

# Our CONGRESS AVENUE ENVISION!

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS  
URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVE

PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MAY 6, 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

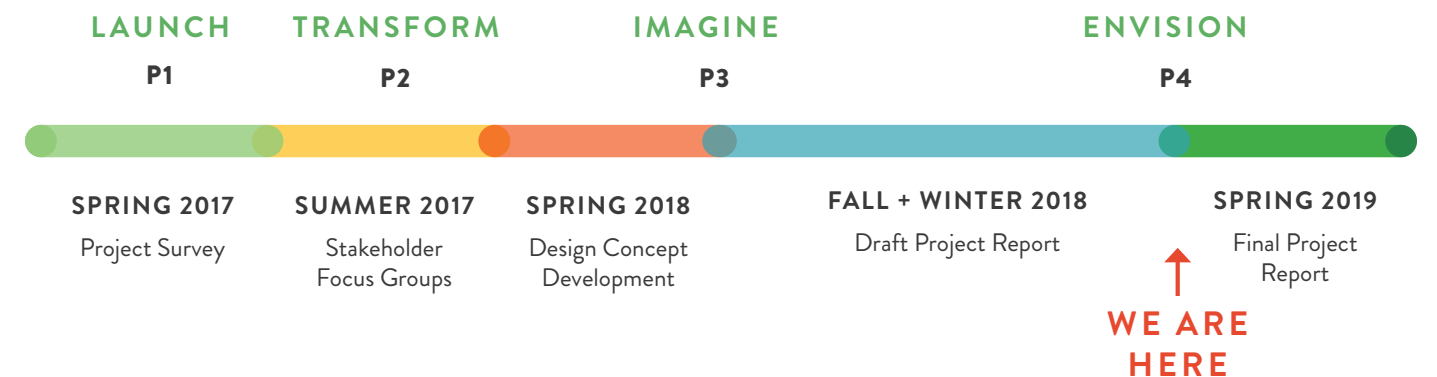
### Implementation





# 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



XYZ Atlas Congress



Our Austin Story

Final Plan as Adopted on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

SOUTH CENTRAL WATERFRONT  
VISION FRAMEWORK PLAN



June 2016  Austin, Texas



Great Streets Initiative



Downtown Austin Master Plan, 2011



# 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

ENVIRONMENT

Congress Avenue is a mini-valley that...

SOCIAL EQUITY

The 1928 "A City I Austin, Texas" call...

CULTURE & HISTORY

There are 46 locally designated landmarked buildings that front the Avenue, four of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places—Capitol Building, Western Telephone Building, the theatre, and the bakery. In addition, Congress Avenue is National Register places.

ECONOMICS

MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

Congress Avenue is an important route for bicyclists to get across Lady Bird Lake and get to the Butler Hike & Bike Trail along the Lake. Bicycle traffic across the Congress Avenue Bridge is increasing and is among the highest in the city.





## PUBLIC EVENT # 2

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

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## 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

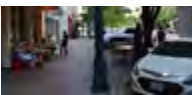
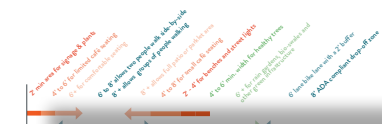
##### Common Elements

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!

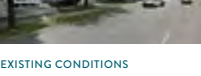
#### ACTIVE GROUND FLOORS

##### 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



**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 storefront 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!

#### SAFE BIKE LANES

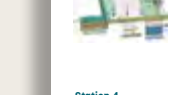
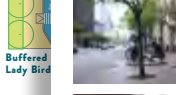
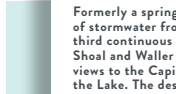
##### Common Elements

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



**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

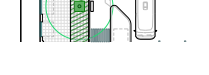
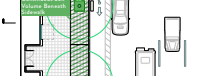
- ECONOMICS
- ENVIRONMENT

##### EXISTING CONDITIONS



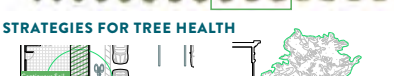
**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### STORMWATER FLOW



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### TREE HEALTH AND SOIL VOLUME



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### STRATEGIES FOR TREE HEALTH



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

#### FLEXIBLE TRANSIT

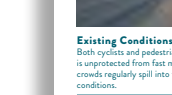
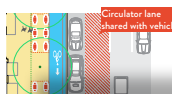
##### Common Elements

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



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

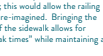
#### REFRESH THE BRIDGE

##### 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

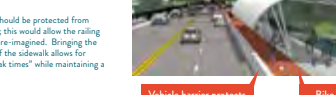
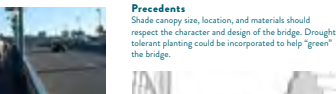
- CULTURE & HISTORY
- MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY
- ENVIRONMENT



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### GOALS

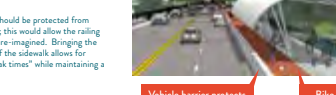
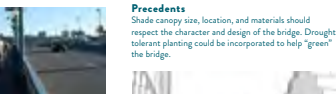
- Increase capacity and safety for pedestrians and cyclists
- Respect the historic character and design of the bridge with any modifications
- Enhance the bridge as a destination
- Provide shade and greening opportunities



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### EXISTING CONDITIONS

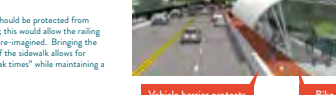
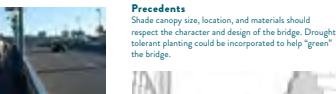
Cyclists and pedestrians share the sidewalk that is unprotected from fast moving traffic. Bat viewing crowds regularly spill into traffic lanes, creating unsafe conditions.



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### 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!

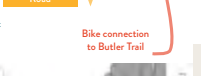
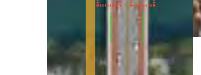
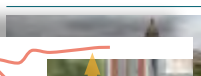
#### SPACES FOR CELEBRATION

##### 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

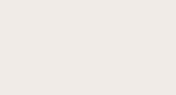
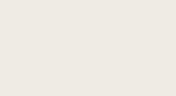
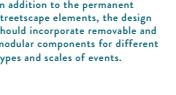
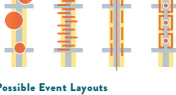
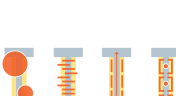
- SOCIAL EQUITY
- CULTURE & HISTORY



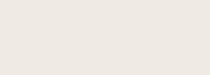
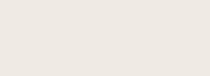
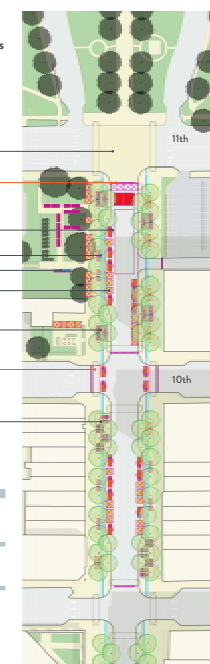
**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

##### 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.



**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!

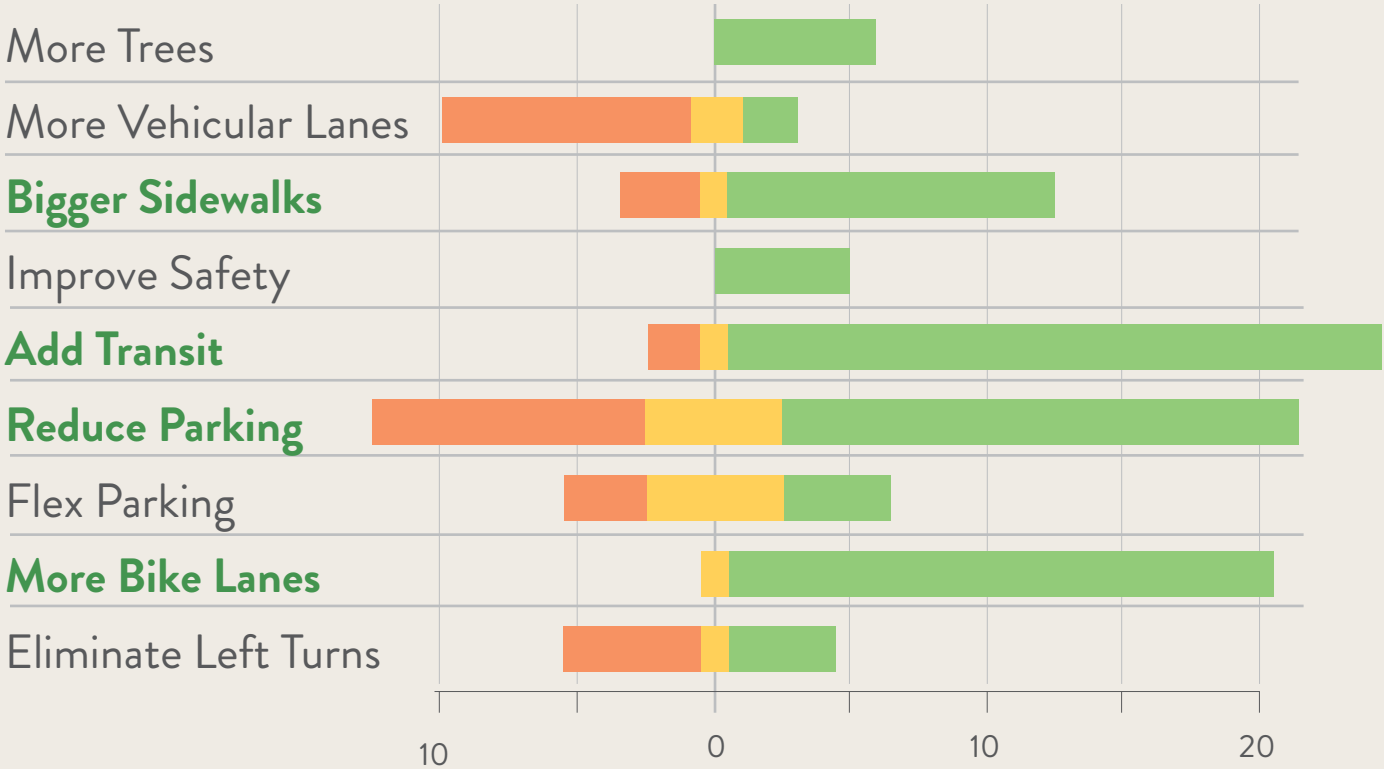


**Station 4**  
Public Event 3: Imagine!



# 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?

Option A: 5 Lanes / 18' Sidewalk

Five travel lanes plus parking and raised bike lanes

Vehicular 43%

Parking 13%

Bike 13%

Sidewalk 30%

~10 parking spaces/block

Option B: 5 Lanes Flex / 27' Sidewalk

Five flex-lanes including off-peak parking and raised bike lanes

Vehicular 25%

Parking/Flex 18%

Bike 13%

Sidewalk 43%

~16 parking space/block AT NON-PEAK TIMES

Option C: 4 Lanes / 24' Sidewalk

Four travel lanes plus parking and raised bike lanes

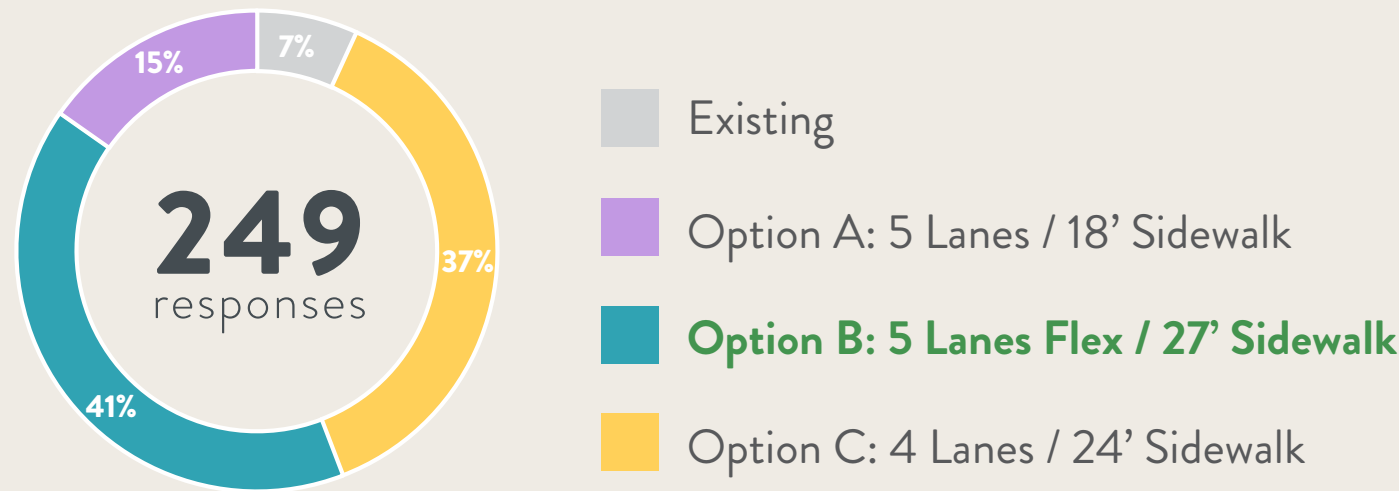
Vehicular 35%

Parking 13%

Bike 13%

Sidewalk 38%

~10 parking spaces/block





NEXT STEPS

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

**OUR CONGRESS AVENUE: ENVISION!**

**Input Opportunity:**

In your opinion, how well do the recommendations address the goals established by the community for the future of Congress Avenue?

