

Chapter 16 – Implementation

This section provides the framework for implementing the Specific Plan. It includes a variety of specific infrastructure improvements and ongoing programs, known as catalyst projects or catalyst actions that will help Martinez achieve the goals and policies of the Plan. This Chapter is organized as follows:

- 16 Implementation
 - 16.1 Priority Catalyst Projects
 - 16.2 Financing and Funding Mechanisms
 - 16.3 Implementation Matrices

16.1 PRIORITY CATALYST PROJECTS

Several catalyst projects require action and attention to ensure the effectiveness of the strategies outlined in the Specific Plan. These priority catalyst projects are:

- Changing land use regulations;
- Improving the electric and gas utility grid;
- Creating an unreinforced masonry (URM) program; and
- Establishing an historic preservation district.

16.1.1 Changes to Downtown Land Use Regulations

The bulk of this Specific Plan identifies and describes changes to the land use regulations that are effective immediately pending approval of the Plan. Most of these changes can be found in Chapter 10: General Design Standards and Guidelines and Chapters 3-9, which describe and set standards for the various Plan Districts. The new set of land use regulations serves many purposes also identified in these chapters, but in part is intended to catalyze positive economic and physical change in the Downtown Specific Plan area through private development activity.

Upon final approval of this Specific Plan and the subsequent Environmental Impact Report, these land use changes will be the first catalyst project to be implemented by the City. Future financial burdens to the City as a result of changing land use regulations will be in the form of review and approval of private development, but these relatively minor costs will be compensated for by development and permit fees. In addition, this catalyst action will likely enhance the City’s overall property and sales tax revenue through private reinvestment.

16.1.2 Improvement of the Utility Grid

The utility grid that serves most of the Downtown was installed before office and retail buildings required the levels of energy that they do today. Office heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems require a substantial amount of electricity and gas, and potential new retail tenants with on-site production facilities (restaurants, bakeries, etc.) could require utility hookups that exceed the capacity of the existing Downtown utility grid.

As a result of the increasing demand for energy and the deficient infrastructure currently available in the area, some individual Downtown property owners reportedly have absorbed the full costs of upgrading parts of the utility grid to suit the needs of their tenants.

According to property owners who have upgraded their properties, and to an electrical engineering specialist, Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) method for financing upgrades to its Downtown Martinez system requires owners who undertake significant rehabilitation to pay for their necessary utility upgrades themselves. If the infrastructure has already been upgraded by another property owner, owners of neighboring buildings are only responsible for connecting their buildings to that infrastructure. As an example, one property owner might pay \$100,000 for the installation of a new transformer on the electrical grid during rehabilitation, after which a neighboring owner would only have to pay \$10,000 to connect their building to that transformer.

This financing system makes it extremely difficult to stimulate the process of revitalizing the Downtown commercial core. The few property owners who are willing to invest in the Downtown early in the revitalization process would be burdened with higher costs than those who decide to invest in upgrading their buildings once revitalization is well underway.

To stimulate reinvestment in Downtown structures, the costs of utility upgrading could be spread equally among all benefiting property owners or businesses in the area requiring an upgrade. This could be done if the City identified the exact area requiring such an upgrade as well as the costs of this upgrade, and organized an assessment district to finance improvements to the utility grid in areas where such improvements are needed to stimulate property reinvestment.

16.1.3 Unreinforced Masonry Program (URM)

There are many unreinforced masonry buildings in Downtown Martinez that will require significant retrofitting to accommodate the types of tenants willing to pay higher rents. Likewise, many older, non-masonry buildings in the Downtown have structural issues that could make them unsafe in an earthquake and thus undesirable for new tenants. These buildings would also require a significant investment from property owners for structural upgrading.

Unfortunately, the costs of seismic upgrading are not compensated with proportionally higher rents. Many higher rent tenants will only consider leasing a retrofitted building, but the current Downtown commercial real estate market is not strong enough to enable property owners to cover the cost of retrofitting by increasing their tenants' rental rates sufficiently.

