

## Creating the Village ~ a place to eat, sleep, shop, play, visit & work

Within the last 233 years, the Mission lands have changed from a Gabrielino-Tongva tribal area, to a Mission settlement, to agricultural lands, to a western frontier town with several saloons, to the celebration of early California romance, to today's Mission District.

In the early 1800's San Gabriel Mission was one of the wealthiest of the 21 California Missions. With an aqueduct, mill, cattle, and orchards of olives, oranges, and grapes, life in and around the Mission was active and fruitful. Although the land switched from the Missions to the Mexican government, and then to Mexican and American ranchers and farmers in the mid-1800's, the area was still primarily agricultural in nature. In the 1880's San Gabriel was a western town with eighteen saloons in a two-block area. With the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area celebrated the romance of the early Mission era with the Camino Real bell marker in 1906, the 10,000 square foot grapevine, and Grapevine Inn. This setting was the inspiration for southern California's famous first novel *Ramona*, by Helen Hunt Jackson's and John Steven McGroaty's *Mission Play*. There are two buildings that mark a significant period of economic vitality in San Gabriel:



- The San Gabriel Mission founded in 1771 and built in 1776, and
- The Mission Playhouse (San Gabriel Civic Auditorium) built in 1926 specifically for the Mission Play, which was performed 3,198 times from 1912 - 1932.



The Mission District is now a mix of businesses anchored by the Mission campus, the Civic Auditorium, and City Hall. The lack of synergy between the business community and these anchors and the lack of density within the District stymies the economic success of the District.

### **ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES**

- Provide for long-term economic vitality.
- Establish a plan based on a market driven economy.
- Provide a denser District with people living and working in the immediate area.
- Encourage the development of under-utilized sites with the highest and best use.
- Ensure adequate parking for District uses.
- Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- Showcase the District.
- Pursue recurring events in the District.
- Promote the District.
- Encourage communication and partnership with the Mission District stakeholders.

### **MARKET CONDITIONS**

The District serves an immediate market area that is characterized as being a mature, largely built-out suburban market place. Household incomes average \$60,000 annually compared with the Los Angeles County average of \$70,000. The ethnic make-up of the population has changed dramatically over a very short period of time, with Asians now representing approximately 50% of the San Gabriel population, consistent with the general market area. Latinos represent approximately 30% of the total City population. The impact of the ethnic concentrations in the market area divides the market into two or three sub-market populations, reducing the effective demand from that indicated by the population numbers.

The District competes with regional-serving retail concentrations in Arcadia (Westfield Mall), Pasadena (Old Pasadena, South Lake Avenue, East Pasadena), and Main Street Alhambra as well as with local-serving retail concentrations. Most notable of the latter is the concentration of Asian-serving retail and restaurant establishments along the Valley Boulevard corridor.



Previously, the District's role was seen as a visitor-serving, specialty retail District. This designation was derived from the fact that it contains the historic San Gabriel Mission and the Civic Auditorium, a regional entertainment venue. The actual experience of the District has been that the influence of both these institutions has not had sufficient strength to sustain a tourist-oriented district.

Tourism is not the only answer to the economic success of the Mission District. The Civic Auditorium and the Mission have not generated sufficient visitor traffic to be the basis of a viable business district. The prosperity of existing and future businesses begins at home. Interviews with current merchants and brokers seeking to lease space within the District confirm that the District's customer base is largely local. The San Gabriel Mission market area has seen a substantial increase in the Asian residential community in the last 5 years. This is evident in the new business with Asian ownership such as Mission 261, Orchid Boutique, and Mission Seasonal Gifts.

Current zoning restrictions designed to promote visitor-serving retail uses have been ineffective and have precluded occupancy by local-serving retail and service businesses. Based upon the experience in the District, broker interviews, and business surveys, the indicated role for the District is local serving, capitalizing on the pleasant scale of the District and the density of near-by residents and the medical business population.



**3.1 In order to capitalize on the existing market the District needs to take the following actions:**

- Be responsive to the local population and attract this major segment of the community into the area.
- Remove barriers to business. Land use regulations that restrict uses to visitor-serving businesses should be eliminated.
- Hone in on local needs. Land uses that are more local serving in nature should be permitted.



