

# **THE VALIDITY OF URBAN FORMS**

## **LIFESTYLE CENTERS AND TRADITIONAL MAINSTREETS**

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# **THE VALIDITY OF URBAN FORMS**

## **LIFESTYLE CENTERS AND TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWNS**

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

By,

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE ON PUBLIC SPACES .....	2
2.1 PUBLIC SPACES.....	2
2.2 STREETS.....	5
2.3 DOWNTOWNS (CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS) .....	5
2.4 PLAZAS .....	6
3. SUBURBANIZATION, URBAN FORM, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MALL .....	7
3.1 SUBURBANIZATION AND THE MALL .....	7
3.2 PUBLIC SPACES AND SHOPPING CENTERS .....	11
4. METHODOLOGY AND STUDY OBJECTIVES.....	13
4.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES .....	13
4.2 METHODOLOGY .....	14
4.3 METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS .....	14
4.3.1 POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATIONS.....	15
4.3.2 EXPERT INTERVIEWS .....	16
4.3.3 MAPPING .....	17
5 STUDY AREAS.....	18
5.1 THE “CASES” .....	18
5.1 DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELMO .....	18
5.2 CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER.....	20
6. FINDINGS.....	22
6.1 FINDINGS FROM MAPPING ANALYSIS .....	22
6.1.1 DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELMO .....	22
6.1.2 CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER.....	28
6.2 EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS .....	34
6.2.1 DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELMO .....	34
6.2.2 CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER.....	39
6.3 FINDINGS FROM EXPERT INTERVIEWS .....	44
6.3.1 CITY OF SAN ANSELMO .....	44
6.3.2 CITY OF CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER.....	45

<b>6.4 FINDINGS FROM USER SURVEYS.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6.4.1 WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE SITE? .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>6.4.2 HOW DID YOU TRAVEL TO THE SITE? .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>6.4.3 HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU COME THE SITE? HOW FREQUENTLY ONLY TO SHOP? .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6.4.4 ACTIVITIES YOU PARTICIPATE IN WHEN VISITING THE SITE? .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>6.4.5 WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES YOU LIKE ABOUT THE SITE? .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6.4.6 WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE SITE? .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>6.4.7 WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT THE SITE? .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>7. CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>8. REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>APPENDIX A. DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELO SURVEY .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>APPENDIX B. CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER SURVEY .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>APPENDIX C. HUMAN SUBJECTS CONSENT FORM.....</b>	<b>63</b>

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

Downtowns historically functioned as the epicenter of the City. Traditional downtowns are the focus of a region's economic, social, and political institutions. With the progression of multi-centered urban areas, new centers of finance and entertainment are developing, often in the form of "town centers" or "lifestyle centers." Town centers are juxtaposed to traditional downtowns. Both traditional downtowns and town centers offer users a similar experience by providing public spaces, retail uses, entertainment, and social opportunities. Town centers differ from traditional downtowns because they are essentially retrofitted malls. The town center and its smaller cousin, the lifestyle center, attempt to evoke the atmosphere and feel of a traditional downtown. Town centers are also similar to lifestyle centers, which are designed with similar objectives on a smaller scale. This study examines a lifestyle center and a traditional downtown in Marin County, California. This study aims to explore and understand how lifestyle centers compare to downtowns through the comparative experience of users. This study assesses the merit of lifestyle centers as a new form of public space, and explores the lifestyle center's role as a "new downtown."

Chapter Two discusses the existing literature focusing on public space as an aspect of streets, downtowns, and plazas. The chapter reviews existing literature and identifies the role public space plays in different aspects of the urban environment. Chapter Three focuses on suburbanization and the role of the mall. It draws from existing literature to identify the mall's role in suburbanization and provides context for the recent trend of "town centers" and "lifestyle centers." Chapter Four identifies the project objective, methodology, and methods and instruments. Chapter five introduces the cases: Downtown San Anselmo, as a traditional downtown and Corte Madera Town Center, as a lifestyle center. Chapter six presents the findings from research. The findings are sorted into four categories: Findings from Mapping Analysis, Findings from Site Observations, Findings from Expert Interviews, and Findings from User Surveys. Chapter 7 analyzes the findings and draws conclusions based on research.

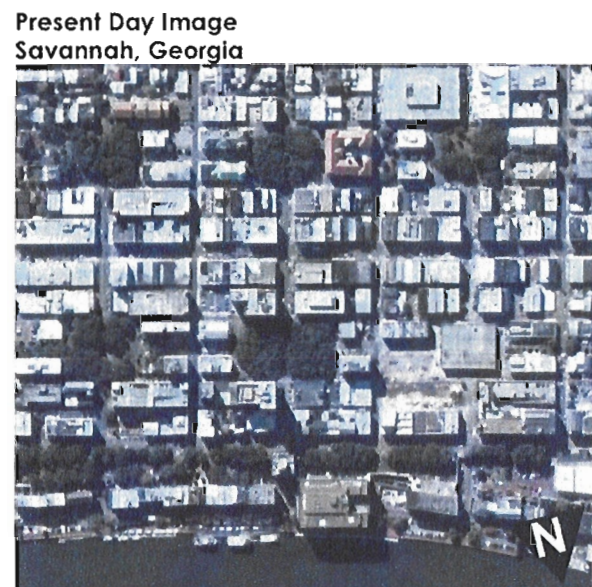
## 2. REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE ON PUBLIC SPACES

### 2.1 PUBLIC SPACES

Good urban spaces are necessary to maintain our social and psychological health (Mehta, 2007). Public plazas are outlets of expression, offering people places to relax, read, study, work, socialize, or reflect. They are dynamic spaces that offer each person a unique experience. In addition, public spaces cooperate with the adjacent land uses, making a meaningful experience for people. Public spaces draw people and help to build community (Bunnell, 2008). Originally, the first step in American town planning was to locate public spaces (Bunnell, 2008). Savannah, Georgia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania are two American cities associated with early urban planning. Olgethorpe's plan for Savanna included public squares incorporated into a grid pattern. Olgethorpe designed the plan in 1733. Twenty public squares still remain in the old city because of its successful design (Kunstler, 1993). Philadelphia's plan included a central square and four park-like squares dispersed evenly within a grid. This design was intended to evoke a country town feel for all future building patterns (Kunstler, 1993).

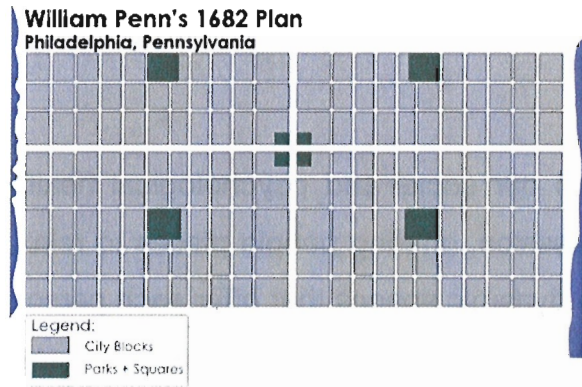


**Figure 1 – Olgethorpe's 1733 Plan for Savannah, Georgia with public squares and grid patter**

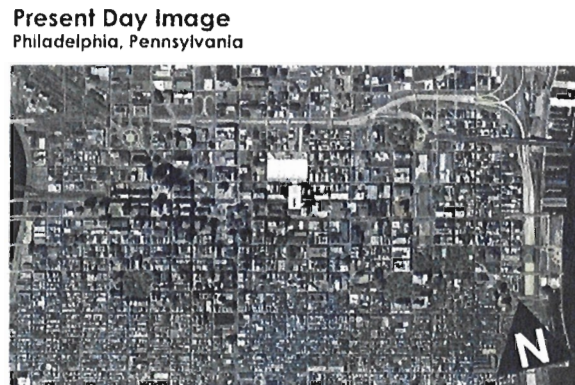


**Figure 2 - Present day image of Savannah, Georgia with public squares and grid pattern.**





**Figure 3** - William Penn's 1682 Plan for Philadelphia, PA with public squares and grid pattern. The main axes meet at an intersection with four public squares.



**Figure 4** - Present day image of Philadelphia with remnants of William Penn's plan.

Within the built environment, micro-scale characteristics dictate its participants' use (Mehta, 2007). Micro-scale characteristics are both physical and behavioral. Physical characteristics include fixed, semi-fixed, and moveable features (Hall, 1966). In addition, physical micro-scale characteristics distinguish buildings, business variety, and spaces on the street (Mehta, 2007).

Farbstein and Kantrowitz identify numerous micro-scale characteristics of site usage in their book *People in Places* (1978). Micro-scale characteristics affect how people experience public spaces. These include "face to face contact" and "eyes on the street." People's interactions at the face-to-face level are impacted by environmental and behavior factors (Farbstein et al., 1978). These factors include distance, lighting, acoustics, furniture arrangement, people's roles, values, interests, attitudes, and intentions. There are hidden dimensions to interactions: Intimate (contact to 1.5 feet), Personal (1.5 feet to 4 feet), Social (4 to 12 feet), and Public (12 feet and up). Within these hidden dimensions of interaction, people communicate through sensory channels such as seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting (Farbstein et al., 1978). "Eyes on the Street" refers to defensible space. Defensible space uses design to allow people to determine their security through monitoring (Farbstein et al., 1978).

In addition to micro-scale characteristics, a lively public space is a product of macro-scale characteristics. Macro-scale characteristics include socioeconomic characteristics, site accessibility, major destinations (within proximity), density, and

natural features (Mehta, 2007). Therefore, a well designed public space or privatized public space will only be successful if it is accessible and if the end-users exist.

Farbstein and Kantowitz identify numerous macro-scale characteristics that affect the way people use public spaces. These include “cars and people,” the “location game,” zoning, and barriers (Farbstein et al., 1978). “Cars and people” refers to streets and pedestrians. Streets were traditionally used as public spaces (Farbstein et al., 1978). The automobile changed the street’s function, however, making planning streets to incorporate both cars and people difficult (Farbstein et al., 1978). The “location game” also affects the use of space. Farbstein and Kantowitz assert that town centers are clusters of unique features that serve the needs of an entire area (1978, p. 120). The location of a place affects its use. Poor location can cause inconvenience for potential patrons or result in lack of revenue. These consequences can result in embarrassment for the developer or bankruptcy (Farbstein et al., 1978). Zoning regulates development under uniform restrictions (Farbstein et al., 1978). Zoning, unless legislative appeal is granted will restrict the size and use of developments and any incorporated public space. Barriers also impact space usage. People with disabilities will access and use a space differently. Poor design will inhibit a disabled person’s use of the space. Approximately 25 percent of Americans have a disability (Farbstein et al., 1978). It is important that lifestyle centers and downtowns are designed to allow everyone access to the public space.

Public space is embodied in numerous physical manifestations including streets, downtowns, and plazas. These spaces each offer a unique experience to users. Downtowns, streets, and plazas interact to form the urban framework. Despite William H. Whyte’s research on people’s behavior and public space, local governments and private developers allow inadequate public spaces to be built (Dobbins, 2009). The following sections discuss the social and economic exchange, aspects of public space, and people’s interactions within streets, downtowns, and plazas.

## **2.2 STREETS**

Streets offer people more than just a system of transportation. According to Jacobs, streets allow for social and commercial exchange between people (1993). Streets are social space and not only for automobile movement (Mehta, 2007). Streets can be for living, for shopping, for walking and driving, for working, and many other activities (Jacobs, 1993). People traditionally used streets as public spaces (Farbstein et al., 1978). Mehta states that streets represent the outdoors for urbanites (2007). Streets are open for everyone. People can watch and enjoy the movement of the street (Jacobs, 1993). Jacobs states that “physical design alone cannot be proved to make a place and that a good urban street is the product of its context” (1993). Great streets need to define the community by facilitating people’s actions and allowing people to meet and interact with others (Jacobs, 1993). A great street is a lively street. Lively streets contain large sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping, and articulated building facades (Mehta, 2007). Great streets encourage public use by giving people the opportunity to stop and sit, talk, contribute to the street, actively or passively participate in the street’s, or participate passively. In addition, great streets should be safe and physically comfortable (Jacobs, 1993). Streets offer urbanites a multitude of opportunities. Streets are traditional public places where pedestrians, cyclists, automobiles, and public transportation interact. There currently is a “reinvestment in, and use of, existing and new pedestrian-oriented streets, squares, plazas, and other traditional types of public open spaces in cities” (Mehta, 2007).

