’s primary trade area: 4,796 residents who live within a 5-minute drive from downtown.
- Secondary trade area: 15,011 residents who live within a 10-minute drive from downtown, including the communities of Jamestown and Columbia.
- Tertiary trade area: 51,569 residents who live within a 25-mile drive from downtown.
- The 13,075 employees of the 1,472 businesses located within a 10-mile drive from Downtown Sonora.
- Nearly 4,000 students attending Columbia College (1,003 full-time; 2,436 part-time).

**Downtown Businesses**

Sonora is fortunate to have a viable downtown business district with over 178 businesses already located within the project area. However with the growing commercial areas in other parts of the community, it will be important that downtown continually look at ways to maintain its position in the marketplace as well as grow and expand its market share. There is room for improvement in business presentation and building appearance as well as in downtown branding and promotion efforts. Limited open hours also mean missed opportunities.

**Business Support and Recruitment**

The City and partners have programs intended to attract new businesses, assist startups, and support existing businesses. For instance, the City offers a Microenterprise Assistance Program offering technical assistance and loans for income-qualified individuals starting or expanding a business with five or fewer employees. The Alliance Small Business Development Center has an office in downtown Sonora and provides free consultation and



Downtown Business Environment



low-cost training. Among other activities, the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority provides information about the local community and business environment as well as potential business locations. Columbia College offers Career Technical Education programs and certifications intended to align with business and industry workforce needs.

**Community Engagement**

Community members participating in Community Visioning Week formed the ideas behind Vision Sonora. These initiatives can only be accomplished through the continued engagement of community partners, downtown business and property owners, and residents. Sonora’s population includes many older residents who can offer a wealth of knowledge and volunteer hours, and youth who would benefit from greater involvement in community life.

**Community Health**

As a community, Sonora can promote the health of people who live and work there by encouraging physical activity and access to healthy food, and by reducing exposure to tobacco smoke.

The City has no dedicated recreation staff or commission, but maintains parks and Dragoon Gulch Trail. Other facilities within City limits that offer space for recreation include County parks, schools with recreation facilities, and the County library and senior center. The recommendations in Mobility & Community Design expand opportunities to walk and bike along streets and trails in Sonora. Opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, camping, golf and other outdoor activities are accessible within short travel distances.

The “Get Up, Get Going, Get Healthy – Sonora!” program is completing a Master Trails Plan for Dragoon Gulch and provides public education to encourage healthy lifestyles. “Fit for the Future”, a collaborative effort between the Tuolumne County



Superintendent of Schools Office, Sonora Regional Medical Center, and Tuolumne County Health Department, works hard with schools to eliminate childhood obesity throughout the County.

The City of Sonora provides access to fresh, locally grown produce through the Sonora Certified Farmers Market that is open from May through October. Community members would like to see the market extended year-round. A community garden exists at Sunrise Rotary Park.

A campaign is underway to reduce smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke in Tuolumne County. The adult smoking rate in Tuolumne County is similar to other rural areas in California which at an estimated 18.7% in 2008 was at the high range for

California counties and above the statewide smoking rate of 13.2%; meanwhile the estimated youth smoking rate in 2010 was in the low range at 10.8% and below the statewide youth smoking rate of 13.8%.<sup>1</sup> Tuolumne County has an ordinance that prohibits smoking in enclosed public spaces, including outdoor dining areas, but smoking on sidewalks and in parks exposes non-smokers to second-hand smoke.

**Homelessness and Drug Use**

The presence of homeless individuals in the community raises the question of how to meet their housing needs while improving the sense of safety in downtown public places. Official homeless counts estimated 181 and 186 homeless persons in Tuolumne County in 2007 and 2009, respectively, with an estimated 80% of these living in or adjacent to Sonora<sup>2</sup>. Among the County-wide homeless population, 39.4% said they were victims of domestic violence and 12.5% identified themselves as being chronically homeless<sup>3</sup>. The most common service needs identified in the 2009 Homeless Census were housing assistance, shelter, and employment or employment training<sup>4</sup>.

Within the Sonora city limits, the Sonora Community Development Department strives to provide for adequate shelter and housing opportunities, to support job training programs, and to provide referrals to rental assistance providers. The Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency operates a homeless shelter in Sonora and a food bank based in Jamestown. The Mountain Women’s Resource Center operates a domestic violence shelter. Community meals and other assistance are provided by churches and private organizations. The Central Sierra Continuum of Care is a collaborative effort between organizations serving the homeless to jointly apply for funding, coordinate services, and share information.

Drug use is noted as a related community issue, which among other damaging effects can lead to a decreased sense of community safety that discourages people from using public spaces or going out in the evening. The Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency manages the YES Partnership, a coalition that organizes programs to discourage substance abuse and support the health of youth and families. Safety is promoted by the Sonora Police Department, which embraces a community-oriented policing approach that includes partnerships with community organizations and engagement of residents as volunteers. These volunteers assist with department activities such as traffic and crowd control at community events.

<sup>1</sup> C-STATS, <http://www.cstats.info/>, accessed July 8, 2013. Adult Smoking Prevalence (2008) and Youth Smoking Prevalence (2010), for Tuolumne County and Statewide.

<sup>2</sup> Sonora Housing Element 2009-2014

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



Sonora Farmers Market  
(credit: BJ Hansen)



Coffill Park – An Underutilized Public Space

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Improvement Concept

This chapter is aimed at improving Sonora’s draw as a destination for tourism, with a particular emphasis on cultural and heritage tourism. Recommendations include strengthening Sonora’s historic resources as well as creating programs to highlight them; improving image and sense of safety in Sonora’s commercial areas; marketing Sonora to attract tourists; and making sure visitors find the experiences they are looking for.

This chapter also turns the focus of Vision Sonora to the people who live and work here. While much of the Plan seek to develop the visitor market and improve the appearance of business areas, targeted economic development recommendations in this chapter aim to create a stronger link between local businesses and local customers, retain and support businesses, and recruit targeted businesses. It complements other improvement recommendations by seeking ways to promote the health and well-being of residents and grow a thriving arts and culture scene. And, it provides guidance on involving the community in making Vision Sonora a reality.

Recommendations in this chapter address the following topics:

- **Visitor Information**
- **Tourism Promotion and Marketing**
- **Cultural and Heritage Tourism**
- **Arts & Culture**
- **Image and Safety**
- **Strengthening Local Businesses**
- **Focused Business Recruitment**
- **Health & Well-Being**
- **Community Involvement**

#### A. Visitor Information

1. **Continue the Downtown Visitor Center.** Continue to staff a satellite Visitor Center in downtown Sonora. The Center should be open when visitors are in town, including Saturdays and Sundays.

**RELATED VISION GOALS**

*Attract and Welcome Visitors*

*Strengthen Sonora’s Identity and History*

*Take Care of Locals*

*Boost Downtown Appeal and Commerce*

**a. Evaluate performance and modify as needed.**

After a trial period, convene a meeting with the downtown business community and the Visitor Center staff to discuss any challenges and changes needed as well as measure the overall impact.

**b. Provide visitor information through businesses.**

Distribute materials for visitors to businesses that tend to attract people from out of town. Familiarize business employees with these materials and with the resources available at the Visitor Center.

**c. Cater to international visitors.**

Seek to provide visitor materials in multiple languages and, if possible, hire multi-lingual staff to better accommodate the international travelers who are drawn to Sonora and other attractions in the region.

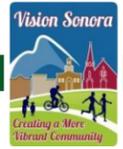
2. **Publish and distribute a comprehensive, quality downtown directory.** Produce a directory in color that shows off the downtown businesses and points of interest, expanding upon the current business map/directory. Many downtowns across the Gold Country and surrounding regions have successfully produced this type of all-inclusive downtown directory and are usually very open to sharing.

Consider including the following:

- Unified logo/tag line (see page 4-6) and high resolution pictures
- A map of downtown indicating the location of parking areas and other points of interest
- Accurate, up-to-date business listing of all downtown businesses and the types of services they provide
- Culture and entertainment highlights
- Listing of annual events held in downtown (sponsored by the City as well as those hosted by other organizations)
- Brief background on the history of downtown as well as its exciting future
- Contact information including phone number and website for additional information



Example Downtown Directories and Guides



*Distribution.* The format of the brochure should be designed so that is suitable to fit in brochure racks, informational kiosks and as a promotional mailer. Determine a distribution plan, placing brochures in key places (City Hall, College, key downtown businesses, Visitor Center, surrounding hotels, real estate offices) where it will be visible to residents, visitors and employees alike. It should also be available to download on the City, Tuolumne County Visitor Bureau, Chambers of Commerce, and College websites.

- 3. Publish and distribute a restaurant guide.** Parallel to creating and distributing a Historic Downtown Sonora directory, publishing a restaurant guide also should be a priority. The guide should include all of the restaurants located within the historic downtown core, with key information (address, phone number, website) listed for each restaurant and perhaps a map. Launch the restaurant guide in conjunction with a Restaurant Week.

## B. Tourism Promotion and Marketing

- 4. Develop a logo and slogan to strengthen Historic Downtown Sonora's brand.** A unified visual concept (captured in a logo) and message (condensed into a slogan or tag line) should be developed that represent the essence of downtown and further support Historic Downtown Sonora as a special, unique destination on its own within the City and region. There are numerous ways that communities develop a logo for their downtown area including contests, graphic artists competition, pro bono work, and high school or college internships. Efforts to get strong buy-in for the downtown business community are imperative so make sure to include their feedback in the process.

**a. Using the logo and slogan.**

The logo/slogan should be incorporated into as many visual elements as possible including printed marketing materials, advertising, websites, recruitment pieces, banners, kiosks and signage. Encourage downtown businesses to incorporate the downtown logo/slogan in their individual advertising as well as be consistent in how they refer to downtown as Historic Downtown Sonora.

- 5. Strengthen downtown's Internet presence.** With the majority of travelers using the Internet for vacation planning, it is critical that downtown has a strong presence on the Internet to assist potential visitors with information gathering about downtown's activities, businesses and amenities.

**a. Enhance current websites.**

Currently downtown has a small presence on the City of Sonora's website, Historic Sonora Chamber of Commerce site and the Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau's site. Continue to look at how each of these sites can be strengthened with content about downtown, a downtown logo and tagline (when these are developed), downtown directory, vacation packages and deals, and key pieces of marketing collateral available for download as PDF files.

**b. Develop a stand-alone website.**

Develop a stand-alone website for promoting downtown that can serve as a repository for the materials recommended in this chapter.

- 6. Grow a robust social media campaign.** Social media is fast becoming one of the most vital, cost-efficient tools in tourism marketing. Effective use of social media has been proven to boost the number and length of visits, as well as visitor satisfaction and number of return visits.

