

Todd Smith, Planning Director
Planning and Environmental Review



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Department of Community Development

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
NOTICE OF PREPARATION

JANUARY 9, 2026

TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR NORTH WATT AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN (PLNP2023-00256)

Sacramento County will be the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a project known as North Watt Avenue Specific Plan. This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been sent to responsible and trustee agencies and involved federal agencies pursuant to Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. Agencies should comment on the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agencies' statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent as soon as possible, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

The project description, location, and the probable environmental effects are contained in the attached materials and may also be viewed online at:

<https://planning.saccounty.gov/Programs/Pages/NorthWattAvenueSpecificPlan.aspx>

Please send your Agency's response to this notice to:

Julie Newton, Environmental Coordinator
Planning and Environmental Review
827 7th Street, Room 225, Sacramento, CA 95814
or via e-mail at: CEQA@saccounty.net

Your response should include the name of a contact person in your agency.

Agencies with specific questions about the project should contact Jessie Shen, Infill Coordinator, at shenj@saccounty.gov for further information.

COMMENT PERIOD:

The County requests your comment on or before February 9, 2026.

SCOPING MEETINGS:

Two scoping meetings have been scheduled for the proposed project. Interested parties and agency representatives are invited to learn more about the proposed project and submit comments and suggestions concerning the analysis in the EIR.

Agency Scoping Meeting

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 10:00 – 11:00 AM

Location: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting ID: 285 128 090 454 59

Passcode: BF2Qq72Z

Phone: 916-245-8966 | Conference ID: 372 484 823#

Public Scoping Meeting

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 5:00 – 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting ID: 245 307 738 497 20

Passcode: Lj2Nz2Nd

Phone: 916-245-8966 | Conference ID: 490 310 246#

PROJECT TITLE: NORTH WATT AVENUE SPECIFIC PLAN

CONTROL NUMBER: PLNP2023-00256

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:

The *Sacramento County General Plan of 2005-2030* (General Plan) emphasizes improving streetscapes along the County's commercial corridors, including north Watt Avenue, and promoting compact residential, commercial, and mixed-use development. The North Watt Avenue Specific Plan (Specific Plan) will be designed to implement the General Plan for this corridor, and to accelerate infill development that will increase local economic activity, improve transit ridership, add housing near jobs and services, and create new public gathering spaces.

The Specific Plan is intended to remove regulatory constraints to infill development, consistent with the County Board of Supervisors' (Board's) 2024 Resolution regarding Housing and Infill Development, which directs staff to increase corridor development that can be built by-right, and to provide a flexible framework for development that allows innovation and encourages creative approaches.

The Specific Plan identifies public infrastructure improvements needed to support new infill development, along with strategies to fund and implement these improvements in ways that can attract private investment in both existing properties and future infill projects.

The Specific Plan area encompasses approximately 705 acres along a 4-mile segment of Watt Avenue, north of Interstate-80 (I-80) to Antelope Road/U Street, within unincorporated Sacramento County (see **Plate NOP-1**). The project encompasses the existing North Watt Avenue Corridor Plan area and North Highlands Town Center Special Planning Area (SPA) with minor exclusions and new inclusions (see **Plate NOP-2**).

The Specific Plan area is within the Urban Policy Area and Urban Services Boundary.

REQUESTED ENTITLEMENTS:

The proposed project includes the following entitlement requests:

1. General Plan Amendments to:

- Create a "North Watt Avenue Specific Plan" General Plan land use designation, including a description and intent of this new land use designation and primary allowed land uses, as well as reflecting this new land use designation on the General Plan Land Use Diagram.
- Amend the General Plan Circulation Diagram to change U Street between Watt Avenue and

34th Street from a one-way couplet Smart Growth Street to a 4-lane arterial, Watt Avenue between Antelope Road/U Street and Palm Avenue from a one-way couplet Smart Growth Street to a 6-lane thoroughfare Smart Growth Street, 34th Street between Antelope Road/U Street and Palm Avenue from a one-way couplet Smart Growth Street to a major collector, and Palm Avenue between Watt Avenue and 34th Street from a one-way couplet Smart Growth Street to a major collector.

