



CHAPTER

*two*

**Existing  
Conditions**

The two most potent factors in the development of property and appreciation of values in any suburb are: LOCATION AND TRANSIT. North Sacramento has both!

North Sacramento Brooke Realty Brochure (Early 1900s).

CHAPTER TWO

# existing conditions

**in this chapter**

LOCAL & REGIONAL CONTEXT

HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

ASSETS

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

MAXIMIZING DEVELOPMENT

OPPORTUNITIES

**THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES THE PROJECT AREA'S EXISTING CONDITIONS**, including the local and regional context, the historic pattern of development, assets, challenges, and potential opportunities. Future planning should build on the corridor's existing assets, work to counter challenges, and maximize promising opportunities.

Figure 2.11, at the end of this chapter provides a comprehensive summary of primary assets, issues, and opportunities as they relate geographically to the project area.

## LOCAL & REGIONAL CONTEXT

The project area is located approximately three miles northeast of Downtown Sacramento, in the City's North Sacramento Community Planning Area. The project area includes two major arterial streets: Arden Way and Del Paso Boulevard. Arden Way is a four-lane facility with scattered retail and commercial uses. Del Paso Boulevard, a two- to four-lane road, is the area's primary mixed-use commercial and retail corridor, and it includes a concentration of art studios and galleries.

The area's residential land uses are concentrated in the Dixianne and Woodlake Neighborhoods on the north and south side of Arden Way, respectively. The Dixianne Neighborhood, which is predominately made up of utilitarian apartment buildings and small single-family homes, is bounded by Del Paso Boulevard to the west, El Camino Avenue to the north, and the Southern Pacific/Capitol Corridor railroad line. The Woodlake Neighborhood is bounded by Arden Way, Del Paso Boulevard, Highway 160 and Royal Oaks Drive. The eastern section of Woodlake includes many of North Sacramento's historic single-family homes, which contrast with the more modern multi-family residences and mobile homes on the western side of the neighborhood.

While all three stations are located within close proximity of downtown, each station also serves as an access point to key destinations and regional amenities:

- Globe Station offers the most convenient access to the American River Parkway and Downtown;
- Arden/Del Paso Station serves as the multi-modal transit gateway to the Del Paso Arts District along Del Paso Boulevard; and
- Royal Oaks Station is closest to the Arden Fair Mall and Cal Expo.

FIGURE 2.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT





*Historical context of Del Paso Boulevard*

## HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

Historically, the area surrounding the Northeast Line Light Rail Stations was almost entirely devoted to agriculture. In 1910, Daniel W. Johnston, founder of the North Sacramento Land Company, purchased approximately 4,000 acres in the area and, with the help of his son, began laying out a vision. The North Sacramento Land Company touted North Sacramento to investors as a peaceful alternative to life in Downtown Sacramento. The establishment of streetcar service along Del Paso Boulevard in 1915 was a major turning point, as it spurred significant development in the area.

The City of North Sacramento was incorporated in 1924 and was soon recognized as a center for light and heavy industrial businesses, many of which were clustered around the area’s railroad lines. Several of these factories and plants, including the Swanston Meat Packing Company, the Essex Lumber Company, and the Sacramento Wool Company, brought national recognition to the area. The 1930s also marked the establishment of Del Paso Boulevard as the main commercial and retail street of North Sacramento. By the 1950s, Del Paso Boulevard was known for its lively parade celebrations, the Streamline Moderne Iceland skating rink, and the Del Paso Theatre.

