BETTER BLACKSTONE

Public Realm Action Plan

CAL POLY
Landscape Architecture
COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE
& ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How the City of Fresno is Like the Native Ash Tree

When we began this project, one of the first questions we had was where the name Fresno came from. After learning that Fresno is the Spanish name for the native ash tree to the area (Fraxinus dipetala), we researched the California ash tree to learn more about the tree that gave its name to the fifth largest city in the world's fifth largest economy. We learned that the City of Fresno shares many symbolic and functional qualities with the native ash tree—a resilient, adaptable species exclusive to California's Central Valley. Much like the ash tree, which thrives in tough climates with hot summers and limited rainfall, Fresno has grown and endured through environmental challenges, economic shifts, and social change. The ash tree's deep roots allow it to access water and anchor itself firmly in dry, shifting soil - a metaphor for Fresno's strength in holding onto its identity and history despite cycles of disinvestment, migration, and rapid urbanization. This parallels how the deep cultural roots of the city's residents tie the people to the place.

The ash tree offers shade, shelter, and support to the ecosystem around it, serving as an anchor of resilience and interconnection. Similarly, Fresno possesses powerful potential as a city where diverse communities contribute to a shared canopy of culture, labor, and creativity. Yet this potential is situated within a context of deep and persistent challenges. Fresno confronts some of the most pressing urban issues in California: severe air pollution, extreme income inequality, and a legacy of disinvestment in its historic core and existing neighborhoods. Decades of unchecked urban sprawl have depleted resources from central neighborhoods, resulting in fragmented infrastructure, decaying commercial corridors, and a lack of accessible public amenities amid a changing climate.

Systemic underinvestment has left many communities without safe streets, reliable transit, adequate housing, or third places. Public health disparities, driven by poor air quality and limited access to healthcare, further burden residents.

Despite these challenges, Fresno—like the native ash—remains rooted in resilience. It supports a wide range of people, ideas, and industries, from agriculture and education to art and innovation. The city, like the tree, grows strongest when nurtured in a balanced, sustainable environment. With bold, community-driven planning—focused on equitable reinvestment, walkable neighborhoods, inclusive transit, and environmental restoration—Fresno can regenerate from within. The ash is not just a tree, but a powerful symbol of what is possible: a city that transforms its challenges into strength and its diversity into its greatest asset.

The Blackstone Corridor's public realm—with its potential for transformation—can be viewed as a canvas for fostering sustainable, community-driven change, much like the growth of a native ash tree. Just as the ash tree adapts to its environment over time, the redevelopment of Blackstone should follow a phased, thoughtful process that nurtures the corridor's local culture, values, and unique identity. Each phase of the project can resemble the growth rings of a tree—growing deeper, more rooted, and more expansive with every cycle.

Source: Kohlruss, Craig. "Go Ahead and Stare, Fresno. Because the Sierra Will Soon Fade behind a Veil of Smog | Opinion." Go Ahead and Stare, Fresno. Because the Sierra Will Soon Fade behind a Veil of Smog Read More at: Https://Www.Fresnobee.Com/Opinion/Opn-Columns-Blogs/Marek-Warszawski/Article299784544.Html#storylink=cpy, 5 Feb. 2025, www.fresnobee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/marek-warszawski/article299784544.html.
Read more at: https://www.fresnobee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/marek-warszawski/article299784544.html#storylink=cpy

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Definitions were adapted for this project from 'A Planner's Dictionary' by Davidson & Dolnick (2004)

Built Environment
- Elements of the environment that are built or made by people for the intent of the human experience as contrasted with natural processes.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), a high-capacity, cost-effective public transit system that uses buses to transport passengers quickly and efficiently and are sometimes called "rubber-tired light rail".

Character
- The collection of unique physical characteristics in an area that contribute to its unique look and feel. These characteristics provide an aesthetic identity for that area that differentiates it from surroundings areas or cities. Character can range from individual buildings to city scale.

Circulation
- How people move within a defined place, such as on foot, bike or in a car.

Community Engagement
- The active involvement of people who live, work or are invested in an area during the process of making improvements to, or the envisioning of, what that area can be.

Historic Preservation
- Historic preservation is a process that seeks to preserve and protect buildings, objects, landscapes or other artifacts of historical or architectural significance.
- This term refers specifically to the preservation of the built environment, including buildings and landscapes.

Pedestrian-Friendly
- The layout and design of the public realm that intentionally encourages walking and biking within an area, ranging from a single block to the district level.
- Specific elements including traffic calming, transparent storefronts, sidewalks, and wayfinding experiences.

Placemaking
- The uses of the arts and temporary designs to activate existing town squares, parks, streets, and waterfronts.
- It can be done through place-based interventions, and introduce pleasurable and interesting elements that reinvigorate local economic development and improve public health through social interaction and physical activity opportunities.

[Image Left] Anti-walkability sign on Blackstone by Fresno City College.

Public Realm
- The public realm are areas within a city that exist within the right-of-way that is available to the public, often centering around transportation corridors. Elements of the public realm include streets, sidewalks, alleys, hike and bike trails, etc.).

Revitalization
- Revitalization is the process of restoring the economic and social vitality of an area where market forces alone will not suffice. This can take many forms, whether focusing on new infrastructure and industrial scale developments or to smaller downtown projects that affect the sense of place.

Right-Of-Way
- A public or private area that allows for the passage of people or goods. Public examples include interstates, streets, bike paths, alleys, and sidewalks. Private right-of-ways include railroads and utility corridors.
- A public right- of-way is dedicated or deeded to the public for public use and is under the control of a public agency.

Roundabout
- A raised island that is usually landscaped and located at the intersection of two streets used to reduce traffic speeds and accidents without diverting traffic onto adjacent residential streets.

Sense Of Place
- The characteristics consisting of constructed and natural landmarks or social and economic surroundings, of a location, place, or community that make it readily recognizable as being unique and different from its surroundings. These elements provide a feeling of belonging to or being identified with that particular place.

[Image Left] Weldon St. BRT station on Blackstone

Storm Water Detention
- Any storm drainage technique that retains or detains runoff, such as a detention or retention basin, parking lot storage, porous pavement, or any combination thereof.

Streetscape
- The design and associated elements that accompany a street, particularly through a city or downtown. The streetscape occurs within the right-of-way and makes up the public realm.

Traffic Calming
- The efforts taken to reduce the adverse impact of vehicular traffic in cities. Traffic calming usually involves reducing vehicle speeds through a specified area, creating more welcoming spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, while improving safety for both drivers and pedestrians.
- This can be accomplished through a variety of interventions, including improved signage, crosswalks, road diets (narrower or fewer lanes) and other efforts to slow traffic.

Urban Design
- Urban design is a hybrid of architecture, landscape architecture and urban planning. While it is called urban design it can be scaled to a variety of community sizes.
- Urban design works with building facades, streetscapes and land use to create a cohesive, functional and aesthetically pleasing public realm.

Walkability
- The overall quality of walking conditions in an area. This includes how friendly the built environment is to pedestrians, measuring both in terms of facilities (sidewalks) and destinations (ability to safely walk to a grocery store).
- Increased walkability has been proven to have individual and community health benefits, both physically and mentally, as well as economic benefits.

Wayfinding And Signage
- Elements in the public realm that assist people in orienting themselves, at both a city and site specific scale. Wayfinding can include signage and graphic communication.

[Image Left] Wayfinding in downtown Fresno

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[Images Right]
Photo of students exploring the Blackstone Corridor.

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1 PLANTING THE SEEDS

FIRST PHASE - PLANTING THE SEEDS:

Community Engagement and Initial Infrastructure

In the initial stages, we focus on establishing strong foundations - both physical and social - by engaging local residents, business owners, and community groups in defining their vision. This first phase mirrors the deep root system of the ash tree, where we invest our time in understanding basic physical and social infrastructure such as pedestrian walkways, public gathering spaces, and community leadership. This phase ensures that the corridor's future vision aligns with local culture and needs by prioritizing features like cultural landmarks, historical markers, and spaces for community interaction. Just as roots anchor a tree in the soil, this phase establishes the corridor's strong connection to its local identity and the community's values.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND - ROOTING THE FOUNDATION

Project Background

During the Fall of 2024, the Landscape Architecture Cultural Environments Design Focus Studio course (LA 404) at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly), focused on the Blackstone Corridor in Fresno.

Partnering with local stakeholders, including but not limited to Regenerate California Innovation, Manchester Center, Fresno City College, Paul Halajian Architects, and Darden Architects, we developed this Public Realm Action Plan for the one-mile stretch along the Blackstone corridor between McKinley and Shields Avenues. While we will initially begin with an inventory of the entire study area and the larger Fresno context, our findings will focus on specific themes and nodes within the site.

[Images Right]
Photo of existing businesses and their built environment along Blackstone

The Blackstone Corridor was chosen as the focus area for this studio to build upon the recent design and planning initiatives undertaken there with the Better Blackstone Design Challenge, and corridor infrastructure plans by the City of Fresno. While that intensive effort built momentum around the potential of Blackstone to act as one of the primary commercial, cultural, and social corridors in Fresno, there are opportunities for this studio to further this momentum with a fresh set of eyes focusing on phased-interventions in the public realm.

The Better Blackstone Design Challenge in Fresno was a locally led initiative aimed at re-imagining and regenerating Blackstone Avenue, one of the city's most important commercial corridors (Better Blackstone Design Challenge, n.d.). Organized by local stakeholders and community leaders, the challenge invited architects, designers, and residents to propose innovative solutions for improving the corridor's functionality, experience, and sustainability. The objective was to transform Blackstone into a more pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented, and economically vibrant space while preserving its historic significance. Ideas included enhanced landscaping, improved public transit access, the introduction of mixed-use developments, and safer biking and walking experiences. The challenge reflected a broader effort to address urban sprawl, economic disparity, and environmental concerns for Fresno's future growth, ultimately envisioning a Blackstone Avenue that serves the evolving needs of the city's residents

ABOUT CAL POLY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Mission and Objectives

The Department of Landscape Architecture offers a top-tier professional educational experience for its students in a unique California natural landscape (Department of Landscape Architecture, n.d.). With a student-focused educational approach to Landscape Architecture, students cultivate the skills and knowledge needed to make valuable contributions to a changing profession and global society. We prepare our graduates to take active leadership roles in the planning, design, and management of various aspects and scales of our environment. Faculty commitment to excellence

[Image Above]
Parking lot of the New Manchester Center looking towards Blackstone Ave.

[Image Above]
Dedicated bike lane along Shields Ave.

in teaching and to the core values of the profession helps students develop a holistic approach to the field of Landscape Architecture while fostering an appreciation for lifelong learning.

The department has identified the following broad goals in support of our mission:

- Promote a professional, responsible, humanistic and sustainable approach to Landscape Architecture.
- Provide contemporary and necessary landscape architectural skills and knowledge to prepare students for a variety of professional roles.
- Provide our students with a diverse, integrated and learner-centered set of experiences that stimulate and nurture life long learning.
- Present the landscape architect as a leader and integrator of information from allied disciplines, the arts, technology and the natural and social sciences.
- Structure an understanding of natural and cultural systems in the context of site, community, urban and regional design, planning and implementation.
- Support teaching, scholarship and community service opportunities for all.

LA 404 CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS - COURSE INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Environments Design Focus Studio, LA 404 is a ten-week studio designed to provide assessment, exploration, and interpretation of cultural values, issues, and landscapes to design and planning projects. Emphasis on observation and inquiry of diverse cultural settings, differences in cultural values, and personal ethics in the design process. The course learning objectives include:

- Define a concept of cultural design in landscape architecture
- Identify and analyze characteristics of cultural contexts - values, attitudes, beliefs, etc. found in the larger community and immediate project setting
- Demonstrate critical and multi-scale thinking processes responsive to cultural values
- Address the investigations and processes that lead to the formation of design concepts and their realization as objects, plans, and places

[Image]
1919 Sanborn Map of Blackstone at McKinley. . Courtesy of the Library of Congress

HISTORY OF FRESNO

The History of Native Americans in the Fresno Area

Long before Fresno became a city and national agricultural hub, the region was home to thriving Native American communities whose relationships to the land spanned thousands of years. The primary Indigenous group in what is now the Fresno area were the Yokuts, a confederation of tribes that occupied the San Joaquin Valley, stretching from the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to the valley floor (Fresno County Historical Society, n.d.). The Yokuts developed deep cultural, spiritual, and economic ties to the region's rivers, plains, and oak-studded hills, living in harmony with the cycles of nature and sustaining themselves through hunting, fishing, and gathering.

The Northern Valley Yokuts lived near the San Joaquin River and its tributaries, while other groups, such as the Choinumni and Dumna people, lived along the Kings and San Joaquin Rivers. These tribes were part of a collection of communities with distinct languages, customs, and political systems. Their lives were guided by traditions tied to the land. Acorns, for instance, were a staple food, and large communal granaries were built to store them (California Native American Heritage Commission, n.d.). Spirituality was deeply embedded in everyday life, with ceremonies, songs, and stories passed down through generations and are often connected to the landscape itself - the rivers, mountains, and oak groves.

The arrival of Spanish explorers in the 18th century marked the beginning of a series of devastating transformations. Although the Spanish missions were primarily located on the coast, their influence stretched inland, bringing disease, displacement, and forced labor that weakened Indigenous populations. In the 19th century, Mexican land grants and later American settlement during and after the Gold Rush accelerated the dispossession of Native lands. The formation of the state of California in 1850 led to more aggressive efforts to remove and marginalize Native peoples, often through violent means. In 1851–1852, treaties were signed between the U.S. government and many Central Valley tribes, including those near Fresno, but Congress later refused to ratify them, leaving tribes

landless and vulnerable.

Despite this history of colonization and systemic erasure, Native communities in the Fresno area have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Today, descendants of the original peoples, such as the Choinumni and Dumna, continue to advocate for the recognition of their sovereignty, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. They work to protect sacred sites, preserve oral histories, and revitalize Indigenous languages and practices. Community organizations, educators, and tribal leaders play a crucial role in bringing awareness to the deep Indigenous roots of the Fresno region and in creating opportunities for collaboration in areas like land use planning, environmental protection, and cultural representation.

Understanding the history of Native Americans in Fresno is not just a matter of honoring the past - it is essential to envisioning a future rooted in justice, equity, and respect for the original stewards of this land.

Recognizing Indigenous presence, both historical and contemporary, helps foster more inclusive planning processes that reflect the full story of the Central Valley.

HISTORY OF FRESNO'S DIVERSE CULTURES

Prevalence of Fresno's Cultures

Fresno has a rich history of diversity and multicultural contributions, making the city one of the most culturally diverse places in the world. Fresno's multicultural population is evident in its role as a destination for art and music, a variety of culinary options, and cultural celebrations. These annual events in Fresno include the Mexican Independence Day celebration, the Armenian Grape Blessing Festival, the Japanese Obon Odori Festival, the Fresno Greek Fest, and the Hmong New Year Celebration, which is the largest Hmong event in the United States (Fresno/Clovis Convention & Visitors Bureau, n.d.).

The initial settlement and colonization of Fresno began in the early 19th century, following Spanish and Mexican expansion into the San Joaquin Valley. After California became a U.S. state in 1850, settlers, ranchers, and farmers moved into the region, drawn by fertile soil and opportunities for agriculture. The establishment of the Central Pacific Railroad in 1872 played a crucial role in Fresno's growth, leading to the founding of the city as a key agricultural hub. Over time, Fresno developed into a major center for farming, shaping its economic and cultural identity.

African American

The first African American arrived in Fresno County in 1827 as part of a fur trading expedition (Fresno County Historical Society, n.d.). A more significant influx of African American settlers began with the expansion of the Central Pacific Railroad, which facilitated the establishment of towns throughout the valley. By 1882, Fresno's African American community had formed its first congregation, and in 1953, they established the NAACP Fresno Chapter. By the late 20th century, the Fresno Advocate was founded by Lester and Pauline Foster, and the Carter Memorial Church began sponsoring housing programs to support the local community.

Latino

The Latino presence in Fresno County dates back to the Gold Rush, as many sought fortune in California's goldfields. However, due to discrimination and limited gold reserves, many transitioned to labor in agriculture and railroad construction. By the 1890s, improved railway connections facilitated migration from Mexico, and by 1907, restrictive immigration policies against Asian laborers created new job opportunities for Latinos. The labor demand during World War I further expanded employment prospects, particularly in agriculturally rich Central Valley.

Basque

Immigrants from the Basque region of Spain arrived in Fresno County during the gold rush, but found their expertise in sheepherding to be more lucrative. By the latter half of the 19th century, figures such as William Helm and the Kreyenhagen brothers were raising tens of thousands of sheep in Fresno County. By 1867, wool production had become a thriving industry, and the first Basque hotels emerged in the 1920s to accommodate the growing community. Today, only the Basque Hotel and Santa Fe Hotel remain as cultural landmarks.

Chinese

The Gold Rush also attracted hundreds of Chinese immigrants to the region, many of whom initially settled in Millerton. However, in 1867, a group of White businessmen expelled them from the town, forcing them to relocate near Fort Miller and, later, to Fresno with the arrival of the Central Pacific Railroad. Discriminatory policies prevented them from purchasing land east of the railroad tracks, leading to the formation of Fresno's Chinatown to the west. By the 1910s, the Chinese community

[Image Left] Photo of an early Black family in Fresno

[Image Left] Photo of an early Latino family in Fresno

[Image Left] Photo of an early Latino family in Fresno

[Image Left] Photo of an early Latino family in Fresno

[Images] All photos are courtesy of the Fresno County Historical Society

remained segregated from the broader population, and in 1994, Chinatown Revitalization Inc. was established to preserve historic buildings and promote economic and cultural growth.

Armenian

The first Armenian family to settle in Fresno, the Seropians, found the region's climate and geography similar to their homeland. Initially working as grocers and packers of dried fruit, they later became pioneers in exporting figs and oranges to Eastern markets. By the 1920s, more Armenians arrived and concentrated in what became known as "Armenian Town" in southeast Fresno. By 1930, Armenian growers owned approximately 40% of Fresno County's raisin-producing acreage and played a significant role in the cultivation of melons and figs. Like many immigrant groups, Armenians faced discrimination and were not fully integrated into the broader community until the 1950s. In 2017, The Vineyards at the California Armenian Home was built to provide senior living services.

Japanese

Japanese immigrants in Fresno initially worked as farmers, railroad laborers, and business owners serving their community. Their churches became central to neighborhood life, but this stability was disrupted during World War II, when Japanese Americans were forcibly removed to internment camps, such as Manzanar, on the opposite side of the Sierras from Fresno. Less than half of the Japanese residents who were sent to internment camps returned to Fresno after the war. However, those who did benefited from a relatively improved reputation despite continued racism due to the distinguished military service of Japanese American soldiers during the Second World War.

Additional Groups

Among the many other communities which have, and continue to, contribute to Fresno's cultural landscape include the Greeks, Hmong, Portuguese, Scandinavians, Sikhs, and Volga Germans, with each continually adding to the city's rich and diverse heritage.

[Image Above]
Photo of an early Armenian family in Fresno

[Image Above]
Photo of an early Japanese cultural event in Fresno

[Image Above]
Photo of an early Hmong cultural event in Fresno

[Image Above]
Photo of an early Greek cultural event in Fresno

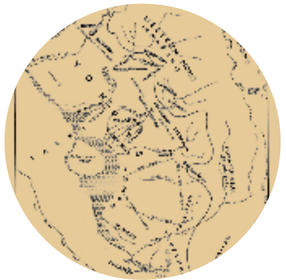
[Images]
All photos are courtesy of the Fresno County Historical Society

HISTORY OF FRESNO'S PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

As an influx of people migrated to California for gold in 1849, they created new settlements to accommodate the new residents. Gold miners explored the San Joaquin River and eventually established a settlement known as Rootville, later called Millerton. Before 1867, water was too scarce for most crops to grow effectively. Moses Church developed the first canals, called "church ditches," for irrigation to address this challenge. Anthony Easterby funded the production and acquisition of existing smaller irrigation canals to form the Fresno Canal and Irrigation Company (Fresno County Historical Society, n.d.). These canals transformed Fresno County into rich, productive soil, enabling extensive wheat farming in the area. Leland J. Stanford, the Executive of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, is credited with selecting the site of the city after seeing a lush wheat field owned by Easterby surrounded by dry prairie. Fresno was then founded by the Central Pacific Railroad Company in 1872 to connect San Francisco and San Diego (City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, n.d.).

When gold became more difficult to find, miners- motivated by California's abundant groundwater turned to agriculture (California Department of Water Resources, n.d.). The Tulare Lake Basin, where Fresno is located, was once a seasonal lake. The basin would flood every spring as snowmelt and rainfall flowed from the Sierra Nevadas, becoming the "largest freshwater body west of the Mississippi River" (Sarah A. Mooney Memorial Museum, n.d.). Tulare Lake was a key resource for Native peoples"for thousands of years, the tribes thrived in the basin's diverse habitats, from wetlands and vernal pools to oak woodlands and riparian forests (Water Education Foundation, 2024). The Yokuts enjoyed abundant wildlife and native fish, including pike minnow, hitch and chinook salmon".. However, once the miners-turned-farmers arrived, rivers were diverted, and marshes were drained to create farmland in the 1880s. Canals, levees, and dams were built, preventing the lake from flooding as it historically had and stripping the Native peoples and animals of a crucial food source and habitat. While agriculture in the Tulare Lake Basin has been lucrative, farmland runoff and overpumping of groundwater have led to pressing concerns. Since the basin lacks any outlets, groundwater is polluted by

[Image Above]
By Unknown (before 1880) - Digital scan, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=119278961



[Image Above] The southern San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada during contact (1772), showing Tulare Lake at 1880 levels.

fertilizer and livestock waste. As a result, the salt in the water "can render farmland less fertile and groundwater undrinkable"(Water Education Foundation, 2014). Additionally, overpumping of groundwater has caused land subsidence, causing the Tulare Lake Basin being one of the fastest-sinking areas in the nation.

In the first half of the 20th century, Fresno experienced steady growth, evolving from a small agricultural town into a thriving regional center (Urban Institute, n.d.). The expansion of irrigation systems, including the development of canals and dams, allowed for large-scale farming, solidifying Fresno's reputation as a major agricultural hub. The arrival of the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads facilitated trade and transportation, further boosting the local economy. During this period, Fresno saw an influx of immigrants, from Asia, Europe and Central and South America, contributing to the city's cultural diversity and workforce. The Great Depression posed economic challenges, but World War II spurred growth as military bases, food production, and wartime industries expanded. By 1950, Fresno had developed into one of California's fastest-growing cities, with a growing population, improved infrastructure, and a more diversified economy.

From the 1950s onward, Fresno experienced significant population and economic growth, transforming from an agricultural hub into a major urban center. The expansion of irrigation and mechanized farming fueled the city's role as a leading national agricultural producer, attracting workers and businesses. The construction of highways, such as State Route 99, improved connectivity and facilitated suburban development. During the latter half of the 20th century, Fresno saw rapid urbanization, with the establishment of shopping centers, residential neighborhoods, and educational institutions, including the founding of California State University, Fresno. By the 1980s and 1990s, the city had diversified its economy, incorporating sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics. However, rapid expansion also brought challenges, including urban sprawl, economic disparity, and environmental concerns. Today, Fresno continues to evolve, balancing its heritage with modernization aimed at sustainable growth and resilience.

[Image Above]
Looking down Blackstone towards downtown Fresno.

[Image Above]
Business signs on Blackstone Ave. Photo by Kurt Hegre. Courtesy of the Fresno Bee.

About Blackstone Corridor

Blackstone Avenue is one of Fresno's most commercially and culturally significant streets, having played a central role in the city's development from the 20th century to today. Originally a key route connecting downtown Fresno to the northern outskirts and Yosemite National Park, Blackstone Avenue became a major thoroughfare as the city expanded (City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, 2019). In the mid-20th century, it emerged as Fresno's primary commercial corridor, attracting businesses, car dealerships, and shopping centers, including the iconic Manchester Center, which opened in 1954 as the region's first major mall.

As suburbanization increased in the latter half of the 20th century with the proliferation of private car ownership, retail and commercial activity shifted even further north from downtown and the Manchester Center, leading to periods of decline for some areas along Blackstone. However, efforts to regenerate the corridor have been ongoing, including infrastructure improvements and redevelopment projects aimed at modernizing businesses and attracting new investments. Today, Blackstone Avenue remains a vital artery in Fresno, reflecting the city's evolving economic landscape and urban growth.

Today, driving up Blackstone Avenue in Fresno resembles peeling back the layers of the city's history, revealing its transformation over time like an onion. Starting at the edge of downtown, remnants of early 20th-century architecture hint at Fresno's origins as a bustling railway and agricultural hub. As you move north, mid-century strip malls, aging motels, and former car dealerships reflect the post-World War II boom, when Blackstone became the city's commercial spine. Further along, shopping centers like Manchester Center narrate the story of Fresno's suburban expansion in the 1950s and '60s, while newer developments and big-box stores near River Park underscore the city's late-20th-century shift toward large-scale retail and urban sprawl. Each mile illustrates how shifts in transportation, commerce, and demographics have shaped the city's development.

2 BREAKING GROUND

SECOND PHASE - BREAKING GROUND

Enhancing Connectivity and Retrofitting Suburbia

As the Ash tree begins to grow, its branches spread outward, extending the tree's reach and impact. Similarly, in the second phase of Blackstone's redevelopment, we focus on enhancing connectivity and promoting mixed-use developments. This phase explores how existing suburban developments can be re-adapted for affordable housing, local businesses, and public spaces which can serve multiple purposes. That streetscapes can become more vibrant, featuring more green spaces, public art, and cultural installations that reflect the corridor's diverse heritage - similar to how the Ash tree's canopy expands to provide shelter and support to other species. During this phase, we pay particular attention to ensuring that the cultural aspects of Fresno - like Latino, African American, and Hmong communities - are represented through design elements, such as paving patterns, murals, and public art.

SUBURBAN RETROFITS

Revitalizing the Middle: Reclaiming the Central Blackstone Corridor

Over the last several decades, Fresno has experienced two powerful and often conflicting development trajectories: the embracing of its historic downtown and neighborhoods, and the expansive growth of suburban neighborhoods to the north. Regeneration efforts in downtown Fresno have brought renewed energy, infrastructure investments, and cultural activity to the city's urban core, while significant commercial and residential development has steadily pushed the city's commercial and economic edges northward. These north-end expansions have attracted private investment, retail, and institutional growth, effectively drawing economic and social momentum away from the midsection of the city - particularly the central stretch of the Blackstone Corridor (Greenfield Coalition, 2023).

[Images Right]
Photo of existing businesses with their parking lots along Blackstone

As a result, the area between Shields and McKinley Avenues has been caught in the middle - geographically, economically, and socially. Once the city's thriving commercial spine, this segment of Blackstone has faced years of disinvestment, vacancy, and fragmented land use. Infrastructure is aging, the pedestrian environment is uninviting, and the corridor lacks the vibrancy it once had, and is currently seen in either downtown, the Tower District, or in newer northern suburbs. Yet, in this overlooked condition lies a powerful opportunity: to re-imagine the central Blackstone Corridor as a model for equitable, sustainable, and inclusive urban transformation through suburban retrofitting.

Suburban retrofit strategies can re-imagine car-centric, single-use zoning by introducing mixed-use infill developments, walkable public spaces, and multi-modal transportation systems. Along Blackstone, this involves rethinking underused parking lots, strip malls, and low-density parcels as areas for housing, culture, transit, and commerce.

With institutions like Fresno City College and revitalizing activity centers like Manchester Shopping Center anchoring the corridor and its proximity to downtown, this stretch is uniquely positioned to serve as a connective tissue - a central spine that bridges north and south, past and future. A holistic redevelopment approach could rebalance the city's growth, bringing investment and vitality to an area that deserves attention and care. The moment is ripe to reenvision this corridor not as a leftover space, but as a dynamic and catalytic zone for Fresno's next chapter, led by the people who live there and have lived there for generations.

Infill Development versus Suburban Sprawl

Infill development, which involves re-purposing vacant or underutilized developments within existing urban areas, offers numerous advantages over suburban sprawl. One primary benefit is its ability to reduce urban sprawl, preserving open space, farmland, and natural habitats often consumed by suburban expansion (Fiveable, 2025). By developing within established urban boundaries, infill development also utilizes existing infrastructure such as roads, utilities, and public services, decreasing the need for costly new

[Images above and to the right]
Examples of strip mall developments and drive-thrus along Blackstone

[Image above]
Examples of mid-century strip mall developments along Blackstone Ave.

[Images above]
Examples new drive-thru land use and development along Blackstone Ave.

infrastructure projects required for new greenfield developments. This helps conserve resources and lower the environmental impact of expanding cities, making urban infill more environmentally and financially sustainable. Additionally, infill development can revitalize neighborhoods, breathing new life into older or underinvested areas and fostering an enhanced sense of community by creating more walkable, mixed-use environments that reflect the needs of existing residents.

Another key benefit of infill development is its potential to improve transportation efficiency and reduce traffic congestion (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2007). Well-designed infill projects promote compact, mixed-use communities that offer easier access to commercial amenities and public transit systems, reducing residents' reliance on cars. This increased density promotes enhanced walkability, which can lead to decreased traffic congestion and lower emissions, making these neighborhoods more human-scale. Moreover, infill development supports economic growth by encouraging the reuse and revitalization of existing developed lands, providing a population density that can support the variety of daily needs for its residents (Peña, J., & Shah, S.,2022).
It can also promote social equity by providing affordable housing options and creating vibrant, diverse communities with easy access to amenities, jobs, and services. Ultimately, infill development helps create more resilient, efficient, and sustainable cities.

SUBURBAN RETROFITS

Revitalizing the Middle: Reclaiming the Central Blackstone Corridor

Over the last several decades, Fresno has experienced expansive suburban sprawl in the northern and eastern edges of the city, which has accelerated underinvestment of the city's central and historic neighborhoods. Regeneration efforts in downtown Fresno have brought renewed energy, infrastructure investments, and cultural activity to the city's urban core, while significant commercial and residential development has steadily pushed the city's commercial and economic edges northward and to the southeast. These outward expansions have attracted private investment, retail, and institutional growth, effectively drawing economic and social momentum away from the midsection of the city - particularly the central stretch of the Blackstone Corridor between the Manchester Center and Fresno City College.

Corridor Regeneration

Corridor revitalization is crucial for cities as it enhances economic activity, improves mobility, and fosters community development at a neighborhood scales (Núñez, L. (2021). Major corridors, such as Blackstone, are often home to once-thriving commercial and transportation hubs. This decline can be due to a multitude of reasons, such as suburban expansion that draws energy into a different part of the city, shifting consumer habits such as online shopping, or aging infrastructure. Revitalizing these areas can reinvigorates local businesses, attracts new investment, and creates job opportunities. Improved streetscapes, public transportation access, and pedestrian-friendly designs also enhance connectivity and the sense of place for residents. Additionally, corridor revitalization can preserve historical and cultural identity while incorporating sustainable urban planning practices, such as green spaces and energy-efficient buildings. By transforming underutilized corridors into vibrant, mixed-use spaces, cities promote economic resilience, social equity, and long-term growth.

STRIP MALL REDEVELOPMENT

Strip malls are a common development pattern associated with second generation suburban sprawl in American cities. With their history tied to the use of personal vehicles, single zoning, and minimum parking requirements, they are primarily designed with a substantial parking lot located between the retail stores and the primary thoroughfare they are located on. While there may be standalone businesses along the street edge, these businesses are often drive-thrus and aren't designed to rely on foot traffic.

Due to their reliance on customers driving to them, strip malls often occupy a disproportionately large footprint along significant streets and corridors, largely because of their parking lots and parking minimums requirements outlined in the city's zoning code. This development pattern is evident along Blackstone Avenue, where most of the

[Images above]
Examples of abandoned strip mall developments along Blackstone Ave.

[Images above]
Examples of strip mall developments and drive-thrus along Blackstone.

developments were designed primarily for the automobile. As consumer behavior and the socioeconomic conditions of the surrounding neighborhoods have evolved, these strip malls often struggle to adapt.

Strip mall redevelopment refers to the process of transforming underutilized or outdated strip malls into more modern, vibrant, and sustainable experiences. This can involve renovating existing structures, repurposing vacant storefronts, or introducing a mix of residential, retail, and recreational spaces. The goal is to create walkable, community-oriented places that cater to changing consumer preferences, such as integrating green spaces, interactive elements, and a broad mix of shops and amenities. Such redevelopment can breathe new life into aging commercial areas by attracting new small businesses and destinations, increasing local tax revenues, addressing urban sprawl, and promoting more efficient land use.

The economic benefits of strip mall redevelopment can take multiple forms. By repurposing outdated or underperforming strip malls, communities can stimulate local economies by attracting new businesses, which create jobs and drive consumer spending. Many of these new jobs can be with local small businesses, helping to keep Fresno's dollars in the community. Redeveloped properties often increase in value, boosting property taxes and generating additional revenue for local governments, which can help offset the costs of an updated public realm and infrastructure in the long term. The inclusion of new land uses, such as residential spaces, office areas, or entertainment venues, can diversify income streams and draw a wider range of customers and residents. Finally, improved infrastructure and aesthetics can enhance the desirability of surrounding areas, leading to higher real estate demand and long-term economic growth while planning for the residents who are already there.

EXAMPLE

Thinking like a Farmer

City development, like farming, requires a balance of developing long term visions

[Image Left]
Aerial image of the Fresno suburbs at the northern end of Blackstone Ave. . Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

while addressing the ever changing daily needs. Just as a farmer tends to their land with long-term stewardship in mind - nurturing soil health, responding to seasonal shifts, and planting with future harvests in mind within a finite amount of space - planners and designers must approach cities as living systems that need time to grow, adapt, and regenerate. Both require working with, not against, natural and social conditions. Instead of quick fixes or extractive growth, this mindset encourages sustainable, community-rooted development that values local knowledge, invests in resilience, and cultivates the conditions for healthy, inclusive urban life to flourish year after year.

EVALUATING THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF LAND USES

Tax Revenue for Urban versus Suburban

The Sonoran Institute employs this idea of connecting farming to development, with land being a finite resource, and the decisions on which crops to plant are balanced between economic and environmental conditions. An example of this provided by the Sonoran Institute evaluated two development patterns in Grand Junctions, CO (Sonoran Institute, 2012). According to the Sonoran Institute:

'Let's compare the massive Mesa Mall in Grand Junction, Colorado to the much smaller "300 Main," a two-story mixed-use building in the city core. The mall does bring in $300,000 in property tax revenue to the county annually, which is substantial. The building at 300 Main brings in a more modest $9,000. But, when compared on a per-acre basis, the 95-acre mall yields $3,000 per year, while the 0.22-acre downtown building yields $43,000. That means the per-acre yield of 300 Main is over 14 times greater than that of the mall; a dramatic difference."

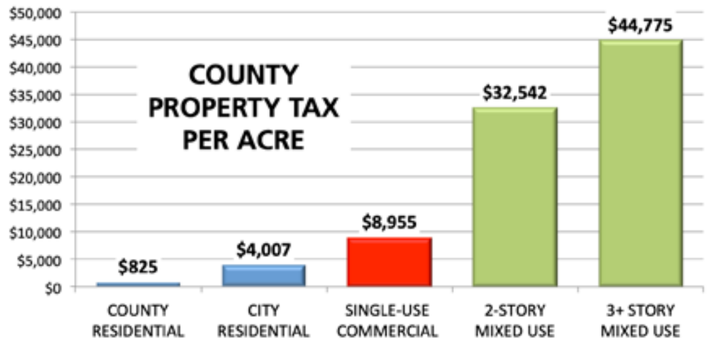
In other words, less than 7 acres of the downtown property would yield as much revenue as the 95-acre mall. This is especially important for Fresno, which has few natural barriers to prevent further suburban sprawl. With the abundance of strip malls and suburban developments along the Blackstone Corridor, there is a significant opportunity for this area to be a pilot for urban retrofits and regeneration in Fresno.

