A livable Oxnard

Considering new—and very old—approaches to urban design.
Traditional Neighborhood Design
Before WW2, neighborhoods were compact and walkable. One could find almost everything one needed within a few blocks of home. We know the rest of the story—cars became the focus of municipal planning, ignoring time-honored universal town-planning principles, creating mindless, rampant sprawl. Today, it’s nearly impossible to simply walk to meet our everyday needs. Our lives have been designed around the car and we are forced to drive almost everywhere—and our quality of life has suffered.

Today’s urban designers, using contemporary disciplines guided by principles from a bygone era, are placing the human experience first and foremost, focusing on walkable neighborhoods and creating more livable cities.

This document is, in part, informed by this New Urbanism sometimes called Traditional Neighborhood Design.

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 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 commercial/retail enterprises along the street edge. At specifically chosen locations along the Oxnard Boulevard corridor, this kind of development naturally creates a more populated street that has an urban look and functions as an urban street.

**Background**
Oxnard has the unprecedented opportunity to transform Oxnard Blvd with new life as Oxnard city officials have taken over full control of Oxnard Blvd, 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 Blvd. Oxnard Blvd needs to be more than just a traffic conduit based on conventional traffic engineering.

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

Vision
With Rice Avenue becoming Highway 1, Oxnard Blvd can finally become the ‘main street’ it has never been, by adopting Traditional Neighborhood Design and Complete Streets models—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 is considerable need 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, incentivizing urban housing,
and strengthening 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 4 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.

We are seeking creative and varied housing types to meet the needs of 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 will improve 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, as not succeeding in attracting commercial tenants. The entire story is more complex, because those particular commercial spaces have needed to remain empty until they were sold, for instance.

Also, a further possible problem is the lack of density. We believe the Colonial House project 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 always been—and continue to be—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.

A Note on 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 its roots, its present, and vision for where it wants to go.

Last and perhaps most importantly, 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.
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

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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.

Marking Oxnard’s North Gateway as A Complete Streets Triangle:
Vineyard Ave from Esplanade Dr to Oxnard Blvd
Oxnard Blvd from Vineyard Ave to Esplanade Dr
Esplanade Dr between Oxnard Blvd and Vineyard Ave

Including all roads crossing or terminating the above streets will be recreated as Complete Streets and Complete Intersections, including Spur Dr and Orchard Pl. If recommended by consultants; a traffic circle at the intersection of Oxnard Blvd and Vineyard Ave.

Recreatin the north gateway to Oxnard into a Complete Streets triangle will connect residential neighborhoods east and west with shopping opportunities in the Esplanade area. Each intersection will have bulb-outs (for possible parking and to allow for public transportation) and protected bicycle lanes. Each street will have wide sidewalks and canopy trees. All additional amenities to make this area people friendly to be considered and employed.

Adjustments will be made along the west side of Oxnard Boulevard south of Orchard Pl to create parking for the residential just to the west and for public transportation. Create a bicycle and pedestrian friendly way (bridge over RR tracks) for people west of Oxnard Blvd to have direct access to the Esplanade Dr area.

This triangle will function as the main shopping area for the north of Oxnard residents as well as the northern gateway to Oxnard from the 101 freeway corridor.
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 Oxnard’s downtown main street
• Road has 4 wide noisy traffic lanes (2 traffic lanes each way) with various median treatments
• No on-street parking
• Sidewalks are broken up and cluttered with utility boxes and overly large trees. Fast traffic and poor sidewalks make this a poor place for people to enjoy walking, shopping, congregating, relaxing
Suggestions:
• Retain Oxnard Blvd as a 4-lane traffic street—however—create curb side (parallel) parking on both sides, with a median down the middle for left turns. The existing roadway is 70 feet wide and the above described 10-foot wide lanes will fit in the existing roadway without changes to the sidewalks
• Create bulb-outs (curb extensions) at corners
Create planter areas for canopy trees in parking lanes in appropriate areas (needs block by block assessment that has not been discussed in this document)
• Provide overlay zone to encourage 4- to 6-story residential over existing buildings (mixed-use) along both sides of Oxnard Blvd—do everything possible to retain and support existing businesses and historic facades
• Make this section of our main street stellar in all ways—canopy trees (in the parking area), clear existing sidewalks to make places for people to linger over a coffee and shopping places for public transportation
• Traffic circle at Five Points intersection—the OCCTIP consultant has removed this from their report—but the round-a-bout has been revisited by the CNU Charrette
• Public art at Five Points intersection

Comments:
This is Oxnard’s downtown. Make it grand, while keeping a human scale. Canopy trees in curbside parking area to clear the sidewalks. Unobstructed sidewalks. Places to gather. Places to shop. See notes above about building mixed-use with housing so that local businesses can thrive.

