

# CHAPTER 1

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## Introduction

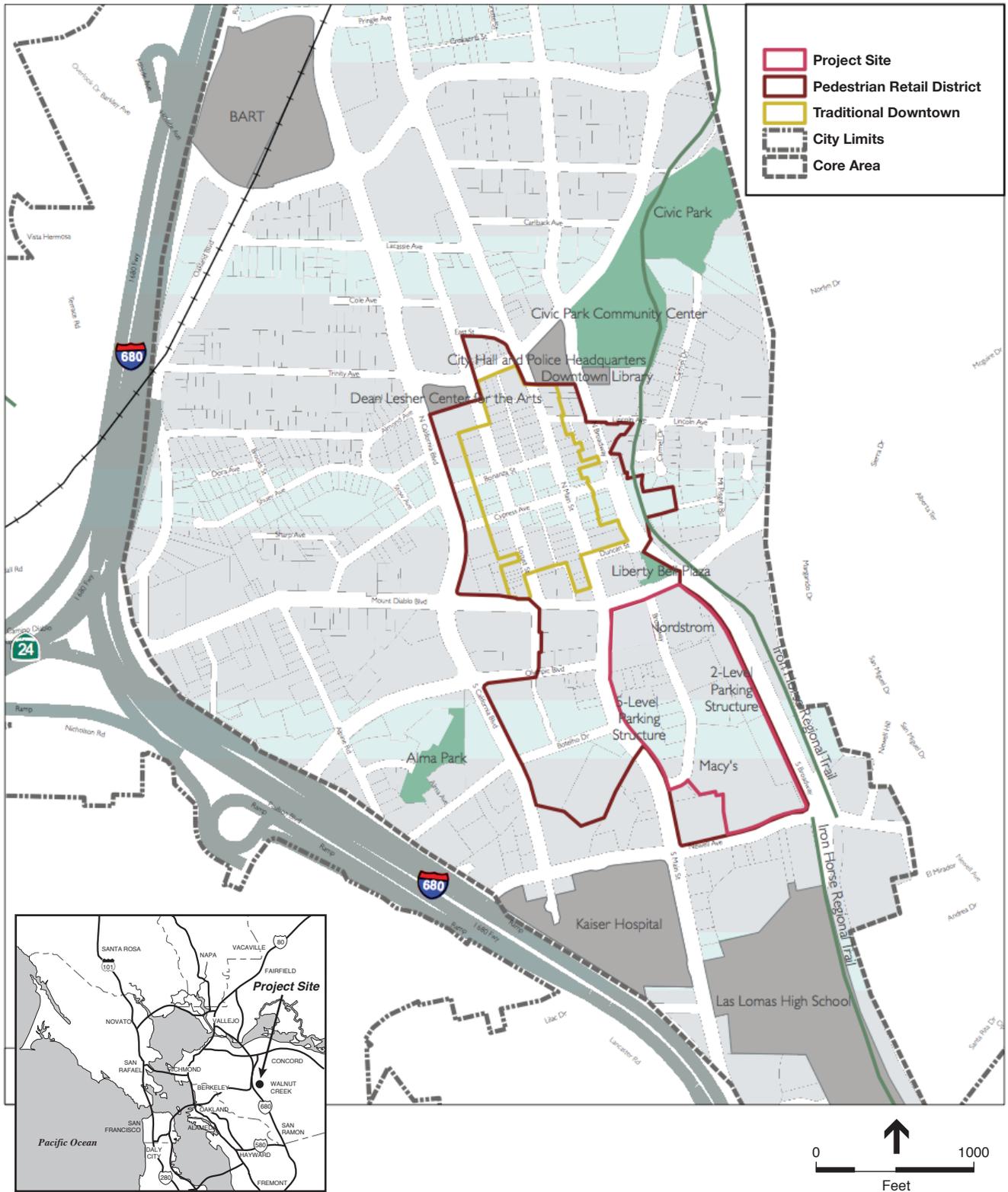
### 1.1 Project Overview

The City of Walnut Creek (City) prepared this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to address the physical and environmental effects of the Broadway Plaza Long Range Master Plan project (Project). The Project Site is located within the City of Walnut Creek (see **Figure 1-1**). The Project includes a net increase of up to 300,000 gross square feet of commercial space, or a net increase of up to 400,000 gross square feet of mixed commercial and residential uses; reconstruction of 200,000 square feet of commercial space; and interior, cosmetic or façade improvements to the rest of the Broadway Plaza shopping center.

