

Downtown Neighborhood Transit-Oriented Development Plan

Executive Summary

July 2020

As most transit trips begin and end as walking trips, the area within easy walking distance of a transit station is where development opportunities can take advantage of and encourage transit ridership. Such transit-oriented development (TOD) may be the redevelopment of existing facilities or new development and should be designed with an emphasis at the pedestrian scale—mixing residences, employment, shopping, and services.





Planning for Rail Transit

What is Honolulu Rail Transit?

The Honolulu Rail Transit system will serve 21 stations between East Kapolei and Ala Moana Center. Over 60% of Oahu's population currently lives within this transit corridor, and the population in the corridor is projected to continue to grow faster than the rest of Oahu.

Rail transit provides an opportunity to help reduce the growth of traffic congestion by taking cars off the road; improve travel reliability; shorten travel times for most riders between home and work; and increase transportation options by transit, bicycle, and on foot.



How Can We Prepare for It?

The Department of Planning and Permitting is currently preparing neighborhood transit-oriented development (TOD) plans to help integrate land use and transportation planning around the rail stations in conjunction with the rail project. The plans address opportunities for new development and orderly growth and improved accessibility around the stations.

Each plan begins by looking at lands within one-half mile of the proposed transit stations. Land use, mobility, urban form and open space elements are addressed in every plan but result in different outcomes in different neighborhoods, including TOD district boundaries that relate to topographic and other physical parameters.

Successful TOD depends on participation and support from government, residents, businesses, community organizations, landowners, developers, and the financial sector. Good TOD projects increase transit ridership and respond to community concerns, needs and goals.

Each community must determine what type of TOD will work best given its specific assets, growth and population trends, transportation, infrastructure, and social needs. Development happens as the result of private investment. The role of government is to provide the policy ground rules, define and offer strategic incentives, ensure that adequate infrastructure is available, and engage the community in helping direct private investment into public benefit.

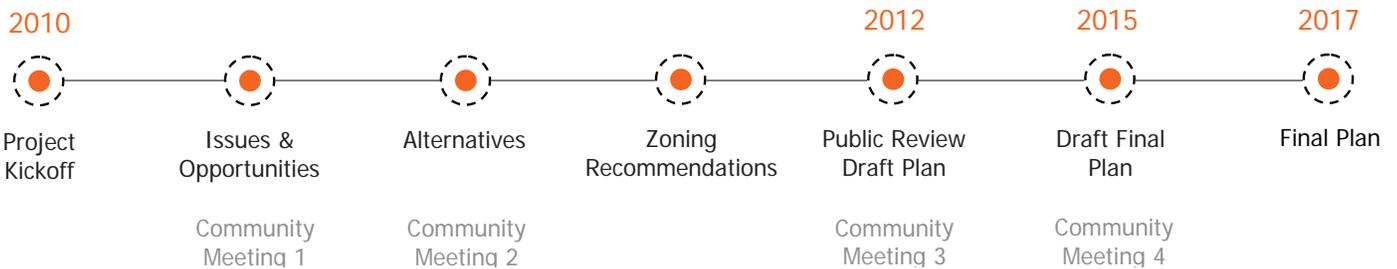


The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan

What are the Objectives of the Plan?

The Downtown corridor includes the Downtown, Chinatown, and Iwilei station areas. It is home to Oahu’s center of employment, the historic Chinatown district, and a variety of open spaces. The Downtown Neighborhood Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan articulates a vision for the future of the Downtown corridor and will guide its development over the next era of the city’s growth. It will enhance transit access and walkability by enabling more people to live and work within walking distance of a rail station.

The Plan envisions more diverse housing options, employment opportunities, and educational centers, and a new high-intensity mixed-use neighborhood in Iwilei. New and improved open spaces, entertainment venues, and a waterfront promenade will enhance livability. A more connected circulation network in the Iwilei area, as well as safer street crossings and new bicycle facilities throughout Downtown, will help residents, workers, and tourists access key destinations, residences, and jobs.



How Was the Plan Developed?

The planning process for the Downtown corridor has involved community workshops, Advisory Committee meetings, and a community needs survey.

Beginning in December of 2010, the planning process included identification of issues and opportunities, a market study, the creation of alternatives, and development of preferred station area plans. The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan also includes recommendations on phasing, implementation, and revisions to the Land Use Ordinance (LUO), including TOD special district regulations.

The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan builds upon the Primary Urban Center Development Plan and the Special Districts for Chinatown and the Capital District.



COMMUNITY VISION: Downtown Honolulu will and easy access to stores and everyday amenities. An accessible and activated waterfront mixed-use Iwilei district as an extension of Downtown, will create a new image for

Guiding Principles for Downtown Neighborhood

1. Develop a Vibrant Mixed-Use Downtown



Expand hours of operation and uses, such as restaurants, retail, and waterfront destinations, that will encourage activity at night and on weekends. Develop visitor- and locally-serving commercial and hospitality uses to provide greater vibrancy while minimizing gentrification to the extent possible. Preserve, enhance, and celebrate existing buildings and properties of human scale and historic value, as well as scenic and cultural landmarks. Encourage residential uses to enable people to live closer to jobs and provide “eyes on the street,” improving real and perceived safety.

