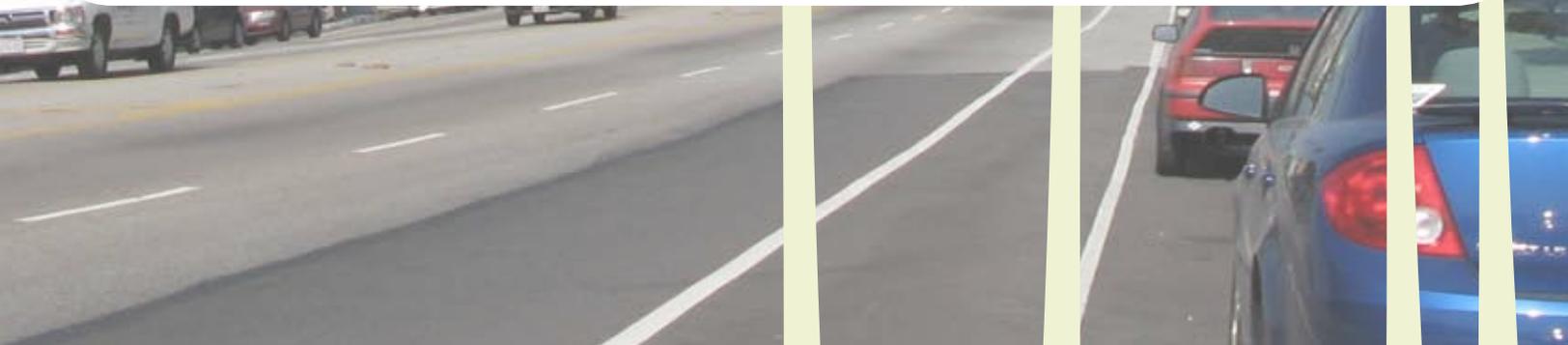




WELCOME TO SILVERLAKE
SUNSET ★
JUNCTION

Streetscape Design & Transportation Vision for the Sunset Junction Area

MARCH 2009





This is a project of the City of Los Angeles with funding provided by the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project Program. Compass Blueprint assists Southern California cities and other organizations in evaluating planning options and stimulating development consistent with the region's goals. Compass Blueprint tools support visioning efforts, infill analyses, economic and policy analyses, and marketing and communication programs.

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Streetscape Design & Transportation Vision for the Sunset Junction Area



Executive Summary

Through a Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority received a grant in 2008 to identify streetscape improvements for the Sunset Junction area that are desired by the community and would help support activities within the neighborhood. A series of public workshops and outreach events paired neighborhood leaders with regional transportation agency representatives to collaborate on possible solutions to facilitate more efficient transit service while also realizing local community goals. The Demonstration Project culminated in the development of a vision called the Sunset Junction Area Streetscape and Transportation Vision.

The Sunset Junction Area Streetscape and Transportation Vision

The Sunset Junction Area Streetscape and Transportation Vision provides a modern blueprint for turning the Sunset Junction district into a model of coordinated bicycle, pedestrian, and transit activity that will benefit the community, local business, and the region. The purpose of the Sunset Junction Area Streetscape Design and Transportation Vision is to suggest transit, pedestrian and bicycle improvements along three main commercial lifelines within the area: Sunset, Santa Monica, and Vermont Boulevards. Improving streetscapes and better integrating transit services in the district will increase community satisfaction and boost the multi-faceted use of these main arterials.



The Vision for the Sunset Junction area is a program for tactical improvements to the public realm: the sidewalks, the alignment and width of the road network, the location and design of transit stops, and the location of features including parking and open space within the study area.

The vision is based on efforts to accomplish four primary goals:

1. *Strengthen the Sunset Junction area business core and identity.*
2. *Improve transit integration and efficiency.*
3. *Improve the walkability and the pedestrian experience.*
4. *Improve bicycle facilities and markings.*

The Vision outlines immediate and short term steps that should be taken in the next 1-4 years to achieve the goals of the Sunset Junction Area Streetscape Design and Transportation Vision. Funding to implement many of these improvements should be available through a grant from Metro to the City of Los Angeles.

The following short term strategies include improvements to the corridor, transit facilities, the pedestrian environment, and for bicycle travel:

1. *Begin to establish a “bookend” gateway transit plaza at Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards to begin the process of establishing a transit plaza at the triangular area formed by Santa Monica Boulevard, Manzanita Street, and Sunset Boulevard.*

2. *Locate a left turn lane and signal at Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard and equip transit vehicles with transponders to activate signal priority*
3. *Form a shared parking district to maximize existing off-street parking*
4. *Secure funding for new parking facilities*
5. *Develop a community identity program for the Sunset Junction area including the use of emblems and signage to build sense of place*
6. *Coordinate and integrate existing transit stops within the district*
7. *Redesign and install new bus transit shelters that provide cover and seating*
8. *Provide real-time bus arrival information in the bus transit terminals*
9. *Improve intersections with curb extensions, highly visible crosswalks and countdown timers*
10. *Plant native shade trees and other landscaping to green the streetscape*
11. *Add consistent bike lane striping and signage along the main streets in the study area*
12. *Add “bike boxes” at major intersections*
13. *Designate “bike boulevards” within the district and install traffic calming features*



The Vision outlines a second phase of improvements that should be taken in the long term as resources become available:

- 14. *Finalize design and construction of a transit plaza at the intersection of Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards*
- 15. *Implement high capacity transit along the corridor with dedicated transit lanes, elevated stops, and automated pre-pay*
- 16. *Plan and build new automobile and bicycle parking facilities*
- 17. *Consider the addition of a mixed use civic structure*

Finally, the Vision outlines a third phase of improvements that should be considered in the longer term. The following strategies include three different options for widening the pedestrian realm:

- 18. *Widen sidewalks to 15-18 feet mid-block by removing the center turn lanes between lighted intersections. Turn lanes would remain at key intersections to prevent congestion; or*
- 19. *Widen sidewalks to 25 feet by replacing on-street parking with parking structures close to the gateways that bookend the district; or*
- 20. *Widen sidewalks to 27 feet by removing two traffic lanes along Sunset Boulevard while maintaining existing on-street parking*

Sunset Junction has the opportunity to stand as a regional model in how to rethink the conventional wisdom of a city's main streets and offer a more balanced approach to main street design.





Vision Background

In 2008, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) awarded Metro, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, a grant to plan street and transportation improvements for a triangular study area bound by the transit-rich streets of Sunset Boulevard, Santa Monica Boulevard and Vermont Avenue. The rapid buses that pass through Sunset Junction link to two light rail stations at Vermont Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard, and Vermont Avenue and Sunset Boulevard, providing regional rail transportation. The streets were deemed prime candidates for streetscape enhancements because they have high transit ridership and a street life with vibrant business districts and increased bicycle activity. However, the current design of the roadways is primarily focused on moving high volumes of traffic through the area quickly with little attention to the needs of other users, such as pedestrians, transit riders and bicyclists.

Within this Silver Lake/East Hollywood study area is the focus area of this planning process, the Sunset Junction neighborhood. The “Junction” refers to the intersection of Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevard, where two streetcar lines once joined. While the streetcars are long gone, the history of the streetcar era remains evident in the wide arcing turn in Santa Monica Boulevard as it approaches Sunset Boulevard. While the intersection today is still a major junction for auto, transit and pedestrian travel, the design, much like the

design of the area’s main streets in general, is inefficient and unsafe.

For at least the past 50 years, main roads have been measured in terms of how many cars they can move through an area quickly. There has been less recognition of the other users of the roadway, such as pedestrians, transit riders and bicyclists. The Sunset Junction area is experiencing an increase in pedestrian activity, bicycling and transit use but the area’s main streets are still designed primarily for the automobile. The goal of this planning project is to identify what streetscape improvements are desired by the community and would help support activities within the neighborhood. Sunset Junction has the opportunity to stand as a regional model in how to rethink the conventional wisdom of a city’s main streets and offer a more balanced approach to main street design.

Through SCAG’s Compass Blueprint Program, Sunset Junction has been designated a demonstration project area for showcasing the regional planning principles of mobility, livability, prosperity and sustainability. Compass Blueprint builds partnerships with local governments for innovative transportation and land use solutions to local regional challenges. Specifically, the Compass Blueprint Program provides planning funds to implement small area visions that can serve as models for the larger region. This project resulted in SCAG, Metro, and representatives from the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council, Councilman Eric Garcetti’s office, and other civic volunteers joining forces.



A key part of the Sunset Junction demonstration project was engaging active community members in public workshops to generate specific design solutions for the neighborhood's streetscape. Sunset Junction residents are highly engaged in community planning and retain a strong sense of identity, place, and history.

The public workshops paired neighborhood leaders with regional transportation agency representatives to collaborate on possible solutions to facilitate more efficient transit service while also realizing local community goals. The workshops aimed to solicit local knowledge and creative ideas to achieve regional benefits while meeting local needs such as improving the public infrastructure that supports transit access, pedestrian travel, and bicycle transportation.

From Metro's perspective, the study area surrounding Sunset Junction provides an opportunity to implement the following regional priorities and strategies identified by SCAG and the Compass Blueprint program:

- Focus growth in existing and emerging centers and along major transportation corridors
- Create significant areas of mixed-use development and walkable communities
- Target growth around existing and planned transit stations
- Preserve existing open space and stable residential areas

Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the Sunset Junction Area Streetscape Design and Transportation Vision is to suggest transit, pedestrian and bicycle improvements along three main commercial lifelines within the area: Sunset, Santa Monica, and Vermont Boulevards. By improving streetscapes and better integrating transit services in the district, the plan will increase community satisfaction and boost the multi-faceted use of these main arterials.

