

Your Community — Your Vision

NORTHRIDGE VISION

Executive Summary

The Northridge of tomorrow offers an ever-increasing array of shopping, dining, and recreational opportunities. Reseda Boulevard provides a backbone for a well-balanced cluster of amenities, retail outlets and dining opportunities. Mixed-use planning and transit-oriented development hold great promise for the future of town centers, relieving congestion and reducing pollution. They provide a means of accommodating population shifts without significantly impacting the existing community. The blending of commercial and residential uses contributes to an improved quality of life by offering a more pedestrian-oriented and desirable main street corridor: “University Village.”

The community of Northridge is a place of tremendous potential and opportunity. Northridge Vision analyzes the major strengths and assets of the community and its neighborhoods, identifying areas of need and opportunity. It provides concepts and strategies that can be implemented, and tools that can be utilized to realize Northridge’s future as a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Communities like Northridge change over time, and risk decline and obsolescence if they lack a vision or lose their sense of direction. Northridge stakeholders all agree, the key will be in collaborative implementation of a community vision.

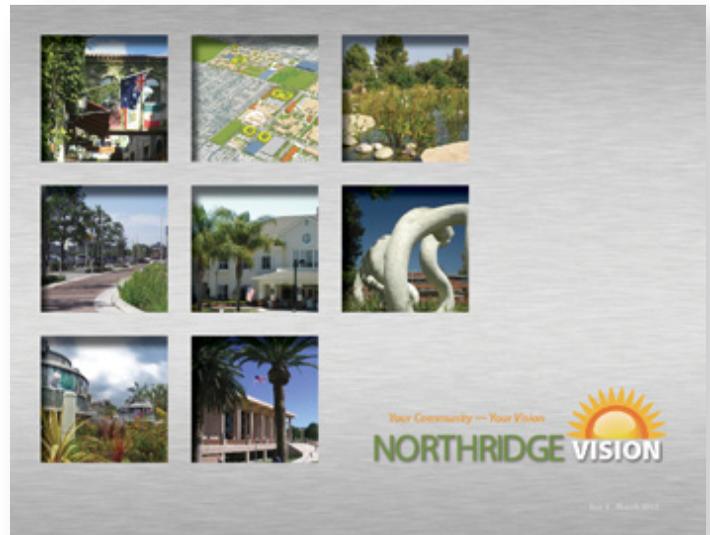
Tools and concepts presented are intended for inclusion in future iterations of the Northridge Community Plan. Beyond that, these and other navigational documents will guide community planning efforts on five, ten, and twenty-year planning horizons.

The majority of the land in Northridge is single-family residential. The visioning roundtables made it clear that residents are not anxious to see this change in any substantial way. Most realize that some amount of change is inevitable and—as this vision process would suggest—desirable. The preference is to focus changes along main thoroughfares, in business districts and centers, and in the buffer zones between CSUN,¹ the commercial corridor, and single-family residential properties. Much of this could come in the form of Vision-friendly mixed uses and transit-oriented development.

One of the main goals of the Northridge Vision project is to connect the Central Business District of Northridge with the Cal State University Northridge campus. When driving, walking or cycling down Northridge’s main street, Reseda Boulevard, visitors should be aware that there is a world-class university a mere block away.

Current zoning and land use planning in the Northridge area will benefit from a much more proactive and visionary approach. Central to this plan is the cultivation of streetscape and economic development in the commercial strips and centers of Northridge—particularly the Reseda

¹ Cal State University Northridge



Boulevard corridor.

The purpose of visioning is to provide a variety of ideas and alternatives—a “toolbox” with a wide range of applications to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. We are in a position to encourage and cultivate the type of improvements we envision through our determination, and with the power of our good ideas, creative programming, and best practices.

Once this plan is established, the next challenge is to clearly and credibly articulate that vision to those who can contribute to making it a reality. Implementation resources may come in the form of leadership, investment, creativity or entrepreneurship. But, the all-important ingredient comes from cultivation of community support for Vision-friendly projects and initiatives. The degree to which Northridge Vision succeeds will depend on the level of support received from community leaders and stakeholders.

The immense campus of Cal State University Northridge, with over 40,000 students and faculty, is an extraordinary regional asset with huge potential for increasing the visibility of the Northridge community. On its next update, the Northridge Community Plan² can enjoy a great deal of leverage and support by coordinating with, and capitalizing on CSUN’s 2005 *Master Plan Update, Envision 2035*.³

CSUN’s new Valley Performing Arts Center is a unique and incredibly valuable regional asset. As a focal point for a new “University Village” initiative, VPAC has the potential to enhance economic prosperity in the community, and to dramatically enrich its artistic and cultural environment.