Cities in California maintain one of three types of URM Mitigation Programs. Mandatory Strengthening programs require owners to strengthen their buildings within times prescribed by each local government. Voluntary Strengthening Programs establish seismic retrofit standards and require owners to evaluate the risks in their buildings. Owners write public letters indicating their strengthening plans and schedules. These programs are popular but are only slightly more effective than notification only. Notification Only programs are when local governments write letters to owners stating that their building type has been known to perform badly in earthquakes.

Martinez currently maintains a Notification Only Program, which has resulted in low levels of URM mitigation. A more intensive program would ensure increased earthquake safety in the City, but would likely also require an increased public financial commitment that would essentially subsidize property owners who would otherwise be unable to afford seismic improvements.

Other Bay Area cities have adopted a variety of financial incentive programs to encourage URM retrofitting. Cities such as Morgan Hill, Oakley, and Pittsburg waive or reduce the building permit fees usually required for development when the owner of a URM building applies to upgrade it. Other cities provide grants or low interest loans to property owners, which are financed either through redevelopment agency monies (Emeryville, Vacaville, Fremont), general obligation bonds (San Francisco), or Special Assessment Districts (San Leandro). The parameters of these loan and grant programs vary, but often limit the amount of public financing to around \$50,000 per structure.¹

Case Study Test for a URM Program

Strategic Economics' *Historic Preservation Case Study*, available from the City of Martinez, tested the financial feasibility of retrofitting a brick building in Downtown Martinez without public financial support. A Downtown property owner volunteered his URM building as a case study for four upgrade scenarios: the first two scenarios provided minor tenant improvement upgrades and cleaning but did not require URM mitigation measures. The second two scenarios added URM mitigation costs to the upgrading process.

Each scenario was measured on the basis of current market conditions in the Downtown. The results of the financial analysis showed that the property owner could eventually pay for the improvements in the first two scenarios through an increase in rents, but that higher rents could not justify the additional debt added from URM mitigation costs. In other words, the owner of the case study building would need public financial support to acquire the loans needed to retrofit his building.

16.1.4 Historic Preservation District

While there is clearly symbolic and ambient value in the unique historic buildings that make up the Downtown, translating this into commercial and tourist-generating value is a challenge. The long-term deferred investment in basic maintenance for older commercial buildings has resulted in a variety of structural problems that require expensive improvements before superficial rehabilitation can take place.

Many rehabilitation projects incur unexpected replacement and reinforcement costs and experienced property developers in the Downtown have come to expect the costs associated with engineering improvements of their buildings to be unpredictable. This has made it difficult for owners to attract private financing, because private lenders do not want to absorb the risks associated with unpredictable construction costs.

¹ From the Northern California Chapter of the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute:
http://www.quake06.org/quake06/best_practices/IRVPOP.html

The alternative to rehabilitation in Martinez is deferred maintenance, which ultimately will lead commercial buildings to an uninhabitable state. While rehabilitation is costly and difficult to complete, it is the only option if the community of Martinez wants to preserve its historic buildings for future use.

The Specific Plan implements a Downtown Historic Overlay District, as described in Chapter 6. The District will allow owners of qualified historic properties in the Downtown Core and Civic Districts to use the State Historical Building Code (SHBC) when making improvements to their properties. Because the SHBC is more flexible than the Building Code adopted by the City of Martinez, it will be easier for property owners to maintain and upgrade their buildings in ways that are both architecturally appropriate and cost effective. Additionally, local recognition enables historic properties to apply for property tax relief from the City in exchange for restoration and maintenance via the Mills Act (see State Historic Restoration Incentives, Appendix A).

The creation of a State or Nationally Registered Historic District or the listing of individual buildings on the State or National Register, a much more complicated process than the implementation of the Downtown Historic Overlay District, would make many of the buildings in the Downtown eligible for federal and state funding restoration sources and tax credits. This could significantly reduce the costs of restoring these buildings for use by a variety of retail tenants who would otherwise not consider locating in Downtown Martinez. Please see Appendix A for further explanation.

16.2 FINANCING AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

Table 16-2 identifies a variety of mechanisms that the City can use to finance its Catalyst Projects. This list should be approached as a menu of financing choices rather than as a recommendation for any particular financing strategy. Identifying and pursuing any of the financing options described in Table 16-2 is a policy decision that should be made by the City on a case-by-case basis.

