



Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan Project Information Sheet

Background:

- In 2000, the City of Imperial Beach embarked on a community-driven process to identify the overarching vision for Palm Avenue/State Route (SR) 75 that would lay the foundation to revitalize this important corridor. The intent of the City is to improve the commercial corridor to generate new economic development, increase the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, more effectively manage vehicular traffic, and improve the overall appearance and urban design of the area.
- Since that time, the City has conducted a number of studies to implement the vision for Palm Avenue/SR 75 including:
 - “Imperial Beach: The Big Picture” which created an overall vision for various target areas in the City including the Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor;
 - The Urban Waterfront & Ecotourism Study, intended to spur economic development and ecotourism;
 - The Bicycle Transportation Plan to provide a more convenient and better connected bikeway system for bicyclists;
 - The Commercial Zoning Review which updated development regulations within the City’s commercial zone to improve the design of commercial and mixed-use projects; and
 - The Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan Study.
- The Palm Avenue Commercial Corridor Master Plan (adopted in 2009) proposes streetscape improvements and urban design strategies that help support the common goal of transforming Palm Avenue/SR 75 into a vibrant, safe, and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly mixed-use “Main Street.” The Master Plan was a culmination of a one and a half year process in which City staff and consultants worked with the community, elected officials, and key stakeholders to develop a visionary and implementable plan.
- The current Palm Avenue Mixed Use & Commercial Corridor Master Plan project is the next step towards implementing the vision for Palm Avenue/SR 75. This phase of the project includes the preparation of design and development drawings as well as the associated environmental document necessary to analyze the implementation of the proposed streetscape improvements.

Current Challenges:

- The current design of Palm Avenue/SR 75 presents an unsafe, inconvenient, and unfriendly pedestrian and bicycling environment. Challenges include:
 - The width of the right-of-way;
 - Long blocks with an unfriendly human/pedestrian scale;
 - Sidewalks with little or no shade;
 - Poorly-marked and infrequent crosswalks;
 - Discontinuous sidewalks with inadequate ADA access;
 - Frequent jaywalking by pedestrians because of the long distances between signalized crosswalks;
 - High speed vehicle traffic;
 - Wide driveways and frequent curb cuts; and
 - Discontinuous bike lanes and bicyclists traveling in the wrong direction on sidewalks.

Project Description:

- The project includes a number of elements to enhance the public realm and redesign Palm Avenue/SR 75 so that it better serves all modes of travel – not just vehicles. Proposed street improvements include:
 - Widened medians with additional landscaping;
 - Wider sidewalks with shade trees that provide comfort for pedestrians and to allow for complementary sidewalk activities like outdoor cafes;
 - Additional crosswalks with ADA curb ramps;
 - Bicycle lanes buffered from vehicular traffic;
 - Features to slow down vehicular traffic (traffic calming) to increase the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians, such as:
 - Bulb-outs at intersections;
 - Narrower traffic lanes;
 - A slower speed local access lane separated from the through lanes by a narrow, local-access median which allows vehicles to leisurely cruise by and access the businesses fronting Palm Avenue/SR 75;

- Additional on-street diagonal parking along side streets.
- Gateway elements that signify a sense of arrival to Imperial Beach such as public open spaces, signage, landscaping, public art, and wayfinding features that give directions on how to access the beach.
- Ecologically sensitive design features to reduce contaminated stormwater runoff, such as:
 - Stormwater drainage planter strips;
 - Additional trees/landscaping that reduce paved areas; and
 - Permeable paving.

Funding:

- The City of Imperial Beach was awarded a Smart Growth Incentive Program Grant from SANDAG, which is funding the vast majority of this project.

Process and Timeline:

- Because this project is being funded by a SANDAG grant, it must be completed within 18 months of the notice to proceed, which was issued on January 24, 2014.
- It is expected that the preliminary engineering and landscape plans as well as the environmental document will go before the City Council for a decision in January or February of 2015.
- Following project approval, more detailed construction drawings will need to be developed. It is anticipated that construction will occur in phases either concurrently with new development along the corridor and/or as funding becomes available.

Community Engagement Opportunities:

Community engagement for the project is informed by a detailed Community Engagement Strategy aimed at fulfilling the following objectives:

- Increase the community’s knowledge and understanding of the project’s needs and benefits
- Share project information and studies
- Report on the team’s work-in-progress and decisions made throughout the project
- Solicit feedback, questions, and comments to inform and shape the design process
- Respond to stakeholder questions and concerns
- Fully implement public involvement requirements per CEQA

The community engagement process is synchronized with the design process, allowing for each phase to be meaningfully informed and shaped by the community’s input. The City has developed a variety of opportunities to engage the community throughout the project timeline, including:

- Community workshops
- City council briefings
- Project information booths at community events

Community engagement event details can be found on the project website www.ImperialBeachCA.gov/PalmMasterPlan. Interested persons can also choose to receive email updates by submitting their contact information to PalmMasterPlan@ImperialBeachCA.gov.

Environmental Review:

- Environmental review will be conducted in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). At this time, it is anticipated that a Mitigated Negative Declaration will be the required environmental document.
- Once the draft environmental document is complete, a Notice of Intent to adopt a draft Initial Study and Mitigation Negative Declaration will be circulated for a public review period of 30 days, providing an opportunity for the public to comment on the environmental impact conclusions and proposed mitigation. The environmental document is expected to be released for public review in the fall of 2014. All public noticing requirements under CEQA will be followed. Though not required under CEQA, the City will send an eBlast reminder to project stakeholders in advance of the close of the comment period.

Project Webpage and Contact Information:

- For additional information, please visit www.ImperialBeachCA.gov/PalmMasterPlan. This website will be periodically updated to report on the project team’s work-in-progress, provide public meeting announcements, and summarize the results of public workshops.
- You may submit comments and questions electronically by emailing PalmMasterPlan@imperialbeachca.gov.