

CHAPTER 3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The City of Santa Cruz is located along the northern shore of Monterey Bay, approximately 75 miles south of San Francisco, 25 miles south of San Jose and 40 miles north of Monterey (see Figure 1-1). The City occupies a picturesque location between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Cruz Mountains and is bordered by parks, open space, and residential uses on the north, open space lands on the west, the Monterey Bay on the south, and a portion of the unincorporated urban community of Live Oak on the east. The City's western and northern borders are mostly defined by publicly- and privately-owned open space and agricultural lands, with the Monterey Bay on the south. Within the City, city-owned open space lands help establish a greenbelt around the City.

The project area is located within the Downtown Recovery Plan (DRP) planning area that covers approximately 69 acres. Boundaries of the DRP plan area generally are: Laurel Street on the south, Cedar and Center Streets on the west, River and Water Streets on the north, and the top of the west levee of the San Lorenzo River on the east. The DRP identifies the following four subareas, which are also referenced as sub-districts in the Central Business District (CBD). The area covered by the DRP and subareas are shown on Figure 1-2.

- a. *Pacific Avenue Retail District*, including a one-half block depth for all parcels fronting onto Pacific Avenue between Water and Laurel Streets;
- b. *Front Street/Riverfront Corridor*, including the one-half block depth of property on the west side of Front Street, and all parcels adjacent to the riverfront between Water and Laurel Streets;
- c. *Cedar Street "Village" District*, generally situated between the Pacific Avenue Retail District on the east and Center Street on the west; and
- d. *North Pacific Area*, situated between Water Street, River Street, and the Mission Hill escarpment.

The proposed project, as described in the following sections, would affect future development intensity within an approximate 12-acre portion of the lower DRP planning area that generally includes the lower parts of the Pacific Avenue Retail District and Front Street/Riverfront Corridor. The project area is shown on Figure 2-1 and is generally bounded by Laurel Street on the south; the San Lorenzo River on the east; Cathcart Street and Soquel Avenue on the north; and Cedar Street on the west. This area is developed primarily with a mix of commercial uses with some upper floor office and residential uses. The area also includes the Metro Station (approximately 1.5 acres), owned and operated by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District that serves as the bus plaza for the downtown area.

3.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Downtown Recovery Plan (DRP) was adopted in 1991 to guide reconstruction of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake as the earthquake destroyed significant portions of downtown Santa Cruz. The intent was to establish policies, development standards and guidelines to direct the recovery process toward the rebuilding after the earthquake. In addition to an Introduction, Summary, and Implementation Strategy, the DRP includes the following components:

- ☐ Land Use Plan for four subareas (Chapter 3)
- ☐ Development Standards and Design Guidelines (Chapter 4)
- ☐ Circulation and Parking Plan (Chapter 5)
- ☐ Streetscape and Open Space Plan (Chapter 6).

An EIR on the DRP was prepared in 1991 and adopted by the City Council in 1991 with certification of an Environmental Impact Report prepared on the Plan. The DRP was adopted as a specific plan (pursuant to California Government Code requirements) to implement policies in the downtown area. The 1991 EIR prepared for the DRP estimated that the development program established by the DRP would result in a total of 656 residential units, 990,000 gross square feet of office space and 1,329,257 gross feet of commercial retail space. Prior to the earthquake, the downtown area supported 311 housing units, mostly residential hotels containing single-room occupancy (SRO) units and approximately 1,130,00 square feet of retail space and 431,300 square feet of office space (EIP Associates, 1991, DEIR volume).

The DRP has been modified several times over the past 25 years with the most recent change in 2016 to relocate the downtown sign regulations from the DRP to Chapter 24 of the Zoning Code. Implementation of the DRP also included amendments to the Zoning Code. Specifically, DRP Chapter 4—Development Standards and Design Guidelines—is incorporated by reference in Part 24 of the Zoning Code, the Central Business District (CBD).

The City Planning and Community Development Department and the Planning Commission began review of the development standards for the Pacific Avenue Retail District and the Front Street/Riverfront Corridor at the request of the City Council in October 2014. The Planning Commission established two subcommittees to review and develop recommendations. The recommended amendments were forwarded to the City Council, and in October 2016, the City Council directed staff to initiate environmental review on the proposed amendments.

3.3 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Section 15124 of the State CEQA Guidelines indicates that the EIR Project Description shall include a statement of the objectives sought by the proposed project. A clearly written statement of objectives will help the lead agency develop a reasonable range of alternatives to

evaluate in the EIR and will aid the decision makers in preparing findings or a statement of overriding considerations, if necessary. The statement of objectives should include the underlying purpose of the project.

The existing DRP includes a set of “first principles” intended to guide redevelopment of the downtown area. These principles address the appearance and height of buildings, new housing opportunities, accessibility and circulation, open space and streetscape, and parking.

The following are the project objectives provided by City staff.

1. Support the following First Principles of the Downtown Plan:
 - *Form and Character.* New buildings should be allowed to develop individual character while retaining qualities of the historic townscape. Issues of articulation, materials, signage, setbacks, scale, massing, form, bulk, solar access and height are critical.
 - *Housing.* Significant new housing opportunities should be targeted throughout the downtown, including Pacific Avenue, the San Lorenzo riverfront, and South of Laurel. Housing should be comprised of a mix of apartments and condominiums. SRO housing should be replaced and dispersed throughout the downtown area.
 - *Accessibility.* A downtown that aesthetically integrates access as a primary design criterion for all improvements to ensure increased opportunities for the public to participate in commercial, governmental, residential, social and cultural activities.
 - *Open Space and Streetscape.* A strong network of public and private open spaces (streets, sidewalks, public parks, plazas, passageways and courtyards) that creates a socially active and pedestrian-oriented downtown core should be emphasized.
 - *Circulation.* Downtown should be predominantly pedestrian in nature; movement should be carefully structured to reinforce the character of the place. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access to the downtown should be enhanced.
 - *Parking.* Parking in the downtown core should continue to be provided by the Parking District in a centralized fashion, to maximize shared use and minimize the quantity of stored vehicles.
2. Increase opportunities for all types of housing in downtown.
3. Encourage and incentivize maximum public access to the San Lorenzo River.
4. Achieve superior connections to the San Lorenzo River above the existing DRP and existing SLURP policies consistent with Section 30211 of the Coastal Act.
5. Ensure that development adjacent to the Riverwalk will be designed to prevent impacts to the adjacent sensitive San Lorenzo River and will incentivize clean-up of degraded areas along the levee.

6. Enhance opportunities to view and interact with the San Lorenzo River as a coastal resource.
7. Create development standards that will incentivize development of key east-west public passageways between Pacific Avenue and the Riverwalk.

3.4 PROJECT COMPONENTS

The proposed project consists of a series of amendments to the following adopted City plans and regulations:

- ☐ Downtown Recovery Plan: Amendment to extend Additional Height Zone A, modify Additional Height Zone B, and modify development standards
- ☐ General Plan 2030: Amendment to modify Floor Area Ratio for the Regional Visitor Commercial land use designation
- ☐ Local Coastal Plan (LCP): Amendment to Land Use Plan text to modify San Lorenzo Urban River Plan land use development policies
- ☐ Zoning Code sections: Amendment to Municipal Code Section 24.10, Part 24, Central Business District (CBD), of the Zoning Code to modify extension area regulations and add Parklet standards.

Each of these project components is further explained in the next section.

3.4.1 Proposed Plan and Zoning Code Amendments

Downtown Recovery Plan Amendments

The proposed DRP amendments include minor revisions to text, reorganization of text, elimination of outdated text, addition of new text and exhibits, and modifications to development guidelines and standards. The focus of the amendment is to expand the location of “Additional Height Zones” and revise the Chapter 4 Development Standards. The primary proposed modification would increase allowable building heights in the lower Pacific Avenue and lower Front Street areas between Cathcart and Laurel Streets and along the San Lorenzo River between Laurel and Soquel Avenue. According to the City, these changes were initiated to provide more opportunities for housing in the core of the downtown. Increasing densities in the downtown is consistent with the overarching objectives of the City to maintain a compact downtown with a dense urban core in exchange for retaining a greenbelt around the City. The DRP amendment also includes: modifications to the format of the original DRP with the creation of a Use Chart for ground level and upper level uses; consolidating language relating to design guidelines and development standards; and the renaming of the plan to eliminate the word “Recovery” from the title that was formerly associated with the post-earthquake reconstruction

that is now mostly complete. Key proposed changes are summarized in Table 3-1 and further described in the following sections. All DRP text revisions can be viewed on the City’s website at: <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/government/city-departments/planning-and-community-development/downtown-recovery-plan-amendments>.