Specific goals include:

- Develop a new design for the area's main streets (Sunset, Vermont, and Santa Monica).
- Develop a conceptual urban design and transportation plan that establishes a transit plaza and better integrates transit into the area.
- Reconfigure the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard.
- Examine pedestrian and bicycle linkages to the Red Line Stations at Vermont and Santa Monica Boulevard, and Vermont and Sunset Boulevard.





History of the Sunset Junction Area

Sunset Boulevard is a major east-west regional arterial and also serves as one of the main business districts for the Echo Park and Silver Lake neighborhoods. Sunset and Santa Monica Boulevards run generally parallel to each other as they travel to the Pacific Ocean. At Sanborn Avenue, however, they join at the intersection of two former branches of intercity streetcar lines. In 1954, the Pacific Electric Railway ceased rail service along this stretch and sold the lines to Metropolitan Coach Lines, whose intention was to convert the lines into commuter bus service. Despite the end of the streetcar, this stretch acts as an important passage from the ocean to the downtown for regional bus, truck, and car transportation.

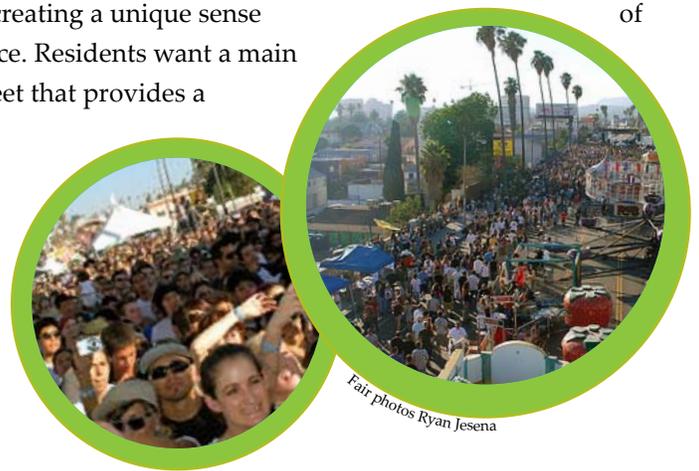
Sunset Junction also enjoys a rich cultural history as a popular site for Hollywood films and now as the central hub for a diverse community. Since the 1960s, the area has been an established gay and lesbian community. While the gay population grew, so did the working class Latino community. Efforts to ease tensions between these two groups led to the organization of the now famous Sunset Junction Street Fair in 1980. The Sunset Junction Street Fair occurs every July and has evolved into a major event that attracts thousands from throughout the region for live music, performance art, food, and local merchant shopping.

Today, the Sunset Junction area remains culturally diverse with a strong sense of identity and a unique composition of retail businesses and organizations that include hipster hang outs,

classy boutiques, and activist coffee shops. At the same time, this area is experiencing a wave of investment and is wrestling with the issues surrounding gentrification and rising property values. Retaining the neighborhood identity as a creative, if slightly (and proudly) grungy, community during this period of change and growth is a key goal for the community. One potentially powerful way of establishing community identity is through unique designs within the streetscape.

In recent years, the community has experienced another surge in community activism. The community's vision would re-shape their transportation corridors for the benefit of local residents. Neighbors in the district desire better walking conditions, better transit facilities, and a more enjoyable streetscape environment. The neighborhood also boasts a growing number of bicyclists seeking better bicycle parking, better bicycle priority lanes and connections throughout the greater region.

Surprisingly, local residents seem less concerned about the speed of vehicular traffic and more interested in creating a unique sense of place. Residents want a main street that provides a



Fair photos Ryan Jesena



central location for community gathering and an active venue for local business and culture.

Sentiments of Residents

In 2008 the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council conducted a survey of area residents in order to catch a glimpse of who lives in the community and what concerns them. Forty-two residents were surveyed and asked a series of questions regarding transportation movement, retail activity, and their community preferences. Their responses offered some interesting insights.

- Residents appreciate the casual and relaxed atmosphere of the area, the small scale of the buildings, and the local shops and restaurants.
- The majority of respondents (31 of 42) said they would be willing to walk 4-5 blocks within the Junction to access services or other destinations.
- There is significant community pride in the Street Fair, the local business flavor, area youth programs, the acceptance of alternative lifestyles, and how creative expression is encouraged and celebrated.
- Residents like to think out of the box and are open to new solutions in order to offer better pedestrian and bicycle access.
- People in the community are eager to find creative solutions for community issues whether it is painting murals to beautify the district or host fairs to quell tension between various groups.

- The community is open to improvements to the built environment that are forward-thinking and solution-based.

Community Trends

The vibrancy of the neighborhoods within the study area has attracted significant recent growth and investment. The urban lifestyle offered by the Silver Lake neighborhood has led to an influx of newcomers, driven up home prices and changed the mix of retail businesses.

According to the Trulia real estate search engine, the October-December 2008 median sales price of a home in Silver Lake hovered at \$483,703, compared to \$325,775 for the City of Los Angeles. With the loss of some affordable housing options in the community, there is increased demand for this type of housing that could be provided by mixed use developments offering townhomes and condominiums.

Despite the shifting demographics, the study area continues to support an artistic and alternative viewpoint. Both long time and new residents seem to share a strong environmental ethic, an appreciation of eclecticism and an interest in promoting the local economy and locally-owned businesses. Furthermore, they want to access shops and services by foot, bike, or a quick transit ride.





Changing Transportation and Travel Behavior

All three main streets, Santa Monica Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard, and Vermont Avenue, provide quality Rapid Bus transit service and boast some of the highest transit ridership in the entire city. The Rapid Bus service on these streets connects area residents to the regional Red Line subway stations on Vermont Avenue. The area increasingly serves the region as a hub of transit, attracting new riders each day. Surveys conducted of transit riders show about one-third of the riders on the rapid bus system are new.

Along Vermont Avenue, the average weekday ridership on Rapid Bus 754 is about 25,000 people. By contrast, the average daily number of cars on Vermont Avenue near Santa Monica Blvd is about 40,000 cars. That equates to roughly 40 percent of daily travelers on Vermont Avenue choosing the bus over the car. Similarly, on Santa Monica Boulevard 10,000 people take Rapid Bus 704. With an average of 36,000 people traveling this network each day, nearly 30 percent are choosing to take the bus. The amount of transit riders on Santa Monica Boulevard and Vermont Avenue exceed the transit ridership of most areas in Los Angeles.

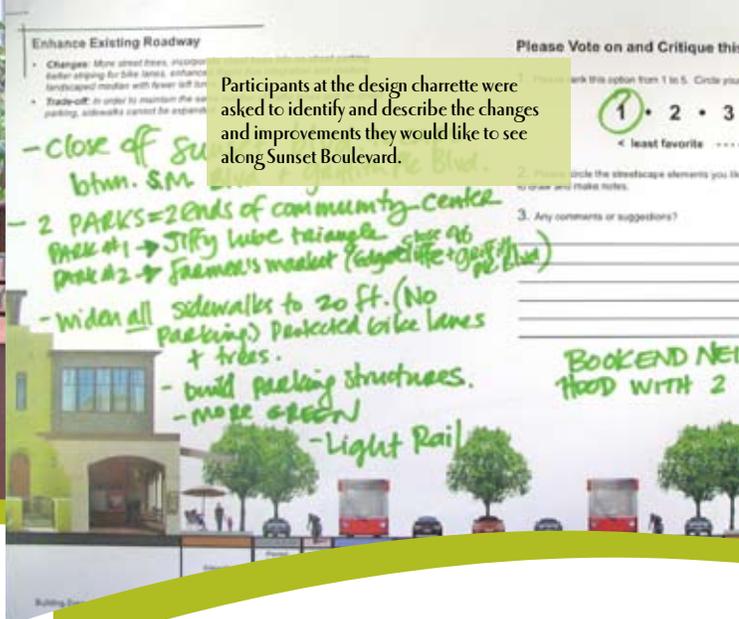
Although more people are accessing and utilizing Rapid Bus service, the supporting transit infrastructure has not kept pace with the increased demand. Few bus shelters, awkward bus stop placement, inefficient bus transfer coordination, and narrow pedestrian sidewalks indicate a need for infrastructure improvements to support the increased transit use. When bus service is efficient, convenient, and accessible more and more riders will

choose transit.

Despite the prioritization of the automobile in the design of many of the streets, the area is becoming increasingly active with pedestrian and bicycle traffic. A dedicated bike community travels within the district as well, commuting to other parts of town despite poor bicycle lane striping and the heavy flow of cars, trucks and buses. The increased pedestrian, bike, and transit activity is also helping spur a sidewalk café culture with businesses whose retail and activities spill out into the streetscape environment. All of this bustling activity suggests that Sunset Junction is transitioning from a collection of auto-oriented arterials into a true main street district.

The Need for a New Streetscape Plan

A new streetscape design is needed to complement the evolution of the community and its activities. The lifestyle choices of the community indicate a desire for easy access to shops and services within walking distance. Beneficial changes within the public realm could inspire new investments within the private realm, offering a more diverse range of housing types, and helping the area become a multi-faceted urban place.



Public Involvement

Stakeholder Design Charrette

In June 2008, a design charrette was held to refine the streetscape planning process and get participation from key stakeholders. Approximately 15-20 people attended and offered insight into the priorities of the community in approaching a redesign of Sunset Junction. The charrette consisted of a three different activities: a strengthening connections exercise, a streetscape design exercise, and a review of possible redesign concepts for the intersection at Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards.

