

CIRCULATION 8

This Specific Plan proposes a number of circulation improvements. Recommendations focus on sustainable strategies that accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles and transit.



Sidewalk on a residential street in Downtown.

A. Pedestrian Improvements

Sidewalk System

Pedestrian circulation is a major priority for Downtown. As an early step in the implementation process, it is proposed that an integrated pedestrian circulation system be developed for Downtown. An initial step in establishing a more robust pedestrian system is the completion of the existing sidewalk system, particularly in the eastern residential areas. Priority sidewalk segments include areas of Fifth Street near the Whitmore Mansion where there are currently no sidewalks. Smaller gaps should also be closed along Magnolia Avenue, Fifth Street near Whitmore, and potentially along El Camino Avenue. Figure 2-1 in Chapter Two, Existing Conditions, shows gaps in the existing Downtown sidewalk system.

Paseo Network

A key component of the Specific Plan is increased east-west pedestrian circulation. To that end, a series of pedestrian paseos is proposed for the Plan Area. It is envisioned that one of these connections would cross the blocks bounded on the north and south by Magnolia Street and North Street respectively. A second pedestrian paseo is proposed to cross the blocks bounded on the north and south by North Street and Lawrence Street respectively. The proposed paseo network will connect key destinations in the Plan Area to Fourth Street and to each other, including the Whitmore Home, Whitmore Mansion and Whitmore Park. The paseo network will be instrumental in the establishment of a walkable downtown in Ceres. Furthermore,



Paseo in Stockton.

a paseo system will provide enhanced character and identity to Downtown and promote economic development by making nearby sites more attractive. Paseos will bisect blocks containing parcels under private ownership and will potentially require property acquisition by the City, dedication, public/private partnerships or other mechanisms. In addition to their contribution to a comprehensive pedestrian circulation system, paseos will also provide increased visual interest in the Downtown and evolve into unique public gathering spaces. Development adjacent to paseos can “spill out” onto the paseo with outdoor seating, special landscaping and other similar physical features. Paseos could accommodate special events, such as sidewalk sales, farmers’ markets and other appropriate activities. Paseos should also be comfortable pedestrian spaces at night and should be available for nighttime events. Adequate lighting and engagement of paseos by new development and residential units on upper floors of mixed use buildings will help to ensure this. Figures 8-1 and 8-2 illustrate a typical paseo during the day and at night.

FIGURE 8-1 Paseo

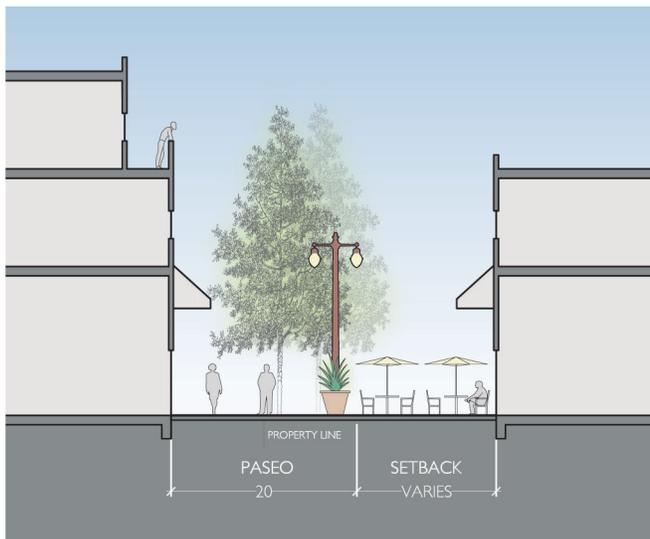
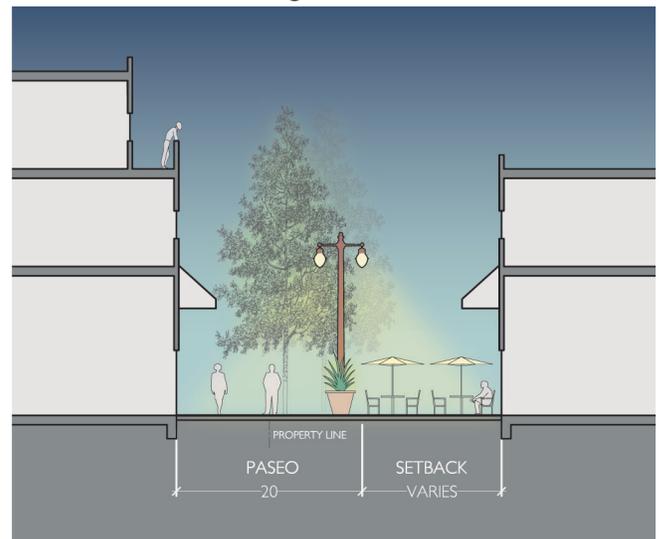


