

Final Draft



Alameda Civic Center Vision

Alameda, California



*The vision for Downtown Alameda
is to reconnect the Civic Center to Park Street
by finding new uses for vacant buildings,
such as the historic Carnegie Library,
redevelop the CVS site, and
create a more cohesive government core.*



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Prepared for

City of Alameda, California

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ALAMEDA

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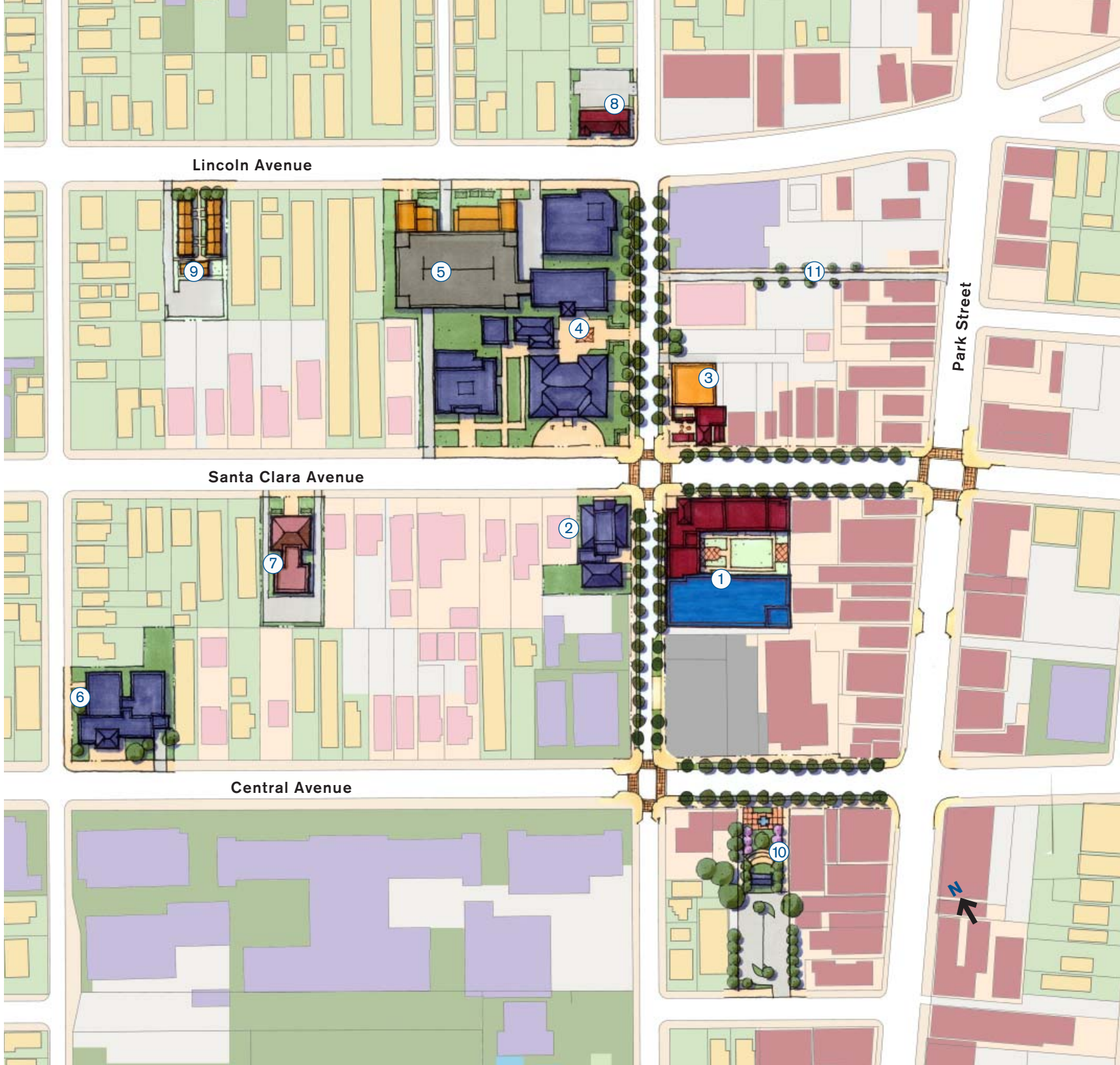
Introduction

The City of Alameda, in collaboration with a team of consultants, facilitated a three month focused planning process to update the vision for the Alameda Civic Center. Previous planning efforts included the Alameda General Plan (1991) and the Downtown Vision Plan (2000). Many of the policies and recommendations in those plans have been implemented, such as the new Main Library, Theater, and parking garage. However, as with all plans, success has created the opportunity to build upon this accomplishment by expanding the downtown vision to incorporate new adjacent planning districts. The scope of the study included:

- » Identifying preferred Civic Center uses
- » Finding a preferred reuse for the Carnegie Library
- » Illustrating architecture and design character
- » Developing a game plan for:
 - › Phasing and sequencing
 - › Asset management

A public presentation to City Council was held in March, 2010.





