

# Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan



City of San Diego

## DRAFT Preferred Plan

January 2012

*Prepared by*

**DYETT & BHATIA**

Urban and Regional Planners

*With assistance from:*

*Fehr & Peers*

*Keyser Marston Associates*

*Rob Quigley Architects*

*Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects*



# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
	Background .....	1
	Public Outreach for Plan Preparation.....	1
	Next Steps .....	1
	Report Organization .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>Vision and Planning Principles .....</b>	<b>3</b>
	Vision .....	3
	Guiding Principles.....	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Land Use.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	Overall Concept .....	5
	Draft Land Use Designations .....	5
	Development Potential .....	6
<b>4</b>	<b>Mobility .....</b>	<b>11</b>
	Mobility Strategy .....	11
	Trip Generation and Potential Traffic Impacts.....	11
	Potential Safety Impacts.....	12
	Impacts of Various Transportation Improvement Options.....	12
<b>5</b>	<b>Streetscapes and Urban Design.....</b>	<b>17</b>
	Existing Streetscape Conditions .....	17
	Potential Streetscape Concepts.....	18
	Visual Simulations .....	23
<b>6</b>	<b>Development and Financial Feasibility .....</b>	<b>27</b>
	Residential Building Prototype (Site #1).....	27
	Mixed Use Building Prototypes (Site #2) .....	30
<b>7</b>	<b>Draft Policies.....</b>	<b>33</b>
	Community Character .....	33
	Land Use .....	34
	Economic Development .....	36
	Mobility.....	36



# 1 Introduction

The Preferred Plan presented here provides the fundamental framework for development of the Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan. Community review and endorsement of the Preferred Plan will provide direction for further embellishment and development of detailed policies. Following this introduction, which provides an overview of the project, the Preferred Plan and its potential impacts are presented. Alternative choices are presented for streetscape improvement possibilities.

In September 2011, three alternative land use concepts were prepared that presented a range of options to guide future development in the corridor while still striving to meet the community vision and guiding principles that emerged from community outreach meetings to date. The Project Working Group reviewed these alternatives and provided feedback on their preferences and priorities. Community members overwhelmingly supported the retention of industrial uses along Commercial Street and transit-oriented development (TOD) around trolley stops (including space for parks/public gathering). They also supported a new trolley stop at 28<sup>th</sup> Street and improvements to the pedestrian environment. This report presents this preferred concept and land use/transportation strategy.

## **BACKGROUND**

As part of its most recent 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, the San Diego Association of Governments designated the Commercial/Imperial corridor as a potential “Mixed Use Transit Corridor.” The corridor was seen as a potential focus area for smart growth development because it contains both the Orange Line Trolley and high-frequency bus service. As a result, the City applied for and was awarded a planning grant to identify potential development opportunities that could propel the corridor into a true Mixed Use Transit Corridor. The Master Plan will establish the community vision for the corridor and policies to help achieve it.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH FOR PLAN PREPARATION**

Preparation of the Master Plan is proceeding with an integrated community outreach and technical process. Through the planning process, community members were offered a variety of opportunities to help develop a vision and plan for the corridor that reflects the community’s most important values and priorities. Outreach activities include an advisory committee (the Project Working Group), community workshops, community character survey, and on-going updates to the project website: <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/profiles/southeasternsd/index.shtml>.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following review by the community-at-large during a November 2011 open house, this Preferred Plan will continue to be refined to greater specificity in the Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan, which will provide land use, urban design, mobility, and economic strategies for the corridor. The Master Plan will ultimately be incorporated into the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan update expected to begin in 2012.

## **REPORT ORGANIZATION**

Following this introduction, this report is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the vision and guiding principles that emerged from Working Group meetings and the community workshop.
- Chapter 3 describes the Preferred Plan concept, proposed land use and potential build-out resulting from the plan.
- Chapter 4 describes mobility concepts that community members discussed during outreach activities and analyzes their feasibility. The chapter also estimates trip generation and potential congestion resulting from the Preferred Plan.
- Chapter 5 presents three streetscape concepts for Imperial Avenue and illustrates potential new development using photo simulations. A streetscape concept for Commercial Street will be prepared at the Master Plan stage following community review.
- Chapter 6 presents prototypes illustrating how new uses and densities may be developed on typical sites in the corridor and analyzes the financial feasibility of these prototypes.

## **2 Vision and Planning Principles**

A vision and guiding principles emerged from community outreach activities, served as the basis for development of the Preferred Plan, and will provide a foundation for all plan policies and programs. The vision and principles have been vetted and endorsed by the Project Working Group during their September 21, 2011 meeting.

### **VISION**

A Commercial/Imperial Corridor that is vibrant, diverse, family-oriented, and safe, and celebrates the neighborhood's history and sense of community. The corridor capitalizes on its transit access to support a mix of culturally-relevant uses, including stores, restaurants, and other businesses; a diverse range of housing; economic development and employment opportunities for a range of skill and education levels; and public facilities, including arts, education, recreation and parks/open space. Streetscapes foster community identity, provide opportunities for plazas and other gathering spaces; and enhance pedestrian and bicyclist safety and comfort, while preserving automobile movement. A network of north-south transit routes complements the east-west trolley lines.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

#### **Community Character**

1. Create an inclusive community that supports a diversity of ethnicities, income levels, ages, businesses, and architectural styles.
2. Celebrate the corridor's historic roots as a working-class, African-American and Hispanic community.
3. Improve community health by facilitating safe walking and biking routes, promoting good air quality, reducing noise impacts, providing access to healthy foods in lieu of liquor stores, and expanding park/recreation opportunities.

#### **Land Use**

4. Develop a mix of employment, residential, live/work, retail, restaurant, public gathering space, and cultural uses and a variety of amenities and services to support a balanced and vibrant community. Encourage transit-oriented development around existing—and potentially an additional—trolley stops.
5. Reinforce Imperial Avenue's identity as a mixed-use corridor, with vibrant ground-level uses in several stretches. Explore feasibility of transit-oriented uses around trolley stops along Commercial Street.
6. Accommodate a range of household types and incomes with a variety of housing types and affordability levels.

### **Economic Development**

7. Provide opportunities for arts, cultural, educational, and job training for children, teenagers, and adult community members.
8. Provide job opportunities in light industrial, commercial, and new start-up sectors.

### **Mobility**

9. Create a multi-modal circulation system that supports the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and vehicles.
10. Retain and enhance street parking opportunities.
11. Explore feasibility of an additional trolley stop at 28th Street.



### **3 Land Use**

This chapter describes the overall concept and strategy of the Preferred Plan, presents draft land use designations, and analyzes potential development that could result from its implementation.

#### **OVERALL CONCEPT**

As shown in Figure 3-1, the Preferred Plan directs development into mixed-use centers around the two existing trolley stops, as well as a new trolley stop proposed at 28th Street. These centers are strategically located to maximize accessibility from transit and the residential neighborhoods to the north and the south. Each center will contain a mix of local serving uses, spaces for small businesses, retail, housing, and plazas or open spaces. While commercial development would be allowed as part of mixed-use developments in any location in the corridor, they would be required along certain stretches (as shown in the Land Use and Transportation drawing) in order to create core locations for foot traffic, small businesses, façade improvements and local shopping. For example, the intersection of 25th and Commercial streets could build on existing public facilities and foot traffic to become a center for the community with retail uses and a gathering space for a farmers' or open air market.

#### **Imperial Avenue**

Imperial Avenue will remain as a mix of residential and commercial uses, but new and revitalized transit-oriented development around the trolley stops will enhance pedestrian safety and comfort, and the vibrancy of the corridor with focused streetscape and pedestrian improvements, such as wider sidewalks, bulbouts, traffic calming, landscaping, and street furniture. A new north-south bus route is proposed along 28th Street to better connect the neighborhoods to the north and the south. The feasibility, including ridership demand, is being determined in consultation with the San Diego Metropolitan Transportation System (MTS).

#### **Commercial Street**

The majority of the Commercial Street corridor will be retained as industrial and for employment uses. However, at the proposed 28th Street trolley stop, a mix of uses would be prioritized to capitalize on transit accessibility, with industrial uses transitioning to other use over time into other uses such as residential, live/work, commercial businesses, and cultural and community facilities. In the short term, the Master Plan will also address compatibility between industrial and residential uses through measures such as noise mitigation (i.e. controlling noise at the source) landscaping and/or screening. Streetscape improvements would be prioritized around the Commercial and 32nd Street trolley stop. In addition, sidewalk construction on Commercial Street will be required when any property improvements are made where sidewalks are missing.

#### **DRAFT LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

The San Diego General Plan specifies a series of land use designations that may be applied to community plans to fit the needs and desires of individual communities. Table 3-1 shows the draft land use designations that have been applied to the Commercial/Imperial corridor. Figure 3-2 illustrates how they have been applied in the corridor. These designations will be re-

fined through the planning process to determine use mix and density ranges. Specific allowed uses and building intensities will be recommended in the Master Plan and codified in the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan Update.

**Table 3-1: Land Use Designations for the Preferred Plan**

<i>Land Use Designation</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>General Plan Density Range<sup>1</sup></i>
Residential Medium	Single- and multi-family housing.	15-29 du/ac
Residential Medium - High	Multi-family housing.	30-44 du/ac
Community Commercial	Shopping areas with retail, service, civic, and office uses for the community at large. Multi-family residential uses may be appropriate in transit corridors. (Residential may be permitted or prohibited.)	0-74 du/ac
Light Industrial	Light manufacturing, R&D, storage, distribution, accessory office, and commercial uses. Heavy industrial uses with significant nuisance effects excluded.	N/A
Neighborhood Village	Provides housing in a mixed-use setting with convenience shopping, and civic uses. Residential required.	15-44 du/ac
Community Village	Provides housing in a mixed-use setting with commercial needs of larger community, including industrial and business areas. Retail, office, civic, and recreation, are permitted. Residential required.	45-74 du/ac

1. Densities ranges will be further refined through the planning process.

*Source: San Diego General Plan, Land Use and Community Planning Element. March 2008. Table LU-4.*

In addition to the land use designations shown in the table above, Figure 2-2 also shows placeholders for parks and plazas, street segments where commercial frontage will be required to focus retail development and create vibrant pedestrian-oriented centers.

