A.1. Introduction

The condition of the Beach and Edinger Corridors at the inception of this Specific Plan is detailed in this section. Ultimately, the implementation of the planning framework contained herein will result in sufficient modification of these conditions as to make this Plan obsolete. At that point, a newly updated Beach and Edinger Corridors Specific Plan will be prepared to engage the problems and opportunities presented by the modified existing conditions. As change occurs, the community intends to measure those changes against the conditions recorded herein to monitor the degree to which the Plan remains sufficiently current.

A.2. Context

1) Region

Huntington Beach is located in Orange County 35 miles south of Los Angeles (Fig.A.1). With a population of 202,250 it is the second largest City in the County behind Anaheim. The city's western edge is bounded by the Pacific Ocean which provides 7 miles of coastline stretching from Seal Beach to Newport Beach. The northern and eastern City Limits boarder Seal Beach, Westminster, Fountain Valley, and Costa Mesa.

Fig.A.1.Regional Context

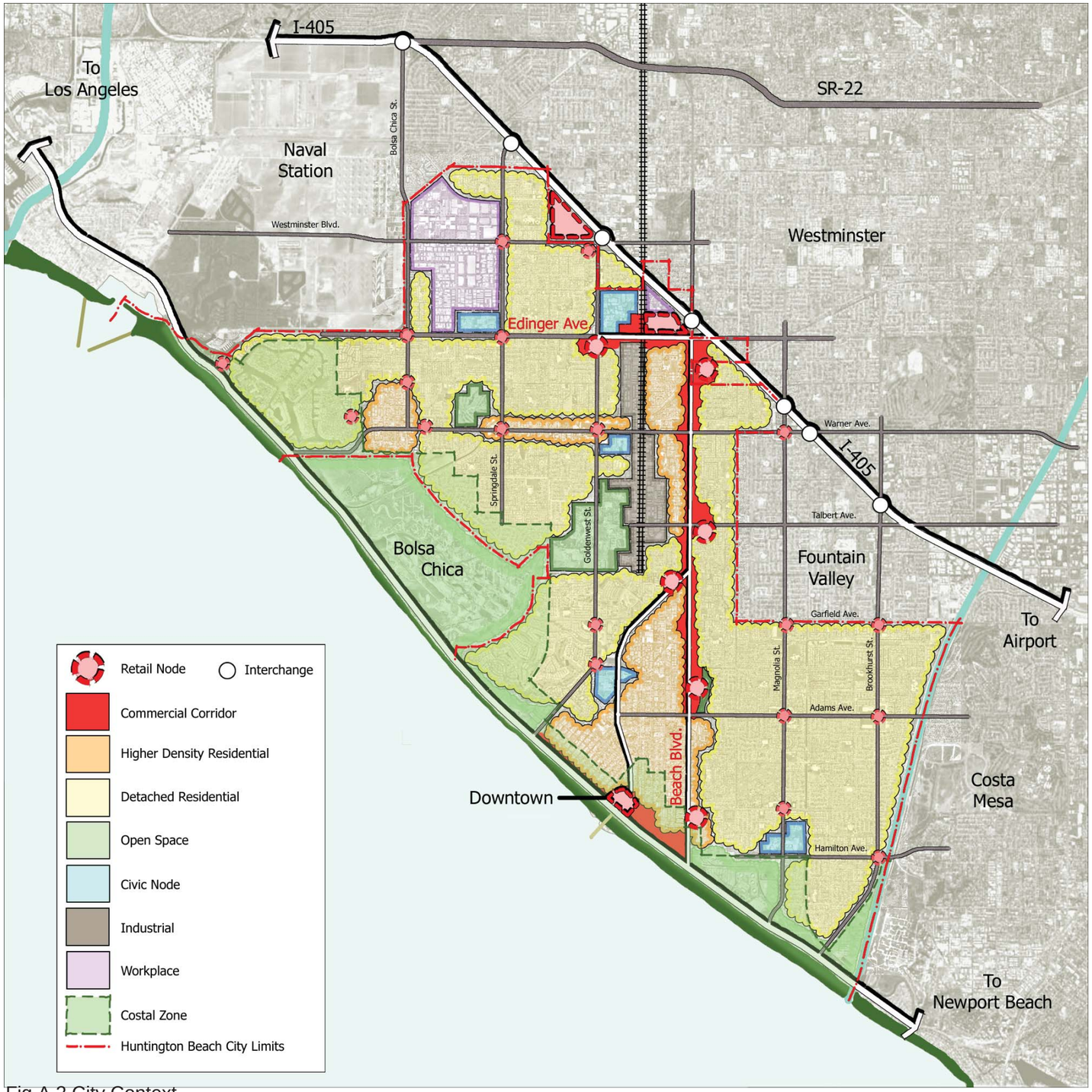


Fig.A.2.City Context

2) City

Corridors Location. Beach Blvd. is one of four arterial corridors with the City of Huntington Beach providing continuous north-south connection between Pacific Coast Highway and Interstate 405. It runs roughly through the geographic center of the city – the Beach Blvd. I-405 interchange is the central of the seven interchanges providing access to Huntington Beach (Fig A.2). Edinger Ave. runs due east-west and is one of only four city arterials that cross the freeway. It is the primary east-west arterial serving the job center adjacent to the Seal Beach Naval station. The portion of Edinger Ave. located within the Specific Plan Area runs along the southern edge of Golden West College and Bella Terra shopping mall and intersects with Beach Blvd. immediately south of the I-405 interchange.

Coastal Zone. The California Coastal Zone Area abuts the southern edge of the Specific Plan Area, and incorporates a segment of the Beach Blvd. Corridor. The portion of the Beach Blvd. Corridor falling within the California Coastal Zone is not within the Beach and Edinger Corridors Specific Plan Area.

3) History

In early 1901, with plans to develop a resort town on 1,500 acres of land along the Pacific Ocean, the West Coast Land and Water Company laid a grid of lots and streets, including main street, for the new town of Pacific City. In order to stimulate investment the company moved to secure public transportation to the town sitting on an isolated Mesa on the beach. To achieve this, they made a deal with Henry E. Huntington, the owner of the southern California electric railway better known as the "red car" to extend the Long Beach line of the rail to Pacific City. In 1904, a crowd estimated at 50,000 witnessed the arrival of the first Pacific Electric red cars and the re-naming of the City of Huntington Beach (Fig.A.3).

For a the first couple of decades of the 20th century, growth in the city was slow until the oil industry began drilling the City's oil field around 1920 (Fig.A.6 & a.8). The Pacific Coast Highway was constructed in 1925 and Beach Blvd. was designated a state highway in 1939 (Fig.A.7). Land speculation was high as oil production soared until the 1940's and World War II. After the short oil boom, City growth slowed again and by 1954, most Pacific Electric Street Car lines were shut down. Through the 1950's large property holdings and unincorporated County farmland were annexed and large areas of agricultural land remained along Beach Blvd. and northern portions of the City until 1960 (Fig.A.9 & A.10). Despite the oil booms and the physical growth due to annexation, the City's population was still just under 11,500 in 1960.

The City's biggest changes came following the construction of the I-405 freeway in 1963 (Fig.A.11). With the car and the new freeway infrastructure, Huntington Center mall opened at the Beach Blvd. interchange in 1964 and McDonald Douglas located in Huntington Beach employing 8,000 people by 1968 (Fig.A.12). By 1970 the population had exploded to over 115,000. During this period of growth in the 1960's and 70's, commercial corridors across the country entered a period of accelerating transition. With long stretches of commercially zoned land available and financial conditions that provided incentives to construct low cost buildings with short economic lives, the City's commercial corridors were lined with "strip" commercial development. Much of the development currently along Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. comes from this period (Fig.A.13 – A.15).

The rapid population growth of the 1960's and 70's has continued to the present with the City reaching 202,250 in 2007 (Fig.A.4 & A.5). Despite this incredible city-wide growth, new development, re-development, and property improvement on properties along the corridors has been declined since the initial surge of commercial construction. While there has been some large scale development, the character of Beach Blvd.. and Edinger Ave.. remain largely unchanged over the past two decades.

