



Orange County/
Inland Empire

REDISCOVERING THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

Lake Elsinore, California

Technical Assistance Panel | December 3–4, 2025

About

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Cover photo: This corner in downtown Lake Elsinore illustrates recent streetscape improvements along Main Street. (ULI)

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Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

In keeping with the ULI mission, Technical Assistance Panels convene ULI members who volunteer their time to aid public agencies and non-profit organizations that have requested expert insight to address their land use challenges.

During this process, a group of diverse professionals representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate disciplines spend one to two days visiting and analyzing site-specific conditions in the built environment, identifying pertinent planning and development issues, and formulating realistic and actionable recommendations to move initiatives forward in a fashion consistent with the applicant's goals and objectives.

Learn more at orangecounty.uli.org.

About

Technical Assistance Panel

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Executive Summary

The city of Lake Elsinore is situated along the eastern shore of Lake Elsinore, a 3,000-acre freshwater lake. Over the years, the lake has been the area's primary draw, first as an important water source for Indigenous communities and ranchers, then, together with its mineral springs, as a destination resort, and today as a place to also enjoy extreme sports.

With the professional staff and elected leaders of Lake Elsinore eager to see the city grow and thrive, the City of Lake Elsinore (the City) has undertaken a number of important planning and development projects. The \$70 million that the City has reinvested in Lake Elsinore has resulted in an improved Main Street streetscape, a new City Hall near the southern edge of downtown, and a new public library that will help activate downtown's current northern edge.

With these significant public sector improvements and investments well underway, the City turned its attention to the economic vitality of Main Street as it runs through downtown, seeking recommendations for catalyzing private investment, activating the downtown district, amplifying the historic character of Main Street, and boosting the economic vitality and appeal of downtown as a regional destination. The City asked the Urban Land Institute Orange County / Inland Empire district council (ULI) to form a technical assistance panel (TAP) to make recommendations the City can use as it

shapes the next evolution of Lake Elsinore's Main Street and downtown district.

District Framework: Land Use and Redevelopment

Recognizing the city's existing assets and seeking to deepen the success of Main Street and the surrounding downtown, the panel outlined a new land-use framework to encourage a more active and vibrant downtown core.

Create an interstate gateway. The City's plans to extend Main Street improvements north to Interstate 15 represent an exciting gateway opportunity for the city. New signage is recommended to attract and direct visitors. Additional public investment at and around this intersection can help signal to the private sector that the area is worth the investment.

Enhance connections to the lakefront.

Creating a more visible, direct physical connection from Main Street to the lake is important. A new bridge connecting Main Street to the lake access at Elm Grove Beach can assist, and a roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Limited Street could improve traffic flow to lake access points.

Strategically acquire additional parcels.

The panel identified over eight acres of underutilized land and another five acres that could be redeveloped downtown. Combined with other underutilized City-owned parcels, this could represent a significant opportunity for housing and other mixed-use development downtown. Using rough

estimates, the panel believes these parcels could add approximately 450-500 housing units and an additional 1,000–1,200 residents downtown. Such a population influx could further activate downtown and support Main Street businesses.

Create a mobility hub downtown. Parking downtown is managed through on-street parking and efficient surface lots. By building a downtown parking garage, surface parking could be consolidated, enabling the redevelopment of the surface lots. Additional mobility resources, such as charging for electric vehicles (EVs), bike and scooter parking, and/or other micro-mobility rentals, could also be folded into this mobility hub.

Amend the Downtown Elsinore Specific Plan.

Amendments to the city's Specific Plan could include requirements that address visibility into and out of storefronts to support a more active streetscape, and limitations on the number of specific uses allowed on each side of Main Street within the downtown boundary to encourage commercial diversity, minimizing low-traffic stores and stores with minimal operational hours.

Placemaking and Activation

The City has made good strides in the five placemaking cornerstones for downtown: public activation and programming; seating and comfort amenities; landscape design; mobility and wayfinding; and lighting, utilities, and infrastructure. With the following recommendations, downtown Lake Elsinore could become an even stronger destination.

Focus on public activation and programming.

The City and business owners have roles to play in further activating downtown. The City should permit restaurants and coffee shops to create outdoor seating areas in public spaces fronting a shop, and, where the sidewalk is too narrow. Parklets can be carved out of parking spaces to create more seating and active areas. The City is also encouraged to provide special spaces for mobile kiosks or vendor carts to help activate the area and pull downtown's vibrancy further north or south. Public art, murals, sculptures, and heritage markers can be added to downtown's streetscape to inform visitors about the city's history and engage visitors in the art. Event banners and digital screens can be used to provide additional informational, educational, and directional assistance.

Add more seating and comfort amenities.

Movable seating, benches, and seat walls along the sidewalks are helpful, as are seating clusters at street intersections. Lounge seating, fire tables, and awnings can also support more comfortable spaces in which to linger while shopping downtown.

Use landscaping elements to soften hardscapes and cool the environment.

Street trees can improve the look and feel of downtown, shade pedestrians, and help cool the environment through evapotranspiration. Planters and year-round tree lighting add life and vibrancy and can be used to create temporary activation areas.

Increase mobility and wayfinding resources.

Bike racks and micro-mobility hubs can make moving around without a car much easier. Wayfinding signage, right off the highway and in other areas, should include district maps, trail links, pedestrian connectors, and smart maps to further assist with navigation and encourage exploration across the city.

Improve lighting, utilities, and other infrastructure.

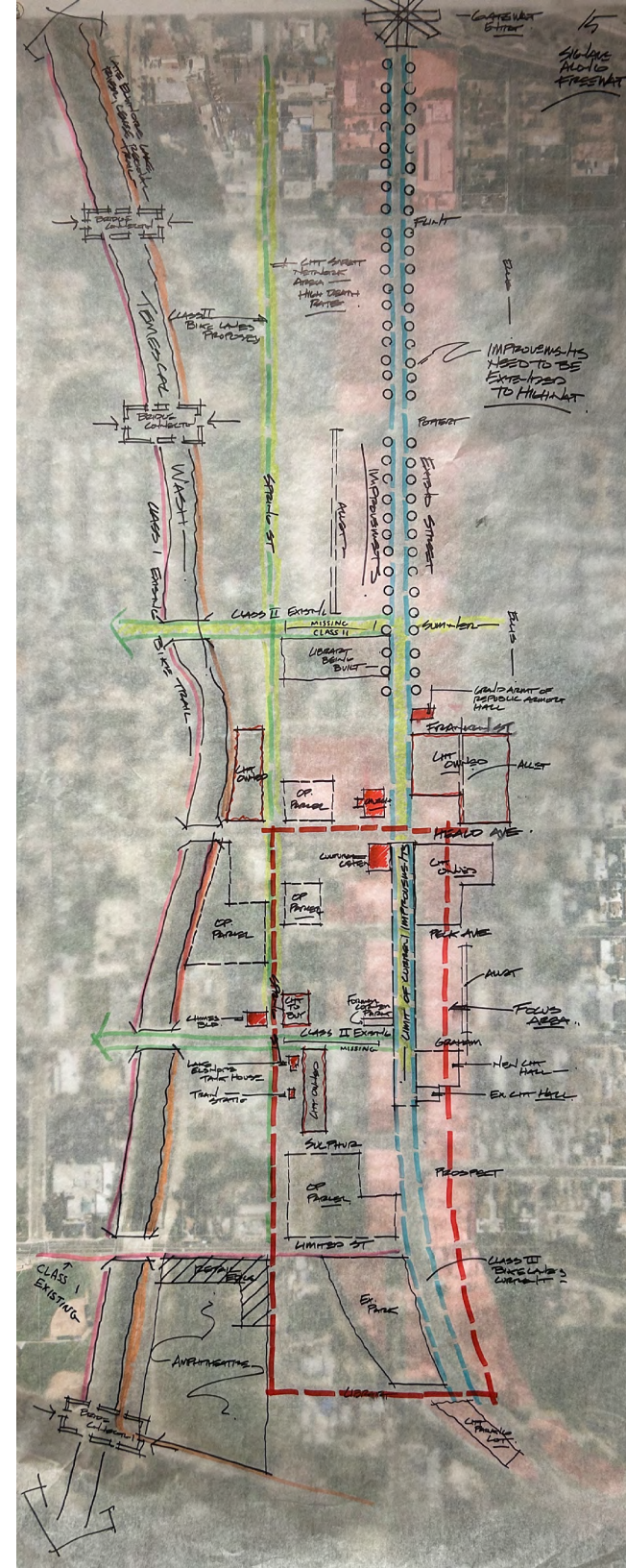
Efficient and effective utility and public infrastructure makes a city experience seamless, safe, comfortable, and enjoyable. Lighting, including decorative and/or string lighting, public art that features lighting aspects, and walkway lighting with banner options, can support safer pedestrian experiences. Ample trash and recycling bins, emergency lights, security kiosks, and free public Wifi-Fi can also make the downtown experience more enjoyable, safer, and comfortable.

Partnerships and Implementation

The panel's recommendations center on actions the City can take to improve downtown, yet much of the work will require assistance from key partners.

The role of the City of Lake Elsinore. The work needed downtown will require focused

Downtown Lake Elsinore, represented by the red dashed line in the map to the right, surrounds Main Street and features a number of excellent streetscape improvements. Expanding its study area to the north and west, the panel identified a number of additional opportunities for the City to amplify downtown's impact, strengthen its economic activity, and increase the connectivity of the rest of the city to its downtown core.



attention from the City and will require work that only the City can perform. Municipal actions should include upgrading public infrastructure, streamlining permitting and zoning requirements and processes, pursuing public financing resources, and assembling parcels for potential development.