While Appendix A describes each of the financing mechanisms in detail, it is important to first understand the basic workings of public finance, particularly where infrastructure improvements are concerned. To arrive at the appropriate funding strategy, the City will have to make a series of decisions about the implementation process for each of the catalyst projects:

16.2.1 Pay-As-You-Go or Debt Financing

The first step in deciding how to finance a catalyst action or project is to determine whether the appropriate financing strategy is *pay-as-you-go*, or *debt financing*.

- In the *pay-as-you-go* approach, the improvement would only be made once a sufficient amount of tax or fee revenue is gathered to fund the improvement. For example, the City

currently maintains a Parking District that has been collecting revenue for parking improvements over time.

- This contrasts with the *debt financing* approach, where the money for an improvement is borrowed now by issuing bonds, the improvement is made now, and is paid for over time through tax or fee revenue. In 1999, the City used debt financing to fund \$1.2 million of a \$6 million improvement project along parts of Alhambra Creek. The community has benefited from both a reduced risk of flood damage to buildings, and from higher property values in neighboring buildings. Because the assessment district financing structure used in this case is based on property tax revenues, the resulting increased property values from the improvements have reduced the risk associated with debt financing.

	<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
<i>Pay-as-you-go</i>	Very little financial risk to City or District	Improvement takes a long time to implement, could be less effective
<i>Debt Financing</i>	Improvement made immediately, could be more effective as a result	Some risk that revenue will not be sufficient to pay off debt within time limit

16.2.2 Benefit Assessment District or Tax Increment Financing

Once the financing method has been identified, the City needs to determine how to gather the additional revenue needed to pay for the catalyst project or action. Two of the more prominent methods of collecting local revenue are the *benefit assessment district* and *tax increment financing*:

- A *benefit assessment district* is formed to include a geographical area in which all property owners would equally benefit from the proposed improvement. Property owners or businesses within the district area would pay an additional tax or fee in the amount necessary to pay for the improvement in the desired time frame. The individual tax or fee would be lower if the district encompassed a large area, or with a long financing time frame.
- *Tax increment financing* is administered at no additional cost to the property owner or individual businesses, by freezing the property tax revenue at its “base rate” in the current year, and diverting any additional tax revenue each year into a separate pool of money used to finance the improvements, as well as state-required pass-throughs, and the 20% set-aside for housing. Tax increment financing is only implemented with the establishment of a redevelopment agency, or an infrastructure financing district.

	Pros	Cons
<i>Benefit Assessment District</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less financial risk to City or public agency; individual property owners take on more risk, although the City may have to take on a defaulted loan under State law. ▪ Could lead to increased tax revenue based on private reinvestment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual property owners may be unwilling to absorb financing risk, especially for debt financing. Therefore, could be ineffective in the short term if approved. ▪ Assessment is considered another form of taxation.
<i>Tax Increment Financing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvement does not cost individual property owners additional fees or taxes ▪ Improvements may lead to increases in sales and property tax revenue adjacent to redevelopment area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some risk to Redevelopment Agency if incremental tax revenue does not cover financing costs for improvements ▪ Takes future tax revenue that would otherwise go to the general fund; diverts this revenue to debt service for bonds

16.3 IMPLEMENTATION MATRICES

The implementation matrices that follow, Tables 16-1 and 16-2, provide the following information:

- Identify the catalyst projects or actions
- Describe how the catalyst projects or actions benefit the Downtown
- Connect the catalyst projects or actions to the Specific Plan goals and policies that they could help achieve
- Identify a variety of financing options that the City could potentially use to implement the catalyst projects or actions

The catalyst projects/actions fall into three categories, depending on the level of public involvement needed to execute them:

- The first category includes **publicly-funded improvements**, or specific one-time infrastructure costs that require a significant level of City involvement and public financing to complete. The costs of public improvements ultimately will be borne equally by all residents of Martinez or the Downtown area by allocating public funds to pay for these improvements (see Section 16.2 of this chapter, “Financing Mechanisms,” for more information).
- The second category includes **ongoing programs** that can either be administered by a public or private agency. The costs to the City of these catalyst projects vary depending on the financing sources that the City can secure. These projects are often categorized as “public-private partnerships.”

