

OCEAN STREET CONCEPT 3

The Ocean Street Concept detailed in this chapter provides the Santa Cruz community's overall vision for the Ocean Street corridor. It also explains the types of development and streetscape improvements that will occur under the Plan. Urban design principles are presented to guide long-term implementation of the overall vision.

A. Vision

By the year 2030, Ocean Street will become a beautiful, multifaceted gateway to Santa Cruz that reflects the city's unique and diverse character. Public art will create a distinctive sense of place as people enter the city, and the street itself will be an attractive, tree-lined boulevard that provides a comfortable and safe place for people to walk. New buildings on Ocean Street will reflect a high caliber of architectural design. They will provide space for a variety of local and franchise businesses, and they will create new places to work, live and visit. In addition, all parts of Ocean Street will have stronger connections to the San Lorenzo River. Different parts of Ocean Street will accommodate a wide variety of activities:

- ◆ **North of Water Street:** Ocean Street will provide space for hotels, motels, restaurants and other visitor services, as well as mixed-use buildings with retail stores and services that benefit visitors and residents alike.
- ◆ **Water Street to Soquel Avenue:** The County Government Center will become the "heart of Ocean Street," with a new public space where people can gather. A new hotel and conference center will help to catalyze additional development.
- ◆ **South of Soquel Avenue:** The residential neighborhood along Ocean Street will be strengthened. Mixed-use buildings will provide new places to live, along with retail stores and services that benefit neighborhood residents.

B. Urban Design Principles

This section describes the urban design principles that help to define the Ocean Street Concept. Figure 3-1 shows how several of these urban design principles will be applied to specific parts of the Plan Area.



Gateways could include traditional signs welcoming people to the city.

1. Gateway Enhancements

Ocean Street is the “front door” to Santa Cruz for visitors arriving on Highway 17. The street should include gateway features that reflect Santa Cruz’s unique character and create a strong sense of arrival. To strengthen Ocean Street’s role as an important gateway, the following improvements will be made:

- ◆ **Gateway to Santa Cruz.** A new, distinctive work of public art, designed by a local artist, will be installed near Highway 17 to welcome visitors to the city. It will include thematic elements that relate to Santa Cruz’s unique natural and built environment.
- ◆ **Gateways to Downtown.** Ocean Street connects visitors to Downtown Santa Cruz via Water Street and Soquel Avenue. Where these two streets cross the San Lorenzo River, landscaping and public art will be used to create a sense of transition to Downtown.



Tall sculptures can define gateways.



A gateway sculpture could create an interactive landmark.

