

# West Fresno Community Vision Plan



October, 2003

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Prepared for:

Local Government Commission,  
Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development  
and  
The Council of Fresno County Governments

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### **Disclaimer**

The contents of this report represent the knowledge, experience, and expertise of the citizens and authors in providing ideas and concepts to improve safety, access, mobility and livability through streetscaping, transit, walking, bicycling enhancements and other traffic management strategies. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation, and is not intended to be used as a basis for establishing civil liability. The decision to use any particular measure should be made on the basis of engineering studies of the location. This report is not a substitute for sound engineering judgment. Adherence to the principles found in this report can lead to an overall improvement in neighborhood and community livability.

**We are grateful for the assistance of many people and organizations who helped fund, plan and hold the charrette that formed the basis of this Vision Plan:**

***Caltrans, District 6***

***Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development***

***Citizens of West Fresno***

***Council of Fresno County Governments***

***Redevelopment Agency of the City of Fresno***

***Columbia and Lincoln Elementary Schools***

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## 1. Overview

The Council of Fresno County Governments (COFCG) was the recipient of a community planning grant awarded through the Caltrans *Environmental Justice: Context Sensitive Planning* program. Context sensitive planning considers and is responsive to local community needs and circumstances. The grant provided funds to conduct planning to improve transportation mobility, access, equity and quality of life for citizens in the West Fresno area. It was administered by the COFCG. The Local Government Commission and Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development (FWCED) planned and coordinated a *charrette* to develop the plan. A charrette is a series of public involvement events that spans several days and culminates in a vision or design. The events were conducted by a consultant team led by Walkable Communities, Inc.

This report summarizes background information, charrette process and results, and a vision plan prepared by the consultant team. Detailed minutes of events are contained in the Appendix.

### Process

An estimated 300 people participated in the charrette activities, providing their insights, concerns, and suggestions. Their shared vision is for an improved quality of life in West

Fresno. They would like a more walkable, livable, economically viable community.

### Plan Concepts

Basic concepts that guided development of the vision plan included improving perceived and actual safety, providing additional public spaces, nurturing a sustainable, local economy, and maintaining a scale that would encourage walking and bicycling.

### Vision Plan

Village centers with mixed uses that include retail, commercial, residential, and public space are a key element in the plan. The largest of the villages is envisioned in the area surrounding Kearney Palms Shopping Center. Civic activity areas, such as libraries, youth areas, and training centers are located here.

Another village center is located at the realigned intersection of California Avenue and Walnut Avenue. This smaller village is scaled to primarily serve the local neighborhood and high school students. A site plan for housing and mixed use buildings in this village is presented. Concepts to rearrange space near the Head Start building and add a senior center are also addressed.

Other villages are smaller, neighborhood commercial areas that currently exist and should be nurtured to serve the needs of nearby residents and provide local jobs.

Neighborhood in-filling of vacant lots and the removal or rehabilitation of abandoned properties provides opportunities for housing and additional pocket parks.

The street system in West Fresno operates with light traffic compared to similar areas. To improve safety and better balance user needs, recommendations include reducing the lanes on some streets, returning two-way operation to one-way streets, and providing roundabouts for traffic control at selected sites.

A sample traffic calming plan illustrates how wide streets could be modified to slow drivers down. The traffic calming measures presented are examples of the many choices that exist. A process that allows residents to understand these choices and select the measures they most prefer is encouraged.

### Implementation

During the charrette many people expressed their concern that no changes would occur after the meetings ended. The responsibility for change is shared among the citizens of West Fresno, community leaders, and agency staff. Suggestions for immediate, short term, and long term implementation steps are included. A more detailed, step-by-step approach will be needed as preliminary work is completed.

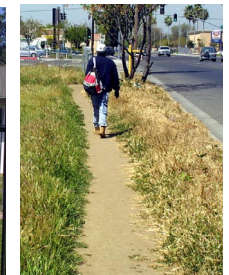
## Background

### Existing Conditions

West Fresno is in an area that is expected to experience tremendous growth over the next two decades. The 2025 Fresno General Plan projects the area population to grow from 24,728 in 2000 to 68,014 by the year 2025.

The community is one of the oldest in Fresno County. Urban decay is visible in vacant and neglected buildings that once housed businesses. Many residents live in deteriorating homes, and the area has frequently received attention for poverty, high crime and unemployment. Nearly 50% of the population is Latino, more than 25% of the population is African American, and over 9% Asian American. Almost 40% of West Fresno residents live in poverty and 43% of households report public assistance income (2000 U.S. Census).

To address the physical and economic conditions of the neighborhood, several hundred West Fresno residents, local community groups, City elected leaders and government agency staff joined together March 2003 in an intensive multi-day community visioning and planning process, or charrette, to make West Fresno walkable, safer and more prosperous. Some of the assets, challenges, and opportunities confronting the community were discussed and observed during the charrette. These include:



### Assets

- Traditional neighborhoods with classic homes
- Award-winning Edison High School
- Kearney Palms Boulevard
- Recent investment in Kearney Palms Shopping Plaza
- Grid street system

### Challenges

- Perception that West Fresno is not a safe place
- Maintaining political commitment and continuity
- Overly wide residential streets



*West Fresno has assets and opportunities that can be used to overcome the challenges faced by the community. The beautiful buildings in the top two images contrast with the lack of maintenance and barred fences in the other photos.*





*Children and adults attended a series of events to help form a vision for the future of West Fresno.*

### **Unique Opportunities**

- Enterprise and Empowerment Zones
- City Redevelopment program
- Vacant parcels of land available for development
- Potential in-fill sites
- Abandoned buildings and vacant lots
- Low traffic flow volume
- Multiple connecting points to downtown Fresno
- Many independently owned businesses



## **2. Charrette Process**

### **Outreach**

The Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development (FWCED) conducted community outreach in advance of the charrette, with special emphasis on reaching under-represented residents. A total of 6,000 flyers in English and Spanish were passed out through community schools and door to door. Posters in English and Spanish were posted at area businesses. Articles were included in FWCED newsletters to over 10,000 residents and other area recipients. FWCED representatives visited area churches to speak with congregations. The event was announced and covered on three television channel news programs. There were over 500 email contacts and FWCED conducted a phone bank from their office. All elementary schools in West Fresno sent flyers home with students announcing the event. Spanish and Hmong translation was provided at the main public events and incentives were offered to the first 100 people to register at the door. As a result, community turnout was high, with over 300 people attending the various charrette events.

*Participants in the kick-off meeting.*

### **Focus Group Meetings**

On Thursday, March 27, 2003 the charrette began with a kick-off meeting with representatives of City, County, and Caltrans agencies and committees. A discussion facilitated by Dan Burden, of Walkable Communities, Inc. was followed by a bus tour organized by the City RDA of key commercial and redevelopment sites in West Fresno. Key points made at various sites included:

- **Kearney Palms Shopping Center.** A 12-acre site that includes 108,000 square feet of neighborhood shopping area that opened in February, 2000. The Center was awarded the California Redevelopment Association Award of Excellence. It provides 250-300 permanent jobs and includes a large grocery store, landscaped parking lot, and numerous eateries and small businesses.
- **California/Walnut Area.** City staff is currently seeking redevelopment proposals for this site. A realignment of Walnut Street is also anticipated. The site is adjacent to the award winning Edison High School, where athletic field improvements are underway.
- **Fresno, C, Tulare, and A Streets.** The Redevelopment Agency has been approached by a developer interested in constructing a “big-box” department store in this area. The feasibility of such a project is being evaluated.

Two focus groups were conducted on Thursday evening, one of Community Service Organizations (church leaders, community



service providers, nonprofits and community-based advocacy activists), and the other comprised of the Edison/Southwest Citizen's Planning Advisory Committee that serves as an advisory body to the City Redevelopment Agency. A third focus group of individuals and organizations that work with recent immigrants and Spanish-, Laotian-, Cambodian- and Hmong-speaking residents was conducted on Friday morning. All groups were invited to tell what they hoped would be achieved during the charrette and what information would be useful to the consultant team. Highlights of these events are summarized below:

### **Hopes**

- Economic: a business climate that attracts investors to create needed jobs
- Pedestrian safety and improved conditions for those with disabilities
- Better transportation mobility including transit at night and frequent service
- Quality of life improvements
- Comprehensive neighborhood planning with community buy-in
- Restore community pride
- More trees
- Make connections between modes: walking, bicycling, transit, auto
- Residents have knowledge of the plan and know how to proceed
- Implementation, not just a plan

### **Challenges**

- High unemployment
- Access to training and jobs
- Crime rates perceived as higher than facts show
- Older model, higher polluting cars; poor air quality
- Under-educated populace
- Appearance and image of West Fresno
- Outdated zoning codes
- Lack of commitment from elected leaders
- Political transitions and changes in priorities
- Little follow-up after previous efforts
- Inadequate facilities for people with physical disabilities
- Fear that after the charrette the ideas will be forgotten
- Involving the community
- School district system woes shadow award-winning high school
- Language barriers

### **School Visit**

On Friday, March 28, the consultant team visited Lincoln Elementary School to chat with fifth graders about their experiences getting to school. Through a show of hands 18 children said they walked to school, 6 were driven in family cars, and 2 rode the bus.



*Children discuss where they take shortcuts on their way to school.*

When asked how many would like to walk to school, all the children raised their hands.

The children were asked what they thought could be done to make walking safer. They suggested:

- Slow traffic down
- Look before crossing the street
- Walk with an adult
- Take a water bottle
- Wear shorts

The places they would like to walk to include stores, parks, churches, and all around the school. When asked about what places are missing in their neighborhood they said a BMX track would be great.

### Values

Safety, Security  
 Respect, pride, love, caring  
 Parks, open space, recreation  
 Educational opportunities  
 Community, culture, diversity  
 Housing ownership, affordability

### Priorities

Cleanliness  
 School Equipment  
 Facilities for Children/Seniors  
 Unemployment for Adults/Youth  
 Junior High/Middle School  
 Safety  
 No Drugs  
 Empty Houses/Abandoned Lots  
 Better Public Transit  
 Lack of Good Police Relationship  
 Better Schools  
 Bike Facilities



*Citizens listen to the Spanish translation of the presentation.*

### Evening Workshop

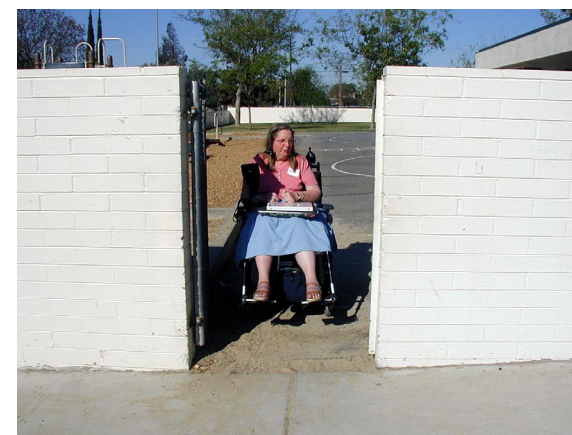
On Friday evening, a public workshop was conducted at the Columbia Elementary School. Participants were guided through a series of visioning and priority-setting exercises. They described visions for a future West Fresno that is clean, safe, green and beautiful. They envisioned places to walk to, such as small shops and restaurants. The values and priorities established during the workshop are shown on the left.

### Walking Tour

On Saturday, March 29, several groups walked the area near the Columbia Elementary School. The tour provided an opportunity for people to notice elements of the street that are not obvious from a vehicle. They shared their concerns and discussed potential improvements with others. Charrette participants included a blind person and two people in wheelchairs. They helped others under-



*Annette Carter, President of the San Joaquin chapter of the California Council of the Blind, points out a hazard for visually impaired pedestrians.*



*A wheelchair cannot negotiate this entrance to the school grounds because there is a depressed dirt area separating the asphalt on one side of the wall and the concrete on the other side. Neither children nor someone in a wheelchair can see over this wall to determine if it is safe to enter. The area near the school lacks curb ramps and continuous sidewalks.*



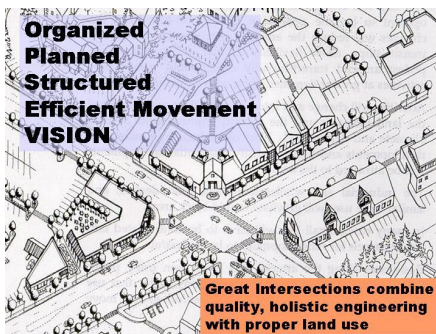


*Participants of the walking tour present their observations and suggestions after walking the area near Columbia Elementary School.*

stand how barriers to mobility impact everyone. The comments and suggestions of the walking tour participations are reflected in the conceptual plan for West Fresno.

### Training

Following the walking tour, a slide presentation was used to illustrate concepts that could be used to design the West Fresno of the future. Topics included the importance of a welcoming presence, the value of mixed-use building, designing for safety, tools for improving the pedestrian experience, and many other urban planning concepts.



*After the training session, participants gathered at tables to share their ideas for the future of West Fresno. They used maps to illustrate their points, then shared their concepts with the entire group.*

### Design Tables

People then gathered at tables to refine their ideas and create maps illustrating suggestions. Each of the groups presented their maps and explained their suggestions.

### Analysis and Preliminary Review

The input provided during the events was then compiled and analyzed by the Consultant Team to form the basis of a conceptual plan for West Fresno. The conceptual plan was presented to the public on Monday, March 31, 2003.



*The Consultant team compiled information gathered during public input to develop a Vision Plan.*



### 3. Plan Concepts

The Vision Plan was developed using several basic concepts. First, it is a community-based plan that represents ideas brought forth during the charrette. Second, the purpose of the plan is to create a more walkable, livable, economically viable community. This is accomplished by improving safety through design, developing public spaces, and attracting economic investment. These concepts are the foundation for the Vision Plan that is described in detail in Section 4.

#### Community Plan

The engaged community process that shaped this plan is a key first step toward implementation. Individuals, associations and institutions in the community helped shape a vision for West Fresno by participating in the charrette process. Assets present in the community include its citizens. The people of West Fresno are eager for positive changes that preserve and enhance quality of life in their neighborhoods.

#### Livable Community

Charrette participants clearly defined the improved quality of life they want for West Fresno. The safe, beautiful, economically vibrant community they envision is not an unrealistic dream. They dream of the same amenities that attract new businesses, jobs,

“Resources will be much more effectively used if the local community is itself fully mobilized and invested, and if it can define the agendas for which additional resources must be obtained.”<sup>(1)</sup>

*Building Communities from the Inside Out:  
A Path Toward Mobilizing a Community's Assets*

and residents to communities. Businesses and developers shop for an appealing location, and they clearly prefer communities with a high quality of life, including an abundance of open space, nearby recreation, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.

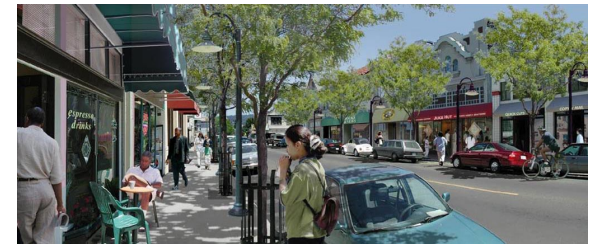
#### Safety

Every project in West Fresno must add to the sense of safety and security in the community. High fences, barred windows, and litter send a message that West Fresno is not a safe place. The existing structural environment and future projects must be carefully evaluated to ensure they promote safety.

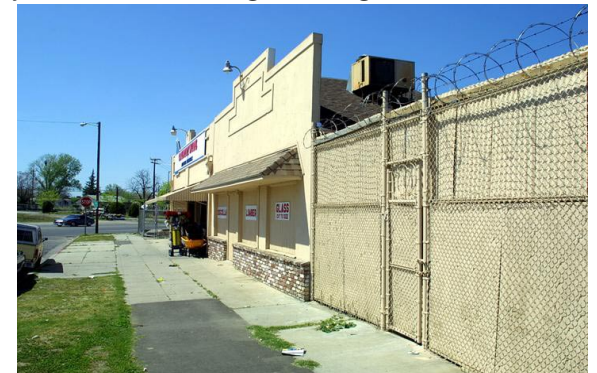
Streets should be safe for all users, including those walking, bicycling, or using wheelchairs. Traffic in neighborhoods should travel at prudent, respectful speeds. Transit stops should be secure, well-lit, and comfortable.



*The simulated image below shows how this Honolulu, Hawaii, street can be transformed to a place that is welcoming and secure.*



*Tall fences and boarded up windows send a message that West Fresno is unsafe. The building below once had a facade with windows facing the street. Note how in the photos above windows have been added. This allows people to see in and those inside to see out. This see and be seen concept is essential for West Fresno's image to change.*



#### Public Space

Public space includes the street, parks, buildings open to the public, and some privately owned space where the public is invited, such as outdoor restaurants. Public spaces such as pocket parks, community gardens, community centers and neighborhood schools provide places for residents to get together to share common interests and develop a sense of community. When people feel like they belong to a community, they are more willing to watch out for one another.

Open space, parks, and recreation are ranked number one in factors small businesses use to select locations. <sup>(5)</sup> Paul Grogan, former president of Local Initiative Support Coalition (LISC), a community development group in New York City, agrees that open space can play a crucial role in revitalizing low-income, inner-city neighborhoods. “Low-income neighborhoods are principally residential neighborhoods where the economics have gotten weak because of depopulation and disinvestment,” Grogan says. “The key to restoring their economic vitality is restoring the residential vitality. The residents of such communities regard quality open space—parks, ball fields, and gardens—as vital to the health of their community.”

The physical design of public space is a key factor in whether people will feel comfortable using public space. Three key concepts in the

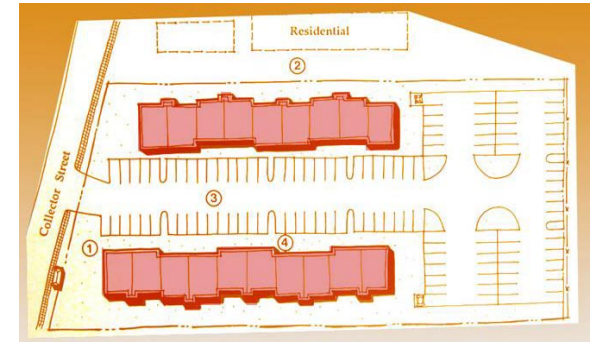
Vision Plan public space recommendations are:

- **See and Be Seen.** People behave differently when they know they are being observed. As new buildings are constructed, they should be oriented to the street and other public space. They should be well lit and have ample window space to allow people inside the building to watch over the nearby spaces.
- **Ownership.** The Vision Plan addresses concerns expressed by residents. Their continued involvement in the design of public spaces will encourage them to refine the ideas, take part in the implementation, and encourage them to take ownership of their community spaces.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly.** Places in West Fresno must be inviting to people who are walking. Beautiful streets filled with shoppers, walkers, and people enjoying public spaces beckon to

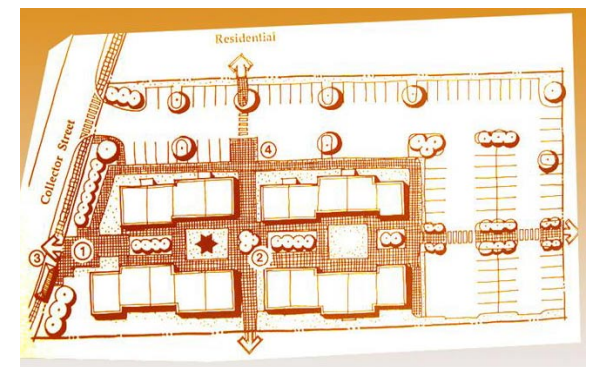
*Welcoming places invite people to linger and enjoy spaces.*



those who might otherwise feel uncomfortable about leaving the perceived safety of their vehicles.



*The multi-family housing above is a typical site plan with parking in front of the units. All outdoor living space is behind the units. The same number of units are rearranged on the same site in the plan below. This plan provides shared space in front of the units that can be watched over by the inhabitants of the units. This type of site planning uses the concept of see and be seen to improve safety and foster a sense of ownership by residents. Private outdoor space is still provided behind each unit.*





### 3. Plan Concepts



#### Vibrant Economy

Many workshop participants discussed the need for increased training and job opportunities for current residents. An improved economy is a by-product of changing the image of West Fresno so it attracts investors who will create training and job opportunities.

#### Size

Big isn't always better. Vision Plan concepts emphasize development of village-scale business and housing environments. This environment can serve as an incubator for entrepreneurs and attract other local investors interested in locating in Fresno. Studies show that local merchants generate substantially greater economic impact than chain retailers because they spend a much larger portion of total revenues on local labor and local purchases.



