



DRAFT - For Discussion Purposes Only

Public Realm

1. Streetscape Design
2. “First 15 Feet”
3. Gathering Spaces
4. Placemaking Opportunities

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Today I will talk about 4 key tenets of public realm design; put another way, I will argue that Public Realm is defined by these 4 things



Starting with streetscape design...

The Primary Open Space of our Cities

“If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be . . . then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and will have had an immense impact on the rest ”

Alan Jacobs, Great Streets

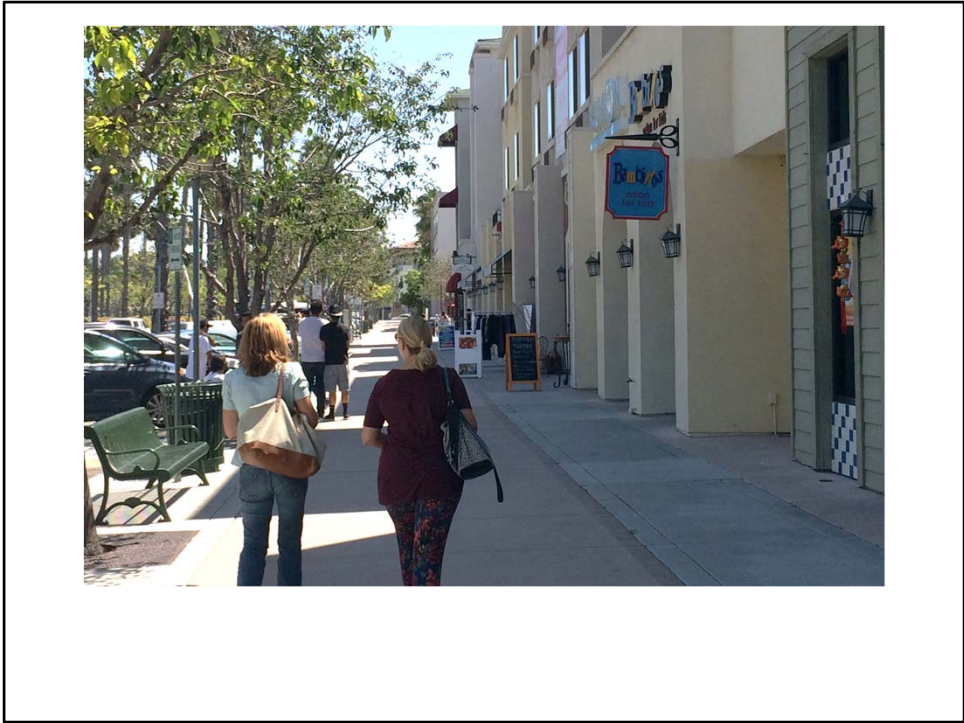
Streets make up as much as 30% of our cities



We don't always get it right



But sometimes there are little gems or anomalies that result in lovely environments and an authentic place (this is on Clairemont Mesa Blvd. on the South side of Clairemont Town Square)



So, what makes for a great street and a pleasant pedestrian experience? Let's look at a prototypical street; the sidewalk is clearly divided into zones...