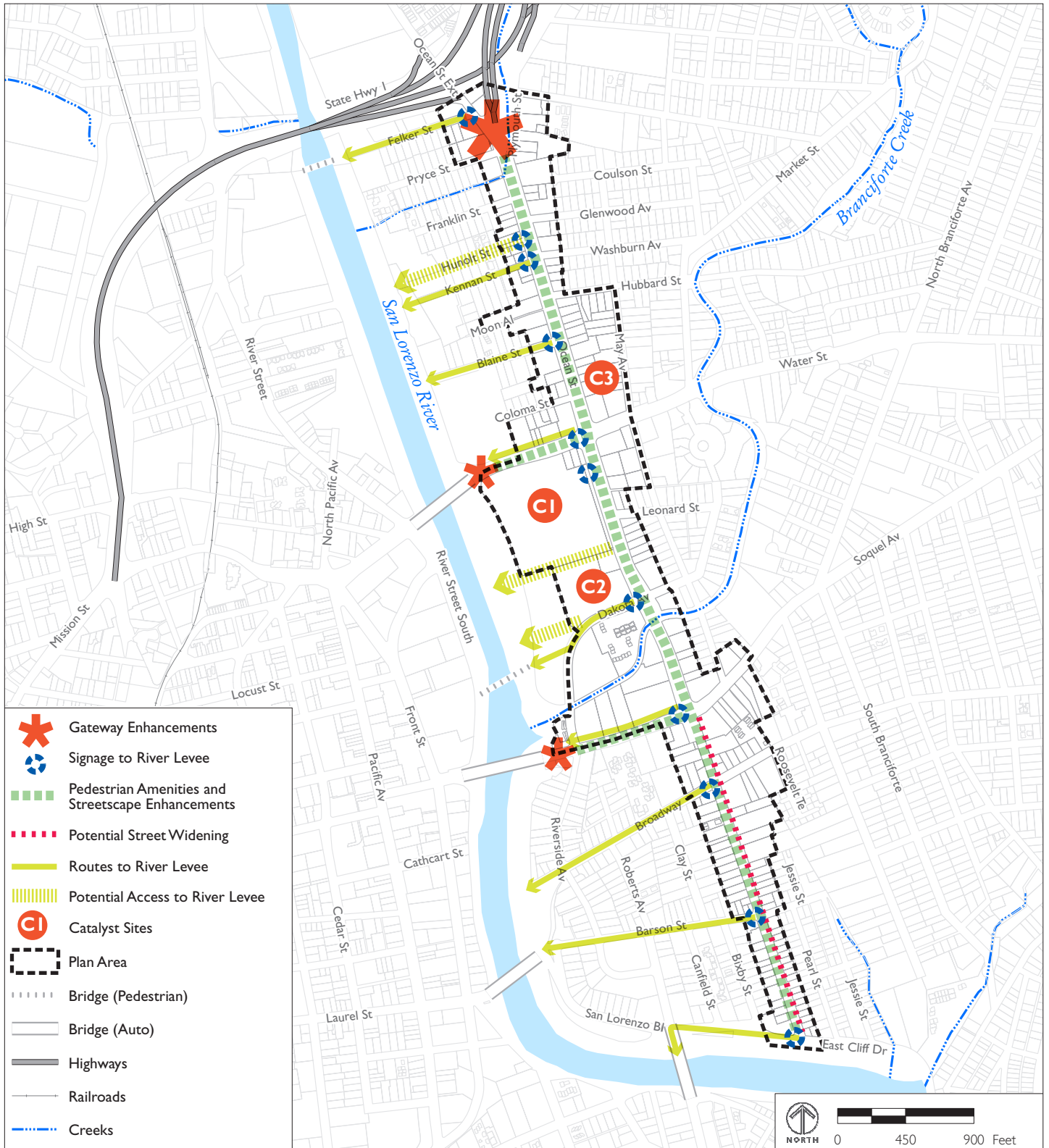


Figure 3-1. Urban Design Concepts

2. Access to the River Levee

Ocean Street runs parallel to the San Lorenzo River and its levee trails, a recreational amenity that is highly valued by Santa Cruz's residents. However, the river is not visible from Ocean Street itself. To strengthen connections from Ocean Street to the river levee, the following improvements will be made:



Pedestrian-scaled signs can direct people to important destinations, such as the river levee.

- ◆ **Directional Signage on Ocean Street.** New signs on Ocean Street will direct pedestrians down the side streets that provide access to the river levee.
- ◆ **Enhanced Signage at Levee Access Points.** In places where pedestrians are allowed to cross private property to reach the river levee, new signs will clearly show how to reach the levee. The signs will also provide the times of day when the access point can be used, and they will ask visitors to be respectful of each property's owners and residents as they cross.
- ◆ **New Physical Connections.** As change occurs on the County Government Center and University Inn sites, new connections will be provided through these properties to San Lorenzo Park and the trails along the river. Other new connections may also be created as opportunities arise.

3. Neighborhood Context

The Ocean Street corridor has the potential to accommodate new land uses and more intensive development, transforming an automobile-oriented thoroughfare into a more attractive and functional urban environment where residents can work, live and shop. Santa Cruz also values the existing built form of its finely-scaled residential neighborhoods, several of which are adjacent to the Ocean Street corridor. With careful planning and design, high-quality development along the corridors can further enhance the city's built form while respecting the scale of surrounding residential neighborhoods. To address neighborhood compatibility, new development in the Plan Area will incorporate the following, as shown in Figure 3-2:

- ◆ **Height Transitions.** The height and bulk of new buildings will be reduced adjacent to residential neighborhoods to create a transition in scale.
- ◆ **Upper Floor Setbacks.** Buildings will be designed to incorporate setbacks on upper floors facing the street, so as to avoid an overly tall appearance.
- ◆ **Rear Setbacks.** Where the rear of a multi-story building faces a residential neighborhood, rear setbacks will create a buffer between taller buildings on the corridor and homes in the adjacent neighborhood. These setbacks will

be facilitated by new requirements to place building frontages at the back of the adjacent sidewalk.

- ◆ **Screening.** Fences and landscaping at rear property lines will provide visual screening between new development and adjacent homes.
- ◆ **Parking and Loading.** Surface parking and loading areas will be located behind buildings, improving the appearance of the corridor.



Figure 3-2. Neighborhood Compatibility Features

4. Parking and Vehicle Circulation

Many visitors to Santa Cruz arrive by car, stay in a hotel or motel on Ocean Street and drive to other destinations, such as Downtown and the beach. While it is essential to provide vehicle parking for these visitors, many of Ocean Street's small, shallow lots would be easier to develop if on-site parking is not needed. Also, traffic on Ocean Street can be reduced if visitors do not have to drive to reach popular destinations. For visitors who choose to drive, parts of Ocean Street can be widened to accommodate more vehicles. To address these needs, the following improvements will be pursued:



Parking structures lined with retail stores will enhance the character of Ocean Street.

