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PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
809 Center Street • Room 206 • Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • www.cityofsantacruz.com
Lee Butler, Director

September 16, 2022

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

RE: Santa Cruz Downtown Plan Expansion Project

To Interested Agencies and Persons:

The City of Santa Cruz, as the lead agency, is preparing a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) to the Downtown Plan Amendments Final EIR that was certified in November 2018, for the expansion of the City's Downtown Plan to include a new area south of Laurel Street. Please respond with written comments regarding the scope and the content of the EIR as it may relate to your agency's area of statutory responsibility or your areas of concern or expertise. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project, if any is required. **Responses are due within 30 days of the receipt of this Notice, as provided by State law.** As such, written responses are requested to be received by 5:00 p.m. on October 17, 2022. The contact person's name and address are listed below. Please include the name and phone number of a contact person at your agency in your response.

A public scoping meeting will be held via Zoom (<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83682184844> Webinar ID: 836 8218 4844) on Wednesday, September 28, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. You or members of your agency or organization are invited to attend to provide comments on the scope and content of environmental information to include in the EIR.

- 1. Project Location.** As shown in **Figure 1: Project Location**, the approximate 29-acre project area is located in downtown Santa Cruz and is generally bound by Laurel Street on the north, the San Lorenzo River on the east, Front Street on the south, and Center Street, Cedar Street and neighborhoods west of Pacific Avenue on the west. The project area is located in coastal zone and within the Beach and South of Laurel Plan Area.

The project area currently contains a mix of developed commercial and residential land uses. Existing development includes: the temporary Kaiser Permanente Arena; various commercial retail and restaurant/bar uses, multi-family housing, and visitor-serving motels and inns.

- 2. Project Description.** The proposed project consists of a series of amendments to the City's Downtown Plan by extending the boundary of the existing Downtown Plan to incorporate the

project study area and incorporate development standards and design guidelines for the study area, and other policies and standards to the City's Downtown Plan (amended January 28, 2020) that will facilitate future redevelopment of the project area. The project also includes amendments to the City's General Plan 2030, the Local Coastal Program (LCP), the Beach and South of Laurel Comprehensive Area Plan, the San Lorenzo Urban River Plan, and the Municipal Code to provide updates consistent with the proposed Downtown Plan amendments.

The proposed Downtown Plan amendments could facilitate additional development as a result of various circulation, land use and infrastructure revisions. For purposes of environmental review, the project area could potentially accommodate:

- A minimum of 1,800 housing units and 60,000 square feet (sf) of gross commercial area.
- Construction of a new approximately 180,000 sf permanent sports and entertainment arena for the Santa Cruz Warriors basketball team. The arena would contain a main event court with spectator seating for approximately 3,200 seats for basketball, and approximately 4,000 seats for concerts, performances, etc. Additional facilities would include a practice facility consisting of an additional court and training spaces, and supporting concession, retail and administrative uses.
- As shown in **Figure 2: Proposed Building Heights**, the amendments could result in increased building heights with maximum heights not to exceed one taller building of 175 feet and three buildings not to exceed 150 feet, with each height being inclusive of anticipated height increases associated with a 50% density bonus and with the taller building elements comprising only a portion of shorter podium building forms.
- As shown in **Figure 3: Existing and Proposed Circulation Improvements**, pedestrian and vehicular circulation improvements including: 1) The permanent closure of Spruce Street east of Pacific Avenue to create a new civic space that extends to and includes the San Lorenzo riverfront but does not limit access to critical utilities under Spruce Street; 2) Access or relocation of storm drain pump station at the north end of Laurel Street Extension; 3) A new service alley west of Pacific Avenue; 4) Reconfiguration of Pacific Avenue to support "flex use" parking and commercial uses within the public right-of-way; 5) Realignment of the Laurel Street Extension and adjacent city roadway and parking lot fronting the San Lorenzo levee; 6) Creation of a new civic spaces along the San Lorenzo River, Spruce Street, Front Street, and Pacific Avenue; and 7) Other miscellaneous streetscape improvements that facilitate vehicular, bike, and pedestrian mobility.
- Enhanced pedestrian connections between the Downtown and Main Beach by way of improvements to the Cliff Street overlook and stairs, and the Cliff Street right-of-way to create a new multi-modal corridor.
- Options for the location of a permanent arena facility for the Santa Cruz Warriors, with a preferred location being on the south side of Spruce Street between Pacific Avenue and Front Street.

