

# Community Character and Design

The design of neighborhoods, buildings, and streets plays a key role in how people access, experience, and use places, and thus the broader community quality of life. The Community Character and Design (CCD) Element seeks to enhance the design of key residential and commercial areas in Carson to promote their visual appearance, community orientation, and integration with the public realm. As the community continues to grow through infill, reuse, and intensification, there are opportunities to build upon the city's successes and establish new models of community design.

The CCD Element presents community design goals for key areas, including the Core, Neighborhood Villages, employment centers, and Greenway Corridors. This element builds upon the existing character, and is partly based on work completed through a separate but complementary process, called the Carson Neighborhood Villages Plan, which is a study (not adopted by the City) that looked at design of key neighborhoods within Carson to create more sustainable, vibrant, and complete neighborhoods.

This element establish seeks to:

- Foster neighborhood, community, and social connectedness;
- Promote attractive, safe, and walkable neighborhoods and districts;
- Enhance the city's visual quality and build a distinctive sense of place and pride in Carson;
- Ensure high-quality development design;
- Promote a multi-generational and diverse community; and
- Improve streetscapes and the public realm.





## 4.1 Existing Urban Form

### CARSON DEVELOPMENT SNAPSHOT

The area now known as Carson was first settled by the Gabriolino Indians, who built villages in the area over 6,000 years before the first white settlers arrived in southern California.<sup>1</sup> The first white settler was Juan Jose Dominguez, who arrived in Carson in 1784 after the Spanish government gave him a private land grant for an area totaling 75,000 acres. The land grant included areas now known as Carson, Torrance, Redondo Beach, and the Los Angeles Harbor. Throughout the 19th century, settlers used the land predominantly for cattle ranching, sheep grazing, and dairy farming. The character of the area began to change from rural to urban following the establishment of the Dominguez Water Company in 1911. With the provision of water and other utilities, settlers began to develop residential and commercial properties along Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard.

The Carson area continued to grow throughout the 20th century. The discovery of oil in the 1920s led to the development of refineries in the area, spurring industrial and residential development.<sup>2</sup> As seen in Figure 4-1, by 1930, most of the main corridors in Carson today—including Carson Street, Avalon Boulevard, Victoria Street, Alameda Street, Main Street, and Sepulveda Boulevard—were major transportation corridors. By 1950, the grid pattern centered around Carson Street extended into the southern and eastern portions of the city. By 1964, the interstate system made the South Bay more easily accessible to the rest of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and the population of Carson boomed from about 40,000 residents in 1960 to 70,000 residents in 1970.

2 State of California Department of Conservation. Oil and Gas Production History in California. 2005. [ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/oil/history/History\\_of\\_Calif.pdf](ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/oil/history/History_of_Calif.pdf). Accessed November 2017.

1 City of Carson. History of Carson. 2017. Online. <http://ci.carson.ca.us/AboutCarson/History.aspx>. Accessed November 2017.

The 1960s were an important decade for Carson. By this time, residents of many nearby areas had incorporated their communities into cities. These cities would not allow uses such as refuse dumps, landfills, and auto dismantling plants within their boundaries, and thus, many of these uses relocated to Carson. To exert greater control over land uses in their community, residents voted to incorporate Carson into a city in 1968. The city continued to grow, and as seen in Figure 4-1, most of the development that exists now had already been built by 1981.

## CITY STRUCTURE

Carson is a compact community of approximately 19 square miles. The city is generally flat with some rolling terrain, especially toward the north, and is fully urbanized. Development is generally low-scaled, often no more than a few stories tall. Several edges of the city blend into those of surrounding communities.

The country's busiest freeway and the largest freight corridor coincide in Carson. Thus, streets and major transportation corridors are a defining feature of Carson's urban structure. Most streets are oriented in cardinal directions, creating a grid, as seen in Figure 4-2. Often, major street corridors form edges of neighborhoods and industrial districts. Interstate-405—the busiest freeway in the country—and SR-91 delineate the city into north, middle, and south sections. The Alameda freight corridor—the busiest freight corridor in the country—runs north-south in the eastern portion of the community. Interstate-110 (I-110) and Interstate-710 (I-710) form city boundaries on the western and eastern sides of the city, respectively.

Within this framework of corridors and freeways, Carson mostly has a mix of industrial and residential uses. Most of the eastern portion of the city—where the Alameda Corridor is located—is industrial, though there are pockets of residential in this area. There are several prominent activity nodes, including Dignity Health Sports Park, California State University-Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), the Porsche Experience Center, and the SouthBay Pavilion mall. West Carson Street serves as the city's Downtown, and significant new residential and mixed-use development has been occurring along that street and along Avalon Boulevard in the Core.

## NEIGHBORHOOD FORM

Urban form, including street patterns, lot size, lot shape, and building footprints in Carson vary from neighborhood to neighborhood depending on when neighborhoods were built. For instance, as seen in Figure 4-3, the neighborhood built prior to 1930 has a compact grid pattern with many intersections. Neighborhoods built after the 1930s tend to look a bit more suburban in character, meaning they have curvier streets, fewer access points to major arterials, and less residential density. For instance, the neighborhood built around 1981 on Figure 4-3 built has a slightly curvilinear street pattern with many streets that turn into cul-de-sacs rather than connect to arterials.

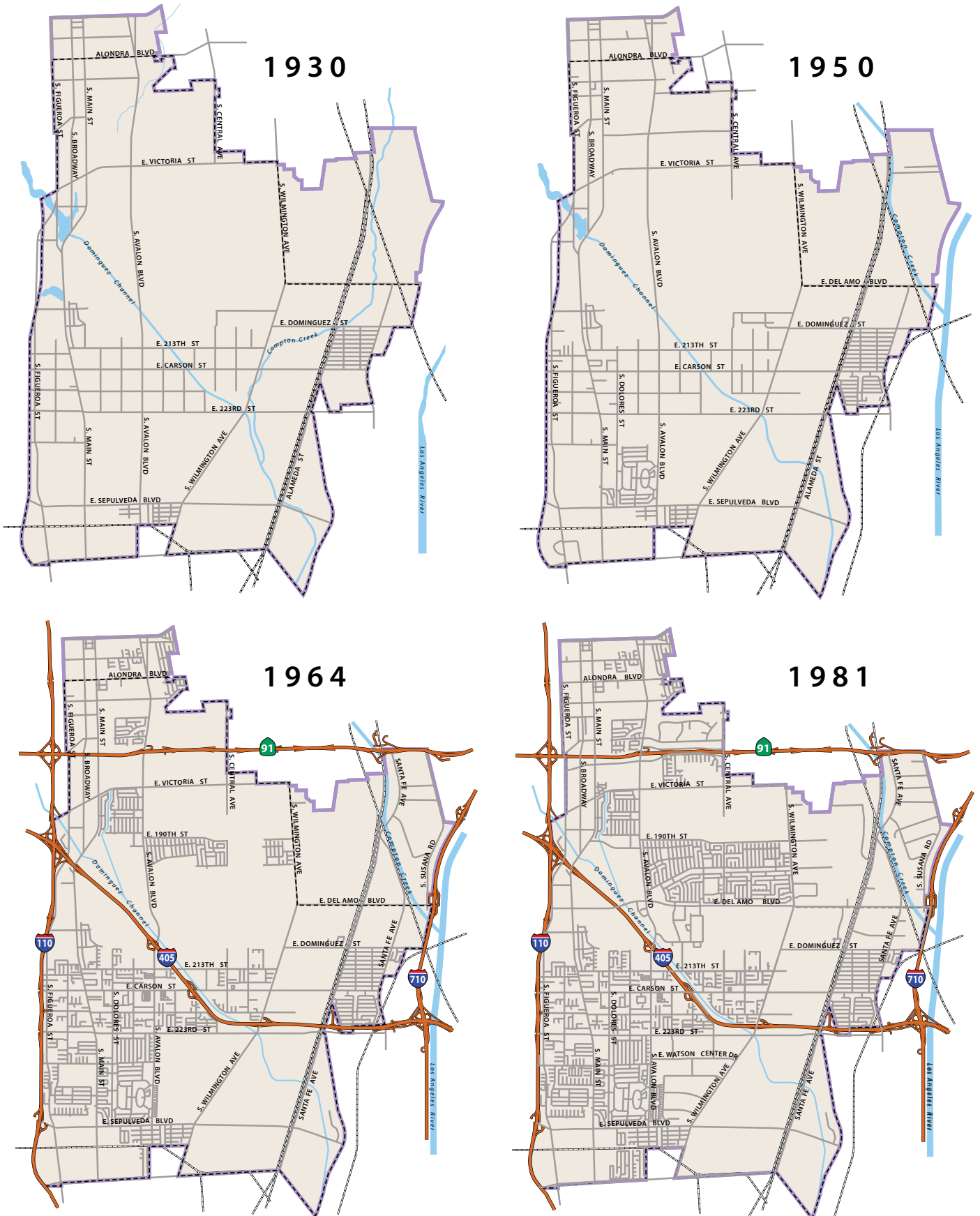
Within many neighborhoods, there is great variety in lot size, lot shape, and building footprint. Some neighborhoods, such as Dominguez Hills Village, were built as part of one planned development, and thus buildings and street patterns look similar in the neighborhood. Others, such as the residential area shown in Figure 4-4, vary in terms of lot size, residential land use, and street pattern, reflecting development over time.

