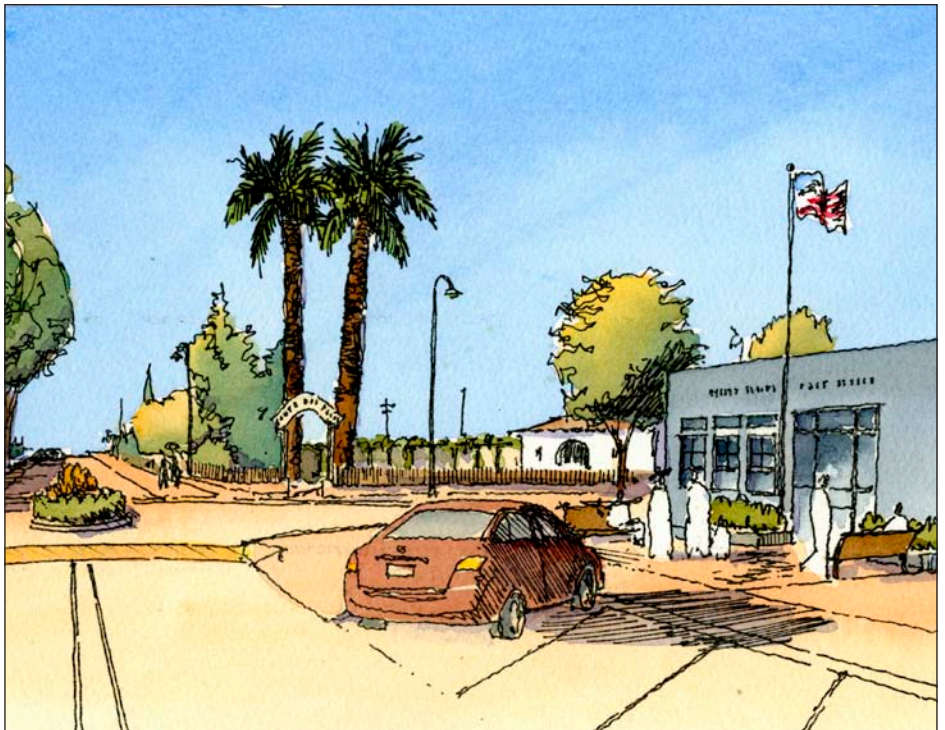


GREATER DOS PALOS
Mobility and Connectivity Study
Draft: August 19, 2009



Prepared By:



**Local
Government
Commission**

Local Government Commission
Sacramento, California



Opticos Design, Inc.
Berkeley, California

Greater Dos Palos Mobility and Connectivity Study

A Report to the City of Dos Palos,
and the Unincorporated Communities of Midway
and South Dos Palos in Merced County

August 19, 2009

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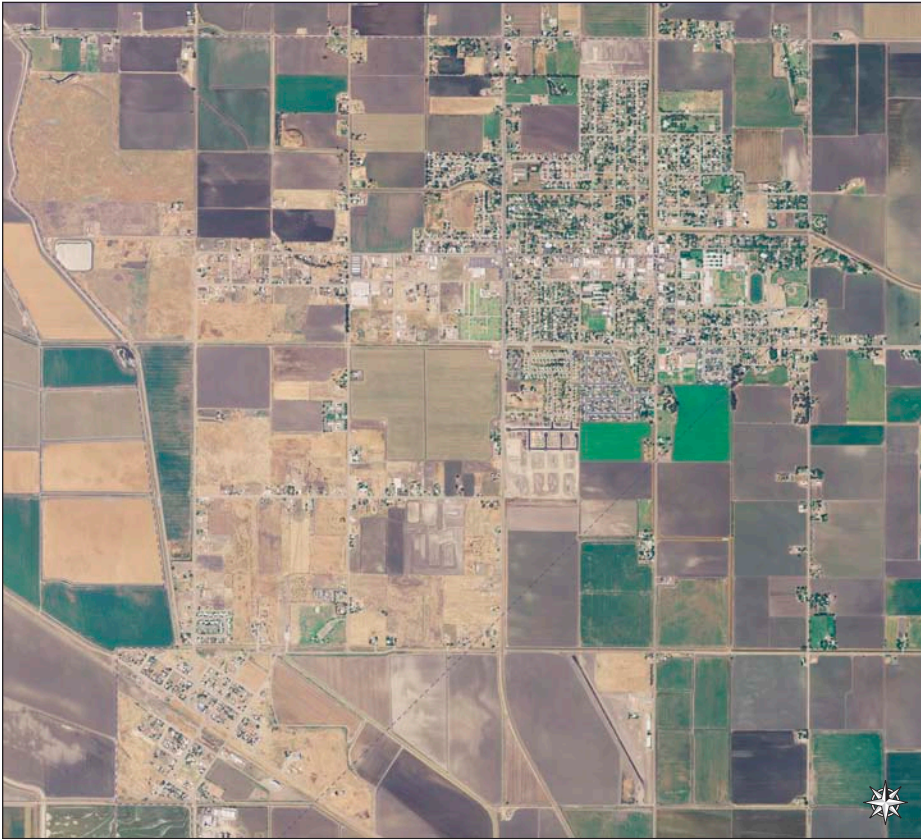
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Project Overview and Objectives

This document is the outcome of an intensive community-based planning process in the Greater Dos Palos area, including the City of Dos Palos and the unincorporated communities of Midway and South Dos Palos in Merced County. Approximately 5,000 citizens live in the City of Dos Palos with the same number of citizens living in the surrounding unincorporated communities of Midway and South Dos Palos. The purpose of the plan is to improve safety and mobility choices for all types of users, stimulate new investment in properties within the region, encourage neighborhood revitalization, and provide overall visioning for the future of the Greater Dos Palos area.

This planning effort was made possible through a California Department of Transportation Environmental Justice: Context-sensitive Design Planning Grant received by the City of Dos Palos in partnership with the Local Government Commission (LGC). The LGC is a Sacramento-based nonprofit organization that works with local leaders and agencies to build livable communities. LGC assembled a professional multi-disciplinary consultant team to develop the plan. Dan Burden of Glatting Jackson/Walkable communities facilitated the public visioning process. Opticos Design, Inc. provided urban design expertise and prepared the plan document, with the support of transportation planning consultant Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates and LGC staff.

Public Design Charrette

A multi-day design effort, known as a charrette, was conducted February 26 – March 3, 2009. City staff and other agencies, community leaders, and residents participated in a series of events to identify concerns, priorities and potential transportation improvements and neighborhood revitalization strategies. The charrette began with an interagency focus meeting of representatives from the City, Merced County, Merced Council of Governments (MCAG), Caltrans District 10, and the school district. Other meetings were held with local business development interests and County health service providers. A neighborhood focus group meeting with South Dos Palos and Midway residents was organized to learn about the needs in the unincorporated areas.

The public events kicked off Thursday night, February 26th, with an opening community meeting at Bernhard Marks Elementary School. Approximately 45 people viewed a presentation that showed current conditions and potential solutions used in other communities facing similar challenges. Walkable Communities expert Dan Burden explained the principles involved in creating safe, vital and economically successful places using images to illustrate his points. Participants then engaged in activities to identify their key values and priority issues in the community.

Top values included:

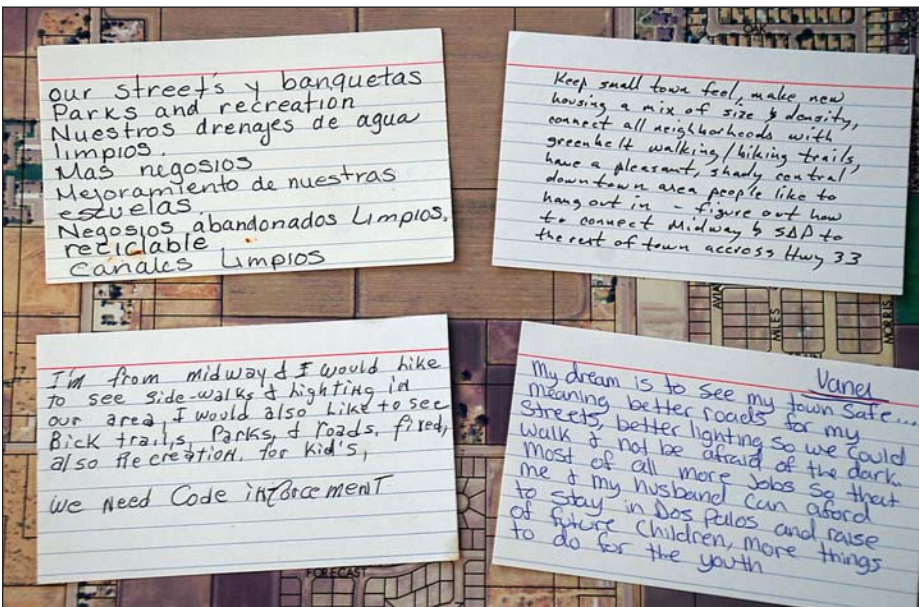
- Friendship, Family, Neighborhood
- Small Town, Rural Character
- Quiet, Peaceful
- Jobs, Business, Shops
- Safety
- Transportation, Less Traffic, Bike Paths

Top priorities by votes included:

- Parks and Recreation for Kids— 22
- Sidewalks — 19
- Bike Trails — 17
- Fix Roads — 17
- Youth Center — 14
- More Businesses and Franchises — 12
- Street Lights — 11
- Plazas and Fun — 11



Above from top to bottom: Members of City Staff meet with the design team on February 26th, 2009; City and County staff discuss goals and concerns for the Greater Dos Palos Area; The design team discussing design alternatives for the Greater Dos Palos Area.



Above, clockwise from top left: The City of Dos Palos “walking audit” group meets at the Veteran’s Memorial; Members of the community work to prioritize potential improvements; Members of South Dos Palos assess their community with the design team on Saturday’s “walking audit”; Midway resident’s discuss potential improvements on the “walking audit” tour; Community members share their vision on note cards during Thursday’s workshop.



Saturday approximately 60 people walked the downtown area with consultant team members. At the same time, team members met with a dozen residents to perform a similar walk audit in the South Dos Palos community. A walking audit of Midway was conducted later in the week. The groups observed traffic and pedestrian conditions in the field, discussed concerns, and considered ideas for resolving problems.

After the walk audits, all participants returned to the school and viewed a presentation about strategies and tools to address input from the opening workshop, focus meetings and problems observed in the area. Participants then broke into small groups and developed ideas for improvements by drawing and writing on aerial maps. The workshop concluded with each group presenting and explaining their maps to all the participants.

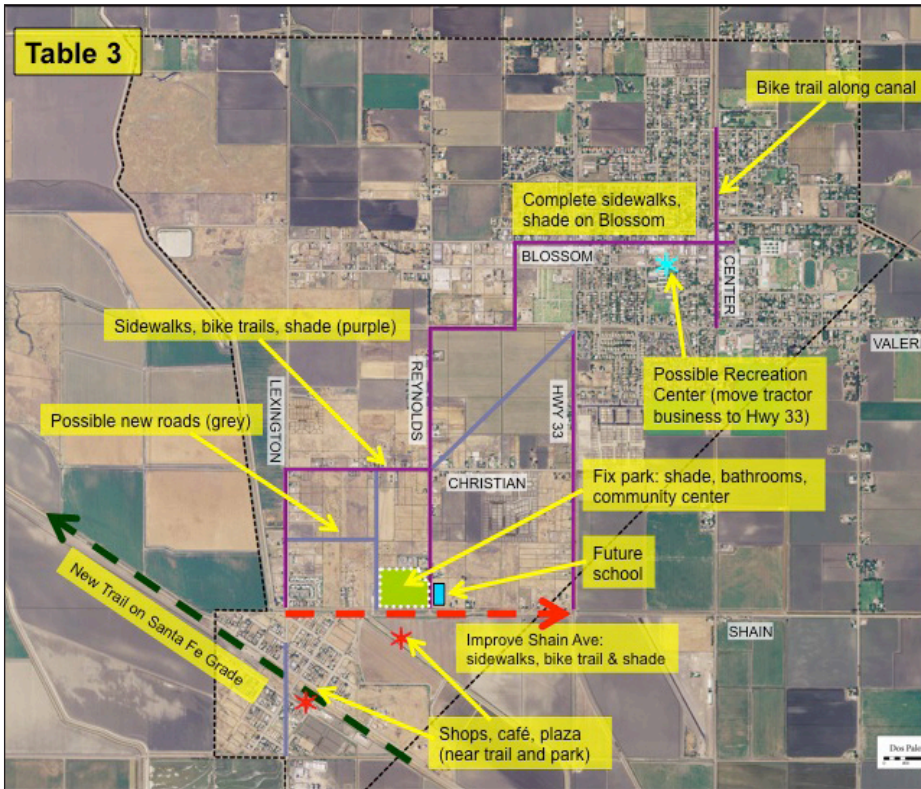
Over the next several days, the consultant team translated the input from the meetings and activities into concepts and recommendations. Tuesday evening, March 3rd, team members presented the plan concepts and key points developed through the process in a closing public meeting attended by over 75 people.

Charrette activity responses, participant lists, and notes from the focus group meetings are included in the Appendix.

In the weeks following the charrette, the consultant team refined the concepts, completed drawings and prepared recommendations for near-term improvements and long-range, visionary changes. The resulting plan is presented in the next chapter.

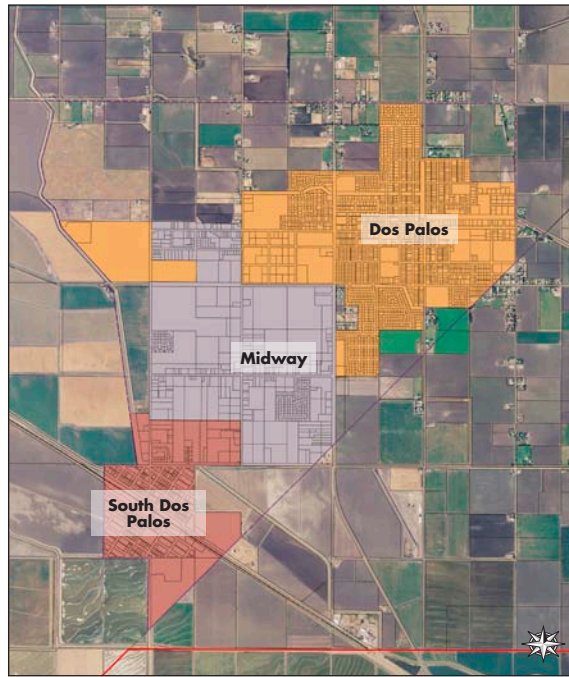
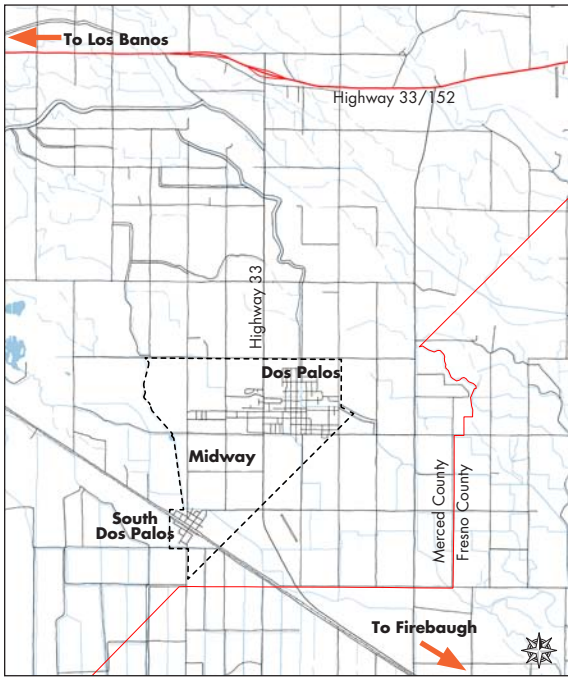


Above, clockwise from Top Left: Image from Saturday's table map exercise; Children point to a good location for a new "kid's club"; Community member presents his values for the community; Community member shares her group's ideas from Saturday's table map exercise.



Above, clockwise from Top Left:
 Table map displaying group 3's ideas from Saturday's workshop; Dan Burden present's ideas to the community; Community member discusses her concerns at Saturday's workshop; Design Team member illustrating potential options for Dos Palos; Community members discuss ideas around a table and map.

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Project Area and The Community

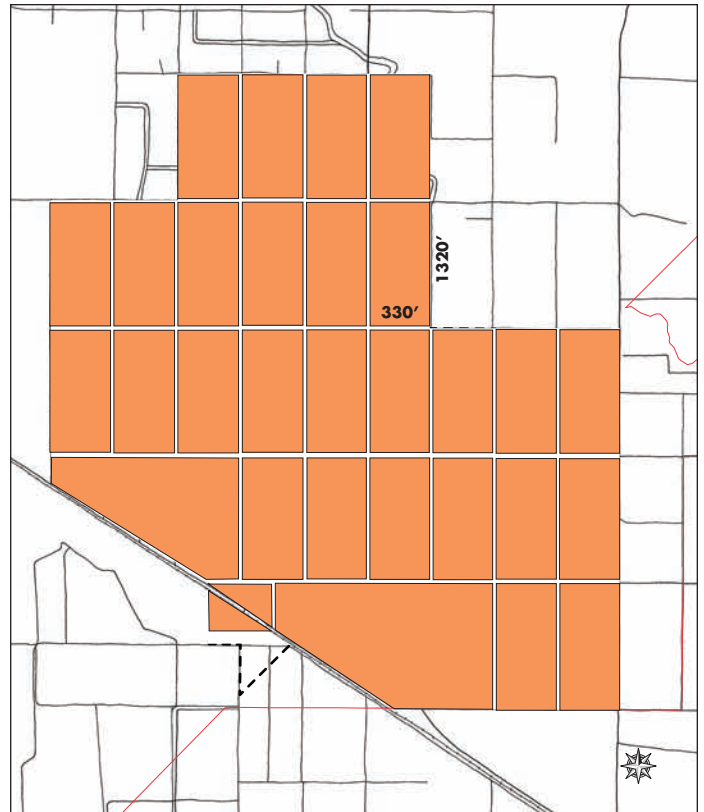
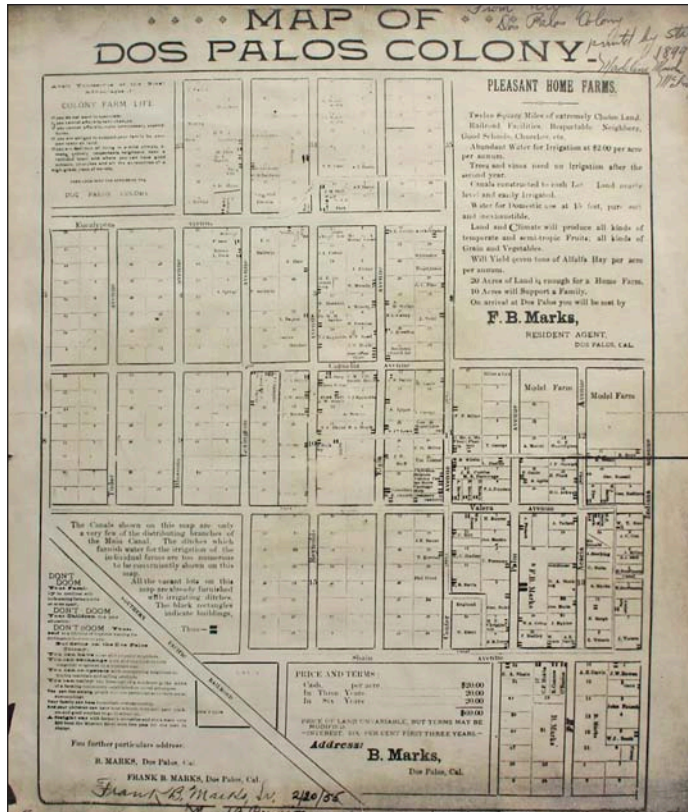
The City of Dos Palos is a small, rural community located along the eastern edge of Merced County between Interstate 5 and Highway 99, approximately 17 miles south of Los Banos and 16 miles northwest of Firebaugh. The unincorporated communities of Midway, located just to the west, and South Dos Palos, located to the southwest along the now-defunct Santa Fe railway grade, exist outside City boundaries but within its Sphere of Influence. Each of these three areas has a strong sense of character and presents a different set of challenges and concerns.

Highway 33 runs north-south through the city just west of the historic downtown core of Dos Palos, which is comprised of about 6 blocks of small, local retail and services. Amenities are sparsely dispersed throughout the rest of the community and many residents must travel far distances outside the greater Dos Palos area to meet routine shopping, medical care, and employment needs. Although the schools provide some recreational opportunities and Dos Palos is a well-known football city, there are few quality youth activity facilities within walking distance of many households. Midway and South Dos Palos lack sidewalks and bicycle trails and are generally in need of safe pedestrian linkages, both internally and into the city. There is also a lack of services, including fire and police in these areas.

The joint unified school district of Dos Palos - Oro Loma serves an extremely large area. With limited public transportation alternatives, school buses travel as far as 25 miles to transport students to and from school. Over 68% of the students in the school district are Hispanic.

Above left: Location Map showing the communities of Dos Palos, Midway & South Dos Palos situated along Highway 33.

Above right: Map outlines the three core study areas, showing the existing boundaries of the city of Dos Palos, and the unincorporated areas of Midway & South Dos Palos.



Historical Background

Dos Palos was first founded with the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in the late 19th century along the Sante Fe railroad grade that connected the San Francisco Bay Area (via Tracy) to Fresno and Southern California. The town, first called Colony Center, developed in a gridiron pattern typical of many railroad towns, with uniform blocks and wide streets oriented parallel to the railroad.

The first residents quickly realized that the water in this location was of poor quality and made the decision to move the town north and east to its current location. Without significant transportation connections, the town developed as the agricultural community of “Dos Palos Colony,” building an extensive canal system to carry water for irrigation of the abundant farmland.

During the charrette a longtime resident brought a historic map of the Dos Palos Colony that provides insight into how the community first grew. The original colony, drawn up in the late-1800s, comprised a series of uniform blocks measuring 1320 feet long by 330 feet wide, filling a twelve square mile area. The map boasts about a climate and land that could produce all kinds of temperate and semi-tropic fruits, grains and vegetables including large amounts of alfalfa, and lots already furnished with irrigation ditches. These subdivided lots created 10 acre parcels estimated to be the right amount of land needed to grow crops to support a family, with two of these parcels providing enough land for a “home farm.”

Above left: Historic map of Dos Palos Colony. Above right: The original agricultural grid and subsequent ten-acre parcels of the Dos Palos Colony are still apparent within the current grid of the Greater Dos Palos Area.

Today much of the farmland has been consolidated into larger plots, and many of the original irrigation channels have disappeared. However, the historic development pattern is still apparent in three distinct communities. South Dos Palos has maintained the uniform grid of streets and blocks oriented to the (now defunct) railroad. Midway has retained large, 10-20 acre parcels set within large blocks on the 1/4 mile grid. Dos Palos has seen the most change, with growth centered around the historic alignment of Highway 33 (today Center Avenue). Without a plan for urban development, however, subsequent streets and blocks were placed in a random pattern, and a network of strong connections between the three areas was never established.

Primary Challenges

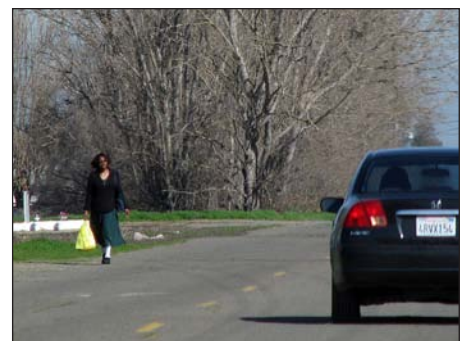
While Merced County has witnessed significant population and economic growth over the past decade, and predicts an annual growth projection of 2.3%, Dos Palos and its neighboring unincorporated areas have struggled to keep pace. The recent economic downturn, combined with ongoing changes to the agricultural industry, has produced increasingly limited economic opportunities for local employment and the closing of several large agricultural facilities in the area, including rice processing plants located around South Dos Palos. Currently, the City of Dos Palos unemployment rate is estimated at over 20% while the South Dos Palos unemployment rate is estimated to be over 35%, with poverty rates well above County and Statewide averages.

Within South Dos Palos and Midway, over 45% of the population is under the age of 19, and nearly 12% of the population is over the age of 55. The younger population, mostly Hispanic, largely lives outside the city; without local opportunities for higher education or jobs, however, many young people ultimately leave the area. The school district reports a declining population that has mirrored this phenomenon. The older population, many of which are 2nd and 3rd generation industrial workers, lack adequate health facilities and related social services. Over 10% of households do not own or operate a vehicle, making many dependent on public transportation, walking, and bicycling, all of which lack adequate infrastructure and levels of service.

These demographic conditions relate directly to some of the following physical problems identified during the charrette process:

Lack of Good Connectivity for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Few connections exist between the City of Dos Palos, Midway and South Dos Palos, hindering safe access for pedestrians and bicycles to primary destinations. The few connecting streets that do exist are very wide with limited facilities, promoting high traffic speeds and a hostile pedestrian environment. Although the downtown Dos Palos street grid provides good internal connectivity, most streets do not continue far beyond the center, and sidewalks have not been extended into rural areas. New subdivisions have been built with few or no connections to existing neighborhoods. While Merced County transit provides transportation service across a larger, regional area, the transportation needs of a majority of riders seeking safe and simple access to in-town destinations are unmet.



Above, from top to bottom: Excessively wide streets in the downtown area fall into disrepair due to high maintenance cost; Historic theatre on Center Avenue sits vacant; A woman walks along the shoulder carrying groceries because no sidewalk exists.

