Napa’s economic, social and cultural life has been centered in Downtown since the mid 1800s. This historic core is comprised of a range of urban amenities and natural features, from shops, restaurants and offices to community parks and the scenic Napa River. Downtown is surrounded by beautiful historic neighborhoods that place residents within a comfortable walking distance of the city center. Downtown serves the needs of these local residents while also drawing people from around the region and country with its many tourist-oriented attractions and services. While there are opportunities to enhance the heart of the community, there is already a strong foundation upon which to develop a vibrant, livable and inviting destination.

This chapter includes an overview of the baseline conditions of Downtown (see Appendix A – Existing Conditions Report for the full analysis). This information provides the basis for recommendations and strategies that will ensure high-quality design, foster development opportunities and bolster the economic health of Downtown. The recommendations and strategies relate to both the private and public realms of the Planning Area, as well as the connections with the adjacent neighborhoods and greater city.
The planning team conducted a comprehensive survey of the land uses within Downtown. The survey highlighted existing uses, facilities and services that are vital to Downtown. It also identified additional uses necessary to achieve the community’s vision and support economic vitality. In addition, the survey assessed Downtown’s design features to determine its physical strengths and weaknesses in terms of urban form, building orientation, street design, and overall identity and character. The urban design analysis identified areas of Downtown that are assets to be preserved and built upon, as well as areas that need to be strengthened and improved through public improvements, development standards and design guidelines.

The following is a summary of key land use and urban design findings.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The Downtown area includes numerous assets that have the potential to boost Napa’s position as a gateway to the Napa Valley, a beautiful wine country destination and a dynamic city center.

The city center has tremendous natural features that give it a memorable identity and should be protected, enhanced and built upon. The Napa River is a unique characteristic central to the identity of Downtown. Cutting a winding course on the eastern edge of the Downtown area, the River is a visible feature and backdrop, although the city has traditionally been somewhat disconnected from this amenity due to flooding issues. Strong connections are now being created between Downtown and the River, linking the natural setting with recreation, social events and the urban environment. Napa Creek also crosses through the Downtown area, providing an additional natural feature in Downtown and opportunities for creek-side dining and pocket parks. The broader agricultural context surrounding the city and views of the hills underscore the natural setting that surrounds Downtown Napa.
The Downtown area is also characterized by a range of urban uses and amenities. These include retail stores, restaurants, groceries, religious institutions, civic and government facilities, offices, and park and plaza spaces. Theater, art and performance space is found in Downtown, as well as some nighttime entertainment. Recently developed hotels also add to the destination orientation of the city center, complemented by a collection of bed and breakfasts, inns, day spas and personal services.

Despite these assets, there are several challenges that currently detract from Downtown’s overall character and sense of place. A lack of housing Downtown translates into relatively deserted streets after business hours on many nights. Vacancies and empty storefronts in Downtown also present a challenge in achieving the desired vibrancy and activity in the area. The prevalence of surface parking lots breaks the urban fabric, creating “holes” in the pedestrian environment with inconsistent street frontages. The lack of a sense of cohesion also results from the great variation in architectural character of buildings, building heights and degree of building maintenance.

Specific opportunities that build upon existing assets and overcome these challenges are detailed in the following chapters of this plan.
FIGURE 2.1: Existing Land Uses
EXISTING CONDITIONS

FIGURE 2.2: 2020 General Plan Land Use Categories
Downtown Commercial Subarea
The Downtown Commercial subarea includes a range of services and amenities (see Figure 2.3: Community Amenities) that serve the day-to-day needs of Napa residents. These amenities include several churches, neighborhood-serving retail such as Safeway and Ace Hardware, as well as office supply stores, shoe repair, dry cleaners, and hair and nail salons. Other amenities include parks, open space and entertainment venues. Several parking structures and surface parking areas are spread throughout the Downtown Commercial subarea.

A number of vacant buildings and storefronts currently exist within the Downtown core. Some of these vacant buildings are in disrepair, while others are in good physical condition but lack tenants.

Residential/Office Subarea
The Downtown area includes a Residential/Office subarea located south of the Downtown Commercial subarea. This area includes a number of historic residential structures which have been converted to office uses. These properties have maintained their original residential appearance with office signage and parking areas as the only indication of a changed use.

