chapter 4

OVERALL URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT

palm avenue

The best streets create and leave strong, lasting, positive impressions; they catch the eyes and the imagination. They are joyful places to be, and given a chance one wants to return to them. The best streets continue, are long lived.

Allan B. Jacobs.
Great Streets. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993). 312

CHAPTER FOUR

urban design concept

in this chapter

URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT
CORRIDOR SECTORS
SECTOR A: EAST END GATEWAY
SECTOR B: MID-TOWN SECTOR
SECTOR C: PARK SECTOR
SECTOR D: WEST END SECTOR

The Urban Design Concept for the Palm Avenue corridor outlines the preferred character and experience for the area by illustrating the variety of connections, public open spaces and gateways. The Concept emphasizes improvements to the public realm, circulation patterns, and the character of the corridor along its length. The Concept also identifies key public realm opportunity sites. It is the visual blueprint for the corridor that helps establish a unified identity while also encouraging the establishment of distinct sectors.

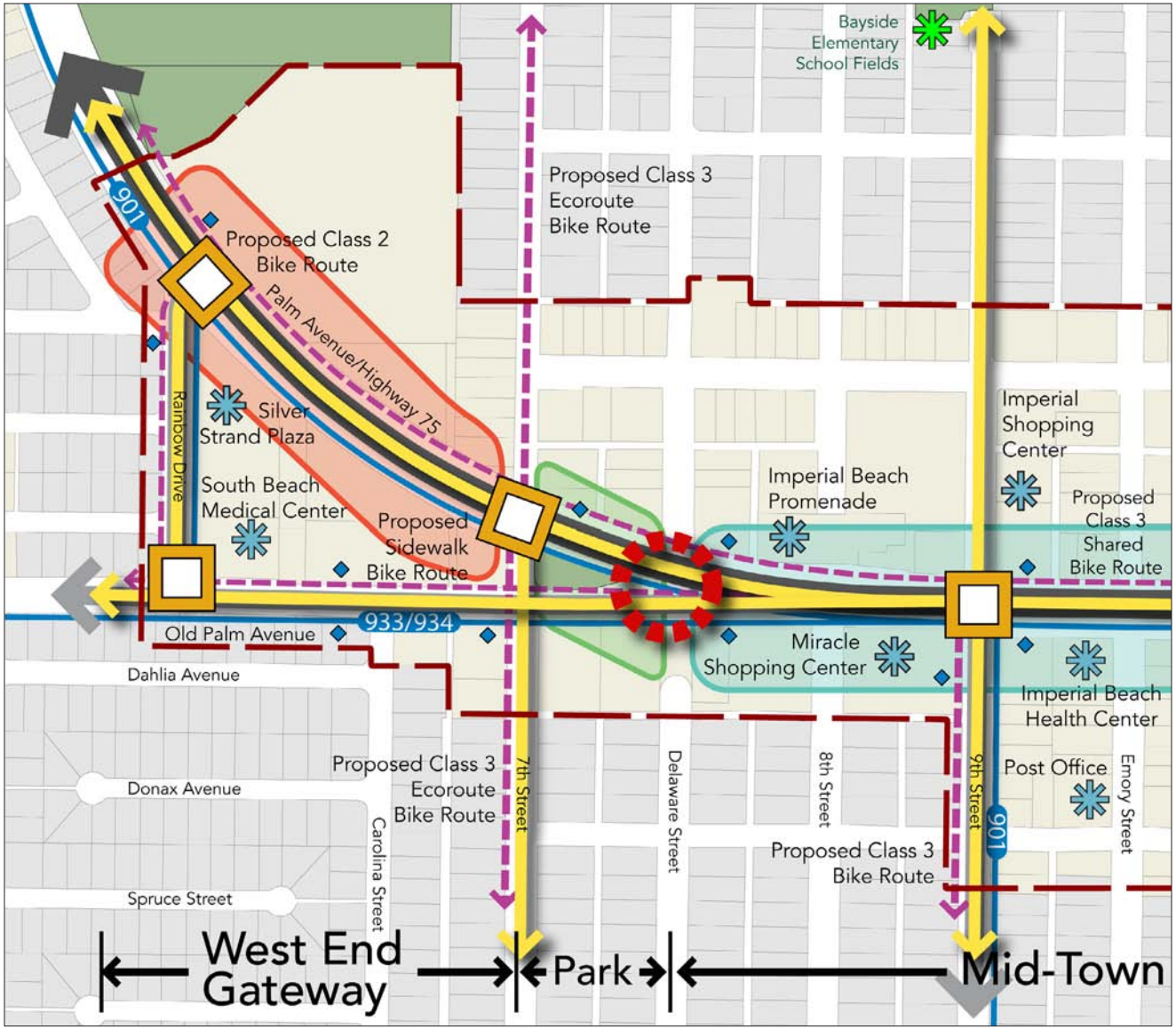
URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT

The Palm Avenue corridor is envisioned as a vibrant, mixed-use commercial corridor in Imperial Beach, celebrating its heritage as a small beach town 'Main Street' while transforming it into an attractive and unified pedestrian-friendly corridor. The redesign of the streetscape will help revitalize the Avenue, attract potential new development and bring new activity and life to the area.

Palm Avenue is envisioned as a corridor that is characterized by:

- Four interconnected sectors that respond to the private realm and maximize individual public realm opportunities;
- Common unifying streetscape elements that tie the sectors together;
- An enhanced network of pedestrian and bicyle connections that connect to destinations and neighborhoods north and south, through continous landscaped sidewalks, shared and dedicated bicycle paths, well-articulated crosswalks and a new signalized intersection at Palm Avenue and 10th Street;
- Two key elements along its length that include an entry gateway at 13th Street and a new open space amenity between Delaware and 7th Street; and
- A new desirable context for future private mixed-use development.

FIGURE 4.1 - URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT



Bayshore Bikeway
Existing Class 1
Bike Route
Cypress Avenue
Existing Class 3
Proposed Class 2
Bike Route
Calla Avenue
Teeple
Park
Proposed
Class 3
Bike Route
Existing Class 2
Bike Route
Palm Avenue/Highway 75
933/934
Marina Village
Shopping Center
10th Street
11th Street
Florida Street
12th Street
Florence Street
13th Street
Georgia Street
City of Imperial Beach
City of San Diego
Donax Avenue
Mid-Town
East End
Gateway
Study Area Parcels
Open Space
Waterbodies
City Limits
Project Area Boundary
Gateways
Key Destinations
Bus Stop
Pedestrian Routes
Existing Bike Route
Proposed Bike Route
Bus Route
Sector A: East End Gateway
Sector B: Mid-Town
Sector C: Park
Sector D: West End Gateway
0'
175'
350'
700 feet
N

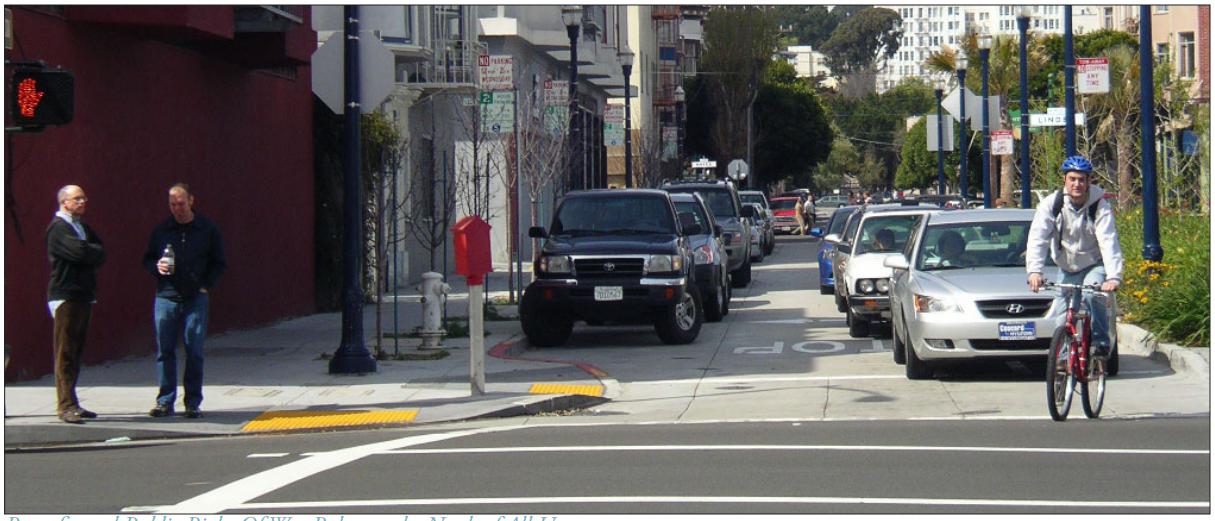
Comfortable and Active Sidewalk

PUBLIC REALM

The Urban Design Concept connects the four distinct districts with a unified streetscape palette that provides a safe, well-defined, and comfortable environment for all users. The Concept emphasizes reclaiming the public realm from the automobile along both Palm Avenue and the north-south streets.

