

Town Plaza and Mixed-Use Center

A recent economic development study illustrates that new commercial development in Firebaugh may capture some of the retail “leakage” that currently occurs. This potential new development may provide a significant opportunity for increased vitality and viability of O Street businesses, if new development is designed and strategically positioned to complement, rather than compete with, the existing O Street environment.

To this end, the design team explored the potential long-term creation of a new mixed-use center at the intersection of Highway 33 and 12th Street. This development could combine new retail, civic, office, and housing development organized around a public plaza that would provide O Street with a strong southern anchor and provide the community with a “front door” image that would be unique and positive.

The square could provide a viable setting for community festivals and would be suitable for a weekly farmers’ market. Managed, on-street parking around the square could provide an opportunity for travelers to “park once,” patronize local businesses, and venture over to new and existing businesses in the heart of O Street, merely 1 1/2 blocks away.

Above: The area bounded by Highway 33, 11th Street, O Street, and 12th Street should be considered as a significant redevelopment opportunity that can assist in the healthy revitalization of O Street as a retail environment.



It is envisioned that current underutilized and vacant land along the east side of O Street between 11th and 12th Streets could, in the future, be developed with a new City Hall or other civic use, providing a strong visual backdrop to the public plaza. Along its northern and southern sides, new, two to three-story, mixed-use buildings could house ground-floor retail with housing and offices above. Ground floor commercial spaces could provide a variety of sizes and depths to accommodate both much-needed regional retail (such as a potential new grocery store) and smaller spaces for local businesses.

The City should explore potential strategies for encouraging new, coordinated development in this area, including the designation of a redevelopment area, and the generation of a precise or specific plan.

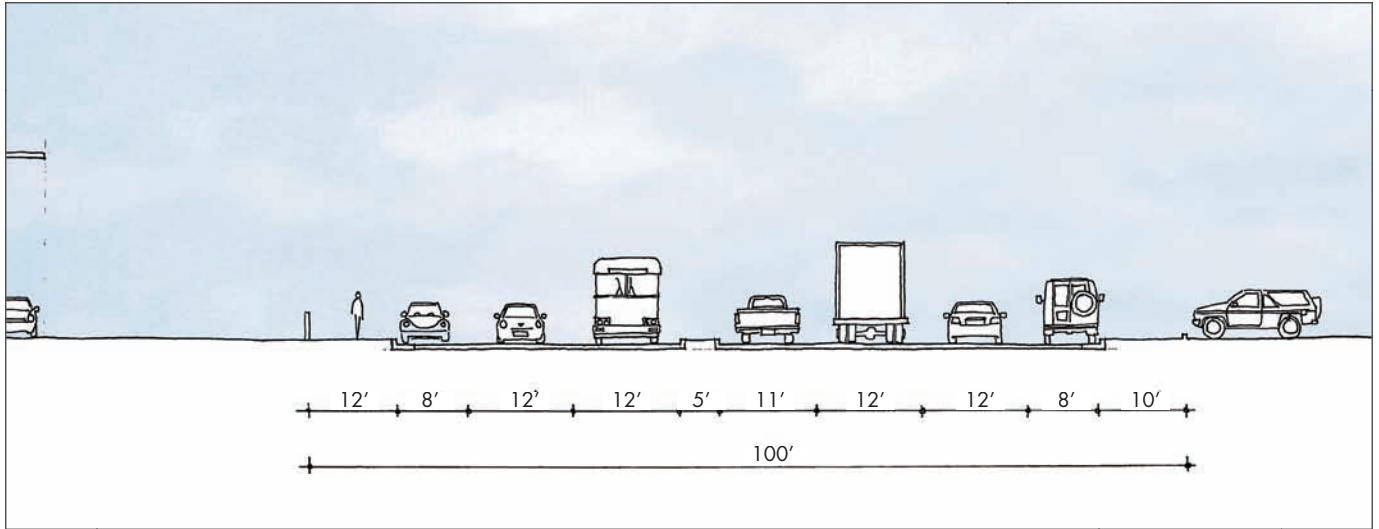
Above: Illustrative view of proposed plaza in central Firebaugh from Highway 33. A new city hall sits at the eastern end of the plaza, and the plaza is anchored by a fountain (in the foreground) and a bandstand (in the background). 2- and 3-story mixed-use buildings line the north and south sides.

Below: Plan detail of illustrated area.

