

East 14th Street and MacArthur Boulevard Gateway Landmarks and Street Tree Planting

San Leandro, CA



City gateway landmarks and corridor street tree plantings were the placemaking components of San Leandro's North Area Specific Plan prepared by FTB.

BEFORE

- Visible disinvestment in commercial corridor properties together with barren streetscapes had created a perception of decline in the North Area, in turn affecting upkeep and property values.
- The four ¾ mile long north-south arterial corridors in the North Area all had little or no street tree canopy and sidewalks were not buffered from traffic lanes.
- The North Area was difficult to distinguish from other neighborhoods in San Leandro and those next door in East Oakland.



A 1990 view of East 14th Street in the North Area showing its utilitarian and treeless commercial strip character.

ASSIGNMENTS

- As outlined in the Specific Plan's revitalization strategies, identify conditions whose placemaking improvement would help catalyze private investment. Prepare the designs, working with limited capital improvement funds (approximately one million dollars total for about 3 miles of corridors).
- Implement the improvements.

OUTCOMES

From the adopted Specific Plan (1991), improvements were constructed in 1992.

- To ensure that improvements would be visible and have a catalytic effect on private investment, FTB recommended their focus onto the two most heavily used of the four corridors, East 14th Street and MacArthur Boulevard.
- Half of the improvement funds were allocated to continuous canopy street tree plantings of London Plane trees onto the two corridors. The balance was allocated towards city gateway structures at the Oakland-San Leandro border on East 14th Street and a seat wall/gateway sign at the border on MacArthur Boulevard.
- The street trees have matured to over 60 feet in height (typical) today and have created a "Grand Boulevard" corridor streetscape effect.
- The gateways' architectural character was derived from historic San Leandro civic buildings (San Leandro Veterans' Building, City Hall) and have helped to strengthen district identity.

CLIENT: City of San Leandro

IN COLLABORATION WITH: Canan Tolon, Julia Lord (sculptor), Sierra Engineering Group

FTB: When this project was completed the firm name was Freedman Tung & Bottomley (FTB).



The Gateway Landmark Arch on East 14th Street at San Leandro's border with Oakland. This landmark was positioned in the center of the road and at a significant scale to create a noticeable "punctuation" along an otherwise very long arterial corridor. Its design was also intended to capture and celebrate the established place character of North Area neighborhoods.



Left: A detail view of the East 14th Street Gateway Landmark Arch and its architectural ornament and figurative sculpture. The forms and materials are a symbolic compilation of the North Area's civic architecture and residential character.

Center and Right: Images of architecture and ornament from the San Leandro Veterans' Building and City Hall, civic buildings from the North Area district that were sources of imagery for gateway design themes.



A view of East 14th Street in the North Area today, with a mature and continuous London Plane tree canopy. Tree canopies have been "limbed up" to maintain commercial visibility while still providing buffering of corridor housing and pedestrians from traffic. The City later applied a "road diet" to add bike lanes and trim vehicle lanes for a Complete Streets outcome.