**DISTRICT GROWTH POTENTIAL**

Putting people in the mix by increasing the residential density is necessary to allow conversion of smaller residential properties and to provide additional local market support to the District’s commercial uses. In addition to higher densities constant visual activity is needed at the ground level to promote pedestrian activity. This suggests the need to develop surface area parking lots with infill development in order to create continual building interest and additional commercial density.

The San Gabriel Valley Medical Center is San Gabriel’s largest employer. The incorporation of the hospital uses along Santa Anita is important psychologically as a means of developing a relationship between the medical center patrons and employees and the merchants in the District. A master plan has been created for the properties in the Medical Facilities Zone, and is in the process of being implemented. A 63,000 square foot medical office building is scheduled to open in July of 2004 at the southwest corner of Santa Anita and Padilla. This building is 100% pre-leased and there is a demand for additional medical office space.



**3.2 District growth can occur with the following:**

- Including the mixed-use residential areas between Mission Drive and Santa Anita will give the District additional identity that can be shared with the area as increased density of residential is considered.
- Maximizing key properties. Uses at key properties should be carefully managed to maximize the benefit to the District.
- Creating joint venture parking opportunities with the San Gabriel Valley Medical Center can expand the links with the medical center, and provide alternative parking for the Civic Auditorium.
- Expanding the boundaries to encompass the land generally east of the arroyo, north of Mission Road, West of Junipero Serra, and South of Las Tunas Drive.



**RESIDENTIAL DENSITY ANALYSIS**

Development at in-fill locations within the District will most likely be multi-family residential, either ownership or rental. Currently, rental rates in San Gabriel do not support new construction, but this can change as the cost of home ownership continues to rise. Analysis of the cost of acquisition of existing low density residential in the District, suggests that density of 35 to 45 units to the acre will be required to allow the low density housing to be recycled into higher density condominium development. A one-acre development site would yield a land value of approximately \$50,000 per unit or approximately \$45 per square foot.



**3.3 Residential opportunities include these possibilities:**

- Living above the store. Mixed-use residential/commercial uses should be permitted with residential densities as high as 40 units per acre.
- Creating the urban village. Allowing for the high density residential to be developed at 40 units per acre with the consolidation of more than one parcel with 150 linear foot frontage and 3/4 of an acre minimum lot size.

**OPPORTUNITY SITES**

- The Civic Auditorium parking lot site represents the most significant site in the District.
- The successful operation of the Mission 261 Restaurant as a local/regional serving restaurant and banquet facility is significant in reinforcing the other restaurant and retail uses in the District.
- The Park and Ride lot is an opportunity to develop a small parking structure or other use to create additional density as depicted in **Exhibit 3.1**.
- Use of the Mission Seasonal Gift (former Startup- 323 South Mission Drive) site as a potential additional restaurant use or a significant local service or retail use with extended operating hours should be encouraged.



Additionally, this site offers an opportunity to develop a more pedestrian friendly development with a shop fronting Mission Drive and with rear parking as shown in **Exhibit 3.2**.

- Combining the properties to the north and south of 323 South Mission Drive under a single ownership can further enhance this site with a combination of new construction and adaptive re-use of historic structures.



- Assuming the parking impacts can be mitigated, the Civic Auditorium parking lot provides the opportunity to introduce a mixed-use development into the District with ground floor retail/offices and residential above. The resulting land value may provide the resources to replace parking lots lost from its development. **Exhibits 3.3** and **3.4** provide two alternatives for the development of the Civic Auditorium parking lot that create pedestrian paseos linking parking to the Civic Auditorium.

