



2 CONTEXT

Regional and Local Context

The City of Santa Ana is in the heart of Orange County. Harbor Boulevard—one of the main thoroughfares in Santa Ana—spans the City and links key local and regional commercial, employment, and residential districts.

Starting at the southern end of State Route (SR) 55, Harbor Boulevard travels uninterrupted for 26 miles through numerous cities in Orange and Los Angeles counties. Along its route, Harbor Boulevard serves as a critical link between major regional attractions, including the Pacific Ocean, Triangle Square in Costa Mesa, Disneyland, Downtown Anaheim, and California State University, Fullerton. With its north–south orientation and intersection with a half dozen freeways, Harbor Boulevard carries over 40,000 cars and trucks every day and serves as a bypass for drivers traveling along SR-55 and SR-57.

The Harbor Corridor Plan covers the 2.5-mile segment of Harbor Boulevard located on the west side of Santa Ana. The approximately 305-acre planning area includes parcels adjacent to Harbor Boulevard between Westminster Avenue and Lilac Avenue, as well as parcels along Westminster Avenue, 1st Street, and 5th Street.

Figures 2-1 and 2-2 show the location of the Specific Plan area within the regional and local contexts of Orange County and the City of Santa Ana, respectively.

Santa Ana Neighborhoods

Santa Ana has a rich mosaic of neighborhoods, each distinguished by its history, architecture, housing types, and amenities. The City's neighborhoods are more than simply collections of housing. Neighborhoods are the fundamental building blocks of the community. Neighborhoods are where residents feel safe, where friendships and social ties develop, and where people identify with their community.

More than 60 neighborhood associations have been formed to address neighborhood issues. The Harbor Corridor Plan connects two Santa Ana neighborhoods: Riverview West (west of Harbor Boulevard) and Santa Anita (east of Harbor Boulevard).

School District

Most of Santa Ana is served by the Santa Ana Unified School District, but the Harbor corridor is served by Garden Grove Unified School District (GGUSD). GGUSD's enrollment boundary generally follows the Santa Ana River and allows the district to serve students in many central and northern Orange County communities.

Although residents in the Specific Plan area send their children to a different school district and are somewhat physically separated from the rest of the City by the Santa Ana River, people who live along Harbor Corridor still very much identify as residents of Santa Ana. This sense of community is a testament to the City's ongoing efforts to strengthen and support its neighborhoods and ensure their integration into the larger vision for the City.

Current and Past Planning Efforts

North Harbor Specific Plan

In 1994, the City adopted the North Harbor Specific Plan (NHSP) to create a strong and viable commercial district along Harbor Boulevard supported by well-maintained neighborhoods. This plan addressed the same geographic area as the Harbor Corridor Plan, as well as the Willowick Golf Course and some adjacent residential neighborhoods. The NHSP established six goals:

- » To retain and upgrade the area's commercial character while improving and expanding its role as a significant regional commercial district.
- » To enhance and support the residential neighborhoods surrounding Harbor Boulevard.
- » To improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation in and around the Harbor Boulevard area.
- » To achieve an aesthetic visual consistency throughout the Harbor Boulevard area while improving and upgrading the visual image of the adjacent areas.
- » To enhance the economic viability of the Harbour Boulevard area.
- » To create a secure atmosphere within which business and residential communities can thrive.

The NHSP identified the opportunity to capitalize on its proximity to Disneyland and other major commercial recreation and tourist attractions. As the NHSP was being prepared in the early 1990s, The Walt Disney Company announced plans to develop a new theme park named WestCOT adjacent to Disneyland. WestCOT was officially announced in 1991, and the NHSP identifies focus

areas within the Specific Plan area that could capitalize on what the plan considered to be the largest private development project in the United States.

Unfortunately, financial constraints led The Walt Disney Company to cancel the development of WestCOT. In 2001, the site was developed as Disney's California Adventure Park, but the cancellation and delay of the Disney theme park negatively impacted the NHSP's ability to attract and incentivize development. Very few uses along the corridor are currently tied into the region's major commercial recreation and tourist activities.

The NHSP also recognized the existing Vietnamese community and proximity to Little Saigon in Garden Grove. When the NHSP was adopted in 1994, the Vietnamese Catholic Church at Harbor Boulevard and Seventeenth Street was already (and remains) a regional destination for Catholics in the Asian Community. The NHSP supported the development of a new ethnic commercial center adjacent to Catholic Church, but it never came to fruition.

