



Revitalizing the Durfee Avenue/ Peck Road Corridor in South El Monte

A Report to the City of South El Monte



November 2012

Prepared by:

Local Government Commission

Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1		
Background	4	11. Charles T. Kranz Intermediate School	38
Overview of this Report	6	12. Monte Vista Elementary School	40
		13. South El Monte High School	47
CHAPTER TWO: DESIGN FAIR PROCESS	7	C. Residential Area Connectivity and Safety Recommendations	54
Overview	7	14. Old Durfee Avenue Neighborhood Traffic Calming	54
Outreach Efforts	8	D. Bikeways and Trails	55
Focus Group Meetings	8	City Bikeway Map	55
Public Charrette Events	9	San Gabriel River Trail Access	57
Opening Session	9	Conclusion	59
Saturday Walking Audit and Design Session	10		
Design Recommendation Preview	11	CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLEMENTATION	61
Closing Session	11	Implementation and Phasing	61
		Structuring the program	61
		Project Priorities	61
CHAPTER THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS	13	Funding	62
Overview	13	Durfee Avenue/Peck Road Corridor Project Funding Matrix	63
Design Highlights	14		
A. Primary Corridor Designs (northeast to southwest)	14	APPENDIX A	65
B. School Safety and Access Recommendations	14	Pellissier Neighborhood Connectivity Improvements	65
C. Residential Area Connectivity and Safety Recommendations	15		
D. Bikeways and Trails	15	APPENDIX B	67
A. Primary Corridor Designs	16	Resident Table Maps	67
1. Peck Road – El Monte City Limits to E. Rush Street	16		
2. E. Rush Street – Tyler Avenue to Peck Road	18		
3. Peck Road/Rush Street to Durfee Avenue	20		
4. Durfee/Rush Intersection	21		
5. Durfee Avenue from E. Rush Street to Thienes Avenue	22		
6. Durfee/Thienes Intersection	26		
7. Durfee Avenue from Thienes to Michael Hunt	28		
8. Durfee/Michael Hunt Intersection	30		
9. Peck Road from Michael Hunt Drive west to Durfee Avenue	31		
10. Peck/Durfee Intersection and Access Ramps west of Highway 60	36		
B. School Safety and Access Recommendations	38		

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Three years ago the City of South El Monte held a series of design workshops for the Santa Anita Avenue and Tyler Avenue corridor. That event and the resident-derived designs that came out of it were so successful that funding was sought for another design charrette to focus on the Durfee Avenue/Peck Road corridor in the southern portion of the City. Once again Caltrans stepped forward to fund the project. This report details every aspect of that charrette, highlighting the designs that were produced by residents and the project team, and funding sources that will help the City move to the construction step.

Durfee Avenue, Peck Road, and adjoining streets were designed decades ago to serve the industrial traffic that was more common in the community of South El Monte at that time. That type of traffic required large, multi-lane streets with wide lanes and medians. Industrial activity and traffic has been

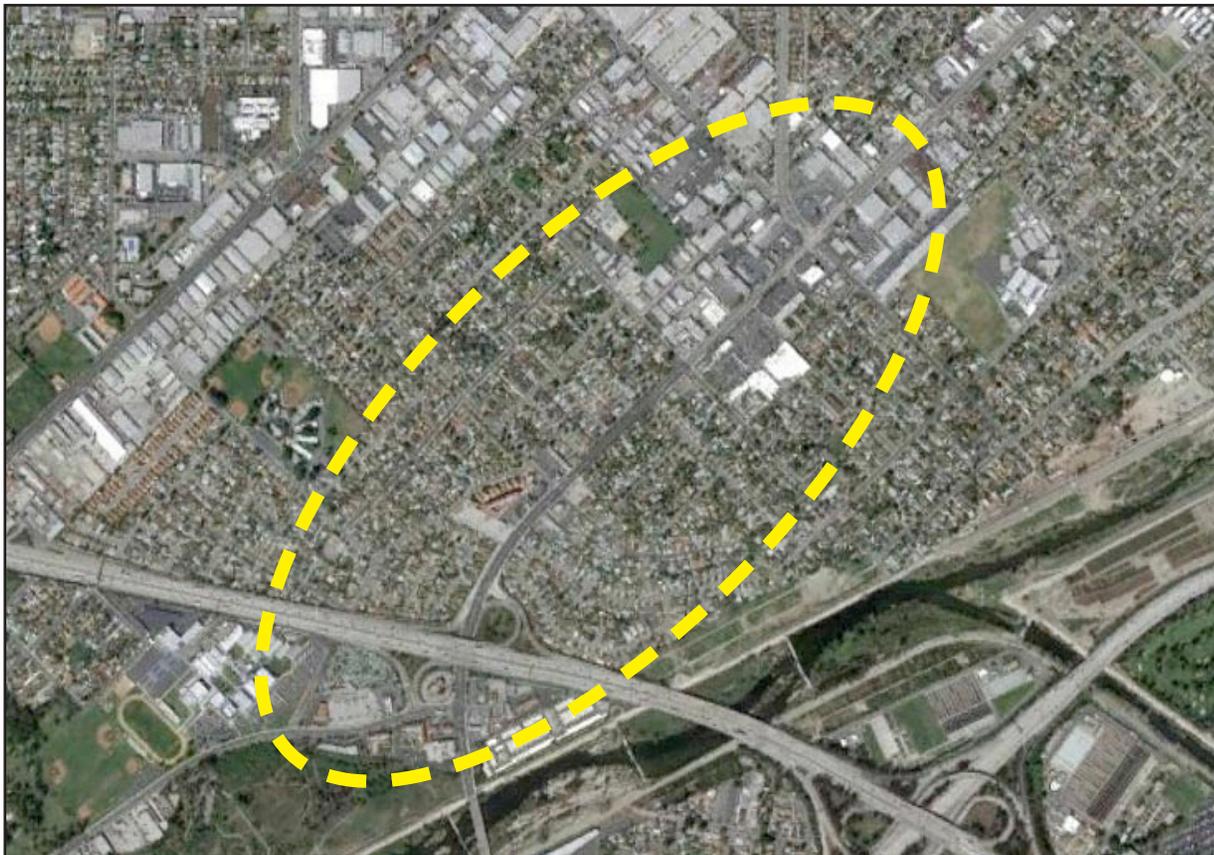


Figure 1. Aerial view of the Durfee Avenue/Peck Road Corridor. The oval marks the primary study area for the corridor. South El Monte High School is at the far bottom-left, and Kranz Intermediate School just outside the upper right of the oval.



Many people who are not in automobiles...



...use South El Monte streets...



...and must be accommodated.

declining in recent years, as the practice of street design has evolved. The designs in this report reflect those changing times.

No longer are streets considered the near exclusive domain of motor vehicles. Now they are recognized as important public spaces that must meet the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, youth, seniors, and the disabled. Contemporary street design practice allows these different users of the streets to coexist with improved safety. A well-designed, balanced, complete street can also be a catalyst for commercial activity and economic development.

This project's focus is on the complex corridor in the community of South El Monte where street names bounce between Peck Road and Durfee Avenue. .

This project and the implementation activities that will follow advance all of these goals. The goals related to mobility and accessibility, safety and security, and community values were often ignored by transportation planning activities in the past. This project sets the stage for reconfiguring streets in this corridor to better provide for all users of these public thoroughfares and improve safety for everyone. Experience with similar street makeovers in other communities has proven that providing for the disabled, pedestrians, bicyclists, and all age groups does not mean that commerce and the ability to move vehicle traffic in the corridor must suffer.

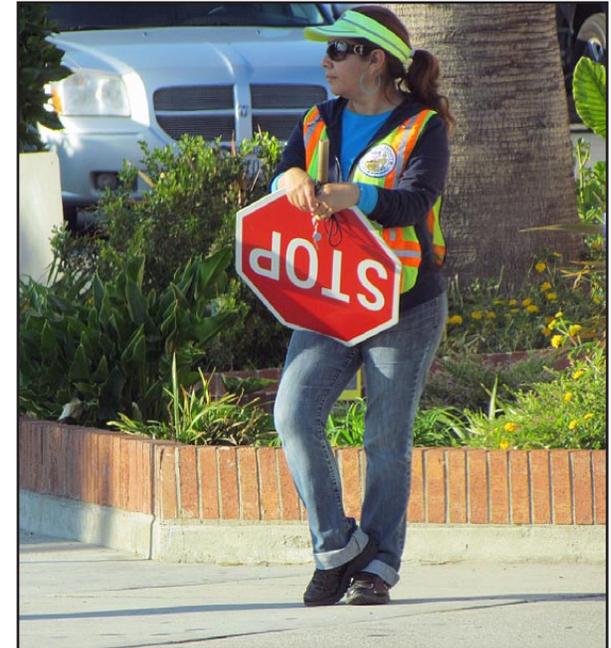
This effort is focused around the Durfee-Peck Corridor, and the adjoining portions of two other primary streets: East Rush Street and Thienes Avenue. Several nearby school sites, some streets connecting to the Durfee-Peck Corridor, and the San Gabriel River Trail were also addressed. A description of the community should begin there. These streets are characterized by:



- A deficient pedestrian environment with barriers to travel along sidewalks and across streets.
- Difficulty for pedestrians crossing major streets.
- A lack of bicycle facilities.
- Heavy volumes of truck traffic on the major streets.
- Very wide intersections with numerous vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian conflicts
- Speeding and other driver misbehavior on the primary streets, secondary streets, and in school zones.
- Poor signing and access to the regional asset of the San Gabriel River Trail.
- Speeding cut-through traffic in some neighborhoods.
- Limited access in other neighborhoods.
- Poor control of entry points for vehicles, bicyclist, and pedestrians at school sites.

This project was funded by a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Environmental Justice Context Sensitive Planning Grant. That grant program's goals include:

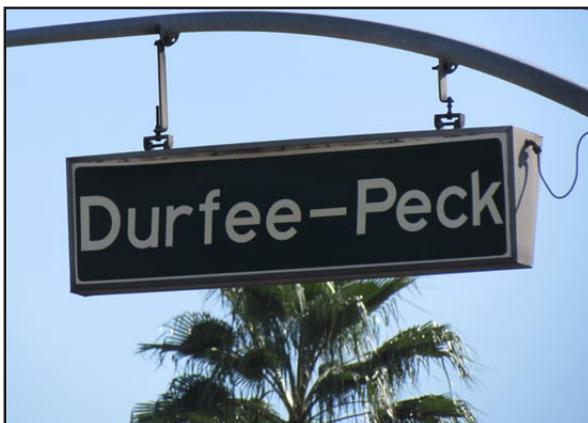
- Improve Mobility and Accessibility.
- Preserve the Transportation System.
- Support the Economy.
- Enhance Public Safety and Security.
- Reflect Community Values.
- Enhance the Environment.



A group of staff and volunteer crossing guards...



...watches over the school children of South El Monte.



The Durfee-Peck corridor is in transition...



...but still sees commercial and truck traffic.

2010 SOUTH EL MONTE STATISTICS

- Land Area – 2.85 square miles
- Population – 20,100
- Hispanic or Latino – 85%
- Asian – 11%
- Number of Households – 4,700
- Persons per Household – 4.3
- In Home One Year or Longer – 93%
- Median Household Income – \$46,000
- Per Capita Income – \$14,200
- Persons below Poverty Level – 15%

This project used a highly participatory process called a “design charrette” that engaged residents, business owners, local elected officials, city staff, school officials, parents, and students. The result is a detailed plan using context-sensitive design principles to redesign these auto-oriented thoroughfares into modern urban streets that also accommodate transit, pedestrians, and cyclists, and will provide a lively corridor for the residents of South El Monte. Additionally, three school sites on or near the corridor were evaluated, and recommendations made to improve safety and access.

Background

South El Monte, located in the San Gabriel Valley, is bounded on two sides by the San Gabriel Valley’s two major drainage features: the Rio Hondo River on the west and the San Gabriel River on the east. Throughout the 1930s, South El Monte and much of the region remained in agricultural production, in part due to these local water sources.

The City of South El Monte lies at an important crossroads from both a geographic and historical perspective. Bounded by the Pomona and San Gabriel River freeways, South El Monte has ready access to regional travel routes that link the City to centers of commerce in Los Angeles County and beyond.

Leading up to the Second World War, however, the region experienced significant industrial growth, with an accompanying boom in the housing market. South El Monte, due to its location adjacent to rail lines and new freeways, successfully attracted a broad base of industrial users.



On some streets, there is little room for children on foot....



...or bicyclists sharing space with vehicle traffic.

Between 1958 and 1980, annexations expanded the City to almost three square miles providing housing for 16,000 residents. Industry continued as the dominant force in the City's economy, with 1,100 business licenses reported in 1980. During the 1980s and 1990s, South El Monte experienced gradual, limited growth resulting primarily from annexation of peripheral lands. Geographic and political barriers prevent the City from increasing in size much beyond its current boundaries.

Although South El Monte today is almost completely built out, many properties are not used to their full potential. Over 50% of South El Monte's land is dedicated to industrial uses. Some locations in the Durfee-Peck Corridor may be suitable for additional infill development over time that can contribute to the revitalization of the area and provide more services to nearby residents.

The Durfee-Peck Corridor is the hub of local retail activity in the community. This project will set the stage for improvements to the street and nearby environs in the corridor that can boost revenues and the appeal of this district.

The city is not well-served by transit. Metro bus line 270 operates in the corridor but on weekdays only, and at a 1 hour frequency.

Key to improving livability and the quality of life for residents is to enhance this corridor and its connections so that residents feel safe walking, bicycling, and taking transit within and from the City. A plan to improve the streetscape, safety, and mobility along this corridor, will help advance future development and increased retail activity in the area.



Providing access for large trucks requires careful design to protect pedestrians.



Outreach efforts succeeded in gathering residents for charrette events.

The community's population and business patterns mirror the transition occurring throughout the San Gabriel Valley toward a more diverse ethnic mix and increased presence of businesses serving Pacific Rim and Asian markets within the region and abroad. However, the community can benefit from a richer mix of uses to foster economic development within the City.

Highway 60 cuts across the southern portion of the City and crosses the Durfee-Peck Corridor. The very popular Whittier Narrows recreation area is south of Highway 60 at the western end of the Corridor. The underpass is characterized by narrow sidewalks, poor lighting, and closed crosswalks at nearby intersections. This limits safe pedestrian and bicycle access in this area and to the Whittier Narrows recreation area.

Several locations in the corridor are suitable for additional development, or redevelopment. These include the commercial property at the northeast corner of the Rush/Peck/Durfee intersections, the largest shopping center on the southeast corner of the Rush/Durfee intersection, the former gas station site on the southeast corner of Durfee/Michael Hunt intersection, and the vacant former Teamsters building just west of Highway 60. The simple addition of buildings near the street can improve the two active commercial locations.

Access issues were reviewed at three schools located on or near the corridor: Charles T. Kranz Intermediate School (which is in El Monte but serves some South El Monte students), Monte Vista Elementary School, and South El Monte High School. Students walking or bicycling to all of these schools must travel on or across streets that are very busy with automobile traffic, especially during student arrival and departure times.

Overview of this Report

This report consists of four chapters. The first two chapters have information on South El Monte, this project, its funding, and issues this project addresses. Chapter 3 is the core street design component of this report, outlining the recommendations for the corridor and nearby school and residential areas. Chapter 4 spells out steps to move these designs and land use changes forward, as well as potential funding sources.

CHAPTER TWO: DESIGN FAIR PROCESS

Overview

Design charrettes are an increasingly popular tool for neighborhood and street design programs. Charrettes are community-based design exercises intended to involve the public in a meaningful way to craft their own future.

This format allows residents, users of a street, or whatever population is targeted, to be the primary force behind the designs. They are typically brought together for several sessions over a short period of time, before the charrette project team finalizes the designs and prepares a report like this one.

In the case of this project in South El Monte, the first visiting team members arrived on Wednesday afternoon the week of the first focus group meetings and didn't depart until the closing session concluded late in the evening the following Tuesday.

Most participants in charrettes following this format strongly prefer it to the more conventional approach where a consultant team visits the community, meets with a few chosen officials or prominent citizens over a day or two, then departs to a distant place to write up a report that appears in the mail months later.

The process used for this project in South El Monte gives the public more meaningful involvement and rewards their effort with a preview of the final designs at the end of the week.

The project team included the following individuals:

- Local Government Commission — Paul Zykofsky, AICP, Associate Director; Anthony Leonard, Project Manager; and Steve Tracy, Senior Research Analyst
- Dan Burden, Executive Director and Cofounder, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute
- Michael M. Moule, P.E., P.T.O.E., Principle, Nelson\Nygaard
- Barrio Planers, INC. — Frank Villalobos, FAIA, President; Luzmaria Chavez, Project Manager; Luis Vazquez; and Marlene Lechuga



Meetings were held with City elected officials and staff.

Public Charrette Events

Opening Session

On Thursday evening, November 10, 2011, the Durfee-Peck Corridor Design Fair opened with the first public event, held at South El Monte Senior Center Auditorium. Mayor Louie Aguiñaga and City Manager Anthony Ybarra welcomed residents to the event, introduced the project and offered background on the City's ongoing desire to improve safety and mobility.

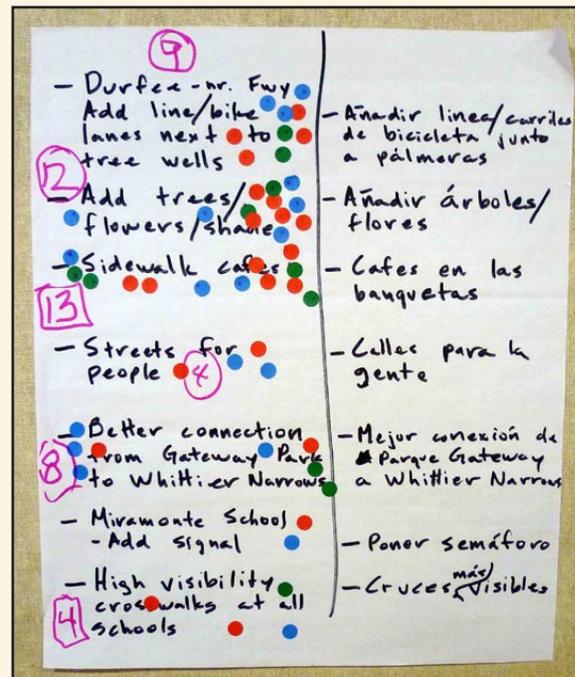
Dan Burden of the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute and Paul Zykofsky of the Local Government Commission then gave the crowd a presentation in English and Spanish about design techniques that can convert dysfunctional, unsightly, and dangerous streets into complete streets that work for everyone, not just drivers. Their presentation was rich with examples from other cities where problem streets, intersections, and crossings were redesigned into functional, attractive, and safe public spaces.



Residents expressed their thoughts on issues to address...

General Priorities:

1. Fix crossing at Durfee/Peck and Highway 60 on-ramps (15)
2. Add bicycle lanes (15)
3. Sidewalk cafes (13)
4. Add trees/flower/shade (12)
5. Add lines/bike lanes next to tree wells on Durfee/Peck near freeway (9)
6. Add signal or beacon at Mountain View High School (9)
7. Better connection from Gateway Park to Whittier Narrows (8)
8. Add crosswalk near South El Monte High School (8)
9. Prevent midblock crossings at Madrid School (7)



... and voted to prioritize them.



After a walking audit of the corridor...



... residents began mapping their own design solutions.

Participants were then asked to take part in a simple exercise about priorities. They were asked to call out things they would like to give attention to, while LGC staff recorded their issues on large easel paper. Those sheets were then taped to the auditorium wall.

Next, participants were each given half a dozen colored adhesive dots to use as votes for the issues they feel are the most important in the Durfee-Peck corridor. They were only allowed to place one dot per item, no double votes. This information was carried forward into the subsequent tour on Saturday morning, and to the designs the project team developed over the course of the charrette.