SOCIAL EQUITY	MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY	CULTURE & HISTORY	ECONOMICS	ENVIRONMENT
Ensure a welcoming, accessible, and representative space	Balance mobility options along Congress Avenue	Enhance Congress Avenue as a historic and cultural destination	Amplify the economic strength and diversity of Congress Avenue	Celebrate biodiversity and urban habitat in a functional, resilient streetscape design
<input type="radio"/> Very Well <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Somewhat <input type="radio"/> Not at All	<input type="radio"/> Very Well <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Somewhat <input type="radio"/> Not at All	<input type="radio"/> Very Well <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Somewhat <input type="radio"/> Not at All	<input type="radio"/> Very Well <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Somewhat <input type="radio"/> Not at All	<input type="radio"/> Very Well <input type="radio"/> Mostly <input type="radio"/> Somewhat <input type="radio"/> Not at All

Please use the back of this card to make any suggestions for how we could better address these goals





Draft Recommendations:

# Balance the Avenue

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



3TH STREET  
(HICKORY ST.) 100

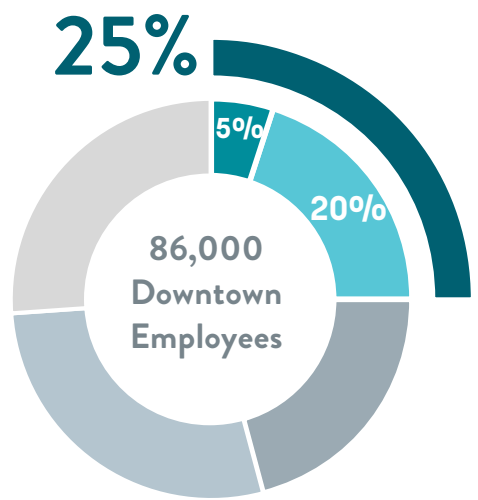


Balance the Avenue

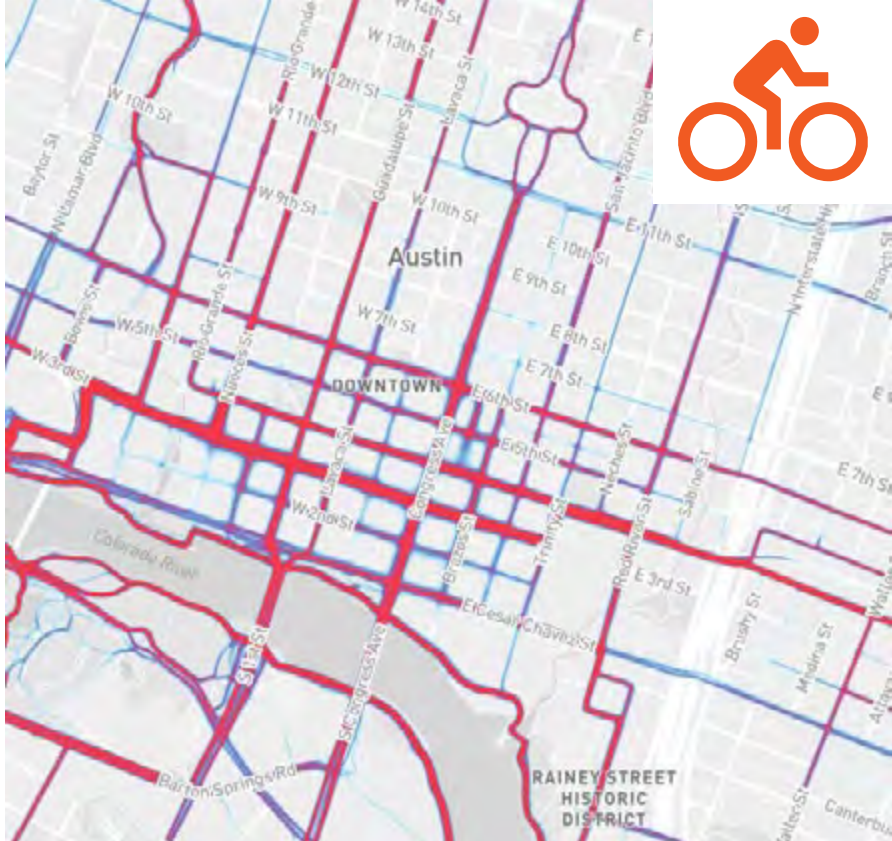
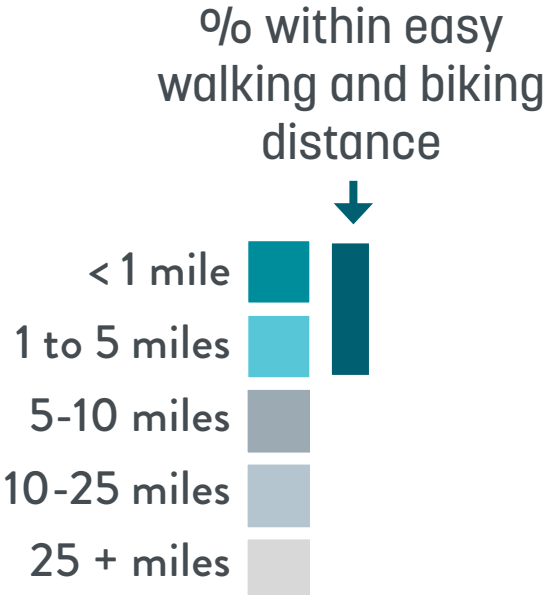
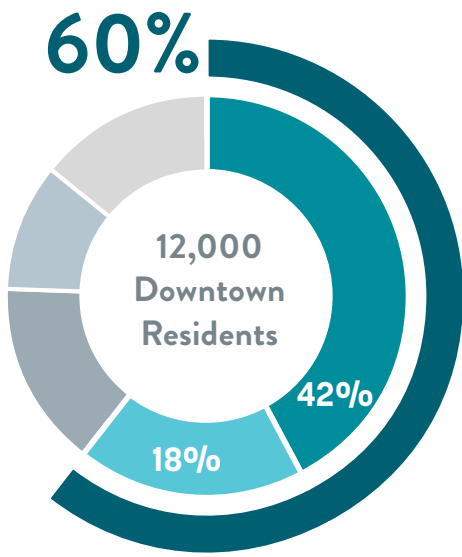


MOBILITY OVERVIEW: A MULTIMODAL AVENUE

Regional  
Downtown Employees within  
Walking or Biking Distance  
from Work



Local  
Downtown Residents within  
Walking or Biking Distance  
from Work

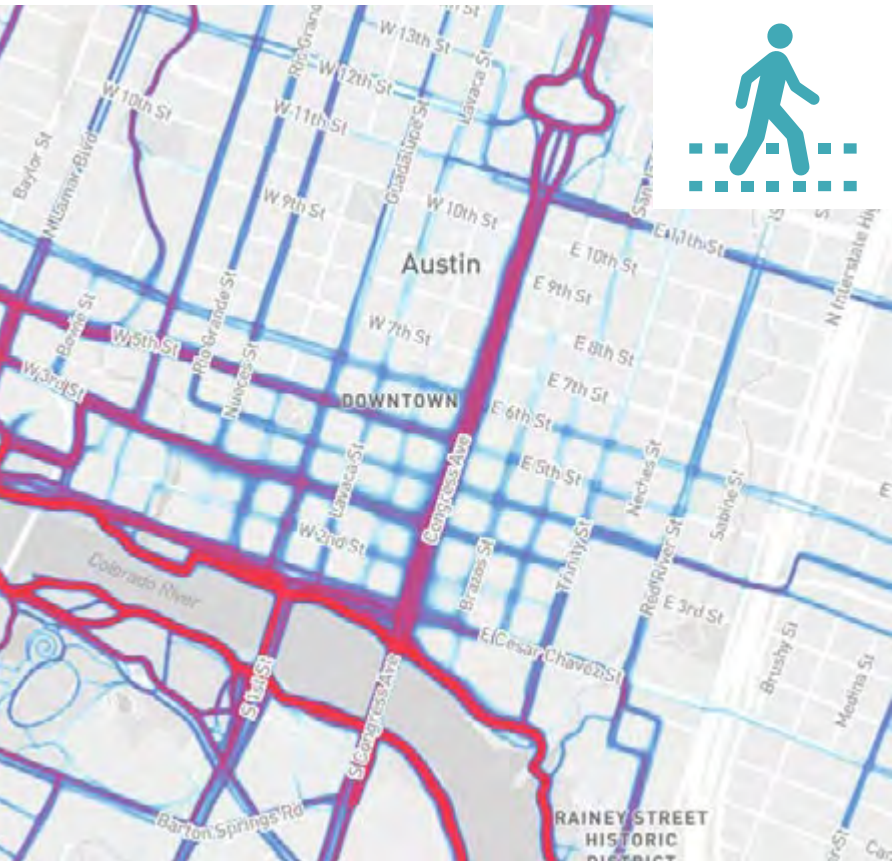
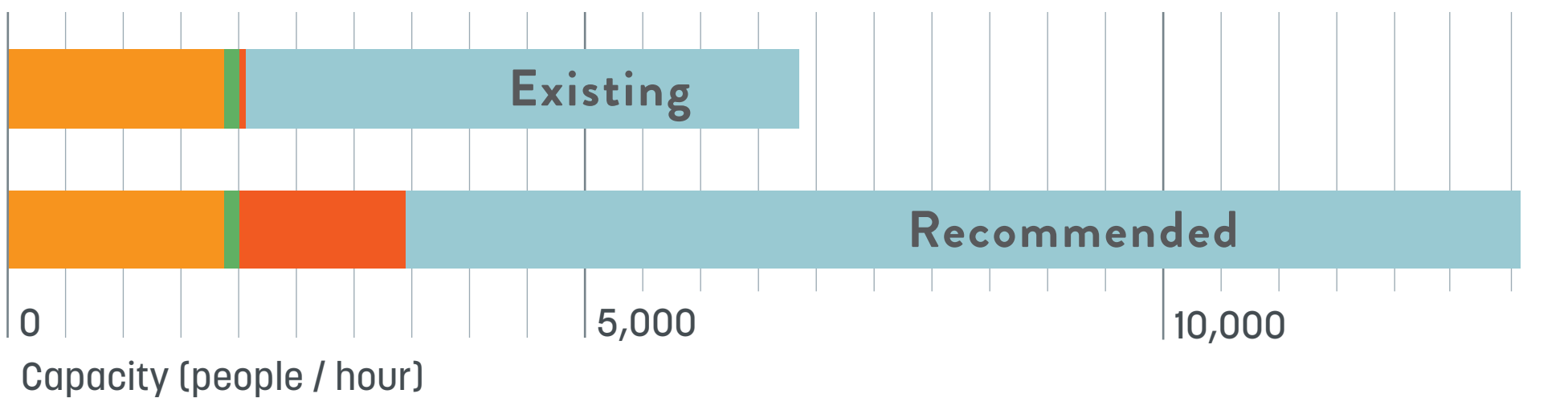


