

# MEMORANDUM

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TO **City of Riverside**

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FROM **PlaceWorks**

SUBJECT **Context Memorandum | Riverside Downtown Station Area TOD Action Plan**

PROJECT NUMBER **WRC 09.3**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Context Memorandum provides an audit of existing planning documents, draft Specific Plan updates, and previously completed visioning studies regarding the Riverside-Downtown Metrolink Station study area. The purpose of this review is to provide historical context for the vision, goals, and development potential of the area, while identifying gaps, contradictions, and areas requiring further study to inform the recommended Focus Area and catalyst projects.

### Documents Reviewed:

- Riverside Marketplace Specific Plan & Draft Environmental Impact Report (1991)
- Transit Oriented Development Marketplace Study by Urban Land Institute (ULI) (2009)
- Draft Marketplace Specific Plan Update (2012)
- SCAG Riverside High-Quality Transit Area Vision Plan (2019)
- RCTC Riverside-Downtown Station Improvements Draft Environmental Impact Report (2021)
- RCTC Transit Oriented Communities Strategic Plan Corridor Plan (2024)
- RCTC Transit Oriented Communities Strategic Plan Station Plan - Riverside - Downtown (2024)
- Housing Implementation Strategies Memorandum for the Downtown Metrolink Station (2024)

## 2. REGULATORY AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING HISTORY

### 2.1 Riverside Marketplace Specific Plan & Environmental Impact Report (1991)

The 1991 plan focused on revitalization, historic preservation, and commercial development. It emphasized protecting the Union Pacific and Santa Fe stations and citrus packinghouses, noting the importance of “preservation and enhancement of historic buildings and elements.” The plan introduced eight sub-areas with tailored development standards but limited residential uses and envisioned cul-de-sacs and larger blocks that conflicted with walkability goals. While it facilitated key improvements—such as the Metrolink station (1993) and Vine Street reconstruction—it has not resulted in transit-oriented residential development.

### Land Use and Circulation Plan

The Land Use Plan creates eight sub-areas within the overall Specific Plan Area. Each sub-area provides custom development standards. The Land Use Plan is divided into two phases. Phase I is the area adjacent to the 91 Freeway, extending back to the Santa Fe railroad tracks, and serves as the core of the plan, containing a concentration of historic structures.

The proposed circulation improvements include eliminating through traffic in residential neighborhoods through the introduction of cul-de-sacs; constructing a slip ramp connecting University Avenue and Mulberry Street to Vine Street; and reserving setbacks to accommodate the future widening of the Freeway.

The parking district strategy recognizes that historic packing houses often cover their entire parcels. To address this constraint, the plan encourages shared parking arrangements among contemporary uses.

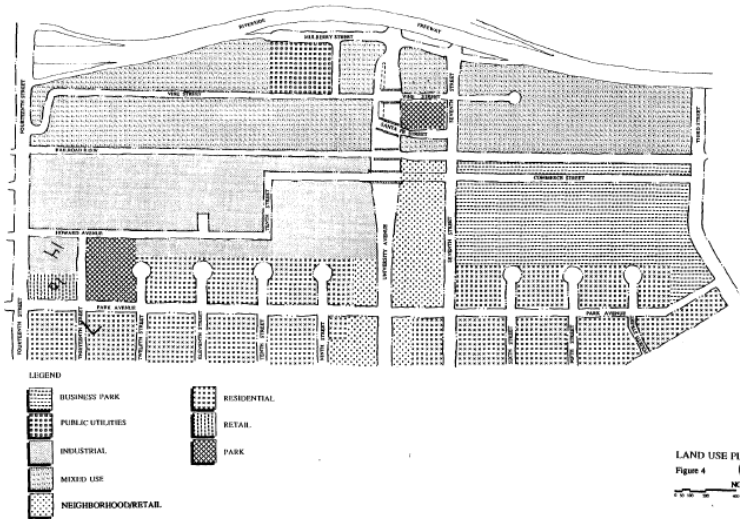


Figure 1. 1991 Specific Plan Land Use Map

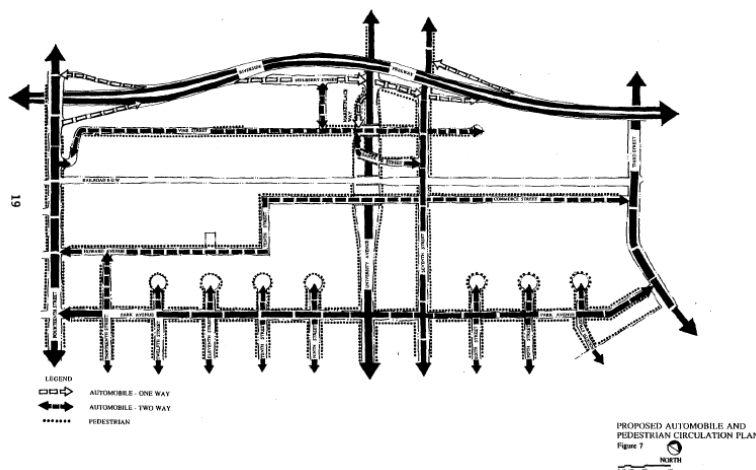


Figure 2. 1991 Specific Plan Circulation Map

### Urban Design Concept

At the time when the initial Specific Plan was drafted, a large amount of land was underutilized or vacant. The Urban Design concept detailed in the Plan is to utilize the underlying historic urban character of the community, while allowing for the addition of complementary new structures and urban design elements. The architectural design concept emphasizes that new structures should be designed to complement the context of the older structures and the historical period of the Central Marketplace. The plan proposes a pedestrian promenade along Vine Street as the primary north-south aligned pedestrian connection within the Riverside Marketplace.