2. Enhance Downtown’s Waterfront Orientation

Provide a promenade along the waterfront; enable easier pedestrian crossing of Nimitz Highway; and redevelop the Aloha Tower area as a regional destination with community-oriented uses and activities that draw people from near and far. Provide attractions, signage, and information to encourage cruise ship passengers to explore Downtown neighborhoods.



3. Expand Housing Opportunities and Provide a Range of Housing Types



Develop new housing of varied types, including affordable, family-friendly and mixed income, to allow a range of household types—from young professionals and first-time home buyers to fixed-income seniors—the opportunity to live Downtown. Ensure affordability at the start of redevelopment through incentives and regulations. Provide solutions to accommodate the homeless population off the streets and enable re-integration through the provision of social services.

continue to be the region's premier employment center with a substantial residential population with promenades and community uses, a vibrant, historic Chinatown, and a new high-intensity Downtown Honolulu.

4. *Balance Density with Green Space*

Ensure good access to open spaces and parks to balance the density of Downtown by improving existing facilities and strategically providing new green spaces. Plant street trees, provide small plazas and community gardens, and consider accessible and green rooftop open spaces. Ensure that parks are safe, clean, well-lit, and offer a variety of activities. Emphasize a network of green space connections.



5. *Create an Integrated and Convenient Transportation Network*



Ensure that rail stations are attractive, safe, clean, and accessible by pedestrian routes and crossings, and provide safe bicycle facilities and direct bus/shuttle connections. Develop a coordinated parking strategy and standards that emphasize transit and pedestrian movement, rather than cars.

6. *Provide Quality Public Improvements*

Support transit ridership with directional signs, public restrooms, improved lighting, clean streets, and wider sidewalks. Develop a promenade along Nimitz Highway/Ala Moana Boulevard that would highlight views of the waterfront and its connection to Downtown neighborhoods. Preserve and create mauka-makai views from public streets and existing and new developments.



Community Character

The TOD Plan Concept Map illustrates the vision and guiding principles for the Plan, including generalized land uses, conceptual park locations, key destinations, views, and connections. The future land uses, which are described in detail in the Plan, provide the foundation for development around the three Downtown corridor stations.

Downtown Station Area

The Plan enhances Downtown as the region’s premier employment center with a wide mix of uses. The range of day and evening uses will be expanded to create a regional destination, with waterfront activities, a revitalized Aloha Tower and Fort Street Mall, and potential new development on the HECO power plant site. This area will contain the tallest building heights and highest densities of the planning area. Bishop Street and the Fort Street Mall will provide mauka-makai connections between the station, Downtown offices, and the waterfront area.

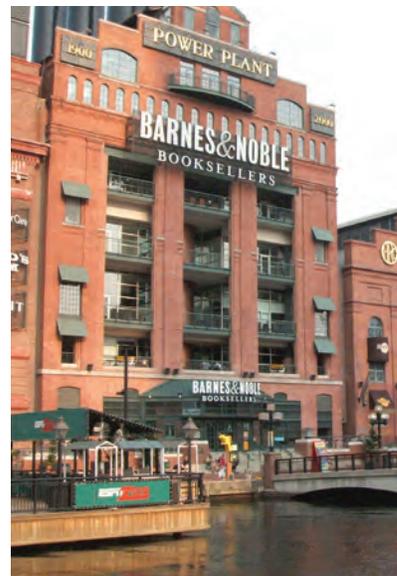
Mixed-use designations accommodate a range of uses, including residential, shopping, employment, and cultural, that support neighborhood vibrancy at various times of the day and week.

Chinatown Station Area

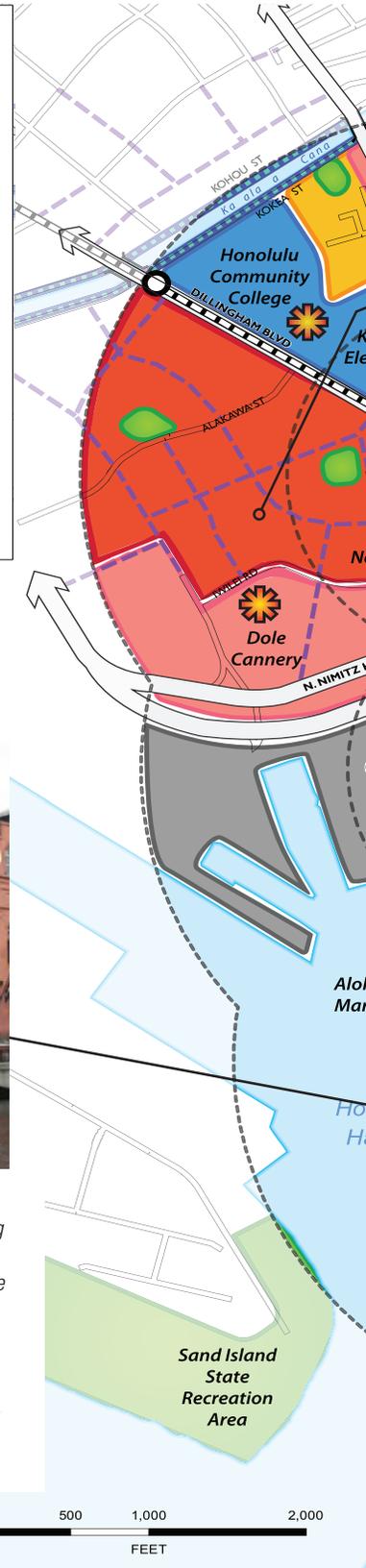
This neighborhood, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, will retain its historic character and scale. It will continue to have a wide mix of uses, while key opportunities for development, such as on surface parking lots along Nimitz Highway, are pursued. New uses and public services will accommodate the needs of seniors, children, and families.

