A PROPOSAL FOR ENHANCING MOBILITY · SUN VALLEY

California State University, Northridge
Department of Urban Studies & Planning
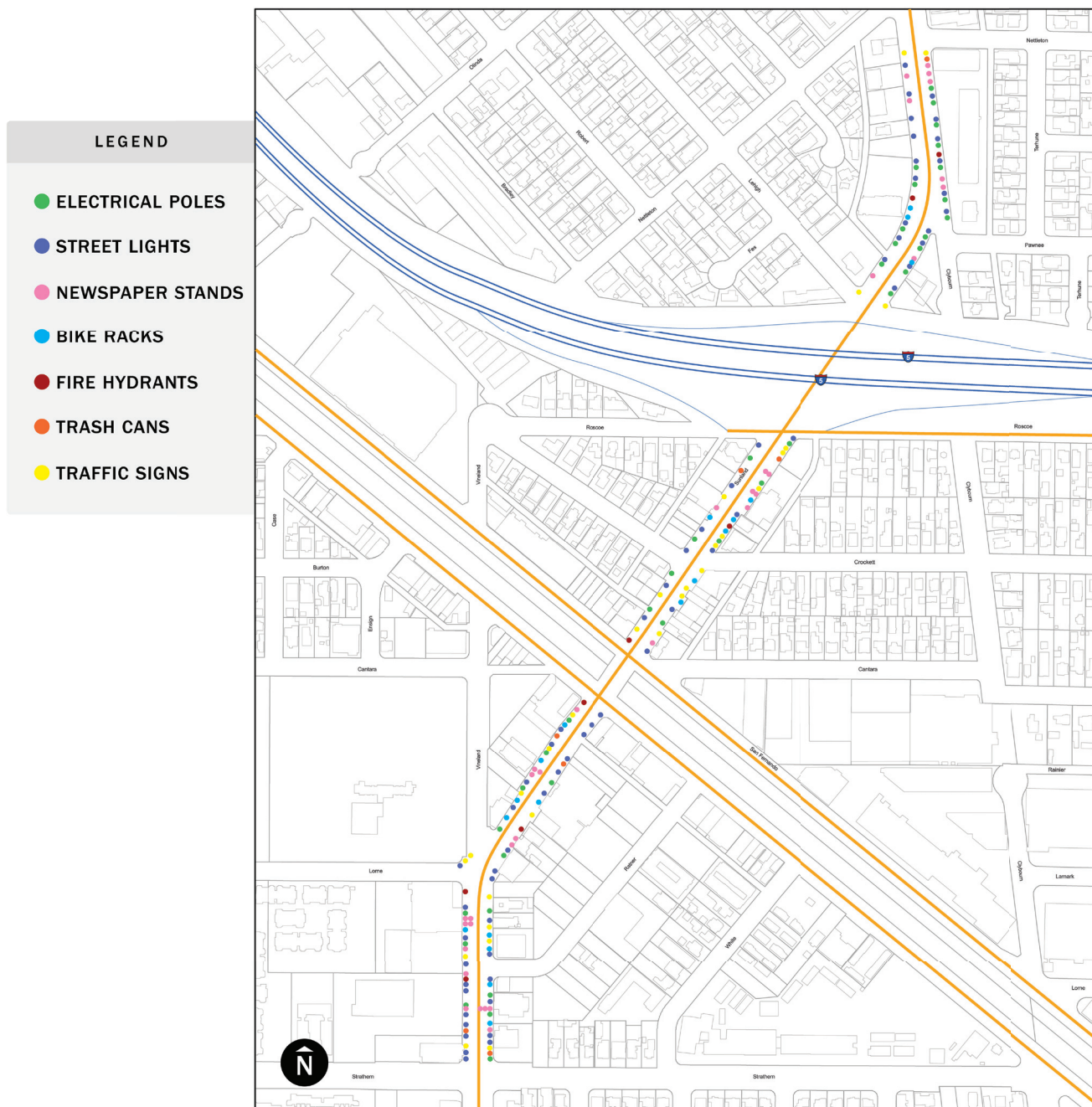
Spring 2016

