Our CONGRESS AVENUE ENVISION!

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS
URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVE

DOWNTOWN COMMISSION
MARCH 20, 2019

AGENDA

Introduction

Timeline | Existing Initiatives | Public Engagement | Next Steps

Balance the Avenue

Mobility Overview | Street Space Allocation | Ann W. Richards Congress Ave Bridge
Bike & Scooter Lanes | Curbside Management & Flex Parking

Pedestrian Realm

Congress Avenue for All | Defining the Sidewalk | Seating & Furnishing
Lighting | Trees | Green Infrastructure | Ann W. Richards Congress Ave Bridge

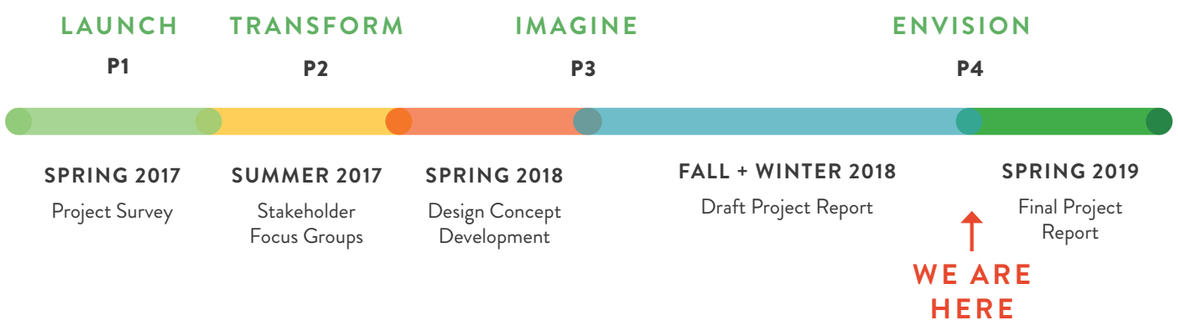
Design Concepts & Placemaking

Civic Stage | Heart of Austin | Green Gateways | Vibrant Crossings

Implementation

Our CONGRESS AVENUE

is a great Texas people place - the cultural, historic and commercial spine of downtown Austin where people come to **share, celebrate and create a bright future.**



EXISTING INITIATIVES

Final Plan as Adopted on June 16th, 2016

SOUTH CENTRAL WATERFRONT
VISION FRAMEWORK PLAN

June 2016 • Austin, Texas

Launch

PUBLIC EVENT # 1

Demonstrated the existing conditions and challenges of the corridor today

161
Attendees

2,320+
Comment Cards
517 in person
1,830+ online

Transform

PUBLIC EVENT # 2

The second public event was held at various locations along Congress Avenue on June 2-3, 2017.

Build a Street

Transform

PUBLIC EVENT # 2

Activations and pop-up events along the Avenue demonstrated potential streetscape design elements.

Imagine

PUBLIC EVENT # 3

The third public event invited Austin residents to discuss and evaluate different concepts for Congress Avenue

Imagine

PUBLIC EVENT # 3

Common Elements

SIDEWALKS FOR PEOPLE

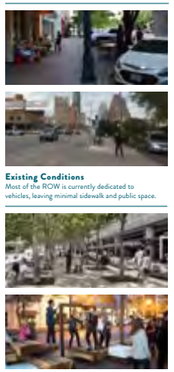
Common Elements

Congress Avenue is one of Austin's most iconic places, lined with local businesses, cultural institutions, and global offices. The design of the Avenue will respect its status as a National Historic District and provide a spacious and dynamic tree-shaded public realm that connects and supports these destinations with places for people to stroll, mingle, and participate in urban life.

SUPPORTING KEY THEMES

- CULTURE & HISTORY
- ECONOMICS
- SOCIAL EQUITY
- ENVIRONMENT

POTENTIAL DESIGN



Existing Conditions
Most of the ROW is currently dedicated to vehicles, leaving minimal sidewalk and public space.

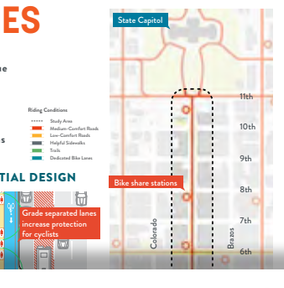
Precedent
Wider sidewalks that are inviting and include an array of public amenities.

Station 4
Public Event 3: Imagine!

SAFE BIKE LANES

Common Elements

Despite a lack of bike facilities, Congress Avenue is a heavily-used route for cyclists. The Avenue intersects numerous urban bike routes as well as the trail system around Lady Bird Lake. The introduction of grade-separated bike lanes will create a safer route for cyclists of all ages and ability levels, strengthening the Avenue's role as central spine of Austin's bike network.



SUPPORTING KEY THEMES

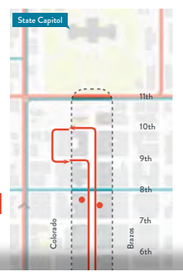
- MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY
- ENVIRONMENT

POTENTIAL DESIGN

FLEXIBLE TRANSIT

Common Elements

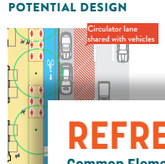
A circulator connecting Downtown Austin with South Congress will tie together several of the city's most dynamic neighborhoods, and support local businesses and institutions. A future transit hub at Riverside Drive would support mass transit envisioned by Project Connect, provide access from under-served neighborhoods, and help reduce congestion by providing an alternative to driving.



SUPPORTS KEY THEMES

- SOCIAL EQUITY
- ECONOMICS
- MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

POTENTIAL DESIGN



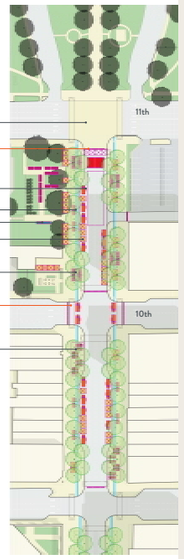
SPACES FOR CELEBRATION

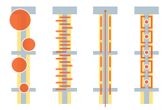
Common Elements

Congress Avenue is the political, cultural, historic, and symbolic center of Texas's capital city. The Avenue hosts a diverse range of parades, festivals and protests that can attract thousands of visitors throughout the year. A flexible design for the northernmost portion of the Avenue, adjacent to the Texas Capitol, will create a place that can function equally well as a parade route, festival ground and an urban street.

SUPPORTING KEY THEMES

- SOCIAL EQUITY
- CULTURE & HISTORY





Possible Event Layouts
In addition to the permanent streetscape elements, the design should incorporate removable and modular components for different types and scales of events.

Our CONGRESS AVENUE

ACTIVE GROUND FLOORS

Common Elements

In many places along Congress Avenue active ground floor uses such as cafés, retail, event venues, and busy building lobbies animate the sidewalks today. However, large stretches of the Avenue are lifeless due to blank facades, empty storefronts, and few building entries. Urban design guidelines for Congress Avenue will improve ground floor activations through a variety of strategies.

SUPPORTING KEY THEMES

- SOCIAL EQUITY
- CULTURE & HISTORY
- ECONOMICS

800 Block East Side

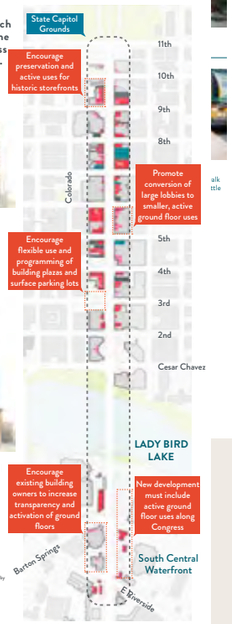
Variety of ground floor uses, multiple small scale venues, multiple entries

100 Block West Side

Single ground floor use spans entire block, single entry

Entry Locations
Active Ground Floor
Passive/Blank Ground Floor

Publicly Accessible Ground Floor Use
Study Area
Office/Commercial Lobby
Retail/Hotel
Residential
Mixed Use
Cultural
Vacant/Construction



GROUND FLOOR USES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Ground floor conditions vary greatly along the Avenue. Sidewalks are enlivened by uses such as Royal Blue, yet empty just blocks away due to setback lobbies and limited active ground floor uses. South of the Bridge, surface parking greatly diminishes the pedestrian experience of the Avenue.

Station 4
Public Event 3: Imagine!

HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

Common Elements

Formerly a spring bed, Congress Avenue plays a central role in capture of stormwater from adjacent spaces. It has the potential to serve as a third continuous green finger through downtown—centered between Shoal and Waller Creeks. A majestic tree canopy will not only frame views to the Capitol, but provide continuous habitat from the Capitol to the Lake. The design of street tree planting and stormwater capture will be optimized to allow the Avenue to live up to this potential.

SUPPORTING KEY THEMES

- ECONOMICS
- ENVIRONMENT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Tree growing conditions and spacing varies throughout the study area, weakening the trees' ability to provide strong definition and character to the Avenue.

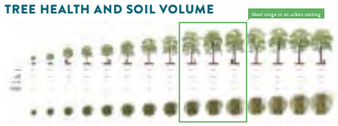
PRECEDENTS

Permeable paving systems may be used in the sidewalk amenity zone to infiltrate stormwater, thereby reducing the amount of runoff.

STORMWATER FLOW

Along with Shoal Creek and Waller Creek, Congress Avenue is one of three mini-valleys in Downtown that channel stormwater into Lady Bird Lake.

TREE HEALTH AND SOIL VOLUME



STRATEGIES FOR TREE HEALTH

Station 4
Public Event 3: Imagine!

Our CONGRESS AVENUE

REFRESH THE BRIDGE

Common Elements

The Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge connects two of Austin's most vibrant pedestrian districts. On spring and fall evenings, the bridge becomes a lively destination as residents and visitors gather to watch the Congress Avenue Bat Colony. The design for the bridge should reflect its importance as an iconic destination, provide safe bike and pedestrian movement, and create shaded spaces to linger, sightsee, and learn.

SUPPORTING KEY THEMES

- CULTURE & HISTORY
- MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY
- ENVIRONMENT

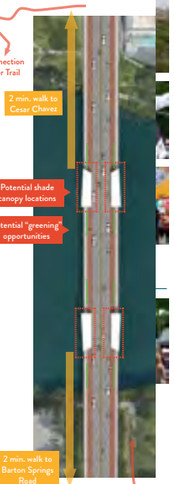
Existing Conditions
Both cyclists and pedestrians share the sidewalk that is unprotected from fast moving traffic. Bat viewing crowds regularly spill into traffic lanes, creating unsafe conditions.

Precedents
Cyclists and pedestrians should be protected from traffic by a vehicle barrier; this would allow the railing at the bridge's edge to be re-imagined. Bringing the bike lane up to the level of the sidewalk allows for spillover by crowds at "peak times" while maintaining a clear walking path.

GOALS

- Increase capacity and safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Respect the historic character and design of the bridge with any modifications
- Enhance the bridge as a destination
- Provide shade and greening opportunities

Precedents
Shade canopy size, location, and materials should respect the character and design of the bridge. Drought tolerant planting could be incorporated to help "green" the bridge.

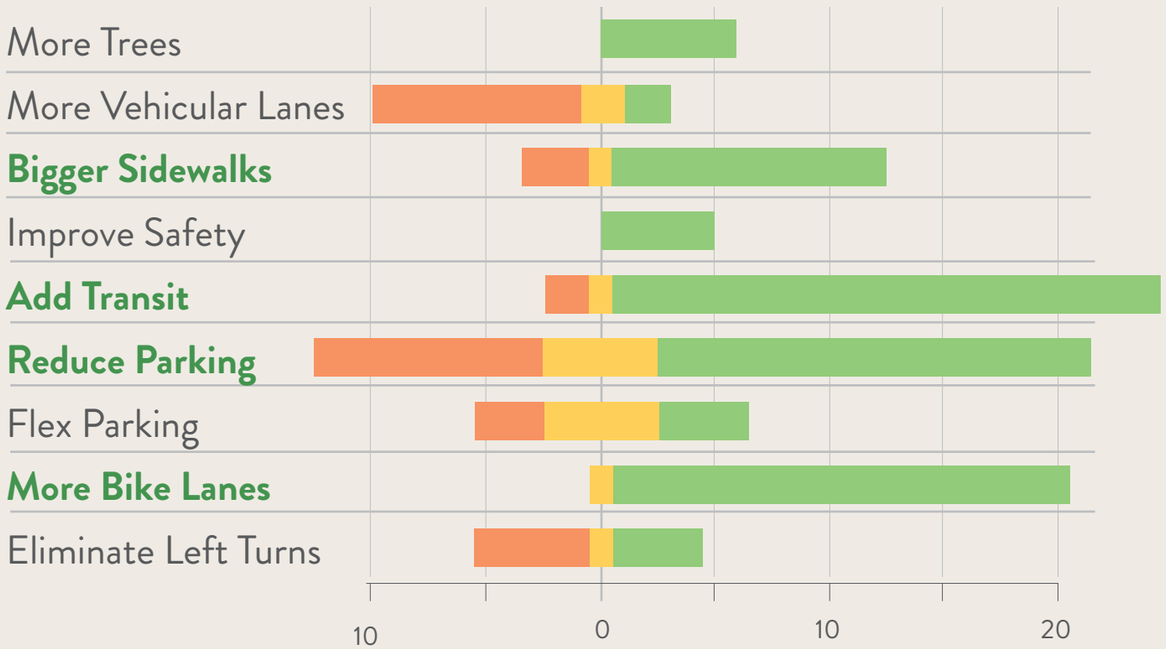


Station 4
Public Event 3: Imagine!