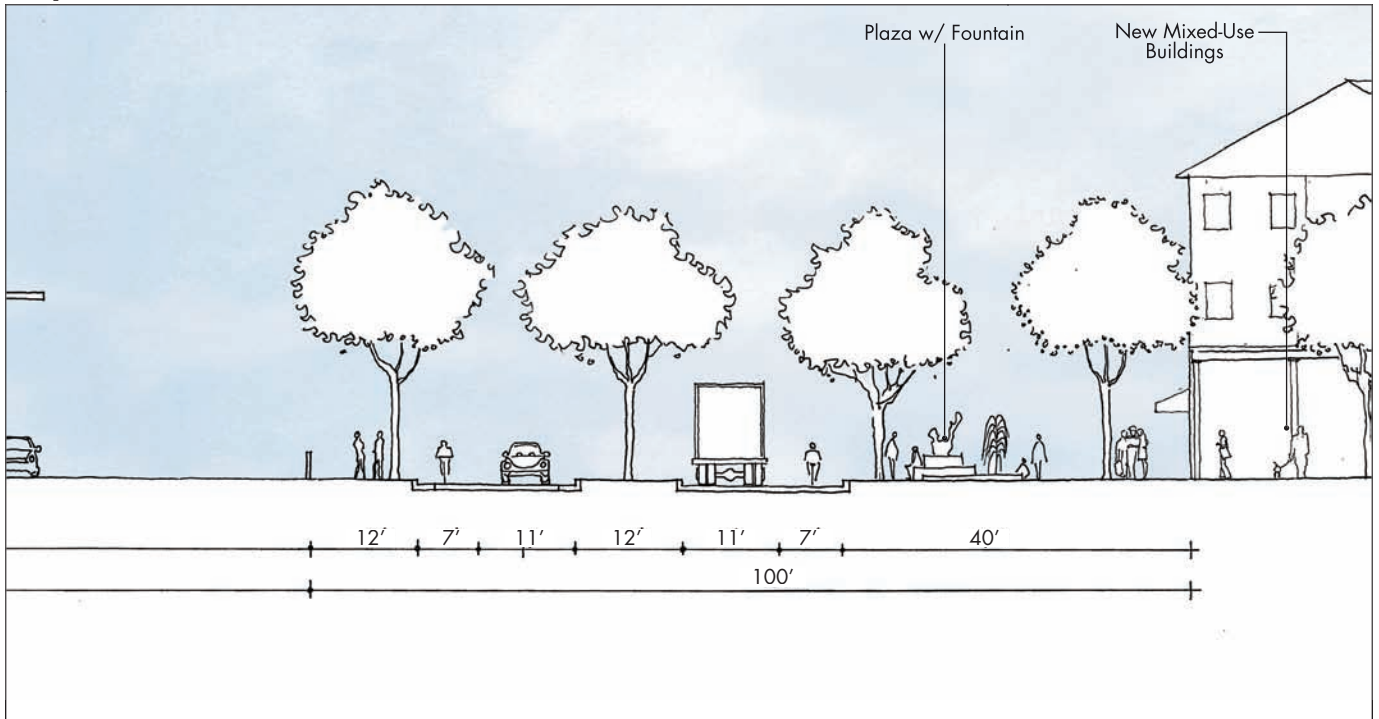


Highway 33 at Plaza

Existing



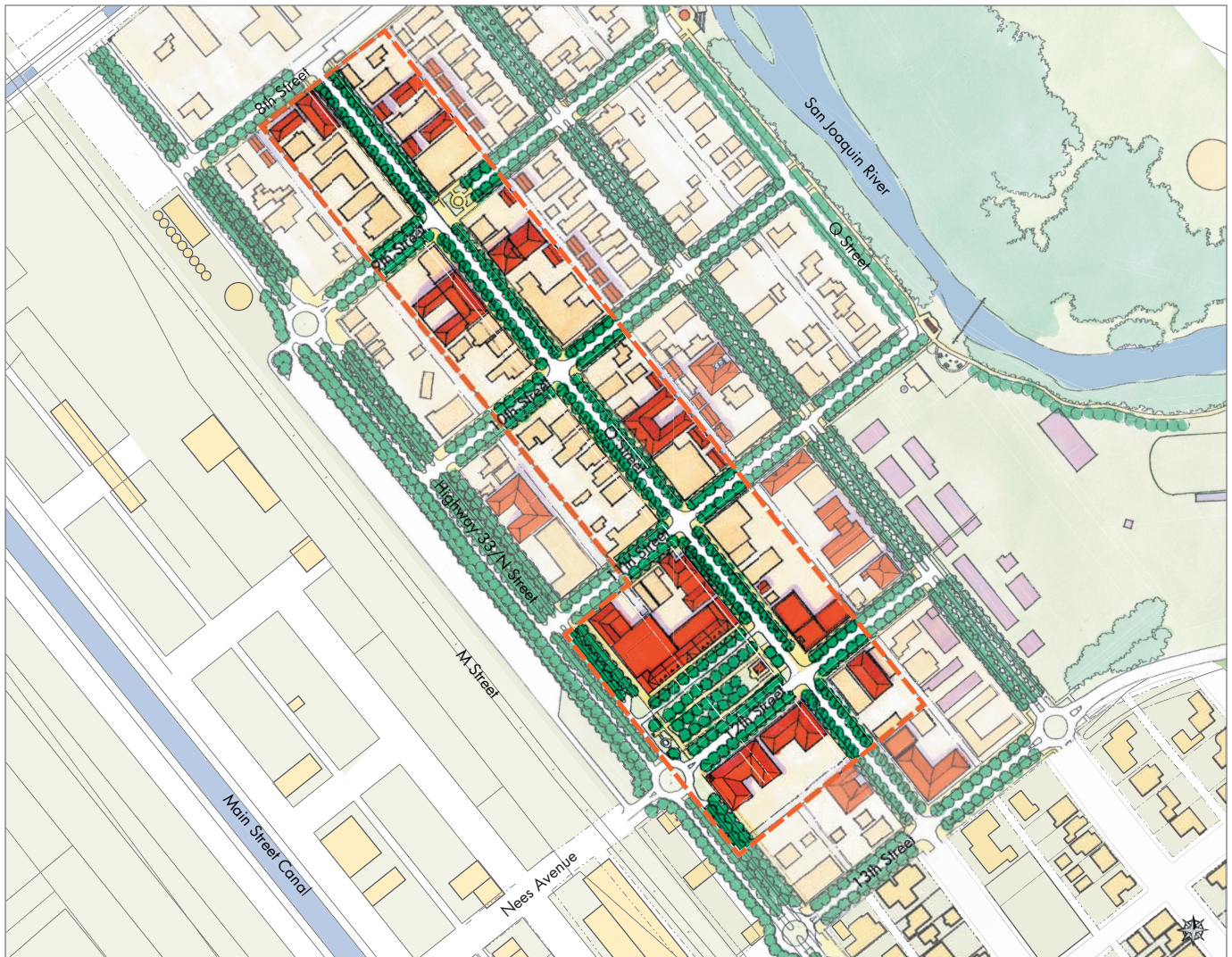
Proposed



Above: Cross section facing north illustrates how a new public plaza might interface with Highway 33, providing an identifiable “address” for Firebaugh along the state highway.



Clockwise from top left: View of the historic Sonoma Square in downtown Sonoma, illustrating character of mixed-use buildings lining the plaza; The historic City Hall in Sonoma Square is a suitable precedent for Firebaugh; The Zócalo in Oaxaca City, Mexico provides a strong community focal point as well as space for local entrepreneurs; A new square in downtown Lindsay, California incorporates a farmers' market and a central fountain.



O Street

The viability of retail along O Street suffers from two key problems: First, it suffers from poor visibility and physical connectivity. The majority of retail is not visible by drive-by traffic passing through on Highway 33 and Avenue 7 1/2. Visitors who may be encouraged to “stop once” utilize the service-oriented businesses at the intersection of Nees and Highway 33 or other locations and are then quickly on their way.

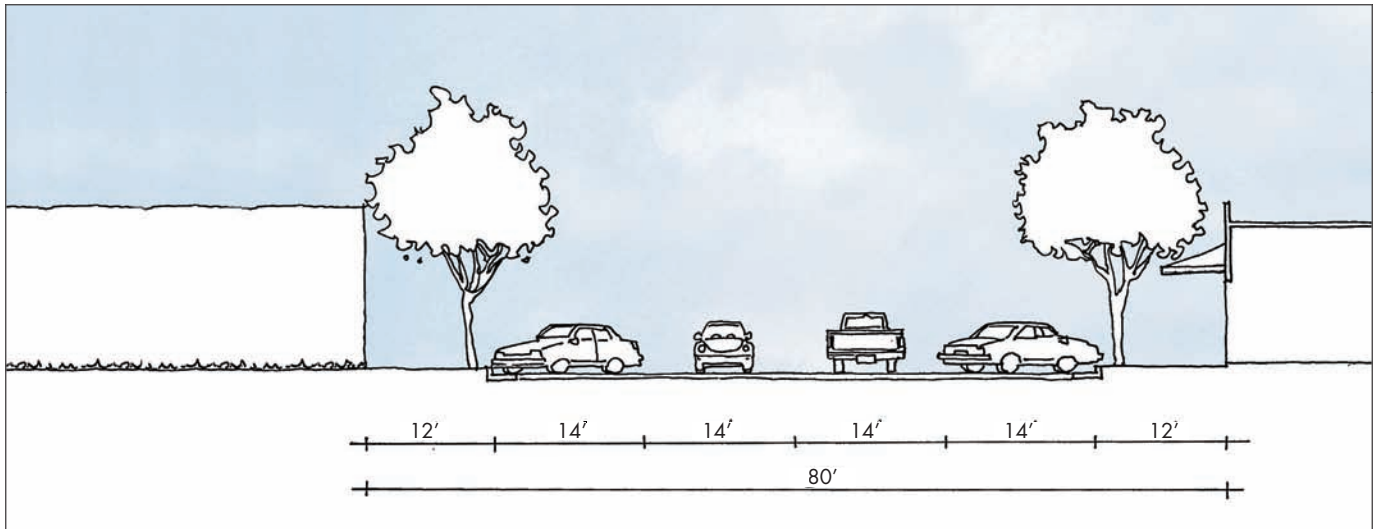
Second, O Street is long for a pedestrian-oriented retail street at approximately 2000 feet – nearly one half of a mile. Retail businesses are somewhat evenly spread out across five city blocks and there is a general lack of intensity or the sense of a strong central location. The northernmost block of O – between 8th Street and 9th Street – has already significantly transitioned away from retail uses.