Strengthening Connections Exercise

In this exercise, participants were given a map of the larger triangular study area and asked to identify specific street and intersections where critical improvements could be made to pedestrian, transit or bicycle facilities. Participants talked amongst themselves, while drawing and circling problem areas and suggesting improvements. The exercise helped pinpoint the areas that deserve the most immediate attention.

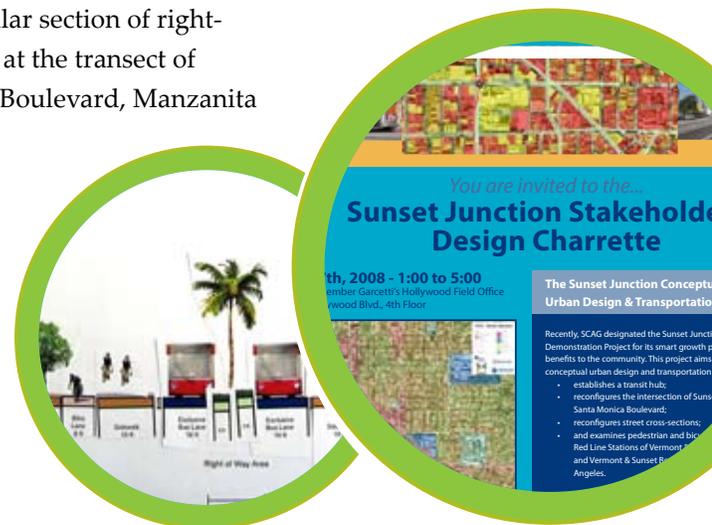
Streetscape Design Exercise

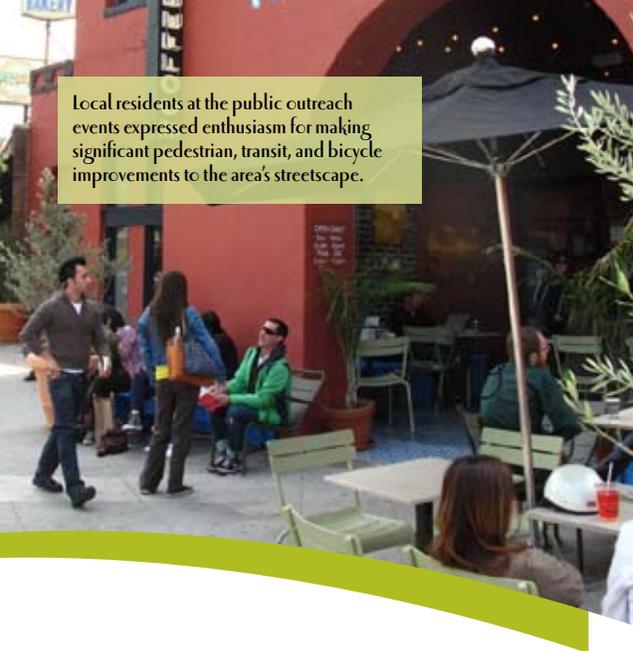
For this exercise, participants were asked to design their ideal streetscape, making strategic changes to the existing streetscape. They reviewed a series of draft design concepts and discussed the trade-offs that would be required for making different decisions within the public right-of-way. Participants were asked to consider how their choices would affect the transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, businesses, and other people that would be traveling in the area.

Sunset Junction Intersection Redesign Exercise

Finally, participants were asked to establish specific goals for possible redesign of the intersection of Santa Monica, Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard. To improve safety and efficiency for drivers, bus service and pedestrians, it has been proposed to reroute Santa Monica onto a redesigned Manzanita Street, which would allow for the vacated portion of Santa Monica to become a transit plaza or other community space. Provided with large print-outs of the existing intersection and two possible design concepts, participants had to identify and describe the different elements a redesign of the intersection should accomplish. Each group made note of their priorities and goals for any redesign, for example, new open space, better transit access, bicycle parking, among others.

Under each redesign concept, proposed adjustments to the street alignment result in the creation of additional public space from vacating a triangular section of right-of-way at the transect of Sunset Boulevard, Manzanita





Local residents at the public outreach events expressed enthusiasm for making significant pedestrian, transit, and bicycle improvements to the area's streetscape.



Street, and Santa Monica Boulevard. The vacated right-of-way presents some exciting possibilities for open space, underground parking, or even as a site for a new cultural building. The exercise culminated in a guided discussion about the community's priorities for the intersection and the possible use of the vacated right-of-way.

Ultimately, the charrette provided a successful test run for the public workshop. It helped generate buzz in the community about the area's possibilities for redesign and community use, and sparked an interest in upcoming planning events.

Public Design Workshop

The next phase of the planning process was a public design workshop on the evening of August 7, 2008 at the Micheltorena Street Elementary School. The goals of the workshop were to speak to a broader section of the community, and glean input on their ideas for rethinking the entire streetscape and function of Sunset Boulevard within the Sunset Junction area. The workshop followed a similar format as the design charrette.

Approximately 50 participants gathered together from the bike community, the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council, Councilman Garcetti's office, and the general public. Workshop participants were given table-sized maps and asked to review several concepts for specific streetscape improvements and street alignment variations. The maps showed detailed illustrations of how the intersection could be physically adjusted to improve transit service, bicycle use and travel, and create new open space for the enjoyment

of area businesses and pedestrians. The streetscape options presented at the public workshop are shown on pages 14-15. The participants spent several hours critiquing and redesigning their community's transportation network, and offering their ideas for how to improve the connections and integration of transit, bike, and pedestrian activity.

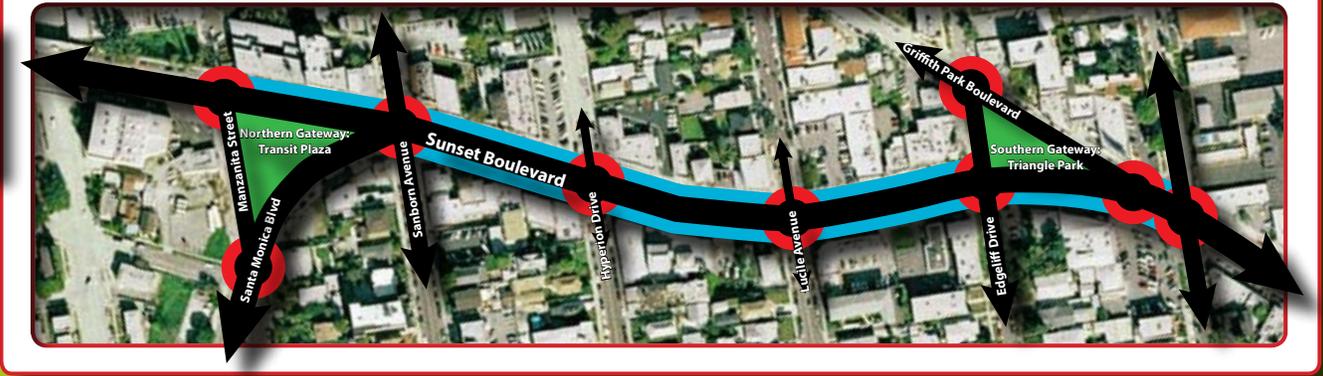
Finally, participants voted on their priorities for Sunset Junction redesign. If given ample resources, residents would likely select a myriad of improvements for the district. However, due to the reality of budget and time constraints, this exercise helped participants prioritize their goals for a redesigned intersection.

Open House

In December 2008, an open house was held to present a draft redesign concept and vision for the Sunset Junction area to the public. The open house provided an opportunity for citizens and stakeholders to view posters illustrating the different stages of the draft vision and to comment on the proposed changes. The public expressed enthusiasm for making significant pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvements to the area's streetscape. The main elements of the draft vision, such as improving intersections with curb extensions, adding additional bicycle parking and better bike lane striping, and incorporating covered bus shelters received strong support. However, the idea of widening sidewalks by removing turn lanes between strategic intersections proved somewhat controversial. Many expressed concern for the potential redirection of traffic into residential neighborhoods and the likelihood of increased congestion at the remaining signalized

Vision Framework

-  Key Streets
-  Key Intersections
-  Gateways
-  Business Core



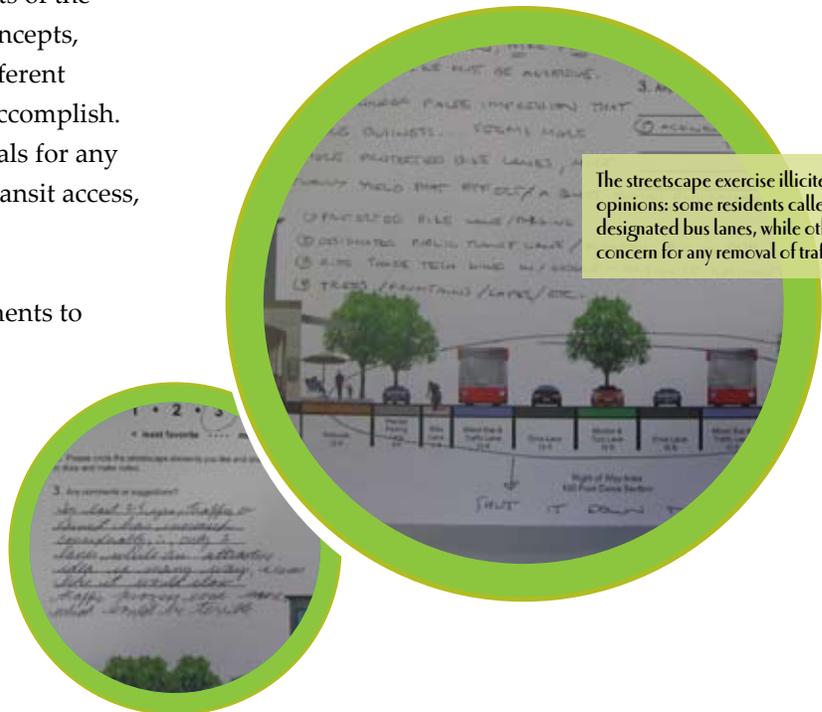
intersections. Participants were asked to consider how their choices would affect the transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, businesses, and other people that would be traveling in the area.