Saturday Walking Audit and Design Session

On Saturday, November 12, 2011 the Design Team led charrette participants on a walking tour of the Durfee-Peck Corridor. This began on Central Avenue at the Senior Center in the Civic Center area, where participants boarded a bus. They disembarked at the Durfee/Peck/Rush intersection, and walked from that point west all the way to just beyond the Michael Hunt intersection.

At numerous stops on this walk the group assembled around audit leader Dan Burden to discuss mobility issues at each location, look at traffic on the streets, and listen as Dan offered possible solutions to improve conditions at each location. Other members of the project team took notes, measurements, and photographs along the way. These animated, revealing, and educational discussions continued as the group returned to the Senior Center.

The design team began the next session with a short refresher course on some of the tools available to address the priorities identified by participants on Thursday evening. These included traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and access requirements and techniques.

Once refreshed with lunch, participants broke into three table groups and began the complex task of discussing the corridor. Each table group held energetic conversations as they discussed detailed recommendations and general concerns. These thoughts were then translated into design recommendations which they drew on large aerial photographs.

Design Recommendation Preview

Before the closing session, South El Monte City staff and elected officials saw a brief preview of the charrette recommendations. This afternoon session lasted about an hour, and included discussions covering numerous locations, topics, and design recommendations.

Closing Session

This session was held at the Senior Center auditorium on the evening of November 15, 2011. Over fifty residents and project team members were in attendance as Dan Burden and Paul Zykofsky began the presentation with a brief recap of the tools of good street design. This was followed by detailed images of resident and project team recommendations for areas along the Durfee-Peck Corridor, nearby school sites, and residential neighborhoods.

After this discussion session, participants congratulated each other and were thanked by the project team. The resulting designs appear throughout the next chapter of this report. The residents, officials, and City Staff who contributed their time and expertise to this project deserve the gratitude of the entire South El Monte community.



After the design table session...



Residents reported back their ideas.



Residents attended the closing session to see the preliminary recommendations based on their input.



High school students also shared their opinions.

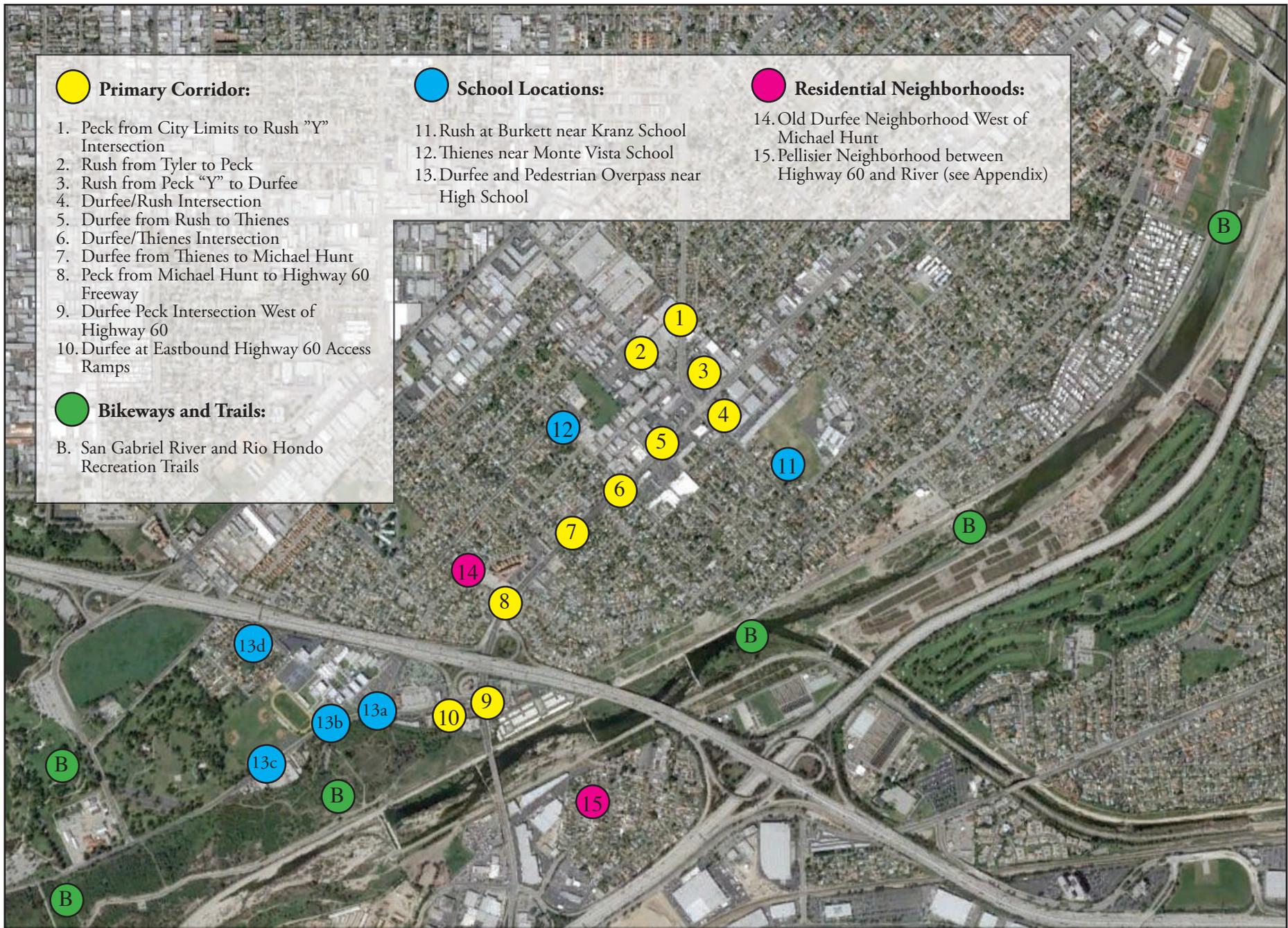


Figure 2. Overview of design locations for the Durfee/Peck Corridor. Primary corridor locations are in yellow, school sites in blue, residential neighborhoods in magenta, and trails in green.

CHAPTER THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Design recommendations are the heart of this project, the charrette activities in South El Monte, and this report. This section details the improvements suggested for roadway segments along the corridor, local schools, and nearby residential areas.

This discussion begins with the Durfee-Peck Corridor and intersecting cross streets, then continues to suggestions to improve school access and safety, recommendations for better connectivity and safety in adjacent residential neighborhoods, and finally bikeway and recreation trail access improvements.

Critical issues raised during the charrette events are addressed by the designs. It is important to remember that these designs are not the product of the design team working in isolation, but are based on input from residents working collaboratively during the Saturday charrette event. Factors leading to these recommendations include:

- Suggestions made by residents attending the Saturday design workshop
- Solutions that have been proven effective in similar settings in other communities
- Traffic volumes on the various roadway segments in South El Monte
- Accident types and frequency
- Simplicity and cost

The discussion of each street segment begins with a short description of the current situation, with details about traffic flow and safety issues. This information will include:

- Street width
- Traffic volumes
- Accident history
- Issues raised in charrette sessions

In some cases, short-term solutions can be implemented with simple applications of paint to improve crosswalks, add bicycle lanes, and narrow vehicle lanes. More complex features such as curb extensions and raised medians with landscaping can be added as funding is secured. Ramps for disabled residents and related improvements should be added at every appropriate location as soon as possible. Potential funding sources for all of these project types are discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.



Project team members examined the corridor.



They then mapped out recommendations based on public input.

Design Highlights

The toolkit of features that are recommended as appropriate at different locations in the corridor include:

- Narrowing vehicle lane widths to reduce vehicle speeds and free up space for buffers, wider sidewalks, and bicycle lanes
- Converting unnecessary vehicle lanes to bicycle lanes or parking
- Adding bicycle lanes wherever needed
- Marking bicycle routes across intersections
- Widening or improving sidewalks
- Completing intersections to provide the full set of high visibility crosswalks (always including advance stop bars), ADA ramps, pedestrian signals with Lead Pedestrian Interval, pedestrian crossing islands, etc.
- Reducing vehicle speeding with techniques that improve safety through good design without requiring additional enforcement
- Upgrading the appearance of streets in the corridor wherever possible with landscaping and other improvements

This Chapter is organized into these areas:

A. Primary Corridor Designs (northeast to southwest)

- Peck Road from the El Monte City Limits to East Rush Street
- The Peck/Rush/Durfee segment with two intersections
- Durfee Avenue from E. Rush to Thienes Avenue.
- Durfee Road from Thienes to Michael Hunt Drive
- Peck Road from Michael Hunt Drive under Highway 60 to where Durfee Avenue resumes
- Durfee Avenue from Peck Road to South El Monte High School

B. School Safety and Access Recommendations

- Charles T. Kranz Intermediate School
- Monte Vista Elementary School
- South El Monte High School

C. Residential Area Connectivity and Safety Recommendations

- Old Durfee Avenue from Michael Hunt Drive (Slack Road) to Central Avenue
- The Pellissier Road residential area

D. Bikeways and Trails

- The existing South El Monte Bikeway Map
- Trailheads and access to the San Gabriel River Trail

Recommendations are discussed in detail in the pages that follow. Because this report is being produced in a format that can easily be photocopied, some tracking back and forth from page to page may be necessary to view location maps, design details, example photographs, and explanatory text.

The Durfee-Peck street segment at the core of the corridor is oriented southwest to northeast. For the optimal display in the format chosen for this report, most of the designs are tilted clockwise 45 degrees so that north is off the upper right corner of the image.

Figure 2 is oriented to true north, and shows an overview of the corridor and the numerous sites that will be discussed below.

Summary of Recommendations

- Install bike lanes in both directions
- Add parking adjacent to northbound travel lanes
- Provide a median for center turning functions
- Add tree wells in the parking lane on the east side of the street
- Add a landscaped median north of the Rush intersection



A. Primary Corridor Designs

1. Peck Road – El Monte City Limits to E. Rush Street

Peck Road is a major corridor for residents from communities north of South El Monte accessing Highway 60. As such, the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) is 12,500 vehicles from the northeast South El Monte City limits to the Peck Road/Rush Street “Y,” and 23,000 vehicles on the southwestern portion of Peck Road near Highway 60, on a typical weekday. This corridor is driven by people interested primarily in cutting through South El Monte, not stopping or shopping there.

This street is built on the major thoroughfare Right of Way (ROW) that is 100 feet wide to the back of the sidewalks. This dimension typically includes 80 feet of asphalt between the curbs. These measurements can be found on other major streets in South El Monte and other communities in the San Gabriel Valley.

However common this type of street may be, the extremely wide travel lanes adjacent to the curbside parking invite speeding. Fortunately, this excess width can be used to create a better street that provides bike lanes, narrower through lanes, and a median for left turning vehicles and informal temporary truck parking. Removing the curbside parking next to the southbound traffic lanes provides the necessary street space to make these changes without creating additional inconvenience. The parcels on the east side of Peck Road at this location are small and have little on-site parking. That makes it logical to retain curbside parking next to the northbound travel lanes.



Figure 3. Peck Road north of the Rush Street/ Peck Road intersection.

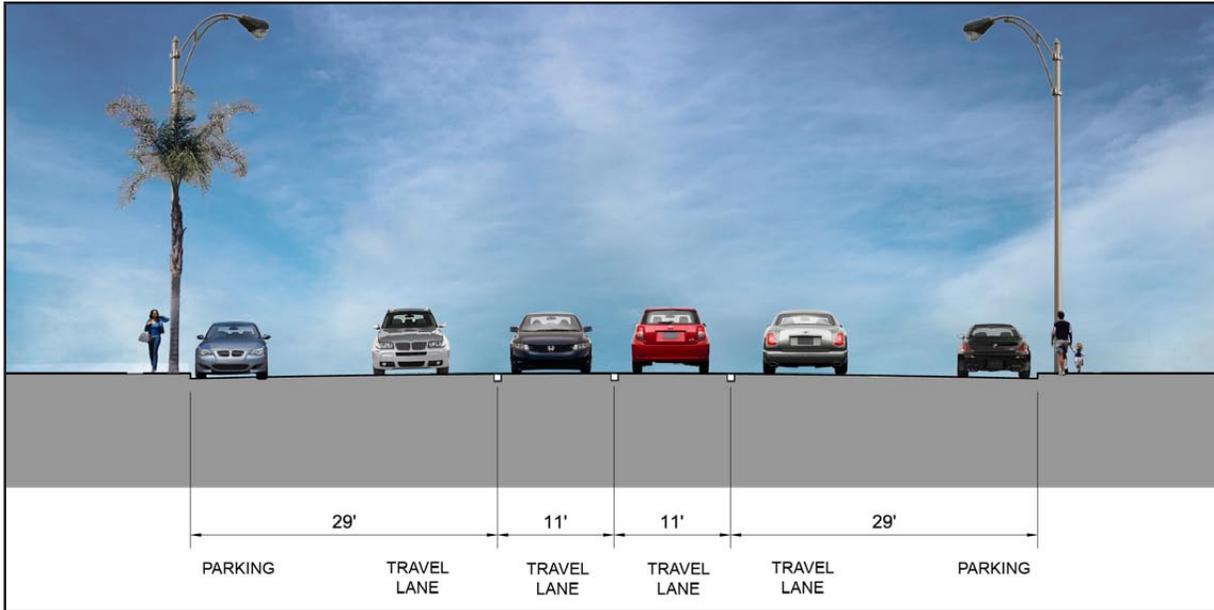


Figure 4. Peck Road, facing south, north of Durfee/Peck intersection — Existing.

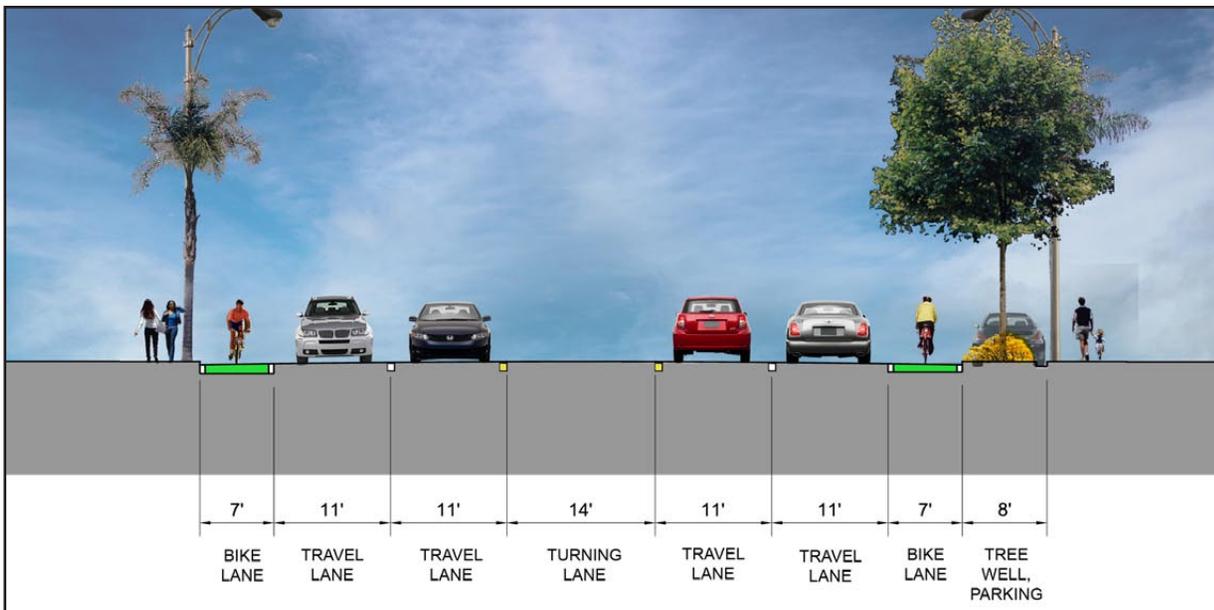


Figure 5. Peck Road, facing south, north of Durfee/Peck intersection — Proposed.

Summary of Recommendations

- Reduce through lanes to one in each direction
- Add a center median for left turns
- Stripe bike lanes in both directions
- Substitute shared lane markings for the southbound bike lane from Frank Stiles Street to the intersection with N. Peck Road
- Add tree wells between parking spaces on both sides of the street



2. E. Rush Street – Tyler Avenue to Peck Road

This section of Rush Street is on a narrower ROW than is common for the secondary thoroughfares in the region. The total width is 80 feet, with 64 feet of asphalt surface between the curbs. E. Rush Street also currently has two lanes in each direction and parking on both sides of the street.

In this setting, bike lanes can be provided by reducing the through lanes to one in each direction, and providing a center median that can be shared for left turns. This configuration will still allow sufficient room for the numerous large trucks accessing properties on this street. It extends the design previously recommended for E. Rush Street between Santa Anita Avenue and North Tyler Avenue. (2009 report)

Because trucks with long trailers require extra street width as they approach the Rush/Peck intersection with odd-angle left and right turns, reserved bike lanes might constrict trucks and invite conflicts with cyclists. In this setting, substituting shared lane markings, which are referred to as “sharrows,” is advised. This allows bicycle riders to take the lane as they approach the intersection, and alerts drivers that for 200 feet they are required to yield the lane to the cyclists.



Figure 6. Rush Street northwest of the Peck Road/Rush Street intersection.

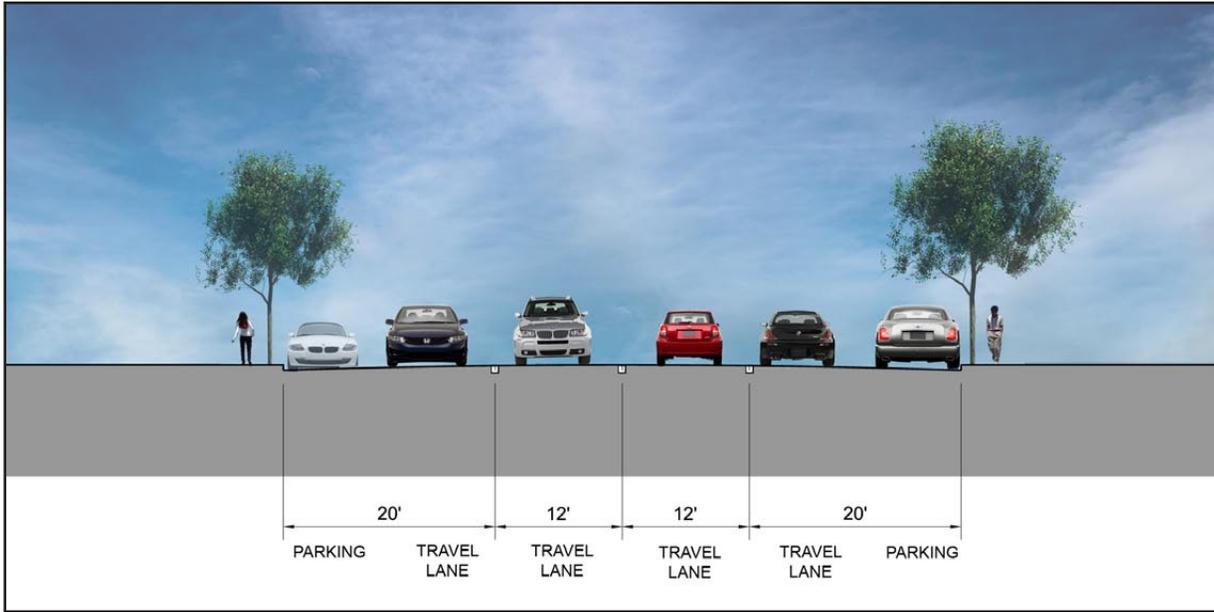


Figure 7. East Rush Street, from Tyler Avenue to Peck Road, facing south — Existing.