- ◆ **Parking District and Parking Structures.** Large surface parking lots on Ocean Street, particularly those at the County Government Center, will be replaced by strategically placed parking structures that can serve multiple businesses and destinations. The new parking structures will create the potential for a parking district on Ocean Street, so that some properties can be developed without on-site parking.
- ◆ **Visitor-Serving Shuttle.** A fast, free shuttle will connect Ocean Street to other destinations, such as Downtown, the beach and the UCSC campus. The shuttle will have a permanent, dependable source of funding, so it can continue to operate year after year.
- ◆ **Ocean Street Widening.** The City will continue to require a setback for new development along Ocean Street south of Soquel Avenue. In the future, this setback may make it possible to widen this part of Ocean Street, so it can accommodate wider sidewalks, street trees and bicycle lanes while also carrying additional vehicle traffic to San Lorenzo Boulevard.



Street trees, trash cans and benches will encourage people to walk on Ocean Street.

5. Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities

Ocean Street is a major thoroughfare for vehicles, and it will continue to serve this purpose in the future. However, streetscape improvements can be used to make Ocean Street a safer, more appealing place for pedestrians and bicyclists as well. In order to improve Ocean Street's pedestrian and bicycling environment, the following improvements will be implemented once the City has identified funding sources:

- ◆ **Street Trees and Sidewalks.** Streetscape improvements will be designed and constructed in coordination with new development to widen sidewalks and provide a continuous canopy of street trees. South of Soquel Avenue, the overhead utility lines on Ocean Street will be moved underground when funding is available and as the street is widened. Doing so will free up valuable space for street trees on the street's narrow sidewalks and improve the

street’s overall appearance.

- ◆ **Pedestrian-Oriented Design Elements.** Street furniture that benefits the pedestrian, such as benches and trash cans, will contribute to pedestrian comfort and encourage more people to walk on Ocean Street. In addition, unique paving treatments will be considered at the intersection of Ocean Street and Water Street, and at other key locations, to highlight the street’s proximity to the Monterey Bay and San Lorenzo River. New buildings will also be located near the street, creating more visual interest for pedestrians.
- ◆ **Pedestrian Safety.** Crosswalks on Ocean Street will be restriped with higher-visibility striping patterns. Mid-block crossings that are not protected by a traffic signal will be redesigned to include pedestrian refuge islands in the median, so pedestrians have a safe place to stop after crossing half of the street.
- ◆ **Bicycle Improvements.** When Ocean Street is widened, bicycle lanes can be added in both directions. In the short term, a shared lane marking, also known as a “sharrow,” could potentially be added to Ocean Street’s south-bound traffic lane south of Barson Street. This improvement would alert drivers that they must share the road with bicyclists on this part of Ocean Street.
- ◆ **Plazas and Open Space.** The City and County will work together to create a new outdoor plaza at the County Government Center, reinforcing its importance as a major civic destination. Future improvements on the Government Center and University Inn sites will create stronger connections between Ocean Street and San Lorenzo Park.



Medians can include hardscaping as well as landscaping.



A shared lane marking encourages drivers to share the road with bicyclists.

C. Streetscape Improvements

To beautify Ocean Street and make it a more welcoming entrance to Santa Cruz, it is essential to improve the street right-of-way itself. The City's consultant worked with community members, as well as staff from the Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation and Public Works departments, to identify potential streetscape improvements that would improve Ocean Street while remaining consistent with the City's existing standards.

Figures 3-3 through 3-5 show a series of conceptual street sections that illustrate how different parts of Ocean Street could be improved as new development occurs. These street sections illustrate concepts for future change over the medium- to long-term, based on the typical right-of-way widths found on each part of the street.

The conceptual street sections reflect all of the following improvements:

- ◆ **North of Water Street:** Sidewalks will be widened to 12 feet, with shade trees lining the sidewalk.
- ◆ **Water Street to Soquel Avenue:** In this area, the heart of Ocean street, sidewalks will be widened to 15 feet where possible. Trees will be planted on both sides of the street.
- ◆ **Soquel Avenue to San Lorenzo Boulevard:** A widened right-of-way will provide space for parking and bike lanes on both sides of the street. Overhead utility lines will be moved underground, and shade trees will line the sidewalk.

The conceptual street sections show potential widening of Ocean Street's entire right-of-way. North of Soquel Avenue, the street's right-of-way would be increased to provide wider sidewalks. This sidewalk widening can occur incrementally, as new development occurs. There may also be opportunities on some parts of Ocean Street to widen an entire block's sidewalk at once, as a single project.

