

23RD STREET SAN PABLO, CA



EXISTING DEVELOPMENT



SIMULATION OF POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

TOD Technical Assistance Panel June 24, 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Community of San Pablo

The City of San Pablo is located in Western Contra Costa County, next to San Pablo Bay and about 15 miles northeast of San Francisco. The City is ideally situated on I-80 that connects the San Francisco Bay Area with Sacramento, Lake Tahoe, Reno, and the picturesque Napa Valley! It is only minutes from *University of California, Berkeley* and less than an hour's drive from the most prestigious university on the West Coast-*Stanford University!* The City is also readily accessible to the Oakland and San Francisco airports, various Amtrak stations, BART stations, bridges, and ferry terminals.

With an area of approximately 2.6 square miles and a population exceeding 30,000, it is one of the densest cities in California. Being an established City, San Pablo offers a variety of amenities that serve the regional population, such as: *ContraCosta College*, *Casino San Pablo*, and *Doctors Medical Center*. Casino San Pablo has hundreds of class II gaming machines that attract thousands of visitors during the week. Contra Costa College is a community college that has been serving the communities of Western Contra Costa County for over 50 years. Doctors Medical Center has been serving the West Contra Costa Count for the past 50 years and is currently restructuring. These establishments continue to meet the needs of the local and adjacent communities.

It's not all business in San Pablo, we know how to enjoy the good things that balance our lives. Visit Casino San Pablo or attend an annual fundraisers include the Martini dinner event (sponsored by the San Pablo Community Foundation), The Big Board Raffle (San Pablo Rotary Club), Annual Golf Tournament (San Pablo Police Employees' Association). Community events include Cinco de Mayo Parade and Festival, Heritage & Culture Day and Holiday Tree Lighting to name a few. Visit the website to see other activities; www.SanPabloEvents.com.

With its great location, coupled with interesting projects and new opportunities, San Pablo has transitioned into the 21st century with confidence, promise, and resolve to meet challenges and enhance community service.

2. THE ASSIGNMENT



Desired Mixed-use development

A. Summary of the Issues

23rd Street has many thriving businesses, it also has parcels that are vacant and/or are occupied by low-intensity businesses. These parcels detract from the street's identity as an important commercial corridor.

As such the City has conducted a number of public workshops and is in the process of adopting the 23rd Streets Specific Plan in order to create a more pedestrian-friendly retail environment on 23rd Street. Under this Specific Plan, redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels should provide vertical mixed-use development that includes retail ground floors, with residential units on the upper floors.

The City's goal is to facilitate infill development that is built at densities that support transit use and that help market for neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

B. Existing Constraints

This section identifies the existing constraints to redevelopment in the 23rd Street Specific Plan Area.

1. Land Use

The current land ownership patterns and number of separate parcels in the Specific Plan Area constitute a constraint to the redevelopment of the corridor. Assembling small pieces of land into larger, more marketable parcels will be necessary to attract the type of development consistent with the vision and goals set forth in this Specific Plan. Parcels are currently being used as parking areas or are vacant and unused. Another significant constraint is the number of nonconforming single-family homes present in the Specific Plan Area.

2. Urban Design

A significant urban design constraint is the lack of flexibility for traffic reconfiguration and the use of existing sidewalks. Existing sidewalks are typically narrow and leave little room for pedestrian circulation. More extensive urban design concepts could be developed with greater flexibility of the existing traffic lane configuration and room for pedestrian flexibility. The current parking and development regulations are also significant urban design constraints. Adjusting these regulations will be necessary for the corridor to redevelop in a pedestrian-oriented manner. These regulations are also a key constraint to private investment on 23rd Street.

C. Circulation

23rd Street currently carries two lanes of traffic in both directions. This lane configuration results in a considerably large right-of-way. The size of this right-of-way provides a constraint to redevelopment by making it difficult to provide ample space for additional pedestrian circulation, sidewalks, bicycle lanes or landscaping. A reduction in the number of traffic lanes might be an appropriate solution to this problem, but such a reduction would face several challenges:

- ◆ 23rd Street is a County Route of Regional Significance, which imposes strict requirements on the level of service (LOS) for vehicular traffic. A lane reduction would require extensive review.
- ◆ Any new street configuration should not degrade AC Transit's bus service, which connects the neighborhood to the Richmond BART station, Contra Costa College and other major destinations.