In the short term, the City should focus on making physical street improvements to O Street that can make the street more appealing to shoppers, particularly between 9th Street and 12th Street.

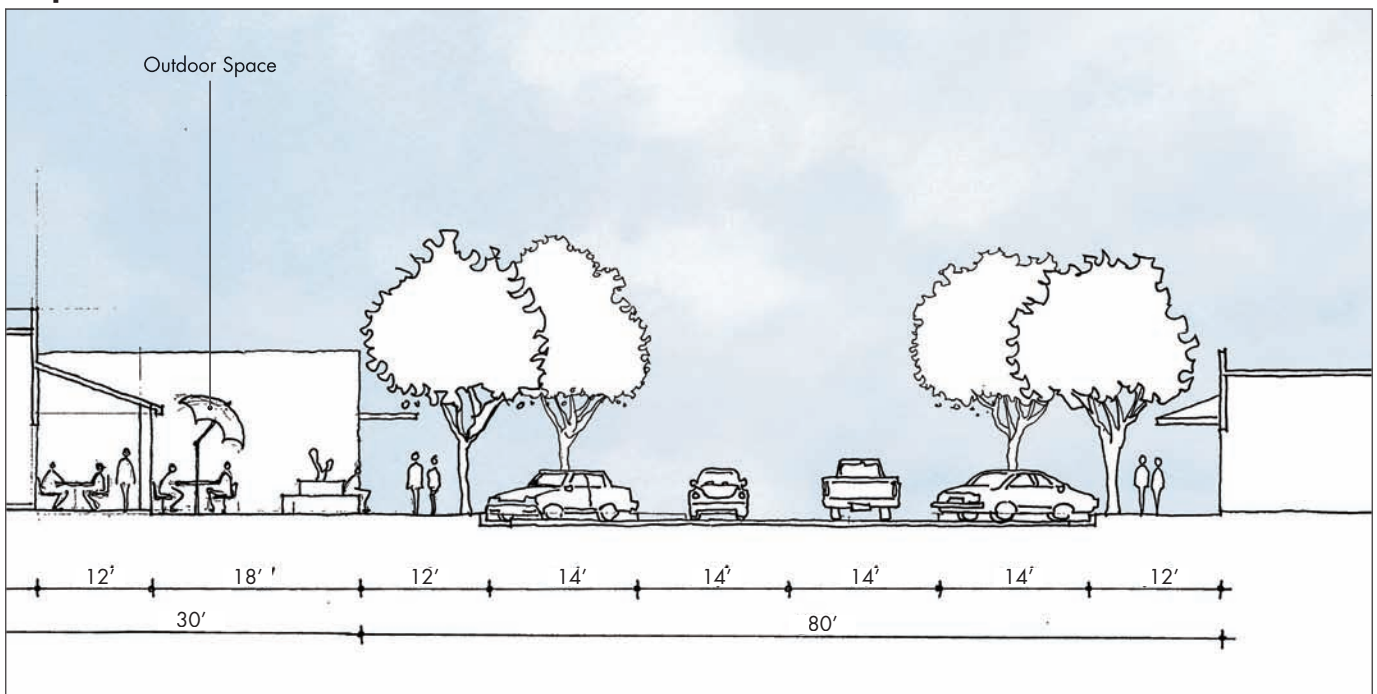
Above: Vision plan for O Street that illustrates essential plan components, including physical improvements to O Street, the introduction of infill building types along O and in the surrounding neighborhood (in bright red), and the development of a new, mixed-use center at the intersection of Highway 33 and Nees Avenue.

O Street

Existing



Proposed



O Street could transform into a more pleasing, pedestrian-friendly retail environment through the introduction of new tree wells for street trees in the diagonal parking lane every 4-5 parking spaces, and more consistent street trees along the sidewalk. Intersections should be made more pedestrian friendly with curb extensions in the spirit of recent improvements to the 9th Street intersection.

Above: Cross section of O Street (looking north) at the intersection of 11th Street looking north.

During the workshop many community members discussed the possibility of a small plaza along O Street. The current intersection of 11th and O Street has strong potential for becoming a “100% corner” in the future, with two existing historic buildings (Rebecchi’s General Store and Westside Drug). The proposal for O Street illustrates a small outdoor space incorporated into the design of a new retail/mixed-use building at the southwest corner of 11th and O Streets.



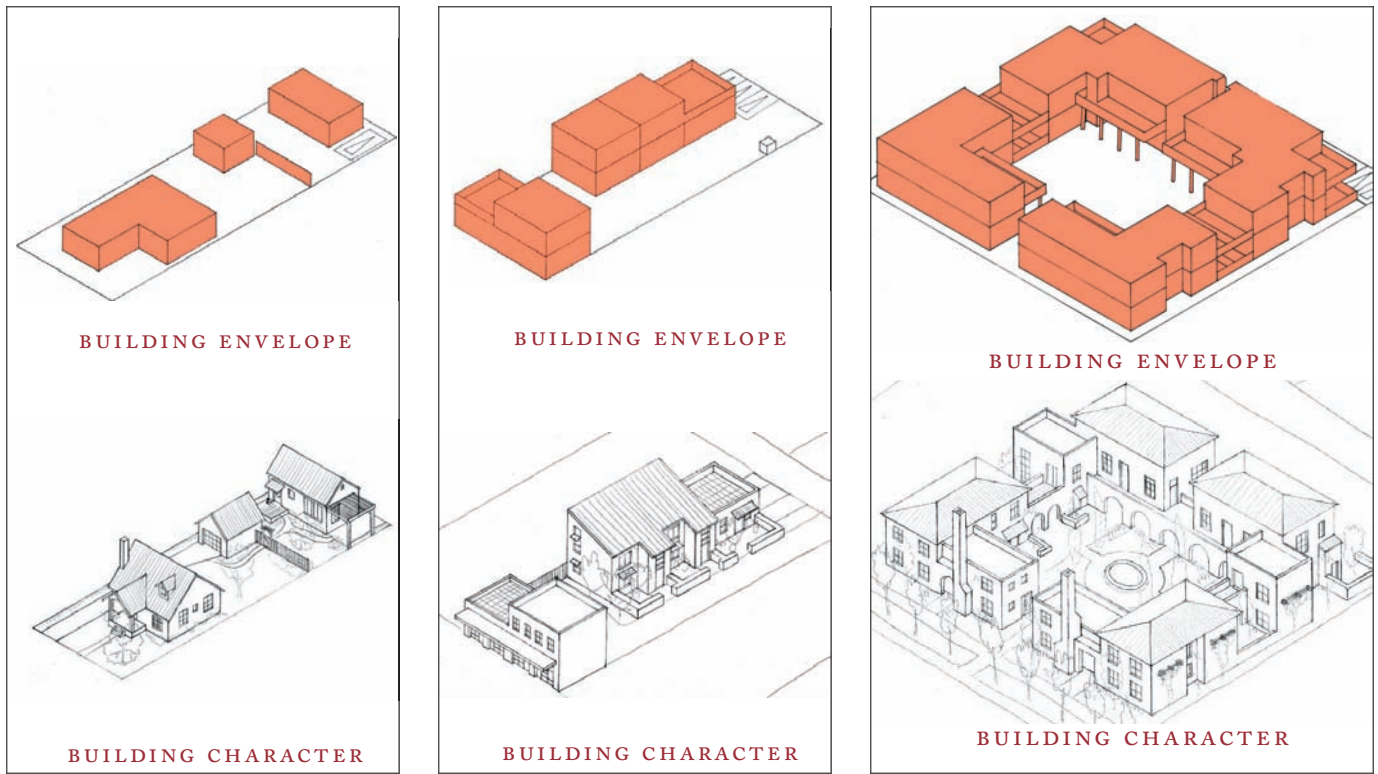
Clockwise from top left: View of School Street in downtown Lodi, California illustrating the placement of street trees in the diagonal parking lane; Another view along School Street that shows very simple streetscape treatments – pedestrian-scaled street lighting and stamped concrete – that would be appropriate for O Street; A two-story mixed-use building is an appropriate precedent in scale, size, and materials for downtown Firebaugh; Another well-scaled mixed-use building in Davis, California.



