



CITY OF COLUSA, CALIFORNIA IDEABOOK

*DESIGN AND
PRESERVATION RAPID
ASSISTANCE TEAM
(D-PRAT)*



American Planning Association

Creating Great Communities for All

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT D-PRAT

WHO WE ARE

The Design and Preservation Rapid Assistance Team (D-PRAT) is a pro-bono program supported by the American Planning Association (APA) Urban Design and Preservation (UDP) Division. D-PRAT's mission is to support under-resourced communities and organizations in their efforts to collaboratively plan for the future with a focus on urban design of the public realm and preservation. The fifth D-PRAT program began in the summer of 2025, working with the City of Colusa, California with a focus on their Main Street district.

The City of Colusa applied to the D-PRAT program and identified that they were looking for technical expertise to clarify opportunities and solutions for the city. Their objective was to ask the D-PRAT team to provide guidance on three areas within the city: Main Street and Market Street activation, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, including the Chinatown area, and Levee Park activation along the Sacramento River. The Division sent out a call of interest to membership and assembled a team of both ground and virtual volunteer urban designers and historic preservation experts to serve on the 2025 D-PRAT team. The Division funded volunteers to travel and be in-person during two days on November 2nd and 3rd, 2025, supported throughout by virtual volunteers. Together, the three different teams with specific focus and topic areas collaborated to develop this report.



Ground team and stakeholders during the 2-day Workshop, image by Donovan Lee of Hapa Films



Main Street and the Sacramento River, image by Donovan Lee of Hapa Films

BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The City of Colusa is located in the Sacramento Valley along the Sacramento River and has a population of about 6,589. In 1850, Charles Semple purchased the Rancho Colus Mexican Land Grant, where he then founded the town named Colusi, eventually changing its name to Colusa in 1851. The town became a popular rest stop for travelers along the Southern Pacific Railroad. Colusa is known for its historic Chinatown, the Carnegie Library built in 1905, a town courthouse built in a classical style, and several other historic buildings.

The City of Colusa sought planning assistance for revitalizing and re-envisioning the Main & Market Street corridors, activating Levee Park and leveraging the downtown's historic properties for adaptive reuse.

The City of Colusa is at an exciting turning point. Rooted in a rich agricultural heritage and shaped by generations of community pride, Colusa is embracing this moment to build a strong, vibrant future for everyone who calls the city home.

While recent years have brought challenges such as drought, economic shifts, and changes in traditional crop production, these pressures have inspired Colusa to explore new ideas, invest in local strengths, and imagine fresh possibilities for growth. Residents, businesses, and partners throughout the region are coming together to support sustainable

agriculture, diversify job opportunities, and strengthen the local economy.

Across the city, momentum is building around projects that enhance daily life. Infrastructure and transportation remain areas of evolving opportunity. The City and County are currently participating in the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, which reflects a commitment to creating safer, more walkable, and more vibrant public spaces. County level planning, environmental health initiatives, and water resource management also offer pathways for reinvention, supporting Colusa's long-term goals of sustainable development and high-quality public services.

Colusa's story is one of resilience and optimism. Rather than being defined by its challenges, the community is using them as fuel for creativity and positive change. With its welcoming small-town character, strong partnerships, and deep sense of pride, Colusa is ready to invest in its people, enrich its neighborhoods, and continue building a future rooted in opportunity, connection, and possibility.



Colusa County Superior Court



Independent Order of Odd Fellows Building

AREAS OF FOCUS & PROJECT GOALS

GROUP 1: PRESERVATION & ADAPTIVE REUSE

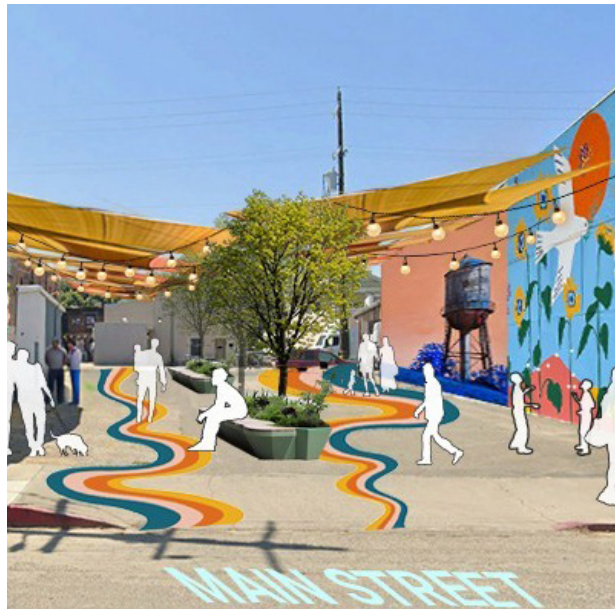
Preservation and Adaptive Reuse focuses on strengthening long-term economic resilience through reinvestment in historic buildings, adaptive reuse, and support for local entrepreneurship. The proposed ideas prioritize reducing vacancy by activating underutilized buildings and public spaces with phased, low-risk. Interventions that build foot traffic, test new uses, and catalyze private investment central goal is to reinforce Colusa's distinct identity through coordinated public art, placemaking, and downtown programming, while recognizing the city's historic districts and formalizing these areas in the future. The plan also emphasizes establishing shared local stewardship through a Main Street framework that aligns property owners, businesses, community partners, and the City around ongoing downtown revitalization and preservation efforts.



Rendering by group 1

GROUP 2: STREETSCAPES & PUBLIC REALM

The Downtown Streetscape & Public Realm Enhancements framework envisions a safe, connected, and people-centered downtown that blends mobility, culture, and community life. It focuses on improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, reactivating alleys and plazas, and fostering lively spaces that support local business and social interaction. Through art, design, and inclusive public space, the project transforms streets into civic experiences rather than transit corridors. The overarching goal is to create a resilient, vibrant downtown that reflects Colusa's character while embracing its future growth.



Rendering by group 2

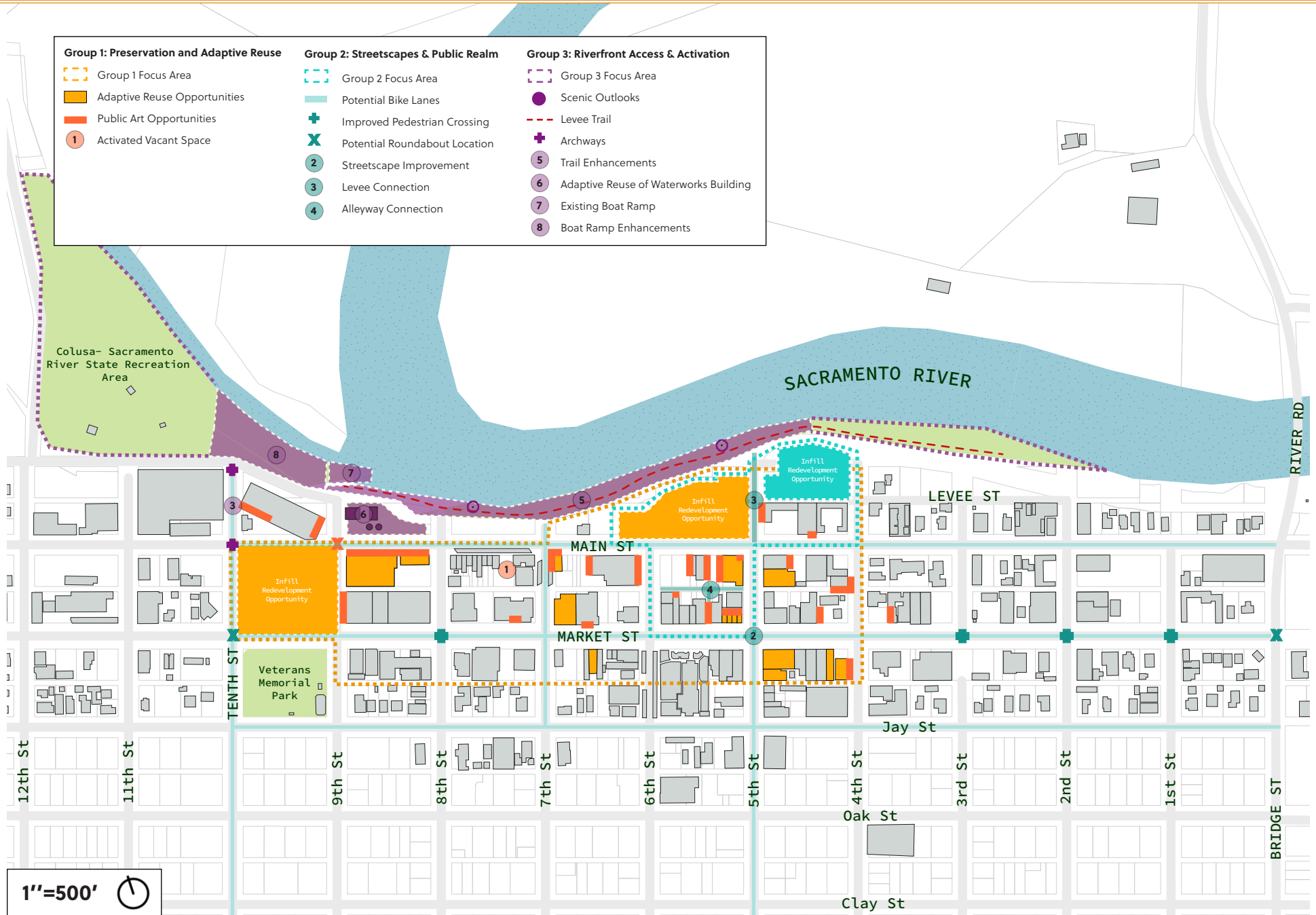
GROUP 3: RIVERFRONT ACCESS & ACTIVATION

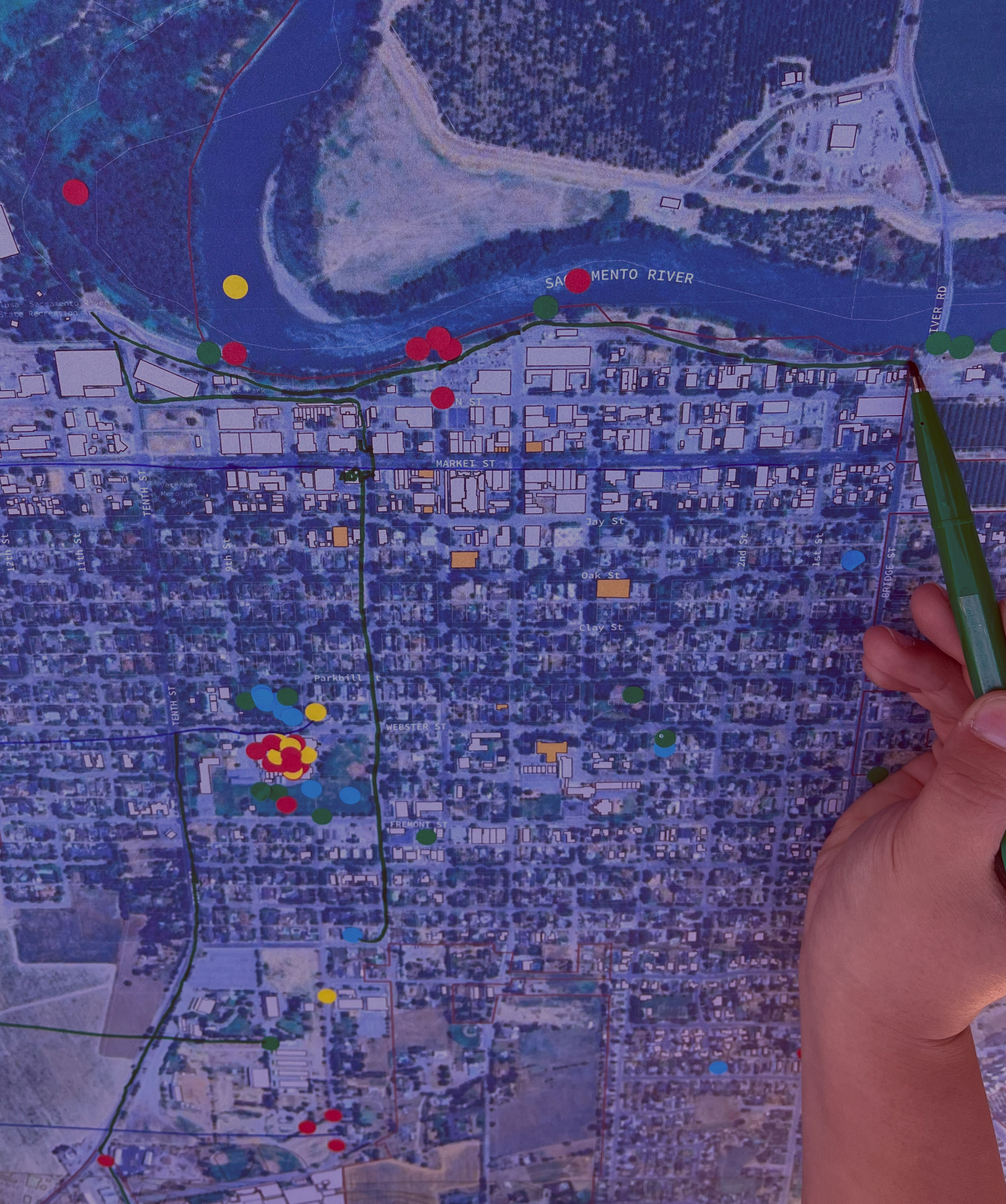
The primary goal of the intervention projects proposed by the Riverfront Access & Activation team is to strengthen or create connections between downtown Colusa and the Sacramento River. The implementation strategy relies on both better utilization of existing access points and identification of underused opportunities for additional ways to climb the levee and access the river. Individual proposals make use of both design and programming improvements to achieve the goal of greater opportunities for residents and visitors to bridge from the downtown streets to the levee trail and river overlook.



Rendering by group 3

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS MASTER PLAN





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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GROUND TEAM



D-PRAT GROUND TEAM MEMBERS (LEFT TO RIGHT):

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Andrea Cruz Mejía, Urban Designer/Planner
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IN-PERSON WORKSHOP

The in person workshop was hosted at Colusa's City Hall November 2-4, 2025 where both City staff, local subject matter experts and D-PRAT volunteers explored Colusa, met with stakeholders, and surveyed residents.

DAY ONE

On the first day of the workshop, the D-PRAT team participated in a guided tour of Colusa led by City grant writer and lifelong resident Sadie Ash, who provided valuable insight into the city's history, layout, and key community assets. The tour highlighted critical locations throughout the study area, allowing team members to better understand existing conditions and opportunities. Following the site visits, the teams synthesized their observations and began preparing materials for the community open house. Later that afternoon, local stakeholders gathered at City Hall for a series of working sessions, where they shared important local perspectives and participated in interactive activities, including a visual preference survey. That evening, the public open house welcomed residents to provide additional input and engage directly with the D-PRAT team through hands-on activities.

DAY TWO

On the second day of the workshop, teams debriefed key takeaways from Day One and began brainstorming potential solutions.



Ground team during the guided tour, image by Donovan Lee of Hapa Films

Team members worked collaboratively to refine preliminary design ideas and recommendations, while in-person volunteers met with their virtual counterparts to share insights from the site visits and stakeholder discussions. The day concluded with a second open house, offering another opportunity for community members to review concepts and contribute feedback.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

To engage the voices of youth from Colusa, youth activities were conducted at both Egling Middle School and at Colusa High School. These activities are integral to D-PRAT's

community outreach strategy. The youth outreach activities were designed to be fun and interactive.

Youth engagement workshops happened during the week after the in-person workshop, focusing on middle and high schooler input at the schools. Team members worked collaboratively to refine preliminary design ideas and recommendations, while in-person volunteers met with their virtual counterparts to share insights from the site visits and stakeholder discussions. The day concluded with a second open house, offering another opportunity for community members to review concepts and contribute feedback.

STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

One of the vital interactive sessions during the in-person design workshop were the stakeholder sessions, hosting nearly two dozen local stakeholders with various backgrounds. Teams had the opportunity to interact with the stakeholders, and better understand what their experience was like living in Colusa. From these stakeholder sessions, the D-PRAT team was able to identify critical issues that could be addressed.

Some of the stakeholders present included:

- » Colusa business owners
- » City planners of Colusa and staff
- » Parks and Recreation representatives
- » Civic group representatives

Each group engaged in discussions around the following questions:

- If you had to drop a pin, where would you say the heart of Colusa is?
- What would make you go to Downtown more often?
- How do you usually move to and around Downtown Colusa?
- What opportunities do you think Colusa will face in the next five years?
- What challenges has Colusa historically faced?



Introductions taking place during stakeholder session, image by Donovan Lee of Hapa Films



Stakeholder session, image by Donovan Lee of Hapa Films

STAKEHOLDER SESSIONS

There were several key themes that were discussed by both groups:

- » Increase tourism by celebrating local assets and expanding the infrastructure to support what the City already has. This includes expanding bicycle infrastructure, improving hospitality amenities for hunters, providing options for visitors/residents to rent kayaks and bikes.
 - » Provide an opportunity to educate residents and tourists about nature, agriculture, and wildlife given Colusa's strategic location as an agricultural hub between a State Park and National Wildlife Refuge.
 - » Install new lighting features along trails, sidewalks, and streets in a manner that pays homage to historic pedestrian lighting.
 - » Improve the working relationship with key implementation partners including Caltrans and the County to ensure safety and maintenance of City assets.
 - » Continue to expand Colusa's presence as an arts and cultural hub by leveraging the Levitt partnership and Colusa County Arts Council. This could include creating a space to offer arts programming to youth, families, and aging adults.
- » Expand Downtown events with a focus on better advertising and branding that could encourage businesses to be open later a couple of nights a week.
 - » Re-imagine key parcels that are underutilized such as the old Ray's Bike Shop/Grocery Store and the current Waterworks building.
 - » Continue to program Veteran's Park while exploring the feasibility to add additional programming to the site and enhance connectivity between that park and other locations
 - » Provide a non-motorized launch separately from the Boat Ramp for floating/kayaking entry to the Sacramento River. This could be done in a way that enhances the sense of arrival and placemaking at the existing Boat Ramp.
 - » Pursue National Historic Designation for one or more districts in Downtown.
 - » Explore the options of a Downtown Merchants Association, Business Improvement District, and Main Street Designation to see what could best support stakeholders in advancing Downtown economic goals.



Stakeholder session, image by Donovan Lee



Stakeholder session, image by Donovan Lee

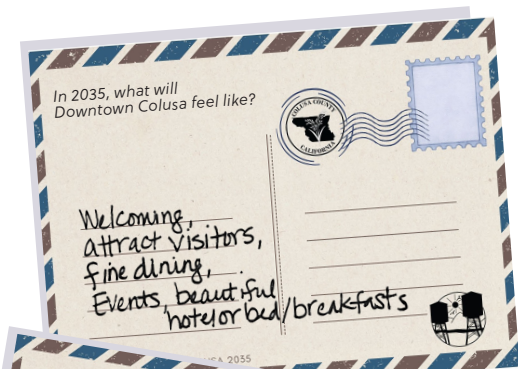
OPEN HOUSE: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The Open House was hosted at Colusa's City Hall on the evening of November 2nd, 2025 where volunteers met and surveyed stakeholders and residents. The event was public and open to all Colusa residents. The Open House consisted of a series of hands-on activities that residents engaged with. These activities varied, asking about what residents love about Colusa, visual preference surveys, and where they want to see more activation in the downtown area. The following pages synthesize the activities and their results in detail.

POSTCARDS TO COLUSA

People were given postcards to write what they loved about the City. The postcards focused on creating activated and welcoming public spaces. These were the questions and results on the postcards:

- What does a welcoming and vibrant Main Street feel like to you?
- What is one thing you love about Colusa that you would like the City to celebrate?
- In 2035, what will Downtown Colusa feel like?



OPEN HOUSE: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

Several images were provided for eight categories to understand what types of interventions, precedents, and aesthetics the public gravitated towards. An analysis and votes for the most popular options for each of the eight categories is provided below.

● = AMOUNT OF VOTES FROM COMMUNITY

GREEN	GATHER	PLAY	ART	WALK	SHOP	LIVE	BIKE
 	  	 	 	  	  	 	  
<p>Participants preferred natural spaces without paved pathways that include shade trees.</p>	<p>Participants preferred linear waterfront activity.</p>	<p>Participants loved the idea of a moveable checkers set as a multi-generational play feature.</p>	<p>The only art that participants responded well to was mural and paint-based art similar to what is found at the Colusa Library today.</p>	<p>Participants voted for streetscapes that emphasized variation in facade type with a variety of balconies and awnings. They also preferred pedestrian streets with paving differentiation from the roadway.</p>	<p>Participants voted for the images with well-preserved historic buildings, plantings in the right of way, and patio seating options. Participants did not like images with large crowds of people.</p>	<p>Participants gravitated towards row-style housing similar to the existing building stock in the Historic Chinatown area of Colusa. Participants also liked pedestrian scaled lighting in the right-of-way outside of the housing options.</p>	<p>Participants gravitated towards multi-use paths that separate users and also provide shade/greenery.</p>

OPEN HOUSE: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

LIKERT SCALE

A poster about choices that shape change was provided with four questions providing opportunities for residents to choose between to extremes how we should be thinking of change in Downtown. When asked about preserving existing facades or encouraging new design, all participants leaned towards preserving existing facades in a manner supportive to new development. All participants also agreed that streets should be re-designed to support the pedestrian experience. Participants were unsure about how to balance tourism with local businesses, and this will be an area to strike a delicate balance with future investment. There was also no consensus about the desire for incremental growth or transformative change which will be a necessary conversation to carry into implementation.



Likert scale activity

MAP ACTIVITY

Large maps were presented to people and then they were provided stickers depicting different activities/places, such as walking, parks, biking, housing, etc. People would place the stickers where they wanted more of that activity to take place.



Results of the map activity

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

To best understand what residents desire, community outreach is a cornerstone to learning from the residents perspective what their opinions and hopes are for their community. The outreach helps inform decision-makers on activities and plans that may affect the residents and the community. Unfortunately, there may be members of the community that are overlooked, such as youth. Outreach activities are important to reach youth in order for their voices to be heard. Including the youth helps insure that they help in the planning rather than leaving to "others". This helps the planning to be more inclusive.

The D-PRAT team wishes to thank Ms. Changus, Superintendent, for helping with the coordination with the schools, Ms. Lemenager, Principal of Egling Middle School and Ms. Beauchamp. Keith's work at Colusa High School was made possible with the assistance of Mr. Johnstone, Principal and Ms. Hickel.

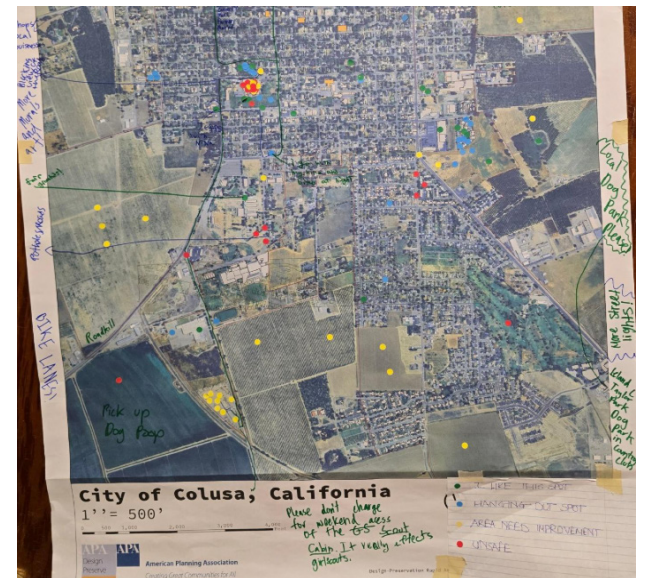
The youth engagement activities were conducted from Monday November 3, 2025 through Friday, November 7, 2025.



Students working on recommended goals



Students working on their PhotoVoice projects



Aerial maps of the city with the students mapping

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

EGLING MIDDLE SCHOOL

The activities conducted at Egling Middle School included a mapping exercise in which students were asked to use colored dots to place on an aerial photograph of the City of Colusa. They placed a green dot for areas that they liked, blue dot for areas where they hung out, yellow dot for areas that they felt needed improvement, and red dot for areas that the students felt unsafe.

The students were also asked to write down on a poster paper, **What is Missing in Colusa?**, as well as, **If Colusa were a Person, Who would that Person Be?**

The responses for “What is Missing in Colusa?” were varied. The responses have been tallied and are found in the Appendix to this Idea Book. But as can be quickly noted, they range from the student’s desire for large venues such as malls, fast food restaurants, and more entertainment choices.