While there is a great variety in neighborhood urban form, most neighborhoods have similarly-defined edges formed by arterials, often with sound walls alongside. For instance, the neighborhood shown in Figure 4-4 is bordered by four arterials, including Carson Street, Avalon Boulevard, 223rd Street, and Main Street. Arterials shape neighborhood edges because traffic and their width interrupt the flow of neighborhood form. Often, neighborhoods facing arterials are bordered by sound walls, visually distinguishing



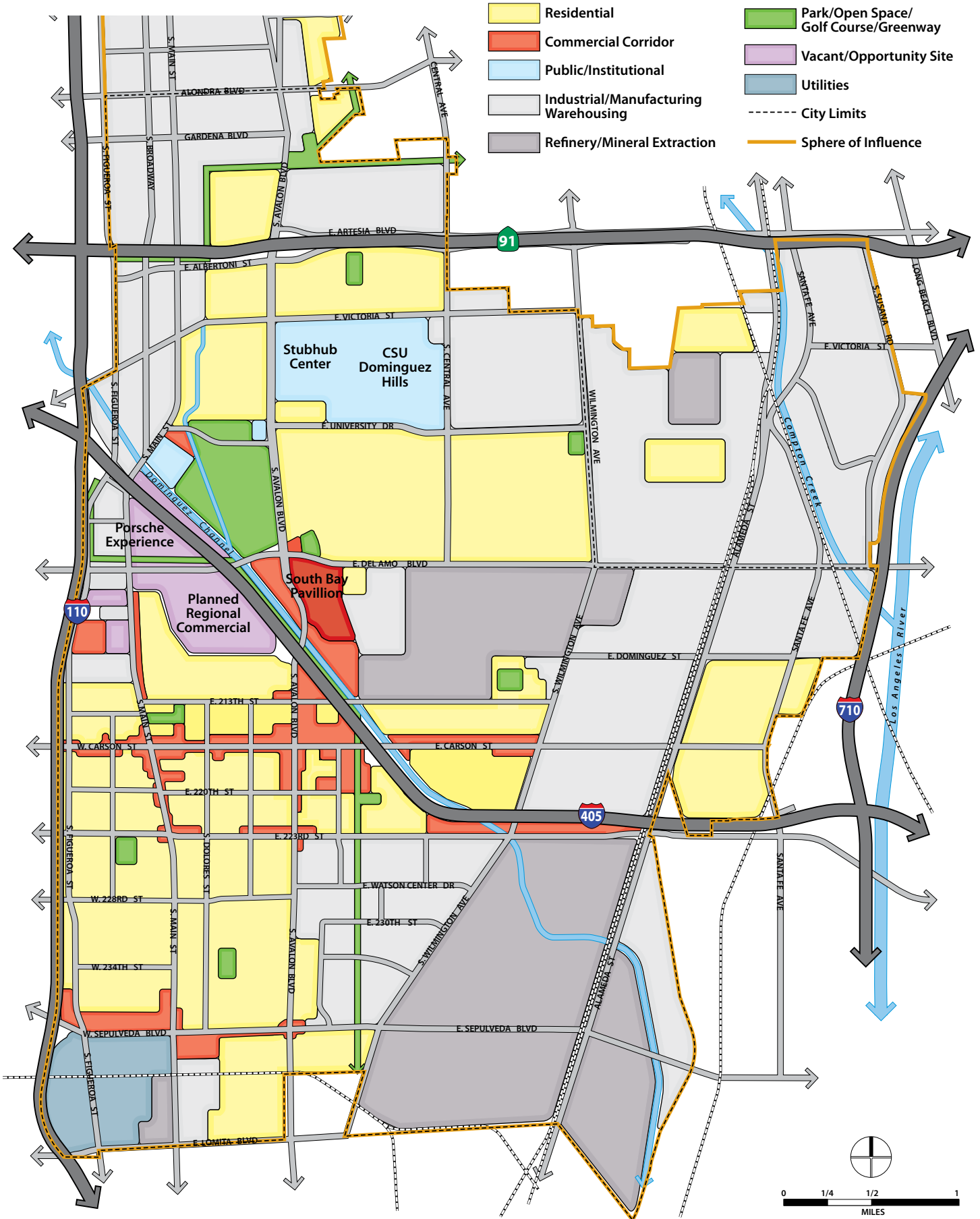
4-3

**Figure 4-1 Historical Development of Carson**

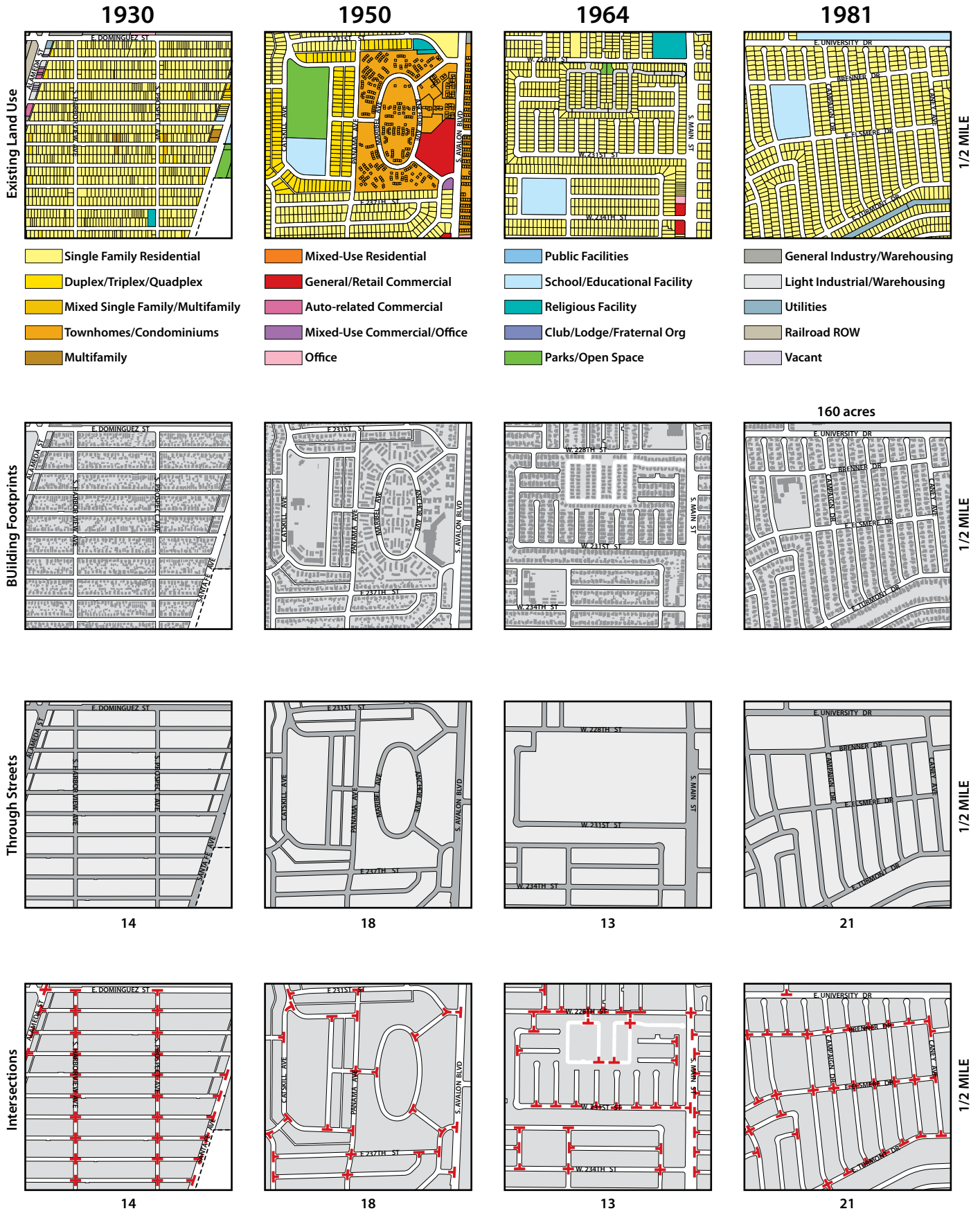


Source: Historical U.S. Geological Survey 7.5 min quads: Compton, Inglewood, Long Beach, Torrance, South Gate.

Figure 4-2 Existing City Structure



**Figure 4-3 Neighborhood Form**



Source: Historical U.S. Geological Survey 7.5 min quads: Compton, Inglewood, Long Beach, Torrance, South Gate; City of Carson, 2017; Dyett & Bhatia, 2017

neighborhoods from others across arterials. On occasion, non-residential land uses border residential neighborhoods, creating neighborhood boundaries. For instance, in the figure shown, Main Street is not bordered by residential uses, but rather commercial and religious uses. A few neighborhoods in the city, including several of the mobile home parks, have gated entryways and are only accessible to residents. Dominguez Hills Village, for instance, is surrounded by a fence and has limited entryways and connections to the main street grid. A few of the cul-de-sacs in Figure 4-4 are also accessible only via private entryway. The wide variety of lot sizes, land uses, street patterns, and boundaries contribute to the diversity of housing and neighborhood options in Carson.

