



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

November 4, 2025
Agenda Item No. 2

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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TITLE: Presentation on the Results of the Corona del Mar Commercial
Corridor Study

ABSTRACT:

On September 26, 2023, the City Council held a study session to discuss planning efforts for Corona del Mar's commercial corridor, with a focus on exploring potential zoning changes to reduce constraints for business owners and making infrastructure improvements to enhance the overall walkability and vibrancy. Following the discussion, the City Council directed staff to study the commercial corridor and develop recommendations with the support of a consultant. City staff has been working alongside the identified consultant, Dudek, since June 2024 to prepare the Corona del Mar Commercial Corridor Study (CdM Study).

The results of the CdM Study, including proposed recommendations, are being presented for City Council review and direction.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the presentation and provide direction regarding possible implementation of recommendations identified in the CdM Study.

DISCUSSION:

At the August 22, 2023, City Council meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Lauren Kleiman requested that a study of land use and parking within the commercial corridor of Corona del Mar (CdM) be placed on a future agenda, pursuant to Council Policy A-1. The City Council unanimously voted in favor of staff returning with an item.

On September 26, 2023, staff returned to the City Council to discuss a possible study for CdM and to seek input on its content. The City Council expressed an interest in exploring opportunities to create an environment that invites more walkability and connectivity to other villages while balancing the parking needs of businesses, visitors and others so that residents are not unfairly burdened.

Based on this direction, staff released a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking submissions from qualified firms interested in assisting the City with the CdM Study and preparation of a “community plan” or other appropriate planning document for the CdM commercial corridor (Project Area). Through the RFP process, Dudek emerged as the highest-ranked consultant and the firm most likely to achieve the City’s objectives. The City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Dudek for the CdM Study on June 11, 2024.

Staff will provide a presentation on the work with Dudek using the slide deck included in draft form as Attachment A to this report; however, the following sections serve to provide a summary of the CdM Study’s objectives, approach and recommendations.

Overview of Study and Objectives

The Project Area spans approximately 1.27 miles, from Avocado Avenue to Hazel Drive (Figure 1 right). The CdM Study aims to provide recommendations for zoning, parking and infrastructure to support the implementation of a successful, vibrant, walkable and connected “main street” destination. It further intends to address the limited private investment within the corridor, which has been hindered by outdated land use regulations, limitations with development standards, and high parking requirements. The following five topics represent the CdM Study’s core objectives:

- 1) Develop zoning regulations unique to CdM;
- 2) Remove barriers to investment;
- 3) Implement parking solutions that balance all users;
- 4) Enhance walkability & safety; and
- 5) Determine feasibility of redevelopment opportunities.