The existing pedestrian realm is enhanced through a network of contiguous tree-lined sidewalks, adequate lighting, well-defined crosswalks and new gathering and seating opportunities. A new bicycle-friendly environment is established through the redesign of the existing right-of-way to incorporate contiguous bike routes that include both dedicated bicycle lanes and shared bicycle routes.

In concert with existing activity nodes and potential new private development, the public realm provides an encouraging and hospitable environment for new activity and energy along the corridor. This will hopefully encourage new infill development that positively addresses the streets with windows and building entrances off of Palm Avenue, and outdoor seating along the sidewalks to further activate the corridor.



Reconfigured Public Right Of Way Balances the Needs of All Uses

CHARACTER

Palm Avenue will be reconfigured to cultivate the distinctive characters of the identified districts, while including unifying streetscape elements along its length to establish a cohesive corridor character.

Iconic columnar palm trees along with shorter shade giving trees frame the street between 13th and 7th Streets and provide both comfort and identity for all users. The use of palm trees also ties in with planting west of 7th Street, thereby connecting Palm Avenue to the other commercial corridors of the Imperial Beach including Old Palm Avenue and Seacoast Drive. Drought-tolerant, local, non-invasive and 'hardy' plantings, along with low-maintenance materials such as rocks, gravel and decomposed granite impart an identifiable and climate sensitive character to the corridor.

Regularly spaced automobile and pedestrian-scale street lights, widened sidewalks with special paving at key locations and intersections, and other street furniture elements including different types of seating, trash cans, bus stops, and signage contribute to the cohesive character of the street. By making the street physically comfortable, engaging, sensory, flexible and programmable, Palm Avenue can begin to function as a revitalized 'Main Street' corridor of Imperial Beach.

AUTO CIRCULATION & PARKING

A better balance between automobiles, bicyclists and pedestrians will be established through a redesigned streetscape. Existing and future traffic flows and volumes will be accomodated within the reconfigured street sections. Existing through-travel lanes that primarily serve regional traffic needs are maintained and their efficeincy is enhanced.

Dedicated bicycle lanes are proposed through most of the corridor. Shared bicycle routes within local access lanes are created between Florida and Delaware Streets. These bicycle improvements connect with existing and planned new bicycle improvements along the adjoining north-south streets.

On-street parking is maintained west of Florida Street. However, bulbouts are placed in between parking spaces to discourage undesirable truck parking and provide spaces for bigger trees and healthier plantings. In addition, the overall parking capacity of the corridor is increased by reconfiguring the wide local north-south streets.

Celebrate and Calm Entrances to Local Streets

CORRIDOR SECTORS

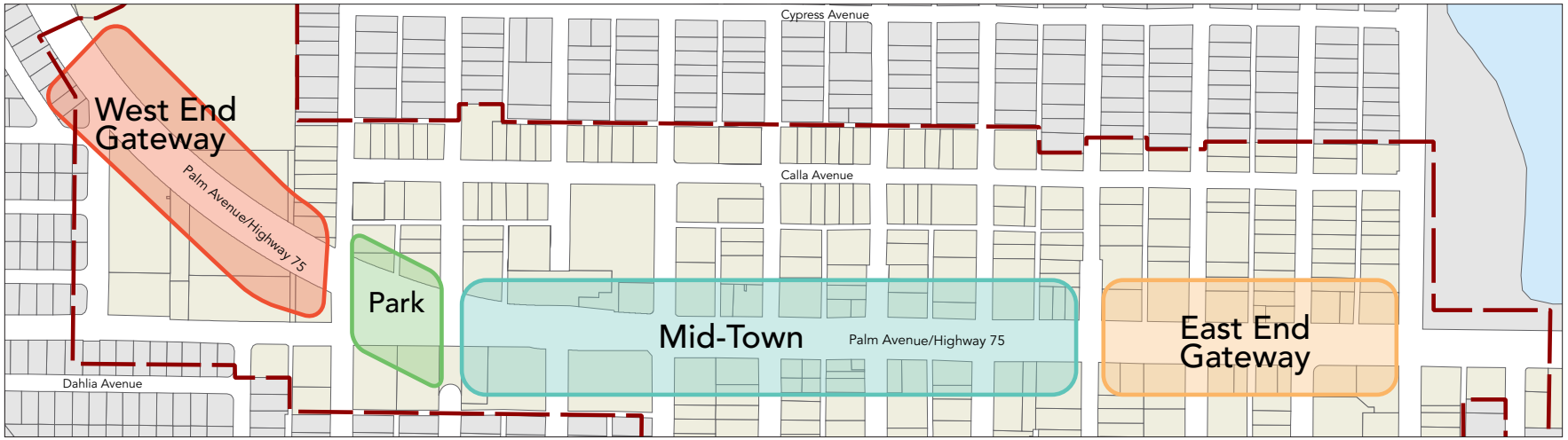
The Urban Design Concept identifies distinct characteristics of the different sectors of the Palm Avenue corridor. A sector is defined by the predominance of a certain type of existing character within it. The character is based on the nature of uses, its location and recent development and planned projects.

The discussion below is organized by sector A through D. The description of each sector includes: a discussion of its boundary; a review of existing character; a description of long term vision and ideal character; a discussion of design treatments of the public realm; and a characterization of key circulation components including automobiles, buses and bicyclists.

As highlighted with the shaded areas on the Concept diagram, districts as they run east to west within the Palm Avenue project area include:

- Sector A: East End Gateway
- Sector B: Mid-Town Sector
- Sector C: Park Sector
- Sector D: West End Gateway

FIGURE 4.2 - DISTRICT DIAGRAM



Sector D: West End Gateway

Existing

Desirable

Sector C: Park

Existing

Desirable

Sector B: Mid-Town

Existing

Desirable

Sector A: East End Gateway

Existing

Desirable

Location Map

SECTOR A: EAST END GATEWAY

The district formally runs from 13th Street on the east to Florida Street on the west. The area is characterized by fast food restaurants and offices. The Wy market, American Legion and Latter Rain Missions fitness center are also destinations in this area. The buildings along the street front are mostly nondescript, with limited signage and identity.

East End Gateway Existing Conditions

SECTOR A - VISION

Overall, the East Gateway is envisioned as a sub-area that:

- Celebrates its role as the gateway to the City of Imperial Beach with an iconic entry feature
- Establishes itself as a bookend to the "Main Street" commercial corridor of Imperial Beach
- Sets the stage for new and improved bicycle and pedestrian transportation improvements

Landscaped sidewalks enhance the pedestrian environment and build upon the strengthend median landscaping thereby creating a colorful, sustainable, and welcoming corridor. These public realm improvements provide the context to alllow new mixed-use buildings to further define the street right-of way and activate the public realm.