CASE STUDY

County versus Urban Mixed-Use

This chart illustrates the property tax revenue generated per acre across various land use types, as found by the Sonoran Institute. It shows a clear trend: denser, mixed-use developments yield significantly higher tax revenue compared to low-density uses. County residential land generates the least, at just $825 per acre, followed by city residential at $4,007 and single-use commercial at $8,955. In contrast, 2-story mixed-use developments generate $32,542 per acre, while developments with three or more stories top the chart at $44,775 per acre. The data highlights the fiscal benefits of compact, vertically integrated urban development.

Source: https://sonoraninstitute.org/files/pdf/about-town-building-revenue-for-communities-final-report-06152012.pdf



[Image above]
Examples downtown commercial in Grand Junction, CO. Taken 04/22/25.
Courtesy of Google Earth.

[Image above]
Examples of rural residential developments in Grand Junction, CO. Taken 04/22/25.
Courtesy of Google Earth.

CASE STUDY

County versus Urban Mixed-Use

Grand Junction, CO, has recognized the strong link between economic development and the revitalization of key areas, particularly the downtown core. The city continues to renew its downtown and core neighborhoods while redeveloping outdated malls and commercial corridors. Through strategic investments in infrastructure and public amenities, the city, along with the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Partnership, has significantly improved the downtown area—prompting increased private investment. Looking ahead, the city is focusing on several targeted sites in and around downtown to drive high-quality infill and redevelopment. The economic benefits are highlighted by the Sonoran Institute below.

Source: https://sonoraninstitute.org/files/pdf/about-town-building-revenue-for-communities-final-report-06152012.pdf

[Image above]
300 Main St. in Grand Junction, CO.
Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

[Image above]
The former KMart location in Grand Junction, CO. Taken 04/22/25.
Source: Google Earth.

EXPERIENCING THE ECONOMY AT 5 MPH

Why Mixed-Use Developments Are More Productive Than Regional Sprawl

Walkable communities offer significant economic advantages over traditional suburban developments, primarily due to how land is utilized and experienced. In walkable urban environments, compact, mixed-use developments generate far more tax revenue per acre than sprawling areas dominated by surface parking lots (Steuteville, R., 2021). Dense, pedestrian-oriented districts, even at just three stories tall, better utilize limited land by stacking residential, commercial, and civic functions vertically and in close proximity. This not only increases the taxable value of the land but also bolsters small businesses that thrive on foot traffic through increased density. In contrast, parking lots - often required in excess by zoning codes - occupy valuable real estate without generating meaningful tax revenue. They cater to cars, not people, and diminish the character, vibrancy, and economic potential of the public realm.

From the human experience, walkable communities create places that are engaging, comfortable, and accessible, encouraging residents and visitors to spend more time - and money - locally. Streets lined with shops, housing, and public amenities draw people in, while parking lots deter them. Additionally, walkable places reduce infrastructure costs over time, requiring less roadway and utility expansion per capita than low-density sprawl (Marohn, C.,2019). The return on investment in walkable communities makes them financially, socially and environmentally sustainable, providing a smarter, more sustainable path for cities seeking long-term economic health.

The Value of Walking and Biking in the Public Realm

The speed at which we move through our cities dramatically shapes how we interact with our environment, how we spend our money, and how we interact with each other (Welle, B., Liu, Q., Li, W., King, R., Adriazola-Steil, C., Sarmiento, C., & Obelheiro, M., 2015). Walking at 5 mph or biking at 10 mph allows people to engage with the public realm in ways that are completely different from driving through it at 45 mph. On foot or by bike, people are moving slowly enough to notice storefronts, public art, parks, other people, and notices for community events. They're more likely to stop for coffee, browse a local shop, or chat with a neighbor. This creates ripple effects that fosters stronger local economies, supports small businesses, and enhances community in ways that fast-moving traffic can't.

When traveling by car at high speeds, particularly along corridors like Blackstone Avenue, a person's experience of place can become transactional and detached. At 45 mph, the public realm blurs, navigated for efficiency rather than enjoyment. Drivers are less likely to stop impulsively or notice smaller, independent businesses tucked between chain stores (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, n.d.). Parking availability, whether real or perceived, can also become a deciding factor in whether someone stops. Furthermore, driving creates a physical and psychological barrier between individuals and their environment, limiting both social interaction and spontaneous economic participation. In contrast, walkable and bikeable places invite exploration, spontaneity, and a deeper connection to place, which is essential for vibrant communities.

Beyond merely spending habits, walking and biking also influence how money circulates within a community. Car ownership comes with significant expenses: monthly payments, gas, insurance, registration, repairs, and parking fees to name a few. These costs can consume 15–25% of a household's budget (U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2023), with much of that money flowing out of the local economy to national and multinational companies via gas stations, auto manufacturers, insurance firms, and banks. In contrast, walking and biking cost considerably less, and any necessary expenditures, like bike repairs or shoe replacements, are more likely to be spent at local businesses (National Association of City Transportation Officials, n.d.). The money saved by not driving stays in people's pockets, enhancing their capacity to spend more at neighborhood stores, restaurants, farmers markets, or other local commercial services.

Studies have shown that people who walk or bike to a commercial district spend less per trip, but they shop more frequently and ultimately spend more overall than those who drive (Bike East Bay, 2015). For business

[Image Left] Local retail shops with pedestrian scaled elements and design

[Image Left] Strip mall with a parking lot between the retail and street frontage

[Image Left] Artistic and colorful crosswalk to enhance pedestrian experience

[Image Left] County road with no defined pedestrian experience

[Image Left] Well-design ground floor residential and live-work spaces

[Image Left] Drive-thru prioritizing the vehicular experience

owners, this means that foot traffic is not just desirable - it's economically essential. A pedestrian and bike-friendly environment doesn't just benefit cyclists and walkers; it benefits everyone by creating stronger, more resilient local economies. Investment in sidewalks, bike lanes, public seating, lighting, and other public realm improvements should be viewed not just as beautification, but as economic development infrastructure.

Moreover, walkable and bikeable communities tend to have higher property values, lower infrastructure maintenance costs, and improved public health outcomes, all of which contribute to long-term economic sustainability (Chamberlain, L., 2023). When residents can meet their daily needs without driving - by walking, biking or taking a bus to meet their daily needs - they save money and are more likely to invest in their local community. Providing alternatives to cars is not just a climate or health issue; it is a smart economic strategy for cities like Fresno aiming to build equitable, thriving urban corridors.

In the end, the difference between moving through a place at 5 mph versus 45 mph is not just a matter of speed, but a matter of economic and social investment. By designing streets and public spaces that support walking, biking, and transit, cities can unlock the full economic potential of their communities and create places where people want to live, work, and play. The more we slow down, the more we notice, the more we connect, and the more we all prosper.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

Connecting People, Places, and Possibilities

Multi-modal transportation, which integrates walking, cycling, and public transit, plays a vital role in building healthier, more equitable, and more resilient communities. In places like the Blackstone Corridor, prioritizing alternatives to car travel can transform not only how people move but also how they live, work, and connect with their environment. Providing safe, accessible, and reliable infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users fosters a more inclusive transportation system that meets the diverse needs of all residents, regardless of age, income, or physical ability (Access Built, 2025).

[Image Above]
Plaza showing equal priority given to all modes of transportation

[Image Above]
Clear definition between vehicular, bike and pedestrian routes

[Image Above]
Public art and signage engaging a variety of scales

[Image Above]
Dedicated bus lines with an adjacent cycletrack.

Investing in multi-modal transportation directly contributes to physical and mental health. Walkable neighborhoods with pedestrian amenities and easy access to transit promote daily activity, reduce stress, and lessen exposure to noise and air pollution caused by excessive car use (Sustainability Directory, 2025). Public transportation also reduces traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to cleaner, more breathable air. When people feel safe and encouraged to walk or bike - especially to schools, parks, and jobs - they are more likely to adopt healthier lifestyles that benefit both individual well-being and community-wide health outcomes.

Economically, multi-modal systems can enhance local prosperity. Transit-oriented development and pedestrian-friendly design attract businesses, stimulate local investment, create jobs, and increase taxable base. With cyclists and walkers spending less money on traveling in their personal vehicles, they are more likely to spend more money at local shops. Moreover, access to reliable, affordable transportation reduces household transportation costs, especially for lower-income residents who may not own a vehicle, or those with mobility issues. These savings can be redirected toward housing, education, and other essential needs.

Socially, multi-modal transportation reconnects fragmented communities, bridging gaps created by decades of car-centered planning. It empowers individuals to engage more with their neighborhoods, fosters community cohesion, and ensures that everyone - regardless of background or economic status - has the freedom to move (Fedorowicz, M., Bramhall, E., Treskon, M., & Ezike, R., 2020). In places like Fresno, where economic disparities and mobility challenges are deeply intertwined, designing streets for people rather than just cars represents a powerful step toward a more just, connected, and sustainable future.

[Images Right]
All photos on this spread were taken by the authors.

[Image above]
Example of modern seating and planting areas in the public realm

[Image above]
Example of incorporating bike amenities into the public realm

DESIGNING FOR PEOPLE

The Importance of Public Realm Amenities in Walkable, Vibrant Communities

A vibrant and walkable community depends not only on streets and buildings but also on the quality of its public realm - the spaces between those buildings where everyday life unfolds (Reed, T., (2025). Along corridors like Blackstone Avenue in Fresno, where car-centric development has long dominated, reimagining the public realm with people at the center is essential to creating places where residents and visitors alike feel comfortable, safe, and welcomed. A thoughtfully designed public realm with the right amenities can transform a corridor from somewhere you drive through, so to somewhere you drive to - supporting health, equity, and economic vitality.

At the core of a successful public realm are welcoming, and engaging, elements embracing pedestrian walkability. Wide, continuous sidewalks free of obstacles invite walking, while curb extensions at intersections reduce crossing distances, increase visibility and slow traffic. Crosswalks should be well-marked, with tactile paving for accessibility and pedestrian signals timed to accommodate all users. Street trees and planting strips provide both shade and psychological comfort, creating a human-scaled environment that encourages slower vehicle speeds, more enjoyable walks, while also lowering the real feel of the temperature Thoughtfully placed benches, water fountains, and wayfinding signage make even short trips more pleasant and purposeful, and give people something to engage with.

For cycling infrastructure, safety and separation are essential in a corridor. Protected bike lanes, buffered from car traffic by planters, parked cars, or curbs, make cycling a viable option for people of all ages and abilities (National Association of City Transportation Officials, 2017). Clear signage, bike signal lights, and intersection designs that prioritize cyclists help minimize conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians. End-of-trip facilities such as secure bike parking and nearby repair stations support daily riders and encourage new ones. Creating networks rather than isolated bike lanes ensures connectivity to key destinations like schools, parks, and transit hubs.

Transit is most effective when it is supported by high-quality waiting environments. This includes covered shelters to shield riders from the sun and rain, seating for comfort, real-time arrival information for convenience, and adequate lighting for safety. When bus stops are integrated into a cohesive public space - surrounded by landscaping, public art, and pedestrian-scale design - they not only serve as transit nodes but also as neighborhood anchors and places of social interaction (Flynn, J., & Yassin, M.,2012). The inclusion of trash cans, bike racks, and shade can further enhance these stops, making them clean, functional, and attractive.

Ultimately, these public realm amenities function best when designed as a system rather than isolated add-ons, where the integrated experience supports the journey as much as the destination. When communities like Fresno invest in high-quality, place-based public infrastructure, they not only enhance mobility - they also strengthen social connections, improve safety, and foster pride in place. The public realm acts as a platform for equity, resilience, and long-term community success.

Placemaking and Public Health

Placemaking isn't just about aesthetics, it deeply interconnected with public health. The design and programming of public spaces directly influence physical, mental, and social well-being. Thoughtfully designed environments that prioritize green spaces, social interaction, and inclusive amenities encourage active lifestyles, reduce stress, and promote a sense of belonging - all key factors in improving community health outcomes (Montgomery, 2013). When public spaces are welcoming, safe, and accessible, they become venues for physical activity, cultural exchange, and social support, helping to combat isolation and health disparities. In this way, placemaking is not just about beautifying a space - it's a proactive strategy to create healthier, more resilient communities through design.

[Image Left]
Redeveloped building housing a brewery and outdoor seating.

[Image Left]
Example of temporary wayfinding zip-tied to light poles.

[Image Left]
Example of a high quality pedestrian experience.

BRANCHING OUT

3

THIRD PHASE - BRANCHING OUT

Transit-Oriented Development and Long-Term Sustainability

Just as an ash tree requires the right conditions - healthy soil, sunlight, water, and protection - to grow strong and thrive, the long-term success of the Blackstone Corridor depends on a deep understanding of its environment and community needs. In this phase of inventory, the focus shifts to understanding how the elements previously mentioned, such as the public realm, exist and are experienced along Blackstone. By recognizing the corridor's existing social, economic, and environmental conditions, we can understand what the right mix of public transit infrastructure, such as bus rapid transit (BRT) and bike lanes, might look like to connect people more effectively to opportunities across the city. Meanwhile, cultural landmarks, public gathering spaces, and parks are carefully woven into the urban fabric, just as the ash tree provides shelter and nourishment for the life around it. Thriving growth, whether of a tree or a community, begins with truly understanding and nurturing the environment in which it is rooted.

[Images Right]
Photos of existing businesses and their built environment along Blackstone

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the existing conditions of the Blackstone Corridor through comprehensive inventory and meaningful community engagement is foundational to creating a responsible and effective planning strategy. This includes not only analyzing the built environment, public spaces, and demographics, but also carefully listening to the experiences, stories, and needs of the people who live, work, learn, and move through the Blackstone corridor every day. These layers of knowledge - both quantitative and qualitative - are critical to ensuring that any interventions proposed are relevant, respectful, and rooted in the community's needs and desires. Without this grounding, design and planning risk becoming abstract or imposed, rather than adaptive and inclusive. In other words, that this work is designed to be done *with* the local community, rather than *to* them.

By identifying and gathering these findings, we will be able to distill key priorities and conditions into clear, actionable strategies for short, medium, and long-term implementation. In the short term, these might include tactical urbanism projects, improved amenities, or wayfinding that immediately enhance safety, comfort, and usability of the public realm. In the medium term, projects like protected bike lanes, BRT improvements, and infill housing can build on that momentum while reinforcing walkability and equity. In the long term, we can envision systemic changes such as transit-oriented development, cultural infrastructure, and sustainable land use that fundamentally reshape how Blackstone functions and for whom. This chapter collects everything we've learned in an effort to craft a roadmap that ensures the corridor grows in a way that supports the needs and aspirations of its existing communities - never forgetting the people who made Blackstone what it is today.

INVENTORY PROCESS

A deep understanding of how Blackstone is currently used, and the specific elements that contribute to Fresno's unique sense of place, is essential to ensuring that this project is

[Images Above]
Photos of existing buildings and their built environment along Blackstone

rooted in the community's real experiences, history, and needs. Grounding our findings in the local vernacular required more than just collection; it required active, sustained immersion in the life of the corridor. Throughout each phase of the project, we prioritized being present in the community, listening, observing, and learning. This commitment led to two primary methods of inventorying the Blackstone Corridor: direct observation of how spaces are used day-to-day, and meaningful engagement with residents, workers, and business owners who bring the corridor to life. Together, these methods helped us build a comprehensive and authentic foundation for proposing a future that grows from the community itself.

HARD AND SOFT DATA

Gathering both quantitative and qualitative data is essential for creating a full, accurate understanding of a place like the Blackstone Corridor. Quantitative data - such as demographics, income levels, housing statistics, transportation patterns, and climate conditions - provides the hard facts needed to frame challenges, opportunities, and potential impacts. This measurable information helps identify trends, allocate resources, and justify planning decisions with evidence. Without this foundation, it would be difficult to ensure that solutions are equitable, data-driven, and responsive to real community needs.

Equally important, however, is collecting qualitative data - the lived experiences, stories, perceptions, and aspirations of the people who use the corridor every day. Understanding where people choose to go, what spaces they value, and what they hope Blackstone can become adds the human dimension that numbers alone can never capture. These insights reveal emotional attachments, cultural significance, and everyday barriers that aren't visible in statistics. Blending both types of data ensures that planning efforts are not just technically sound but also culturally meaningful and rooted in the voices of the community.

[Image Left] Two parents playing with their young child

[Image Left] Students attending their university graduation

[Image Left] Two young children playing with toys

Hard Data

Our analysis is starting by incorporated quantitative data primarily drawn from demographic layers in ArcGIS, which allowed us to visualize patterns related to income, race, age, housing, and transit access along the Blackstone Corridor. This spatial analysis helped identify areas of vulnerability and opportunity, ensuring that design interventions could be both equitable and responsive to community needs. In addition, we conducted a thorough literature review of previous planning documents, including city and regional plans, transportation studies, and community visioning efforts. This review provided critical context for understanding what has been proposed in the past, how those proposals align or diverge from current goals, and most importantly, who those plans were likely to impact. Together, these methods informed a data-driven yet historically and socially grounded approach to our design recommendations.

UNDERSTANDING THE PEOPLE OF FRESNO

Demographics

To better understand the community living along the Blackstone Corridor, we gathered data from Fresno County sources and used ArcGIS to create detailed maps of the area. We set ½-mile radius around our one-mile project site, capturing the neighborhoods and people most representative of the corridor. This allowed us to generate a series of maps highlighting key demographic, economic, and environmental factors. By visualizing who lives within the area and analyzing their needs, we were able to ground our design proposals in real, localized conditions and ensure that our concepts are responsive to the people they are meant to serve.

[Image Left] An older mother with her adult daughter sitting on a bench.

[Image Left] An older woman sitting with a friend.

[Images] All photos are courtesy of Fresno County Public Health Department.

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE IDENTIFYING AS WHITE ONLY

Understanding the Identities of Blackstone Residents

Understanding the ethnic composition of the people living along the Blackstone Corridor is essential for developing culturally responsive, inclusive, and equitable planning and design interventions. The corridor is home to a highly diverse community, and recognizing the specific cultural backgrounds, languages, and traditions of its residents enables planners to better meet their needs and aspirations. This understanding informs not only how public spaces are designed and programmed, but also how communication strategies - such as signage, outreach, and engagement efforts - are structured to ensure accessibility for non-English speakers and historically underserved groups. Furthermore, by acknowledging the corridor's ethnic diversity, planners can celebrate and preserve the cultural identity of the area, avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions and instead fostering a sense of belonging, representation, and respect in the built environment.

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE IDENTIFYING AS WHITE ONLY COMPARISONS

Fresno County	California	United States
27.2%	34%	61.6%

SUMMARY

These figures highlight that Fresno County has a slightly lower proportion of residents identifying as White compared to the state, and a significantly lower proportion than the national average. Whereas, the map to the right illustrates that the area around Blackstone has a significantly higher percentage of residents who identify as non-white, or have multiple racial and ethnic identities.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,fresnocountycalifornia,US/RHI125223

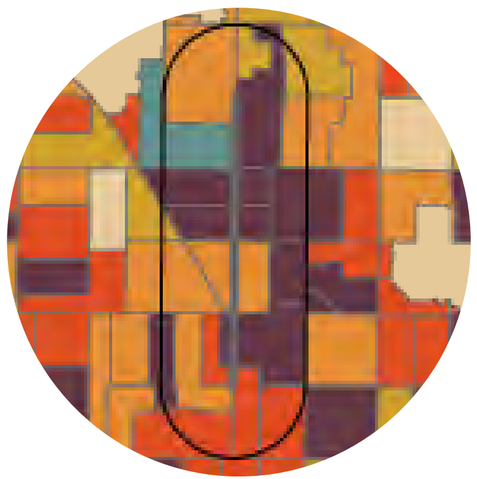
LEGEND

Blackstone Ave.
1 Mile buffer

Ethnicity

% of people identifying as White

0 -10 | 11 - 30 | 31 - 50 | 51 - 70 | 71 - 90 | 91 - 100



PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO COMMUTE ALONE

People who Commute Solo

Understanding the percentage of people who commute alone to work is a critical metric in urban planning and transportation design, as it directly informs infrastructure needs, traffic patterns, and environmental impacts. High rates of solo commuting often indicate a car-dependent environment, which strains road networks, increases greenhouse gas emissions, and diminishes the viability of alternative modes such as public transit, biking, or carpooling. Understanding where and why people drive alone can help planners identify gaps in transit accessibility, first- and last-mile connections, and walkability. This data is essential for crafting targeted strategies to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and encourage more sustainable and equitable commuting options, particularly in corridors like Blackstone, where multi-modal mobility is a central goal of redevelopment.

PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO COMMUTE ALONE COMPARISONS

Fresno County	California	United States
75.9%	67.1%	69.2%

SUMMARY

Understanding the percentage of people who commute alone to work is important because it reveals how dependent a region is on private vehicles and helps identify critical gaps in transportation equity, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. In areas like Fresno County, where over 75% of workers drive alone, this high rate of solo commuting places a significant strain on road capacity, contributes to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and increases the cost burden on individuals who may not have affordable or reliable alternatives.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,fresnocountycalifornia,US/RHI125223

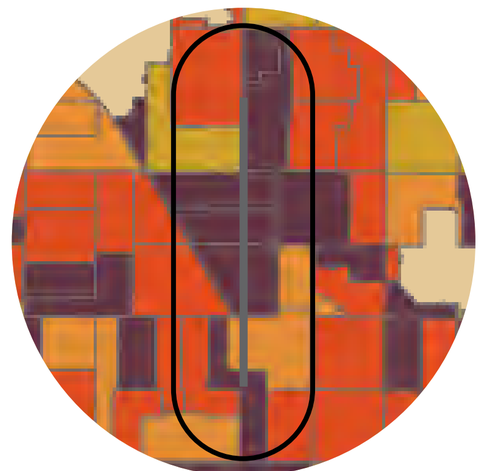
LEGEND

Blackstone Ave.
1 Mile buffer

Commute by Car Solo

% of drivers

0 -12 | 13 - 19 | 20 - 28 | 29 - 40 | 40 - 62 | 63 - 100



LEGEND

Blackstone Ave.
1 Mile buffer

Education
% of Adults >25 years with at least an Associates degree

0 -10 | 11 - 30 | 31 - 50 | 51 - 70 | 71 - 90 | 91 - 100

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS >25 YEARS WITH AT LEAST AN ASSOCIATES DEGREE

Understanding the Educational Realities
Educational attainment in the Blackstone Corridor shows a spatial pattern that closely resembles the distribution of income levels. The percentage of residents with an associate degree or higher is significantly lower in the corridor and in areas directly to the south, while educational attainment rates rise considerably in neighborhoods located to the north. This trend indicates a strong correlation between geographic location and access to, or outcomes of, higher education. The notable increase in degree attainment north of the corridor highlights broader systemic disparities in access to educational resources, quality of schooling, and socio-economic mobility. These patterns have crucial implications for planning and policy, as educational attainment is tightly connected to employment opportunities, civic engagement, and long-term community health. Therefore, any revitalization efforts within the Blackstone Corridor should be guided by these disparities, to promote educational equity and upward mobility for current residents.

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS >25 YEARS WITH AT LEAST AN ASSOCIATES DEGREE COMPARISONS

Fresno County	California	United States
39%	48.4%	48%

SUMMARY

Understanding the percentage of adults over 25 with at least an associate degree matters because educational attainment is one of the strongest predictors of economic opportunity, health outcomes, and community well-being. Higher education levels are closely linked to increased income potential, lower unemployment rates, and greater access to stable housing and healthcare.

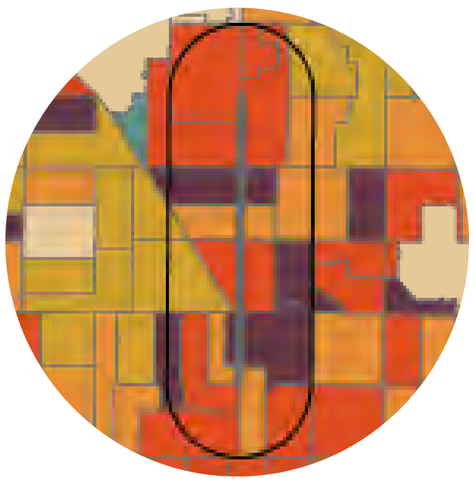
Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,fresnocountycalifornia,US/INC110223

LEGEND

Blackstone Ave.
1 Mile buffer

Income
Median Income

Null | 0-42k | 43k-66k | 67k-95k | 96k-140k | 150k-250k



MEDIAN INCOME

Understanding the Economic Realities of the Corridor
Understanding the median income of an area is essential for informing equitable planning, policy-making, and investment decisions. Median income serves as a key indicator of economic stability, access to opportunity, and overall quality of life within a community. It helps identify areas that may be economically vulnerable or underserved, guiding strategies for affordable housing, transit subsidies, educational support, and public service delivery. Moreover, it allows planners and policymakers to tailor interventions that reflect the community's financial realities - ensuring that proposed developments, amenities, and infrastructure improvements are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to residents' needs, rather than exacerbating existing inequities.

MEDIAN INCOME (2023)

Fresno County	California	United States
$33,875	$41,901	$ 39,982

SUMMARY

The median income of the study area is significantly lower than both the state and national averages, highlighting the community's relative economic vulnerability. This disparity underscores the importance of interventions that are affordable, inclusive, and sensitive. It also reinforces the need for public investment in infrastructure, housing, and amenities that prioritize equity and long-term community benefit.

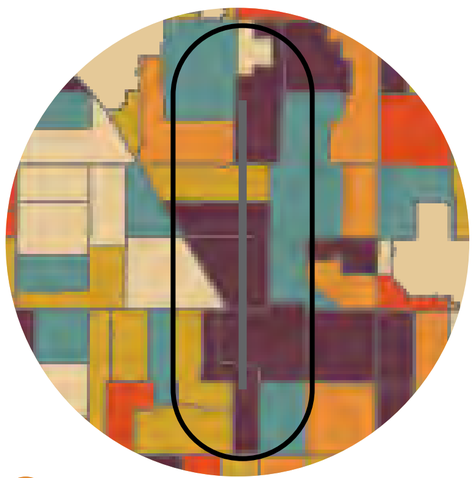
Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,fresnocountycalifornia,US/INC110223

LEGEND

Blackstone Ave.
1 Mile buffer

Education
Median Age

0 -25 | 26 - 29 | 30 - 32 | 33 - 36 | 37 - 42 | 43 - 76



MEDIAN AGE

Knowing Who Lives Here

Understanding the median age of a population is a vital health indicator as it offers insight into the demographic makeup and potential health needs of a community. A lower median age may indicate a younger population that could benefit from investments in early childhood services, education, and maternal health. Meanwhile, a higher median age typically signifies an aging population that may need greater access to chronic disease management, mobility assistance, and elder care services. Understanding the median age also aids public health professionals and planners in anticipating long-term healthcare demands, creating age-appropriate recreational and wellness programs, and effectively allocating resources. In terms of neighborhood or corridor planning, such as along Blackstone Avenue, the median age can inform decisions regarding infrastructure, public spaces, and services to ensure they meet the current and future health and lifestyle needs of residents.

MEDIAN AGE COMPARISONS

Fresno County
33.9 years

California
38.2 years

United States
39.2 years

SUMMARY

These figures indicate that Fresno County has a markedly younger population compared to both the state and national averages. This demographic trend reflects Fresno's larger share of young families, students, and emerging professionals - insights that are important for guiding investments in education, housing, transit, and public amenities tailored to this age group.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,fresnocountycalifornia,US/INC110223

PERCENT OF HOMES THAT ARE OWNED VERSUS RENTED

Understanding the Balance of Renters Versus Homeowners

Housing tenure patterns in Fresno reveal a clear spatial trend where homeownership increases progressively as one moves outward from the city's central core, while rental occupancy is more prevalent in the inner urban neighborhoods.

However, the Blackstone Corridor represents a notable deviation from this overall trend. Despite its moderate distance from the downtown core, where comparable census tracts frequently begin to show increased rates of homeownership, the corridor continues to exhibit disproportionately high rates of rental housing. This suggests that the corridor functions as a unique housing submarket, shaped by factors such as proximity to transit, the presence of Fresno City College, and a high concentration of commercial uses. The prevalence of rental housing within the corridor carries significant implications, particularly concerning housing stability, affordability, and susceptibility to displacement.

PERCENT OF HOMES THAT ARE OWNED VERSUS RENTED COMPARISON

Fresno County
46.4% renters
53.6% owner-occupied

California
45.1% renters
54.9% are owner-occupied

United States
34.8% renters
65.2% owner-occupied

SUMMARY

Fresno County's rental percentage is significantly higher than the national average, closely aligning with California's trend. This higher proportion of renters in the region has important implications as rental households tend to have greater housing and income insecurity, making them more vulnerable to rising rents, displacement, and economic shocks.

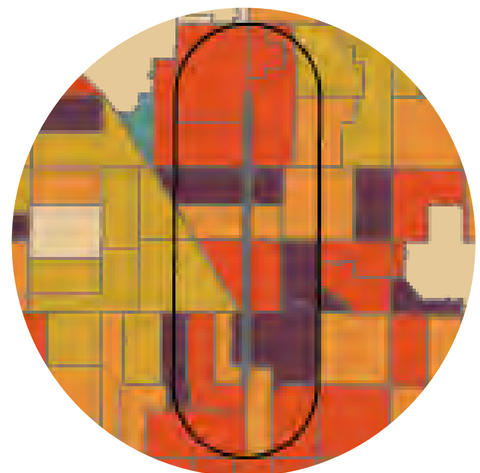
Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA,fresnocountycalifornia,US/INC110223

LEGEND

Blackstone Ave.
1 Mile buffer

Housing
% of Homes That Are Owned

0-10 | 11 - 30 | 31 - 50 | 51 - 70 | 71 - 90 | 91 - 100



HEALTH

Public Health Challenges in the Central Valley

Fresno and the broader Central Valley consistently rank among areas with the worst air quality in the United States due to a unique combination of geography, climate, and human activity. The Central Valley is a vast, flat basin surrounded by mountain ranges, the Sierra Nevada to the east and the Coast Ranges to the west, which trap air pollutants close to the ground, including from Sacramento and the Bay Area regions. During the summer, intense heat and sunlight react with vehicle and industrial emissions to produce high levels of ozone, while winter brings stagnant air and temperature inversions that prevent pollution from dispersing. These natural conditions severely limit the valley's ability to ventilate, allowing pollutants to accumulate over time.

In addition to geography and weather, the region's heavy reliance on agriculture and transportation contributes significantly to air pollution. Fresno is at the heart of one of the most productive agricultural zones in the world, and large-scale farming operations produce airborne dust, pesticide drift, and emissions from diesel-powered equipment. At the same time, the valley's growing population and limited public transportation infrastructure mean more vehicle traffic and higher emissions from personal cars and freight transport. Combined, these factors create a persistent air quality crisis that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, especially children, the elderly, and low-income residents who often live near highways and industrial zones.

Impacts

Poor air quality in Fresno and the Central Valley has serious and far-reaching impacts on the health of residents. Exposure to high levels of pollutants like particulate matter (PM2.5) and ground-level ozone increases the risk of respiratory illnesses, such as asthma, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Fresno has some of the highest asthma rates in the nation, particularly among children, who are more vulnerable because their lungs are still developing. Long-term exposure can also contribute to heart disease, stroke, and even premature death, especially among elderly residents and those with pre-existing health conditions.

Beyond physical health, poor air quality also affects mental health and overall quality of life. Frequent "bad air days" can limit outdoor activities, contributing to physical inactivity and social isolation, which in turn can lead to higher rates of depression and anxiety. For low-income communities that often lack access to adequate healthcare, these health challenges are even more devastating. In the long term, the burden of disease caused by poor air quality places additional strain on local healthcare systems, reduces workforce productivity, and deepens social and economic inequalities across the region.

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy in Fresno (78 years) is lower than the California state average (81 years) and above just the national average (77.5), reflecting various socioeconomic and health disparities faced by the region (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2018). Factors such as higher rates of poverty, limited access to healthcare, and environmental challenges like air pollution contribute to this gap. While California overall boasts a higher life expectancy due to generally better healthcare infrastructure and healthier lifestyles, Fresno's average lags behind. Nationally, the average life expectancy is also somewhat higher than Fresno's, underscoring broader systemic issues that affect the city's health outcomes compared to many parts of the country.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Statistics

A significant portion of the population within the Blackstone Corridor and the broader Fresno area can be considered transportation disadvantaged, meaning they face barriers to reliable, affordable, and accessible mobility options. Data indicates that 12.4% of households in Fresno do not own a vehicle, making them highly dependent on public transit, walking, or biking for daily needs such as employment, education, and healthcare (Maciag, M., 2014). This reliance on alternative modes of transportation is particularly concerning, given that only 57% of residents report their transportation needs being adequately met, highlighting a substantial service gap that disproportionately affects low-income and transit-dependent populations (Fresno Council of Governments, 2019).

In addition to physical access issues, there is a clear desire for improved informational infrastructure to support transit use. Many community members have expressed the need for more effective communication tools, including printed schedules, real-time bus stop information displays, and online resources, to navigate the system more confidently and efficiently. Furthermore, commuting patterns reveal the regional significance of Fresno's transportation network: while approximately 26,000 people commute out of Fresno for work, about 31,000 commute in, reinforcing the city's role as both a residential and employment hub. These dynamics emphasize the importance of investing in an inclusive, multimodal transportation system that not only improves service quality but also enhances access to opportunities for all residents—particularly those most reliant on public transit.

[Image above]
Existing separated bike lane along Shields Ave. at Blackstone.

[Image above]
Cyclist riding their bike on the sidewalk along Blackstone

[Image above]
Broken sprinklers watering a lawn area at a local gas station

[Image above]
Parking lot drainage at a local gas station which drains directly into local waterways

CLIMATE

Current Climate

Fresno experiences a typical Central Valley climate, with the sun shining an average 83% of the time, 303 days a year, and long, dry summers and mild, wetter winters (County of Fresno, 2018). Summers are usually very hot and dry, with daytime temperatures frequently exceeding 100°F (38°C), especially in July and August. Rainfall during the summer months is nearly nonexistent, leading to extended drought conditions and high evaporation rates. These extreme temperatures pose significant challenges for outdoor activities, pedestrian comfort, and public health - especially for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and unhoused residents. Therefore, shade, water access, and heat-mitigating urban design strategies (e.g., reflective materials, tree canopies, and cooling stations) are essential elements of any public realm improvements in Fresno.

Winters in Fresno are relatively mild, with average daytime temperatures ranging from the mid-50s to low 60s °F, and nighttime lows occasionally dipping into the 30s °F. Unlike summer, winter is the city's primary rainy season, with most of its annual average precipitation of about 11 inches occurring between November and March. While not extreme, winter storms can produce brief periods of heavy rainfall, and urban infrastructure must be designed to manage surface runoff and prevent localized flooding. Prevailing winds in Fresno usually come from the northwest, but during the summer months, localized breezes and heat-induced low-pressure systems can create variable wind patterns. These climatic characteristics highlight the importance of climate-responsive design - emphasizing shade, ventilation, and stormwater management - as essential elements of urban planning and public space development in Fresno.

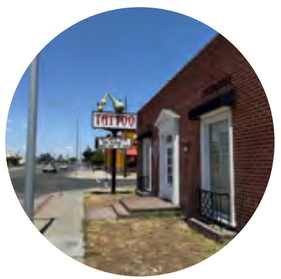
Future Climate

Fresno's climate is projected to undergo significant changes due to climate change, with substantial implications for public health, infrastructure, and urban planning. By mid-century, the region is expected to experience an increase in annual average maximum temperatures of approximately 4°F to 5°F, and by 2100, between 5°F and 8°F (California Natural Resources Agency, n.d.). This warming trend will likely lead to more frequent and intense heatwaves, exacerbating existing challenges related to air quality and heat-related illnesses. Additionally, the number of days with temperatures exceeding 90°F is projected to rise, further stressing energy systems and water resources.

