

1

Introduction

DUARTE TOWN CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN

1

Introduction

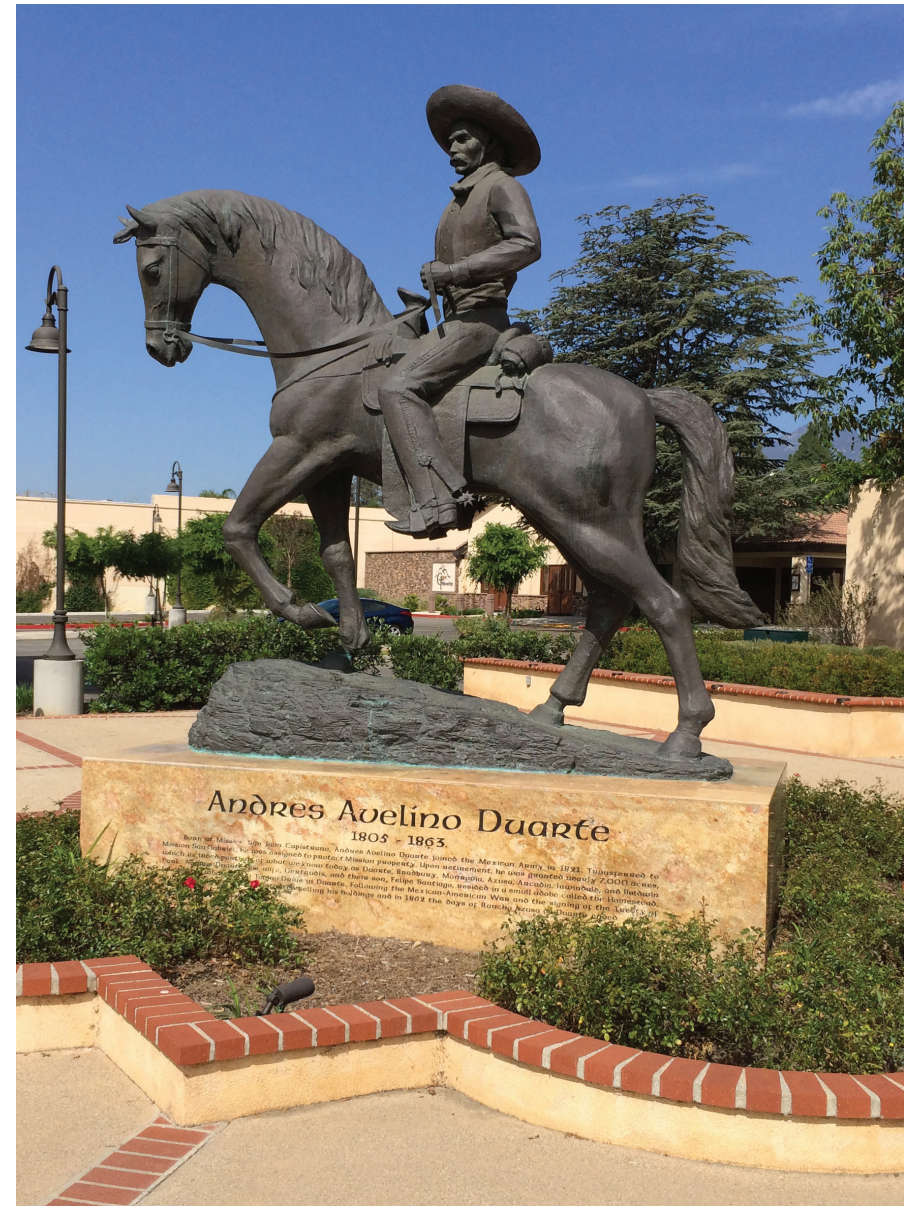
The City of Duarte, located in a beautiful foothill setting, is a home to an array of assets and amenities. From its tree-lined streets and world-class hospital to its rich historic past, Duarte is a community that evokes a sense of pride in its residents.

Despite these many qualities, residents have noted that Duarte lacks a “sense of place.” The City has no historic town center or central gathering spot. Pedestrians do not have a place to comfortably shop or stroll along storefronts, relax with friends in a plaza, or come together for community events.

In response, in the early 2000s the City initiated work on a Town Center Concept Plan to foster the eventual development of just such a place. Adopted by the City Council in 2003, the Town Center Concept Plan envisioned a community-oriented, walkable, mixed-use activity center in the heart of Duarte.

In 2012, the City convened a Town Center Ad Hoc Committee to revisit the 2003 Town Center Concept Plan vision. The Ad Hoc Committee reaffirmed the original Vision and recommended that the City Council authorize preparation of a specific plan to implement that Vision. The specific plan was envisioned as the mechanism to encourage and promote mixed-use development and set forth a plan for streetscape improvements in the area.

The Town Center Concept Plan originally identified an approximately one-mile stretch of Huntington Drive, along with the portion of Buena Vista Street from Huntington Drive south to the I-210 freeway, as Duarte’s core town center. This area would be enhanced and activated through a variety of public and private sector improvements. With the opening of the Duarte Metro Gold





Buena Vista Street (view to the north)



Duarte Clock Tower located at the Teen Center



The public right of way in front of City Hall on Huntington



Duarte Metro Gold Line Station, located just south of the Specific Plan area

Line Station, the original Town Center concept has been expanded to also include Highland Avenue in this new planning effort. The expansion will accommodate enhanced mobility options to and from the Gold Line station area, as well as promote additional transit-oriented development opportunities in Duarte.

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan is an action-oriented plan that sets standards and guidelines for new building forms, as well as land use and mobility regulations for activities within the Town Center. The Plan seeks to create a **memorable, accessible, and economically vibrant Town Center**. The Specific Plan is the result of extensive community engagement, planning, and design efforts. It builds upon community desires and aspirations from residents, businesses, property owners, stakeholders, City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council.

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan aims to be truly transformative. It implements the **Town Center Vision**, outlines **development standards and design guidelines** to support the vision, and identifies **action steps** to achieve key objectives.

1.1 PLAN PURPOSE

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan provides a long-term strategy for revitalizing central Duarte and creating a more downtown-like environment. Through concerted, strategic efforts, the Town Center has the potential to become an iconic and attractive place for new and existing businesses to flourish, accompanied by new residential developments, shopping opportunities, and entertainment uses in an inviting, walkable, and bikeable environment.

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan provides the framework to guide future public and private investment in the Town Center over an approximate 20-year planning horizon. In general, development activity is stimulated and influenced by a range of tools, including:

- Development standards, design guidelines, and other regulatory tools and metrics
- Public infrastructure improvements
- A comprehensive and strategic set of policy, physical, and programmatic implementation actions

These elements will serve as an impetus and guide for tangible change to the Town Center. This document represents the community's cohesive vision and provides solutions to transform the area into a memorable, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, and interconnected Town Center.



Duarte City Hall (view to the north), showing the base of the Angeles National Forest in the distance

WHAT IS A SPECIFIC PLAN?

A specific plan is a zoning and development tool to implement the City's General Plan. It establishes a link between General Plan policies and individual development proposals in a defined area. State law requires that specific plans be consistent with the General Plan. The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan is a direct implementation measure of the Duarte General Plan, which called for creation of a specific plan in this general area to foster mixed-use development and overall revitalization.

1.2 PLAN CONTEXT

1.2.1 AREA CONTEXT

Duarte is located in Los Angeles County, California, at the southern base of the San Gabriel Mountains. It is bordered by Monrovia to the west, Bradbury to the north, Azusa to the east, and Irwindale to the southeast. Duarte has a total area of approximately six and one-half square miles.

The city is connected to neighboring cities and regionally by Interstate 210 (I-210), Interstate 605 (I-605), and Huntington Drive (Route 66). Huntington Drive also provides a link to civic and commercial uses within Duarte, while key north-south corridors such as Buena Vista Street and Highland Avenue connect retail services, medical-related uses, the Duarte Metro Gold Line station, and business park areas to the city's residential neighborhoods.

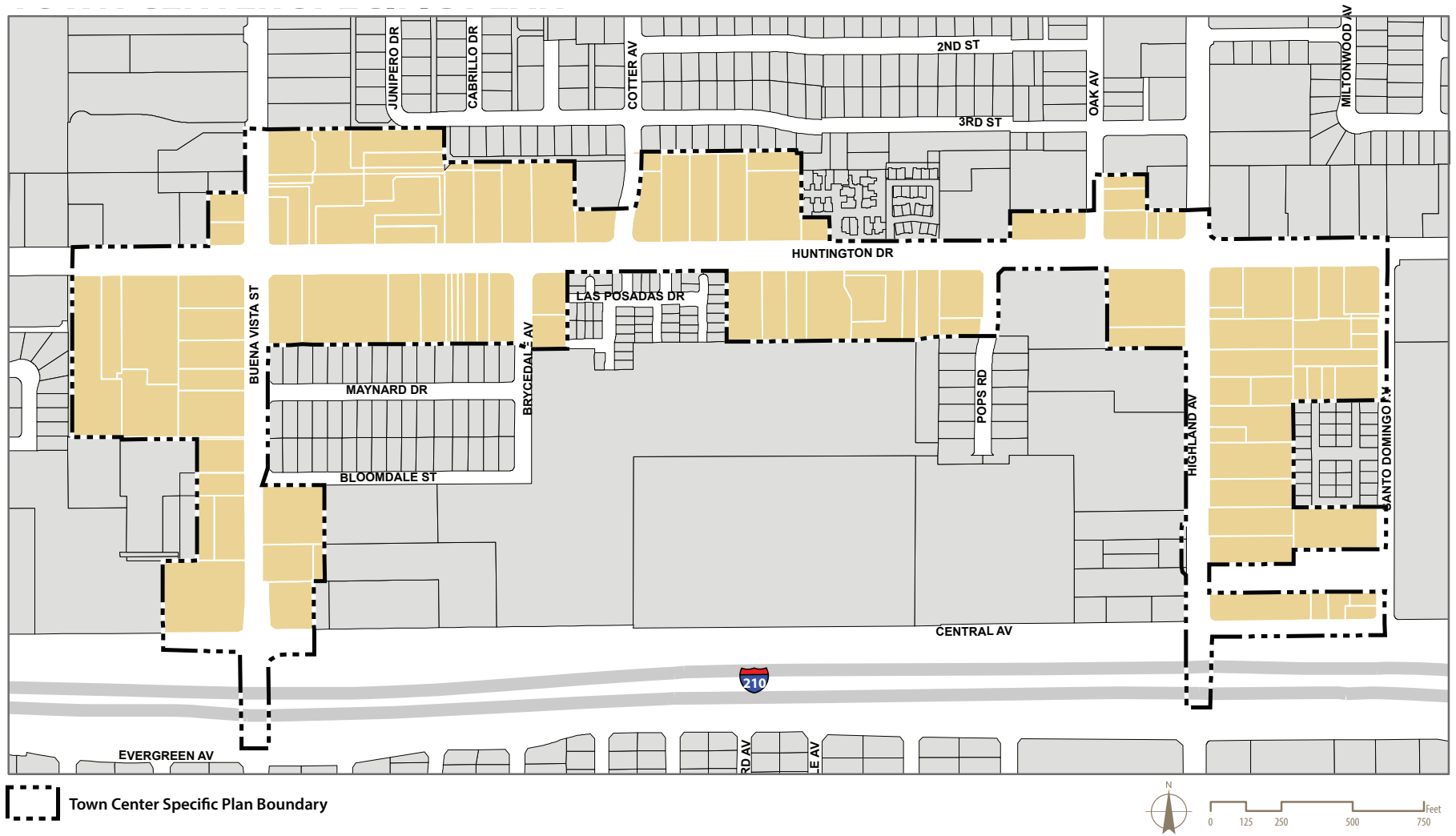
1.2.2 PLANNING BOUNDARY

Duarte's Town Center generally extends north from I-210 along Highland Avenue at the eastern boundary and Buena Vista Street at the western boundary to Huntington Drive. Huntington Drive and the parcels on the north and south sides of Huntington Drive span the Specific Plan area. The plan area encompasses approximately 75 net acres.



Aerial view of the Specific Plan area, 2016

Figure 1-1: Planning Area





Duarte's State Citrus Fair exhibit, 1891



Duarte Shopping Center, 1964



Historic Route 66 (Huntington Drive in Duarte)



Duarte's historic citrus groves

1.2.3 LOCAL HISTORY

The community of Duarte was founded as a rancho in the 1850s and incorporated in 1957. Facilitated by expanding railways that fueled local agricultural growth, Duarte became well-known and regarded for its citrus orchards and avocado groves. The construction of Route 66 along Huntington Drive initially supported the agricultural industry, and also prompted the construction of a number of new auto-oriented businesses, including motor hotels, restaurants, garages, and service centers. In 1957, Duarte installed its first traffic light at the eastern edge of the city on Huntington Drive. The next major cycle in Duarte's development followed World War II, where the population tripled as the construction of hundreds of new tract homes replaced the city's lush citrus groves. It doubled again in the 1980s with another wave of home building. In 2016, Duarte had a population of just over 20,000 residents.

1.3 SPECIFIC PLAN PROCESS

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan is the culmination of a broad community-based process, beginning in the early 2000s with the Town Center Vision Plan.