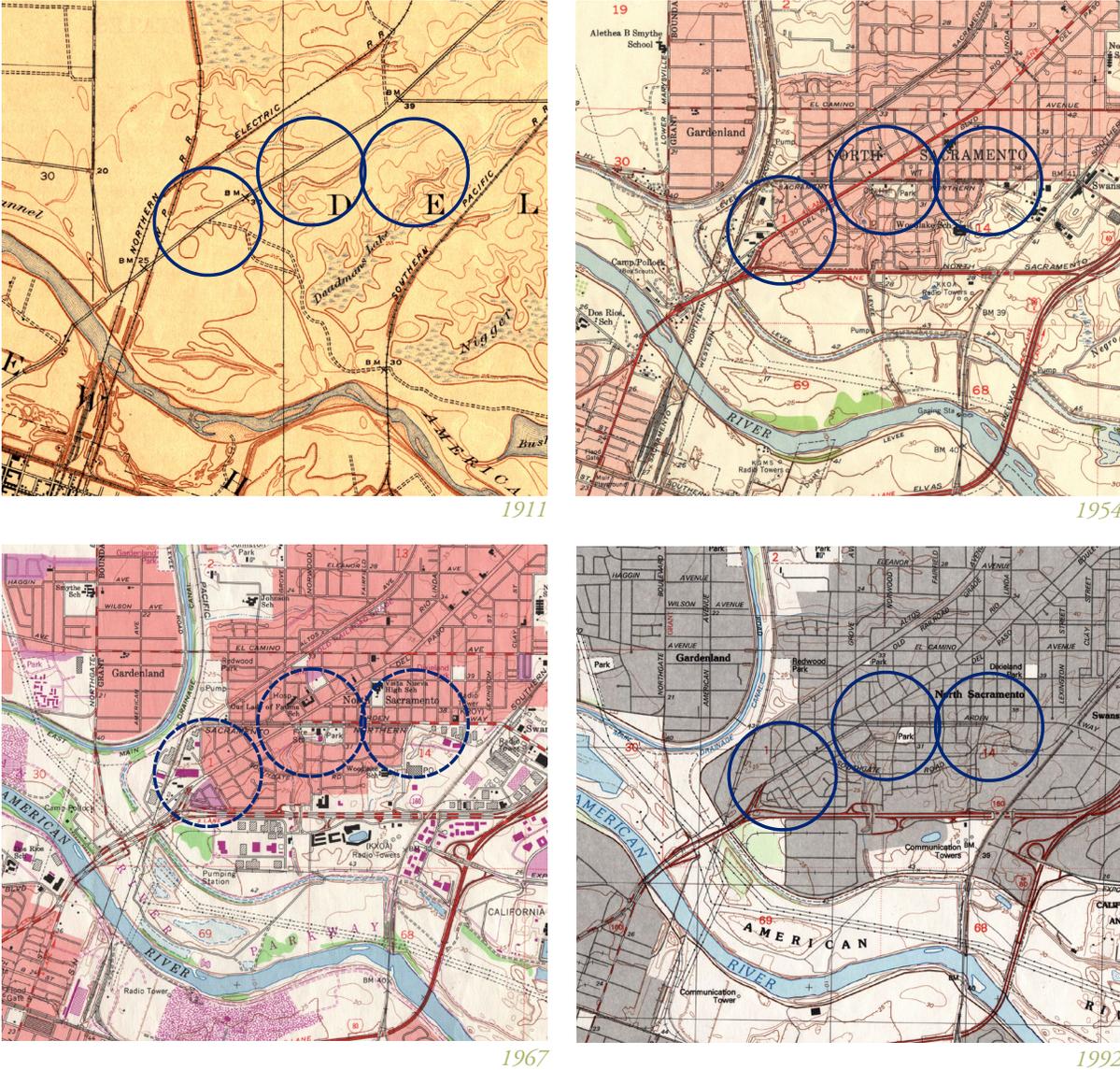
In 1964, the City of North Sacramento merged with the City of Sacramento. According to the Del Paso Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan, the idea of consolidation originated in the City of North Sacramento in 1929 by residents who believed that “flood protection could be more easily achieved if the two cities joined forces.”<sup>1</sup> With this merger, the City of Sacramento gained approximately 6.5 square miles and an estimated 15,000 residents.

Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, many of the area’s heavy industrial land uses gave way to additional commercial and retail development. During the 1970s and 1980s, much of North Sacramento began to decline and struggle financially. The area’s economic downside can be traced back to the construction of the North Sacramento Freeway (Highway 160) in 1955, which physically and psychologically isolated North Sacramento from the region.<sup>2</sup>

1. Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency. *Del Paso Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan*. Sacramento: 2002 pg. 9  
 2. Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency. *Del Paso Boulevard Streetscape Master Plan*. Sacramento: 2002 pg. 11

In 1987, Regional Transit (RT), Sacramento’s transit provider, began light rail service at the Globe, Arden/Del Paso, and Royal Oaks Stations. The 18.3-mile system links the region’s northeastern (Interstate 80) and eastern (Highway 50) corridors with Downtown Sacramento. The early 1990s marked the rebirth of Del Paso Boulevard as an arts and cultural district. In 1992, the City began the Phantom Galleries program, in which property owners lend their vacant spaces to local artists to create temporary gallery and performing art spaces on the second Saturday of each month. Today, the area features several permanent art galleries, unique retail stores, and local restaurants.

FIGURE 2.2 DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS



**ASSETS**

With its strategic location, extensive public transit infrastructure, and eclectic mix of uses, the NE Line Light Rail Stations project area has many positive attributes. Recognizing and building upon these strengths will help create a unique neighborhood urban design concept.

**EASY MULTIMODAL ACCESS - MAP 5**

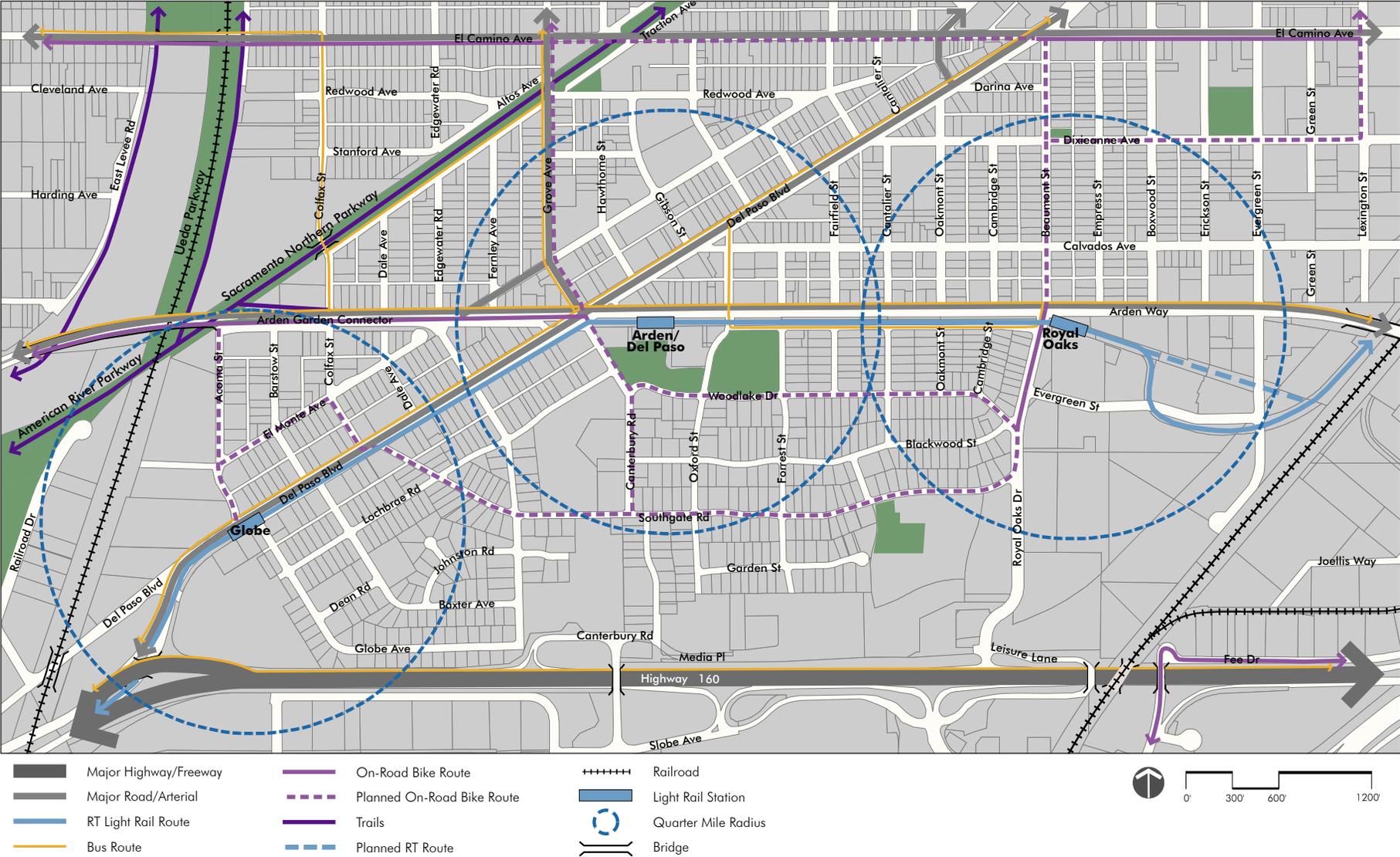
The overall project area, especially the area around the Arden/Del Paso Station, is well served by multiple modes of transportation. Major regional highways include State Highway 160 and the Capital City Freeway (Business 80), and major arterial roads include Del Paso Boulevard, Arden Way, the Arden Garden Connector and El Camino Avenue. The light rail stops at Globe, Arden/Del Paso and Royal Oaks, along with the bus transfer facility at the Arden/Del Paso Station, improve the project area’s local and regional accessibility for both public and private modes of transportation.