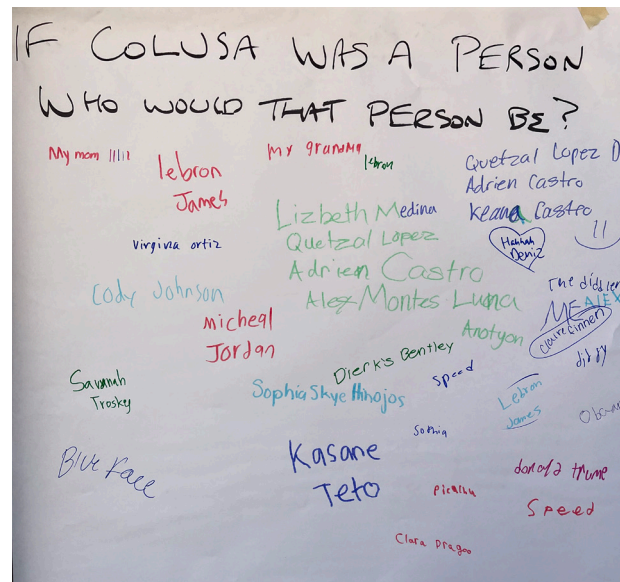
The question “If Colusa was a Person” may seem like an odd question, but it reveals indirectly how the students perceive their community. If negative responses were recorded, students may feel negatively about their community. Conversely, positive responses generally correlate to positive feelings about Colusa. We noted several students were writing names of their friends and groups. When asked what this meant, several responded in the vein of “We are Colusa. We are friends and we like Colusa”.



Students at George T Egling Middle School



Student responses to “What is missing in Colusa?”



Student responses to “If Colusa was a Person, who would that Person be?”

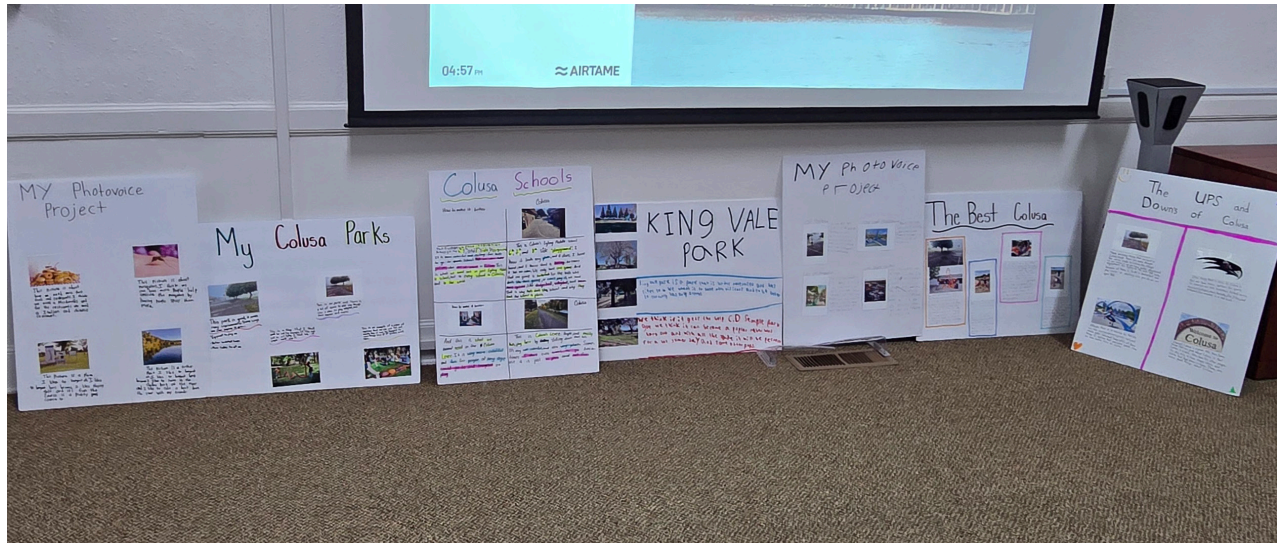


Students at George T Egling Middle School

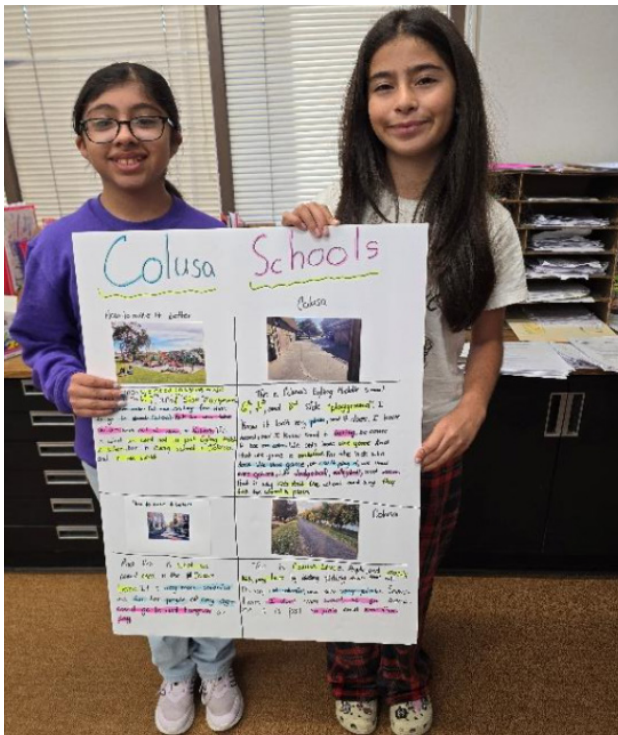
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The students in Ms. Beauchamp's Leadership Class took part in a week long PhotoVoice Project in which the students used photographs and written narratives to express their personal views of the community in which they live. PhotoVoice is a participatory activity from the participants viewpoint.

Their work culminated in several students making presentations to the Colusa School Board of Trustees on December 15, 2025.



Some of the completed PhotoVoice projects



One group's completed PhotoVoice project



Students in Ms. Beauchamp's Leadership Class

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

COLUSA HIGH SCHOOL

One of the vital interactive sessions during the in-person design workshop were the stakeholder sessions, hosting nearly two dozen local stakeholders with various backgrounds. Teams had the opportunity to interact with the stakeholders, and better understand what their experience was like living in Colusa. From these stakeholder sessions, the D-PRAT team was able to identify critical issues that could be addressed. The students identified six goals that they recommend that the City undertake.

A Sustainable Colusa is:

- Clean
- Safe
- Healthy
- Entertaining/Involved
- Agriculturally Oriented
- Modernized/Innovative

Conclusion

The students were all very enthusiastic and engaged in the activities. They are optimistic about the future of the City and the schools that they attend. Several expressed that this was the first time that they were asked their opinions and thoughts about their community. It is the hope that the youth's responses and ideas are reflected on and incorporated by the City as it develops its plans for its residents.



High School students working on implementation



Ms. Hickel's High School students



03

TEAM WORK

GROUP 1:

*Preservation &
Adaptive Reuse*

OVERALL GOALS

1

Build a Stronger, More Resilient Downtown Economy

Strengthen Downtown Colusa's economic foundation by encouraging reinvestment in historic buildings and expanding opportunities for local entrepreneurship. This work should be informed by a clear understanding of downtown's current business and building inventory, shaped by community input, and carried forward through close collaboration between business owners, property owners, the City, and economic development partners.

2

Bring Empty Buildings and Spaces Back to Life

Reduce vacancy and under-use by turning dormant storefronts, upper floors, and public spaces into active, productive parts of the downtown. This includes targeted tools such as a facade improvement program, a public art mural walk, pop up designs that activate vacant spaces, and short-term and long-term activations that generate foot traffic, visibility, and new investment.

3

Express What Makes Colusa Distinct

Ensure that downtown's programming and public spaces reflect what is unique about Colusa — its history, river and agricultural roots, and access to natural attractions such as the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge and Sutter Buttes. Downtown should not feel interchangeable with other small cities, but should clearly communicate Colusa's story through public art, wayfinding, and unique experiences.

4

Create Local Stewardship for Long-Term Revitalization

Establish a partnership among property owners, business owners, residents, community organizations, and City staff to guide downtown's ongoing improvement. This shared structure will help maintain momentum, coordinate projects and investments, and provide a practical foundation for future downtown management efforts, including the potential creation of a formal Main Street-style organization.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

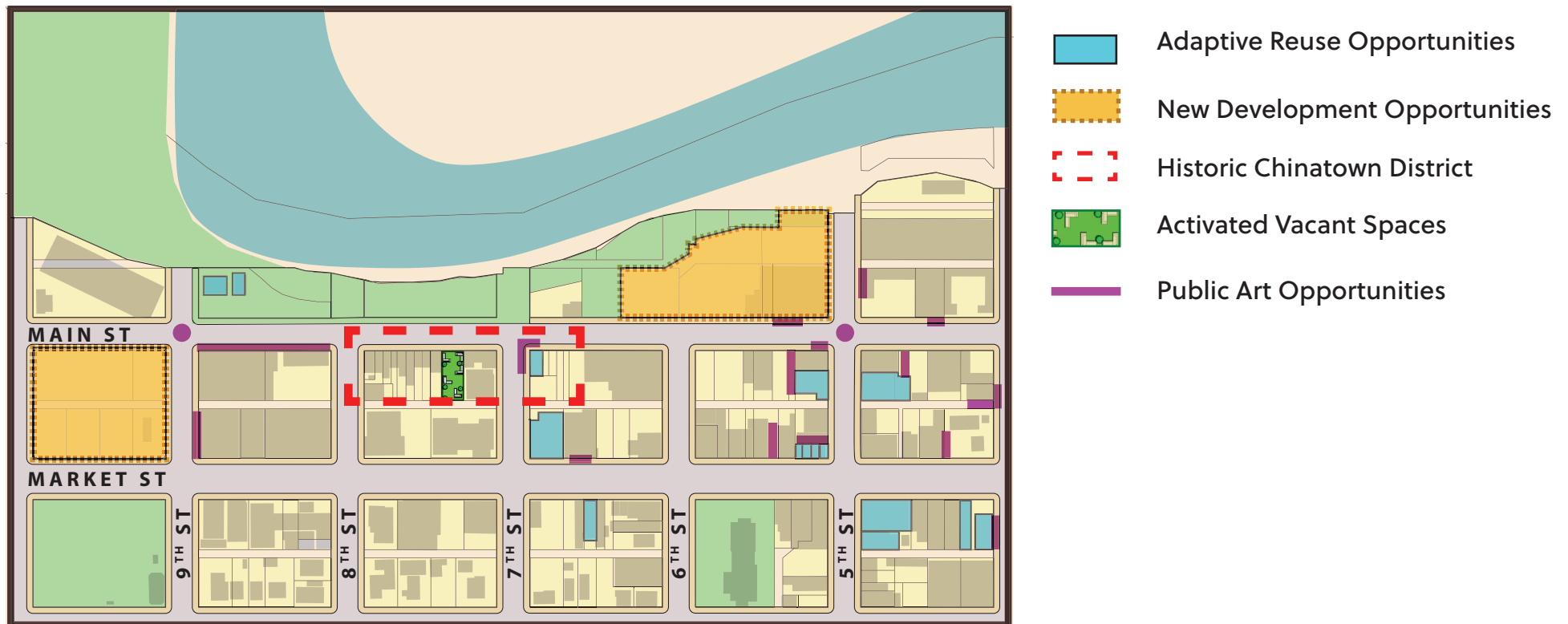
- **Use the Main Street Four Point Approach as an organizing framework.** The Main Street approach—centered on Organization, Design, Economic Vitality, and Promotion—provides a clear, time-tested structure for coordinating downtown revitalization efforts across partners and disciplines. In Colusa, this framework can help ensure that physical improvements, economic development, programming, and local leadership advance together, reinforcing one another.
- **Invest in the Power of Place.** Colusa's strength lies in its authentic sense of place—rooted in the Sacramento River, its agricultural heritage, and a compact historic downtown that still reflects daily life. Strategic investments that highlight these assets—through public spaces, local art, and walkable connections—can reinforce community pride while creating a distinct, memorable experience for residents and visitors alike.
- **Preservation can be an Economic Development tool.** Colusa's historic downtown buildings are assets that provide affordable space, architectural character, and authenticity that new development often struggles to replicate. Reinvesting in existing structures through adaptive reuse and incremental rehabilitation can support local businesses, attract visitors, and anchor long-term economic vitality while preserving the community's identity.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF DOWNTOWN

The efforts of this chapter focus on reactivating downtown Colusa while preserving the historic, cultural, and environmental qualities that define the community's unique character and its surrounding context. The plan identifies several downtown buildings with strong potential for adaptive reuse, along with opportunities for new development on vacant or underutilized sites that can strengthen the overall fabric of the downtown. It envisions a public art walk that documents existing murals while offering guidance for future public art installations, and it outlines incremental steps to activate vacant spaces—including the lot behind the library and the alley connecting Market Street and Main Street—as near-term catalysts for revitalization.

In addition, the plan identifies historic resources within the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, outlining a path toward potential historic districts, and lays out a strategy for pursuing affiliate Main Street program status to better coordinate organization, design, economic vitality, and promotion efforts over time.



PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

1

Activate Downtown through the Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings

Colusa's historic downtown contains multiple vacant buildings well suited for adaptive reuse, and preliminary analysis—grounded in community input, site visits, and funding realities—highlights feasible opportunities to reintroduce active uses that support Main Street, strengthen connections to Market Street and the Sacramento River, and meet identified community needs.



Figure 1.1: Rendering of potential adaptive

2

Establish A Robust Public Art Program

Building on its existing murals, cultural institutions, and community partners such as the Colusa County Arts Council, Colusa can develop a coordinated public arts program that enhances the pedestrian experience, reinforces downtown identity, supports local businesses, and celebrates the cultural, agricultural, and environmental narratives that make the city distinctive.



Figure 1.2: Rendering of festival art alley

3

Tactical Activation of Vacant Spaces

Temporary, low-cost pop-up interventions—such as flexible lawn areas, simple seating, and colorful painted elements—can quickly transform underused downtown spaces into welcoming places for everyday activity, testing ideas that build community connection and inform future permanent investments.



Figure 1.3: Example of tactical pop-up park

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

4

Steward New Development with Design Guidelines

Thoughtful design guidelines can help ensure that new development and infill projects reinforce downtown Colusa's historic character, walkable scale, and relationship to the river, while still allowing flexibility for contemporary uses, market realities, and long-term economic growth.

5

Preservation-Led Revitalization through Historic Districts and Main Street

By establishing a tiered system of historic districts—ranging from National Register-eligible areas with local oversight to broader symbolic districts—and aligning them with a Main Street-based downtown management framework, Colusa can protect its historic assets while using preservation as a catalyst for coordinated economic development, design quality, and long-term downtown stewardship.



Figure 1.4: Example of design guidelines



Figure 1.5: William Semple Green House

ADAPTIVE REUSE OPPORTUNITIES

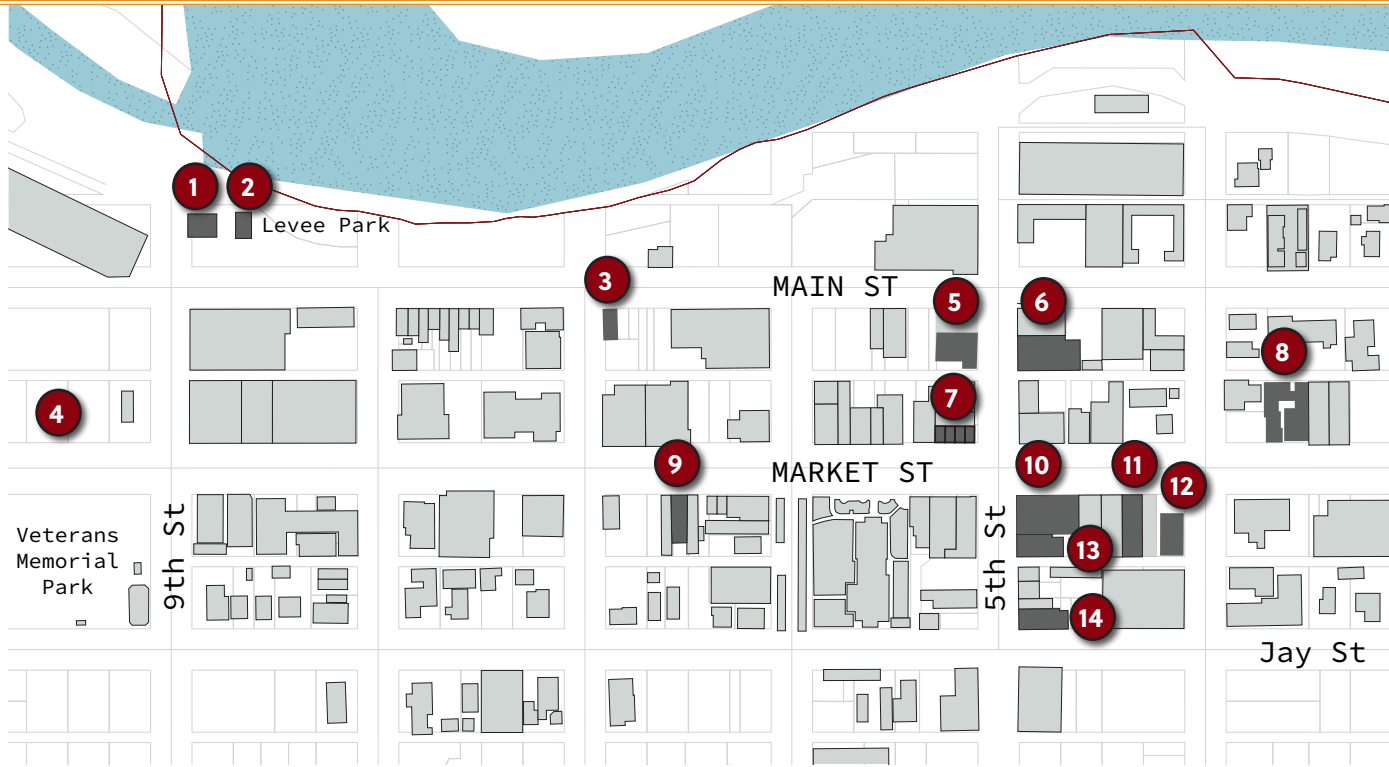


Figure 1.6: Map of Vacant Properties



Figure 1.7: Historic Vacant Properties

Colusa’s historic downtown has excellent potential for adaptive reuse. The D-PRAT team conducted a preliminary assessment to determine the type of functions that would be beneficial to the community, with consideration to the expected availability of future funding resources and the community needs that were highlighted during the on-site workshop. This assessment identified the vacant buildings that could be available for adaptive reuse, but did not conduct building condition assessments. This will need to be executed once funding resources become available.

The onsite team visited the buildings to get an understanding of building proximity and how the downtown area is laid out in relation to Main Street, Market Street and the Sacramento River. The team consulted with the community liaison, Sadie Ash, to identify a list of potential adaptive reuse opportunities. She completed a survey ranking the feasibility of each opportunity.

The number of stars next to each design intervention reflect their ranking:

- Not Viable/Advantageous
- ★ Somewhat Viable/Advantageous
- ★★ Neutral
- ★★★ Viable/Advantageous
- ★★★★ Highly Viable/Advantageous

1 The numbered, red icons following each of the design interventions reflect that the corresponding vacant buildings in the above figure could be appropriate locations.

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

1

Artist-in-Residency Hub ★★★★★

3

The Artist-in-Residency Hub will reuse a well-known building that used to be a community hub and will feature a ground floor gallery and studio space, serving as a public venue for exhibitions, workshops, and maker activities. This space will host rotating shows, community art classes, and collaborative projects, ensuring accessibility for residents and visitors. The upper floor will house three affordable housing units reserved for artists participating in the residency program, reducing barriers for creative professionals and fostering long-term engagement. This hub will catalyze cultural tourism, economic development, and community pride. By blending creative workspaces with affordable housing and leveraging proven residency models, Colusa can become a beacon for arts innovation in rural California.



Figure 1.8: Proposed Artist-in-Residency Hub

Community Event Center ★★★★★

1

2

10

A community event center would provide space that members of the community could rent for special events, which would generate revenue. It could be combined with other programming, such as a museum or cultural center, or a Third Space.

Museum/Cultural Center ★★★★★

1

A rural museum can drive tourism and safeguard the collective memory of a town. David City, NE (pop. 3,026), may seem an unlikely place for an important museum. But 16 years after local residents founded the Bone Creek Museum of Agrarian Art in 2007 in a defunct plumbing shop, it boasts 1,700 visits on average each year. A museum can also include an event space, a cafe serving local foods and specialty coffees, or a pub or bar offering locally brewed beer or curated cocktails. These additional uses can generate revenue and attract more patrons.



Figure 1.9: Bone Creek Museum, David City, NE

Visitor/Tourist Lodging ★★★

4

11

Stakeholders mentioned their desire for more lodging options. Vacant buildings could offer space for bed and breakfasts or small boutique hotels. The vacant parcel across from Veteran's Park could be a prime location for a new hotel.

Recreation Supply/Rentals ★★★★★

★★★★★

2

A recreation supply and rental business could support tourism by offering rentals of kayaks, canoes, rafts, and bicycles, and potentially fishing rods and gear for hunters and birders. It could offer lessons and guided tours as well. The Marietta Adventure Company, in Marietta, OH (pop. 13,282), expanded from three to 15 employees in seven years, growing alongside Marietta's revitalized downtown and activated riverfront.



Figure 1.10: Marietta Adventure Company

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

Small Businesses ★★★

5 6 7 9 10 11 13 14

Colusa has a variety of sizes and types of vacant buildings that can accommodate a range of businesses. Entrepreneurs could reduce their risk by doing market research, providing multiple products or services, or co-locating with complimentary businesses.

Small Business Hub ★★★★★

7 10 11

A small business hub would support entrepreneurs without brick and mortar locations. It would offer co-working amenities such as high-speed internet, meeting rooms, cubicles, and private offices via membership. It would provide resources, networking, and training. It could also provide a shared kitchen for food businesses, or shared warehouse space for small contractors.



Figure 1.11: The Hub, Fayetteville, NC

Brunch Restaurant ★★★★★

8 12

Stakeholders expressed interest in more restaurant options, especially those serving breakfast or brunch.

Food Hall ★★

8 10

Colusa should continue to host food trucks during events, which provides variety and the opportunity to gauge interest in various cuisines. A brick-and-mortar food court would offer entrepreneurs a lower barrier to entry than a standalone restaurant, lower overhead costs, and a base of foot traffic. According to Aaron Allen & Associates, food hall spaces can generate 10 times the sales volume of a traditional restaurant. Food halls can offer entertainment options such as games and events. Larger food halls may include specialty markets as well.



Figure 1.12: Fond du Lac (WI) Food Hall

Fish Market ★

6 12

A year-round or seasonal fish market could provide a connection to the Sacramento River and draw tourists. Successful fish markets often embrace social media and introduce innovations, like fish throwing at the famous Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle, WA.

Grocery Store ★★★

6 8 9 11

Colusa's downtown has a hardware store and a pharmacy, but no grocery store, so a small store could be a useful addition. The Cedar Street Market in Tigerton, WI (pop. 728) sought to fill a need for value products, including generic and private label brands, overstock products, and quality meats, produce, and dairy. Colusa's market could also offer local agricultural produce, such as walnuts, almonds, and vegetables.



Figure 1.13: Cedar Street Market, Tigerton, WI

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

Entertainment Space ★★★★★

5 6 10 11 13

The Colusa community is clamoring for family-friendly entertainment activities. Small interventions could include adding games such as cornhole, skeeball, darts, billiards, or arcade games to existing Third Places or the suggested Food Hall. A standalone entertainment venue could offer axe-throwing, indoor mini-golf, or an escape room. A good example of a large entertainment venue is McDermont Field House in Lindsay, CA, which was converted from a fruit packinghouse to an exciting venue with a flow rider surf tank, zip line, tree house, laser tag, indoor soccer and volleyball, interactive arcade, dance studio, rock climbing wall, fitness center, skate park, and light space dance floor.