*The images above illustrate methods for placing housing strategically to provide watchful eyes on the shared spaces. Some private outdoor space should also be provided for each dwelling.*



*These images illustrate how a scary, uninviting place can be turned into an appealing community asset. West Fresno will be a more attractive investment for new businesses as projects to improve the appearance of spaces are completed.*



*The photo on the left is in Fresno. West Fresno citizens need go no further than downtown Fresno to see excellent examples of well planned and inviting public spaces. The greenery, shade, and sitting places send a clear message that people are welcome here.*

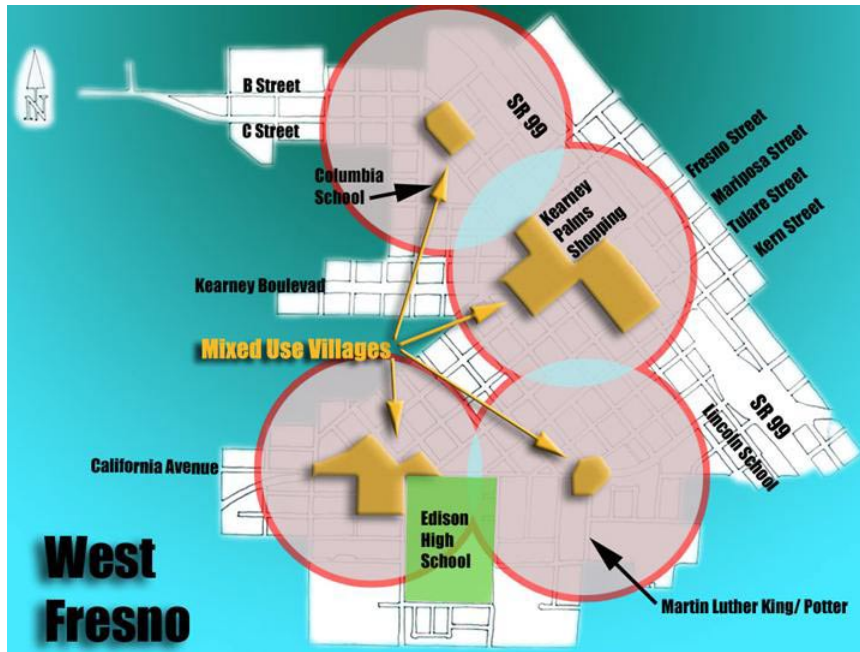


# 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



*Village centers identified above take advantage of assets already in place. The largest village is envisioned near Kearney Palms.*

## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



The circles approximate the walking distance from each village. Villages vary in size. In West Fresno, the Kearney Palms area is the largest and most commercial village envisioned.

### Village Centers

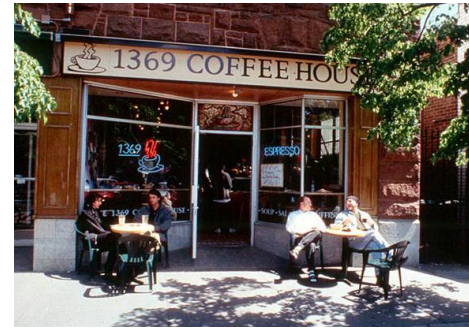
Charrette participants identified several sites as potential village centers for the West Fresno area. Village Centers are compact neighborhoods or community commercial areas where walking and the interaction of people and businesses is encouraged. Mixed-use buildings in the village combine a number of uses including retail, office, residential, and even parking. The Tower District in Fresno, Old Town Clovis, and the Selma downtown incorporate many of the features of a village center.

Neighborhood village centers vary from 3 to 10 acres, while larger community village centers could range from 20 to 30 acres. They are built with attention to how their design affects surrounding neighborhoods. Facilities are provided to encourage walking and bicycling between nearby residential areas and the village. Neighborhood streets are designed to provide equity between pedestrian comfort and automobile movement. Increasing pedestrian activity encourages casual meetings that form bonds of community. A village

setting with closely spaced goods and services easily accessed by foot will attract walkers.

At the center of a village is a public space, which may be a plaza, a square, a green, or an important street intersection. These centers can become focal points in the community, often taking on a unique neighborhood character.

Housing for a variety of incomes is incorporated into village buildings or located within



Villages are a smaller scale than “big-box” shopping areas. They create a friendly, welcoming center for neighborhoods that is easily accessed by foot, bicycle, transit, or automobile.



## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



*These buildings have retail on the ground floor and residential on the second story.*

walking distance. Villages should seek to fulfill the goal of balanced uses within the village, such that under ideal conditions, daily needs of residents can be met within the area. This goal fosters community formation, reduces motor vehicles, aids in establishment of a stable tax base and retail sector, and allows residents who cannot drive the mobility and access needed to live full lives. As the population of the United States ages the demand for compact, walkable neighborhoods is expected to increase. Households headed by residents who are over 45 show particular interest in more densely configured homes in more central locations. (*Livable Places Update*, Local Government Commission, August 2002)

Potential villages in West Fresno include the Kearney Palms Shopping Center, the area near Edison High School at Walnut and

California, and areas where neighborhood commercial development can be nurtured. Following input from the charrette, the consultant team architect prepared conceptual plan illustrations for the Kearney Palms and Edison areas.

### 2025 Fresno General Plan: Villages as Activity Centers

The West Fresno Community Vision Plan reflects a number of stated community goals in the new Fresno 2025 General Plan. One goal is the provision of “activity centers . . . to create a mix of land uses and amenities to foster community identity and reduce travel.” The General Plan calls for adherence to “a multiple community center concept of urban design” that includes commercial areas, employment centers, schools, higher-density residential development, churches, parks, and other gathering points where residents may interact, work, and obtain goods and services in the same place.” Activity centers emphasize “pedestrian activities and linkages, and provide for priority transit routes and facilities to serve the activity centers.” They “should also provide for mixed uses and shared parking facilities” (*2025 Fresno General Plan, Chapter 4, Urban Form Element, 02-01-02*).

### Case Studies: Streetscape Investments Pay Off

*Downtown Lodi, California*, invested \$4.5 million in pedestrian improvements in a five block area of downtown. The city credits the 60 new businesses, a drop in vacancy rates and a 30% increase in downtown sales tax to pedestrian improvements and economic development incentives.

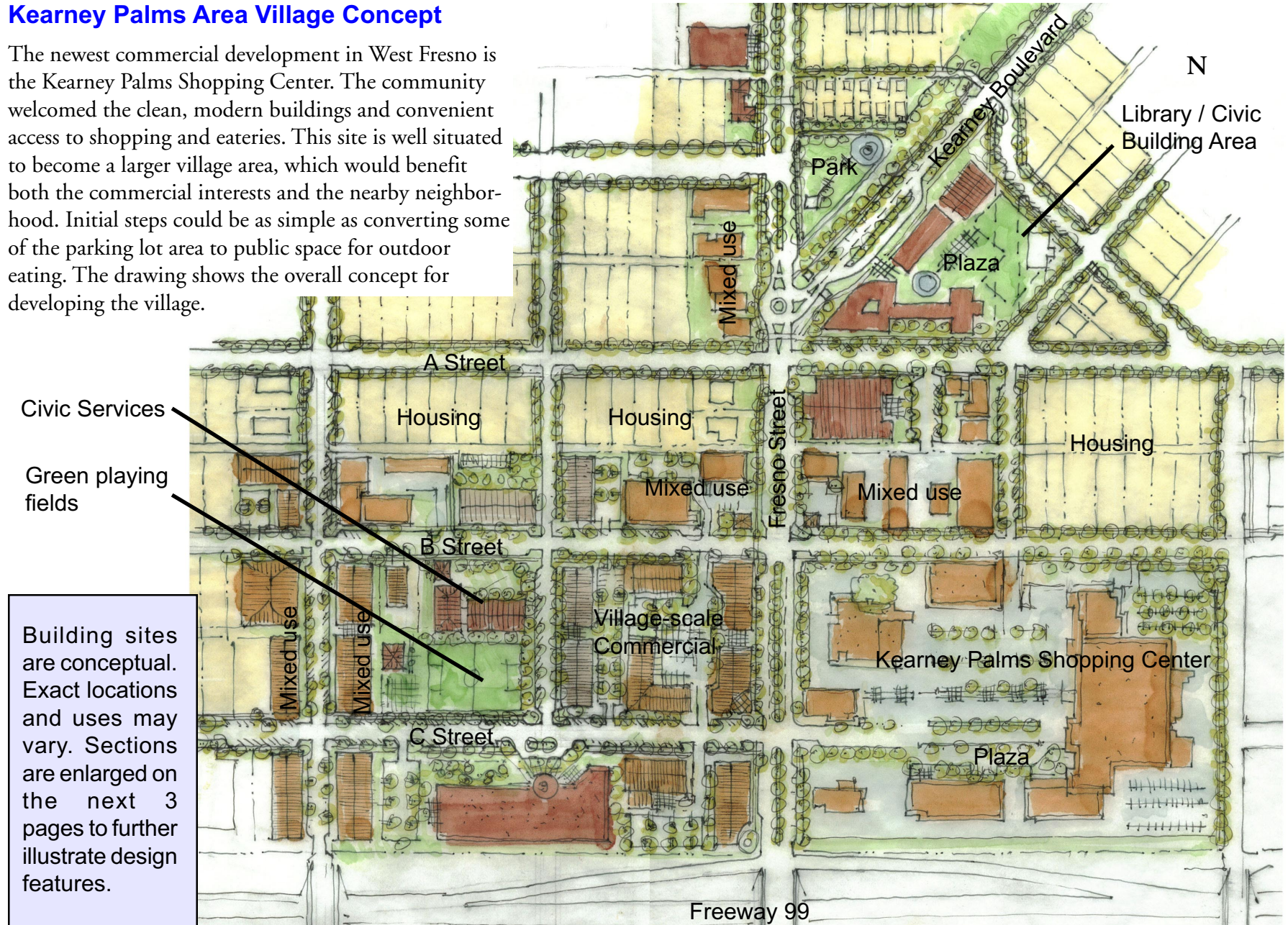
*The Oak Park community in Sacramento, California* is also undergoing a renaissance. The City of Sacramento and the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency have poured millions of public dollars into a project to improve the infrastructure, and landscape, beautify streets, install historic streetlights, and rehabilitate storefronts and buildings. Their investment and the efforts of a local foundation to improve Oak Park are paying off. A new primary care medical center is under construction and commercial development on the edge of Oak Park has begun. Oak Park home values have climbed faster than in the region as a whole, fueled by an improving neighborhood image and affordable prices that lure more low-and medium-income buyers.



## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods

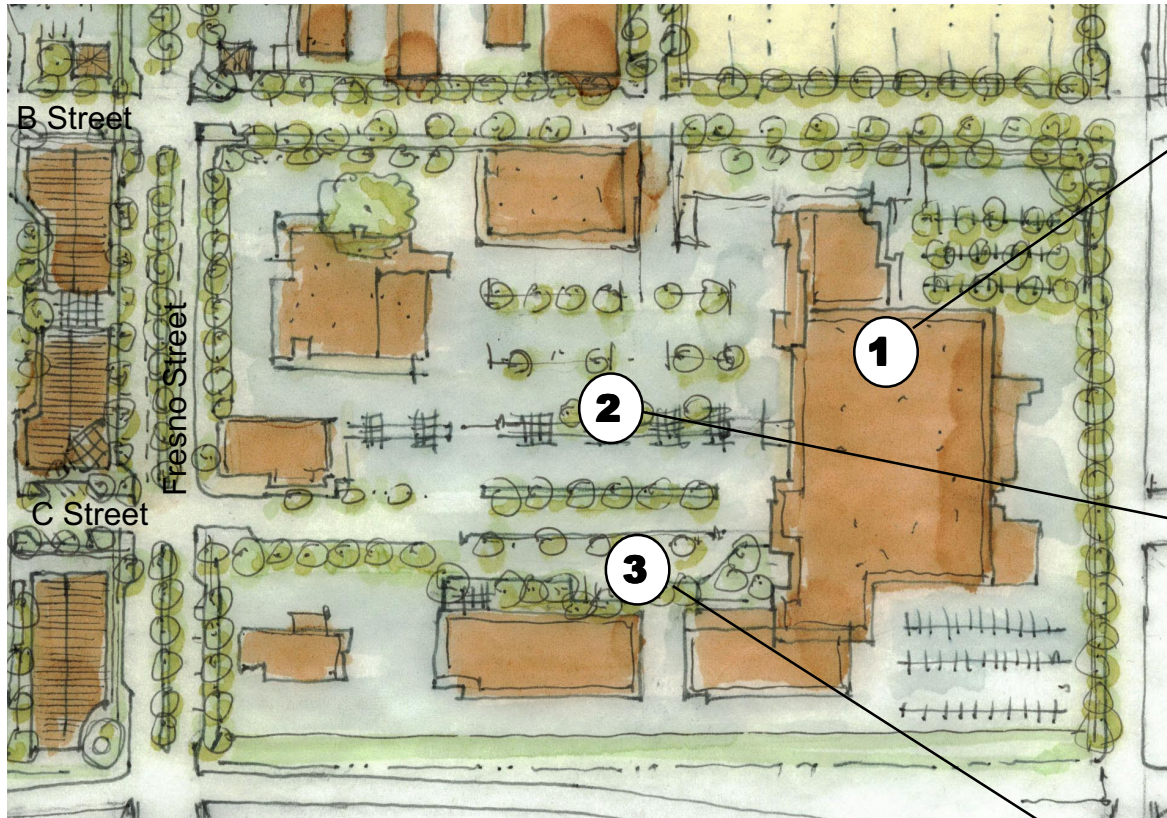
### Kearney Palms Area Village Concept

The newest commercial development in West Fresno is the Kearney Palms Shopping Center. The community welcomed the clean, modern buildings and convenient access to shopping and eateries. This site is well situated to become a larger village area, which would benefit both the commercial interests and the nearby neighborhood. Initial steps could be as simple as converting some of the parking lot area to public space for outdoor eating. The drawing shows the overall concept for developing the village.





## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



### Kearney Palms Shopping Center Enhancements

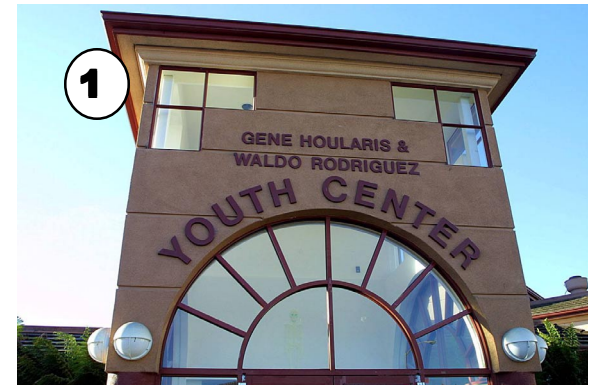
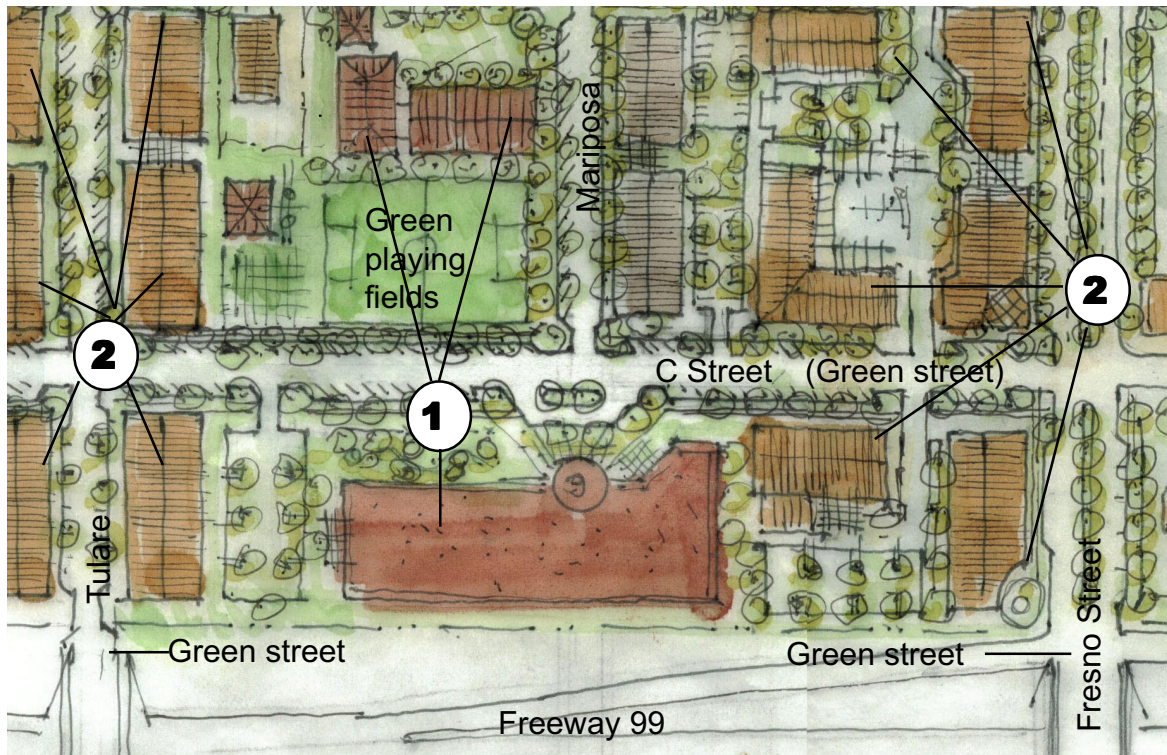
- 1** Charrette participants requested a stronger police presence in West Fresno. The existing substation at the shopping center is perfectly situated to watch over the shopping area.
- 2** The parking area has some tall palm trees, but lacks shade trees and shrubs. A greening of the area will make it more inviting. Employee parking could be provided behind the grocery store. Connections to the neighborhood should be well-lit.
- 3** Public plaza space could easily be added in this area, or perhaps in other areas as well. Many shopping centers have found this to be an economically viable use of excess parking space. Outdoor eateries should be accompanied by additional greenery.



## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods

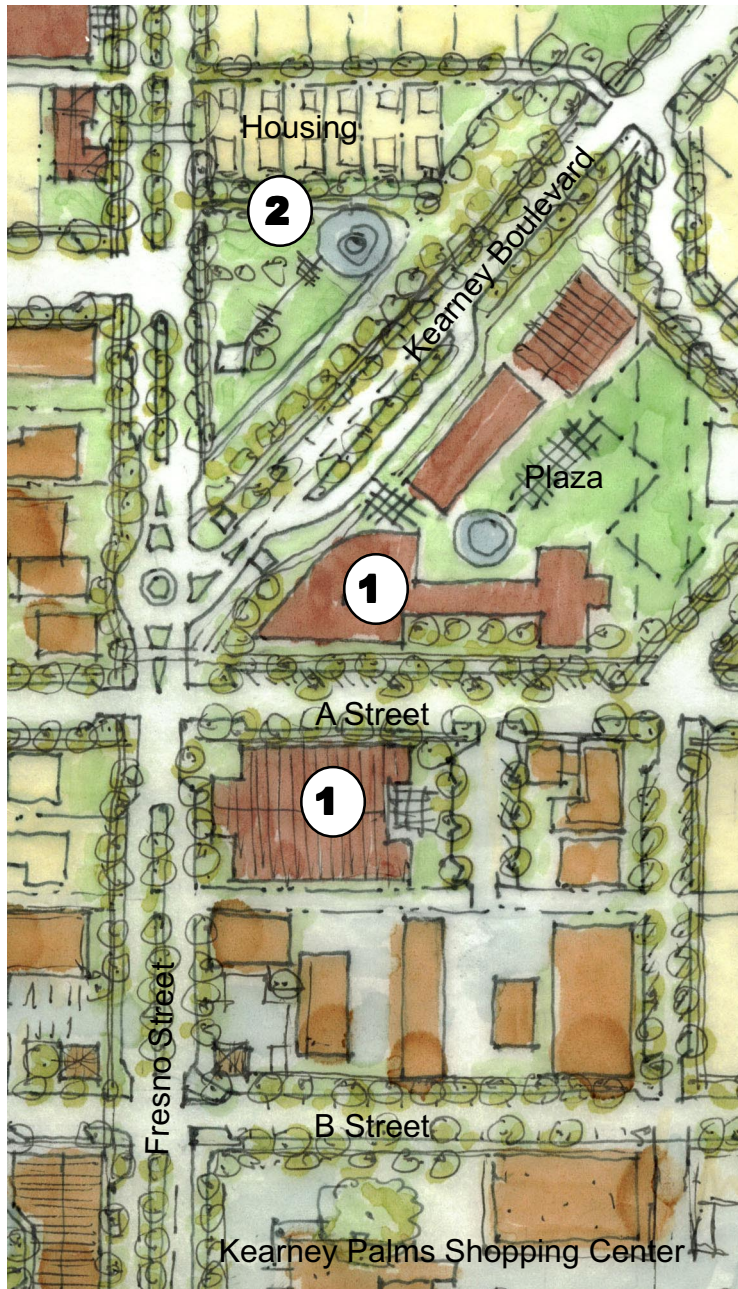
### Kearney Palms Village Area (C Street between Fresno and Tulare Streets)

- 1** While sites may vary from the suggestions on the map, the concept for this area is to cluster community services and youth activity areas near the village center and other civic facilities.
- 2** This mixed use building in Reno, Nevada, has retail on the ground floor and commercial on the upper floor. Parking and multi-family housing is behind the building. This is representative of the development approach envisioned for West Fresno.
- 3** Although no specific site is suggested, a theater for drama, music or cinema is envisioned.





## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



### Kearney Blvd/ Fresno St.

**1** Using existing or new buildings, this site could become the central focus of the Kearney Palms Village. The existing arches at Kearney Boulevard should remain in place. A library complex overlooking a plaza area is envisioned here. Other civic buildings such as a community center, post office sub-station, or other community-oriented facilities should be located in the center of the village.

**2** The existing park needs activity areas that attract people. A street closure here provides room for small cluster houses to watch over the park. Revenue from home sales could help fund improvements.





## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods

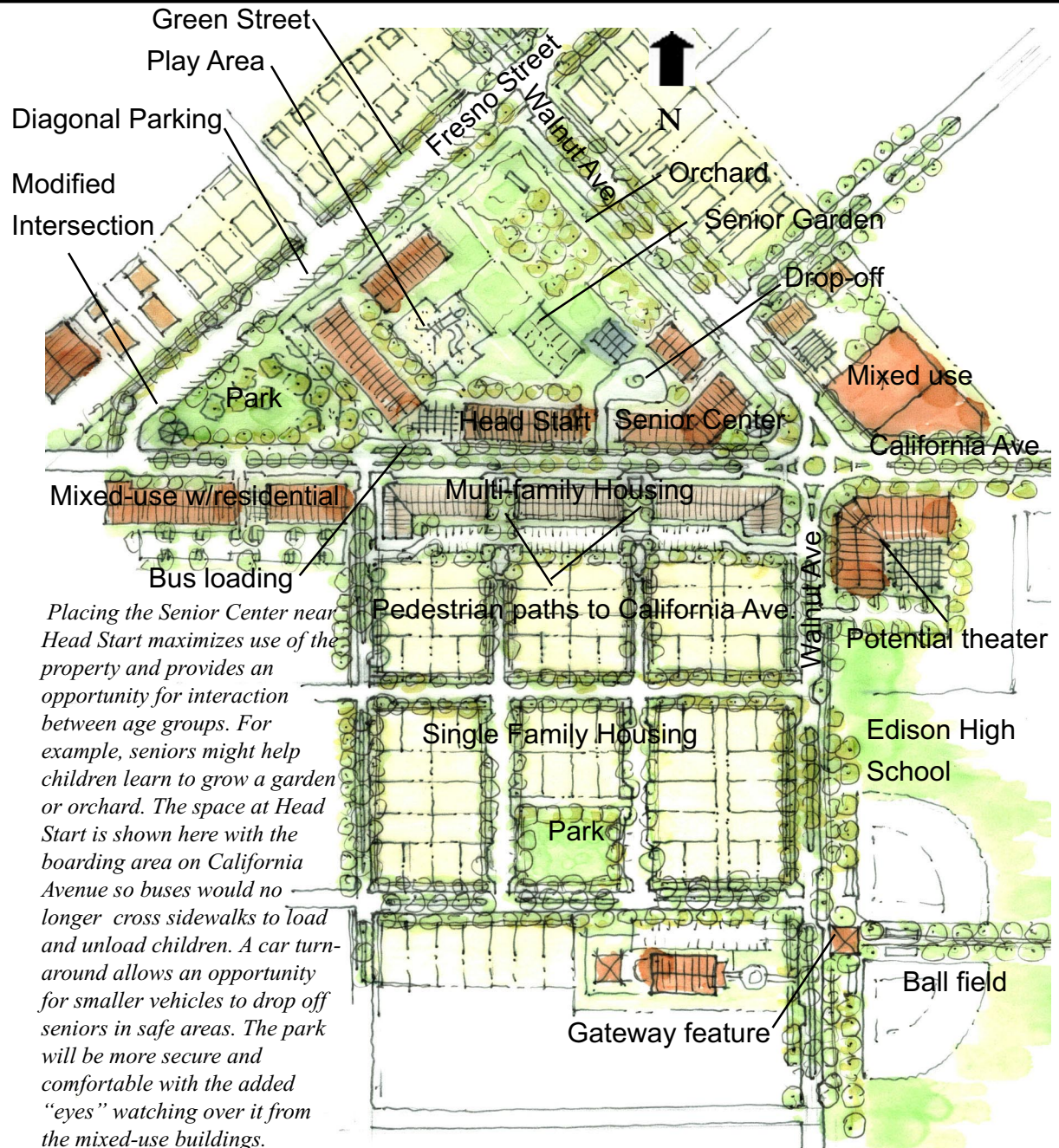
### Edison Village

A smaller village is envisioned near Edison High School. Current plans to build affordable housing in this area make it a prime site to apply charrette concepts. Affordable housing, convenience shopping, small eateries, and a possible training or performing arts center on the corner high school property are envisioned.

Conceptual housing in the proximity of Edison High School uses principles of compact development to plan a site that is compatible with older neighborhoods in West Fresno. A grid street system similar to other West Fresno streets is envisioned. The advantages of this street pattern are discussed in greater detail on page 37. There are no gates and walls because these tend to isolate and disconnect people from the greater community. Garages are accessed from alleys or set back from houses. Residential areas on California Avenue add the density needed to support retail and place residents in a position to watch over the street and park.

Although gates are often perceived as a safety enhancement, there is no body of evidence that shows crime over the long term is reduced in gated housing developments.

*Fortress America: Gated residential Communities in the United States*





## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



*Metro Square, Sacramento. Any doubts that homes on small lots with access would sell were eradicated when these 44 units sold in twelve hours. The Sacramento developer built them on a vacant lot near the downtown. The homes doubled in value in two years.*

The Urban Land Institute, a membership organization of developers, recognizes that most home builders target households with children, which represent about 30% of the housing market. They concluded that higher density, mixed-use neighborhoods appeal to large market segments that are seeking maintenance-free living, and communal space for recreation and socializing. (*ULI Looks at Trends In Housing Demand and Design: Urban Land Institute*)

*The three images on the right illustrate concepts envisioned for Edison village homes, including low, “friendly” fences, sidewalks separated from the street with planted areas, and alley access.*



### Evaluating Housing Developments

*from the Local Government Commission's housing checklist:*

- Is the site within walking distance of shops, services, schools or transit?
  
- Is the project designed to meet appropriate density levels for the site, especially if close to transit and neighborhood retail?
  
- Is the plan a “stock plan” or is it designed specifically for the site (i.e. the size, style and materials are consistent with adjacent buildings)?
  
- Is the street lined with living units rather than parking lots or garages? Do windows face the street?
  
- Is parking hidden from the street?
  
- Are there shared outdoor spaces designed for barbecues, children’s play, community gardens or similar activities?
  
- Do windows overlook shared outdoor spaces?
  
- Is there some private, usable outdoor space for each housing unit, such as a patio, balcony or small yard?



## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



*Small neighborhood stores and eateries sensitively designed and located within walking distance of homes are vital to the creation of a more walkable, livable West Fresno.*

### Other Neighborhood Scale Commercial Areas

Other neighborhood commercial areas with existing retail should be encouraged and nurtured. Larger, car-oriented businesses are less compatible with neighborhoods than small convenience stores and eateries. The Consultant Team recognized existing small commercial areas in the vicinity of California Avenue and Martin Luther King/Pottle and on B Street near the Fink-White Park as excellent sites to provide local goods and services.

### 2025 Fresno General Plan Policy

Plan for the appropriate location, size, and distribution of neighborhood and community commercial uses to implement the planned urban form, promote the stability and identity of neighborhood and community areas, and allow efficient access without compromising the operational effectiveness of planned major streets.

- Neighborhoods should be anchored by commercial centers with a mix of uses that meet the area's need to achieve activity centers that create a sense of place.
- Community commercial centers should be located at designated activity centers.
- Retail commercial goods and services shall be provided in planned unified shopping centers, carefully designed small-scale commercial centers, and in neighborhood-oriented stores.

*Chapter 4, Urban Form Element, 02-01-02*

### Neighborhood In-fill

Vacant parcels and abandoned or severely neglected properties within the neighborhoods should be prime targets for in-filling with new homes or for pocket parks. This is an important step in generating neighborhood pride and fostering the sense of community that is needed for enhanced safety and security. In-fill homes or pocket parks add value to neighborhoods.



*In-fill sites offer an opportunity to meet diverse housing needs while improving neighborhoods. Charrette participants said that many properties had been abandoned and ignored for years. These are prime sites for new homes, like the one shown below, or pocket parks.*



Livable neighborhoods promote interaction among the residents, contribute to the well-being of individuals, and create and sustain a sense of community and personal safety.

*Safescape: Creating Safer, More Livable Communities Through Planning and Design <sup>(2)</sup>*

## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods



*The graphic above suggests how pocket park sites could be distributed throughout the West Fresno area. All residents should be within easy walking distance of a public gathering site. Careful selection and design of public spaces to provide “eyes” on the space from adjacent properties will allow residents to keep a watchful eye on the space.*

### Public Activity Spaces

West Fresno needs many places for people to assemble, play and associate with others within their neighborhood. Places with trees and other amenities not only offer refuge outside an apartment or house, they also provide a setting in which relationships grow stronger. A series of studies conducted at the University of Illinois have determined that “greening” an urban environment can reduce

social service budgets, decrease police calls, and decrease the incidence of child abuse.

### Pocket parks

Three new pocket parks have recently been added to West Fresno. The continued provision of small parks is recommended throughout West Fresno until every resident is within ½ mile or less of a park or plaza. There are many vacant or abandoned lots within residential areas that are prime locations for pocket parks. Adjacent and nearby neighbors should be the chief designers of such parks. Each site should be selected with careful thought to how neighbors can keep an eye on park activities so it does not become a haven for undesirable activities. The parks should be demonstrations of community pride that can be watched over and even maintained by people in the neighborhood. These small parks are places where community is built as people come together to barbeque, play Frisbee, or watch over their children. They are an opportunity for citizens who live in West Fresno to contribute their time, energy, and talents to improve their community.

Many great amenities of pocket parks can be developed inexpensively. A jumping pit, as shown in the photo on the next page, is a simple but intriguing addition to any play area. The talents of local youth, neighbors who are artistic, or community members with woodworking or other skills should be maximized. Participation in the project adds to the sense of pride and ownership that helps keep public spaces safe.



## 4. Vision Plan: Village Centers and Neighborhoods

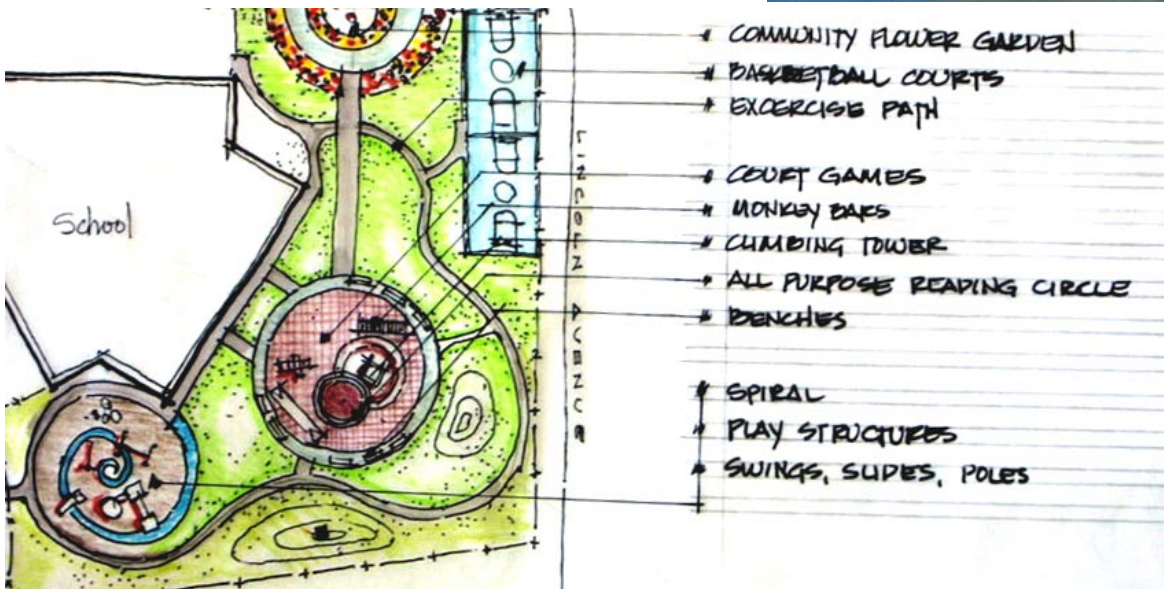


An area as small as a home lot can be transformed into a place for discovery, relaxation, and socializing. Residents designed and built the pocket park in the top two photos. Children enjoy the jumping pit and splash features in the center photos. Students helped design the school playground in the drawing below.



Public spaces include areas like the ones pictured on this page. Benches, bike racks, trash cans, water fountains, and public art add to the appeal of public spaces and send a message that people are welcomed. Plazas and outdoor eating spaces are also an essential ingredient in a livable community. These areas contribute to the “sense of place” referred to in the Fresno General Plan on page 23.

*Downtown Fresno public/private space.*





# 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

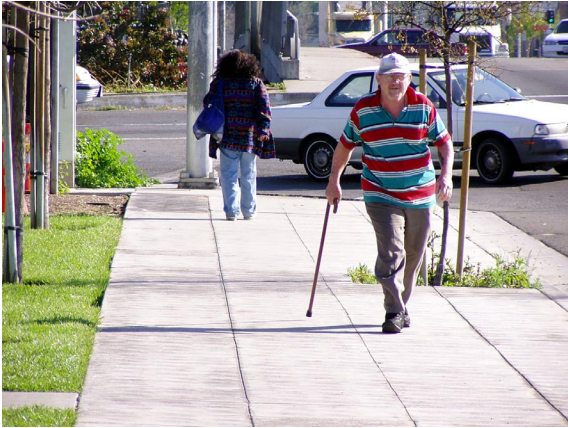
*Streets comprise a large percentage of public space and have a profound impact on quality of life. Key street changes are illustrated in the image on the right and discussed in detail in this section.*



The street network in West Fresno can be designed to allow present and future traffic to flow smoothly at speeds appropriate for a walkable, livable community. In order to do this, street design must embrace the streets as public space that is shared by everyone. People may be walking, bicycling, parking, driving through, or waiting for transit. A pleasant experience will encourage people to return. Streets filled with people shopping, walking, lingering at restaurants, and driving slowly to find a parking space are a sign of a successful, economically viable area.



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections



*Streets provide mobility and access for people walking, pushing baby strollers, using wheelchairs or canes, bicyclists, and motorized vehicles. The Vision Plan seeks to balance the needs of all users to create a comfortable and safe environment for all who share the streets.*

### Universal Design

Universal design is that which serves all people of any ability. Mothers pushing strollers, a person using a cane, someone with a visual impairment, or a motorist who will use a wheelchair when they leave their vehicle rely on the street and sidewalk system to be mobile and to access stores, medical care, or other needs. Federal law mandates minimum standards to accommodate people using wheelchairs and others with physical impairments. Often these minimums fulfill the mandate, but fall short of providing the best possible design for the investment.<sup>(4)</sup>

### Sidewalks

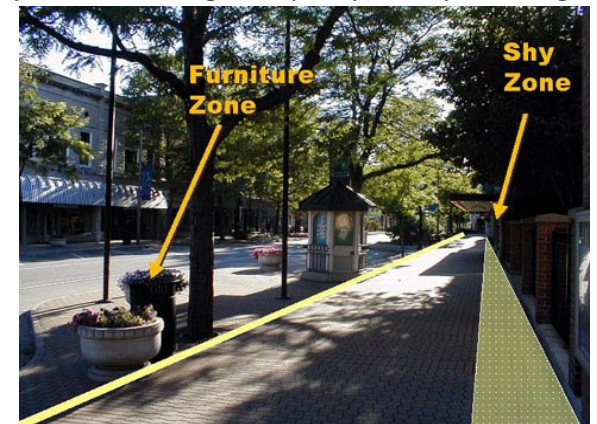
Many residential areas of West Fresno have pleasant sidewalks separated from traffic by a planter strip with trees. These areas should be used as models for completion of a continuous system of sidewalks throughout the community. The planted areas separating traffic from walkers is an excellent design. It allows trees and other landscaping to be planted, provides an opportunity for curb ramps parallel to the street, and adds to the comfort of pedestrians.

Minimum widths defined by current Americans with Disability (ADA) standards are not wide enough to create pedestrian-friendly areas that accommodate people of all abilities comfortably. Residential sidewalks should be at least five feet wide to allow two people to walk side-by-side. Commercial areas should have sidewalks that are at least 8 feet wide. More space is needed in high activity areas or where sidewalk cafes are expected to locate. The walking corridor should be free of obstacles.

Maintenance of sidewalks is essential to creating a pedestrian-friendly and aesthetically pleasing walking environment. Vegetation should be well trimmed to eliminate any obstacles. Sidewalks should be smooth and continuous.



*This West Fresno sidewalk can serve as a model for finishing the sidewalk system and building new sidewalks as areas are redeveloped. The planter strip between the sidewalk and the street facilitates the planting of trees, which bring additional benefits. People also prefer to walk as far from traffic as possible. In addition, planter strips allow the flat sidewalk surface to cross driveways without uncomfortable sloped areas. The diagram below shows how the walking portion of all sidewalks should be clear of obstacles, including street furniture, signs, benches, planters, and trees. The “shy” zone is the area near buildings, walls, or fences that is not generally comfortable for walking.*





## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections



Three pedestrians cross near California Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr/Pottle Avenue.

### Crossings

Crossing the street can be the most challenging and hazardous part of a walk. Key principles for enhancing crossings are to make them as short as possible, maintain clear visibility between drivers and pedestrians, and provide refuge islands between opposing lanes of traffic whenever possible. Where traffic speeds exceed 25 mph, high visibility markings should be used for all crosswalks. Curb ramps are needed on every corner of every intersection.

At signalized crossings, walk/don't walk signals should be provided. In pedestrian-friendly areas, people are not required to push a button to activate signals. They automatically receive a walk signal when the vehicles receive their green signal. This timing ensures

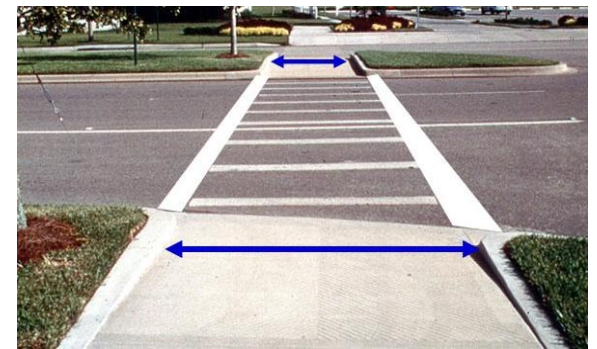


Two separate curb ramps are superior to one ramp angled at the corner. The style above provides excellent access for people in wheelchairs and also helps people with visual impairments identify the crossing area.

that pedestrians are not required to wait through an entire signal cycle because they arrived at the crossing too late to receive a walk interval during the vehicle green.



Many West Fresno intersections lack curb cuts. Signals should be timed to allow people with limited mobility adequate time to cross.



The images above show a high-visibility crossing at an intersection. The median has a curb cut through it to facilitate crossings. On streets with no medians, short islands like the one below provide refuge for people crossing where there are no signals.





## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections



*Shelter and secure bicycle parking should be provided at all transit stops.*

### Transit

Public transit is an essential element of a livable, walkable community. It reduces traffic congestion and improves air quality by reducing reliance on cars for travel. It increases mobility options for the physically impaired and helps meet transportation needs for those with limited access to cars, such as youths, the poor and the elderly.

Improved transit service and shelters are needed in West Fresno. Charrette participants cited the lack of transportation as a hindrance to their ability to obtain training and jobs. The 2025 Fresno General Plan designates Fresno Street a principal transit corridor and proposes several other transit routes on major streets in the subject area. The general plan states “all new transit-significant activity centers should be located immediately along designated principal transit corridors and

transit corridors,” and that “other transit significant projects should be located immediately along these corridors or along existing or programmed bus routes.” The Vision Plan supports increased public transit opportunities, expansion of bus services and improvement of transit facilities by locating higher density, multiuse village centers along transit corridors and routes as envisioned in the General Plan.

### Bicycles

Bikeways include bike paths (trails) separate from the street, designated bike lanes next to vehicle travel lanes, and streets that have been designated as preferred routes for bicycling. The Fresno General Plan directs “the implementation of bikeways along all newly constructed streets. These bikeways are to be

#### **2025 Fresno General Plan Policy**

“Encourage the conversion of auto-oriented development located along principal transit corridors and transit corridors to transit oriented land uses. Auto-oriented land uses like used car lots, car washes, gas stations, ‘big box’ retail outlets, auto repair businesses, furniture stores, et cetera, should be encouraged to locate in auto-oriented strip development corridors.” *Chapter 4, Public Facilities Element, 02-01-02*



*Bike lanes five feet wide can be provided between the parking area and travel lanes.*

implemented primarily as dedicated bike lanes (minimum five-foot width) along the outside edges of the street pavement. Efforts will also continue to establish bikeways along existing major streets” and implementation of other “bike routes utilizing local streets is also advocated for existing neighborhoods to provide a pervasive bikeway system . . .”

