

CHAPTER 1 Introduction



A. Purpose and Background

The Downtown Hemet Specific Plan is a city-initiated Specific Plan that demonstrates a clear vision for the future of Downtown Hemet, and is an economic development tool to facilitate development. The Specific Plan is a comprehensive planning document and regulatory tool for implementing the City of Hemet 2030 General Plan and guiding development in the Downtown through customized land use regulations and recommendations for public realm improvements.

In June 2016, Metrolink began commuter rail service along the 91/Perris Valley Line with four new stations in Riverside, Moreno Valley and Perris. A principal concept in the Downtown Hemet Specific Plan is the expectation that a new transit mobility hub in Downtown will connect to the Perris station with bus rapid transit (BRT) in the short term, and ultimately, rail transit will extend into Downtown Hemet. This will spur new economic opportunities, transformative development, and jobs and housing around the new transit mobility hub. Therefore, the Specific Plan promotes transit oriented development and principles, including mixed use development and pedestrian connectivity to the transit mobility hub and around Downtown, which fosters active transportation and reduces vehicles miles traveled.

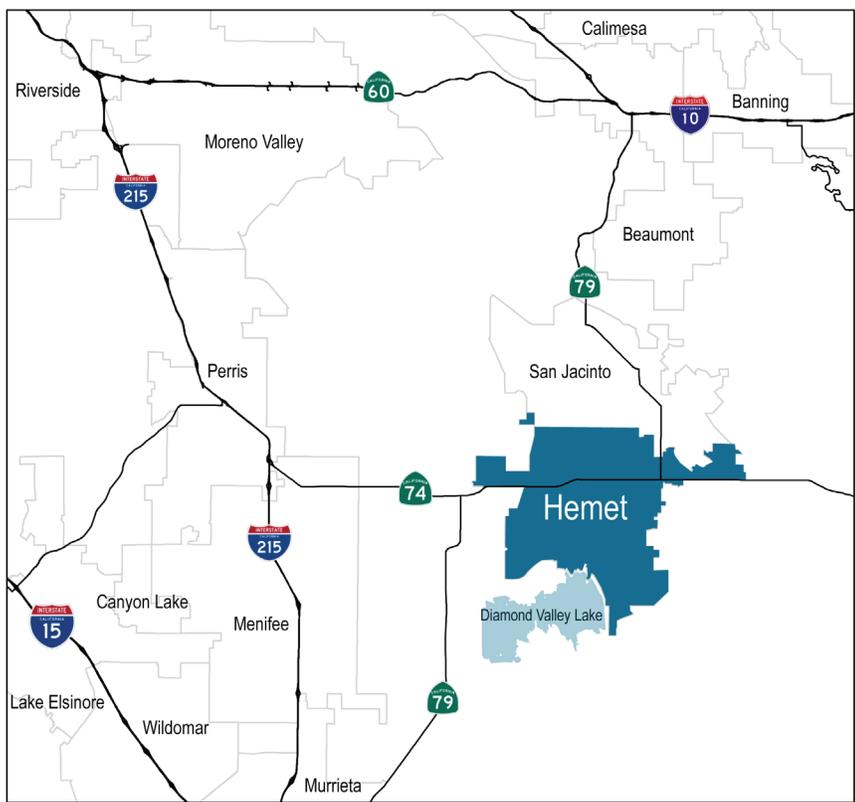
The purpose of the Downtown Hemet Specific Plan is to revitalize the City's historic downtown area, foster a healthy community and promote economic development. The vision for Downtown is to become a vibrant community hub for civic, social, cultural, and employment activities. As such, the primary objectives of the Specific Plan are to preserve and enhance the historic core, preserve Downtown's single family neighborhoods, promote infill development, recommend appropriate transit-oriented land uses near the future transit mobility hub, improve pedestrian connections to the transit mobility hub and around Downtown, and create an

attractive, pedestrian-friendly and sustainable environment. The Downtown Hemet Specific Plan represents the opportunity to revitalize the heart of the City by embracing both Downtown’s history and its future potential.

