

Chapter 4. Linkages – Public Realm Recommendations

4.4 Transit Recommendations

Transit service and bus stops can provide multiple benefits to the Downtown area, including an alternative means of circulation through Downtown, attractive street furniture, and access to the region.

4.4.1 Downtown Circulator Shuttle Service

Downtown is currently served by a variety of local Spirit Bus routes. These routes wind through the City and typically operate only once every 40 minutes. While these Spirit Bus routes provide a valuable service in linking Downtown to the rest of the City, a simpler circulator with more frequent service would serve to bring together the portions of Downtown which are currently too far apart for some to walk. Shown in Figure 4-1, this circulator service would link the “four corners” of Downtown –Garfield Hospital, Garvey/ Garfield, Garvey / Atlantic, and the future Atlantic Times Square project near Hellman / Atlantic. These four distinct activity nodes each have substantial existing (or future) pedestrian and commercial activity. However, because they are each slightly more than one-quarter mile apart, they do not generate substantial cross-traffic.

Shuttle service, running simply and frequently in a circular loop between these destinations, would encourage visitors to one node to visit the other nodes as well. The resulting linkages between Downtown’s nodes would foster the intermingling between uses and destinations that lie at the heart of a vibrant livable community.

4.4.2 Improved Bus Stops with Curb Bump-Outs where Feasible

Bus stops along major streets in Downtown can be improved to create a unified identity for Downtown that will serve the needs of transit riders while meeting business and property owners’ expectations for attractive street furniture that does not interfere with their ability to do business. A new shelter design should be created for Downtown Monterey Park that coordinates aesthetically with the existing street furniture chosen for the BID. The shelters should emphasize protection from the sun while

minimizing the blockage of views of local businesses from the street. Generally shelters should not have back wall to maintain an openness in the urban environment. Also, potential streetscape improvements should be focused at transit stops. In addition, curb bump-outs, similar to those described at crosswalks, should also be considered for bus stop locations. Curb bump-outs would provide additional room for shelters and waiting transit patrons. In addition, curb bump-outs would push the bus stop away from businesses, reducing crowding along the sidewalk (see Figure 4-16).