**a. Encourage downtown businesses to use social media.**

Work with downtown businesses to encourage them to engage in social media—especially ratings sites such as Yelp, Foursquare, and TripAdvisor where people may already be posting opinions about their businesses—and to cross support the downtown's social media presence.

**b. Short term: Launch a Facebook page.**

At a minimum, downtown should maintain and grow a robust Facebook presence. Develop a content calendar to identify post content and frequency, along with a usage policy to prevent spam. Content and updates can include information on special events, activities, dining, history, photos, and questions. Engaging with fans is a key metric that determines whether posts appear in Facebook users' news feeds, so focusing on quality of content and providing for interaction are important. Build the fan base by encouraging people to "Like us on Facebook", linking to the Facebook page from downtown webpages, and putting the Facebook icon on printed materials.

**c. Longer term: Explore using other sites.**

In addition to Facebook, other social media sites to consider include a downtown blog, Twitter, YouTube, Google+, Foursquare (allows users to "check in" and submit reviews as they visit locations such as stores, restaurants, and tourist sites), Flickr (photo

**"Better marketing is needed to get tourists to explore town beyond Washington Street—St. Patricks, the history museum, the graveyards, whatever the jail and courthouse can become... Most people who come to town never climb a hill to see how the town layers onto the hills, and they don't see that postcard image."**

*Vision Sonora Website Comment*



*Sonora – Queen of the Southern Mines*

sharing), TripAdvisor (travel destination ratings), Yelp (business and destination ratings and “check ins”), and social coupon sites like Groupon. With the overwhelming number of possibilities with social media, start small and grow as resources and capacity expand.

**7. Improve the downtown wi-fi zone.** Providing free wireless Internet access within the historic downtown core will aid visitors in accessing online information and encourage businesses to enhance their online presence. There is an existing wi-fi zone, but the City should investigate improving the strength of the signal.

**8. Develop a twelve-month calendar of smaller-scaled events that create incentives to come to downtown.** Communities across the nation have found that hosting an event is a viable way to attract visitors and residents alike to downtown and build additional foot traffic to spur economic activity. People often need a reason or incentive to come to downtown.

**a. Build on existing events.**

The City, arts community, Fairgrounds, Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations, already host successful events in or near downtown. Downtown needs to fully take advantage of these established events and look for key opportunities to piggyback on these activities. It takes a great deal of resources and community support to launch a new event. It is recommended that before considering adding a new event, identify any gaps in the existing community’s calendar of events (as they relate to attracting visitors) and consider if there are opportunities to build on an existing event and/or determine if it has the potential to grow into a signature event.

**b. Develop a year-round calendar in phases.**

Expand upon the monthly events occurring in Sonora over time.

**c. Produce materials to promote events.**

Consider producing a high-quality poster that lists the key annual events for the year as well as a smaller rack size piece which can be distributed in hotels, at the visitor centers, in downtown windows, on community bulletin boards and other locations. Consider producing a quarterly postcard-size piece that lists the upcoming events and that businesses can use to hand out and/or mail directly to their customer database.

**9. Expand downtown as a “stage” for community events.** Many communities encourage local community events to be held downtown. As described in Chapter 3, Mobility & Community Design, a major focus of Vision Sonora is the improvement and creation of community gathering spaces that are suitable for hosting events.

**a. Develop downtown event guidelines and procedures.**

To ensure that all events support downtown’s image and are coordinated effectively, the City in partnership with the downtown business group should develop a set of guidelines and procedures for community-based organizations (such as schools, civic organizations and nonprofit entities) to follow when using downtown as the stage for their events. The guidelines should include permits needed; set up and tear down procedures; how hosting organizations should notify local businesses; food handling permits; recommendations for parking and access; and requirements for safety, restrooms, sanitation, and waste collection.

**b. Expand the banner program.**

Develop seasonal banners to call attention to upcoming annual events and highlight Sonora attractions. Consider developing banners with historical themes.

**10. Develop life-long relationships with your visitors, both in-state and out-of-state.** As a community, work together to foster a life-long relationship with all visitors, from local to international.

**a. Encourage repeat visits.**

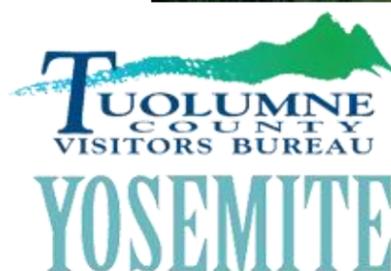
Letting visitors know you appreciate their business builds loyalty. Encourage businesses to have a guest book that asks for comments and email addresses so when appropriate they can contact visitors again. Explore how you are contacting out-of-state visitors three to four months before upcoming events and exhibits. Do you communicate with visitors to encourage return visits? Do you thank them for their visit?

**b. Encourage word-of-mouth marketing.**

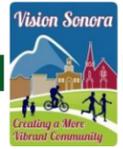
Consider a “Wish You Were Here” campaign by providing a stamped post card from your destination/attraction that you give each visitor during peak season, encouraging them to write to a family member or friend and tell them about their visit. Encourage happy customers to post their



Promoting Local Events



Sample of Existing Tourism Resources



comments on social media sites such as TripAdvisor, Foursquare, and Yelp.

### C. Cultural and Heritage Tourism

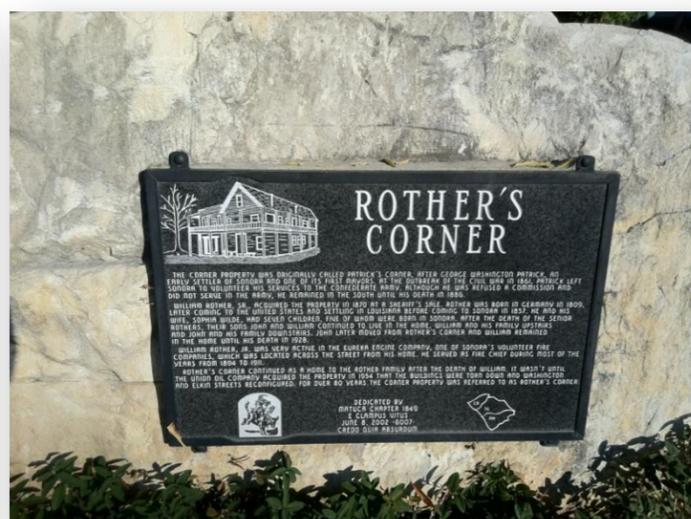
**11. Expand cultural and heritage tourism.** Cultural and heritage tourism is defined as visits by persons from outside the community who are motivated by interest in historical, artistic, or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community or region. Cultural and heritage tourism is a growing economic sector in America, and downtown Sonora is positioned to capitalize even more on this trend. Cultural and heritage tourism is about more than historic buildings; it is about exploring the entire history of the community, its events, its people and its culture. Downtown will need to broaden its image from an interesting collection of historic buildings to include interesting things that happened in the area and the interesting people that caused them. Historic Downtown Sonora is a genuine reflection of both the community's history (historic buildings) and the culture. Concentrate on what is authentic, real and meaningful to Sonora.

- a. Produce self-guided tour guides.**  
Continue to work with the Tuolumne County Historical Society Landmarks Committee, Tuolumne Heritage Committee, and key members of the community to produce at least one self-guided tour guide of landmarks and historic places. Consider a separate walking/driving tour showcasing unusual points of history—not just Sonora's buildings, but the rock walls, bridges, barns, mining and railroad equipment, railroad tracks, and other historical artifacts and sites. Also consider organizing tours by theme or historical period. Make sure that the tour materials are widely distributed to regional hotels, visitor centers and museums—and are available as downloadable PDFs.
- b. Develop mobile/handheld content.**  
Develop content for mobile and handheld devices, such as maps, mobile-compatible webpages, and audio files. Explore developing a dedicated application. Use QR codes on signs and handouts that link to mobile-friendly online material.
- c. Run docent-led tours.**  
In peak season, offer docent-led walking and/or trolley tours. College students could be excellent candidates to help develop and conduct tours. Consider developing a home tour event.

- d. Create a "Windows on History" event.**  
In this type of program, historical pictures and a brief history of the various buildings and businesses are enlarged and placed in the windows of the corresponding locations. A brochure is created with all of the "Windows on History" locations. This can be a temporary event coordinated with National Preservation Week (typically in May) and augmented with activities such as docent led tours, special musical venues, and historical storytelling.
- e. Create opportunities for interaction.**  
The Heritage and Cultural tourist wants to learn but not be bored. Personalize and customize to bring experiences alive. Provide positive, authentic opportunities for interaction so visitors can see, taste and take home some of their Sonora cultural heritage experience. Provide opportunities for personal communication with artists, historians and tour guides. Identify a lecture series, demonstrations, artists' workshops or even a "behind the scenes" tour especially for heritage/cultural visitors.
- f. Package, package, package.**  
Partner and look for opportunities to work with museums, historic sites, art galleries and cultural activities in your area and create packages. Offer visitors the ability to buy a package of museum admissions, including a one, two-or three-day pass with unlimited access to many of the area's museums, historical sites and other appropriate heritage or cultural venue. Investigate using "smart cards" with encoded information for package discounts at multiple sites. Develop itineraries specifically targeted at promoting the history and cultural (performing arts, galleries, events, etc.) aspects of Sonora.

**12. Consider registration of historic downtown Sonora as a historic resource.** Although some structures in Sonora have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, there has not yet been a formal recognition of the historic downtown area as a whole. Inclusion on one of the state listings would allow Historic Downtown Sonora to be recognized with Caltrans signage. Inclusion on the National Register would also allow the installation of signage and would also give more property owners access to federal tax incentives for qualified rehabilitation projects.

- a. Decide what type of registration to pursue.**  
Seek advice from the California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation to determine what level of



Sonora – Rich in History

effort is required for the different state and federal listings, and which listings might be the best fit for Sonora’s historic resources. Form a task force with City officials, local historic preservation organizations, and downtown property owners to identify objectives and evaluate and consider whether listing(s) should be pursued such as California Historical Landmarks, California Points of Historic Interest, California Register of Historical Resources, or National Register of Historic Places.

**b. Consider registration.**

The application process will require research and writing at a minimum, and potentially a survey of historic resources—different listings will have different requirements. Maintain the involvement of the task force for this effort, and reach out to the public to explain what the listing means. Property owners may worry that the listing will result in limitations on what they can do with their properties.