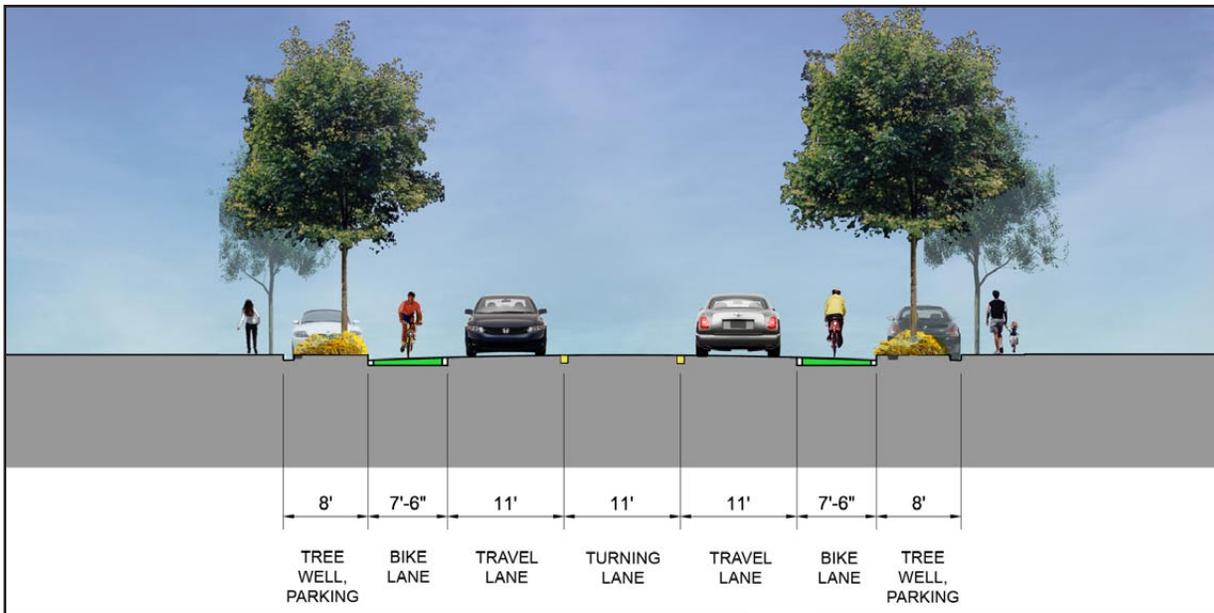


Figure 8. East Rush Street, from Tyler Avenue to Peck Road, facing south — Proposed.

Summary of Recommendations

- Install curb extensions on both western corners where E. Rush Street meets Peck Road
- Widen and landscape the existing median
- Add bike lanes in both directions
- Add highly visible crosswalks
- Install countdown signals with Lead Pedestrian Interval



3. Peck Road/Rush Street to Durfee Avenue

This 400 foot long segment of roadway carries more traffic than any other street in the corridor, most of this traffic is oriented to N. Rush Street and Durfee Avenue to the west. Morning commute traffic is particularly intense, with high volumes of southbound vehicles turning west onto Durfee Avenue. Many drivers were observed making the right turn on red without coming to a full stop as is required by law. This creates a hostile situation for pedestrians.

Recommendations include better defining and tightening vehicle space by painting bike lanes in both directions and widening the medians. Faint paint lines already mark where these median extensions should be. The E. Rush/Peck Road intersection is at an awkward oblique angle, which can be “squared up” somewhat with curb extensions and repainting lane stripes.

All of this and better crosswalks can make this portion of the corridor safer for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians but still serve the daily needs of commuting and commercial traffic.

Aside from the recommendations to improve safety and traffic flow, the design team sees the potential for some modest additional development at the front edge of the underutilized parking lot on the east side of this roadway segment. Figure 9 shows schematic locations for two new buildings that would better frame the street, leave the shopping area driveway intact, provide for additional commercial activity, and increase sales tax revenues to the city.



Figure 9. Peck Road/Rush Street segment to Durfee Avenue.

4. Durfee/Rush Intersection

This is a 4-way intersection, but the heaviest traffic streams are the northeast/southwest flows on Durfee Avenue and the northwest/southeast flows on E. Rush Street. Most of that traffic is oriented to N. Peck Road. This has created a situation with numerous right turns from southbound Rush to southwestbound Durfee, and the reverse volume of left turns from northeastbound Durfee to northwestbound Rush. To accommodate these vehicle turns, the crosswalk to get pedestrians across Rush Street on the northwest side of this intersection is closed. Pedestrians who want to cross the northwest leg of Rush Street are now required to cross three legs of a large intersection which exposes them to more conflicts and considerable delay.

The northeastern link to this intersection on Durfee Avenue is much wider than is required for the two through lanes in each direction and the left turn lane onto southbound E. Rush Street. A striped buffer is painted in this location, moving the left turn lane over so drivers have a better view of oncoming traffic. Converting the striping to a more conventional left turn lane with a median separating traffic in the two directions will require changing the left turn from a protected/permissive light cycle to fully protected left turns. The median then will make this extremely wide crossing much safer and more comfortable for pedestrians.

Summary of Recommendations

- Landscape the widened median on E. Rush Street north of this intersection
- Move the westbound Durfee Avenue left turn lane over next to the through lanes
- Add a raised median on the eastern link of Durfee Avenue
- Open the crosswalk on the northwestbound side
- Paint highly visible crosswalks on all four pedestrian crossings
- Install countdown signals for all crosswalks with Lead Pedestrian Interval
- Install bike lanes on Durfee Avenue and on E. Rush Street north of this intersection
- Add sharrows through the intersection to connect bike lanes

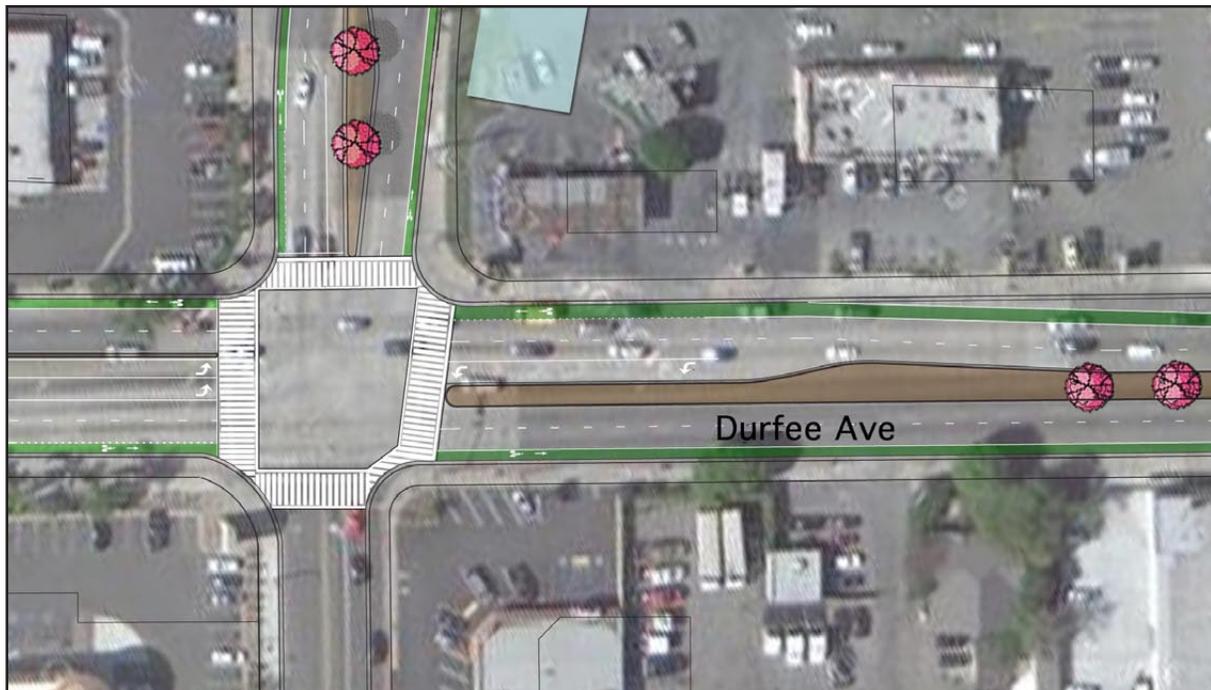


Figure 10. Intersection at Durfee Avenue and Rush Street.

Summary of Recommendations

- Install raised and landscaped medians with left turn pockets
- Narrow driveways on the north side of Durfee
- Eventually eliminate driveways close to the Thienes Avenue intersection
- Remove the third westbound travel lane
- Add bike lanes in both directions
- Install a mid-block crosswalk when justified

5. Durfee Avenue from E. Rush Street to Thienes Avenue

This segment of the corridor is bordered on the southeast side by a strong commercial center. As such, it deserves full attention to beautify the roadway, improve pedestrian and bicyclist comfort, and provide safe access for motorists.

The north frontage of Durfee Avenue in this segment is more fragmented, with diverse commercial, industrial, and warehouse operations served by 11 driveways.

There is also a third westbound travel lane next to the curb in this segment, that is available for parking at some times of the day. The design team never observed a vehicle parked in this area, and none appear in aerial photographs that were reviewed going back 6 years. Traffic in that lane is impeded by slow vehicles entering and leaving driveways, and turning right onto northbound Thienes Avenue. This third westbound travel lane is eliminated closer to Highway 60, and the design team saw merging conflicts where that lane disappears.

Since the heaviest volumes of morning traffic headed towards the freeway are carried in only two lanes for the last 2,000 feet, this part-time third westbound lane seems unnecessary at any point along the corridor. The recommendation is to restrict vehicle travel in this lane entirely, unless there is a need to help drivers turning right ease out of the stream of traffic as they approach intersections. The space freed up by that lane removal can then be used to stripe bicycle lanes or provide parking that is not forbidden at certain times of the day.

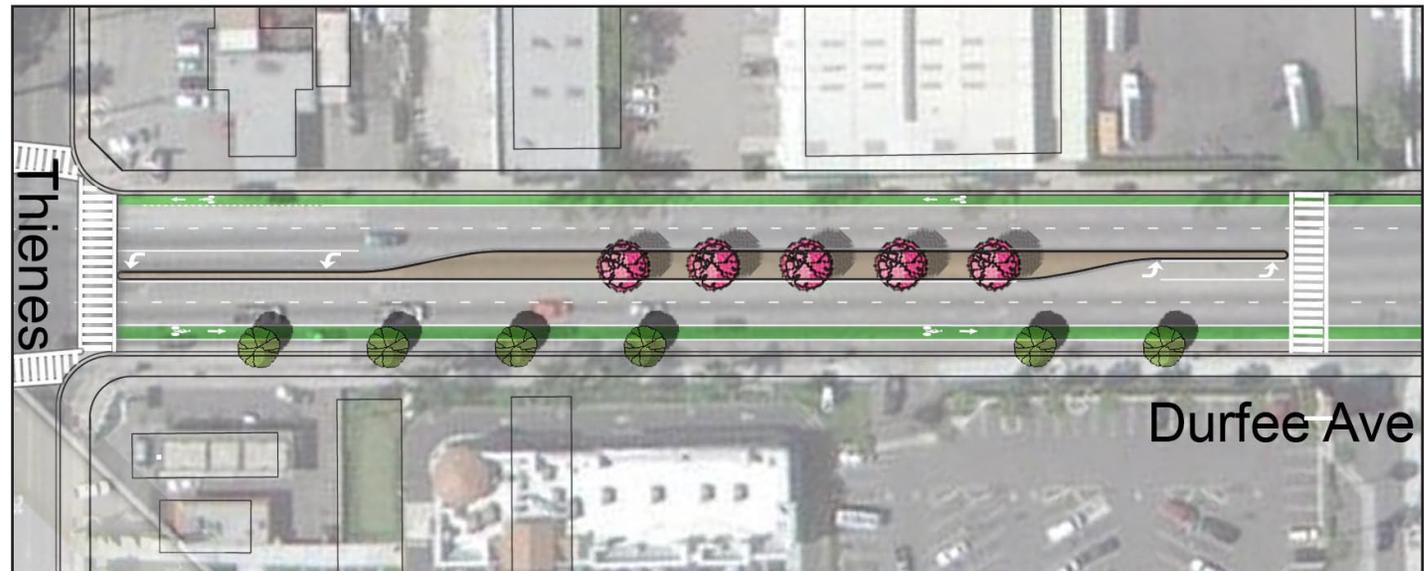
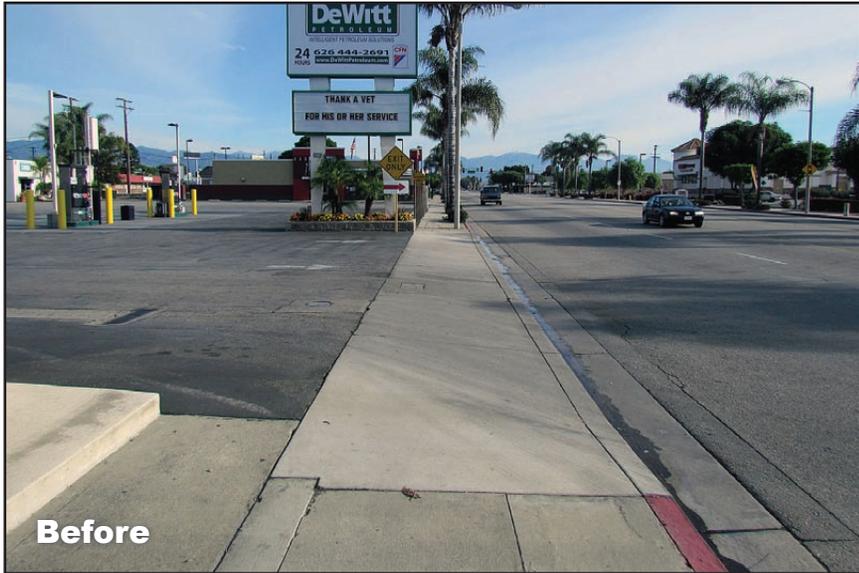


Figure 11. Durfee Avenue from Rush Street to Thienes Avenue. (both pages)



Figures 13 and 14. Before and After photos of driveway adjustments.

Some driveway adjustments are recommended for both sides of the street, including narrowing those that are excessively wide or too close to intersections. These can cause conflicts with traffic, crosswalks, and pedestrians on the sidewalks.

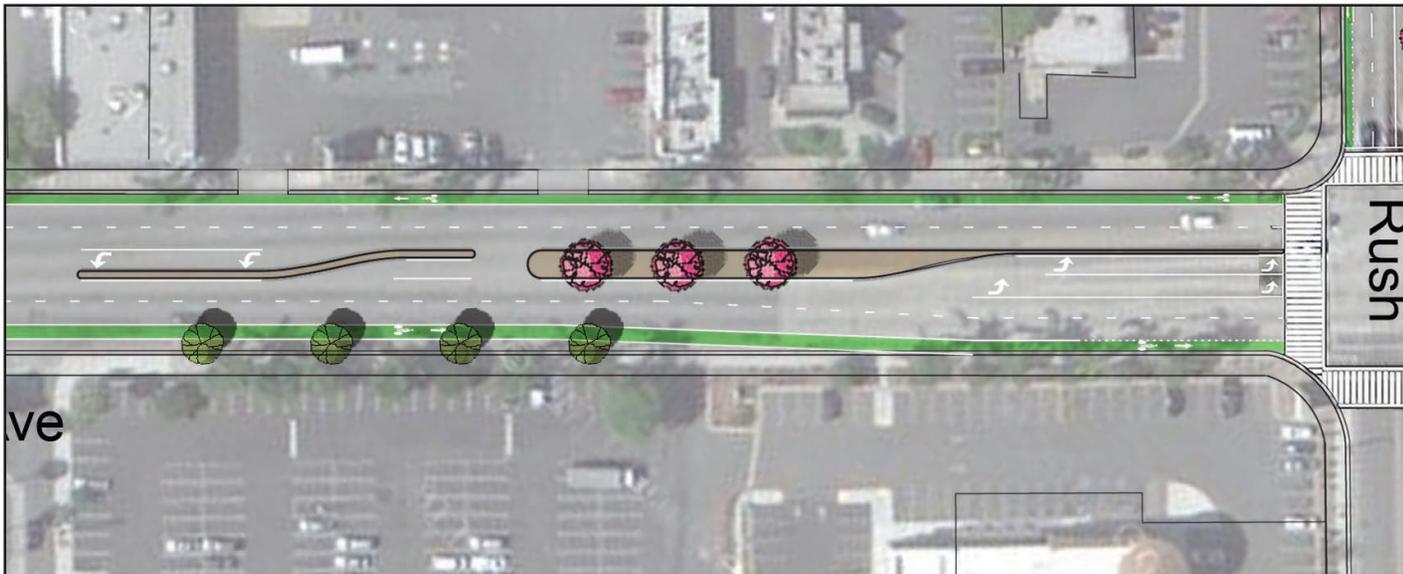


Figure 14. Durfee Avenue from Rush Street to Thienes Avenue. (both pages)



Figures 15 and 16 (left) and Figures 17 and 18 (right). Before and After images of Durfee Avenue improvements.

Otherwise, the recommendations are straightforward: add landscaped medians and bike lanes, better define vehicle lanes, and improve pedestrian features. Figure 16 shows this fully-developed street. The mid-block crosswalk can be deferred until a later time, after more commercial uses have replaced the warehouse uses on the northwest side of Durfee that currently generate little pedestrian traffic.

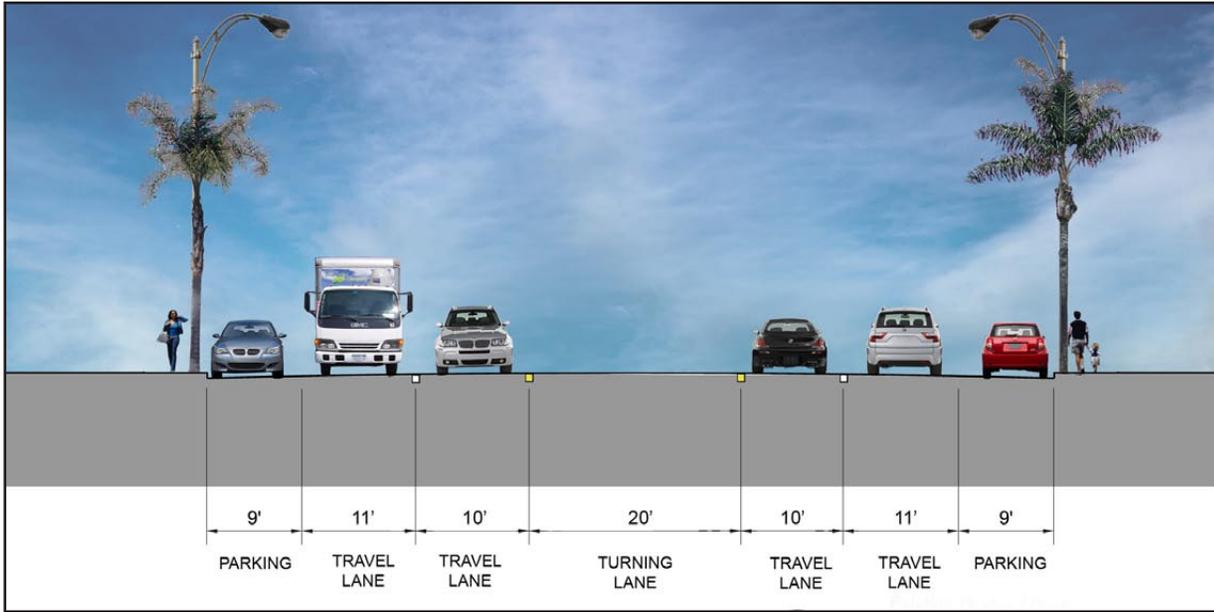


Figure 19. Durfee Avenue from East Rush Street to Thienes Avenue, facing north — Existing.

