



**DISCUSSION ITEM**  
**Agenda Item # 8**

**AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY**

**Meeting Date:** June 9, 2020

**Subject:** Open Streets/Placemaking Project Update

**Prepared by:** Jim Sandoval, Engineering Services Director

**Reviewed by:** Chris Jordan, City Manager

**Approved by:** Chris Jordan, City Manager

**Attachment:**

1. Exhibits of Idea C for Main and State Streets Closures

**Initiated by:**

City Council

**Previous Council Consideration:**

May 5, 2020; May 26, 2020

**Fiscal Impact:**

The primary cost impacts to the City include the purchase of the proposed security barriers, staff time for logistics and weekly setup, some staff overtime during the initial logistics and setup period of the street closure plan, and traffic engineering support from the City's on-call consultant Traffic Patterns.

Staff will have quotes for purchase and rental of the security barriers by the June 9, 2020 City Council Meeting. A sole source purchase would be recommended because Meridian Rapid Defense's proprietary Archer 1200 Barrier System is the only known system that the City of Los Altos is able to utilize to meet the requirements of both the Santa Clara County Fire Department and the Los Altos Police Department.

If the street closures continued through October 2020, the fully loaded staff time is estimated to be up to \$150,000.

We have utilized Traffic Patterns to develop the street closure concepts explained herein. If the Council approves a street closure plan, Traffic Patterns will continue to assist with design details and logistics for implementation of the plan. For all street closure support, we estimate their fee to range from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

**Environmental Review:**

Not applicable at this time

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**Reviewed By:**

City Manager

*CJ*

City Attorney

*JH*

Finance Director

*SE*

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**Subject:** Open Streets/Placemaking Project Update

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**Policy Question for Council Consideration:**

- Now that as of June 5<sup>th</sup> Santa Clara County's updated COVID-19 Health Order allows in-store retail shopping and outdoor dining at restaurants to occur, does Council desire to proceed with immediate action to temporarily close Main and State Streets to enable compliant social distancing and increased vibrancy for Downtown businesses?

**Summary:**

- Council directed staff to investigate possible opportunities for pedestrians and business owners to utilize Downtown streets and sidewalks in an alternative fashion to address the social distancing and economic impacts of the COVID-19 State and County directives.
- After numerous meetings and workshops among Downtown stakeholders and City representatives, staff has developed a recommendation to temporarily close Main and State Streets from about 6 a.m. Thursday through about 6 a.m. Monday, effective as early as this Thursday, June 11, 2020. The recommendation is based on feedback from the business community gathered during video-conference workshops and written surveys, and written correspondence from Los Altans.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Appropriate funds<sup>1</sup> from the General Fund and authorize the City Manager to proceed with

1. temporary closure of Main and State Streets from approximately 6 a.m. Thursday through approximately 6 a.m. Monday, effective as early as this Thursday, June 11, 2020
2. the sole source purchase of the minimum number of the Meridian Rapid Defense Archer 1200 Barrier System units to block vehicular access at the intersections of Main and 1<sup>st</sup> Streets, Main Street at Veteran's Plaza, State and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, and optionally at State and 1<sup>st</sup> Streets

**Purpose**

Determine if Main and State Streets in Downtown Los Altos should be closed at certain times of the week as an assistance to commercial businesses and their customers as they comply with the social distancing requirements in the latest State and County Health Orders.

**Background**

At the May 5, 2020 joint meeting of the City Council and the Complete Streets Commission, staff received direction to investigate possibilities to close-off portions of Main and State Streets within the Downtown business district to address the social distancing and economic impacts of the current and ongoing COVID-19 State and County health directives.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff will share security system purchase and rental costs at the City Council Meeting.



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### **Discussion/Analysis**

In response to Council's direction, City staff teamed-up with the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce and formed a design team to develop ideas for possible street and/or sidewalk treatments. Additionally, this team has joined or hosted several webinars to discuss options and opportunities with Downtown stakeholders on May 13<sup>th</sup>, May 19<sup>th</sup>, May 28<sup>th</sup>, and June 2<sup>nd</sup> including business owners, Los Altos Village Association (LAVA), Los Altos Property Owners Downtown (LAPOD), and the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce.