Property owners' and businesses' roles.

Property owners, business owners, and business operators can and should also play very active roles in the work. Parcel aggregation and joint ventures can leverage or complement the City's efforts to create more development opportunities. Business owner upgrades to facades and more active storefronts can help enliven the streetscape, and more flexible leasing terms from building owners can help tenants fill vacant spaces. An active and effective merchants' association can help coordinate district programming and support district branding efforts, which can be led by either the City or the merchants' association.

The roles of developers and employers. Real estate developers and anchor employers can also help catalyze additional private investment and long-term activity through their actions. Building renovation, new construction, and the capital these projects bring to the area are important. Attracting new employers to the City is likewise important, and the City's economic development team is already hard at work. The panel recommends pursuing new healthcare and/or medical anchors as well as regional employers.

Explore and pursue various financing strategies and funding sources. The panel outlined a number of public funding streams that the City might be able to tap, as well as private capital sources and infrastructure funding resources to explore. Given the wide range of activities before it, the City is



Early streetscape improvements downtown added new street trees and decorative brick pavers to the sidewalks.

encouraged to also explore public-private partnerships (P3s) to expand its capacity and tap additional resources it might not be able to access on its own or as a public entity acting alone.

Next Steps

The City has a considerable number of improvements already underway, with more planning efforts and studies in the pipeline. Understanding that they are adding more items to the City's already robust to-do list, the panel created a phasing strategy that outlines recommendations for the near term that focus on early wins that will increase the City's momentum, medium-term strategies that can begin to deliver infrastructure improvements and project results, and longer-term strategies that are designed to support full district redevelopment within the next 15 years.

Throughout the study, the panel was impressed by the City staff's capacity to tackle large projects. Likewise, the City's willingness to invest significant dollars in public realm improvements and civic facilities is commendable. These approaches will continue to serve the city of Lake Elsinore and its residents well. With a few key additions, parcel repositioning, and partnerships, the City's good work can be amplified, expanded, and strengthened. The result should be a more active and vibrant downtown core that attracts visitors from across the region and strengthens the city's position as *the* place in southern California to dream extreme.

Introduction and Background

The city of Lake Elsinore, California, is home to nearly 80,000 people and offers its residents and visitors a small-town experience on the shores of Lake Elsinore. The area has a rich history of Indigenous populations settling along its shores, and the Luiseño people were the earliest known inhabitants of what was established in 1925 as the city of Lake Elsinore.

Over the last 100 years, the lake has been the primary draw for both residents and visitors, attracting a wide variety of people who enjoy boating, fishing, and other water-based activities. As a lake in a semi-desert environment, low water levels have stressed the lake and its surrounding environment, and pollution from nearby water runoff has led to algae blooms, fish kills, and poor water quality. Recognizing the lake's importance to the city and broader region, the City of Lake Elsinore (the City) and the San Jacinto Watersheds Authority installed aeration systems in the lake in 2007, restoring water quality and allowing for full enjoyment of the lake once again.

Businesses in Lake Elsinore have capitalized on the city's proximity to the lake. Main Street (nearly) connects the lake with Interstate 15. The businesses lining Main Street fill one- and two-story buildings that are situated close to the street, separated from the traffic by angled parking and generous sidewalks. While many of the businesses along Main Street are locally owned and operated by people committed to downtown Lake Elsinore's success, several

TAP Questions

Placemaking and Activation

- What physical and experiential improvements can make Downtown Main Street a regional destination for shopping, dining, arts, events, and culture?
- How can we enhance the streetscape and public realm to attract foot traffic and support outdoor activation, and create nightlife, spur art and culture, tourism, and overall long-term investment in the core of the downtown?

Land Use and Redevelopment

- What mix of uses (residential, retail, office, public, cultural) should be encouraged or incentivized in the Downtown?
- What opportunities exist to redevelop underutilized or vacant parcels and locations of businesses that are vacant or not open to the public, and how can incentives or key policies be structured to attract quality investment, assist with uses the city and community desire, and increase the daytime population?

Historic Character and Identity

- How can the City preserve and enhance the historic identity of Main Street while encouraging innovation and modern design?

Mobility and Access

- How can the Downtown better support multimodal transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access?
- What improvements to parking, signage, and connectivity are recommended?

Partnerships and Implementation Strategy

- What roles can the City, property owners, business community, and developers play in the revitalization strategy?
- What phasing, financing, or public-private partnership models are recommended to support short- and long-term implementation?

Main Street looking south to the lake and mountains beyond.



shopfronts remain vacant, and other shops with generous storefronts only conduct business online. These vacancies or online-only operations detract from an otherwise engaging Main Street experience.

With an eye on the current and future success of downtown Lake Elsinore, City leadership turned to the Urban Land Institute Orange County / Inland Empire district council (ULI) for advice and guidance. Specifically, the City asked ULI to make recommendations related

to land use and redevelopment downtown, as well as placemaking and activation of its public spaces. The City was also interested in preserving the historic nature of Main Street while encouraging innovation, ensuring that mobility is supported, transit is accessible and effective, and that the City establishes and strengthens partnerships to support the work along the way. ULI, using its trusted and objective technical assistance panel (TAP) program, convened a panel of real estate professionals with the expertise needed to

assist the City. Meeting over the course of two days, the ULI panel toured Main Street and the surrounding areas with City leadership. The panel reviewed briefing materials provided by the City and interviewed business and community stakeholders.

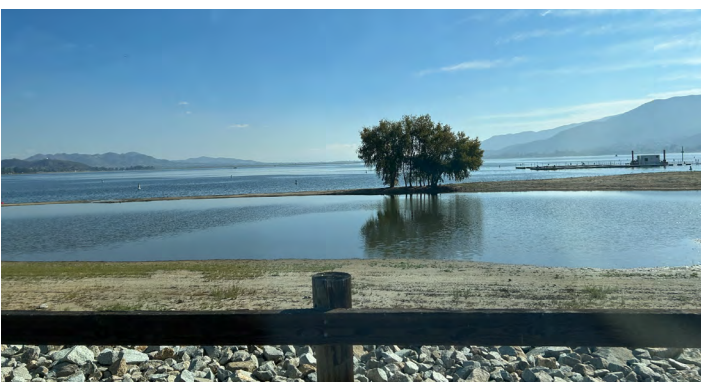
At the end of the two-day study, the panel delivered a set of recommendations City leadership can consider as it determines where and how to further support downtown Lake Elsinore's success.



Main Street runs roughly north and south through this section of Lake Elsinore, and the downtown corridor envisioned by the panel is outlined here in red.



Businesses lining the west side of Main Street.



Lake Elsinore as seen from Launch Point.



Seating at this intersection allows residents and visitors to relax and visit while spending time downtown.

What the Panel Heard and Observed

The panel interviewed leaders and staff from the City of Lake Elsinore, elected officials, the Chamber of Commerce, property owners, business owners and operators, and other community members who shared the following feedback:

- The City's vision, Dream Extreme 2040, elevates the lake, downtown, and action sports.
- The lake is a historical draw, and the City has significantly improved the lake's water quality.
- Youth and professional sports are an important draw for the city.
- Main Street has a great urban fabric.
- The City is leading the way with important public sector investments totaling \$70 million at the time of this study, including the construction of a new city hall, public library, outdoor amphitheater, and Launch Point.
- Near-term private sector investments include a new hockey rink, Formula 2 racetrack, and wave pool.
- The City has very committed staff and elected leadership. There is significant planning work underway.
- The community has faced historic and ongoing public relations challenges, primarily focused on lake water quality.
- The city's pockets of activity are not well connected, either physically or through signage.
- Stakeholders expressed a need for more restaurants beyond quick-service options, as well as family-friendly entertainment.
- Main Street businesses close early, and residents and business owners have expressed concerns regarding insufficient lighting, safety, and security.
- Downtown has a number of vacant storefronts, absentee owners, and online-only storefronts. There are also Main Street businesses that do not fit the City's vision for the district.
- Some land is being held by owners who are speculating on future value, and land offered for sale is overpriced.
- There is a need for greater density downtown, particularly more multifamily residential and options for office space.
- There are parking challenges downtown; parking is free but often misused, and rules are frequently not followed.
- There are ongoing disagreements between the City and indigenous tribes regarding land ownership and use, and some lake-front parcels are affected.



District Framework

Land Use and Redevelopment

The panel was tasked with studying the Main Street corridor in downtown Lake Elsinore. In doing so, the panel recognized that improvements to the corridor should also take into account the surrounding streets, parcels, and city assets, as connectivity to these assets and greater visual connectivity from the highway are key to downtown's vibrancy and success.

Following the tour of the study area and the stakeholder interviews, the panel discussed a potential new land-use framework for the city's downtown core that would build on its existing assets and deepen the corridor's community impact. This framework would provide a foundation for future land use along both sides of Main Street, and, over time, encourage and support the uses the City would like to see. It is also anticipated that these land use changes will discourage continued or future uses that detract from the vibrancy of this commercial district.

Constraints

There are notable constraints that are currently limiting the City's ability to create a well-connected downtown network. The Indigenous tribal ownership of lake-front land at the southern terminus of Main Street and a related failed real estate transaction on neighboring property limit the City's ability to directly connect to the lake from Main Street. There are also private landowners holding key parcels while speculating on a future development boom. Other landowners who have listed parcels for sale are

overestimating the land's marketable value, leaving key parcels vacant while they hold on for a future sale. Each of these scenarios impinges on downtown's vibrancy.