Precipitation patterns are expected to shift, with a greater proportion of annual rainfall occurring during extreme events. While total annual precipitation may remain relatively stable, the intensity and frequency of heavy downpours are predicted to increase, heightening the risk of flooding in certain areas. These changes highlight the importance of integrating climate resilience into urban development plans, which include designing infrastructure capable of withstanding extreme weather events and implementing strategies to mitigate heat island effects. Understanding these projections is essential for policymakers and planners looking to adapt to and lessen the impacts of climate change in Fresno to its residents.

[Image Left]
Center median of Blackstone showing a lack of landscape

[Image Left]
Pedestrian experience with a lack of shade trees along Blackstone



[Image Left]
Pedestrian experience along local retail with a lack of shade

[Image above]
Architectural render. Source: Better Blackstone Design Challenge

[Image above]
Photo from a community engagement event.
Source: Better Blackstone Design Challenge

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous and Existing Planning Efforts

Conducting a literature review of existing planning documents is a crucial first step in any urban planning or design process. It allows planners and designers to understand the historical context of the area, what has been proposed in the past, and which goals or visions have guided previous efforts. By reviewing these documents, such as the Better Blackstone Design Challenge, the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, the Fresno 2017 General Plan's Housing Element, and Fresno Parks Vision 2050, teams can identify recurring themes, priorities, and challenges. This helps avoid duplication of effort, builds upon existing momentum, and ensures alignment with established long-term regional goals.

Just as importantly, a thorough literature review reveals what hasn't been implemented and why. Understanding barriers to implementation - whether political, financial, logistical, or social - can offer critical insight into how new proposals might overcome those obstacles. It also allows teams to identify gaps or outdated strategies in current planning frameworks, creating an opportunity to introduce more relevant, equitable, or innovative solutions. In short, reviewing existing planning literature grounds a project in reality while helping it push toward a more actionable and informed future.

The plans that are mentioned in this section are representative of the plans we reviewed, and it is not exhaustive. Additionally, these are the plans that felt the most relative to both our project and site.

BETTER BLACKSTONE DESIGN CHALLENGE

Link to the website HERE

The Better Blackstone Design Challenge is a community-driven initiative focused on re-imagining and revitalizing Blackstone Avenue, one of Fresno's most historic and heavily traveled corridors. Once a thriving commercial spine, Blackstone has faced decades of disinvestment, traffic congestion, and fragmented development. The Better Blackstone Design Challenge seeks to change that by fostering a unified vision that integrates housing, transportation, economic development, and public space improvements into a cohesive, inclusive strategy. Spearheaded by community organizations, planning agencies, and local stakeholders, the challenge aims to transform Blackstone into a vibrant, walkable, and equitable urban corridor that better serves all residents.

The process began with extensive community outreach and public workshops, inviting residents, business owners, and civic leaders to share their experiences and ideas for Blackstone's future. Through collaborative design sessions, data analysis, and neighborhood tours, the challenge identified key opportunities for smart growth - such as infill housing, transit-oriented development, safer pedestrian infrastructure, and the preservation of cultural landmarks. Rather than relying on a top-down plan, the initiative emphasizes grassroots leadership and co-creation, ensuring that changes reflect local priorities and community identity. By aligning city planning efforts with grassroots action, the Better Blackstone Design Challenge aims to create a corridor that is not only more functional but also more inclusive, resilient, and representative of Fresno's diverse populations.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Create a Safer, More Walkable Corridor: Improve pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure to encourage active, safe mobility.
- Promote Equitable Development: Ensure housing, business, and transportation improvements benefit existing residents and prevent displacement.
- Foster Community-Driven Design: Engage local voices at every stage to shape a corridor that reflects shared values and needs.
- Support Transit-Oriented Growth: Encourage mixed-use, higher-density development near public transit to reduce car dependency.
- Preserve Cultural Identity: Protect and celebrate the corridor's historic character and diverse cultural assets.

[Image above]
Image from the growth scenario outcomes.
Source: Better Blackstone Design Challenge

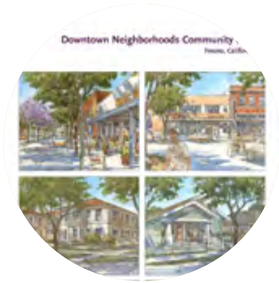
[Image above]
Render of potential infill developments.
Source: Better Blackstone Design Challenge

DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY PLAN

Link to the Document HERE

The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan is "the community's tool for guiding the successful regeneration of Downtown Fresno and its surrounding neighborhoods." The DNCP provides thorough information regarding land use and development, transportation, the public realm of streets and parks, infrastructure, historic resources, and health and wellness in Fresno. The document is thorough at 170 pages and is divided into chapters including Vision; Urban Form and Land Use; Transportation; Parks, Open Space, and Streetscape; Infrastructure and Natural Resources; Historic and Cultural Resources; Health, Wellness, and Community Development; and Implementation. The DNCP also includes helpful images (both historic and modern), graphs, and/or statistics regarding each topic. The plan expands on the General Plan and overlaps with the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan (if there are discrepancies between the two, the FCSP takes precedence), the Central Area Community Plan, the West Area Community Plan, the Edison Community Plan, the Roosevelt Community Plan, the Fulton Lowell Specific Plan, and the Fresno Chandler Downtown Airport Specific Plan.

The creation of the Community Plan involved 300 downtown Fresnans participating in a series of public meetings and a participatory Design Workshop. The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan is significant because Fresno faces many issues related to "the neglect of and disinvestment in inner city neighborhoods." It is known that Fresno has one of the highest rates of concentrated poverty, meaning 40% or more of the residents in a neighborhood live at or below the federal poverty line, compared to any large city in the nation. This situation arises from a variety of factors, including the City of Fresno's failure to implement community plans, the geographic isolation of neighborhoods adjacent to freeways or railroad tracks, high unemployment rates, suburban sprawl, an overwhelmed public school system, and major barriers to employment. As a result, the building stock in Fresno's inner city has aged and deteriorated, goods and services are more expensive, and crime rates are elevated.



Despite these challenges, there is hope for Fresno. According to the document, over the last ten years, "public sentiment and optimism about revitalizing Downtown Fresno and its surrounding neighborhoods has grown tremendously." Groups including young professionals demand more amenities and higher-quality inner-city neighborhoods. Other groups are moving to Fresno for cheaper real estate. Artists are able to create and sell original work due to lower living costs. The DNCP advocates for a "Back to Basics" approach to revitalization. The project aims to make investing in the inner city cheaper, faster, easier, more predictable, more focused, wiser, and more secure.

5 Key Takeaways:

- There is an increased hope and desire within Fresno residents for the optimism of downtown revitalization.
- Fresno has some of the highest concentrations of poverty among large cities in the country.
- Due to the lower costs of living compared to many other parts of California, Fresno is primed to attract talent and the next generation of city dwellers.
- The plan advocates for a "Back to Basics" approach
- Downtown is the cultural, economic and social heart of the city.

[Image Top Left] Cover page of the The Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan. Source: City of Fresno

[Image Bottom Left] Rendering of potential infill development Community Plan. Source: City of Fresno

[Image Top Right] Existing photo of Fresno Street at Irwin Avenue. Source: City of Fresno

[Image Bottom Right] Rendering of Fresno Street at Irwin Avenue after a conceptual road diet. Source: City of Fresno

REGIONAL BICYCLE AND RECREATION TRAILS MASTER PLAN

Link to the Document HERE

The Fresno Regional Bicycle and Recreation Trails Master Plan is a long-term strategy developed to enhance and expand the bicycle and pedestrian trail network throughout the Metropolitan Area. The plan focuses on creating a more connected, accessible, and safe system of trails that promotes active transportation, recreation, and healthier communities. It envisions an integrated network that links neighborhoods, parks, schools, commercial centers, and transit, supporting sustainable growth and reducing reliance on motor vehicles. Through collaboration with local agencies and public input, the plan reflects community needs while aligning with broader regional planning goals.

The Master Plan identifies both short and long-term infrastructure investments, with a focus on equity, environmental stewardship, and economic development. Emphasizing the importance of inclusive access, the plan outlines strategies to address gaps in under-served areas and create a more balanced network of bike lanes, multi-use paths, and recreational trails. Ultimately, the plan serves as a roadmap for transforming the region into a more bike - and pedestrian-friendly place that supports both mobility and quality of life.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Connectivity Focus: The plan aims to create a seamless regional trail network that links key destinations across Fresno and Clovis.
- Equity in Access: Special attention is given to underserved communities to ensure fair distribution of trail access and amenities.
- Health & Environment: Promotes healthier lifestyles and environmental sustainability by encouraging active transportation.
- Implementation Strategy: Includes detailed project prioritization, cost estimates, and funding strategies for phased development.
- Community-Driven Approach: Developed with significant public input to ensure the plan reflects local priorities and values.

[Image above]
Cover image of the County Regional Trails Plan. Source: Fresno County

[Image above]
Map of prioritized trails projects .
Source: Fresno County

FULTON CORRIDOR SPECIFIC PLAN

Link to the Document HERE

The Fresno Fulton Corridor Specific Plan is a visionary framework designed to revitalize historic Fulton Street and its surrounding downtown area. It aims to transform the corridor into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly district that supports economic development, cultural vitality, and urban living. The plan focuses on reintroducing vehicle traffic to Fulton Street - previously a pedestrian mall - to stimulate business growth, enhance accessibility, and encourage private investment. It also emphasizes mixed-use development, incorporating housing, retail, office space, and public gathering areas to create a dynamic and walkable urban environment.

In addition to economic revitalization, the plan prioritizes historic preservation, public art, and green infrastructure to reinforce downtown Fresno's identity and sustainability. It includes improvements to streetscapes, lighting, and public spaces to enhance safety and attractiveness for residents, businesses, and visitors. With strategic public and private partnerships, the plan provides a phased implementation strategy to guide long-term growth while maintaining flexibility to adapt to future needs. Overall, the Fresno Fulton Corridor Specific Plan serves as a roadmap for transforming the heart of the city into a thriving, inclusive, and economically resilient destination.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Restoring Fulton Street: Reintroducing vehicle traffic to boost economic activity and business engagement.
- Mixed-Use Development: Encourages a blend of housing, retail, and commercial spaces to create a vibrant downtown.
- Historic & Cultural Preservation: Protects key landmarks while integrating public art and cultural elements.
- Pedestrian & Public Space Enhancements: Improves walkability, streetscapes, and public gathering areas.
- Strategic Investment & Growth: Leverages public-private partnerships to attract development and long-term revitalization.

[Image above]
Cover image of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan. Source: City of Fresno

[Image above]
Rendering of new Chinatown streetscape from the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan.
Source: City of Fresno

[Image above]
Cover image of the General Plan. Source: City of Fresno.

[Image above]
Housing affordability spreadsheet from 2014. Source: City of Fresno.

FRESNO MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL 2023-2031 HOUSING ELEMENT

Link to the Document HERE

The 2024 City of Fresno Housing Element provides a comprehensive policy framework to address the city's pressing housing needs, particularly in light of growing affordability challenges, displacement risks, and demographic shifts. This updated element builds on state-mandated requirements to ensure adequate housing production across all income levels, with a particular focus on very low, low, and moderate-income households. It emphasizes strategies to preserve existing affordable housing, streamline approvals for new development, and expand housing choices in areas historically underserved by public and private investment. Key priorities include increasing infill development, mixed-use and transit-oriented projects, and equitable access to housing throughout the city.

For neighborhoods like those along the central Blackstone Corridor, the 2024 Housing Element reaffirms the city's commitment to fair housing, anti-displacement protections, and community stabilization. The plan acknowledges the corridor's potential for new housing opportunities - particularly through redevelopment of underutilized parcels, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use infill - while also emphasizing the importance of preserving neighborhood character and preventing involuntary displacement.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Affordable Housing Expansion: Increases housing options for low- and moderate-income residents.
- Infill & Smart Growth: Encourages development within existing urban areas to reduce urban sprawl.
- Transit-Oriented Development: Promotes housing near public transportation to enhance both mobility and accessibility.
- Sustainability & Resilience: Supports energy-efficient housing and climate-adaptive building practices.
- Equity & Anti-Displacement: Focuses on protecting vulnerable populations from housing instability and displacement.

[Image above]
Cover image of the Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Strategy. Source: City of Fresno.

[Image above]
Alternatives for Blackstone streetscape. Source: City of Fresno.

SOUTHERN BLACKSTONE AVENUE SMART MOBILITY STRATEGY

Link to the Document HERE

The Fresno Southern Blackstone Avenue Smart Mobility Strategy is an initiative aimed at transforming one of Fresno's busiest corridors into a more accessible, efficient, and sustainable transportation spine. Focused on the southern portion of Blackstone Avenue, the strategy seeks to improve mobility options through enhanced public transit, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and smart technology integration. The plan aligns with the city's broader goals for transit-oriented development, prioritizing multimodal improvements that serve all users, including those without access to private vehicles. By redesigning the corridor with safety, connectivity, and environmental performance in mind, the strategy aims to support the needs of the existing community.

Key components of the strategy include upgrading the bus rapid transit (BRT) services, improved crosswalks and sidewalks, bike lanes, and signal optimization through smart mobility technologies. The plan also considers land use changes to support higher-density, mixed-use development along the corridor, encouraging more people to live, work, and shop in walkable neighborhoods. The community played a central role in the strategy, ensuring that the proposed changes reflect local needs and priorities. The Mobility Strategy presents a forward-thinking vision for mobility that promotes equity, sustainability, and quality of life in one of Fresno's most vital corridors.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Multimodal Focus: Enhances options for walking, biking, and public transit.
- Smart Technology Integration: Introduces signal optimization and mobility tech for safer, more efficient travel.
- Transit-Oriented Development: Encourages higher-density, mixed-use growth to reduce car dependency.
- Equitable: Aims to improve mobility for underserved and transit-reliant communities.
- Corridor Revitalization: Supports economic development through infrastructure upgrades and improved access.

FRESNO PARKS VISION 2050

Link to the Document HERE

Fresno Parks Vision 2050 is a movement dedicated to improving the accessibility and quality of parks in Fresno. According to the document, "Fresno Parks 2050 envisions a robust park system made up of innovative recreational opportunities, preserved natural areas, multimodal trails, and educational programs that equitably support a diverse, healthy population forming a valuable basis for our thriving community." The Vision includes three key questions and six main themes. The three questions are "Where are we?", "Where do we want to go?", and "How do we get there?" The main themes that should inform design are access, equity, health, design for beauty, funding and operations, and safety.

There were several stakeholders in the project, including Action Change / Accion Cambio, Building Healthy Communities, Cultiva La Salud, Habitat for Humanity, Shifting Gears, Tree Fresno, and other local, state, and community groups. The City of Fresno led the charge with the assistance of the interdisciplinary studio WRT, PROS Consulting, Precision Engineering, Urban Diversity Design, and Vernal Group. Fresno Parks Vision 2050 is the first phase of the Fresno Parks Master Plan update. It encompasses goals and research from the General Plan (2014) and the Active Transportation Plan. According to the General Plan, park acreage is set to be 5 acres for every 1,000 residents (3 acres for community, neighborhood, and pocket parks). According to the Active Transportation Plan, the goals for this project include establishing a network that connects the current park system for bikes and pedestrians and expanding a trail network.

Survey data proves that Fresno Parks Vision 2050 is an incredibly important project. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed feel there is a lack of usable green space within walking or biking distance from home. Over sixty percent reported the current park system as unsatisfactory or poor. Parks make up only two percent of Fresno's city area. Even in Fresno's extreme climate, only 87%of parks have shaded areas, making for an unpleasant experience during warm seasons. The majority of Fresnans agree that parks are a crucial element of a healthy lifestyle. In fact, 52% of those surveyed are willing to support an increase in public funding for parks.

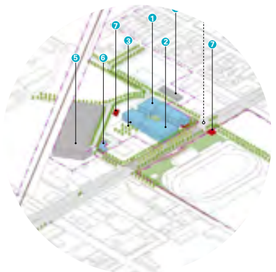
[Image]
New parks, such as Todd Beamer Park pictured here provide much needed facilities for all ages.
Source: Visit Fresno County

Despite these shortfalls, certain amenities of the Parks Program are widely appreciated by the community. The Life and Environmental Science Program, held at Highway City Park, educates young students about regional and national science and ecology. BMX and skate facilities are popular and well-maintained. New parks, including Martin Ray Reilly and Inspiration, have enjoyed remarkable success due to their variety of amenities and universal accessibility. The Parks Program also mentors, trains, and employs youth. The Fresno Parks Aquatics Program saw approximately 50,000 swim participants in 2022. Lastly, 40,000 meals have been provided to seniors through the Parks Program.

Through maintaining, renovating, and constructing parks, improving security, advocating, forming partnerships, and promoting efforts, Fresno can enhance the quality, safety, and accessibility of its parks. Over the past five years, park staff have raised over $17 million for park initiatives. Currently, issues facing parks include maintenance, accessibility, crime, and insufficient services for adults (in contrast to the services available for children and the elderly). Surveys indicate that Fresnans desire picnic areas, paved multi-use trails, community gardens, playgrounds and splash pads, dog parks, and sports facilities (especially soccer fields).

5 Key Takeaways:

- Per the General Plan, park acreage is set to be 5 acres for every 1,000 residents (3 acres for community, neighborhood, and pocket parks).
- Per the Active Transportation Plan, the goals for this project include establishing a network connecting the current park system (for bikes and pedestrians) and expanding a trail network.
- Fresno is severely underserved when it comes to the percentage of the city parks
- Parks are seen as a key opportunity to address inequities in Fresno, such as in health and mobility.
- The benefit of parks aren't fully understood or appreciated.



[Images above]
Examples of strip mall developments and drive-thrus along Blackstone Ave. Taken 04/22/25. Source: Google Earth.

BLACKSTONE CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION + HOUSING STUDY

Link to the Document HERE

The Fresno Active Transportation Plan (ATP) is a comprehensive framework aimed at improving walking, biking, and other non-motorized transportation options throughout the city. It seeks to create a safer, more accessible, and interconnected active transportation network that supports public health, sustainability, and mobility for all residents. By identifying gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, the plan prioritizes new projects such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths to enhance connectivity between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and transit hubs. The ATP aligns with Fresno's broader goals of reducing traffic congestion, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting equitable access to transportation options.

A key focus of the plan is to address safety concerns and infrastructure deficiencies in historically underserved communities, where walking and biking often serve as primary modes of transportation. The ATP incorporates community input to ensure that investments reflect local needs, including safer crossings, better lighting, and improved access to public transit. It also introduces policy recommendations and funding strategies to support long-term implementation. By promoting a shift toward active transportation, the plan enhances mobility while fostering a healthier, more environmentally friendly urban landscape for Fresno's future.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): Promotes mixed-use, higher-density development near major transit stops.
- Affordable Housing Strategies: Identifies tools to increase housing options while minimizing displacement.
- Integrated Land Use & Mobility: Align transportation upgrades with smart land use.
- Equity-Centered Approach: Prioritizes inclusive growth for low-income communities.
- Corridor Revitalization Blueprint: Offers a comprehensive plan for transforming Blackstone into a livable, connected urban corridor.

CITY OF FRESNO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

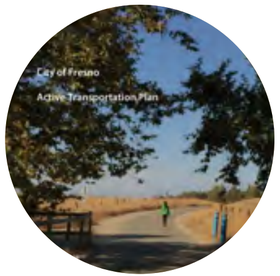
Link to the Document HERE

The Fresno Active Transportation Plan (ATP) is a comprehensive framework aimed at improving walking, biking, and other non-motorized transportation options across the city. It seeks to create a safer, more accessible, and connected active transportation network that supports public health, sustainability, and mobility for all residents. By identifying gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, new projects such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths to enhance connectivity between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and transit hubs are prioritized. The ATP aims to reduce traffic congestion, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and promote transportation equity for all users.

A key focus of the plan is addressing safety concerns and infrastructure deficiencies in historically underserved communities, where walking and biking are often primary modes of transportation. The ATP incorporates community input to ensure investments reflect local needs, including safer crossings, better lighting, and improved access to public transit. It also introduces policy recommendations and funding strategies to support long-term implementation. By promoting a shift toward active transportation, the plan not only enhances mobility but also fosters a healthier, more environmentally friendly urban landscape for Fresno's future.

5 Key Takeaways:

- Improved Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure: Expands sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths for safer mobility.
- Equity-Focused Planning: Prioritizes investments in underserved communities that rely on active transportation.
- Safety: Addresses key issues like safer crossings, better lighting, and traffic-calming.
- Sustainability & Public Health: Encourages walking and biking to reduce emissions and promote active lifestyles.
- Long-Term Investment Strategy: Provides policy recommendations and funding pathways for implementation.



[Image above]
Cover image of the Active Transportation Plan. Source: City of Fresno

[Image above]
Map of bicycle usage. Source: City of Fresno

[Image above]
Transform Fresno logo.
Source: Transform Fresno.

[Images above]
Image of street improvements for the Chinatown neighborhood. Source: Transform Fresno.

TRANSFORM FRESNO PLAN

Link to the Document HERE

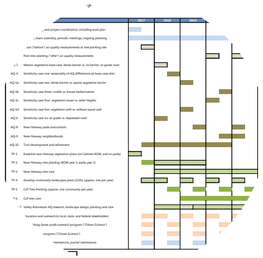
The Transform Fresno Plan is a community-led initiative focused on addressing decades of disinvestment in some of Fresno's most underserved neighborhoods, particularly in Southwest, Chinatown, and downtown Fresno. Funded by California's Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program, the plan leverages a combination of state grants and local partnerships to implement projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote environmental justice, economic opportunity, and neighborhood revitalization. Developed through an inclusive and transparent community engagement process, Transform Fresno empowers residents to shape investment decisions around clean energy, affordable housing, transportation, and green infrastructure.

The plan brings together a diverse coalition of stakeholders - including community organizations, city agencies, businesses, and residents - to coordinate over 20 projects under a unified vision of equitable and climate-resilient development. From building affordable, energy-efficient housing to expanding access to clean public transit and urban greening, each project is designed to improve quality of life while combating climate change. At its core, Transform Fresno is not just about infrastructure, it's about transforming systems of exclusion into systems of empowerment and opportunity.

5 Key Goals of the Transform Fresno Plan:

- Climate Justice: Invest in communities impacted by pollution and climate change.
- Promote Sustainable Economic Development: Support green jobs, local businesses, and inclusive workforce development.
- Improve Housing & Transportation Access: Expand affordable, energy-efficient housing and clean transit options.
- Foster Community Leadership: Ensure residents have a central voice in planning, implementation, and oversight.
- Build Resilient, Greener Neighborhoods: Increase tree canopy, green space, and climate-adaptive infrastructure.

[Image above]
Fresno Trees Project cover page.
Source: City of Fresno.



[Image above]
Examples of strip mall developments and drive-thrus along Blackstone Ave. Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

THE FRESNO TREES PROJECT

Link to the Document HERE

The Fresno Trees Project is a citywide initiative aimed at expanding Fresno's urban tree canopy to improve air quality, combat extreme heat, and enhance overall community well-being. Focused particularly on underserved neighborhoods with low tree coverage, the project seeks to plant thousands of trees in public spaces, parks, schoolyards, and along major streets. By increasing green infrastructure, the initiative helps reduce urban heat islands, lower energy costs, and provide much-needed shade in Fresno's hot climate. The project is a collaborative effort involving city agencies, environmental organizations, and local residents, ensuring that tree-planting efforts align with community priorities.

Beyond environmental benefits, the Fresno Trees Project plays a crucial role in promoting public health, social equity, and economic resilience. More trees result in better air quality, reduced stormwater runoff, and improved mental and physical health outcomes for residents. The initiative also creates opportunities for green jobs, engaging local workers in tree maintenance, care, and education. By fostering long-term stewardship and community participation, the Fresno Trees Project aims to cultivate a healthier, more livable, and sustainable city for future generations.

5 Key Goals of the Fresno Trees Project:

- Expand Urban Tree Canopy: Increase tree coverage in high-need neighborhoods to provide shade and cooling.
- Improve Air Quality & Public Health: Reduce air pollution and enhance residents' overall well-being.
- Mitigate Climate Impacts: Combat extreme heat and reduce energy consumption through natural cooling.
- Create Green Job Opportunities: Train and employ local workers in tree care and environmental stewardship.
- Enhance Community Engagement: Involve residents in tree planting, education, and long-term care efforts.

MANCHESTER SHOPPING CENTER

Link to the Website HERE

The Manchester Center has played a significant role in the city's commercial and cultural landscape since its opening in 1955. As one of the first major shopping centers in the Central Valley, Manchester was initially developed as an open-air retail destination before being enclosed in the 1960s, reflecting national trends in suburban mall design. For decades, it served as a regional hub for shopping, dining, and social gatherings, housing major department stores like Sears, Gottschalks, and later, Macy's. However, like many malls across the U.S., Manchester began to decline in the late 20th and early 21st centuries due to changing consumer habits, competition from newer retail developments, and economic challenges.

Recognizing the need for revitalization, developers and city leaders launched a comprehensive redevelopment plan in the late 2010s aimed at transforming Manchester Center into a modern, mixed-use destination. The redevelopment vision reimagines the mall as more than a shopping center, integrating residential units, office space, entertainment venues, and community services into the site. Plans include updated retail space, new dining options, and redesigned public areas with improved walkability and outdoor gathering spots. Importantly, the redevelopment also positions the center as a key transit-oriented development (TOD) site, with proximity to major bus rapid transit lines and future high-speed rail connections. This shift reflects broader trends in urban planning that prioritize livable, compact communities. The Manchester Center redevelopment is not merely a facelift - it's a strategic move to reinvigorate a legacy site, support economic revitalization, and meet the evolving needs of Fresno's growing and diverse population.

5 Goals of the Manchester Center Redevelopment:

- Revitalize a Historic Commercial Hub: Restore Manchester Center as a vibrant, economically active destination that serves both local residents and regional visitors.
- Create a Mixed-Use, Transit-Oriented Development: Integrate housing, retail, office, and community spaces in a walkable environment connected to Fresno's public transit network.
- Support Economic Growth and Job Creation: Attract new businesses, generate employment opportunities, and stimulate investment in the surrounding area.
- Enhance Community Amenities and Public Space: Introduce improved public gathering areas, green spaces, and recreational opportunities to foster a more inclusive, livable environment.
- Promote Sustainability and Smart Urban Design: Emphasize energy-efficient buildings, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and adaptive reuse to support long-term environmental and social resilience.

[Image Left] Outline of the Manchester Center property

[Image Left] Plan for retail development at Manchester Center.

[Image Left] Rendering of proposed redevelopment of the Manchester Center.

[Image Left] Rendering of proposed redevelopment of the Manchester Center.

[Image Left] Rendering of proposed redevelopment of the Manchester Center.

Source: All images provided by the Manchester Center

[Image Left] Rendering of proposed redevelopment of the Manchester Center.

EXISTING CULTURAL AMENITIES/IDENTITY

Fresno, California, boasts a rich and diverse cultural scene that reflects the city's deep agricultural roots, multicultural heritage, and thriving arts community. As the largest city in the Central Valley, and the fifth largest in California, Fresno is home to numerous cultural institutions, events, and organizations that celebrate its history, cuisine, and artistic expression. The Fresno Art Museum serves as a cornerstone of the city's visual arts scene, showcasing contemporary and modern art exhibitions. Meanwhile, the Arte Américas cultural center highlights Latino arts and traditions through rotating exhibits, performances, and educational programs. For performing arts enthusiasts, the Fresno Philharmonic, Fresno Grand Opera, and Good Company Players present classical music, opera, and live theater productions that enhance the local arts landscape.

Fresno also hosts a variety of annual events and festivals that showcase its cultural diversity. The Big Fresno Fair, one of California's largest county fairs, celebrates the region's agricultural heritage with exhibits, concerts, and food from around the world. The Rogue Festival, Fresno's independent performing arts festival, brings together theater, comedy, music, and spoken word artists in a vibrant, grassroots setting. Meanwhile, the Taco Truck Throwdown emphasizes Fresno's deep ties to Mexican cuisine, featuring top taco vendors from across the region. Additionally, organizations like the Fresno Arts Council and the Hmong Cultural Center work to preserve and promote local artistic and cultural traditions, ensuring that Fresno remains a hub of creative and cultural expression for future generations. Whether through museums, music, theater, or community celebrations, Fresno's cultural scene continues to thrive and evolve, offering something for everyone.

5 Goals of Cultural Events in Fresno:

- Celebrate Diversity and Heritage: Highlight the rich cultural backgrounds of Fresno's diverse communities, including,. but not limited to, Latino, Hmong, African American, and Indigenous traditions.
- Promote Community Engagement: Provide inclusive spaces for residents to come together, share experiences, and foster a sense of belonging through arts and cultural activities.
- Support Local Artists and Performers: Offer platforms for musicians, dancers, actors, and visual artists to showcase their talents and sustain Fresno's creative economy.
- Boost Tourism and Economic Development: Attract visitors to Fresno through signature festivals, performances, and cultural events that benefit local businesses and the hospitality industry.
- Enhance Public Appreciation for the Arts: Increase awareness and participation in arts and culture through educational programs, interactive exhibits, and accessible public events.

[Image Above]

[Image Above]

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KEY THEMES ACROSS FRESNO'S PLANS

Fresno has undertaken a series of strategic planning efforts aimed at revitalizing key corridors, improving housing accessibility, enhancing transportation, and fostering sustainable growth. The various plans, including the Better Blackstone Design Challenge, Transform Fresno Plan, and the Fresno Active Transportation Plan, collectively demonstrate a commitment to equity, environmental sustainability, and economic revitalization. While each initiative has a distinct focus, they all share a common vision of creating a more livable and connected Fresno. This analysis examines the major themes, strengths, and challenges of these initiatives, highlighting their potential impact on the city's future.

Equity and Inclusive Growth

- Many of Fresno's planning documents emphasize addressing historical disinvestment and improving opportunities for marginalized communities. The Transform Fresno Plan, for example, explicitly focuses on climate justice and investing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, while the Blackstone Corridor initiatives prioritize affordable housing and anti-displacement strategies.

[Image Above]
Interactive water elements in a public park for children and adults alike.

[Image Above]
New mixed use infill development with groundfloor residential.

Sustainable and Smart Development

- Sustainability is a recurring priority, with projects like the Fresno Trees Project and the Active Transportation Plan focusing on reducing the city's carbon footprint. These initiatives encourage energy-efficient housing, increased tree canopy coverage, and improved non-motorized transportation options. Additionally, transit-oriented development is a core strategy in the Blackstone Corridor projects and Manchester Center redevelopment, aiming to promote smart urban growth.

Economic Revitalization

- Fresno's redevelopment efforts seek to attract businesses, create jobs, and stimulate local economies. The Manchester Center redevelopment and the Better Blackstone Design Challenge are designed to transform underutilized spaces into thriving mixed-use developments. Additionally, cultural investments, such as the support for arts organizations and events, aim to bolster Fresno's economy through tourism and local business engagement.

Community-Centered Planning

- A strong emphasis on public participation and community-driven planning is evident across these documents. Initiatives like the Better Blackstone Design Challenge and Transform Fresno Plan have actively involved residents in shaping their vision. This grassroots approach ensures that development reflects local priorities and fosters long-term community buy-in.

SOFT DATA

To complement our quantitative analysis, we gathered qualitative data through community engagement events, informal conversations, and direct field observations along the Blackstone Corridor. These interactions provided invaluable insight into how residents, business owners, and students experience the corridor in their daily lives - what they value, the challenges they face, and the changes they hope to see. Observations of pedestrian behavior, transit usage, and the condition of public spaces revealed gaps in accessibility, safety, and comfort that might not be captured through data alone. This qualitative input ensured that our design proposals were grounded in lived experience, reflecting the community's aspirations and needs with empathy and authenticity.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Once we understood the demographics of who lives around the Blackstone Corridor, how they move through it, and how the current and future climate impacts their daily lives, it became clear that numbers alone could not tell the full story. To truly understand Blackstone, we also needed to explore the emotional and intangible connections people have with the corridor - how they feel when they walk its streets, what memories they associate with specific places, and what hopes they hold for its future. Capturing these human experiences was essential to creating a vision for Blackstone that resonates with the community on a deeper, more personal level.

Visits to Fresno

Because of the travel time between San Luis Obispo and Fresno, our engagement efforts along the Blackstone Corridor included two overnight trips and a day trip for the final presentation. The first visit, in October, centered around participating in the Better Blackstone Placemaking Design Challenge, which helped introduce us to the project partners and the community. The second trip, in November, focused on a community engagement event where we gathered additional feedback and insights from residents and stakeholders. Finally, in December, we returned for a day trip to deliver our final

[Images Above]
Students doing a walking tour of Fresno City College.

presentation, sharing our findings, design proposals, and vision for the future of the Blackstone Corridor.

The Better Blackstone Placemaking Design Studio

The Better Blackstone Placemaking Design Studio, held at Manchester Center on October 11th, served as both a culmination and a springboard for ongoing revitalization efforts along the Blackstone Corridor. It offered a recap of the broader Better Blackstone Design Challenge, showcasing the ideas, strategies, and design concepts generated to re-imagine the corridor as a more walkable, vibrant, and community-centered place. The event also provided an invaluable opportunity to connect directly with the key partners and stakeholders active along the corridor, from local nonprofits and small business owners to institutional leaders and city representatives. By engaging in conversations and workshops during the event, we gained critical insights into the various interests, priorities, and visions that different groups hold for Blackstone's future.

More than just a review, the October 11th event strengthened the collaborative foundation needed to move from ideas to action. It allowed participants to build relationships, align on shared goals, and identify potential challenges and opportunities that must be addressed in the next phases of the project. This collective energy reinforced the importance of an inclusive, community-driven process for shaping a Blackstone Corridor that truly reflects the needs, culture, and aspirations of those who live, work, and invest in it every day.

November Visit

Spending a full night and morning along the Blackstone Corridor offered an invaluable perspective on the street's true character - something that cannot be fully captured through maps, surveys, or Google Earth. Slowly walking along the corridor as a group allowed for a deeper understanding of how people actually interact with the space at different times of day, revealing subtle but critical details about the human experience. We were able to see and experience firsthand where the corridor supports pedestrian activity and where it struggles - from missing crosswalks and uneven sidewalks to areas

[Image Above]
Agenda for the Better Blackstone Placemaking Design Studio.

[Image Above]
A speaker at the Better Blackstone Placemaking Design Studio.

that feel welcoming versus those that feel hostile or isolating. Observing the flow of daily life, from people walking to work to local businesses or community resources, helped us better understand the corridor's strengths, such as its cultural vibrancy and existing gathering places, alongside its challenges, like lack of shade, noise, and heavy car dominance.

Taking the time to immerse ourselves in the corridor also emphasized the emotional and sensory experience of being on Blackstone — how it feels to move through it as a person rather than simply drive by. These observations are essential for human-centered design: they anchor our proposals in the real, lived experiences of the community and ensure that future improvements support comfort, safety, dignity, and pride for all who use the corridor. True transformation starts with seeing a place up close, on foot, and at 5 mph.

Fresno City College Architecture

During our next visit to Fresno, we had the opportunity to work directly from the architecture studio facilities at Fresno City College, placing us once again in the heart of the Blackstone Corridor. Being based so close to the project site allowed us to immerse ourselves even deeper in the environment, offering the chance to gather final observations, inventory important physical and social details, and refine our understanding of the corridor's conditions. Working from within the community, rather than from a distance, provided invaluable real-time insights into the rhythms, challenges, and potential of Blackstone Avenue.

This proximity also allowed for more spontaneous site walks, direct engagement with the surroundings, and informal conversations with students, residents, and business owners. It reinforced the importance of designing with a sensitivity to the everyday experiences of the people who live and move through the area. Our time at Fresno City College not only enriched the depth of our fieldwork but also strengthened the connection between the academic environment and the community-centered approach critical to the future of the Blackstone Corridor.