Development Standards and Design Guidelines

Land Uses. The proposed amendments continue to support and promote mixed-use development opportunities within the DRP area, but references to specific sites have been eliminated, including references to potential residential development on city-owned parking lots along Cedar Street. The proposed Plan revisions do indicate that “the Plan encourages the most intensive development along Pacific Avenue and the Front Street/Riverfront corridor, where it can most benefit from shared parking and convenient transit, and where higher density development is most appropriate” with acknowledgement that there are opportunities for redevelopment of existing structures along lower Pacific Avenue and Front Street.

The proposed amendments consolidate former text on permitted uses into a new table that identifies permitted uses for both ground level and upper level uses for each of the four CBD subdistricts, as well as the required level of permit approvals for each use. This modification allows for easier reference to allowed uses and provides notes about particular uses. Neither the existing DRP nor the proposed amendments provide an exhaustive list of all potential and foreseen uses for the CBD subdistricts. The proposed DP does include more uses not mentioned in the original DRP, including required Community Care, Family Day Care and Supportive and Transitional Housing uses that are required by State Law. Ground level parking has been added as a conditional (or administrative use) along Front Street if certain criteria are met (provision of some public parking, garage doesn’t extend to street corners, one curb cut per garage). The proposed revisions include prohibition of marijuana dispensary facilities as a result of the passage of state Proposition 64, the ballot measure to allow personal recreational use of marijuana. The proposed DP also includes a provision that allows the Zoning Administrator to determine whether a proposed unlisted use would be considered similar in nature to other listed uses that support the objectives of the DP and the CBD.

Building Heights and Stepbacks. The primary change associated with the proposed amendment is to expand the area of “Additional Height” zones along lower Pacific Avenue and the River Street/Riverfront corridor. The proposed amendments would allow increases in allowable maximum building heights in three locations as shown on Figure 3-1 as described in the following sections. Additionally, the amendments propose an increase the base height along Pacific Street between Water and Laurel Streets from 50 to 55 feet and along the west side of Front Street.

TABLE 3-1: Summary of Key Proposed DRP Amendments

Chapter	Existing	Proposed
Introduction, Executive Summary, Chapters 1, 2 and 3	Downtown Recovery Plan	Revisions refer to the plan as Downtown Plan (DP), except where specifically referring to the original document.
	The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake is the baseline for describing character of the CBD zone. Language indicating historic character or historic fabric of the CBD meant pre-1989 earthquake character.	Text has been modified to note that the City has had 25 years of post-earthquake development and recognizes that the CBD character has changed.
	Summary of the Plan Recommendations	Revised text clarifies that language reflects recommendations in 1991.
	References to flood improvements.	Updated to reflect improvements to the San Lorenzo River levee made since the Loma Prieta earthquake.
	Descriptions and boundaries of the four CBD subdistricts - Pacific Avenue Retail, Front Street / Riverfront Corridor, Cedar Street Village Corridor, and North Pacific.	The general descriptions of the purposes and character of these four areas remain the same. The height map is moved to Chapter 4 with the other Development Standards.
	Reference and description of the High Density Overlay (HDO) District.	Text eliminated as the HDO District was repealed in 2016.
Chapter 4	The DRP was formatted to describe allowable uses for each of the four CBD subdistricts, including by ground floor and upper floor uses, written in paragraph form.	Reorganizes the allowable uses for all the CBD districts into a table format, similar to the Citywide Zoning Ordinance update format that will be more consistent with all zoning districts in the future. Adds two tables: one for ground level uses and one for upper floor uses.
	Prohibited uses are listed within Chapter 4 of the Plan. The Plan also includes a list of amortized uses that are to be phased out by October 2020.	Adds Medical and Recreational marijuana service providers to the list of prohibited uses within the Central Business District. No change is proposed for the types of uses that are listed to be phased out of the CBD by October 2020.
	Existing “Additional Height Zones” are located generally north of Cathcart and west of Front Street.	Expands zones of additional height to areas along lower Pacific Avenue and lower Front Street.
Chapters 5, 6 and 7	Circulation-Parking, Open Space-Streetscape and Implementation	No revisions to Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are proposed with this update.
Appendices	Appendix 3 – Sign Regulations	Appendix 3 – Downtown Sign regulations previously were moved to the Zoning Code, Chapter 24.12.
	5 – Floor Area Ratio (ordinance)	Appendix 5 – Floor Area Ratio ordinance appendix deleted as it is now identified in the General Plan 2030.
	6 – Additional Height Zone C (specific to upper Pacific Avenue)	Appendix 6 – The Additional Height Zone C is integrated with Additional Height Zone A in Chapter 4.
	7 – Live Entertainment (ordinance)	Appendix 7 – Live Entertainment ordinance is in the Zoning Code Chapter 24.
List of Maps and Diagrams	Land Use Concept	Land Use Concept remains unchanged.
	Height Housing Zone A – Additional Height Standards Zone B – Additional Height Standards	Height Map relocated to Chapter 4. Housing Map deleted as it represented the High Density Overlay Zone that is obsolete with the General Plan 2030. Additional Height Zones A and B are in Chapter 4.

- ❑ *Additional Height Zone A – to 75 Feet:* The proposed amendment would extend the existing “Additional Height Zone A” to the area along Pacific Avenue between Cathcart Street and Laurel Street and to the area along the west side of Front Street between Cathcart Street and Soquel Avenue. Additional Height Zone A, which currently is applied to Pacific Avenue north of Cathcart, would allow building heights to 75 feet on sites 15,000 to 50,000 square feet in size. Current allowable heights for these areas are 50 to 60 feet. The proposed change also reduces the minimum property size to which the additional height may be applied from 20,000 to 15,000 square feet.
- ❑ *Additional Height Zone A - to 85 Feet:* The proposed amendment would establish a maximum height of 85 feet in Additional Height Zone A for the area between the east side of Pacific Avenue and the west side of Front Street (between Cathcart and Laurel) and on the west side of Front Street between Cathcart and Soquel Avenue for projects on aggregated parcels larger than 50,000 square feet.
- ❑ *Additional Height B - to 70 Feet:* The proposed amendment changes the “Additional Height Zone B¹” to cover properties located on the east side of Front Street between Soquel Avenue and Laurel Street. The amendment would allow additional heights to 70 feet over the base height limit of 50 for properties larger than 15,000 square feet in size. The DRP amendments performance criteria is provided that requires recessed building breaks, skyline architectural variation and integrated rooftop design.

Uninhabitable mechanical penthouses continue to be permitted to exceed the maximum building height (to a maximum height of 65 feet, except 60 feet for the Front Street/Riverfront corridor) with a 15-foot setback, which is reduced from the 25-foot setback in the current plan.

The proposed amendments also modify upper floor stepback requirements. A stepback is generally an upper floor setback from the edge of the building to help break up building mass. The proposed amendments would change the existing upper level 42 or 52 degree stepback standard to standard that would allow a certain percentage of a site to have heights over a specified limit. According to City staff, this “volumetric approach” is intended to ensure both vertical and horizontal building variation to avoid monolithic structures.

- ❑ For sites that are eligible for additional height in Additional Height Zone A, the footprint of portions of the building at or below 55 feet shall be at least 40% of the total site area; portions of the building footprint above 55 feet to a height of 75 feet may comprise up to 60% of the site area. For assembled sites greater than 50,000 square feet, buildings may achieve an 85-foot height for up to 20% of the total area in the area proposed for this additional height allowance. Figure 3-2 provides a schematic that shows proposed distribution of building height on different size sites.

¹ The existing Additional Height Zone B consists of two areas along Pacific Avenue that are now included in the proposed expansion of Additional Height Zone A. The existing Additional Height Zone C at the northern end of the DRP area is now included into Additional Height Zone A.

Along Pacific Avenue, portions of buildings that exceed the maximum base height of 55 feet may occupy up to 55% of the length of the property line along the street or 200 feet, whichever is less. Any additional height above the base height must be set back from the building wall by at least 15 feet. An example of the potential distribution of height that is included in the proposed revised Downtown Plan is shown on Figure 3-3.

