



# Castroville Community Plan

## VOLUME I

Prepared by:

MONTEREY COUNTY HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICE

168 W. Alisal Street, 3rd Floor

Salinas, CA 93901

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# 1. Merritt Street Corridor

## Project Area

As shown on **Figure 6**, the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area comprises the properties generally located along Merritt Street north of the Cypress Opportunity Area. The land along both sides of Tembladera Street is also included, as is the Tembladero Slough, which creates a defined edge for the western portion of the community.

## Existing Conditions

The Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area is the heart of Castroville's historic downtown commercial core. Many buildings within the commercial area along Merritt Street exhibit excellent features of traditional "Main Street" structures reflecting the community's historic past. However, the charm of the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area is overshadowed by heavy regional through traffic, which creates excessive noise and traffic delays along Merritt Street and discourages locals and tourists from visiting the area. The existing mix of businesses, along with vacant and underutilized properties also detract from the area. The key natural resource in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area is the Tembladero Slough, which runs along the western edge of this Opportunity Area. However, the existing Slough, in the vicinity of this Opportunity Area, is essentially a drainage ditch and with limited resource value. Most of the existing development backs up to the Slough, using its frontage for open storage and service activities. Flooding also continues to be a threat to the downtown area from Tembladero Slough and the overtopping of the Salinas River. This continuing threat has left many parcels south of Tembladero Street undeveloped, underutilized, and unimproved. The general character of these properties is blighted.

## Overall Objectives for Land Use and Circulation

The objective for the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area is to create a revitalized downtown that is safe and attractive, providing needed services for community residents, while also capturing a larger segment of the agricultural tourism and commuter retail/commercial markets. Residential uses should also be introduced and integrated into the commercial area to meet the needs of the local workforce and promote more activity in the community's core area throughout the day and into the evening. Greater connectivity and safer circulation patterns for both vehicles and pedestrians should be emphasized. Improvements along the Tembladero Slough should be implemented to protect the community from flooding, provide a better traffic pattern, create a visual and recreational amenity for the entire community and enhance biologic and wetland values. Development in this area must respect the natural resources of the Slough and enhance views of the community as seen by those traveling on Highways 1, 183 (Merritt Street), and 156.

Because the community desires to introduce residential development into an area that is currently primarily developed with commercial uses, the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area is designated as mixed use. The Mixed Use designation is a way to promote pedestrian activity centers that have a mixture of residential, commercial, office, and civic uses. Designated as Mixed Use on the Land Use Plan (Figure 6), uses to be encouraged include such businesses as a drug/variety store, gift shops, cafes and restaurants, a video store, specialty foods, and a fabric/craft store that serve the residents and could also draw visitors. Service businesses such as banks, medical offices, a copy center, beauty salons, shoe repair, professional offices and dry cleaners would also be appropriate, but could be located in portions of the development that do not have high visibility or even on the second floor. The Mixed Use



designation is a way to promote pedestrian activity centers that have a mixture of residential, commercial, office, and civic uses.

Under the Mixed Use designation, residential and commercial uses may be developed on the same parcel (i.e., generally residential above commercial); however, commercial uses on the ground floor fronting the street will be required. A maximum of three stories will be allowed in order to retain vistas into the community while traveling along Highways 1 and 156, particularly views of important skyline features, such as the Catholic Church in the center of town.

Residences will be allowed to develop at a density of 15 to 30 units per acre and will be designed to serve local resident and workforce needs. Commercial development will provide goods and services for the everyday needs of local residents, as well as attract visitors to stop in Castroville. A single large mall or commercial building is not appropriate for this area and would conflict with the historic character that makes Castroville special. However, the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area can act as an outdoor, human-scale traditional downtown shopping area. All development in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area will be reviewed for consistency with the *Design Guidelines* and *Development Standards* provided as appendices to this Community Plan.

As shown in the *Circulation* section of this Community Plan, access to the downtown area will be improved to correct the existing traffic congestion problems and encourage more pedestrian activity in the area. A new roadway, Artichoke Avenue, will be constructed along Tembladero Slough, from Highway 1 to Preston Street to create a second roadway parallel with Merritt Street. This new road will reduce traffic along Merritt Street, and allow traffic calming features to be installed on Merritt Street, creating a pedestrian friendly environment that supports the economic success of downtown. The proposed conceptual alignment of Artichoke Avenue is depicted in the *Circulation* section of this Community Plan. The

roadway has been designed to potentially connect to the Cypress Opportunity Area in the future via an overpass over Highway 156.

