

City of Duarte

TOWN CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY



Date: July 2015
Prepared by:
MIG, Inc.



DUARTE TOWN CENTER STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

On June 24, 2015, Duarte Town Center Specific Plan consultant MIG met with eight key stakeholders to help inform the planning process and to **identify key land use and development needs, opportunities and challenges in the district**. The consultant team conducted interviews with a cross-section of stakeholders, including architects, developers, real estate brokers, business representatives and property owners. Interviewees were asked a series of questions regarding broad-based concerns and objectives for the Town Center, as well as specific topics. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them not otherwise raised in response to specific questions.

This summary presents the comments and key themes discussed during the interviews. Some comments may be contradictory where interviewees had differences of opinion.

KEY THEMES

Through the interviews, a few key themes emerged, as outlined below. Graphic summaries of each interview are included at the end of this document.

- **Address Derelict Properties:** Certain properties stand out as “gap teeth” and need rehabilitation or redevelopment.
- **Foster an Active Street Life:** Key changes are required to make the major corridors more pedestrian friendly, including installing streetscape improvements and enhancements and encouraging development to interact with the street through site design and outdoor spaces.
- **Capture Commuter Traffic:** Currently there are big impacts and limited benefit from commuters passing through town. In order to make commuters stop and visit local businesses, a concentrated node of desirable destinations is necessary.
- **Build on Existing Assets:** The Civic Center, historic Route 66, well-designed new developments and great local employers are assets that should be recognized and built upon.
- **Identify Catalytic Sites and Realistic Uses:** The Buena Vista/Huntington node is a critical component of the Town Center. Demand exists for new residential and potentially a “restaurant row”.
- **Provide Flexibility for Developers and Property Owners/Businesses:** Key areas of flexibility can be open space and parking requirements.
- **Be Action Oriented:** It’s time to stop thinking and start doing.

Address Derelict Properties

Development has occurred in a patch-work fashion over the years, without clear land use planning to guide it. Partially as a result of this, and partially due to absentee landlords, certain properties stand out as “gap teeth” and need rehabilitation or redevelopment. Specifically, concerns were voiced about both the Big Lots and the Mike’s Foods centers, and there was clear consensus from participants that the liquor store at Buena Vista Street/Huntington Drive has to go.

There are good infill opportunities with vacant and underutilized properties, especially along Huntington Drive; catalytic projects should be identified and encouraged. Derelict properties need to be addressed so that people feel safe and places look more inviting.

Foster an Active Street Life

The lack of pedestrian crossings, in addition to the width and speed of Huntington Drive, creates a barrier for many to cross, especially seniors. To create a Town Center, it will be necessary to improve streetscapes and rights-of-way, slow down traffic and provide public investment. New development on key catalyst sites must have a retail or retail-like component on street front to encourage activity.

Identify Catalytic Sites and Realistic Uses

Multiple key opportunity sites were discussed (see attached maps), with one commonality: all interviewees agreed that the Buena Vista Street/Huntington Drive node must be a critical component of the Town Center and increased densities should be encouraged here. A plaza was recommended for the northeast corner of the node, flanked by active commercial uses. The Specific Plan should encourage development of catalytic projects and improvements to create clusters of more intense experiences, promote walkability and strengthen identity.

Demand was identified especially for residential uses, some restaurant uses, and potentially some small amount of specialized bio-medical office. The Town Center needs to attract family-friendly businesses, and quality restaurants – and these need to be localized/concentrated (retail likes other retail). In addition, an increase in the local population (through new residential developments) is necessary to draw the new restaurant uses.

Capture Commuter Traffic

Pass-through traffic on Huntington is not currently stopping – in order to make them stop, destination places are necessary. To have a true Town Center, traffic needs to slow down, just like in all good downtowns.

In addition to commuters, we also have a large population of youth just south of the Town Center area. The Plan should ensure connections to the school, perhaps a bike/skateboard lane to get students up to Huntington (to the restaurant row).

Build on Existing Assets

The sense of history and authenticity are valued throughout the community, but are mostly hidden now. Recommendations were made to officially adopt Route 66. Improvements to the corridor should emphasize Duarte's hometown feel.

Existing local employers, including City of Hope and Santa Teresita, are representative of the "City of Health." Local healthcare workers, especially residents at City of Hope, are located here short term (approximately 5 years) and would welcome nice, nearby apartments to rent, especially if paired with amenities and restaurants.

The Civic Center, and especially the Senior Center and community pool are great local assets that create a hub in the middle of the Town Center. Better connections to these assets are necessary.