The Residential/Office subarea is also a transitional area with a combination of mixed residential and office areas generally along the southern edge of the Downtown area. Its existing land use designation allows both residential and professional office uses as well as compatible uses.
FIGURE 2.3: Community Amenities

- New Technology High School
- St. John’s Catholic School
- St. John’s Church
- Heritage Park
- 9/11 Memorial Garden
- Napa Civic Center
- Napa Opera House
- Dwight Murray Plaza
- CineDome
- Veterans Memorial Park
- Promenade
- Future China Point Overlook
- Riverbend Plaza
- Napa Expo
- Safeway
- U.S. Post Office
- Ace Hardware
- Safeway Blue Oak School
- Coombs Plaza
- Church Valley Bible Chapel
- City Hall
- Downtown Area
- Community Service
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Church
- School
- Entertainment Venue
- Open Space/Park

Downtown Area
Community Service
Neighborhood Commercial
Church
School
Entertainment Venue
Open Space/Park

Legend:
- 0 700ft 1400ft 2100ft 2800ft 3500ft

Map scale: 0 320ft 700ft 1400ft
Tourist Commercial Subarea (Oxbow Mixed-Use)
On the east side of Soscol Avenue, the Downtown area includes the Tourist Commercial (Oxbow Mixed-Use) subarea, which has many visitor-serving uses (see Figure 2.4: Visitor Amenities) in the form of hotels, restaurants and the Oxbow Public Market. Copia, prior to its closure, was an important destination for tourists interested in the Napa Valley’s wine culture. The closure now allows for the opportunity to determine potential future uses on the property that could strengthen Downtown Napa while enhancing the character of the Oxbow Mixed-Use subarea.

Public/Quasi Public Subarea
The Downtown area also contains government buildings for both the City and County of Napa. The Public/Quasi Public subarea refers to a number of Napa City and County uses, such as the State Superior Courthouse, Law Library, County Jail and County Administrative Offices, and the Napa Library. The City of Napa owns and leases multiple office locations (see Figure 2.5: City-Owned Sites), such as the City Hall, the Police and Fire Administration, and other City departments that are housed in buildings throughout Downtown. The U.S. Post Office maintains a central branch in Downtown. Historically, the County seat has been located in the City of Napa. While County offices and functions are located within the City, the County is not required to comply with the City’s development standards, but may choose to do so.
FIGURE 2.4: Visitor Amenities

EXISTING CONDITIONS
Within the subareas in Downtown there are a range of housing types and parks, plazas, and open spaces as described below.

Housing
There is a limited amount of housing in Downtown, with approximately 125 units spread throughout Downtown. The housing is composed primarily of single-family homes, duplexes and apartments. Although the City has encouraged new residential mixed-use development in recent years, the Riverfront project is the first and largest such development, containing 50 condominiums. Residential neighborhoods are directly adjacent to Downtown. The 2020 General Plan has designated these neighborhoods for lower density development, recognizing their historically residential uses. However, these older neighborhoods contain a variety of existing housing types, from large single-family dwellings to apartment complexes. The adjacent neighborhoods also include two historic districts, the Napa Abajo Fuller Park National Register District and the Calistoga Historic District (see Figure 2.6: Neighborhoods and Historic Districts).

Parks, Plazas and Open Space
Public parks, plazas and natural open space in Downtown are generally concentrated along Main Street, First Street and the Napa River (see Figure 2.7: Parks and Open Space). There is a lack of formal public space in the western portion of the Downtown area, although there are nearby open spaces in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Veteran’s Memorial Park is an attractive, newly-renovated park that allows the community to host large outdoor social gatherings and enjoy waterfront views. The new Opera House Plaza between the Opera House and Napa Creek provides an opportunity to enjoy a natural setting within Downtown. Dwight Murray Plaza on First Street is a medium-sized urban plaza in a central location. It currently lacks sufficient uses and connections to make it active and vibrant. Additionally, its “sunken” plaza design is dated and is currently not a popular gathering place in Downtown. Revitalization efforts to improve the plaza’s design, bring more programming to the plaza and create stronger connections to adjacent uses would help make the plaza a more successful urban space.
FIGURE 2.6: Neighborhoods and Historic Districts