Our CONGRESS AVENUE

Imagine

PUBLIC EVENT # 3



Key Sentiments (Number of responses)

Agree Neutral Disagree

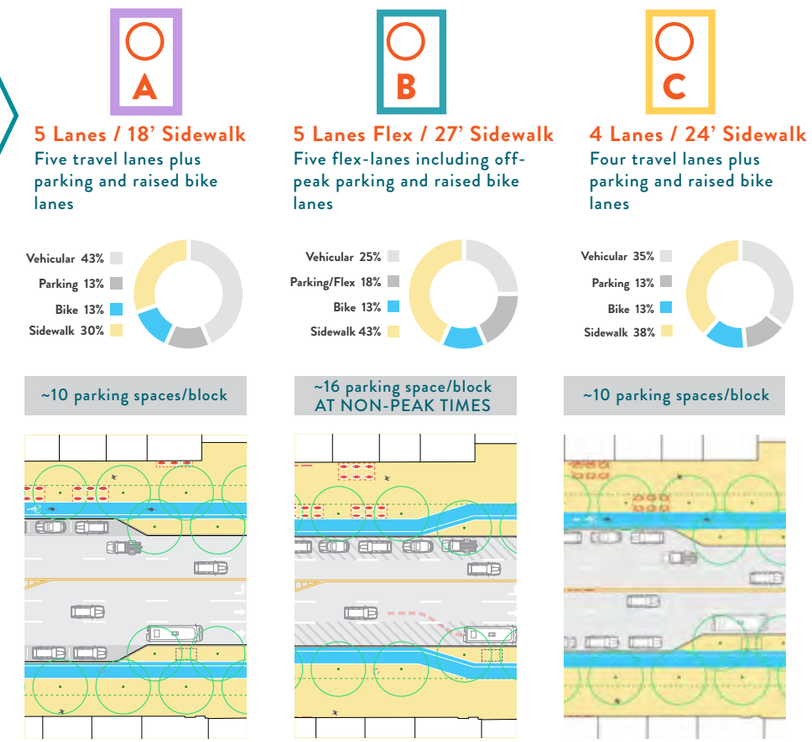
Station 5: BALANCE THE AVENUE

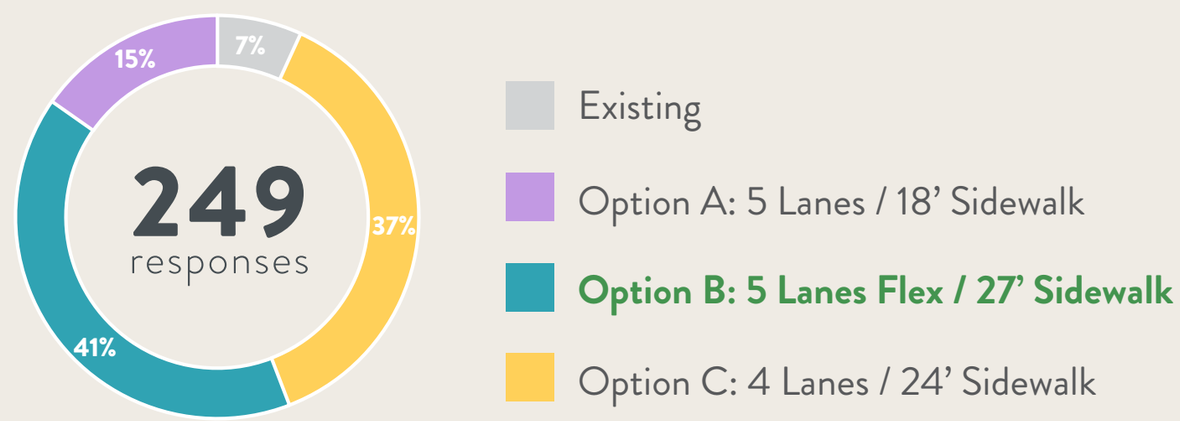
input opportunity

WHICH OPTION PROVIDES THE BEST OVERALL BALANCE FOR THE AVENUE?

(check one)

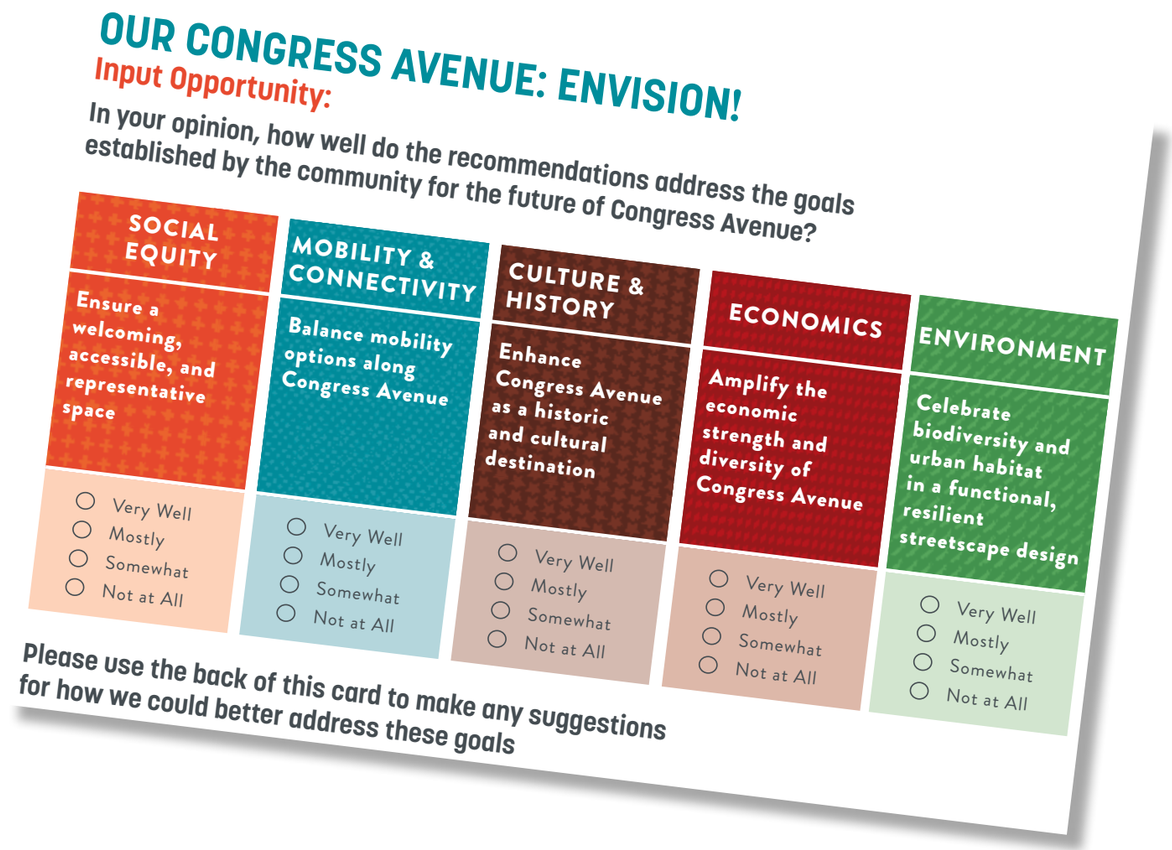
HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THESE OPTIONS?





NEXT STEPS

- Incorporate Feedback from Public Engagement
- City Council Approval of Amendment to Downtown Austin Plan
- Design Development & Engineering
- Phased Construction



LAUNCH P1 — **SPRING 2017**
Project Survey

TRANSFORM P2 — **SUMMER 2017**
Stakeholder Focus Groups

IMAGINE P3 — **SPRING 2018**
Design Concept Development

ENVISION P4 — **FALL + WINTER 2018**
Draft Project Report

SPRING 2019
Final Project Report

WE ARE HERE

Draft Recommendations:

Balance the Avenue

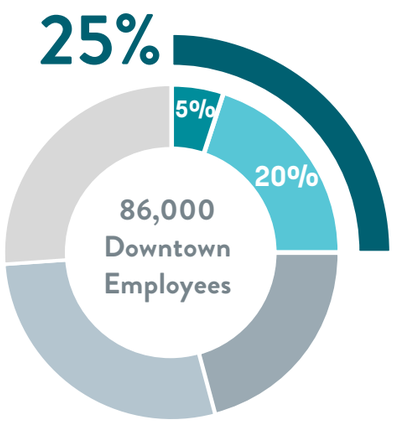
- Mobility Overview
- Street Space Allocation
- Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge
- Bike & Scooter Lanes
- Curbside Management & Flex Parking

