

Cotati General Plan Update

MEMORANDUM

December 5, 2011

TO: Planning Commissioners

FROM: Vicki Parker, Community Development Director
Beth Thompson and Ben Ritchie, De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: Land Use and Community Character

DATE: December 5, 2011

INTRODUCTION

This Planning Commission meeting will focus on the topics of Land Use and Community Character. This meeting packet includes specific reading materials related to land use and community character, and raises key issues to consider in preparation for the sixth General Plan Commission meeting. The Land Use Element is a mandatory element of the General Plan, while the Community Character Element is optional.

A key component of the land use strategy for the General Plan is the Land Use Map. The Land Use Map works in tandem with the Land Use Element of the General Plan to guide future development within the City. The Land Use Map will not be discussed in detail during this meeting, however, an entire workshop will be dedicated to the Land Use Map near the end of the Planning Commission's General Plan workshop schedule.

Visioning Workshops Feedback

As part of the Visioning Process, residents and stakeholders were given an overview of the General Plan update process and an overview of land use "placemaking" concepts. Visioning Workshop attendees participated in exercises where they identified values and priorities that pertained to community character, land use, and placemaking. The Visioning Workshops also involved mapping exercises that provided participants an opportunity to identify key community focal points that should be enhanced and to identify areas where specific land uses should occur.

Land Use and Community Character Priorities and Concerns

At the third Visioning Workshop, participants were asked to identify the top three themes from the list below that should guide the General Plan update. The list was developed based on input received during the previous two visioning workshops.

- Local food production/local agriculture
- Diversify and improve downtown businesses
- Emphasis on culture and the arts

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- Maintain rural small-town feel
- Bike and pedestrian connectivity
- Business-friendly climate
- Open space protection
- Citizen participation
- Connection with Sonoma State students
- Integrate planning with SMART
- Protect water quality
- Increase tourism
- Provide a range of housing options

The top four responses to this question are provided below, in the order of importance indicated by workshop participants.

1. Business-friendly climate
2. Maintain rural small-town feel
3. Bike and pedestrian connectivity
4. Diversify and improve downtown businesses (tied with #3 above)

Mapping Exercises

At the first Visioning Workshop, participants were divided into groups of four to eight people, and asked to provide notes, comments and input on City-wide maps. Groups were asked to outline areas where new growth and land uses should occur (housing, commercial, parks, open space, agriculture, etc) using color markers; identify areas where existing land uses should change; identify areas where new roadways should be developed; and provide any other thoughts or input that the group developed..

At the third Visioning Workshop, participants were divided into groups based on where they lived within the City or the surrounding areas, and asked to provide notes, comments and input on City-wide maps that included the Sphere of Influence and Urban Growth Boundary. Groups were asked to identify key focal points in the community, including parks, local stores, schools, playgrounds, transit stations, community services and major streets. Groups were also asked to identify areas where new community gathering places or focal points should be located. Areas appropriate to accommodate new land uses or development were also identified.

Each group presented their marked-up map to the rest of the workshop participants, and key concepts from each map were discussed and noted. Summary maps from the Visioning Workshops are attached as Attachment 2 (Visioning Workshop #1) and Attachment 3 (Visioning Workshop #2).

Existing General Plan

The City's 1998 General Plan includes goals and policies specifically related to land use and community character. It is anticipated that the Commission will review these policies for relevancy and scope, and if necessary, expand upon them as part of this General Plan Update.