## **DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL**

Development opportunity sites were identified during the existing conditions analysis and are shown with hatched symbology on each of the figures. These sites include vacant or underutilized parcels (i.e., sites with low building values compared to land values and sites with low building intensities). Development potential is estimated based on the land uses shown in Figure 3-2 and assumptions for density/intensity (described in Table 3-1) and likelihood of redevelopment.

Table 3-2 describes the results of this analysis, including net new development resulting from the Preferred Plan (which factors in any existing development lost due to redevelopment). When combined with the approved Comm22 development project, the Preferred Plan could result in nearly 110,000 square feet for new non-residential development, one acre total in parks/plazas, and over 730 housing units. Adding existing development to these values results in the total estimate in the bottom row of the table: over 1 million square feet of non-residential space and nearly 1,200 housing units.

**Table 3-2: Development Potential Resulting from the Preferred Plan**

<i>Square Feet</i>						
<i>Category</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Light Industrial</i>	<i>Commercial Retail</i>	<i>Public /Semi-Public</i>	<i>Park/Plaza (Acres)</i>	<i>Housing Units</i>
A. Preferred Plan (Net New)	34,300	18,800	23,100	0	1.0	480
B. Development Project (Comm22)	10,000	0	17,800	5,400		250
C. Subtotal (A+B)	44,300	18,800	40,900	5,400	1.0	730
D. Existing Development	27,400	404,600	346,600	135,200	1.5	460
<b>Total (C+D)</b>	<b>71,700</b>	<b>423,400</b>	<b>387,500</b>	<b>140,600</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1,190</b>

*Source: Dyett & Bhatia (Preferred Plan Buildout); Center City Development Corporation, 2011 (Comm22); City of San Diego, 2011 (Existing Data).*

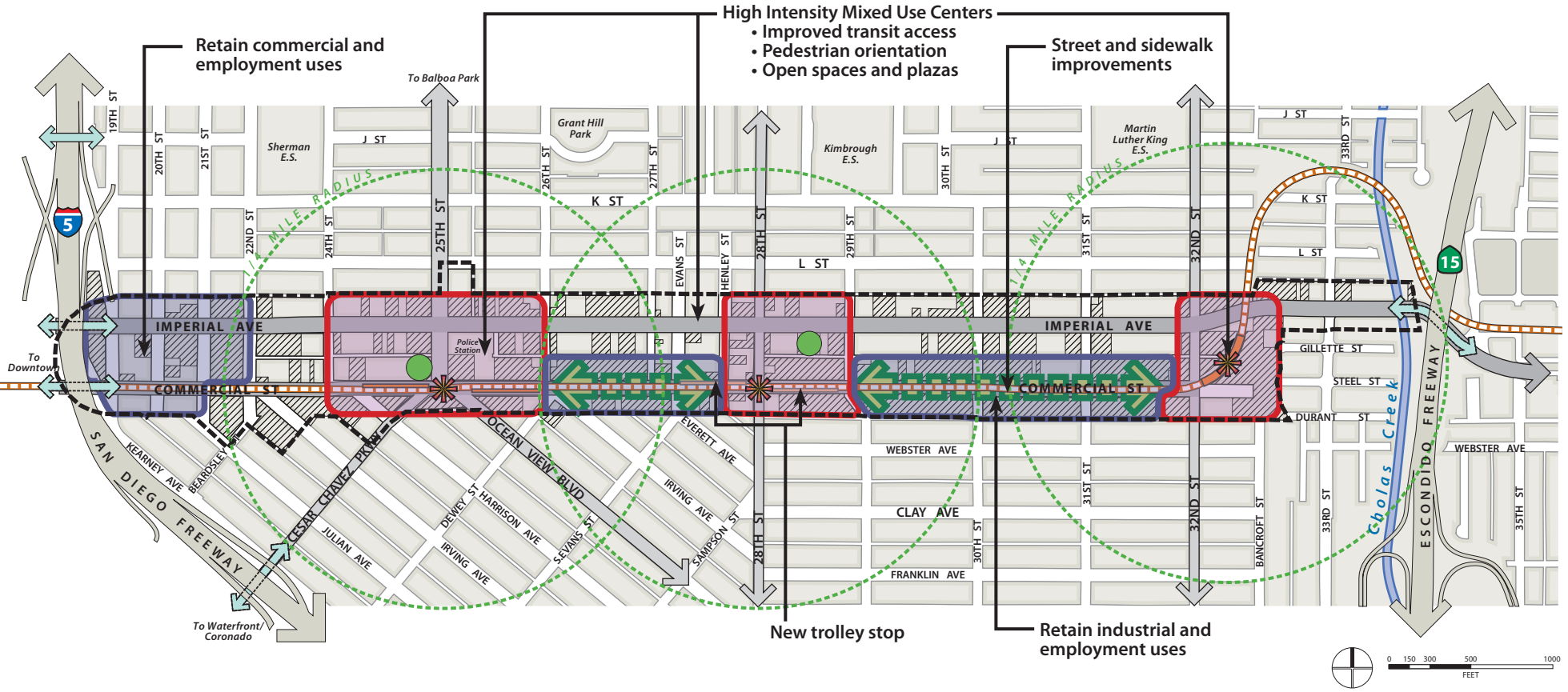
The Preferred Plan and Comm22 project could add about 2,600 new residents, and add about 130 new jobs in industrial, retail, and office sectors. It should be noted that while the net increase in commercial/retail space is about 23,000 square feet (s.f.), another 50,000 to 100,000 s.f. of commercial/retail space could convert (for example, from auto repair to retail and restaurants) over the plan horizon of approximately 20 years. This may be due to businesses transitioning out of the planning area as a result of the vision for the Master Plan coming to fruition and market conditions change.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Notably, this conversion of commercial uses may affect environmental analysis under CEQA, since various commercial uses can have different trip generation rates and effects on jobs and the jobs/housing ratio.

Figure 3-1:

# Preferred Plan Concept










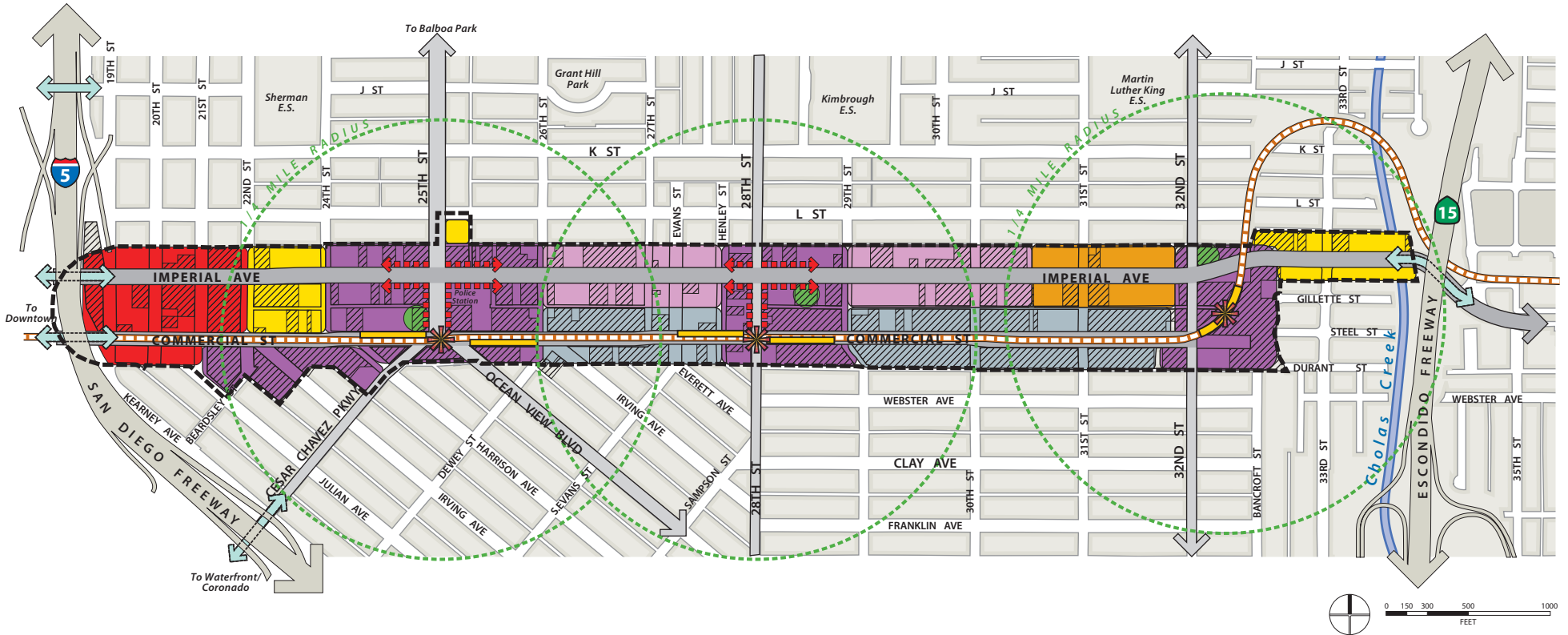
-  Park/Plaza
-  TOD Node
-  Orange Line Trolley
-  Trolley Platform
-  Street/Sidewalk Improvements
-  Planning Area
-  Overpass/Underpass



Figure 3-2:

# Preferred Plan: Land Use



- Community Village (45-74 du/ac)
- Neighborhood Village (15-44 du/ac)
- Community Commercial
- Residential Medium - High (30-44 du/ac)
- Residential Medium (15-29 du/ac)
- Light Industrial
- Opportunity Site
- Commercial Frontage Required
- Park/Plaza
- TOD Node
- Orange Line Trolley
- Trolley Platform
- Planning Area
- Overpass/Underpass

## Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan



*This page intentionally left blank.*

## 4 Mobility

This chapter presents the emerging circulation plan and the impact of the Preferred Plan land use strategy on traffic and circulation. In addition, several transportation improvement ideas expressed during community outreach activities have been explored further for their impacts and feasibility. These findings are presented here.