Balance the Avenue

MOBILITY OVERVIEW: A MULTIMODAL AVENUE

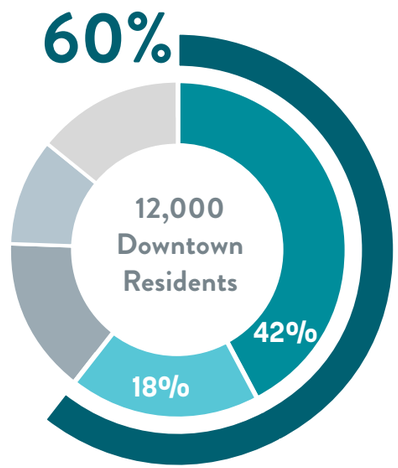
Regional

Downtown Employees within Walking or Biking Distance from Work



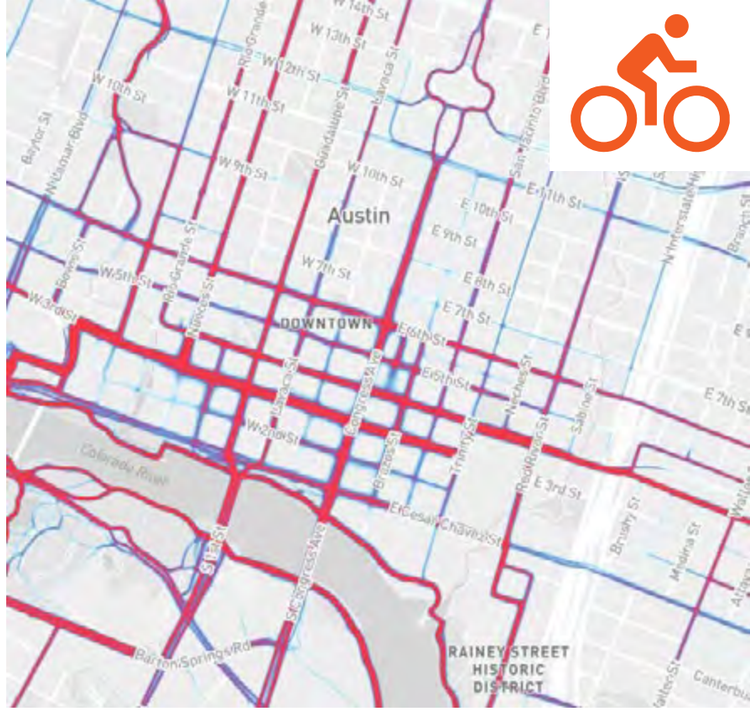
Local

Downtown Residents within Walking or Biking Distance from Work

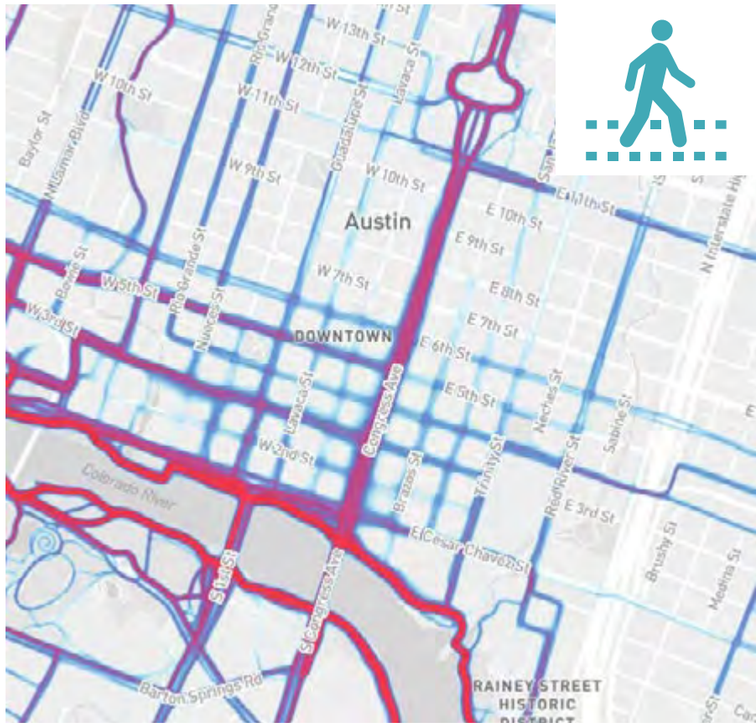


% within easy walking and biking distance

- < 1 mile
- 1 to 5 miles
- 5-10 miles
- 10-25 miles
- 25 + miles

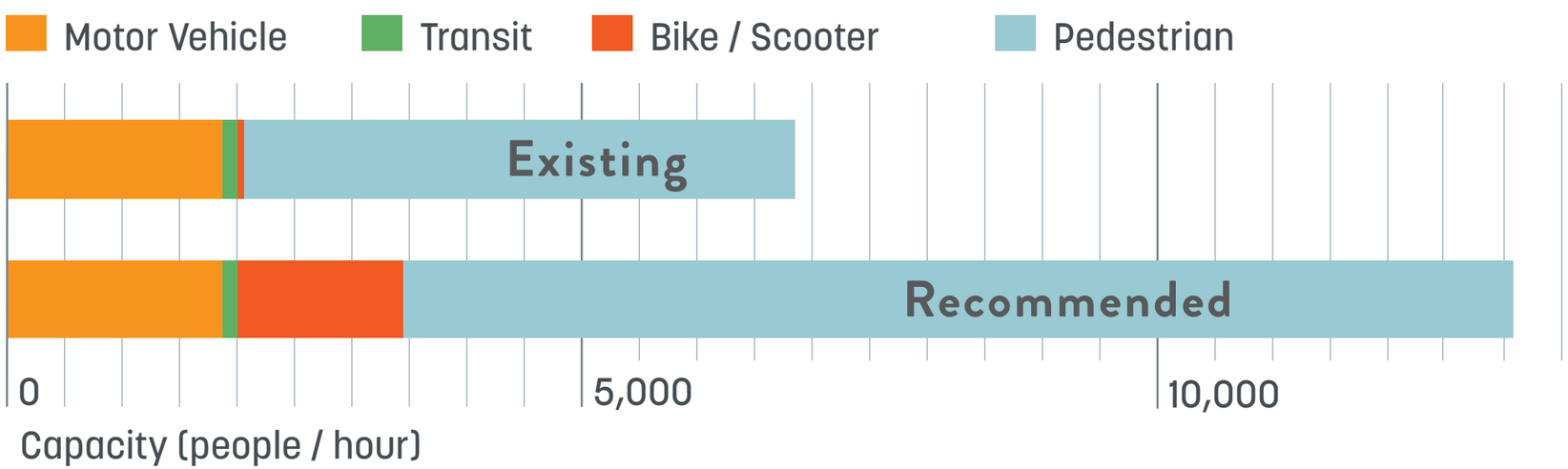


Existing Bike Heatmap

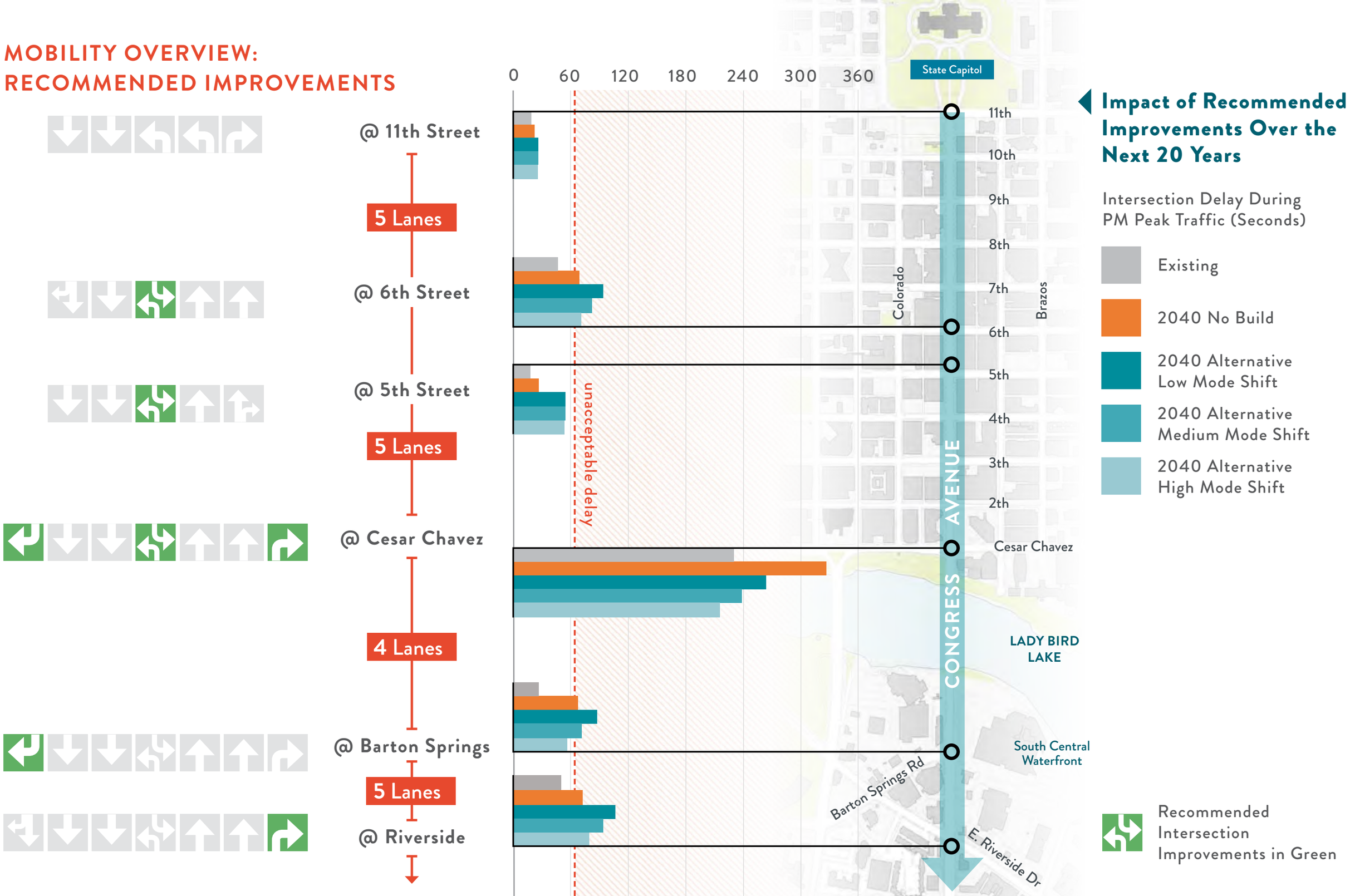


Existing Pedestrian Heatmap

MORE ACCESS FOR ALL MODES



MOBILITY OVERVIEW: RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS



STREET SPACE ALLOCATION: EXISTING

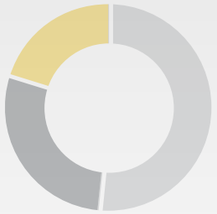
Parking:
~ 12 permanent spaces per block

Left Turns:
Allowed with option for left turns

Allocation of Space

- Vehicular 52%
- Parking & Amenity Zone 28%
- Sidewalk 20%

Shared Bike Lane



Pedestrian Zone	Parking & Amenity Zone	Travel Lane / Shared Bike Lane	Travel Lane	Travel Lane / Turn Lane		Travel Lane / Turn Lane	Travel Lane	Travel Lane / Shared Bike Lane	Parking & Amenity Zone	Pedestrian Zone

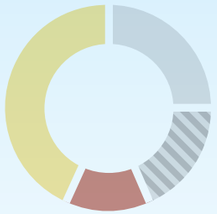
STREET SPACE ALLOCATION: RECOMMENDED

Parking:
~ 16 spaces per block at off-peak times

Left Turns:
Allowed with dedicated lane

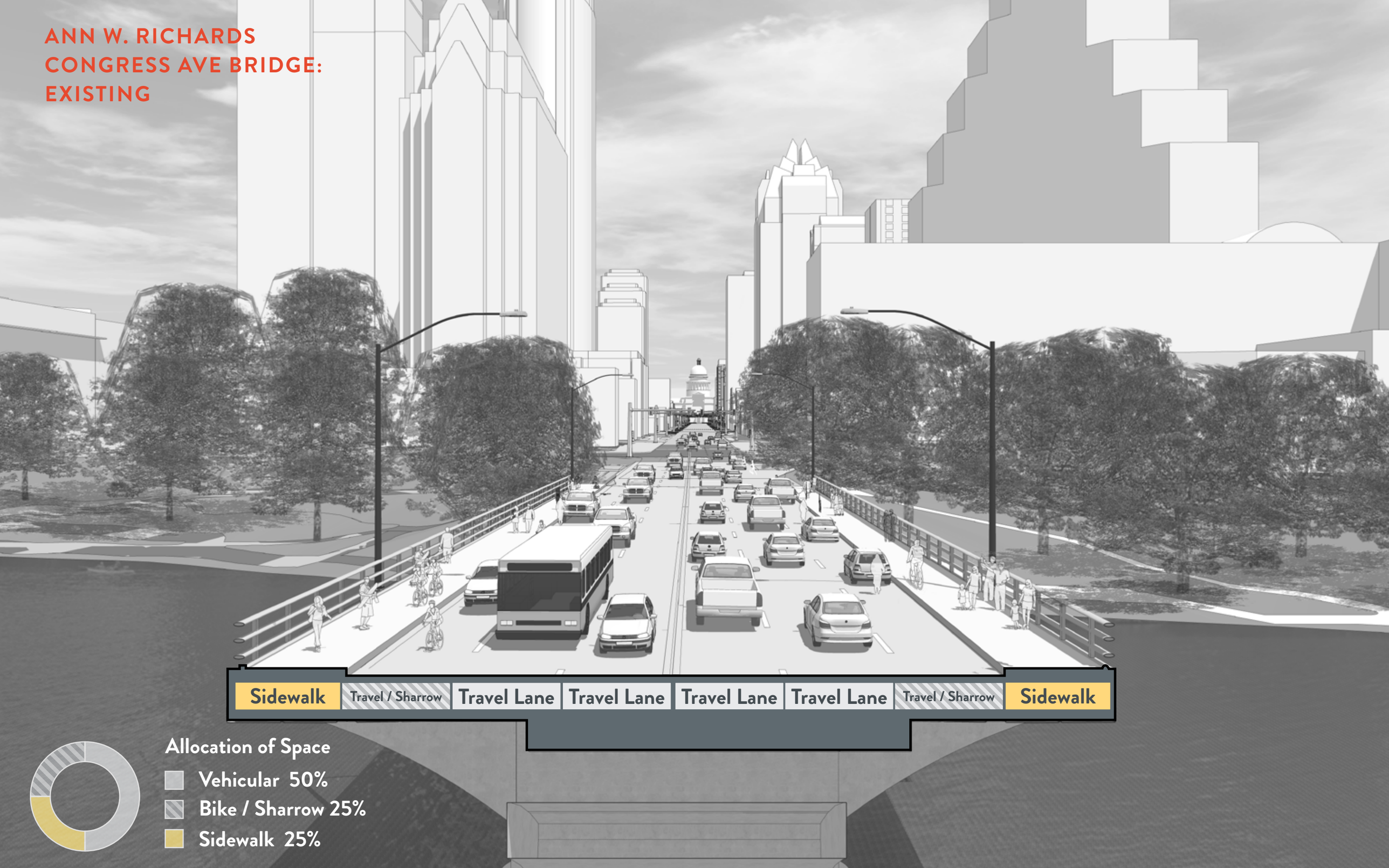
Allocation of Space

- Vehicular 25%
- Flex Parking 18%
- Bike & Scooter 14%
- Sidewalk 43%

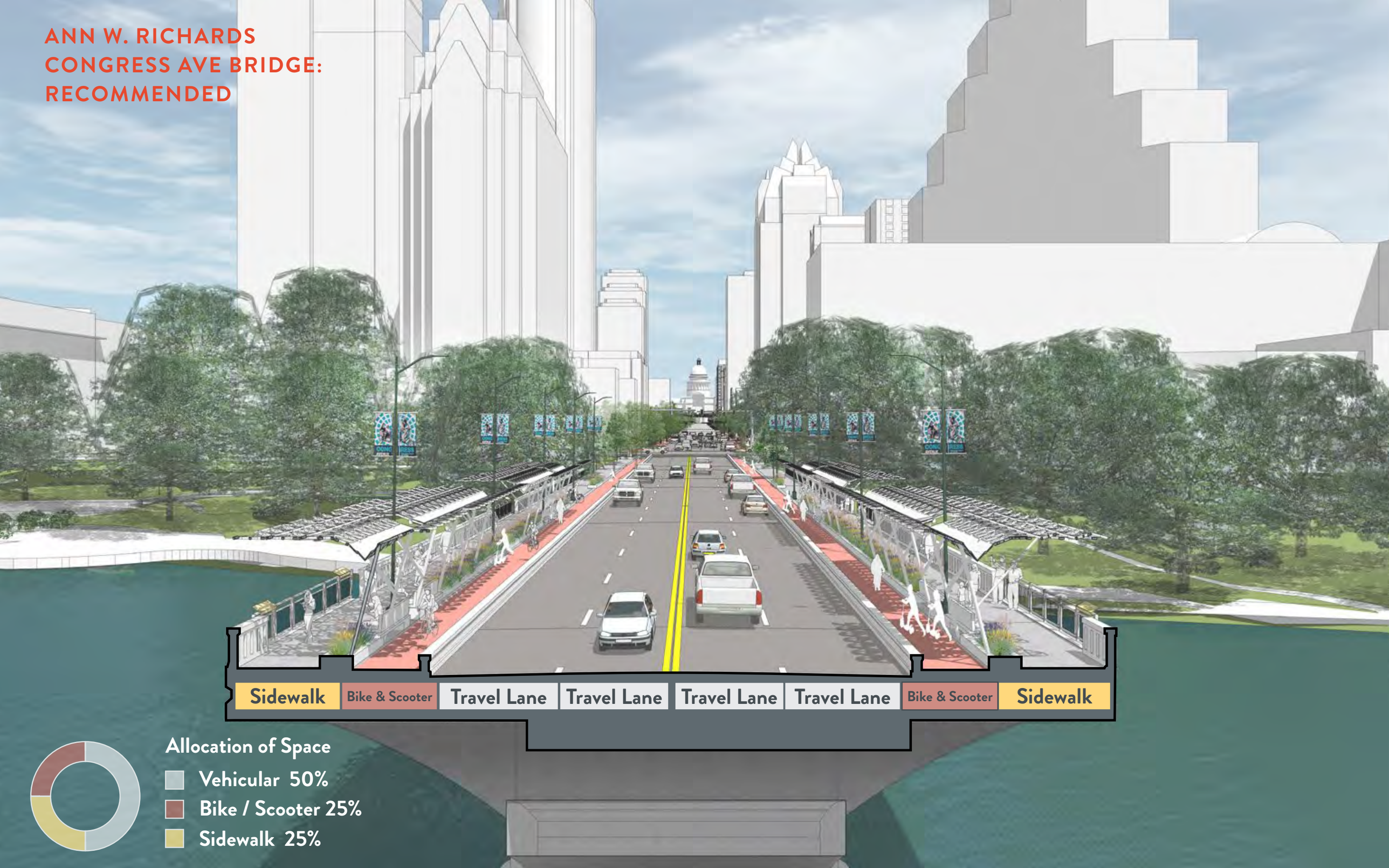


Pedestrian Zone	Amenity Zone	Bike / Scooter Zone	Flex Parking / Travel Lane / Circulator Lane	Travel Lane	Turn Lane	Travel Lane	Flex Parking / Travel Lane / Circulator Lane	Bike / Scooter Zone	Amenity Zone	Pedestrian Zone