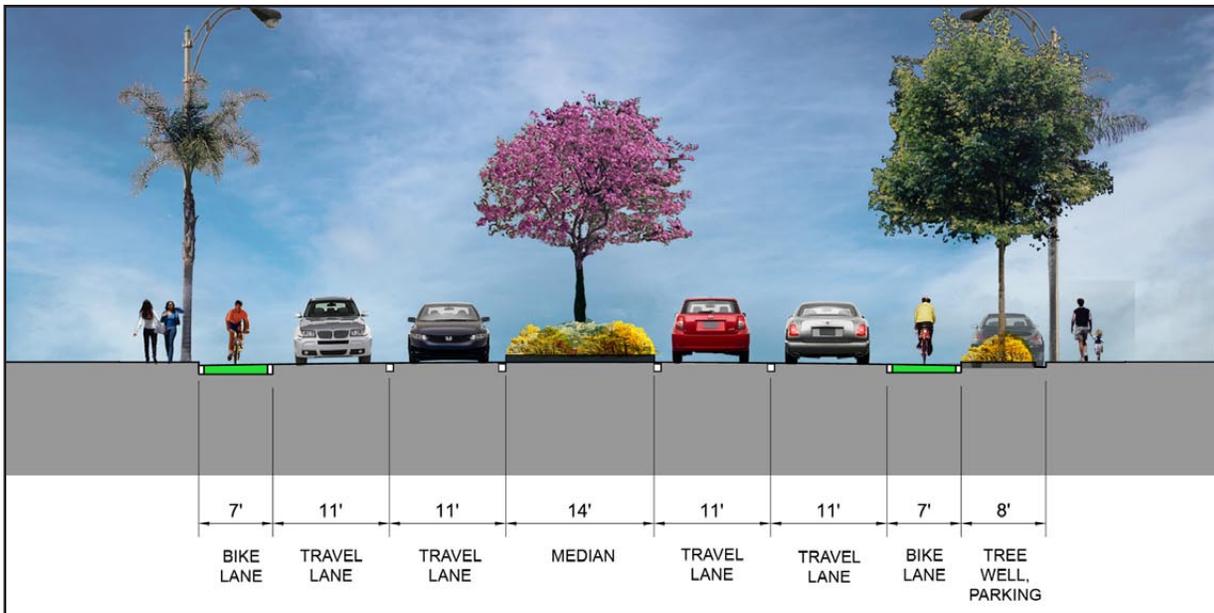


Figure 20. Durfee Avenue from East Rush Street to Thienes Avenue, facing north — Proposed.

Summary of Recommendations

- Paint highly visible crosswalks
- Install pedestrian countdown signals with Pedestrian Lead Interval
- Add sharrows through the intersection to connect bike lanes
- Eventually close driveways to the east very near the intersection
- Resolve the encroachment issue on the northwest corner

6. Durfee/Thienes Intersection

This intersection carries a high volume of bicycle and pedestrian traffic, because it provides access to the shopping center, Monte Vista Elementary School, and the San Gabriel River Trail. Therefore, this intersection needs a full makeover to provide for those non-motorized users without interfering with vehicle traffic.

This will begin with repainting all four crosswalks to be highly visible, adding stop bars, and installing pedestrian countdown signals. Sharrows should be added to show bicyclists where to ride while crossing the intersection from one bike lane segment to another.

Longer term recommendations fall into two areas. First, there are driveways very near the eastern crosswalk on both the northeast and southeast corners. Each of the properties these driveways access has two additional driveways, one each on Thienes and Durfee. So many driveways on small corner parcels is no longer accepted as good practice. Closing the third driveway that interferes with both pedestrian and vehicle circulation should occur as any development or remodel activity that requires a building permit takes place. This will not pose any hardship if the remaining driveways are retained.



Figures 21 and 22. Before and After images of improvements to Durfee/Thienes intersection.

The second long term issue does not require waiting, and creates such an impediment to able and disabled access on the northwest corner of this intersection that it should be addressed immediately. As the images show, there is a private stub wall and iron fence blocking the sidewalk that once existed at this location.

On the Saturday walking audit conducted with residents, one resident occasionally rode in a wheelchair. Only forceful jamming of the wheelchair allowed it to pass between utility poles and the illegal fence. City Right of Way maps confirm this encroachment, which captures public property for exclusive use. This taking of critical public access space for private use must be corrected immediately.



This fence in the City Right of Way at the Durfee/Thienes intersection.



... makes it difficult for disabled residents to pass.

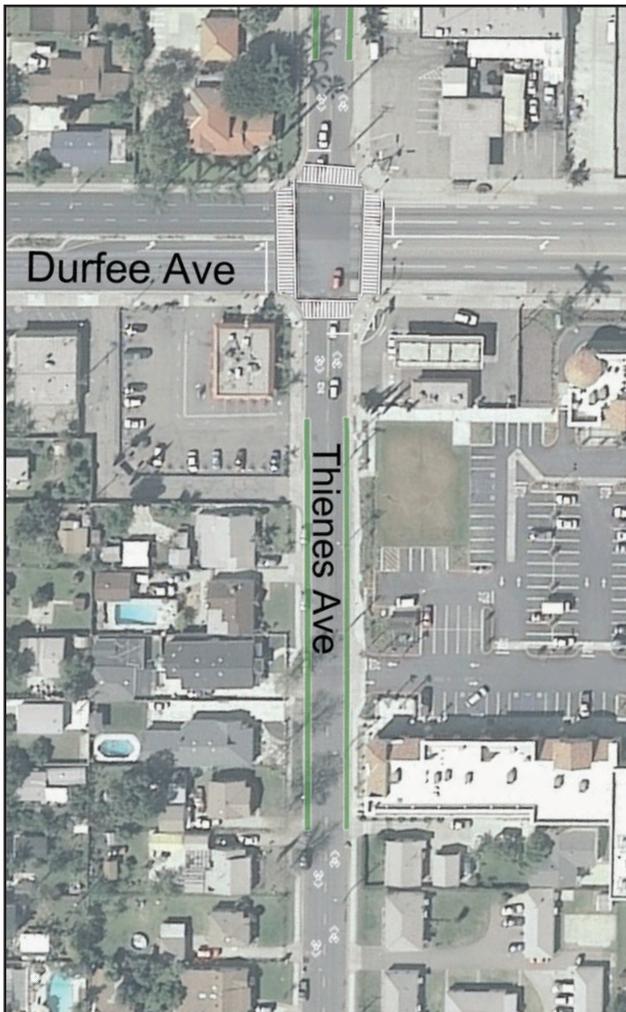


Figure 23. Thienes Avenue with recommended improvements.

Summary of Recommendations

- Complete the partial medians for the full length of this segment
- Remove the third southwestbound travel lane
- Add bike lanes in both directions
- Replace the awkward wandering sidewalk on the Broadmead Street frontage road
- Add highly visible crosswalks at the Michael Hunt intersection
- Set pedestrian signals for a lead pedestrian interval
- Create a gateway feature on the corner of the vacant lot at Michael Hunt

7. Durfee Avenue from Thienes to Michael Hunt

This is a primarily residential segment. There are commercial uses only at the major intersections, and none of the residential properties on the north side of the street actually front onto Durfee Avenue. As a result, there are only twelve residential driveways accessing Durfee in this segment, all on the south. Due to the median extending east from the Michael Hunt intersection, two of those properties are already in a “right in, right out” situation where access is partially blocked.

While it will be an inconvenience to residents of the remaining ten properties, traffic safety dictates a design for this segment that eliminates left turns into and out of those driveways. This will add to travel distance somewhat, requiring U-turns at the signals. The safety and traffic flow improvements make this worthwhile for the community as a whole.

As with the Rush to Thienes segment, a third westbound travel lane is available on this portion of Durfee Avenue at some times of the day, and available for parking at other times. The same arguments about unnecessary capacity, a forced merge, and space better used for bike lanes apply here. Again, the design team never observed a vehicle parked along this stretch of curb even when it was legal, and none appear in a review of aerial photos back to 2006.



Figure 24. Durfee Avenue from Thienes to Michael Hunt Drive.

There is an awkward meander on the northern sidewalk in the middle of this segment that is overgrown with landscaping in places. A better way to accommodate pedestrians in the long term would be to add a straight sidewalk in the southern few feet of the Broadmead Street frontage road, as shown in Figure 27. This would still allow vehicle parking along the curb on one side of the street. It would also narrow the roadway and reduce vehicle speeding, which is an established problem in this neighborhood.



Figures 25 and 26. Before and After images of improvements on Broadmead Street.

Summary of Recommendations

- Paint highly visible crosswalks
- Install pedestrian countdown signals with Lead Pedestrian Interval
- Add sharrows through the intersection to connect bike lanes
- Create a monument gateway feature on the southeast corner of the intersection

8. Durfee/Michael Hunt Intersection

Like the intersection at Thienes and Durfee, this intersection also serves a school on the side street to the north – the Epiphany Catholic School. The primary corridor west of this intersection, with the name changed to Peck Road, is primarily an access route to Highway 60.

This combination of school-oriented pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and automobile cross traffic oriented to the freeway requires careful attention to design details. Recommended features include highly visible crosswalks with Lead Pedestrian Interval signals, and colored asphalt or other markings to highlight the best route for bicyclists approaching and crossing the intersection. These will also alert motorists to be on the lookout for cyclists.

This intersection also serves as a gateway to the corridor, once east-bound traffic clears the area around the access ramps to Highway 60. Participants in the design workshops wanted to see a feature of some sort welcoming people to the corridor. A gateway monument should be installed at the southeast corner of the intersection when the former gas station site is developed, if not sooner.

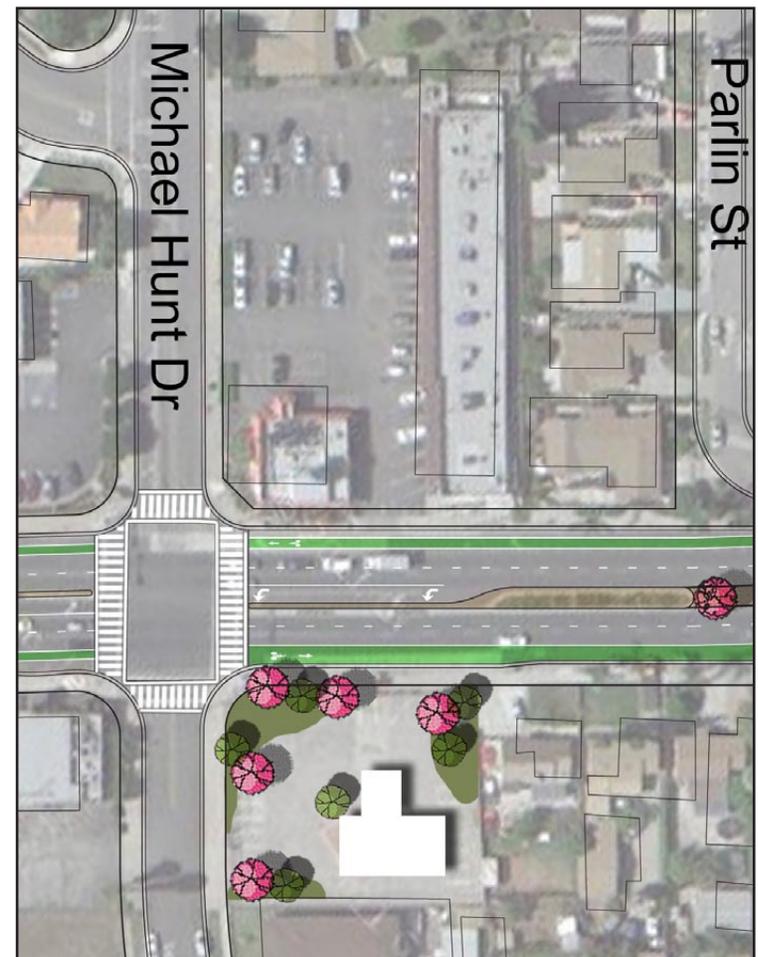


Figure 27. Intersection at Durfee Avenue and Michael Hunt Drive.



9. Peck Road from Michael Hunt Drive west to Durfee Avenue

A high percentage of vehicles on this segment of the corridor are entering or exiting westbound Highway 60 via access ramps near the freeway. Recently the City of South El Monte installed tree wells and medians to narrow vehicle lanes, reduce speeds, structure curbside parking, and beautify the entryway to the corridor. Caltrans also redesigned the paired onramp and off ramp on the south side of Peck Road to narrow vehicle space and improve pedestrian crossings.



Summary of Recommendations

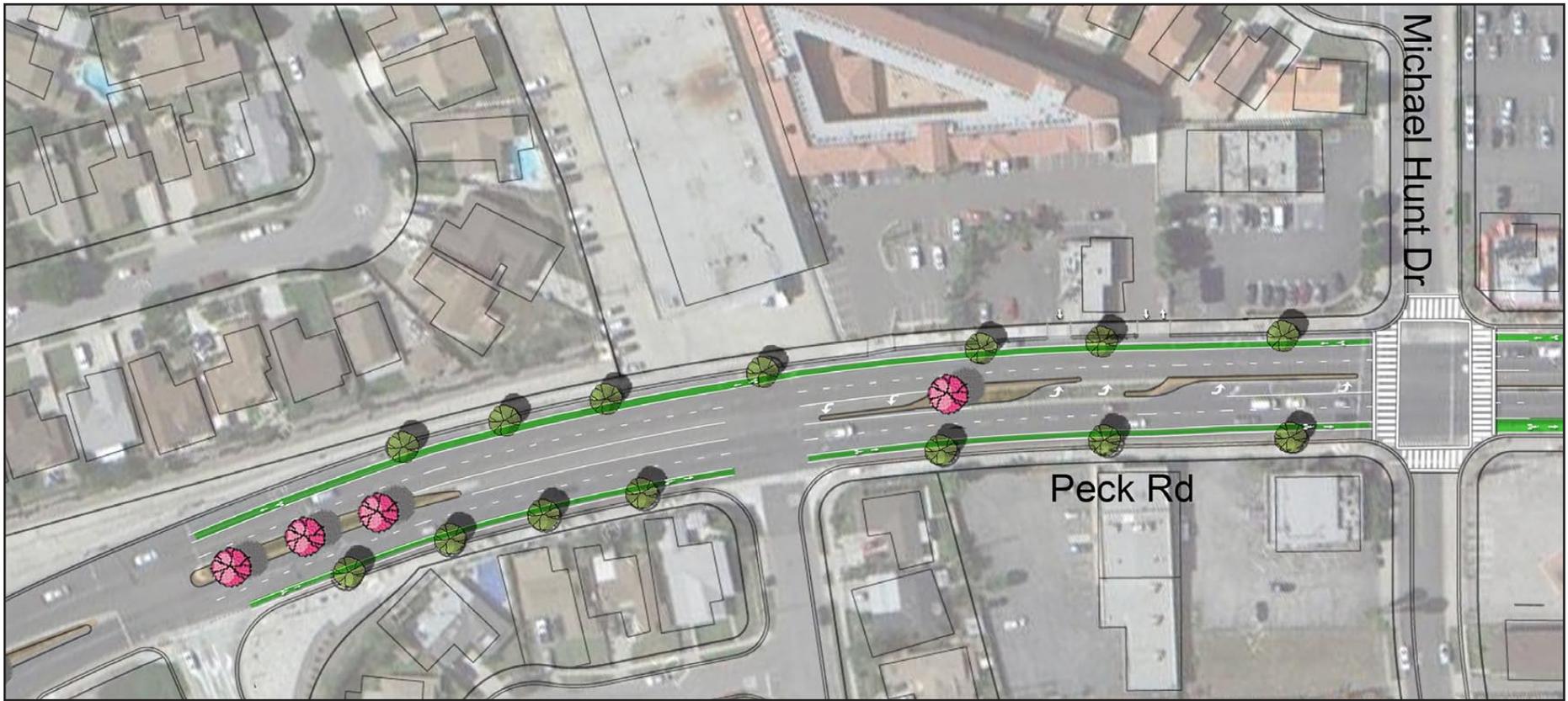
- Add bike lanes in both directions
- Extend the existing medians east of Farndon Street
- Restrict left turns out of the commercial and senior housing properties on the north side of Peck Road
- Structure left turns into those properties with a new left turn pocket
- Provide a turn pocket for left turns onto Farndon Street
- Narrow the entry point to Farndon Street with curb extensions
- Add a highly visible crosswalk across Farndon Street
- Narrow the Highway 60 onramp and offramp pedestrian crossing distances with new curbing
- Paint highly visible crosswalks at freeway ramp locations

Figures 28 and 29. Before and After images with bike lane south of Michael Hunt Drive.

While the tree wells that were recently added are good for traffic safety, and beautify the corridor, they may have pushed bicyclists away from the curbs and towards the stream of moving traffic. There is still sufficient room on the street to narrow the two existing travel lanes in each direction and add bike lanes, which can be done in the short term with simple paint.

The design team recommends some additional medians be placed in the gap in the middle of this segment. These should include a left turn pocket for access to Farndon Street. Another new left turn pocket between Farndon Street and Michael Hunt Drive as shown on Figure 30 will provide access to senior housing and businesses on the north side of Peck Road. If drivers leaving those uses want to travel eastbound, they will need to make right turns out of the driveways and then U-turns at Farndon Street. This minor inconvenience is justified by the improvement in traffic safety the medians provide.

Figure 30. Peck Road from Michael Hunt Drive southwest to Durfee Avenue.



Other recommendations are primarily directed at pedestrian safety. These include curb extensions at Peck Road and Farndon Street as shown in Figure 32. These will narrow the crosswalk distance where pedestrians are vulnerable, especially to vehicles whose drivers make hurried left turns in front of on-coming traffic to enter the Farndon Street neighborhood.



Figures 31 and 32. Before and After images of improvements at Farndon Street.

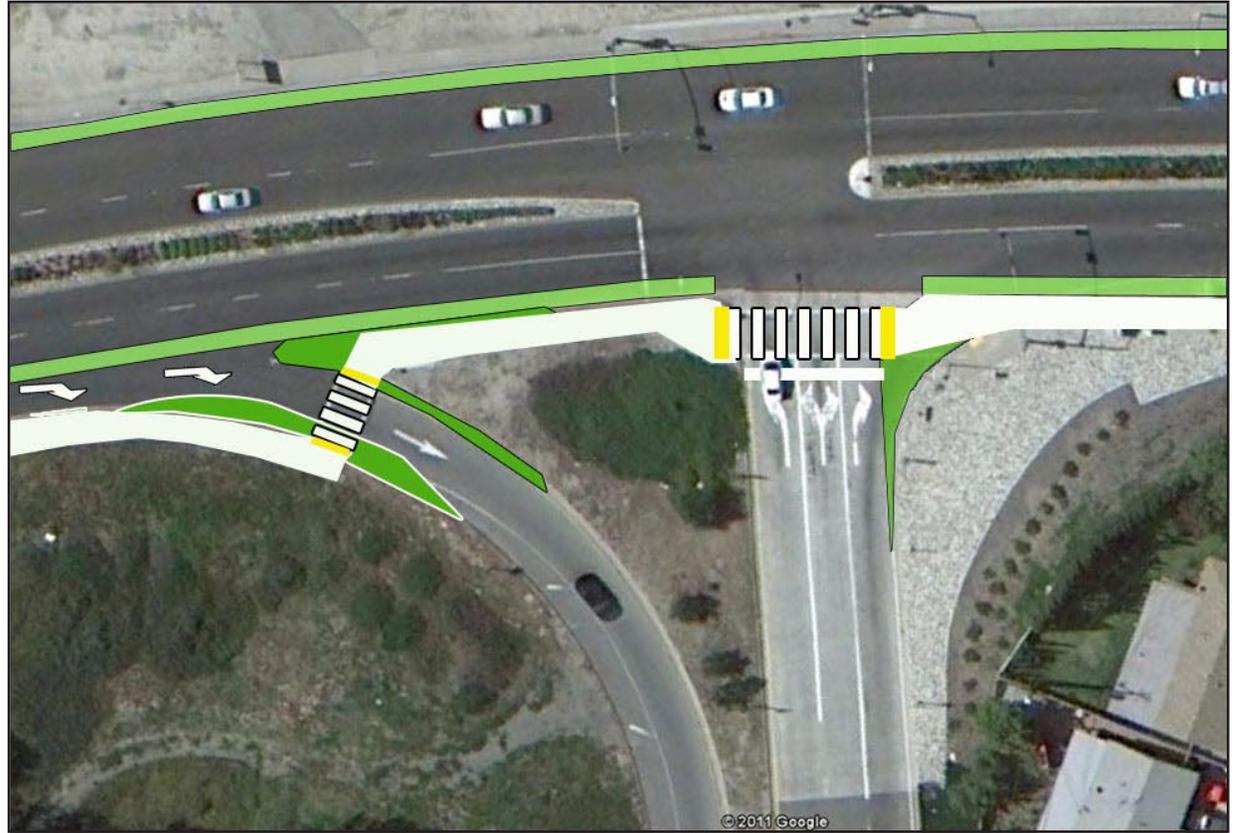


Figure 33. Additional improvements for pedestrian safety at Highway 60 on- and offramps.

