

CHAPTER 4: THE FULTON MALL

Revitalizing the Fulton Mall is key to revitalizing Downtown Fresno. If no provisions of this Specific Plan were implemented other than improving the function of the Fulton Mall, it would mark a huge step forward for the future of the Downtown economy. This is why the Plan devotes this special chapter to the past, present, and future of the Fulton Mall.



A view of the Fulton Mall at its opening. Credit: Fresno Historical Society Archives.



A civic celebration in Mariposa Plaza. Credit: Joe Moore.



A farmers' market in Mariposa Plaza.



Fulton Mall patrons sit beneath one of the trellis structures. One of several mosaic installations is seen behind the bench.

4.1 PEDESTRIAN MALLS IN AMERICAN DOWNTOWNS

In 1959, Kalamazoo, Michigan, installed the nation’s first downtown pedestrian mall. In the 25 years that followed, an estimated 200 or more pedestrian malls were installed in other cities across the United States.

The reason was clear: The shopping malls that began appearing on the edges of American cities in the 1950s were a hit. Business on Main Street showed signs of slowing down, and merchants became nervous about losing their customers for good.

Cities that followed Kalamazoo’s lead thought they had the solution: bring a slice of the suburban mall to the central business district. Remove the “gritty” combination of vehicle traffic and foot traffic found on a traditional urban street. Almost overnight, Main Street would turn from the epicenter of downtown’s hustle and bustle into a refuge from it.

In the years since 1959, most downtown pedestrian malls in America have failed and have been removed. In fact, only an estimated 30 of the original 200 remain today. Virtually all of those that remain have been redesigned to better support commercial activity by guiding pedestrian behavior toward storefronts, accommodating public transit, or both. Some have even been redesigned to accommodate vehicle traffic if desired in the future.

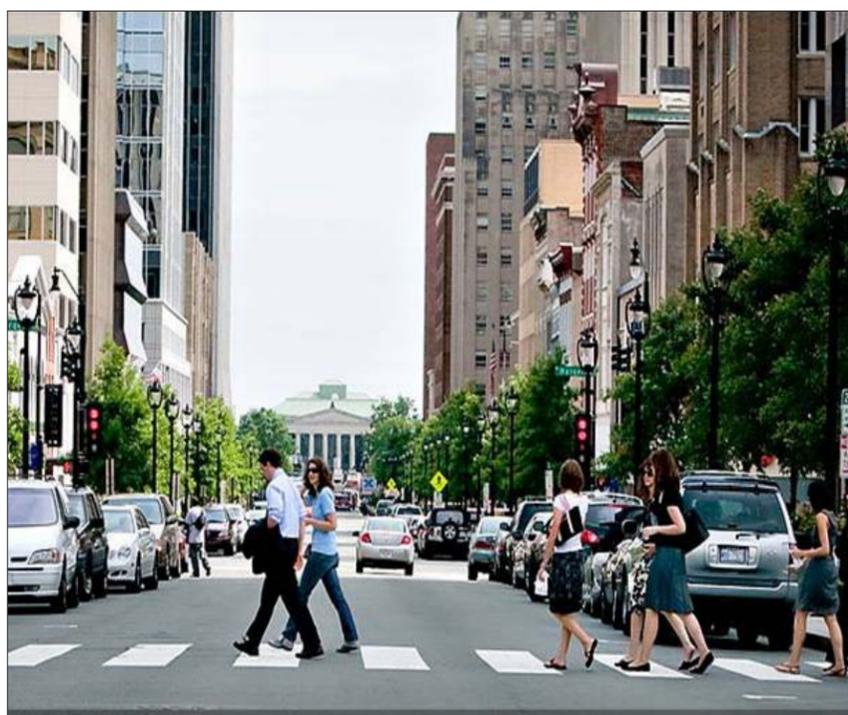
Of perhaps ten or fewer downtown pedestrian malls that remain and are successful, most are located in a university setting (such as in Madison, WI, or Boulder, CO, or Burlington, VT), near a state capitol (such as in Denver, CO, or Madison, WI), or in an area with otherwise very heavy foot traffic (such as in Miami, FL, or Santa Monica, CA, or Brooklyn, NY).



Two of the original four blocks of the Kalamazoo pedestrian mall have been reopened to automobiles since the malls construction in 1959.



Boulder, Colorado’s pedestrian mall is four blocks long and largely successful because of its proximity to a university.



The economy rebounded quickly along Fayetteville Street in Raleigh, NC (above right), when the street was reopened in 2006 after 30 years as a closed pedestrian mall (above left). The reopening of the four blocks cost \$9.3 million. “With the reopening of the street, our city can come back home to Fayetteville Street,” Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker told the crowd of some 35,000 at the reopening celebration. For several years the city celebrated the reopening with an annual festival.

4.2 HISTORY OF THE FULTON MALL

From its inception at the corner of Mariposa Street and J Street in the late 1800's, and well into the post-World War II era, Fulton Street was the epicenter of Fresno's commercial and business activity. Served by the streetcars of the Fresno Traction Company and traffic on Highway 99, which was then located on Broadway Street, Fulton Street became a bustling hub of commercial activity and remained so well into the post-war era. The streetcars brought people into Downtown, but they also laid the groundwork for Fresno's northward and eastward expansion, as development sprouted along their various routes.

The completion of the Mayfair subdivision in 1947, northeast of the Plan Area, included Fresno's first suburban shopping mall and ushered in an era of development at the suburban fringe. The automobile provided easy access to spatially dispersed destinations and made it no longer necessary to locate residential, commercial, and business uses in proximity to one another. People began to move out of Fresno's residential neighborhoods and scatter into the new, northern subdivisions. Businesses followed, resulting in a decline of the Central Business District. This trend accelerated with the opening of the suburban Manchester Center Mall in 1955.

In the mid 1950's, Downtown Fresno merchants and elected officials sought to address Downtown's decline with a bold new plan to remake the Fulton Corridor. They hired famed shopping mall architect Victor Gruen to develop a long term plan to rebuild the core of the City. The plan included a recasting of the Downtown according to modernist planning principles, and its centerpiece was an 80 acre pedestrian-only "superblock" surrounded by a one way street loop (see below). Pedestrians and cars were separated from each other and so were all uses. While the Plan was never fully realized, its centerpiece, the Fulton Mall, designed by the prominent landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, opened in 1964 to national acclaim and initial commercial success. It was the nation's second downtown Pedestrian Mall, and helped spur a wave of similar projects in other American cities throughout the 1960's and 1970's.

However, after several years of stability, by 1970, Downtown Fresno business began to decline again, due to increasingly rapid growth in the northern parts of the city and the opening of the major suburban shopping mall, Fashion Fair. Shortly thereafter, the major and specialty retailers – including iconic department stores such as Gottschalks and JC Penney – left Downtown Fresno, and the Fulton Mall, known for its world class collection of public art, became home to vacant storefronts, empty office buildings, and a small collection of retailers. Various attempts at reviving the Mall, including the construction of the \$40 million Chukchansi Park, have met with limited success, while the opening of additional shopping malls, such as River Park, provide even more reasons for Fresnoans not to come Downtown.

Today, Fulton Mall functions largely as an urban park. Characterized by relatively low levels of retail and other economic activity, it is devoid of any significant activity on weeknights after 5 p.m., when Downtown's more than 30,000 daytime workers leave Downtown. Vacancies are common among the storefronts and especially in spaces above the ground level along the Mall.