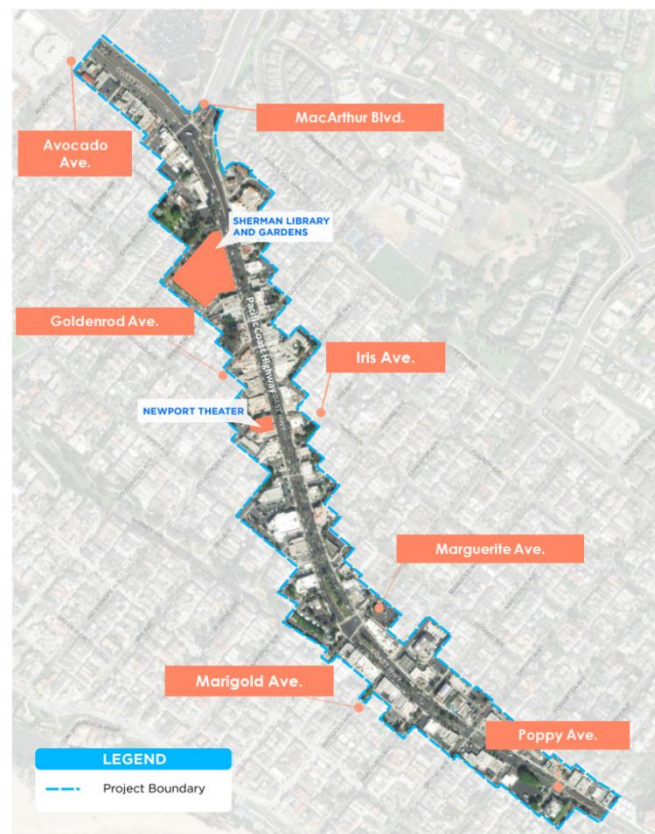


Figure 1, CdM Study Project Boundaries

Existing Conditions

To better understand activity within the Project Area, Dudek worked with staff to evaluate existing conditions, including data related to business mix and visitation to inform the study. While not exhaustive, some of the key takeaways of this analysis are highlighted below:

- The Project Area receives 2.9 million annual visitors who stay 30 minutes or more;
- 40% of visitors are Newport Beach locals, coming from less than five miles away;

- Visitors come to the Project Area year-round, primarily during daytime hours, with similar visitation levels on both weekdays and weekends;
- The Project Area features small parcel sizes and building footprints;
- Existing development is not reaching development potential;
- Building façade activation varies within the Project Area, with most façade characterized by dull and/or inactive features;
- Outdoor dining along the Project Area is present, but not widespread;
- Some instances of existing sidewalk dining create conflicts within the Project Area due to limited sidewalk space; and
- The City's parking requirements are higher than typical main streets.

The full analysis of existing conditions is provided in Attachment B (Draft Corridor Atlas).

Case Studies

The CdM Study evaluated three case studies of successful “main streets” in Southern California to understand what features, regulations or other conditions contribute to a successful corridor. Belmont Shore 2nd Street in Long Beach, the Main Street in Santa Monica, and Coast Highway (HIP District) in Laguna Beach were selected because they share key similar characteristics to the Project Area, including their location along Coast Highway, length (no more than one mile long), building height (no more than three stories), and their context within the Coastal Zone. The case studies concluded the following are key attributes to a successful main street corridor:

- Unique local businesses create a distinctive identity;
- Active uses like restaurants and entertainment encourage longer stays;
- Evening uses such as restaurants and tasting rooms increase foot traffic along the corridor and are essential to the success of main streets;
- Local business support through a Chamber of Commerce or Business Improvement District is vital;
- Streetscape improvements create a better pedestrian environment;
- Land use regulations should be specific to the area and encourage designs that are pedestrian oriented; and
- A suite of parking and mobility strategies are critical including options to access the corridor without a personal vehicle.

Outreach

Throughout the process of analyzing existing conditions and reviewing case studies, staff conducted substantial outreach to the CdM community to share the background information and learn what may be working well in the Project Area, what problems exist, and how it could be improved. Outreach occurred at several stages and included commercial business and property owners as well as residents. The following provides a brief overview of the outreach that was conducted:

- December 5, 2024: Business canvassing along the corridor was conducted and engaged a total of 42 business owners, managers, and property owners. 19 businesses were interviewed.
- February 24 and 26, 2025: Business roundtable discussions were conducted engaging 14 commercial businesses.
- July 17, 2025: An overview of the CdM Study was presented to the Corona del Mar Residents' Association.
- July 29, 2025: A follow-up roundtable with business and property owners/operators from the corridor was conducted.
- August 12, 2025: A Community Open House was hosted to share a snapshot of the corridor research and CdM Study findings, and to solicit feedback on the draft goals and actions developed for the Project Area. 77 individuals attended the open house and more than 50 participants provided feedback on the draft goals and actions. A summary of the event is included as Attachment C.
- October 7, 2025: A follow-up community meeting was hosted to share updated recommendations that had been revised based on feedback received at the community open house. Approximately 40 individuals attended this meeting.

