COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

The goals and major design elements of the Transit Village as a whole were developed over time through a number of staff and developer-led community workshops that included members of the City Council, Planning Commission, Design Review Commission, Transportation Commission, Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the general public. These workshops have served to guide the goals and opportunities outlined below as well as inspire the design concept for the Transit Village as depicted in figure 1.34 as well as the more specific design recommendations in the pages to follow.

VISION STATEMENT

As mentioned before, the overarching goal for the Transit Village is Smart Place-Making, meaning the creation of a new transit-oriented neighborhood in Walnut Creek that will act as a prominent gateway to its downtown core, be integrated with the rest of the city fabric, as well as fulfill the city’s potential for future growth.

The livability and viability of this development site is paramount. This development addresses housing needs for families and provides a supply of housing to accommodate mandated Regional Housing Need Allocations by the State of California.

The residential density of the project should be maximized to take advantage of the location as an established public transportation hub for Walnut Creek and surrounding areas. This density should be balanced with current land use regulations including Measure A height limits and approved zoning regulations to ensure proper setbacks, light, air, and access are planned for properly.

Mixed-use retail is an important component of the development, but is not the driving force behind the project. The mixed-use/retail components must be properly located to be attractive to prospective tenants and serve the local residents as well as transit patrons and guests. A proper balance of the amount of mixed-use/retail must be weighed with the constraints of the site and the overall project viability. These uses should be limited to the ground floor locations where foot traffic and exposure is maximized. Where possible, flexibility within the ground floor uses should be encouraged to react to changing market needs.

The Walnut Creek Transit Village is envisioned as a true mixed-use neighborhood with several amenities for future residents and the existing community to enjoy. With attractively designed buildings and appropriate landscaping, the project should function as a desirable place for residents to live and the public to visit and enjoy. Residents should feel as though they are living in an active village in the heart of Walnut Creek. The location and design of individual buildings should enhance existing views, take advantage of topography and make use of the site in a sophisticated and thoughtful manner. The separation of private living/amenity areas from the public realm should be respected and planned accordingly. However, opportunities for the combination of private and public areas is encouraged where appropriate. Attention must be paid to the public realm as well, as the site is actively used by the public for access to transportation services on the site. These public areas should be strategically placed and designed to encourage frequent public use and enjoyment as well as encourage use of the public transportation system.
GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

1. A Functional Multi-Modal Transit Center

Designing stations that cater to the transit user in both scale and function, with safe and attractive design, multi-modal connections, and a convenient mixture of uses, can encourage transit ridership and decrease reliance on the automobile. These Guidelines envision design that accommodates a mixture of transit-supportive uses such as residential and retail immediately adjacent to the BART station. This policy direction is consistent with the goals of the Housing Element, Economic Development Plan, General Plan, BART’s TOD Policy and TOD Guidelines, and CCCTA Principles, and Walnut Creek Bike Plan.

2. Natural Connections to Existing Streets

Providing clear physical and visual pedestrian and bicycle connections from transit facilities to employment centers, retail, and entertainment attractions encourages people to commute or visit using alternatives to the automobile. The plan encourages site design elements to improve on-site connectivity and create clear connections to downtown.

These characteristics are consistent with the goals of the General Plan, as summarized below:

a. The General Plan supports improving pedestrian and bicycle connections from the station to Downtown to encourage transit usage and create a more accessible Downtown.

b. North Main Street/Ygnacio Valley Road Specific Plan encourages the creation of an inviting pedestrian corridor between the Walnut Creek BART station and the Traditional Downtown.

3. Smart Density

Locating medium to high density housing near transit helps create an active, 24-hour environment, meet regional housing needs, and increase the likelihood that residents will use both transit facilities and proposed retail, thus ensuring future ridership and retail patronage. The Walnut Creek BART Design Guidelines envisions design that accommodates high-quality multi-family housing.
immediately adjacent to the BART station, within the City’s Core Area, and within walking distance to Downtown Walnut Creek. This goal is consistent with the goals of the Housing Element, Economic Development Plan, and General Plan, summarized as follows:

a. The Design Review Guidelines require new multi-family housing to address design issues such as scale and character, views, building facades, exterior site design and landscaping, building materials, and facilities. (II. Residential Architecture, C. Multiple Family Residential);

b. The Housing Element encourages higher density residential development in the Core Area, particularly near Downtown, public transit, major thoroughfares, shopping, and employment centers. (Policy 1, Policy 3) The element supports meeting regional housing needs (Policy 22);

c. The Economic Development Plan encourages maintaining a range of affordable housing to meet the needs of the City’s workforce (Policy 4.1). Specifically, it supports mixed-use development surrounding the Walnut Creek BART Station (Policy 9.1); and

d. The General Plan supports locating high-density residential development in locations that enhance pedestrian access and reduce traffic, are located in the Core Area, and are

4. Vibrant Mixed-Use

The Plan Area should be developed as a mixed-use Transit Village, predominantly residential in nature with ground floor retail, office, and open space uses. Commercial uses range from neighborhood, to transit-serving retail and office space. In general, neighborhood serving retail uses should be strategically located adjacent to new Transit Village housing and existing office uses in order to take advantage of the market generated from new residents and existing office workers. Transit-serving retail uses should
be located adjacent to BART and CCCTA transit facilities and pedestrian pathways in order to take advantage of the market generated from BART and CCCTA commuters.