Along Front Street, portions of buildings that exceed the maximum base height of 55 feet may occupy up to 60% of the length of the property line along the street or 180 feet, whichever is less with the proposed amendment. Any additional height above the base height must be set back from the building wall by at least 15 feet.

- ❑ For the Front Street/Riverfront Corridor, the proposed amendments require a minimum 10-foot setback from Front Street for development above 50 feet in height and at least 50% of the building frontage along Front Street and Soquel Avenue shall have a 10-foot setback for development above 50 feet (See Figure 3-4). Along the west side of the Riverwalk, a 10-foot setback from the exterior building face would be required for development above 50 feet. The proposed amendments allow up to 25% of the Riverwalk building frontage to encroach into the required 10-foot setback area to provide massing variation. See Figure 3-4, which depicts heights and setbacks along Front Street and adjacent to the San Lorenzo River. The proposed amendments also permit top floor cantilevered portions of the building to encroach over the property line a maximum of 5 feet in order to provide architectural interest to the façade, which shall not exceed 25 percent of the total building frontage along the riverfront.
- ❑ Along Laurel Street, Cathcart Street and Soquel Avenue, portions of buildings that exceed the maximum base height of 55 feet may occupy up to 60% of the length of the property line or 150 feet, whichever is less. Any additional height above the base height must be set back from the building wall by at least 15 feet.
- ❑ Along the Maple Street extension to Front Street, the proposed amendment requires the building frontage to be stepped back by 10 feet above a height of 50 feet. In addition to the 'build to' line, the Maple Street building face shall incorporate at least one recessed break, open to the sky, no less than 25 feet wide and no less than 10 feet in depth from Maple Street (see Figure 3-4).

Development Standards and Design Guidelines. The proposed amendments reorganize and combine Guideline language with Development Standard language in Chapter 4 with generally minor text revisions. A new section has been added that consolidates requirements and performance criteria for Additional Height areas, and another new section provides consolidated Storefront Standards and Guidelines that are applicable to the entire CBD zone. A new standard has been added that requires new development to provide for public passageways between the Riverwalk and Front Street at or near the extension of along Cathcart Street, Elm Street and Maple Street.

Tables 3-2 and 3-3 summarize changes in development standards and design guidelines for the Pacific Avenue Retail District and Front Street/Riverfront Corridor, respectively.

Other DRP Text Revisions

The proposed DRP amendments includes other revisions, including removing references to the High Density Overlay (HDO) District, which was repealed in 2016 due to redundancy with the adopted *General Plan 2030* and Housing Element. The HDO had been adopted for the Pacific Avenue corridor between Water and Elm Streets, which provided density bonuses amounting to an additional 2.0 FAR for residential development within commercial mixed-use projects. The zone became obsolete with the adoption of the *General Plan 2030* in 2012 as the Regional Visitor Commercial land use designation (applicable to the downtown area) includes new floor area ratio (FAR) ranges that supersede the HDO district.

The Draft Plan includes language to require the sloped side of the river levee between the levee and the private property to be filled with earth to achieve a similar elevation between the Riverwalk and the adjacent private development for the purposes of encouraging more connections to the Riverwalk. The original DRP did encourage filling along the levee, but the proposed language makes this public objective a mandatory design feature for new development.

The proposed amendment would require any development along the west side of Front Street between Cathcart Street and Laurel Street to dedicate sufficient property to result in a sidewalk depth of at least 12 feet. Development along Laurel Street between Pacific Avenue and Front Street would also require a setback to result in at least a 12 foot sidewalk. Additionally, specific parcels are identified and standards provided for future pedestrian extensions from Elm Street and Maple Street to Front Street and the San Lorenzo River. Buildings fronting the 10-foot Maple Street alley between Pacific Avenue and Front Street shall be set back 20 feet to provide for a 50-foot wide public paseo, lane or street. In recognition of this required dedication, the proposed amendment indicates that aggregated parcels meeting the size for additional height would not be required to provide on-site parking, but pay parking fees to the Downtown Parking District in lieu of meeting the on-site parking requirements. Specified properties are required to dedicate a 30-foot wide publicly accessible pedestrian connection as an extension of Elm Street between Pacific Avenue and Front Street, and the passageway shall be integrated into the design of the development.

TABLE 3-2: Summary of Pacific Avenue Retail District Development Standards

Standard	Existing	Proposed
Base Height	50 feet (maximum)	Increase to 55 feet (maximum)
Additional Height	Additional height not permitted south of Metro Center. 75' maximum height for properties eligible for additional height north of Metro Center. Project sites eligible for additional height must be at least 20,000 square feet in size.	Extend Additional Height zone south of Soquel Avenue to Laurel Street. Allow up to 60% of site area to be 75 feet in height and up to 20% of site up to 85' for eligible properties, subject to massing standards. Project sites eligible for additional height must be at least 15,000 square feet in size.
Uses within Additional Height Zone.	Maximum of 5 levels of commercial and 5 levels of residential above 1 level of required pedestrian-oriented ground level commercial.	Allow 6 levels of residential development above 1 level of required pedestrian-oriented ground level commercial.
Additional Height Stepbacks on Pacific Avenue	On west side, setback above 50' to create 42° solar access plane to opposite sidewalk. On east side setback so that no more than 30% of additional height is visible.	Replace terraced stepbacks with volumetric massing standards that avoid large monolithic buildings. Limit additional height to: a footprint no greater than 60% of the total site area with two-story variation between building masses.
Additional Height Stepbacks on East-West Streets	Setback above 50' to create 52° solar access plane to opposite sidewalk.	Limit additional height to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a maximum of 55% of Pacific Avenue frontage or 200' whichever is less, • 60% of east-west street frontages or 130', • 60% of Front Street frontages or 180', • and 50% of the Maple Avenue Paseo frontage. Provide recessed space with 15' minimum depth and 25' width to distinguish between volumes. Treat this recessed space in a manner that creates a positive pedestrian/streetscape environment.
Additional Height Stepbacks on Front Street	Not applicable. Maximum height along Front Street is 50'.	
Public Connections between Pacific Ave and Front St.	No specific requirements. All buildings are built to the property line of the street with some exceptions. No interior side yard setbacks stipulated.	Require all new development to physically dedicate and/or to make a fair share financial contribution to the creation of publicly accessible connections along or near the extension of Maple (50 feet) and Elm (40 feet) Streets. Require upper level stepbacks of 10 feet above 50 feet. A recessed break, open to the sky, is required along Maple Street of no less than 25 feet in width with a depth of at least 10 feet.

TABLE 3-3: Summary of Front Street/Riverfront District Development Standards

Standard	Existing	Proposed
<i>Base Height</i>	50' (max)	No change to maximum base height.
<i>Uses within Base Height:</i>	3 floors of commercial or 3 floors of residential above 1 level of commercial.	No change for buildings within the base height.
<i>Additional Height</i>	Additional height not permitted south of Metro Center.	Establish Additional Height Zone B, between Soquel Avenue and Laurel Street. Allow buildings up to 70 feet for properties that meet specific Performance Criteria that promote high quality public access to the river, appropriate treatment of the riverfront edge and commitment to manage and maintain riverfront open space.
<i>Ground Level Uses</i>	Commercial uses required along Front Street.	Add live-work as a permitted ground level use along Front Street.
<i>Building Stepbacks</i>	Any development above 35' is required to step back at least 10' from the street.	Require at least 50% of Front and Laurel Street frontages to step back by 10 feet above a height of 50 feet. Require a stepback of 10 feet above 50 feet on frontages facing the Riverwalk. Buildings Adjacent to River Street, east-west streets, and publicly accessible passageways shall step back at least 10 feet from the street for any height above 35 feet.
<i>Upper Level Standards</i>	Not specified in current plan.	Require top floor area to not exceed 60% of the site area if the project includes a publicly accessible passageway to the river. If no passageway is included within the project, require the top floor to not exceed 60% of the floor area below.
<i>Public Connections to River</i>	No specific standard. Guidelines ask for pedestrian access between Front Street and the Riverwalk.	Require all new development to physically dedicate and/or to make a fair share financial contribution to the creation of publicly accessible connections along or near the extensions of Cathcart, Maple and Elm Streets, at widths of 60, 50 and 40 feet respectively.
<i>Building Length</i>	No standard.	Limit building to 250' of lineal street frontage. A minimum 30' break between buildings must be provided.