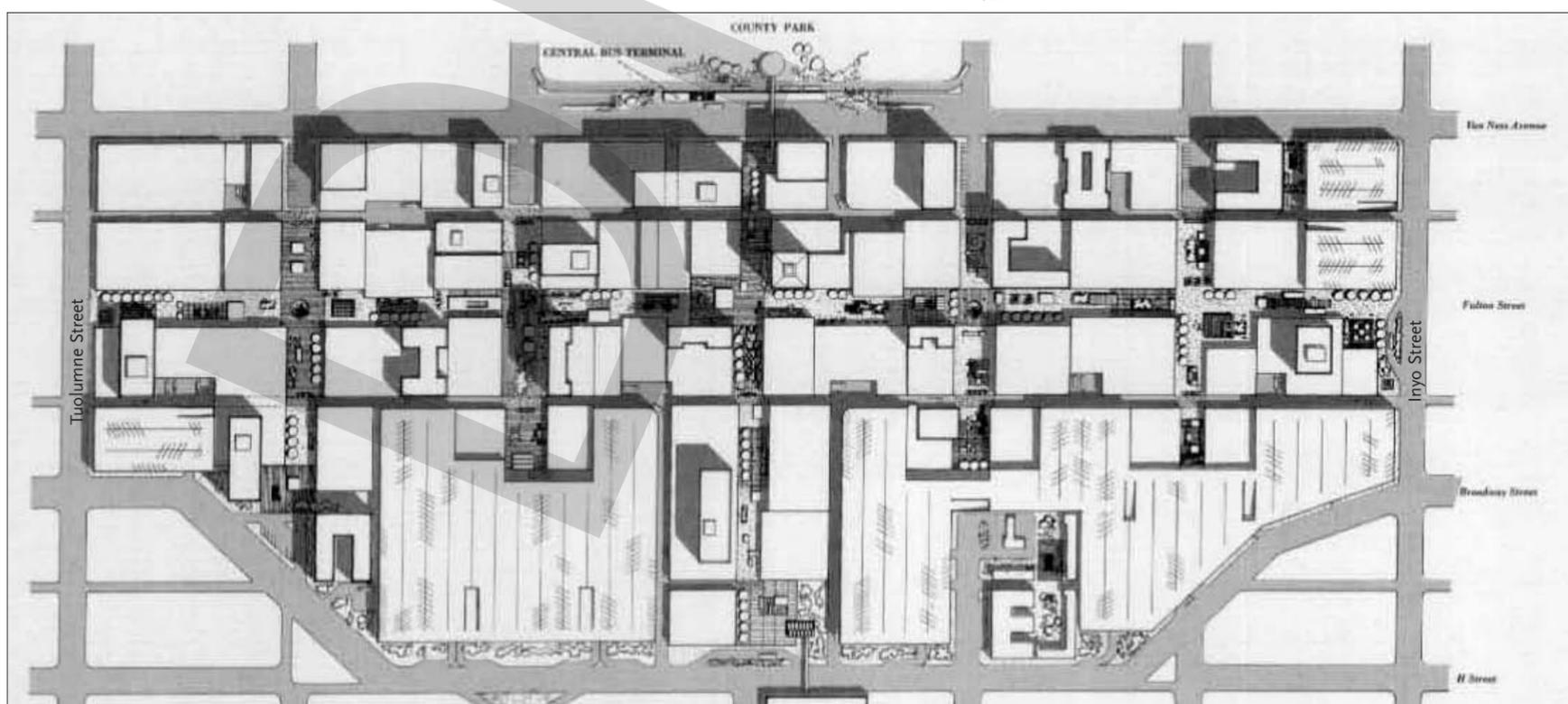
Significance of the Mall

Prior to the construction of the pedestrian mall, Fulton Street was Fresno's main commercial corridor. A large number of mid-rise and hi-rise office buildings were constructed in the boom years prior to the Great Depression, as well as most of Fresno's large department stores and clothiers, including Gottschalks, JC Penney, Rodder's, Coffee's, Walter Smith, Roos-Atkins, Berkeley's, and Cooper's. With its central location, and dense collection of retail and commercial uses, Fulton Street was Fresno's "main street" and the heart of city.

The Fulton Mall is comprised of the Garrett Eckbo-designed landscape as well as the buildings that face it. Representative of several 20th Century development trends spanning over seventy years, the six blocks of Fulton Street between Tuolumne and Inyo streets have comprised an important regional commercial corridor for much of the 20th Century. Its concentration of commercial uses, including most of Fresno's finest retailers, established Fulton Street as Fresno's "main street" prior to World War II. Most of the buildings on the Fulton Mall were built prior to the construction of the pedestrian mall, many of which underwent ground floor facade renovations and modernizations after Fulton Street was pedestrianized. Seven properties have been designated by the City as historic resources.

The landscape of the Fulton Mall is the masterwork of Garrett Eckbo, one of the most prominent American landscape architects of the 20th century. It is listed on the California Register of Historical Resources, was found eligible for the National Register, and is potentially significant as a National Historic Landmark, both as the work of a master and a rare surviving example of his work with a high degree of design integrity.

In addition to Eckbo's contributions, the Mall is significant for the visionary leadership of the Downtown Mall Art Selection Committee, chaired by O. J. Woodward II, and the public display of modern art that grew out of that committee's patronage. The art was fully funded by private citizens, with the intent to provide "an outdoor Museum of Art." The combination of sculpture, mosaics (drinking fountains and benches), and clock tower, which cost over \$200,000 in 1964, is an early, if not the first, large-scale display of Contemporary Art by both internationally-recognized and local artists, not physically attached to a Museum as a sculpture garden. A 2011 appraisal estimated the total value of this art collection to be \$2 million.



Victor Gruen's Plan for Fulton Street and surrounding blocks.

4.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The Fulton Mall consists of six blocks bounded by Van Ness Avenue to the east, Inyo Street to the south, Broadway Street to the west, and Tuolumne Street to the north. Fulton Street, Merced Street, Mariposa Street, and Kern Street are pedestrian-only, while Fresno Street and Tulare Street continue to bear traffic, dividing the Mall into three equal portions. The Fulton Street portion of the Mall is 2,670 feet long. Together with the three shorter cross Malls, the total linear dimension of the Fulton Mall complex is 4,620 feet.

All of the Fulton Mall's right-of-ways are eighty feet wide, building to building. Ribbons of concrete aggregate eight-and-one-half-inches wide cross each right-of-way at frequent intervals, sometimes gently curving and sometimes angular, suggesting, by alternate accounts, the contours of the Valley floor or Asian rice paddies.

Interspersed throughout the Mall are the following, arranged in a harmoniously designed asymmetrical whole:

- 144 trees and a large number of shrubs and flowers in planting beds of many shapes, sizes and elevations;
- 19 sculptures;
- 80 seating areas of various sizes and configurations, 18 of which have benches with brightly colored mosaic backs;
- Two tot lots;
- 19 water features, among them pools, fountains and flowing streams; and
- 26 sculpted ceramic pipes that are part of the water features.

The high design character of the Mall is in stark contrast with its state of advanced physical deterioration. Partly because of its age, and partly because of poor maintenance over several decades, most of its design features are beginning to fail. The Mall's pavement is cracked throughout and in many locations is heaving due to interference by tree roots. Many planter walls and curbs are cracked and light pole bases are broken. Many fountains leak, and consequently sit empty, their plaster cracked, their skimmers not operational, and their lights in disrepair. Electrical vaults are filthy and clogged with debris, damaged due to leakage, and infested with cockroaches. Distribution panels are breached by roots and foliage. Most electrical boxes have missing covers and exposed wires, and some are being overtaken by roots. The state of disrepair is so extreme, that it is often difficult for the casual observer to appreciate the design value of the Fulton Mall.

Currently, maintenance funding for the Mall comes from the City General Fund and Community Sanitation ratepayer funds. In 2010, the Fulton Mall staff of seven was reduced down to two persons serving all of Downtown. In 2011 the City has made a concerted effort to combine scarce resources from different departments in new ways in order to raise the level of maintenance. An average of eight City maintenance workers spend part of their shift on the Mall every day. While not changing many of the root causes of disrepair, this effort has been successful in getting lights to work again temporarily, clean the Mall's surfaces daily, fill a limited number of fountains and keep them running, and trim the trees on an appropriate schedule.

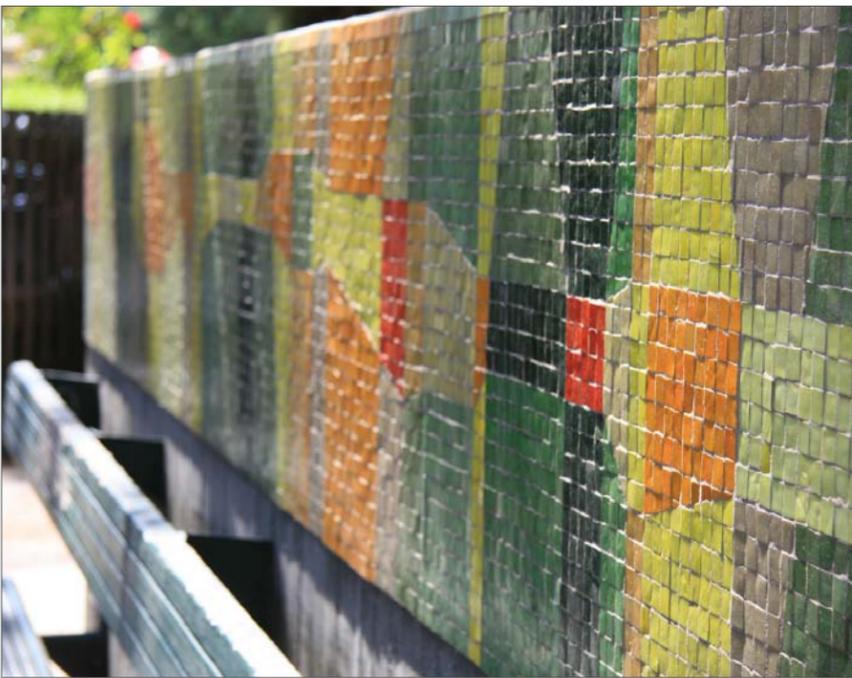
The state of buildings along the Mall projects a similarly forbidding image. In particular, most of the seven buildings along the Mall listed on the Local Register of Historic Places suffer from disinvestment, vacancy, and disrepair. In 2010 the City of Fresno estimated that the seven large historic office buildings on the Fulton Mall, representing nearly 745,000 square feet of office space, are 71 percent vacant. Meanwhile another six large historic buildings adjacent to the Mall, representing 573,000 square feet of space, have a combined vacancy rate of 35 percent. The prospects for the Mall's older buildings, including those listed on the Local, State, and National Historic registers, are bleak in the absence of economic conditions that make it profitable to invest in restoring and maintaining them.