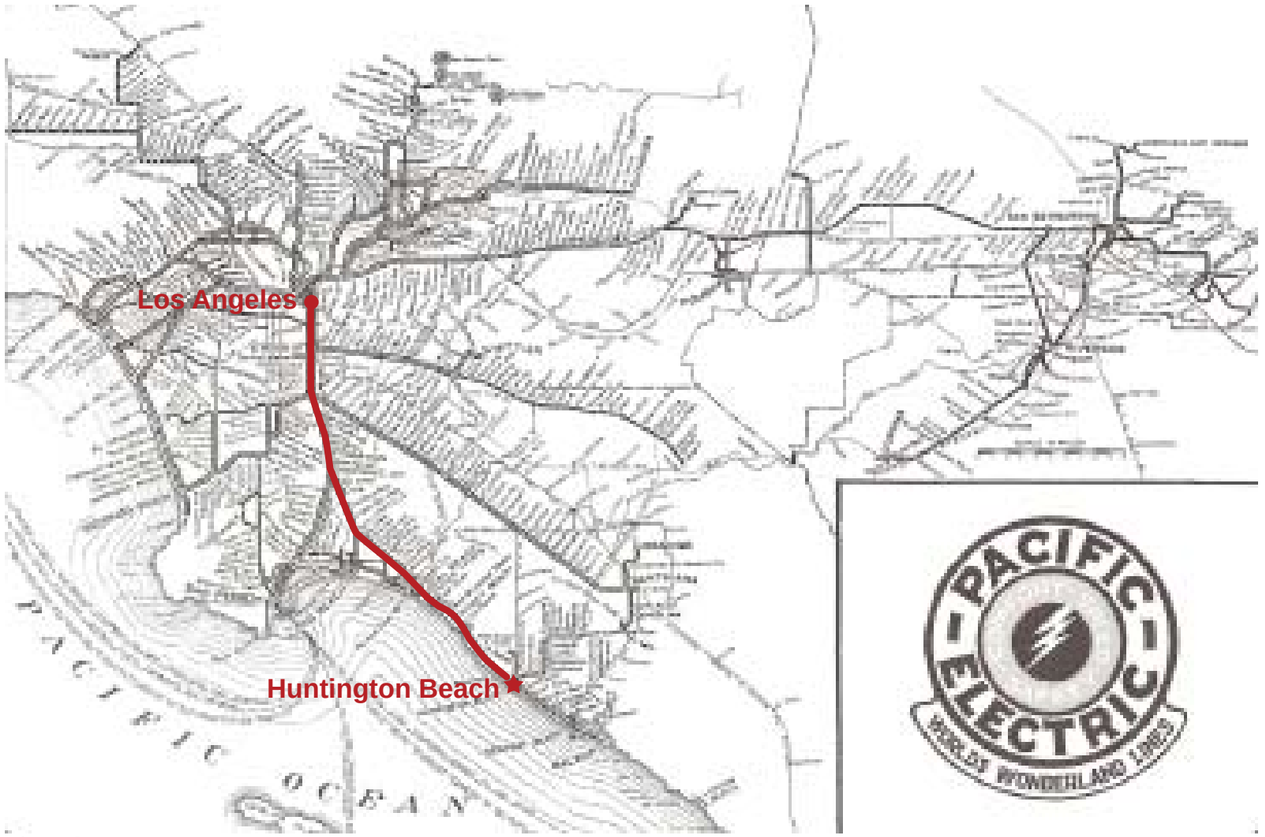


Fig.A.3.

The Streetcar or "red car" Runs Along the Coast and Arrives in Huntington Beach from Los Angeles, c.1904

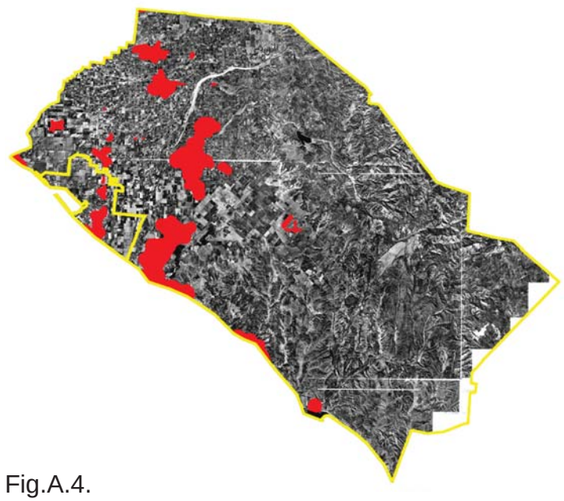


Fig.A.4.

Orange County Urbanized Area 1950

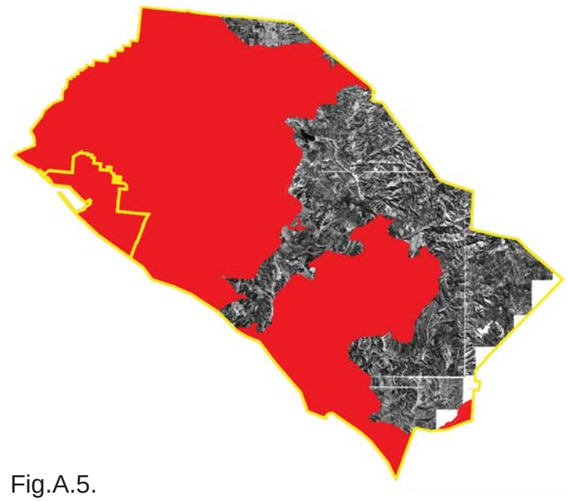


Fig.A.5.

Orange County Urbanized Area 2000

Fig.A.6.

Aerial of Downtown and Beach Blvd., c.1938

Fig.A.7.

Looking North on Beach Blvd. at Talbert c.1933, Beach Blvd. is designated as a state highway in 1939.

Fig.A.8.

Newland House c.1948

Fig.A.9.

Aerial of Beach Blvd., c.1959
Beach Blvd. remains largely un-developed

Fig.A.10.

Bird's Eye View looking East circa 1950's

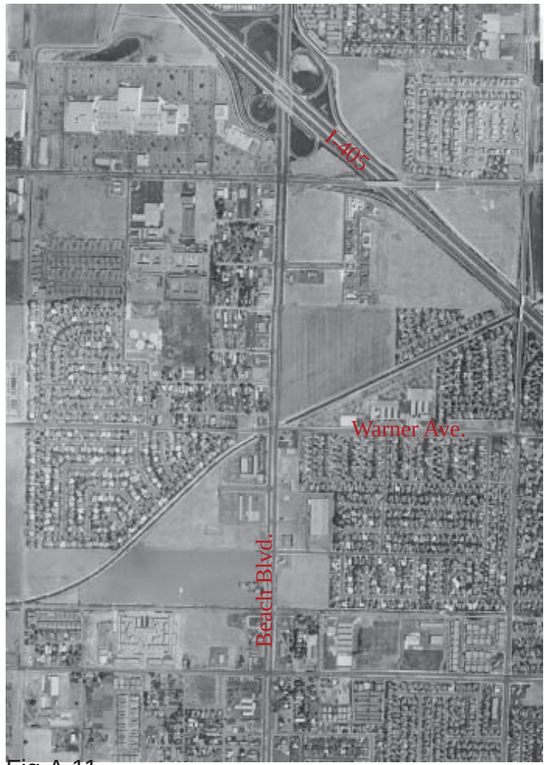


Fig.A.11.

Aerial of Beach Blvd., c.1970
Although significant housing construction occured and development began to fill in around the I-405 interchange, large tracts of vacant land remain along Beach Blvd.

Fig.A.12.

Huntington Center c.1965 (now Bella Terra)

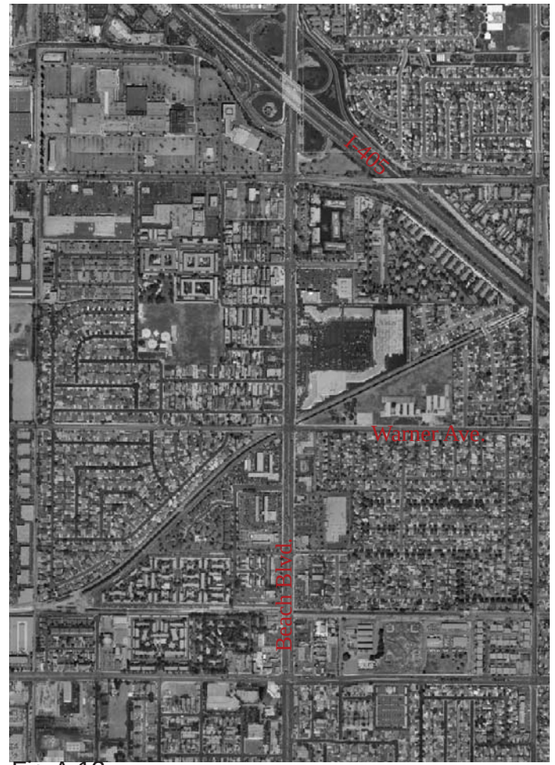


Fig.A.13.