## BLOCK SIZE AND SHAPE

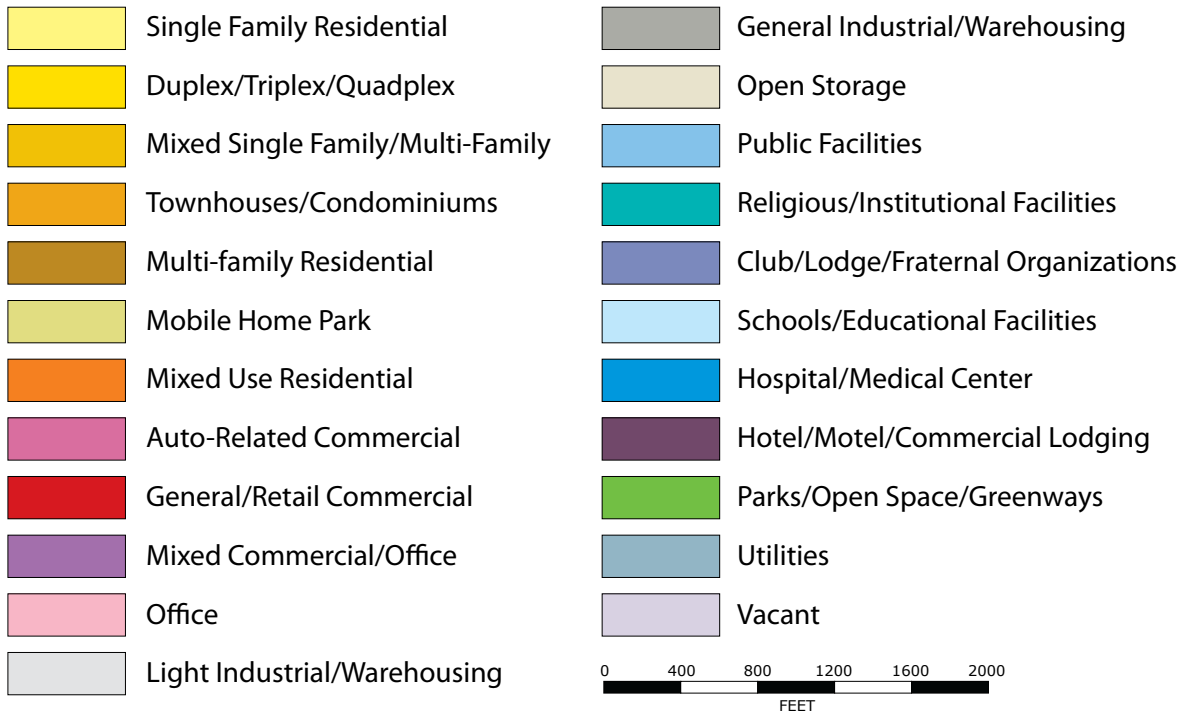
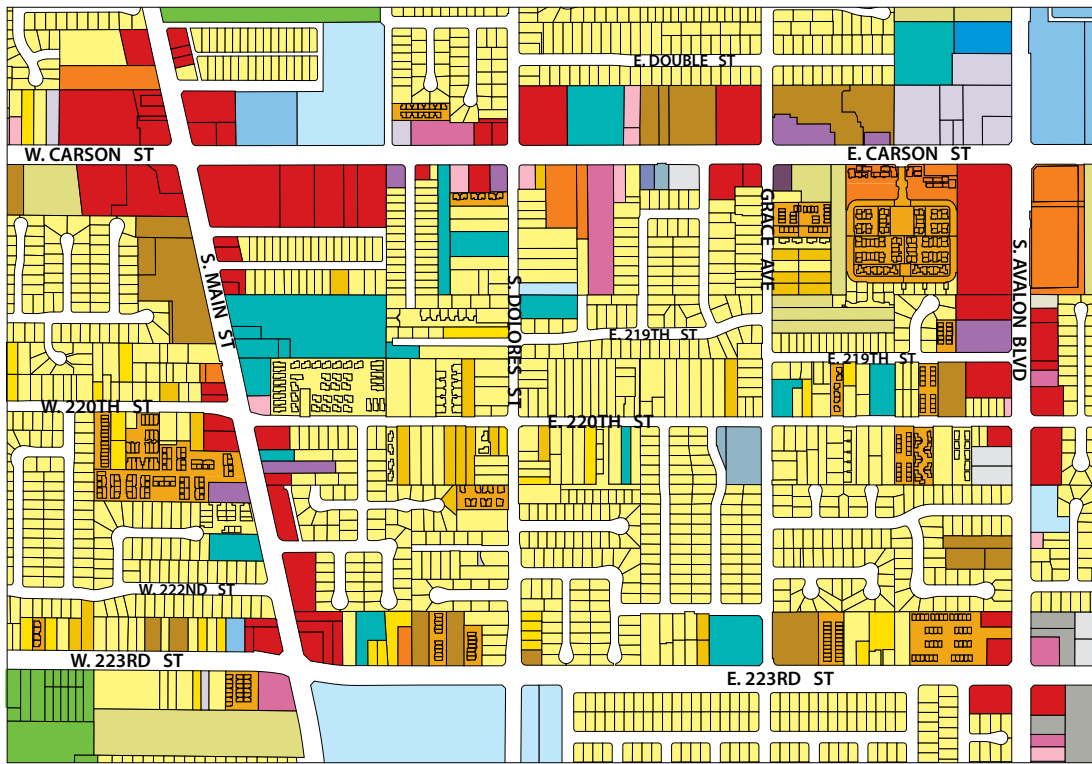
A city's street grid and resulting block size influences how people move around their city and the accessibility of jobs, services, and other activity centers. Large super-blocks accommodate larger building footprints, but reduce pedestrian and vehicular connectivity. Likewise, a disconnected street pattern (e.g. dead end streets) limits options for circulation. On the other hand, a more connected grid of streets and smaller blocks can improve mobility for cars, pedestrians, and alternative transportation modes, since more options are available for travel. This type of fine-grained development pattern is also more visually interesting and secure for pedestrians at the street level.

Block size and shape is often an indicator of scale of development, the age of development, and the type of land use. The largest blocks in Carson are occupied by oil refineries, such as Shell (447 acres), Phillips 66 (227 acres), and Marathon (730 acres). Large blocks accommodate major commercial developments, such as the SouthBay Pavilion (103 acres), the Porsche Experience Center (52 acres), and the 168-acre opportunity site along Main Street and Del Amo Boulevard. CSUDH also occupies a large block of 248 acres. In these cases, the large block size of each of these developments is reflective of their importance in the economy of the city and the everyday life of people in Carson. However, most blocks are shaped by grid pattern defined by major corridors. The major corridors are offset from each other by about a mile, creating blocks that are about a square mile in area.

In the oldest residential neighborhoods (built prior to 1950), such as the neighborhood south of Carson Street seen in Figure 4-4, blocks are square or rectangular shape in shape. Most neighborhoods built after this time follow a more suburban street pattern, consisting of curvilinear streets with limited access points to arterials, creating curvy blocks of varying sizes. For instance, blocks in Avalon Village and Dominguez Hills Village are defined in large part by oval-shaped streets. The oval street, combined with other streets in both areas, creates irregular block shapes and slows down traffic, creating a suburban feel.



**Figure 4-4 Neighborhood Inset**





## 4.2 Community Design and Policy Framework

The development of an attractive community not only provides a distinctive city that creates pride for residents but can also improve the health, safety, and accessibility to Carson residents, workers, and visitors. This section outlines high-level design strategies and policy framework to guide new development in a way that complements the existing urban form and provides a high-quality living and working environment.

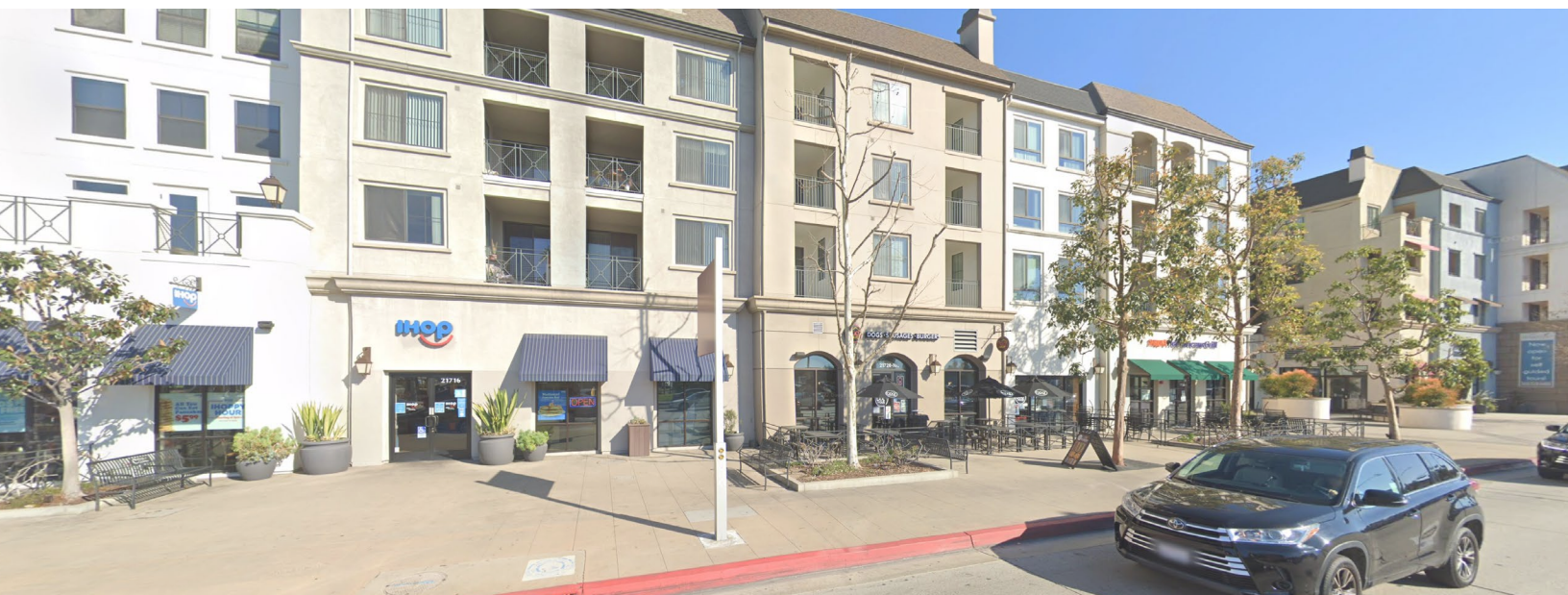
The General Plan supports building upon Carson's existing city structure to further enhance the community character through an intensified, central Core; strong, identifiable Neighborhood Villages and employment centers; and better street connections and streetscape improvements through Greenway Corridors. The arrangement of these components within the overall city structure is shown in Figure 4-5. Key design and policy features include:

- A dynamic Core around the intersection of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard with a walkable, more intense mix of uses, enhanced streetscapes, sidewalks, street crossings, public amenities, pedestrian-scaled design, and active ground floor uses north