3. **Project Applicant.** City of Santa Cruz

4. **Probable Environmental Effects of the Project.** After completing a preliminary review of the project, as described in Section 15060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines, the City has determined that a Subsequent EIR to the certified 2018 Downtown Plan Amendments EIR should be prepared to assess the potentially significant environmental impacts of the project. The EIR will include a project-level analysis associated with the Warriors Arena and associated development as shown in **Figure 4: Redevelopment Parcels**.

Because the preparation of an EIR is clearly required, an Initial Study will not be prepared. The City has identified the following possible effects of the project as topics for analysis in the EIR.

Included for Detailed EIR Analysis (Potentially Significant)	Excluded from Detailed EIR Analysis (Insignificant)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aesthetics ● Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions ● Biological Resources ● Cultural Resources ● Hydrology & Water Quality ● Land Use & Planning ● Noise ● Population & Housing ● Public Services, Utilities & Energy Conservation ● Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agricultural and Forest Resources ● Geology & Soils ● Hazards & Hazardous Materials ● Mineral Resources

The following describes the anticipated environmental issues that will be addressed in the EIR.

- *Aesthetics* – Potential aesthetic impacts related to increased building heights will be addressed based in part on conceptual building massing renderings prepared as part of the Downtown Plan amendments. Potential impacts associated with substantial new night-time lighting or new sources of glare and shadows will also be addressed.
- *Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)* – Potential impacts resulting from construction and operational emissions related to potential future development will be addressed.
- *Biological Resources* – Potential impacts to San Lorenzo River habitat and species due potential development resulting from increased building heights will be addressed.
- *Cultural Resources* – Potential impacts to archaeological and historical resources with redevelopment under the proposed plan amendments will be addressed.

- *Hydrology and Water Quality* – Exposure to flood hazards and a review of hazards due to potential San Lorenzo River flooding, tsunami inundation, climate influenced riverine flooding, climate adaptation, and sea level rise in the project area will be addressed.
- *Land Use and Planning* – Potential project conflicts with plans, policies or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect will be addressed.
- *Noise* – Operational noise, particularly related to predicted noise levels associated with anticipated events hosted at the proposed permanent area, will be addressed.
- *Population and Housing* – Population growth that may result from development of new housing units in study area will be addressed taking into account City growth trends and AMBAG’s adopted Regional Growth Forecast.
- *Public Services, Utilities and Energy Conservation*– Fire and police protection services, schools, parks and recreation, wastewater treatment, municipal water service, and solid waste disposal will be reviewed based on potential future development that could occur as a result of the proposed amendments. Updated information regarding water supply planning will be provided to reflect any changes in water demand and supply as identified in recent City plans, including the 2020 Urban Water Management Plan. This section will also provide operational energy calculations, utilizing the CalEEMod results to address energy use..
- *Transportation* –Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) will be evaluated for each proposed land use and compared to existing conditions. This net change in VMT will be analyzed based on the City’s adopted VMT transportation thresholds and in accordance with CEQA and state requirements. The review will address other modes of transportation in the area, including transit, pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

The City will consider the written comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation in determining whether any additional topics should be studied in the Draft EIR.

5. Contact Person:

Sarah Neuse, Senior Planner
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Responses to this Notice of Preparation are due by October 17, **2022**. Additional information regarding the project is available on the City's website at: www.cityofsantacruz.com/Downtown.

