



Budget Memorandum: Request for 2026 Funding and Implementation of Gardena Boulevard Improvements in Harbor Gateway North District I

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Ronald Robinson <ronrobinson.hgnnc@gmail.com>
To: Clerk.BudgetandFinanceCommittee@lacity.org
Cc: Ronald Robinson

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To: City of Los Angeles Budget and Finance Committee
From: Ron Robinson, Resident Harbor Gateway North Community
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Executive Summary

This memorandum recommends that the City of Los Angeles fund a 2026 implementation package for Harbor Gateway North District 1, with Gardena Boulevard from Vermont Avenue to Figueroa Street as the priority corridor. Gardena Boulevard should be the first focus for implementation because it is where neighborhood life, small businesses, transit access, industrial edges, freight movement, workforce opportunities, and long-standing public improvement needs converge.

The Harbor Gateway North community has already identified the improvements it needs along and around Gardena Boulevard: safer crossings, repaired sidewalks, reliable lighting, cleaner public spaces, stronger storefronts, better business support, job access, youth and workforce pathways, environmental protections, and better coordination among City departments. The appropriate next step is not another general statement of support. The appropriate next step is a funded work program with specific deliverables, responsible departments, timelines, cost estimates, and public reporting.

The proposed Gardena Boulevard investment should improve the daily quality of life for Harbor Gateway North residents while strengthening the City's economic and fiscal position. The community's proximity to the San Pedro Bay ports, the Harbor Freeway, regional freight corridors, commercial properties, and industrial land makes it a strategic location for logistics, warehousing, wholesale trade, retail activity, light manufacturing, clean industry, small-business growth, and workforce development. A targeted corridor package can support property reinvestment, tenant improvements, business activity, job creation, youth career exposure, and future City revenue while also including a mural and public art initiative that strengthens community identity and business visibility.

Recommended Committee Action

The Budget and Finance Committee should recommend that the City Council instruct the City Administrative Officer, Chief Legislative Analyst, Department of City Planning, Economic and Workforce Development Department, Office of Finance, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Bureau of Street Services, Bureau of Street Lighting, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Sanitation, Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Los Angeles Police Department, and other relevant City departments to prepare a coordinated report-back within a reasonable timeframe, in coordination with Council District 15 and with outside-agency coordination where needed.

The report-back should provide:

- **A corridor implementation map** identifying proposed improvements from Vermont Avenue to Figueroa Street.
- **A costed project list** covering safety, sidewalks, lighting, transit access, curb management, trees, shade, maintenance, a Gardena Boulevard mural/public art initiative, illegal dumping response, and business-support improvements.
- **A baseline conditions inventory** documenting existing sidewalk conditions, lighting gaps, illegal dumping locations, graffiti hot spots, vacant or underused storefronts, business needs, and opportunity sites.
- **An economic development strategy** focused on small businesses, logistics, warehousing, wholesale trade, retail activity, manufacturing, clean industry, and compatible mixed-use investment.
- **A job and revenue analysis** estimating current employment, future job capacity, business activity, sales activity, property value impacts, permit and fee activity, and other City revenue benefits.
- **A phased funding plan** identifying actions that can begin in the 2026 budget year, funding sources available for immediate allocation, and additional funding options for later phases.
- **A maintenance and accountability plan** assigning department responsibilities, ongoing service commitments, and quarterly public updates.

Basis for Investment

Harbor Gateway North is not merely a pass-through area. It is a community with residential neighborhoods, local businesses, industrial land, and regional economic significance. City materials identify Harbor Gateway as approximately 3,229 acres, or 5.1 square miles, and describe it as a narrow corridor linking the City's harbor communities to the main body of Los Angeles.

The corridor's location makes the public realm especially important. When sidewalks, lighting, crossings, and commercial edges are neglected, the effects are felt by residents, workers, transit riders, businesses, customers, and visitors. When those conditions improve, the benefits are immediate and visible.

Gardena Boulevard should be the first focus for implementation because it is a manageable corridor with a clear public need and economic potential. A targeted investment from Vermont Avenue to Figueroa Street can deliver visible results while creating a model for future improvements to Harbor Gateway North.

The cost of inaction should also be considered. If the corridor remains underinvested, Harbor Gateway North risks continued sidewalk deterioration, weak storefront conditions, illegal dumping, poor lighting, missed business opportunities, reduced private reinvestment, and avoidable public safety concerns. A funded package would help prevent those conditions from becoming more expensive to correct later.