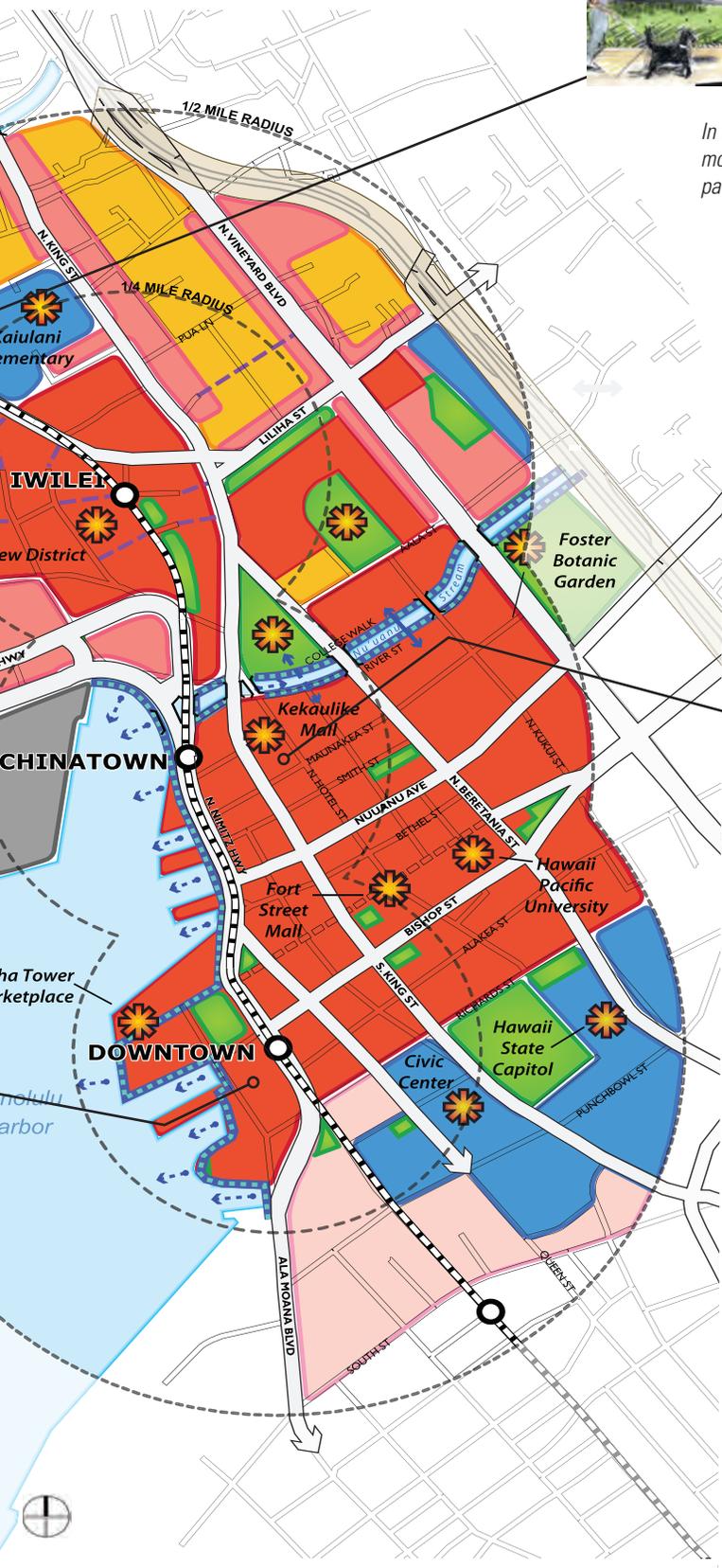
Iwilei Station Area

The most transformative vision for TOD in the planning area is the new high-intensity mixed-use Iwilei district. This new full-service urban neighborhood includes residences, public facilities, and neighborhood services, including retail, entertainment and restaurant uses. It serves as an extension of Downtown and a transition to the Kalihi area. A network of new streets provides better access to the transit station, and better connects the area to the waterfront and to Downtown.