Inadequate and Deteriorating Public Infrastructure

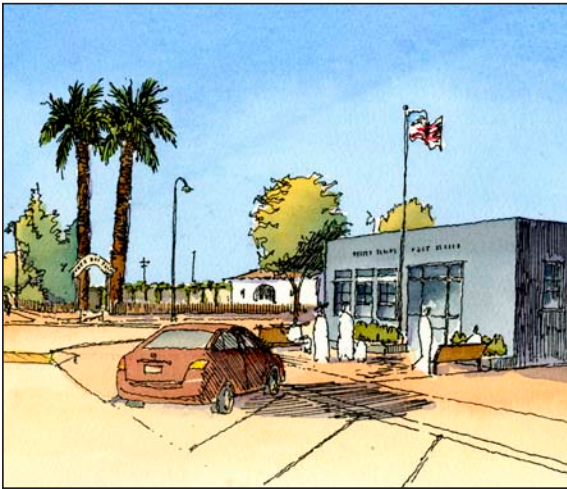
Despite high pedestrian activity and a large number of residents without automobiles, most streets within the Greater Dos Palos Community are in disrepair, lacking sidewalks, paved shoulders, crosswalks, or curb ramps. Street lighting is inadequate or absent in many locations despite many people walking during nighttime hours. Most streets were originally built without a sub-base which has rendered routine maintenance ineffective. In many cases, significant outlays are required to completely rebuild streets. The high water table and clay soils cause drainage problems and make road construction and improvements even more costly, particularly in the unincorporated areas. Many streets segments and some properties are subsiding.

South Dos Palos and Midway are unique in that they present infrastructure challenges that are atypical of rural, unincorporated areas, with relatively high densities, a diverse population, and an urban framework of streets and blocks. Merced County representatives expressed acute awareness to the problems of physical infrastructure in the area, but are beset by limited resources and needs that must be met elsewhere in the County. Dos Palos representatives seek to extend as many services as possible to the area, including police and fire protection, but are also beset by limited resources and needs that must be met elsewhere in the city. Many charrette participants acknowledged that the relationship between the communities has not always been positive, and that basic infrastructure needs have often exacerbated negative relationships and resentment. Annexation of all or part of the unincorporated areas has been discussed many times as a potential solution, often with controversy. Despite a troubled history, however, charrette participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire to move forward toward positive solutions that can benefit all three communities.

Lack of Neighborhood Centers

There is a lack of well-established neighborhood centers that can serve as focal points for positive community and youth activity. Downtown provides a strong and historic center for the City of Dos Palos but is in need of revitalization, with several buildings suffering from years of deferred maintenance, and a poorly-maintained pedestrian environment. Since the re-routing of Highway 33 in the 1960s, the Downtown core has lacked visibility and ease of access, and is largely bypassed by travelers utilizing the 33 corridor.

Despite many parks and schools existing within the city or just outside the city, significant improvements are needed to strengthen these places into beneficial centers of activities for nearby residents and businesses. The South Dos Palos Park, for example, is a regional amenity that could draw people from throughout the city and beyond but has fallen into disrepair. The central commercial core of South Dos Palos includes several dilapidated structures that could be revitalized with new, strategic investment. Although the Carver Center provides a central and well-used meeting place for the community of Midway, its facilities are overburdened and in disrepair, and lack visibility from primary corridors, such as Highway 33.



Despite significant challenges, the charrette generated many viable ideas regarding ways that the communities of Greater Dos Palos can become pedestrian-oriented places, with improved commercial services and access to high-quality open space. The design proposals focus on ways each of these communities can be strengthened through public and private improvements, and improved linkages between nodes of activity within downtown Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos. They are presented in this chapter and organized by their location within the greater community.

Guiding Design Principles for Revitalization

1. Maintain the centrality and significance of Downtown Dos Palos within the Greater Dos Palos Community.
2. Provide and maintain a well-connected network of sidewalks, trails, and paths for bicyclists and pedestrians within and between all three communities.
3. Encourage the revitalization and creation of Neighborhood Centers within all three communities that can serve as a focal point for commerce, institutions and services, and access to public open space, within walking distance of a majority of residences within each community.

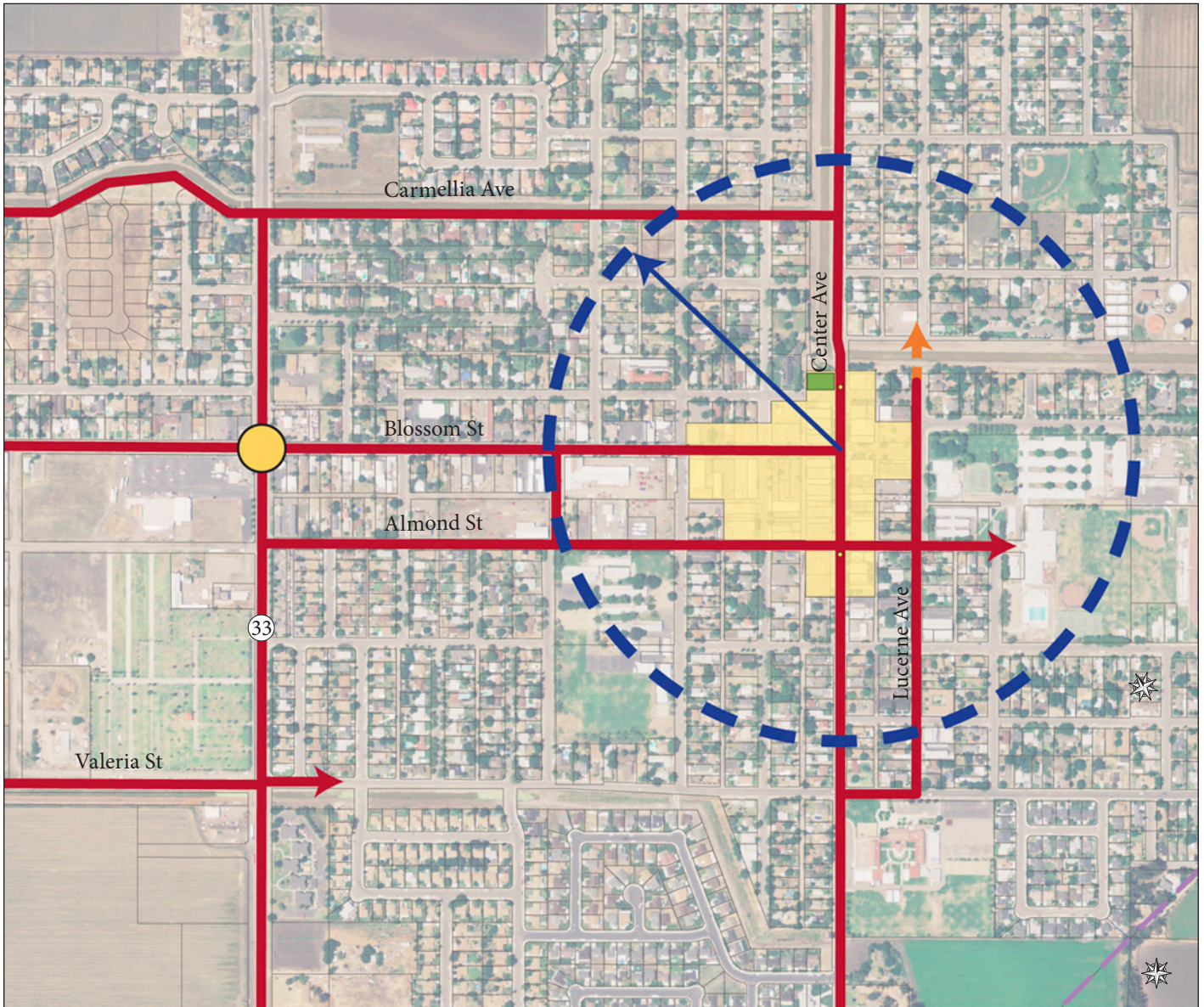
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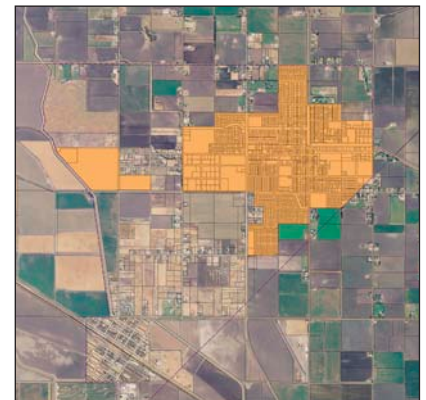
The City of Dos Palos

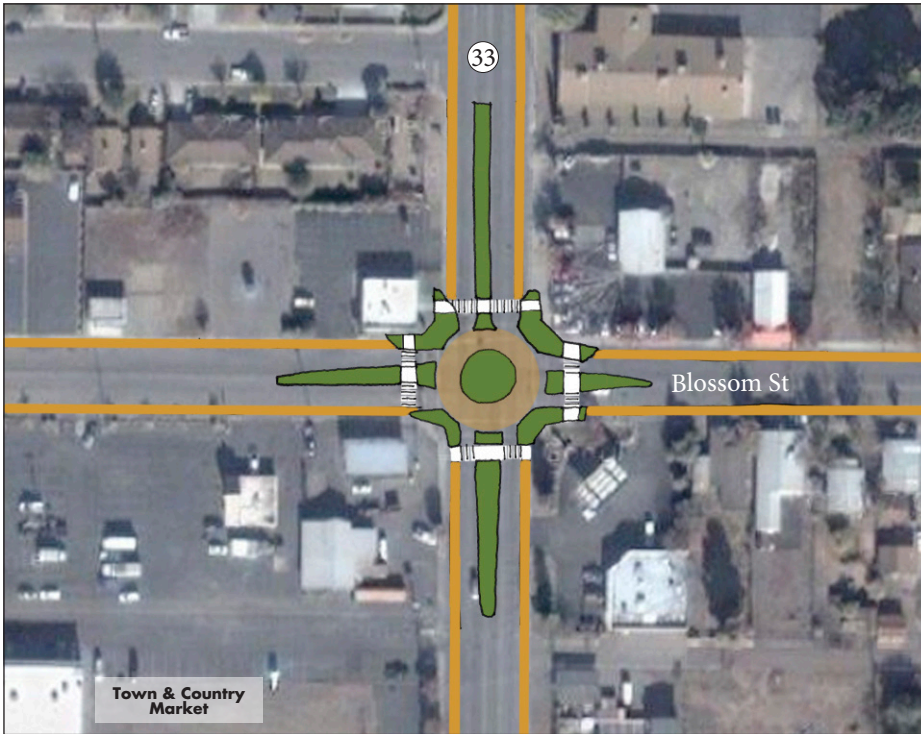


Above: Conceptual diagram of streets, parks and nodes in need of improvement within the City of Dos Palos. Below Right: Boundary of the City of Dos Palos.

Key

- Commercial Center
- Park Improvements
- Street Improvements
- Future Connection
- 1/4 mile radius = 5 min walk
- Proposed Roundabout
- Proposed Gateway Element





Getting Into Downtown

The core of Downtown Dos Palos runs along Center Avenue for about three blocks, roughly between Marguerite Street and Palo Alto Street. Its historical location reflects Highway 33’s original alignment that ran through the center of town before moving to the west in the 1960s. While downtown continues to support commercial activity, it suffers from a lack of good visibility and connectivity. Although Highway 33 carries relatively high volumes of traffic and many potential consumers, the intersection of 33 and Blossom does little to indicate the nearby business district less than 1/2 a mile away.

Highway 33

Highway 33 widens from a two-lane cross section at the outskirts of Dos Palos to a four-lane section between Valeria Street and Santos Street. This condition encourages motorists to speed as they pass through town and serves as a significant barrier for pedestrians crossing between Midway and the downtown. Reducing the cross section from four lanes to three, and incorporating a central median, could help to facilitate safe pedestrian crossings and provide a sense of arrival for drivers.

Roundabout at Highway 33 & Blossom

During the charrette the design team studied the addition of an “Urban Single Lane” roundabout at the intersection of Highway 33 and Blossom. Such a roundabout could provide smooth traffic flow through the area and create a special marker denoting entry into Dos Palos, a needed element to draw attention toward downtown. The roundabout could also facilitate smooth turning movements at the intersection,



Clockwise from Top Left: Preliminary roundabout study for Highway 33 and Blossom gateway illustrating conceptual curb profiles, lane locations, crossing islands, medians and bike lanes; Example of an existing roundabout; Existing conditions of Highway 33; Improvements to the 33/Blossom intersection would allow for road improvements similar to these, including one lane of traffic in each direction, bike lanes and center turn lane.

eliminating the need for designated turning lanes and greatly reducing the pavement cross section. Speeds would be reduced to a level that facilitates easier crossing for pedestrians, especially for residents trying to access the Town & Country market located west of the highway. Typical trucks and agricultural vehicles could also pass through a roundabout of this size in low gear, eliminating the need for excessive downshifting, and greatly reducing the amount of noise and pollution that may be incurred.

Roundabouts are still new in the U.S. and many communities express concern when they are first proposed. However, once built, residents often embrace them and recognize that they are safer, quieter, more attractive and efficient than signalized intersections. While traffic engineers often recommend roundabouts because they are more efficient than a typical stop-controlled or signalized intersection, the lower speeds and more predictable vehicular movement also make them safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Following are some additional benefits that should be considered:

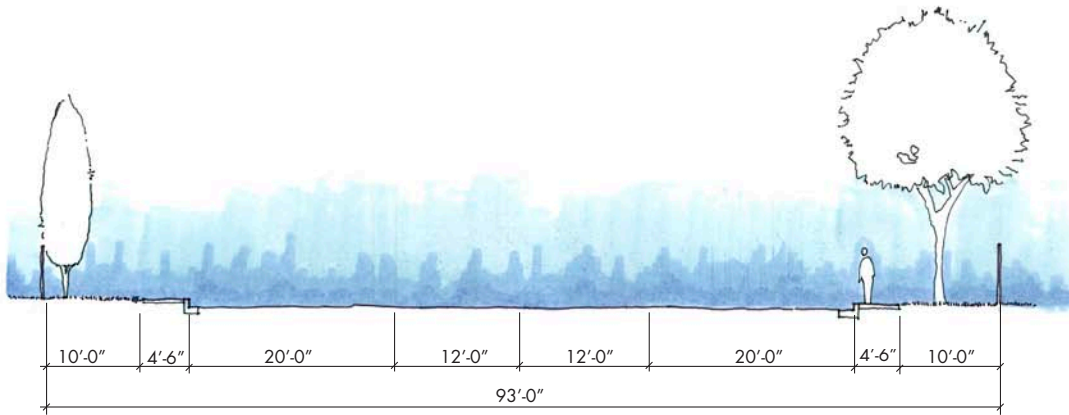
- A typical 4-way intersection, such as the existing Highway 33/Blossom intersection, may have as many as 32 vehicle-to-vehicle conflicts. At a roundabout would reduce these conflicts to 8.
- Properly designed roundabouts are designed to bring vehicle speeds down to 15-20 mph, speeds at which motorists are much more likely to yield to pedestrians.
- The splitter island in a roundabout provides a refuge for pedestrians as they cross the street and simplifies the crossing by letting them focus on vehicles traveling in only one direction.
- Because roundabouts are more efficient at moving traffic it is often possible to use a one-lane roundabout as a viable alternative to a conventional intersection of four or more lanes. While the existing Highway 33 intersection requires pedestrians to cross over 100 feet, a one-lane roundabout could break the pedestrian crossing into as little as two, 12-14 foot legs.
- Roundabouts also work well for bicyclists. Most bicyclists at roundabouts simply take the travel lane since vehicles are circulating at a comfortable bicycle speed. Less confident bicyclists can be provided a ramp on the approach to the roundabout so they can exit and walk their bicycle across at the crosswalk. (In areas with high bicycle use, side-walk and crosswalk areas should be wide enough to avoid creating conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians.)
- Roundabouts can be designed for long or wide vehicles (such as wide-load trucks or large agricultural tractors) with a mountable truck apron to allow space for wheels or equipment to pass over for turning movements.

Primary Street Improvements

In order to increase access and connectivity to downtown, the design team also proposed physical changes to Blossom Street, Valeria Street, and Lucerne Street. Blossom provides a primary connection into the downtown for both vehicles and pedestrians. During the charrette, City staff expressed a desire to improve the area, including replacement of the existing Bradford Pear trees with a more suitable Central Valley species. Valeria Street represents a principal connection between Dos Palos and Midway. A Class II Bike Lane is designated in the 2008 City of Dos Palos Proposed Commuter Bike Plan. Lucerne Street provides an important north-south connection for pedestrians and bicyclists wishing to bypass the downtown core, and has also been designated for a Class II Bike Lane.

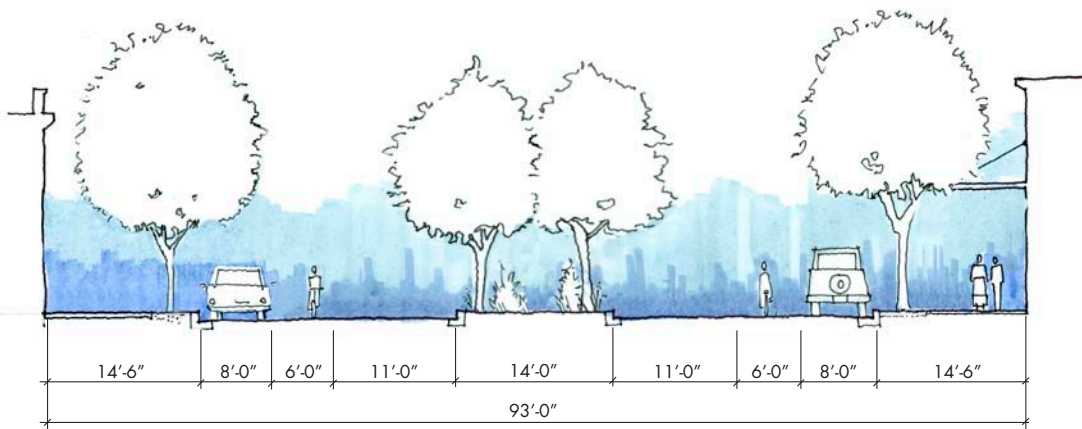
State Highway 33

Existing



Existing: Right of Way (ROW) of Highway 33 coming into downtown with 4 lanes of traffic.

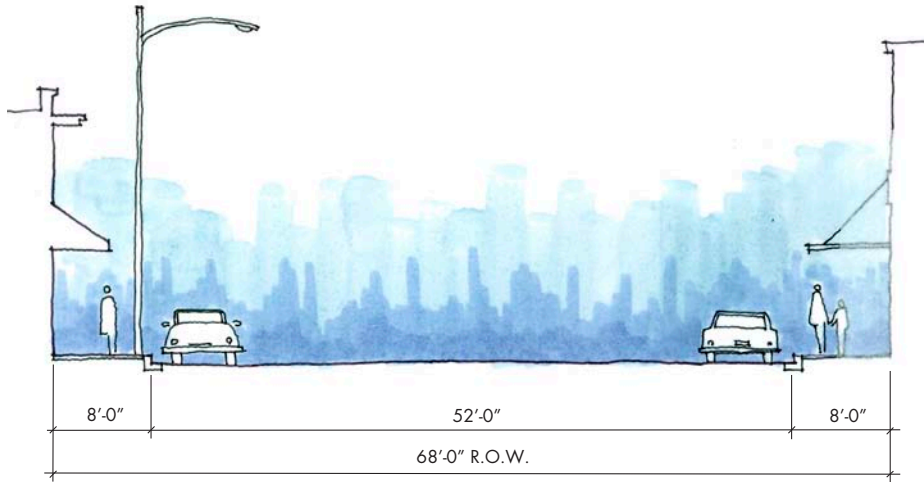
Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to Highway 33 showing a potential "road diet" that includes a central 14' median that will act as a pedestrian refuge. Four lanes are replaced with two 11' travel lanes, two 6' bike lanes, two 8' parallel parking lanes and improved 16' sidewalks with tree wells.

Blossom Street - West of Downtown

Existing

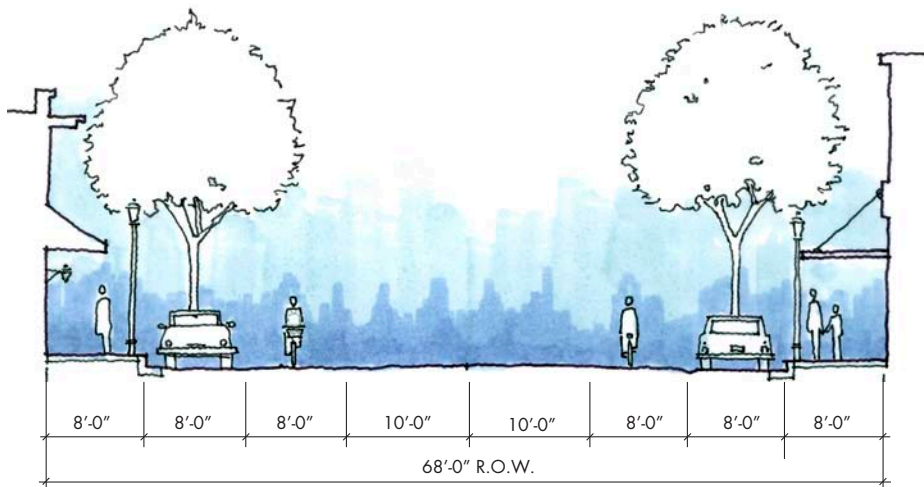


Existing: Right of Way (ROW) of Blossom west of downtown.



Above (from top to bottom): Existing view of Blossom looking east towards downtown shows an expanse of empty pavement; Existing view of Blossom approaching Center Avenue; Existing infrastructure is in need of maintenance and lacking pedestrian facilities such as curb ramps and crosswalks.

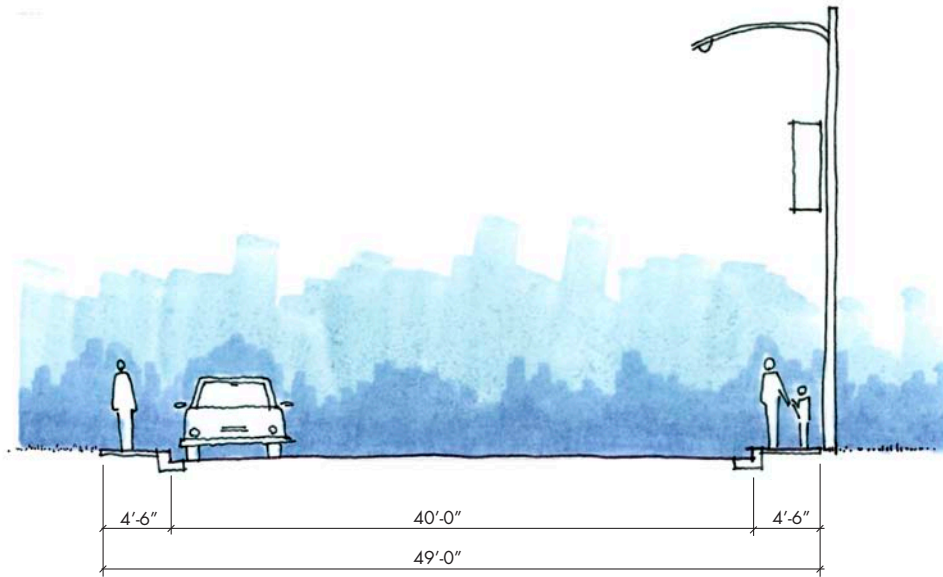
Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to Blossom Street designating two 10' travel lanes, striping of two 8' bike lanes, 8' parallel parking lanes with tree wells located every few parking bays and improved 8' sidewalks with pedestrian scaled lighting.

Valeria Street

Existing

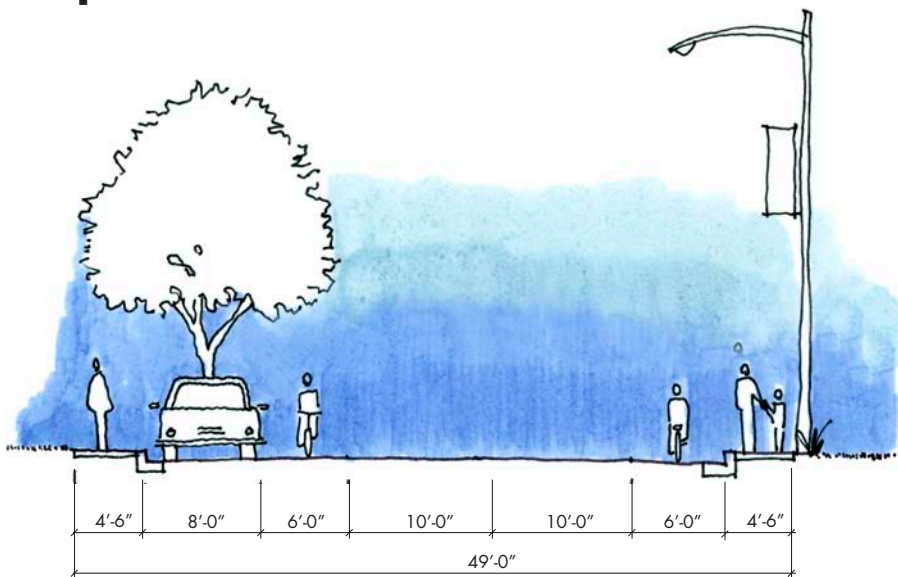


Existing: Right of Way (ROW) of Valeria Street.



Above: Existing view looking east down Valeria alongside Bernhard Marks Elementary School. Below: Existing conditions of Valeria Street showing a break in sidewalk and sudden change of character as travelers head west.

Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to Valeria Street designating two 10' travel lanes, two 6' bike lanes, 8' parallel parking on residential side of street only with tree wells located every few parking bays and improved sidewalks.

