



**DOWNTOWN SAN CLEMENTE  
VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

D R A F T

*Vision Plan Design*



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## Introduction

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The purpose of this Vision Plan Design is to describe the parameters by which the City of San Clemente will conduct its Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan process. The Vision Plan Design is informed by **an assessment of current conditions** – as developed through the preliminary assessment of a site tour and review of existing planning documents – and by the **ideas generated in a Joint Session of the City Council and Planning Commission**, conducted on March 23, 2004. As the project progresses, new information may challenge or expand these assumptions; it will be the work of the project team – City staff, Task Force and consultants – to determine how the process may need to respond to accommodate such information.

## II. Background/Existing Conditions

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Any process that attempts to envision and move toward a desired future must begin with an assessment of the present. The project team will continue to bring observations and insights to the process of defining a strategic plan for Downtown San Clemente. Based on an initial site tour and inventory of existing planning documents, there are a number of key elements that the project should address:

### **A. OVERALL PHYSICAL ASSETS**

Downtown San Clemente has a sense of place – the “Spanish Village by the Sea”; there is a distinct and walkable core; residential neighborhoods are found immediately adjacent to commercial/mixed-use corridors; and there is close proximity to natural assets, such as the beach and mountains.

### **B. OVERALL PHYSICAL CHALLENGES**

It may be difficult to maintain and enhance the sense of place, and retail health in the regional market, in the face of developments like Marblehead Coastal; also, there is the challenge of linking together distinct districts into a cohesive commercial area.



### **C. STUDY AREAS**

There are five distinct study areas that require different assessments, visions and planning solutions – North Beach, El Camino North, El Camino South, Del Mar and Pier Bowl.

#### *North Beach*

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**Assets:** gateway to Central San Clemente; historic buildings; rail transit; proximity to beach; potential opportunity sites

**Challenges:** lack of strong pedestrian/transit connections to other parts of Central San Clemente, integration with Marblehead Coastal

#### *El Camino North*

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**Assets:** Nicely scaled buildings and setbacks; direct freeway access; precedent of good new development; potential opportunity sites (including underutilized parcels and uses for redevelopment,

**Challenges:** Auto-oriented corridor, hodge-podge of commercial uses

#### *El Camino South*

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**Assets:** Views, potential opportunity sites (including underutilized parcels and uses for redevelopment); direct freeway access; potential as gateway to downtown from the south

**Challenges:** Auto-oriented corridor; hodge-podge of commercial uses

#### *Del Mar*

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**Assets:** Walkable street; historic buildings and character; civic and cultural uses; local businesses; park space; mixed-use buildings

**Challenges:** Need for facade improvements; incomplete network of pedestrian connections to adjacent blocks; additional restaurants and entertainment in downtown (how to build but address the desire to maintain a quiet, smaller town atmosphere); dearth of opportunity sites; some parking issues

#### *Pier Bowl*

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**Assets:** Distinct character; compact and walkable district; historic and cultural buildings

**Challenges:** Topography (affecting connections with Del Mar and the rest of the City); lack of opportunity sites

## II. Process Design

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At a joint session on March 23, 2004, the San Clemente City Council and Planning Commission initiated the Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan process. With the aid of consultants Daniel Iacofano, Chris Beynon and Lou Hexter of MIG, Inc., the officials contributed their ideas for the goals, objectives and scope of this effort. They also began the process of identifying key assets, issues and opportunities to be explored in the course of the project.



### A. **DESIRED OUTCOMES – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS**

The Planning Commissioners and City Councilmembers were each asked to describe desired outcomes for this effort. The process will attempt to achieve the following goals and objectives:

- Integrate the vitality of Del Mar and the T-zone with North Beach
- Capture the area’s potential, especially North Beach
- Identify local treasures and define ways to preserve them and make them relevant; e.g. the Theater, old city hall, beach club, S.C. hotel
- Define desired balance of visitor-serving and local-serving uses
- Define desired balance of vehicle- and pedestrian-orientation
- Understand the implications of design on desired activities; e.g. wide sidewalks may be appropriate for visitor orientation
- Develop design guidelines that articulate different zones
- Explore use of public facilities as catalysts to leverage and promote desired uses
- Include public housing to stimulate private investment

### B. **SCOPE**

Council and Commission members discussed the need for this effort to look at a broader reach of the City – beyond Del Mar and the T-zone – to the El Camino corridor and to the commercial nodes at North Beach and the Pier Bowl. The project will need to consider the roles or niches of these various “districts” and how they contribute to the overall future commercial health of San Clemente.