Part of the Plan’s strategy is to create concentrated areas of vitality by encouraging active ground-floor uses, particularly in the **Downtown** station area. These uses include retail stores, restaurants and cafés, markets, personal services (e.g. salons, banks, travel agencies), theaters, and galleries. Uses with active frontages allow window-shopping and entice customers inside with visible and attractive entrances.





In the **Iwilei** station area, existing big-box stores should be redesigned and redeveloped into more attractive and intensely-utilized retail destinations with a vertical mix of uses. Structured parking would also free up land for other uses, allowing a more intense, urban atmosphere.



Chinatown's markets, shops, restaurants, First Fridays, and other events are important destinations for local residents and visitors. Existing uses will grow and expand in a way that is consistent with the district's character, and new development designed in accordance with Chinatown Special District regulations.



A conceptual three-dimensional computer model was prepared to analyze how various height and intensity regulations could influence development. Renderings shown here illustrate how future buildings will be consistent with existing development in Chinatown and Downtown, and establish a new high-intensity district in Iwilei.

TOD Zoning

The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan serves as the basis for TOD zoning proposals and a new TOD special district. Existing zoning regulations will be modified or replaced based on recommendations contained in the TOD Plan.

Recommendations include:

Land Uses

In most areas, the TOD zoning will allow uses similar to the BMX-3 Community Business Mixed Use and BMX-4 Central Business Mixed Use Districts, allowing for a range of office, retail, business services, as well as multifamily dwellings.

Building Heights & Density

Height limits (shown at right) vary based on existing land use patterns, community objectives, and market considerations. Maximum floor area ratios (FAR) in the Plan range from 0.9 to 7.5.

Affordable Housing

For larger residential projects, affordable housing requirements are recommended, with an emphasis on rental housing.

Parking

The Plan recommends reducing parking requirements across the board, allowing exemptions in certain situations, and requiring bicycle parking.

Yards

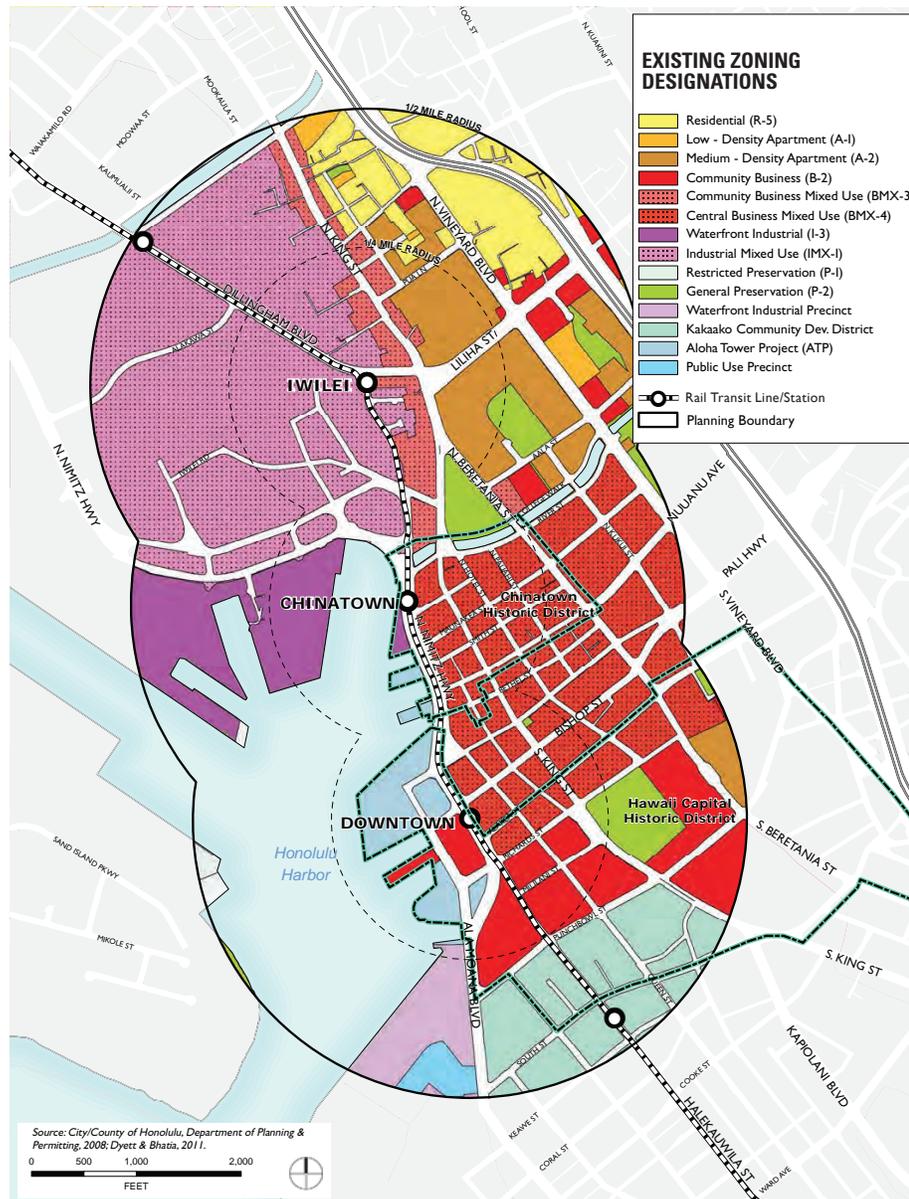
Yards should contribute to an active, pedestrian-oriented environment. Establishing maximum front setbacks would place building facades close to the sidewalk and help create outdoor “rooms” that include the street.

