



LA HABRA BOULEVARD SPECIFIC PLAN UPDATE



Stakeholder Interviews Summary

On October 11, 2023, key stakeholders were invited to participate in group interviews to share their ideas and vision for La Habra Boulevard. City staff identified the stakeholders and was responsible for contacting the interviewees and coordinating interview times. The consultant team (MIG, Inc.) conducted the interviews using the digital platform Zoom. Stakeholders representing the Chamber of Commerce, La Habra Collaborative, local service clubs, arts and cultural organizations, local schools, youth and family organizations, and faith-based organizations joined the group interviews.

Interviewees were given a brief overview of the Specific Plan Update project then asked a series of questions (text inset) in a conversational format. This summary presents key themes, opportunities, and issues discussed during the interviews.

Key Themes

A few key themes emerged across all four of the interviews.

- **Rich History and Culture:** Celebrate the community's diversity through visual art installations and by expanding ethnic/culturally relevant spaces.
- **Downtown Core:** Support the development of a downtown core. A centrally located, inviting, and lively destination for the community to explore.
- **Pedestrian Activity:** Key changes are needed to improve pedestrians' experience including streetscape improvements and making it safer to move along the corridor.
- **Community Gathering Spaces:** The Boulevard lacks outdoor spaces for residents of all ages to gather.

Celebrate Diversity

Stakeholders mentioned they would like to see the community's diversity celebrated along the corridor. Some suggestions on how the City could facilitate and support diversity include an international food court or

QUESTIONS

1. What are the main attractions along (or near) the corridor that you frequent the most?
2. What do you want to preserve, if anything, about the La Habra Boulevard corridor as it is today? Consider appearance, uses, landscaping, etc.
3. What do you wish La Habra Boulevard had that it currently doesn't?
4. What would you like to change and how would you change it?
5. Are there other areas in La Habra or nearby communities which may serve as examples for this corridor? If so, what are they? Why?
6. What is the biggest opportunity along the corridor?
7. Is there an issue facing the corridor that the planning team should be aware of? What is the issue?
8. How long have you lived or worked in La Habra? How has La Habra Boulevard changed over that time?
9. If you own a business, a property, or are involved with a school within the corridor, do you have any plans for changes to your business/property that may occur within the next five years? Why?
10. Anything else you would like to share?

market, introducing a variety of restaurants representing all La Habra residents (e.g., Korean), expanding and advertising ethnic/culturally relevant spaces, and incorporating art that represent the history of La Habra.

Cohesive Look and Feel

The fifteen interviewees had varying ties connecting them to La Habra – some self-identified as longtime residents while others live in the surrounding communities but work in La Habra. Many long-time residents noted that not much has changed along the corridor over the past 20 to 30 years. Restaurants, small, mom and pop businesses, City facilities, schools, and Costco were mentioned as the main attractions along the corridor that are frequented often.

The sense of history and authenticity are valued throughout the community. However, stakeholders shared that many buildings and spaces along the corridor are not well maintained, especially between Monte Vista Street and Walnut Street. Current characteristics and qualities along the corridor that stakeholders would like to preserve include:

- Historic and civic buildings
- Mission architecture style and style of newer buildings (i.e., City Hall)
- Small town feel
- Local and small businesses

Gathering Spaces

Interviewees voiced a strong desire for social gathering spaces that would allow the community to safely come together and foster a sense of community. Gathering spaces for parties and celebrations, green open spaces for recreation or leisure, and a place for families and youth to frequent after school sporting events were examples stakeholders shared. Additionally, outdoor seating for restaurants was also suggested and noted as convenient for the various street fairs and festivals that take place in La Habra. Other recommendations that could foster social gathering include additional businesses that encourage people to stop—like bookstores and gift shops—, a weekly farmers market or street market, and adding community gardens in spaces between buildings.