Existing Bike Heatmap



MORE ACCESS FOR ALL MODES

Motor Vehicle   Transit   Bike / Scooter   Pedestrian

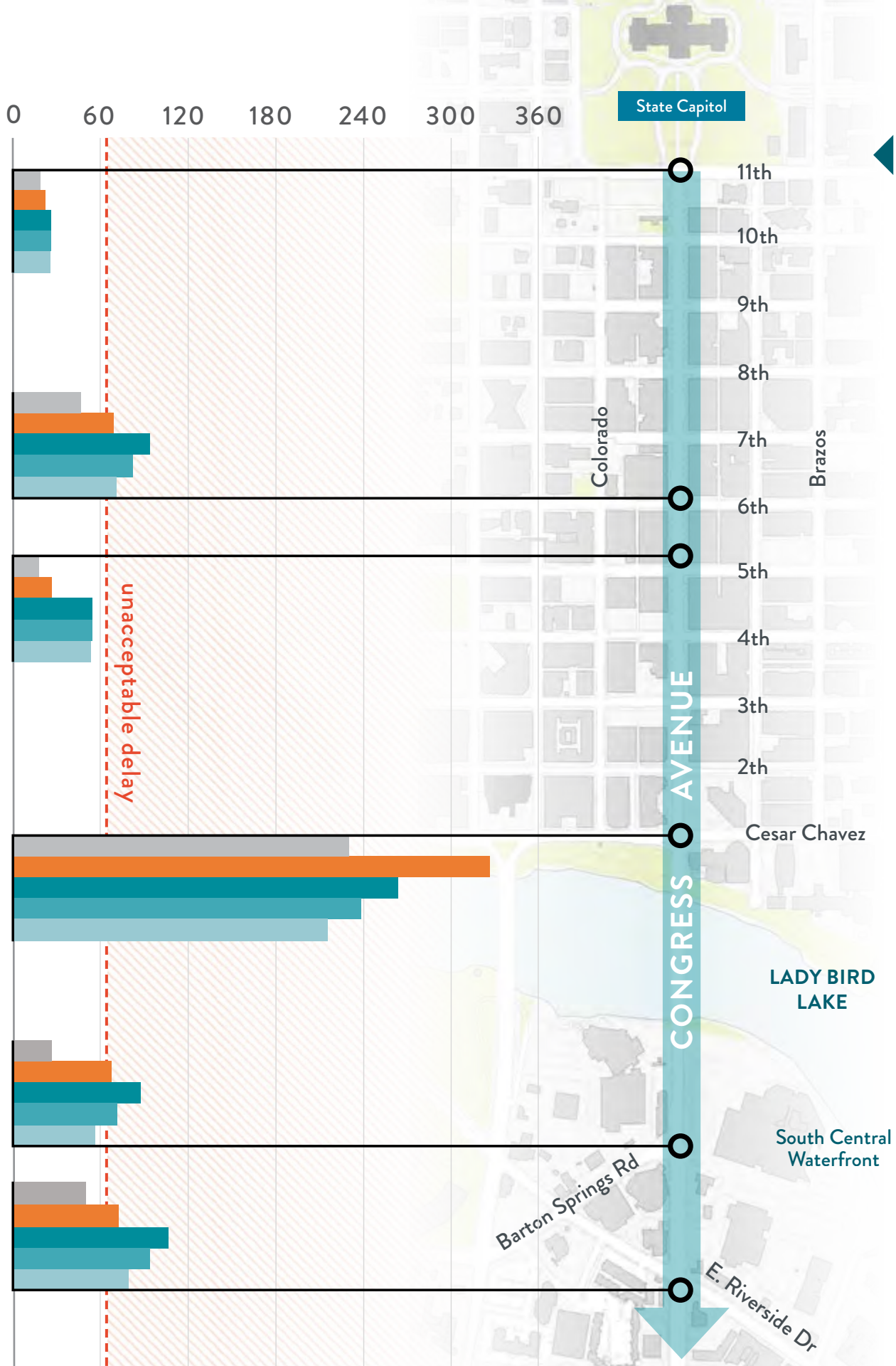
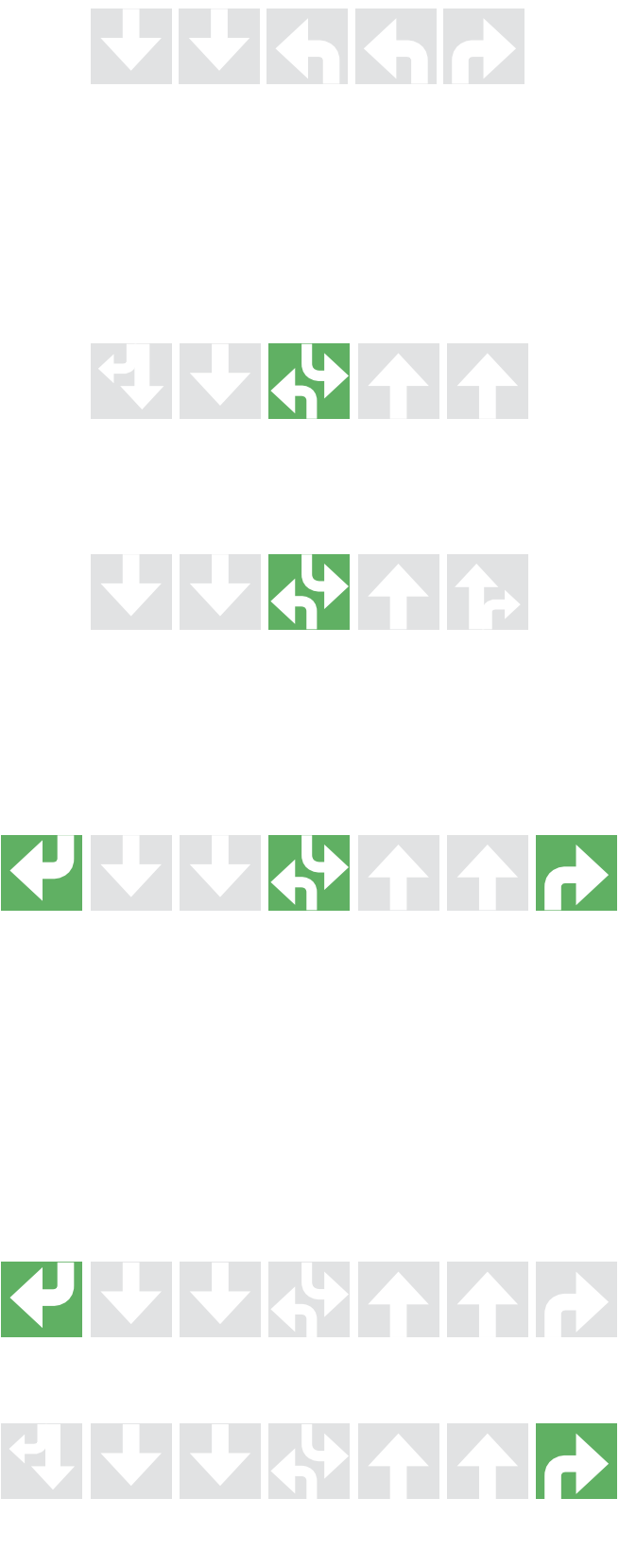


Existing Pedestrian Heatmap



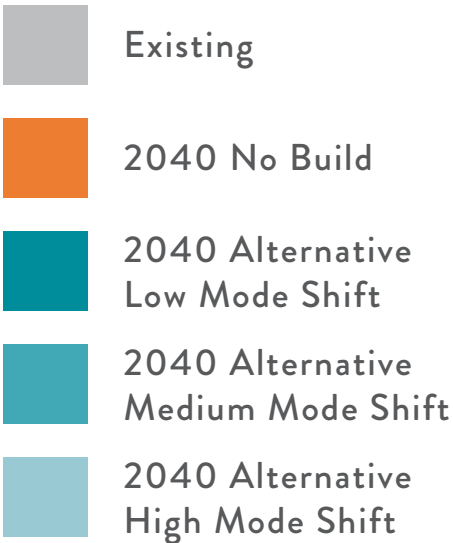


MOBILITY OVERVIEW:  
RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS



Impact of Recommended  
Improvements Over the  
Next 20 Years

Intersection Delay During  
PM Peak Traffic (Seconds)



Recommended  
Intersection  
Improvements in Green



# STREET SPACE ALLOCATION: EXISTING

Parking:  
~ 12 permanent spaces per block



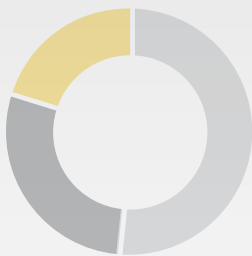
Left Turns:  
Allowed with option for left turns



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
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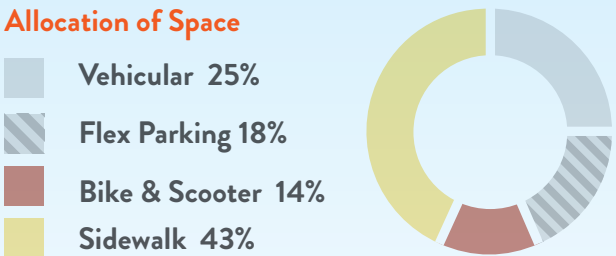


# STREET SPACE ALLOCATION: RECOMMENDED

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



**Left Turns:**  
Allowed with dedicated lane



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
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ANN W. RICHARDS  
CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE:  
EXISTING



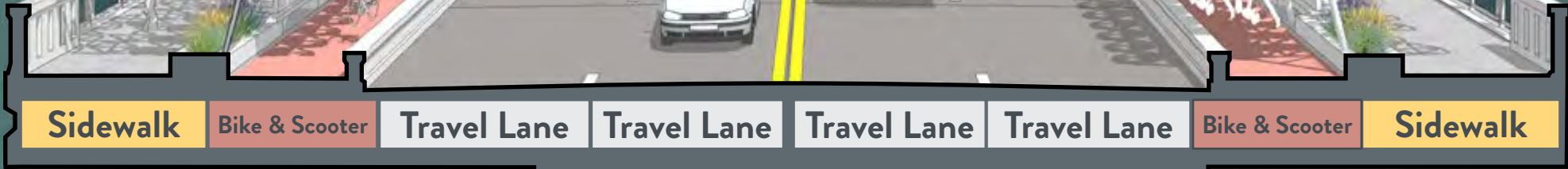
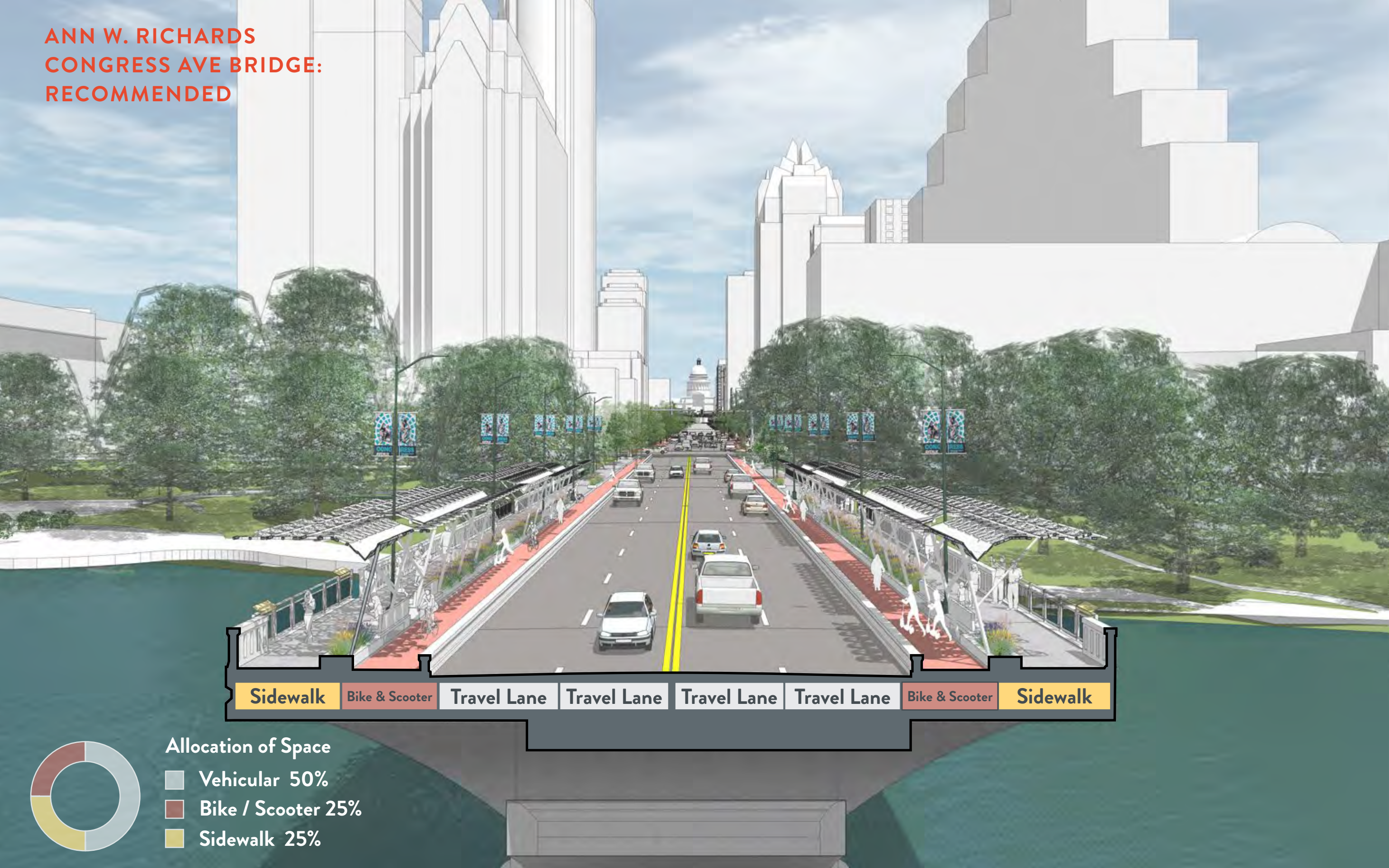
Allocation of Space

- Vehicular 50%
- Bike / Sharrow 25%
- Sidewalk 25%





ANN W. RICHARDS  
CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE:  
RECOMMENDED