Sincerely,

Sarah Neuse
Senior Planner

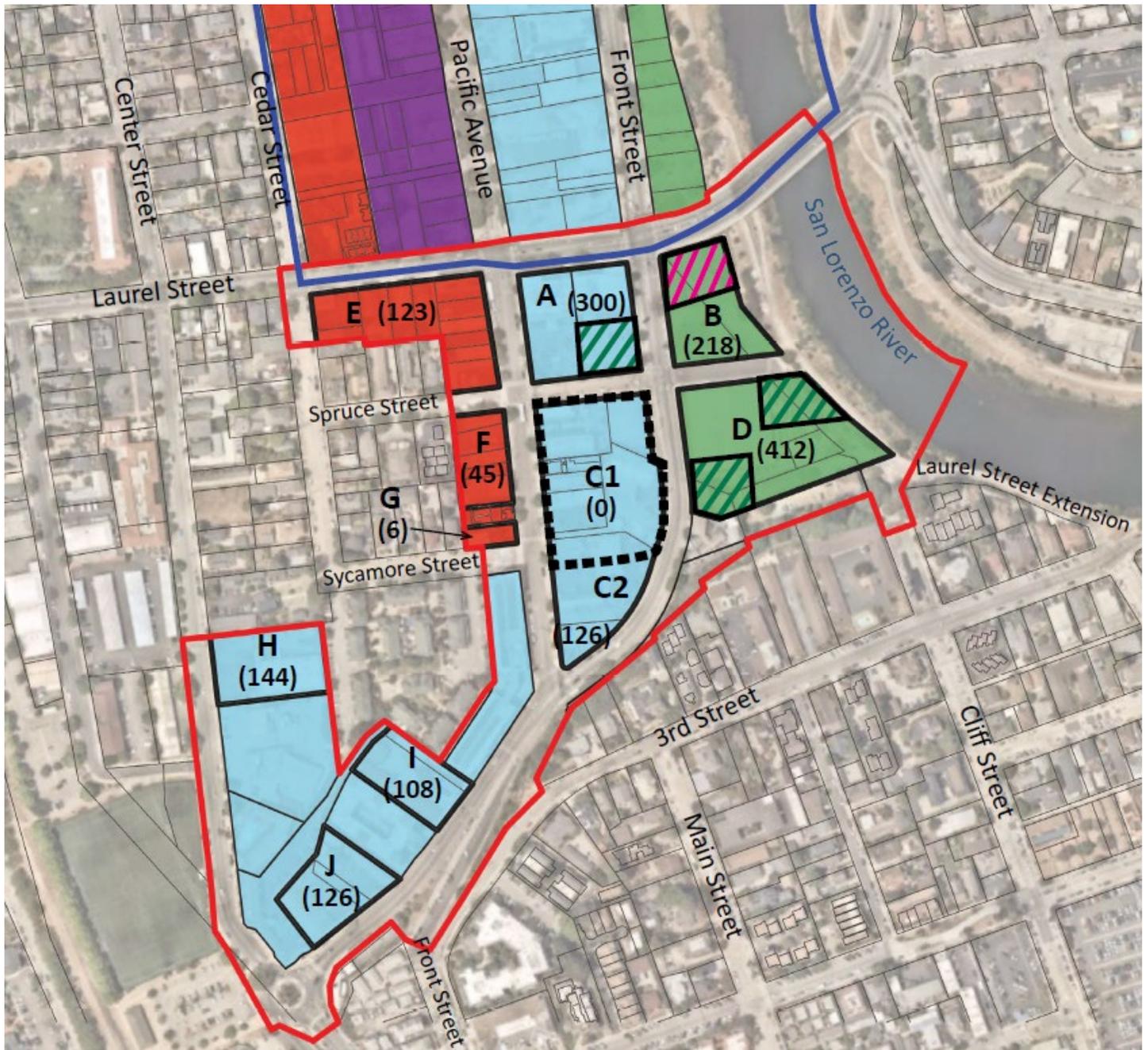
Attachments:

- Figure 1: Project Location
- Figure 2: Proposed Building Heights
- Figure 3: Existing and Proposed Circulation Improvements
- Figure 4: Redevelopment Parcels