Aerial of Beach Blvd., circa 2000

Fig.A.14.

Looking North on Beach Blvd. at Talbert c.2007

Fig.A.15.

Bella Terra c.2007

A.3. Pattern of Ownership

The Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. Plan Area includes well over 500 individual parcels located along approximately 6.7 miles of public right-of-way (Fig.A.16). These parcels vary greatly from less than 1/10th of an acre with as little as 50 feet of corridor frontage up to 40 acres and as much as 1000 feet of corridor frontage. This range of property shapes and sizes does not have a logical basis and, as a result, there is no singularly “typical” property shape or size in the Plan Area.

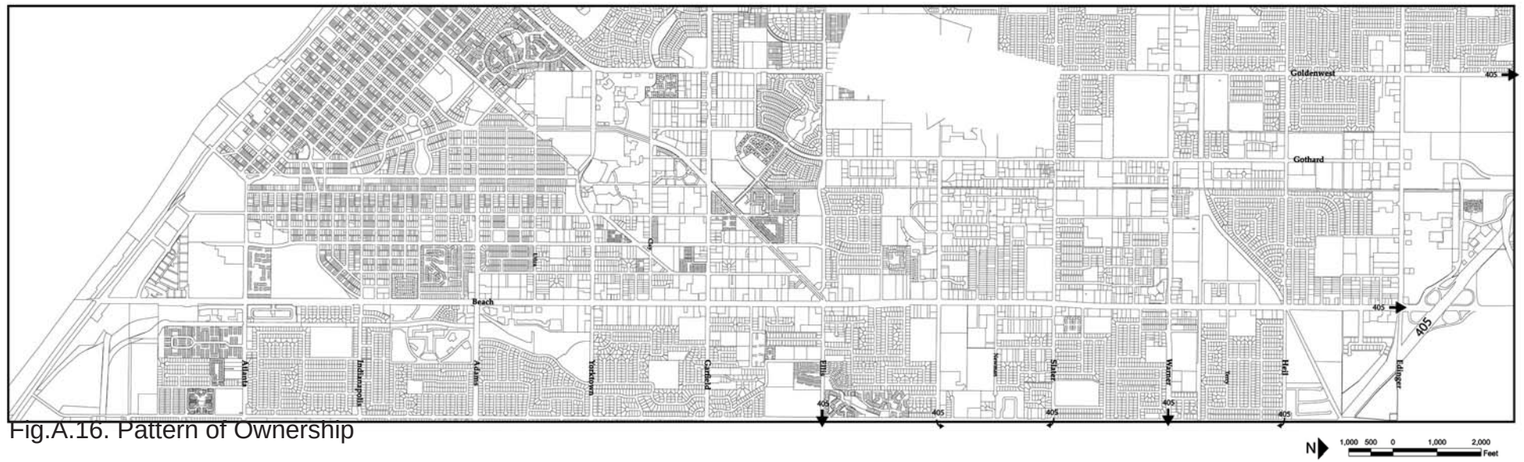


Fig.A.16. Pattern of Ownership

A.4. Zoning

At the time of this Plan’s adoption, both the City’s Zoning and General Plan on the large majority of land along the Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. is designated for some type of commercial use, focusing on general retail and professional office (Fig.A.17.). This fact appears to provide an overabundance of commercially designated property, permitting continued and undifferentiated commercial development along the length of the study area. The most notable exceptions are the properties south of Adams that are predominantly designated for residential development.

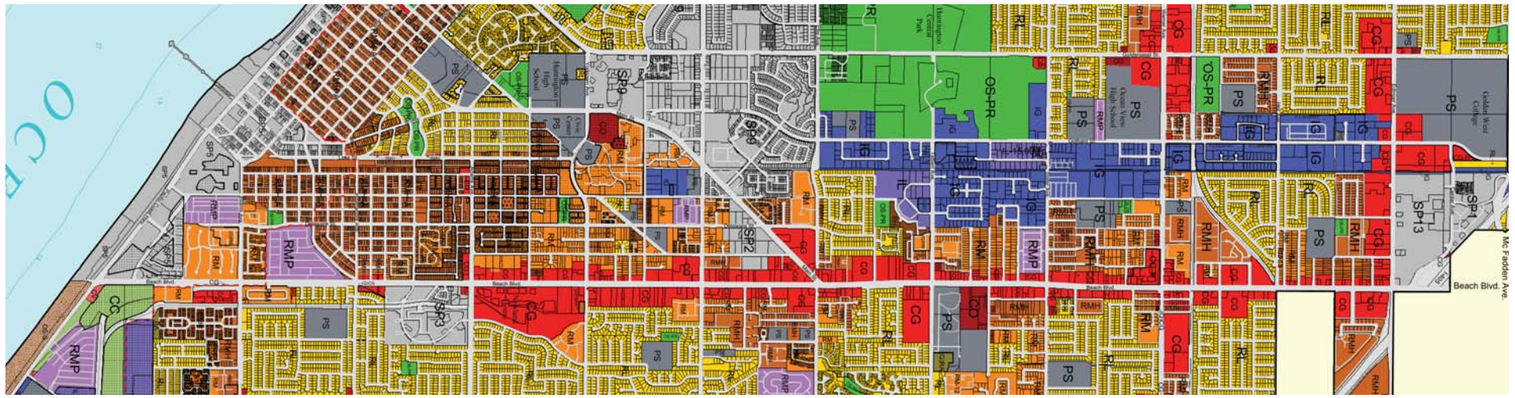
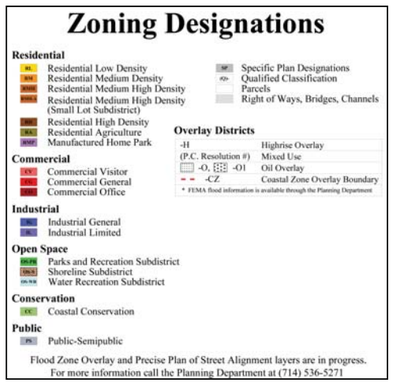