Change the zoning policy to allow for less onsite parking in mixed-use buildings and eliminate the units-per-acre requirement, which currently limits the number of people we need downtown to create a critical mass of shoppers. Make Oxnard Blvd in the downtown area a wonderful urban neighborhood.

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.

5th Street - Funk Zone

A mixed-use area for housing—creative live-work spaces and tourist oriented business like galleries and micro-breweries and other complementary uses and businesses, marked by its unique architecture (see below). Extend the Downtown Complete Streets area along 5th street within the Meta District east to Pacific Ave along the south side of 5th Street. With the main concentration between the Meta District and the E 5th Service Street.

Architecture could be a mix of contemporary urban funk and light industrial. Angular, planar, layered—corrugated steel and other contemporary materials including steel troweled stucco—in vibrant colors, lots of glass, open space—perhaps a paseo running the length of the zone from east to west—a shopping street oriented to the arts: painting, sculpture, theater, music, dance…

We are a city of 200K+ and providing a contemporary shopping zone as a complement to the downtown with its more historical and traditional orientation would make a dynamic mix of experiences in Oxnard’s center.
**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 if suggested by the OCCTIP consultant
- 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
• OCCTIP consultant is recommending a roundabout at the intersection of E. Channel Islands Blvd and S. Oxnard Blvd. Create a “High Line”-style pedestrian bridge/city park on the flyover bridge that used to be E. Channel Islands Blvd

Saviers Road - Oxnard’s South Main Street Corridor
Create an enhanced Complete Streets corridor event along Saviers Road from Pleasant Valley Road to Channel Islands Blvd. Mark the entrance to this shopping and residential zone at each end with enhanced intersection decorations with perhaps an actual gateway at each end. Concentrate infill multi-story mixed-use on both sides of Saviers Road in specific locations or intersections to assure appropriate density in support of retail and other commercial business.

Each intersection will have bulb-outs (for possible parking and to allow for public transportation) and protected bicycle lanes. Each street will have wide sidewalks and canopy trees. All additional amenities to make this area people-friendly should be considered and employed.

Additional Overall 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. Please 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.

Eliminate all semi- and tractor-trailer truck access to the downtown or enhanced Complete Streets areas. Provide a transfer area either on Rice Ave or in the Commercial Ave.
Only 2- or 3-axle vehicles allowed—no articulating semi-type vehicles allowed downtown or along 5th Street in the downtown area or in one of the enhanced Complete Streets areas. Access to all downtown areas from Wooley Rd only.

The OCPG suggests that the “North Gateway Triangle”, the “Downtown” and the “Saviers Road South Oxnard Corridor” be enhanced Complete Streets areas. By this designation we mean areas where the full complement of Complete Streets enhancements are employed. Of course, we want to see the kind of street design that allows for public transportation and protected bike lanes all the way from Oxnard’s North Gateway Triangle through to Hueneme Road, completing and connecting South Oxnard to US101 in a continuous people-friendly main street.

The OCPG encourages public transportation along our main streets to include both Oxnard Blvd and Saviers Road. The Oxnard Blvd corridor, from the 101 to Pleasant Valley Road, and the Saviers Road corridor, from Wooley to Hueneme Road, are fully public-transportation enabled corridors. All necessary changes to streets to allow for buses to load and off-load passengers should be designed into our main street corridors.

Further 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

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

Community Planning Group members who contributed to this effort are:

Please visit the Oxnard Community Planning Group at www.OxnardCPG.com
Oxnard Corridor Transportation Improvement Plan

Overall Map