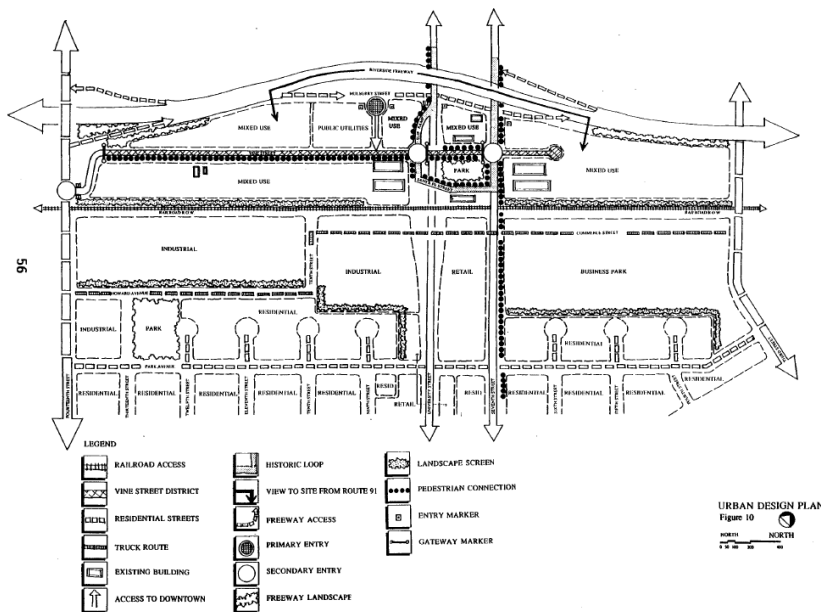


Figure 3. Urban Design Plan

### Environmental Impact Report

The Environmental Impact Report section notes potential toxic hazards such as underground tanks and surface soil pollution. Development in these areas requires a Phase I environmental audit, and potentially a Phase II study involving soil borings and surface soils evaluation to assess toxic substances.

### Impact of the Plan

Since the adoption of the Plan, many projects have been facilitated, including:

- The development of the Metrolink Station in 1993
- Circulation and street improvements including the reconstruction of Vine Street
- The widening of the SR-91 freeway and construction of ramps
- The preservation and adaptive reuse of several historic structures
- The provision of infrastructure

### Gaps and Constraints

- Despite the mixed-use goals, the plan lacks a variety of uses and especially does not envision residential uses around the transit hub. The housing demand generated by new jobs in the area is pushed to the south and east of the Specific Plan boundaries.

- The plan limits higher density around the station area. This does not help create a Transit-oriented neighborhood near major transit stations.
- The circulation plan proposes bigger blocks and cul-de-sacs which are very different from the historic fine-grained street grids. Implementation of cul-de-sacs does not contribute to a walkable, pedestrian-friendly urban environment and to-date has not been realized.

## 2.2 Urban Land Institute (ULI) TOD Marketplace Study (2009)

The ULI study introduced a TOD oriented vision, recommending mixed use development, active ground floors, a variety of parking options, and a “Transit Village District.” It highlighted the need for air quality analysis, industrial adjacency evaluation, and funding strategies. The parking strategy introduced parking on accessible from multiple locations instead of a centralized, single use parking structure. The concept of a “transit room” featured a weather-protected plaza. The study also emphasized the importance of context sensitive street design and public private partnerships.

## 2.3 Marketplace Specific Plan (2012)

The 2012 draft plan update was intended to incentivize residential and mixed-use development, acknowledging the area’s diverse working-class history and constraints such as freight noise, freeway barriers, and an “undesirable public realm.” It proposed nine new zoning districts, including a high-density Transit Core District allowing 40–60 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) and building heights up to 100 feet. Recommended improvements included utility undergrounding, streetscape upgrades, a UCR–Downtown shuttle, and a parking structure with active ground floors. However, the plan lacked strong parking reform, historic reuse incentives, and funding mechanisms. This draft update of the Specific plan was never adopted.



Figure 4. 2012 Draft Specific Plan Zoning Diagram

### Gaps and Constraints

- While the plan acknowledges that historic parcels face challenges in accommodating on-site parking, it does not present a strong strategy for reducing parking requirements. High-density residential zones are located near active freight rail lines, yet the plan does not propose adequate measures to mitigate noise and air quality impacts.
- The plan recognizes the importance of adaptive reuse for historic buildings but lacks policies that provide meaningful incentives. Overall, it does not identify viable funding mechanisms to address the issues outlined in the plan.