FIGURE 8-2 Paseo at Night



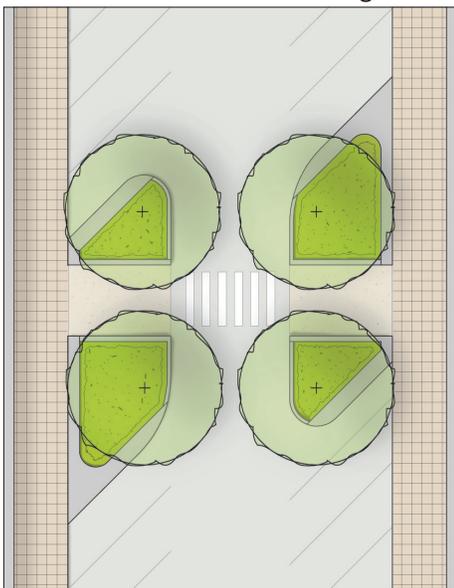
Pedestrian Signalization

New traffic signal improvements proposed for Downtown are discussed in detail below. In addition to easing vehicular traffic, new traffic signals should provide protected pedestrian crossings as appropriate and accommodate bicyclists, ultimately providing easier and safer access to Downtown for these modes. Signalized pedestrian crossings will be most appropriate in later implementation stages, as traffic increases.

Pedestrian Crossings

Well-marked pedestrian crossings provide enhanced safety and comfort for pedestrians and help calm traffic. While several pedestrian crossings already exist in Downtown, including marked along Whitmore Avenue and near Walter White Elementary School, additional clearly-marked pedestrian crossings should be provided in Downtown. Marked crossings should be incorporated at all Downtown intersections and at key mid-block crossings. Mid-block crossings are proposed along Third and Fourth Street. These are proposed to connect paseos across streets in the middle of blocks. Additional mid-block crossings should also be considered in other locations as Downtown redevelops. Mid-block crossings enhance the pedestrian circulation system, increase pedestrian safety, enhance streetscape character, and can help to break up the monotony of long blocks in Downtown. Figure 8-3 illustrates how a mid-block crossing could be incorporated on Fourth Street. As shown, some parking spaces will need to be removed to accommodate a new crossing.

