

MOVING MECCA FORWARD

Mi Comunidad, Mi Vision, Mi Orgullo



Mecca Community Revitalization Strategy
A Report to Riverside County Departments
of Planning and Public Health

30 June 2008



**Local
Government
Commission**

Local Government Commission
Sacramento, California



Opticos Design, Inc
Berkeley, California

Moving Mecca Forward

Mecca Community Revitalization Strategy

June 30, 2008

Design Team

Opticos Design, Inc.

Stefan Pellegrini, AICP, Principal
John Miki
Jennifer Block
Brenda Fuste
1285 Gilman Street
Berkeley, California 94706
510.558.6957

Local Government Commission

Paul Zykofsky, Program Director
Scott Clark, Project Manager
1303 J Street, Suite 250
Sacramento, California 95814
916.448.1198

Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, Inc.

Dan Burden
33 E. Pine Street
Orlando, Florida 32801
866.347.2734

Christopher Illustration

Dede Christopher
405 South Ruth Street
Maryville, Tennessee 37803
865.977.0598

County Staff

Riverside County Planning Department

Damien Meins,
Assistant Planning Director
Mitra Mehta, Principal Planner
Josh Lee
Phayvanh Nanthavongdouangsy
4080 Lemon Street, 9th Floor
Riverside, California 92502
951.955.6864

Riverside County

Department of Public Health
Susan Harrington, Director
Michael Osur, Deputy Director
Sandy Wales-Jackson, Program Coordinator II
3900 Sherman Drive, Suite 1-E
P.O. Box 7600
Riverside, California 92513
951.358.7171

Funding for this project provided by a Caltrans Environmental Justice: Context Sensitive Planning Grant.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
The Chrette Process	
Project Area & The Community	
Background	5
Historical Background	
Primary Challenges	
Guiding Principles for Growth and Revitalization	
Design Proposals	10
2nd Street	
Coahuilla Street	
Typical 60' R.O.W. (Dale Kiler Road)	
Additional Street Recommendations	
Building Types	
Blocks & Neighborhoods	
Building Community	
Appendix	21
Workshop Flyers	
Charrette Participants	
Focus Group Meeting Notes	

Introduction

This report summarizes the results of a charrette held in the community of Mecca, California. A charrette is a series of interactive public events that spans several days or more and culminates in a vision or design. The Mecca charrette was conducted January 24-30, 2008 to produce a vision plan for the existing community and approximately 4,000 acres of surrounding land.

The study area is the land within the Mecca Community Council boundary - an unincorporated portion of Riverside County in the Coachella Valley just north of the Salton Sea. Mecca is predominantly a farming community with approximately 5,500 residents. The community of Mecca and the largely agricultural-zoned land around it are facing significant development pressure that could greatly impact the community's quality of life. The people of Mecca face many challenges to taking an active role in planning for their future, including economic, health, language and cultural barriers. Yet, Mecca has a strong tradition of togetherness and great pride in their community that lends itself to successful community engagement.

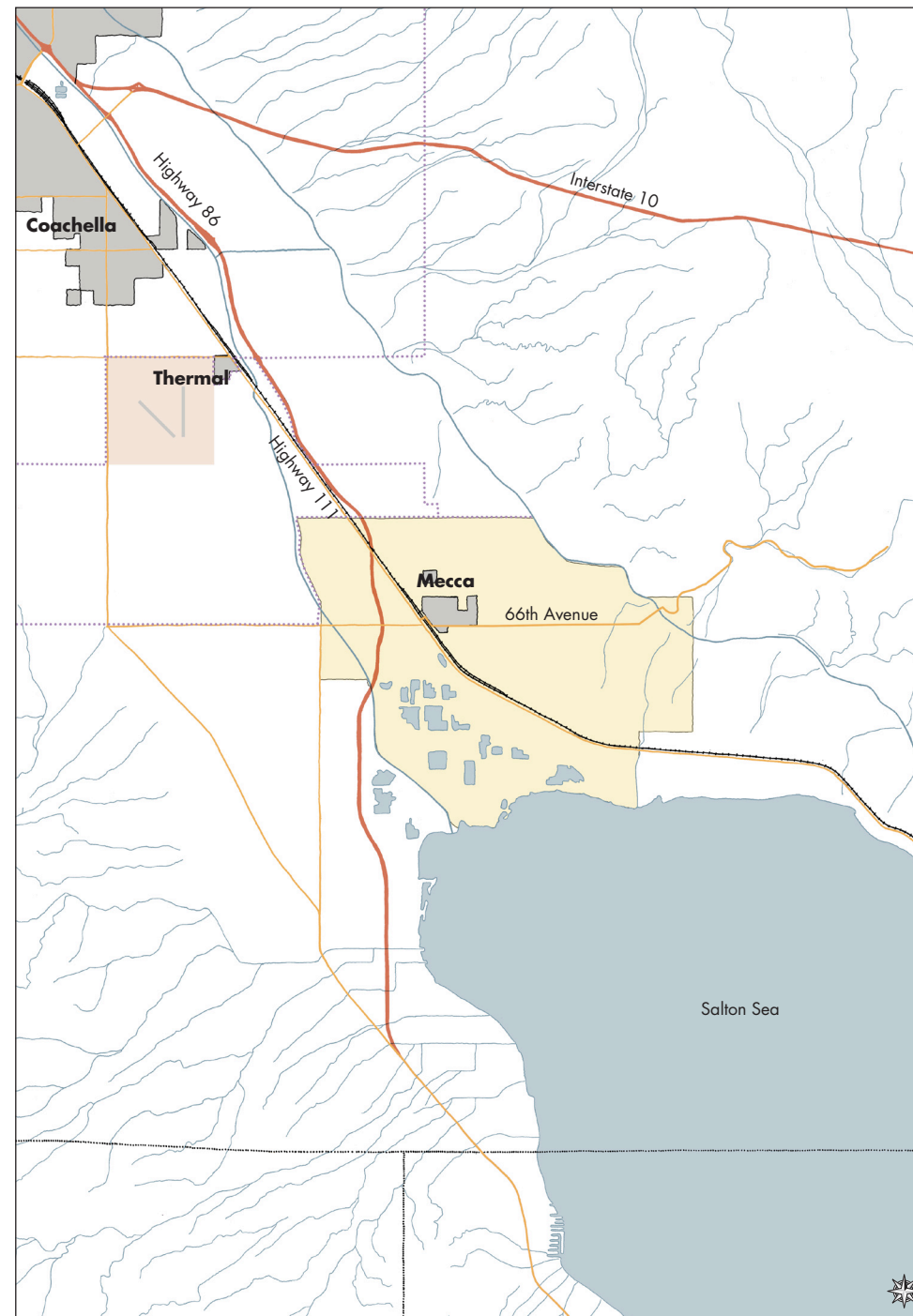
The project, "The Mecca Livable Community Planning Program," strives to engage the under-represented stakeholders of Mecca in a vision plan process that highlights community voices addressing local transportation, land-use planning, health, safety, and environmental issues. It expands upon recent efforts to improve the quality of life in Mecca by Riverside County, which has supported the community by addressing health and safety needs, and making infrastructure improvements.

The project is funded by an Environmental Justice: Context Sensitive Planning grant from the California Department of Transportation. Lead partners include the Riverside County Health Department, Riverside County Planning Department, the Local Government Commission, Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, and Opticos Design, Inc.

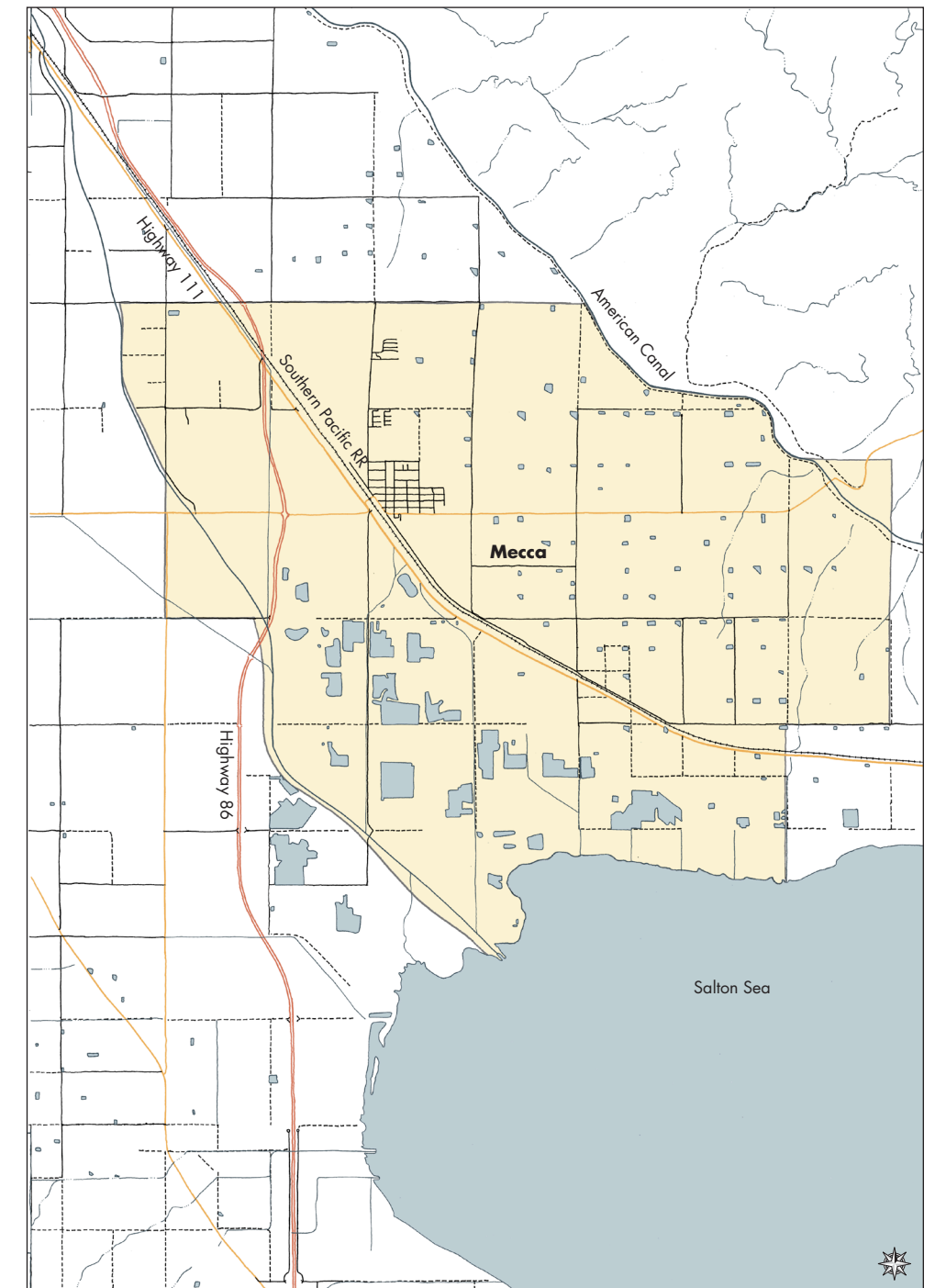
The Role of Public Health

This project is relatively unique in that Public Health took a primary role to ensure that this visioning process was initiated, successful at engaging the community, and considered health impacts of future development and redevelopment. Considering the significant health issues facing the community and the growing evidence of a link between the built environment and health, this project is a pioneering effort to incorporate health in the planning process. Yet, such collaboration is not new - the urban planning profession emerged out of nineteenth century public health initiatives - but rather represents an effort to bridge the gap between their missions that has grown over time.

Support is building nationwide for a public health role in the planning process. The professional associations for planners (APA) and physicians (AMA) have both endorsed and encouraged communities to ensure that public health is at the planning table. Public health issues, such as obesity and other chronic diseases that relate to inactivity and poor diet, provide a different perspective on the design of a community. Public health can also bring unique community engagement and education skills to the discussion, and the value they are able to add should encourage all those involved to consider what other agencies and departments may also have to offer in regards to collaboration on community plans and visions.



Above: View of the 4,000-acre Mecca Community Council boundary in relationship to the surrounding communities of the Coachella Valley and the Salton Sea.



Above: With the exception of a small, urban area at the heart of the community plan boundary, Mecca is largely an agricultural community. Much of the open land is cultivated with row crops (including table grapes and oranges) to the north of Highway 111. Fish farms are common south of the highway near the Salton Sea.

The Charrette Process

In coordination with Riverside County staff and community partners, the Local Government Commission organized a public design charrette process to produce a vision plan for the community of Mecca. The process included a multi-day series of meetings, presentations, and workshops that engaged key stakeholders including residents, property owners, and community organizations. The activities were designed to elicit their concerns and suggestions, provide information about possible solutions, and foster collaborative development of a community vision. Each stage of the process was preceded by large-scale outreach effort utilizing key community members and a professional promotora (trained bilingual peer representative). Meetings were conducted in both Spanish and English.

In order to help prepare the community for the charrette process, a pre-charrette workshop was conducted on October 23, 2007 and facilitated by the Local Government Commission. A goal of the workshop was to provide an introduction to smart growth principles and walkable community design elements. In addition, it provided an opportunity to get some initial community input on key issues. More than 80 people were in attendance.

Issues heard at the pre-charrette workshop:

- Frustration about waiting for improvements over many years
- Concerns about standing water and flooding in streets
- Paved streets and sidewalks needed
- Lighting throughout town is inadequate
- Affordable housing needed, but not like current apartments
- Better communication needed in regards to Community Council meetings
- Need for additional community resources and activities for seniors and children

The formal charrette process began with an opening event at which over 60 community members participated. It featured a cultural celebration with healthy food and mariachi, and an orientation to the charrette process. Participants discussed and voted on key values and community priorities.

The top community values identified were

- Work
- Cleanliness
- Education
- Safety
- Community
- Service



Top Left: Community members share and discuss ideas. Top Right: Community Council member Maria Machuca speaks with the community. Below: Paul Zykofsky presentation outlining smart growth principles and the connection to public health.

Top: Mariachi perform at kickoff event. Middle: Community members vote on community priorities. Below Left: Charrette team documents community ideas and concepts. Below Right: Healthy food served during the charrette.

The top community priorities identified (and the number of votes they received) were:

1. Shopping Center/WalMart (57)
2. Gymnasium (44)
3. Sidewalks (40)
4. Sports and Parks (38)
5. University (35)
6. Beautify Entrance (30)
7. Pharmacy (29)
8. Bridge Over Railroad Tracks (29)
9. Clean-up and Fix Drainage (29)
10. School Security (20)
11. Street Repair (17)

During the first two days of the charrette, focus group meetings were held involving property owners, community service groups, Riverside County staff, and property owners to gather additional details on the issues, values, and priorities.

The next event was a Saturday workshop with over 40 participants that featured a “walk audit” of the community, training on community design, and provided participants with an opportunity to put their vision on maps during interactive design table discussions. The design team then spent four days of work developing the vision plan, continuing to seek input from stakeholders throughout. The formal process ended with a community “thank you” event featuring raffle prizes and cake. A decision was made to postpone the vision plan presentation to the community until June 11, to provide additional time for County staff to discuss the recommendations.

On June 11 the final plan was presented to the Mecca Community Council and an audience of residents and other community stakeholders. The Community Council voted unanimously to support the Moving Mecca Forward vision.