While many ideas have been considered, the following four concepts were short-listed for consideration by the Downtown business community:

1. Idea A – Parklets: temporarily converting most on-street parking stalls along Main and State Streets into closed off spaces that can accommodate wider pedestrian spaces for retail shops and their customers and for outdoor tables for restaurants.
2. Idea B – One Way Loop: temporarily converting Main and State Streets into one-way streets that flow in a clockwise loop. This concept would provide a greater amount of pedestrian space than Idea A.
3. Idea C – Full Street Closure: temporarily close off Main and State Streets to vehicular traffic. This concept would provide the maximum amount of pedestrian space for social distancing and for businesses to expand their operations outdoors.
4. Idea D – Business as Usual: Main and State Streets would operate normally and have no public right of way areas closed off.

The primary goals for the Downtown Open Streets concept are to

- maximize safe customer access to all businesses to help jump start post shelter-in-place Downtown vibrancy.
- enable adequate space for meeting the social distancing requirements in the State's and Santa Clara County's evolving COVID-19 Health Orders.

After workshops with Downtown restaurant and retail/personal service businesses, the City's Economic Development Manager distributed surveys that asked them to rank the four concepts above and provide written feedback about utilizing temporary street-closures to help revitalize Downtown. The results of the surveys are as follows:



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Figure A. Retail and Personal Services ranked choice of concepts survey (23 survey responses)

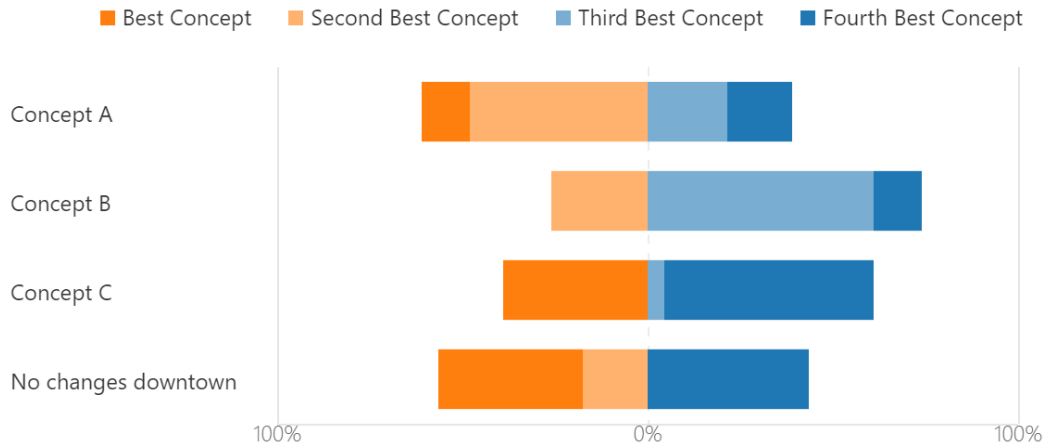
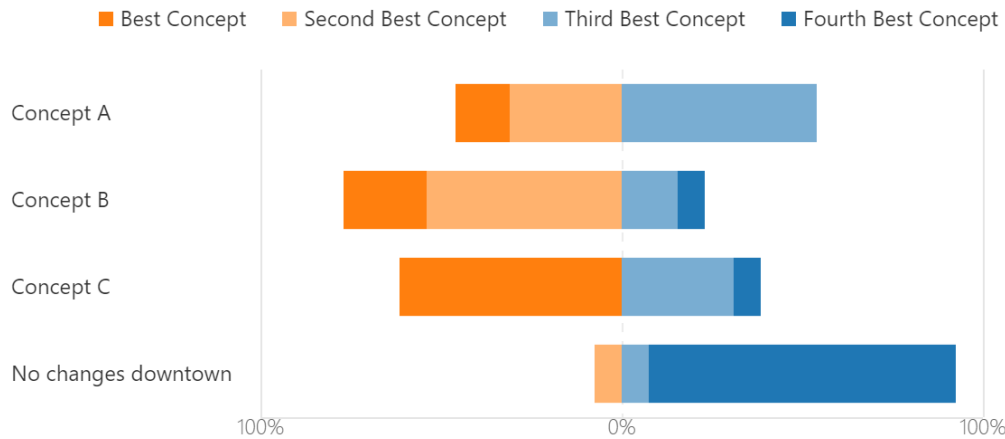