D. Economic Development

Attracting new businesses and new development to the 23rd Street corridor has been difficult. Hilltop Mall is located within a 10 minute drive time and several of the big box retailers such as: Macy's, Walmart, JC Penny's are located within this center.

1. Questions and or issues to be addressed by the Panel

- How do you bring in development?
- How do you motivate property owners to form partnerships or re-develop their properties to a higher use?
- What incentives could the city provide?
- Ideas for encouraging people to get out of their cars and walk.
- Traffic calming methods?
- What methods would attract retailers?

3 & 4 HISTORY & DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

This chapter examines how 23rd Street’s existing character can be enhanced and improved as a result of new development. It also recommends improvements to the public realm to improve the walkability of the Plan Area in order to make it more pedestrian-friendly and to strengthen the neighborhood’s identity.

A. Regional Location

The City of San Pablo is located in Contra Costa County, south of San Pablo Bay, as shown in Figure 1-1. San Pablo is bordered by the City of Richmond and parts of unincorporated Contra Costa county. The 23rd Street corridor serves as a north-south connection between the historic Downtown Richmond area and the newer Hill-top Mall also in Richmond.

Interstate 80 connects the City with other parts of the Bay Area and with the Central Valley. In addition, AC Transit provides citywide bus service with destinations throughout the East Bay, and bus routes connect the City with Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and with Amtrak’s Capitol Corridor train to Sacramento.

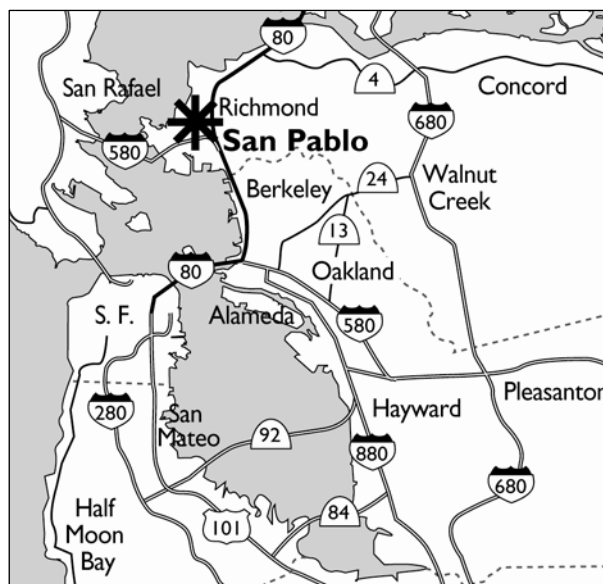


Figure 1-1 Regional Context Map

1. City and 23rd Specific Plan Area History

San Pablo’s history dates to the early 1800s, when the Castro family received a 20,000 acre land grant. This original settlement grew over time and was incorporated as a city in 1948. 23rd Street has always been a significant fixture within the City of San Pablo. The street has historically served as the “main drag” and has provided a commercial shopping district for nearby residents in San Pablo and Richmond. In the late 1960s the Brookside Commercial Shopping Center was developed as a commercial anchor for 23rd Street. In the 1970s Brookside Plaza was constructed across from the shopping center with the aid of a federal beautification grant. 23rd Street also experienced a period of decline around this same time period. Much of this decline can be attributed to the migration of residents from San Pablo to the suburbs. More recently, however, 23rd Street has begun to rebound economically. This is evident by increased private development interest and investment.

2. Plan Area Location

The Specific Plan Area includes roughly a half mile stretch of 23rd Street's from San Pablo Avenue to the north and Pine Avenue to the south, as shown in Figure 2-1. The Area contains a total of 22 acres and is composed of 76 parcels, most of which front on 23rd Street. The Plan Area is composed almost entirely of parcels that front on 23rd Street. A few additional parcels are included that face other streets but are contiguous with the rest of the Plan Area.