Opportunities

The panel also identified a host of land use opportunities along Main Street and across downtown. A number of these opportunities are represented by parcels the City previously identified for potential acquisition; other parcels represent compelling connectivity or activation opportunities that could be tackled by the private sector, the City, or a combination of the two.

Interstate Gateway

The panel applauded the public investments in the downtown Main Street streetscape improvements from Heald Avenue to East Prospect Street. Those improvements, which create a more enjoyable and safer Main Street pedestrian experience, have a planned second phase that will extend the streetscape improvements north to the intersection of Main Street and Interstate 15. This intersection is an important gateway to the city, and alerting drivers to the downtown experience and enticing them into Lake Elsinore is key.



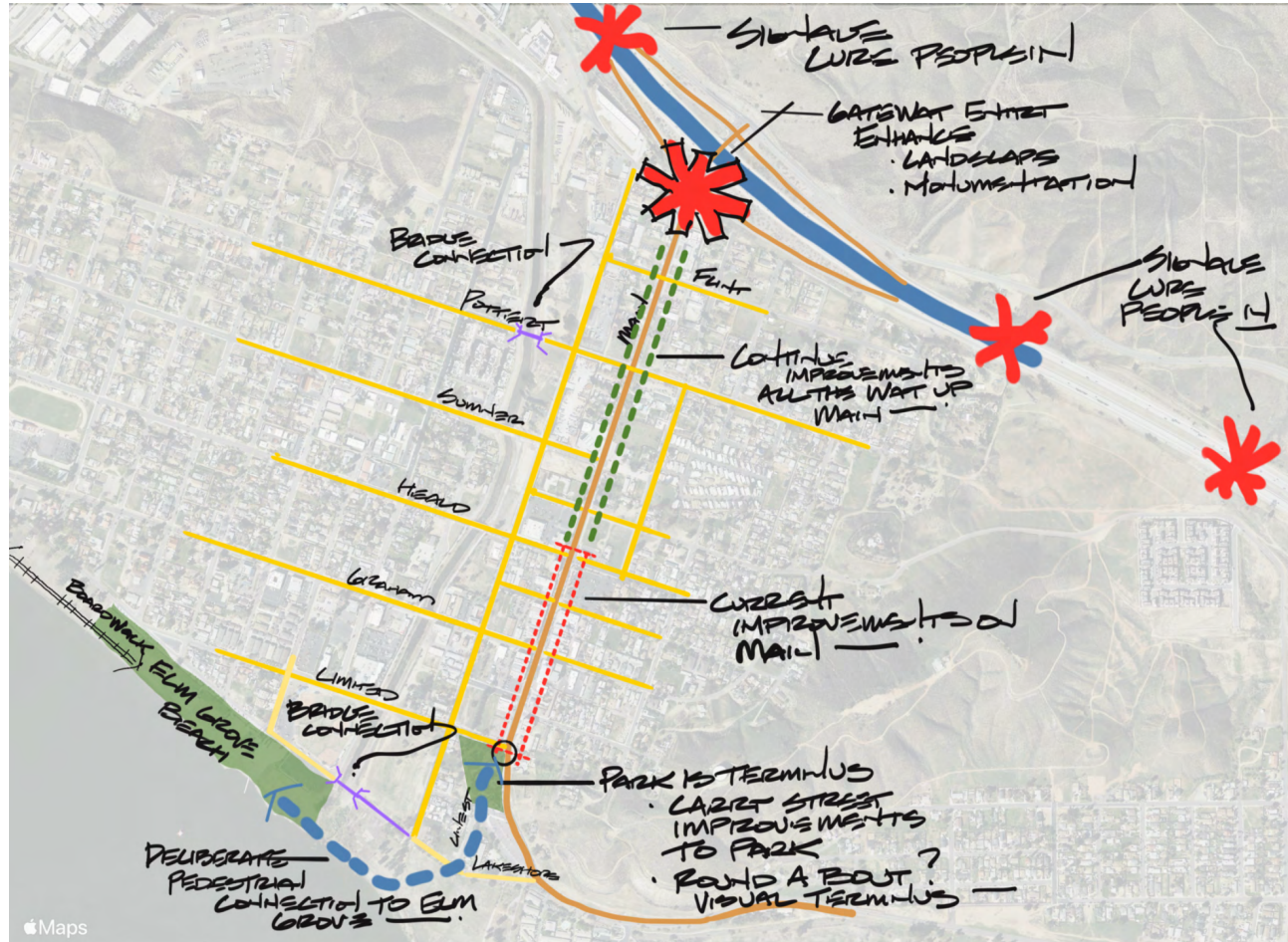
The parcel at the terminus of Main Street at the lake has been held up by a failing real estate transaction with an international entity.

- **Use signage to direct visitors.** Directional signage, alerting drivers to downtown and its attractions, can encourage those driving on the interstate to stop and explore downtown Lake Elsinore.
- **Use additional public investment to catalyze private investment.** The City's Phase 2 investment in the northern streetscape signals to the private sector that the area is investing in. This additional public-sector investment may also encourage private property owners to improve their parcels to better suit the new gateway to the city.

Lakefront Connections

While there are challenges to creating a direct physical connection from the southern terminus of Main Street to the lake, the visual connection remains, and with some additional improvements, proximate physical connections could be made easier.

- **Build a bridge to the west.** With the addition of the contemplated bridge to the west, lake access at Elm Grove Beach becomes an easy lake access point. With the addition of a deliberate pedestrian connection to the area and good existing parking resources, the public, particularly those visiting downtown, may find this access point more appealing.
- **Create a roundabout to the south.** A new roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Limited Street could facilitate improved traffic flow around Main Street Park and the lake access points to the



The panel noted the current downtown core in red dashed lines and the expanded downtown that goes north to the interstate. Also noted by red asterisks are several key signage locations, new bridge connections in purple, and a potential new roundabout to the south.

south. Lakepoint Park, in particular, is just steps from this intersection; yet it is tucked behind the senior center and fencing, with only a small blue sign to point the way.

Parcel Acquisitions

The City has acted strategically over the years, purchasing parcels downtown that could be put to good public use. This acquisition work has created space for a new

City Hall and public library, and could also be applied to other strategic or under-performing parcels near the Main Street corridor. On the map on page 10, the panel identified approximately 4.5 acres currently owned by the City, 8.7 acres of privately owned underutilized parcels, and an additional 5.1 acres that could eventually be repositioned for future development either by the City or in partnership with landowners.

Mobility Hub

Downtown Lake Elsinore offers on-street parking and parking in surface lots. With the addition of a new parking garage and mobility hub downtown, it could be possible to reposition the surface parking lots for a more active and productive downtown use.

- **Consider a new parking garage.** With the City Hall development well underway and a new amphitheater in the works, the panel considered how structured parking could be added downtown to serve these and other nearby uses. Using the lot just north of Main Street Park, the panel drafted a block design that features a three- or four-story parking garage. By using the natural slope of the site, moving

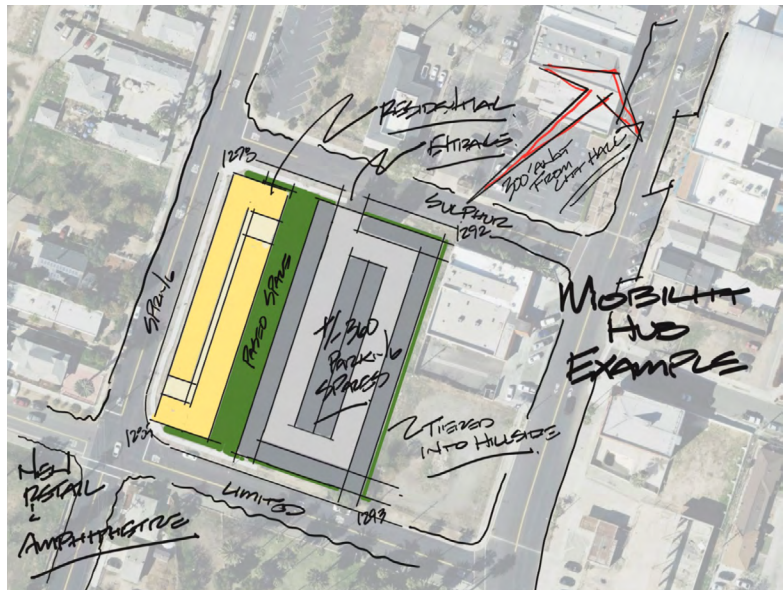
downhill west to the Temescal Wash, the garage could be tiered into the hillside and deliver approximately 360 parking spaces to the downtown network.

- **Include mobility amenities and other uses.** The garage and mobility hub could feature electric vehicle charging, parking and locker facilities for bicyclists, and potentially a bike or scooter rental facility for those wishing to explore the Lake Elsinore outside of a vehicle. The hub can also be home to automated services, such as AI driverless vehicles providing on-demand service to identified opportunity areas and destinations. In addition to a multi-story parking garage, the site is large enough to also accommodate a building to the west along Spring Street, which could include a mix of uses such as residential and office space.

Specific Plan Updates

City staff shared a number of recent updates to the Downtown Elsinore Specific Plan, adopted in 2018. In addition to those updates, the panel notes that two additional modifications could be made to better support more active uses in the downtown core.