Figure B. Restaurants ranked choice of concepts survey (13 survey responses)



Based on this data and verbal feedback heard during the workshops with Downtown business owners, along with written correspondence from numerous Los Altans, staff has concluded that an ongoing partial week implementation of Idea C meets the needs of the majority of Downtown businesses and patrons. The proposed temporary schedule for Idea C is from approximately 6 a.m. Thursday through approximately 6 a.m. Monday, effective this Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup>.



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Nine of the 12 restaurant owners that provided an opinion during the webinar indicated that Idea C is the only viable option for them to practicably implement outdoor dining, while meeting the social distancing requirements of the County Health Order. The current Order does not allow indoor dining. 61% of the 13 restaurant business owners that responded to the survey indicated that Idea C, complete street closure, was the best concept for Downtown, while 100% of restaurant business owner survey respondents indicated that the best concept was any type of street closure.

39% of the retail/personal service businesses survey respondents supported Idea C, while 56% of them thought it was the least favorable option. 43% of the retail/personal service businesses found Idea D the least favorable option, as well. That group's preference is a tie between Idea C and D (both with 39% in support). 27 people from this group attended the webinar. Their opinions were mixed about Ideas A-D, but the majority of the 13 that spoke up seemed to favor Ideas A and D. Their key concerns raised about Idea C on the webinar were

- the loss of on-street parking on Main and State would make it challenging for some patrons to access their business; particularly those that have difficulty walking longer distances.
- where will people park? The parking plazas fill up fast.
- some patrons will choose to shop elsewhere because the inconvenience of less and more distant parking spaces will deter them from visiting Downtown. This was the experience of some businesses during the 2011 streetscape work.
- some business owners want more data to understand what the potential impact will be.
- some businesses have been told by some clients that they avoid Downtown when streets are closed for events.
- it is not practical to move their merchandise in and out of the store each day the streets are closed.
- if the merchandise is outside, patrons are more likely to touch it, which is discouraged during the pandemic.
- since many people are creatures of habit, this will break their routines in how they travel into Downtown and discourage them from coming; it may take a while to re-educate people.
- the City needs to proceed with caution because it may impact our livelihoods.

The design team believes Idea C, Thursday through Sunday, is a good compromise because

- a. it provides the space needed to give patrons visiting Downtown a safe environment that meets the County's social distancing requirement.
- b. it provides adequate space to allow outdoor dining at restaurants to be viable.
- c. it allows normal street and parking conditions three days per week for patrons that prefer that environment to access retail and special services.
- d. among all three street closure ideas, it is



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- the safest and most economical solution to expand the public right of way Downtown
  - it can be mobilized immediately by placing street closures at intersections along Main and State Streets, whereas Ideas A and B require a lot more time and expense to mobilize and demobilize barriers that protect pedestrians between the road and closed off parking areas along both sides of each street
- e. it is a compromise for the needs of the restaurants and the retail/special services businesses in maximizing their business activities under the constraints of the recent Health Order.

The proposed plan to close streets is considered a “living design” that can be rolled out immediately and changed along the way as we receive feedback from businesses and the community and as the Health Order evolves to stages of less social distancing. The closure of Main and State Streets would cease once the Health Order is suspended or the rainy/colder season begins and outdoor business activity is no longer practical--whichever comes first.

The attached drawing provides a layout of Idea C. Drawings of the two other concepts will be shared during staff’s presentation at the June 9<sup>th</sup> City Council Meeting.

The design team recommends immediate mobilization of Idea C this Thursday because

- it jump-starts opportunities for patrons to begin visiting Downtown again and boost vitality for businesses.
- it takes advantage of the beginning of summer-like weather and maximizes the duration that businesses can operate outdoors before inclement weather starts-up in the Fall.
- the current Health Order was effective June 5<sup>th</sup> and businesses are anxious to reopen their businesses and have a Downtown environment that patrons feel they can safely visit.