KEY INITIATIVES

The redevelopment of a series of city owned properties are critical to the redevelopment of Downtown

- 1. CVS Site
- 2. Carnegie Library and Foster House
- 3. Gas Station
- 4. City Hall Parking Lot
- 5. Elks Parking Lot
- 6. Veterans Memorial Building
- 7. Parks and Recreation Building
- 8. Police Parking and Smog Check
- 9. City-Owned Employee Parking Lot
- 10. Parking Lot C
- 11. Times Way

Vision Plan

The vision for Downtown Alameda is to reconnect the Civic Center to Park Street by finding new uses for vacant buildings, such as the historic Carnegie Library, and redeveloping the CVS site. Stakeholders are eager to see Civic Center area become a better version of what it is today – cultural arts, entertainment, ethnic restaurants, urban living opportunities, and consolidated City government.

To bring that vision to life, the City of Alameda is proposing a vision plan for improving the Civic Center area. This view book presents the proposed plan for the Council's consideration. The strength of this Vision lies in the synergistic effects which can be achieved by implementing strategic initiatives across a downtown that has been conceived as a series of tightly inter-related districts.

The Strategic Initiatives fall into two primary categories, each of which addresses fundamental issues that business owners, other stakeholders, and governmental officials identified during the planning process as important to the City and its citizens. These fundamental concerns revolve around the need for traffic-calming and pedestrian enhancements and the desire for attractive public open and green spaces in the downtown.

The plan also includes specific recommendations and highlights of catalyst projects identified in the study area. These projects will serve to create momentum for new development in, and revitalization of the Civic Center area.



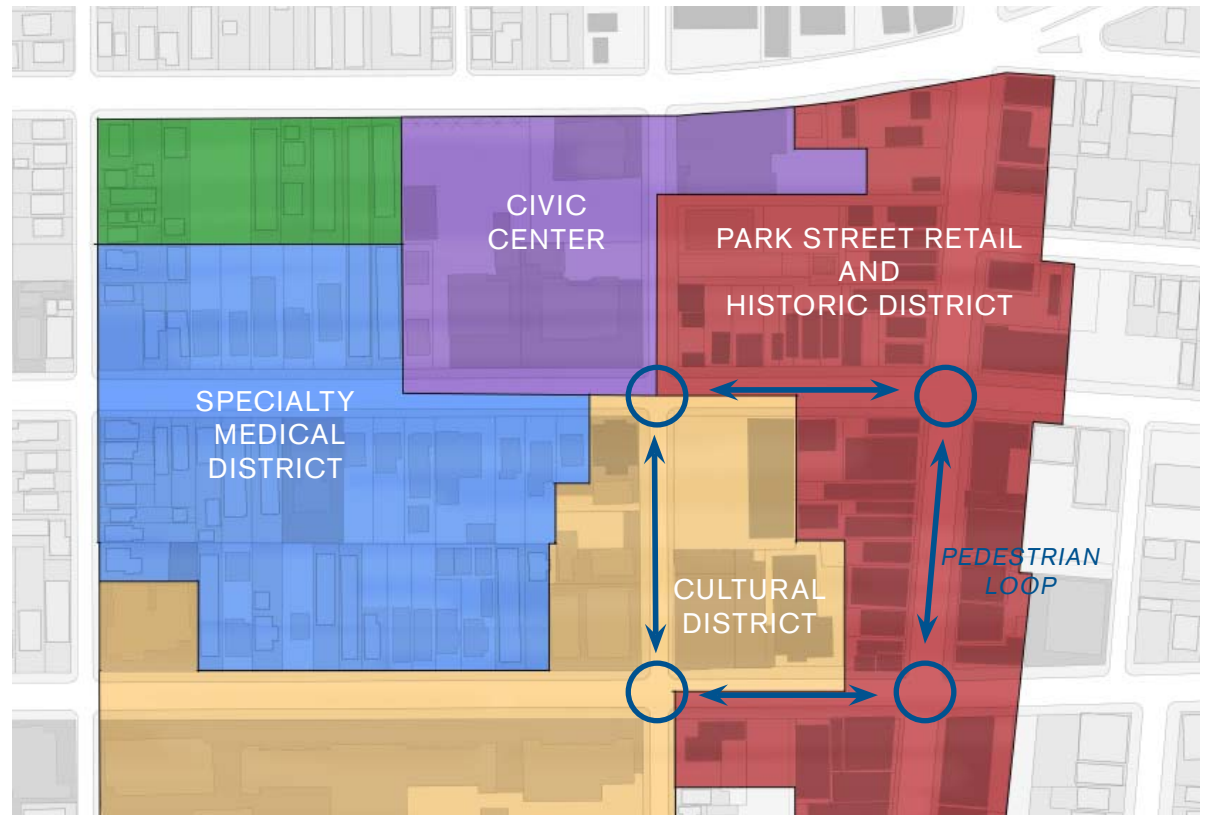


Districts

Downtown Alameda is currently comprised of the Park Street Historic Commercial District and a series of adjacent points of activity. Among these points are the Civic Center, Cultural Arts uses (including the Kaufman Theater and Veteran's Memorial), and medical offices. Currently, these uses are seen as disconnected, interrupted by vehicle oriented streets, surface parking lots, and in some cases vacant buildings. This point is reinforced by the fact that many Alameda residents can not identify the Civic Center. The Vision seeks to enhance the spirit of Alameda by formalizing new districts around existing anchor uses.