Fig.A.17. Zoning Map



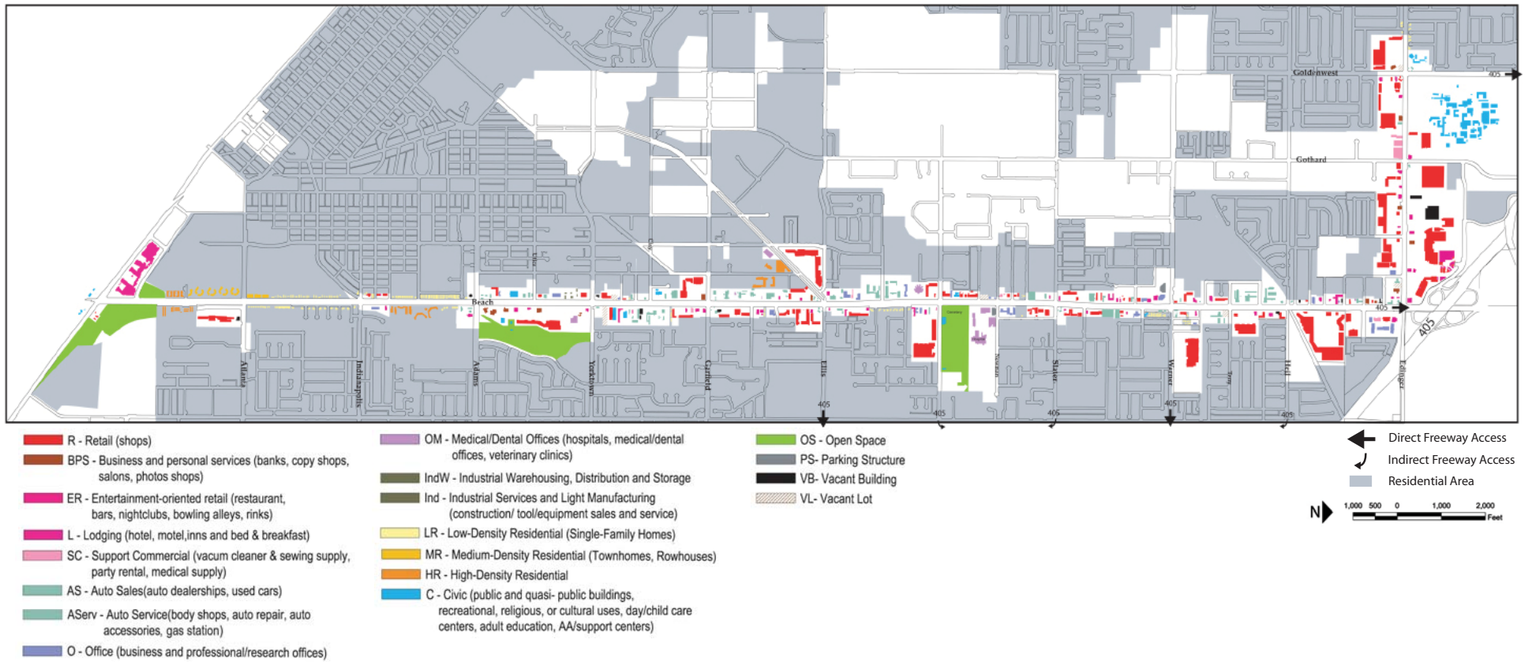


Fig.A.18. Ground Floor Land Use

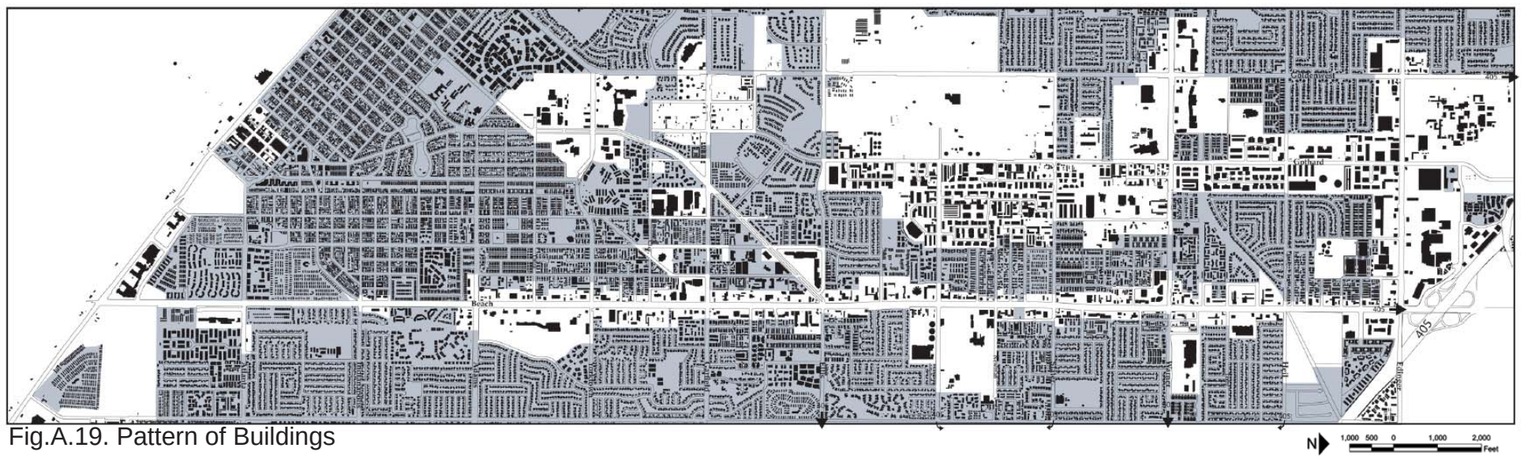


Fig.A.19. Pattern of Buildings

A.5. Pattern of Development

1) Ground Floor Land Use and Site Development Pattern

Beach Blvd. North of Adams Ave. and Edinger Ave. are dominated by commercial- and retail-oriented uses (Fig.A.18). The most common site development configuration for these uses is a typical single-story “strip center” configuration.

In this configuration, a row of multiple tenants occupy a single building significantly set back from the street/sidewalk and surrounded by parking lots. This development pattern has been driven by the desire for vehicular access and business visibility where primacy is placed on signage visibility and availability of parking. Parking fronts or surrounds the building, distancing the building form the street and the public realm. The result is building coverage that is inconsistent and significantly lacks definition (Fig.A.19).

The pattern of land use and development along Beach Blvd. changes South of Adams Ave. This segment is composed predominantly of housing built in a “parkway” configuration. In this configuration, the side or rear of buildings are located along Beach Blvd. are significantly screened from view by walls or landscaping.

2) Anchored Shopping Centers

At most major intersections (where cross streets provide access to I-405), neighborhood serving retail, such as pharmacies, banks, coffee shops, and other convenience uses, are clustered. The larger clusters typically contain supermarkets or other retail anchors (Fig.A.20.). The most successful retailers seek locations with strong anchored shopping centers. However, the Study Area is dominated by unanchored strip centers, the weakest type of center in the retail industry. Of the 34 shopping centers evaluated, less than 30% of the centers are considered anchored by retail industry standards.

a) Edinger Ave.

Of the 7 shopping centers along the Edinger Corridor, only 3 are anchored:

1. The Albertsons Center;

2. Bella Terra (Kohl's, Mervyn's); and

3. Expo Center (Home Depot).

The remaining 5 centers are occupied by furnishings stores and mini-anchor stores, such as Petsmart and Michaels—but are not anchored by grocery stores or discount department stores.

b) Beach Blvd.

Of the 27 shopping centers along the Beach Corridor, only 6 are anchored by major retailers:

1. Pavilions Place (Target and Vons Pavilions), located in the City of Westminster;

2. Newland Center (Albertsons, Mother's Market);

3. Wal-Mart Center;

4. Beach Garfield Center (Stein Mart);

5. Loehmann's 5 Point Plaza (Loehmann's and Trader Joe's); and

6. Huntington Collection (Marshalls).

A seventh center contains Big Lots in a former grocery store space (at the southeast corner of Beach and Atlanta), but this discounter is not considered a traditional anchor store.

3) Neighborhood Center Saturation

Nearly all potential neighborhood and community anchor stores have already found homes in Huntington Beach or the immediately neighboring city of Westminster to serve the residents living in and around the Study Area (Fig.A.21).

