

The purpose of the Chico Downtown Vision Plan is to depict Downtown Chico in 2030 and beyond if the General Plan Goals, Policies and Actions are optimized. Unlike the Land Use Plan or Circulation Plan, the Downtown Vision Plan is not a master plan or a blueprint for future development. This plan does not mandate any parcel or site specific development solution. Rather, the Vision Plan is an illustration intended to reflect the community’s aspirations for the future of Downtown. Ideally, this Plan will foster the gradual transition and enhancement of Downtown over the next 20 to 30 years and beyond.

The Vision Plan is based on an overarching statement of the community’s vision for Downtown and is consistent with the community-formulated goals contained in this Element. Opportunities for preserving and enhancing the traditional character and function of the Downtown are shown in the Vision Plan, along with new development opportunities consistent with the policy framework in this Element.

The Vision Plan’s 12 Concepts

During the outreach and analysis for this Element, several core concepts were identified as important future features and improvements for a thriving Downtown Chico. The following 12 concepts are portrayed in the Downtown Chico Vision Plan.

Concept #1 – Downtown Intensification

The Vision Plan seeks to illustrate that underutilized parcels have given way to high intensity mixed use, developments.

Concept #2 – South Downtown District

The area south of 6th Street on the Vision Plan, commonly referred to as South Downtown, can host a complementary mix of uses that support Downtown and incorporate pedestrian improvements. This area allows more service commercial uses than the north and contains lot sizes that lend themselves to more half block and full block redevelopment; therefore, considerable opportunities exist here.

Concept #3 – Pedestrian Connectivity

Pedestrian activity and connectivity is essential to the continued success of Downtown Chico. Maintaining the street grid pattern, enhancing the streetscape with amenities such as sidewalk dining opportunities, and providing ample public parking all serve to promote a healthy pedestrian environment.

Concept #4 – Mixed Use Development with Integrated Parking Structures

The Vision Plan purposely avoids showing any new, stand alone parking structures in Downtown. Rather, the concept is for all new structures to be “wrapped” and integrated with mixed use development that provides public parking as part of the overall development concept. The mixed use parking structures have been strategically

identified on the Vision Plan to meet the demand of a residentially denser and more intensely developed Downtown.

Concept #5 –Traffic Calming

While the Downtown needs adequate traffic flow to survive, it does not need speeding traffic passing through. Streets on the Vision Plan accommodate parking and slow the speed of vehicles to provide a safe pedestrian environment.

Concept # 6 – Integration of California State University, Chico

CSU Chico borders and blends into the commercial and residential fabric of Downtown Chico where students, faculty, staff and the public interact on a daily basis. The Vision Plan promotes pedestrian and bike connections to the University and Bidwell Park through trails and other improvements, and town and gown partnerships to improve these historical relationships.

Concept #7 – Preservation of Historic Buildings

The large number of historic buildings in Downtown are preserved, protected and enhanced on the Vision Plan. It is anticipated that incongruent buildings detracting from the traditional “Main Street” feel of Downtown will be ultimately redeveloped or renovated to better fit the Downtown neighborhood character.

Concept #8 – Development Transition at Neighborhood Edges

While Downtown is to become an intensive mixed use center, it is important to protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from any negative influences that higher density projects might present. The Vision Plan shows a transition in development intensity at key neighborhood edge locations.

Concept #9 - Downtown as the Cultural and Civic Community Core

As the City of Chico has grown, the role of Downtown has diversified. In addition to its traditional role as commercial center, Downtown is also the focus for governmental and cultural affairs for the community. These uses are very important to the continued health and vitality of Downtown.

Concept #10 – Mixed Use Development

In order to foster a healthier, more sustainable future for Downtown, mixed use development is continually encouraged. Incorporating more residential uses in Downtown provides a ready-made market for commercial success. Downtown Chico is established as the focus for mixed use density and intensification in the City.

Concept #11 – Open Space Protection and Enhancement

As Downtown matures and urbanizes, it becomes very important to protect and enhance existing open spaces, creeks, parks and plazas for human enjoyment.

Concept #12 – Downtown as a Key Transportation Hub

Downtown is a place for pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles, trucks and buses. Downtown is considered the hub of several modes of mobility and as such has the requisite facilities that assist in making it a special and safe place for all modes of transportation.

Other Important Vision Plan Ideas

In addition to the 12 concepts listed above, there are several other important design and development ideas reflected in the Vision Plan. These ideas will likely be incorporated into Element policies and action items.

1. In the future, parking structures in Downtown will be “wrapped” by development. Freestanding parking structure architecture is not desirable.
2. The Farmers’ market will continue to exist and thrive within Downtown.
3. Downtown will contain a robust diversity of uses.
4. Streets will not be permanently closed to vehicular traffic or otherwise compromised.
5. Surface parking lots owned by the City offer opportunities for new mixed use development.
6. All private development will be encouraged to provide public amenities such as plazas, public art and roof gardens.
7. Second Street will be designed as a bicycle friendly street connecting to CSU Chico.
8. Development adjacent to existing neighborhoods should gradually transition to lower intensity.
9. Buildings and landscape features will be clustered along the street to maximize the pedestrian environment with continuous visual interest and activity.
10. Developers of new buildings will maximize use and development opportunities with multi-story buildings.
11. When parking structures are not utilized, on-site surface parking will be behind buildings, not between the building and the sidewalk.