3. Architecture

Over the past 10 years, City efforts to revitalize this area included the 23rd Street Façade Improvements Program. This program was designed for the City website program description. These enhanced façades contribute strongly to the special character of 23rd Street.



23rd Street's façade improvements include fine-grained architectural details.

4. Existing Land Uses

This section describes the wide variety of existing land uses in the Specific Plan Area. Because the mix of land uses varies from block to block, the Plan Area has been divided by uses into four Specific Plan Subareas. The boundaries of each Subarea are shown in Figure 2-1.

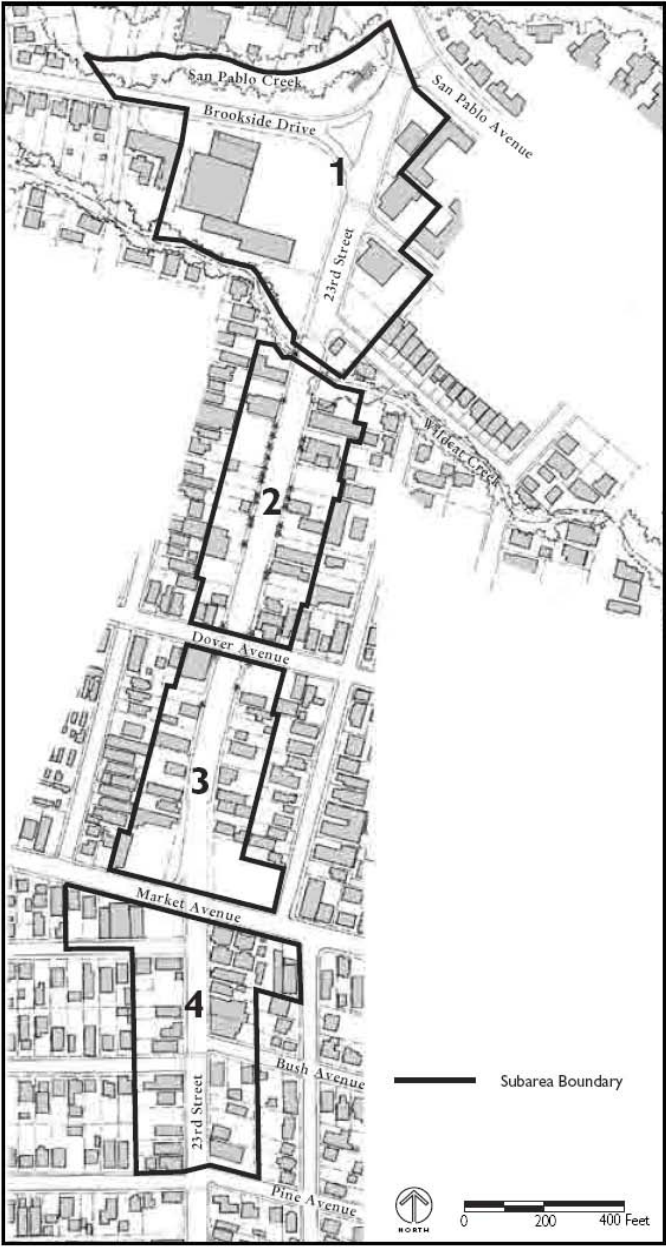


Figure 2-1 Specific Plan Subareas

a. Specific Plan Subarea 1: San Pablo Creek to Wildcat Creek

As shown in Figure 2-3, Kennedy Plaza and San Pablo Creek anchor the northern edge of Subarea 1, where 23rd Street merges with San Pablo Avenue. Kennedy Plaza is a large linear park which offers a large, sunny open space and a connection to Wildcat Creek. However, the plaza is currently underutilized by local residents. The City currently has plans to install several improvements to Kennedy Plaza, including picnic areas, improved lighting, a gazebo, and barbecue facilities, to encourage active recreational use and make the park more welcoming for a wider range of visitors.