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Under each redesign concept, proposed adjustments to the street alignment result in the creation of additional public space from vacating a triangular section of right-of-way at the transect of Sunset Boulevard, Manzanita Street, and Santa Monica Boulevard. The vacated right-of-way presents some exciting possibilities for open space, underground parking, or even as a site for a new cultural building.

The draft vision was modified in response to the open house feedback. All the ideas regarding possible future sidewalk widening options were consolidated into a separate section called “Strategies for Widening the Pedestrian Realm.” This section provides strategies to achieve a widened sidewalk should this concept become more popular and feasible. The remaining street improvements with favorable public support comprise the short and long term strategies identified in the vision, both of which retain the current sidewalk dimensions.

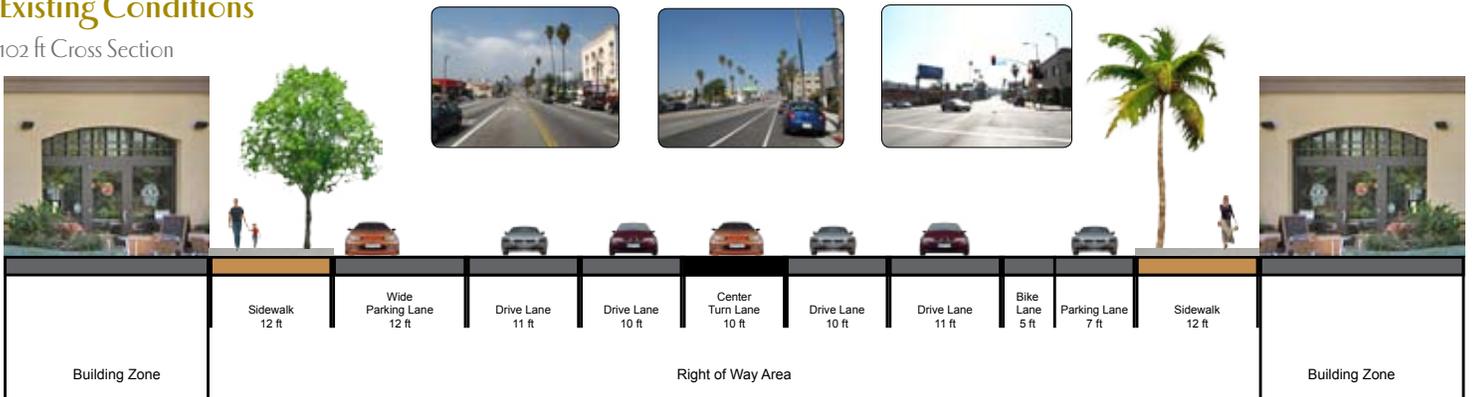


The streetscape exercise elicited strong opinions: some residents called for designated bus lanes, while others showed concern for any removal of traffic lanes.