The construction of Artichoke Avenue will also create important development opportunities for properties adjacent to Tembladero Slough. As presently planned, the new Artichoke Avenue will be constructed onto a new flood control levee. The fill necessary to construct the roadway will provide flood protection for properties east of the new Artichoke Avenue and potentially increase development potential. These properties can orient toward the slough and open space beyond, creating an attractive, pedestrian oriented westerly edge and an amenity for all of the downtown area.

To improve the visual and recreational features of the downtown, habitat restoration and recreational opportunities along the Tembladero Slough will be included as part of the revitalization and transportation improvements in the area. With the construction of Artichoke Avenue, there will be an opportunity to restore and enhance portions of the Slough that are degraded, creating a linear green space along the Slough. This linear park will extend the length of the Slough within the Community Plan area.

Mixed-use development along Merritt Street will, in and of itself, promote pedestrian activity in this area. However, where appropriate and feasible, circulation system improvements will also be undertaken that promote a safer and more attractive pedestrian environment.

Improvements recommended for this area include: increased landscaping and lighting along the sidewalks; use of awnings; well-marked crosswalks; and American Disability Act (ADA) improvements. As part of the implementation of the Community Plan and building off of the existing programs in the existing Merritt Street Revitalization Strategy, the streetscape master plan will be refined. The design and development requirements for



**LEGEND**

	Proposed Community Plan Boundary		HDR-C		High Density Residential
	Opportunity Areas		AB-C		Agricultural Conservation Buffer
	Future Study Area Overlay		RC-C		Resource Conservation
	LDR-C		PQP-C		Public/Quasi-Public
	MXDR-C		MU-C		Mixed Use
	MDR-C		IND-C		Industrial
					Train Station

Source: County of Albany  
 Planning and Community Development  
 Planning Staff Report

**Merritt Street  
 Opportunity Area  
 Proposed Land Uses**



**FIGURE 6**



Figure 6 – Backside



this area are further described in the Implementation section and new development will also be subject to the *Development Standards* and the *Design Guidelines* contained in the appendices.

While comprised of individual properties, the success of the area depends on the design and development occurring in a coordinated manner. To achieve this objective, projects in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area will be reviewed by the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) as advisory to the County of Monterey Resource Management Agency (Housing and Redevelopment Office and the Planning Department) related to determining consistency with the goals, objectives, development requirements and compliance with the *Development Standards* and *Design Guidelines* of this Community Plan through the General Development Plan process. The *Design Guidelines* specifically address site design, architectural design, lighting, landscaping, parking, and signage. In addition, if a project affects a designated Historical Building or Site the County's Historic Resources Review Board will review the project for compliance with applicable regulations and requirements under their purview.

## Urban and Site Design

Several goals and policies provided in the *Goals and Policy* section of this Community Plan address urban and site design specifically within the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area.

**Goal 1:** *Maintain the community's existing small town, agricultural character, while enhancing its sense of place and safety through appropriate design programs.*

**Policy 1.1:** The Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area shall be improved through implementation of the Community Plan, as well as other adopted plans and redevelopment efforts, to create a walkable

and vibrant downtown area with businesses that serve the residents of Castroville and is attractive to visitors.

**Policy 1.6:** Implement a streetscape program in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area to provide a unifying design theme and improve the visual appearance of the community.

**Goal 2:** *Ensure that new development and redevelopment is compatible with existing development and enhances the character of the community.*

**Policy 2.1:** Redevelop targeted areas within the downtown to promote a more pedestrian friendly commercial core, provide needed local and tourist serving businesses, and take advantage of the new community amenities (e.g., Tembladero Slough Enhancement and Castro Plaza).

**Policy 2.2:** New development and redevelopment proposals, including infill development shall be reviewed with the appropriate Community Plan architectural *Design Guidelines* (Appendix A) and *Development Standards* (Appendix B) to ensure quality of design and compatibility.