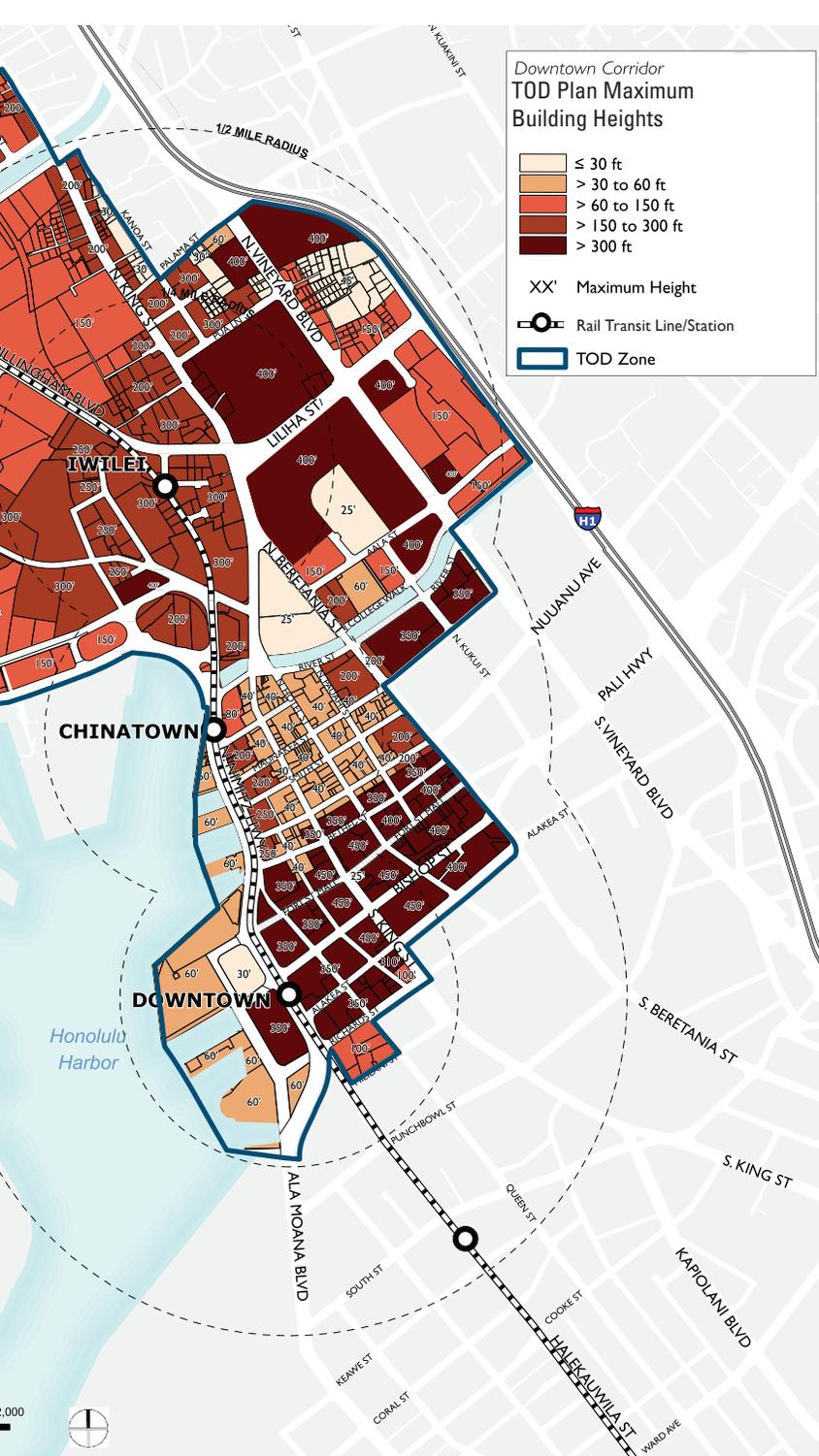
Publicly Accessible Open Space

New developments should provide publicly accessible plazas or parks or contribute an equivalent value toward public park improvements within the station area.

