



Location: El Centro, Imperial County

Timeframe: 2007 - 2008

Project Partners: City of El Centro

Project Services

- Open houses and meetings
- Photorealistic visualizations
- Policy recommendations
- Public workshops
- Video fly-throughs
- Visual preference surveys



This demonstration project evaluated the present use of the downtown area and existing City policies. Rapid growth was pulling new development and money away from the downtown into outer areas. Now, Project Shape: The El Centro Downtown Plan serves as a road map and business plan for the City to generate developer interest in investing in downtown El Centro.

Goals

- Beautify the existing downtown
- Create a people-oriented downtown area
- Design a walkable district
- Develop a sustainable economy
- Preserve historic buildings and landmarks
- Bring new investment downtown
- Define a cohesive vision and plan for the Downtown area

El Centro, a fast growing town near the Mexican border and the hub of the agriculturally rich Imperial Valley, needed a plan to draw investment into its historic downtown. The City learned their zoning code and parking requirements were actually inhibiting new development and investment downtown. The project resulted in a plan, policy recommendations, and a blueprint for using existing resources more efficiently to beautify the downtown, preserve historic properties, improve walkability, and generate new investment.

Results

- Focus area of 54 acres; 33 acres to be redeveloped
 - 800 dwelling units as a result
 - 186,000 sq. ft. of retail
 - 543,000 sq. ft. office/service space
 - 1,500 new jobs in the downtown
- Nearly \$200 million in new investment
- Increasing walkability, density, and investment in transit core areas
- Focusing growth into existing communities
- Increased livability for local residents
- Improvements for the largest city in the Imperial Valley, the local economic base

Of Note

Compass Blueprint is currently working on the El Centro Parking and Traffic Study to compare parking supply versus parking demand and find solutions for increasing traffic in the downtown area.

There was a perception that there was a "lack of parking" but studies revealed in reality there was a surplus. People thought that if there wasn't parking on the main street, there wasn't parking period. Actually the City had public parking in many locations just around the corner. El Centro learned with better signage and parking management they could make parking more accessible. This project also created a plan to address and manage future parking needs over time.