**Goal 3:** *Promote the redevelopment of the downtown area to create pedestrian friendly, mixed-use areas that positively contribute to the community's character and sense of place.*

**Policy 3.1:** Encourage a mixture of residential and commercial uses in the downtown.



- Policy 3.2:** New Development and redevelopment proposals shall apply the Community Plan *Design Guidelines* (Appendix A) and *Development Standards* (Appendix B) for Mixed Use Commercial and Residential development in the downtown.
- Policy 3.3:** Pedestrian and bicycle connections shall be created between the downtown, Castro Plaza, slough enhancement areas, the Commuter Train Station Area, the high school, and other portions of the community to promote linkages and improve the pedestrian and bicycle accessibility of the community.
- Policy 3.4:** Any proposed demolition or renovation of a historic structure shall be subject to review and approval by the Monterey County Historical Resource Review Board to ensure that historic resources are protected.
- Goal 4:** *Implement a land use plan that meets the needs of the local population for housing, retail, public services, and employment opportunities during the next 20 years.*
- Policy 4.4:** Development of tourist serving commercial development that will benefit the local community and enhance the downtown shall be encouraged.

The *Design Guidelines* contained in Appendix A and the *Development Standards* contained in Appendix B of this Community Plan include details for achieving these goals and implementing these policies. The primary urban design features are summarized below.

### **Mixed Uses Pedestrian Activity and Orientation**

The existing traditional architecture and new buildings that will be developed consistent with the *Design Guidelines* along the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity

Area will promote a pedestrian-friendly environment by positioning storefront display windows at the sidewalk edge (i.e., zero-lot line development), promoting high quality construction and materials, providing awning shade at the storefront level, articulated entries and pedestrian-oriented signs. These features will define a pedestrian zone at the sidewalk and provide a sense of human scale and visual interest. The enhancement of the pedestrian zone through the introduction of outdoor or semi-outdoor spaces is encouraged. Examples of such activities include outdoor seating for restaurants, vegetable and flower stands, and courtyards with displays of merchandise.

This pedestrian-oriented design character also provides a great opportunity to reinvent sound development practices that reestablish the "village commercial" area, accommodating a mix of land uses where residential and/or office uses are combined with service or retail commercial functions to create a mixed use context. The current building frontage along some blocks is discontinuous, disrupted by vacant lots, small parking lots and underutilized spaces. Where this occurs, the development and redevelopment of these sites to complete a continuous street frontage is strongly encouraged. Where new development along the west side of Merritt Street has the opportunity for two orientations or entrances, one towards Merritt Street and another towards the enhanced Tembladero Slough linear park, this is also strongly encouraged and will be considered during the General Development Plan process.

### **Architectural Elements**

The historic character found in the downtown along Merritt Street provides a great opportunity to further define the community's image and attraction of new commercial and diverse housing opportunities to the extent feasible. Buildings representing the community's historic past should be preserved and new buildings should be designed to compliment the existing historic architecture drawing upon specific building detailing, materials, and



style elements. All development in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area must comply with the historic character architectural style guidelines and the *Distinctive Treatments - Historic Downtown Castroville/Merritt Street Corridor* section contained in Appendix A. Any proposed demolition or renovation of a historic structure shall be subject to review and approval by the Monterey County Historical Resources Commission.

### **Landscaping**

Projects will be reviewed for landscape treatments as part of the General Development Plan process and/or design review process. Landscaping in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area should enhance the pedestrian environment. For example, trees should be continued to be planted and maintained along the sidewalks that provide shade and a sense of visual separation from the traffic for pedestrians. Perennial flowers are also recommended to add interest and splashes of color at property and building entrances. Where buildings front or are located adjacent to the Slough linear park, landscaping should establish a visual connection to the park. This can be accomplished by requiring defined landscaped walkways between the buildings and the Slough, constructing outdoor use areas (e.g., eating and observation decks) as part of the new development for viewing into the Slough, and care in placing outdoor storage, parking, and service uses to not detract from the visual connection desired. Landscape maintenance plans will be required as part of the approvals for new development to ensure that the outdoor areas are well maintained.

### **Public Infrastructure**

The following goals and policies provided in the *Goals and Policy* section of this Community Plan address public infrastructure specifically within the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area.