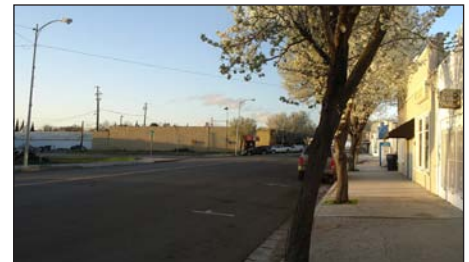


A Revitalized Downtown

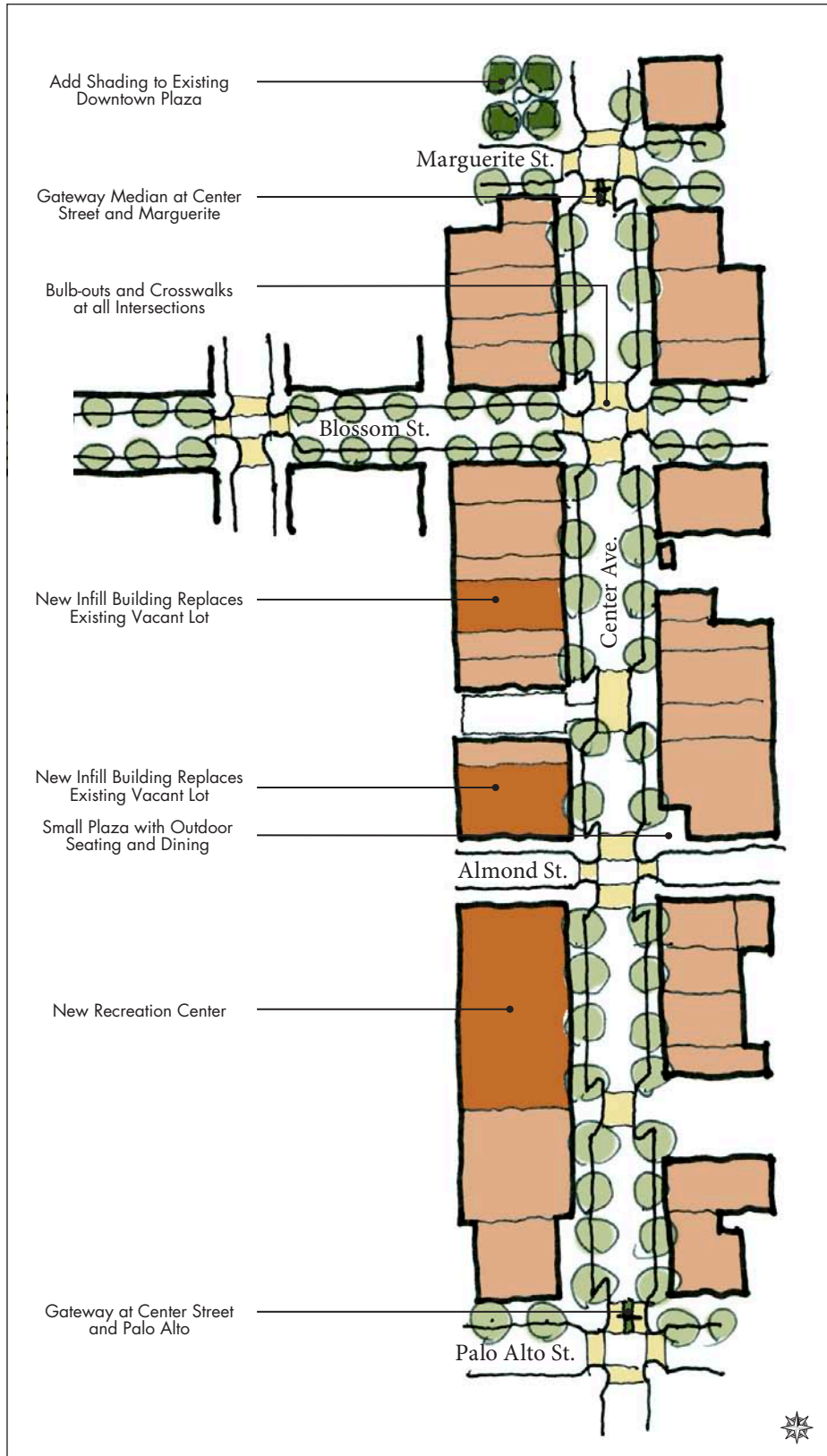
The intersection of Blossom Street and Center Avenue traditionally served as a center for a pedestrian-oriented, traditional “main street” environment that extends along Blossom Street between California Avenue and Lucerne Avenue, and along Center Avenue between Marguerite Street and Palo Alto Street. This area includes several older buildings that contribute to Dos Palos’ unique identity and provides essential services for residents. Several schools are within a short walk of downtown providing the opportunity for more local business and activity throughout the day. Although downtown has the right “bones,” it still suffers from some significant problems. Several storefronts and vacant lots are under-utilized and have been left to deteriorate. A lack of infrastructure and high maintenance costs have resulted in an often unsafe pedestrian environment, especially for children, the elderly and those with disabilities.

During the charrette the design team explored the possibility of a new downtown recreation center that could be located on the vacant lot at the southwest corner of Center Avenue and Almond Street. This center could provide important after-school and weekend activities for children, including a small bowling alley, classrooms, meeting rooms, and other facilities that could supplement, rather than replace nearby school facilities. Additional opportunities for downtown development were identified at the northwest corner of Center and Almond and along Center Street.

The City should continue to encourage the revitalization of the area through assistance with facade and building renovations, new infill development, and additional street improvements, including high-visibility crosswalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, gateway elements and continuous sidewalks with trees for shade.



Above: Illustrative view down Center Avenue looking north toward Almond Street with a new 2-story recreation center and 1-story commercial corner building replacing existing vacant lots in downtown. Below: Current conditions at Center Avenue and Almond Street.



Left: Illustrative plan of proposed improvements within the downtown district at Blossom and Center Avenue highlighting new infill buildings, intersection improvements and gateway elements. Above: Existing Conditions of Downtown (from top to bottom): Plaza at Center and Marguerite; Center Avenue looking south; Shopfront and pedestrian realm on Center Avenue; Vacant lot at Center and Almond.

Downtown Design Considerations

Attracting new development to the downtown area will require a concerted effort from both existing property owners and the City to encourage projects and investments that can have a catalyzing effect. Some preliminary recommendations to consider include:

Building Design Considerations

New buildings along Center should be required to face the street. Zoning should be amended to implement “Build-to lines” (placement of buildings adjacent to public right-of-way) that maximize building frontage along the street (i.e. 90-100%). Well-designed encroachments over the sidewalk, including canopies, galleries, and awnings that shade the sidewalk, should also be considered.

Parking Considerations

Existing parking standards serve as an impediment to the redevelopment of small lots within the downtown area. On-street parking, combined with pools of parking in existing municipal lots, should be sufficient to accommodate additional development if managed correctly. Small lots, including the proposed Recreation Center at the corner of Center and Almond, should be allowed to develop with little or no on-site parking requirement particularly if off-site parking within a reasonable walking distance (e.g. 1000’) can be provided. If new off-street parking is required within the downtown, it should be located in lots behind, rather than in front of buildings.

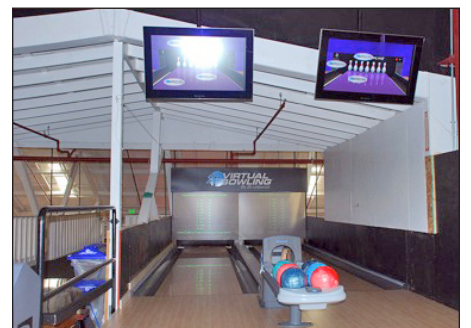
Key parking facilities could also be upgraded with special paving and public art/murals to function as “auto courtyards” that could be temporarily programmed for flea markets, swap meets, or other occasional public/civic uses.

During the charrette the design team also discussed the possibility of implementing “back-in” angled parking along Center Avenue. “Back-in” parking is safer for all transportation modes and takes up no additional space.

Adjacent Streets and Blocks

Over time, the downtown area should develop into an environment where patrons can be encouraged to “park once” and visit multiple destinations on foot within a comfortable walking district. Such a district could extend along Blossom between California Avenue and Lucerne Avenue, and along Center between Marguerite Street and Palo Alto Street, including 1-2 blocks of Golden Gate Avenue encompassing City Hall, the Post Office, and the Fire Station. Land uses within this area could be more tightly controlled to encourage pedestrian-friendly businesses, many of which have already begun to emerge. Coordinated street improvements can also help to provide the downtown with a unified image.

The design team looked at improvements to Blossom Street. Center Avenue provides the primary address for downtown Dos Palos and its improvement can catalyze its revitalization.

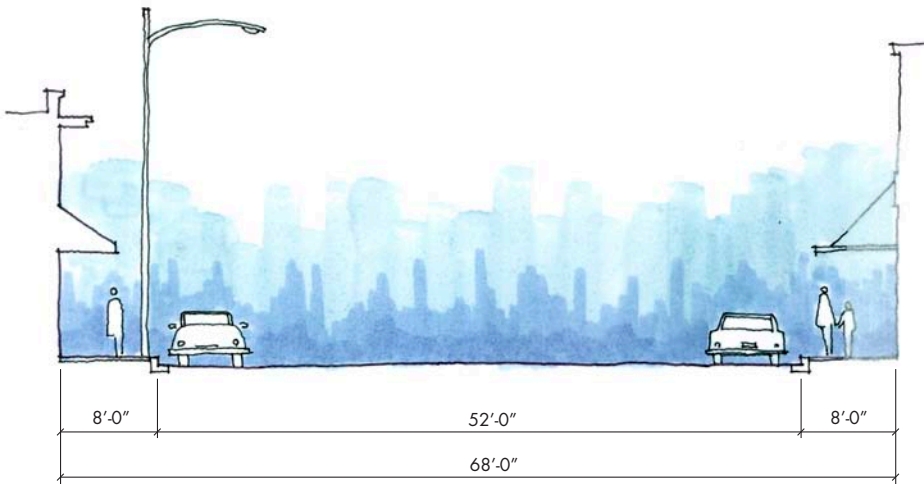


Above: Example of downtown street improvements including wide sidewalks with outdoor dining, street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, bike racks, and on-street parking. *Below:* Example of small plaza where children can interact with water and people can gather.

Above: Before and after views of bus stop on Golden Gate Ave. proposing new planting, benches and mural. *Below:* Examples of a Recreation Center located in Lindsay, CA.

Blossom Street - Downtown

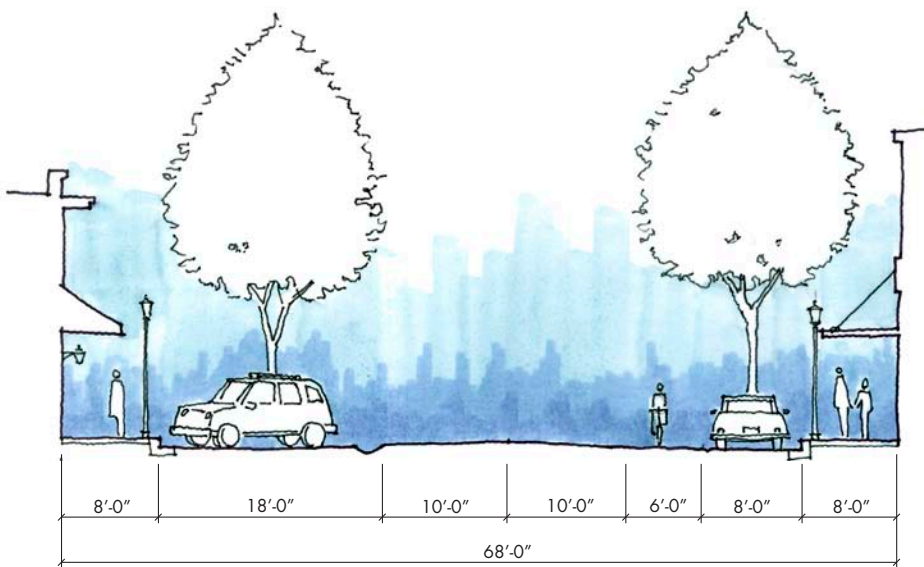
Existing



Existing: The typical Right of Way (ROW) of Blossom Street through downtown showing existing parallel parking and building frontages.



Proposed



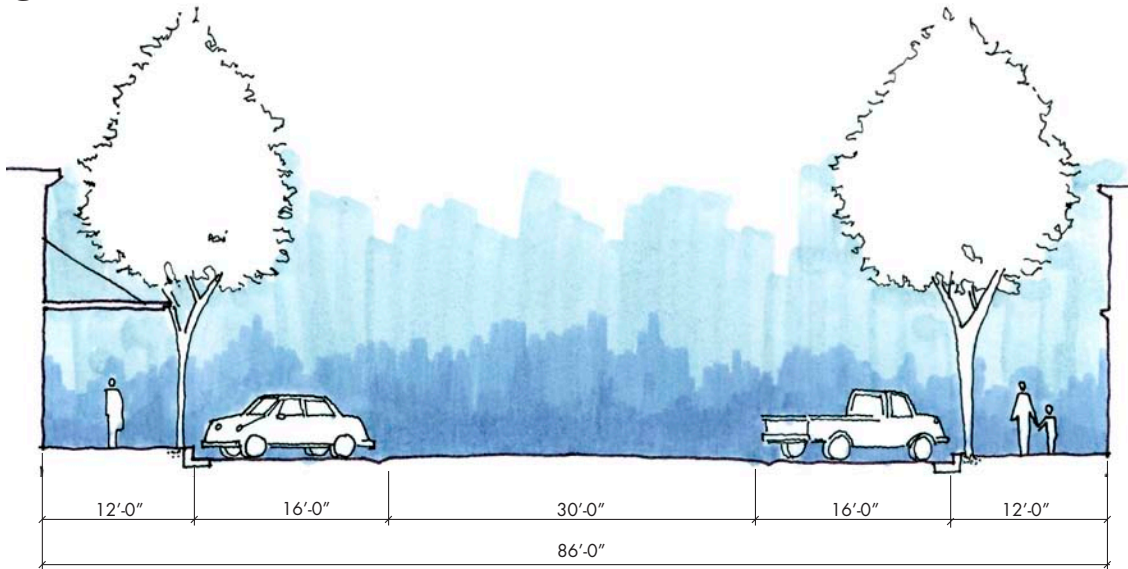
Proposed: Blossom Street between California Avenue and Lucerne Avenue could be reconfigured with diagonal parking along the south side of the street to facilitate ease of access for visitors and patrons of downtown businesses.



Above: One item worthy of consideration for downtown is “back-in” angled parking which virtually eliminates potential conflicts parked cars may have with bicyclists and passing motorists. “Back-in” also provides easier loading and sidewalk access for children. **Middle:** Informally placed flower boxes and benches are used to create a bulb-out condition in this Montana example. **Below:** Existing conditions of Blossom Street.

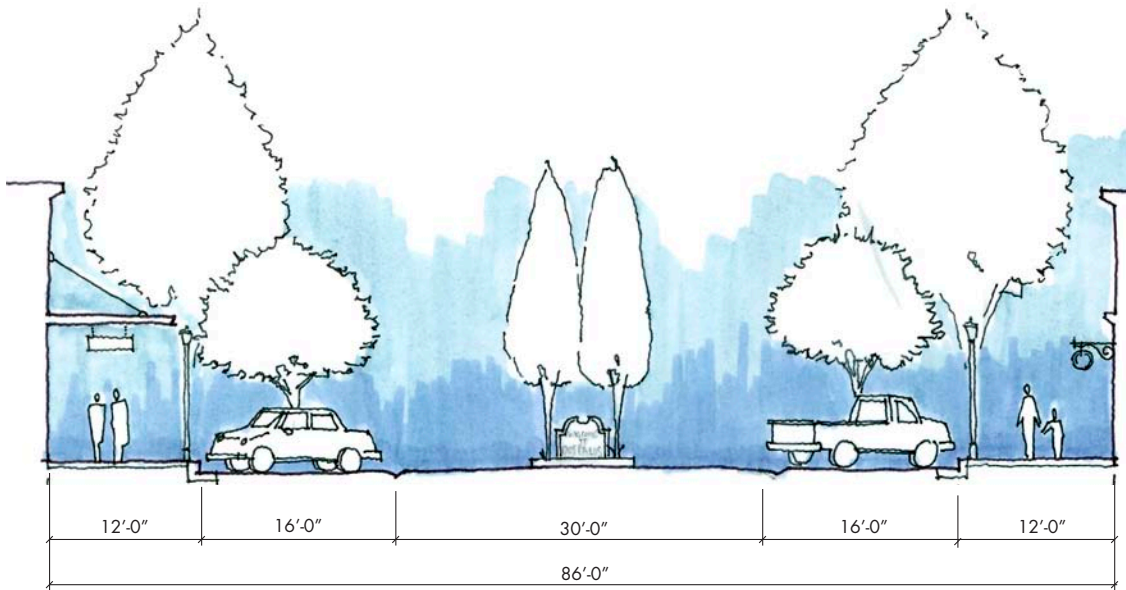
Center Avenue

Existing



Existing: The typical Right of Way (ROW) of Center Avenue through downtown showing angled parking and existing building frontages.

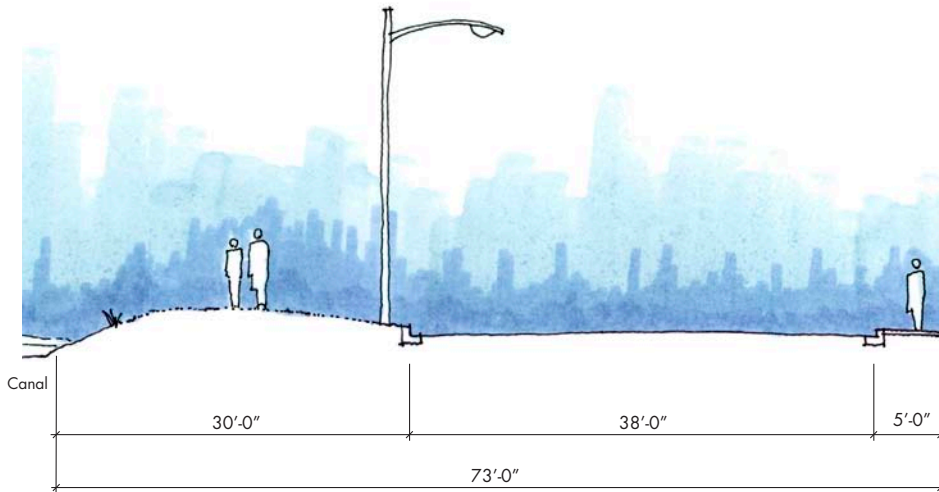
Proposed



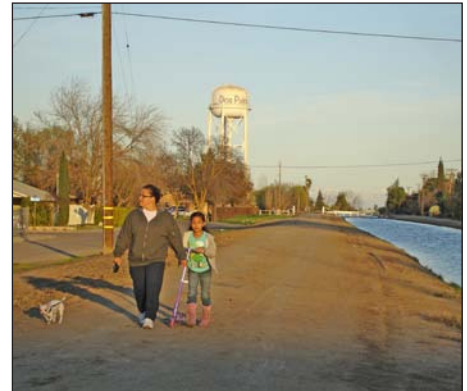
Proposed: Improvements to Center Avenue showing pedestrian scaled lighting and signage, bulb-outs with landscaping and a new gateway median at the intersection with Marguerite Street with signage and landscaping. Lane and parking configuration are unchanged although back-in angled parking could be considered for the downtown portion of Center which would require appropriate signage and re-stripping of parking spaces.

Center Avenue - North of Town

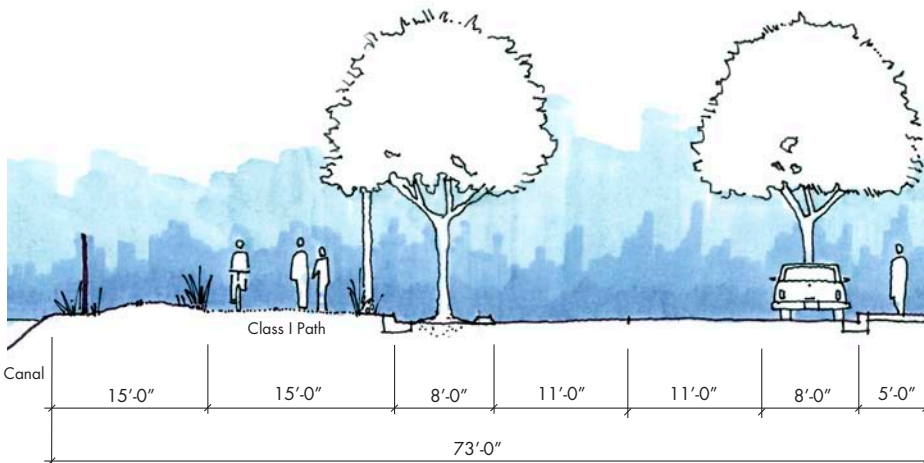
Existing



Existing: Typical R.O.W. of Center Avenue north of Dora Street along the canal.



Proposed



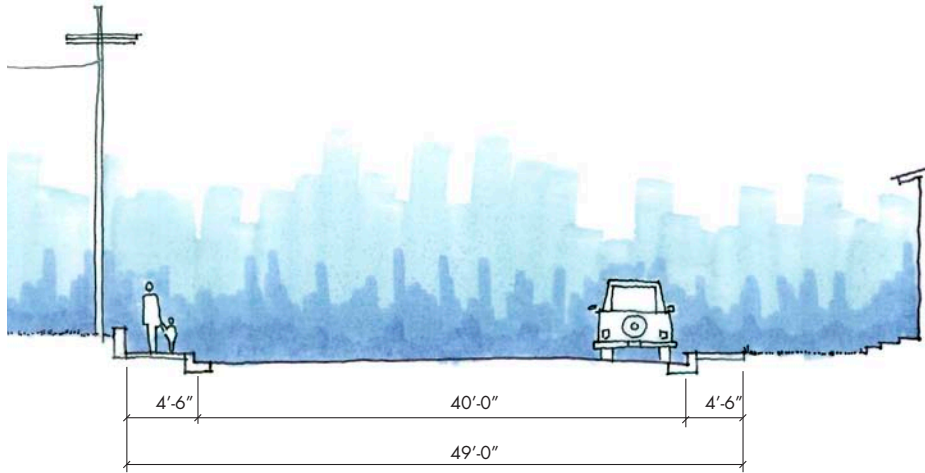
Proposed: Improvements to Center Avenue showing two 11' travel lanes, 8' parallel parking, trees planted between parking spaces, and a separated path for pedestrians and bicyclists along western edge, separated from canal with landscaping and a fence if necessary.



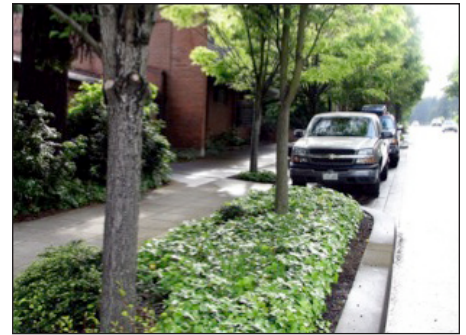
Above (from top to bottom): Pedestrians are already accustomed to using irrigation canals as informal paths within the city. Here, pedestrians walk parallel to the canal along Dora Street; Existing view of canal along Valeria Street; Proposed improvements along canal including a path for bikes and pedestrian facilities with trees for shade can also be implemented in this section of Center.

Lucerne Avenue

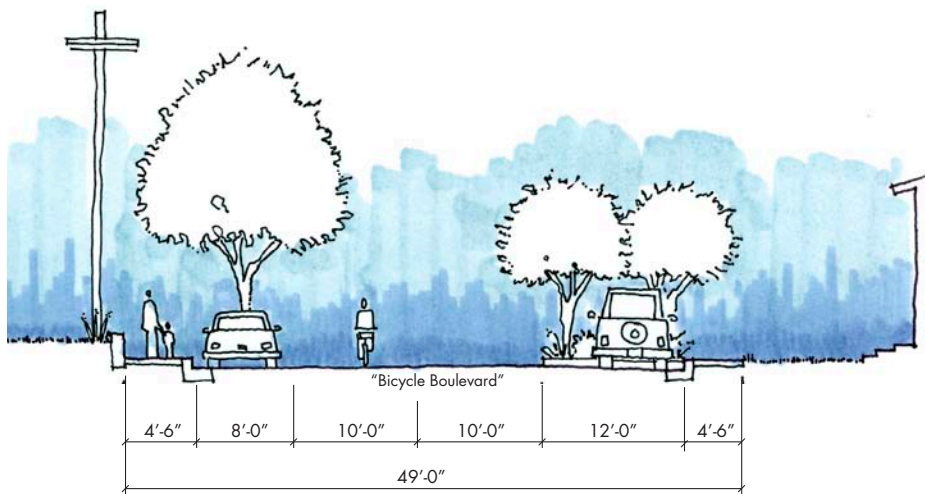
Existing



Existing: The typical Right of Way (ROW) of Lucerne Avenue.



Proposed



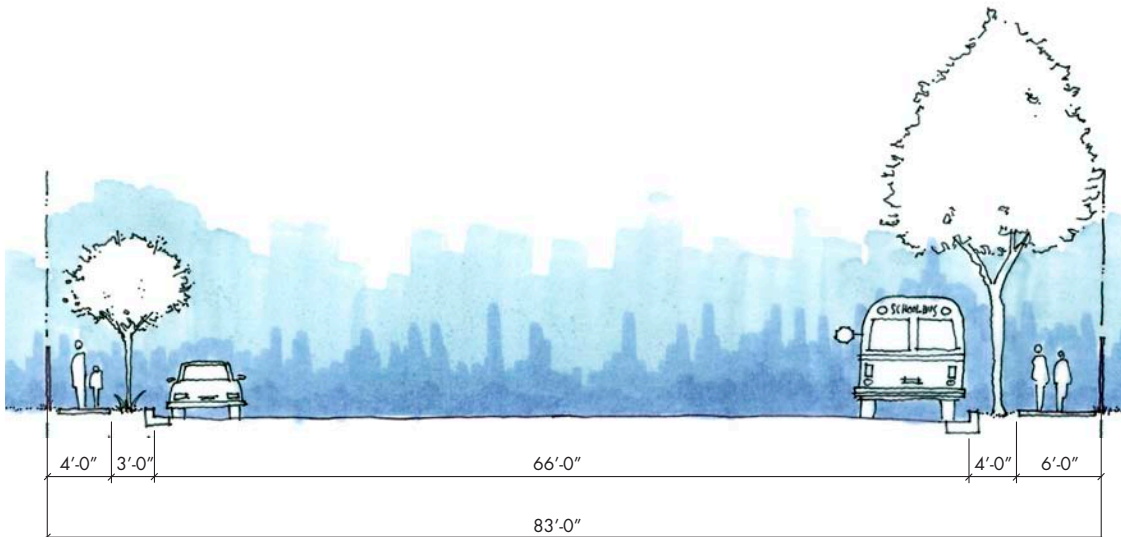
Proposed: Lucerne Avenue should be reconfigured with two 10' travel lanes and parallel parking on both sides. It should be designated with new signage and painted symbols on the street as a "Bicycle Boulevard" that slows traffic speeds so that vehicles and bicycles can share the roadway safely. Large bulb-outs with landscaping at intersections allows youth to safely cross the street as they travel from school to their homes or downtown.



Above (from top to bottom): A landscaped bulb-out with parallel parking; An example of painted bike lanes and center median; An example showing street drainage and a rain garden condition.