Fig.A.20. Anchored Shopping Centers

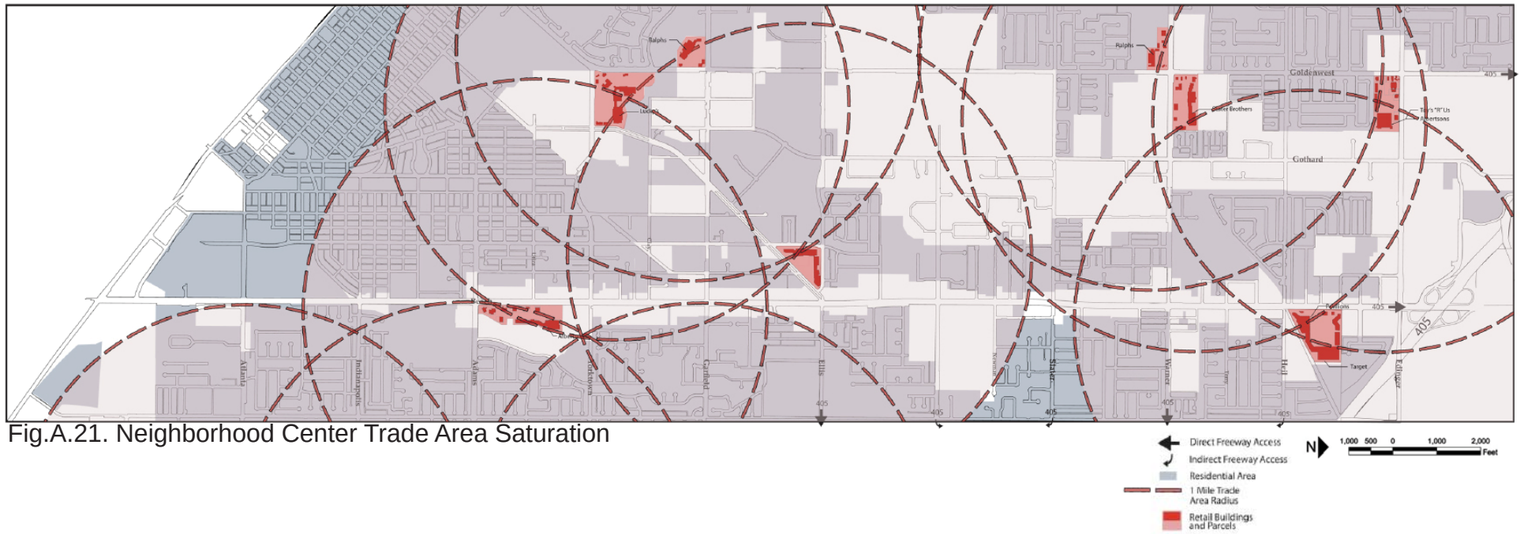


Fig.A.21. Neighborhood Center Trade Area Saturation

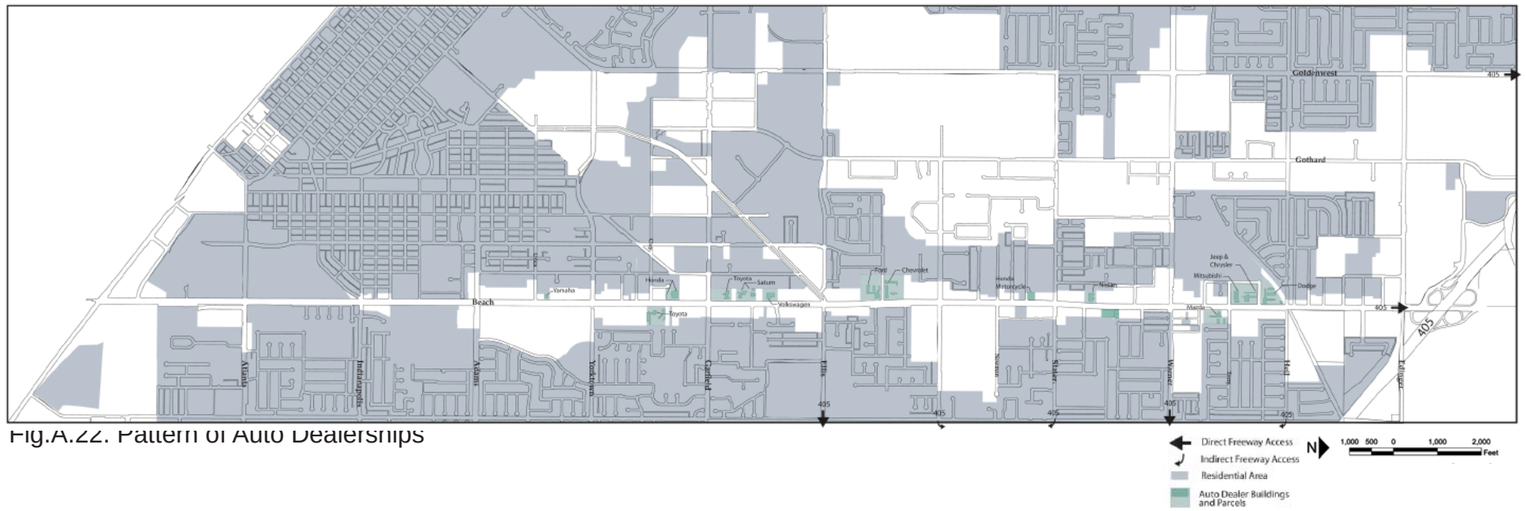


Fig.A.22: Pattern of Auto Dealerships

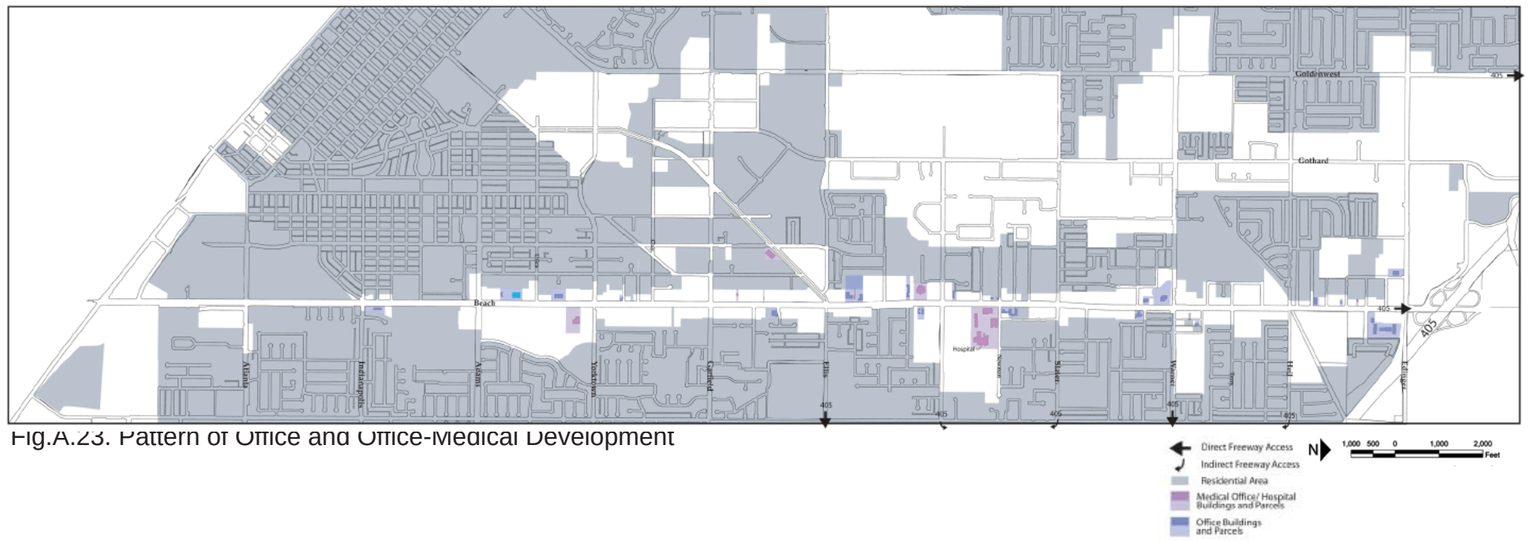


Fig.A.23: Pattern of Office and Office-Medical Development

4) Pattern of Auto Dealerships

Beach Blvd. is home to a significant number of vehicle dealerships. However, these dealerships are significantly dispersed between Yorktown Ave. and Heil Ave. street (Fig.A.22.). Furthermore, land available for dealership expansion is limited.

5) Pattern of Office and Office-Medical Development

Office and office-medical development along the corridors is limited. In many cases, office tenants occupy retail shopfront space in strip commercial buildings. The three largest concentrations of office and medical office uses are along Beach Blvd.: 1) The mid-rise office building at the Warner Ave. intersections 2) the Huntington Beach Hospital and nearby office-medical development at the Newman intersection and 3) the Hoag Health Center and nearby office development near the Yorktown intersection. (Fig.A.23.).

6) Relationship to Adjacent Neighborhoods

The extent of Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. corridor development is primarily defined by the irregular edges of the residential neighborhoods that lie immediately to the East and the West of the corridors. In Fig.A.18 – A.23 the grey area represents the extent of housing along the corridors. The transition from commercial development along Beach Blvd. or Edinger Ave.. to this housing is generally abrupt. Commercial parking lots and loading areas are adjacent to single family homes, creating an undesirable and unattractive relationship.

The exception to this condition is along the residential segment of Beach Blvd. south of Adams Ave. where housing lines the corridor.

A.6. Open Space and Recreation

Public open spaces and opportunity for recreation are extremely limited within the corridor Plan Area (Fig.A.24). Public open spaces within 1/4 mile of the Plan Area include the ball fields at Golden West College, the plaza area of the Bella Terra mall, Bartlett Park along the eastern edge of the Newland Center, and the Huntington Beach State Beach at the southern end of Beach Blvd. However, these spaces are fragmented and generally not connected to the Corridors or to each other as shown (Fig.A.25).