Clear Pedestrian Zone



Frontage Zone



Street
Furnishings
Zone



Street
Furnishings
Zone

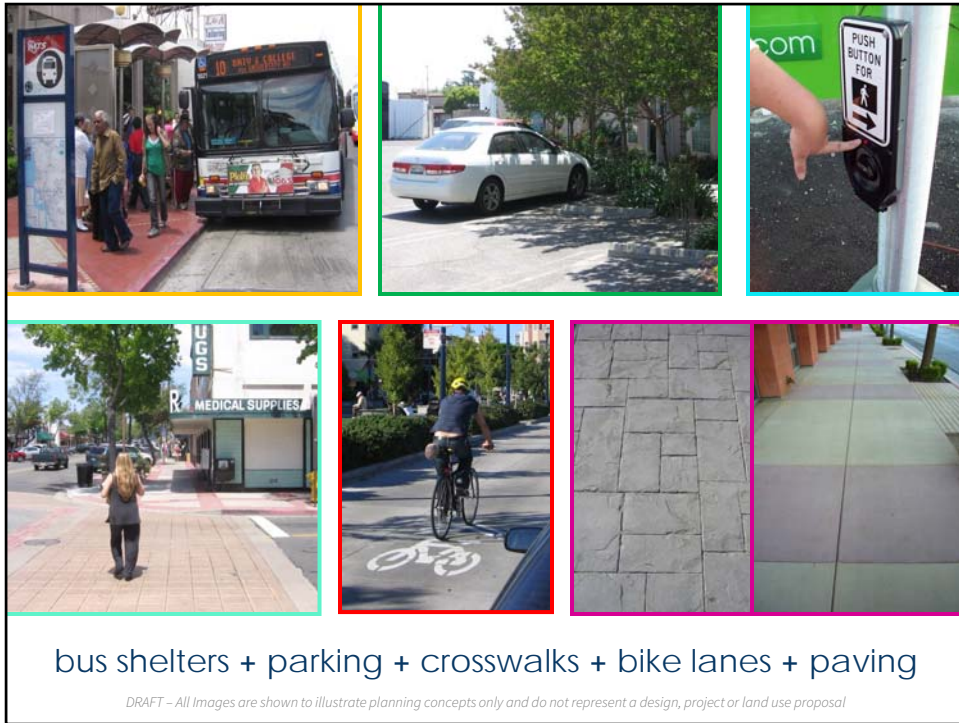
Clear Pedestrian Zone

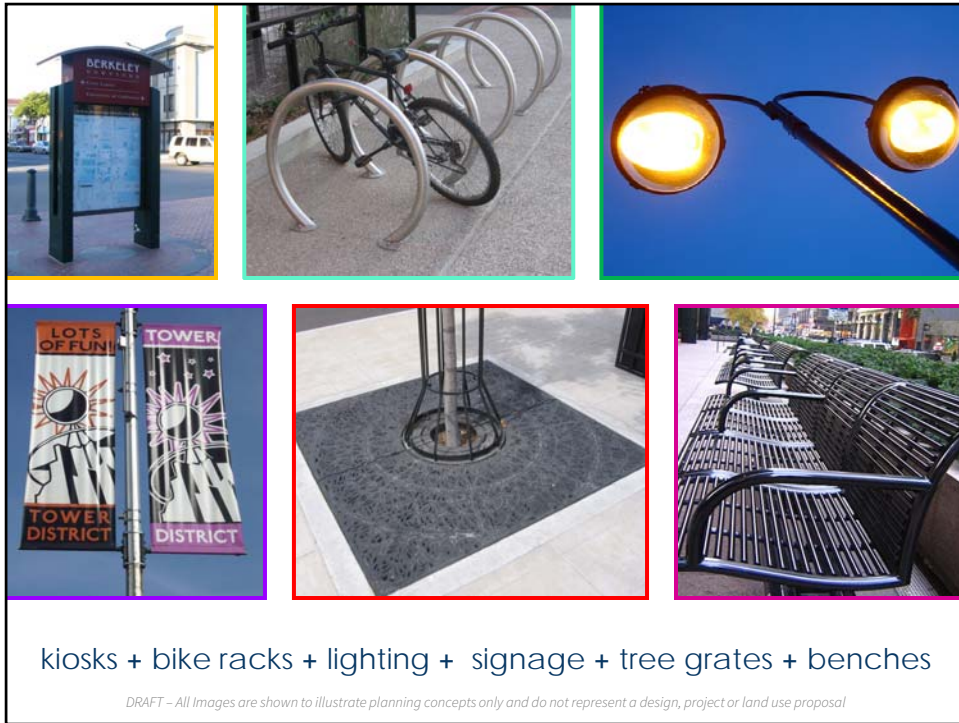
Frontage Zone

Streetscape Elements

There is a whole lot more to streets
than asphalt

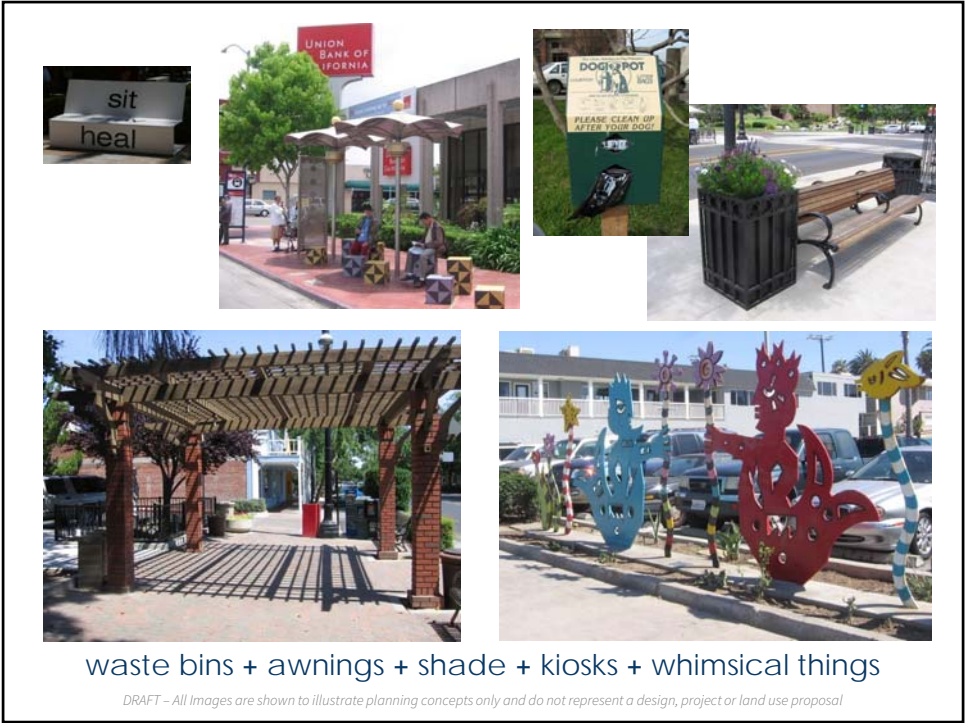
Now let's look at all the other elements that make for a great street – it's a lot more than pavement!





kiosks + bike racks + lighting + signage + tree grates + benches

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waste bins + awnings + shade + kiosks + whimsical things

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Sense of Enclosure

Beyond clear sidewalk zones and activating streetscape elements; great streets often provide a sense of place through enclosure – in this case, a commercial street is activated by the storefront/ restaurant that frames one edge of the street



Landscape Buffers from High Speed Traffic

In this case, a residential street, the engagement is more subtle and softer, with landscape playing a more significant role



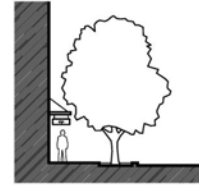
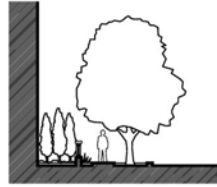
These two examples are a good lead in to a discussion about the role that buildings play in shaping the public realm; starting with the concept of the first 15' (define)

Active Street Frontage

Building Facades encourage and contribute to an active street environment and a pedestrian friendly street edge with many "eyes on the street"



Stoops, Front Porches, Balconies, Patios and other elements like them help activate a street



BAY WINDOW



YARD, FORECOURTS, AND BUILDING ENTRIES



AWNING, CANOPY, OR TRELLIS

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What we choose to build along a street's edge makes all the difference in how we experience the street; parking lots make for a monotonous and uneventful walking experience – which result in a distorted perception of distance (we tend to perceive things are farther than they really are when there are few or no good reference points to gauge our distance along the way)



But if we have something to look at, our perception of distances changes and the walking experience is made more pleasant