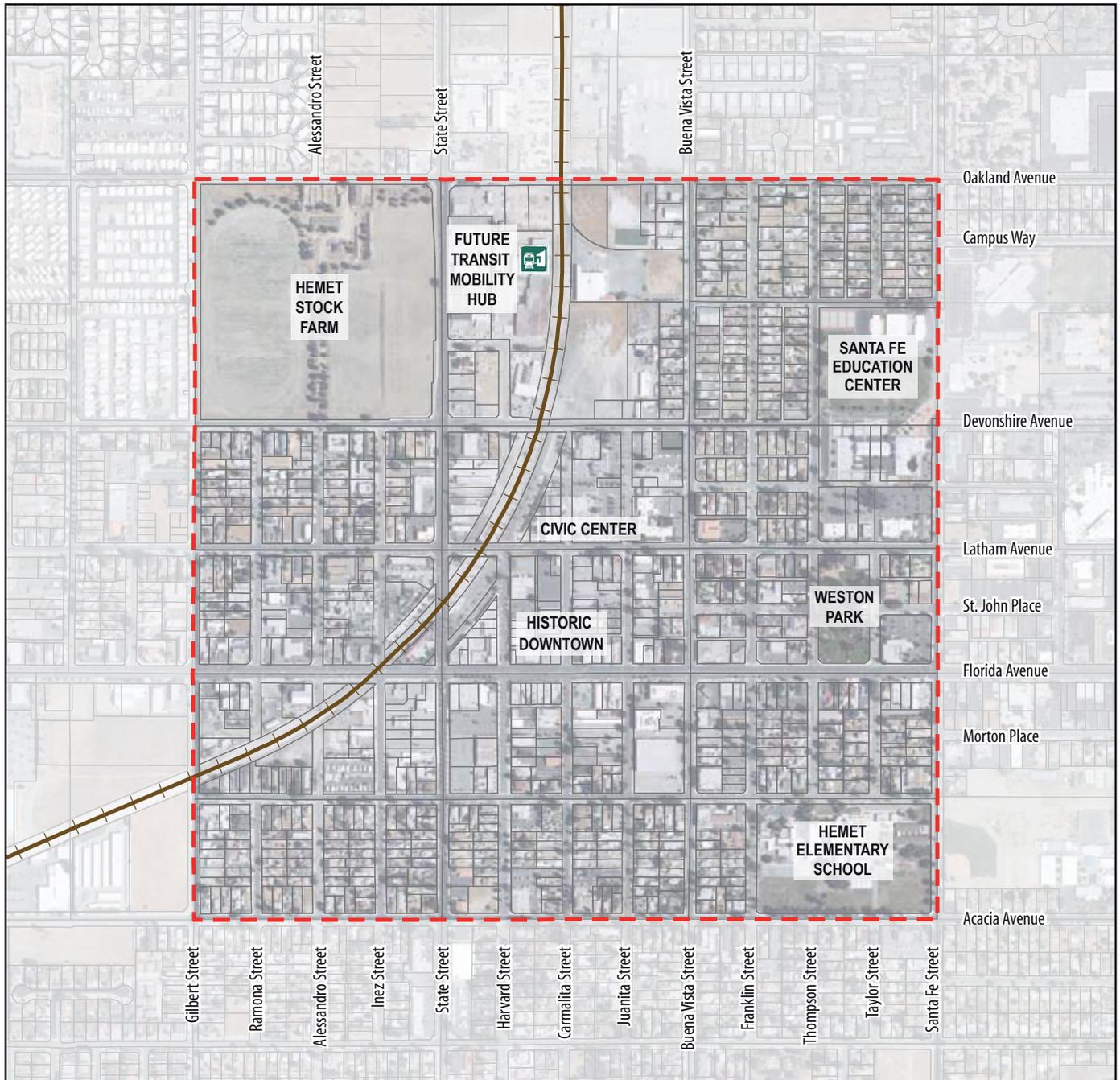
B. Location and Setting

The City of Hemet is located in the San Jacinto Valley in Riverside County, approximately 80 miles southeast of Downtown Los Angeles. The city covers about half of the valley, which it shares with the neighboring City of San Jacinto to the north and Diamond Valley Lake to the south. The San Jacinto Mountains to north provide a beautiful natural backdrop to the City.