The City is business-friendly and should continue to make efforts to remain so. The annual Taste of Duarte is a good example of an activity that draws people out and helps showcase Duarte businesses.

The Duarte Station is anticipated to become a primary asset as the Goldline begins service to Duarte this year. Demand will increase for nearby apartments within walking/biking distance of the station. To facilitate connections to the Town Center, improvements should be made to Highland Avenue.

Provide Flexibility for Developers and Property Owners/Businesses

Development standards should be flexible and creative to more easily accommodate desired uses. For example, the City could consider allowing some on-street parking to count towards required onsite parking, and think creatively about outdoor open space requirements.

In addition, the City should consider potential revisions to planning entitlements within the Town Center. For example, entertainment, attractive outdoor lighting, appropriate signage, and outdoor dining should be encouraged and streamlined, while existing properties that have let properties fall into disrepair should be actively pursued.

Be Action-Oriented

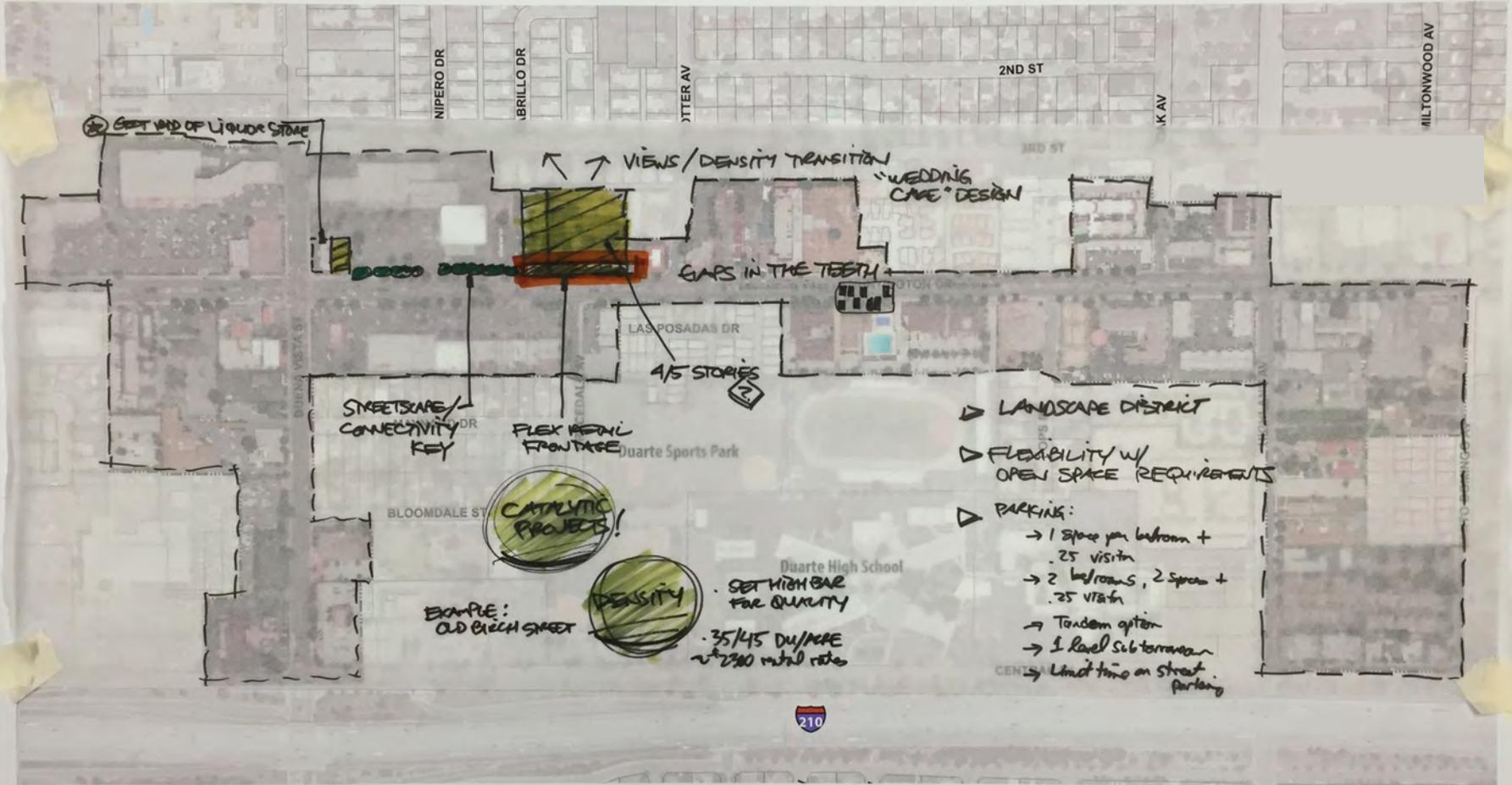
Many participants discussed other local downtowns, such as Myrtle Avenue in Monrovia, downtown Claremont, Bonita in San Dimas, D Street in La Verne, and Old Pasadena. Interviewees recognized that the Town Center was not going to turn into any of these examples, due largely to the character of the streets – but it could become something special and unique, and a place Duarte residents could cherish. Participants agreed: What these good downtowns have that the Town Center needs are walkable streets, desirable destinations and good restaurants.

