

Downtown Austin Wayfinding Master Plan
appendix

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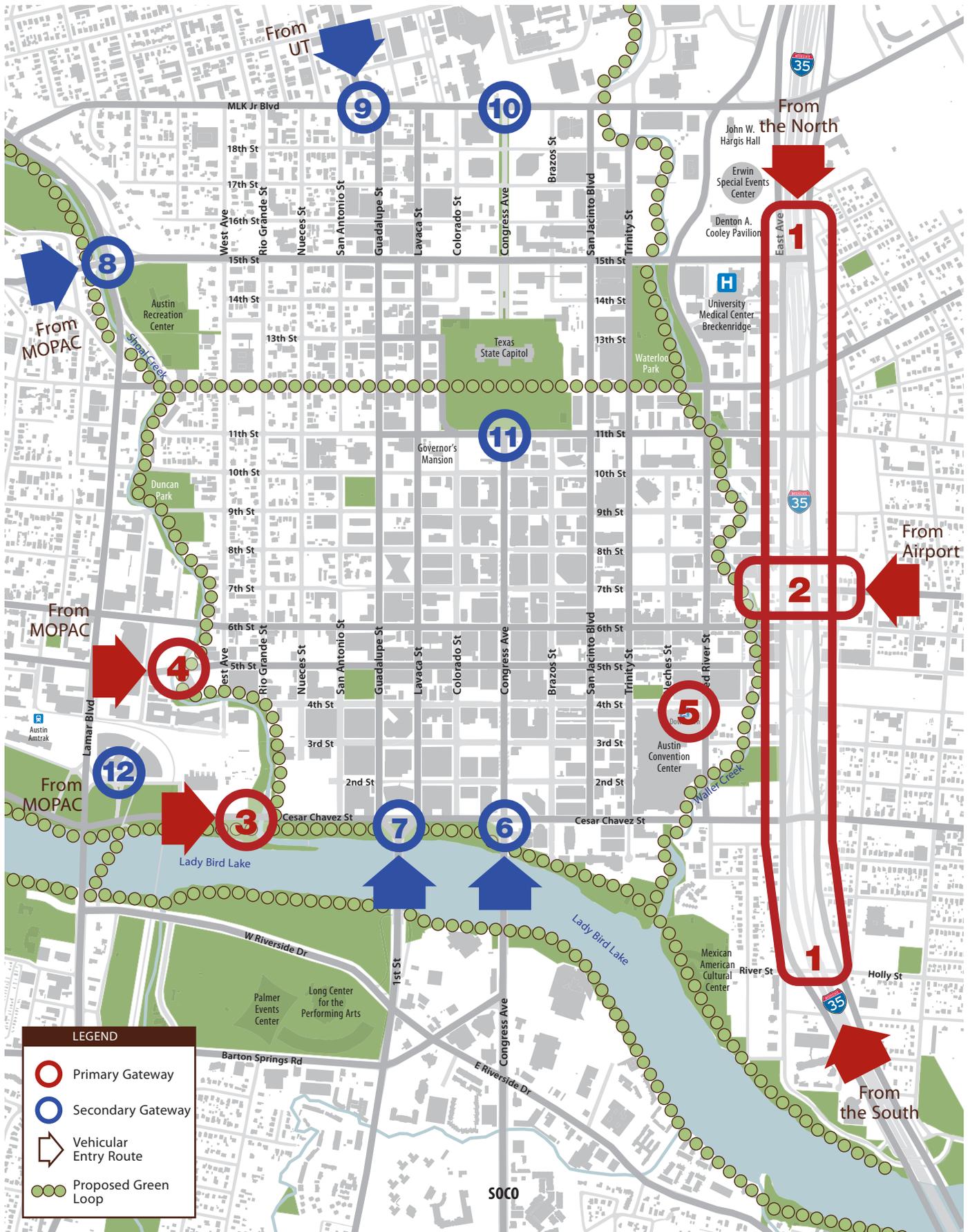
**You got to go through
a whole lot of Texas to get here.**

AUSTIN

appendix

wayfinding & signage analysis

1	Gateways
43	MoPac Expressway



LEGEND

- Primary Gateway
- Secondary Gateway
- ➔ Vehicular Entry Route
- Proposed Green Loop

Downtown Gateways
 (See following pages for individual gateway recommendations.)

gateways

overview

Overall Design Approach

Gateways should celebrate the key arrival and transition points to Downtown through a variety of physical improvements that reflect the unique spirit of Austin, particularly the city's focus on sustainability and creativity. Rather than formulaic "signposts" that provide thematic entries to Downtown, each gateway should be designed to enhance its specific context and to become an important place of orientation and welcome.

Such improvements could be a combination of signage, lighting, landscape, streetscape, public open space and public art, each composed to:

- Create a positive, coherent identity and sense of arrival for Downtown and for Austin.
- Establish a strong sense of orientation and place appropriate to the context.
- Improve the experience, understanding of and connectivity to Downtown and its destinations, for all modes: pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular.

Primary Gateways

There are at least five gateways that serve as the principal portals for most people arriving to Downtown Austin by auto, transit, bicycle or foot. These are the most important in establishing the visitor's first impression of Downtown and in providing an initial understanding of its physical layout and sense of place. They include:

1 IH 35 Corridor Gateway, between E. 15th St. and César Chávez Blvd., where interstate traffic from the north and south is channeled onto the frontage roads that connect with the Downtown grid of east-west streets, particularly César Chávez, 4th, 6th, 7th, 11th and 12th streets, all of which connect to East Austin.

2 E. 7th St. Gateway, which provides the principal route between Austin Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) and Downtown. Unfortunately, arriving visitors are forced to turn northbound to 8th St. at IH 35 due to the one-way street system on 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th streets Downtown. The "stitches" of the I35 Makeover Project between 6th and 8th provide a strong and celebratory gateway at these points. However, the surrounding environment is unwelcoming to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, alike.

3 César Chávez Gateway, from MoPac (Loop 1), where eastbound traffic from Loop 1 and cyclists along the Lance Armstrong Bikeway and Pflugger Bridge enter the Downtown through the Seaholm EcoDistrict at Shoal Creek.

4 W. 5th St. Gateway, from MoPac, where the majority of commuters from the western parts of the city enter Downtown, just east of Lamar Blvd. at Shoal Creek.

5 Brush Square at the Convention Center Gateway along E. 4th St., where rail commuters on Capital Metro's Red Line disembark and make their way to Downtown destinations by foot, bike and BikeShare, bus, taxi or car share.

Secondary Gateways

There are numerous other important arrival points to Downtown, seven of which rise to the next level of significance:

6 The Ann W. Richards Bridge Gateway (Congress Ave.), which provides a natural southern gateway across Lady Bird Lake and along the formal axis of Congress Ave., leading to the State Capitol.

7 Drake Bridge Gateway (S. 1st St.), which brings northbound traffic from South Austin to the front door of City Hall, itself a landmark building on axis with the bridge.

8 W. 15th St. Bridge Gateway, across Lamar Blvd. connecting Enfield Road and Loop 1 with the Capitol and the northwest quadrant of Downtown.

9 Guadalupe St. Gateway (at Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.), bringing southbound traffic from the University of Texas (UT) area and "the Drag".

10 Congress Ave./MLK Jr. Gateway (at Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.), which provides an important threshold between the State Capitol and UT.

11 The Congress Ave./11th St. Gateway, which serves as the principal gateway between the downtown core and the Capitol Complex.

12 The Seaholm EcoDistrict Gateway, is an important node for commuters, trail users and cyclists into Downtown. Users along César Chávez from MoPac, Lance Armstrong Bikeway and Pflugger Bridge, and the Bird Lake Trail system enter Downtown just east of Lamar Blvd.

A "Green Loop" Pathway

Most of the gateways identified above are located in close proximity to the existing and still emerging pedestrian and bicycle network along Lady Bird Lake, Waller and Shoal creeks, and Congress Ave. The Wayfinding Master Plan recommends that the stature of historic 12th St. be restored as a civic boulevard and as a "green street" connecting the two creeks and the Capitol and forming a multi-use "loop" or pathway around Downtown.

gateways

design principles



7 Drake Bridge Gateway



2 7th St. Gateway



11 11th St. / Congress Ave. Gateway

Above are the “after” images (simulations) of gateways showing how design principles A-F that could be applied.

As part of the gateway and wayfinding strategy there is an opportunity to use the Green Loop as a strong orienting device, that reinforces Austin’s commitment to the natural environment, to its parks, to the promotion of alternative transportation modes, to being a healthy community - and to one that provides opportunities for families and children.

In addition, the “Green Loop” could have an interpretative role to play in revealing the history of Austin, where the two creeks and the Colorado River and the promontory of the hill overlooking these scenic features established Austin as the perfect site for the State’s new Capitol. The city was laid out in respect to these natural features with a clear, grid system of streets and four public squares.

Overall Gateway Design Principles

The following describes the key principles in developing the Downtown’s Gateway System.

A: Welcoming and Celebrating

Each gateway should welcome, celebrate and convey optimism about the place it announces. The design of the gateways must recognize that multiple places may be signaled within a single gateway zone. For example, the S. Congress Gateway, announces the State of Texas with its views to the Capitol, “The Main Street

of Texas” (Congress Ave. itself), and Lady Bird Lake. Each gateway should also be designed with an awareness of the importance of its function in terms of arrival, orientation, the history and celebration of place, as well as how each functions as a “key” to the Downtown Austin experience.

B: Site-Specific

The gateways should be designed to help address the issues and opportunities inherent in each site. For example, the design of a gateway in an area already congested with signage, poles, etc., should not add to this clutter, but should instead seek to make sense of or reveal an order that may be latent. The gateways should strengthen or create an altogether new sense of arrival and place, and so, they demand a larger re-thinking of their sites, beyond simply placing a portal-like object or structure at a key spot on the map. Other gateways may need little or nothing to be “added”, as they already are imageable and memorable places.

The Downtown Wayfinding System has developed strategies for signage consolidation and removal of unnecessary signage and poles. It will be especially important to prioritize this “clean-up and clarification” in and near the sites to be developed as gateways.

C: Multiple Functionality

The gateways should function on multiple levels. They should: 1) serve to mark entry zones and important thresholds within Downtown; 2) help reveal the city, 3) orient visitors and residents to the overall way-finding system; and 4) help to clarify and organize the important public spaces in which they occur. In addition, the gateways may be part of a larger improvement strategy that should include safety, security, enhanced pedestrian access and mobility, environmental, aesthetic and way-finding improvements.

Every effort should be made to identify and leverage other Downtown, initiatives and projects that are planned that may intersect with the Gateway System. For example, the TxDOT/City of Austin IH 35 Corridor Improvement Project, will identify improvements in the Downtown stretch of the freeway. The Gateway System and overall way-finding system projects could be implemented as part of the capital improvement projects that will emerge from this project.

The City’s Great Streets Development Program should be revised to include the Wayfinding and Gateway Program projects, so public streetscapes are improved, these may be implemented at the same time - possibly through the use of Great Streets funds.



8 W. 15th St. Bridge Gateway

D: Artfully-Conceived & Austin-Imbued

The Gateways should be designed, detailed and executed with a high-quality sense of craft and aesthetics, and should convey an “Austin spirit”. Architects, landscape architects, artists and artisans should be employed to conceive and execute the spaces and objects associated with each gateway.

The City’s Arts in Public Places (AIPP) Program should be engaged to assist in identifying artists that could participate in the design and implementation of the various gateways. If they become part of other identified capital improvement projects, as discussed above, AIPP would typically receive funding in the form of two percent of the above-ground improvements, which could then be dedicated to involving artists.

E: Wayfinding-Related

The gateways should not only be objects or places that are perceived as isolated points in Downtown: they should also function to introduce and seamlessly link to the Downtown Wayfinding System. In effect, the gateways are also gateways to the Wayfinding System, so there should be a conceptual and aesthetic relationship between the two.



5 Brush Square Gateway

F: Announcing & Informing

The gateways should help orient visitors and residents to what Downtown offers. In some cases, this could take the form of changeable banners and signage that announce specific events, exhibitions, etc. In other cases, the gateways may simply be announcing that one is arriving in Downtown or at one of its thresholds, transmitting on a more intuitive level, information about how to move about in this special district.

A processional banner program along the key “visitor approach corridors” leading into Downtown to advertise current cultural events, exhibitions, programs, etc., is a powerful way to express the cultural identity of Austin - to both visitors and residents. This would utilize the existing street lighting poles along these corridors, but may involve adding additional poles along certain corridors or on bridges, where the density and spacing of street light poles may not be adequate to achieve the desired effect of creating excitement and anticipation as one enters Downtown.



12 Seaholm EcoDistrict Gateway

The proposed corridors for the banner system are:

- IH 35 Gateway Frontage Roads
- S. Congress Ave. Gateway
- W. César Chávez Blvd. Gateway
- W. 5th St. and 6th St. Gateway
- W. 15th St. Bridge Gateway

Six of the 12 gateways are associated with adjacent projects or related initiatives which make them a higher priority for implementation. These are:

- E. 7th St. Gateway
- Brush Square Gateway
- Ann Richards Bridge Gateway
- W. 15th St. Bridge Gateway
- 11th St. / Congress Ave. Gateway
- Seaholm EcoDistrict Gateway

See the following pages for explanations of all 12 gateways, with a more enhanced explanation and illustration for the six gateways selected for nearer term implementation.

gateways

design strategies

1 IH 35 Corridor Gateway



The Downtown Austin Plan and Reconnect Austin initiative call for depressing IH 35 main lanes and creating new boulevards, bridges, and public spaces.



SECTION/PERSPECTIVE AT THE SOUTHBOUND FRONTAGE ROAD LOOKING SOUTH TO 4TH STREET

The Downtown Austin Plan (2011) and more recently, the Reconnect Austin (reconnectaustin.com) initiative call for designing the rebuild as a “cut-and-cap”, allowing IH 35 to become a more civic gateway to Austin. (See mobility35.org) The concept of cut-and-cap would allow the higher-speed, through-traffic to travel below grade and the lower-speed, local traffic would connect at the surface. Reconnect Austin proposes this design, envisioning a ground-level human environment, with great streets, wide sidewalks, bikeways, transit, street trees and sidewalk cafes. The east/west surface streets would connect straight across IH 35, reconnecting Austin’s

historic grid and providing more entry points into Downtown.

- In the short term, landscape and calm the highway edge and frontage roads, so they are welcoming, safe and visually attractive.
- Improve signage and legibility to enable people to easily locate and enter the street grid of Downtown.
- Implement the Downtown Austin Plan recommendation for removing the sloped concrete embankments, and vegetating the slopes adjacent to the elevated portions of the freeway. When possible, reduce the number of travel

lanes, improve bicycle and pedestrian ways, and finally construct bio-filtration planters along both edges of the frontage roads.