Other pedestrian improvements are recommended for the Highway 60 access ramps east of the freeway. In addition to the recent work by Caltrans, more should be done to further narrow crosswalk distances, as shown on Figure 33. This will also help reduce vehicle speeds in the areas where automobile drivers are crossing foot and bicycle traffic.



Figure 34. Improvements to Highway 60 westbound onramp.

Nearest to the freeway, drivers westbound on Peck Road are able to make the turn onto the westbound Highway 60 onramp too fast for safety as they pass the unmarked crosswalk. A solution lies in tightening the turn for vehicle traffic as shown on Figure 34. This will both reduce speeds and narrow the crosswalk distance.

In order to offer more protection for pedestrians at this location, the City should consider adding some physical barriers to protect pedestrians from vehicles running wide as they make the right to turn onto the onramp. This may require conversations with Caltrans.

Summary of Recommendations

- Improve lighting under the freeway overcrossing
- Continue the new bike lanes on both sides of Peck Road under the freeway
- Provide a striped buffer for bike lanes where sufficient width exists
- Add bike lanes on Durfee Avenue continuing past the high school
- Provide symbols to mark the left turn for eastbound bicycles through the Durfee/Peck intersection
- Open the closed crosswalk on the northern side of the intersection
- Install a pedestrian island separating the right turn lane onto westbound Durfee Avenue
- Install countdown signals with Pedestrian Lead Interval timing at both intersections
- Add a pork chop island at the eastbound freeway onramp
- Install pedestrian warning flashers at the mouth of the freeway access ramps

10. Peck/Durfee Intersection and Access Ramps west of Highway 60

This portion of the corridor lacks all but the most basic amenities for pedestrians, and does not provide for bicyclists in any way. Correcting this situation should be a priority, considering the heavy volume of foot and bicycle traffic accessing South El Monte High School.

This begins with adding lighting under the freeway overcrossing, so the pedestrian and bicycle environment is well lit even in the daytime. This will improve safety by making pedestrians and cyclists more visible, and increase the sense of personal security as well.

Next, pedestrian-related improvements must be installed at the intersection of Peck Road and Durfee Avenue, as shown on Figure 35. Recommendations include opening the closed crosswalk on the Peck Road side closest to the freeway. This would allow a high school student walking home to the Farndon Street neighborhood to avoid having to cross three links of this wide and busy intersection to get to the sidewalk on the south side of Peck Road and from there to Farndon Street.



Figure 35. Improvements near Peck Road intersection south of Highway 60.

A few moments observation will make it clear that when faced with a detour like this and long waits for the pedestrian lights to cycle on, kids will make dangerous and illegal crossings. The design team observed this behavior at the worst possible location – in the dark cavern under the freeway overcrossing.

Pedestrians using the newly opened crosswalk will get further assistance in their journey by adding the “pork chop” island so they can cross the right turn lane onto westbound Durfee Avenue separate from crossing Peck Road itself.

A similar pork chop island is needed at the eastbound Highway 60 access ramps, to improve pedestrian safety. Button-activated countdown signals should be installed with Lead Pedestrian Interval and flashing lights to alert those drivers making a left turn onto the freeway.

Finally, the new bike lanes should be extended from the Peck/Durfee intersection west to the high school and beyond. Symbols should be placed in the Peck/Durfee intersection to mark the intended path of left turns for cyclists, and across the mouth of the freeway access ramps where westbound cyclists will pass.



Figure 36. Closer view of improvements at Durfee/Peck intersection and Highway 60 off-ramp.

Summary of Recommendations

- Add a sidewalk in place of the dirt path on the north side of the choke point on Burkett Road
- Add sharrows in both directions through the choke point
- Install curb extensions at all four corners of the intersection of E Rush Street and Burkett
- Add median refuge islands on E Rush Street on both sides of the intersection
- Add a highly visible crosswalks on all four sides of the intersection

B. School Safety and Access Recommendations

11. Charles T. Kranz Intermediate School

This school site lies within the boundaries of the City of El Monte, but it is included in this design exercise because the school attendance area includes much of the nearby portion of South El Monte. In fact, the northwestern and southwestern boundaries of the school property are on the border between the two cities.

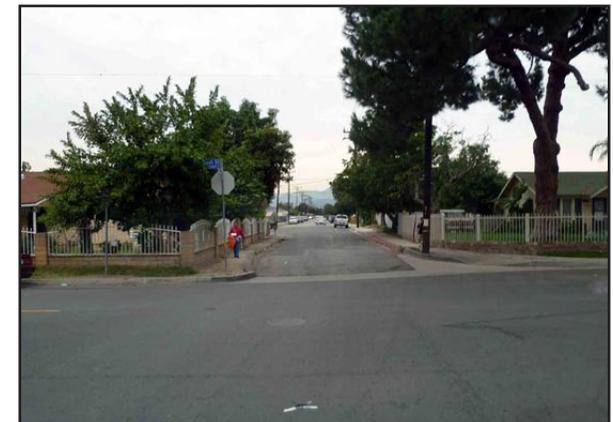
There are two difficulties that South El Monte residents, students and adults both, must confront as they walk or bike between Kranz Intermediate School and their homes.

The first of these is the constricted area near E Rush Street where Burkett Road narrows to just 20 feet, with a further restriction as westbound vehicles reach the intersection. (See photos below) An improved sidewalk exists only on the southern side of Burkett, with just a dirt path marking where pedestrians travel on the north side.

Bicyclists are often crowded out of the tight space on the street, and take to the sidewalk for safety reasons. Pedestrians on the south side of Burkett must then share that sidewalk, and pedestrians on the north side of the street are left walking in the dirt, or mud in the winter.



Burkett Road facing Rush Street.



Burkett Road and Rush Street intersection.

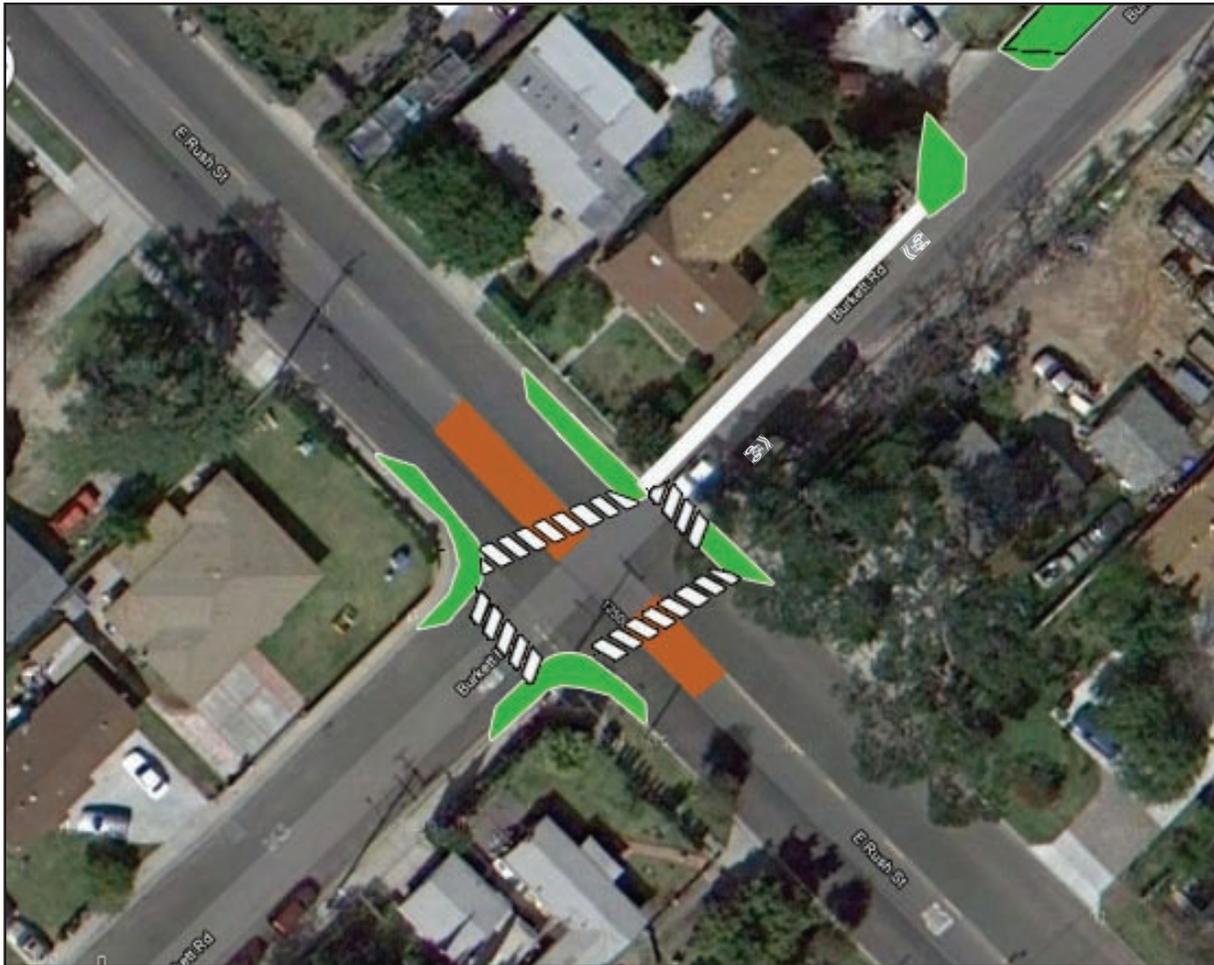


Figure 37. Intersection and pathway improvements near Burkett Road and Rush Street intersection.

At the intersection with E Rush Street, all users face an intersection wider than need be, with no markings for pedestrians. Figure 37 shows the full set of recommendations to add sidewalk space on the north side of Burkett, paint sharrows for bicyclists through the choke point, narrow the intersection with curb extensions, add median refuge islands, and add highly visible crosswalks.

Summary of Recommendations

- Bicycle access along Thienes Avenue
- Crossing directly in front of the school at the intersection of Thienes Avenue and Leafdale Avenue
- Visibility for drivers exiting the student dropoff area onto Thienes
- Pedestrian access onto the campus from the south
- Bicycle access onto the campus
- Additional bicycle parking
- Restricting student short-cuts through the staff parking lot south of the school buildings



12. Monte Vista Elementary School

This neighborhood elementary school lies in the center of South El Monte and is easily accessible to most nearby residents. It has one of the best arrangements for vehicle access and dropoff the design team has seen in any city, an accomplishment school district staff should be proud of.

Still, there are some things that could be improved along the school frontage for better pedestrian and bicycle access. These measures will also improve vehicle circulation and reduce speeding. Areas that need attention are discussed in a general order north to south along the Thienes frontage of the school.

Thienes Avenue carries bicycle traffic, especially at school arrival and departure times when vehicle traffic can also be heavy. That forces many bike riders to take to the sidewalks where they feel more comfortable. Whether they continue riding or dismount and push their bikes, this can interfere with pedestrians using the sidewalks.

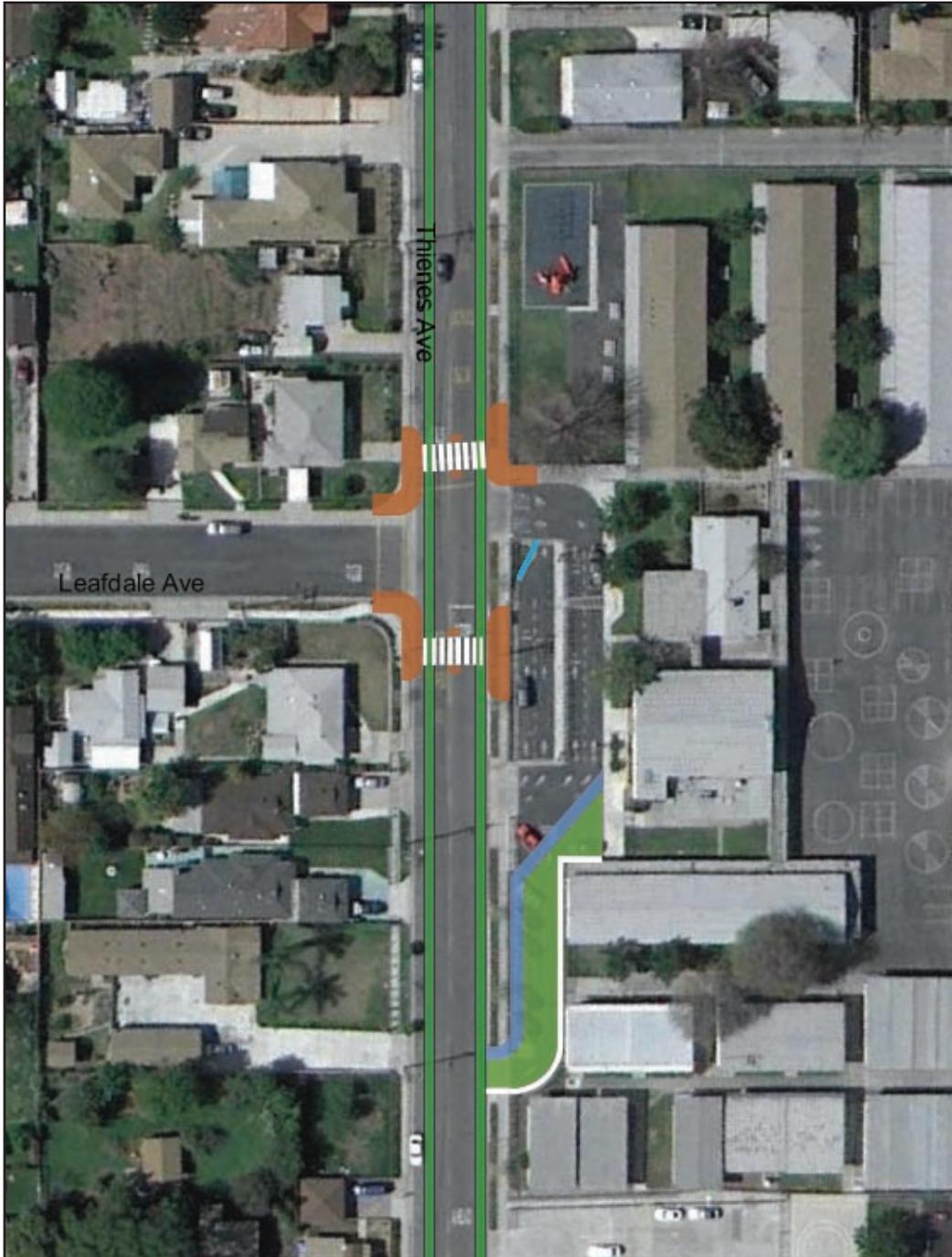
There are several solutions to provide better space on Thienes for bicycles. All have some drawbacks, so deciding which approach to take will require further discussion with residents and City officials.

The safest approach for bicyclists would be to paint bike lanes in both directions on Thienes Avenue, as shown in Figure 38 (next page). To keep enough space on the street for one vehicle lane in each direction, on-street parking would have to be removed from one side of the street. This would affect both residential and commercial properties.

Removing parking on the east side of the street would affect only 9 residential properties. Four of those properties have on-street parking available on a cross street, and two more are such large lots that any lost parking can easily be accommodated off-street.

But Monte Vista Elementary is on the east side of Thienes, so it is inevitable that school arrival and departure times would see many parents blocking the bike lane in front of the school and forcing riders into the street.

Removing on-street parking on the west side of Thienes would affect over two dozen residential properties, at least half of them with no alternative guest parking available. This hardship might make this solution unappealing, even though it would allow both parking and a bike lane on the east side of Thienes in front of Monte Vista Elementary.



Monte Vista Elementary dropoff and pickup zone.

Figure 38. Recommended improvements on Thienes Avenue.



An alternative solution that would retain on-street parking is to paint shared lane markings, or sharrows, in both vehicle lanes on Thienes. This would require drivers to respect cyclists in the lane ahead of them, and to pass only when it is safe to do so without crowding the cyclist to the edge of the lane. (See Figure 39.)

Residents and City staff may ultimately decide to choose different solutions for different portions of Thienes between Tyler Avenue and Durfee Avenue, creating a combination approach that works best.

A similar situation can be found at the Thienes crossing in front of the school at Leafdale Avenue. Different approaches are offered by the design team, which can be evaluated by residents, school officials, and City staff.

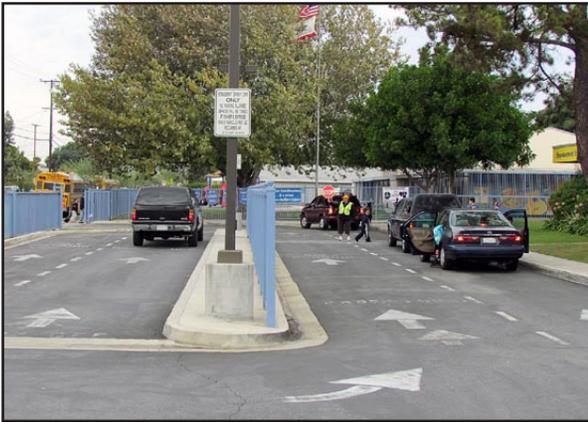


Figure 40 (next page) shows an alternative with curb extensions and a median island to aid pedestrian travel. This design would also create a visual choke point, which will reduce vehicle speeds. Figure 41 (next page) shows the same basic design, with a raised crosswalk that creates a speed table for motorists.

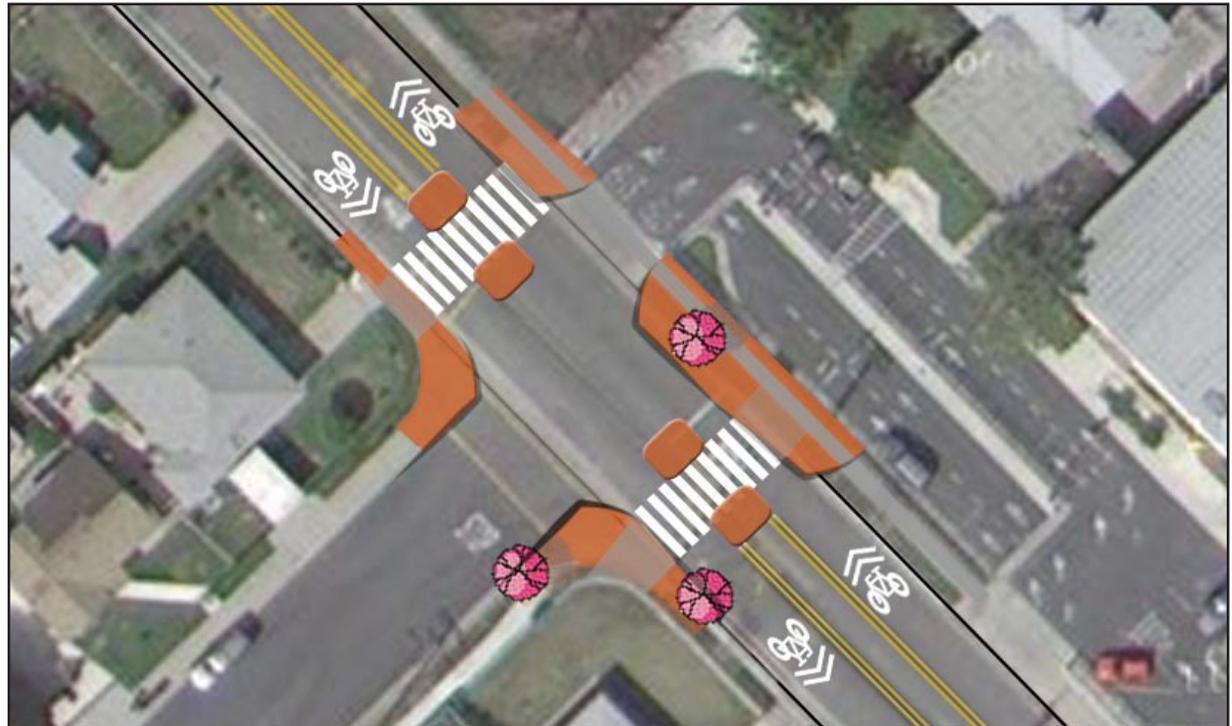


Figure 39. Alternative improvements at Thienes and Leafdale intersection.