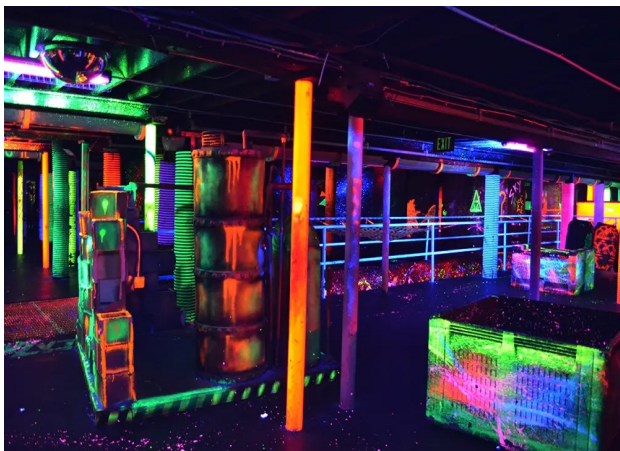


Figure 1.14: Laser tag, McDermont Field House

Additional Third Spaces ★★★★★

6 7 9 10 12 13 14

Third Spaces, places other than home or work where people gather for connection and relaxation, are important community anchors. Colusa could benefit from more such spaces, like coffee shops, bakeries, bistros, bookstores, and bars.

Theater

5

Stakeholders miss the old movie theater, which is now a church. An outdoor pop-up theater could screen movies, perhaps as a semi-annual event. Potential locations are the buildings on Main St between 5th and 6th streets, or the proposed plaza on 5th Street. An informal screening space could be co-located with a cafe, event space, or entertainment venue. A small art house theater could be built in the longer term if there is interest.



Figure 1.15: Village Green Pop-Up Cinema

Housing ★★★★★

10 11

A number of Colusa's historic downtown buildings have vacant or underutilized second stories that could be developed into apartments. Creating additional housing downtown will enliven the streetscape and increase revenue at local restaurants and businesses. Some units could be income based to ensure affordable housing is available for local workers. Additional housing stock will help meet Colusa's projected demand, increase the town's property tax revenue, and create local jobs.



Figure 1.16: Housing above storefront

ESTABLISH A ROBUST PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Public art can play a central role in strengthening Colusa's identity and attracting residents and visitors to its historic downtown. By expanding and strategically curating its public art assets, Colusa can enhance the pedestrian experience, support local businesses, and celebrate the cultural and environmental narratives that define the city. The Colusa County Arts Council is an active organization that can help steward this effort. Located in the historic Odd Fellows building at Market and 5th Streets, the Council anchors the heart of downtown with a vibrant gallery space to have community programming.

Colusa already has a modest but meaningful foundation of public art. In the downtown area, there are currently seven outdoor murals, which provide visual interest and highlight the town's rich history and natural beauty. The oldest mural, a faded natural landscape, presents an immediate opportunity for restoration and reinvestment. Others feature flowers blooming on a windowsill, Colusa's agricultural produce, and stylized multicolored hands and leaves. The public library boasts pops of bright, pastel colors and an interactive fish sculpture. Other murals include a domestic scene of a woman watering plants as a bird perches on a laundry line and a restoration of old marketing images that highlight the commercial history of Colusa's downtown.



Figure 1.17: The images above depict existing murals in Downtown Colusa. Refer to Figure 1.18 for the locations of these murals.

PUBLIC ART : OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

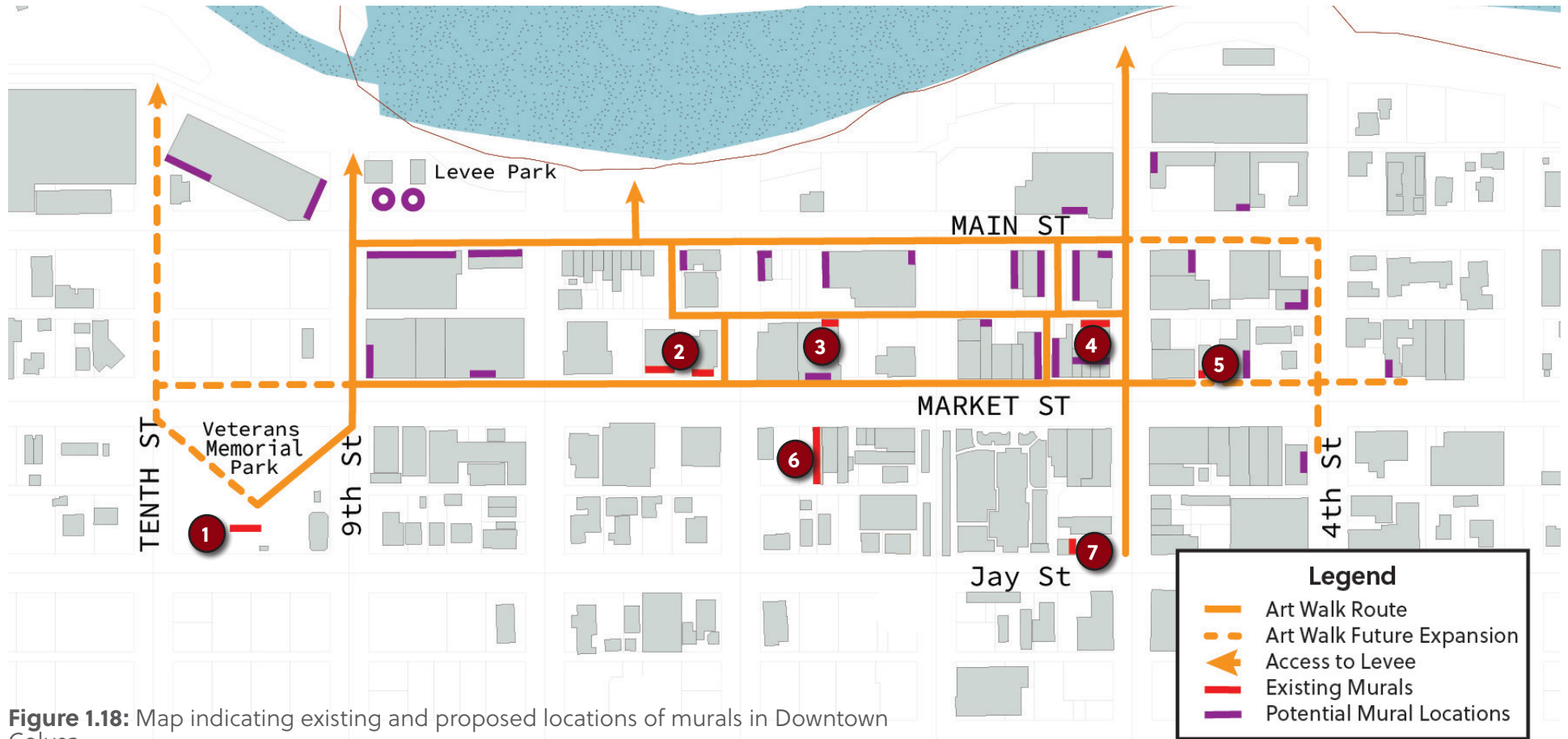


Figure 1.18: Map indicating existing and proposed locations of murals in Downtown Colusa.

Future public art should more intentionally reflect Colusa’s layered cultural and environmental history. Rural communities nationwide demonstrate that public art can be a powerful revitalization tool. Example; Clay Center, Kansas, implemented a coordinated mural program with more than 15 installations, drawing visitors into its downtown, increasing foot and bicycle traffic, and supporting local businesses. Colusa can build on its existing assets and partnerships to pursue a similar, scalable strategy tailored to its history, landscape, and community.

Figure 1.19: The image on the right shows a mural from Clay Center’s mural program, sourced from Kansas State University.



PUBLIC ART : PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

The nearby Colusa National Wildlife Refuge, located along the Pacific Flyway, attracts birdwatchers and hunters who come to experience seasonal migrations of nearly 300 species of birds, including ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds, and raptors. The Sacramento River draws Fishermen to Colusa to seeking a catch of sturgeon, steelhead, salmon, shad, and striped, black, and spotted bass.

Public art can also reflect Colusa's diverse cultural heritage, including Native American history, early settlement patterns, the historic Chinatown, and the city's growing Latino community. As agriculture remains a central economic driver, artwork can celebrate key regional crops such as rice, almonds, tomatoes, and walnuts.



Figure 1.20: Image indicates existing empty wall on Riverside Inn on 5th Street.



Figure 1.21: Image indicates proposed mural depicting species from Sacramento River on Riverside Inn on 5th Street

PUBLIC ART: PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

The proposed Festival Art Alley between Main Street and Market Street would function as a vibrant cultural corridor that supports both local artists and downtown economic activity. During art festivals and special events, the alley can provide dedicated space for artists to display and sell their work, creating direct economic opportunities while activating the public realm. Permanent and rotating murals painted along alley walls would establish a recognizable arts destination, while overhead installations and temporary art elements would enhance the pedestrian experience.

Over time, the collection of murals can form the basis of a curated mural art tour, encouraging visitors to explore downtown on foot and increasing dwell time at nearby shops and restaurants. By combining artist-led sales, public art creation, and cultural tourism, the Festival Art Alley would serve as a flexible event space and a lasting attraction that strengthens Colusa's downtown identity.



Figure 1.22: Image indicates existing alleyway.



Figure 1.23: Image indicates proposed Festival Art Alley.

1 STREET ART FESTIVAL

A new annual Street Art Festival will expand Colusa’s public art and attract visitors by highlighting existing murals and debuting one or more new public artworks each year. Additional art could be commissioned to commemorate existing events, such as the Levitt AMP Colusa Music Series, Farmers Markets, or Christmas Tyme Colusa. The festival should welcome various mediums, including murals, sculptures, and more. Indoor art can be displayed at the Colusa County Arts Council, the proposed Artist-in-Residence gallery, or the planned Commerce office. Businesses could sponsor art to display on their premises as well.

Colusa will produce a colorful map of public art locations and encourage visitors to engage in a self-guided tour, exploring local businesses and enjoying the town’s ecology along the way. The new art would add vitality and interest to the downtown area and encourage people passing through to stop and enjoy Colusa. Street banners and street furniture such as bike racks and benches would represent the festival and assist in wayfinding.



Figure 1.24: Example for downtown street festival from Eureka Springs, Arkansas

2 FIND THE FLOCK

Birdwatching and bird hunting are central to Colusa’s character and tourism base. The town should commission a series of life-sized bronzes of migrating birds that would overlook the city from their perches on balconies, windowsills, shop signs, and benches. The cost could be offset by sponsorships from local businesses and individuals, which would be celebrated with commemorative plaques. A scavenger hunt would encourage people to find all of the birds, rewarding the fastest participants with a small prize or gift certificate to a local business. The scavenger hunt could coincide with an existing event, such as Christmas Tyme Colusa or the Duck Race, or it could become its own standalone event catering to the families of tourists who come during the fall and winter bird migration.



Figure 1.25: Example for Find the Flock

3 ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY HUB

Colusa has a unique opportunity to position itself as a cultural destination by establishing a Makers Space and Artist-in-Residency Hub that combines creativity, community engagement, and affordable housing. This concept draws inspiration from successful models like Denver’s Art District on Santa Fe Emerging Artists Residency, Boston Center for the Arts programs, and New York City’s PAIR Program, while aligning with the mission of the Colusa County Arts Council to enrich community life through the arts.

The Arts Council already runs impactful programs like Levitt AMP Colusa Music Series, Creative Youth Development, and Public Art Projects. This hub can build on these efforts by serving as a permanent space for exhibitions and artist-led programming. Partnerships with local schools, businesses, and nonprofits will strengthen outreach and ensure inclusivity, particularly for underrepresented communities.

4 IMPROVED GATEWAY SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

The existing overhead signage on Market Street at 5th Street should be improved to facilitate legibility and attract more attention. An LED sign would allow Colusa to change its messaging seasonally to promote upcoming events. Additional signage, such as street banners and sculptures, could enhance wayfinding. The three levee staircases provide excellent opportunities to invite exploration of the Levee Park and the river beyond through the application of murals or mosaics highlighting Colusa’s natural and cultural heritage.



Figure 1.26: Example for distinct gateway signage from Downtown Vacaville

5 ART FOR ALL

As talented artists make their mark on Colusa’s built environment through commissioned artworks, residents and visitors should be encouraged to take part in the town’s artistic renaissance by creating public artworks during established events. For example, when Main Street is closed for the Christmas celebration, volunteers could collaborate on painting a colorful crosswalk. Children who attend the childcare center could adorn the facade with colorful handprints; a contest for amateurs during the Duck Race could vie for a prize drawing sidewalk chalk art around Veteran’s Park. Encouraging citizens to engage with Colusa’s public art strategy will increase their interest and feelings of connection to their town.



Figure 1.27: Example for Art for All

TEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTION

This temporary pop-up activates a small pocket park in downtown Colusa, transforming it into a welcoming space for everyday use and community connection. The design introduces flexible lawn areas for informal play and small gatherings, paired with simple seating that encourages people to stop, rest, and spend time together. Painted walkways and a mural bring color and local character to the site, making the park visible, inviting, and easy to navigate.

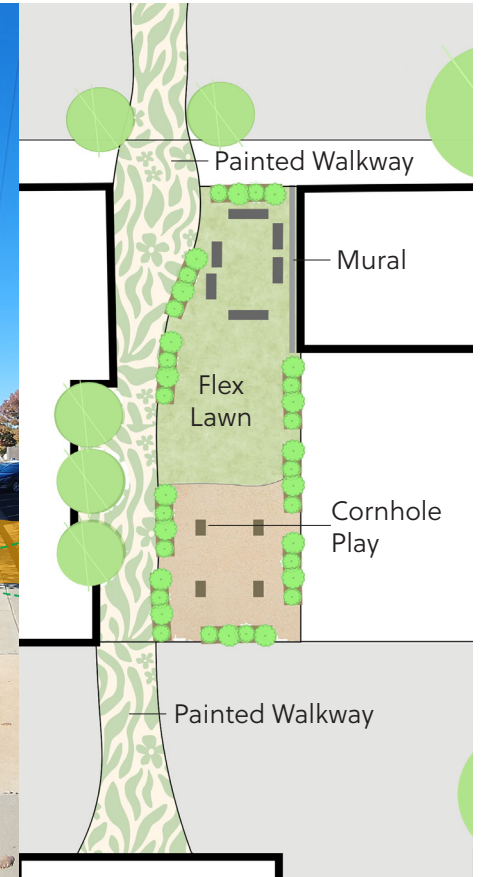


Figure 1.28: Temporary Pop-up Proposal

TEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTION

Designed for use throughout the year, this pocket park supports a range of activities that remain active across seasons in Colusa's climate. Shaded seating and covered gathering areas provide comfort during warmer months, while durable play elements such as a small climbing wall and flexible play area encourage daily use by children and families. The layout balances active and passive spaces, allowing multiple activities to happen at once without conflict.



Figure 1.29: All-year Round Proposal

TEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACE INTERVENTION

This holiday pop-up re-imagines the pocket park as a lively seasonal hub, demonstrating how temporary programming can unlock the site's full potential. Festive features such as a hot chocolate stand, live caroling, a central Christmas tree, and interactive photo moments draw residents into the space and encourage longer stays and repeat visits. By creating a warm, family-friendly destination, the pop-up fosters social connection, supports local activity, and activates the park during colder months when public spaces are typically underused. The installation also helps the City see how people use the space, what activities attract visitors, and which elements are most successful, providing clear insights to guide future improvements and programming.



Figure 1.30: Inspiration for pop-up Christmas activities

STEWARD REDEVELOPMENT THROUGH DESIGN STANDARDS 4

The purpose of physical standards and guidelines for site and building design is to respect the scale and character of historic downtown Colusa. Design regulations are not intended to replicate existing built form or achieve a specific stylistic result, but to allow imaginative design that respects the neighborhood context. It is the specific intention of this approach is to ensure that development:

- Is compatible with surrounding areas;
- Supports the unique visual character and streetscapes in Colusa;
- Utilizes architectural styles which respect the existing historic character of the city;
- Spatially defines streets, squares, and parks through careful building placement and site design;
- Encourages walking by orienting buildings to public streets, providing easy pedestrian connections, and bringing activities and visually interesting features closer to the street.

Include the following in future design standards:

GENERAL SITE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

- A. Pedestrian and Vehicular Access
- B. Building Location and Orientation
- C. Building Height
- D. Fences, Hedges, and Garden Walls
- E. Loading/Service Areas, Equipment and Utilities

GENERAL BUILDING DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

- A. Building Height
- B. Form and Massing
- C. Facade Articulation
- D. Facade Transparency
- E. Materials
- F. Architectural Details

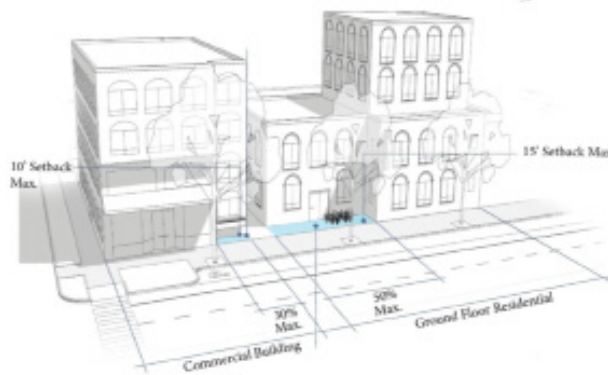


Figure 1.31: Setback standards, Ogden City, UT



Figure 1.32: Building Base, Middle and Cap, Davidson, NC

GUIDELINES FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION IN COLUSA

1. Site new buildings so they do not compromise the overall historic character of the district streetscape. Site them to be consistent with nearby historic buildings in terms of setback and orientation to the street as well as spacing between surrounding historic buildings.
2. Site new buildings so that the overall character of the building site and adjacent streetscape, including significant site features, topography, vistas, and views are maintained.
3. Reduce the negative impact of a new building on the district streetscape and adjacent buildings by employing

a compatible scale and size. It is not appropriate to construct a new primary building if it will visually overpower the surrounding historic buildings or district streetscape.

4. Design new buildings to be compatible with surrounding historic buildings in terms of height, massing, roof form, street facade, proportion, overall size and scale, exterior surface materials and trimwork.
5. Design new buildings so that the placement, configuration, materials, and overall proportion of windows and doors are compatible with surrounding historic buildings. Select exterior surface materials and architectural details that are compatible in terms of composition, module, texture, pattern, color, and detail with surrounding historic buildings.
6. Design new buildings to be compatible with but differentiated from historic buildings in the district.
7. Protect significant site features from damage during construction by minimizing related ground disturbance and the use of heavy construction equipment. Protect areas within the drip line of mature trees.



Figure 1.33: Examples of Prohibited Architectural Details

NEIGHBORHOOD RE-BIRTH W/ TOWNHOMES & RETAIL



MAIN & 9TH BEFORE



MAIN & 9TH AFTER

To illustrate redevelopment potential, several ideas were studied on vacant and underutilized sites bounded by Main St. and Market St. between 10th and 8th Streets. Depending on the market demand, owner interest and community vision, these sites near major destinations Veterans Park, the boat launch and the state park have significant development capacity to revitalize downtown Colusa. Having adopted policies in place ensures compatibility with the historic downtown.



MARKET & 10TH BEFORE



MARKET & 10TH AFTER



Connect green space and activities from Veterans Park to the riverfront.



Provide attainable housing as identified at Open House visual preference survey.



Ensure this key redevelopment site at the entrance to downtown serves as a catalyst for revitalization.



Figure 1.34: Redevelopment Plan Option 1

A NEW DESTINATION W/ HOTEL, EVENTS & FLEX SPACE



Given Colusa's significant natural, wildlife and historic assets, the city can become an even bigger regional destination and tourist draw. The example shows a hotel with event space, a visitor's center and prominent architecture at the corner near the entrance to the state park. Building maker spaces and flex warehouse nearby can also provide growth opportunities for small businesses catering to visitors to the state park, boat launch, sport hunting and wildlife viewing. Authentic experiences, comfortable accommodations and a commitment to agreed upon site development and design standards in the historic downtown will bring visitors, jobs, and investment, benefiting property owners, existing businesses and residents.



Consider incentives to attract a hotel and consider feasibility of an event space such as in Keizer, OR



Use flex space to incubate start-ups, maker spaces or modernization of existing businesses.



Encourage flex space design that offers significant benefits like cost savings, scalability and adaptability. Use design standards to reinforce existing scale and character.

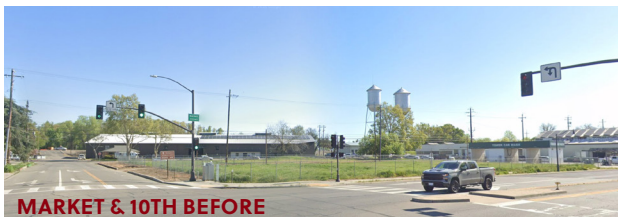
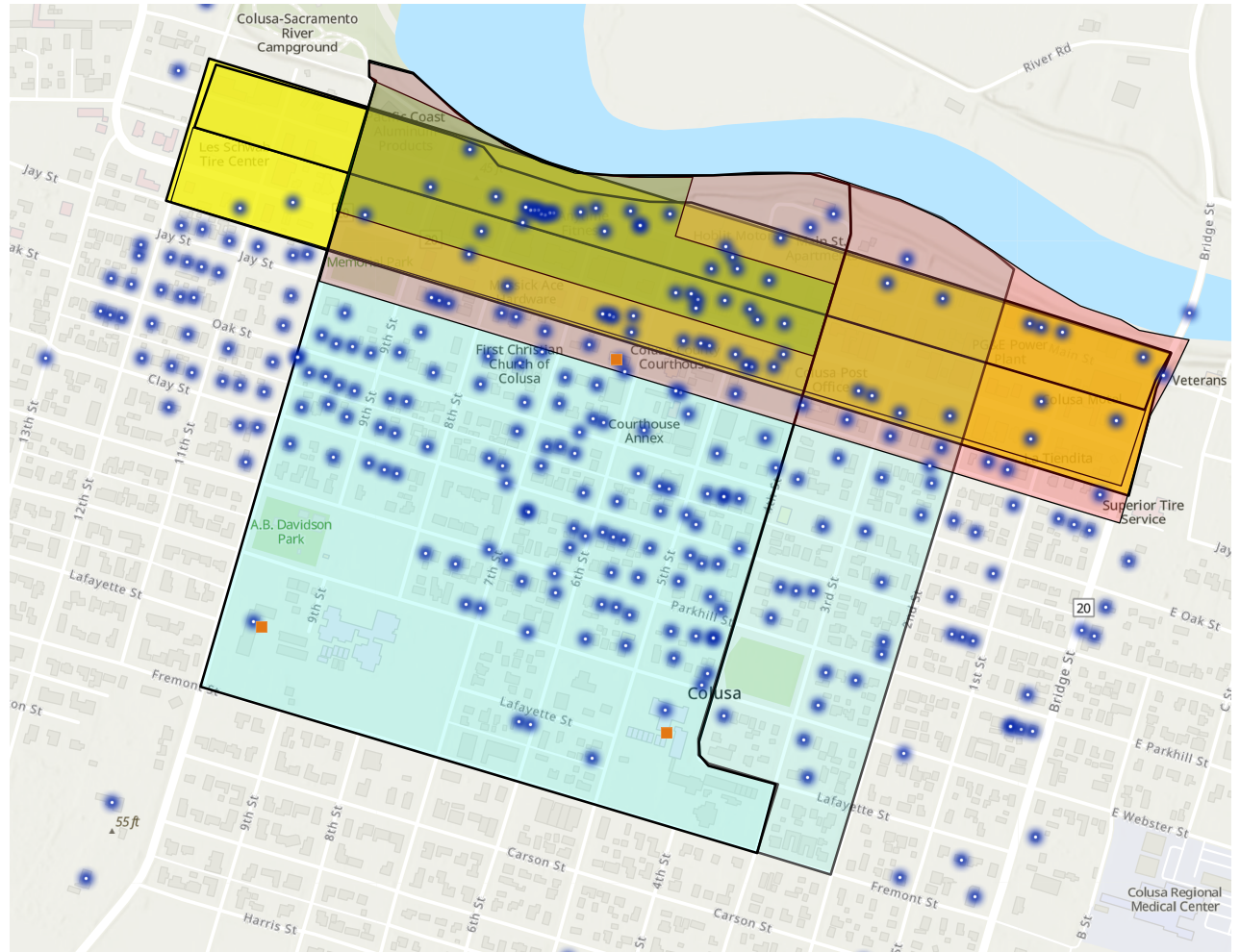


Figure 1.35: Redevelopment Plan Option 2

HISTORIC DISTRICTS OVERVIEW

The map presents a series of proposed historic districts and Main Street program areas designed to enhance and preserve Colusa's historic downtown. The proposed districts are based on three distinct planning rationales:

- **Potential Historic Districts 1 and 2** are recommended for National Register designation, which would establish corresponding local regulatory oversight to ensure long-term preservation and maintenance.
- **Potential Historic District 3** is envisioned as a broader, symbolic district that celebrates the historic identity of downtown, without imposing the regulatory requirements associated with formal designation.
- **Main Street program** areas are intended to stimulate economic development rooted in historic character. These areas include options that focus on individual commercial corridors as well as a comprehensive district encompassing the entire downtown core.