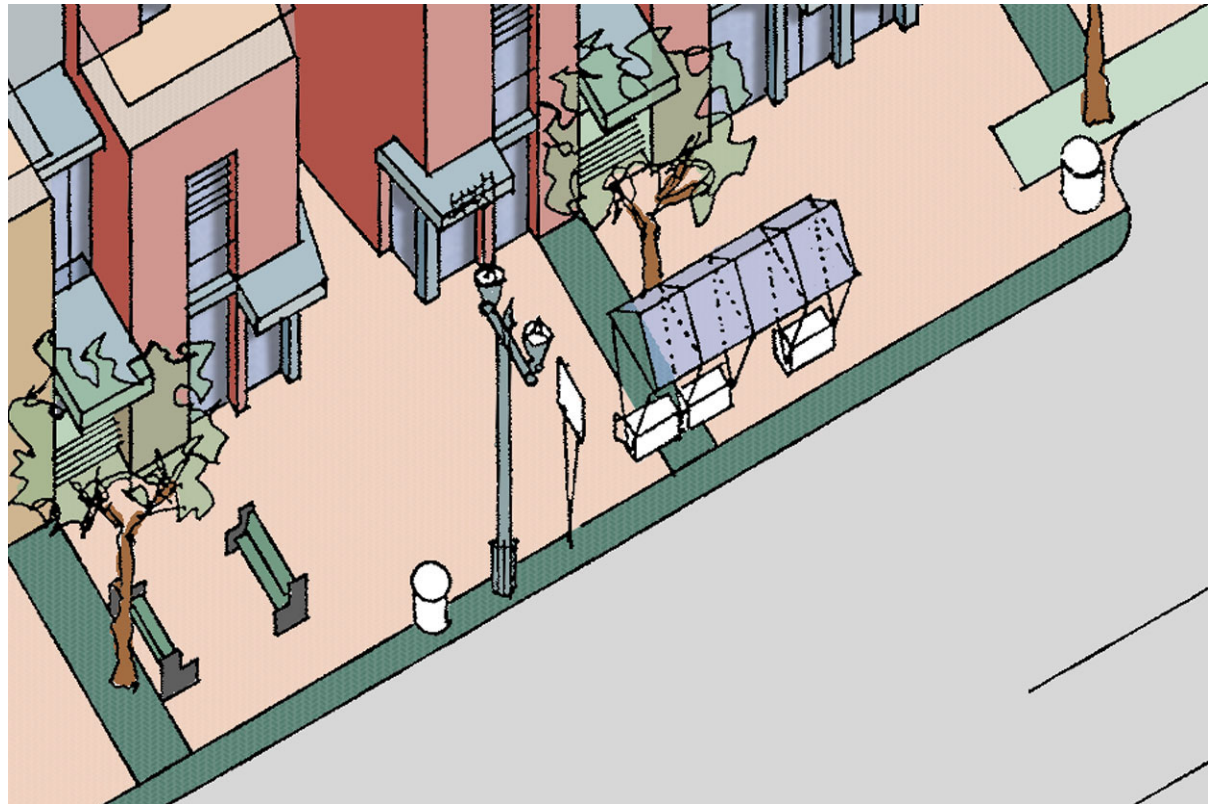


Figure 4-16. Bus stop concept with curb bump-out, improved shelters and street furniture.



Figure 4-17. Rapid Bus stop in Los Angeles.

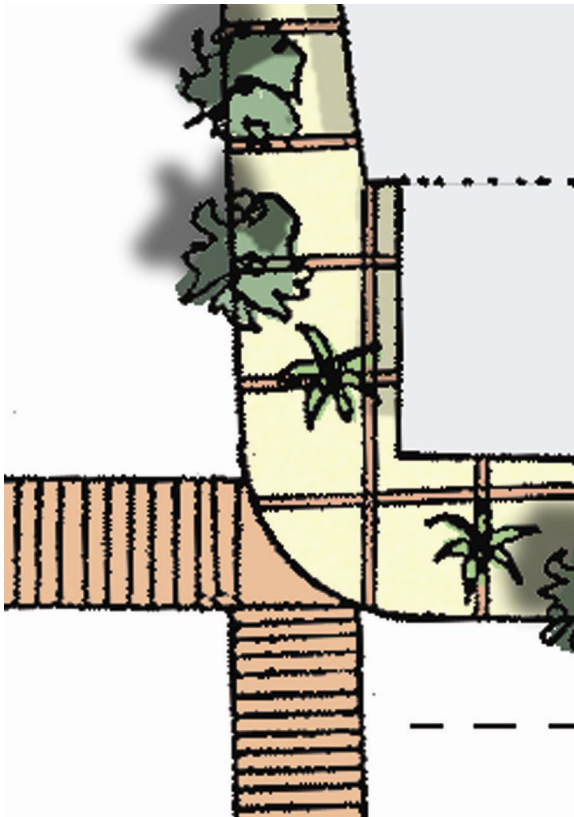


Figure 4-18. Setback of new development at potential Rapid Bus location to accommodate bus shelters and additional pedestrians.

4.4.3 Regional Access Via Metro Rapid Bus

Transit enhancements in Downtown Monterey Park would not only improve linkages between major destinations within Downtown, but would also improve non-automotive connections between Downtown and the rest of the region. Specifically, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) plans for initiating Rapid Bus service on both Atlantic Boulevard and Garvey Avenue will provide excellent bus links to the surrounding region.

Rapid Bus service typically only stops once every half-mile to mile along a single route. The City should coordinate with MTA to ensure that Rapid Bus stops are located advantageously to serve major activity nodes, such as Garvey / Garfield and the future Atlantic Times square. Rapid Bus stops built along other corridors have a streamlined modern design that helps the stops stand out as unique in the transit system (see Figure 4-17).

As new development occurs at likely Rapid Bus locations (see Figure 4-1), the City should work with developers to ensure that sufficient space and amenities are provided for the higher numbers of pedestrians and transit riders who will ride the Metro Rapid (see Figure 4-18).

4.5 Parking Recommendations

Parking is a critical, if sometimes neglected, component of a neighborhood's circulation system. Well placed public parking structures can encourage people to leave their cars in one place when they visit a neighborhood and walk between destinations. If public parking is built within approximately one-quarter mile of a destination, shoppers will feel comfortable parking in a centralized facility and walking to their destinations. However, when auto users drive between each destination rather than using a centralized parking facility, the roads become more congested and shoppers don't make the spontaneous decision to patronize a local business as they stroll by. Downtown Pasadena, Santa Monica, and Alhambra are examples of this synergy.