With respect to bicycle facilities, bike routes are located on portions of Arden Way, El Camino Avenue, and Royal Oaks Drive. In addition, the North Sacramento Bike Trail is located along Traction Avenue to the north of the project area, and it provides off-street access to the American River Bike Trail and the American River Parkway, the Ueda Multi-use Trail and Ueda Parkway, and the Sacramento Northern Bike Trail. The development of on-street pedestrian and bike connections to these regional amenities should be considered as part of an improved circulation system for the area.



*Multiple modes of transportation serve the station areas*

FIGURE 2.3 MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS





*Residential development in the Woodlake neighborhood*

**DIVERSE MIX OF USES**

The study area’s wide mix of uses, including residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and the arts and retail district along Del Paso Boulevard, helps create a broad and stable economic and social base.

The area around Globe and Arden/Del Paso Stations is characterized by regional and neighborhood-serving retail and commercial uses along Del Paso Boulevard and Arden Way. The area south of the stations is primarily residential development in the Woodlake Neighborhood, while the area north of the stations contains a variety of different uses, including residential, commercial, and industrial.

**LOCAL AND REGIONAL AMENITIES**

Certain local and regional amenities are common to the entire project area. The Arden Fair Mall is a regional destination which attracts people from all three station areas. The project area is also served by two schools: Woodlake and Northwood Elementary. However, certain amenities, such as parks and open spaces, are more closely akin to individual station areas.



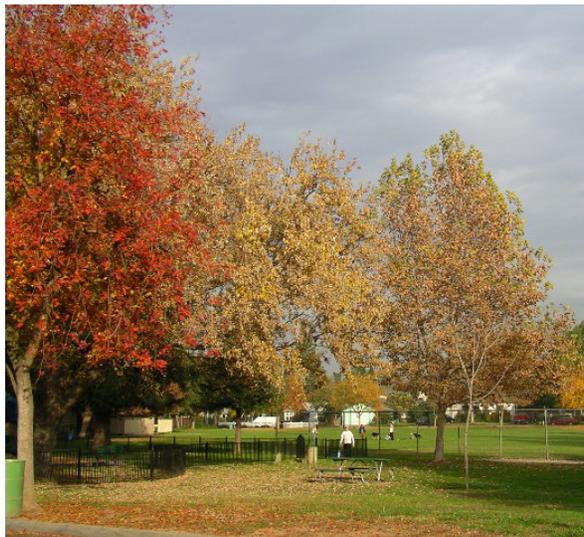
*Mix of uses southeast of Royal Oaks Station*