- **Amend the Downtown Core policies.** Within Section 3.3, the Downtown Core policies could be updated to include visibility requirements into and out of retail storefronts, which would help activate the streetscape with activity visible inside and out.
- **Limit the quantity of specific uses within the downtown boundary.** Within the City's Land Use Matrix, the City could add a regulation that would limit certain uses to one instance on each side of Main Street by right, with any additional instances requiring City approval.



GOOGLE EARTH / JULI TAP

The panel used a block west of Main Street to conceptualize a potential new structured garage and mixed-use building that could serve downtown businesses as well as the new amphitheater.



This garage features a bike share program and a public use area, creating a multi-functional space that is as inviting as it is practical.



Placemaking and Activation

Through the course of the stakeholder interviews, the panel identified several themes related to the placemaking and amenities in Lake Elsinore's downtown public realm. These themes centered around the following five placemaking cornerstones: public activation and programming; seating and comfort amenities; landscape design; mobility and wayfinding; and lighting, utilities, and infrastructure. The City has made great strides in a number of these areas already, and, with some additional phased investment, downtown Lake Elsinore could become an even more appealing destination.

Public Activation and Programming

While much of the activity downtown centers around the goods and services offered by Main Street's business owners, the following actions can further activate downtown.

- **Make space for sidewalk cafés.** Downtown sidewalks should allow room for restaurants and coffee shops to provide outdoor seating, which can expand the businesses' service capacity and positively impact their bottom line while activating the streetscape.
- **Create parklets or flex-zones.** In spaces where the sidewalk may be too narrow to accommodate much additional activity, the City can carve out a parking space or two to create small parklets or flexible use areas that can provide valuable space for additional seating and other commercial use besides parking.
- **Provide street vendor pads.** On festival days or other days of increased activity or tourism, the City can provide special space for mobile kiosks or vendor carts. Rather than competing with existing businesses, these mobile options can expand the reach of existing shops or provide a pilot opportunity for a new business wanting to test the market prior to a brick-and-mortar launch.
- **Use public art, murals, sculpture pads, and heritage markers to inform and engage.** While some art installations are for viewing only, others are designed for interaction, climbing, and play, delighting adults and children alike. Similarly, heritage markers or educational trail markers can inform visitors of the past while encouraging present-day engagement.
- **Create event banner opportunities.** Whether strung across Main Street or affixed to street lights, banners can help create a sense of place. In some cities and through the Main Street America program, the business association or Main Street organization provides branded banners for a fee, giving business owners an easy way to market their businesses within or in relation to the district's branding scheme.
- **Consider interactive directional screens.** Digital kiosks are becoming a frequent tool for downtowns and other commercial districts. The digital medium is easy to update, allowing businesses and



the broader district to easily update messages and list daily events and activities. Beyond just information posting, providing an interactive display can enhance the kiosk's efficacy, allowing users to touch to find directions, event details, or other useful information.

Seating and Comfort Amenities

Once people arrive in Lake Elsinore, or when locals visit Main Street, providing a comfortable, welcoming environment will encourage them to linger longer and extend their shopping or exploring adventures. The following steps can offer key respite.

- **Use movable seating, benches, and seat-walls.** While fixed seating and tables are convenient, they can prove limiting. Flexible seating options that can be moved to create larger groupings or more intimate spaces can allow visitors to make the space better fit their needs.
- **Create street seating clusters at intersections.** The seating already in place at key intersections downtown is a great start. Clustering more seating in other similar spaces can provide additional comfort while waiting to cross the street or good meeting spots while shopping.
- **Use lounge seating with gas fire tables.** The Southern California weather allows for considerable outdoor time, yet evenings can become cool. Outdoor seating that is close to or clustered around gas fire tables can extend time

outdoors and enliven the streetscape into the evening.

- **Encourage awnings for shade.** Businesses should be encouraged to install awnings above shop windows. In addition to providing helpful cooling for the building's interior spaces, the awnings also create welcome shade for those standing or passing by outside.

Landscape Elements

Downtowns are often marked by extensive concrete and pavement. Trees, planters, and other landscaping elements can help soften the streetscape, provide welcome shade, and help cool the environment through evapotranspiration.

- **Plant street trees with ample room to grow.** Street trees, when planted with room to grow up and space for roots to expand down, can significantly improve the look and feel of a downtown street. Trees provide welcome shade for pedestrians and, in spaces where the buildings are tall, help create a space that feels more human-scaled and welcoming to pedestrians. Trees should be planted with grates that can allow for trunk growth and in soil that has not been compacted for development. (Compacted soils inhibit healthy tree growth and limit height.)
- **Use additional accent planters.** Planters filled with colorful flowers or native plants can help soften the streetscape. These same planters can also be used to



delineate a temporary space; restaurants can use them to create seating areas, and shops can use similar means to separate outdoor shopping areas from nearby traffic.

- **Light trees year-round.** Trees lit for the holidays enliven a space in a way that feels warm and festive. With some careful planning and eco-friendly light selections, this same treatment could be left in place all year.

Mobility and Wayfinding

Lake Elsinore's Main Street should be easy to find. Wayfinding signage can help drivers from the interstate find downtown destinations and assist those already downtown in finding and exploring other Lake Elsinore amenities.

- **Install gateway identification.** Directing people into downtown from the interstate is key—they need to know that there is a reason to get off the highway and explore all Main Street has to offer.
- **Create wayfinding signage.** Directional signage, district maps, trail links, pedestrian connectors, and smart maps can draw visitors' attention to the city's destinations and ease their navigation. These wayfinding mechanisms should be branded and engaging and, at a minimum, should start with information about the downtown district, shops, trails, and cultural destinations.

- **Install bike racks and micro-mobility hubs.** Main Street provides a wonderful pedestrian experience. Moving beyond this core downtown street, however, may require more mobility assistance, and installing bike racks and even micro-mobility hubs—which cater to bicyclists, scooters, and more—can provide residents and visitors with the assistance needed to extend their adventure beyond areas that are easily walkable from downtown.

Lighting, Utilities, and Infrastructure

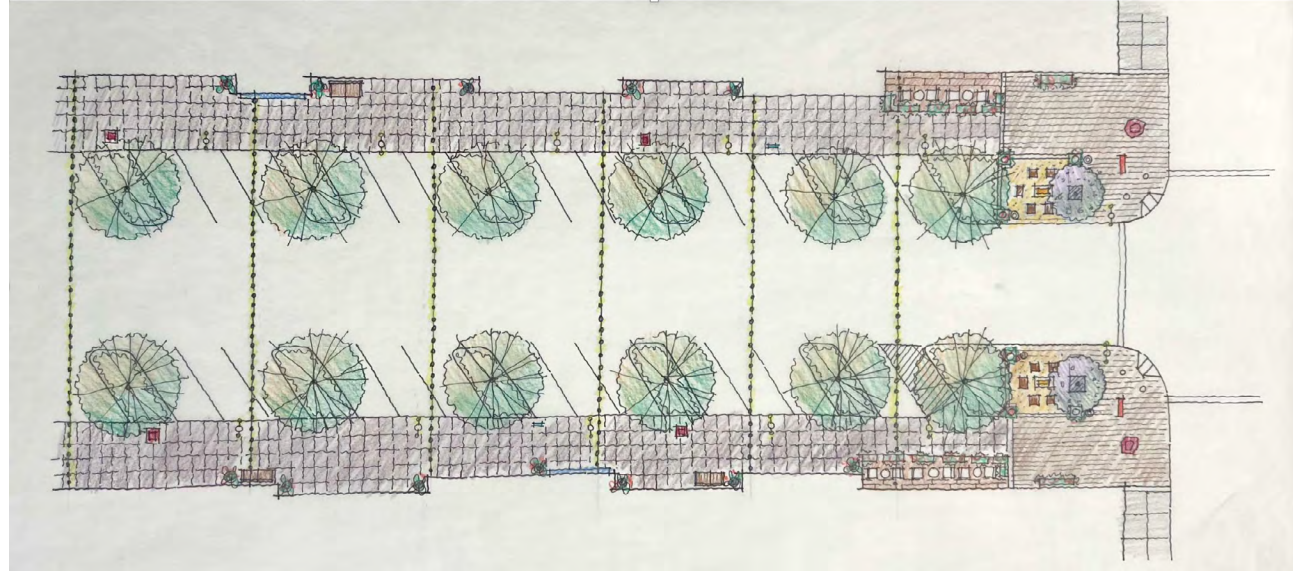
Underpinning all of the City's placemaking efforts should be efficient and effective utility and public infrastructure that makes the experience seamless, safe, comfortable, and enjoyable. The City is encouraged to explore the following improvements to Main Street.

- **Ensure trash and recycling bins are available.** The first step in any successful activation is ensuring that the space is clean and safe. The Main Street corridor and surrounding streets should have easily accessible trash bins and recycling opportunities at every intersection (at a minimum) and mid-block, particularly along longer stretches.
- **Install emergency lights or security kiosks.** Clean and safe is Step #1 for downtown Lake Elsinore. Emergency stations (such as blue light phones seen on college campuses) or security kiosks can help support a sense of security when visiting downtown.