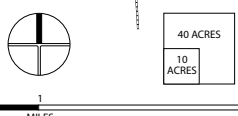
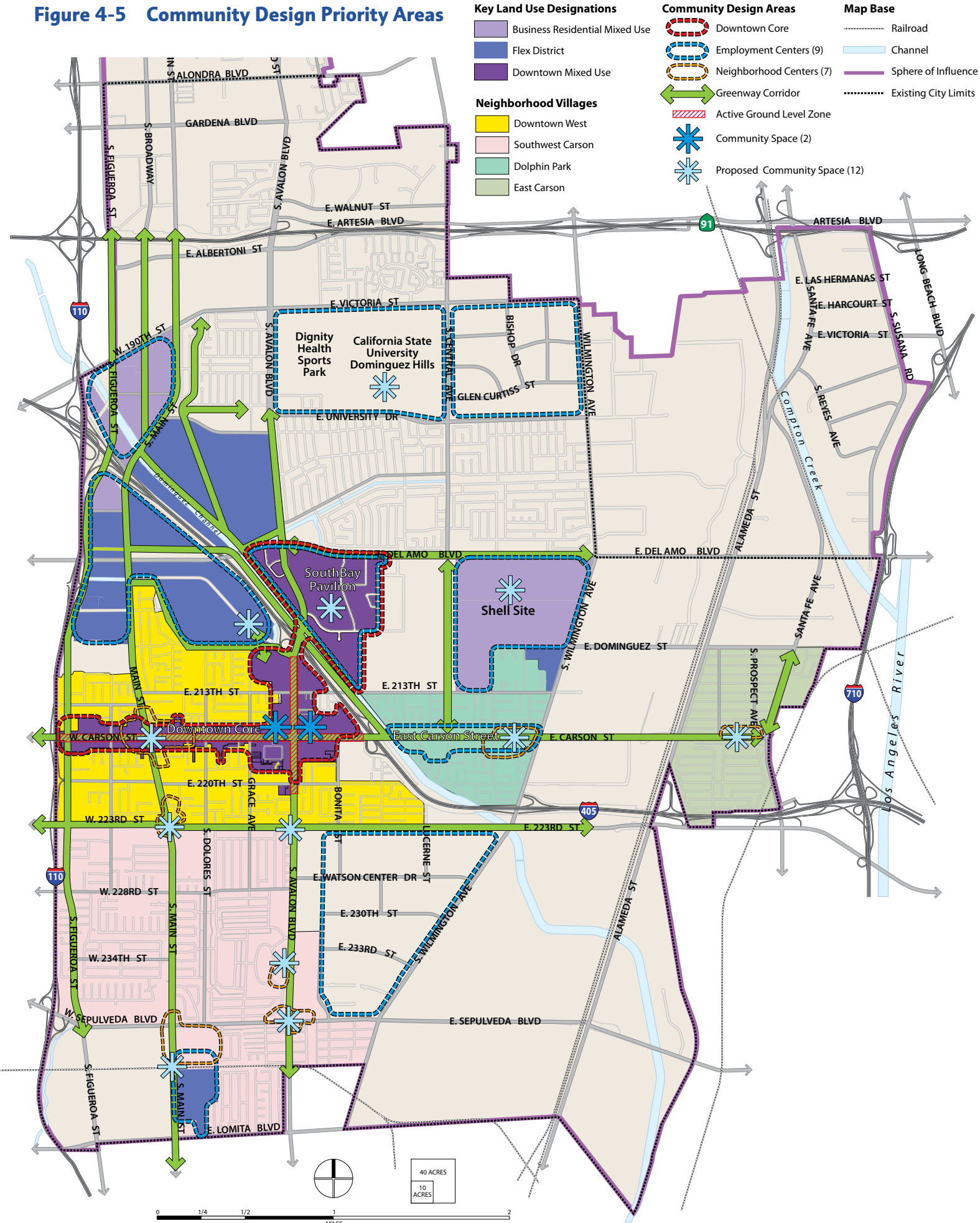
along Avalon Boulevard to the SouthBay Pavilion and heading west along Carson Street to Figueroa Street.

- Complete Neighborhood Villages with greater emphasis on walkability, strengthening identity, and improving access to everyday shopping and service needs through neighborhood centers. Neighborhood Villages include Southwest Carson, Downtown West, Dolphin Park, and East Carson.
- Vibrant employment centers with higher level of design and appearance that support greater intensities with large sites broken down into smaller blocks for better connections to adjacent development.
- Greenway Corridors are a guide for streetscape improvements and higher level of design and appearance in key areas where greater concentration of people expected.

By building on the city's existing assets and integrating new development within the General Plan's structural framework, Carson will evolve into a more livable and connected community, creating a strong sense of place and improving quality of life for its residents and visitors.



**Figure 4-5 Community Design Priority Areas**



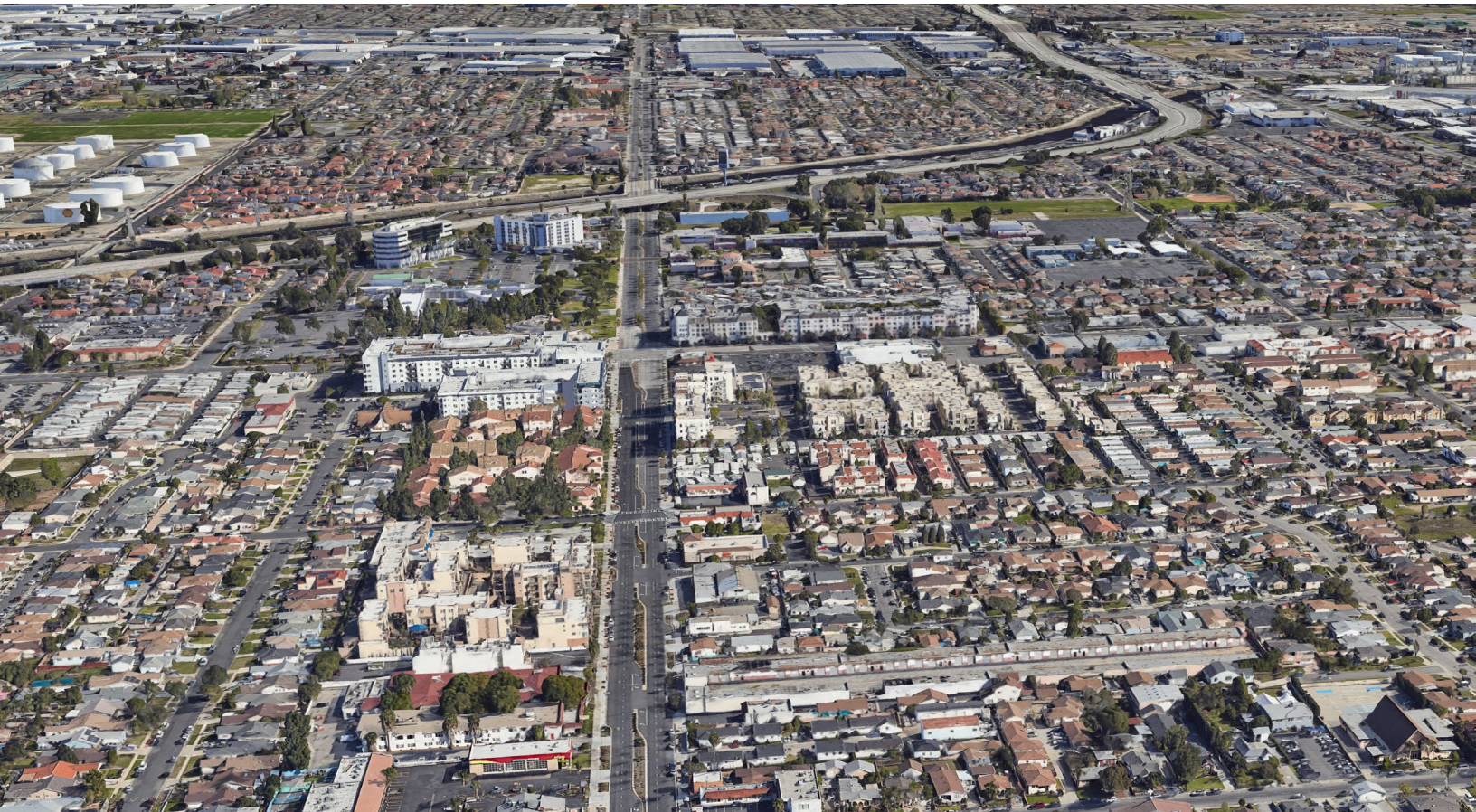
## 4.3 Carson's Core

The General Plan supports concentration of new development in a central area in the city, shown as the "Core" shown in Figure 4-5, which expands on the energy and success of recent development along Carson Street and the Carson City Hall and Civic Center. The Core spans east to west along Carson Street from I-405 to I-110 and north to south along Avalon Boulevard from 223rd Street to I-405.

Carson Street, which is the backbone of the Core, is the main commercial corridor in Carson, with recent streetscape improvements undertaken as part of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan. Gateway signs near Figueroa Street and the I-405 welcome visitors to Carson. From approximately Figueroa Street to I-405 Carson Street has two traffic lanes moving in either direction, a landscaped central median and turn lane, and marked

parallel parking. Bicyclists travel down Carson Street via shared Class III bike routes marked with sharrows (shared ROWs or rights-of-way). Streetscape elements, such as decorative bike racks, sheltered bus stops, decorative paving, street trees, and lighting create a welcoming environment.

Carson Street is home to a few grocery stores, a drug store, and has several other commercial establishments, including offices, restaurants, smaller stores, motels, and the city's largest hotel, adjacent to I-405. Some older, smaller-scale service commercial uses are also present. New housing with retail at the ground level at several locations, including south near Avalon Boulevard, have contributed to a denser, more urban feel in Carson. These building, as well as other new structures like it along Carson Street, are four stories in height, and have pedestrian-oriented ground floor restaurants and cafés that attract activity.



*looking along West Carson Street toward I-405*

## URBAN DESIGN APPROACH

The General Plan continues support for growing the Core into a vibrant, connected center with a diverse mix of uses. This will be a priority area for streetscape, pedestrian, and bicycle-way improvements, to promote active, walkable environments with easy access to stores, services, parks, and other public uses. New development along Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard is envisioned to be in mixed-use buildings, with housing above retail stores. The General Plan also seeks to promote retention of existing local-oriented shopping establishments; in some instances, shopping centers may be able to fill in parking lots with housing while retaining some stores. The Civic Center will form the heart of the Core, with a focus on a pedestrian-friendly and community-oriented environment, and better connections with surroundings. Specific design approaches for promoting a vibrant Core are described below.

### Streetscape Design

The design of the street, and the buildings that front along the street, are central to an area's identity, movement, and pedestrian experience. Regardless of the method of transportation used, visitors, residents and workers must travel on streets, and the design of streets shapes the perception of the area as a whole. Street design can incorporate a wide variety of elements, ranging from benches to paving to tree grates, or even signage. Many of these detailed elements can be grouped into larger categories such as pavement and sidewalk width, landscaping, stormwater management, parking, medians and sidewalk amenities. An effective street design includes enclosure and street wall, continuity, character, relationship between pedestrians and traffic, shade and light.

The streetscape design of the Core should create a physically attractive and functionally efficient environment to promote Carson's image as a desirable location to establish and conduct business, a safe and enjoyable place to live, and the cultural heart of the community. New buildings should be oriented towards the street, with active ground floor uses and design integrated into the street frontages with parking in garages or tucked in the back. The General Plan supports creating a high-quality, walkable, and engaging streetscape that will continue to revitalize and

build up the Core supporting a vibrant urban environment to support Carson businesses and for residents to enjoy.

Signage, landscaping, streetscape, and street furniture improvements along Carson Street, together with new development, is shaping a main street-like identity for the corridor, and making this area feel welcoming to bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, street signage and furniture branded with the Carson logo visually reinforces Carson's identity. Incorporating these improvements on other corridors may create a more distinctive Carson streetscape identity throughout the city. Extending these improvements along Avalon Boulevard between Carson Street and I-405 can further tie the Core together by connecting the inner core area to key large-scale development opportunities along I-405, including the 157-acre opportunity site where the District at South Bay project is proposed, as well as the SouthBay Pavilion Mall.