National Register of Historic Places - Points/Properties	Potential Historic (or Symbolic Historic) District 3	1:9,000
■ Building	■ Potential Main Street Program 1	0 0.07 0.15 0.3 mi
● City of Colusa Historic Resources	■ Potential Main Street Program 2	0 0.13 0.25 0.5 km
■ Potential Historic District 1	■ Potential Main Street District 3	Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community
■ Potential Historic District 2	World_Hillshade	



QR code links directly to the ArcGIS Online map, allowing users to explore historic resources and reference materials.

This tool supports both city management and public engagement with Colusa's local history.

Figure 1.36: Map showing potential historic districts

*These alternatives are not recommendations of a single preferred outcome, but rather a set of tools intended to support discussion about preservation priorities, downtown identity, and future investment in Colusa.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS 1 & 2

POTENTIAL DISTRICT 1

Potential Historic District 1 captures a large section of downtown Colusa and the riverfront. The area includes an estimated 85 historic properties that appear to retain much of their historic character, although a full CRAS would be required to confirm their contributing or noncontributing status.

This group includes the NRHP-registered Historic Colusa County Courthouse. The district extends beyond the initial D-PRAT boundaries, but the concentration of historic resources suggests a representative district that could support long-term preservation and tourism goals for Colusa.

POTENTIAL DISTRICT 2

Potential Historic District 2 aligns with the DPRAT focus area boundaries and includes 32 historic properties (as provided by the California Office of Historic Preservation’s Built Environment Resources Directory (BERD)) that appear to retain much of their original character; however, a CRAS is still needed to confirm final status. None of the 32 BERD buildings are currently listed on the National Register, although many would currently meet eligibility criteria.

The smaller district size strengthens confidence in the integrity of the resources, but it also creates a risk that other historic properties across Colusa may receive less historic acknowledgment and tourist/visitor attention. Based on preliminary research using Newspapers.com and discussions with the Colusa County Assessor’s Office, the Colusa Fire Department was built around 1965 and is a strong example of mid-century modern architecture, making it a strong candidate for inclusion in BERD, the NRHP, and this potential historic district.

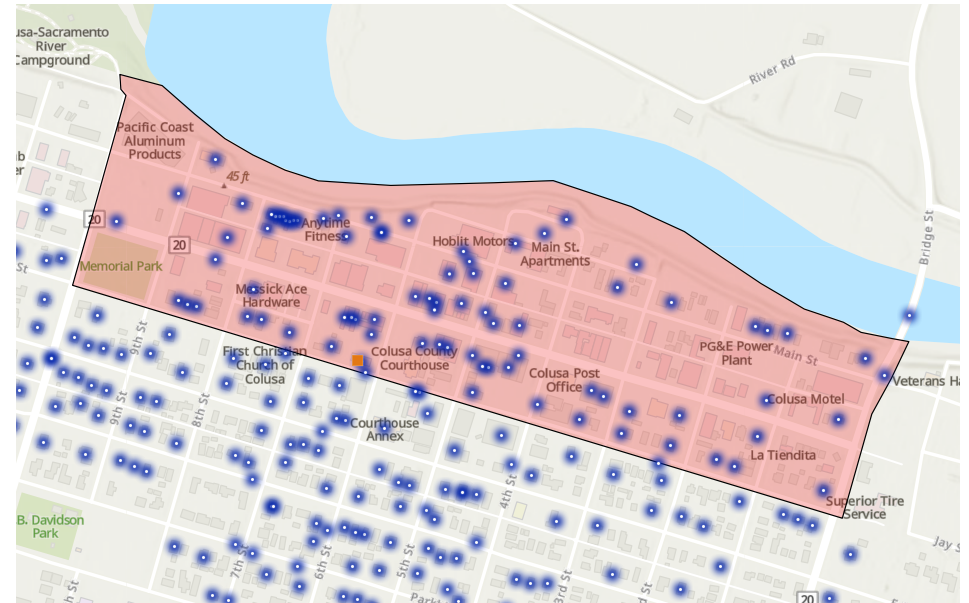


Figure 1.37: Map showing potential historic district 1

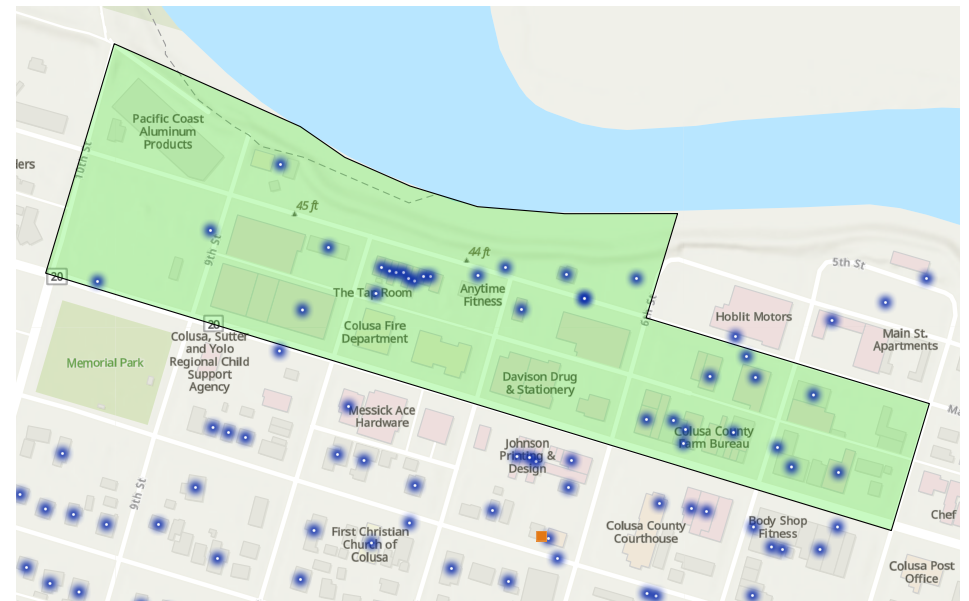


Figure 1.38: Map showing potential historic district 2

HISTORIC DISTRICTS 3 & MAIN STREET PROGRAM

POTENTIAL DISTRICT 3

Potential Historic (or Symbolic Historic) District 3 covers the largest area and includes much of downtown Colusa. It contains more than 100 historic properties (as listed in the California Office of Historic Preservation’s Built Environment Resources Directory (BERD)) with varying levels of historic integrity, and a CRAS would be essential for determining which resources qualify as contributing.

The district also includes all three NRHP-registered historic properties within the city proper (the Historic Colusa County Courthouse, the Colusa High School and Grounds, and the Colusa Grammar School). Given the size of this area and the regulatory implications of a formal district, this option could function more as a symbolic district that highlights historic character without the full oversight associated with a designated district. Potential extension added to this layer in a lighter shade of blue if a symbolic historic character wanted to be expanded.

MAIN STREET PROGRAMS

- **Potential Main Street Program 1:** Focuses on Main Street, highlighting its concentration of historic commercial buildings. While not NRHP-listed, targeted reinvestment and Main Street designation could support preservation and economic growth.
- **Potential Main Street Program 2:** Centers on Market Street’s mix of historic buildings. Main Street affiliation could encourage investment and future NRHP eligibility, connecting Colusa to statewide revitalization resources.
- **Potential Main Street Program 3:** Combines Main and Market Streets into a unified district, supporting coordinated preservation and development across the full downtown core.

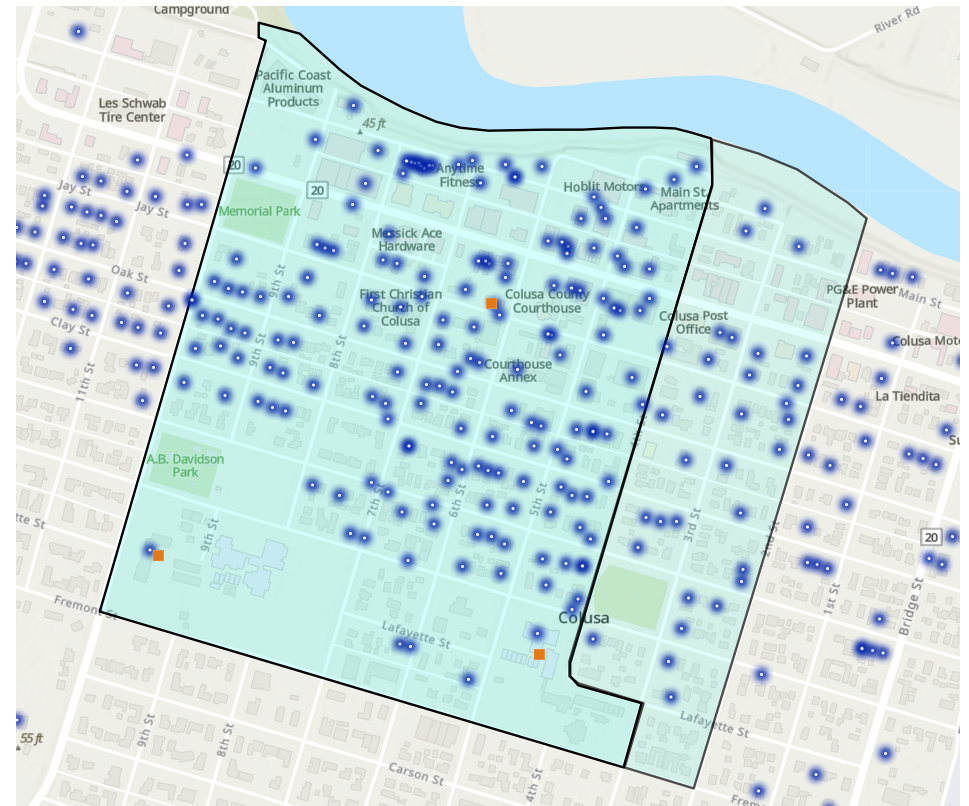


Figure 1.39: Map showing potential historic district 3

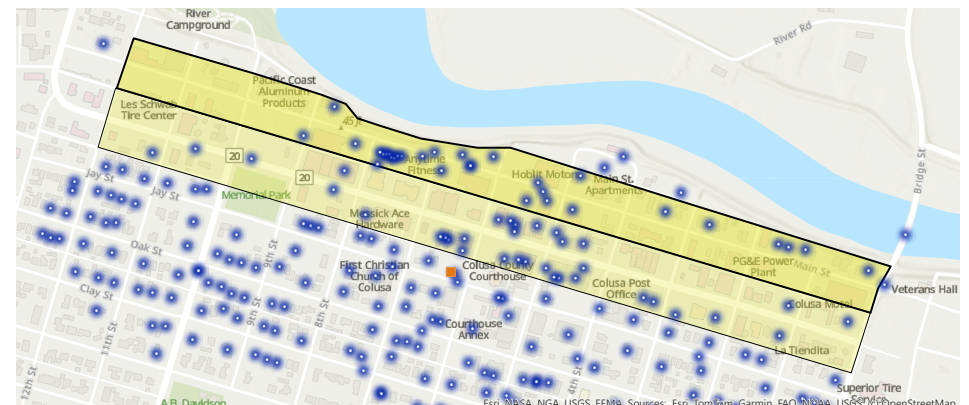


Figure 1.40: Map showing potential Main Street Program

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

Develop a priority list of potential adaptive reuse opportunities. This will need to consider community priorities as well as conducting building condition assessments.

Pursue funding from multiple sources, form partnerships with schools and businesses to implement low-cost volunteer Art for All, and hold an inaugural art contest.

Creation and Marketing of a Symbolic Historic Colusa District (downtown or broader boundaries) or Main Street Program

Join California Main Street / Main Street America

Create Colusa Confluence Main Street Association

MEDIUM-TERM (1-3 YEARS)

Seek investors and developers to fund adaptive reuse opportunities.

Launch the first Street Art Festival around the creation of the winning artwork, plan and implement the alley activation artwork, begin renovations on the Artist-in-Residency Hub and open its applications process. Procure business sponsorships to cast and install birds for Find the Flock and implement lower cost wayfinding signage and art for the levee stairs.

Conduct and complete a city-wide CRAS.

Achieve National Main Street Affiliate Status

Create Street Banner Program

Hire full time Main Street Executive Director

LONG-TERM (3+ YEARS)

Execution of design and repair/upgrade/renovate vacant buildings to retrofit with selected adaptive reuse opportunity and or functions.

Inaugurate the Artist-in-Residency program, continue to build the annual Street Art Festival, and debut the improved gateway signage.

National Register nomination of Historic District and/or Local Register creation

Petition to create a Property and Business Improvement District (PBID) or Central Business District (CBD)



04

TEAM WORK

GROUP 2:

*Streetscapes &
Public Realm*

OVERALL GOALS



Figure 2.1: Conceptual photo collage of the Market Street scenario.



1. Create a Safe and Connected Downtown

Build a low-stress, multimodal network that ensures safe, direct, and inclusive movement for pedestrians, cyclists, and all users while improving connections between neighborhoods, the riverfront, and the regional Caltrans corridor.



2. Foster a Vibrant and Inclusive Public Realm

Activate downtown streets and alleys as social, cultural, and economic hubs through flexible public spaces, local partnerships, and design strategies that celebrate Colusa's unique heritage and community identity.



3. Promote Sustainability and Long-Term Resilience

Integrate green spaces, trees, and eco-friendly designs into the downtown area to manage rainwater naturally, keep public spaces cooler and more comfortable, and build a stronger, more sustainable community.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Phased, Scalable Implementation:** Quick, low-cost actions (signage, lighting, paint activations) lay the groundwork for long-term investments in complete streets and green spaces.
- **Connected and Walkable Downtown:** A cohesive bike and pedestrian network links neighborhoods, Main Street, Market Street, and the riverfront.
- **Market Street as a Safe Mobility Corridor:** Re-envisioned as a complete street, Market Street balances traffic flow with pedestrian and cyclist safety through intersection improvements, lane reconfigurations, and introduction of bicycle facilities.
- **5th and Main Street as the Cultural Hub:** Streetscape enhancements and creative programming transform 5th and Main Street into a lively civic hub celebrating Colusa's heritage and community life.
- **Community-Driven Stewardship:** Partnerships with Main Street CA, local businesses, and residents foster shared ownership, ensuring ongoing activation and maintenance.
- **Resilient and Green Urban Core:** Native planting, permeable paving, and shade trees enhance comfort, manage stormwater, and build long-term climate resilience downtown.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

Figure 2.2: Conceptual scope diagram highlighting intervention areas and key locations with street connections.



PROJECT OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

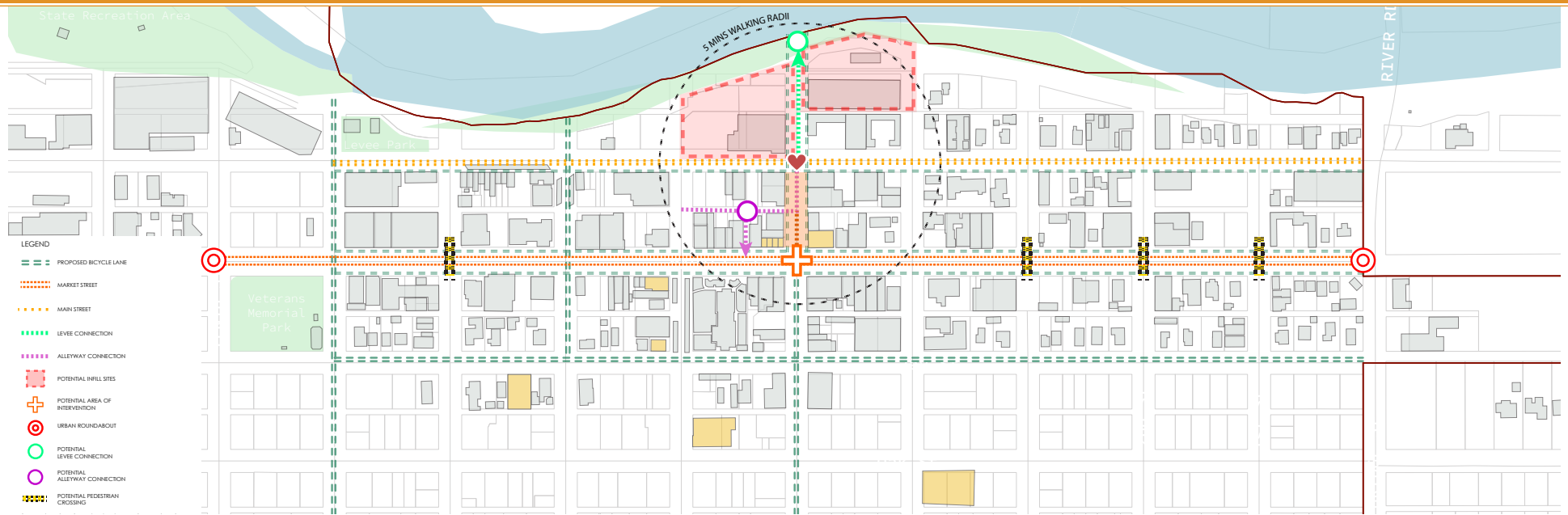


Figure 2.3: Highlighting connectivity enhancements and design strategies within the focus area.

RECONNECTING COLUSA: A FRAMEWORK FOR A VIBRANT AND CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

The intersection of 5th Street, Main Street, and Market Street are envisioned as the new connective core of downtown Colusa—linking the civic center, the Levee corridor, and key local landmarks. With an existing cluster of businesses along Market Street, the Colusa County Arts Council, riverfront access, and key opportunity sites, this core area can become an important gateway and destination for both the Colusa community and visitors.

The design looks at ways that bicycle and pedestrian improvements can increase access and provide new public space. Protected bike lanes, speed-calming measures, and wayfinding strategies create a safe network connecting Main Street and Market Street to nearby neighborhoods and the riverfront. Along Market Street, design changes and speed reductions can help to provide more space for pedestrians and bicyclists. New marked pedestrian crossings at 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 8th streets to improve safety and walkability. Urban roundabouts at 10th & Market Street and Bridge & Market Street could provide gateways into downtown and enhance traffic flow and safety. At the intersection's heart, the 5th Street Plaza introduces a flexible civic gathering space that provides space for community events, local markets, and daily social interaction. The adjacent alley network is reactivated as a creative corridor that can support micro-retail, artisan studios, outdoor dining and murals visible from Market Street, 5th Street also provides an opportunity for a ground mural that can create a bold visual gateway connecting to the Levee.

Collectively, these interventions advance a vision of a safe, connected, and economically dynamic downtown, where streets operate as civic spaces—integrating art, mobility, and public life into one cohesive urban framework.

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS



Bicycle Corridor and Connectivity

The framework establishes a network of bike corridors that connect the Main Street and Market Street to neighborhoods, the riverfront and nearby destinations like the Colusa National Wildlife Refuge. This system is both a mobility link and economic catalyst, recognizing that cyclists and pedestrians support local business activity.

- Introduces protected lanes and safe shoulders in key corridors.
- Recommends reductions in posted speeds from 35 mph to 25 mph; to improve safety and comfort and create more space for pedestrians and bicyclists



Figure 2.4: Protected bike lanes precedent



5th Street Plaza Design

A new plaza near the 5th Street intersection strengthens the connection between downtown and the Levee.

- Can integrate previous surfaces to add greenery and enhance stormwater infiltration .
- Highlights opportunities for murals and cultural markers to activate underutilized frontage and alleyway.
- Envisions potential new mixed-use infill offering levee views and supporting small business growth.



Figure 2.5: Prototyping Festival, San Francisco



Main Street Concepts

As Colusa's local social spine, Main Street will anchor civic identity while improving comfort and placemaking potential.

- Introduces new bikeways and refines narrow intersections to enhance pedestrian safety and strengthen Main Street's civic identity.
- Builds on existing assets like restaurants, the bowling alley, and the Colusa County Arts Council to seed ongoing downtown activity and strengthen Main Street as a local gathering place.



Figure 2.6: Exeter Mural, CA

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS



Alley Activation

The alley west of 5th Street becomes a creative connector between Market Street, Main Street, and Levee.

- Creates opportunities for outdoor dining, introduction of micro-retail (eg food trucks, artisan markets), and art installations.
- Enhances visibility from Market Street with murals and strategic lighting.
- Maintains open-space continuity while upgrading surfaces and safety features.
- Activates the alley with food trucks, kiosks, local markets, and evening restaurant extensions.



Figure 2.7: Puerto Plata Umbrella Street



Infill and Resilience

5th Street presents a strategic opportunity to strengthen connections between downtown and the River through thoughtful infill and public realm improvements.

- Encourages mixed-use and residential redevelopment to enhance activity and vibrancy.
- Promotes walkability through new pedestrian links and a more connected street network.
- Integrates green infrastructure to manage stormwater and build climate resilience.



Figure 2.8: Kentlands, Maryland



Asphalt Art and Cultural Marker

An asphalt mural along 5th Street links the Main Street –Market Street intersection to the Levee entrance, serving as both a visual gateway and cultural marker.

- Symbolizes Colusa’s river identity through color and pattern.
- Encourages recreation and downtown foot traffic.
- Revitalizes storefront activity and supports local commerce through placemaking and art-based engagement.



Figure 2.9: Asphalt art mural, New York

1. REGIONAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD BIKE NETWORK

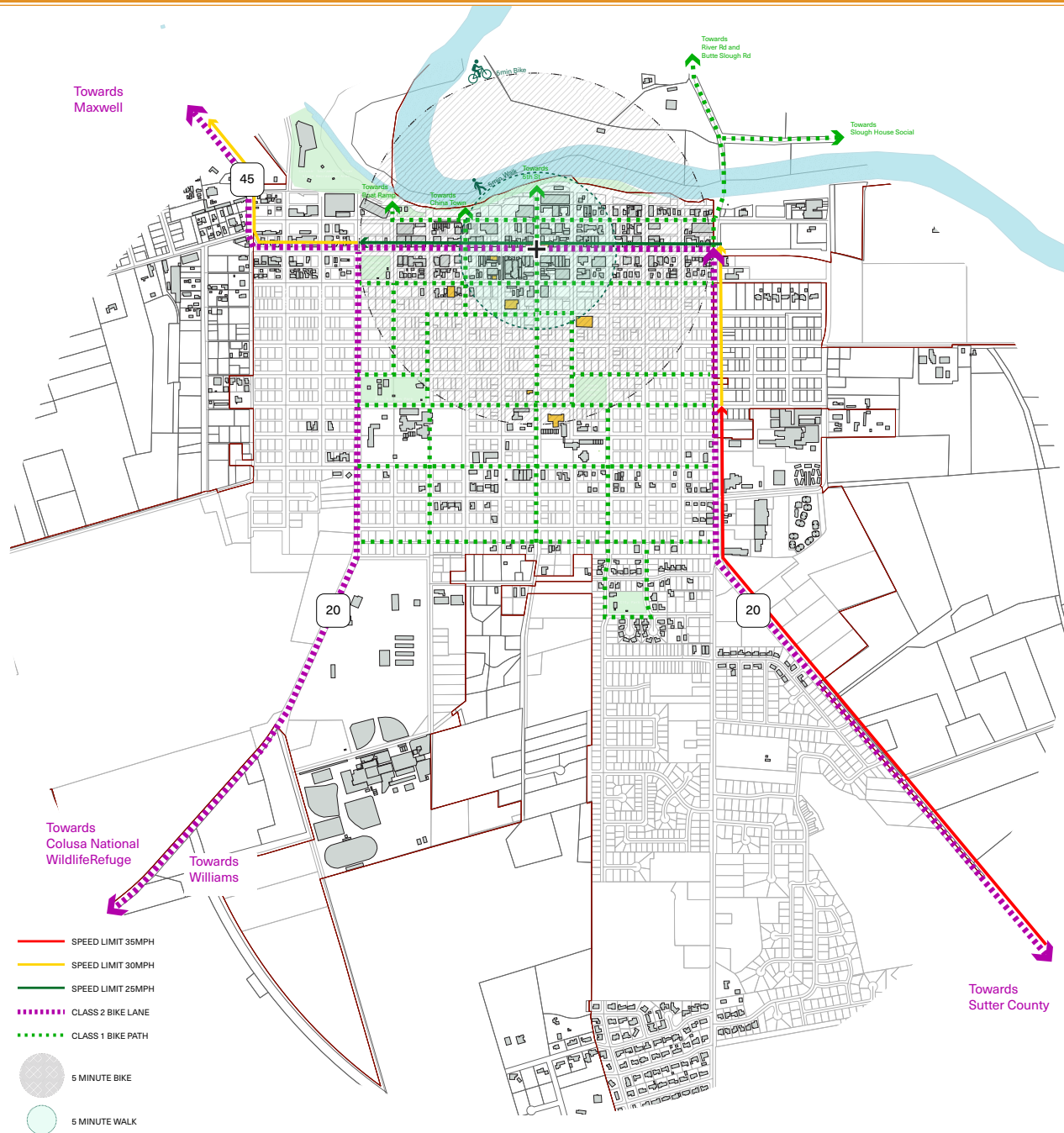


Figure 2.10: Regional Connectivity Diagram

Vision: A seamless, low-stress bicycle system integrates Colusa’s downtown with regional trails, neighborhoods, wildlife refuges, and the Levee—transforming cycling into an economic driver as cyclists spend locally while enhancing daily mobility for residents.