The Mariposa Plaza stage.



This view north of the Fulton Mall at Mariposa Street at noon on a Saturday in September 2010, looks to be vacant of pedestrian activity.



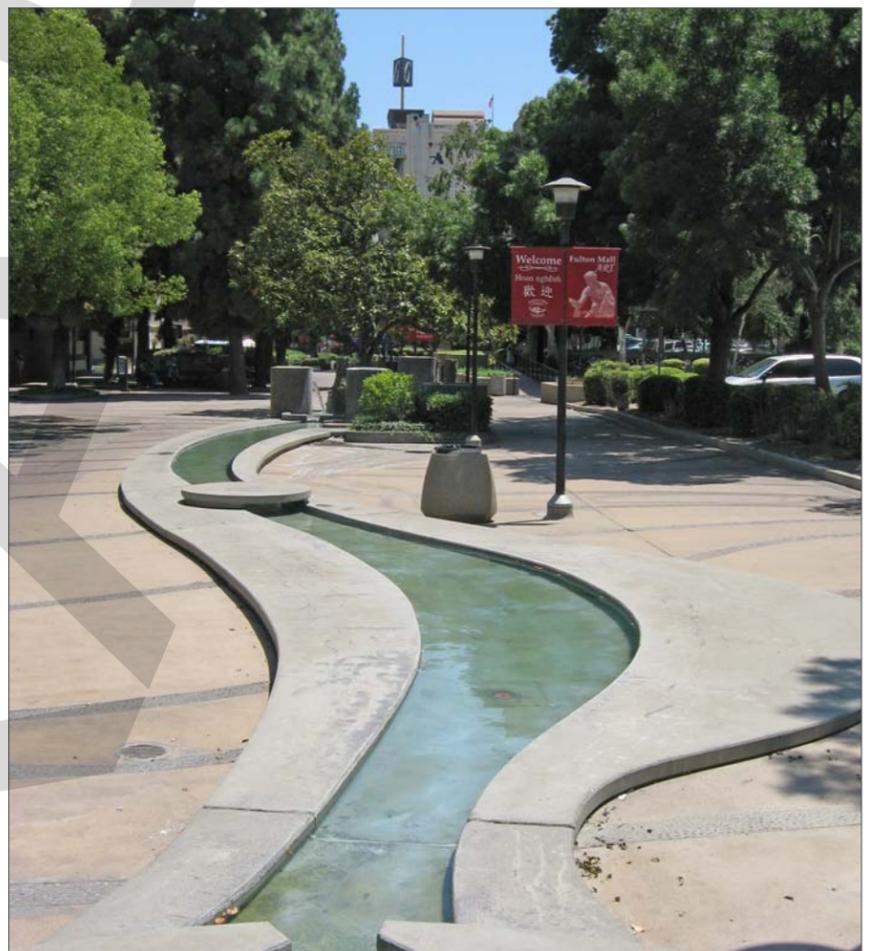
Benches with mosaic installations, one of many pieces of artwork sprinkled throughout the Fulton Mall, provide character, color, and places to sit.



The paving pattern of the Fulton Mall echoes the contours of a natural landscape.



The pedestrian connection between the Fulton Mall and Fresno County Courthouse is made less apparent by an underground crossing at Van Ness Avenue.



In addition to artwork, numerous water features run through the Fulton Mall.



Many ground floor storefronts have been changed over the last fifty years.



Leaky and empty fountains and missing irrigation give the Mall an abandoned look.

4.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS (continued)

B. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Like many other American pedestrian malls, the Fulton Mall has seen its share of severe decline. Because of demographic and population shifts, the Mall's only real usage is during business hours. After 5 p.m., it is largely dormant. This is a problem for the retailers in place, City revenues, and the overall image of the City of Fresno. The Fulton Mall's commerce is presently grossly under-performing, especially given the region's large population, diverse demographics, and large number of Downtown employees.

In 2011, the vacancy rate in the Fulton Mall's nearly 500,000 square feet of ground floor space was estimated at 26%. However, only an estimated 57% of the ground level space present was actually occupied by retail stores, retail services, or restaurants (as opposed to office use or vacancy). Not surprisingly, the existing businesses are principally focused towards modestly priced goods and services.

A number of conditions that are built into the design of the Mall prevent it from improving its market performance. The lack of "convenience parking" (spaces in front of stores for faster visits) and drive-by vehicular traffic is unsustainable for the small and independent retailers who cannot afford advertising budgets to offset the small number of pedestrians passing by.

In addition, the Mall is surrounded by wide arterial streets and is flanked by cross streets such as Tulare Street and Fresno Street that prohibit curb-side parking. There is no clear view into the Mall from its ends, and the landscape largely blocks views into storefronts. The Mall's principal pedestrian path is along its center and is separated from adjacent business by obstacles such as planters, fountains, and furniture.

Finally, the dilapidated appearance of the Mall due to many years of low maintenance hampers retail activity, particularly by Fresnoans driving in from the suburbs or by tourists on their way to visiting the National Parks near Fresno. Lack of proper lighting, dirty pavement, overgrown plants, and abandoned plantings all suggest to potential visitors and patrons that this is an uninviting and unsafe place.

Retail development and leasing success is highly dependent on the quality of the location and its access to potential customers, and the nature of tenants attracted to a given site is influenced strongly by the quality and quantity of those customers. The Downtown area in general currently generates a large retail sales volume relative to its resident population, but this is due primarily to the presence of 30,000 daytime employees, who leave the area at night.

Without significant changes to the current nature of the Mall environment and its customer base, it is unlikely that additional quality retailers can be attracted to the site without significant public subsidy, and the level of retail activity along the mall could deteriorate further.



The overgrown foliage in a planter that used to be a fountain blocks views into storefronts.



A Fulton Mall building designed for ground floor office use sits vacant. Even when full it may not generate significant foot traffic.

4.4 CHOOSING A FUTURE

The restoration of the Fulton Corridor into a prosperous, vibrant place is the most critical component of the Downtown's revitalization. Without resolving the fate of the Fulton Mall, substantive change in the Downtown will occur very slowly or not at all, and Downtown's rich collection of older buildings will fall into further, irreversible disrepair.

The core question that this Plan aims to address is striking a balance between the original character and value of the pedestrian-only Mall, and its importance as the economic engine of the Downtown.

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the challenges associated with the revitalization of the Fulton Mall, the City's consultant team studied its current physical state, its aesthetic attributes, and its economic potential. Based on this work, a wide range of options were generated, ranging from leaving the Mall in its current state, to restoring it in its entirety, to completely removing it and replacing it with an enhanced street, to leaving some portions pedestrian-only while opening up others to vehicular traffic.

The construction costs for the various options were also conceptually estimated.

The consultant team first interacted with the public on the subject of the future of the Fulton Mall on September 14, 2010. During a scheduled Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Community Advisory Committee (FCSPCAC) meeting, Committee members and the public voiced their values, concerns, and initial ideas about the Mall's future, and discussed at length the competing issues of commercial development versus historic preservation.

On September 27, 2010, in a major evening session during the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Design Workshop, the design team presented eight Fulton Mall options to the public, describing the existing conditions of the Mall's various elements (landscape, paving, fountains, artwork), the history and the significance of the Mall, and the economic and physical preconditions for its revitalization. Key presenters included Charles Birnbaum, a landscape architect, preservationist, and founder of The Cultural Landscape Foundation, an institution dedicated to increasing the public's awareness and understanding of the importance and legacy of cultural landscapes such as the Fulton Mall, and Robert Gibbs, an urban commercial real estate consultant and founder of Gibbs Planning Group, one of the foremost urban retail planning consultancies in America. Workshop participants, including approximately 400 community members, voiced their opinions on the respective merits of the options and submitted over 1,300 comments in writing.

On October 19, 2010, the City and project team presented ten Fulton Mall options to the FCSPCAC at a noticed public meeting attended by over 125 members of the community, including two new options

that were generated in response to comments received at the Design Workshop - one that incorporated Charles Birnbaum's Design Workshop recommendations and another that included a one-way street configuration. The presentation included photos showing the present degradation of the Mall's surfaces, fountains, and electrical systems, and a discussion of the advantages, disadvantages, and probable construction and maintenance costs of each option.

After considerable input from the public, the FCSPCAC voted from among the ten initial Fulton Mall options to recommend three that they would like to see studied in greater detail by the Environmental Impact Report prepared for this Plan. These chosen options consisted of a pedestrian-only option and two vehicular traffic-only options, but did not contain a hybrid in which some blocks are kept pedestrian-only and others are opened up to traffic. The three options to be further studied, in order of the CAC's recommendation vote, are:

- 1. Reconnect the Grid on Traditional Streets.** Completely remove the existing Mall and introduce a narrow, two-lane, two-way enhanced street with oversize sidewalks, stately trees, and on-street parking, throughout the Fulton Mall and its cross streets.
- 2. Reconnect the Grid with Vignettes.** Introduce a two-way street through the Fulton Mall, keeping selected original features in their original Mall contexts ("vignettes"), in a manner that provides improved retail visibility and some on-street parking. Transform Kern, Mariposa and Merced into enhanced streets with narrow traffic ways, ample sidewalks, stately trees, and on-street parking.
- 3. Restoration and Completion.** Keep Fulton Street, Merced Street, Mariposa Street, and Kern Street Malls pedestrian-only. Renovate and repair them in their entirety, including their landscape and hardscape, and restore the artwork.