The General Plan supports further implementation of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan, which seeks to achieve a unique pedestrian-friendly mixed-use environment along Carson Street, and should be referred to for specific development guidelines, public improvements, and implementation strategies.



*New Mixed Use Development*

## Building/Public Realm Interface

Building design, especially at the ground level, is critical when addressing the character in an urban area with pedestrian traffic and active uses. New residential, mixed-use, commercial, and office should support an engaging public realm to facilitate an active pedestrian environment within the Core. Frontages that require active ground level design are illustrated in Figure 4-5. Ground level commercial establishments should contribute to the pedestrian-oriented nature of the Core and encourage individual storefronts to establish unique identity through façade articulation and creative design.

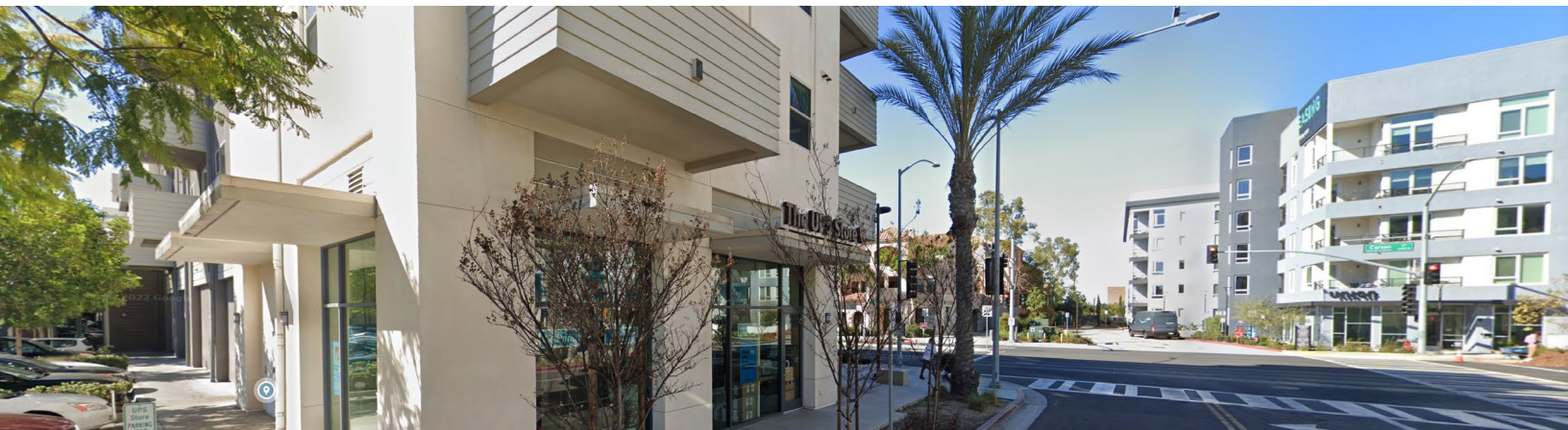
For mixed-use buildings in the Core that front along Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard, including residential, commercial, and office, flexible design should be incorporated that can accommodate a variety of uses at the ground floor. Flexible ground floor spaces are encouraged so that the space can be reconfigured relatively easily from one land use to another to allow for adaptation to economic

conditions and/or demographic shifts over time. Active ground floor level design can include a variety of strategies, including storefronts, entryways, windows, patios, art, and attractive landscaping, as well as choosing active uses to be on the ground floor, for example gyms, stores, lobbies, and restaurants. Improving the public realm through active ground level design can help encourage walking and active transportation, give vibrancy to the street, improve safety by engaging people in the public realm, and support a diverse, dynamic, and aesthetic city design.

Where residential uses are located on the ground floor, the ground floor building design must still engage with public realm by shaping the street frontage, locating entrances and balconies along the street, and contribute to a comfortable and inviting pedestrian experience while maintaining privacy for residents. Office buildings should be designed to have a clear main entrance with public space or non-tinted windows offices on the ground floor.



*New housing/mixed-use development across from City Hall*



*New mixed-use development along West Carson Street, with active frontage and parking tucked behind building*



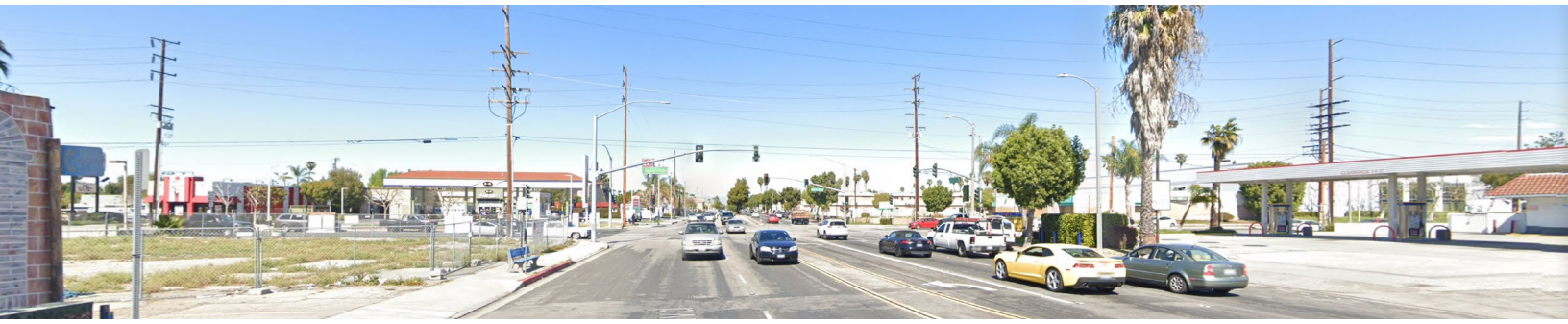
## 4.4 Neighborhood Villages

During the General Plan update process, the City conducted a study of different residential and commercial areas within Carson as part of the Neighborhood Villages Plan study. This study, which is not an adopted City document, identified specific areas as Neighborhood Villages, which represent targeted areas that are supportive of new local services and destinations while improving safety and access for people who are not driving automobiles to local destinations. The General Plan builds on the recommendations of the Neighborhood Villages Plan, while ensuring that the villages are seamlessly integrated into the wider community fabric.

Neighborhood Villages contain both residential areas and neighborhood centers (also called “nodes”) that provide a sense of place and community where residents can meet daily needs such as going to stores, restaurants, and banks on foot, by bicycle, or via other non-automotive means . The approximate location of the neighborhood centers are shown in Figure 4-5 and correspond with the proposed Community Spaces that are established in Chapter 5: Recreation and Active Lifestyle and Neighborhood Nodes in the Neighborhood Villages Plan. Connections between residential areas and neighborhood centers are important to support convenient and walkable access to goods and services; Chapter 3: Transportation and Connectivity should be referenced for specific connectivity improvements.

The General Plan supports the strategies that have been developed in the Neighborhood Villages Plan; below is a description and general design vision for each Neighborhood Village. The Neighborhood Villages are shown in Figure 4-5.

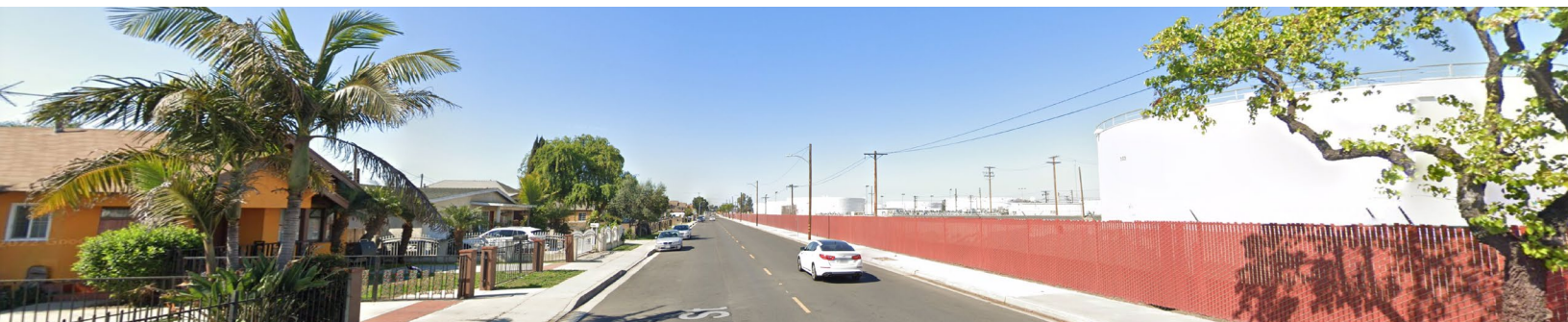
1. The **Southwest Carson Neighborhood Village** which is bounded by 223rd Street on the north, the City boundary/I-110 Freeway on the west, the City boundary on the south and the Watson Center industrial park/Avalon Boulevard/Wilmington Avenue on the east. Southwest Carson is the largest Neighborhood Village, with a population of over 20,000 residents. The General Plan envisions a greater diversity of housing units with commercial and neighborhood centers, particularly along Sepulveda Boulevard and at the intersection of Avalon Road, plus streetscape improvements to major arterials.
2. The **Downtown West Neighborhood Village** which encompasses all the residential and commercial portions of Carson west of I-405, north of 223rd Street and east of I-110, and a part of Carson's Core. While Carson Street is the key activity center in the northern portion of Downtown West, Carson High School and the intersection of Main Street and 223rd Street are also major destinations. The General Plan envisions development within the Downtown West Neighborhood Village to be slightly denser and taller than others in the City due to its proximity to the Core, location along a high quality transit route, nearby Metro Silver Line stop and existing pedestrian infrastructure. Development may also reflect a higher level of pedestrian orientation than in other Neighborhood Villages.
3. The **Dolphin Park Neighborhood Village** is bifurcated by East Carson Street, with I-405 to the south, the Dominguez Channel to west, the Shell Site to the north, and S. Wilmington Avenue to the east. The General Plan supports stronger connections to the Core through pedestrian-oriented street improvements and a greater intensity of housing units and mixed-use developments along East Carson Street. The General Plan also supports greater connections to open space, with potential development at the Shell site or to trails located along the Dominguez Channel.
4. The **East Carson Neighborhood Village** which is at the terminus of East Carson Street and is bounded by the Carson City Limits, Alameda Street, and East Dominguez Street. While interconnected street patterns have the potential to provide walkable access to schools and commercial services, the presence of truck traffic and wide, auto-oriented streetscapes makes walking unpleasant. The General Plan supports efforts into improving the streetscape along Carson Street and Santa Fe Avenue to enhance access to schools and services.
5. The **South Main Street Neighborhood Village** is anchored by what is presently the Carson Depot mall, with an Albertsons and a Home Depot as anchor tenants and smaller retail establishments, as well as a large truck body shop along the railroad to the south. The center extends across South Main Street and includes all frontages around the South Main Street/East Sepulveda Street intersection. This is the only neighborhood-oriented shopping area with a supermarket for neighborhoods in the southern part of the city; the General Plan maintains a General Commercial designation for the shopping center to ensure it can expand as needed and remain vibrant. There may be longer-term opportunities to develop of the area as mixed-use (with residential above retail) and commercial and/or mixed-use development for sites west of South Main Street close to the East Sepulveda Boulevard intersection that are presently industrial and designated as such in the General Plan; any use change on these sites would require a General Plan amendment.



