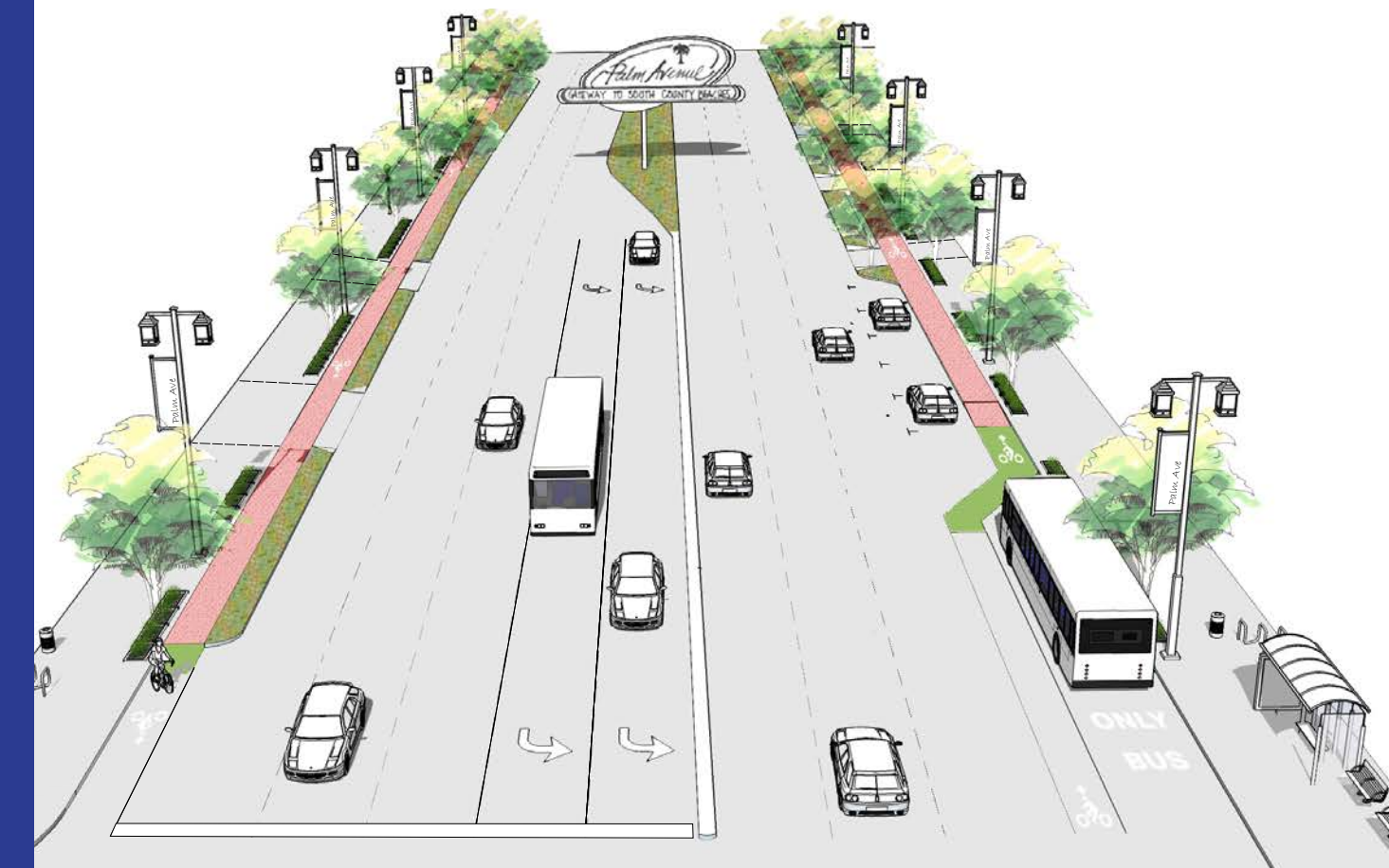


PALM AVE

Revitalization Plan



Prepared by:
The City of SAN DIEGO
 with funding from:
Caltrans

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Palm Avenue is a vital element of the City's Mesa-Nestor community and the City of San Diego. The Plan is a strategy for the future of the Palm Avenue corridor. The Plan proposes to re-envision Palm Avenue as a complete street, guiding future urban design, streetscape, and mobility improvements along the corridor.

Key elements of the Plan include:

- Strategies for key catalytic projects, to demonstrate reinvestment in the corridor, and improve community character.
- Implementation of a raised cycle track, integrating a buffered bike lane contiguous with an expanded public way and streetscape enhancements such as signage, landscaping, and street furniture, to better facilitate walkability and cycling, and improve the sense of place.
- Operational improvements to address traffic improvements and mobility in the near term.

Project Location and Plan Area

The Plan area includes an approximately one-mile section of Palm Avenue between 13th Street and the City of San Diego boundary on the west, and Hollister Street near the Palm Avenue Trolley Station on the east. As shown on the Study Area map, the analysis area includes an additional roadway segment at each end of the Palm Avenue Plan area, as well as the following roadways: 13th Street, Saturn Boulevard, Hollister Street, and Dorcas Avenue.