[Image Above]
Students visiting the Architecture program at Fresno City College.

[Image Above]
Students taking their first walking tour along Blackstone Ave.

November Engagement

Community engagement is essential in projects like the Shields and Blackstone redevelopment because it ensures that the voices, needs, and values of those most impacted are genuinely reflected in the design and planning process. By involving residents, students, local business owners, and stakeholders early and consistently, the project can build trust, surface culturally relevant insights, and create public spaces that people feel ownership over. Engagement transforms infrastructure from a top-down intervention into a collaborative opportunity - fostering more equitable outcomes, reducing displacement risks, and ensuring that public investments serve not just efficiency, but community identity, pride, and long-term resilience.

December Engagement

During our final trip to Fresno in December, the students transformed a room at Fresno City College into a gallery of ideas, covering the walls with presentation boards showcasing their designs, research, and proposals. This setup created an immersive environment where partners and key community members could walk through the work, engage directly with the concepts, and provide valuable feedback. The event served as both a culmination of months of effort and a celebration of the collaboration between the students, community partners, and the people of the Blackstone Corridor.

[Image Left] Students leading a community engagement exercise in November.

[Image Left] Students leading a community engagement exercise in November.

[Image Left] Students presenting their final concepts at Fresno City College.

BLACKSTONE MID-CENTURY MODERN

One of the defining strengths of the Blackstone Corridor is its rich collection of mid-century modern architecture and iconography, which offers a distinctive visual and cultural identity that sets the corridor apart within Fresno. These architectural elements - evident in commercial facades, signage, rooflines, and materials - reflect a pivotal era in the city's growth, capturing the optimism, innovation, and the auto-oriented design sensibility of post-war America. Rather than viewing these features as outdated, the project embraces them as inspirational assets that anchor the corridor in a unique historic narrative.

This architectural character is not accidental; it is a direct result of Blackstone's historical role as a primary transportation corridor connecting downtown Fresno to the city's growing northern neighborhoods and ultimately to destinations like Yosemite National Park. During the mid-20th century, Blackstone served as one of the main arteries for travel, commerce, and expansion, making it a hub of roadside development that mirrored the era's fascination with mobility and modernism. The signage, motel architecture, car dealerships, and retail strips all stand as cultural and material evidence of the time and place in which the corridor was shaped. By recognizing and celebrating this mid-century legacy, the corridor's redesign can highlight authentic place-based character while bridging past and future. These architectural motifs inspire a design language for wayfinding, public space, and redevelopment that honors local heritage without resorting to nostalgia. Whether through the revival of geometric forms, the reinterpretation of classic signage, or the preservation of key structures, this design approach positions Blackstone as a corridor where heritage and contemporary urbanism meet, creating a space that is both grounded and forward-thinking.

When we first began our research on the Blackstone Corridor, one of the first elements of the street to jump out at us was the mid-century architecture, signage and design elements that are still located throughout the corridor. This inspired the colors, fonts and design of this document.

[Image Left] Mid-century retail sign along Blackstone Ave.

[Image Left] Mid-century architecture along Blackstone Ave.

[Image Left] Mid-century architecture and plantings along Blackstone.

GROWING TALLER

4

FOURTH PHASE - GROWING TALLER

Integration and Legacy Building

As the native ash tree reaches maturity, it begins to produce seeds, ensuring regeneration and the continuation of its ecosystem. Similarly, the final phase of the Blackstone Corridor transformation is about planting the seeds for future growth through long-term investment in education, cultural stewardship, and innovation. This phase emphasizes the development of community-based programs, educational partnerships, and entrepreneurial hubs that empower local residents - particularly youth - to shape the future of the corridor.

Public spaces can host workshops, festivals, and maker fairs that celebrate and preserve the corridor's multicultural legacy, while also fostering new ideas. Collaborations with local schools, colleges, and training programs can establish pathways for careers in sustainability, design, and public service, helping residents become stewards of their own neighborhoods. Much like an ash tree's seeds are dispersed to grow new life elsewhere, this phase ensures the ideas, values, and practices nurtured on Blackstone can inspire broader change across Fresno - building a culture of local pride, leadership, and innovation that carries into the next generation.

[Images Right]
Examples of how students can lead community engagement events

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the existing conditions of the Blackstone Corridor through comprehensive inventory and meaningful community engagement is foundational to creating a responsible and effective planning strategy. However, if this inventory isn't analyzed in an effort to learn how to apply the information we have learned, it was a fruitless exercise. This includes not only analyzing the built environment, public spaces, and demographics, but also what we heard from residents and stakeholders regarding their experiences, stories, and hopes of the people who live, work, learn, and move through Blackstone every day. These layers of knowledge - both quantitative and qualitative - are critical to ensuring that any interventions proposed are relevant, respectful, and rooted in the community's lived reality. Without this grounding, design and planning risk becoming abstract or imposed, rather than adaptive and inclusive.

By synthesizing these findings, we are able to distill key priorities and conditions into clear, actionable strategies for short, medium, and long-term implementation. In the short term, these might include tactical urbanism projects, improved amenities, or wayfinding that immediately enhance safety, comfort, and usability of the public realm. In the medium term, projects like protected bike lanes, BRT improvements, and infill housing can build on that momentum while reinforcing walkability and equity. In the long term, we can envision systemic changes such as transit-oriented development, cultural infrastructure, and sustainable land use that fundamentally reshape how Blackstone functions and who it serves. This chapter applies everything we've learned to craft a phased roadmap that ensures the corridor grows in a way that supports the needs and aspirations of its existing communities—never forgetting the people who made Blackstone what it is today.

KEY THEMES ACROSS FRESNO'S PLANS

Fresno has undertaken a series of strategic planning efforts aimed at revitalizing key corridors, improving housing accessibility, enhancing transportation, and fostering

[Image Above]
Images of walkable public spaces that have been recently redevelopment.

[Image Above]
Images of various community engagement events led by design and planning students.

sustainable growth. The various plans, including the Better Blackstone Design Challenge, Transform Fresno Plan, and the Fresno Active Transportation Plan, collectively demonstrate a commitment to equity, environmental sustainability, and economic revitalization. While each initiative has a distinct focus, they all share a common vision of creating a more livable and connected Fresno. This analysis examines the major themes, strengths, and challenges of these initiatives, highlighting their potential impact on the city's future.

Equity and Inclusive Growth

Many of Fresno's planning documents emphasize addressing historical disinvestment and improving opportunities for marginalized communities. The Transform Fresno Plan, for example, explicitly focuses on climate justice and investing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, while the Blackstone Corridor initiatives prioritize affordable housing and anti-displacement strategies.

Sustainable and Smart Development

Sustainability is a recurring priority, with projects like the Fresno Trees Project and the Active Transportation Plan focusing on reducing the city's carbon footprint. These initiatives encourage energy-efficient housing, increased tree canopy coverage, and improved non-motorized transportation options. Additionally, transit-oriented development is a core strategy in the Blackstone Corridor projects and Manchester Center redevelopment, aiming to reduce car dependency and promote smart urban growth.

Economic Revitalization

Fresno's redevelopment efforts seek to attract businesses, create jobs, and stimulate local economies. The Manchester Center redevelopment and the Better Blackstone Design Challenge are designed to transform underutilized spaces into thriving mixed-use developments. Additionally, cultural investments, such as the support for arts organizations and events, aim to bolster Fresno's economy through tourism and local business engagement.

[Image Left] Wyandanch, Long Island, New York, where asphalt parking was turned into a great public space. Before image. Source: Torti Gallas & Partners.

[Image Left] Wyandanch, Long Island, New York, where asphalt parking was turned into a great public space. After image. Source: Torti Gallas & Partners.

[Image Left] Lancaster Boulevard before. Courtesy of the City of Lancaster.

[Image Left] Lancaster Boulevard after. Courtesy of the City of Lancaster.

Community-Centered Planning

A strong emphasis on public participation and community-driven planning is evident across these documents. Initiatives like the Better Blackstone Design Challenge and Transform Fresno Plan actively involved residents in shaping their vision. This grassroots approach ensures that development reflects local priorities and fosters long-term community buy-in.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Integrated Approach

Many of these plans recognize the interconnectedness of housing, transportation, environment, and economic development, ensuring a holistic approach to urban revitalization.

Funding Support:

State and local investments, such as Transform Fresno's funding through the Transformative Climate Communities program, provide essential financial backing for these projects.

Multimodal Transportation Improvements:

The focus on active transportation and transit-oriented development enhances mobility and reduces Fresno's reliance on automobiles.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Implementation and Funding Gaps:

While these plans set ambitious goals, securing long-term funding and ensuring timely implementation remains a challenge.

Gentrification and Displacement Risks:

With revitalization efforts come concerns about rising property values and displacement of long-term residents, necessitating strong anti-displacement policies.

Coordination Between Projects:

Ensuring alignment between various initiatives will be key to avoiding redundancy and maximizing impact.

CONCLUSION

Fresno's various planning efforts collectively reflect a strong commitment to creating a more sustainable, inclusive, and economically vibrant city. By addressing equity, sustainability, and community engagement, these initiatives lay the groundwork for meaningful transformation. However, their success will depend on effective implementation, continued funding, and proactive measures to prevent unintended consequences such as displacement. If executed well, these plans have the potential to significantly enhance Fresno's livability and long-term resilience.

PRIORITIZING REGENERATION

Connecting and applying the common themes from Fresno's previous planning documents, such as the emphasis on equity, sustainability, connectivity, and cultural representation, provides a strong foundation for the next phase of regeneration and infill development along corridors like Blackstone. Across initiatives like the Transform Fresno Plan, the Active Transportation Plan, and the Southern Blackstone Avenue Smart Mobility Strategy, there is a shared vision of creating a more walkable, inclusive, and resilient city. These documents collectively call for regenerating central neighborhoods, improving multi-modal transportation, investing in green infrastructure, and honoring and supporting the communities who already live there. By synthesizing these insights, future development can be more strategic, aligning long-term goals with near-term action and ensuring public realm investments are not only functional, but culturally meaningful and socially supportive.

Regeneration and infill development are critical strategies for addressing the structural and environmental challenges that cities like Fresno face. After decades of urban sprawl, many central neighborhoods, including the Blackstone Corridor, have suffered from underinvestment, disconnection, and decay. Infill development allows for the strategic reuse of vacant or underutilized parcels within the existing urban fabric, directing resources back into the core rather than expanding outward. This approach helps reduce infrastructure costs, strengthens transit systems, and maximizes the value of public investments by building where services already exist. Most importantly, regeneration prioritizes healing: revitalizing neighborhoods without displacing existing residents, preserving cultural identity, and restoring environmental quality through greener, more walkable streetscapes.

In the context of Fresno's economic and environmental challenges - including poor air quality, income disparity, and fragmented development - regenerative infill development becomes not just a growth strategy, but a pathway to equity and sustainability. It allows communities to reshape themselves from within by aligning land use, housing, and

[Image above]
Lafayette Park
Taken 04/22/25.
Courtesy of Google Earth.

transportation with the lived realities of residents. Through projects that blend mixed-use development, affordable housing, public amenities, and improved transit access, regeneration breathes life back into neglected corridors like Blackstone. Much like the native ash tree, which regrows from strong roots when nurtured in the right conditions, Fresno can regenerate by fostering community-centered development, rooted in local needs and resilient to the pressures of climate, inequality, and disconnection.

Public Realm Investments

Investing in the public realm is essential for transforming planning visions into lived reality. While policies and long-term plans lay the foundation for change, it is tangible public space improvements - like sidewalks, plazas, furnishings, lighting, and public art - that make those changes visible, tangible, and meaningful for residents. These are the investments that shape daily life, influence how people move through and interact with their neighborhoods, and reflect the character and values of the community. Without attention to the public realm, even the most intensive planning documents risk becoming a plan's worst nightmare: a shelf. A well-designed public realm fosters equity, accessibility, and connection, while neglected public spaces often reinforce disinvestment, social isolation, and blight.

To implement the goals set forth in Fresno's previous planning documents, it's critical to move from broad policy toward place-based action. This begins by identifying key nodes along the Blackstone Corridor - intersections, transit stops,local institutions, parks, and commercial hubs - that serve as natural third places and gateways for future development. These nodes will be evaluated through a combination of community feedback, demographic analysis, and site inventory to determine where investments may have the greatest social, economic, and environmental impact. In many cases, these locations are already home to active community life but lack the infrastructure and public amenities to fully support a vibrant and welcoming public realm. Prioritizing these areas ensures that public realm investments are used intentionally, to catalyze transformation where it's most needed and where it's most likely to meet the needs of the surrounding community.

[Image above]
The corner of Blackstone and McKinley.
Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

[Image above]
The corner of Blackstone and Cambridge.
Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

Public realm investment also plays a vital role in civic engagement and community ownership. When neighborhoods see investments that reflect their values - such as safe streets, multi-modal transportation, furnishings, and representative public art - they are more likely to feel valued and a sense of belonging. These small-scale interventions can build momentum for larger projects, piloting intentional investments into a network of connected, thriving public spaces. In this way, the public realm becomes both the foundation and the catalyst for broader goals of economic, environmental, and social regeneration and sustainability.

KEY NODES

In order to achieve the long-term goals of regeneration, equity, and sustainability along the Blackstone Corridor, we have focused our design and planning efforts on a series of key nodes; strategic locations where public realm investments and policy implementation can have the greatest impact. These nodes include the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley, the redesign of the Blackstone streetscape to incorporate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and multi-modal transportation, enhancements to Lafayette Park, and the redevelopment of the Manchester Center at the corner of Blackstone and Shields. Each of these sites plays a unique role in the corridor's function and identity, offering opportunities to model infill development, improve access to essential services, create inclusive community spaces, and address long-standing issues of disinvestment.

BLACKSTONE @ MCKINLEY

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WHY BLACKSTONE @ MCKINLEY?

The intersection of McKinley and Blackstone presents a transformative opportunity for urban redevelopment, anchored by the planned grade separation to lower the roadway beneath the existing railroad tracks. This major infrastructure investment will not only improve traffic flow and safety but also create the rare condition of reclaiming land at a significant urban node. Approximately 16 acres have been cleared through eminent domain to accommodate the construction and future realignment of traffic. Rather than allow this land to become a fragmented or underutilized remnant of the construction process, it should be strategically reimagined as a vibrant, inclusive, and transit-oriented mixed-use district.

Given its direct adjacency to Fresno City College, this site is ideally situated to become a new hub for student life, academic support, housing, and community amenities. Prioritizing pedestrians and ensuring equal access for all users, including bicyclists, bus rapid transit (BRT) riders, and drivers, is essential. The grade-separated design must integrate safe and inviting pedestrian pathways, intuitive wayfinding, and seamless connections between transit modes. The redevelopment vision should also reflect the needs of the surrounding community by including affordable student housing, retail and service-oriented ground floor uses, public plazas, and educational or community-serving facilities. By viewing this intersection as a catalyst site rather than a construction afterthought, Fresno has the opportunity to model how infrastructure projects can serve broader goals of equity, sustainability, and neighborhood revitalization.

[Image above]
The corner of Blackstone and Princeton.
Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

[Image above]
The corner of Blackstone and Shields.
Taken 04/22/25. Courtesy of Google Earth.

ANALYSIS OF THE INVENTORY

Applying What we Have Learned

The inventory of the corner of Blackstone and McKinley reveals a rare and transformative opportunity for urban reinvention, driven by the upcoming grade separation project that will lower the intersection to eliminate conflicts with the existing rail line. This infrastructure shift will result in approximately 16 acres of cleared or underutilized land, creating a significant open canvas for redevelopment at a key crossroads of the city. Our analysis included not only site conditions and mobility patterns but also a review of proposed plans from the City of Fresno and previous design concepts put forward by local planners and architects. While these earlier efforts explored ideas ranging from mixed-use development to institutional expansion, few have fully capitalized on the potential for integrating transit, open space, and community infrastructure into a cohesive urban district. This inventory laid the foundation for a proposal that positions the site as a civic gateway and college district hub, reconnecting Fresno City College to its surroundings while prioritizing equity, access, and placemaking.

FIVE GOALS OF THE BLACKSTONE & MCKINLEY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

1. Enhance Safety and Mobility through Grade Separation

Eliminate the at-grade rail crossing to reduce vehicle congestion, increase pedestrian safety, and ensure uninterrupted movement for freight and transit systems.

2. Reconnect the Urban Fabric with a Public Plaza Overpass

Create an elevated public space that restores pedestrian connectivity across the corridor, linking Fresno City College with future student housing, and offering an inclusive place to gather, study, and relax.

3. Develop Affordable and Accessible Student Housing

Utilize land acquired through eminent domain to construct affordable housing dedicated to FCC students, modeled after other successful community colleges across California.

[Image Above]
Current streetscape along Blackstone approaching McKinley heading south

[Image Above]
New Fresno City College building along Blackstone

[Image Above]
The Link at Blackstone affordable housing development

[Image Above]
Entrance to Ratcliffe Stadium along Blackstone

4. Foster a College-Oriented Urban District

Introduce academic support facilities, community-serving retail, health resources, and transit access that collectively form a vibrant campus gateway and civic node.

5. Promote Long-Term Sustainability and Community Resilience

Design the public realm, plaza, and housing with climate-adaptive strategies, shade infrastructure, and social programming that enhance quality of life and neighborhood identity.

CONCEPT

Redesigning Blackstone and McKinley as a Pedestrian-Centered Student District

The intersection of McKinley and Blackstone is one of the most infrastructurally complex and symbolically important locations along the corridor. Here, an active freight rail line diagonally crosses a key arterial, causing persistent safety issues and delays for drivers, cyclists, and especially pedestrians. The planned grade separation, lowering the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley approximately 30 feet below the rail line, offers an opportunity. But more than a utilitarian transportation fix, this project represents a powerful opportunity to redesign the area at grade level above the intersection to create a vibrant, place-based district centered on community, education, and public life.

Rather than treat the space as a traffic corridor, the acquisition of approximately 16 acres through eminent domain creates a blank canvas to reimagine this node as a walkable, mixed-use environment that actively supports Fresno City College. This site can be transformed into a thriving college district - complete with affordable student housing, academic resources, neighborhood-serving retail, and engaging public spaces. Drawing inspiration from successful college-oriented districts elsewhere in California, such as those near Orange Coast College, the redevelopment around McKinley and Blackstone can elevate both the physical and social infrastructure of the area, while also responding to Fresno's pressing housing and mobility challenges.

[Image above]
Rendering of proposed grade separation of Blackstone at McKinley. Source: Measure C

[Image above]
Site plan of proposed grade separation of Blackstone at McKinley. Source: Measure C

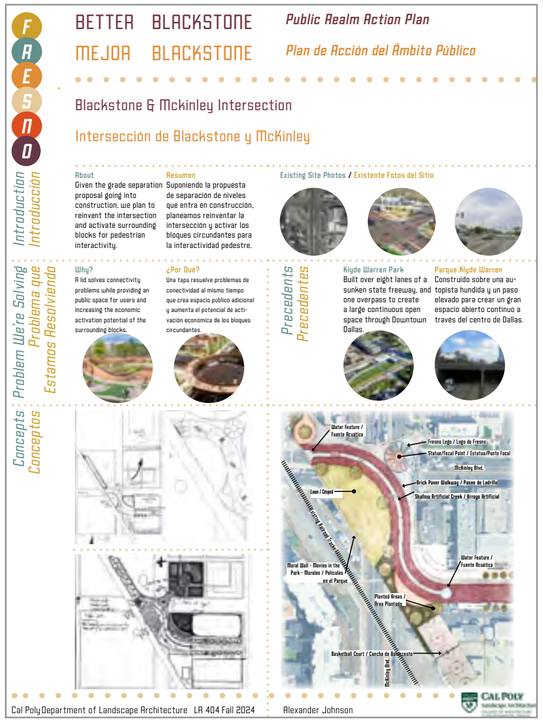
A Campus Gateway and Urban Commons Over Infrastructure

At the center of this vision is the idea that infrastructure should serve people first—and that includes building an elevated public plaza or park over the sunken intersection. This "land bridge" would restore pedestrian connectivity across McKinley and Blackstone, linking future student housing on the west side to Fresno City College's campus on the east. More than just a passage, it would be a destination in its own right: a shaded, active, and inclusive urban commons where students, residents, and visitors can gather, socialize, study, and celebrate. Designed with accessibility, safety, and social connection in mind, the plaza could feature ADA-accessible ramps, terraced seating, study areas, outdoor classrooms, food vendors, and performance spaces - turning a once-disconnected intersection into a vibrant focal point of neighborhood life.

Beneath the plaza, the sunken roadway can be designed with high-quality lighting, wayfinding, and artistic treatments to ensure it remains safe and welcoming. Combined with future investments in the proposed BRT line, enhanced bike lanes, and pedestrian-first streetscapes, this district could become one of the most walkable and transit-oriented environments in Fresno. By centering public life, student needs, and placemaking in the redesign of this infrastructural project, the intersection of McKinley and Blackstone becomes more than a corridor - it becomes a symbol of how cities can invest in community, equity, and the future.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the Blackstone and McKinley analysis highlights the site's immense potential to serve as a transformative anchor for the corridor, particularly given the scale of available land and its proximity to Fresno City College and major transit infrastructure. The comprehensive inventory - encompassing land use, circulation, public space, and prior planning efforts - provided a clear understanding of the opportunities and constraints shaping the site. This analysis served as the foundation for a human-scaled, inclusive design concept that prioritizes the needs of all users: students, transit riders, pedestrians, cyclists, and nearby residents.



[Image right]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event.

[Image above]
Student sketches of conceptual park lid over the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley

[Image above]
Student sketches of conceptual park lid over the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley

[Image above]
Lafayette Park signage at the corner of E. Princeton Ave. and N. Glenn Ave.

[Image above]
Mural of Lafayette Park along the tennis courts.

LAFAYETTE PARK

Team Members
Owen Fitzgerald

WHY LAFAYETTE PARK?

Lafayette Park stands out as a vital node along the Blackstone Corridor due to its central location, existing green space, and its proximity to neighborhoods that have long lacked quality public amenities and green space. As the only public park in the area, Lafayette Park already serves as a gathering space for families, youth, and seniors, yet it remains underutilized due to outdated amenities, limited maintenance, and defensive access from the surrounding streets due to being surrounded by a chain link fence. By prioritizing investment in this park as a key public realm anchor, it has the opportunity to be one of the few, free, public gathering spaces in the neighborhood. There is an opportunity to re-imagine it into a vibrant community hub - one that supports physical activity, social connection, cultural expression, and everyday leisure. By exploring enhancements to Lafayette Park, we seek to not only address the multiple levels of deprivations for nearby residents, but also reinforce the corridor's overall identity as being representative of the surrounding communities.

In addition, prioritizing investments into Lafayette Park has the potential to create ripple effect across the corridor. As a potential site for community events, markets, performances, and civic engagement, the park can act as a connective tissue between surrounding housing, transit stops, and commercial destinations. Investments in lighting, seating, play areas, and general public realm elements can make the space safer and more inviting, encouraging greater use throughout the day and evening. When framed by mixed-use development and enhanced with partnerships from local organizations, schools, and cultural groups, Lafayette Park can serve as a demonstration of how reinvestment in public space leads to broader neighborhood regeneration, social equity, and long-term economic development.

[Image above]
Existing amenities in the park, including the playground and community building.

[Image above]
Existing amenities in the park, including trash, benches, and tennis courts.

ANALYSIS OF THE INVENTORY

Applying What we Have Learned
Walking through Lafayette Park revealed critical insights about both its challenges and its potential. The perimeter fence, though likely intended for security, creates a visual and physical barrier that makes the park feel unwelcoming and disconnected from the surrounding community. Despite this, local residents clearly see Lafayette Park as a vital community space - the last remaining free and accessible gathering place in the neighborhood. However, much of the park's programming is geared toward children and youth, with limited amenities for adults and seniors, leaving key segments of the population underserved. Given that Fresno has one of the lowest park-to-population ratios in the country, the importance of Lafayette Park is magnified - not just as a recreational space, but as a critical component of public health, social connection, and neighborhood equity. These observations informed our approach to re-imagining the park as a more inclusive, open, and multi-generational public space that reflects the diverse needs of its diverse community.

FIVE GOALS OF THE LAFAYETTE PARK REDESIGN

1. Preserve and Improve Core Recreational Functions
Maintain the baseball field, playground, skate park, and community center as central, beloved features while upgrading circulation, shade, and safety to ensure accessibility and comfort for all users.

2. Expand the Public Realm Through Adaptive Reuse
Transform underutilized adjacent properties - like the former strip mall and Auto Trader lot - into extensions of the park, offering free, inclusive spaces that provide essential community services.

3. Strengthen Social Infrastructure and Equity
Introduce learning centers, health resources, youth and senior programming, and civic

gathering spaces that respond directly to the needs and feedback of local residents, especially those most underserved.

4. Enhance Connectivity and Environmental Comfort
Improve pathways, add shaded areas and tree canopy, and integrate sustainable landscaping to make the park more walkable, climate-adaptive, and welcoming year-round.

5. Create a Cultural Anchor for Community Life
Design new plazas and social spaces that can host celebrations, markets, performances, and festivals - making Lafayette Park a dynamic and flexible place for gathering, culture, and collective memory.

CONCEPT

Redesigning Lafayette Park: Honoring Community, Expanding Access
Lafayette Park has long stood as a vital public space in the heart of Fresno, offering one of the few places in the surrounding neighborhoods where people of all ages can gather freely - without the expectation of spending money or navigating exclusionary, commercial spaces. In its redesign, the project honors this essential role by preserving the core layout and functions of the park while expanding its capacity to meet the evolving social, cultural, and physical needs of the community. With improved circulation, enhanced social spaces, and new community-serving amenities, Lafayette Park becomes not just a park, but a neighborhood anchor, deeply rooted in place and equity.

The existing ballfield, playground, skate park, and community center remain intact and improved, as they are beloved assets to the neighborhood. The redesign prioritizes better connectivity and access throughout the site, creating smoother and safer pathways between these areas, along with new seating nodes, shaded gathering spots, and public art that reflects the diverse cultures of the surrounding community. Trees and landscaping are added strategically to cool the park, soften its edges, and make it more

[Image above]
Northern edge of Lafayette Park

[Image above]
Entrance to Lafayette Park along N. Glenn Ave.

comfortable year-round, especially during the region's hot summers. Lighting, signage, and site furnishings are updated to create a more welcoming, navigable, and inclusive environment for everyone.

Expanding the Public Realm: Adaptive Reuse and Community Resilience
One of the most transformative aspects of the Lafayette Park redesign is its extension into the surrounding underutilized commercial properties, bringing new life and purpose to adjacent lots while extending the public realm. At the corner of Blackstone and Princeton Avenue, a current strip mall is proposed to be adaptively reused as a hub of community-serving resources. Rather than being demolished, the existing structures are repurposed into learning centers, community health facilities, youth programs, and senior services - a deliberate shift from transactional retail space to inclusive, free, and accessible community infrastructure.

The strip mall's parking lot is redesigned as an urban plaza and green space, with trees, seating, play zones, and a covered loggia along the street edge, providing both shade and architectural rhythm to the space. This area acts as a transitional zone between indoor programming and outdoor gathering - perfect for community markets, performances, or informal hangouts. Meanwhile, at the corner of Blackstone and Harvard Avenue, a proposed redevelopment of the current Auto Trader lot envisions a shaded, flexible green gathering space, specifically designed to accommodate community events, celebrations, and cultural festivals. This plaza anchors the park's southern edge, creating a gateway into Lafayette Park that opens it onto Blackstone.

The guiding principle of this redesign is simple but powerful: to enhance what already works, while expanding the definition of what a public park can be. By combining physical improvements with adaptive reuse and public resource integration, the new Lafayette Park becomes a model of community resilience, spatial justice, and inclusive design. It not only protects one of the last truly public spaces in the neighborhood - it expands it, ensuring that generations to come will have access to a safe, welcoming, and dynamic space that grows with their needs.

[Image above]
View of the park from home base at the baseball field in the park.

[Image above]
Existing amenities in the park, including the formal pool which is now inactive.

[Image right]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Lafayette Park concludes that while it is currently popular, yet underutilized and physically constrained, it holds immense potential as a central, inclusive gathering space for the surrounding community. The existing fence, limited adult-focused amenities, and lack of visual connectivity to the street undermine its accessibility and vibrancy, despite the community's deep appreciation for it as one of the few free public spaces in the neighborhood. With Fresno's overall shortage of parkland, Lafayette Park stands out as a critical civic asset that, if redesigned to be more open, multi-generational, and integrated with its urban surroundings, could serve as a model for equitable and resilient public space. The findings underscore the need to prioritize inclusive design, remove physical and psychological barriers, and invest in amenities that reflect the full spectrum of community needs.

[Images above]
Student sketch of the conceptual site plan for a re-imagined Lafayette Park

MANCHESTER CENTER

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ANALYSIS OF THE INVENTORY

Applying What we Have Learned
The redesign of Manchester Center builds upon a comprehensive inventory of its physical fabric, historical resonance, and enduring regional role. Learning from these lessons, we've moved beyond the predominantly mixed-use redevelopment models of previous plans to place local retail and the public realm at the forefront. Once one of Fresno's pioneering mid-century, auto-oriented shopping destinations, the center's vast surface parking and underused storefronts are reimagined as platforms for neighborhood entrepreneurs, artisan markets, and community-driven retail experiences that celebrate local culture and craftsmanship. Strategically positioned along the Blackstone Corridor and adjacent to major transit lines, this approach prioritizes human-scale investments - from widened promenades and interactive plazas to thoughtfully programmed gathering spaces - ensuring that the center's transformation fosters social vitality, equitable access, and a memorable sense of place. By honoring the site's legacy while embedding public-focused amenities and supporting grassroots commerce, the proposal envisions a Manchester Center that truly functions as a vibrant, inclusive hub for both daily life and regional connection.

FIVE GOALS OF THE SOUTHWEST MANCHESTER CENTER CONCEPT

Celebrate Cultural Memory and Identity
Restore and showcase the iconic Manchester carousel as a central organizing feature that connects the site's legacy with its future, creating a symbolic and functional gathering space for people of all ages.

[Image above]
Existing southern entrance to the New Manchester Center.

[Image above]
Southern edge of the New Manchester Center.

[Image above]
The corner of Shields and Blackstone looking north along Blackstone.

[Image above]
The corner of Shields and Blackstone looking north along Shields.

Create a Walkable, Mixed-Use Urban Environment
Introduce new infill development featuring active ground-floor uses and upper-story housing to reframe the site as a complete, transit-connected neighborhood that prioritizes pedestrians and cyclists.

Establish a Civic Commons and Marketplace
Design a flexible east-west market plaza featuring a covered structure, restrooms, a community kitchen, and a playground—providing essential services, economic opportunities, and a welcoming hub for local residents.

Support Environmental Sustainability and Urban Greening
Incorporate green infrastructure, shade trees, permeable surfaces, and native landscaping to reduce heat, manage stormwater, and enhance environmental resilience.

Foster Inclusive Economic Development
Provide space and resources for local vendors, small businesses, and community programming that promotes entrepreneurship, job creation, and social equity in the heart of the city.

CONCEPT

Reimagining Manchester Center's Southwest Corner: A Community-Driven Vision at Blackstone and McKinley

The southwest corner of Manchester Center, located at the highly visible and transit-connected intersection of Blackstone and Shields, represents a unique opportunity to redefine the identity of this historic site. Once a thriving regional shopping destination, the center now stands at a critical juncture - ripe for reinvention as a mixed-use, community-focused urban space that reconnects people to place. This redevelopment concept celebrates Manchester's legacy while shifting its role from a single-use commercial hub into a vibrant, human-scaled node of public life.

At the heart of the redesign is the transformation of an underutilized surface parking lot into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented public space, framed by a series of new mixed-use buildings. These structures are envisioned to activate the streetscape with ground-floor uses that support daily life and social interaction - such as small businesses, cafes, or community-serving retail - designed to engage directly with the adjacent public plaza through shaded seating, landscaping, and inviting storefronts. Above, the buildings offer opportunities for a diverse mix of housing, helping to bring residential presence and vitality to the area. Together, the plaza and surrounding development would work to restore walkability, enhance the public realm and promote a more connected, livable corridor where people can live, work, and play just steps from transit and key community destinations.

At the southern edge of the site along Shields Ave., a re-imagined public plaza transforms a current surface parking lot into a lively, community gathering space centered around local retail pop-ups and cultural activation. These temporary or rotating vendor spaces create opportunities for small businesses, artisans, and food entrepreneurs to engage with the public in an accessible, high-visibility environment, which embraces the commercial history of the Manchester Center for Fresno. At the heart of this space would be the inclusion of a historic civic landmark, offering both a symbolic and physical anchor that connects past and present: the carousel. More than just a nostalgic feature, the carousel would becomes a focal point of community memory and celebration, framed by flexible open space that supports everyday use as well as public events - such as performances, markets, or seasonal gatherings. Together, these components foster a vibrant, inclusive atmosphere that celebrates local identity and encourages sustained community interaction.

This site embraces Fresno's deep agricultural heritage and economy by incorporating a community kitchen designed to support local food entrepreneurs, small-scale producers, and emerging culinary talent. The kitchen provides a flexible, shared space where residents can prepare, package, and sell goods—lowering barriers to entry for small business owners while fostering innovation rooted in local food traditions. Surrounding

[Image above]
The southern edge of the New Manchester facing Shields. Ave.

[Image above]
The southern corner of the New Manchester facing the intersection of Blackstone Ave. and Shields. Ave.

this hub, designated areas for food trucks and open-air vendors create a vibrant, ever-changing marketplace that not only supports local commerce but also draws people to gather, eat, and connect. By celebrating the region's agricultural legacy and investing in the people who continue to sustain it, the site becomes both a tribute to Fresno's past and a platform for its entrepreneurial future.

Throughout the site, the design emphasizes landscaping, tree canopies, and sustainable materials, transforming hard surfaces into shaded, green environments. Rain gardens and permeable paving address stormwater while supporting biodiversity. Overhead structures like pergolas and trellises could soften the space and provide shade. Public art integrated throughout the promenade and plaza would tell the story of Manchester's commercial legacy, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the diverse cultural histories of Fresno's residents.

CONCLUSION

A Ground-Up Vision Rooted in Local Identity

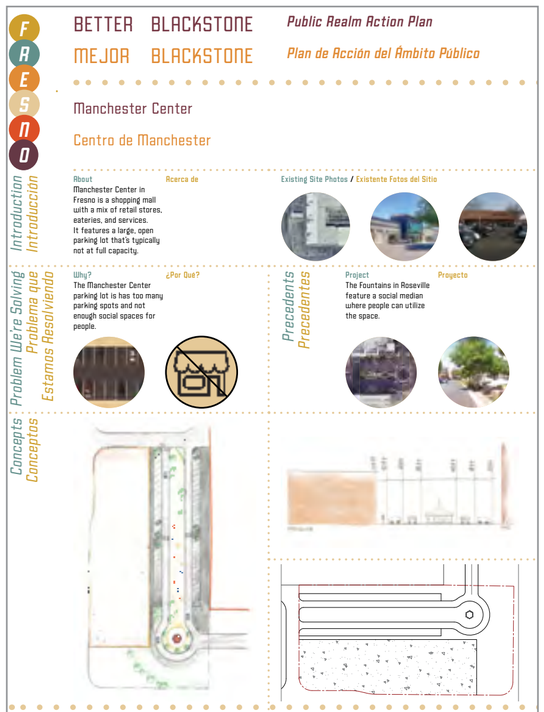
This proposal takes a bottom-up approach - not a nostalgic re-creation of what Manchester once was, but a future-facing interpretation of its community-centered legacy. Rather than replicating big-box retail or suburban mall typologies, it leans into the iconography and spirit of Manchester: gathering, celebration, exchange, and movement. Through thoughtful design, it repositions Manchester not only as a destination but also as a neighborhood connector - bridging Blackstone's transformation with new investment in community infrastructure and public life.