### 2.3 SCAG Riverside HQTAs Vision Plan (2019)

The 2019 Vision Plan is a visioning document created in partnership with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) as part of the High-Quality Transit Area (HQTAs) Analysis Program. The goal of the program is to promote future job and housing growth near high-quality transit through actionable projects. The Vision Plan includes an implementation plan and customized financial strategy that identifies stakeholders, cost estimates, and potential funding streams for specific projects. The Vision Plan also includes a toolkit which provides a range of physical investments and strategies to construct and measure impacts of well-designed TOD's.

This plan envisioned an ambitious TOD district with 5,080 housing units, 1.4 million sq. ft. of office, and a Mobility Hub. It emphasized affordable housing, sustainability, and placemaking, stating the need to “promote an environmentally-sustainable TOD district.” Key area enhancements included a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over SR-91 and a 12th Street pedestrian tunnel.

The plan assumed significant demand for residential and office development at densities and intensities that lack strong precedent in the local submarket.



Figure 5. 2019 Vision Plan Illustrative Buildout Scenario

## Land Use Strategy

The Vision Plan area is divided into four districts.

- Transit Core District: Focused on high-density transit-oriented development (TOD).
- Commerce Street District: Features adaptive reuse of historic warehouse for retail, hospitality, food halls, or creative offices.
- Park Avenue District: Primarily consists of residential uses with limited office space and very limited retail space.
- North Park District: Largely consist of office and employment space.

The opportunity sites at proximity to the Mobility Hub are considered primary opportunity sites and are envisioned for high-density TOD. The two major sites identified for redeveloping are the Ironworks site and the 1000-stall commuter parking lots owned by RCTC. The Regulating Concept Plan outlines the proposed height, density, intensity, and development guidelines for key redevelopment areas in the Pilot Project Area. The building height ranges from up to 3 stories to 15+ stories. High density towers are envisioned immediately adjacent to the Mobility Hub.

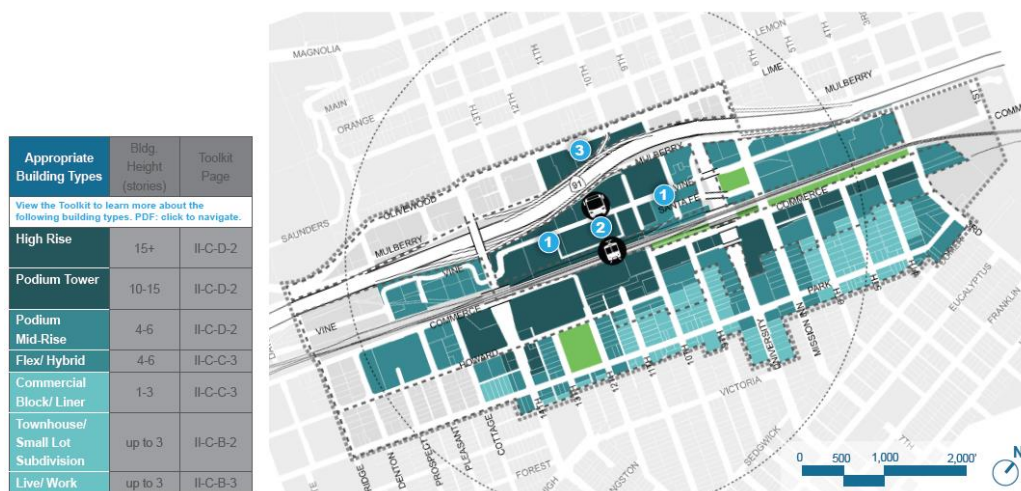


Figure 6. 2019 Vision Plan Regulating Concept Plan

## Infrastructure & Public Realm Strategy

The Vision Plan proposes a connected network of bicycle facilities and pedestrian/ landscaping connections. The plan recommends capitalizing on these walkability improvements as opportunities for stormwater filtration and recapture through the use of bioswales and other means.

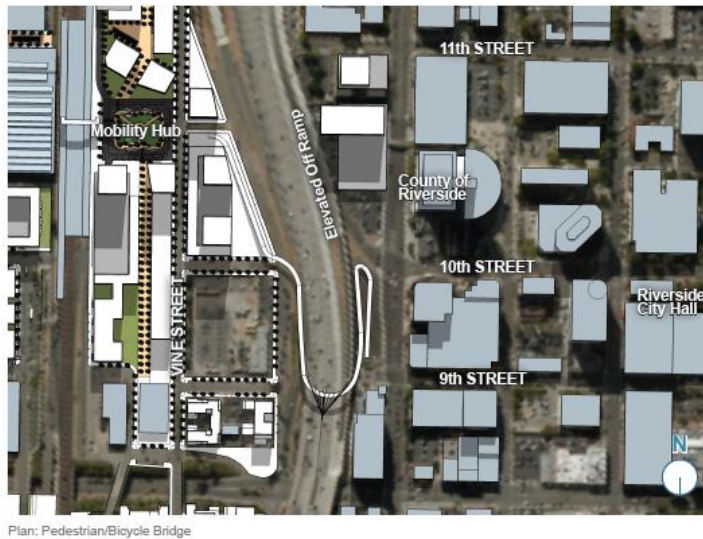
Shared parking is encouraged amongst neighboring properties, new structures are consolidated in dense pockets of the HQTAs, and additional connections to existing transit infrastructure are added. The strategy supplements the existing parking supply with three new shared parking structures at and around the Metrolink station. The parking structures are 4-5 floors with 647 to 1207 stalls.