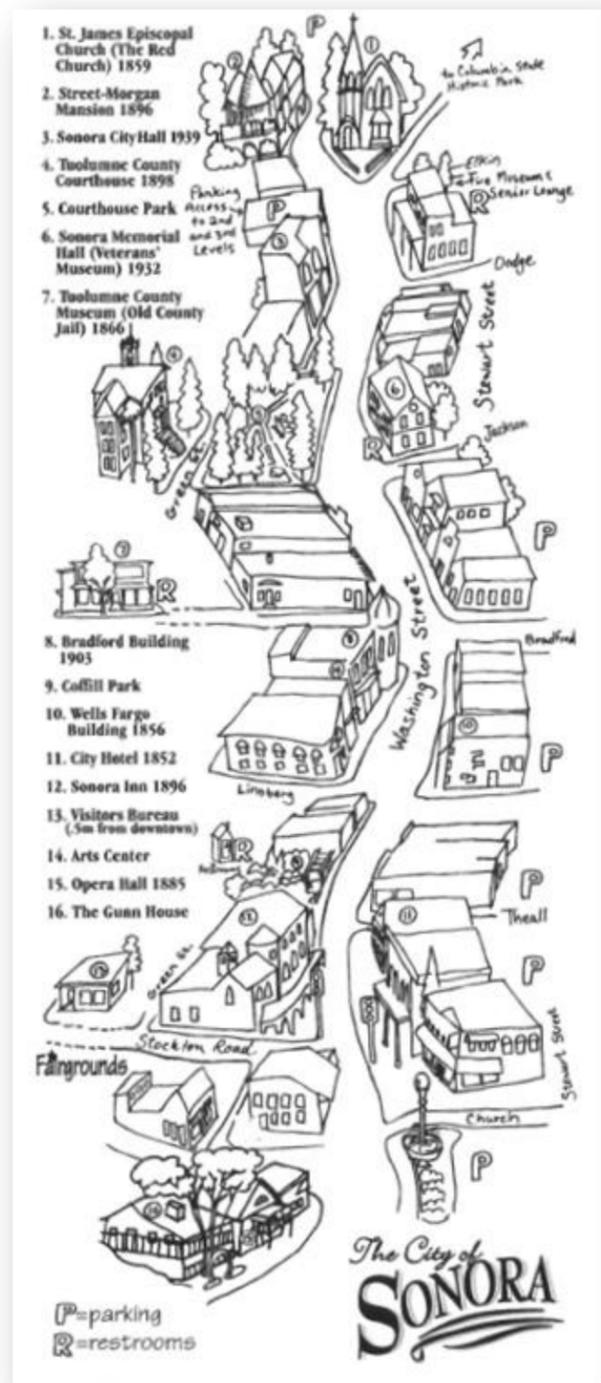
**c. Request Caltrans signage for Historic Downtown Sonora.**

If a listing at the state and/or national level is achieved, the City should proceed with a formal request to place a set of signs on SR 108 directing eastbound and westbound travelers toward Historic Downtown Sonora via Washington Street or Stockton Street. This should involve the following steps (contact the Caltrans district office to verify, as the steps may change over time):

1. *Consult with the Office of Historic Preservation.* Obtain a written verification of the historic district’s official name from the California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation, and ensure that there are no conflicts with existing signs.
2. *Adopt a resolution and identify funding.* The City Council must adopt a resolution requesting Caltrans to place the signs. Identify funding to pay for the cost of the signs and their installation—this is not provided by the State.
3. *Request a sign from Caltrans.* Contact the Traffic Operations unit in the local district office to make the request for a sign.

**13. Strengthen Sonora’s historic resources.** Historic structures benefit from adaptive re-use, rehabilitation, and maintenance that allow more people to appreciate them while leaving significant features intact and preventing decay. Historic areas are often given special protections to maintain the feel of a particular era while allowing contemporary life to go on.

- a. **Promote rehabilitation and re-use of historic structures.** See the Image and Safety section for a recommendation to create an assistance program for building and façade rehabilitation. Registration of the historic district may make more funding resources available.
- b. **Explore ways to maintain a historic atmosphere.** There are different ways to maintain the historic integrity of Sonora’s most treasured historic areas, including design guidelines, special zoning, a historic preservation commission, and a local historic district designation. The community should explore these options, again drawing on the California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation for information and examples.

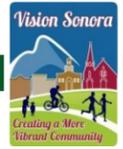


Historical Sites Directory



**“I would like Sonora to be a destination that beckons through strong cultural artistic, healthy, forward reaching, historic expressions of who and what we are here.”**

Community Visioning Comments



**14. Add elements to the streetscape and public places that call attention to Sonora’s history and unique attributes.** Tell the story of Sonora through signage, artwork, and artifacts that express what is unique or notable about the area, its history, and its people.

**a. Place plaques and interpretive signs at historic sites.**

Continue to expand and look for opportunities to promote the Historical Society’s work with downtown property owners to place plaques on their buildings that describe the building’s history. Work with the Historical Society and other partners to create a series of interpretive signs at historic sites. See wayfinding section in Mobility & Community Design for recommendations about freestanding historical markers.

**b. Feature historic artifacts and local materials in public places.**

Place historic artifacts such as lumber and mining equipment in visible locations such as parks and plazas, and other landscaped areas. Use interpretive signs to place the artifacts in context, and try to create photo opportunities. Integrate local rock, plants, and other materials into the design of public spaces.

**c. Create interpretive elements in public places.**

Incorporate creative and artistic elements into sidewalks and other pedestrian areas to encourage spontaneous discovery of interesting aspects of Sonora. For instance, these could be timelines, small mosaics, or wayfinding symbols calling out significant locations. This should be part of the public art program recommended below.

**d. Create murals.**

Select appropriate sites for murals, and commission artwork that brings Sonora’s history to life. A mural could be a photographic depiction of a streetscape as it was in the past, or a less literal interpretation of historic or cultural elements. This should be part of the public art program recommended below.

Create a committee or commission to oversee the creation of public art works and performances. Implement projects by engaging professional artists (preferably local) and look for ways to involve community members. Use art to enliven the public gathering places and corridors described in Community Design—with murals, three-dimensional artwork, and performances. Be creative in looking for “canvases,” or opportunities to incorporate works of art and craft. Install public art in vacant storefronts as described in Visitors & Tourism. Public art is approved through the City’s use permit process.

**b. Explore an artist-in-residence program.**

In collaboration with Tuolumne County Arts Alliance and Columbia College, explore creating an artist-in-residence program. The artist would mentor local students and artists and be responsible for implementing public art projects. Sonora’s beautiful setting should be a major selling point for artists as they consider applying for this program.

**c. Expand arts and culture events.**

Support and build on Sonora’s events to foster more opportunities for art appreciation and experiencing culture and history. Seek funding to support 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday Art Night as an anchor event for arts tourism. Consider restarting the concert in the park season and creating more visual arts events.



**d. Develop local artistic talent.**

Through the programs above, prioritize opportunities to develop local artistic talent through education as well as opportunities to display art, install public art, and perform. Create a scholarship program for youth showing exceptional artistic promise, perhaps in conjunction with the KASA (Kids Arts Studies Academy) program.

**e. Explore opportunities to create additional arts and culture spaces.**

Consider use of vacant buildings and sites to create additional spaces in Sonora to create and celebrate art—such as spaces for exhibits, lectures, workshops, artist workspaces, video and photography studios, live theaters, and galleries. Continue to explore use of the historic Dome Campus for this purpose.

**D. Arts & Culture**

**15. Create a focused effort to promote arts and culture.** Continue to promote arts and culture events, installations, performances, and sales.

**a. Create a public art program.**

In collaboration with Tuolumne County Arts Alliance,



Existing Historic Artifact Used in Public Space



Example: Incorporating Art into Infrastructure

**“Murals and 3 dimensional artwork. We have so many artists in our community. We should highlight their talents.”**

Vision Sonora Website Comment

## E. Image and Safety

**16. Create incentives for commercial building and site improvements.** Improving the physical aspects of Sonora’s buildings, facades and storefronts must be a priority.

- a. Offer grant and loan programs.**  
Identify and pursue funding to be able to offer various levels of funding and financing to assist simple paint and fix-it projects as well as more extensive rehabilitations of buildings or storefronts. Conduct extensive outreach to property owners to encourage them to take advantage of these programs. Comply with prevailing wage requirements for workers while establishing these programs.
- b. Create a volunteer “makeover” program.**  
As part of Spruce Up Downtown, develop a competitive program that mobilizes volunteers to make a major difference in the appearance of one property in a day (plus prep time) through repairs, painting, and installation of landscaping.
- c. Connect property owners to resources.**  
Develop relationships with external resources that can offer assistance directly to property owners seeking to make building improvements, such as CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions) which provide credit and financial services to underserved markets and populations.

**17. Improve the presentation of empty storefronts.** Efforts need to be centered on improving storefronts as much as possible to demonstrate that downtown cares about and is proud of its historic district as well as help “sell” downtown’s economic opportunities.

- a. Encourage cleanup and maintenance.**  
Meet one-on-one with property owners to encourage them to remove old signs, products and junk from vacant buildings and especially from vacant display windows. Create a list of local companies or resources to assist with window cleaning, awning repair, removal of junk or debris, and painting.
- b. Create a program for displays in vacant storefronts.**  
Store windows can be used as “phantom galleries” to display art, small museum exhibits, merchandise from other downtown businesses or start-up businesses that do not yet have the revenue to rent a

space, or as a place to promote community events and projects. As described above in History and Identity, a “Windows on History” event could be staged in storefronts. And as described in Local Economy & Community, windows can be used to promote the available spaces themselves as well as other commercial vacancies. Start by adopting a window each month and building a display with community partners such as the Arts Alliance, historical organizations, and Columbia College.

**18. Work with businesses to improve their overall physical presentation.** Business owners need to pay careful attention to window displays and their impact on both the image of the district and their individual businesses—not only stores with merchandise to display but service and professional businesses. Front and rear entrances must be inviting and visually appealing. Finally, the entire store (interior and exterior) should be kept as pristine as possible. Business owners need to sweep, vacuum and mop their businesses on a consistent basis. Awnings, carpets, rugs, blinds and curtains also need to be cleaned regularly.

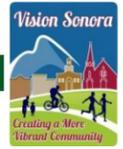
- a. Develop and distribute a 12-month window display calendar and guide.**  
In partnership with the Chamber, create a calendar to inspire creative window displays. Each month the calendar should suggest themes or ideas. Develop ideas that tie into the community events held downtown, at the College, and at Stage 3, as well as other local and civic promotions. Include tips on how to build and maintain exciting window displays, and provide a list of resources available for such items as window cleaners, sources for materials and displays, books or publications. Distribute the guide to all downtown businesses, including service and professional businesses.
- b. Consider holding a window display contest.**  
Provide an additional incentive by profiling contest winners in a City publication and awarding downtown gift certificates.
- c. Offer visual merchandising assistance.**  
Working with the Alliance Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and/or the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, offer one-on-one visual merchandising assistance to help businesses improve their window displays, in-store displays and overall visual presentation of their businesses. Consider involving an intern from the College.