Why is it that most people love to visit traditional Main Streets across America? I would argue the reason lies (in large part) in the traditional storefronts that line the street. Take a traditional storefront – hypothetical image



Starts with transparency



High windows to allow plenty of natural light and greater ceiling height in retail space



Clearly defined entrance



Clear definition between first floor commercial and second floor residential/ office



Defined base at the street with a change in material or color to delineate public spaces



Awnings, projections and trellises to provide cover from elements and human scale



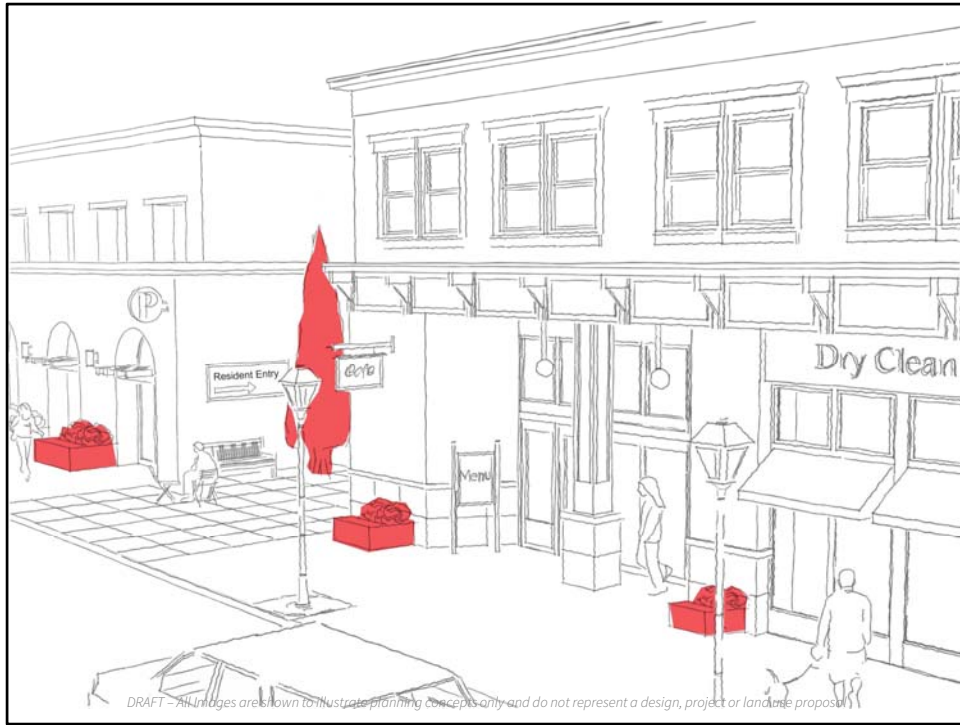
Change in paving to delineate pass throughs to internal part of the block, parking and residential entry



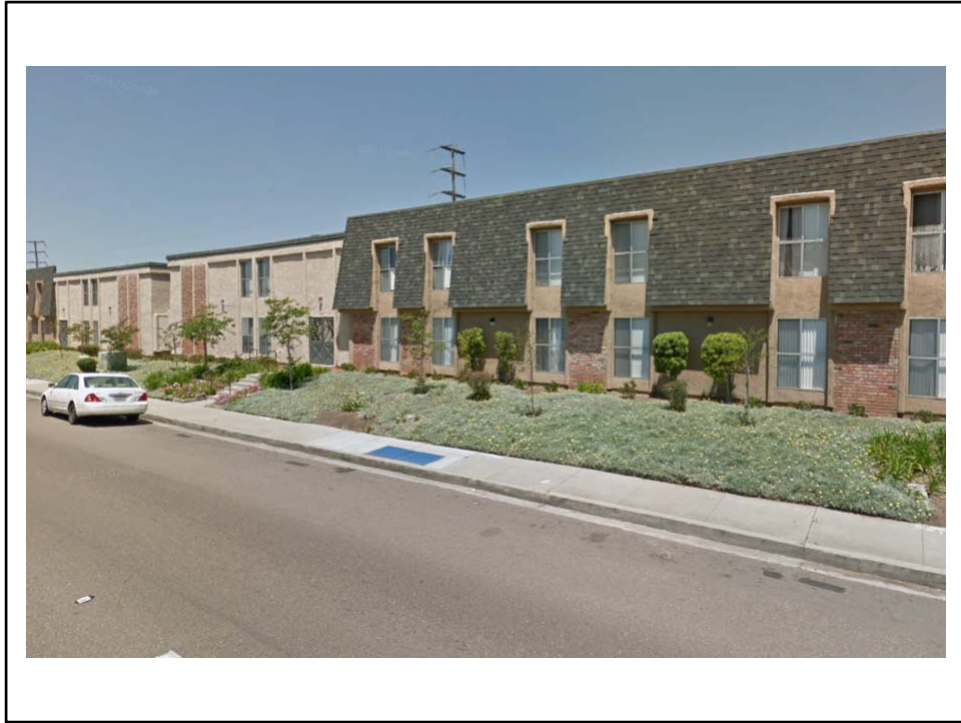
Clear and varied signage to attract visitors



Plenty of lighting on street and on the building



Landscape to enrich the ground level and add a level of detail and richness to the street



Concepts for the first 15 feet also apply to residential development; this is what is commonly seen on Clairemont Mesa Blvd. and Balboa Ave.



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Could it be this?



Or this?



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Finally, none of what I have talked about would matter much if public realm design did not result in great gathering spaces for the community. Gathering spaces in our communities are the spaces we remember; they house our experiences and connect us with our community – what are those gathering spaces today and how can we encourage more to flourish in the community?