SUN VALLEY

BACKGROUND The project area is Vineland Ave. (which becomes Sunland Blvd. from Lorne St.) between Strathern St. (South) and Nettleton St. (North). This arterial road encompasses an array of commercial activity, access to residential land use, businesses/offices, a park, and it intersects with Golden State 5 Fwy. Its defining characteristics present problems in the form of cleanliness, safety, and traffic, all which compromise pedestrian/bicyclists circulation. To business owners, these problems threaten the economic vitality of the site while discouraging walking and biking. To residents, these problems compromise the community's overall well-being. To redress these constraints, Pacoima Beautiful, an environmental justice organization in the Northeast San Fernando Valley, set out this project with the assistance of California State University, Northridge- Department of Urban Studies and Planning students. This collaborative effort has produced a set of design guidelines that addresses pedestrian and cyclist constraints in order to enhance the mobility of Vineland Ave./Sunland Blvd.

PURPOSE The purpose of this project is to obtain a better understanding of the site in order to analyze elements that foster and inhibit the walkability/bikeabilty/transit friendliness of the boulevard, and to come up with recommendations to enhance mobility on Vineland Ave./Sunland Blvd. The data provide insight on the existing conditions of the boulevard, and the guidelines offer recommendations for addressing problems related to inadequate elements that obstruct and impede walking, biking, and using public transit, and for enhancing elements that presently foster walking/biking, and using public transit.

PROCESS Three methods of data collection were utilized in this study: questionnaires, observations/mapping, and two focus group meetings. The questionnaires were administered by CSUN students to 68 local residents and to 51 business owners located in the project site. The second method of data collection was observations/mapping executed by CSUN students. The elements observed included, pedestrians and cyclists, traffic lights, trash, sidewalk cracks, obstacles, trees, public transit, crosswalk, and facades. The students then mapped these elements and used the spatial analysis maps to obtain a better visual understanding of the streetscape. The third method of data collection was focus groups meetings held at the Sun Valley Library. The discussions gave the students insight on what the issues were and how to address them.
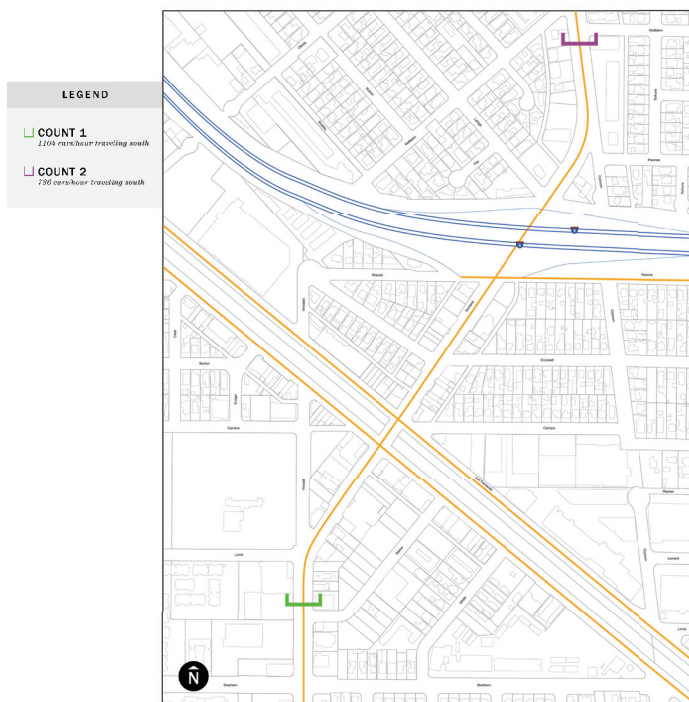
OBSTACLES FOR PEDESTRIANS