The City of Fresno Bikeway Map produced by the Council of Fresno County Governments shows bike lanes or routes along Kearney Boulevard and California Avenue. West Fresno streets are generally wide enough to consider installation of bike lines on nearly all minor and major streets. In the street design concepts that follow, additional bike lanes are proposed on Fresno Street, Whites Bridge Avenue, A and B Streets and Walnut Avenue. Proposed traffic calming measures will also make bike travel a more appealing and safe alternative. The large widths of

## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

smaller residential streets provide ample room and opportunity for additional bike lane installations in West Fresno neighborhoods.

Some charrette participants mentioned the need for a trail system for bicycles. The Fresno General Plan outlines a planned network of multi-purpose trails that includes links through West Fresno. Development of bikeways should be coordinated with the planned trail system (see the Multi-Purpose Trails Plan Map, Exhibit 9 of the 2025 Fresno General Plan).



Green Streets bring many amenities to the neighborhood and its residents. They make way for nature to be introduced into neighborhoods. Intimate outdoor spaces for users provide incentives for pedestrians to use the street and thereby help to revitalize the neighborhood. Unique features designed into the streetscape help users form a mental connection with the place and feel a sense of pride and ownership. <sup>(6)</sup>

“Demographic data show that Fresno also has a high population of children and youths below driving age, and this population trend is likely to continue into the future. Furthermore, regional air quality problems indicate that the city should promote alternate modes of transportation. These factors all point to the need for a comprehensive alternative transportation network, to foster non-motorized travel.” — *2025 Fresno General Plan, Chapter 4, Public Facilities Element, 02-01-02*

### Green streets

Green Streets are those designated for added emphasis on landscaping and street furnishings. The streets are:

- Tuolumne Street
- Fresno Street
- Mariposa Street
- Tulare Street
- Trinity
- Pottle/Martin Luther King
- A Street
- California Avenue

*Several designated Green Streets connect West Fresno to the China Town area downtown.*



*Some downtown Fresno streets serve as good examples of the benefits of greening streets. Seating areas and lighting add to pedestrian comfort.*



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

### Roundabouts

The Vision Plan includes roundabouts of varying sizes at numerous locations to control traffic and improve intersections.

Roundabouts reduce the number of lanes required to carry traffic by reducing or eliminating intersection delays. Reduced street widths and elimination of signals save construction and maintenance costs. Reduced intersection delays can generally improve intersection capacity by 30%. Roundabouts also facilitate lower and more constant speeds at and between intersections, improving access to driveways and sidestreets along the corridor. Landscaped roundabouts beautify intersections and distinguish a community.

Traffic entering roundabouts yields to drivers circulating in roundabouts. Drivers enter just as they would turn right from driveways - wait for gaps and enter. Pedestrian crosswalks are placed one car length away from circulating traffic to ensure driver attention is focused on pedestrians, not turning movements. This placement also encourages pedestrians to cross behind vehicles entering roundabouts. Splitter islands in the roadway create refuges for pedestrians waiting for crossing gaps.

ADA Council representatives in Fresno have expressed concern about challenges roundabouts may pose for the visually impaired and some wheelchair users. However,

roundabouts offer important safety advantages to pedestrians of any ability by slowing vehicles from all directions as they approach intersections and by substantially reducing crossing distances. Moreover, by comparison, intersections with four-way stop signs pose significant challenges for the visually impaired since they may have difficulty determining which vehicle is going to move next. Signals also present hazards resulting from vehicles making right hand turns on red lights, noise, and drivers running red lights and making fast left turns. Therefore it is highly recommended that planners, engineers and ADA representatives visit a well-designed, slow-speed (15 – 20 mph) roundabout and a signalized intersection with comparable traffic to assess the advantages of roundabouts as a pedestrian crossing and traffic calming option. It is critical that planners work with ADA representatives in the initial design process to support the safety and access needs of all pedestrians.

### Traffic Flow

Data from the Council of Fresno County Governments travel demand model show the arterial street network does not currently carry large volumes of traffic. Nor is it expected to do so in the future based on projected volumes for 2025.

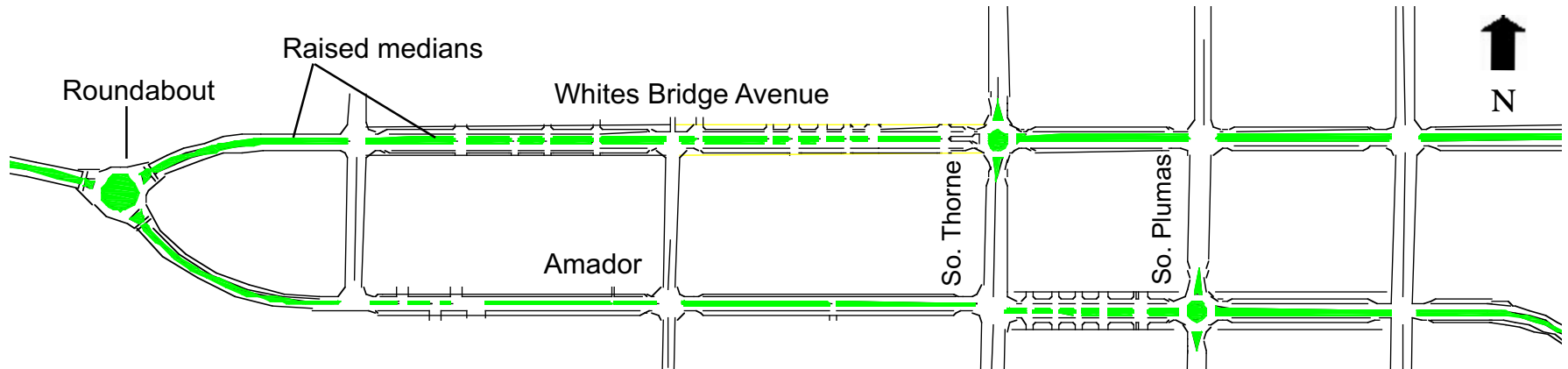
The light volume of 4,600 vehicles per day on



*Fewer and less severe pedestrian and vehicle crashes occur at roundabouts. West Fresno roundabouts are designed to slow traffic. The pedestrian crossing distance at a roundabout is much shorter than at a typical intersection.*

Fresno Street is much less than typical 5 lane streets that may carry up to 32,000 cars per day. Traffic is also light where Whites Bridge Avenue and West Amador operate as a one-way pair starting west of S. Fruit Avenue. Whites Bridge Avenue westbound, a three lane one-way street, carries approximately 1,200 vehicles a day, which is comparable to the traffic on a typical two lane residential street. West Amador eastbound carries approximately 4,000 vehicles a day. A typical three lane, one-way pair would have up to 45,000 cars a day.

## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections



Two-way traffic, raised medians with driveway access allowed, and several roundabouts are combined to change the operation of Whites Bridge and Amador to be more compatible with a walkable West Fresno.

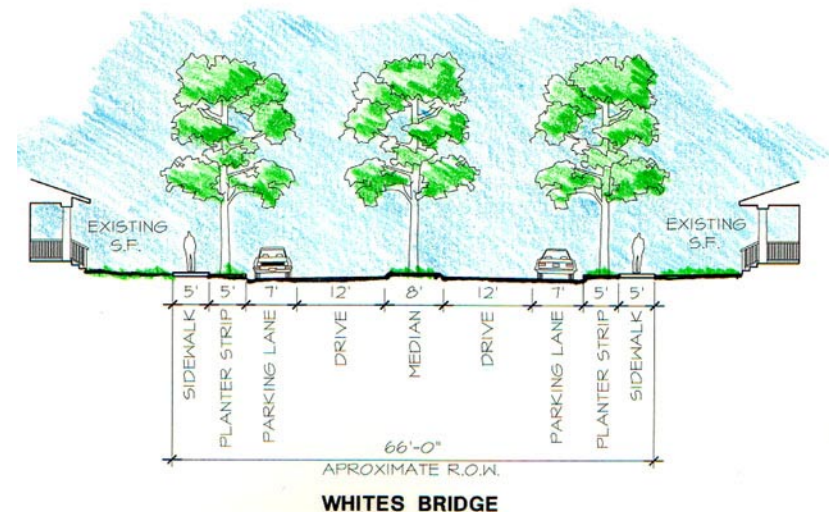
The combination of low volume and wide, over-sized roads encourages higher driving speeds and a compromised pedestrian environment. The objective of the street design recommendations is to scale the roadways to provide a smooth flow of traffic throughout West Fresno, to slow traffic on local residential streets, and to provide safe and comfortable facilities for those who may be walking or bicycling.

Specific street modifications are discussed in the following pages. Conceptual street design drawings are included in the Appendix.

### *Whites Bridge Avenue*

Whites Bridge Avenue is currently State Route 180 through West Fresno and maintained by Caltrans. A new SR180 West freeway construction project is underway that will replace existing SR180, at which time Caltrans will relinquish Whites Bridge to the City of Fresno. Relinquishment of the road from Caltrans to the City is still under negotiation. Caltrans may make improvements to bring Whites Bridge up to current road standards before relinquishment or they may give the City a lump sum payment to pay for repairs.

Approximately 4,300 vehicles per day use this street. When the extension of SR180 is completed it is likely that a large proportion of this traffic will move to this new expressway. The West Fresno area would benefit from conversion of this one-way street system to two,

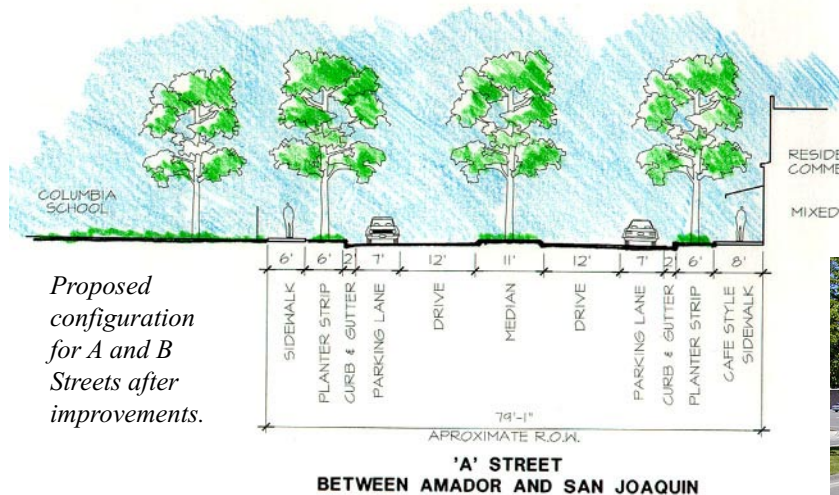




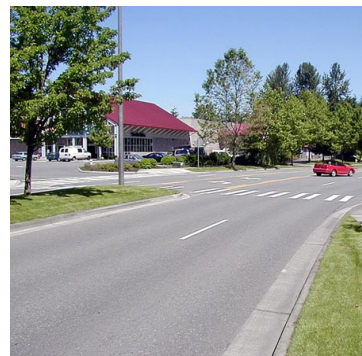
## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

two-way streets with raised medians, bulb outs, on-street parking and roundabouts to slow speeds and control selected intersections. The ideal time for this conversion is when road improvements associated with relinquishment are implemented.

The configuration benefits include lower speeds, more attractive, pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets, and safer parking spaces. Residents and their visitors will be able to reach houses and businesses along these two streets more directly. A roundabout is proposed at the western end where the two roads come together to create a gateway into the neighborhood and to slow eastbound traffic that has come from the rural area into the slower speed residential area.

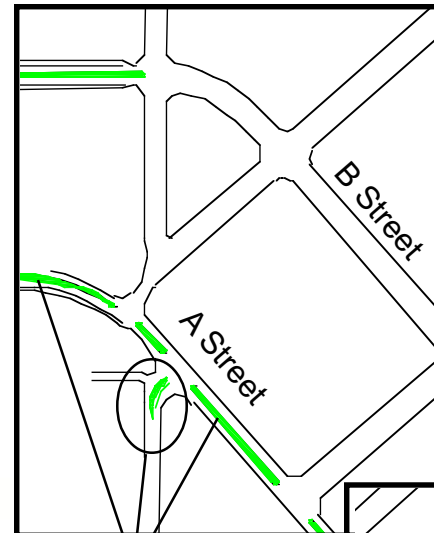


*Raised medians similar to the one in this photo are recommended on many West Fresno streets. Medians provide refuge for pedestrians to cross the street and add landscape space.*



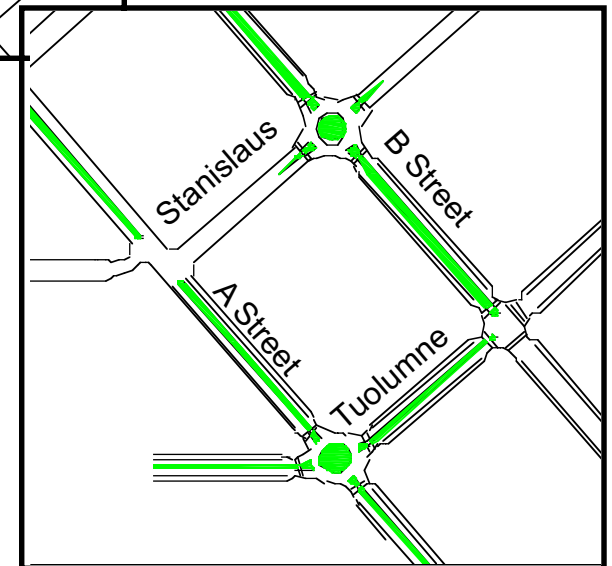
### *A and B Street One-way Pair*

These two streets are a continuation of the Whites Bridge one-way pair. As part of the reconfiguration these streets would also be converted to two-way operation. Two roundabouts are proposed to reduce the excess asphalt and large turning radii from Stanislaus to B and Tuolumne and A Street.



### *Tuolumne and Stanislaus*

One-way streets tend to increase vehicle speed and create circuitous travel routes. The Vision Plan recommends these streets be reconfigured to two, two-way streets with raised landscaped medians where possible.



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

### *Fresno Street, At Highway 99*

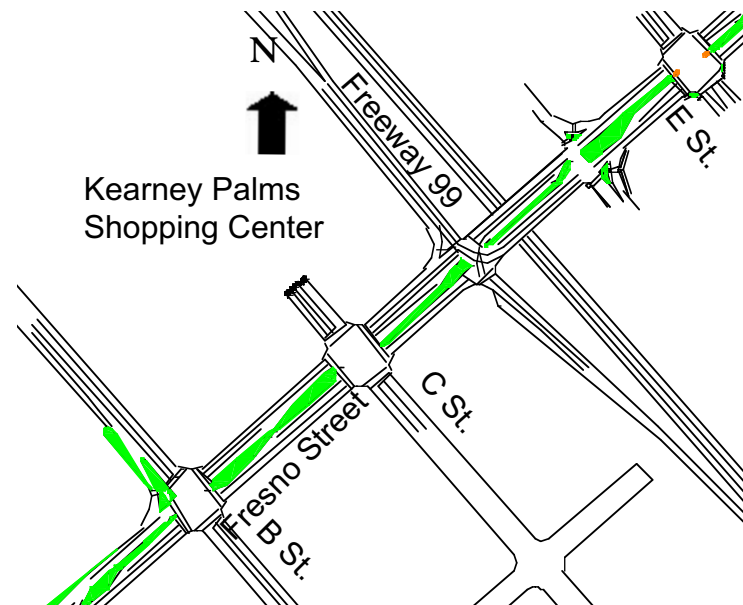
The conceptual drawings show this area slightly modified with 12' wide lanes so that a wider landscaped median can be provided.

Many pedestrians cross the freeway on Fresno between downtown and the Kearney Palms Shopping Center. Many were observed pushing strollers and using canes. The sidewalk is missing on the northwest corner of Fresno Street and on the westbound on-ramp, and a number of locations in this area lack curb ramps. Installation of curb ramps should be a priority. Two curb ramps per corner, parallel to crosswalks as shown on page 28 are recommended. Parallel ramps are more convenient, safe, and direct for the visually impaired and wheelchair users. This style of ramp benefits all pedestrians by guiding them into crossing areas.

Currently the city's regulations require the use of a 1/2 inch lip at the bottom of the curb ramp. This regulation should be changed as soon as possible so that curb ramps can be compliant with Federal regulations.

At the westbound on- and off- ramps two concrete islands are proposed. One is a modification of an existing island.

At the Fresno Street westbound on-ramp a concrete splitter island is proposed to reduce



pedestrian crossing distances and to provide a refuge area as they cross the on-ramp. The off-ramp has a concrete ramp now. A modified design for this is proposed because the current design is not optimum.

The proposed design for both of these islands includes tactile strips to identify edges for visually impaired people. The curb return ramps and cut throughs on splitter islands should be at least 6 feet wide so a wheelchair does not block passage for others, and people travelling different directions in a crosswalk can pass one another.

### *Kearney Palms Shopping Center*

The current driveway connection to Fresno Street is 5 lanes wide. A pedestrian crossing on the western end of the access road connects to Fresno Street. This crossing is opposite the steps that lead to the Blockbuster Store. Photo 2 on page 18 illustrates an improved walkway that should be incorporated as the mall is upgraded and maintained. Lowering the walkway would help prevent vehicles from intruding onto the pedestrian walking area.



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections



*This image of a Honolulu, Hawaii, crossing illustrates the concept for a channelized island at the Kearney Palms Shopping Center entrance.*



*A gateway roundabout similar to this one in Fort Pierce, Florida, would manage traffic efficiently and provide identity to the Kearney Village.*



*The realignment of Kearney Boulevard at Fresno Street would add public space to facilitate the civic uses described on page 20.*

Consideration should be given to installing a roundabout at Kearney Boulevard and Fresno to create a gateway to the village center and Downtown Fresno. On Fresno Street south of A Street, volumes are about 4,600 vehicles per day, which would indicate that a single lane roundabout is more than adequate.

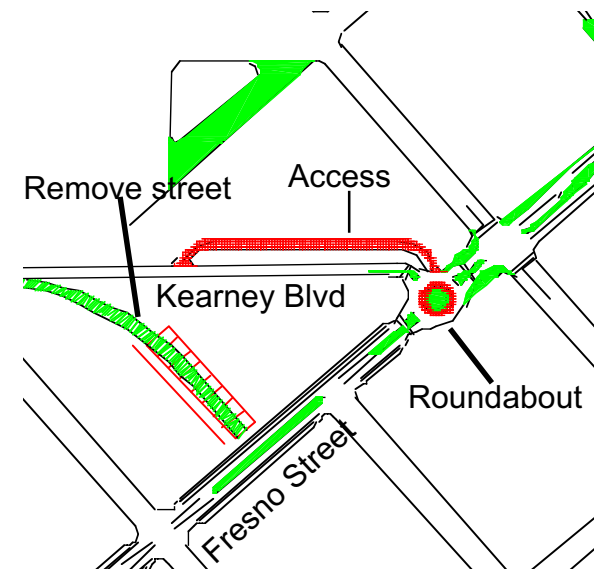
### *Kearney Boulevard*

The boulevard is split by a large green triangular area at Fresno Street. The northern section of Kearney Boulevard between Fresno Street and Picford has two west-bound lanes. Some minor modifications near Snow Street are needed to convert this section of Kearney to two way operation. Where Kearney Boulevard intersects Fresno Street the boulevard should be realigned to connect at 90 degrees.

The median opening will need to be adjusted to suit the realignment. This change will enable the closure of the eastbound one lane section on the south side of the triangle. The closed section can then be used for housing to provide eyes on the park. It is possible the revenue from home sales could help pay for park improvements.