*Southwest Carson Neighborhood Village*



*Downtown West Neighborhood Village*



*Dolphin Park Neighborhood Village*



*East Carson Neighborhood Village*



*South Main Street Neighborhood Village*



## URBAN DESIGN APPROACH

Neighborhood Villages are envisioned to incorporate design features to foster social and community connectedness while strengthening neighborhood image, form, and identity. Good urban design practices in streetscape and building design are important to make Neighborhood Villages memorable and distinct. Commercial centers, which contain everyday goods and services, should have better pedestrian and bicycle access to the surrounding neighborhood and contribute to an attractive urban environment. Having a well-designed and connected community will increase the attractiveness of Carson and improve quality of life for residents. Design concepts to help guide new development within the Neighborhood Villages include:

- Locating parking facilities away from the street front either by placing parking lots to the back/side of the lot or through structured (surface or underground) parking facilities.
- Incorporating flexible parking requirements to support infill development, creation of a more livable and human-scaled public space, and encouragement of non-auto travel.
- Locating pedestrian and/or bicycle paths to better connect neighborhood centers to surrounding communities.
- Using high-quality building materials and locating windows and entrances to support active and attractive frontages along primary streets.
- Improving the public realm through streetscape improvements, such as wider sidewalks, outdoor dining, street trees, pedestrian-scaled and attractive lighting, benches and other street furniture, wayfinding, attractive building signage, and branding that is unique to each Neighborhood Village.
- Growing the tree canopy by maintaining existing trees and planting additional street trees throughout existing neighborhoods, and encouraging property owners to plant trees in their front lawn.
- Supporting mixed-use and higher density development in areas that are close to neighborhood centers or other areas that are appropriate for addition housing.

By utilizing these design approaches and those outlined in the Neighborhood Villages Plan, the General Plan upholds and builds on the existing plans to guide urban design within Neighborhood Villages. Together, high-quality architecture, public realm and streetscape improvements, better connectivity, and strong urban design principles can create a more attractive, safe, walkable, and distinctive city.



## 4.5 Employment Centers

Employment centers are areas with a concentration commercial and office uses, with General Plan designations such as the Flex District and Business Residential Mixed Use, and sites of other large employers that have the opportunity for change, including the SouthBay Pavilion, Shell site, and the CSUDH campus. These centers, as well as the relationship to Greenway Corridors and Neighborhood Villages, are shown in Figure 4-5. Growing these centers will help bring additional high-quality job opportunities and businesses to Carson while promoting small, medium, and large employers.

### URBAN DESIGN APPROACH

The General Plan seeks to promote employment centers that are walkable and are connected to surrounding development. Where large sites, such as the Shell site, are redeveloped, they should be broken down into smaller blocks with frequent streets, that are connected to the surroundings. The street network and streetscape should be designed and scaled appropriately depending on the uses of the employment centers; industrial areas are more likely to have wider streets to accommodate trucks and office or commercial centers should be pedestrian-oriented to encourage walkable centers.

The scale of buildings would vary depending on land use—industrial and office employment centers are likely to have large building massing and scale whereas centers focused on commercial goods would have smaller buildings. Building massing and articulation would reflect considerations of land use, but also the relationship with the public/pedestrian realms. Storage should be indoors or screened, and parking thoughtfully located. Overall design approaches for these employment centers are described below.

### Flex Districts

Flex Districts are unique areas within Carson that allow for a mix of uses, including non-nuisance light industrial, office, residential, and commercial. The Flex District land use designation is described in Chapter 2: Land Use and Revital-

ization and illustrated in Figure 4-5 for reference. The intention is to allow light industrial and incubator spaces while permitting artist studios, live/work lofts, and housing that co-exist with and complements existing businesses.



To provide the maximum amount of development flexibility, a variety of uses are allowed. Outdoor seating and greenery can help improve the public realm and encourage people to visit and stay, and would be provided organically as developments occur. Warehouses, parking lots, blank walls, or uses that make significant noises or odors should be located away from the public realm to reduce any potential impacts.

### Business Residential Mixed Use

Business Residential Mixed Use (BRMU) areas support higher-intensity office and residential uses, such as corporate offices, technology and research and development headquarters, biotech and pharmaceutical companies, light-industrial and manufacturing uses, and high-density housing. The BRMU land use designation is described in Chapter 2: Land Use and Revitalization and illustrated in Figure 4-5 for reference. The two main areas that are designated as BRMU include the Shell Site, which is discussed in the next section, and a collection of parcels between Francisco, Victoria, and Main streets and I-110.

The design character envisioned for BRMU areas are typical of office/industrial parks or technology campuses within an urban, walkable environment. While architectural styles may vary, buildings should reflect a modern vocabulary to symbolize Carson as a rising employment hub.

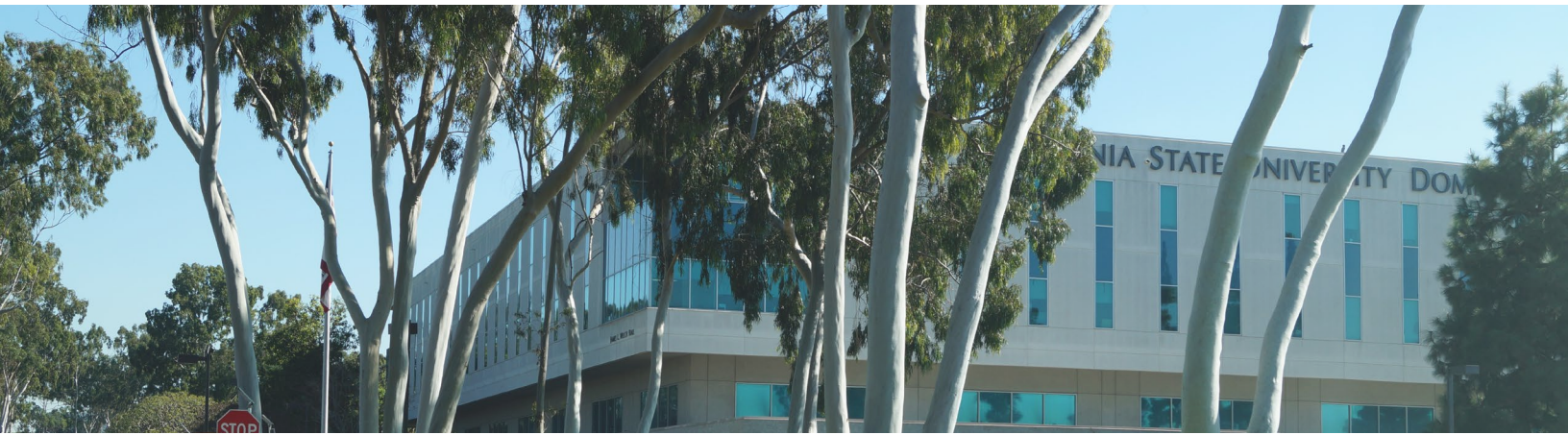
Stand-alone or a vertical mixture of uses is encouraged to give additional vibrancy, convenience, and a variety of businesses to patron and housing opportunities for Carson residents and workers. Residential housing should be built for easy, walkable access to everyday goods and services while connecting to the rest of Carson. For large-scale developments, alternative methods of transportation—such as walking, biking, or privately-run but publicly available shuttles—should be integrated as part of efforts to reduce automobile dependency and vehicle miles travelled. When new residential units are developed, the impacts of office or industrial uses should be taken into consideration as to not inversely affect residents.

### Shell Site

The Shell site is a portion of the Shell Oil Products refinery located north of Dolphin Park and east of SouthBay Pavilion at the corner of East Del Amo Boulevard and South Wilmington Avenue. The entire Shell property covers 448 acres with 193 acres of vacant, underutilized land located on the eastern portion of the property.<sup>3</sup> The western portion of the refinery consists of storage tanks and likely to remain as heavy industrial use. The eastern portion is

3 Carson Revitalization Project Specific Plan, February 2014. Accessed via web June 2021. [https://ci.carson.ca.us/content/files/pdfs/planning/Shell\\_CRP/Shell\\_CRP\\_Specific\\_Plan\\_DRAFT\\_0214.pdf](https://ci.carson.ca.us/content/files/pdfs/planning/Shell_CRP/Shell_CRP_Specific_Plan_DRAFT_0214.pdf)





designated as BRMU and is intended to allow a mixture of industrial, housing, and office-related uses that should also follow the approach within the BRMU section.

The Shell site is proposed as a new, state-of-the-art research and development campus, bringing more jobs to Carson. In addition, the site's proximity to CSUDH can help provide work opportunities for students. A new street grid and linear park in this area fosters connectivity to industrial flex across the street along East Del Amo Boulevard and adjacent existing single-family neighborhoods. This higher-density, modern industrial area can help to revitalize the low-density, old industrial buildings currently located in this area and provide a more prominent gateway to the city.

Redevelopment plans should include a minimum of 25 total acres of parks and open space, with at least seven acres along western border to act as a greenway and to buffer the remaining oil refinery. The remainder 18 acres could be part of a large park or multiple smaller parks. New development should take advantage of this requirement to provide usable parks and open space to future residents and workers; miscellaneous leftover space, such as building setbacks or unusable detention ponds, does not count towards this requirement.