To achieve the Town Center Vision, it will take time. In the interim, smaller improvements should be made, while the big changes line up.

CONCLUSION

The 2003 Town Center Concept Plan, which was affirmed by the Ad Hoc Committee in 2013, set the foundation for the Vision for the Duarte Town Center Specific Plan. Through the stakeholder interviews described above, along with input from the Duarte Town Center Ad Hoc Committee, the Vision is reaffirmed and goals are being established. There will be multiple additional avenues of community input, including community workshops, Ad Hoc Committee meetings, surveys, and public hearings. All residents, business owners, property owners, and interested parties are encouraged to become involved in the process of creating a Town Center Specific Plan that reflects the desires of the community, is action-oriented, practical and innovative.

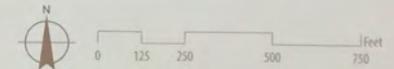
City of Duarte
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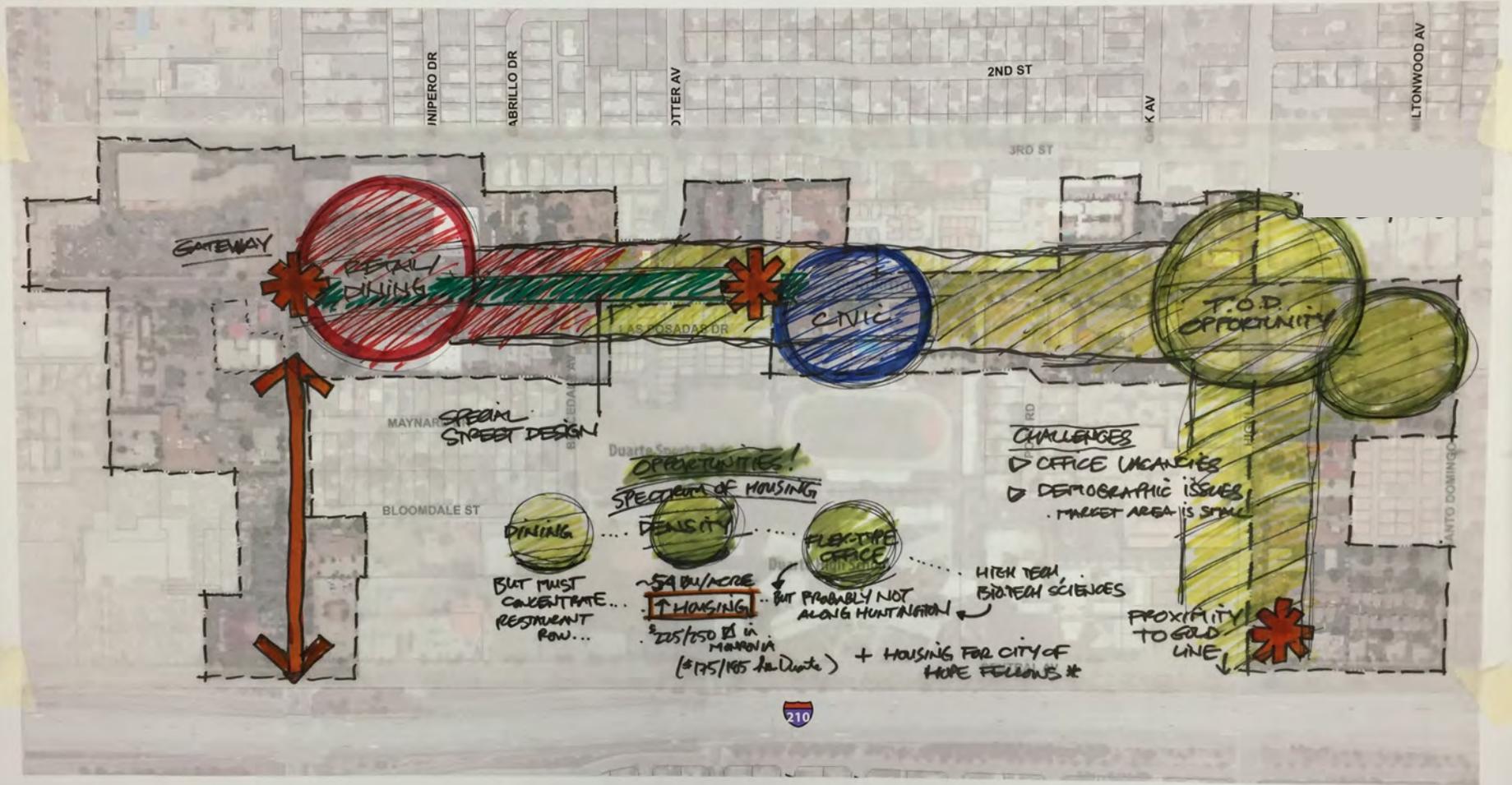
 Town Center Specific Plan Boundary