### *Fresno Street, South of A Street*

This section of Fresno Street carries little traffic. Many alternate routes from the south into downtown Fresno are available, making it unlikely the traffic volumes will increase substantially on Fresno Street. The light traffic can be easily accommodated on a two-lane street with a median, on-street parking, and bike lanes. This new configuration is

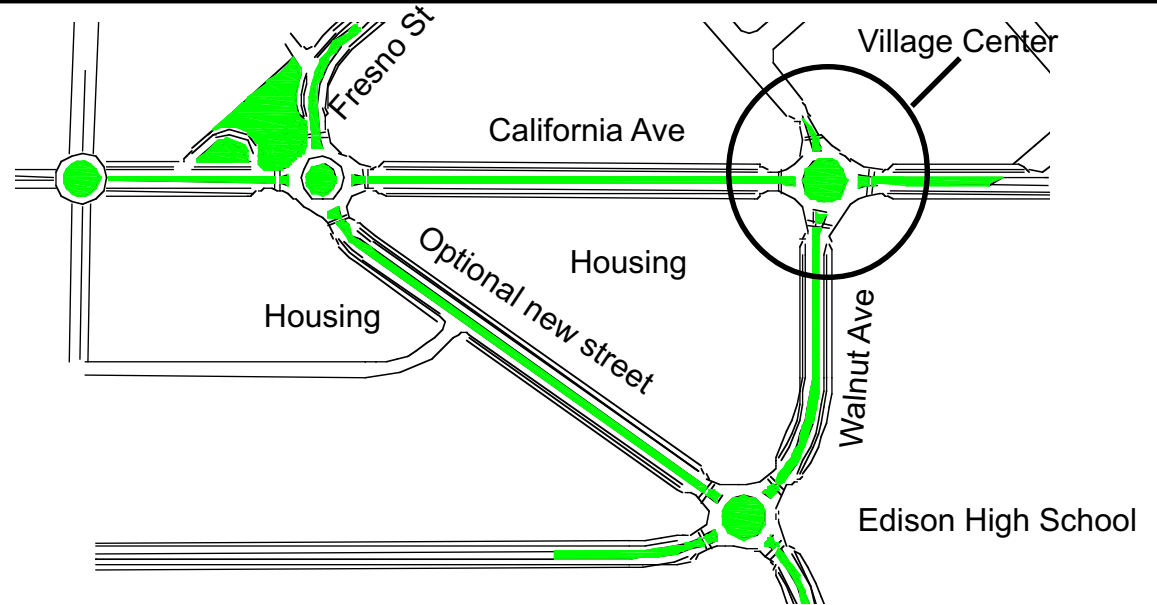


*The drawing above illustrates the roundabout envisioned at the intersection of Kearney Blvd. and Fresno Street. The reconfiguration includes removing the one-way section and adding a short access street.*

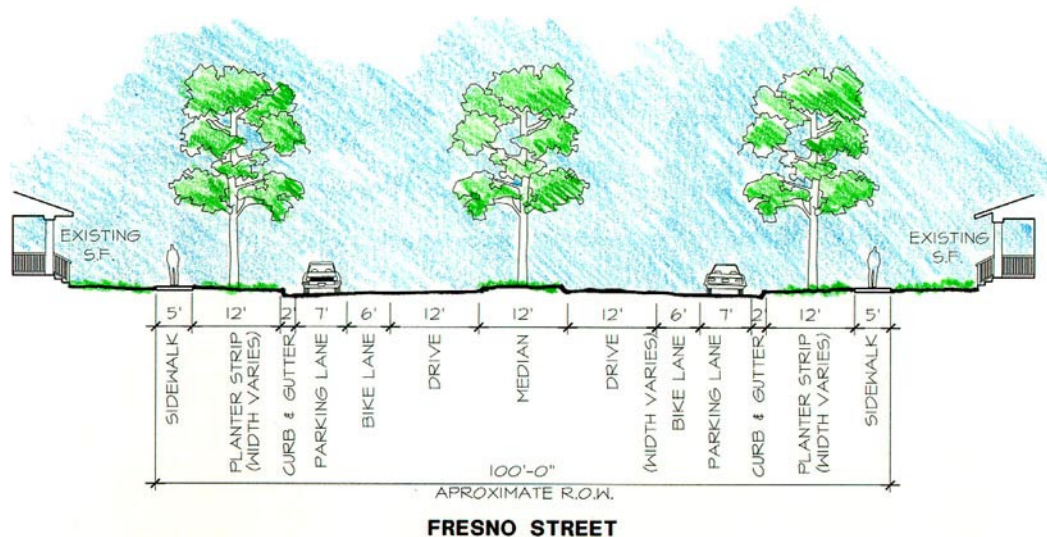
## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

capable of carrying up to 20,000 cars a day, which is a 400% increase over the current volume. Where Fresno Street intersects California Avenue the recommendation is to curve the end of Fresno Street to intersect California Avenue at 90 degrees. A single lane roundabout is recommended at this location. A new connection road can connect the roundabout to Walnut Avenue as shown on the drawing.

A roundabout is also proposed where the extended Fresno Street meets Walnut Avenue. This design enables provision of a diagonal street between the two roundabouts that is consistent with the historic grid in this section of Fresno. Other benefits of this design are that it enables east Lorena to intersect the roundabout and continue on to



*The roundabouts shown above allow traffic to flow smoothly near the proposed village center at Walnut Avenue. Note the street connection between Fresno Street and Walnut Avenue. It may be preferable to connect the streets in a grid pattern as shown on page 21. The decision will be contingent upon how housing is developed in the area.*



*This photo illustrates how Fresno Street south of A Street could look with two lanes, a median, on-street parking, and bike lanes.*



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

the realigned Walnut Avenue. This connection continues the grid in this area. It also slows vehicles next to the high school and improves safety for students crossing the new street.

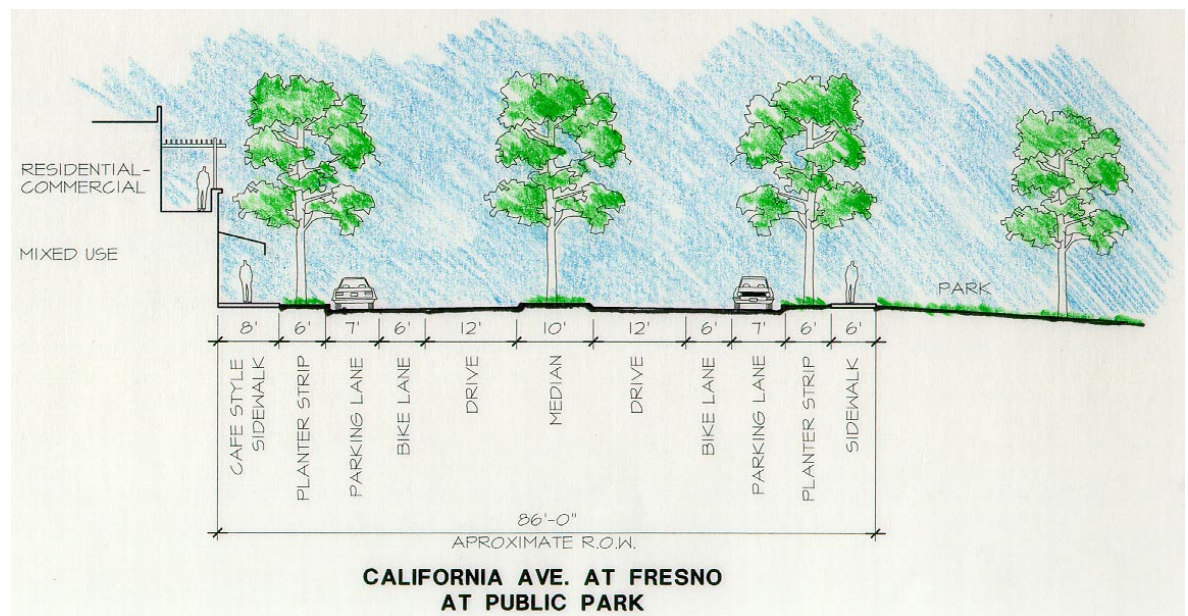
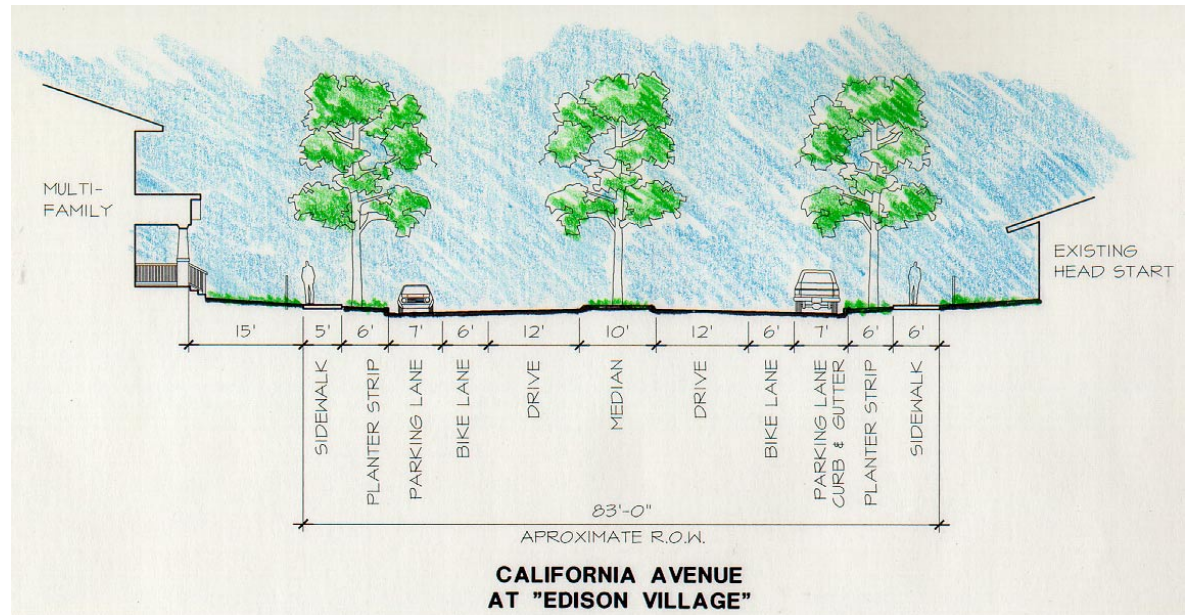
### *Walnut Avenue*

The intersection of Walnut and California Avenue also includes Martin Avenue. It is a skewed intersection with conflicting vehicle movements. The geometry of the intersection is incompatible with the high level of pedestrian use that can be expected near schools. The roundabout proposed at this location (see previous page) will provide safer crossings, slow traffic outside the schools and configure the intersection into a more standard layout.

### *California Avenue*

Current traffic levels on this street are about 3,000 vehicles per day. This light traffic makes the street a good candidate to be rebuilt as a two lane road with a raised median and bike lanes. This design will make it easier for children to ride their bikes to school, cross the road where they want, and dramatically improve the aesthetics in this area.

Roundabouts and medians on California Avenue will help slow traffic and create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. The images on page 28 show how pedestrian crossings are designed into raised medians.



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections



*This Vermont roundabout is located adjacent to a school. Students benefit from the slower speeds and shorter crossings.*

### Neighborhood Residential Streets

Mariposa Street is representative of many residential streets in the study area. It is wide, long, and straight. Residents on streets like these are often concerned about excessive vehicle speeds. Controlling speeds on these streets is becoming a major challenge faced by cities across the U.S.

The excellent grid network in West Fresno is an asset that allows traffic to distribute itself evenly throughout the community. Although the grid streets may be too wide and some traffic calming is needed, they are superior to cul de sacs and winding collector streets.

Some communities are tempted to develop cul de sac streets to avoid this problem, but this tactic creates other problems. Traffic is no

longer evenly distributed and connections between homes and destinations are weakened or eliminated. More car trips are generated, and this traffic is funneled onto a few major residential streets. The result of this concentration of traffic is that people living on the major residential and collector streets suffer from high traffic volume. These residential and collector streets create concentrated traffic levels at arterial street intersections, which often results in signalization of that intersection. This unnecessary signalization downgrades capacity of the arterial street system. It generates much higher levels of turning movements both at the collector/arterial intersection and at other major intersections, which further degrades the arterial street system.

As shown in the Edison Village drawings on page 21, the Vision Plan recommends planning future housing areas with a grid system to match the existing street system in West Fresno. In addition, a sample traffic calming plan is shown on the following page. The plan is intended to demonstrate the many options for slowing traffic. Before any traffic calming measures are designed and installed, neighbors should be involved in a process to identify their concerns and objectives, then work together to select the options they feel best suit their streets.



## 5. Vision Plan: Streets and Intersections

### Traffic Calming

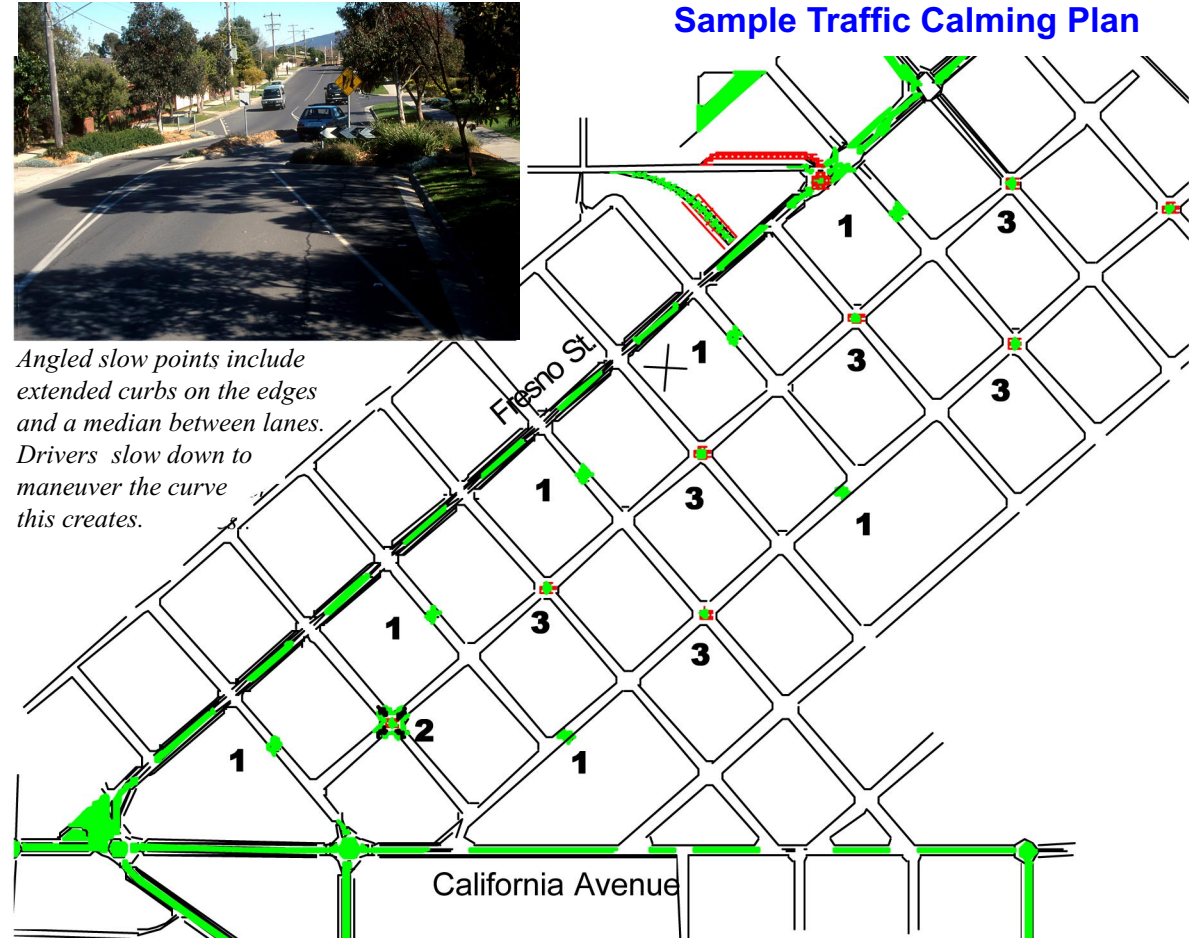
Some communities close streets to address speeding and cut-through concerns, but this tactic displaces residential traffic onto other streets. Street closures only impact speeding close at the closure and they increase traffic distances by requiring drivers to take a circuitous route to reach their destination. Closures at one intersection can increase turning movements on adjacent intersections. Overall closures hamper vehicle mobility within a neighborhood.

Undulations, or speed humps, are an effective form of traffic control, but they detract from the appearance of the street and slow emergency service providers. The undulations also increase noise levels compared to landscaped treatments. Other traffic calming techniques include landscaped horizontal treatments such as roundabouts and angled slow points. These are the treatments selected for the sample traffic calming plan shown on the right. On streets that are narrow there are a number of other landscaped traffic calming treatments that could be used such as medians with tree wells, chicanes, and oval medians.

*Image 2 is a small neighborhood roundabout. Image 3 is a traffic calming circle. Either of these can be retrofitted into existing West Fresno neighborhood intersections.*



*Angled slow points include extended curbs on the edges and a median between lanes. Drivers slow down to maneuver the curve this creates.*



# 6. Implementation

Implementation should begin immediately to take advantage of the momentum generated by the charrette. Collaboration between community groups, resident volunteers, and city staff is a key element of implementation. A steering committee to begin implementation plans should be assembled and begin meeting immediately.

The lists below suggest a starting point for approaching implementation. Early implementation seeks extensive involvement from the community. Cleaning up and celebrating the area will help bring people together to discuss their future and remain focused on the path ahead.

*Community garden club members maintain landscaped areas in this city.*



As implementation progresses more refinements of the implementation steps will be required.

## Early Implementation: Begin Now

- Conduct Community Cleanup days: Celebrate West Fresno!
- Step up Code Enforcement: Need commitment from City for quick response. Remove abandoned cars.
- Form Merchants Association: Conduct “Eyes on the Street” Campaign in association with the Police Department.
- Partner with schools and nonprofits such as Tree Fresno to conduct street and park tree planting projects.
- Set up Community Improvement Hotline: Assign someone to respond to calls and provide feedback to caller.
- Form Public Art Partnership.
- Review and revise codes to allow higher density, mixed-use village-style development.
- New Street Markings: Install high visibility “ladder” crosswalk markings; Paint stop bars; Paint on-street angled parking in commercial areas and schools where adequate room exists; designate and mark bike lanes and routes.
- Walkable for All: Assemble brochures for

property owners to enhance the walkability of their property by maintaining vegetation and sidewalks.

- Establish Senior/Youth Garden Project: All ages share knowledge, wonder, and food.
- Create Adopt-a-Park program: Share responsibility for public places.
- Coordinate Edison area village conceptual planning with City Redevelopment Agency Walnut Avenue realignment and residential housing plans at the junction of East California and South Walnut, west of Edison High School.
- Coordinate Kearney Palms area village conceptual planning with Redevelopment Agency exploration into options for future mixed-use development in the area southeast of Kearney Palms Shopping Center (bounded by Fwy 99 and Fresno, Tulare and B Streets).

## Near Term: Begin Soon (next 6 to 18 months)

- Establish Ombudsman position dedicated to implementation of the West Fresno Vision Plan under the auspices of the Mayor’s Office or the Redevelopment Agency.
- Property Acquisition: Identify and fund pocket park sites and neighborhood housing in-fill sites; Identify properties and prospective funding partners to develop village areas.



## 6. Implementation

- Pocket Parks: Assess existing Redevelopment Agency properties to identify potential early implementation pocket parks. Plan, design, and implement one pocket park every six months as sites are made available.
- Curb ramps: install at schools and transit areas first.
- Sidewalks: repair missing and broken sections.
- Start Green Streets Implementation Program: Street furniture, lighting, tree planting.
- Budget: Identify funding strategy for long-term capital intensive street design improvements.
- Conduct neighborhood traffic management workshops to develop traffic calming plan.
- Begin implementation of traffic calming measures selected by residents.
- Plan redesign of Whites Bridge Avenue, W. Amador, A and B Streets in conjunction with Caltrans relinquishment of existing SR 108 to the City.

and Fresno streets.

- Build out Kearney Village mixed-use area southeast of Kearney Palms Shopping Center.
- Build out Edison Village area.
- Complete Street Modifications.
- Complete Pocket Parks.
- Complete Green Street Program.



*The people who live and work in West Fresno are the key implementors of the Vision Plan. If every merchant clears storefront windows and creates an appealing display, every property owner upgrades their space, every citizen picks up a piece of trash, and every person smiles, West Fresno will have changed.*

### Long Term (two to ten years)

- Implement redesign of Whites Bridge Avenue, W. Amador, A and B Streets following Caltrans relinquishment of existing SR 108.
- Complete Kearney Palms Shopping Center plaza area.
- Construct Kearney Village area park, library and plaza at the junction of Kearney Blvd., A

*Encinitas children made the tiles on these trash cans. They share the community pride and sense of ownership that is expressed on every block of their city.*



### End Notes

1. Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets; John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, 1993, ACTA Publications.
2. Land Use Planning for Safe, Crime-Free Neighborhoods, Local Government Commission Factsheet.
3. The Economic Benefits of Walkable Communities, Local Government Commission Factsheet.
4. Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access (Federal Highway Administration, FHWA-EP-01-027).
5. The Trust for Public Land: Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space - www.tpl.org
6. Seattle, Washington Green Street program.

### Minutes

#### Focus Groups

Several focus groups were conducted on Thursday and Friday. A focus group allows people with common interests to explain their concerns and needs so the consultant team has all pertinent background information. Dan Burden served as facilitator. He opened each group meeting by asking the participants to tell what they hoped would be achieved during the charrette. Their comments are summarized below. Questions and comments from consultant team members are in italicized text.