### MOBILITY STRATEGY

As described by the Vision and Guiding Principles, the intention of the Preferred Plan is to create a multi-modal circulation system that supports the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and vehicles. This draft Circulation Plan is illustrated in Figure 4-1 and includes the following:

- A new 28th Street trolley stop was a popular idea among community members as a way to improve access to and ridership on the Orange Line. Although this concept is included in the Preferred Plan and the Circulation Plan diagram, analysis of its physical feasibility suggests that it would be challenging and redundant as described at the end of the chapter. The Project Working Group and other community members will need to weigh the benefits and drawbacks to determine if the idea should continue to be supported.
- A proposed north-south bus transit route complements the east-west trolley lines to improve access to destinations north and south of the corridor, not just east and west to and from Downtown. Staff from San Diego Metropolitan Transportation System are being consulted to determine future bus routes and feasibility of a new or modified line serving the corridor.
- New bicycle routes and lanes are intended to minimize conflicts between cyclists and vehicles and encourage bike riding. These routes are adapted from the Bike Master Plan. However, as described in the impacts assessment at the end of this chapter, Commercial Street is not the best option for a Class I bike path given the limited right-of-way and existing trolley tracks.
- Vehicle circulation and parking is also accommodated, through streetscape designs (see Chapter 5) and traffic calming policies, such as bike lanes and enhanced crosswalks, which seek to minimize conflicts and encourage use of alternate modes. See Chapter 7: Draft Policies for details.
- Finally, improvements to sidewalks and streetscapes, including constructing sidewalks where missing and adding street trees and lighting, seek to enhance the safety and comfort of pedestrians. (These concepts are illustrated in detail in Chapter 5.)

### TRIP GENERATION AND POTENTIAL TRAFFIC IMPACTS

Table 4-1 estimates vehicle trip generation resulting from existing land use conditions and the addition of the Preferred Plan, to suggest potential traffic impacts on the circulation system. As shown, buildout of the Preferred Plan is projected to generate 5,800 new daily vehicular trips, including 480 and 600 new trips in the AM and PM peak hours, respectively. This

represents a 16 percent increase of daily trips and a slightly higher increase during peak hours.

**Table 4-1: Trip Generation (# of Trips)**

	<i>Daily</i>	<i>AM Peak</i>	<i>PM Peak</i>
Existing	35,500	2,570	3,590
Preferred Plan (Net New)	5,800	480	600
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,300</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>4,190</b>
% Increase	16%	19%	17%

*Source: Fehr & Peers, 2011.*

The existing roadway volumes on both Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue are generally well below the functional capacities of the respective roadways. Therefore in general, it is anticipated that the excess roadway capacity along both corridors will be sufficient to accommodate the additional traffic demand associated with the Preferred Plan. However, the Preferred Plan recommends dense pockets of development around the two existing trolley stations—at 25th and 32nd streets—as well as a proposed trolley station at 28th Street. The dense development patterns at these locations could potentially concentrate and increase the level of vehicular traffic at the adjacent intersections of 24th, 25th, 28th, and 32nd streets along both Imperial Avenue and Commercial Street, as shown in Figure 4-2. This deterioration could include increases in intersection delays, excess queuing, and slower speeds resulting in choke points along the corridors.

## POTENTIAL SAFETY IMPACTS

As noted in the Existing Conditions Report, between the years 2005 and 2010 there were a total of 186 vehicle related collisions along the corridor. The majority of these collisions (65%) were caused by unsafe traffic movements<sup>2</sup> predominantly along Imperial Avenue. The transit-oriented developments proposed around the transit stations will likely increase pedestrian and bicycle activity along the corridor. This, in association with the projected increase in vehicular traffic, may increase conflicts between the various modes of travel (auto, pedestrian, bicycle and transit), resulting in higher potential for vehicular collisions. Traffic safety, control and calming measures should be considered along Imperial Avenue; these are specified in the policy section in Chapter 7.

## IMPACTS OF VARIOUS TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

Community members discussed several concepts to be explored as potential improvements to the Commercial/Imperial corridor. Three of these concepts are described and analyzed for potential benefits and drawbacks: a new trolley stop at 28th Street, one-way couplets for vehicle travel, and a Class I bike path on Commercial Street as shown in the City’s Bike Master Plan.

---

<sup>2</sup> Unsafe movements include: improper lane changes/starts/passing/turns, unsafe backing and other general unsafe maneuvers.



**Table 4-2: Potential Transportation Improvements and Their Impacts/Feasibility**

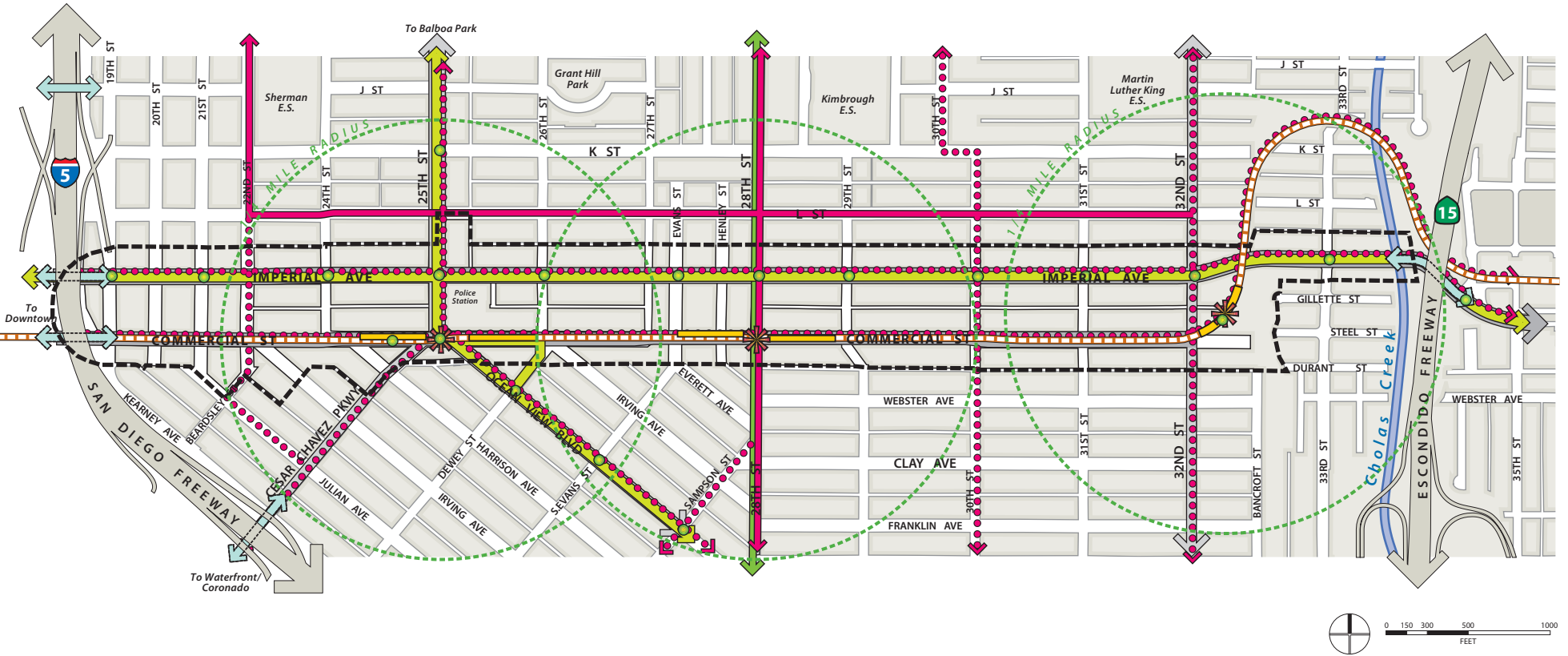
<i>Proposed Improvements</i>	<i>Potential Benefits</i>	<i>Potential Impacts and Feasibility</i>
New 28 <sup>th</sup> Street Trolley Stop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More convenient access/shorter walking distances for transit users</li> <li>• Potential additional transit-oriented development opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trolley may not be pick up enough speed between stations (approximately 2,000 feet distance to 25th Street station)</li> <li>• Need additional right of way to install trolley platforms (total ROW is 80 feet; compared with 92 feet at 25th Street station)</li> <li>• Length of station platform would obstruct and eliminate access to/from Hensley Street</li> </ul>
One-Way Couplets on Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminating left-turn lane/median on Imperial Avenue provides opportunities for bicycle lanes and wider sidewalks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the center-running trolley, Commercial Street will have operation/safety issues at intersections if it remains as two travel lanes. Since both lanes travel in the same direction, in order to avoid collision, one lane will have to prohibit left-turn movements while the other with no right-turns.</li> <li>• Potential capacity issues when combining directional volumes at peak hours.</li> </ul>
Class I Bike Path on Commercial Street (as shown in Bicycle Master Plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A separated bike path would provide a safe biking route</li> <li>• Convenient bicycle linkage between the corridor and the MLK, Jr. Promenade and Downtown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ROW is too narrow with trolley and driving lanes to construct a separated bicycle path; would need ROW in addition to existing 80-foot ROW.</li> <li>• Sharrows (marked shared lanes) could be considered along this corridor.</li> </ul>

*Source: Fehr & Peers, Dyett & Bhatia, 2011.*

This analysis suggests that these transportation improvements may not be feasible as proposed. Rather than installing a new trolley stop, community members may want to consider how to improve access to the existing trolley stations. Although the one-way couplet and Class I Bike Path may not be feasible on Commercial Street, there may be other ways to achieve the desired benefits of accommodating all modes of travel. The next chapter explores ways to reconfigure traffic lanes and the right-of-way to accommodate bicycle, transit, and pedestrian travel, in addition to vehicle movements and parking, particularly on Imperial Avenue. Streetscape improvements along Commercial Street are described in the text of the following chapter and will be explored further in the Draft Master Plan.