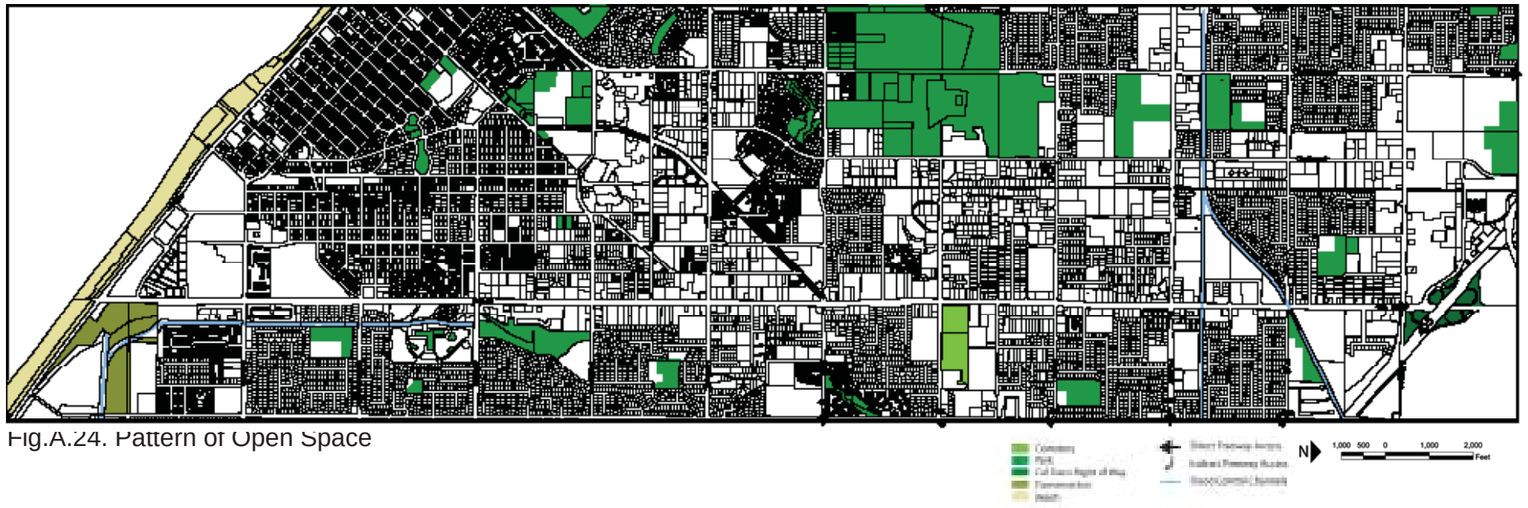


Fig.A.24. Pattern of Open Space

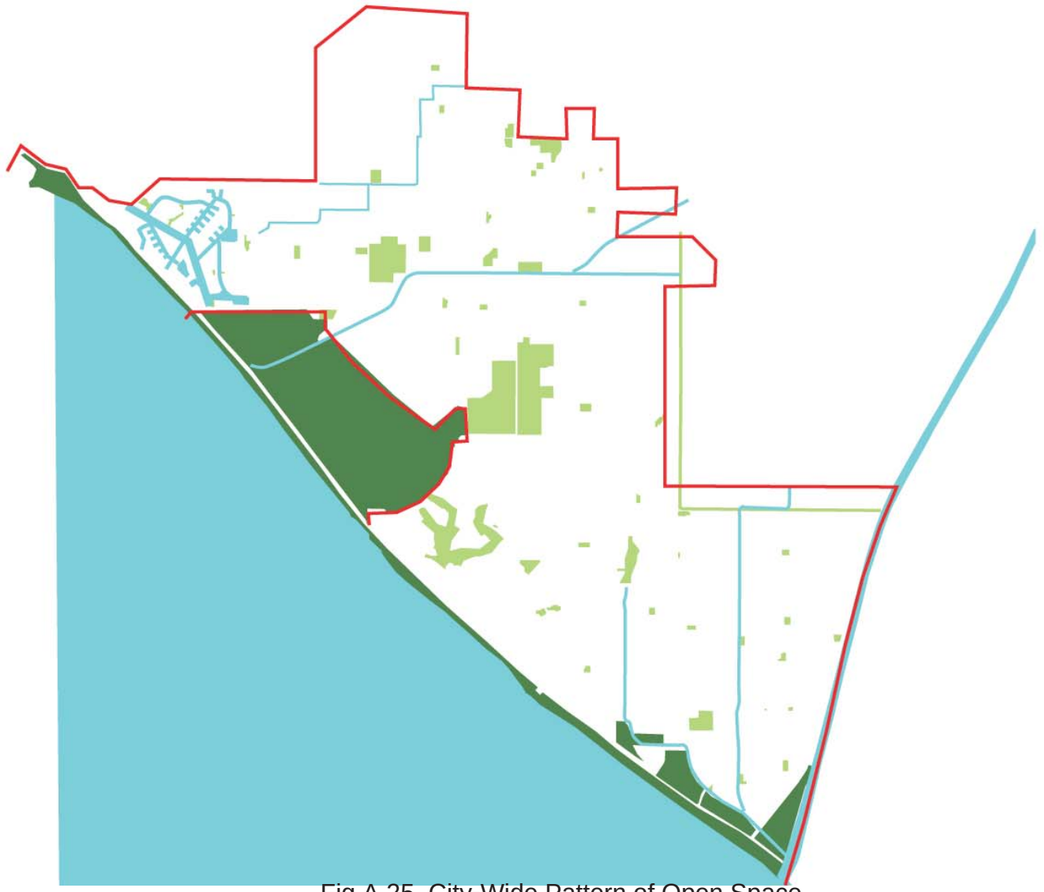


Fig.A.25. City-Wide Pattern of Open Space

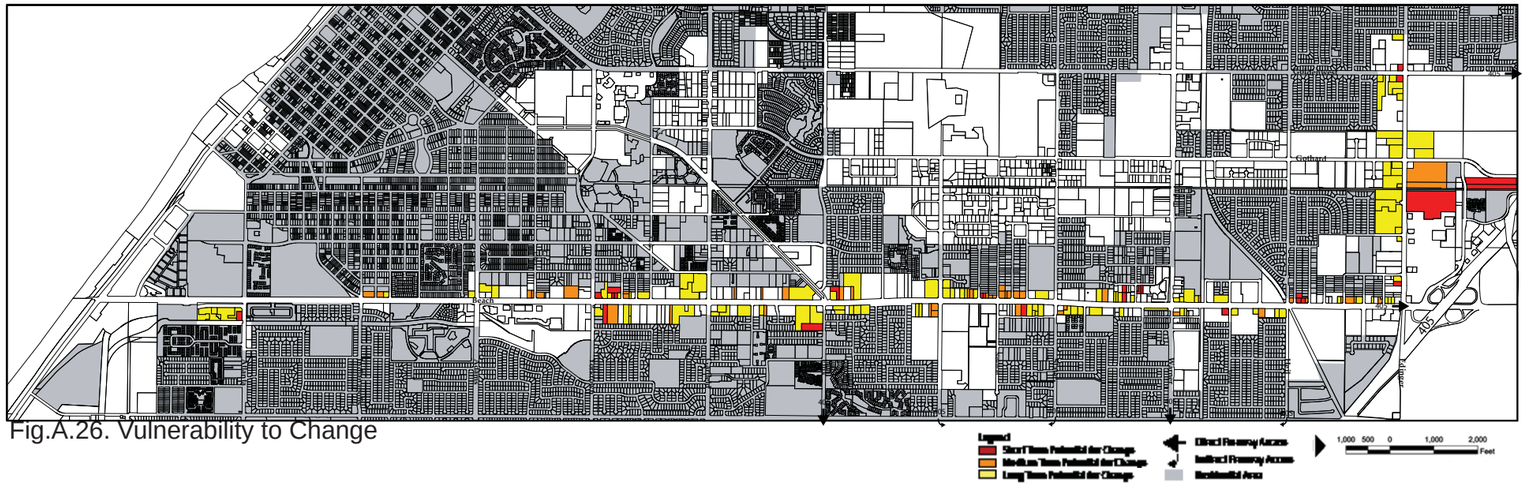


Fig.A.26. Vulnerability to Change

Fig.A.27. Street and Block Network

A.7. Vulnerability to Change

Competition with large anchored centers located at major intersections has had a detrimental effect on smaller businesses and un-anchored strip centers throughout Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave.. This condition is reinforced by the aforementioned existing land use and zoning designations which provide an overabundance of commercially designated land while limiting properties' ability to re-align with current market trends (Fig.A.17.). This vulnerability includes vacant land and buildings, poorly maintained buildings, and underutilized land with low value businesses or structures that could solicit higher rates of return (Fig.A.26.). However, visible disinvestment is only moderately apparent throughout the corridors. The best current opportunities for change are the large, assembled properties located near the Edinger Ave./405 interchange. This area include the largest concentration of vacant land, vacant buildings and underutilized properties in the Plan area. Longer term opportunities are distributed throughout the remainder of the Beach Blvd. north of Yorktown.

