



chapter one

INTRODUCTION

An eclectic mix of stores, restaurants, businesses and homes. Innovative companies advancing electric car design and space travel. Working families enjoying great transit, good jobs and affordable housing. Historic and civic resources that celebrate the area's rich aeronautic and celebrity history. Students attending one of the best high schools in all of southern California ...Downtown Hawthorne indeed has a mix of vitality, history and importance that makes it the centerpiece of the community – an area on the verge of regaining its potential.



Downtown is defined by Hawthorne Boulevard, the major commercial, employment and entertainment corridor for the city



There is also a diverse mix of housing in Downtown in neighborhoods to the east and west of Hawthorne Boulevard

Overview

This Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan encapsulates the **community's vision to once again make Hawthorne Boulevard the city's economic, civic and cultural "Downtown"** with a healthy mix of retail, office, hotel, dining, entertainment, employment, housing, civic and public spaces. It builds on the area's rich history and outlines **a series of goals, strategies, projects and implementation actions** that will bring positive change. It proposes bold **transformative projects**, as well as tactical **"quick wins"** that can be accomplished cost-effectively and in the near term. The plan sets forth a comprehensive, holistic approach, weaving together a nuanced set of strategies that collectively will foster a prosperous, connected, healthy, attractive and inclusive Downtown.

The plan cannot succeed solely by itself—it will take a concerted and collaborative **alignment of people and resources** to achieve the ultimate vision for Downtown. The City of Hawthorne, other government agencies, major employers, business and property owners, and residents must all be strong partners in moving Downtown forward. To help frame the discussion, this Introduction chapter includes the following sections:

Plan Purpose

Provides an outline of the major project goals for plan development

Setting and Context

Highlights Downtown's location, history and role within the broader Hawthorne community and South Bay region

Planning Process

Describes the community-driven planning process that informed the development of the plan and its various elements

Plan Overview

Provides an overview of the remaining chapters in the document

Plan Purpose

California and the nation are slowly moving out of the Great Recession—and as a result, jobs and investments are beginning to trickle back into Hawthorne and the South Bay region. In recent years the City of Hawthorne, METRO and the Los Angeles Flood Control District have made significant infrastructure and transit improvements in Downtown. In addition, companies such as Tesla Motors, SpaceX and 9to5 Seating have expanded operations and employment within the city.

The Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan establishes a blueprint for how the city center will look, feel and function in the future. Informed by the collective vision of residents, workers, merchants and property owners, the plan advocates for a new urban form that is compact and less reliant on the private automobile. This will result in a Downtown where motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users have a variety of transportation options to reach mixed-use projects, employment and commercial centers, and housing. Where parks, plazas and civic destinations frame key gathering spaces for the community. And where major employers provide higher wage, professional jobs for local workers.

The charge of the Specific Plan is to articulate this vision and present a clear path forward to ensure a prosperous, connected, healthy, attractive and inclusive future for Downtown Hawthorne. Specifically, the plan:

- **Responds to extensive community input** and incorporates specific ideas, recommendations and strategies which reflect that input
- **Protects and enhances key physical and cultural assets** in Downtown
- **Addresses issues and opportunities** related to land use, urban design, parks and open space, economic development, transportation, health, safety and community investments
- **Provides a concise set of goals, policies, projects and actions** for achieving tangible and positive change



Recent projects have brought energy and economic vitality to Downtown Hawthorne



Innovative companies like Tesla and SpaceX are located at Hawthorne Airport



Hawthorne Boulevard's rich history as a commercial and entertainment destination is a key asset to build upon in the future



Since its founding, Hawthorne has been a place of affordability and prosperity



Members of the legendary band the Beach Boys were raised in Hawthorne

Setting and Context

History

In 1886, several groups of investors organized companies to purchase land for towns in the South Bay region. One of these was the Hawthorne Land Company, which purchased an 80-acre town site and in the early 1900s. The company promoted Hawthorne as ideal for homes and investments since it was situated on the Redondo Electric Car Line, with three stations and a 30-minute ride from the heart of Los Angeles in the line of rapid growth toward the harbor. The city incorporated in 1922 and, like much of Los Angeles county, experienced a post-World War II building boom. This growth was fueled by the Northrop Corporation and its associated subcontracting companies, which by the late 1940s employed more than 20,000 people. For much of the mid-20th century, the local real estate market flourished, primarily driven by blue-collar manufacturing employment in Northrop and other Southern California aviation and aerospace employers.