As can be seen in the diagrams, the Vision Plan builds on the existing Park Street District by expanding existing points of activity into a series of distinct, complete, yet clearly interconnected districts, each having its own defined character and primary purpose. The districts are knit together by a framework of pedestrian and vehicular connections. New districts include:

- » Cultural Arts District along Central and Oak Streets
- » Redefined Civic Center around City Hall
- » Medical Office District along Santa Clara Street





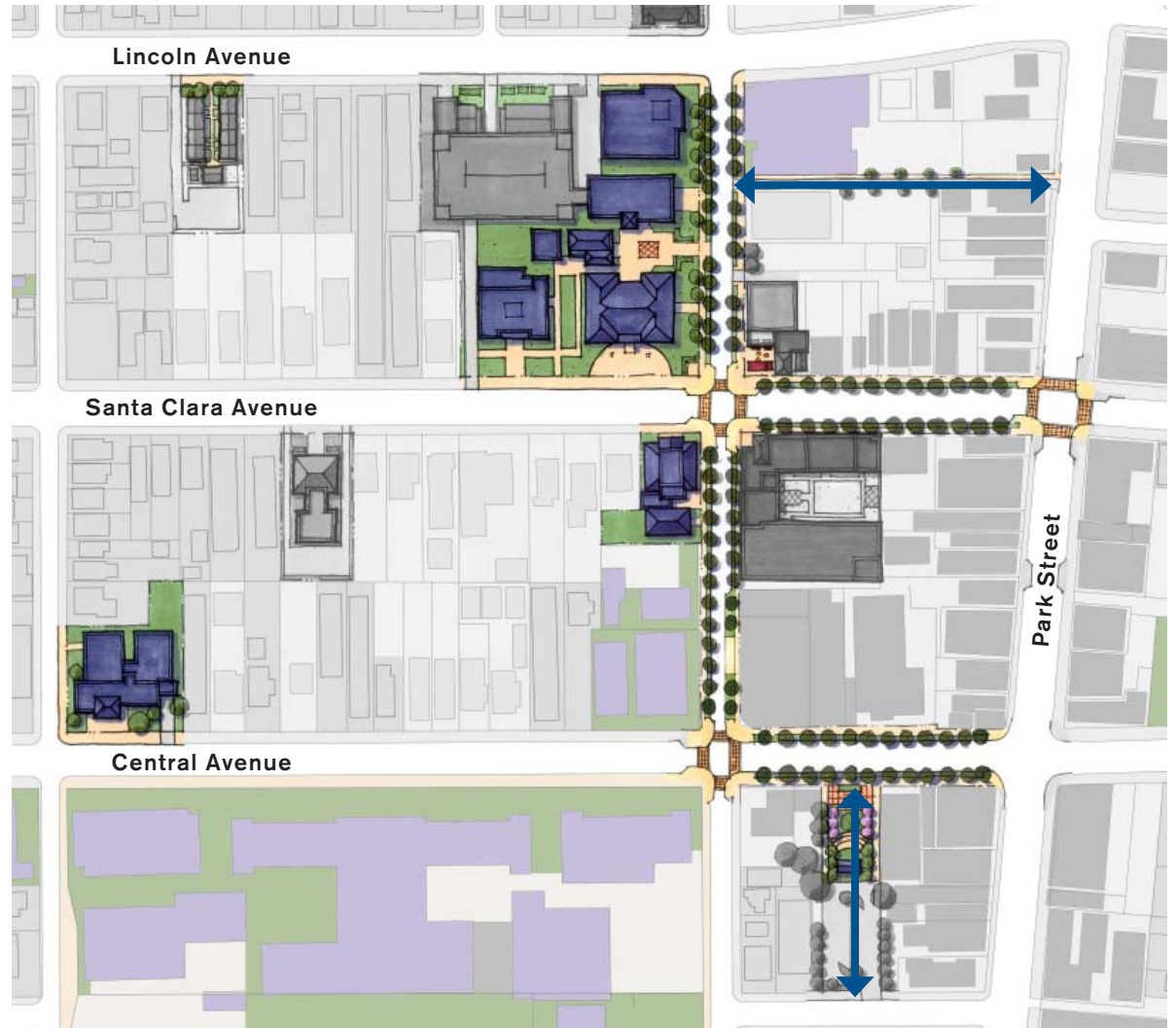
CITY HALL

Oak
Santa Clara

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Civic Realm Framework

Market forces in the Alameda Civic Center are influenced in part by the configuration and design of the civic realm. Current deficiencies discourage pedestrian activity. The desire to balance vehicle and pedestrian needs and the goal of creating attractive public open and green spaces are keys to uplifting the area. The Vision Plan seeks to enhance the civic realm through a series of targeted streetscape and open space improvements.