The vision in this report is one outcome of the charrette process, but there were other results worth noting. Some of the challenging issues that were identified and discussed have led to relationship building between different departments within Riverside County. Community members gained new knowledge about healthy community design, and the stage was set for future discussion and visioning. There is great momentum and interest in moving Mecca forward.

It is also important to note that the charrette process is not solely responsible for the outcomes. The process was built upon the previous work of many community members and Riverside County staff, who have been committed to creating to a healthier, more livable Mecca.



Top Left: Community residents form a “bulb out” during the walking audit. **Top Right:** Residents discuss design ideas during the design tables session. **Middle Left:** Resident calls attention to drainage problems during walking audit. **Middle Center:** Project team meets with County staff and agencies. **Below Left:** Code enforcement official discusses problems unique to Mecca. **Below Middle:** Resident presents design ideas during the design tables session. **Below Right:** One group’s design tabulated design recommendations.

Project Area and The Community

Mecca has a rich, cultural history and a strong sense of community. Combined with the striking panoramic views and the kindness and strong work ethic of its people, Mecca clearly comes across as special and unique place. This section of the report addresses some of the aspects that stand out in relation to creating a vision plan for the community.

As an unincorporated part of Riverside County, the community of Mecca relies on County services. A Community Council of five members acts as a leadership link to their County Supervisor and meets monthly to discuss issues and provide recommendations to county staff. Some branches of County services are housed within the community, including the recent additions of the Mecca Community Health Clinic and Farm Worker Family Resource Center, a public library, and a sheriff sub-station.

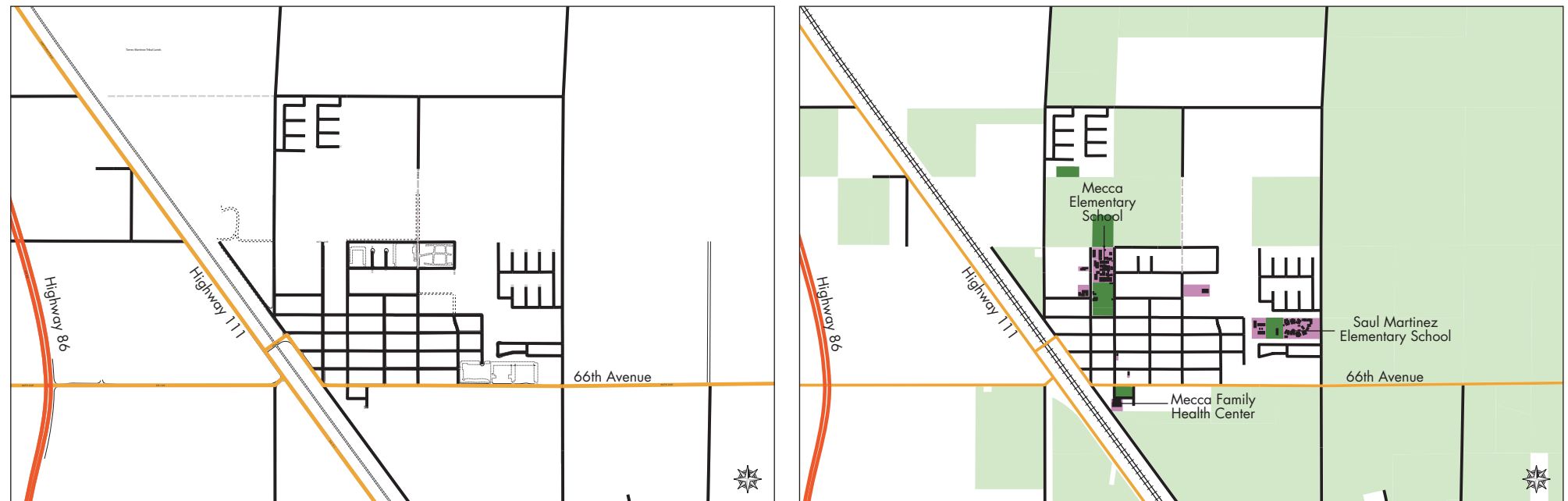
Based on census data, the median income is \$22,973, far below the national average income level of \$41,994. The ethnic make-up is almost completely Latino at 98%. The community is a much younger population with an average age of 26.2 compared with the 34.6 average in California and 36.2 for the nation as a whole. Of the population age 25 and older, only 11.1% reported earning a high school diploma, while only 2% of Mecca residents age 25 and older have a bachelor's or advanced college degree. The community suffers from high asthma and diabetes hospitalization rates.

While the people of Mecca generally consist of low-income farm workers, many families have lived there for more than one generation. There is a mix of single-family housing and multi-family housing, and a small amount of retail within the community's center. Of the approximately 1,000 housing units in Mecca, 55.3% are renter occupied and 44.7% are owner occupied. There are a limited amount of vacant lots and infill opportunities. Due to high housing costs and limited housing opportunities, many housing units are shared by extended or multiple families, resulting in overcrowding and building code violations.

Two elementary schools are located in Mecca. Older children must travel by motor vehicles to attend middle and high school outside of the community. Open space where children can safely play is limited.

In outlying areas of Community Council boundaries, there are additional smaller development tracks along the Highway 111 and 86 corridors. The remaining acreage is primarily used for agriculture including but not limited to table grapes, citrus and fish farming.

Highway 111 runs to the west side of the existing community, continuing to the Salton Sea to the south and Thermal and Indio to the north. Highway 86 runs north/south further to the west of Mecca. The Southern Pacific railroad maintains an active freight line located between Highway 111 and Mecca, but does not stop in the community. Highway 111 intersects with 4th Street, which provides the only access to Mecca across the railroad. There are no provisions for pedestrians to cross the railroad tracks and crossing any leg of the intersection of 111 and 4th Street is signed as prohibited, effectively making motor vehicles the only way to access Mecca from surrounding communities.



Top Left: Local street network illustrates Mecca's limited connections to Highways 111 and 86 via 66th Avenue and 4th Street. **Top Right:** Map of area parks and institutions illustrates little useable open space (in dark green). **Bottom:** three images describing Mecca's typical physical character, from left to right, commercial uses along 2nd Street, community members wait for the bus near Cesar Chavez Park, Mecca's informal street conditions result in sometimes haphazard and unpredictable use of public space.

Background

Prior to the charrette the Economic Development Agency (EDA) had been active in several planning and redevelopment projects within the downtown area. The 2005 Downtown Revitalization Study provided a series of design and revitalization recommendations for central Mecca, including streetscaping and street improvements for 2nd Street and 66th Avenue, specific infill and building projects, including the Mecca Family Care Center (opened to the public on September 15, 2007), Library/Police Substation (recently completed), and “town plaza” (also recently completed), and general guideline approaches for downtown urban design elements, including signage, lighting, and street furniture. The Revitalization Study also considered the potential for a re-alignment of 66th Avenue south of its present location, made possible by a new overpass over Highway 111 and the railroad tracks. A series of community meetings provided input towards the development of the plan.

In 2007 the Agency also completed Design Guidelines for the community. These guidelines address architectural concepts for new residential and commercial buildings, principal public spaces (such as the town plaza), and provide extensive information on character-building elements for the community, such as entry monuments, street signage, and “themed roads.” Based on five guiding principles, they do much to suggest ways in which the physical identity of Mecca may be strengthened. The Design Guidelines have positively influenced the design and character of many recent projects, including the Family Care Center and the Library and Police Substation. However, they do not address specific components of revitalization, such as appropriate building types for the community, nor do they provide a basis or framework for how the community should grow or change in the future. The Design Guidelines were also driven by a public process.

During the charrette the design team learned of several infrastructure and development projects in varying states of progress. Some had been discussed or conceived in the aforementioned planning studies. The design team also learned of initiatives by others, including the following, in the core community of Mecca. Many of these projects provide a direct and positive response to community concerns heard during the charrette. These projects include:

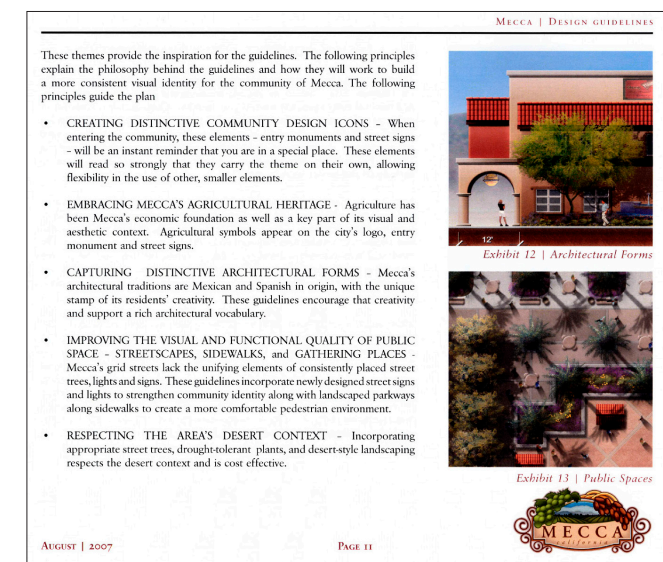
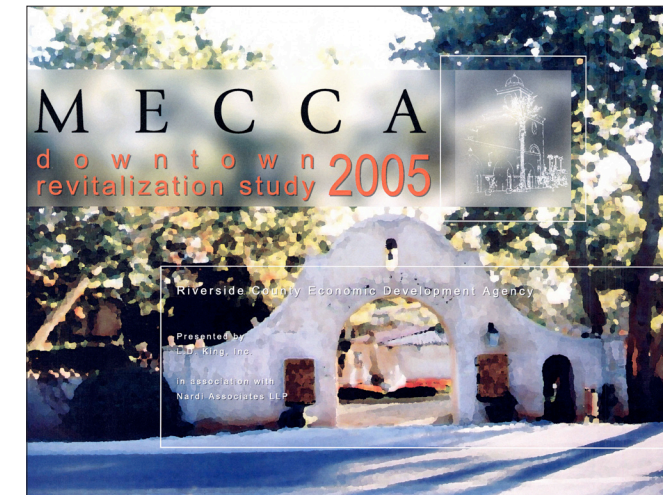
- Street improvements implemented by the EDA (including new curb, gutter, sidewalk, and paving) to a significant portion of the downtown area, including 66th Avenue, 2nd Street, 3rd Street, 4th Street, 5th Street, 6th Street, portions of 7th Street, Coahuilla Street, Date Palm Street, Brown Street, Dale Kiler Road, Lincoln Street, and Hammond Street
- A roundabout implemented by the EDA at the intersection of 4th Street and Hammond Road and the closure of 4th Street to through traffic west of Coahuilla
- Improvements to Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church along Dale Kiler Road proposed by the church including initial construction of a temporary sanctuary and ultimate construction of a larger permanent facility
- Two subsidized housing projects along Lincoln Street in northwest Mecca planned by different non-profit agencies
- Another multi-family housing project planned along 5th Street east of Dale Kiler Road
- The clearance of land on the east side of Dale Kiler Road between 2nd Street and 5th Street for unknown reasons

Within the downtown core, several other projects, are also in different stages of planning and implementation, including:

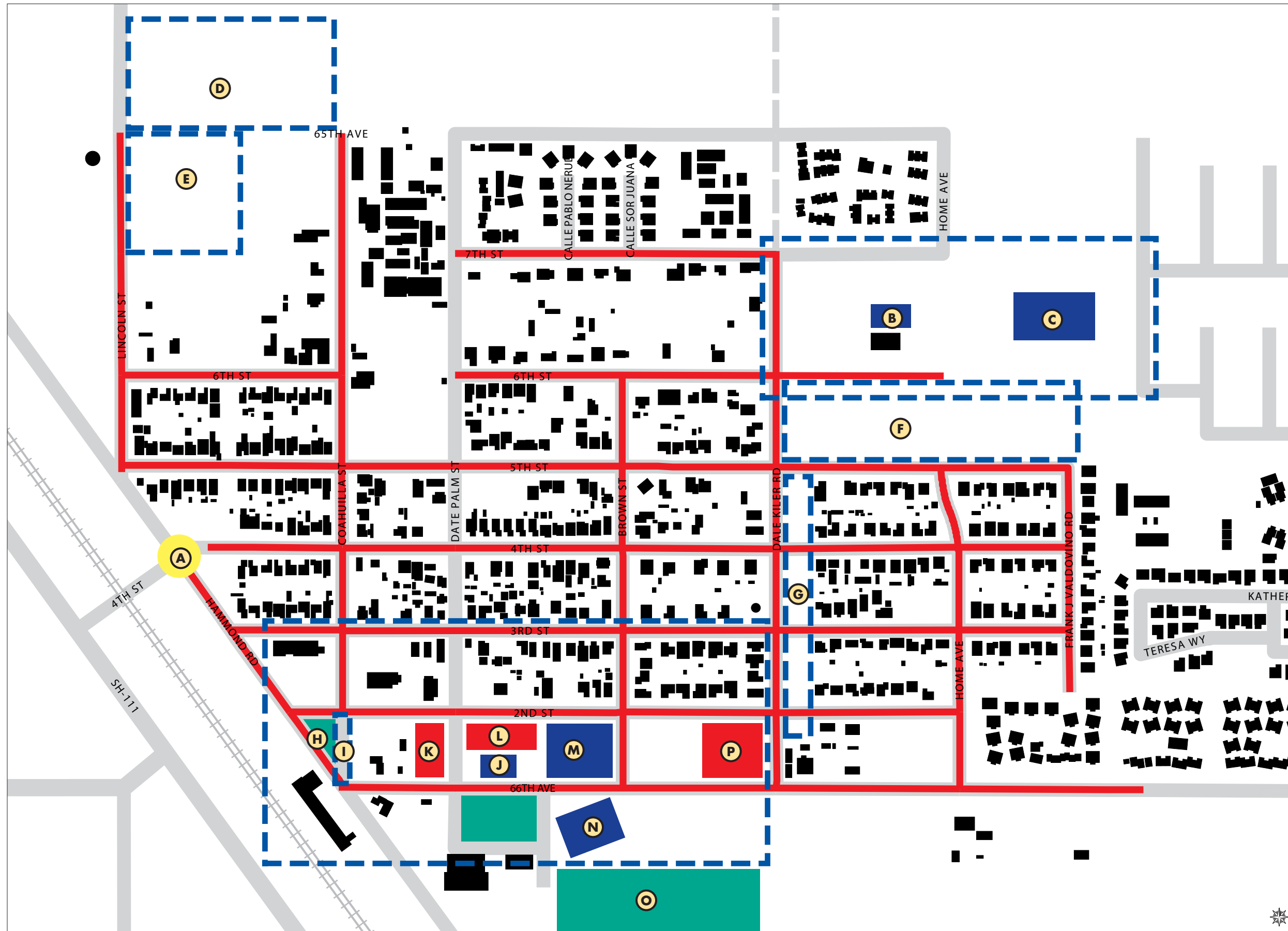
- The restoration of Cesar Chavez Park and the closure of Coahuilla Street between 2nd Street and 66th Avenue planned by the EDA
- The recently completed library & police substation along 66th Avenue implemented by the EDA
- A new senior center at the corner of 2nd Street and Date Palm Street planned by the EDA
- The relocation of the 4th Street fire station to a site at 2nd Street and Brown Street planned by the EDA
- A new Boys’ and Girls’ Club with play fields along 66th Avenue planned by the EDA
- A mixed-use commercial building planned by DACE (Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment) at the corner of 2nd Street and Dale Kiler Road
- A new commercial center (including a new post office) at 2nd Street and Date Palm Road planned by the EDA

These projects are diagrammatically illustrated on the following page. Many of these projects will bring new investment and large improvements to the community. Nonetheless, many were not previously anticipated or do not closely relate to the concepts put forth in the Revitalization Study and Design Guidelines. Some projects do not respect the existing context of Mecca very well, and could benefit from minor design improvements.