In addition to physical and economic growth, Hawthorne was also home to the chart-topping Beach Boys, athlete Jim Thorpe, movie star cowboy Roy Rodgers, and two of the greatest glamour blondes of all time—Marilyn Monroe and Mattel’s Barbie. Hawthorne’s notable historical events run the gamut, from the annual Kiwanis Parade—second in California prestige only to Pasadena’s Tournament of Roses Parade—to a furious 1971 police gun-battle with the Charles Manson gang.

However, beginning in the 1990s, many parts of Downtown Hawthorne began to spiral into decline. A highly visible indicator was the closure and abandonment of the 40-acre Hawthorne Mall. While a portion of the mall was leased to the County of Los Angeles, the majority of the site has remained vacant and shuttered for nearly 15 years. This major facility in Downtown is currently in physical decay and remains a major eyesore for the community.

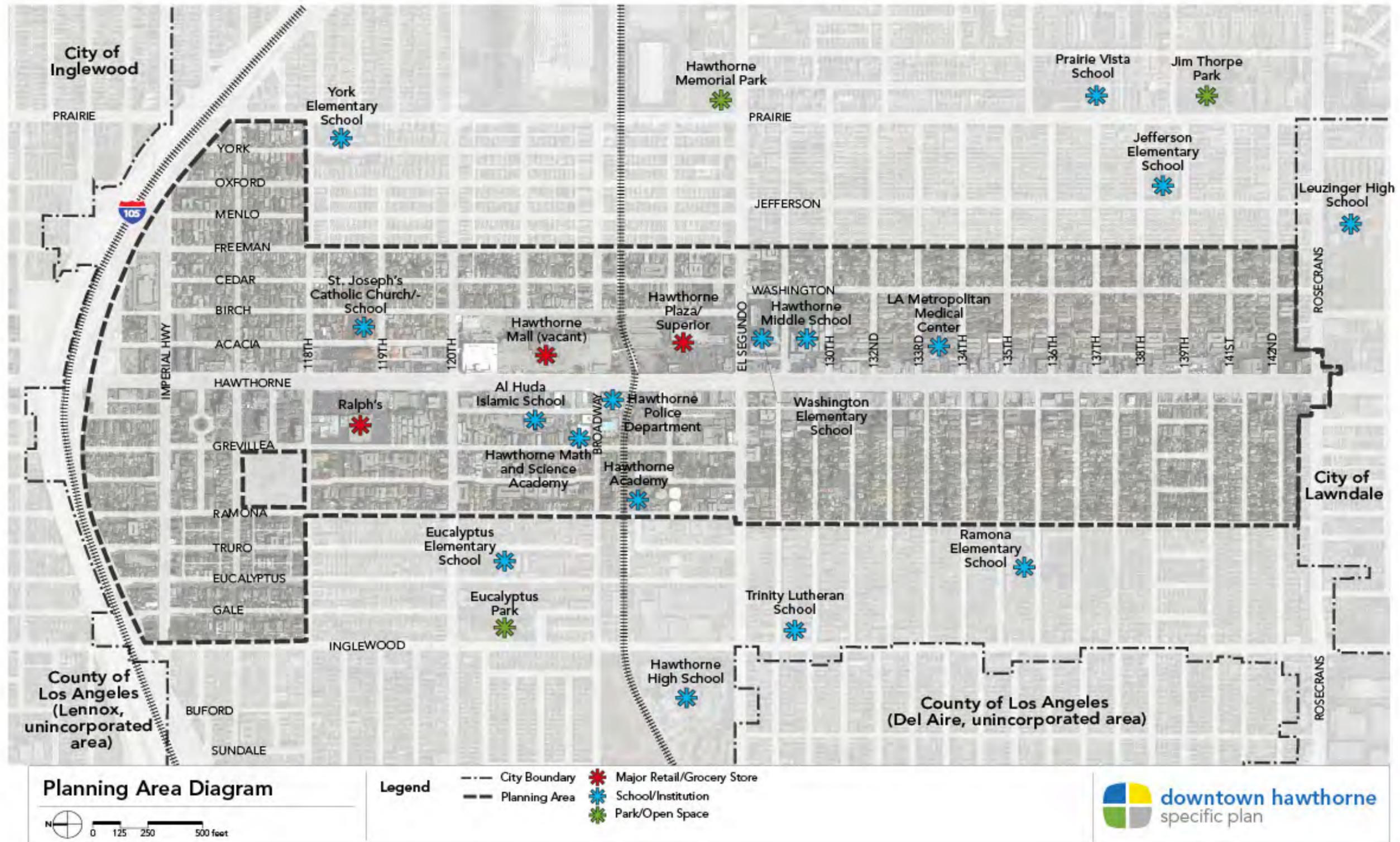
With the economic downturn of 2008, more storefronts closed, jobs disappeared and property maintenance worsened not only along the major corridors but also within the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Today, thousands of commuters quickly drive through Downtown en route to other destinations, unaware that over half of the area is comprised of low-income households. While the city is still in a transition period, Hawthorne has had recent success building on its historical strengths to meet the changing needs of the manufacturing and aerospace industries. For instance, innovative technology companies like Space Exploration Technologies Corporation (SpaceX) and Tesla Motors currently have design and manufacturing headquarters in facilities formerly used by the Northrop Corporation.

Planning Area Context

The Downtown Hawthorne planning area is focused around the approximately two mile segment of Hawthorne Boulevard that runs from Interstate 105 to Rosecrans Boulevard, and the adjacent commercial and residential neighborhoods (see diagram on the following page). This area is bounded on the north by the community of Lennox (Los Angeles County), south by the City of Lawndale, east by Freeman and Prairie avenues, and west by Ramona and Inglewood Avenues. In addition to Hawthorne Boulevard, the planning area also includes portions of Imperial Highway, 120th Street, El Segundo Boulevard and Rosecrans Avenue within Downtown.

The planning area contains a diverse mix of building sizes and conditions that reflect the area’s historic development trends. Hawthorne Boulevard is flanked by many small, shallow parcels, a common pattern in former streetcar corridors. The major exception to the pattern of small parcels is the Hawthorne Mall site, which dates from a redevelopment project in the 1970s.

In some parts of the corridor—particularly between Rosecrans and El Segundo Boulevards—building stock harkens back to the streetcar era, with narrow storefronts directly fronting onto the street and limited on-site parking. Other parts of the corridor are more automobile-oriented, with strip retail centers featuring significant surface parking and buildings set back from the street. Retail is the predominant land use, including a number of grocery stores, drug stores,





Interactive walking tours provided the community a “hands on” approach to planning



Workshops and presentations provided opportunities to update the community

restaurants, automotive service uses, personal and financial services, and other stores that primarily serve residents and employees who live and work in and around the Downtown area. In addition, the planning area also includes a wide array of different single family and multi-family residential.

What is a Specific Plan?

The Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan is a strategic document that provides guidance to City officials and staff, addresses the community’s unique issues, and sets the course for positive future change. It includes a series of text, diagrams and graphics that describe concepts and requirements for future public improvements and private developments. It will be used by the City to enhance the economic vibrancy, character, health and overall quality of the Downtown area.

More specifically, this document is a tool that the City will use for the systematic implementation of the Hawthorne General

Plan. It establishes a link between implementing policies of the General Plan and individual projects. State law requires the Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan to be consistent with the Hawthorne General Plan. Specifically, this plan is consistent with Land Use Policies 1.2 and 2.3 that provide for review of the Hawthorne Boulevard area to determine a feasible approach for commercial revitalization. In addition, the major goals, policies and strategies of this plan are consistent with other goals and policies established in the General Plan.

Major funding for the Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan came from a \$277,000 Sustainable Communities Planning Grant and Incentives Program Grant (Proposition 84) awarded to the City by the State of California’s Strategic Growth Council (SGC). The SGC realized the importance of Downtown Hawthorne, not only as center of commerce and employment, but also a growing community with great access to regional transportation. The City of Hawthorne also allocated substantial staff resources to this project.

As part of the Specific Plan process, the City of Hawthorne is also currently funding and preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) consistent with

the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR is an analysis tool that will help decision-makers, staff and the community understand the potential environmental impacts or benefits associated with implementation of the Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan. The Draft EIR is scheduled for release in late fall of 2015.

Planning Process

The planning process for Downtown Hawthorne, which began in mid-2013, was designed around extensive, thoughtful input from the local community. The City created a comprehensive four-phase process to ensure there were ample opportunities to conduct research, prepare reports and materials, and conduct necessary environmental review. Each phase also included multiple opportunities and methods to directly engage the local business community, property owners, residents, students and workers. The following diagram outlines the major phases of the planning process.

1	Discovery Background research, community intercepts and visioning	Summer 2013
2	Foundation Public planning charrette, planning and design concepts, and economic analysis	Fall 2013 - Winter 2014
3	Plan Preparation Initial draft specific plan and community input on plan concepts	Spring - Summer 2014
4	Public Review and Approvals Environmental impact report (EIR) and formal public hearings	Fall 2015 - Winter 2016

Community Engagement and Participation

A range of ideas, concepts and visions were expressed during the process by a wide variety of stakeholders, including local residents. The following are some of the key ways the City engaged the community throughout the process:

WEBPAGE

To help promote the project and make information more accessible, the City developed a project-specific webpage dedicated to Downtown Hawthorne. The webpage includes a summary of the project, links to available documents and information for how people can provide input. The webpage is available at: www.cityofhawthorne.com/downtown

SOCIAL MEDIA

In addition to the webpage, the City launched a comprehensive social media campaign to keep the community informed and engaged. This included creating and maintaining a Facebook page (**Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan**) and a Twitter account (@**hawthornedt**). These social media platforms allowed the City to present ideas and concepts, engage the community in open discussion, and respond quickly to questions about the project.

STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

The City held a series of facilitated meetings with City Council members and local stakeholder groups to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing Downtown Hawthorne. The informal discussions provided an opportunity to discuss different ideas and strategies for the future. Specific stakeholder groups included a project Steering Committee, the Economic Development Council and the Mayor's Economic Roundtable.

NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY

The City developed a Neighborhood Survey to directly solicit the community's thoughts about their transportation options, safety concerns, places they like to visit and shop, and things they like about Downtown Hawthorne. The City and consultants held several "intercept" events where City staff and consultants conducted surveys at high traffic venues in Downtown Hawthorne, such as supermarkets, coffee shops, transit stops and other commercial areas.

WORKSHOP #1: COMMUNITY VISIONING

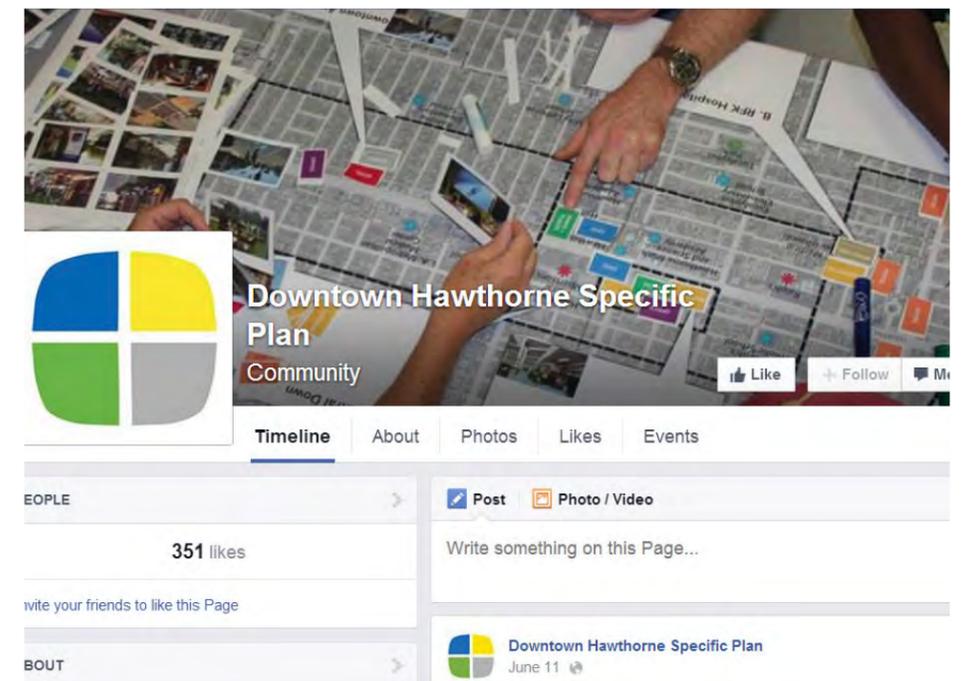
On Saturday, September 28, 2013 the City held a public workshop to provide an overview of the project; identify planning and design assets, challenges and opportunities; and discuss community desires for future land use, urban design, mobility and economic development. The workshop included a walking tour of the Hawthorne and El Segundo Boulevard area, including the Hawthorne Mall and Civic Center sites. Following the walking tour was an interactive preference survey and a group mapping exercise.

WORKSHOP #2: DRAFT SPECIFIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

On March 13, 2014, the City held the second public workshop to present and solicit community feedback on key emerging concepts for Downtown Hawthorne included in the Draft Specific Plan Framework. The workshop had a flexible, open house format with staff and consultants giving overview presentations approximately every hour. During the remainder of the time, participants had the opportunity to view and share their ideas, perspectives and insights on draft plan components. The community provided extensive feedback on the draft Framework components, which the City used to develop the Specific Plan document.



An interactive workshop allowed the community to directly edit the Plan Framework



A facilitated Facebook page allowed the City to keep the community updated, while also providing a means for the community to raise questions or give ideas



Neighborhood surveys provided valuable information to the planning process



Community events like Farmers Markets add life and energy to Downtown Hawthorne

Plan Overview

The Downtown Hawthorne Specific Plan is a strategic, action-oriented document that presents a clear vision followed by specific strategies and actions necessary to achieve positive change in the coming years. It provides a range of short- to long-term and low- to high-cost implementation actions that will be carried out by the City of Hawthorne, partner public agencies, and the broader community. Each specific action reflects the community's vision, is intended to be realistic and achievable, and is based on sound policy for future decision-making.

Each chapter helps tell the story of Downtown Hawthorne and how it will become an even better place in the years ahead. Following this Introduction, the Specific Plan consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Vision Framework

This chapter establishes the high-level vision for Downtown Hawthorne's future, including several important plan goals. It introduces five Vision Elements, which are supported by specific Plan Strategies and Transformative Projects. It also includes a comprehensive Strategy Diagram, which highlights important physical improvement opportunities in Downtown.

Chapter 3: Plan Strategies

This chapter expands upon the Vision Elements and includes 17 Plan Strategies that are key to implementing the community's vision. Each Plan Strategy includes a goal statement and summary of why it is important, followed by specific policies and strategies for achieving the goal. This includes technical information and numerous graphics, illustrations and photos to give life to each idea and concept.

Chapter 4: Transformative Projects

This chapter includes five Transformative Projects that are key to the future evolution of Downtown Hawthorne. These projects represent key sites within Downtown where significant public and private investment will be focused to create catalytic changes, including the Hawthorne Mall and Civic Center.

Chapter 5: Implementation

This chapter outlines the major actions and ongoing commitments required to implement the plan and realize the vision for Downtown Hawthorne. This includes diagrams identifying future land use, mobility and infrastructure changes and improvements. It also includes a detailed Implementation Action Plan that prioritizes public projects and investments, and identifies funding mechanisms necessary to achieve the community's vision.