## **2.3 DOWNTOWNS (CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS)**

A city is associated with the success and prosperity of its Central Business District (CBD). Therefore, cities developed incentives to encourage private development downtown (Sideris and Banerjee, 1998). Industrialization shifted the focus of downtowns from small commercial and retail districts to true CBDs (Reitzes, 1986). These new CBDs contained financial services, retail, and administrative activities (Reitzes, 1986). Suburbanization “through increased personal mobility, a postindustrial service economy, and the growth of suburban manufacturing and population” (Reitzes,



1986, p. 122) allowed multiple CBDs to proliferate in an urban area. Reitzes asserts that downtowns are no longer the nucleus of the metropolitan area; however, CBDs still function as centers for specialized and mass shopping, a nexus of financial operations, and the location of major governmental and cultural facilities (1986). According to Sideris et al. (1998), public open spaces are “the leading metaphor for understanding the structure and design of the contemporary North American downtown” (p. 86). These public spaces are located in a hodgepodge of office, retail, civic, and residential uses. The area’s inhabitants live in high-rise condo and apartment buildings. For these urbanites, public spaces are extensions of their back yards. People in the SOMA district of San Francisco can be seen walking their dog or playing with their children in parks, plazas, and play grounds in their neighborhoods.

## **2.4 PLAZAS**

The plaza, along with the forum, and other public spaces offer participants a space to exchange information (Dobbins, 2009). Plazas often contain marketplaces that allow for the buying, selling, exchanging, trading, and vending of goods and information (Dobbins, 2009). Historically, cities owned and maintained public plazas. Recently, “the private sector has been supplying the majority of public spaces in downtown of American cities, resulting in a change in creation and consumption of public space in downtown districts” (Sideris et al., 1998, p. 86). Plazas are a form of public spaces. A successful plaza is inclusionary, allowing for a diversity of users and uses. The number one use in plazas is “people watching” (Whyte, 1980). Plaza design also influences the intensity of use and desirability of the place. Plazas offer people a designated space for their enjoyment. People can use plazas for a multitude of activities, some introverted and others extroverted. Whyte (1980) observed, in his famous plaza studies in New York City that successful plazas allow for socialization and usually contain a high proportion of groups.

### **3. SUBURBANIZATION, URBAN FORM, AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MALL**

#### **3.1 SUBURBANIZATION AND THE MALL**

Suburbanization accelerated in the post-war period. Suburbanization coincided with the deterioration of America's industrial cities. Beauregard (2006) claims that from WWII through the 1970s, the U.S. became "the most prosperous nation, the first suburban society, and a global power" (p. ix). During this time, young couples moved to suburbs with the application of mortgages and a steady economy (Beauregard, 2006). Suburbanization catalyzed the decay and "loss of centeredness" within the central cities and was also a result of the decay (Ellin, 1997). It was cyclical. The suburbs allowed "Americans to define a unique identity out of the suburbs, making suburban life both desirable and possible, and abandon the industrial centers" (Beauregard, 2006, p. x). Concurrently, the street lost its role as a social nexus after 1945 as a result of modernist principles (Ellin, 1997). In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a statistically small move of suburbanites back to the central city. People born to suburbanites were drawn to the appeal of the central city (Ellin, 1997). Suburbanization, according to Ellin (1997), began with post war suburban tract housing, then shifted to master planned and gated communities, and is currently at the neo-traditional and New Urbanist development stage. Neo-traditional development impacts smaller areas of development, including the renaming of shopping centers "town centers." Town centers attempt to replicate village squares (Ellin, 1997).

Shopping malls traditionally emulated market towns and villages and at the time of Goss' (1993) writing, high end franchises attempted to evoke this original form through idealizing villages and small towns. Some malls include regional architecture for authenticity (Goss, 1993). Mall retrofits attempt to create instant town centers or lifestyle centers from failed malls (also known as regional serving retail centers and neighborhood serving retail centers).

In his book, *The Option of Urbanism* (2007), Christopher Leinberger defines two types of built environments: *Walkable Urbanism* and *Drivable Suburbanism*. *Walkable Urbanism* allows people to satisfy everyday needs, such as attending school, shopping, using parks, socializing with friends, and employment through walking or transit. These locations are generally within walking distance or accessible via transit from a person's home (Leinberger, 2007). On the other hand, *Drivable Suburbanism* causes people to rely on their car due to the arrangement of buildings at low densities (Leinberger, 2007).

There are three real estate products in *Drivable Suburbanism*: *Drivers*, *Followers*, and *In Between Uses*. *Drivers* include housing, major entertainment, cultural centers (stadiums, arenas, etc.), universities, and hospitals. These uses draw consumers regionally at approximately a 15-mile radius (Leinberger, 2007). *Followers* include neighborhood serving retail, restaurants, office space, and self-storage. These uses draw consumers within a 2-3 mile radius. These services are more dependent on sources of demand (Leinberger, 2007). Leinberger identifies the third form as *In Between Uses*, which includes regional serving offices, individual developments, big box power centers, regional malls, and hotels (2007). Regional malls and neighborhood serving retail are variants of shopping centers and malls.

Neighborhood serving retail (smaller shopping centers) were the first commercial establishments in the suburbs. In the 1920s shopping centers were accessible via public transit and contained few parking spaces (Leinberger, 2007). Shopping centers in the 1950s were based on the 1920s model but provided additional parking. In addition, parking lots were placed behind the shopping center. Department stores still located in traditional downtowns during the 1950s (Leinberger, 2007). In the 1960s, shopping center design changed to accommodate parking in front of the store. At the same time, department stores created "branches" to anchor suburban shopping malls (Leinberger, 2007). Victor Gruen developed many of the first malls and believed that mall designs could be applied to the traditional CBDs to restore a sense of belonging, decrease alienation, decrease loneliness and isolation, and create a sense of identity

(Goss, 1993). By the 1980s, however, downtown department stores closed leaving only their suburban “branches” (Leinberger, 2007). Leinberger identifies that development of regional power centers limits the use of neighborhood serving retail (2007), furthering the decline of neighborhood serving retail and perpetuating *Drivable Suburbanism*.

*Drivable Suburbanism* proliferates in edge cities. These edge cities include retail, hotels, offices, and regional malls. Leinberger asserts that for the last 60 years, the auto heavily influenced the United States’ [urban and transportation] policies (2007). Auto driven tendencies of the United States were evident in the *Futurama* exhibit at the 1939 World’s Fair. Bel Geddes created the *Futurama* exhibit for General Motors Highways and Horizons exhibit. Geddes utilized an aerial view to show patrons the “World of Tomorrow,” allowing spectators to “Fly through utopia” (Morshed, 2004). According to Morshed, *Futurama* is a parable of modern planning (2004). Following the *Futurama* ideology, auto oriented planning dominated the 1950s and 1960s. These policies helped the shopping center proliferate. In addition, financing also encourages *Drivable Suburbanism* (Leinberger, 2007). Policies and personal preferences promoted *Drivable Suburbanism* for the majority of the last century. We are now beginning to understand and quantify the effects of this form of development. The most noticeable negative impact is auto dependence. *Drivable Suburbanism* increased social segregation by concentrating poverty and decreasing access to jobs because lower income households cannot afford the vehicle commute. Approximately 33 percent of America is unable or chooses not to drive and are thus excluded by *Drivable Suburbanism* (Leinberger, 2007). In addition, *Drivable Suburbanism* detrimentally impacted the environment through decreased water quality, increased land consumption, degraded air quality, urban heat islands, and climate change. *Drivable Suburbanism* did allow more people to own land, and made retail easily accessible albeit by automobile (Leinberger, 2007).

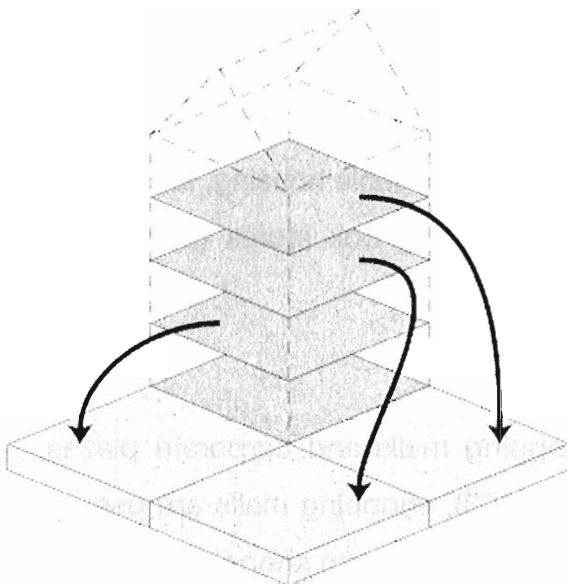
In addition to auto oriented planning and policy making, real estate financing drove the development patterns of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Wall Street perpetuates a standardized development pattern through its tendency to limit finance to 19 standard

real estate products (Leinberger, 2007). These real estate types include various types of office, industrial, retail, hotel, apartment, housing, and other miscellaneous uses. Retail standard products include neighborhood retail centers, lifestyle centers, and big box anchors (Leinberger, 2007).

In the 1990s, shopping mall development slowed because of a shortage of greenfield sites, increased land costs, increased construction costs, development controls, public opposition, changing market demographics, segmentation of retail industry, and decreased federal programs for infrastructure and incentives (Goss, 1993). This slowdown in mall development resulted in the redevelopment of existing malls. Regional malls and shopping centers that fail leave edge cities without their major *Drivers*. The over abundance of retail in the suburbs causes malls to fail (Jones and Williamson, 2009). Failed malls are being converted into new mixed-use town centers and lifestyle centers. Mall retrofits are possible because of “growth in households without children, growth in suburban jobs, growth in multifamily housing market, lack of greenfield sites, rising gas prices, smart growth policies, lack of affordable housing in the suburbs, increased land values, and regional patterns” (Jones et al., 2009).

Mall retrofits attempt to convert *Drivable Suburbanism* into *Walkable Urbanism*. Leinberger uses Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to define each of his urban classifications. FAR

corresponds to the ratio between total floor area and total site area. If the FAR of a lot is 1.0, the building can cover 100 percent of the lot. In Figure 5, the FAR is 1.0 or 100 percent, however, the building covers one fourth of the site. The FAR can be reached through multiple building types and designs.



**Figure 5 - FAR Digram** showing a four story building with FAR of 1.0 (100%) using  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the site. (Source: <http://www.carfree.com/far.html>)

According to Leinberger, *Drivable Suburbanism* contains a FAR between .005 and .3 (2007). Leinberger defines the FAR for *Walkable Urbanism* between 0.8 and 40.0 with the missing FAR (.3-.8) representing the *Never-lands* (2007). Increased FAR (as in the classification of *Walkable Urbanism*) results in a more walkable environment with a greater diversity of uses than lower FARs. The *Never-lands* are neither walkable nor drivable. Leinberger notes that cities implemented *Drivable Suburbanism* in declining traditional city centers especially in the 1970s with the closure of main streets to create pedestrian streets like suburban malls (2007). For a place to encourage pedestrians, it needs more than an appropriate FAR. Mixed-use and access (e.g. barriers such as freeways) need to be considered when creating a pedestrian oriented space (Leinberger, 2007). Leinberger asserts that *Walkable Urbanism* includes transit-oriented developments and regional serving places. Regional serving places include traditional downtowns, downtown adjacent areas, suburban towns, greenfield towns, regional and strip malls, and neighborhood serving retail (Leinberger, 2007).

Lifestyle centers can be built from scratch on greenfield sites or by retrofitting regional and strip malls. The current shift from *Drivable Suburbanism* to *Walkable Urbanism* is a product of many factors. As people continue to realize the benefits of *Walkable Urbanism*, development patterns will continue to shift. According to Leinberger, *Walkable Urbanism* offers financial benefits to local governments, and benefits to private investors. It also fights against NIMBYism (2007). NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) is the negative reaction citizens take to undesirable land uses that are planned to be located or are currently located in their neighborhood. There are also unintended consequences of *Walkable Urbanism* including a lack of affordable housing, an influx of national and international chains, and a proliferation of big box stores (Leinberger, 2007).

### **3.2 PUBLIC SPACES AND SHOPPING CENTERS**

Mehta claims that consumer culture, through shopping malls and corporate plazas, privatized public space (2007). According to Goss (1993), shopping malls are pseudo places where developers use design to create a disassociation with shopping. The mall

uses spatial forms to determine the permeability of structures and persuade users to use the space the way developers proscribe (Goss, 1993). Lifestyle centers created from retrofitted malls create a sense of place for new experiences, encouraging identification (Jones et al., 2006). Goss speculates that the retail environment and subsequent cultural experience is a product of the consumer's predisposition to spend and their political and economic ability to spend (1993).

Malls can be reused to create town centers complete with "traditional" main streets or pedestrian malls, offering users an experience derived from traditional urban downtowns. Lively streets allow people to engage in stationary and sustained social activities (Mehta, 2007). Short-term social contacts can lead to long-term social interactions. Short-term contact includes standing, sitting, lying, talking, eating, drinking reading, etc, and low intensity contact between people. These short-term interactions can inspire others to join (Mehta, 2007). Therefore, a lively street encourages participation of all users through short-term and long-term interactions. The concepts that create a lively street can be applied to retrofitted malls with "main streets."