They can be inside in public buildings



They can be indoor/outdoor areas



In and around buildings



From one store to another



Built into our parking lots

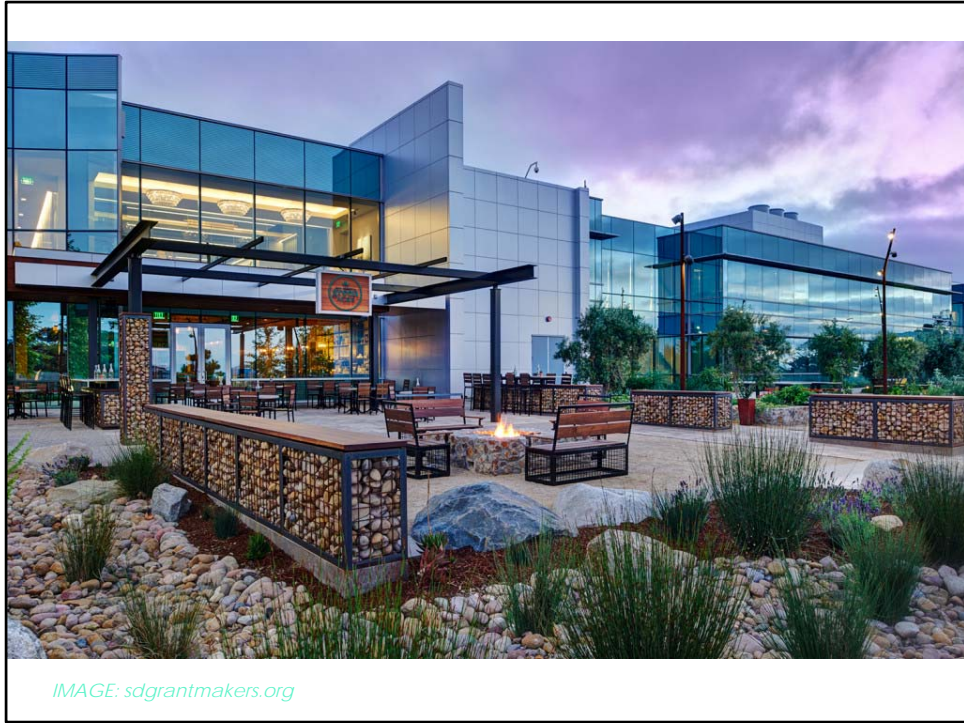








At office parks?



Campus Pointe – University City – Alexandria Real Estate



Clairemont Town Square



How do we get this many people to stick around and enjoy our beautiful San Diego weather? If they hang out long enough, perhaps they will demand more for their streets, shopping centers, and public spaces?

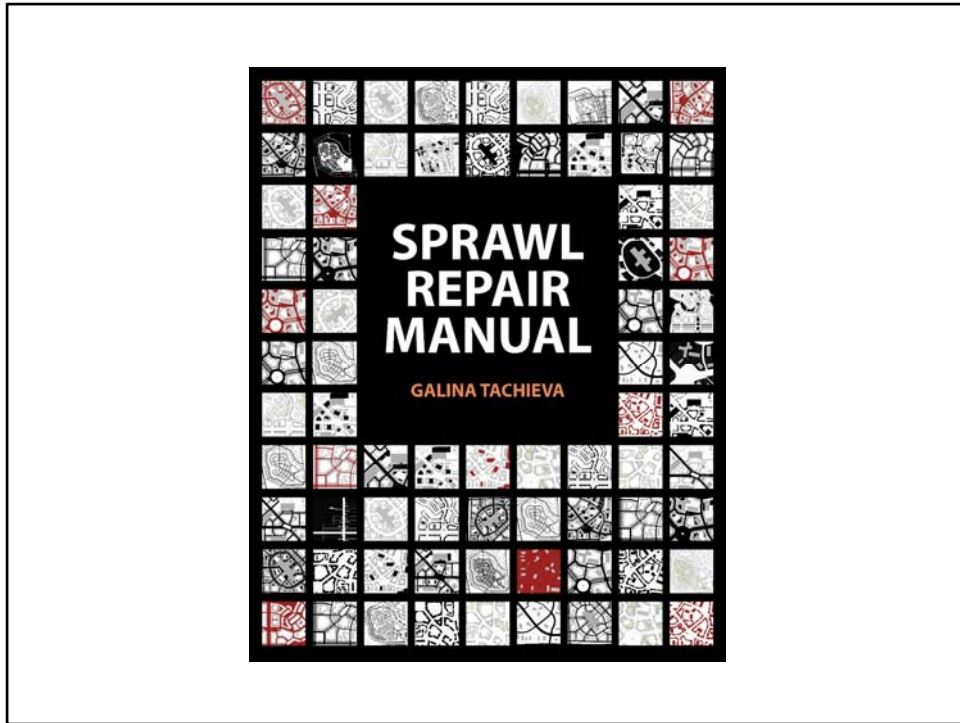


Ultimately, public realm design is about making great places for everyday life and memorable experiences