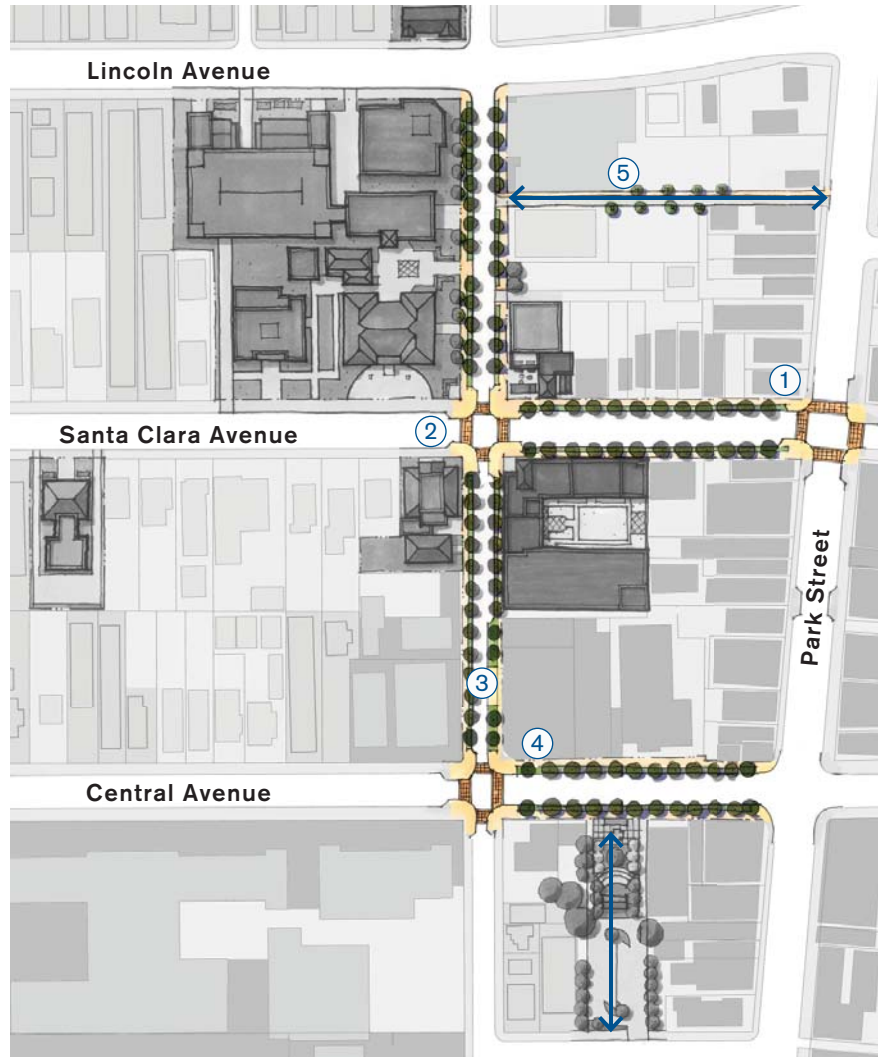


Streets

As is the case in most American cities, all roads eventually lead to Main Street. In Alameda that street is Park Street. Growth of the City has forced the local street grid to accommodate increasing traffic volumes. Unfortunately, this increase has come at the expense of pedestrians. The result is a commercial area that is characterized by pedestrian-friendly commercial and retail uses separated by auto oriented streets.

New approaches to calming traffic suggest that the interests of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians can be balanced. One current strategy is to put pedestrian-unfriendly streets on a “road diet.” This approach calls for better organizing traffic within the existing curb lines to be in context with the urban setting.

Pedestrian enhancements go hand-in-hand with traffic-calming initiatives. Elements such as additional street trees, pedestrian scale street lights, and articulated crosswalks reinforce the idea that downtown is a welcome place for visitors. Opportunities exist in the Civic Center on this front as well.



LEFT A menu of traffic calming solutions include:

1. Bulb outs at four key intersections
2. Enhanced crosswalks with paving and texture treatment
3. Plant missing trees where needed along Oak, Central, and Santa Clara
4. Introduce pedestrian scale street lighting
5. Enhance mid-block pedestrian connections



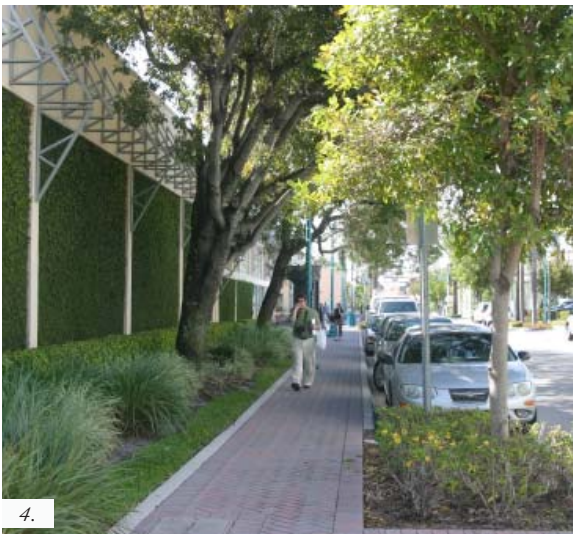
1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.