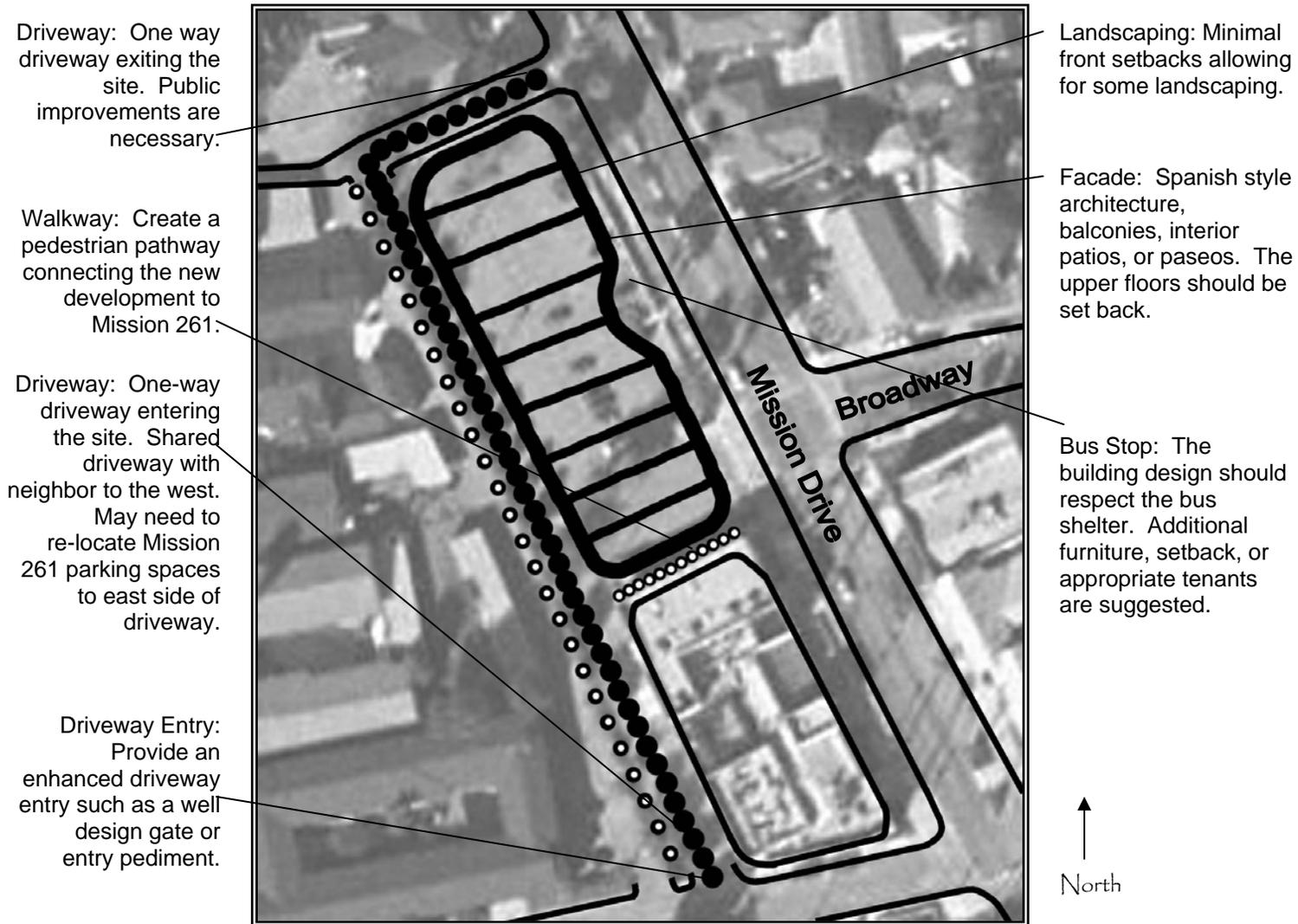


#### **3.4 Economic development opportunities include these points:**

- Taking advantage of today's demographic, real estate and economic market.
- Exploring development opportunities for the Civic Auditorium parking lot.
- Creating mixed-use in retail and residential projects may be financially viable in near-term.
- Promoting the highest and best use of key properties and corner sites.



**EXHIBIT 3.1 ~ PARK AND RIDE DEVELOPMENT SITE OPTION**



**EXHIBIT 3.2 ~ 323 SOUTH MISSION DEVELOPMENT SITE OPTION**

Covered Walkway: Create an archway or second story over the pedestrian alley to provide shade, interest, and additional square footage.

Driveway: Create reciprocal access agreement with building to the north.