*Dixieanne tot-lot*

For example, Globe Station offers easy access to the American River Parkway, the Arden/Del Paso Station area is located adjacent to Woodlake Park, and the Royal Oaks Station area includes the Dixieanne Tot Lot. Del Paso Boulevard, especially between Arden Way and El Camino Ave, serves both local and regional constituents and proves most convenient for those people in the Arden/Del Paso Station area.



*Open space amenities*



*Woodlake Elementary School*

FIGURE 2.5 LOCAL AMENITIES





*New and planned development projects*



**NEW AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

The approximate quarter-mile project areas around each of the three stations are seeing positive new developments. These projects include the Limn Furniture Store along Arden Way, the Victory Town Homes on Dixie-  
anne Ave, the Dixieanne Tot Lot, and the Surreal Estates residential development, which is under construction, at the northeast corner of Calvados Avenue and Cantalier Street. In addition, \$2.3 million in streetscape improvements, including sidewalk replacements and the installation of angled parking and public art, are underway along Del Paso Boulevard and have served as catalysts for new development.



FIGURE 2.6 NEW AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



FIGURE 2.7 SOUTHGATE DRIVE SECTION



**UNIQUE URBAN FABRIC**

With its narrow and tree-lined streets, neighborhood scale, and one- to two-story architecturally significant houses, certain sections of the Woodlake Neighborhood have an intimate residential feel. This character is particularly evident on Fairfield, Forrest, Woodlake, Blackwood, and Oxford Streets. In contrast, the building footprints of the larger-grain industrial, institutional and warehouse buildings around Royal Oaks Station have a more gritty and urban character.



*Narrow streets in the Woodlake neighborhood*



*Large-grain structures around the Royal Oaks Station*

FIGURE 2.8 BUILDING FOOTPRINTS





*Art Deco signage and facades along Del Paso Boulevard*

**CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS**

The Globe and Arden/Del Paso Station project areas have a distinct set of urban design elements which are unique to these two stations. In contrast, there are no character-defining elements at the Royal Oaks Station.

In the private realm of the Globe and Arden/Del Paso Station project areas, many structures have Art Deco/Moderne facades and Art Deco signage and building materials, including brick, glass blocks, and steel sections along Del Paso Boulevard. Off of Del Paso Boulevard, the private realm is defined by wide spacious front yards, common courtyards, and porches.

In the public realm, the Globe and Arden/Del Paso Station project areas include unique lighting and street art/sculptural furniture on Del Paso Boulevard. The surrounding residential public realm in the Woodlake Neighborhood has “fenceless” front yards and rolled curbs. The narrow 20’ roads and lack of sidewalks allows pedestrian and bicyclists to share the road, transforming a functional public right-of-way into a unique public open space.



*Character-defining buildings at the Arden/Del Paso Station*



*Unique street lights at Globe and Arden/Del Paso Stations*

**COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT**

Through the development and implementation of several innovative programs, neighborhood and community organizations, including the North Sacramento Chamber of Commerce, Uptown Arts, and the recently-formed Property-Based Improvement District (PBID), have demonstrated their determination to improve the area and create visible results on the ground. The Phantom Galleries program has helped to activate the Del Paso Boulevard cor-

ridor while creating an identity for the area. City leaders have also made improvements in the Dixianne Neighborhood by adding streetlights along Dixianne Avenue and by closing several crime-ridden alleys.



*Murals along Del Paso Boulevard activate the street edge*



*Commitment from city leaders to improvements in the area*

## CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

In order to create an implementable Urban Design and Development Plan for the area, it is important to understand the challenges facing this part of North Sacramento. Strategically identifying key opportunities of the project areas will also ensure a successful revitalization effort.