- **St. John's Neighborhood**
- **Yajome Neighborhood**
- **Spencer's Addition Neighborhood** - portion eligible for Local Landmark Historic District
- **Calistoga Ave Historic District**
- **West Napa Neighborhood** - portion eligible for Local Landmark Historic District
- **Napa ABAJO/Fuller Park National Register Historic District**
- **EAST NAPA NEIGHBORHOOD** - portion eligible for Local Landmark Historic District
- **ALTA HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD**
FIGURE 2.7: Parks and Open Space
Adjacent to Dwight Murray Plaza is the Brown Street Plaza. Brown Street south of Pearl Street to the mid-block south of First Street is closed to vehicular traffic. This area has the potential to become a community gathering place if designed and programmed correctly. Additionally, Coombs Plaza, currently also closed to vehicular traffic except for deliveries, offers a similar opportunity for outdoor public gathering, but in its current configuration lacks any draw to make people want to spend time in the space. The Napa Skate Park is currently located on a block owned by Napa Sanitation District that is being surplus because the District no longer needs a major pump station on the block. The Napa Park Facilities Plan considers alternative locations for relocating the Skate Park. The future Oxbow Commons Bypass will provide dry season recreational opportunities as well as access to the Napa River through hand boat launches. River recreation will also be supported by the future Fourth Street Dock, which is planned to accommodate large and small watercraft. There is also the potential for a dock to be located at the east end of Division Street.

In addition to Downtown’s formal public spaces, the City periodically closes First Street for public events such as the Chef’s Market, auto shows, and wine and art fair events. In this capacity, First Street serves as an informal plaza and important community gathering place.

The Napa River forms the eastern boundary of the Downtown area and is a key asset to Downtown. Ongoing Napa River/Napa Creek Flood Protection Project improvements will help prevent flooding and provide significant improvements in terms of natural open space, recreational access and opportunities for waterfront development. As part of the project, the City is planning a multi-use recreational area (Oxbow Commons Bypass) that will cut through the eastern Oxbow area to the former China Point Park. This will provide new additional open space and recreational opportunities. Additionally, a new park, China Point Overlook, is slated to be completed in 2012.

Napa Creek crosses through the Downtown area as it feeds into the Napa River near Second Street (see Figure 2.8: Waterways). Heritage Park, located south of Napa Creek north of Pearl Street, will remain but will most likely be reconfigured as the Napa Creek project continues. Most portions of Napa Creek in Downtown are open or will be “daylighted,” such as one portion at Clinton and Coombs streets which will be daylighted by removing the street connection. Planned flood control improvements will protect adjacent lands from flooding, widen the creek, landscape and revegetate the creek banks, and provide more creek-oriented development opportunities in Downtown.
FIGURE 2.8: Waterways
URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

Founded in 1847, Napa is a historic city. Napa’s growth over the last century is evident in the urban form of Downtown and can be traced through its street layout and buildings.

Relative to other cities in the Napa Valley, Downtown Napa has a large, older, urban environment that is one of its greatest assets. Downtown is Napa’s commercial and civic heart, as evidenced by its large commercial building footprints surrounded by neighborhoods of predominantly single-family homes (see Figure 2.9: Figure Ground).

Over time, however, Downtown has evolved and experienced many changes. Not unlike many other American cities, Napa went through a mid-century period of promoting one-story, auto-oriented development. Redevelopment during the 1970s replaced many older buildings with new development, including offices, parking lots and structures, and a Downtown shopping center—the Town Center. The historic street grid has been broken by construction of the Town Center as well as the County complex. Two-way streets have been turned into one-way couplets. All of these resulted in changes to circulation patterns.