*Thursday, March 27, 2003*

*3:00 P.M. Agency Representatives*

*What would you hope most for the outcome on Monday evening? I'm interested in hearing about your greatest hope for the charrette.*

- Pedestrian safety and accessible roadways.
- Economic interests.
- Caltrans goal is to improve the quality of life of people with transportation and partnerships with the community.
- Learn more about the community and put faces to the community transit project; Odys-

sey is working with same community on a transit-related project.

- Redevelopment agency is present here for technical advice and provide information you need.
  - COG transportation planning goal is for a good tangible plan the community feels good about and in which they have ownership. They need a plan that can be used to seek funding.
  - Fresno COG: one of our goals is not only partnering, but to ensure we have a partnership between agencies and the community so improvements are what the community needs.
  - A good comprehensive plan the community has input in.
  - Housing Authority: Operate several developments in Southwest Fresno and some single family in-fill. They have a major redevelopment at the western end of California Avenue and what they are looking for is coordination of all the efforts.
  - Responsible for Yosemite Village public housing in west Fresno; interested in things growing up around that complex.
  - Here to offer technical assistance and interested in the planning effort.
  - It's a blessing to have all these people in one room talking about West Fresno. Everyone will be happy to see something finally done.
  - Implementation of recommendations.
- What are the barriers we have to get beyond for a successful plan that can be implemented?*
- One of the biggest problems is the awareness of



the accessibility in the community. Broken sidewalks, falling branches and other things are problems. We need to build sensitivity to the needs of the disabled community.

- Sometimes things get through the system that should not have been approved. We as a community are working hard, but this forum will help create awareness.
- Make sure improvements comply with zoning ordinance, although it might be outdated. It can hinder some of the newer ideas; improvements should be tangible improvements that can be made with existing ordinances.

*Dan Burden pointed out that when towns want to become walkable, the next step is to rewrite the rules, even if only as an overlay district so you can do exemplary projects.*

- Funding is a major issue. It's rare. You have to build a good case to go and get the funds. The city hasn't ignored these issues, but we are more focused now. We have concentrated on bringing businesses; now we are to the point of getting to the pedestrian issues.
- Seems like a comprehensive plan on what to do and how to put it together has been lacking. One that can be disseminated to the community is needed.
- In the past we have had plans that touch on these issues, but this will be smaller and more feasible.
- Plans are wonderful, but they need a long term commitment. Part of the problem is there is a

change in elected leadership and then a change in direction. Since this is the community process, you can keep that plan in the focus to maintain your funding priority despite changes in leadership. A lot of plans have come and gone; the ones that bear the most fruit are the ones people were committed to and didn't deviate from.

- That is true because money doesn't flow back into SW Fresno. The constituents are wondering when this will really happen. Is this really going to happen?
- There are neighborhood plans throughout Fresno. If you work with the General Plan, division is usually grouped around high schools; updated infrequently; over the years zoning ordinances have become their own thing. Because some of these changes have been done elsewhere it should be easier for us to get new ones considered.

*Dan pointed out it is important that if we raise hopes something must happen, or hope is forever lost. He told about West Palm Beach and how the redevelopment that has been so successful was prompted by a charrette that gave people a vision for their place. It's not about money, it's about hope, vision and consensus.*

- If money is used where it is collected there would be enough. What bothers me is that the new development didn't also bring curb ramps. The lights are pretty, but the curbs don't work.
- There are a lot of design concepts in the older neighborhoods near Fresno Street where people used to walk. Kearney Blvd, for example, is

important to acknowledge, maintain and build upon.

### *5:30 Community Service Organizations*

*What are your hopes for the outcome of the charrette?*

- I'm working to increase ridership on transit. I'd like to see mixed used environment, access to transit, a walkable community, mixed use area, and improved lifestyle.
- There is transportation policy reform occurring in California and it would be great to make links between modes. Walking works when we also make links to transit and other modes.
- A comprehensive, focused, implementable type of report the community can leverage to make this a better community.
- Improving quality of life. We would like to see elimination of blight.
- Contaminated areas removed.
- Curbs and gutters; numbers on curbs for emergency location purposes; improve overall look of community and help people feel proud of what they have done for themselves.

*What were some of the uses of the brownfields before?*

- Some are not a problem; one or two where someone started something and what was supposed to be done wasn't.
- Tree Fresno feels West Fresno safety is a big issue. There is a fractured sense of community that needs to be put back together. Infrastructure improvement and a walkable community are pieces of the puzzle.

- We think Fresno has some chronic problems that are connected to the way the community looks. We have a low people to park ratio and a high crime rate that continues to get worse. We have severe unemployment that hasn't improved over the years. The thing that gets cut every time is the very thing that has the potential to improve looks. We think the problems are related to the fact we have a low standard of livability, few parks and it's not attractive. What we've tried to do is address that. We'd like the whole community to make it a priority.
  - We finally have approval to landscape all the canal banks in Fresno. Greenways linking the community together with the Mayor's idea of pocket parks will connect the community.
  - They have approval to landscape recharge basins. We'd like to make these things a priority because this is what is missing in addressing long term crime reduction and unemployment.
  - Having been a Fresno resident for 50 years, I've heard all this before. The ideas are good, but I'm skeptical there will be any follow up. The major thing that needs to be addressed is unemployment and under-education. When instructor assignments for the schools are made we get those who don't want to be here. It is very evident with their performance. If you block off West Fresno from the rest of the city I think you would find unemployment especially among young black men is very, very high. There have been some steps toward improvement. All the things I've tried to do have been through private funds. We find we get the leftovers. The community health people are willing to work with anyone who wants to work with them.
  - The big challenge for Big Brothers Big Sisters is getting people to come in and serve as mentors for youth in the community. We like to learn to encourage our kids to volunteer, so they may be able to be of some service at some point.
  - I am a believer in not reinventing the wheel. Many promises have been made and not kept, including job programs, nutrition, and other programs. There are a lot of emergency services needed in this area . I would like to see a real focus on recognizing the limited resources, why we aren't getting them, and how to get them. Downtown stadiums don't create jobs with a sustainable wage. Find out why people live in substandard housing in some areas. I'm passionate about making sure people have equal opportunities. Nobody seems to be on the same page.
  - I'm interested in the neighborhood; I'm here to see how I might help.
  - Intensely working on curb cuts on both sides of 99. I am appalled at the lack of curb cuts.
- Dan Burden said he would like to hear each person explain definition of a walkable community. What is missing? Why would people not be walking here? What would it take to make it more successful? If a walkable place is a place everyone wants to be what is it?*
- Building spaces so people are there and it is a neighborhood. Places for pedestrians, more than for the vehicle.
  - Places to walk to, either because of need or desires. Distances have to be feasible. Safety, security and vehicle speeds make a big difference.
  - Safety – people must feel safe. Places to walk have to be pleasing to the eye.
  - Street trees are important. There is a nice canopy on my street, which keeps the temperatures down to invite people. Also the planter strip between street and sidewalks.
  - Community involvement such as a spring cleaning project that gets people to take ownership.
  - Safety is a matter of perception. For the past 6 months West Fresno has been the safest place (in Fresno). I'd like no more broken sidewalks; access for those physically challenged; no loose dogs; more green belts; brighter street lights in certain areas.
  - Ease and accessibility for all people is critical. Children should be able to use paths safely so they could get to and from school on a bike. It would be nice if people could walk to a market. Theaters – a movie theater would be nice.
  - We think trees make places special.
  - Most politicians identify jobs as a number one priority for Fresno, but they never get beyond that to how we make it happen. Livable communities attract business investment, so that is what we need to do. I don't think there has been an understanding of how important livability is to issues of crime and jobs. We cut the Parks Department first, even though we need that the most.
  - As for making a town livable, what comes first, the chicken or the egg? It is difficult for



someone to feel safe and enjoy where they live if they spend all their time wondering how they are going to pay the rent, obtain food, and send their kids to school. The employment situation must be improved, then everything else will fall in line.

- Some areas that have a lot of pedestrian traffic are in pleasant places. Most residents in West Fresno don't have the luxury of walking to a nice destination. There are some gorgeous places, but there is nowhere for people to walk to.
- There is a lack of vision at the city for West Fresno. The residents don't have a voice here.
- More attractive places to walk would encourage people to walk. Things like open air restaurants contribute to a sense of safety. I'm impressed with this area. It just needs people to know it is safe.
- I like what you said about eyes on the street because that also creates community and people caring about each other. Windows on the street and trees, plants, sidewalks that have ramps and connect together ramps. Many connections to businesses from the sidewalk are missing. Your economy will change if you build to suit pedestrians. There are people who would be out there if the sidewalks and bike lanes were better.
- Bicycle lanes are important.
- The school is very important. West side has had some problems, but once you get the school system in shape people will want to come here.
- West Fresno school district went through years

of battles; that is really mostly county. We generally look at the city. The number one school in the state is across the street. Edison Computech.

- Average people don't have time to be active citizens because they are struggling to survive.

*Dan Burden explained that one of the components of walkable communities is the scale. As many people identified there aren't enough stores or nearby places to go to. People have to get in cars to go anywhere, so the neighborhoods don't feel complete. In America we have built many neighborhoods to be bedroom neighborhoods. Now we are trying to grow village centers in these neighborhoods. Making this feasible requires some different investment strategies than those currently being considered. True mixed use does fit.*

- If this neighborhood develops a good comprehensive plan and the neighborhood owns the plan, the money has to flow here.
- Is this supposed to be a representative group of the neighborhood? Anything that is going to be successful in this neighborhood is going to have to involve the residents.
- 6000 flyers were passed out door to door; 10,000 newsletters had articles; the West Fresno Coalition has visited 7 churches and spoken to congregations. They are offering an incentive to the first 100 people. They have been on 3 television channels, sent 500 emails, and conducted a phone bank in the office. All elementary schools in West Fresno sent flyers home with the kids.
- I hope when you speak to people in the

community it is not what we can do for you. Do things with us, or once the novelty wears off you'll be gone and we'll still be here.

*Dan urged everyone present to also bring others to the Friday and Saturday presentation and activities.*

- The ADA meetings are open to all people and we invite them to come learn how to better their neighborhoods and remove barriers.

### 6:30 Edison/Southwest Citizens' Planning Advisory Committee

*Dan began the group by explaining that what turns a place around is when people start to craft a vision. It is never about money. The places that are poor turn around once they decide it is time. He then asked the group what they thought were the greatest opportunities for the west end.*

- A similar effort has happened in the Jefferson area. This is a place I've worked in as an organizer and service provider. I think the opportunity is mixed income housing. Diversity makes things thrive. Mixed income housing is to have housing and home ownership affordable for people who are low income as well as those who may have an income of 80% of the area wages. The haves and have nots live in the same vicinity. If they focus only on low income families you need to have things that bring things in. Mixed income housing brings up the economy of the neighborhood.
- I think the assets and diversity of the community should be marketed.
- Make the connections between all the modes.

- It's important to educate people so they know what being a walkable community can do for the area.
- Independently owned businesses could help address the unemployment.
- I'm trying to not be critical because I don't know what you're doing, but I hope it isn't another survey. It's hard to get the citizens to participate anymore. I hope you have a lot of people stuff in your plan, historical preservation.

*Dan pointed out that it isn't our plan. Too often in our country we've hired outside experts to tell us what to do. Until the neighborhood creates the plan you don't have one. What we do is facilitate. We interpret what you say and we use our skills to create a plan, but it's yours.*

- You'll be leaving here Monday. Is the design team going to be local, or your team?

*Dan explained the process that would occur over the next several days.*

- The process you're presenting is very good. My question is, does your facilitation include an explanation of the process of once you provide your final report and it goes to the organization? If the residents don't have knowledge of how to go from a written plan to a master plan they can't adequately hold the coalition or other entity accountable.
- The demographics of this community is that hopefully there will be a mix of incomes and diverse peoples. But some people at these tables are from a dependency background, so the

information has to be put at their table so it can be used.

*Friday, March 28, 2003*

*9:00 – 10:00 St. Joseph Church*

### *English as a Second Language Populations*

*Dan Burden explained the purpose of the charrette is to craft a vision for the neighborhood. He then asked participants to tell what they consider the most important issues to address during the event.*

- Charrettes last 3-4 days. I think getting the community to come out and see there are groups or individuals that do care about the community will get interest in getting involved and providing input.
- I'm not in this particular neighborhood, but people want better housing, more health care, more neighborhood associations, and a safe place.
- They want to feel part of the community, be welcome and have accessibility. The majority are African American and Latino. One of the things they really dislike is when they are invited to meetings such as at school and they are ignored. The white population still controls whatever goes on. It is unfortunate we still haven't developed sensitivity to language barriers. It is hard to understand and accept, but community members feel they aren't welcome and part of the system.

- They feel intimidated.
- The other thing is unemployment. We've always had double digit unemployment rates in West Fresno. The average is in the thirties. How do you channel that energy? We need to utilize more of the high school kids and involve them in the community.
- Here the older generation is plodding along, surviving. High schools are really important. Teach the kids how to be involved in the community with a tree program.

*What could West Fresno be?*

- You have the land, corridor and empowerment zone which is practically tax free and a credit for every person they hire. Land is cheap, but the thing missing is training institutes to save people the time and energy and costs to travel into North Fresno to be trained. I've offered them the computer lab to utilize computers so people who don't have home computers could train in their own neighborhood. But it hasn't been done. Those are the kind of things that need a little more commitment of the organizations that have funding.
- You're also looking in the future of reduction of vehicles. People don't have money to buy cars and insurance here. The public transportation system doesn't run at night. Buses aren't available for a lot of people who work at Foster Farms at night.
- Transit stops at 9 or 10 o'clock. Transit is run by the City.
- Why couldn't they have a trolley on Fresno Street that ran end to end? We have electrical



systems to avoid the exhaust. People in this neighborhood can only afford old cars.

- A Rail Consolidation group had formed to deal with light rail, monorail around downtown and high speed rail. They have moved the City to talk about it.
- There is a lot of not even getting to the edge of the box in our area. The air quality is very poor. There was a 50% jump in asthma related deaths this year.
- If we have a big problem in the environment, why are we running big engines in all our service vehicles and running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? These vehicles are outdated and contributing to the smog.
- Our buses haven't been converted to other fuels.

*Are there any good examples of transit shelter?*

- Manchester Transit Center at Shields and Blackstone where the lines come together is the best example.
- The routes aren't useful. It isn't cross town service.
- Transit runs between 15 and 30 minute frequencies.
- What about some minor changes, like posting the transit times at the sites?
- Consider smaller bus vehicles.

*There is a perception of lack of security. The neighborhoods are doing everything they can to tell me these neighborhoods aren't secure, with bars on the windows. How can we make it feel*

*secure?*

- The bars on windows are usually from elderly people. Now the younger people are moving in but some don't bother to remove the bars.
- What if we did a training course? Good tell how to aesthetically fix the holes.
- The neglect and poor response times by police and emergency services have prompted people to extend fences and raise them to protect themselves. It is a moat and drawbridge mentality.

*Is there a police presence other than Kearney Palms?*

- No.

*Do you have community police at the schools?*

- There was an agreement between City Hall and PD that all the officers committed to the streets are committed to security at the games instead of the streets. Chinatown, downtown mall, and West Fresno.
- 75% of the CDBG funding is used to supplement the city's budget.

*Lincoln Elementary School*

*Ms. Nellis' 5<sup>th</sup> grade class*

*10:30 – 11:45*

The consultant team visited the Lincoln Elementary School to chat with fifth graders about their experiences getting to school.

Through a show of hands 18 children said they walked to school, 6 were driven in family cars, and 2 rode the bus. When asked how many would like to walk to school, all the children raised their hands.

The children were asked what they thought could be done to make walking safer. They suggested:

- Slow traffic down
- Look before crossing the street
- Walk with an adult
- Take a water bottle
- Wear shorts

The places they would like to walk to include stores, parks, church, on any sidewalks, and all around the school. When asked about what places are missing in their neighborhood they said a BMX track would be great.

**Public Workshop**

**Friday, March 28, 2003**

A public meeting was conducted from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Columbia Elementary School. An estimated 150 people attended. Keith Kelly of the Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development welcomed participants and explained the agenda for the evening. Council member Sydney Sterling thanked the audience and presenters.

Dan Burden, Walkable Communities, Inc., began his presentation by asking the audience to write on a 3 x 5 card how they hope West Fresno will be in twenty years. The following remarks are a representative sampling of the cards that were turned in:

- Less crime; better police services; better homes and streets like on the north side; better schools, better transportation; more street lights [translated from Spanish]
- I will be able to walk and ride a bike to most places in the neighborhood. I would meet and greet my neighbors as I walk. I will be able to walk to all stores with sidewalks all the way up to the shops. There will be lots of trees. All sidewalks will have curb ramps. All streets will have sidewalks and bike lanes. All intersections will have pedestrian activated cross buttons.
- Fresno West will be a model city for urban renewal. No vacant lots, clean streets. Ethnically diverse, economically self-sufficient and a place where Fresno East comes to shop.
- I would like this community to come together and do some reconstruction around the neighborhood.
- My vision for West Fresno is a community that is safe and clean, where people can stand on a corner and talk with friends without fear of being shot.

- A beautiful, walkable, community with access to transit and affordable housing and many trees.
- Street clean up; more shopping centers; police station more present; beautification
- A calm, quiet area where people take pride in where they live and are not afraid to walk outside.

Many of the vision cards emphasized a vision for a clean, drug-free neighborhood where people feel safe.

Following this exercise, the audience was asked to write a value down on each of five sticky notes they received. These values were later sorted into categories. Top categories were:

- Safety, Security
- Respect, pride, love, caring
- Parks, open space, recreation
- Educational opportunities
- Community, culture, diversity
- Housing ownership, affordability

Dan showed a series of slides depicting some of the current conditions in West Fresno and explained the principles and reasons to create a walkable place. His presentation covered many aspects of building quality places,

including affordable housing, a mix of uses for buildings and central areas, the importance of greening spaces, and easier street crossings for pedestrians.

Dan used slides to illustrate the concept of having building windows face streets and parks so that people are naturally watching over spaces. Every time a park of any size is built, there should be housing situated near the park so that residents watch over the space. He spoke of building village-style, where buildings are close to the street and have ample window areas. Maximum on-street parking helps minimize parking lots. Outdoor cafes and stores are included in these village areas. Slides also showed how other communities have provided fun places for children and have designed to ensure that all people have equal access.

After the visual presentation, the audience helped compile a list of priority items they felt should be addressed during the charrette. Each person received seven dots to use to vote for their highest priority. From this process the following ranked list was prepared:

Item	# Votes
· Cleanliness	82
· School Equipment	64
· Facilities for Children/Seniors	58
· Unemployment for Adults/Youth	58
· Junior High/Middle School	50



· Safety	50
· No Drugs	49
· Empty Houses/Abandoned Lots	48
· Better Public Transit	32
· Lack of Good Police Relationship	30
· Better Schools	30
· Bike Facilities	24

The meeting was closed with an invitation extended to those present to participate in additional events on Saturday.

### **Walking Tours**

#### **Saturday, March 29, 2003**

On Saturday morning several groups guided by consultant team members toured the vicinity of the Columbia Elementary School. The tour provided an opportunity for people to share their concerns and discuss potential improvements with others. When they returned, the groups shared what they had discussed. The following list summarizes their comments:

- No ramp at school
- Grass in road and on pavement
- Steep ramps that someone in a chair couldn't use
- Lots of overgrown vegetation
- There are wires coming onto the street and cars blocking sidewalks and pedestrian use
- Dirt and stones on sidewalks; need for cleanup and sweeping
- Lines on road at stop signs need to be pulled back
- Bumps in sidewalks
- Uncovered bus stops; no shelter; no curb ramp at bus stops
- Lots of garbage in alleys, lawns, streets
- One accessible space at school; should be at least two
- Bars on windows and high fences makes you feel unsafe
- Sidewalks could be moved away from fences so vegetation doesn't block walking area
- Chain link fences almost protrude into sidewalk
- Sidewalk changed in width from four to six feet
- Tree branches in the way
- Boarded up house and vacant lots
- Steep slopes and driveway
- Alleys need cleanup
- Fast cars
- Nonfunctioning vehicles
- Unleashed dog
- The pedestrian cross lines should be two bars that you walk between; cars have a habit of crossing into that area. The stop bars aren't painted in the correct place to discourage drivers from stopping in the pedestrian area.
- High walls can't be seen over by someone in a wheelchair
- Handicap access is poor
- Need more speed humps
- More greenery on the streets
- Abandoned cars: law officer needs to get involved
- Abandoned houses haven't been addressed
- Alleys are an asset and serve as short cuts
- Kearney versus A and B one-way streets; liked the raised median on Kearney and the street lights.
- The bumps on the sidewalks make it hard to travel on sidewalks. Many ramps are missing.

When you go to the traffic signal you don't see the traffic signal and stop sign because it is facing the wrong way. Some signs are obscured by vegetation and cannot be seen, especially visually impaired people.