Figure 4-1:

# Preferred Plan: Circulation Plan




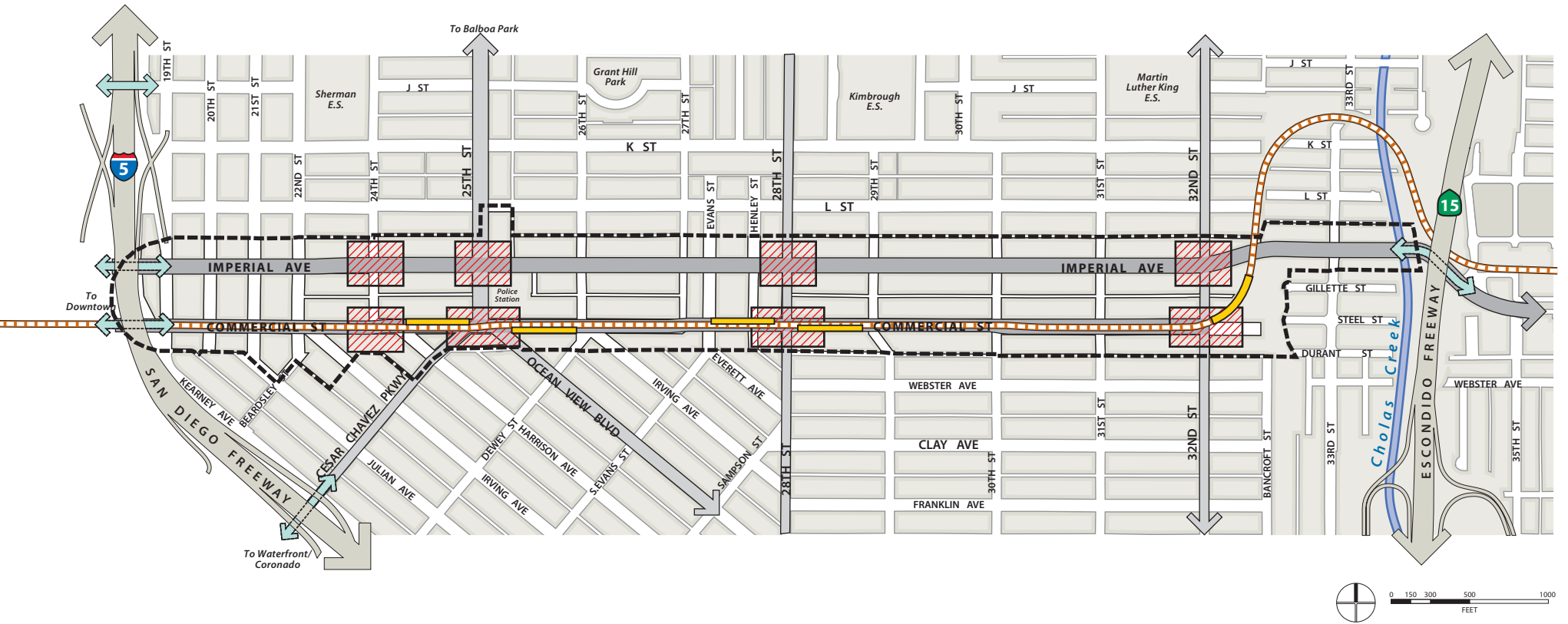






-  TOD Node
-  Orange Line Trolley
-  Trolley Platform
-  Planning Area
-  Overpass/Underpass
-  Existing Bus Routes & Bus Stops
-  Potential New Bus Route on 28th Street
-  Existing Bicycle Lanes/Routes
-  Potential Bicycle Paths/Lanes/Routes

Figure 4-2:

# Preferred Plan: Potential Congestion Areas



-  Potential Congestion Areas
-  TOD Node
-  Orange Line Trolley
-  Trolley Platform/Station Stop
-  Planning Area
-  Overpass/Underpass

**DYETT & BHATIA**  
Urban and Regional Planners

## Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan



City of San Diego

*This page intentionally left blank.*

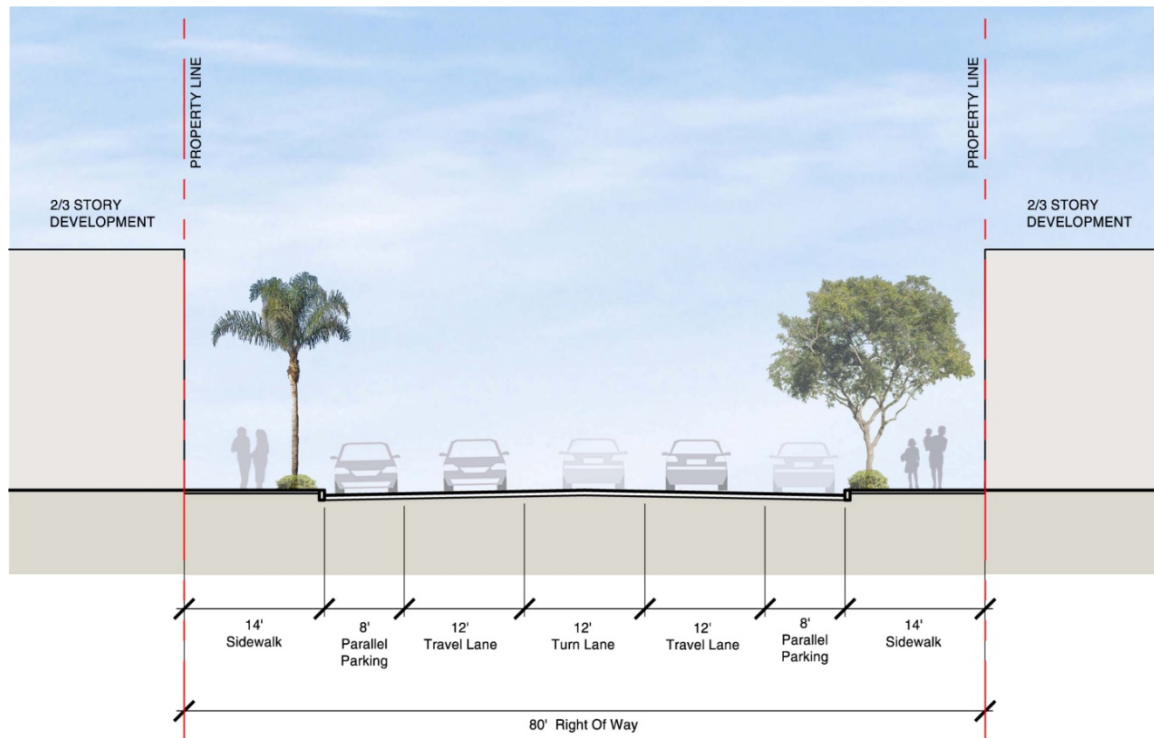
## 5 Streetscapes and Urban Design

This chapter illustrates three possible streetscape and urban design concepts to help visualize how the vision, guiding principles, and Preferred Plan concept could appear. The focus for streetscape improvements is on Imperial Avenue since most new development will be located on this street. Most of Commercial Street will retain its industrial uses and character, so redevelopment is not anticipated along most of the corridor in the short term. Still, around the trolley stops, where higher intensity mixed-use development is proposed, streetscape improvements will be prioritized and should proceed in tandem with redevelopment. The 25th Street station area already enjoys sidewalks, public art, and landscaping, but can benefit from additional improvements such as bike lanes and crosswalk striping. On the other hand, the 32nd Street station does not enjoy the same amenities; here, façade improvements, sidewalk construction, landscaping, and other basic street improvements are necessary. Project Working Group members and the community at-large will be asked to choose preferred streetscape concepts for the Master Plan.

### EXISTING STREETScape CONDITIONS

Currently, Imperial Avenue maintains a mix of small business and residential land uses, with generally one and two story building heights. Overall, the activity of pedestrians and a varied mix of small businesses and single-family homes provide the character of the street. In front of residential uses on Imperial Avenue, the sidewalk is typically ten feet wide, including a four foot planted buffer between the sidewalk edge and the property line. As shown in Figure 5-1, in front of commercial uses, sidewalks are 14 feet wide, including small five foot by five foot planting cut-outs for street trees, which are generally spaced 25 to 35 feet apart. Very few street furnishings (such as benches, trash receptacles, or bike racks) are provided along the corridor making the streetscape appear a bit barren. Lighting is limited to cobra lights, approximately every 175 to 250 feet on Imperial Avenue and Commercial Street. These lights illuminate the street and vehicles, but do not provide good illumination for pedestrians on the sidewalk. Street lights are less frequent and sometimes lacking altogether on the side streets running perpendicular.

**Figure 5-1: Imperial Avenue Existing Street Conditions Section**



Source: Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects, 2011.

## POTENTIAL STREETSCAPE CONCEPTS

Community members expressed a desire for more attractive and comfortable streets, with more street trees, places to sit, and lighting to ensure safety at night. Community members would like to retain, and potentially even enhance, existing on-street parking. This section explores three concepts for improvements to the configuration of Imperial Avenue, particularly around the mixed-use nodes (the street adjacent to the 25th Street intersection is modeled below). These concepts are not meant to suggest that the entire length of Imperial Avenue would be reconfigured. As described above, additional concepts for Commercial Street will be prepared for the Draft Master Plan.

Each of the concepts recommends eliminating the left-hand turn lane in order to accommodate more on-street parking, bike facilities, and/or wider sidewalks. Analysis of the average daily trips resulting from the Preferred Plan is underway and will help to determine whether potential increases in traffic volume and bus operations can be accommodated within a two-lane street. Curb cuts will continue to be necessary to access properties, although the Master Plan recommend policies limit new curb cuts as properties redevelop in order to achieve the more pedestrian-oriented streetscape that the community has envisioned.

### **Imperial Avenue Concept 1 – Diagonal Parking**

Concept 1, shown in Figure 5-2, utilizes the existing curb alignments, but reconfigures the travel lanes in order to include a row of diagonal parking on one side of the road through the elimination of the center turn lane.<sup>3</sup> While this scheme maximizes parking, bike lanes and widened sidewalks are not included in this concept. New street trees will help soften the corridor and provide shade to pedestrians on warm sunny days. Street trees in this scheme are placed in tree grates to maximize the amount of walkable surface since there is no gain in sidewalk width. Planted islands between the diagonal parking spaces are provided to break up the long rows of diagonal parking and to provide additional shade.

New pedestrian scale lighting provides added light to improve visibility and safety at night and provide the potential to hang banners. Like in all three concepts, benches, public art, and trash receptacles should also be provided along the corridor to create an inviting pedestrian scale character for the streetscape. These site furnishings should be of a similar style and color palette, but could also provide an opportunity to provide branding for Imperial Avenue and the community and to incorporate public art into custom site furnishing pieces.