Residential uses (including accessory uses) would be allowed if they are swapped for commercial square footage at the rate of 2,000 gross square feet of residential uses for every 1,000 gross square feet of commercial space replaced. Residential uses would be limited to 200 units and 200,000 gross square feet. Ancillary uses, described below, are also proposed. The Project would result in approximately 1,100,000 total gross square feet of commercial uses in Broadway Plaza, or approximately 1,200,000 total gross square feet in a combination of commercial and residential uses. The Project's design will incorporate gathering places and a pedestrian-friendly orientation, and is intended to create a more auto-free experience at Broadway Plaza. The Project proposes to vacate most of Broadway Plaza street, a public street that currently runs through the shopping center, to allow for a more pedestrian-friendly configuration of the Project Site. A subdivision map, or merger and lot-line adjustment, is proposed to facilitate implementation of these parcel line modifications.

The Project applications include a General Plan Amendment to affect every parcel on the Project Site except Parcel 2 (which was the subject of a recent initiative, Measure I in 2009, and which includes the site of the Neiman Marcus store). The proposed changes for the remainder of the Project Site would include:

- **General Plan Category:** The Project would amend the General Plan land use category from PR (Pedestrian Retail) to MU-C (Mixed-Use, Commercial Emphasis). This General Plan Amendment would allow mixed commercial and residential uses on the Project Site.
- **Establish New FAR:** By virtue of its current PR land use category designation, the existing FAR on the Project Site is 0.75. Changing the land use category from PR to MU-C will increase the FAR to 0.85. The Project Applicants have asked to further increase the FAR on the Project Site to 0.95 for commercial uses and an FAR of 1.05 for



SOURCE: Walnut Creek GIS

Broadway Plaza Long Range Master Plan EIR . 211723

**Figure 1-1**  
Project Site Location

mixed uses. These proposed FAR changes would not change to the allowable FAR at any other location.

- Amend General Plan Figures: Figure 8 of Chapter 4 (Core Area FAR) of the General Plan would need to be modified to apply the 0.95 FAR for commercial uses to the Project Site, and Figure 9 (Mixed Use Floor Area Ratio) would need to be modified to apply a new 1.05 FAR for mixed commercial and residential uses to the Project Site

The Project Applicants also seek to rezone the entire site to a new Planned Development (PD) District. The proposed zoning ordinance for this PD Zoning District would include detailed requirements and exhibits, including parking standards and restrictions, necessary for it to function as a Master Plan for long-term development of Broadway Plaza.

## 1.2 Environmental Review and Approval

The City of Walnut Creek is the Lead Agency for this EIR (pursuant to State and local guidelines for implementing the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA]), and has determined that the Project is subject to CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15000, et seq.) promulgated thereunder (together “CEQA”).

### 1.2.1 Use of this EIR

Pursuant to CEQA, this EIR is a public information document prepared for use by governmental agencies and the public to identify and evaluate potential environmental consequences of the Project, to evaluate and recommend mitigation measures that would substantially lessen or eliminate significant environmental adverse impacts, and to examine a range of feasible alternatives to the Project. The information contained in this Draft EIR is subject to review and consideration by the City of Walnut Creek and any other responsible agency prior to the City’s decision to approve, reject or modify the Project.