4.5.1 Centralized Public Parking Facility Near Garvey / Garfield Intersection

The area most in need of centralized parking facilities is the Garvey / Garfield Downtown Core. Many community members and business owners in the area emphasized the lack of parking near local businesses. The City currently owns public parking lots north and south of Garvey along Garfield. Signage for these lots, however, is poor, so the lots appear to belong to adjacent businesses rather than being available for public use.

The City should consider the development of a public parking structure concurrently with the redevelopment of parcels adjacent to the public

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lots. It will be critical that these structures do not just provide enough parking for new development but also additional spaces to support existing development. Furthermore, signage for these lots should clearly designate them as public lots. Signage should be located along the major streets directing new visitors to their locations (see Figure 4-19).

4.5.2 Generate Funds for Additional Parking Improvements

The City and local business and property owners should also consider other means for raising funds for additional public parking. In-lieu fees charged to new development and the installation of parking meters along major streets could help raise funds for the purchase and/or construction of new parking facilities, as well as improving signage for existing available parking. Parking meter funds were used to construct the recently constructed parking structure in Westwood.



Figure 4-19. Parking structure in Beverly Hills serving shops in building and in surrounding neighborhood, with clear signage for drivers.

Some business owners are concerned that parking meters may deter patrons from visiting their stores. However, in an area with an existing shortage of parking, parking meter fees can be fine-tuned so that only a few spaces are ever vacant, effectively providing the same number of patrons to businesses while raising money for business owners. Parking meters can be tried in a small area, such as the existing City lots, to test their effects and ability to raise funds before they are located throughout Downtown.

4.6 Wayfinding Recommendations

“Wayfinding” is a critical component of neighborhood linkages. Easy access to information about locations (including available parking), destinations, and the types of goods and services are available inside each building increases the value and invitingness of Downtown to both locals and visitors. Improving wayfinding in a neighborhood is typically thought of as improved street signage. However, wayfinding can be improved through many other means already discussed in this chapter. For example, a single, unique bus shelter design or streetscape concept would provide a visual cue to visitors that they have arrived in a special place without requiring signage to that effect. In fact, such non-signage forms of wayfinding are encouraged whenever possible in order to avoid signage clutter.

Wayfinding can be a means of communication between cultural groups that increases the understanding and interaction between diverse

groups in a single place. Therefore, signage should communicate common information and ideas that are useful and meaningful to all. Wayfinding can also be a means of cultural exchange, particularly in a diverse neighborhood like Downtown Monterey Park. In that context, public art is also a form of wayfinding

4.6.1 Parking Signage

A program of signage should be designed for Downtown Monterey Park that points drivers towards public parking lots, including private lots that may share parking with surrounding businesses. Knowing the location of public parking is essential information for first time visitors to an area (see Figures 4-20).



Figure 4-20. Parking signage in Pasadena begins at entry points to the area to guide visitors.

4.6.2 Information Kiosks

As shown in Figure 4-1, a network of regularly-spaced information kiosks has been recommended for Downtown sidewalks. Kiosks can provide pedestrians with information on the street network, surrounding businesses, and upcoming community events (see Figure 4-21). A kiosk with good information can encourage a pedestrian to continue on into an unfamiliar area.



Figure 4-21. Information kiosk in Beverly Hills provides information on local shops and the surrounding neighborhood.

4.6.3 Public Art – Art Walk

Figure 4-1 shows an “Art Walk” between Garfield and Atlantic along Garvey Avenue. This stretch of Garvey links high activity areas along Atlantic and along Garfield. However, the area in between is currently fairly inactive in terms of commercial destinations. A program of public art, possibly initiated together with the two elementary schools on this stretch of Garvey, could entice people to walk between Atlantic and Garfield on Garvey. Potential types of public art include pieces embedded in the sidewalk, an art fence adjacent to the schools, banners hanging from light posts, or free standing periodic sculptures.

4.6.4 Downtown Internet “Hot Spot”

Another form of information which could be made available in Downtown Monterey Park’s public realm is the Internet. With the advent of wireless networking, the Internet can be made available in public spaces. Many coffee shops, such as Starbucks, already provide this type of service. However, this service has begun to spread to the wider public realm. This type of service has recently been activated along Pine Street in Long Beach, a neighborhood similar to that envisioned for Downtown Monterey Park.