### **Imperial Avenue Concept 2 – Bike Lanes with Minimal Disturbance**

Concept 2 also utilizes the existing curb alignments and eliminates the center turn lane. This scheme, however, uses this additional space to add five foot wide Class II (that is, striped) bike lanes. As shown in Figure 5-3, this concept still has fairly wide travel lanes at 13 feet each, but the inclusion of the bike lane creates a safer environment for cyclists to travel through the corridor. As in the first scheme, new street trees should be included in trees grates to maximize the walkable surface.

### **Imperial Avenue Concept 3 – Pedestrian Promenade**

Maximum emphasis on pedestrians and bicycles is the goal of the third scheme. This concept utilizes the existing curb location along the south side of Imperial Avenue, but widens the sidewalk by six feet on the north end to allow for additional sunlight to reach the sidewalk in the cooler winter months. As shown in Figure 5-4, five-foot wide Class II bike lanes are also provided in this concept through the elimination of the center turn lane and by narrowing down the vehicular travel lanes to 11.5 feet each. These narrow vehicular lanes serve as a traffic calming tool.

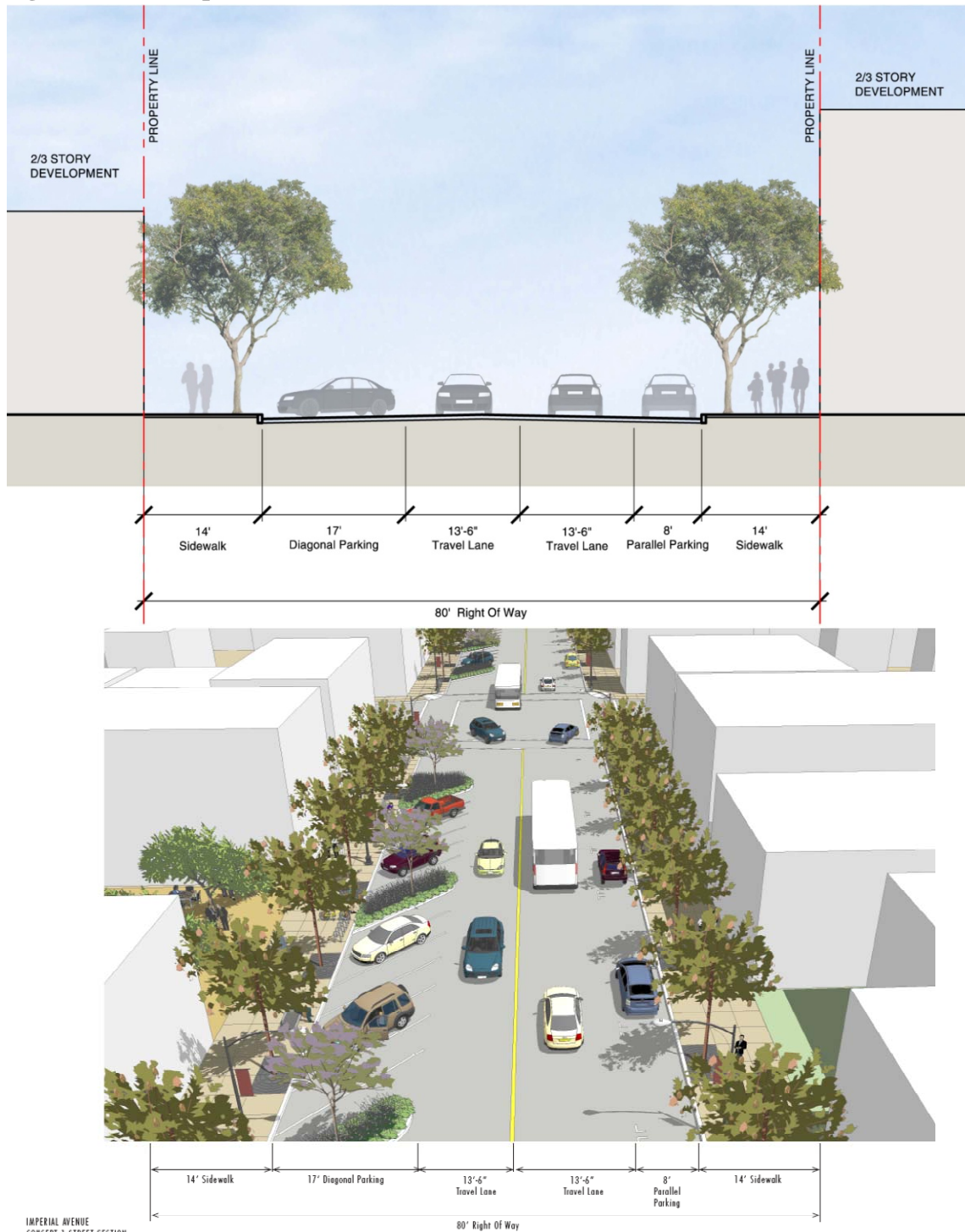
New street trees with cutouts for understory planting are included in this concept since the width of the northern sidewalk has been increased. This planted understory will also create a more walkable pedestrian-friendly environment by separating pedestrians from the street. The widened pedestrian sidewalk will provide an opportunity to create informal gathering spaces and additional seating areas than what could be provided in the other concepts.

---

<sup>3</sup> The preference of angled parking on the north versus south side of the street would depend more on land use and sun access than traffic operations. The existing average daily trips indicate that the eastbound and westbound traffic are distributed pretty evenly.



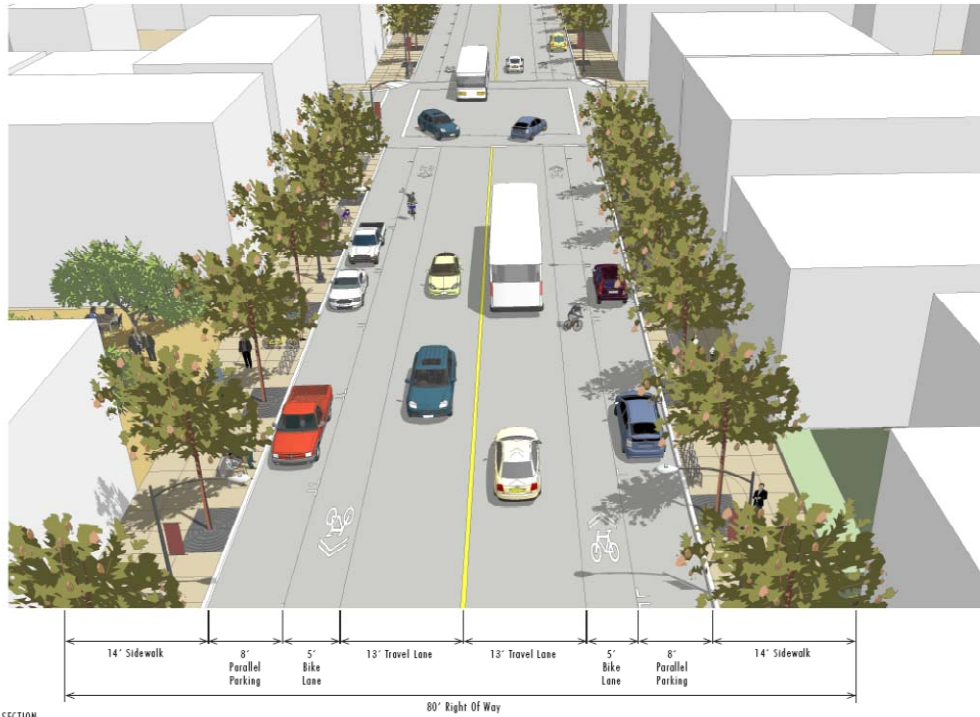
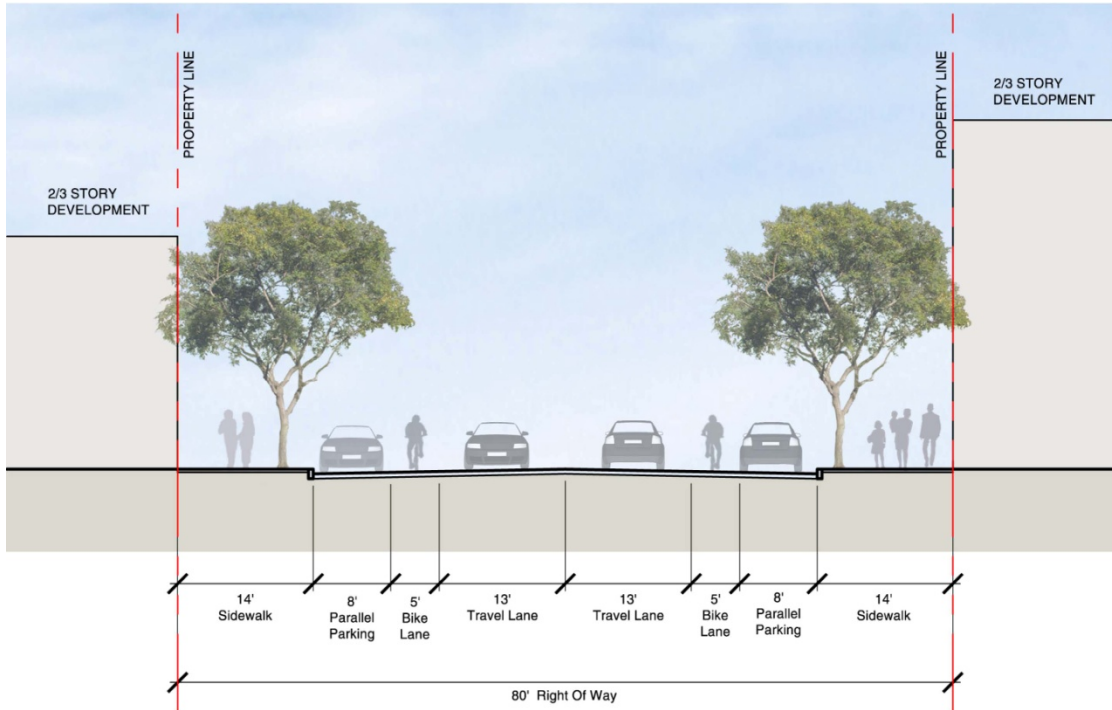
**Figure 5-2: Concept 1 (Section & 3D Model)**



Source: Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects, 2011.