- The third category includes **policy-level changes** that require a low relative cost on the part of the City, but that could potentially stimulate a high level of investment from property owners or developers within the Downtown.

Table 16-1 Description of Catalyst Projects
Downtown Martinez Specific Plan

CATEGORY Catalyst Project/Action	Benefits	Potential Sites	Factors/Requirements
<i>PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS</i>			
Parking Structure	Improves parking in commercial areas; Helps free up existing surface parking lots for more appealing development; Attracts customers to retail businesses; Encourages new retail businesses to move to Downtown; Encourages visitors downtown to park once and walk around. Depending on the location, could provide parking for Willows Theater.	Sites 13 (Community College parking lot); 24 (SW corner Ward/Las Juntas); 25 (behind Veterans Building); or on a County parking lot	1/2 block or larger site needed. Demand is on east side. Could develop a private parking structure but parking could be relatively expensive unless subsidized. If structure is built near, and shared with intermodal station, it may be eligible for partial financing through Federal Transit Capital Investment Grants.
Additional Creekside Improvements: pedestrian path, children's playground, lighting, new landscaping	Makes the downtown more visually appealing; Provides an attractive and direct route from the Intermodal station to the Downtown commercial areas; Encourages visitors and residents to walk; Improves the connection of the downtown with the waterfront	Along Alhambra Creek, esp. NW corner Green/Ferry	Explore funding options: TLC grants from MTC, state and federal funding may also be available.
Relocation of City Corporation Yard and new (public or private) development on site	Provides a highly accesible site for new development; Since it is already city-owned, it is more readily available for public uses than other sites in the Downtown; Improves the image and quality of life for surrounding residents; Its development could could spur other owners of vacant or industrial sites to consider new development options	Portion of Site 5 (current corp. yard). Proposal to move corp. yard to Water Treatment Plant site	Already identified in Capital Improvements program, but no identified funding source. Need identification of funding to pay for relocation of yard, and cleanup; if new development is public, must identify funding sources for development

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Downtown Martinez Specific Plan

<i>CATEGORY</i> Catalyst Project/Action	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Potential Sites</i>	<i>Factors/Requirements</i>
<i>PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS Cont'd</i>			
Improved streetlighting and streetscaping	Encourages visitors and residents to remain in commercial areas after working hours and on weekends; Beautification enhances the look of businesses	Main, Ferry, Court, others, esp. along Alhambra Creek greenway	Could be developed with TLC Capital Program grant; could be supported through the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID)
Improved electricity and gas grid	Distributes costs of utility upgrades among all property owners, thus reducing unequal cost burden on first owners reinvesting in historic buildings; enables owners to attract high end retail tenants and businesses requiring more electricity (such as restaurants)	Downtown commercial area (boundaries should be considered by City and property owners)	
<i>PROGRAMS AND GRANTS</i>			
Contract with business recruitment marketing consultant	Business recruitment consultants bring experience with attracting new tenants, and have connections to tenants looking for new locations. Can also define, in great detail, the size and amenity requirements of potential new retailers	Downtown commercial area	Chamber of commerce, Main Street could be involved in hiring this consultant
Grant program for Unreinforced Masonry (URM) improvements	Preserves the historic nature of the Downtown; may save small businesses that occupy unreinforced buildings; makes the Downtown safer in seismic activity; Enables new businesses to occupy currently vacant buildings; encourages reuse of older buildings; may attract new retail tenants	All sites with URM structures	Identification of sources of funding for grant program; development of an application process; would need to encourage building owners to apply
Façade improvement grant program or small business loan program	No or low interest loans provide property owners and small businesses with the additional equity they need to complete improvements to older buildings, thus making them more attractive to new tenants and patrons alike. Also, city-sponsored loans help qualify land owners for matching funds from federal/state sources.	Older commercial buildings along Main St., Green St., Las Juntas St.	