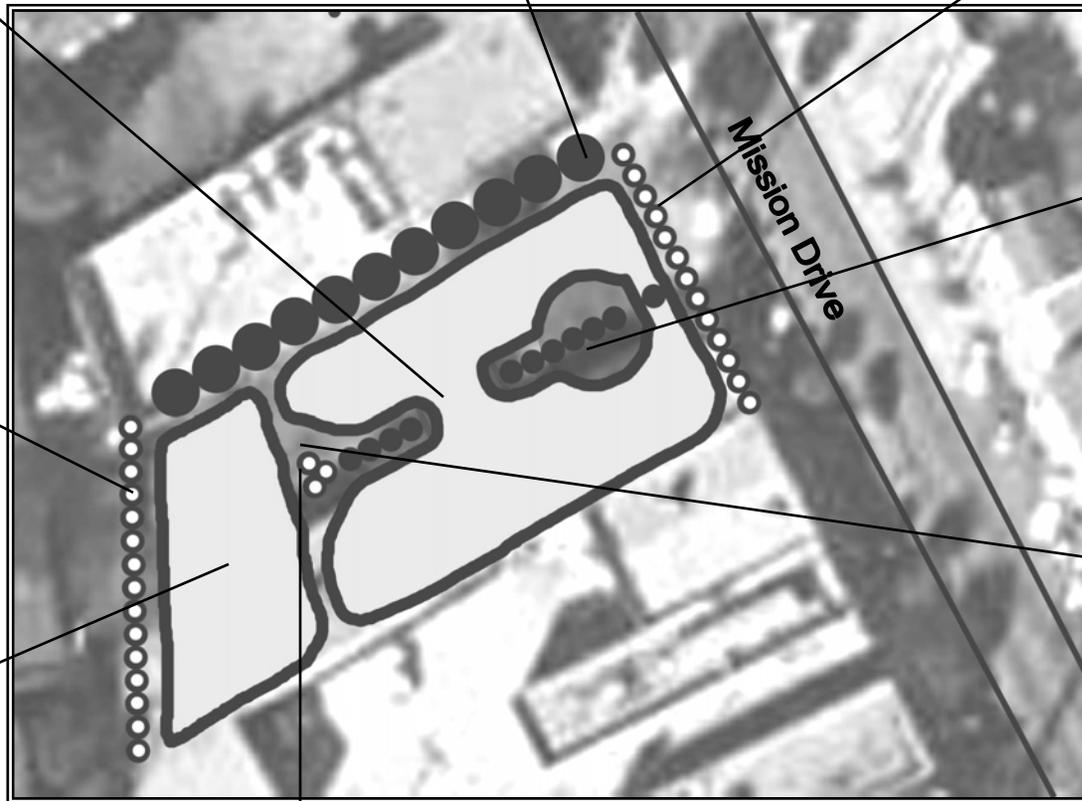
Buffering: light landscaping along the front to soften the appearance of the building and help transition between the building and the street.

Buffering: Provide ample buffering between the residences to the west. Properties to the west are higher in elevation.

Patio: for outdoor dining for restaurants or office workers or display for retail goods.

Parking based on one story building. If two stories, create shared parking agreement with neighboring properties.