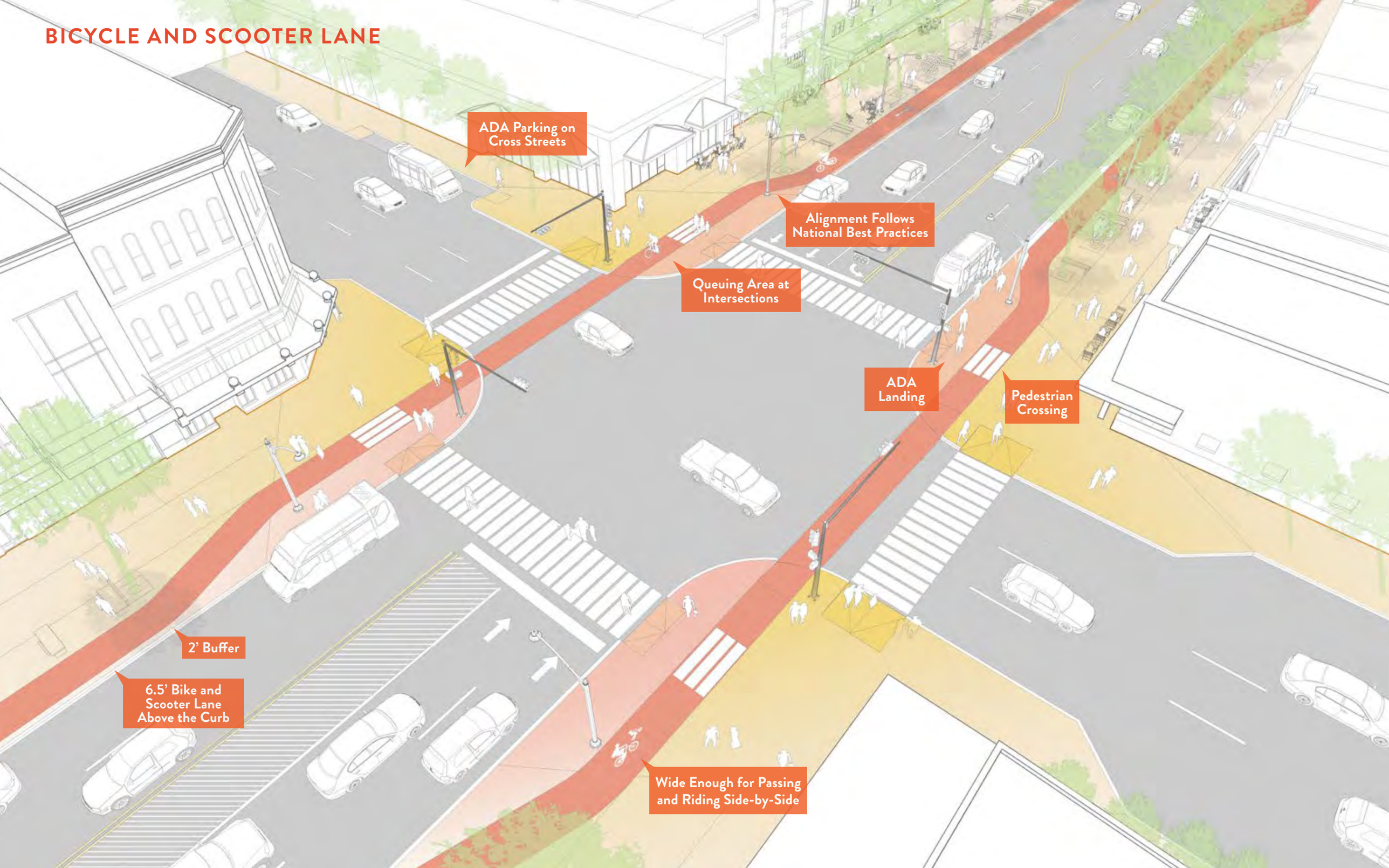
ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE: EXISTING



ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE: RECOMMENDED

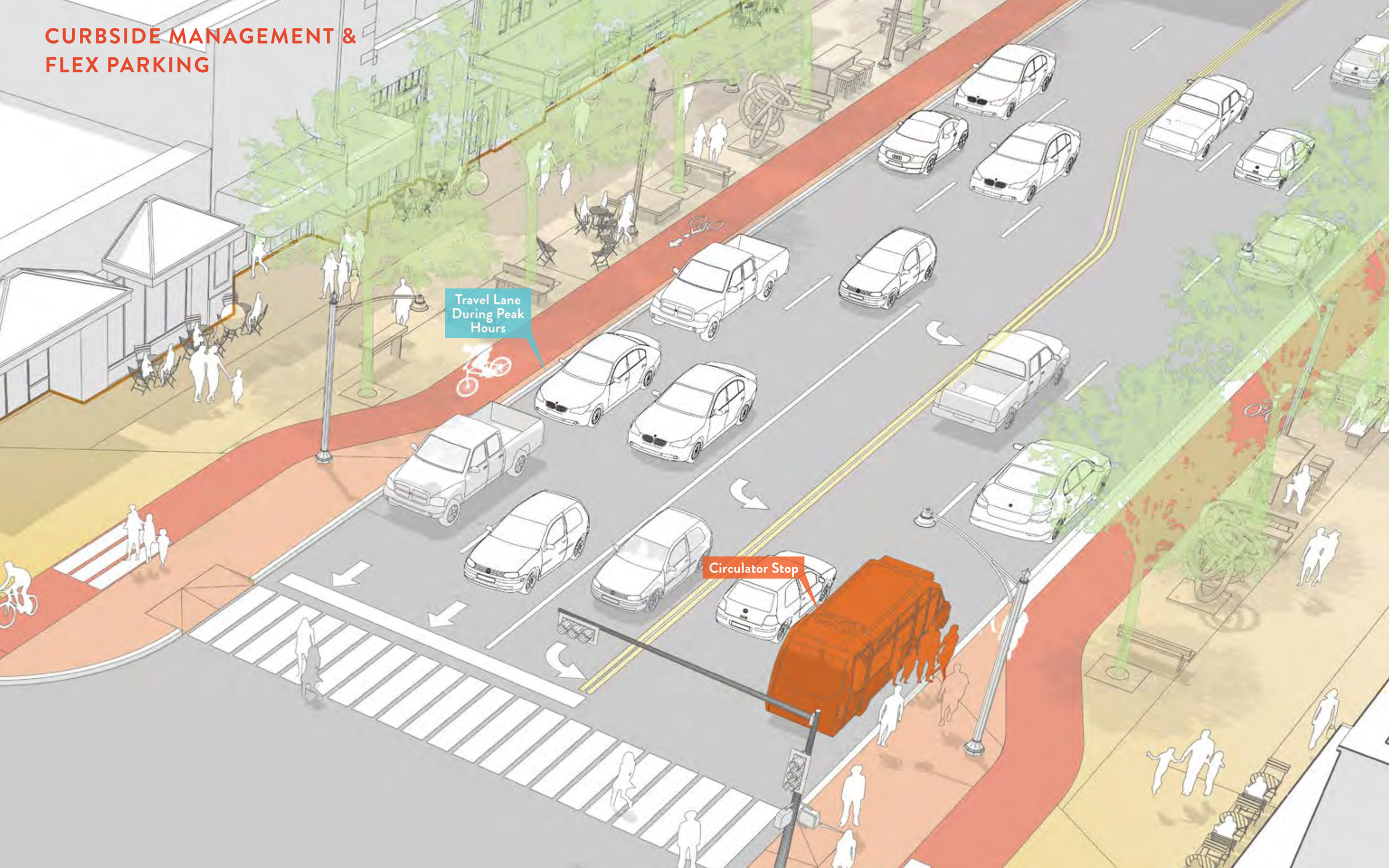


BICYCLE AND SCOOTER LANE

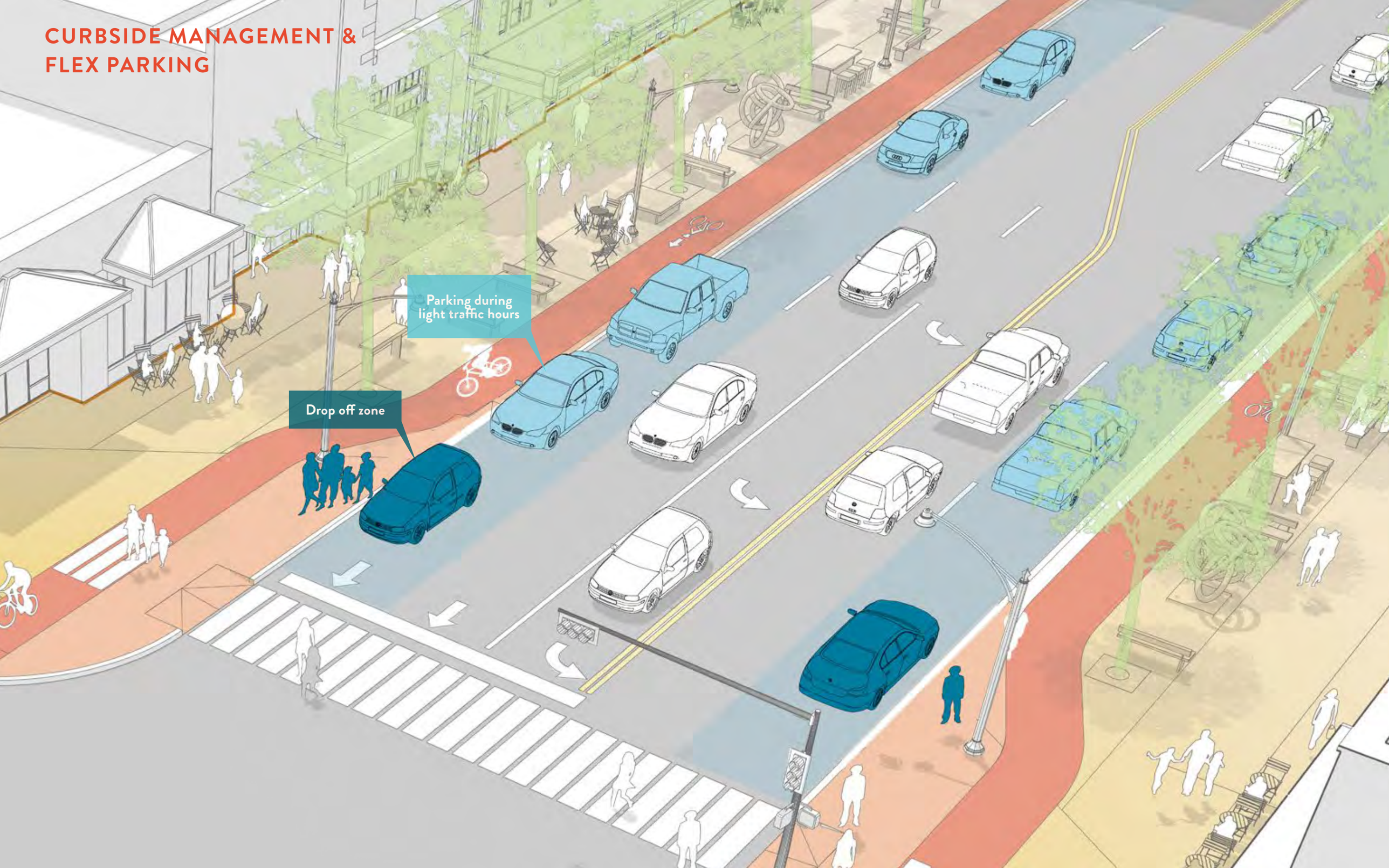


BICYCLE AND SCOOTER LANE

CURBSIDE MANAGEMENT & FLEX PARKING



CURBSIDE MANAGEMENT & FLEX PARKING



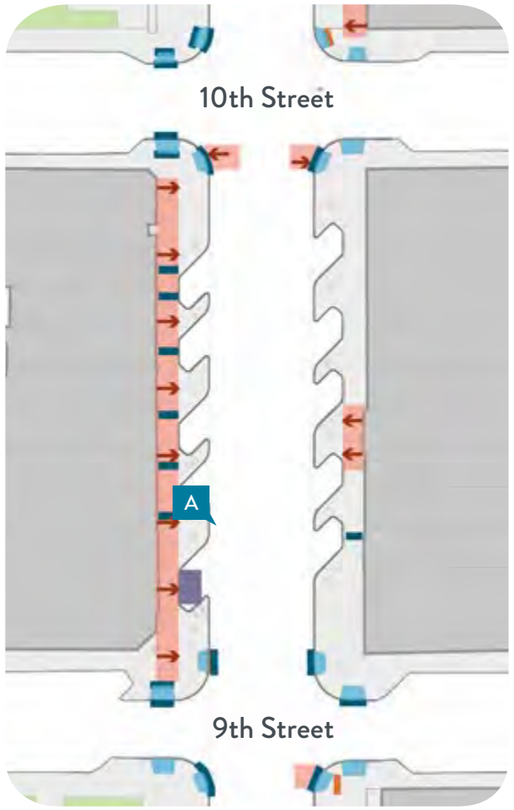
Draft Recommendations:

Pedestrian Realm

- Congress Avenue for All
- Defining the Sidewalk
- Seating & Furnishing
- Lighting
- Trees
- Green Infrastructure
- Ann W. Richards Congress Ave Bridge

Pedestrian Realm

CONGRESS AVENUE FOR ALL



Accessibility Issues

- Cross-slope exceeds 2%
- Running-slope exceeds 5%
- Curb ramp slope exceeds 8.3%
- Horizontal opening exceeds 1/2”
- Vertical height exceeds 1/2”
- Protruding object in circulation path
- Accessible parking is non-compliant
- Ground material is non-compliant
- Push button reach range or level clear floor is non-compliant

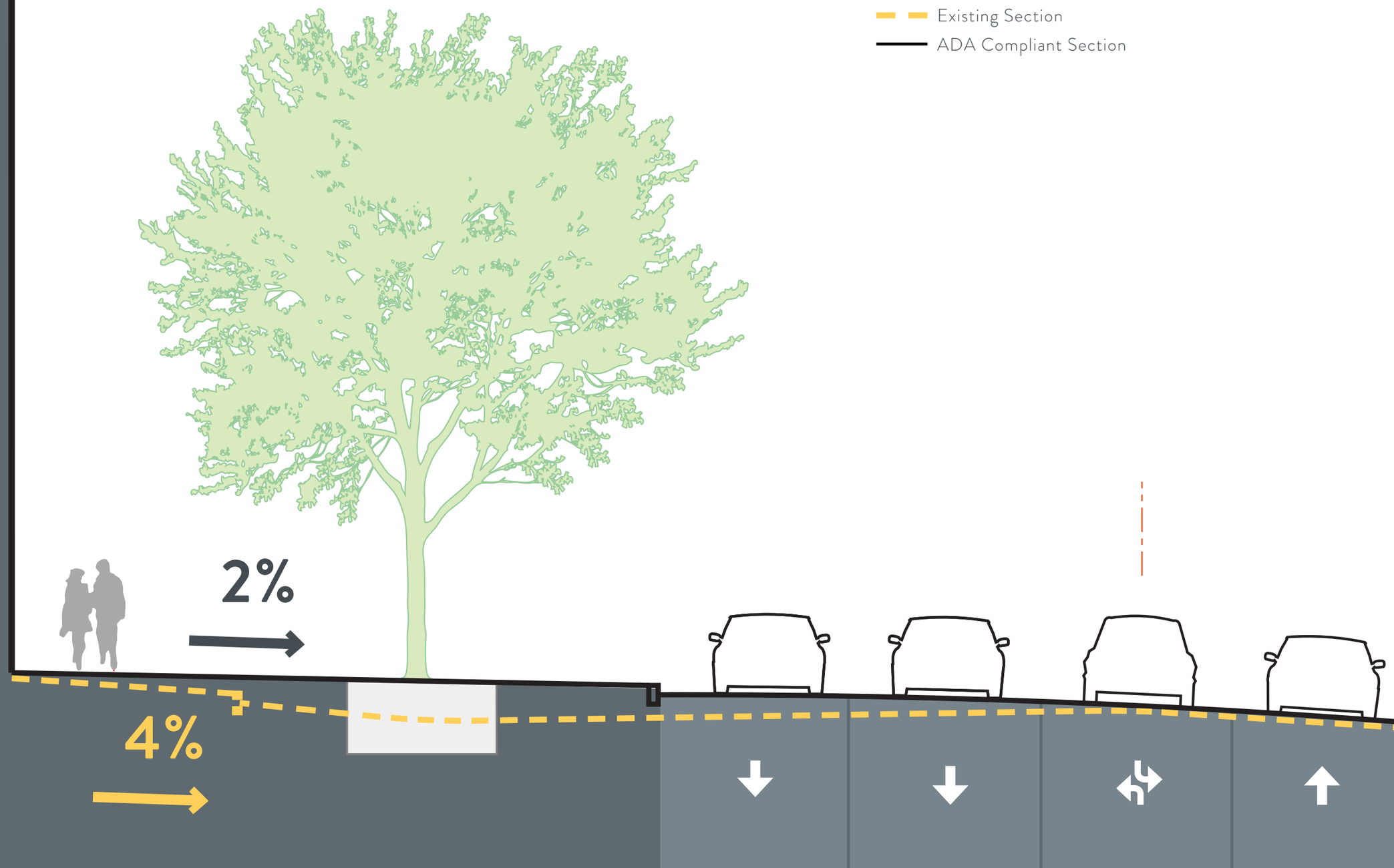
CONGRESS AVENUE FOR ALL: CROSS SLOPES

Section @ 700 block

Recommended Cross-Slope

Existing Section

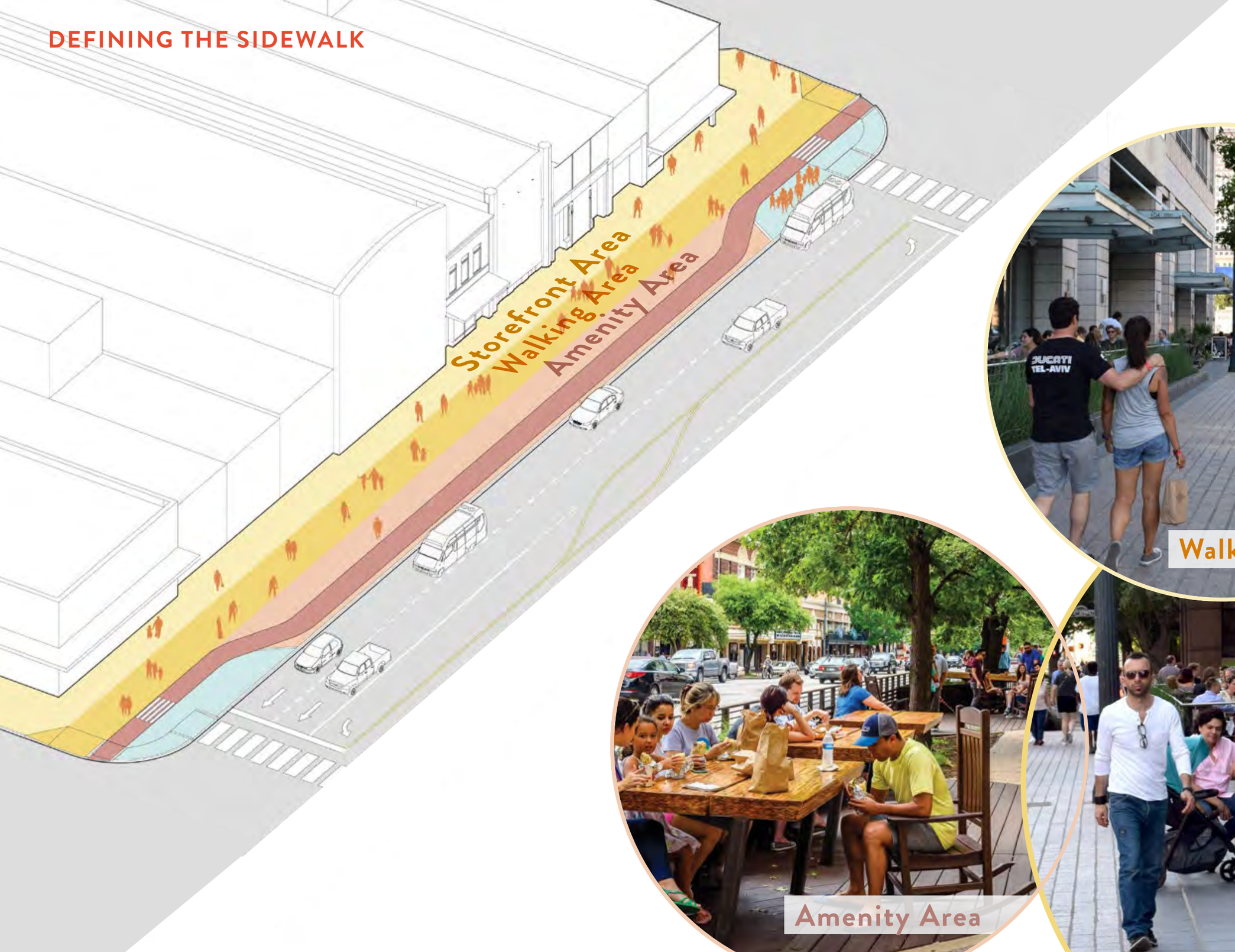
ADA Compliant Section



DEFINING THE SIDEWALK

8′ Storefront Area | **9.5′ Walking Area** | **8′ Amenity Area**

DEFINING THE SIDEWALK

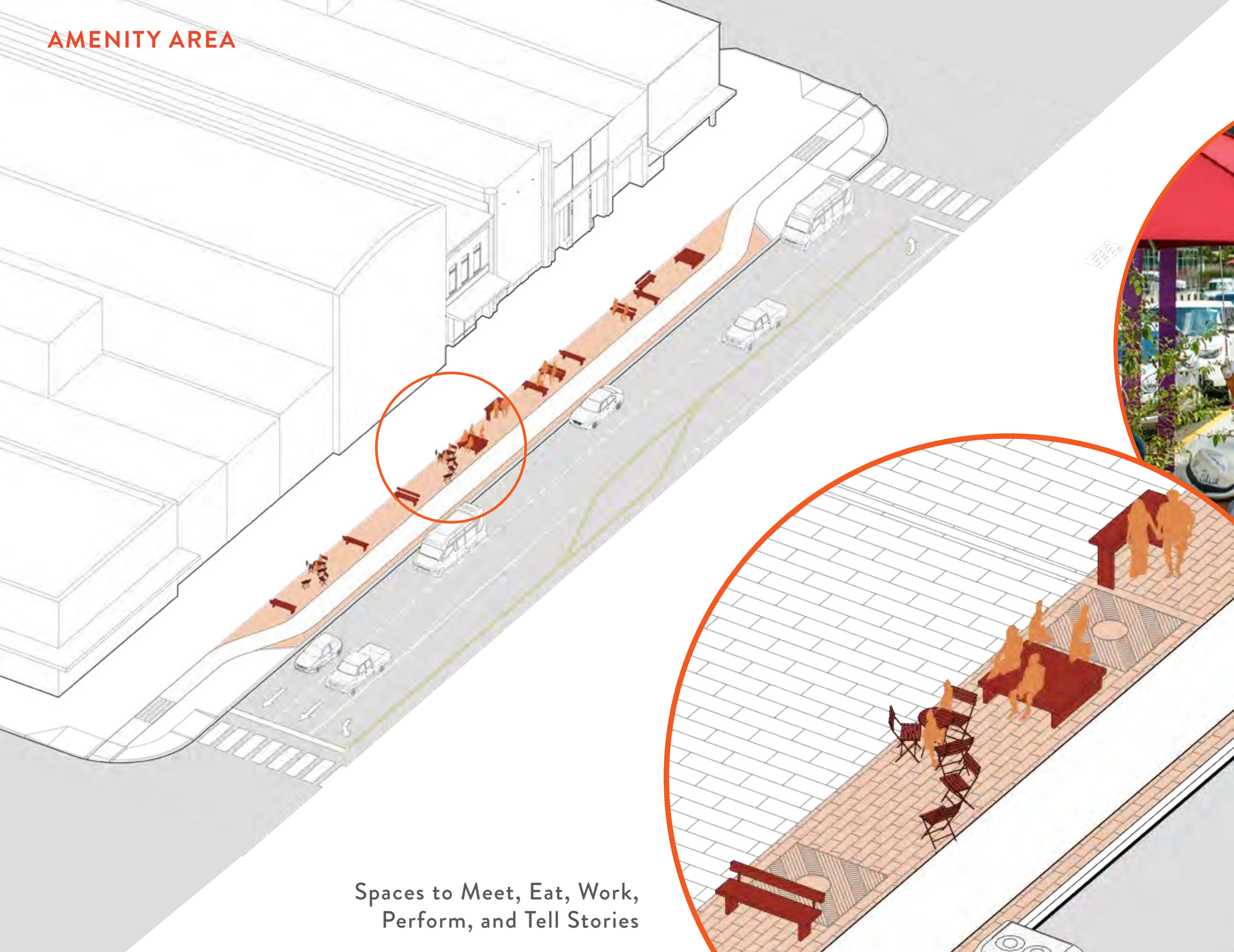


Walking Area

Amenity Area

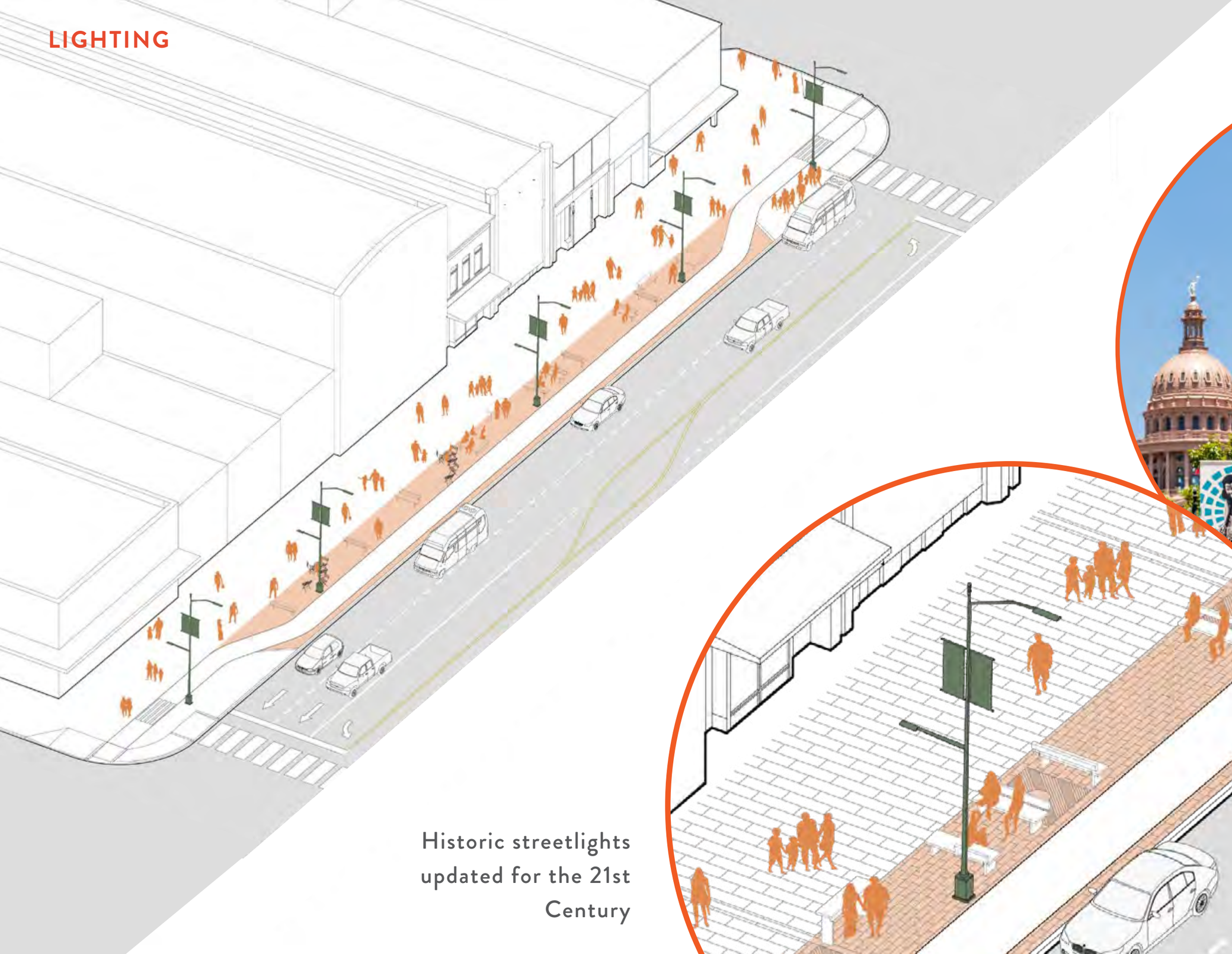
Storefront Area

AMENITY AREA



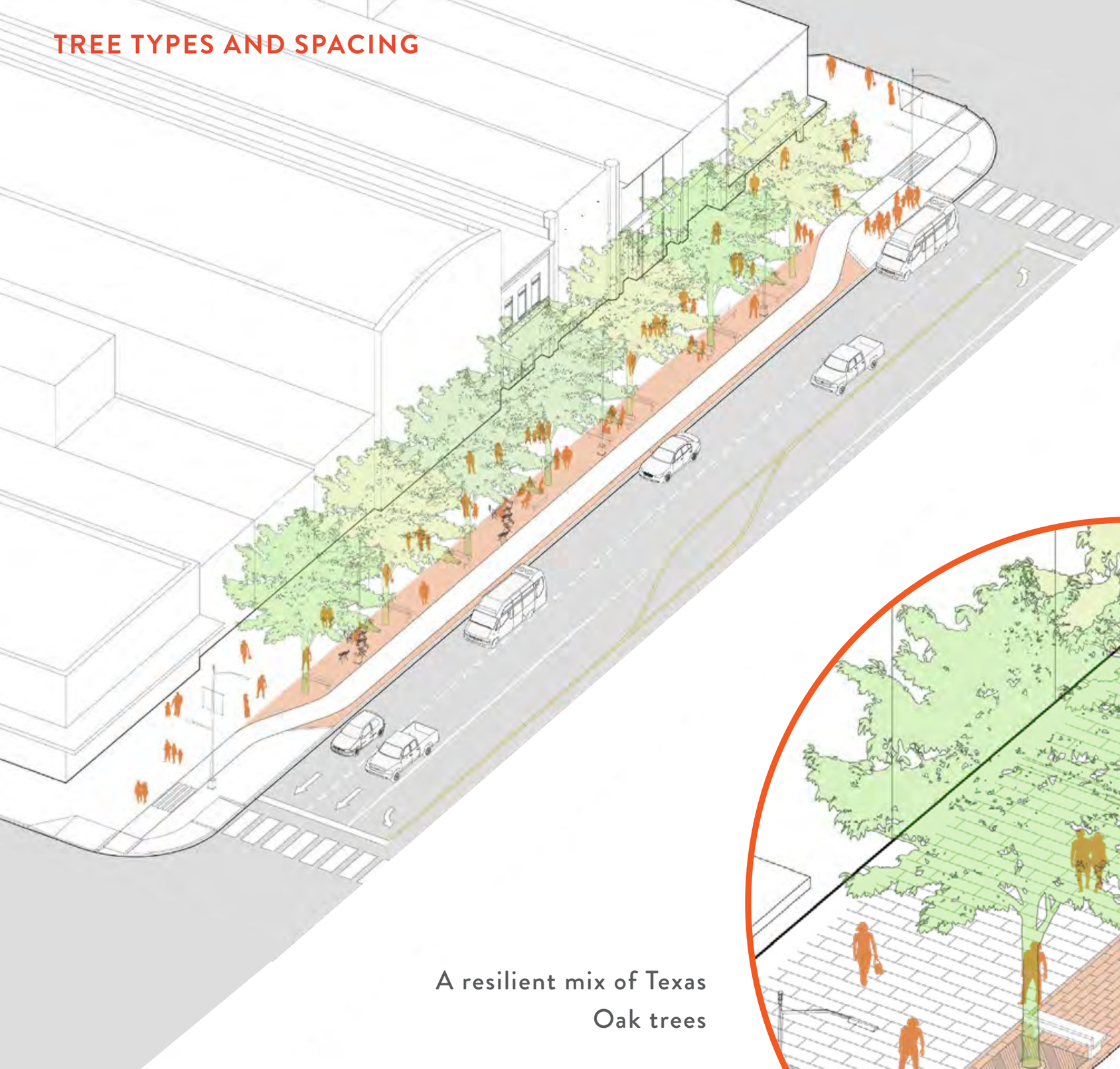
Spaces to Meet, Eat, Work,
Perform, and Tell Stories