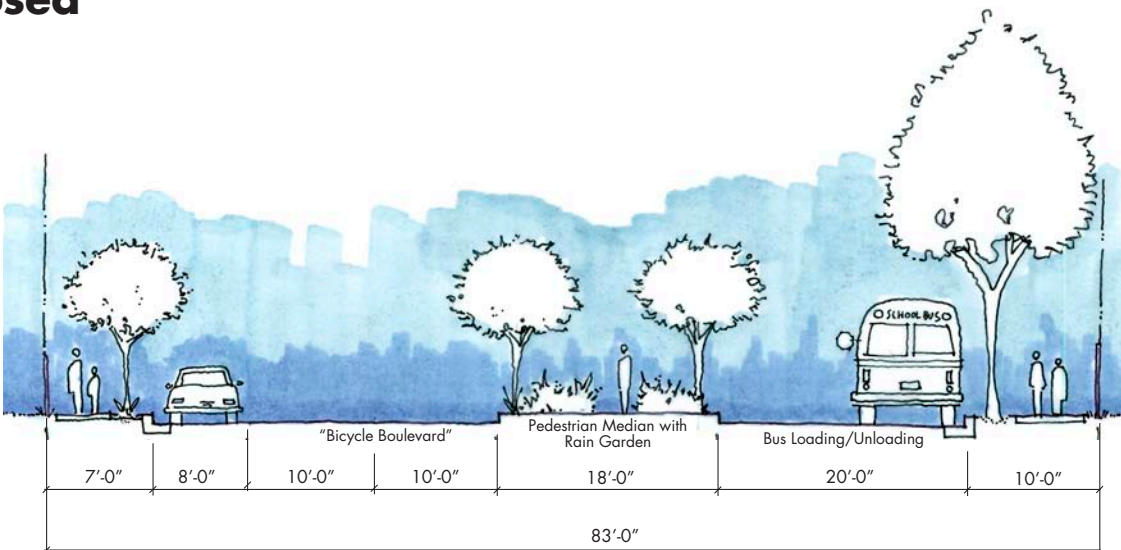
Lucerne Avenue at School

Existing



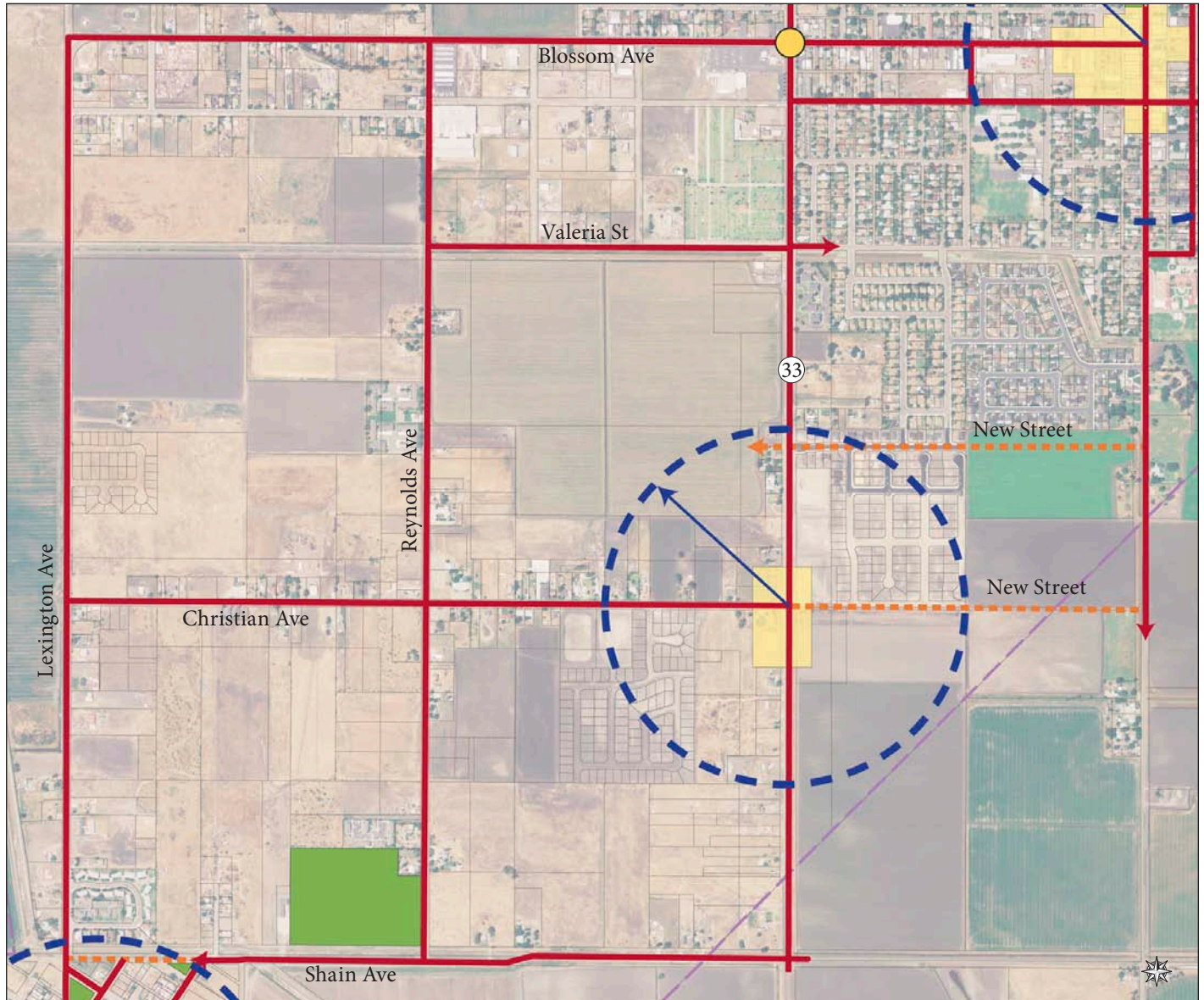
Existing: The Right of Way (ROW) of Lucerne Avenue in front of Dos Palos High School showing existing bus dropoff location and very wide street condition that is difficult for students to cross.

Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to Lucerne Avenue continues the "Bicycle Boulevard" condition with one side of 8' parallel parking. A new slip lane for bus loading and unloading is separated from traffic by a large 18' rain garden and pedestrian median that helps students cross easily. The bus lane could provide short-term parking in the evening and between school drop-off and pick-up times.

Midway



Above: Conceptual diagram of streets, parks and nodes in need of improvement within the unincorporated area of Midway. Below Right: The community of Midway project area.

Key

- Commercial Center
- Park Improvements
- Street Improvements
- Future Connection
- 1/4 mile radius = 5 min walk
- Proposed Roundabout
- Proposed Gateway Element



Midway Design Considerations

The unincorporated area of Midway is primarily comprised of sparse residential lots that have developed along the Dos Palos Colony's original 1/2 mile farm grid. Although some agricultural plots of significant size have remained, during the charrette the design team learned that soils in the area suffer from high levels of alkali which have marginalized agricultural uses. As a result, some new subdivisions have been developed in recent years. Infrastructure is limited, however, which has placed constraints on the amount and intensity of new development.

Due to a very limited street grid, residents of Midway have very few alternatives to driving, and pedestrians and bicyclists must share county streets, often with no sidewalks, shoulders, or lighting, with vehicles traveling at high speeds. These routes are important for residents accessing services and daily needs in both Dos Palos to the north and east as well as South Dos Palos.

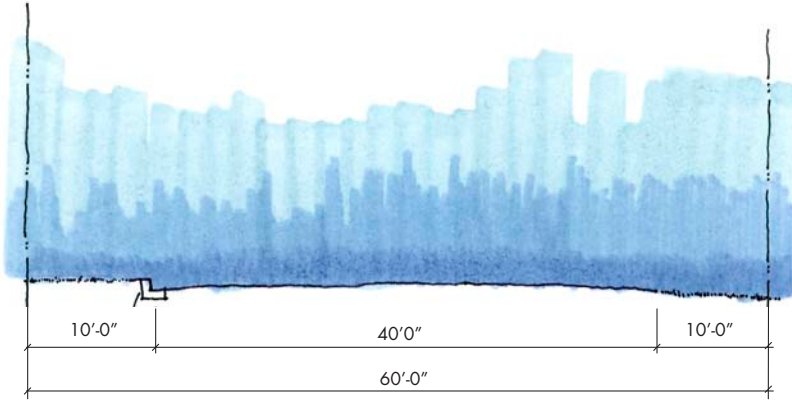
In order to address the most pressing issues with regards to mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists, the design team focused first on improvements to the community's primary corridors, including Christian Avenue, Reynolds Avenue, and Lexington Avenue. Acknowledging that these are county roads, the design team sought to identify simple changes that are both implementable and maintainable.

The Carver Center, located at the intersection of Reynolds and Christian, serves as an important center for much-needed community services. After a series of charrette meetings and events on site, the design team looked at ways this existing facility might improve its pedestrian access and integrate facilities improvements and expansion.

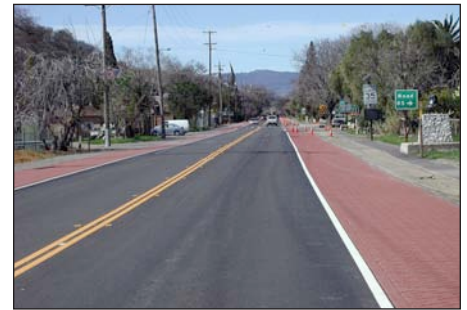
Finally, the design team looked at ways Midway might develop a center for neighborhood activities, locally serving commercial uses, new housing opportunities, and social services. The intersection of Highway 33 and Christian Avenue was identified as an appropriate site for this future center.

Typical R.O.W - Christian & Reynolds Avenue

Existing

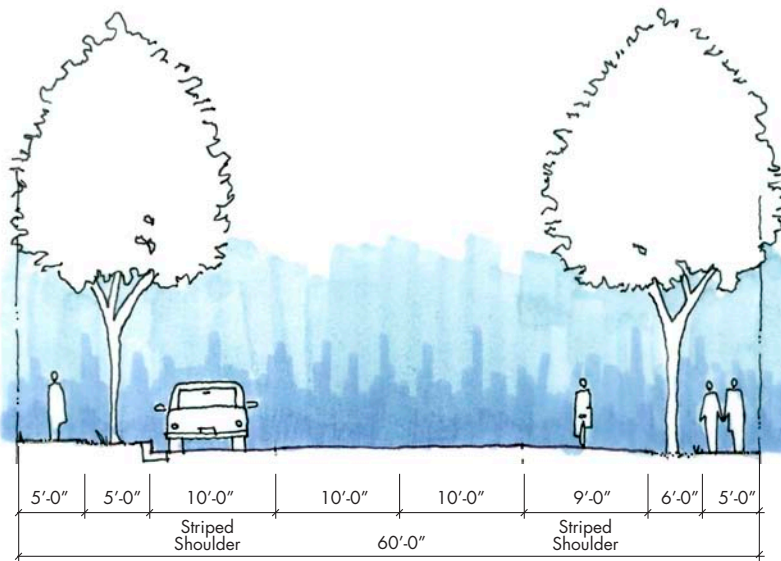


Existing: The typical Right of Way (ROW) throughout Midway is 60' between property lines. Wide, straight travel lanes promote high speeds and a dangerous pedestrian environment. The existence of shoulders and curbs are variable. Christian and Reynolds both have this configuration.



Above: Existing view of typical R.O.W. in Midway. **Below:** Example of improved shoulder with texture and color that clearly differentiates it from the roadway.

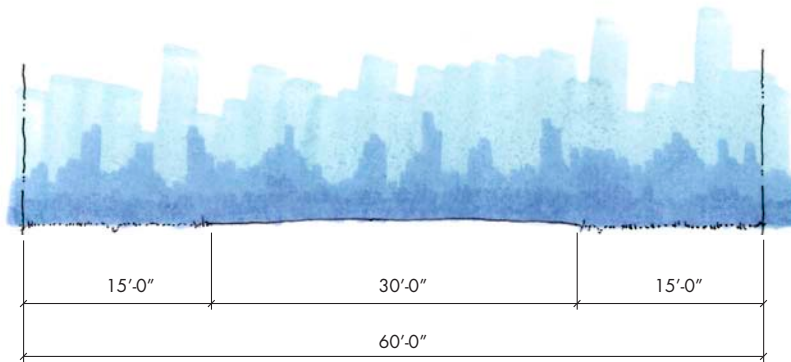
Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to the typical R.O.W. showing two 10' travel lanes and two 10' paved shoulders, clearly striped, that could be used for both parking and bicycle travel along with an improved 5' sidewalk and 5'-6' planting strip providing trees for shade. Although minimum 6' planting strips are ideal to accommodate tree planting, the constraints of existing curbs along Christian and Reynolds can justify a 5' planting strip.

Lexington Avenue

Existing

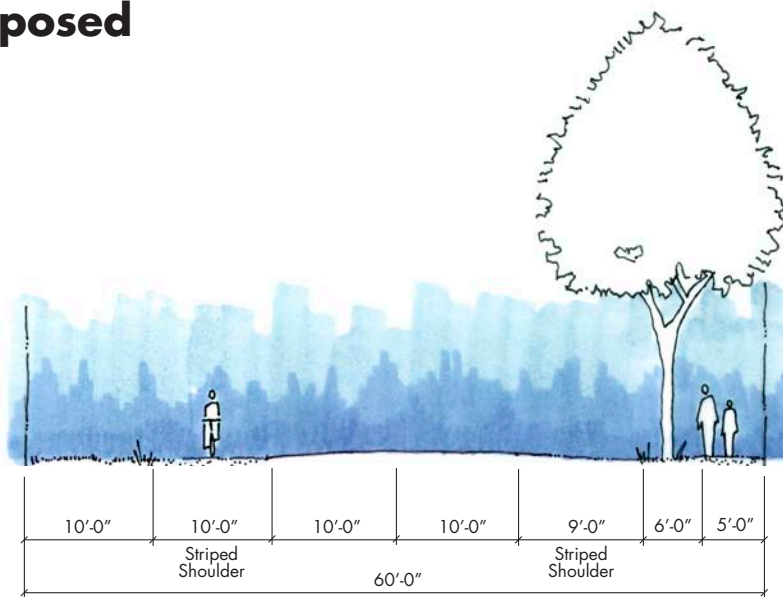


Existing: Lexington Avenue today with two 15' travel lanes and no shoulder, curbs or sidewalks.

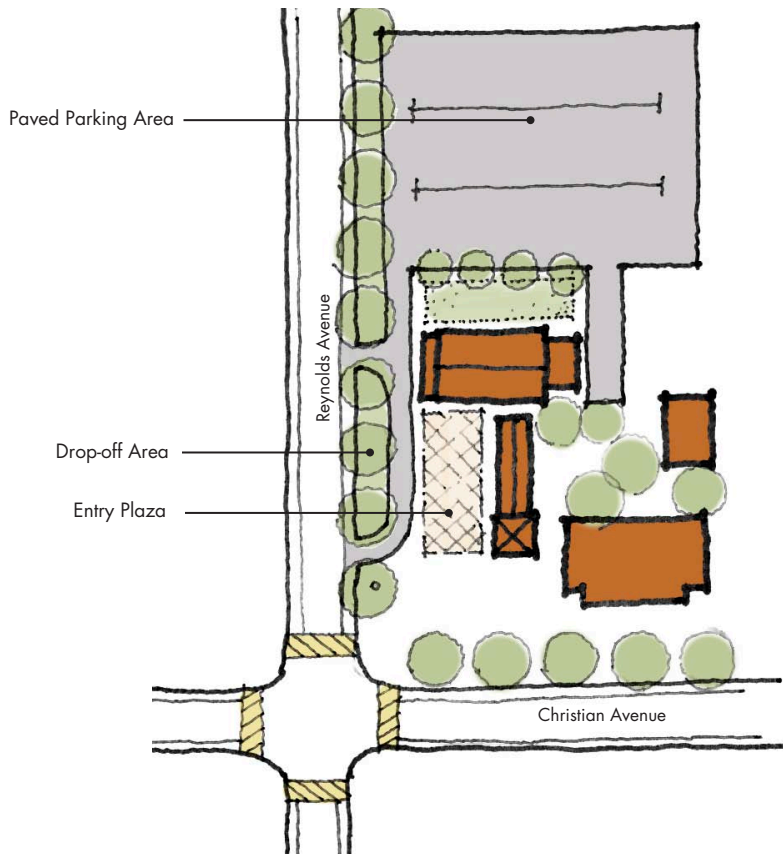


Above: Existing view of Lexington Avenue. **Below:** Example of multi-use path with landscaping to separate pedestrians from vehicles. A similar configuration could be use on the eastern side of Lexington Avenue for travelers heading north or south through Midway.

Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to Lexington Avenue R.O.W. showing two 10' travel lanes and two 10' paved shoulders, clearly striped, that could be used for bicycle travel. A 5' sidewalk and 6' planting strip with shade planting should be improved on the east side of the R.O.W. for pedestrians.

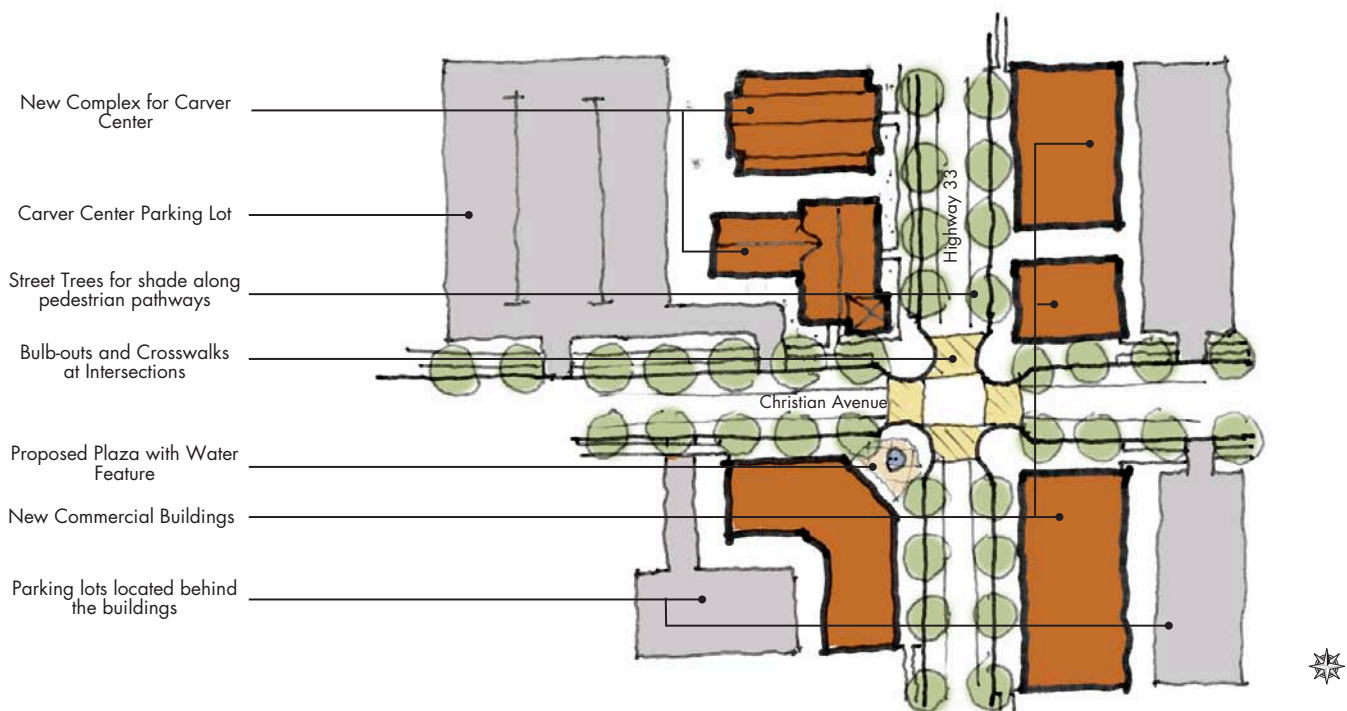


The Carver Center

The Carver Center is an important asset within the Greater Dos Palos community and beyond. During the charrette the design team had the opportunity to attend a food bank distribution event at the Center that drew residents from throughout Merced County. The current facilities are in need of renovations and both interior and exterior improvements, and the existing site configuration makes it difficult to accommodate large groups and events.

The design team looked at an alternative site plan that would place a paved parking area to the north of the building compound and integrate a structured drop-off lane along Reynolds Avenue. The parking area could be constructed with a pervious surface (such as decomposed granite or structured permeable pavers) to ensure water infiltration and drainage. Such a configuration could retain an open space at the corner of Reynolds and Christian, suitable for children’s play or other uses.

Clockwise from Top Left: Proposed short-term improvements to the current Carver Center site; People wait in line for food and amenities distributed at the Carver Center; Existing view of the current Carver Center location.



A Neighborhood Center for Midway

As Midway continues to grow and evolve, new residents will provide an opportunity to locate and support additional services within the community. The design team explored the possibility of creating a new node of activity at the intersection of Christian Avenue and Highway 33. If planned and designed correctly, such a node could provide a variety of amenities within reasonable walking distance of most Midway residences and be supported by additional drive-by traffic and visibility along Highway 33.

Such a development would provide an ideal future address for the Carver Center that would reflect their institutional importance within the region. The node could also incorporate two and three-story mixed use buildings housing neighborhood-serving commercial uses, offices, residences, and additional institutional space. Such a node could be developed in coordination with intersection improvements at Christian and Highway 33, facilitating better crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists, and slowing traffic down to “in-town” speeds as they pass through the area.

The existing PG&E Substation at the northeast corner of Christian Avenue and Highway 33 is a constraint to developing a node that would encompass all four corners of the intersection as illustrated. However, as Christian is planned to continue eastward in the future, the City and County should work with PG&E to consider the eventual relocation of this infrastructure to a more appropriate location.

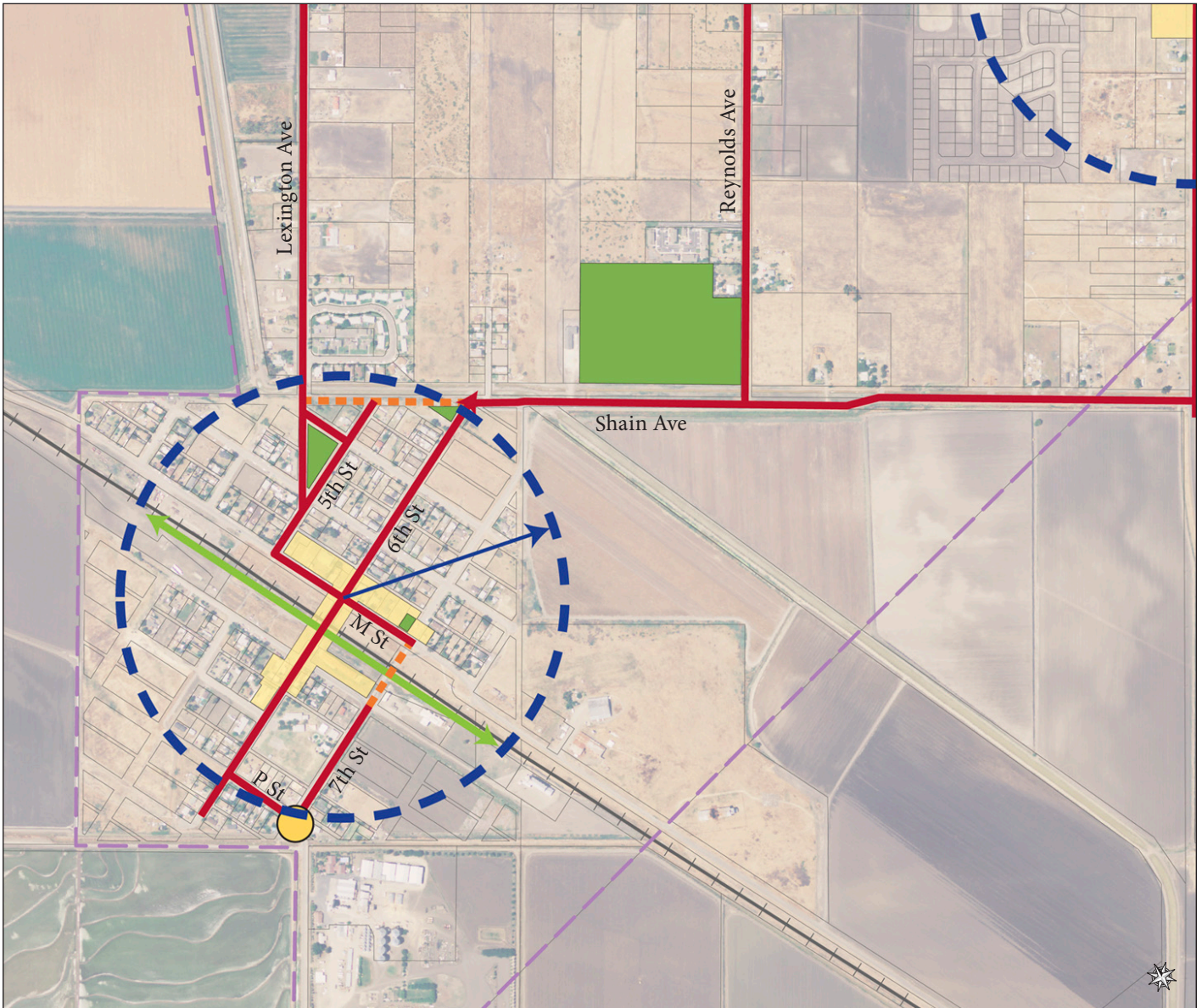
Above: Illustrative plan of new node at Christian Avenue and Highway 33 intersection.



Clockwise from top: Illustrative view looking north at Christian Ave. showing a new commercial node and relocated Carver Center; Current conditions at intersection of Highway 33 and Christian Ave; Nearby vacant lots in Midway with recent development in the distance.

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South Dos Palos



Above: Conceptual diagram of streets, parks and nodes in need of improvement within the unincorporated area of South Dos Palos. *Below Right:* Boundary of the South Dos Palos project area.