4.7 Public Space Recommendations

A frequent comment from community members has been the desire for additional public space in Downtown to allow for public gathering and recreation. As shown in Figure 4-1, the Downtown area already includes several parks

and community facilities, including City Hall. However, these facilities are not located directly on the major streets that form the heart of Downtown. Along these streets, additional open space will need to be provided by new development (see Figures 4-22 and 4-23). Chapter 5, which describes standards and guidelines for new development in Downtown, includes recommendations on the provision of public open space as a part of new development.



Figure 4-22. Public courtyard with seating along Atlantic Boulevard.



Figure 4-23. Open space in Alhambra provided on private property with city involvement.

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4.8 Streetscape: Corridor Design Concepts

With the improvements made along Garvey Avenue within the BID, the City has already made significant investments in streetscape in Downtown. These types of investments should continue along other major Downtown streets. In this Plan, individualized streetscape concepts have been developed for each major street in Downtown. They are described in Section 4.2.

The concepts in the following four subsections provide holistic concepts for streetscape and other public realm improvements on each major street in Downtown Monterey Park: Garvey Avenue (plus a focus on East Garvey), Atlantic Boulevard, and Garfield Avenue.

4.8.1 Overall Garvey Avenue Streetscape Concept

Garvey Avenue is the spine of Downtown Monterey Park. Its relatively wide sidewalks and streetscape improvements already provide pedestrian amenities lacking in other parts of Downtown (see Figure 4-24). The following recommendations build upon this foundation to establish a signature street for Monterey Park:

- Require 15 feet minimum Pedestrian Realm width open to sky (awning and balconies may project 5 feet, see Figure 4-25). The Garvey / Garfield Specific Plan provides for this 15 feet. However, it allows second stories to the property line. This provision of the Specific Plan should be deleted.

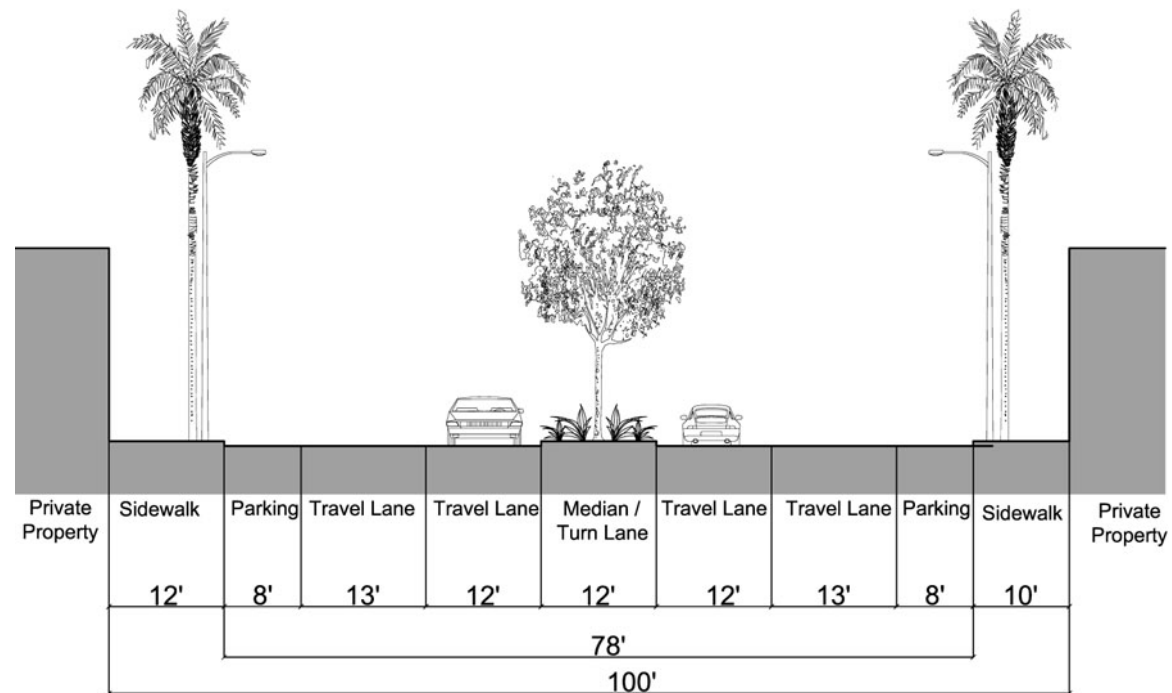


Figure 4-24. Existing cross-section of Garvey Avenue.