Iconic Gateway Along HWY 101, Encinitas

Proposed View of East End Gateway

FIGURE 4.3 - EAST GATEWAY PLAN - EXISTING

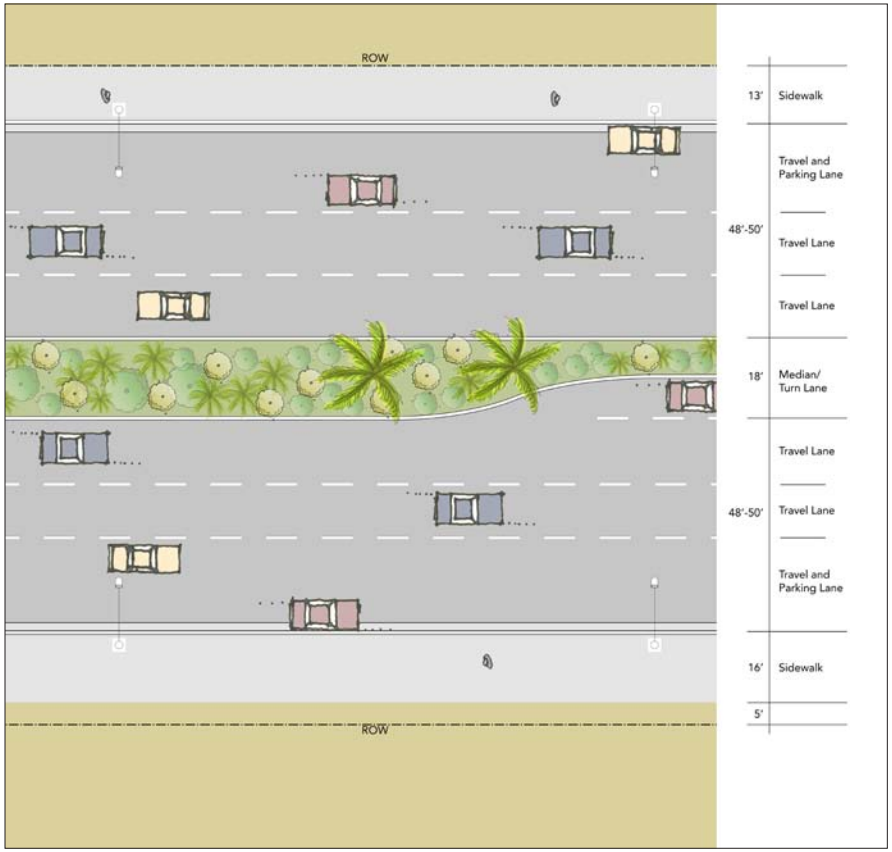
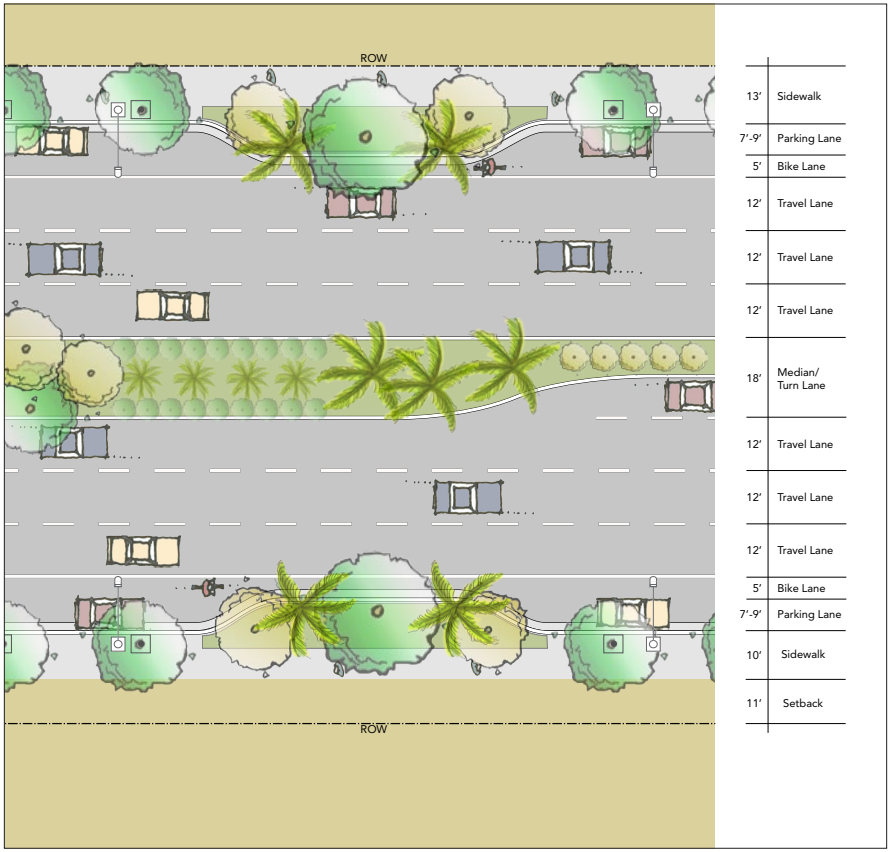


FIGURE 4.4 - EAST GATEWAY PLAN - PROPOSED



SECTOR A - CONCEPT PLAN ELEMENTS

PUBLIC REALM

The existing six lanes of traffic and curb side parking are reconfigured to allow space for bulbouts, bicycle lanes and vibrant planting areas. The existing sidewalk and median curbs are maintained to the largest extent possible. The existing wide concrete pedestrian-unfriendly sidewalks are transformed by sidewalk landscaping and shade trees. The wide swath of planting serves not only as an aesthetic element, but also as a buffer from the street and a visual traffic-calming element for automobiles. Colored or special paving in front of key destination and at intersections help create small pocket plazas. These are furnished by streetscape furniture. Five feet wide bicycle lanes flank either side of the six lane roadway, bordered on the other side by parking lanes/bulbouts. An iconic design element at 13th Street and Palm Avenue, is the focal point for the East End Gateway sector, welcoming travelers and residents to Imperial Beach.

Shade Trees Help Create a Comfortable Pedestrian Experience

Streetscape Landscaping and Shade Trees Improve the Pedestrian Realm

CIRCULATION

Three lanes of traffic in either direction are maintained in this segment of Palm Avenue. New contiguous dedicated bicycle lanes now run in both directions. On either side of the street, parallel parking is accommodated in eight foot lanes. Mid-block bulbouts between the parking spaces provides an additional landscaped buffer to pedestrians on the sidewalk and discourage truck parking.

To compliment changes to Palm Avenue, streetscape improvements are also made along the north-south local streets. These include exploring bulbouts and/ or traffic medians at intersections. The parking along the local streets are reconfigured to provide for diagonal parking where possible. These will help improve the overall on-street capacity and mitigate any reductions in parking along Palm Avenue.

FIGURE 4.5 - EAST GATEWAY PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - EXISTING

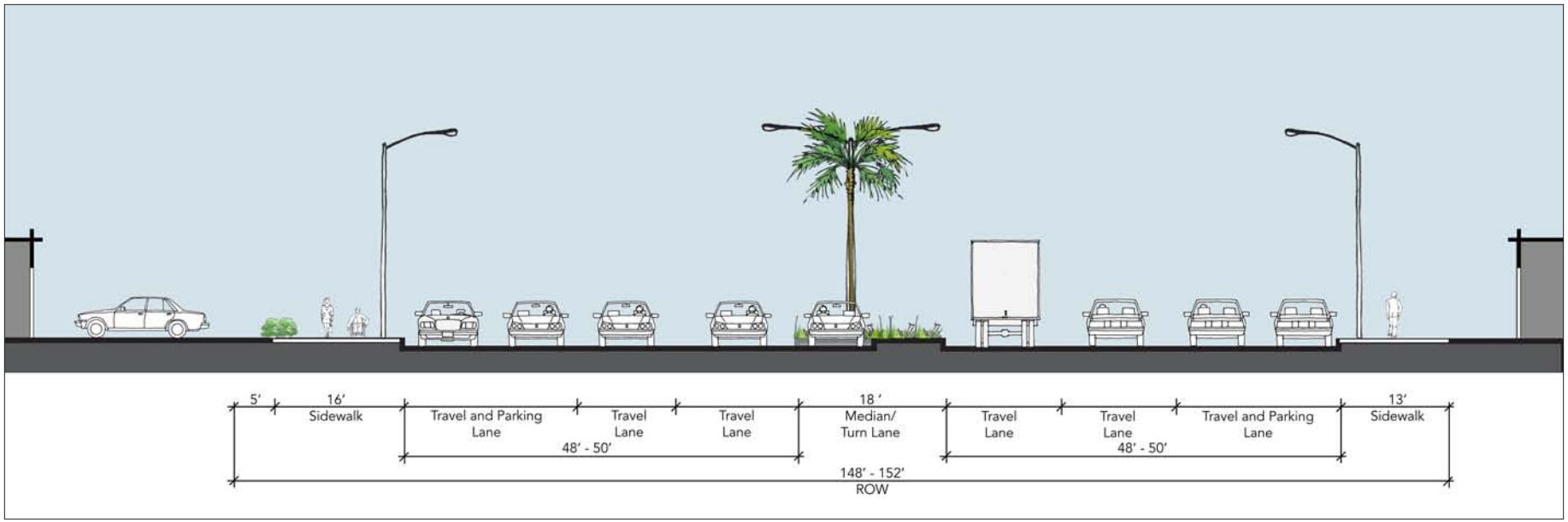
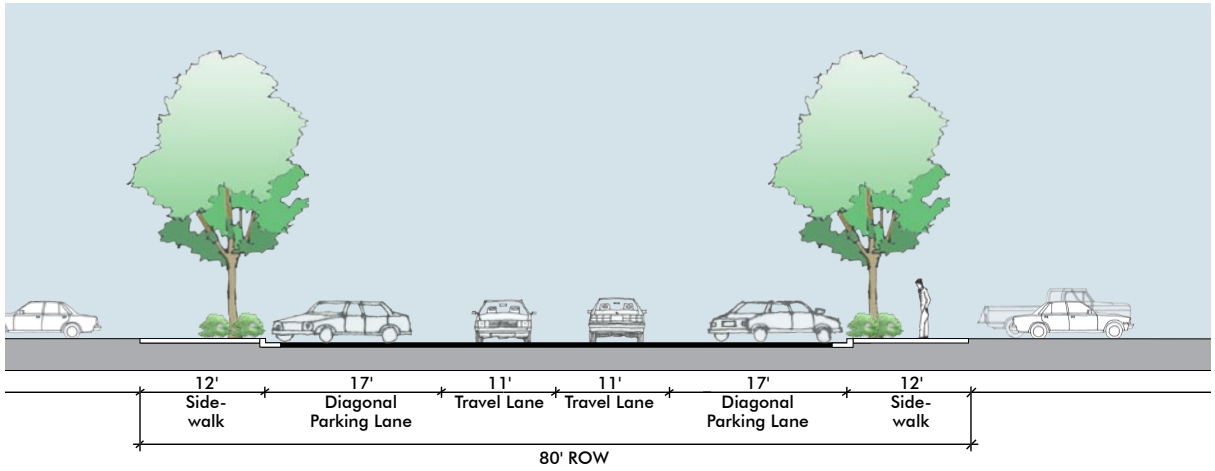
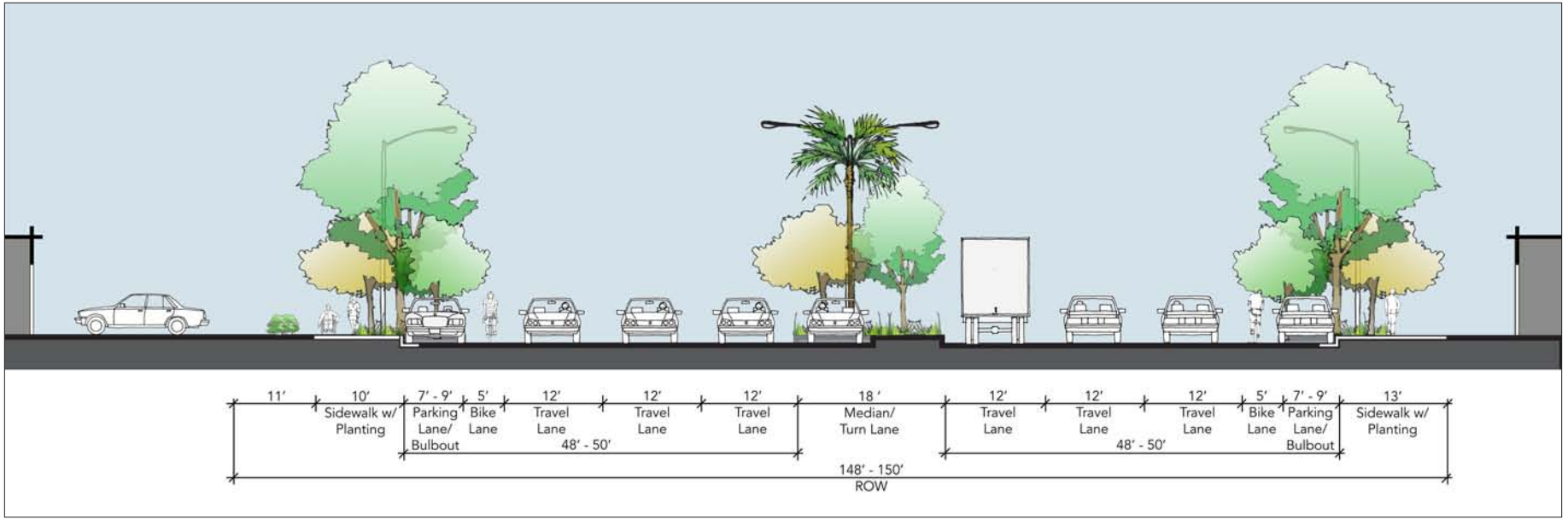