Although the NHSP envisioned a revitalized corridor with quality commercial uses compatible with neighborhoods, progress has been limited, and land uses did not transition as planned. The dominant use along Harbor Boulevard became auto sales and service.

City of Santa Ana Housing Element

In its Housing Element, the City of Santa Ana identifies three key transportation corridors, including Harbor Boulevard, that could support higher density housing. The selected corridors are consistent with the City's Go Local vision to promote sustainable multimodal transportation options. The Harbor Corridor Plan supports the City's Housing Element by creating the zoning framework to allow for new, compact, transit-supportive housing combined with nonresidential uses along Harbor Boulevard.

Former Redevelopment Project Area

The Harbor Corridor Plan area was included in a former City of Santa Ana Redevelopment Project area (adopted in 1982). The North Harbor Boulevard Redevelopment Plan comprised approximately 428 acres, generally located along Harbor Boulevard from Westminster Avenue to Kent Avenue; and along 5th Street, 1st Street, and McFadden Avenue from Harbor Boulevard to the Santa Ana River.

The North Harbor Boulevard Redevelopment Project area was substantially developed and included a mix of older residential and strip commercial uses fronting on Harbor Boulevard, with newer commercial uses developed near 1st Street and 5th Street.

As part of California's 2011 Budget Act, the State Legislature approved the dissolution of the state's 400 plus redevelopment agencies (RDAs). After a period of litigation, RDAs were officially dissolved as of February 1, 2012.