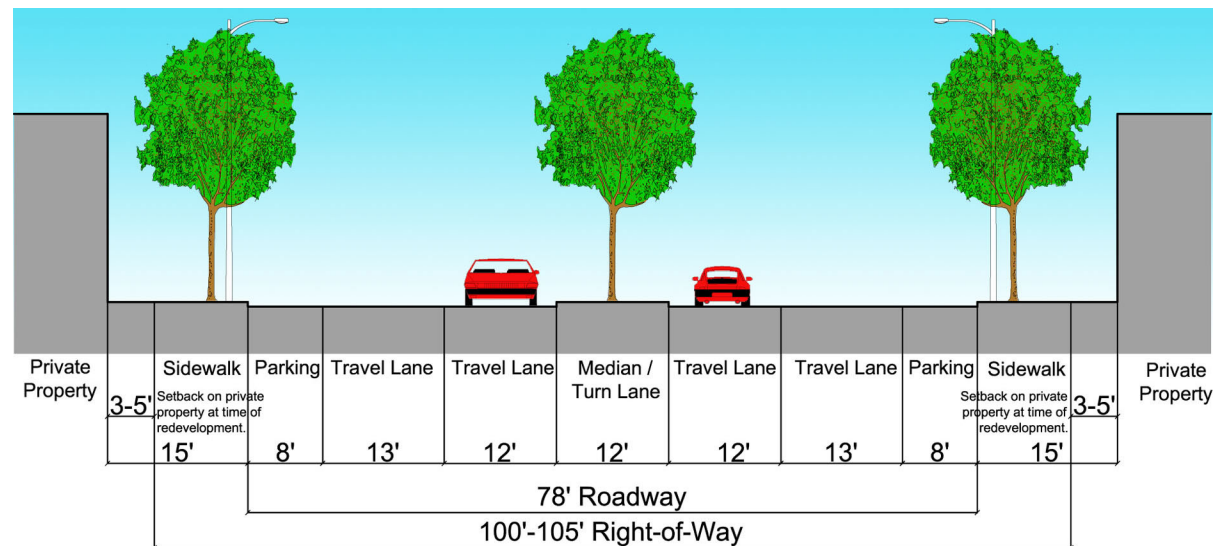


Figure 4-25. Recommended cross-section for Garvey Avenue.

- Continue Basic BID Streetscape Improvements to the east and west on Garvey to unify the street including:
 - Green-colored decorative crosswalks (see Figure 4-26)
 - Benches and trash receptacles
 - Ornamental green street lights
 - Special paving at curb
 - Podocarpus trees in the medians
 - Decorative tree grates in sidewalks
- Consider the following modifications and additions to BID concept:
 - New bus shelters with decorative paving to match BID streetscape
 - Protected crosswalks with pedestrian lighting in street or pedestrian signal at non-signalized intersections
 - Directories and signage throughout the area identifying restaurants, businesses and parking
 - Public art walk between Atlantic and Garfield (places for public art children's art near school)
- For the private realm to complement the public realm:
 - Water features incorporated in new development
 - Corner plazas at intersections but diagonal connections not required as recommended in the Specific Plan
 - Public gathering spaces/town square directly visible from the street
 - Pedestrian-friendly uses and design for visual interest on ground floor
 - Retail shops and restaurants along street frontage should be as close to sidewalk elevations as possible. No below-grade shops should be permitted along major street frontages.



Figure 4-26. Existing decorative crosswalk on Garvey Avenue.

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4.8.2 East Garvey Focus

The recommendations for East Garvey are similar to those for Garvey in general. However, East Garvey should emphasize the pedestrian by providing multiple crossings of the street and using shade trees rather than palms along sidewalks. In addition, existing medians could be extended in order to provide additional landscaping along the street while simplifying traffic flow in the area. Furthermore, the following additional modifications should be considered to the basic Garvey streetscape concept:

- Chinese Flame trees spaced 30 feet to 35 feet apart in sidewalk next to curb instead of Queen Palms (see Figure 4-27)
- Curb extensions at bus stops and at some intersections to increase width of sidewalks
- Green parkways instead of tree grates around the new trees on East Garvey
- Crosswalks with flashing lights alongside

Figure 4-28 presents an aerial view of the East Garvey area today, and Figures 4-29 and 4-30 provide two alternative streetscape concepts which reflect the above recommendations.



Figure 4-27. Chinese Flame tree in Westwood.



Figure 4-28. Aerial view of East Garvey Avenue existing conditions.