Table 16-1 Description of Catalyst Projects
Downtown Martinez Specific Plan

CATEGORY Catalyst Project/Action	Benefits	Potential Sites	Factors/Requirements
<i>POLICY CHANGES</i>			
Changes to Land Use Regulations as proposed in Specific Plan	Encourages development of townhomes and condominiums, which are not allowed under current regulations. Takes advantage of a strong residential market; Increases the amount of housing stock in the Downtown; Placement of residential in more commercial areas creates a lively Downtown on the evenings and weekends; Stimulates overall reinvestment and attracts people to the Downtown	Scattered vacant sites; will affect most opportunity sites identified earlier.	Will be established with approval of Specific Plan. Most economically feasible as 3-4 stories with tuck-under parking on ground floor; current zoning forbids townhouses, 3+ story, and housing in commercial zones
Establishment of local historic preservation district	Qualifies buildings within district for property-tax reduction incentives if approved by County, City; Preserves the historic nature of the Downtown; encourages improvement of commercial buildings	Downtown Commercial Area	Will be established with approval of Specific Plan.
Establishment of state and federal historic preservation district	Qualifies buildings within district for financial incentives from Federal government; Preserves the historic nature of the Downtown; prevents the destruction of historic landmarks; encourages improvement of commercial buildings	All buildings qualifying under guidelines for 10 percent and 20 percent tax credit	Would require district-wide evaluation and survey of historic buildings, completed using standards provided by the State. Enables property owners to apply for federal tax credits and other public sources of financing, but application is competitive.
Establishment of property assessment district for infrastructure, utility improvements, Business Improvement District, or other districts	Provides financing for a variety of projects including lighting and street improvements, utility and wastewater drainage upgrades. Projects must equally benefit all property owners in district, and in this case will reduce costly utility upgrade burden on owners interested in improving their properties, could positively impact property value as well.	Commercial area in downtown (to be determined by City, property owners)	Creation of a district requires State, County approval as it changes property taxes. Districts could provide distinct benefits and allow for geographic flexibility (i.e. if residential areas needed wastewater drainage improvements as well, can expand this district to include these areas). Would also need to determine whether financing strategy is pay-as-you-go or debt financing.
Reexamination of way that parking district is structured	Restructuring parking district could make it more effective in improving public parking in the Downtown	Downtown Commercial Area	Parking district has historically underperformed in providing public parking areas. This is in part because parking district provides "pay-as-you-go" financing which takes a long time to accumulate.

Table 16-2 Potential Financing Sources for Catalyst Projects/Actions
Downtown Martinez Specific Plan

CATEGORY	Catalyst Project/Action	Goals and Policies Addressed	Timing: <i>Short Term</i> (Within 2 Years) <i>Mid Term</i> (2 to 5 Years) <i>Long Term</i> (5 to 20 Years)	Costs: <i>Low</i> (Less than \$50,000) <i>Medium</i> (\$50,000 to \$300,000) <i>High</i> (\$300,000 to several million)	Potential Funding Sources																Reference in Specific Plan Text
					Assessment Districts				Private Investment			Other Government Sources of Funding						Direct City Financing		Description of other	
					Creation of Business Improvement District (BID)	Property Based Improvement District (PBID)	Lighting and Landscape Assessment District	Parking Assessment District	Infrastructure Financing District	Maintenance Assessment District	In-lieu Development Fee	Coordination with Chamber of Commerce	Coordination with Main Street	California Mills Act Historic Preservation Agreement	California Heritage Fund Grant	Federal Certified Local Government program	Federal Historic Tax Credits (10 or 20 percent)	Contra Costa County Measure C Discretionary Funds	MTC's TIC: Transportation for Livable Communities program		
PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS																					
Parking Structure	Policy LU-1-2 Policy LU-1-3 Policy LU-1-4 Policy LU-1-5 Policy LU-1-6 Policy H-1-5 Policy ED-1-3 Goal P-1	Short Term	High (\$950,000 to \$1.2 million)	X	X		X										X	X	X	Federal Transit Capital Investment Grants	Chapter 11
Additional Creekside Improvements: pedestrian path, children's playground, lighting, new landscaping	Policy LU-1-1 Policy OS-1-2 Goal UD-1 Policy C-1-3 Policy OS-1-2	Mid Term	Medium to High						X	X	X						X	X	X		Section 13.5 Section 13.6
Relocation of City Corporation Yard and new (public or private) development on site	Policy LU-1-1 Policy LU-1-4 Policy LU-1-5 Goal H-1 Policy ED-1-3	Mid Term	High (est. \$4,000,000) Net cost could be Low														X	X	X	Sale of site could partly cover costs of new site	
Improved streetlighting and streetscaping	Policy LU-1-6 Goal UD-1 Policy C-1-2 Policy C-1-5 Policy C-1-3 Policy C-1-6	Short Term	Medium	X	X	X			X		X	X				X	X				Chapter 14
Improved electric and gas grid	Policy LU-1-2 Policy LU-1-4 Policy H-1-5 Policy ED-1-2 Goal HP-1	Mid Term	High															X	X		Chapter 15