Figures 40 (top-right), 41 (top-left) and 42 (bottom-left). Before and after images of crossing in front of Monte Vista Elementary. Figure 42 shows with a speed table.



This design will not allow for a bike lane through the crossing area, because street travel space through the curb extensions and medians is reduced to the width of a single lane. So if the bike lane option is selected, sharrows should be used in this short part of the school frontage to direct motorists to share the lane with cyclists.

A more open design is possible at this location that would still allow bike lanes. It could have curb extensions just on the one side of Thienes where parking is retained. If no bike lanes are installed on Thienes at all and sharrows used instead, then the design with full extensions and medians is best.

Next, the design team sees a problem that is created by the type of fencing that has been installed at many area schools. Where driveways exit school property, drivers are looking at a very low angle along the fencing, as seen in the photos on left. While this type of fencing is sturdy, attractive, and effective, it can block views.



The photos to the left show that a child running or bicycling along the sidewalk can be completely invisible as a driver pulls out of the driveway. The recommendation is that along the exit driveway this fencing be angled back away from the sidewalk as shown in Figure 43. This will require some reconfiguring of the security gate, but will greatly increase safety for adults and children on the sidewalk.

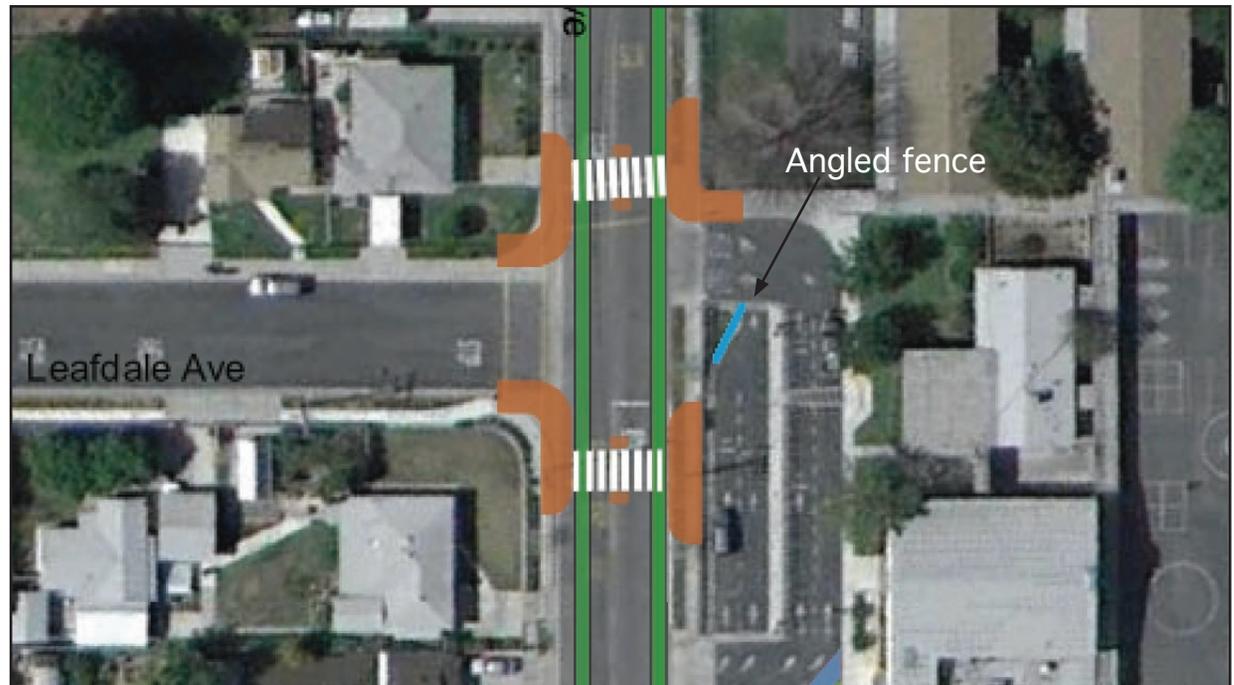


Figure 43. Reconfiguring fencing to improve sight lines.

The next issue in order is poor pedestrian access onto the campus from the south. Much of this traffic comes from the Thienes and Durfee intersection. Once they cross Durfee, those pedestrians have an unbroken stretch of sidewalk for 600 feet until they reach school property with only four driveways and one alley.

While the current dropoff zone design works very well for vehicles, there is no provision for pedestrians coming from the south, so they typically do one of three things:

- Enter the first or second driveway they encounter on school property and walk through the teacher parking lot to the gate on the northeast corner and through that to their classrooms.
- Enter the third gate they encounter and walk in the driveway past administrative staff parking and the dropoff zone until they reach a sidewalk.
- Enter the dropoff zone (fourth driveway) and walk through that vehicle traffic until they reach a sidewalk.

With the current design, what they should do to avoid walking amongst moving, waiting, and parked vehicles is to walk past the dropoff zone exit (fifth driveway) and access the sidewalk near the main crosswalk. But that sidewalk is very crowded with staff, parents, and children from the crosswalk and the bus dropoff zone.

The design team recommends several fairly simple things to improve this situation, at minimal inconvenience to school staff or to arriving parents and students. As shown in Figure 44 (next page), these include:

- Close the pedestrian gate at the rear of the teacher parking lot.
- Close the gate across the second driveway into the teacher parking lot to allow only pedestrian access.
- Stripe additional parking spaces where that driveway is deactivated.
- Remove all the administrative parking near the dropoff zone.
- Use the third driveway for access to the two dropoff zone lanes farthest from the street.
- Create a lane against the fence for waiting vehicles where the administrative parking is currently.
- Add a sidewalk that begins at the southern edge of the third driveway and continues past two school buildings to meet the existing sidewalk.
- Add a bike path connecting the third driveway with new bike parking near the dropoff zone.
- Adjust the location of the handicapped space slightly as necessary to provide room for the new sidewalk.



These changes will take some adjustments, as administrative parking is shifted to the staff parking lot, but they come with a big improvement in pedestrian and bicycle access and safety. The net loss in parking will be six spaces, but a review of several aerial photographs from the past few years reveals the teacher lot is rarely more than half full.

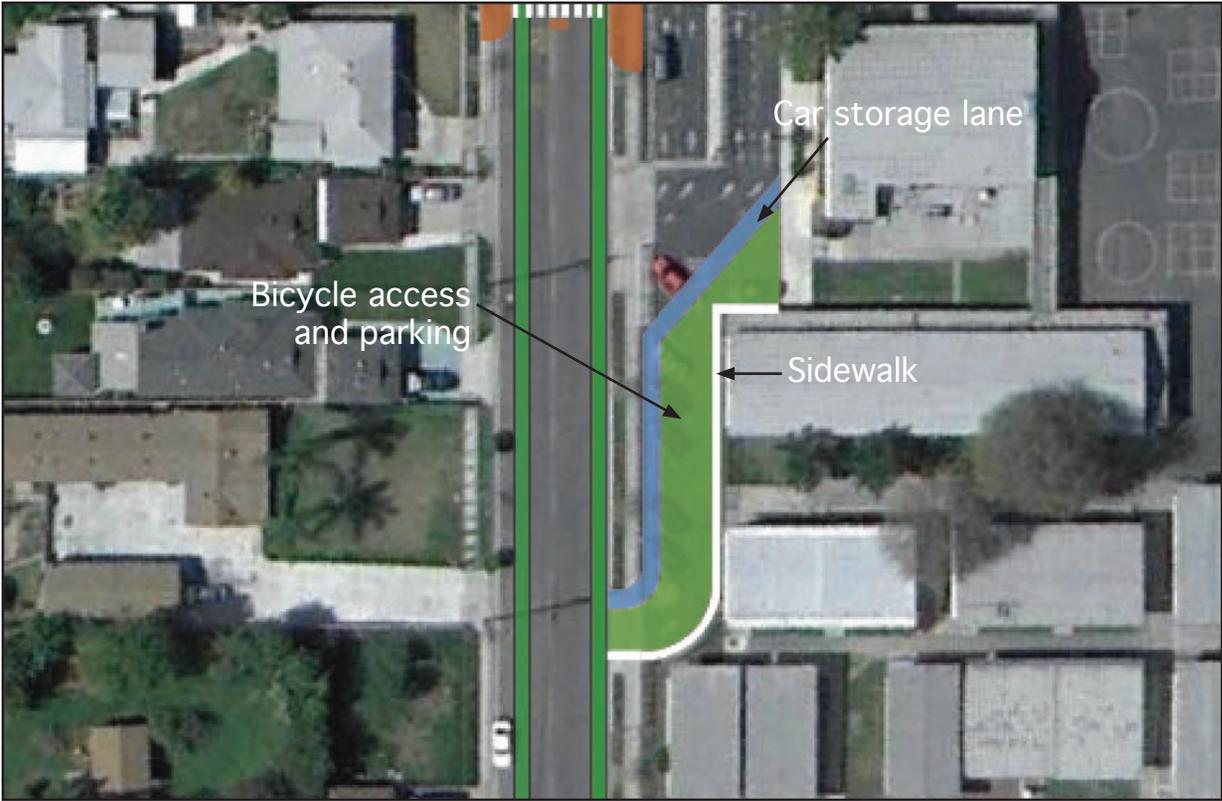


Figure 44. Additional dropoff zone improvements.

13. South El Monte High School

This is by far the most complicated school in South El Monte for vehicle circulation. When traffic is heavy during student arrival and departure times, many drivers forget to be polite, disregard safety, ignore state law, and disobey the rules school staff tries to enforce. This is all made worse by the school's location on the outside of a sweeping turn where many vehicles are traveling at 50 miles an hour or more in the 40 MPH zone.

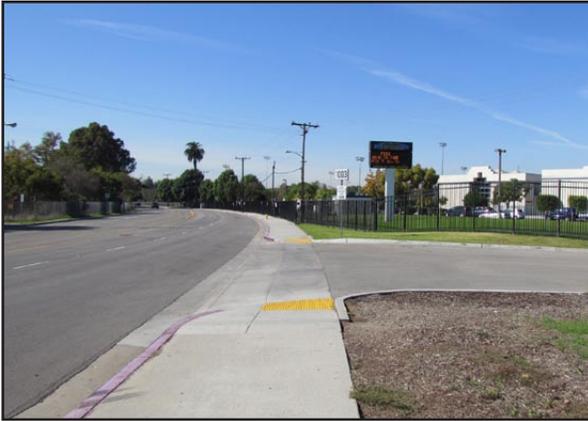
During the generally frantic morning arrival time when traffic is more concentrated, drivers are directed into the larger eastern parking lot with a lengthy curb where students can safely exit the vehicles. School and City staff have tried to get drivers to not attempt dangerous left turns across two lanes of fast-moving traffic when exiting this lot. When right turn arrows failed, raised pavement markings resembling half bowling balls were placed in rows in the median. Some drivers of large SUVs simply ignore those bumps and drive over them to turn left, while others first turn right and then make an illegal U-turn when the row of bowling balls ends.

Huge improvements in safety and driver behavior can be brought about by reworking the street in front of the high school, but it is not a simple task. These are the goals:

- Create raised medians to prevent drivers from doing things that are unsafe or illegal
- Provide a structured and safe way for drivers to do the things they are now doing improperly



Figure 45. Overview of Durfee Avenue improvements near South El Monte High School.



- Reduce the number of through lanes to lower vehicle speeds and improve safety
- Paint bike lanes to provide safe passage to the school and past it for cyclists
- Beautify the school frontage with landscaping

Figure 46 is a closer look at Durfee Avenue at the eastern end of the school frontage. The entrance to the leftover piece of Old Durfee Avenue that serves the bus area at the rear of the High School is at the upper right. The two driveways to the eastern parking lot are in the middle of the image. A long right turn lane is provided westbound so vehicles will no longer block a through lane as they are slowed or stopped prior to entering the parking lot. Vehicles traveling eastbound that want to access the high school will be able to make a legal U-turn at this location.

Drivers will enter the eastern parking lot either directly while traveling westbound on Durfee Avenue, or after making a U-turn if traveling eastbound on Durfee as they approach the school. The left turn lane they will use for this maneuver will also provide access to Old Durfee Avenue and the school bus area.

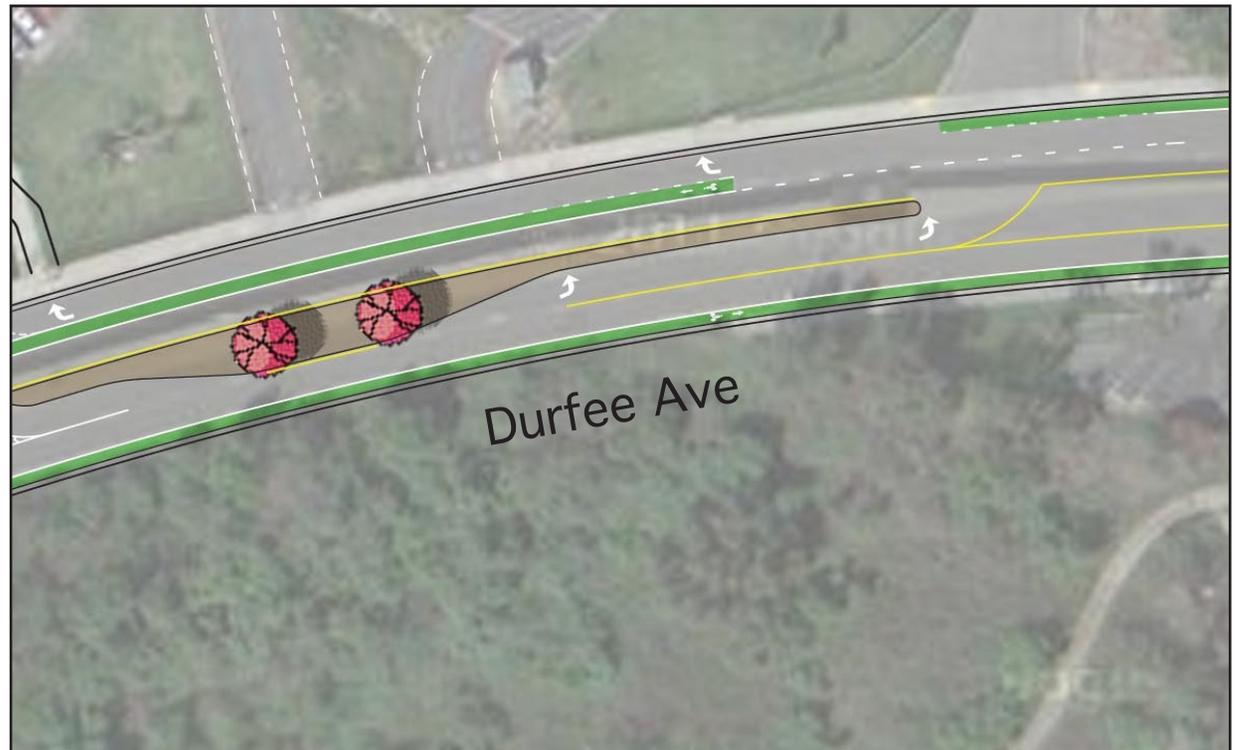


Figure 46. Recommended improvements at eastern end of high school.

The raised and landscaped median will prevent drivers exiting this parking lot from turning left across traffic to travel eastbound. Instead, they will be directed westward to the U-turn lane that will be discussed below. Note that the bicycle lane will “braid” across the right turn lane to improve safe passage for cyclists not entering school property. Figure 47 shows a cross section of the proposed design for Durfee Avenue at this location, looking east.

Figure 47 shows the High School frontage for the staff parking lot. Right turns will be possible from the continuation of the right turn lane. Left turns into this parking lot are possible from the left turn pocket created in the new raised and landscaped median. Again, the bike lane will be to the left of the right turn lane to reduce conflicts between vehicles and cyclists as they pass the first two driveways for this parking lot, then will move gradually back to the curb.

The school currently operates that driveway as two entry lanes during school arrival and dismissal times. The design is intended to channelize left turning drivers into the left lane, and right turning drivers into the right lane, with a painted island in the driveway between the lanes. At these times, two lanes of cars go into the parking lot, drop off or pick up students at the school, and exit the southwesternmost driveway of the parking lot (near the track). But during the middle of the day, the school closes all gates to the parking lots except for this main driveway, and the driveway serves two-way traffic, with the right



Figure 47. Recommended improvements near main high school entrance/exit.

Figure 48. Durfee Avenue near South El Monte High School entrance, facing north — Proposed.

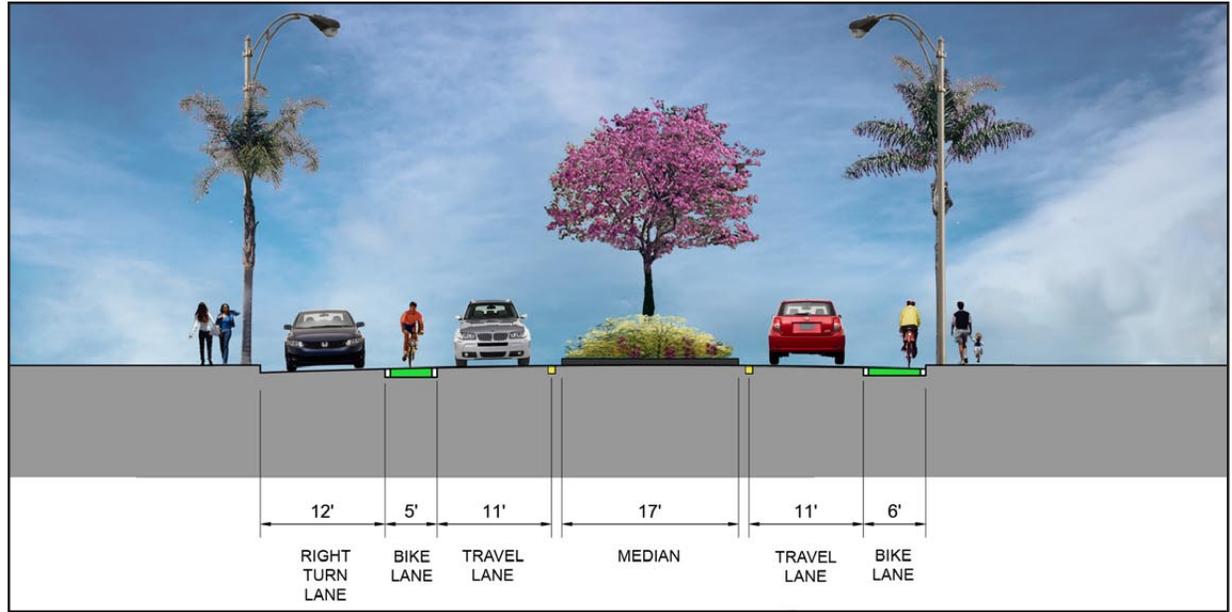
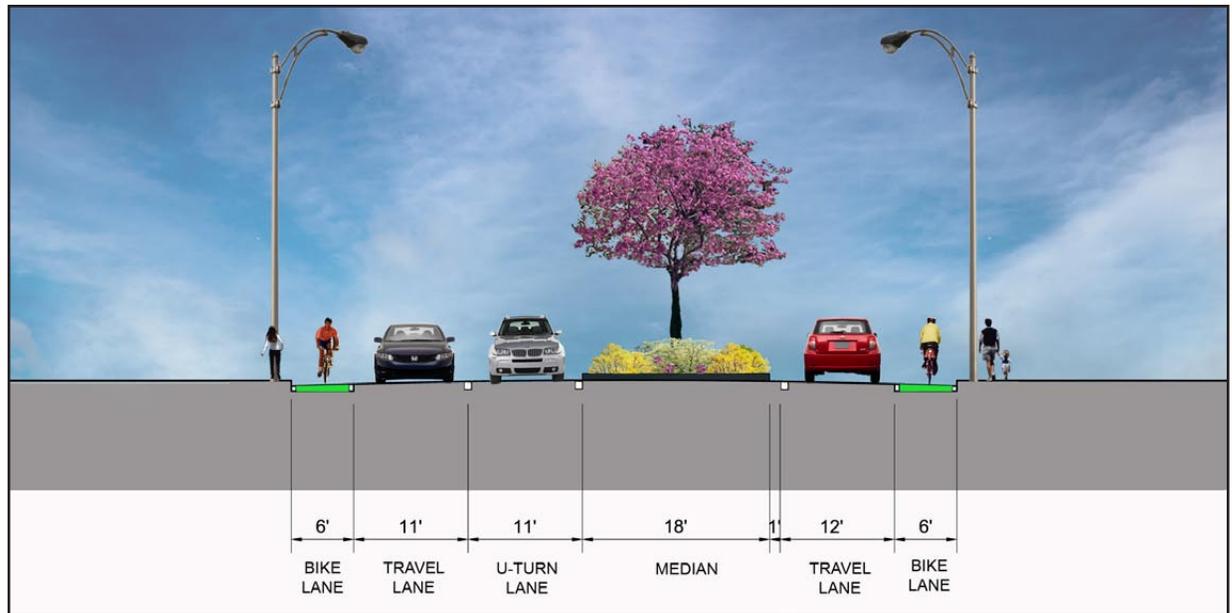


Figure 49. Durfee Avenue west of South El Monte High School entrance, facing north — Proposed.



lane serving inbound traffic, and the left lane serving outbound traffic. This is a relatively low volume of traffic (students who arrive/depart at odd times, faculty/staff, and visitors). Drivers turning left into the driveway can simply swing wide if there is a car simultaneously exiting, and with low volumes, this shouldn't really be a problem, and is pretty much how it works today. With low traffic volumes during off peak times when this driveway is used for two-way traffic, there is no reason not to allow outbound drivers to make a left turn onto Durfee Avenue if they want to go that way.