The Figure Ground diagram in Figure 2.9 illustrates the prevalence of several large parking lot gaps in the urban fabric. In addition to surface parking lots, a large number of one-story buildings diminish the Downtown area’s identity. Historic photos of Downtown Napa in the Downtown Historic Context Statement and Intensive Level Historic Survey (a survey that identified the historic resources in the Downtown area for preservation and protection that was then integrated into the Downtown Napa Historic Resources Design Guidelines document which is referenced in Chapter 5 – Design Guidelines of this Specific Plan) indicate the prevalence of predominantly two-story buildings in Downtown through the 19th century and into the early part of 20th century. While the historic pattern remains in places, today the patchwork of surface parking lots and one-story buildings leads to an inconsistent building pattern in Downtown. Vacant and under-utilized parcels also contribute to this inconsistent patchwork; however, they also present opportunities for new development.
In addition to the inconsistent building pattern, the quality of building orientation varies widely in Downtown Napa. A building’s orientation is defined by the design of its building face in relation to the street, sidewalk and buildings adjacent to it. A street-facing building orientation is an important aspect of an area’s pedestrian design and urban character. The building orientation in Downtown ranges from well-designed buildings that have many windows, pedestrian entrances and architectural design details to those that are poorly-designed with large, blank walls, and utilities and service areas facing the street.

Many buildings in Downtown, particularly historic buildings, have strong building edges with entrances, windows, awnings, recessed entries and other pedestrian-oriented building design details. However, good building orientation is not limited to historic buildings.

Newer buildings, such as the five-story Avia Hotel, three-story Napa Square building and three- to four-story Riverfront development, possess strong design detail and taller building heights. These are good examples of the market response to current design guidelines and regulations.

Street design also plays an important role in the Downtown area’s urban design character. In general, the Downtown’s street design is fine-scaled and walkable. However some wider streets have fast-moving traffic, wide intersections and challenging pedestrian conditions. Downtown Napa’s one-way streets and discontinuous grid are disorienting (see Figure 2.10: Block Figure Ground). Potential opportunities to restore two-way street circulation and vehicular circulation on Coombs Street through the Napa Town Center were explored during the planning process.
FIGURE 2.10: Block Figure Ground
HISTORICAL RESOURCES

In addition to natural features, Downtown Napa possesses many beautiful historic buildings. With over 150 years of colorful history, Downtown Napa has the growth of Northern California embedded in its buildings. Historic buildings in the Downtown area range from Victorian houses to turn-of-the-century commercial mixed-use buildings and later built exemplary buildings.

The Historical Resources Inventory (HRI) was the City of Napa’s official list of locally designated historic resources. As part of the planning process for this Plan the HRI process was updated. An intensive survey of the Downtown area was performed by Page & Turnbull and a map of historic resources in Downtown was created, colored by California Historical Resource Status Code (CHRSC) (see Table 2.1: California Historical Resource Status Codes (CHRSC) and Figure 2.11: Historical Resources Inventory). These codes represent a statewide system for cataloguing historic resources, and are used here to describe the historical ratings assigned to each property within Downtown. The Downtown Napa Historic Resources Design Guidelines document prepared by Page & Turnbull includes a thorough description of the historic resources in Downtown.

In general, although many buildings in Downtown are in continuous use, others are vacant. Several buildings have undergone adaptive re-use and restoration while many have been extremely altered. Future development efforts should consider adaptive re-use and/or restoration of historic buildings. The General Plan emphasizes this rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings, and encourages new buildings to follow the historic urban form. To what degree new buildings should “mimic” older buildings, versus achieving more general compatibility criteria, is addressed in the Specific Plan. These criteria were considered as specific design guidelines related to historic architecture (see Chapter 5 – Design Guidelines). Many downtowns have been able to harmonize new development with the historic context through massing and materials, without necessarily imitating the older buildings and their architecture. A compatible mix of eras and styles can make Downtown dynamic and engaging, without losing its historic character.

EXISTING REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The existing regulatory and policy framework is comprised of the existing land use designations and zoning regulations that currently apply to all areas in Downtown. The planning process for the Specific Plan included an analysis and re-assessment of the framework, and proposes changes to ensure that Downtown has the appropriate land use plan and zoning regulations to encourage sustainable, vibrant and economically-viable development. Chapter 4 – Land Use Designations and Zoning Districts includes a detailed description of the existing regulatory and policy framework, as well as principles, goals and policies outlined in the City’s General Plan.