FIGURE 8-3 Mid-Block Crossing



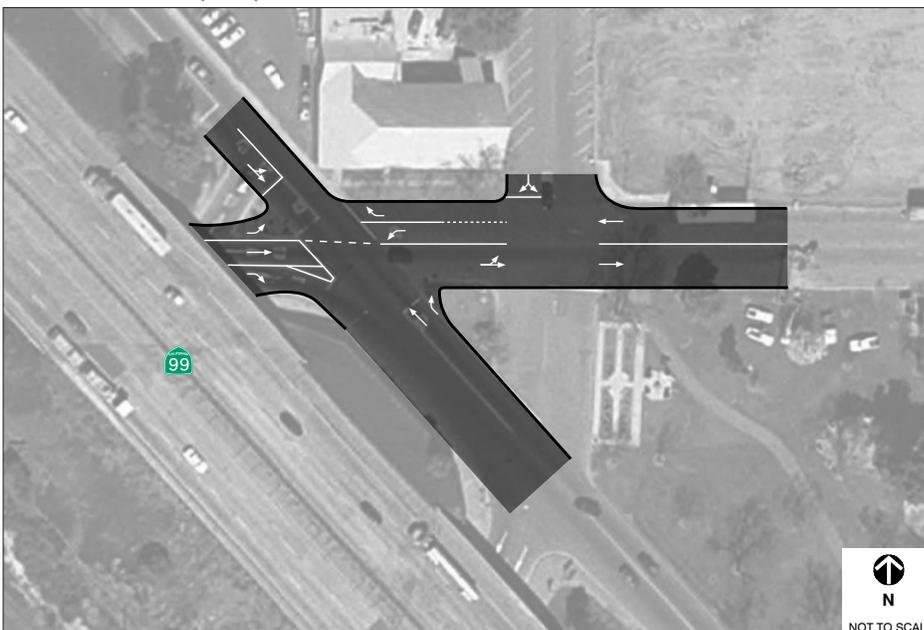
Crosswalk.

B. Vehicular Improvements

El Camino Avenue/North Street/State Route 99 Ramps Improvements

This important intersection is a gateway into Downtown Ceres. Under its current configuration, the intersection is not able to accommodate an increase in traffic associated with regional growth and the development of the Specific Plan land uses. A traffic signal will need to be installed at the El Camino Avenue/North Street/State Route 99 ramps to better facilitate traffic flows. The Specific Plan recommends a reconfiguration of the intersection that would close a small segment of Second Street between El Camino Avenue and North Street. Closure of this short segment that creates the existing triangular island would simplify signalization, and allow for expansion of Whitmore Park. The recommended intersection configuration is shown on Figure 8-4. Since this intersection was built prior to the current Caltrans standards being in place, a design exception may be required to make improvements. This improvement is not warranted in the near-term, but rather to accommodate long-term Specific Plan Area and regional growth. It is estimated that the design of the improvements should begin when building permits representing 35 percent of Specific Plan buildout are issued. It is recommended that construction be completed before the Specific Plan Area reaches 75 percent buildout. More information about transportation improvement costs and potential traffic impact fees are provided in Chapter Ten, Implementation.

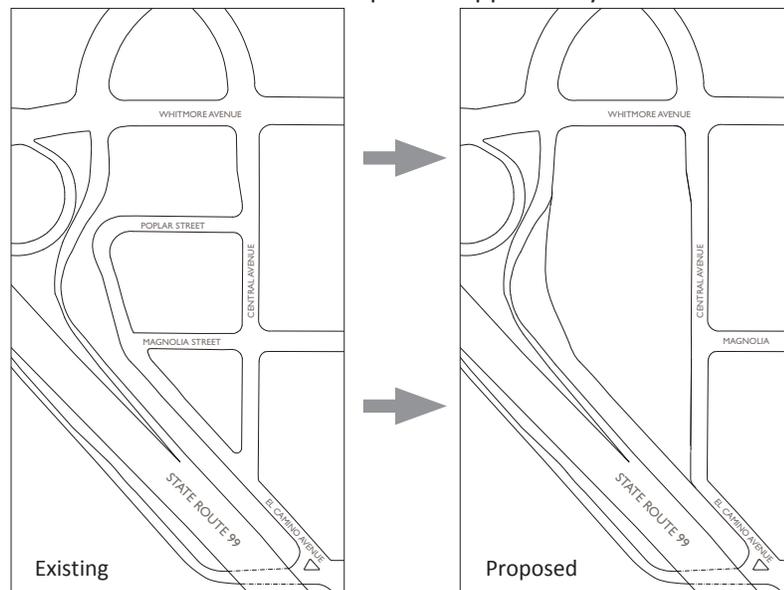
FIGURE 8-4 Ramp Improvements



El Camino Avenue and Magnolia Street Elimination West of Central Avenue

The State Route 99 Whitmore Interchange project, at Whitmore Avenue, will end El Camino Avenue prior to reaching Whitmore, and direct northbound El Camino Avenue traffic onto Magnolia Street. The plan proposes to dedicate the right-of-way of these streets to create a large redevelopment parcel at the northwest portion of the Downtown, provided that surrounding parcels can be consolidated. The assembly of these blocks provides a noteworthy development opportunity for the Downtown. Redevelopment of this area would take place in late phases of implementation, and careful coordination with existing property owners will be required. Figure 8-5 shows how these blocks could potentially be transformed to create a large, highway-oriented development opportunity.