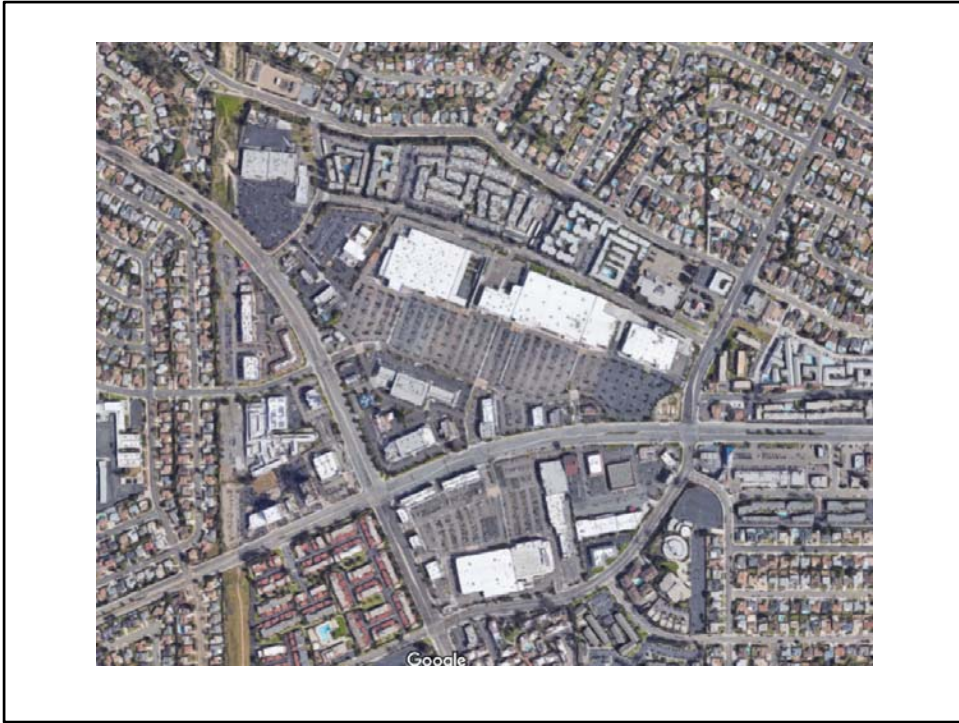
Suburban Retrofitting

Across the country, suburban communities are working with what they have instead of spreading out further. This is about making existing spaces better, more active, and compatible with the community

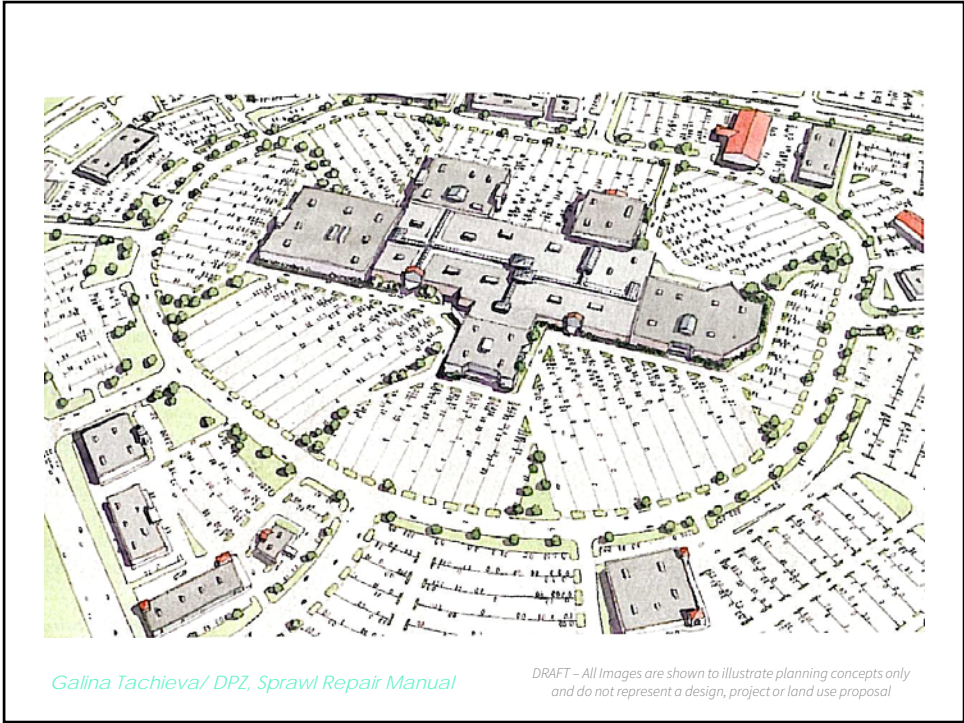
Many scholars, planners, designers, architects, etc. are studying the suburbs, asking, what's next? The conclusion is: let's work with what we have and make it a better place.



In 2009/10, with CNU, Ellen Dunham-Jones published a book titled “Retrofitting Suburbia”; followed shortly thereafter by this book, by Galina Tachieva; emphasis on what is the future of the suburbs? Suggest that there are a number of strategies for how to work within the framework of what we have and make better, more active and walkable environments



Considered by many the “Downtown Clairemont” the Balboa Mesa Shopping Center follows a prototypical suburban model; how can this be re-imagined for the next 20 years? How can it be a better place?



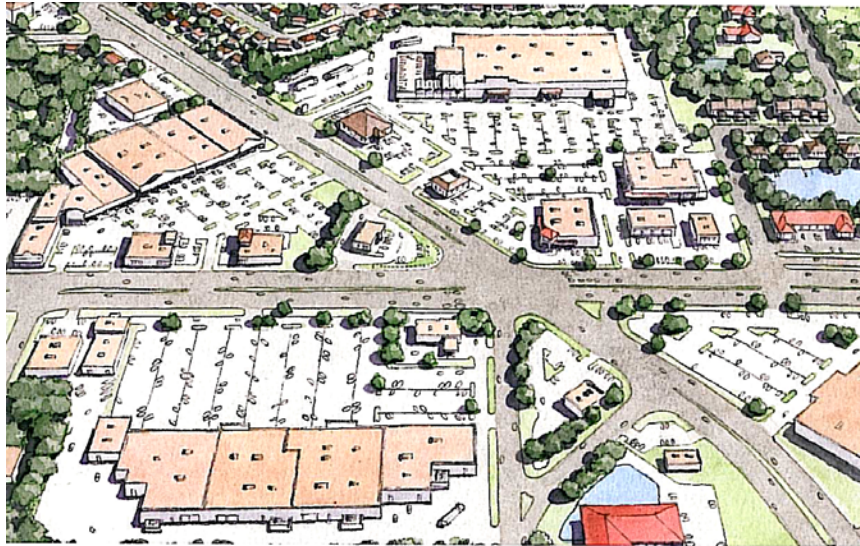
Let's look at an abstract illustration of a typical suburban shopping center from Galina Tachieva's book



