II. Existing Conditions

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the built environment within the Specific Plan area. A brief historical overview of the Urban Core is provided as well as significant historical structures and features in the area. The chapter also details the existing conditions within the Specific Plan area in terms of land use and zoning, circulation and mobility, and economic conditions.

Historic Resources

Historic Sites in the Study Area

The last City inventory of historic sites occurred in 1986. Several City-designated historic sites and structures are located within the planning area and have been assessed as to their local significance (see Historic Resources Inventory located on the City’s website) and then rated on National Park Service criteria. Any building with a 3, 4, or 5 rating is considered to be significant and therefore, prior to major exterior change, a recommendation from the Historic Heritage Committee (HHC) is required as is Planning Commission (PC) approval through the architectural and site review processes. Protection of existing noteworthy structures and respect for the City’s heritage is a theme that will guide new development.

The inventory of existing historical resources lends important reference for new development in the Specific Plan area. While the Specific Plan does not require strict application of traditional historic architectural styles, the historic influences should be honored and retained where possible. The design guidelines encourage the use of building elements and/or features typically found on Gilroy’s historical structures. The development standards emulate the form, massing, and relationship of building to sidewalk of these historical structures.
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Existing Conditions

A primary general plan goal states: "An urban downtown will be the pride of Gilroy's residents and the focal point of activity in the City."

Land Use, General Plan, and Zoning

General Plan

The General Plan divides land uses into four broad categories: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, & “Other” (including parks and recreation, schools, public facilities). Of these categories, the Specific Plan area encompasses a component of each. These designations are further broken down into subcategories, based on density and intensity of the use. Densities apply to residential uses and are measured in terms of dwelling units per gross acre (du/ac). Intensity applies to commercial, industrial and other uses and is measured by maximum building height (in feet and stories). The majority of the Specific Plan area is designated under the Commercial heading in a subcategory designated as “Downtown Commercial.” The concept of districts is presented in Chapter V (Districts, Land Use, and Development Standards) as this Downtown Commercial area is subdivided into a Downtown Historic District, Downtown Mixed Use District, and Downtown Office District and each has specific intensities and zoning associated with them.

A number of goals have been established in the General Plan for the Downtown Commercial area. One of the primary goals in the vision of Gilroy is the following: “A Vibrant Downtown at Its Core - A vibrant Downtown will be the pride of Gilroy’s residents and the focal point of activity in the City. Downtown Gilroy will showcase restored historic buildings, attractive new buildings, a bustling transit center, new housing, pedestrian-oriented public spaces and amenities, and a new town plaza. A wide mix of uses in or near Downtown will attract both residents and tourists, including a planned Performing and Visual Arts Center, an expanded civic center, restaurants, shops, and offices.” Other General Plan Goals include the following:

- Improve the Look and Function of Downtown’s Physical Environment.
- Direct Office Development to the Downtown.
- Direct Cultural, Arts and Entertainment Uses to the Downtown.
- Promote Mixed-Use Development.
- Promote Transit-Oriented Development.
- Capitalize on Development Opportunity Sites.
- Link the Downtown and Civic Center.

The General Plan land use plan divides the Downtown Commercial Area into three districts.
II Existing Conditions

FIGURE 2.1 - LAND USE PLAN MAP
Zoning

The Zoning Map divides the zoning designations into the same four broad categories as the land use map: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, & “Other” (including open space and park/public facility). Of these categories, the Specific Plan area encompasses a component of each, including Single Family Residential, Two Family Residential, Medium Density Residential, High Density Residential, Professional Office, Neighborhood Commercial, Central District Commercial, Shopping Center Commercial, Commercial Industrial, Limited Industrial and Park/Public Facility. However, the majority of the Specific Plan area is currently designated for some form of commercial uses, though the outer edges of the area permit broader uses. (See Figure 2.2 City of Gilroy Zoning Map for existing zoning.)

The historic Downtown along Monterey Street consists mainly of Central District Commercial uses. This district is primarily composed of general retail sales, including but not limited to, antique stores, coffee shops, and restaurant uses that serve the City as a whole. The north and south ends of Monterey Street are designated as Shopping Center Commercial and Commercial Industrial, respectfully, and offer a broader set of allowable uses including auto serving uses and a broad range of commercial serving uses. Less intensive multi-family residential, occasionally industrial, and Public Facility uses radiate out from the historic Downtown commercial area to the edges of the Specific Plan boundaries. The majority of Public Facilities are concentrated in the area bounded by Church Street, Dowdy Street, Sixth Street and Seventh Street.
II Existing Conditions
II
Existing Conditions

Circulation and Mobility

Monterey Street is the primary spine of the Downtown. At its southern end, Monterey Street connects with State Highway 101, and at its northern end, Monterey Street connects with State Highway 152. Both ends of the street provide a gateway to the Downtown core. Eigleberry Street and Railroad Street parallel Monterey Street and service additional portions of the Specific Plan area. Currently, Monterey Street has two travel lanes on either side of a planted median along much of the north and south ends and one travel lane with parking provided in the Downtown core. Street configuration is described in detail in Chapter VII (Infrastructure and Public Facilities). In addition to the primary vehicular access, located within the heart of Downtown is the Gilroy train station, which services CalTrain commuter trains and Valley Transit Authority; links to Greyhound, Monterey County, and San Benito County bus routes; and acts a hub for taxis.

Economic Conditions

Economic Development Opportunities

As stated in the General Plan, it is apparent that the Downtown should not try to compete with the outlets and large shopping centers in terms of retail volumes; most likely, large retailers will not locate in the Downtown. However, the Downtown does have an advantage over these areas in that it has a certain character and charm reflecting Gilroy's history, pedestrian orientation, and transit access that make it an ideal location for restaurants, cultural and arts activities, entertainment, small and medium size businesses, and specialty retailing.

The demand for these types of services will continue to grow in relation to the growth in population within the area. To the extent that the City can encourage these uses to locate in the Downtown versus other areas of the City, the more stable the long-term economic vitality of Downtown will be. Many small and medium sized businesses can easily be accommodated in Downtown.

The City of Gilroy will commission an economic study to aid in implementation of the economic development recommendations.