The re-imagined southwest corner becomes not just a redevelopment project, but a symbol of what equitable, inclusive, and locally inspired urban renewal can look like in Fresno. It honors the past, embraces the present, and seeds the future, just like the beloved carousel at its heart, turning through time and carrying the community forward.

[Image Left]
View of the corner of Shields and Blackstone from the New Manchester Center parking lot.

[Image Left]
View from the corner of Shields and Blackstone to the New Manchester Center parking lot.

[Image Left]
View of the New Manchester Center parking lot.



[Image right]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event.

[Image above]
Student sketch of conceptual infill development at Manchester Center

[Image above]
Student sketch incorporating the historic carousel at Manchester Center

BLACKSTONE CORRIDOR URBAN DESIGN

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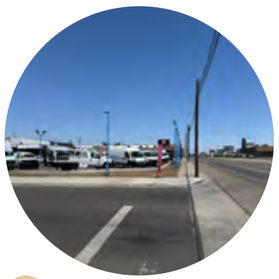
ANALYSIS OF THE INVENTORY

Applying What we Have Learned
The proposed street design for the Blackstone Corridor was shaped by a detailed inventory of existing street conditions, infrastructure, and streetscape elements, with particular attention to the functionality and limitations of the current Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. This included an assessment of lane widths, curb uses, sidewalk conditions, crosswalk visibility, bike infrastructure, bus stop placements, and traffic flow patterns, as well as the underutilization of the corridor's expansive right-of-way. Observations revealed a lack of protected pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, fragmented public space, and BRT lanes located along the outer edges of the street in mixed traffic with cars. This inventory informed a new, multimodal street design that relocates the BRT to the center median, introduces dedicated bike lanes and expanded sidewalks, and integrates traffic-calming features like roundabouts and landscape buffers. The result is a more efficient, accessible, and community-centered corridor that supports transit, local business, and active transportation while reclaiming the public realm for people.

At its core, this project envisions Blackstone as a model of next-generation urban mobility - a place where fast, reliable public transit coexists with walkable neighborhoods, green infrastructure, and thriving local businesses. It is not merely a transportation project - it's a city-shaping strategy.



[Image Left]
Example of the pedestrian experience along Blackstone Ave.

[Image Left]
Example of the pedestrian experience along Blackstone Ave.

[Image Left]
Example of the pedestrian experience along Blackstone Ave. at Shields Ave.

GOALS

Deliver Equitable, High-Capacity Transit Access
Create a fast, reliable, and affordable transit system that connects historically underserved neighborhoods to jobs, schools, and essential services while minimizing car dependency.

Catalyze Sustainable and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
Encourage mixed-use, walkable development along the corridor that supports affordable housing, small businesses, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions through compact urban form and multi-modal transportion. .

Lay the Foundation for Future Light Rail Conversion
Design a cohesive BRT experience featuring infrastructure - platforms, lanes, signals, and right-of-way - that satisfy the technical requirements for future light rail, facilitating a cost-effective long-term transition.

Enhance the Public Realm and Urban Ecology.
Integrate green infrastructure such as landscaped planters and stormwater elements that beautify the corridor, reduce urban heat, reflect Fresno's native ecological character while embracing climate resiliency along the corridor.

Celebrate Cultural Identity and Community Ownership
Design stations and streetscapes that reflect the corridor's diverse cultural heritage through public art, signage, and community engagement, ensuring that local voices shape the corridor's future.

[Image Left]
Example of the pedestrian experience along Blackstone Ave.

[Image Left]
Example of the pedestrian experience along Blackstone Ave.

[Image Above]
View of Blackstone looking south towards downtown Fresno.

[Image Above]
View of Blackstone looking north towards River Park.

CONCEPT

Redesigning the Blackstone Corridor: A Blueprint for a Greener, More Equitable Future

The redesign of the Blackstone Corridor marks a transformative shift from a car-dominated arterial into a complete, people-first urban boulevard that prioritizes sustainability, equity, and multimodal transportation. By reducing the number of general-purpose vehicle lanes from three to two in each direction, this plan unlocks critical space to create a corridor that serves everyone - transit riders, pedestrians, cyclists, and local businesses.

At the heart of the redesign is a dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, that would remove the buses from traffic and allow them to move more expeditiously along the corridor. This bold, transit-forward configuration positions the Blackstone Corridor as the backbone of Fresno's future transit network, designed with a long-term vision of converting to light rail. Between BRT stops, green planters separate BRT lanes from traffic, contributing to both safety and aesthetics while introducing stormwater management and habitat benefits.

On both sides of the corridor, wider sidewalks and fully protected bike lanes could be implemented from some of the space created by reduced and narrowed lanes, creating a continuous, accessible, and comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists. These protected bike lanes could be buffered not only by landscaping but also by strategically placed street furniture and lighting, enhancing both safety and usability. Curb extensions and shortened crosswalks improve pedestrian access at intersections, while station areas serve as community spaces featuring public art and wayfinding elements that reflect the corridor's cultural identity.

One of the most significant impacts of the redesign is its emphasis on environmental sustainability. By reclaiming heat-absorbing asphalt for new planting areas and expanding the tree canopy, the corridor becomes a tool for urban climate adaptation. Increased shade cover will help combat the urban heat island effect, reduce surface

[Image above]
View of the Waldon Station BRT along Blackstone at Fresno City College.

[Image above]
View of the Waldon Station BRT along Blackstone at Fresno City College.

temperatures,improve air quality, thus making the corridor somewhere people feel comfortable and welcome. The use of native and drought-tolerant species aligns with regional ecology, supports pollinators, and reduces water usage.

Economically, this re-imagined corridor supports transit-oriented development, enhances the visibility of local businesses, and creates safer, more inviting public spaces that encourage people to linger, shop, and connect. Socially, it promotes inclusivity and equity by providing safe and dignified options for all modes of travel, particularly for those who rely on public transportation or non-car mobility. The combination of mobility access, green infrastructure, and placemaking reinforces the corridor's role not just as a transportation route, but as a vibrant public space that supports the well-being of Fresno's residents.

Design Vision for a Center-Running BRT System on the Blackstone Corridor

The Blackstone Corridor, one of Fresno's most vital and historic commercial arteries, is the ideal location for a transformative, high-capacity Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system designed to enhance public transportation, promote sustainability, and support long-term urban revitalization. The new BRT line will operate in the center of the street, utilizing dedicated median lanes that prioritize speed, safety, and future scalability to light rail transit (LRT).

One of the biggest opportunities to make Blackstone a true multi-modal corridor is the upgrading of the existing BRT line into a dedicated BRT line. After undertaking some research on best practices for BRT, two options identified themselves: a dedicated route that runs on the outside of the street along the sidewalk, and a center-running line along the median of the street.

We chose the dedicated, center-running Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, as it offers significant advantages for the Blackstone Corridor compared to curbside alignment along the edge of the street. Center-running BRT lanes are more efficient and reliable, as they avoid conflicts with turning vehicles, parked cars, and curbside activity - common issues that slow down buses in edge-aligned systems. This configuration also allows for

[Image above]
View of the median of Blackstone looking south towards downtown Fresno.

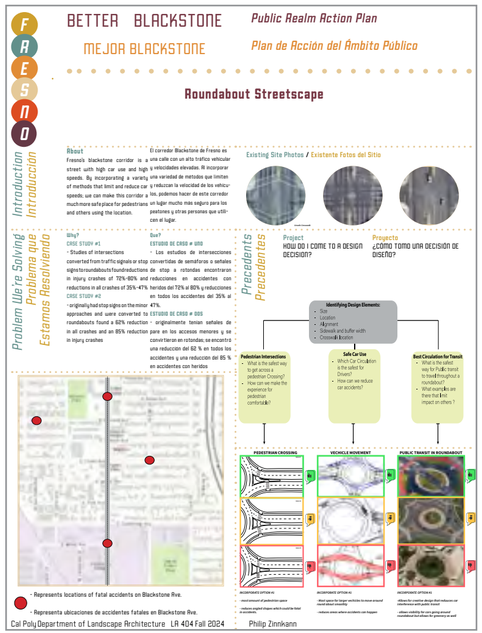
[Image above]
View of the median of Blackstone looking north towards River Park.

the integration of center median stations with raised platforms, which improve boarding speed, accessibility, and safety for riders. Additionally, by placing transit at the heart of the street, the design symbolically and functionally prioritizes public transportation, aligning with goals for equity, climate resilience, and multimodal mobility. For a corridor like Blackstone - ripe with potential for redevelopment and increased foot traffic - a center-running BRT reinforces transit as a central spine of community connectivity.
In the median between BRT stations, they will contain planters featuring native vegetation and low-impact stormwater infrastructure will separate BRT lanes from general traffic, providing both a visual buffer and ecological benefits. These green medians will calm traffic, reduce urban heat, and enhance the aesthetic quality of the corridor. In addition to their environmental functions, these planters symbolically connect to Fresno's native ecology—evoking elements like the ash tree—and signify a commitment to sustainability and place-based design.

At major intersections and existing or proposed roundabouts, the BRT lanes will run straight through the center. Unlike general traffic, which must navigate around the roundabout, BRT vehicles will travel through a signal-controlled dedicated lane, ensuring uninterrupted priority movement. These BRT-priority signals will be synchronized with the larger traffic signal network, minimizing delays while maintaining safety and efficiency for all road users.

Designing for a Light Rail Future

One of the guiding principles behind this BRT design is its long-term adaptability. All design elements - from the platform heights and alignment to the turning radii and lane widths - would be engineered to comply with light rail specifications. The power infrastructure, such as underground conduits and vaults, will be planned in advance to facilitate future LRT electrification without the need to excavate the corridor. Station footprints are sized to accommodate longer LRT vehicles, and the preservation of right-of-way ensures that no future expansion will necessitate costly property acquisition.
In this way, the BRT system serves as a transitional and pilot phase - enhancing current mobility while laying the groundwork for a future high-capacity light rail line. Over



[Image above]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event.

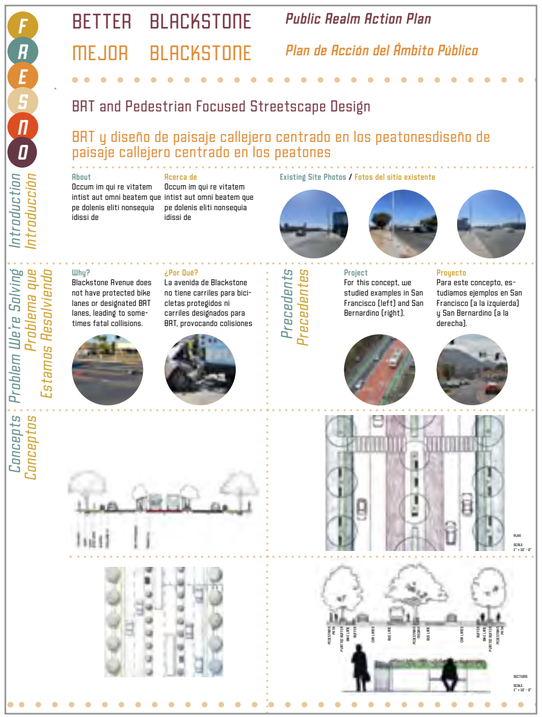
time, as ridership increases and development along the corridor intensifies, Fresno can seamlessly transition from rubber-tired BRT to a fully electric rail system, solidifying Blackstone as the backbone of the city's modern transit network.

ROUNDABOUTS

One of the other key ideas proposed for Blackstone is the idea of celebrating key intersections along the corridor. By introducing roundabouts at key, evenly spaced intersections along the Blackstone Corridor serves a dual purpose: enhancing traffic safety and calming, while also functioning as gateway monuments that establish a distinct identity for the corridor. Unlike traditional signalized intersections, roundabouts naturally reduce vehicle speeds and eliminate dangerous conflict points, significantly improving pedestrian and cyclist safety. Their central medians provide opportunities for landscaping, public art, or cultural markers, turning these intersections into visual landmarks that celebrate local character and signal transitions between corridor nodes. Strategically placed, these roundabouts contribute to a more cohesive and navigable urban fabric, while reinforcing the corridor's transformation into a multi-modal, pedestrian-friendly environment that prioritizes safety, aesthetics, and place-making.

CONCLUSION

This street design isn't just about moving cars and buses; it's about reshaping how people move through, and experience, Blackstone. It's a people-first strategy grounded in community, ecology, and adaptability. With center-running BRT lanes, integrated landscape features, and a forward-thinking light rail vision, the Blackstone streetscape becomes more than infrastructure - it becomes the spine of a more connected, sustainable, and inclusive Fresno.



[Image right]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event.

[Image above]
Student sketch of conceptual infill development at Manchester Center

[Image above]
Student sketch incorporating the historic carousel at Manchester Center

[Image above]
Current sign prohibiting pedestrian crossings along Blackstone.

[Image above]
Street signage along Blackstone at the corner of Clinton.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Team Members
Lani Strom

ANALYSIS OF THE INVENTORY

Applying What we Have Learned
The proposed family of wayfinding and signage for the Blackstone Corridor is deeply informed by a comprehensive inventory of the people, places, and cultural narratives that define the corridor's unique identity. This includes institutions such as Fresno City College, Radcliffe Stadium, Manchester Center, and Lafayette Park, as well as the small businesses, community organizations, and local residents that animate the corridor daily. Equally important are the ethnic and cultural communities - including Hmong, Latino, and African American populations - whose histories, languages, and visual traditions can inspire the signage's design motifs, iconography, and bilingual elements. This inventory also considered patterns of mobility, gathering spaces, and community memory, ensuring that each node's signage responds to its local context. Together, these influences shaped a place-based, culturally attuned wayfinding system that does more than direct movement - it celebrates identity, enhances orientation, and invites deeper connection with the corridor's layered social and spatial fabric.

GOALS

Enhance Navigation and Legibility
Provide a clear, consistent, and accessible wayfinding system for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and drivers to easily locate key destinations and amenities along the corridor.

Celebrate Cultural Identity and Neighborhood Character
Integrate colors, icons, materials, and languages that reflect the diverse cultural heritage and histories of each district, reinforcing a sense of place and belonging.

Create a Unifying Visual Language
Design a cohesive signage family with shared materials, typography, and forms that connect the entire corridor while allowing for localized expression.

Support Accessibility and Inclusivity
Ensure that signage is multilingual, ADA-compliant, and legible for people of all ages and visual abilities, reducing barriers to navigation and information.

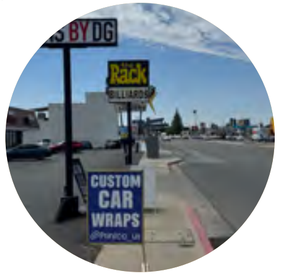
Promote Long-Term Adaptability and Sustainability
Use modular and durable materials that allow the signage system to evolve with future development, while incorporating sustainable and recycled elements that align with environmental goals.

CONCEPT

Creating a Sense of Place: Wayfinding And Signage for the Blackstone Corridor
In a corridor as culturally rich, historically layered, and functionally complex as Blackstone Avenue, wayfinding and signage serve far more than mere navigational tools - they express identity, equity, and care. A consistent, place-based signage and wayfinding system aids people in orienting themselves not only spatially but also emotionally and culturally. For a corridor that encompasses educational institutions, historic retail nodes, diverse neighborhoods, and future development sites, a unified signage system can weave these layers into a cohesive urban narrative.

A strong wayfinding system achieves several goals at once: it guides pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers efficiently; it celebrates local heritage and cultural identity; and it signals investment, safety, and belonging in the public realm. On Blackstone,

[Image above]
Sign at the corner of Blackstone and Shields advertising a vintage market at Manchester Center.



[Image above]
Existing business signage along Blackstone just north of Shields Ave.

where many users are pedestrians and transit riders navigating a complex, evolving environment, clarity and consistency are especially critical. The proposed signage family could include color-coded themes and cultural motifs for each key node - such as Fresno City College, Manchester Center, Lafayette Park, and proposed housing clusters - helping both visitors and residents understand where they are and what makes that place unique.

A Framework Rooted in Culture and Clarity
To truly reflect the corridor's diversity, the wayfinding system must be more than just functional - it must represent and reflect the communities it serves. For instance, signage in the Fresno City College district could be themed around academic achievement and student life, using colors drawn from the campus branding, layered with subtle patterns or icons that reflect the multicultural student body. In the Manchester Center zone, mid-century patterns and references to the original mall's carousel could inform the design language. In Lafayette Park and the surrounding neighborhoods, signage could incorporate natural elements, murals, or indigenous and immigrant design motifs to root the visual identity in lived history.

Importantly, the wayfinding elements must be multilingual, easily updated, and physically durable. Modular signage systems allow for future additions as the corridor evolves. Clear, universal symbols ensure accessibility for all users, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The consistent use of materials—ideally natural or recycled—throughout the corridor reinforces the environmental values of the project, while tactile elements like tile, wood, or engraved metal create a sense of craftsmanship and local detail.

Wayfinding extends beyond physical signs. Ground-level interventions - such as color-coded paving, stenciled icons, and even interactive or digital wayfinding - can intuitively guide people through key transitions: from transit stops to plazas, from housing to park space, or from neighborhood streets to commercial zones. Lighting, public art, and storytelling elements can be integrated into signage to enrich the experience further. The result is not just a navigational tool but cultural infrastructure - one that helps people

[Image above]
Street sign celebrating Glasgow Scotland's city motto.

[Image above]
Chalk spray paint celebrating Scotland's 2013 Year of Nature in Glasgow, Scotland.

feel grounded, welcomed, and oriented in a corridor that is both changing and rooted in history and sense of place.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE FAMILY

Designing a family of wayfinding and signage system for the Blackstone Corridor necessitates customizing each element to meet the specific needs, scale, and pace of various transportation modes - pedestrians, cyclists, BRT riders, and drivers - while ensuring a cohesive visual language.

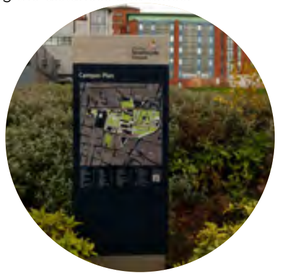
The key factor in creating a family of wayfinding and signage is the mode of transportation, due to the speed of each mode. As a pedestrian, the average person walks at a speed of 3 to 5 miles per hour, whereas the current speed limit for driving is 45 mph. Casual cyclists and bike commuters tend to experience the public realm at speeds of 10 to 15 mph.

Pedestrians
For pedestrians, signage should be positioned low to the ground, detailed, and oriented for easy viewing, including maps, directional arrows, and cultural information at key intersections, plazas, and transit nodes.

Cyclists
Cyclist signage should be placed slightly higher for better visibility while in motion, including lane guidance, distances, and connections to bike infrastructure, and ideally integrated with protected lane elements.

BRT
BRT signage must be easily readable from the platform and inside the bus, displaying real-time information, transit maps, and district-specific branding to assist riders in orienting themselves before and during their journey.

[Image above]
Directional wayfinding and signage with directions for pedestrians and cyclists showing the distances and times.



[Image above]
Example of campus wayfinding signage at the edge of the campus and the city.

Vehicles
For drivers, larger, high-contrast signs placed strategically at roundabouts, intersections, and entry corridors offer clear direction with minimal distraction. Together, these mode-specific designs create a comprehensive and inclusive wayfinding family, ensuring seamless navigation while celebrating the identity of the corridor.

Designing a family of wayfinding and signage for the Blackstone Corridor requires tailoring each element to the specific needs, scale, and pace of different transportation modes - pedestrians, cyclists, BRT riders, and drivers - while maintaining a unified visual language. For pedestrians, signage should be low to the ground, detailed, and oriented for walk-up viewing, including maps, directional arrows, and cultural information at key intersections, plazas, and transit nodes. Cyclist signage must be positioned slightly higher for visibility while in motion, featuring lane guidance, distances, and connections to bike infrastructure, ideally integrated with protected lane elements. BRT signage must be highly legible from the platform and inside the bus, with real-time information, transit maps, and district-specific branding to help orient riders before and during their journey. For drivers, larger, high-contrast signs, placed strategically at roundabouts, intersections, and entry corridors, provide clear direction with minimal distraction. Together, these mode-specific designs form a comprehensive and inclusive wayfinding family, ensuring seamless navigation while celebrating the identity of the corridor.

CONCLUSION: MAKING THE CORRIDOR LEGIBLE, LAYERED, AND ALIVE

In summary, a consistent, place-based wayfinding and signage family for the Blackstone Corridor is essential for making the corridor legible, navigable, and human-scaled. It reinforces identity, enhances mobility, and creates a framework for inclusive placemaking that evolves with the community. As the corridor grows through new infrastructure, housing, and public realm investments, wayfinding becomes the connective tissue - a quiet yet powerful tool that both invites people in, represents them, helps them find their way, and shows them they belong.

[Image Above]
Wayfinding and signage in downtown Fresno.

[Image Above]
Mural for the Brewery District in downtown Fresno.

[Image Above]
Bike rack at the Arthur Building along Blackstone.

[Image Above]
Typical bike racks at BRT stations along Blackstone.

AMENITIES

Team Members
Daniel Rivera

ANALYSIS OF THE INVENTORY

Applying What we Have Learned
The vision for public amenities along the Blackstone Corridor is to create a welcoming, inclusive, and engaging amenities that supports everyday life, reflects the neighborhood's cultural richness, and promotes sustainable, human-centered design. These amenities are not merely functional elements; they are expressions of identity and belonging. By incorporating seating, trash receptacles, bike racks, and other small-scale interventions using natural and recycled materials, the corridor transforms into a tactile and visually compelling corridor rooted in the area's history and diverse culture.

This vision aims to transform the corridor into a public living room - a place where people can pause, gather, and engage with their environment in meaningful ways. Designed to be durable, adaptable, and expressive, these amenities foster a more equitable, comfortable, and connected urban experience, empowering both residents and visitors to see themselves reflected in the space around them.

FIVE GOALS FOR BLACKSTONE CORRIDOR PUBLIC AMENITIES

Support Everyday Use and Comfort
Provide consistent, well-placed seating, bike parking, and trash receptacles that enhance walkability, encourage lingering, and serve people of all ages and abilities.

Honor Cultural Identity and Local History
Use forms, materials, and embedded storytelling (e.g., tilework, signage, historic QR codes) to reflect the mid-century commercial heritage and diverse cultural voices of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Promote Environmental Sustainability
Prioritize recycled, natural, and low-impact materials, integrate solar-powered lighting, and use permeable surfaces to reduce the heat-island effect and stormwater runoff.

Enhance Safety and Accessibility
Ensure that amenities are placed with visibility, lighting, and ADA compliance in mind to create an inclusive and secure public environment.

Foster Community Ownership and Engagement
Design elements that invite interaction, creativity, and local input - turning amenities into platforms for civic pride, art, and community expression.

CONCEPT

Designing Public Life: Proposed Amenities for the Blackstone Corridor

As part of the transformation of the Blackstone Corridor into a more accessible, inclusive, and environmentally conscious urban spine, integrating public amenities plays a central role in redefining how people interact with the public realm. These amenities - ranging from seating, trash receptacles, and bike racks to shade structures, wayfinding, and water fountains - are more than functional additions; they serve as tools of engagement, culture, and identity. Thoughtfully positioned and consciously designed, these elements work together to humanize the corridor, creating moments of rest, interaction, and expression amid the pace of daily life. In essence, if you want people to go somewhere, you have to not only give them things to do, but amenities for people to interact with.

The design strategy prioritizes tactical interventions that enhance usability while reflecting the corridor's deep-rooted character. Informed by extensive community feedback, a key objective of the amenities package is to create a sense of belonging along the corridor - particularly in spaces that have historically lacked investment or comfort. Benches and seating

[Image Left]
Sidewalk condition along Blackstone.

[Image Left]
Street crossing condition along Blackstone.

[Image Left]
Street crossing condition along Blackstone.

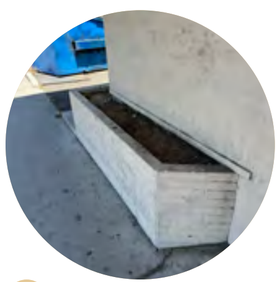
elements are placed at consistent intervals, clustered near bus stops, storefronts, and plazas to support rest, social interaction, and mobility needs for people of all ages and abilities. Trash cans and recycling bins are located alongside seating and high-traffic pedestrian zones to ensure cleanliness and stewardship. Bike racks, designed with visibility and safety in mind, are installed near commercial nodes and institutional buildings to encourage sustainable transit choices and reduce car dependency.

Materials, Aesthetic, and Cultural Representation

The design language of these amenities is rooted in a modern interpretation of Blackstone's mid-century commercial legacy. By utilizing natural, recycled, and locally sourced materials - such as reclaimed wood, weathered steel, poured concrete, and permeable pavers - the pieces reflect a rugged honesty and warmth, resonating with the corridor's layered history. Patterns, textures, and silhouettes evoke the forms of vintage signage, commercial awnings, and retro public furnishings from Blackstone's heyday, reinterpreted in contemporary styles that balance nostalgia with forward-thinking design.

But aesthetics alone are insufficient. Each element serves as a canvas for cultural storytelling. Custom tilework, etched metal panels, and mosaic inlays on benches and planters reflect the neighborhood's diversity - drawing inspiration from the motifs, colors, and languages found in the murals, markets, and people of Fresno's surrounding communities. QR codes on select pieces link to oral histories, poems, and stories of local businesses - creating a layered, interactive experience. These amenities are intentionally inclusive, not just in who they serve, but in what they represent - public spaces designed with and for the community.

At night, solar-powered path lighting embedded in seating elements and trash receptacles subtly illuminates key areas, enhancing safety while showcasing the design. These low-impact lighting features support sustainability goals and keep the corridor active and welcoming after dark.



[Image Left]
Planting bed as part of a building along Blackstone.

[Image Left]
Example of mid-century modern art on the side of a building.

[Image Left]
Three types of street lights along Fresno City College.

CONCLUSION

The public amenities concept for the Blackstone Corridor concludes with a vision of a vibrant, inclusive, and people-centered street that supports the daily lives and aspirations of its surrounding communities. By integrating expanded public spaces, culturally responsive wayfinding, dedicated transit and bike infrastructure, and re-imagined parks and plazas, the corridor shifts from a car-dominated thoroughfare to a dynamic civic spine that invites walking, gathering, and connection. These amenities—ranging from shaded promenades and performance spaces to local marketplaces and community hubs—are not only functional improvements but also investments in social equity, public health, and neighborhood identity. Ultimately, the redesigned Blackstone Corridor aims to reflect the values of the people who live along it, creating a public realm that is welcoming, accessible, and deeply rooted in place.

[Image Left]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event showing options for public amenities.

[Image Right]
Student presentation board prepared for the midterm community engagement event showing potential locations for public amenities.

FULL CANOPY

5

FINAL PHASE - FULL CANOPY

Integration and Legacy Building

The final phase represents the full canopy of the ash tree, where all components of the public realm - housing, businesses, transportation, and public spaces - are fully integrated, creating a cohesive and thriving community. At this stage, the Blackstone Corridor will be a model of resilience and cultural representation, with thriving green spaces, sustainable infrastructure, and a strong sense of place. The final phase ensures that the corridor's growth honors its cultural roots, supports economic vibrancy, and celebrates the diversity that makes Fresno unique, while continuing to be adaptive and responsive to changing needs, just as the ash tree can withstand harsh environments.

APPLYING INVENTORY, ANALYSIS, ENGAGEMENT, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY TO A NEW VISION FOR THE BLACKSTONE CORRIDOR

The transformation of the Blackstone Corridor demanded more than just a design response - it required a deeply grounded process that honored place, people, and potential. Our vision emerged through an iterative design approach that integrated four key pillars previously mentioned in this document: inventory, analysis, engagement, and cultural identity. Each element contributed essential layers of understanding, allowing us to shape a vision that is both aspirational and achievable - one that respects the community's roots while planning for a more connected and inclusive future.

Our initial inventory efforts documented the physical and environmental conditions of the corridor, including the built environment, transportation systems, public realm assets, and land use patterns. Using GIS tools, we mapped a half-mile radius around our one-mile study area to understand the residents and identify available or missing resources. This data helped us assess demographic needs, mobility gaps, economic vulnerabilities, and public space conditions, all of which informed our site selection and design priorities. We also evaluated zoning regulations, current development patterns, and transportation infrastructure to gain insights into potential barriers or opportunities for redevelopment and regeneration.

Our analysis was paired with community engagement to create a holistic view of the corridor. Events such as the Better Blackstone Placemaking Design Challenge and our midterm presentations at Fresno City College helped us gather both qualitative and quantitative feedback about how people use Blackstone, how they feel in it, and what they would like to see in the future. We heard consistent calls for safer, greener, and more inviting public spaces; more accessible housing; better transportation; and cultural representation. This includes the enhancements of public spaces that are free and don't require purchases to be there. These community voices sharpened our priorities and pushed us to think beyond infrastructure to the social and emotional relationships people have with Blackstone.

Cultural identity was a guiding thread throughout the entire process. Fresno is a place of incredible cultural richness, with long-standing immigrant, Indigenous, and working-class communities that have shaped the city's social fabric. This identity is often invisible in the built environment. In our vision, we sought to celebrate and reflect that identity through inclusive public spaces, community-driven programming, and design elements such as murals, wayfinding, and placemaking strategies that honor local history and voices. Whether proposing new student districts, re-imagined parks, or an enhanced public realm, our goal was to design with - not for - the people who call Blackstone home.

Together, the inventory, analysis, engagement, and cultural context shaped a vision of the Blackstone Corridor not only as a transportation artery but also as a living, breathing civic spine—one that supports affordable housing, celebrates cultural diversity, and offers a safe, walkable, and vibrant public realm for generations to come.

[Images Right]
Concepts of proposed public spaces along Blackstone.

[Image on the spread]
Concept renderings of the various proposed elements created for the nodes along the corridor.

BLACKSTONE & MCKINLEY

Re-imagining Blackstone & McKinley: A Decked Public Realm Above Infrastructure

The intersection of Blackstone Avenue and McKinley Avenue is at a critical juncture in Fresno, serving as a primary access point to Fresno City College (FCC) while linking major vehicular, transit, and rail infrastructure. With the planned grade separation project lowering the intersection more than 20 feet below ground level to eliminate the at-grade railroad crossing, an extraordinary opportunity arises: to build a deck over the sunken road intersection, creating a vibrant new public realm that reconnects the urban fabric and catalyzes a walkable, transit-oriented college district.

THE VISION

A Deck as a Civic Connector

Rather than leaving a vast infrastructural void at street level, edged by undeveloped commercial parcels with no street frontage, this proposal reclaims the area above the lowered roadway by constructing a deck that spans the intersection. This would effectively connecting the east and west sides of Blackstone and McKinley. This elevated public space serves as a gateway plaza - both a physical connector and a symbolic threshold to Fresno City College.

The deck supports safe, convenient pedestrian and bicycle access while fostering new development opportunities that enhance the district's educational and cultural life. It transforms what would otherwise be a car-dominated gap into an active, human-scaled environment that encourages walking, gathering, and discovery.

[Image Left]
Aerial image of the existing conditions looking northwest at the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley. Source: Google Earth

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection showing the grade separation with a proposed lid and public plaza.

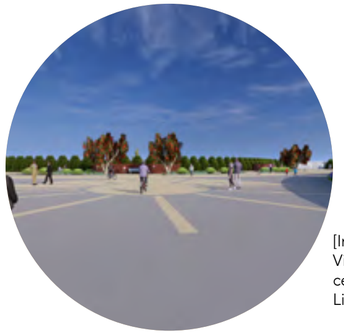
BENEFITS AND FEATURES OF THE DECKED REDESIGN

Why Deck the Trench?

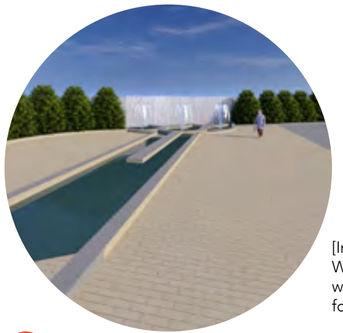
Placing pedestrian facilities and bus stops at the bottom of the trenches created by the grade separation at Blackstone and McKinley would represent a worst-case scenario in terms of urban design, equity, and user experience. Such a configuration would subject transit riders and pedestrians to intense vehicular noise, poor air quality, and a deeply unwelcoming, visually disconnected environment. Beyond the discomfort, it would reinforce a car-dominated hierarchy, placing people literally

[Image Left]
Street view of existing conditions looking northwest at the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley.

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection showing the proposed lid and public plaza over the grade separation.



[Image Left]
View of proposed central plaza on the Lid.



[Image Left]
Water feature with destination fountain.

and symbolically nearly three stories below ground, undermining efforts to promote sustainable, inclusive transportation options. The trench itself would be difficult to access, particularly for seniors, people with disabilities, and cyclists, who need it the most.

By contrast, elevating pedestrian and cyclist facilities above the trench reflects a more just and forward-thinking vision - one that prioritizes human experience over vehicular flow. This design approach improves visibility, safety, and comfort while reconnecting the fractured urban fabric around Fresno City College. Placing people and active transit users at the top not only provides better access to natural light, green space, and civic amenities, but also establishes a public realm that values walkability, dignity, and connectivity. In doing so, it flips the conventional transportation hierarchy and creates a civic space that is both functional and symbolic of a more equitable, people-first city.

Seamless Pedestrian Connectivity

The deck would provide a direct link between the Fresno City College campus and the underutilized parcels to the east. This connection would facilitate the development of student housing, retail spaces, and academic support facilities without the obstacles of high-speed traffic or train delays. Students and faculty could travel safely and comfortably without descending into a vehicular canyon, while those traveling north and south along Blackstone would be able to at ground level.

Public Realm Activation

The deck would serve as a signature public space for Fresno, featuring wide walkways, native landscaping, shaded seating, performance areas, and integrated public art. This elevated plaza would be a hub for community interaction, student life, and informal programming, including food trucks, pop-up markets, and cultural events.

Transit and Bicycle Integration

Well-marked bike lanes and BRT access could connect to the deck's to its adjacent areas, encouraging multi-modal transportation and reinforcing the Blackstone Corridor as a transit-oriented spine. Clear signage and wayfinding would provide a seemless

[Image Left]
Bike lane along the planted edge over the recessed intersection.

[Image Left]
Proposed planting area along the sculpture garden.

navigation between the deck, bus stops, bike racks, and campus entrances.

Safety and Accessibility

By maintaining the pedestrian zone at the ground level, removed and above the sunken traffic intersection, the deck enhances user safety while adhering to ADA accessibility standards. Ramps, elevators, and visual cues ensure that everyone, including those with disabilities, can comfortably access this new public space above the trench.

Cultural and Educational Identity

As a highly visible civic space adjacent to Fresno City College, the deck would serve as a canvas for student-created art, academic showcases, and cultural storytelling. Its design reflects FCC's legacy and diverse student population, making it a living extension of the college's identity, integrating town with gown.

A Strategic Catalyst for District Development

This infrastructure-integrated public space offers more than aesthetic and functional benefits - it would serve as a catalyst for long-term redevelopment. By improving pedestrian access and enhancing the area's desirability, the deck bolsters the case for higher-density housing, mixed-use development, and public-private partnerships that support student life and neighborhood revitalization. Additionally, the space could act as an anchor for a larger college district, with new cafes, bookstores, co-working spaces, and community facilities activating the deck as Fresno's first proper college neighborhood.

VISION SUMMARY

A Model for Infrastructure as Civic Space

The Blackstone & McKinley redesign is not merely about addressing a traffic or rail problem - it's about utilizing infrastructure investments to foster inclusive, forward-thinking public spaces. The proposed deck converts a sunken intersection into a plaza for human connection, education, culture, and opportunity. It illustrates how Fresno can harmonize infrastructure with public life, embracing people-centered urban design.