The Palm Avenue corridor is located within the City's Mesa-Nestor Community Planning Area in the south-west portion of the City of San Diego. The City's Mesa-Nestor Community Planning Area is bounded on the north by the City of Chula Vista and the San Diego Bay, the Imperial Valley and San Marcos communities to the south, the community of City Center Highlands neighborhood, with a small portion also located within the Nestor community. In addition, the project is also adjacent to Pond 20, managed by the San Diego Port District.

Background

The Palm Avenue Revitalization Plan is funded through a grant from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The grant was awarded through the F 2013-14 Environmental Justice Transportation Planning Grant Award. It should be noted that the Palm Avenue corridor is currently a Caltrans facility. As such, it has been built to state design standards, which limits the strategies the City of San Diego can use to help facilitate the implementation of a more complete street.

Strategies presented in this Plan build upon many of the City of San Diego's existing plans and policies, as well as Caltrans' "Main Streets" guidance, and integrates those of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), and the City of Imperial Beach's Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan (2012).

Community Input

The Palm Avenue Revitalization Plan has been developed through a robust community involvement process. This process included events and workshops to share information about the project process and to provide an opportunity for the public to contribute input to help shape the Plan:

- **Walk/Bike Audit:** Gain a better understanding of issues and concerns related to walking and cycling on Palm Avenue (April 2015).
- **Workshop #1:** Develop a vision for Palm Avenue and collect ideas for making walking and cycling safer, improving traffic flow, encouraging private investment, and making Palm Avenue more attractive (June 2015).
- **Workshop #2:** Solicit feedback on proposed alternatives for Palm Avenue (October 2015).
- **Workshop #3:** Review and comment on the draft Palm Avenue Revitalization Plan (February 2016).
- **City's Mesa-Nestor Community Planning Group:** Project status updates (project duration) and (February 2016).
- **Plan completion:** (February 2016).
- **San Diego City Council:** Final presentation at the Smart Growth and Land Use Committee (March 2016)

Acknowledgements

The Palm Avenue Revitalization Plan was funded by a Caltrans Transportation Planning Grant for Environmental Justice. This plan greatly benefited from the participation of the Olay Mesa-Nestor Community Planning Group as well as local residents and business owners who provided valuable feedback throughout the plan development.

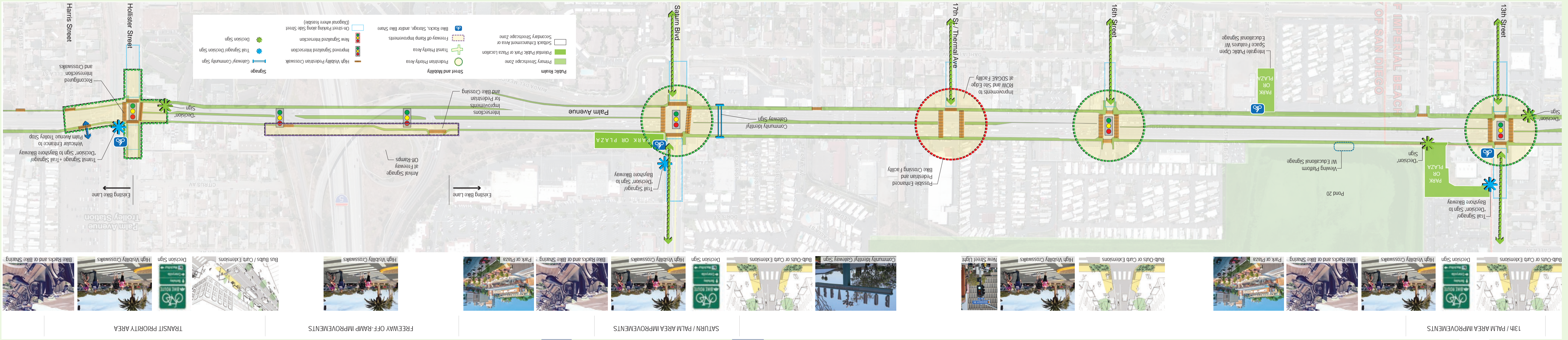
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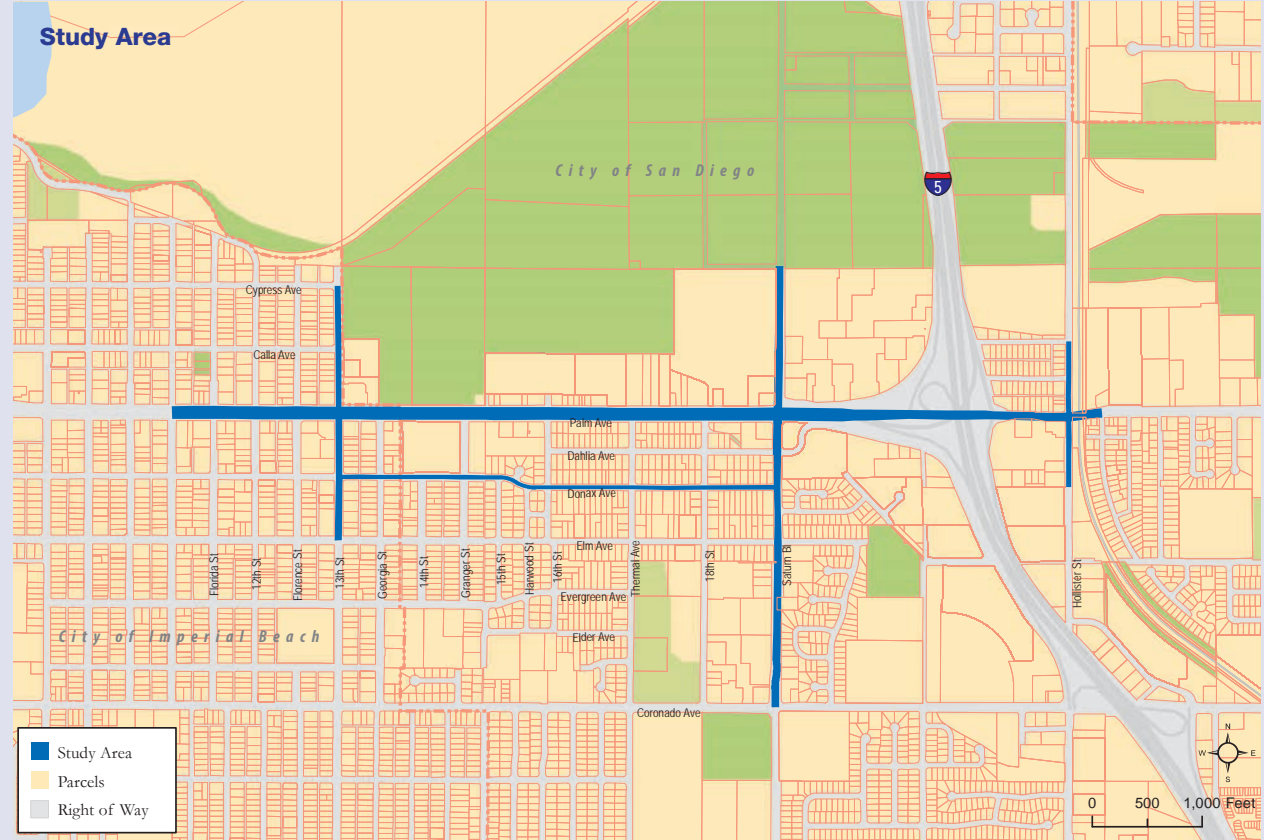
Chen Ryan Associates
 AECOM