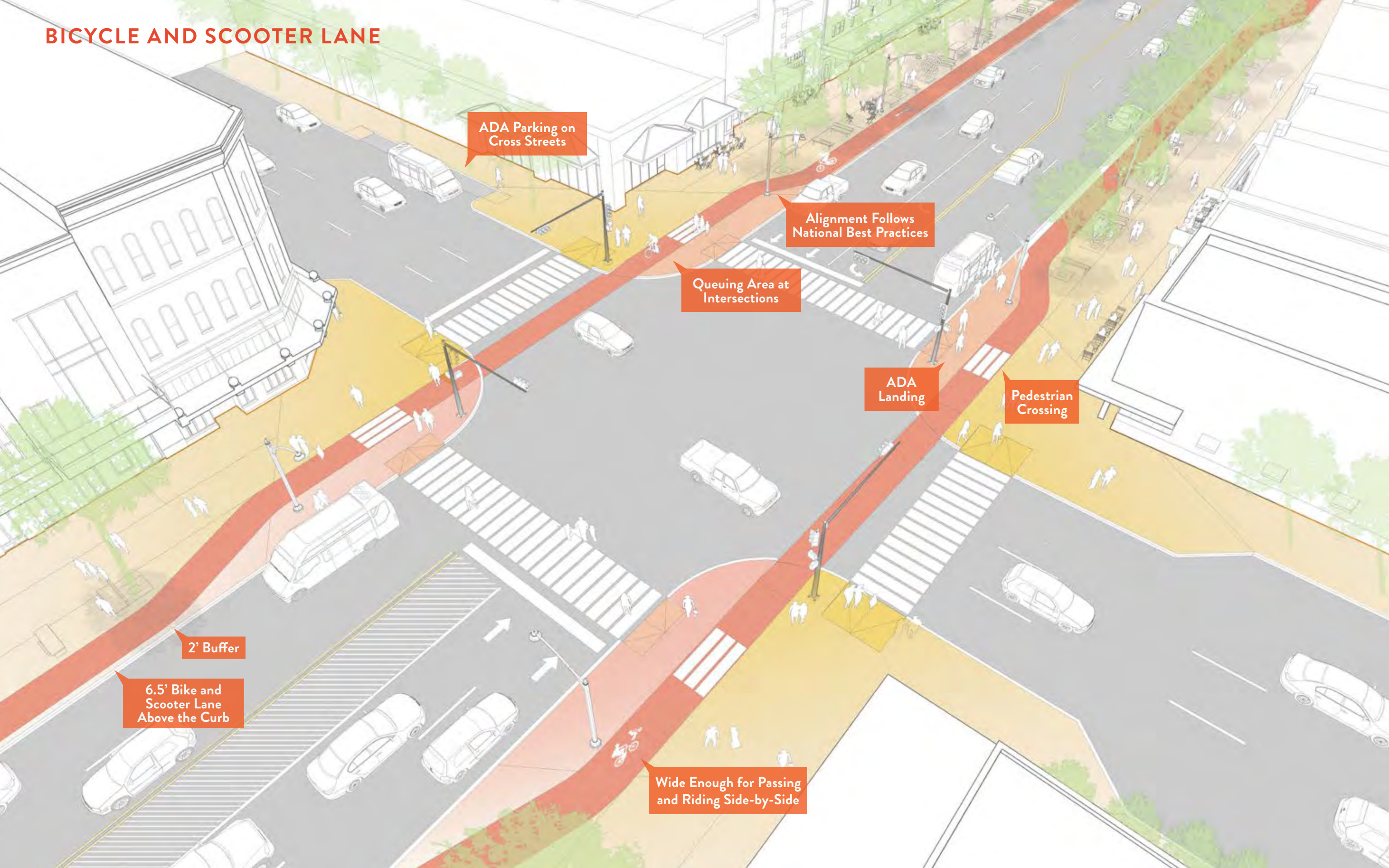
Allocation of Space

- Vehicular 50%
- Bike / Scooter 25%
- Sidewalk 25%





BICYCLE AND SCOOTER LANE



ADA Parking on  
Cross Streets

Alignment Follows  
National Best Practices

Queuing Area at  
Intersections

ADA  
Landing

Pedestrian  
Crossing

2' Buffer

6.5' Bike and  
Scooter Lane  
Above the Curb

Wide Enough for Passing  
and Riding Side-by-Side



BICYCLE AND SCOOTER LANE



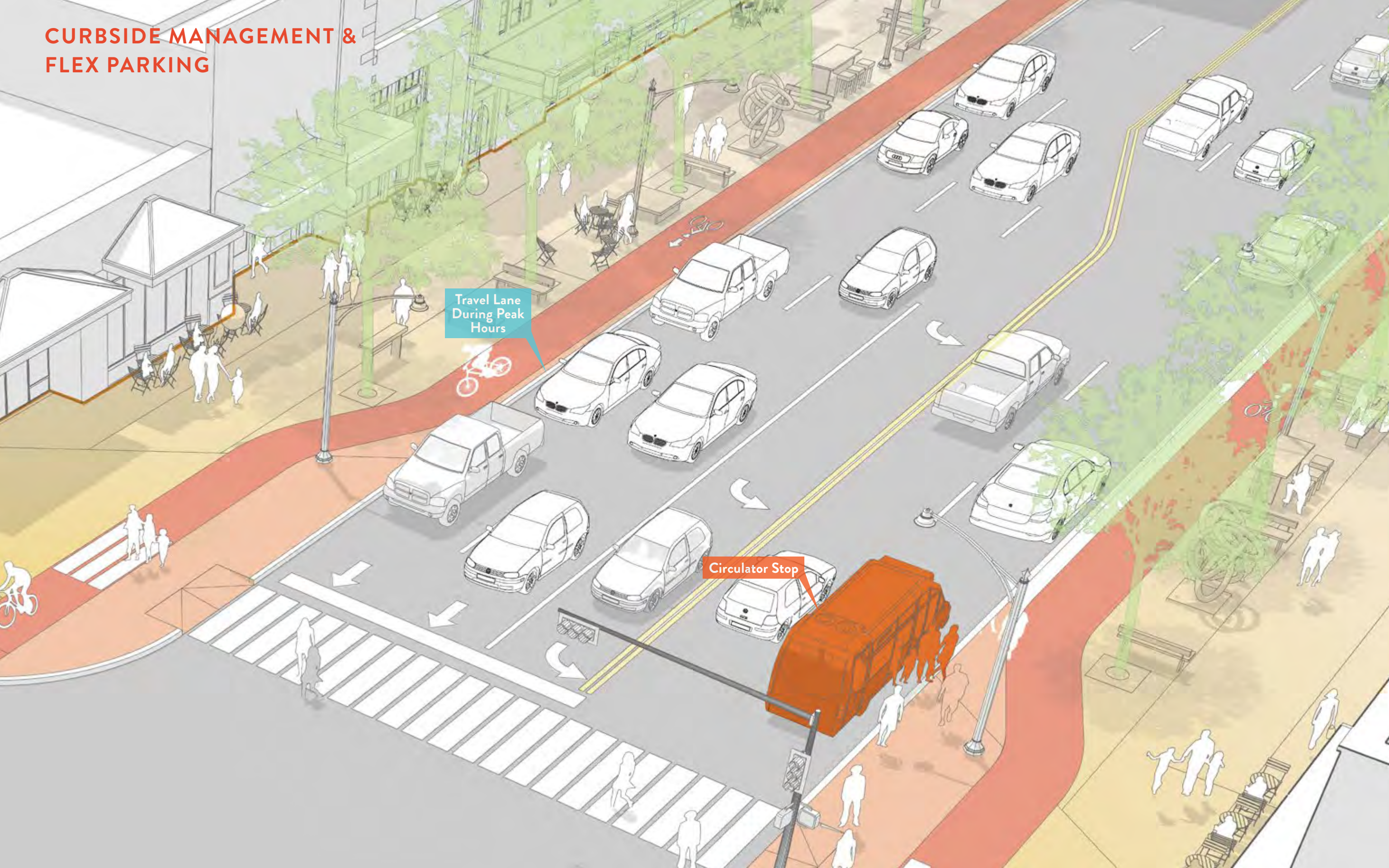
Space for Queuing  
at Intersections

2' Wide Buffer

6.5' lane wide  
enough for passing



# CURBSIDE MANAGEMENT & FLEX PARKING

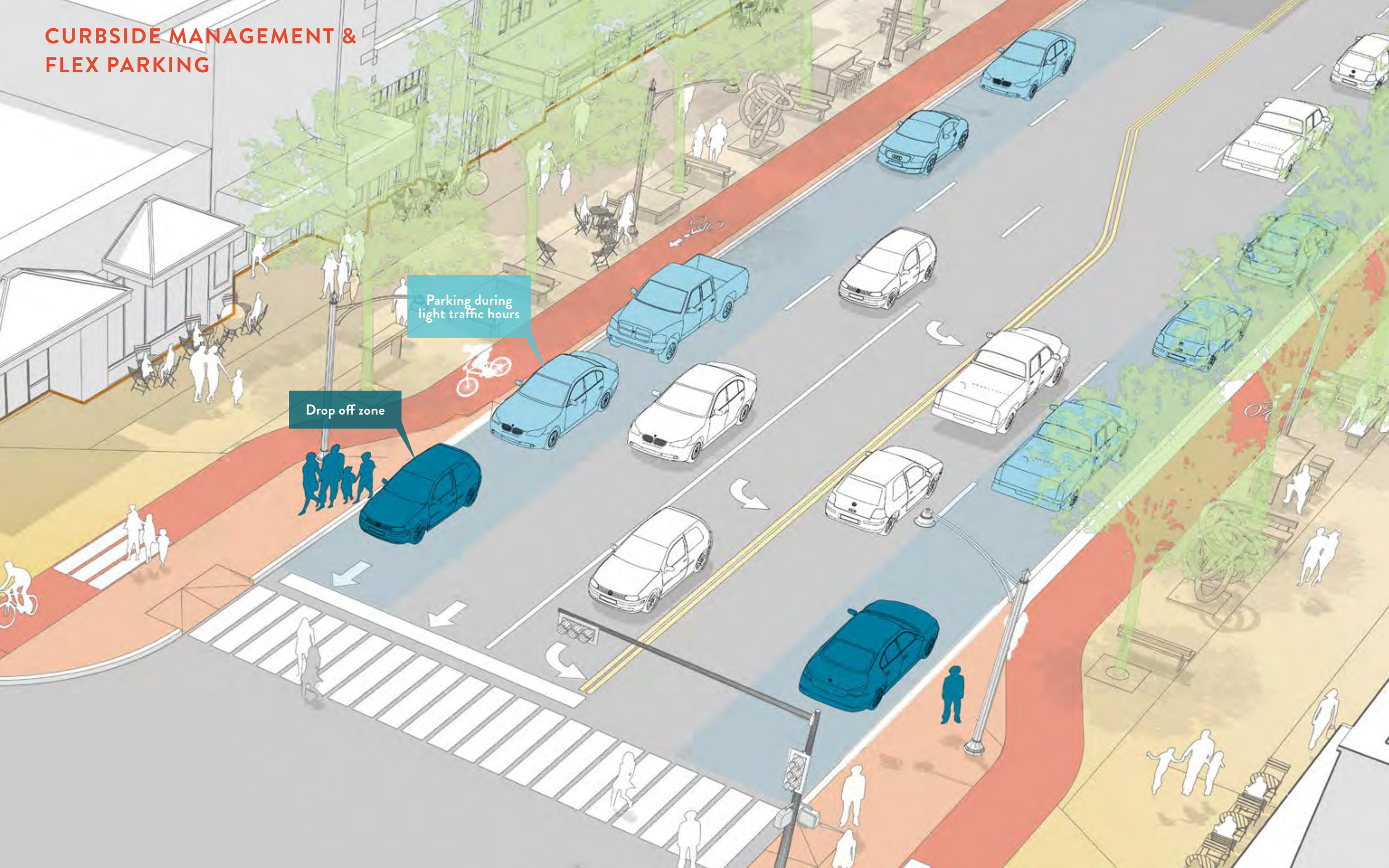


Travel Lane  
During Peak  