Figure 2-1. Regional Context and School District Boundaries

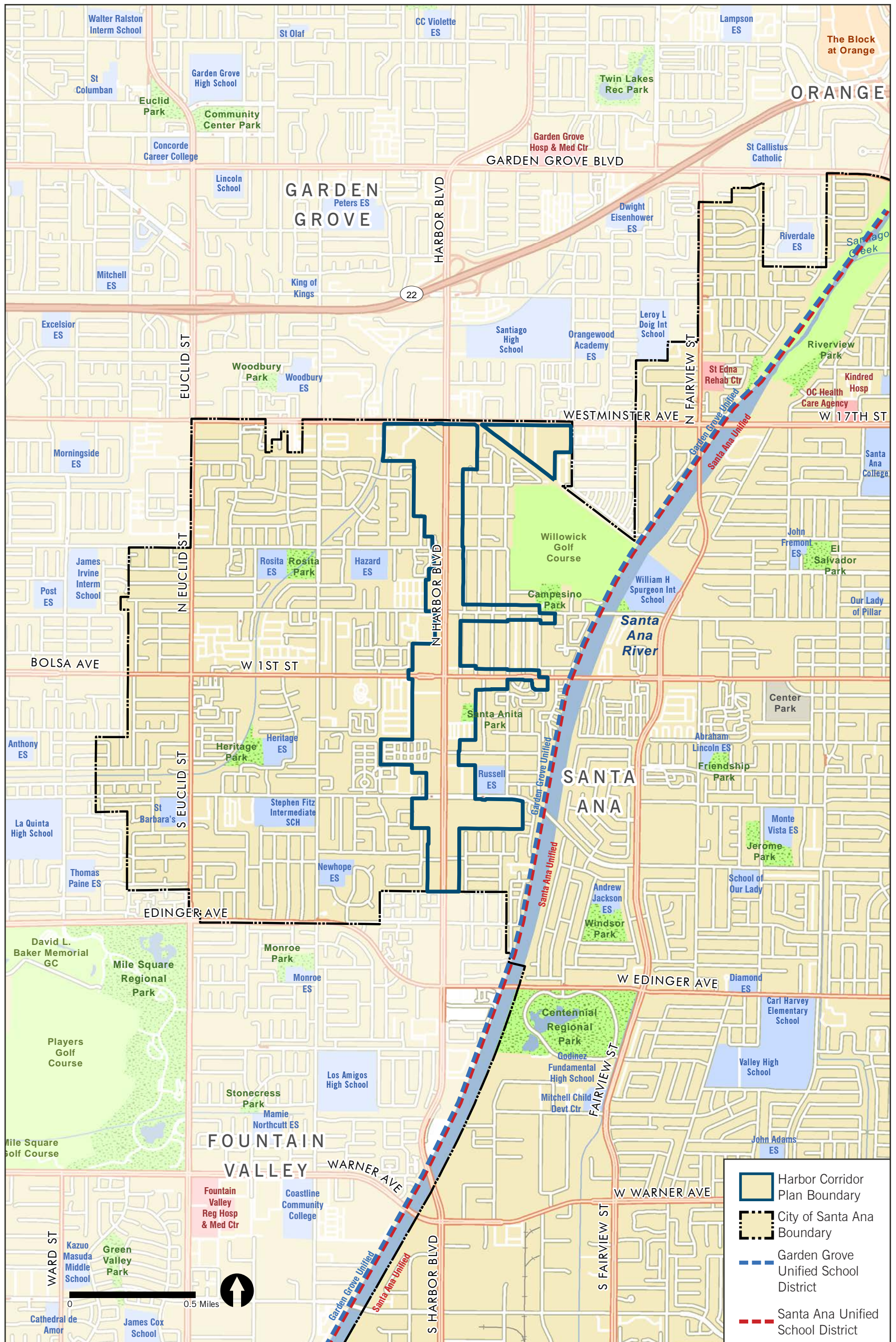
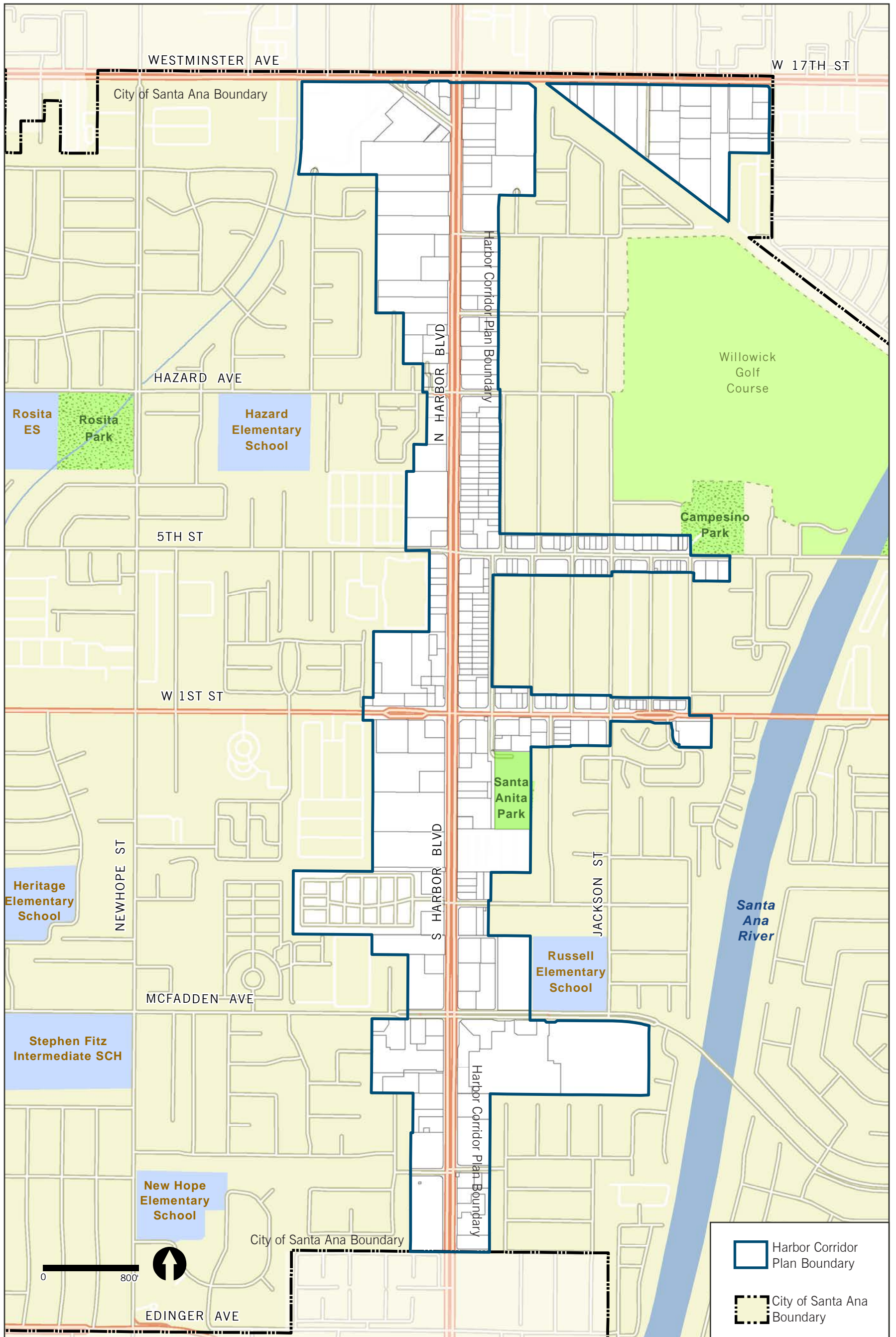