<table>
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FIGURE 2.11: HISTORICAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

EXISTING CONDITIONS
2.2 MARKET CONDITIONS

This section includes an overview of the existing economic and market conditions affecting growth and redevelopment opportunities in the Downtown area. Greater detail about existing market conditions can be found in Appendix A and in Chapter 8 – Implementation.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The City of Napa has experienced strong population, household and employment growth over the last 10 years and projections indicate that these growth trends will continue. In addition, real incomes are expected to increase, resulting in higher demand for residential and retail development. The city’s economy is heavily based on tourism and the wine industry, with employment growing steadily in recent years. Growth is expected, providing additional job opportunities for residents. An expanded labor force will support the development of office space. Downtown’s desirable urban environment and concentration of amenities are projected to attract residents to higher-density housing as regional population growth increases.

There has been significant retail development in the Downtown area since 2000 with a strong emphasis on entertainment, culinary and wine-related, and other leisure and/or tourist-related establishments. Recent hotel investments, coupled with the strong tourism industry, suggest a favorable long-term market environment for attracting additional hotel and retail demand to Downtown. However, Downtown has been less successful in attracting or retaining local-serving related retail tenants and those focused on meeting the daily shopping needs of local residents. Downtown appears relatively well-positioned to capture an increasing share of the Napa region’s growing office market, assuming adequate space is available. The gradual improvement in level of services, amenities and built environment offered in Downtown has helped foster a setting that is more attractive to a wide range of business tenants.

EXISTING MARKET POLICY CONTEXT

Between 2007 and the time this document was completed, the national recession presents challenges to the development of Downtown Napa. Instability in the credit and capital markets, reductions in retail spending, and the downturn of the housing market have combined to create weak market conditions across the range of potential uses. These conditions are projected to continue for a number of years before returning to more normal market conditions, and may result in significant long-term changes in the Napa real estate market. Because the Specific Plan focuses on longer-term trends and market fundamentals to determine development feasibility, a market analysis and feasibility study are integrated into Chapter 8 – Implementation.
2.3 CIRCULATION AND PARKING

This section summarizes current transportation and parking conditions in the Downtown area that are covered in greater detail in Chapter 6 – Circulation and Parking. The following includes a summary of existing circulation and parking regulations, existing parking supply and demand, and existing vehicular, transit, pedestrian, bike and rail systems.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The Downtown area currently offers a walkable environment based primarily on its pedestrian-scaled historic grid and urban design features, as well as pedestrian crossings, paths and sidewalks. Barriers to pedestrian circulation and access include the Napa River, the rail line running alongside Soscol Avenue, high volume streets with wide crossings, and in some instances the merging of city blocks for large developments. Downtown benefits from some existing bicycle facilities, but needs improved bicycle access and connectivity throughout the Downtown area.

Downtown has a variety of public transit options. Transit service includes the VINE (the Napa Valley fixed-route bus system) and paratransit services offered by the Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency (NCTPA). The Pearl Street Transit Center is the key transit stop and transfer station for local and regional bus routes. The NCTPA is relocating the Pearl Street Transit Center to Fourth and Burnell streets, just outside the planning area. Depending on the reconfiguration of transit routes, this planned relocation of the transit center, in addition to the discontinuation of the Napa Downtown Trolley, has the potential to result in fewer transit options in Downtown and a consequent increase in automobile trips. Proposed future transportation improvements include new connections to key arterials, additional turn lanes, intersection improvements and a widening of the Silverado Trail.

Traffic and parking remain important concerns in Downtown. There has been a substantial increase in overall parking in the Downtown area, primarily due to construction of a new parking garage and some new developments providing on-site parking for their tenants. There are more than enough parking spaces within Downtown to accommodate current demand based on the current levels of occupancy. Presently, public parking is only 50 to 60 percent occupied due to slow economic conditions. Future development may result in a more constrained supply of parking. In addition, parking lost due to the Flood Project near the CineDome will need to be replaced to ensure an adequate supply.
EXISTING CIRCULATION CONTEXT

Downtown Napa’s transportation policies require balancing the objectives of multiple planning efforts and agencies at the local, regional and state levels, including the City of Napa’s General Plan (1998), California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Napa County Public Works Department, Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency (NCTPA), the City Bicycle and Trails Advisory Committee, and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). In addition, Napa’s transportation planning reflects the community’s goals to provide acceptable traffic flow and access to destinations across the city, create a safe multi-modal transportation network with opportunities for bicycling and walking, and minimize the negative effects of additional auto traffic.