## Key Improvements

- A Mobility Hub and a bus layover facility. The layover facility is south of the existing substation along Vine Street, with up to 13 bus bays. The Mobility Hub is adjacent to Metrolink platform, and includes

a loop that frames a central town square. Within the town square, transit-supportive amenities are envisioned.

- A bicycle/pedestrian bridge that spans the 91 Freeway connecting the Transit Core and Mobility Hub to Downtown Riverside. The western end of the bridge connects directly to 9th Street, which provides a direct connection to City Hall and the Main Street Pedestrian Mall.
- 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Tunnel underneath the existing rail corridor connecting the Park Avenue District and the Eastside neighborhood to the Transit Core District.
- Bike lanes and complete street improvements along Vine Street, Mission Inn Avenue, and Commerce Street.



*Figure 7. 2019 Vision Plan Proposed Mobility Hub and Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge*

### Gaps and Constraints

- The 2019 Vision Plan envisions ambitious high-density development that is not currently supported by market conditions.
- The Plan proposes highly ambitious infrastructure projects such as mobility hub and pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the freeway that require additional study and analysis and funding support to be feasible.
- The Plan does not provide sufficient strategies to mitigate noise and air pollution impacts from nearby freight rail operations on proposed residential and mixed-use development.
- While the plan identifies affordable housing for existing residents as a key goal, it lacks clear, actionable anti-displacement strategies to support that objective.

### 2.4 RCTC Riverside-Downtown Station Improvements Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (2021)

In 2021 the Riverside County Transportation Commission, in collaboration with Metrolink and the Federal Transit Administration, prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report on proposed improvements at the Downtown Riverside Metrolink Station. The project was primarily focused on transit and facility improvements including new tracks and passenger platforms, additional parking, and modified bus drop off area, among others. The DEIR found the project to have significant and unavoidable impacts to Cultural Resources and Noise. Public comments reflected concern for the demolition of historic resources, added

noise, and increased traffic. The project has been paused indefinitely, citing lack of funding availability and challenges with property acquisition.

### Project Purpose

The purpose of the Project was to expand capacity and improve operations and efficiency, connectivity, and the passenger experience at the Riverside-Downtown Station. Objectives of the Project included:

- Expand platform capacity to meet passenger train storage needs
- Allow for train meets off the BNSF mainline and minimize impacts to BNSF operations
- Improve train connectivity and passenger accessibility while minimizing impacts on improvement projects near the station that are already designed or in construction
- Facilitate more efficient passenger flow and reduce dwell times
- Enhance safety and access for station users
- Accommodate projected future demand

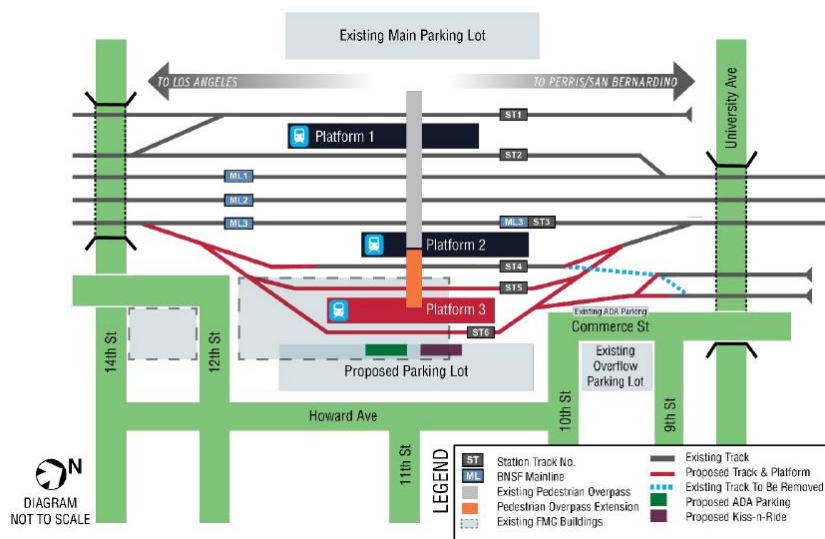


Figure 8. RCTC Riverside-Downtown Station Improvements Draft EIR Proposed improvements

### Unavoidable Significant Impacts under CEQA and Adverse Effects under NEPA

- **Cultural/Section 4(f):** Former Food Machinery Corporation (FMC) Plant 1 building. The Build Alternative would require the demolition of the FMC Plant 1 building. Demolition of the historic structures would also cause indirect impacts to the former FMC Plant 2 building’s integrity of setting and association.
- **Noise:** If the Build Alternative with Design Option 1B, 2B, or 3B is selected; there would be potentially significant noise impacts to two residences at 3021 12th Street during demolition of the former FMC Plant 1 building (Prism Aerospace building).

### Project Impact

The project faced local opposition regarding historic preservation. In March 2023, the Riverside County Transportation Commission officially voted to terminate the expansion plans.