At each under-crossing of IH 35 (César Chávez, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th streets):

- Clean and paint the “underbelly” of the freeway, and wrap the round concrete columns supporting the overpasses with a colorful, light-producing and/or reflecting, ant-graffiti cladding or surface (e.g., bonded aluminum or porcelain enamel panels, glass mosaic tiles, etc.) that clearly announces each street/gateway of the Interstate into the Downtown.



The underbelly of the freeway (above) conveys a feeling of neglect. The columns could be wrapped with a new colorful and light-reflecting cladding that announces each street/gateway.



The guardrails on the bridges crossing IH 35 should be replaced with a more artfully-conceived railing system that protects the pedestrian and creates a civic statement perceivable from the frontage roads and the freeway itself.



- Address the substandard pedestrian infrastructure flanking the roadway underpasses by improving ADA ramps, providing sidewalk continuity beneath the freeway improving public lighting and overall maintenance.

At each bridge crossing of IH 35 (at MLK, 15th, 12th, 11th streets):

- Replace the guardrails with a new, artfully-conceived railing system that better protects the pedestrian and while creating a civic-scaled statement that is perceivable from the freeway and both frontage roads.

- Increase bicycle lane and sidewalk widths of the bridges by reducing the width of the roadway travel lanes, in order to create a safer, more ample bike/ped entries into Downtown.
- The guardrail could be an interestingly-detailed, painted steel screen that could begin at the minimum 42-inch guardrail height where it is nearest the frontage roads, and arch up to a height of eight or more feet in the center, so that the guardrail provides protection from the noise and danger of the freeway traffic below, acting also as a monumental gateway element.

As part of a possible AIPP initiative, use the blank facades of existing IH 35 oriented buildings as support for a permanent or changing artistic interventions. UT's Frank Erwin Center, the City's Downtown Police Station (at 8th St.), and the Brackenridge Hospital Complex (at 15th St.) are examples of buildings that may be able to support such public art. These "blank canvases" are all located on public building facades and currently present a dreary - yet very prominent - face to Downtown visitors. These buildings create an opportunity to enliven these major gateways, while putting forth a message or image about the Austin community.



The monumental banner on the façade of the Police Station (above) communicates a message of fear rather than one of welcome. Left is an example of using such a building as a "canvas" for public art.

gateways

design strategies

2 E. 7th St. Gateway & the “Stitches” / IH 35 Makeover Project



The planned conversion of 7th St. to two-way operation will create a strong eastern gateway for visitors arriving from the airport.



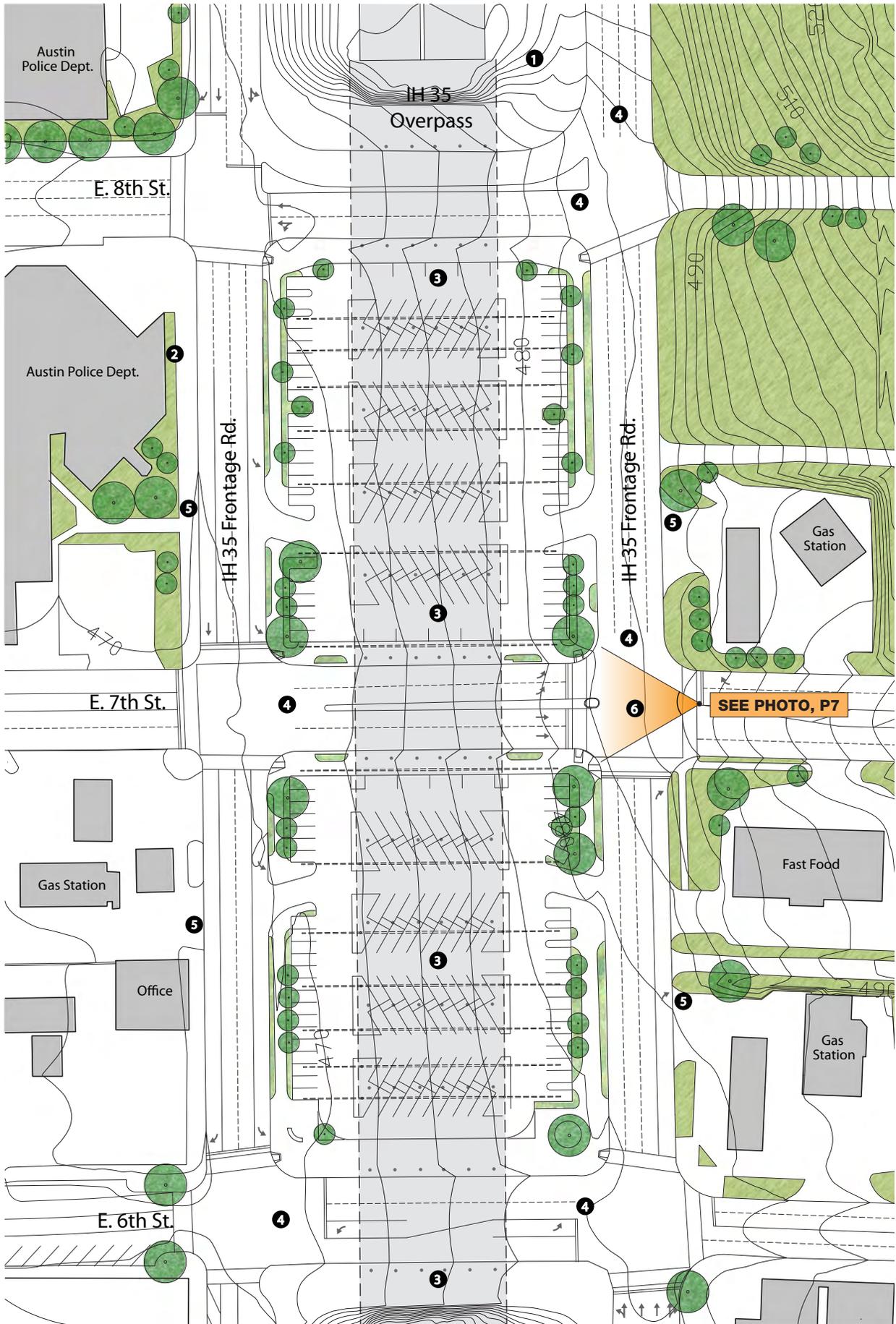
Thousands of vehicles arrive to Downtown via this key route from the airport and are met with the barrier of the elevated portion of IH 35 and the confusing and off-putting deflection to 8th St., because 7th St. is one-way east. This conveys the message that “it’s easy to get out of Downtown, but not in”. The Downtown Austin Plan’s recommendation for the conversion of 7th St. to two-way operation will remedy this.

On the positive side, design elements implemented under the freeway viaduct between E. 6th and 8th streets as part of the I35 Makeover Project “stitch” together the two sides of the freeway, affirming the linkages between east and west. These take the form of large-scale, galvanized, curved steel poles that rise up from the underside of the freeway to expose their “tusks” above the elevated portion.

• The “stitches” are a very powerful design element that operates as a highly distinctive gateway, so care should be taken not to conflict aesthetically or spatially with this series of LED-lighted poles. Currently lit by alternating blue and magenta lights resulting in a purplish glow, there is a second phase project soon to be implemented by an artist team to enhance the lighting.

Existing Conditions/Issues:

- 1 The sloping concrete embankment of the elevated freeway is unattractive.
- 2 An unwelcoming message/banner exists on the Austin Police Department Building.
- 3 Lack of periodic maintenance (power-washing) and public lighting of structure below IH 35 creates an atmosphere of neglect.
- 4 The lack of crosswalks along 7th St. and the IH 35 corridor create a barrier to/from East Austin.
- 5 Poor sidewalk conditions along the frontage roads make for an unpleasant experience.
- 6 The vehicular entry from the airport is a confusing and off-putting entrance to Downtown.



7TH ST. UNDERPASS AT IH 35 - EXISTING CONDITIONS



gateways

design strategies

2 E. 7th St. Gateway & the “Stitches” / IH 35 Makeover Project



The AIPP Program has commissioned artist team, Electroland, to design lighting that will enhance the pedestrian experience by utilizing the LED technology of the “stiches” with a more robust interactive scheme. This pedestrian-activated component will interact with images on the sidewalk. When an individual walks on the different images, corresponding colors or lighting effects would occur. An overall ground paving scheme is also proposed that would tie the whole experience together and redefine the space as much more just a parking lot.

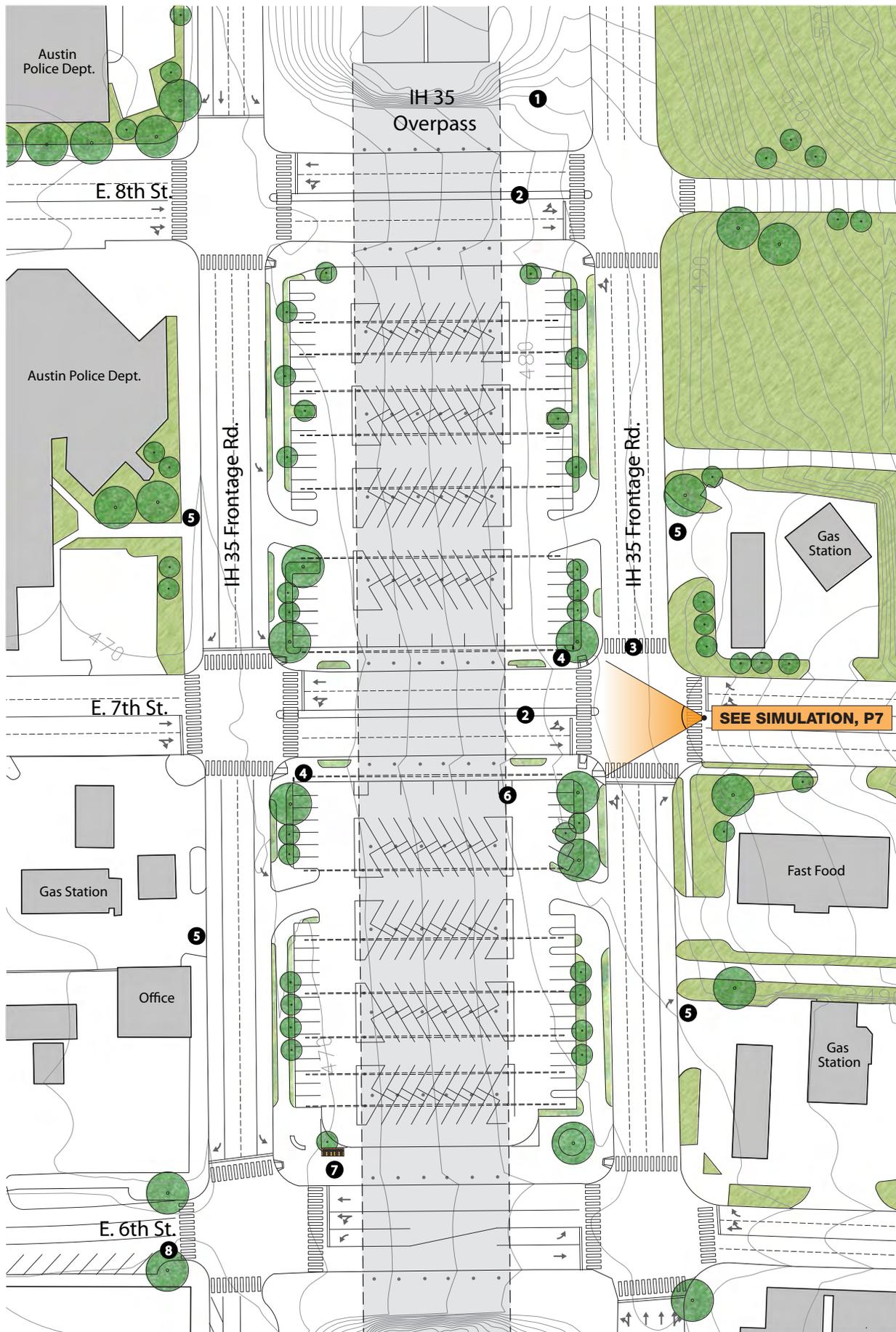
- The AIPP project should be coordinated with the other gateway concepts outlined in this document. This may allow for visual elements and shared philosophies to be displayed through the artist’s work, the IH 35 gateways and the Wayfinding System, making for a more interesting Downtown experience.
- The proposed gateway treatment could be the column wrap and underbelly improvements described above, and be implemented once the two-way conversion of the 7th and 8th St. couplet is completed.



Phase 2 of the “Stitches” Project with Pedestrian Icon/Lighting Element (Courtesy: Electroland, Artist)

Recommendations:

- 1 In the near term, remove the concrete embankment; and replace with vegetated slopes with rain gardens at their base.
- 2 Reconfigure 7th and 8th streets and their medians to become two-way streets.
- 3 Reconfigure crosswalks and signage to ensure pedestrian safety.
- 4 Install wayfinding element, “PKiosk.1”.
- 5 Improve lighting and sidewalk conditions along frontage roads.
- 6 Implement AIPP project by artist team, Electroland.
- 7 Install proposed Bike Share kiosk.
- 8 Propose improvements into the historic 6th St. district.



7TH ST. UNDERPASS AT IH 35 - IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT



gateways

design strategies

3 W. César Chávez Blvd. Gateway at Shoal Creek



Above: The existing gateway along W. César Chávez Blvd. beneath the railroad bridge is the last of three bridges creating a gateway from the west.

Right: “Pollen Grain” sculpture by artist Chris Levack, located at Mueller’s Southwest Greenway is an example of what could signal the trailhead and gateway to Shoal Creek and Lady Bird Lake trails.



This eastbound approach into Downtown is primarily experienced by commuters, those in vehicles or buses from MoPac, as well as by walkers and bicyclists. This stretch of César Chávez has the Lady Bird Lake Trail on its south side and the Lance Armstrong Bikeway on its north side. The gateway zone is clearly marked by the sequence of three bridges across César Chávez: the Lamar vehicular bridge, the Pfluger Pedestrian/Bicycle bridge and the Union Pacific Railroad bridge. The railroad bridge is located immediately west of the Seaholm Power Plant, an iconic building, at the center of the emerging, mixed-use and arts/entertainment-oriented Seaholm EcoDistrict.

This gateway zone also contains the new Sand Beach Park with the “Open Room Austin” public art installation by Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt, and a beautiful biofiltration meadow - all City projects that showcase environmental responsibility, alternative transportation modes, community gathering, healthy living and the arts.

- Coordinate plans for this gateway with redevelopment plans for the Seaholm Power Plant, the new Central Library, the César Chávez Esplanade Improvements - Phase Two, and the Green Water Treatment Plant.

The gateway zone terminates with the César Chávez vehicular bridge crossing of Shoal Creek, where its trail passes beneath it, largely unbeknownst to the passerby. This is an important gateway to both the Shoal Creek and Lady Bird Lake Trail systems, celebrating Austin’s green and healthy Downtown. A gateway element at Shoal Creek could take the form of a trailhead and descent, signaled with a light beacon or a strong vertical mast element to mark this: the southwest corner of the Green Loop (described above).

