A livable Oxnard

Becoming more than just a pretty name.
Oxnard Community Planning Group Comments on the Oxnard Corridor Transportation Improvement Plan

Mission: Complete Streets, Walkable Community, Mixed-Use Urban Corridor

Complete Streets
Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.

Walkable Community
Walkable communities are desirable places to live, work, learn, worship, and play; they are a key component of smart growth. Their desirability comes from two factors. First, goods (such as housing, offices, and retail) and services (such as transportation, schools, libraries) are located within an easy and safe walk. Second, walkable communities make pedestrian activity possible, thus expanding transportation options, and creating a streetscape for a range of users—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers. To foster walkability, communities must support mixed-use development and build compactly, with safe and inviting pedestrian spaces.

Mixed-Use Urban Corridor
Mixed-use urban corridor development, for the purposes of this document, is a combination of low-income and market-rate housing above a row of commercial enterprises along the street edge at specifically chosen locations along the Oxnard Boulevard corridor to make a more populated street that has an urban look and functions as an urban street.
Background
Oxnard now has the unprecedented opportunity to transform Oxnard Boulevard with new life as Oxnard city officials have taken over full control of Oxnard Boulevard because Highway 1, with its heavy truck traffic, has been reassigned to Rice Ave. The City was awarded a grant of $250,000 in Community-Based Transportation Planning grant funds to hire a consultant, Omni-Means Engineering Solutions, to provide guidance for this transition.

Our Story
As a group of concerned community members, we want to contribute to this process and transformation. Our goal is to ensure the project will consider the Boulevard from a Complete Streets perspective that provides for all users, including pedestrians, bike riders, and drivers, with urban design strategies that promote more active civic life along Oxnard Boulevard. Oxnard Boulevard needs to be more than just a traffic conduit based on conventional traffic engineering.

As community planners we are pleased to submit a vision plan we believe will serve all aspects of a smart growth Complete Streets Mixed-Use Oxnard Boulevard urban corridor.


Vision
Oxnard now has the unprecedented opportunity to remake its main street and downtown into a Complete Streets model—thus setting the tone for the future of Oxnard’s development. Cities are recognizing the many benefits of remaking their streets into Complete Streets, and as the Complete Streets concept brings new vitality to an area, “Complete Streets” are a boon to business.
We envision Oxnard Blvd as a Mixed-Use urban corridor with a strong emphasis on the residential infill element. There remains considerable pressure for more housing, especially affordable housing, in Oxnard, which historically has led to sprawl. Increasing evidence reveals that sprawl bankrupts cities; kills city centers, and requires infrastructure improvements that are better applied to a city’s center.

An Oxnard Blvd Mixed-Use Urban Corridor would be a counter-measure to sprawl, to incentivize urban housing, and strengthen our city center. There are many locations along Oxnard Blvd that are perfect for housing including the segment that traverses the downtown core. This proposal includes moderate density housing structures of 5 to 6 stories combined with commercial at the street edge. With proper planning, the potential housing should contain a mix of housing types from low-income units, singles on lower floors, with high-end units on the top floors and everything in between.

Society is demanding more creative and varied housing types to meet the needs of our residents. For example, seniors benefit from having all their amenities and public transportation close at hand and need creative housing that can provide this. At the same time, young business people are consciously moving to downtowns where everything is in close proximity. Thus both groups have less need for automobiles and will make better use of walking and biking facilities.
As the transportation sector is a major contributor to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, providing new housing types combined with a canopy tree-lined, “Complete Streets” approach will offer a significant reduction in GHG’s and community health. New zoning should reduce the number of required parking places to maximize housing, minimize wasted space and encourage public transit.

We are confident that a Complete Streets/Mixed-Use Urban Corridor will transform Oxnard Blvd and supersede any perceived benefit of simply expediting traffic flows, which we consider an antiquated approach known as “Level of Service” or “LOS”. This is a significant and important point—our vision is to create a canopy tree-lined walkable street, with access to civic amenities that will attract residents and businesses alike in a diverse urban mix—not to expedite traffic.