Figure 2-2. Local Context





Existing and Surrounding Land Uses

The Specific Plan area currently contains roughly two million square feet of commercial uses distributed fairly evenly along the corridor. Existing commercial uses occur both at midblock locations and at intersections and are visually dominated by auto service and sales, but also include grocery stores, service businesses, and restaurants. While the total Specific Plan area covers 305 acres, right-of-way comprises roughly 52 acres, leaving 253 acres of parcelized land use.

As is true for many corridors throughout Southern California, land use along Harbor Boulevard is primarily commercial in nature. Nearly 60% of all parcels contain a commercial business, and 21% consist of auto sales and service businesses. Light industrial and industrial uses, primarily concentrated north of Hazard Avenue but also found elsewhere along the corridor, cover 14% of the parcelized Specific Plan area.

The Specific Plan area contains 739 residential units that occupy approximately 16% of the Specific Plan area. Roughly two-thirds of the units are multi-family, 30% are mobile homes, and the balance is single-family units. Santa Anita Park is the only formal public open space within the plan’s boundaries.

The Specific Plan area also includes a limited amount of public, quasi-public, and religious facilities. Finally, approximately 5% of the Specific Plan area is currently vacant. The breakdown of existing land distribution is illustrated in Table 2-1 and Figures 2-3 and 2-4.

Like much of Santa Ana, the Specific Plan area and its surroundings are largely built out and highly urbanized. Adjacent land is characterized by a mix of single-family units, apartment complexes, and mobilehome communities. The majority of these homes take access from streets perpendicular to Harbor Boulevard (not from Harbor Boulevard itself).

Retail and Market Conditions

An assessment of the corridor’s retail market was conducted in 2011 and 2012 to provide insight into the challenges and opportunities facing retail development along Harbor Boulevard. As shown in Figure 2-5, the assessment considered three segments or trade areas along Harbor Boulevard, each centered at a proposed Bravo BRT station: Westminster Avenue, 1st Street, and McFadden Avenue. A trade area is the geographic area from which a retail center or business will draw most of its customers.

The overall corridor is dominated by retail and auto-related uses. Nearly one in five used auto dealers in Orange County can be found along this stretch of Harbor Boulevard. When all retail space is considered (based simply on numbers), the corridor appears to have more retail building space than is necessary to serve the needs of the adjacent neighborhoods—primarily those within one-half mile of Harbor Boulevard. However, the type of retail businesses is just as (if not more) important than the amount of retail buildings space. Residents may still find that they cannot satisfy their regular shopping needs in close proximity to where they live.

Even with excess retail building space, Santa Ana loses retail spending to nearby communities and collects less money per person than other cities in Orange County.

Retail outside of existing shopping centers (which sit primarily at the major intersections) experience challenging conditions—especially smaller independent businesses that are most likely to serve the needs of neighborhood residents. These conditions include:

- » Small lots with little depth
- » Older buildings that do not suit modern retail businesses
- » Poor visibility
- » Inconvenient or inefficient entry and exit points
- » Fractured land use patterns, with retail businesses interspersed among non-retail uses

While the corridor does contain some retail businesses that draw from beyond the immediate neighborhoods, additional consumer spending could be attracted if one of the key intersections were reconfigured and improved to support a shopping environment that can attract consumers from a larger market area, located on adequately sized parcels.

The potential future fixed guideway system and BRT transit investments are potential catalysts that could spur the development and reconfiguration of one or more key nodes along the corridor. Additional right-of-way improvements along Harbor Boulevard could create a more dynamic public space and a desirable shopping experience.

The Harbor Corridor Plan establishes the zoning City and property owners need to respond to such transit and other public investments, establishing places and businesses that boost local spending and attract more regional spending. With or without such catalytic projects, many of the corridor’s retail businesses will continue to primarily serve the adjacent neighborhoods.