Regional Location ►



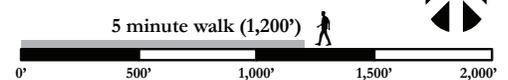
The 360 acre (58 block) Downtown Hemet Specific Plan area is generally located in the central portion of the City between Gilbert Street on the west, and Santa Fe Street on the east, Oakland Avenue on the north, and Acacia Avenue on the south (Figure 1-1). The Specific Plan area contains the historic commercial core of the City, which was established in the early 1900’s, and also includes the City’s Civic Center, Public Library, historic Hemet Stock Farm, Hemet Museum, Santa Fe Educational Center, and historic residential neighborhoods.



-  Specific Plan Boundary
-  Rail Right-of-Way/ Future Transit Line
-  Future Transit Mobility Hub (approximate location)

FIGURE 1-1
Specific Plan Area

DOWNTOWN HEMET SPECIFIC PLAN



Large portions of the project area are vacant along the existing railroad right-of-way (formerly the AT&SF Railway) due to the diminished concentration of agricultural activities in the valley. There are also a number of vacant or underutilized parcels, including properties owned by the City that can be opportunities and catalyst for new development and revitalization in the area.

Florida Avenue (State Route 74) bisects the Downtown in an east/west direction. This highway provides a major regional transportation linkage across the San Jacinto Valley, and has high traffic volumes thereby contributing significantly to Downtown's overall image and character as viewed by drivers. The other streets in Downtown Hemet form a traditional grid pattern facilitating a walkable street network.

C. General Plan Consistency

Per California State law, specific plans must be internally consistent with the jurisdiction's general plan. The City of Hemet 2030 General Plan (adopted 2012) regulates the land uses in the Downtown Hemet Specific Plan area. Where, for certain parcels in the Downtown, the Specific Plan zoning does not match the land use designations in the 2030 General Plan, the General Plan Land Use Element is being updated concurrently to ensure consistency between the two documents. In addition, where Downtown roadway and bike path classifications have changed with this Specific Plan, the General Plan Circulation Element is being updated.

With these minor updates to the General Plan, the Specific Plan is consistent with all elements of the 2030 General Plan. The Specific Plan is supportive of General Plan goals and policies to “promote the Downtown District as the centerpiece of community identity, activity, culture and governance” (2030 General Plan, Land Use Element, Goal LU-7 and associated policies). The Specific Plan also facilitates and promotes the fifteen Downtown Planning and Design Principles in the General Plan, which relate primarily to land use, character and urban design.

D. Goals and Policies

The goals and policies set the framework for the Downtown Hemet Specific Plan. They serve as guidelines for decision-making and provide direction for future activities. As guided by the Hemet 2030 General Plan, the overriding goal is to “promote Downtown as the centerpiece of community identity, activity, culture and governance.” The goals and policies for the Downtown Hemet Specific Plan are consistent with guiding City policy and this Specific Plan reinforces General Plan goals and design principles.

In addition, the goals and policies are consistent with “Smart Growth” principles. Smart growth can be defined as growth that is economically sound, environmentally friendly and supportive of community livability. Smart growth is also a key component of creating sustainable and resilient communities. Sustainable and resilient communities are healthier, safer, greener, more livable, and more prosperous. The goals and policies are intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety in the Specific Plan area.

The goals and policies were derived from input received from the community and stakeholders during the community engagement process as described in Chapter 2. The following is a summary of the overall goals identified for the Specific Plan:

- Revitalize the historic Downtown core and stimulate infill development.
- Improve economic vitality and employment opportunities in the Downtown.
- Preserve and enhance existing single-family neighborhoods.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Encourage good design and high-quality development.
- Promote active transportation and reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Enhance quality of life with improvements to the public realm.
- Promote sustainable development practices and “green” streets.
- Explore options for improving parking in the Downtown.

Goal 1: Revitalize the historic Downtown core and stimulate infill development.