Key

- Commercial Center
- Park Improvements
- Street Improvements
- Future Connection
- 1/4 mile radius = 5 min walk
- Proposed Roundabout
- Proposed Gateway Element



South Dos Palos Design Considerations

The unincorporated community of South Dos Palos (or “Southtown” as it is known to many residents) presents several challenges. South Dos Palos began as a railroad community, with a uniform grid of streets and blocks bisected by the railroad. Today, the rail line along the Sante Fe grade has been removed, and little of the associated commercial and industrial activity has remained. The surviving residential community is confronted with limited rural services and infrastructure, including incomplete sidewalks and inadequate street lighting, poorly-maintained and inadequate parks and open spaces, and high levels of truck traffic. Economic opportunities are also very limited, and many residents expressed a dire need for new jobs and economic development in the area.

The future of South Dos Palos is not entirely clear, and may be influenced by a variety of external factors that are beyond the scope of this report. The Dos Palos General Plan of the late 1990s, for example, studied South Dos Palos as part of its Sphere of Influence and identified a large commitment to industrial land within existing residential areas, particularly to the south of the railway tracks. Past planning efforts have also discussed the continuation of Lexington Avenue through the community via a railway overpass to facilitate truck traffic, which would have a significant effect on the community’s form and function. While the Santa Fe Grade has been converted to a rails-to-trails corridor to the northwest in Los Banos (that, if extended to South Dos Palos could be a significant regional amenity), the Crow Canyon industrial park proposal may ultimately create a need to reestablish the rail corridor, which would likely generate considerable industrial potential.

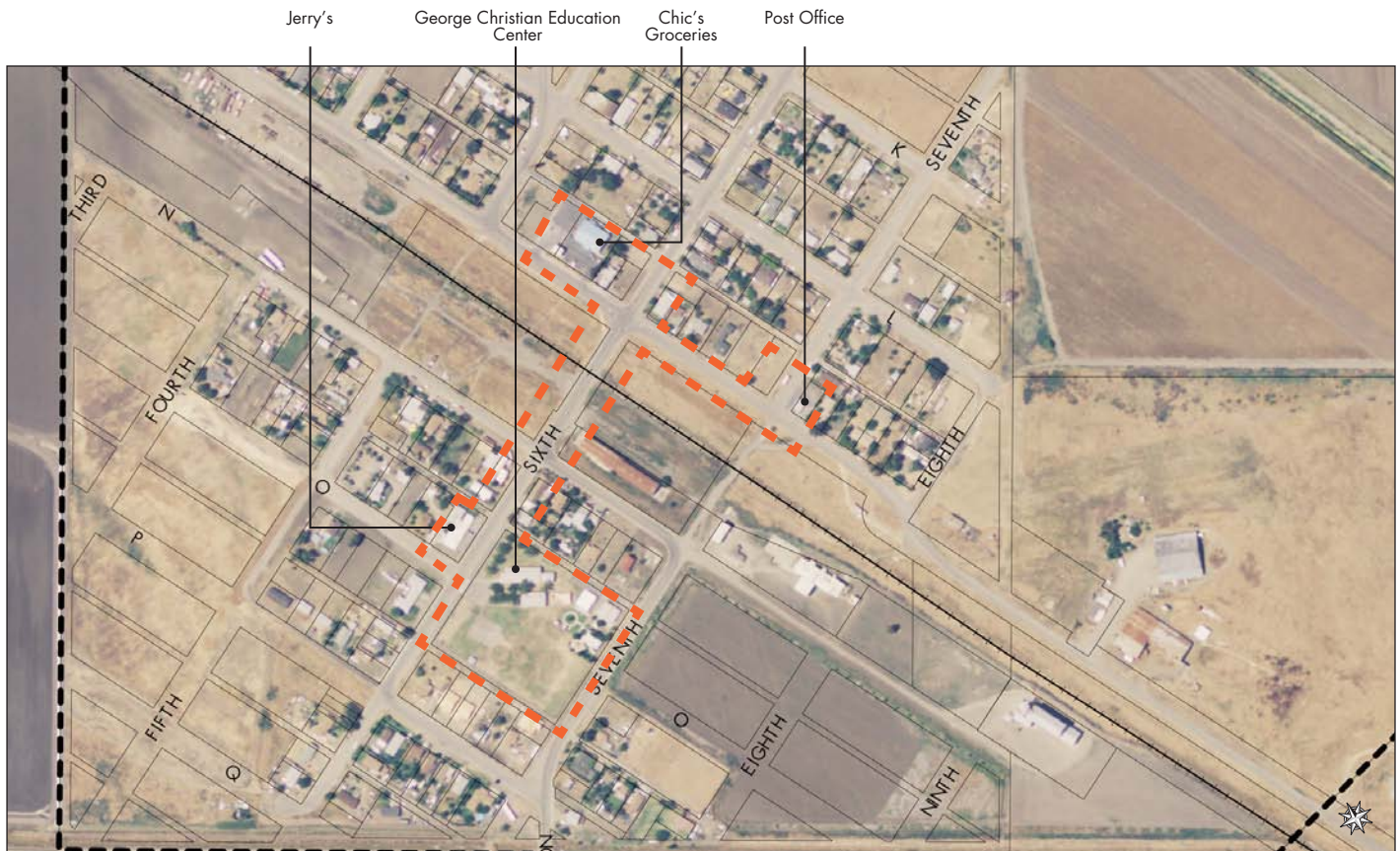
During the charrette the design team began by looking at several ways to make more immediate improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists in South Dos Palos. These included improvements to Sixth Street, the community’s principal artery and center for commercial activity, M Street, which provides a connection to the South Dos Palos Post Office, and Shain Avenue, which provides an essential connection to Midway and Highway 33. A connection across the former railway at 7th Street would also increase connectivity and access within the community.

The team also focused on improvements to South Dos Palos Park which has fallen into considerable disrepair, and suggested a new open space could be developed on a (currently vacant) triangular parcel along 5th Street.

Recognizing the uncertain future for the community, the design team also studied larger potential changes, including several alternatives to organizing circulation and land use that responded to community concerns.



Above: A young girl shows the need for sidewalks in Southtown; A mother and children try to navigate around cars at the Post Office; South Dos Palos Park in need of improvements.



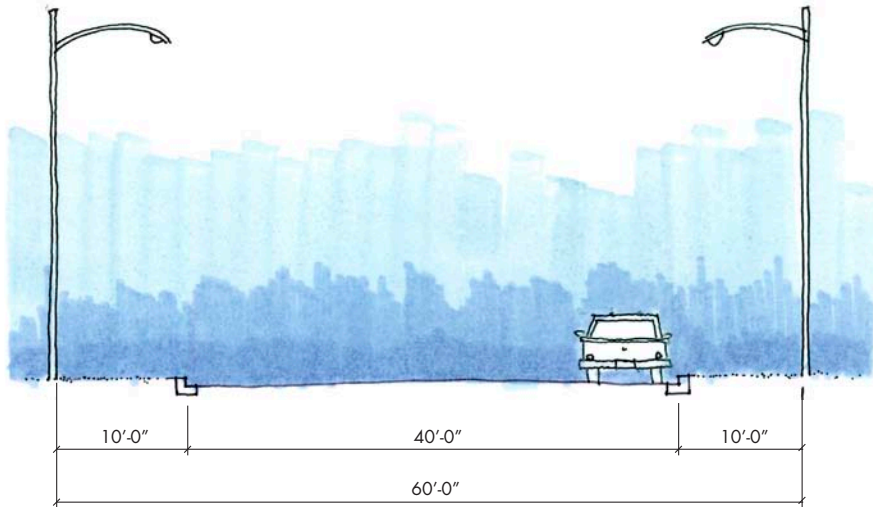
Sixth Street Mixed Use Area

In Southtown, Sixth Street has always served as the center of activity as seen from a number of vacant commercial buildings that once housed bookstores and markets. Sixth Street still serves as the main connection for residents to get to the post office, gas station, Chic's Groceries, and Jerry's multi-purpose store. The George Christian Education Center also provides recreational facilities and classroom space for the community. Despite a few small amenities however, existing services are inadequate, and a continuous pedestrian environment is interrupted by the wide Santa Fe Grade and nearby vacant parcels.

Adding sidewalks and additional pedestrian amenities could be an important first step in maintaining some vitality for Southtown residents. If the Santa Fe Grade rails-to-trails corridor is extended through South Dos Palos from Los Banos, additional open space, and even beneficial new development, might occur.

Sixth Street

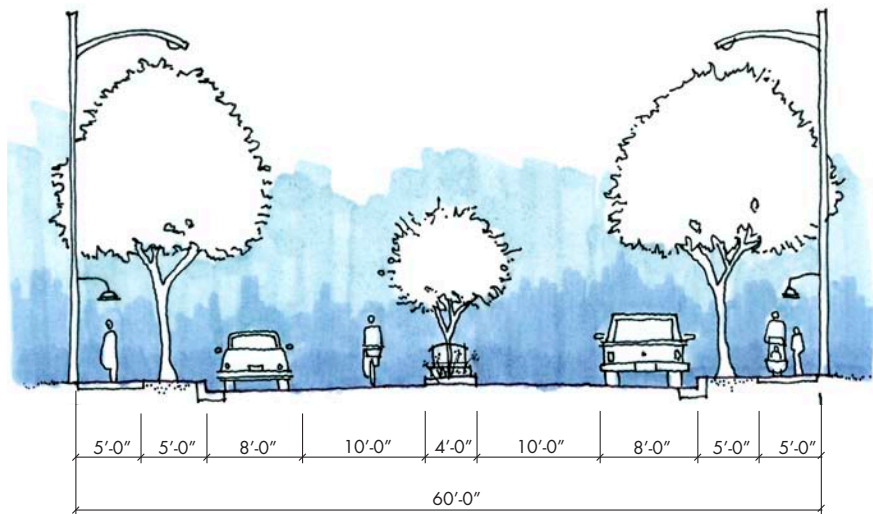
Existing



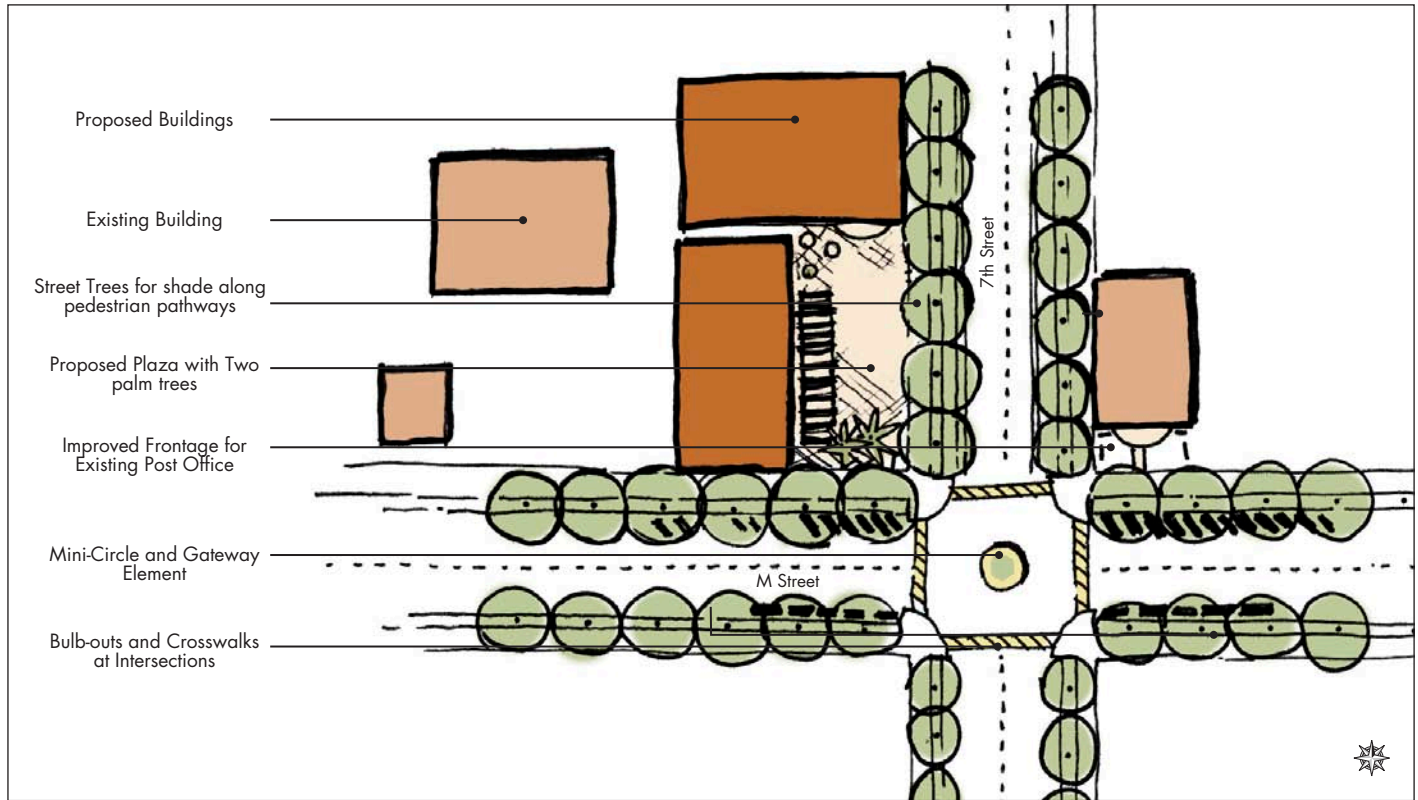
Above: Existing view down Sixth Street.

Existing: Sixth Street carries most of the traffic through South Dos Palos but has few pedestrian amenities such as continuous sidewalks or landscaping.

Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to the Sixth Street R.O.W. showing two 10' travel lanes, parallel parking, and 5' sidewalks with 5' planting strips with shade planting and improved lighting. A small 4' median island with signage and landscaping could provide an entry feature for South Dos Palos at key intersections, slowing speeds and creating shorter crossing distances for pedestrians.

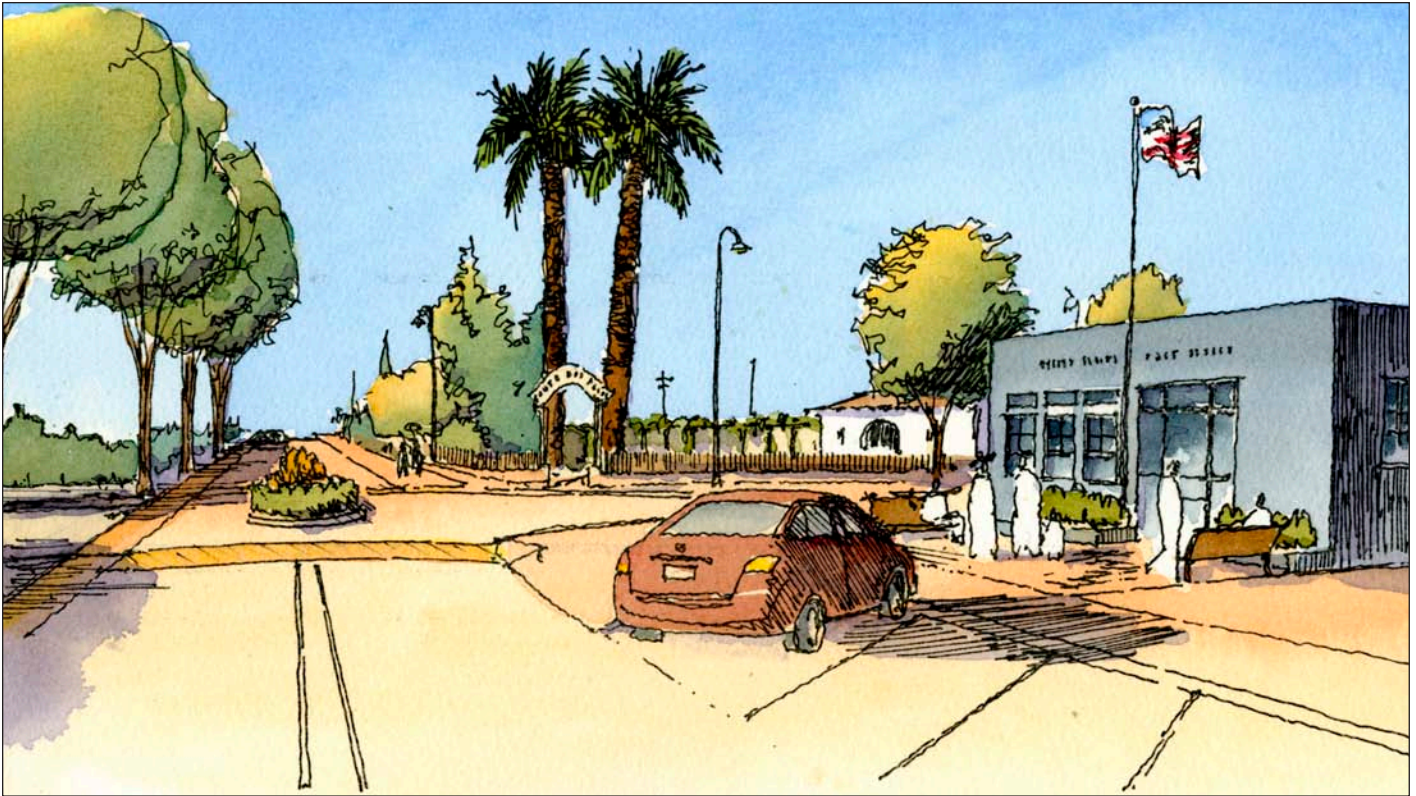


M Street and Post Office

The South Dos Palos Post Office contributes to activity within the community. The area could be upgraded to better serve pedestrians with a new plaza at the corner of 7th and M Streets, clearly defined crossings at the intersection, a “mini-circle” to calm traffic, and reconfigured parking to ease Post Office access.

Over time, new infill and revitalization of vacant lots and buildings should be encouraged along M Street as future investment and new growth become viable. Connecting 7th Street through the Santa Fe Grade to the south would also provide increased connectivity within the community for pedestrians and bicyclists.

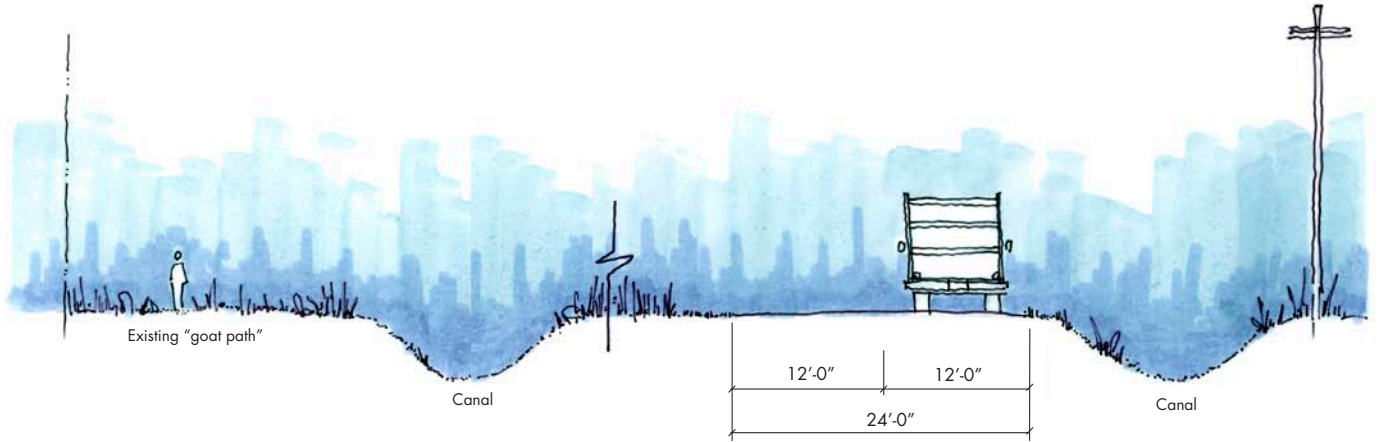
Above: Illustrative plan of proposed improvements at the intersection of M and 7th Streets highlighting an improved entry to Post Office, street improvements, mini-circle and plaza.



Above (from top to bottom): Illustrative view of existing post office located at M Street and 6th Street showing street improvements, gateway and plaza; Current view of intersection of M Street and 7th Street; Existing post office.

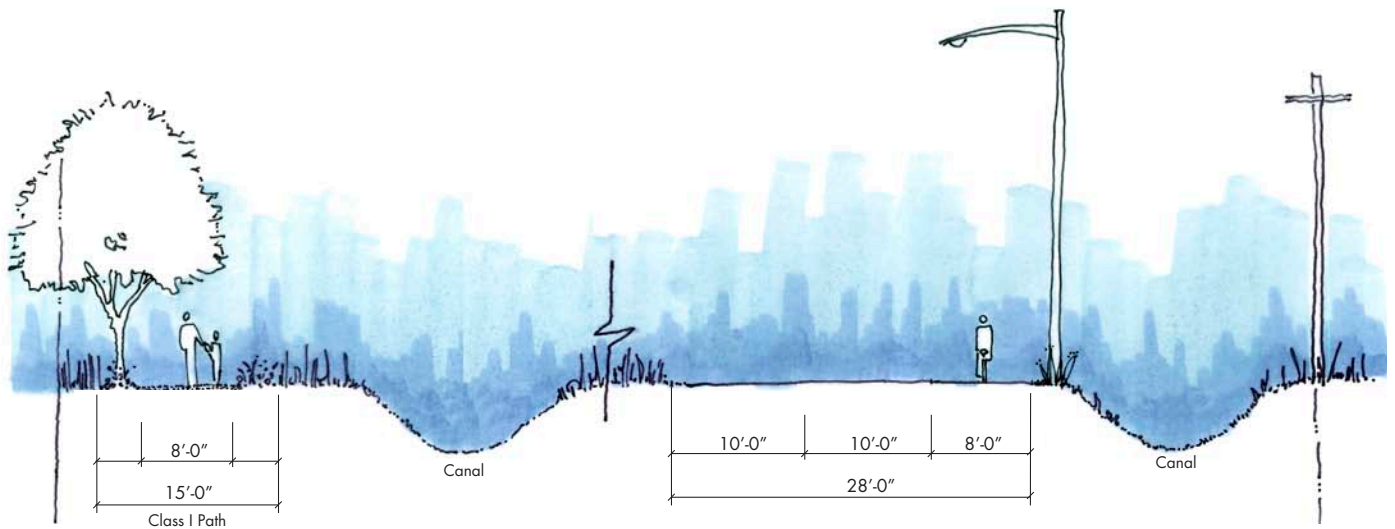
Shain Avenue

Existing

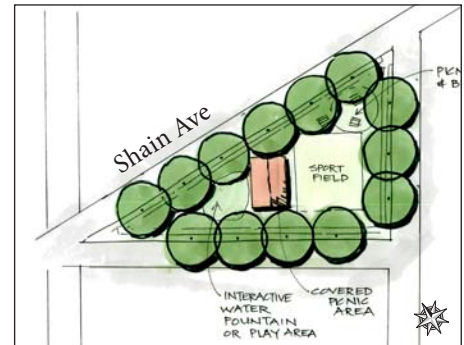


Existing: The typical R.O.W. of Shain Avenue showing a narrow roadway condition with no pedestrian amenities or shoulders. Due to the harsh pedestrian environment of Shain Avenue travelers have established a well-used goat path north of the canal to get from South Dos Palos to the park and beyond.

Proposed



Proposed: Improvements to the R.O.W. of Shain Avenue showing two 10' travel lanes and a paved shoulder, clearly striped, that could be used for bicyclists traveling east to Dos Palos. A Class I path is proposed in place of the existing goat path that provides improved shade and lighting for pedestrians, and can facilitate bicycle and pedestrian travel in both directions.



Improved Parks and Recreation

South Dos Palos Park at the intersection of Shain and Reynolds Avenues is a significant amenity for the community of South Dos Palos and with a few improvements could serve the greater Dos Palos area. However, the park has fallen into considerable disrepair. When the design team visited the park with residents during the charrette, the ground suffered from burrowing rodents and there were few healthy trees to provide shade. The current play structure and benches are cherished by residents but often cannot be used because temperatures get unbearably hot.

The grounds of the park should be resodded, and new trees should be planted surrounding the picnic and play areas. Lighting is needed for safety and to deter vandalism. The park would also be an ideal location for a skate park, similar to that recently built in nearby Firebaugh.

The design team also explored a smaller pocket park at the intersection of 5th Street and Lexington Avenue. The park could include a play structure within walking distance to many nearby children.

Clockwise from Top Left: Illustrative plan of proposed improvements for South Dos Palos Park; Illustrative plan for a new pocket park in South Dos Palos; Example of Rails to Trails recently completed in nearby Los Banos; Example of skatepark located in nearby Firebaugh.

Rails to Trails

The Santa Fe Railroad Grade is no longer used by the railroad and could be used for recreation and travel between nearby cities. The county should consider a Rail to Trails program to create a bike trail connecting with recently completed facilities in Los Banos.

Future industrial development at Crow Canyon may increase demand for freight to the extent that the Santa Fe Grade would need to return to service. If this is the case, the trail could be designed in such a way to provide parallel service to the railway.

Truck Traffic

During the charrette there was considerable discussion regarding agricultural truck traffic that passes through Midway and South Dos Palos. Seasonal farm trucks speed up and down Russell Avenue and pass through South Dos Palos on their way to Lexington Avenue, often making dangerous U-turns along the way. Few pedestrian amenities along these routes exacerbate the difficulty for pedestrians. Truck parking, particularly during certain times of year, was also cited as an ongoing problem.

The Dos Palos General Plan identified the extension of Reynolds Avenue through the community of South Dos Palos via an overpass over the Santa Fe Grade. Such an overpass would alleviate the problem of local truck traffic but would have a considerable negative impact on the local community. For this reason, the design team explored a few alternatives to appropriate routes through South Dos Palos that considered circulation and land use issues.

One alternative looked at continuing 7th Street through the Santa Fe Grade and allowing trucks to pass through the community along 7th between Russell and Shain on their way to Highway 33. In this case, land use and zoning along this route could be changed to encourage more compatible uses.

Another alternative explored a truck route to divert truck traffic off of Russell Avenue prior to reaching South Dos Palos. A route would travel east from Russell prior to entering South Dos Palos and then cross the Santa Fe Grade perpendicularly before connecting with Highway 33. As a Caltrans right-of-way, Highway 33 provides a much safer route through the area than the rural roads such as Lexington and Reynolds.