Building Design

The ground floors of buildings should be designed at the pedestrian scale and provide transparent storefronts to activate street frontages.





The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan defines a future for the rail station areas with increased community amenities triggered by new investment. Many of these amenities (described throughout the TOD Plan and highlighted on pages 10-13) can be developed by the private sector. In return for development bonuses, a project can incorporate any number of these amenities within the project, or off-site within the station areas, to help support community values and goals. The likely development bonus would be higher building heights, or it could be higher density (floor area) or less required parking.

Phasing

The sketches below are illustrative and intended to show that TOD does not occur overnight; rather it matures and evolves over time. The actual sequencing of development depends on numerous factors, including the real estate market, the availability of financial incentives, and the interest of individual property owners. It will take several decades, even generations, for full “build-out.”

The first phase is the construction of the train station and complementary changes in bus routes. The first developments are likely to be very close to the stations and on a larger property. Later phases will see additional infill development, including more outlying and smaller properties. With less parking needed, surface parking lots are replaced with mixed-use buildings and parking garages to support the new uses.





Streets & Transportation

The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan recommends creating an integrated and convenient multi-modal circulation network that emphasizes transit and pedestrian movement. Improvements are located primarily within the TOD Zone—an area that encompasses most of the corridor’s sites with development or redevelopment potential, and the area where special district regulations will apply. The foundation of this network is local streets, which will be designed and maintained to accommodate all users, consistent with the City’s Complete Streets policy. The TOD Plan identifies potential locations for new local streets that provide the neighborhood’s basic transportation and open space framework and improve access to the rail stations and existing and future development. Proposed streets are primarily located in the Iwilei station area to provide better access within the proposed mixed-use district and to Chinatown and Downtown.

In addition to local streets, the TOD Plan identifies a range of improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities. These elements enhance neighborhood accessibility, attractiveness, and safety while also expanding mobility options and reducing reliance on vehicles for all trips.

Waterfront Promenade

A promenade is proposed along the Downtown/Chinatown waterfront and along Nuuanu Stream. With consistent landscaping and improved pedestrian crossings, the promenades would provide routes that are attractive, peaceful, and directly accessible from the rail stations.

Bicycle Facilities

The Plan’s recommended bicycle routes, lanes, and paths (see Circulation map at right) efficiently and safely connect bicyclists to the rail stations, to destinations within the Downtown corridor, and to the regional bike network. Based on the Oahu Bike Plan, this plan designates a number of new bicycle facilities within the corridor as well as new routes and lanes on proposed new streets; under the rail guideway; and on the waterfront promenade.

Walkable and bikable communities not only enhance livability, but also support increased transit ridership.

Sidewalk and Crossing Improvements

The Plan recommends a number of specific sidewalk improvements. Improvements include installing sidewalks or striping where appropriate; installing a new pedestrian bridge across Nuuanu Stream; increasing sidewalk width; and adding lighting, shade trees, street furniture, directional signage, and other pedestrian amenities.