REQUIRED READING

Prior to the meeting on December 5th, please read the following items:

1. Visioning Workshop #3: Summary of Guiding Principles (see Attachment 1)
2. Visioning Workshops #1: Desired Land Uses and General Plan Focus Area (see Attachment 2)
3. Visioning Workshop #3: Placemaking Mapping Summary (see Attachment 3)
4. Background Information – Land Use and Community Character: Chapter 1 of the Background Report (previously provided to the Planning Commission)
5. 1998 General Plan Goals and Policies related to Land Use and Community Character (see Attachment 4)
6. 1998 Land Use Definitions (see Attachment 5)

WORK EXERCISE

After reading the materials identified above, please consider the following questions and be prepared to discuss:

1. In developing a goal and policy framework to address land use, what top three issues or actions should the City prioritize?
2. Should the General Plan Update include additional land use designations? Categories for consideration may include:
 - a. **Mixed Use:** This category would be used to identify areas where a mixture of commercial, office, and/or residential uses is required. Both the Downtown Specific Plan and Santero Way Specific Plan require mixed use in specific areas or on specific parcels. However, while the Land Use Code or Specific Plans may require mixed use, the General Plan does not have a designation that requires a mix of uses.

A Mixed Use land use designation would distinguish between parcels where mixed use is a requirement versus parcels that are allowed to have mixed use under the General Plan. This would clarify mixed use requirements for land owners and project applicants, and would also make it easier to interpret and understand the land use map. A Mixed Use designation would clarify consistency between the General Plan and zoning or Specific Plan designations. This would also ensure that a rezone of a parcel does not remove the requirement for mixed use in those locations where a mix of uses is desired by the City. When applying a mixed use designation, consideration should be given to the types of businesses Cotati wishes to attract and

whether requiring a mix of uses on a specific site would make it difficult for a desired business to develop at the location.

- b. Urban Reserve: This category could be used to identify areas in the Sphere of Influence or Planning Area where urbanization is currently not appropriate, but may be appropriate at some point in the future when adjoining lands have been urbanized and the majority of in-fill parcels in the City have been built out.
3. In developing a goal and policy framework to address community character, what top three issues or actions should the City prioritize?
4. In reviewing the 1998 General Plan policies related to land use and community character:
 - a. Which 1998 General Plan goals and policies best address the concerns you identified?
 - b. Which priorities are not addressed in the 1998 General Plan?

ATTACHMENT 1

VISIONING WORKSHOPS: GENERAL PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PRIORITY PRINCIPLES

Business-friendly Climate	13
Maintain rural small-town feel	12
Bike and pedestrian connectivity	10
Diversify and improve downtown businesses	10
Open space protection	7
Citizen participation	6
Protect water quality	6
Local food production/Local agriculture	5
Emphasis on culture and the arts	4
Connection with Sonoma State and students	3
Integrate planning with SMART	2
Increase tourism	2

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES

Provide a range of housing options

5-day turnaround for permit applications

Address elder care issues comprehensively and creatively

Consider adopting complete streets policy

Create viable destination for SSU students

Famil friendly

Improve overall health of Cotati and its citizens, air, water, noise, light pollution

Include entire community in the process - provide day care and have information available in spanish