This intersection could occur on the site of the former rice cooperative and could be resolved with a roundabout, which would also assist in slowing traffic entering the greater Dos Palos community. A truck park located at the intersection of Russell and this new street could provide an alternative location for truck parking immediately adjacent to the community.



Above: Example of a “rail and trail” path allowing safe bicycle access parallel to an active rail line; Informal truck parking in Midway.

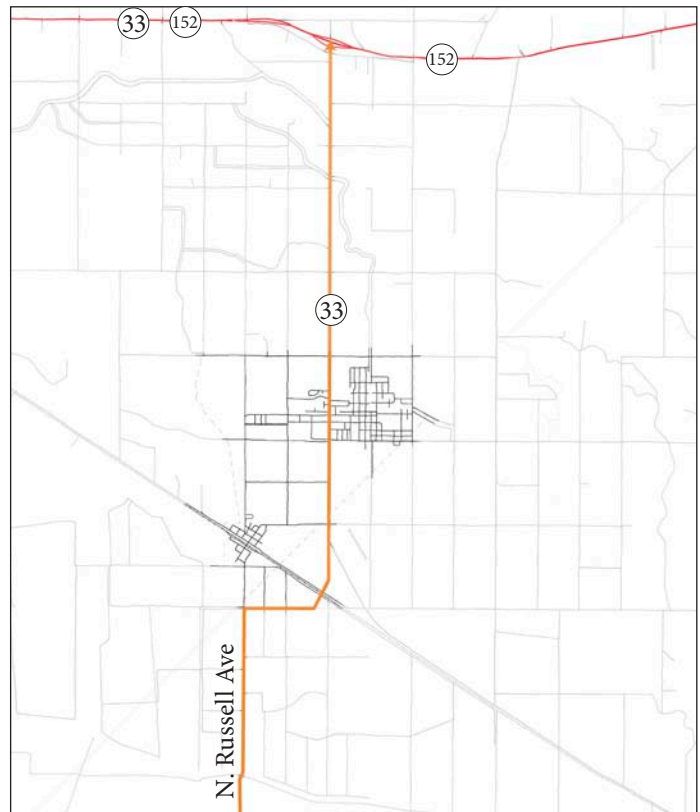


Existing

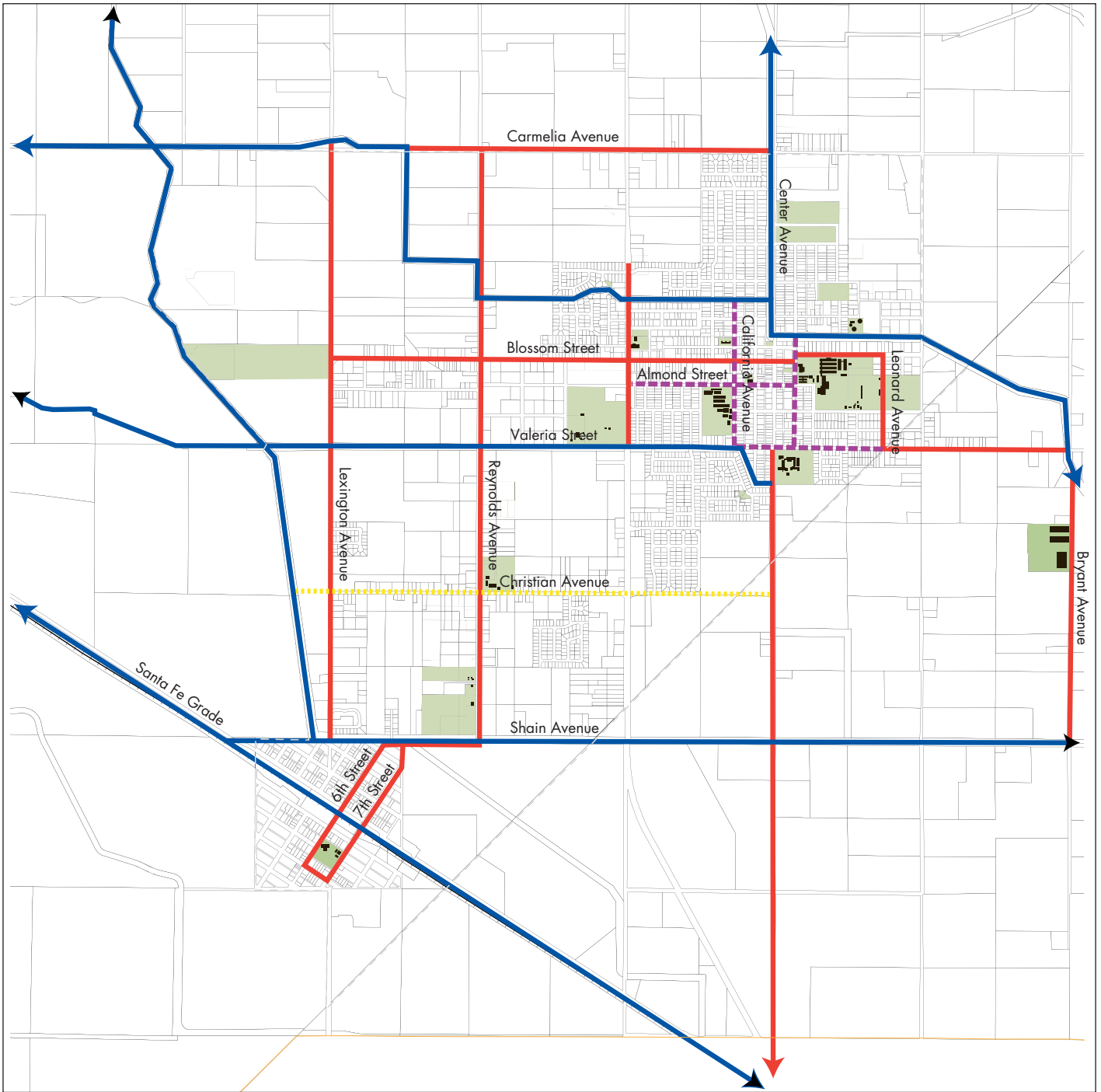


Proposed

Top Left: Existing truck route and land use configuration. The Dos Palos General Plan identified the southern half of South Dos Palos as appropriate for industrial land use, with the northern half appropriate for residential. **Top Right:** Alternative truck route and land use configuration. 7th Street could be continued across the Santa Fe Grade to provide a route along the eastern half of South Dos Palos. In this case, industrial land might be more appropriate for the eastern half. **Right:** Alternative route that would allow truck traffic to bypass the community altogether. Such a configuration would allow the community to evolve independent of industrial zoning or land use, particularly if the Santa Fe Grade is used exclusively as a trail.







Bicycle Circulation



Above: Proposed Bike Plan for the Greater Dos Palos Area

Key

-  Class I - Bike Path
-  Class II - Bike Lane
-  Class III - Bike Route
-  Future Bike Connection

Bicycle Circulation

A well-connected system of trails and paths for bicyclists should be an essential component of a the greater Dos Palos area's circulation network. While Dos Palos has considered past bicycle path plans, to date no routes have been successfully implemented. The network at left should supplement the proposals outlined in the 2008 Commuter Bike Plan that was drafted by the Merced Council of Governments (MCAG).

Existing irrigation canals in the area, including those running parallel to Valeria Street, Shain Avenue, and Center Avenue, should be utilized as Class I (off-street) bicycle paths that provide dedicated routes with minimum potential for conflict with vehicles. The Santa Fe Grade can also provide a continuous path to the City of Los Banos (14 miles) and even Firebaugh (14 miles).

Class II (on street and dedicated) bicycle lanes should be implemented on principal north-south and east-west streets including Blossom Street, Carmelia Avenue, and Leonard Avenue in Dos Palos, Reynolds Avenue and Lexington Avenue in Midway, and 6th and 7th Streets in South Dos Palos.

Class III (on street and shared) bicycle lanes should be implemented within the Dos Palos core to provide routes parallel to primary streets for bicyclists, including along Almond Street, California Avenue, Lucerne Avenue, and Valeria Street between California and Leonard. This network can ensure safe connections to Dos Palos High School, Bernhard Marks Elementary school, and Dos Palos Elementary School along streets where potential conflicts with vehicles can be minimized.

Such a network in total can ensure that downtown Dos Palos remains accessible to all residents, and can provide an alternative means to auto-oriented travel across the area that promotes health, exercise, and affordable transportation. If these routes are prioritized for tree planting, it can also provide a high-quality network of shaded "green streets" that can provide comfortable outdoor environments during the hot summer months as well as an opportunity for increased storm water management and control.



***Above:** Example of a Class I bike path along a canal; **Below:** Example of a Class II bike lane along a street. Colorizing the lane helps to maintain lower vehicle speeds and creates a safer environment for bicyclists.*

Transit Recommendations

It was learned during the course of the charrette that transit service frequencies are low, stops are widely spaced, and stops lack consistent design, amenities, and information (maps, schedules, etc). Ideally, additional fixed-route service should be provided on the 10 and 10A routes (so all weekday and weekend buses serve all stops including those in South Dos Palos). This would require additional funding. Unfortunately, while ridership on “The Bus” fixed-route and dial-a-ride services has been increasing, funding for transit is highly constrained, with potential under the current state budget crisis for the elimination of the State Transit Assistance (STA) program, which accounts for as much as 70 percent of the operating budgets of transit agencies in California.

In addition, the Merced County Joint Powers Transit Authority (JPTA) that oversees “The Bus” system does not currently have a “coordinated public transit human services transportation plan,” which means it is ineligible for Federal Transit Administration Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317 funds that provide funding for transportation improvements that assist the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income persons. In order to achieve eligibility, it is recommended that the Merced County JPTA develop a human service coordinated plan, which is described by the Federal Transit Administration as a “unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited income, laying out strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizing services.”

Despite current reductions in funding resources for improving transit service, Merced County Transit, The Bus will soon be updating its Short-Range Transit Plan that will identify needs, service improvements, and a financial plan. The Update of the Short Range Transit Plan will suggest adjustment to existing routes, improvements to schedules, and new service (if there is need) and will provide an opportunity to identify specific enhancements and a related funding strategy to improve service in greater Dos Palos.



Above: People wait at a Dos Palos bus stop.

Other options for improving transit service for Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos include:

- A new/expanded vanpool program, perhaps subsidized by Caltrans or County economic development/job training funds.
- A new/expanded rideshare program that matches and screens drivers and passengers with similar origins and destinations.
- Migrant farmworker trips: A special type of commuter trip is “home to field” transportation for farmworkers. This is typically an employer-subsidized transportation service, but public agencies can be involved in supporting these services (especially in providing initial start-up funds or in-kind services to get these services going). An example is the cutting edge migrant farmworker vanpool program in Kings County sponsored by Kings Area Rural Transit (KART).
- Medical trips: social service transportation, sponsored by either a public agency or community organization, and perhaps including volunteer drivers to keep costs low.
- Dial-a-ride: Because of the high cost of demand-responsive dial-a-ride service, the Merced County Joint Powers Transit Authority (which operates both fixed route and dial-a-ride service in Merced County) has recently proposed a fare increase for dial-a-ride services for all non-senior/non-disabled users in order to discourage utilization of this service by persons who are able to utilize fixed-route services. Expansion of dial-a-ride could be implemented if demand for non-senior/non-disabled users merits such a service expansion at a higher farebox recovery than for seniors/disabled users.
- Taxi vouchers: While the County already has a taxi voucher program, it could be expanded as taxi vouchers are cheaper on a per-rider basis than dial-a-ride (but still more expensive than fixed route).
- Conduct outreach to residents of Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos through existing city communication channels (e.g. water bills) or social service providers (e.g. Carver Center) to help residents become aware of transportation options (e.g. seniors and youth ride ½ price, kids ride free, on-board pass purchase, medi-cab program, etc.), bus routes, schedules, and stop locations, and transfer opportunities (Amtrak, Greyhound, etc.).



Above: “The Bus” takes residents into Los Banos.

Big-Picture Growth

During the charrette residents expressed a wide range of concerns regarding the long-term growth and evolution of the greater Dos Palos community. Some expressed concerns over the problems related to limited infrastructure. Others discussed the potential annexation of South Dos Palos and Midway into Dos Palos and the sorts of changes that it might incur. Still others cited the need for economic development and an influx of new jobs into the area.

The design team prepared a set of design drawings to help describe and explore the existing and potential future physical relationships between the three communities. They also looked at the greater Dos Palos area's relationship to the large body of wetlands, wildlife refuges, and natural open spaces that exist just a few miles to the west, and considered its potential as a catalyst for future economic development within the community.

Growth Strategies

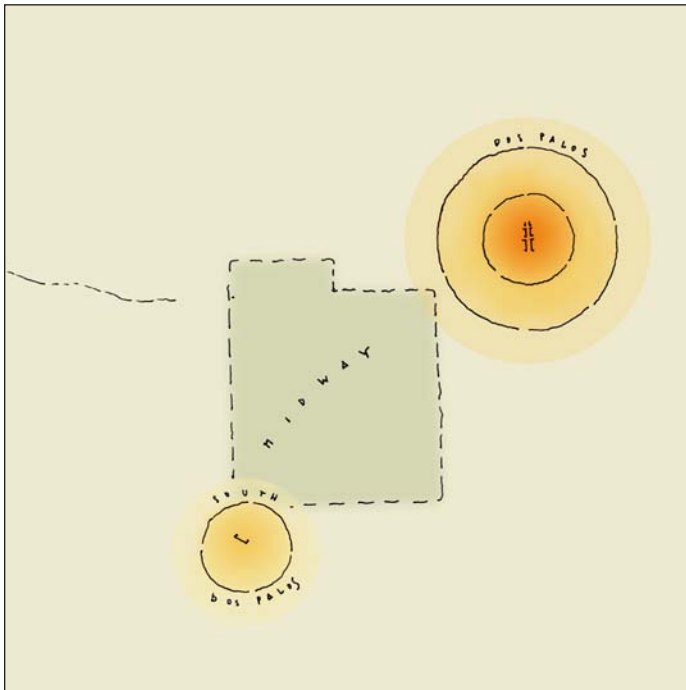
Today Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos more or less exist as three distinct communities. Although Dos Palos and South Dos Palos are organized around a network of connected streets and blocks, Midway continues to follow a largely rural development pattern, although new subdivisions have recently been introduced.

The presence of high-alkali soils in Midway have made the area less and less suitable for agricultural development, and much discussion has occurred regarding its potential for future housing opportunities. However, with existing zoning and land use regulations in place, it is likely that Midway would develop simply as a cluster of unconnected, single-use subdivisions. Development at the periphery of Dos Palos could occur in much the same way. The result might be an agglomeration of disconnected development that does little to provide internal connectivity or promote walkability. This type of future is undesirable and should be avoided.

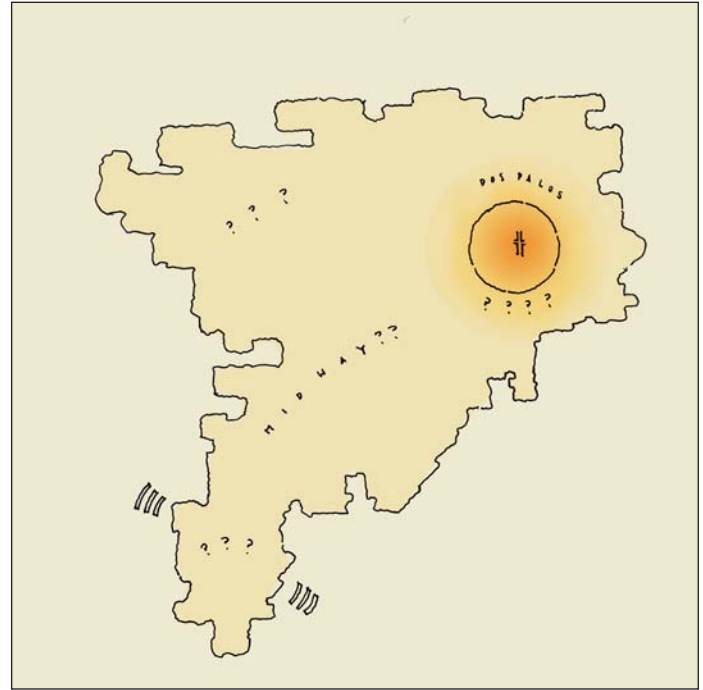
Limited investigations during the charrette revealed that alkali soils can, in some cases, be tempered and gradually changed over time by the presence of wetlands. Native species that thrive in wet soils can increase the soil acidity over time, returning it to a more sustainable level. Existing elevations in Midway are only a few feet above the wet lowlands to the west, which form part of the extensive Pacific Coast Flyway, a significant habitat for migrating birds that extends from the Arctic Circle down through Mexico. The design team considered the potential for the creation of new wet habitat — and even new wetlands — in and around Midway that could provide both an environmental amenity and resource as well as a greenbelt that could help to keep each community distinct. The area could even be promoted as a “Gateway to the Wetlands” as a basis for economic development.

Regardless of the ultimate form of the three communities, they should be encouraged to develop as well-connected, pedestrian-oriented places, with an interconnected network of streets, blocks, and open spaces.

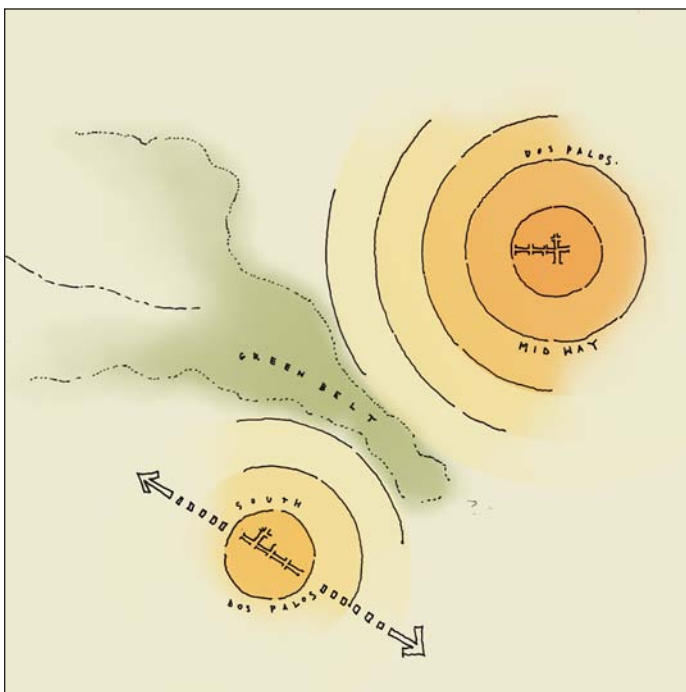
General strategies for growth and community identity are illustrated at right and on the following pages.



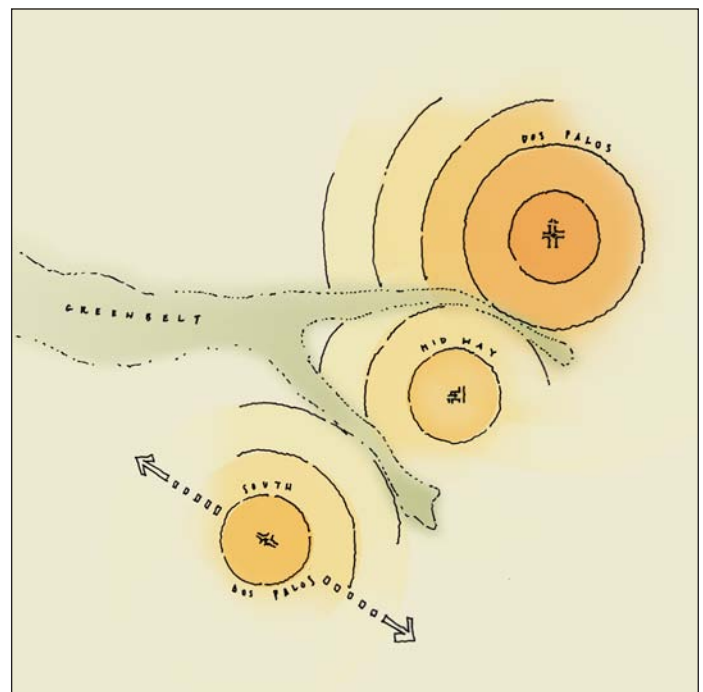
Existing Conditions: Growth concentrates around downtown Dos Palos, a smaller node exists in South Dos Palos with Midway spreading, mostly undeveloped, between the two.



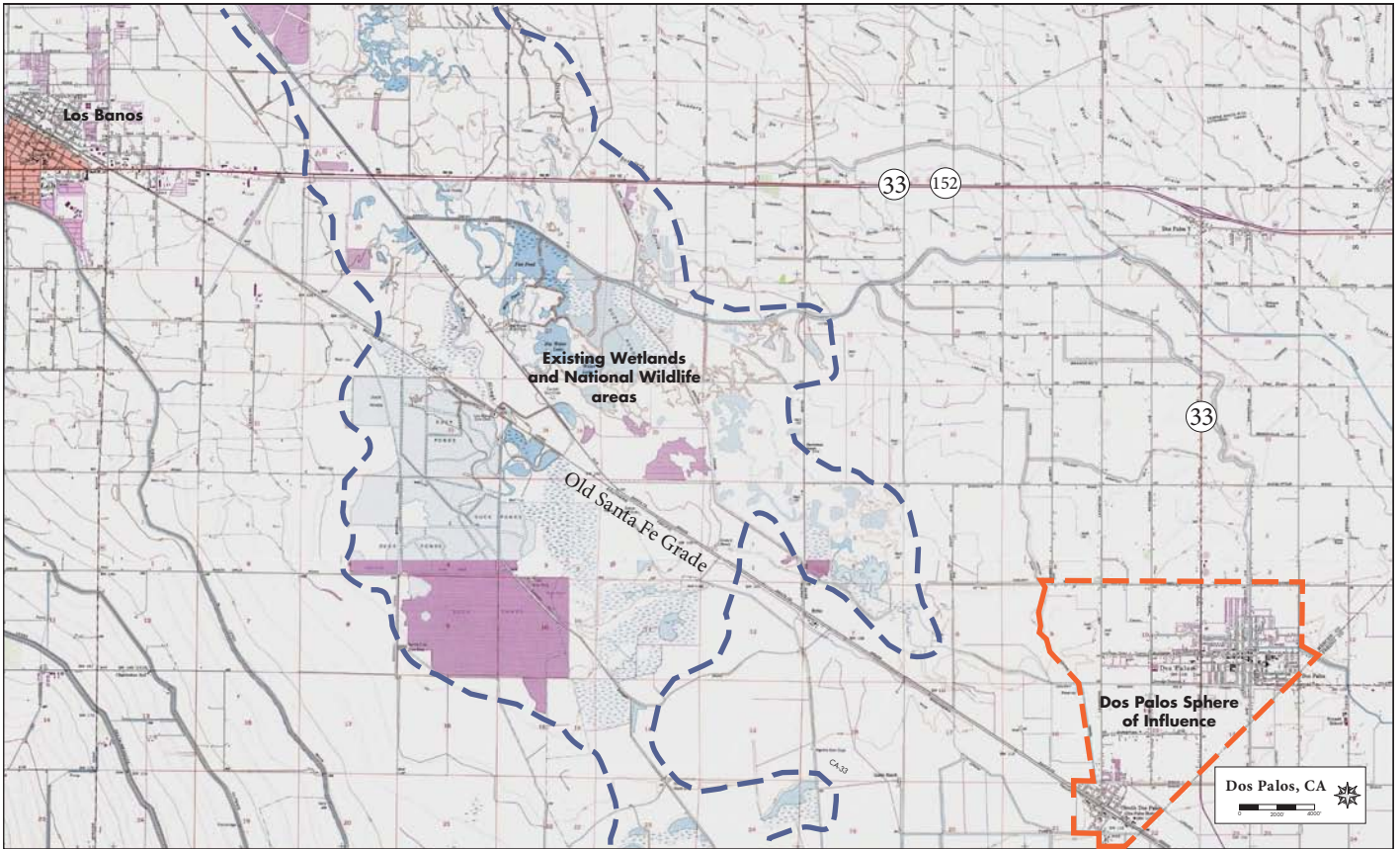
What to Avoid: Growth with no framework and no centers. New development continues at random with few connections to the existing grid and historic character.



Greenbelt: Two communities grow outward from their centers, a greenbelt running between each. Dos Palos and Midway grow together and South Dos Palos begins to extend north.

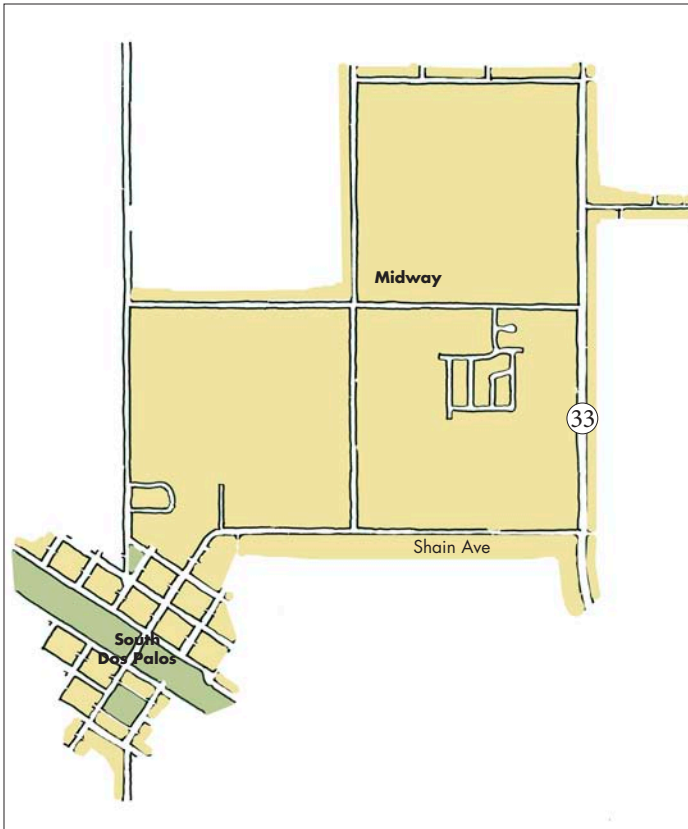


Three Distinct Communities: Greenbelts separate Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos as each forms around individual and unique nodes.