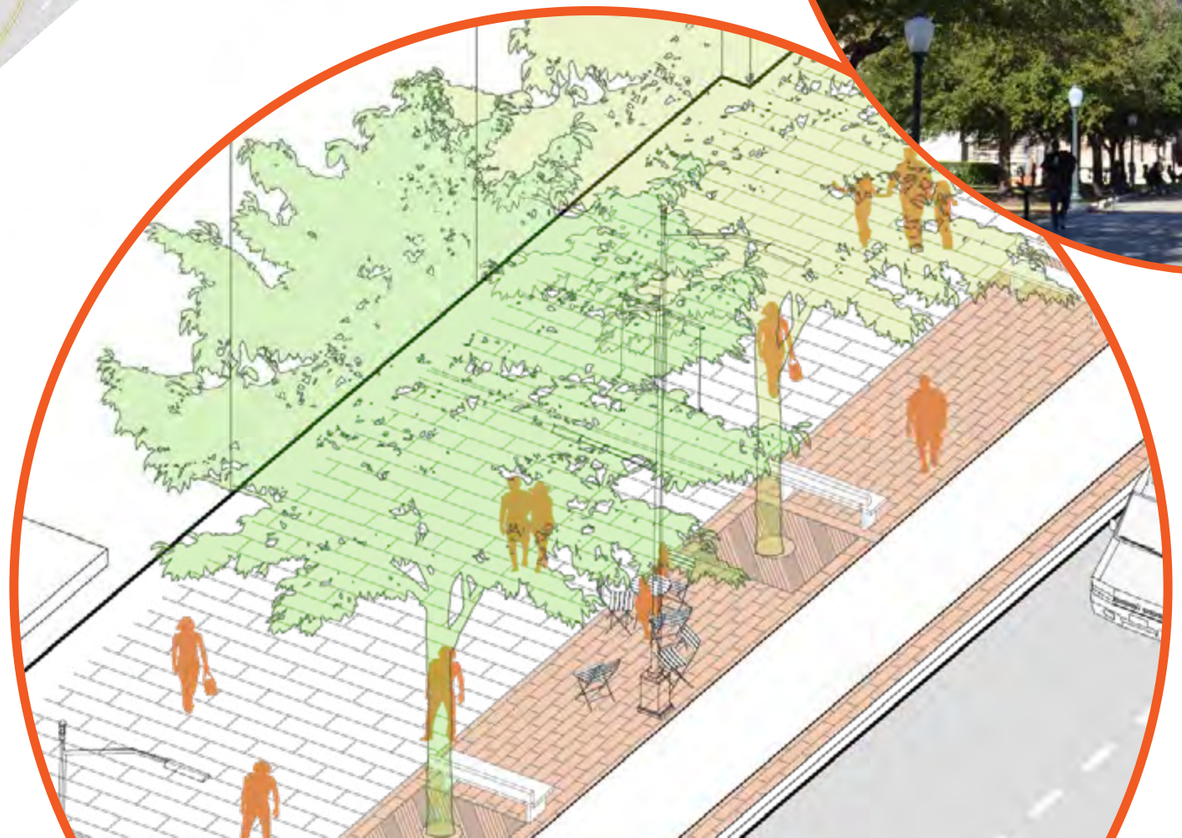
LIGHTING



Historic streetlights updated for the 21st Century

TREE TYPES AND SPACING

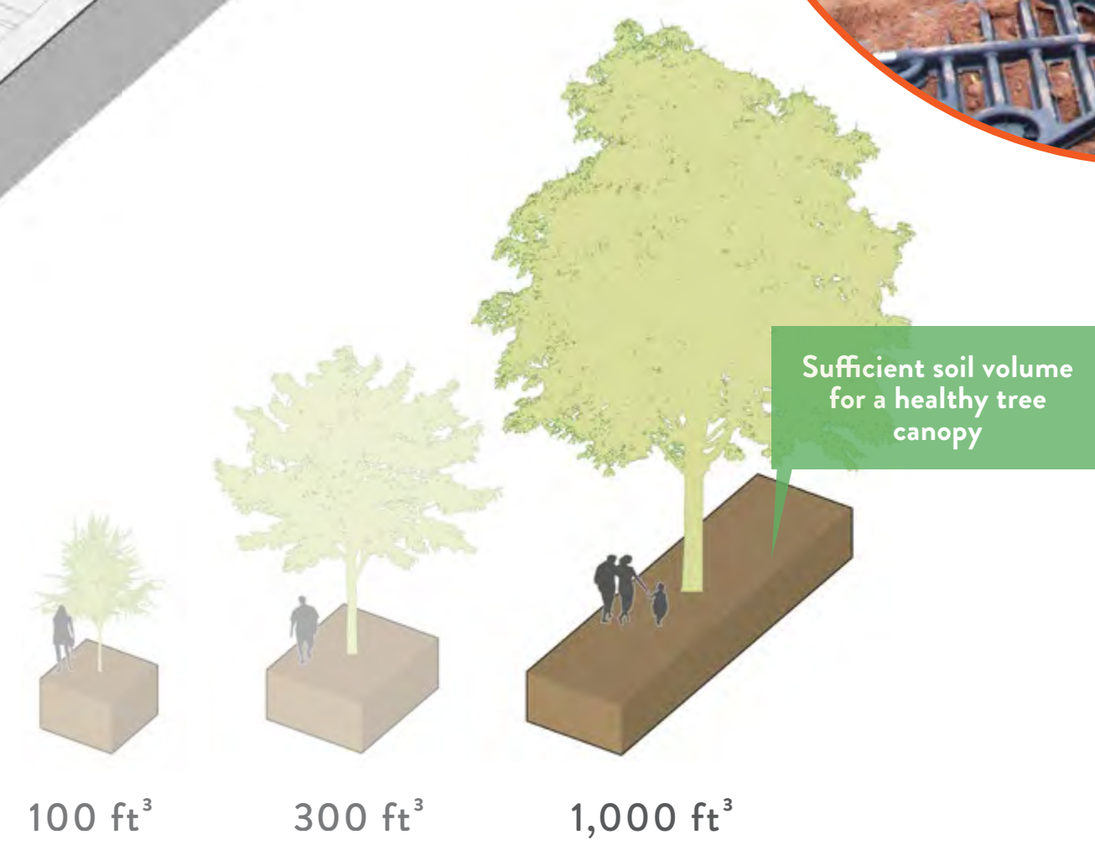




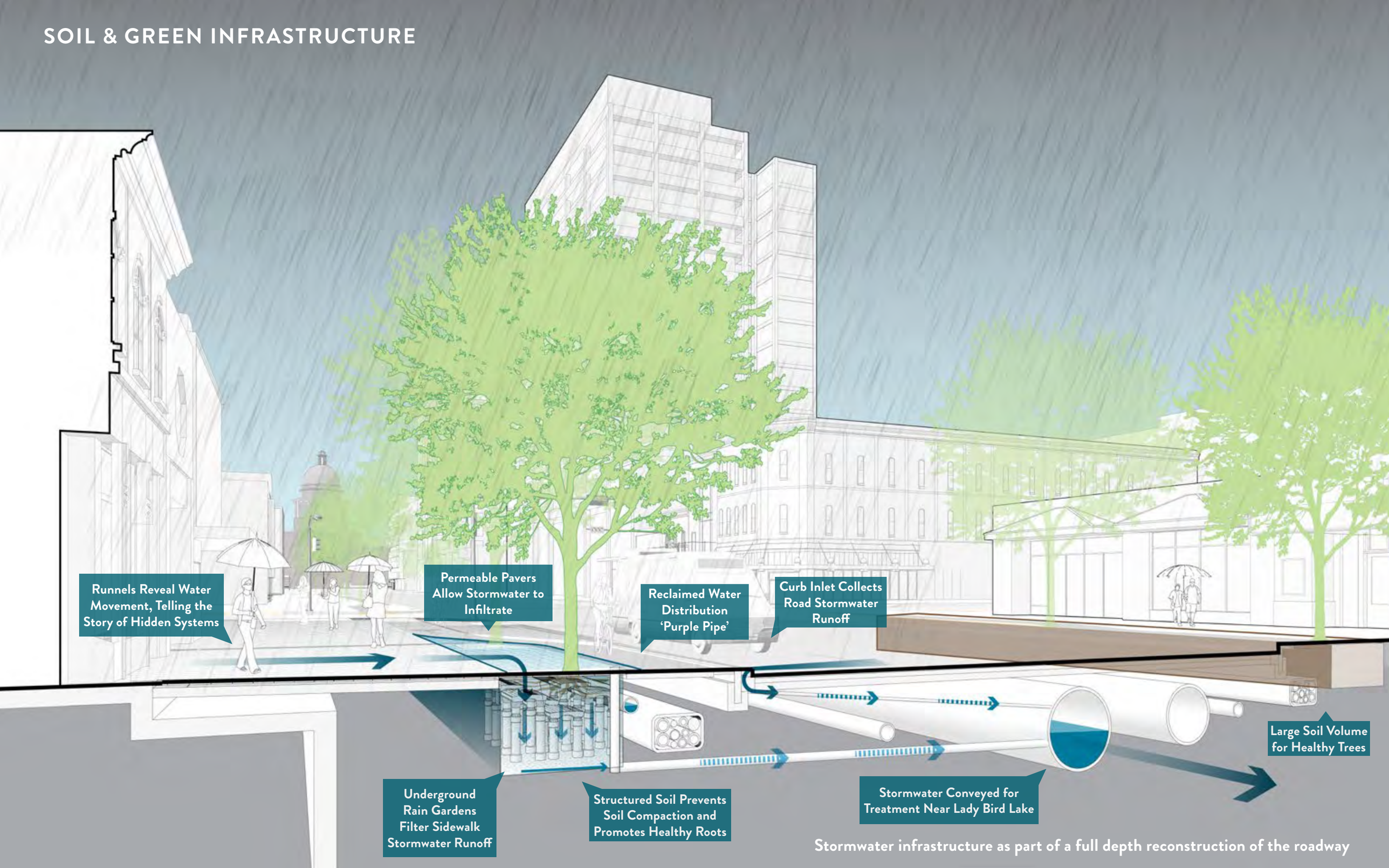
A resilient mix of Texas
Oak trees

SOIL & TREE HEALTH

Soil volume directly affects mature canopy size



SOIL & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



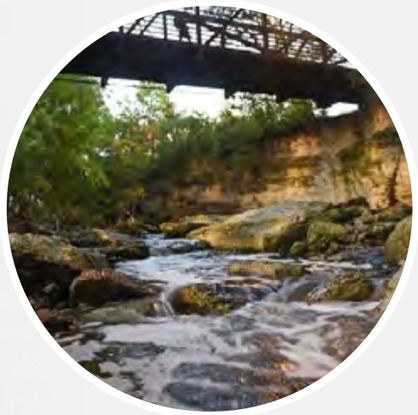
Stormwater infrastructure as part of a full depth reconstruction of the roadway

STORMWATER STORY

Stormwater Management on Cesar Chavez Street

Restoration of Shoal Creek at Austin Central Library

Historic Flooding in the 1930s



Waller Creek

Lady Bird Lake

BRIDGE LANDINGS

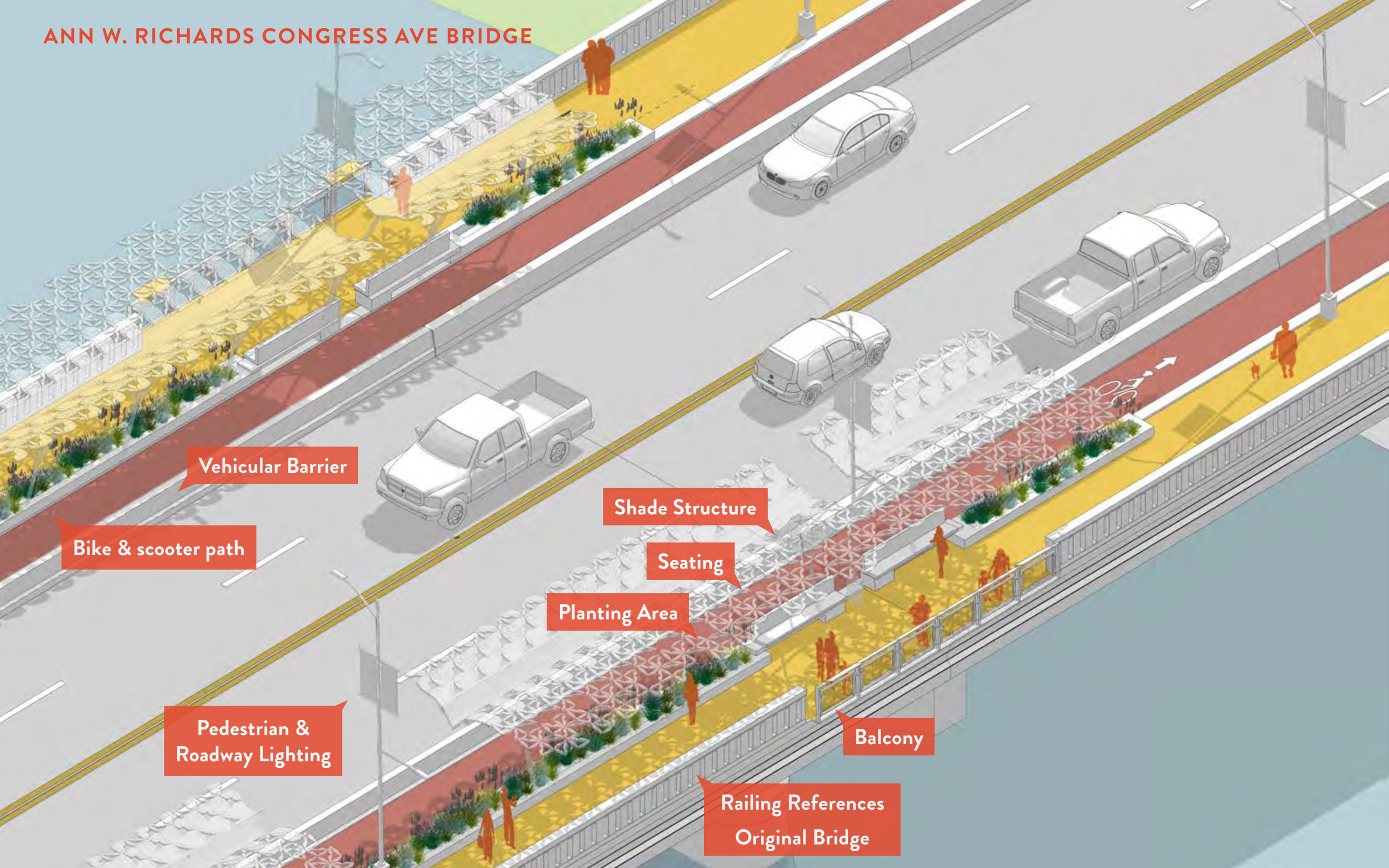
Stormwater Sculpture

Stormwater Terraces

Deck at Edge of Lake

ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE

ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE



RAILING AND SHADE PRECEDENTS

Draft Recommendations:

Design Concepts & Placemaking

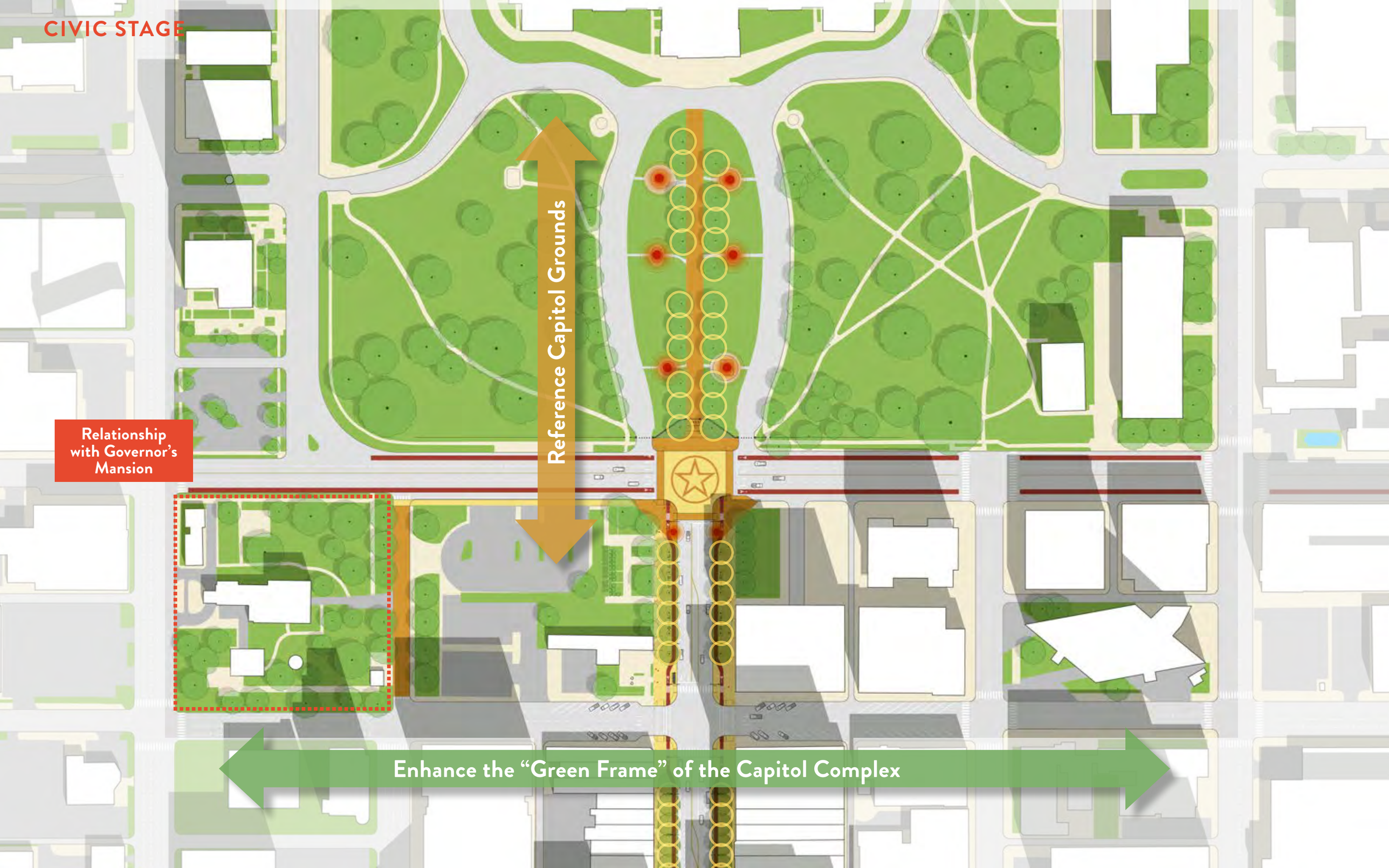
- Civic Stage
- Heart of Austin
- Green Gateways
- Vibrant Crossings