These three options are described in further detail on the following pages and are summarized in **Table 4.5A** at the end of this section. All ten original Fulton Mall options – including the opinion of probable construction and maintenance costs, the opinion of parking revenues, an assessment of the Mall as a cultural landscape, and a retail summary – are presented in **Appendix A**.

During the forthcoming environmental review process, the City may also consider additional options in order to address impacts from these options that the review process identifies.



A view of Fulton Street in the 1920's. Option 1 would remove the Fulton Mall and replace it with a street of approximately half the width shown here. Credit: Pop Laval Foundation



A view of the Fulton Mall at its opening. Option 3 provides the opportunity to restore this landscape to its original state. Credit: Fresno Historical Society Archives.

4.5 THE OPTIONS

Option 1: Reconnect the Grid on Traditional Streets. This option removes the original 1964 pedestrian mall design from the Fulton Street right-of-way and replaces it with an enhanced street that incorporates vehicle traffic, wide sidewalks, on-street parking, and a new streetscape. On-street parking could be parallel, as shown in the below diagram, or perhaps angled on one or both sides of the street. Angled parking would introduce more on-street parking, but reduce the width of the adjacent sidewalks. Kern Street, Mariposa Street, and Merced Street are also converted into enhanced streets that support the retail stores on the restored portions of the Fulton Mall.

Fulton Street could be closed to traffic for specific events, on weekends, or as otherwise desired. Bicycles would share the roadway and public transit, such as a streetcar, could be introduced along Fulton Street. Seventeen of the Mall’s sculptural works would be relocated elsewhere in the Central Business District, either along Fulton or assembled in Mariposa Plaza, and three would remain in their present locations.

From a retail standpoint, this option maximizes sales potential throughout the Fulton Corridor. As in Option 2, but to a greater degree, Fulton Street is entirely open to traffic and will attract businesses that thrive on the higher exposure in this kind of mixed use urban environment. Synergies between retail offerings and the general high energy of the street environment will create special attractions for Fresnoans living beyond the center of the city. This option will improve property values for buildings and land in the Fulton Mall area.

From a historic preservation standpoint, this option has the most impact on the landscape, since the 1964 Fulton Mall design is removed, and its artworks are preserved in a fundamentally different setting. From the perspective of the Mall’s older and historic buildings, the revival of the economy in the area significantly improves the chances of investment to restore and maintain them as well as for them to be fully occupied.



Plan view of Fulton Mall with an enhanced street running down its entire length. Enhanced streets are also introduced on Merced, Mariposa, and Kern Streets.



View of Fulton Mall with an enhanced street running down its entire length.



View of Fulton Mall with an enhanced street that accommodates transit running down its entire length.

4.5 THE OPTIONS (continued)

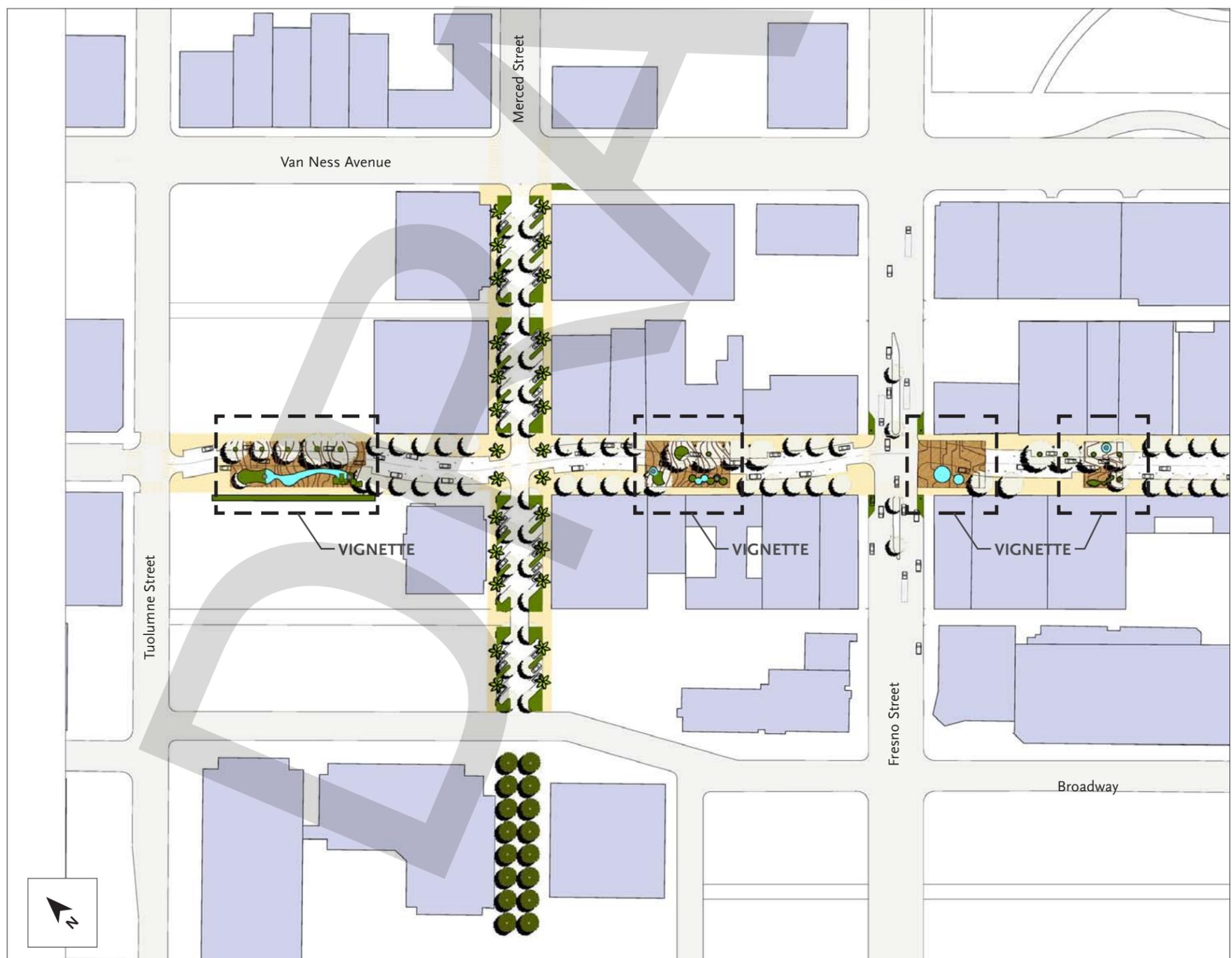
Option 2: Reconnect the Grid with Vignettes. This option introduces a two-way street through the Fulton Mall, restoring selected original Mall design elements in their original Mall contexts (“vignettes”), in a manner that provides improved retail visibility and some on-street parking. Kern Street, Mariposa Street, and Merced Street are converted into enhanced streets that accommodate new streetscape, vehicle traffic, and diagonal parking that supports surrounding retail stores. Fulton Street could be closed to traffic for specific events or on weekends as desired. Bicycles would share the roadway and public transit, including a streetcar, could potentially be introduced along Fulton Street.

The new streets will incorporate traditional curbs and gutters. Within the “vignette” areas, the Mall landscape will be retained to the maximum extent possible, while accommodating through traffic. In addition, the street surface will incorporate the original paving materials and patterns of the 1964 landscape and no parking will be allowed within the vignettes. Street lighting for the new street will be contemporary, but must revert to the original mall fixtures in the vignettes. The pedestrian and building frontage zones between the vignettes and existing buildings will be a minimum of 10 feet wide.

Five of the Mall’s sculptural works would be relocated elsewhere in the Central Business District, either along Fulton or assembled in Mariposa Plaza, while fifteen would remain in their present locations.