Key issues that need to be addressed by the design team include loss of parking, public safety and security, ADA access, and setup and maintenance. Other considerations include curbside pick-up locations, traffic flow, permitting, insurance requirements, etc.

The design team and various City staff will continue working to address these issues and flesh out the numerous details of implementing the proposed plan. We will also form a team that will work directly with businesses to mobilize their operations into the public right of way in a safe and equitable manner. We will continually collect data related to the above design issues, and related benefits and challenges of Idea C, and consider how to keep improving upon the plan to maximize the needs of all Downtown stakeholders and visitors. This will include having check-in workshops with the business groups to get their feedback and making adjustments accordingly. If significant changes are needed, we will return to Council with a recommended alternative.



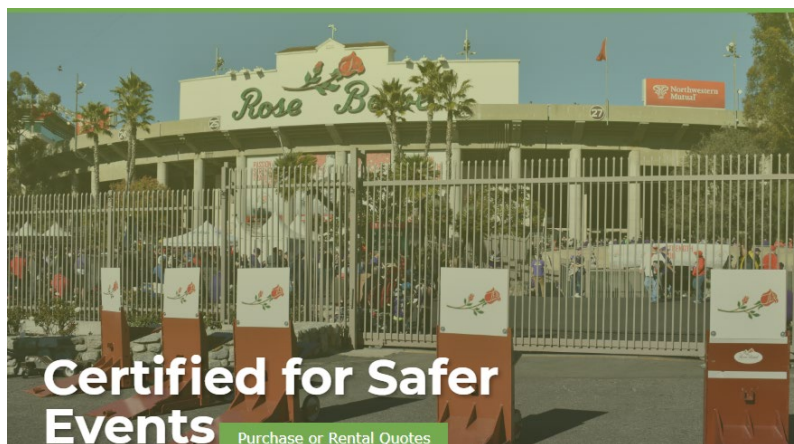
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Logistical Issue--Security

Should the Council approve the street closure recommendation, there is another logistical issue that requires concurrent Council action: the acquisition of security barriers.

Police is recommending that secure vehicle-barriers be placed to protect the proposed closure areas. Engineering recommends that these barriers be placed at least at the intersections of Main and 1<sup>st</sup> Streets, Main Street at Veteran's Plaza, State and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, and optionally at State and 1<sup>st</sup> Streets. Since the Fire Department requires 24/7 access into the closed areas with no dead-ends greater than 150-feet, the barriers need to be mobile so one fireman is able to move them for truck access during an emergency. Accordingly, staff is recommending the light-weight Meridian Rapid Defense Archer 1200 anti-vehicle barrier system, which is moveable by one person. If we rent them, they come in white. If we purchase them, the vendor will paint them any color desired by the City. The following photo depicts the barriers utilized at the Rose Bowl.



If these barriers are not available by this Thursday, we would use the City's standard A-frames to close off access to the closed streets until the barriers are delivered

**Options**

To be provided by staff at the City Council Meeting.

**Recommendation**

Appropriate funds<sup>2</sup> from the General Fund and authorize the City Manager to proceed with

1. temporary closure of Main and State Streets from approximately 6 a.m. Thursday through approximately 6 a.m. Monday, effective as early as this Thursday, June 11, 2020

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<sup>2</sup> Staff will share security system purchase and rental costs at the City Council Meeting.