- Ensure that the trailhead beacon(s) or mast(s) are visible from César Chávez.
- Extend the César Chávez Esplanade from Congress Ave. to Shoal Creek.

- Coordinate plans for this gateway with redevelopment plans for the Seaholm Power Plant, the new central library and the Green Water Treatment Plant, as well as the AIPP arts master plan for the Seaholm EcoDistrict.
- Coordinate plans for this gateway and its future trail linkages to the future West Ave. signaled pedestrian crossing in front of the Seaholm Power Plant.
- Consider widening and delineating pedestrian and bicycle zones on the César Chávez bridge crossing, as well as creating sidewalk/trail improvements on the west side of this bridge. (There is currently no pathway on the south edge of César Chávez between the Shoal Creek bridge and MoPac. At a minimum, a multi-use path should be created between this bridge and the Pfluger Bridge helix ramp and the pedestrian crossing at Sandra Muraida Way.)

4 W. 5th St. Gateway at Shoal Creek



5th St. gateway at the Shoal Creek bridge will expand a small stair descent to the Shoal Creek Trail below and create better visibility from the street to the proposed “Green Loop.”



The W. 5th St. approach to Downtown from MoPac is primarily a vehicular commuter’s gateway into Downtown. The Lamar Blvd. intersection at 5th St. is a congested, high-traffic area with many overhead power lines and poles, so a gateway element at this busy intersection is not recommended. Like that described for César Chávez, however, there is an opportunity to create a gateway at the Shoal Creek crossing of 5th St., just east of Lamar, where it could provide another link to the “Green Loop” trail system in the form of a grand descent with a similar, lighted beacon or vertical mast.

This threshold is near the largest concentration of recent residential and mixed-use developments in Downtown. The access point to Shoal Creek, however, is difficult to discern: it is a narrow stair that is shielded from view by a solid concrete guardrail, as well as a Capital Metro bus stop. The following are design criteria for this gateway:

- The vertical mast structure or beacon should artfully signal the presence of the creek trail and incorporate the trailhead marker of the Wayfinding System.
- A grand descent to the creek should be developed, which could be a street-level plaza with a stair and a ramp that works both for cyclists and wheelchairs. Negotiations with adjacent property owners and developments will be required to achieve this strategy.
- The sidewalks along both sides of W. 5th St., west of the Shoal Creek bridge crossing, should be improved to Great Streets standards with 18-foot wide sidewalks and street trees.
- Overhead power lines that create visual clutter at this key gateway should be relocated underground.
- Views to the creek should be opened up by removing the heavy concrete guardrails that are perpendicular to the historic bridge rail.
- The eroded segments of trail on the west side of Shoal Creek, between 3rd and 9th streets should be mended.
- The placement of the trailhead marker of the wayfinding system and the design of its mast or beacon should be coordinated with The Trail Foundation’s way-finding systems. This gateway and associated way-finding should also orient trail users to the street-level destinations that may be accessed from the trail, including the many dining and shopping opportunities, the Seaholm EcoDistrict, the Market District, Duncan Park, the BMX Park, House Park, the new skate park, Pease Park, etc.

gateways

design strategies

5 Brush Square / Convention Center Gateway



Commuter rail establishes an information hub and optimal location for Bike Share. The MetroRail expansion's future streetscape improvements along both sides of 4th St. and should be the occasion for improving Brush Square as a great Downtown park.



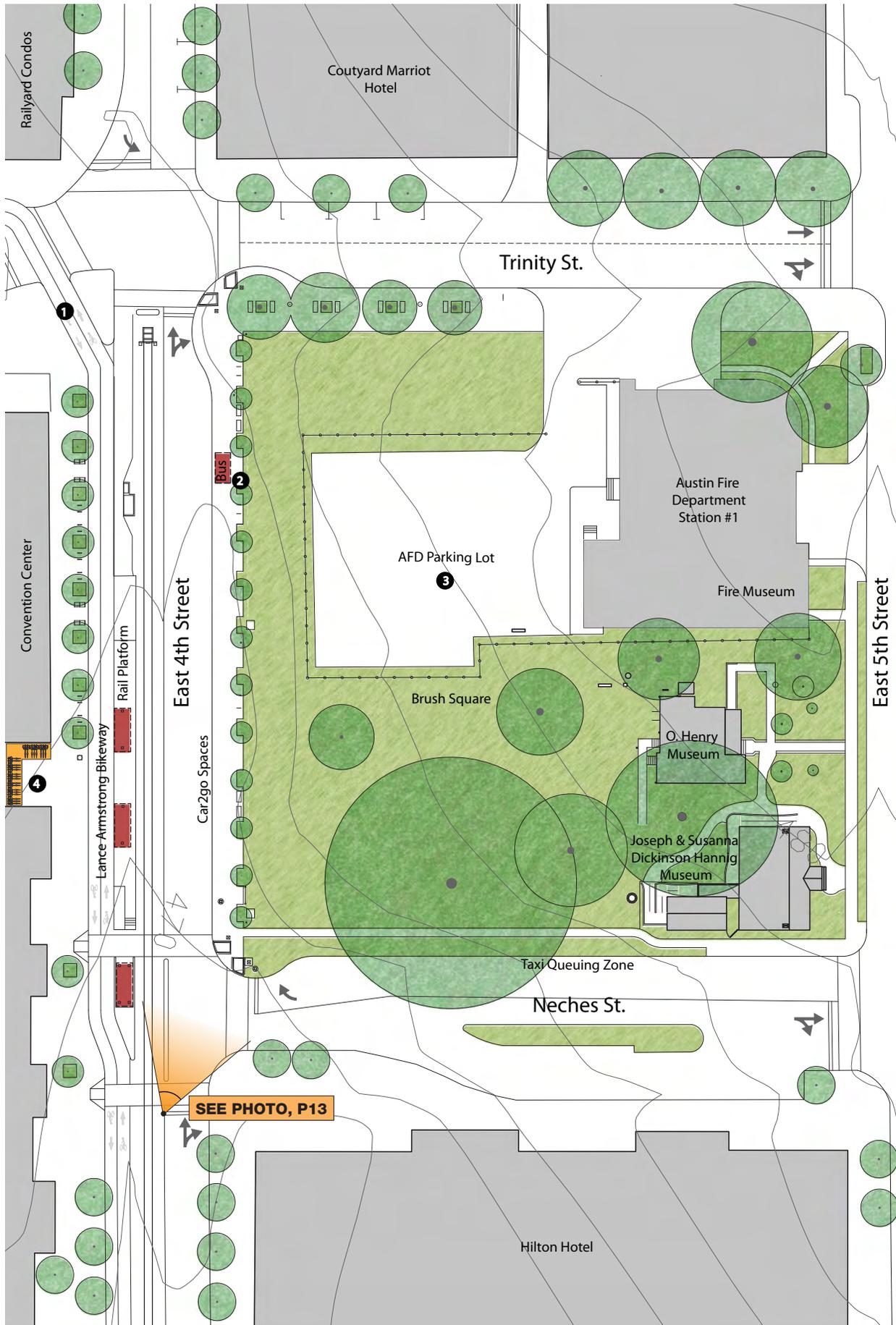
The arrival into Downtown Austin via commuter rail is a point of entry that requires a gateway of a different scale and purpose. This point of arrival should be pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-oriented and provide not only a welcoming message, but also directional, orientation and event-specific information. Information and cues that provide transit patrons with easy transfers to other modes of transportation (including walking) and general information regarding nearby destinations will be particularly important.

- Provide a major Bike Share station along the southern curb of 4th St. in front of the Convention Center, with an artistic design treatment that celebrates Austin's commitment to cycling and the presence of the Lance Armstrong Bikeway.

- Improve Brush Square as an active and welcoming open space with a positive street presence and edge along 4th St. Consider the future, adaptive re-use of the fire station for uses that energize the park.
- Improve the streetscape treatment of 4th St. with wayfinding and informational kiosks along the northern curb as well as enhanced paving, crosswalks and pedestrian-scaled lighting.

Existing Conditions/Issues:

- 1 The Lance Armstrong Bikeway does not make a good connection to Trinity St. bike lanes.
- 2 The existing bus shelter along 4th St. is too small for a major public transportation node.
- 3 The Austin Fire Department (AFD) Station's parking lot is laid out inefficiently and should be reduced in area.
- 4 A new Bike Share station has recently been installed.



BRUSH SQUARE/CONVENTION CENTER - EXISTING CONDITIONS



gateways

design strategies

5 Brush Square / Convention Center Gateway



Above: Heart of Texas Pétanque Club teaching people how to play pétanque at Mueller's Paggi Square Grand Opening is an example of the type of space needed for a pétanque court.

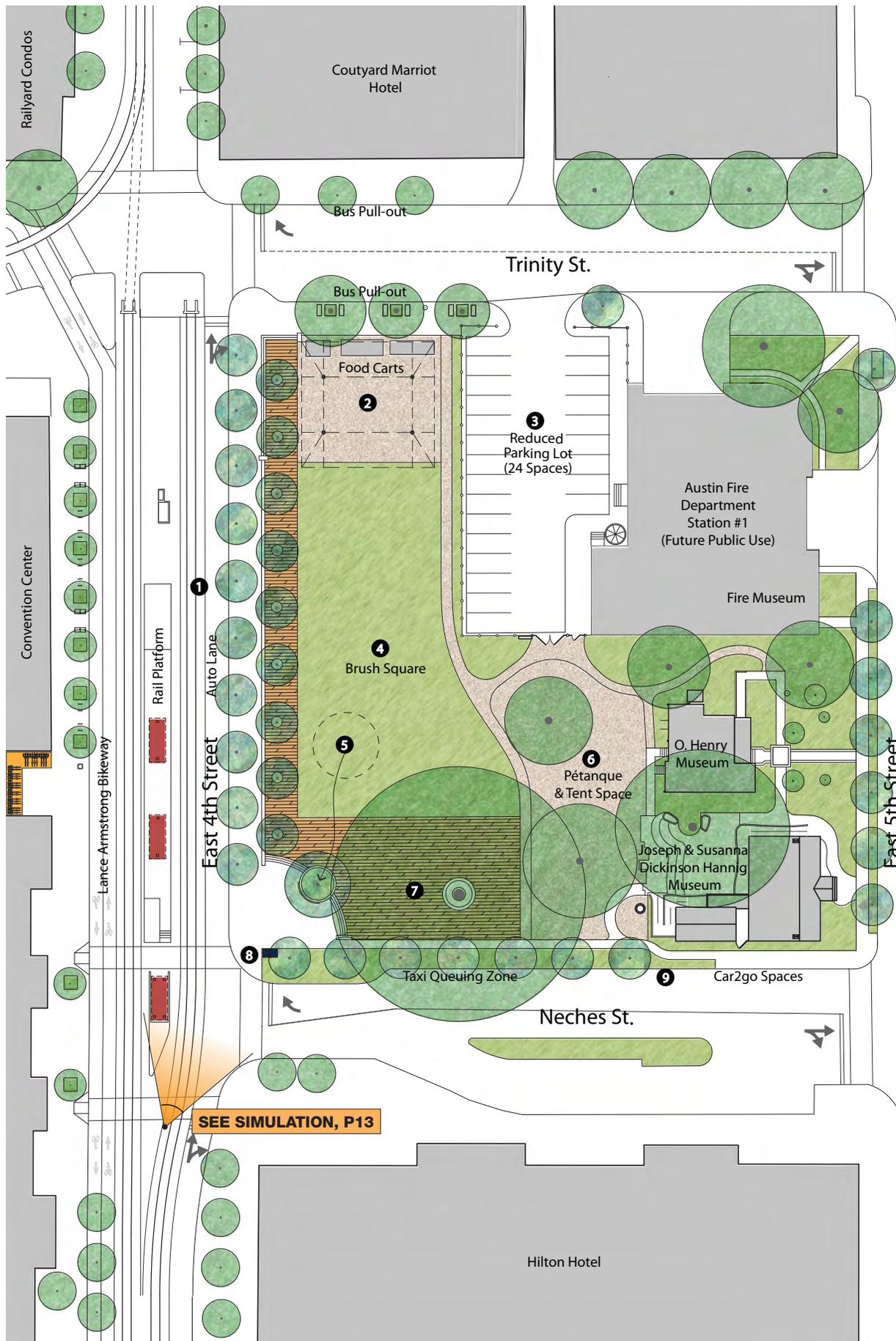
Left: This shade structure is an example of a light, steel structure proposed for the southwest corner of Brush Square.

Below: Example of a deck built around the Heritage Oaks at Republic Square.

Recommendations:

- 1 The expansion of MetroRail will construct a second track and move the platform between the two tracks.
- 2 Construct a light steel frame shade structure for food carts and dining/performance space.
- 3 Reduce the size of the AFD parking lot with a more efficient layout.
- 4 Regrade the Brush Square lawn with seat wall along the 4th St. sidewalk.
- 5 Relocate a tree to create entry way on southeast corner of Brush Square.
- 6 Create a flexible paved space used for tented events and for daily use, such as pétanque courts.
- 7 Install deck around heritage tree.
- 8 Install wayfinding element - "PKiosk.3a".
- 9 Relocate Car2Go spaces and taxi queuing zone to Neches St.





SEE SIMULATION, P13

gateways

design strategies

6 Ann W. Richards Bridge (Congress Ave.) Gateway



Above: West side of Ann W. Richards Bridge

Right: Proposed bat viewing areas (Courtesy: Black + Vernooy, Architecture and Urban Design)



This gateway should celebrate the arrival of the visitor to the great state of Texas, along what is now branded as the “Main Street of Texas”. The dramatic terminus of the view is the Texas Capitol Building, a powerful landmark in itself, suggesting that treatments should be careful not to compete or detract from it.

The Congress Avenue Bridge is a logical and important gateway into downtown Austin. Local architect and urban designer, Sinclair Black, envisions the Congress Avenue Bridge as a transition between South Austin, Lady Bird Lake and Downtown, that operates at both a civic and a human scale. The bridge would have wide sidewalks, trees for shade, bike lanes and “Bat Decks”.

This bridge is home to the largest urban colony of Mexican freetail bats in North America, and has become a major venue for bat-watching as they emerge from their nests in the understructure of the bridge - nightly from March through October every year.

As part of this gateway project, the following should be addressed:

- Increase the width and the protection of the sidewalk area to allow for increased numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists both passing over the bridge and congregating at the Bat Decks.
- Introduce pedestrian-scaled lighting across the bridge. Which would be attached to the existing poles, which could also be support banners.

- Place interpretative information about the bats along the eastern guardrail.
- Place interpretative information about the history of Austin along the western guardrail, where such information already exists in the form of historic plaques.
- Announce the presence of the Lady Bird Lake trail system immediately below this bridge, which is not clearly linked to and associated with Downtown’s street level destinations.



