

Downtown — Place for all

The downtown is frequented by a greater variety of people than any other area of the city. It is everyone's downtown. Many cultural and institutional facilities are located in the downtown: The Main Library, City Hall, the Pacific Garden Mall, the Civic Auditorium, and numerous theaters, restaurants, and shops. Literally thousands of tourists and residents visit the downtown yearly.

The downtown is also home to a diverse group of people. Many senior citizens and students reside in the downtown — an interesting mixture of the young and old. The residential neighborhoods include families and children. These people intermingle with visitors to the downtown, creating a rich human tapestry.

Ultimately, planning is for people. The Downtown Area Plan will need to address the desires of many groups of people. There are many constituencies represented in the downtown; responding to their diverse problems and balancing the needs of one group with the desires of others is the principal challenge in the planning process.

The downtown planning area contains several neighborhoods — separated by natural features, major streets, and/or intervening commercial districts. This diversity is characteristic of Santa Cruz — a cultural and textural richness unexpected in a city of its size.

Within the downtown, the Mission Hill area is a distinct neighborhood that is designated a historic district. The downtown neighborhood, a well established residential area adjacent to Santa Cruz High School, is bisected by a bluff and includes a variety of architectural styles as well as some commercial uses. The north River Street area contains a small residential enclave — and the potential for significant residential development which would create an additional major neighborhoods in the downtown. The south Pacific Avenue area, which abuts a concentration of automobile dealerships, includes a residential neighborhood that also has some expansion potential.

The Downtown Area Plan will need to respond to the needs of these various neighborhoods. Although some common themes are shared by the neighborhoods — traffic problems, parking, etc. — each will require special treatment to address its unique set of problems and opportunities.



Shoppers stroll along Pacific Garden Mall

Meeting both commercial and residential parking needs—a challenge

Additional commercial parking can be created in the downtown, but competition for parking spaces will still be felt in downtown residential neighborhoods.

According to the City Public Works Department, an additional 250 to 300 parking spaces can be created in downtown through traffic management techniques, including restriping of lots, and the development of one new parking structure (the most likely location being Municipal Lot No. 2, behind the PG & E building).

Establishment of on-street parking spaces for exclusive use by persons living downtown, however, presents problems. As with other traffic problems, preferential parking may be a solution, but it is likely to be characterized by displacement.

The Downtown Parking Plan shows that day parking on neighborhood streets (employees as well as residents and customers), is highest between Center and Chestnut streets, north of Lincoln Street. Ample vacant street spaces exist south of Lincoln Street. If a preferential parking program were to be instituted in the area demonstrating greatest impaction, the cars seeking this parking might be displaced to the neighborhoods streets south of Lincoln.

510 Lincoln St.

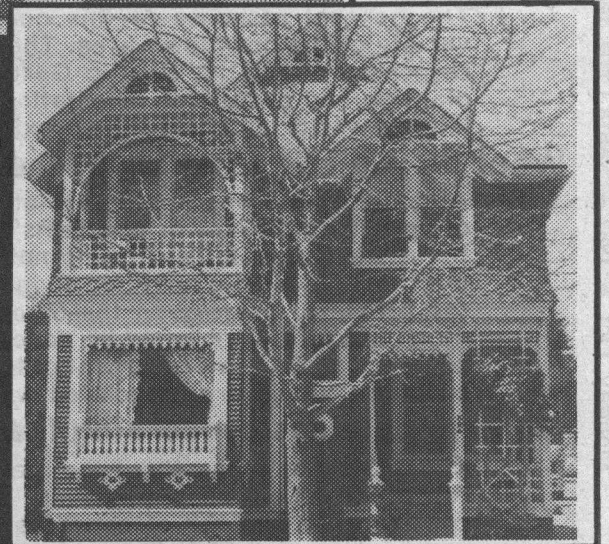


Restored homes in downtown neighborhoods.

621 Washington St.



504 Lincoln St.



Children play at Loudon-Nelson Center

Mural done by local artist

Public view of downtown offers helpful advice

Atmosphere and convenience draw shoppers to downtown Santa Cruz, according to a county-wide shoppers' survey conducted in May 1981 by San Jose State University sociology graduate students. County residents interviewed in the downtown area said that convenience was their main reason for shopping there but that atmosphere, people and the total experience of being downtown was what they liked best about the downtown. Preferences among persons interviewed in three shopping areas — Capitola Village, 41st Avenue Mall, and downtown Santa Cruz — reinforced the conclusion that downtown Santa Cruz, more than the other two shopping areas, combines the attractions of convenience and interesting atmosphere.

The other very important factor attracting shoppers to the downtown is the mix of stores and type of merchandise offered. Over one-third of those interviewed at 41st Avenue and Capitola Village said that specific stores and the choice of goods downtown were the main reason that they shop there and 16 percent noted that this was also the aspect they liked best about the downtown.

Parking downtown was mentioned as a problem by 12 percent of those interviewed at 41st Avenue, possibly because they strongly prefer the convenience of parking at a shopping mall. When asked specifically if they had sometimes gone elsewhere because parking was a problem in downtown Santa Cruz, most respondents said no, indicating that parking is not a major issue.



Daytime parking along Walnut Avenue