Regional Connectivity: Links Market Street to regional networks along State Routes 20 and 45 via protected lanes and 5th Street trailheads extending to the riverfront, coordinates safe paths to schools, commerce, and recreation for all ages, and positions Colusa as a bike-friendly gateway boosting visitor spending and downtown vitality.

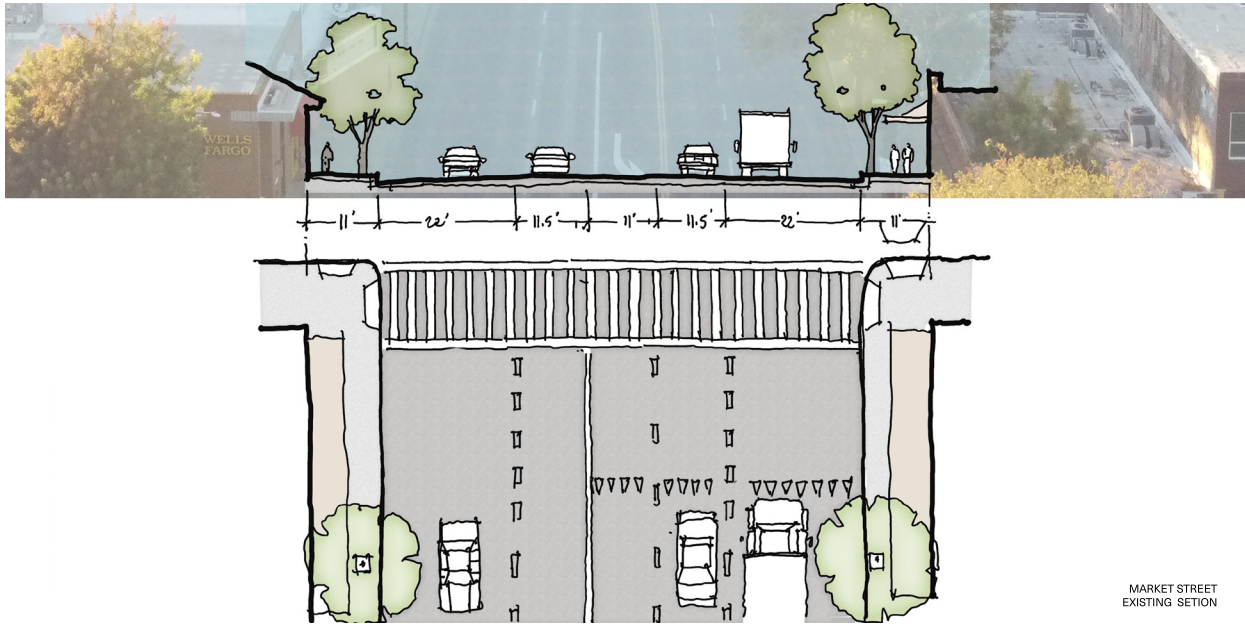
Speed Calming Strategy: Existing speeds along Market Street prioritize vehicles and limit design opportunities. If core speeds can be reduced to 25mph or below, Market street can be reclaimed as a center of pedestrian-oriented businesses and social activity. Design changes could shift travel speeds at 35mph or above to the edges of town, with “transition zones” leading into Market St, and speeds reduced to 25mph within the downtown core.

- Tactics & Outcomes: Curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, vertical elements (trees, planters, street furnishings), shortened crossings, improved sight lines, and reclaimed space for protected bike lanes on Market and 5th Streets.
- In the short term, the City can experiment with tactical/temporary installations including new crosswalks, asphalt murals, and parklets/curb extensions.

1. DESIGN INTERVENTION AREAS OVERVIEW

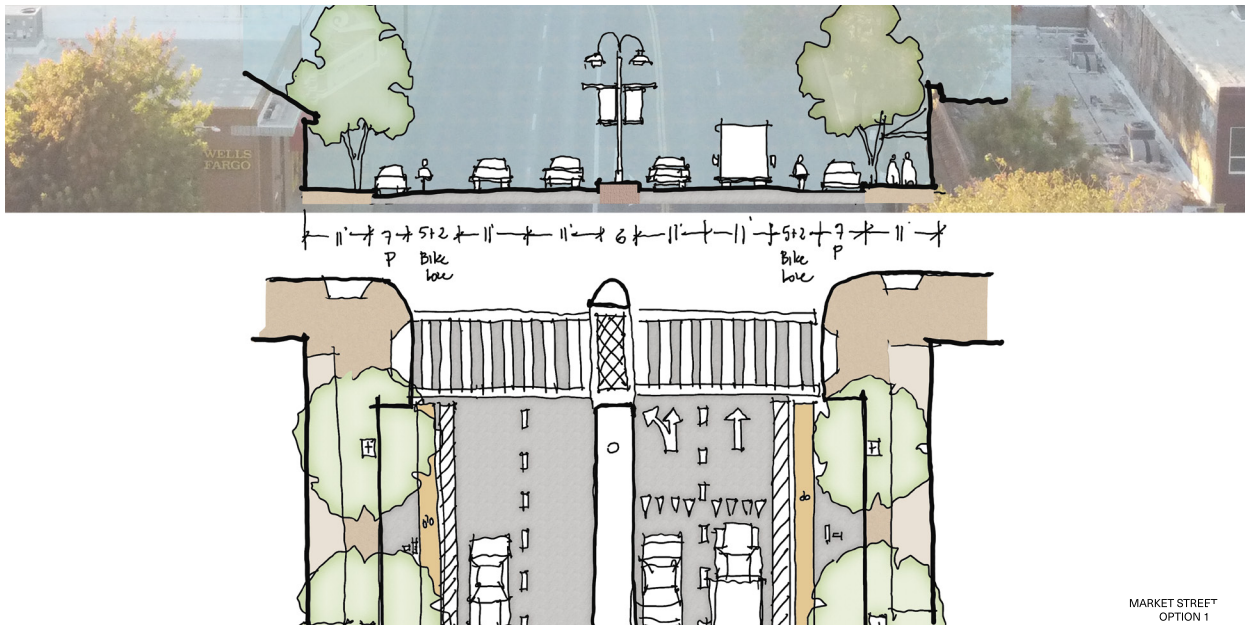


2. MARKET STREET



MARKET STREET EXISTING SECTION

Figure 2.12: Market Street Existing Scenario Section



MARKET STREET OPTION 1

Figure 2.13: Market Street Proposed Section Option 1

Market Street: Reimagining the Corridor: Market Street today includes 5 traffic lanes: 2 lanes in either direction and an alternating center turn lane. Speeds are high and although there is not a lot of traffic, the street is wide and difficult to cross. There are also a lot of trucks.

Current Conditions: Average Daily Traffic (ADT) along Market Street is relatively low (17,300 cars/day or less) creating an opportunity to reduce the number of travel lanes.

While Market is also a designated Truck Route with high numbers of trucks (over 800/day) and large agricultural vehicles, Caltrans' guidelines for Main Streets do provide some design flexibility.

Strategic Vision: Market Street can receive a "road diet" that makes more room for bicyclists and shortens and improves crossings for pedestrians. This option illustrates the introduction of a central raised median that provides pedestrians with a mid-street refuge when crossing, and buffered Class II bike lanes.

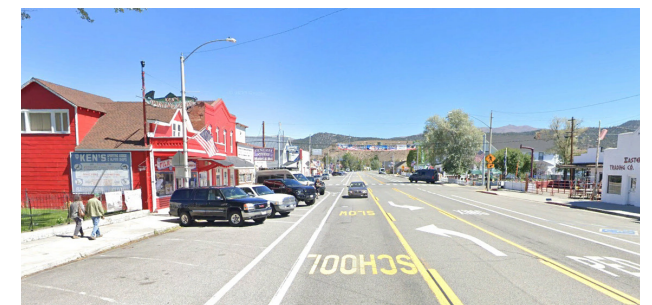


Figure 2.14: Bridgeport back-in angled parking configuration

2. MARKET STREET

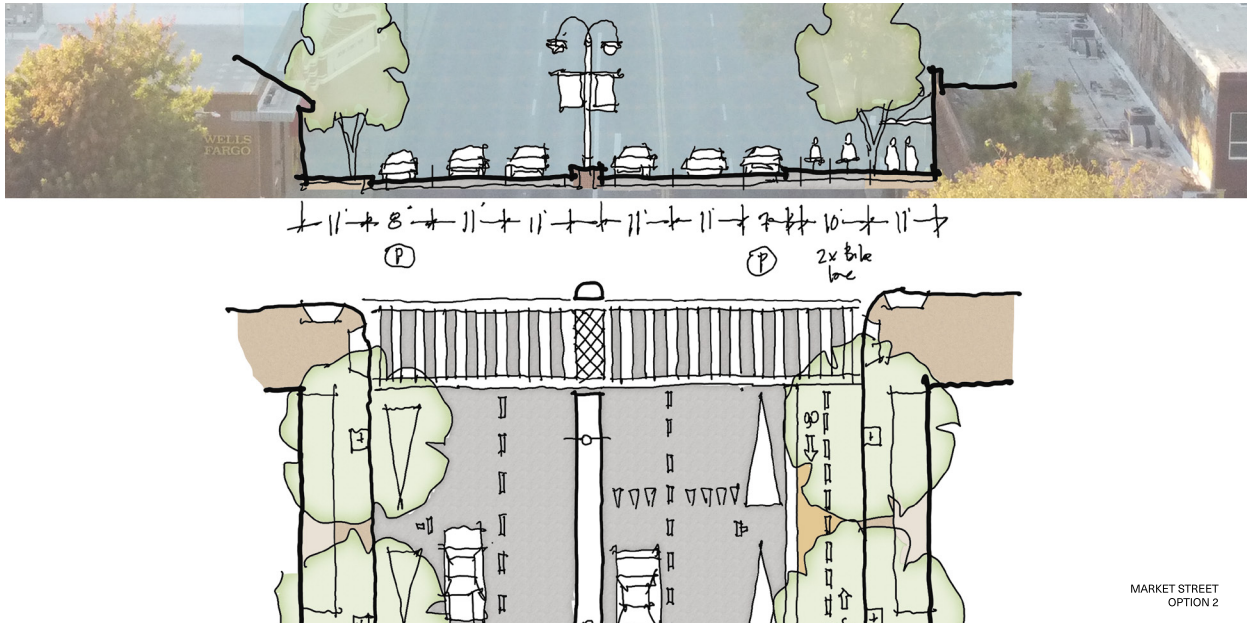


Figure 2.15: Market Street Proposed Section Option 2

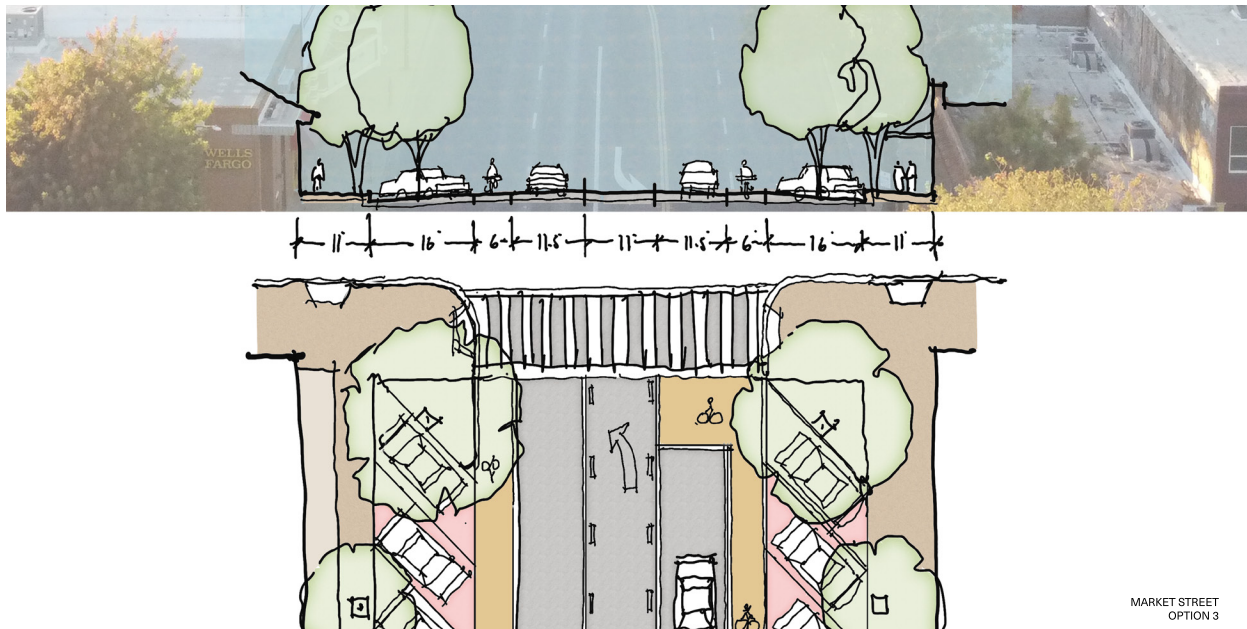


Figure 2.16: Market Street Proposed Section Option 3

2 additional options were explored. Option 2 illustrates a protected, two-way cycle track running along the north side of Market.

In the short term, either of these proposals could be implemented as “quick-build” projects through re-striping and paint.

In the long term, a 3-lane “road diet” could be considered, reducing the number of travel lanes from 5 to 3, one in either direction and a central turn lane. This would create additional space along Market for “back-in” diagonal parking that could greatly improve conditions for businesses fronting Market.

MARKET STREET
OPTION 2

MARKET STREET
OPTION 3

2. MARKET STREET SUMMARY

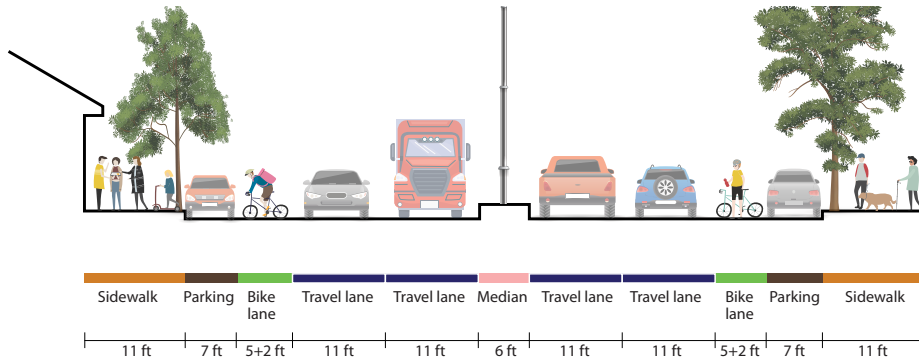


Figure 2.17: Market Street Proposed Section Option 1

Option 1: Centered Median + Parking Rebalance

Replace alternating turn lane with continuous raised median (6ft) for pedestrian refuge, add buffered bike lanes (5+2ft) on outer edges.

Advantages: Shortens crossings 40%, enhances shade/tree buffers, maintains truck flow.

Tradeoff: narrow (11ft) travel lanes would likely require Caltrans design exception given Truck designation; Bike lane buffer can provide vertical protection but limited space for raised curbs or other protective measures.

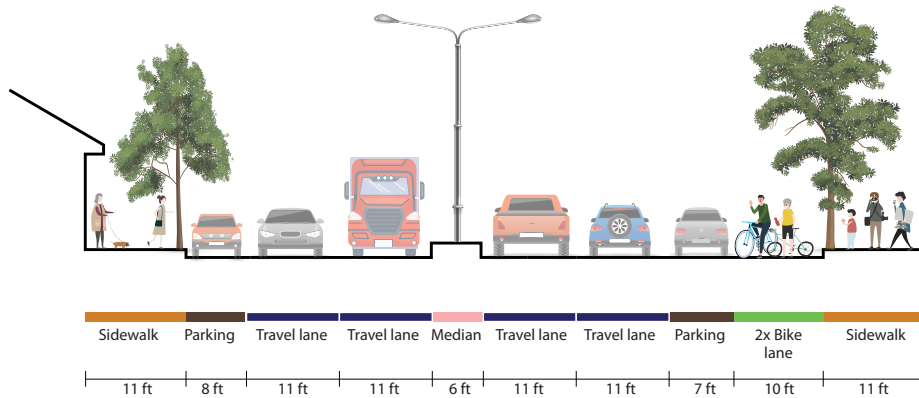


Figure 2.18: Market Street Proposed Section Option 2

Option 2: Off-Center Median + Cycle Track

Position off-center raised median toward south edge, dedicate paired bike lanes (north-side focus, 10 ft total) with protective flexposts/bollards.

Advantages: Prioritizes Levee/downtown cyclist flow, flexible median for seasonal planters, north-south neighborhood connectivity.

Tradeoff: I think Tradeoff here is: narrow (11ft) travel lanes would likely require Caltrans design exception given Truck designation

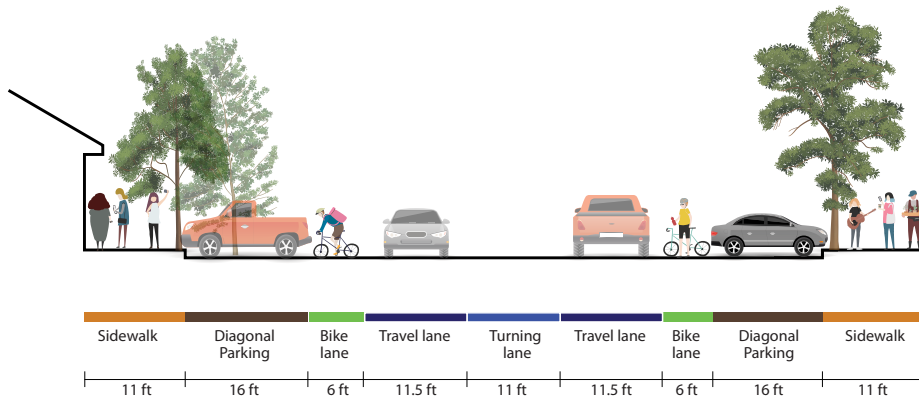


Figure 2.19: Market Street Proposed Section Option 3

Option 3: 3-lane Road Diet

Retain center turn lane, introduce (back-in) diagonal parking along commercial frontages, add bike lanes both sides (Class II buffered).

Advantages: Maximizes parking for Market St businesses (20% increase).

Tradeoff: Additional analysis needed to reduce travel to 3 lanes; bike lanes best separated from traffic when trucks are high, back-in diagonal parking very safe but not always popular.

2. MARKET STREET : PHASED TRANSFORMATION

Short-Term (0–1 Year): Coordinate with Caltrans to pursue design adjustments aligning with a core downtown travel speed reduction below 25 mph. Reconfigure existing travel lanes through re-striping and pavement marking—introducing missing crosswalks, delineated parking lanes, and buffered or protected bicycle lanes using “quick-build” materials such as vertical delineation, paint, and planters. These tactical measures serve both as demonstrations of intent and as data-gathering pilots to evaluate user behavior and safety outcomes.

Medium-Term (1–3 Years): Leverage maintenance cycles and Caltrans’ road diet precedents to deepen early interventions: reinforce high-visibility crossings, and enhance comfort through modular curb extensions or parklets at key commercial nodes. Continue collaboration with Caltrans to monitor traffic performance and calibrate operational changes supporting the long-term redesign vision.

Long-Term (3+ Years): In partnership with Caltrans, transition successful pilot treatments into permanent infrastructure. Replace quick-build elements with raised medians, street trees, bioswale-integrated curbs, and pedestrian-scale lighting. Add new landscaping, street trees, and street furnishings, establishing shaded microclimates and enabling interpretive placemaking that connects Market Street’s civic identity to Colusa’s agrarian-river heritage. The outcome is a coherent, durable streetscape—both a transportation corridor and a public realm framework that invites slower, more human-scaled movement through downtown.

Spatial and Economic Outcomes: This calibrated, partnership-based approach transforms Market Street from a vehicle-dominated conduit into an articulated civic spine—anchoring safety, comfort, and identity. Sequential upgrades foster a legible, adaptable hierarchy that supports Caltrans’ operational needs while signaling Colusa’s emergence as a regional trail nexus and cultural destination. Infrastructure becomes performance: a choreography of mobility, shade, and encounter enriching daily life in the heart of the city.

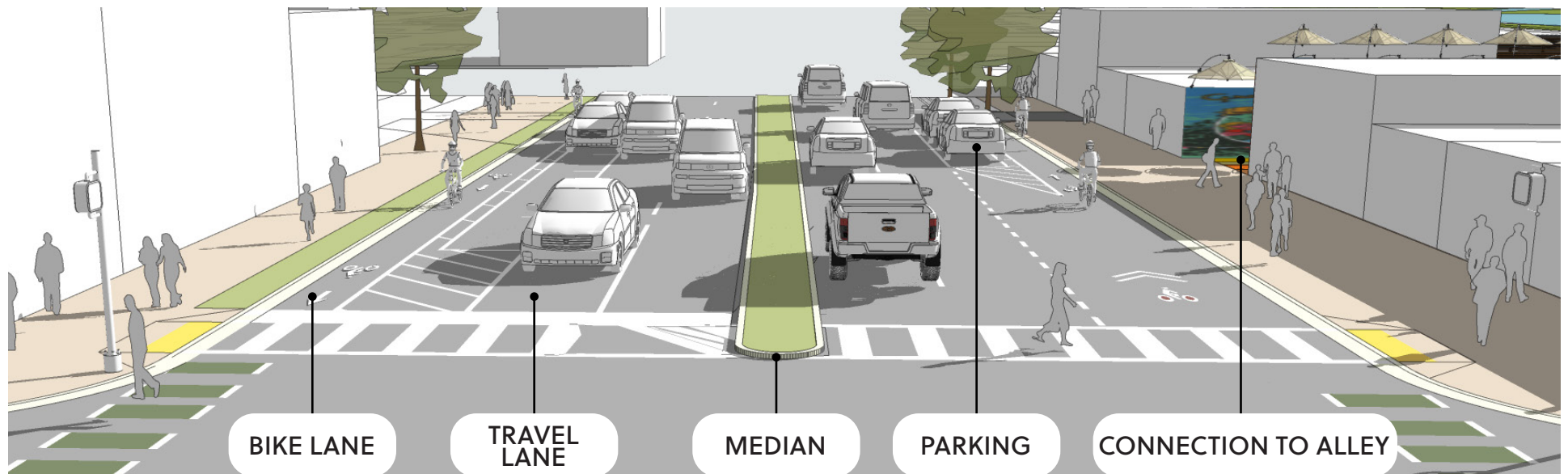


Figure 2.20: Proposed ideas for Market Street

3. 5TH STREET INTERSECTION

5th Street Intersection: Civic Gateway Node

Strategic Vision: 5th Street between Market St and the Levee provides the best opportunity to create a “main street” environment perpendicular to highway. The 5th and Main intersection can be reconfigured with a decorative design that extends northwards to the Levee. These 2 blocks can be redesigned to support temporary closures and street activity that can support local businesses, like farmer’s markets and festivals.

Design Strategy: Key features include shared travel lanes with color-field striping toward the Levee, sidewalks with tree buffers, safe crossings with refuge islands and beacons, and ADA curb cuts with tactile paving—rolled out from short-term paint and markings to medium-term bulb-outs and long-term plaza build-out, creating a clear, resilient urban hub.