Draft Corridor Atlas and Recommendations

Dudek prepared a key deliverable for the project called the Corridor Atlas, included as Attachment B. The Corridor Atlas contains the goals, strategies and actions for the project that could be implemented over time. The Atlas documents the existing conditions analysis, case studies and process for the study. A preliminary draft was shared at the Follow Up Community Meeting.

Based on an evaluation of existing conditions, background research, review of case studies, and engagement with the business community, staff worked with Dudek to develop initial draft recommendations to accomplish the objectives and goals of the CdM Study. These were shared and later refined based on further input from the business community and from residential community members who attended the Community Open House or Follow Up Community Meeting.

Proposed recommendations are discussed in Table 1, below, and detailed further in the draft presentation and the Corridor Atlas included as Attachments A and B to the staff report. The recommendations are structured as actions that will achieve the project's four goals. Key recommendations are indicated in **bold**.

Table 1, Draft Goals and Recommended Actions

Goals	Actions
Goal #1: Promote a pedestrian friendly and vibrant corridor that supports high quality development and investment	1. Adjust zoning requirements to promote preferred land uses, including outdoor dining on private property.
	2. Create tailored development standards unique to CdM that modify parking requirements for preferred land uses and incentivize lot consolidation.
	3. Establish objective design standards for new development or significant remodels to enhance the pedestrian experience.
	4. Prohibit future development of land uses that are not compatible with an active, pedestrian-oriented corridor including drive-thru facilities, vehicle/equipment repair, and automobile washing/detailing, while allowing existing businesses to continue operating.
Goal #2: Increase parking availability and accessibility along the corridor, and enhance corridor navigability	5. Select technologies and wayfinding signage to increase access to both private and public parking facilities including CdM State Beach parking.
	6. Lease private parking lots to increase public parking supply.
	7. Expand existing local trolley/local circulator to provide access year-round with new stops along Coast Highway to serve the CdM corridor.
	8. Institute an employee shuttle and/or employee parking program to ensure that preferred parking along the corridor is reserved for visitors and residents.
	9. Implement a valet program for private or public property.
Goal #3: Ensure safe, accessible, and efficient mobility for all users -- regardless of mode -- along the corridor	10. Implement intersection improvements, including at MacArthur/Coast Highway and Orchid/Coast Highway.
	11. Install infrastructure that supports pedestrian activity and safety along the corridor including bulb-outs and additional markings for crosswalks.
	12. Add bike infrastructure on/near Fifth Avenue to redirect cyclists and E-bikes from sidewalks and Coast Highway to a safer more convenient route along Fifth Avenue.
Goal #4: Develop a clear identity for the corridor and create a sense of place	13. Map locations within the corridor that can accommodate outdoor dining on public property and identify areas that can accommodate sidewalk extensions for outdoor dining, parklets or other similar uses through a future Public Works initiative.
	14. Establish a wayfinding and signage program for the public realm.

Summary

The key recommendations include changes to land use permitting requirements to streamline review of restaurants; prohibit uses that are not compatible with a pedestrian or residential environment; waive parking requirements for restaurants to remove existing barriers to investment; implement a suite of parking solutions to provide better access to and management of the existing parking supply within the corridor; improve bicycle infrastructure; and design infrastructure on Coast Highway to promote pedestrian and vehicle safety.

Council Direction

Based on the recommendations listed above, staff is seeking input from the City Council on the development of potential code amendments to implement the recommendations. Additionally, staff is seeking guidance from the City Council on any infrastructure improvements that the Public Works Department should evaluate further for technical feasibility.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this study session item. Any future code amendments or infrastructure proposals brought forward to implement the recommendations of the CdM Study would be evaluated individually for potential fiscal impacts.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item). Additionally, notices of the study session were sent to the project interest list and announced via the City's Newsplash.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Draft Study Session Presentation

Attachment B – Draft Corridor Atlas

Attachment C – Open House Outreach Summary