Figure 50 (next page) shows the area near the western boundary of the High School site where the proposed design provides a safe U-turn for drivers who exit or pass the school heading west but need to turn around and travel east. Presumably, most drivers doing this in the morning will be going back to the Highway 60 access ramps to continue their journey to work. The space provided by this design will not allow for trucks to make U-turns, but is sufficient for most passenger vehicles, possibly requiring a modest intrusion into the bicycle lane.

To the west of the High School site, it is recommended that the configuration of a single through lane in each direction with a two-way left turn median be retained to the intersection with Santa Anita Avenue and beyond. That configuration handles all the traffic on this segment well, with only modest backups at the very heaviest times. It is the safest design for the frontage of the Whittier Narrows recreation area and for bicyclists accessing the San Gabriel River Trail.

The final design issue near South El Monte High School is the pedestrian bridge across Highway 60. The design team recommended ADA-compliant, safer, and more visible access ramps to this bridge in an earlier design exercise. That recommendation is reinforced by revisiting the bridge site as part of this current exercise. In the intervening three years, attempts have been made to address the poor pedestrian access in the Lexham Avenue neighborhood. This included creating pedestrian space in the street with a new stop sign and painted crosswalk, ADA ramps, and a barrier of more half bowling balls. This appears to be tied to the construction of the new parking lot east of Fawcett Avenue.

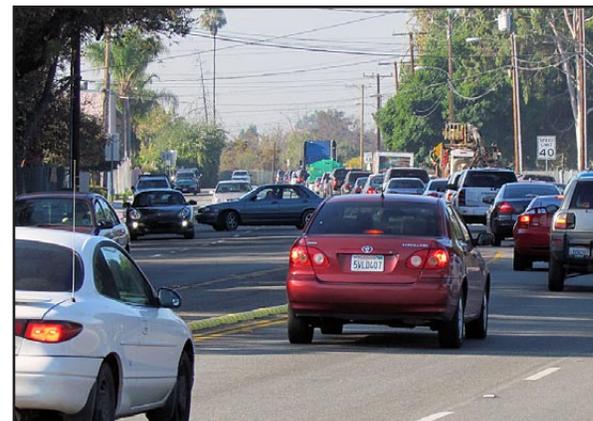




Figure 50. Overview of Durfee Avenue improvements west of South El Monte High School entrance.

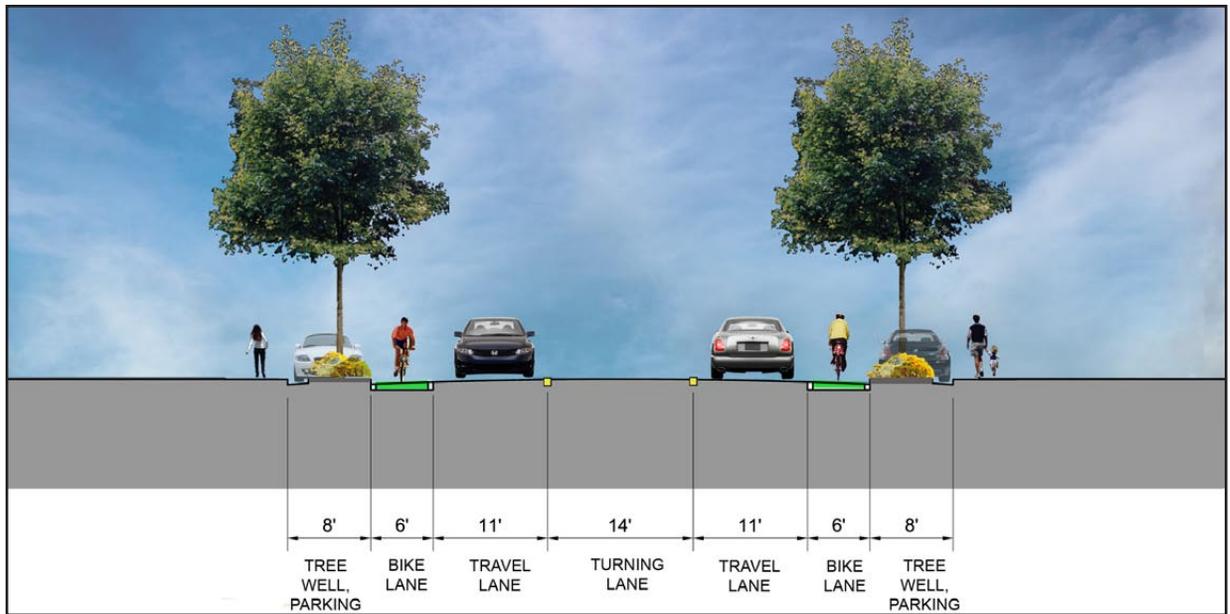


Figure 51. Durfee Avenue west of South El Monte High School, towards Santa Anita Avenue — Proposed.

A schematic representation of one possible solution show in Figure 52. This eliminates the spiraling ramps on both sides of the crossing. They are too steep for current standards, and dangerously hidden from view for long intervals.

The proposal is for the ramp to Gomez Palacio Drive to continue straight after the first 90-degree turn off the bridge, and drop gradually to the street. In a similar fashion, a long straight ramp should be constructed on the southwest side of the bridge and drop down parallel to Fawcett Avenue. Current ADA standards limit the slope of a ramp to no more than one inch per foot, with periodic flat platforms. If this ramp is built to comply with that requirement as it slopes downward from the bridge to the street surface, it will still be sufficiently high as it crosses the driveway onto the school service area parking lot to provide clearance for large trucks passing underneath.

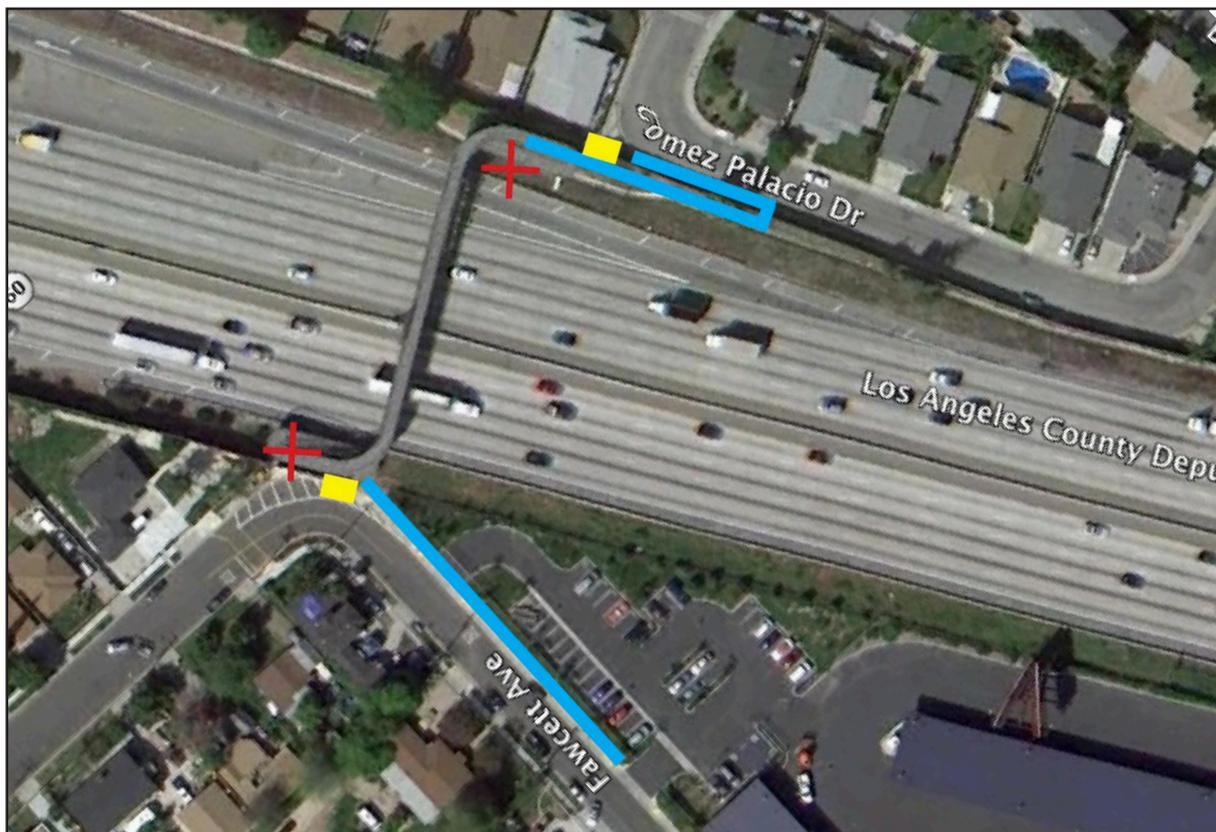


Figure 52. Recommended changes to Highway 60 overcrossing.

C. Residential Area Connectivity and Safety Recommendations

14. Old Durfee Avenue Neighborhood Traffic Calming

During the charrette events, residents of this neighborhood complained about speeding vehicles and drivers running stop signs on a vestigial portion of Durfee Avenue dating to before the Durfee-Peck corridor was created. Much of this traffic in the morning is associated with drivers, presumably parents, delivering children to the New Temple Elementary School. City of South El Monte staff had responded in the past to the speeding issue with multiple speed humps along this primary through street. However, those were removed and there are now two locations of rumble strips with a speed of 25 mph posted.

The design team recommends additional measures in this neighborhood. The initial point of emphasis should be the two busiest intersections where Central Avenue and Michael Hunt Drive meet Durfee Avenue. There are two basic approaches to consider for better controlling driver behavior. The first would include curb extensions and highly visible crosswalks similar to those recommended for Thienes Avenue in front of Monte Vista Elementary School. The second would be to install pedestrian crossing islands. These devices provide a refuge for pedestrians at the crosswalk midpoint, narrow vehicle travel space, and place a visible obstacle in the middle of the street. These features can be successful at reducing vehicle speeds, according to recent Federal Highway Administration guidance (Guidance Memorandum on Promoting the Implementation of Proven Safety Countermeasures, January 2012, FHWA)



Figure 53. Locations for pedestrian crossing islands on Old Durfee Avenue and intersection improvements.

Whichever solution is chosen, City staff should also consider raising the crosswalks at these locations. In addition, median islands similar to the pedestrian refuges but not at crosswalk locations could be installed at intermittent locations along Durfee Avenue. Additional speed limit and warning signs, and possibly a radar speed board would be the final recommendations to consider.

D. Bikeways and Trails

City Bikeway Map

Figure 54 (next page) shows a map detailing the current plans for an on-street bike lane system in South El Monte as well as additional bike lanes recommended in this report. Some of the lanes shown in green will come about as the redesign projects recommended in a charrette for the Santa Anita Avenue Corridor are restriped or constructed. The bicycle facilities shown in yellow come out of recommendations in this report. Those on Durfee, Peck, and Rush north of Durfee have been discussed in the sections above detailing each segment of the primary corridor.

Rush south of Durfee should receive some bicycle markings to improve access to the west side of Kranz Intermediate School at least as far as the intersection with Burkett. Although Fineview Street is outside South El Monte, the City of El Monte should be encouraged to add bicycle markings to this street to improve bicycle access to Kranz School and to the San Gabriel River Trail as discussed below.

Also discussed above are bike lanes improvements in both directions on Durfee Avenue at the High School frontage and beyond in both directions. This bike lane improvement would extend from Peck Road past the Santa Anita Avenue intersection to Rosemead Boulevard, with off-street bike path connections branching off in several places.

The report for the previous charrette conducted in South El Monte did not cover bike lanes on Santa Anita Avenue across Highway 60 to the west. With the increasing popularity of the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo trail network, though, a safer connection across Highway 60 on Santa Anita Avenue is prudent. This can be linked to the existing trail network and the newly recommended bike lanes for west Durfee past the High School with a new bike path near the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area pond as shown in Figure 54.





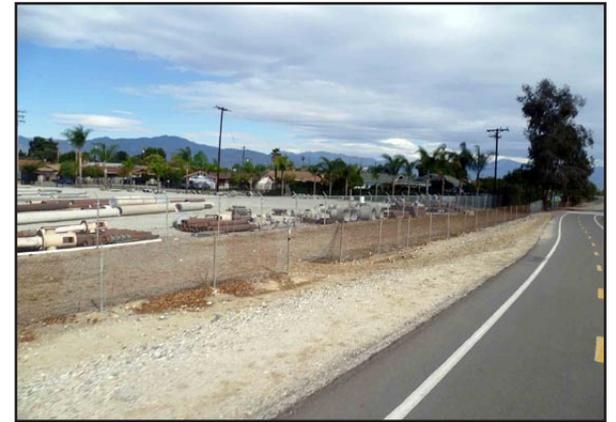
Figure 54. Map of bikeways through South El Monte. Yellow lines indicate new bikeways recommended in this report.

Source: LA County Bike Map, Metro.

San Gabriel River Trail Access

Figure 55 (next page) shows recommendations for improved access and connectivity to the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel River Trail system. This wonderful asset to the community is not as well known as it could be, and needs additional points of access to make it more accessible to residents and visitors. Some of the recommendations that follow involve partnerships with other cities or agencies, but it is hoped that the interests of the broader community of residents in the San Gabriel Valley will move these improvements forward. From the northeast to the southwest on Figure 55, the recommendations include:

- Improve the pathway and signage for the informal access through the Mountain View High School site
- Add a new access point at the end of Fineview Street across San Gabriel Valley Water Company property
- Improve parking at the trailhead at the terminus of Thienes Avenue
- Improve access from the newly-paved trail on the levee top to the trail network near the Whittier Narrows Nature Center
- Add a bicycle connection near Legg Lake in the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area from Santa Anita Avenue to the Durfee Avenue crossing.



A cooperative arrangement will be necessary at the Mountain View High School to structure access through the school site from the cul-de-sac end of Magnolia Street to the far southern corner of recreation fields. There are currently informal gates at this location, through both the school site fencing and the fencing at the edge of the levee. A better pathway and signage on the streets north and west of the school site could improve this access and make it easier to find.

Adding a new access point at the terminus of Fineview Street should be a simple thing to do. A narrow easement no more than 25 feet wide will be necessary across property belonging to the quasi-public San Gabriel Valley Water Company, which serves South El Monte and other nearby communities. From the appearance of drainage infrastructure on Fineview Street and Silverbay Avenue, there may already be a drainage easement in place at this location. The eastern 5 feet of this easement should include fencing or other screening to protect the quiet and privacy of nearby residents. The remainder would allow an improved biking and walking path connecting to the existing San Gabriel River Trail on the levee past the water company property. This path would also be available for emergency access, improving safety on the River Trail.

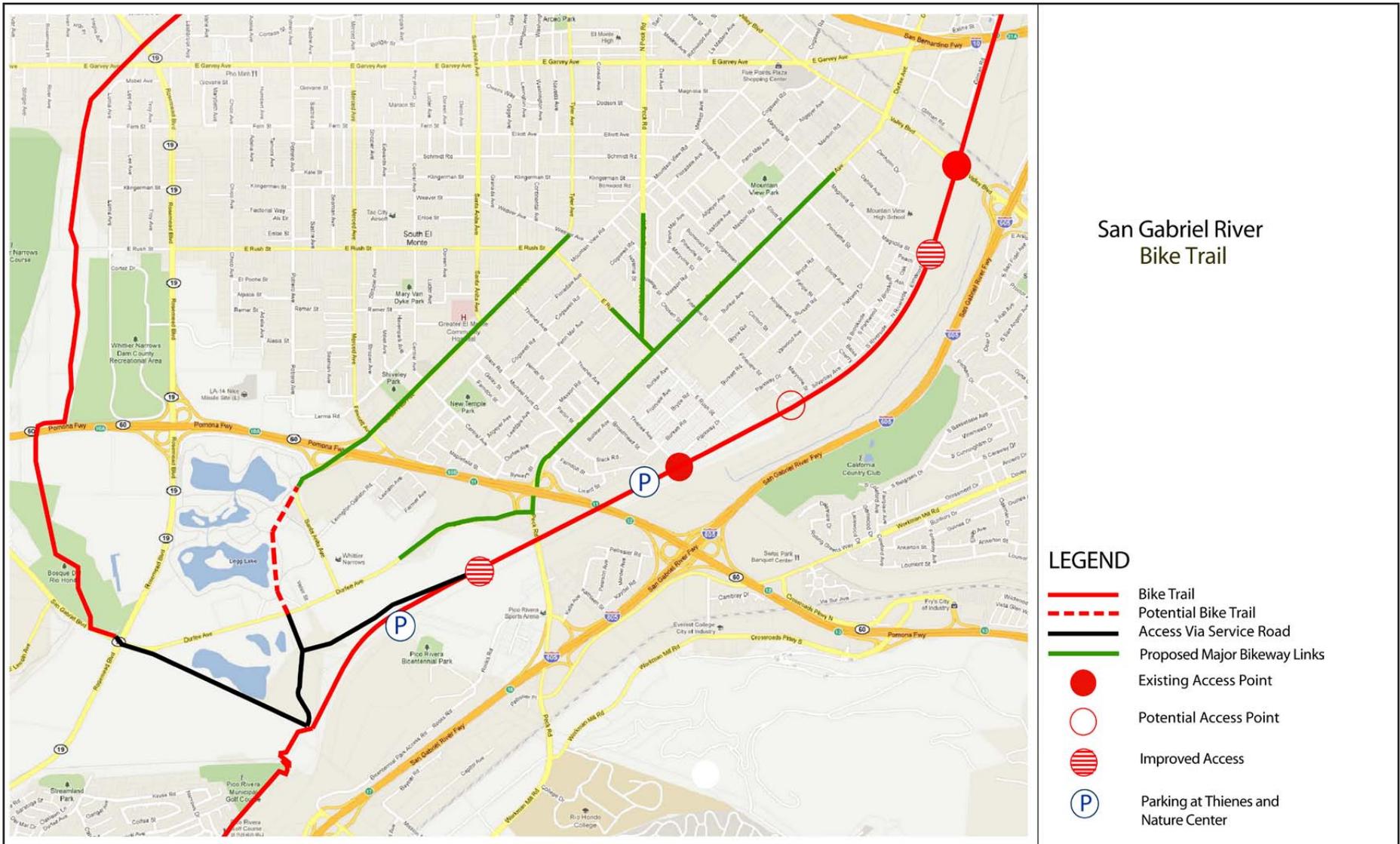


Figure 55. Map of San Gabriel River Bike Trail connections and recommended improvements.