During the charrette the design team analyzed many of these projects and sought to make critical recommendations, when possible, to build upon and improve work already underway.



Right: Past planning and design work for Mecca includes the 2005 Downtown Revitalization Study and the 2007 Mecca Design Guidelines. The Design Guidelines included many relevant design-related items that can contribute to the revitalization of Mecca. They are based on five guiding principles, illustrated here, that have served as a basis for the further explorations in this plan.



Known Projects

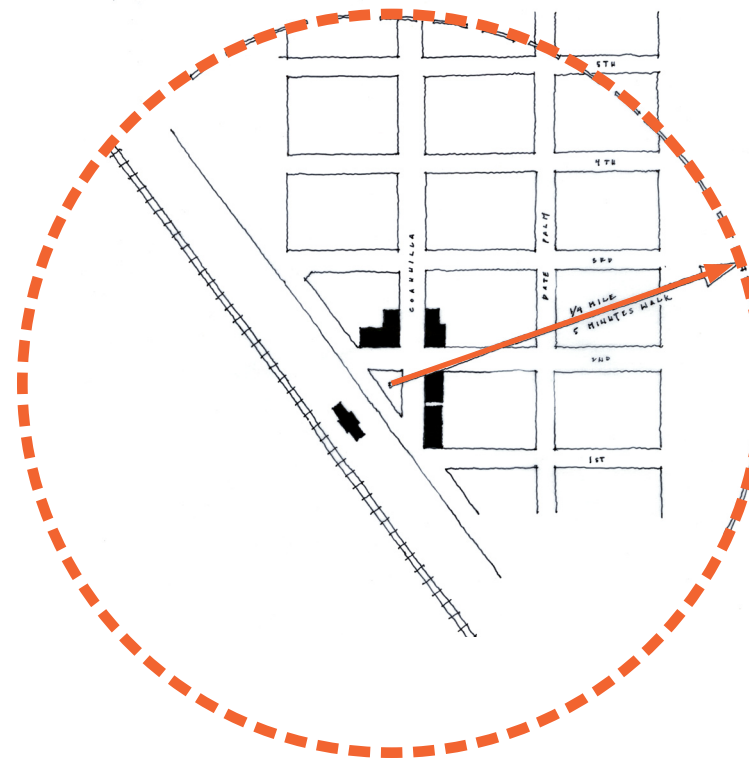
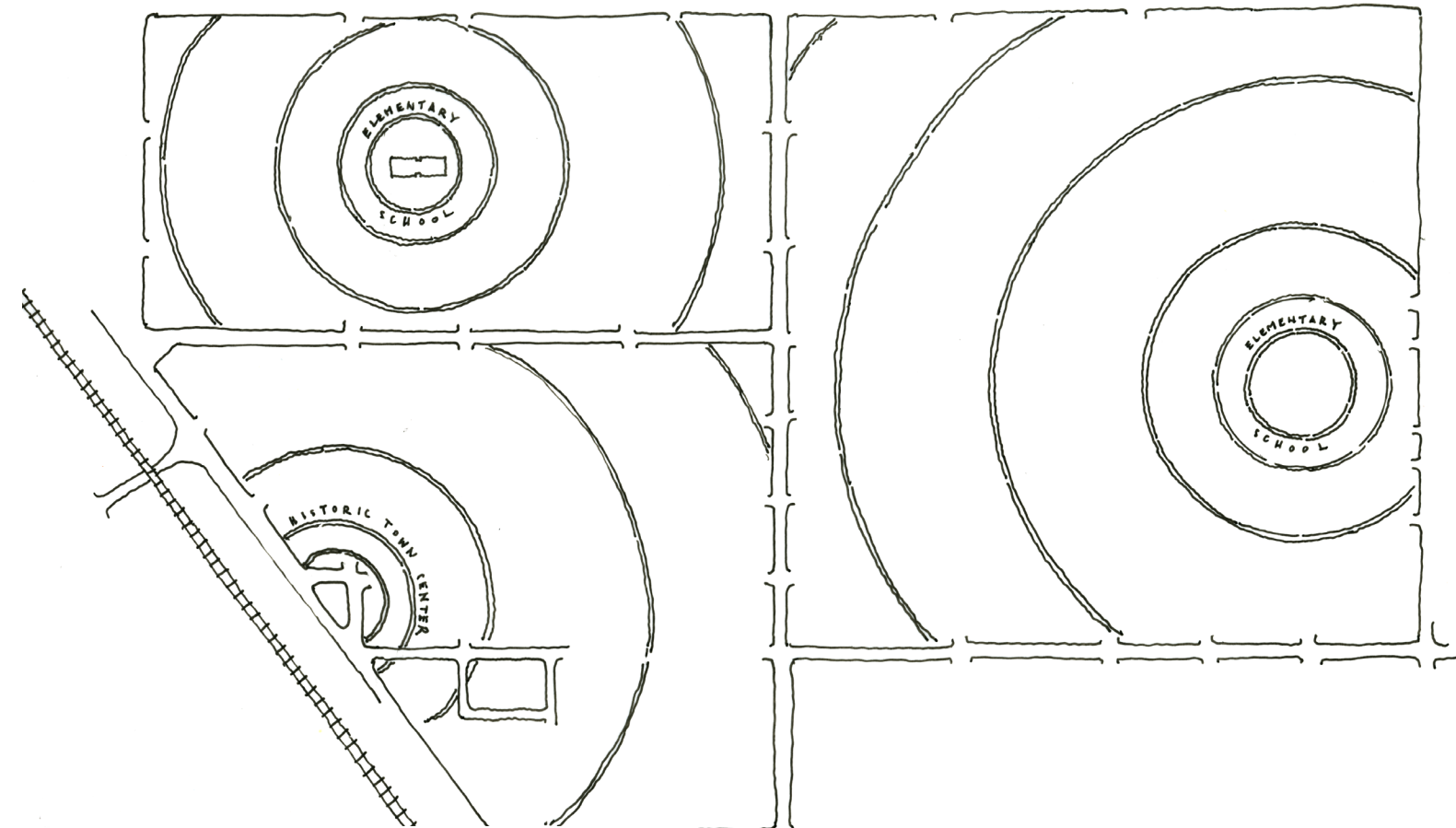
- Street Improvements
- (A)** Roundabout at 4th St. and Hammond and closure of 4th & Hammond intersection
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church Improvements:
- (B)** Removal of existing temporary sanctuary and replacement with modular structure
- (C)** Future, larger sanctuary
- (D)** Subsidized Multifamily housing project
- (E)** Subsidized Multifamily housing project
- (F)** Proposed Multifamily housing project along 5th St. east of Dale Kiler Rd.
- (G)** Land along Dale Kiler Rd. cleared for unknown reasons
- Downtown Mecca Improvements:
- (H)** Renovation of Cesar Chavez Park - design unknown
- (I)** Closure of Coahuilla Street between 2nd and 66th St.
- (J)** Recently completed Library/Police Substation along New Square
- (K)** New Senior Center at 2nd St and Date Palm
- (L)** Commercial Center/Post Office at 2nd St. and Date Palm
- (M)** Fire Station relocated from 4th St. to 2nd and Brown St.
- (N)** Boys & Girls Club along 66th St.
- (O)** Boys & Girls Club play fields
- (P)** DACE (Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment) sponsored mixed-use building at 2nd St. and Dale Kiler Rd.

Historical Background

Mecca was founded in the late 19th century and was originally known as Walters. The community served as a water and rest station initially for stagecoaches and later for both passenger and freight trains, and was renowned for the quality of its artesian wells.

With the formation of the Mecca Land Company in 1904, the community's name was changed to Mecca, invoking the Arabian desert. Although no maps exist from this time period, the size and shape of the original community can be estimated from physical descriptions that remain. At that time, the community was composed of a limited area organized around the train station. 60' streets were platted along the cardinal directions to form blocks approximately 400' wide by 270' deep. Two main streets that led directly to the station (2nd Street and Coahuilla Street) were platted 80' wide. Early buildings in the downtown core included a General Store (The "Bazaar") and a hotel (the "Caravansary").

At its inception, Mecca was a strongly pedestrian-oriented place, with a clear center and definable edge. Visitors passing through town at the time would have been able to walk comfortably from the station to the edge of the original 40-acre town site (today around Brown Street) in less than 5 minutes. Over time, as Mecca has grown, it has grown into about three distinct neighborhoods that have retained the neighborhood scale of the community's original plat, with one neighborhood centered roughly around Mecca Elementary School to the north, and another neighborhood centered around Saul Martinez Elementary School to the east. As the community grows, retaining this neighborhood structure can aid in providing a place that continues to be highly walkable and accessible for pedestrians.



Right: Map illustrating Mecca in the early 20th century with a quarter-mile radius - a five-minute walk - superimposed. Far Right: Image of the "Bazaar" General Store and Post Office in early Mecca. Above: Diagram illustrating how Mecca has retained its neighborhood structure over the years.



Primary Challenges

“Communication Infrastructure”

Mecca faces significant challenges due to its remote location at the southern end of the Coachella Valley. Despite a lot of positive energy and substantial efforts by different county agencies, work in the past has not always been well-coordinated, and maintaining consistent lines of communication with community residents has at times been difficult. A transient population has further exacerbated this problem.

Decaying/Inadequate Physical Infrastructure

Despite high pedestrian activity, most streets within Mecca do not have sidewalks and many streets are unpaved. Street lighting is inadequate in many locations despite active pedestrian activity during nighttime hours. There are also drainage issues and standing water despite very low annual rainfall, including a persistent ponding that occurs at the intersection of 2nd Street and Date Palm Avenue.

Lack of Good Connectivity and Visibility

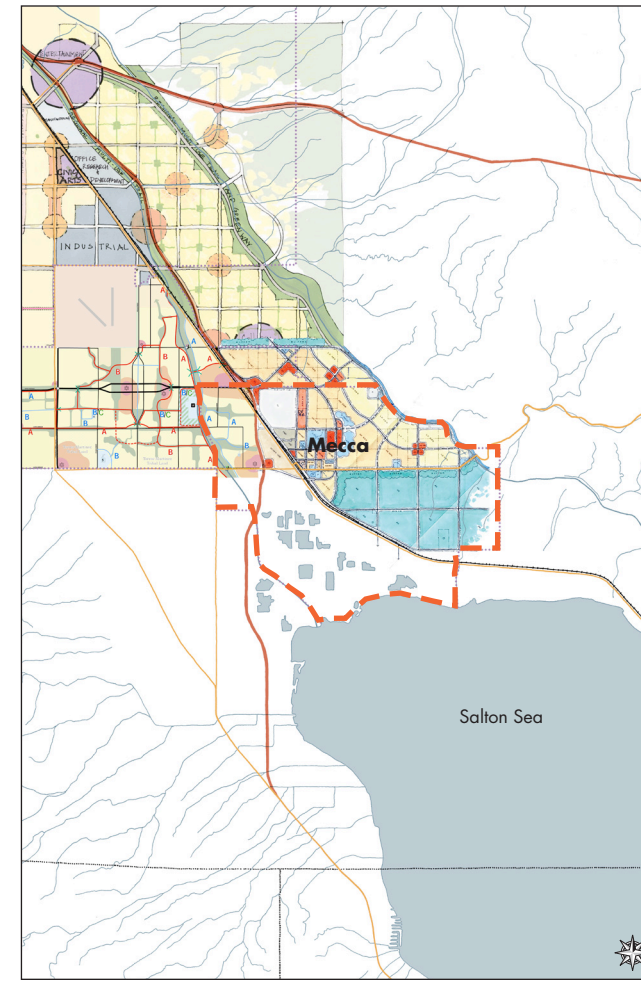
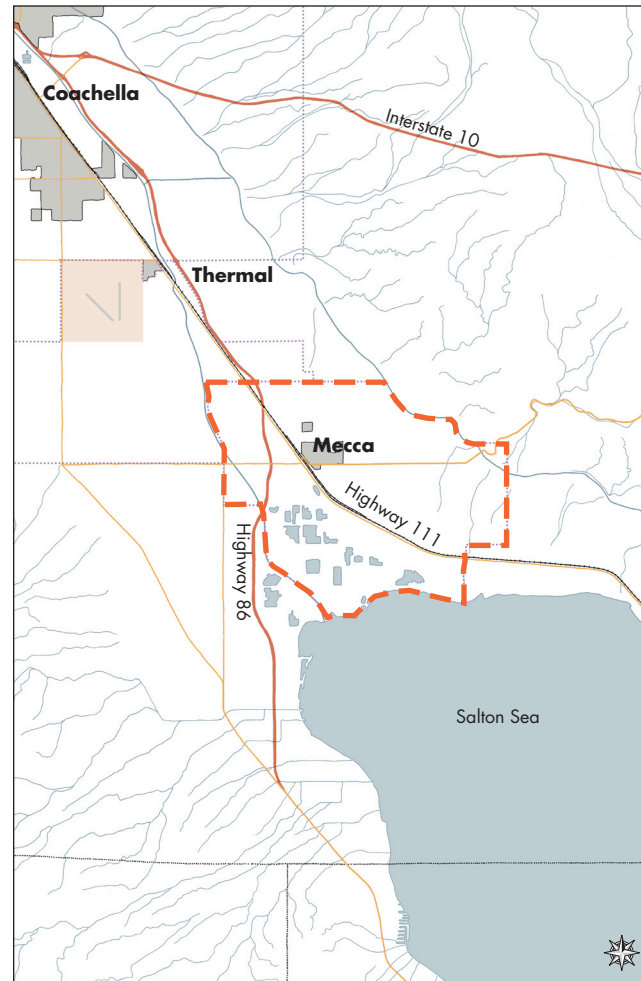
The community largely exists to the east of two limited-access highways (86–South and Highway 111) as well as the Southern Pacific railroad line. Access from the west is today limited to 4th Street at the intersection of 66th Avenue. Secondary access is provided at 62nd Avenue and along the county roads of the historic 1-mile survey grid. Although the Downtown Revitalization Study and subsequent south Mecca property owners have studied an overpass over Highway 111 and the railroad at 66th Avenue, it is unlikely that it will be implemented in the near term.

Despite good internal connectivity within the community’s original street grid, streets do not continue far beyond the center, where newer development has been built with non-through streets and walls between developments.

Significant Development Pressure

As a small, relatively remote community within a very large county, the community of Mecca has historically been a place of subtle change while Riverside County experienced some of the fastest growth in California. Recent regional development pressures, however, have extended to the southern Coachella Valley. Private property owners primarily own the farming operations in and around Mecca. About ten property owners are at varying stages of submitting development plans for approximately 25,000 acres of land in unincorporated areas of the Coachella Valley, including in Coachella, Thermal, and Mecca. Well over 100,000 units have been proposed. These development plans will not only result in a loss of agricultural land, but they will also affect the community’s primary job base of farm workers.

Much of the recent development in the Coachella Valley has produced conventional auto-oriented suburban communities with single-use neighborhoods that lack a sense of place. These new developments create neighborhoods where residents must rely on cars to get to work, school, shopping and most other destinations. As Mecca grows and changes, it will need to continue to provide accessibility and mobility for a low income populace that must depend on alternative transportation modes for their daily needs. The County of Riverside is revising its transportation and planning policies to ensure that future developments are built as more livable neighborhoods where people can safely and conveniently walk, bicycle and use transit to access more destinations.