There should be at least 100,000 square feet of new commercial development to act as a neighborhood commercial center, the location of which will be established during the site planning process. This commercial may also be mixed-use, provided that the ground floor is commercial, and should have adequate visitor parking to ensure community

access. In addition, the Shell Site should also incorporate a Community Space as a community hub. This Community Space could connect to the new parks and open space or be incorporated into the commercial development. *Community Spaces are described further in Chapter 5: Recreation and Active Lifestyle.*

### California State University, Dominguez Hills

CSUDH is located in the northern portion of Carson bounded by Victoria Street, Avalon Boulevard, University Drive, and Central Avenue. In addition to university buildings, the campus is also home to the Dignity Health Sports Park which is home to a variety of professional and semi-professional sports teams. See Chapter 7: Community Services, Education, and Safety for information on projected student enrollment and Chapter 10: Economic Development which looks at the economic impacts of the university. The university is a significant center for employment and activity, with approximately 1,600 jobs and a total of 15,179 part-time and full-time students as of Spring 2018.<sup>4</sup> Currently, the University has 11,325<sup>5</sup> full-time equivalent students (FTES) with an enrollment capacity of 20,000 FTES over the next 15 to 20 years. Development on the campus is guided by the campus Master Plan which was updated in 2018 and establishes a need for over 1.2 million square feet of academic and administrative space, including a new student recreation center, 1,800 student hous-

4 California State University Dominguez Hills. (n.d.). About the University. Accessed via web June 2021. <https://www.csudh.edu/ir/campusprofile/student/>

5 *ibid.*

ing beds, and 6,940 parking spaces. Many of these facilities will be constructed on the 76.5 acres of land identified as underutilized on the east side of campus. The 2018 Master Plan shows an increase both enrollment and the number of students living on campus, plus identifying the need for additional campus-serving retail, office, and open space and student life facilities, including an updated Student Union and intramural sports facilities.

The university helps support the Carson community character by attracting new students and talent while providing economic and social benefits for the city. The campus can continue by supporting community events, promoting adult learning opportunities, and connecting to the larger Carson community. Once students graduate, retaining talent in Carson can help enhance the city and provide skilled labor for future industries. Improving public transportation, amenities, and housing in the area surrounding the campus can help integrate it better into the rest of Carson. In addition, a Community Space is envisioned for the campus to be a gathering place for the community and encourage better connections between the university and the surrounding neighborhoods. This Community Space can happen through a collaboration between the City and the university.

### SouthBay Pavilion

SouthBay Pavilion is an enclosed regional shopping mall located near the center of Carson at the south-east corner of Del Amo Boulevard and Avalon Boulevard. The central location is near other significant business and industrial centers in Carson, including the Shell Site to the east, the Downtown Core to the south, the CSUDH campus to the north, and across the street from the proposed The Creek at Dominguez Hills parks and recreation project. Designed as a typical suburban, mid-century mall, SouthBay Pavilion opened in 1973 and features a variety of chain stores and large anchor tenants with buildings surrounded by surface parking lots.

Given the mall's central location and access, combined with large vacant parking lots and big box stores, make it a prime candidate for future redevelopment. The General Plan designates the mall and its environs as Downtown Mixed Use which allows for high-intensity residential and commercial development, with the intention of spurring revitalization of the site. The character of the site is envisioned to be an urban village center with a variety of uses making it a vibrant regional destination for Carson residents as a place to live



with ample retail, commercial, and employment opportunities and public spaces. The central location also provides an opportunity to connect to the other business and industrial centers in Carson with public transit routes and Greenway Corridors. Redevelopment plans should incorporate a Community Space to act as a focal gathering place for the community and be integrated into new development proposed at the site.

### East Carson Street

East Carson Street, which is Carson Street east of I-405, is more auto-oriented than the multi-modal portion of Carson Street west of I-405. As the streetscape enhancements west of I-405 have not extended to this area, pedestrian crossings are fewer, sidewalks are narrower, bus stops only consist of a bench and no shelter, and there are no bike facilities. Whereas Carson Street west of I-405 has mostly multi-family housing and neighborhood-commercial businesses, East Carson Street mostly has detached housing, industrial facilities, and religious facilities. There are several

opportunity sites in this area, including the vacant parcels on the northwest corner of Carson Street and Perry Street and the underutilized auto-oriented commercial facilities across Carson Street from these parcels.

East Carson Street is within the Dolphin Park and East Carson Neighborhood Village, with the employment center envisioned for East Carson Street between I-405 and S. Wilmington Avenue. Building upon the successes of Carson Street west of I-405, East Carson Street is envisioned to become an employment center between I-405 and S. Wilmington Avenue by being designated as Corridor Mixed Use with a range of housing, commercial, and office uses. As part of the redevelopment, streetscape improvements and pedestrian-friendly treatments should be extended from west Carson Street and serve as a better connection between East Carson Street and the Core. Additional public realm improvements, such as street trees, wider sidewalks, benches, and active building frontage, can help further define East Carson Street as an employment center and strengthen retail opportunities for the community.



## 4.6 Greenway Corridors

Greenway Corridors, with the initial network illustrated with green arrows in Figure 4-5, seek to better connect the Downtown Core, Neighborhood Villages/Centers, and Employment Centers. Greenway Corridors are designated to be redeveloped as tree-lined multi-modal boulevards, with bikeways and/or trails running parallel to the street. The majority of improvements for Greenway Corridors are anticipated to be within public rights-of-way with further connections and enhancements coming from new projects located along the corridor. Some of the key Greenway Corridors include Main Street, Avalon Boulevard, Carson Street, Figueroa Street, along the Dominguez Channel, and a connection through the Shell site from 213th Street to Del Amo Boulevard. As Greenway Corridors are implemented in the central parts of the city, consideration should be given to future phases and extending these out citywide.

### URBAN DESIGN APPROACH

Greenway Corridors with streets are envisioned to have “complete streets” that incorporate a variety of modes, including bikeways, pedestrian safety improvements, and other measures that foster a strong image and identity for Carson. The inclusion of linear parks and greenery along these major roadways can promote a healthier living envi-

ronment by providing shade, respite from sun/urban heat, cleaner air, and visual delight. Together with new development, rejuvenated corridors will foster greater identity for Carson and a sense of belonging for neighborhoods.

In addition to streets, some Greenway Corridors, such as along the Dominguez Channel, are envisioned to provide safe, attractive, and functional active outdoor recreation spaces that also serve as linkages. The design for these Greenway Corridors should incorporate benches, lights, trash cans, and wayfinding signage to support outdoor activities like biking, jogging, or bird watching. Incorporating additional greenery along these corridors can expand plant and animal habitat while providing shade and interest to users.

### Streetscape Design

The City has undertaken proactive efforts to improve streetscapes, such as along Carson Street. Currently, specific design of individual streets occurs through implementation documents like the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan, project specific plans, and the City’s Public Works Standards. Development of a citywide streetscape plan would consolidate overarching goals, treatments based on street typologies (see Chapter 3: Circulation),



and design features appropriate for Carson. Specific considerations that could be incorporated into the design of Greenway Corridors include:

- Using a consistent species of trees and planting to define corridors. Multiple rows of trees or landscaping can be planted along sidewalks or in medians as space allows;
- Managing stormwater and improving ecology through bioswales or street tree rain gardens;
- Widening sidewalks and reducing street pavement area;
- Introducing public art sequences and signage;
- Using resource-efficient materials and lighting;
- Creating a psychological/physical distance between pedestrians and traffic with trees, planters, lights, and sidewalk furniture;
- Adding seating, bus shelters, and other pedestrian-oriented furnishings;
- Improving intersections with pedestrian-friendly corner sidewalk bulb-outs, highly visible pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian safety islands;
- Establishing a consistent street signage or public signage aesthetic;

- Providing places with shade;
- Designing the road for multi-modal transportation modes, including vehicles, bicycles, multi-use paths, and public transit; and
- Placing utilities underground.

As Greenway Corridor streetscape improvements are implemented, Carson's street network will become an attractive realm for public activity and enhance the community character. Coupled with better building-to-street interface within residential and commercial areas, the improved street network will foster pedestrian activity and social gathering.

### Building-to-Street Interface

In addition to streetscape design, street life and comfort are crucial for providing an attractive, safe, active, and walkable environment along Greenway Corridors. This cultivation of the public realm can be accomplished not only through streetscape improvements, but also through the interplay between the built environment and the street. Strategies to improve the public realm are most applicable to areas where concentration of activity is likely, such as within the Core, Neighborhood Villages, and certain employment centers. The building-to-street interface is





especially important when considering new projects that front along Greenway Corridors. Specific improvements that could be incorporated into the design of buildings that front along Greenway Corridors include:

- Building articulation to reduce physical size/massing. This includes varied building heights within districts or building clusters, recesses and projections, window articulation and treatments, and roof forms that contribute to overall texture and character. Horizontal building articulation is especially emphasized to provide richness and variety at eye level, particularly for large floorplate structures that are characteristic of the light industrial, research and development, and mixed-use commercial development throughout Carson;
- Incorporating stepbacks of upper floors to diminish overshadowing of the public realm;
- Improving building transparency by locating entrances and windows to face the street;
- Creating habitable and active space at the ground level, including privately-owned public spaces, outdoor dining, visible indoor dining, parklets, store fronts, and building entrances for both commercial and residential uses;
- Beautification of industrial sites through landscaping, screening of outdoor facilities, and limiting storage to indoor facilities;
- Locating parking facilities away from the street front either by placing parking lots to the back/side of the lot or through structured (surface or underground) parking facilities;
- Utilizing high-quality building materials, finishes, and signage to strengthen the city's architectural identity; and
- Prevention of blank walls, or facades that don't contribute to an active frontage, from facing the Greenway Corridor.

By utilizing streetscape improvements and better building frontages, Greenway Corridors will help enhance the aesthetic image, build a distinctive sense of place and pride, and bring additional greenery and activity for Carson.

## 4.7 Guiding and Implementing Policies

### GUIDING POLICIES

**CCD-G-1** Foster Carson's sense of place and arrival through careful attention to building and public realm design, and cohesive streetscapes that promote community and neighborhood identity.

**CCD-G-2** Nurture development of a tapestry of places with concentrations of activity—the Core, Neighborhood Villages, and Employment Centers—each with its own identity, with buildings, streetscapes, and open spaces designed to reflect conditions and use of each place.

*These identities can be developed through individual development projects or through other planning initiatives, like corridor plans or through the Carson Neighborhood Villages Plan. The identities should reflect the culture and ethnicities of the surrounding residents, incorporate high-quality materials, and incorporate other placemaking strategies.*

**CCD-G-3** Promote the Core as Carson's energetic commercial, cultural, and residential center, promoting a diversity of building types and variety of options for living and working in the heart of the community.