FIGURE 8-5 Northwest Development Opportunity



Lane Width Reduction on Downtown Streets

Many streets in Downtown have wide right-of-ways with ample room for travel and parking. Several streets have a curb-to-curb distance of 60 feet. Reducing travel lanes to a width of ten to eleven feet will provide opportunities for enhancement of the pedestrian realm, landscape and streetscape improvements, reconfigured parking, bicycle facilities, and increased development potential. Travel lanes of ten to twelve feet on Downtown streets can still provide for safe travel and emergency access while helping to satisfy urban design goals. Travel lane reduction will also help minimize

paved surfaces in Downtown that impact stormwater infrastructure facilities. Lane width reductions should occur as part of larger streetscape projects in Downtown. Additional detail and illustrations regarding the reconfiguration of streets in Downtown are provided in Chapter Four, Development Concepts.

Creative Streetscape Improvements at Strategic Locations on Fifth Street

The Specific Plan prioritizes the preservation and enhancement of historic Fifth Street. Creative streetscape improvements will be critical to the street's transformation to a celebrated historic corridor. It is proposed that new streetscape configurations be explored as parcels adjacent to this street redevelop. For example, it may be appropriate for Fifth Street to "shift" at certain locations or intersections where opportunities to improve the right-of-way exist, particularly where improvements will accentuate properties or features to reinforce the historic character of the street. Opportunities include the west side of the mansion property, which has been identified by this Specific Plan as a key termination point of the northern paseo.



Meandering road provides interest and character to the street.

North Street/Fourth Street Traffic Circle Removal

It is proposed that the existing traffic circle at the North Street/Fourth Street intersection be removed. Removal of this traffic circle will allow for more extensive pedestrian improvements, including enhanced sidewalk bulbouts at this primary intersection. This action will also create design continuity on Fourth Street and provide for easier mobility and vehicle access. A four-way stop will need to be added at this intersection upon removal of the traffic circle to ensure safe traffic operations. Please refer to Chapter Four, Development Concepts, for further discussion of potential improvements to this intersection and North Street as a whole.