June 2015
 Source: City of Duarte
 Map Prepared by: MIG, Inc.



STUDY AREA MAP

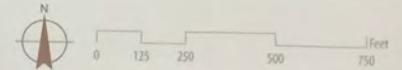
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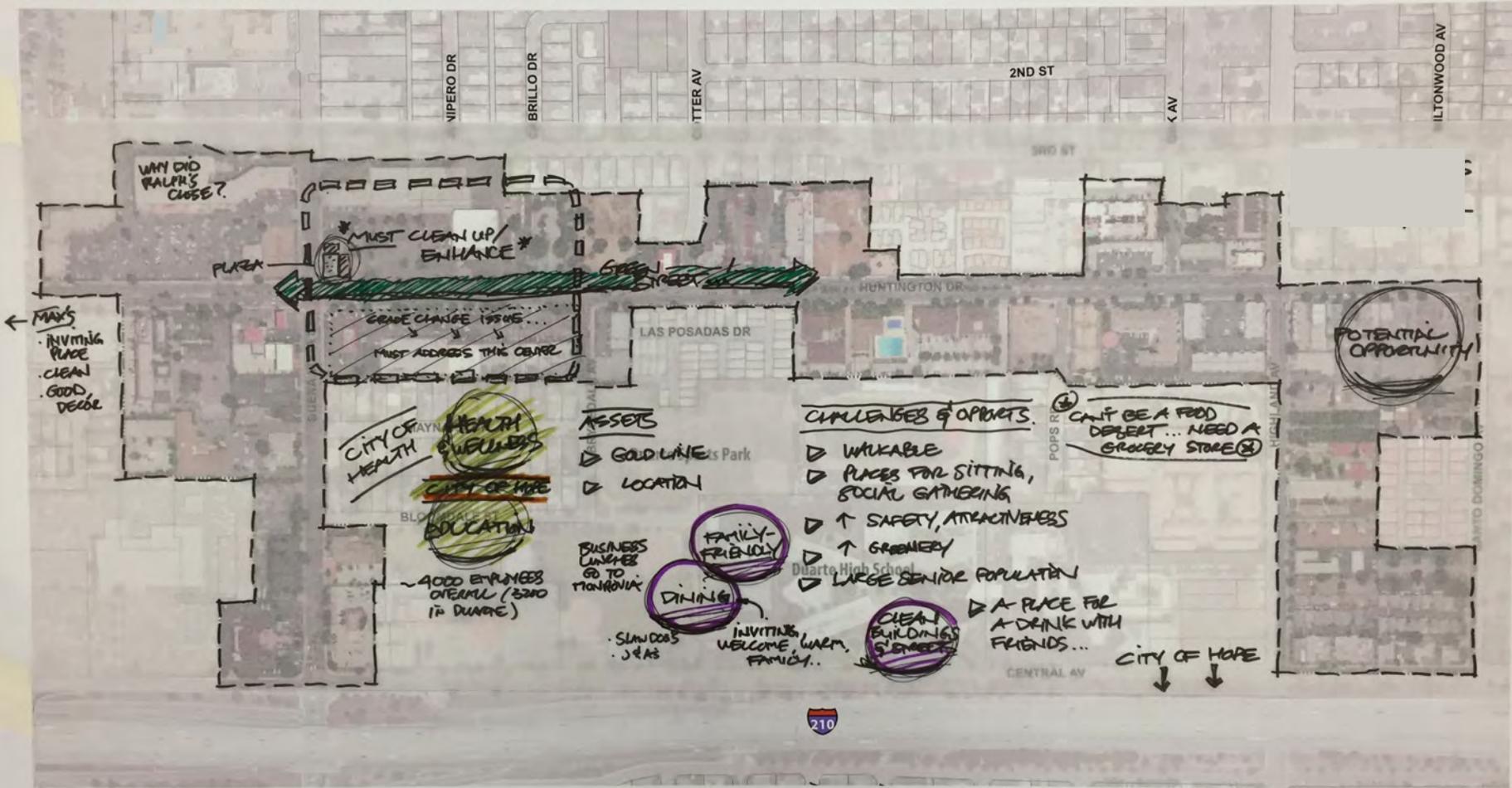
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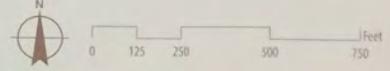
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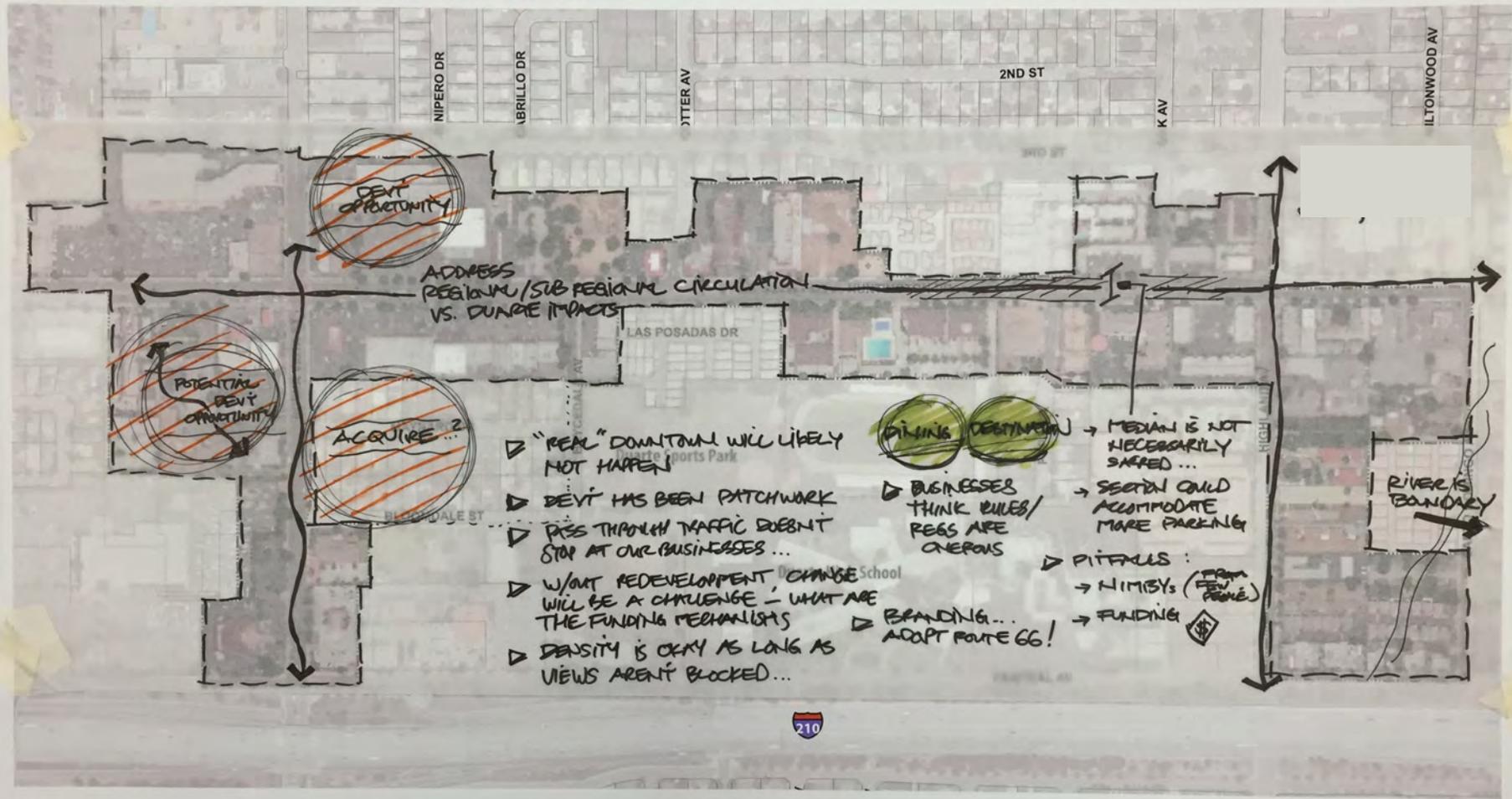
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STUDY AREA MAP

TOWN CENTER SPECIFIC PLAN



- ▷ "REAL" DOWNTOWN WILL LIKELY NOT HAPPEN
- ▷ DEVT HAS BEEN PATCHWORK
- ▷ PASS THROUGH TRAFFIC DOESNT STOP AT OUR BUSINESSES ...
- ▷ W/OUT REDEVELOPMENT CHANGE WILL BE A CHALLENGE - WHAT ARE THE FUNDING MECHANISMS
- ▷ DENSITY IS OKAY AS LONG AS VIEWS ARENT BLOCKED...