Clockwise from Top Left: Mecca today continues a pattern of small towns and communities in the Coachella Valley surrounded by agricultural land; Over 100,000 units have been proposed which, if built, could extend a continuous, suburban development pattern from Coachella down to Mecca; Poor drainage is an indicator of inadequate infrastructure in central Mecca; Poor road conditions; Limited connectivity due to the train tracks; Agricultural activities are gradually turning over to other land uses.

Guiding Principles for Growth and Revitalization

During the charrette the design team identified the following urban design principles to guide future design decisions in the community. These principles are intended to build upon the foundation of design principles established in the 2007 Community Design Guidelines.

1. Encourage the healthy growth of the existing downtown mixed-use district centered along 2nd Street.

The traditional downtown area of Mecca has focused on 2nd Street where principal commercial and institutional uses have been historically organized. The Economic Development Agency is planning several projects in the area that will bring new energy and investment. However, the viability of 2nd Street as a retail district is at risk. In the future, the new 66th Street overpass will provide new connectivity to the area and likely provide an opportunity for auto-oriented retail to organize along 66th. The extensive new institutions planned for 2nd Street – including the Senior Center and Boys & Girls Club – may consume land that is most valuable for retail and mixed-use purposes if not planned correctly.

2nd Street should be maintained as a healthy retail environment through maintained connectivity between Hammond Street to the west and Dale Kiler Street to the east. Over time, this stretch of 2nd could evolve into a walkable, mixed-use district approximately 1/4 mile – a 5 minute walk for most people – in length. Keeping Dale Kiler open to through traffic will be key to providing retail viability along 2nd Street.

2. Maintain 2nd Street and Coahuilla Street as primary addresses in the downtown area.

The original town plat for Mecca recognized the importance of 2nd and Coahuilla as primary streets in the town, providing them with 80' of right-of-way rather than the 60' made available to the rest of the street grid. Most of the space on both streets has never been improved and remains unpaved. As the community grows, however, 2nd and Coahuilla can both remain as primary addresses in the community, with wider rights-of-way that can support safer environments for pedestrians and allow them to attain their full development potential over time. 2nd Street should be encouraged to develop into a healthy, mixed-use environment, with diagonal parking and wide sidewalks covered by awnings and galleries. Coahuilla Street can be reconfigured to support higher densities and subsequent high pedestrian activity.

3. Encourage new infill development in the downtown core that recognizes historic downtown development patterns and responds to the needs of the community's residents.

During the charrette, residents brought attention to the limited housing choices that were available. Detached single family houses are unaffordable to many and are subject to overcrowding and building code violations when used as rental properties. Apartments have been developed at more affordable rates, but they are almost always organized in impersonal, gated clusters surrounded by parking with limited pedestrian connectivity. Neither building type has done well to meet the needs of many community residents, who are accustomed to living in extended family groups and to the sharing of semi-public spaces. Moreover, the majority of Mecca's existing building stock has done little to respond to the harsh desert environment.

New development within the downtown core should be built that recognizes the historic pattern of Mecca's interconnected streets and blocks. New building types can be designed and organized to provide alternative product types (for sale and for rent) that are by their nature more affordable to community residents, and that can include well-designed semi-public, shared spaces such as courtyards. Passive heating and cooling techniques should be incorporated into new development to ensure energy efficiency and proper response to desert living.



4. As the community grows, ensure that connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists is maximized.

The community of Mecca has much lower automobile ownership rates than other comparable communities and supports a very high degree of pedestrian activity. Despite these numbers many pedestrians walk along streets with no or incomplete sidewalks. When sidewalks do occur, they are typically placed adjacent to the street, rather than providing a landscaped buffer. Crosswalks, bicycle lanes and shoulders are virtually nonexistent. During the day, most public streets are unshaded and provide little respite from hot summer temperatures and the strong desert sun. At night, inadequate street lighting further compromises pedestrian safety.

As new development has occurred around the historic core, it has been largely organized along single-access roads and cul-de-sacs in a strictly auto-oriented format. Despite potential for many streets of the historic grid to continue into newer neighborhoods, most have not. This has limited pedestrian connectivity between the newer and older parts of the community. Recent improvement projects have proposed further street closures (such as the 4th Street roundabout), further decreasing connectivity. As the community grows, this strategy will result in fewer and fewer through streets that must carry larger traffic volumes, and large-scale, pedestrian unfriendly arterials will inevitably follow.

Mecca has the opportunity to evolve into a unique community within the Coachella Valley that is compact, relatively dense, highly connected, and subsequently very pedestrian friendly. The existing street grid should be preserved to the greatest extent possible in order to maximize pedestrian connectivity. In the future, new development should be organized along an interconnected network of streets and blocks that can allow for safe passage into and out of the downtown core for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Above: Strategies for improving the Mecca community following these design principles include: (A) Keeping Dale Kiler open as a through street that can help support mixed-use development along 2nd Street; (B) Extending the grid of historic Mecca to ensure connectivity and that new development faces streets; (C) providing new pedestrian connections between Valdovino Road and Saul Martinez Elementary School/neighborhoods to the east; (D) Redesigning the 4th Street roundabout to allow 4th Street to remain open as a through (although traffic calmed) street; (E) Over time encouraging 2nd Street to develop as a walkable "Main Street" between Hammond and Dale Kiler.

2nd Street



Above: View of existing 2nd Street (at Hammond) looking east



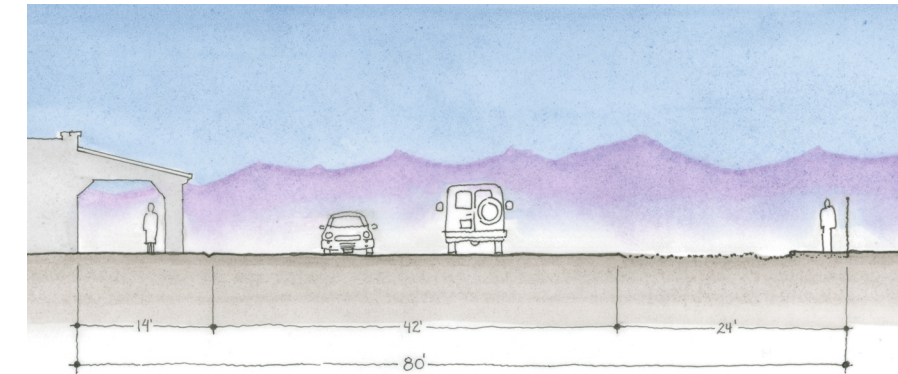
Above: View of proposed 2nd Street illustrating street improvements, infill development, and an improved Cesar Chavez Park

Design Proposals

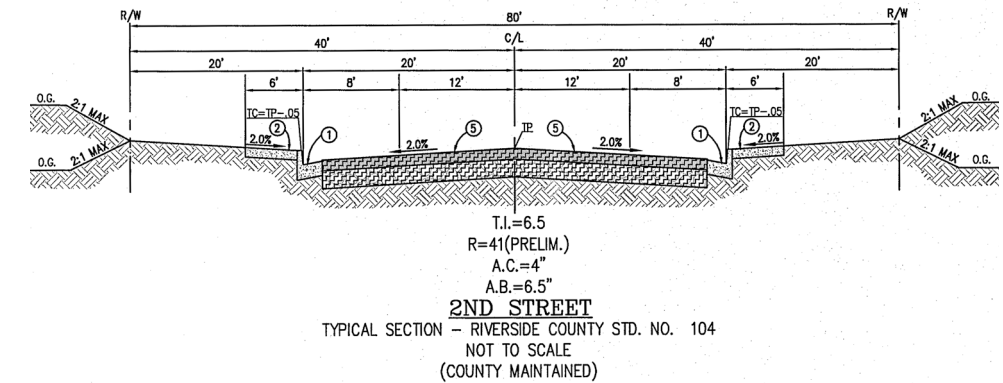
During the charrette, the design team explored a variety of improvements and design recommendations that could fulfill many of the community's aspirations, follow the goals and objectives of the aforementioned design principles, and form viable building blocks of a future Mecca. These concepts are illustrated and described on the following pages.

Mecca Community Revitalization Strategy
Opticos Design, Inc.

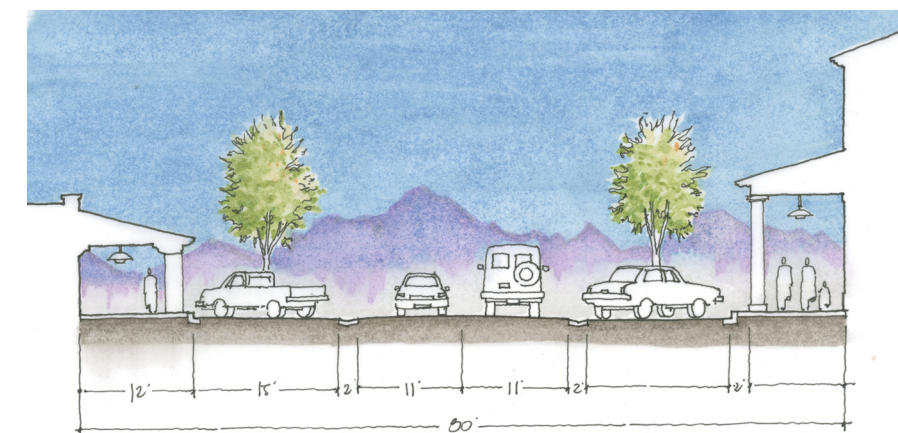
© 2008 Opticos Design, Inc.



Above: 2nd Street today



Above: 2nd Street improvements as proposed in January 2008, illustrating two 12' travel lanes, 8' parallel parking lanes, and 6' improved sidewalks. The remaining 14' behind the sidewalk is left unimproved and potentially abandoned.



Above: Alternative proposal for 2nd Street, showing two 11' travel lanes, 15' diagonal parking separated by a 2' valley gutter, and a 12' improved sidewalk, suitable for galleries or overhanging awnings.

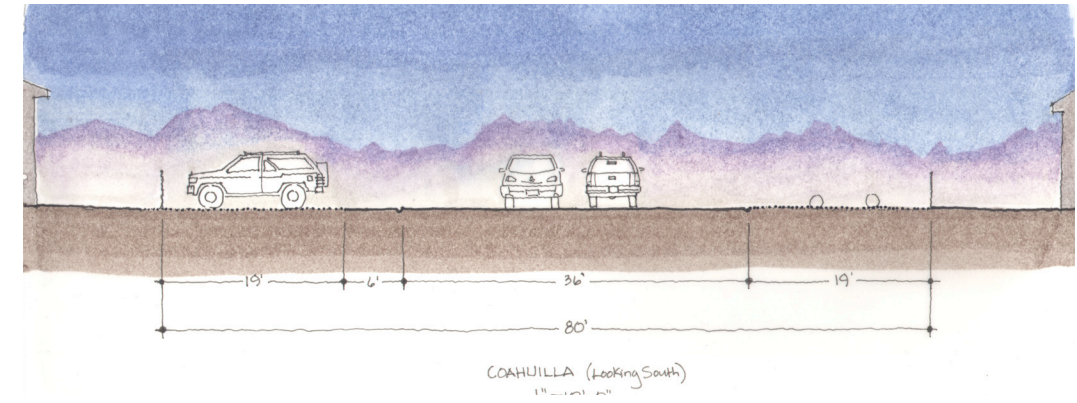
Coahuilla Street



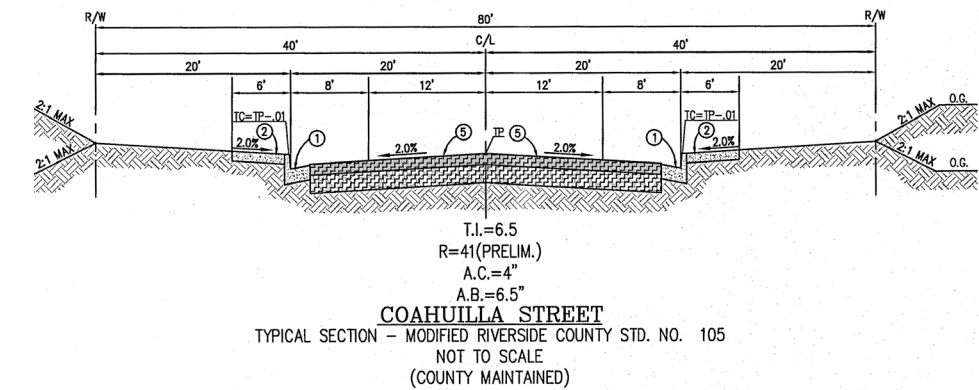
Above: View of existing Coahuilla Street looking South



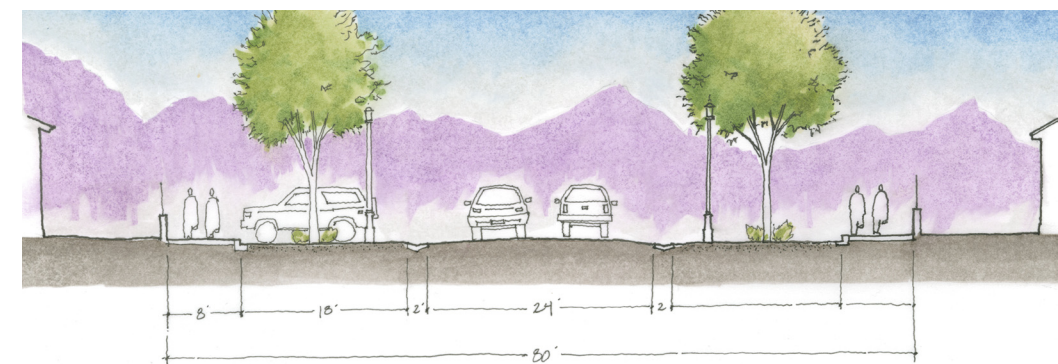
Above: View of proposed Coahuilla Street illustrating street improvements



Above: Coahuilla Street today



Above: Coahuilla Street improvements as proposed in January 2008, illustrating two 12' travel lanes, 8' parallel parking lanes, and 6' improved sidewalks. The remaining 14' behind the sidewalk is left unimproved and potentially abandoned.



Above: Alternative proposal for Coahuilla Street, showing two 12' travel lanes, 18' perpendicular parking on a permeable surface with shade planting separated by a 2' valley gutter, and an 8' improved sidewalk.