DESIGN CONCEPT

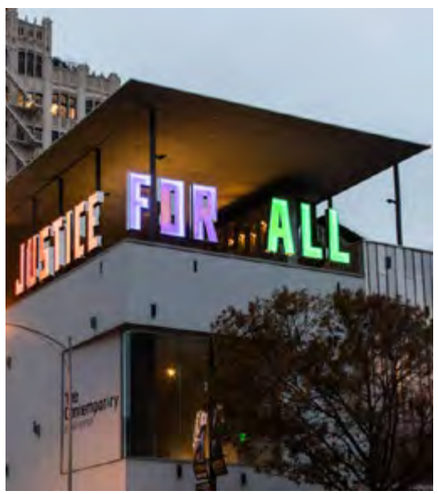
VIBRANT CROSSINGS

Civic Stage

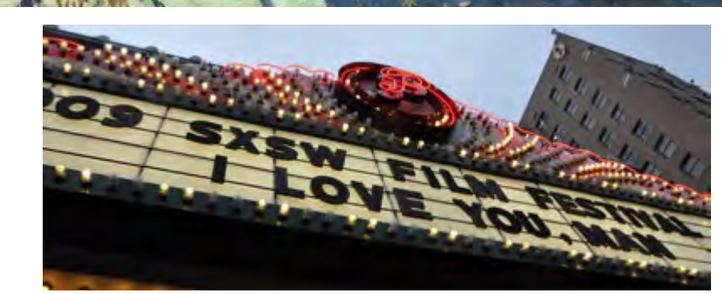
CIVIC STAGE

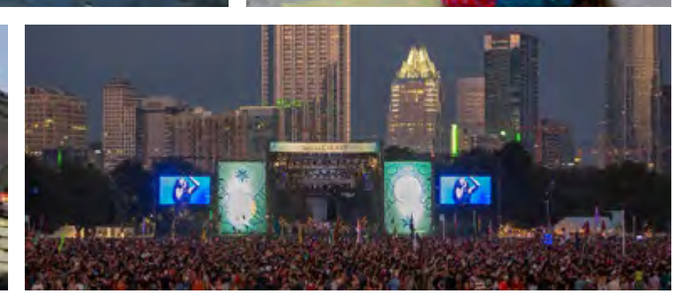

Relationship with Governor's Mansion
Reference Capitol Grounds
Enhance the "Green Frame" of the Capitol Complex

CIVIC STAGE



Heart of Austin





Green Gateway

GREEN GATEWAY

Ann W. Richards Congress Ave Bridge

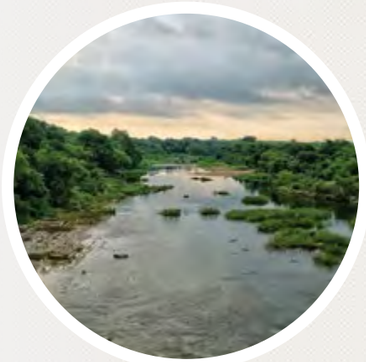
ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE

Vibrant Crossings

VIBRANT CROSSINGS

Wooldridge Square and other Historic Squares

Houston & Texas Central Railroad Depot (1871)



Colarado River Below Longhorn Dam

State Capitol

Red River District

Civic Stage

Heart of Austin

Green Gateway

E 11th

E 10th

E 9th

E 8th

E 7th

E 6th

E 5th

E 4th

E 3rd

E 2nd

E Cesar Chavez

W 11th

W 10th

W 9th

W 8th

W 7th

W 6th

W 5th

W 4th

W 3rd

W 2nd

W Cesar Chavez

6th Street

Wooldridge Square

Brush Square

Palm Park

Waller Creek

Republic Square

Shoal Creek

Seaholm

LADY BIRD LAKE

Auditorium Shores

Barton Springs Rd

Riverside Drive

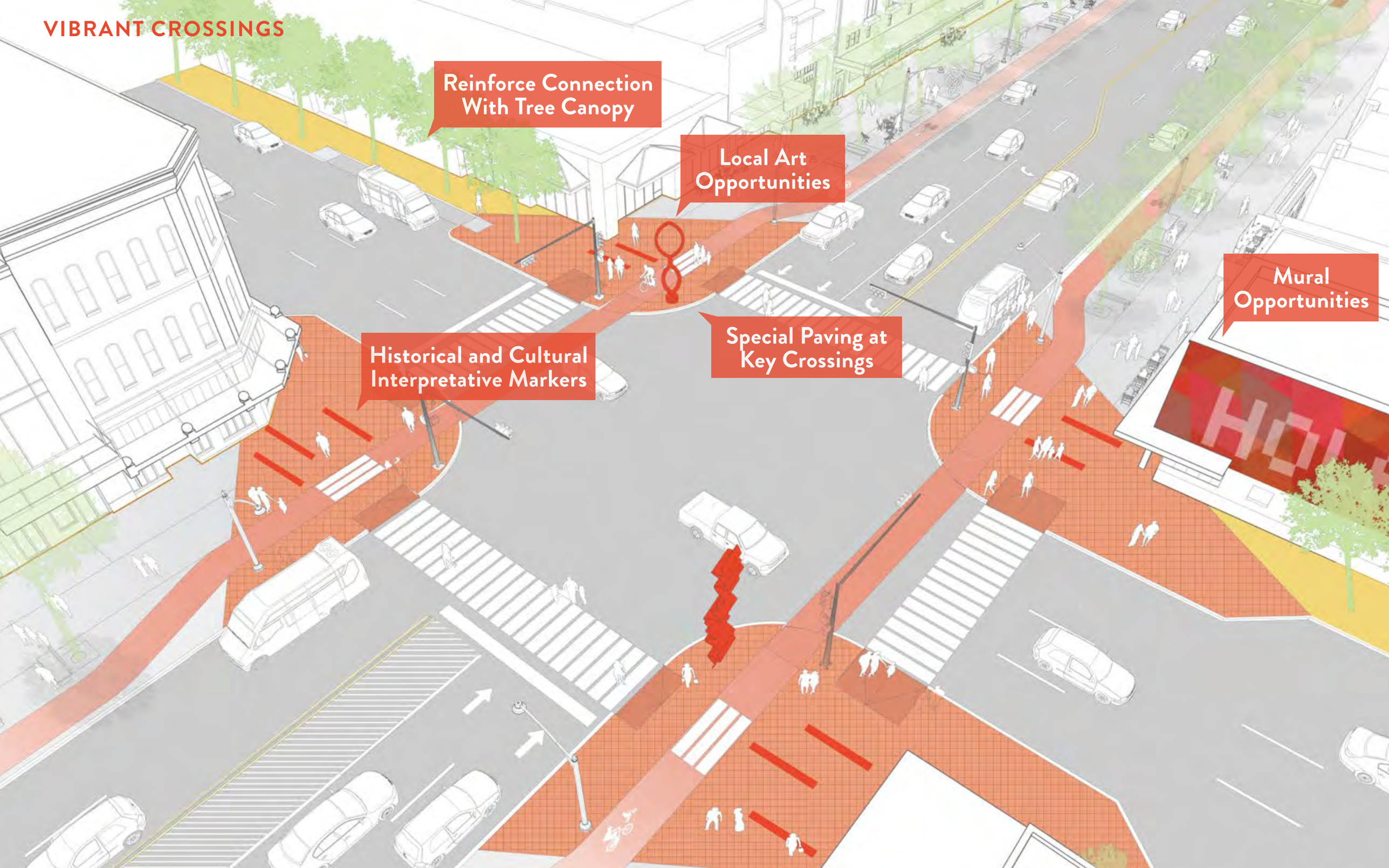
East Austin African American Cultural & Heritage District

6th Street District

Waller Creek and Sixth Street Nightlife

Mexican American Cultural Center

VIBRANT CROSSINGS



Next Steps:

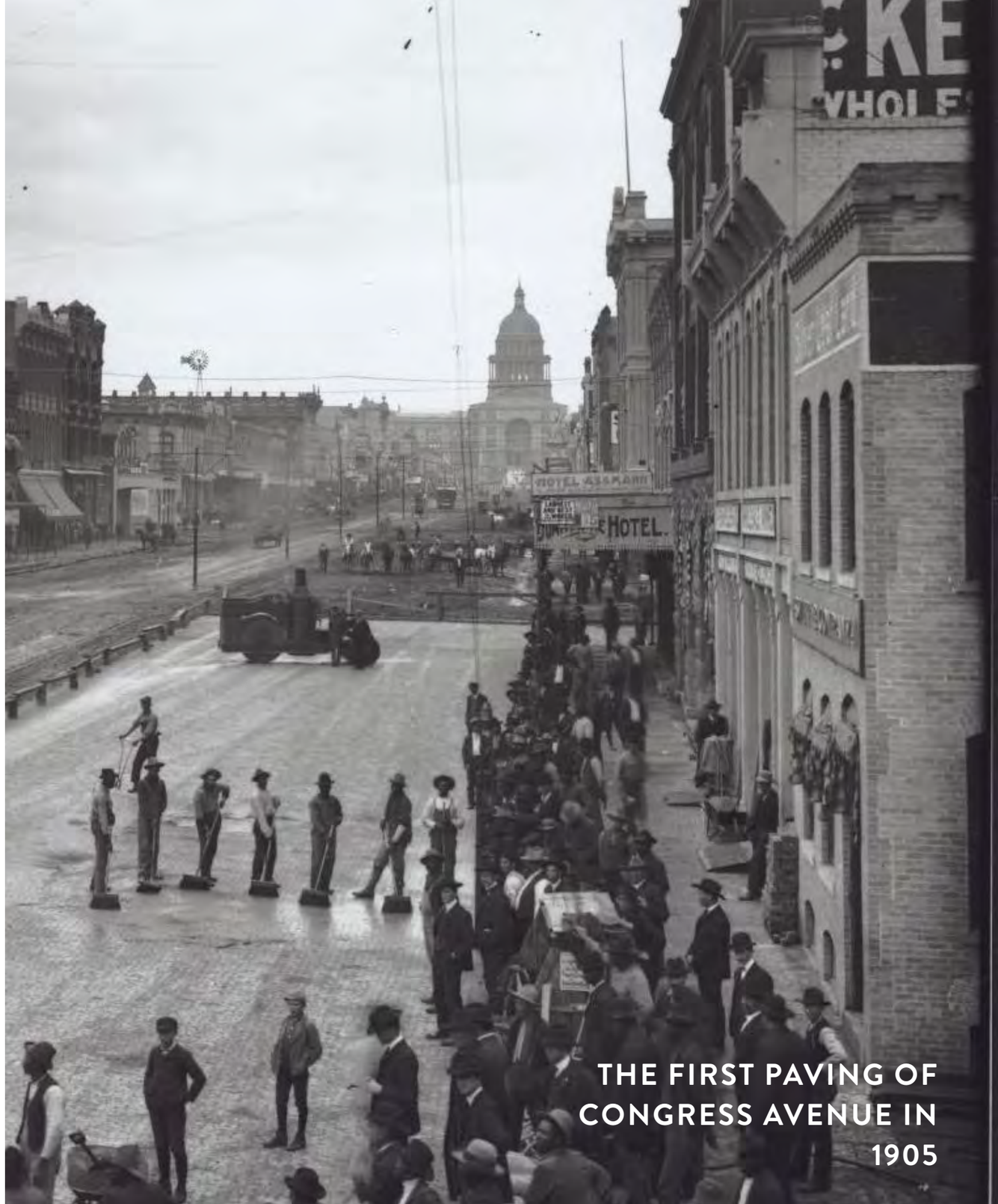
Implementation

FINANCING

CAPITAL COSTS (ESTIMATED)	
Engineering & Management	$9.6 million
Surveys & Inspections	$1.5 million
Construction Costs *Street Reconstruction* *Utility Reconstruction* *Landscape & Streetscape* *Bridge Improvements*	$50.1 million
Contingency & Miscellaneous	$8.3 million
Total	$69.5 million

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES INCLUDE:

- Bond Financing
- Ongoing Development Fees
- Tax Increment Financing
- Federal / State Funding
- Fees Recovered from Dockless Mobility Providers



THE FIRST PAVING OF CONGRESS AVENUE IN 1905

Funding Sources for Events, Operations & Maintenance
• Public Improvement District • Philanthropic Sources • Event & Rental Fees

AUSTIN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2023

Economic Opportunity and Affordability

- Increased opportunity for small, local businesses through markets and events
- Increased foot traffic and retail sales
- More mobility choices and connections offer more affordable transportation
- Increased land value and "value capture" for new and existing businesses

Mobility

- Move more people
- Full ADA accessibility
- Minimize vehicular traffic impacts through efficient design
- Increased pedestrian, bicycle, and scooter space and connectivity
- Designed for future flexibility and potential connector transit
- Simplified curbspace management

Safety

- All sidewalks and ramps ADA compliant with minimal trip hazards
- Increased pedestrian safety
- Increased bicycle and scooter safety
- More street activity, lighting and better conditions for a 24/7 neighborhood

Health & Environment

- Increased walkability and pedestrian activity for all ages and abilities
- Improved stormwater management
- Increased shade, comfort, and areas of respite
- Increased biodiversity, habitat, and a healthier urban tree canopy
- Decreased asphalt areas — reduction in urban heat island effect

Culture

- Strengthen the national register historic district and historic interpretation
- Increased visibility and viability of existing cultural institutions
- Improved wayfinding and interpretive opportunities
- Increased capacity for programming and events
- Increased opportunities for "streetlife"

Our CONGRESS AVENUE