January 2016



3. URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Framework Plan is intended to provide a long-term vision for the evolution of Palm Avenue into a walkable, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use corridor, and a complete street. The following components are identified:
1. An expanded public way, with a minimum width of 10 feet, to accommodate:
 - A pedestrian zone with a sidewalk and streetscape enhancements that include street furniture, lighting, signage, and drought tolerant landscaping.
 - In some areas, a "seeback" enhancement area for the public way and drought tolerant landscaping.
 2. Expanded areas for landscaping and/or street furniture improvements, where feasible, alternate with parking to provide a mixture of on-street parking and create expanded areas for landscaping and/or street furniture.
 3. A raised cycle track, contiguous to the public way, to facilitate cycling for all users.
 4. Pedestrian Priority Areas at 13th Street, 16th Street, Thermal Avenue, Saturn Boulevard, and Hollister Avenue, to include high visibility crosswalks, ADA curb ramps, and sidewalk improvements.
 5. Reconfiguration of Hollister to facilitate pedestrian crossing and transit access.
 6. Opportunities for parks, plazas, or open space enhancements.
 7. Signage and wayfinding, including:
 - Gateway signage west of Saturn Boulevard.
 - Entry monument/gateway signage at the I-5 freeway off-ramps.
 - Trail signage and/or decision signage at 13th Street, Saturn Boulevard, and Hollister Street.
 - Bike lockers and/or bike sharing locations at 13th Street, between 19th and 16th Streets, at Saturn Boulevard, and at Hollister Street.
 8. Although it is expected that the implementation of the Plan may take between 10-20 years, there are many smaller, near-term improvements that can be implemented immediately, including near-term operational improvements and catalytic projects that can be implemented over the next 1-5 years.
- Additional specific transportation recommendations that could help facilitate greater mobility include:
1. Install high visibility crosswalks at all crossings.
 2. Consider widened crosswalks at Saturn, to address high pedestrian volume.
 3. Install ADA curb ramps at all crossings.
 4. Create a continuous level sidewalk by reconstructing driveways concurrent with other street improvements or with future development.
 5. Reconfigure the intersection at the southbound Palm Avenue to eliminate conflicts between bicyclists and vehicles.
 6. Signal synchronization and optimization to improve traffic flow.



Vision and Goals

The Palm Avenue Revitalization Plan promotes multimodal mobility improvements to:

1. Address mobility along Palm Avenue for all users of all modes, including vehicles, transit riders, pedestrians, and cyclists.
2. Propose strategies to improve the livability and economic vitality of the corridor.
3. Establish an Urban Design Vision for the corridor.
4. Complete a Mobility Study that analyzes proposed multimodal improvements.
5. Establish an Implementation Strategy to help transform Palm Avenue into a vibrant multimodal corridor that contributes to the health of the community and the regional economy.



