



PART I

CHAPTER

01





# INTRODUCTION

The Vacaville Downtown Specific Plan serves as a guide to inspire the continued growth and evolution of Vacaville’s Downtown core. It draws upon the ideas and values of the city’s residents, business owners, elected officials, staff, and other stakeholders to advance a shared vision for Downtown.

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*Downtown Vacaville gateway sign spanning Davis Street, near Catherine Street (Source: ESA)*

## 1.1 Purpose

The Vacaville Downtown Specific Plan (DTSP) provides structure and organization for efficient implementation of the vision for Downtown Vacaville and upholds the core community values identified during the community-driven process.

Funded in part by a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Sustainable Communities Grant, a Bay Area Metro Priority Development Area (PDA) planning grant, and a Senate Bill (SB) 2 Planning Grants Program grant, the DTSP will help guide future development of the Downtown Plan Area (Plan Area) to align with the vision of the City of Vacaville (City) and provide an outline for how the City can achieve the community's goals. The purpose of the DTSP is to:

- Implement the City of Vacaville General Plan (General Plan);
- Revitalize and enhance the economic, social, cultural, and recreational fabric of the city's downtown urban core;
- Clearly articulate land uses and development standards by district; and
- Create a structure and direction that will guide development in Downtown with a mix of uses including retail, office, and residential, supported by enhanced recreation, art, and mobility options.

### What is a Specific Plan?

A specific plan is a detailed planning document for a defined geographic region. State law requires every city in California to have a general plan, which establishes development and conservation goals, as well as the locations and intensity of different land uses in the city and its plan area. A specific plan implements the goals and policies of the general plan for a smaller geographic area, often establishing more detailed standards that go beyond what the general plan's land use designation or underlying zoning would normally regulate.



*Andrews Park bridge connecting to the Town Square Library (Source: ESA)*

## 1.2 Community-Driven Planning Process

The DTSP planning process was initiated by the City in March 2019 and has been driven by a community-wide effort. The DTSP was developed through a robust public process that included a broad spectrum of participants to generate ideas for both immediate improvements and future changes, focusing on ways to increase activity, connectivity, livability, and vibrancy in Vacaville's Downtown. This community-driven planning program was intended to inform, educate, and gather input from the community and key stakeholders. Topics discussed during larger group outreach events were wide-ranging, while other meetings focused on specific subjects, such as connectivity and transportation, Downtown businesses, parking, and arts and culture. The input received greatly influenced the overall shape and direction of the DTSP.

During a portion of the planning process, certain in-person activities were limited because of the social-distancing policies put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Strategies to make community outreach as inclusive, convenient, accessible, and relatable for participants as possible were a priority throughout the DTSP effort.



*Various DTSP outreach events (Sources: ESA, LGC)*

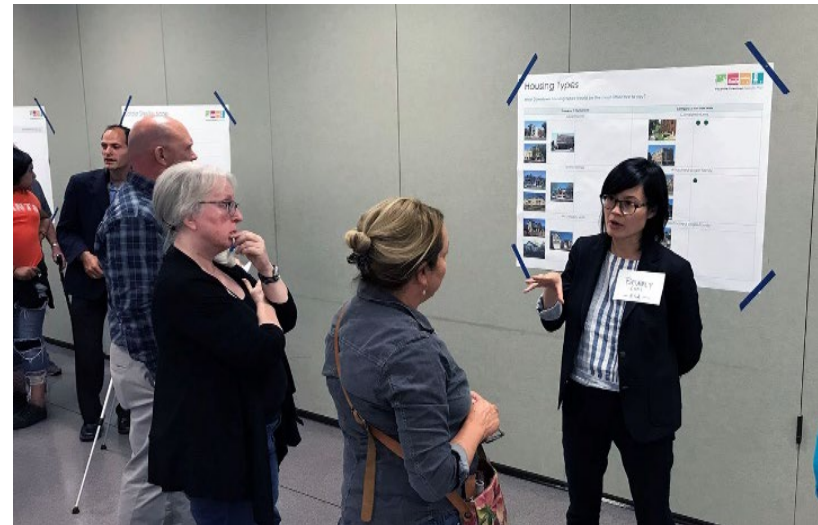
## 1.2.1 Public Outreach Events and Activities

Through its outreach strategy, the DTSP team strived to ensure that a variety of Downtown stakeholders would have the opportunity to engage throughout the DTSP planning process, from the project's onset during the existing conditions and visioning phases to DTSP stages when technical and design elements were being reviewed.