- Near Columbia Elementary there is no crossing sign for the children

Michael Wallwork, P.E. and guide for one of the groups added that the things we are talking about aren't just for people in wheelchairs. They are also for children and seniors. What we are describing affects all of us. Anyone can trip over something on the sidewalk. One participant agreed and gave an example of someone who needs to push grocery carts to their home. They benefit from the facilities that also help those in wheelchairs or pushing baby strollers.

### **Design Tables**

After the walks a slide presentation featuring additional concepts for improving the West Fresno area was shown. Following the presentation, participants gathered at tables to discuss their concerns in more detail and offer suggestions for improvement. At final presentation, the groups offered these ideas:

#### *Table 1*

- Conceptually converted mall area into a real village, tying businesses into a centralized theme like River Park. Senior housing business incubator, park, community center in this area.

- On Fresno Street between Tuloumne and Tulare we added greenery.
- Off C Street between Tulare and Lincoln School, expand to have business where lots are vacant.
- Cleanup and revitalization along B Street and Stanislaus.
- Expand Fink White Park parking lot.
- Make B Street and A Street two way streets.
- In-fill houses on vacant lots between airport and school. The vacant lots attract transients and other things. Eliminate vacant lots or empty houses that have been boarded up for years so neighbors feel safe.
- More landscaping at Kearney Park
- South of airport - code enforcement
- Low income housing needed
- There is some greenery in areas where we wanted the nearby communities to adopt the areas and add some benches and gathering areas.
- Along California, on the east side of Edison, bring in a new street convenient to retail at Fruit and California.
- More shops on California to tie in where Subway and Marcus Center is. Tie in those vacant lots to build in that area for community and students. Make it available for some of the seniors who live there. Make the corner more pedestrian safe because they can't cross the street.
- Look at the people who use Lincoln Elementary and the Martin Luther King area: older

people and kids; the intersection should meet their needs.

- Greenup and provide bike lanes on main connectors to downtown.
- 1 pocket park every six months
- The fencing on Martin Luther Blvd should be changed.
- Major streets - all avenues into the West Side should look safe. If it looks good then all the avenues are appealing and draw people in.

#### *Table 2*

- More security at Edison: a police station, restaurant and small business at Edison, and a technical school.
- Boys and Girls Club
- Convenience store
- A playground for the school
- Build houses in vacant lots
- Skate Park
- Library
- Family Clinic and shopping center
- Activity
- Better public transportation
- Fountain
- Farmers Market
- Crosswalks

#### *Table 3*

- Concentrated on area around Kearney Palms:



- more pedestrian friendly and enhanced parking area.
- Wider walk space for better access; more decorative walkways; more trees, fountain in center of the area.
- To right of police station there is a dead space so we turned that into a community area with a lattice canopy and provided seating.
- More trees in the seating areas and around the shopping center.
- Better bus stop.
- Across the street from Kearney Palms, a business center with links and walking ways to the shopping center
- Across from Kearney in vacant lot, a surprise fountain and a pedestrian bridge over traffic.
- Triangle green areas become pocket parks
- To slow fast traffic on Fresno we added medians and trees
- We added angled parking to narrow the street at the business area near Hale Medical.
- Across from Edison we put a mixed use center – a small village.
- Park for kids across from Edison High School with play area; sidewalks and links to neighborhood across from housing authority.
- Tulare Street: low end modern housing
- Kearney Street more green space
- More green space by Lincoln
- A singer's center and a library
- By Fresno Street we need green space; job training programs, some low end modern housing.
- By Merced area low end, modern housing.
- Along Kearney Blvd, a bike trail.
- We need a bike trail across the whole city of Fresno.
- Pocket parks all over West Fresno.
- Car wash, fast food
- Better police protection
- We need better community involvement

### *Table 4*

- Big school at [unclear location]
- Across the street we want a shopping center.
- We need jobs so maybe we can put some retail stores that will hire people.

## Closing Event

**Monday, March 31, 2003**

Keith Kelley of Fresno West Coalition opened the final meeting of the charrette. He welcomed the audience and explained briefly the process that began 1-1/2 years ago to develop a plan for West Fresno. Mr. Kelley acknowledged the presences of Councilmember Cynthia Sterling, County supervisor Walter Ram, the City Manager, and several other community leaders. He introduced Mayor Alan Auntry, who explained he knew there was not equal access to quality of life when he ran for office. The question, he said, was how do we fix it? First we have to admit we have the problem. We have progressed beyond that point now and are positioned to correct the problems. West Fresno is a major component of the general plan. The schools must work. We must bring in business, which is why so much time was spent on the empowerment zone and the enterprise zone. The Running Horse project is a very real project that is likely to happen. In terms of transportation, that is one element that has to work. How we move people around is important. There will be 300,000 more people here in twenty years. Unique ways such as bicycle paths are important. He urged people to attend the upcoming community forum so he could hear the priorities people have for the limited resources

available.

Dan Burden, of Walkable Communities, Inc., began his presentation by explaining he would present the plan, and asked if those present support it. His presentation included an overview of the process that people had participated in during the past several days. He showed several lists of values and priorities compiled during the event and explained how ideas people presented during the process were evaluated to create the plan. He showed a series of slides representing existing conditions, showing where construction or maintenance issues can make it impossible for people who are blind or in wheelchairs to travel the route comfortably and safely.

Michael Wallwork, P.E., narrated a series of slides that explained the current street system. He said the low volume of traffic is an asset. Whites Bridge Avenue is recommended to be converted to two lanes, one in each direction. These streets could handle 18,000 cars each, so redesigning them this way they have more than enough room to meet future growth needs. He reviewed some of the details of the recommended street designs, including curb ramps and pedestrian crossings. He said the residential streets in this area are quite wide, which generally creates speeding. The plan includes a recommendation for traffic calming in the neighborhoods. Two options are offered for a proposed redesign at Fresno and

California Avenue near Walnut Avenue.

Dan Burden presented the plan that had evolved from participant input. Mixed use villages are recommended at four sites. He explained this occurs over a period of time and showed a series of slides to demonstrate how villages could be constructed. The next element of the plan is pocket parks. Green streets provide corridors that help people cross the freeway and access the school. Renner Johnston presented drawings prepared to illustrate how the development pattern potential could be designed. He explained that the drawings illustrate what could be on Fresno Street, reviewed the details of how the Head Start program buildings might be relocated to create a courtyard and showed how the center of the courtyard offers an opportunity for the seniors and children to interact. Bus loading areas at the current site creates a conflict. The entry for Head Start was moved to California where a bus pull-out offers a safe pick up and delivery spot for the children.

He showed how higher density housing near green spaces helps people provide more eyes on the park plus the green space creates a larger front yard. The roundabout creates a center. He showed how the housing option illustrated in the drawings provides a traditional grid for houses as well as some multi-family housing. Houses have one garage on

the front and can be loaded tandem with vehicles so the front isn't all garages. Renner explained that the grid system in West Fresno is a wonderful asset. He went through a list of key features that could be included in the village areas.

Renner also presented an illustration of the Kearney Palms area in which ideas to create a more pedestrian-friendly area were developed. The existing palm trees give definition, but shade trees would create the true value. He suggested a greening of the mall where there could be some café space. Where Kearney and Fresno meet, there is an existing park with a wonderful gates. The consultant team suggests adding features to the park to attract additional use. He reviewed the changes in the street that facilitate development of this area. The old Masons building that is boarded up appears to be a place where a community center might be located. The building next to it also has a blank wall that could be opened up so those inside could take ownership of the street. There is an existing building overlooking the park that could become a library. The turnout off on Kearney is a perfect place. He showed how a street could be eliminated there to create ample public space to provide room for an amphitheater or some other use of the green space.

There is ample parking opportunity along the streets in this area. There is also a parking lot



added in this area. This could be a shared parking lot. The idea is the high use time for a church is on Sunday but the library might be at a different time. So people share the lots; it saves money because it isn't necessary to build two parking lots.

Across from Kearney Palms the illustrations depict a zone that was identified as a redevelopment area. Orange is commercial. The conceptualized buildings are all pushed right up to the curb, which makes it a nice place to walk along. Parking goes behind the buildings, although not much is needed because there is parallel parking on Fresno Street. There could be diagonal parking on some of the side streets.

A conservation corp or youth center could be located where Mariposa terminates. The community function would become its own draw. Some green playing fields could be located across the street. The church was busy on Sunday. Diagonal parking might ease the need for some of their parking areas and allow them to use the space for other purposes. The next street over is envisioned as retail because it connects back to the village center.

Dan Burden then talked about how the plan would be implemented. He reviewed a series of steps that were intended to help people implement the plan. The first task is to have

weekend cleanup parties. Within one year West Fresno could have all parks looking beautiful. Dan stressed the importance of providing places where small businesses can be incubated.

When the presentation concluded, people were invited to demonstrate by a show of hands if they supported the plan. There was an overwhelming endorsement of the plan. Participants were invited to volunteer to serve on an implementation committee and to add their name to a mailing list. The meeting was then adjourned.

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Thursday, March 27, 2003 4 - 5 PM  
WEST FRESNO CHARRETTE TOUR  
ITINERARY

1. Kearney Palms Shopping Center - A new 108,000 square foot neighborhood shopping center, developed at a cost of approximately \$10.5 million on an approximate 12 acre site bounded by Fresno Street, Tuolumne, "B" Street and Highway 99. The center includes a 50,000 square foot Food 4 Less grocery market, a 16,708 square foot Rite Aid store, four retail pads of approximately 24,600 square feet and two free-standing sites of about 8,000 square feet. Additionally, an 8,400 square foot Police Substation was developed within the shopping center. Approximately 675 off-street parking spaces are contained in the Agency-owned parking lot. The Center employs over 250-300 permanent positions. The Center opened in February 2000, and the Police Substation opened in December 2000.

In March 2001, the California Redevelopment Association (CRA) awarded the Fresno Redevelopment Agency the 2001 CRA Award of Excellence in the category of Office and Commercial Retail for the Kearney Palms Shopping Center project. The CRA is comprised of over 330 redevelopment agencies and 250 associate

members throughout California that are eligible to apply for the award.

2. "Big-Box" Department Store - The Agency has been approached by a developer who has expressed interest in developing a "big-box" department store in the area generally bounded by Fresno Street, "C," Tulare and "A" Streets. Preliminary exploration is underway to determine the feasibility of assembling a site for the proposed project.
3. California/Walnut Housing RFP, Walnut Avenue Realignment, Residential Housing Project - Staff is in the process of preparing a draft Request for Qualification/Proposals (RFQ/P) for the development of residential housing on approximately 6-7 acres of property, presently Agency-owned, located at the southwest corner of East California and South Walnut Avenues, west of the Edison High School campus. The Agency will be seeking a partner who will acquire the property from the Agency and design and construct a creative plan for in-fill housing development on this piece of vacant property.

Related to the implementation of this potential housing project, adopted City Plans show that Walnut Avenue, a planned arterial street, is to be realigned

along a diagonal curving northwesterly from about Florence Avenue to intersect California Avenue at the Plumas Avenue alignment, one block west of the existing California/Walnut Avenue intersection. This diagonal alignment has been planned for more than 25 years, but because of inadequate traffic loads, the street has not been constructed. RDA staff has met with Public Works staff to explore the possibility of moving the proposed diagonal realignment further south to free up additional property for the residential development. The issue of the final alignment and development of the planned Walnut Arterial will ultimately need to be resolved before the RDA releases the RFQ/P. As a result of the meeting with Public Works staff, staff has retained a consultant engineering firm to prepare preliminary engineering plans for the Walnut realignment. Those plans have been submitted to Public Works with a request for a Director's Determination relative to establishing the ultimate alignment of the arterial street.

4. Edison High School Athletic Field Improvements - This project is a joint venture between the Fresno Redevelopment Agency, the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD), and the City of Fresno Department of Parks and Recreation that seeks to maximize impact of public



monies through the joint usage of school facilities for both education and recreation. Specifically, the baseball, softball, track, and outdoor basketball facilities will be lighted for after school hours use by the public. FUSD will provide Measure K monies for lighting, RDA will provide tax increment monies for installation of a concession stand/restroom and an all weather track, and Parks and Recreation will provide staffing for after hours supervised league play.

5. California/Ventura Avenue Pocket Parks - Three RDA-owned properties along California and Ventura Avenues have been developed as pocket parks. Prior to the improvements, these sites existed only as vacant dirt lots which were magnets for trash and weeds. All three sites are developed with grass and shade trees. Additionally, two of the sites, one at the intersection of California and Fresno Streets, and one at Ventura and Tupman Avenues, have been equipped with picnic tables and barbeque pits.
6. EOC Neighborhood Youth Center Project - The Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC) desires to acquire five Agency-owned parcels, encompassing approximately 6.2 acres, along the north and south sides of California Avenue at "C" Street. EOC

proposes to develop a neighborhood youth center, containing offices, classrooms and a computer lab for the Local Conservation Corps, in the area between "C" and State Highway 99 to the north of California Avenue. A children's day care center is proposed at the northwest corner of "C" Street and California Avenue. To the south of California Avenue, EOC proposes to develop a gymnasium and health center. The project will also include two outdoor play fields and a soccer field.

7. Lincoln School Restoration - Measure "K" Funds designate approximately \$4.6 million for the complete restoration and rebuild of Lincoln Elementary School. RDA is working with the Fresno Unified School District and the community on school design and potential joint utilization of the facilities.
8. Chandler Executive Airport/Roeding Business Park Redevelopment Project - The Roeding Business Park incorporates approximately 950 acres, including the Chandler Downtown Executive Airport, available for light and heavy industrial and commercial development. The Project Area is located just west of Downtown Fresno and the Southwest Fresno GNRA Project. It is situated adjacent to Freeway 99, is traversed by the Freeway

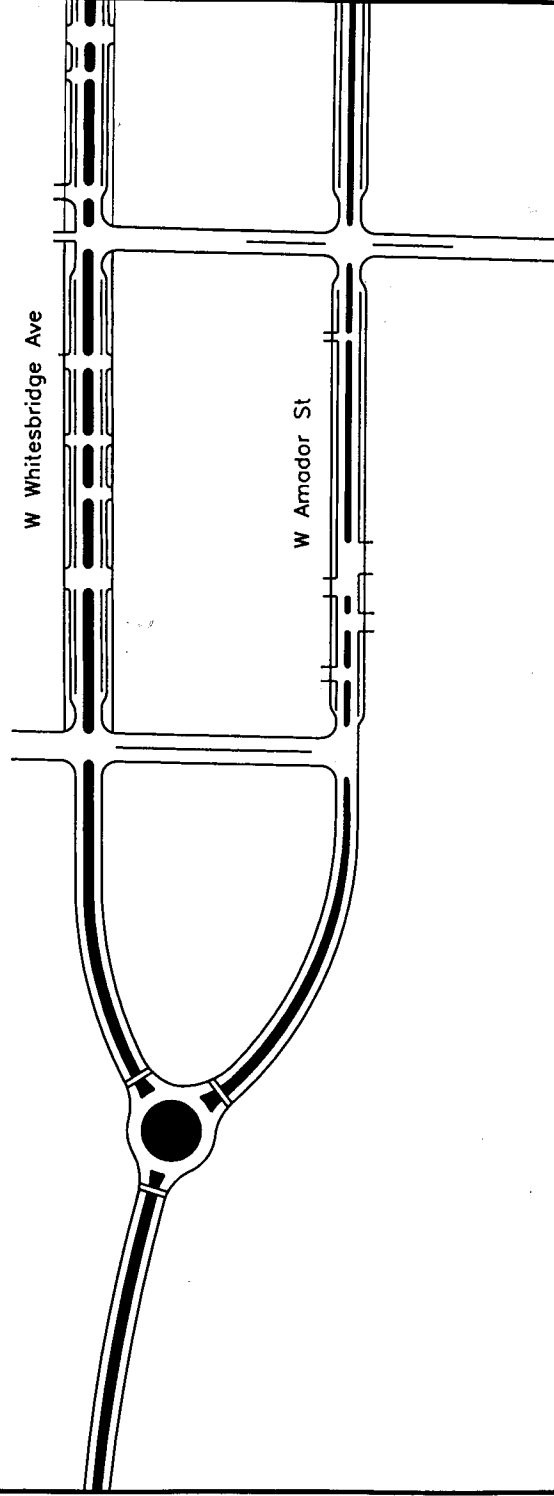
180 extension, now under construction, and has easy access to Freeway 41. The project includes three sites planned for general heavy commercial development, each located at the proposed Freeway 180/Whites Bridge-West Avenue interchange, which will accommodate the development of centers for retail, office and/or business commercial activities. Through a \$3.0 million U.S. EDA Public Works Award with matching Agency funds, Phase I and II of infrastructure improvements, including water, sewer, storm drainage and street improvements, have been completed. Phase III infrastructure improvements are now undergoing final design review and are scheduled to begin construction in May 2003.



NOT TO SCALE

Convert W Whitesbridge Ave to two-way operation. Options include adding a median or permitting on street parking on one or both sides of the street with no median.

Add a roundabout at the western end to create a gateway and to slow eastbound traffic as they come off a high-speed road.