Outcomes:

- Safety Gains: Color striping/refuge islands cut crossing times <15 sec; ADA accessibility.
- Economic Boost: Tree buffers/shared lanes draw Levee cyclists to shops; 20–30% foot traffic increase near plazas activates storefronts/evening events.
- Urban Continuity: Legible cues link downtown to neighborhoods/Dragon Island, fostering encounters and dwell as Colusa’s resilient civic gateway.

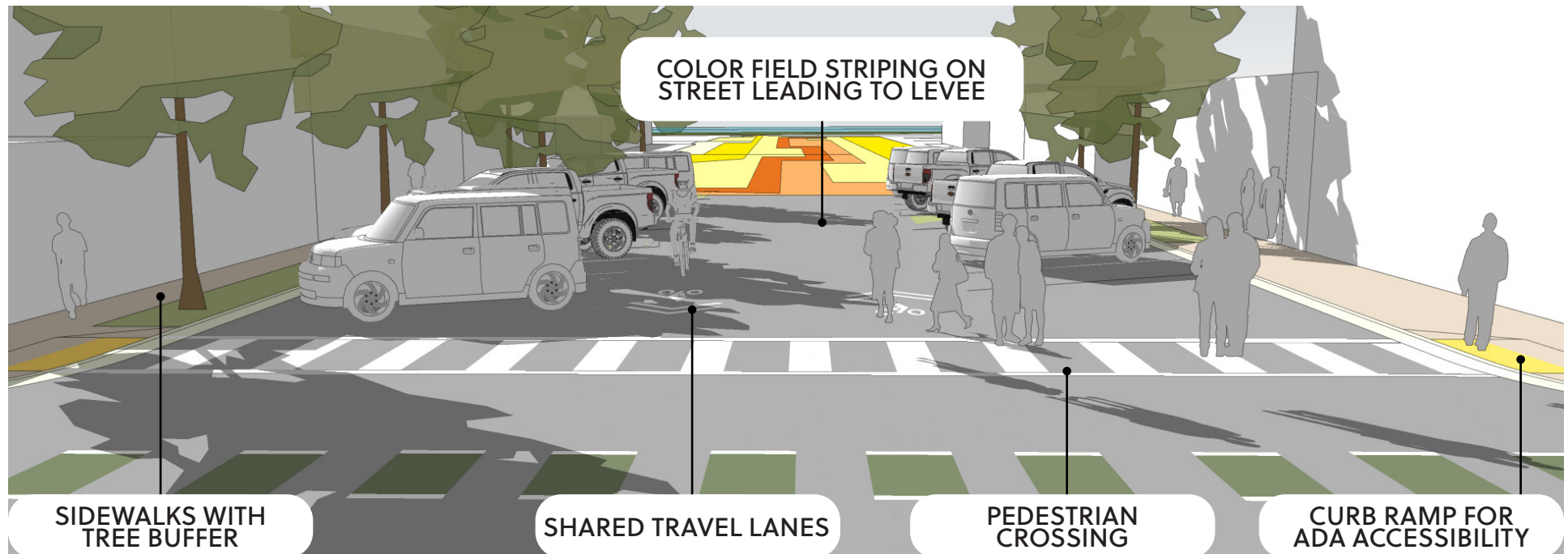


Figure 2.21: Looking north toward Levee

4. DOWNTOWN ALLEY ACTIVATION

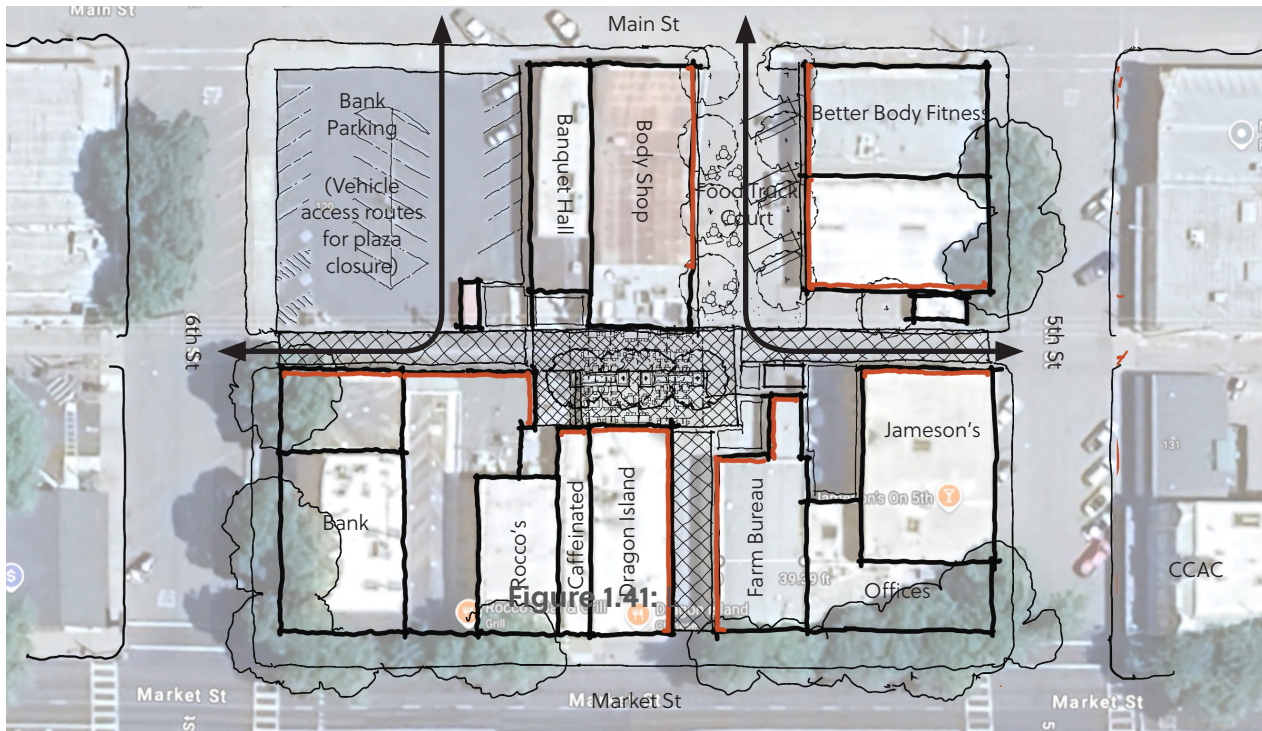


Figure 2.22: Downtown alley activation between Main, Market, 5th and 6th Streets

The alleyway between Market, Main, 5th and 6th Streets is a good opportunity to create new public space downtown that can support existing local businesses and bring in foot traffic that supports new ones.

Existing empty space behind buildings can be transformed into a central plaza connecting to pedestrian routes from all four directions using stamped/painted concrete, decorative pavers, and planters. This plaza could be flexible and support temporary traffic closures. The existing parking lot adjacent to 533 Main could be resurfaced with decomposed granite and repurposed as a flexible courtyard for food trucks.

Multiple walls (shown in red) are good candidates for new art murals that can line the route and expand downtown's art offerings.

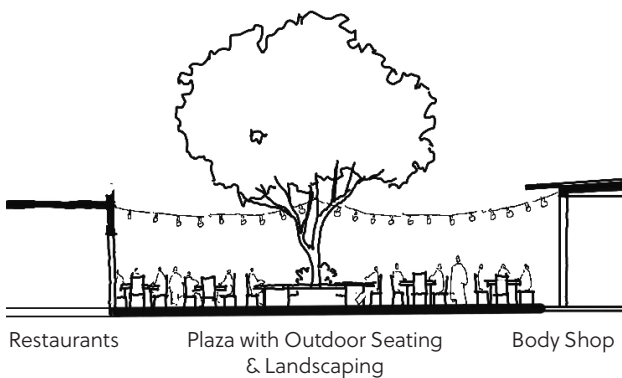


Figure 2.23: North/south section looking West showing proposed plaza



Figure 2.24: Alleyway activation (AARP)



Figure 2.25: Illustration of proposed central plaza

4. DOWNTOWN ALLEY ACTIVATION



Figure 2.26: Looking south towards Courthouse and Market Street

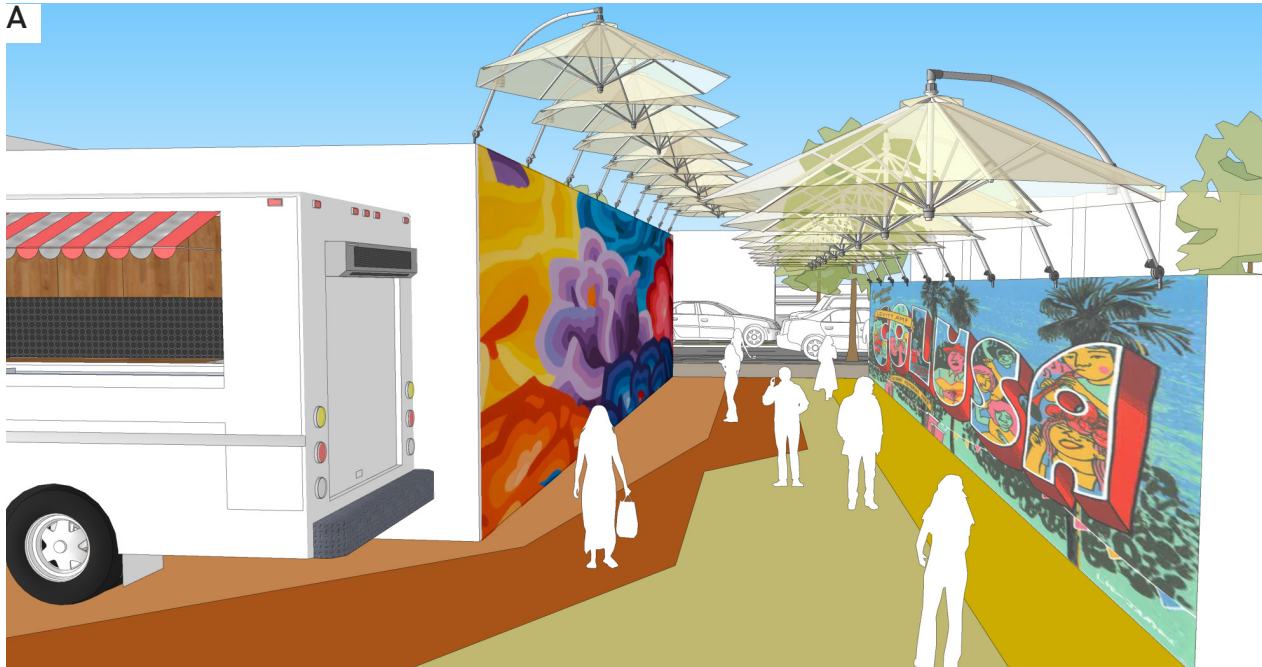


Figure 2.27: Proposed idea of a mural and activation of the pathway connecting Market Street.

Mural Walls: Cultural Narrative Spine

Strategic Vision: Blank walls along 5th Street alleys and Market-facing facades can become part of Colusa’s growing public art network—turning underutilized spaces into community destinations. Murals celebrating Colusa’s agrarian heritage, river identity, and local stories create a continuous cultural thread connecting the Levee, downtown, and civic core.

Design Strategy: Property owners can collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and the Colusa County Arts Council to implement and maintain new murals. Early phases may feature community-designed paint installations, evolving over time into more durable panels or integrated facade art, supported by lighting and small seating nooks that invite gathering and evening activity.

Outcomes

- **Visibility:** Murals boost alley/Market visibility, increasing evening foot traffic 25–35%.
- **Engagement:** Local artist participation fosters pride and stewardship.
- **Economic:** Public art attracts trail users to nearby shops, positioning Colusa as a regional arts destination.

4. DOWNTOWN ALLEY ACTIVATION

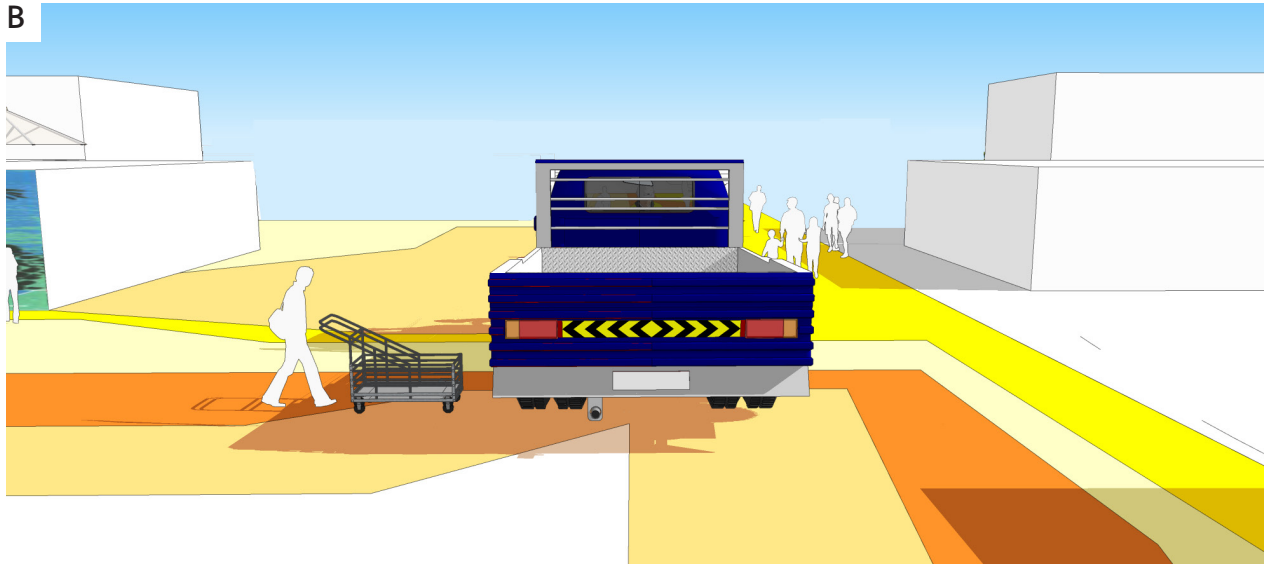


Figure 2.28: Alley way during morning



Figure 2.29: Alleyway during the evening with food trucks, kiosks, and extended seating for businesses.



Figure 2.30: Alley way during morning



Figure 2.31: Alley way during evening

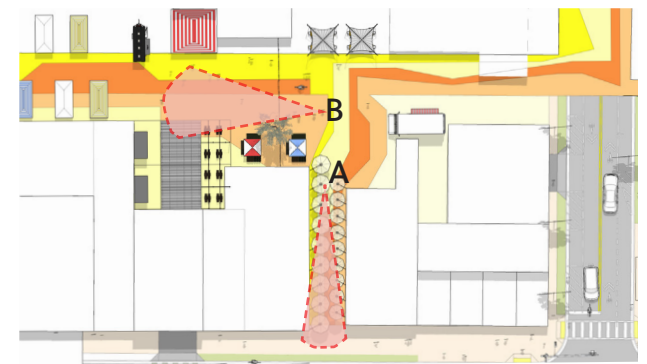


Figure 2.32: Key Plan

5TH STREET INFILL SITES



Figure 2.33: Infill opportunity sites along 5th Street at Main Street

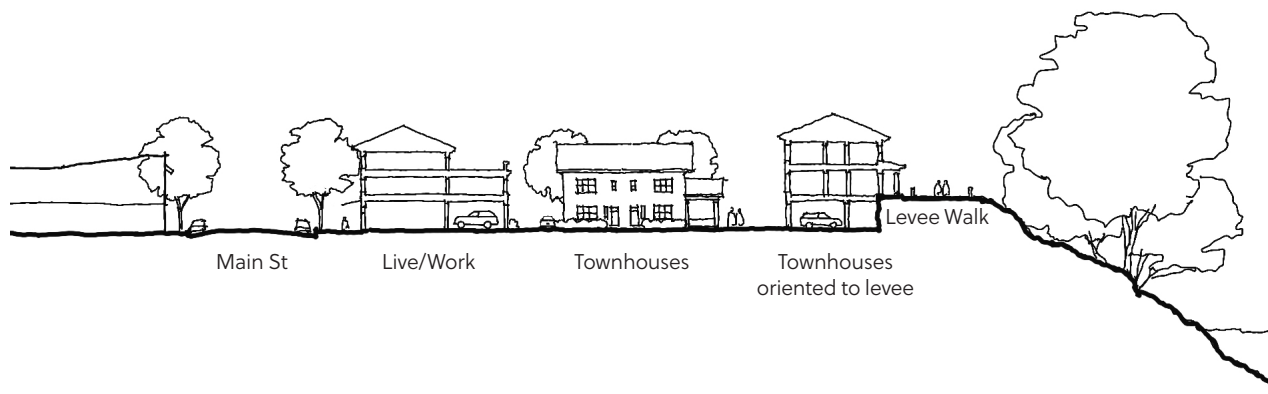


Figure 2.34: North/south section looking West showing new housing oriented to the levee walk and River

5th Street provides a good opportunity to create a “main street” environment between Market Street and the River, with high visibility from passing traffic on Market and large opportunity sites.

The car dealership site at 46 5th Street and the parking lot at 15 5th Street both provide good opportunities for residential and mixed-use development. 2-3 story residential addresses above garages can provide views, terraces, and porches oriented to the River while live/work and shopfront spaces can face 5th Street and Main Street. New pedestrian “mews” can break up large blocks and provide additional connections between downtown and the River.

New housing can help with downtown’s ongoing revitalization, with new residents to patronize local businesses and providing “eyes on the street” along the Riverfront.



Figure 2.35: Live/Work units in Hercules, CA

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

TACTICAL ACTIVATION AND EARLY CONNECTIVITY

Focus on quick, visible interventions that enhance safety, spark community ownership, and test ideas for long-term design.

Mobility & Safety: Install pavement markings, buffered bike lanes, and speed-feedback signs along 5th Street and Market Street.

Wayfinding & Identity: Deploy branded wayfinding signage connecting Main Street, the alley, and the Levee; add temporary lighting in key corridors.

Public Art & Placemaking: Implement the asphalt art mural along 5th Street to mark the Levee gateway; support community-led mural painting and storefront enhancements.

Street Furniture & Programming: Introduce move-able street furniture, planters, and pop-up parklets near the 5th Street–Main Street intersection to encourage lingering and local events.

Community Engagement: Establish a local stewardship group (Main Street CA, business owners, youth volunteers) for programming and maintenance coordination.

MEDIUM-TERM (1-3 YEARS)

INFRASTRUCTURE INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVATION

Transition from tactical projects to semi-permanent physical and social infrastructure that reinforces downtown's identity.

Mobility Network: Build protected bike lanes on Market Street and 5th Street with curb elements and crossings connecting to the alley system and Levee.

5th Street Plaza: Develop the plaza design with permanent seating zones, articulated paving, lighting, and space for markets or performances.

Alley Activation: Enhance the west alley with paving improvements, art installations, and rear access for cafes and artisan vendors; encourage micro-retail and maker spaces.

Public Realm Character: Integrate cohesive design language through consistent materials, lighting, and signage across Market and Main Streets.

Economic Anchors: Partner with nearby businesses (e.g., bowling alley, cafes) to host recurring events that sustain foot traffic and boost local commerce.

LONG-TERM (3+ YEARS)

COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION AND RESILIENT CONNECTIVITY

Solidify Colusa's downtown as a regionally recognized, inclusive, and economically vibrant hub.

Complete Streets Implementation: Fully reconstruct Market Street as a multimodal corridor with pedestrian-priority crossings, street trees, and continuous protected bike infrastructure.

Permanent Plaza & Cultural Core: Deliver a fully realized 5th Street Plaza as Colusa's civic heart—integrating performance space, flexible markets, and community art installations.

Levee Connection Gateway: Develop a permanent gateway marker and landscape corridor linking the downtown to the riverfront, celebrating Colusa's ecological and cultural heritage.

Infill Development: Small-scale mixed-use infill on underutilized downtown sites strengthens density with ground-floor retail, raised medians, street trees, furniture, and lighting.

Policy & Stewardship: Formalize a long-term maintenance and event programming strategy led by city agencies, Main Street CA, and local partners.

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP FUNDING STRATEGY

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

TACTICAL ACTIVATION AND EARLY CONNECTIVITY

Prioritize low-barrier grants for immediate visibility through public art, signage, and pop-up interventions.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Planning/Technical Assistance:

Supports wayfinding, asphalt murals, and alley pilots; builds on Colusa's prior downtown planning achievements.

Clean California Local Grants

(Caltrans): Funds beautification efforts including murals, lighting, and small-scale activations such as the 5th Street art gateway.

California Arts Council Grants: Enables community-led murals and public art installations in alleys and along 5th Street.

MEDIUM-TERM (1-3 YEARS)

INFRASTRUCTURE INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVATION

Target state safety and active transportation programs for protected bike lanes, crossings, and semi-permanent public spaces.

Active Transportation Program (ATP – Caltrans):

Finances bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, and traffic calming on 5th and Market Streets to establish a low-stress network.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A):

Addresses Vision Zero priorities at the streets intersection through planning and implementation tailored to small communities.

California Main Street Program/Goes Green Accelerator:

Supports alley micro-retail, plaza furnishings, and Main Street activations via established local partnerships.

LONG-TERM (3+ YEARS)

COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION AND RESILIENT CONNECTIVITY

Pursue competitive federal and state capital grants for full corridor reconstruction and Levee integration.

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants (USDOT):

Funds multimodal reconstruction of Market Street and Levee connections, ideal for small cities demonstrating prior progress.

California Recreational Trails Program (RTP):

Supports trailheads, plaza linkages, and bike corridor extensions to the riverfront.

Measure B Local Funds (Colusa County):

Provides matching support for parks and plazas; recent \$381K allocation demonstrates viability for the 5th Street civic hub.



IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP FUNDING STRATEGY

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

TACTICAL PLACEMAKING & ART

Low-barrier grants fund immediate, visible interventions—public art, signage, wayfinding, crosswalks, benches, and pop-up placemaking—that test and activate Colusa’s streetscape framework while building community buy-in.

Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants: FY 2026-27 call opens September 2025 (apps due Nov/Dec), awards summer 2026; funds Market Street complete street planning, 5th Street intersection multimodal studies, and regional bike network integration with Levee trails

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

TACTICAL PLACEMAKING & ART

2026 AARP Community Challenge (Flagship/Micro/Demo Grants): \$500–\$25K quick-action awards fund tactical 5th Street crosswalks with refuge islands, Market Street bike lane sharrows and speed feedback signs, Main Street benches/planters, and alleyway lighting pilots—delivering visible safety and activation by Dec 2026 (apply by March 4).

AARP Livable Communities Focus: Perfect alignment for age-friendly walk audits along Market Street, bikeability assessments for the low-stress neighborhood network, and accessible seating nooks in alleyways that serve 50+ residents while testing universal design principles.

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

TACTICAL PLACEMAKING & ART

AARP Application Strategy: Online applications due March 4, 2026 (Jan 27 webinar); City of Colusa and Main Street CA nonprofits eligible to bundle multiple tactical pilots—bulb-outs at 5th/Main/Market, color-field pavement markings toward Levee, temporary bike corrals at commercial nodes.

Statewide Park Development Program (SPP): Round 5 (\$188.5M) targets Levee Park trailhead expansion adjacent to Water/Sewer facility, funding gateway plaza, permeable surfacing, and wayfinding markers that knit park connectivity into **the downtown bike/ped network (subscribe for launch updates).**





05

TEAM WORK

GROUP 3:

*Riverfront Access &
Activation*

OVERALL GOALS

The D-PRAT team set out to identify opportunities for public realm improvements along and adjacent to the levee that can improve connections between downtown and the river. Juxtaposed against urban development in the blocks along Main Street and Market Street, the river provides a character-defining asset for Colusa, but access and activation are somewhat limited.

Group 3 pursued and explored a series of interventions to enhance connections between downtown and the riverfront and recommend improvements to public and private spaces along Main Street and the river.

The proposed interventions for physical or programmatic improvements are envisioned to enhance the role that the levee plays as a destination as well as a connecting element between the downtown and the river. The interventions provided in this chapter implement key themes.

1

ACCESS

Provide better access for residents and visitors alike to the amenities provided by the existing levee trail, the Sacramento River, and the City of Colusa boat ramp.

2

ACTIVITY

Provide activities that improve and enhance both passive and active use of the river and the riverfront environment as an immediate amenity to the downtown.