Economic Importance

Harbor Gateway North is located near one of the country's most significant goods movement systems. LAEDC describes Southern California's trade and logistics sector as a major regional economic cluster supported by the San Pedro Bay ports, highway and rail networks, air cargo hubs, warehousing, and distribution facilities.

The scale of that economy is substantial. LAEDC reports that Southern California's trade and logistics cluster directly employed nearly 902,400 workers in 2022 and supported nearly 2 million total jobs when supplier and

household-spending effects are included. The same report states that the cluster generated nearly \$497.6 billion in economic output, \$157 billion in labor income, and \$93.3 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue in 2022.

Harbor Gateway North should receive a greater share of the local benefits associated with this regional economy. That does not mean accepting unmanaged freight impacts, incompatible uses, or environmental burdens. It means supporting job-producing businesses while requiring safe truck routing, cleaner operations, maintained public spaces, and protections for nearby residents.

Port Proximity and Business Readiness: Economic Value for Harbor Gateway North and Gardena Boulevard

Harbor Gateway North is positioned near regional movement pathways that connect the San Pedro Bay ports, the Harbor Freeway, freight routes, industrial districts, and local commercial corridors. This location gives the community a practical economic advantage. With the right public investment, Gardena Boulevard can become more than a corridor residents travel through; it can become a better-supported local business corridor that helps the City capture more value from the port-related economy while improving quality of life for the surrounding community.

The Port of Los Angeles is a major City asset. The Los Angeles Harbor Commission approved a \$2.7 billion FY 2025/26 Port budget, a 3.1% increase over the prior year, with priorities that include business, community, sustainability, and workforce development. Harbor Gateway North should be included in that larger economic conversation because communities along goods movement routes need investment that supports business activity while reducing the burdens associated with freight movement and industrial edges.

Port-related economic development also has a community workforce dimension. The Port of Los Angeles awarded \$1.5 million in FY 2023/24 Community Investment Grants to 37 local nonprofits for projects that included maritime workforce development, youth education, environmental programs, job creation, and quality-of-life improvements, with the grants funded by Port shipping fees and leasing revenues rather than taxpayer funds. That example supports a broader point for Harbor Gateway North: communities connected to port activity should also be connected to workforce, youth, education, and community-benefit opportunities.

The benefits of investing in Gardena Boulevard are direct and practical:

- **Robust job creation:** Port-related commerce depends on workers in logistics, warehousing, wholesale trade, retail distribution, light manufacturing, maintenance, construction, and clean transportation. Corridor investment can help connect Harbor Gateway North residents to those sectors by improving access, supporting employer outreach, and making the area more prepared for job-producing businesses.
- **Targeted infrastructure investment:** Goods movement communities need streets that work for residents and businesses. Better sidewalks, crossings, lighting, loading areas, curb management, and truck-route coordination can reduce conflicts while improving access for workers, customers, deliveries, and transit riders.
- **Commercial corridor revitalization:** Gardena Boulevard can serve as the visible local business corridor for Harbor Gateway North. Cleaner sidewalks, safer crossings, improved lighting, storefront support, public art, and regular maintenance can make the corridor more inviting for customers and more credible for private investment.

- **Youth and workforce pathways:** Investment should connect young people and working-age residents to logistics, supply-chain, construction, clean transportation, maritime, and small-business opportunities through employer outreach, career fairs, mentoring, training partnerships, and apprenticeship pathways.
- **City revenue generation:** Stronger business activity, tenant improvements, construction permits, sales activity, property reinvestment, and new employers can support future City revenues. The report-back should quantify these potential benefits instead of leaving them as general assumptions.

The specific impact on Gardena Boulevard should include:

- **Facade and safety upgrades:** Storefront improvements, lighting, crosswalks, sidewalks, and visibility improvements can help businesses feel safer and more attractive to customers, workers, and investors.
- **Planning district implementation:** Harbor Gateway’s adopted planning direction should be translated into corridor-level projects that show residents how policy becomes action.
- **Business growth:** A better-maintained and better-connected Gardena Boulevard can support existing small businesses while attracting compatible employers that benefit from proximity to the ports, freight routes, and the local workforce.

Employment and Land-Use Opportunity

The Harbor Gateway Community Plan Update identifies significant employment capacity. The City Clerk transmittal for Council File 25-0775 identifies a SCAG 2040 employment forecast of 23,800 jobs for Harbor Gateway and a proposed plan capacity of 40,998 jobs.