Thus, the Vision and Strategic Plan will articulate recommended goals and strategies for the following **five sub-areas: North Beach, El Camino – North, Del Mar, El Camino – South, and Pier Bowl.**

Officials want to ensure that specific land uses will be considered in the planning process, including Specialty Retail, Restaurants, Entertainment (including youth-focused), Housing and Small-scale hotels.

### **C. PROCESS**

The visioning and strategic planning process will involve an assessment of current economic conditions and future trends, an examination of community values and preferences, and an integration of these into a set of viable strategies to guide planning and economic development for the Downtown for the next five to 10 years.

The Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan process will be guided by the City Council and Planning Commission, with the assistance of City staff and the consultant team of Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc. (MIG) and Economic and Planning Systems (EPS). A 19-member Task Force will be established to serve as a steering committee for this process. This group, comprised of city officials and local business and community leaders, will meet regularly to review interim work products and to determine what adjustments, if any, should be made to the process along the way.

The work program is guided by these key principles:

- *Use of recent, reliable economic data*
- *Understanding of local and regional planning context*
- *Broad-based community involvement*
- *Consistency with other citywide planning initiatives*
- *Creation of a realistic, implementable plan*



From April through October 2004, the work program will include the following key elements:  
(See process graphic for details of sequencing of project activities.)

- Existing Conditions Mapping
- Market Demand Analysis
- Task Force Meetings
- Community-wide Workshops
- City Council/Planning Commission Joint Work Sessions
- Economic Development Resources and Programs
- Opportunity Site Identification and Selection
- Financial Strategies/Pro-Forma Analysis
- Draft and Final Strategic Plan

#### **D. VISIONS**

City Council and Planning Commission members articulated a number of visions for the future of Downtown San Clemente, which will be expanded upon in dialogues with the Task Force and the community at-large:

- Sense of place and identity -- “Spanish Village By The Sea”
- Balance between visitor-serving and community serving
- Pleasant, walkable downtown with wide sidewalks
- Include pass-throughs to streets on either side of Del Mar
- Civic center
- Mixed use on southern part of El Camino
- Mixed use in core (Del Mar, Cabrillo, Granada)
- Well- branded downtown with good way finding and retail signage
- A livable, well-rounded community
- Retain uniqueness of independent businesses on Del Mar
- Entertainment along Del Mar
- Urban village
- Bed and Breakfast
- Reflective of the entire community
- Define gateways
- Expansion of Del Mar community and mixed use
- Integrate North Beach with Del Mar
- More parks



## **E. ISSUES**

At the Joint Session, officials identified a number of issues to be considered during the course of the project:

- Need to integrate property owners into land-use discussions (multiple owners)
- Need to understand impacts and opportunities of MarbleHead
- Need strategically-located attractive parking facilities
- Do we need national/regional retailers?
- Impact of utility wires on views
- Railroad
- Small hotels on El Camino need upgrading
- Consider how changing conditions, such as rising rents, will impact retail mix

## **F. OPPORTUNITIES**

Officials described a range of opportunities in central San Clemente that could improve the economic viability and quality of life for the area:

- Consider making Ole Hanson/Miramar Theater the Civic Center
- Provide restrooms on Del Mar
- Engage property owners about reuse
- Consider transit opportunities
- Explore trolley system
- Use public money for housing development
- Define gateways by good use of signage
- Create pocket parks along El Camino
- Explore transit-oriented/higher-density development at North Beach
- Take advantage of ocean views on El Camino, from Del Mar to Valencia
- Enhance wayfinding and signage (like St. Augustine, FL)

Some of the **place-defining elements** – what makes San Clemente unique – described by the officials were:

- Iconic buildings and structures
- Topography, /geography/beaches
- Pier Bowl and North Beach
- Coastal trail
- Max Berg Park
- Signage
- Public Art

Planning Commissioners and City Councilmembers also identified a number of preliminary **opportunity sites** – parcels to be considered for development or redevelopment that could catalyze desired improvements in the area. These were:

- Cabrillo (between Del Mar and freeway)
- North Beach
- U-Haul Site (on Pico)
- Victoria (behind starbucks)
- El Camino



## Conclusion

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All of these ideas comprise the Vision Plan – a roadmap for moving forward in the process to envision and realize the desired future for Downtown San Clemente.