LEFT AND OPPOSITE
A menu of open space solutions include:

1. Street Trees
2. New Civic Courtyard
3. Enhanced Corner at Chun Gas Station
4. Landscaped Setbacks
5. Shared Space in Lot C
6. Pedestrian Connections and Public Art

Open Space

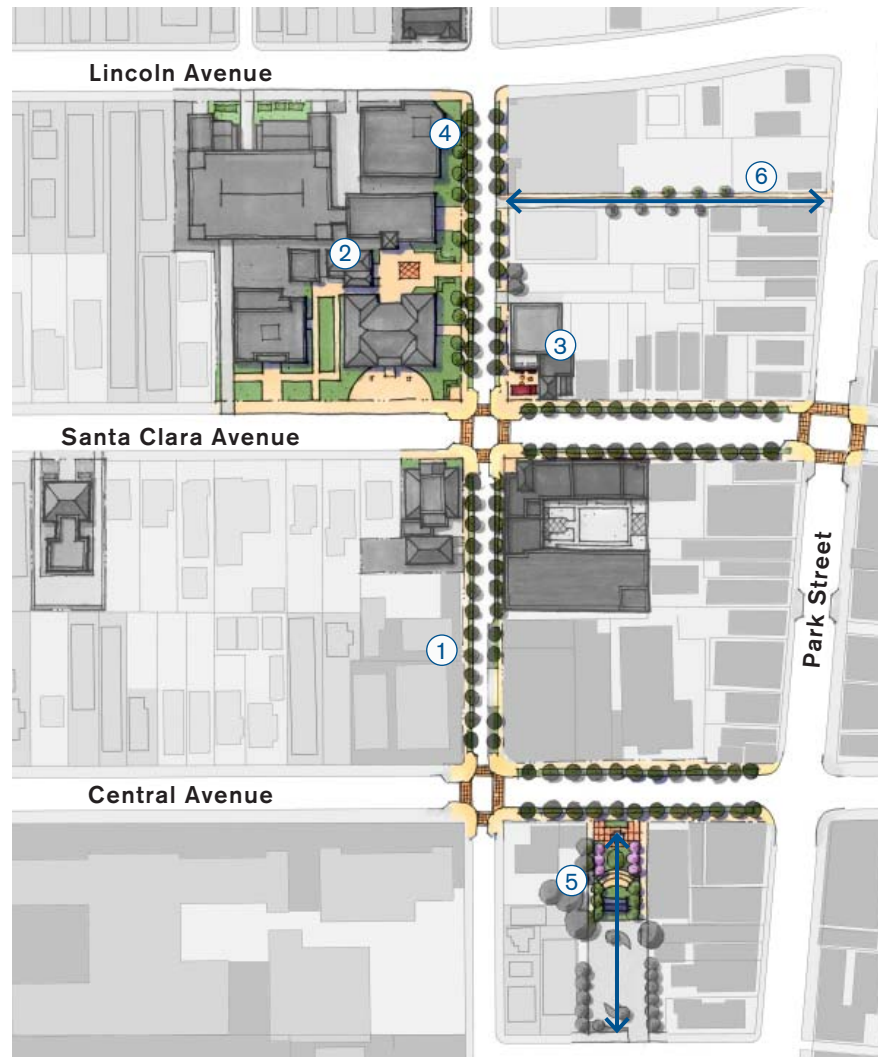
The study area is largely devoid of open space; the only exceptions is the space in front of City Hall. Determining an appropriate location to develop a Civic Plaza was identified as a high priority in the Downtown Vision Plan (2000). In response, the vision calls for the downtown area to be overlaid with an interconnected network of green spaces.

Rather than creating just one civic space, this proposed framework features a hierarchy of spaces designed to accommodate a wide range of uses and users.

Each space will be characterized by a unique set of amenities that will define a one-of-a-kind sense of place. Proposed open spaces for Downtown Alameda include:

- » New Civic Courtyard behind City Hall
- » Enhancement of the Chun Gas Station Site
- » Restoration of the Oak Street Setback
- » Creation of Alameda Commons, between Central Avenue and Alameda Avenue

These proposed open spaces will be connected via the existing downtown sidewalk network. Sustainability will also be promoted through the incorporation of native low-water-use landscaping and recycled paving materials.