Stewart Street Plaza Concept



Downtown Sonora



- d. Implement a rear entrance demonstration project.** Many downtown businesses and property owners have started to enhance the backs of their stores. To continue encouraging these types of rear entrance improvements and demonstrating the impact they can have on the overall visual presence to both the business itself as well as Downtown as a whole, consider implementing a “rear entrance demonstration project.” Choose a downtown business that ideally has a rear entrance facing a parking lot or side street and offer to work with the owners to improve the visual aspects. Improvements are primarily aesthetic and not structural, and might include cleaning up the area; painting; adding signage, an awning, or some simple landscaping; and opening up the doorway to welcome visitors.

**19. Enhance cleanliness and safety downtown.**

Business and property owners need to continue to work with City staff to plan and coordinate a regular program of cleanliness. A greater sense that downtown is looked after will enhance the sense of safety.

- a. Establish a City notification process for maintenance and safety issues.** Develop and implement a formal notification process for businesses, property owners and other community members to report issues related to cleanliness or condition of public amenities in the downtown to City staff.
- b. Expand downtown clean-up events.** On a bi-yearly basis, businesses and property owners in partnership with the City should host a Spruce Up Downtown clean-up day event, for instance in April and October. Have downtown business and property owners, local youth, city staff, civic organizations and residents participate in activities such as:
- Painting or cleaning the public rights-of-way (bus stops, etc)
  - Cleaning the exteriors of businesses, including awnings
  - Sweeping and washing down sidewalks
  - Washing windows
  - Making repairs and removing weeds
  - Plant planter boxes (work with local garden club)
  - Remove graffiti and stickers, and pick up trash
- Celebrate with food, and supply brooms, watering buckets, gloves and garbage bags for volunteers. Work with the local waste removal service to provide for extra trash pickup.

- c. Provide more waste and recycling receptacles.** As described in Mobility & Community Design, receptacles for collecting trash and recyclables should be more readily available, especially in gathering places. These will require pickup and handling that is different than waste collection in the rest of the community.
- e. Distribute a Clean and Safe bulletin to business and property owners.** Consider publishing and distributing a downtown Clean and Safe bulletin that lists the days when streets are cleaned and trash receptacles emptied, upcoming clean-up days or walk-around events, contact information for window washers and companies that repair and clean awnings, phone numbers to call for graffiti or crime related issues, and other useful information about safety and keeping downtown clean. The bulletin should be distributed to all property owners with a special section dedicated to the importance of keeping empty storefronts clean. Post the bulletin on the City’s website.
- f. Consider establishing a downtown foot patrol.** A police foot patrol would enhance a sense of safety while offering a point of contact for questions about Sonora. Explore options for a volunteer foot patrol that operates under the guidance of the Police Department and refers safety issues to staff.

**F. Strengthening Local Businesses**

**20. Create a business retention and expansion program.** Statistics show that it is far more cost effective to retain an existing business than to attract a new one. Sonora should implement a comprehensive business strengthening strategy focused on business retention/expansion.

- a. Business visitation program.** One of the most effective tools for business retention is communication. Current business visitation efforts can be strengthened to communicate strongly to businesses that the community is interested in their challenges and in keeping them in the area. It is recommended that the City of Sonora, in partnership with the Sonora Chamber and the downtown business group, consider conducting systematic business visitations as one of its priorities for the next 18 months to build a stronger network among the business community and help link businesses with resources and technical assistance. In addition,



Promoting Extended Business Hours



the visitations help the community to identify businesses that are struggling or are at risk of closing or leaving the area—as well as businesses looking to expand and in need of guidance on permitting or relocation.

**b. Education and technical assistance.**

The environment for the small business owner is constantly changing and extremely competitive. Ongoing education is essential for the health of any business. Attending workshops or seminars, however, can be difficult for “mom and pop” operations, especially if they are not convinced that the trainings will meet their needs. Instead of offering larger-scaled workshops, continue the Microenterprise Assistance Program and work with the Alliance Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, the Sonora Chamber of Commerce, and the Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau to expand programs tailored to meet the needs of the downtown business owners especially in regards to hospitality training, customer service, displays/presentation, social media, and e-marketing.

**21. Expand downtown business hours.** There must be a concentrated effort focused at getting the majority of retail stores, restaurants, and cultural and historical attractions to expand the hours that they are open—Saturday, Sunday and later in the evening as well as holidays when visitors are in town, if staff schedules allow. One strategy that other communities have implemented to make the shift toward being open seven days a week is hosting a specific campaign targeted at driving business to a particular day or time.

**a. Open (this day or hours) campaign.**

Have businesses commit to being open on special evening hours or on a specific extra day beginning Memorial Day and ending after Labor Day. Have businesses sign an agreement that they will make the commitment and encourage them to promote it within their own advertising and marketing venues. Plan several “mini” events specifically during these hours such as an evening “walkabout” with refreshments offered at participating businesses. As a group, promote that downtown is open during these hours and list participating businesses through a variety of promotional venues such as a display ad in the local media, press releases, websites, flyers, posts on bulletin boards, direct mail, table tents in restaurants, and inserts in visitor packets.

**22. Develop promotions targeting area workers.** Extra efforts will help to draw area workers into downtown on a regular basis.

**a. Customer Appreciation Month.**

Recognize and reward people who work downtown and already patronize downtown businesses. Dedicate one entire month and offer a variety of discounts, incentives, awards and fun promotions to get downtown employees back into downtown while also rewarding other loyal customers.

Consider the following components:

- Offer discounts or give away “downtown bucks” to key customers
- Support the promotion by showcasing “Downtown Employers” in window displays
- Have staff wear buttons that say “We Love Our Customers”
- Use table tents at the restaurants to promote the monthly event and the various discounts being offered
- Have restaurants create “bring a fellow employee to lunch and get a free dessert as our way to say thank you”
- Invite all downtown customers and employees to gather in a key location for a large photo shoot. Distribute the photo and short story to key media venues and display it throughout downtown shops and businesses. People love to come back and see themselves in print!

**b. Distribute restaurant guides.**

Distribute downtown restaurant guides to key employers, especially firms outside of downtown Sonora.

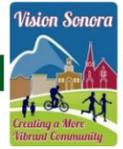
**c. Help businesses to create joint and “bounce back” promotions.**

Businesses can coordinate to encourage commerce among themselves as well as offering joint promotions such as two-for-one deals.

**23. Develop promotional and advertising efforts targeting residents.** Create a series of direct mail, special promotions, mini events and other creative marketing efforts targeted directly to residents—including new residents and second home residents. Make sure that any marketing collateral about Historic Downtown Sonora is included in relocation packets, visitor packets, racks, subdivision sales offices and other key places.



Examples of Customer Appreciation & Student Promotion



- a. Send a bi-yearly direct mail piece.**  
Create an interesting, professional direct mail piece that acts as an invitation to come to Historic Downtown Sonora. Obtain addresses and zip codes from a mail house service. Consider offering a discount coupon and make sure to list all of the upcoming events. To help offset the cost of the printing and mailing, offer downtown businesses the opportunity to advertise or sponsor it, or co-produce it with Stage 3 or the Art Walk.
- b. Send a “move-in” coupon book or package for new residents.**  
Create a Historic Downtown Sonora coupon book that has discounts and incentives from participating businesses, as well as other related venues. Work with realtors, homebuilders, mortgage and title companies, and Columbia College to distribute the coupon book to new residents and students. Consider signing up with the local “welcome wagon” or greeting service as another possible distribution channel.
- c. Host Downtown Restaurant Week.**  
Work with the Tuolumne Visitor Center and leverage California Restaurant Month in January to support a Sonora Restaurant Week promotion.
- d. Develop a Shop Local campaign.**  
The majority of businesses located in downtown Sonora are independently owned, which makes downtown the perfect candidate for capitalizing on the national “shop local” movement. Explore ways to build on the success of the annual Tuolumne Chamber’s “Shop Local Saturdays”.

**24. Target College students and faculty.** Students and faculty make up a considerable market with annual turnover. Continue to work with Columbia College to target this market.

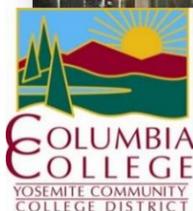
- a. Host a Downtown Sonora Tour targeting students.**  
Working with the College, host a Downtown Sonora Tour inviting students to come downtown and visit shops, restaurants and other attractions. Have the businesses put together “swag” (coupons, giveaways, etc) to give to the students.
- b. College outreach booth.**  
Look for opportunities to have a Historic Downtown Sonora booth/table at strategic College activities and events. It is important to bring downtown to the potential customer group. Not only should the booth

be at key College activities, but explore using it at other community events in the area.

- c. Use social media and online marketing.**  
Social media and hand-held devices are the primary formats that many young adults use to make decisions about shopping, dining and events. Explore how downtown businesses can penetrate this market through social media, online rating sites, social coupons, dedicated apps, and text messaging. See Visitors & Tourism for recommendations regarding a larger social media campaign.

**25. Produce regular cluster advertisements.** The downtown businesses that advertise on a regular basis should work together to develop programs with their local advertising media to cluster their advertisements, using the Historic Downtown Sonora logo and tagline and promoting upcoming events or news about downtown.

- a. Newspaper ads and inserts.**  
Working with the local newspaper, prepare quarterly inserts that combine advertising, positive and informational editorial content (including upcoming events), photos, and a listing of all downtown businesses. Overruns of this insert can be distributed at the Visitor Centers, Chamber, City Hall, Library, and Museum.
- b. “Donut” commercials.**  
Produce a “donut” commercial with a local radio station; for businesses/attractions with websites, explore creating a video commercial for online advertisements. The first 20 seconds of the commercial would talk about Historic Downtown Sonora—new happenings, history and/or upcoming special events. The next 30 seconds of the commercial would be about a downtown business (the business would pay for this portion of the commercial) and the last 10 seconds would be a call to action reminding the radio listener to come to downtown for a special event or shopping and lunch.
- c. Downtown coupon book.**  
Downtown businesses should cluster their ads together and create a downtown coupon book. The books could offer discounts, 2-for-1 dining opportunities, and service and professional offerings. The books could be distributed at key events in goodie bags, at a downtown booth, and to new residents (as described in recommendations above). Explore ways to create a digital coupon book.