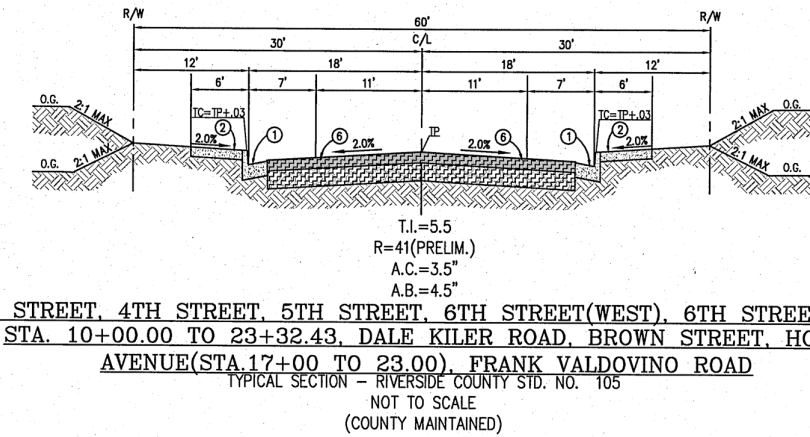
Typical 60' R.O.W. (Dale Kiler Road)



Above: View of existing Dale Kiler Road looking south near Our Lady of Guadalupe Church

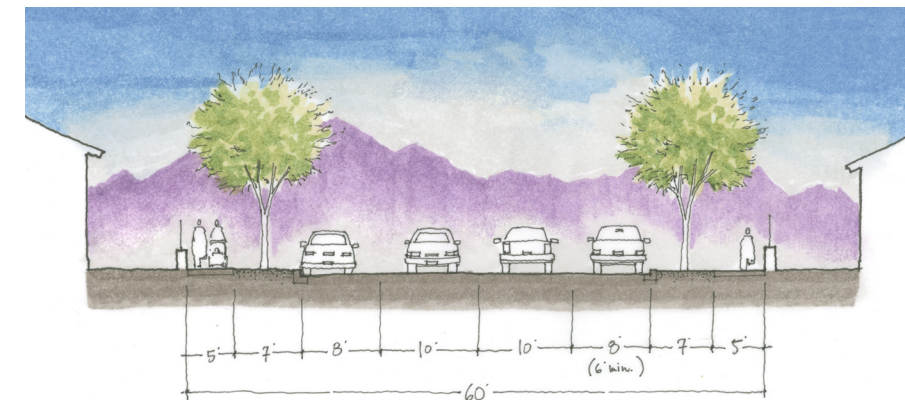


Above: View of proposed Dale Kiler Road illustrating street improvements, infill housing development, and a future church expansion



3RD STREET, 4TH STREET, 5TH STREET, 6TH STREET (WEST), 6TH STREET (EAST)
 STA. 10+00.00 TO 23+32.43, DALE KILER ROAD, BROWN STREET, HOME
 AVENUE (STA. 17+00 TO 23.00), FRANK VALDOVINO ROAD
 TYPICAL SECTION - RIVERSIDE COUNTY STD. NO. 105
 NOT TO SCALE
 (COUNTY MAINTAINED)

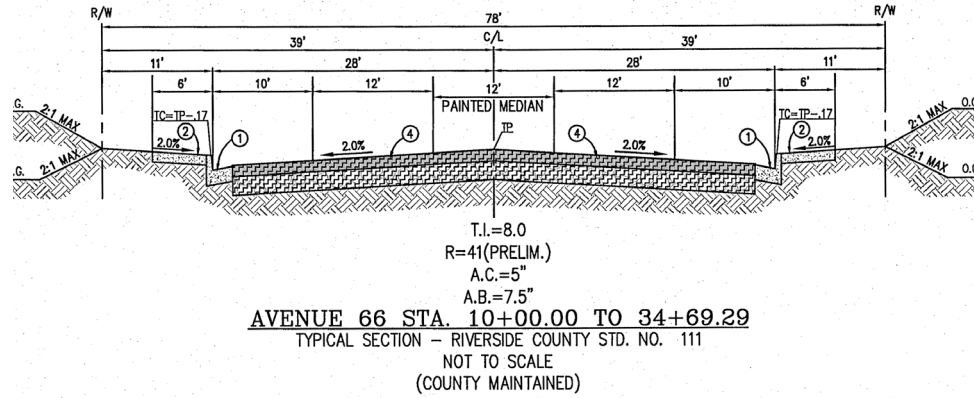
Above: Typical 60' R.O.W. improvements as proposed in January 2008, illustrating two 11' travel lanes, 7' parallel parking lanes, and 6' improved sidewalks. The remaining 6' behind the sidewalk is left unimproved and potentially abandoned.



Above: Alternative proposal for a 60' R.O.W., showing two 10' travel lanes, 8' parallel parking, a 7' planting strip with shade planting, and a 5' improved sidewalk. If landscape maintenance is currently an issue, planting strips could be left unimproved for future improvement and maintenance by neighborhood associations or civic groups.

Additional Street Recommendations

66th Avenue



Above: 66th Avenue improvements as proposed in January 2008, illustrating two travel lanes (10' outside and 12' inside) on either side of a 12' painted central median/turn lane, and 8' improved sidewalks. The 6.5' behind the sidewalk is left unimproved and potentially abandoned.

Typical 3-Lane Avenue



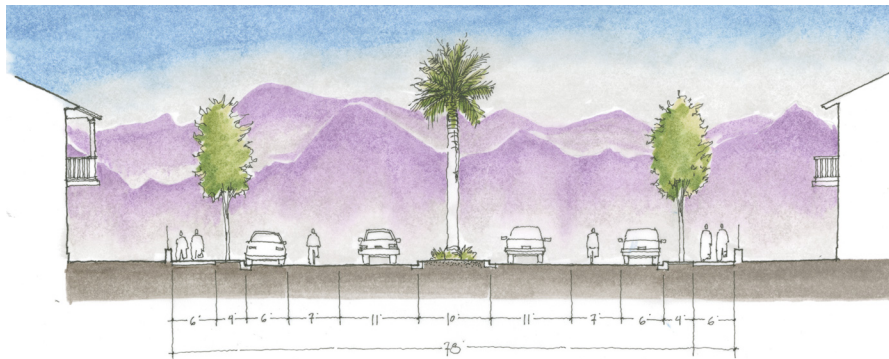
Above: Street sections such as this do not currently exist among county standards but would be appropriate for the Community of Mecca. A well-designed, "three-lane" avenue with one travel lane in either direction and a designated turn lane can handle upwards of 15,000 cars per day in a safe environment (with low crossing times) for pedestrians.

Typical 4-Lane Avenue



Above: With a well-designed, highly-connected street grid, the future Mecca can accommodate future traffic needs with streets no larger than this four-lane avenue in a 100' right-of-way. Such a street should provide a central median that can serve as a pedestrian refuge, along with designated bicycle lanes and parallel parking to assist in calming traffic. Contrary to previous recommendations, Avenues and other minor arterials should incorporate straight, rather than meandering sidewalks in keeping with well-designed urban environments.

Typical Boulevard



Above: Alternate design for 66th Avenue illustrating two 11' travel lanes, a central, 10' landscaped median/turn lane, 6' bicycle lanes, 7' parallel parking, a 9' planting strip, and a 5' improved sidewalk. Traffic projections for 66th Avenue suggest that a "three-lane" street such as this can accommodate future traffic.



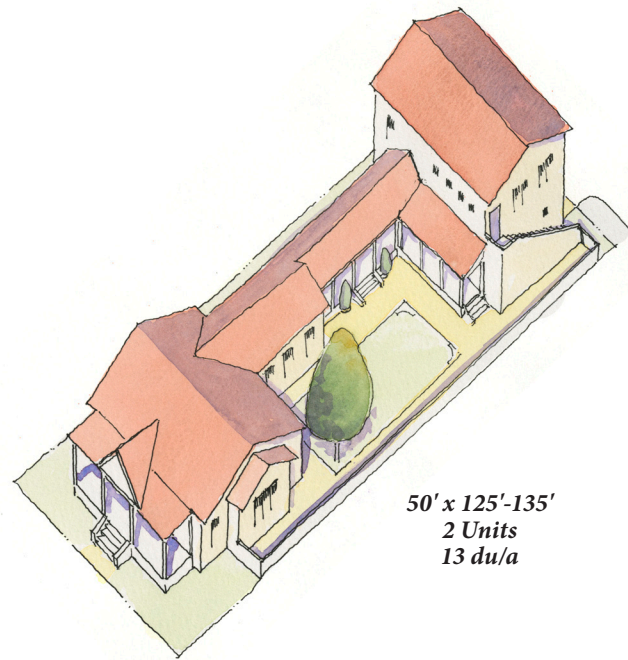
Above: Streets larger than the 100' Four Lane Avenue should be treated with a boulevard section as shown that provides a local access lane designed for very slow speeds and parallel parking.

Typical Alley



Above: Typical alley standards can help to provide rear access in new development, providing more efficient, pedestrian friendly densities that minimize street-side curb cuts.

Building Types



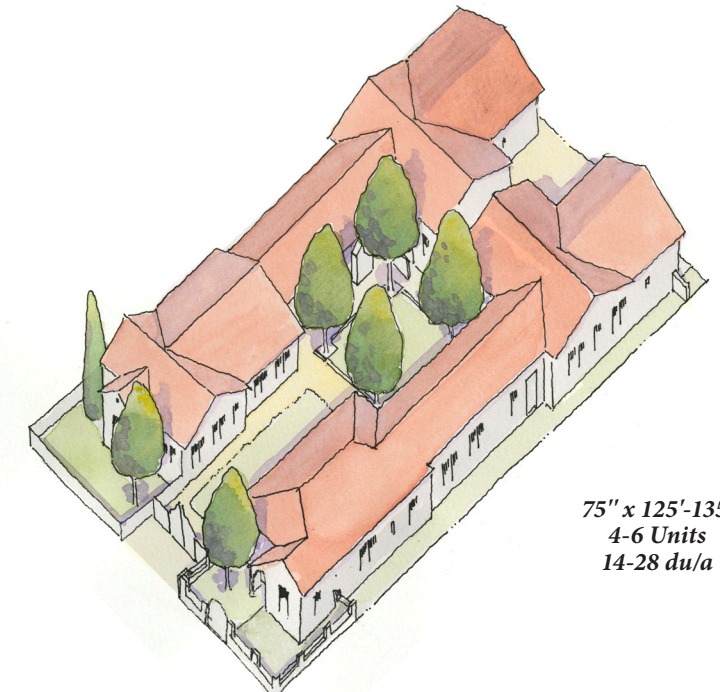
50' x 125'-135'
2 Units
13 du/a

Above: Design for a two-family house on a single, rear-loaded, 50' x 125'-135' lot. The two houses share a central courtyard.



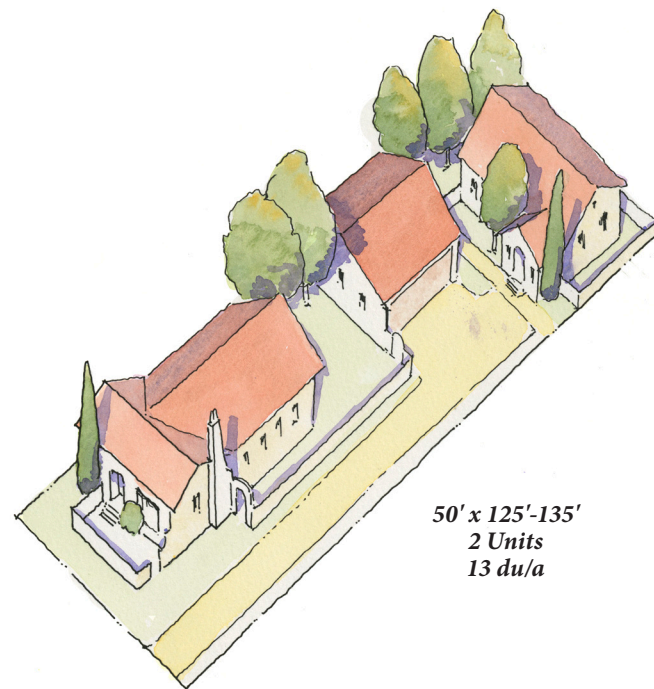
75' x 125'-135'
3-6 Units
14-28 du/a

Above: Design for 3-6 units on a 75' x 125'-135' rear-loaded lot. A large house (a duplex or fourplex) at the street forms one side of a shared courtyard with a smaller house (single family or duplex) to the rear of the lot.



75' x 125'-135'
4-6 Units
14-28 du/a

Above: Design for 4-6 small, attached units organized around a central courtyard on a rear-loaded, 75' x 125'-135' lot.



50' x 125'-135'
2 Units
13 du/a

Above: Design for a two-family house on a single, front-loaded, 50' x 125'-135' lot. The two houses share a multi-use parking court.



75' x 125'-135'
4 Units
18 du/a

Above: Design for two duplex units that share a central, multi-use parking court on a front-loaded, 75' x 125'-135' lot. The duplexes may consist of a larger 1.5-story townhouse above a 1-story, handicapped-accessible unit appropriate for seniors.

Building Types

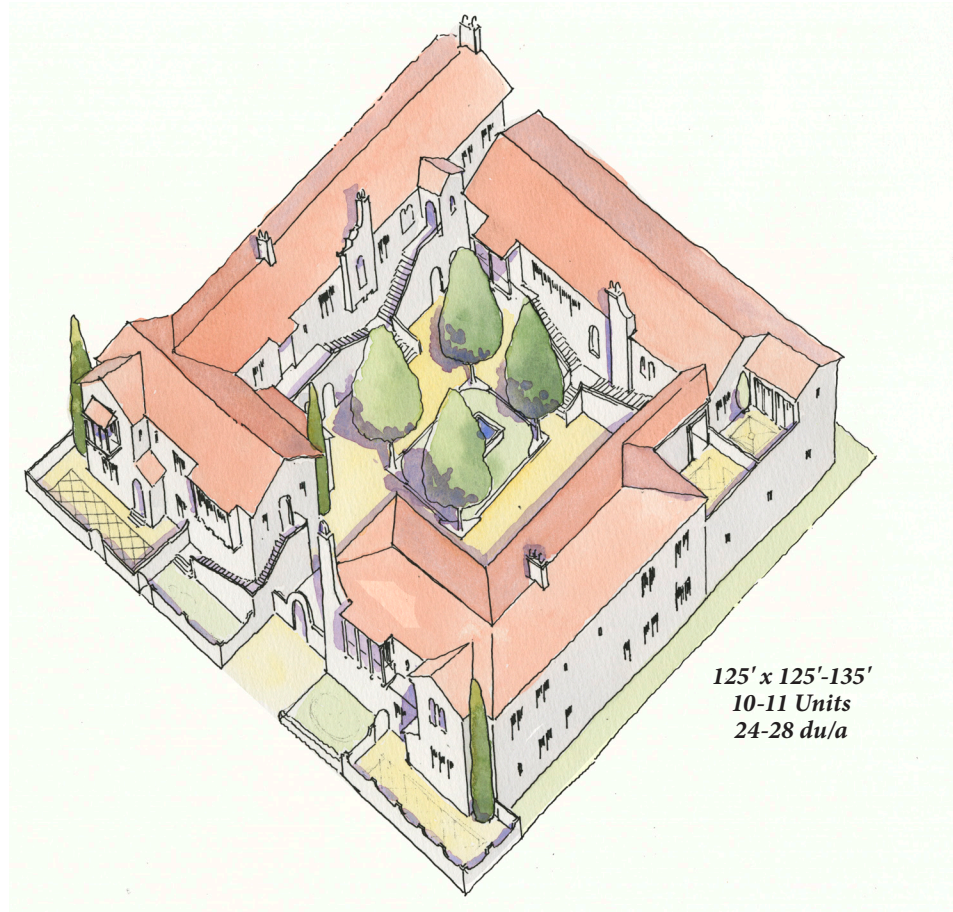
During the charrette, the design team explored different building types that could provide single-family amenities to a largely multi-family housing market. Many of these types are based on actual houses recently built in California communities with similar demographics. Many of the houses incorporate courtyards and internal open spaces that can provide passive heating and cooling in the harsh desert climate.