Policy 1.1: Create a vital, energetic city core by facilitating a concentration of people, buildings and activity through compact development patterns.

Policy 1.2: Implement mixed use zoning at appropriate locations to create a synergy of uses for a balanced and vibrant Downtown, and to provide flexibility for landowners to respond to evolving market conditions.

Policy 1.3: Encourage infill development of vacant or underutilized land, especially projects that contribute to an urban identity.

Policy 1.4: Support the retention and, where appropriate, adaptive reuse of architecturally and historically significant buildings and those that visually unify the street.

Policy 1.5: Use infill development to strengthen historic “main street” development patterns and restore the downtown urban fabric.

Policy 1.6: Foster a pedestrian environment by locating active retail and restaurant uses at the street level in the Downtown core.

Policy 1.7: Support and strengthen the civic focus of the Downtown core by retaining government and public facilities and relocating City Hall from Florida Avenue to the Civic Center.

Policy 1.8: Promote the location of cultural facilities, entertainment activities, and community events within the Downtown core.

Goal 2: Improve economic vitality and employment opportunities in the Downtown.

Policy 2.1: Create economic opportunities by fostering a complementary variety of retail, residential, and employment uses.

Policy 2.2: Improve the retail tenant mix in the historic commercial core of Downtown Hemet.

Policy 2.3: Preserve and expand medical and medical support uses in the Downtown proximate to the Hemet Valley Medical Center, and foster workforce development opportunities in this field for local residents.

Policy 2.4: Actively lobby for and leverage the location of the future transit mobility hub to bring revitalizing land uses and activity to Downtown.

Policy 2.5: Encourage more employment-intensive uses proximate to the future transit mobility hub.

Policy 2.6: Consider innovative financing techniques and public-private partnerships to construct the capital improvements recommended in the Specific Plan.

Policy 2.7: Use density bonuses to incentivize lot consolidation around the future transit mobility hub to facilitate the development of cohesive mixed use projects.

Goal 3: Preserve and enhance existing single-family neighborhoods.

Policy 3.1: Preserve the character and density of existing residential neighborhoods.

Policy 3.2: Integrate infill residential projects into existing neighborhoods so that they are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character.

Policy 3.3: Design multi-family and non-residential development to provide buffers between, and sensitive transitions to, adjacent single family uses and zones.

Goal 4: Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.

Policy 4.1: Implement targeted areas of mixed use zoning to promote new, high quality housing in the Downtown.

Policy 4.2: Introduce a range of housing products in mixed use areas for efficient use of land, to offer housing choices for current and future residents, and to support desired retail services in the area.

Policy 4.3: Promote diversification of housing choices for varied income groups.

Policy 4.4: Take advantage of the proximity of the future transit mobility hub to encourage transit oriented development with higher density housing and live-work units.

Goal 5: Encourage good design and high-quality development.

Policy 5.1: Implement development and design standards in the Specific Plan to ensure that new development enhances the character of the Downtown by requiring design and architectural elements that support high quality development.

Policy 5.2: Through design review, ensure that new buildings incorporate appropriate and compatible architectural features that enhance and compliment the existing architectural elements and styles in the Downtown.

Policy 5.3: Encourage the inclusion of amenities such as plazas, walkways, landscaping, open spaces, appropriate water features, and public art within residential and commercial developments.

Policy 5.4: Encourage development to include high quality building exteriors, enhanced pavement, special entryway treatment, and landscaping.

Goal 6: Promote active transportation and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Policy 6.1: Provide a multi-modal transportation system of “Complete Streets” by making streets in the Downtown multi-purpose to accommodate a diversity of users.

Policy 6.2: Maintain the traditional street grid pattern in the Downtown to foster pedestrian circulation and neighborhood circulation.

Policy 6.3: Enhance access to public transportation and the future transit mobility hub in the Downtown.

Policy 6.4: Provide a connected pedestrian and bicycle network that links together the future transit mobility hub, Civic Center, historic Downtown core, major parks and open space areas, and the residential neighborhoods.

Policy 6.5: Design Downtown streets for safe and comfortable pedestrian movement by incorporating wider sidewalks and a high level of streetscape amenities where feasible.