- **Install decorative and/or string lighting.** Much like lighting the trees year-round, decorative lighting and string lighting can be left up all year to create a more festive environment while also further illuminating public spaces.
- **Use public art that features lighting aspects.** Public art that is well-lit or that uses light as a part of the installation can likewise help illuminate spaces while creating a more engaging art experience.
- **Install vehicular and/or pedestrian walkway lighting with banner options.** Streetlights, particularly those installed at pedestrian height, provide great marketing opportunities once banner-hanging hardware is installed. With this upfront investment, the City can use the banners to promote festivals or sell space to the downtown association or individual businesses to use for branded promotions.
- **Provide free public Wifi.** As internet connectivity moves closer to becoming a public utility, the City of Lake Elsinore is encouraged to install free public Wifi in spaces where it wants to attract people and encourage them to linger. The Main Street corridor should be first on that installation list.

(Right, top) This panel sketch highlights key public realm components, including street trees, angled parking, seating near intersections, and other comfort items. (Right, middle and bottom) These images from cities around the US demonstrate how these public realm treatments can help activate space while also providing wayfinding and comfort.



Public Realm Criteria for a Downtown Main Street (small)

The panel provided the following list to call attention to the wide array of public space interventions and amenities the City may wish to provide in downtown Lake Elsinore to assist with visitation, activation, and comfort.

Street Elements – Opportunities List

Pedestrian/Furniture Zone (11-15 foot width)

- Gateway identification
- Sidewalk café areas
- Low retail fencing with movable seating and benches (where room allows)
- Street tree grates and planters
- Bike rack locations, micro-mobility hubs
- Parklets or flex-zones
- Street vendor pads (for kiosks, carts)
- Public art, murals, sculpture pads, heritage, and educational markers
- Wayfinding signs (district maps, trail links, pedestrian connections to other city features)
- Decorative or string lighting over main street
- Street tree lighting year around
- Vehicular/ pedestrian walkway lighting with banner opportunities
- Trash and recycling bins
- Benches and seat-walls at key locations

- Intersection gas fire tables and lounge seating
- Street seating clusters at intersections with gas fire tables that invite dwell time
- Event banner opportunity across street
- Emergency/security kiosks
- Free public Wi-Fi
- Interactive screen for directional signage
- Intersection accent planter pots

Placemaking and Social Spaces

- Small “micro-plazas” or bump-outs at intersections or mid-block nodes
- Public art, murals, wayfinding, and heritage markers
- Street seating clusters to invite dwell time

Streetscape and Public Realm Character

Continuity and Cohesion

- Use a consistent palette of materials, lighting styles, railings, and furnishings
- Street trees at 25-35 feet spacing where possible

Storefront Engagement

- Transparency requirements (e.g., active facades)
- Awning consistency and sidewalk café guidelines
- Business signs (use a consistent program)

Night-time Activation

- Pedestrian-scale lighting (e.g., 10-14 foot poles)
- Integrated and consistent accent lighting for building facades, signage, and canopies
- Main Street accent string light over street
- Seating opportunities with heated elements

Street and Roadway Components

- Pedestrian-scale lighting
- Banners, seasonal decorations
- Overhead string lighting (e.g., create festival blocks)
- Transit stops
- Traffic calming (e.g., narrow lanes, textured paving crossings)
- Shared-street treatments on low-volume segments

Branding and Identity

- Gateway signage or archways
- Branded light pole banners
- Historic-district elements (e.g., brick patterns, plaques)
- Public art themed to local culture
- Community message board or events kiosk
- Event banners spanning street

Digital and Smart City Features

- Public Wifi zones



Main Street today.



A long-term vision for Main Street, which features greater building densities and heights and wider sidewalks for greater activation potential.

- Digital kiosks for info/maps/events
- Smart parking meters (shared with angled stalls)
- Security cameras
- Smart lighting (adaptive dimming)

Street Geometry and Safety

Lane Widths

- Travel lanes: 11-12 feet to calm traffic without constraining movement
- Angled parking bays (60°): 18-19 foot stall depth and 9-10 foot width

Curb Radii

- Keep small (10-15 feet) to slow turning vehicles and shorten crossings

Speed Target

- Design for 20-25 mph (30-40 km/h)

Sight lines

- Maintain clear visibility at crossings and driveways; limit curbside obstructions near intersections

Pedestrian Priority

Sidewalk Widths

- Minimum 8 foot clear zone, ideally 11-15 feet in commercial areas (including café zones, furnishings, and circulation)

Crosswalks

- High-visibility patterns (e.g., continental or ladder)
- Mid-block crossings recommended every 300-400 feet where block lengths are long or retail demand exists
- Curb extensions where possible (even with angled parking) to enhance sight lines

Surface Quality

- Non-slip, durable paving; accessible slopes (less than or equal to a two percent cross slope)

Accessibility

- ADA-compliant ramps, tactile surfaces, and consistent grade transitions

Bicycle Accommodations

- 60° parking makes traditional bike lanes difficult; consider:
 - Shared lane markings (low-speed context)
 - Contraflow or buffered lanes on parallel streets
 - Protected bike parking nodes off-street or in-curb extensions

Transit Friendliness

- Trolley stops integrated into widened sidewalk zones (i.e., not in parking rows)

Parking Management and Design

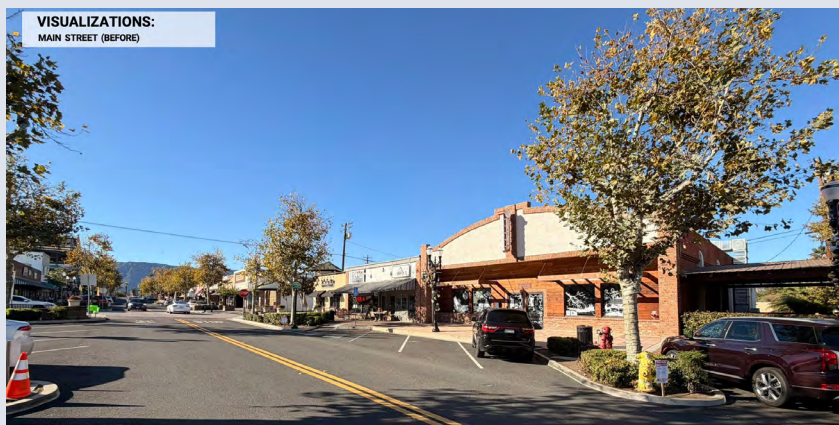
- Main Street parking limits to encourage movement and new visitors
- Main Street accessible stalls for business
- Use angled parking only where volumes are moderate and collision risks are manageable
- Provide back-in angled parking if safety and visibility are priority (optional)
- Include EV charging locations

Curbside and Parking Zone

- Angled parking with clear markings
- Accessible parking stalls near key destinations
- Loading/delivery zones that are time-controlled
- EV charging bays
- Curb extensions (e.g., pedestrian bulbs)
- Parklets replacing select angled stalls

Intersection Elements

- Raised intersections / raised crosswalks
- Decorative paving patterns
- Pedestrian refuge islands (where geometry allows)
- Audible pedestrian signals
- Corner plazas with seating and landscaping



Main Street today.



A long-term vision for Main Street, again featuring greater building densities and heights and wider sidewalks for greater activation.



Mobility and Access

As the City considers additional infrastructure and programming enhancements to downtown and the Main Street corridor, the panel identified elements to incorporate into the improvements, incident data to help inform priority intersections and circulation, and opportunities to use mobility and access to improve connectivity to and across Main Street.

Safety Focus Areas

The panel studied collision data for the downtown district between 2020 and 2024. Within the studied time period, there were three serious crashes in this area that involved fatalities or severe injury ("KSI" crashes). Two of these incidents occurred at night, and two occurred at intersections. One involved a pedestrian, and another involved a motorcycle. Based on these results, the panel identified Spring Street, Sumner Avenue, and Main Street as safety-focused corridors that warrant heightened attention from City planners and traffic professionals. This data also helped inform the panel's following recommendations for mobility and connectivity improvements in and around downtown Lake Elsinore.

Mobility Enhancements

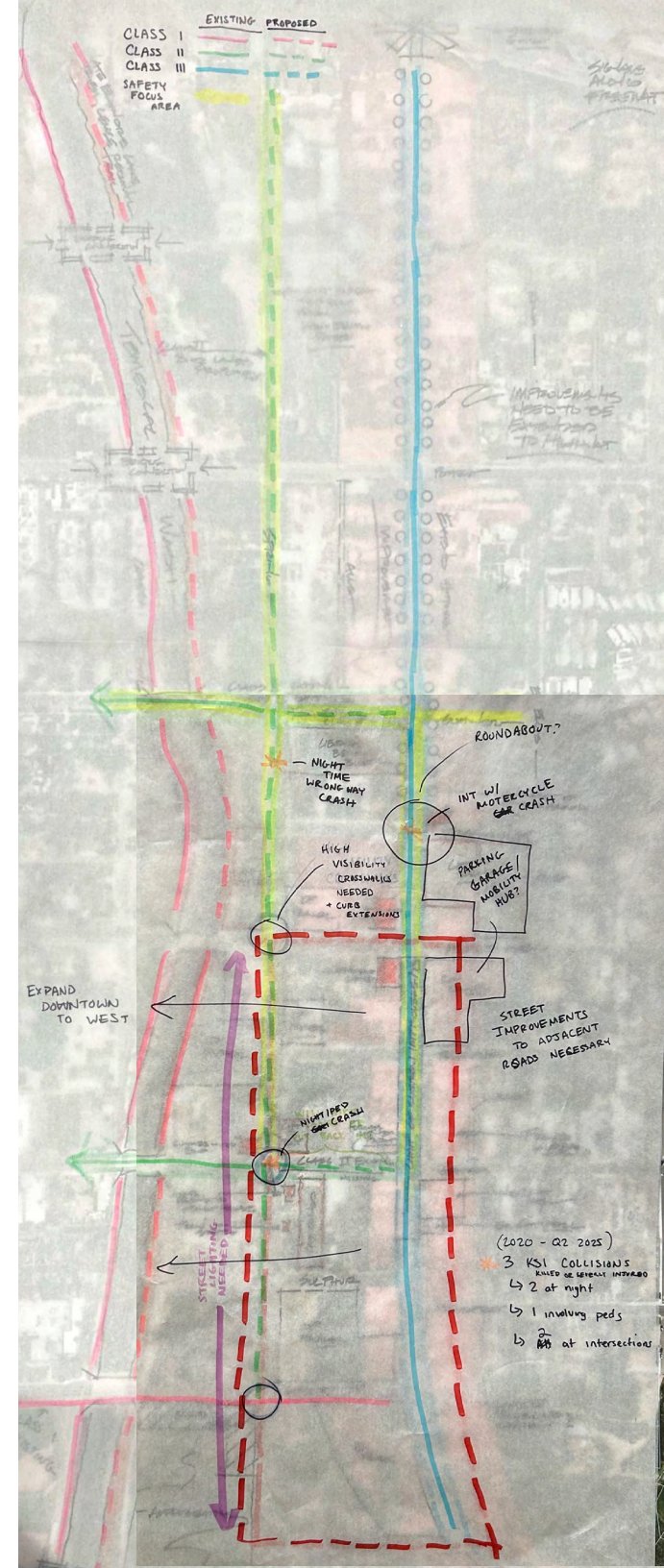
The recent roadway improvements in the three-block heart of Main Street serve the district well. The road width provides ample room for moving vehicles in each direction, on-street parking, tree plantings, and wide sidewalks. In addition to extending these improvements north to the interstate and