South of Soquel Avenue, the street's right-of-way would be increased to provide one additional lane for traffic, along with parking and bike lanes and wider sidewalks. These improvements would require several blocks of Ocean Street to be widened at the same time, potentially resulting in the displacement of existing buildings. More analysis is needed to determine the appropriate funding sources, implementation tools and phasing for these improvements.

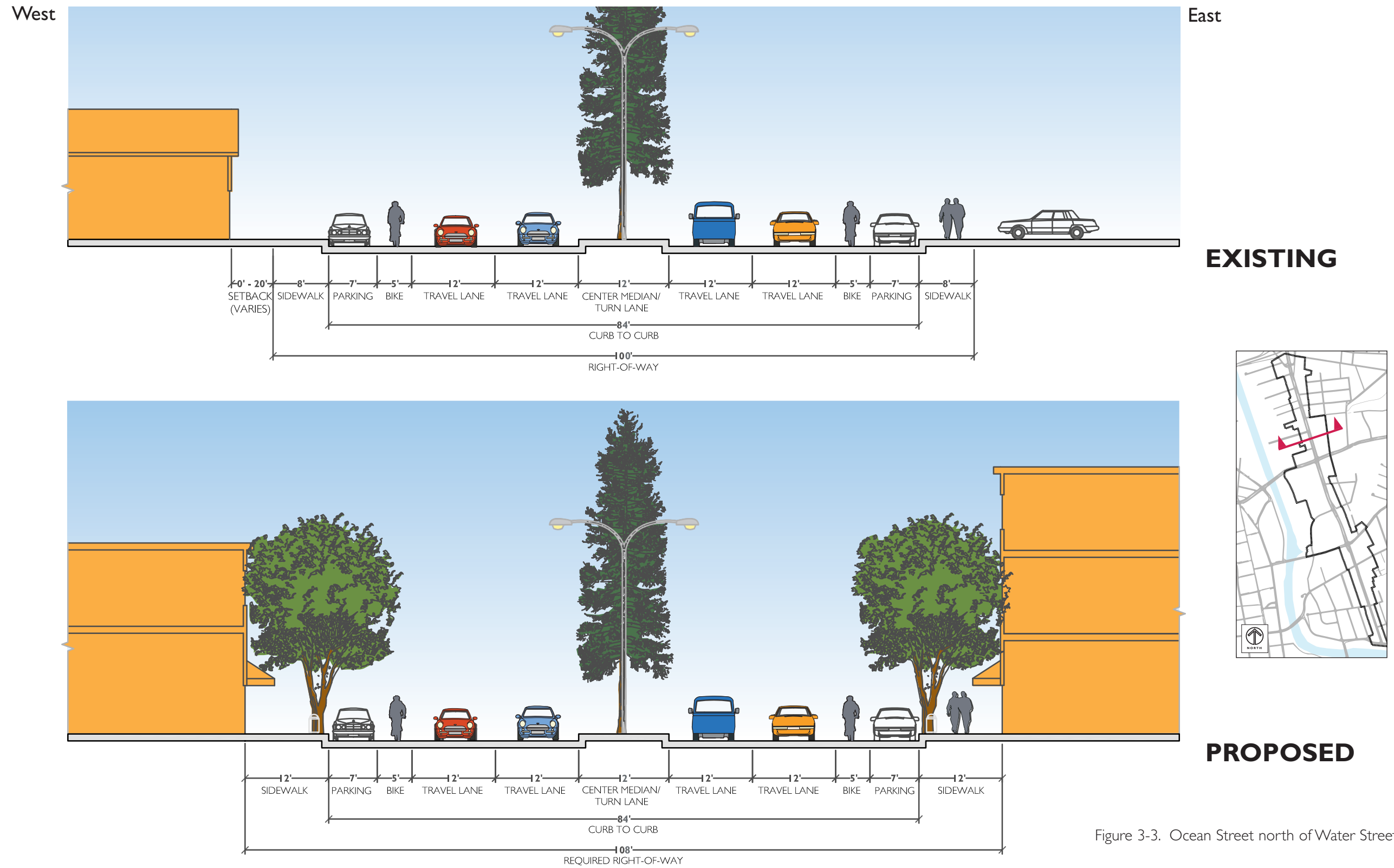
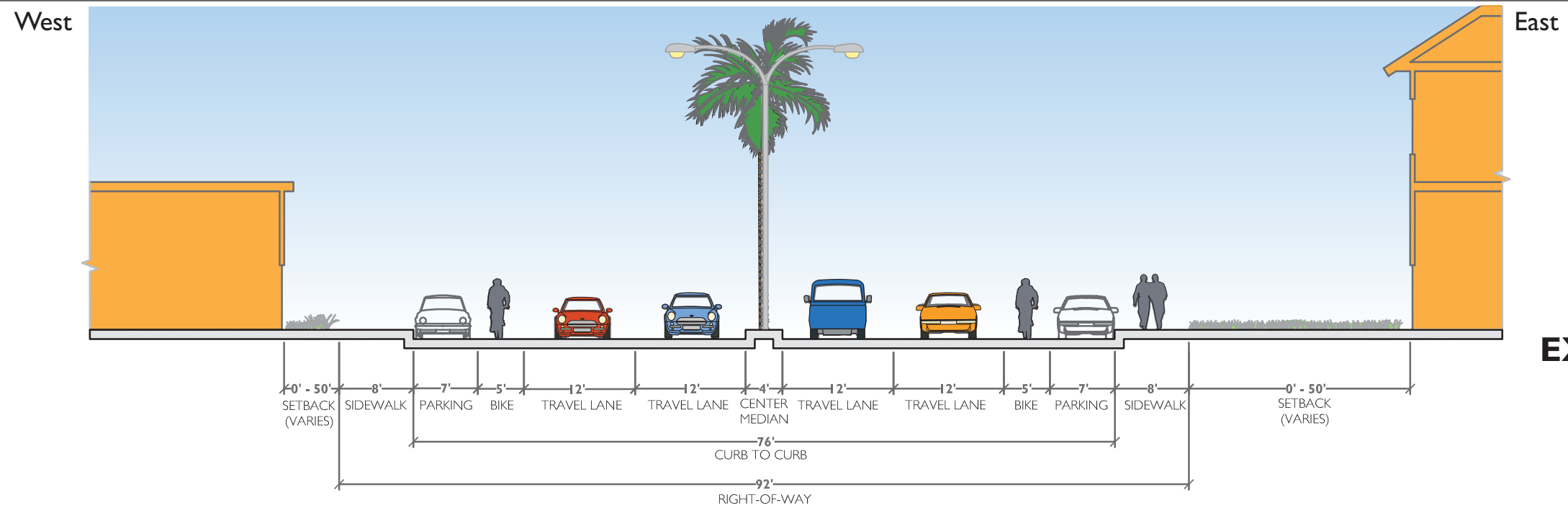
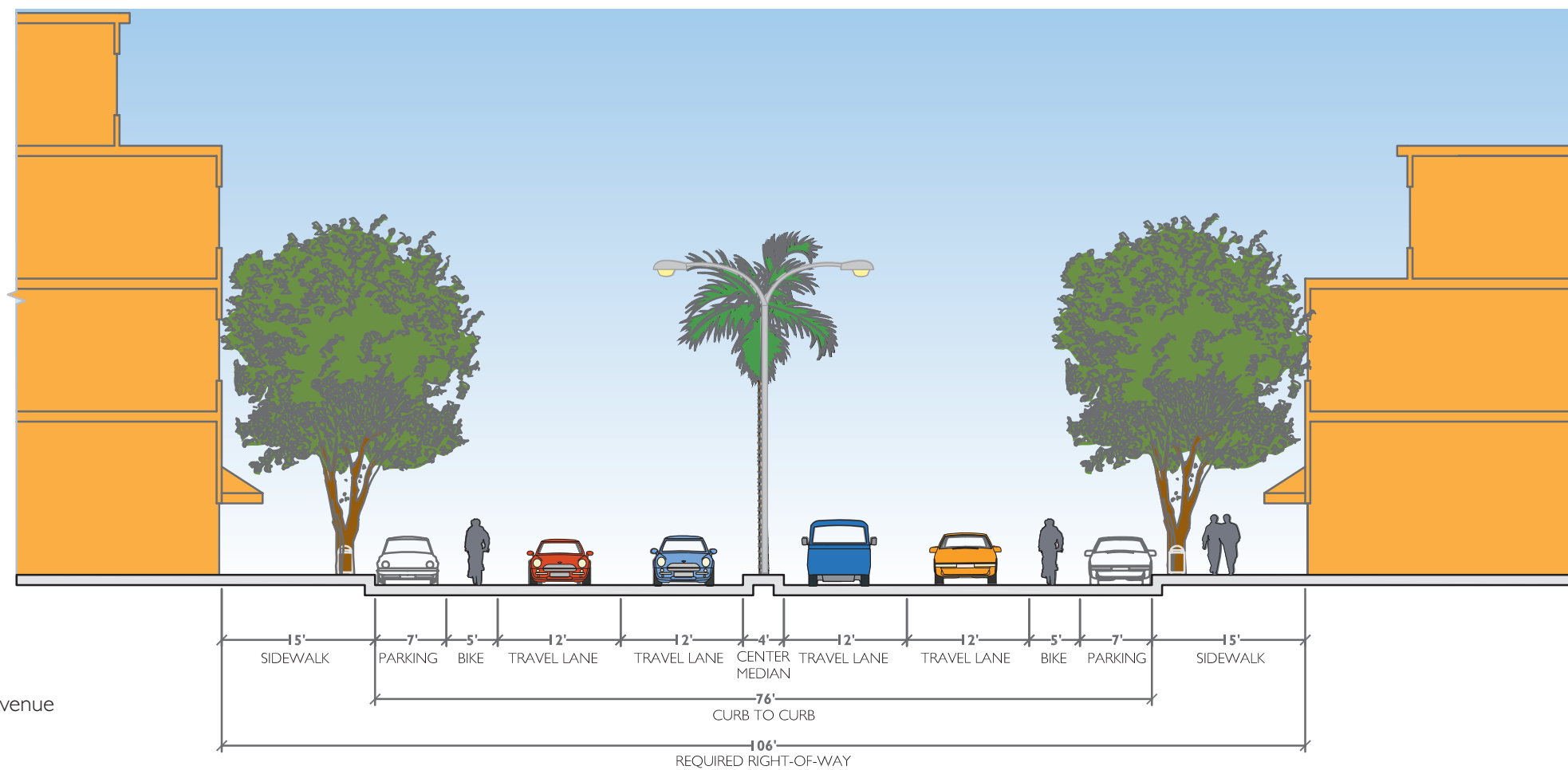