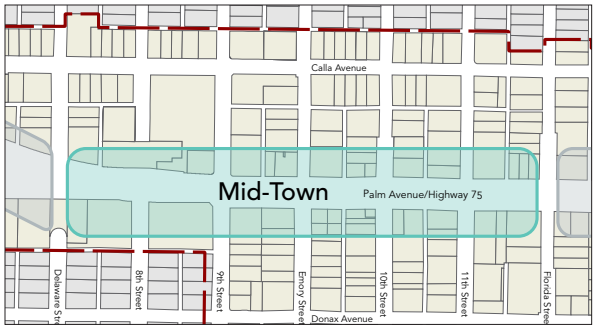
FIGURE 4.6 - LOCAL STREET SECTION WITH DIAGONAL PARKING



Reconfigured Local Street with Diagonal Parking

FIGURE 4.7 - EAST GATEWAY PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - PROPOSED





Location Map

SECTOR B: MID-TOWN SECTOR

The Mid-town Sector extends from Florida Street on the east to Delaware Street on the west. Like the East End sector, current uses and overall character in this area are primarily auto-oriented. However, certain key destinations along Palm Avenue such as the Imperial Beach Shopping Center, the Imperial Beach Promenade and the Miracle Shopping Center generate a significant amount of pedestrian traffic. Other neighborhood destinations include the Post Office on Emory Street and the Rose Temple Memorial Park on Calla Avenue.

Mid-Town Existing Conditions

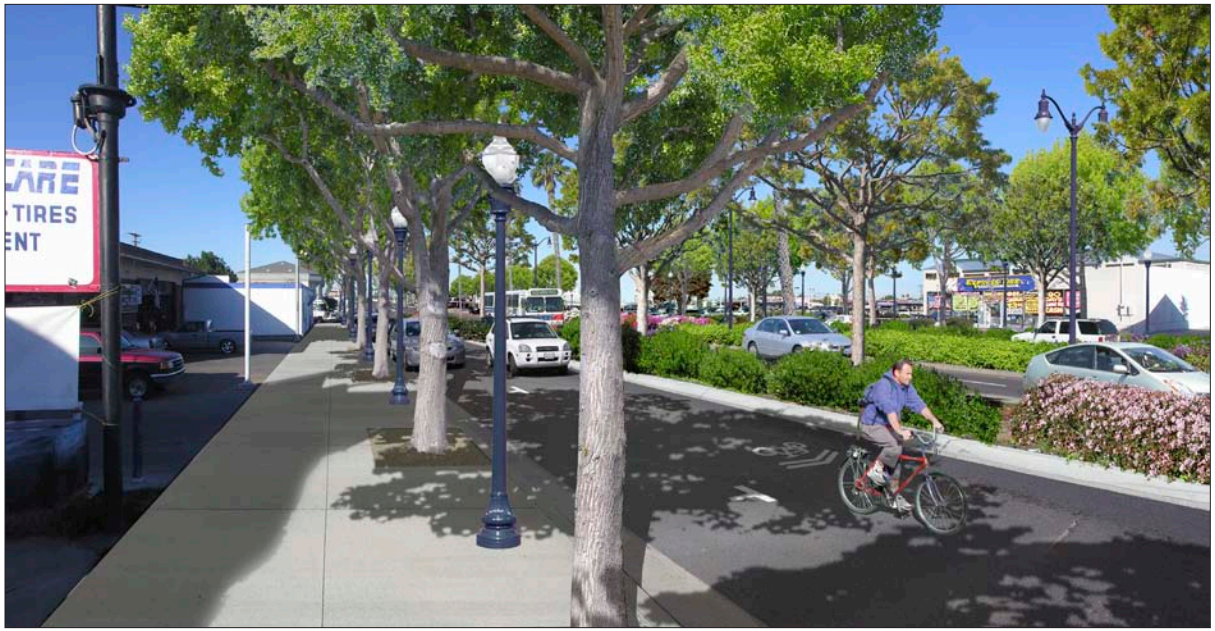
SECTOR B - VISION

The Mid-town Sector is envisioned as a sub-area that:

- Builds upon its potential of being a pedestrian-oriented destination sector by reclaiming much of its wide auto-oriented roadway to create a safe and vibrant pedestrian and bicycle realm.
- Cultivates a distinct identity through a unique "Multi-way Boulevard" streetscape design that transforms the wide right-of-way with local access travel lanes that are buffered from fast-moving through travel lanes by medians.

The design for a multi-way boulevard through the Mid-Town sector provides a unique opportunity for Palm Avenue to replace its auto-dominated character. A reconfigured roadway with enhanced landscaping highlighted by five rows of trees provides an enriching experience for pedestrians and bicylists. It also provides an opportunity for existing and future buildings and uses to actively engage the street and the adjoining sidewalks.

