



View within parking lot on Western Ave at Capitol Dr.



# 7 Process

## 1.1 Goals

In 2012, the City of Rancho Palos Verdes embarked on a community-led effort to improve Western Avenue for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. This document summarizes and illustrates the shared vision, ideas, and process that underlies the yearlong planning effort.

To inform this effort, the project team established principles and aspirations as shared by the Vision Committee, stakeholders, the community, and the City of Rancho Palos Verdes:

### Guiding Principles and Aspirations:

**Improve, improve, improve: storefronts, public realm, and perception.**

**Create diversity: retail, access, and mobility.**

**Locals first: address the needs of local residents and the rest will follow.**

**Partner with San Pedro and other adjoining communities to market the Western Avenue brand.**

**Create amenities and a destination for visitors and residents alike.**

# 1.2 Process

This effort was conducted in three phases: Research and Analysis, Alternatives, and Final Plan. Community outreach was woven into each step and served as a critical component in driving the overall Vision.

**RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS:** Our analytical process was one of listening and discovering. We began the process with an open mind and established a dialogue with all of the interested stakeholders, who guided the discovery process. This first phase culminated with a clear set of agreed-upon goals, as well as design principles which framed the subsequent stages of our work.

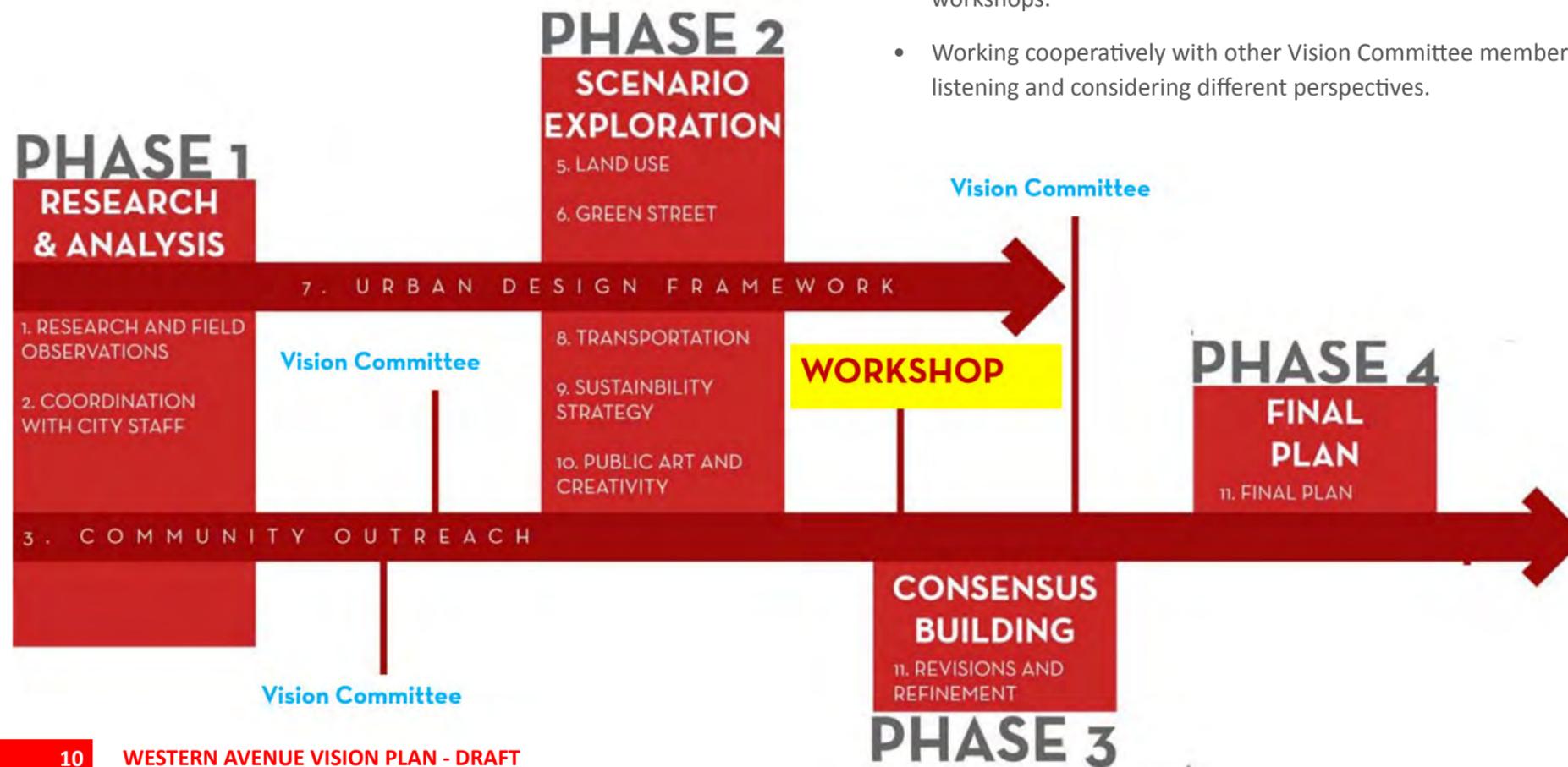
**ALTERNATIVES:** Once the design guidelines and principles were established, the team explored alternatives, in an iterative process based on engaging the community and stakeholders at intensive workshops and charrettes. A public workshop and exhibition of ideas was held to present these alternatives to the stakeholders and solicit their feedback. A preferred alternative was identified based on their feedback.