2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Vehicular Facilities

Palm Avenue is currently a six-lane roadway divided by a raised, landscaped median. East of the southbound ramps to the northbound ramps, it is a 4-lane roadway with a raised median. East of the northbound ramps, the raised median becomes a center left-turn lane. The paved width of Palm Avenue within the study area ranges between 110 feet and 118 feet. Parking is generally permitted along Palm Avenue within the study area, except for near I-5, between Saturn Boulevard and the I-5 northbound off-ramp. The highest traffic volume is 63,032 average daily traffic volumes (2006-2010) between Saturn Boulevard and the Interstate 5 off ramps.

Pedestrian Facilities

Along Palm Avenue sidewalks are continuous along both sides, with the exception of the south side of Palm Avenue from Saturn Boulevard to the Interstate 5 northbound off-ramp, where pedestrian access is prohibited. Pedestrians benefit from wide sidewalks greater than 15 feet along the south side of Palm Avenue from Thermal Avenue to Saturn Boulevard, and along the north side of Palm Avenue from Claire Street to Saturn Boulevard. There are 49 curb ramps along the corridor, and 22 were identified as non-ADA conforming.

Bicycle Facilities

There is a bicycle lane on the westbound side of Palm Avenue from I-5 SB off-ramp to just east of Saturn Boulevard, then beginning again west of the intersection, continuing until 13th Street. From Saturn Boulevard to 13th Street, the facility is a shared parking/bike lane. On the eastbound side, there is a shared parking/bike lane from Georgia Street to just west of 18th Street, beginning again east of Saturn Boulevard. A short bike path is provided after crossing the I-5 SB on-ramp, connecting under a freeway overpass and back to Palm Avenue where it continues as a bike lane, terminating at the east end of the freeway overpass.

13th Street is classified as a bike route from Cypress Avenue to Palm Avenue per the SANDAG Regional Bicycle Plan and the City of Imperial Beach Bicycle Transportation Plan, however no sharrows or signage are present along the route. North of Cypress Avenue the route joins with the Bayshore Bikeway.

On Saturn Boulevard there are bike lanes present from the northern terminus to Palm Avenue in the northbound direction, and from the northern terminus to Doris Street in the southbound direction. South of Palm Avenue, Saturn Boulevard is classified as a bike route.

Transit Facilities

Public transit within the project area is provided by the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and consists of light-rail (Blue Line Trolley) and local bus (routes 932, 933, 934).

Existing Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Facilities



Illustration: NACTO Urban Street Design Guide

4. MULTIMODAL MOBILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Plan provides recommendations for improving mobility along the corridor for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and vehicles. Although recommendations to improve mobility along the corridor are identified separately for each mode, the recommendations are designed to make the Palm Avenue corridor more efficient, functional, and pleasant for everyone, regardless of how you get around.

Pedestrian

- The pedestrian environment will benefit from increased separation from vehicles along Palm Avenue, provided by landscaped buffers, the raised cycle track, and/or on-street parking.
- High visibility crosswalks at signalized intersections will improve driver awareness of pedestrians and emphasize safe and legal crossing locations.
- Curb cut-outs will help shorten pedestrian crossing distances and improve visibility of pedestrians to drivers.
- The proposed pedestrian improvements will result in improved Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index scores at three intersections and five segments along Palm Avenue.
- Driveway aprons will be located in the landscape/parking area to create a uniform, wide, flat sidewalk for a better walking experience.

Bicycle

- Raised cycle tracks will provide a facility physically separated from vehicles between 13th Street and Interstate 5.
- A user-actuated signal is recommended to assist cyclists when crossing the southbound Interstate 5 on-ramp from eastbound Palm Avenue.
- The raised cycle track will improve cycling comfort for all riders, regardless of age or skill level.
- East of Interstate 5, bicycle lanes will provide a dedicated space for cyclists.