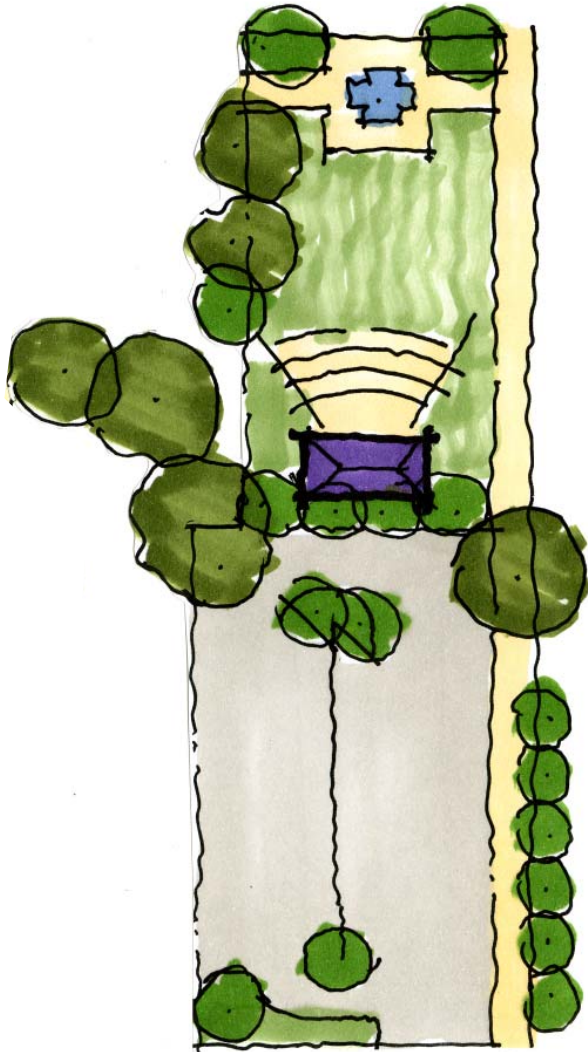
LEFT Downtown open space improvements diagram, depicting streetscape improvements and park connections