Source: Kimley-Horn, 2022

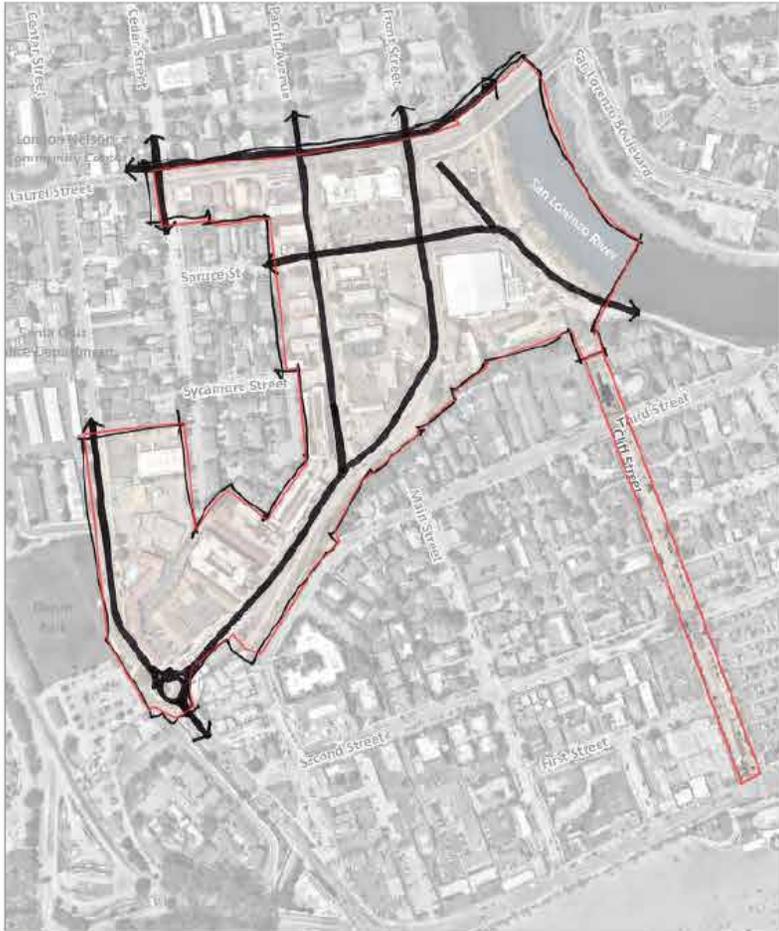
Figure 1: Project Location
Santa Cruz Downtown Plan Expansion Project
Draft Environmental Impact Report