Pine Street/El Camino Avenue Intersection

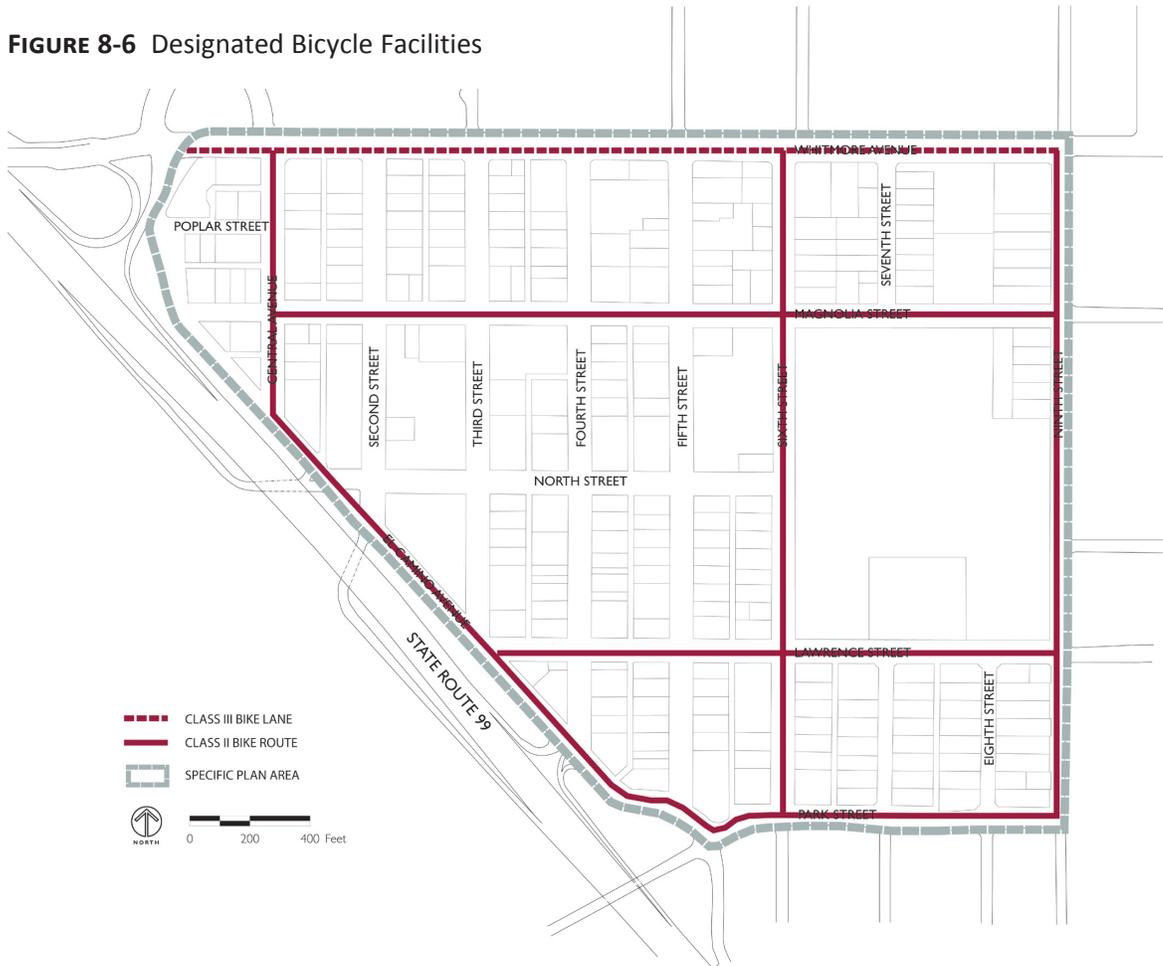
This intersection was examined during the planning process to determine if improvements or signalization would be warranted. It was determined that this intersection is currently operating at an acceptable level and will continue to operate at an acceptable level upon buildout of the Specific Plan. Additionally, due to the close spacing of this intersection to the State Route 99 over crossing, sight distance is limited over the bridge structure and there is insufficient distance between the crest of the bridge and expected eastbound vehicle queues (should the intersection meet signal warrants and be signalized) to provide sufficient stopping distance.

C. Bicycle Improvements

Class III Bicycle Facilities

A Class III bicycle route is a street or section of street that is designated as a shared route for bicycles and vehicles. Signage or markings on the street alert vehicular traffic to bicycle traffic. Magnolia Street contains the only Class III bicycle route already in place in Downtown. New Class III routes are recommended for El Camino Avenue, Park Street (from Pine Street to Sixth Street), Lawrence Street, Ninth Street, Sixth Street and Central Avenue. These improvements are consistent with recommendations in the Ceres General Plan, which recommends Class III or Class II bike lanes (dedicated on-street bike lane) for these roadways. Designated bicycle facilities are shown in Figure 8-6.

FIGURE 8-6 Designated Bicycle Facilities



Class II Bicycle Improvements

Whitmore Avenue is also designated in the Ceres General Plan as a Class II or Class III facility. It is recommended that this roadway be reconfigured to include an on-street Class II bike lane. A Class II bike lane is a dedicated area within the roadway, which is demarcated by striping or painting and is available exclusively to bicyclists. Bike lanes are appropriate for Whitmore Avenue, particularly considering its close proximity to Downtown, the crossing of State Route 99 and two major nearby school facilities.



Class II Bicycle Lane.



Class III Bicycle Route.