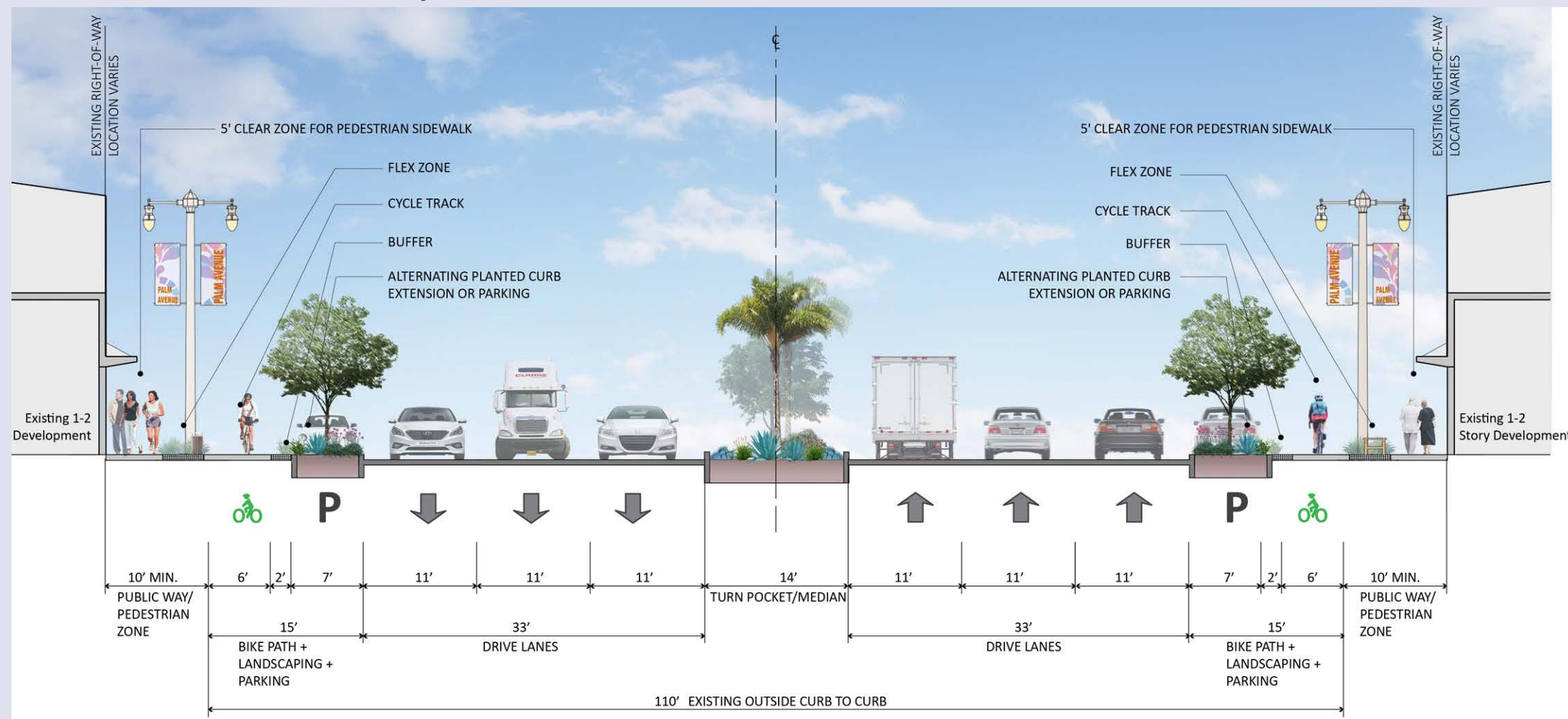
Transit

- Transit users will benefit from improved bicycle and pedestrian environments along the corridor.
- Existing bus stop locations are integrated into the corridor design, and generally do not disrupt cycle track operations.
- Improved bus stations are recommended for all bus stops along the corridor, inclusive of amenities such as shelter, seating, and trash cans.

Vehicular

- An additional left-turn lane is proposed from westbound Palm Avenue onto southbound Saturn Boulevard to help alleviate queuing vehicles that back up into the through lanes.
- The westbound Palm Avenue right-turn lane onto Saturn Boulevard is recommended to be extended to improve congestion at the intersection.
- The vehicular recommendations will help reduce congestion and improve operations along Palm Avenue and at the Saturn Boulevard and Palm Avenue intersection.
- The southbound Interstate 5 ramps from the westbound Palm Avenue approach will be reconfigured to position the on- and off-ramps adjacent to one another, consolidating two street crossings into one, which improves pedestrian and cyclist visibility and comfort.

Illustrative Street Section of Multimodal Mobility Recommendations



6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To facilitate implementation of the Plan, the following long-term steps are recommended.

Planning and Zoning

Subsequent to the completion of the Plan, the development of a Palm Avenue Plan "checklist" is recommended to ensure consistency among all subsequent projects, and consistency with future streetscape improvements. Near-term coordination items that should be addressed include the siting of utilities, driveways, and curb-cuts, engineering, landscaping improvements, etc., for all private development projects, as well as any public realm improvements.

As part of a future community plan update, the following zoning changes are recommended in support of the Vision. Changes may be accomplished through a rezone or adoption of an overlay:

- Make adjustments to designated land uses and/or designate zoning districts applied to the corridor, so that the associated land use permissions promote implementation of the vision.
 - Select zoning districts that specify by-right and conditional uses that promote implementation of the vision.
 - Consider incentivizing desired land uses.
 - Reduce building setbacks, and require that buildings be built close to or abutting the public way. As an example, more than half of the corridor is zoned CC 4-2, which allows up to a 100 feet setback with parking in front, which is not conducive to implementation of the Vision.
- Limit curb-cut width and frequency, require curb cuts to be consolidated, and promote shared driveways where possible.
- Discourage parking in front of buildings. Consider the following: Requiring parking to be located at the rear of the building.
 - Where possible, locating parking access from side streets
 - Sharing parking among multiple users
- Consider strengthening existing sign standards, fence and wall standards
- Consider working with existing property owners to phase out existing billboard uses, and consider resources that could be utilized, such as a Sign Removal Amortization Program.
- Consider use of code enforcement
- Prohibit the following:
 - Chain link fencing
 - Blank walls over 20 feet in length
 - Unbuffered parking lots
 - Utilities in the public way
 - Billboards

Inter-jurisdictional Coordination and Maintenance

Future implementation of the Plan will require additional engineering and design studies. Studies will be coordinated with Caltrans to identify non-standard items, and will be subject to Caltrans Design Review. In addition, the City of San Diego will work with the City of Imperial Beach and Caltrans to coordinate the design of the roadway at the transition between city boundaries.

In conjunction with all proposed improvements, an inter-agency maintenance agreement should be defined between the City of San Diego, Caltrans, and MTS. Specifically, the installation and maintenance of non-standard items such as planting, streetscape materials, street furniture, transit shelters, etc. should be coordinated in order to ensure timely upkeep and consistent quality and life-span of all public realm improvements. The agreement should distinguish between respective agencies or entities, including City of San Diego, Caltrans, MTS, and private owner-maintenance responsibilities, and should identify the creation of a maintenance assessment district, if appropriate.



5. CATALYST PROJECTS AND FOCUS AREAS

The following potential Catalyst Projects and Focus Area Projects identify specific coordinated recommendations for improving the character, function, and usability of the Palm Avenue corridor.

The Potential Catalyst Projects identify small, incremental recommendations that can be implemented in the nearer term (1-5 years), and demonstrate how small actions by individual property owners, with support from programs such as the City of San Diego Storefront Improvement Program, can transform the character and business environment in the interim, and promote reinvestment along the corridor.

Focus Area Projects #1 and #2 identify longer term, strategic coordinated improvements that are designed to enhance multimodal connectivity, improving pedestrian, vehicular, and bicycle mobility.

The following catalyst projects have been identified as near-term "kick-starter projects" that can serve as investment opportunities and greatly improve the character of the corridor.

Catalyst Project #1: SDG&E Site Wall. To improve the visual character along Palm Avenue, screening and buffering is needed at the SDG&E facility located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Thermal Avenue and Palm Avenue.

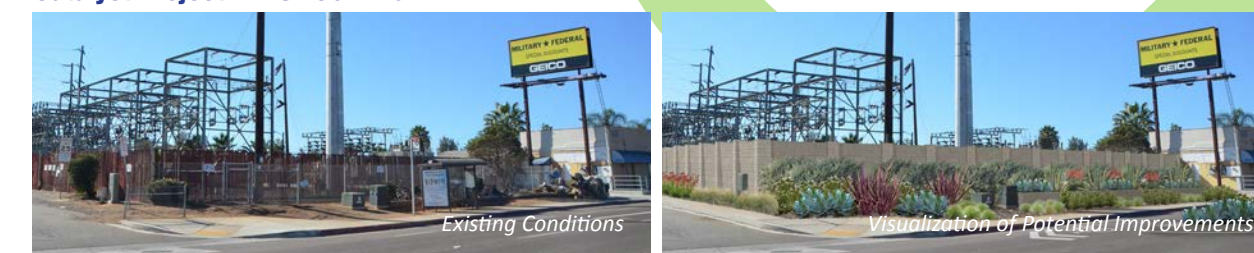
The City should work with SDG&E, to support implementation of the following improvements by SDG&E:

- Construction of an 8 feet masonry wall along all sides of the facility abutting the public way.
- The wall should be painted and screened with landscaping to soften the appearance of the wall, screen the facility, and add interest to the public realm.
- Sidewalks should be added adjacent to the facility to improve safety and access to transit.

- Catalyst Project #2: Site Wall Improvements.** Where they exist, site walls should be painted and screened with landscaping to soften their appearance, and add interest to the public realm.
- The use of site walls for Public Art is encouraged. Property owners should work with the City through the Public Arts Commission to plan any Public Art, prior to commissioning or installation.
 - The installation of new site walls or blank walls in excess of 20 feet is highly discouraged along Palm Avenue. New development should be built up to the property line or any required setback, and "address" the public right of way with active uses.

The example shown is for visualization and discussion purposes only, and is not intended to represent a project. Interested property owners, where eligible, should work with the City to apply for grants or other funding opportunities.

Catalyst Project #1: SDG&E Wall



Catalyst Project #2: Site Wall Improvements

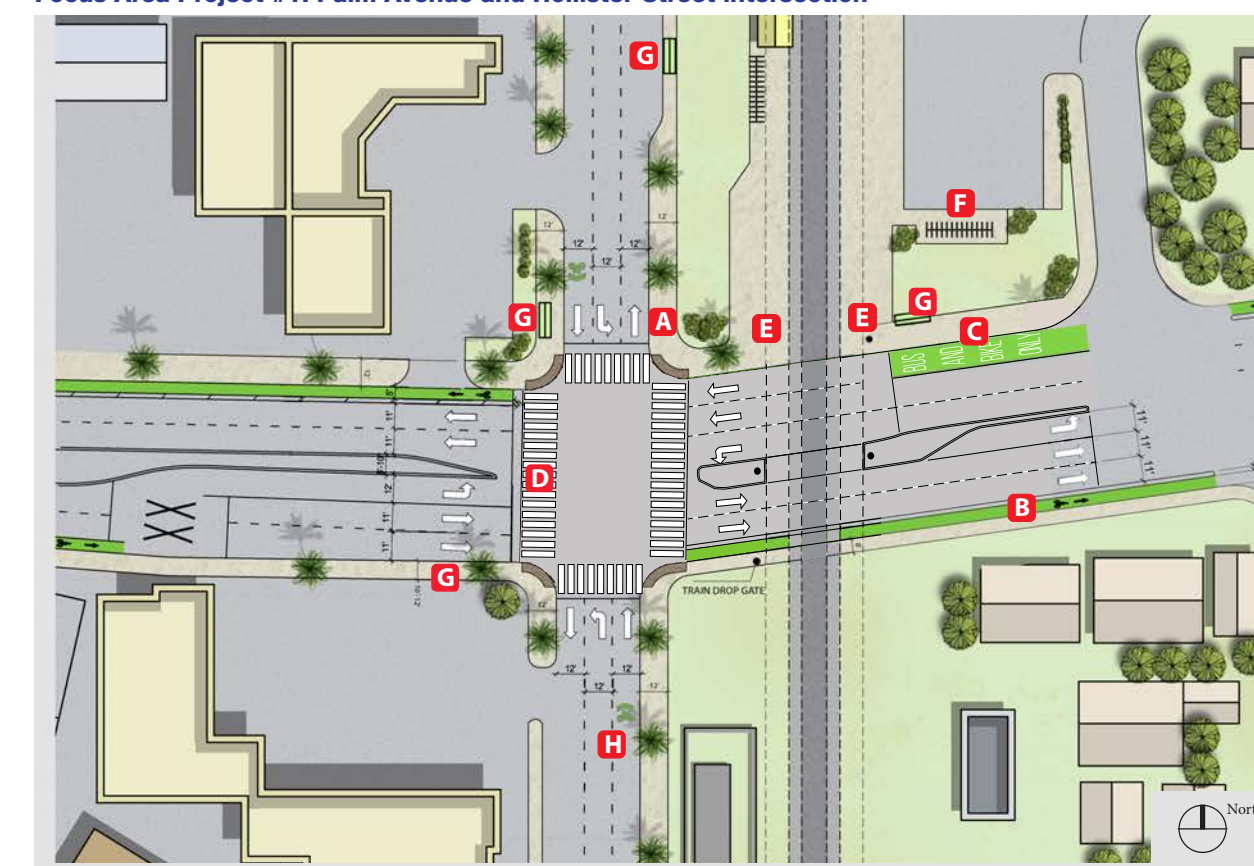


Focus Area Project #1: Palm Avenue and Hollister Street intersection.

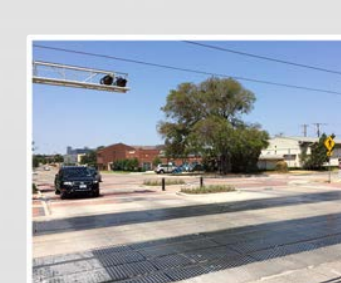
Proposed improvements at the Palm Avenue and Hollister Street intersection include the following:

- Street trees and landscaping
- Implement high visibility extra-wide crosswalks to accommodate high pedestrian volume.
- Street furniture (benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, etc.)
- Pedestrian light fixtures
- Trail signage/ "decision" sign in general vicinity of north-east corner, identifying direction and distance to Bayshore Bikeway, Seacoast Drive/ Imperial Beach waterfront, Coronado, and any other desired destinations.
- Public art
- Bus shelter improvements, including bus shelter and signage, and possible stop relocation to help facilitate better pedestrian access to the trolley stop.
- Raised cycle-track or Class II bike lanes
- Diagonal on-street parking along Hollister Street, pending further study.
- Improvements to the westbound Palm Avenue lane, possibly including a shared bus/bike lane to "complete" the westbound bike facility, and a transit priority "T" for westbound busses.
- Consider widening sidewalks, where feasible.
- Consider dual-opening curb ramps at Palm/Hollister intersection.

Focus Area Project #1: Palm Avenue and Hollister Street intersection



High visibility crosswalk clearly demarcated as a separate area from pedestrian crosswalk



Train crossing is clearly demarcated as a separate area from pedestrian crosswalk

- A** Wider Sidewalks
- B** Buffered Bike Lane
- C** Demarcated Bus Stop
- D** High Visibility Crosswalk
- E** Signage for Ped/RR Interaction
- F** Bike Racks
- G** Improved Bus Stops
- H** Bike Sharrows

Catalyst Project #3: Façade Improvements.

Building façade improvements are highly encouraged. The example illustrates how small improvements and maintenance, such as new awnings, paint, planters, etc. can dramatically improve the character of the right-of-way.

The example is for visualization and discussion purposes only, and is not intended to represent a project. Interested property owners, where eligible, should work with the City to apply for façade improvement grants or other funding opportunities, such as with the City of San Diego Storefront Improvement Program.

Catalyst Project #4 (TBD): Vacant sites and redevelopment projects.

As sites become available for redevelopment or as the reuse of vacant sites is considered, there is the opportunity to plan land uses and site design in support of the vision. Active uses that support a mixed-use pedestrian friendly community are highly encouraged. The following uses were discussed throughout the outreach process:

- Cafes and restaurants, including outdoor sidewalk cafe/restaurant seating.
- Neighborhood mixed-use, including convenience shopping and services, a small-medium grocery store, and housing or office uses in a mixed-use setting.

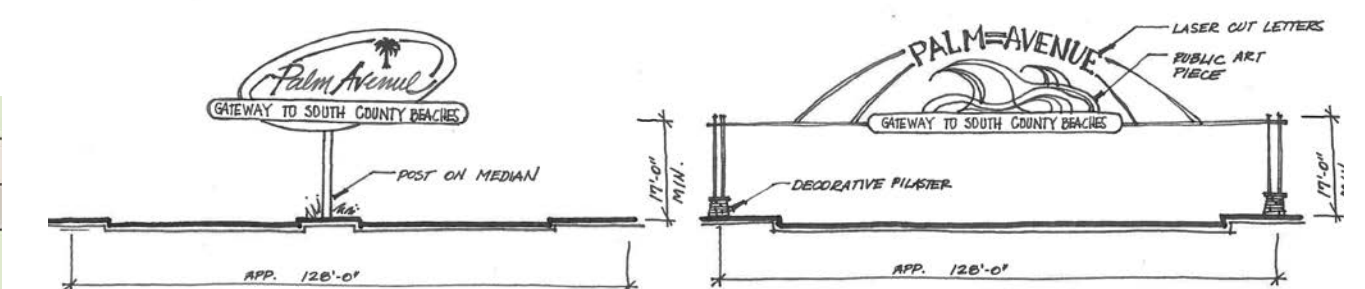
Catalyst Project #3: Façade Improvements



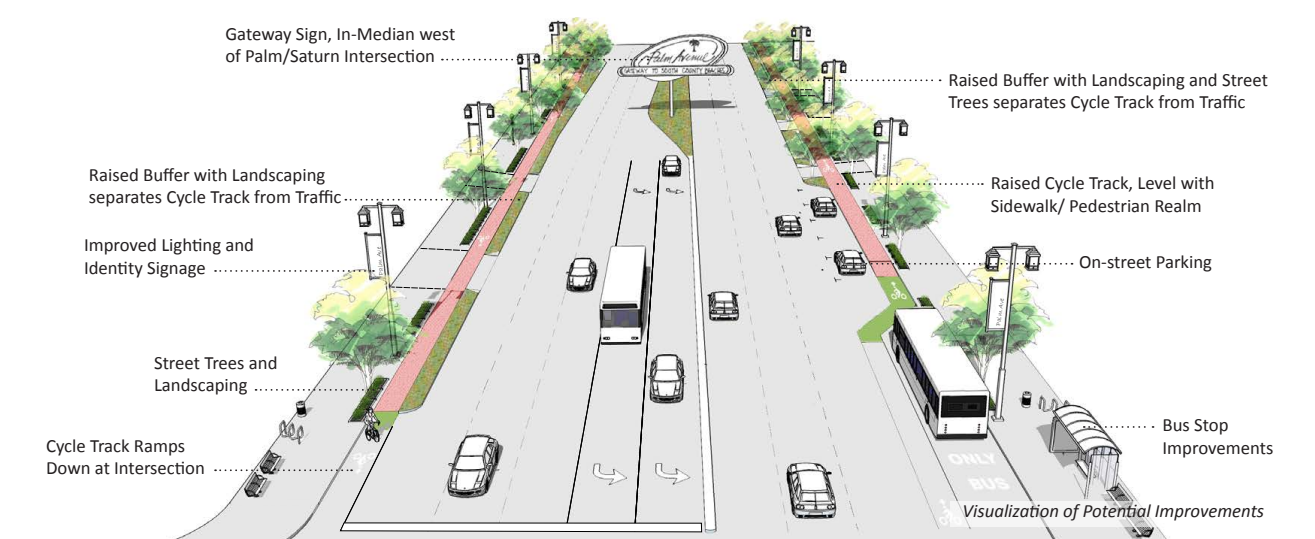
Focus Area Project #2: Palm Avenue and Saturn Boulevard

Proposed improvements at the Palm Avenue and Saturn Boulevard intersection include the following:

- Gateway sign, either as an archway sign, or in median. Potential options for gateway signage are illustrated at right.
- Street trees and landscaping
- High visibility crosswalks
- Street furniture (benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, etc.)
- Pedestrian light fixtures
- Trail signage/ "decision" sign in general vicinity of north-east corner, identifying direction and distance to Bayshore Bikeway, Seacoast Drive/ Imperial Beach waterfront, Coronado, and any other desired destinations
- Public art
- Bus stop improvements, including bus shelter and signage
- Raised cycle-track
- Diagonal on-street parking along Saturn Boulevard, pending further study.
- Expanded plaza or park space along the north-east edge of Palm Avenue, south of the Southland Plaza retail center.



Focus Area Project #2: Palm Avenue and Saturn Boulevard



Note: Realization of any non-standard amenities such as streetlights, landscaping, pavers, etc., may require a maintenance assessment district.