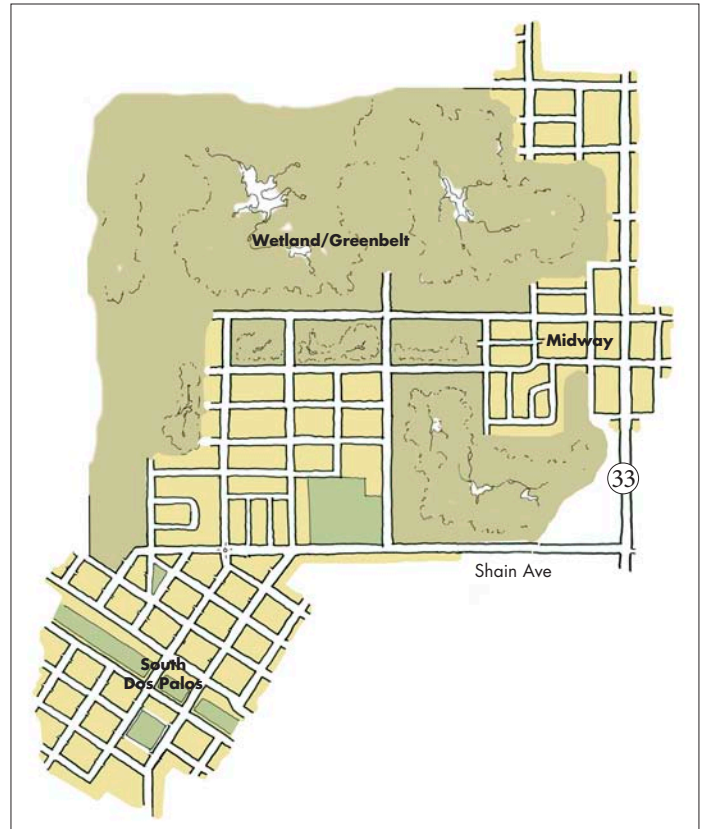


Above: Map showing the relationship and location of the Greater Dos Palos Area to Los Banos, the old Santa Fe Railroad Grade, and extensive wetlands to the west, which form part of the Pacific Coast Flyway. **Right:** The Gadwall Unit North Wetlands off of Highway 152, just to the northwest of Dos Palos, is representative of the local wetland habitat.

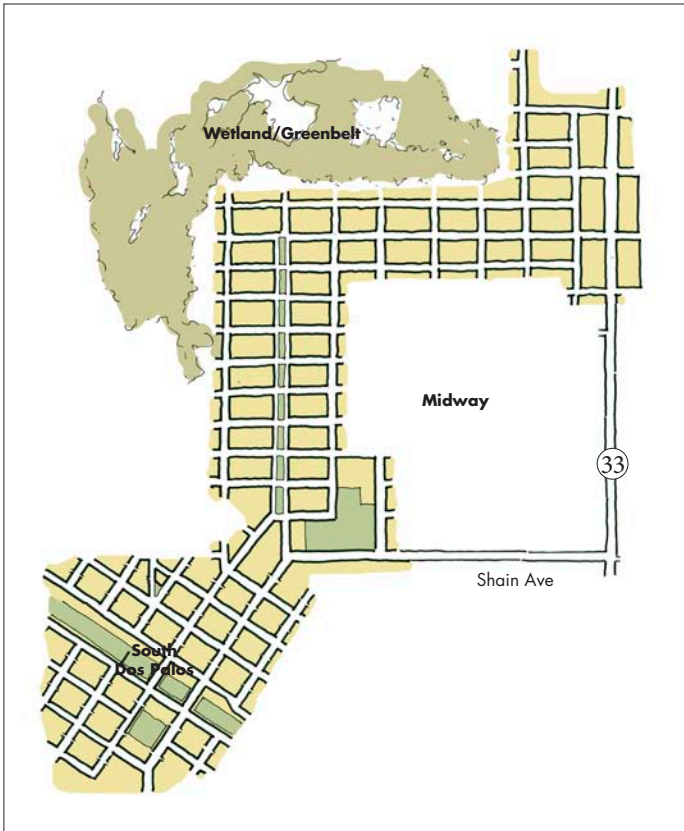




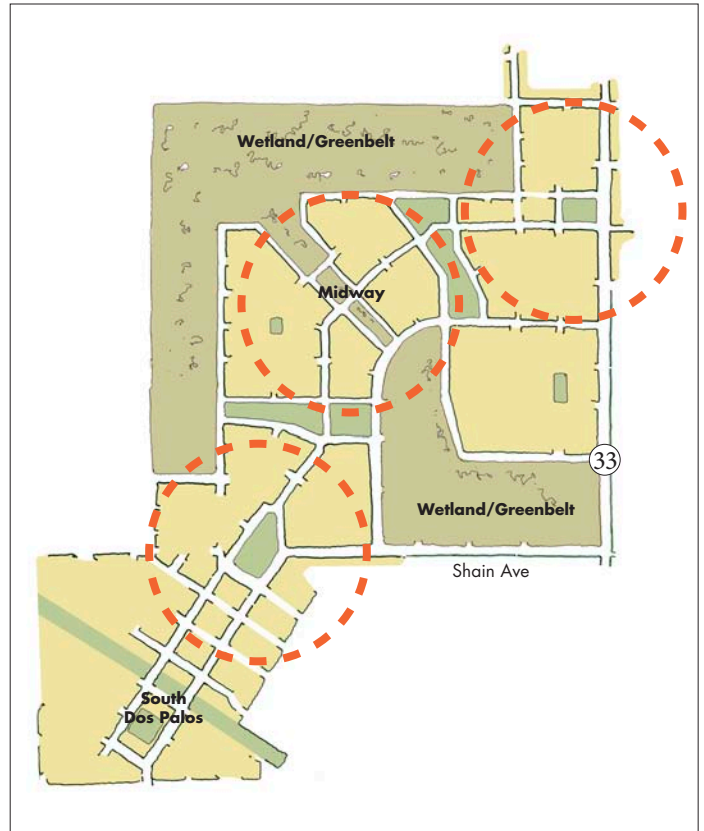
Above: Existing conditions of Midway and South Dos Palos.



Above: "Greenbelt" concept where South Dos Palos is separated from Dos Palos/Midway by an extensive greenbelt. The greenbelt could be developed over time as land becomes available, and could even include limited low-density residential development.



Above: Framework illustrating a linear connection of more urban development between South Dos Palos, Midway, and Dos Palos. Such a concept could provide enough density for reliable transit along the linear corridor while still keeping the identity of the three communities intact.



Above: Another “Greenbelt” concept where South Dos Palos is separated from Dos Palos/Midway by an extensive greenbelt. Here, the development pattern is organized into a set of walkable neighborhoods. The greenbelt could be developed over time as land becomes available, and could even include limited low-density residential development.



Introduction

Improvements and revitalization within the greater Dos Palos area will require coordination between the City and Merced County. The City should consider an implementation plan for Dos Palos that can expand upon the design ideas provided during the community charrette process. Such a plan could include programming and design development of potential catalyst projects, further development of urban design improvements, and financial feasibility studies and market analysis. Elements of this plan can also form the basis for future updates to the General Plan.

Dos Palos should also consider amendments to zoning that can enable more pedestrian-friendly development patterns. Within the downtown area, Form-Based Coding can be used to provide the community with a set of clear, predictable standards, and can assist in attracting new development that appropriately complements the existing historic patterns. At the periphery, a TND Ordinance or Traditional Neighborhood Subdivision Standards can provide a regulatory framework for new subdivisions. The County could consider similar efforts for better regulation of urbanized unincorporated areas.

This chapter includes a list of potential physical design improvement projects within the greater Dos Palos area, a discussion of policy and programmatic opportunities to address the transportation needs of residents, a summary of potential funding sources, and a brief discussion of Form-Based Coding.

Potential Projects Summary

<i>Catalyst Projects</i>	<i>Priority</i>
City of Dos Palos	
Urban Single Lane Roundabout at Highway 33 and Blossom Street	Mid-term
Highway 33 Improvements between Carmellia Avenue and Shain Avenue	Mid-term
Blossom Street Improvements between Lexington and California	Near-term
Blossom Street Improvements between California and Lucerne	Near-term
Valeria Street Improvements between Bryant Avenue and Reynolds Avenue	Mid-term
Downtown Recreation Center at Center Street and Almond Street	Mid-term
Center Street/Downtown Infill Projects	Mid-term
Center Street Improvements between Marguerite Street and Palo Alto Street	Near-term
Center Street Improvements between Valeria Street and Shain Avenue	Mid-term
Lucerne Street Improvements between Marguerite Street and Valeria Street	Near-term
Dos Palos High School dropoff improvements along Lucerne	Mid-term
Land Use/Zoning Updates	Near-term
Midway Community	
Christian Avenue Improvements between Lexington Avenue and Highway 33	Near-term
Christian Avenue Extension from Highway 33 to Center Avenue	Long-term
Reynolds Avenue Improvements between Blossom Street and Shain Avenue	Near-term
Lexington Avenue Improvements between Carmellia Avenue and Shain Avenue	Near-term
Carver Center Improvements at Reynolds Avenue and Christian Avenue	Mid-term
New Neighborhood Center at Christian Avenue and Highway 33	Long-term
Land Use/Zoning Updates	Near-term
South Dos Palos Community	
Sixth Street Improvements between Shain Avenue and Q Street	Near-term
M Street/Post Office Site Improvements	Mid-term
Shain Avenue Improvements between Lexington Avenue and Highway 33	Near-term
Seventh Street link across Santa Fe Grade	Mid-term
South Dos Palos Park Improvements	Mid-term
Tot Lot/Pocket Park at 5th Street & Lexington Avenue	Long-term
Rails to Trails Program for Santa Fe Grade	Long-term
Truck Traffic Circulation Plan	Mid-term
Land Use/Zoning Updates	Near-term
Project-Area Wide	
Zoning Amendments / Form-Based Coding	Near-term
Bicycle Plan Initiation	Near-term
<p>Near-term=start now (0 to 6 months) Mid-term=start soon (6 months to 2 years) Long-term=start later (2 to 5 years) *Listed source may only partially fund the cost of the identified project. Additional sources may be required. TBD=To be Determined</p>	

Potential Funding Sources

A number of funding sources could help implement report recommendations. They offer alternatives for street design, community facilities, and other infrastructure. Sources of funding include:

- State and federal transportation funds
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency
- Infill Infrastructure Grant Program (IIG)
- Proposition 12 Tree Planting Grant Program
- Recreation and Park Grants
- City road maintenance and construction funds
- Development fees
- Special districts
- Volunteer initiatives and private donations

Each of these funding sources is subject to changes in state and federal law, budget levels, and target project priorities. A summary of the situation for each as it existed at the time of this writing is below.

State and Federal Transportation Funds

Major state and federal transportation funding resources are outlined below. For more information on these funding programs, visit the Caltrans Division of Local Assistance website:

www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms

Hazard Elimination Safety Program (HES)

The HES Program is a federal safety program but administered by the State. The HES program provides funds for safety improvements on all public roads and highways and publicly-owned bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail. These funds serve to eliminate or reduce the number and severity of traffic accidents at locations selected for improvement. Some of the street design elements recommended may be eligible for funding if the site selected is considered a high hazard location. Caltrans solicits applications for projects. Any local agency may apply for these safety funds.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/hesp/hesp.htm>

Or contact Caltrans District Local Assistance Office for Merced County at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist10/>

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

Caltrans administers state and federally funded programs to improve walking and bicycling conditions in and around schools. Projects for federal funding must fall under infrastructure (capital) or non-infrastructure (education and encouragement) categories.

A standardized statewide SRTS training program with promotional materials and school resources will be developed to help communities implement programs.

The program seeks to fund projects that incorporate engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement and evaluation components. It should be noted that engineering is listed first, because that effort creates the durable features of a street that support the other efforts.

For more information, visit: www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/saferoutes/saferoutes.htm

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

Funded at \$8.3 billion over 1999-2005, this program represents the lion's share of California's state and federal transportation dollars. Three-quarters of the program's funds were earmarked for improvements determined by locally adopted priorities contained in Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIP), submitted by regional transportation planning agencies from around the state.

STIP funds can be used for a wide variety of projects, including road rehabilitation, road capacity, intersections, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit, passenger rail and other projects that enhance the region's transportation infrastructure. The City of Dos Palos and Merced County should work with the Merced County Association of Governments to nominate projects to be included in the STIP. Funding for this program usually occurs every two years.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/STIP.htm>

Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities

Federal Transportation Enhancement funds are for construction projects that are "over and above" normal types of transportation projects. These projects may include street trees and landscaping along roadways, pedestrian and bicycle access improvements, acquisition of scenic easements, preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use of the corridors for pedestrian or bicycle trails), and other scenic beautification.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/TransEnhAct/TransEnact.htm>

Or contact TE Project Coordinator John Haynes at (916) 653-8077, john_haynes@dot.ca.gov

Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA)

This state fund, administered by the Caltrans Bicycle Facilities Unit, can be used to improve conditions for cyclists. Eligible projects include improving and maintaining existing bikeways, building new bikeways, constructing median crossings, installing bicycle/pedestrian signals, and planning. Annual BTA funding is in the range of \$5 million a year.

To be eligible for BTA funds, a city or county must prepare and adopt a Bicycle Transportation Plan. Adoption of a plan establishes eligibility for five consecutive funding cycles.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/bta/btawebPage.htm>

Transportation Development Act (TDA)

TDA provides for two sources of funding: Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA). The TDA funds a wide variety of transportation programs, including planning and program activities, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, community transit services, public transportation, and bus and rail projects.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/MassTrans/State-TDA.html>

Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (ISRF) Program

Subdivisions of a local government, which includes cities and counties and joint power authorities, can apply for low-cost financing ranging from \$250,000 to \$10,000,000 through the ISRF program for a wide variety of infrastructure projects. Eligible project categories include city streets, county highways, state highways, drainage, water supply and flood control, parks and recreational facilities, public transit, water treatment and distribution, and public safety facilities.

For more information, visit: <http://www.ibank.ca.gov/Programs/infrastructure.html>

Or contact program manger Diane Cummings at (916) 324-4805, dcummings@ibank.ca.gov

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

Under the State Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) Program, cities and counties may seek funding for a broad range of activities ranging from establishment and operation of revolving loan funds and construction of infrastructure improvements to construction of new housing and community facilities. Applications under the CDBG Economic Development Allocation will require a job creation/retention component. Funding programs include:

- Economic Enterprise Fund for community infrastructure projects (i.e. water and wastewater systems, street improvements) and/or to develop lending programs and technical assistance programs for small business.
- Over-the-Counter Grants to be used to finance publicly owned infrastructure associated with the creation or retention of jobs, including street improvements, water and wastewater systems, and utilities. Loans are also available to fund activities, such as land acquisition, building construction, equipment purchase, and building renovation or restoration.

- Planning and Technical Assistance Grants offer small cities and counties up to \$70,000 for planning and evaluation studies related to economic development projects. Funds can be used for range of studies, including business development feasibility studies, business attraction and retention plans, infrastructure needs assessments, and marketing studies.

For more information go to: www.hcd.ca.gov/fa

Or contact Merced County's regional representative: Patrick Talbott at (916) 552-9361, ptalbott@hcd.ca.gov

California Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency (BTHA)

The Business Transportation and Housing Agency (which includes Caltrans) administers a revolving fund program for local governments to finance infrastructure improvements, including city streets. This is a loan program for which the City can apply and receive funding from \$250,000 to \$10 million with terms of up to 30 years for a broad range of projects.

For more information go to: www.ibank.ca.gov

Infill Infrastructure Grant Program (IIG)

Administered by the CA Department of Housing and Community Development, the IIG program offers grant funding for infrastructure improvements to support residential or mixed-use infill development projects. Eligible activities and improvements include development or rehabilitation of parks or open space, water, sewer or other utility service improvements, streets, roads, transit linkages, transit shelters, sidewalks and streetscape improvements. Cities and Counties can apply as a joint applicant with a developer to fund infrastructure improvements associated with a specific infill project or for an infill area.

For more information, visit: <http://www.hcd.ca.gov/fa/iig/>

Or contact regional representatives: Brian Gibson (916) 324-1426 and Kurt Weber (916) 324-1551

Green Trees for The Golden State

Cities and counties can apply for grant funding for community forestry tree planting projects and up to three years of initial maintenance. Minimum grant award is \$7,5000 and the maximum award is \$250,000.

For more information, visit: http://www.ufe.org/files/grantinfo/Green_Trees.html or contact Darla Mills, Fresno (559) 243-4109, darla.mills@fire.ca.gov

For other possible funding sources for downtown trees:

<http://www.californiareleaf.org/grants.html>

Recreation and Park Grants offered by the California State Parks Department

Proposition 84 - Statewide Park Program

\$368 million made available through the Sustainable Communities and Climate Change Reduction chapter in Prop 84. Funding available for the creation and development of new parks and new recreation opportunities in underserved communities in California. Projects include athletic fields and courts, community centers, community gardens, non-motorized neighborhood and regional recreational trails, open space, picnic areas, play grounds, skate parks, restroom buildings, parking lots, and additions that enhance the park use and appearance (i.e. landscaping). Cities, counties, districts, non-profits and joint powers authorities can apply and partnerships are encouraged. Grant guidelines were adopted April 1, 2009, but the due date for applications has not been set due to the “bond freeze”.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is the state agency that is responsible for administering the federal Recreational Trails Program, which provides funding for recreational trails and trails-related projects. The program provides funding for acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property for recreational trails, development of trailside and trailhead facilities, and construction of trails. RTP funding made available nationwide has steadily increased over the years, with \$85 million authorized for the Federal Fiscal Year 2009.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Administered by CA State Parks, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is offered annually to cities, counties and districts. Funds can be used to acquire or develop outdoor recreation areas and facilities. Communities can use these funds to build trails, picnic areas, and preserve natural and cultural areas.

Habitat Conservation Fund

Approximately \$2 million per year is made available to cities, counties, and districts to preserve natural resources, such as fish, wildlife, and native plant resources. Funds can be used to acquire land and develop trails or develop programs that bring residents into park and wildlife areas.

For more information on all the above grants administered by CA State Parks Department, visit: http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=24820

Or contact Bonnie Morse West at (916) 651-7740, bwest@parks.ca.gov

Local Funding Opportunities

City and County Public Works Funds

The City of Dos Palos and Merced County can add striping, traffic calming, sidewalks, curbs and similar elements to other projects that already involve digging up or rebuilding street sections. For example, drainage and sewer improvements, utility under-grounding projects, and routine street resurfacing are all possibilities. The greater the extent of the reconstruction, the greater the opportunity for adding elements such as curb extensions and medians at a lower cost than if implemented as stand-alone projects. The City is currently in line to receive \$200,000 of Federal stimulus funding under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ACRRA) to construct and improve sidewalks in the downtown area, which upon attainment provides an immediate opportunity to help leverage some of the costs associated with recommendations outlined in the plan.

New on-street bike lanes and paved shoulder pedestrian paths are proposed as part of this plan. Some segments can be implemented at fairly low cost through simple striping to demarcate dedicated pedestrian and bicycle travel paths. However, while vehicle lanes are “self-cleaning” (i.e. the friction of vehicles’ tires keeps debris out of vehicles path of travel), pedestrian/bicycle pathways do not benefit from a similar self-cleaning function and often receive considerable debris from the vehicle travel lanes. In order to optimize the usefulness of the proposed bike lanes and paved shoulder pedestrian pathways, the City and the County (for unincorporated areas) will need to explore ways to arrange for street sweeping of this important infrastructure. Options to consider include:

- Existing consumer garbage fees provide funding for the City to sweep city streets, using its own labor and equipment. This practice should be continued and streets with bike lanes and paved shoulder pedestrian paths should be prioritized for more frequent sweeping (at least bi-weekly but ideally weekly).
- For streets in unincorporated areas where proposed striped bicycle lanes or paved shoulder bicycle or pedestrian paths exist outside the vehicle travel path, the City should work with the County to develop protocols for street-sweeping in these areas, such as:
 - Cost sharing, where the County would subsidize the City to extend regular street sweeping services to priority pedestrian and bicycle streets (such as with a ¼ mile of schools, parks, and community centers) within the unincorporated areas of the City’s sphere of influence. This service could be provided either by the City, a private contractor, or Caltrans (which currently sweeps the shoulders on Highway 33 with a sweeper attached to the back of a service truck).
 - The City and County could facilitate arrangements with private property owners, homeowner’s associations, and/or community volunteers to manually sweep key street segments such as street frontage on any block with a school or park. Private individuals/organizations would need to have liability insurance to provide this service and would need to lease or purchase a small “green machine” sweeping machine or a sweeper mechanism that can be attached to a small multi-purpose vehicle (MUV) or even a passenger car or truck.¹
 - To keep costs low during a pilot period, street sweeping could be done on an “on-demand / as needed” basis rather than a regular schedule. Under this system, city staff or citizens (typically this will be pedestrians and bicyclists that use these routes) could request street-sweeping for streets when they need it (signage or pavement plaques could be posted at periodic intervals to alert users what number to call to request street-sweeping).

¹ For more information on these types of “green machine” street sweepers, see www.appliedsweepers.com/index.aspx. Examples of small multi-purpose vehicles (MUVs) include the John Deere “Gator” (www.deere.com/en_US/ProductCatalog/GC/category/GC_UV.html) or Honda “Big Red” (powersports.honda.com/offroad/muv.aspx). Examples of street sweeper attachments for ATVs or passenger vehicle/trucks can be found at www.wadsworthquads.co.uk/Attach/wessex/ac120swpcoll.htm.

Public and Private Cost Sharing

Some cities require developers and property owners to install or help pay for infrastructure improvements (streets, sidewalks, trails, landscaping, etc.) through individual development agreements. On a larger scale, the City of Dos Palos or Merced County could explore using development fees with a capital improvements program to help fund recommendations. To avoid legal challenge of the City's or County's right to levy these fees, care must be taken to apply this strategy only where there is a clear link establishing that travel generated by the private project will use the facility to be funded with the fees.

Currently the City maintains a "50/50" arrangement with private property owners for sidewalk repair and maintenance. With this arrangement, the property owner pays for materials and the City personnel make the repairs (e.g. "pays for" the labor).² Due to extremely limited City resources, limited incomes of many property owners, and the dispersed, semi-rural and rural nature of development in areas of Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos there is a significant backlog in repairs of existing sidewalks, American Disability Act compliance curb cut and ramp retrofits, and construction of new sidewalks.

To address the sidewalk repair backlog, the City could adopt an ordinance requiring periodic proof of compliance with sidewalk standards. There are several potential mechanisms to accomplish this, including:

- Whenever properties are sold ("regulation at sale");
- Whenever properties are permitted for expansion or renovation; and/or
- Whenever commercial properties apply for or renew a business license.

Under this arrangement, property owners pay the complete cost (materials and labor) of sidewalk repairs, ADA retrofits, or new construction upon determination by a City inspector that repairs or construction are required. Repairs or construction must be completed prior to title transfer or issuance of a business license. By requiring repairs at regular trigger points, the backlog of substandard sidewalks is gradually addressed over time. In the case of regulation at time of sale option, the property owner is able to make the repairs at the same time when they realize a capital gain on the real estate transaction.³ The City and County would still be responsible for district-wide or corridor-wide sidewalk repair or construction projects.⁴ Maintenance of existing street trees and planting of new street trees could also be required under this same mechanism.

The City's existing Subdivision Code allows for development impact fees (in lieu of land dedication) to be made for "pedestrian walkways or bikeways," improvements to "major thoroughfares" as well as "other public improvements" subject to certain requirements.

In addition, the Subdivision Code allows the City to require developers to pay for improvements that provide "supplemental" benefit to a geographic area beyond the subdivision site proper and then reimburse the developer for the pro-rated cost of the non-localized improvements (via user fees, etc.). This financing method could be used for pedestrian and bicycle connectivity improvements, but since such facilities are not subject to user fees, reimbursements to the subdivider could occur via permit fee reductions and/or tax abatement over a pre-determined number of years.

2 The exception is for emergency repairs to correct ADA violations and "known hazardous conditions"; in this situation, the City provides for both materials and labor.

3 Over time, real estate prices adjust to reflect this known transfer cost, allowing buyers and sellers to negotiate responsibility for this regulatory cost.

*4 The Los Angeles City Council is considering a proposal to require property owners to replace damaged sidewalks or pay the city a fee when they sell their property (www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-sidewalk-21feb21,1,4243807.story). For more information, see Donald Shoup, "Regulating Land Use at Sale," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 62, No. 3, Summer, 1996, pp. 354-372 (http://shoup.bol.ucla.edu/Regulation_at_Sale.pdf).*

In addition to the development impact fees described above, the City should consider expanding the potential use of park development fees and park and recreation fees (as detailed in the Subdivision Code) to include pedestrian and bike improvements that provide access to parks, because the utility of park is limited for major portions of the Dos Palos, Midway, and South Dos Palos populations if the only safe and convenient access is by auto.