Indeed, “…LOS doesn’t tell engineers how safe a street is for pedestrians, or how convenient it is for buses. It measures only one thing: how many cars can be moved through an intersection in a given period. From an LOS point of view, any delay in auto traffic would be a bad thing, to be rectified by shrinking sidewalks, increasing traffic lane widths, and removing crosswalks and on-street parking. The problem is that making driving easier also encourages more driving, a phenomenon known as induced demand, which causes traffic engineers to chase ever-diminishing returns in trying to improve LOS. These days, many cities and states are reevaluating their reliance on LOS, with California set to ditch it entirely.”

Naysayers will tell you that mixed use does not work in our area, and point to the Colonial House project on Oxnard Blvd, among others. The problem is the lack of density. It’s that simple.

We believe the Colonial House project thus far fails to attract commercial tenants because, among other reasons (marketing?), it is not high enough, does not have enough stories, and does not have enough different housing options (further limiting the number of people), to support a bakery or deli or some other inviting amenity. And canopy trees, benches, bicycle racks, and walking areas are a great help as well. Also—and this is key—when adjacent 5 to 6 story residential properties are built along the Blvd, with multiple housing options, in the same area—mixed use commercial will thrive in Oxnard.

The ideas presented here may seem radical, yet they most certainly are not. Great public spaces don’t happen by accident—they have been and are created by communities with visionary leaders who understand city planning and work hard to bring the vision of a beautiful thriving small city into reality.

If Oxnard is going to have a great downtown and no sprawl, Oxnard has to change, and that change can only come from the City Council. The City
Council must adopt a Complete Streets and mixed-use urban corridor policy—to assure the change Oxnard needs. The beauty, or lack thereof, of a city lies within a city’s governing body’s ability to connect and work together with residents. As stewards, the governing council sets the policy and tone—so that a city may flourish.

It will not happen overnight. But with proper vision, guidance, and fortitude, Oxnard will thrive block-by-block and neighborhood-by-neighborhood.

**Public Art**

Public Art is a reflection of who we are as a community (both for ourselves and to visitors). Public Art communicates where the city finds itself in history, its roots, its present and vision for where it wants to go.

Last and perhaps most important, Public Art has the effect of communicating to those who encounter the art that they are respected, dignified, and deserving of something more than just a bland public space that doesn’t care about their presence.

*Remaking Oxnard Boulevard into a Complete Street and walkable Mixed-Use Urban Corridor will require support from, and policy changes by, the Oxnard City Council. We invite you to step up and make it so!*
Our Work
The following observations are for each of the 8 segments identified by the consultants via maps they provided to the community. Each segment will be described by current conditions and then, through the lens of Complete Streets, Walkable Community, and Mixed-Use Urban Corridor models, we will make mostly general, but occasionally specific suggestions towards what we perceive as significant improvements.

Per the consultant provided maps, segments are listed north to south and are not in numerical order. In addition, areas with specific issues are interspersed within the segments.

Segment 1: Oxnard Blvd between US101 and Vineyard Ave
Current Conditions:
• The antithesis of a Complete Street
• Very poor pedestrian and bicycle accommodation
• Separated residential neighborhoods to the south of US101 and west of Oxnard Blvd—makes it almost impossible for people in the residential areas to the west of Oxnard Blvd to access the Esplanade commercial businesses—forces use of automobile
• Narrow sidewalks littered with power poles and other obstructions
• Unattractive railroad overpass