Building Types



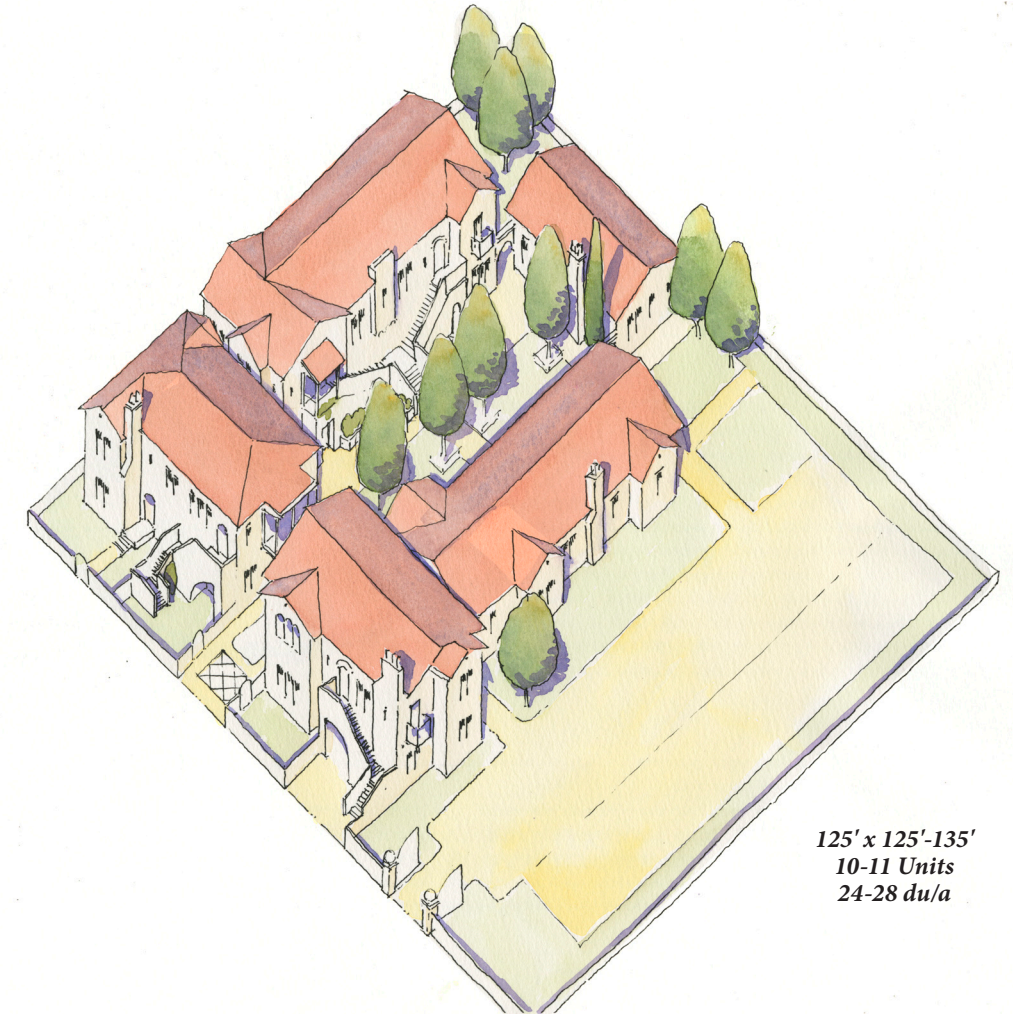
100' x 125'-135'
6 Units
21 du/a

Above: Design for 6 units that share a multi-use courtyard on a front loaded, 100' x 125'-135'. Two larger houses (duplexes) at the street flank a central driveway that accesses two smaller units to the rear of the lot.



125' x 125'-135'
10-11 Units
24-28 du/a

Above: Design for a multi-family courtyard building on a rear-loaded, 125' x 125'-135' lot. 10-11 units share a large central courtyard.



125' x 125'-135'
10-11 Units
24-28 du/a

Above: Design for a multi-family courtyard building on a front-loaded, 125' x 125'-135' lot. 10-11 units are grouped around an intimate courtyard, with a multi-use parking court adjacent.

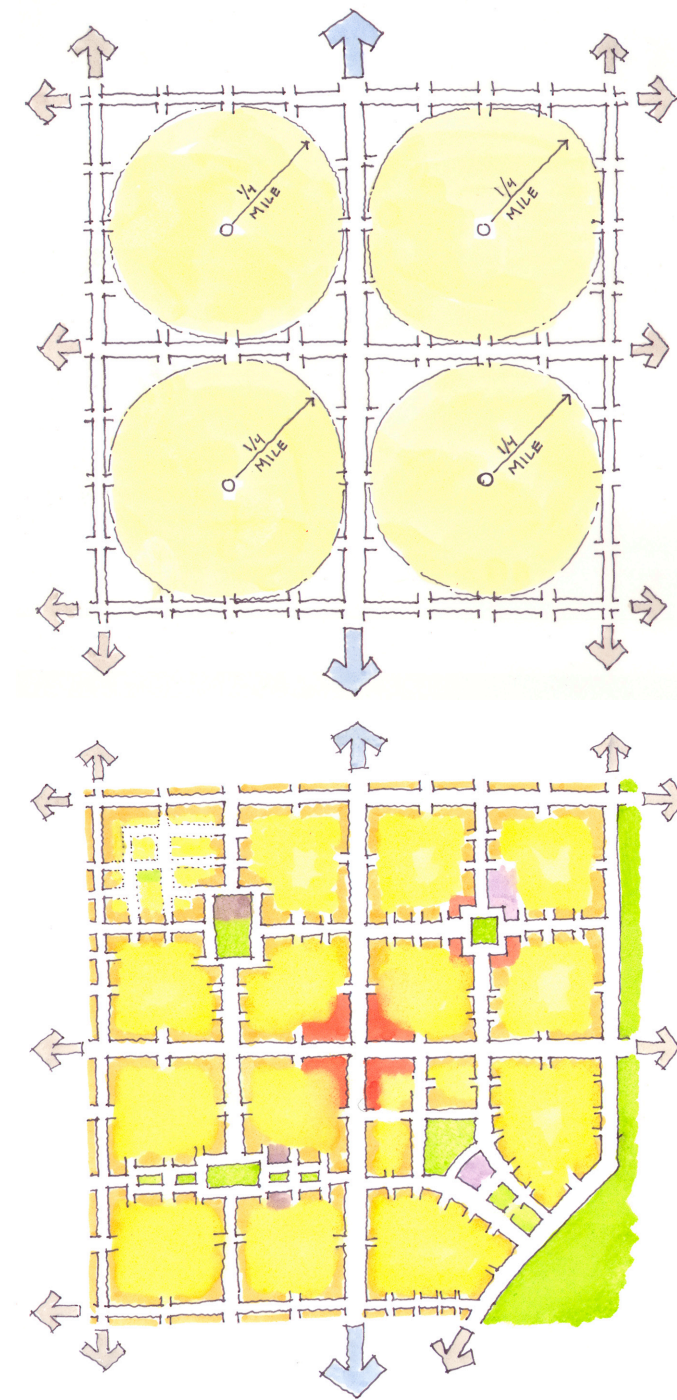
Right: Courtyard housing project recently built in King City, California similar to courtyard types proposed for Mecca. In King City, the project was constructed as a market-rate condominium for entry-level, first-time homeowners.



Blocks & Neighborhoods



Above: Proposed building types can be used as infill prototypes in central Mecca or can be appropriate for new development of relatively high densities. This grouping of 46 dwelling units has been organized on a block that is equal in size to a typical Mecca block - about 270' wide by 400' long. This block has a net density of 19.5 du/acre, high enough to support local services within walking distance of many residences.

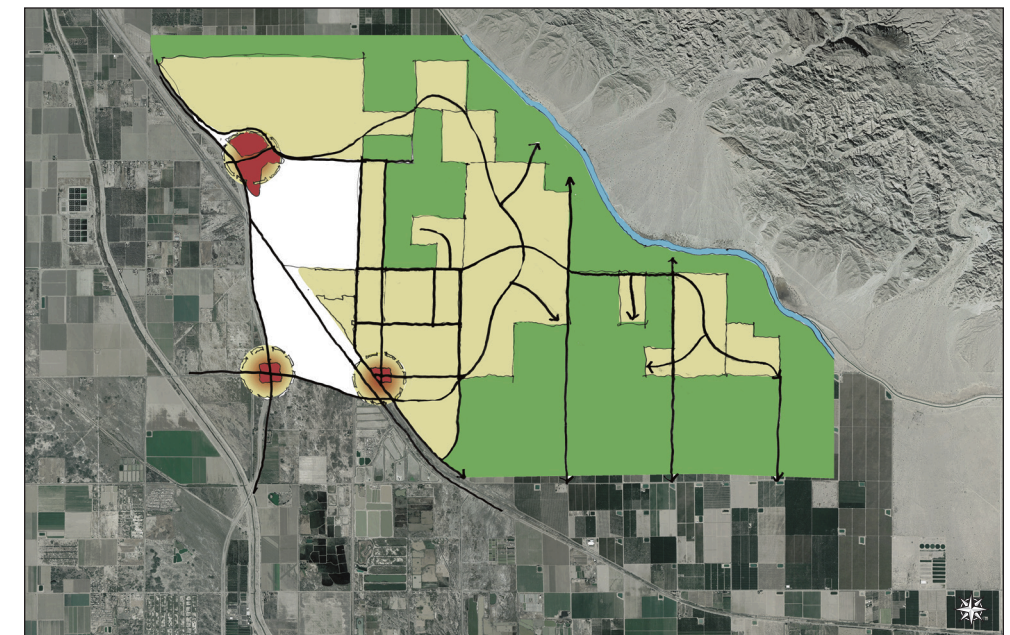
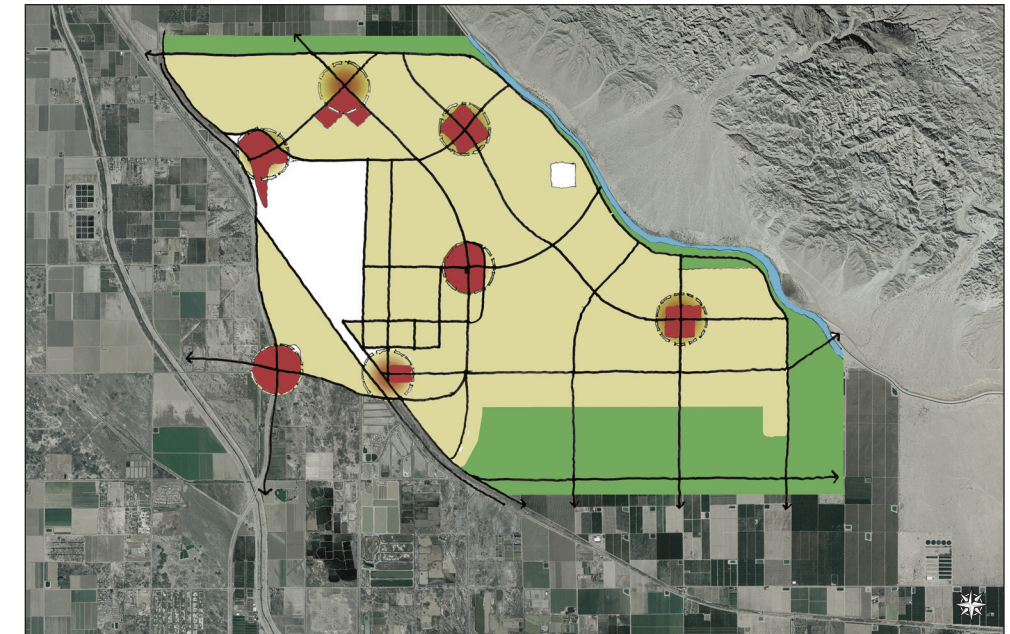


Above: Blocks can be organized into neighborhoods approximately 1200' (1/4) in diameter that are bound together (top) by a highly connected, pedestrian-scaled network of well-designed small arterials, local streets, and alleys. Using the building types illustrated herein, sufficient densities can be attained to provide neighborhood amenities (such as parks, day care centers, etc.) within 1/4 mile of each residence, and commercial amenities (such as neighborhood shopping centers) at the intersection of four neighborhoods (bottom).

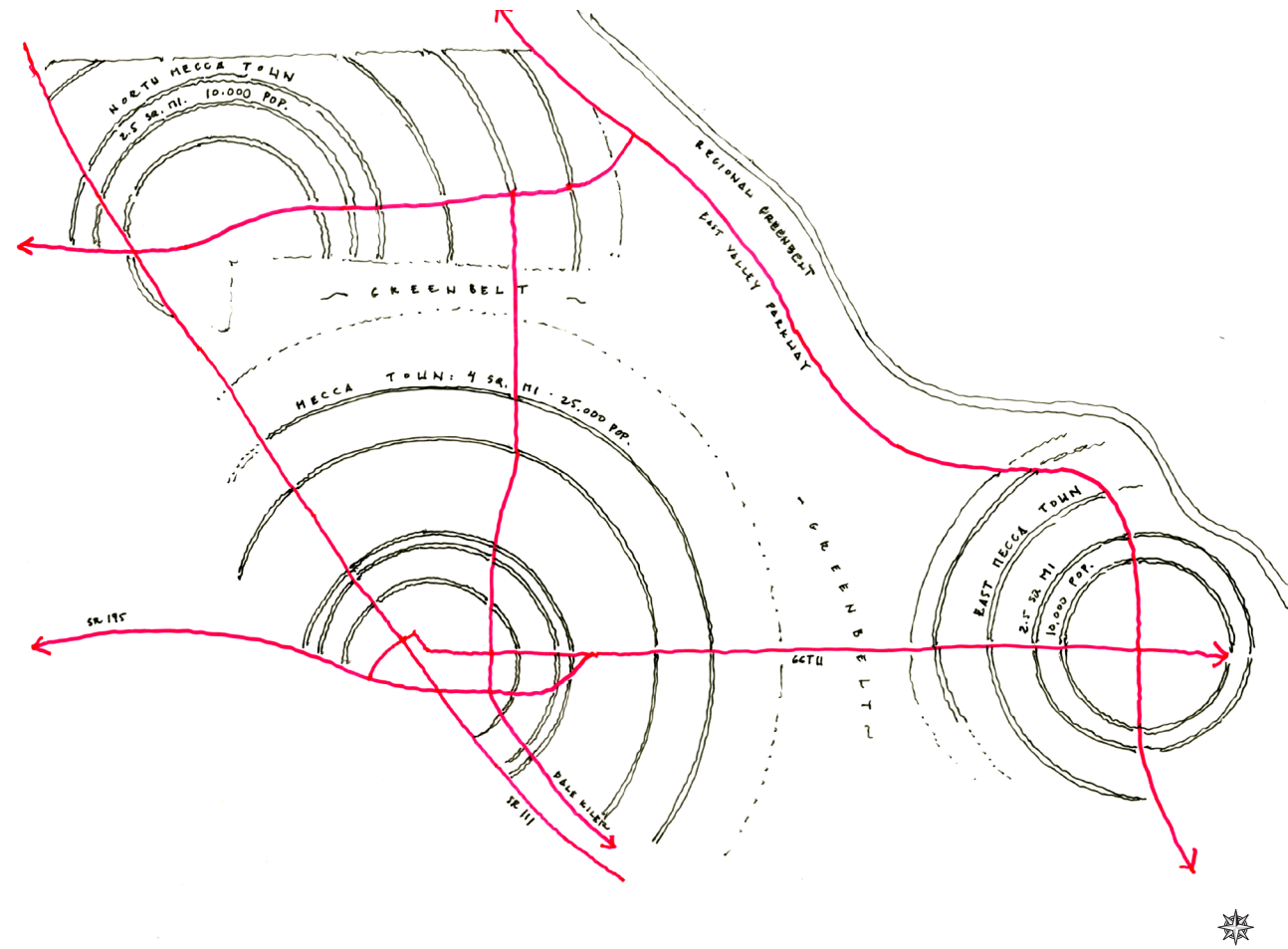
Building Community



Above: Blocks can be organized into subdivisions composed of an interconnected network of pedestrian-scaled streets and alleys. This diagram illustrates four individual neighborhoods approximately 1200' (1/4 mile) in diameter, made up of about 8 blocks, each with a neighborhood amenity (such as a park) at its center. At the intersection of four such neighborhoods a larger amenity, such as a neighborhood shopping center or school could be located. Using the proposed building types, each neighborhood could accommodate approximately 360 units (900 people) on about 35 acres, or roughly 1500 families (3500 people) on 140 acres.