Subarea 1, at the intersection of 23rd Street and Brookside Drive, includes the largest group of parcels within the specific Plan Area. The site is currently occupied by a grocery store (Grocery Outlet), a taqueria, a place of public assembly (Church use), and a liquor store. The City owns the vacant parcel south of this site, adjacent to Wildcat Creek, and has plans for a future park on that site. A Mercado, a small one story building and a post office occupy the east side of Subarea 1.

b. Specific Plan Subarea 2: Wildcat Creek to Dover Avenue

The core of 23rd Street's commercial area is in Subarea 2, the block between Wildcat Creek and Dover Avenue, which is shown in Figure 1-5. Most of the existing buildings on this block are occupied by a variety of commercial uses, including mercados; restaurants; a furniture store; a flower shop; and a small office building. Many of these commercial uses have taken advantage of the City's façade improvement program, creating a strong sense of place. A few apartment buildings are on this block as well, including one mixed-use building with an antique shop on the ground floor. In addition several small parcels are also being used as nonconforming single-family houses.

Subarea 2 also has many small parcels, some as small as 2,500 square feet, that are vacant or are used exclusively to park vehicles. In several places, these parcels are located in groups of two or more and could possibly be combined into a single and larger parcel.

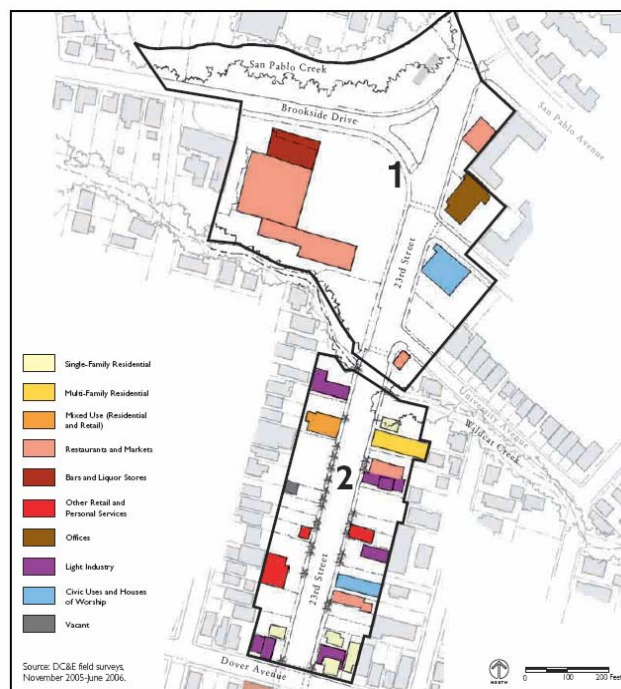


Figure 2-3 Existing Land Uses: Subareas 1 and 2

c. Specific Plan Subarea 3: Dover Avenue to Market Avenue

Although Subarea 3 provides a variety of commercial uses, including mercados, restaurants and a small shopping center, it also includes many nonconforming single-family houses. These exclusively residential uses, combined with the current lack of streetscape improvements, create a sense of transition away from 23rd Street’s commercial core. Figure 2-4 shows a map of Subarea 3 & 4.

The southern edge of Subarea 3, is served by two major arterials (23rd Street and Market Avenue). These arterial streets connect Rumrill Boulevard with San Pablo Avenue and provide an important east-west bicycle route. The shopping center on the northwest corner has a low-rise, one-story building with large setbacks and parking areas in the front. The northeast side of the intersection is currently vacant. The redevelopment Agency recently purchased this vacant lot and the small residential parcel adjacent to it on the Powell street side in an effort to assemble a larger parcel. The Agency is currently working with a developer to create a mixed-use multi-story building and parking structure.

d. Specific Plan Subarea 4: Market Avenue to Pine Avenue

As shown in Figure 1-6, apartment buildings are one of the most common existing land uses in Subarea 4, along with nonconforming single-family homes. The neighborhood’s few retail storefronts include a party supply store, a Laotian market and a veterinary hospital. There is a large auto repair shops, as well as a liquor store and a billiard hall. None of the parcels are vacant.

As in Subarea 3, the existing uses just south of Market Avenue do not emphasize the importance of this intersection with 23rd Street. The auto repair shops on the southwest corner are located away from the intersection, with a car storage yard at the street. The apartment complex on the southeast corner has a two-story building near the corner, but a wall separates the buildings from the sidewalk.