Suggestions:
• Widen sidewalks (at least 10-12’ wide? Preferred 15’) and create protected bike lanes (preferred 6’ wide) on Oxnard Blvd to create a positive pedestrian and bicycle experience
• Reduce traffic lanes to make the street more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly
• Expand bicycle-protected lane and pedestrian access at all crossings and across the 101 freeway
- Provide “Welcome to Oxnard” signs at Oxnard Blvd 101S and 101N exits
- Pedestrian tram (shuttles?) at Esplanade and Home Depot shopping centers
- Possible pedestrian bridge at Oxnard Blvd light crossing from the Wagon Wheel area into the Home Depot parking lot along Spur Drive and Esplanade
- Easy pedestrian crossing from Wagon Wheel area into the Home Depot-Esplanade area
- Add a protective island along Oxnard Blvd at the Spur Dr/Esplanade crossing
- Add pedestrian amenities where the Wagon Wheel Rd crosses over Oxnard Blvd
- Slow down traffic at Oxnard Blvd where it crosses US101 with design changes and signs
- Coordinate with VCWPD to allow pedestrian and bike access over the El Rio Canal and allow parking along Oxnard Blvd
- Create new pedestrian and bicycle connection across Oxnard Blvd at Orchard Place

Segment 7:
Vineyard Ave between US101 and Oxnard Blvd
Current Conditions:
- The antithesis of a Complete Street
- Very poor pedestrian and bike accommodation
- Narrow sidewalks littered with power poles and other obstructions
- Separated residential neighborhoods—forces use of automobile.

Suggestions:
- Widen sidewalks (at least 10-12’ wide? Preferred 15’) and create protected bike lanes (preferred 6’ wide) on Vineyard Ave to create a positive pedestrian and bicycle experience
- Reduce traffic lanes to make the street more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly
- Expand bicycle protected lane and pedestrian access at all crossings and across the 101 freeway
- Provide “Welcome to Oxnard” signs at the Vineyard Ave 101S and 101N exits
- Pedestrian tram (shuttles?) at Esplanade and Home Depot shopping centers
- Easy pedestrian crossing from the residential area to the east into the Esplanade area
- Slow down traffic at Vineyard where it crosses US101 with design changes and signs
- Reduce number of traffic lanes and add protected bike and pedestrian lanes at the US101 crossing
- Reduce traffic lanes to make the street more pedestrian/ bike friendly
**North Entrance to Oxnard from US101**

Comments:
Both the Oxnard Blvd and Vineyard freeway exits are our north “Gateways to Oxnard” and as such should be inviting and beautiful. This is a place for public art and tree-lined roads. Oxnard must do everything possible to enhance and create a wonderful “Welcome to Oxnard” feeling at our north entrances.

**The intersection of Oxnard Blvd and Vineyard Ave:**

Comments:
This very busy intersection has several places where a traveler can go wrong. For instance, when traveling north on Oxnard Blvd and wanting to turn into Vineyard Ave, one must be in the correct lane. Make a mistake and end up on Oxnard Blvd—there are no options other than to go all the way to the Esplanade. The same situation exists when wanting to end up on Oxnard Blvd and wanting to go to Vineyard Ave. In another instance when traveling south on Vineyard Ave one must be in the correct lane to stay on Vineyard or to turn onto Oxnard Blvd.

This is also a highly trafficked area with backups common at rush hour and when the train moves through.

A traffic circle may be an option for this intersection.

**Segment 2:**

**Oxnard Blvd between Vineyard and Gonzales Road**

Current Conditions:
- Railroad running along the east side of Oxnard Blvd from Vineyard Ave to Gonzalez is not attractive and cuts off the residential neighborhood to the east of the tracks and Oxnard Blvd
- Underutilized strip mall just to the north of Citrus Grove Lane and west of Oxnard Blvd
- The Lowes complex west of Oxnard Blvd is typical of big box shopping areas
- Empty lot at the southwest corner of Citrus Grove and Oxnard Blvd
- Parallel street from a restaurant on the north and Citrus Grove to the south just west of Oxnard Blvd

Suggestions:
- This segment must begin to slow and divert traffic from US101 to the downtown area
- Provide a quality pedestrian and bicycle crossing experience at Vineyard Ave and Gonzalez
- Explore options for integrating the frontage road west of Oxnard Blvd between Vineyard and Citrus Grove Lane
• Provide protected bike lanes along the west side of Oxnard Blvd
• Remove island planters—retain island concept
• Plant trees and shrubs between the railroad tracks and Oxnard Blvd
• Provide a pedestrian bridge near Citrus Grove to allow access from the residential neighborhood to the east to the shopping area west of Oxnard Blvd

Comments:
This relatively short strip needs aesthetic upgrading on the east side at the railroad tracks and a mini-charrette process to work out the numerous issues presented by the west side of Oxnard Blvd.