**Goal 7:** *Create a local circulation system that allows for safe automotive through traffic within the downtown area.*

**Policy 7.1:** The near-term improvements to the Highway 1 /Merritt Street intersection shall be implemented to provide immediate traffic congestion relief.

**Policy 7.2:** The phased Artichoke Avenue circulation improvements and traffic calming improvements shall be implemented to allow for better traffic circulation, business exposure, and an improved pedestrian environment downtown.

**Goal 9:** *Create a safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle system that connects local and regional destinations.*

**Policy 9.2:** Traffic calming measures shall be implemented to create a safe, pedestrian friendly downtown area.

**Policy 9.4:** The Artichoke Avenue improvement project that will include a bicycle and pedestrian trail along the proposed Tembladero Slough shall be implemented.

**Policy 9.6:** Pedestrian/bike facilities shall be encouraged in required agricultural buffer areas and along slough enhancement areas.

**Goal 10:** *Continue to ensure that adequate levels of public services and infrastructure are available to meet the needs of new and existing development.*

**Policy 10.5:** Flood control improvements shall be implemented to reduce the threat of flooding to the existing community and provide opportunities for new development in areas currently subject to flood hazards.



The following provides a summary of the infrastructure requirements for new development and redevelopment located in the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area. Detailed descriptions of infrastructure requirements are included in the Infrastructure and Implementation sections of this plan.

### **Water Distribution System**

New development will connect to the existing 8-inch main located in Merritt Street. This line has sufficient capacity to satisfy residential fire flow requirements. Commercial fire flows will need to be determined by the North County Fire Protection District during the project review process.

### **Sanitary Sewer**

New development on the west side of Merritt Street will connect to the existing 8-inch sewer line system located in Tembladero Street. The existing sewer system can support minor infill development, provided the relief sewer system improvements have been made as described in the *Public Infrastructure* and *Service Plan* section of this Plan.

### **Artichoke Avenue and Related Improvements**

Artichoke Avenue within the Merritt Street Opportunity Area is proposed as a phased project (see **Figure 16** in the *Circulation Plan* section of this Plan). The design and construction of the first phase (Phase 1A) must be completed prior to occupancy of any development within the North Entrance, New Industrial, and Commuter Train Station Opportunity Areas; the Tottino Subarea of the Commuter Train Station Opportunity Area; and full occupancy of the Cypress Residential Opportunity Area, Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area and/or the Infill Sites. Opportunity Area. Sufficient transformation capacity presently exists to support some infill development including the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area.

Phase 1A consists of supplementing the existing left turn movement from southbound Highway 1 onto Highway 183/Merritt Street with a right exit ramp onto a new

County road that will follow the existing Sewer Road right-of-way, then continue under Highway 1 on the north side of the Temblabero Slough to Merritt Street. The new road connects to the intersection of Merritt and Mead Streets. Future phases will extend the proposed Artichoke Avenue parallel to Merritt Street across Preston Street to Crane Street.

The phased Artichoke Avenue project also provides 100-year flood protection as well as traffic circulation improvement. Properties that back up to the proposed alignment will be filled to above the 100-year flood elevation, which will eliminate the current flood hazards in the downtown and provide more usable development areas on those properties. Some sections of levee may be required if filling proves infeasible.

Proposed design criteria for facilities and properties impacted by flooding from Tembladero Slough are summarized below. More detailed information regarding the design of these facilities is provided in the *Public Service* and *Infrastructure Plan* section of this Plan. These criteria will need to be reviewed and approved or amended by the Army Corps of Engineers, County of Monterey Department of Public Works, Monterey County Water Resources Agency, and other pertinent jurisdictional agencies before the improvements are implemented.

- Engineered fill shall be based on the geotechnical analysis and recommendations of a registered geotechnical engineer or engineering geologist registered in California and other applicable Monterey County Standards.
- Minimum ground elevations by reach are as follows:
  - Downstream of and under the Highway 1 over crossing – the proposed Artichoke Avenue or its floodwall is intended to be 1-foot above the 50-year flood, about 11.0 feet North American Vertical Datum (NAVD).