As discussed in the Fulton Mall Alternative Plan Economic Impact Analysis (**Appendix A.4**), from a retail standpoint, this option will significantly improve sales potential throughout the Fulton Corridor. The street will be open to traffic and will attract businesses that thrive on the higher exposure that this mixed-use urban environment provides. Increased vehicular traffic will provide increased visibility and exposure for all Fulton businesses and will introduce the Mall to numerous residents and surrounding workers that are not aware of its commercial opportunities, or were previously unwilling to venture down the Mall. Street parking will be provided for convenience, although in lesser numbers than proposed under Option 1. Due to increased exposure and retail viability, this option will improve property values for buildings along Fulton Street and its cross streets, as well as increase the prospects for their rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

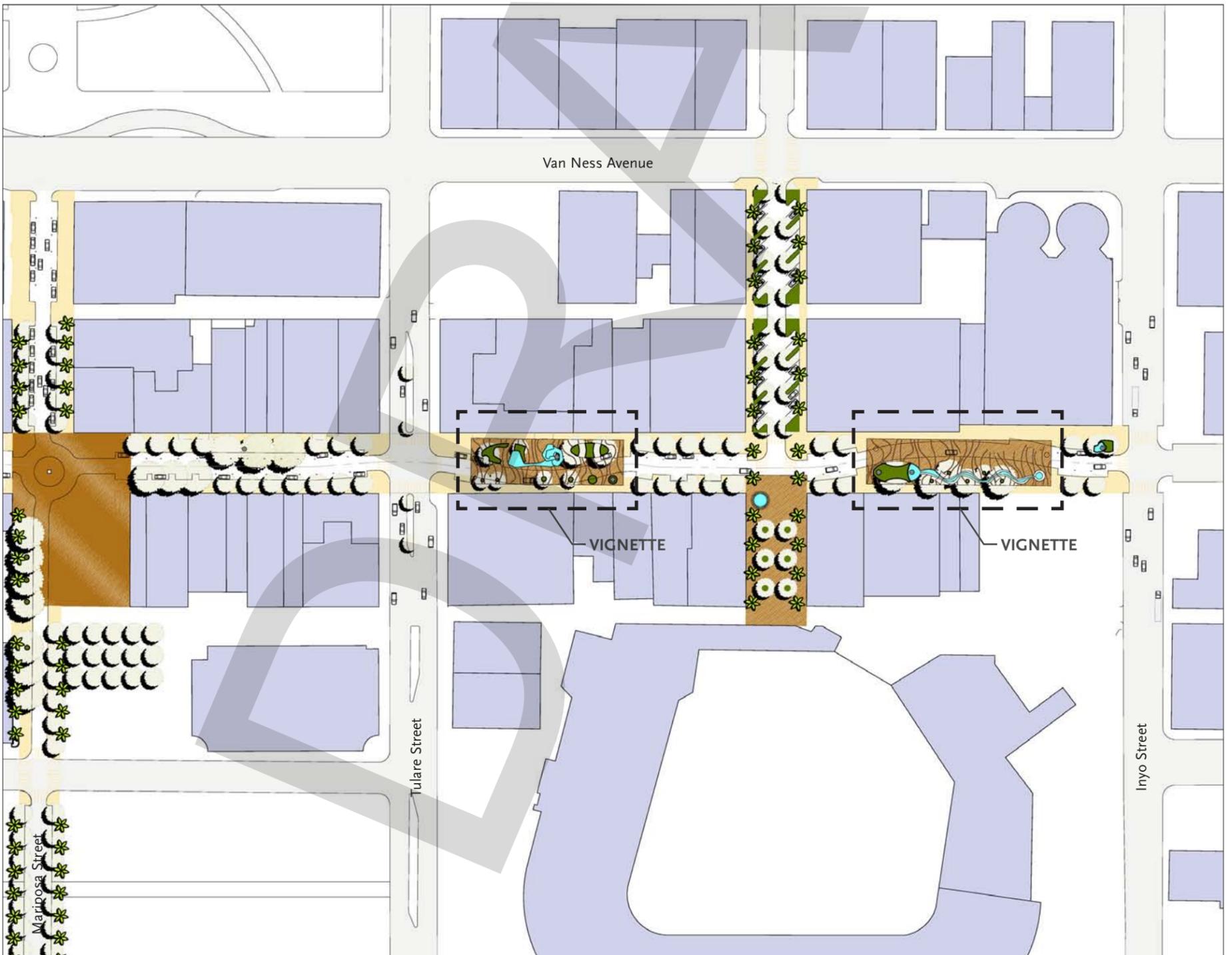
From a historic preservation standpoint, key features of the original Mall landscape will be kept in place as vignettes within the new streetscape. Although most Mall landscape features are removed, those that remain will be celebrated. Although not ideal from a landscape preservation standpoint, improved economic viability along the Mall makes it more feasible for private owners to invest in restoring and maintaining the Mall’s older and historic buildings, preventing their further deterioration.



Plan view of Fulton Mall showing an enhanced street that accommodates vehicular traffic winding through selected preserved and renovated portions (“vignettes”) of the original Fulton Mall. The vignettes center around existing fountains, such that most fountains present remain in place and are restored to functionality.



View of Fulton Mall with selected Eckbo features preserved and restored.



4.5 THE OPTIONS (continued)

Option 3: Restoration and Completion. This option keeps the Fulton Street, Merced Street, Mariposa Street, and Kern Street Malls in their original pedestrian-only configuration. The entire project as envisioned and realized by Garrett Eckbo, including all of its features and details (fountains, pavement, plantings, lighting, etc.), is renovated and the existing artwork is restored in place. Various design improvements are introduced, including more lighting, new restrooms, and better way-finding signage.

As discussed in the Fulton Mall Alternative Plan Economic Impact Analysis (**Appendix A.4**), from a retail perspective, a Mall closed to vehicle traffic cannot prosper without the critical mass of a regional shopping center or a proven national developer that can attract leading national and regional retailers, cinemas, and restaurants. These venues would need to work in concert to offer an extended entertainment and shopping destination, such as Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade. This means attracting at least 250,000 new square feet of stores, including several leading major anchors. (Currently the Mall is occupied by 50,000 – 100,000 square feet of local-serving retail space.) In addition, modern shopping center management practices, including a permanent marketing campaign, would need to be implemented. Such a prospect is unlikely, considering the Downtown’s poor state of repair, its current demographic profile, competition from retail in other parts of the city and region, and the huge amount of public subsidy required to attract a major retailer.

Another option for retail development in a restored Mall would be to begin a professional, targeted business recruitment and merchandising campaign designed to attract a limited number of unique restaurants, coffee houses, bakeries and other locally-based businesses that service the local office and residential markets. Considering that a restored Mall would not provide convenience parking or better visibility, or deliver a vibrant real estate market in the short run, the prospects of this commercial strategy succeeding are also poor. Without changing the design dimensions of the Mall that currently frustrate the expectations of the retail market, the retail offerings there will be limited to local serving stores similar to the ones already in place. Poorly performing retail will probably produce property values that will continue to remain low, relative to commercial real estate in other areas of the region.

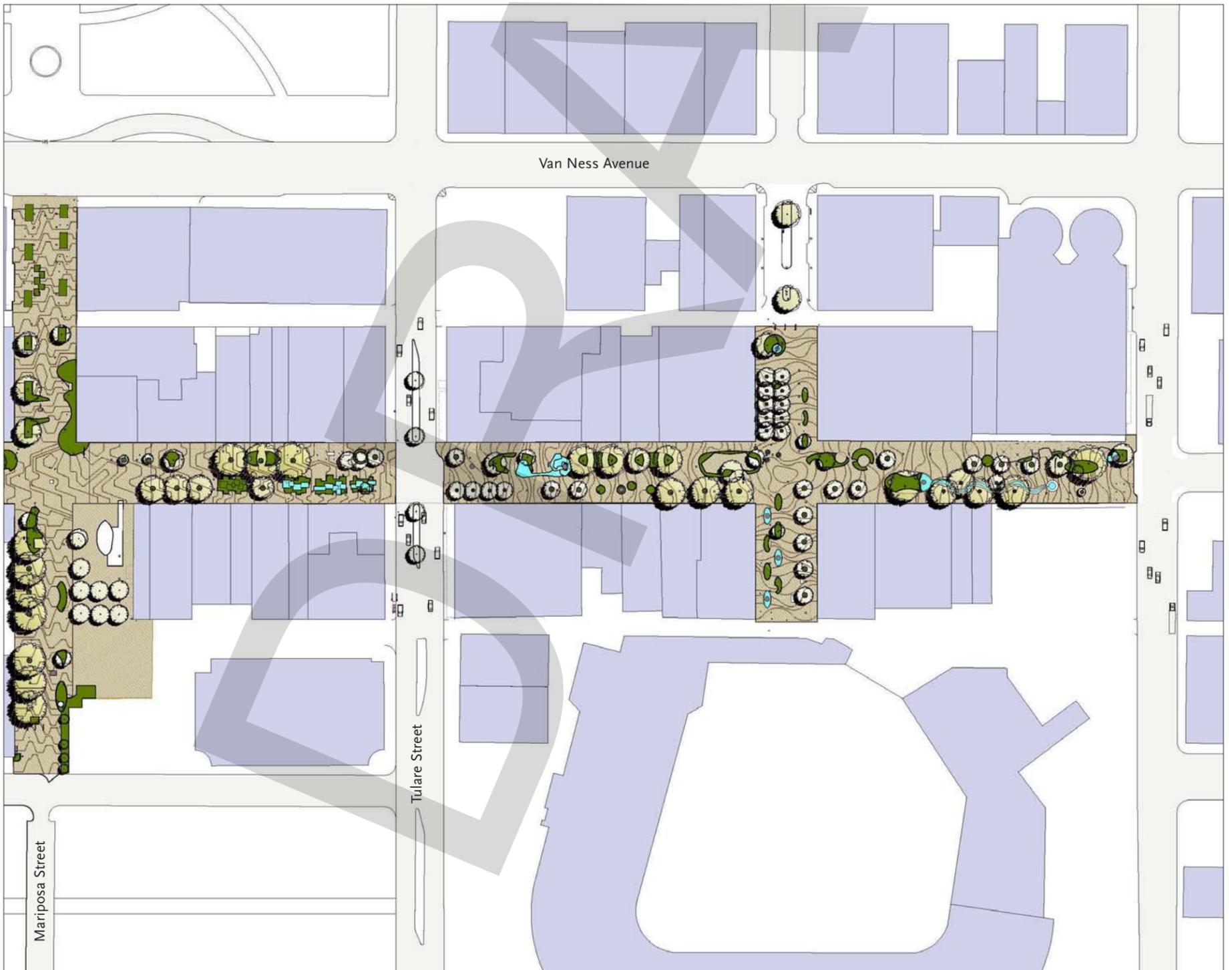
From a historic preservation standpoint, this option is the most beneficial for the landscape, restoring it to its original 1964 luster and preserving all of its key design features. The benefit to the older and historic buildings along the Mall is less clear in light of the economic challenges outlined above. Older and historic buildings along the Mall are in danger of disintegration significantly if the economy of the area does not revive to the point that it is profitable to invest in restoring and maintaining them. This alternative does not help in this respect. This option also precludes the introduction of a vehicular and/or transit street – the configuration that Fulton Street had for the first 80 years of its existence.