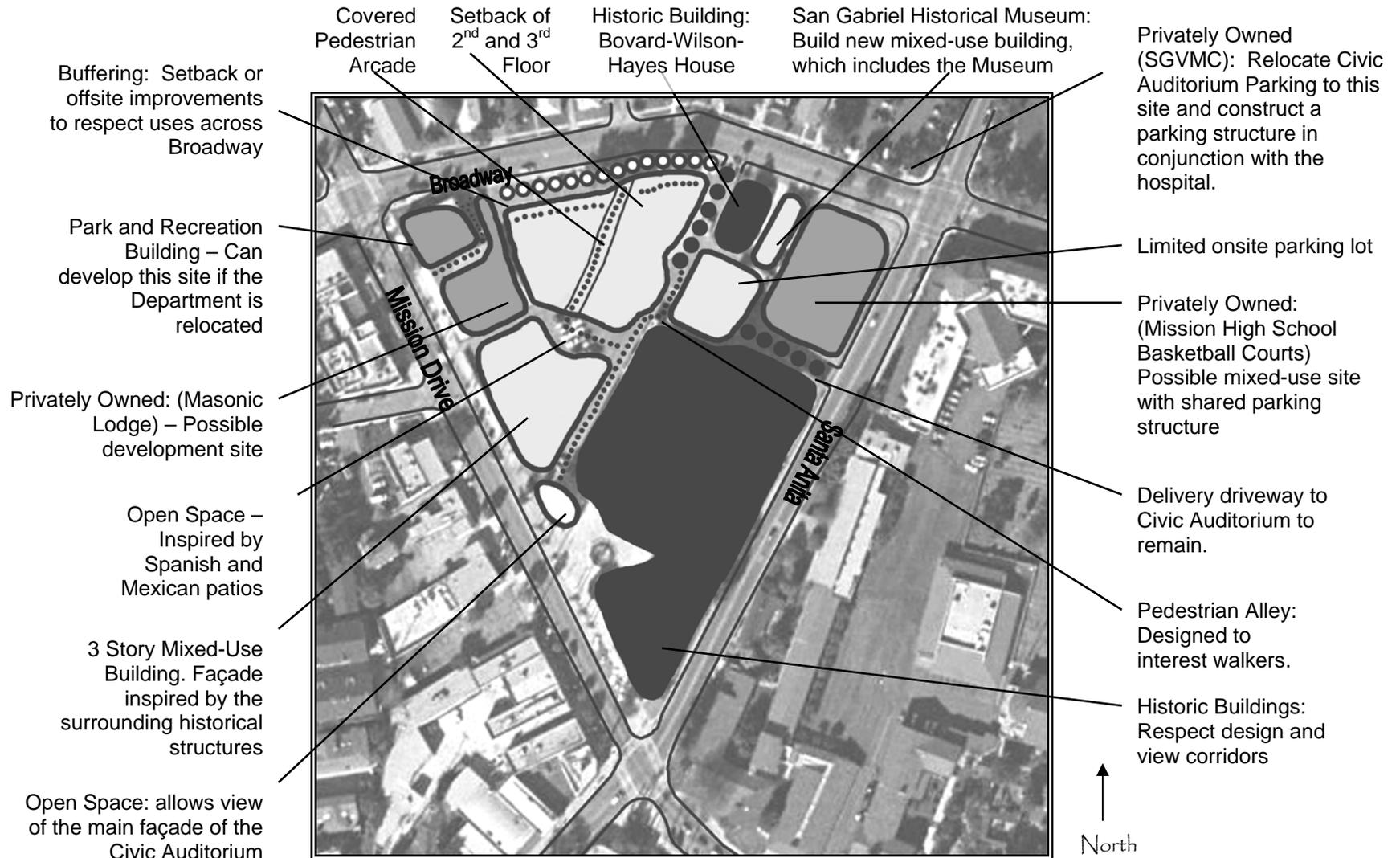
Arcade/Alley: Pedestrian walkway to provide interest, rhythm, surprise, view corridor, and access to tenant. An outdoor staircase and planters would be appropriate.