Promote cultural and social diversity

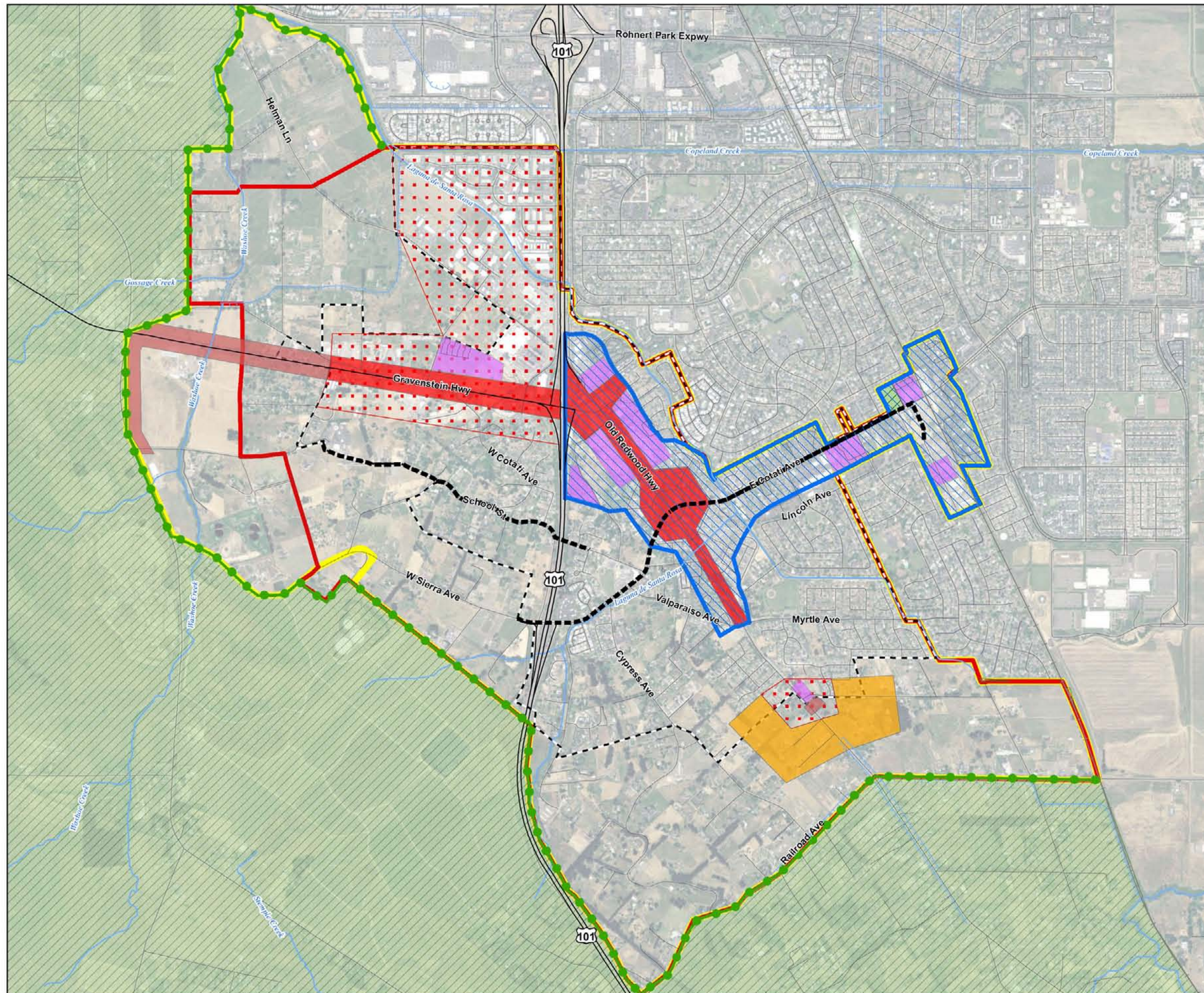
Protect city land use values from deteriorating due to neighboring community growth










Protect Laguna de Santa Rosa

Protect local groundwater levels


Social justice - protect public health through land use (locate tobacco, alcohol retailers appropriately and not at high densities)

Attachment 2: Visioning Workshop #1 Mapping Summary



-  Focus Area
-  Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Restaurant/Retail
-  Rural Commercial
-  Job Growth
-  Permanent Rural/Open Space
-  Greenbelt
-  Bike/Pedestrian Connection

Planning Areas

-  City Boundary
-  Sphere of Influence
-  Urban Growth Boundary



0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet
1:20,000

Data sources: Cotati GIS, ArcGIS Online Bing Aerials. Map date: July 13, 2011.