That capacity should serve as the basis for implementation. The same Council File materials state that the plan retains viable industrially designated lands for existing industry and new clean industries, supports research and development, light manufacturing, and warehouse/distribution facilities, and seeks to encourage job-rich industries while discouraging uses that do not generate significant employment.

The Committee should require the report-back to explain how the City will convert planned capacity into actual employers, workforce pathways, business activity, and revenue benefits. Land-use capacity has value only when it is paired with infrastructure, site readiness, business assistance, workforce development, and public accountability.

Fiscal and Economic Benefits to Gardena Boulevard and Harbor Gateway North

The investment case for Gardena Boulevard is both community-based and fiscal. A safer, cleaner, better-lit, and more active corridor can help Harbor Gateway North attract responsible private investment while improving daily conditions for residents and existing businesses. The City should therefore evaluate the corridor not only as a public works need, but also as an opportunity to strengthen long-term economic activity and revenue generation.

Public improvements can support property reinvestment by making underused parcels, aging storefronts, and commercial frontages more viable for rehabilitation or redevelopment. Sidewalk repairs, lighting upgrades, tree canopy, curb management, public art, and regular maintenance can help signal that Gardena Boulevard is ready for investment. That signal matters for property owners, tenants, lenders, customers, and employers considering whether to improve, lease, expand, or invest in the corridor.

The proposed improvements can also support business activity. Safer crossings, cleaner sidewalks, better lighting, storefront assistance, and a stronger corridor identity can make it easier for residents and customers to visit local businesses. Retailers, wholesalers, small service businesses, logistics firms, light manufacturers, and clean-industry employers all benefit from reliable access, visible storefronts, predictable loading conditions, and a public realm that feels maintained rather than neglected.

For the City, these outcomes can translate into measurable fiscal benefits that should be evaluated in the report-back. Potential benefits include business tax activity from new or expanding firms, sales activity from stronger retail and service corridors, permit and fee revenue from tenant improvements and construction, property value impacts from reinvestment, and broader economic benefits from jobs and local hiring. The report should not assume a dollar amount without analysis; instead, it should require the CAO, CLA, Office of Finance, EWDD, LADBS, and relevant departments to estimate the likely fiscal return under limited, moderate, and full implementation scenarios.

The report-back should also track business openings, storefront vacancies, permits issued, tenant improvements, sales activity, and jobs supported so the Committee can measure whether the investment is producing visible economic results.

This section is important because it explains why the investment should be considered fiscally responsible, not merely desirable. Harbor Gateway North has public needs that deserve attention, but Gardena Boulevard also offers the City a practical opportunity to turn corridor improvement into business retention, private investment, jobs, and future revenue.

Implementation, Funding, and Measurable Return

The 2026 package should be structured as an implementation program rather than a general planning request. The Committee should direct the CAO, CLA, and relevant departments to identify near-term, mid-term, and longer-term improvements, match each improvement to available or potential funding sources, and establish measurable outcomes for the City and the community.

The first phase should focus on improvements that can be started or completed in the 2026 budget year. Early actions should include lighting repairs, sidewalk and crossing priorities, illegal dumping response, graffiti removal, mural and beautification planning, storefront outreach, business assistance, and a corridor conditions inventory. These actions would show residents and businesses that the City is moving from discussion to delivery.

The report-back should organize delivery into practical time frames:

- **0 to 6 months:** Complete the baseline conditions inventory, identify priority work locations, repair lighting outages, begin illegal dumping and graffiti response improvements, start mural site review, and conduct business outreach.
- **6 to 12 months:** Begin first-phase sidewalk, crossing, curb, storefront, beautification, and public-realm improvements; identify funding for larger capital items; and launch workforce and business-support partnerships.
- **12 to 24 months:** Advance larger corridor infrastructure, clean growth, public art, business attraction, and private reinvestment strategies that require more design, permitting, funding, or interagency coordination.

The report-back should identify funding sources that could be used immediately and funding sources that may require later budget action, grants, interdepartmental coordination, or outside-agency participation. The

Committee should be able to see which improvements can begin quickly, which require additional scoping, and which need a longer capital or grant strategy.