Hours

Circulator Stop



# CURBSIDE MANAGEMENT & FLEX PARKING



Drop off zone

Parking during  
light traffic hours



**Draft Recommendations:**

# Pedestrian Realm

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

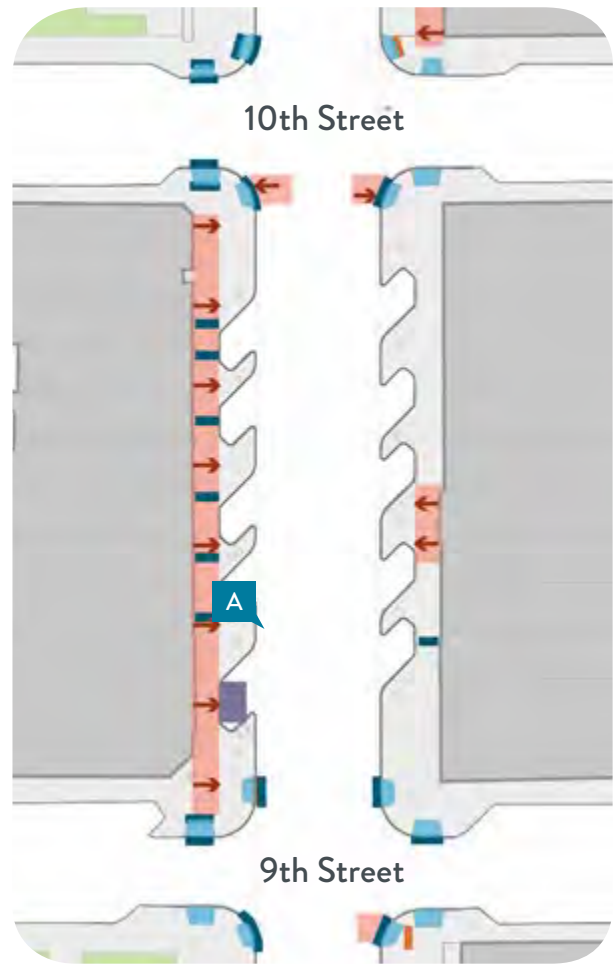




Pedestrian Realm



CONGRESS AVENUE FOR ALL



Accessibility Issues

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



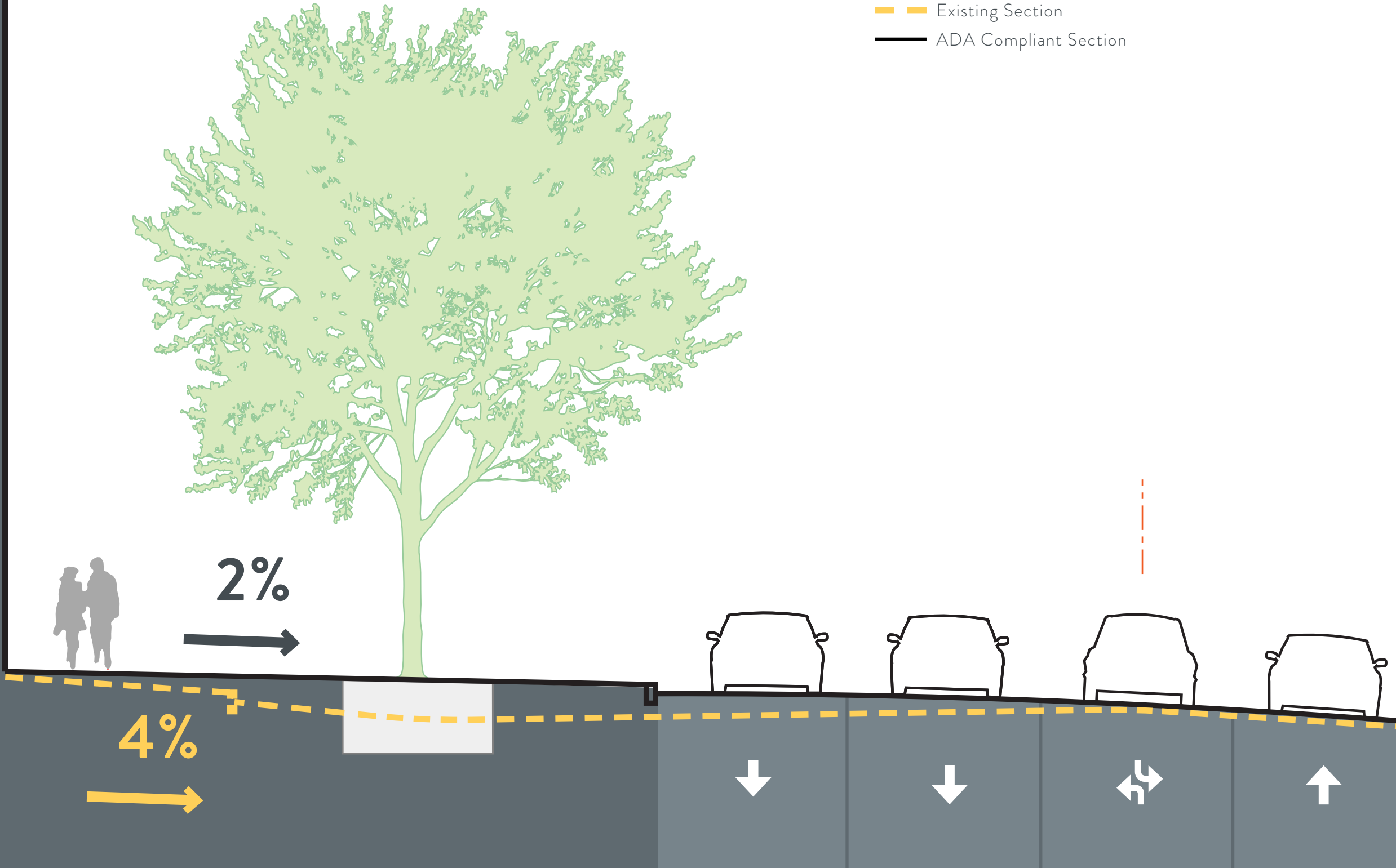


CONGRESS AVENUE FOR ALL:  
CROSS SLOPES

Section @ 700 block

Recommended Cross-Slope

- Existing Section
- ADA Compliant Section





## DEFINING THE SIDEWALK



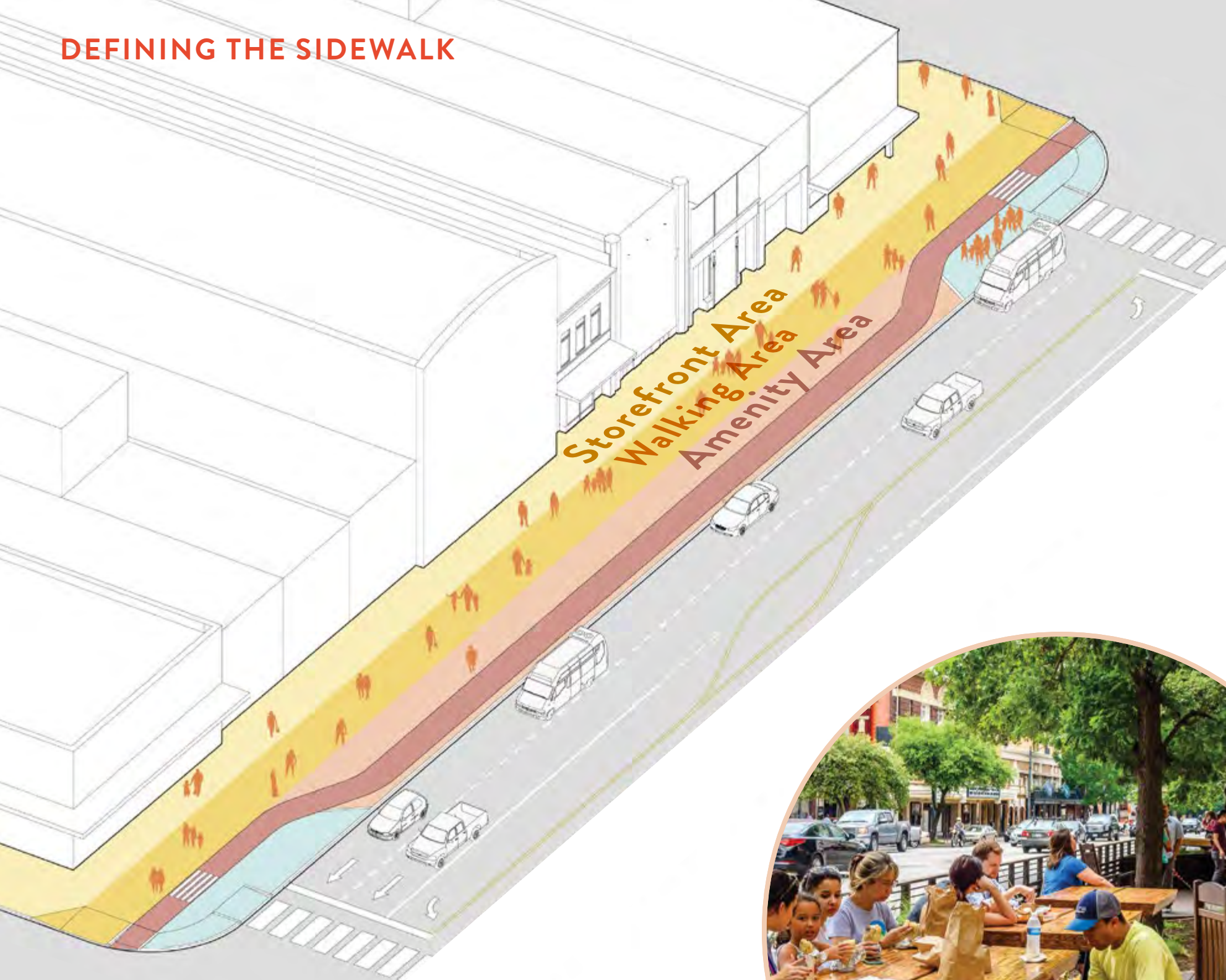