### 1.2.2 EIR Scoping

On November 2, 2011, the City issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to announce its intent to prepare and distribute a Draft EIR for the Project. The NOP was distributed to governmental agencies, organizations, and persons interested in the Project. The City sent the NOP to agencies with statutory responsibilities in connection with the Project and requested their input on the scope and content of the environmental information that should be addressed in the EIR. The City held a Public Scoping Meeting on November 17, 2011, to accept comments regarding the scope of the EIR in response to the NOP. The City received no verbal comments. The NOP review period ended on December 5, 2011. The NOP and written comments that the City received in response to the NOP are included as **Appendix A** to this Draft EIR, which addresses all comments received in response to the NOP that are relevant to environmental issues. During the public scoping process for this EIR, no specific areas of controversy arose relevant to the CEQA analysis.

The City has prepared this EIR to analyze the potential environmental effects of the Project under CEQA and addresses all environmental topics identified in the CEQA Guidelines. The City elected not to prepare an Initial Study Checklist to reduce the scope of the EIR, as permitted by Section 15060(d) of the CEQA Guidelines.

### **1.2.3 Public Review**

This Draft EIR is available for public review and comment for the period identified on the notice accompanying this document (45 calendar days). During the public review and comment period, written comments on the Draft EIR may be submitted to the City at the address indicated on the notice. Verbal comments may be stated at the public hearing on the Draft EIR, which will be held as indicated on the above-referenced notice.

Following the public review and comment period for the Draft EIR, the City will prepare responses that address all substantive written and verbal comments on the Draft EIR's environmental analyses and that are received within the specified review period. The City's responses and any other revisions to the Draft EIR will be prepared as a Responses to Comments document (commonly referred to as the Final EIR). The Draft EIR and its Appendices, together with the Response to Comments document actually constitute the Final EIR (commonly referred to collectively as "EIR") for the Project.

Prior to approval of the Project, the City must review and certify the Final EIR and adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) for all mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR.

## **1.3 Organization of the Draft EIR**

Following this Chapter 1, *Introduction*, this Draft EIR is organized as follows:

Chapter 2, *Summary*, contains a brief summary of the Project and is an easy reference to the analysis presented in the Draft EIR. It is prepared for use as a stand-alone summary of the Draft EIR. A Summary of Impacts, Mitigation Measures, and Residual Impacts table is provided at the end of Chapter 2 as a reader-friendly reference to each of the environmental impacts, proposed mitigation measures and residual environmental impacts after mitigation is implemented. Chapter 2 also summarizes the analysis of alternatives to the Project, areas of controversy, and issues to be resolved.

Chapter 3, *Project Description*, describes in detail the Project Site and surroundings, the background of the Project; Project characteristics (including anticipated development steps and entitlements and approvals requested or required), and Project objectives. Chapter 3 also identifies other agencies that must consider or approve aspects of the Project.

Chapter 4, *Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures*, discusses the environmental setting (existing physical conditions and regulatory framework), the environmental impacts of the

Project and cumulative conditions that could result from the Project. This chapter also identifies mitigation measures that, after implementation, would reduce or eliminate significant impacts.

Chapter 5, *Alternatives*, evaluates a reasonable range of alternatives to the Project and identifies an environmentally superior alternative.

Chapter 6, *Impact Overview and Growth Inducement*, summarizes the potentially significant and unavoidable impacts and the cumulative impacts that could result with the Project, as they are identified throughout Chapter 4. Chapter 6 also describes the Project's potential for inducing growth, as well as the Project's significant, irreversible effects and less-than-significant effects.

Chapter 7, *Report Preparers*, identifies the authors of the EIR, including City staff and the EIR consultant team. The key consultants who provided technical resources for the EIR are also identified in this chapter.

*Appendices* to the Draft EIR are provided at the end of the document and include the NOP, Responses to the NOP, as well as certain supporting background documents used for the impact analyses for specific topics. Reference documents and persons contacted to prepare the EIR analyses are listed at the end of each analysis section in Chapter 4, *Environmental Setting, Impacts and Mitigation Measures*. The appendices to the Draft EIR are available for review by the public on the City's website at [www.walnut-creek.org/citygov/depts/cd/planning/projects.asp](http://www.walnut-creek.org/citygov/depts/cd/planning/projects.asp), the Walnut Creek Downtown Branch Library at 1644 North Broadway, and at City Hall, 1666 North Main Street, Walnut Creek, California 94596.