General Plan 2030 Amendment

The existing General Plan 2030 was updated and adopted by the City Council in June 2012. The proposed General Plan amendment would revise General Plan text to increase the upper level of permissible floor area ratio (FAR) for the Regional Visitor Commercial (RVC) land use designation in the downtown area from 3.5 to 5.0². (See Appendix C for text revision.) The RVC designation currently is applied to all of the area within the boundaries of the DRP.

The purpose of this modification is to reflect the changes to the Additional Height Zone A in the Downtown Plan, which would allow for a potential height of up to 85 feet for a portion of a development site that meets the criteria for additional height under the proposed DRP amendment. While the FAR is proposed to be modified, no changes to underlying zone districts are proposed.

Local Coastal Plan Amendments

A portion of the downtown and project study area lies within the coastal zone. Pursuant to the California Coastal Act, the City has a Local Coastal Plan (LCP) that was certified by the California Coastal Commission (CCC). The LCP consists of a land use plan, implementing ordinances and maps applicable to the coastal zone portions of the City, and applies to all private and public projects located within the coastal zone. The Land Use Plan consists of: text; policies, programs and maps; Area Plan coastal policies and maps; and a Coastal Access Plan. The Implementation Plan consists of ordinances and regulations used to implement the Land Use Plan, including sections in the Zoning Code. The City is in the process of updating and revising the LCP Land Use Plan as a separate document from the General Plan. The LCP applies to private and public projects located within the coastal zone.

Chapter 4 of the Downtown Recovery Plan is incorporated by reference in the CBD zone district, and the district is part of the implementation section of the LCP. Thus, revisions to the DRP Chapter 4 require review and approval by the California Coastal Commission as part of an LCP amendment.

In addition to the development standards of Chapter 4, there are several LCP policies that are proposed to be modified. Since the original certification of the City's LCP in 1985, additional plans have been prepared and policies incorporated into the LCP as amendments. The City adopted the San Lorenzo Urban River Plan (SLURP) in 2003 as a resource management protection plan for the river. Subsequent to the City Council approval, several resource-related and land use policies were included in the LCP and approved by the CCC as an amendment to the City's LCP. There are nine coastal policies based on the SLURP that pertain to development along

² FAR is the gross floor area permitted on a site divided by the total net area of the site. For example, on a site with 10,000 net sq. ft. of land area, a FAR of 1.0 will allow a maximum of 10,000 gross square feet of building floor area to be built. On the same site, a FAR of 3.5 would allow 35,000 sq. ft. of floor area,

Front Street within the coastal zone. The proposed amendment would modify one policy, eliminate the other existing eight policies, and add two new LCP policies. The LCP policies proposed for deletion address maintenance of 50-foot building heights along Front Street, provision of public amenities, and building architecture. Appendix C lists the policies proposed for deletion with an explanation provided by City Planning Department staff.

The proposed new LCP SLURP policies are:

- ☐ Require new development projects to incorporate design features that encourage active engagement with the Riverwalk such as: filling adjacent to the Riverwalk and landscaping, providing direct physical access to the Riverwalk, including appropriate active commercial and/or residential uses adjacent to the Riverwalk, or providing a combination of these and/or other design features that support the resource enhancement and river engagement policies of the San Lorenzo Urban River Plan.
- ☐ Require new development projects to incorporate pedestrian and/or bicycle connections between Front Street and the Riverwalk at appropriate locations such as the extensions from Maple Street and near Elm Street.

Zoning Code Amendments

The project includes amendments to Part 24 of the Municipal Code, Commercial Business District that is part of the Zoning Code. Minor text revisions are proposed in several sections as shown in Appendix C, and the two primary changes relate to outdoor extension areas and parklets:

- ☐ Municipal Code section 24.10.2340, Extension Areas. The proposed amendment specifies that this section is applicable to the Central Business District and to properties to the San Lorenzo Riverwalk as areas for outdoor restaurant and business extension in order to enhance the pedestrian ambiance of the downtown and the San Lorenzo Riverwalk, by introducing uses attractive to pedestrians into the pedestrian environment, configured and arranged in ways which activate and enliven the public streets and the San Lorenzo Riverwalk.
- ☐ Municipal Code section 24.10.2341, Parklets. The proposed amendments add a new section that regulates construction of “parklets”. The purpose of parklets is to enhance the pedestrian ambiance of the CBD zone district by creating useable outdoor spaces that encourage a sense of community and that provide a tool for economic development. The new sections include requirements for design, construction and operation.

3.4.2 Potential Buildout with Proposed Amendments

Adoption of the proposed plan and code amendments would not directly result in development, and the proposed amendments do not include site-specific development. However, the proposed amendments would expand and specify the geographical areas in which increased

building heights may be allowed, which could result in additional building floors as part of future redevelopment in the area. Therefore, the amendments could lead to reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes in the environment.

City Planning Department staff developed an estimate of potential buildout without and with the proposed amendments for the purpose of identifying and evaluating potential indirect environmental impacts resulting from new development that could be accommodated by the project. The affected area was divided into three segments as shown on Figure 3-6 to include the Riverfront area, the area between the east side of Pacific and Front Street, and the area to the west of Pacific Avenue. City staff identified broad development assumptions for these areas, which are included in Appendix D.

Table 3-4 at the end of this section summarizes potential development based on City staff estimates. The proposed amendment to expand the existing “Additional Height Zones” could result in a net increase of approximately 711 residential units and approximately 2,200 square feet of office space with a net decrease of approximately 14,700 square feet of commercial building space over existing conditions within the study area. In comparison, City staff estimates that potential redevelopment under the adopted *General Plan 2030* without the proposed DRP amendments could result in a net increase of approximately 437 residential units with a decrease of approximately 24,000 square feet of commercial and 5,000 square feet of office uses.

At this time there are no development applications currently pending before the City. However, there have been development inquiries and discussions between private developers and City staff. The Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District also had been pursuing a mixed-use transit, parking, and residential project on the downtown Metro Station site, but there are no current project plans for this development.

3.5 PROJECT APPROVALS & USE OF EIR

As indicated in the Section 1.0, Introduction, the EIR is an informational document for decision makers. The EIR includes a “program-level” analysis. As defined by the State CEQA Guidelines section 15168, a Program EIR is prepared for a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related geographically, by similar environmental effects, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, or in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program.

The City of Santa Cruz is the lead agency and responsible for approving the proposed amendments to the DRP, General Plan and LCP. After certification, this EIR may be used by the City as a “first tier” document for later projects as authorized by section 15183 of State CEQA Guidelines. Reviews of later projects under this provision would be required to consider any project-specific impacts that were not adequately addressed in this EIR. The specific later

projects are not known at this time, but could include, for example, site-specific development projects.

For later individual projects proposed in the areas covered by the plans and amendments covered in this EIR, the City will determine whether the individual project or subsequent activity is within the scope of this Program EIR, meaning it is an activity within the same project as analyzed in the program EIR or within the same geographic area encompassed by the program EIR. Depending on the City's determination, including whether new effects could occur or new mitigation measures would be required, the analysis for later projects could range from no new CEQA document to a new EIR. The City potentially could apply one or more CEQA "streamlining" tools when it considers later projects, such as the focused analytical routes offered under Public Resources Code sections 21155.2 and 21083.3 and CEQA Guidelines sections 15152, 15182, 15183, and 15183.3. If appropriate and applicable to a proposed project, the City may also consider one or more statutory or categorical exemptions.