Table 2-1. Summary of Existing Land Use

| Existing Land Use | Acres | Distribution |
|------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Commercial (non-auto) | 95 | 38% |
| Auto Sale/Auto Service | 54 | 21% |
| Residential | 40 | 16% |
| Industrial | 36 | 14% |
| Public | 12 | 5% |
| Vacant | 12 | 5% |
| Open Space | 4 | 2% |
| Land Use Subtotal | 253 | 100% |
| Right-of-Way | 52 | -- |
| TOTAL | 305 | -- |

Figure 2-3. Distribution of Existing Land Uses (2012)

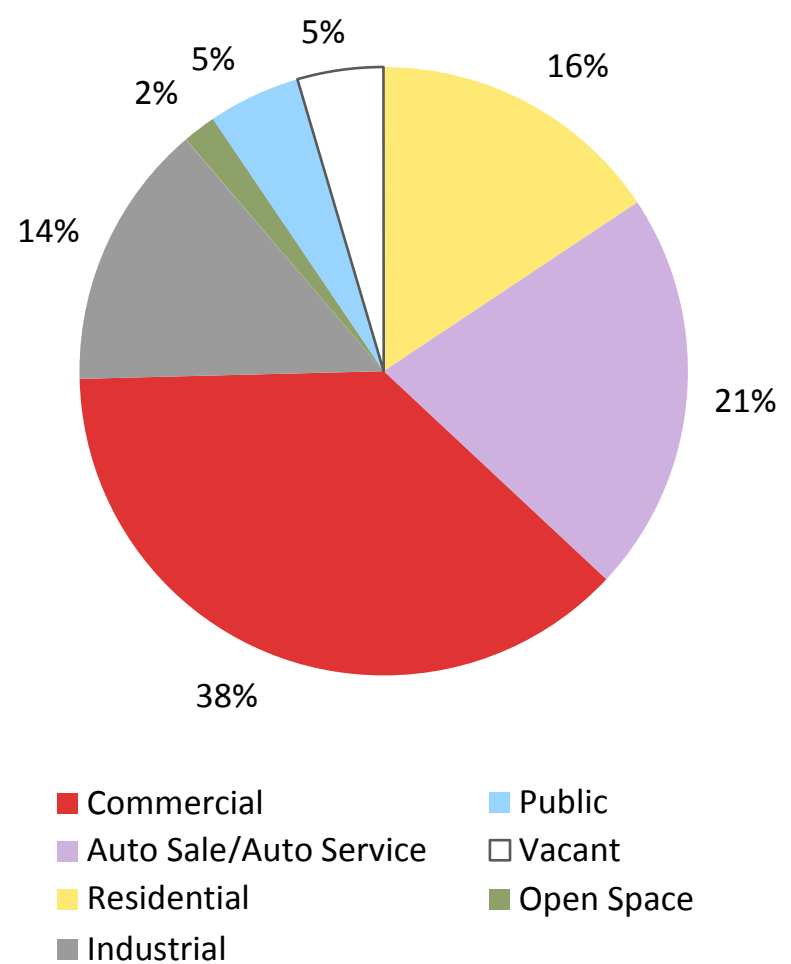




Figure 2-4. Existing Land Uses (2012)