2. **Zoning Code Amendment** to amend the Sacramento County Zoning Code (Zoning Code) such that the zoning district classifications and development standards for the Specific Plan would supersede some development and design standards in the County's Zoning Code within the Specific Plan area.
3. **Community Plan Amendment** to amend the North Highlands Community Plan to establish a Community Plan designation of "North Watt Avenue Specific Plan" and amend Community Plan map, as appropriate, to be consistent with the Specific Plan.
4. **Adoption of the North Watt Avenue Specific Plan**, which would establish Specific Plan zoning districts with specified allowable uses, required entitlements for specific proposed uses, development standards and design standards; proposed major components of public infrastructure and facilities, including open space, required to support the development anticipated under the Specific Plan; a financing strategy for the proposed public infrastructure required to serve development anticipated under the Specific Plan; and a program of implementation actions required to facilitate development within the Specific Plan area.

The Specific Plan proposes three zoning districts (Mixed-Use Corridor [MU-C], Mixed-Use Neighborhood [MU-N], and Employment Flex [EMP-Flex]) within the Specific Plan area (see **Plate NOP-3**). Each proposed zoning district would establish allowable land use and include development and design standards. The zoning districts would allow a mix of residential and commercial retail and service uses, industrial uses and compatible uses focused south of the Union Pacific Railroad main line, and parks and open space areas.

The Specific Plan will identify the water, sewer, drainage, and stormwater infrastructure investments required to support infill development within the corridor and transportation improvements needed to ensure multi-modal access for residents, employees, and visitors. The Specific Plan will also identify importation implementation strategies – actions the County will take to encourage infill development in this corridor and improve the area for existing and future residents, employees, and visitors.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The primary objectives of the proposed project include:

- Identify and implement public infrastructure improvements necessary to support infill development.
- Enhance streetscapes with shade trees and landscaping features to create safe, attractive, and climate-resilient public realms that encourage walking, biking, and transit.
- Remove regulatory constraints and increase opportunities for by-right approval of infill development, consistent with the Board's 2024 Housing and Infill Resolution.
- Accelerate private investment, including infill development that will add housing near jobs and services, increase local economic activity, and catalyze additional investment.
- Create new public gathering spaces, including new parks and open spaces areas, that provide passive recreational opportunities, increase community connectivity, and can host regular and special events.

ENVIRONMENTAL/LAND USE SETTING:

Surrounding land uses include the former McClellan Air Force Base to the west, single-family residential neighborhoods to the north and to the east, and I-80 to the south.

The Specific Plan area consists of developed, low-scale retail and commercial service uses with expansive, underutilized parking areas fronting the corridor, offices, multi-family residential development, a small number of single-family residential uses, places of worship, public uses, light industrial uses and warehousing, and some vacant land. The portion of the Specific Plan area known as the North Highlands Town Center, located along Freedom Park Drive between Watt Avenue and 32nd Street, consists of several large vacant parcels and a mix of low-density residential, automotive sales and service-related uses, and the Aerospace Museum of California. The southern portion of the Specific Plan area, south of the Union Pacific Railroad main line, consists of light industrial, warehousing, retail, and office uses, and the North Area Recovery Station west of Watt Avenue.

The General Plan designates the Specific Plan area as Transit Oriented Development (580 acres), Commercial and Offices (1.2 acres), Intensive Industrial (8.9 acres), Low Density Residential (0.26 acres), Medium Density Residential (11.5 acres), High Density Residential (9.8 acres), Urban Development Area (6.7 acres), and Recreation (0.4 acres).

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS/EIR FOCUS:

Preliminary review indicates that potentially significant impacts may be associated with, but not limited to, the following topic areas: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, climate change, cultural resources, energy, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use, noise and vibration, population and housing, public services and recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, and utilities and service systems. A brief discussion is provided below.