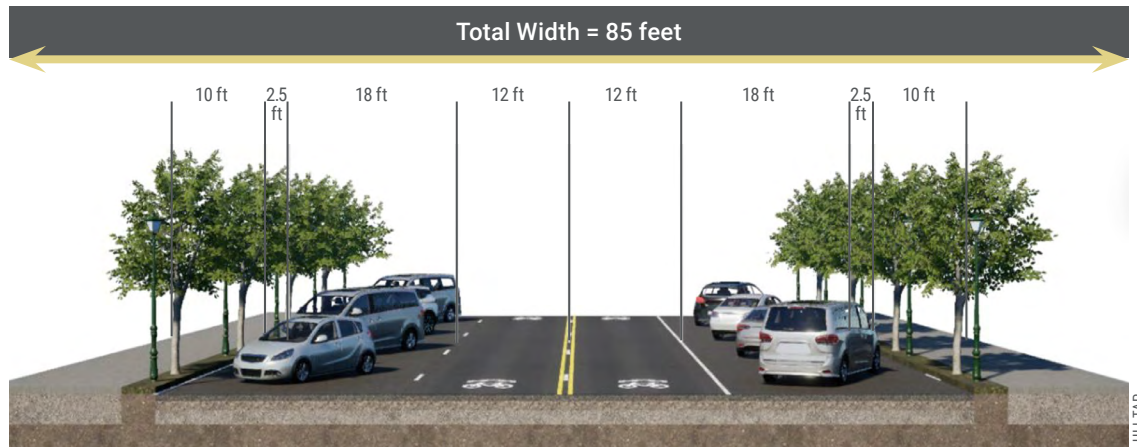
south to Limited Street, the panel recommends the following enhancements.

- **Create gateway intersections.** At Main Street's intersection with the interstate, specifically at the intersections with the outer roads and south at the intersection with Limited Street, roundabouts or other "gateway" intersections would be a welcome revision. These special intersections create a gateway experience into the district and better facilitate traffic flow in the area. Roundabouts can also make street closures, for festivals or vendor fairs, easier than typical four-way cross intersections.



(Above) The panel noted three particularly problematic intersections that warrant additional safety measures. (Right) The panel studied the downtown core, identifying areas along and around Main Street that may need additional mobility and safety attention.





The width of Main Street provides a great deal of flexibility in roadway configuration, allowing ample space for a lane of traffic in each direction, angled on-street parking, street trees, and ten-foot-wide sidewalks.

- **Enforce time limits for on-street parking.** A number of stakeholders noted difficulties with on-street parking spaces, specifically issues with users parking in spaces for far longer than the metered time. This points to a need for more active enforcement of parking regulations and ticketing. With more regular enforcement, the City can help alleviate some of the retailers' concerns about parking capacity while also supporting municipal revenues through fine collection.
- **Build a mobility hub parking garage.** By constructing a municipal parking garage and mobility hub, the City can consolidate several surface parking lots into a single facility. The hub can also serve as a nexus for key mobility services, including scooters, e-bikes, and future driverless mobility resources, such as the Ohmio shuttle the City has been piloting. With new construction, the City can also build

in additional resources, such as EV charging, bicycle facilities, and other micro-mobility resources.

- **Consider starting a City-operated trolley or shuttle.** As improvements along Main Street take hold and connectivity around the area improves, the City may wish to consider providing a publicly-operated trolley or shuttle bus. This service could take residents and visitors around a loop connecting downtown to the lake as well as to points beyond, such as Launch Point, the racetrack, golf course, lakefront parks, and more.
- **Improve wayfinding.** Again, as amenities are improved and new connections made, wayfinding to support resident and visitor navigation will be critical to finding these new spaces, places, and amenities.
- **Install advanced yield markings at existing mid-block crossings.** With the

long blocks of retail shops lining Main Street, mid-block crossings are helpful and frequently used by pedestrians. More advanced and impactful yield markings, such as a raised crosswalk or speed table, can assist with slowing traffic and improving pedestrian safety in these areas.

Beyond Main Street

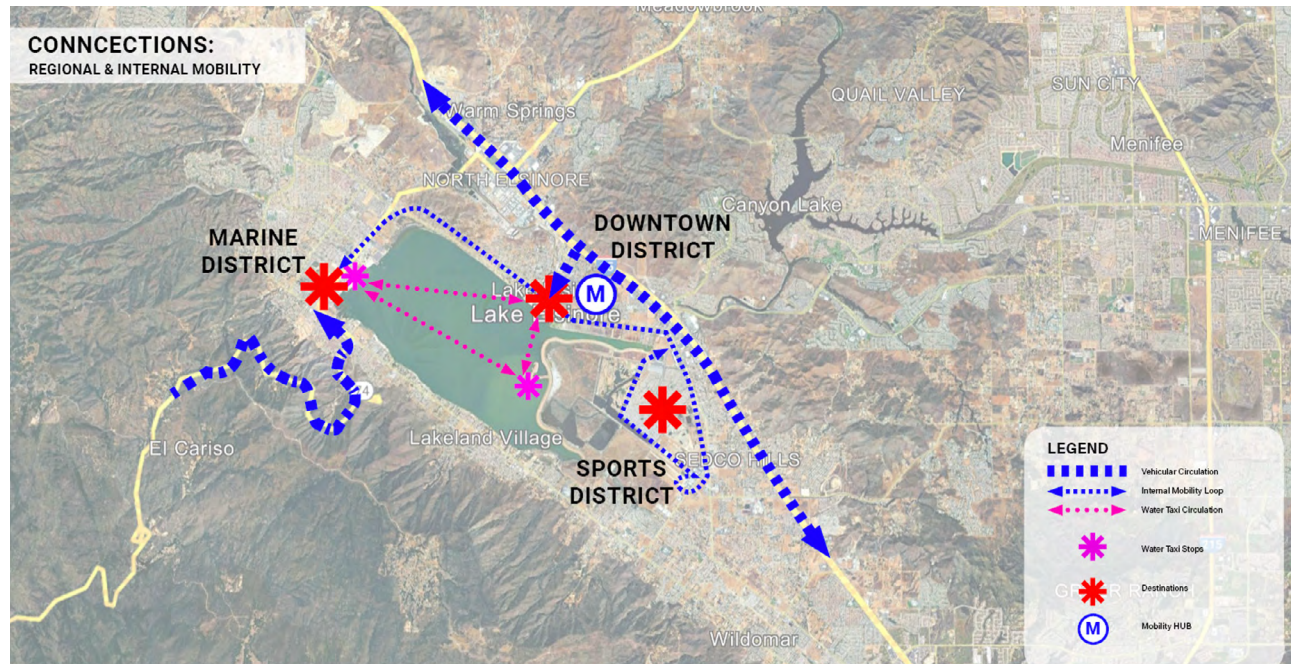
Main Street is the heart of an interconnected network of streets and activity—across the city and to the broader region. With this perspective, the panel strongly encourages the City to invest in improvements to the streets surrounding downtown to further strengthen this connected, multimodal network beyond the central corridor of Main Street.

- **Address streetscape improvements along Spring Street.** Spring Street runs parallel to Main Street and, with two quick connection points to Main Street and the additional improvements below, Spring Street can create a welcoming loop of activity and activation that is easily biked or walked.
 - Improve roadway lighting to enhance safety, particularly pedestrian safety, and visibility while moving along Spring Street.
 - Extend the curbs along Spring Street to better protect pedestrians.
 - Install high-visibility crosswalks to facilitate safer pedestrian movement around the area.
 - Install Class II bicycle lanes along the roadway to better protect bicyclists.