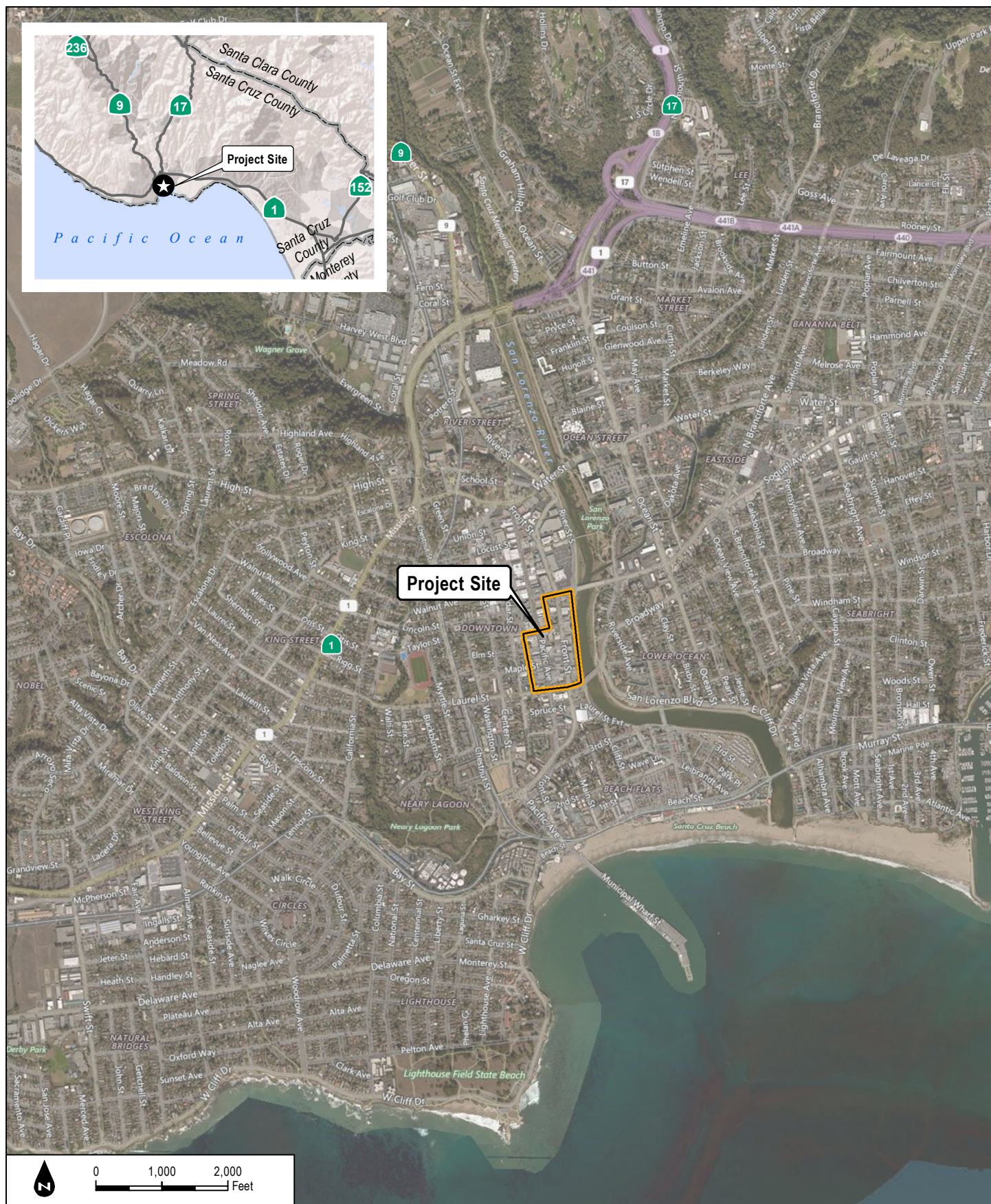
Other public agencies that have review or approval authority of the project include:

- ☐ California Coastal Commissions: Approval of LCP amendment

TABLE 3-4: Potential Development/Buildout Assumptions with Downtown Plan Amendments

	Area X Riverfront	Area Y E. Pacific/W. Front Pacific Station	Area Z W. Pacific	Totals	Change from Existing Conditions (Includes demolition and reconstruction)
Baseline/Existing Conditions					
Property Area	146,000 sf (3.35 acres)	222,200 sf (5.10 acres)	148,800 sf (3.42 acres)	517,000 sf (11.87 acres)	N/A
Commercial	62,000 sf	74,864 sf	182,836 sf	319,700 sf	N/A
Office	N/A	56,105 sf	65,761 sf	121,866 sf	N/A
Residential	N/A	113 units	56 units	169 units	N /A
Parking	164 spaces	186 spaces	97 spaces	447 spaces	N /A
Buildout Assumptions with Proposed Downtown Plan Amendments (Units are totals, reflecting both demolition and reconstruction)					
Commercial	73,171 sf	47,000 sf	184,836 sf	305,007 sf	-14,693 sf
Office	18,296 sf	40,000 sf	65,761 sf	124,057 sf	+2,191 sf
Residential	321 units	483 units	76 units	880 units	+711 units
Parking	397 spaces	1,924 spaces	117 spaces	2,438 spaces	+1,991 spaces

SOURCE: City of Santa Cruz Planning and Community Development Department

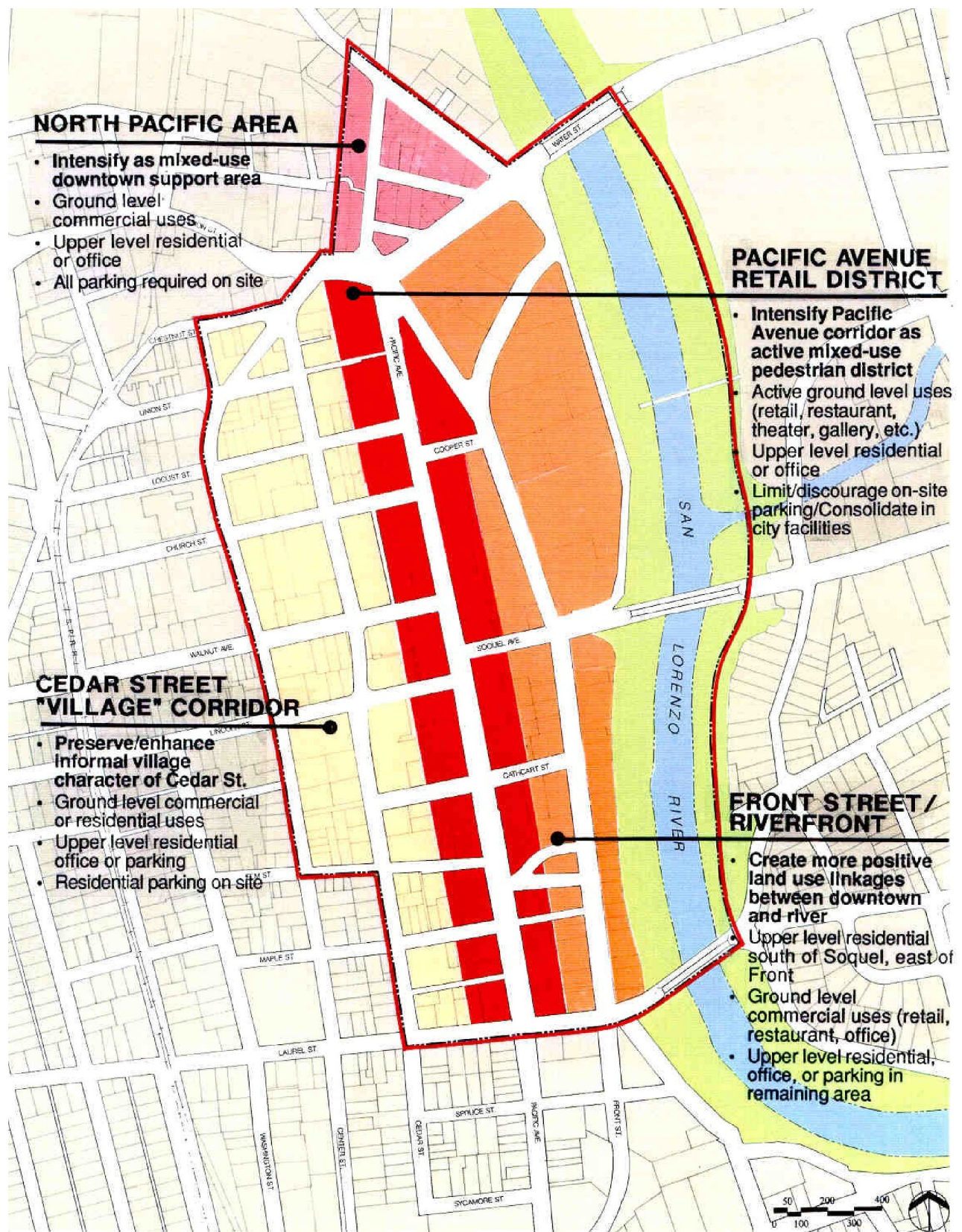


DUDEK

SOURCE: Bing Maps (accessed 2017)