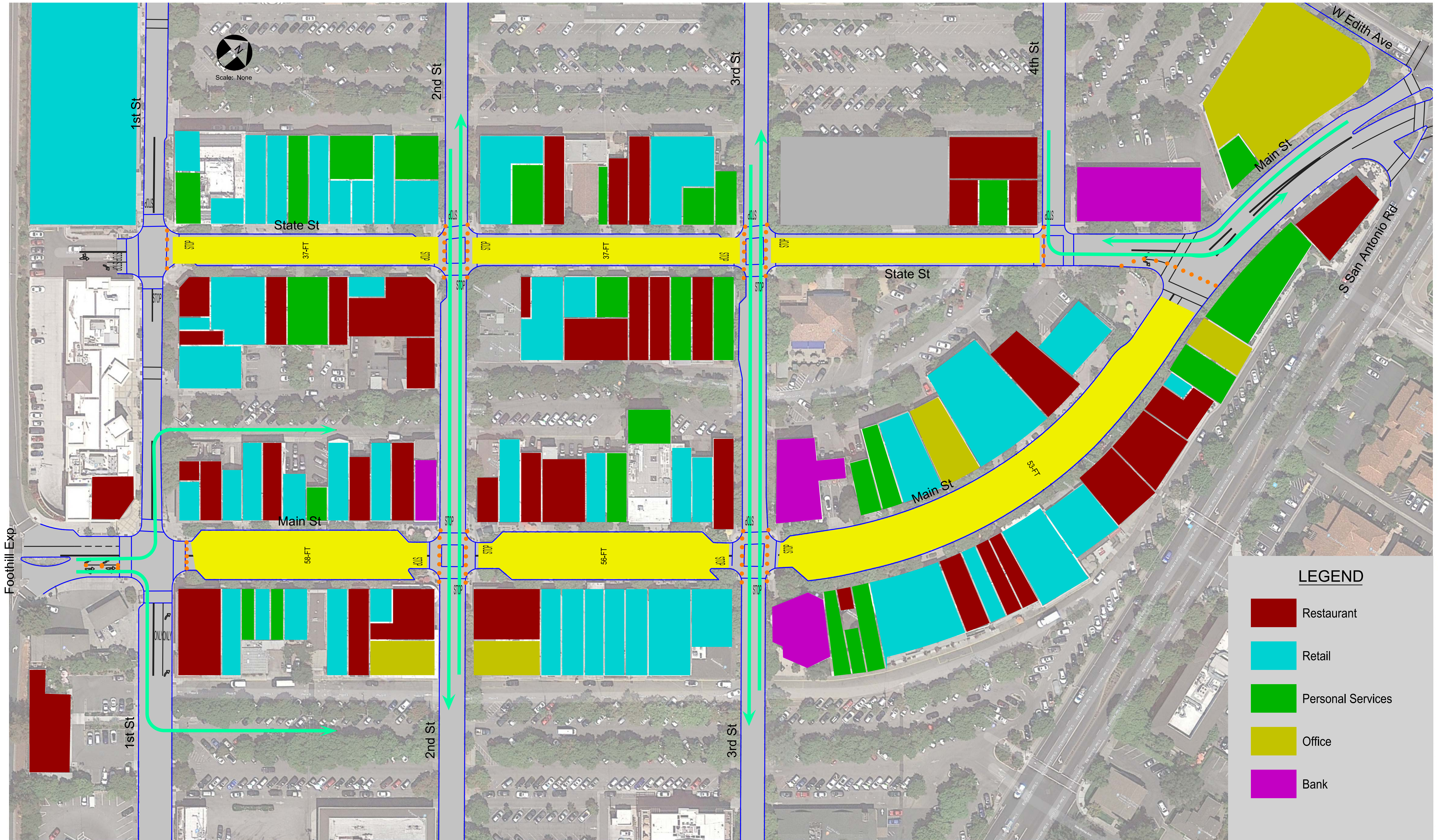
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Idea C  
Main Street and State Street Closures  
(1st Street to 4th Street)

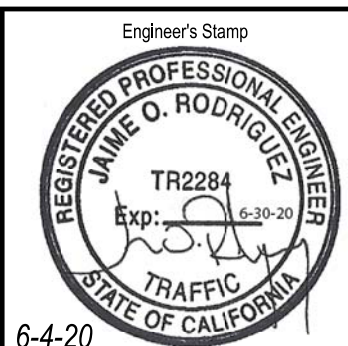
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LEGEND

- Restaurant
- Retail
- Personal Services
- Office
- Bank

**Traffic Patterns**  
P.O. Box 25  
Danville, CA 94526  
C: (408) 916-8141  
www.trafficpatterns.net  
info@trafficpatterns.net



Record Drawings	
Project Engineer:	Date: _____
Designer:	Date: _____
Public Works Inspector:	Date: _____

Public Improvements Initially Accepted by the City Council on: \_\_\_\_\_

Submittal Log		
NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	Draft Submittal No. 1	6-4-20

DRAWN BY:	J. Rodriguez	Date:	6-4-20
CHECKED BY:	City of Los Altos	Date:	6-4-20
DESIGNED BY:	J. Rodriguez	Date:	6-4-20