The following in-person and virtual outreach activities were conducted as part of this process:

- Citizen Advisory Committee meetings
- Technical Advisory Committee meetings
- Stakeholder interviews
- A community workshop and open house
- A walking tour
- A bus tour
- Vacaville High School student activities
- Pop-up events at the Farmers' Market, Kidfest, Annual Night Out on the Rocky Hill Trail, and events in Town Square
- Promotion of the project website Let's Talk Vacaville
- Online community surveys and forums
- Webinars and virtual informational meetings
- Announcements on the City's social media

- Presentations to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Vacaville Arts Committee
- Presentations to the Rotary Club of Vacaville, the Solano County Economic Development Corporation, and the Solano County Directors and Planning Group
- Numerous informational/update presentations to the Planning Commission throughout the duration of the project
- Presentation to the Airport Land Use Commission
- City Council and Planning Commission presentations



*Open house event held at the Senior Center in October 2019 (Source: ESA)*

### 1.2.2 Primary Outreach Groups

The DTSP team sought input on plan development from four primary groups:

**General Public.** The planning effort and opportunities for participation were broadly publicized to engage residents, businesses, customers of local businesses and restaurants, schools, visitors to the Farmers’ Market and music events, transit riders, and commuters, to gather their thoughts and impressions about Downtown and learn their needs.

**Stakeholders.** Stakeholder groups, such as business representatives, developers, property owners, neighborhood associations, school and parent/teacher representatives, local service providers (e.g., community centers, clinics), and bicycling and pedestrian advocates, were targeted for inclusion in community workshops, tours, and focus group meetings. The team engaged a range of local businesses operating in the Downtown vicinity, as well as businesses that operate in neighboring shopping centers.

**High School Students.** Students from Vacaville High School were engaged to address their specific interests, needs, challenges, and opportunities in the Plan Area. Their feedback helped to shape, and was integrated into, the DTSP’s goals, policies, and strategies.

**Agencies and Policymakers.** Vacaville Planning and other departments, the Planning Commission, the City Council, and staff members from Bay Area Metro, Caltrans District 4, and the Solano Transportation Authority were involved during principal phases of the community engagement and plan development process. This group is key for implementation purposes.



### 1.2.3 Strategies Implemented for Equitable Engagement

A successful public engagement process should be multilayered and ensure that the principles of social and environmental justice are followed. An equitable planning process can foster early support of the project and result in a plan that reflects the values of the community and stakeholders. For this reason, the DTSP team sought not only to include outreach early and throughout the planning process, but to implement a variety of strategies that would provide equitable opportunities for participants to become aware of, understand, and contribute to the effort. Strategies implemented included:

- Creating a logo to brand the project and increase visibility.
- Producing flyers and posters in English and Spanish to publicize events for community-wide distribution. Flyers and posters were distributed to City Coach Transit, Downtown businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Business Improvement District, and City facilities. Flyers were also posted in two Downtown kiosks in the Town Square branch of the Solano County Library (Town Square Library) and the McBride Senior Center.
- Engaging with schools within the Plan Area.
- Creating bus advertisement cards to enable City Coach to advertise events.
- Engaging community members to distribute flyers at local events and through other channels.
- Using the City's social media to encourage public participation through Facebook and Twitter.
- Distributing media releases to newspapers (The Reporter and the Fairfield Daily Republic) and the local radio station.
- Creating public service announcements to promote workshop information on community television.
- Posting meeting announcements and project updates on the City's website and Let's Talk Vacaville, the online forum for the project. The Let's Talk Vacaville site provided a location for asking questions and collecting surveys during key phases of the project.
- Hosting pop-up tables at various local events. These included the Farmers' Market in Andrews Park, Kidfest, Annual Night Out on the Rocky Hill Trail, and events in Town Square.

*Creating equitable access in public engagement takes open and honest communication, and extensive relationship and trust building.*



## 1.2.4 Common Themes

Several consistent themes that arose during the outreach activities are addressed in the DTSP as strategies for improvements. This input also became the genesis for the DTSP's goals and policies, described in DTSP Part I, Chapter 2, "Vision, Goals, and Policies."

The following community-driven themes do not reflect any ranking or prioritization.

- Create a cohesive vision for the Downtown.
- Create a safer and more family-friendly Downtown.
- Provide more lighting in streets and alleys.
- Maintain cleanliness within Downtown locations, parks, and creek areas.
- Increase art opportunities (e.g., art walk or trail, art installations).
- Encourage ground-floor businesses to activate street-level interaction.
- Provide additional, protected bicycle facilities that connect to other parts of the city.
- Provide multiuse trails for increased mobility options.
- Make Andrews Park a focal point and enhanced destination for users.
- Make gateway improvements to improve Downtown visibility.
- Respond to the need for fewer offices and more restaurants and retail boutiques.



*Input provided during a community charrette (Source: ESA)*

## 1.3 Development and Organization of the Specific Plan

### 1.3.1 Supporting Analysis

The DTSP is a reflection of the robust outreach strategy and community values shared, the strong collaboration with City staff, and the findings of the numerous technical, financial, and design-related studies and reports generated, including those listed below (included as appendices to this DTSP).