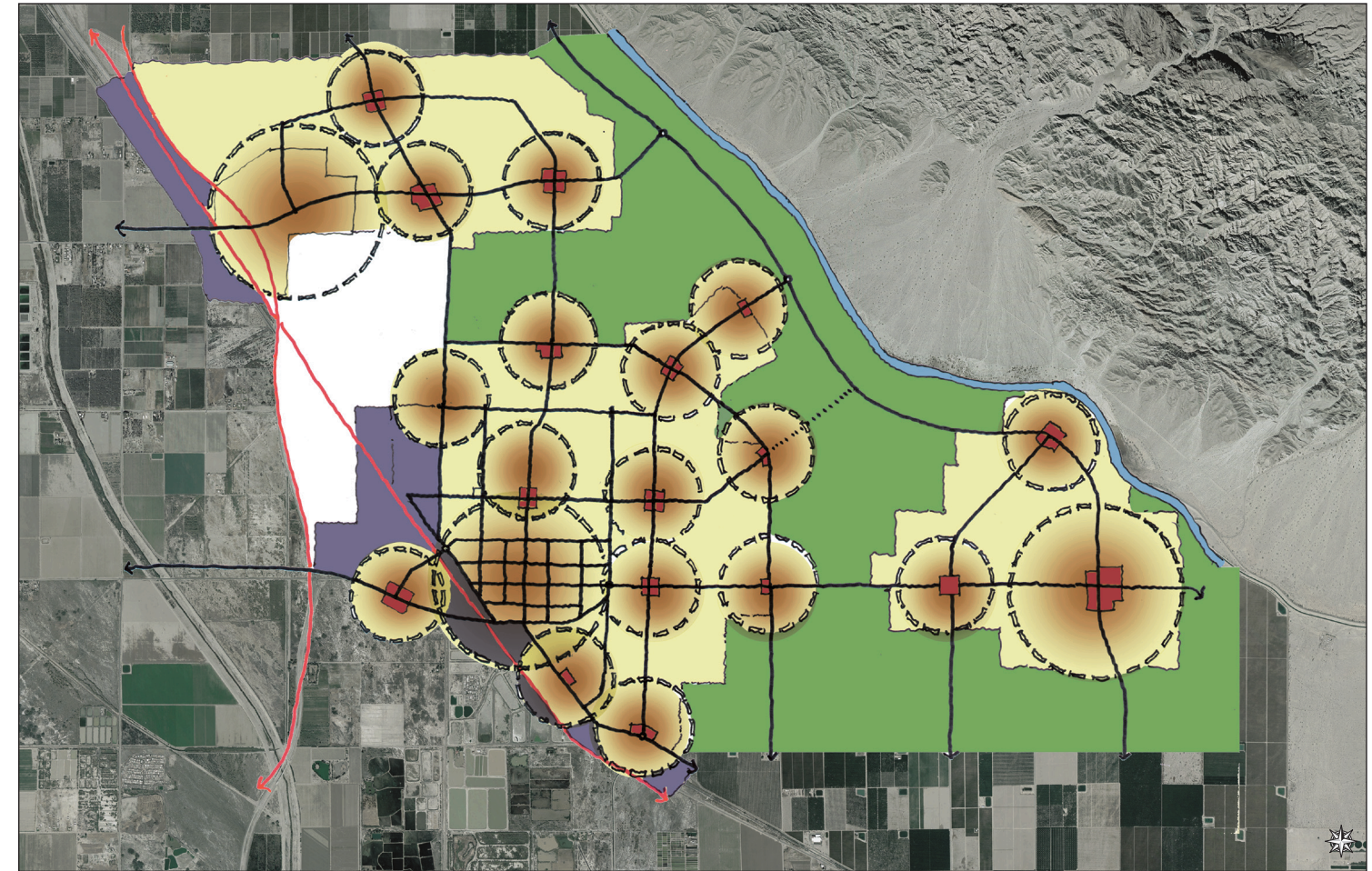


Above: These diagrams and those on the following page illustrate how the design concepts of building types, blocks, and neighborhoods can be utilized to organize the long-term growth of the community. Recent proposals (top) within the community boundary have organized large swaths of suburban development accessed by large arterials from the existing community northward, well beyond the Mecca-Thermal border. This approach results in auto-oriented development of relatively low densities, minimal quality open space, and an inefficient use of the land. In the absence of a community plan (bottom), individual property owners could develop haphazardly, resulting in more sprawl.



Above: During the charrette the design team considered how growth might be organized within the community boundary in the long term. Previous proposals to the north and east of Mecca town had considered 14,000 housing units. The above diagram was created as an alternative to organizing this type of density into three distinct, pedestrian-oriented communities, separated by a "greenbelt" that creates a clearly-defined edge. The greenbelt could consist of recreational open space, community-oriented agriculture, golf courses, even large lot (i.e. greater than 1 acre) subdivisions. The communities would be connected and served by an interconnected network of major and minor streets, including a new, 4-lane arterial near the American Canal (the "East Valley Parkway").

"North Mecca Town" would be organized around the 62nd Avenue connection across Highway 111, and could include the College of the Desert, larger, regional services and retail, and homes for about 10,000 people. It would be limited to about 2.5 square miles in size. "Mecca Town" could be focused on the revitalized, traditional downtown along 2nd Street, the 66th Avenue overpass, and accommodate homes for about 25,000 people. It would be limited to about 4 square miles in size. "East Mecca Town" could include homes for another 10,000 people, and have an entirely different focus.



Above: Carrying the concept at left, the design team prepared this vision for three distinct communities, organized along a system of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors, and defined and separated by a regional greenbelt. "North Mecca Town" could include a regional center (along 62nd Avenue) and three additional neighborhood centers. "Mecca Town" could include a regional downtown (along 2nd Street/66th Avenue) and as many as twelve additional neighborhood centers. "East Mecca Town" could include another regional center and additional neighborhood centers.

Implementation Solutions & Strategies

This vision plan has been completed at a time when Riverside County Planning is hoping to complete a Community Plan as part of General Plan implementation. Large property owners within the community plan area are also mobilizing to request entitlements and significant changes in land use through Specific Plans,

As the Community Plan process moves forward, the county should work to ensure that the future land use vision for the community plan boundary can support an interconnected framework of walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. This framework can provide a basis for the organization of land uses. In recent years, many general plans have chosen to create a framework of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors that help to organize land uses and establish appropriate development intensities. Land uses are subsequently organized along the concept of the "transect" that can respond appropriately to Mecca's strong community character, and can provide a basis for zoning tools and standards that are specific to the community.

Mecca, like other historic rural communities in Riverside County, has an existing physical form that does not adhere well with Riverside County's zoning and coding standards, which have typically addressed only rural and suburban development. The community of Mecca has a strong, urban character, with an interconnected network of streets and blocks, relatively high densities with moderate setbacks, and a mix of uses. Much of the existing community of Mecca would simply not be possible if built to current County standards. As the community grows, site-specific coding and zoning tools will become increasingly more relevant and necessary in order for Mecca's unique character to be maintained. Although conventional design guidelines can also contribute, regulatory solutions will ultimately be needed.

Form-Based Codes

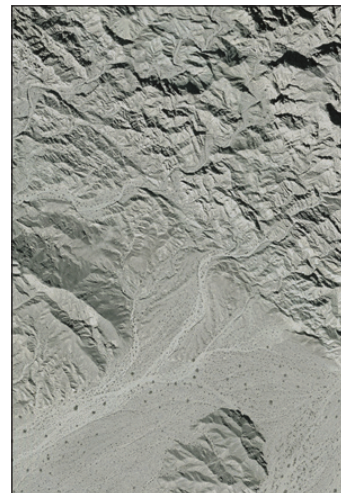
The County should consider Form-based Codes as an effective tool for Mecca to promote both appropriate and effective infill within the existing community as well as walkable, highly-connected, mixed-use neighborhoods at the periphery. The non-profit Form-Based Codes Institute offers the following definition for Form-Based Codes:

Form-based codes address the relationship between building façades 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 Mecca, 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.

RURAL

URBAN



T1 – Preserve



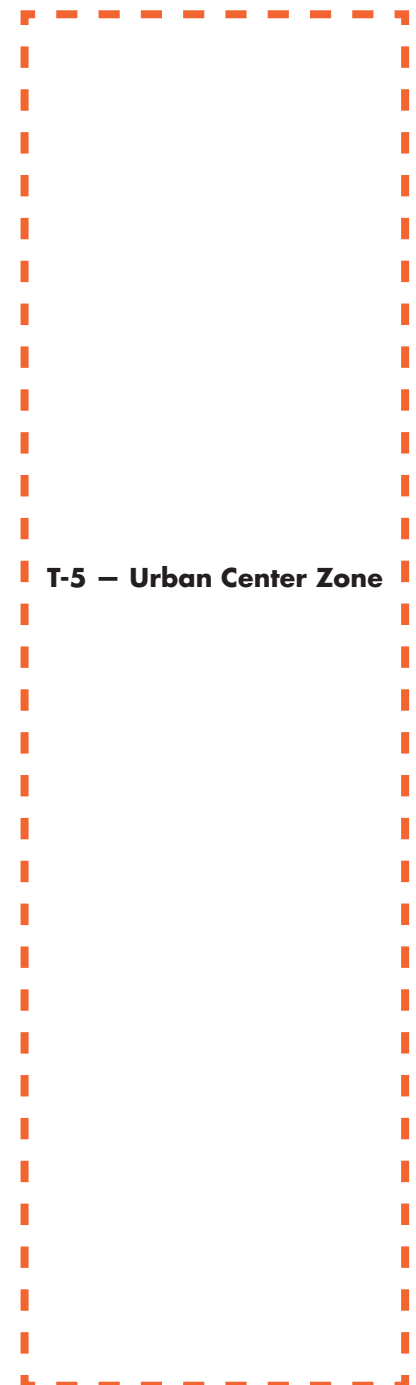
T2 – Rural Zone



T-3 – Neighborhood General Zones



T-4 – General Urban Zone



T-5 – Urban Center Zone



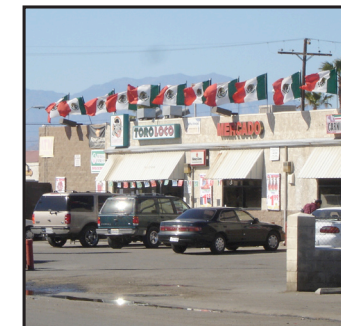
Mountains



Cultivated Lands



Single-Family Home



Locally-Serving Commercial



Salton Sea



Cultivated Lands



Compatible Multi-Family



Locally-Serving Commercial

Above: Transect diagram for Mecca produced during the charrette. From left to right, the transect starts at its least urban in the "T-1" zone, where natural preserves such as the Salton Sea dominate the landscape. "T-2" or "Rural Zone" follows, composed of agricultural lands and other areas in potential "reserve" for future development. "T-3" or "Neighborhood General" would comprise most of the Mecca core community: single family and multi-family homes and related structures. "T-4" or "General Urban" could be applied to some of the buildings found around 2nd Street. In the future, "T-5" or "Urban Center" could be applied to existing "T-4" areas that evolve or intensify, or new regional centers in outlying areas.

Form Based Codes are typically organized into a series of common sections, including a Regulating Plan (which indicates where different standards may apply), Public Space Standards (that regulate streets and other public space types) Building Form Standards (that regulate the configuration, features, and buildings as they address the public realm), Administration (that defines the application and review process), and Definitions. FBCs may also commonly include Architectural Standards, Landscaping Standards, Signage Standards, and Environmental Resource Standards.

Form-Based Codes could be implemented in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. The County could consider a Development Code Update of their existing zoning standards as they would be applied to the Mecca Community. Such a code update could include traditional neighborhood subdivision standards that would guide the layout of future communities, and form-based traditional neighborhood standards organized along a transect or other regulating tool.
2. The County could consider using a coding template such as the Smart Code. Such an "off-the-shelf" template could be calibrated to follow Mecca's unique physical form and could be adopted as either a mandatory or optional code. An optional format would allow developers to choose between a fast-tracked process (if they adhere to the code), or a conventional process (if they follow existing county standards).
3. Form-based standards could be required, even in a mandatory format, for any new developments requiring a Specific Plan.

For additional information on form-based codes, please consult the following resources:

- The Form-Based Codes Institute's web site at www.formbasedcodes.org
- The Smart Code web site at www.smartcodecentral.org
- The book "Form Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, Municipalities, and Developers" by Daniel Parolek, Karen Parolek, and Paul Crawford, available from Wiley Press

Chapter 4: Form-Based Code
Neighborhood General (NG) Standards

Key
 - - - Property Line - - - Setback Line
 - - - Build-to Line (BTL) ■ Building Area

Building Placement		
Build-to Line (Distance from Property Line)		
Front	20' *	A
Side Street	10'	B
Rear, Ancillary Building	5'	C
*May be reduced to meet furthest back adjacent BTL if adjacent BTL is less than 20' from property line.		
Setback (Distance from Property Line)		
Side	4' one side, 8' other	D
Rear, Main Building	40'*	E
* Setback shall be measured from 120' from front property line if no alley adjoins the property.		
Building Form		
Primary Street Façade built to BTL	50% min.	F
Side Street Façade built to BTL	30% min.	G
Lot Width	50' max.	H
Lot Depth	150' max.	I
Distance between buildings	10' min.	J
Depth of ancillary building	28' max.	K
Footprint of ancillary building	700 sf max.	

Use		
Ground Floor	Residential, or Services	L
Upper Floor(s)	Residential, or Services	M
*See Table 4.4 for specific uses.		
Height		
Building Max.	2.5 stories and 30' max.	N
Ancillary Building Max.	1.5 stories and 15' max.	
Finish Ground Floor Level	18" min. above sidewalk*	O
First Floor Ceiling Height	10' min. clear	P
Upper Floor Ceiling Height	8' min. clear	Q
*6" on downslope lots.		
Notes		
Mansard roof forms are not allowed.		
The windows along any portion of a building that project beyond the rear façade of adjacent homes must be privacy windows if the façade is 10' or less from the side property line.		
Any decks on the rear of homes greater than 2' above grade must have a privacy screen toward neighboring lots.		

4-18 Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan
 Opticos Design, Inc.

Above: Sample pages from a Form-Based Code prepared for the City of Benicia, California by Opticos Design. Building Form Standards typically address building placement, land use, height, parking, encroachments, and frontage.