**8' Storefront Area**

**9.5' Walking Area**

**8' Amenity Area**



## DEFINING THE SIDEWALK



Walking Area



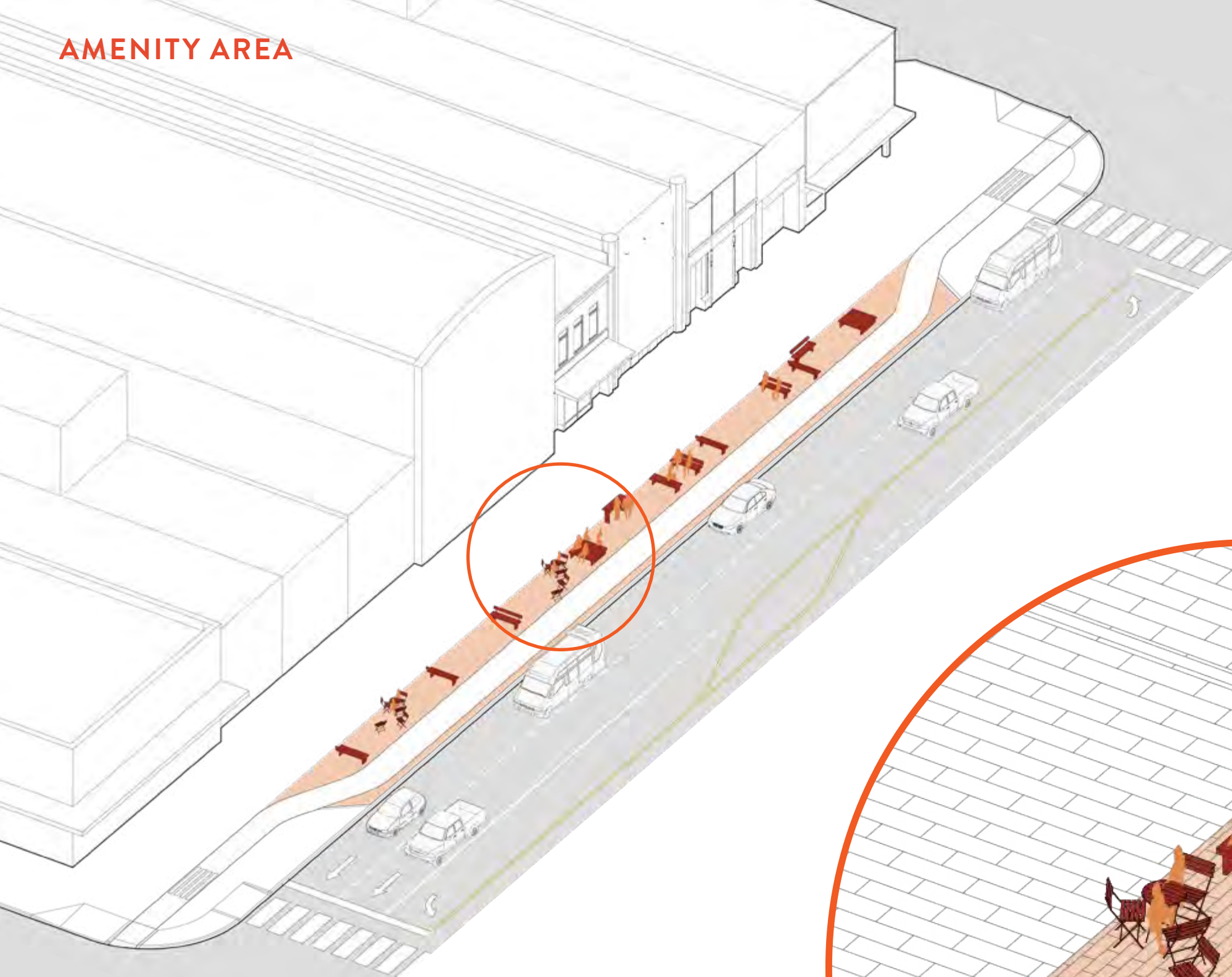
Amenity Area



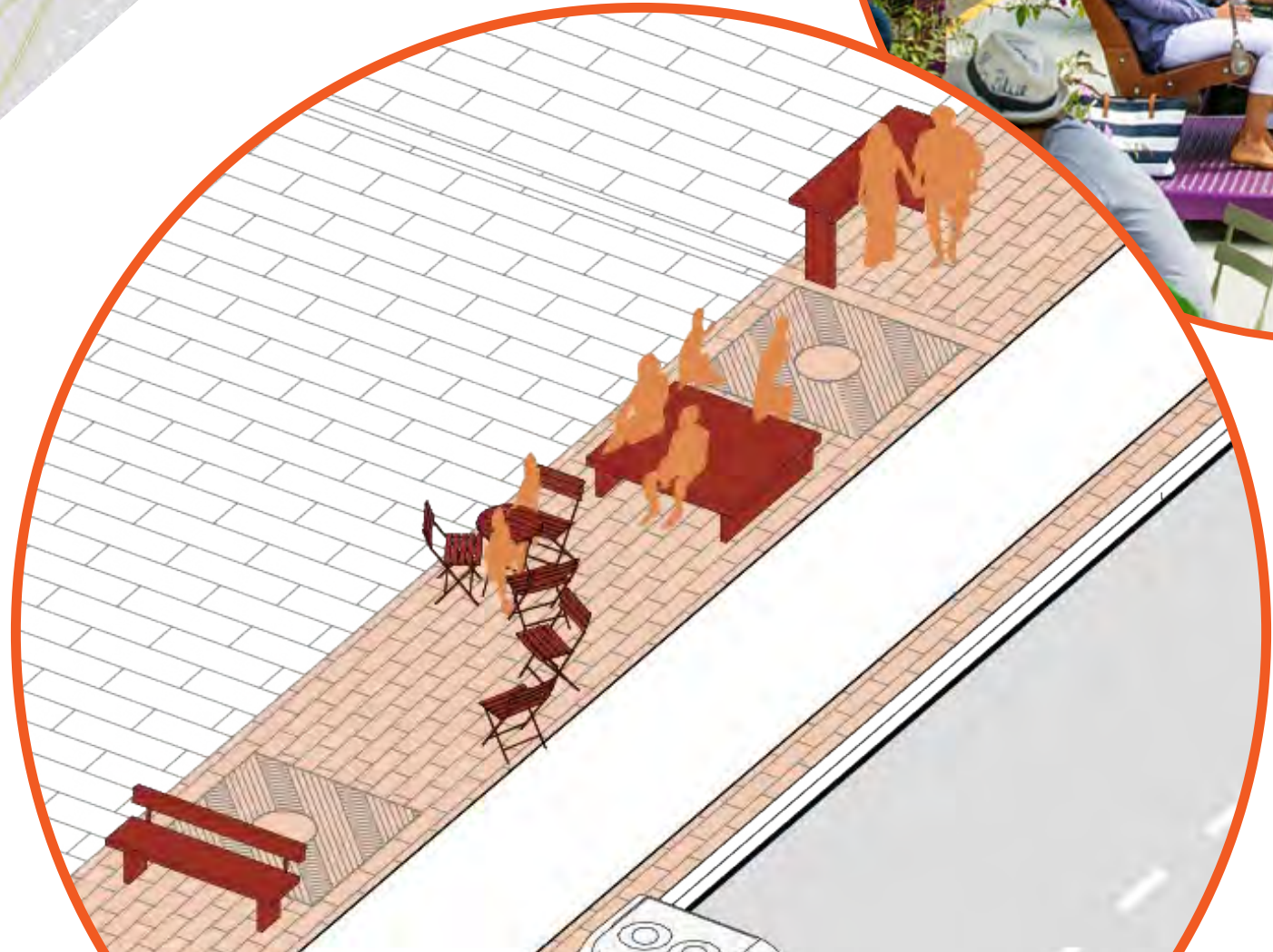
Storefront Area



## AMENITY AREA

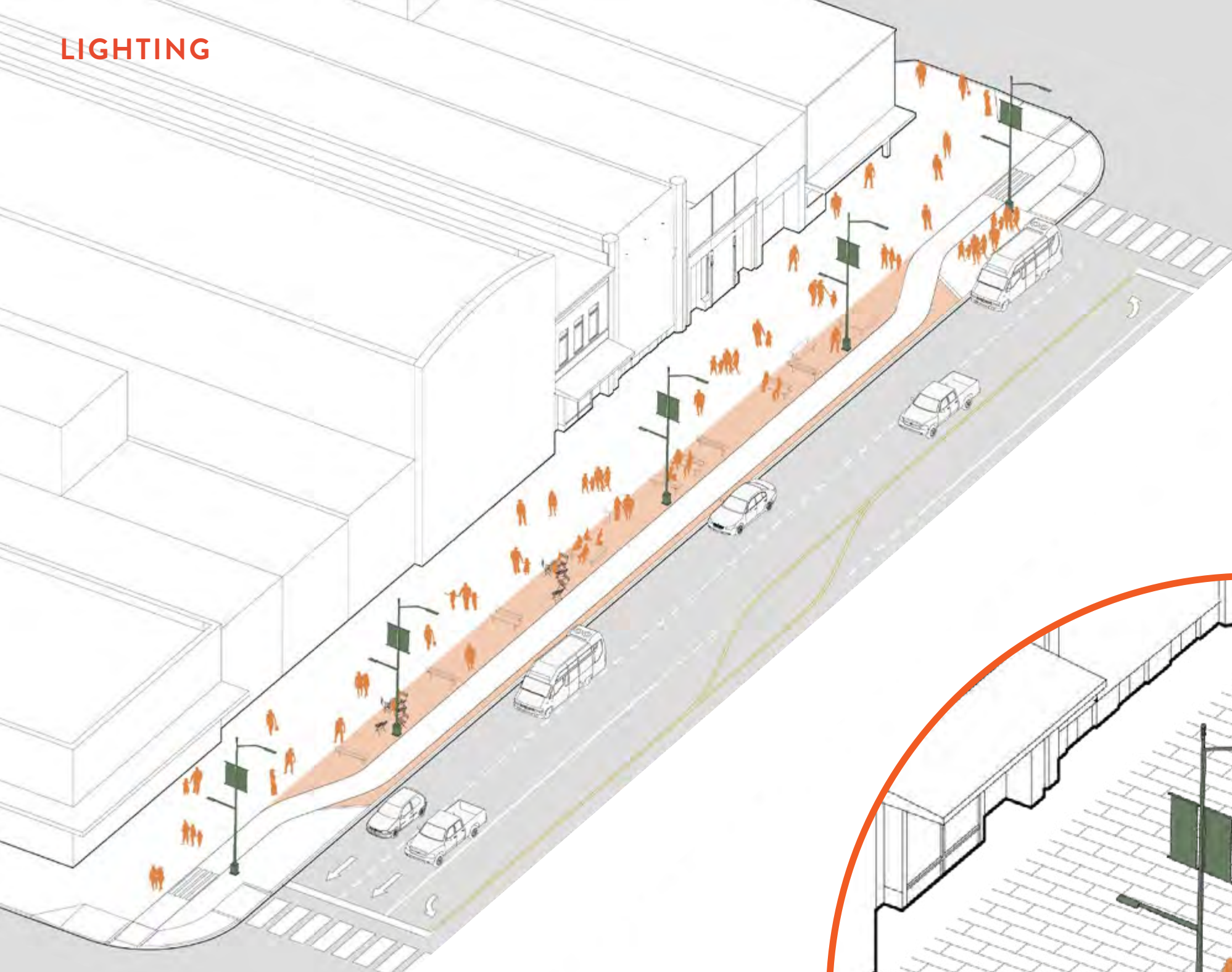


Spaces to Meet, Eat, Work,  
Perform, and Tell Stories





# LIGHTING

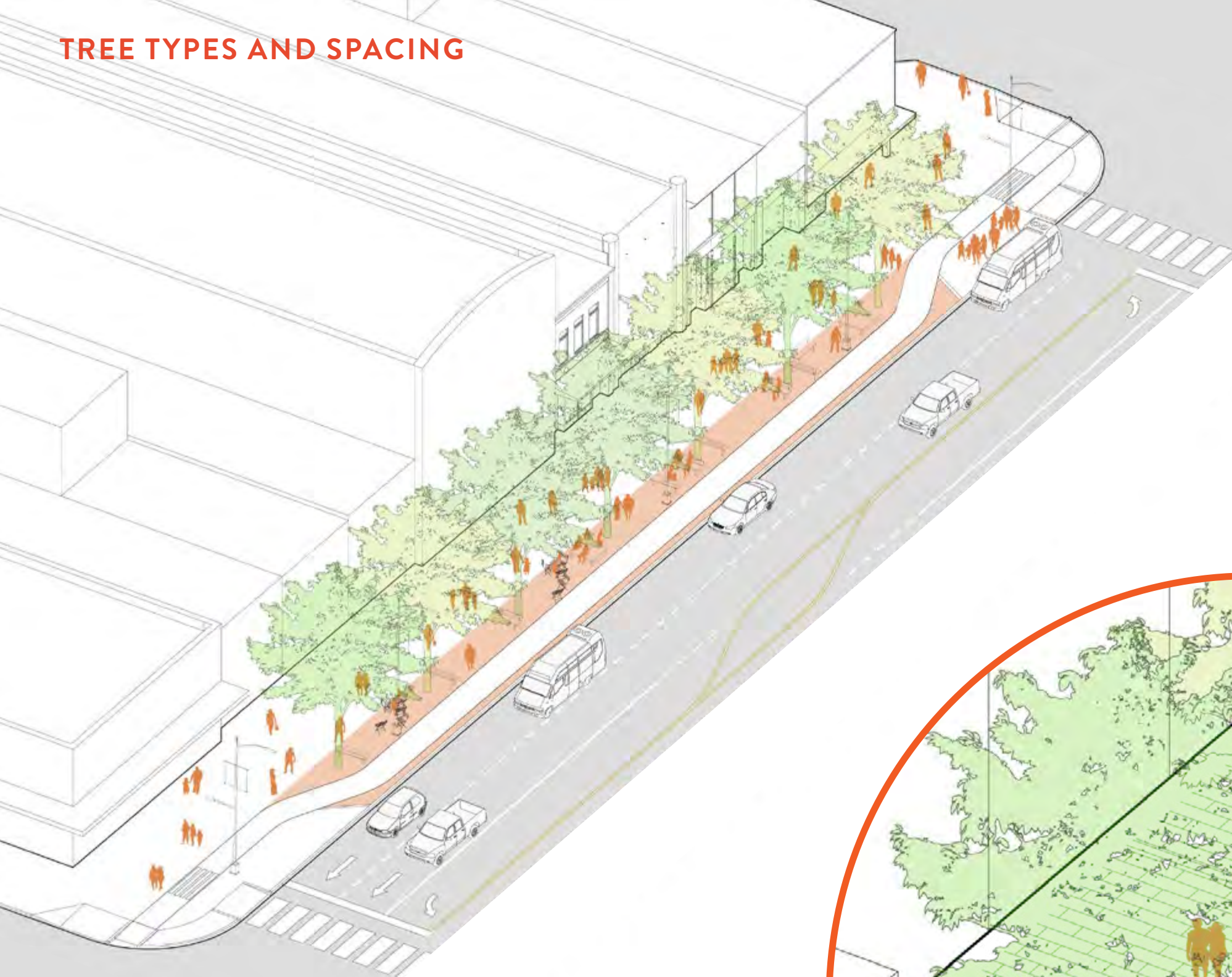


Historic streetlights  
updated for the 21st  
Century

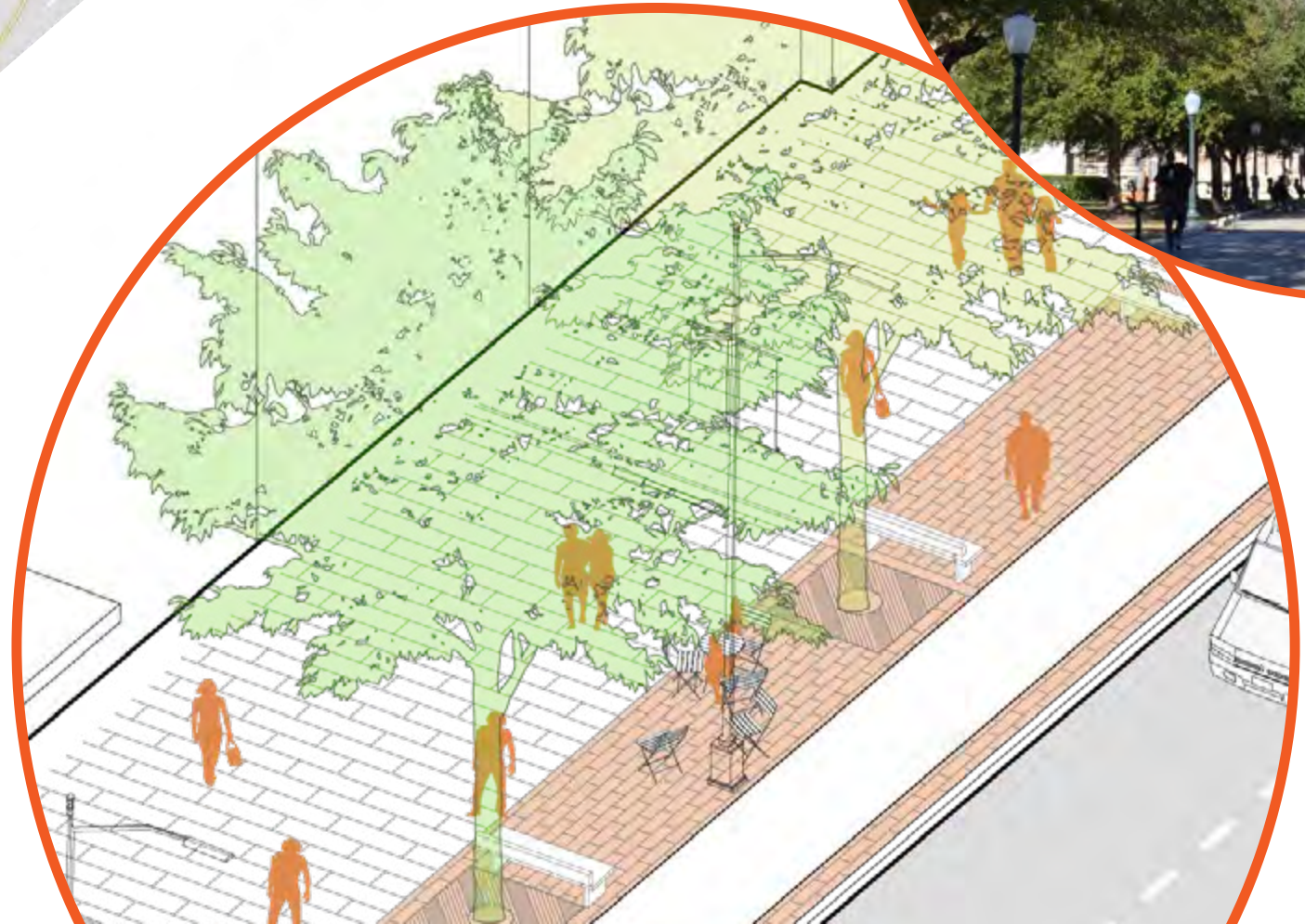




## TREE TYPES AND SPACING



A resilient mix of Texas  
Oak trees





## SOIL & TREE HEALTH

Continuous soil volume



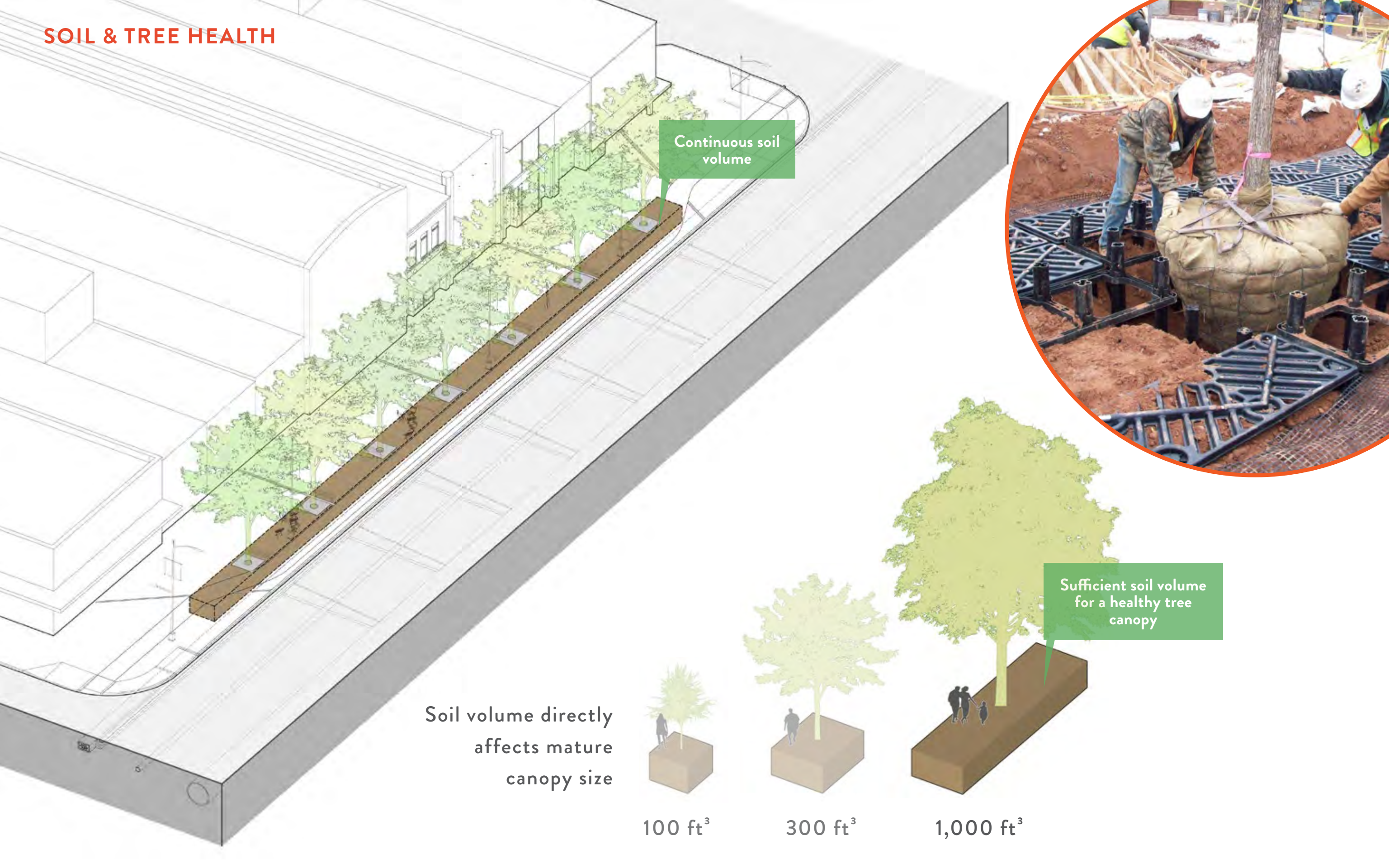
Sufficient soil volume  
for a healthy tree  
canopy