Attachment 3: Visioning Workshop #3 Mapping Summary

Focus Areas

- Existing Destinations & Community Gathering Areas
- New Focal Points/Community Gathering Areas
- New Residential
- New Low Density Residential
- New Residential and Retail
- Bike/Pedestrian Connection

Planning Areas

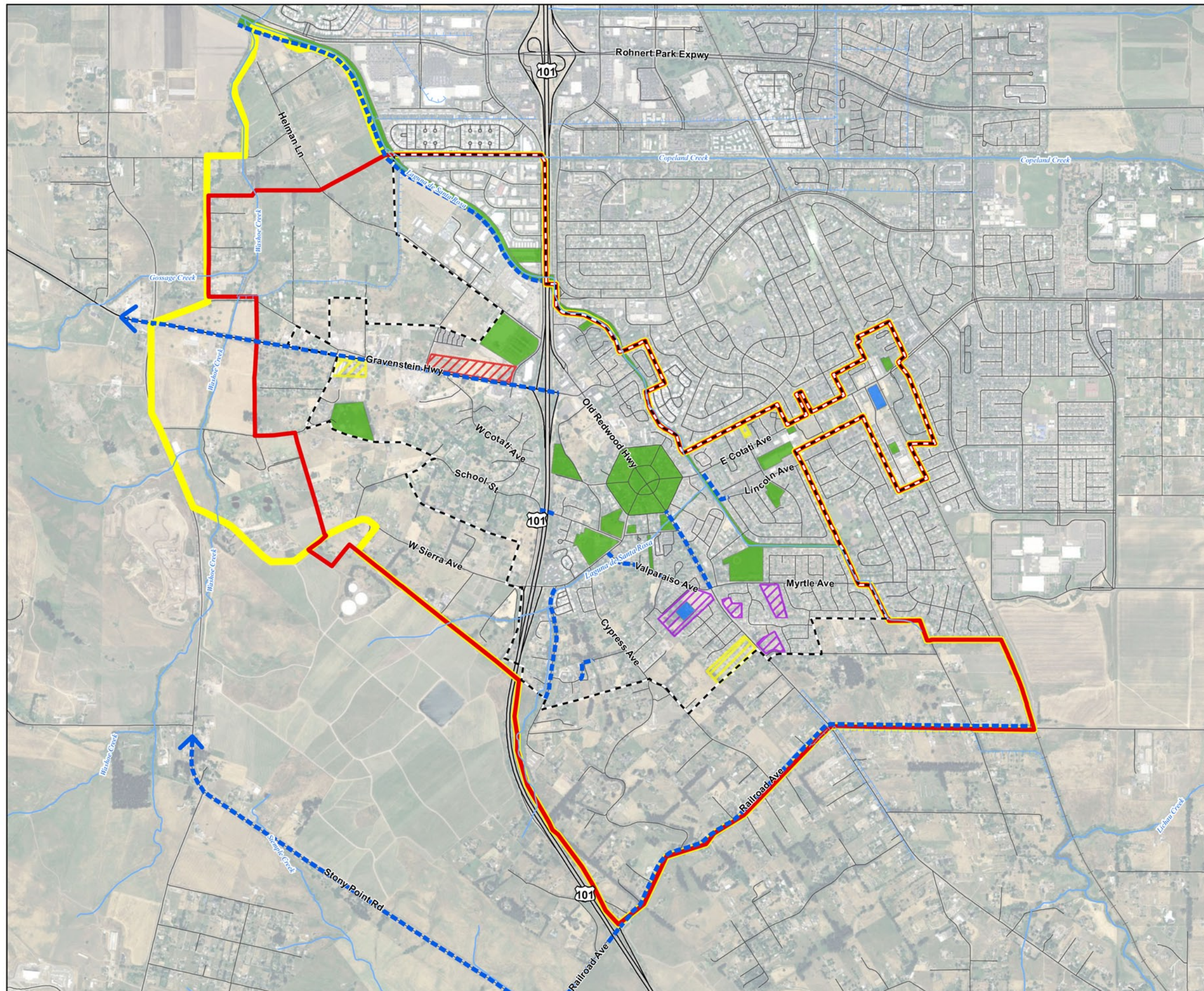
- City Boundary
- Sphere of Influence
- Urban Growth Boundary



0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

1:22,000

Data sources: Cotati GIS, ArcGIS Online Bing Aerials. Map date: July 13, 2011.