## **2.5 RCTC Transit Oriented Communities Strategic Plan Corridor Plan (2024)**

The 2024 Corridor Plan is a strategic plan to serve as a planning and development resource for communities along the 91/Perris Valley Line (PVL). The Corridor Plan provides coordinated guidance for the corridor as a whole as well as eight Metrolink stations along the corridor. The study identified a significant inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels, with coordination amongst stakeholders being a significant challenge. A Vision Plan for the Downtown Metrolink Station is a key component to the overall strategic plan. As part of the Vision Plan, a Priority Projects and Implementation Matrix are included which identifies key actions to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan, as well as a “Project Champion”, estimated time frame, and potential funding sources.

### **Vision and Goals**

This Corridor Plan pairs with eight individual Station Vision Plans to provide coordinated guidance at both the corridor and individual station level. The vision is that the 91/PVL commuter rail corridor provides individual and community-level benefits through enhanced mobility, affordability, and long-term environmental and social sustainability. TOC along the 91/PVL corridor represents true integration of land use and transportation.

The goals of the study are to support local economic development, increase Metrolink ridership, and decrease auto trips along the corridor. The supporting goals include:

- Elevate the integration of land use, mobility and urban design
- Identify and enhance community benefits (such as new open space, civic facilities, affordable housing, etc).
- Diversify housing options and price points.

- Accelerate implementation through a unified approach to TOC for the station area communities.

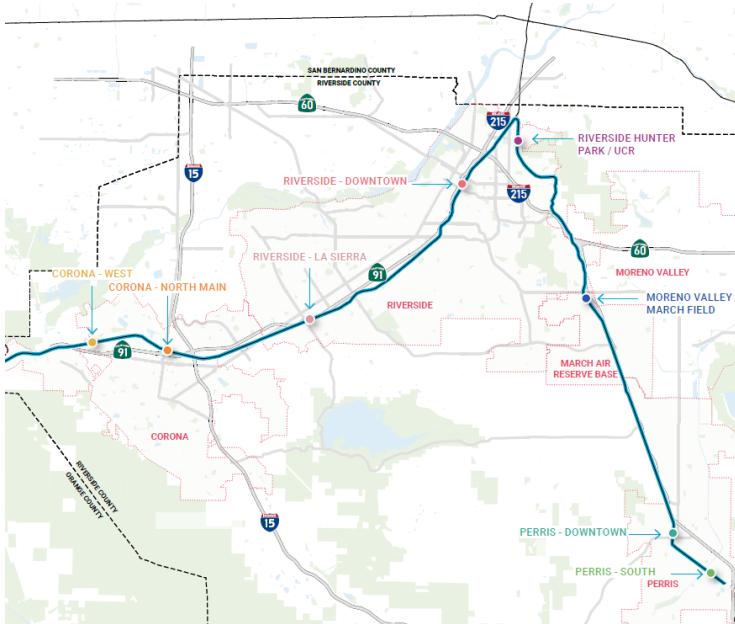


Figure 9. The 91/PVL Commuter Rail Corridor

### Corridor Opportunities and Barriers

The study identified a range of opportunities and constraints shared across the corridor, all of which are present at the Riverside–Downtown Station.

Common Opportunities included:

- A significant inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels that can be used for redevelopment.
- Significant opportunities for adaptive reuse in the form of vacant industrial buildings along the rail lines
- Potential to capitalize on existing improvements.
- Proximity to major destinations and employment centers, and opportunities to bridging the first/last mile gap.

Common Barriers included:

- Parking and Limited station access: visibility, entry points, bike and pedestrian connections.
- Barrier from freight-related traffic
- Limited frequency of trains.
- Community concerns regarding new transit-oriented development projects. Within the Riverside–Downtown station area gentrification and lack of affordable housing are a top concern.
- Challenges with coordination among multiple stakeholders.

### Station Area Vision Plan – Riverside Downtown

The corridor plan gives an overview of each station area vision plan, including for Riverside–Downtown Station, which is reviewed as a separate plan in Section 2.7, below.

The Plan emphasizes the need for coordinated policies across all corridor communities. In the short to medium term, it recommends a strategic corridor-wide approach for adopting affordable housing strategies, to reduce real estate market imbalances and competition. It also proposes corridor-wide investment attraction campaigns to highlight market characteristics, opportunity sites and public-private partnership opportunities. The investment attraction strategies could include a marketing plan or a business attraction strategy. In addition, the Plan supports providing business support services for existing commercial uses to thrive in the changing landscape as Transit Oriented Communities begin to take hold.

In the long term, the Plan called for establishing a community benefits framework. By creating a shared framework, corridor communities create a level playing field that could deter disadvantageous competition among themselves and clarify what is desired from developers. The plan also highlights regional coordination on Financing among the cities (or other potential funding recipients) to make the corridor more competitive.

### Gaps and Constraints

- The TOC Strategic Corridor Plan is more on vision level, and does not include implementation actions on specific improvements, or phasing/ priorities.
- The 91/PVL has a waiting period of 45 minutes between each train and provides very limited services on weekends. The frequency of services is low to support strong TODs.
- The Plan acknowledges Barrier from freight-related traffic, and community concerns over noise, however, does not provide concrete strategies to mediate these problems.