Figure 3-3. Ocean Street north of Water Street



EXISTING



PROPOSED

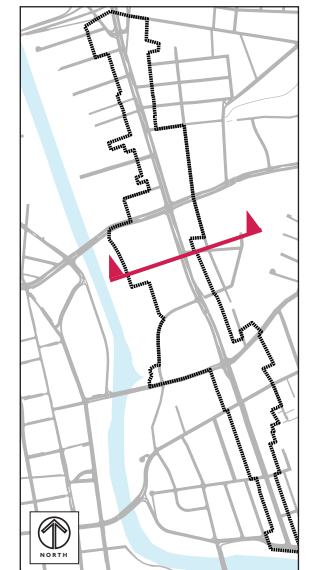


Figure 3-4. Water Street to Soquel Avenue

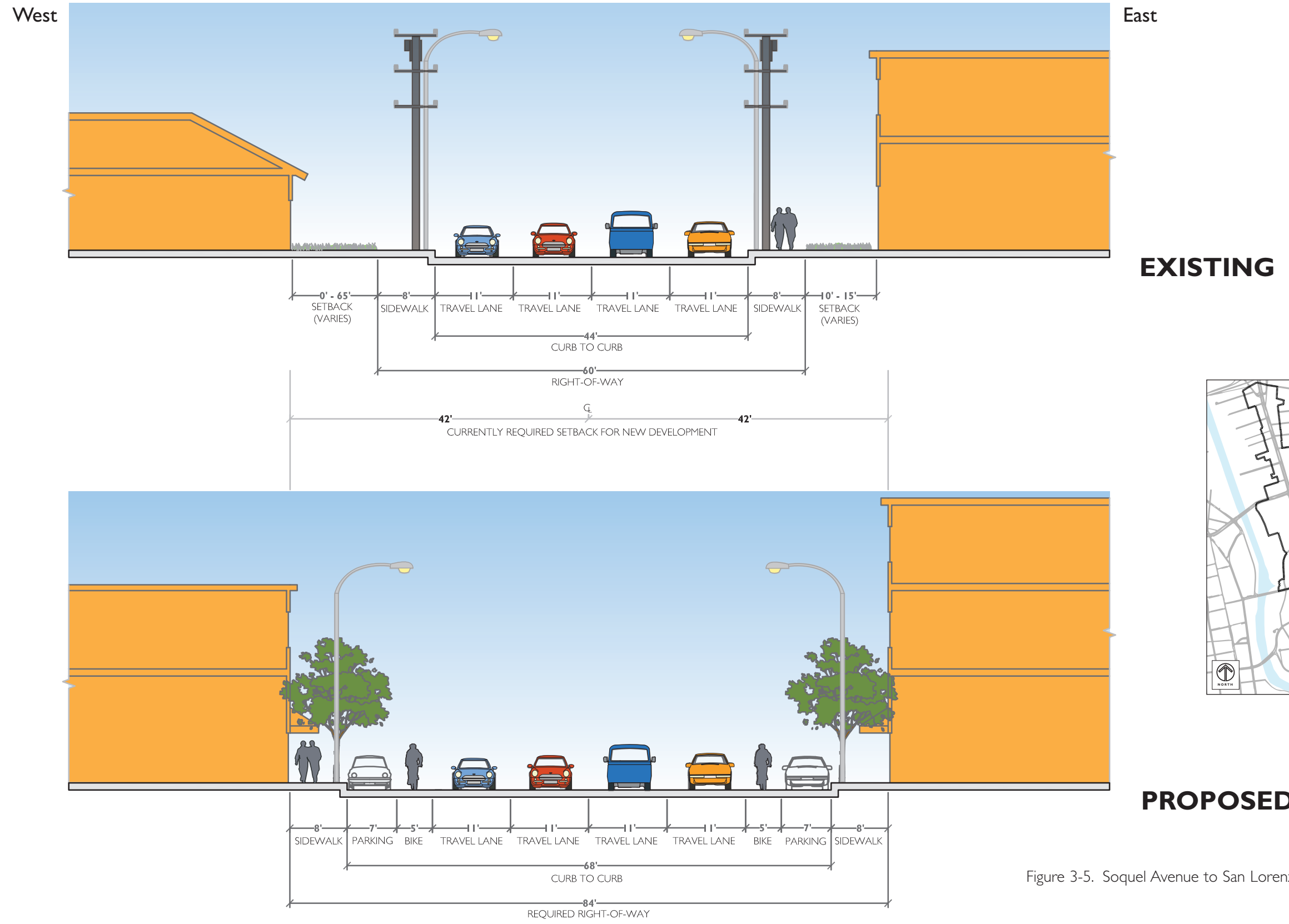


Figure 3-5. Soquel Avenue to San Lorenzo Boulevard

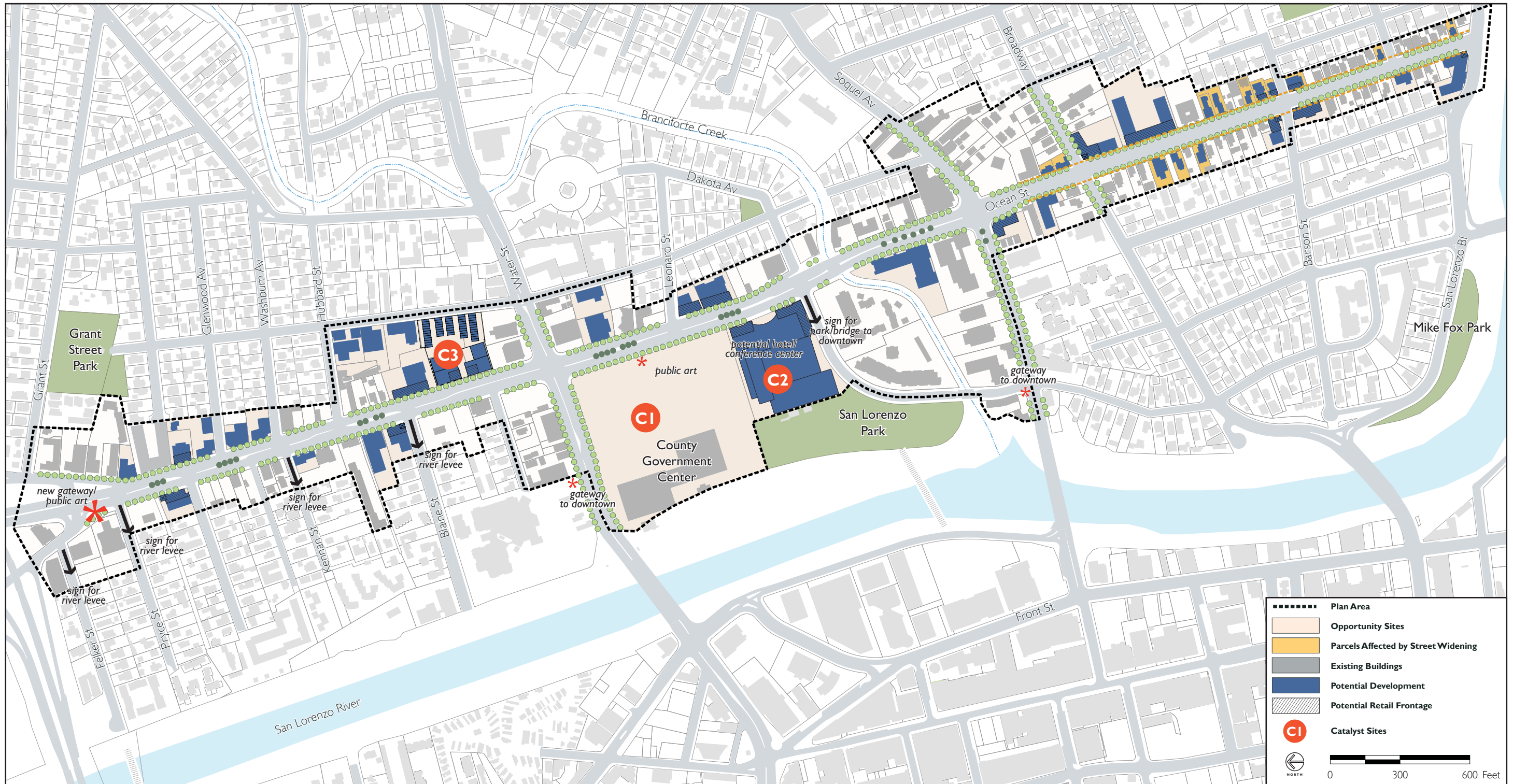


Figure 3-6. Illustrative Plan

To implement these improvements, the City will prepare a Streetscape Master Plan that further refines these concepts and includes greater detail about the precise improvements to be constructed. As part of this effort, the City will continue to search for innovative engineering approaches that can accommodate vehicle traffic while making Ocean Street a better place for pedestrians and bicyclists. Once the Streetscape Master Plan is complete, it will take precedence over the conceptual street sections shown in this Area Plan.

D. Illustrative Plan

An Illustrative Plan is presented in Figure 3-6 to show how the Ocean Street Concept could be implemented by the year 2030. The Illustrative Plan is provided only to show the potential form of new development. It is not intended to set development requirements for individual properties or dictate the precise form of new buildings. It also does not require new development to occur on any property.

The Illustrative Plan shows potential change on opportunity sites that met at least one of the following criteria:

- ◆ A development proposal was pending for the site.
- ◆ Adjacent parcels have a single owner and could be combined to create a larger development site.
- ◆ The site was vacant or underutilized.

On each potential opportunity site, the Illustrative Plan shows new development that would help to improve the character of Ocean Street. The new buildings shown on the Illustrative Plan would help to create a strong built edge along Ocean Street, providing more visual interest for pedestrians and a better walking environment. Buildings could also be articulated to create small setbacks in front, providing space for outdoor seating or an entry courtyard. Parking and loading spaces would be provided behind new buildings, away from the street.