ATTACHMENT 4

1998 GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES: LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

GOAL 1 ESTABLISH AN EFFICIENT AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LAND USE PATTERN THAT PROVIDES ADEQUATE SPACE TO MEET HOUSING AND ECONOMIC NEEDS WHILE MAINTAINING COTATI'S SMALL-TOWN IMAGE.

1.3.1 The City shall have as a policy an emphasis on the development of vacant and underutilized land within the existing city limits.

1.3.2 The Urban Growth Boundary is established. The Urban Growth Boundary is generally coterminous with the Sphere of Influence boundary as set forth in the Urban Land Map, Map 5. The Urban Land Map shall represent the limit for the ultimate expansion of urban services and urban development.

1.3.3 Annexation of land to the city shall be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- i. The land is within the Sphere of Influence and Urban Growth Boundary, except for public parks/open space.
- ii. The capacity of the water, sewer, fire, school, and police services are adequate to service the area.
- iii. Land within the city limits is insufficient to meet the current land use needs.
- iv. Annexation shall be contiguous to existing developed areas.
 - a) Annexation proposals shall be evaluated in the development review process, and acted upon in accordance with the criteria set forth in this policy. Planning Department shall review project proposals for compliance with the criteria.

1.3.4 All annexations shall require public noticing of adjoining property owners within 500 feet of the annexation proposal.

1.4.1 The area within the Urban Growth Boundary west of Alder Avenue and north of Gravenstein Highway shall be designated Rural Residential.

1.4.3 The area within the city east of Old Redwood Highway and north of George Street shall be a mix of low-medium density and medium density residential and commercial land uses.

1.4.4 The area west of Olaf and William Streets bordered by Highway 101, West Sierra Avenue and Old Redwood Highway shall be a mix of commercial land uses, low-medium density and medium density residential land uses.

1.4.5 The area within the Urban Growth Boundary south of West Sierra Avenue and Henry Street, west of Old Redwood Highway, and east of Highway 101 shall be a mix of rural, low density, low-medium density and medium density residential land uses and commercial land uses.

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1.4.6 The area bordering East Cotati Avenue shall be a mix of low-medium density and medium density residential, commercial, and professional service land uses.

1.4.7 The area within the Urban Growth Boundary east of Old Redwood Highway and south of Lincoln Avenue and Benson Lane shall be a mix of rural, low and low-medium density residential land uses.

1.4.8 The area bounded by Charles Street, Old Redwood Highway, and Benson Lane shall be a mix of commercial, and low and low-medium and medium density residential land uses.

1.4.9 Santero Way shall be designated for mixed-use development that is consistent with rail transit related uses.

1.4.10 The Urban Growth Boundary for the city shall be defined as the area shown on map 2.

1.4.11 The area bounded by Derby Lane and Gravenstein Highway may be developed in the future, but only after the preparation of a specific plan which shall delineate land uses and the provision of public services.

1.4.12 All future development proposals in Cotati's Urban Growth Boundary adjacent to Willow Avenue shall be analyzed to determine if the land use would be reasonable situated next to a possible future commuter rail system.

1.4.13 Land uses in the area of Industrial Avenue and East Cotati Avenue shall be consistent with the development of a rail station.

1.4.14 The area along both sides of Old Redwood Highway, north of La Plaza and south of the Highway 101 northbound on-ramp, shall be developed in an integrated manner assuring a vibrant, mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented extension of the downtown.

1.5.1 Subdivision of land between the City Limits and the Urban Growth Boundary shall be discouraged.

1.5.2 The City shall encourage the clustering of residential units to preserve the continuity of open space, protect environmental features, enhance visual amenities, and insure public safety.

GOAL 6 ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF COTATI RESIDENTS THROUGH THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF WELL-DESIGNED AND APPROPRIATELY SERVED NEIGHBORHOODS.