Galina Tachieva/ DPZ, Sprawl Repair Manual

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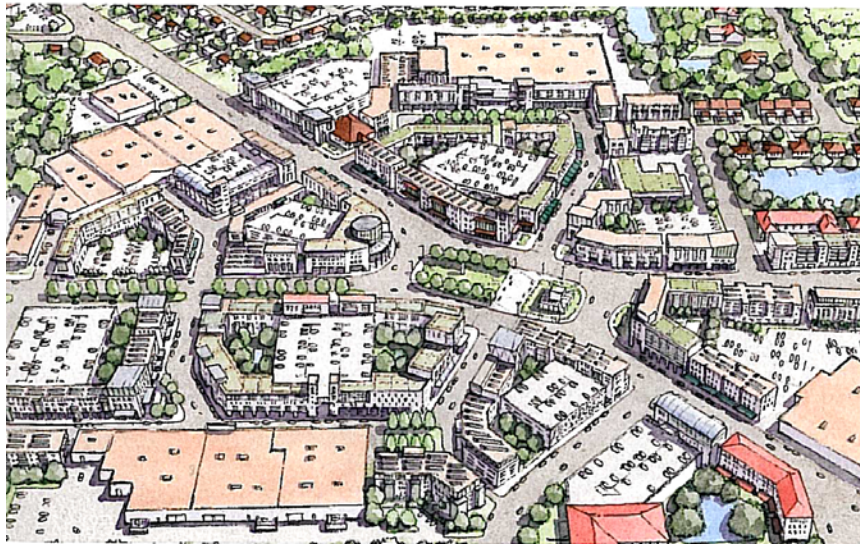
The key takeaway: there is A LOT of acreage in our shopping center sites! 10-15 downtown city blocks can fit in here. If we do break down the superblock, traffic is dispersed and perhaps more attractive environments are created?



Galina Tachieva/ DPZ, Sprawl Repair Manual

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Another example: two or three large strip centers bisected by an arterial street



Galina Tachieva/ DPZ, Sprawl Repair Manual

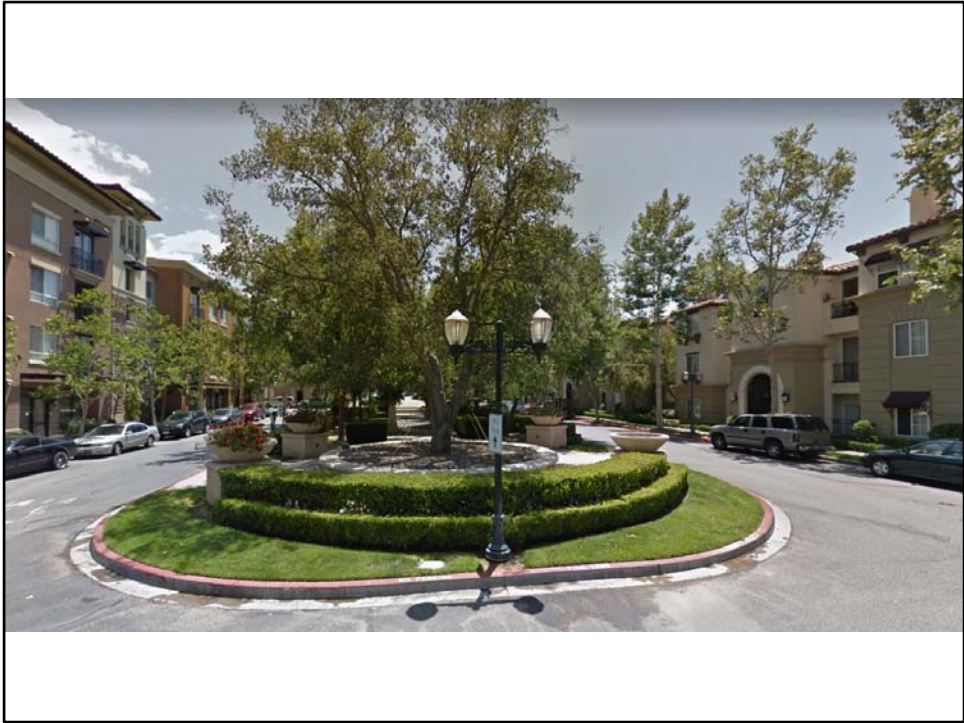
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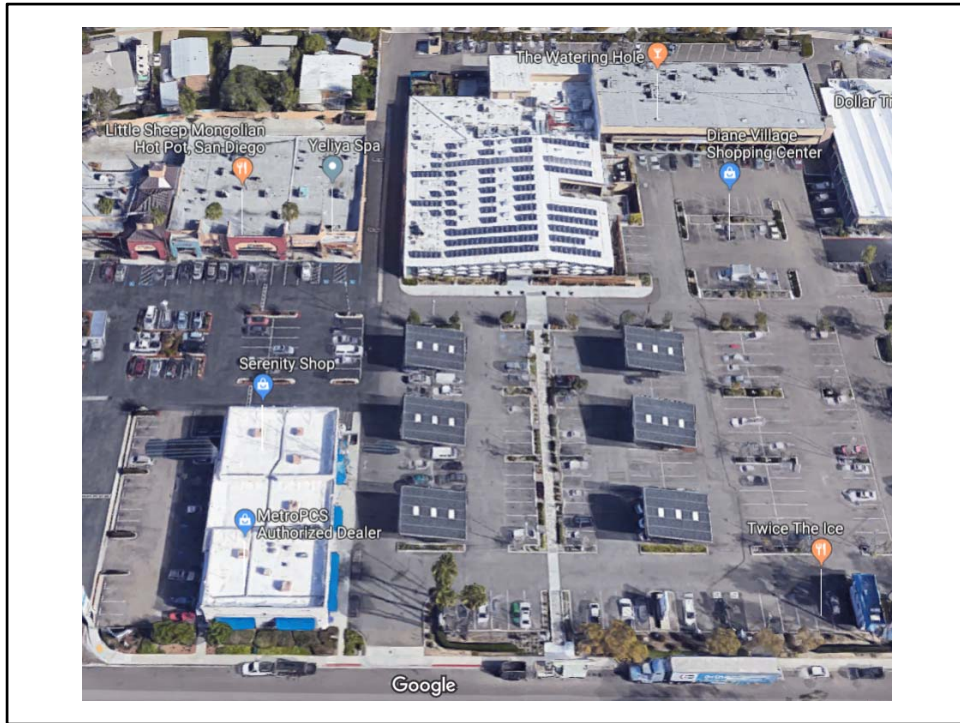
An awkward intersection is reclaimed, providing the opportunity for a new place to emerge and a better connection from one commercial center to another