Aesthetics

The EIR will document the existing visual conditions along the north Watt Avenue corridor and describe substantial changes to the visual character and impacts resulting from new sources of light and glare attributable to development anticipated under the proposed Specific Plan.

Air Quality

The EIR will evaluate potential short-term and long-term air quality impacts during construction and operation of new development and supporting infrastructure anticipated under the proposed Specific Plan.

Biological Resources

The EIR will identify areas where proposed land use changes and infrastructure improvements may affect biological resources. The analysis will discuss impacts to general wildlife populations and habitats but will focus on special-status species and sensitive habitats.

Climate Change

The EIR will quantify and analyze potential greenhouse gas emissions that would occur with implementation of the proposed Specific Plan and evaluate cumulative contribution to the significant cumulative impact of climate change.

Cultural Resources

The EIR will identify areas where proposed land use changes and infrastructure improvements may impact cultural, historical, and archaeological resources.

Energy

The EIR will evaluate potential energy consumption impacts during construction and operation of new development and supporting infrastructure anticipated under the proposed Specific Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The EIR will identify hazardous materials sites in the vicinity of the Specific Plan area and provide an analysis of any potential significant impacts related to hazards or hazardous materials, including the provision of recommended mitigation measures (as warranted) to avoid or reduce potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The EIR will evaluate the impacts of implementation of the proposed Specific Plan on local and federal floodplains, surface water quality, and groundwater resources. It will also examine potential groundwater sustainability impacts based on existing standards and the additional impervious surfaces added by new development.

Land Use

The EIR will evaluate potential conflicts with land use plans, policies, or regulations that were adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental impacts.

Noise and Vibration

The EIR will analyze the potential for proposed new uses and construction of infrastructure improvements to generate significant noise, including temporary impacts during construction, and operational impacts from future development anticipated under the proposed Specific Plan.

Population and Housing

The EIR will describe changes in population, housing, and employment resulting from implementation of the proposed Specific Plan and the potential for secondary environmental impacts from those changes.

Public Services and Recreation

The EIR will evaluate whether implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would increase demand for public services, such as fire protection and police protection, and will identify any potential environmental impacts. Potential effects to existing parks and recreational facilities will also be assessed.

Transportation

The EIR will evaluate whether implementation of the proposed Specific Plan and General Plan amendments to the roadway classifications for portions of Watt Avenue, U Street/Antelope Road, 34th Street, and Palm Street¹ would result in transportation impacts, including potential conflicts with applicable transportation plans and policies, increased vehicular travel demand, hazardous roadway design features, or inadequate emergency access.

Tribal Cultural Resources

The EIR will summarize background on tribal cultural resources and mitigation to avoid effects, if necessary, in the context of future projects within the Specific Plan area. Further, pursuant to Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52), consultation with tribal entities will be initiated to determine potential impacts to inform the tribal cultural resources analysis. Information obtained through the AB 52 consultation process will be summarized in the EIR.

¹ As directed by the Board as part of approving the Hybrid Urban Boulevard Alternative for the County Department of Transportation's (SacDOT's) Re-Imagine North Watt Complete Street Plan.

Utilities and Service Systems

The EIR will summarize required changes to water supply, wastewater treatment, stormwater drainage, solid waste management, and energy infrastructure and identify the potential for secondary physical impacts associated with these changes.