Preserve American Restoration Activity

During the charrette process, participants also noted that the Firebaugh Preserve America Commission plans to develop and operate a visitor center and historic museum in the downtown. The commission has identified the two-story Zito building at 922 O street (one of only two two-story buildings in downtown Firebaugh) and the City Council has directed the City Manager to enter into negotiations for the purchase of this historic property. In addition, the Commission plans to work with downtown building owners and merchants to develop a historic theme approach for the commercial district that would involve murals and other promotions. This will help further fuel revitalization of Central Firebaugh.

Clockwise from top left: Historic Zito building at 922 O Street; Murals in downtown Exeter add beauty and a sense of character; Mural depicting California's agricultural heritage that provides a good precedent for Firebaugh.



Vacant and Underutilized Lots

The City should also promote the introduction of more housing in the central city that is appropriate for residents of different wage and income levels.

Several vacant and underutilized lots around O Street also provide significant development opportunities. Central Firebaugh enjoys a system of uniform blocks and lots, suggesting that uniform building prototypes may be developed for use in different areas.

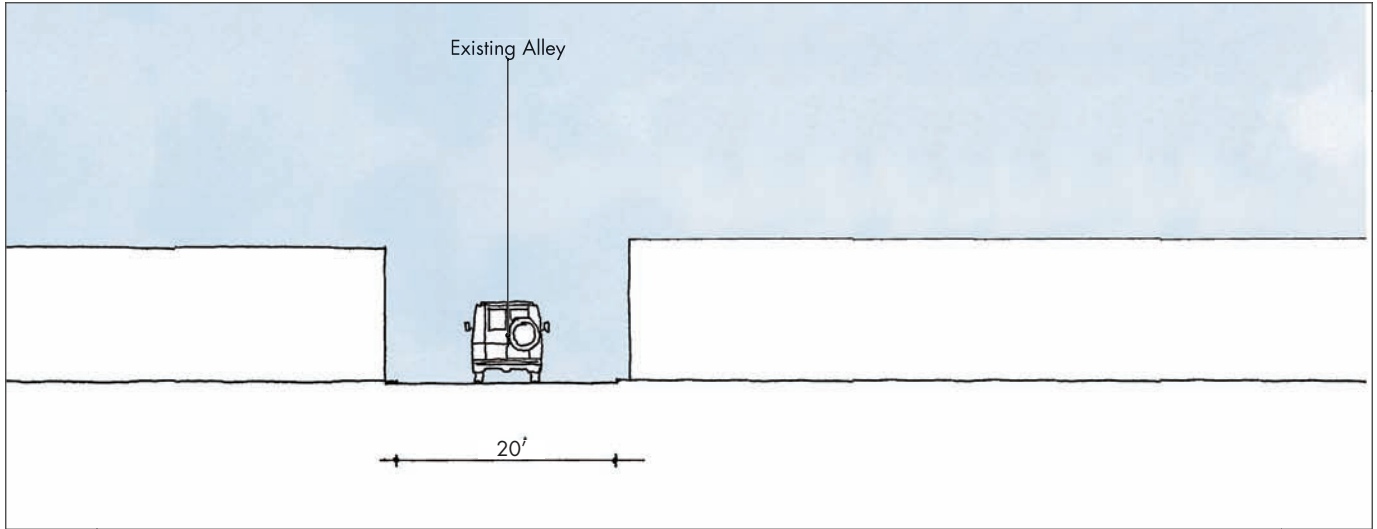
Vacant lots along O should be developed with a variety of mixed-use housing types that can provide new retail space for local entrepreneurs and additional options for housing above. The design team also recognized that the alleys, present in all of the downtown blocks, present a special opportunity for the development of small infill housing types. Alley housing can provide increased opportunities for affordable housing and can also provide a source of secondary rental income for home owners.

Courtyard housing types should be explored for larger vacant and underutilized lots. Courtyard housing can provide well-designed public and private open spaces and works well with affordable housing configurations.

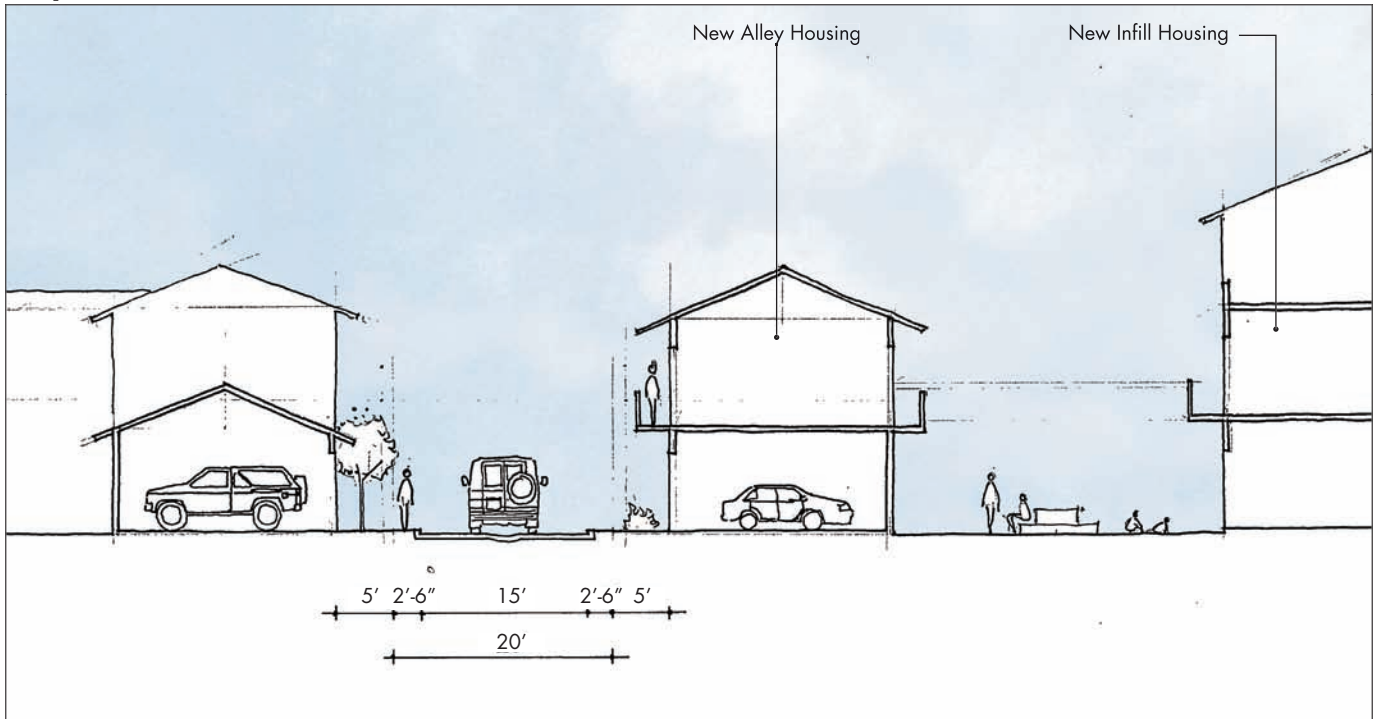
Above, from left to right: Three building prototypes explored by UC Berkeley Urban Design students. Smaller lots typically range from 50' to 75' in width and are appropriate for 2-family configurations in residential areas (above left) or small mixed-use projects along O Street (above center). Larger lots typically range from 75' to 100' or greater in width and are appropriate for courtyard housing types (above right).