LEGEND

- 🟢 ELECTRICAL POLES
- 🔵 STREET LIGHTS
- 🩷 NEWSPAPER STANDS
- 🔵 BIKE RACKS
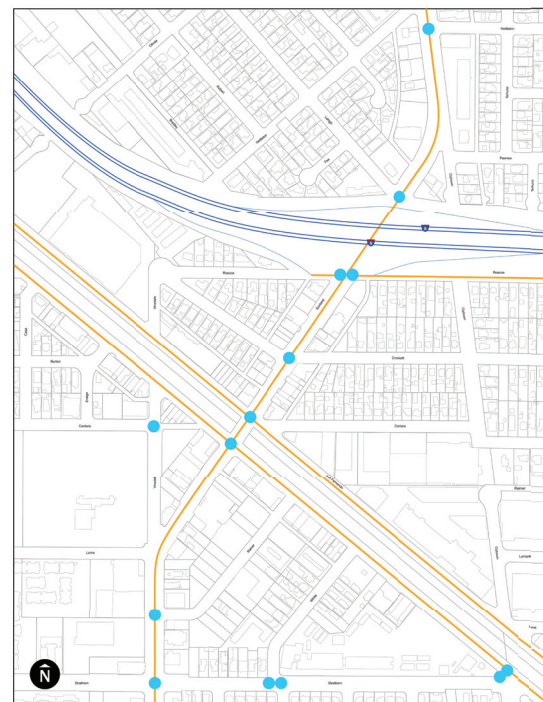- 🔴 FIRE HYDRANTS
- 🟠 TRASH CANS
- 🟡 TRAFFIC SIGNS

In collaboration with Pacoima Beautiful, CSUN students conducted two focus group meetings held at Sun Valley Library where local residents and business owners were welcomed to state their comments and concerns about the project site and provide insight on how and why those involved at the site are being affected by various elements. The main topics of concern include: high number of homeless people, lack of safety, and increased traffic volume/speed.

The high number of homeless people in the area is a growing concern for the residents and the business owners. They unanimously acknowledge that the homeless discard debris in front of businesses and in the Sun Valley Park- where many seek shelter, thus causing the park to be unappealing and unsafe to the community. Moreover, the presence of gangs also generates a nuisance. Several of the residents and business owners have witnessed drug deals and other illegal activities, and residents argue that this environment is affecting the youth. They also discussed that the lack of proper lighting plays a pivotal role in the decreased sense of safety. Several also view the high traffic volume as an issue. Some of the surrounding streets draw traffic congestion, especially during peak hours, making it unsafe for pedestrians to easily move about. Speeding is also a safety concern to the residents and business owners. They believe this issue can be mitigated with additional speed bumps.
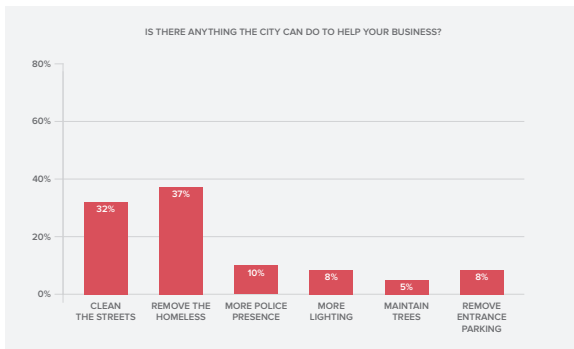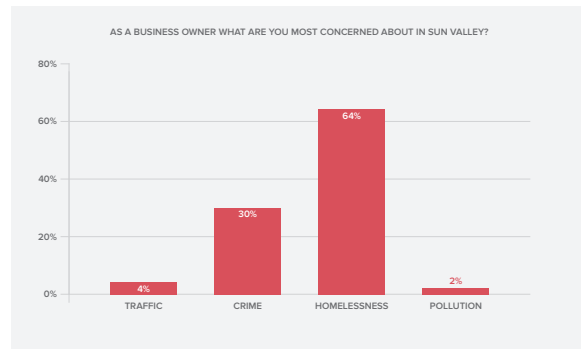
TRAFFIC DENSITY