Special Districts

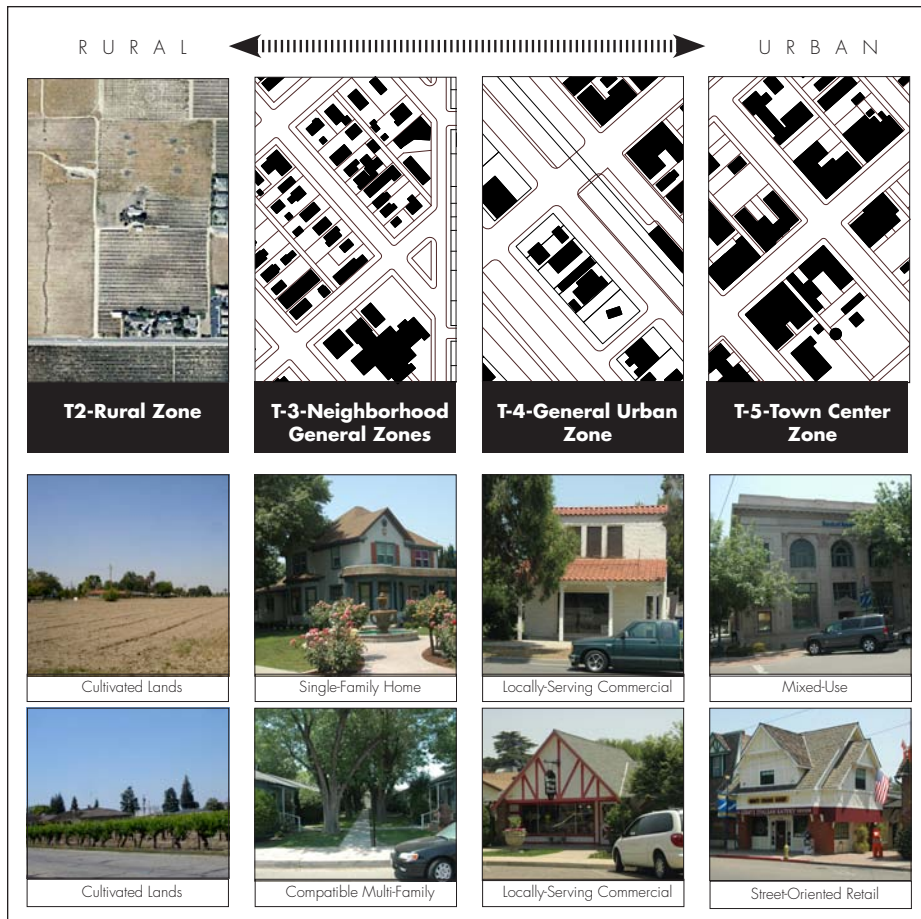
A special district such as a Business Improvement District (BID) can provide up-front and on-going funding for projects benefiting specific commercial areas. Business-Based Improvement Districts are best suited for marketing, special events, and smaller expenditures like signage. Property-Based BIDs typically generate more revenues and are better suited for more expensive projects like landscaping. Landscaping and lighting districts are also sometimes established for streetscape improvements and maintenance.

Other types of facilities and infrastructure districts are sometimes created for parks, drainage and sewage. Special districts generally assess a charge levied upon parcels of real property within the district's boundaries to pay for "local improvements." So unlike redevelopment, to fund such a district it is necessary to charge an assessment or fee to property owners and/or merchants.

Volunteer Initiatives and Private Donations

In addition to funding sources, programs can be created for volunteer initiatives such as "Adopt-a" programs where individuals or groups engage in beautification projects such as tree plantings. A program can also fund some projects, such as public art, by enlisting private donors to sponsor downtown enhancement activities. These programs can be administered by the City or by other community organizations.

Form-Based Coding



The non-profit Form-Based Codes Institute offers the following definition for Form-Based Codes:

- Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land-use types, permissible property uses, and the control of development intensity through simple numerical parameters (e.g., FAR, dwellings per acre, height limits, setbacks, parking ratios).

Form-based codes are often based on the concept of the transect, which suggests that places can be organized in varying degrees of intensity, from least urban at the rural edge, to most urban at the center. In the case of Dos Palos, the transect is very apparent and visible in a very short distance moving from the edge of town to downtown. The transect could be used as a tool for determining what new development should be like in order to ensure that it is both appropriate for its location and compatible with the existing community.

Above: Transect diagram for a similar Central Valley town. From left to right, the transect starts at its least urban in the "T-2" zone, where farmland and associated farmhouses dominate the landscape. "T-3" or "Neighborhood General" follows, which would comprise most of the Dos Palos community: single family homes and related structures. "T-4" or "General Urban" would refer to buildings typically found around the edges of downtown Dos Palos. "T-5" or "Town Center" would refer to Dos Palos at its most urban, largely around the core blocks of Center Avenue.

Draft: 01.12.05 **Section X.X.X: Section Title**

NC: Neighborhood Center Standards

Key
 --- Property Line
 - - - Build-to Line (BTL)

Building Placement		Use	
Build-to Line (Distance from Property Line)			
Front	0'	Ground Floor	Service, Retail, or Recreation, Education & Public Assembly*
Side	0' min.; 10' max.	Upper Floor(s)	Residential or Service*
Street Side, Corner Lot	0'	*See Table x.x for specific uses	
Setback			
Rear			
Adjacent to residential	15'	Height	
Adjacent to any other use	10'	Building Minimum	16'
Building Form			
Street Facade Built-to BTL	80% min.	Building Maximum	3 stories
Street Side, Corner Lot Built-to	30% min.	Finish Ground Floor Level	12" max. above sidewalk
Lot Width	100' max.	First Floor Ceiling Height	12' min. clear
		Upper Floor(s) Ceiling Height	8' min. clear
Notes			
Street facade must be built to BTL within 30' of every corner.		Mansard roof forms are not allowed.	
All floors must have a primary ground-floor entrance which faces the street.			
Rear facing buildings, loading docks, overhead doors, and other service entries are prohibited on street facades.			
Any section along the BTL at a street edge that is not built on must be defined by a 4' to 4'6" fence or stucco or masonry wall.			

2-4 Grass Valley Development Code

Section X.X.X: Section Title **Draft: 01.12.05**

Key
 --- Property Line
 - - - Build-to Line (BTL)

Parking		Encroachments	
Location			
Distance from Property Line			
Front Setback	20' min.	Galleries	12' max.
Side Setback	0'	Upper-Story Balconies	8' max.
Rear Setback	5' min.	Bay Windows	4' max.
Required Spaces			
Ground Floor			
Uses < 3,000 sf	No off-street parking required	Street Side, Corner Lot	
Uses > 3,000 sf	1 space/500 sf	Galleries	12' max.
Upper Floor(s)			
Residential uses	1 space/unit; .5 space/studio	Upper-Story Balconies	8' max.
Other uses	1 space/300 sf	Bay Windows	4' max.
Notes			
On corner lots, parking drive shall not be located on primary street.			
Shared drives are encouraged between adjacent lots to minimize curb cuts along the street.			
Parking may be provided off-site within 1,300' or as shared parking.			
Bicycle parking must be provided in a secure environment.			
See page x.x for further parking specifications.			
Front			
Rear			
Upper-Story Balconies			
Upper-Story Bay Windows			
Frontage Type: Galleries			
Depth			
Height			
Notes			
Upper story galleries facing the street must not be used to meet circulation requirements.			
2' max. clear distance between gallery columns and curb.			

2-5 Grass Valley Development Code

Sample Codes

Form-based codes typically include detailed standards regulating building placement, general use, building height, parking, allowable encroachments and frontage types, and allowable land uses. They also often include illustrative drawings intended to direct the character of expected development.

For additional information on form-based codes, please visit the Form-Based Codes Institute's web site at www.formbasedcodes.org.

Above: Typical code pages from a form-based code developed for Grass Valley, California.

Appendix

chapter **5**

Charrette Flyer

Plan the Future of Dos Palos!

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Greater Dos Palos Mobility Plan

➔ Work with nationally known walkable communities expert Dan Burden to develop ideas for enhancing the streets and neighborhoods of Dos Palos, Midway and South Dos Palos.

➔ Join your friends and neighbors to create strategies for calming traffic, improving safety, and revitalizing the community.

➔ A professional design team will translate your ideas into a vision and a plan to make Dos Palos a more walkable, bicycle and transit friendly place for residents, schools and businesses.

For more info: Michael Smith, City of Dos Palos, (209) XXX-XXXX

Please Join Us!

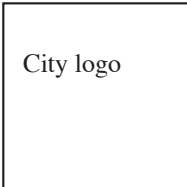
Thursday, February 26
 OPENING COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
 ➔ 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 28
 WALKING TOUR & DESIGN FAIR
 ➔ 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Tuesday, March 3
 PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN
 ➔ 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

All events at Bernhard Marks
 Elementary School Cafeteria
 1717 Valeria Street

**Free Food & Refreshments
 Provided!**



Organized by the Local Government Commission in partnership with the City of Dos Palos.

Funded by a Caltrans Environmental Justice: Context Sensitive Environmental Justice Grant.

Focus Group Meetings

Interagency Focus Group Meeting

11am, Thursday, February 26, 2009

Dos Palos City Hall

Attendees:

Bill Nicholson, Merced County Planning Department
 Brain Walker, Dos Palos Unified School District
 Darrell Fonseca, City of Dos Palos
 Dewayne Jones, City of Dos Palos
 Jesse Brown, MCAG
 John Gedney, Caltrans, District 10
 Manuela Sousa, City of Dos Palos
 Michael Smith, City of Dos Palos
 Rich Green, MCAG

Dan Burden, Walkable Communities/Glatting Jackson
 Paul Zyfosky, Local Government Commission
 Josh Meyer, Local Government Commission
 Stefan Pellegrini, Opticos Design
 Chris Janson, Opticos Design
 Jennifer Block, Opticos Design

Notes:

The meeting facilitator, Dan Burden, asked everyone in the room to answer this question:

What are the most important things that should not be overlooked in this project?

The plan needs to represent the youth. The City of Dos Palos needs a recreation center. Currently there is a good use of school facilities (i.e. school gym and pool) but there needs to be more options for recreation.

Dos Palos is geographically isolated, making it hard for families to reach activities. Currently, there is little for the youth to do, other than organized sports. There are youth sport leagues but these only go up to 12 years old.

The council has been involved with the idea of a recreation center – there is a group trying to become a non-profit to pursue a recreation center.

How do kids get to school?

Most kids are bused in to school, with buses going as far as 25 miles away. Geographically the Dos Palos school district is huge.

The schools are in need of modernization and infrastructure improvements. The City worked with the school district to apply for a Safe Routes to School grant, which focused on three different schools to improve infrastructure but the grant was not awarded.

The school district has lost 121 students in 15 years. Families are leaving, therefore, young kids are leaving. Due to the recent adjustment of the Merced-Fresno County line, Bryant Middle School (which used to be in Fresno County) is now included in Merced County.

There is limited water availability in region. Where growth occurs is going to be greatly influenced by the availability of water. A Joint Powers Authority was created to expand sewer, secure water supply and build treatment plants.

Years ago the County had their own separate plan for Midway and South Dos Palos (SDP) but abandoned those plans when the City completed their General Plan update in 1991. In their General Plan update, the City included Midway and South in their Sphere of Influence. The City is the driving force of growth in the area. The annexation of SDP and Midway by the City has been around for a long time. There is pent up historic animosity between the communities of SDP and Midway with the City.

The County is going through their General Plan Update. Smart Growth is central. It is recognized by the County that community level planning is key for implementing Smart Growth but Merced County is doing much more general planning.

Interested in retaining jobs within the agriculture sector. Incorporated communities are looking for ways to expand value added agriculture in their communities. Del Monte used to have the biggest packaging shed in the County. One of the largest wineries Gallo, if not the largest, is located in the Central Valley. Also Hilmar Cheese, Foster Farms, and almond processing create jobs by having their products shipped out of the county.

Agriculture is changing. Consolidation has caused industries to leave (rice processing plants have recently left). More cotton and dairies (more mechanized crops) in the area

One rice facility is operating right now.

Money is needed for fixing current infrastructure issues and for new projects. The City needs money to fix streets, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters. Most streets are in bad shape. There is a high water table and clay soil, which create problems and expensive road construction. Public Works has worked with school district to identify problem areas around schools and put together grant application for Safe Routes to School.

Street trees also need to be replaced. The City has had good luck with Rio Grande Ash trees. Rio Grande Ash trees are resistant to mistletoe and borers. The City also has Modesto Ash. Bradford Pears have not worked out as well.

Public Works is interested in how to prioritize projects for funding and how to get the most “bang out of our buck” with current funds.

There is need for pathways to connect civic destinations, schools and facilities. There used to be a bike path running down Valeria Street to Bryant Street but it is in disrepair. A lot of people are on foot and motorized wheelchairs. These people need to be linked to destinations. The main grocery store is across State Route 33.

Consider adding Wi-fi in town.

Kids walking to school are hesitant to cross the highway.

Improvements are needed for storefronts and sidewalks in downtown.

An overview of Merced County was provided by and MCAG representative: Looking at Merced County, the growth projections, which is 2.3% on an annual basis, depends on available infrastructure. Dial-a-ride provides regional service but not inter-city transit. Smaller communities are usually the older communities. Agriculture is the base industry but is not a growth industry, meaning that kids can become educated but will not come back to the area to work. The region needs to diversify work opportunities for kids to come back. The nearest medical care is the Golden Valley health clinic in town with Los Banos and Merced both having large hospitals.

The distances between Midway, SDP, and the City are very large and it is not realistic to think this area will be filled in with new development, therefore, looking at alternative routes to connect these areas is appropriate.

The area needs jobs and employment but not housing because there are considerable vacancies.

The plan should reflect the demographics and culture of the area. The plan should retain old town feeling and should not change feeling with “modern” architecture or design solutions. The City has a lot of older senior citizens, the population is mostly white, and there are a lot of 2nd-3rd generation industrial workers. The City has a very young population, tending to be Hispanic. 50% of the school age population lives outside of city limits. Kids tend to graduate and leave. This has been going on for 30-40 years.

The City has a redevelopment agency but has not become a tax increment-collecting agency.

The City is a participant in the Enterprise Zone to promote jobs. It is attached to zoning (commercial and industrial land) and offers tax benefits and tax breaks for those areas. (Rich Green is apart of that and can share more information.)

UC Merced holds classes locally in the City.

Realistic constraints should be a reflected in the plan as well as implementation and prioritization. Safe Routes to School and Highway Safety improvement programs will be announced soon, which can fund intersection improvements and median projects.

This project is a great opportunity to tie into the Blueprint Process and strategize economic development. The State is putting great emphasis on regional planning. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments came up with great strategy regarding impacts to farmland. They identified challenges and offered a menu of opportunities that decision makers could select from, (ex. Identify locations for trees to sequester carbon). SB 732 (companion bill to SB 375) – puts into place economic strategy council to encourage and provide incentives for locations based on Blueprint planning.

MCAG has completed the first phase of the San Joaquin Blueprint. Incorporating Blueprint principles into urban forms will be a challenge for smaller towns. This plan could visually demonstrate different urban types. This plan should identify potential opportunities to incorporate San Joaquin Blueprint principles.

Identify new places for facilities through coordination with Valley counties and communities to position facilities appropriately.

This region has high salinity soils, which can support crops used for bio diesel.

Wetlands in the area could provide additional tourism. Duck hunting is a major tourism draw in October through January. The Resource Conservation District and the Grasslands District were brought up in the conversation. Playing into this theme is the question of balancing water for urban uses and water for environmental uses. West of the City is wetland habitat while North of the City is more appropriate for agriculture. Los Banos is right near grasslands and this is affecting how it grows. The Great Dos Palos area is right along Pacific Coast Flyway and near a national wildlife refuge. Santa Fe grade also goes right through this wetland area.

Where will growth go now that Merced County has a “new” chunk of land from Fresno?

Growth should occur where there are the least amount of barriers. Land near Midway would be more appropriate since the land can not support agriculture. The City services Midway and SDP with infrastructure (sewer, water) therefore it makes sense to grow that way. There is no pressure to grow into Fresno County.

Business Focus Group Meeting

3pm, Thursday, February 26, 2009

Dos Palos City Hall

Attendees:

Hope Ortega, Dos Palos Resident

John Foppe, Dos Palos Merchant

Mary Clements, Dos Palos Resident

Michael Smith, City of Dos Palos

Dan Burden, Walkable Communities/Glatting Jackson

Paul Zyfosky, Local Government Commission

Josh Meyer, Local Government Commission

Stefan Pellegrini, Opticos Design

Chris Janson, Opticos Design

Jennifer Block, Opticos Design

How many active businesses are there in the downtown?

About 40.

How are they doing?

Some are doing better than others. Some have higher profile than others.

How many businesses have more than five (5) employees?

Primos, Nicollettis, drug store, town and country grocery, and insurance company.

What is the leakage?

Trying to track through sales taxes but it is hard to do, but whenever a big store opens we notice a dip.

Have to go out of town for simple commodities. Also, have to pay more for less quality in town.

Many go out of town for groceries. If you have transportation, you can go out of town for lower prices and fresher produce but for basics amenities, people do buy here.

What about meals? Good variety? Not enough?

There are a lot of places to eat. A lot of people do try to stay in Dos Palos for most shopping.

Handful of restaurants, but they're struggling with the economy. There is also the perception that chains restaurants are not allowed, won't come or are too far away.

There is the problem that there is nothing to attract people here.

What could you do that would make people come?

Years ago, an Italian restaurant had a Friday fish night that was a draw. Lots of people came.

After games on Friday nights, it would be great if we just had a place open for coffee and pie.

There has been talk about “theming” the shopping area, (e.g., like a cheese store, or meats store like in Gustine) and create some outdoor seating (i.e. Paris-like theme). People like to eat, that is a draw.

What about a Farmers Market?

The Farmers Market is not going to continue. There are not many vendors participating and no one wanted to pay the \$100 fee because they can't make enough to cover their costs.

What about community gardens?

They are a good idea. There are empty lots downtown. Community gardens could dress up the lots. Would need water, but not much.

There is a fair amount of youth vandalism, which could be problem.

Not many opportunities for kids to work. Jobs here and there, but no career opportunities. ROP (rural opportunities program) high school program helps a little.

If you could have 5 businesses, which ones would they be?

General retail store.

Independent hardware store (not like Lowes and Home Depot).

Fast food restaurant would help keep kids from speeding to other places for food.

There are not enough people on the highway, so the City can't attract businesses here. They don't see the potential.

There is poor presentation of businesses. Need to improve the presentation. Need to get businesses to clean up, too cluttered and messy.

Many housing foreclosures in Los Banos. Equity farmers and gas prices killed them.

Need a focal point or cohesiveness to make the town come alive.

Would like to see Center Ave. become a village. Center Ave. is the oldest street in town.

Could try live theater to get community involved. Had a good drama program at Junior High. Firebaugh does live melodrama show at the church.

Have the downtown owned by just a few owners. There is fear to upgrade because of property tax.

Several thousand people working downtown, but not eating here during the day.

If 40 businesses were invited, how many would come?

Probably twelve. People are too busy.

Has the town ever had a fund for façade improvements?

Yes, once had low interest loans.

Town once had car dealerships, 2 drugstores, gas stations, etc. before I-5 development. Now everything is in Los Banos.

History: started with South Dos Palos, found out the water was bad - hard, so the town moved up to here (used to be Colony Center); the Dos Palos Y used to be small highway-oriented community, then wiped out by I-5.

Midway and South Dos Palos (SDP) Focus Group Meeting

5:30 pm, Friday, February 27, 2009

Carver Center

Meeting Attendees:

Barbara Weaver
 Betty Digg
 Beverly Jackson
 Carlos Mendoza
 Irene String
 Katherine Plant
 Kathy Fowler
 Laura Putt
 Mary Henderson
 Otis Manning
 Rebecca Gulley
 Rebecca Ruetel
 Roberto Walker
 Vella Ingram

Dan Burden, Walkable Communities/Glatting Jackson
 Paul Zyfosky, Local Government Commission
 Josh Meyer, Local Government Commission
 Stefan Pellegrini, Opticos Design
 Jeremy Nelson, Nelson/Nygaard
 Michael Smith, City of Dos Palos

Josh Meyer explained the project, covered Thursday's presentation, and announced Saturday events.

Dan Burden asked everyone in the room to answer the question: *What are the most important "things" and/or needs that should not be overlooked in this project?*

There is a need for jobs and job training. There are no manufacturing jobs nearby. The main employment is agriculture. Unemployment rate in this area is extreme. A lot of people don't have driver license to get to jobs.

SDP and Midway need sidewalks and streetlights.

Need more bus stops to Merced and Los Banos. Lot of people don't have driver licenses. Currently there is a bus stop at Carver Center and you wouldn't want to leave a car abandoned here all day for safety reasons because the Carver Center does not have adequate lighting and is geographically isolated. A good stop would be "chics" a South Dos Palos store.

There needs to be more frequent pick-ups and drop-offs. Bus stops are too far apart and the bus leaves too early and you can't get around in town if you don't have a car

Is there dial-a-ride?

No, transit is a fixed schedule.

There are no "puppet" phones (aka pay phones) at Carver Center making it difficult to call in case you need help.

There are a lot of stray dogs.

No lights at bus stop.

Kids can't walk to the park. There needs to be bike trails.

This area needs clean up. There are weeds, abandoned properties, and skeleton buildings. Property owners should have to clean up abandoned properties, etc.

The County Park needs to be renovated. There are restrooms but they are locked, no shade, potholes in grass, kids can't run there, does not have sitting for adults, people use it in the evening but don't stay too long because of the mosquitoes, and there is a one time clean up of the park. The park is big enough to fit a lot of amenities

SDP is treated as separate in the region. Part of the city but do not received benefit. Needs of community are not met. The people that don't help us is the City.

Poor water quality. Participant mentions he is tired of buying bottled water to drink. The water quality is not good. When the Joints Power Authority started up there was supposed to be good water and sewer but that is not the case today.

Where do you go get water?

Chics (grocery/gas store in SDP)

Large trucks and speeders make streets unsafe. Housing authority on Lexington has lots of children playing there and trafics is very bad, especially big trucks in the summer time. Cars and trucks need to slow down. Pedestrian have been hurt and killed. A lot of people use this street for walking. No sheriffs patrol there. This is also the main fare connection between I-5 to 152.

Need separated bike trails and streets are always flooded.

Question from audience: How often are streets swept and cleaned?

Answer from Mike Smith from Public Works from the City of Dos Palos: Merced County does not have a street sweeper so they will not maintain streets.

Crossing the highway is hard. Participant has to cross the highway to pick-up the mail and needs to wait around 5 minutes to cross the highway. She lives on Elgin Ave/SR 33 and is not allowed to move her mailbox. No one lives on opposite side of street. [this caused a reaction (mostly confusion) from design consultants]

Question from audience: Who do we contact to check up on what happens? Who is our representative?

Answer: County Supervisor Jerry O'banion and County departments. LGC can identify who from the County residents should contact in the report.

Question from the audience: How can SDP apply for grants?

Answer: LGC and others would need to partner with the County to work in unincorporated areas. LGC can put together a section on how the county and others might pursue grants.

Question from the audience: We are the stepchildren of the region and do not feel included in the city. Are we part of the city or not? Is annexation going to take place because SDP and Midway need representation? Answer: Dan Burden confirmed that this project will make sure their needs are included.

Water rights were taken away from land (i.e. the Ranchwood Development) in SDP. People don't know if they should buy property and build because they don't know if they will have water, all these houses used to have water rights. No one told residents.

Can't have septic tanks in Midway anymore.

Question from Stefan Pellegrini: Do you enjoy the rural atmosphere? Do you have freedom to do things here and not in a town (e.g., you can have chickens, animals?) Do you want to be separate? Do you want to be apart of a larger community?

Residents want a grant to fix up the community first before annexation. There are craters in the streets in Dos Palos. There is concern that the City will fix up there problems first and overlook SDP and Midway if the three communities were to become one. There are sections of Blossom with no street lights

and sidewalks and this is in the City.

If you had safer more comfortable streets, would you still want to go up to the City for services? There could be ways to join up with city and receive some services but you will get other challenges. If you stay unincorporated, you could try that.

Question from audience: Is money in the grant allocated towards SDP and Midway? Answer: Yes, for planning only.

Dan Burden noted that a lot of what people were saying is what was identified at the previous night (at the opening/kick off meeting)

It was decided that LGC and consultants would conduct a separate walk audit at the park (Shain and Reynolds) for SDP and Midway residents.

Opening Meeting: Values and Priorities Greater Dos Palos
Thursday, February 26, 2009

Complete List of Values:

1. Friendship, Family, Neighborhood
2. Small Town, Rural
3. Quiet, Peace
4. Jobs, Business, Shops
5. Safety
6. Transportation, Less Traffic, Bike Paths
7. Schools, Education
8. Green, Trees
9. Farming, Agriculture
10. Faith, Church
11. Community
12. Cleanliness
13. Caring, Helpful, Belonging
14. Affordability
15. Weather

Complete List of Priorities:

- Parks and Recreation for Kids - 22
- Sidewalks - 19
- Bike Trails - 17
- Fix Roads - 17
- Youth Center - 14
- More Business, Shopping and Franchises - 12
- Street Lights - 11
- Plazas and Fun - 11
- Code Enforcement - 9
- Nice Downtown - 9
- Police and Fire Service in South Dos Palos - 9
- Jobs - 9
- Water Fountain and Park - 8
- Drainage - 7
- Trees - 6
- Trash Cans - 6
- Public Bathrooms - 6
- Upgrade Library - 6
- Infrastructure - 5
- Skate Park - 5
- Security Cameras - 4
- Crossing Highway 33 - 4

- Vegetable Market - 3
- Space for Families - 3
- Slow Down Valeria - 3
- Slow Down Christian - 2
- Dog Park - 2
- Safer Schools - 2
- Senior Center - 1

Public Events Attendees

Participant List from Collective Public Meetings:

Opening Meeting – Thursday, February 26, 2009

Community Workshop – Saturday, February 28, 2009

Presentation of the Plan – Tuesday, March 2, 2009

Albert Fally	Eva Corchado	Maria Gama
Ana Mijare	Evelyn Adams	Maria Alcanna Maria de
Andrew McCullough	Felix Rivera	Jesus Lopez
Angelica Nevarez	Fima Vasquez	Mark Trull
Angelica Rivers	Flavio Lopez	Mary Henderson
Annie Murchisol	Fred Loughridge	Mary Cleniente
Astonie Gove	Gerardo Nevarez	Melinda Vincent
Augustus Mosley	Gil McCullough	Michael Smith
Barbara William	Ilene Macias	Mike McGlynn
Barry Mann	Irene	Nancy Gama
Bill Nicholson	Jamie Mejitt	Neftali
Brian Guerrero	Jan Grey	Odise Manning
Brooke Kelley	Jan Sweeb	Olivia Sanchez
Carlos Mendoza	Javier Vasquez	Pam Bunthoff
Carolina Zith	Jeannie Mont	Panda Bennett
Cenn Duelta	Jerry O'Banion	Phyllis Leggs
Claude	Jerry Antonetti	Rebecca Rimentil
Claudia Corchado	Jim Kelley	Rebecca Gulley
Cynthia	John Foppe	Relee
Darrell Fonseca	Johnny Mays	Richard Davis
David Cory	Jose Mijares	Robert B.
Dennis Walker	Jose Rafael	Rosara Gonzalez
Dennise Walter	Josie Rodreguez	Rosario Moreno
Eddie Mae Finny	Julie Reynolds	Rosio McCullough
Edith Johnson	Linda Macias	Sharon Brady
Edmundo Corchado	Lori Flanders	Silvana Rodriguez
Edward Johnson	Marco Nevarez	Susie Stewart
Estela Mosqueda	Maria Magallanes	

Table Map Exercise