Typical Alley

Existing

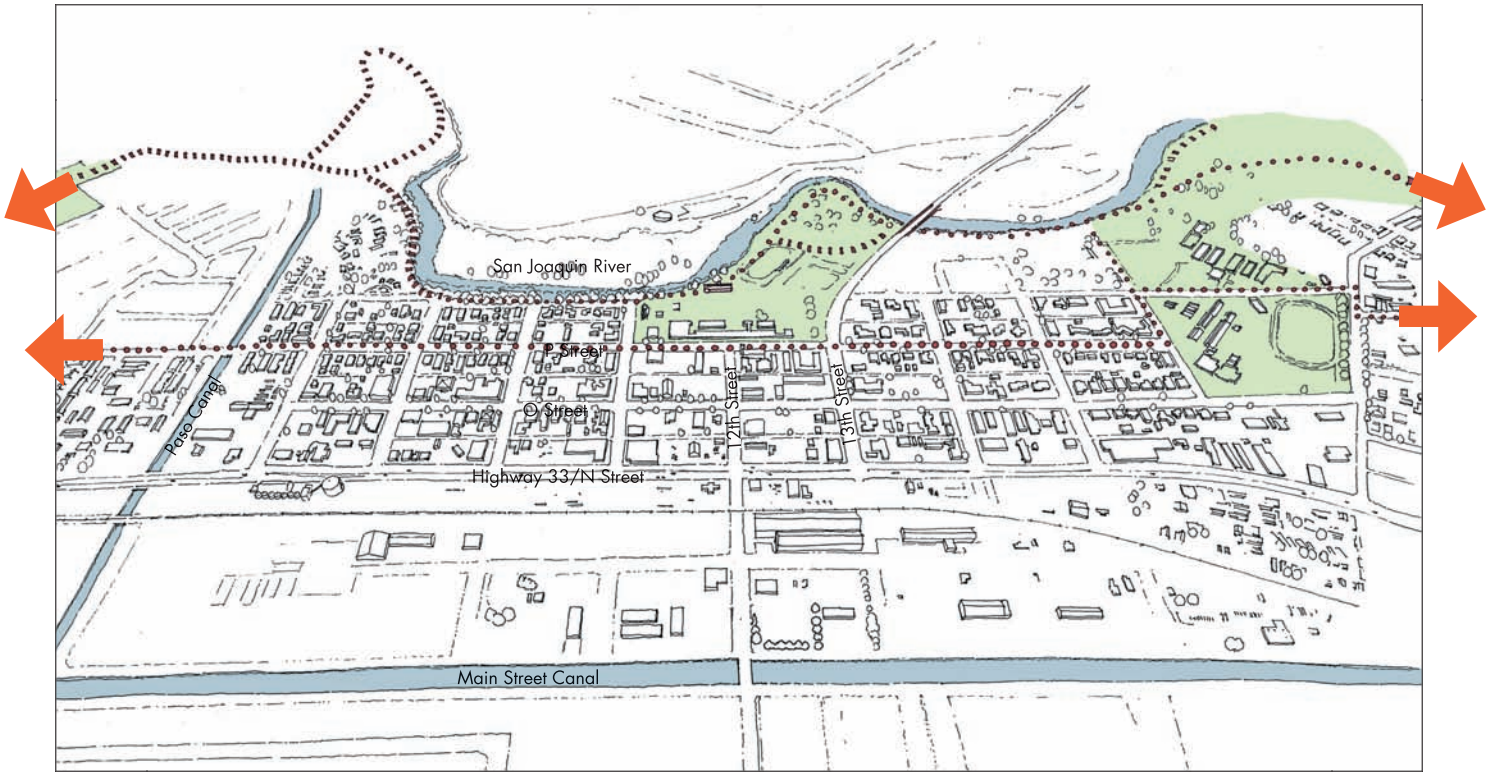


Proposed



Above: Alley development on one of Firebaugh's typical alleys in coordination with new mixed-use and residential development is illustrated.

Improved Pedestrian Access



Design Principle 4: Improve North-South Mobility Through the City for Pedestrians and Bicycles.

Analysis of the City's physical form shows that there is a tremendous opportunity to link several principal open spaces and City schools along one continuous network for pedestrians and bicyclists. This network can provide safe routes for children and families to and from home and school and can provide an alternative means to auto-oriented, north-south travel across town that promotes health and exercise. The plan details potential locations for this network as well as opportunities for urban design improvements to streets along the way.



Bicycle Routes

Due to limited connections across the Paso Canal, P Street represents the best opportunity to encourage pedestrian and bicycle movement from north to south across the City. This bicycle route can provide a safe, alternative route to schools for parents and children, as well as provide safe access for City residents to patronize businesses along O Street. A network of streets was identified that is appropriate for the introduction of Class II (striped) and III (designated route with signage) bicycle lanes to facilitate this movement.

This network would begin along Clyde Fannon Drive past Maldonado Park, head south toward P Street, continue along P Street to 16th Street and the Firebaugh Middle School, head west along 16th Street to Q Street, head south on Q Street to Saipan Street and Green Acres Street, then head southwest along Landucci Avenue to Morris Kyle Drive. New bicycle lanes along Highway 33 could create a loop around large portions of the City for bicyclists.