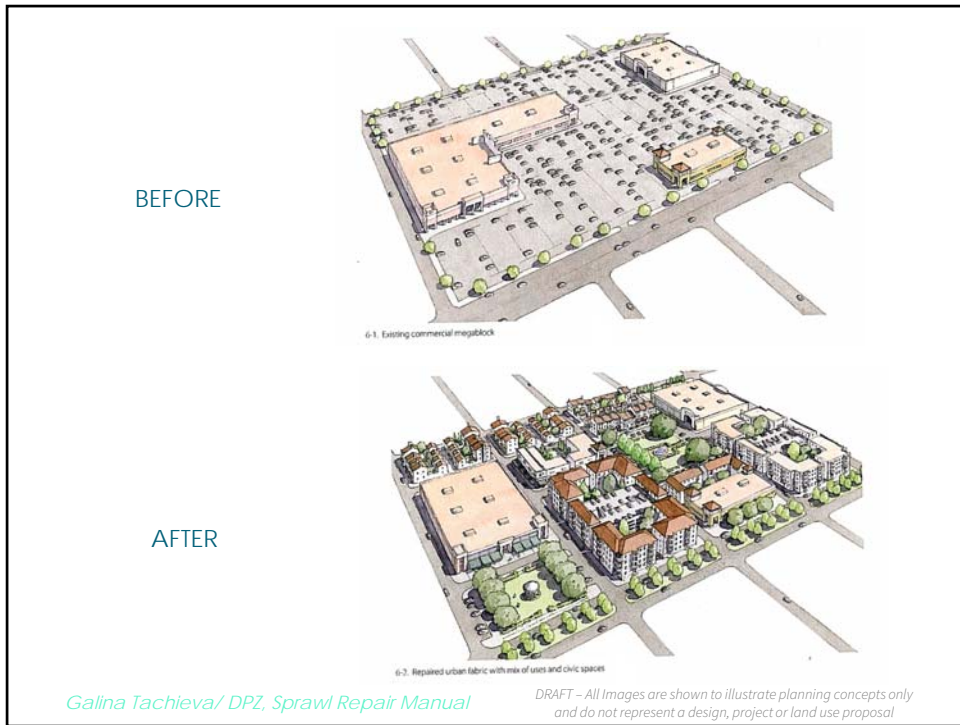
A good example is the Valencia Town Center in Valencia, CA







Let's look at one of my favorite buildings in Clairemont: The SDGE Innovation Center; it is hard to believe this used to be a Ross Store, but what if we took it one step further?



What if it was no longer in an island, surrounded by asphalt but instead anchored in a neighborhood, connected by streets and open spaces?

BEFORE



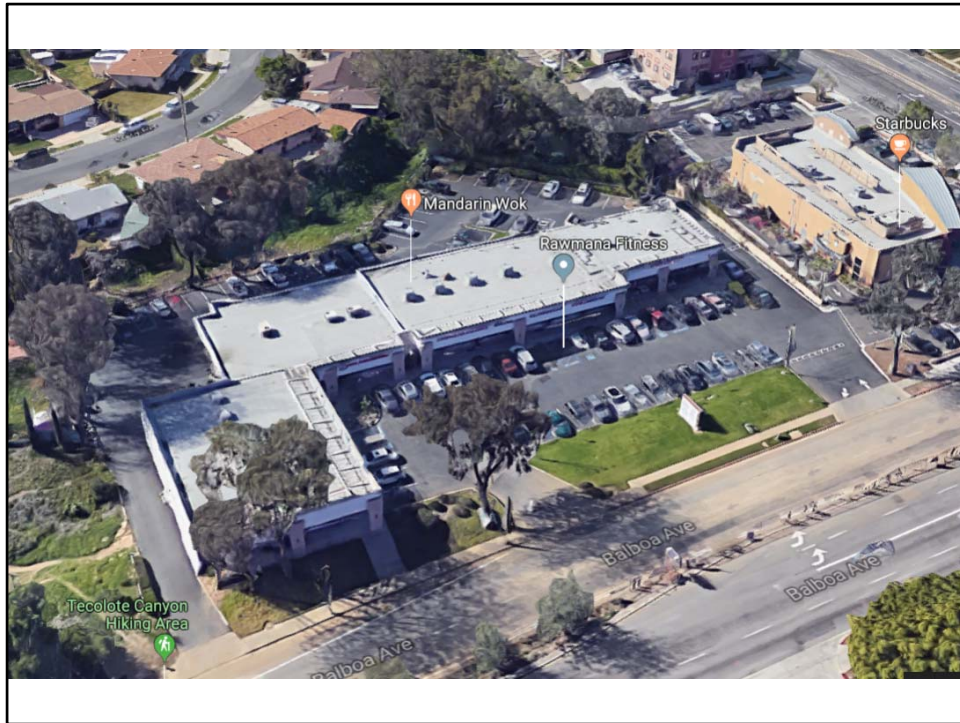
AFTER



Galina Tachieva/ DPZ, Sprawl Repair Manual

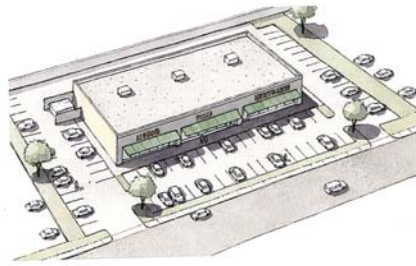
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What about our big box stores? Will they survive? What if there is a way to retrofit these too?