## 4. METHODOLOGY AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

### 4.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Lifestyle centers are the next step for the mall because it offers a more appealing setting and ambience than a standard mall, encouraging people to spend more time at the place (Little, 2006). The wave of lifestyle centers began in the late 1980s and early 1990s but catalyzed in the late 1990s (Jones et al., 2006). Mehta argues that U.S. cities do not incorporate center plazas designed for stationary and social activities (2007). Retrofitting malls into town centers, lifestyle centers and pedestrian streets attempts to integrate retail and public social spaces together, fostering social and stationary activities. Little defines lifestyle centers as large trade areas with retail, restaurants, and entertainment establishments encompassing 150,000 to 500,000 square feet in a main street or village square atmosphere (2007). According to Mehta, retail uses engage people and support stationary and social activities on the street (2007). Jones et al. suggest that lifestyle centers are generally built in upscale neighborhoods and offer shoppers upscale retail and trendy restaurants (2006).

Lifestyle centers are a unique trend within the built environment. Lifestyle centers and their larger cousin, the town center, evoke traditional downtowns. They can function as the contemporary retail center of a city, embracing its role as a hub of activity similar to traditional downtowns. At the same time lifestyle centers compete with downtowns. Lifestyle centers are a product of *Drivable Suburbanism*. The shift in America from urban to suburban decayed the central cities and their downtowns because the majority of the population resided in the suburbs. As America became more suburban, retail followed the population, leaving central city downtowns without any major attractions.

This study aims to explore and understand how lifestyle centers compare to downtowns through the comparative experience of users. This study assesses the merit of lifestyle centers as a new form of public space, and explores the lifestyle center's role as a "new downtown."



## **4.2 METHODOLOGY**

The study uses two case studies, a traditional downtown “Main Street” and a lifestyle center, created from a recent mall retrofit. The Corte Madera Town Center, a lifestyle center in Corte Madera, California, was chosen because it contains the necessary characteristics of a lifestyle center and it was recently renovated from a more traditional shopping center. To compare Corte Madera Town Center to a traditional urban environment, San Anselmo’s downtown was selected as a case study of a traditional city center.

## **4.3 METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS**

The study was divided into macro and micro scale factors as defined by Mehta (2007) and supported with characteristics defined by Farbstein and Kantrowitz (1998). The physical, micro-scale characteristics of fixed, semi-fixed, and moveable objects were analyzed through empirical observations at each site. The behavioral micro-scale characteristics relating to “face to face interactions” and “eyes on the street” were empirically observed and assessed through user surveys. Physical macro-scale characteristics were analyzed through GIS analysis, including site accessibility, land use, and proximity to transit. Research utilized Farbstein and Kantowitz’s macro-scale characteristics of “cars and people,” “The Location Game,” “Zoning,” and “Barriers” to assess behavior based macro-scale factors through user surveys and GIS analysis.

Mehta suggests that public authorities play an important role in fostering lively streets through the provision of infrastructure and the ability to encourage a variety of businesses (2007). Cities were contacted and interviewed regarding the Corte Madera Town Center’s impact on the community. The traditional downtown street was assessed through the same factors.

This study utilized three method groups: Post Occupancy Evaluations, Expert Interviews, and Mapping.

#### 4.3.1 POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATIONS

Post occupancy evaluations are used to assess strengths and weaknesses within the built environment. Post Occupancy Evaluations began as assessments of building occupants and their needs (Preiser et al., 1988). The first POEs were conducted in the mid-1960s in response to problems in mental hospitals and prisons (Prieser et al., 1988; Osmond 1966). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, numerous books were written on POEs. In the 1960s, researchers began studying the relationships between behavior and environmental design. This led to the creation of the field of environmental design and research (Prieser et al., 1988). According to Prieser et al. (1988), the POE process model is:

1. Plan
2. Conduct
3. Evaluate

Within this process model, there are three types of POEs. Each type of POE has a different level of detail and research time associated with it.

1. **Indicative POE:** The indicative model is the least in depth and simply identifies the successes and failure of a space. Indicative POEs include interviews, archival research, observations (walk through evaluations in buildings) and question to building or site managers regarding performance issues (Prieser et al., 1988).
2. **Investigative POE:** Investigative POEs are more in depth and often investigate in more detail key areas highlighted by the indicative POE. (Prieser et al., 1988) The Indicative POE forms the foundation for the Investigative POE.
3. **Diagnostic POE:** The diagnostic POE is the most intensive. According to Prieser et al. (1988), the diagnostic POE uses a multi method strategy to evaluate each important aspect of a building and the results are used to improve particular facilities on site (pg. 57).

This study utilizes an indicative POE and uses the following methods and instruments to conduct the post occupancy evaluation of both the downtown and town center.

### *EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS*

Post occupancy evaluations were conducted at each site. The post occupancy evaluation was based on first hand observations of the public spaces and behavior of the patrons. Downtown San Anselmo was observed on a Saturday between 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM and on a Friday between 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM. Due to weather, Downtown San Anselmo was observed on an additional late Saturday afternoon. The Corte Madera Town Center was observed on a Saturday between 11:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Observations noted the use of fixed, semi-fixed, and moveable features, “face to face” interactions between people, and the provision of “eyes on the street.”

### *USER SURVEYS*

User perceptions and behavior habits were obtained through user surveys. The survey asked participants to identify their reasons for coming to the site, travel mode, frequency of visitation, activities, likes and dislikes, and opportunities for change and improvements at the specific site. Approximately ten surveys were administered at each site. The researcher administered the survey at the site. An example survey is available in Appendix A (Corte Madera Town Center) and Appendix B (Downtown San Anselmo).

### 4.3.2 EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Interviews with city staff and property management were conducted to understand the context and history of the two sites as well as perceptions on use. The Planning Director of Corte Madera was interviewed along with the property manager of the Corte Madera Town Center regarding the Corte Madera Town Center. The San Anselmo Finance Director and San Anselmo Town Manager were interviewed about Downtown San Anselmo. The interviews focused on background site information, history of the site, economics of the site, and expert opinions regarding site usage.

### 4.3.3 MAPPING

The study relied on the mapping instrument ArcView GIS to analyze both sites. GIS Analysis included a transit accessibility map, walkability analysis, context maps, and land use maps. These analyses were conducted to provide a framework to compare and contrast the user surveys, empirical observations, and expert interviews. Data was compiled from the Marin Map consortium of GIS data from multiple Marin public agencies, ESRI data from the server at Cal Poly, and data from the MTC.

## 5. STUDY AREAS

### 5.1 THE “CASES”

#### 5.1 DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELMO



**Figure 6 - Downtown San Anselmo** – A small traditional downtown nestled in the hills of Marin County.

The North Pacific Coast Railroad split in San Anselmo with spurs running from Sausalito to San Rafael and Tomales through San Anselmo (San Anselmo Historical Museum, 2003). The railroad prompted the first wave of growth by encouraging real estate development along the railroad. San Anselmo was referred to during this time as the “Junction” because of its location at the junction of two railroad lines (San Anselmo Historical Museum, 2003). The San Francisco Theological Seminary catalyzed the second wave of growth. The City incorporated in 1907. The Golden Gate Bridge was

completed in 1937, linking Marin County and the North Coast with San Francisco, bringing a third wave of growth to the Town of San Anselmo (San Anselmo Historical Museum, 2003). The California Department of Finance estimated the City's 2009 population to be 12,644.

James Tunstead, Marin County Sheriff, donated part of his land to the city of San Anselmo to build its town hall and firehouse in 1911. San Anselmo's businesses relocated from the area around Sir Francis Drake and Ross Avenue to San Anselmo Avenue thereafter (San Anselmo Chamber of Commerce, 2009). Today downtown San Anselmo contains a mix of uses. Numerous specialty shops, local restaurants, and small apparel shops exist in the Downtown. The Downtown also includes lodging, bookstores, professional offices (often on the second floor), beauty shops, and banking. Therefore, the downtown area contains land uses integral to a successful downtown. The area does not include any corporate chain stores. The study area is approximately six blocks long, along San Anselmo Avenue between San Rafael Avenue and Ross Avenue.

According to the San Anselmo Town Manager, San Anselmo embodies a small town, with an old fashioned and charming feel. The small town feel is promoted through local businesses, owned by local residents. These businesses are apt put up flyers for community events (Stuttsman, 2009). The San Anselmo Chamber of Commerce website states "San Anselmo is an especially charming and safe place to visit and live" (2009). Pacific Sun readers voted San Anselmo the "Best Non-Mall Shopping City or Town in Marin County." Sunset Magazine readers voted San Anselmo "Best in the West" for antiquing and the town is distinguished as the "Northern California Antique Capital" (2009). This distinction as the "Best Non-Mall Shopping Town in Marin County" makes Downtown San Anselmo a prime location to study as a traditional downtown.



## 5.2 CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER



**Figure 7 - The Cortes Madera Town Center** – The pedestrian promenade and clock tower within the Town Center.

The City of Cortes Madera Incorporated in 1916. It is located between Mt. Tamalpais and San Francisco Bay. The California Department of Finance estimated the City's 2009 population to be 9,739.

The Cortes Madera Town Center was built in 1958 (originally known as the Cortes Madera Shopping Center) and at that time, it was the only shopping center in Marin County. The shopping center included a grocery store, two department stores (J.C. Penny's and Montgomery Ward's), and a few shops. It was successful because no competition existed (Hoffman, 2009). Today Marin County contains three shopping malls: The Cortes Madera Town Center, The Village at Cortes Madera, and the Northgate Mall. Two of the three malls are located in Cortes Madera. According to Robert

Pendoley, the Corte Madera Planning Director, the two “malls” give Corte Madera the best per capita sales tax in the county, making the “malls” very important to the City’s general fund (2009).

Two Decades after the Corte Madera Shopping Center debuted it became run down. The shopping center was renovated at the same time as the Village (directly across Highway 101). The renovation included a new four-story office building and a cosmetic remodel of the buildings. The recession of the late 1980s negatively impacted the newly remodeled center (Hoffman, 2009). The remodel was finished in 1986 (about the same time as the village remodel) and few tenants were interested in locating in the Corte Madera Town Center. Tenants at opening (yr. 1986), included Safeway, Woolworth, Thrifty (now Rite-Aid), Marshalls (the anchor tenant), and J.C. Penny. The Town Center went bankrupt in the late 1980s (Hoffman, 2009).

Under new ownership, the Corte Madera Town Center focused on lifestyle. The new ownership understood it could not compete directly with the Village at Corte Madera and its women’s apparel and major department stores (Nordstrom’s and Macy’s). To accomplish this objective, management focused on food and home furnishings, with food establishments composing the core of the center (Hoffman, 2009). Dining and food related establishments include A.G. Ferrari (an upscale grocery store), David’s foods (a locally owned market), and coffee shops. Home furnishing stores include Z Gallery and Pier 1 Imports. Marshalls was the original anchor; however, management noticed people were only shopping at Marshall’s and not patronizing other tenants (Hoffman, 2009). Barnes and Noble replaced Marshall’s, which encouraged the inclusion of P.F. Changs. According to Stan Hoffman, certain tenants bring additional tenants (2009). Stan Hoffman asserts that the Corte Madera Town Center focuses on the family and that the Corte Madera Town Center is almost the downtown of Corte Madera (2009). The Corte Madera Town Center serves as the downtown; it contains multiple banks, a shoe repair shop, a drug store, and other services. The center harbors neighborhood aspects in a regional style (Hoffman, 2009).