Multi-way Boulevard along Palm Canyon Drive, Cathedral City



Proposed View of Mid-Town

FIGURE 4.8 - MID-TOWN
PROTOTYPICAL PLAN - EXISTING

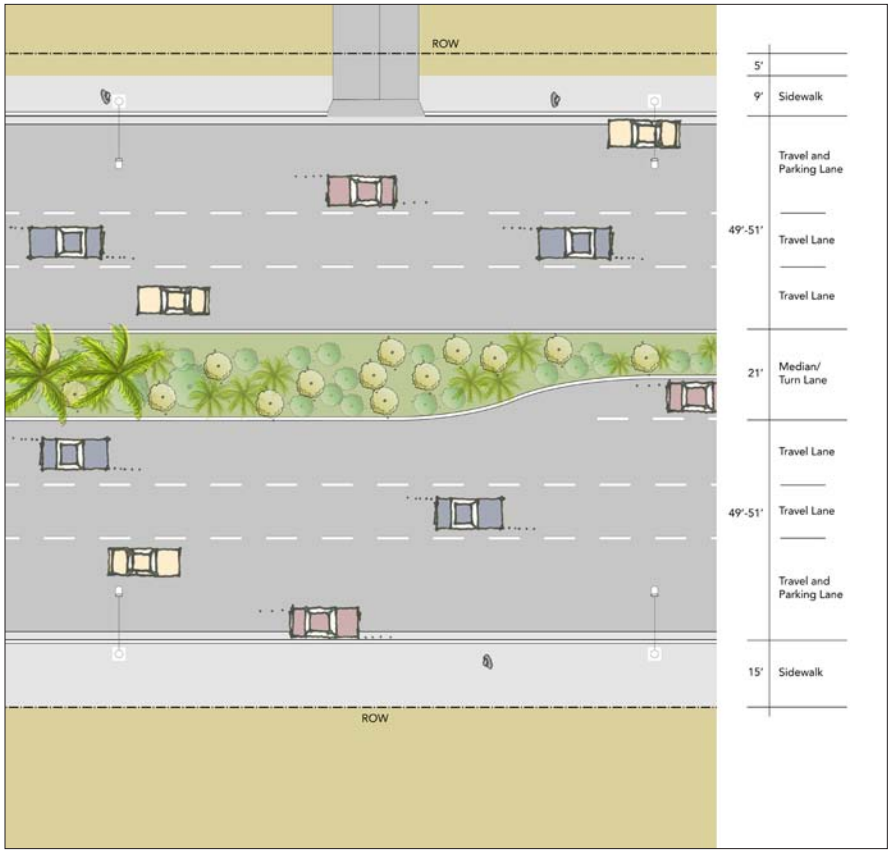
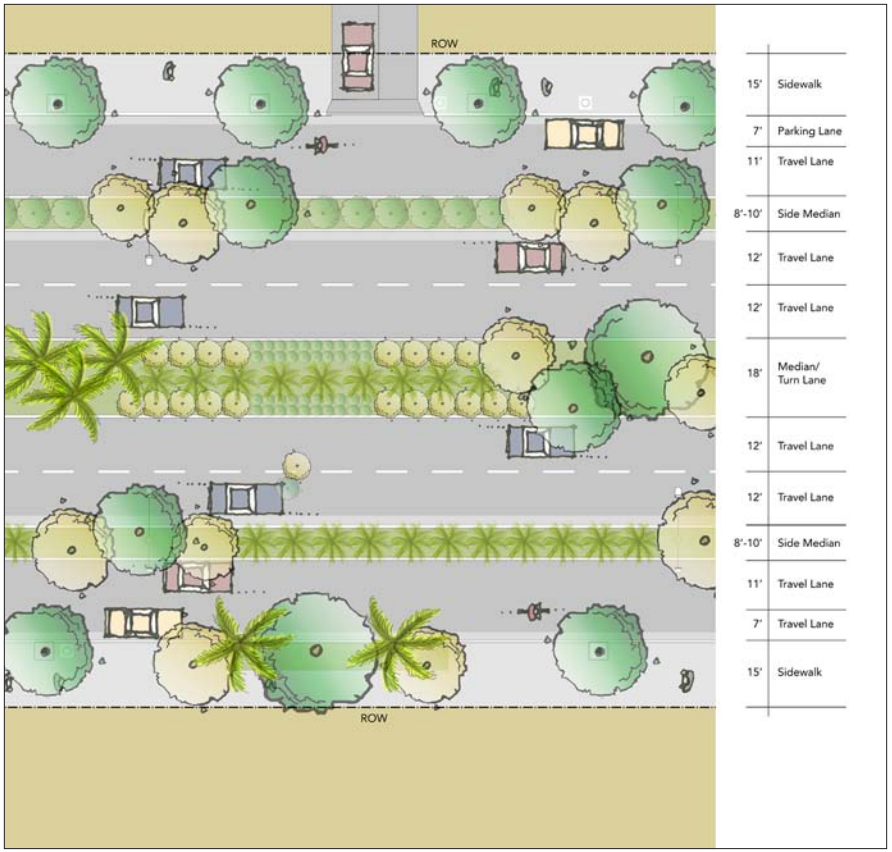


FIGURE 4.9 - MID-TOWN
PROTOTYPICAL PLAN - PROPOSED



SECTOR B - CONCEPT PLAN ELEMENTS

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm is defined by its reconfiguration as a multi-way boulevard. The current undesirable pedestrian experience of multiple fast-moving through traffic lanes is replaced by a calmer human-scaled local access lane adjacent to landscaped 15-foot wide sidewalks. The access lanes along with tree-lined side-medians serve as extensions of the public realm due to their slower traffic and shared use nature. At various points within the Midtown Sector, pocket plazas with seating areas and special paving are located to add variety and interest to the street. Three rows of tree-lined medians along with two rows of tree-lined sidewalks mitigate the detrimental effects of fast-moving traffic and provide a calm and comfortable environment for the users of the streets.

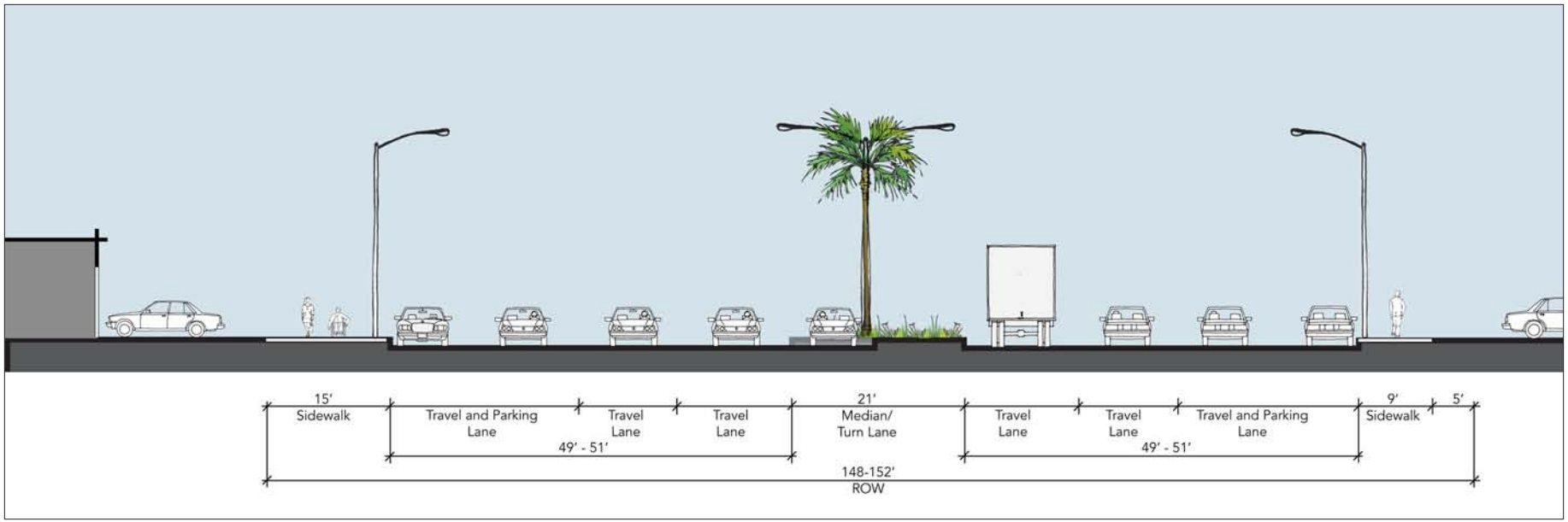
Pocket Plazas with Seating Activate the Public Realm

Wide Sidewalks Provide a Comfortable Pedestrian Realm

CIRCULATION

Six travel lanes and parking are maintained in the multi-way boulevard streetscape reconfiguration. The multi-way boulevard accommodates fast, through-traffic as well as slower, local traffic through its unique design. Two lanes in either direction in the center of the boulevard allow for the higher volumes, flows, and speeds associated with through and truck-traffic, while single travel lane access roads accommodate local and slower traffic. The shared access road with appropriate 'Sharrow' signage also continues the safe and wide route for bicyclists ensuring a continuous path for them along Palm Avenue. Bicycle connectivity is also enhanced by ensuring planned connections along 9th Street. Fifteen feet sidewalks are on either side of the boulevard, providing pedestrian-friendly routes of travel and access to curb side parking. The result is a transformation of a heavily trafficked arterial into a boulevard that is capable of carrying the projected increase in volume and speeds of traffic, but that also provides a comfortable and appropriate environment for a wide mix of existing and future uses.