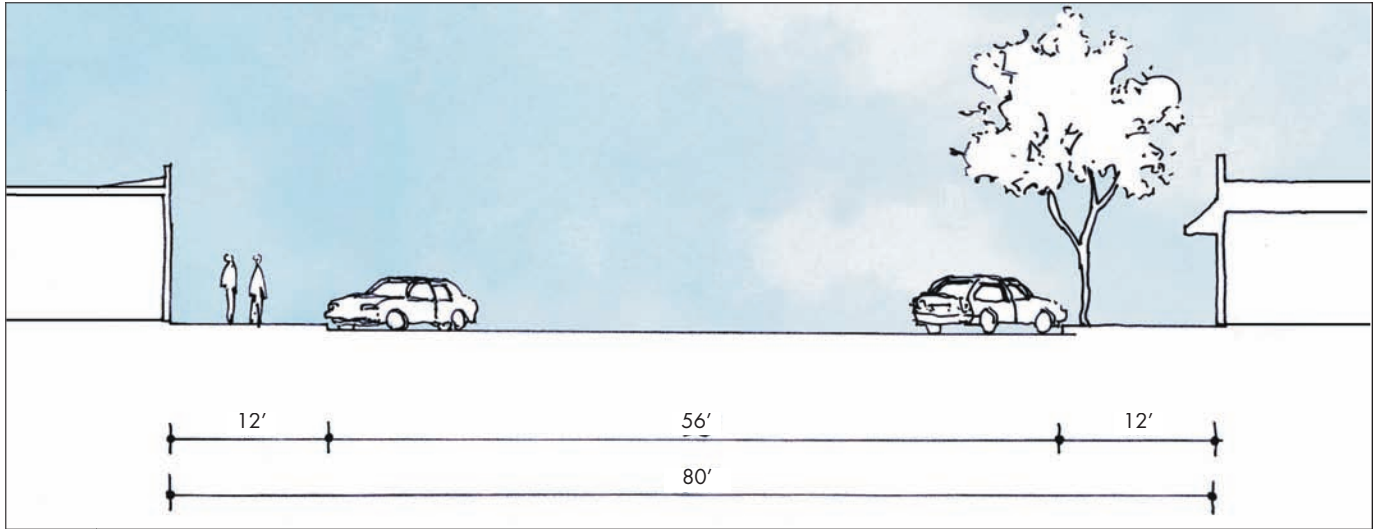
Key

- ■ ■ Bicycle Routes
- ● ● Pedestrian Trails

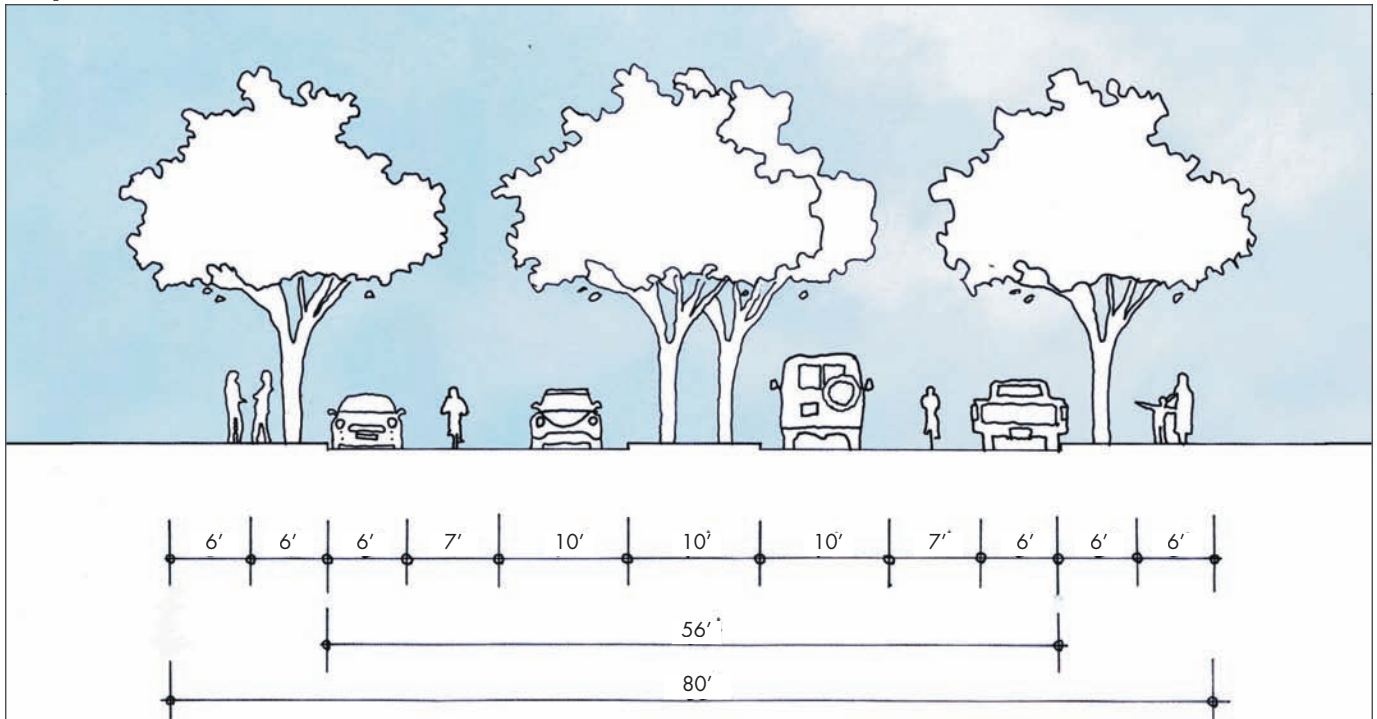
Above: Framework plan illustrating potential bicycle and pedestrian network in Firebaugh.

P Street

Existing



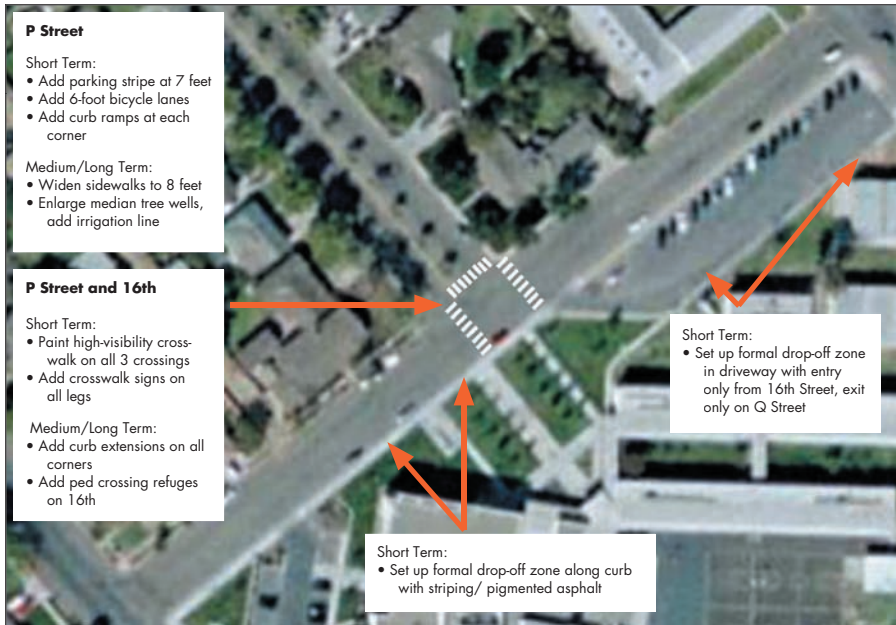
Proposed



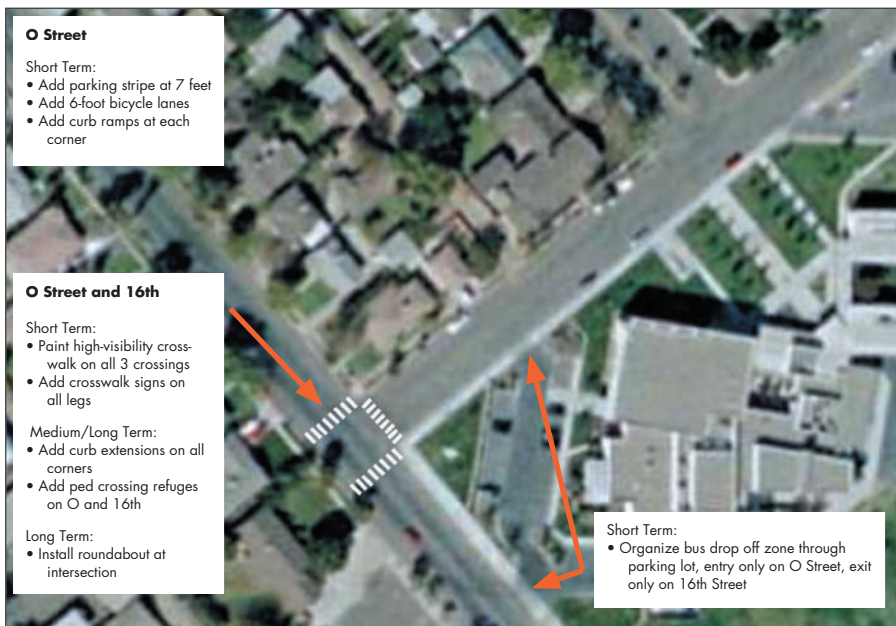
P Street

P Street currently measures 56' in width and carries very little traffic. This wide thoroughway provides a unique opportunity to consider P Street as a walkable, bicycle-friendly "green street" with a wide, central landscaped median, one lane of traffic in either direction, a Class II bicycle lane, and parallel parking. P Street should be encouraged as an alternative route to and from downtown Firebaugh for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially given its role as an access route to schools.