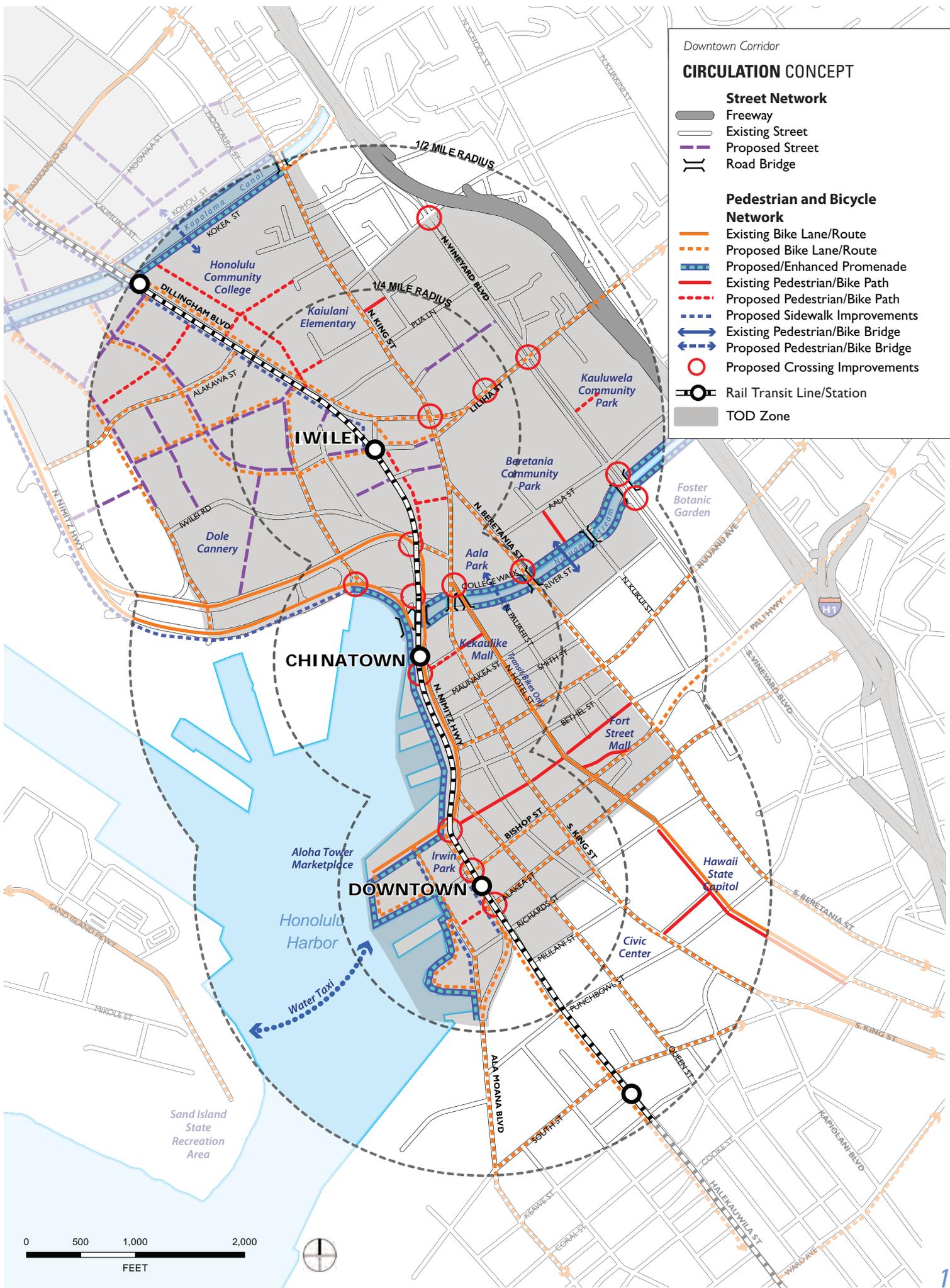
CIRCULATION CONCEPT

Street Network

- Freeway
- Existing Street
- Proposed Street
- Road Bridge

Pedestrian and Bicycle Network

- Existing Bike Lane/Route
- Proposed Bike Lane/Route
- Proposed/Enhanced Promenade
- Existing Pedestrian/Bike Path
- Proposed Pedestrian/Bike Path
- Proposed Sidewalk Improvements
- Existing Pedestrian/Bike Bridge
- Proposed Pedestrian/Bike Bridge
- Proposed Crossing Improvements
- Rail Transit Line/Station
- TOD Zone





Urban Design

Urban design determines the character, feel, and livability of an area. The Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan addresses physical urban design elements such as buildings, blocks, and streets, as well as the location, orientation and design of open space, the pedestrian realm, and landscaping elements. The basic elements of urban design that the Plan proposes relate to the public realm and open space, such as parks and plazas.

Public Realm

Defined as the space between buildings, including the street, the public realm is integral to user's experience in an urban area. The Plan provides policies to inform the design of, among other elements, sidewalk and streetscapes, building facades and massing, and parking. The Plan's goal is to create memorable and livable streets and streetscapes that promote identity and enhance pedestrian comfort and safety.

Open Space

The Plan proposes several new parks and open spaces, and green connections between them. These spaces, which will help to balance the density of development, include:

- **Community Parks** that offer a range of recreation opportunities and amenities.
- **Small urban parks and plazas**, including public/private spaces developed as part of new developments, that provide space for rest and shade near transit stops.

Successful parks are well-lit, visible from public streets, thoughtfully programmed, and part of larger a connected network of public spaces.