## 2.6 RCTC Transit Oriented Communities Strategic Plan Station Vision Plan – Riverside Downtown (2024)

The 2024 Station Vision Plan for Riverside – Downtown Station works in parallel with the 2024 Corridor Vision Plan mentioned above. It specifies the vision and action strategies for land use, mobility and placemaking improvements in the station area.

### Framework and Vision

The Framework includes three major districts and several key mobility corridors that guide the vision for the Riverside – Downtown station area. One of the three major districts is partially within the study area in the memo – Commerce Street District. The districts establish future land use patterns and densities designed to promote pedestrian and cyclist activity, while improving access to the station and other transit services. Major mobility corridors, such as Vine Street, Mission Inn Avenue, and Commerce Street will serve as key connections between Downtown and the Eastside neighborhood.

Similar to other efforts the vision for the Riverside-Downtown station area is a vibrant city center, balancing increased economic activity with preservation of its historic identity.

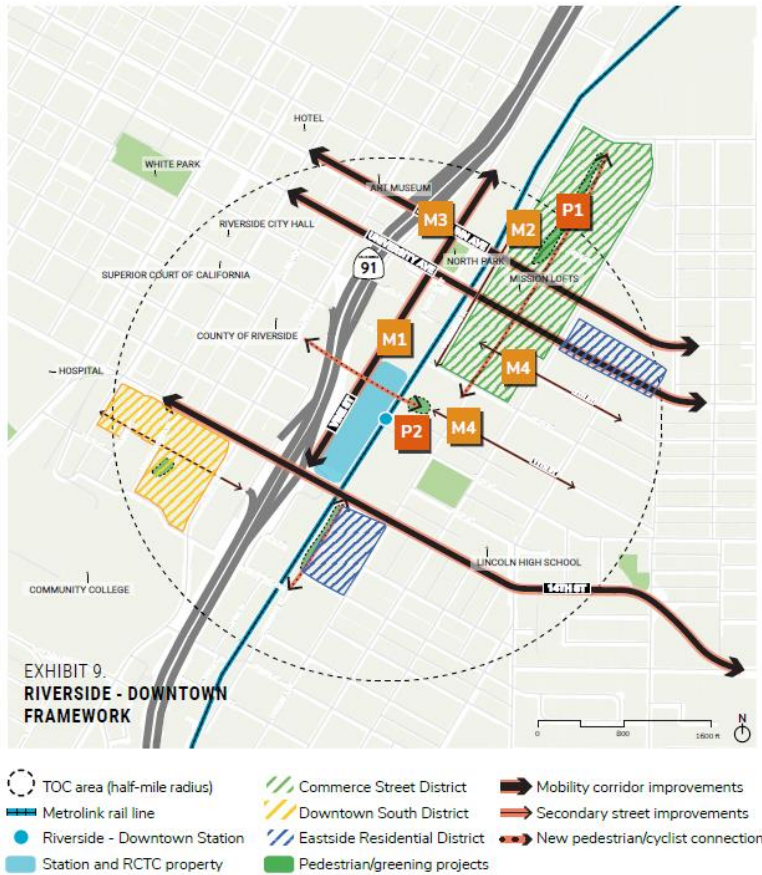


Figure 10. Riverside-Downtown Framework in 2024 RCTC TOD Strategic Plan Station Plan

### Commerce Street District and Overall Land Use

The Commerce Street District envisions a revitalized pedestrian-oriented corridor supported by mixed-use affordable housing, communal creative spaces, breweries, and artisan shops. This opportunity area could incorporate adaptive reuse strategies to restore existing industrial buildings and redevelop vacant sites. Though higher density could be concentrated closer to the station, building heights east of Commerce Street could transition down to ensure that the scale of new development is compatible with the Eastside neighborhood.

Land use objectives:

- Encourage mixed-use building typologies that are compatible with, and that preserve the character of, the existing residential Eastside community
- Provide opportunities for mixed-income affordable housing within the Marketplace District Specific Plan area
- Preserve and reinforce the unique industrial heritage that has defined the city’s Seventh Street Historic District, Seventh Street East Historic District, and the Citrus Thematic Industrial Potential Historic District which all overlap within the immediate vicinity of the station

## Mobility Improvements

The Station Plan lists three mobility improvement projects:

- Add passenger loading platform and two station tracks
- Eastside Layover Facility Expansion – extend layover facility across Mission Inn Avenue and along Commerce Street
- PVL track connection to Riverside Downtown Station – 4th Main

Mobility project objectives:

- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety, and provide additional connections to Downtown across the 91 Freeway
- Strengthen connections between UCR, the Eastside community, and the station
- Establish Commerce Street as a primary mobility corridor
- Reduce parking demand by investing in alternative modes of transportation

## Street Improvements and Placemaking Strategies

The Station Plan proposes streetscape improvements on Vine Street, Commerce Street, Mission Inn Avenue, and 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Street, including added bike lanes, safe crossings, street parking and narrowed travel lanes. It also introduces placemaking strategies, such as pedestrian and cyclist amenities and public space programming within the Commerce Street Artisan District and the East Side Walkway.