INTENDED USES OF THE EIR:

The Sacramento County Planning Commission and the Board will use the information contained in the EIR in evaluating the proposed project and rendering a decision to approve or deny the requested entitlements. The EIR will serve as an information document for the public, as well. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions for future development projects and infrastructure improvements anticipated under the Specific Plan. Responsible agencies may include but not be limited to:

- Sacramento Municipal Utility District
- Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District
- Regional Water Quality Control Board – Central Valley Region
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District
- Airport Land Use Commission
- Central Valley Flood Protection Board
- Sacramento Suburban Water District
- Sacramento Area Sewer District

Plate NOP-1: Vicinity Map

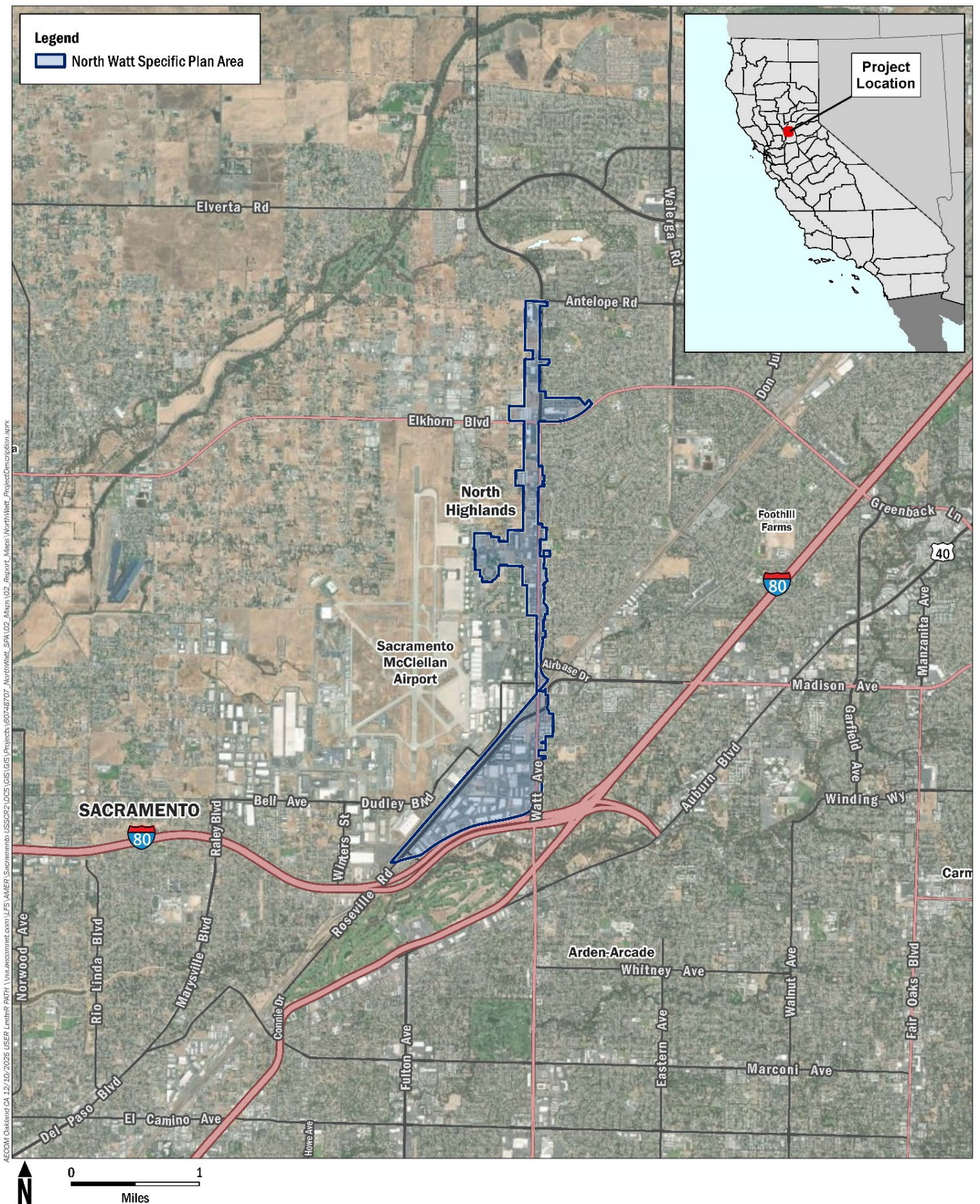


Plate NOP-2: Planning Areas

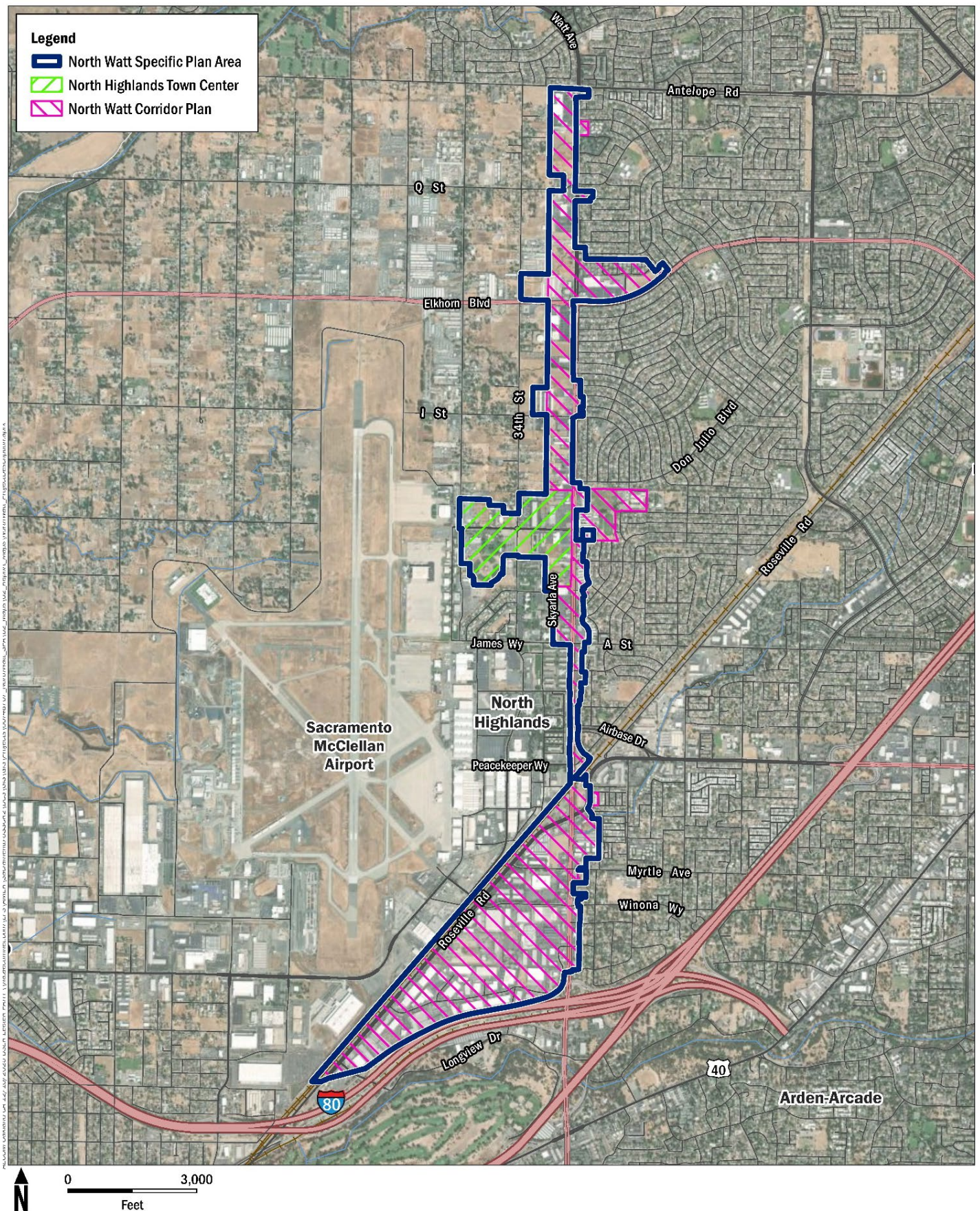


Plate NOP-3: Proposed Zoning Districts