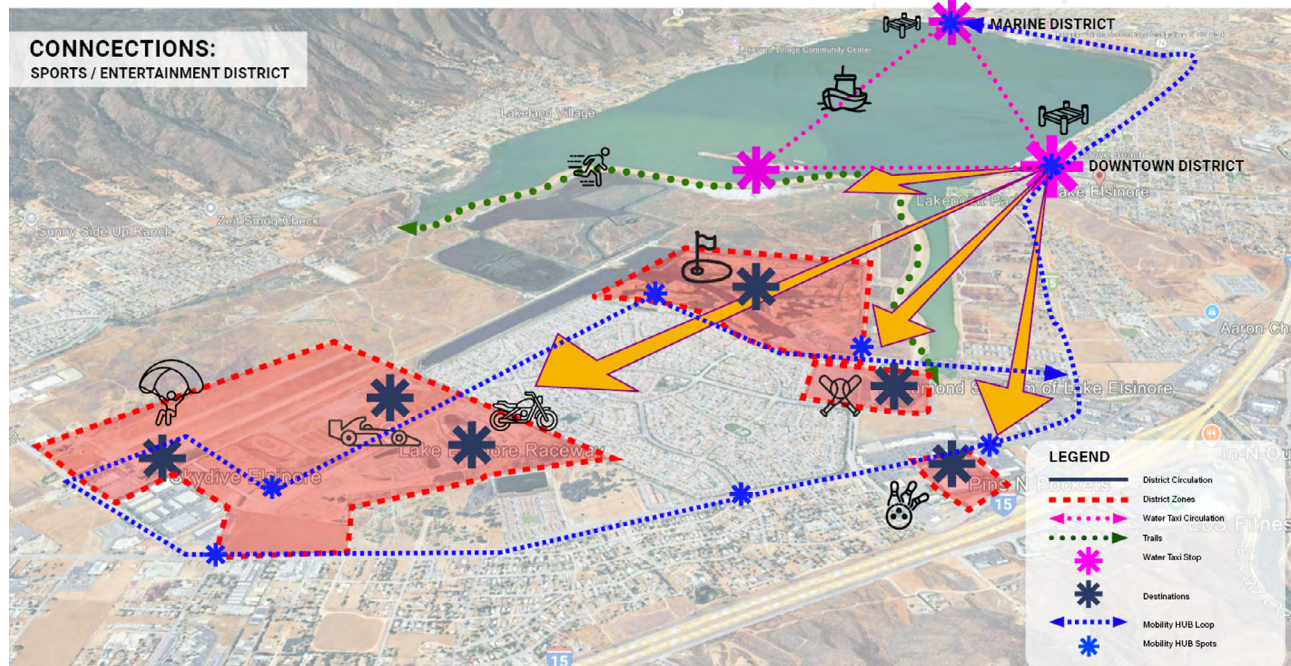
- **Improve mobility connections beyond the study area.** It will be helpful to improve the connections from downtown to the rest of Lake Elsinore's sporting and entertainment attractions. This broader connectivity should include opportunities to bike around town, walk, hike, run, or take a boat or water taxi. These improvements and enhanced connections align with and support the city's sports-centric brand, encouraging other modes beyond a personal vehicle.
 - The City is encouraged to facilitate east and west downtown mobility connections with the addition of new bridges over the Temescal Wash at Pottery Street and Lakeshore Drive.
 - There was also discussion in the community of potentially adding a Class I trail east of the Temescal Wash to connect to the Class I trail on the Wash's west side.

This broader mobility focus and intentional new connectivity between Lake Elsinore's sports and entertainment nodes will enhance the overall appeal of the city and community while encouraging visitors to move between and enjoy more than just one of the city's exciting destinations.

The panel envisioned how connections from downtown can radiate out across the city and lake, connecting people by trails, roads, and water, and encouraging the active lifestyle that the City's "dream extreme" vision promotes.



Main Street and downtown can serve as a key destination in a connected network of Lake Elsinore destination district.



Partnership and Implementation Strategy

The City of Lake Elsinore has undertaken a number of impressive public improvement projects. The recommendations outlined by the panel can and generally should continue to be championed by the City, yet it will also prove helpful to engage certain key partners in the various aspects of the work and pursue public-private partnerships (P3s) when the opportunities arise.

Stakeholder Roles

City of Lake Elsinore

The City's ongoing roles should continue to involve setting policy direction and driving early investment. Specifically, the panel recommends that the City take the lead on the following initiatives.

- **Pursue public infrastructure upgrades.** Infrastructure upgrades may include street work, utility installations and upgrades, parking garage construction and consolidation, and Wifi installation.
- **Streamline permitting and zoning requirements and processes.** Any potential updates that will result in streamlined processes should be pursued. This could include, for example, adopting a form-based code and/or instituting parking flexibility.
- **Assemble parcels for potential development.** Whether for new development or redevelopment, the City can take the lead on assembling parcels and then facilitate potential requests for development proposals or joint-development activities.

- **Explore all public financing tools.** In a number of instances, certain funding is only accessible to municipalities, including [Community Development Block Grants](#) (CDBG), [HOME Investment Partnerships Program](#) (HOME), other [Housing and Community Development](#) (HCD) funding opportunities, and other funding offered by or distributed through Riverside County.
- **Consider creative tools such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF).** There may be opportunities to use a new TIF district to fund needed public improvements downtown.

Property Owners and Businesses

Property owners, business owners, and business operators shape Main Street's identity and form the basis for the district's economic activity. As such, each of these entities has important roles to play in the district's economic success.

- **Pursue parcel aggregation and joint ventures.** Property owners can also take the lead on assembling properties and pursuing a joint venture development arrangement.
- **Upgrade facades and activate storefronts.** Property owners and business operators can take the initiative to update building facades and further activate storefronts and corresponding sidewalks. (The City is encouraged to provide design guidelines or precedents that owners can follow in their activation and upgrading work.)

- **Provide flexible leasing.** Owners are encouraged to provide potential tenants with flexible leasing opportunities. This may help early-stage business owners launch a new venture or allow a more diverse array of tenants to enter the downtown market, bringing along with them new customers who can help activate Main Street.
- **Coordinate the merchant association.** The assembly of businesses lining Main Street can have a significant impact if the efforts are well-coordinated. Reinvigorating the association or adopting new operating principles may help the association be more effective and amplify its efforts.
- **Establish district branding and programming.** With some coordination, the downtown district can establish its own brand. Aligned with a citywide brand, a vision and image that are recognizable as distinct to downtown Lake Elsinore can help market the district and serve as a foundation for individual business marketing. Similarly, coordinated programming efforts, aligning events on a specific day or time, can help create an event with a larger gravitational pull than the efforts of a singular merchant.

Developers and Employers

Real estate developers and business anchors can also help catalyze additional private investment and long-term activity.

- **Pursue mixed-use, residential, retail, and adaptive reuse.** As new developers consider projects in and around

downtown, the City should encourage building renovation or new construction that allows for a mix of uses, bringing housing together with employment and retail opportunities.

- **Explore equity, lending relationships, and private capital.** With a relatively stable, but not bullish, market at the time of this study, developers will need to explore a variety of funding sources to bring projects to completion.
- **Consider adding new healthcare or medical anchors.** Aging Baby Boomers need healthcare services as do the families and individuals visiting and moving to Lake Elsinore. Without a full-service hospital, the city would benefit from new healthcare providers, clinics, or other medical industry anchors.
- **Pursue regional employers.** The City's economic development director and other professional staff are well-versed in the pursuit of new businesses. Site selectors and business owners looking for new locations are good targets for these efforts, and employers like Amazon, logistics businesses, technology companies, and educational institutions could provide a welcome boost to the community's potential job base and related earning/spending potential.

Financing Strategies and Funding Sources

The panel's recommendations and the related work posed will likely require a

variety of financing sources, and the following resources are recommended for further exploration.

Public Sources

Potential public sources of funding might include tools to close feasibility gaps and attract private capital, such as:

- Federal sources like CDBG and HOME funds (linked on page 25).
- State of California sources like HCD programs, including the [Infill Infrastructure Grant Program](#), the [Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities \(AHSC\) Program](#), [CalHFA Mixed-Income Program](#) (MIP), and other [California Housing Finance Agency](#) programs.
- TIF for housing or infrastructure.
- [Local Housing Trust Fund \(LHTF\) Program](#).

The City can also commit to providing developers with reduced impact fees or expedited approval processing, both of which would help reduce the cost of development and the amount of financing required.

Private Sources

Private capital to fund vertical development and long-term operations might include:

- Developer equity and conventional loans.
- Healthcare or medical partner investments.
- Regional employer participation.
(Corporate partners may be interested in funding local initiatives that support the community in which they have facilities.)



- Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) and other institutional lenders may also provide additional funding at variable rates.

Infrastructure Funding

The connectivity and other public realm improvements recommended by the panel might be eligible for certain infrastructure funding.

- **Maximize local funding sources.** The Southern California Association of Governments [Sustainable Communities Program](#) may provide funding for projects that align with its goals.
- **Explore funding from the State of California.**
 - [Active Transportation Program](#)
 - [Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities](#)
 - [Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grants](#)
 - [Local Highway Safety Improvement Program](#)
 - [Transformative Climate Communities Program](#)
- **Explore federal funding opportunities.** At the time of this study, federal resources included the following programs from the Department of Transportation.
 - [BUILD Grants](#)
 - [Innovative Finance and Asset Concession Grant Program](#)
 - [Safe Streets and Roads for All](#)

P3 Strategies

Public-private partnerships are “creative alliances” formed between a government entity and private developers to achieve a common purpose. The primary uses of P3s include: facilitating the development of a real estate asset or community area, developing critical infrastructure, or monetizing public assets for public benefit. For the City of Lake Elsinore, the following models may be worth exploring as the City considers potential P3 modes that could facilitate the work at hand.