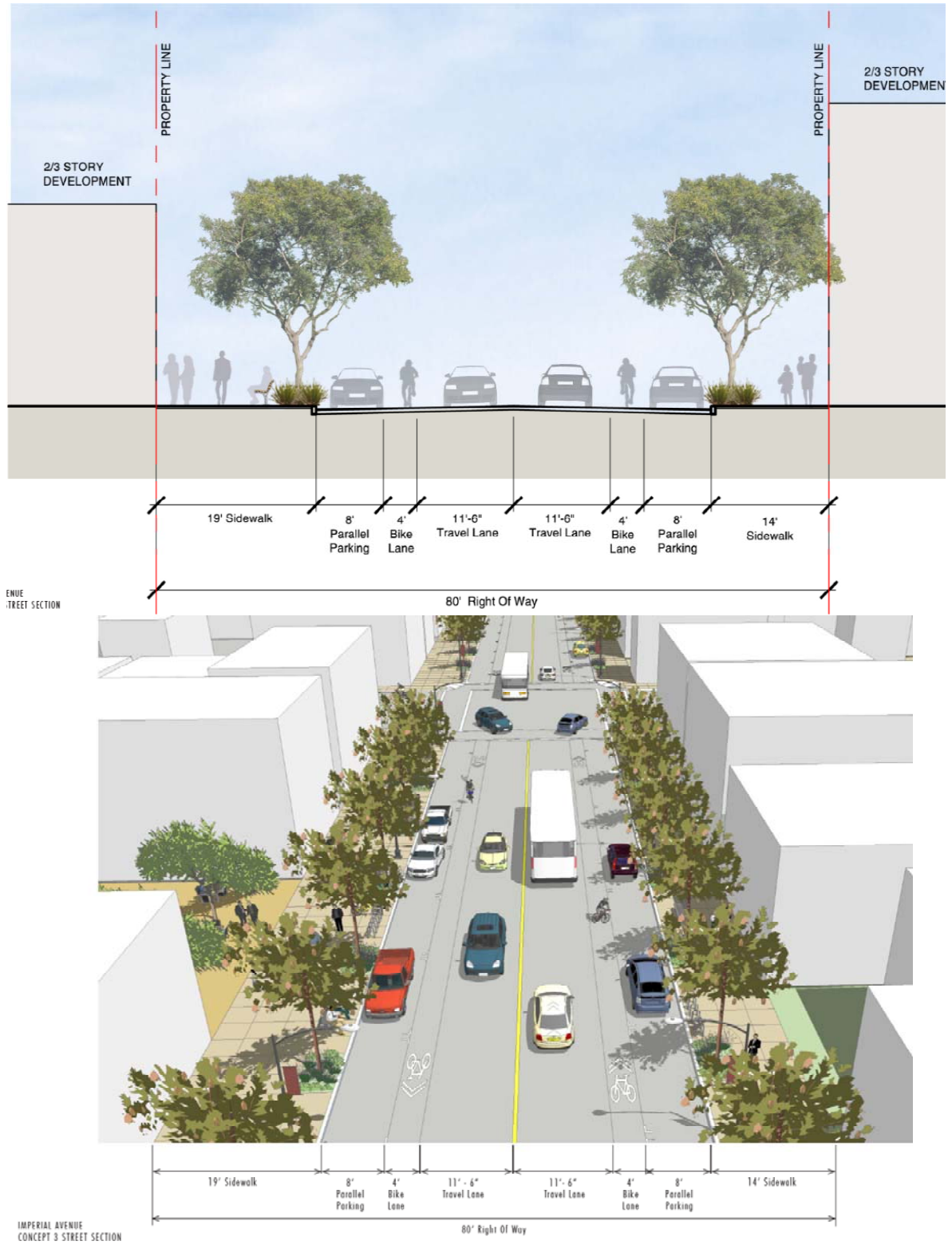


**Figure 5-3: Concept 2 (Section & 3D Model)**



Source: *Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects, 2011.*

**Figure 5-4: Concept 3 (Section & 3D Model)**



Source: Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects, 2011.

## VISUAL SIMULATIONS

Photo simulations below illustrate concepts for streetscape design and how new development could look and feel. Figure 5-5 and 5-6 detail façade and streetscape improvements, as well potential building heights, massing, and scale. Corner bulb-outs provide opportunities for seating or “parklets.” New street trees provide shade and an attractive streetscape.

**Figure 5-5: Photo Illustrative of Imperial Avenue at 30th Street**



*Existing Conditions*



*Façade Improvement*



**Figure 5-5: Photo Illustrative of Imperial Avenue at 30th Street (continued)**



*New Street Trees and Sidewalk Improvements*



*New Residential Development*



**Figure 5-6: Photo Illustrative of Imperial Avenue between 25th and 26th Street**



*Existing Conditions*



*Undergrounding Utilities*



**Figure 5-6: Photo Illustrative of Imperial Avenue between 25<sup>th</sup> and 26th Street (con't)**



*New Street Trees and Sidewalk Improvements*



*New Mixed-Use Development*

## 6 Development and Financial Feasibility

This chapter illustrates how opportunity sites in the planning could be developed and explores the financial feasibility of various types of developments: one residential example and two mixed use examples. Although actual site locations were chosen to demonstrate realistic and typical site conditions—locations are shown below—this is not intended to suggest that redevelopment is planned or proposed for these sites.



The typical lot size in the corridor is relatively small: 50 feet wide and 140 feet deep which can make development cost prohibitive. However, there may be opportunities for property owners to consolidate lots. In addition, the presence of rear alleyways running east-west (e.g. between L Street and Imperial Avenue, and Imperial Avenue and Commercial Street) allow opportunities for vehicle and pedestrian access while reducing the need for curb cuts for driveways. This reduces the potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians along the main street.

In addition to the site planning analysis, Keyser Marston Associates prepared financial feasibility analyses for each of the development programs to determine the “residual land value.” Residual land value is defined as the maximum land payment that a private developer could afford to pay for a specified development opportunity. In other words, this analysis determines whether the projects are feasible from the developers’ perspective.

### **RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PROTOTYPE (SITE #1)**

The first prototype illustrates how a new residential development could be developed on a typical 7,000 square foot lot along Imperial Avenue. This prototype shows how three duplex townhouse units (a total of six dwelling units) could be developed on the site, resulting in a density of 37 dwelling units per acre. Two parking spots are provided for each unit, with access to four of the units from a driveway off of a side street and access to the other two units from the alley way just south of Imperial Avenue.

### **Site Plan Characteristics**

Detailed site characteristics are provided below and illustrated in Figure 6-1.

- Preferred Plan Land Use Designation: Residential Medium-High (30-44 du/ac)
- Lot Size: 50 feet x140 feet = 7,000 square feet

- # of Stories: 3
- Type of Construction: Type VB<sup>4</sup>
- Unit Mix: 3-Duplex Townhouse Units: each duplex unit consists of two bedrooms, 1-1/2 baths with attached two-car garage. (Six dwelling units.)
- Density: 37 dwelling units/acre

### Financial Feasibility

Table 6-1 describes costs, proceeds from the sale or rent of residential units, and the resulting residual land value. Due to relatively low construction costs for the duplex units and the market sale price and rental price for residential units (\$231,000 and \$1,700, respectively), the residual land value is positive. Specifically, the residual value is estimated at \$66,000 and \$52,000 for sale and for rent, respectively (or \$9 and \$7 per square foot, not shown). This positive value suggests that development may be feasible, but only if land can be acquired at or below these rates and no site contamination clean-up is needed. Since the cost of land has been historically higher—in fact, comparable land prices for the area since 2008 suggest an average of \$45 per square foot—additional subsidy may be needed for the project to pencil out and actually be constructed.

**Table 6-1: Residential Building Prototype Feasibility**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total Amount</i>	<i>Per Unit Amount</i>
A. Total Costs (excluding land)	\$1,139,000	\$189,833
For Sale		
B. Net Sales Proceeds	\$1,205,000	\$200,833
Residual Land Value (B-A)	\$66,000	\$11,000
For Rent		
C. Net Scheduled Rental Income	\$1,191,000	\$198,500
Residual Land Value (C-A)	\$52,000	\$8,667

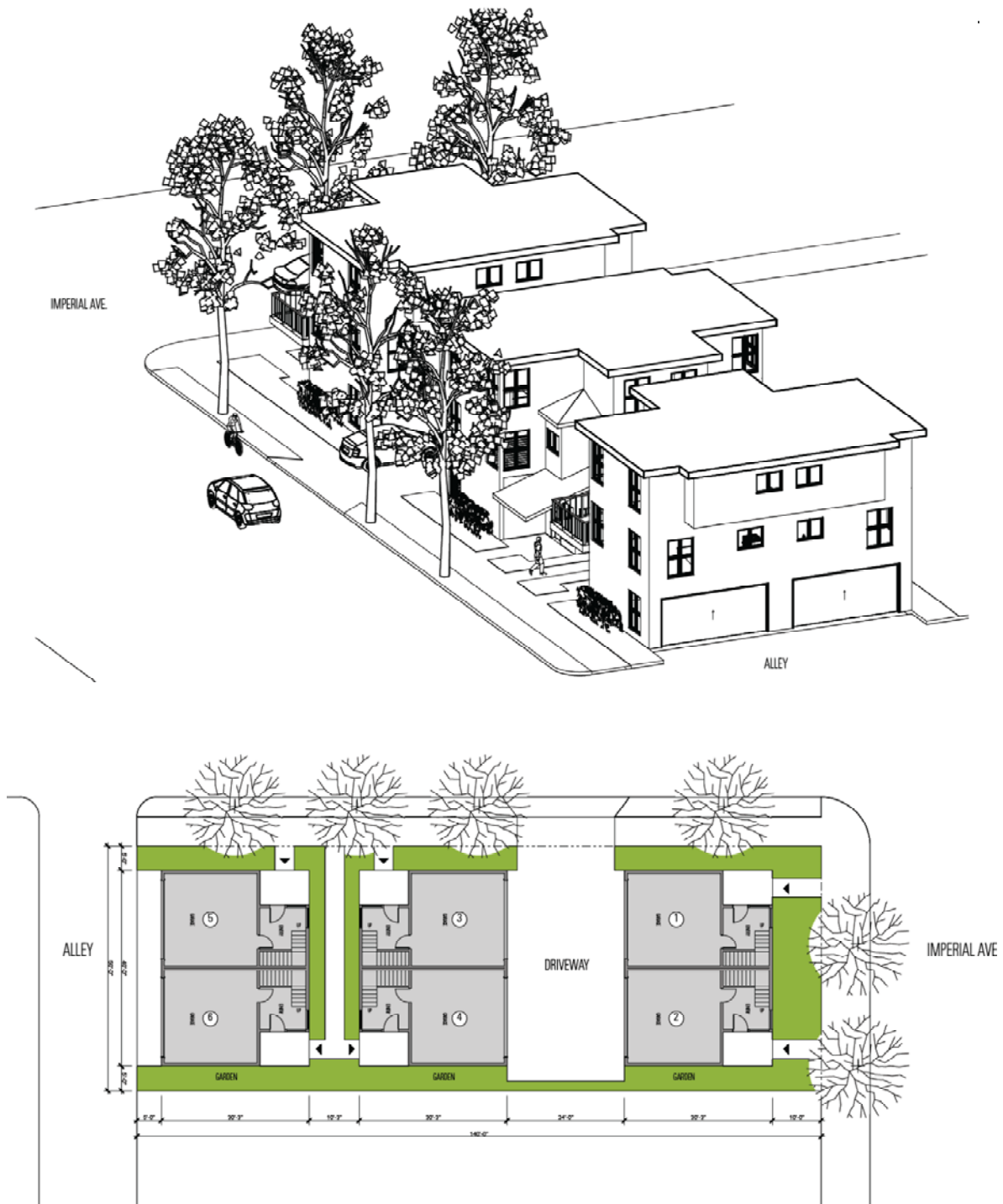
*Source: "Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue Corridor Master Plan—Financial Feasibility Analysis." Keyser Marston Associates, 2011.*