REDWOOD
AMARIN THAI CUISINE

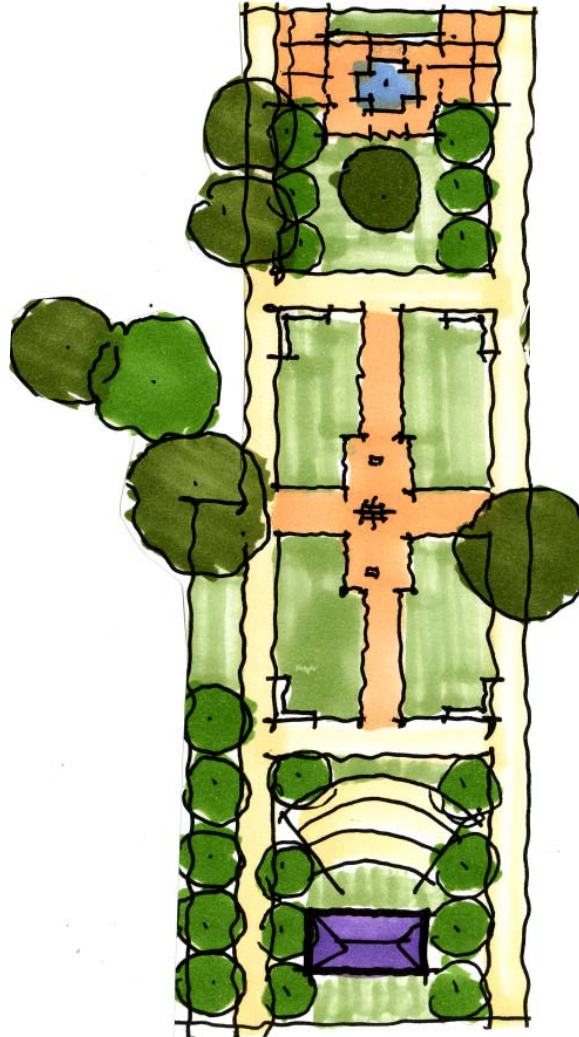


Central Avenue



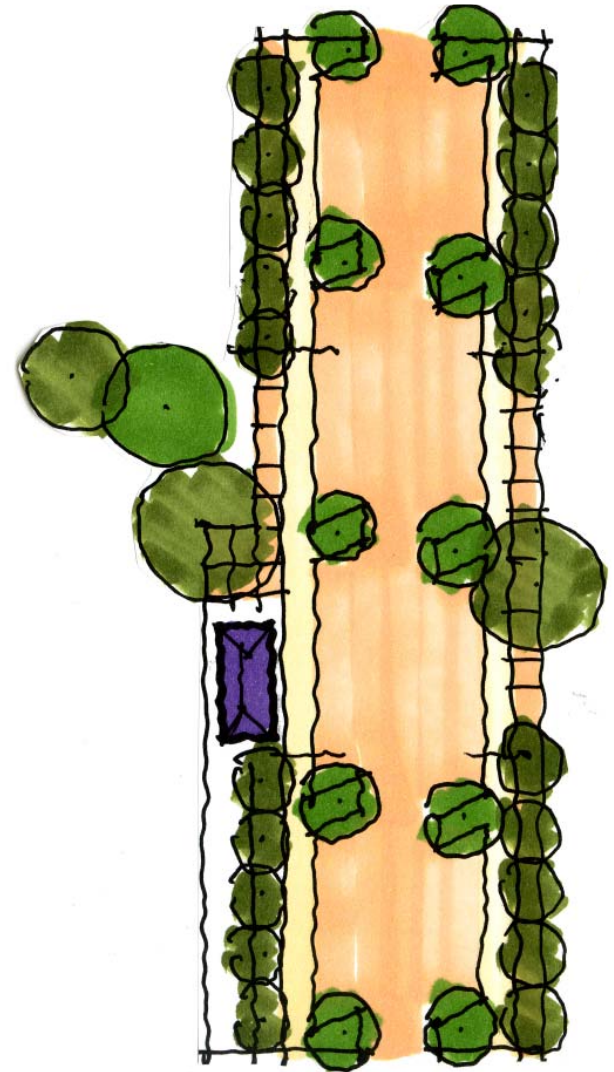
Alameda Avenue

Central Avenue



Alameda Avenue

Central Avenue



Alameda Avenue



Initiatives

In addition to recommendations for enhancing the civic realm, the Vision plan includes a series of catalyst initiatives. These initiatives radiate from the historic City Hall and include re-purposing the Chun Gas Station and Towata Flowers site, redeveloping the CVS site, revitalizing the historic Carnegie Library, and envisioning opportunities for other underutilized spaces. Together, these impact opportunities are designed to complete the Civic Center and reconnect it to the Park Street retail core.



CLOCKWISE *Design ideas for Chun Gas Station and Towata Flowers; CVS Site; Carnegie Library; and Elks Club, City Hall, and Police Parking Lots.*



Chun Gas Station & Towata Flowers

The Chun gas station and Towata Flowers facades are both historically significant and important elements in the story of Alameda. The buildings are currently vacant. It is the recommendation of the Project Team that the City promote renovating the iconic elements of these buildings and redeveloping the remainder of the parcels. This approach will require consolidating the two properties and preserving the gas station canopy and the flower shop's front wall and green house.

A restaurant is the preferred use at the corner of Oak and Santa Clara Streets. The southern exposure of this key corner makes it the perfect location for outdoor dining. The dining patio should be wrapped by new indoor dining areas with glass storefronts. A further recommendation is that the balance of the site be converted to second floor residential use (up to 8 units) with ground floor parking and a micro office use along Oak Street. Green roofs and other sustainability features should be integral to the design.



OPPOSITE Proposed redevelopment of the site includes a ground floor restaurant with outdoor dining, and residential units above.



RIGHT Preferred alternative – “Keep the best and redevelop the rest.”







OPPOSITE Proposed redevelopment of the site includes a ground floor restaurant with outdoor dining and residential units above.

TOP Alternative mix of uses



CVS/pharmacy

31XZ482

CVS Site

In past years, many attempts have been made to find a suitable development program for the CVS site. It has long been acknowledged that CVS's preferred store format would be better located on the eastern leg of Park Street.

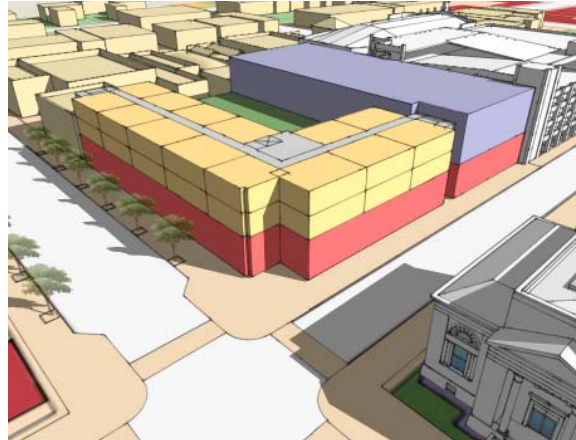
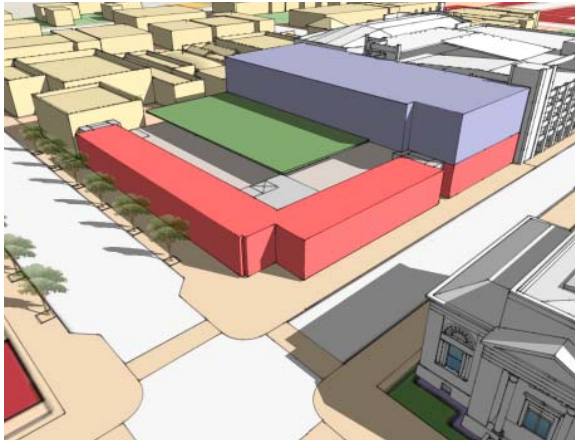
Benefitting from prior analysis, the catalyst project proposed here consists of an achievable program mix. With its proximity to shopping, the Alameda Theater, and City Hall, the proposed development is perfectly located to become the bridge that reconnects the Civic Center to Park Street. Elements of this proposal include:

- » Ground-floor retail/educational uses
- » Two floors of residential with up to 29 units
- » Five additional screens for the Alameda Theater
- » Mid-block shared parking
- » Green roofs and other sustainability features
- » Small civic space at the corner
- » Possibility for a hotel use on this site