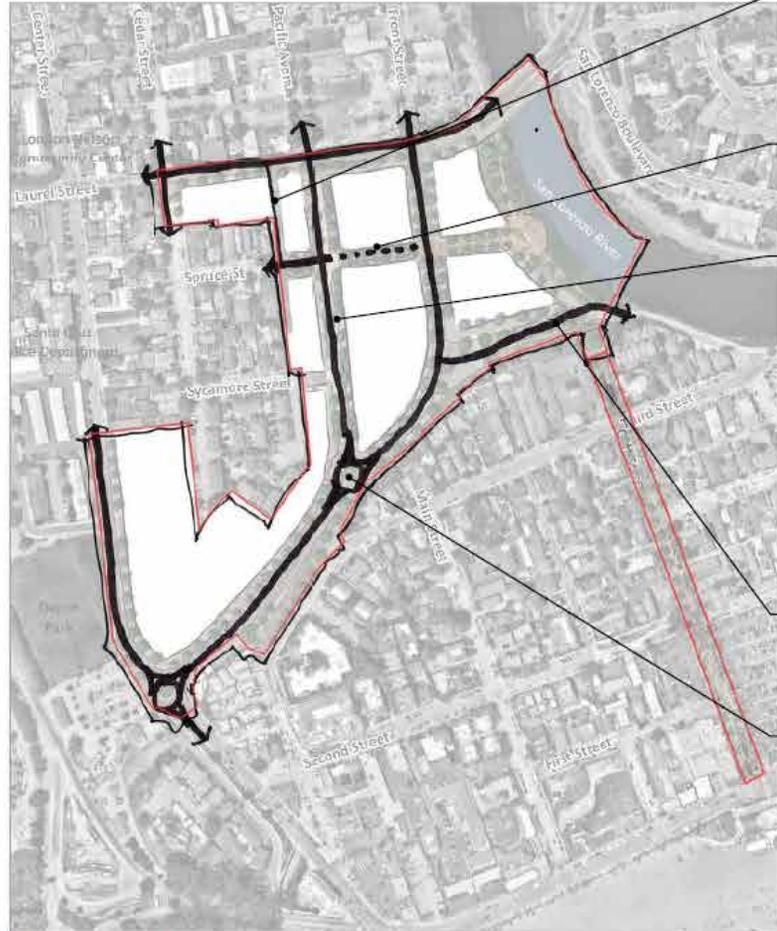
Source: Kimley-Horn, 2022

Figure 2: Proposed Building Heights

Santa Cruz Downtown Plan Expansion Project
Draft Environmental Impact Report



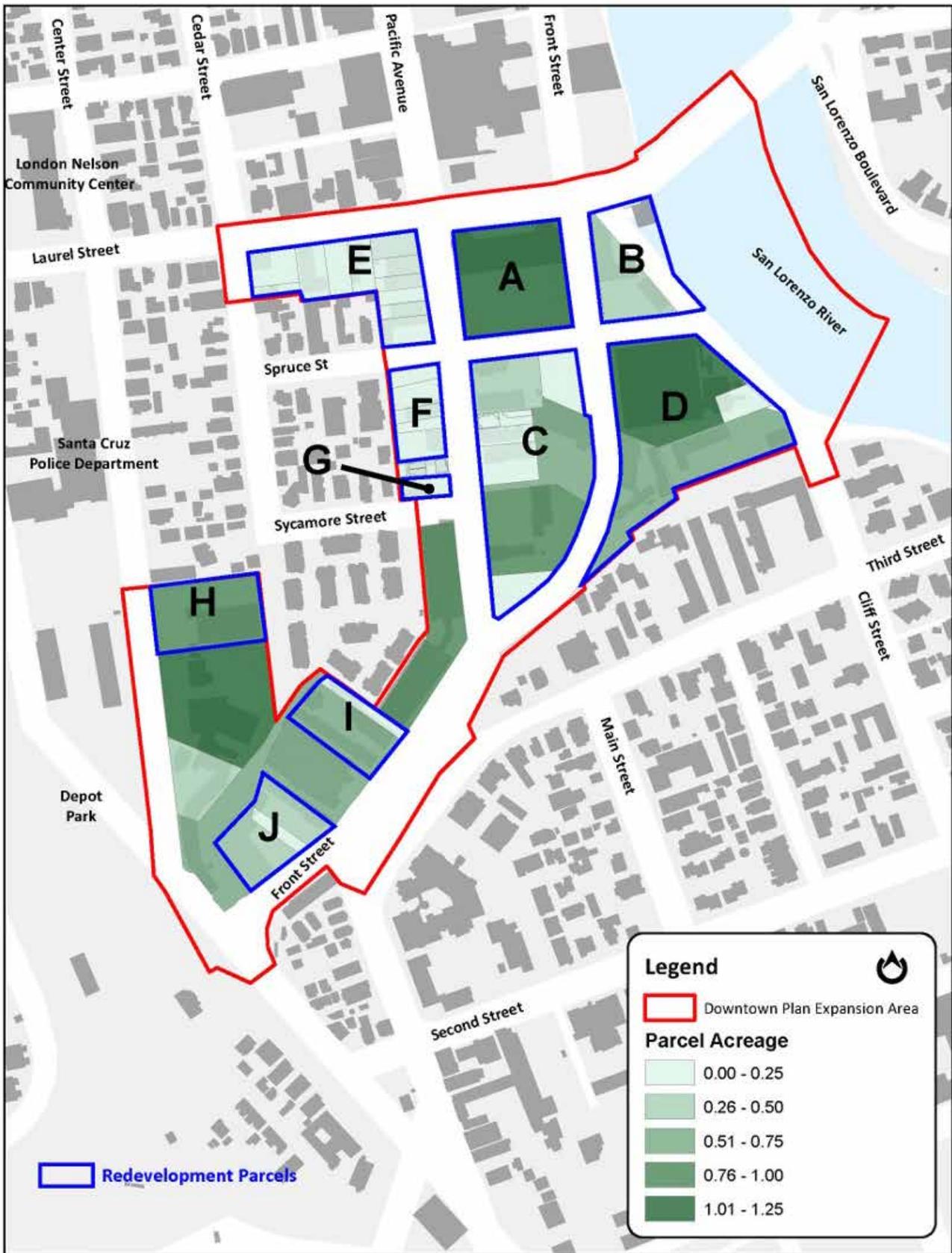
Existing



Proposed

- New service / access alley to avoid curb cuts on Pacific Avenue
- Spruce Street partial / timed street closure creates
- Pacific Avenue improvements: Shared street and "Flex Zones" with possible street closures during events
- Realign Laurel Street Extension
- New roundabout

Source: Kimley-Horn, 2022



Source: Kimley-Horn, 2022