A roundabout may be used to calm traffic at the intersection of P Street and 13th Street, and should be designed to safely accommodate bicyclists as necessary.



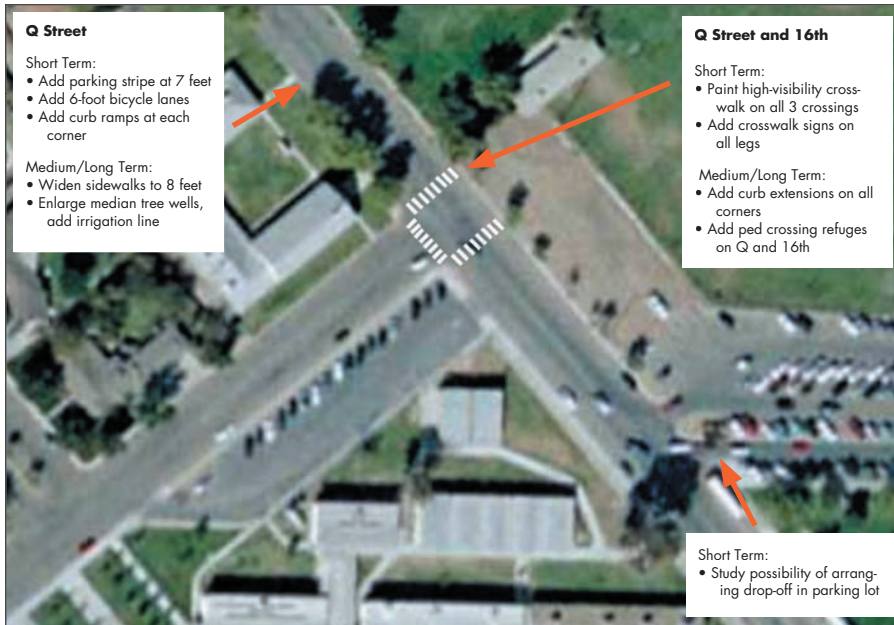
Left: Proposed changes to the intersection of P Street and 16th Street in front of Firebaugh Middle School.



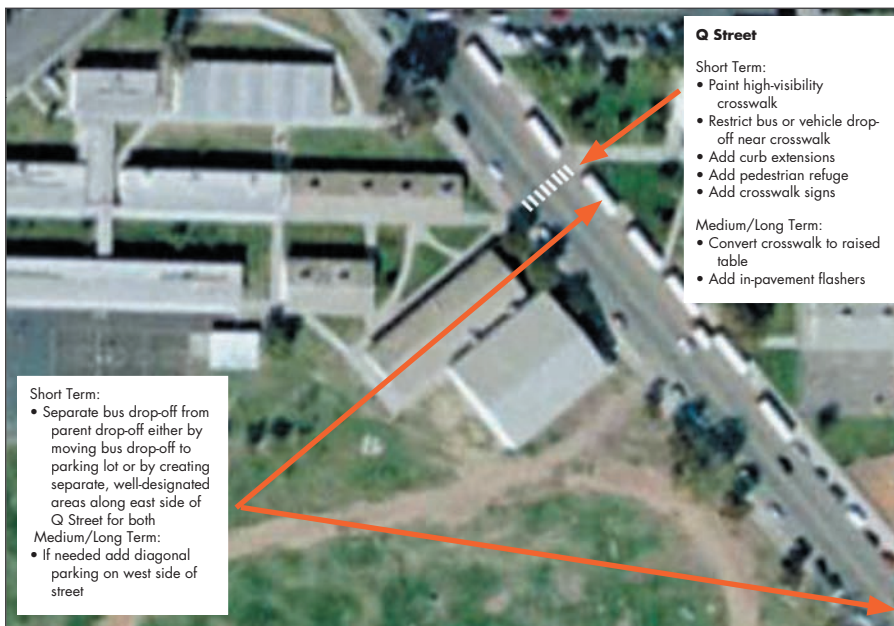
Left: Proposed changes to the intersection of O Street and 16th Street in front of Firebaugh Middle School.

Additional School Crossing Improvements

New high-visibility marked crosswalks should be installed at the intersection of P Street and 16th Street in coordination with formal pickup and drop-off areas along 16th Street in front of Firebaugh Middle School. In the long term, additional improvements should be considered, including the construction of widened sidewalks, curb extensions, and pedestrian refuges along 16th Street.



Left: Proposed changes to the intersection of Q Street and 16th Street.



Left: Proposed changes along Q Street in front of Hazel Bailey School.

The design team also explored potential improvements to streets around the Firebaugh Middle School and the Hazel Bailey School that should be considered as part of a comprehensive improvement strategy. These included improvements to the intersection of O Street and 16th Street, organization of a bus drop-off zone for the Firebaugh Middle School along O Street and 16th Street, improvements to the intersection of Q Street and 16th Street, and improvements to Q Street along the Hazel Bailey school frontage, including new crosswalks and bus drop-off areas.



Pedestrian Trails

As the San Joaquin river corridor continues to improve, a comprehensive trail network should be considered as a recreational amenity for Firebaugh residents and visitors alike. This trail could begin at Maldonado Park, cross the Paso Canal at a new pedestrian bridge, and travel southward along the river.

The City has already secured partial funding for development of a multi-use equestrian, bicycle, and pedestrian trail running along the west bank of the river. The Firebaugh Preserve America Commission plans to create and donate a series of murals and plaques to place along the trail depicting Firebaugh’s historic places and occurrences.

Additional Trail Opportunities

During the workshop the design team recognized that two additional opportunities existed for the development of “spurs” off of this principal trail: One heading down to the river near the terminus of Paso Canal Road, and another that would provide public access around Lake Joallan. As the City consider new residential development proposals around the lake, design strategies that can maintain public access to the lake as part of this larger trail system should be considered.

Above: Conceptual renderings illustrating ways in which new residential development can provide continuous public access along City waterways. At left, view along Lake Joallan that provides continuous public pedestrian access around the lake. At right, possible development in north-west Firebaugh with a public relationship to the Paso Canal and river.

Below: Children use the recently-completed bike path along Q Street in central Firebaugh.