A.8. Local Transportation and Circulation

1) Street and Block Network

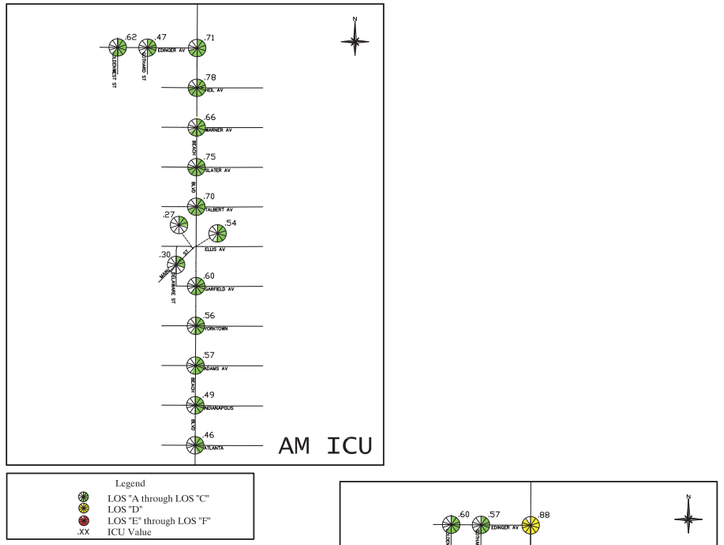
The primary existing street network throughout Huntington Beach is laid out on a grid based on U.S survey quarter sections, or 1/2 mile squares. Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. are two of the major streets in this network. The result is a regular and connected grid of streets with major cross streets along Beach Blvd. consistently located every 1/2 mile. In contrast, the consistency and connectivity of the local street network within those 1/2 mile "blocks" is relatively limited and does not contribute significantly to a transportation system with a built-in series of alternative routes should they be needed (Fig.A.27).

2) Vehicular Circulation

The City's highly connected arterial street network combines with the inconsistent local street network to direct the majority of traffic onto a limited number of major, high volume arterials. The load these arterial streets are required to carry is exacerbated by the City's spread out, single-use development pattern. By physically separating destinations by long distances, this pattern requires residents to get in their car when traveling from one location to another. Without a connected local street network, these relatively short local trips must use the same routes as longer distance regional trips and add to the volumes of traffic the Currently, bicycle in the Beach/Edinger corridors are nonexistent.

3) Traffic Volumes and Intersection Level of Service

By far the highest traffic volumes in the City are on Beach Blvd. at the I-405 intercahnge with Average Daily Traffic (ADT) reaching as high as 96,000 trips per day. Further from this intersection, traffic levels steadily decrease with a low of around 20,000 trips per day approaching the intersection with the Pacific Coast Highwyay. Due to these high volumes of traffic on Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave., intersection Level of Service (LOS) in several locations along Beach Blvd. from I-405 to Talbert Ave. are near the City's adopted acceptable limit of LOS E. In particular, the Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave., Beach Blvd. and Warner Ave., and Beach Blvd. and Talbert Ave. intersections are near this limit (Fig.A.28).



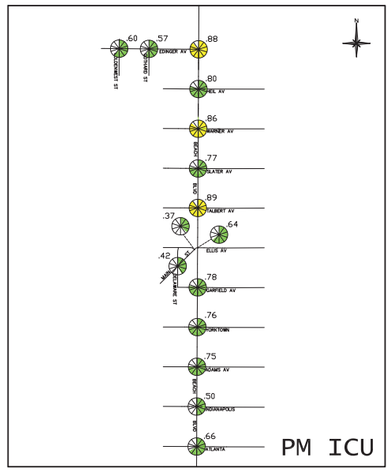


Fig.A.28. Intersection Level of Service Throughout the Corridors

4) Circulation Patterns: Regional Beach Access

Although Beach Blvd. is a major access point for City and State beaches, due to the length of the City's beachfront, there are multiple alternative routes for local and regional beach access. These routes include the Pacific Coast Highway, Goldenwest Ave., Lake St. Magnolia Ave., and Brookhurst Ave (Fig.A.29).

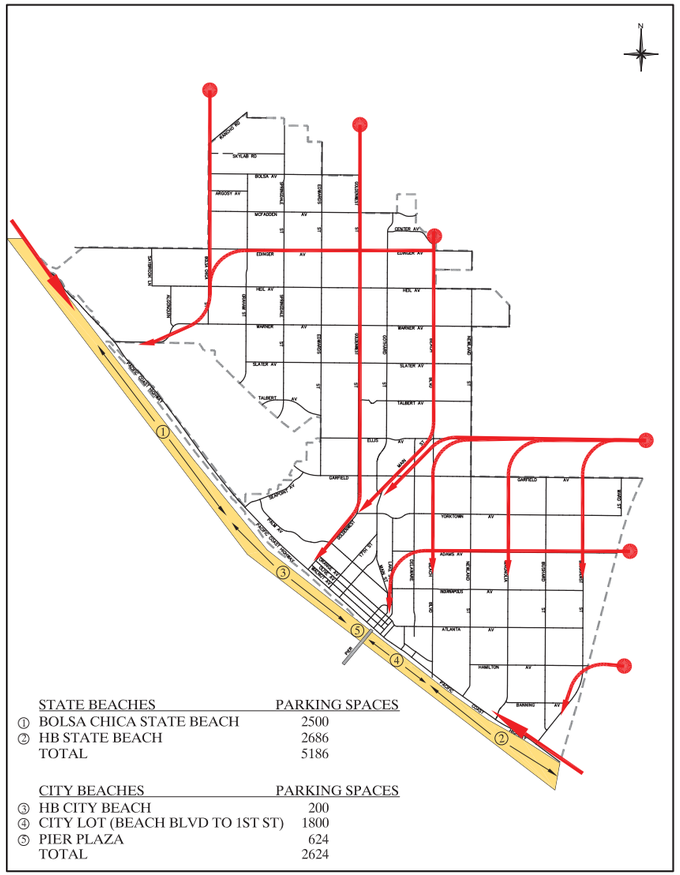


Fig.A.29. Circulation Patterns: Regional Beach Access

5) Bicycle Circulation

Currently, bicycle facilities in the Beach/Edinger corridors are nonexistent. Due to the high volumes of traffic on Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. these streets are not designated as bike routes in the General Plan bike network. Bicycle traffic is, instead, directed to nearby parallel Class II routes along Newland Street, Gothard Ave., Heil Ave., and McFadden Ave. as well as the route connecting 5 points with Downtown along Main Street.

6) Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian Facilities are consistent throughout the Plan Area with sidewalks on all major streets including cross streets. However, these sidewalks are not located within a pedestrian oriented environment. The lack of on-street parking throughout the majority of the corridors puts sidewalks directly adjacent to travel lanes. Sidewalks are regularly interrupted by curb cuts accessing parking lots, further reducing pedestrian comfort. At intersections, the 7 lane and larger street sections make crossing major streets difficult and dangerous. In addition, there is little pedestrian refuge from the sun due to few shade trees on sidewalks. Finally, the large blocks increase walking distances to and along the corridors. Overall, the pedestrian experience along Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. is unpleasant (Fig.A.30).

7) Transit

Currently public transportation service in the City is provided by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA). Facilities consist primarily of local bus routes. In the Plan Area, bus route 29 runs along Beach Blvd. and bus route 70 runs along Edinger Ave. In addition, bus lines run along cross streets every mile, including along Main St. Bus frequency can range from as high as every 10 minutes to as low as once an hour between about 6am and midnight. Regional transportation is limited to the Goldenwest Transportation Center Park-And-Ride. From here, buses take I-405 toward Los Angeles where riders can transfer to various MTA rail lines.

Union Pacific Railroad tracks run parallel to Beach Boulevard from Yorktown Ave. north, crossing Edinger Ave. just east of Gothard Ave. Currently, the tracks are not used for public transportation. However, the Goldenwest Transportation Center is well positioned along these tracks to be used as a potential future rail station.