The City should also measure return on investment. Suggested measures include business openings, storefront vacancies, permits issued, tenant improvements, jobs supported, businesses assisted, service requests resolved, corridor maintenance response times, lighting repairs completed, public-realm improvements installed, and progress toward responsible private investment. These measures would allow the Committee to evaluate whether public dollars are producing visible, practical, and fiscal benefits for Gardena Boulevard and Harbor Gateway North District I.

Mural and Beautification Initiative

A Gardena Boulevard mural should be included as a practical corridor improvement rather than as decoration. Public art can help change how a corridor is perceived, especially in areas where blank walls, graffiti, poor lighting, and underused commercial edges make a street feel overlooked. A well-planned mural can create a recognizable landmark, enhance the corridor's appearance, foster community pride, and signal that Harbor Gateway North is receiving visible City investment.

The mural initiative is also relevant to the Committee because it supports economic development goals at a modest and visible scale. A mural can help draw attention to nearby storefronts, encourage walking and photography, support community events, and create a stronger identity for Gardena Boulevard. Those outcomes can benefit small businesses by making the corridor more memorable, more active, and more inviting for customers. The economic value should be measured through practical indicators such as pedestrian activity, business participation, corridor events, storefront vacancy trends, graffiti reduction, and resident and business satisfaction.

The City already treats art and character as part of street improvement. LADOT's Great Streets guidance identifies murals, banners, painted signal cabinets, public art displays, sidewalk dining, street trees, lighting, and maintenance as tools that can improve streets as community places. That same guidance lists Great Streets goals that include enhancing neighborhood character, increasing economic activity, improving community engagement, supporting safer communities, and improving access and mobility.

The Department of Cultural Affairs' Citywide Mural Program provides a City framework for this type of project. The program supports new murals that re-engage communities, especially youth, create opportunities for muralists, provide technical assistance and training, and support mural documentation and cultural tourism opportunities. For registered original art murals, the City's process requires property owner consent, maintenance responsibility, and neighborhood involvement, which helps ensure that the mural is community-supported and not installed without a long-term care plan.

For Gardena Boulevard, the mural should be developed as part of a larger beautification package that includes anti-graffiti coating, lighting, sidewalk cleaning, trash removal, banners or gateway markers, and outreach to nearby businesses. The report-back should identify potential mural walls, property owners' interest, DCA process requirements, estimated costs, artist selection options, youth or community engagement opportunities, maintenance responsibilities, and metrics for measuring public-realm and business benefits.

The mural initiative should advance five goals:

- **Beautification:** Convert a blank, tagged, or visually neglected wall into a maintained public asset.

- **Community identity:** Reflect Harbor Gateway North’s history, families, workers, small businesses, port connection, and future aspirations.
- **Small-business support:** Create a landmark that improves corridor visibility and gives customers another reason to walk, stop, take photos, attend events, and notice nearby businesses.
- **Youth and artist opportunity:** Involve local artists, students, and community members in design input, storytelling, and implementation where feasible.
- **Maintenance and blight prevention:** Pair the mural with anti-graffiti treatment, clear maintenance responsibility, and rapid response procedures so the investment remains attractive.

2026 Investment Priorities

Corridor Infrastructure

Gardena Boulevard should receive a first-phase infrastructure package that addresses the most visible and practical barriers to investment, mobility, accessibility, and daily use. The package should include:

- High-visibility crosswalks and pedestrian safety improvements near businesses, transit stops, and key intersections.
- Sidewalk repair inventory, ADA access review, and first-phase repair locations.
- Lighting audit, outage repairs, and pedestrian-scale lighting priorities.
- Curb management for deliveries, short-term parking, loading, and customer access.
- Street trees, shade, and basic streetscape improvements.
- Trash receptacles, graffiti response, illegal dumping abatement, and alley cleanup.
- Identification of priority mural walls, signal-cabinet art locations, banners, and gateway markers as part of the corridor beautification program.

Business and Employment Development

The City should support businesses that fit the district’s location, land-use framework, and workforce potential while protecting residential quality of life. The business strategy should include:

- Outreach to logistics, warehousing, wholesale, retail, light manufacturing, clean-industry, and small-business operators.
- Inventory of vacant, underused, or poorly maintained commercial and industrial properties.
- Identification of sites suitable for job-producing and compatible uses, subject to applicable zoning, environmental review, infrastructure capacity, and community impact considerations.
- Business retention support for existing corridor businesses.
- Storefront assistance for signage, lighting, paint, security, windows, doors, facade repair, and accessibility.