Still, it should be noted that the Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue Corridor Master Plan is a long-term plan. Although the housing market will need to rebound and see substantial changes to market pricing in order to produce healthy residual land values, there are strong fundamentals supporting attached housing development in infill locations throughout Central San Diego. Scarcity of land, rising housing costs, and the increase in non-family households will continue to generate demand for townhomes, condominiums, and apartments. In addition, proximity to Downtown San Diego and its amenities and employment opportunities may further generate demand within the corridor.

<sup>4</sup> Type VB, typically wood construction with no fire resistance, is one of the most common building types for multi-family housing, since it is relatively inexpensive and the construction technology is well understood.



**Figure 6-1: Illustrative Residential Building Prototype**



*Source: Rob Quigley Architects, 2011.*

**MIXED USE BUILDING PROTOTYPES (SITE #2)**

The next set of prototypes illustrates potential development on a slightly larger corner lot, designated for mixed use development. Two concepts are provided below, demonstrating site buildout with structured and surface parking, respectively. Detailed site characteristics are provided below and illustrated in Figure 6-2.

**Site Characteristics**

Prototype A includes structured parking, which allows for 19 residential units. Prototype B allows for only 12 units because parking requirements are met through surface parking. The entrance to the residential units is provided on the side street for pedestrian access, while vehicle access is provided in the rear of the units from the alleyway. Each prototype also provides space for a small commercial space (close to 5,000 square feet) fronting Imperial Avenue, with its own parking and entrance.

<i>Prototype A (Residential Over Structured Parking, with Ground-Floor Commercial)</i>	<i>Prototype B (Residential and Ground-Floor Commercial, with Surface Parking)</i>
Preferred Plan Land Use Designation: Community Village (Mixed Use)	
Lot Size: 100' x 140' = 14,000 square feet	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of Construction: Type VA<sup>5</sup> over Type I<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• # of Stories: 4</li> <li>• Commercial: 4,785 square feet</li> <li>• Residential Unit Mix: 19 units (10-1BD, 8-2BD, 1-3BD)</li> <li>• Parking type: Structured (two floors)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of Construction: Type VA</li> <li>• # of Stories: 3</li> <li>• Commercial: 4,915 square feet</li> <li>• Residential Unit Mix: 12 units (6-1BD, 6-2BD)</li> <li>• Parking type: Surface</li> </ul>

**Financial Feasibility**

Table 6-2 describes costs, proceeds from the rent of the commercial space and sale or rent of residential units, and the resulting residual land value. In both cases (and for both rental and for sale scenarios), residual land values are negative, suggesting that development is not feasible from the developers’ perspective without subsidy or changes in market conditions. This finding assumed average sale prices of \$181,300 for Prototype A and \$175,500 for Prototype B (or average monthly rent of \$1,270 and \$1,200) to \$233,000 and monthly rental rates of \$1,080 to \$1,730, respectively.

Prototype A includes structured parking which is substantially more expensive than surface parking. This “stacked flat” configuration (units over commercial and structured parking)

<sup>5</sup> Type VA is similar to Type VB, described in the previous footnote, but requires some fire resistance.

<sup>6</sup> Type I requires a non-combustible structural frame, typically concrete or steel, and is the most expensive building type to construct. It is assumed here for the parking structure.

also assumes a minimum of 15% building inefficiency factor for circulation and common areas. Prototype B is more feasible, despite producing fewer units, but would still require a subsidy or major change in market conditions. Alternatively, increasing the average sale/ rental prices to \$307,000 and \$2,100 for Prototype A and \$251,000 and \$1,800 would bring the estimated residual value to zero, but would be higher than local comparable prices and potentially out of reach for current residents.

**Table 6-2: Mixed Use Building Prototype Feasibility**

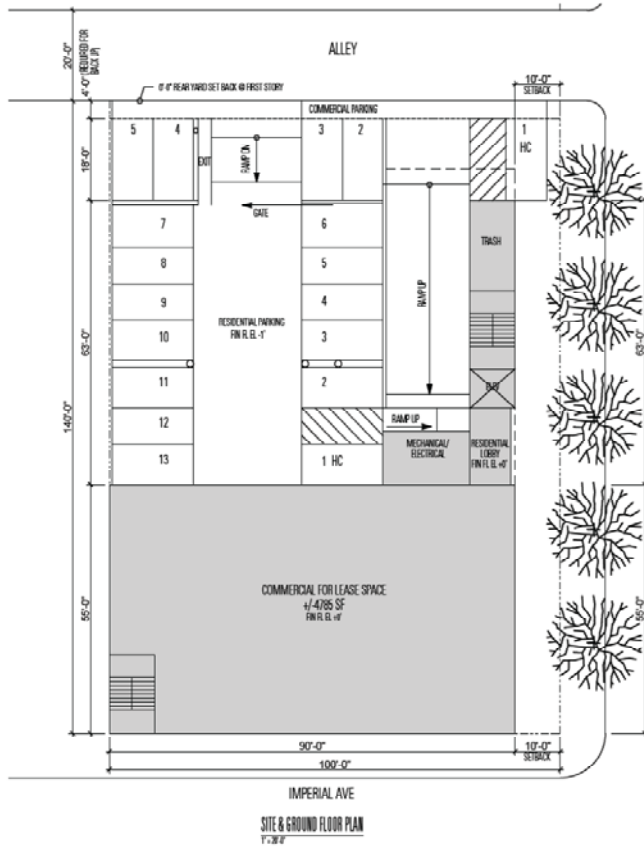
<i>Category</i>	<i>Prototype A</i>		<i>Prototype B</i>	
	<i>Total Amount</i>	<i>Per Unit Amount</i>	<i>Total Amount</i>	<i>Per Unit Amount</i>
A. Total Costs (excluding land)	\$6,139,000	\$323,105	\$3,704,000	\$308,667
Commercial Rent and For Sale Condos				
B. Net Proceeds	\$4,067,000	\$214,053	\$2,926,000	\$243,833
Residual Land Value (B-A)	-\$2,072,000	-\$109,053	-\$778,000	-\$64,833
Commercial and Residential For Rent				
C. Net Scheduled Rental Income	\$3,691,000	\$194,263	\$2,653,000	\$221,083
Residual Land Value (C-A)	-\$2,448,000	-\$128,842	-\$1,051,000	-\$87,583

*Source: "Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue Corridor Master Plan—Financial Feasibility Analysis." Keyser Marston Associates, 2011.*

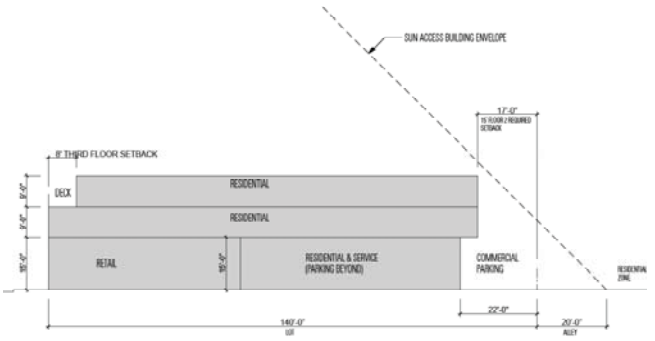
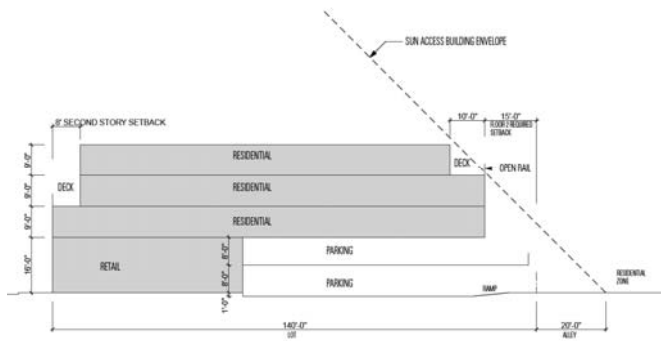
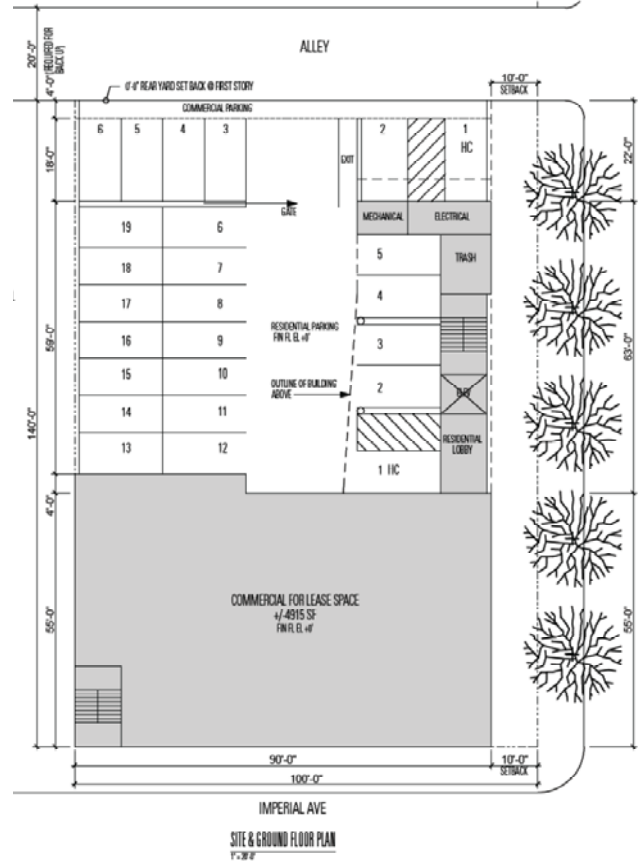
Notably, both scenarios are negatively affected by the fact that current market rents for commercial space do not support cost of construction.