City of Santa Cruz Downtown Plan Amendments EIR

FIGURE 1-1
Project Location

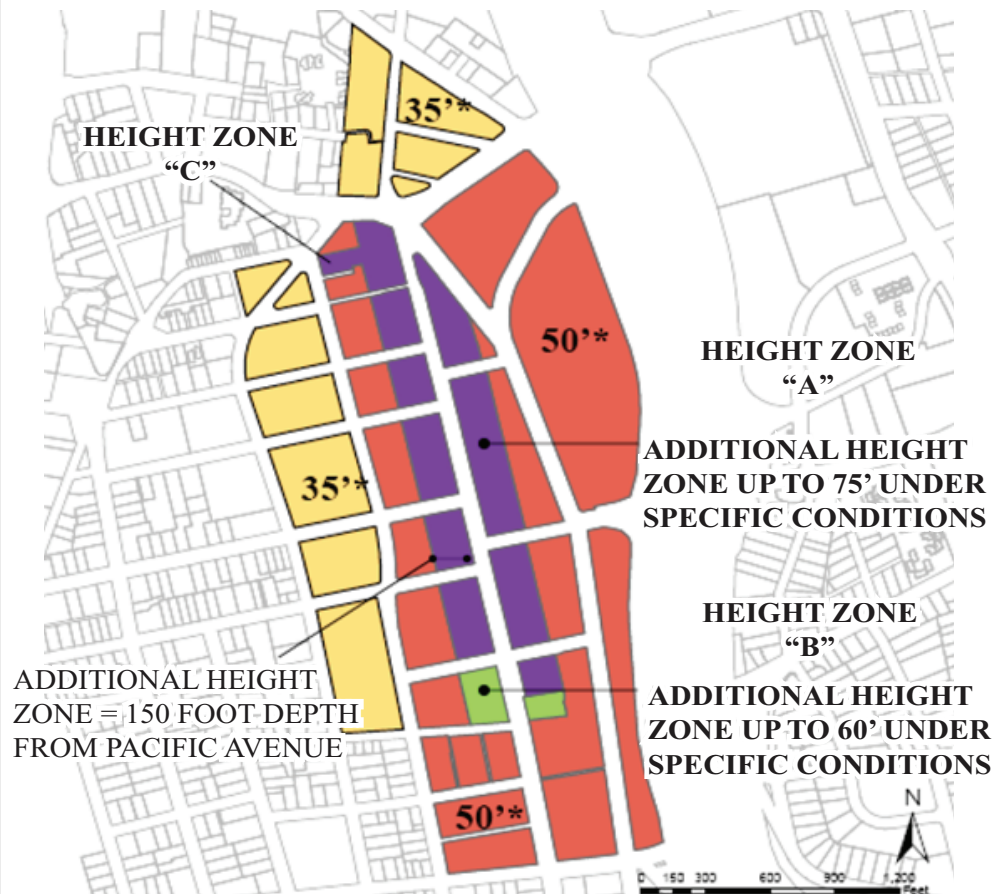




SOURCE: Bing (accessed 2017), County of Santa Cruz

FIGURE 2-1
Lower Downtown Project Study Area

Existing Additional Height Zones



Proposed Additional Height Zones

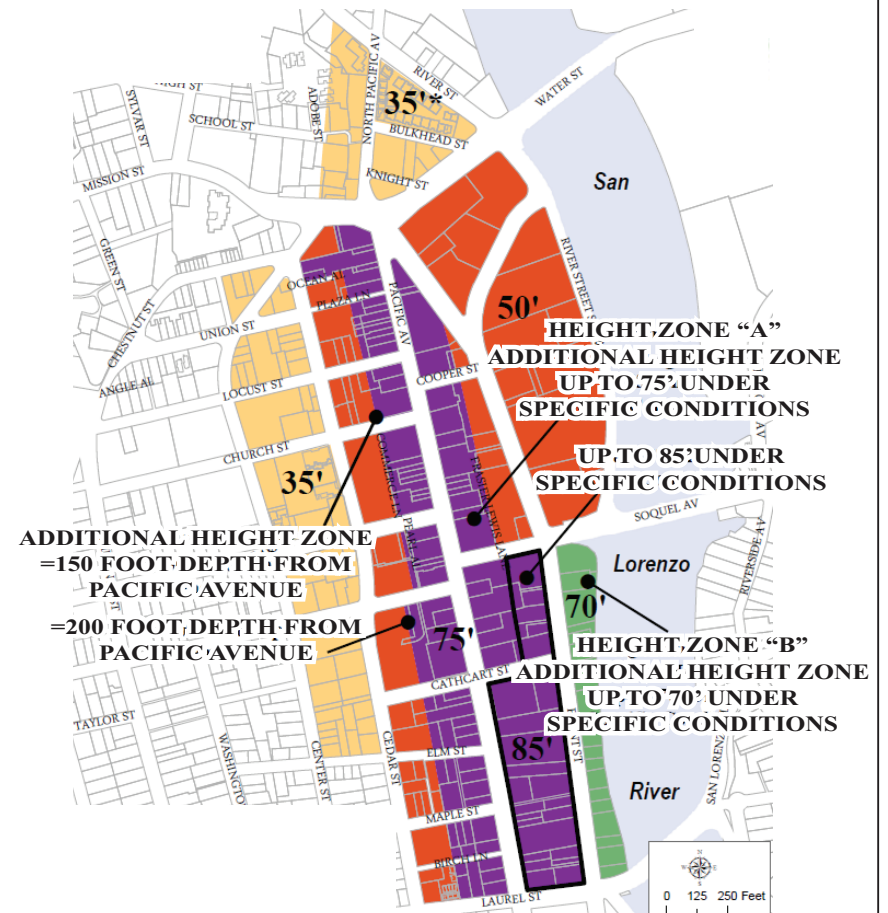
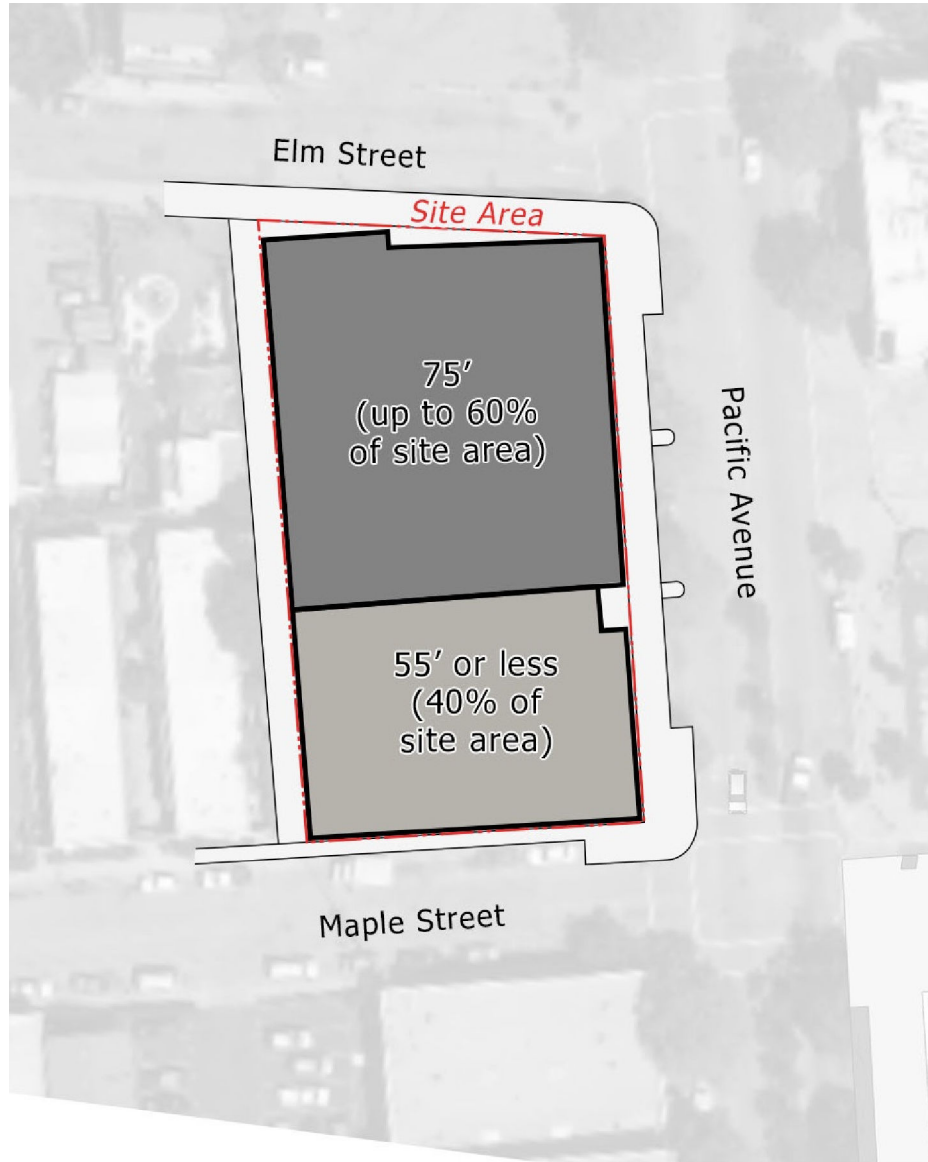
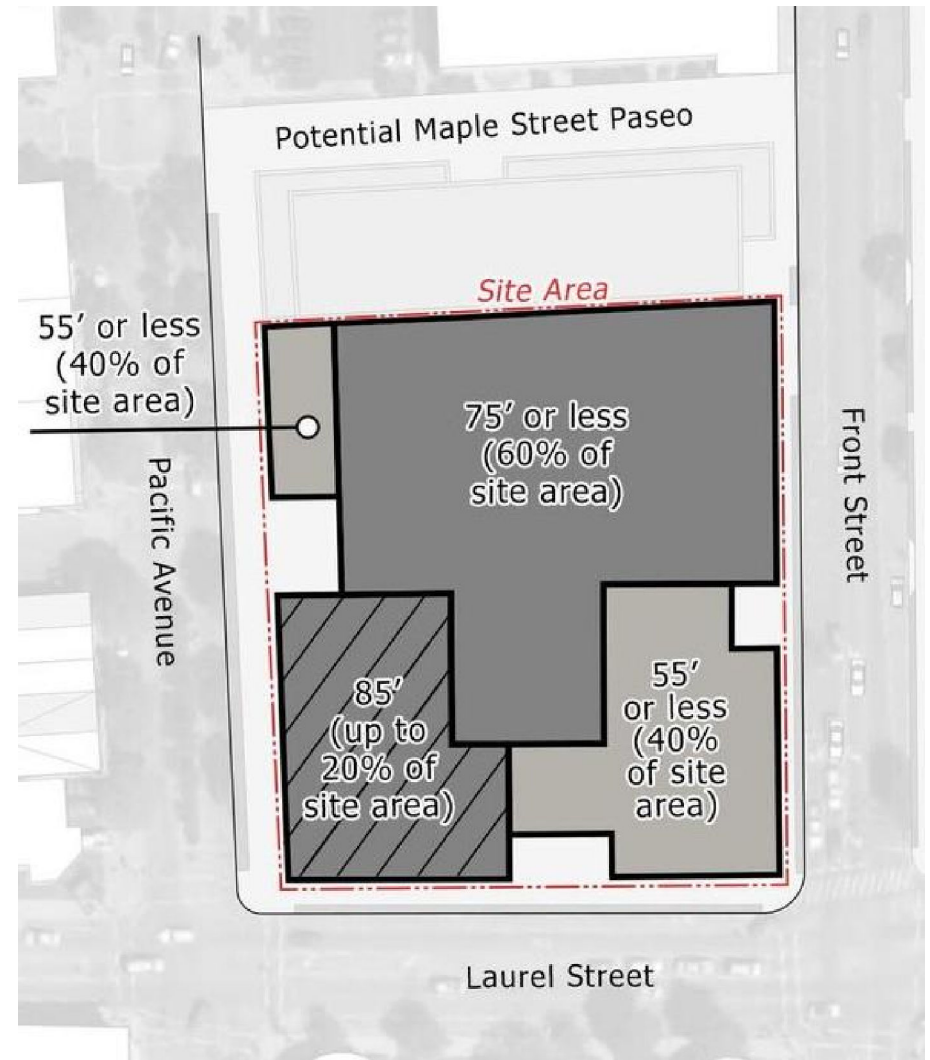