## **6. FINDINGS**

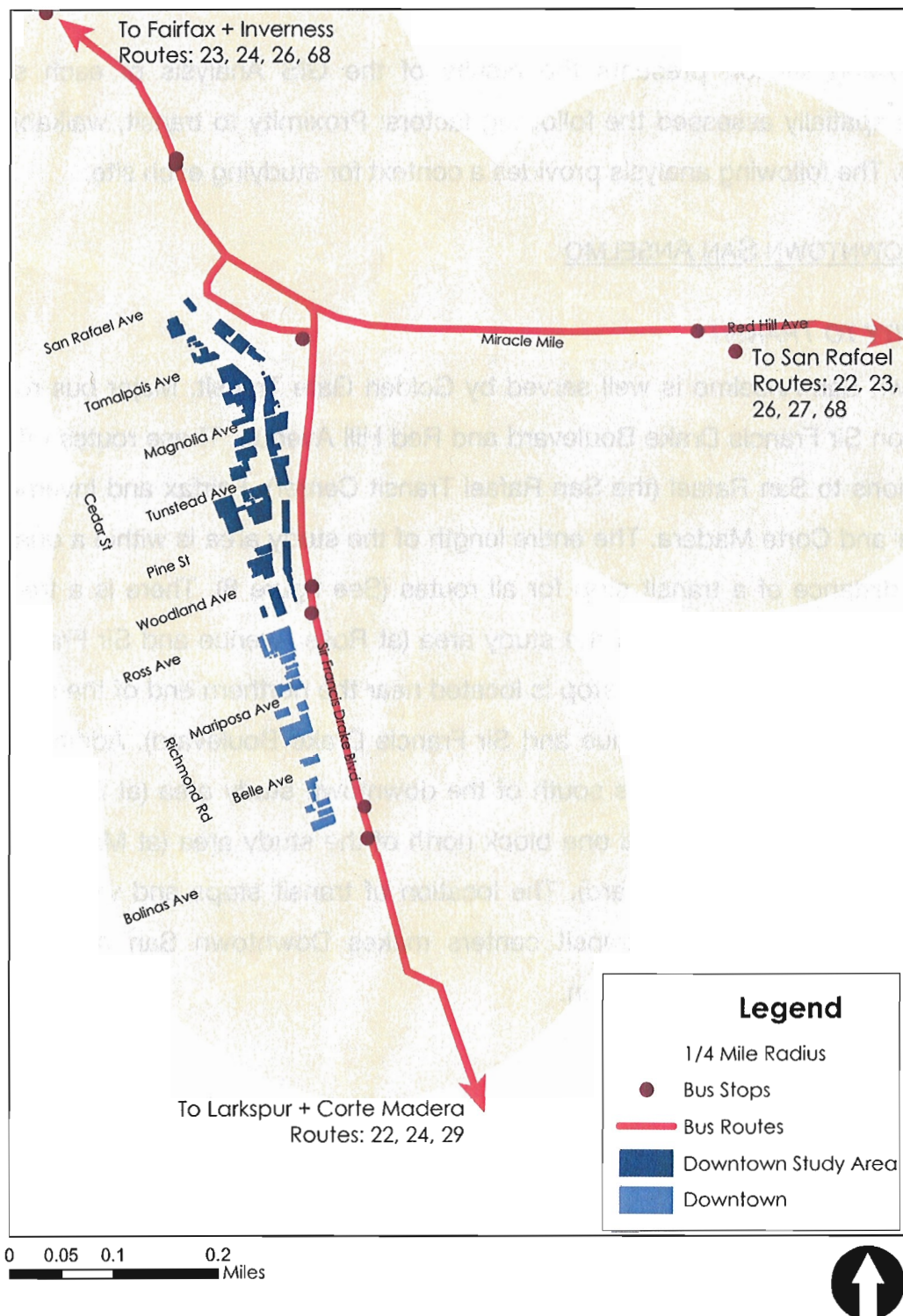
### **6.1 FINDINGS FROM MAPPING ANALYSIS**

The following section presents the results of the GIS Analysis of each site. GIS analyses spatially assessed the following factors: Proximity to transit, walkability, and land use. The following analysis provides a context for studying each site.

#### **6.1.1 DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELMO**

##### *PROXIMITY TO TRANSIT*

Downtown San Anselmo is well served by Golden Gate Transit. Major bus routes are located on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Red Hill Avenue. These routes offer direct connections to San Rafael (the San Rafael Transit Center), Fairfax and Inverness, and Larkspur and Corte Madera. The entire length of the study area is within a quarter mile walking distance of a transit stop for all routes (See figure 8). There is a transit stop located at the southern end of the study area (at Ross Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard) and another transit stop is located near the northern end of the study areas (at the corner of Red Hill Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard). Additional transit stops are located three blocks south of the downtown study area (at Bolinas and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard), and one block north of the study area (at Madrone Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard). The location of transit stops and variety of routes with connections to major transit centers makes Downtown San Anselmo highly accessible by public transportation.



**Figure 8 - San Anselmo Proximity To Transit Map** – The map identifies the proximity of major bus routes and transit stops within the study area.

## *WALKABILITY AND LAND USE*

Downtown San Anselmo is well integrated into the fabric of San Anselmo. The study area contains sixteen pedestrian access points. Twelve are streets and four are pedestrian bridges or walkways over San Anselmo Creek. There are seven connections between the study area and the neighborhood to the West (See Figure 9). This neighborhood is composed of mainly single-family residential and multiple-family residential housing units (See Figure 10). There are few barriers between the study area and the neighborhood to the West. Four small surface parking lots exist. These lots are small and only one parking lot fronts San Anselmo Avenue. The others are hidden from San Anselmo Avenue, with minor outlets onto the side streets that connect the neighborhood to downtown (See figure 9).

Sir Francis Drake Boulevard parallels San Anselmo Avenue to the East. San Anselmo Avenue acts as a frontage road to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard south of Ross Avenue. There are three street connections with pedestrian access to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and neighborhoods to the East of the Study Area. There are also three pedestrian only access pathways and bridges between the downtown study area and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (See figure 9). Commercial land uses are located along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Further east, single-family homes are prominent with few multiple family residences (See figure 10).

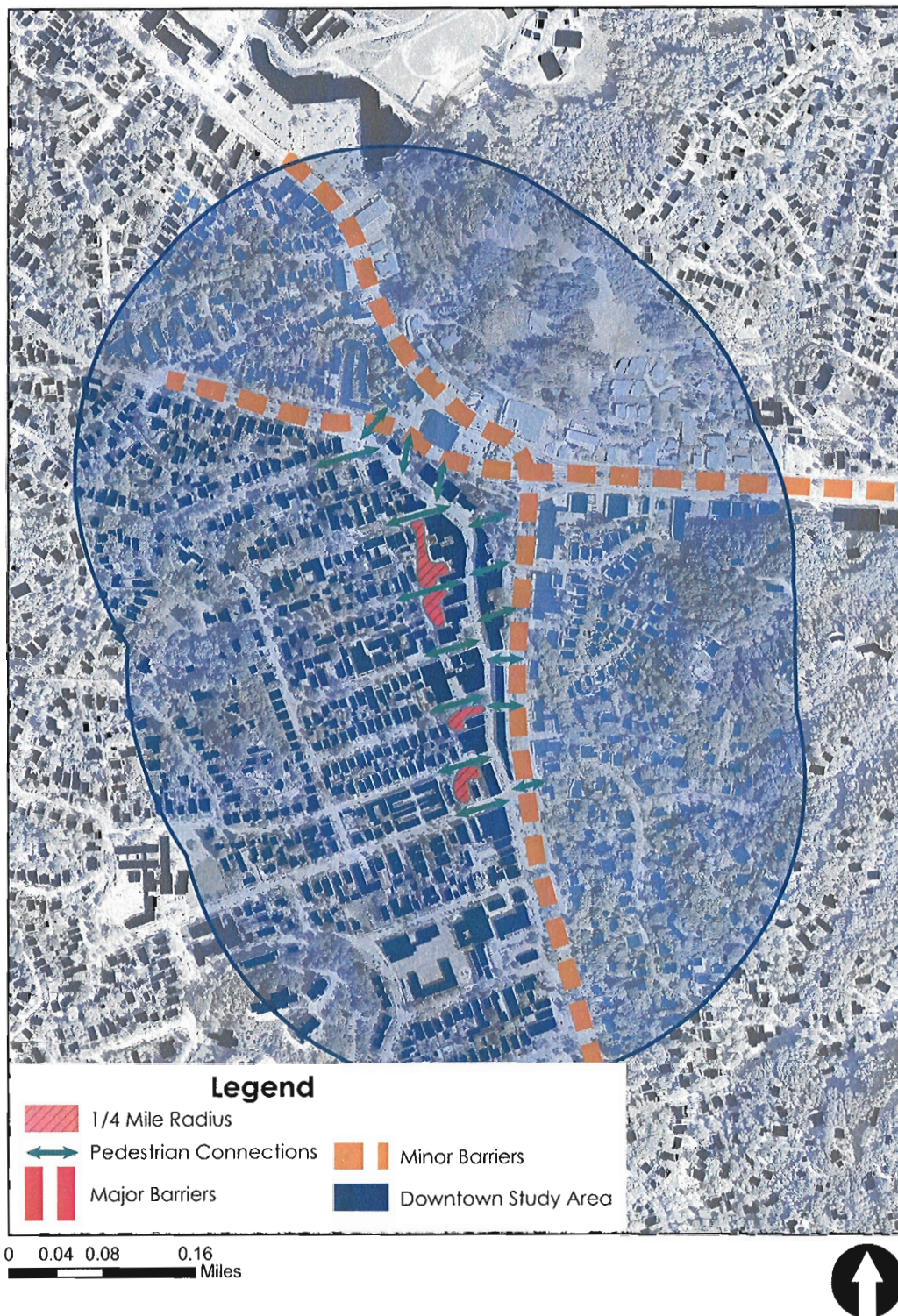
Sir Francis Drake Boulevard functions as a minor Barrier. While there are multiple pedestrian crossings, the street is a heavily trafficked north to south route. Therefore, the neighborhood to the East of the study area is considered to have less connectivity to Downtown San Anselmo than the neighborhood to the West.

Center Boulevard runs east to west, north of the study area. The study area has two street connections and one pedestrian only connection. The pedestrian only connection joins the northern edge of Downtown San Anselmo with a major transit stop on Center Boulevard. Land uses to the North of Center Boulevard include commercial (along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard from Center Boulevard to Bella Vista

Avenue), single family homes, and a few multiple family residences (See figure 10). Center Boulevard is a minor barrier to pedestrians. This neighborhood harbors the same connectivity intensity as the neighborhood east of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

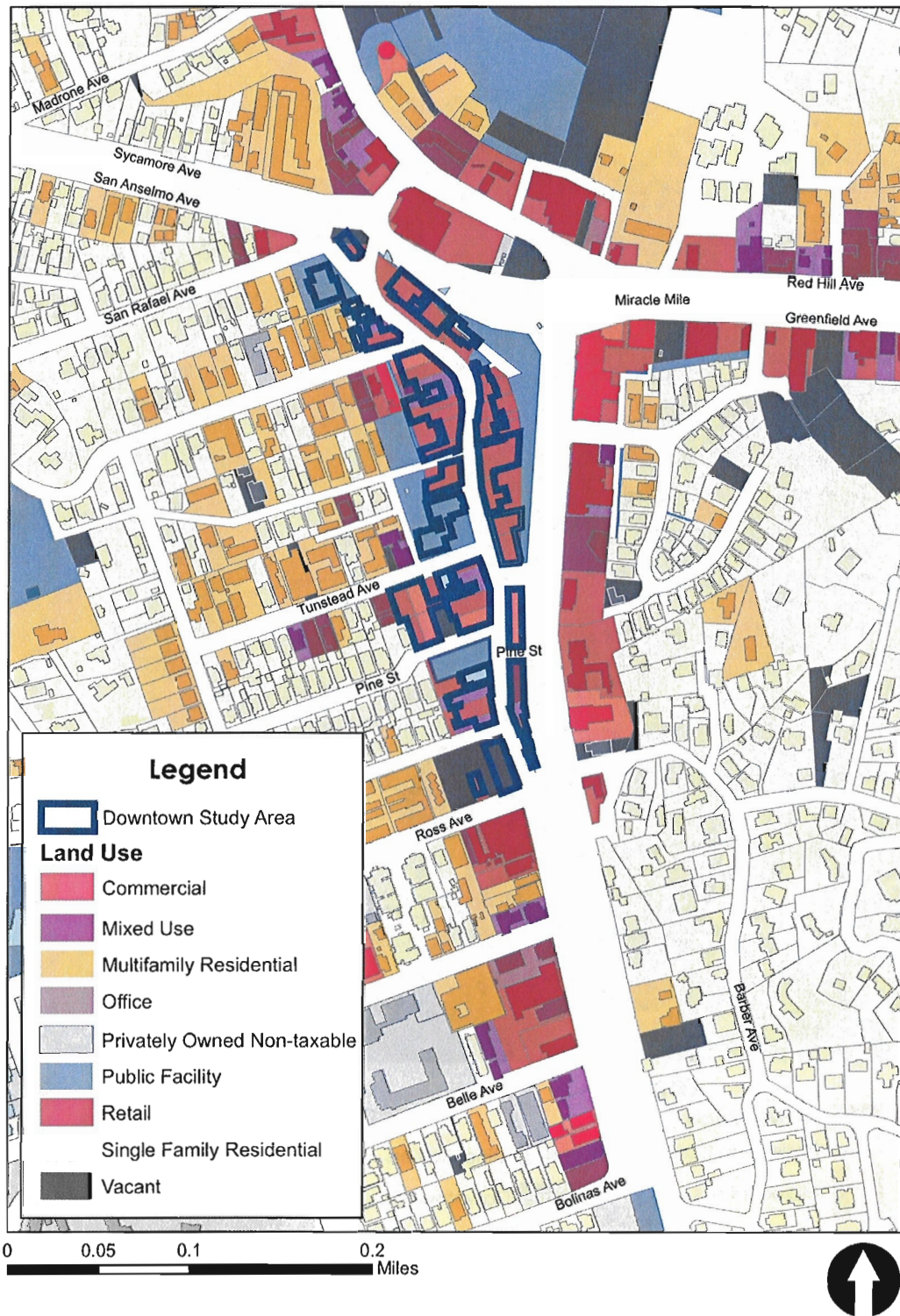
There are no direct connections between Downtown San Anselmo and the neighborhood east of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and north of Red Hill Avenue. This neighborhood harbors the lowest connectivity intensity to the study area. Land uses in this neighborhood include commercial (directly along Red Hill Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard), open space, multiple family residences, and a limited number of single-family homes (See Figure 9). Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, Center Boulevard, and Red Hill Avenue are all barriers that reduce connectivity between this neighborhood and the downtown study area.