**CCD-G-4** Support a safe, engaging, pleasant, and walkable environment within the Core; promote commercial activity and pedestrian-scaled streetscape along Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard by incorporating ground level design that engages pedestrians and promoting active uses on the ground floor of new buildings.

**CCD-G-5** Support an active pedestrian realm along East Carson Street (between I-405 and Santa Fe Avenue) and improve the streetscape connection to the Core.

- CCD-G-6** Strengthen community identity within Neighborhood Villages through high-quality building and streetscape design and promote attractive pedestrian connections to access neighborhood centers for local services and amenities.
- CCD-G-7** Support development of new or transition of existing employment centers that are walkable and connected to the surroundings by promoting smaller blocks, connected streets, and improving the aesthetics of buildings, landscaping, and streetscape.
- CCD-G-8** Support the vision of the Shell site as a high-tech office and research and development campus with integrated residential uses, while improving the aesthetic character to the surrounding neighborhoods, including Dolphin Park and the residential area north of E. Del Amo Boulevard.
- CCD-G-9** Encourage redevelopment of the SouthBay Pavilion and its environs as a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use activity center.
- CCD-G-10** Prioritize development of Greenway Corridors—tree-lined multi-modal boulevards or trails—to better connect Carson’s key activity hubs with greenspace, improve the streetscape aesthetics, and promote an environmentally healthier and active streetscape environment.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

Policies that apply to all areas are followed by policies that apply to specific ones.

### Building and Site Design

- CCD-P-1** Encourage mixed-use projects by allowing flexibility in the site and building design standards outlined in the Carson Municipal Code Zoning Ordinance.

*Such standards that could be flexed include setbacks, open space, parking, dwelling units, minimum lot area, and height requirements.*

- CCD-P-2** In areas with high levels of pedestrian activity—including the Core, Employment Centers, and Neighborhood Villages—locate parking facilities away from the street front either by placing parking lots to the back/side of the lot or through structured (surface or underground) parking facilities. Promote flexible parking requirements to support infill-development, creation of a more livable and human-scaled public space, and encouragement of non-auto travel.
- CCD-P-3** Incorporate pedestrian and bicycling wayfinding by locating and marking pedestrian and/or bicycle paths to better connect neighborhood centers to the surrounding community.
- CCD-P-4** Require high-quality building materials and locate windows and entrances to support active and attractive frontages along primary streets.
- CCD-P-5** For industrial areas that are adjacent to housing, ensure that noise, traffic, glare, odors, and other nuisances produced by the industrial uses are contained to the extent feasible within the industrial sites through site and building design.



## Streetscape Design/Greenway Corridors

**CCD-P-6** Prepare a Greenway Corridors and Streetscape Plan to prioritize the development of streetscapes in Greenway Corridors (illustrated in Figure 4-5; additional street segments not shown in this figure may be included), in coordination with other City streetscape design and pedestrian realm improvement initiatives. The Plan should:

- a. Foster development of Greenway Corridors as tree-lined boulevards, emphasizing:
  - Consistent species and regularly-spaced trees that promote street identity;
  - Closely spaced canopy trees in and around neighborhood centers to provide adequate shade;
  - Stormwater management through bioswales or rain gardens.
  - Wider sidewalks, with considerations for those that are mobility impaired;
  - Corner sidewalk bulb-outs, highly visible pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian safety islands where appropriate.

- Bikeways, as shown in Figure 3-3 and updated citywide Bicycle Master Plan when developed; and
- Pedestrian-scaled and attractive lighting, benches and other street furniture, and signage.

- b. Grow the tree canopy by maintaining existing trees and planting additional street trees where feasible. Develop regulations for tree canopy coverage of surface parking areas that are appropriate to use and location.
- c. Prioritize Greenway Corridors in high-activity areas, such as within the Core and along residential neighborhoods, active commercial areas, Neighborhood Villages, or major transportation corridors.

**CCD-P-7** Develop Greenway Corridors throughout the community after completion of the initial segments outlined in Figure 4-5.

**CCD-P-8** Require buildings to provide a “front face” along Greenway Corridors by locating entryways, storefronts, and windows facing the street while locating elements like blank walls, parking lots, and storage areas away from the corridors.



## Carson's Core

**CCD-P-9** Ensure that buildings are designed to emphasize the Core as Carson's downtown, and Carson Street /Avalon Boulevard as the main street. Building should define the street edge; have awnings along the street where pedestrians are expected, and are designed to engage pedestrians.

**CCD-P-10** Reduce the number of curb cuts along Carson Street/Avalon Boulevard by consolidating multiple entrances into one shared entrance and locating entrances at intersections to emphasize continuous, unbroken curb lengths in order to improve pedestrian safety and reduce automobile confusion.

**CCD-P-11** Support efforts for outdoor seating and dining along Carson Street/Avalon Boulevard, including temporary street closures for special events, café-style seating along the street, and temporary replacement of parking spaces with seating areas (parklets).

*A parklet is a small seating area or green space created as a public amenity on or alongside a sidewalk, especially in a former roadside parking space, that acts as an extension of the sidewalk to provide more space and amenities for people using the street.*

### ACTIVE GROUND LEVEL DESIGN

**CCD-P-12** Support an active street frontage by requiring buildings to locate entrances, windows, storefronts, porches, or outdoor seating along Carson Street.

**CCD-P-13** Require that the ground floor frontage—with the exception of ingress and egress and other necessary building and site design considerations—of a site within the Active Ground Level Zone (shown in Figure 4-5) should be devoted to active commercial uses; active commercial uses are those that are accessible to the general public, generate

walk-in pedestrian clientele and contribute to a high level of pedestrian activity.

*Such active uses include retail shops, restaurants, bars, theaters and the performing arts, commercial recreation and entertainment, personal and convenience services, leasing offices, private recreational areas, fitness studios, party rooms, building and hotel lobbies, banks, travel agencies, childcare services, libraries, museums, and galleries. Other parts of the site—at the ground level and at upper stories—may be devoted to commercial or residential uses.*

**CCD-P-14** Prepare and implement an active ground floor overlay district—shown as Active Ground Level Zones in Figure 4-5—as part of the Carson Municipal Code that establishes required development standards. This overlay district should focus on areas that require active ground floor uses to further develop mixed-use use centers, accommodating the need for both auto-oriented uses as well as designated pedestrian-oriented centers.



Regulations should address:

- (a) Types of uses permitted on the ground floor.
- (b) Minimum height requirements on the ground floor.
- (c) Façade design specifications for residential, commercial, and light industrial/maker uses.
- (d) Maximum front setback requirements.
- (e) Requirements for awnings, shade, building transparency for designated pedestrian areas.
- (f) Landscape requirements.

### Neighborhood Villages

**CCD-P-15** Promote the development of “complete neighborhoods” – neighborhoods with a wide complement of everyday uses and amenities within a walking distance. Ensure that Neighborhood Centers (Figure 4-5) contain a spectrum of neighborhood-oriented commercial uses.

*A “complete neighborhood” refers to a neighborhood where residents have safe and convenient access to the goods and amenities needed in daily life. This includes a variety of housing options, grocery stores and other commercial services, quality public schools, public open spaces and recreational facilities, affordable active transportation options, and civic amenities. An important element of a complete neighbor-*

*hood is that it is built at a walkable and bikeable human scale, and meets the needs of people of all ages and abilities. Ideally, complete neighborhoods would have goods and services be accessible within a 15 or 20-minute walking radius of the majority of residences as to reduce automobile dependency and encourage active transportation.*

**CCD-P-16** Strive to accentuate activity and presence at the street level, particularly along pedestrian-oriented corridors and neighborhood centers within Neighborhoods. Streetscape design in these areas should foster safer pedestrian crossings by incorporating enhancements like sidewalk bulb-outs, mid-block crossings, reduced vehicle speeds, and other pedestrian-friendly design.

### Employment Centers

**CCD-P-17** Incorporate smaller block sizes and a connected street grid when laying out new streets to increase walkability and connectedness.

**CCD-P-18** Provide gathering spaces, including plazas and small parks, to enable workers to spend time outdoors.

**CCD-P-19** Allow a diverse range of architectural styles, while encouraging high-quality design and placemaking initiatives to enhance the sense of place.



## Shell Site

**CCD-P-20** Require development of a master or specific plan for development of the Shell site. As part of the plan, establish design and development standards that promotes cohesive streetscape design, distinctive architecture, placemaking, and branding of the site.

**CCD-P-21** Support an urban, walkable environment by incorporating the following strategies:

- (a) Combine residential, commercial, and, when feasible, industrial uses as connected and integrated components of the district, rather than standalone uses.
- (b) Consolidate parking into shared underground garages or structures to discourage large parking lots surrounding buildings.
- (c) Present a cohesive face along public streets, rather than development being introverted.
- (d) Ensure that building entrances and lobbies are easily visible and accessible from streets.
- (e) Locate any industrial areas, parking lots, loading areas, and similar uses away from residential areas, streets, and pedestrianized areas.

**CCD-P-22** As part of site design, incorporate a Community Space that tie into the proposed parks, open space, or commercial area. Ensure that the Community Space is easily identified and accessible by the public. *Community Spaces are described further in Chapter 5: Recreation and Active Lifestyle.*

## California State University- Dominguez Hills

**CCD-P-23** Support efforts for greater integration of the City and CSUDH, and celebrate CSUDH as part of Carson's culture and identity.

**CCD-P-24** Through a collaboration between the City and the university, identify opportunities to develop a Community Space to further engage connections between the surrounding community and the university. *Community Spaces are described further in Chapter 5: Recreation and Active Lifestyle.*

## SouthBay Pavilion

**CCD-P-25** While allowing new housing development as outlined in the Land Use and Revitalization Element, develop new streets or pedestrian walkthroughs to create more walkable and connected environments.

**CCD-P-26** Implement walkable and engaging streetscapes that support a variety of users, with an emphasis on walking, biking, or taking transit.

**CCD-P-27** Establish a cohesive identity to the site by incorporating placemaking principles.

*Such principles include:*

- *Public gather areas, plazas, or year-round public markets.*
- *Beautification of the streetscape and public realm, including street trees, landscaping, and planters.*
- *A pedestrian-friendly, safe, and well-lit environment.*

## East Carson Street

**CCD-P-28** Support an improved public realm for new residential and commercial development along East Carson Street by having a strong building to street interface, without requiring active frontages. Limit fences, blank walls, loading docks, and parking lots fronting Carson Street.

**CCD-P-29** Improve the character along East Carson Street through consistent branding in coordination with the Dolphin Park Neighborhood Village.