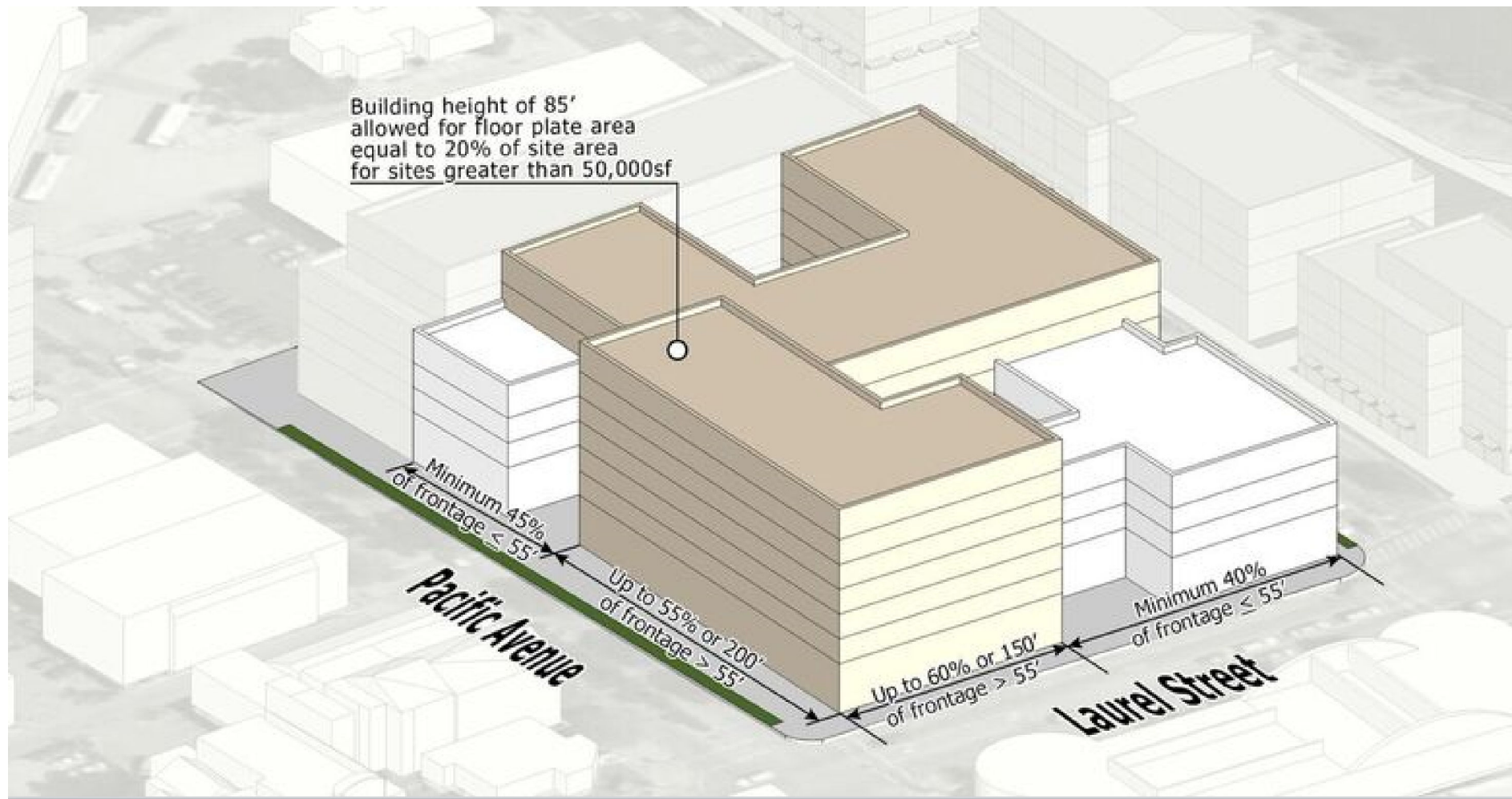
FIGURE 3-1
Existing and Proposed Additional Height Zones