Above: Proposed bat viewing areas on bridge. (Courtesy: Black + Vernooy, Architecture and Urban Design)



Above: West side of Ann W. Richards Bridge looking south
Right: Proposed bat viewing areas. (Courtesy: Black + Vernooy, Architecture and Urban Design)



Above: Congress Ave. looking north toward the Capitol
Right: Proposed Congress Ave. Streetscape. (Courtesy: Black + Vernooy, Architecture and Urban Design)



gateways

design strategies

7 Drake Bridge Gateway



Above: “Margaret Hofmann Oaks” at the terminus of the Drake Bridge (S. 1st St.) provides a green forecourt to City Hall and Downtown, but the City Hall Building is hardly visible from this vantage point.

Right: Proposed shade structures will shelter bicyclists and pedestrians while framing the City Hall view into Austin.



The S. 1st St. Bridge, is the “City of Austin” gateway, as it frames the now iconic City Hall Building on the north shore. Also present in this gateway is the Margaret Hofmann Oaks Park, or “Grackle Triangle”, as named by City Hall’s architect, Antoine Predock. It is a triangular, treed median located just south of César Chávez Blvd. and the City Hall Plaza, and serves as a green forecourt to both City Hall and Downtown. This median provides a shaded refuge for pedestrians and cyclists crossing along the north side of the bridge from the Lady Bird Lake promenade.

Existing Conditions/Issues:

- ❶ Civic and community space that announces the City Hall is hidden behind the Margaret Hofmann Oaks Park.
- ❷ Descent to the Lady Bird Lake Trail is hidden.
- ❸ Depressed and unshaded pathway along the Drake Bridge creates an unsafe and uninviting environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.



DRAKE BRIDGE - EXISTING CONDITIONS



gateways

design strategies

7 Drake Bridge Gateway



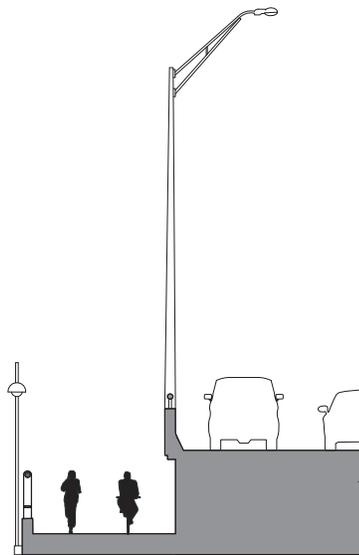
Above: The existing sidewalks of the Drake Bridge are depressed, poorly lighted and unshaded.

Right: A shade structure with solar panels could shelter bicyclists and pedestrians, while creating a real “place” at the walkway level.

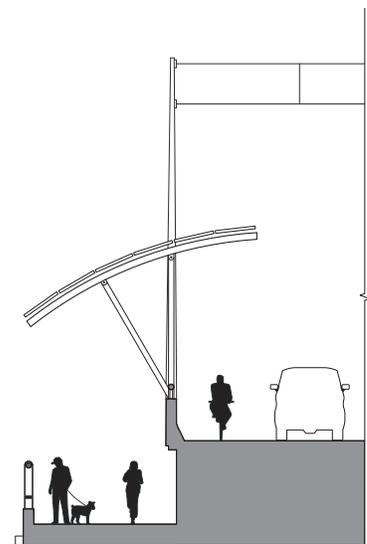


Recommendations:

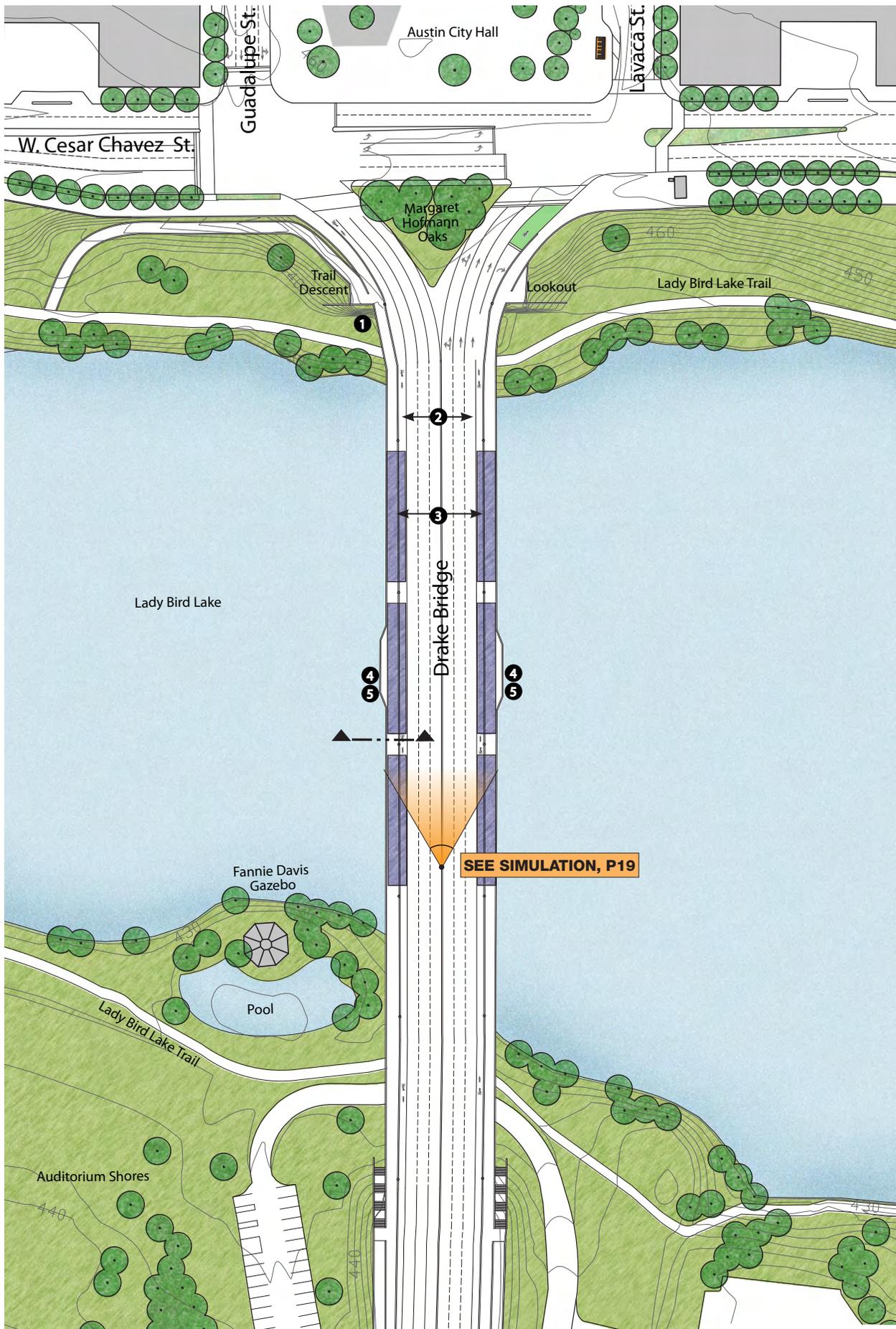
- 1 Install trailheads and wayfinding elements.
- 2 Stripe designated bike lanes.
- 3 Remove existing light poles and install banners with new lighting across the bridge.
- 4 Remove existing pedestrian lighting along the bridge and install shade/ weather protection with lighting.
- 5 Use the walls and rail along the bridge to display public art and interpretive signage.



Existing section at existing Drake Bridge



Proposed section with shading and new pedestrian and vehicular lighting



SEE SIMULATION, P19

DRAKE BRIDGE - IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT



gateways

design strategies

8 15th St. Bridge Gateway



The steeply sloped edge on the north side of 15th St. at the east side of the bridge offers an opportunity to create a graphically-designed, planted gateway to Downtown. The proposed banner system should be implemented in this corridor.

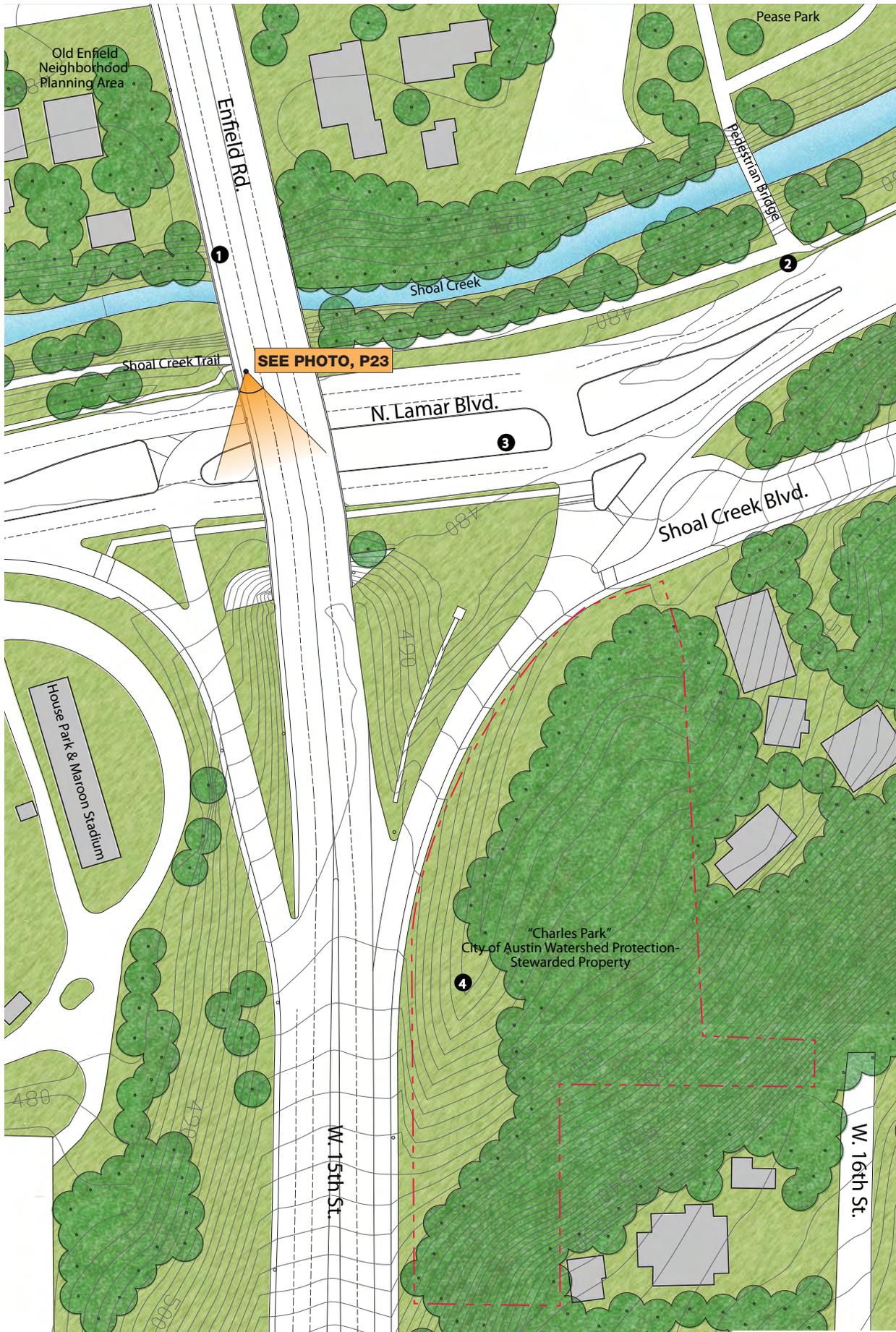


The approach to Downtown from Enfield Road / W. 15th St. offers views to Downtown - including to the Capitol - which is protected by a Capitol View Corridor. This gateway is one experienced more by residents and Downtown commuters than visitors and is an impressive gateway that needs little embellishment. However, the steeply sloped edge on the north side of 15th St. at the east side of the bridge offers an opportunity to create a graphically-designed planted gateway to Downtown. This corridor is also an opportunity to deploy the banner system described above.

- The vegetated slope is on property owned by the City of Austin, thereby enhancing the possibility of creating this planted gateway "signage", which could be something simple like "Welcome to Downtown".
- Rock work or paving could also be employed, as well as waterworks with lighting.
- A banner system along 15th St., from the bridge at Lamar Blvd. east into Downtown will complement the proposed streetscape and create a processional entry into Downtown.

Existing Conditions/Issues:

- 1 The narrow service sidewalk along Enfield Bridge is uncomfortable for pedestrians.
- 2 Improve the crossing from the Pease Park pedestrian bridge across Lamar Blvd. to 15th St.
- 3 The bare concrete medians in Lamar Blvd. are unpleasant and are used for parking during events at the Maroon Stadium.
- 4 Improve the sidewalk and landscaping along the north side of 15th St. along the City of Austin Watershed Protection - maintained land.



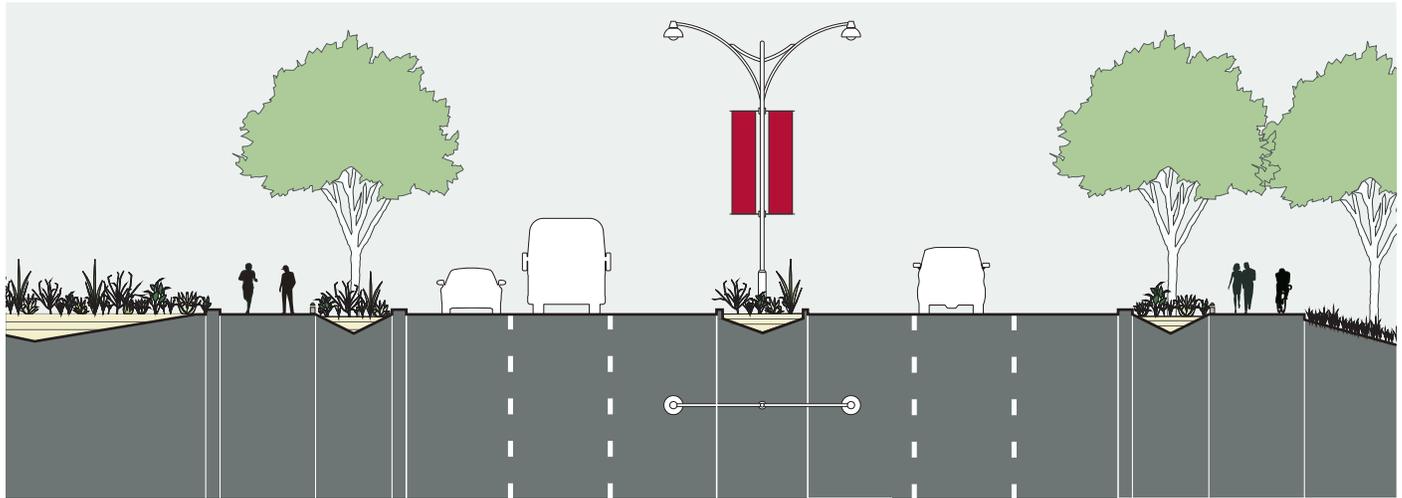
15TH ST. BRIDGE AT LAMAR BLVD. - EXISTING CONDITIONS



gateways

design strategies

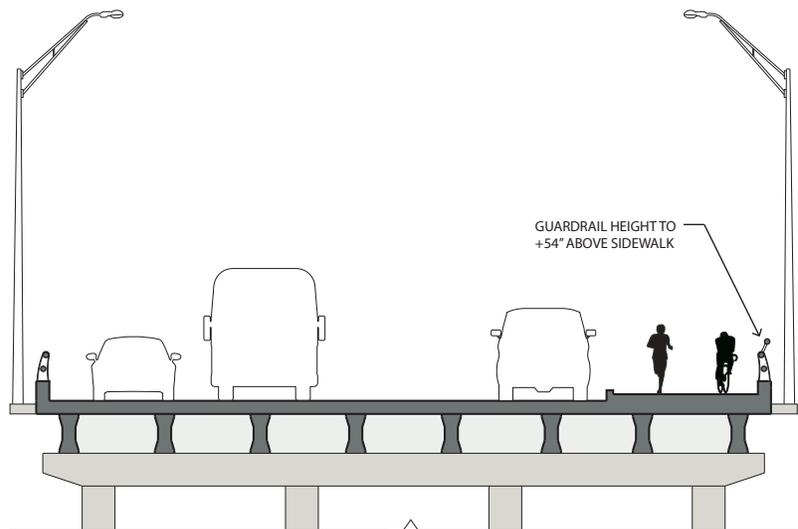
8 15th St. Bridge Gateway



SECTION B: Streetscape improvements include replacing guardrail and median with landscaping, relocating the sidewalk away from the curb edge, adding street lights with banner system, and terracing the landscape along the north side of W. 15th St.