Soil volume directly  
affects mature  
canopy size

100 ft<sup>3</sup>

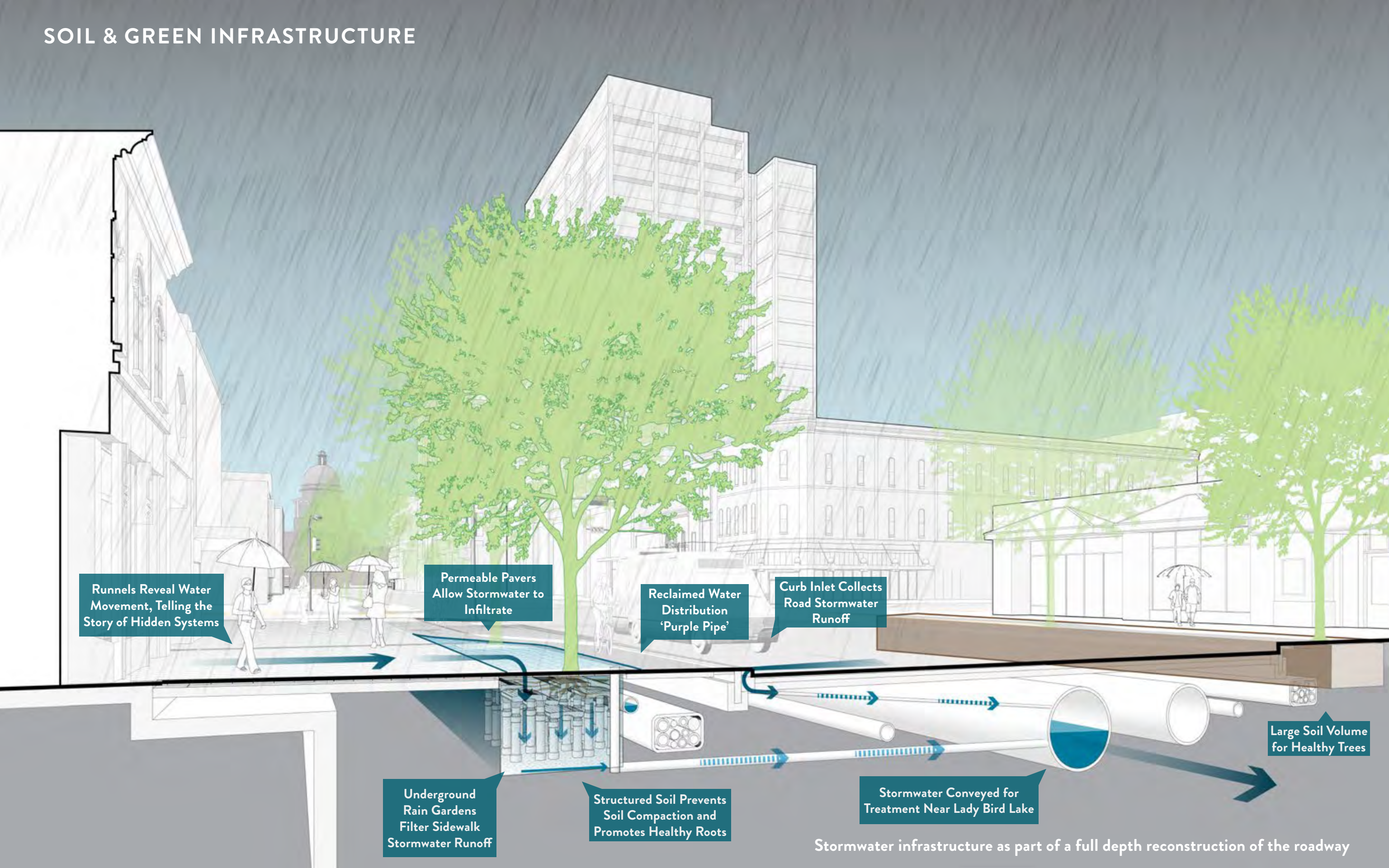
300 ft<sup>3</sup>

1,000 ft<sup>3</sup>



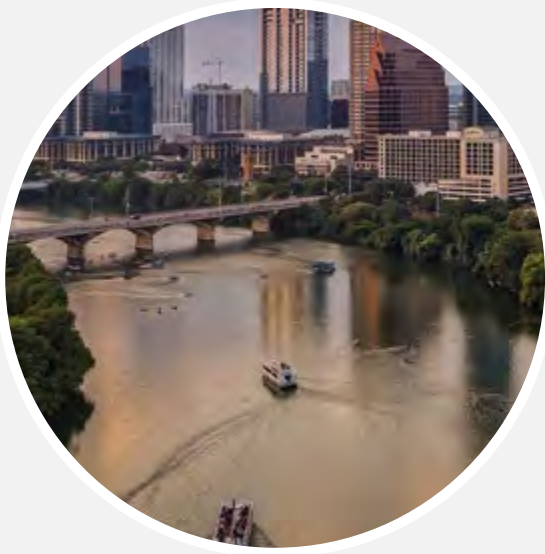
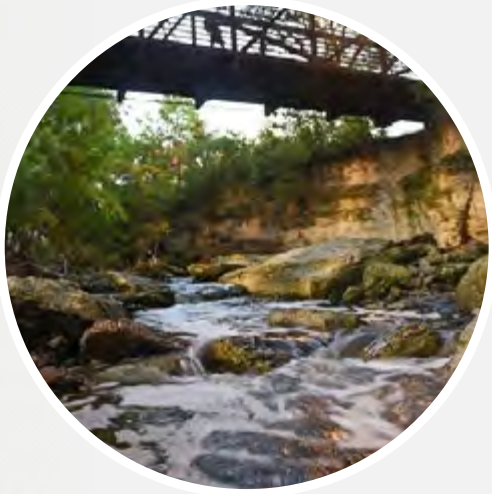