5. Well-Defined Public Realm

A permeable, but well defined public realm gives structure to the Plan Area and provides the framework that contains and organizes individual developments into a cohesive whole. It also serves as the entry to the private realm, a sort of public “forecourt” to individual buildings and developments.

These characteristics are consistent with the goals of the General Plan, as summarized below:

a. The General Plan envisions the intersection of Ygnacio Valley Road at North California Boulevard as a unique gateway that respects the existing view corridor from the site and creates a high quality publicly accessible outdoor space (Quality of Life: Goal 12, Action 12.1.1; Natural Environment and Public Spaces: Goal 7, Policy 7.2; Built Environment: Goal 17, Policy 17.1, Goal 18, Policy 18.1, Policy 18.2).
6. Architectural Diversity

Development within the Plan Area should incorporate a diversity of architectural styles, high quality building types, material and details, setbacks, and landscaping. No one particular architectural theme is being promoted for the Plan Area, but rather the emphasis is to simply promote high-quality design and variety within a framework.

All building facades that are publicly visible should include three-dimensional detailing such as balconies, and reveals to cast shadows and create visual interest. Additional elements that may be used to provide visual relief include awnings and projections, trellises, detailed parapets, and arcades. Part Three of this document will further define acceptable building design.

Authentic use of materials and color schemes will create an attractive feel for the Plan Area. All surface treatments of materials should be designed as an integral part of the building and not merely applied to the surface. Design treatments, colors, and materials should be enhanced at side and rear elevations when exposed to close public view.

7. Public Benefits

Designing a transit center as a gateway creates a more attractive and inviting space for visitors and transit users. As a gateway, development within the Plan Area it should provide high-quality public outdoor spaces and amenities, taking advantage of view corridors to Mt. Diablo and public art projects.

These characteristics are consistent with the goals of the Economic Development Plan and General Plan, summarized below:

a. The General Plan envisions the intersection of Ygnacio Valley Road at North California Boulevard as a unique gateway that respects the existing view corridor from the site and creates a high quality publicly accessible outdoor space (Quality of Life: Goal 12, Action 12.1.1; Natural Environment and Public Spaces: Goal 7, Policy 7.2; Built Environment: Goal 17, Policy 17.1, Goal 18, Policy 18.1, Policy 18.2).

b. The Economic Development Plan supports the creation of gateway corridors at all major entry points to the City which emphasizes the unique qualities of Walnut Creek and provide methods of “wayfinding” to visitors and residents (Policy 7.1); and

c. The Public Art Master Plan identifies the Plan Area as a priority public art site.

d. The Design Review Guidelines provide gateway design guidelines for Ygnacio Valley Road at North California Boulevard (IV. City Gateways), addressing issues such as signage, landscaping, setbacks, building design, public art, entry details, screening and architectural finishes.
8. Sustainability

Sustainable development creates a short and long-term positive social, economic, environmental, and public benefit to the surrounding community and beyond. This can be done when a development demonstrates a reduction of waste, stormwater runoff, energy and water requirements for building operation, automobile usage by its occupants, and material and resource requirements for building construction. These and other “green building” practices improve the long term sustainability of a development and its surrounding community by encouraging sustainable lifestyle choices, minimizing building impacts on the environment and conserving municipal resources. Future development in the Plan Area should embrace sustainable site design and green building practices.

These characteristics are consistent with the goals of the General Plan and Housing Element, summarized below:

a. The General Plan promotes “green” redevelopment within the City including resource-efficient building techniques, materials and technologies. (Built Environment: Goal 27, Policy 27.1); and

b. The Housing Element encourages the incorporation of energy conservation design features in existing and future residential development. (Policy 21)
SITE PLAN CONCEPT

The urban design concept, generated by a staff and developer-led community effort, envisions

1. A network of streets and paseos that connects BART and future development to the rest of the city and break down the scale of development into smaller parcels and frame views towards Mt. Diablo and surrounding landscape.

2. Development that frames attractive living edges throughout, oriented to surrounding streets, new streets, public spaces and other public amenities.