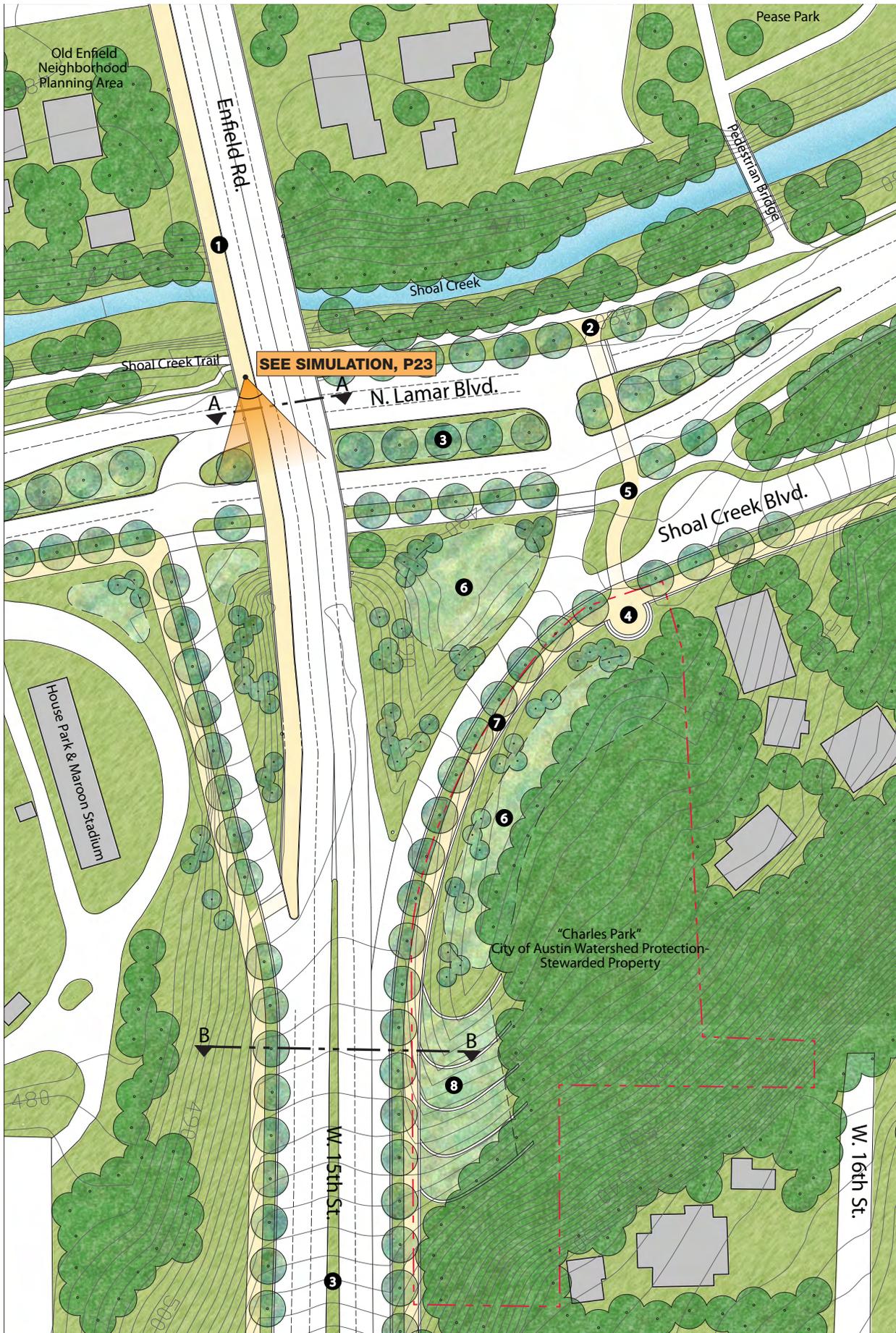
Recommendations:

- 1 Expand the 15th St. Bridge sidewalk into a wide, multi-use path on the southern edge.
- 2 Install crosswalks to facilitate connection between Pease Park/ Shoal Creek Trail and W. 15th St.
- 3 Landscape median and place new street lighting poles that can support banners.
- 4 Create a small bus stop and wayfinding plaza.
- 5 Realign road for traffic-calming and safer pedestrian crossings.
- 6 Create a biofiltration meadow to address stormwater runoff.
- 7 Expand sidewalk along both sides of W. 15th St.
- 8 Create a terraced landscape feature to address stormwater runoff and make a statement about Austin's environmental concerns.



SECTION A: Streetscape improvements on the 15th bridge includes expanding sidewalk with raised curb and increasing the rail height .

Note: Coordinate these improvements with the Shoal Creek Conservancy and Capital Metro.



15TH ST. BRIDGE AT LAMAR BLVD. - IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT



gateways

design strategies

9 Guadalupe St. / MLK Jr. Blvd. Gateway



There is an opportunity to “adopt” the existing billboard at southbound intersection of MLK Jr. Blvd. and Guadalupe St. to create a changing system of messages and/or art that celebrates the presence and influence of The University of Texas. An example of such a proposed art billboard is shown on the right.



This gateway is an important threshold into the Downtown from the University of Texas via Guadalupe St. or “the Drag”. It is a confusing area, as the street grid shifts at MLK Jr. Blvd., creating a jog in Guadalupe St. The southbound view terminates in a convenience store and a billboard. A strong design strategy for this gateway would be to re-purpose the billboard as an “art billboard” to express Austin’s creative and intellectual culture.

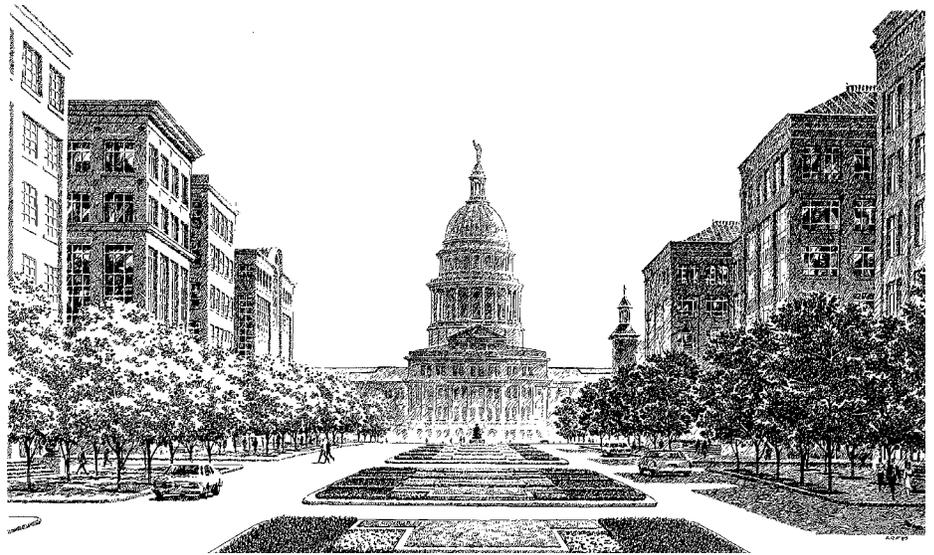
There is also an opportunity to improve the small triangular median on the south (Downtown) side of MLK Jr. Blvd. to create a wayfinding plaza that orients pedestrians and cyclists to the various districts of Downtown with district maps, tourist information, etc. Further considerations for this gateway are:

- Provide a predominantly-hardscape surface under the existing trees of the median, as this triangular refuge island experiences a high volume of pedestrian traffic. Create a clearer marked crossing to this island/plaza area and furnish it with lighted seatwalls that also serve to protect the plaza and its occupants from nearby vehicular traffic.
- In the short term, explore the possibility of UT’s renting the billboard and using it as a display surface for a seasonally-changing system of visual and/or textual art that speaks to and celebrates the presence and influence of The University.
- If the City’s urban rail project is implemented in the Guadalupe corridor as has been proposed, this gateway could receive an expression at that time and become an important transit place.
- Through pro-active redevelopment planning of the key properties on the south edge of MLK Jr. Blvd., strengthen the terminus of the axis of Guadalupe St. from the southbound view through the architecture of new buildings, as well as through public art.

10 Congress Ave. / MLK Jr. Blvd. Gateway



The State has plans to enhance Congress Ave. north of the Capitol by introducing a landscaped axial mall with new civic buildings alongside. (State Preservation Board)

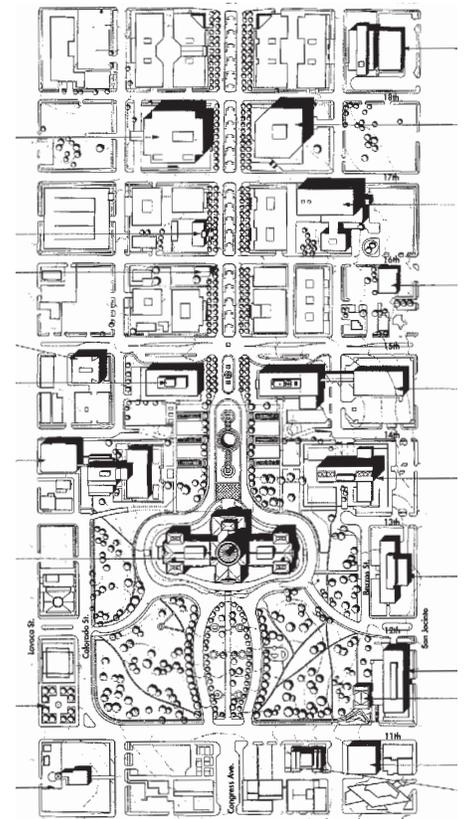


This “T” intersection is at the threshold between the Capitol Complex south of MLK Jr. Blvd. and UT to the north, and is an important location for visitors to both campuses, as both the Bob Bullock Texas History Museum and the Blanton Art Museum are located here. UT has recently built a plaza between the Blanton and its administrative offices and café. The plaza is located at the terminus of the N. Congress axis and is planned to continue northward as a grand pedestrian mall using the Speedway St. right-of-way.

In addition, the State has long had plans to enhance the N. Congress Ave. corridor, north of the Capitol by introducing a landscaped median and new buildings that front the new mall. These projects, if implemented, will reinforce this location as a key civic gateway, so no new structures or gateway projects are recommended here.

Further considerations for this area are:

- Create safer, and more generously-apportioned pedestrian crossings and sidewalks at the intersection of MLK Jr. Blvd. and Congress Ave.
- Do not conflict with the distinct identities and way-finding systems that are already in place for both the State and The University of Texas.
- Work with the State Preservation Board to create an attractive screen for the State parking lot on the southeast corner.



gateways

design strategies

11 Congress Ave. / 11th St. Gateway



The connection between the Capitol and Congress Ave. and the core of Downtown is weak, due to the largely undeveloped and unoccupied of the two blocks south of the Capitol. A landmark signal through public art and revitalized park spaces are proposed at the southwest corner of Congress Ave. and 11th St.

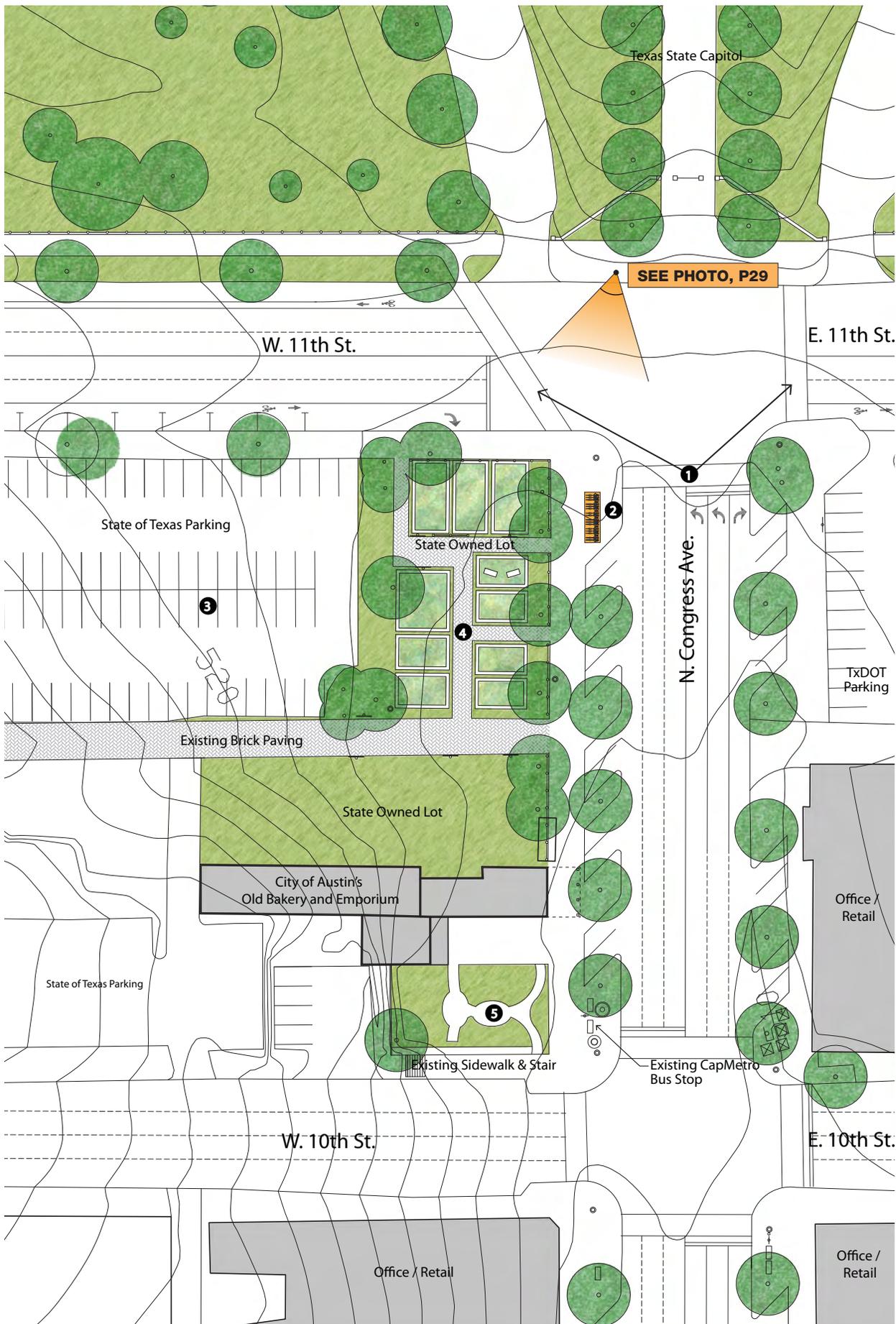


This second "T" junction gateway is located at the southern edge of the original "Capitol Square", bordered by 11th St. With over 1.5 million visitors annually, the Capitol is one of the most important visitor destinations in the State and is also the site of rallies, public events and holiday festivities for locals. However, the visitor connection between the Capitol and Congress Ave. and the core of Downtown is weak, due to the largely undeveloped and unwelcoming nature of the 2 blocks located south of the Capitol on Congress Ave.