Plan view of Fulton Mall fully restored.



Illustrative view of Fulton Mall with rehabilitated pavement, new lighting and new planting.



4.5 THE OPTIONS (continued)

Table 4.5A - A Side-By-Side Comparison of Three Options

	Existing Condition In 2011	1. Reconnect the Grid: Traditional Streets	2. Reconnect the Grid: Vignettes	3. Restoration and Completion
Automobile and Transit				
Auto traffic along the length of Fulton	No	Yes	Yes	No
Auto traffic on the cross streets: Kern (east of Fulton), Mariposa, Merced	No	Yes	Yes	No
Auto traffic on Broadway south of Tuolumne	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Public transit service accommodated on Fulton	No	Yes	Yes	No
On-street parking spaces present on Fulton between Tuolumne and Inyo	0	252	127	0
On-street parking spaces present on cross streets	14	117	117	14
Art and Landscape				
Historic Garrett Eckbo landscape restored	No	No	Partial	Yes
Fulton Mall sculptures in original Mall locations (See Table 4.5B)	19*	3	14	20
Statues on display in Central Business District (not including benches) (See Table 4.5B)	19*	20	20	20
Fulton Mall water features in place and functioning	7*	3	12	21
Use				
Mariposa Plaza redesigned to accommodate major events	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Special events allowed on closed street/Fulton Mall blocks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outdoor dining allowed in pedestrian right-of-way	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Tot lots	2	0	0	2
Streetscape				
Trees present (not including Mariposa Plaza) (approximate)	144	335	245	144
Improved lighting, restrooms, and signage	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pedestrian right-of-way along Fulton (approximate average)	80'	40'	48'	80'
Pedestrian right-of-way along Mariposa (approximate)	80'	40'	40'	80'
Pedestrian right-of-way along Merced and Kern (approximate)	80'	24'	24'	80'
Economics				
Projected annual gross retail sales (and percent change from 2011)	\$32.1 million	\$79.1m (+146%)	\$55.4m (+73%)	\$38.2m (+19%)
Projected ground floor vacancy rate	26%	9%	15%	20%
High visibility for ground floor retailers	No	Yes	Yes	No
Opinion of probable construction cost	N/A	\$12-12.8 million	\$11.4-12.8 million	\$8-16 million
Projected operations and maintenance cost over 30 years	\$7.8 million	\$3.7 million	\$4.2 million	\$7.8 million
Projected parking meter revenues over 30 years	\$0.7 million	\$18.9 million	\$12.5 million	\$0.7 million

* Restoration work in progress. See **Table 4.5B**.



Each option provides shade trees and street furniture.



Some restoration has been completed on some of the artwork in the Fulton Mall, as exemplified by the repainting of these clay standpipe water fountain pieces.

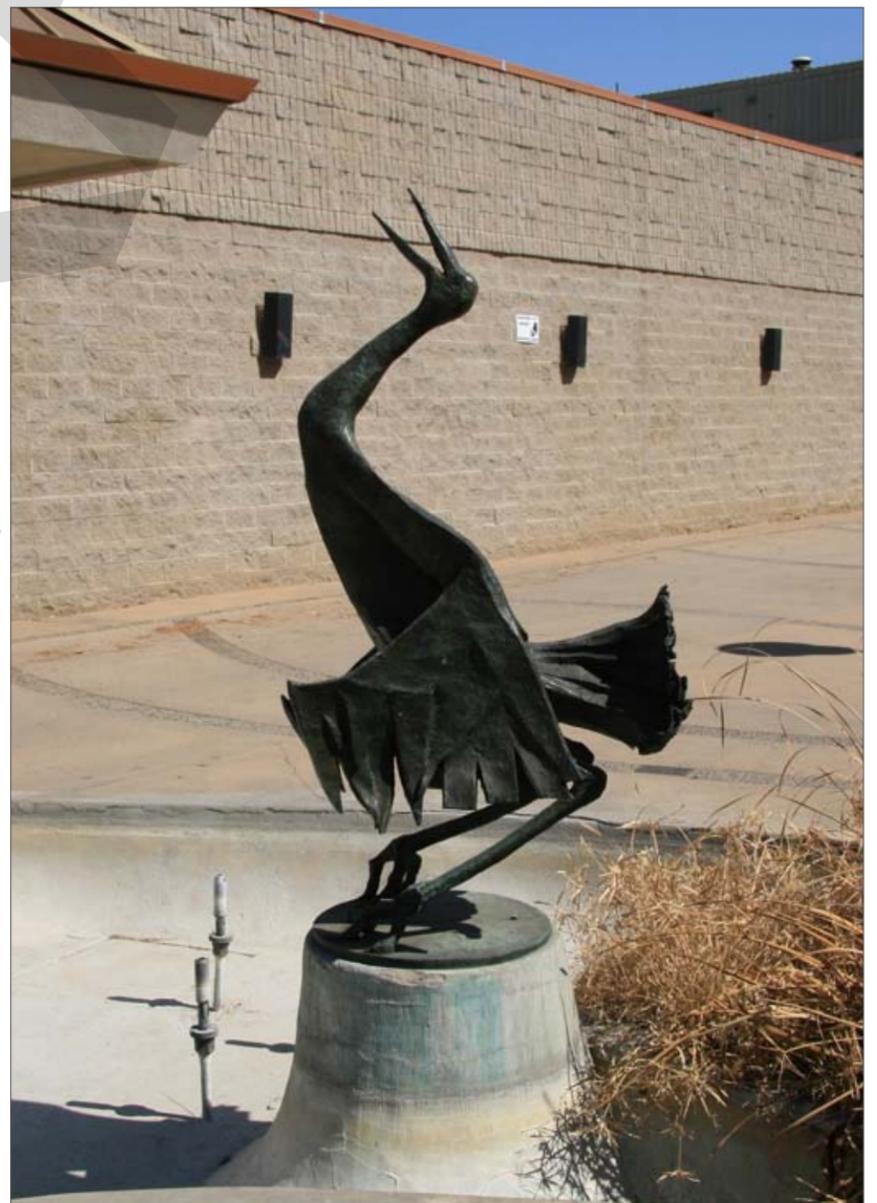
Table 4.5B - A Side-By-Side Comparison of Three Options

	Existing Condition In 2011	1. Reconnect the Grid: Traditional Streets	2. Reconnect the Grid: Vignettes	3. Restoration and Completion
Treatment of Sculptures				
<i>The Visit</i> , Clement Renzi	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
Clay standpipe water features, Stan Bitters	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	Most moved within CBD	In Mall location
<i>Rite of the Crane</i> , Bruno Groth	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	Moved within CBD	In Mall location
<i>Talos</i> , James Lee Hansen	Not present*	Moved within CBD	Moved within CBD	In Mall location
<i>Aquarius Ovoid</i> , George Tsutakawa	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Trisem</i> , T. Newton Russell	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Dancing Waters</i> , Stan Bitters	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Valley Landing</i> , Gordon Newell	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>La Grande Laveuse</i> , Pierre Auguste Renoir	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	Moved within CBD	In Mall location
<i>Clock Tower</i> , Jan de Swart	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Big A</i> , Peter Voukos	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	Moved within CBD	In Mall location
<i>Arbre Echelle</i> , François Stahly	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Orion</i> , Bernard (Tony) Rosenthal	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Mother & Child</i> , Raymond Puccinelli	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Ellipsoid VI</i> , Charles Owen Perry	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	Moved within CBD	In Mall location
<i>Spreading Fires</i> , Claire Falkenstein	In Mall location	In Mall location	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Leaping Fires</i> , Claire Falkenstein	In Mall location	In Mall location	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Smoldering Fires</i> , Claire Falkenstein	In Mall location	In Mall location	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Yokuts Indian</i> , Clement Renzi	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location
<i>Obos</i> , George Tsutakawa	In Mall location	Moved within CBD	In Mall location	In Mall location

* Restoration work in progress



Clement Renzi's "The Visit," located at the north end of the Mall, would be kept in place under Options 2 and 3.