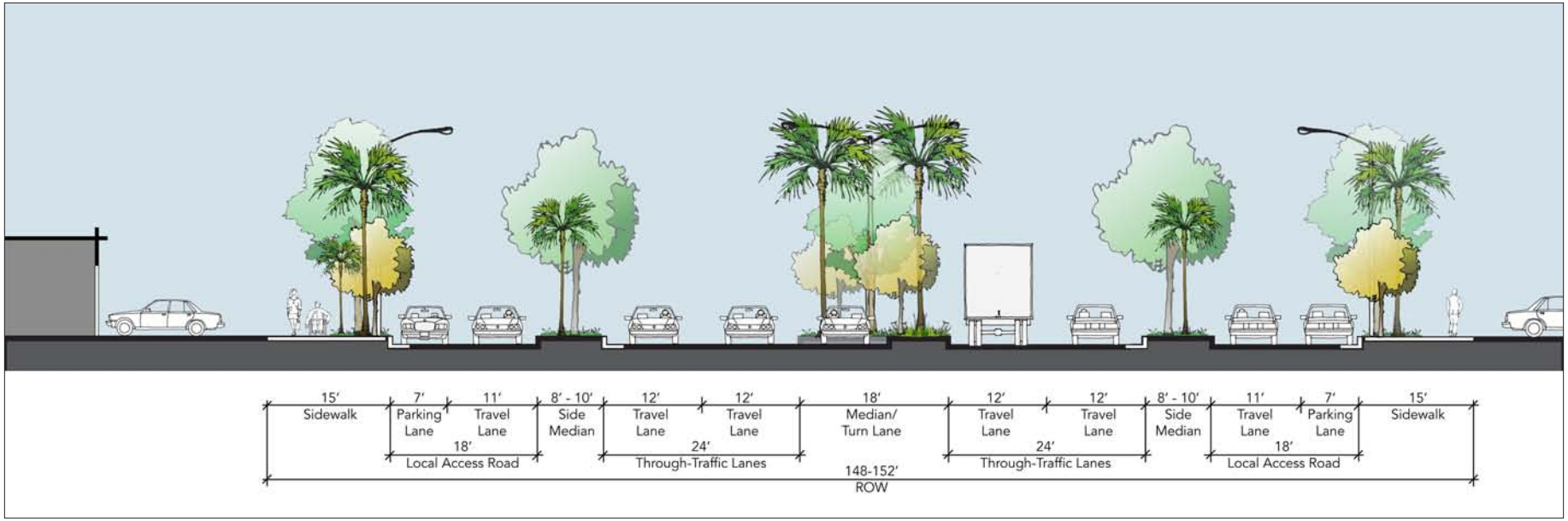
FIGURE 4.10 - MIDTOWN PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - EXISTING

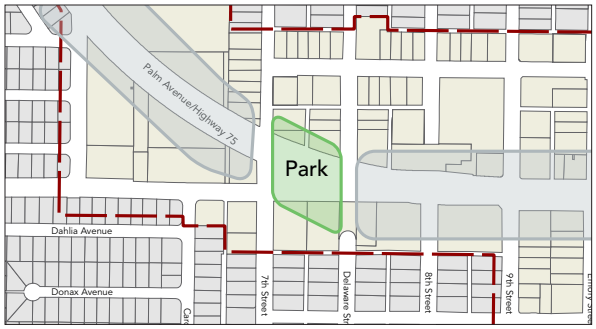


6 Lanes of Road in a New Configuration

Bicycle Friendly Shared Access Road

FIGURE 4.11 - MIDTOWN PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - PROPOSED





Location Map

SECTOR C - PARK SECTOR

The Park Sector is one block long between Delaware and 7th Street. This is a major junction, as Palm Avenue/SR-75 splits into a four lane highway connecting to Coronado, and Old Palm Avenue begins its westward connection towards the recently revitalized commercial corridors along Old Palm Avenue and Seacoast Drive. The block long sector is currently characterized by a mix of four irregular shaped medians and traffic islands.

Park Sector Existing Conditions

SECTOR C - VISION

The Park Sector is envisioned as a sub-area that:

- Celebrates its role as a entry gateway to the commercial corridors along Old Palm Avenue and Seacoast Drive.
- Streamlines the overall circulation pattern for all transportation modes to create a vibrant open space along the southern edge of the sector by closing the southern access from Delaware Street.

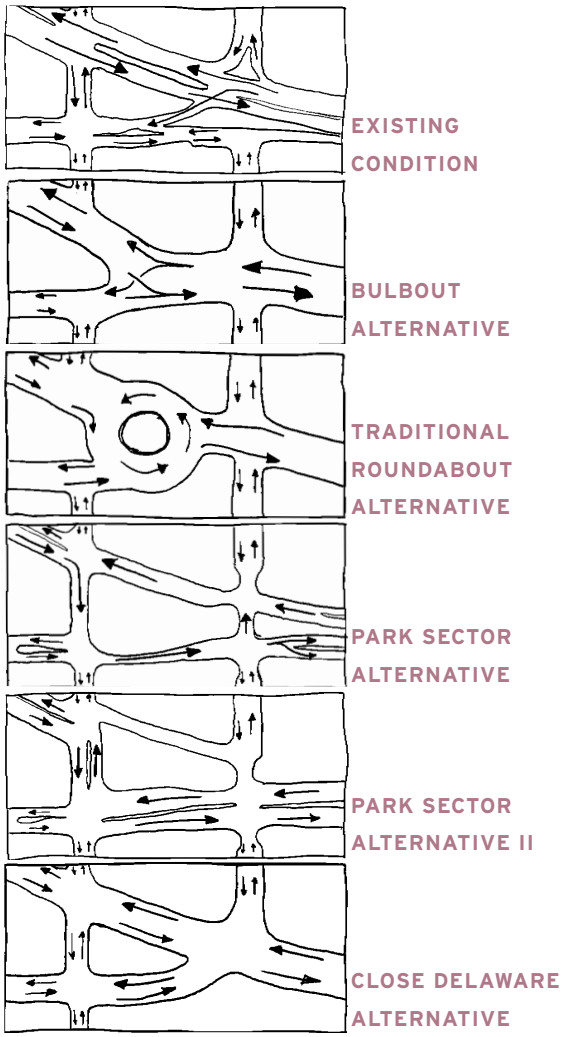
A well-landscaped and furnished pocket plaza reclaims a portion of the auto-oriented intersection providing a well-articulated and welcoming entry to Old Palm Avenue. The reconfigured roadway provides a dedicated bike lane thereby connecting to the existing and planned bicycle improvements along Old Palm Avenue and 7th Streets.

Plaza with Seating and Plantings

Proposed View of Park Sector

The design of the Park Sector involved looking at different alternatives including the preferred 'Close Delaware' alternative.

FIGURE 4.12 -ALTERNATIVES



EXISTING CONDITION

BULBOUT ALTERNATIVE

TRADITIONAL ROUNDABOUT ALTERNATIVE

PARK SECTOR ALTERNATIVE

PARK SECTOR ALTERNATIVE II

CLOSE DELAWARE ALTERNATIVE

FIGURE 4.13 - PARK SECTOR ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN - EXISTING

FIGURE 4.14 - PARK SECTOR ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN - PROPOSED

SECTOR C - CONCEPT PLAN ELEMENTS

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm in the Park Sector district is uniquely defined by the spacious pocket park plaza that marks the transition of Palm Avenue into SR75 and Old Palm Avenue. The pedestrian-friendly open space is characterized by special paving, a mix of iconic and shade-providing trees, benches for resting and gathering, and a signature art piece that celebrates the entry gateway to Old Palm Avenue. The consistent row of proposed palm trees east of Delaware is continued along the plaza to visually connect with the existing palm trees along Old Palm Avenue. This helps reinforce the connection to Old Palm Avenue and invite visitors to the other commercial corridors. Well-articulated crosswalks and dedicated bicycle lanes reinforce the overall sense of comfort and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Enhanced Existing Open Space Experience

Pocket Plaza in Park Sector

CIRCULATION

Overall circulation is improved by reconfiguring the existing complex road system that is complicated by multiple medians and traffic islands. Access to Palm Avenue from Delaware Street, south of Palm Avenue, is closed and a new traffic signal is proposed at the modified intersection to minimize automobile conflicts and enhance pedestrian connectivity.