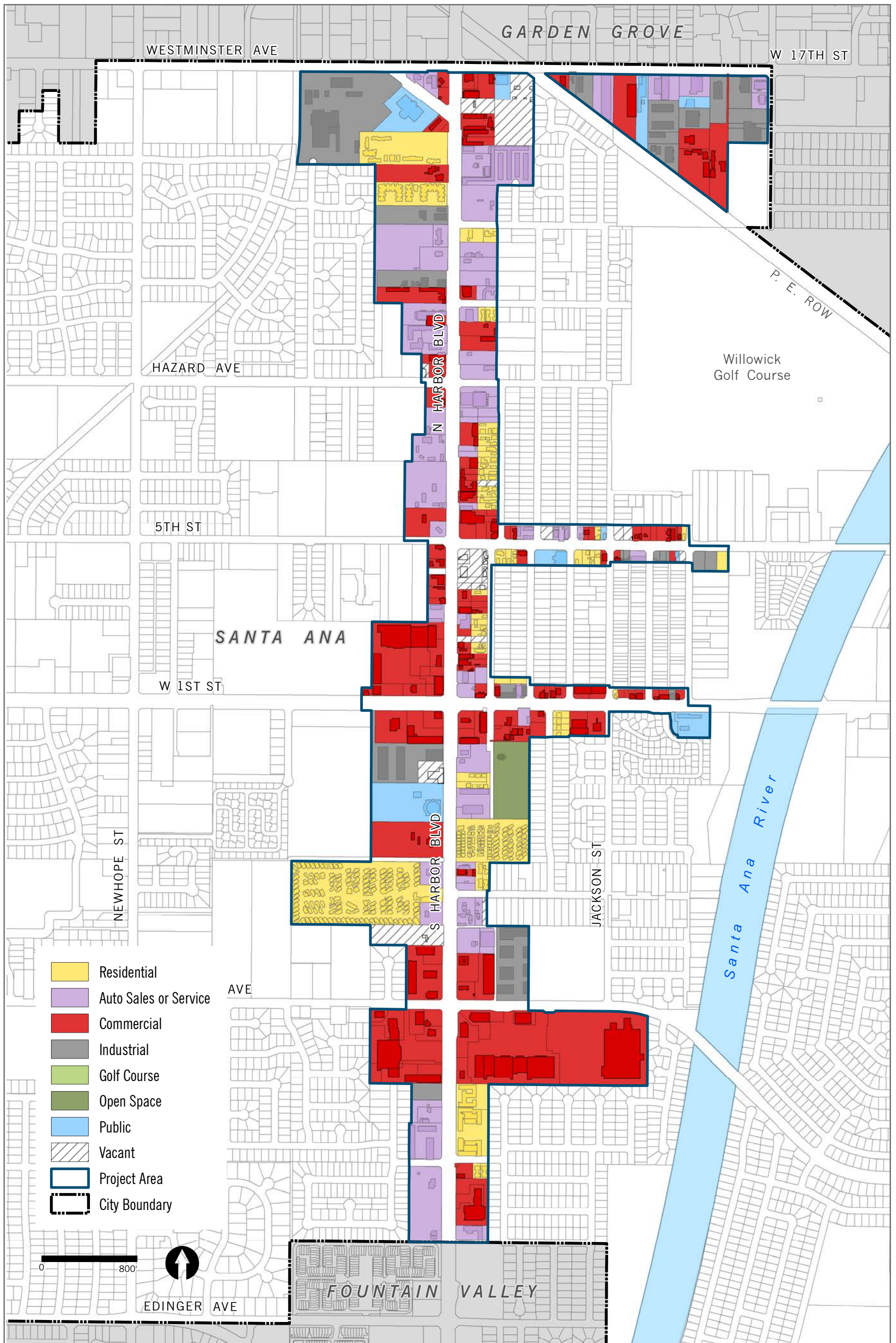
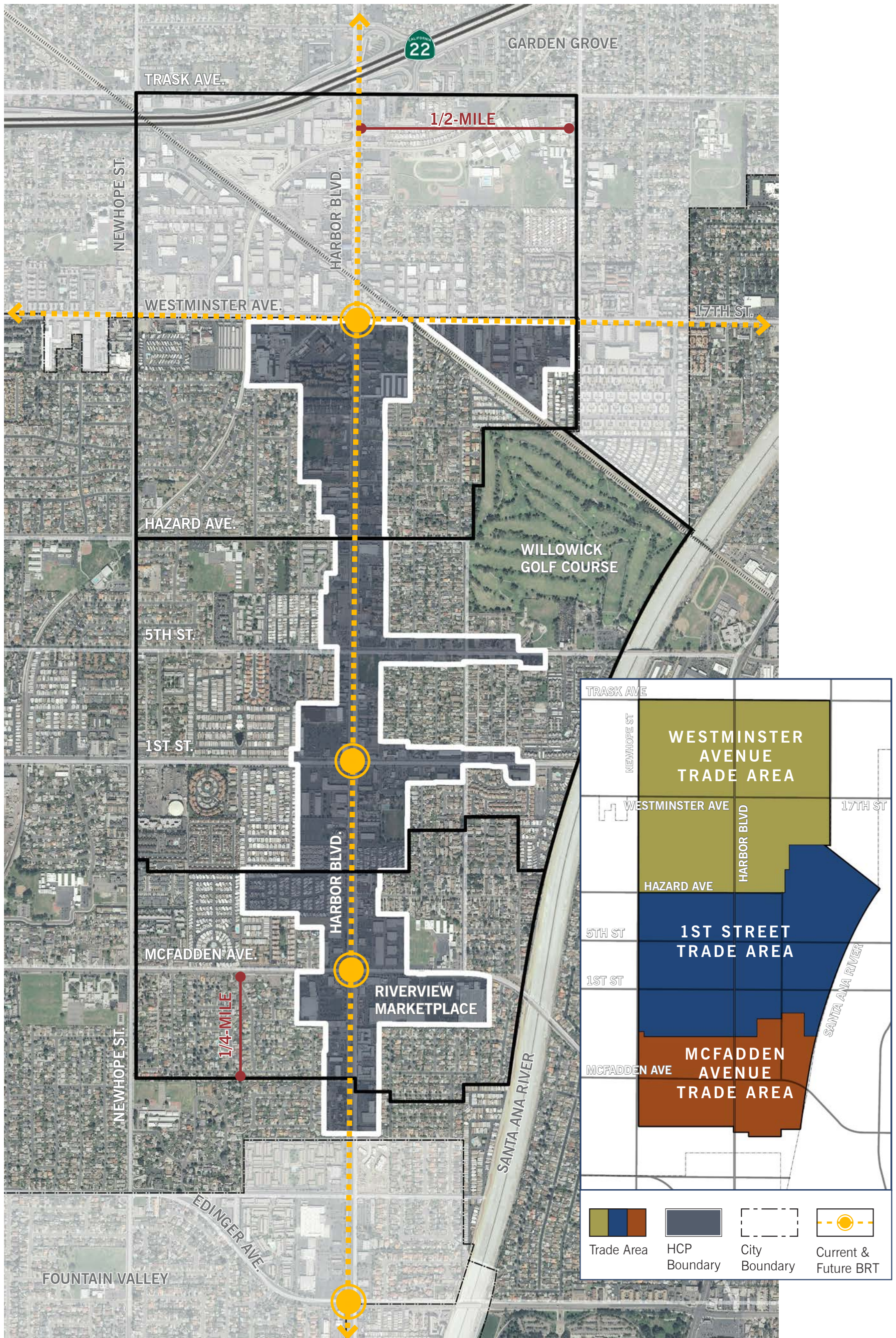