Bruno Groth's "Rite of the Crane," currently on Merced Street, would be relocated under Options 1 and 2.

4.6 STUDYING “THE PROJECT”

Before a city can proceed with a major development or infrastructure project, state and federal environmental laws require that the project undergo a review to determine whether environmental impacts can be avoided, reduced, and mitigated while still achieving the project’s fundamental objectives.

As of the release of the public draft of this Specific Plan, the City Administration recommends and will be pursuing **Option 2: Reconnect the Grid: Vignettes**, as the preferred alternative for the future of the Fulton Mall and “the project” for the purposes of these environmental reviews.

The other two options described in this chapter continue to be viable and will be environmentally assessed at a high level of detail as alternatives to Option 2. In addition, as the state and federal environmental impact review process unfolds, experts in various fields may determine that other alternatives for the Mall require analysis in the effort to avoid, substantially reduce, and mitigate identified significant impacts caused by “the project” while achieving most of the project’s basic objectives. As part of the Specific Plan adoption process, the City Council will evaluate and consider all of these options and select one for inclusion in the final, adopted Specific Plan.

The Administration is pursuing Option 2 now as “the project” for several reasons.

First, stakeholders in the Plan Area have spoken clearly that they favor significant change to the way the Fulton Mall operates:

- The PBID Partners of Downtown Fresno board of directors, representing property owners on the Mall and throughout the Downtown Property and Business Improvement District, voted on October 4, 2011, to make Option 1 their favored option and Option 2 their second choice.
- The Fulton Corridor Specific Plan Community Advisory Committee (CAC), in selecting the three options described in this chapter on October 19, 2010, voted most strongly in favor of Options 1 and 2. The CAC is comprised of Plan Area business owners, property owners, and residents.
- A majority of Fulton Mall property owners in 2010 expressed their objection to listing the Fulton Mall on the National Register of Historic Places, indicating that they question whether the preservation of the Fulton Mall’s current form and function is the ideal vision for the Mall’s future.

Second, the Administration believes strongly in the goal of revitalizing the downtown economy, and believes this is impossible without a healthy economy on the Fulton Mall. The most pedestrian-friendly environments are not necessarily the ones without vehicle traffic; they are the ones that attract the most pedestrians. Generally the urban places with the most pedestrians are those with the most vibrant economies. No other area of Downtown Fresno is built with the density to support many people working, shopping, and living in a concentrated space — to be our traditional “Main Street” and the anchor of Downtown’s economy.

Third, the Administration feels compelled to protect the beloved landmark historic buildings along Fulton that have symbolized our city for most of its history. A 2010 City analysis showed that the major historic buildings near the Mall had an unacceptably high vacancy rate of 35%. But the vacancy rate in landmark buildings on the Mall was an alarming 71%. This is a crisis. Without leased space, an owner has no revenue to put back into a building, and over time the building decays further and becomes more and more difficult to ever restore. Landmark buildings that sit vacant along the Mall are not only in danger themselves as investment continues to pass them by; they serve as emblems of a failed economy that discourage many Fresnoans from coming downtown at all.

Fourth, from a consumer perspective, example after example of pedestrian malls around the country that have been reopened successfully to vehicle traffic indicate that Americans prefer environments where there is a mix of transportation modes that maximizes the visibility of the streetscape and sidewalk to as many eyes as possible. In the case of the Fulton Mall, empirical evidence from cities across the country suggests that investments in changes to the function of the street could make for a place that is more desirable to its users.

Fifth, the selection of Option 2 offers a balance of significantly improving the economic function of Fulton, while preserving key features of the existing landscape. Option 2 keeps most fountains in place, in addition to keeping all existing sculptures present in the Central Business District. Even remnants of the Garrett Eckbo landscape are retained in areas (called “vignettes”) surrounding the fountains, allowing visitors to experience examples of this Midcentury Modern design. As the economy of the area improves and more visitors are encouraged to come to Fulton, the ability to access and appreciate the art works and these design elements will also increase.



Burbank, California, successfully reintroduced automobile traffic and on-street parking onto its pedestrian mall in 1989.



The 3rd Street Promenade in Santa Monica remains a successful, albeit reconstituted, pedestrian mall nearly fifty years after its inception.

Sixth, Option 2 enables a well-established best practice for downtowns across the country of providing parking at facilities within 1/2 to 1 block of the main street. The Fulton Mall has the ideal parking infrastructure to make this work, with at least 3,352 off-street parking spaces existing today within a block of the Mall. Access to these facilities improves dramatically when drivers on Fulton Street can turn off the street to find parking after they identify their eventual destination. In addition, the metered on-street spaces in front of the businesses provide the choice of “convenience parking” to customers planning a short visit to a business.

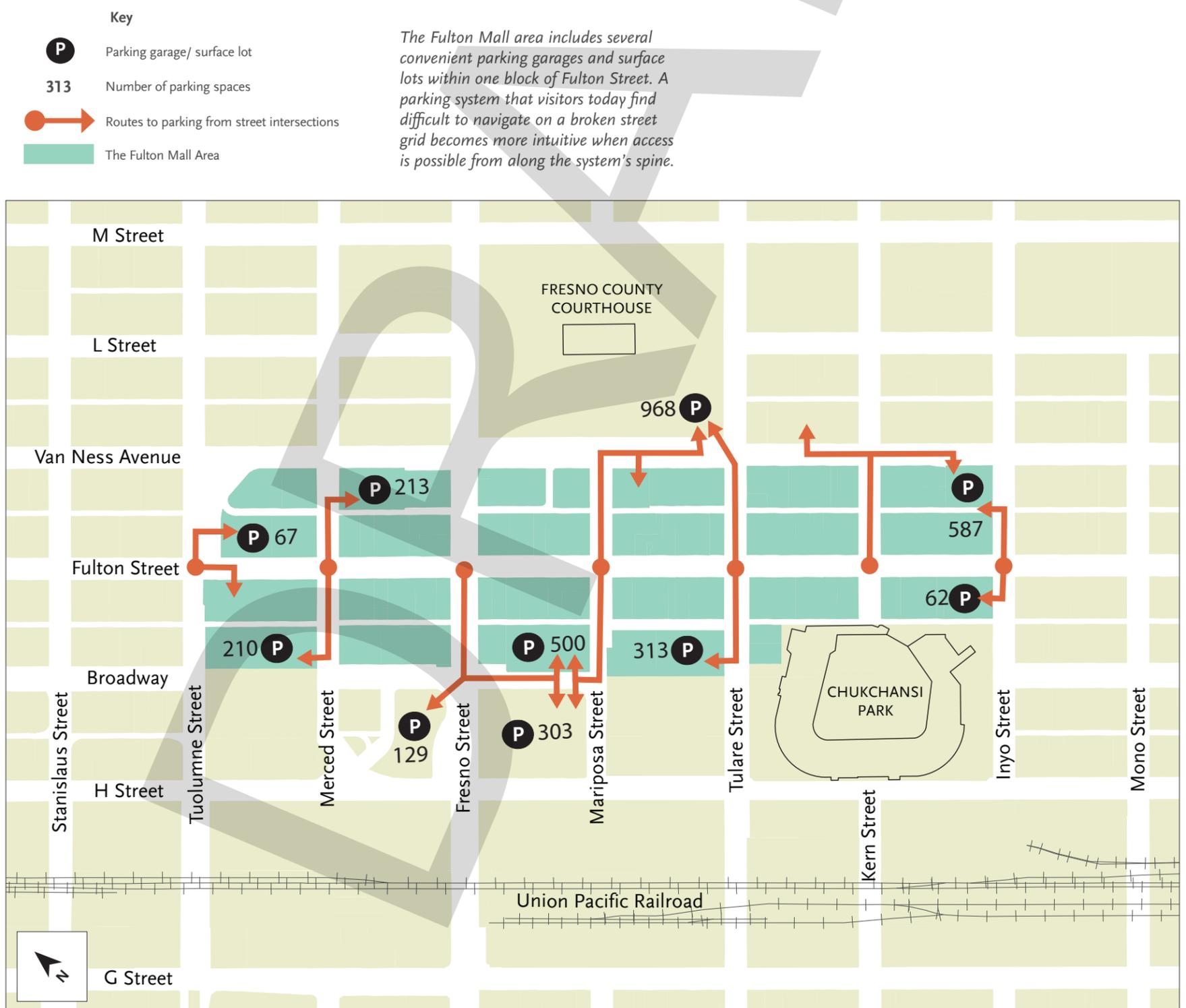


Figure 4.6A - Routes to Off-Street Parking

4.7 MARIPOSA PLAZA

What is now Mariposa Plaza was once occupied by the Grand Central Hotel, which was demolished in 1969, after the Fulton Mall was created. Shortly thereafter, its vacant parcel was paved over and to this day, the Plaza is fronted to the south by the blank wall of an adjacent building. To the north, it is fronted by a parking lot and the Helm Building, whose upper floors are currently vacant. Mariposa Plaza was neither conceived nor executed as part of Garrett Eckbo's original Fulton Mall design.