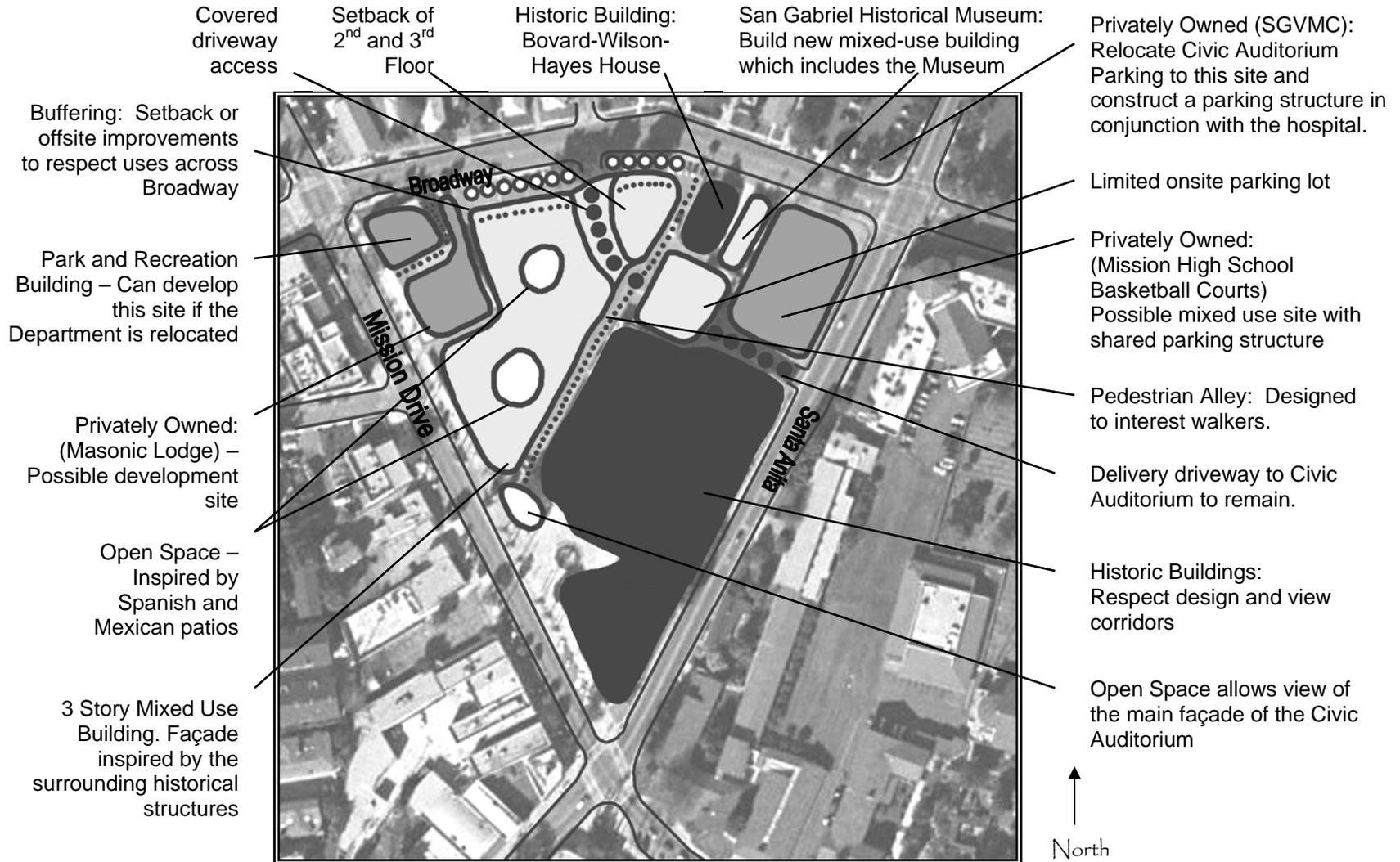
Buffering: Landscaping, historical exhibit case, fountain, or some other aid shall be used to block view to the parking lot.



**EXHIBIT 3.3 ~ CIVIC AUDITORIUM DEVELOPMENT SITE OPTION 1**



**EXHIBIT 3.4 ~ CIVIC AUDITORIUM DEVELOPMENT SITE OPTION 2**



**NICHE OPPORTUNITIES**

Elimination of the current visitor-serving restrictive zoning should increase the attractiveness of the District to prospective tenants. A village designation, with clear design guidelines protecting the scale and character of the District, opens the opportunity for the District to become a premiere address in San Gabriel for local serving businesses, including office uses (architects, designers, realtors, mortgage companies, etc.) and limited restaurant and specialty retail uses.

The District currently has limited niches that focus around our anchors: the Mission, Civic Auditorium, and City Hall.



**3.5 In order to further promote the District, introduce people to this historic oasis, and create a District that makes dollars and sense, we need to do the following:**

- Recruit local serving retail and services into the District.
- Showcase the District. Host more community events in the District in order to familiarize residents with the area.
- Pursue reoccurring events at the Civic Auditorium with a resident theater company or other performing arts group. Season ticket holders attend performances on a regular basis and can become District regulars.



**FOSTERING DISTRICT OWNERSHIP**

The Mission District revitalization will be incomplete without a public/private partnership. Active involvement by people who are property owners, business owners, residents, and community members will be a prerequisite to revitalization. This effort needs to be organized and focused in order to succeed. One possible entity is the Mission District Partnership whose membership is broad-based and which has created a steering committee and subcommittees on access and mobility, business retention and attraction, cultural activities and events, and public information and outreach. These committees are similar to the National Main Street model for revitalization, which has a proven track record. The “Main Street” four points include design, promotion, business retention and recruitment, and organization.





**3.6 The effort to foster this public/private champion for the Mission District needs to include these elements:**

- Strong local leadership to assume a significant role in revitalization efforts should include representatives from the San Gabriel Valley Medical Center, the San Gabriel Mission, the City, District business owners, District property owners and various other stakeholders.
- Long-term funding for events, marketing, staffing and other organizational efforts.
- Professional staffing to guide volunteer work and efforts and to implement Mission District programs.
- Community driven efforts in District design, promotion, business retention and recruitment, and organization.