Workforce and Local Hiring

Economic development should connect residents to opportunity and help local businesses participate in public and private investment. The 2026 package should include:

- Partnerships with employers in logistics, warehousing, manufacturing, retail, wholesale, construction, clean transportation, and maintenance.
- Local hiring and apprenticeship goals for corridor improvement contracts where legally feasible.
- Youth and adult workforce pathways connected to port-related and clean-industry careers.
- Outreach to local, small, minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and disadvantaged business contractors, including assistance with certification and procurement readiness where available.

Report-Back

The Committee should request a concise, implementation-focused report-back. The report should identify actions, costs, funding options, responsible departments, implementation timelines, and any necessary coordination with outside agencies to deliver the work.

Report-Back Item	Required Detail	Lead Partners
Baseline conditions inventory	Existing sidewalk conditions, lighting gaps, illegal dumping locations, graffiti hot spots, vacant or underused storefronts, business needs, and opportunity sites.	CD15, DCP, LADOT, BSS, BSL, BOS/LASAN, EWDD
Corridor scope	Map of proposed work locations from Vermont Avenue to Figueroa Street, including intersections, sidewalks, bus stops, alleys, lighting gaps, commercial frontages, and opportunity sites.	CD15, DCP, LADOT, BOE
Phased funding plan	Immediate 2026 budget-year actions, potential fund sources, grant opportunities, interdepartmental funding options, and later-phase capital needs.	CAO, CLA, CD15, each assigned department
Economic strategy	Business attraction and retention plan for logistics, warehouse, wholesale, retail, manufacturing, clean industry, and small businesses.	EWDD, DCP, CD15
Job and revenue analysis	Current jobs, future employment capacity, business tax, sales tax, property value, permit and fee impacts, and other revenue effects from targeted investment.	CAO, CLA, EWDD, Office of Finance, LADBS
Safety and access package	Crossings, traffic calming, sidewalk access, ADA needs, bus-stop amenities, curb management, and delivery/loading conditions.	LADOT, BOE, BSS, Metro coordination where applicable
Maintenance package	Dumping, graffiti, alley cleanup, trash receptacles, sidewalk conditions, street sweeping needs, and lighting repairs.	BOS/LASAN, BSS, BSL
Public realm and identity package	Street trees, shade, a Gardena Boulevard mural opportunity, signal-cabinet art, banners, gateway markers, anti-graffiti coating, maintenance responsibilities, and corridor identity improvements.	BSS, DCA, LADOT, CD15
Clean growth package	Truck intrusion, industrial-edge mitigation, green infrastructure, stormwater opportunities, clean transportation readiness, and environmental justice measures.	DCP, LADOT, BSS, BOS/LASAN, BSL
Public accountability	Quarterly public dashboard showing completed work, pending work, dollars allocated, jobs supported, businesses assisted, service requests addressed, and next deliverables.	CD15, CAO, CLA, each assigned to a department

Closing Statement

Harbor Gateway North District I is both a community deserving equitable public investment and an economic asset with strategic value to the City of Los Angeles. Its location near the San Pedro Bay ports, the Harbor Freeway, and the regional goods movement network creates opportunities for logistics, warehousing, wholesale trade, retail distribution, light manufacturing, clean industry, small-business growth, youth career exposure, and workforce development. Those opportunities should be matched by visible investment in the streets, sidewalks, businesses, public spaces, and community identity of Gardena Boulevard.

The requested 2026 package would help residents, support existing businesses, attract responsible private investment, create job and training pathways, strengthen the City's revenue base, and promote cleaner and safer growth. It would also send an important message: Harbor Gateway North should not remain a community where long-discussed needs stay on paper. The City should move Gardena Boulevard from planning language to funded projects, from repeated requests to assigned deliverables, and from promises to results the community can see.

For these reasons, the Budget and Finance Committee should advance a scoped and costed implementation package for Gardena Boulevard from Vermont Avenue to Figueroa Street. This is a practical, measurable, and fiscally responsible investment in Harbor Gateway North District I, in the City's goods movement economy, and in the residents and businesses that should share more directly in that economic future.

Thank you for your time, attention, and service to the residents and businesses of Los Angeles. I respectfully urge the Budget and Finance Committee to give these recommendations full and serious consideration and to advance a funded 2026 implementation package for Gardena Boulevard and Harbor Gateway North District I. This action would help move the community from years of discussion to visible results, stronger economic opportunity, safer public spaces, and the investment Harbor Gateway North deserves.