Regional Attraction

When asked about their thoughts regarding the various street fairs and festivals, interviewees supported them as they help generate local revenue, provide affordable local events for families to attend, and help create a sense of community. Interest in creating a semi-permanent space for events like these was expressed.

Pedestrian Experience

Ideas shared during the conversation with stakeholders focused on façade improvements and ways to improve pedestrian’s experience along the corridor, particularly related to safety and making the space easier to navigate and explore. Stakeholder’s suggestions include developing the alleyways, improving visibility along sidewalks, adding designated crosswalks (possibly incorporating scramble intersections), and reducing the number of driving lanes in certain areas (i.e., Cypress Street to Walnut Street or Monte Vista Street).

Public safety was mentioned in several different contexts. Illicit activity, high vehicle speeds on Euclid Street by the police station and The Children’s Museum, and the lack of resources and tools to help address issues related to homelessness were shared concerns among interviewees that impacted their pedestrian experience.

Stakeholders emphasized they would like improvements related to safety prioritized over aesthetic improvements.

Mixed Use and Residential

Interviewees shared their thoughts on housing along the corridor, some comments may be contradictory where there was a difference in opinion. The need for additional housing in La Habra was stated, multi-family housing that is cohesive and consistent in style with surrounding buildings as well as mixed-use spaces especially along the corridor were suggested. Some stakeholders are wary of congestion and traffic that may come from increasing density while others did not like the idea of housing and commercial uses being mixed and would prefer to keep the uses separate.

Mobility and Streetscape Improvements

Several interviewees shared that they only use La Habra Boulevard as a pass through street, on their way somewhere else. Others avoid La Habra Boulevard completely due to congestion. Interviewees were, overall, receptive to introducing traffic calming measures to address high vehicle speeds. Ideas discussed included additional crosswalks, medians, additional left turn lanes, and reducing the number of traffic lanes. In order to capture the commuter traffic that is not currently stopping, streetscape improvements were discussed that would create a more comfortable and inviting environment to walk. The following ideas were discussed:

- increased visibility along sidewalks,
- a centrally located parking garage—encouraging residents, the daily workforce, and visitors to park once and walk,
- more seating options and more shade, and
- adding more plants and greenery to beautify the corridor (to address the empty planter boxes and tree wells among other things).

Planned Development

Stakeholders shared plans for changes to their business or property within the next five years. These changes include the La Habra Women’s Club being relocated by the City to bring them more visibility, relocation of La Habra Art Association to 106 E. 1st Avenue, and the library undergoing extensive remodeling.

Opportunity Sites

Many interviewees noted the former Burch Ford site (at La Habra Boulevard and Harbor Boulevard) and the former Northgate market site as opportunities for redevelopment. Some proposed creating a centralized commercial area at the La Habra Boulevard and Harbor Boulevard intersection, creating a synergy for businesses and a space for the community to gather. Support for the Planet Fitness was expressed at the former Northgate market site.

Nearby Communities

Interviewees were encouraged to share their experiences in other areas of La Habra or nearby communities where they enjoy spending time, as they might serve as examples for this corridor. The following areas were discussed:

- Cudahy – major corridor provides access to wi-fi and offers covered parking with solar panels.
- Seal Beach – outdoor exercise equipment.

- Old Town/Downtown Orange – enjoyable pedestrian experience, good balance and mix of commercial/retail spaces, visual aesthetics, layout, well-maintained outdoor space, and historical buildings were preserved but façade was improved.
- Simi Valley – Simi Valley Town Center has a nice outdoor shopping mall.
- Monrovia – Myrtle Avenue is a pedestrian friendly corridor.
- Huntington Beach – public art displays.
- Uptown Whittier – integration of various architectural styles that work well together.
- La Habra – Imperial Highway shopping center helped activate the surrounding area; improvements near City Hall and the police station are great; townhomes near the library blend in with surrounding uses.
- Other communities mentioned by interviewees as good examples include Brea, Glendale, Downtown Fullerton, La Verne, Downtown Covina, Glendora Downtown, and Tustin.