Fig.A.30. Pedestrian Circulation Experience Along Beach Blvd.

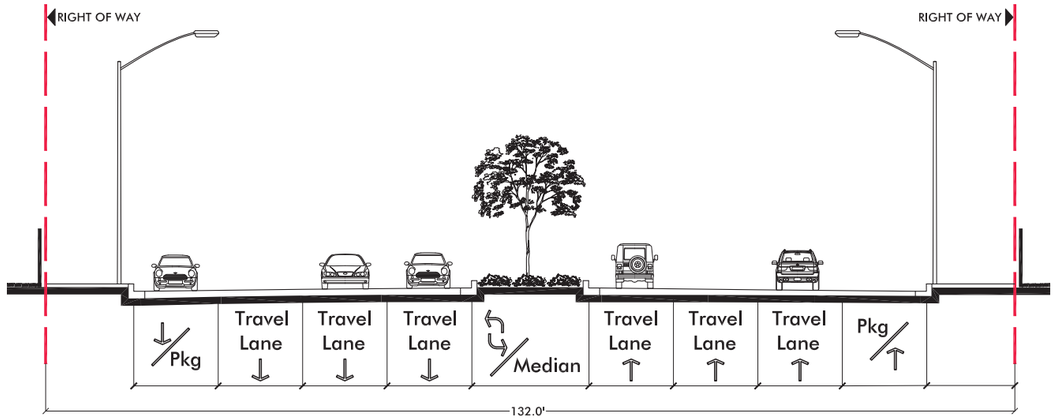


Fig.A.31. Beach Boulevard Existing Street Design - South of Adams

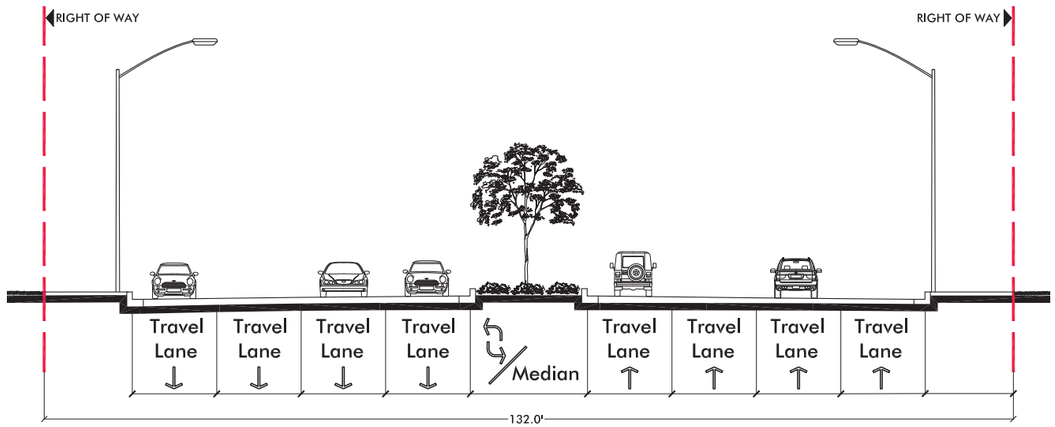


Fig.A.32. Beach Boulevard Existing Street Design - North of Adams

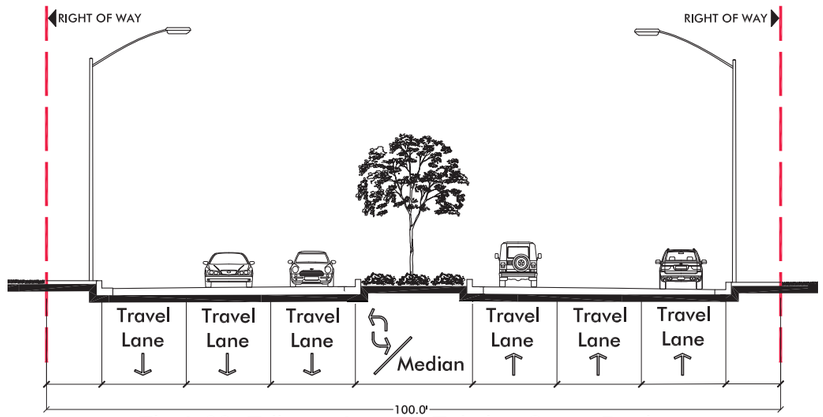


Fig.A.33. Edinger Avenue Existing Street Design

8) Street Design

Fig.A.31 - A.33 show current street sections for Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. respectively. The width and number of lanes on these streets have been determined by their role as major travel thoroughfares oriented to automobile travel. On street parking is limited to Beach Blvd. south of Adams Ave.. Sidewalks are typically 10ft wide.

A.9. Architecture and Landscape Character

See Appendix X for an in-depth summary of Huntington Beach character (including buildings, landscape and landscape elements, and colors and materials) as identified by community member at the Character Workshop held on January 23, 2008.

1) Buildings

There is a strong architectural character in Huntington Beach that generally draws from Tuscan/Spanish Mission and California Beach Bungalow/Coastal Vernacular architecture expressed with a modern simplicity.

However, few buildings along the corridors strongly express this character. Most of the Plan Area is dominated by auto-oriented "strip" development (Fig.A.34). These structures are reduced to the simplest, most economical form: usually tilt-up construction simply massed buildings with a box-like appearance and ornamentation across the facades is minimal, except for signage.

Even these simple buildings, however, sometimes build upon the local architectural styles, even if at a cursory level. The Newland Center, for example, draws heavily on the California Beach Bungalow style with horizontal wood siding, shingle roof, and cool, light coloring (Fig.A.35). Similarly, the newly renovated Bella Terra mall and incorporate the varied masses, stucco finish, and warm colors of the Tuscan/ Spanish Mission style (Fig.A.36).

The most notable concentration of buildings in the Plan Area that build upon Huntington Beach character is along Beach Blvd. south of Indianapolis Ave., where development is primarily residential and close to the beach and Downtown. Here, Beach Bungalow/Coastal Vernacular housing and a Spanish Mission beach-front resorts appear to have been strongly influenced by Huntington Beach character (Fig.A.37 – 39).

2) Landscape

Due to the auto-oriented nature of the corridors, site designs are primarily concerned with vehicular circulation and most properties are significantly covered with paved parking lot areas. Very little effort is made to create site layouts that are amenable to pedestrians, to use pathways, trees, or other site design elements that contribute to the pedestrian realm. Where landscaping has been implemented with new development, particularly along Beach Blvd., the use of palm trees is one of the few elements that consistently draw from local landscape character. While there are some individual projects that have made efforts with landscaping along their edges, these fragments do not add up to create a consistent feeling throughout the Plan Area.

Fig.A.34. Typical "Strip Corridor" Development


Fig.A.35. Newland Center - Coastal Vernacular


Fig.A.36. Bella Terra - Tuscan/Spannish Mission

Fig.A.37. Housing South of Indianapolis - Beach Bungalow


Fig.A.38. Housing South of Indianapolis - Beach Bungalow


Fig.A.39. Beach-Front Resort at PCH - Spanish Mission

A.10. Conclusion

The Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. corridors are two of the City's primary corridors providing the majority the City's commercially zoned land and acting as major pieces of the regional transportation network. However, changing market forces have moved these corridors into a state of transition. The trend of clustering retail at major crossroads has begun to impact the value of development on properties no longer advantageously positioned to accommodate the retail for which the majority of the corridors are zoned. Furthermore, the auto-oriented nature of the corridors and their associated visual character does not complement the role these streets play as major contributors to the City's identity.

Conventional arterial streetscape design and late 20th century commercial corridor land use patterns do not support a strong pedestrian environment. The current character of Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. are no exception and present a significant barrier to successfully accommodating a full range of uses. This is especially true for housing, which is strongly influenced by streetscape character and adjacent development.

The role of Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. in the city and regional circulation pattern will not change in the foreseeable future. However, the changing nature of commercial corridor development and the need to accommodate city and regional growth presents a great opportunity to eliminate this mismatch. By aligning City policy with the forces of change acting on the corridors, future development along Beach Blvd. and Edinger Ave. can help create a balance between the mobility-oriented desires of high-capacity arterials, the accessibility goals of walkable mixed use boulevards, and the community's desire for corridors that embody Huntington Beach character and identity.

APPENDIX A: EXISTING CONDITIONS