

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The City of Grass Valley is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains at an elevation of 2,200 to 2,800 feet above sea level.

Grass Valley is a historic gold mining community that was established in the 1850s. Its downtown core abounds with historic residential and commercial structures dating to its inception. This rich architectural character is a valuable asset to Grass Valley’s charm as well as its tourism industry.

Over the past 150 years Grass Valley has experienced sustained growth. Until the 1930s, numerous mines in the area were the primary employment centers and were complemented by commercial and service functions, most of which were concentrated in downtown Grass Valley. Annexations beginning in the World War II and post-war era facilitated residential development outside the 19th Century town boundaries.

Today Grass Valley is the center for commerce in Western Nevada County. Over a third of all retail sales and a half of all jobs are located here, much of which is located in the Downtown. This vibrant economic base results in an influx of workers during the weekday and tourists during the weekend.

The historic downtown core is a combination of commercial, civic and residential uses. The commercial district is abundant with quaint turn of the century buildings. The south-east quadrant of downtown (bounded by South Auburn, East Main and Highway 49) is a mixture of the old and the new. Newer buildings and styles include the City Hall, Police Station, Post Office, and Union 76 gas station. A new hotel/conference center is proposed in this quadrant. The Safeway Shopping Center is also an example of more contemporary architecture (quasi-southwestern) not compatible with the downtown.



One newer building that is very sympathetic to the historic character of downtown is the Network Real Estate building.

To the north, south and west of the commercial core are the historic residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are best characterized by small Victorian era homes on small lots along narrow streets.

A vibrant Downtown core is the key ingredient in creating a philosophically and economically successful community. The approach to the strategic planning process has had as its main end product, a Downtown (See Exhibit A for the study area boundary) that is alive with people chattering over lunch and dinner in local restaurants, visiting Downtown merchants throughout the day and evening, and generally contributing to a vibrant Downtown community all day, every day.

The timing of this Downtown Strategic Plan is very important as a way to prevent degradation of the existing environment, and to direct change in a favorable way. Several planning and organizational implementation activities have already been initiated by the City, downtown merchants and property owners. They include this planning effort on substantial streetscape improvements and future planned infrastructure improvements, the proposed development of a hotel and conference center. The efforts confirm the

City's and the public's strong commitment to the Downtown, and due to these favorable conditions it is predicted that there will be a successful implementation effort for the City of Grass Valley and its important Downtown core. The Downtown Strategic Plan represents just one of the City's efforts towards its goal of a healthier, more economically stable, livable community now and into the future.

The Grass Valley Downtown Strategic Plan is designed to be a housing and redevelopment tool that can be implemented, for the most part, by the City and the Grass Valley Downtown Association. Key elements include:

- The Vision
- Methodology
- Market Assessment
- Downtown-Wide Issues
- Area Specific Issues
- Implementation Matrix

The plan is organized by the sections identified above. Each section is further broken down into specific topics that include a discussion of the existing conditions, a vision for the future, and recommended programs or projects.

The recommendations presented in the following sections are contained in an Implementation Matrix (see Section 7) that contains a 5-year list of priorities, responsible party, actions, funding sources, and budget.

Additional information such as a Workshop Summary, Promotional Materials, Downtown CIP Projects, Workshop Summary and Potential Funding Sources can be found in the appendices A, B, C, D and E respectively.

The elements contained in the Plan are aimed at enhancing the livability of the Downtown and have been developed and combined into a comprehensive program. The Plan emphasizes and recommends an implementation program that can be carried out through a public and private sector partnership, a partnership that establishes specific responsibilities for action and financial commitments.

## **2 THE VISION**

The Citizens of Grass Valley are proactively seeking to maintain and enhance the diversity of the Downtown's economic base in order to provide needed goods and services to local residents and visitors alike, as well as to expand employment opportunities for all its residents. During this process, the community will strive to maintain and enhance its wonderful quality of life: its small town charm, a balance between jobs and housing opportunities, community members and organizations working together, friendly atmosphere, quaint neighborhoods, quality design, and historic physical environment. Grass Valley embraces and, wherever possible, will build upon its generational, cultural and economic diversity through inclusiveness and social interaction.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE**

Prior to the initiation of the planning process the City established the Grass Valley Downtown Strategic Plan Advisory Committee. The Committee included Delores Jones, Business Owner; Howard Levine, Grass