Bicycle connectivity is improved by providing dedicated bicycle lanes along all the roads. This helps to strengthen the city-wide bicycle system by ensuring that Palm Avenue connects to the planned bicycle improvements along Old Palm Avenue and the eco bike route improvements along 7th Street. Clearly marked crosswalks and pedestrian refuge islands strengthen the overall safety for pedestrians.

The redesign of this area provides a great opportunity to improve the existing conditions and allow existing and future development to embrace the street edge. However, the design of this sector will need to be looked in greater detail to study the affects of a new traffic signal at Delaware Street and the potential to improve the overall traffic flow by closing 7th Street between SR75 and Old Palm Avenue. Additional analysis should also study the traffic impacts on surrounding streets due to the closure of Delaware Street and potential closure of 7th Street.

FIGURE 4.15 - PARK SECTOR PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - EXISTING

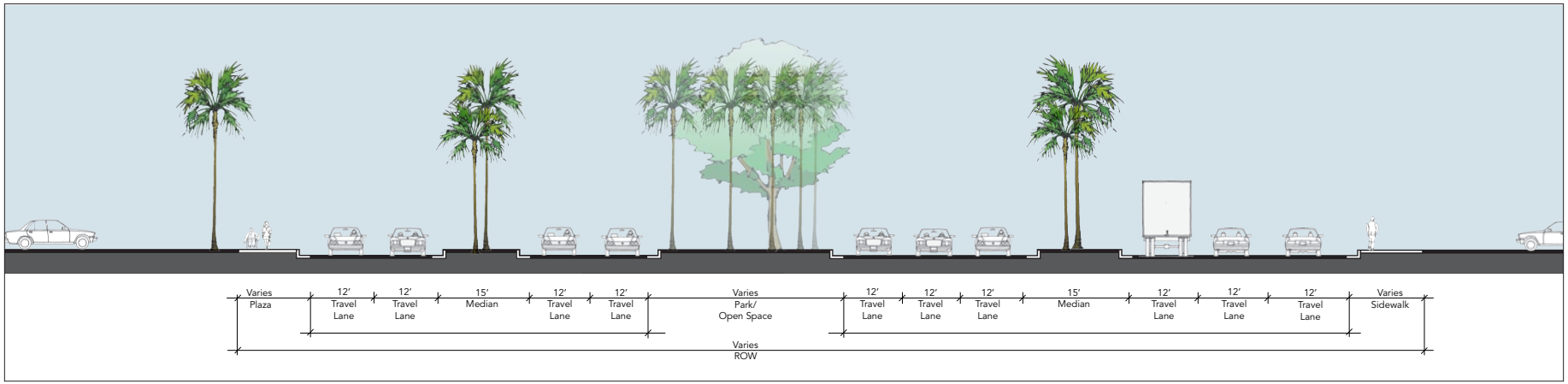
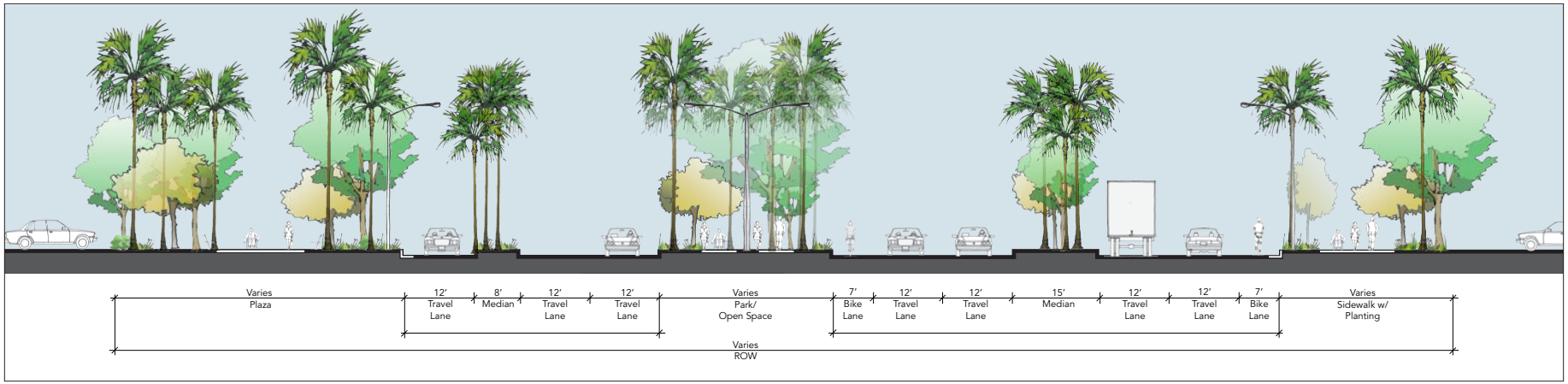


FIGURE 4.16 - PARK SECTOR PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - PROPOSED



Location Map

SECTOR D: WEST END SECTOR

The West End Sector extends from 7th Avenue to Rainbow Avenue. This district is primarily characterized by mobile homes and the Silver Strand Plaza that contains retail, restaurants, and a medical center. This is the only existing four lane section of Palm Avenue. The roadway along this section gradually inclines as it heads north. In addition, property on either side of the roadway slopes away from the sidewalks.

West End Gateway Existing Conditions

SECTOR D - VISION

The West End Sector is envisioned as a sub-area that:

- Cultivates a natural coastal image through native landscaped improvements and integrated storm-water systems that celebrates its role as a gateway access, its proximity to the shoreline, and the existing topography.
- Sets the stage for multi-modal transportation with well-designed and dedicated areas for bicyclists, pedestrian and vehicular lanes

The West End Sector represents the arrival to Imperial Beach from the northwestern approach. It announces the boulevard with wide meandering landscaped buffers on either side of the right-of-way and a tree-lined center median. Its native character contrasts with the more urban character of the remainder of Palm Avenue.

Comparable Vision

Proposed View of West End Gateway

FIGURE 4.17 - WEST END GATEWAY
PROTOTYPICAL PLAN - EXISTING

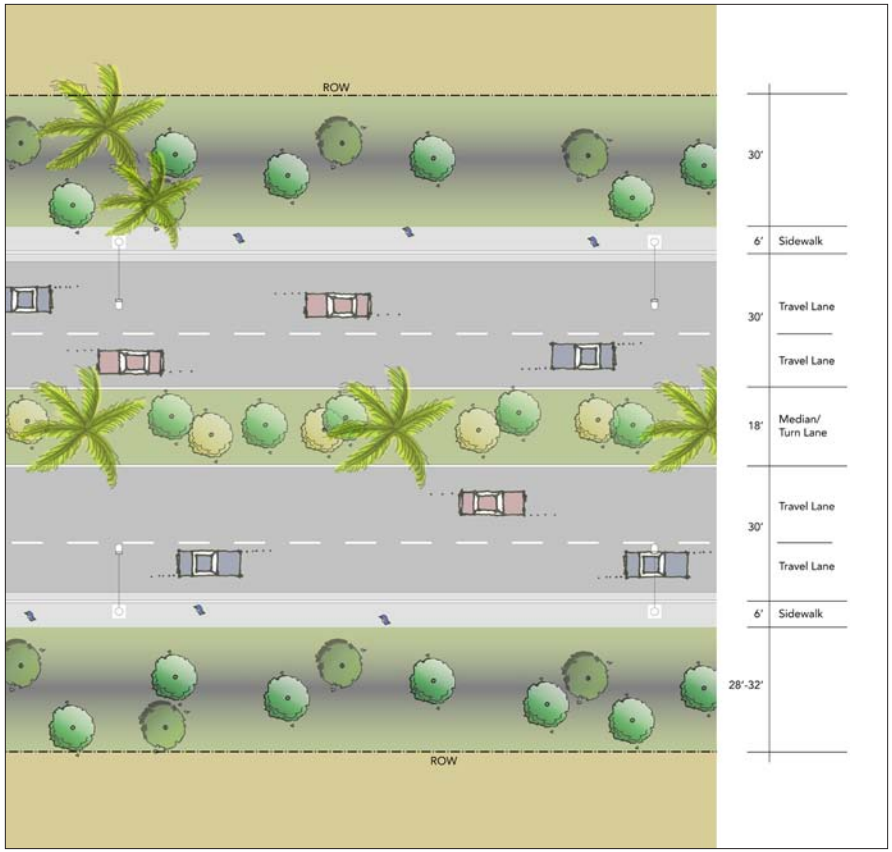
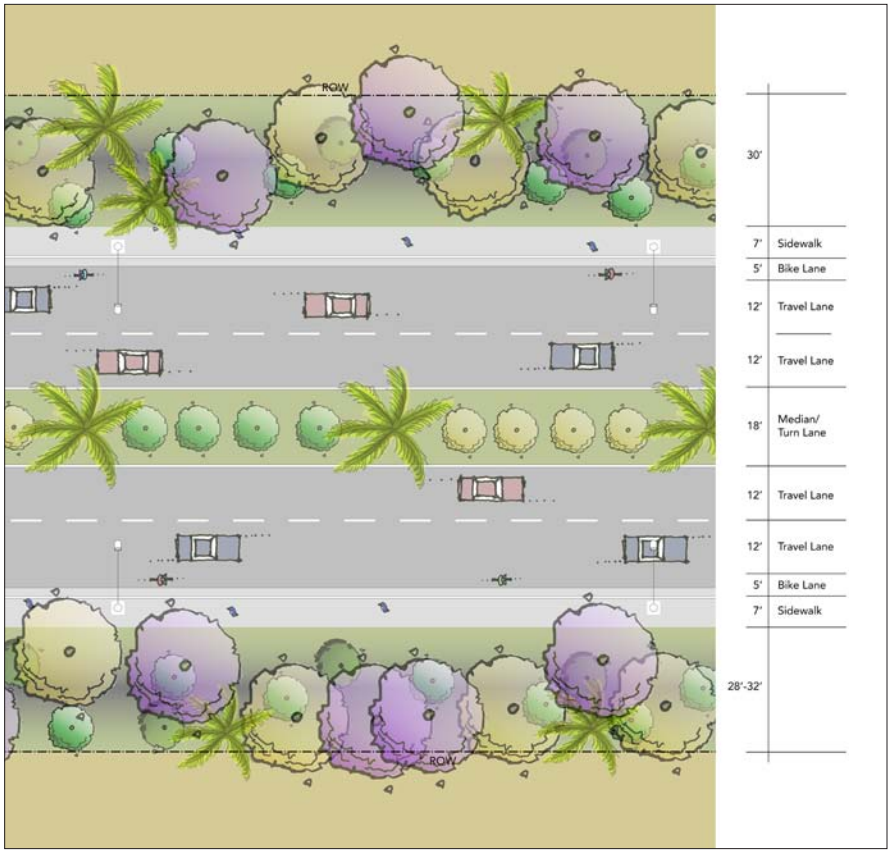