Figure 2-5. Retail Market Trade Areas





Public Outreach

The City of Santa Ana conducted an extensive outreach program over the course of roughly four years. The City’s motto, “Creating Community Together,” carried through as an overarching theme for each event. Events included an open house, an idea fair with bus tour, attendance at neighborhood meetings, a focus group of property and business owners, a coordinated workshop with the Circulation Element Update, and a scoping meeting for the EIR.

Significant input was obtained from residents, property owners, local business owners, community organizations, the local police and fire departments, the county transportation authority, and local developers. Feedback was collected through several methods, including individual conversations, group discussion, question and answer sessions, comment cards, and visual preference surveys.

Overall thousands of people in western Santa Ana were contacted and informed about the project. Reflecting the current makeup of residents around Harbor Boulevard, many materials were distributed in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and translators were present at multiple meetings. Hundreds of people participated directly in all three languages at the various meetings and workshops.

Five topics emerged as having the greatest importance to the community: safety, land use, aesthetics, transportation, and development intensity.

Safety

Residents and businesses voiced safety concerns regarding crime and the interaction between pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists along the corridor. During conversations at workshops between the City’s Planning and Building Agency, the Santa Ana Police Department, and members of the community, participants suggested increasing lighting, improving crosswalks and sidewalks, and creating safer pathways for bicyclists.

Land Use

The community expressed a desire for a broader range of uses that are less focused on auto dependency. Nice restaurants and sidewalk cafes were suggested to increase pedestrians on the street. Some people were excited about the possibility of creating new job opportunities along the corridor. Families in the area requested a day care facility.

Many residents emphasized the need to preserve existing open space and to add more open space. The types of open spaces suggested included community gardens, rooftop spaces, larger parkways, and large open areas. Many residents and business owners agreed that new housing opportunities should be made a priority. A number of residents were skeptical of workforce housing but all agreed on the need to attract new, high quality development. Some suggested that this portion of Harbor Boulevard could support museum or hotel uses.

Aesthetics

Wide sidewalks, attractive landscaping, and a variety of building designs ranked as the most desirable streetscapes in the visual preferences survey. Improving the streetscape was also the topic of many discussions, comment cards, and letters received throughout the City’s outreach events. In addition to improving the aesthetics of the street, enhanced landscaping and new building facades were suggested as ways to make the corridor more pedestrian friendly and to increase community pride. A local community group coined the phrase “Clean and Green Harbor Boulevard” as their vision for the corridor.