SOIL & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE





STORMWATER STORY





BRIDGE LANDINGS



Stormwater Sculpture



Stormwater Terraces



Deck at Edge of Lake



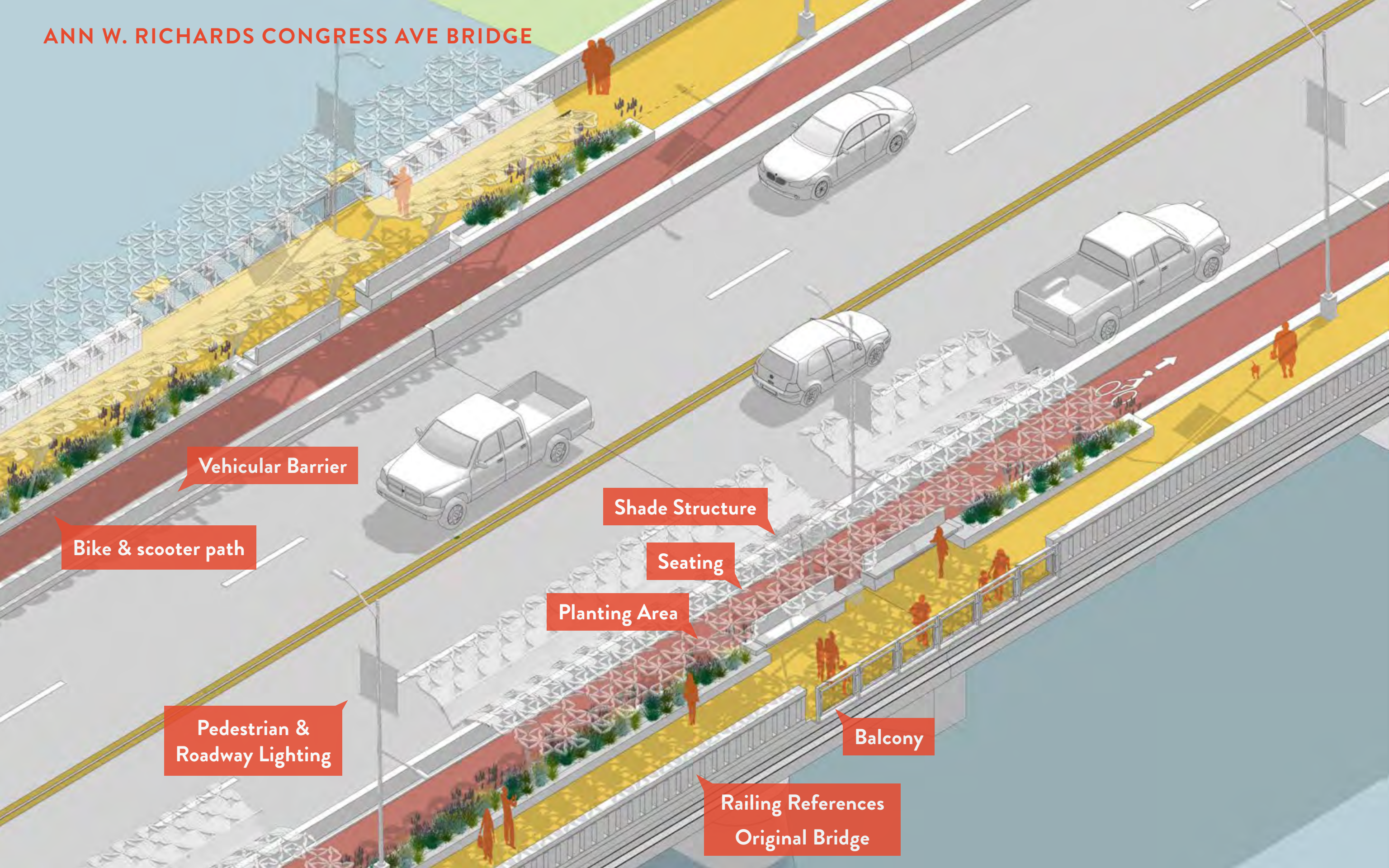


ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE





# ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVE BRIDGE



Vehicular Barrier

Bike & scooter path

Shade Structure

Seating

Planting Area

Pedestrian &  
Roadway Lighting

Balcony

Railing References  
Original Bridge



RAILING AND SHADE PRECEDENTS





**Draft Recommendations:**

# Design Concepts & Placemaking

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



DESIGN CONCEPT

State Capitol



Waller Creek

Shoal Creek

Seaholm

LADY BIRD LAKE

Auditorium Shores

Barton Springs Rd

Riverside Drive



# VIBRANT CROSSINGS







Civic Stage

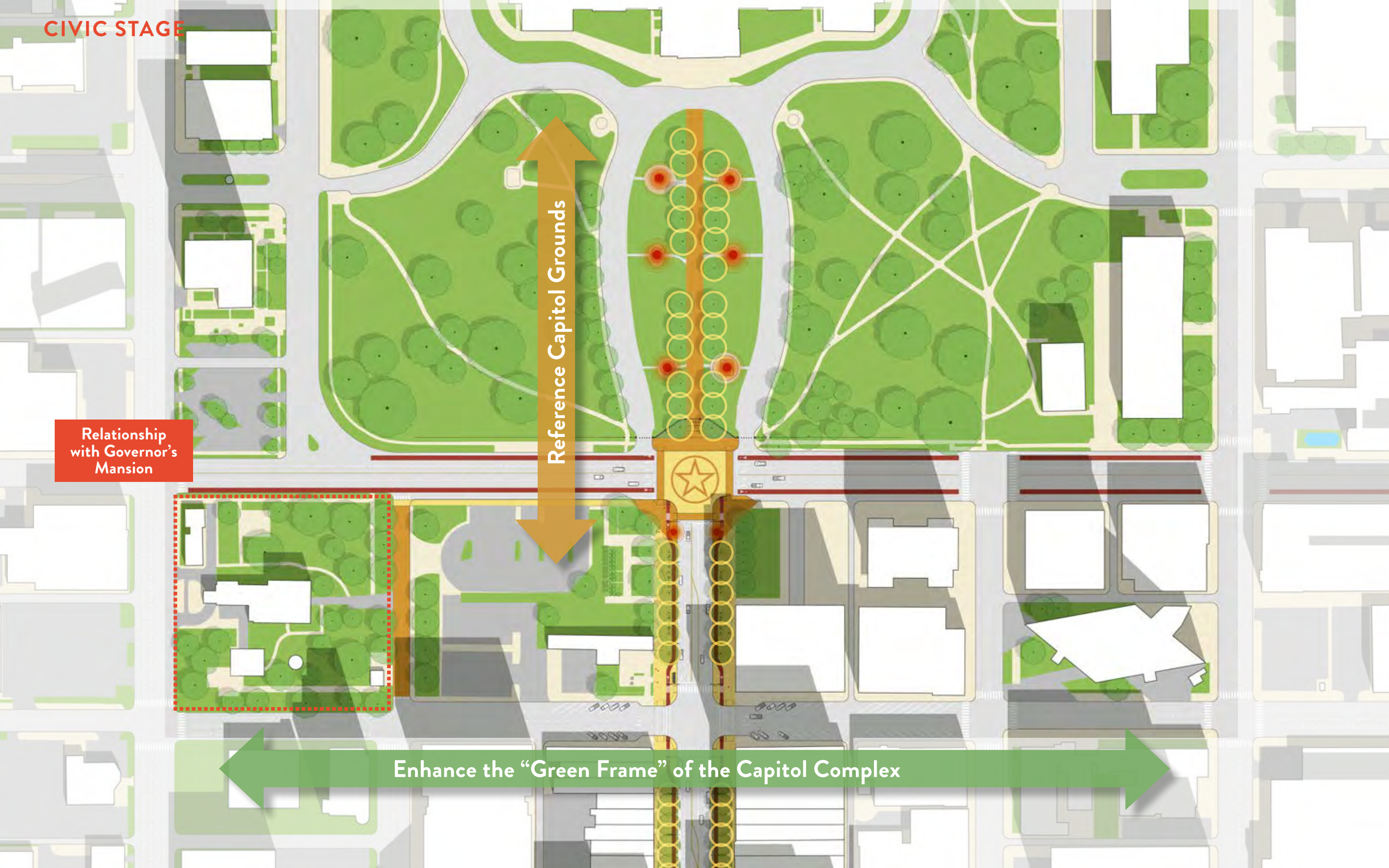


CIVIC STAGE

Relationship  
with Governor's  
Mansion

Reference Capitol Grounds

Enhance the "Green Frame" of the Capitol Complex





## CIVIC STAGE







Heart of Austin



# HEART OF AUSTIN







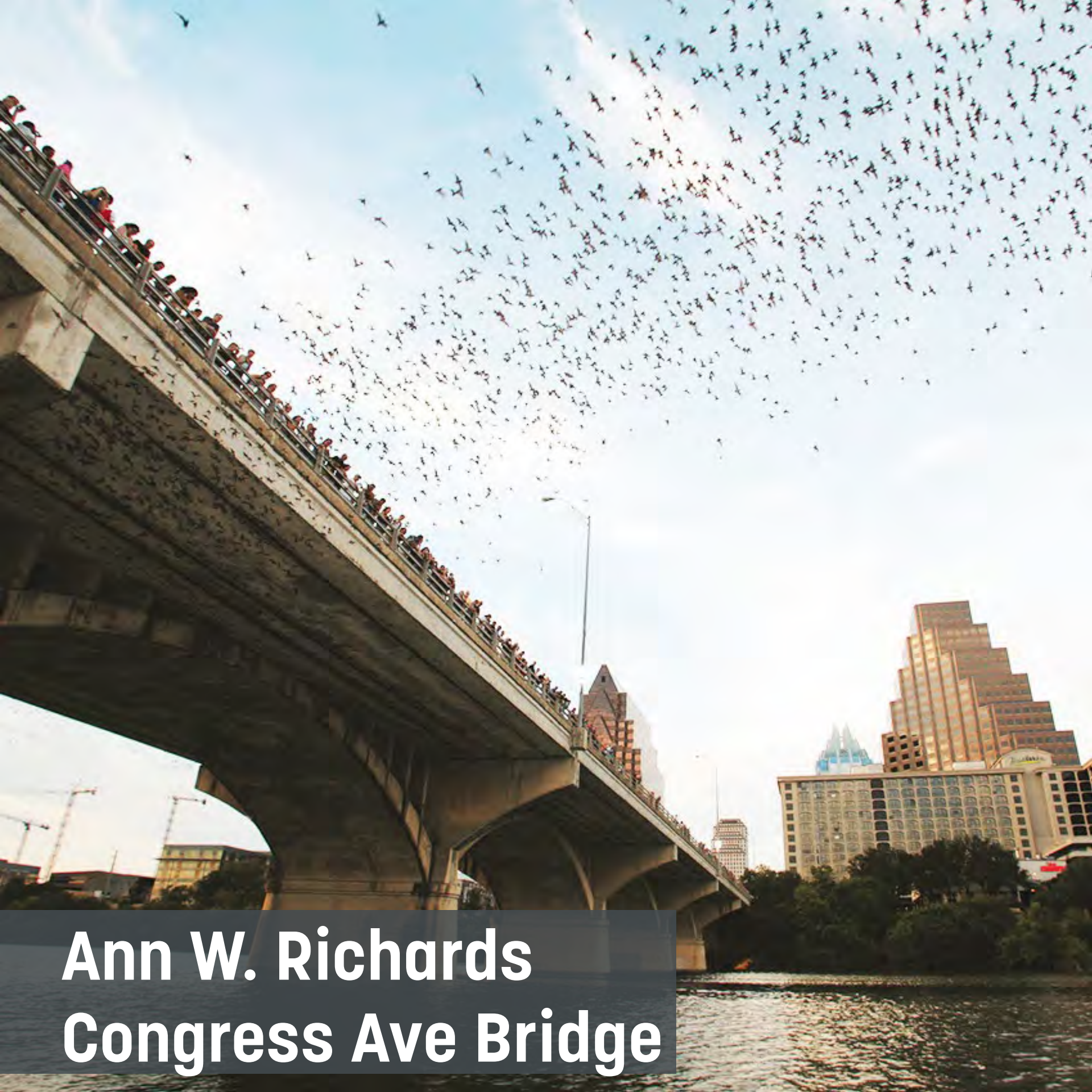
# Green Gateway



# GREEN GATEWAY







**Ann W. Richards  
Congress Ave Bridge**





## ANN W. RICHARDS CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE





# Vibrant Crossings





# VIBRANT CROSSINGS





# VIBRANT CROSSINGS

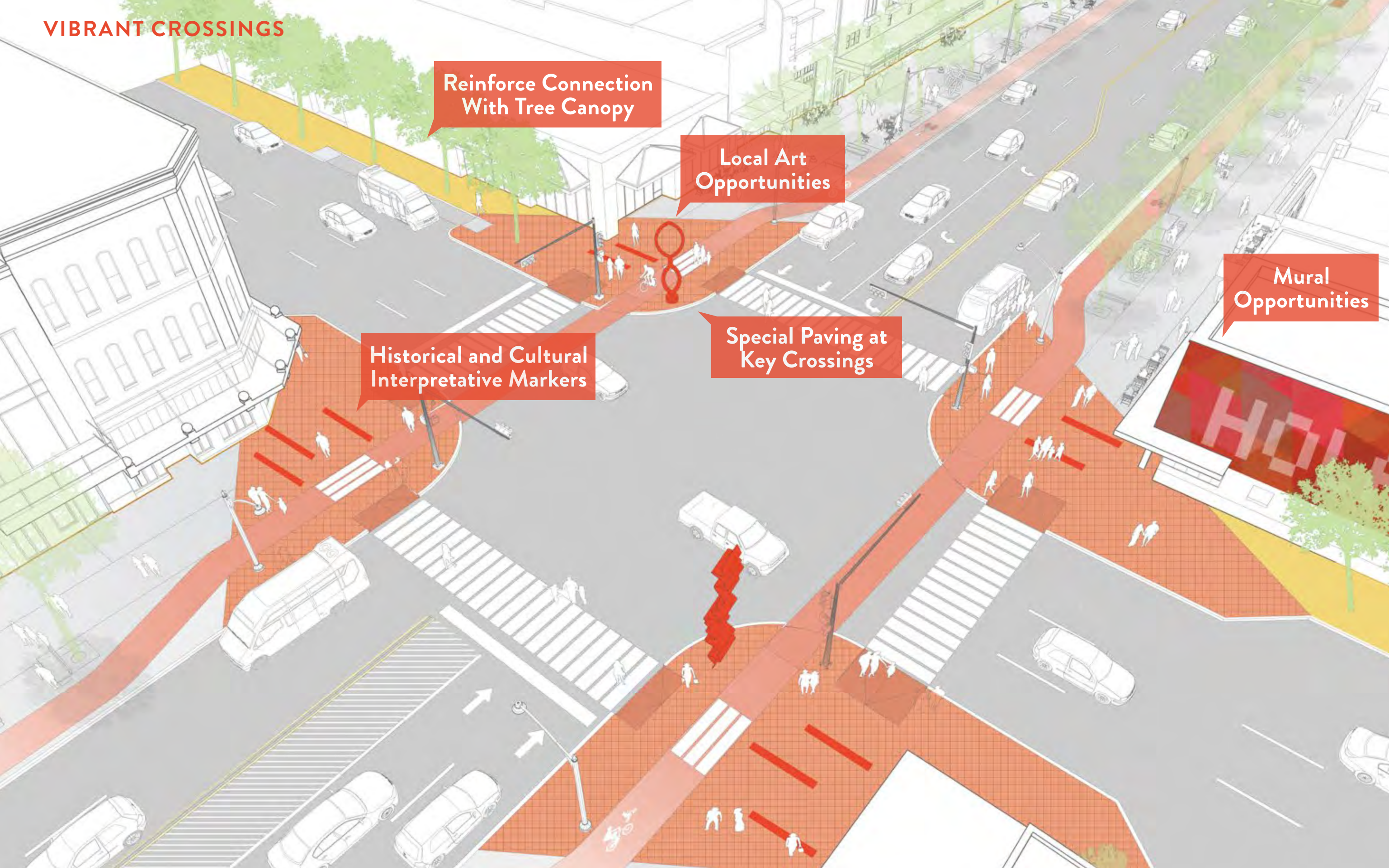
Reinforce Connection  
With Tree Canopy

Local Art  
Opportunities

Historical and Cultural  
Interpretative Markers

Special Paving at  
Key Crossings

Mural  
Opportunities





**Next Steps:**

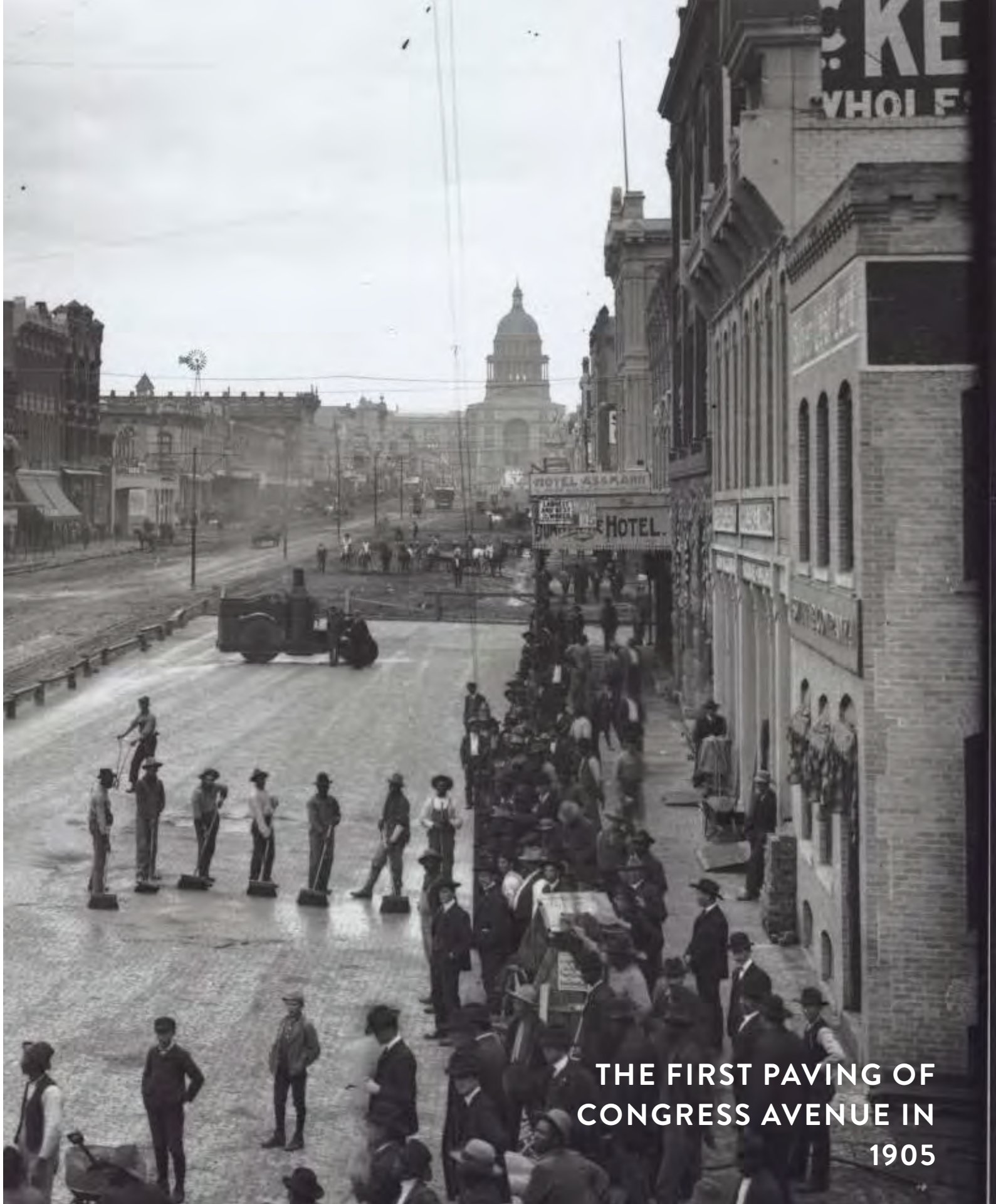
# Implementation



FINANCING

CAPITAL COSTS (ESTIMATED)	
Engineering & Management	\$9.6 million
Surveys & Inspections	\$1.5 million
Construction Costs	\$50.1 million
<i>Street Reconstruction</i>	
<i>Utility Reconstruction</i>	
<i>Landscape &amp; Streetscape</i>	
<i>Bridge Improvements</i>	
Contingency & Miscellaneous	\$8.3 million
Total	\$69.5 million

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES INCLUDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Bond Financing</li><li>▶ Ongoing Development Fees</li><li>▶ Tax Increment Financing</li><li>▶ Federal / State Funding</li><li>▶ Fees Recovered from Dockless Mobility Providers</li></ul>



THE FIRST PAVING OF  
CONGRESS AVENUE IN  
1905



## OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

### Funding Sources for Events, Operations & Maintenance

- Public Improvement District
- Philanthropic Sources
- Event & Rental Fees





## IMPACTS & METRICS



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