6.1.1 Assure that all residential developments are located near land uses that would not be visually unaesthetic, noisy or unsafe.

6.2.1 All new development should conserve land resources and incorporate energy conserving design features.

6.3.1 Encourage the renovation of existing housing stock to preserve the unique character of Cotati.

6.4.1 Site designs shall minimize paved surfaces and roadway lengths while providing adequate access for normal circulation and emergency vehicles.

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6.4.2 Site design shall minimize vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian conflicts.

6.4.3 Site designs shall maximize access to commercial uses, recreational uses, employment, public services and other destinations using a minimum of pavement.

6.6.1 Ensure that all commercial development is compatible with adjacent land uses.

GOAL 11 ESTABLISH THE INNER HUB AREA AS A PRINCIPAL RETAIL AND SERVICE CENTER.

11.1.1 The City shall implement the Downtown Specific Plan, including the standards for land use, traffic circulation, and building design.

11.3.1 The City shall implement the Specific Plan to assure uniform design standards for the Hub area including street lighting, street furniture and pavement surface materials.

11.3.2 Commercial signs shall be consistent in style with building structures and the sign size shall be in proportion to the building, consistent with street safety and visual aesthetics.

11.3.3 Implement an architectural theme as delineated in the Downtown Specific Plan that will guide future development, rehabilitation and expansion of existing structures in the Hub.

11.3.4 Maintain a pedestrian environment in the Hub area which enhances business sales, increase ease of movement across streets, and improve ambiance.

11.4.1 Establish walkways within residential developments and sidewalks which connect residential areas to commercial uses along one side of existing streets in the Hub for the use of residents and shoppers.

11.5.1 Hold community festivals (such as jazz concerts, art shows, craft fairs, and energy forums) in La Plaza Park.

11.5.2 Promote a variety of uses downtown which are non-duplicative in nature and avoid over saturation of market segments.

GOAL 12 MAINTAIN COTATI'S IDENTITY SEPARATE FROM SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

12.1.1 Street signs in the City of Cotati shall have a Hub logo.

12.1.2 A City Limit "Welcome to Cotati"/"You are now leaving Cotati" sign shall be maintained at all principal entry/exit points of the City.

12.1.3 The area around the "Welcome to Cotati"/"You are Now Leaving Cotati" signs shall be landscaped with native plants, trees and flowers.

12.1.4 Native plants shall be planted along the pedestrian path adjacent to the Laguna northeast of Wilford Lane between East Cotati and Commerce Avenues.

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12.1.5 Preserve agricultural use on lands designated as rural within the City of Cotati land use map, primarily in the western and southern sections of the City.

12.1.6 Establish areas of community separators for preservation of open space adjacent to the boundaries of the City of Cotati.

GOAL 13 PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE NATURAL, VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF COTATI, FOR ITS AESTHETIC AND CULTURAL VALUE.

13.1.1 Open space land shall be protected from development.

13.1.2 Encourage infill housing.

13.1.3 All future development of residential lands shall be contiguous to urban development and clustered development shall be given preference to preserve a sense of openness within the town.

13.1.12 Urban open space is essential to maintaining a high quality of life within our City limits.

GOAL 15 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SHALL COMPLIMENT COTATI'S HISTORIC HUB AND SMALL TOWN IMAGE.

15.1.2 The design of new structures in the Hub shall be compatible with the craftsman style of the Hub by proper use of building materials.

15.2.1 Mechanical Equipment shall be screened from public view.

15.2.2 In order to promote quality designs, there shall be a bi-annual award to the finest developments within the previous year.

15.2.3 The natural paths of creeks should not be disrupted as a consequence of development.

15.2.4 All site developments, except in rural-residential areas, shall include landscaping in order to enhance the small town atmosphere.

15.2.5 Future commercial and industrial development shall be designed with a pedestrian orientation.