On the west side of Congress Ave., there is both a City-owned park and historic building, "The Old Bakery", and the ruins of the temporary Capitol Building. This block could become an attraction that can pull Capitol visitors across 11th St. to experience Downtown. The remainder of the block is owned by the State and is used for surface parking, but could provide visitor parking and events space on weekends and at night.

Existing Conditions/Issues:

- ❶ Existing crosswalk conditions at 11th St. and Congress Ave. are awkward and poorly marked.
- ❷ The new Bike Share station has recently been installed.
- ❸ Governor's Mansion parking lot improvements have recently been completed.
- ❹ The public/open space at the southwest corner of 11th St. and Congress Ave. is underutilized.
- ❺ The Old Bakery Courtyard needs seating and landscaping improvements.



11TH ST. AND CONGRESS AVE. - EXISTING CONDITIONS



gateways

design strategies

11 Congress Ave. / 11th St. Gateway



Short term improvements to The Old Bakery courtyard will allow it to be used as a public events space. (Courtesy: Design Workshop)



This block should become an inviting gateway with revitalized park spaces, additional uses/development on the block, and possibly additional and enhanced programming of the Old Bakery Building, as recommended in the Downtown Austin Plan. The gateway could be the Old Bakery Building and flanking park spaces operating as a satellite visitors center/attraction.

There is already an initiative by the Downtown Austin Alliance, the Austin Parks Foundation, AIA Austin and the City's Parks and Recreation Department to formulate a short and long-term improvement strategy for this block.

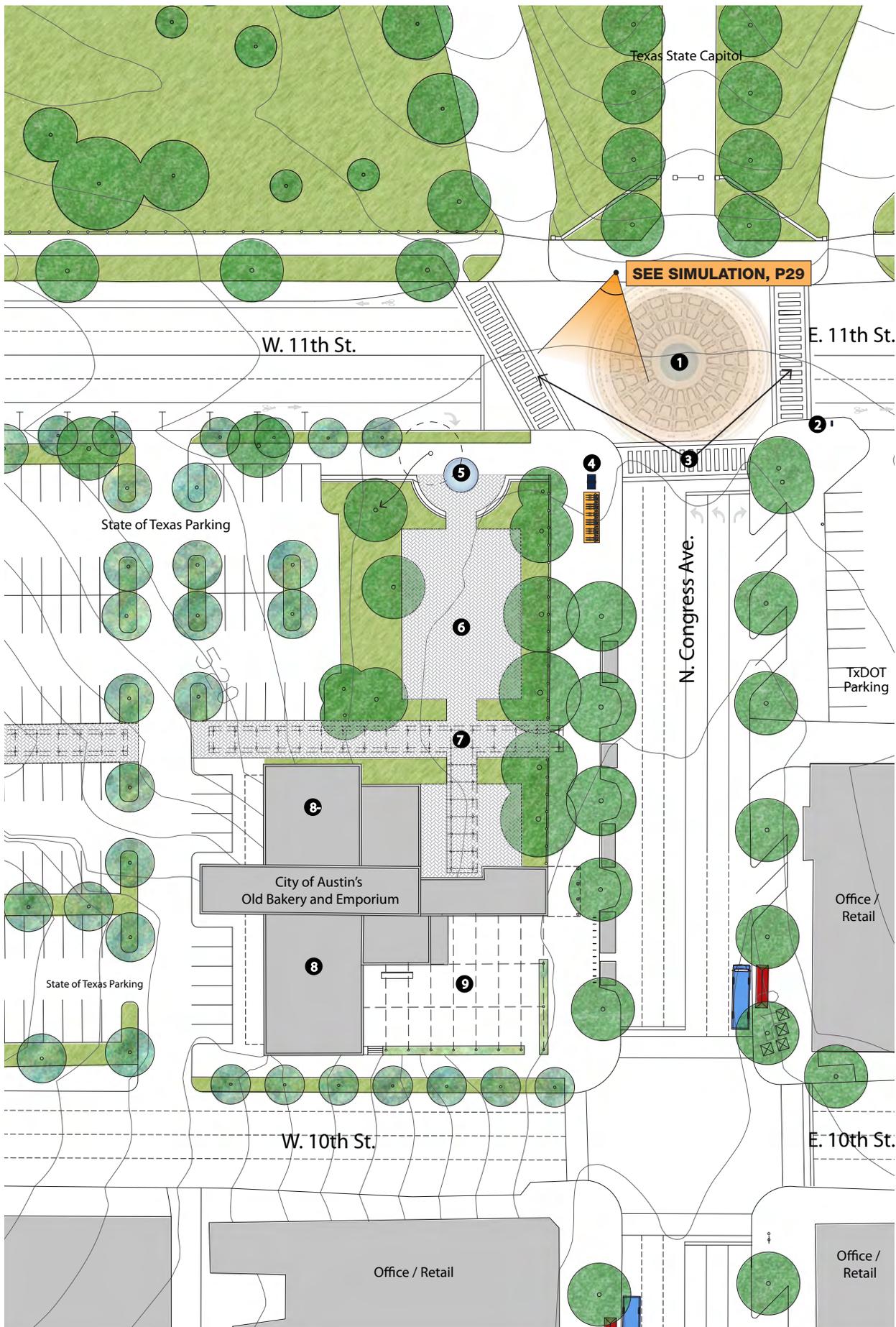
The gateway design and visitors center should be tested as part of this process and be coordinated with these partners.

Further considerations include:

- In the long term, work with the Governor's Office, the City of Austin and the State Preservation Board to revitalize the entire "Old Bakery Block" in order to strengthen it as a major tourist gateway to the Downtown from the Capitol.
- Work with Capital Metro, to design far-side transit stops along Congress Ave. A more gracious landing and waiting area with transit rider amenities is needed - one that does not conflict with the wide pedestrian promenade zone of the Avenue.
- This gateway location also provides an opportunity to locate a technology hub or kiosk that can provide local information.

Recommendations:

- 1 Repave intersection with special pavers or mosaic design, perhaps based on the Capitol rotunda.
- 2 Install wayfinding element- "PKiosk.1".
- 3 Reconfigure crosswalks to ensure pedestrian safety and create a statement mark at the threshold of the Capitol.
- 4 Install wayfinding element- "PKiosk.3A".
- 5 Design a vertical public art element visible from the Capitol.
- 6 Reconfigure the State of Texas' open space with a paved plaza area.
- 7 Create a trellised connection to the Governor's Mansion.
- 8 Construct building additions to enhance the Old Bakery as a venue for Texas cuisine.
- 9 Reconfigure the open space to create flexible space for dining and special events.



11TH ST. AND CONGRESS AVE. - IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT



gateways

design strategies

12 Seaholm EcoDistrict Gateway



The Pfluger Pedestrian bridge extension and re-configuration of streets and new apartment buildings at its landing create a dramatic new gateway to the emerging Seaholm Eco-District.

Right: A monumental light sculpture placed on this area's roundabout could both announce this new district



This area, a former industrial section of southwest Downtown Austin, is undergoing a transformation into a vibrant urban neighborhood. The Seaholm Redevelopment Area has been master planned and individual projects are emerging, from both private and public sectors.

The City of Austin's Seaholm EcoDistrict framework helps illustrate how the area's development aligns with the Core Principles for Action in the City's Imagine Austin comprehensive plan. These include:

- Grow as a compact, connected city.
- Sustainably manage water, energy and other environmental resources.
- Integrate nature in the city.
- Think creatively and work together.

(See www.austintexas.gov/page/seaholm-district)

A monumental light sculpture placed on this area's roundabout could both announce this new district and could somehow express through it changing form, movement or lighting, measures of the environmentally-oriented features of the district. These might be measures of the pedestrian and bicycle activity in the district, carbon footprint, solar energy collected, rainwater collected, etc.

Existing Conditions/Issues:

- 1 Future bike/ped underpass from Bowie St. at Union Pacific Railroad.
- 2 Cycle tracks located between parallel parking and sidewalk.
- 3 Central plaza for Gables Park Tower.
- 4 Lance Armstrong Bikeway, cycle tracks planned to connect from Austin High School to US 183 along César Chávez and E. 5th St.

Recommendations:

- 5 Vertical element that illustrates sustainable practice in Seaholm District.
- 6 Install proposed Bike Share kiosk along near Pfluger Bridge extension and Lance Armstrong Bikeway.
- 7 Install wayfinding element- "PKiosk.3A".



SEE SIMULATION, P33

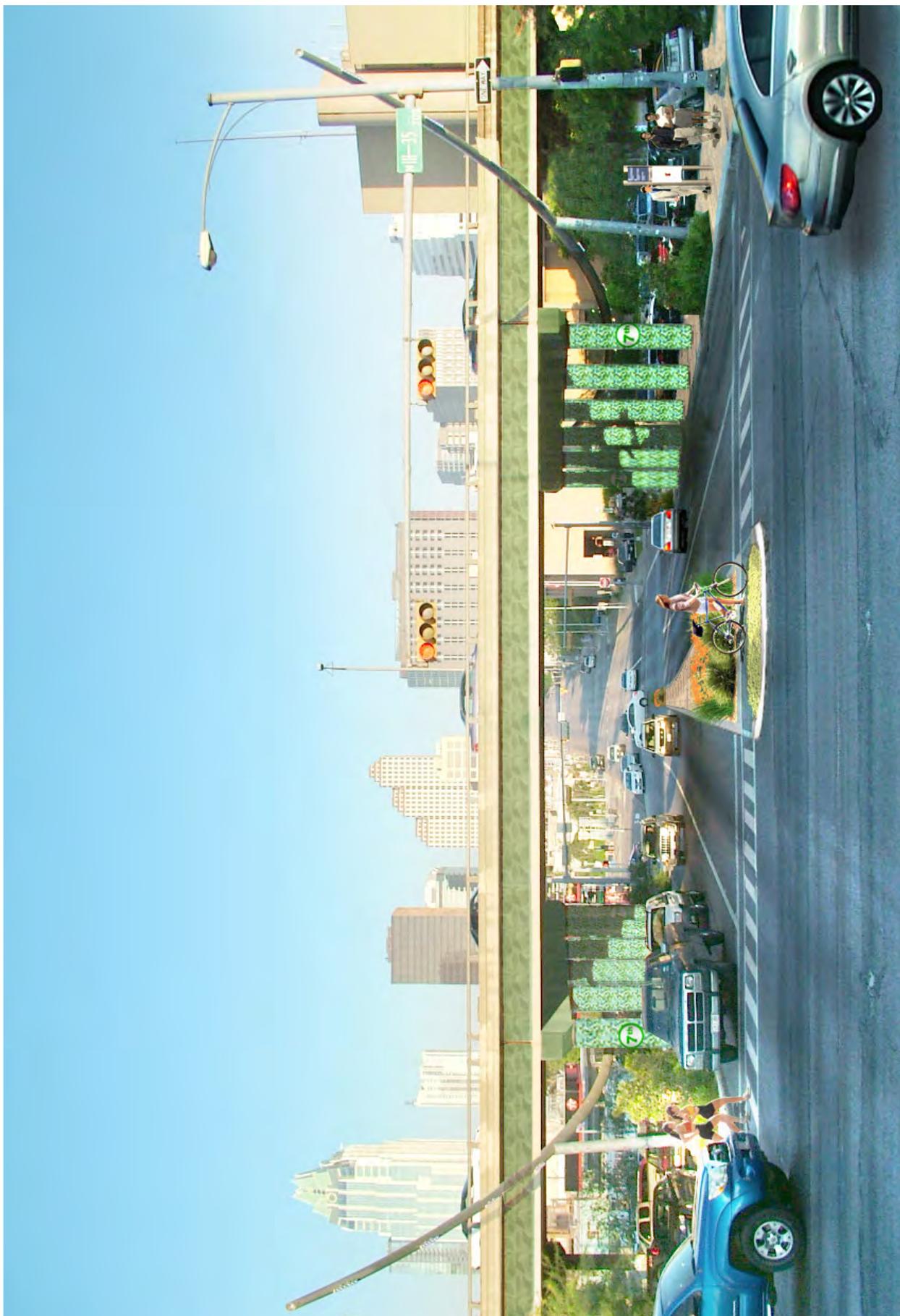


gateways

implementation strategies

Gateway #	Location	Proposed Gateway Element	Potential Project Funding Source(s)
1	The IH 35 Corridor	streetscaping/landscaping, lighting, railings, murals	COA/TxDOT IH 35 improvements, AIPP
2	East 7th St.	banner program	ATD's 2-way conversion project for 7th and 8th streets & ATD's Banner Program.
3	Cesar Chavez from Loop 1	trailhead with light beacon	Seaholm Power and COA's MDA for Seaholm District Improvements
4	West 5th St. / Shoal Creek	trailhead with light feature and plaza at descent to trail	The Trail Foundation, PARD, Austin Parks Foundation
5	Brush Square/ Convention Center	kiosk/orientation device, streetscape, and park improvements	Capital Metro, Convention Center, PARD
6	Ann W. Richards Bridge	bridge lighting, interpretive signs, wider sidewalk area for pedestrians	PWD's Congress Ave. Improvements
7	Drake Bridge	shade structure over depressed walkway	Austin Energy, ATD, PWD - Neighborhood Connectivity Division
8	W. 15th St. Bridge	landscaping and low-impact strategies	transportation bond, watershed protection CIP, Pease Park Conservancy
9	Guadalupe St. / MLK Blvd.	streetscaping and public art billboard	Downtown Austin Alliance, UT, State of Texas
10	Congress Ave. / MLK Blvd.	streetscaping	Bullock Museum's pedestrianization of N. Congress, north of 15th St.; UT's pedestrianization of Speedway Blvd. on campus, north of MLK Blvd.
11	Congress Ave. / 11th St.	Old Bakery Building (OBB) redevelopment and new public park space with public art	Old Bakery initiative with COA, PARD, AIA, DAA, and APF; Governor's Mansion restoration with Governor's walk to Congress Ave. enhanced bus stops on each side of Congress Ave.
12	Seaholm EcoDistrict	lighting, public art	AIPP, Office of Sustainability, Austin Energy