Columbia College Library  
<http://columbia.yosemite.cc.ca.us>

**Shop Local Movements.**

Whether they’re shopping at local retailers on Small Business Saturday (November) or participating in a Cash-Mob event, American consumers’ interest in supporting local, independent businesses is on the rise. In a 2012 survey by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), 75% of business owners surveyed believed public awareness of the benefits of supporting locally owned businesses increased in 2011. The ILSR counts some 150 shop-local campaigns nationwide operated by independent business alliances, and found that in communities with active shop-local movements, independent businesses saw revenues rise by 7.2% in 2011, compared to only 2.6% for independent businesses in areas without a shop-local campaign.

Buy Local is a grassroots initiative open to anyone who believes in the benefit of spending money in the communities where he or she lives, works, goes to school, and plays. Now more than ever, you can have a major impact on maintaining your community’s quality of life simply by paying attention to where you shop.

**Think Local First Step Inside**



**d. Flyers.**

Downtown businesses should cluster advertising about their businesses in high quality, professionally produced flyers to cross-promote between related businesses and share advertising costs. These flyers should be placed in the advertised businesses, Chamber of Commerce, College outlets and Visitor Centers.

**G. Focused Business Recruitment**

**26. Understand the local market.** To boost downtown's commerce as well as help sustain it as a viable and healthy destination (for visitors and residents alike), the community should approach strategic market analysis as an ongoing responsibility. Consultant studies are useful, but only inasmuch as their findings are used to inform leaders in their work to help lower the investment risk for business ventures. The Historic Downtown Sonora Business Development and Market Opportunities report (February 2013) reviews earlier studies and provides current analyses of trade area demographics, downtown's market position, target consumer markets, business mix, business clusters, sales performance, and business development opportunities. The Internet makes it increasingly easy to access numerous data sources to stay abreast of current trends. And, as shown through the interviews conducted during this planning process, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with multiple downtown stakeholders promises to be the only way to truly understand market dynamics.

**a. Market analysis.**

Mine the wealth of quantitative and qualitative market information available to the community. Periodically update strategic market understanding with Internet research, phone calls, interviews, and networking forums. Conduct specific market research to meet information needs as they arise in the course of providing guidance to a business development prospect or in preparing business recruitment marketing materials. Network with business and property owners, city officials, real estate professionals, and community economic development leaders to exchange strategic market information.

**27. Focus on priority recruitment targets and locations.**

During Community Visioning Week, residents expressed needs for a breakfast restaurant, deli, bakery, tasting rooms, bookstores, and men's clothing store as possible gaps in the downtown business mix. Others pointed out a need for non-retail jobs that

pay higher wages. Fortunately, Sonora faces an abundance of viable business recruitment targets that leaders can pursue to fill market gaps and strengthen the current business mix. Successful recruitment programs commit to pursuing a prioritized set of achievable targets.

**a. Recruitment targets.**

Convene a strategy session jointly with the Sonora Chamber of Commerce, Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, and other key partners to select three to five recruitment targets that are promising when held up to business development criteria. Commit to more deeply exploring the business feasibility of the priority recruitment targets and to pursuing them in marketing, outreach, and networking and entrepreneur development efforts.

**b. Location targets.**

Convene another joint Authority, Chamber and City meeting to review vacant buildings and sites and choose three to five locations on which to focus business recruitment efforts. For each priority location, conduct a review of its features and capabilities as places for priority business recruitment targets. Emphasize these priority locations on the City/Authority's website and in business recruitment marketing materials.

**28. Coordinate recruitment efforts.** Continue to position the City, Authority, Chamber, Downtown Business Group and other key partners to effectively respond to, and seek, business investment prospects.

**a. Communications plan.**

Devise a collaborative plan for how each recruitment partner organization will respond to business inquiries about downtown as an investment location. Each partner needs to be equipped with marketing materials, to be prepared to communicate a consistent message to the prospect, and to be clear about what contact person to whom to refer the lead. Ensure that all partners' websites provide consistent information to business prospects. Website content, contacts and links need to reinforce each other and clarify the message that Sonora embraces business investment. Prospects want to perceive that organizations will work in partnership to help them find the right locations and the right help to launch their ventures.



Downtown Sonora

**b. Develop recruitment materials.**

Business recruitment materials should communicate to potential business prospects the desirability of locating their ventures in Sonora and provide abundant information to help them make the decision to do so. The City's and other partner organizations' websites should reinforce that message through complementary content and useful data links.

**c. Packet.**

Assemble a business recruitment packet of marketing materials and market data that includes the items described below.

**d. Website.**

Ensure that the City (and eventually the downtown) website offers business development features that mirror the recruitment packet. The site should also include highlights of public and private investment in the district, profiles of vibrant businesses, and an outline of City services and other entrepreneur support services.

**e. Market profile sheet.**

Publish a market profile sheet that summarizes all of the reasons that a business should choose to locate in downtown Sonora—strong demographics, substantial daytime employment, lots of travelers and tourists, a great mix of businesses, public and private reinvestment projects, new market opportunities, and business support services from the City, Authority, Chamber and other partners.

**f. Business opportunity profile sheets.**

Prepare business opportunity profile sheets that summarize the market viability of top recruitment targets. Include information on target market groups, market gap analysis, sales potential, rough break-even analysis, downtown marketing and promotion services, business planning assistance services, and incentives. Append relevant data sheets and highlights from reports and studies.

**g. Property list and profile sheets.**

Maintain an up-to-date listing of properties available for lease or sale as business locations; the Chamber currently maintains a map of available properties. Include building names, addresses, square footage, lease rates, purchase prices, building features, agents and contact information. Prepare property profile sheets that include more extensive building descriptions and photographs.

**29. Network to reveal and develop prospects.** Besides paying regular visits to local businesses as described above, conduct additional networking activities inside and outside the community to identify prospects and woo them.

**a. Uncovering leads.**

The recruitment team should continue to visit property and business owners, real estate professionals, city officials, Columbia College, The Alliance Small Business Development Center, Trinity County and Historic Sonora Chambers of Commerce, and Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau to brainstorm leads for business expansion and recruitment.

**b. Follow up.**

Continue to visit downtown businesses seeking more space or a better location, local and regional businesses considering relocation, and area entrepreneurs looking to launch a business. Host prospects to tour downtown Sonora, visit key potential neighbor businesses, meet with leaders, and check out potential locations. Link prospects with small business development service providers and help them strategize a successful enterprise.

**30. Use downtown itself as a recruitment tool.** The unlimited positive aspects of a well-managed, thriving downtown will help to recruit businesses. The clean sidewalk and new lamppost, the crystal-clear display window, the bustling heritage festival, the supportive city government that continually invests in the heart of the community, the strongly led private-sector group, the successful business that has achieved a fulfilling integration of values and lifestyle and profits—all of these aspects and countless more contribute to a compelling case for new businesses to locate downtown.

**a. Positioning vacancies as opportunity sites.**

Asset-based business recruitment capitalizes on putting some of Sonora's best assets—its historic, human-scale downtown commercial buildings—in the best possible light. Ensure that business prospects find vibrant locations full of potential. As described in Visitors & Tourism, ensure that vacant buildings are clean and well-maintained, and install storefront displays. Displays could include: real estate agent signs and signs with contact information for leaders from the City or Authority, large-scale photographs of the buildings' architectural details mounted on easels, and others suggested in Visitors & Tourism. Use lighting to enhance these displays.



*Downtown Storefront with Real Estate Information*



*Vacancies as Opportunities*

## H. Health & Well-Being

**31. Address social issues including homelessness, mental illness, and drug use.** Continue to partner with existing agencies and organizations to coordinate social services County-wide, while pursuing the City's housing programs as part of that regional effort.

**a. Participate in collaborative efforts.**

Collaborative regional efforts such as the Central Sierra Continuum of Care and YES Partnership seek to create a stronger social safety net and use resources efficiently by maintaining a flow of communication between community partners and spurring partnerships for joint projects. Demonstrate commitment to collaborative efforts by attending meetings, sharing information, and encouraging the participation of other Tuolumne County partners such as service providers, schools, and government agencies. Both the Community Development and Police Departments would be valuable participants in these efforts.

**b. Fund and implement Sonora Housing Element programs.**

The Sonora Housing Element is the policy document that guides the City's housing and homelessness prevention programs, in coordination with County-wide partners. The Housing Element, currently being updated for 2014-2019, proposes programs to provide for a variety of housing needs including needs of the homeless. Sonora should continue to fund and implement these programs.

**c. Provide transit access near the Tuolumne County Probation Office.**

Consider a future transit stop near the Probation Office based on user needs to link parolees with destinations such as the One Stop Career Center on Cedar Road.

**32. Encourage physical activity.** Regular physical activity is one of the most important things a person can do to stay healthy. The City can help promote physical activity by providing safe and comfortable places to walk and engage in recreation. Programs can encourage use of public spaces for recreation, including walking paths and trails. See Chapter 3, Mobility & Community Design for recommendations on facilities for walking and bicycling in the Vision Sonora study area.

**a. Encourage outdoor classes, clubs, and other recreation groups.**

Encourage the use of parks, trails, and other community facilities by groups of residents. Yoga and t'ai chi are forms of exercise that can use grassy outdoor spaces. Provide organizers with suggested sites for recreation and walking. Help to publicize efforts by residents to organize groups. The Tuolumne County Hiking group on Meetup.com is an example of the type of grassroots effort that could be boosted with City support, along with local walking or jogging groups. Urge large local employers to encourage walking breaks for their employees.

**b. Seek community use of school recreation facilities.**

The community has invested in beautiful recreation facilities at Sonora High School—including a track, tennis courts, and a baseball field—that could be opened for public use when not needed for school programming. Sonora Elementary has a softball field and basketball courts. Joint use agreements between the City and schools would provide a formal structure for maintenance and coordinating schedules to allow for shared use of these facilities.

**c. Promote walking facilities throughout Sonora.**

Beyond the Vision Sonora study area, facilitate and encourage the provision of sidewalks, walking trails, and safe crossings to allow people to walk to schools, business areas, public facilities, and other destinations. In business areas, remember that sidewalks and paths allow employees to take walking breaks. Sonora Regional Medical Center could serve as an example by providing a walking loop for employees and visitors. Develop a Safe Routes to School program for Sonora Elementary School.

**33. Provide smoke-free public areas.** Promoting compliance with the County ordinance for clean indoor air will provide smoke-free enclosed and dining areas. Taking a step further, Sonora can follow the lead of other California cities and prohibit smoking on sidewalks and in parks and plazas. This discourages smoking and protects non-smokers from second-hand smoke.