### USING THE TRANSIT STATIONS' SYNERGY FOR NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

#### Creating a Walkable, Livable Transit-Oriented Village

While the areas south of Arden/Del Paso Station and Globe Station are fairly built out with beautiful residential streets and buildings, a fair amount of vacant and underutilized buildings and parcels exist to the southeast of the Royal Oaks Station and north of Globe Station. These areas are characterized by an overall environment unfriendly to pedestrians. Numerous opportunities exist to create a higher density, vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood.

#### Improving the Station Environments

Surrounded by poorly maintained vacant and underutilized lots and by wide, fast-moving traffic-oriented arterial roads like Arden Way and Del Paso Boulevard, the existing station environments are ill-defined, lack adequate signage, and any significant sense of place.

#### Expanding the Range of Housing Options

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) provides an exciting opportunity to build a mix of housing types around the three station areas, including high-density development such as town homes and condominiums.

#### Increasing Ridership

The abundance of surface parking in the area and the underutilized land surrounding all three stations hinders increased transit ridership. However, opportunities to boost ridership may increase as higher-intensity uses are built around the three stations.



*Capitalize on transit station for neighborhood revitalization*

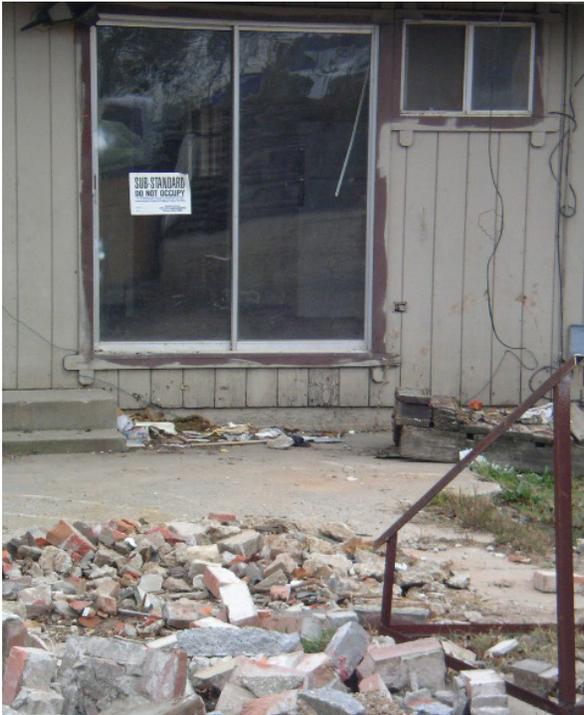
**INCREASING USABLE OPEN SPACE & QUALITY OF OVERALL PUBLIC REALM**

The Arden/Del Paso Station is well-served by Woodlake Park and the unique use of its public roadways, and the Royal Oaks Station project area is home to the Dixieanne Tot Lot. However, the overall public realm, including streets, alleys, parks, and transit plazas, needs to be dramatically strengthened and improved. Additionally, connecting the light rail system with the regional bike and pedestrian trail system along the American River Parkway, the Northern Bike Trail, and the Ueda Parkway would increase access to regional recreation and open space opportunities.

**IMPROVING SENSE OF SAFETY & OVERALL IMAGE**

Without active uses surrounding them, all three stations are largely hidden from public view and have a certain sense of anonymity. The lack of “eyes” and the blank-walled buildings that face these stations create physical environments that encourage crime and undesirable elements.

In addition, boarded-up and dilapidated buildings, poor maintenance, inadequate street lighting, and lack of contiguous sidewalks all contribute to the perception of blight and neglect. Redesigned and revitalized station areas with increased activity levels would help to address safety and security problems, while improving the overall image of the larger area.



*Dilapidated structures*



*Lack of “eyes on the street”*



*Poor maintenance*



*Narrow and interrupted sidewalks*

**STRENGTHENING PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS**

Various transportation rights-of-way (roads and railroad tracks) bound and traverse through the study area, creating strong visual and physical barriers. Arden Way and Del Paso Boulevard inhibit connectivity and restrict movement from the stations to the surrounding neighborhoods. The following pedestrian improvements will help to establish strong connections to and through the stations.