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				Assessment Districts						Private Investment		Other Government Sources of Funding						Direct City Financing			Description of other	
				Creation of Business Improvement District (BID)	Property Based Improvement District (PBID)	Lighting and Landscape Assessment District	Parking Assessment District	Infrastructure Financing District	Maintenance Assessment District	In-lieu Development Fee	Coordination with Chamber of Commerce	Coordination with Main Street	California Mills Act Historic Preservation Agreement	California Heritage Fund Grant	Federal Certified Local Government program	Federal Historic Tax Credits (10 or 20 percent)	Contra Costa County Measure C Discretionary Funds	MTC's TIC: Transportation for Livable Communities program	Establishment of Redevelopment Agency			City General Fund
PROGRAMS AND GRANTS																						
Contract with business recruitment marketing consultant	Policy LU-1-2 Policy LU-1-5 Policy LU-1-6 Policy ED-1-1	Short Term	Low to Medium	X							X	X					X	X				
Grant program for Unreinforced Masonry (URM) improvements	Policy LU-1-1 Policy LU-1-7 Policy H-1-4 Policy H-1-5 Policy ED-1-2 Goal HP-1	Mid Term	High										X	X	X	X		X	X	X	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Chapter 7
Facade improvement grant program or small business loan program	Goal LU-1 Policy ED-1-1 Policy ED-1-2 Policy UD-1-3 Policy HP-1-2 Policy HP-1-3	Long Term	Medium							X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	

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				Assessment Districts					Private Investment			Other Government Sources of Funding							Direct City Financing			Description of other	
				Creation of Business Improvement District (BID)	Property Based Improvement District (PBID)	Lighting and Landscape Assessment District	Parking Assessment District	Infrastructure Financing District	Maintenance Assessment District	In-lieu Development Fee	Coordination with Chamber of Commerce	Coordination with Main Street	California Mills Act Historic Preservation Agreement	California Heritage Fund Grant	Federal Certified Local Government program	Federal Historic Tax Credits (10 or 20 percent)	Contra Costa County Measure C Discretionary Funds	MTC's TIC: Transportation for Livable Communities program	Establishment of Redevelopment Agency	City General Fund			Other
POLICY CHANGES																							
Changes to Land Use Regulations as proposed in Specific Plan	Goal LU-1 Goal H-1 Policy ED-1-3 Policy UD-1-1 Policy HP-1-3 Policy P-1-1	Short Term	Low to Medium																	X	Throughout		
Establishment of Local Historic Preservation District	Policy H-1-2 Policy H-1-4 Policy ED-1-2 Policy UD-1-5 Goal HP-1	Short Term	Low									X	X						X	X	X	Coordination with Martinez Historical Society	Chapter 7
Establishment of State and Federally-recognized Historic District	Policy LU-1-1 Policy H-1-2 Policy H-1-4 Policy ED-1-2 Policy UD-1-5 Goal HP-1	Mid Term	Medium							X	X								X	X	X	Coordination with Martinez Historical Society	Chapter 7
Establishment of property assessment district for infrastructure, utility improvements, Business Improvement District, or other districts	Policy LU-1-4 Policy ED-1-2 Policy ED-1-4 Policy UD-1-2 Policy UD-1-3 Policy UD-1-4 Policy UD-1-5	Mid Term	Low to Medium																X	X			Chapter 15
Reexamination of way that parking district is structured	Goal P-1	Short Term	Low																X	X			