3

APPRECIATION

Provide levee and riverfront activities or enhance the understanding and awareness of the attributes and qualities that have shaped the physical and cultural environment along the riverfront.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Accessibility.** The design interventions propose changes both on the levee and in the adjacent streets. Some proposals are programmatic and intended to activate vacant or underutilized buildings, open spaces, and streets. Other proposals propose physical changes that can facilitate greater use of the levee trail by residents and visitors and capitalize on its location adjacent to downtown.
- **Opportunity.** Many aspects of the proposed intervention take advantage of opportunities to make better use of existing facilities and features and all in the service of increasing connections to the river. The levee trail, the Water Works building, the stairways connections from city streets, and the boat ramp are all existing facilities. The interventions propose making better use of these existing opportunities with improvements to make them more viable.
- **Safety.** A common theme in community comments was greater safety on the levee trail. The proposed interventions provide design solutions to foster a safer environment on the trail by introducing path lighting, interpretive signage at key locations, and improvements to the trail surface. Similarly, design and program changes at key access points, such as the stairways, the Water Works building and the boat ramp can attract more people and make greater use of the levee and the connections to the downtown.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

The ground team explored the existing conditions along the levee and in the adjacent downtown. As part of that exploration, a series of opportunities and constraints were brainstormed and summarized for sharing with community members at the Open House. Community members were encouraged to discuss the Challenges and Opportunities and provide comments on a wall graphic.

CHALLENGES

- » **Limited waterfront access** reduces usability and hard to find for visitors.
- » **Disconnected trails** hinder mobility, visibility, and nighttime use.
- » **Lack of signage** creates confusion and limits educational or recreational engagement.
- » **Insufficient amenities** such as overlooks, birdwatching areas, and fishing docks reduce overall visitor experience.
- » **Aging stairways and entry points** require redesign or renovation to meet safety and aesthetic standards.
- » **Underutilized public facilities**, including the Water District building, need reevaluation to determine their best community-serving purpose.
- » **Inadequate site design** contribute to erosion, poor aesthetics, and inefficient space use.
- » **Limited funding clarity** for improvements makes planning and prioritization challenging.



Figure 3.1: Community input from Open House

OPPORTUNITIES

- » **Transform the vacant Water District building** into an active community destination connected directly to the waterfront trail.
- » **Site's naturally beautiful views** to create scenic overlooks, gathering areas, and recreational opportunities.
- » **The community's strong desire to connect with the water** through improved access points and interactive features.
- » **Existing previous projects have demonstrated public interest** in engaging with the waterfront
- » **The levee's protective function**
- » **Existing efforts in educational signage** that promote environmental learning and cultural awareness along the trail.



Figure 3.2: Design opportunities

PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS



Figure 3.3: Site plan for proposed design interventions

Through coordinated trail improvements, redesigned access points, strategic rehabilitation of adjacent structures, and activation of the boat ramp area, the project aims to create a cohesive riverfront experience that enhances mobility, placemaking, and economic vitality while respecting the levee's primary flood protection function.

1. LEVEE TRAIL ENHANCEMENT

The levee trail improvements focus on enhancing safety, comfort, and usability for pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users.

2. LEVEE ACCESS AND RIVERFRONT ACTIVATION

Levee stairway redesign and riverfront space activation are intended to improve functional access while reinforcing visual identity, creating recognizable and welcoming experience.

3. HISTORIC WATERWORKS BUILDING

Transform the vacant Water District building into an active community destination connected directly to the waterfront trail.

4. BOAT RAMP ENHANCEMENTS

A design strategy for the city boat ramp area builds on the existing condition to better identify the city facility, enhances the sense of arrival, and better utilize the areas at the top of the ramp.

1. LEVEE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

I. IMPROVE TRAIL EXPERIENCE AND SAFETY

- » **Trail Surfacing:** using paved asphalt or permeable options such as decomposed granite (stabilized) or for smooth, all-weather use. Additionally, painting clear striping for path definition and to separate pedestrians from cyclists.
- » **Lighting:** Low-glare, solar-powered path lights and bollard lighting along key access points, rest stops, and near the downtown side.
- » **Wayfinding & Identity:** Install mile markers, river-ecology signs, flood-history markers, and maps of trail connections. Create a consistent Colusa River Trail brand (colors, icons, fonts).

II. CREATE ZONES FOR RECREATION, ECOLOGY & SCENIC VIEWS

- » **Scenic overlook decks:** Platforms overlooking the Sacramento River with binocular scopes, interpretive panels, birdwatching stations.
- » **River habitat enhancements:** Native riparian plant clusters between access points, Pollinator gardens at entry nodes or pocket parks
- » **Recreation nodes:** Small fitness stations (low visual impact), Picnic nooks with shade structures

III. CONNECT THE CITY TO THE LEVEE

- » **Trail access gateways:** Attractive trailheads at key cross streets (10th St, 3rd St, River St, etc.).
- » **Downtown Linkages:** Align gateways with Colusa's historic downtown, making the trail a natural extension of the visitor experience.
- » **Accessibility and Safety:** ADA-compliant ramps up the levee. Decorative railings and safety improvements at road crossings.



AMERICAN RIVER TRAIL, SACRAMENTO



SOLAR PATHWAY LIGHTS



MILE MARKERS



CANTON MISSOURI TRAIL & SCENIC OVERLOOK

1. LEVEE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

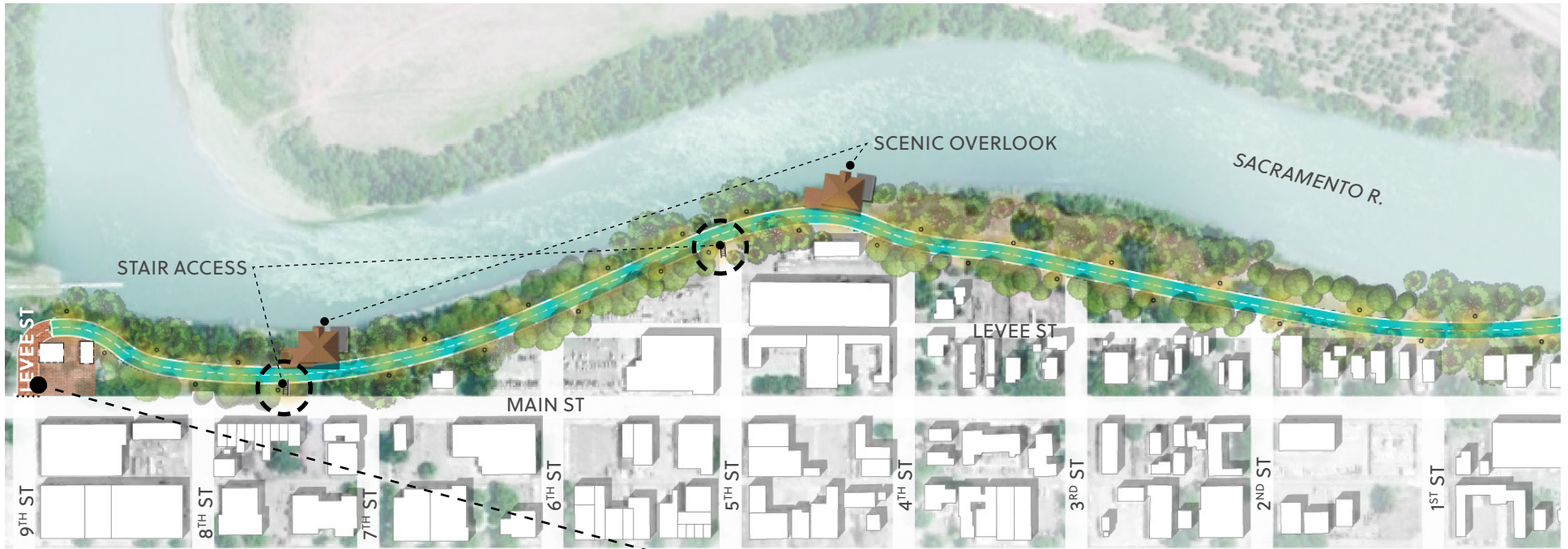


Figure 3.4: Master Plan for Levee Trail

LEVEE TRAIL MASTERPLAN

The Levee Trail master plan proposes enhanced entries and connectivity to Main Street and the Sacramento River through improved stair and street connections, trail resurfacing and lighting, placemaking elements such as signage and gateways, and riverfront access and lookout points.

Figure 3.5: Redesigning Levee St as a Pedestrian-Oriented Corridor



1. LEVEE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS



EXISTING

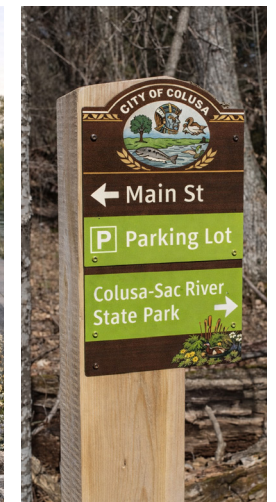
LEVEE LOOKING WEST NEAR MAIN ST. AND 9TH ST.

The enhanced Colusa Levee Trail features multi-use pathway with asphalt paving with clear striping, a maintained tree-lined landscape buffer, solar path lighting, mile markers, interpretive ecology signage, and river-overlook benches. The water tanks along the Main St also offer opportunities for trail branding through graphic murals.



TRAIL SIGNAGE

Levee trail signage celebrating Colusa's heritage and native landscape, featured at trailheads, interpretive points, and along the trail as mile markers.



1. LEVEE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

LEVEE TRAIL CONNECTION WITH MAIN ST

Enhanced linkages between the Levee Trail and Main Street are intended to activate the riverfront through improved pedestrian access, including upgraded levee stairs with a gateway plaza and trail signage, a clearly marked crosswalk connecting Main Street to the levee, traffic-calmed streetscape improvements, and enhanced walking and biking facilities along Main Street that support local businesses and pedestrian activity.

EXISTING MAIN ST



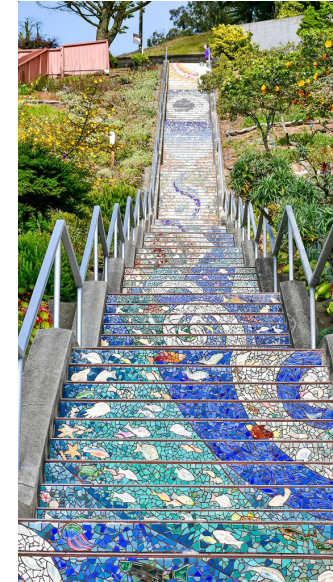
2. LEVEE ACCESS AND RIVERFRONT ACTIVATION

To improve the existing stairway to the levee trail, we suggest creating a safe, well lit, and eye-catching display to help draw people up onto the trail. This can be achieved with a few interventions.

- » First, as part of the lighting system for the trail at large, the stair needs to be lit at night. This will both give people the ability to see where they are walking and do so safely and it will draw eyes to the stairs and help to create a place around the trail and stairs.
- » To aid in placemaking during the day, the stairs should be painted with bright, attractive colors. This visually engaging intervention will help draw people to the area and will be relatively easy to implement. We recommend hiring local artists to create a design for the stairs that highlights the culture of Colusa. The combination of these interventions will help to make both the stairway and the levee trail more attractive and usable to locals.



Painting/Designing Trail stairs



Lighting for Levee Trail stairs

FARMER'S MARKET INCENTIVES

California Nutrition Incentive Program

- » Can provide funds for program operations
- » Statewide initiative

Market Match Program

- » Empowers people to buy fresh produce
- » Program will match spending to allow low income individuals to afford fresh produce



Melrose Trading Post (Los Angeles, CA)

3. HISTORIC WATERWORKS BUILDING

The site is situated along a main street, near Levee Street and 9th Street, offering high visibility, accessibility, and direct connections to the riverfront. Its proximity to the levee and river allows for easy access to water-based activities, while the surrounding mature trees and open landscape contribute to a high-quality environmental and recreational setting.

The initial scope of work focused on the historic Waterworks building (Building 1). However, the site analysis identified a second adjacent structure, leading to a broader consideration of the entire site encompassing both buildings. Together, the two buildings form a compact cluster with strong potential for coordinated

reuse and programming. While each building retains its own design expression, they are visually and functionally linked through coordinated materials, lighting, and shared outdoor space.

Together, they frame a central open area that becomes an active gathering space, supporting seating, informal events, and daily social use. The space between the buildings is intentionally designed as an outdoor room, allowing activities to extend beyond the interiors and strengthening connections between riverfront recreation and community programs.

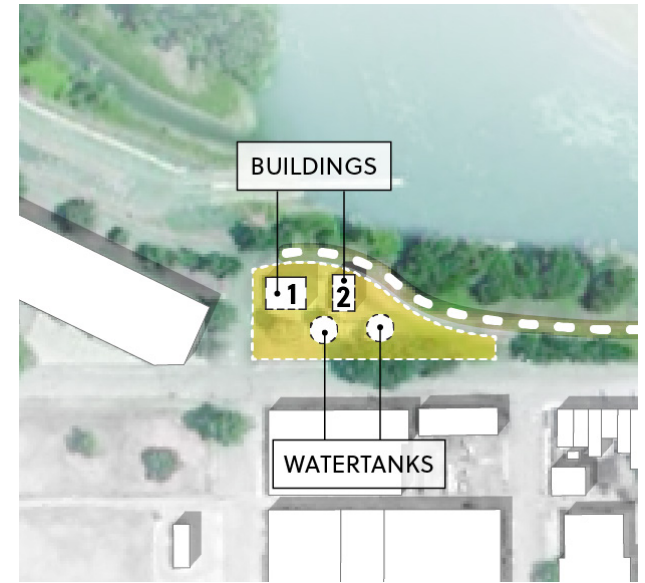


Figure 3.6: Waterworks building site

WaterWorks Building Improvement

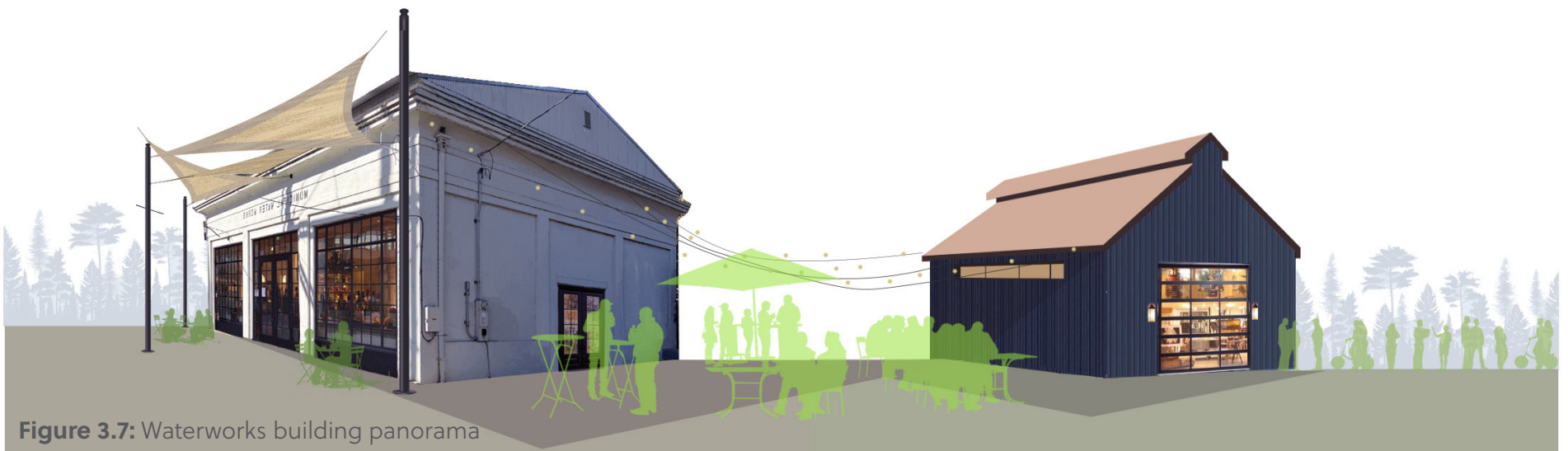


Figure 3.7: Waterworks building panorama

3. HISTORIC WATERWORKS BUILDING

1

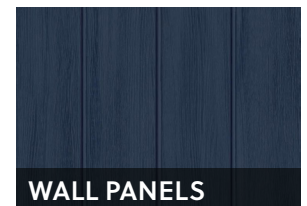
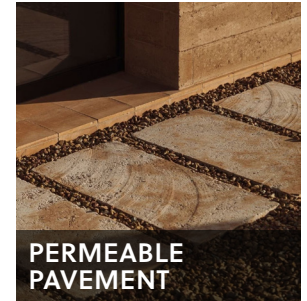
BUILDING 1: MULTI-USE CAFE AND EVENING SPACE

- » **Program:** Multi-use interior space that functions as a café during the day and transitions into an evening social venue for small gatherings, blending the historical building with contemporary uses.
- » **Flexible interior layout:** Supports daily activity while encouraging longer stays and social interaction, contributing to riverfront activation.
- » **Full-height windows:** Increase daylight access, visual transparency, and connection between interior activity and the surrounding site.
- » **Shading fabrics:** Improve outdoor comfort and create a transitional social space without overpowering the original building form.
- » **Permeable paving:** Soften the industrial setting, reduce heat accumulation, and improve stormwater infiltration.

2

BUILDING 2: COMMUNITY ACTIVITY AND RECREATION CENTER

- » **Program:** Indoor uses may include social gatherings, community meetings, art workshops, and small cultural events, while outdoor can accommodate seasonal activities and public events. In addition, the building can support recreational uses such as kayak and bike rentals.
- » **Reinterpreting industrial character:** Durable, weather-resistant metal roofing and vertical wall panels that reference the building's utilitarian past while improving long-term performance.
- » **Clerestory windows:** Upper-level windows bring natural light into the interior while maintaining privacy and thermal efficiency.
- » **Large openings:** Create visibility and flexibility for indoor events and recreational uses.



4. BOAT RAMP ENHANCEMENTS

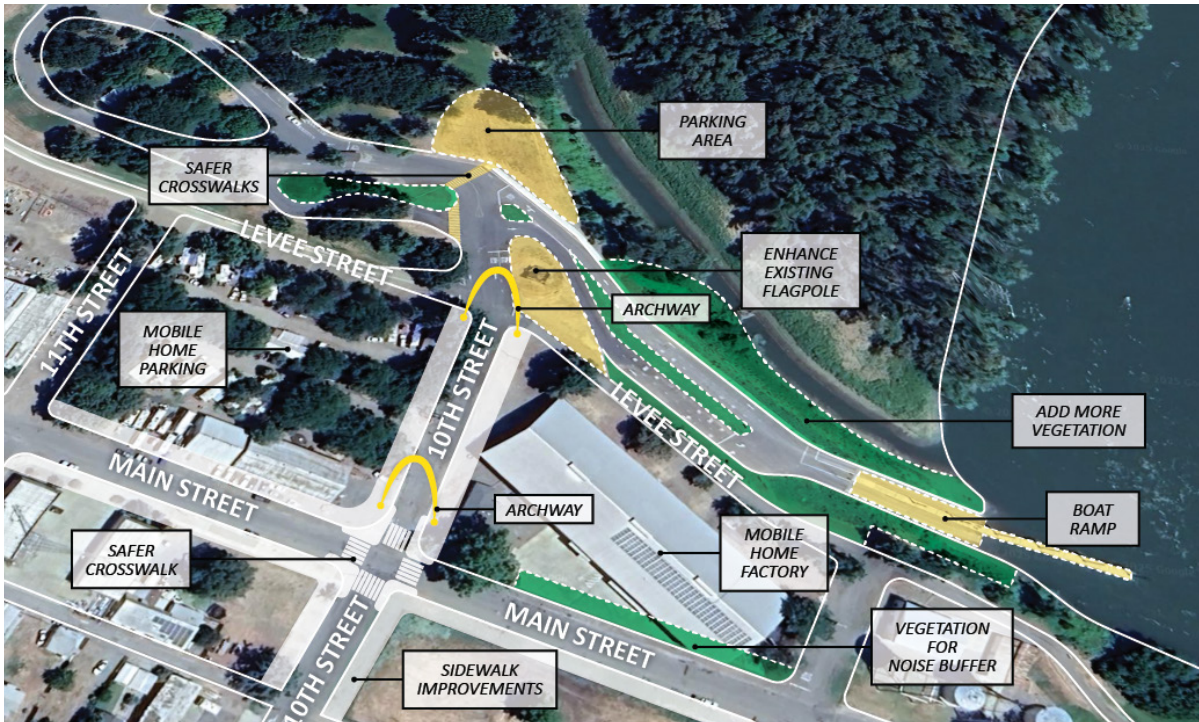


Figure 3.8: Site analysis

SITE INTRODUCTION

The boat ramp entry drive redesign for Colusa, California would be a way to enhance existing site elements as well as becoming a new economic driver for the town. This redesign and enhancement plan would be best situated at the intersections between Main and 10th Street, as well as Levee and 10th Street.

This enhancement plan will focus on two main themes:

1. Revitalization of existing site elements
2. Enhanced pedestrian/vehicular experience

These two main goals will serve as possible ideas and next steps to take. These goals will be broken down into short term, medium term and long term goals to serve as a start for implementation. Along with these goals, Colusa may be eligible for state grants for being home to the Colusa Sacramento River State Park.

DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

To analyze and identify areas for improvement in this plan, we will begin at the intersection of Main and 10th Street. This intersection currently has no crosswalks for safe pedestrian travel. Based on engagement feedback, the boat ramp stands as a cherished place for the community; however, it is unsafe at night.

An archway addition would help guide vehicular and pedestrian visitors into the site. The streetscape can be enhanced through the use of street trees lined along 10th and Main. Near the Mobile home factory, an addition of a new mural will aid the site's entry.

At the intersection of Levee and 10th Street, another archway stands to guide visitors out. At the flagpole, existing pavement and lighting can be enhanced to celebrate the flag as well as create more safety around the area. Down towards the ramp, a divider curb exists. Low ground covers or wildflowers can be used to for cost efficient beautification.

At the end of the sloped drive to the end of 10th Street, a new parking area may be introduced. This parking will be for boat and cars and an existing path starting from that area leads down to the boat ramp.

4. BOAT RAMP ENHANCEMENTS



Figure 3.9: Current Conditions

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

There are three main areas to be delved into regarding Colusa's boat ramp redesign; the flag pole enhancement, the boat trailer parking and the curbed area into the boat ramp. The flag pole can be tacked as a short term scale with the use of outdoor solar lighting. This will help highlight and adore the flag more, without too much of an initial budget constraint. More medium to long term change would feature planting and possible paver changes to highlight the area more as seen on Figure 3.13. Figure 3.12 shows a boat trailer parking in Bay Pines, Florida as a precedent. Colusa travelers and locals will greatly benefit from a small scale boat trailer parking in the area. Lastly, a short term beautification element that could be added is the introduction of small ground covers and shrubs along the boat ramp curb. This could be as simple as raking and placing wildflower mixes along the curb, or a short grass.



Figure 3.10: Boat Ramp Area



Figure 3.11: Flag pole



Figure 3.12: Boat trailer



Figure 3.13: Boat ramp curb

4. BOAT RAMP ENHANCEMENTS



Figure 3.14: Streetscape perspective

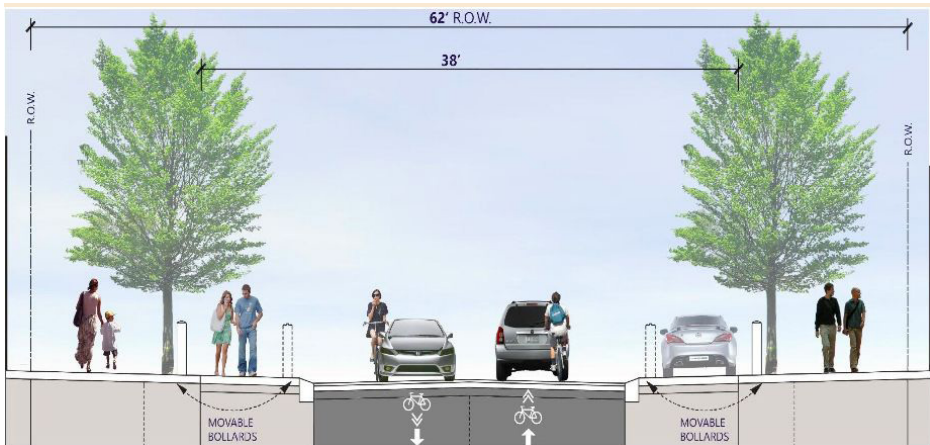


Figure 3.15: Streetscape section

STREETSCAPE AND 10TH STREET ENTRY

The streetscape enhancement at the boat ramp will feature four major elements: an archway, a 5-7ft walkway, a planting buffer, and 11ft-wide roads. For the entry into the boat ramp, adequately sized pedestrian pathways will line both 10th and Main Street. Next to the path, as shown in Figures 3.14 and 3.17, a green buffer filled with native Californian plants will be perpendicular to the walkway. This will serve as a buffer for both pedestrian and vehicular travelers.