TOP Proposed mixed-use development completes the urban fabric along Santa Clara Avenue

OPPOSITE Existing view along Santa Clara Avenue



TOP Conceptual view of new development, with land use diagrams depicting alternatives for residential over retail or hotel uses

OPPOSITE Model of proposed new development





Carnegie Library

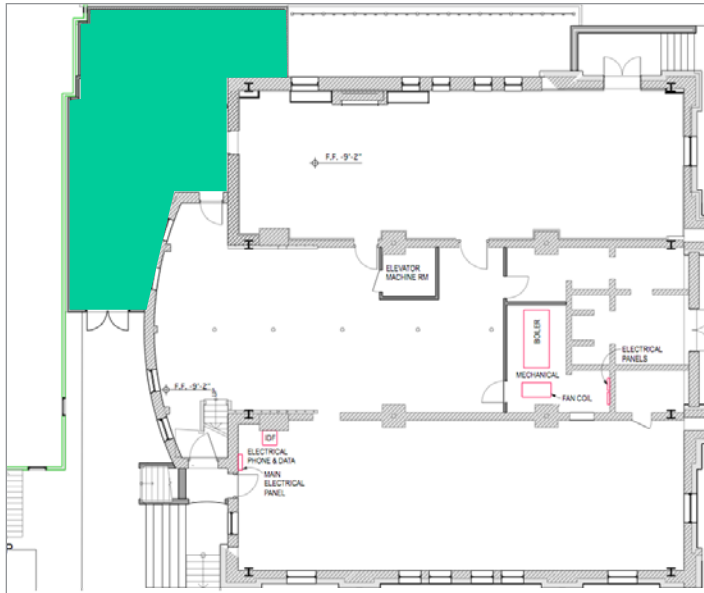
Finding a use for the historic Carnegie Library is a work in process. A seismic upgrade has been completed and plans for three levels of renovation were prepared and priced by Muller & Caulfield Architects. The central challenge to reusing the Carnegie remains identifying the appropriate use and user. Two clear alternatives emerged from the vision plan process:

1. The City can issue a request for proposals to gauge interest by the private sector.
2. The City can leverage the favorable bidding climate to bring the building to code by finishing the core and shell.

In either case, the City has the option to dictate or define its use. It is clear that most stakeholders and citizens prefer that the main gallery remain open to the public, preferably with an educational or cultural arts tenant. The building could accommodate various office uses, from small businesses to local non-profit organizations to City government, if future need arises. The basement would be a suitable location for a specialty wine and martini bar. Ideas for turning the building into a museum, gallery, restaurant, culinary school, or another use entirely, demonstrate a wide array of possibilities, but ultimately the decision rests with the City.







OPPOSITE *Model view of a potential Carnegie renovation scheme*

LEFT AND BOTTOM
Plan and views of a proposed addition and renovation.
Images courtesy of Muller & Caulfield Architects





Elks Club, City Hall, and Police Parking Lots

The Elks Club and parking lot are directly adjacent to City facilities, including City Hall, the Police Station, and the Library. This area is the heart of local government in the City of Alameda. However, parking needs have required the conversion of open space into paved surface lots, which detracts from the character of place. A goal is to address the challenges of this district and transform it into a true Civic Center.

An initial step is to alleviate the parking problem. Surface parking lots use up valuable real estate. A plan for structured parking on this site was proposed in the Downtown Vision Plan (2000). A new garage in this location will provide secured parking on the ground floor for the police, and shared parking for the City, the Elks, and the Library.

Resolving the parking situation allows for the creation of a true Civic Center. Elements of this proposal include:

- » Three story mid-block parking garage with a maximum of 300 parking spaces
- » New Civic Courtyard behind City Hall
- » Restoration of the historic Fire Station
- » Construction of a City Hall Annex (to complete the campus)
- » Restoration of the Oak Street Setback



ABOVE *Existing parking lot*

OPPOSITE *View of Civic Plaza*



ABOVE (CLOCKWISE) *Conceptual views, plan, and perspective of proposed Civic Center district*

OPPOSITE *View of Civic Plaza*





Other Opportunities

Several additional sites throughout the Downtown allow opportunities for strengthening the districts, relocating uses, and generating financial support to drive the Downtown Vision. These sites include:

1. Veterans Memorial

This beautiful historic building may be incorporated into the Cultural District, with an expanded program and marketing to attract users. The interior space could house theater productions and be rented out for events, for example.

2. Housing on City Hall Parking Lot

This site allows up to 9 affordable housing units (single-family or duplex). Arranged around a central green mews court, the houses reflect Alameda residential traditions.

3. Police parking and smog check

This old gas station site, now used for smog check and Police parking, offers an opportunity to build a commercial use along the street with parking located behind.

4. Parks and Recreation Building

Another beautiful historic building, this may be sold or leased as office space.



OPPOSITE *The historic Parks and Recreation building on Santa Clara Avenue*

Published for City of Alameda, California

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