2 E. 7th St. Gateway & the "Stitches" / IH 35 Makeover Project



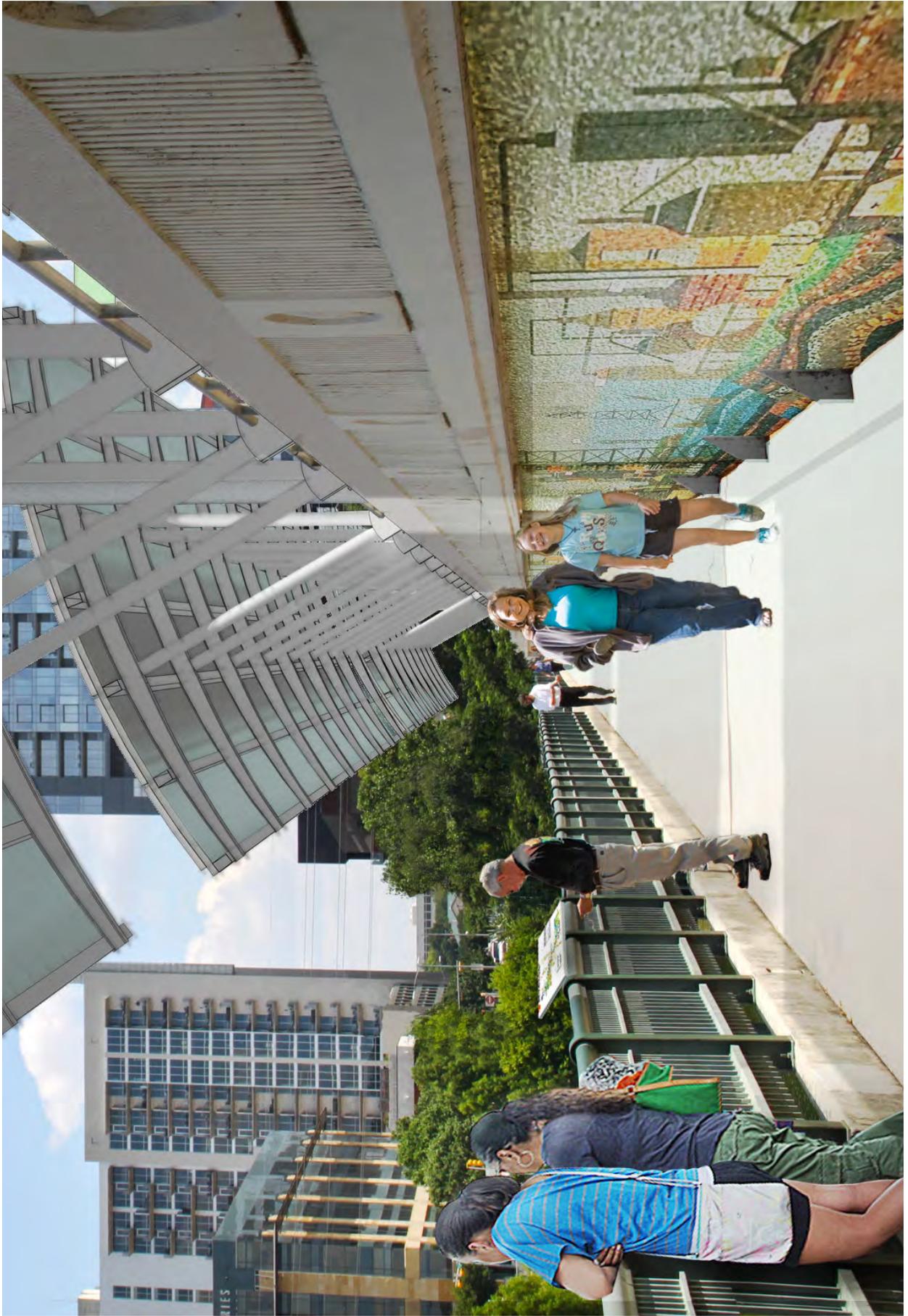
5 Brush Square / Convention Center Gateway



7 Drake Bridge Gateway



7 Drake Bridge Gateway



8 15th St. Bridge Gateway



11 Congress Ave. / 11th St. Gateway



12 Seaholm EcoDistrict Gateway



MoPac Expressway

transportation

Signage located along I-35, MoPac, and other limited access highways is controlled by TxDOT Right-of-Way (ROW) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The rules governing the design, placement and messages related to these signs is strictly controlled and regulated.

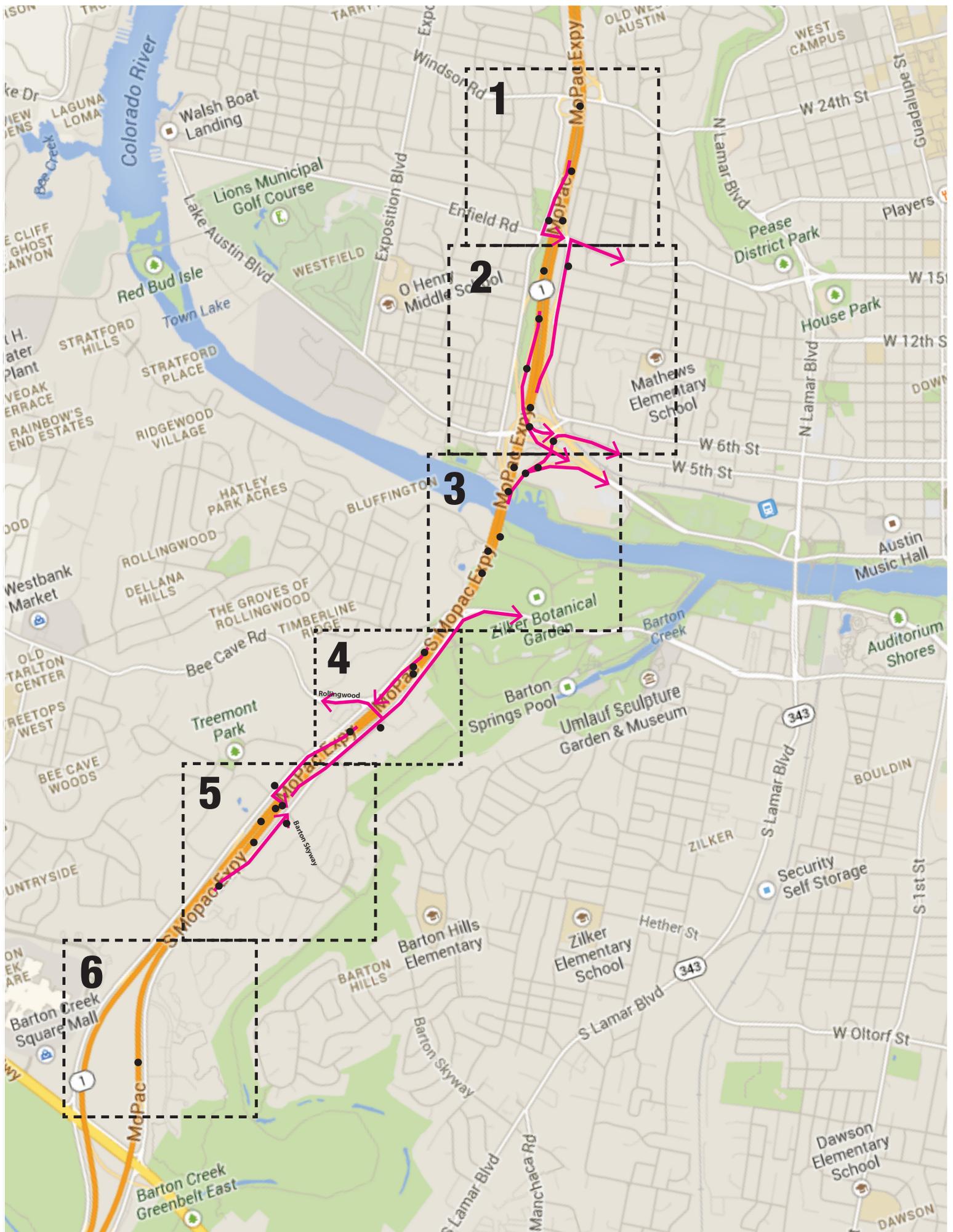
The Mopac Expressway (Loop 1) provides access to the western side of Downtown Austin. As a primary highway route leading into the downtown core, the highway offers the opportunity to establish and provide a seamless route into downtown. This includes a sequence of consistent terminology from the highway signs down to the local roadway signage.

Opportunities to introduce access to major destinations such as Downtown, Convention Center, University of Texas

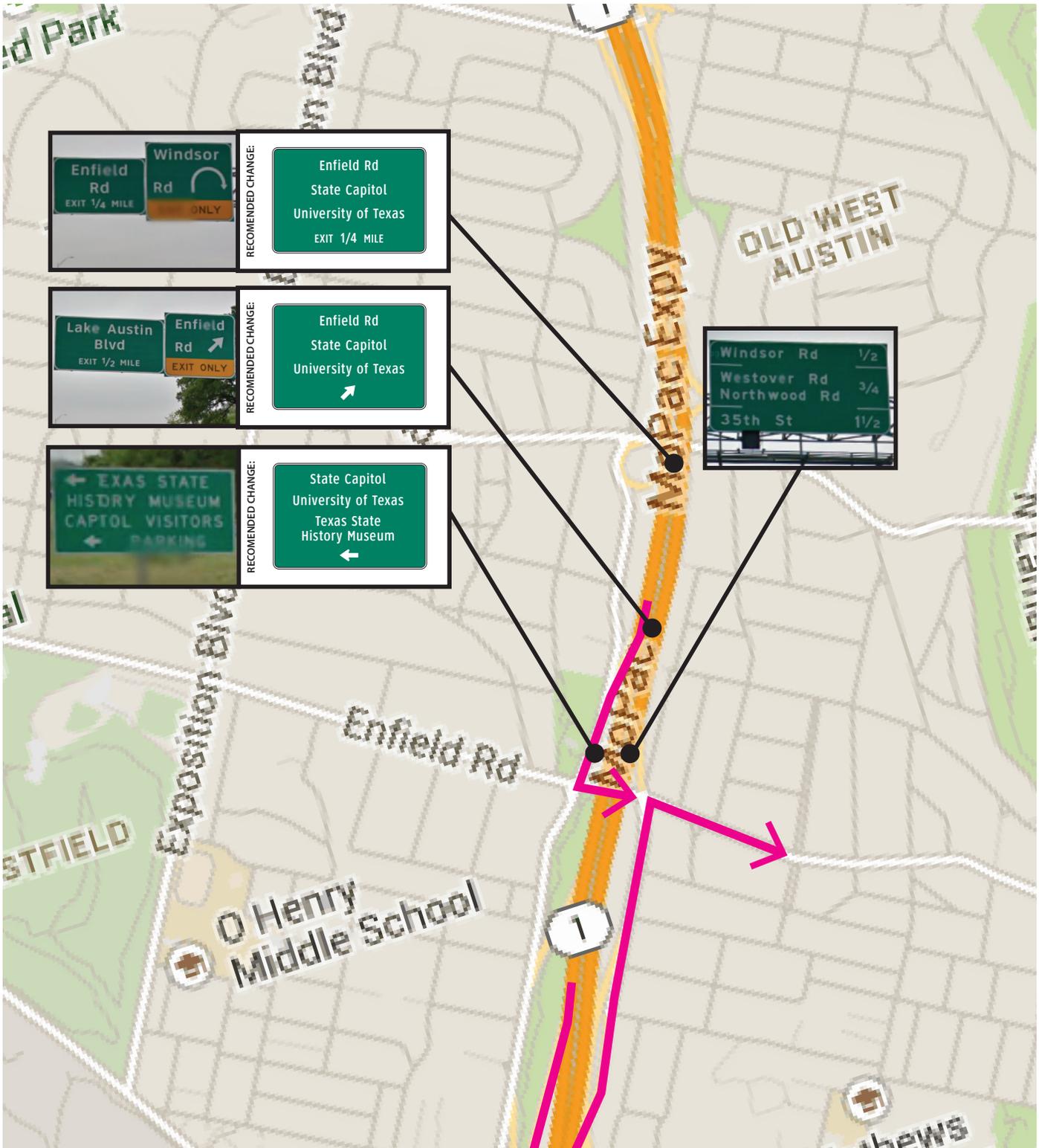
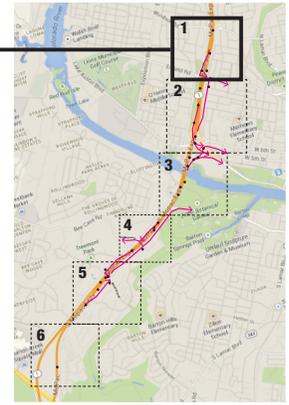
and the State Capitol, will provide better access, ease congestion and create better overall wayfinding experience.