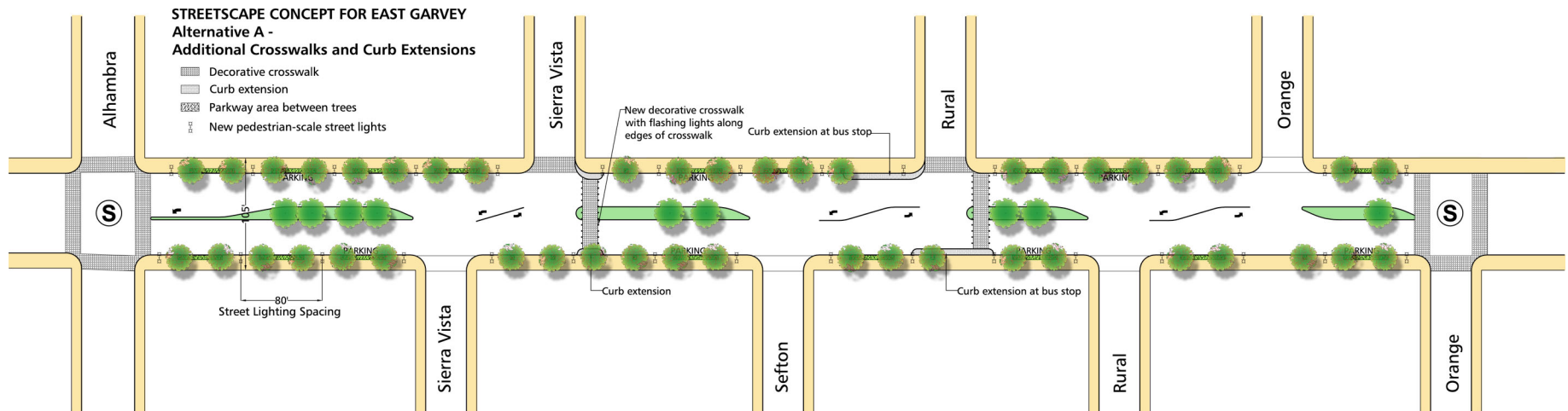


Figure 4-29. East Garvey Avenue streetscape concept, Alternative A.

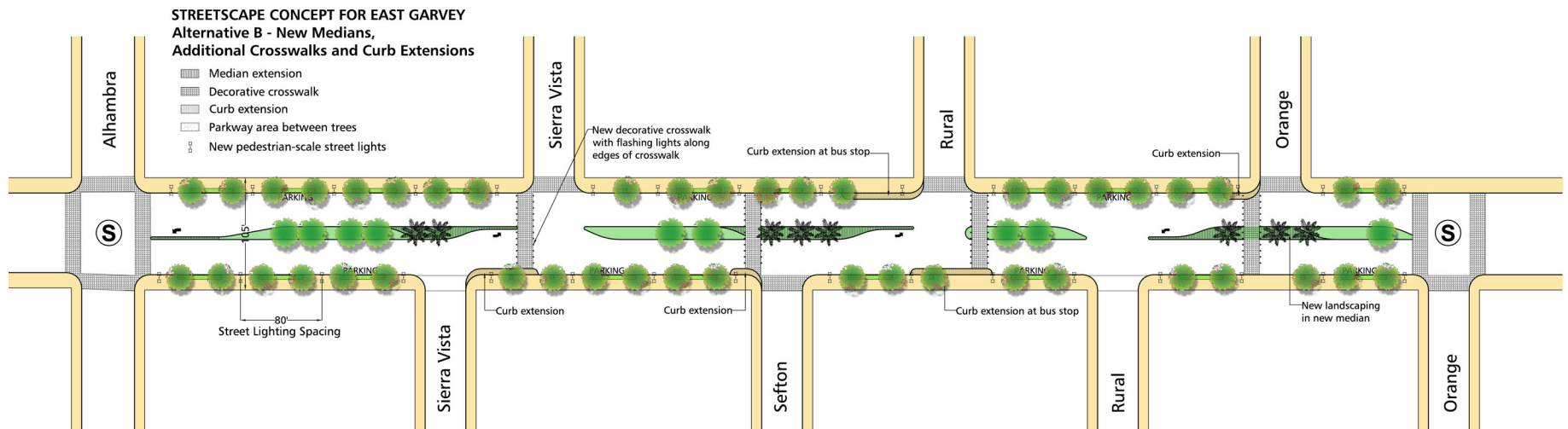


Figure 4-30. East Garvey Avenue streetscape concept, Alternative B.