In 2015, the process of crafting the Specific Plan began, drawing from early visioning efforts as the primary foundation. To that end, local stakeholders, business and property owners, neighborhood representatives, elected and appointed officials, and members of the public representing a broad cross-section of Duarte were brought together as an Ad Hoc advisory group. The City also hired a multi-disciplinary consultant team to support the planning process and perform necessary technical analyses for the Specific Plan effort. The consultant team included planners, designers, economists, and environmental specialists.

Early in the process, the consultant team conducted a series of stakeholder interviews to assess existing conditions, issues, and solutions. Monthly meetings with the Ad Hoc Committee were held to discuss issues and opportunities, develop the Specific Plan Framework, and review the Draft Specific Plan. Participants voiced aspirations for the future of the Duarte Town Center; discussed the challenges, issues, and opportunities affecting the area; and expressed ideas for enhancing the Town Center. Feedback from community members was used to craft the vision and overarching goals for the Duarte Town

Center, confirm desired land uses, identify catalytic opportunity sites, and shape the standards and guidelines that form the basis of this Specific Plan.

1.4 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This Specific Plan is designed to be easily understood and referenced by a range of users, including City staff, elected officials, developers, business and property owners, and community members. To help navigate the main components of the document, the following steps are a quick way to understand the different sections of the plan.

Step 1: Find Out What Land Use District Applies to Your Project.

Locate your project location on Figure 3-1: Land Use Map (Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning) to determine which land use district applies. Review the narrative description for that particular land use to determine whether your proposed project complies with the intent of the Specific Plan for that land use district. Descriptions for each land use district can be found in Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning. Use the Land Use Table (Table 3-1: Land Uses and Permit Requirements) to determine if your project is allowed in a particular land use district.

Step 3: Review the Development Area Plans, Tables, and Maps.

If your proposed use is allowed, refer to Figure 3-2: Town Center Development Area Map to determine the appropriate development standards that apply to your project. Each area has unique objectives and building form standards as described in Table 3-2: Summary of Building Form Standards in Areas 1-5 and Table 3-3: Summary of Building Form Standards in Areas 6-10. Development Standards are organized into three tiers -- base standards and two tiers of bonus standards.

Step 3: Review the Development Standards and Design Guidelines.

Next, review the development standards applicable to all area plans (Section 3.6) and design guidelines located in Chapter 4: Design Guidelines and Standards. Review Chapter 5: Mobility to understand how the location of your project fits with the Town Center circulation network.

Step 4: Speak with a City Planner.

The City encourages you to speak with a planner for any questions about how the Specific Plan applies to your project or the application process.

Step 5: Follow the Appropriate Application Process.

Review Section 7.3: Specific Plan Administration and the Development Code; use the City's application process to have your project reviewed.

1.5 DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

The Duarte Town Center Specific Plan integrates a set of bold strategies to achieve the vision of vibrant, thriving, connected, and memorable Town Center.

Chapters 1 and 2 set the stage for the future by describing the community-informed vision and goals for the Town Center. Chapters 3 through 6 contain the specific development standards and design guidelines to be used to create the transformed Town Center environment envisioned by the community. Chapter 7 outlines strategic implementation and steps needed to achieve positive, tangible change. This includes a series of near-term and long-term actions to be carried out by the City of Duarte in partnership with both public and private agencies.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the purpose of the plan and provides background information to orient the reader.

Chapter 2: Vision Framework

Chapter 2 presents the community-based vision and framework that guided formulation of the Town Center Specific Plan.

Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning

Chapter 3 provides the regulatory framework for future development, renovations, and ongoing maintenance within the Specific Plan planning area. The chapter identifies allowable land uses and illustrates development standards tailored to each part of the Town Center.

Chapter 4: Design Guidelines and Standards

This chapter sets the physical guidelines to perpetuate excellence in design and quality of craftsmanship to enhance the Town Center environment in both the public and private realms.

Chapter 5: Mobility

The Mobility Chapter proposes physical improvement to the public right-of-way geared towards establishing a robust mobility network with enhancements to streets, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities.

Chapter 6: Infrastructure

Chapter 6 assesses the condition of infrastructure (water, storm drainage, sanitary sewer and power lines) in relation to these systems' abilities to meet the demands of projected new growth.

Chapter 7: Implementation

The final chapter outlines major actions necessary to implement the vision, strategies, and concepts of the Specific Plan. It includes a detailed Implementation Action Plan with specific action steps, funding sources, and timelines to implement incremental change.