- **Commerce Street Artisan District:** A proposed district that transforms vacant industrial buildings into a lively mixed-use area centered on local artists, musicians, boutiques, restaurants, breweries, and galleries. Commerce Street could potentially serve as a pedestrian-friendly “festival street.” Key elements include citrus trees, creative spaces, festival/pedestrian streets, and a linear park and multi-use path.
- **Eastside Walkway:** A pedestrian-oriented corridor serving as a primary entrance from the Eastside community. It would enhance access to the station through improved landscaping, signage, shading, and public art, creating a more inviting and legible pathway.

## Implementation Actions

The Station Plan listed actions from immediate- to long-term in land use, mobility and placemaking, with associated potential funding sources.

- **Land Use Actions:** Recommends streamlining affordable housing development and updating relevant specific plans including the Riverside Marketplace Specific Plan in the near term. It also proposes in the mid term to identify key redevelopment sites, conduct a market study and pro forma analysis, and explore partnerships with developers and investors that align with redevelopment goals such as mixed-use development and TOD. It also recommends a feasibility study for potential adaptive reuse projects and an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance to encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties.
- **Mobility Actions:** The Plan focuses on advancing feasibility studies and phased implementation of high-priority projects identified in the City’s Pedestrian Safeguarding, Active Transportation, Complete Streets and Trails (PACT) Master Plan, incorporating recommendations from the Station Vision Plan such as intersection improvements, sidewalk installations, and new bikeways to ensure

alignment with the PACT. It also emphasizes coordinating with the City of Riverside’s Capital Improvement Program to prioritize funding and delivery of key projects, while implementing first/last-mile connectivity enhancements outlined in the RTA First & Last Mile Plan, including wayfinding, expanded bicycle networks, improved transit access, and micromobility options. In addition, the strategy calls for evaluating existing parking demand, promoting structured and shared parking solutions, and establishing public-private partnerships to support infrastructure investment and long-term mobility improvements.

- **Placemaking Actions:** The plan proposes updating the Marketplace Specific Plan to establish design standards for the Commerce Street District that reflect cultural values. It also recommends improving wayfinding at the Downtown Station. Community collaboration is emphasized to ensure design and programming respond to local needs. Additionally, the plan calls for expanding the urban tree canopy through preservation, new planting programs, incentives, and alignment with urban forestry best practices.

## 2.7 Housing Implementation Strategies Memo for the Downtown Metrolink Station (2024)

### Background

In 2023, BAE and PlaceWorks (“project team”) worked with the City of Riverside on the SCAG/Metrolink Station Area Analysis project. The work effort was funded through the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) grant program, intended to accelerate housing production and help meet the region’s goals of producing 1.3 million new housing units by 2029.

As part of this effort, the project team worked with the City to select two sites near the Downtown Riverside Metrolink Station to test key provisions of the City’s Municipal Code. The team created TOD site plans and development prototypes associated with the Mixed-Use Urban and Specific Plan Overlay to identify any barriers to achieving expected residential densities, as well as whether any aspects of zoning requirements resulted in making projects physically or financially infeasible to build.

BAE conducted a market and real estate analysis for the two sites, focusing on the extent to which existing market conditions coupled with updated development standards might be sufficient to achieve feasibility. BAE utilized CoStar to identify local market conditions including average unit size, asking rents, parking ratio, capitalization rates, and other factors. BAE also created a series of pro-forma models to evaluate the financial feasibility of development on the two sites.

### Key Findings

Ultimately, the project team produced a Housing Implementation Strategies Memorandum (“Memo”) for the Downtown Riverside Metrolink Station Area. The implementation strategies recommended in the Memo were informed by multiple meetings with City of Riverside staff, the project team, and representatives from SCAG and Metrolink. High level findings based on conditions at the time included the following:

**Land Use Findings:** The land use recommendations highlight that current zoning standards constrain development feasibility and should be recalibrated to better align with realistic building outcomes. Two Housing Element sites near the Downtown Riverside Metrolink Station were analyzed. For Site 1, both podium and wrap options suggest revisiting density, height, and FAR limits, as existing regulations do not align with realistic development potential. For Site 2, the townhome option indicates that small parcel sizes limit achievable density, while stepback and ground-floor commercial requirements reduce efficiency and financial viability.

**Financial Feasibility Findings:** With respect to financial feasibility, the wrap/podium typologies that achieved the zones' allowable densities were **not** likely feasible under market conditions at the time. Key factors contributing to a lack of feasibility included high construction costs and elevated interest rates, comparatively low asking rents, and to some degree challenges associated with high impact fees and ground-floor commercial standards.

The memo suggested that these issues were not insurmountable, however, and that feasibility could improve over time based on changes in market conditions and targeted updates to zoning and land use requirements.

### 3. Summary of Existing Recommendations

The study area has been addressed in multiple planning documents over time, each offering a range of recommendations. Some are no longer relevant or feasible under current development conditions. The following summarizes the recommendations that remain applicable today.

#### 3.1 General Recommendations

- Encourage transit-oriented development (TOD) featuring an appropriate mix of office, residential and transit-related commercial uses.
- Encourage adaptive reuse and preservation of historically significant industrial buildings.
- Diversify housing options and price points.
- Provide community benefits such as new open space, civic facilities, and better transit services.
- Enhance the pedestrian and cycling experience by improving sidewalks, expanding the bicycle network, upgrading wayfinding signage, and introducing placemaking elements.
- Implement best practices in sustainability, green building design, stormwater management and native vegetation preservation.