The existing circulation network within and near the Downtown area is composed of arterials, collectors and local streets. The Downtown circulation system is generally bounded by Caymus Street to the north, Division Street to the south, Jefferson Street to the west and Soscol Avenue to the east. Primary access points to the area include First Street, Third Street, Soscol Avenue and Jefferson Street (see Figure 2.12: Existing Circulation System). Regional access points include State Route 12 (SR-12), State Route 29 (SR-29), State Route 121 (SR-121) and State Route 221 (SR-221), and are generally two- to four-lane highways.

Key Downtown arterials are either one- or two-way streets that are typically two-lane roadways. Several local streets complete the partial grid network of the Downtown circulation system. In addition, the Napa General Plan identifies several routes as Crucial Corridors, roadways that play a vital role in community-wide circulation and access to key community facilities.

Downtown possesses many key features that can support a well-connected bicycle and pedestrian system, but barriers continue to pose challenges. There are sidewalks or pedestrian paths along nearly all of the roadways within Downtown, with signalized and stop crossings and sidewalk bulbouts provided at several intersections. In general, pedestrian crossings are short, typically less than 60 feet.

With regard to bicycle facilities, the Existing Conditions analysis determined that the city’s bicycle network extends throughout the city, with many routes traveling directly through Downtown. Currently, there are bikeways serving Downtown. Planning for a future bikeway system includes expanded bicycle routes through the area (see Figure 6.6: Existing and Planned/Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian System).
FIGURE 2.12: Existing Circulation System

EXISTING CONDITIONS
2.4 UTILITIES

Downtown faces a number of infrastructure challenges in terms of managing flood risks, ensuring storm drain and sanitary sewer collection system capacities, and securing adequate water for residential and business use. The following section provides a brief overview of the key findings of the existing conditions analysis. Chapter 7 – Utilities includes a full analysis of existing infrastructure needs as well as outlines improvements needed to meet future needs.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The majority of Downtown falls within a 100-year flood zone as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and approximately one-third of the Downtown area is located within a more restrictive “floodway zone” (see Figure 2.13: Flood Hazard Area). The Napa River/Napa Creek Flood Protection Project, currently under construction, should alleviate much of the flooding that has historically occurred in Downtown. A related infrastructure concern includes the status of the existing storm drain network. Although it has capacity for much of Downtown, it requires several high priority upgrades in order to continue to meet the needs of Downtown. In addition, current water supply sources are inadequate during multi-year droughts thus requiring conservation and planning measures to continue to meet the city’s water needs. Lastly, capacity issues within the sanitary sewer collection system are directly attributable to inflow and infiltration flows representing improvements needed in Downtown.

PG&E is the main energy utility provider to the City of Napa. Almost the entire Downtown is served by underground electric lines, therefore upgrades to the system can be costly and difficult to construct. PG&E also provides natural gas service to the Plan area. Current needs appear to be adequately served. PG&E has been involved in the Specific Plan process, and will continue to advise on the impacts of future development in the Downtown Area. Comcast and AT&T are the main providers of cable, phone and internet services to the City of Napa. Most communication facilities were placed underground at the same time as the electric system, and neither provider expects continued growth within Downtown to exceed their system’s existing capacity.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

Many of the existing facilities in Downtown are in need of upgrades to ensure proper long-term function as well as to increase capacity to accommodate future growth. The analysis in Chapter 7 – Utilities includes a study of existing wet and dry utilities (i.e., water and sewer systems; stormwater facilities; and electricity (PG&E), natural gas, and communication facilities). The analysis describes existing conditions and potential deficiencies, and recommended upgrades to accommodate new development. With new development in Downtown there will also be an opportunity to explore and implement sustainable water efficiency measures, and integrate sustainable low impact development practices to reduce impacts to existing facilities.
FIGURE 2.13: Flood Hazard Area

Based on 2008 flood plain boundaries. See effective flood insurance rate map for current conditions.