Bicycle Parking

It is recommended that bicycle parking facilities be provided as development occurs. Bicycle parking facilities should be provided as areas redevelop and increased bicycle activity emerges in Downtown. The City should provide bicycle parking at community parks and buildings wherever possible, and potentially along Fourth Street as well. Standards for bicycle parking in private development are provided in Chapter 7, Land Use Regulations and Development Standards.

D. Parking Improvements

Fourth Street Angled Parking

The southern portion of Fourth Street from North Street to El Camino Avenue is currently lined on both sides with angled parking. This is also where Fourth Street exhibits the commercial character of a true downtown. Building on this character, it is proposed that the entire street frontage along Fourth Street be converted to angled parking to create a consistent streetscape within this important commercial corridor, as well as to provide additional on-street parking. Stormwater treatment measures should be engineered with properly placed flow through curbs or curb cuts to allow for positive drainage. These and similar issues will need to be studied more closely on a street-by-street basis by a landscape architect and engineer during future streetscape design processes.



Fourth Street Angled Parking, just north of El Camino Avenue.

Fourth Street Alley-accessed Parking

The Specific Plan envisions a continuous reservoir of off-street parking along the north-south alleys flanking Fourth Street. This parking would be provided through a variety of mechanisms. Development along these alleys is required to be set back from the alley right-of-way by 20 feet, with parking provided in that setback. Private developers are allowed to provide a smaller number of parking spaces if the spaces are made publicly accessible. Additionally, the City can acquire the land or dedications along the alleys to create public parking.

South Fourth Street Parking Lot

The Specific Plan recommends development of a new parking lot south of the new Turlock Irrigation District building via property acquisition and coordination with the existing TID building. New public surface parking should be combined with the TID office's customer parking area located adjacent to El Camino Avenue. This site will provide additional parking resources for Fourth Street businesses and the Fourth Street Cinema on days experiencing peak demand. Retail development along Fourth Street will be able to rely on this public lot in part to satisfy parking needs. This improvement would be appropriate in late stages of implementation as parking demand increases in response to new development. Please see Figures 4-7 through 4-10 in Chapter Four, Development Concepts, for an illustration of how a new parking area could be developed at this location.

North Street Parallel Parking

North Street is currently configured with a mix of parallel and angled parking in Downtown. This Specific Plan proposes improvements to the existing right-of-way configuration on North Street. Chapter Four, Development Concepts, discusses the proposed streetscape improvements in detail. The North Street Green Connection discussed in Chapter Four recommends that North Street be reconfigured to include deeper setbacks, a rich tree canopy and bioswales to manage stormwater. Converting existing angled parking to parallel parking along North Street will provide space to expand the pedestrian realm as well as provide bioswales, which reinforce sustainability goals for Downtown. It is recommended that improvements to North Street be undertaken in the early phases of development, as a part of a more detailed design process.

Civic Center Parking

Chapter Three, Vision, Goals and Concept, recommends that a new Civic Center parking area be provided on the north side of the block bordered by Second and Third Streets, where the existing library and City Hall are now located. Stanislaus County has already designated Ceres as the location for a new 25,000 square foot library. The Specific Plan strongly recommends that this new library be built in Downtown. Upon construction of this facility, it is anticipated that the current library can be acquired by the City and converted to surface parking, to serve the Community Center, Fire Station #1, Police Building and the new City Hall recommended south of the Community Center. These improvements can be phased, with the parking area expanding as the existing City Hall and Library are replaced. This parking area will also be linked directly to the northern paseo system. Civic Center parking is intended to provide long-term parking for Civic Center uses during the day and at night, but could also create shared parking opportunities for other Downtown uses at night, such as restaurants, shopping, and nighttime community events. Parking capacity could be further increased in the future with the provision of a parking structure.

Tandem Parking in Private Development

It is recommended that the City consider allowing tandem parking to be provided in future private development in Downtown. This type of parking, illustrated in the drawing below, can sometimes provide for more efficient parking layout. Any tandem parking provided in private development should be in keeping with City standards.