Policy 6.6: Facilitate mixed use development that maximizes pedestrian connectivity and minimizes the need for vehicle travel within the Downtown area.

Policy 6.7: Efficiently manage the supply and demand of parking to accommodate customer, visitor and resident parking, and encourage the use of shared parking where possible to increase walking between uses.

Goal 7: Enhance quality of life with improvements to the public realm.

Policy 7.1: Use landscape, streetscape and open space improvements to communicate the character and identity of Downtown, enhance pedestrian comfort and walkability, and create public gathering spaces.

Policy 7.2: Use civic art to contribute to Downtown Hemet's identity, provide cultural enrichment, celebrate historic landmarks, and create gateways to the historic Downtown core.

Policy 7.3: Encourage new development to provide public open space with amenities as a community benefit, and integrate civic art into public spaces of new development projects.

Policy 7.4: Consider building pocket parks and community gardens on vacant lots, and activating existing pocket parks with landscape and hardscape improvements and active uses that engage the community.

Policy 7.5: Use the excess city-owned land adjacent to the rail tracks for a linear park with bicycle and pedestrian connections.

Policy 7.6: Improve Weston Park with active recreational uses to enliven the space.

Policy 7.7: Create a civic plaza or "town square" on the city-owned land adjacent to the Hemet Public Library.

Policy 7.8: Require new development on the Hemet Stock Farm site to provide community open space related to the culturally and historically important landmarks on the site.

Policy 7.9: Explore joint use agreements with schools to better utilize existing and future open space resources.

Goal 8: Promote sustainable development practices and “green” streets.

Policy 8.1: Emphasize environmental sensitivity and sustainable development practices throughout the Specific Plan area.

Policy 8.2: Promote compatible/complementary land uses that reduce vehicle trips.

Policy 8.3: Provide alternative transportation options, including transit, bike paths, and pedestrian connections.

Policy 8.4: Design streets to be “Complete Streets” by providing elements that accommodate all modes of travel and ensure safety, health, livability, and sustainability.

Policy 8.5: Require Low Impact Development (LID) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) for all new development, public streets and open spaces, which will provide for conservation of water resources and enhanced water quality.

Policy 8.6: Maximize drought-tolerant landscaping along streets and in development projects, and, where feasible, consider designing landscaped areas to function as on-site water retention facilities.

Policy 8.7: Emphasize the planting of street trees to provide shade, and through design standards and guidelines, encourage buildings adjacent to the sidewalk to provide overhead cover in the form of awnings or overhangs.

Policy 8.8: Encourage conversion of turf to drought-tolerant landscaping in all Downtown parkways.

Policy 8.9: Install permeable surfaces and discourage the use of materials that reduce permeability.

Policy 8.10: Implement standards and guidelines for sustainable development based on available and emerging technologies in the design, construction and long-term maintenance of projects.

Policy 8.11: Through the development process, encourage building orientations and applications conducive to utilizing solar energy and natural light.

Policy 8.12: Encourage the use of renewable and alternative energy systems for residential and commercial uses.

Policy 8.13: Incorporate energy efficient lights, such as LED lights or solar powered lights, into new construction, and replace and/or retrofit street lights with LED technology.

Policy 8.14: Promote adaptive reuse of older and historically significant buildings as an essential component of sustainable development.

Policy 8.15: During Specific Plan implementation, consider introducing incentives that award sustainable development practices, such as achieving Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, or other similar certification.

Goal 9: Explore options for improving parking in the Downtown.

Policy 9.1: Provide sufficient parking to ensure the economic viability and success of Downtown Hemet, and encourage the use of shared parking where possible.

Policy 9.2: Efficiently manage the supply and demand of parking in a manner that supports a walkable and pedestrian-friendly environment.

Policy 9.3: Upgrade the existing City-owned parking lots with better signage, lighting, and landscaping. Consider restriping to increase parking spaces, wherever feasible.

Policy 9.4: Improve access to rear parking lots by adding mid-block access corridors and plazas where feasible.

Policy 9.5: Provide improved parking supply information for visitors and employees with on-street directional and informational signage.