#### 3.2 Potential Study and Analysis Recommendations

- Conduct a market study and pro forma analysis for potential redevelopment opportunities
- Conduct a feasibility study for potential adaptive reuse projects
- Evaluate existing and future parking demand
- Conduct an industrial adjacency analysis to evaluate potential hazards of placing residential units in close proximity to industrial uses
- Conduct an air quality analysis
- Create a catalog of relevant case studies including photos, densities, housing types, TOD incentives and strategies, funding sources, and parking solutions

#### 3.3 Potential Improvement Projects

- Complete the Third Street grade separation project.
- Study a potential bridge across the freeway aligned approximately at Eleventh Street, connecting plan area to downtown area.
- Explore a 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Tunnel underneath the existing rail corridor.
- Underground utility lines to the extent feasible to improve aesthetics.
- Incorporate wayfinding signage at the station and in historic districts.
- Create or rehabilitate gateway and entry signs in the Park and Mission Inn Avenue areas.
- Sidewalk, bike lanes and public realm improvement projects:
  - Install/replace/repair curbs/gutters and sidewalks as necessary.
  - Add bike lanes and implement complete street improvements along Vine Street, Mission Inn Avenue, and Commerce Street

- Install streetscape improvements on University Avenue
- Plant more Citrus trees along Commerce Street.
- Work with Caltrans to ensure that the Mission Inn Avenue and University Avenue underpasses include well-designed public art, lighting and landscaping to enhance the pedestrian environment.
- Work with the railroads to eliminate as many inactive or marginally active tracks as possible across Mission Inn Avenue and to smooth and make as pedestrian friendly as possible the crossings of the remaining active tracks.
- Placemaking elements:
  - Provide street furniture, art, lighting, and signage built on existing cultural character along Vine Street, Mission Inn Avenue, 14th Street, and University Avenue.
  - Implement temporary street closures and programming for events along Commerce Street.
  - Establish a shuttle bus system linking UCR, Marketplace, and Downtown. Consider using an arts-oriented concept.
- Install traffic calming devices to discourage or divert industrial truck traffic between the Industrial use and neighborhoods.
- Build a central parking structure in the area to balance the needs of RCTC and future TOD.

### 3.4 Policy Update Recommendations

- Consider updating or replacing the Riverside Marketplace Specific Plan.
- Create incentives to streamline affordable housing development – encouraging development of smaller units for improved affordability.
- Cluster development into walkable districts with active ground floors and convenience goods.
- Promote a strong jobs–housing balance with office, innovation, and community-serving uses.
- Establish design standards in key districts that include specific architectural materials, building form, massing, lighting, signage, and streetscape design.
- Adopt an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance to encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties (current city initiative).
- Establish parking maximums, continue to eliminate parking minimums.
- Encourage the development of a centralized parking structure(s).
- Offer incentives such as expedited permitting, decreased fees, and reduced stormwater requirements to developers who incorporate trees and green infrastructure practices in their projects.
- Implement strong noise, vibration, and air quality mitigation for new development.
- Coordinate with rail operators to reduce impacts and improve safety.

### 3.5 Outreach Efforts Recommendations

- Identify key redevelopment sites and explore partnerships with developers and investors that align with redevelopment goals such as mixed-use development and TOD.
- Facilitate coordination between public and private entities, including RCTC, City of Riverside, RTA, Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG), major employment centers, and surrounding businesses, to identify gaps in specific areas where resources are needed to be allocated.
- Collaborate with local business owners, residents, non-profits, Chamber of Commerce, local artists, and other community stakeholders to ensure that design elements, art, and programming are rooted in community needs. Develop partnerships for shared-use parking agreements between RCTC and/or others.

#### 4. Conclusion and Next Steps

Since 1991, planning for the Riverside-Downtown Metrolink Station area has evolved from autocratic design to prioritizing high-density Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), affordable housing, and sustainability. Preserving the area's rich industrial and cultural heritage remains a strong, consistent goal across the decades. Bringing the visions and recommendations from past planning efforts to realization will require updated studies and data, increased funding support, and stronger collaboration between public and private stakeholders.

##### Next steps

- **Set Expectations for Feasible Development:** Earlier plans restricted housing near the station, and later plans overestimated the market and lacked feasible implementation strategies. Several of the studies envisioned high-density (e.g., 15-story towers) which exceed market demand. Identify opportunity sites for potential catalyst projects, opportunity sites and development capacity through this study.
- **Secure Funding & Strengthen Partnerships:** Increase collaboration between public agencies, private developers, and local community organizations to align resources and secure necessary funding for improvements – partners could include - but are not limited to – RTA, RCTC, WRCOG, area businesses, non-profits, Chamber of Commerce, property owners and developers.
- **Update Regulatory Framework:** Update or replace the Marketplace Specific Plan to align with current and near economic market conditions, add flexibility for the future, streamline affordable housing development, and establish design standards.
- **Implement Near-term Improvements:** Focus on feasible active transportation and placemaking projects along key corridors like Commerce Street and Vine Street.