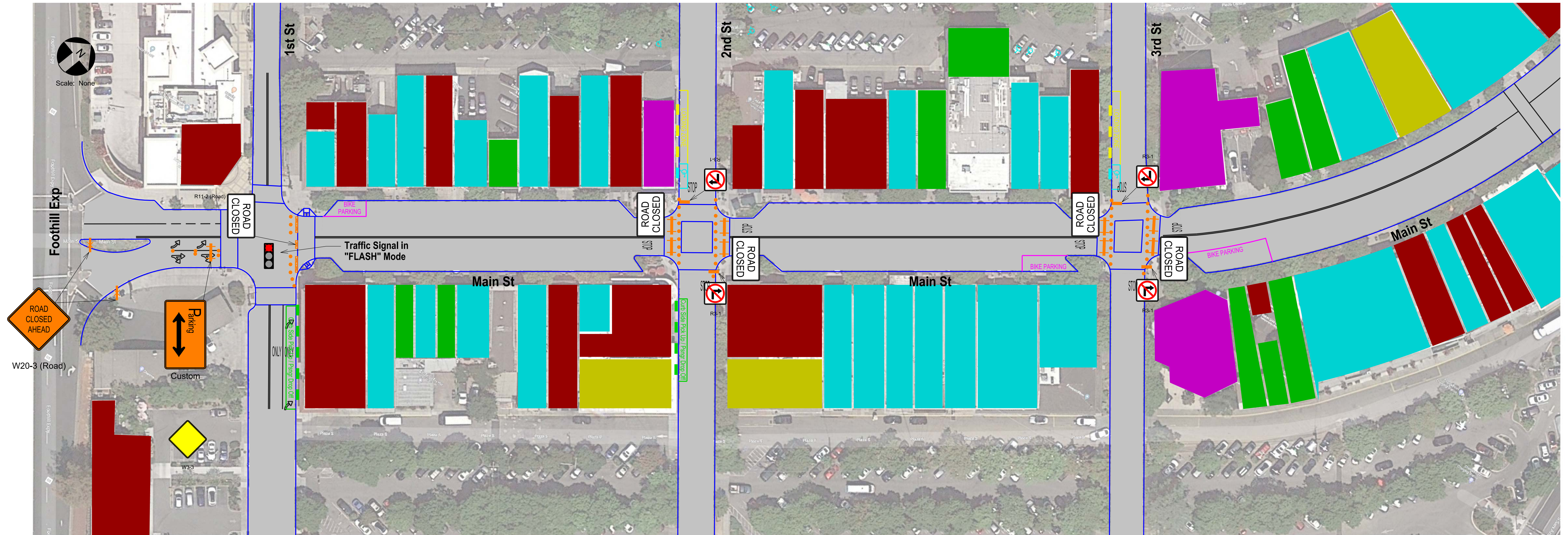
Revisions		
NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE

City of Los Altos  
COVID-19  
Downtown Recovery  
Downtown Street Plazas

RECOMMENDED FOR BIDDING BY:	_____	PROJECT NO.	_____
DATE:	_____	DRAWING NO.	_____
APPROVED FOR BIDDING BY:	_____	E.P. NO.	_____
DATE:	_____	SCALE	None
			Sheet 1

DRAFT

Main St @ 1st St  
Road Closure Plan



NOTES:

- Street Closure Periods:
- Thursday starting at 6:00 AM thru Monday at 6:00 AM

LEGEND:

- 28-Inch High Traffic Cone with Reflective Band - Cone Spacing at 25-FT
- Type II Barricade with MUTCD or CA Standard Traffic Sign, Designation Shown
- Type III Barricade with MUTCD or CA Standard Traffic Sign, Designation Shown
- High-Visibility Flag Tree w/MUTCD or CA Standard Traffic Sign, Designation Shown



BIKE RACKS  
(MOVEABLE)

**Traffic Patterns**  
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Engineer's Stamp  
**JAMIE O. RODRIGUEZ**  
REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER  
TR2284  
Exp: 6-30-20  
TRAFFIC  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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Revisions