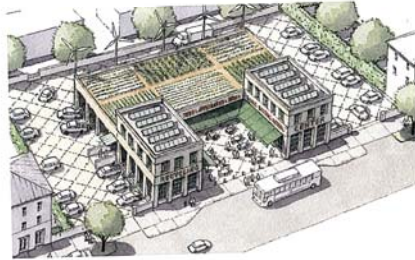


Or smaller strip centers with great restaurants but not much else going on?

BEFORE



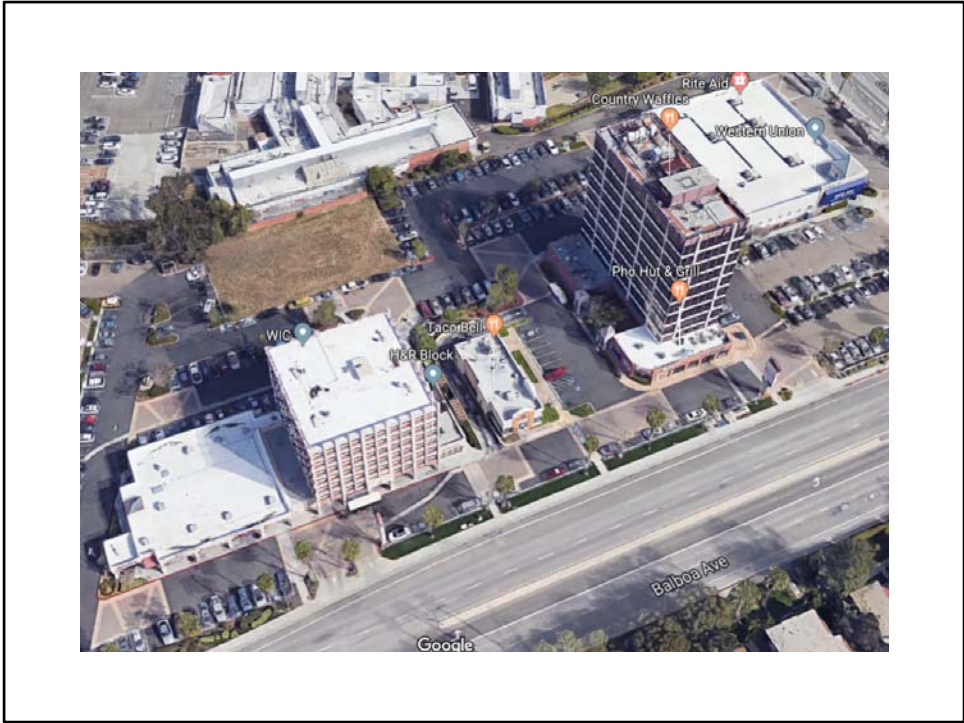
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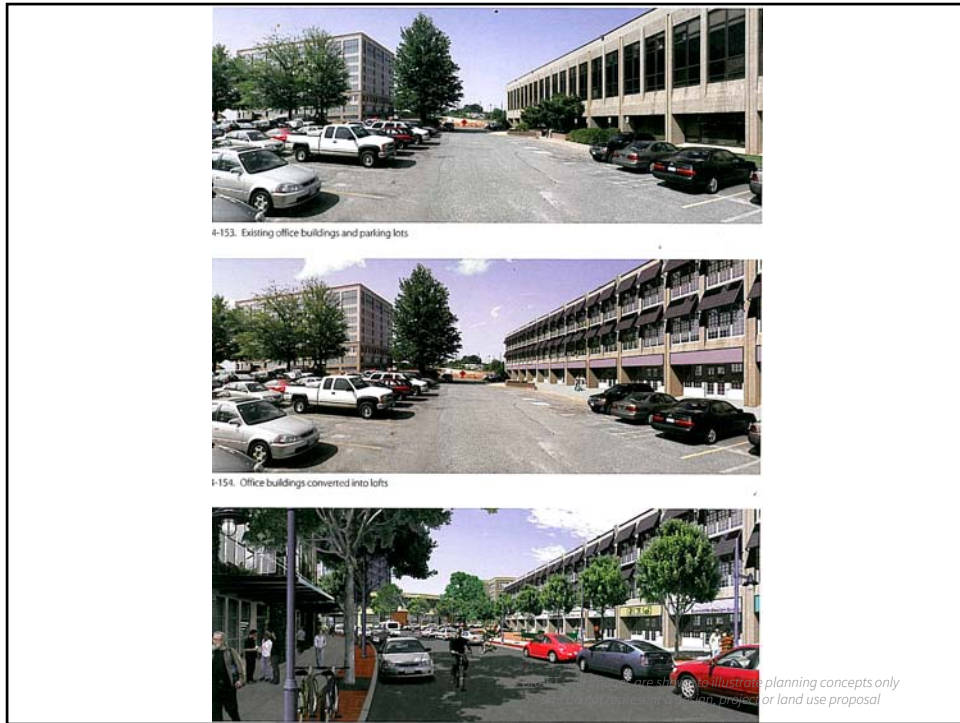
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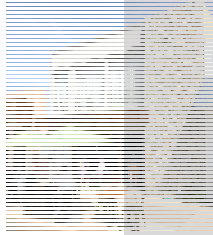
Can anything be added to these to make them better places to hang out?



What about the community's high-rises? How can we leverage this existing density and make it a better place?



I like this sequence of images because it shows how an otherwise unremarkable smattering of buildings sprinkled onto a parking lot can be turned into a place, with active street life and a sense of order



Public Realm