The Thienes Avenue trailhead is a popular access point to the River Trail, but parking is quite limited, with even half a dozen vehicles overtaking the space available. This trailhead could be expanded to the west of the street terminus with an easement or acquisition of property currently used for light nursery activity. Additional visitor facilities at this location should be considered, again with design details to respect and protect the privacy of nearby residents.

There is currently a limited network of service vehicle access roads between the river levees and Durfee Avenue, near the Whittier Narrows Nature Center. This network should be repaved to the standard found on the River Trail, and better signage installed to inform trail users of the full network. Additional parking could be provided at the Nature Center as well.

Finally, off-street access from Santa Anita Avenue near the Highway 60 overcrossing through the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area will provide a quiet and safe route for bicyclists and walkers, free from the commotion of vehicle traffic. This new path should connect to Durfee Avenue via the existing parking lot, and a new crossing with signs and beacons installed to complete the link into the trail network behind the Nature Center.

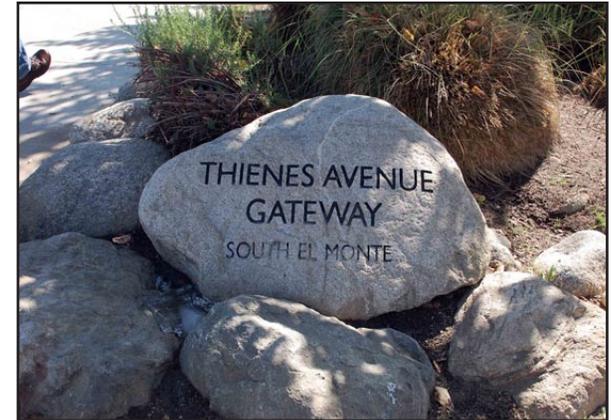
Conclusion

Every recommendation in this section requires funding, and every dollar is precious in these difficult economic times. This will require two things for the City of South El Monte to move forward in a meaningful way.

First, there will have to be a broad discussion in the community about the basic approach to take. For instance, the community may prefer many smaller projects to spread the benefits around instead of one large project that consumes all available funding. Beyond that, the list of recommendations in this report will need to be prioritized and fit within existing capital improvement plans.

Second, a significant outreach effort will have to be initiated to approach Caltrans, your local COGs, the federal government, Safe Routes to School organizations, non-profits, and any other entity that can possibly provide grant funding to move these projects along.

The following chapter will assist in setting project priorities and which funding sources apply to projects.



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CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation and Phasing

Structuring the program

This report outlines extensive modifications to the sequence of streets in the main Durfee/Peck Corridor, includes recommendations for three school sites, and more minor improvements in two residential areas and on the San Gabriel River trail system.

Naturally, all of this will require substantial funding, and can't happen all at once and immediately. This chapter will help prioritize the improvements and direct City staff to possible funding sources.

Project Priorities

First, start with any of the vehicle lane, crosswalk, and bike lane modifications that can be marked out by using paint. That is inexpensive, and will show some movement on the project immediately. Some of the modification will be followed by more expensive and effective improvements – for instance changing painted medians to raised and landscaped features. Many of the recommendations for the primary corridor will fall into this category. So initial work should commence on Peck at the South El Monte City Limits and proceed west from there, narrowing vehicle lanes, striping parking and bicycle areas, and making the crosswalks highly visible.

Second, begin exploring funding opportunities for the more substantial construction projects like modifying the islands and curbs at the Peck/Rush intersection, and installing medians throughout the corridor.

Third, because it is such a critical improvement for school access and safety, school district officials, City staff, and Caltrans should begin identifying funds for a cooperative effort to improve the freeway overcrossing that provides access to South El Monte High School.

Fourth, work with property owners on Durfee Avenue where private fencing encroaches into the public right-of-way or where excessively wide driveways impact pedestrian comfort and safety. Hopefully a cooperative arrangement can resolve these issues.

Next work with school district officials to identify the best funding sources to do the improvements recommended for the Kranz Intermediate and Monte Vista Elementary school sites, and the more complicated improvements on the Durfee Avenue frontage at South El Monte High School. The Kranz Intermediate School location will require a partnership with the City of El Monte to fully implement the recommendations.

Sixth, work with residents to identify the best solutions to calm speeding cut-through traffic in the Old Durfee Avenue residential neighborhood, and seek funding to construct them. The Pellisier neighborhood lies outside South El Monte, but

the recommendations for better access to South El Monte schools can be passed on to County officials.

Finally, bicycle facility improvements on City streets and along the San Gabriel River. These facilities may be best funded with different sources. For example, Safe Routes to School funds might work best for the on-street bike lanes, sharrows, and signage, and be relatively easy to acquire. Funding for the River Trail network improvements will likely have to come from another source.

Funding

A number of funding opportunities exist for leveraging City funds to construct the projects recommended in this report. These programs offer alternatives for street design, community facilities, and other infrastructure.

Key federal funding sources for walking and bicycling are available. The Federal Highway Administration provides a matrix of funding opportunities at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/bp-guid.cfm#bp4. Support for accessing these funds can be found through your regional transportation agency.

An additional source is Caltrans' Local Assistance Program. It oversees more than one billion dollars annually available to over 600 cities, counties and regional agencies for the purpose of improving their transportation infrastructure or providing transportation services. This funding comes from various Federal and State programs specifically designed to assist the transportation needs of local agencies.

More details can be found at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms/>

The following matrix tries to identify the possible pools of funds that can apply towards each project. For some programs, the City may need to combine several projects into a package to justify receiving funding.

Durfee Avenue/Peck Road Corridor Project Funding Matrix

Projects	Timing			Potential Funding Sources										
	Short-Term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-Term (2-5 yrs)	Long-Term (> 5 yrs)	Map 21 CMAQ	Map 21 Transportation Alternatives	Map 21 HSIP	Map 21 STP	Map 21 Caltrans SRS	Map 21 Recreation Trails	Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA)	Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (ISRF)	Development Impact Fees	SEMPA	Other Privately Raised Funds
Peck Road – El Monte City Limits to E. Rush Street														
Install bike lanes in both directions		x		x	x		x			x				
Add parking adjacent to northbound travel lanes	x													
Provide a median for center turning functions		x		x	x		x				x			
Add tree wells in the parking lane on the east side of the street		x		x	x		x				x			
Add a landscaped median north of the Rush intersection			x											
E. Rush Street – Tyler Avenue to Peck Road														
Reduce through lanes to one in each direction		x												
Add a center median for left turns											x			
Stripe bike lanes in both directions		x		x	x		x			x				
Substitute shared lane markings for the southbound bike lane from Frank Stiles Street to the intersection with N. Peck Road		x												
Add tree wells between parking spaces on both sides of the street		x		x	x		x				x			
Peck Road/Rush Street to Durfee Avenue														
Install curb extensions on both western corners where E. Rush Street meets Peck Road		x		x	x		x				x			
Widen and landscape the existing median			x	x	x		x				x			
Add bike lanes in both directions	x	x		x	x		x			x				
Add highly visible crosswalks	x						x							
Install countdown signals with Lead Pedestrian Interval		x					x				x			
Durfee/Rush Intersection														
Landscape the widened median on E. Rush Street north of this intersection			x										x	x
Move the westbound Durfee Avenue left turn lane over next to the through lanes		x					x				x			
Add a raised median on the eastern link of Durfee Avenue			x								x			
Open the crosswalk on the northwestbound side	x													
Paint highly visible crosswalks on all four pedestrian crossings	x						x							
Install countdown signals for all crosswalks with Lead Pedestrian Interval		x												
Install bike lanes on Durfee Avenue and on E. Rush Street north of this intersection		x		x	x		x			x				
Add sharrows through the intersection to connect bike lanes		x		x	x		x			x				
Durfee Avenue from E. Rush Street to Thienes Avenue														
Install raised and landscaped medians with left turn pockets			x	x	x		x				x			
Narrow driveways on the north side of Durfee		x									x		x	
Remove the third westbound travel lane		x									x			
Add bike lanes in both directions		x		x	x		x			x				
Install a mid-block crosswalk when justified			x	x	x		x							
Durfee/Thienes Intersection														
Paint highly visible crosswalks	x						x							
Install pedestrian countdown signals with Pedestrian Lead Interval		x					x				x			
Add sharrows through the intersection to connect bike lanes		x		x	x		x							
Resolve the encroachment issue on the northwest corner		x											x	x
Durfee Avenue from Thienes to Michael Hunt														
Complete the partial medians for the full length of this segment		x		x	x		x				x			
Remove the third southwestbound travel lane		x									x			
Add bike lanes in both directions		x		x	x		x			x				
Replace the awkward wandering sidewalk on the Broadmead Street frontage road		x		x	x		x				x			
Add highly visible crosswalks at the Michael Hunt intersection	x						x							
Set pedestrian signals for a Lead Pedestrian Interval		x												
Create a gateway feature on the corner of the vacant lot at Michael Hunt			x									x		x
Durfee/Michael Hunt Intersection														
Paint highly visible crosswalks	x						x							
Install pedestrian countdown signals with Lead Pedestrian Interval		x												
Add sharrows through the intersection to connect bike lanes		x		x	x		x			x				
Create a monument gateway feature on the southeast corner of the intersection			x								x			x
Peck Road from Michael Hunt Drive west to Durfee Avenue														
Add bike lanes in both directions	x			x	x		x			x				
Extend the existing medians east of Farndon Street		x		x	x		x				x			
Restrict left turns out of the commercial and senior housing properties on the north side of Peck Road		x									x			
Structure left turns into those properties with a new left turn pocket		x		x	x		x				x			
Provide a turn pocket for left turns onto Farndon Street		x		x	x		x				x			

Projects	Timing			Potential Funding Sources							Bicycle Transportation Account (BTA)	Infrastructure State Revolving Fund (ISHF)	Development Impact Fees	SEMPOA	Other Privately Raised Funds
	Short-Term (1-2 yrs)	Mid-Term (2-5 yrs)	Long-Term (> 5 yrs)	Map 21 CMAQ	Map 21 Transportation Alternatives	Map 21 HSIP	Map 21 STP	Map 21 Caltrans SRS	Map 21 Recreation Trails						
Narrow the entry point to Farndon Street with curb extensions		x		x	x		x					x			
Add a highly visible crosswalk across Farndon Street	x						x								
Narrow the Highway 60 onramp and offramp pedestrian crossing distances with new curbing			x	x	x	x	x								
Paint highly visible crosswalks at freeway ramp locations	x						x								
Peck/Durfee Intersection and Access Ramps west of Highway 60															
Improve lighting under the freeway overcrossing			x				x								
Continue the new bike lanes on both sides of Peck Road under the freeway	x			x	x		x				x				
Provide a striped buffer for bike lanes where sufficient width exists		x		x	x		x				x				
Add bike lanes on Durfee Avenue continuing past the high school		x		x	x		x				x				
Provide symbols to mark the left turn for eastbound bicycles through the Durfee/Peck intersection		x		x			x				x				
Open the closed crosswalk on the northern side of the intersection		x										x			
Install a pedestrian island separating the right turn lane onto westbound Durfee Avenue			x	x	x		x					x			
Install countdown signals with Pedestrian Lead Interval timing at both intersections		x													
Add a pork chop island at the eastbound freeway onramp			x	x	x	x	x					x			
Install pedestrian warning flashers at the mouth of the freeway access ramps	x														
Charles T. Kranz Intermediate School															
Add a sidewalk in place of the dirt path on the north side of the choke point on Burkett Road		x		x	x		x	x				x			
Add sharrows in both directions through the choke point	x			x	x		x	x			x				
Install curb extensions at all four corners of the intersection of E Rush Street and Burkett		x		x	x		x	x				x			
Add median refuge islands on E Rush Street on both sides of the intersection		x		x	x		x	x				x			
Add a highly visible crosswalks on all four sides of the intersection	x						x	x							
Monte Vista Elementary School															
Bicycle access along Thienes Avenue	x			x	x		x	x			x				
High visibility crossings at the intersection of Thienes Avenue and Leafdale Avenue							x	x							
Visibility for drivers exiting the student dropoff area onto Thienes		x													x
Pedestrian access onto the campus from the south		x													x
Bicycle access onto the campus		x													x
Additional bicycle parking		x				x		x							x
Restricting student short-cuts through the staff parking lot south of the school buildings		x													x
South El Monte High School															
Create raised medians to prevent drivers from doing things that are unsafe or illegal		x		x	x		x	x				x			
Reduce the number of through lanes to lower vehicle speeds and improve safety		x		x	x		x					x			
Paint bike lanes to provide safe passage to the school and past it for cyclists	x			x	x		x	x			x				
Beautify the school frontage with landscaping		x													x
Bikeways and Trails															
Additional bike lanes	x			x	x		x				x				
Improve the pathway and signage for the informal access through the Mountain View High School site	x					x	x	x	x						x
Add a new access point at the end of Fineview Street across San Gabriel Valley Water Company property			x		x		x		x						
Improve parking at the trailhead at the terminus of Thienes Avenue		x					x								
Improve access from the newly-paved trail on the levee top to the trail network near the Whittier Narrows Nature Center			x				x			x					
Add a bicycle connection near Legg Lake in the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area from Santa Anita Avenue to the Durfee Avenue crossing.			x		x					x	x				
Neighborhood Traffic Calming															
Midblock Crossings		x		x	x		x					x			
Curb Extensions		x		x	x		x					x			
High visibility crosswalks	x						x								

APPENDIX A

Pellissier Neighborhood Connectivity Improvements

The final location for street improvements in this corridor lies in the unincorporated area outside the City of South El Monte, so no action is necessary on the City's part to implement these recommendations. Still, this issue came up during charrette events so the design team responded. Some school-aged children and young adults from this neighborhood appear to attend schools in South El Monte, and either walk or bike to and from school. The suggestions below will improve their access and safety.

The Pellissier neighborhood is essentially a large cul-de-sac, with only a single point of access. That difficulty is compounded by the placement of that single ingress and egress point along the access ramps between Interstate 605 and Peck Road.

Two possible solutions were reviewed by the design team and are schematically represented in Figure A1 (next page). Neither is perfect, but both provide more direct access between this neighborhood and South El Monte, and an alternate route for emergency response as well.

The first solution would extend Pellissier Road through the end of the current cul-de-sac and toward the San Gabriel River. A narrow lane could be paved on the levee top, exiting onto Peck Road near the bridge over the river. Access onto Peck Road would have to be restricted to right-in, right-out to avoid backups and complications with traffic on the bridge. This solution would require a cooperative agreement between Los Angeles County, the Reclamation District, and possibly the industrial park property owner. It may also compromise current plans to improve an area beyond the cul-de-sac for equestrian facilities (Figure A1).

The second solution would provide access out the side of the cul-de-sac bulb, through an existing emergency access gate in the wall around the industrial park. A lane could then be marked with edge treatments through the underutilized parking lot area of the industrial park, and out the driveway onto Peck Road. This would only require an easement agreement between the County and the owner of the industrial park, and compensation to purchase easement rights.

Other solutions may have been discussed by residents in the past, or considered by County and emergency response officials. These two possibilities are offered here with the intent to highlight the issue of an isolated neighborhood, not to suggest that City of South El Monte staff or officials must act on these suggestions.



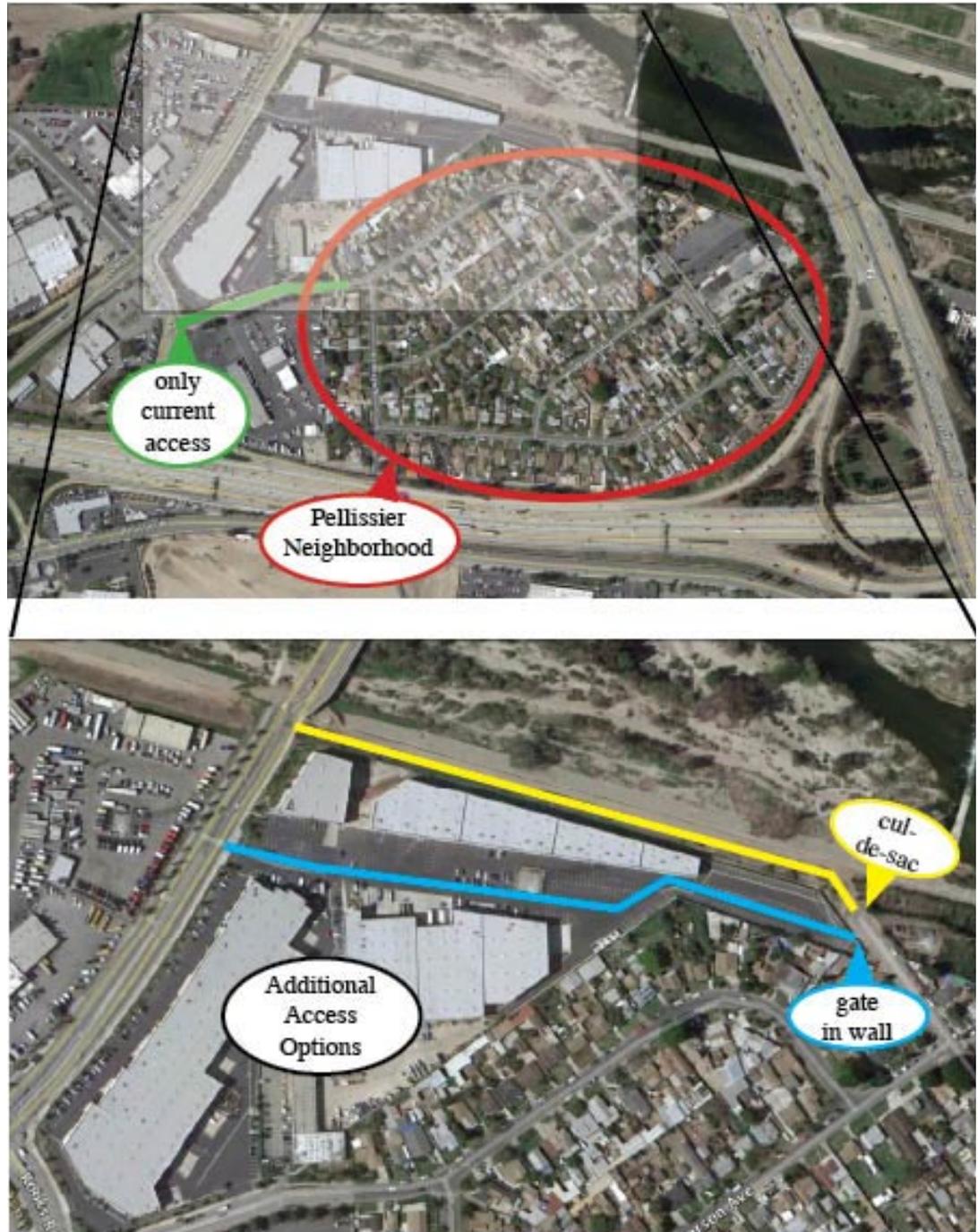


Figure A1. Pellissier Neighborhood with potential new access points.

APPENDIX B

Resident Table Maps



Table #1



Table #2



Table #3



Table #4