Sunset Boulevard Streetscape Options Presented at the Public Workshops

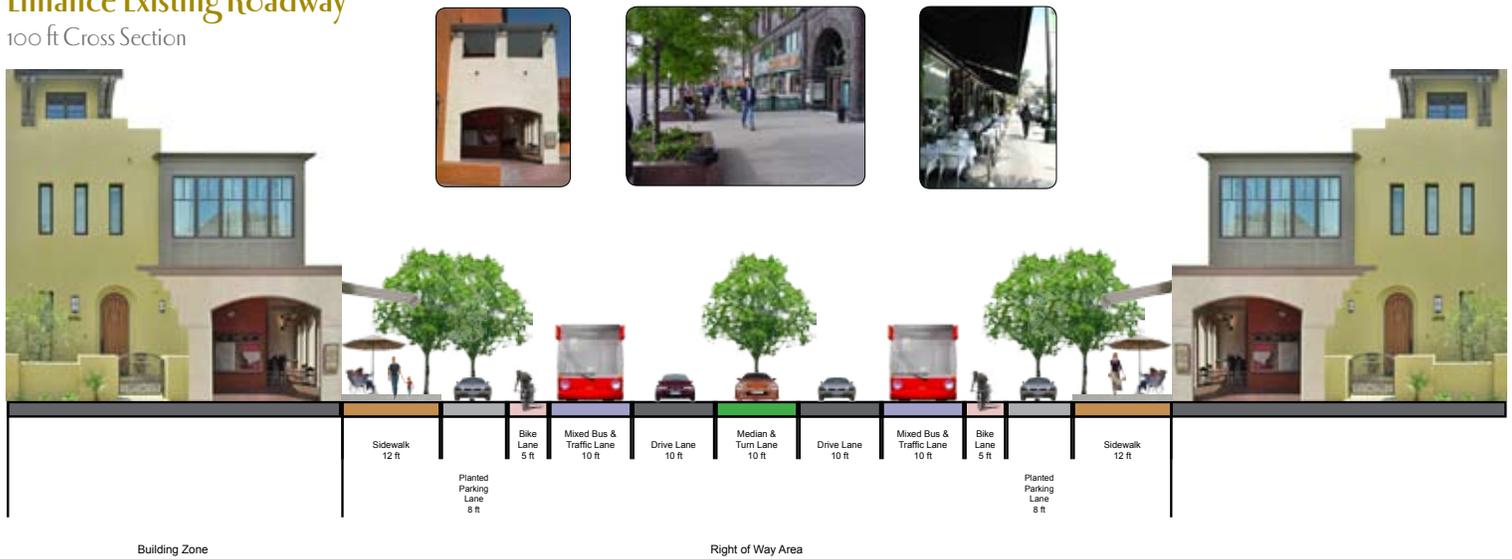
Existing Conditions

102 ft Cross Section



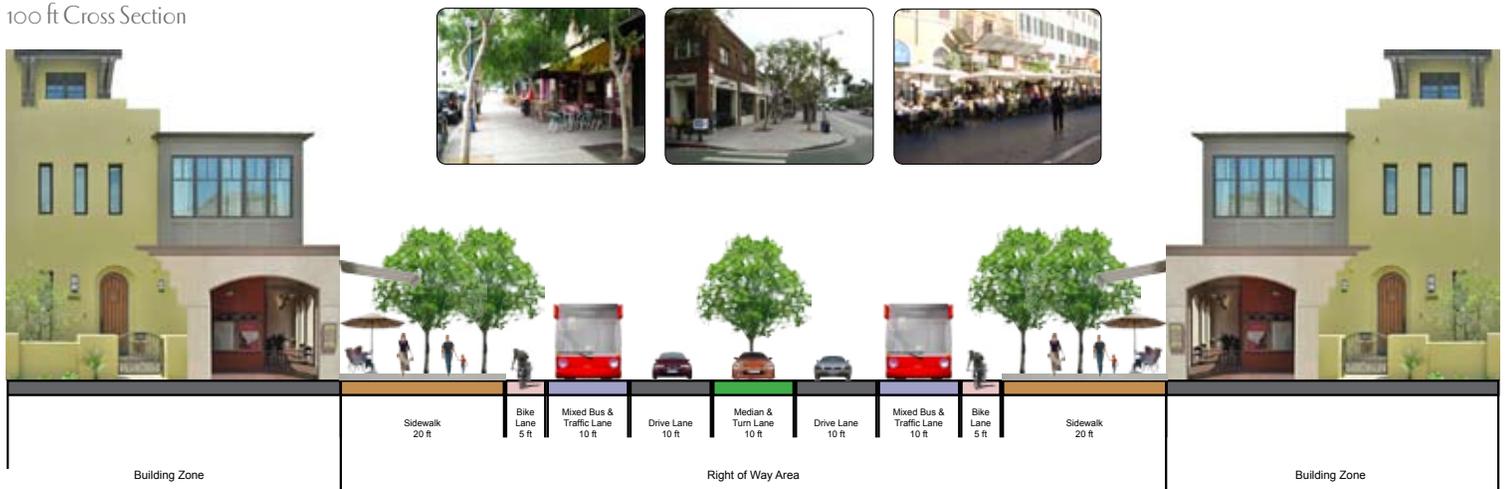
Enhance Existing Roadway

100 ft Cross Section



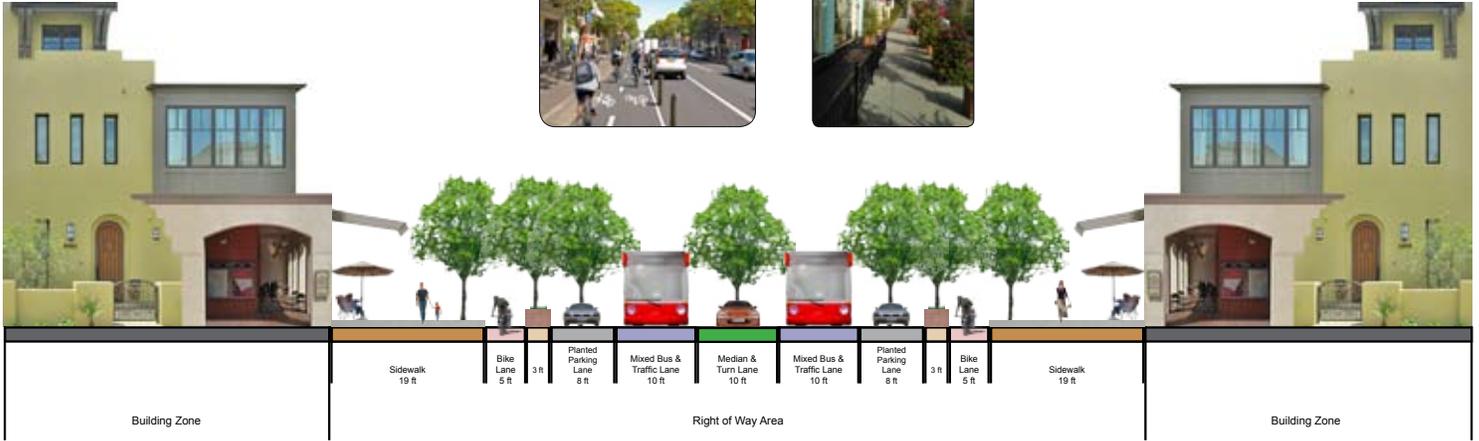
Pedestrian & Transit Boulevard

100 ft Cross Section



Pedestrian & Bike Boulevard 1

100 ft Cross Section



Pedestrian & Bike Boulevard 2

100 ft Cross Section





Goals of the Vision

The Vision for the Sunset Junction area is a program for tactical improvements to the public realm: the sidewalks, the alignment and width of the road network, the location and design of transit stops, and the location of features including parking and open space within the study area. The vision establishes an agenda for the short term, identifying key steps to take in the next 1-4 years, and other long- and even longer-term strategies to pursue as additional resources become available.

The purpose of the vision is to realize the aspirations of the community, regional policy, and the transit authority by improving the experience of bicyclists, transit riders, and pedestrians converging in the Sunset Junction area. Whether you get out of your car and walk, hop on transit, ride the bus or light rail, own or frequent a business, live nearby, or bike commute within the area, the vision identifies ways all these activities can complement and not compete with one another.

The vision is based on four primary goals:

1. *Strengthen the business core and identity.*
2. *Improve transit integration and efficiency.*
3. *Improve the walkability and the pedestrian experience.*
4. *Improve bicycle facilities and markings.*

The following strategies have been developed to achieve each of these goals.

Strengthen the Business Core and Identity

The Sunset Junction area business district is already a popular spot for shoppers, festival goers, and community activity. Investments in pedestrian amenities such as wider sidewalks and street trees will strengthen the café culture that is emerging in the area, and help establish a unique community identity. Incorporating art and historical installations into elements of the streetscape, such as sidewalks and transit shelters, is a great way to establish district identity and strengthen the business core. The City of Los Angeles should work closely with the community to tap into the local creativity and incorporate it directly into the very cement and steel of the streetscape improvements.

Another idea emerged during the public involvement process was establishing a transit plaza at Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards to “bookend” the district with open space and establish gateways to the community. The new transit plaza would complement the existing triangular park at Griffith Park Boulevard at the south end of the district. Gateways can establish community identity and,





The triangular area formed by Santa Monica Boulevard, Manzanita Street, and Sunset Boulevard makes a great location for a transit plaza.

with transit shelters and car and bicycle parking, can serve as entry points to the district. The plazas would allow people to enter the district on a bus, car or bike, store their vehicle, walk around and easily switch from one mode of travel to another.

Bookending the district with gateway plazas would attract new visitors and pedestrian activity that is good for business, café culture, and would lead to a jump in transit ridership. The new transit plaza at Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevard should feature different types of seating, pleasant landscaping, safe and clearly marked crosswalks, good lighting, and serve as a gallery for community art and expression. The transit plaza would add a visible destination to eat lunch, rest, rendezvous with friends, wait for transit, and otherwise enjoy. Visitors to the transit plaza would also augment community safety by maintaining “eyes on the street” and an increase in activity throughout the day.

Improve Transit Integration and Efficiency

One of the best strategies to improve transit integration and efficiency in the Sunset Junction area includes stitching together transit stops into coordinated locations. Currently, many transit riders must cross multiple street intersections in order to transfer to other lines, particularly around the intersection of Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards. This wastes riders’ time, creates additional points of conflict between pedestrians and vehicle traffic, and adds unnecessary complexity. There should be well-marked crosswalks, covered areas, and appropriate lighting for safety. Fine tuning the stop location for the transit lines traversing the district would improve transit connectivity,

make transfers more seamless, save precious time, and help the lines run more efficiently.

The Vision calls for new, covered shelters that provide real-time bus arrival information, adding convenience and ease for the traveler. Transit stops should integrate safe, accessible bicycle parking including bike racks and lockers for day use. The transit shelters themselves should be designed so as not to create unsafe corners or dominate the streetscape. Transit shelters should complement the overall sidewalk activity.

At the charrette and public workshop, the community expressed an interest in using local artists in the design and construction of new shelters and incorporating displays that highlight the area’s rich history. Transit shelters should reflect the creative and artistic talents of the community and help add identity and a sense of place. The more attractive and inviting the physical design of the shelters, the more interest the public will have in using them and riding transit. The community will have an increased sense of pride in a streetscape that includes signature facilities highlighting the area’s artistic nature.



Improve Walkability and the Pedestrian Experience

The single best strategy for improving the pedestrian experience in the Sunset Junction area is to increase the width of the sidewalks. Sidewalks in the district span 10-12 feet, and currently provide inadequate space for the healthy interaction of businesses with outdoor seating, pedestrian travel, bicycle parking, and bus shelter waiting areas. Activities in the area often crowd each other and prevent the full realization of a pedestrian friendly main street that supports an active cafe culture.

In areas of Europe and walkable cities in the U.S., sidewalk widths extend as much as 15-30 feet. Ultimately, the district should include sidewalk widths of 15 feet or more to provide space for outdoor seating, bicycle parking, window shoppers, street furniture, and comfortable transit stop facilities.

Widening the sidewalk can best be accommodated in the long term by eliminating the center turn lane along Sunset Boulevard in the area between the major lighted intersections. To retain the center turn lane around major intersections and also maintain wider sidewalks, on-street parking can be removed for a short distance leading up to the intersections. By taking away a few on-street parking spaces at the intersections, it is possible to maintain traffic flow and provide

consistently wide sidewalks throughout the district.

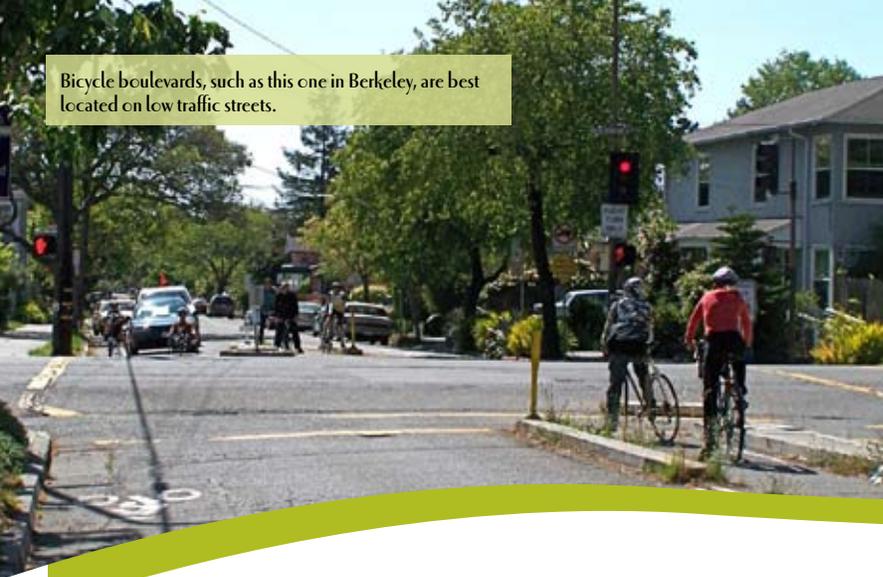
In the short term, the Vision recommends installing curb extensions at all intersections to shorten street crossings and provide additional room for street furniture such as garbage cans, street lights, benches and landscaping. This will require replacing a few on-street parking spaces with new sidewalk bulb-outs immediately surrounding each intersection. Installing countdown crosswalk timers, and stamped and painted crosswalk striping will make crossing the street as a pedestrian safer and more pleasant.

Once people begin to register positive associations with the area's streetscape environment the more it will become a local and regional destination.



BikePortland.org

Bicycle boulevards, such as this one in Berkeley, are best located on low traffic streets.