Chapter 4: Form-Based Code
Neighborhood General (NG) Standards

Key
 - - - Property Line - - - Setback Line
 ■ Parking Area ■ Encroachment Area

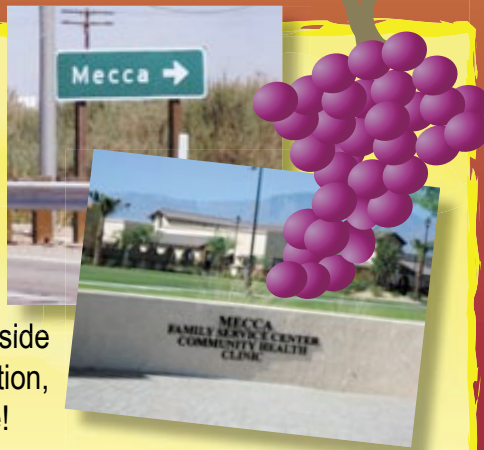
Parking		
Location (Distance from Property Line)		
Front Setback	20'	R
Side Setback	0'	S
Side Street Setback	5'	T
Rear Setback	5'	U
Required Spaces		
Residential Uses		
Studio unit	1/2 space	
1-2 bedroom unit	1 space	
3+ bedroom unit	1 space plus additional 1/2 space for every bedroom over two	
Other uses		
Uses < 3,000 sf	No off-street parking required	
On lots without alley access, a one-unit ancillary structure up to 400 sf may be built without requiring additional parking.		
Notes		
Parking Drive Width	11' max.	V
No more than a single space of parking is allowed in front of the front façade plane.		
50% of the on-street parking spaces adjacent to lot can count toward parking requirements.		
Encroachments		
Location		
Front	10' max.	W
Side Street	8' max.	X
Notes		
Porches, Balconies, and Bay Windows may encroach into the setback on the street sides, as shown in the shaded areas.		
Allowed Frontage Types (see page 4-26)		
Stoop		
Depth	4' min., 6' max.	
Forecourt		
Depth	20' min., not to exceed width	
Width	20' min., 50% of lot width max.	
Porch		
Depth	8' min.	
Height	2 stories max.	
Common Lawn		
Porch Depth	8' min.	

4-19 Downtown Mixed Use Master Plan
 Opticos Design, Inc.

Workshop Flyers

MOVING MECCA FORWARD!

Riverside County Department of Public Health and Riverside County Department of Planning Welcome Your Participation, Opinions, Suggestions, and Vision for Mecca's Future!



Monday, October 22, 2007 4:30 to 6:30 Smart Growth Workshop

Learn how we can plan and build a more livable, healthy, attractive and economically vibrant town of Mecca.

Tuesday, October 23, 2007 4:30 to 6:30 Walkable Community Workshop

Join us to discuss with community leaders that work on traffic, health and safety issues how streets, sidewalks and crosswalks can be designed to help make Mecca a safer, more comfortable place in which to walk and bicycle.

Mecca Family Service & Community Center Health Clinic
91-275 66th Ave., Mecca, CA

Refreshments & Snacks will be served



My Community, My Vision, My Pride – MECCA

MOVING MECCA FORWARD!



Riverside County Department of Public Health and Department of Planning Welcome Your Participation, Opinions, Suggestions, and Vision for Mecca's Future!

**COME CELEBRATE MECCA AND ITS FUTURE!
WITH LIVE MARIACHI MUSIC & FOOD!**



Friday Fiesta, January 25th

4:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Official Kick Off event and Initial Public Meeting with Community

Saturday, January 26th

9:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Walkability Audit and Community Design Workshop

Wednesday, January 30th

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Presentation of conceptual vision plan to stakeholders and community

Location: Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

65100 Dale Kiler Road, Mecca, CA 92254



My Community, My Vision, My Pride – MECCA

Charrette Participants

Mario Acosta, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Virginia Aguilera, Mecca resident
 Jorge Alvarez, Mecca resident
 Ignacio Arellano, Mecca resident
 Yolanda Arellano, Mecca resident
 Elizabeth Avila, Mecca resident
 Judith Avila, Mecca resident
 San Juana Avila, Mecca resident
 Angelica Bacilio, Mecca resident
 Valentin Barcel, Mecca resident
 Imelda Banulo, Mecca resident
 Edith Basaldua, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Javier Castro, Mecca resident
 Porfirio M. Cauo, Mecca resident
 Jessica Ceja, 4th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Jose Ceja, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Maria J. Ceja, Mecca resident
 Consuelo Congeo, Mecca resident
 Jond Coyt, Mecca resident
 Maria Diaz Coyt, Mecca resident
 Maria I. Cruz, Mecca resident
 Ulysses Cruz, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Leticia DeLara, Riverside County Supervisor's Office, District 4
 Rosalun Dia, Mecca resident
 Diana Diaz, 4th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Salvador Diaz, Mecca resident
 Renee Divine, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services
 Isabel B.E., Mecca resident
 Father Eliseo Lucas, Catholic Church
 Majeed Farshad, Riverside County Transportation Department
 Norberto Ferreira, Mecca resident
 Lorna Foster, Caltrans
 Jose Francesco A.M., Mecca resident
 Moris S. Gania, Mecca resident
 Marina Galvez, Mecca resident
 Monica Galvez, Mecca resident
 Carlos Garcia, Mecca resident
 Mike Gialdini, Riverside County Supervisor's Office, District 4
 Sanejuara Gile, Mecca resident
 Ana Gomez, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services
 Maria Gomez, Mecca resident

Ma Guadalupe Gonzales, Mecca resident
 Juan Gutierrez, Mecca resident
 Maria Luz Gutierrez, Mecca resident
 Miguel H., Mecca resident
 Hector Herrera, Riverside County Code Enforcement
 Sandra Jackson, Riverside County Department of Public Health
 Sau Judea, Mecca resident
 Mike Keebler, Coachella Valley Unified School District
 Jose M. Lara, Mecca resident
 Maria A. Lara, Mecca resident
 David Lawless, Riverside County Code Enforcement
 Josh Lee, Riverside County Planning Department
 Isabel Leon, Mecca resident
 Eunice Lori, Sunshine Trust
 Esperanza Lua, Mecca resident
 Jose Luis Lua, Mecca resident
 Monos P. Machuca, Mecca resident
 Maria Machula, Mecca resident
 Leticia Magana, Mecca resident
 Jacquelyn Magano, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Rosina Marcia, Mecca resident
 Gerry Martin, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services
 Elvira Martinez, Mecca Resident
 Catherine McMillan, Coachella Valley Association of Governments
 Mitra Mehta, Riverside County Planning Department
 Damian Meins, Riverside County Planning Department
 Amada Mendez, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Roberto Mendez, Mecca resident
 Fernando Montoya, Mecca resident
 Joe Mota, Coachella Valley Recreation & Park District
 Phayvanh Nanthavongdouangsy, Riverside County Planning Department
 Jose Nunez, 5th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Suzana Orozco, Riverside County Code Enforcement
 Rafael Ortiz, Mecca resident
 Jesus Pan Mi, Mecca resident
 Estela Perez, Mecca resident
 David Petuite, Mecca resident
 Brenda Prado, Mecca resident
 Paul Quill, Innovative Land Concepts
 Isidro Ramirez, Mecca resident
 Juan Ramirez, Mecca resident

Ladrislao "Lalo" Isabel Ramirez, Mecca resident
 Rosa Icela Ramirez, 5th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Sonia Ramirez, Mecca resident
 Elvira Rios, Mecca resident
 Leah Rodriguez, Riverside County Economic Development Agency
 Miguel A Rodriguez, Mecca Library
 Verence Rodriguez, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Gloria Romeo, Mecca resident
 Samuel Romero, Mecca resident
 Silvano Romeo, Mecca resident
 Sean Runnels, Innovative Land Concepts, Inc.
 Gerardo Sanchez, Mecca resident
 Relia Sanchez, Mecca resident
 Sara Sanchez, Mecca resident
 Esther Sandejas, Mecca resident
 Jazmine Santillanes, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Andrew Shouse, Riverside County Sheriff
 Margarita Silva, Mecca resident
 Steve Sims, Go Bike
 Alicia Suarez, Mecca resident
 Mojahed Sulama, Riverside County Transportation Department
 Joaquin Tijerina, Riverside County Economic Development Agency
 Nicola Arellano Torres, Mecca resident
 Victor Valdez, Mecca resident
 Luke Valencia, Mecca resident
 Consuelo Vargas, Mecca resident
 Jose Vargas, Mecca resident
 Leticia Vargas, Mecca resident
 Christian Vasquez, 4th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Erick Vasquez, 5th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Miriam Vidaurri, Mecca resident
 Gabriel Vidaurri, Mecca resident
 Jesus Villalon, 6th Grade, Mecca Elementary School
 Cathy Wampler, Riverside County Transportation Department
 Lluentina Zaiala, Riverside Court Department Public Health
 Guadalupe Zamora, Mecca resident
 Esther Zandzez, Mecca resident
 Rafael Zarate, Mecca resident
 Diego Zerega, Mecca resident
 Daniel Zomora, Mecca resident
 Guadalupe Zomora, Mecca resident
 Noelia Zuniga, Mecca resident

Focus Group Meeting Notes

We are interested in all aspects of a healthy community –lighting, security.

Code enforcement is helping make the community cleaner.

Special avenues needed and traffic lights because people don't stop for signs.

Need things for young people to be involved.

As Mecca grows, it grows healthy. Want destinations that people can walk to, and

activity centers. Health aspects – the health of people is determined by the way our communities are designed.

Employment opportunities needed along with improved public transportation, adult education.

Better transportation options needed, work opportunities, adult schooling. Health is exceptionally important - if not healthy not able to work, or be with others

Over 200 people come to Indio for services, would like more services in Mecca. As businesses come in, we'd like to work with them to provide better jobs for community. An island – hard to get to. Need other and better employment opportunities. More educational options for people who live here, more ESL and citizenship classes. Already offered but more needed.

Improved lighting, design features that make the community safe, sidewalks, improved infrastructure. Broken windows theory – people tend to think no one cares and crime goes up and vice versa. Money is coming into the community. Nice start and need more. As county puts more offices down here it will help.

Instead of giving social services, would like to teach people how to improve themselves. More businesses into the community and better salaries, so can afford what the county is asking of the people. How to improve themselves? How to find work. Training for teenagers, class that teach how to find jobs and apply for college funds, instead of having the mentality, "I'll never get out of Mecca."

Way to communicate better with the community about everything that is being done. Explain to them everything and how it is being done.

Scale of projects will have a tremendous impact on transportation network and other community facilities. Some of the larger landowners are the employers. Seen many rural communities with no character or community feel. We need to work and expand what community feel is there right now.

Whenever talk to people in Mecca, they want stuff built, want to see a building a sidewalk but to get there they need a plan, planning mechanism. This is a necessary process and I want the community to understand this.

Transportation issues can respond, in a matter of a few hours.

Community pride, maintain programs that are here. County brings things and then they leave. We want more consistency.

Want continuation of the close-knit community.

Need something easily implemented.

Community reaction is they never do anything. This is the chance to show them. We have a

Mecca Community Revitalization Strategy
Opticos Design, Inc.

© 2008 Opticos Design, Inc.

lot of apartments, and lots of crime recently - breaking into church. How to provide homes for people? Lots of empty spaces for houses but don't want apartments.

Major housing issues out here. Lots of illegal units - probably one on each property. No easy solution. Seeing apartments being built but people moving in are not from area.

Parking is going to be an issue, 21 people living at one property. Where do the cars go?

Imagine sidewalks curb gutters, where are people going to park - on the sidewalks? They like to see some improvements first.

People are excited that the new health center and substation is there. If we promise to do something we need to follow through.

Concern about apartment complex is partly about the size and opportunity not given to people in the community. Those who moved in are from Indio, Coachella – we don't know who they are. People can't afford to use them, would rather see money to support other approaches.

They don't want mobile homes and apts. They come with the families and add kids to the overcrowded schools. Kids wander the streets. Community members can't afford the apartments. It's an outsider taking up space in my schools and streets. Apartments don't allow same family atmosphere.

5000 people living in the mobile home par near here, but being closed. Slow displacement plan and people will need some kind of priority. We don't have existing residences for these people. If judge says get them out now we wont know what to do with them. Other parks as well. They are considered part of the Mecca community.

Seasonal people. 10-15,000 for grape season in March and until June and then move north. Stay in their cars, under trees, canals. No place for taking showers, rest. DACE planning on dry camp where can park and use showers at 68th and Hammond. Expand on this plan somehow.

Great ideas, but activists who want it to be nice housing, better than existing is what county can do, cant always get what the activists want. Walk them through the process too.

When the season comes. What can we do to talk to owner of lands to build halls for women and men, showers, place to sleep. Not safe to be sleeping outside. Its too hot. Catholic community planning on way to give them meals. And how get owners of fields who benefit to provide some facilities.

Field owners used to offer housing but told not good enough. Regulation in early 90s squeezed out grower housing – county was regulating at one point. As it got stiffer and stiffer, but not required, people stopped providing. State legislative response was to allow the creation of other types of farm worker housing such as mobile homes.

Grade separated crossing – working with RR and state, planned coming in future, long term. Short term plan roundabout to solve situation and keep vehicles moving. Stopping is causing the problem and at 4th and Hammond going into condemnation to create space. Should take 2-3 years.

Plan to update RR track area and provide sidewalks. No sidewalk area now to cross safely. Plan to widen in conjunction with roundabout.

Pedestrians cross tracks on paved surface where cars do.

No sun bus service from Mecca to North Shore, Oasis. No buses to Mexicali. They go over to 111 to catch ride or hitchhike.

Pet peeve with bus stops – no shelter or trash cans. Too hot.

Informal survey of welfare participants showed us that there are very few people who use the system. Only one bus in and one out 6 am/ 6pm. Indo service needed.

Carry forward Hispanic heritage. As higher end houses are built, character needs to be reflected in the community. Grapes heritage – somehow table grapes as requirement for landscaping (brainstormed idea) for example. City of Redlands requires percent of land for orange groves, for example.

Palm desert has corner lots garden spaces. City owned community garden. Assign space between developments – something that belongs to the residents.

We have built out so many areas. Before we look at plan like this, are there others projects planned around it. How does this fit into other plans and development?

How do we figure out how to provide enough jobs are part of this plan? Are there other skills that can encourage jobs within the community? – Work with College of the Desert and their TANIF funds. Short-term program related to construction skills.

Downtown grid is a good pattern. Newest area already disconnected from community. Would like to see future development stay connected. Keep the grid.

Potential for industries - the salt in the sand? Are there industries that can capitalize on this unique characteristic? Mecca would have a monopoly advantage.

Children are concerned about high speeds, lots of cars, and want clean air.

We want trees for shade and more space to walk on the sidewalks.

Fire department will fight narrow roads as fire access is a huge issue.

Code enforcement seen as a forbearer of more development. And seen as a threat because loss of agriculture means loss of jobs.

UFW still here, but not as much. Younger workforce focusing on construction, hospitality. Vacation seasons seem to be changing with global warming so less job opportunities as crops are hurt or less people vacation in this region.

Improvements don't seem fully planned out. We need some quick fixes such as getting rid of the standing water and repaving what roads are paved.

Mobile homes in back yards rented out to families.

Current park space is packed with kids, not enough services and need more room.

Sunday is a day off, so go to town and get groceries in Coachella. A documented driver with a car drives and everyone pitches in for gas.

Few kids who grow up in Mecca come back if they go away to school.

Biggest concern is how is every day life going to change? And how much is it going to cost?