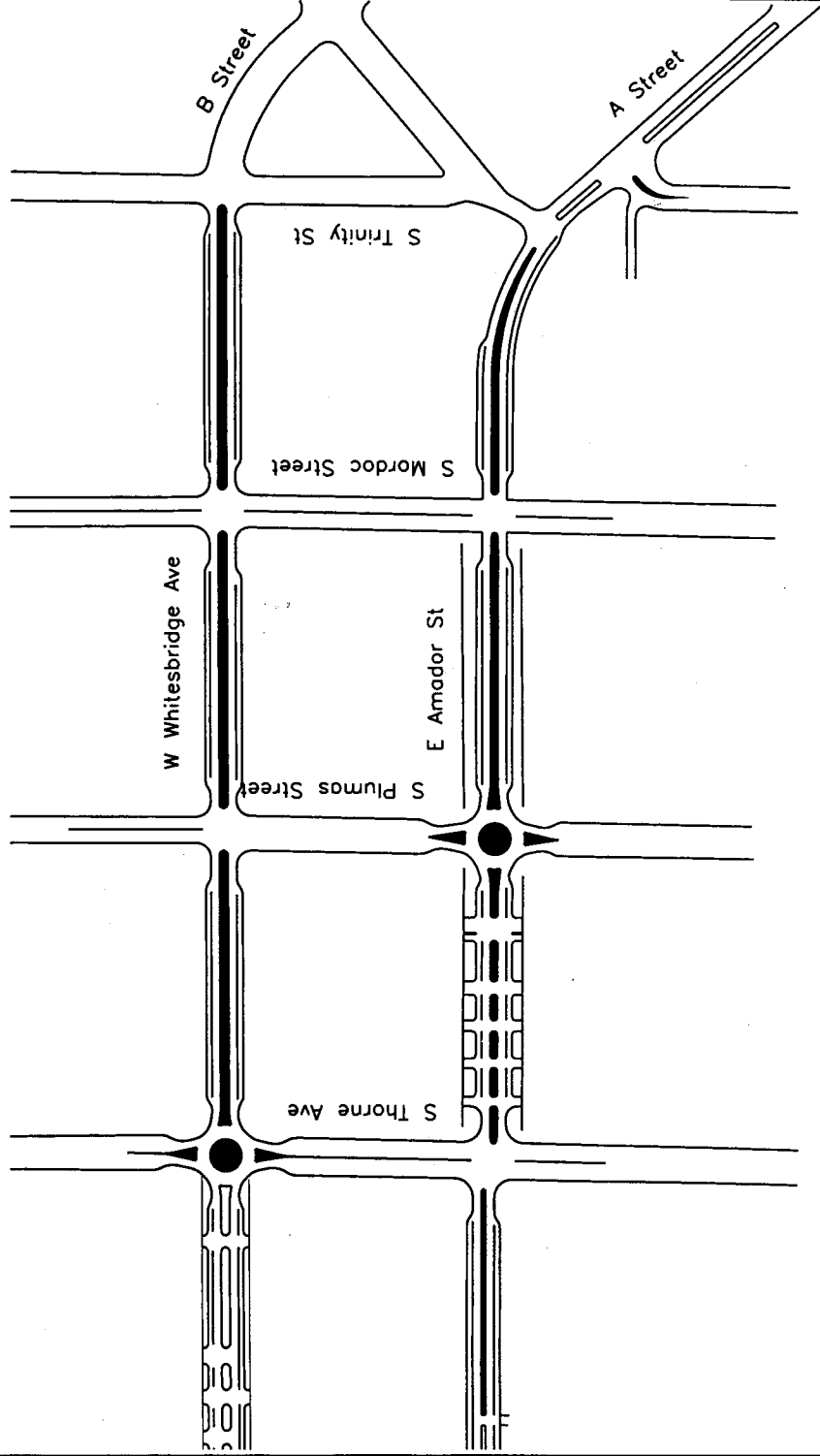


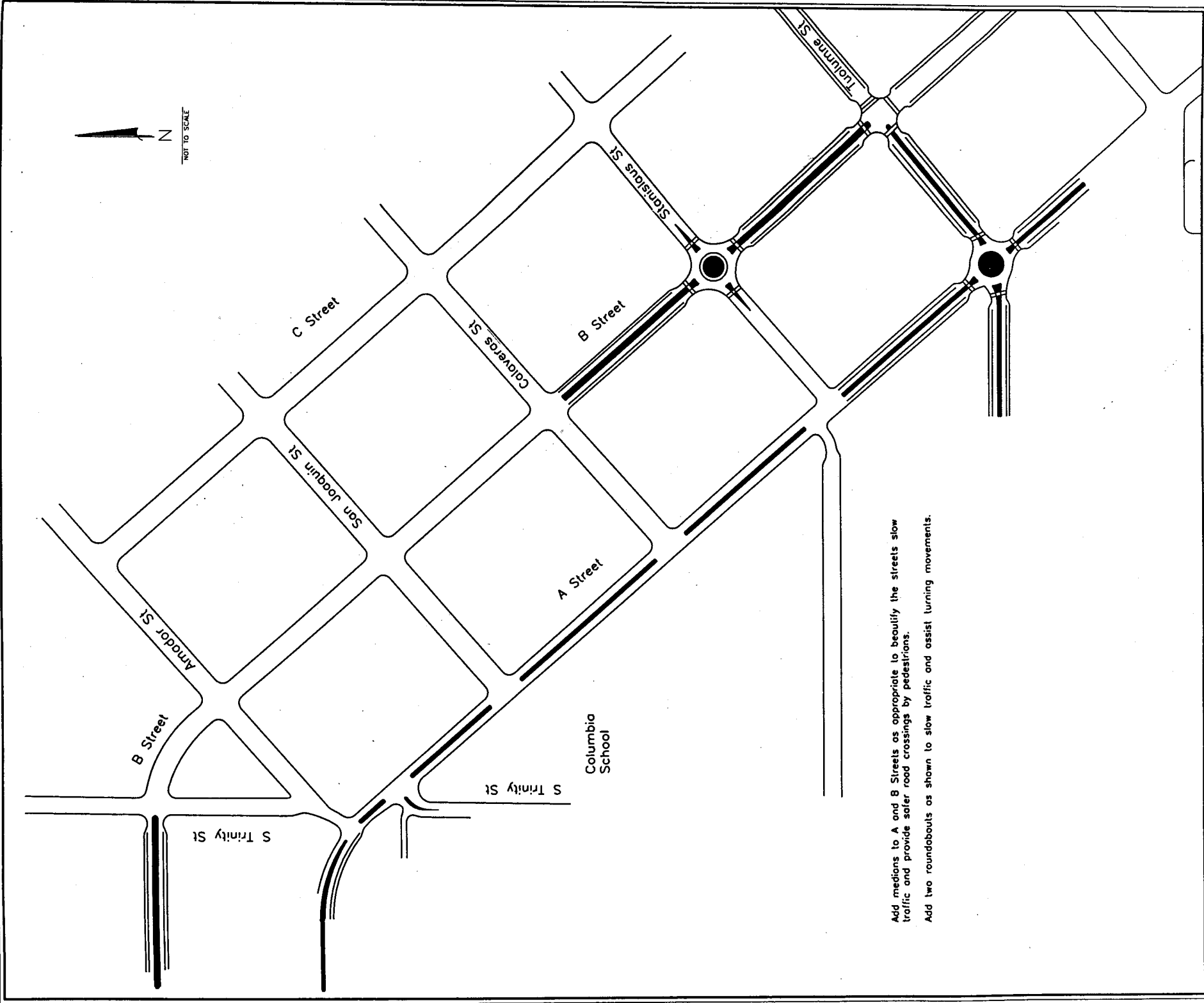
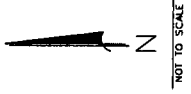
Fresno-Chandler Downtown Airport



Operate W Amador Street as a two way street with a median and on street parking on both sides of the street.

Add roundabouts as shown to slow vehicles and beautify the street.

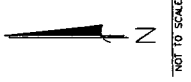




Add medians to A and B Streets as appropriate to beautify the streets slow traffic and provide safer road crossings by pedestrians.

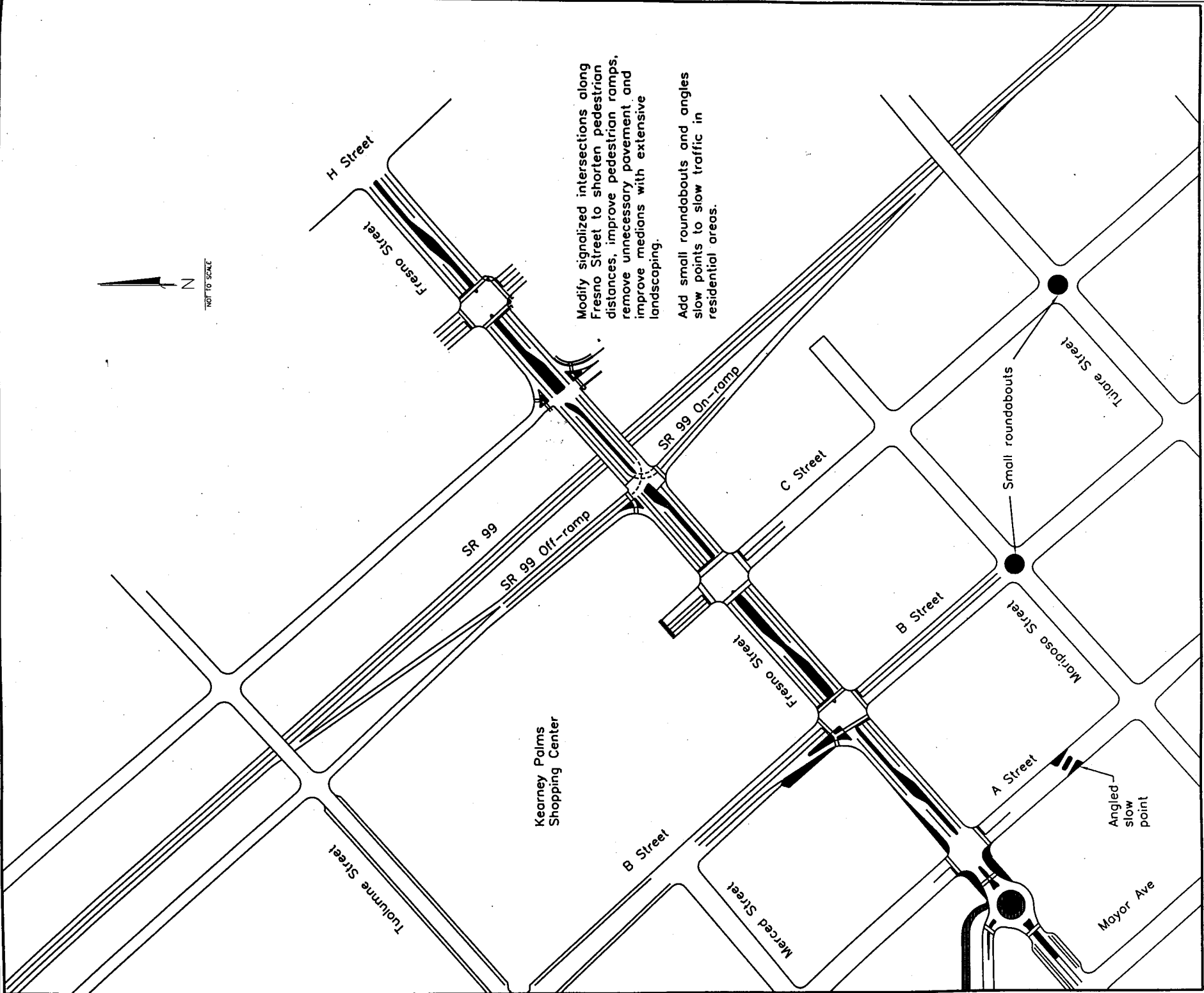
Add two roundabouts as shown to slow traffic and assist turning movements.





Modify signalized intersections along Fresno Street to shorten pedestrian distances, improve pedestrian ramps, remove unnecessary pavement and improve medians with extensive landscaping.

Add small roundabouts and angles slow points to slow traffic in residential areas.



H Street  
Fresno Street

SR 99  
SR 99 Off-ramp  
SR 99 On-ramp

C Street

B Street

A Street

Tuore Street

Morposa Street

Angled slow point

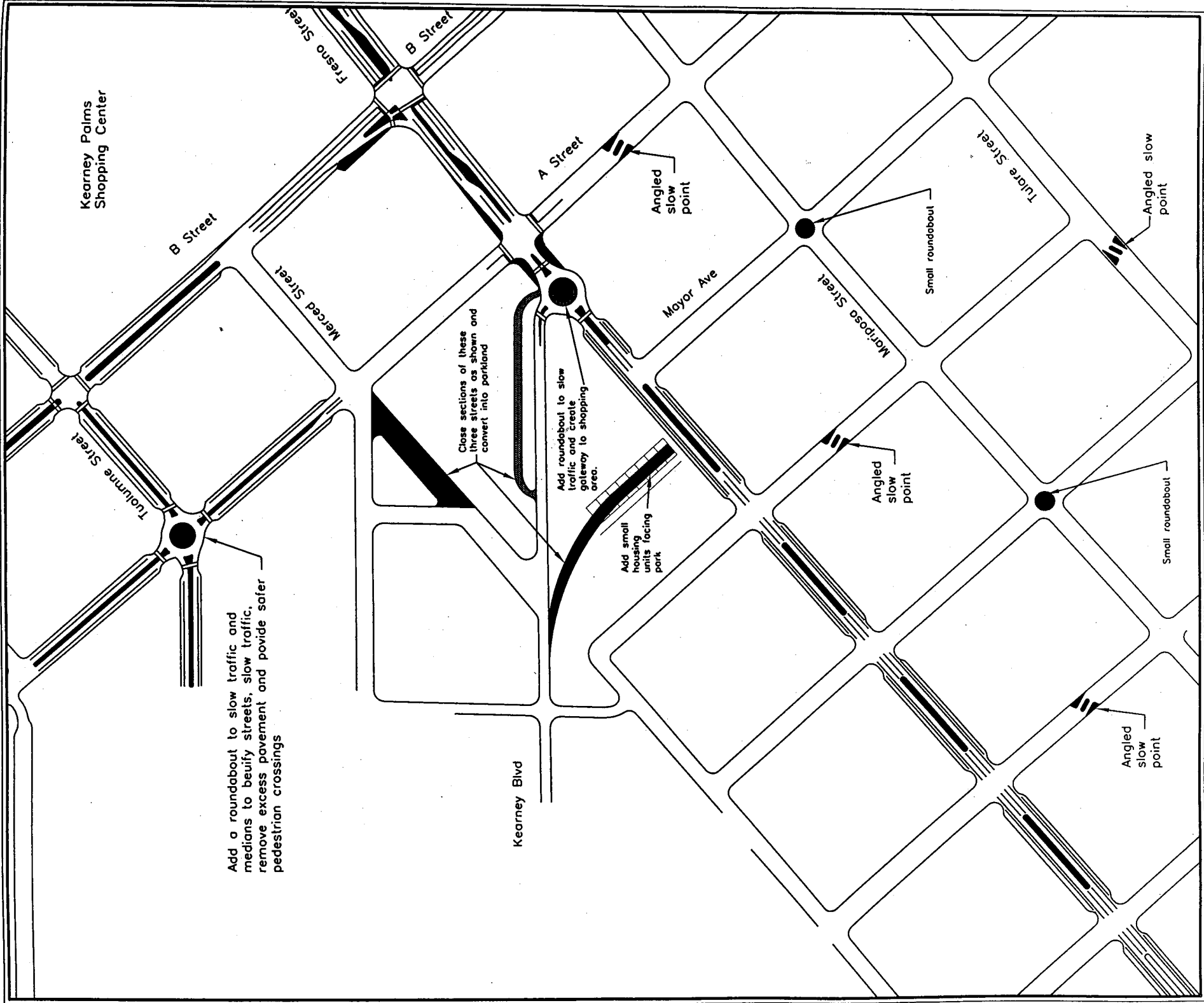
Moyor Ave

Kearney Palms Shopping Center

Tuolumne Street

B Street

Merced Street



Kearney Palms Shopping Center

B Street

Turme Street

Merced Street

Fresno Street

B Street

A Street

Moyer Ave

Marposa Street

Tugre Street

Kearney Blvd

Add a roundabout to slow traffic and medians to beautify streets, slow traffic, remove excess pavement and provide safer pedestrian crossings

Close sections of these three streets as shown and convert into parkland

Add roundabout to slow traffic and create gateway to shopping area.

Add small housing units facing park

Angled slow point

Small roundabout

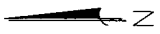
Angled slow point

Angled slow point

Small roundabout

Angled slow point

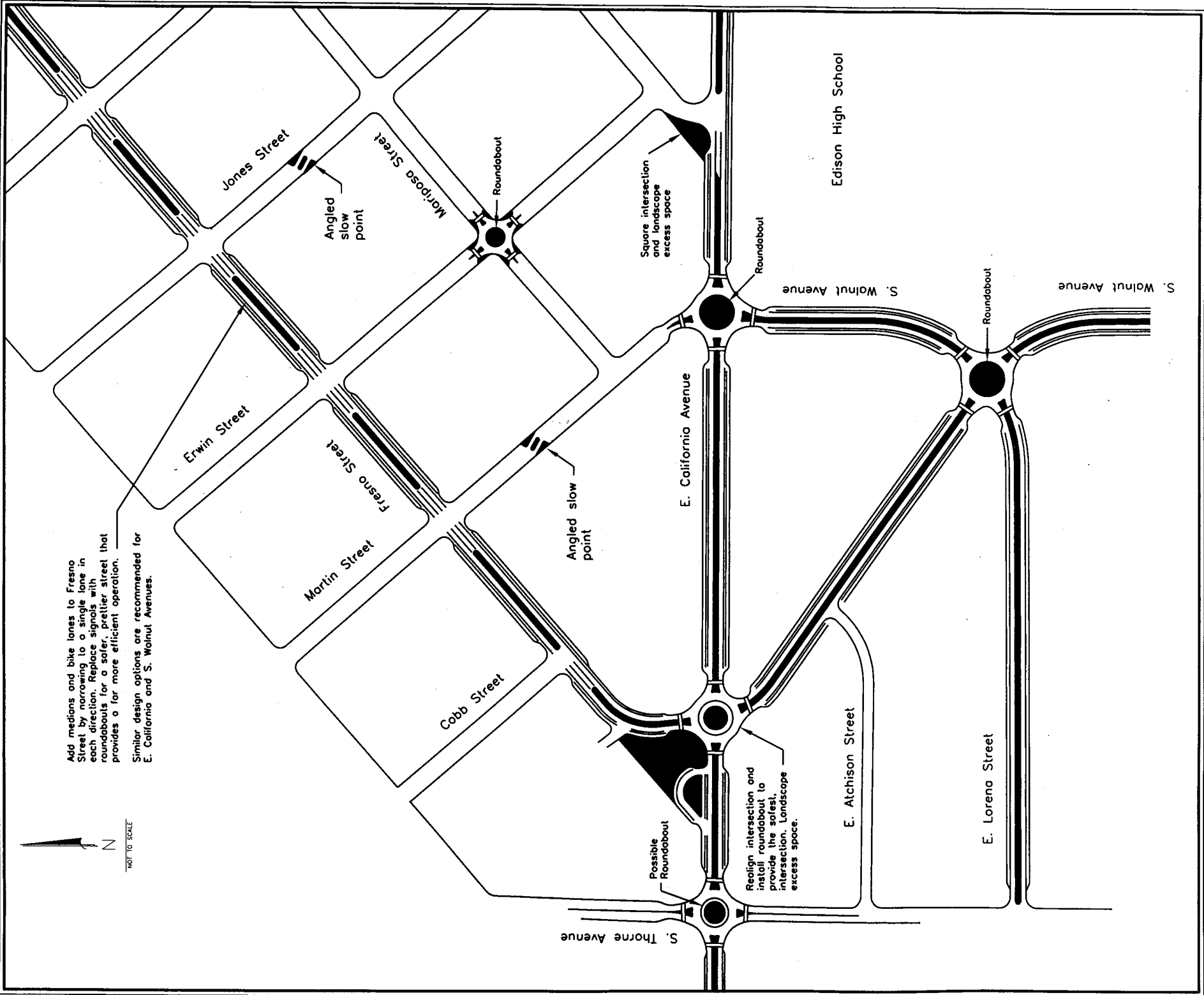




NOT TO SCALE

Add medians and bike lanes to Fresno Street by narrowing to a single lane in each direction. Replace signals with roundabouts for a safer, prettier street that provides a far more efficient operation.

Similar design options are recommended for E. California and S. Walnut Avenues.



Edison High School

Jones Street

Morpaso Street

Roundabout

Angled slow point

Square intersection and landscape excess space

Roundabout

S. Walnut Avenue

S. Walnut Avenue

Roundabout

Erwin Street

Martin Street

Fresno Street

Angled slow point

Cobb Street

E. California Avenue

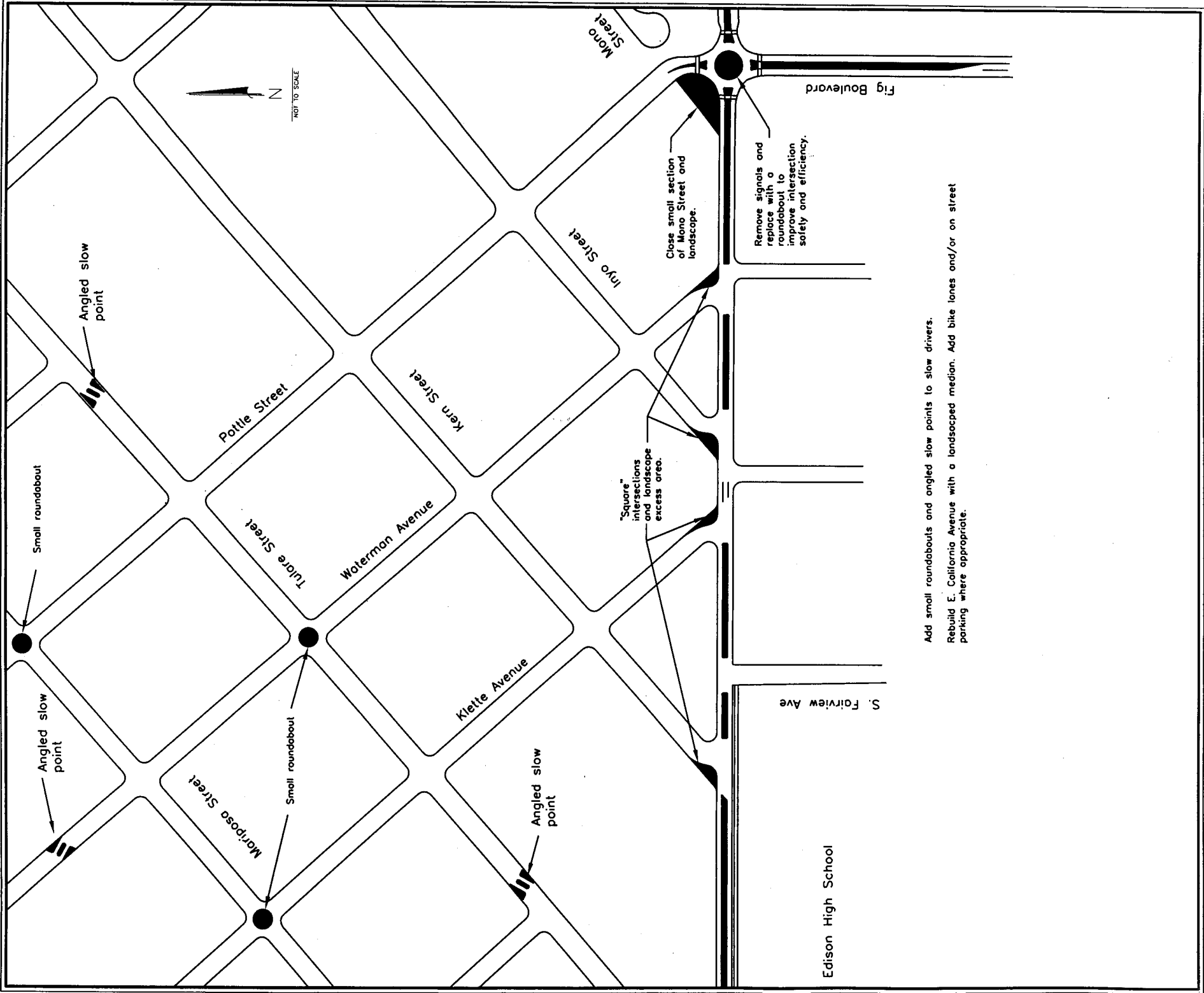
E. Atchison Street

E. Lorena Street

Possible Roundabout

Realign intersection and install roundabout to provide the safest, intersection. Landscape excess space.

S. Thorne Avenue



Add small roundabouts and angled slow points to slow drivers.  
 Rebuild E. California Avenue with a landscaped median. Add bike lanes and/or on street parking where appropriate.