



**City of Hayward Downtown Specific Plan  
Task Force Meeting #1 Summary Notes  
December 12, 2016  
6:00pm – 8:00pm**

Hayward City Hall, 777 B St, Hayward, CA 94541 Conference Room 2A

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## I. Presentation Summary

On December 12, 2016, the City of Hayward and lead consultant Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC) held the first Task Force meeting for the Downtown Hayward Specific Plan (Project). LWC presented an overview of the project with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation on the makeup of the consultant team, task force purpose and role, outreach program, meetings to date, and schedule and next steps. Following the presentation, LWC posed four questions to the Task Force and other meeting attendees on Downtown Hayward: 1) Key Issues, 2) Strengths, 3) Greatest Opportunities for Improvement, and 4) How Can the Specific Plan Help.

Findings from the discussion are summarized below.

## II. Key Takeaways

- Community outreach efforts should consider broader audiences, and reach out to local high schools, senior centers, neighborhoods outside of the Downtown, and large employers – including advanced manufacturing and biotech companies that have recently located to Hayward.
- Homelessness has and will continue to be a major issue impacting the perception of safety Downtown.
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety should be a priority of the planning effort.
- Despite the close community and attractive amenities, Downtown lacks a sense of place and identity.
- Vacancies are a problem in Downtown, largely because of absentee landlords who have little or no connection or commitment to the community or incentive to improve their properties.
- There is a potential to build off of the “family friendly” environment and reputation of Downtown.
- Large companies, namely those involved in advanced manufacturing and biotech, are increasingly attracted to Hayward because of reasonable rent and available land.

### III. Discussion Points

#### A. Key Issues Facing Downtown

- Homelessness
  - Results in real and perceived safety issues
  - According to one Task Force member, 70% of City's homeless population are from Hayward
  - Police Department and social service organizations have ambitious programs to house and find employment for chronic homeless population
- Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety
  - High traffic speed and volumes in Downtown (along Foothill Blvd in particular) creates an unsafe environment for cyclists and pedestrians
  - Lack of mid-block crossings on large city blocks – creates unsafe conditions as pedestrians are encouraged to jaywalk or walk significantly out of their way to cross streets, which impedes business vitality
  - Streetscapes and corridors outside of Downtown do not lend themselves to walking or cycling, hindering accessibility of Downtown to surrounding areas
- Lack of identity/activity
  - Downtown functions as the “downtown” for Castro Valley, Fairview, and other communities not in the City; also many residents are disconnected from the identity of Downtown because they live relatively far away
  - Foothill Blvd acts as a freeway rather than a destination
  - Downtown lacks connection with Cal State East Bay and Chabot College
  - Many businesses lack daytime activity, although they have more significant activity at night
  - Lack of establishments that cater to non-alcohol related activities
- Safety
  - Building vacancies lead to a broken or “run down” appearance, reduce perception of safety and sometimes result in areas where homeless congregate (e.g., vacant Mervyn's site)
  - Downtown is too dark at night - not enough streetlights or lighting from businesses (especially along B Street); LED streetlights generally do not emit enough light
  - Lack of activity or “eyes on the street” attracts crime (according to the Hayward Police Department)
- Vacant buildings and retail vacancies
  - Many Downtown buildings remain vacant for long periods of time because of absentee landlords
  - Existing older Downtown buildings often lack the spatial or infrastructure requirements appropriate for modern retail use
  - Some existing Downtown buildings are too large to attract small-scale retail, rents are generally too high if the tenant is paying on square-foot basis, and many have expensive maintenance requirements
  - Vacancies may reduce safety, attract criminal element (see above)

- The City’s marketing campaigns have largely highlighted areas outside of the Downtown on the outskirts of the City – such as the Japanese Gardens and shoreline.
- Hayward BART Station condition
  - BART Station (70s era) considered by some as in need of modernization; BART representative who attended meeting described expenses associated with modernization efforts, suggested incremental short-term actions such as repainting and cleaning, stated that BART interested in increasing accessibility to station – “blur line between station and community as much as possible”