Student Housing Recreation

Recreation is a vital component of student housing developments, as it directly supports the physical, mental, and social well-being of residents. Access to recreational amenities - such as open green spaces, fitness areas, courts, or social gathering zones - promotes healthy lifestyles, alleviates academic stress, and fosters community among students. In this housing context, these spaces also serve as essential third places, providing opportunities for informal interaction, relaxation, and cultural exchange. Integrating quality recreational infrastructure into student housing design not only enhances livability but also contributes to a supportive, holistic educational experience that acknowledges the diverse needs of student life beyond the classroom. This is especially true with the real life circumstances facing community college students.

Public Plaza

The public plaza envisioned above the sunken Blackstone and McKinley intersection serves as both a symbolic and functional centerpiece of the corridor's transformation. A prominent water feature anchors the plaza, symbolizing the life-giving flow of water from the Sierra Nevada mountains, which has historically sustained Fresno's agricultural and urban development. This feature not only provides a cooling micro-climate and visual interest, but also acts as a symbolic link between natural systems and the built environment. The plaza itself is thoughtfully curved in plan and section, allowing natural light to penetrate the recessed intersection below while maintaining a safe distance from the existing railroad easement to ensure compliance with safety regulations. This sculpted form creates a dynamic, multi-level public space that offers shade, seating, and gathering areas that reinforce the corridor's new identity as an inclusive and interconnected civic landscape.

[Image Left] Basketball court at the new student housing project.

[Image Left] Central water feature on the Lid representing the San Joaquin River.

Promenade and Sculpture Walk

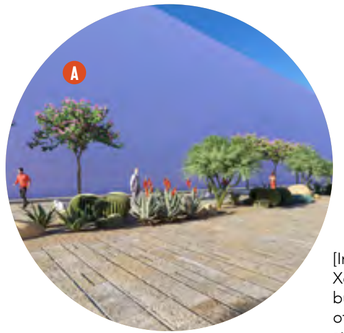
The pedestrian promenade and sculpture garden located on the elevated plaza above Blackstone and McKinley, offers a rich, layered public experience, combining art, movement, and nature in a setting designed for exploration and reflection. The promenade serves as a central circulation spine, guiding visitors through the space and connecting key programmatic elements while encouraging lingering and social interaction. Flanking this walkway, the sculpture garden showcases works by local and regional artists, creating a cultural destination that celebrates Fresno's creative identity. A landscape-buffered edge softening the interface between the public realm and surrounding infrastructure with native planting, trees, and shaded seating. This green perimeter enhances comfort and aesthetics and also acts as a visual and acoustic buffer from adjacent traffic and transit activity, making the space feel safe, welcoming, and distinctly human-scaled.

Shade and Pedestrian Corridor

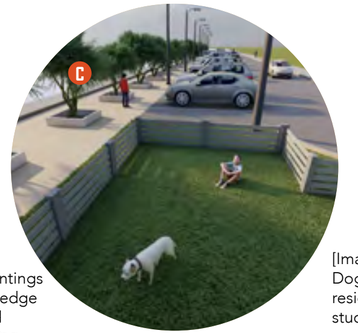
The pedestrian path connecting the recessed intersection to the elevated plaza and adjacent student housing serves as a vital accessibility and circulation element within the redesigned Blackstone and McKinley corridor. Designed to accommodate both stairs and a fully ADA-compliant ramp, the pathway ensures that all users - regardless of their physical ability - can move comfortably between levels. Lined with trees, overhead shade canopies, and integrated seating, the route provides a cool, inviting experience that encourages walkability even during Fresno's hottest months. Along the way, strategically placed wayfinding signage directs pedestrians to key destinations, including transit stops, community amenities, and residential entrances.

[Image Left] Proposed planting area along the sculpture garden.

[Image Left] Pedestrian promenade with proposed wayfinding board.



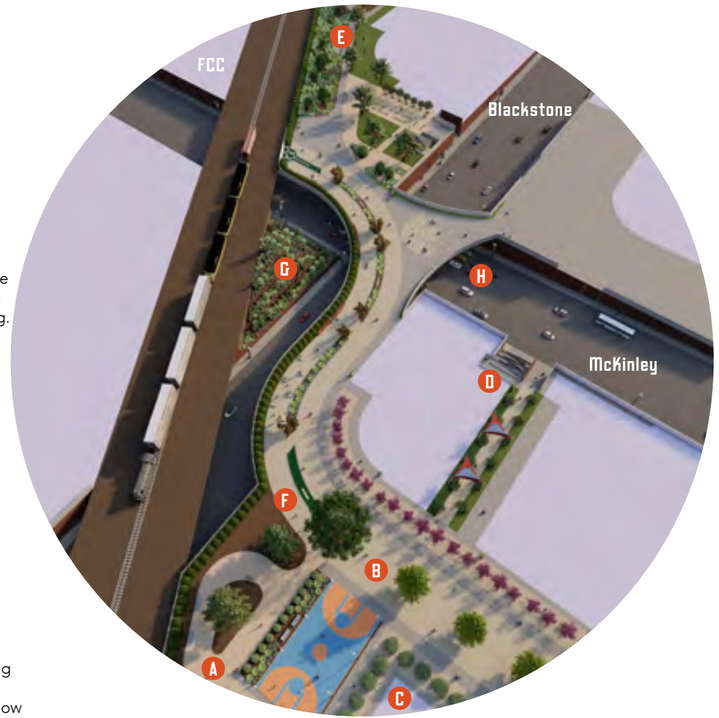
[Image Left]
Xeriscape plantings buffering the edge of the Lid and student housing residences.



[Image Left]
Dog park for the residents of the student housing.

[Image Left]
Planting area on the Lid along the cycling path.

[Image Left]
ADA ramp and stairs connecting the Lid to the intersection below



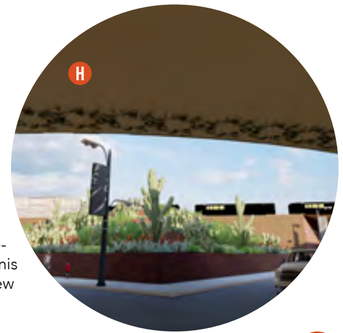
[Image Right]
Native planting area as a buffer along the edge of the Lid.

[Image Right]
View of the new skate park facility.

[Image Left]
Birds-eye view of the concept for the Lid.

[Image Right]
Plantings as a buffer and gathering space.

[Image Right]
View of the re-imagined tennis courts with new fencing and facilities.



LAFAYETTE PARK

Opening up the Park to the Neighborhood

Lafayette Park stands as one of the few free and accessible public spaces in the Blackstone Corridor, a vital resource in a neighborhood where open space, recreational amenities, and community facilities are limited. As a daily gathering place for families, children, elders, and residents of all backgrounds, the park plays a crucial role in fostering social connections, promoting wellness, and offering respite from the urban environment. However, its current layout and limited exposure to surrounding streets restrict its visibility, accessibility, and full potential as a civic anchor. Acknowledging its value, our re-imagining of Lafayette Park aims to expand its footprint and function, transforming it into a more integrated, inclusive, and active community space.

THE VISION

Blackstone's Lung and Civic Center

The proposal envisions extending the park boundary outward toward Blackstone Avenue, allowing it to encompass the entire city block and provide direct access to the public realm on all sides. This expansion would significantly enhance the park's visibility, encourage walk-in access from nearby transit stops and sidewalks, and strengthen its role as a central neighborhood gathering spot. As part of this transformation, an adjacent strip mall is re-purposed into a vibrant community hub - a flexible facility that can accommodate educational programs, health and wellness services, job training, childcare, and other essential resources. Designed to serve residents of all ages and abilities, the hub provides a centralized space for critical support services integrated into the fabric of everyday life.

Additionally, a former used car dealership located along Blackstone - currently underutilized and visually disconnected from the neighborhood - has been re-imagined as an extension of Lafayette Park. By extending the park out to incorporate these the parcels, it opens the street out to Blackstone, where it is currently not visible from the street. This reclaimed space will serve as a highly visible front porch to the park, introducing green infrastructure, seating, performance areas, and public art where asphalt once dominated. The integration of this parcel not only expands the park's footprint but also symbolically and physically breaks down barriers between the park and the street, creating a seamless

[Image Left]
Birds eye view of existing conditions at Lafayette Park. Source: Google Earth.

[Image Right]
Birds eye view of the redeveloped Lafayette Park

[Image Left]
Street view of existing conditions looking northwest at the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley.

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection showing the proposed lid and public plaza over the grade separation.

[Image Left]
View of walkway between new recreation areas and baseball field.

[Image Left]
Social seating area with planting barriers along new tennis courts.

interface between nature, culture, and community life. In doing so, Lafayette Park is repositioned not merely as a park, but as a multi-functional civic campus - a cornerstone of neighborhood equity, resilience, and pride.

Retaining and Celebrating Existing Strengths

In re-imagining Lafayette Park, a central priority has been to preserve all existing amenities that make the park a valued space for the community while introducing strategic enhancements to improve its usability, accessibility, and inclusivity. The current features - such as the playground, basketball courts, and shaded gathering areas - remain intact and are respected as core elements of the park's identity and daily use. Rather than imposing a new vision from the outside, the redesign seeks to build upon what already works, deepening its role as a place for recreation, relaxation, and connection for people of all ages.

To enhance the user experience and strengthen the park's relationship with the surrounding neighborhood, several improvements are proposed. Updated circulation paths will facilitate easier movement through and across the park, accommodating a variety of mobility needs while promoting more organic use of the space. Additional planting and tree cover will offer necessary shade and environmental benefits, while the addition of more seating areas throughout the park creates inviting spaces for rest, conversation, and quiet observation. Most significantly, however, is the removal of the defensive fencing that currently encircles the park's perimeter. This barrier, once intended for safety, now restricts visibility and conveys exclusion. Its removal will connect the park to the street, enhance its visibility from surrounding blocks, and communicate a powerful message that the space belongs to the entire community.

[Image Left]
New tennis court facilities.

[Image Left]
New skate park at the site of the former pool.

The only significant programmatic change to the existing layout is the conversion of the former, long-closed pool area into a skate park. This adaptation responds directly to the expressed needs of local youth, offering a dynamic, creative space that supports physical activity and fosters social interaction. By reusing the pool footprint for skating, the redesign honors the spatial memory of the site while adapting it to current community desires. The re-imagined Lafayette Park retains its essence while becoming more open, welcoming, and responsive, reinforcing its identity as a public space shaped by and for the people who use it every day.

Recreation

Lafayette Park has been transformed into a vibrant, inclusive space for a variety of recreational activities that cater to residents of all ages and interests. Central to this transformation are the renovated and upgraded basketball and handball courts, which now offer improved surfacing, lighting, and spectator seating to support both casual and organized play. The baseball field has been rejuvenated to enhance community use, while new walking paths meander throughout the park, promoting fitness and accessibility with shaded areas and resting spots. One of the most significant changes is the conversion of the long-closed pool into a modern skate park, providing local youth with a dynamic, active space that encourages physical activity and creative expression. Together, these amenities reflect a commitment to health, recreation, and equitable public space, reinforcing Lafayette Park as a vital hub of community life in the neighborhood.

Blackstone and Clinton

The existing strip mall at the corner of Blackstone and Clinton is being re-imagined as a dynamic community resource hub, transforming an underutilized commercial site into a vital center for neighborhood services and support. This redevelopment prioritizes education, health, and public amenities, housing facilities such as classrooms for adult learning and workforce training, health clinics offering preventive and primary care, and flexible spaces for community meetings, childcare, and cultural programming. Designed to be accessible, welcoming, and adaptable, the new hub reinforces equitable access to essential resources within walking distance for residents. By embedding these services directly into the heart of the neighborhood, the project not only revitalizes an underutilized strip mall, but strengthens the social infrastructure needed to support long-term community resilience and well-being.

Blackstone and Harvard

The former used car dealership at the corner of Blackstone and Harvard has been transformed into a vibrant extension of Lafayette Park, re-imagining this underutilized parcel as a welcoming gateway that opens the park directly onto Blackstone Avenue. By replacing asphalt and fencing with a new public plaza and pedestrian promenade, the design significantly enhances the park's visibility, accessibility, and permeability, inviting more residents and visitors to engage with the space. The plaza features shaded seating areas, native landscaping, and public art installations, creating a human-scaled environment that encourages gathering, relaxation, and movement. This transformation not only expands the park's physical footprint but also symbolically reconnects it to the urban fabric, adding an inclusive and active public realm along Blackstone.

[Image Right]
View of walkway between new parking area and baseball field.

[Image Right]
View of the arcade along the corner of Blackstone and Clinton.

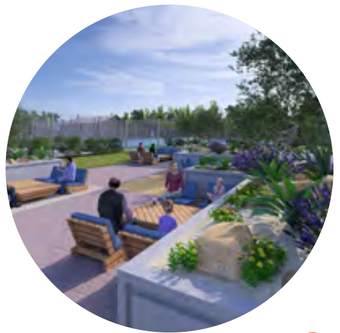
Cost Free and Family Friendly

The redesign of Lafayette Park emphasizes creating cost-free, accessible activities that cater to individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and interests, ensuring the park serves as a true community commons. Central to this vision is the inclusion of social seating areas - comfortable, shaded spaces where everyone can gather informally to play games, or simply relax - fostering everyday interaction and community cohesion. At the heart of the park, a flexible great lawn provides space for play, relaxation, and recreation while also accommodating community events. This open area is framed by a performance stage, enabling free concerts, cultural celebrations, and local performances that enrich the neighborhood's cultural life. Together, these features ensure that the park is not only a place for physical activity but also a hub for creative expression, social engagement, and inclusive recreation, accessible to everyone without financial barriers.

Active and Passive Uses

This redesign aims to thoughtfully balance the active and passive recreational needs of the community, creating a dynamic yet inclusive environment that supports a wide range of uses. On one hand, the park provides active amenities such as renovated sports courts, a skate park, and a great lawn suitable for informal games and community events, encouraging movement and engagement for youth and families. On the other hand, the design incorporates passive spaces, like shaded seating areas, walking paths, and quiet garden zones, that offer opportunities for rest, reflection, and private socializing. By interweaving these active and passive elements throughout the park, the layout ensures that residents of all ages, energy levels, and interests can find welcoming, meaningful ways to interact with the space and eachother.

[Image Right]
View of walkway between new parking area and baseball field.

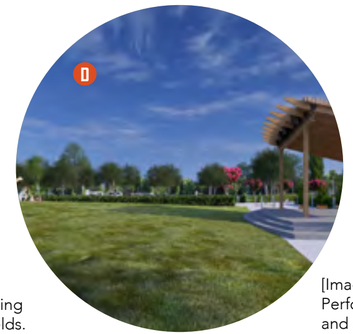


[Image Right]
View of the arcade along the corner of Blackstone and Clinton.

[Image Left]
Walkway connecting Harvard Ave to Lafayette Park

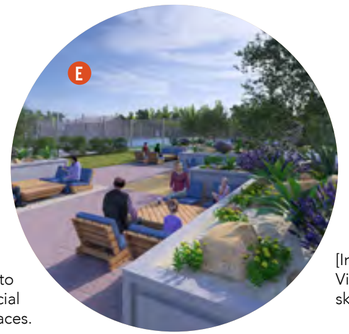
[Image Left]
Natural walking path between the ball fields and other sports facilities.

[Image Left]
Pedestrian promenade separating parking from the ball fields.



[Image Left]
Performance area and great lawn.

[Image Right]
Seating areas to encourage social gatherings spaces.

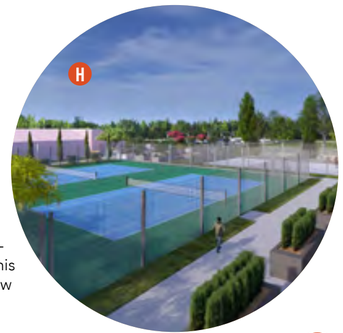


[Image Right]
View of the new skate park facility.

[Image Left]
Birds-eye view of the re-designed Lafayette Park.

[Image Right]
Landscape screening between active and passive recreation areas.

[Image Right]
View of the re-imagined tennis courts with new fencing and facilities.



BLACKSTONE AT SHIELDS/MANCHESTER CENTER

Reclaiming the Corner: Redesigning Blackstone & Shields and the New Manchester Center

The intersection of Blackstone and Shields Avenues, traditionally characterized by its wide expanses of asphalt and auto-focused design, presents a significant opportunity to spark a new era of urban vitality for the Manchester Center and the surrounding neighborhood. Historically a key regional retail hub, the Manchester Center has, in recent decades, become disconnected from its urban context, with large surface parking lots creating a barrier between the mall and the lively public life of the city. The recessed orientation of the mall from the intersection creates a spatial void - an underutilized area that, instead of acting as a gateway or gathering place, helps to foster a fragmented and unwelcoming pedestrian environment. The proposed redesign seeks to transform this corner into a vibrant urban hub, promoting infill development, activating public spaces, and re-imagining Manchester Center as a mixed-use, locally anchored retail and cultural destination.

[Image Left]
Aerial image of the existing conditions looking northwest at the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley. Source: Google Earth

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection showing the grade separation with a proposed lid and public plaza.

THE VISION

Fresno's Regional Retail Center is Localized

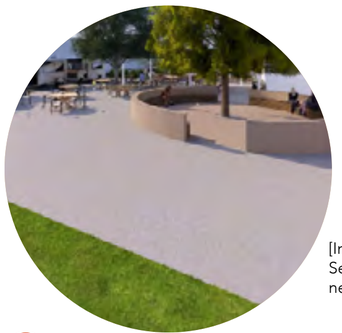
The strategy starts with infill development of the surface parking lots along Blackstone Avenue. These lots are converted into a new mixed-use development that lines the street edge, creating a strong urban frontage and helping to define the public realm. Featuring ground-floor retail and upper-story residential or office spaces, these new buildings bring both activity and density to the corridor, encouraging foot traffic and supporting transit-oriented development principles. Between this new development and the urbanized facade of a reconfigured Manchester Center, a public plaza or pedestrian promenade is established - an engaging civic space where people can gather, shop, dine, and connect. This area reclaims the heart of the block and positions Blackstone and Shields not just as a crossroads, but as a regional center for urban life.

A new mid-block street bisects the site, extending from Blackstone westward to connect with internal circulation at the Manchester Center. This street is designed not as a car-dominated thoroughfare but as a complete street featuring a wide, pedestrianized median, shaded by trees

[Image Left]
Street view of existing conditions looking northwest at the intersection of Blackstone and McKinley.

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection showing the proposed lid and public plaza over the grade separation.

[Image Left]
View of the historic carousel moved to be a central feature.



[Image Left]
Seating area for the new market stalls.

and adorned with seating, public art, and community programming. The street serves as both a spine and a stage, hosting street fairs, food trucks, or cultural festivals while ensuring day-to-day pedestrian comfort. At the southwest corner of the Manchester Center, the historic carousel that once stood inside the mall is re-installed as a public anchor - a nostalgic yet imaginative gesture that connects the center's past with its future. The carousel becomes a landmark and gathering place, celebrating community memory while signaling a renewed identity.

Along Shields Avenue on the southern edge of the mall, the redesign continues with the transformation of additional parking into a public market and open-air plaza, reclaiming the retail legacy of the site while modernizing it for the 21st century. This new public market prioritizes local vendors, food entrepreneurs, artisans, and cultural makers, providing a flexible, inclusive space that attracts both neighborhood residents and regional visitors. The design captures the informal, dynamic energy of street markets and combines it with the infrastructural support of permanent retail environments - creating a hybrid model that embodies both heritage and innovation. This section of the site serves as a gateway to the redefined Manchester Center, focusing less on enclosed consumerism and more on authentic, community-based commerce.

Overall, the redesign of the Blackstone and Shields intersection and the surrounding Manchester Center area serves as a model for urban reinvention. It honors the memory of a once-vibrant retail hub while steering its future toward a more inclusive, mixed-use, and walkable environment. By integrating new development, adaptive reuse, and public realm improvements, this vision repositions the Manchester Center not as a relic of the past, but as a new regional destination that reflects Fresno's evolving urban identity.

Design Narrative: The Reimagined Manchester Center Plaza

This rendering envisions the redeveloped southwest corner of Manchester Center, transforming what was once a sea of surface parking into a vibrant, community-focused public space. At the core of the design is the inclusion of the historic Manchester Center carousel, re-introduced not only as a nostalgic icon but also as a dynamic gathering point

[Image Left]
New children's playground in the public market area

[Image Left]
View of the new public market located along Shields

that connects the mall's past with its modern future. Its position at the end of a newly created pedestrian-oriented street serves as both a visual anchor and a celebratory hub of public life.

Surrounding the carousel is a spacious plaza designed to promote comfort, social interaction, and accessibility. Plenty of seating under shade trees provides a restful spot for visitors of all ages, while circular benches woven around tree wells create inviting gathering spaces. A series of picnic tables equipped with large shade umbrellas adorns the pedestrian promenade, encouraging families, shoppers, and market-goers to linger, dine, or engage with local vendors and events. Thoughtfully chosen plantings, including drought-tolerant shrubs and ornamental grasses, enhance the area with texture while conserving water.

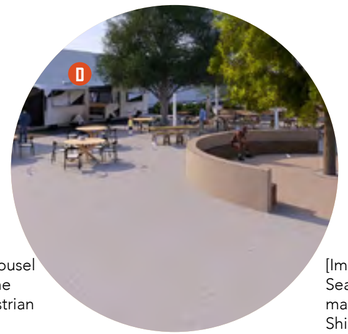
The vehicular presence is minimized and carefully managed, with a single-lane shared street curving gently behind the plaza to maintain service and access without dominating the environment. The paving shifts to brick-textured material at pedestrian crossings and gathering zones, subtly signaling shared space and prioritizing safety. Custom street lighting and vertical banners branded with the Manchester "M" reinforce district identity and ensure visibility and comfort during evening hours.

This space exemplifies the core goals of the Manchester Center redesign: to transform underutilized parking infrastructure into a welcoming, active, and inclusive public space that honors local history while fostering new opportunities for interaction, commerce, and community pride.

[Image Left]
View of the historic carousel moved to be a central feature.

[Image Left]
View of the historic carousel with special paving features.

[Image Left]
View of the carousel at the end of the widened pedestrian median.



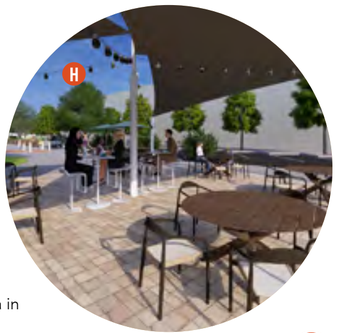
[Image Left]
Seating at the new market area along Shields Ave.

[Image Right]
New market area in the current Manchester Center parking lot.

[Image Right]
New children's playground area

[Image Left]
Birds-eye view of the re-designed Manchester Center.

[Image Right]
Water feature and children's playground at the new market area.



[Image Right]
New seating area in the market area

BLACKSTONE URBAN REDESIGN

Redesigning the Blackstone Corridor: Centering Mobility, Community, and Identity

The re-imagining of the Blackstone Corridor represents a bold, future-oriented vision for equitable mobility, vibrant public spaces, and sustainable urban design at the heart of Fresno. At the core of this redesign is the transformation of Blackstone's current auto-dominated layout into a multi-modal corridor that prioritizes transit, pedestrians, cyclists, and local businesses. A key feature of this transformation is the relocation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lanes from the street's outer edges to the center, creating a more streamlined, efficient, and visible transit experience that anchors the street's redesign.

To accommodate this change, the number of general-purpose vehicular lanes in each direction is reduced from three to two. This lane reduction not only calms traffic but also creates the space necessary for a dedicated, center-running BRT system, enhancing reliability and safety for transit users. A landscaped median is introduced between the two center BRT lanes, serving not only as a safety buffer but also functioning as a visual and ecological spine that reintroduces green infrastructure to the corridor.

[Image Left]
Birds eye image of the existing conditions looking towards a standard intersection along Blackstone. Source: Google Earth

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection looking towards a new dedicated BRT bus stop along Blackstone.

These planted medians soften the urban heat island effect, manage stormwater runoff, and provide aesthetic and psychological relief from the hard edges of the street.

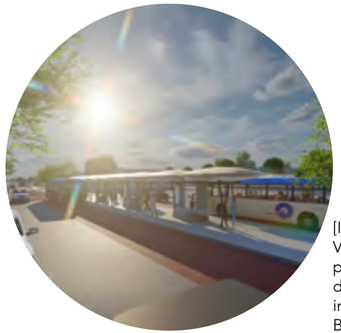
THE VISION

Prioritizing the Pedestrian Experience

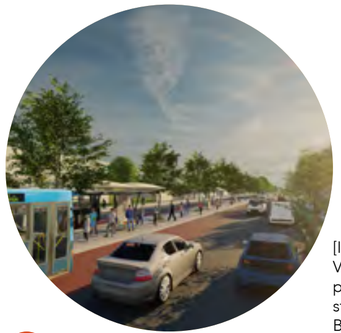
With vehicle lanes shifted inward, the redesign provides ample space along the outer edges for protected bike lanes and widened pedestrian walkways. This approach addresses the critical need for safe and continuous cycling infrastructure while also enhancing the sidewalk environment to support street life and neighborhood commerce. Wider sidewalks, street trees, seating areas, lighting, and signage work together to create an inviting, human-scaled public realm. These improvements are intended not only to support existing small businesses but also to attract new ones by increasing foot traffic and improving accessibility for all residents, particularly those who rely on walking or public transit.

[Image Left]
Street view of existing conditions looking north along Blackstone. Source: Google Earth

[Image Right]
Rendering of the same intersection showing the proposed lid and public plaza over the grade separation.



[Image Left] View of the proposed dedicated BRT stop in the middle of Blackstone.



[Image Left] View of the proposed new streetscape along Blackstone.

Roundabouts

A defining feature of the corridor redesign is the introduction of modern roundabouts at key intersections. These roundabouts replace both conventional signalized and non-signalized intersections, offering numerous benefits such as reduced vehicle speeds, enhanced safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and a smoother flow of traffic. Beyond functionality, these roundabouts serve as distinctive design elements, each with the potential to include public art, landscaping, or neighborhood identity markers that highlight Blackstone's unique character. As landmarks themselves, they transform the corridor's identity from a pass-through route to a meaningful destination.

Together, these elements create a cohesive, integrated vision for Blackstone - one that aligns infrastructure investments with community values, environmental goals, and long-term economic vitality. The corridor becomes more than just a route through Fresno; it transforms into a space to stop, interact, and thrive. It embodies the principles of complete streets, transit-oriented development, and inclusive design, ensuring that Blackstone serves current residents while preparing the city for a more connected and climate-resilient future.

RE-IMAGINING BLACKSTONE: BENEFITS OF A CENTER-RUNNING BRT WITH ENHANCED AMENITIES

Bus Rapid Transit

The redesign of Blackstone Avenue focuses on restoring balance among the various modes of transportation that characterize the corridor, with a strong emphasis on creating a more humane, accessible, and forward-looking street. One of the most transformative moves in the design was the decision to remove one lane of vehicle traffic in each direction. Current traffic counts indicate that three lanes in each direction are unnecessary for maintaining efficient vehicle flow. By right-sizing the street, we were able to reallocate that space toward more community-serving uses—most notably, the introduction of a dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lane positioned at the center of the street.

[Image Left] Rendering of the new BRT stations in the middle of Blackstone.

[Image Left] View of the center running BRT line.

Placing the BRT in the center of Blackstone not only enhances transit efficiency by enabling uninterrupted service flow and easier access to boarding platforms, but it also significantly boosts the safety and quality of the pedestrian experience along the sidewalks. Rather than situating high-speed buses directly next to pedestrians walking, biking, shopping, or dining, the center-aligned BRT creates a buffer that allows the edges of the street to become more vibrant, calm, and people-focused. Wider sidewalks, shade trees, benches, lighting, and space for parklets or café seating all contribute to an environment where people can linger, connect, and engage with local businesses.

Additionally, the central BRT design is future-oriented. As Fresno continues to grow and shift toward more sustainable urban forms, the center alignment allows for a seamless conversion to light rail, should the city choose to pursue that option. This flexibility ensures that today's investment in multi-modal infrastructure can evolve with the community's needs over time. Ultimately, this redesign not only accommodates BRT - it envisions a corridor where pedestrian safety, commercial vitality, and multi-modal accessibility are all prioritized. The Blackstone Corridor becomes not just a route through the city but also a destination and shared civic space that fosters movement, community, and opportunity.

Relocating the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line to the center median of Blackstone Avenue, supported by raised platforms and comprehensive transit infrastructure, represents a transformative step towards creating a safer, more inclusive, and efficient transportation corridor for Fresno. This design repositions public transit as a central feature of the urban landscape—physically, symbolically, and functionally.

KEY BENEFITS

Improved Safety and Efficiency

Center-running BRT lanes significantly reduce conflicts with turning vehicles, pedestrian crossings, and curbside parking. By separating BRT lanes from general traffic, buses can operate more predictably and efficiently, cutting travel times and enhancing reliability.

Raised platforms also ensure level boarding, improving accessibility for all users, including those with mobility challenges or strollers.

Enhanced Passenger Experience

Station platforms equipped with real-time arrival displays, payment kiosks, and clear wayfinding signage provide a seamless and stress-free experience for riders. By facilitating off-board fare collection and minimizing wait uncertainty, these features enhance overall system efficiency and reduce boarding times.

Inclusive and Welcoming Design

An artistic canopy designed to reflect local culture provides not only functional protection from the sun and rain but also establishes transit stops as dignified, engaging civic spaces. Coupled with landscaping, seating, lighting, and ADA-compliant features, these elements enhance safety and invite a broad cross-section of the community - especially seniors, youth, and people with disabilities.

Cultural Identity Through Public Art

Integrating public art into station design and surrounding areas highlights Fresno's cultural richness and fosters community pride. Whether through murals, sculptures, or interactive installations, these artworks help define Blackstone as a vibrant, expressive corridor, transforming transit spaces into destinations in their own right.

Environmental and Urban Benefits

Landscaping around stations and within the median contributes to urban cooling, improves air quality, and aids in stormwater management. Green buffers also provide psychological comfort, reducing the perceived harshness of a busy arterial road. The visual impact of this green infrastructure enhances walkability and the pedestrian environment.

[Image Left]
View of the proposed roundabout along Blackstone.

[Image Left]
View of the proposed BRT station along Blackstone

Symbolic Reinvestment in Public Transit

By placing transit infrastructure at the center - both literally and figuratively - the design represents a shift in priorities toward mobility equity and environmental sustainability. It shows a commitment to making transit not a last resort but a preferred and respected option.

VISION SUMMARY

The redesign of the Blackstone Corridor - featuring reduced traffic lanes, center-running BRT, landscaped medians, and widened pedestrian promenades - represents a shift away from a purely utilitarian, car-centric street toward a more equitable, multimodal, and place-based public realm. By re-allocating space from excess vehicle lanes to transit, bikes, and pedestrians, the corridor better serves the daily needs of the neighborhoods it runs through, many of which rely heavily on walking, cycling, and transit. The new design improves safety, comfort, and accessibility, while supporting local businesses, reducing emissions, and inviting residents to linger, connect, and engage with their surroundings.

Beyond addressing transportation and livability, the redesign also aims to create a series of iconic public spaces that reflect Fresno's evolving identity and civic pride. With shaded promenades, integrated public art, active storefronts, and flexible gathering areas, Blackstone becomes more than a corridor - it becomes a cultural spine and social connector. These investments position Blackstone as not only a functional artery but as a destination in its own right, capable of hosting everyday life as well as community events, performances, and celebrations. In doing so, the corridor transforms into a symbol of Fresno's commitment to inclusive, people-centered urban design and long-term resilience.

[Image Left]
Rendering of proposed new streetscape along Blackstone.

[Image Left]
View of roundabout with BRT running through the center of it.

TRANSFORMING INTERSECTIONS

The Value of Roundabouts on Blackstone Avenue

Redesigning key intersections on Blackstone Avenue as roundabouts presents a bold and elegant solution to enhance safety, mobility, and placemaking along this crucial corridor. Unlike traditional signalized intersections, roundabouts facilitate continuous flow for vehicles and BRT, while greatly improving the pedestrian environment, decreasing crashes, and creating new opportunities for cultural expression.

KEY BENEFITS

Traffic Calming and Safety

Roundabouts naturally slow vehicle speeds through their curvature and yield-based entry, which dramatically reduces the likelihood and severity of collisions - especially high-speed T-bone or head-on crashes. Lower speeds create a safer environment for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists, while enhancing driver awareness at crossings.

Enhanced Pedestrian Experience

Unlike large signalized intersections with wide crossing distances, roundabouts create more compact and navigable pedestrian environments. Crossings are shorter, often set back from the circle and enhanced by refuge islands, making it safer and easier for pedestrians to cross in stages. Well-designed crosswalks with timed signals and tactile surfaces promote accessibility and inclusivity for people of all ages and abilities.

Seamless BRT Integration

Central BRT lanes can run straight through the center of each roundabout, with signal prioritization to maintain schedule reliability and minimize conflicts with general traffic. These intersections are designed to allow safe and efficient BRT movement without sacrificing overall flow, demonstrating how transit and roundabouts can coexist with proper design.

[Image Left]
Birds eye image of a roundabout showing how the BRT, vehicular, cycling and pedstrian traffic will coexist.

[Image Right]
Rendering of a BRT station in the middle of Blackstone looking north.

[Image Left]
Street view of proposed expanded sidewalks, protected bike lane, and streetscape along Lafayette Park.

[Image Right]
Rendering of a proposed BRT station along Blackstone.

[Image above]
Rendering of a proposed BRT station and shade structure to protect riders from the elements.

[Image above]
Examples placemaking and public art along the proposed sidewalk and pedestrian experience.

Opportunities for Public Art and Placemaking

The central island of each roundabout presents a unique civic canvas - a highly visible space for public art, sculptures, landscaping, or cultural markers that reflect Fresno's identity. These features transform intersections from utilitarian spaces into gateways, landmarks, and expressions of community pride.

Aesthetic and Environmental Benefits

Roundabouts offer opportunities for green infrastructure, including low-maintenance plantings, stormwater features, and pollinator gardens. These design elements enhance the street's appearance, contribute to Fresno's environmental sustainability goals, and improve the microclimate for pedestrians and transit riders.

Long-Term Operational Efficiency

Roundabouts decrease vehicle idling and delays, reducing emissions and lowering fuel consumption over time. With fewer moving parts than signalized intersections, they also require less maintenance and incur lower operating costs - yielding long-term savings for the city.

CONCLUSION

Strategically placed roundabouts along Blackstone Avenue will provide significant improvements in safety, walkability, and transit performance, while enhancing the corridor's identity and visual appeal. When paired with integrated BRT infrastructure, public art, and landscaping, these intersections become hallmark features of a complete, inclusive, and inspiring public realm.

[Image above]
Proposed streetscape showing a BRT station in the median of Blackstone.

[Image above]
Rendering of a proposed BRT station and shade structure to protect riders from the elements.

[Image Left]
Perspective of new sidewalks, street trees, and protected bike lanes on Blackstone.

[Image Left]
New BRT bus stop in the median of Blackstone

[Image Left]
View of new intersection along Blackstone

[Image Left]
Reduced traffic lanes on Blackstone

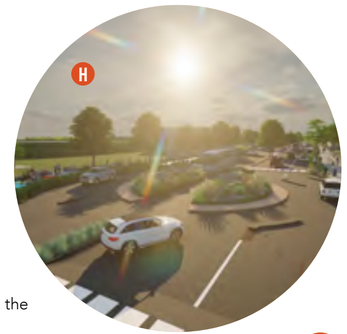
[Image Right]
New bus shelter over the BRT station

[Image Right]
View of the roundabouts with the BRT line running through the median.

[Image Left]
Concept image of the new Blackstone streetscape.

[Image Right]
Concept image of the proposed central bus stop.

[Image Right]
View of cars driving through the roundabout.



WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Developing a Culturally Responsive Wayfinding and Signage System for the Blackstone Corridor

As part of the re-imagination of the Blackstone Corridor, a comprehensive and inclusive set of wayfinding and signage elements was developed to enhance navigation, reinforce neighborhood identity, and reflect the diverse cultural fabric of the surrounding communities. Recognizing that wayfinding is more than just a directional tool, the system was designed as a storytelling and placemaking strategy, honoring the history, character, and everyday lives of the people who live and move through the corridor. This involved creating signage that is not only functional and legible but also culturally resonant, speaking to a shared sense of place while addressing the practical needs of all users.

At the core of the design is a color-coded node system that divides the corridor into recognizable zones, each characterized by its own visual language and thematic focus. These nodes emphasize key destinations and community landmarks, including The Lid, Radcliffe Stadium, Fresno City College, Lafayette Park, and Manchester Center. Within each node, signage reflects local culture, history, and visual traditions, drawing inspiration from patterns, languages, and colors that represent the neighborhood's ethnic diversity. For instance, in areas with a significant population of Hmong or Latino residents, design elements incorporate motifs and bilingual messaging that echo those communities. This approach not only enhances accessibility for non-English speakers but also ensures that residents feel represented in the built environment, fostering a stronger sense of belonging.

The family of signage is carefully scaled according to the speed and needs of different modes of transportation. For vehicular traffic, the signage is designed for visibility and quick comprehension at speeds of up to 45 mph, featuring large text, high-contrast colors, and simplified information that directs drivers to major destinations and parking areas. For cyclists, the signage provides intermediate-scale wayfinding that includes directional arrows, estimated travel times, and bike-specific amenities such as repair stations or green lanes. Pedestrian signage is the most detailed and interactive, aimed at a walking speed of about 5 mph, and includes maps, historical information, public art, and neighborhood highlights.

[Image Left]
Photo of existing BRT station with amenities and shade cover.

[Image Right]
Rendering of a BRT station in the middle of Blackstone showing the shade canopy, platform and wayfinding.

[Image Left]
Existing signage discouraging pedestrians from trying to cross Blackstone.

[Image Right]
Rendering of a proposed crosswalk along Blackstone.

These pedestrian-scale signs are often placed at eye level and incorporate tactile and digital features, like QR codes linking to transit schedules or cultural narratives, further enriching the walking experience.

In designing this multi-modal wayfinding system, the team considered how the legibility and relevance of information change with speed and how each user group interprets their surroundings differently. The result is a cohesive yet flexible system that guides movement while reinforcing the unique identity of each segment of the corridor. It invites people to slow down, explore, and connect with their surroundings - whether they are arriving for the first time or rediscovering a familiar neighborhood. By integrating culture, context, and clarity, this signage family does more than direct; it engages, educates, and celebrates the dynamic communities of Blackstone Avenue.

KEY WAYFINDING ELEMENTS

Landmarks

The metal landmark wayfinding elements serve as prominent visual anchors along the Blackstone Corridor, designed to be both functional and expressive of local identity. These tall, rectangular structures are color-coded according to the corridor's designated nodes, allowing users to quickly identify which district they are in while navigating the area. Each element features clearly labeled destinations, helping pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers orient themselves within the larger corridor. Beyond navigation, these signs act as cultural frames, offering curated space for architectural icons, historic references, and culturally significant imagery unique to each neighborhood. Whether showcasing the legacy of Fresno City College, honoring local immigrant communities, or reflecting mid-century modern motifs, these landmark signs embed stories into the streetscape, turning wayfinding into an opportunity for education, pride, and deeper connection with place.

Banners

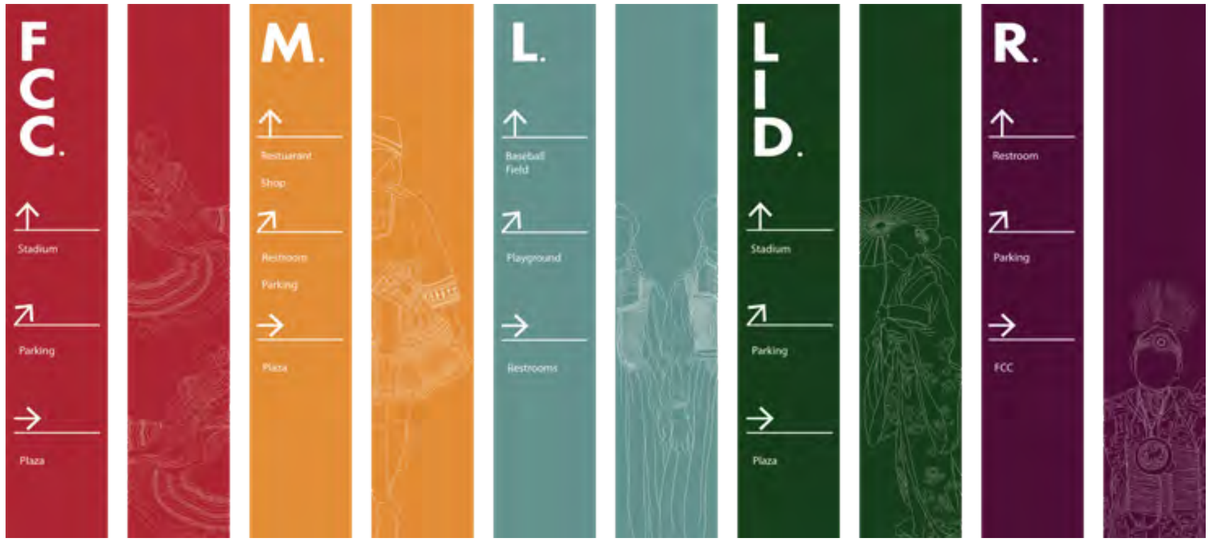
The corridor banners, mounted on existing streetlights, play a crucial role in establishing a cohesive visual identity and directing vehicular traffic along Blackstone Avenue. Designed for a vehicular scale, these banners use bold color coding and symbolic icons that relate to the corridor's key nodes and destinations, such as The Lid, Manchester Center, and Fresno City College, ensuring visibility and recognition at driving speeds. Serving both functional and aesthetic purposes, the banners help drivers intuitively navigate the corridor while also reinforcing the identity of each district. For visitors unfamiliar with the area, they serve as navigational cues and welcoming landmarks, while for local residents, they represent neighborhood pride and continuity. The consistent yet varied banner system helps connect the length of Blackstone, making the corridor more legible, inviting, and memorable.

Cycling Wayfinding and Directionals

The bike median directional signs are a crucial part of the corridor's multi-modal wayfinding system, specifically designed to meet the unique needs of cyclists. Positioned atop the curbs bordering the separated bike lanes, these low-profile, cyclist-facing signs are strategically placed for easy visibility without hindering movement. Designed to be read at riding speed, they offer clear, concise guidance to local destinations, such as parks, transit stations, and commercial centers. Importantly, rather than merely listing distances, the signage highlights estimated travel time, providing more intuitive and actionable information that reflects the cyclists' experience. By merging directional clarity with time-based navigation, these signs promote confident, efficient cycling and help reinforce biking as a viable, accessible, and enjoyable mode of transportation along the Blackstone Corridor.

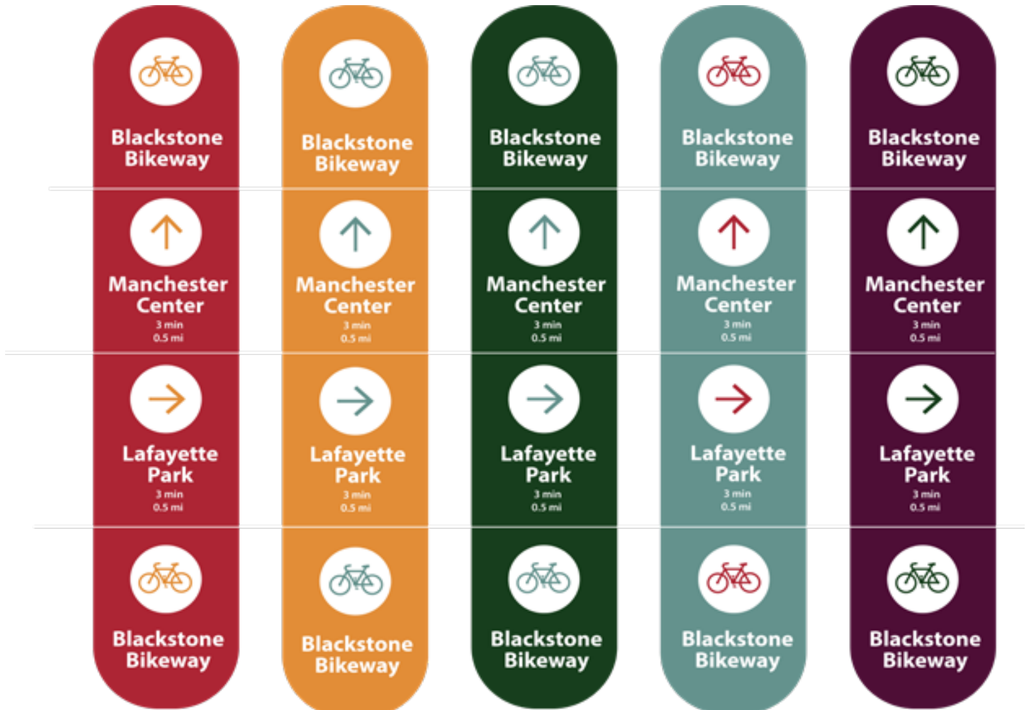
PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING

The pedestrian directional signage along the Blackstone Corridor transcends mere wayfinding to function as a platform for cultural representation and community storytelling. While it provides clear guidance to key destinations within each node - such as parks, colleges, and civic centers - the signage also features illustrations of women from local cultural communities, portrayed in traditional agricultural attire specific to their heritage. These visual elements honor the diverse populations that define Fresno, particularly celebrating the vital role that women have historically played in the region's agricultural economy. From Hmong and Mexican to Punjabi and African American communities, the inclusion of culturally specific imagery nurtures a sense of pride and visibility, reinforcing Fresno's identity as both an agricultural hub and a city shaped by the labor, resilience, and leadership of women. This integration of function and storytelling transforms everyday signage into a significant gesture of recognition and belonging.



BRT Signage

The design of the bus wayfinding below illustrates the transition of the current BRT line along Blackstone into a proper public transit route. With the color coded signs for each node, they show riders where they are along the route and highlight the stops and intersections.



CYCLING WAYFINDING AND DIRECTIONALS

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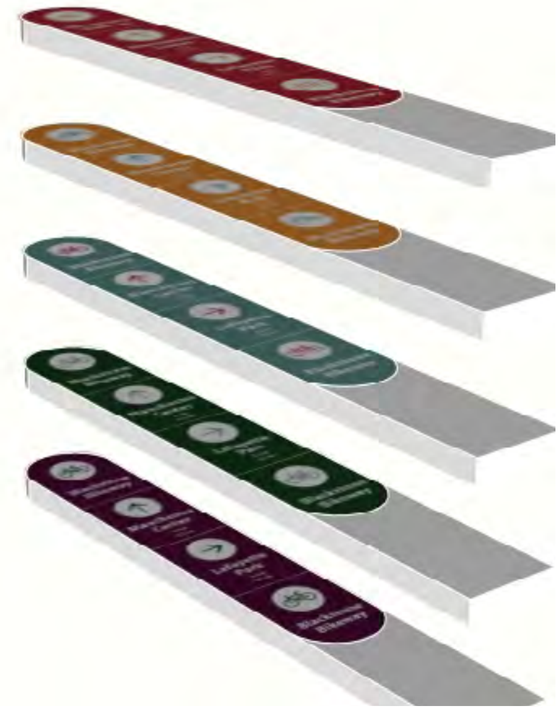
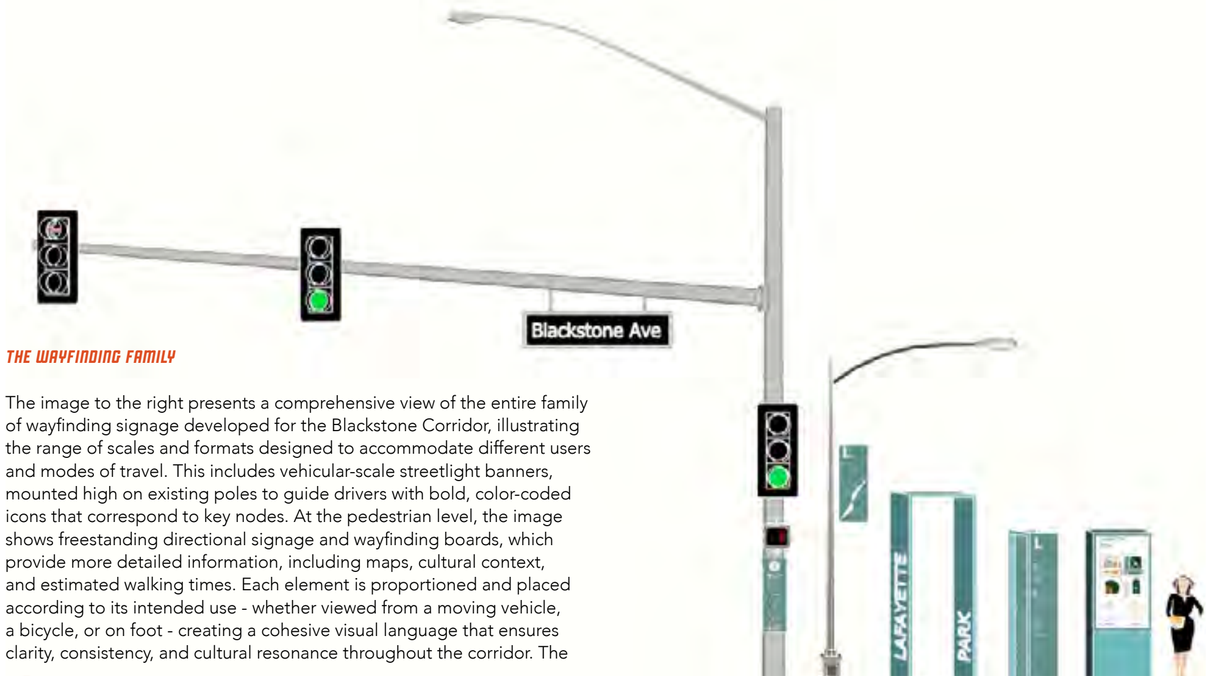




THE WAYFINDING FAMILY

The image to the right presents a comprehensive view of the entire family of wayfinding signage developed for the Blackstone Corridor, illustrating the range of scales and formats designed to accommodate different users and modes of travel. This includes vehicular-scale streetlight banners, mounted high on existing poles to guide drivers with bold, color-coded icons that correspond to key nodes. At the pedestrian level, the image shows freestanding directional signage and wayfinding boards, which provide more detailed information, including maps, cultural context, and estimated walking times. Each element is proportioned and placed according to its intended use - whether viewed from a moving vehicle, a bicycle, or on foot - creating a cohesive visual language that ensures clarity, consistency, and cultural resonance throughout the corridor. The arrangement in the image emphasizes how these components work together to enhance both navigation and neighborhood identity.

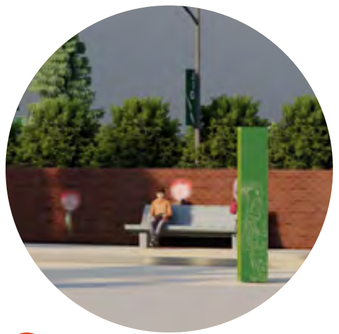
Wayfinding Boards

The wayfinding boards to the right highlight the key elements of each node, featuring site-specific maps with clearly labeled legends that identify important destinations and features within each area. These maps are oriented according to their precise installation location, ensuring intuitive navigation for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition to directional information, the boards provide opportunities for cultural representation, incorporating historical and educational content related to local architecture, agriculture, and other distinctive characteristics of the neighborhood. This layered approach not only supports wayfinding but also enriches the public realm by celebrating the unique identity and heritage of each node along the corridor.












APPENDICES

6

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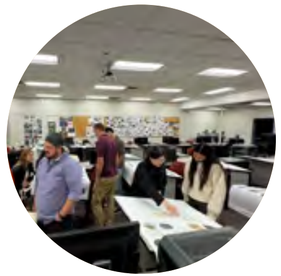

[Image on the spread]
Students working on this project on both the Cal Poly and Fresno City College campuses.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Definitions were adapted for rural communities from
'A Planner's Dictionary'. Davidson & Dolnick (2004)

Abandoned Building

- Any vacant building which is frequented by persons who are not lawful occupants of such structure; or (B) Any vacant building which by reason of lack of maintenance or by reason of the boarding up of its doors and windows, or other reasons, has a substantial adverse effect on the value of property in the immediate neighborhood; or (C) A building, the principal use of which has been abandoned, and that no longer has any function or use; or (D) Any railroad trestle or siding no longer in use. (Oak Park, Ill)

Acre, Commercial

- An area of 35,000 square feet, being an approximation of the area remaining after dedication of normal public street right of way from a full acre. (Peoria, Ariz.)

Adjacent/Adjoining

- Touching or contiguous. To be separated by common property lines, lot lines, or an alley; abutting, adjoining, contiguous, or touching.
- Property that touches or is directly across a street from the subject property. For the purpose of height regulations, any portion of a structure that is more than 100 feet from a low-density zone is not considered to be adjoining that zone. (Federal Way, Wash.) Joined contiguous to, in contact with each other, so that no third object intervenes.
- Lots separated by a street shall be considered adjoining, except those lots separated by an arterial or collector street shall be adjacent. (Grand Forks, N.Dak.)
- Property that touches or is directly across a street, private street or access easement, or right-of-way (other than a freeway or principal arterial) from the subject property. (Burien, Wash.)

Air Pollution

- Concentrations of substances found in the atmosphere that exceed naturally occurring quantities and agricultural support service air pollution 56 are undesirable or harmful in some way. (California Planning Roundtable)
- The emission of any air contaminants in such place or manner which, when by itself or combined with other air contaminants present in the atmosphere, is detrimental to or endangers the health, comfort, or safety of any person, or which may cause injury. (Edmond, Okla.)

Amenity

- Aesthetic or other characteristics of a development that increase its desirability to a community or its marketability to the public. Amenities may differ from development to development but may include such things as a unified building design, recreational facilities (e.g., a swimming pool or tennis courts), security systems, views, landscaping and tree preservation, or attractive site design. (American Planning Association)
- A natural or man-made feature which enhances a particular property but may or may not be a normal requirement of the zoning ordinance in order to develop the property. (Lake Elsinore, Calif.)
- In conjunction with a development project, any or all of the following, proposed and provided by a project applicant in excess of the minimum requirements of the zoning ordinance: permanent open space and landscaping, public art, recreational facilities, on-site child day care facilities, etc. (Rancho Mirage,Calif.)

Arcade

- An area contiguous to a street or plaza that is open and unobstructed to a height of not less than 12 feet and that is accessible to the public at all times. Any portion of an arcade occupied by building columns, landscaping, statuary, pools, or fountains shall be considered part of the arcade for the purpose of computing a floor-area premium credit. The term "arcade" shall not include off-street loading areas, driveways, off-street parking areas, or open pedestrian walkways. The floor of any arcade shall be level with the adjoining street or plaza. (Mankato, Minn.)

Automobile-Accommodating Development

- Development designed with an emphasis on customers who use autos to travel to the site, rather than those with an emphasis on pedestrian customers.
- This type of development usually has more than the minimum required number of parking spaces. The main entrance is oriented to the parking area. In many cases, the building will have parking between the street and the building. Other typical characteristics are blank walls along much of the facade, more than one driveway, and a low percentage of the site covered by buildings. (Portland, Ore.)
- A use of a retail area that depends on exposure to continuous auto traffic. (California Planning Roundtable)

Base Map

- A map showing the important natural and man-made features of an area. Such maps are used to establish consistency when maps are used for various purposes (e.g., reproductions of the same base map could be used to show natural resource limitations, public facilities, and land use as the basis for the official zoning map). (American Planning Association)

Bicycle Facilities

- A general term denoting improvements and provisions to accommodate or encourage bicycling, including parking facilities, maps, all bikeways, and shared roadways not specifically designated for bicycle use. (Deschutes County, Ore.; Indian River County, Fla.)

Big-Box Retail Establishment

- A singular retail or wholesale user who occupies no less than 75,000 square feet of gross floor area, typically requires high parking to building area ratios, and has a regional sales market. Regional retail/ wholesale sales can include but are not limited to membership warehouse clubs that emphasize bulk sales, discount stores, and department stores. (Redmond, Wash.)

Bike Lane

- A corridor expressly reserved for bicycles, existing on a street or roadway in addition to any lanes for use by motorized vehicles. (Temecula, Calif.)
- Those bikeways on existing street rights of- way where a portion of the roadway is set aside for exclusive bicycle use and designated by signs placed on vertical posts or stencilled on the pavement and by a painted line marking the bicycle land on the pavement. Through travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians is prohibited.
- Vehicular parking may or may not be allowed or it may be restricted to certain hours of each day. Cross-flows by motor vehicles and pedestrians when necessary to gain access to and from a public street or alley or a private driveway or other entranceway are permitted. (Raleigh, N.C.)

Auto Oriented Buildings

• Structures that were generally built after WWII that cater to drivers and are often retail oriented. Unique features of auto oriented buildings include surface parking lots, drive-throughs and minimal architectural features.

Building Footprint

• The outline of the total area covered by a building or a structure's perimeter at the ground level.

Built Environment

• Elements of the environment that are built or made by people for the intent of the human experience as contrasted with natural processes.

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Bus Shelter

- A small, roofed structure, usually having three walls, located near a street and designed primarily for the protection and convenience of bus passengers. (Maryland Heights, Mo.)

Bus Stop

- A curbside place where passengers board or alight transit. (Sacramento Regional Transit District)
- A curbside place where passengers board or alight transit, that may or may not include a small shelter usually having three walls and a roof and designed to provide for the protection and convenience of passengers. (Loveland, Colo.)

Canal

- An artificial channel for conveyance of water including laterals and drains. (El Paso, Tex.)
- An artificial open channel or waterway constructed for one or more of the following purposes: a) transporting water, b) connecting two or more bodies of water, and c) serving as a waterway for watercraft
- (Adams Count, Pa..)

Capital Improvement

- Any building or infrastructure project that will be owned by a governmental unit and purchased or built with direct appropriations from the governmental unit, or with bonds backed by its full faith and credit, or, in whole or in part, with federal or other public funds, or in any combination thereof.
- A project may include construction, installation, project management or supervision, project planning, engineering, or design, and the purchase of land or interests in land. (Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook}

Census Tract

- A small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county in a metropolitan area or a selected non-metropolitan county, delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting decennial census data. Census tract boundaries normally follow visible features, but may follow governmental unit boundaries and other non-visible features in some instances; they always nest within counties. (United States Census Bureau)

Catalytic Projects

- Projects that are identified for their potential to increase the economic resiliency and vibrancy at a district, neighborhood or city scale. Catalytic projects leverage existing resources with the intent to use the redeveloped project to increase the real estate value and visible investment in an area. Examples of these projects can range from buildings to public spaces.

Character

- The collection of unique physical characteristics in an area that contribute to its unique look and feel. These characteristics provide an aesthetic identity for that area that differentiates it from surroundings. Character can range from individual buildings to the city scale.

Community Engagement

- The active involvement of people who live, work or are invested in an area during the process of making improvements to, or the envisioning of, what that area can be in the future.

Circulation

- How people move within a defined place, such as on foot, bike or in a car.

City Planning/ Planning

- City planning is the decision-making process in which community goals and objectives are established, existing resources and conditions analyzed, strategies developed, and investments targeted and/or development controls enacted to achieve the identified outcomes. The purpose of city planning is to further the well being of people and their communities by creating economically resilient, environmentally sustainable and overall healthy environments for present and future generations.

Commercial Corridor

- The linear concentration of retail and commercial establishments along a higher trafficked transportation corridor. Commercial corridors may be as little as a block in length, and may extend to several miles along a main street or highway.

Commercial District

- An area with designated land uses characterized by commercial office activities, services, and retail sales. Commercial districts can occur in both historic downtowns or suburban style developments. These areas are generally regional destinations and have noticeable numbers of pedestrians and a mix of commercial and retail establishments.

Community Character

- The physical qualities of a community or area as defined by such factors as its built environment and natural features.
- This range of elements define the unique aesthetics of that community and are often fundamental to a community's identity. They can also be fundamental to how visitors interpret and experience a community.

Complete Streets

- Streets that are designed with equal consideration given to all intended users. The goal of complete streets is for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities to safely and comfortably move along and across the street. Complete streets can occur on new streets as well as retrofitted existing streets within the public right of way.

Context Sensitive Street Design

- The design and planning of streets to respond to their surrounding context and neighborhoods. These designs suggest that once a high-speed or major arterial enters a community, neighborhood, or downtown it needs to transition into a more human scaled design that encourages cars to drive in a slower, safer, more courteous and aware manner to make pedestrians feel safer and welcomed.

Community Health Center

- A public or nonprofit private medical care facility that (1) is not part of a hospital and is organized and operated to provide comprehensive primary care service; (2) is located in an area that has demonstrated need for services based on geographic and economic factors; (3) serves low-income, uninsured, minority and elderly persons; (4) makes its services available to individuals, regardless of their ability to pay; (5) employs a charge schedule with a discount based on income; (6) provides, on an ongoing basis, primary health services by physicians and, where appropriate, mid-level practitioners, diagnostic laboratory, and x-ray, or through firm arrangement; (7) has at least one-half of the full-time equivalent primary care providers as full-time members of its staff; (8) maintains an ongoing quality assurance program; (9) is a participating
- Title XIX and Medicare provider;
- (10) has a governing board of at least nine and no more than 25 members with authority and responsibility for policy and conduct of the center, the majority of whom are active users of the center and, of the nonuser board members, no more than half may derive more than 10 percent of their annual income from the health care industry; (11) provides primary care services at least 32 hours per week; and (12) has arrangements for professional coverage during hours when the center is closed. (Hartford, Conn.)

Concept Plan

- A generalized plan indicating the boundaries of a tract or tracts under common ownership, and identifying proposed land use, land-use intensity, and thoroughfare alignment. (Concord, N.C.)

Corridor, Transportation

- A combination of principal transportation routes involving
- a linear network of one or more highways of four or more lanes, rail lines, or other primary and secondary access facilities which support a development corridor. (New Jersey State Plan)
- A broad geographic band that follows a general route alignment, such as a roadway or rail right-of-way, and includes a service area within that band that would be accessible to the transit system. (Sacramento Regional Transit District)

Crosswalk

- A city-owned right-of-way that crosses a block and furnishes pedestrian access to adjacent streets or properties. (St. Paul, Minn.)
- That part of a roadway at an intersection included within the connections of the lateral lines of the sidewalks on opposite sides of the highway measured from the curbs, or in the absence of curbs and sidewalks from the edges of the traversable roadway; any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface. (Bethel, Maine)
- That part of a roadway at intersections ordinarily included within the real or projected prolongation of property lines and curb lines or, in the absence of curbs, the edges of the traversable roadway; (2) any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere, distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface; (3) notwithstanding subsections (a) and (b) hereof, there shall not be a crosswalk where authorized signs have been placed indicating no crossing. (Norton, Ohio)

Cultural Landscape

- A natural setting, the appearance of which represents the historic settlement pattern and development of a community. Such settings, which may or may not contain an historic structure, often reflect certain time periods of local significance. When applied to historic structures, a cultural landscape also includes the setting of the structure and its contribution to the integrity of the structure. Examples include, but are not limited to historic structures surrounded by large specimen trees, scenic vistas encompassing historic farmsteads and hedgerows, stone walls or ruins against a backdrop of equestrian activity, and rural roads framing historic villages. (Willistown Township, Pa.)

Density

- The number of dwelling units permitted per net acre of land. (Coral Gables, Fla.) The number of dwelling units per gross area devoted to residential development. (Baton Rouge, La.)
- The number of dwelling units per acre. (Durham, N.C.)
- The number of dwelling units situated on or to be developed on a net acre (or smaller unit) of land, which shall be calculated by taking the total gross acreage and subtracting surface water, undevelopable lands (e.g., wetlands) and the area in rights-of-way for streets and roads. (Muskegon, Mich.)

Design

- The physical aspects of a development, road improvement, or other construction project. Design includes but is not limited to such items as street alignment, grading, landscaping, site layout, building elevations, and signing. (San Juan Capistrano, Calif.)

Design Plan

- A plan for a defined geographic area in single or multiple ownership that is consistent with the comprehensive plan and includes but is not limited to a land use and circulation plan, development standards, design guidelines, an open space plan, utilities plans, and a program of implementation measures and other mechanisms needed to carry out the plan. The plan shall be created through the design review process. (Beaverton, Ore.)

Drive-Through Establishment

- A business establishment so developed that its retail or service character is dependent on providing a driveway approach or parking spaces for motor vehicles so as to serve patrons while in the motor vehicle rather than within a building or structure. (Muskegon, Mich.)
- An establishment accommodating the patron's automobile from which the occupants may receive a service or in which products purchased from the establishment may be consumed. (Maple Grove, Minn.)
- A term used to describe an establishment designed or operated to serve a patron who is seated in an automobile. (Stonington, Conn.)
- An establishment that dispenses products or services to patrons who remain in vehicles. (Durham, N.C.)

Easement
- A grant by a property owner to the use of land by the public, a corporation, or persons for specific purposes as the construction of utilities, drainage ways, and roadways. (St. Paul, Minn.)
- The right to use property owned by another for specific purposes or to gain access to another property. For example, utility companies often have easements on the private property of individuals to be able to install and maintain utility facilities. (California Planning Roundtable)
- A legal interest in land, granted by the owner to another person, which allows that person(s) the use of all or a portion of the owner's land, generally for a stated purpose including but not limited to access or placement of utilities. (Clarkdale, Ariz.)

Economic Development
- A development that provides a service, produces a good, retails a commodity, or emerges in any other use or activity for the purpose of making financial gain. (Renton, Wash.)
- Any change in a community that enables greater production, increased employment, and a better distribution of goods and services. (Interstate 81 Corridor Council)

Environment
- The physical conditions which exist within the area that will be affected by a proposed project, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. (California Environmental Quality Act)

Exurban Area
- The region that lies beyond a city and its suburbs. (California Planning Roundtable; Chattahoochie Hill Country (Georgia) Alliance)
- The area beyond a city's suburbs. (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources)

Facade
- That portion of any exterior elevation on the building extending from grade to top of the parapet, wall, or eaves and the entire width of the building elevation. (Peoria, Ill.)
- The entire area of a building facing or side extending from the roof or parapet to the ground and from one corner of the building to another but does not include any structural or nonstructural elements which extend beyond the roof of a building. (Grand Forks, N.Dak.)
- The face of a building, especially the principal face. (Dewey Beach, Del.)
- The exterior elevation of a structure or building as viewed from a single vantage point (Pittsburgh, Pa.)
- All wall planes of a building which are visible from one side or perspective. (Milwaukee, Wisc.)
- That exterior side of a building which faces, and is most nearly parallel to, a public or private street. The facade shall include the entire building walls, including wall faces, parapets, fascia, windows, doors, canopies, and visible roof structures of one complete elevation. (Concord, N.C.)

Fence
- An enclosure or barrier, such as wooden posts, wire, iron, etc., used as a boundary, means of protection, privacy screening or confinement, but not including hedges, shrubs, trees, or other natural growth. (Blue Springs, Mo.)
- An artificially constructed barrier of wood, masonry, stone, wire, metal, or other manufactured material or combination of materials erected to enclose, screen, or separate areas. (Maryland Heights, Mo.)

Gas Station
- A facility limited to retail sales to the public of gasoline, motor oil, lubricants, motor fuels, travel aides, and minor automobile accessories. In addition, such a facility may provide minor vehicle servicing, minor repairs, and maintenance, including engine rebuilding but not reconditioning of motor vehicles, collision services such as body, frame, or fender straightening and repair, or overall painting of automobiles. (Londonderry, N.H.)

Gateway Entry Feature
- A landscape feature and/or built decorative features located at the entrance to a development. (Wayne County, Ohio)

Gateway Route
- A street or parkway which is a heavily traveled entrance to and through the city. These routes link major employment areas, shopping centers, and recreational areas used regularly by a large number of residents and visitors and present a visual impression of [the city's] character. (Tucson, Ariz.)

Gentrification
- The rehabilitation and resettlement of low- and moderateincome urban neighborhoods by middle and high-income professionals. (American
- Planning Association)

Grade Separation
- The physical development of structures or intersections that separate motor vehicles from motor vehicles; motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists from trains; motor vehicles from pedestrians and bicycles, as well as pedestrians from bicycles. (Tempe, Ariz.)

Greenfield Development
- Development on undeveloped parcels not surrounded by existing development, or on large parcels surrounding partially developed areas or undeveloped areas. (Concord, N.C.)

Human Scale
- The perceived size of a building relative to a human being. A building is considered to have good human scale if there is an expression of human activity or use that indicates the building's size. For example, traditionally sized doors, windows, and balconies are elements that respond to the size of the human body, so these elements in a building indicate a building's overall size. (Burien, Wash.)

Impact
- The effect of any direct man-made actions or indirect repercussions of man-made actions on existing physical, social, or economic conditions. (California Planning Roundtable)
- The effect on the local public facilities in a given area produced by the additional population attracted by development. (Boise City, Idaho)

Implementation Plan
- A document of steps or a scheme of action to ensure attainment of planning, development, and environmental quality standards within a specific time period. (Prince George's County, Md.)

Land Use
- The occupation or use of land or water area for any human activity or any purpose (California Planning Roundtable)
- A description of how land is occupied or utilized. (Schaumburg, Ill.)
- A use of land that may result in an earth change, including but not limited to subdivision, residential, commercial, industrial industrial,

recreational, agricultural practices, or other development, private and public highway, road, and stream construction, and drainage construction. (Grand Traverse County, Mich.)
- The type of use activity occurring on a land parcel or within a building situated upon a land parcel. (Concrete, Wash.)

Land, Vacant
- Lands or buildings that are not actively used for any purpose. (California Planning Roundtable)
- A lot or parcel of land on which no improvements have been constructed. (Leesburg, Va.)

Landscape Architect
- A person who, by reason of his special knowledge of natural, physical and mathematical sciences, and the principles and methodology of landscape architecture and landscape architectural design acquired by professional education, practical experience, or both, is qualified to engage in the practice of landscape architecture and whose competence has been attested by the [state regulatory board] through certification as a landscape architect. (Campbell County, Va.)
- A professional individual registered in the state to practice in the field of landscape architecture. (Sedona, Ariz.)

Landscaping
- The bringing of the soil surface to a smooth finished grade, installing sufficient trees, shrubs, ground cover, and grass to soften building lines, provide shade, and generally produce a pleasing visual effect of the premises. (North Kansas City, Mo.)
- The area within the boundaries of a given lot that consists of planting materials, including but not limited to trees, shrubs, ground covers, grass, flowers, , bark, mulch, and other similar materials.
- The modification of the landscape for an aesthetic or functional purpose. It includes the preservation of existing vegetation and the continued maintenance thereof together with grading and installation of minor structures and appurtenances. (Kauai, Hawaii)

Lot
- A parcel of land occupied or intended for occupancy by a use permitted in this chapter, including one main building, together with any accessory buildings, open spaces, and parking spaces required by this chapter and having its principal frontage upon a street or upon an officially approved place. (Perryville, Mo.)
- A parcel of land recorded in the Office of the Clerk of the Court, or a parcel described by metes and bounds, the description of which has been so recorded. (Cecil County, Md.)
- A contiguous parcel of land in identical ownership throughout, bounded by other lots or streets, and used or set aside and available for use as the site of one or more buildings or other definite purpose. For the purpose of this title, a lot may or may not coincide with a lot of record. (Quincy, Mass.)