Transportation

Harbor Boulevard is a major roadway connector through the City and the local region. Residents and business owners understood the need to maintain a good level of service for motor vehicles while improving conditions for other forms of travel. None wanted to see Harbor Boulevard ever expanded from its current six-lane configuration to an eight-lane configuration.

Many were excited and eager to see enhanced bus service come to the area, which hosts some of the busiest bus routes in all of Orange County. A bike sharing program and secure bike parking closer to businesses were recommended to promote cycling as an alternative mode of transportation. Finally, all agreed that improvements should be made to increase safety for adults and children who walk throughout the area and along Harbor Boulevard every day.

Development Intensity

In general, outreach participants indicated that they envision Harbor Boulevard as a transit-oriented corridor with an urban style of development. While some preferred that the heights of buildings remain limited to two stories, many residents and participants agreed on the need for and desirability of intensifying development. However, they all cautioned that it should complement the existing adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Outreach Timeline

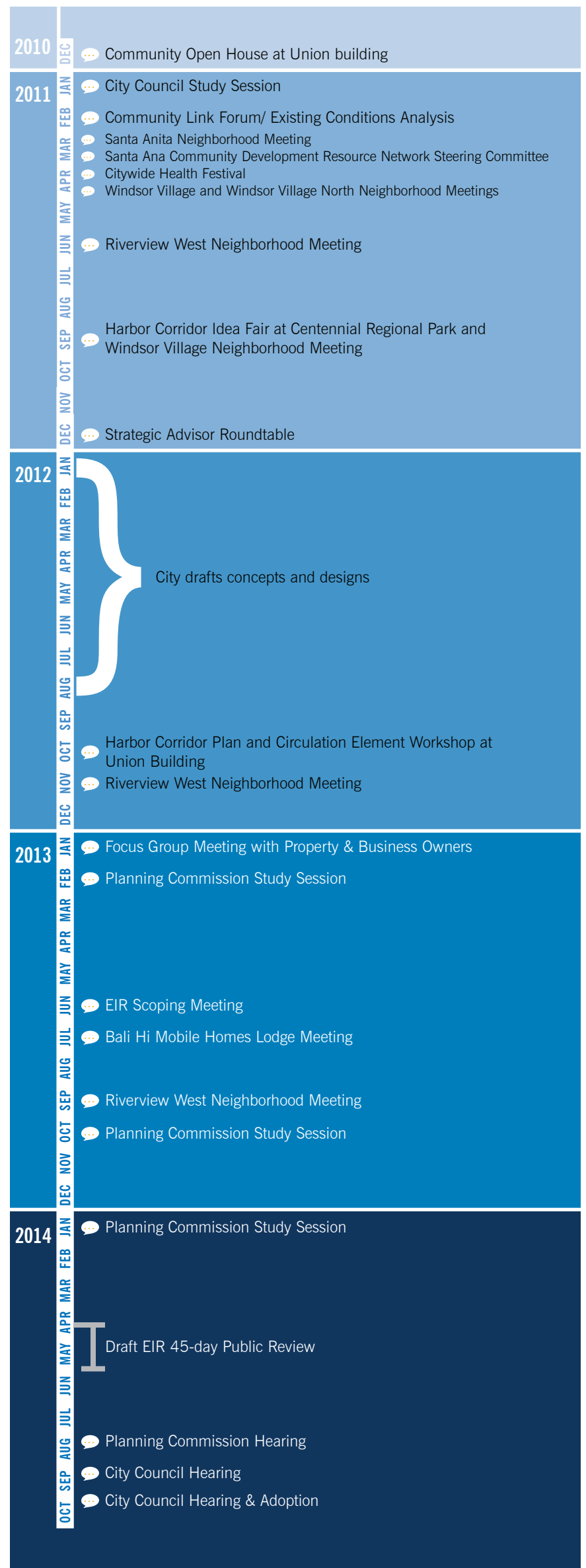




Figure 2-6. Outreach Photos and Materials



Community Open House (December 2010)



Strategic Advisors Workshop (December 2011)



Harbor Corridor Plan and Circulation Element Workshop (October 2012)



Harbor Corridor Idea Fair and Bus Tour (September 2011)



Focus Group of Property and Business Owners (January 2013)