Segment 3:
Oxnard Blvd between Gonzales Road and 2nd Street
Current Conditions:
• This segment to continue to slow and divert traffic from Gonzales Road into the downtown area
• 2 traffic lanes each way (4 traffic lanes total) with parking along the west side of Oxnard Blvd
• No street parking
• Because of the tracks there is no access for students and residents to cross from the high school and neighborhood on the east side of the Blvd to the businesses on the west side of Oxnard Blvd
• The existing protected bike lane just east of the tracks works to provide north-south connection but does little to make Oxnard Blvd a Complete Street.
• Clearly the railroad track is a serious problem in its current and probably permanent location
• Under-utilized auto-related sites on the west side of Oxnard Blvd
• Thrift stores and other less-than-desired business in this area

Suggestions:
• Integrate the N Oxnard service road with the Blvd and businesses west of Oxnard Blvd
• Provide a protected bike lane (preferred 6’ wide min.) along west side of Oxnard Blvd
• Provide overlay zone to encourage 5-6 story mixed-use buildings along the west side of Oxnard Blvd between the restaurants on the north to Glenwood
• Make right turn onto 2nd Street easy
• Extend Camino del Sol to Oxnard Blvd—provide full pedestrian and bike crossing
• Relocate community gardens
• Allow street parking
• Extend sidewalks—plant trees and other people serving amenities on the west side of Oxnard Blvd (at least 10-12’ wide with 15’ Preferred)
• Replace thrift stores and other less-than-desirable business along our main street with mixed-use housing

Comments:
This is a very important link between US101 and our new downtown corridor. It is important to slow traffic all along this corridor entrance from business to the north and our downtown. Plant canopy trees, create wide sidewalks, provide for on-street parking and bulb-outs, etc. There are quite a few businesses and business types that are not appropriate for Oxnard’s main street. We must work to replace these entities with more suitable and appropriate businesses and housing. We must create a Complete Street on this section of Oxnard Blvd.

Change zoning policy to allow for less onsite parking in mixed-use buildings.

Segment 4:
Oxnard Blvd between 2nd Street and Wooley Road
Current Conditions:
• This segment is our downtown
• Road has 4 traffic lanes (2 traffic lanes each way) with planted median
• No on-street parking
• No wide sidewalks for people to enjoy walking, congregating, relaxing

Suggestions:
• This segment is our downtown
• Make Oxnard Blvd one traffic lane each direction—two traffic lanes total—from 4th St to 9th St
• Remove the median
• No left turns during peak travel times
• Include protected bike lanes on one side of Oxnard Blvd
• Provide parallel parking on each side of the street from 4th St to 9th St
• Create parallel parking between 9th and Wooley
• Provide overlay zone to encourage 5-6 story residential over existing buildings (mixed-use) along both sides of Oxnard Blvd—do everything possible to retain and support existing businesses
• Make this section of our main street stellar in all ways—canopy trees, wide sidewalks, places for people to linger over a coffee, you get the picture
• Traffic circle at Five Points intersection
• Public art at Five Points intersection
Comments:
This is Oxnard’s downtown. Make it grand, while keeping a human scale. Canopy trees. Wide sidewalks. Places to gather. Places to shop. See notes above about building moderate density so that local business can thrive.

Change the zoning policy to allow for less onsite parking in mixed-use buildings.