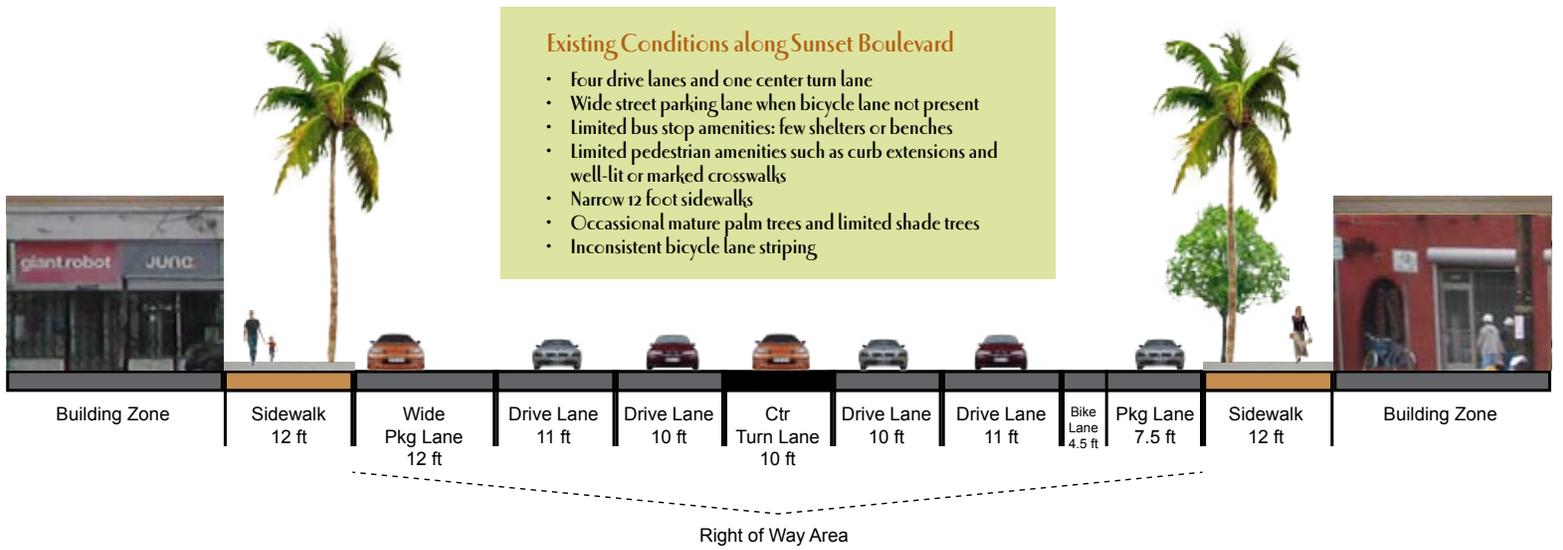
Improve Bicycle Facilities and Markings

Currently, throughout the district, discontinuous bike lanes come and go confusing cyclists and drivers and creating unsafe conditions. Continuous bicycle lane markings along the three major streets in the study area would provide a clear delineation of space between bicyclists and cars. This would ease tension between cyclists and drivers and provide a safer, more predictable environment for all travelers.

New bike lane markings in the area need to be clear, with bright paint and signage, and supported by visual cues such as painted bike boxes at intersections. Bike boxes, such as those tested in Portland, Oregon, give priority to bicyclists at intersections, allowing them to move to the front of the queue at a stoplight and making them more visible to drivers traveling and turning from all directions. The vision also calls for new way-finding features like bike route signs and maps to provide direction and distance information to local and regional landmarks such as libraries, transit facilities, parks, and other parts of the city.

A network of alternative routes or “bicycle boulevards” should be established on low traffic, neighborhood streets. Designated bicycle boulevards allow for travel, often on neighborhood streets that run parallel to major thoroughfares, where bicycle travel can be prioritized over the automobile. A combination of clearly marked bike lanes on major thoroughfares with low-traffic bike boulevard options will improve overall safety and make bicycling more feasible and desirable.

Improving bicycling infrastructure also entails better integrating bicycle parking into the streetscape environment. To facilitate better local and regional travel, bike parking should be incorporated at the gateway plazas and other open space areas, around transit stops and regularly near the curb on the sidewalk throughout the business district. Improved bicycle parking would provide ease and convenience for all cyclists whether they are serious commuters, day riders, families with child carriers, shoppers, or those biking to catch transit.



Short Term Strategies

The following section outlines the immediate and short term steps that should be taken in the next 1-4 years to achieve the goals of the Sunset Junction Area Streetscape Design and Transportation Vision, discussed above.

Funding to implement many of these improvements should be available through a grant from Metro to the City of Los Angeles.

Corridor Improvements

1. *Begin to establish a “bookend” gateway transit plaza at Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards*

The City of Los Angeles should begin the process of establishing a transit plaza at the triangular area formed by Santa Monica Boulevard, Manzanita Street, and Sunset Boulevard. In the short term, improvements to the intersection would include coordinated transit stops, covered bus shelters, bicycle and auto parking, and safer, marked crosswalks with sidewalk islands at the intersections. The improvements will strengthen the existing intersection configuration without a full reengineering of the streets. Long term improvements for the transit plaza, described later in the report, will involve a full reengineering of the streets and incorporates public open space.

2. *Locate a left turn lane and signal at Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard and equip transit vehicles with*

transponders to activate signal priority

In order to improve efficiency of transit and traffic flow within the district, the City should install a signalized left turn lane at Manzanita Street for vehicles turning left off Sunset Boulevard onto Manzanita Street. Transit vehicles should be equipped with transponders so that as they approach the intersection they can communicate with the signal and be given priority in making the left turn. The signalized left turn lane and signal priority for transit would prevent buses from getting stuck at the light, blocking traffic and slowing overall transit service.

3. *Form a shared parking district to maximize existing off-street parking*

The Silver Lake Neighborhood Council should work with local businesses and the City to conduct a shared parking analysis of the district. A shared parking analysis will identify opportunities where existing parking spaces can be better coordinated and utilized to serve multiple uses throughout the day. For example, parking spaces reserved for a restaurant open only in the evenings could also provide use for day visitors in the business district. Implementation of the shared parking analysis findings could ensure more efficient use of existing parking spaces while also pinpointing the amount and location of additional public parking needed to serve the district in the long term.

4. *Secure funding for new parking facilities*

The results of the shared parking analysis will help



Curb extensions and well marked crossings create a safer environment for pedestrians.

identify where additional public parking is needed to serve the district. In the short term, the community, in conjunction with the City and Metro, should begin to identify and secure funding and locations for the eventual development of a public parking structure. Several locations have already been identified as potential locations for parking structures. For instance, an underground garage beneath the proposed transit plaza, a shared facility as part of a public-private partnership with redevelopment on adjacent properties or as part of redevelopment of the large parcel on the southwest corner of Sunset Boulevard and Maltman Avenue. The location of a new parking structure becomes even more important if on-street parking spaces are removed, as is proposed in the second option for long term improvements, detailed later.

5. *Develop a community identity program for the Sunset Junction area including the use of emblems and signage to build sense of place*

The City should partner with the local arts community and area neighborhood councils to design a community identity program for the district. A district emblem, moniker or symbol, designed and approved by the community, could be used on street lights, public art, trash cans, transit stops, etc. to build a sense of place and “brand” the district. Commissioning local artists to develop the identity program would ensure authenticity and uniqueness of design and character. Artists could design and create historical markers, educational plaques, or other signage to highlight the area’s cultural history.

Transit Facility Improvements

6. *Coordinate and integrate existing transit stops within the district*

Metro should conduct a review of the existing transit stops and determine locations where transit facilities, in coordination with the proposed transit plaza, could be better coordinated to ensure safe transfer and efficient service. The analysis will indicate where Metro should relocate transit stops.

7. *Redesign and install new bus transit shelters that provide cover and seating*

The City should work with the local arts community to design bus transit facilities for the transit plaza and other locations to provide protective cover from the weather and comfortable seating while waiting. The new facilities should incorporate a signature look and blend comfortably into the streetscape.

8. *Provide real-time bus arrival information in the bus transit terminals*

Metro and the City should incorporate displays in the transit shelters that show real-time to let riders know when the next bus will be arriving. This addition will improve the efficiency and experience of riding transit.



Curb extensions make pedestrians more visible and shorten the distance the pedestrian travels when crossing the street.



Pedestrian Environment Improvements

9. *Improve intersections with curb extensions, highly visible crosswalks and countdown timers*

Sidewalk curb extensions should be installed at all Sunset Boulevard intersections within the business district. Curb extensions shorten the distance for pedestrians to cross the street and make pedestrians more visible to drivers. Installing curb extensions would require the removal of a limited number of on-street parking spaces immediately surrounding each intersection. Crosswalks within the district should be stamped with a brick molding and painted a bright visible color to differentiate the pedestrian realm and provide a visual cue to drivers where pedestrians will be crossing. Installing countdown timers at crosswalk signals would provide pedestrians with an additional measure of safety and efficiency when crossing the street.

10. *Plant native shade trees and other landscaping to green the streetscape*

The City should partner with neighborhood councils to initiate a community street planting and landscaping project. The addition of new street trees, potted plants, and landscaping near open space or transit waiting areas along Sunset Boulevard would add greenery, beauty, and a civic amenity to attract pedestrian activity and interest. Street trees and plants should be selected for shade producing canopy, climate appropriateness, easy maintenance and community appeal. New street trees will provide appreciated shade on hot days, improve air quality, catch rain, and process storm water on site. Working with community organizations, the City can solicit volunteer help and plant donations to facilitate a street tree planting program.



A new transit plaza at Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard could provide everyday public space as well as flexible space for use during events such as farmers markets.

Bicycle Travel Improvements

11. Add consistent bike lane striping and signage along the main streets in the study area

The City should add consistent bike lane striping along the major corridors serving the Sunset Junction area to clearly delineate space for vehicle and bike travel. The lanes should be a uniform width and brightly marked to reduce confusion for all travelers. The City should provide clear signage, visible to drivers and bicyclists, showing the location of bike lanes, distances and directions to other neighborhoods and destinations, and any hazards such as railway crossings.