**Proposed distribution of additional height
for sites 15,000 □ 50,000 sq. ft.**

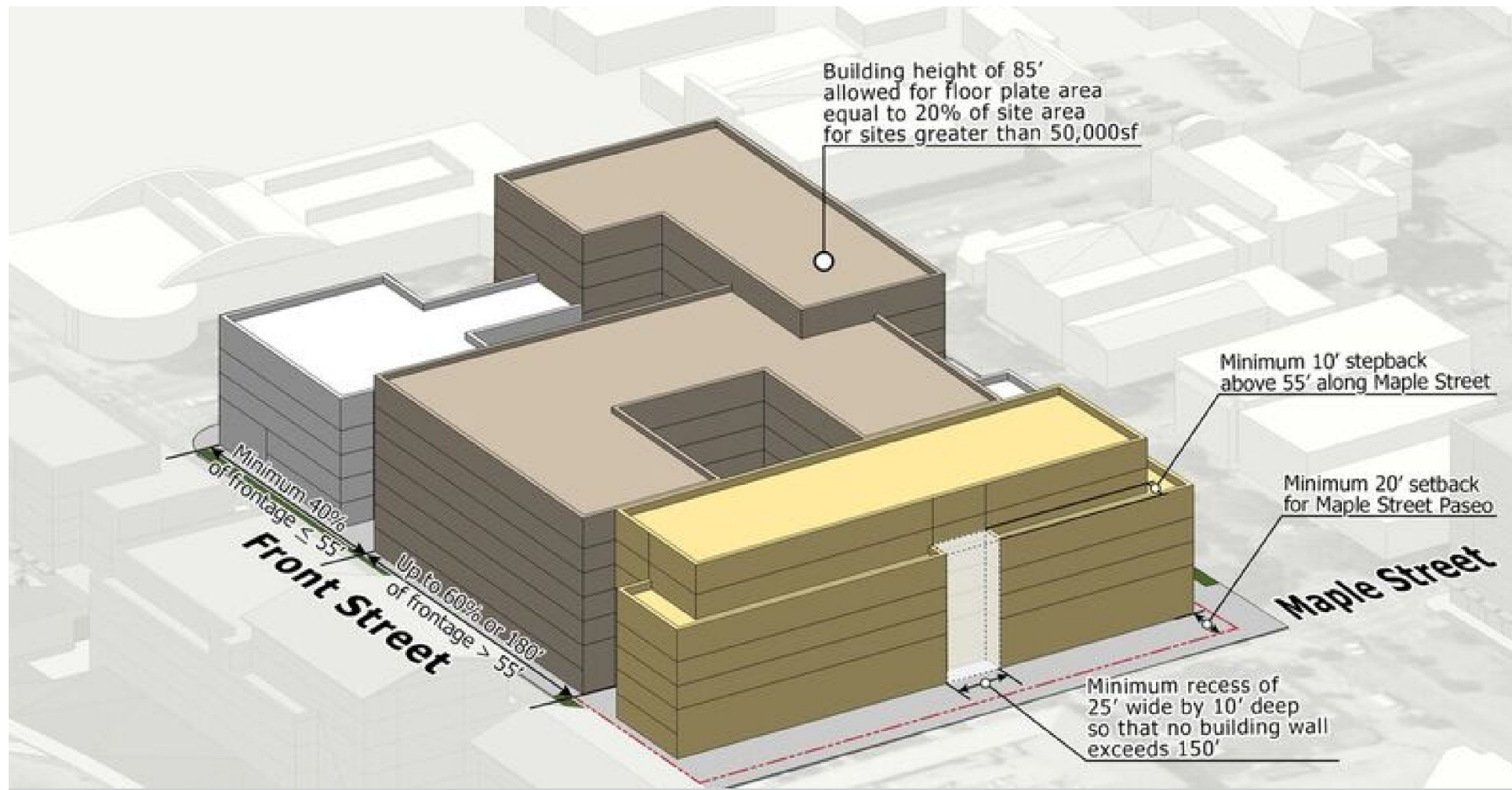


**Proposed distribution of additional height
for sites larger than 50,000 sq. ft.**

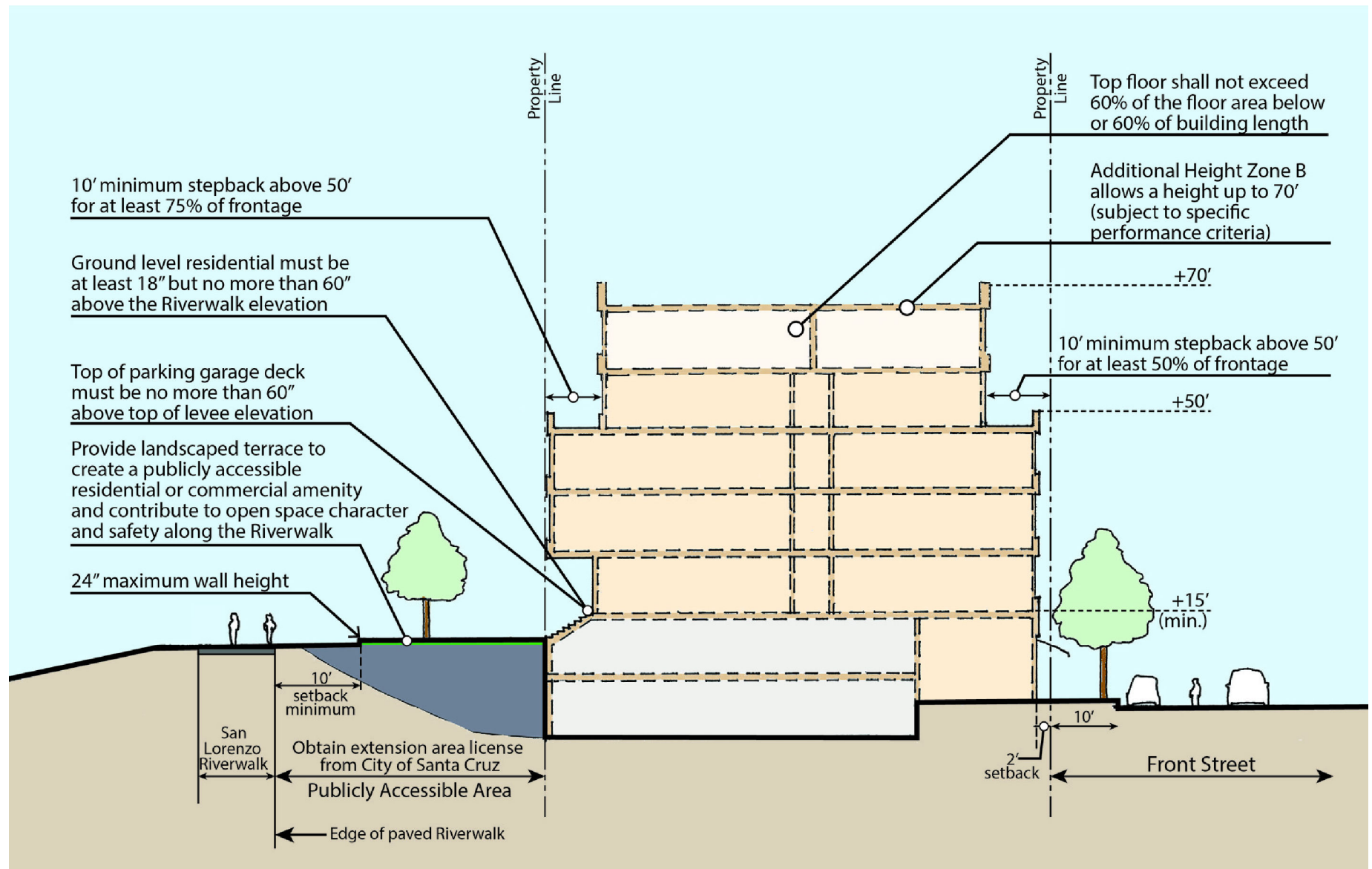




Example of possible distribution of frontage heights along Pacific Avenue and Laurel Street.



Example of possible distribution of frontage heights along Front Street and the Maple Street Paseo



SOURCE: City of Santa Cruz

FIGURE 3-5
Proposed Additional Height and Setbacks Along Front Street/Riverfront Corridor