**Figure 6-2: Illustrative Mixed Use Building Prototypes (Plans and Sections)**

*Prototype A*



*Prototype B*



Source: Rob Quigley Architects, 2011.

## 7 Draft Policies

Through the existing conditions analysis and community outreach meetings and activities, consultants and community members have identified policies and programs that can help to achieve the vision and guiding principles. Proposed draft policies are explored below and will be refined and edited for the Master Plan. Additional policies will be recommended during Community Workshop #2 and refined as the process moves forward.

### COMMUNITY CHARACTER

#### Guiding Principles

1. *Create an inclusive community that supports a diversity of ethnicities, income level, ages, businesses, and architectural styles.*
2. *Celebrate the corridor's historic roots as a working-class, African-American and Hispanic community.*
3. *Improve community health by facilitating safe walking and biking routes, ensuring good air quality, reducing noise impacts, providing access to healthy foods in lieu of liquor stores, and expanding park/recreation opportunities.*

#### Draft Policies

##### *Urban Design and Open Space*

- Improve access to open spaces and plazas by developing safe convenient connections between Southeastern's schools, parks, and library, as well as regional trails and parks (e.g. Balboa Park). This includes:
  - Enhancing the north-south linkages to schools, parks, and the library.
  - Identifying and marking 25th Street as the connector to Balboa Park.
- Improve joint-use coordination between the City and School District through regular communication and a procedure for monitoring and addressing problems.
- Develop public spaces and plazas at key gathering locations in the corridor as part of the mixed-use Community Village nodes at the 25th Street trolley station and near the existing commercial area along Imperial Avenue near 32nd Street, as shown on the Land Use and Transportation diagram.
- Address the deficiency of parks and open spaces in the corridor by considering innovative ways to provide open space in site planning and development, such as through plazas, green roofs, community gardens, and setbacks along street to provide outdoor seating.
- Ensure pedestrian safety and comfort by providing adequately-sized and consistent sidewalks; undergrounding utility lines and boxes, adding street lighting, signage, and landscaping; and abating graffiti and trash.
- Establish an overall height consistent with the designated land uses with typical new buildings reaching three- to four-stories and slightly taller buildings—up to five stories—around trolley stops.

- Design buildings to allow sun access and views. Step back taller building heights, especially on north side of the streets, to avoid building shadow impacts on existing buildings.

***Community Health***

- Do not allow new residential uses west of 22nd Street because of proximity to Interstates 5, to minimize air quality and noise impacts. Do not allow high-density residential development within 1,000 feet of Highway 15.
- Increase availability of fresh healthy foods by actively engaging such businesses, and undertake measures to decrease the density of liquor stores in the corridor.
- Control noise impacts at the noise source by dampening, buffering, or active canceling, particularly on sites that abut residential development or other sensitive receptors.
- Reduce potential noise impacts, particularly from the trolley, by siting residential uses away from noise sources or developing mitigations for noise and vibrations.

***Historic Preservation and Culture Celebration***

- Undertake an assessment of historic resources in the corridor. Adaptively reuse historic and potentially historic structures to reinforce the corridor’s history and reinvest in existing resources.
- Celebrate local culture and arts in the community by supporting local events, providing gathering spaces, and incorporating public art into the public realm. Provide live/work spaces and other forum for performing and visual art and exhibits.
- Accommodate a diversity of ages, income-levels, and household types through land use and zoning designations, and community facilities’ programming.
- Encourage property owners to revitalize building façades to improve the appearance and viability of local businesses.

*In addition to these policies, the Master Plan will support and describe ongoing efforts and regulations to improve community health. This includes enforcing air quality rules identified by the Environmental Protection Agency, the California Air Resources Board, and the San Diego Air Quality Management District. It also includes enforcing rules concerning use, handling, storage and transportation of hazardous materials identified in the California Hazardous Materials Regulations and the California Fire and Building Code, as well as the laws and regulations of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the County Department of Environmental Health.*

**LAND USE**

**Guiding Principles**

4. *Develop a mix of employment, residential, live/work, retail, restaurant, public gathering space, and cultural uses and a variety of amenities and services to support a balanced and vibrant community. Encourage transit-oriented development around existing—and potentially an additional—trolley stops.*

5. *Reinforce Imperial Avenue’s identity as a mixed-use corridor, with vibrant ground-level uses in several stretches. Explore feasibility of transit-oriented uses around trolley stops along Commercial Street.*
6. *Accommodate a range of household types and incomes with a variety of housing types and affordability levels.*

**Draft Policies**

- Focus the highest intensity development around the existing trolley stops on both Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue. Allow commercial uses fronting Imperial Avenue in the Community Village and Neighborhood Village designated areas and require ground-floor commercial uses, such as retail spaces and small businesses, around the trolley stops, as shown by the symbol “Commercial Frontage Required” on the Land Use and Transportation diagram.
- Permit mixed-use development through new mixed-use land use designations to re-develop vacant sites, blighted properties and properties in disrepair with uses that contribute a diversity of land uses and vitality to the corridor.
- Provide a mix of housing densities and types through a range of mixed-use and residential land use designations to accommodate a range of household types and incomes.
- Ensure compatibility between industrial and residential uses by retiring incompatible uses over time. This includes junkyards, recycling centers, and other uses incompatible with proximate residential development.
- Where industrial uses would remain, mitigate incompatible uses through zoning performance measures to mitigate noise and provide landscaping and/or screening:
  - Within an industrial development site, smaller buildings and less intensive uses shall be located closer adjacent residential uses than larger or more intensive uses.
  - Use natural landscape materials (trees, shrubs, and hedges) to buffer differing land uses, provide a transition between adjacent properties, and screen the view of any parking or storage area, refuse collection, utility enclosures, or other service area visible from major streets, alley, or pedestrian area.
  - Develop screening walls on the interior lot lines of industrial uses abutting residential uses.

*The Master Plan and subsequent zoning standards will discuss how to address non-conforming uses (whether residential or industrial) and how to determine thresholds for what improvements (e.g. change in business, ownership, expansion of x%) would trigger compliance with certain criteria (e.g. transportation demand management, performance measures). The focus of these provisions should allow the City flexibility in the treatment of nonconformities, minimizing the creation of nonconforming uses that will increase the time and cost of zoning administration and could create obstacles to maintaining and upgrading some nonconforming properties even when such changes would help to achieve the community’s vision for a more mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented corridor.*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Guiding Principles

7. *Provide opportunities for arts, cultural, educational, and job training for children, teenagers, and adult community members.*
8. *Provide job opportunities in light industrial, commercial, and new start-up sectors.*

### Draft Policies

- Encourage a range of businesses that provide affordable goods and services. Build on the existing base of Hispanic and other ethnic businesses that provide food, culture, and everyday shopping needs for households in the Southeastern community and that draw customers from throughout the city.
- Encourage a diversity of employment opportunities through land use designations that permit a range of light industrial, commercial office, and retail uses.
- Encourage businesses, such as high-tech, machining, and green industries that may seek industrial designations and building requirements in proximity to Downtown.
- Support training and education at all levels, including youth programming and activities, vocational training, creative arts programs, a neighborhood high school, community colleges, and other higher education. Support public access to computers and the internet at libraries and community centers.
- Provide technical assistance to business owners for assistance with both physical improvements and business practices by encouraging participation in the City's Economic Development Division's programming.

## MOBILITY

### Guiding Principles

9. *Create a multi-modal circulation system that supports the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and vehicles.*
10. *Retain and enhance street parking opportunities.*
11. *Explore feasibility of an additional trolley stop at 28th Street.*

### Draft Policies

- Institute traffic calming measures on Commercial Street and Imperial Avenue to ensure pedestrian safety and prevent conflicts between transportation modes (*Note: this policy will be refined/revised once the street section for Imperial Avenue is finalized*):
  - Construct a raised median along Imperial Avenue in order to limit the conflict points at signalized intersections (if median/left-turn lane is retained and feasible with emergency vehicle requirements)
  - Change signal phasing and timing to include a protected left-turn phase for left-turn movements along Imperial Avenue (if left-turn lane is retained)



- Do not widen Imperial Avenue. Instead, narrow roadway lane widths to decrease vehicular speeds and create streets that accommodate vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians safely and efficiently.
- Construct bike lanes along Imperial Avenue to give cyclists their own right-of-way.
- Enhance pedestrian crossing locations with curb bulb outs, enhanced crosswalks and pedestrian countdown signals.
- Design streetscapes to encourage walking and biking, by adding street trees, places to sit, and lighting to ensure safety at night, as well as providing adequate sidewalks, with clear pedestrian pathway. Prioritize streetscape improvements in Community Village designations, which have the highest pedestrian activity.
- Provide designated bicycle routes as shown on the Circulation Plan and adequate bicycle parking around trolley stations and retail destinations.
- Ensure adequate street parking for customers of local businesses, while avoiding excessive supplies that discourage transit ridership and disrupt the public realm. Consider pricing strategies (e.g. metering, variable pricing) and permit parking, if necessary, to manage parking demand and supply.

*This page intentionally left blank.*



**DYETT & BHATIA**  
Urban and Regional Planners

755 Sansome Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco, California 94111  
☎ 415 956 4300 📠 415 956 7315