12. Add “bike boxes” at major intersections

The City should install painted bike boxes at major signalized intersections based on the model used in Portland, Oregon. Bike boxes require additional street markings and signage and are often highlighted in a specific color to make them more visible and identifiable. Locating bike boxes at major intersections brings bicycles to the front of the line of stopped traffic, providing a head start and safer passage across the intersection for bikes and reducing conflicts with vehicles turning right and oncoming traffic turning left.

13. Designate “bike boulevards” within the district and install traffic calming features

Bike boulevards offer local and regional connections, safe crossings of major roadways and intersections, and include way-finding features like signage and maps. Prioritizing bicycle travel can be accomplished by installing traffic calming devices such as intersection

islands, stop signs and speed bumps that discourage cut through traffic while maintaining local auto access. Ultimately, Metro should update its bicycle routes map to show the location of new bike boulevards.

During the visioning process, several streets were identified as candidates for bicycle boulevard designation. The City should conduct a fuller examination of these and other local streets that could be designated as bike boulevards running both north-south and east-west within the study area to support safe bicycle transport and connectivity. Ideal candidates for bicycle boulevards are quieter, often residential, low traffic volume streets, that also have fairly uninterrupted length for connecting one area to another. Once candidate streets have been studied, Metro should work with the city’s Department of Transportation to designate official bike boulevards.

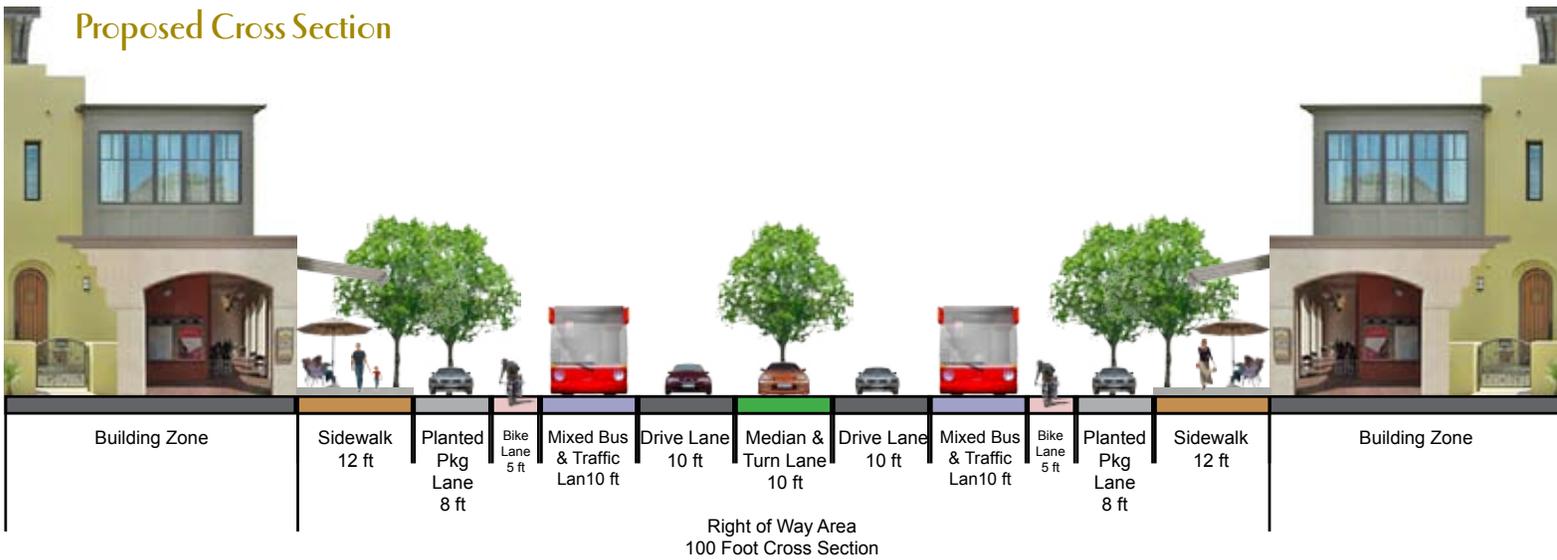


Painted bike boxes prioritize bicyclists at intersections reducing conflicts with vehicles making turns.



Short Term Strategies Summary

Proposed Cross Section



Specific Strategies



Strengthen the Business Core and Identity

- Establish “bookend” gateway transit plaza at Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards
- Develop community identity program with district signage, historical markers, public art, etc.



Improve Transit Integration and Efficiency

- Install covered bus shelters with real-time arrival displays
- Coordinate bus stop placement for efficient bus transfer and movement
- Locate left turn lane signal with transit vehicle priority at Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard



Improve Walkability and the Pedestrian Experience

- Add sidewalk amenities including shade trees, street lighting and public benches along streetscape
- Add curb extensions, highly visible crosswalks and countdown timers to intersections

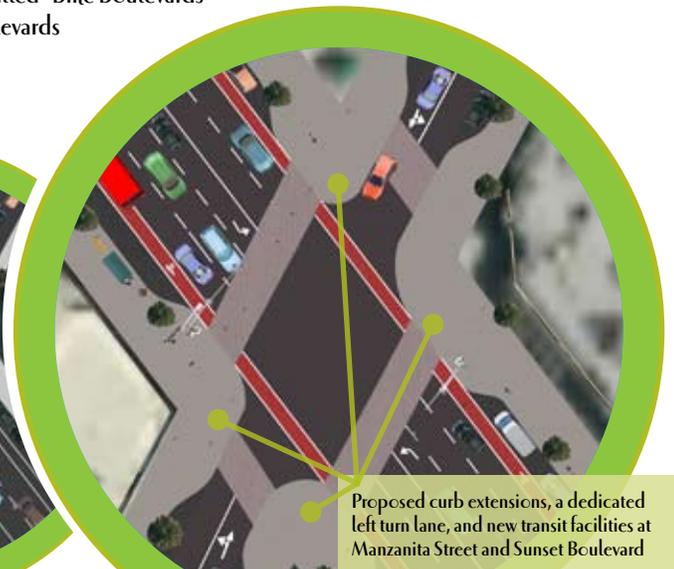
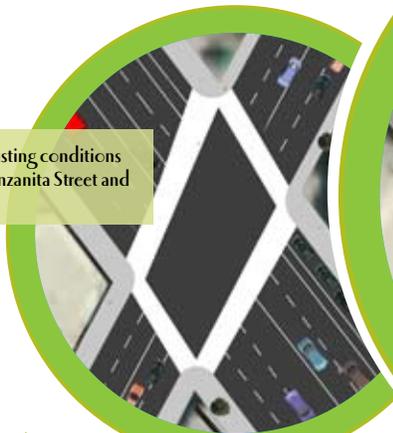


Improve Bicycle Facilities and Markings

- Add consistent bicycle lane striping and signage along the length of the corridor
- Paint “bike boxes” at major lighted intersections to avoid conflicts with turning vehicles
- Designate low traffic alternative bike commuting routes called “bike boulevards”
- Install traffic calming features and signage along bike boulevards

Intersection Improvements

Overhead view of the existing conditions at the intersection of Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard



Proposed curb extensions, a dedicated left turn lane, and new transit facilities at Manzanita Street and Sunset Boulevard

Transit Plaza Summary

Existing Conditions



- 1 Unsafe pedestrian crossings with no curb extensions
- 2 Confusing intersections and awkward turns
- 3 Uncoordinated bus stops & limited bus shelter amenities
- 4 No bicycle parking
- 5 Inefficient use of space

Short Term Strategy: Plaza with Extended Sidewalks



- 1 Curb extensions & marked crosswalks
- 2 Coordinated transit stops & covered bus shelters
- 3 Bicycle and auto parking
- 4 Street trees
- 5 Signalized left turn lane

Long Term Strategy: Plaza with Turn Lanes



- 1 Reconstruction of the triangle intersection to realize Santa Monica Manzanita
- 2 Open up vacated right-of-way for public use
- 3 Active, flexible open space: festivals, farmers markets, and other community events
- 4 Additional bicycle parking
- 5 Community identity features: public art, signage, landscaping, etc.



Long Term Strategies

The following section outlines a second phase of improvements that should be taken in the long term as resources become available to achieve the goals of the Sunset Junction Area Streetscape Design and Transportation Vision.

14. Finalize design and construction of a transit plaza at the intersection of Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards

The City, Metro and surrounding property owners should partner in the planning, design, and reconstruction of the triangle intersection to realign Santa Monica Boulevard, open up vacated right-of-way for public use, and create and implement a final design for a transit plaza. The City should work with the local community to incorporate active open space including flexible space for use at festivals, farmers markets, and other community events. The space should include areas for play and enjoyment such as fountains, seating, landscaping, public art, etc. The transit plaza would provide easy access to regional transportation, open space for riders, pedestrians, and visitors, bicycle parking and, potentially, auto parking while also establishing a gateway bookend at the north end of the district.

15. Implement high capacity transit along the corridor with dedicated transit lanes, elevated stops, and automated pre-pay

To fully achieve a high capacity transit corridor that offers efficient rail and bus

rapid transit, a series of improvements could be made in the long term to boost ridership and elevate the overall profile of regional public transportation. By replacing two mixed-traffic lanes with dedicated transit lanes, public transportation would be prioritized district-wide, allowing transit to ultimately out-compete the car in terms of providing a quick, convenient means of getting from one destination to another. Currently transit suffers with the same congestion that automobiles do and with frequent stops and wait times riders must accept longer travel times when choosing transit. The more efficient transit becomes the more drivers will decide to forgo their cars.