- Upstream from the Highway 1 over-crossing to the Preston Road Bridge – Phase 1A of the proposed Artichoke Avenue or its floodwall is intended to be 1-foot above the 50-year flood, about 11.0 feet NAVD. For later phases of Artichoke Avenue through this reach, it is intended that the top of roadway would be at an elevation of 16.0 feet NAVD. Unimproved properties located between Tembladero Street and the proposed Artichoke Avenue roadway would be required to be on engineered fill with a minimum elevation of 16.0 feet NAVD.
- Upstream from the Preston Road Bridge to Highway 156 – For the later phases of Artichoke Avenue through this reach, it is intended that the top of roadway would be at an elevation of 17.0 feet NAVD. Unimproved properties located between Merritt Street and the proposed Artichoke Avenue roadway would be required to be on engineered fill with a minimum elevation of 17.0 feet NAVD.
- Upstream of Highway 156 approximately one mile to the Southern Pacific Railroad Crossing – unimproved properties would be required to be on engineered fill with a minimum elevation of 17.2 feet NAVD.

### **Stormwater Drainage**

The actual drainage break for proposed Artichoke Avenue would depend on the final grading. A detailed drainage plan will be required for the construction of Artichoke Avenue. The existing drainage for areas between Merritt Street and the Tembladero Slough might be modified as follows:

- Runoff for the drainage area west of Sanchez Street, bounded partially by Merritt Street and Highway 1 would be directed to drain to an existing drainage ditch alongside Caltrans state highway property, through a new culvert with a flapgate under Artichoke Avenue, and outfall into the slough. Runoff between

- Sanchez Street and Preston Road could be directed to the existing drainage system that begins on Tembladero Street and outfalls into the Slough.
- Runoff from Artichoke Avenue would drain toward the underpass sump and collect into a system that includes a stormwater pump station and flow through separation water quality treatment, with a flap gate or one-way valve installed at the outfall discharging into the slough. Runoff collected from as far south as Sewer Road and along Artichoke Avenue would be directed to this system. The stormwater pump station would be designed to provide protection for a 50-year storm, which is the minimum protection required by Caltrans.
  - The system draining the area east of Preston Street would tie into existing "System B," as so designated in the CSA-14 Storm Drain Master Plan (Nov. 2001). It would also drain the remaining portion of Artichoke Avenue, any properties behind floodwalls or levee systems, and the southern half of Merritt Street. Runoff would be pretreated for sedimentation and oil removal prior upstream of the outfall. A flap gate or one-way valve would be installed at the outfall. A pump station would be required for pumping the runoff from any low-lying properties behind floodwalls and/or levees.

## Resource Protection and Enhancement

A primary feature of the envisioned development and redevelopment in the Merritt Street Opportunity Area is the restoration and enhancement of the Tembladero Slough and integration of the Slough restoration with the construction of the new Artichoke Avenue. The Artichoke Avenue/Tembladero Slough design in this area must meet transportation and flooding goals, while restoring the existing degraded habitat to a high quality riparian habitat. The *Resource Protection Plan* section of this Community Plan describes the steps that must be taken so that restoration in this area will have a cumulative benefit



to water quality, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat, and other goals identified for the watershed. The result will be a dramatic change to the western edge of the community, recapturing the development potential on properties along the Slough, creating an amenity in the downtown area, and providing flood protection. The following goals and policies provided in the *Goals and Policy* section of this Community Plan address resource enhancement specifically within the Merritt Street Corridor Opportunity Area.

**Goal 5:** *Continue to protect and enhance the community's important natural and man-made resources.*

**Policy 5.1:** New private and public development shall work with local and regional organizations to enhance the sloughs in the vicinity of Castroville as part of the ongoing regional slough enhancement efforts to improve habitat, provide open space and create attractive amenities for the entire community.

**Policy 5.2:** Compatible infill development and compact new development within the Community Plan area shall be encouraged to efficiently use land resources.

## 2. Cypress Residential Area

### Project Area

As shown in Figure 7, the 90-acre Cypress Residential Opportunity Area is generally bounded by Highway 156, the Tembladero Slough, the railroad, and existing residential uses located along Merritt and Cypress Streets. Four subareas are identified for this Opportunity Area to more clearly define the expected land use, circulation, and urban design requirements components. General development goals for the Opportunity Area as a whole are