- A. Connecting individual stations to neighborhoods on both sides of the light rail tracks.
- B. Creating walkable, contiguous sidewalks that will strengthen existing pedestrian connections from the stations to the adjacent neighborhoods, open spaces, and built amenities, like Woodlake Park and the Dixianne Tot Lot. Installing and widening sidewalks on the south side of Globe Station along Del Paso Boulevard.
- C. Improving the safety of current routes to neighboring schools, like Woodlake Elementary.
- D. Exploring the re-use of underutilized and closed alleys as viable pedestrian-friendly connectors, especially around the Royal Oaks Station.
- E. Adding more crosswalks across Arden Way to facilitate north-south pedestrian movement.
- F. Improving the safety and pedestrian-orientation of the Arden Way and Del Paso Boulevard intersection.

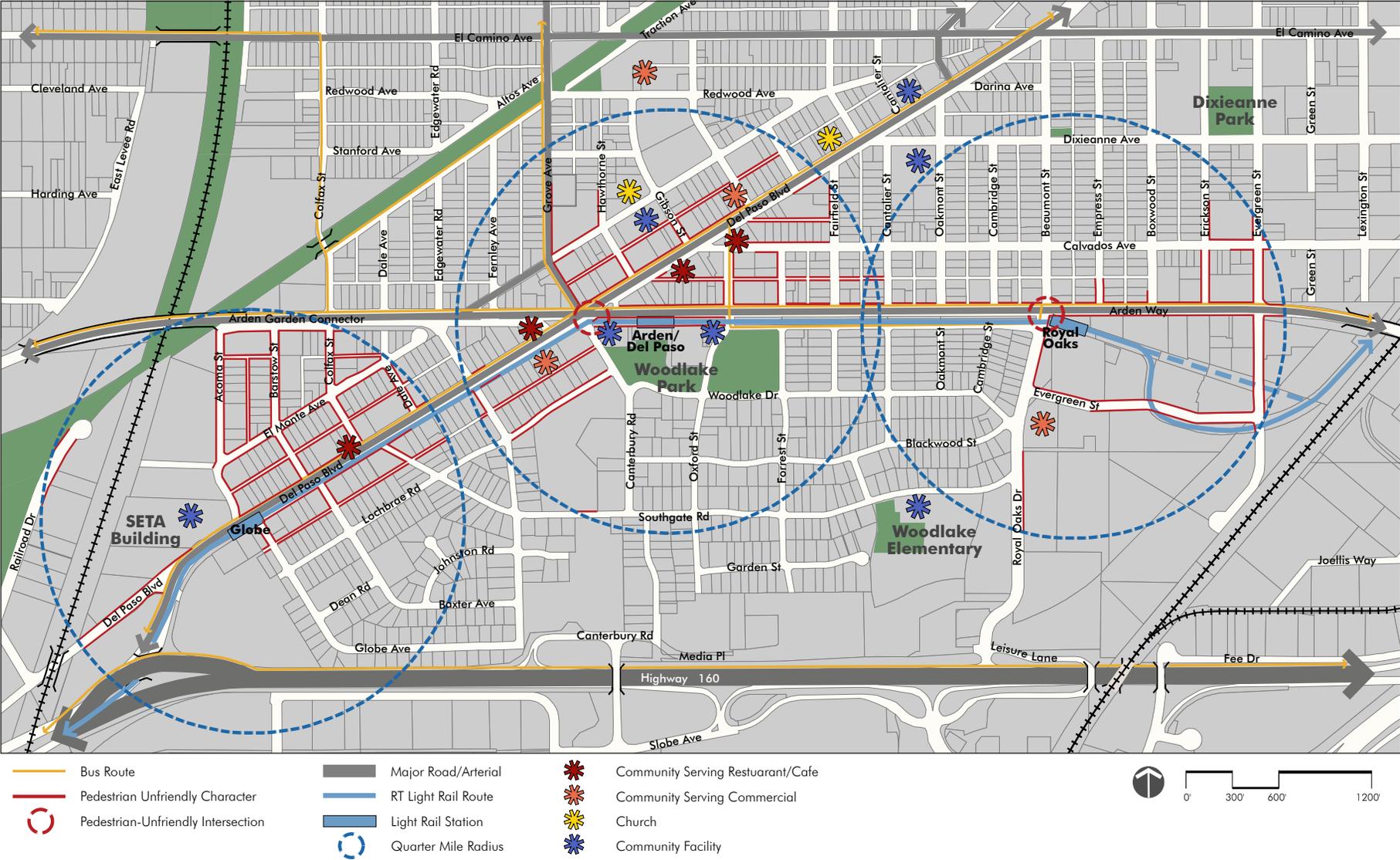


*Lack of sidewalks in many areas*



*Poor pedestrian connections*

FIGURE 2.9 PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT





*Auto and pedestrian conflicts*

### ADDRESSING AUTO & PEDESTRIAN CONFLICTS

Two of the area’s assets, its strategic location and easy free-way access, contribute to another constraint and potential opportunity. According to residents and a brief visual analysis, commuters often cut through North Sacramento’s residential neighborhoods when traveling from Interstate 5 and North Natomas to the Capital City Freeway. For example, drivers often use Southgate Road and Royal Oaks Drive to access the retail centers along Exposition Boulevard. Similarly, fast moving traffic coming onto Del Paso Boulevard reduces pedestrian safety and overall street life. This “cut through” traffic undermines the character

of local residential streets and creates pedestrian safety concerns. Reconfigured circulation patterns and strategic traffic calming could help to address these conflicts and maintain the residential integrity of the area.



*“Cut-through” and fast-moving traffic through station areas*

**IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE**

While new streetscape improvements along sections of Del Paso Boulevard and streetlights along Dixianne Avenue have improved the street environment, many of the existing infrastructure and utility systems in the project area are dilapidated and in urgent need of improvement. The poor state of infrastructure poses a significant constraint to any future development.