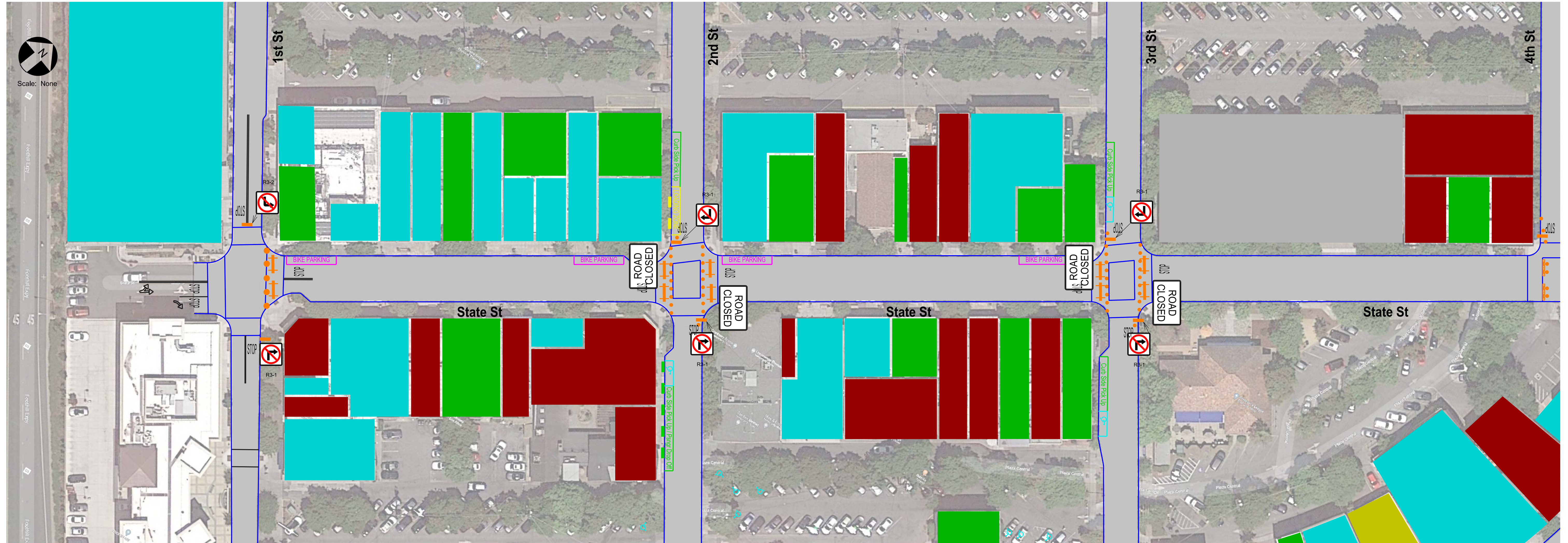
NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE

City of Los Altos  
COVID-19  
Downtown Recovery  
Downtown Street Plazas

RECOMMENDED FOR BIDDING BY: _____	PROJECT NO. _____
DATE: _____	DRAWING NO. _____
APPROVED FOR BIDDING BY: _____	E.P. NO. _____
DATE: _____	SCALE: None
	Sheet 2

State St @ 1st St  
Road Closure Plan

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NOTES:

- Street Closure Periods:
- Thursday starting at 6:00 AM thru Monday at 6:00 AM

LEGEND:

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Engineer's Stamp  
**JAMIE O. RODRIGUEZ**  
REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER  
TRAFFIC  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
TR2284  
Exp: 6-30-20

Record Drawings	
Project Engineer:	Date: _____
Designer:	Date: _____
Public Works Inspector:	Date: _____
Public Improvements Initially Accepted by the City Council on: _____	