Elevated stops should be considered for the Sunset Boulevard corridor for an easy, at-grade means of getting on and off the bus. This would eliminate time lost to raising and lowering buses for the elderly, young, and disabled populations. At-grade entry significantly shortens boarding times and makes transit more comfortable and safe for riders.

Finally, the transit plaza should offer pre-pay transit service where riders can buy tickets prior to boarding. Automated pre-pay service greatly reduces boarding time and improves the experience of all riders by streamlining transfers, entry, and exit time.

16. Plan and build new automobile and bicycle parking facilities

As the streetscape improves and activity grows, there will be additional demand for car and bicycle parking. The long term streetscape plan for the Sunset Junction



Integrated bicycle parking near destinations makes bicycling more desirable and enjoyable.



The Vision calls for covered bus shelters with integrated bicycle parking along Sunset Boulevard.

area should include analysis and evaluation of possible public parking facilities including parking structures, underground parking, street parking, shared parking programs, and bicycle parking. The transit plaza represents a prime opportunity to accommodate an underground municipal parking structure. In addition, the southwest corner of Maltman Avenue and Sunset Boulevard sits at the eastern gateway to the district and has been identified by the community as a possible parking structure site.

17. Consider the addition of a mixed use civic structure

As the district matures, there will be increased desire for new community resources and amenities. The City and neighborhood residents should partner to plan for the addition of innovative civic structures in the area such as a museum, performing arts center, or other community destinations. Through a public-private partnership, the district could develop a mixed use building that serves the community while also offering other uses like affordable housing, office space, or storefront retail. The addition of a mixed use civic structure would help spur the market to add other new development that could enhance the community.



Widening sidewalks creates more space for outdoor seating, pocket parks, landscaping, and promenades.





Strategies for Widening the Pedestrian Realm

This section outlines a third phase of improvements that should be considered in the longer term. The strategies include three different options for widening the pedestrian realm.

18. Widen sidewalks to 15-18 feet by removing the center turn lanes within district

The City should widen sidewalks by an additional 5 feet on both sides of major streets by removing the center turn lane, except at the major signalized intersections at Maltman and Santa Monica/Sanborn Avenues and Manzanita Street. Maintaining wider sidewalks while retaining the center turn lane at these major intersections would require removing the on-street parking spaces in the stretch of road approaching each intersection.

To create a truly rich pedestrian environment, the streetscape should be extended an additional 8-10 feet beyond the initial width adjustment to 15-18 feet, recommended above. There are two options for this further expansion of the pedestrian realm:

19. Widen sidewalks to 25 feet by replacing on-street parking with parking structures close to the gateways that bookend the district

20. Widen sidewalks to 27 feet by removing two traffic lanes along Sunset Boulevard while maintaining existing on-street parking

All three strategies for widening the sidewalk would create a safer, more inviting environment for pedestrians but come with their own unique challenges. Selection of a preferred option depends on several factors, not the least of which are funding for parking structures and the feasibility of reducing the number of travel lanes of travel on a major arterial street.

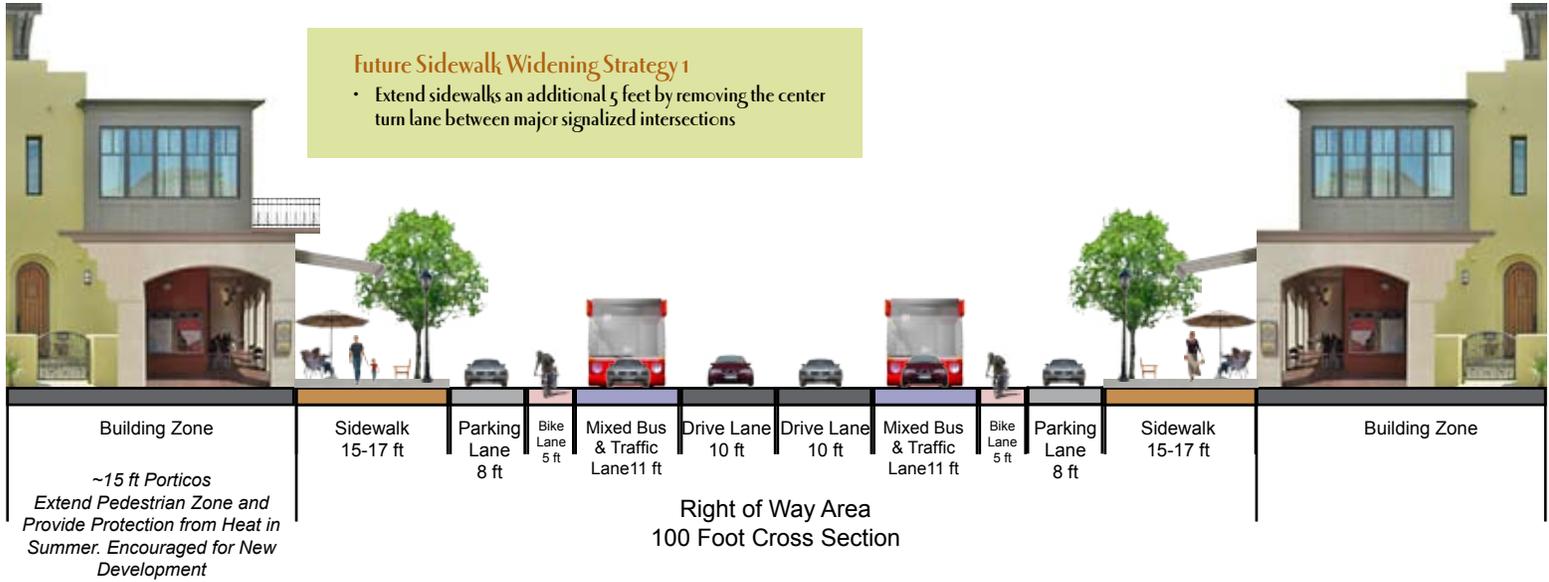
Conclusion

The Sunset Junction Area Streetscape and Transportation Vision provides a modern blueprint for turning the Sunset Junction district into a model of coordinated bicycle, pedestrian, and transit activity that will benefit the community, local business, and the region.

Strategies for Widening the Pedestrian Realm Summary

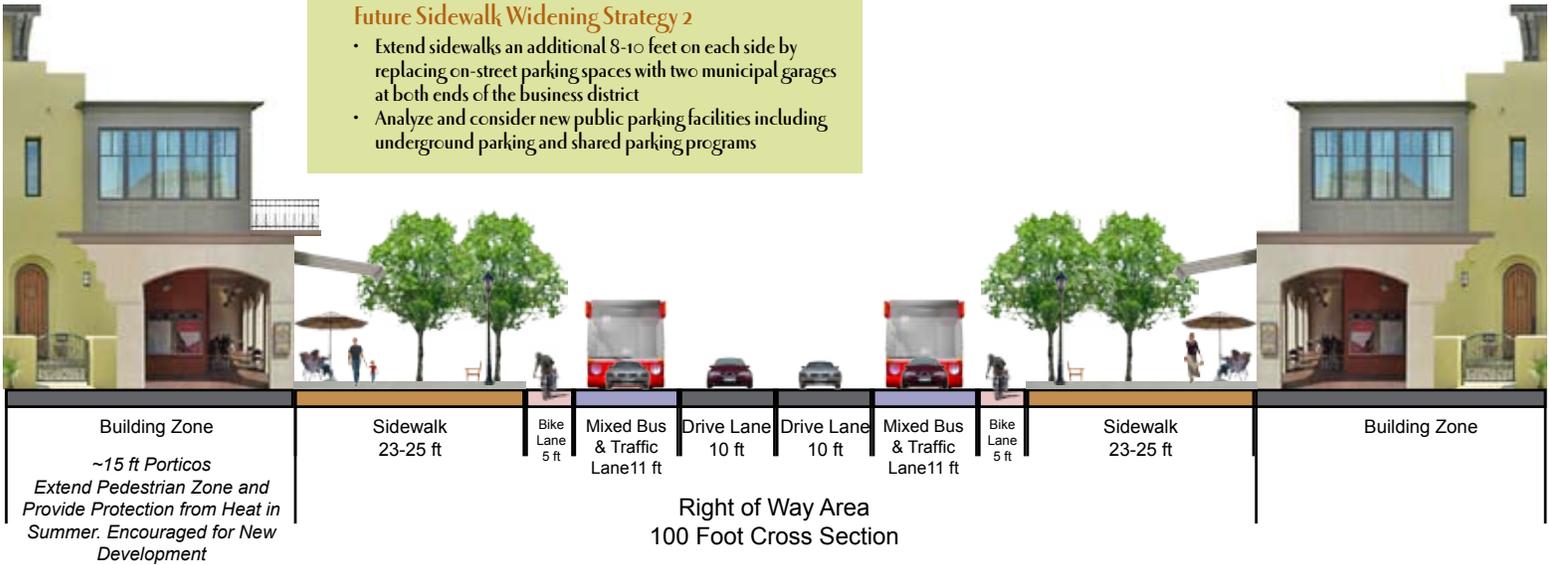
Future Sidewalk Widening Strategy 1

- Extend sidewalks an additional 5 feet by removing the center turn lane between major signalized intersections



Future Sidewalk Widening Strategy 2

- Extend sidewalks an additional 8-10 feet on each side by replacing on-street parking spaces with two municipal garages at both ends of the business district
- Analyze and consider new public parking facilities including underground parking and shared parking programs



Future Sidewalk Widening Strategy 3

- Extend sidewalks an additional 8-10 feet on each side by removing two travel lanes
- Maintain on-street parking throughout district.