**a. Non-smoking ordinance.**

Gauge community interest in and support for an ordinance that extends the non-smoking public realm to public outdoor areas. Model ordinances are available online from the nonprofit organization ChangeLab Solutions, and the American Lung



Tuolumne County Health Fair  
www.mymotherlode.com



Downtown Sonora

Association maintains lists of municipal ordinances controlling tobacco.

**34. Promote access to nutritious food.** Expansion of Sonora's farmers market and promoting community gardens will provide more options for fresh, locally grown, affordable produce.

**a. Expand local produce sales.**

Support the expansion of the farmers market. Encourage local food retailers to offer locally grown produce year-round. Explore the feasibility of creating an indoor farmers market with refrigeration.

**b. Encourage community gardens.**

Allow community gardens by right within appropriate zones. Facilitate community efforts to create community gardens.

**35. Consider becoming a Healthy Eating Active Living City.** The Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities Campaign provides training and technical assistance to help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities' physical activity and retail food environments. Cities that adopt such resolutions or policies are then recognized as HEAL Cities.

## I. Community Involvement

**36. Create opportunities for community members to volunteer in support of Vision Sonora.** Throughout this plan there are opportunities for community members to get involved in making Vision Sonora a reality: cleanups, public art installations, planting, historic tours and programs, visitor center staffing, foot patrol, creating walking groups, and many more. Youth and seniors should be at the top of the list for volunteer recruitment. Involve existing community organizations in sponsoring projects or donating materials and time to implement projects.

**a. Involve youth in community improvement projects.**

From preteens to college students, youth are an often untapped resource. Their enthusiasm and focus make them valuable volunteers, and being involved in the community is rewarding for them as well. Work with the College, high school, and youth-serving organizations to involve youth in projects.

**b. Involve retired and semi-retired residents in community improvement projects.**

Semi-retired and retired Sonora residents have a

wealth of experience and some time on their hands for community-serving projects. They can serve as advisors, organize projects, and fill staffing roles. While the members of civic organizations are obvious candidates for volunteering, they may already have their hands full; also look for people who express interest in particular ideas or issues.

**c. Conduct outreach to recruit volunteers for Vision Sonora.**

Conduct outreach for Vision Sonora to familiarize members of the public with the recommendations, and make it clear that their active participation is welcome and essential.

**37. Conduct outreach to involve property owners in downtown improvement efforts.** It will be critical to the overall success of downtown to gain the support of various downtown property owners and get their buy-in for the overall vision.

**a. Property owner outreach program.** Similar to the business visitation program described in Strengthening Local Businesses, a separate outreach program focused on property owners will help connect them to resources to improve their properties and participate in efforts to grow and recruit businesses.

**b. Maintain an accurate database of all downtown property owners.** Use the database to mail (or email) business newsletters and invitations to upcoming community meetings, and keep property owners in the loop on what is happening in downtown. Maintain mailing addresses of out-of-town property owners and make sure they are included in mailings.

**c. Create and distribute a property owner "news flash."** Consider periodically (about twice a year) publishing a one-page downtown property owner "news flash" that covers specific issues and needs related to downtown properties. This could include a current listing of vacancies, properties that were recently leased, new programs or incentives for owners, educational pieces on keeping properties clean and pristine, and upcoming meetings.

**d. Host a downtown property owner brown bag lunch.** Informal brown bag lunches should be held on a quarterly basis and be targeted to gather feedback from property owners regarding their current needs or issues concerning leasing,



Community Visioning Week Discussion Group

improving, or selling their properties. Periodically consider having a guest speaker to discuss such topics as historic tax credits, Americans with Disabilities Act, financing available for rehabilitations, and fire and safety regulations. Consider offering tours to showcase new business openings, rehabilitation projects, and improvements underway at local properties and buildings.

**e. Implement a formal recognition program to honor improvements being made by property owners.**

The City should implement a formal awards program that showcases key downtown improvements and honors those property owners accordingly. A special recognition could be given at a City Council meeting with a formal plaque presented to the honoree. Distribute a press release to local, regional, and state agencies about the improvements, the level of investment, and the owners investing in downtown.

**38. Build and sustain a strong downtown network and organizational structure.** To maintain a focus on historic downtown Sonora, develop a strong organizational structure that represents both the private and public sectors. Organizations currently engaged in downtown efforts are captured in **Figure 4-1, Historic Downtown Sonora Partners**. There are many options for organizing the effort, but the approach must reflect the character and resources of the community and have the long-term capacity to properly manage downtown and engage all the various stakeholders and partners. The goal of the organizational framework is to involve as many components of the community as possible and not rely on just one entity to single-handedly keep downtown “vitalized”. To create a downtown district that is competitive in all aspects, it must have dedicated resources, a strong organizational structure, and eventually dedicated staff to focus just on downtown.

**a. Formalize a Historic Downtown Sonora collaborative.**

Maintain communication between the local agencies and organizations engaged in Vision Sonora and more generally in downtown improvement efforts by creating a collaborative group that meets quarterly. Encourage members of this collaborative to share information about their current and upcoming activities. Provide opportunities for members to form committees and work on projects together. Convene the group quarterly or bi-annually.

**b. Partner with the Downtown Merchant Group.** A grassroots merchant group was formed to facilitate cooperative advertising opportunities and promotions. The City, Chamber, and Visitor Bureau should acknowledge this group and consider it as a partner at the table. In turn, the merchant group should focus on carrying the voice for Downtown forward in an inclusive, transparent form and work hard at expanding support and buy-in from the Downtown business community.

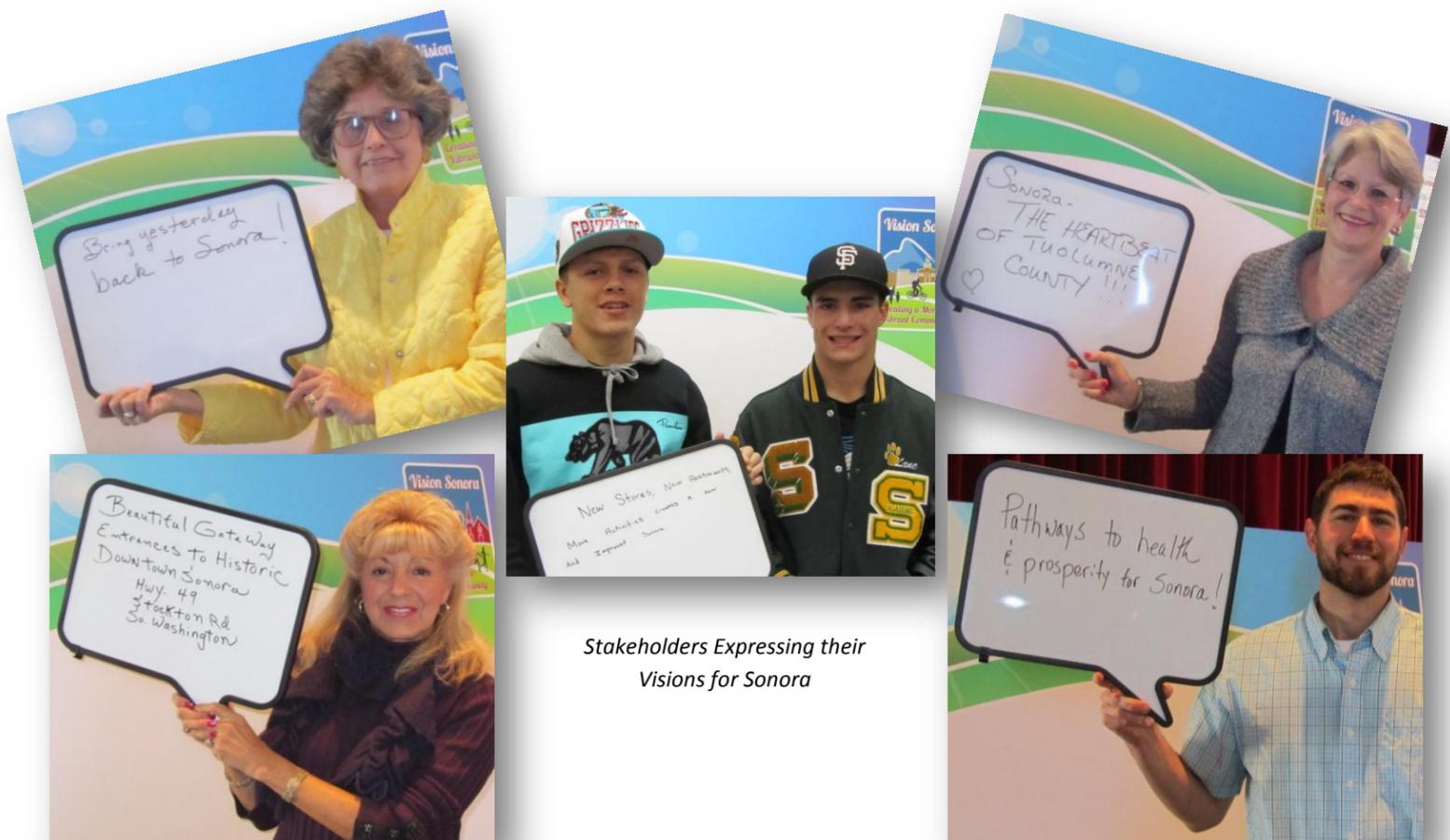
**c. Continue to expand the community’s knowledge of downtown development and management.** Members of the downtown collaborative, other stakeholders, and supporting agencies should continue to attend conferences and other educational opportunities including field trips to other communities.

**39. Maintain consistent communication about Vision Sonora.** As Sonora begins to implement the recommendations outlined in this plan, a consistent communication effort will be key to keep stakeholders, partners and the community well-informed.

**a. Maintain a stakeholder database.** Continue to compile and maintain an accurate contact database of businesses, property owners, partners and other stakeholders. Consider casting a wider net online by creating an email distribution list and social media account for Vision Sonora.

**b. Publish a “Vision Sonora” newsletter.** Distribute news related to Vision Sonora including new projects or programs, new businesses, property improvements, incentives or trainings available, educational articles, meetings, and information about how to involved. Distribute the newsletter as a hard copy and electronically to stakeholders. Keep the Vision Sonora Plan “alive” and the community engaged.

**c. Hold regular community town hall events.** Host quarterly, structured community town hall events to disseminate information about projects and successes related to Vision Sonora and provide opportunities for input. Send invitations to stakeholders and promote these events to the general public. Include ways to engage passionate individuals such as asking them to volunteer on a committee or support an activity.