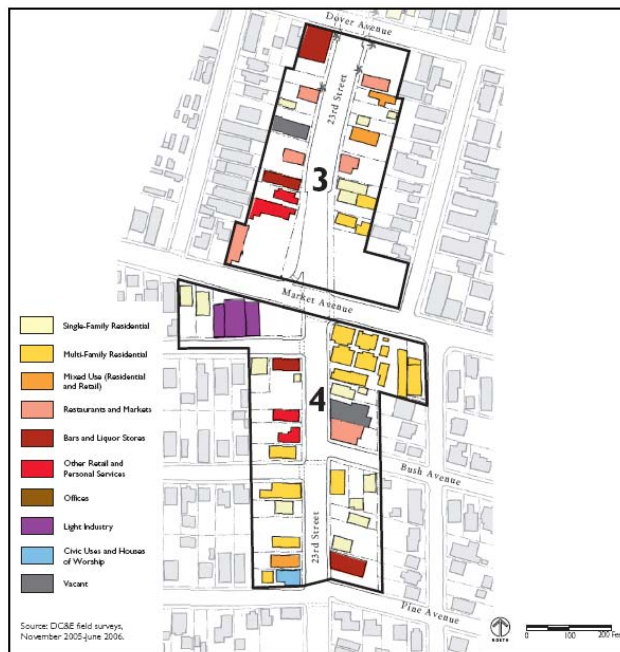


Figure 2-4 Existing Land Uses: Subareas 3 and 4

5. Infrastructure

According to the utility providers that would serve new development within the Plan Area, the existing infrastructure for water and electricity have has adequate capacity to accommodate the development anticipated by this Plan. Sanitary sewer capacity will need to be increased according to the service provider. Potential restaurant waste water discharge is the biggest concern. The City Engineer has indicated that the existing capacity of the Plan Area's storm drains may not be sufficient; however, the City is currently implementing measures to increase the storm drains' effective capacity.



New storm drain

6. Existing Streetscape

Parts of 23rd Street have already benefited from the City's streetscape improvement program, which has helped to create identifiable boundaries for the street's retail district. The existing improvements, which have been constructed between University Avenue and Dover Avenue, include: Planters with Mexican fan palms, which reflect the City's Hispanic identity. Sidewalk bulbouts at corners and into parking lanes, which provide space for palm trees and make it easier for people to cross the street. Sidewalks with red-tinted concrete, which further distinguish 23rd Street's commercial district from its surroundings.

The City has plans to continue the streetscape improvements for an additional block south, between Dover Avenue and Market Avenue. In addition, above ground utility lines along 23rd Street north of Market Avenue have already been moved underground, eliminating the visual clutter of aboveground poles and overhead wires. South of Market Avenue, where 23rd Street has aboveground utilities and no streetscape improvements, there are few visual indicators of the street's special character or the importance of its retail district.

Although the Plan Area attracts many visitors on foot, including students walking to and from Dover Elementary School and Helms Middle School, the street has very narrow sidewalks, typically no wider than 6 feet. The street also carries large volumes of vehicular traffic. At various Community meetings, residents of the neighborhood have expressed that they feel unsafe when they walk or ride their bicycles along the street. Hence, one of the goals of the Specific Plan is to make this a safe, vibrant, and walkable commercial strip.



**Existing streetscape at Bush Avenue,
south of Market Avenue**



Mixed-use development

B. Economics & Demographics

23rd Street has many thriving businesses, it also has parcels that are vacant and/or are occupied by low-intensity businesses. These parcels detract from the street's identity as an important commercial corridor.

In order to create a more pedestrian-friendly retail environment on 23rd Street, redevelopment of the Plan Area's vacant and underutilized parcels should provide vertical mixed-use development that includes retail ground floors, with residential units on the upper floors.

Infill development should be built at densities that support transit use and that help create a market for neighborhood-serving commercial uses. To help create these densities, new buildings should be a minimum of two stories tall, although three to four stories is preferred, particularly on corner sites if the site can accommodate higher densities.