**Figure 9 - San Anselmo Walkability Analysis** – The map shows the major barriers to pedestrians accessing the site.





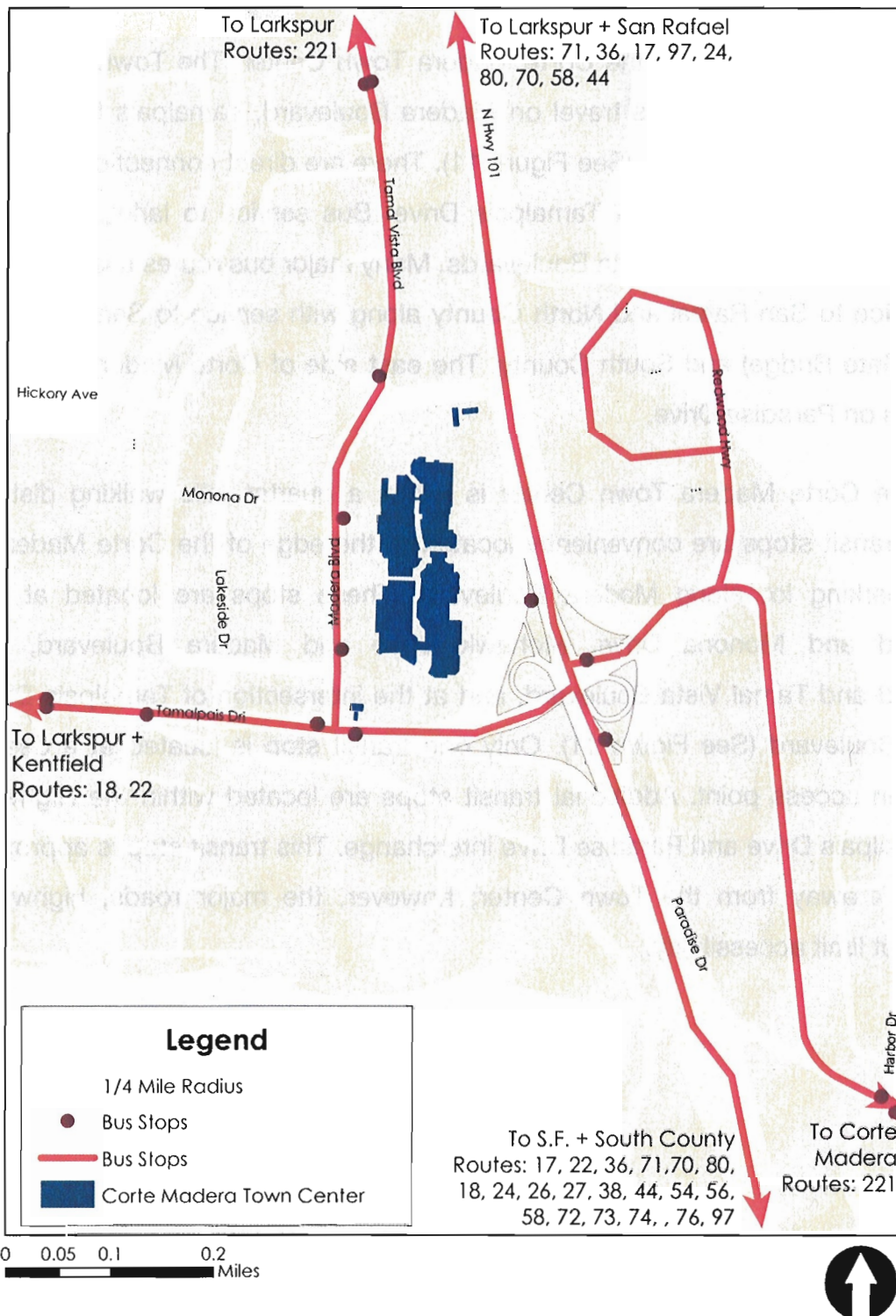
**Figure 10 – Downtown San Anselmo Land Uses** – The map shows the land uses adjacent to the Downtown

### 6.1.2 CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER

#### *PROXIMITY TO TRANSIT*

Golden Gate Transit serves the Corte Madera Town Center. The Town Center is well served by transit. Bus routes travel on Madera Boulevard, Tamalpais Drive, Paradise Drive, and U.S. Highway 101 (See Figure 11). There are direct connections to Larkspur and Kentfield to the West via Tamalpais Drive. Bus service to Larkspur is available through Madera and Tamal Vista Boulevards. Many major bus routes use Highway 101, with service to San Rafael and North County along with service to San Francisco (via Golden Gate Bridge) and South County. The east side of Corte Madera is accessible via routes on Paradise Drive.

The entire Corte Madera Town Center is within a quarter mile walking distance of transit. Transit stops are conveniently located at the edge of the Corte Madera Town Center parking lot along Madera Boulevard. These stops are located at Madera Boulevard and Monona Drive, Mohawk Drive and Madera Boulevard, Madera Boulevard and Tamal Vista Boulevard, and at the intersection of Tamalpais Drive and Madera Boulevard (See Figure 11). Only one transit stop is located at a designated pedestrian access point. Additional transit stops are located within the Highway 101 and Tamalpais Drive and Paradise Drive interchange. This transit stop is approximately one block away from the Town Center; however, the major roads, highway, and parking lot limit accessibility.



**Figure 11 - Corte Madera Proximity To Transit Map** – The map identifies the proximity of major bus routes and transit stops within the study area.



## *WALKABILITY AND LAND USE*

The Corte Madera Town Center is a retail island surrounded by surface parking lots. There are around 1,400 parking spaces (Pendoley, 2009). The town center contains five pedestrian access points. Four of the five access points are also automobile access points. One is a pedestrian only access point adjacent to the Monona Drive transit stop. All the access points require patrons to walk through parking lots. The parking lots function as barriers, reducing the walkability of the site (See Figure 12).

The area to the West of the study area is the most walkable. There are three connections between the Town Center and the western neighborhood. Two of these connections are automobile and pedestrian. Only two streets intersect with Madera Boulevard; however, these streets do provide convenient access to the Town Center. The neighborhood is composed primarily of single-family residential homes. There is one multi-family residential parcel in the neighborhood. General commercial is located at the corner of Madera Boulevard and Tamalpais Drive.

The neighborhood to the South of the Town Center contains only one direct connection to the Town Center. Automobiles and pedestrians share this connection. This neighborhood is less walkable than the neighborhood to the West of the site. Tamalpais Drive acts as a minor barrier to pedestrians. Corte Madera bound traffic from the adjacent highway uses Tamalpais Drive to access the site. In addition to Tamalpais Drive, the parking lot functions as a barrier. The area contains a variety of land uses. There are single-family, multi-family, office, commercial, mixed-use, and industrial land uses in this neighborhood. There is also a public library and a church on Meadowsweet Drive.

The neighborhood to the north of the Town Center only has one connection to the study area. The Connection is a shared auto and pedestrian access way to the site. This area is also less walkable than the neighborhood to the West of the study area. Madera Boulevard is a minor barrier between the neighborhood and the site. Madera Boulevard is connected to a Highway 101 access point. The Parking lot also reduces

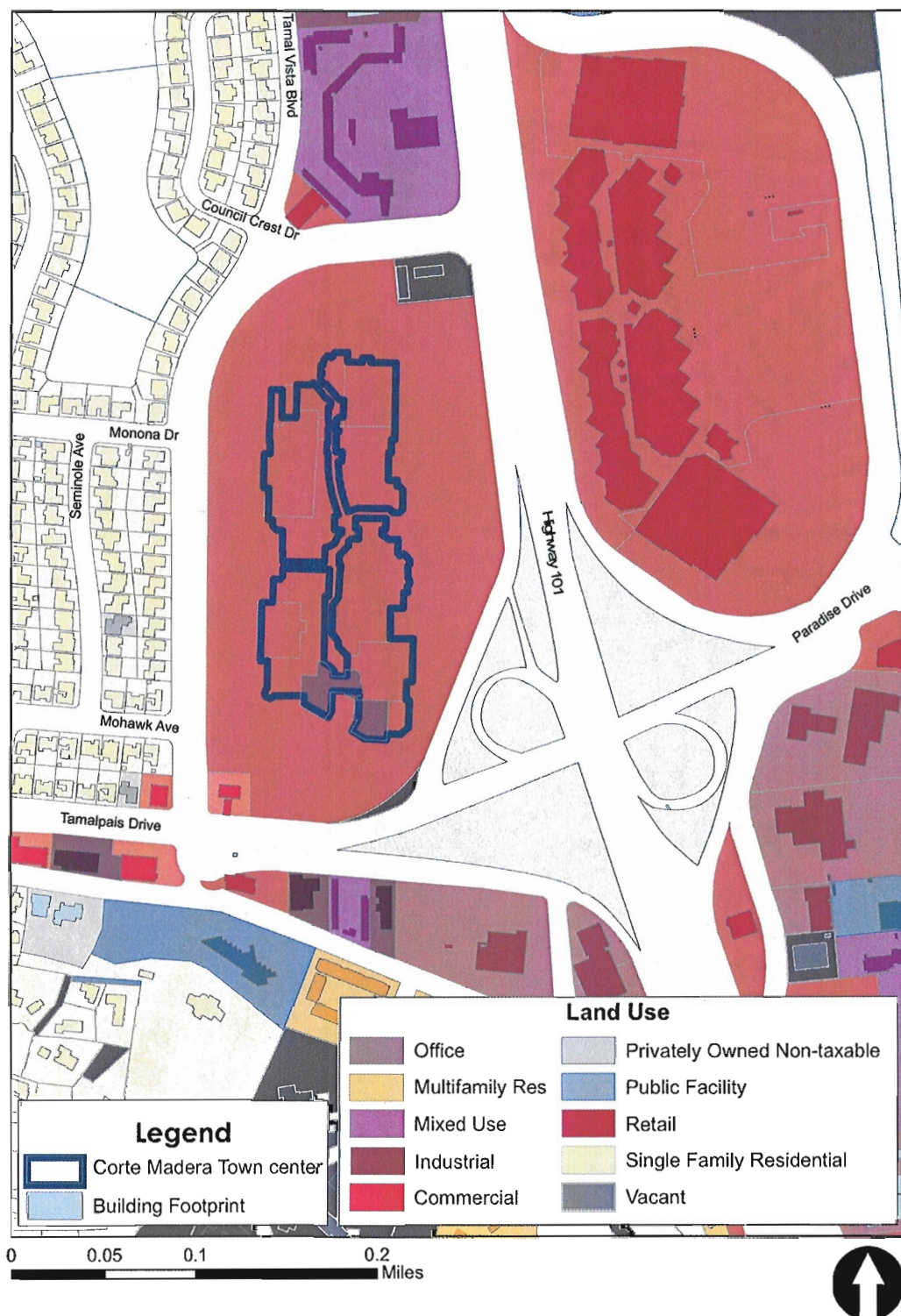
walkability between the Town Center and the neighborhood. Land uses in the neighborhood include retail, office, mixed-use, single family, and commercial.

The neighborhood to the East contains no direct connections to the Town Center. Highway 101 functions as a significant barrier to site access. The Village at Corte Madera, another major retail center, is located on the East side of Highway 101. In addition, auto dealerships are located in this area. Land uses include: retail and industrial (auto dealerships).



**Figure 12 - Corte Madera walkability Analysis** – The map shows the major barriers to pedestrians accessing the site.





**Figure 13 – Corte Madera Town Center Land Uses** – The map shows the land uses adjacent to the Downtown

## 6.2 EMPIRICAL OBSERVATIONS

The empirical observations were assessed using the micro-scale and macro-scale characteristics defined by Mehta (2007) and supported through concepts identified by Farbstein and Kantrowitz (1978). The empirical observations assess these factors within each site, whereas the mapping analyzed the site in its context.

### 6.2.1 DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELMO

#### *MICRO-SCALE CHARACTERISTICS*

##### 1. Face to Face Interactions

There is no public moveable seating in Downtown San Anselmo. Moveable seating is located in defined dining areas in front of many restaurants. There are benches dispersed throughout the street.



**Figure 14** - Fixed feature seating along San Anselmo Avenue adjacent to City Hall.



**Figure 15** - Fixed feature seating along San Anselmo Avenue at the corner of two streets. The seating faces the street allowing for "eyes on the street."

## 2. Eyes on the Street

Businesses in the study area front San Anselmo Avenue. These businesses often have numerous or large windows facing the street. The orientation of businesses to the street allows people inside to view the street. Therefore, patrons and employees can maintain the safety of the street. People can also easily access the street from the businesses. In addition, the benches along the street are oriented towards the street. Benches in City Hall Park area also oriented towards the street.