Stakeholders Expressing their Visions for Sonora

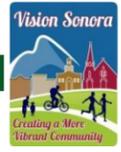
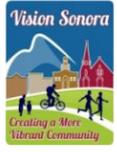
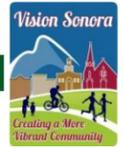


Figure 4-1 Historic Downtown Sonora Partners



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# 5 Implementation

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance on how the Vision Sonora Plan may be funded and implemented.

The Vision Sonora Plan is an aspirational document that describes the steps that the City of Sonora, its partners, and community members believe should be taken to make Sonora a more vibrant community. It is not an engineering document or capital improvement program, and funding has not been committed to implement the plan. However, Community Visioning Week for Vision Sonora already sparked implementation of some of the program recommendations in this plan. For instance, while the plan was being written, a downtown visitor center was launched. This is an encouraging example of the community commitment that exists to carry out Vision Sonora.

This chapter provides recommendations for effectively implementing the Sonora Vision Plan. It is organized into the following sections:

- *Introduction*
- *Carrying Out the Vision*— Calls out some general steps that are necessary to begin and sustain implementation of the Vision Plan.
- *About the Implementation Matrix*— Describes the matrix that appears at the end of this chapter, which lists the plan recommendations along with implementation leaders, partners, and timeframes.
- *Funding and Financing*— Provides information on potential funding and financing sources that can be used to implement the Vision Plan.
- *Implementation Matrix*—This extensive table is provided at the end of the chapter so that it can be maintained and updated as a separate document to guide implementation.

## Carrying Out the Vision

The general steps in a collaborative process to implement Vision Sonora should be the following:

1. **Plan Adoption**
2. **Collaborative Priority-Setting**
3. **Securing Funding**
4. **Capital Improvement Programming**
5. **Monitoring and Re-Prioritization**

### 1. Plan Adoption

The first step in moving forward will be for the City to adopt or otherwise formally embrace the Sonora Vision Plan as a guiding policy document. Subsequent to adoption, the City should distribute the Vision Poster and make the Sonora Vision Plan available to the public via the City's website and in hard copy.

### 2. Collaborative Priority-Setting

As described earlier, community engagement will be essential in carrying out the plan. This engagement needs to begin during the priority-setting phase as the City and partners determine what the first steps should be, and their roles in carrying out those steps. These partners are suggested in the Implementation Matrix but it is essential to engage internal partners within the City as well. The community at large should be able to provide input in this priority-setting process, laying the groundwork for their future contributions as volunteers and supporters.

### 3. Securing Funding

At the earliest opportunity, City staff should seek grants and other funding to support implementation. Fortunately some of this groundwork has been laid with the involvement of Caltrans and Tuolumne County Transportation Council in the Vision Plan. However, as shown in the Potential Funding/Financing section, there are many other potential sources for funding and financing.

### 4. Capital Improvement Programming

The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), is a planning tool for short- and long-range capital improvement and development. The CIP links the City's fiscal planning process to physical development and places a strong emphasis on the overall repair and reconstruction needs of City facilities and infrastructure system. Physical improvements to public property and projects developed by the City will need to be planned for and incorporated in the City's CIP. Other physical improvements may be completed as part of private development.

### 5. Monitoring and Re-Prioritization

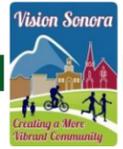
On a regular basis throughout the implementation of the Vision Plan, City staff should report to the City Council and community on progress, then initiate a new round of collaborative priority-setting to begin the next phase of implementation.



### About the Implementation Matrix

The implementation matrix is provided at the end of this chapter so that it can be maintained and updated separately as a tracking tool throughout the life of the Vision Plan. As shown in the sample below, the recommendations detailed elsewhere in the Vision Plan are listed in the matrix for quick reference, along with additional information for implementation for each item; namely, potential implementation leaders and partners as well as timeframe and status. These timeframe and status fields are intended for City use during the priority setting phase of implementation.

Tourism, Local Community, and Economy	Timeframe				Status	Implementation Leader	Partners
	S	M	L	O			
<b>A. VISITOR INFORMATION</b>							
<b>1 Continue the Downtown Visitor Center</b>					Launched June 2013	Visitors Bureau	
a. Evaluate performance and modify as needed							
b. Provide visitor information through businesses							
c. Cater to international visitors							
<b>2 Publish and distribute a comprehensive downtown directory</b>						Visitors Bureau	City of Sonora
							Downtown restaurants, City of Sonora
<b>3 Publish and distribute a restaurant guide</b>						Visitors Bureau	
<b>B. Tourism Promotion and Marketing</b>							
<b>4 Develop a logo and slogan to strengthen Historic Downtown Sonora's brand</b>						Historic Sonora Chamber of Commerce	Visitors Bureau, Downtown Businesses, City of Sonora
a. Using the logo and slogan							
<b>5 Strengthen downtown's Internet presence</b>						Visitors Bureau	Historic Sonora Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Businesses, City of Sonora
a. Enhance current websites							
b. Develop a stand-alone website							
<b>6 Grow a robust social media campaign</b>						Visitors Bureau	Historic Sonora Chamber of Commerce, Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce, City of Sonora
a. Encourage downtown businesses to use social media							
b. Short term: Launch a Facebook page							
c. Longer term: Explore using other sites							
<b>7 Improve the downtown wi-fi zone</b>						City of Sonora	Downtown merchants, Historic Sonora Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau
<b>8 Develop a twelve-month calendar of smaller-scaled events that create incentives to come to downtown</b>						City of Sonora, Visitors Bureau	Chambers of Commerce, Businesses, Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority
a. Build on existing events							
b. Develop a year-round calendar in phases							
c. Produce materials to promote events							



## Funding and Financing

### Local Funding/Financing Sources

#### General Fund

The City of Sonora's General Fund is used to support ongoing City operations and services, including general government operations, development services, public safety and community services. Primary revenue sources for the General Fund include property taxes, sales taxes and intergovernmental revenues. Improvements and ongoing projects or programs should have general community-wide benefits.

#### General Obligation Bonds (G.O. Bonds)

General Obligation Bonds may be used to acquire, construct and improve public capital facilities and real property. However, they may not be used to finance equipment purchases, or pay for operations and maintenance. G.O. Bonds must be approved by two-thirds of the voters throughout the Issuer's jurisdiction in advance of their issuance and typically require the issuing jurisdiction to levy a uniform ad valorem (property value) property tax on all taxable properties to repay the annual debt service.

#### Impact Fees and Developer Mitigation

Impact fees may be assessed on new development to pay for public facilities, including transportation projects, parks and recreation facilities, libraries, and many other public amenities. New development pays its fair share of new facilities, typically based on relative demand for, and use of, the facility by new and existing development. A developer may receive a fee credit by paying for on- or off-site improvements.

#### Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are self-taxing business districts. Business and property owners pay for capital improvements (typically street improvements such as landscaping and signage), maintenance, marketing, parking, and other items as jointly agreed to through systematic, periodic self-assessment.

#### Landscape and Lighting Maintenance District (LMDs)

The Landscaping and Lighting Act of 1972 enables assessments to be imposed in order to finance the maintenance and servicing of landscaping, street lighting facilities, ornamental structures and park and recreational improvements.

#### Special Benefit Assessment Districts

Special Benefit Assessment Districts (AD) are formed for the purpose of financing specific improvements for the benefit of a specific area by levying an annual assessment on all property owners in the district. Each parcel of property within an AD is

assessed for a portion of the costs of the public improvements to be financed by the AD, based on the proportion of benefit received by that parcel. The amount of the assessment is strictly limited to an amount that recovers the cost of the "special benefit" provided to the property. Traditionally, improvements to be financed using an AD include, but are not limited to, streets and roads, water, sewer, flood control facilities, utility lines and landscaping. A detailed report prepared by a qualified engineer is required and must demonstrate that the assessment amount is of special benefit to the parcel upon which the assessment is levied. Prior to creating an assessment district, the city, county or special district must hold a public hearing and receive approval from a majority of the affected property owners casting a ballot. Ballots are weighted according to the proportional financial obligation of the affected property. There are many assessment acts that govern the formation of assessment districts, such as the Improvement Act of 1911, Municipal Improvement Act of 1913, Improvement Bond Act of 1915 and the Benefit Assessment Act of 1982, as well as other specific facility improvement acts. Benefit assessment districts could be used to finance any of the capital improvements in this plan.

#### Community Facilities Districts (CFDs)

Under the Mello Roos Act, municipalities can create a district to impose special taxes on property within the district. The special taxes can go to pay debt service on bonds used to pay for public capital facilities, or can be used for public services, such as public protection or facilities maintenance. The district is created, and the special taxes imposed, through a vote of property owners so long as fewer than 12 registered voters reside within the district. The Community Facilities District (CFD) funds must be used for services and facilities that benefit the district, but there is no detailed annual accounting of special benefit as in the assessment districts described above.

#### Infrastructure Financing Districts (IFDs)

Infrastructure Financing Districts can be created to capture the incremental property tax collected within a district, to be used to fund capital facilities either through a bond issuance or on a pay as you go basis. Any additional property tax collected by participating entities (such as a City or County) can be used to fund facilities through a financing or on a pay as you go basis. It is important to note that IFDs are entirely voluntary; only taxing entities that agree to participate have their incremental tax revenue diverted to the IFD.

#### In-Lieu Parking Fee

The use of an in-lieu parking fee to construct common parking facilities or improve parking facilities serving commercial businesses has been used successfully in other downtown revitalization efforts. Potential funding sources range from in-lieu fees for parking spaces to revenues from monthly parking and short-term parking fees.



## State and Regional Funding/Financing Sources

### **Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP)**

Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP) funds are allocated to projects that offset environmental impacts of modified or new public transportation facilities, including streets, mass transit guideways, park-n-ride facilities, transit stations, tree planting to mitigate the effects of vehicular emissions, off-road trails, and the acquisition or development of roadside recreational facilities. Every year \$10 million dollars is available, with individual grants limited to \$350,000. Cities, counties, councils of governments, state agencies, and non-profit organizations may apply. No match is required.

Last application deadline – January 4, 2013

Contact Information:

Natural Resources Agency  
916-653-2812  
eemcoordinator@resources.ca.gov  
www.resources.ca.gov/eem/

### **California State Parks - Habitat Conservation Fund**

The Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) provides funds to local jurisdictions to protect threatened species, to address wildlife corridors, to create trails, and to provide for nature interpretation programs which bring urban residents into park and wildlife areas. The HCF program allocates approximately \$2 million each year in grants to cities, counties, and districts.