- ▷ BUSINESSSES THINK RULES/REGS ARE ONEROUS
- ▷ MEDIAN IS NOT NECESSARILY SACRED ...
- ▷ SECTION COULD ACCOMMODATE MORE PARKING
- ▷ PITFALLS:
 - NIMBYS (FROM THE PIONE)
 - FUNDING
- ▷ BRANDING... ADOPT ROUTE 66!

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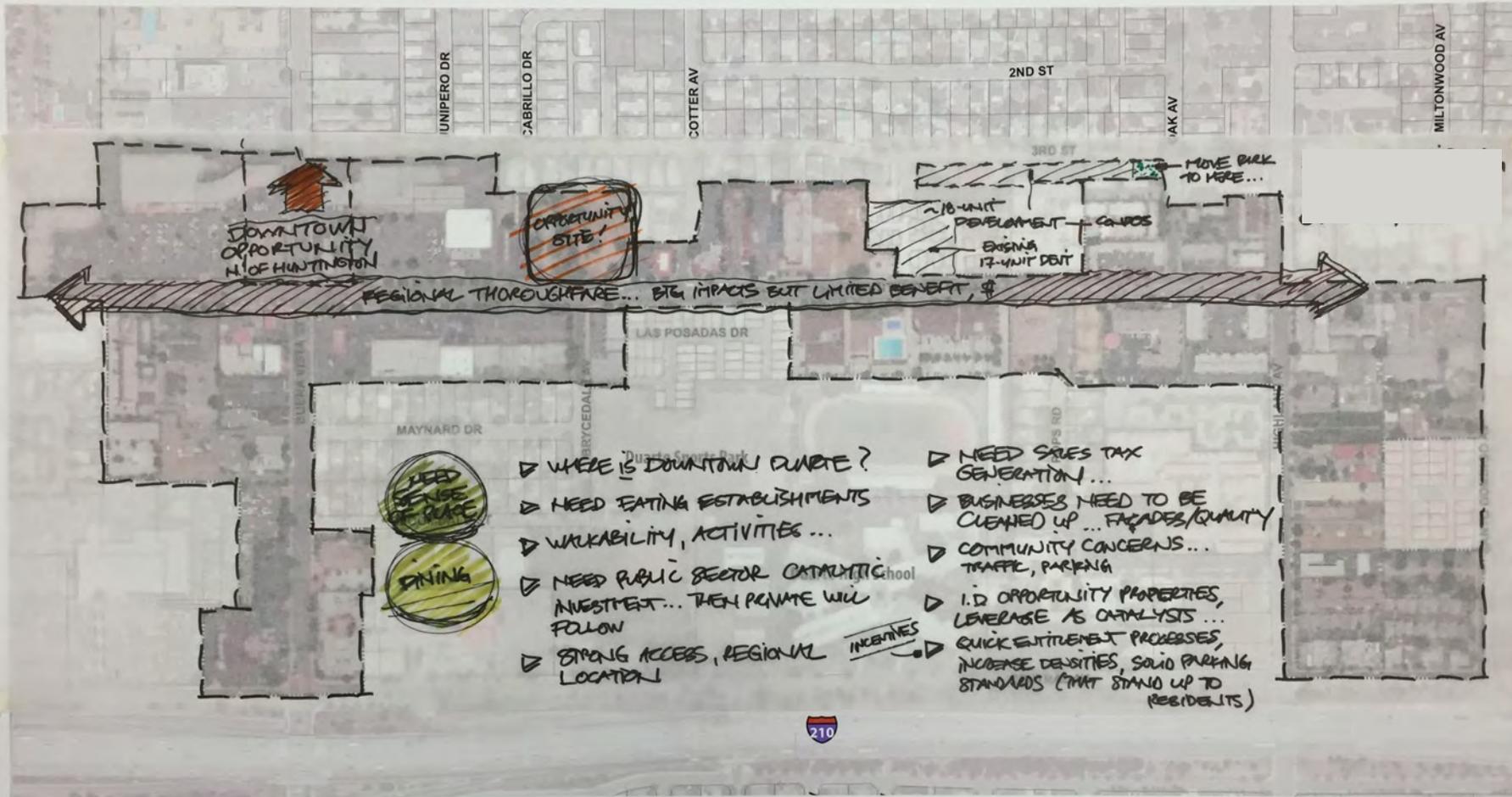
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- ▷ WHERE IS DOWNTOWN DUARTE?
- ▷ NEED EATING ESTABLISHMENTS
- ▷ WALKABILITY, ACTIVITIES ...
- ▷ NEED PUBLIC SECTOR CATALYTIC school INVESTMENT... THEN PRIVATE WILL FOLLOW
- ▷ STRONG ACCESS, REGIONAL LOCATION
- ▷ NEED SALES TAX GENERATION ...
- ▷ BUSINESSES NEED TO BE CLEANED UP ... FAÇADES/QUALITY
- ▷ COMMUNITY CONCERNS... TRAFFIC, PARKING
- ▷ I.D OPPORTUNITY PROPERTIES, LEVERAGE AS CATALYSTS ...
- ▷ QUICK ENTIREMENT PROCESSES, INCREASE DENSITIES, SOLID PARKING STANDARDS (THAT STAND UP TO RESIDENTS)

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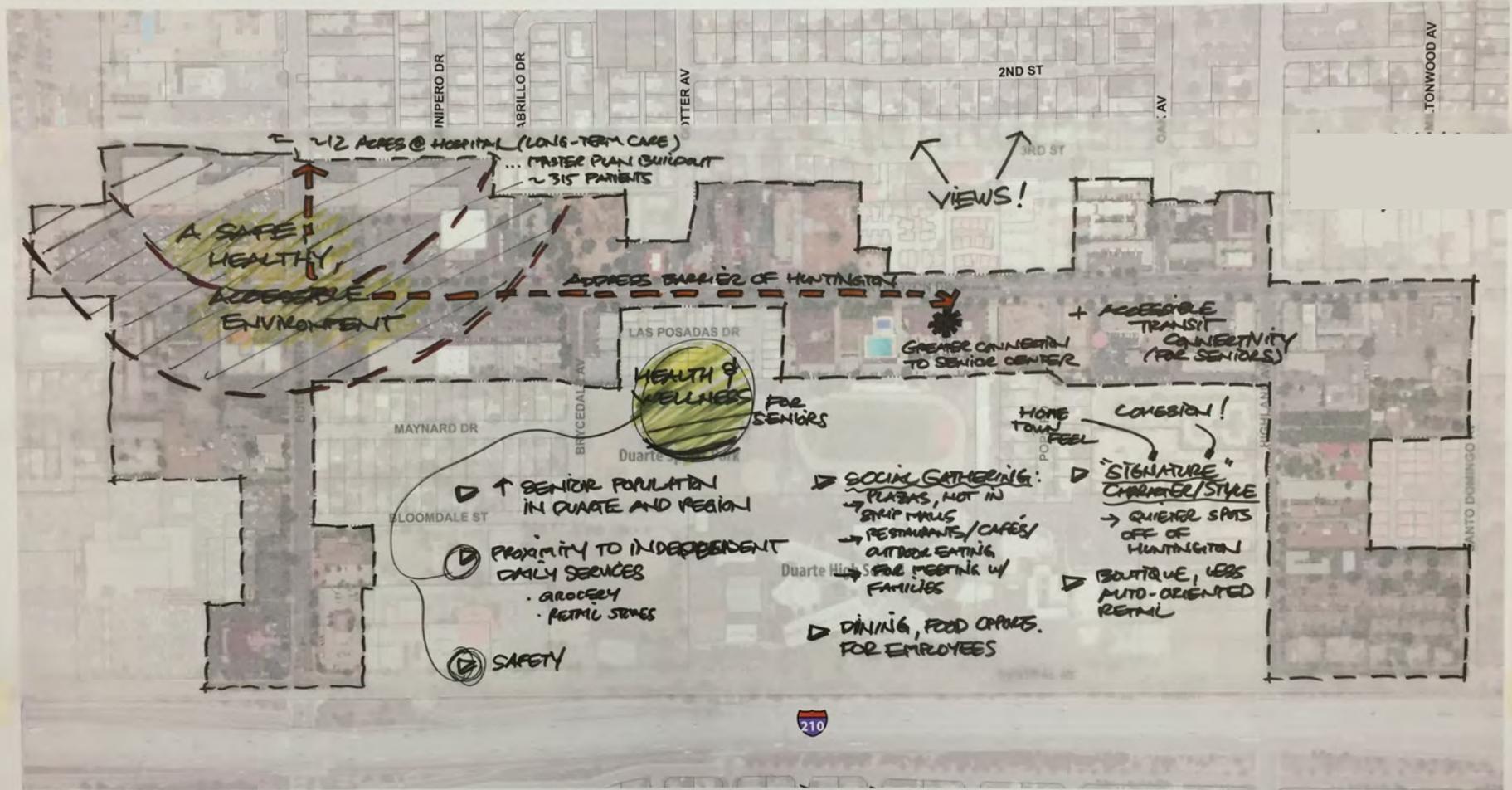
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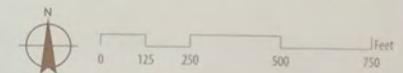
