

DISCUSSION:

Site Context

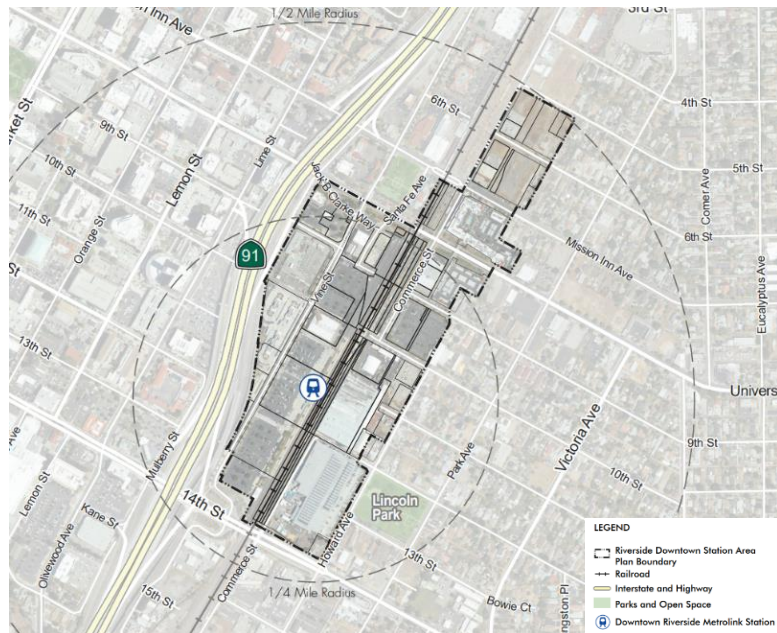


Figure 1. TOD Action Plan Project Area

In 1991 the City adopted the Marketplace Specific Plan for the area adjacent to the Downtown Metrolink Station, generally bound by Third Street, State Route 91, Fourteenth Street and Park Avenue. The original specific plan predates the Downtown Metrolink Station and did not contemplate housing or transit-oriented development for the area. Rather, its goal at the time was to provide additional commerce and employment opportunities to the Eastside neighborhood and complement the redevelopment of the Downtown area. Today, the specific plan area primarily permits industrial and commercial uses. Within the specific plan, there are a select few parcels with a Mixed-Use Urban designation that permits housing; however, the application of this designation is limited and not contiguous.

Since the operation of Metrolink and Amtrak passenger rail service and successful development in Downtown and along University Avenue, development opportunities and long-term goals have shifted for the Marketplace area. Several studies, visioning documents, and draft updates to the specific plan have been prepared over the past 20 years to realize transit-oriented development and maximize transit resources including the two Metrolink Lines serving this station and the recently completed Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) Vine Street Mobility Hub.

Attachment 1 contains a map of the project area for this project.

Transit Oriented Development Action Plan – Project Scope

Since the 1990s, the City and regional transportation and planning agencies have prepared numerous planning and mobility studies aimed at incentivizing transit-oriented development (TOD) near the downtown Metrolink station area. However, for a variety of reasons, these TOD goals have yet to be fully realized.

A key objective of this project is to better understand past planning and mobility efforts through an audit of existing documents, including the Marketplace Specific Plan and other visioning studies within the project area. Evaluating the historical context of the area’s vision, goals, and development potential will help identify gaps, inconsistencies, and areas requiring further analysis, ultimately informing the project’s final action plan.

The action plan will provide steps or actions to meet near-term goals for TOD while spurring additional investments including a balanced mix of jobs and housing, considerations for affordable housing,

integrated multimodal network connections, and community serving amenities such as passive or activated open space. The action plan will take into context the historical planning efforts and will ultimately be integrated into the City's ongoing General Plan Update effort.

The project scope focuses on three major tasks:

A. Stakeholder Outreach

Stakeholder engagement focused on collaborating with property owners and public agencies who own or control property within the project area. The engagement was comprised of focused meetings providing an overview of current and previous planning efforts for the area; understanding stakeholder visions and goals for their property and determining whether priorities identified in prior planning documents remain relevant; identifying opportunities and challenges related to establishing public-private partnerships for redevelopment opportunities within the area; and confirming the Focus Area boundaries, as well as the identifying potential catalyst projects. Attachment 2 contains a summary of the stakeholder engagement.

B. Review of Existing Planning Documents and TOD Studies

The project team conducted a thorough review of draft Specific Plan Updates, visioning documents, studies regarding the Marketplace Specific Plan and any mobility studies for the area. A context memorandum summarizes any gaps, inconsistencies, and areas that require more recent data, study, or outreach (Attachment 3). The following documents were reviewed as part of this task:

- 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 HQTAs 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)

C. Action Plan & Transit Oriented Development Framework

The primary deliverable for this project is an Action Plan that will help guide the City's ongoing General Plan Update and identify implementable strategies to achieve near-term TOD objectives within the project area.

The project incorporates a conceptual development program comprised of a TOD Framework that provides an overview of the project area's development potential, including projected capacity, density, and scale of future TOD opportunities. Approval of the Action Plan does not constitute approval of any specific project, nor does the Action Plan rezone any of the properties within the project area.

The development program evaluates optimal development scenarios for the project area and will incorporate financial feasibility modeling to assess the viability of various development types at densities and configurations that have comparable examples in the area. This analysis will help inform future planning efforts and implementation strategies. Attachments 4 and 5 contain the full Action Plan and conceptual development program.

Action Plan Recommendation and Findings

Over the past three decades, a consistent theme across planning documents and TOD studies has been the importance of preserving and celebrating the area's industrial history and cultural identity while supporting revitalization and economic growth.

Although prior plans established ambitious redevelopment concepts for the station area, implementation has been limited by several factors, including changing market conditions, infrastructure constraints, outdated zoning regulations, and limited funding and coordination among stakeholders. Earlier planning

efforts – including the existing Specific Plan – restricted residential development near the station area, while more recent studies proposed development intensities, such as high-rise towers, that exceed current market demand and feasibility. As a result, many recommendations lacked realistic implementation strategies or phased development approaches.

To advance the long-term vision for the station area, future planning efforts should focus on identifying feasible catalyst development sites and establishing realistic development capacity based on updated market conditions and infrastructure considerations. Additional technical analysis and updated economic and demographic data will be necessary to support informed decision-making and implementation. The action plan makes the following recommendations:

- Strengthen partnerships between public agencies, private developers, transit providers, and community organizations to better align resources, coordinate implementation efforts, and secure funding for infrastructure and redevelopment projects.
- Update or replace the Marketplace Specific Plan to better align with current economic conditions, affordable housing goals, and transit-oriented development objectives, while also streamlining development processes and establishing clear urban design standards.
- Prioritize near-term active transportation, streetscape, and placemaking improvements along key corridors such as Commerce Street and Vine Street to improve connectivity, walkability, and access to the station area.
- Continue preserving and integrating the area’s industrial and cultural heritage into future redevelopment efforts to maintain neighborhood identity.

Next Steps

While the technical assistance provided for this project is concluding, City staff will continue to pursue implementation of the Action Plan following its adoption. Staff will continue engaging stakeholders and identifying grant funding opportunities to support implementation, including grants that facilitate TOD housing projects. Additionally, the action plan will help inform the City’s ongoing General Plan update, including potential amendments to the Marketplace Specific Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report. The project was funded by REAP 2.0 grant funds through a technical assistance request funded by WRCOG and SCAG.

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Attachments:

1. Project Area Map
2. Summary of Stakeholder Engagement
3. Context Memorandum for Project Area
4. TOD Action Plan
5. Resolution
6. TOD Case Studies
7. Presentation