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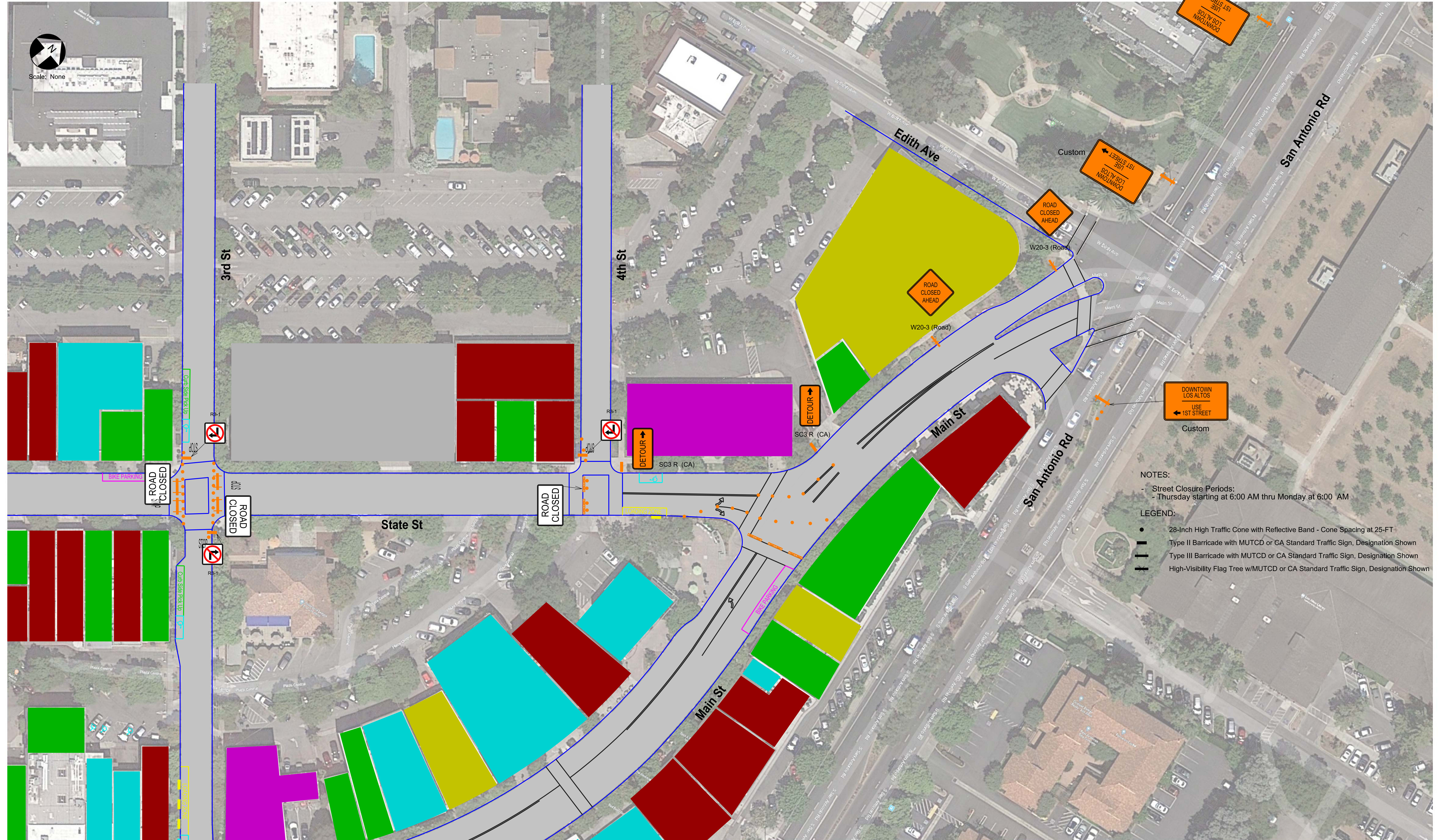
Revisions		
NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE

City of Los Altos  
COVID-19  
Downtown Recovery  
Downtown Street Plazas

RECOMMENDED FOR BIDDING BY: _____	PROJECT NO. _____
DATE: _____	DRAWING NO. _____
APPROVED FOR BIDDING BY: _____	E.P. NO. _____
DATE: _____	SCALE: None
	Sheet 3

DRAFT

Main St & Street St  
Road Closure Plan at 4th St



**Traffic Patterns**  
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Engineer's Stamp  
**JAMES O. RODRIGUEZ**  
 TR2284  
 Exp: 6-30-20  
 REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER  
 TRAFFIC  
 STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
 6-4-20

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**Revisions**

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 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
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 E.P. NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Sheet 4