## **B. Downtown Strengths**

- Presence of creeks
  - Creeks downtown could be “daylighted” and become an asset
  - Homeless population currently congregates around creeks, in part, because they are hidden and little frequented
- Downtown is generally family-oriented
- Tradition of strong arts community and public art
- Proximity to BART
- Downtown is easily accessible to other cities in the Region via transit and freeways/highways
- Natural beauty, good weather
- Historic architecture
- City has very strong advanced manufacturing industrial sector and many of these employers are interested in venues where they can hold events or provide amenities for staff.
- Excess of free parking

## **C. Opportunities**

- City is getting both a new library and arboretum, will attract more visitors to Downtown
- Potential to build off of “family-friendly” environment and reputation
- City generally has very wide right-of-ways, strong potential to support complete streets
- Potential to bolster and build off Downtown arts community
- City should consider additional ways in which to streamline business attraction, expansion, and retention
- Inventory of vacant space could present advantage to attract development and leasers as the Bay Area has more demand than supply. There may be valuable/informative case studies from the East Bay, which has recently experienced an influx of large companies seeking competitive land prices and rents. Additionally, land values in Hayward are cheaper/more competitive than many other Bay Area cities.
- City should consider ways to encourage and pressure absentee landlord to sell, maintain and/or improve vacant properties; (e.g., potential tax incentives to reduce vacancies, City acquisition strategies)
- Urban design/placemaking can make Downtown more of a regional destination
- Increased residential uses can help to alleviate the City’s (and region’s) affordability crisis; City is also home to Eden Housing – a widely successful affordable housing developer in the Bay Area – potential to leverage their expertise as part of planning effort

- Hayward 3<sup>rd</sup> most ethnically diverse City in Nation (reportedly) – potential to build off ethnic diversity as well as diverse businesses and trades in City

## IV. Next Steps

- Coordinate planning effort with “Popuphood”, an organization that works with cities to develop business incentives programs aimed to encourage property owners of vacant and underutilized properties to allow short term leases (3-6 months) for uses, such as testing business concept viability, or holiday retail. Popuphood is currently working with the Economic Development Department, specifically to reduce vacancies along B-Street.
- Consider involving the Hayward Arts Council in any effort involving temporary retail (or other) uses.
- For public meetings and charrettes, consider expanding to local high schools, senior centers, neighborhoods not in close proximity to Downtown and potentially holding meetings outside of Downtown.
- Ensure that outreach materials and notifications are available in hard copy format not only in digital formats – many of the City’s senior citizens do not frequent or have access to the internet.
- Consider scheduling Task Force meetings during the 5-day charrette to better capture and further articulate public comment.
- Coordinate planning effort with regularly-planned Economic Development event(s) in March and/or have LWC staff attend (and potentially present).

## V. Meeting Attendees:

### **Task Force Members:**

Mimi Bauer  
 Larry Gray  
 Robert Harmon  
 Antonette Harmon  
 Lory Hawley  
 Antonio Isais  
 Julie Lind  
 Charles Purvis  
 Stacy Snowman  
 Chris Zaballos

### **City of Hayward:**

Alex Ameri, Director of Utilities and Environmental Services  
 Stacey Bristow, Deputy Director of Development Services  
 Damon Golubics, Senior Planner- Development Services Department  
 Maria Hurtado, Assistant City Manager  
 Fred Kelly, Transportation Manager  
 Cecilia Melero, Administrative Clerk  
 Yaw Owusu, Assistant City Engineer  
 David Rizk, Director of Development Services  
 Christopher Sturken, Department of Environmental Services  
 Ramona Thomas, Economic Development Specialist  
 Lindsey Vien, Education Services Manager at Hayward Public Library  
 XX, City Police Department  
 XX, City Fire Department

**Consultant Team:**

Lisa Wise, Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc.  
Henry Pontarelli, Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc.  
Forrest Chamberlain, Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc.

**Visitors:**

Susie Hufstader, Bike East Bay  
Nathan Landau, Alameda County Transportation Commission  
Hannah Lindelof, BART  
John Plotz, Resident  
Tim Romano Pugh, Operations Supervisor at Hayward Unified School District  
Howard Pugh, Resident  
Charlotte Rivera, Charlotte's (Downtown ice cream shop)  
Ron Rivera, Charlotte's (Downtown ice cream shop)  
Steven Vanbar, Gillig Corporation (Hayward based bus manufacturer)