C. Demographic Information

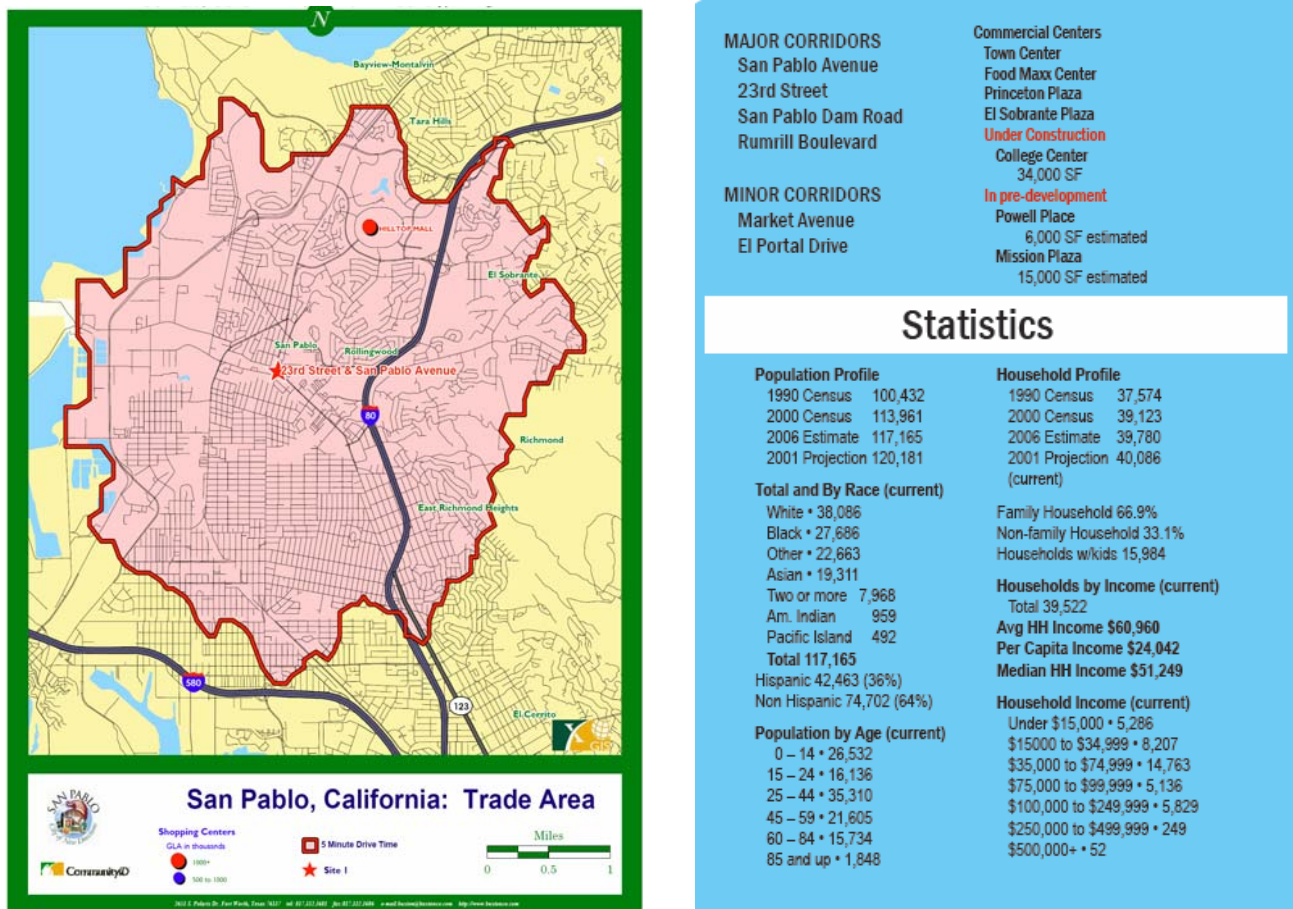
The market area for 23rd Street includes most of the City of San Pablo as well as portions of neighboring Richmond. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Market Area contains 24,063 residents living in 7,096 households. The average household size in the Market Area is 3.3 persons per household, which is somewhat larger than the countywide average of 2.7. Family households make up 71.9 percent of the Market Area, similar to the countywide average of 70.4 percent.