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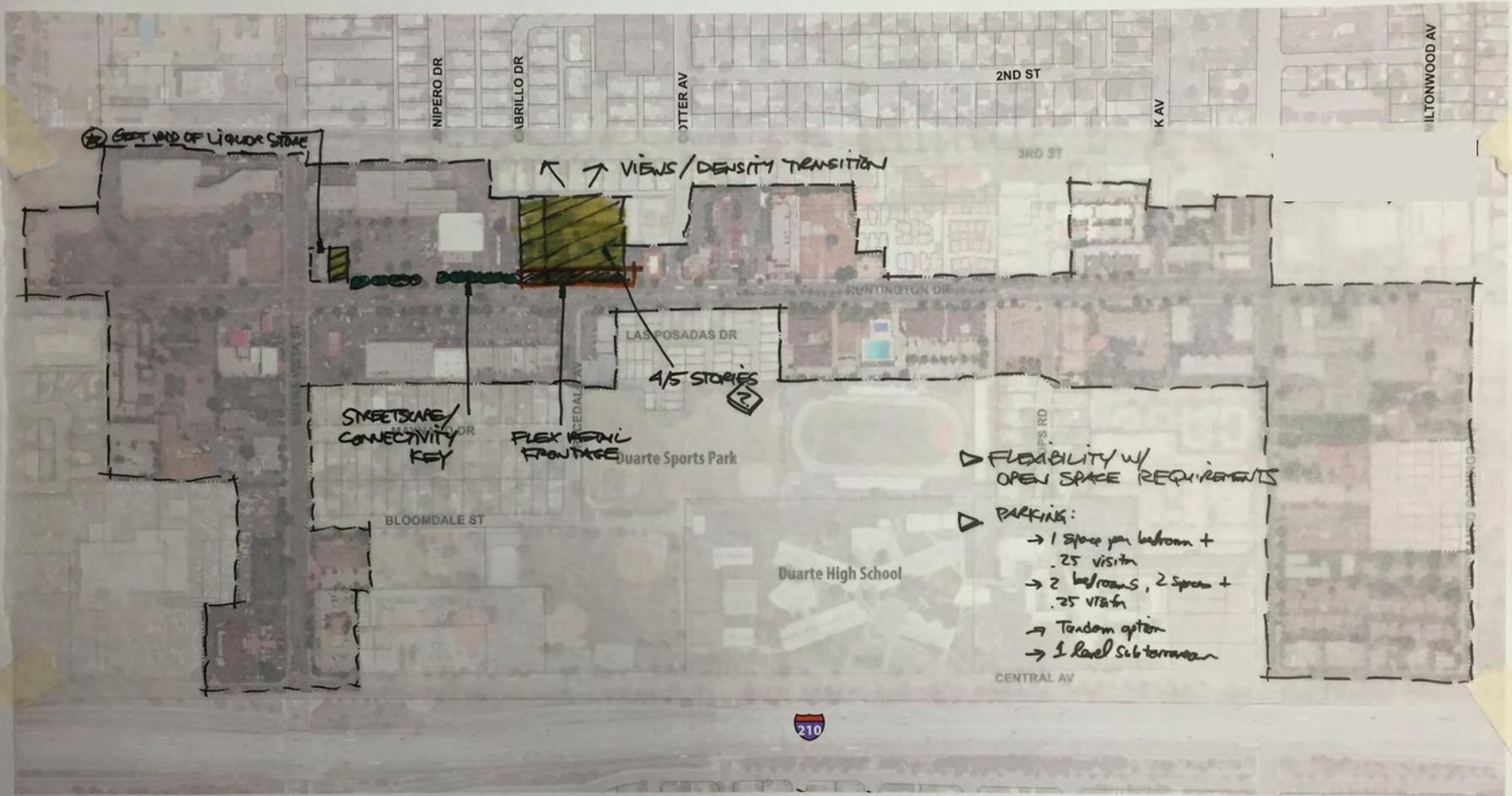
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