Mariposa Plaza is already being successfully used for occasional festivals that bring tens of thousands of Fresnoans into the Downtown every year. However, it is not being used to its full potential due to the Plaza's inefficient layout and the less than ideal location of the stage – known as the free-speech stage. The redesign of Mariposa Plaza is a key initial project for revitalizing Downtown and is envisioned to proceed regardless of the option that is adopted for the future of the Fulton Mall.

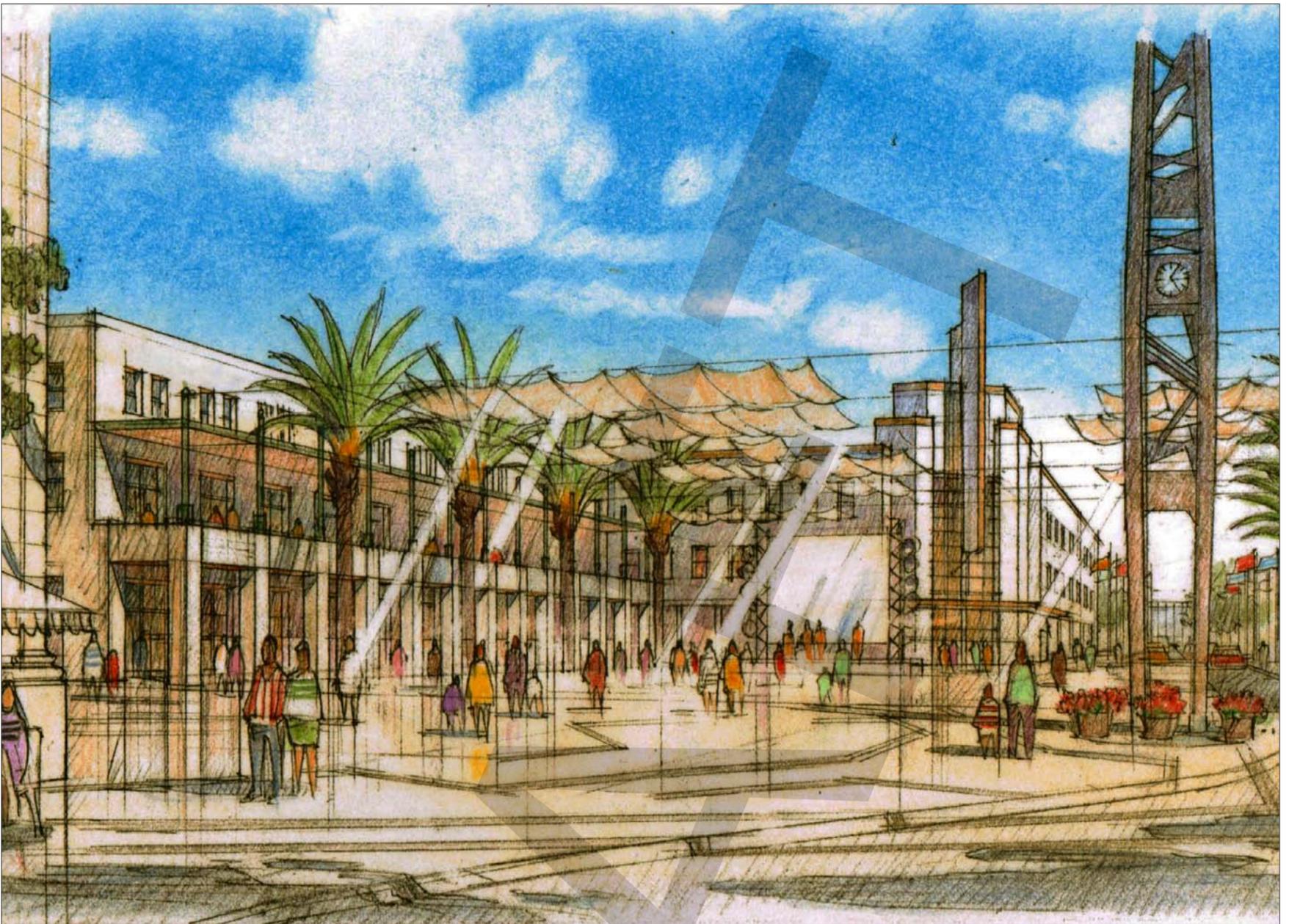
A. Vision. The Plaza is the premier urban place in Fresno. It is an active place, animated and busy, whether a major public event is going on or not. It is the preferred destination of Fresnoans and residents of the San Joaquin Valley, of foreign tourists, of conventioners, and all people converging on the center of the city in the expectation of a rich urban life. It is a lively place every time of the day and night.

B. Plan. Two small, mixed-use buildings are introduced along its southern and northern edges, one to line the blank southern wall, the other to infill the existing parking lot adjacent to the Helm Building. In the longer term, as market demand supports it, a multiplex cinema is introduced on the west side of the Plaza to attract a large number of people every evening and engage them in more than one activity and one economic transaction per visit. These buildings provide a new active boundary to the Plaza in the form of arcade and balcony frontages. Patrons of restaurants and entertainment venues overlook the Plaza from the perspective of two different stories, ground and second, participating in an informal, constant, and vibrant performance of urban theater.

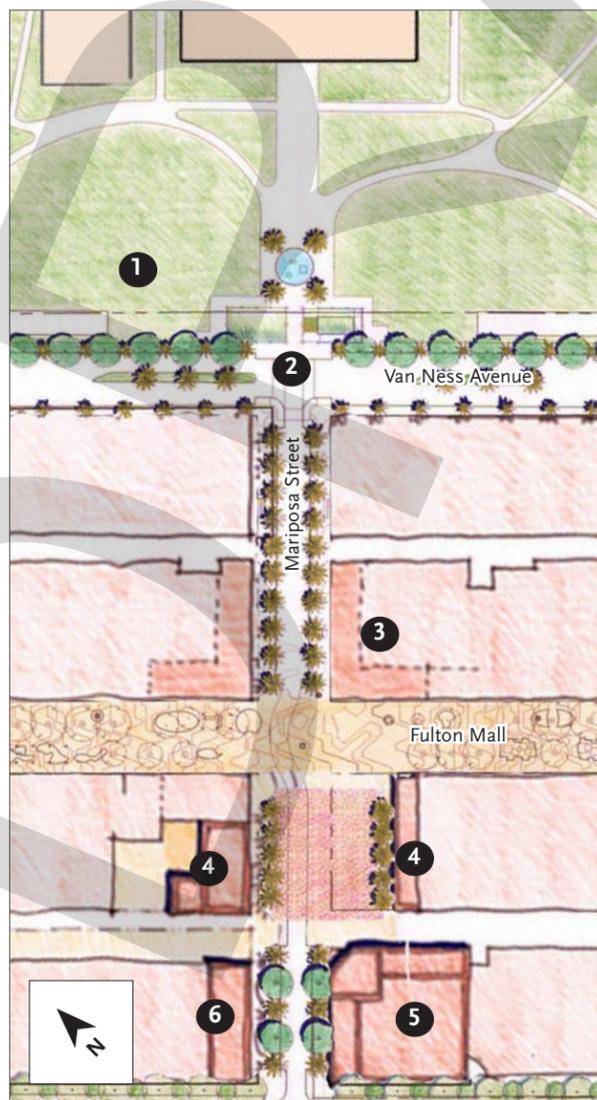
Every aspect of the design of Mariposa Plaza is engaging. A retractable tent structure protects the place from the sun's rays during Fresno's summer months (See **Chapter 8: Public Realm**). A new stage, including a state of the art sound and light system, is provided in the Plaza to facilitate frequent festivals and special events, in addition to accommodating occasions for free speech in accordance with the stage's original intent. Space in the Plaza area is provided to accommodate artworks that are dislocated from their current placement on the Fulton Mall (depending on the option chosen for the Mall's future), or new art works, or both. The space is designed and engineered to fit in its surroundings and be the natural place to host events large and small.



The crowd at a recent Mexican Independence Day celebration on the Mall illustrates Mariposa Plaza's potential as well as its current limitations. Despite temperate weather, the crowd shows a strong preference for shade while watching the show, leaving most of the space empty. While the built-in stage does provide ample electricity for a major show without the need for additional generators, it is not laid out in a useful way for productions of substantial size, requiring an additional temporary stage to be procured and installed next to it (seen at left). Meanwhile the built-in stage is used to support a sponsor's giant inflatable beer can (center background).



View of Mariposa Plaza transformed into the heart of the Fulton Corridor.



This illustrative site plan shows one of many ways that Mariposa Plaza can develop over time, based on the provisions of the Downtown Development Code. Opportunity sites are infilled in the general locations where development is likely to occur.

KEY

- 1 Courthouse Park
- 2 New at-grade crossing
- 3 Security Bank Building
- 4 New Mixed-use Buildings
- 5 New Movie Theater
- 6 Active uses introduced on the ground floor of the existing garage



View of Mariposa Plaza as it currently exists.

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