- A. **PDA Profile Report/Existing Conditions Analysis.** Provides an overview of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the Plan Area, transit/travel patterns and use, physical aspects of the Plan Area, and any known issues for consideration during the planning process.
- B. **Buck Avenue/Historic District Memorandum.** Evaluates the Buck Avenue residential area as a potential extension of the historic district.
- C. **Land Use Analysis.** Evaluates the current General Plan designations and zoning districts in the Plan Area and identifies changes required to facilitate development envisioned in the DTSP.
- D. **Downtown Retail Strategy.** Provides a high-level framework that identifies effective solutions to facilitate economic revitalization to position the Downtown as a unique mixed-use commercial area within the city for residents and visitors.
- E. **Downtown Connectivity and Streetscape Design Plan.** Identifies and prioritizes strategic improvements to streetscape and roadway elements to better connect Downtown Vacaville with surrounding neighborhoods, and to support a vibrant Downtown business environment. This plan was adopted in February 2020.
- F. **Financial Feasibility for Prototype Development.** Evaluates the financial feasibility of the four Downtown development prototypes and identifies alternative development scenarios that illustrate some ways that developers may go about achieving feasibility.
- G. **Affordable Housing and Anti-displacement Strategy.** Addresses demographic characteristics of the existing population in the Plan Area, and specifically looks at those factors affecting individuals at risk of displacement.
- H. **Downtown Parking Strategy.** Provides a detailed analysis of existing Plan Area parking conditions, and identifies recommendations for improvements.
- I. **Utilities Technical Memoranda.** Provides an overview of the future public services and other utilities needed to serve buildout of the Downtown, including water, wastewater, and storm drainage infrastructure.

- J. **Farmers' Market Analysis.** Provides a summary of a rough cost estimate to construct a permanent Farmers' Market pavilion structure in Downtown and identifies potential funding sources to support this project.
- K. **Financing Strategy.** Identifies a range of potential funding sources for public improvements identified in the DTSP.
- L. **General Plan Consistency Review.** Identifies the relevant General Plan goals and policies with which the DTSP is consistent.
- M. **Development Code Update Comparison Table** (developed by Lisa Wise Consulting). Provides a comparison of the Draft Comprehensive Development Code Update to the City's existing zoning ordinance. This table will no longer apply once the new Development Code has been adopted.

### 1.3.2 Downtown Specific Plan Organization

The structure of this DTSP has been organized into two parts:

**Part I** presents a comprehensive land use and policy document that governs future development in the Plan Area. Part I also provides a summary narrative of the recommended projects that support the development framework of the DTSP. DTSP Part I includes Chapters 1 through 5, organized as follows:

1. **Introduction.** Provides an overview of the purpose and organization of the DTSP.
2. **Vision, Goals, and Policies.** Conveys the overarching intent and vision for Downtown Vacaville's continued growth and evolution. The goals and policies guide the priorities for implementing that vision for an active Downtown.
3. **Setting and Context.** Describes the setting of the Plan Area and introduces its subareas.
4. **Development Framework.** Establishes the development framework for land use; community identity; housing; mobility and connectivity; community amenities, facilities, and services; and utilities.
5. **Implementation.** Describes the strategies and actions for implementing the DTSP including infrastructure financing and phasing, process streamlining, incentives, and monitoring.

**Part II** includes the Downtown Development Standards and Guidelines (DDSG) that are intended to provide direction for development projects and public improvements within the Plan Area. The primary purpose of the DDSG is to implement the vision of the DTSP. In addition, the formatting of the information contained in Part II mirrors how information is presented within the City's Land Use and Development Code to provide continuity and ease in reviewing City regulations. Further, Part II outlines the City's approach to streamlining and incentivizing development using a prototype approach to identify specific types of development desired in defined areas of Downtown. Part II includes Chapters 6 through 14, organized as follows:

- 6. Purpose and Application.** Summarizes the purpose, applicability, and administration of the DDSG.
- 7. User Guide.** Presents a brief overview explaining how to apply the DDSG.
- 8. Zoning Districts.** Establishes the Downtown zoning districts and presents the zoning map.
- 9. Development Prototypes.** Identifies the specific types of development desired and incentivized in defined areas of Downtown.
- 10. Land Use Regulations.** Defines permitted and conditionally permitted uses.
- 11. Development Regulations.** Specifies density, floor area ratio, setback, height, and other development standards.

- 12. Design Regulations and Guidelines for Private Development.** Details site, building, landscaping, lighting, and other design regulations and guidelines for development projects.
- 13. Historic District Standards and Guidelines.** Presents design standards for the preservation and restoration of buildings within the Downtown Historic Preservation District.
- 14. Streetscape and Public Spaces Guidelines.** Provides landscaping, furnishing, wayfinding, public art, and other guidelines for the design of streetscapes and public spaces.



*Statue by the Vacaville Town Square Library (Source: ESA)*