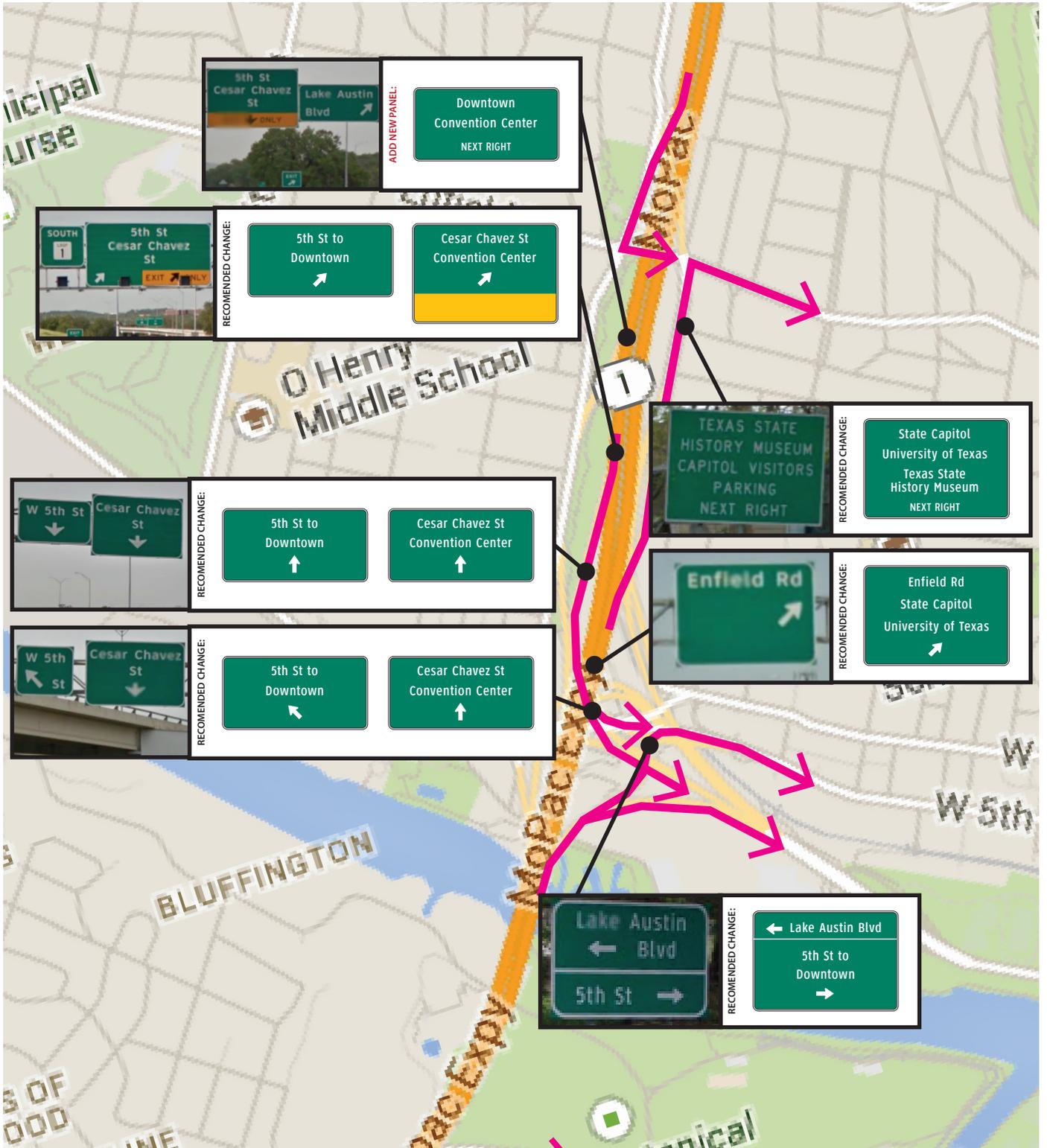
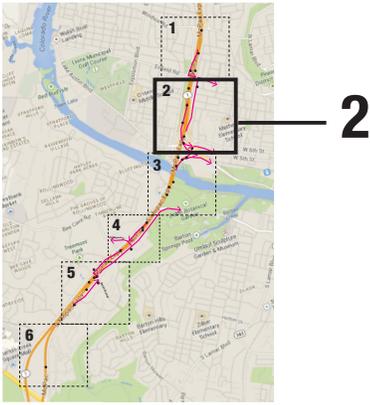
As per TXDOT MUTCD requirements the current signage directs to mainly roadways, with limited supplemental signage to major destinations. The following pages offer suggestions for potential additional destinations and terminology adjustments that can help to clarify, confirm and improve a connection to the Downtown Austin Wayfinding

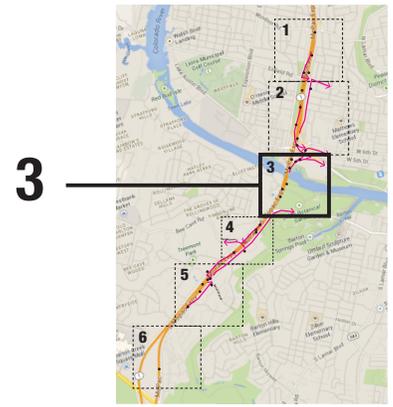
program. It is understood that these recommendations require review and approval by TXDOT. The recommendations are offered only as suggestions, to begin the conversation on how signage along this expressway can be improved to become more consistent and a lead-in to the vehicular circulation that has been developed for the Downtown Austin Wayfinding project.



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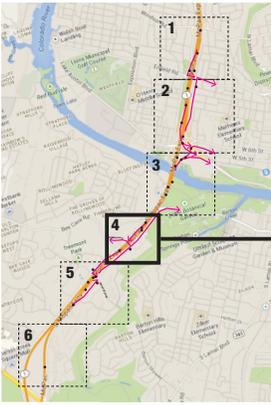




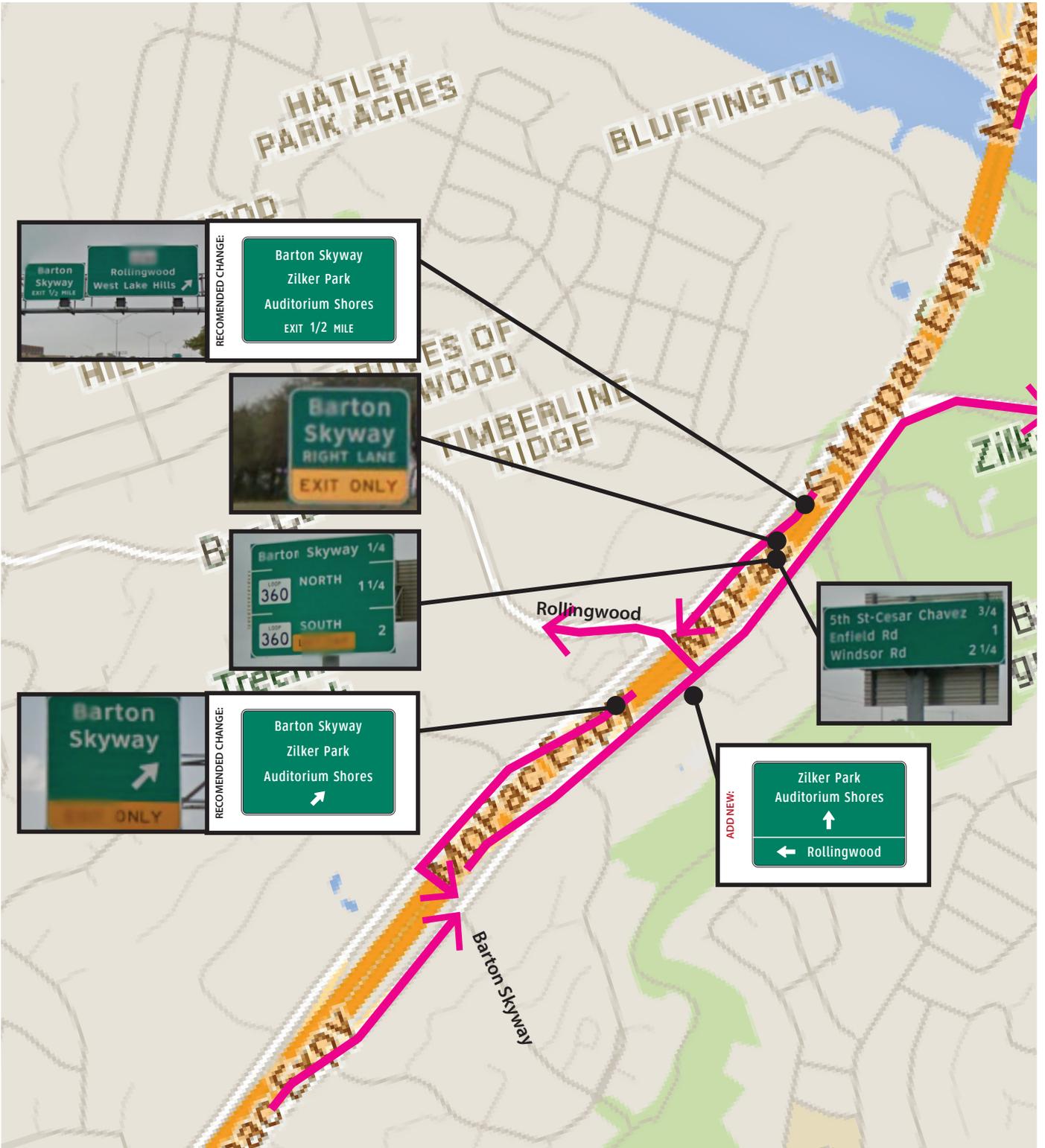


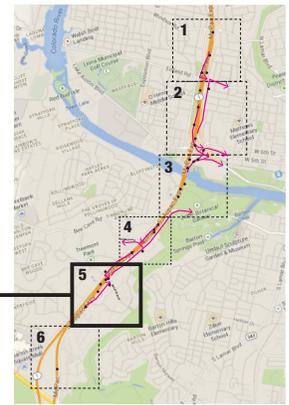
The main map shows the Mopac Expressway (Loop 1) with proposed sign changes. A pink line highlights the route. Callouts include:

- Enfield Rd:** A green sign for "Enfield Rd" with a "1/4 MILE" distance. The recommended change is a green sign listing "Enfield Rd", "State Capitol", "University of Texas", and "EXIT 1/4 MILE".
- 5th St/Cesar Chavez St:** A green sign for "5th St" and "Cesar Chavez St". The recommended change is a green sign with two panels: "5th St to Downtown Lake Austin Blvd" (left) and "Cesar Chavez St Convention Center" (right).
- W 5th St/West Cesar Chavez St:** A green sign for "W 5th St Lake Austin Blvd" and "West Cesar Chavez St". The recommended change is a green sign with two panels: "5th St to Downtown Lake Austin Blvd" (left) and "Cesar Chavez St Convention Center" (right).
- 5th St/Cesar Chavez St:** A green sign for "5th St Lake Austin Blvd" and "Cesar Chavez St" with an "EXIT ONLY" panel. The recommended change is a green sign with two panels: "5th St to Downtown Lake Austin Blvd" (left) and "Cesar Chavez St Convention Center" (right) with a yellow "EXIT ONLY" panel at the bottom.
- Downtown:** A green sign for "Downtown" with "NEXT RIGHT". The recommended change is a green sign for "Downtown Convention Center" with "NEXT RIGHT".
- 5th St-Lake Austin Blvd/Cesar Chavez St:** A green sign for "5th St-Lake Austin Blvd" and "Cesar Chavez St" with an "EXIT ONLY" panel. The recommended change is a green sign for "Downtown Convention Center" with "NEXT RIGHT". A note "ADD NEW PANEL:" is next to this callout.

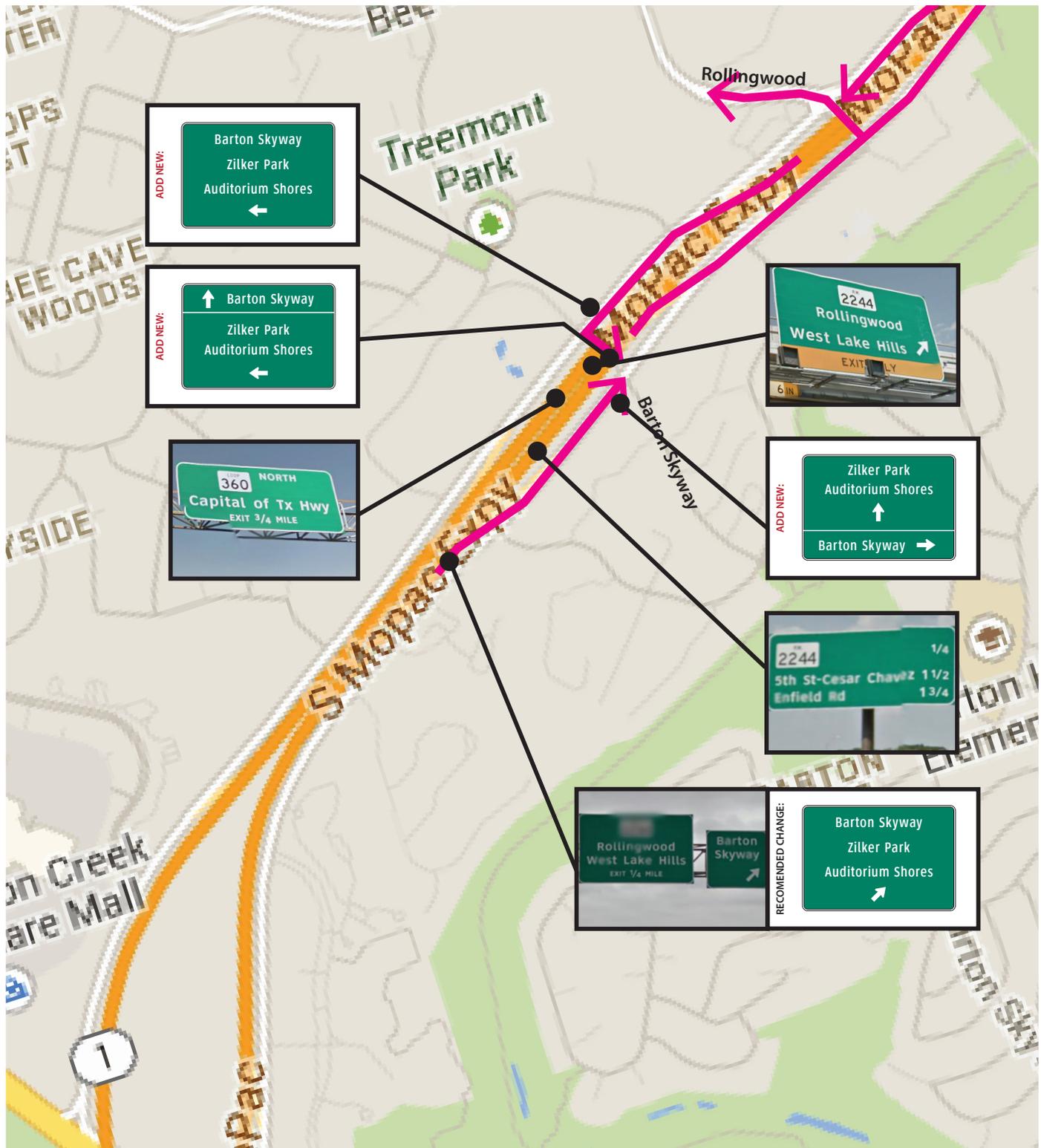


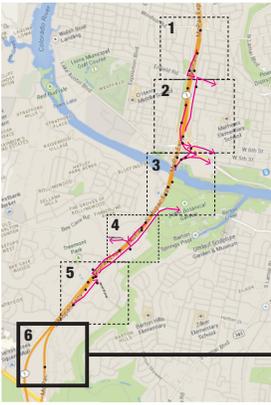
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