**Segment 8:**
**E 5th Street**

Current Condition:
- One traffic lane each direction from Oxnard Blvd to Rice
- Except for the first 2 blocks nearest Oxnard Blvd, there are no curbs or sidewalks, with several less-than-notable exceptions
- Railroad spare parts and junk along the north side of 5th Street

Suggestions:
- 2 traffic lanes each way from Oxnard Blvd to Rice Ave
- Provide parking on the south side of 5th street from Oxnard Blvd to Rose Ave
- Provide a protected bike lane on south side of 5th Street to Rose Ave
- Provide a visual screen to hide railroad junk from view
- Provide two STOP signs, 4 total per intersection, next to the railroad tracks just north of 5th Street at Rose and Rice

Comments:
5th Street is really three distinct sections. The first two blocks, just east of Oxnard Blvd, should be considered and treated as a part of the downtown. The rest of 5th Street to Rose Ave is light industry and between Rose and Rice it is agricultural. However, it seems important that 5th Street be two traffic lanes each way with parking and a protected bike path on the south side of the street.

This segment needs more work and attention beyond the scope of this document.
Intersection of Oxnard Blvd, Saviors Road, and Wooley Road (Five Points)

Current Condition:
• Long waits at lights
• Poor neighborhood connection

Suggestions:
• Provide a traffic circle
• Public Art

Segment 5:
Oxnard Blvd from 5 points (possible traffic circle) to railroad tracks and water channel

Current Conditions:
• Mix of newer larger tilt-up industrial and other uses and building types
• Visually not well integrated

Suggestions:
• Line the 4 traffic-lane road with street trees
• Provide a median for left turns - do not plant
• Provide protected bike lane

Comments:
This is a linking section of Oxnard Blvd joining the light industrial, mixed-use and housing mix to the north with the new 4-5 story mixed-use urban corridor to the south.

This segment needs more work and attention beyond the scope of this document.
Segment 6:
Oxnard Blvd from railroad tracks and water channel to Pleasant Valley Road

Current Conditions:
• Freeway from Pleasant Valley Road to Rose Ave
• Light industrial from just east of Date to Rose Ave
• Mixed and messy both north and south of Statham Blvd
• Not a noteworthy southern entry to Oxnard

Suggestions:
• 5-6 story mixed-use housing on the old drive-in property
• Provide overlay zone to encourage 5-6 story mixed-use along Oxnard Blvd between the E Channel Islands Blvd overpass and Pleasant Valley Road (see comments below)
• Connect Olds Road to Oxnard Blvd
• 2 traffic lanes each way (4 traffic lanes total)
• Line street with trees
• Protected bike lane in strip park south of mixed-use commercial area with residential above

Comments:
Provide housing along Oxnard Blvd just north of the Oxnard College/College Park area. This would be a much-needed upgrade to South Oxnard. In addition this housing will support a growing Oxnard College population. We propose that this new housing strip extend from the E Channel Islands Blvd overpass to where Oxnard Blvd drops down to level from Pleasant Valley Road. Oxnard Blvd would be moved as far to the
north as possible. Then the 4-5-6 story mixed-use housing, with creative housing types (for students, creatives, seniors and others), be built with a strip park to the south containing parkways, trees, a protected bike lane and other amenities to serve this new residential area. Lemon Ave and Tree Lane could be connected to Oxnard Blvd in this area. It may be necessary to use Butler Road to gain the added width necessary for this project. Can you imagine the ocean views from the upper floors(?), guaranteeing a mix of population diversity.

Change zoning policy to allow for less onsite parking in mixed-use buildings.

This would also be the new elegant entry to Oxnard from the south.

Info:
Oxnard City planning staff was invited to all meetings. This document has been provided to the City Council, city planning staff, Omni-Means Engineering Solutions (the consultants), and is available online at OxnardCPG.com

Addendum:
Maps provided by consultant:
OCCTIP - Overall Map
OCCTIP - Segments 1, 2, and 7
OCCTIP - Segment 3
OCCTIP - Segments 4 and 8
OCCTIP - Segments 5 and 6

Please visit the Oxnard Community Planning Group at http://www.OxnardCPG.com
Segments 1, 2, and 7