Application deadline – October 1, 2013

Contact Information:

California State Parks  
Office of Grants & Local Services  
916-653-7423  
localservices@parks.ca.gov  
www.parks.ca.gov/?page\_id=1008

### **California State Parks - Recreational Trails Program (RTP)**

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds annually for recreational trails and trails-related projects. These are federal funds from the National Park Service that flow through the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Non-motorized projects are administered by the Department's Office of Grants and Local Services, and motorized projects are administered by the Department's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. It is anticipated that California's RTP apportionment will be approximately \$5.3 million for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014 / State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013/14.

Last application deadline – January 9, 2013

Contact Information:

California State Parks  
Office of Grants & Local Services  
916-653-7423  
localservices@parks.ca.gov  
www.parks.ca.gov/?page\_id=1008

### **California State Parks - Land and Water Conservation Fund**

This annual program provides funds for facilities that provide for public recreation. These are federal funds from the National Park Service that flow through California State Parks. Acquisition of land, construction and/or renovation of existing facilities and support facilities are all eligible for this grant. Projects that allow for biking on paved surfaces are a priority for this grant program.

Last application deadline – November 1, 2012. New guidelines will be posted October 2013.

Contact Information:

California State Parks  
Office of Grants & Local Services  
916-653-7423  
localservices@parks.ca.gov  
www.parks.ca.gov/?page\_id=1008

### **Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA)**

The State Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA) is an annual statewide discretionary program that is available through the Caltrans Bicycle Facilities Unit for funding bicycle projects. Available as grants to local jurisdictions, the BTA emphasizes projects that benefit bicycling for commuting purposes. Applicant cities and counties are required to have an approved bicycle plan that conforms to Streets and Highways Code 891.2 to qualify and compete for funding on a project-by-project basis. A local match of 10% is required for all awarded funds.

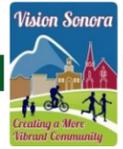
Contact Information:

Caltrans, Division of Local Assistance  
(916) 653-0036  
www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/bta/btawebPage.htm

### **California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (CIEDB) - Infrastructure State Revolving Fund Program**

The California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank (CIEDB) was created in 1994 to promote economic revitalization, enable future development, and encourage a healthy climate for jobs in California. The CIEDB has broad authority to issue tax-exempt and taxable revenue bonds, provide financing to public agencies, provide credit enhancements, acquire or lease facilities, and leverage State and Federal funds. The Infrastructure Bank's current programs include the Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (ISRF) Program and the Conduit Revenue Bond Program.

ISRF is a loan program that provides low-cost financing to public agencies for a variety of infrastructure programs, including: city



streets, county highways, state highways, drainage, water supply and flood control, educational facilities, environmental mitigation measures, parks and recreational facilities, public transit, sewage collection and treatment, solid waste collection and disposal, water treatment and distribution, public safety facilities, and power and communications facilities. Funding assistance ranges from \$250,000 to \$10,000,000. The application process can be complex and slow. There must be a dedicated source for debt service of the loan. The term of the loan can be as long as 30 years.

Contact Information:

Carlos Nakata, Manager  
916-322-1399  
ibank@ibank.ca.gov  
www.ibank.ca.gov/infrastructure\_loans.htm

**California Conservation Corps (CCC)**

The California Conservation Corps (CCC) provides emergency assistance and public service conservation work. Among the criteria considered in selecting projects, the CCC looks for work conserving or enhancing the state's natural resources or providing another public benefit, and work offering corps members an opportunity to boost employable skills. The sponsoring agency typically provides the technical plans/specifications, materials and on-site technical supervision.

Projects have included the following:

- Landscaping and park development; park maintenance and restoration (park, campground and picnic area development/renovation,) shade structure construction, disabled access to recreational facilities
- Trail maintenance, repair and construction (hiking, equestrian, interpretive, disabled access)
- Fire hazard reduction (brush removal, thinning, prescribed burns, fire line construction)
- Tree planting
- Erosion control efforts (gabion and check dam installation, stream clearance and enhancement)
- Irrigation system installation
- Fish and wildlife resources: riparian habitat enhancement, fish ladder installation
- Solar lighting and water heater installation
- Forest and timber management: tree, brush and native vegetation planting; removal of non-native species; seed cone collection and propagation; hand release of vegetation; chipping and mulching
- Public works projects
- Recycling

Contact Information:

California Conservation Corps  
1719 24th Street

Sacramento, CA 95816  
916-341-3100  
www.ccc.ca.gov

**Federal Funding/Financing**

**MAP-21**

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) is the federal transportation spending bill passed in June 2012. The Cardin-Cochran amendment to MAP-21 requires 50% of all program funding to be distributed by population directly to local metropolitan planning organizations. The rest of the funding is administered by the States. Thus, MAP-21 funding is administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the local metropolitan planning organization (MPO).

Under MAP-21, transportation projects are eligible for the following core programs described below:

- National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)
- Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)
- Metropolitan Planning
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The **National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)** was created to support the condition and performance of the National Highway System (NHS), support the construction of new facilities in on the NHS, and ensure the investment of Federal-aid funds in highway construction are directed to support progress toward the achievement of performance targets established in State's asset management plan for NHS.

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidenhpp.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidenhpp.cfm)

The **Surface Transportation Program (STP)** provides flexible funding for States and local municipalities for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance of any Federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals.

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/stp.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/stp.cfm)

The **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)** aims to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious accidents through the implementation of infrastructure-related highway safety improvements. These improvements may be on any public road or publicly owned bicycle and pedestrian pathway or trail,



and can include the use of devices such as traffic signals, curb extensions, and crosswalks.

[www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/hsip.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/hsip.htm)

The **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)** includes enhancing public transit, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, ridesharing programs and facilities, and technologies to improve traffic flow and vehicle emission, in turn improving air quality.

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/cmaq/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/)

The **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** combines the following SAFETEA-LU programs: Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational Trails. TAP funds are dedicated funds for bicycling, walking, and safety for all users. Biking, walking, and trails projects are also eligible for a handful of other programs such as Scenic Byways funds, Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program (TCSP), and Tribal High Priority Projects. The Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program (TCSP) provides federal funding for projects that improve the efficiency of the transportation system, reduce the impact on the environment, and generally investigate the relationships between transportation, community and system preservation. Eligible projects include improving conditions for bicycling and walking, better and safer operations of existing roads, new signals, and development of new programs. States, MPOs and local jurisdictions are eligible to apply for the discretionary grants. The Federal Highway Administration solicits a call for grant applications annually.

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidetap.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidetap.cfm)

#### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides States with funds based upon a national formula, with state population being the most influential factor. States initiate a statewide competition for the amount available annually. Bike paths and recreational trails are eligible uses of this money. Cities, counties, recreation and park districts, and any other entity that has the authority to develop or maintain a public park is eligible to apply. This program is a reimbursement program, and the applicant is expected to initially finance the entire project. A one-for-one match is required, and federal funds cannot be used as a match, except Community Development Block Grants.

Contact Information:

CA Department of Parks and Recreation  
916-653-6995  
[www.parks.ca.gov/?Page\\_id=21360](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?Page_id=21360)

#### **Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)**

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service which provides technical assistance to communities in order to preserve open space and develop trails. The assistance that RTCA provides is not for infrastructure, but rather building plans, engaging public participation, and identifying other sources of funding for conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

Contact Information:

RTCA, National Park Service  
415-623-2388  
[Barbara\\_rice@nps.gov](mailto:Barbara_rice@nps.gov)  
[www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm)

#### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

The City of Sonora currently receives Community Development Block Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The City is a non-entitlement jurisdiction and must apply for funds through a competitive process. CDBG funds may be used for infrastructure improvements as long as they also meet the program objectives to:

1. Benefit low- and moderate-income persons;
2. Prevent or eliminate slums or blight; and
3. Address community development needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health or welfare of the community for which other funding is not available.

#### **Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

Funds from the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) can be used to finance construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure and facilities that are necessary to achieve long-term growth and dynamic local economies. This includes grants to communities for site preparation and construction of water and sewer facilities, access roads, etc.

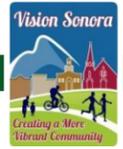
Contact Information:

Federal Economic Development Administration  
206-220-7699  
[dfranworth-martin@eda.gov](mailto:dfranworth-martin@eda.gov)  
[www.eda.gov](http://www.eda.gov)

#### **Private / Non-Profit Sources**

##### **Private Donations**

Private donations for a variety of different types of projects are generally available from foundations, institutions, and



corporations that have major interests in these areas (e.g. Sonora Regional Medical Center, Black Oak Casino, Sonora Area Foundation, etc.).

### **Donor Programs**

Some of the proposed improvements may lend themselves to a public campaign for donor gifts. Donor programs have been used very successfully in many cities for providing funds for streetscape and community design elements. Such programs can be tailored to solicit contributions from individuals, corporations, local businesses, and community and business associations. Donor gifts could be used to fund items such as: benches, street lights, trash receptacles, street trees, street tree grates, public art elements, and information kiosks. Donors could be acknowledged with a plaque on the element itself or other prominent display, such as a "wall of fame" with donor names.

### **Bikes Belong**

The purpose of the Bikes Belong grant program is "To connect existing facilities or create new opportunities; leverage federal, state, and private funds; influence policy; and generate economic activity." Eligible facility projects include:

- Bike paths, lanes, trails, and bridges
- End-of-trip facilities such as bike racks, bike parking and bike storage
- Mountain bike facilities
- Bike parks
- BMX facilities

Generally, Bikes Belong will consider funding construction costs and matching funds for facilities projects. Bikes Belong is particularly interested in projects that serve a range of age and ability levels and that reach the "interested but concerned" riders - those who would bicycle more but don't because of safety issues. Bikes Belong will NOT consider facility applications that request funding for:

- Feasibility studies, master plans, policy documents, or litigation
- Signs, maps, and travel
- Trailheads, information kiosks, benches, and restroom facilities
- Parking lots for bicycle facilities
- Bicycles, helmets, tools, and other accessories or equipment
- Events, races, clinics/classes, or bicycle rodeos
- Bike recycling, repair, or earn-a-bike programs
- Projects in which Bikes Belong is the sole or primary funder.

In 2013, Bikes Belong will accept Community Partnership Grant Applications only. These proposals must come from a partnership that is minimally comprised of one government

agency or office, one non-profit organization, and one business. Proposals may be for facility or advocacy projects.

#### Contact Information:

grants@bikesbelong.org  
www.bikesbelong.org/grants/

## **Cost Estimates**

Planning level cost estimates for the physical improvements recommended in the Vision Sonora Plan are provided in **Appendix F**. These cost estimates are based on the conceptual designs provided in this plan and provide a general idea of cost associated with each improvement. Refined detailed cost estimates will need to be completed during the development of construction/bid documents for improvements.



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