CROSSWALKS

LEGEND

COUNT 1
1104 cars/hour traveling south

COUNT 2
786 cars/hour traveling south

SAFETY Safety is the biggest concern for the residents and business owners of the site. The results of the questionnaires reveal that 64% of the business owners express that the increased number of homeless people is their number one issue, followed by crime at 30%. Ten percent of the business owners would like more police presence, as they feel this could decrease crime. Furthermore, 37% of the business owners would like the City to remove the homeless, which is consistent with the discussions held during the focus group meetings, where many expressed that the homeless are creating an unsafe and visually unappealing environment for residents, business owners, and transients. In addition, poor lighting is also a concern, and 30% of the residents are advocating for additional streetlights in order to enhance their sense of safety.
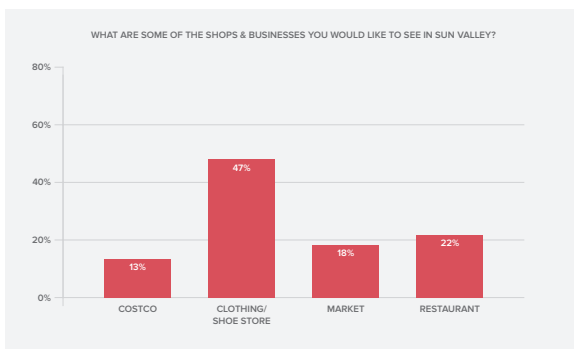
IS THERE ANYTHING THE CITY CAN DO TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS?

Business Owner Questionnaire

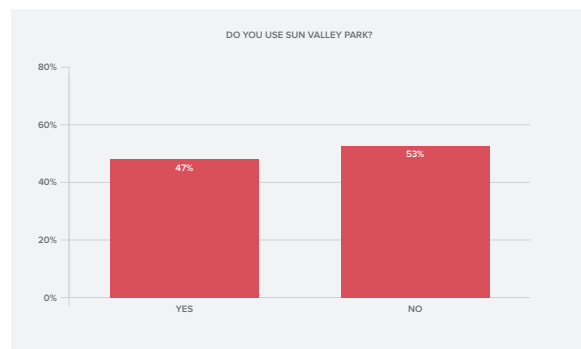AS A BUSINESS OWNER WHAT ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT IN SUN VALLEY?

Business Owner Questionnaire

ENJOYMENT An enjoyable environment is a necessary criterion for efficient circulation and a thriving community. Forty-seven percent and 22% of the residents would like more clothing stores, such as Target and Walmart, and more restaurants/eateries, respectively. Furthermore, having a park in the community is inconsequential if not a lot of people are enjoying it. About 70% of the residents claim that they do not go to the Sun Valley Park- 37% of those residents claim it is because there are too many homeless people. The questionnaire results show that the majority of the residents would like there to be more games/activities/classes for kids and adults, such as art classes, yoga classes, and sports.
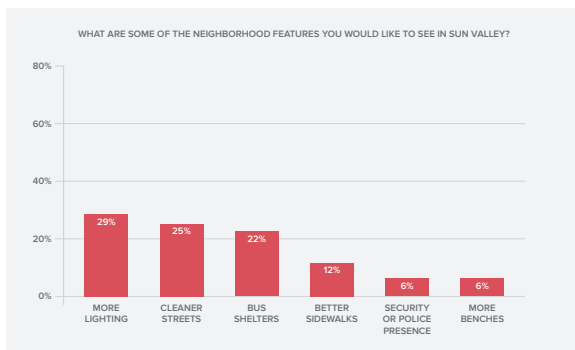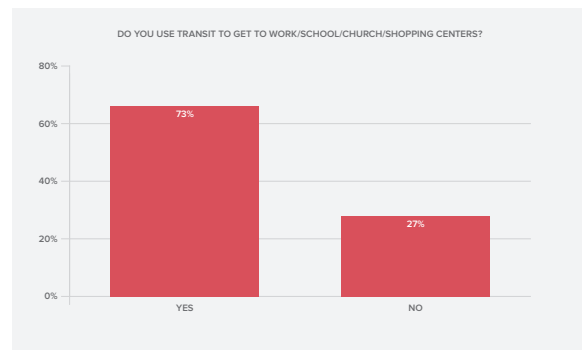
WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SHOPS & BUSINESSES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN SUN VALLEY?

Residents Questionnaire

DO YOU USE SUN VALLEY PARK?
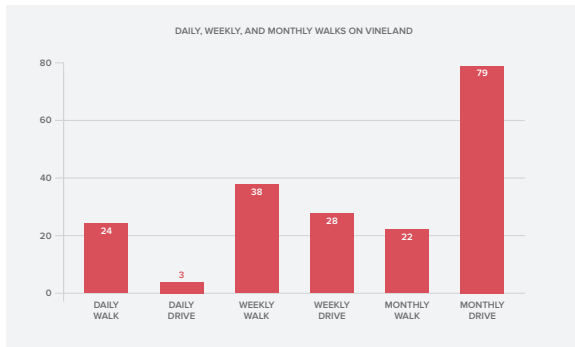
Residents Questionnaire

COMFORT A comfortable atmosphere plays a big role in accumulating foot traffic and increasing the economic vitality for the businesses within the site, as higher foot traffic can lead to higher sales. However, obstacles interfere with the comfortable environment while deterring access and limiting mobility. At the site, dynamic pedestrian activities are obstructed by an excessive amount of unused newspaper stands, trash and other debris, unmanaged/ untrimmed trees, and by poor sidewalk surface quality. Twenty-five percent of the residents and 32% of the business owners would like cleaner streets, 32% of business owners would like better maintained/trimmed trees, and 12% of the residents would like better paved sidewalks. Furthermore, the decreased number of benches and bus shelters with shade impedes static pedestrian activities. Six percent of the residents would like more benches and 22% would like more bus shelters, which is essential because 96% of the respondents take public transit.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN SUN VALLEY?

Residents Questionnaire

DO YOU USE TRANSIT TO GET TO WORK/SCHOOL/CHURCH/SHOPPING CENTERS?

Residents Questionnaire

DAILY, WEEKLY, AND MONTHLY WALKS ON VINELAND

Residents Questionnaire

DESIGN GUIDELINES

SAFETY

- Add additional streetlights to enhance sense of safety
- Decrease traffic speeds by implementing traffic calming measures
- Improve safety of pedestrians by adding mid-block crosswalks
- Address the problem of increased homeless population by redesigning Sun Valley Park and increasing park programming

existing crosswalk

proposed crosswalk

existing streetlights

proposed streetlights

COMFORT

- Improve cleanliness by elminating trash on streets and Sun Valley Park
- Improve sidewalk surface quality by repairing cracks/uneven pavement
- Improve dynamic pedestrian activities by lessening excessive obstacles
- Improve static pedestrian activities by adding benches and bus shelters with shade

existing sidewalk maintenance & quality
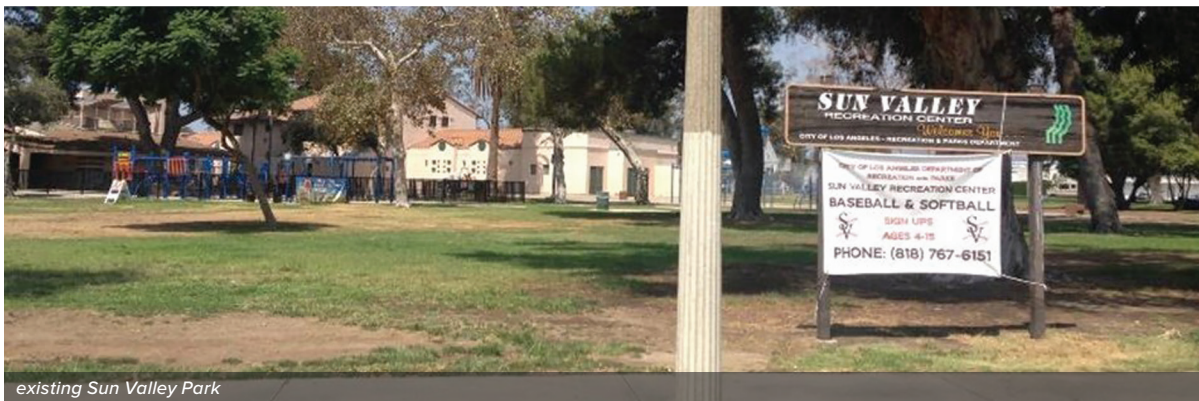

proposed sidewalk maintenance & quality

existing bus stops

proposed bus stops

ENJOYMENT

- Add classes/activities at Sun Valley Park
- Add shops – clothing, shoes, and eateries

existing Sun Valley Park

proposed community garden

proposed food trucks

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This study was conducted by students in the Fall 2015 URBS 490C Field Work course under the supervision of Dr. Zeynep Toker.

In association with Yvette Lopez and Mercedes Ortiz of Pacoima Beautiful

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