3. Centers of activity at key nodes.

4. Street-oriented ground level uses at key locations and thoughtfully buffered edges throughout.

See figure 1.49 below.
Urban Design Framework and Strategies

Walnut Creek Transit Village Design Guidelines

Street and Block Configuration

A network of streets and paseos link the BART station and future development with itself and the surrounding community. The street network includes 1) New Street A (formerly Riviera Avenue), 2) New Street B, a new dual-use street and patron drop-off between the existing parking garage and future residential development, 3) New Street C between the North Parcel and the BART tracks including a taxi roundabout, and 4) two pedestrian thoroughfares or “paseos” bisecting North and East Parcels. Refer to figure 1.52 below and Section IIB of this document.

Surrounding the existing BART parking garage are three new parcels or “blocks” that provide a framework for a livable community by breaking down the scale of development, and framing views within the Transit Village. The North and South parcels sit to the west of the BART tracks, whereas the East parcel sits to the east of the tracks and south of the existing BART parking garage. The size and shape of these parcels fit well with that of the surrounding neighborhood blocks.
CIRCULATION AND ACCESS STRATEGIES

BART Station Strategy

The Walnut Creek BART Station’s primary entrance is located in the center of the Plan Area with elevated BART tracks running from the south to the north edges of the site. Two surface parking lots and a multi-story garage are currently situated on the western portion of the site. The power substation is located north of the BART entrance, under the BART tracks. According to data provided by BART, the Walnut Creek BART Station has a total ridership of approximately 6,100 persons per day. BART recently added special trackwork between the Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre Stations to allow a train to cross from one track to the other track. This improvement resulted in additional BART seating capacity during peak hours, increased reliability of service in the Walnut Creek-Pleasant Hill area, additional flexibility in operational and delay management, and improved maintenance capacity. The Walnut Creek BART Station does have a capacity plan in place, approved by the BART Board, which would allow increased ridership in the future. This plan includes providing emergency exit stairs at both ends of each platform, a new set of fare gates to the southwest of the existing fare gates and new escalators to provide convenience to riders. There is no date set to implement the Station Capacity Plan at this time, although, the Development should provide the flexibility to adapt in the future and meet all of the need outlined in the documents of Part 1a of this Chapter.

An essential element of a successful transit station is ensuring that all users and service providers can easily access and circulate within the facility. Development of the Plan Area will provide safe and efficient circulation and access for a variety of modes. These characteristics are consistent with the goals of the General Plan, BART’s TOD Policy and TOD Guidelines and CCCTA principles, summarized:

a. The General Plan policies support creating attractive and safe linkages for pedestrian and bicyclist to the Walnut Creek BART Station and surrounding areas;

b. BART TOD policy is aimed at reducing automobile access by enhancing multi-modal access to and from BART station in partnership with communities and access providers;

c. BART’s TOD Guidelines are aimed at enhancing circulation and access through improving customer safety, convenience and system and station operation; and

d. CCCTA principles deal with transit circulation and access issues such as access and egress, bike parking, and bus facility siting.

BART Replacement Parking Strategy

Development should provide an adequate supply of parking, to serve the needs of BART’s customers (current and future) as well as new residential development. Accordingly, this Plan envisions at least a 1:1 replacement parking ratio for the redevelopment of existing surface parking. Alternative parking strategies and technologies for BART users and residents should be encouraged. Subsequent environmental review will include a comprehensive analysis of parking adequacy, location, access, and operations.
Bus Intermodal Relocation Strategy

CCCTA provides County Connection bus service to the Plan Area, providing fixed-route (local and express) and paratransit service (LINK) within the City of Walnut Creek. The express fixed-route service runs along Ygnacio Valley Road to the east of the Plan Area and the local fixed-route service runs north-south along North California Boulevard. Currently the CCCTA utilizes the bus terminal located on the eastern portion of the Plan Area, adjacent to the BART entrance. The Plan envisions relocating the bus terminal to the southwest portion of the Plan Area, incorporated within the proposed BART replacement parking structure. The link between BART and connecting transit modes should be direct, short and uninterrupted by other types of vehicular traffic. Relocating the bus terminal to the southwest portion of the Plan Area will place it immediately adjacent to the BART entrance, improving accessibility for transit users and enhancing the pedestrian environment on the eastern portion of the Plan Area.
VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Figure 1.56: Vehicular Circulation Strategy

Figure 1.57: Pedestrian Circulation Strategy
URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGIES

WALNUT CREEK TRANSIT VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES

BUS CIRCULATION

Figure 1.58: Bus Circulation Strategy

BICYCLE CIRCULATION

Figure 1.59: Bicycle Circulation Strategy