Retail Trade Area

The City has contracted with Buxton LLC to perform a study which is intended to identify specific retailers and restaurants that are most likely to consider San Pablo as a potential location. The study revealed the following:

The potential site possesses large numbers of households with a mix of dominant segment households that appeal to a wide variety of retailers and restaurants. The potential site benefits from large traffic counts on Interstate 80. Overall, this site is well situated to attract a quality mix of desired retailers and restaurants.

The map below shows a 5 minute drive time to the intersection of 23rd Street & San Pablo Avenue from the surrounding area:



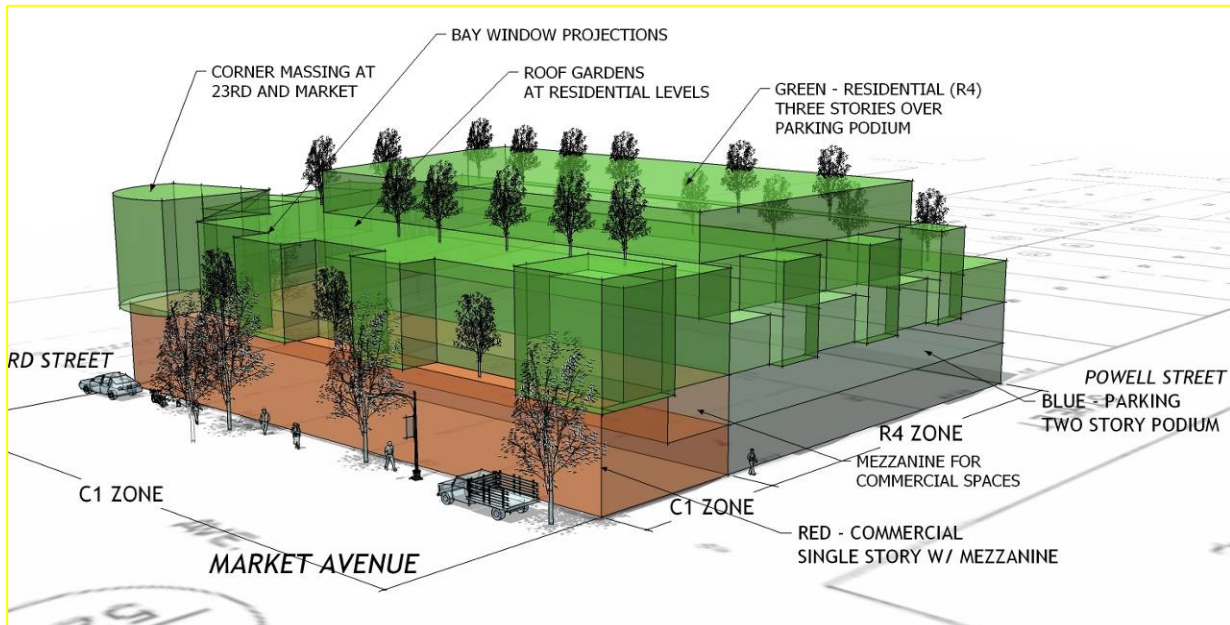
Trade Area – Buxton Study

Household incomes are generally lower in the Market Area than in Contra Costa County as a whole. The median household income within the Market Area was \$38,625 in 2000, compared with \$71,905 in the entire county. Also, residents of the Market Area are generally younger than county residents; the median age in the Market Area is 29.1, compared to 36.4 for the county.

Residential Housing Market (as of April 2007)

	Lowest	Highest	Median	Average
San Pablo	\$340,000	\$500,000	\$428,750	\$428,750

CITY OF SAN PABLO
23RD STREET TOD PANEL



The City of San Pablo is working closely with a developer to create a unique mixed-use building. San Pablo's first, eco-friendly project will be located in a viable and critical intersection on 23rd Street that serves as a major gateway to the City. This project will serve as a catalyst for 23rd Street.