With respect to water supply, the Woodlake Neighborhood and the Arden Way and Del Paso Boulevard corridors are well served, but the Globe Station area and the Dixianne Neighborhood contain undersized mains that need to be upgraded. The area has significant drainage problems, including street flooding and inadequate conveyance of runoff from the project area to local creeks and canals. The project area would benefit from new and upgraded pipelines, pump stations, and detention basins. The existing sewer needs of the area are adequately served by the current system, but new development may require additional sewer capacity.



*Significant drainage problems in the Dixianne neighborhood*



*Existing drainage basin*



34

*Vacant and underutilized lots and buildings*

## MAXIMIZING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Northeast Line Light Rail Stations Plan project areas present numerous opportunities for redevelopment and infill projects. All three station areas possess vacant and underutilized parcels that are well suited for transit-oriented development. Overall, the project area has the potential to capture a strong increase in housing demand with more moderate demand for retail and office space.

A rapidly changing demographic picture coupled with regional housing pressures in the Sacramento region has created a significant demand for residential housing in the area. In the near-term, for-sale townhomes present the best transit-oriented development opportunity, with short-term development focused on the Globe Station area. Other desirable building types include condominiums and workforce-oriented housing units.

Increasing the number of residents within the project area will also contribute to the area's potential for attracting neighborhood-serving retailers and restaurants, including cafés, florists, bakeries, and specialty food and beverage stores. These niche or boutique retail stores and restaurants can help to draw even more visitors and add a new dimension to the identity of the area. With its comparably lower rents, North Sacramento also has the potential to be an attractive alternative to higher priced commercial and office space in Downtown. Though relatively modest, there is a demand for small- to medium-scale commercial and professional office space in the project area.

The vast amounts of empty and underutilized land and open space provide a tremendous opportunity to create a series of interconnected TODs that will revitalize North Sacramento and increase transit ridership.

FIGURE 2.10 DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL



FIGURE 2.11 OVERALL ASSETS, ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

