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# What is the Cost of Underinvestment? Capital Improvement Needs on Gardena Boulevard and the Harbor Gateway North District 1 Community

1 message

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To: Clerk.BudgetandFinanceCommittee@lacity.org

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## Memorandum

**To:** Los Angeles City Budget and Finance Committee  
**From:** Ron Robinson, Resident, Harbor Gateway North District 1 Community  
**Date:** May 20, 2026

### Purpose

This memorandum respectfully requests that the Los Angeles City Budget and Finance Committee fund, or direct staff to identify funding for, a coordinated capital improvement package for Gardena Boulevard. The package should address deficiencies in sidewalks, lighting, ADA accessibility, and parking through assessment, design, cost estimating, and phased implementation.

The central budget question is: **What is the cost of underinvestment?**

On Gardena Boulevard, the answer is clear. Underinvestment increases future repair costs, exposes the City to avoidable risk, weakens business activity, limits access to jobs and transit, constrains customer parking, and diminishes the corridor's long-term economic potential.

### Background

Gardena Boulevard is a key neighborhood corridor serving residents, workers, small businesses, students, seniors, transit riders, pedestrians, and visitors. It connects people to transit, employment, schools, businesses, and neighborhood services.

However, the corridor has not received the infrastructure investment needed to support safe, accessible, and productive public use. The result is a corridor that places unnecessary burdens on seniors, people with disabilities, transit-dependent residents, working families, customers, and local businesses.

The issue before the City is not whether improvements are needed. The issue is whether continued delay is fiscally responsible. It is not.

### Cost of Underinvestment

The cost of underinvestment is not limited to deteriorated sidewalks, poor lighting, ADA barriers, or constrained parking. Those conditions are symptoms of a larger fiscal and economic problem.

When public infrastructure declines, the City bears the cost in multiple ways. Sidewalk defects become more expensive repairs. Lighting gaps continue to undermine safety and evening activity. ADA barriers increase compliance and liability risks. Poorly planned or insufficient parking areas limit customer access and push parking demand onto Gardena Boulevard, reducing turnover and making it harder for businesses to attract steady customer traffic.

The community also pays. Businesses lose visibility, accessibility, and customer convenience. Entrepreneurs are less likely to invest in corridors that appear unsafe, inaccessible, congested, or neglected. Workers and customers face less reliable access to transit, jobs, services, and commercial destinations. Residents lose confidence when basic public infrastructure remains unchanged year after year.

This is the true cost of deferral: higher future expenses, weaker economic activity, reduced job access, constrained customer traffic, avoidable liability, and lost neighborhood potential. Underinvestment does not save money. It compounds costs.

A coordinated capital improvement package is therefore not only an infrastructure request. It is a fiscal strategy to reduce risk, protect public assets, improve access, support local commerce, and position Gardena Boulevard for long-term community and economic growth.

## **Existing Deficiencies**

### **Sidewalk Conditions**

Cracked, uneven, obstructed, or deteriorated sidewalks along Gardena Boulevard create hazards for pedestrians and place particular burdens on seniors, children, people with disabilities, transit riders, and residents who rely on walking.

Sidewalks are essential public safety and economic infrastructure. When they fail, pedestrians may be pushed into unsafe conditions, businesses may lose foot traffic, and the City may face preventable repair and liability costs.

### **Lighting Deficiencies**

Inadequate or inconsistent lighting reduces visibility for pedestrians and drivers, discourages use of the corridor during early morning and evening hours, and contributes to safety concerns.

Lighting improvements are not cosmetic. A well-lit corridor supports safety, commercial activity, transit access, and the conditions needed for evening economic activity.

### **ADA Accessibility Deficiencies**

Missing or noncompliant curb ramps, uneven paths of travel, narrow passageways, and other barriers prevent equal access to the public right-of-way.

Correcting these barriers is an equity responsibility, a compliance obligation, and a fiscally prudent step to reduce future risk.

### **Parking and Customer Access Deficiencies**

Parking conditions also affect the economic performance of Gardena Boulevard. When off-street parking areas are insufficient, poorly maintained, or poorly organized, more vehicles compete for limited curbside parking along the boulevard. This reduces turnover, limits customer access, and can discourage patrons from stopping at local businesses.

Improved parking areas, where feasible, would help support business activity by freeing up parking on Gardena Boulevard for short-term customer use, improving circulation, and making the corridor more convenient for visitors, employees, and residents.

## **Recommended Capital Improvement Scope**

The requested capital improvement package should include:

- Comprehensive corridor assessment;
- Engineering review and design;
- Sidewalk repair or reconstruction;
- ADA-compliant curb ramps;
- Path-of-travel corrections;
- Pedestrian-scale lighting upgrades where appropriate;
- Assessment of parking needs and opportunities;
- Improvements to parking areas where feasible to support customer access and reduce pressure on Gardena Boulevard curbside parking;
- Cost estimating and funding identification;
- Phased implementation schedule; and
- Coordination among relevant City departments, including Public Works, the Bureau of Street Services, the Bureau of Street Lighting, the Department on Disability, and transportation or parking-related departments as appropriate.

This scope would allow the City to address related deficiencies through a coordinated strategy rather than fragmented repairs after conditions worsen.

## **Fiscal and Community Return**

Planned investment is more efficient, more accountable, and more durable than reactive repair. By acting now, the City can reduce future costs while improving safety, access, and corridor performance.

Immediate investment would help the City:

- Reduce future repair and reconstruction costs;
- Lower exposure to liability, settlements, and accessibility claims;
- Improve pedestrian safety and mobility;
- Support business creation and corridor activity;
- Improve customer access and parking turnover;
- Reduce pressure on Gardena Boulevard curbside parking;
- Improve access to jobs, transit, and services;
- Strengthen public confidence in City infrastructure; and
- Position Gardena Boulevard for long-term neighborhood growth.

Continued deferral does not protect the City's budget. It increases the likelihood that future work will be more expensive, more urgent, and less coordinated.

### **Requested Action**

I respectfully request that the Budget and Finance Committee fund, or direct staff to identify funding for, a dedicated capital improvement package for Gardena Boulevard. At a minimum, the Committee should initiate the assessment, design, cost estimate, funding identification, and parking needs analysis required to move the corridor toward phased implementation.

This action would provide a practical path to address sidewalk, lighting, ADA, and parking-related deficiencies while advancing safety, accessibility, business growth, customer traffic, job access, and long-term neighborhood investment.

### **Conclusion**

The cost of underinvestment on Gardena Boulevard is clear: higher repair costs, avoidable liability, reduced business activity, limited customer access, weaker job access, diminished public trust, and lost economic potential.

Gardena Boulevard has waited long enough. The City can pay now through planned investment or pay more later through emergency repairs, claims, settlements, economic stagnation, and continued decline. I urge the Budget and Finance Committee to prioritize Gardena Boulevard and support a capital improvement package that restores the corridor as a safer, more accessible, better-connected, and more economically productive public right-of-way.