Lot Frontage
- That part of a lot (a lot line) abutting on a street or way; except that the ends of incomplete streets, or streets without a turning circle, shall not be considered frontage. (Quincy, Mass.)
- The horizontal distance between the side lot lines measured at the point where the side lot lines intersect the street right-of-way.
- All sides of a lot that abuts a street shall be considered frontage. On curvilinear streets, the arc between the side lot lines shall be considered the lot frontage (Blacksburg, Va.)
- The uninterrupted linear or curvilinear extent of a lot measured along the street right-of-way from the intersection of one side lot line to the intersection of the other side lot line. The measurement of lot frontage shall not include irregularities in the street line and, in the case of a corner lot, shall extend to the point of intersection of the side line of the rights-of-way.

Master Plan
- A comprehensive long-range plan intended to guide growth and development of a community or region and one that includes analysis, recommendation, and proposals for the community's population economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use. (Iowa State University Extension Service; Sheridan, Wyo.)
- A land-use plan focused on one or more sites within an area that identifies site access and general improvements and is intended to guide growth and development over a number of years, or in several phases. (Renton, Wash.)

Median
- An area in the approximate center of a city street or state highway that is used to separate the directional flow of traffic, may contain left-turn lanes, and is demarcated by curb and guttering, having painted or thermally applied stripes or other means of distinguishing it from the portion of the roadway used for through traffic. (Thornton, Colo.)

Mixed-Use Development
- The development of a tract of land or building or structure with two or more different uses such as but not limited to residential, office, retail, public, or entertainment, in a compact urban form.(Lake Elsinore, Ca.)
- A project which integrates a variety of land uses including residential, office, commercial, service, and employment and can result in measurable reductions in traffic impacts. (San Juan Capistrano, Ca.)
- A proposed development that includes primary non-residential and primary residential uses on the same development site. (Concord, N.C.)
- A tract of land or building or structure developed for two or more different uses such as, but not limited to, residential, office, manufacturing, retail, public, or entertainment. (Schaumburg, Ill.)

Mural
- Artwork applied to the wall of a building that covers all or substantially all of the wall and depicts a scene or event of natural, social, cultural, or historic significance. (Clearwater, Fla.)
- Any picture, scene, or diagram painted on any exterior wall or fence not interpreted by the zoning administrator to be advertising. Murals determined to be advertising shall be considered a sign and shall be included in the calculations of allowable sign area. (Clarkdale, Ariz.)
- A graphic design on a building which represents a person, place, scene, or other artistic endeavor. This definition does not include architectural enhancement of a building facade; however, this would be subject to the procedural and substantive design review portion of the [local code]. (Ashland, Ore.)

Natural Resource
- Air, land, water, and the elements thereof valued for their existing and potential usefulness to man. (Deschutes County, Ore.)
- Existing natural elements relating to land, water, air, plant and animal life, including but not limited to soils, geology, topography, surface and subsurface waters, wetlands, vegetation, and animal habitats. (Concord, N.C.)
- Land, air, water, ground water, drinking water supplies, fish and their habitats, wildlife and their habitats, biota and other such resources belonging to, managed by, held in trust by, appertaining to, or otherwise controlled by a governmental entity. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)

Neighborhood
- An area of a community with characteristics that distinguish it from other community areas and that may include schools, or social clubs, or boundaries defined by physical barriers, such as major highways and railroads, or natural features, such as rivers. (Iowa State University Extension Service)
- A subarea of the city in which the residents share a common identity focused around a school, park, community business center, or other feature. (Renton, Wash.)
- An area of a community with characteristics which distinguish it from others including distinct ethnic or economic bases, housing types, schools, or boundaries defined by distinct physical barriers such as railroads, arterial streets, rivers, or major drainage channels. (Clarkdale, Ariz.)

Neighborhood Facility
- A facility intended to serve or accommodate the needs of a specific segment of a community or area. (Fort Wayne, Ind.)

Node
- An identifiable grouping of uses subsidiary and dependent upon a larger urban grouping of similar or related uses. (Concord, N.C.)

Open Space
- Any land or area, the preservation of which in its present use would: (1) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources; or (2) protect streams or water supply; or (3) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes; or (4) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, or sanctuaries; or (5) enhance recreation opportunities. (Redmond, Wash.)
- Land and water areas retained for use as active or passive recreation areas or for resource protection in an essentially undeveloped state. (Cecil County, Md.)

Open Space, Active
- Open space that may be improved and set aside, dedicated, designated, or reserved for recreational facilities such as swimming pools, play equipment for children, ball fields, court games, picnic tables, etc. (Redmond, Wash.)

Open Space, Passive
- Open space that is essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated, or reserved for public or private use or for the use and enjoyment of owners or occupants. (Redmond, Wash.)

Outdoor Sales
- The display and sales of products or services primarily outside a structure and limited to those items generally stored, used, or inspected outdoors where parking is the principal use of the property. (Clarkdale, Ariz.)
- The display and sale of products and services outside of a building or structure, including vehicles, garden supplies, gas, motor oil, food and beverages, boats and aircraft, farm equipment, motor homes, burial monuments, building and landscape materials, and similar materials or items. (Fort Wayne, Ind.)

Park
- A noncommercial, not-forprofit facility designed to serve the recreation needs of the residents of the community. Such facilities include subdivision recreation facilities (neighborhood parks), community parks, regional parks, and special use facilities,all as described in the recreation and open space element of the [comprehensive plan]. Such facilities may also include but shall not be limited to school and religious institution ballfields, football fields, and soccer fields, if they meet the above definition. Commercial amusement facilities, such as water slides, go-cart tracks, and miniature golf courses shall not be considered parks. (Melbourne, Fla.)
- Any public or private land available for recreational, educational, cultural, or aesthetic use. (Mankato, Minn.)
- An open space with natural vegetation and landscaping; may include recreational facilities. (Austin, Tex.)

Park, Mini Park
- Small neighborhood park of approximately one acre or less.
- (California Planning Roundtable)

Park, Neighborhood
- City- or county-owned land intended to serve the recreation needs of people living or working within a one-half-mile radius of the park. (California Planning Roundtable)
- A publicly owned park as defined in the [local plan]. Such parks are generally a minimum size of eight acres, have a service area of one-half of a mile, and are designed to serve a population of approximately 3,000. Such parks usually do not include restrooms or lighted recreation facilities, and provide outdoor facilities such as informal softball, soccer, and football fields, basketball and tennis courts, picnic tables, and free play areas on turf. (Loveland, Colo.)

Parking Lot
- An off-street, surfaced, ground level open area, for the temporary storage of five or more motor vehicles. (Fayetteville, Ark.)
- An authorized area not within a building where motor vehicles are stored for the purpose of temporary, daily, or overnight off-street parking. (Richfield, Minn.)
- An open, hard-surfaced area, other than street or public way, to be used for the storage, for limited periods of time, of operable passenger automobiles and commercial vehicles, and available to the public, whether for compensation, free, or as an accommodation to clients or customers. (Belmont, Calif.)
- An area provided for self-parking by employees, visitors, and/or patrons of any office of state or local government, any public accommodations, commercial or industrial establishments, or any other business open to the general public. Also includes the area provided for self-parking by residents, visitors or employees of an apartment building available to the general public. (Las Cruces, N.Mex.)

Parking, On-Street
- The storage space for an automobile that is located within the street right-of-way. (Hilton Head, S.C.)

Parking Space
- An off-street space available for the parking of one motor vehicle conforming to the typical parking lot standards. (Southington, Conn.)
- Usable space within a public or private parking area, or a building of sufficient size and area, exclusive of access drives, aisles or ramps, for the storage of one properly spaced passenger automobile or commercial vehicle. (Belmont, Calif.)
- An area for the purpose of parking one automobile, having a minimum width of 10 feet and a minimum length of 22 feet, surfaced with concrete or asphalt, with access to a public street or alley. (Sheridan, Wyo.)

Parking space, off-street

- A space which is intended for off-street vehicular parking.
- (North Liberty, Iowa)
- A space of 180 square feet of appropriate dimensions for the parking of an automobile, exclusive of access drives and aisles thereto. (Beverly Hills, Calif.)
- Space occupied by automobiles on premises other than streets. (Ellington, Conn.)
- A space adequate for parking a motor vehicle with room for opening doors on both sides, together with properly related access to a public street or alley and maneuvering room. (Londonderry, N.H.)

Pedestrian-Friendly

- The density, layout, and infrastructure that encourages walking and biking within a subdivision or development, including short setbacks, front porches, sidewalks, and bikepaths. (Wayne County, Ohio)

Pedestrian-Oriented Development

- Development designed with an emphasis primarily on the street sidewalk and on pedestrian access to the site and building, rather than on auto access and parking areas. The building is generally placed close to the street and the main entrance is oriented to the street sidewalk. There are generally windows or display cases along building facades which face the street. Typically, buildings cover a large portion of the site. Although parking areas may be provided, they are generally limited in size and they are not emphasized by the design of the site. (Portland, Ore.)
- Development which is designed with a primary emphasis on the street sidewalk or connecting walkway access to the site and building, rather than on auto access and parking lots. In pedestrian-oriented developments, buildings are typically placed relatively close to the street and the main entrance is oriented to the street sidewalk or a walkway. Although parking areas and garages may be provided, they are not given primary emphasis in the design. (Loveland, Colo.)

Pedestrian Scale

- The proportional relationship between the dimensions of a building or building element, street, outdoor space, or streetscape element and the average dimensions of the human body, taking into account the perceptions and walking speed of a typical pedestrian.
- (Loveland, Colo.)
- Design and construction considerations based upon the scale of a human being which imbue occupants and users of the built environment with a sense of comfort and security. (Traverse City, Mich.)

Person

- Any individual, partnership, corporation, joint stock association, or any city or state or any subdivision thereof; and includes any trustee, receiver, assignee, or personal representative thereof. (Peoria, Ill.)
- An individual, partnership, organization, association, trust, or corporation. When used in a penalty provision, “person” shall include the members of such partnership, the trustees of such trust, and the officers and members of such organization, association, or corporation. (Cumberland, Md.)

Place

- An open, unoccupied space other than a street or alley, permanently reserved as a principal means of access to abutting property. (Dewey Beach, Del.)

Plan

- Can be an area plan; comprehensive plan; concept plan; congestion management plan; functional plan; general plan; implementation plan; or improvement plan.
- A document, adopted by an agency, that contains, in text, maps, and/or graphics, a method of proceeding, based on analysis and the application of foresight, to guide, direct, or constrain subsequent actions, in order to achieve goals. A plan may contain goals, policies, guidelines, and standards. (Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook)

Planting Area

- An unrestricted area which provides a pervious surface for plants to grow. (Huntington, Ind.)

Planting Strip

- A section of land not less than 10 feet in width intended to contain plant materials and for the purpose of creating a visual separation between uses or activities. (Carmel, Ind.)
- A strip intended to be planted with trees, shrubs, or other vegetation between the sidewalk and the curb or between the sidewalk and the public right-of-way or private easement line or between the pavement of a frontage road and the major street, limited-access highway, or freeway it parallels. (Sedona, Ariz.)

Playground

- A publicly owned area for recreational use primarily by children. (Palmer, Alaska)
- An area developed for active play and recreation that may contain courts for such games as basketball or tennis. (Hartford, Conn.)
- A recreation area with play apparatus. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)
- A land use designed principally to offer recreation, passive or active, to the public. (Glen Ellyn, Ill.)

Plaza

- An open space that may be improved, landscaped, or paved, usually surrounded by buildings or streets. (Miami, Fla.) are paved areas typically provided with amenities, such as seating, drinking and ornamental fountains, art, trees, and landscaping, for use by pedestrians. (Portland, Ore.)
- A public open space at ground level wholly or partly enclosed by a building or buildings. It is continuously accessible to the public and has openings to the sky. (Davis, Calif.)

Pollution

- The presence of matter or energy whose nature, location, or quantity produces undesired environmental effects. (California Planning Roundtable)
- The presence in the outdoor atmosphere, ground, or water of any substances, contaminants, noise, or man-made or maninduced alteration of the chemical, physical, biological, or radiological integrity of air or water, in quantities or at levels which are or may be potentially harmful or injurious to human health or welfare, animal, or plant life, or property, or unreasonably interfere with the enjoyment of life or property. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)

Public

- Belonging or open to, enjoyed and used by and/or maintained for the public generally, but not limited to a facility the control of which is wholly or partially exercised by some governmental agency. (Lake Elsinore, Calif.)
- Anything owned or operated by the federal government, state government, or any political subdivision. (Concord, N.C.)

Public Facilities
- Transportation systems or facilities, water systems or facilities, wastewater systems or facilities, storm drainage systems or facilities, fire, police, and emergency systems or facilities, electric utilities, gas utilities, cable facilities, or other public utilities. (Loveland, Colo.)
- Any facility, including but not limited to buildings, property, recreation areas, and roads, which are leased or otherwise operated or funded by a governmental body or public entity. (Limington, Maine)

Public Space
- A legal open space on the premises, accessible to a public way or street, such as yards, courts, or open spaces permanently devoted to public use, which abuts the premises and is permanently maintained, accessible to the fire department, and free of all encumbrances that might interfere with its use by the fire department. (Concord, N.C.)
- Open space, including any park, lake, stream, stadium, athletic field, playground, school yard, street, avenue, plaza, square, bus, train or railroad depot, station, terminal, cemetery, open space adjacent thereto, or any other place commonly open to the public, including but not limited to, areas on private property commonly open to the view by the public. (Champaign, Ill.)

Public Transportation
- Services provided for the public on a regular basis by vehicles such as bus or rail on public ways, using specific routes and schedules, and usually on a fare-paying basis. (Sacramento Regional Transit District)
- Transportation of passengers whether or not for hire by any means of conveyance, including but not limited to a street railway, elevated railway or guideway, subway, motor vehicle or motor bus, either publicly or privately owned and operated, carpool or vanpool, holding itself out to the general public for the transportation of persons within the territorial jurisdiction of the authority. (Concord, N.C.)

Quality Of Life
- The attributes or amenities that combine to make an area a good place to live. Examples include the availability of political, educational, and social support systems; good relations among constituent groups; a healthy physical environment; and economic opportunities for both individuals and businesses. (Indianapolis, Ind.)
- The personal perception of the physical, economic, and emotional well-being that exists in the community. (Larimer County, Colo.)

Railroad Crossing
- Where a public road or right-of-way intersects with railroad lines or tracks and one crosses over the other. This term shall include the entire width of the right-of-way of the public road and the entire width of the railroad right-of-way at the place of crossing. (Boone County, Ky.)

Recreation
- The refreshment of body and mind through forms of play, amusement, or relaxation. The recreational experience may be active, such as boating, fishing, and swimming, or may be passive, such as enjoying the natural beauty of the shoreline or its wildlife. (Renton, Wash.)
- The pursuit of leisure-time activities occurring in an outdoor setting. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)

Redevelopment
- Any proposed expansion, addition, or major facade change to an existing building, structure, or parking facility. (Wheeling, Ill.)
- Any rebuilding activity which has no net increase in built-upon area or which provides equal or greater stormwater control than the previous development. (Concord, N.C.)

Resident
- One who lives and usually works in the vicinity; not a visitor or transient. (Whatcom County, Wash.)
- An individual whose principal place of living and sleeping is in a particular location is a resident of that location. (Huntington, Ind.)

Retail
- The selling of goods, wares, or merchandise directly to the ultimate consumer or persons without a resale license. (Lake Elsinore, Calif.)

Right-of-Way
- A strip of land acquired by reservation, dedication, prescription, or condemnation and intended to be occupied by a street, trail, water line, sanitary sewer, and/or other public utilities or facilities. (Clark County, Nev.)
- The line determining the street or highway public limit or ownership. (Danville, N.Y.)
- A public or private area that allows for the passage of people or goods. Right-of-way includes passageways such as freeways, streets, bike paths, alleys, and walkways. A public right-of-way is a right-of-way that is dedicated or deeded to the public for public use and under the control of a public agency. (Portland, Ore.)

Road
- All property dedicated or intended for public or private road, street, alley, highway, freeway, or roadway purposes or to public easements therefore. (Johnson County, Iowa)
- That portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel. If a highway includes two or more separate roadways, the term "roadway" shall refer to any such roadway separately but not to all such roadways collectively. (Shreveport, La.)

Roundabout
- A raised island that is usually landscaped and located at the intersection of two streets used to reduce traffic speeds and accidents without diverting traffic onto adjacent residential streets. (American Planning Association)

Sense of Place
- The constructed and natural landmarks and social and economic surroundings that cause someone to identify with a particular place or community. (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources)
- The characteristics of a location that make it readily recognizable as being unique and different from its surroundings and that provides a feeling of belonging to or being identified with tat particular place. (Scottsdale, Ariz.)

Setback
- The minimum distance by which any building or structure must be separated from a street right-of-way or lot line. (Blacksburg, Va.)
- The required distance between every structure and the lot lines of the lot on which it is located. (Doylestown, Ohio)
- The distance between a street line and the front building line of a principal building or structure, projected to the side lines of the lot and including driveways and parking areas, except where otherwise restricted by this ordinance. (Duluth, Ga.)

Shade
- A shadow, except a shadow caused by a narrow object, including but not limited to a utility pole, an antenna, a wire, or a flagpole. (Deschutes County, Ore.)
- A shadow cast by the shade point of a structure or vegetation when the sun is at an altitude of 21.3 degrees and an azimuth ranging from 22.7 degrees east and west of true south. (Beaverton, Ore.)

Shadow Pattern.

- A graphic representation of an area that would be shaded by the shade point of a structure or vegetation when the sun is at an altitude of 21.3 degrees and an azimuth ranging between 22.7 degrees east and west of true south. (Beaverton, Ore.)

Shopping Center

- A group of commercial establishments planned, constructed, and managed as a total entity with customer and employee parking provided on-site, provision for goods delivery separated from customer access, aesthetic considerations, and protection from the elements. (Iowa State University Extension Service)
- A group of retail and other commercial establishments that is planned, owned, and managed as a single property. On-site parking is provided. The center's size and orientation are generally determined by the market characteristics of the trade area served by the center. The two main configurations of shopping centers are malls and open-air strip centers. (International Council of Shopping Centers)
- A group of stores planned and designed for the site on which it is built, functioning as a unit, with off-street parking, landscaped areas, and pedestrian malls or plazas provided on the property as an integral part of the unit. (Scottsdale, Ariz.)

Shopping Center, Community

- A center that typically offers a wider range of apparel and other soft goods than the neighborhood center does. Among the more common anchors are supermarkets, super drugstores, and discount department stores. Community center tenants sometimes contain off-price retailers selling such items as apparel, home improvements/ furnishings, toys, electronics, or sporting goods. The center is usually configured as a strip, in a strip line, or "L" or "U" shape. Of the eight center types, community centers encompass the widest range of formats.
- For example, certain centers that are anchored by a large discount department store refer to themselves as discount centers. Others with a high percentage of square footage allocated to off-price retailers can be termed off-price centers. (International Council of Shopping Centers)

Shopping Mall

- A facility with five or more stores for retail goods and services, which are structurally designed in an integrated fashion around or along both sides of a promenade, walkway, concourse, or courtyard. Primary individual store entrances front onto this promenade.
- The mall may include offices and satellite or unattached structures that are served by the mall road network. This definition applies only to a facility in which 85 percent or more of the gross floor area is accessed from enclosed promenades, walkways, concourses, or courtyards. (Prince William County, Va.)
- Malls are typically enclosed, with a climate- controlled walkway between two facing strips of stores. The term represents the most common design mode for regional and superregional centers and has become an informal term for these types of centers. (International Council of Shopping Centers)

Sidewalk

- An improved pedestrian surface that is typically located adjacent to a roadway. (Farragut, Tenn.)
- Any strip or section of concrete, stone, or macadam a minimum of four feet in width, the prime purpose of which is a walkway. (Bensalem Township, Pa.)
- A paved surface or leveled area separated from the street and used as a pedestrian walkway. (Lake Elsinore, Calif.)
- That portion of a street between the curb lines, or the lateral lines of a roadway, and the adjacent property lines, intended for the use of pedestrians. (Norton, Ohio)
- That portion of a vehicular thoroughfare not within the roadway and set apart by curbs, barriers, markings, or other delineations for pedestrian travel. (San Juan Capistrano, Calif.)
- [Areas] located along streets, within the right-of-way or easement, separated by a curb, planter, or both from the street, and designated for preferential use by pedestrians. (Beaverton, Ore.)

Sign

- Any device (including but not limited to letters, words, numerals, figures, emblems, pictures, or any part or combination) used for visual communication intended to attract the attention of the public and visible to the public rightof- way or other properties. The term "sign" shall not include any flag, badge, or insignia or any governmental unit, nor shall it include any item of merchandise normally displayed within a show window of a business. (Glendale, Ariz.)
- Any words, lettering, figures, numerals, emblems, devices, trademarks, or trade names, or any combination thereof, by which anything is made known and which is designed to attract attention or convey a message. (Doylestown, Ohio)

Sign, Bus Stop

- Signs located on benches or shelters placed in the public rights-of-way or on private property adjacent to public rights-of-way at a bus stop pursuant to a written agreement with the city which sets forth the regulations for size, content, placement, design, and materials used in the construction of said signs, benches, and shelters. (Loveland, Colo.)

Site

- Any geographical area. (Blacksburg, Va.)
- A parcel of land or portion thereof with frontage on a street, devoted to or intended for a use or occupied by a structure or a group of structures. (Cotati, Calif.)
- A lot or group of contiguous lots not divided by an alley, street, other right-ofway, or city limit, that is proposed for development in accord with the provisions of this code and is in a single ownership or has multiple owners, all of whom join in an application for development. (Newport Beach, Calif.)
- The entire lot or series of adjoining lots on which a use is or will locate and that is otherwise subject to the provision of this code. (Burien, Wash.)

Site Plan

- A plan, to scale, showing uses and structures proposed for a parcel of land as required by the regulations. Includes lot lines, streets, building sites, reserved open space, buildings, major landscape features—both natural and manmade—and, depending on requirements, the locations of proposed utility lines. (Handbook for Planning Commissioners in Missouri)
- A required submission, prepared and approved, that is a detailed engineering drawing of the proposed improvements required in the development of a given lot. (Prince William County, Va.)

Skate Park

- A public facility that is designed for use by persons riding skateboards, in-line skates, or roller skates. (Sunnyvale, Calif.)

Smart Growth

- Planning, regulatory, and development practices and techniques founded upon and promoting the following principles:
- (1) using land resources more efficiently through compact building forms, infill development, and moderation in street and parking standards in order to lessen land consumption and preserve natural resources;
- (2) supporting the location of stores, offices, residences, schools, recreational spaces, and other public facilities within walking distance of each other in compact neighborhoods that are designed to provide alternate opportunities for easier movement and interaction;
- (3) providing a variety of housing choices so that the young and old, single persons and families, and those of varying economic ability may find places to live;
- (4) supporting walking, cycling, and transit as attractive alternatives to driving; providing alternative routes that disperse, rather than concentrate, traffic congestion; and lowering traffic speeds in neighborhoods;
- (5) connecting infrastructure and development decisions to minimize future costs by creating neighborhoods where more people use existing services and facilities, and by integrating development and land use with transit routes and stations; and
- (6) improving the development review process and development standards so that developers are encouraged to apply the principles stated above. (Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook)

Sprawl

- Urban development or uses that are located in predominantly rural areas, or rural areas interspersed with generally low-intensity or low-density urban uses, and which are characterized by one or more of the following conditions:
- (a) The premature or poorly planned conversion of rural land to other uses;
- (b) The creation of areas of urban development or uses that are not functionally related to land uses which predominate the adjacent area; or
- (c) The creation of areas of urban development or uses that fail to maximize the use of existing public facilities or the use of areas within which public services are currently provided.
- Urban sprawl is typically manifested in one or more of the following land use or development patterns: leapfrog or scattered development; strip commercial development; large expanses of predominantly low-intensity, low-density, or single-use development. (Martin County, Fla.)

Stadium

- A large building with tiers of seats for spectators at sporting or other recreational events. (Dona Ana County, N.Mex.)

Storefront

- Display windows of a building housing a commercial use visible from a street, sidewalk, or other pedestrian way accessible to the public, or adjacent public or private property. (Bronxville, N.Y.)

Stormwater Management

- Any stormwater management technique, apparatus, or facility that controls or manages the path, storage, or rate of release of stormwater runoff. Such facilities may include storm sewers, retention or detention basins, drainage channels, drainage swales, inlet or outlet structures, or other similar facilities. (Champaign, Ill.)
- The collecting, conveyance, channeling, holding, retaining, detaining, infiltrating, diverting, treating, or filtering of surface water, ground water, and/or runoff, together with applicable managerial (nonstructural) measures. (Redmond, Wash.)
- The system, or combination of systems, designed to treat stormwater, or collect, convey, channel, hold, inhibit, or divert the movement of stormwater on, through, and from a site. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)

Stormwater Runoff

- Surplus surface water generated by rainfall that does not seep into the earth but flows overland to flowing or stagnant bodies of water. (Larkspur, Calif.)
- Waters from rains falling within a tributary drainage basin, flowing over the surface of the ground or collected in channels, watercourses, or conduits, measured in depth of inches. (Grand Traverse County, Mich.)
- The direct runoff of water resulting from precipitation in any form. (Concord, N.C.)
- That portion of the stormwater that flows from the land surface of a site either naturally, in man-made ditches, or in a closed conduit system. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)

Street

- A public thoroughfare, including road, highway, drive, lane, avenue, place, boulevard, and any other thoroughfare that affords the principal means of access to abutting property. (Glendale, Ariz.)
- Any vehicular way that: (1) is an existing state or municipal roadway: or, (2) is shown on a plat approved pursuant to law; or, (3) is approved by other official action. "Street" shall include road and highway. Unless otherwise indicated, the term street shall refer to both public and private streets. (Blacksburg, Va.)

Street, Arterial

- A major way used for fast or heavy traffic. (Taos, N.Mex.)
- A street designed to carry large volumes of traffic and providing for efficient vehicular movement between large areas of the city. (Roswell, N. Mex.)
- Serves the major traffic movements within the city such as between the central business district and the outlying commercial and residential areas. Serves a major portion of the vehicular traffic entering and leaving the city. (Garrett, Ind.)
- A major street for carrying a large volume of through traffic in the area; normally controlled by traffic signs and signals. (Concord Township, Pa.)

Street Capacity

- The maximum number of vehicles which have a reasonable expectation of passing over a given section of a lane or a roadway in one direction, or in both directions for a two- or four-lane highway, during a given time period under prevailing traffic conditions. In the absence of a modifier, capacity is based upon hourly volumes. (Citrus County, Fla.)
- The maximum number of vehicles which can pass a given point during one hour under prevailing roadway and traffic conditions. (Prince George's County, Md.)

Street, Center Line of

- A right-of-way, as defined or surveyed by the state department of transportation or the city engineering department. (Durham, N.C.)
- An imaginary line that is equidistant from the boundaries of the street. (Boulder, Colo.)
- A line halfway between the street rightof- way lines. (Baton Rouge, La.)
- The true centerline of a street right-of-way that has been fully dedicated to the required width. (Concord, N.C.)

Street Frontage
- The distance along which a property line of a lot adjoins a public or private street. (Las Vegas, Nev.)
- The contiguous linear distance of the line separating the lot from a street, as defined in this ordinance. (Limington, Maine)

Street Furniture
- Those features associated with a street that are intended to enhance that street's physical character and use by pedestrians, such as benches, trash receptacles, kiosks, lights, newspaper racks, etc. (Larkspur, Calif.)
- Man-made, aboveground items that are usually found in a street right-of-way such as hydrants, manhole covers, benches, traffic lights and signs, utility poles and lines, parking meters, and the like. (Lake Elsinore, Calif.)
- Man-made, aboveground items that are usually found in street rights-of-way, including benches, kiosks, plants, canopies, and phone booths. (Conemaugh Township, Pa.)

Street Scape
- An area that may either abut or be contained within a public or private street right-of-way or accessway that may contain sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping or trees, and similar features. (Prince William County, Va.)
- Portion of a lot's net area and improvements that is exposed to view from the street. (Temecula, Calif.)
- The visual image of a street , including the combination of buildings, parking, signs, and other hardscape and street furniture. (Las Vegas, Nev.)
- The space between the buildings on either side of a street that defines its character. The elements of a streetscape include building frontage/ façade, landscaping (trees, yards, bushes, plantings, etc.), sidewalks, street paving, street furniture (benches, kiosks, trash receptacles, fountains, etc), signs, awnings, and street Lighting (Austin, Tex.)

Strip Development
- Commercial zoning/ development immediately adjacent and parallel to a collector or arterial street that is generally less than 250 feet in depth. (Jefferson County, Colo.)
- Commercial, retail, or industrial development, usually one lot deep, that fronts on a major street. (Elbert County, Colo.)
- A mix of development, usually commercial, extending along both sides of a major street. In zoning terms, a strip zone may refer to a district consisting of a ribbon of highway commercial uses fronting both sides of a major arterial route. (Handbook for Planning Commissioners in Missouri)
- Commercial development, usually one store deep, that fronts on a major street for a distance of one city block or more. Includes individual buildings on their own lots, with or without on-site parking, and small linear shopping centers with shallow on-site parking in front of the stores. (California Planning Roundtable)

Suburban
- A city's outlying area, usually characterized by lower population and residential densities. (Prince George's County, Md.)
- The low- to medium-intensity development patterns which surround the downtown or other more intense, urban areas of the city. (Raleigh, N. Carol.)
- Low- to medium-development patterns that surround the urban areas of a city. The suburbs are often residential in character with single-family detached houses as the primary use of land. Increasingly, the suburbs contain employment and subdivision vice centers as well as residential areas. The automobile historically determines the form of

Sustainable Economy
- A system which maintains or enhances current economic opportunity and community well being without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Larimer County, Colo.)

Town Scape
- The physical elements of the urban landscape and includes the natural setting, street patterns, water courses, and overall building placement, height, scale, color, wall types, and prominent views. (Santa Fe, N.Mex.)

Traffic
- Pedestrians, ridden or herded animals, vehicles, and other devices, either singly or together, while using any street or highway for purposes of travel. (Norton, Ohio)

Traffic, Average Daily
- The average number of vehicles using a traveled way for a 24-hour period determined by dividing the total number of vehicles for a stated period by the number of days in that time period. In calculating vehicle trips, trucks with trailers shall be adjusted to a passenger car equivalent. (San Juan Capristrano, Calif.)

Traffic Calming
- A concept fundamentally concerned with reducing the adverse impact of motor vehicles on builtup areas. Usually involves reducing vehicle speeds, providing more space for pedestrians and cyclists, and improving the local environment. (University of Leeds, Institute for Transportation, UK)
- Reducing motorist speed, decreasing motor vehicle volumes, and increasing safety for pedestrians and nonmotorized vehicles. (University of Hawaii at Manoa, Department of Urban and Regional Planning)
- The installation of speed humps, traffic circles, or similar devices intended to discourage speeding or to discourage through traffic. (Beaverton, Ore.)

Transit
- The conveyance of persons or goods from one place to another by means of a local, public transportation system. (California Planning Roundtable)
- Passenger services provided by public, private, or nonprofit entities such as the following surface transit modes: commuter rail, rail rapid transit, light rail transit, light guideway transit, express bus, and local fixed route bus. (Temple Terrace, Fla.)
- A system of high-speed mass transit operating on exclusive rights-of-way. (Oakland, CA)

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Moderate and high-density housing concentrated in mixed-use developments located along transit routes. . . . The location, design, and mix of uses in a TOD emphasize pedestrian-oriented environments and encourage the use of public transportation. (Community Green Line Planning Project, "Putting Neighborhoods on the Right Track," Chicago)
- A mixed-use community within an average 2,000-foot walking distance of a transit stop and core commercial area. TODs mix residential, retail, office, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot, or car. (California Planning Roundtable)
- Moderate- or high-density housing concentrated in mixed-use

developments that encourage the use of public transportation. (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources)

Transit, Passenger

- A commercial or public facility for the loading and unloading of passengers, luggage, and packages, including sales of fares, and which may include accessory restaurants, indoor commercial amusements, and retail sales, but not including airports. (Concord, N.C.)

Transit Platform

- That portion of the station directly adjacent to the tracks at which trains stop to load and unload passengers. (Sacramento Regional Transit District)

Transit, Public

- A system of regularly-scheduled buses and/or trains available to the public on a fee-per ride basis. (California Planning Roundtable)

Transit Stop

- A facility located at selected points along transit routes for passenger pickup, drop off, or transfer, but excluding areas for vehicle repair or storage, which are defined as a public service facility, or bus stops or shelters. (Loveland, Colo.)
- All real and personal property necessary or useful in rendering transit service by means of rail, bus, water, and any other mode of travel including, without limitation, tracks, rights-of-way, bridges, tunnels, subways, rolling stock for rail, motor vehicles, stations, terminals, areas for parking, and all equipment, fixtures, buildings and structures, and services incidental to or required in connection with the performance of transit service. (Concord, N.C.)

Tree

- A plant having at least one well-defined stem or trunk and normally attaining a mature height of at least 15 feet, with an average mature spread of 15 feet, and having a trunk that shall be kept clear of leaves and branches at least six feet above grade at maturity. (Santa Monica, Calif.)

Tree Canopy

- Any self-supporting woody plant of a species that normally achieves an overall height at maturity of 30 feet or more. (Nashville and Davidson County, Tenn.)

Tree, Street

- A tree that is currently located or proposed for planting along streets or highways. Such tree can be located on private property or on publicly held land. Street trees are typically planted in a linear fashion and provide spatial enclosure as well as other technical and aesthetic benefits. (Wildwood, Mo.)
- Trees, shrubs, bushes, and all other woody vegetation on land lying between the property lines on either side of all streets, avenues, or ways within a city/ village. (State of Nebraska)

Urban Design

- The attempt to give form, in terms of both beauty and function, to selected urban areas or to whole cities. Urban design is concerned with the location, mass, and design of various urban components and combines element of urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. (California Planning Roundtable)

Urban Growth

- Development that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, other structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, fiber, or other a agricultural products, or the extraction of mineral resources and that, when allowed to spread over wide areas, typically requires urban services. (Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook)

Vehicle Ridership, Average

- Calculated by dividing the number of employees who report to the work site or another job-related activity between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. inclusive Monday through Friday by the number of vehicles used by these employees. The AVR calculation requires that a five consecutive-weekday average be used and cannot include a holiday. (San Juan Capristrano, Calif.)
- The average of one way vehicular trips that use a road or driveway during a 24- hour period. (Boulder County, Colo.)

Vicinity Map

- A map, not necessarily to scale, showing the general location of the proposed development in relation to other developments within a one mile radius. (Loveland, Colo.)
- A drawing or diagram, to scale, showing the location of the proposed development in relation to abutting properties, major streets, and other known landmarks. (Sandy, Ore.)
- A drawing which sets forth by dimensions or other means the relationship of a property or use to other nearby developments of landmarks and community facilities and services within [township] in order to better locate and orient the area in question. (Trenton Township, Ohio)

View

- A range of sight including pleasing vistas or prospects or scenes.
- Views include but are not limited to the sight of geologic features, bays, oceans, skylines, bridges, and distant cities. (Contra Costa County, Calif.)

Xeriscaping

- A set of garden design and landscape maintenance principles that promote good horticultural practices and efficient use of water. The term “xeriscape” is a registered trademark of the National Xeriscape Council and means water-conserving, drought-tolerant landscaping. (Oviedo, Fla.)
- Landscaping characterized by the use of vegetation that is drought-tolerant or of low water use in character. (Temecula, Calif.)

Zoning

- The division of a city or county by legislative regulations into areas, or zones, which specify allowable uses for real property and size restrictions for buildings within these areas. Also, a program that implements policies of the general plan. (California Planning Roundtable)
- A police power measure in which the community is divided into districts or zones within which permitted and special uses are established as are regulations governing lot size, building bulk, placement, and other development standards. (Sacramento, Calif.)


Blackstone Bikeway
Manchester Center
Lafayette Park
Blackstone Bikeway