**FINAL PLAN:** During this phase, a “preferred plan” was selected and both phasing and implementation strategies explored. Elements of the

plan were identified for both immediate actions, or recommended for more advance study at a future date.

Visions are successful only when they are shared and built on bedrock of transparency. To that end, stakeholder engagement has played a critical role in creating and refining the vision for Western Avenue Corridor. Outreach was proactive and conducted at two levels. First, a vision committee was established at the project kickoff and was charged with the following tasks:

- Representing the broader community and stakeholders in the Western Avenue planning process.
- Helping to identify opportunities, issues, and challenges to address in the planning process.
- Providing feedback on research conclusions and planning concepts to the project team.
- Serving as advocates of the process, assist with publicizing community involvement opportunities, and attending workshops.
- Working cooperatively with other Vision Committee members, listening and considering different perspectives.



The makeup of the Vision Committee was intended to represent the entire range of voices of the larger community. It provided equal representation to both the City of Rancho Palos Verdes (west side of the corridor) and San Pedro (on the east). Members represented residents, businesses, property owners, and agencies that will have a role in implementing the recommendations of this effort.

The second level of outreach directly engaged members of the larger community. An open house and public workshop was held in April 2013 at Peck Park. Community members were invited to review the

team’s findings and preliminary ideas and provide feedback. The team sought input at two levels. First, “what are the long terms aspirations for the corridor?” And second, “what are issues and problems that need immediate fixes?” Both were invaluable in prioritizing improvements.

## 1.3 What is a Vision Plan?

The efforts and recommendations described in this document constitute a Vision Plan. A Vision Plan, in the fields of urban design and city planning, is a unique and often misunderstood tool that is always the critical first step in any long-term city building effort. The following narrative aims to clarify the goals of this visioning effort in particular, and vision plans in general.

By its comprehensive and aspirational nature, a vision plan takes the long view. For it to be effective, it must articulate and illustrate the qualitative character and attributes of the future vision it is describing. A vision plan illustrates the finish line of a community’s march to success, and its own success comes from broad grassroots support. The vision’s horizon of implementation is viewed in generational terms. Typically, vision plans (including this one) look at a 20 to 30-year timeline.



A vision plan is not a development plan. It is not meant to solve every problem or resolve every constraint. Rather, it sets a broad framework of feasibility, and within that framework generates and test ideas (some provocative) to address the communities issues.

Vision plans typically do not have any implementation funds associated with them. In fact, one of their measures of success is the ability to raise funds for catalyst projects identified in the plan. In the long-term, it is the free market that will ultimately determine the pace of a vision’s realization. To be clear, the guidelines and incentives that the vision recommends are meant to accelerate the rate of improvements (both private development and public improvements).



While all implementation efforts ultimately flow from the recommendations of a vision plan, jurisdictions must first set the stage by establishing the policy and regulatory frameworks that support the vision. In the case of Rancho Palos Verdes, the immediate next steps may include updating the Western Avenue Specific Plan, revising the zoning code and development standards, or partnering with the City of Los Angeles.

Cities cyclically reinvent and reinvest in themselves. Vision planning is the tool by which this natural process is best managed. It lies squarely at the intersection of good urban design, rigorously engaging the public, relying on sound market analysis, and most importantly, building the optimism of the community.