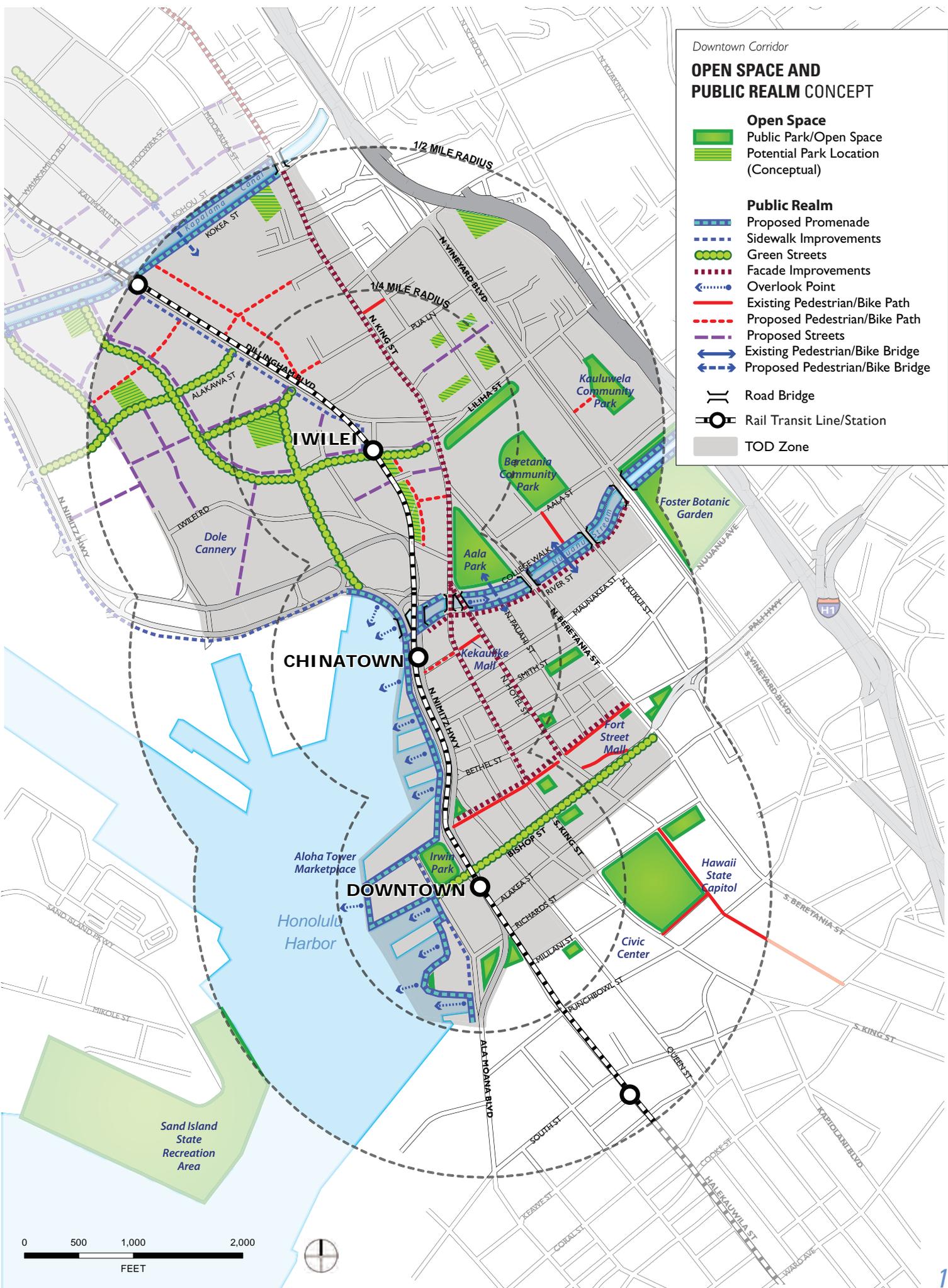
- **“Green Streets”** that connect existing and planned open spaces to create an open space network and highlight views. Green Streets are characterized by a regular spacing of large shade-providing street trees on both sides of the street.
- **Promenades** along the waterfront and Nuuanu Stream, which provide opportunities to walk, bike, and sit along the waterfront.

Below: Conceptual illustration of an improved Irwin Park, serving as a gathering place for Downtown workers, residents, HPU students, and Aloha Tower visitors.



OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC REALM CONCEPT

- Open Space**
- Public Park/Open Space
 - Potential Park Location (Conceptual)
- Public Realm**
- Proposed Promenade
 - Sidewalk Improvements
 - Green Streets
 - Facade Improvements
 - Overlook Point
 - Existing Pedestrian/Bike Path
 - Proposed Pedestrian/Bike Path
 - Proposed Streets
 - Existing Pedestrian/Bike Bridge
 - Proposed Pedestrian/Bike Bridge
 - Road Bridge
 - Rail Transit Line/Station
 - TOD Zone



How and When Will the Plan be Implemented?

The Plan works together with the City's other policy and regulatory documents, including the Land Use Ordinance, to outline the vision, policies, and specific regulations for new development, while providing enough flexibility to allow land owners and applicants to make decisions based on market demands and economic conditions. It is anticipated that most new development and support infrastructure will be privately funded. Some development may take place in the short-term in advance of or soon after

the rail is fully operational; other development projects and improvements may take as many as 20 or 30 years to come to fruition. The City is preparing zoning regulations that will create a TOD Special District to explicitly promote TOD (or transit-ready development in anticipation of rail service) and help implement the Plan's vision. In addition, the City is developing funding mechanisms and priorities for upgrades of local and regional infrastructure.

Next Steps

Following the acceptance of the Downtown Neighborhood TOD Plan by the City Council in September 2017, and as amended in August 2020, the near-term steps identified below will put it into action and ensure that future TOD and neighborhood improvements follow the vision and principles defined by the community.

- Adoption of the Downtown Neighborhood TOD Special District zoning regulations
- Identification of incentives and funding sources at the city, state and federal levels
- Partnerships with property owners interested in redeveloping according to the Plan
- Development and implementation of the Iwilei/Kapalama Infrastructure Master Plan
- Ongoing implementation of the Chinatown Action Plan

For More Information on the City's TOD Program:

Please visit www.honolulu.gov/tod or call 768.8000

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