The Northridge Hospital Medical Center is another major regional asset that sets the community apart, both as a regional resource and as a local economic engine. Future Community Plan updates will provide opportunities to cultivate and enhance the medical center. Strategic planning and zoning will also prove useful in supporting the surrounding healthcare cluster.

² The Community Plan is the part of the City of Los Angeles General Plan that describes and details land uses at the parcel level.

³ California State University Northridge, *2005 Master Plan Update, Envision 2035*

Private investments are not easy to come by, and community groups only have a handful of tools that they can use to affect changes and revitalize their town centers. Often overlooked is their ability to work with governing agencies in planning and zoning, in a proactive rather than reactive fashion. Recognizing that change is inevitable, it is within the power of the stakeholders to promote change for the better.

Residents would like improved mobility within the Central Business District including pedestrians, cyclists and public transit. Streets are the backbones of our communities. They are the key to livability and ought to be for everyone, whether young or old, motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper.

Initiatives

1. Continuity of Collaboration for Northridge Vision - Maintain an ongoing committee with a broadly-supported mission statement and fail-safe succession plan

2. Business and Property Owners Association - Reseda Boulevard Initiatives

3. Planning Initiative

4. Fundraising Initiatives

5. Sustainable Industries, Emerging Clusters and the Economy

6. Livable Communities - Quality of Life Initiatives.

7. Initiatives to locate tenants complementary to the existing offerings so as to balance retail, dining, services, entertainment, and other amenities in a way that allows visitors to park once, and keeps them in the district for more than one activity. A big part of the “park-once” equation is creating the right sense of place.

The best starting point for outreach and intervention is with the largest property owners. They tend to have the most at stake, and the most to gain. They generally have access to capital and are sophisticated enough to understand the strategies being proposed. Not only are they apt to participate, but can even turn out to be the strongest advocates for the Vision.

8. Main streets give communities their identity and character, they promote multi-modal transportation, support economic growth, and may have scenic or historic value.⁴ Possible tools include:

- Visual cues help drivers recognize that they are entering an area of increased pedestrian, bicycle or other non-motorized activity
- Gateway treatments, that are typically signs or monuments
- Sidewalks, typically accompanied by curb and gutter, to designate portions of the roadway for motorized and non-motorized users
- Broad Sidewalks to accommodate high volumes of pedestrians, bus shelters, streetscape, sidewalk cafes and other outdoor uses.
- Raised medians or traffic islands, typically installed

as an access management technique and to provide a pedestrian refuge area or accommodate landscaping

- Raised Median Islands for pedestrian refuge, reduced scale of the main street, and with added landscaping, make the public space aesthetically more pleasing.
- Landscaping in medians, sidewalk planting strips and planters
- Trees can calm traffic by making the road appear narrower. Street trees add an attractive canopy over the main street and may increase comfort for pedestrians. They create comfortable spaces and soften lighting. They cool streets in the summer, and provide a windbreak in the winter. Ornamental lighting, planters, benches, trash receptacles, light poles, traffic signals, overhead banners, artwork, bus shelters and other street furniture
- Street Furnishings, benches, kiosks, bollards, bike racks, planters, etc.
- Street Landscaping
- Pedestrian signs
- Textured crosswalks, rumble strips or intersection pavement
- Unique Pedestrian Crossings
- Intersection crosswalk markings to channelize pedestrians into a preferred path at intersections and give visual cues to drivers
- Mid-Block Crossings
- Limit lines set back from crosswalks
- Transportation Art
- Roundabouts
- Lower Speed Limits
- Reduce the number of lanes
- Reduce Lane Width
- Synchronized Signals for Throughput at Lower Speeds
- Parking Configurations that complement the district as a destination
- Diagonally-angled parking to accommodate more parking spaces on the main street
- On-street parallel parking and landscaped sidewalk planting strips can provide a welcome buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles.
- Sidewalk Bulbouts and Curb Extensions into the roadway with textured/aesthetic surface treatment and integrated into the streetscape design; allowing sidewalk widening, placement of street furniture, landscaping, kiosks, statuary, bike racks, bollards and other design features
- Street Lights that are unique and decorative
- Banners and Decorations



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⁴ See *Main Streets: Flexibility in Design and Operation*, (Caltrans, Sacramento, CA - 2005) pp 8-13