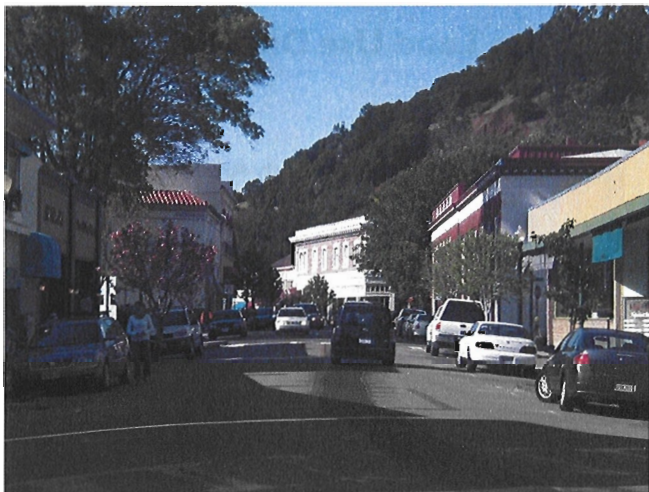
**Figure 16** - Businesses along San Anselmo Avenue engage the street allowing for “eyes on the street.”

## *MACRO-SCALE CHARACTERISTICS*

### 1. Cars and People

A significant amount of vehicle traffic was observed during the study periods. San Anselmo Avenue is a two-lane road with diagonal and parallel parking. Cars and people interact frequently on San Anselmo Avenue, specifically at intersections where heavy vehicle and pedestrian traffic meet. Parking in the study area is scarce, resulting in many vehicles searching the streets to park. On street parking results in a significant amount of vehicle traffic. Conversely, heavy vehicle traffic implies heavy use.





**Figure 17** - A significant number of interactions between cars and people take place in Downtown San Anselmo.

## 2. The Location Game

The Downtown harbors a myriad of land uses. These include dry cleaners, two small bookstores, numerous restaurants, liquor stores, professional offices, financial services (banks), apparel and accessory stores (including jewelry stores), home furnishing stores, consignment stores, public facilities, specialty shops, and beauty shops. The most numerous land uses are specialty shops and restaurants. These stores are small, local shops dispersed throughout the six-block study area with the Town Hall a central feature within the Downtown.



## Downtown San Anselmo Land Use Diagram



**Figure 18 - Downtown San Anselmo Land Use Map** – The map shows the land uses within the study area.

### 3. Zoning

The study area is zoned either C-2 (General Plan Land Use designation 'Limited Commercial') or Public Facility. The FAR in the C-2 district is 2.0. The San Anselmo Zoning Ordinance states:

"This District is generally applied to existing commercial areas along San Anselmo Avenue and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard between The Hub and Ross Avenue. The purpose of this District is to identify those areas which form the Town's central business district. Two types of business are expected in this District. The primary uses expected are businesses referred to as "primary attractors," which are those which draw the majority of their customers from outside the community. Examples of these types of businesses are specialty boutiques, antique stores, restaurants, and cafes. The second type of businesses expected in the District are those which rely upon pedestrian movements generated by the primary attractors. Examples of these include small specialty shops, small food outlets (ice cream and coffee), and personal services such as barber and beauty shops" (Town of San Anselmo).

When paired against the current land uses, the town's zoning successfully developed the intended downtown. The Downtown contains many "primary attractors." It also harbors numerous uses dependant on "pedestrian movements." In addition, the C-2 zoning ordinance permits mixed-use buildings but "offices and residential uses are encouraged to locate above the ground floor to preserve the District's primary purpose of providing for commercial activities." The Town's zoning ordinance is designed to foster a vibrant and lively downtown that translates to a lively street.

#### 4. Barriers

The Downtown is highly accessible to pedestrians. As discussed in the *Mapping Analysis* section, the Downtown is well integrated into the fabric of the community. There are no major barriers preventing access to the site. Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Center Boulevard are minor barriers to pedestrians. However, there are many connections (some pedestrian only bridges and paths to Center and Sir Francis Drake Boulevards). There are also bicycle racks along San Anselmo Avenue. The Downtown is least accessible by vehicle since parking is limited and the streets in the neighborhood are narrow.

### 6.2.2 CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER

#### *MICRO-SCALE CHARACTERISTICS*

##### 1. Face to Face Interactions

The Corte Madera Town Center facilitates face-to-face interactions by providing ample moveable seating in the pedestrian promenade. People were observed reading, watching other people, and conversing with friends. The fountains are additional focal points for face-to-face interactions. People congregate most densely around the fountains and children are specifically captured by the allure of the fountains. The various seating options at the Town Center allow for all of Hall's (1966) hidden dimensions of interaction.



**Figure 19** - Moveable and fixed feature objects (seating) in the Corte Madera Town Center.

## 2. Eyes on the Street

The stores that front the pedestrian promenade have inviting storefronts. These storefronts offer a strong connection to the pedestrian space with windows that allow people to see the pedestrian promenade. The moveable seating and benches in the pedestrian promenade allow people to watch the promenade and keep their “eyes on the street.” The high level of sociability and orientation to the pedestrian space improve safety and add to the comfort of the space.



**Figure 20** - Stores oriented along the main pedestrian promenade have inviting windows that allow for people inside the stores to maintain their eyes on the street.

## *MACRO-SCALE CHARACTERISTICS*

### 1. Cars and People

The Town Center attempts to eliminate vehicles from the urban scene. Once patrons leave the parking lot, they are free of pedestrian and vehicle interactions. Within the parking lots, however, people constantly interact with vehicles while navigating the parking lots. The parking lots are large. Once inside, the Town Center offers patrons a retail and dining experience without the nuisance or danger of vehicle traffic. The pedestrian only center increases the safety of children.



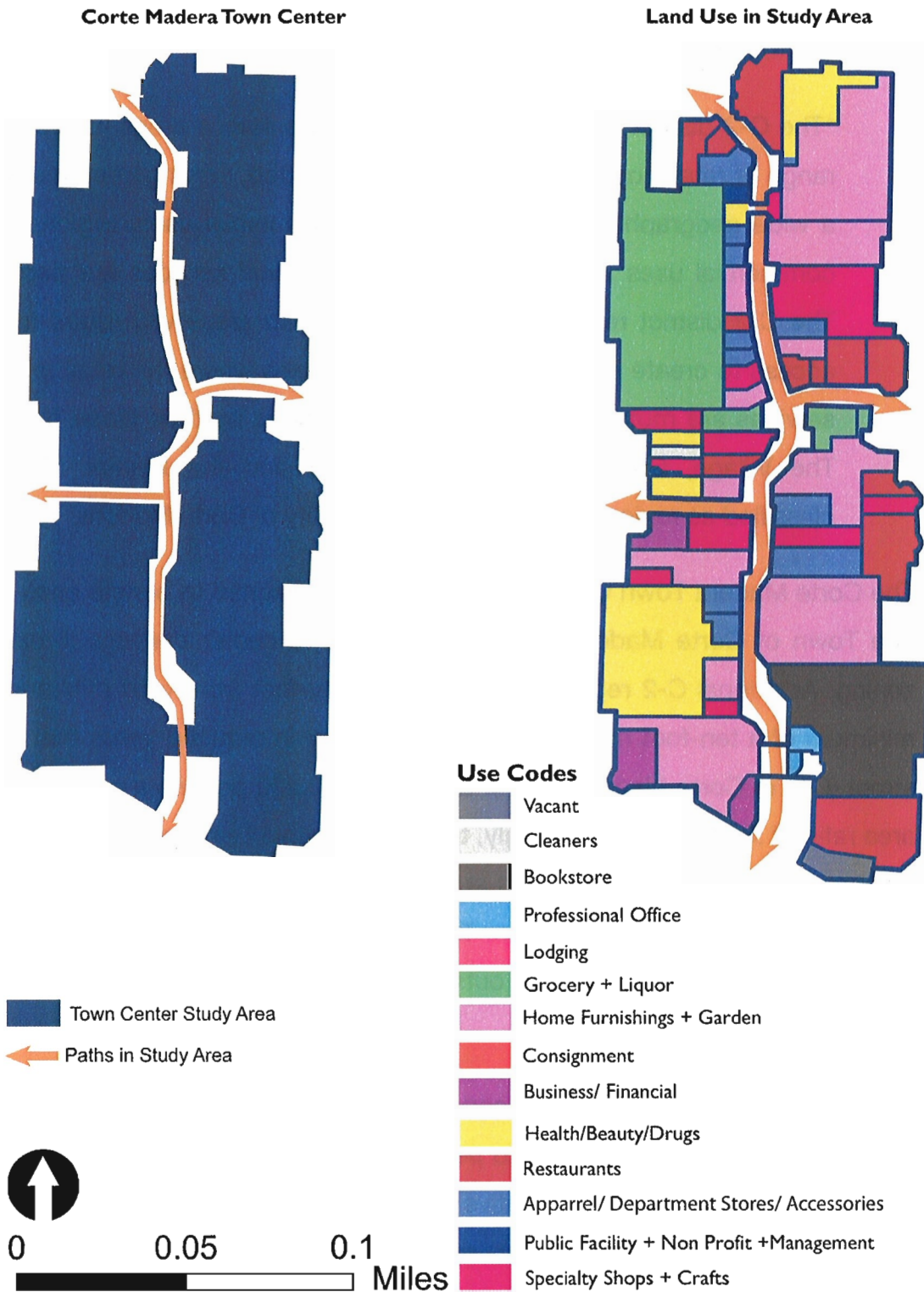
**Figure 21** - The parking lot at Corte Madera Town Center. Patrons must walk through parking and vehicle traffic to access the Town Center.

## 2. The Location Game

As stated by the Property Manager, the Corte Madera Town Center contains multiple components. The Neighborhood center, which serves a more local populace, is located on the Westside of the center. This side contains a higher level of connectivity to the surrounding (residential) neighborhood. The restaurants are located on the outside of the Center with greater freeway and parking lot visibility to draw people to the Center. The smaller stores are located along the pedestrian promenade. According to Stan Hoffman, this increases foot traffic (Hoffman, 2009).



## Corte Madera Town Center Land Use Diagram



**Figure 22 - Corte Madera Town Center Land Use Map** – The map shows the land uses within the study area

### 3. Zoning

The Corte Madera Town Center is zoned C-2 (Regional Shopping Districts). According to the Town of Corte Madera Municipal Code,

“The C-2 district is intended to create and enhance areas where a wide range of retail goods and services are permitted, serving customers from a wide geographic area. Local-serving commercial uses, region-serving commercial uses and some office and personal services are permitted. The C-2 district regulations will be applied to areas with good freeway access to create regional shopping complexes where the retail uses and services are mutually benefitted and enhanced by their close proximity. The Village, Corte Madera Town Center and the Market Place are classified as region-serving commercial” (City of Corte Madera, 1994).

The Corte Madera Town Center is a mix of uses designed to benefit each other. The Town of Corte Madera promotes the lifestyle center concept through its zoning. Additional C-2 regulations include a sixty-foot front yard minimum and minimum of a ten-foot minimum landscape buffer in required yards that front a street (City of Corte Madera, 1994). Section 18.12.230 permits a maximum floor area ratio of .34 (34%). Interestingly, this FAR is within Leinberger’s *Never-lands*. Leinberger claims the *Never-lands* are neither walkable nor drivable (2007). The Town Center fits this classification. The Town Center is difficult for pedestrians to access and vehicles must park outside the actual center.

### 4. Barriers

Barriers such as the parking lots and U.S. Highway 101 limit pedestrian access to the site. These same barriers to pedestrians help to facilitate vehicle access. Vehicle access to the site is relatively barrier free. Regarding pedestrians, the parking lots pose a significant barrier to walkability, as does Highway 101, and Tamalpais Drive. Tamalpais drive is a heavily used east to west route in the



region. Highway 101 links Sonoma and Marin communities with San Francisco and the Southern Bay Area.

## **6.3 FINDINGS FROM EXPERT INTERVIEWS**

The following section presents information pertaining to the use of both study areas from the expert interviews. This section mainly identifies the experts' thoughts and perceptions on how people use either site. Experts were prompted with the discussion questions about site design, major activities at both site, and how people are generally using the site.

### **6.3.1 CITY OF SAN ANSELMO**

Janet Pendoley, Finance and Administrative services Director and Debbie Stutsman, Town Manager were interviewed.

#### *FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIRECTOR*

Janet Pendoley, the City Finance Director stated the major sales tax contributors in the downtown area are the grocery store, pharmacy, and gas station (2009). She explained that the downtown is known for its boutique shops and antique shops; however they do not contribute significantly to the City's sales tax intake (Pendoley, 2009).