- Disposition and Development Agreements (DDAs)
- Joint development
- Ground leases
- Master developer agreements
- Revenue-sharing
- Transportation

For a deeper dive into potential P3 models and applications, refer to ULI’s publication, [Successful Public/Private Partnerships](#).

Additional Resources on P3s

The following additional information may help the City identify where and how a partnership with a trusted private entity might help further the City’s development and/or infrastructure goals.

Ten Principles for Successful Public/Private Partnerships:

1. Prepare properly for public/private partnerships
2. Create a shared vision
3. Understand your partners and key players
4. Be clear on the risks and rewards for all parties
5. Establish a clear and rational decision-making process
6. Make sure all parties do their homework
7. Secure consistent and coordinated leadership
8. Communicate early and often
9. Negotiate a fair deal structure
10. Build trust as a core value

[Successful Public/Private Partnerships: From Principles to Practice](#)

From [P3s: A Practical Solution for Improving Public Infrastructure](#):

P3s offer the public sector an open and transparent business model that can take advantage of private-sector financing and expertise, thereby making larger, more complex programs affordable. In addition, well-constructed fiscal models and contractual arrangements allocate appropriate risk between the public and private sectors to create efficiencies that benefit both parties.

P3s are not to be confused with privatization, nor are they successful if the public sector loads all the risk onto the private sector. They result in a partnership in which both parties have shared values and a long-term vested interest in the success of the assets and the services delivered.



Next Steps

Given the scope of the planning and projects the City already had underway at the time of this study, the panel outlined the following phasing strategy to assist City staff and leadership with tackling the recommendations outlined in this report.

Phasing Strategy

Near Term (0–18 Months)

These near-term actions are generally quick-win items that can further support the City's existing momentum.

- Launch facade grants, pop-ups, and placemaking initiatives to spruce up the streetscape and bring additional activity and commerce to Main Street.
- Address utility updates and launch a parking study to determine existing capacity and forecast future needs.
- Consider early streetscape concepts that can expand the Main Street experience north and south, and reinforce the improvements already made in the core.
- Amend the Specific Plan to accommodate revisions recommended by the panel and streamline the City's entitlement process.
- Focus on tenant recruitment and activation to bring new vendors and businesses to Main Street that will support a destination experience.
- Launch proactive marketing strategies to bring more visitors and returning visitors to the city. Using influencer marketing to promote the city's extreme sports opportunities would be an excellent start.

- Begin financing pursuits. Identifying and securing financing for the larger improvements under consideration will take time. Start the pursuit now to ensure funding is available when the City is ready to begin work on those larger projects.

Mid Term (18 Months–5 Years)

Over the course of the next five years, the City should be able to deliver the following infrastructure and projects.

- Expand streetscape and infrastructure construction work along Main Street (to the north and south) and address improvements to surrounding streets, particularly Spring Street, and key connecting east-west streets.
- Create structured parking to consolidate parking resources and free surface lots for higher and better use.
- Conduct local transportation and connectivity upgrades (within the surrounding one to two miles) to improve pedestrian and micro-mobility safety downtown.
- Launch mixed-use catalyst projects. The City, in partnership with a trusted development partner, can lead the way and demonstrate the type of mixed-use projects it would like to see downtown.
- Secure medical and/or office anchors to support the community's health and business needs. While it is not imperative that these uses be located downtown, the office uses, in particular, could help support the downtown daytime economy.

- Continue adding financing to ensure that the resources are readily available when the City is ready to move on a particular project.

Long Term (5–15 Years)

The panel believes that downtown Lake Elsinore can see full district redevelopment within the next 15 years, which could include the following improvements.

- Add additional structured parking resources to further shift parking away from inefficient surface parking lots, making way for additional development.
- Address regional mobility improvements (a radius of three miles or more) that will further enhance downtown's connectivity to broader regional destinations.
- Conduct multi-block redevelopment in and around the downtown core through a master developer mechanism or with a development partner.
- Build mixed-income housing to help ensure that current residents are able to remain in Lake Elsinore and that the community remains an affordable option for new residents.
- Create additional civic spaces, plazas, and cultural amenities to enhance public gathering areas across the community and ensure the city's rich historical narrative and cultural resources are cherished, uplifted, and protected.



About the Panel

CITY OF
LAKE & LSINORE
DREAM EXTREME



Julia Malisos

Panel Co-Chair
Senior Associate
T&B Planning



With 20 years of experience in the development industry, Julia is a seasoned planner specializing in entitlement processing, project management, and site design. She has successfully led teams through complex jurisdictional approvals and worked on a diverse range of projects, from large-scale master plans to small infill developments. Her background in both policy and design planning allows her to create practical, innovative, and implementable solutions. As a former Planning Commissioner for her city, Julia brings a well-rounded perspective to land use planning, understanding projects from both sides of the dais. Julia holds a Bachelor of Science in Planning from Arizona State University and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from the University of California, Irvine. She is a LEED Accredited Professional and an active member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI).

Hessam Vakili

Panel Co-Chair
Co-Managing Director
SMS Architects



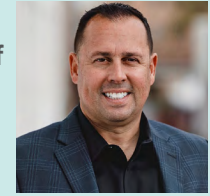
Hessam (Hess) Vakili is a design advocate with over two decades of experience, dedicated to excellence and community enrichment through innovative design solutions. With a diverse background spanning mixed-use developments, educational campuses, residential housing, and large-scale urban projects, he brings a holistic approach to every endeavor.

Having worked with renowned firms like Gensler and Elkus Manfredi, Hessam is recognized for his leadership and commitment to delivering impactful results. Beyond his professional achievements, he is passionate about mentoring emerging designers and contributing to philanthropic causes, embodying a dedication to shaping a better future through design innovation and community engagement.

Hessam holds a bachelor of science in Landscape Architecture, from University of Massachusetts, Amherst and also holds a Master's degree in Architecture, from the Boston Architectural College. He is a LEED Accredited Professional and an active member of the Urban Land Institute.

Matthew Durham

Senior Practice Leader of
Landscape Architecture
Kimley-Horn



Matt has practiced landscape architecture for almost 30 years and has experience in management, planning, design, and construction oversight of a wide range of projects. His vision is to design spaces that can enrich people's lives and facilitate connections to the natural environment to create a healthy lifestyles. Matt utilizes his leadership, management and technical background in all aspects of the profession and is committed to producing a quality product with high levels of client and team interaction.

Matt's background covers a wide range of project types, including master planned communities, park systems, trail and open space planning, streetscapes, education, commercial campuses, institutional facilities, hospitality, and retail destinations. His experience overseeing projects and teams from conceptualization through construction implementation is critical to achieving successful projects while maintaining strong client relationships.

Prior to joining Kimley-Horn, Matt worked at renowned firms EDAA, Inc. and AECOM. Matt received a Bachelor in Science in Landscape Architecture from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and is a Registered Landscape Architect in California, Utah, and Idaho.

Jason Rastegar

Director of Development
The Wolff Company



Jason Rastegar is an accomplished real estate development professional with extensive experience delivering both affordable and market-rate multifamily housing. His expertise spans the full development lifecycle—from land acquisition and entitlements to design, construction, and complex financing strategies leveraging Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), tax-exempt bonds, and public-private partnerships.

Jason has led large-scale housing initiatives that address critical affordability challenges while ensuring financial feasibility and long-term community impact. Currently, he plays a key role in expanding affordable and market-rate platforms, guiding projects from concept through completion and spearheading the launch of a new LIHTC division for his organization.

A recognized leader in the industry, Jason is actively involved with the Urban Land Institute (ULI), where he participates in mentorship programs focused on fostering the next generation of real estate professionals. Passionate about creating housing solutions that strengthen neighborhoods, Jason combines strategic vision, technical expertise, and a collaborative approach to deliver developments that promote equity and sustainability.

Chris Williams

Director of Planning
TCA Architects



Chris Williams is the Director of Planning at TCA with over 25 years of experience in planning, architecture and landscape architecture design. Dedicated to pushing a project forward, problem solving and efficiently achieving the client's goals, his contacts within the land development industry and knowledge of Building, City and County codes help to propel a project through the entitlement process with minimal interruptions.

Prior to joining TCA, Chris worked as an Associate Partner with MVE & Partners, focusing on high density and high profile multifamily and mixed-use projects. He has successfully guided more than 400 projects through entitlement for clients. Because the details are what ultimately bring a project together, he works closely with clients to understand their goals and studies the site to create designs that maximize potential. Chris has developed a deep knowledge of the entitlement process through his extensive experience in the field of design and land development.

Chris received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Design from the University of Oklahoma. He currently resides in Santa Ana and enjoys world adventures such as Running with the Bulls in Pamplona and treks in the Himalayas.

Diwu Zhou

Associate Transportation
Engineer
Fehr & Peers



Raised in suburbia where a car was essential to survival, Diwu was exposed to mass transit through his travels around the world. His work at Fehr & Peers focuses on the design, planning, and operation of California's transportation network.

Diwu envisions a country with accessible transportation for all Americans: self-driving vehicles for the military veterans who no longer can drive, ADA accessible sidewalks for all who brave our outdated streets, and extensive bicycle networks that encourage multi-modal travel.

Diwu earned his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas – Austin and his Master of Science in Transportation Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley.