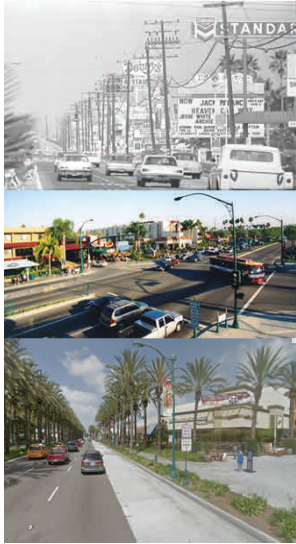


# Corridor Planning – The Relationship Between Commerce and Placemaking

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ULI Orange County/Inland Empire Places of Commerce Initiative Council



**About the Author:** Bryce Bunker graduates Spring 2013 with a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the UC, Irvine. Fiscal year 2013, Bryce has been serving as Student Representative on the Places of Commerce Initiative Council.

**About ULI:** The ULI is a non-profit think tank for land use planning and real estate development. The ULI OC/IE's Initiative Councils focus on ULI's priority initiatives: Capital Markets, Edge Development, Housing, Infrastructure, Placemaking, Places of Commerce and Sustainability. The Places of Commerce Initiative Council is exploring the "Scale of Commerce" and the latest trends and innovations in mixed-use, retail, office and industrial space..

Take a minute, identify a corridor in Orange County that you travel frequently, use as a commercial center, or simply appreciate the design and charm it provides. Maybe it's driving along the El Toro Rd. or windshield shopping for a new car along Harbor Blvd. The point is, you've probably thought of several corridors throughout OC. From La Habra to San Clemente, OC offers a wide variety, all with their own unique characteristics. As a number of cities in OC, continue to redevelop these corridors, the Places of Commerce Initiative Council met on Feb. 7, 2013, with David Barquist, AICP, Principal Planner and Urban Designer, RBF Consulting's Urban Design Studio, to discuss the importance of placemaking along a corridor and the impact it can have on commerce.

The corridor planning process must reflect on the experiences of yesterday and today, and anticipate tomorrow. In order to design a corridor that attracts businesses, consumers and various modes of transportation, developers, planners and stakeholders need to be cognizant of the flaws from "yesterday's" planning models (auto-centric design, piecemeal development, old standards) and be able to incorporate the demands of the users today (less parking, variety of users, improved access.) While attempting to design a corridor with these accommodations in mind, developers and planners also need to plan ahead and consider the financial constraints, combination of land uses, and potential stakeholders that may be involved not only immediately, but also in the future.. Corridor planning requires an

understanding among complementary land use planning, mobility planning, economic development, and the principles of placemaking.

In order to accomplish developing, or redeveloping a corridor, consider these four concepts that must work together. These concepts incorporate realistic vision that are based on existing market conditions and demands, a clear vision about design expectations and providing a certain level of predictability for developers and investors. The four concepts are: 1) Land use—allow land uses to interact and complement the other to enhance economic stability, don't use the narrow-minded "plug-and-play" approach with a lone, replicated model. 2) Economics—use current market conditions and demands to set a baseline that will support the design and uses within the development. 3) Regulatory provisions—the experience with local governments should not feel like you're reading from a "rule book" or staring at a fence in front of the development, but rather a visionary process that that helps investors understand what is desired in the community and how the provisions can be satisfied, and 4) Entitlement process—the process needs less uncertainty and acrobatics for developers and investors who are looking for a fair, predictable development process with low-risk profiles.

The future of corridor planning must include four fundamental characteristics. First, corridor planning needs to consider the current socio-economic conditions in the area and understand-

ing the impacts of shifting spending habits and opportunities to access capital.. Second, with the loss of Redevelopment Agencies, funding/financing resources are changing, new mechanisms are emerging, and future innovation will be required. Third, policy and regulatory provisions should focus on "getting to yes" during the approval process. Regulations should not be too stringent or burdensome, but encourage an understanding by all stakeholders about what is expected to streamline the entitlement process. Fourth, with fewer resources at the local government level, the burden is on the private market to facilitate project success. The process must evolve to a user-centric model with policies that reduce constraints on local investment opportunities and allow investors to create a competitive environment for economic planning.

Considering the principle that commerce requires the integrated functional relationship between rooftops, jobs, and retail, planning a corridor should follow a similar integration between appropriate land use based on market conditions and the predictability of regulatory provisions required by local governments. If interdependent elements are lacking, corridors may not be effective in contributing to long-term vibrancy, like we see in communities today. Holistic development can be a tool to create a sense of place in the community.