#### *TOWN MANAGER*

Debbie Stutsman, the Town Manager remarked that the downtown is composed of local businesses, run by local people, who are part of the community (2009). These local businesses are apt to support the community by putting up local posters in their shops (Stutsman, 2009). According to Ms. Stutsman eating and shopping are the primary activities in Downtown San Anselmo (2009). In an email, she remarked,

"In our downtown, people come primarily to shop and eat. We do, however, have areas in the downtown that are conducive to socializing, drinking coffee, picnicking with toddlers, etc., such as the town hall lawn and our little downtown park, Creek Park. People frequently get coffee or lunches to go and take them to these areas. San Anselmo is fortunate to have a good

many restaurants in the downtown, which draw people to eat while shopping. Hair and nail salons are also a big draw for people to come downtown, do business, eat lunch and relax.”

In addition, Debbie Stutsman, mentioned that many town events are held downtown. These events include Sunday Music in the Park (hosted by the Arts Commission), Film Night in the Park, an Art and Wine Festival (hosted by the Chamber of Commerce), a Country Fair Day, antique fairs (hosted by local antique dealers), and a classic car show (hosted by the Downtown Merchants Association) (Stutsman, 2009). “These events enhance the use of downtown beyond shopping and dining” (Stutsman, 2009).

Gathering spaces within close proximity to downtown, such as Town Hall lawn and Creek Park, are important for people (Stutsman, 2009). Public facilities such as the fire department, police station, library, and town hall are within four or five blocks, making them easily walkable. These facilities draw people to downtown (Stutsman, 2009).

### 6.3.2 CITY OF CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER

#### *CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER PROPERTY MANAGER*

Stan Hoffman, the Town Center property manager mentioned that the Town Center is composed of uses that overlap. This overlap results in people patronizing restaurants and spending time walking around the Town Center (Hoffman, 2009). For instance, Crate and Barrel increases West Elm sales despite the fact that they sell similar products (home furnishings). The incorporation of P.F. Chang’s resulted in an increase in sales for the other tenants and Barnes and Nobel generates traffic for the center (Hoffman, 2009). Hoffman states that the store synergy tenant mix was intentional (2009).

Stan Hoffman remarked that the Town Center is multipurpose, different people come for different reasons (2009). He explained that the Town Center has four different components relating to use. The neighborhood center component includes a shoe repair shop, grocery store, and cleaners. This area is used more regularly (roughly a

couple times a week). The restaurant component draws people from a large radius for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The office-building component includes attorneys, financial advisors, etc. and brings an additional component to the property. The employees of offices and their customers often patronize the Town Center (Hoffman, 2009).

According to Stan Hoffman, big regional shopping centers are used once a month for shopping. In contrast, people come to the Town Center daily (2009). The town center, according to Hoffman functions as the downtown of Corte Madera and people who work in the area use the Town Center to eat lunch (2009). Hoffman explained that the Town Center is like coming to a downtown main street. The Town Center at one time considered itself the “Main Street of Marin” and the Town Center believes “This is where you go for all of your needs” (Hoffman, 2009). In addition, the Town Center hosts a large farmers market (Hoffman, 2009).

Hoffman remarked on the importance of the easy freeway access. The site is very accessible via highway 101. Restaurants are located along the outside of the Center to be visible from the freeway and parking lot (Hoffman, 2009). The neighborhood component of the Center is on the Westside of the Town Center. This area includes grocery, banks, cleaning, and other local services (Hoffman, 2009). According to Hoffman, the fountains, flowers, and music are ambiances to make shoppers more comfortable (2009).

#### *CORTE MADERA PLANNING DIRECTOR*

According to Robert Pendoley, the Corte Madera Planning Director, the property management at the Corte Madera Town Center emphasizes the Town Center as a gathering place (2009). The Town Center has been successful and the local community uses the space as a gathering place (Pendoley, 2009). The Town Center is a place people patronize for entertainment (Pendoley, 2009). Robert Pendoley remarked that the Town Center management identified good design objectives that

were met with the remodel of the shopping center (2009). The space is walkable and the Town Center harbors a good retail structure (Pendoley, 2009).

## **6.4 FINDINGS FROM USER SURVEYS**

The following section presents data gathered from user surveys at each site. Site users provided valuable insight into each site.

### **6.4.1 QUESTION ONE: WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE SITE?**

Downtown San Anselmo respondents identified numerous reasons for visiting the Downtown. (This question asked their reasons for the current visit.) Shopping was the most popular reason for their visit. Other popular reasons were “haircut,” “proximity,” and “dining.” To supplement “dining” (a social activity), one respondent also mentioned “friends” as a reason for their visit. People also stated they were downtown for “work” or to use the “library.” The varied responses represent the variety of uses that draw people to the Downtown. People are using the downtown for recreation (socialization and shopping) and for necessities (See Figure 23).

Town Center respondents predominantly cited “shopping” as their reason for visiting. Other popular reasons included “food” and “work.” One individual each also mentioned the following responses: “variety of uses,” “weather,” “parking,” “browsing,” and “friends.” Shopping is the major draw to the Center with “food” and “work” also bringing in people (Figure 23). The variety of responses displays the diversity of activities that the Town Center offers patrons. Much like Downtown San Anselmo, the variety of uses draws people to the site. One respondent cited the weather as a reason for being at the Town Center; No respondents at Downtown San Anselmo cited “weather” related reasons for coming to the Downtown. Parking was also mentioned as a reason to come to the Center, in contrast to the parking issues cited for Downtown San Anselmo (See Question Two). “Proximity” was not a factor in respondents’ use of the Town Center, while it was mentioned by respondents at the Downtown.

## What Brings You to the Site?

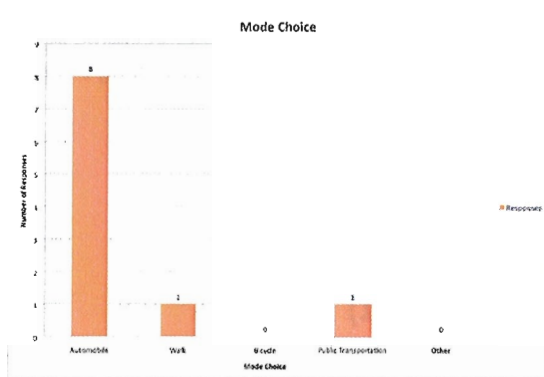
Downtown San Anselmo	Corte Madera Town Center
(4) Shopping	Shopping (4)
(2) Dining	Dining (2)
(1) Work	Work (2)
(2) Haircut	Weather (1)
(2) Proximity	Parking (1)
(1) Friends	Friend/Spouse/Partner (1)
(1) Library	Variety of Uses (1)
	Browsing (1)

**Figure 23 - Reasons for Visitation** – The chart shows reasons respondents identified for visiting the site.

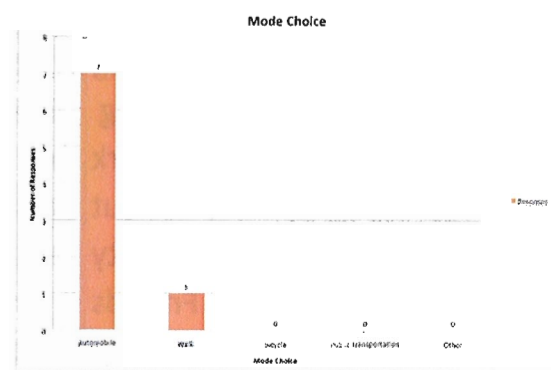
### 6.4.2 QUESTION TWO: HOW DID YOU TRAVEL TO THE SITE?

Despite Downtown San Anselmo's high walkability and bicycle infrastructure, the majority of respondents (80%) arrived downtown by automobile. The inclement weather (heavy rain on one day) could be a factor in this mode choice. Only one person walked to downtown. One person utilized public transportation to access the Downtown (See Figure 24). No respondents used a bicycle or other mode of transportation. Many cyclists were observed taking a break at the Marin Coffee Roasters; however, no cyclists were surveyed.

Survey Respondents at the Corte Madera Town Center drove to the site. One participant walked to the site. No respondents used a bicycle or public transit to access the site. The amount of parking onsite and vehicle connections encourages patrons to drive to the Town Center. In addition, Highway 101, Tamalpais Drive, and Madera Boulevard are all barriers to pedestrians. Site access was similar for both sites, as shown by the high proportion of automobile mode choice.



**Figure 24 - Mode Choice for Downtown San Anselmo**



**Figure 25 - Mode Choice for Corte Madera Town Center**

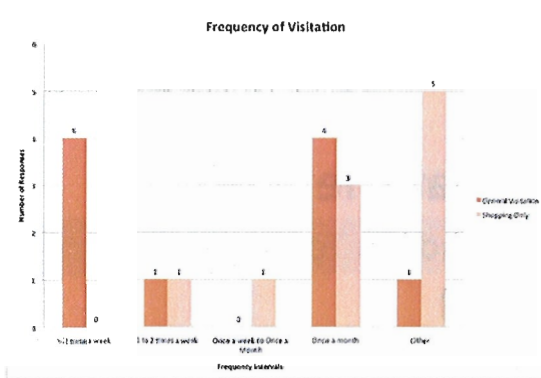
### 6.4.3 QUESTIONS THREE AND FOUR: HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU COME THE SITE?

#### HOW FREQUENTLY ONLY TO SHOP?

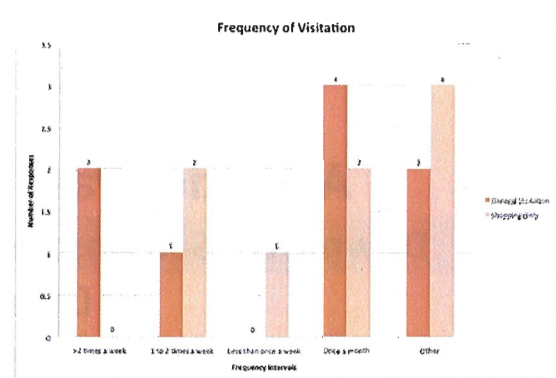
When asked how frequently they visit Downtown San Anselmo, four respondents said they visit “more than twice a week” and four respondents visit “once a month.” One respondent visited less than once a month and another visited one to two times a week. When asked how often they visit only for shopping, the responses shift towards “other” which corresponds to less than once a month. Five respondents said they visit Downtown San Anselmo less than once a month (“other”) when coming only to shop. The responses also show a shift to less frequent visitation with three respondents stating they visit once a month to shop. No respondents said they come to the Downtown more than twice a week for just shopping. One participant cited “one to two times a week.” This is the highest frequency with which respondents visit the Downtown only to shop. User surveys imply that Downtown San Anselmo is more for recreation and socialization in conjunction with shopping. People do not patronize the Downtown specifically to shop (see figure 26).

The majority of respondents visited the Town Center once a month or less. Three respondents visited once a month and two visited less than once a month. Two respondents visited more than twice a week. When asked their frequency of use for shopping only, the responses shifted toward less frequent. No respondents came to

the Center to shop more than twice a week; however, the number of respondents that came to the Town Center once to twice a week increased. The same amount of respondents came once a month only to shop but the number that visited less than once a month (“other”) increased from two respondents to three (see figure 27). This shift in responses parallels the responses from users of Downtown San Anselmo. Both surveys show that users tend to patronize the sites for reasons other than shopping.



**Figure 26 - Visitation Frequency for Downtown San Anselmo – Showing the frequency for all visits and for “shopping only.”**



**Figure 27 - Visitation Frequency for Downtown San Anselmo – Showing the frequency for all visits and for “shopping only.”**

#### 6.4.4 QUESTION FIVE: PLEASE DESCRIBE ACTIVITIES YOU PARTICIPATE IN WHEN VISITING THE SITE?

Respondents at Downtown San Anselmo provided a variety of activities they participate in downtown. The most popular activity was “dining.” The next popular activities were “shopping” and the “library.” The Downtown includes public facilities and these facilities provide a main activity for downtown patrons. Respondents also mentioned browsing and socializing as important activities. Only one respondent mentioned personal services as an activity (haircut). Therefore, despite the number of beauty shops, the restaurants and general shopping are the major activities people participate in downtown (See Figure 28).



The most popular activity for Town Center survey respondents was “window shopping and browsing.” Five respondents identified “window shopping” as an activity. Four respondents also identified “shopping” and four respondents also identified “dining” as main activities they participate in at the Center. The high level of window shopping can be attributed to the ability of shopping and dining to draw people. Some of these patrons will stay at the Center and engage in additional activities such as browsing.” Respondents also mentioned enjoying activities such as “people watching,” “enjoying the “weather,” and “interacting with other shoppers” (See figure 27). Respondents utilize both sites similarly, with the Downtown providing governmental institutions in addition to shopping and dining.

Activities Participate in at the Site?	
Downtown San Anselmo	Corte Madera Town Center
(7) Dining	Dining (4)
(3) Shopping	Shopping (4)
(3) Library	People Watch (1)
(2) Browsing	Window Shop/ Browsing (5)
(1) Haircut (personal services)	Sit Outside/ enjoy weather (2)
(2) Socializing	Interact with Other Shoppers (1)

**Figure 28: Participatory Activities at Each Site** – The chart shows user identified activities and frequency for each site.