At the front of the road, an archway may be placed at the intersection of 10th and Main, and 10th and Levee Street. These could be as simple as a metal archway, or more grand as Figure 3.16 shows, with 'Colusa' at the front. Street lights would also be greatly beneficial.

The elements in the streetscape enhancement may be more medium- to long-term solutions. The introduction of street lighting could serve as a short-term solution, but decisions regarding the archways and redefining the road may be long-term. Trees can be placed after street are redefined; however, they will require time to grow and provide the right amount of shading.



Figure 3.16: Entry archway

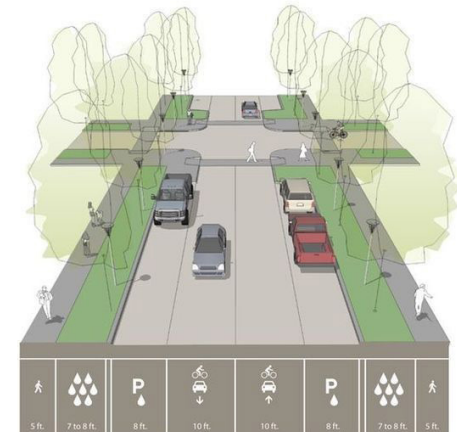


Figure 3.17: Intersection safety

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

The short-term improvements are those that can be made largely with volunteer efforts, community organizations, and generally without requiring large capital expenditures. These include:

- A trailside interpretive signage program like the program of the Colusa County Library
- Landscaping around the flagpole arrival at the boat ramp
- Site improvements around the Water Works buildings
- Organizational implementation of a farmer's market or other community event
- Levee crosswalk striping at 10 Street

MEDIUM-TERM (1-3 YEARS)

The medium-term improvements are those that will require some amount of capital expenditure through grants or city capital improvements as well as some amount of design, planning, and some degree of organizational change. These include:

- Trailside path lighting
- Tenant or occupant for the Water Works buildings

LONG-TERM (3+ YEARS)

The long-term improvements are those that will require significant design and planning as well as capital expenditures using grants or city funds. These include:

- Trailside overlook structures for passive recreation and interpretive signage opportunities
- Facade or structural improvements to the Water Works buildings
- Streetscape and sidewalk improvements on 10th Street
- Wayfinding markers on 10th Street
- Intersection improvements at 10th Street and Main Street

IMPLEMENTATION CONCEPTS: ZONING CODES

GENERAL PLAN

- The General Plan identifies the downtown and riverfront areas with a “Mixed Use (MU)” land use designation, and the “Main Street Mixed Use District” and the “Downtown Commercial Mixed Use District” are described in detail on page 2-19. The corresponding zoning designations include C-G, P-D, and C-H (note, however, that the Zoning regulations in Appendix A of the Code also includes Article 48, “Mixed Use Districts Table”).
- Mixed-use land use concepts are already included in the existing policy framework (see page 3-6; Policy CCD-4.2 and Policy CCD-12.2).
- High Density Residential defined as up to 20 dwelling units per acre (this equates to about 3 stories of residential units), “the higher density ranges will accommodate multi-family development such as apartments, condominiums, and town homes,” and “FARs for land use designations will range... to 2.0 in mixed-use districts that also contain medium-to-high density residential.”

The description of Mixed Use includes:

1. *“Within areas identified as MU on the Land Use Map, Specific Plans may be used as an appropriate planning tool to further define the land use mix and to provide additional use guidelines.” A new Specific Plan is not the only option to implement mixed use principles and development standards. An interim step may be to adopt a few modest Zoning Code amendments that could accomplish the same goals (without the significant time, effort, and expense of designing a new Specific Plan).*
 2. *“FARs within the MU districts provide for relatively high intensity development within these locations and may be two-story and occupy nearly 100 percent of the parcel.” Mixed uses should allow for at least 3 stories (ground-floor commercial suites along street frontages, and residential on the upper floors) for financial viability, especially with structured parking or podium parking designs.*
 3. *“Mixed Use districts may permit parking to be located off site, thereby allowing more of the parcel to be used for the building.” Historical buildings often have limited parking or no parking on-site because they pre-date the invention of zoning requirements originally developed in the 20th Century. Accommodation or waivers should be provided to older properties that allow for adaptive reuse (with residential units) without imposing modern parking requirements.*
- Adaptive reuse of historic buildings and downtown with more multifamily residential combined with ground-floor commercial units (mixed uses) can help preserve and sustain the utility of older buildings as well as provide additional revenue sources to property owners to help with their preservation and maintenance efforts.
 - Consider amending the Noise Element (Table 7.3) to accommodate residential units within mixed use buildings, by applying the Commercial interior/exterior noise standards (since the downtown is primarily a commercial district).

ZONING CODE

- Article 48 already includes a “Mixed Use Districts Table” that can be implemented; or utilize the existing Commercial General (C-G) use list which is very similar to the M-U-D list of uses.
 - The current Commercial General (C-G) zoning and development standards could accommodate new mixed use developments, with modest modifications to the development standards for maximum Building Height Limit and minimum parking requirements for mixed uses.
1. Building height: currently limited to 2 stories maximum in the downtown area (downtown area designated “Commercial General (CG)” currently) which is very restrictive for mixed use projects. Slightly more height, such as 3 or 4 stories, should be considered to incentivize new mixed use buildings and adaptive reuse in the downtown (for appropriate density necessary for mixed use projects). It is up to the community to decide what height limit is preferred, but 4 stories would be better for financial feasibility.
 2. Parking requirements: consider alternative parking standards for mixed use projects, and modify or waive parking req. for existing buildings (adaptive reuse). A mixed formula could be: 1 space per 300 or 350 sq. ft. of leasable non-residential space on the ground floor; 1 space per 350 or 400 sq. ft. of non-residential leasable space on the upper floors; not more than 1 space per residential unit within a mixed use building (and “unbundle” the parking so that any residents who do not have a vehicle are not assigned a parking space and not charged extra for a space they don’t use); and 100% of residential guest spaces, if any, may be shared with commercial uses.
- The strategy here is to implement a series of small, incremental changes as needed. If substantial development activity or adaptive reuse projects occur within 5 years, then the development standards can be further adjusted incrementally, if needed (rather than a single larger step such as creating an entirely new Specific Plan).
 - Article 39 (Floodplain Management): Allowing for only non-residential uses and parking areas on the ground floor may accommodate the flood hazard prevention design requirements for residential construction as well as ground floor floodproofing. Residential units on the ground floor within a flood hazard area may trigger elevating the finish floor several feet above the sidewalk or street, which might present problems in terms of engineering design, grading, ADA access, and urban design for storefronts at the frontage.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: PLANNING

SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR)

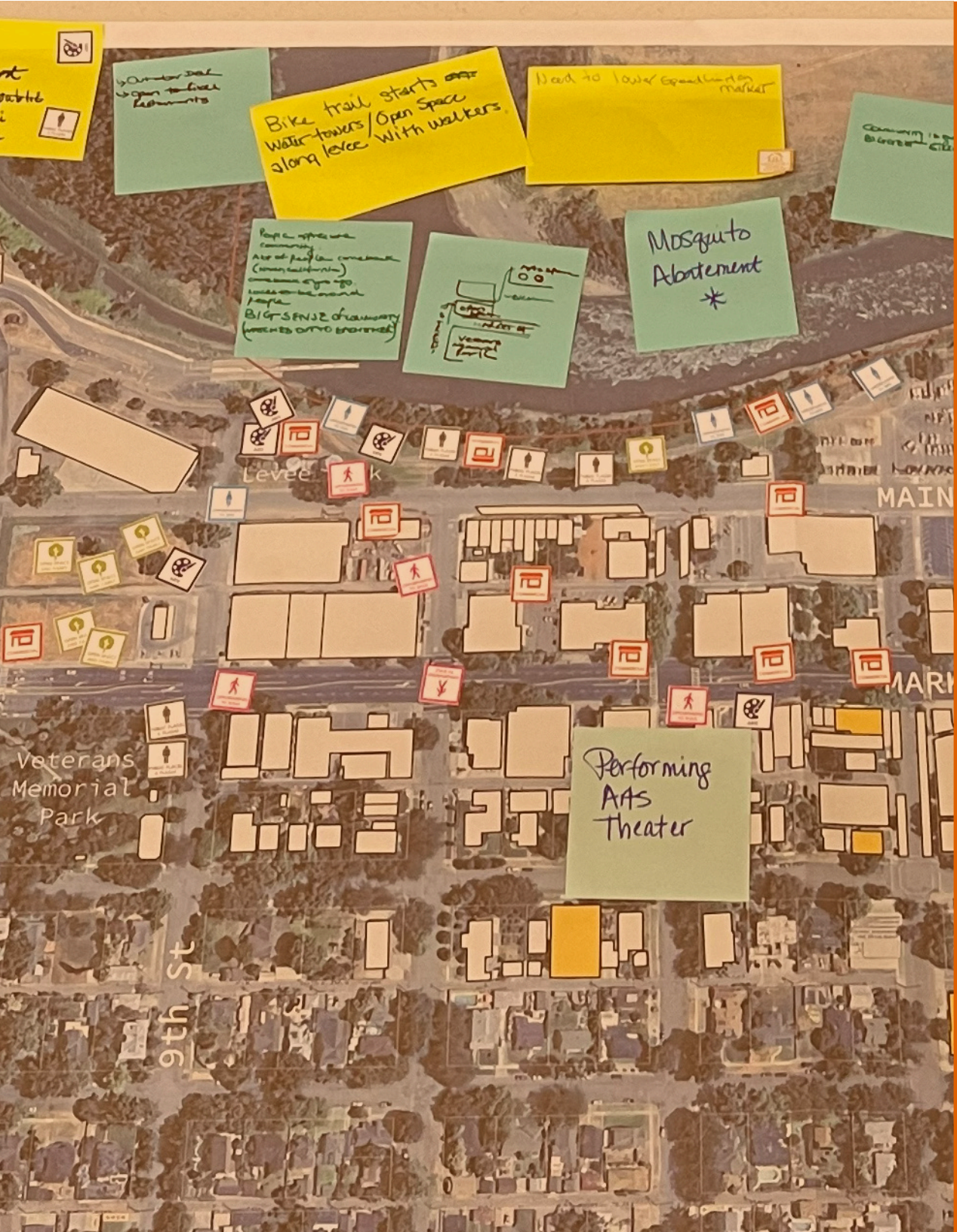
- Identify an administrator to act as the Project Manager (or “champion”) to oversee and guide implementation efforts.
- Begin implementation (installation or construction) for at least one easy project, such as street furniture, public art, Wayfinding signage, decorative lighting, etc.
- Identify potential funding sources such as State grant programs aligned with these projects, and apply for one if appropriate. Identify a staff person to act as a grants coordinator, if needed.

MEDIUM-TERM (1-3 YEARS)

- Begin installation or construction for another easy project to demonstrate results and start to build momentum for additional projects.
- Begin installation or construction for a moderately difficult or more complicated project (such as new street trees, re-striping along Main Street, new street parking concepts, etc.).
- Apply for a second grant (or more) for desirable projects.
- Find and adapt available outdoor spaces for public activities (movie night, market night, etc.).

LONG-TERM (3+ YEARS)

- Begin installation or design/ construction for public infrastructure projects with awarded grant funds (such as bulb-outs at intersections, re-striping along Market Street, or similar efforts).
- Attract new businesses and facilitate retrofitting of older buildings (adaptive reuse).



07

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

GROUP 1: PRESERVATION & ADAPTIVE REUSE MATRIX

1. ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN THROUGH ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

1.a	Artist in Residency Hub	Long term	\$\$\$
1.b	Community Event Center	Long Term	\$\$\$
1.c	Museum/Cultural Center	Long Term	\$\$\$
1.d	Visitor/Tourist Lodging	Long Term	\$\$\$
1.e	Recreation Supply/Retail	Mid-Term	\$\$
1.f	Small Businesses	Short-Term	\$\$
1.g	Small Business Hub	Mid-Term	\$\$
1.h	Brunch Restaurant	Short-Term	\$\$
1.i	Food hall	Mid-Term	\$\$\$
1.j	Fish Market	Mid-Term	\$\$
1.k	Grocery Store	Mid-Term	\$\$\$
1.l	Entertainment Space	Short-Term	\$\$
1.m	Additional Third Spaces	Mid-Term	\$\$
1.n	Theater	Long term	\$\$\$
1.o	Housing	Mid-Term	\$\$\$

2. ESTABLISH A ROBUST PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

2.a	Establish a Robust Public Art Program with Interventions & Murals	Short-Term	\$
2.b	Develop Festival Art Alley	Mid-Term	\$\$
2.c	Street Art Festival	Mid-Term	\$\$
2.d	Find the Flock	Mid-Term	\$\$
2.e	Artist-in-Residency Hub	Long Term	\$\$\$
2.f	Gateway Signage/Wayfinding	Short-Term	\$
2.g	Art for All	Short-Term	\$

GROUP 1: PRESERVATION & ADAPTIVE REUSE MATRIX

3. TACTICAL ACTIVATION OF VACANT SPACES

3.a	Play, Gather, Share Pop Up Park	Mid-Term	\$\$
3.b	Holiday Pop-up programming	Short-Term	\$

4. STEWARD NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH DESIGN GUIDELINES

4.a	Design Guideline Development	Short-Term	\$
4.b	New Developments in underutilized spaces	Long-Term	\$\$\$

5. PRESERVATION-LED REVITALIZATION THROUGH HISTORIC DISTRICTS & MAIN STREETS

5.a	Historic District Establishment	Mid-Term	\$\$
5.b	Main Street Program Establishment	Mid-Term	\$\$

GROUP 2: STREETSCAPES & PUBLIC REALM MATRIX

1. CREATE A SAFE AND CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

1.a	Bicycle Network and Connectivity	Mid-Term	\$\$
1.b	Market Street: Reimagining the Corridor	Long-Term	\$\$\$
1.c	Asphalt Art & Cultural Marker	Short-Term	\$

2. FOSTER A VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE PUBLIC REALM

2.a	5th Street Plaza Design	Mid-Term	\$\$
2.b	Main Street Concepts/Street Design	Mid-Term	\$\$
2.c	Alley Activation	Short-Term	\$

3. PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

3.a	Infill & Resilience on 5th Street	Mid-Term	\$\$
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GROUP 3: RIVERFRONT ACCESS & ACTIVATION MATRIX

1. IMPROVED ACCESS TO TRAIL AND RIVER THROUGH LEVEE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

1.a	Improve Trail Experience & Safety	Short-Term	\$\$
1.b	Create Zones for Recreation, Ecology & Scenic Views	Mid-Term	\$\$
1.c	Connect the City to the Levee	Short-Term	\$

2. LEVEE ACCESS AND RIVERFRONT ACTIVATION

2.a	Improved stair access - lighting & visual engagement	Short-Term	\$
2.b	Farmer's Market Incentives	Short-Term	\$

3. HISTORIC WATERWORKS BUILDING

3.a	Building 1: Multi-use Café & Evening Space	Mid-Term	\$\$
3.b	Building 2: Community Activity & Recreation Center	Mid-Term	\$\$

4. BOAT RAMP ENHANCEMENT

4.a	On-Site Improvements (flag pole, parking, curbed area)	Short-Term	\$
4.b2	Streetscape & 10th Street Entry Arch	Long-Term	\$\$

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

1. COMMUNITY BASICS

1.a	Zoning Code Changes	Mid-Term	\$
1.b	Identify Project Champion	Short Term	\$
1.c	Develop database of funding sources	Short Term	\$

2. MAIN STREET PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

2.a	Join California Main Street/MSA	Short Term	\$
2.b	Develop non-profit Colusa Confluence Main Street Program	Short Term	\$\$
2.c	Achieve National Main Street Status	Mid-Term	\$
2.d	Street Banner Program	Mid-Term	\$
2.e	Main Street Executive Director	Mid-Term	\$\$
2.f	Create a BID/Community Benefit District	Long Term	\$\$



08

APPENDIX

CALIFORNIA MAIN STREET RECOMMENDATIONS

MAIN STREET NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

California Main Street [affiliate membership](#) includes ongoing technical assistance, grant notifications, free registration to state and national Main Street conferences, and [community level membership](#) with Main Street America). Joining will build on the findings of D-PRAT, unlock potential funding and technical assistance as Colusa takes next steps. **Annual Dues \$1,675.**

TIMELINE OVERVIEW:

0-12 months	Join California Main Street / Main Street America	\$
0-12 months	Create Colusa Confluence Main Street Association	\$\$
1-3 years	Achieve National Main Street Affiliate Status	\$
1-3 years	Create Street Banner Program	\$
1-3 years	Hire full time Main Street Executive Director	\$\$
3-5 years	Petition to create a PBID or CBD	\$\$

THE MAIN STREET AMERICA FOUR POINT APPROACH

The Main Street Approach™ offers community-based revitalization initiatives with a practical, adaptable framework for downtown transformation that is easily tailored to local conditions. The Main Street Approach helps communities get started with revitalization and grows with them over time. We applied these four points to create localized recommendations for Colusa.



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MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

The central element of Main Street-driven economic development is the selection of a Main Street Transformation Strategy. These strategies direct the work of the program, based on community input and market understanding. Communities can find a starting point in one of Main Street's Catalyst Strategies: [MSA-CAMS Transformation Strategies- Catalyst Strategies Matrix.pdf](#)

RECOMMENDED MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES:

1. Sports & Recreation

Overview: Connects outdoor activities – camping, boating, hiking, climbing, hunting, etc. – with supporting businesses and amenities. This includes outfitters and equipment sales, restaurants and food services, accommodations, and others. This strategy connects Market, Main and Jay Streets to users of the outdoor recreational attractions on the Sacramento River levee walk.

Target customers: outdoor enthusiasts, a varied spectrum of ages and abilities, and travel lifestyle preferences. While frequently associated with youth, many outdoor enthusiasts are seniors traveling without families or children

Potential Action items:

- Install wayfinding signs to levee trail, boat launch and other points of interest
- Nature-themed public art (e.g. Birds of Colusa)
- Work with sporting equipment businesses like Kittles to offer guided tours
- Boat/bike/Adventure rental company.
- Indoor sports complex / community center
 - [McDermont X](#)

MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

2. Tourists & Tourism

Overview: Addresses people who visit the district from elsewhere, usually to experience something unique to the place, such as history or architecture, arts and culture, or shopping. Tourism and tourism related amenities exist at all price points. Our understanding is that Colusa tends to draw regional tourism. The needs of regional tourists are different from national or international visitors. The goal is to create a place that locals love, and visitors will love it, too. Tourism brings outside consumer spending and adds to local buying power but locals may not be happy about outsiders making it feel “less local”. Increased tourism can result in higher prices (food, housing) for locals.

Target customers: This would attract outdoors enthusiasts, heritage travelers, cultural tourists, weekend/second home-owners, and resort-goers. Opportunities for conventioners and business travelers.

Example Action items:

- Install way-finding signs geared toward those unfamiliar with district
- Convene regional tourism professionals to share data
- Set up large-format maps in stores and have customers mark where they live

Once a transformation strategy is selected, the next step is to generate a workplan. This part of the process works best when a local stakeholder group can brainstorm consensus on the workplan elements. Stakeholder sessions and goal-finding work conducted at the initial D-PRAT site visit provided comprehensive feedback and a great start to the workplan development process. [CAMS-MSA-Main-Street-Transformation-Strategy-WorkPlan-Template](#)

MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MAIN STREET DISTRICTS

Historic District Information:

- National designation from NPS. [Sample application.](#)
- [CA Certified Local Historic Districts.](#) There are only 12 districts in the state of CA. This can be an intensive and expensive process, so this would not be recommended as an initial action.
- [Mills Act](#), which significantly reduces property taxes for homeowners who commit to preserving qualifying historic properties.

Creation of Colusa Confluence 501(c)3 Main Street Association

California Main Street would be happy to provide a proposal for the creation of a Downtown Business Association in Colusa. The following is a guideline to the work involved.

0-12 Months:

- **Obtaining 501(c)3 status.** Build a small coalition of stakeholders willing to serve as charter members. Can be as little as 5-7 people to get started. File paperwork and establish bylaws.
- **Complete Main Street transformation strategy workplan and corresponding budget.** The central element of Main Street-driven economic development is the selection of a Main Street Transformation Strategy. These strategies direct the work of the program, based on community input and market understanding. Includes in person stakeholder meetings.
- **Develop an initial set of services offered.** Consider creating a co-op marketing membership with deliverables based on membership level.
- **Analysis of available funding sources.** The largest funding source for Main Streets is typically their municipality followed closely by event revenue ([see Main Street Trends Survey](#)). Develop and enter into a fee-for-service contract with the city to host events, run promotions and provide support to downtown business owners. Additional fundraising tactics would be suggested,
- **Building a full 501(c)3 Board of Directors** would include business owners as well as stakeholders and residents who are interested in supporting Downtown revitalization efforts. Example: [Downtown SLO.](#)
- **Establish committees** which follow the Main Street Four Point Approach.

MAIN STREET TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

1-3 Years

- **Hire Executive Director.** Develop job description and duties. ED could be a consultant. ED does not need to be a business owner. Set salary of Executive Director by referencing the [average salary range](#) for a Main Street Director. If full time, recommended \$70k exempt for full time W2. Explore incentive-based bonus pay.
- **Create a street banner program (placemaking / fundraiser)**
 - Banners centered in the historic core or where pedestrian visitation is most likely.
 - Banners would feature the City of Colusa logo or downtown association logo.
 - Designs could also feature the work of local artists. Businesses buy a banner(s) to advertise their business name on the bottom.
 - EXAMPLE: [Encinitas Arts Alive Banner Program](#)
- **Qualify as a Main Street America Affiliate Community / Designated Community**
 - Utilize Main Street America Booms Tracker (Vacancy tracker)

3-5 Years:

- Petition to create a 501(c)6 Assessment District ([e.g. Community Benefit District](#)). Funds could be redirected to physical improvements and maintenance of streetscape items (benches, trash cans, public art, tree lights, banners). Sometimes, assessment dollars can be used for salary or marketing if deliverables are clearly defined. The Assessment District Board would be exclusively made up of assessment paying members and the agenda solely focused on allocating BID assessment dollars. 501(c)3 would sign a MOU with the 501(c)6 to administer funds as directed by the 501(c)6 Board.
- Become an Accredited Main Street program. This is the highest designation achievable within the Main Street network. Communities must meet a set of [baseline requirements](#).

GRANT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Here are some examples of funding opportunities our members are sent on a regular basis. Some of these grants are partnered with Main Street America and members receive favorable marks on their application.

- **BOOKMARKS:**

- Main Street America Opportunities and Events [Learn More >](#)
- California Consulting list of Grants for Cities and Counties [Learn More >](#)
- CalTrans Transportation Grants. [Learn More >](#)
- Preservation-based grants from CA State Parks. [Learn More >](#)
- **T-Mobile Hometown Grants.** Grantees will receive up to \$50K to fund projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in your community. Just a year and a half into the \$25 million, five-year initiative, T-Mobile has given more than \$5.5 million dollars to projects across 37 states. **Submissions close March 31.** [Learn More >](#)
- **AARP Community Action Grant.** Since its inception in 2017, the AARP Community Challenge has awarded 2,100 grants totaling \$24.3 million to projects that benefit residents — especially those age 50 and older — and accelerate community change. **Deadline March 4, 2026.** [Learn More >](#)
- **USDA Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program.** This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings. **The deadline is rolling.** [Learn More >](#)
- **Community Heart and Soul Seed Grants.** Funding to implement the CHS model. Open to towns of 30,000 or less. Requires a one-to-one match. **Applications accepted on a rolling basis.** [Learn More >](#)
- **Funding Guides:**
 - **Federal Funding Sources for Main Streets.** The new resource from Main Street America offers a curated list of over 25 federal grant programs that can be used on Main Streets, with key information like eligible entities and matching requirements. It also includes tips and tricks for successfully capturing federal resources. [Get the guide >](#)
 - **Guide:** AARP Pop-Up Placemaking Tool Kit. [Learn More >](#)
- **Course: Finding New Sources of Funding in Challenging Times.** [Learn More >](#)



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