FIGURE 4.18 - WEST END GATEWAY
PROTOTYPICAL PLAN - PROPOSED



SECTOR D - CONCEPT PLAN ELEMENTS

PUBLIC REALM

As this is the only section four lane roadway along Palm Avenue, space exists for 30 feet wide landscaped corridors that steeply slope away from the sidewalks. Native, drought -tolerant trees and other planting provide shade to the sidewalks. The landscaped corridors also serve as stormwater swales that capture seasonal precipitation and minimize stormwater overflows during peak rainfall.

Decorative rock swales and varied native and non-invasive trees and shrubs create a welcoming coastal feel for all users in the West End Sector.

Sustainable Landscaping Provides Unique Character

Landscaped Storm-Water Planters

CIRCULATION

The West End Sector maintains the existing two lanes of traffic in either direction and a wide median in the center. However, the wide roadways on either end of the median are reconfigured to accommodate five-foot bicycle lanes that continue the safe travel route for bicyclists all along Palm Avenue and further accommodate the mix of modes viable along its length. Well-articulated crosswalks at either end of the sector (at 7th and Rainbow Streets) ensure a safer pedestrian realm.

As future development occurs on both sides of the street, potential mid-block crossings could be explored to enhance the overall connectivity of the corridor.

FIGURE 4.19 - WEST END GATEWAY PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - EXISTING

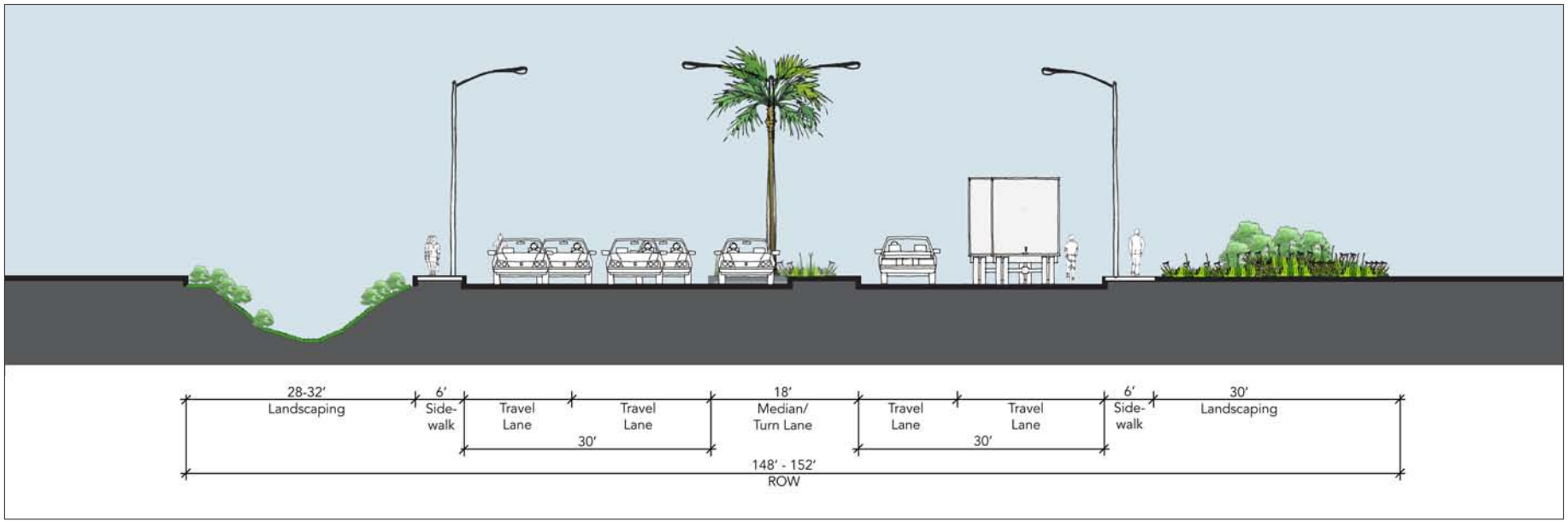
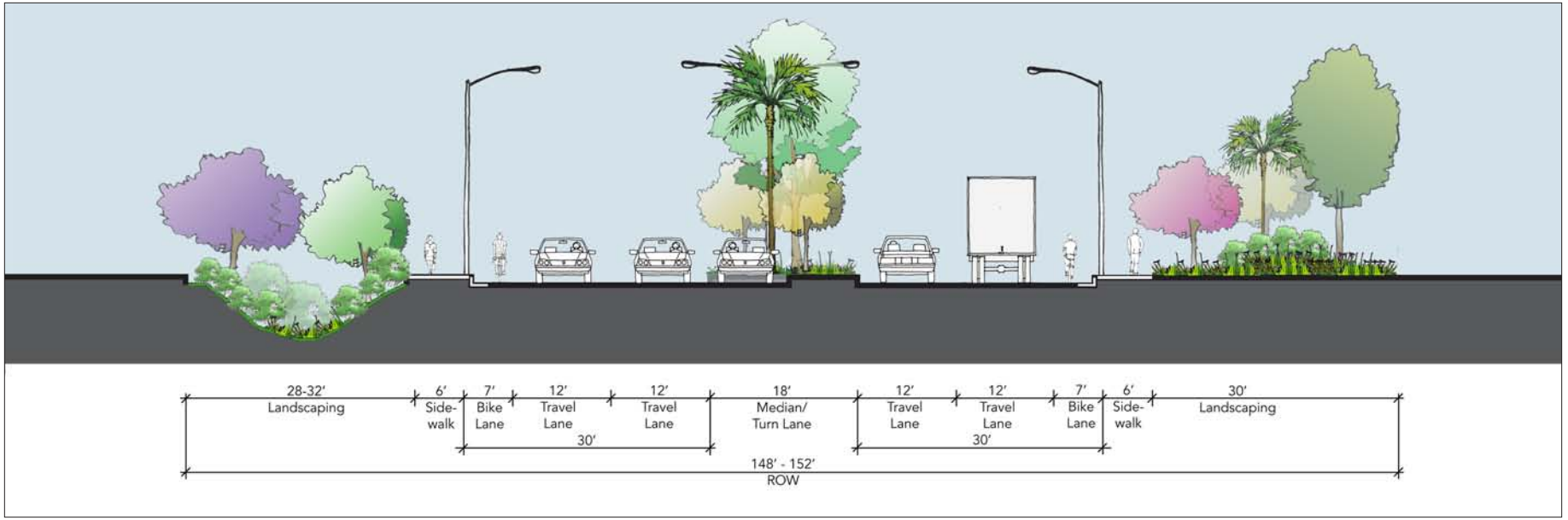



FIGURE 4.20 - WEST END GATEWAY PROTOTYPICAL SECTION - PROPOSED