Potential Projects Summary

Catalyst Projects	Priority	Potential Funding Source*
Design Principle: Improve Highway 33 Linkages to Downtown		
Highway 33 - Sidewalks		
Complete sidewalks on east side of 33 between Paso Canal and Clyde Fannon Road	Near-term	Caltrans Hwy 33 beautification
Complete sidewalks on east side of 33 between Saipan Street and Morris Kyle Drive	Near-term	" "
Highway 33 - Bicycle Lanes		
Designated 6' wide bike lanes on both sides of the street with minimum 8" wide striping and MUCTD bicycle lane control markings	Near-term	" "
Highway 33 - Gateway and Median Improvements		
Short median islands at Clyde Fannon Road and Morris Kyle Drive with gateway signage and landscaping	Near-term	" "
Gateway trees on both sides of the street at Clyde Fannon Road and in short median island	Near-term	" "
Truck Parking		
Exploration of enforcement strategies to mitigate truck parking	Near-term	TBD
Landscaping and screening of parked trucks on west side of 33	Near-term	Caltrans Hwy 33 beautification
Development of a truck parking area or facility along 33, off of Nees Avenue, or nearby	Mid-term	TBD
Highway 33 - Lighting and Landscaping		
Consistent tree planting on 33 between 8th and 15th Streets at intervals of 20' to 30' along sides and in median where possible	Near-term	Caltrans Hwy 33 beautification
Street Lighting along 33 between 12th and 13th Streets to and along Avenue 7 1/2 to connect up to bridge over San Joaquin	Near-term	" "
Highway 33, Nees Avenue, and 12th and 13th streets - Future Improvements		
New plaza at intersection of 33 and 12th Streets	Mid-term	TBD
Roundabout at 8th Street to facilitate truck turning in coordination with potential truck parking facility	Mid-term	TBD
Roundabout and intersection improvements at 12th Street and Highway 33	Long-term	TBD
Roundabout and intersection improvements at 13th Street and Highway 33	Long-term	TBD
Intersection improvements at 13th Street and O Street	Mid-term	TBD
Roundabout and intersection improvements at 13th Street and P Street	Mid-term	TBD
"Road Diet" with one-sided boulevard along 33 with side service lane for safe parking and business access	Long-term	TBD
Street improvements (street trees, sidewalks, curb extensions) along Nees Avenue between Highway 33 and Main Street Canal	Long-term	TBD
Design Principle: Improve Visual and Physical Access to the San Joaquin River for Residents and Visitors		
East West Streets		
New street trees, sidewalk repair, and curb extensions on 9th Street between Highway 33 and Q Street	Mid-term	TBD
New street trees, sidewalk repair, and curb extensions on 11th Street between Highway 33 and Q Street	Mid-term	TBD
New street trees, sidewalk repair, and curb extensions on 12th Street between Highway 33 and Q Street	Long-term	TBD
New street trees, sidewalk repair, and curb extensions on 13th Street between Highway 33 and Q Street	Long-term	TBD
New street trees, sidewalk repair, and curb extensions on 14th Street between Highway 33 and Q Street	Long-term	TBD
Q Street		
New street trees, sidewalk repair, curb extensions, and drainage swale between 9th and 11th Streets	Mid-term	TBD
Public access/overlook at 9th Street and Q Street	Mid-term	TBD
Public access/overlook at 11th Street and Q Street	Mid-term	TBD
Future Improvements		
Open connection through Mills School to Community Center and river walk	Long-term	TBD
Piers on 7-1/2 Avenue bridge	Long-term	TBD

Design Principle: Create a Compact, Well-defined, Active Town Center			
O Street			
New street trees, sidewalk improvements, and curb extensions between 8th Street and 13th Street	Mid-term	TBD	
New mixed-use development with small public plaza at southwest corner of O Street and 11th Street	Mid-term	TBD	
Mixed-use infill buildings along O Street between 8th and 13th Streets, with a concentration of a consistent retail environment between 11th and 13th Streets	Mid-term	TBD	
Accessory unit housing program on alleys that parallel O Street	Mid-term	TBD	
Façade improvement program	Mid-term	TBD	
Mixed-Use "Redevelopment Area"			
New plaza with bandstand (or small vacant O Street building moved and renovated) between 12th and 13th Streets	Mid-term	TBD	
Anchor retail use (e.g., supermarket) at northwest corner of 33 and new plaza	Mid-term	TBD	
New mixed-use (housing, office, and retail) between 11th and 13th Streets lining plaza	Mid-term	TBD	
New City Hall or other civic structure at northeast corner of 12th and O Streets, as eastern visual terminus of plaza	Mid-term	TBD	
Design Principle: Improve North-South Access and Mobility Through the City for Pedestrians and Bicycles			
Bicycle Routes			
Route from Maldonado Park along Clyde Fannon Drive to P Street, south to 16th Street, east to Q Street, south to Green Acres Street to Landucci Avenue and west to Morris Kyle Drive	Near-term	Air Pollution Control District Funds	
P Street			
Bicycle lanes, sidewalk improvements, street trees, central planted median between Paso Canal and 16th Street	Near-term	Air Pollution Control District Funds	
Safe Routes to School			
Crosswalks, curb extensions, pedestrian refuges at the intersection of 16th and O Streets	Near-Term	Caltrans: Safe Routes to School	
Bus drop-off redesign at Firebaugh Middle School along O Street	Near-Term	"	"
Vehicle drop-off redesign at Firebaugh Middle School along 16th Street	Near-Term	"	"
Crosswalks, curb extensions, pedestrian refuges at the intersection of 16th and Q Streets in front of Hazel Bailey School	Near-Term	"	"
Bus drop-off redesign study in Hazel Bailey parking lot	Near-Term	"	"
Q Street mid-block crossing at Hazel Bailey School	Near-Term	"	"
Pedestrian Trails			
Completion of pedestrian trail from Maldonado Park down to River and south through town	Mid-Term	Safety Trails & Beautification Project	
Spur trail and new public park at the terminus of Paso Canal Road	Mid-Term	"	"
Spur trail around Lake Joallan in concordance with new residential development	Near-Term	"	"
Notes			
Near-term=start now (0 to 6 months)			
Mid-term=start soon (6 months to 2 years)			
Long-term=start later (2 to 5 years)			
*Listed source may only partially fund the cost of the identified project. Additional sources may be required.			
TBD=To be Determined			

Potential Funding Sources

Project	Description	Location	Planned	Construction	Time line
Caltrans Hwy 33 Beautification Funding	Up to \$2 million for improvements.	Hwy 33	Yes	Yes	Summer 2007
Firebaugh "Green Trees for the Golden State" Grant (Urban and Community Forestry Department)	\$25,000 to plant trees around the city to reduce harmful emissions and pollutants and improve the beauty of the community and provide shade (500 trees).	Along new bicycle trail from Dunkle Park south and west to the high school. Along the westside of the high school from Morris Kyle Road south to the new subdivision.	Yes	N/A	Anytime
Bicycle Infrastructure Incentive Component Remove II Program (San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District)	\$100,000 to construct 4,000 feet of eight foot wide bicycle trail.	Along the Eastern border of the San Joaquin River within the City of Firebaugh.	Yes	Yes	Summer 2007
Safety Trails and Beautification Project (Transportation Enhancement Program)	\$400,000 transportation master bicycle plan for bikes and pedestrian pathways to connect schools, parks, recreational facilities and other services.		Yes	Yes	Summer 2007
Reberti-Z'berg-Harris Grant (Department of Parks and Recreation)	\$1.5 million to rehab and improve the park by incorporating new baseball fields, skate park, volley ball courts, basketball courts, track, etc.	Maldonado Park.	Yes	Yes	Summer 2007
Safe Routes to School	\$460,000 to Install in-Pavement crosswalk lights; Construct curb ramps; enhance crosswalks and striping.	Morris Kyle Drive, Intersections of Siapan and Q Street, 14th and P Street and 12th.	Yes	Yes	Summer 2008
Preserve America	Special designation as a Preserve America Community, which recognizes communities that: protect and celebrate their heritage; use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization; and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.	City Limits.			Ongoing
P Street Improvements	The city council has decided to replace sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Specific Charrette standards were incorporated.	Between 7th and 10th Street on P Street.	yes	yes	Currently out to bid
Electronic Sign USDA Grant	In an effort to communicate more with the community an LED sign will be installed on the eastern entrance of the city.	On 13th Street next to the rodeo grounds.	Yes	Yes	Fall 2007