6.4.5 QUESTION SIX: WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES YOU LIKE ABOUT THE SITE?

At Downtown San Anselmo, respondents gave a wide variety of responses for their “likes.” The most common cited “like” was the “charming feel” of the Downtown. Additional qualities people like were the “old town feel” (Two people), the “nice atmosphere” (Two people), and the “eclectic character” (Two people). The following characteristics where identified by one person each: “nice shops,” “local shops,” and “clean and tidy.” People overwhelming mentioned attributes related to the physical design and style of the Downtown. Two respondents acknowledged use-based

attributes of the Downtown. These were “local shops” and “nice shops” (Please See Figure 29).

Survey respondents provided many diverse responses when asked what they like about the Town Center. The majority of people like aesthetic (design) qualities such as the “pedestrian and inner village design” (three people), “attractiveness” of the place (one person), and the “water features,” “statues,” and “murals” (four people). One person also mentioned “seating” and one person mentioned “umbrellas” as liked qualities. People also said they like many social aspects of the Town Center. Social aspects people commonly mentioned were “dog friendly” (three people), “kid friendly” (three people), and the “Town Center is a people place” (two people). Other qualities people enjoyed were the “music” (two people) and the “quiet and relaxing atmosphere” (two people). Two respondents cited “parking” (specifically convenience) as a quality they like. Interestingly, only two people mentioned the actual stores as qualities they like. Also, only one person said they like the restaurants (figure 29). Most people cited social aspects or design aspects as qualities they like. Other responses included: “feng shui after remodel” (one person), “sophisticated” (one person), and the “place fits the needs of the people.” The open-ended question produced diverse responses showing that many people enjoy the Town Center in different ways. Respondents at each site valued the design and its impact on the atmosphere and feel. People’s attitudes towards each site are similar; however, the Town Center solicited a larger variety of responses.

## What Do You Like About the Site?

Downtown San Anselmo	Corte Madera Town Center
(3) Charming Feel	Water Features/ Statues/ Murals (4)
(2) Old Town Feel	Pedestrian Promenade/ Interior Village (3)
(2) Nice Atmosphere	Dog Friendly (3)
(1) Nice Shops	Kid Friendly (3)
(1) Local Shops	Quiet/ Relaxing (2)
(2) Eclectic	Stores (mix) (2)
(1) Clean + Tidy	Music (2)
	Convenience (2)
	People Place (2)
	Seating (1)
	Umbrellas (1)
	Fits needs of people (1)
	Restaurants (1)
	Attractive place (1)
	Feng Shui Energy after Remodel (1)
	Chic and Sophisticated (not arrogant) (1)

**Figure 29 - User Identified "Likes"** – The chart shows user identified "likes" and frequency for each site.

### 6.4.6 QUESTION SEVEN: WHAT ARE SOME QUALITIES YOU DISLIKE ABOUT THE SITE?

People overwhelmingly cited parking as a quality they dislike about the downtown. Four of the ten respondents believe parking to be a major problem in the Downtown. The majority of respondents drove to the Downtown. Therefore, it is not ironic for participants to cite parking as a major issue. The following disliked qualities were each mentioned by one respondent: not "green" oriented, "no men's shop," "no record store," "not prepared for emergencies," "too large," and "vehicle congestion" (Figure 30). The vehicle congestion response supports the responses of disliked parking. It is interesting for a respondent to feel the Downtown is "too large" considering its relative size.

The responses for disliked qualities at the Town Center were not as varied as the responses for qualities people liked. Three people said they did not dislike anything

about the Town Center (see figure 30). Other responses include: “the architecture of Crate and Barrel” (one person), “too many kids” (one person), “lack of disabled parking” (one person), “vehicle speed in parking lot” (one person), “expensive” (one person), and “corporate culture of stores” (one person). While many respondents mentioned the kid friendly aspects of the Town Center as qualities they like, one person said children were a quality the respondent disliked. Parking is an issue that permeates many survey responses. Despite the lack of vehicles in the Town Center itself, one respondent said vehicle speeds in the parking lots was an issue. Disliked qualities tend to not be design based but rather social aspects of the center. In contrast, dislikes for Downtown San Anselmo tend to be based on use and design.

### What Do You Dislike About the Site?

Downtown San Anselmo	Corte Madera Town Center
(4) Parking	None (3)
(1) Not "Green" Oriented	Not enough disabled parking (1)
(1) No Men's Shop	Corporate Culture (1)
(1) No Record Store	Expensive (1)
(1) Not Prepared For Emergencies	Architecture of Crate & Barrel (1)
(1) Too Large	Too many kids (1)
(1) Vehicle Congestion	Vehicles Drive Too Fast In Parking Lot (1)

**Figure 30 - User Identified “Dislikes”** – The chart shows user identified “dislikes” and frequency for each site.

#### 6.4.7 QUESTION EIGHT: WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT THE SITE?

The majority of respondents stated they would not change anything about the Downtown. Interestingly, the next two most popular responses were to “close the street from vehicle traffic” and “condense parking into a structure.” Parking and traffic congestion were frequently mentioned by participants in their dislikes and potential changes. The majority of respondents chose to drive to the Downtown despite their dislike for traffic and parking. Respondents also mentioned they would like to “improve bicycle safety,” “prohibit taller buildings,” “prepare for floods,” and “change financial decision making towards the Downtown.”

The responses from Corte Madera Town Center respondents were varied, showing no prominent trends (see figure 31). Changes included: “adding a Trader Joes” (one person), the “architecture of Crate and Barrel” (one person), the “internal feel of the space” (two people), “nothing” (one person), “handicapped accessibility” (one person), “large ‘target like’ store to accomplish all shopping needs in one trip” (one person), and “more local shops” (one person). Three respondents identified accessibility and access between the pedestrian promenade and the parking lots as potential changes. This shows a small trend of increased accessibility between the inside pedestrian promenade, the stores fronting the parking lots, and the parking lots. Corte Madera Town Center responses are interested in localizing the commercial aspect of the site and adding more “neighborhood uses.” Respondents at Downtown San Anselmo desired changes to the design that would make the Downtown “mimic” the Town Center.

### What Would You Want to Change About the Site?

Downtown San Anselmo	Corte Madera Town Center
(4) Nothing	Nothing (1)
(2) Close Street from Automobile	Feels Internal (Improve Parking Access) (2)
(1) Financial Decision to Downtown	Local Shops (1)
(2) Condense Parking in Structure	Accessibility (handicapped) (1)
(1) Improve Bicycle Safety	Add Trader Joes (1)
(1) Prohibit Taller Buildings	Architecture of Crate & Barrel (1)
(1) Flood preparation	Target (Acomplish All In One Trip) (1)

**Figure 31 - User Identified “Changes”** – The chart shows user identified “changes” and frequency of identification for each site.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Lifestyle centers offer people similar qualities and attributes as a downtown, making it a valid urban form. Lifestyle centers do not contain the nostalgia of a traditional downtown; however, lifestyle centers are a valid urban form. The Corte Madera Town Center and Downtown San Anselmo both function as the epicenter of economic, political, and social institutions for their respective cities. Downtown San Anselmo contains public facilities (city hall, library, police station, fire station) while the Town Center only contains the Corte Madera Chamber of Commerce. Research demonstrates that people enjoy both lifestyle centers and traditional downtowns. Neither is a more acceptable urban form. They are similar with regards to access and reasons for visitation, frequency of use, and user identified “likes.”

Lifestyle centers and traditional downtowns offer users more than a retail experience. Both sites were primarily visited for shopping and dining but respondents also identified a multitude of other reasons. GIS analysis shows the Corte Madera Town Center is disconnected from its urban fabric. Respondents at Downtown San Anselmo mentioned proximity as a reason to visit the site. The automobile permeates urban life. Respondents for both sites mentioned traffic, parking, and vehicles in a negative context. Respondents at the Town Center enjoyed the parking lots and the separation the Town Center provides from the automobile. Respondents at the Town Center mentioned the negative interactions between pedestrians and vehicles and the many mentioned closing the street from vehicular traffic (much like the Town Center). Respondents accessed both sites similarly. Therefore, despite differences in walkability, public transit, and land use, context does not dictate how people utilize the site.

Regarding frequency of use, each site exhibited similar patterns. People visited the sites more frequently for “general” use than for “shopping only.” When asked if how often they came only to shop, the results shifted drastically towards less frequently. This was true at both sites.



Downtown San Anselmo provides patrons with a more traditional downtown experience; however, the Town Center exhibited similar qualities to traditional downtowns. The Town Center provided patrons with public space and a variety of seating to enjoy the space. The Downtown did not provide patrons with a significant amount of public seating (except for a few benches). User surveys show that people use each location similarly and like similar qualities (design, feel, and uses) of each site. When asked about their “likes,” respondents frequently mentioned aspects relating to the atmosphere and feel of the site. More varied responses were generated by respondents at the Town Center.

The Corte Madera Town Center is dominated by corporate culture. There are only a few local businesses in the Town Center. In contrast, Downtown San Anselmo is predominately local businesses. This was represented in surveys that showed people enjoyed the locality of the Downtown and disliked the corporate culture of the Town Center. Respondents patronized the Town Center despite their disagreements with its corporate culture. User surveys, empirical observations, mapping analysis, and expert interviews show that both lifestyle centers and traditional downtowns have merit within the urban framework.

People use both the Downtown and Town Center for more than shopping. Both sites are hubs of activity and are used for socialization and entertainment. They are created from different processes to serve similar uses. The Corte Madera Town Center is the “downtown” of Corte Madera and functions as its social and economic hub; however, it does not harbor government institutions. It is not the hub of political activity within Corte Madera. Downtown San Anselmo is the hub of social, economic, and political activity within San Anselmo. Despite this difference, both sites are used in similar fashion, demonstrating the validity and merit of the lifestyle center.

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## APPENDIX A. DOWNTOWN SAN ANSELO SURVEY



POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION  
Downtown San Anselmo  
Kyle Perata CRP - 462

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Time \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Weather \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTIONS:

- 1) What brings you to Downtown San Anselmo?
- 2) How did you travel to Downtown San Anselmo?
  - a. Automobile.
  - b. Walk
  - c. Bicycle
  - d. Public Transportation
  - e. Other
- 3) How frequently do you come to Downtown San Anselmo?
  - a. >2 times a week
  - b. 1 to 2 times a week
  - c. Less than once a week
  - d. Once a month
  - e. Other
- 4) How frequently do you come to Downtown San Anselmo to Shop (only shop)?
  - a. >2 times a week
  - b. 1 to 2 times a week
  - c. Less than once a week
  - d. Once a month
  - e. Other
- 5) Please describe activities you partake in when visiting Downtown San Anselmo?
- 6) What are some of your likes and dislikes of Downtown San Anselmo?
- 7) If you could change something(s) about the downtown, what would you change?



## APPENDIX B. CORTE MADERA TOWN CENTER SURVEY



POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION  
Corte Madera Town Center  
Kyle Perata CRP - 462

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**Time** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Weather** \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What brings you to the Corte Madera Town Center?
  
- 2) How did you travel to the Corte Madera Town Center?
  - a. Automobile
  - b. Walk
  - c. Bicycle
  - d. Public Transportation
  - e. Other
  
- 3) How frequently do you come to the Corte Madera Town Center?
  - a. >2 times a week
  - b. 1 to 2 times a week
  - c. Less than once a week
  - d. Once a month
  - e. Other
  
- 4) How frequently do you come to the Corte Madera Town Center to Shop (only shop)?
  - a. >2 times a week
  - b. 1 to 2 times a week
  - c. Less than once a week
  - d. Once a month
  - e. Other
  
- 5) Please describe activities you partake in when visiting the Corte Madera Town Center?
  
- 6) What are some of your likes and dislikes of the Corte Madera Town Center?
  
- 7) If you could change something(s) about the Town Center, what would you change?

## APPENDIX C. HUMAN SUBJECTS CONSENT FORM

### INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PEOPLE AND PUBLIC SPACES RESEARCH.

A research project on the use of different types of public spaces is being conducted by Kyle Perata in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing a short survey consisting of seven questions about how you travel to a public space, how often you come, what you do, and some of your perceptions. Your participation will take approximately 5 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire(s) you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with participation in this study. Your responses will be provided anonymously to protect your privacy. Potential benefits associated with the study include an enhanced understanding of how people utilize public spaces within traditional downtowns and lifestyle centers.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Kyle Perata at 650 - 207 - 5184 or via email at [kperata@gmail.com](mailto:kperata@gmail.com). If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at 805-756-2754, [sdavis@calpoly.edu](mailto:sdavis@calpoly.edu), or Dr. Susan Opava, Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, at 756-1508, [sopava@calpoly.edu](mailto:sopava@calpoly.edu).

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by completing and returning the attached questionnaire. Please retain this consent cover form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.