- Proposed 8,000 SF of Commercial Space
- Corner Site Ideal for Restaurant
- 31 Proposed Residential Condominium Units
- Eco-Friendly Design
- Rooftop Gardens
- Two-Story Parking Structure

5 GOVERNMENT

1. County Constraints

At present, 23rd Street carries two lanes of traffic in both directions. It may be appropriate in the future to reduce the number of traffic lanes in order to provide space for wider sidewalks, added landscaping or bicycle lanes. However, a proposed lane reduction would face several challenges:

- ◆ 23rd Street is a County Route of Regional Significance, which imposes strict requirements on the level of service (LOS) for vehicular traffic. A lane reduction would require extensive review.
- ◆ Any new street configuration should not degrade AC Transit's bus service, which connects the neighborhood to the Richmond BART station, Contra Costa College and other major destinations.

2. City Codes regulating this area

The City of San Pablo has been working to transform 23rd Street into a lively commercial district. In the early 1990's the City Council adopted a façade improvement program for 23rd Street which has been an ongoing economic development effort and which was deemed complete in 2006. The primary focus of this program was on creating a viable shopping district with a distinct character through improvement of the facades on existing businesses, and by providing potential new businesses with renovated space.

In early 2005 the City received a grant for \$25,000 from the East Bay Community Foundation (EBCF) as part of their Livable Communities Initiative. Funding from this initiative is dedicated to assist cities in revitalizing pedestrian transit and commercial corridors. As a result, the City entered into a Memorandum of understanding with EBCF and jointly dedicated funds to complete a Specific Plan to assist in the revitalization efforts for 23rd Street. The Specific Plan is expected to be adopted by The City Council in August of 2007.

The Draft 23rd Street Specific Plan modified the City's development standards, including height limits, maximum floor area ratios (FARs) and minimum parking ratios for the 23rd Street corridor. Following is a table of those changes:

**CITY OF SAN PABLO
23RD STREET SPECIFIC PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION**

	Existing	Proposed
F.A.R	Office 0.75 Non-office 0.4	2.5
Height	40'	50'
Setbacks	No front yard setback No side yard setback No rear yard setback	No front yard setback No side yard setback No rear yard setback
Density	17 units per acre or 22 units per acre for Mixed Use	Min 30 units per acre and max of 55 units per acre

3. California Department of Fish and Game

The Plan Area is highly urbanized providing little habitat for wildlife except for those species adapted to human habitation, such as starlings, golden crowned sparrows and rock pigeons. The Plan Area has two waterways: San Pablo Creek, on the northern boundary and Wildcat Creek that runs through the Plan Area, just south of San Pablo Creek. These waterways are known to have biological resources and could act as movement corridors, yet provide limited cover due to the proximity of existing urbanization.

The City's General Plan has several policies that deal with the City's creeks. Policy ER 1.2 recognizes both the San Pablo and Wildcat Creeks as Primary Creeks within the city. Additionally, Policy ER 1.8 regulates new development along creeks. Furthermore, under Policy ER 2.1, both San Pablo and Wildcat Creeks are identified as two of the City's significant biological resources. Policy ER 1.24 states that the City shall enhance creek-side habitat areas where feasible as a component of any established Creek Linkage and Improvement Program (CLIP). Finally, under policy ER 1.26, cluster developments should be encouraged to maximize open space areas and new or enhanced open space areas should be located adjacent to existing open space resources to maximize habitat values. 11 The CDFG has jurisdiction over any alterations to the bed or banks of San Pablo and Wildcat Creeks under Section 1600 of the State Code.

6 PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

Old Town Association/ Merchants Association

An association of 23rd Street merchants will be created to ensure that businesses seeking to lease or buy space in this commercial corridor will further support the goals of this Specific Plan. The Association would be responsible for reviewing business plans of potential businesses seeking to locate in the area and to determine whether or not these businesses are consistent with the types of businesses and pedestrian friendly retail that this Specific Plan calls for.

The City of San Pablo works closely with the West Contra Costa Business Development Center (BDC). The BDC is a non-profit business development agency that provides business support services to aspiring and existing small business owners in West Contra Costa County. Working together with the BDC, The City of San Pablo offers micro-loans up to \$50,000 as a tool to promote the retention and attraction of businesses that may lack the necessary funding for capital improvement, equipment, technology upgrades, and façade improvement.