The illustrative concept also shows the potential widening of Ocean Street's right-of-way south of Soquel Avenue. Some properties in this area have existing buildings that are within this new right-of-way and would have to be moved or replaced in order to widen the street. Other properties along Ocean Street could also be affected by street widening, even though they do not have existing buildings within the increased street right-of-way.

E. Catalyst Sites

To further illustrate how new development could transform Ocean Street’s character, three sites for potential catalyst projects were considered in more detail:

- ◆ C-1: County Government Center
- ◆ C-2: University Inn
- ◆ C-3: Ocean Street and May Avenue properties

Figures 3-1 and 3-6 show the location of each catalyst site.

The following concepts for each catalyst site are provided only as examples. They are not binding on property owners.

1. C-1: County Government Center

The County Government Center could accommodate a bold new public space that reflects the civic importance of this site and creates a new place for people to gather. In addition, the surface parking lots on the site could be replaced by new parking garages that enable the County to accommodate its full parking demand. These parking garages could include retail shops on the ground floor along Ocean Street and Water Street, creating greater interest for pedestrians. The Government Center’s large “superblock” could also be divided into smaller, more walkable blocks by new public streets through the site.

Near the property’s south edge, a new path could create a pedestrian connection from Ocean Street to San Lorenzo Park. This path would help to strengthen the link between Ocean Street and the San Lorenzo River.

2. C-2: University Inn

The University Inn site could be redeveloped as a first-class hotel, providing accommodations for business and leisure travelers alike. The hotel could include a signature tower component, creating a distinctive architectural accent at the heart of Ocean Street. New apartments or condominiums could be included as part of the hotel development. While some parking would be provided on-site, the hotel could also share parking with garages on other sites.

On the south edge of the site, next to Dakota Avenue, a new pedestrian path could create a more direct connection between Ocean Street and San Lorenzo Park. This connection would provide a line of sight between the street and the park. Also, a sign on Ocean Street could direct people to the park's pedestrian bridge, which crosses the river into Downtown Santa Cruz.

3. C-3: Ocean Street and May Avenue Properties

This site—located just north of Water Street—has frontage on both Ocean Street and May Avenue. This site could accommodate a mixed-use building facing Ocean Street, with apartments or condominiums located above ground-floor retail stores. The building's podium would provide on-site parking for residents. Parking for retail uses could potentially be located off-site. Open space for residents could be provided on top of the podium and in the middle of the block, behind the podium.

Along May Avenue, the site could be developed with two-story townhomes that would reinforce the block's neighborhood character. Townhomes along May Avenue would front onto the street. The remaining townhomes would front onto pedestrian-only landscaped paseos. Parking would be provided in a tuck-under garage behind each unit.

