

# Our CONGRESS AVENUE

**STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS  
URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVE**

**PAC JUN 2, 2018**

# Our CONGRESS AVENUE

## Vision

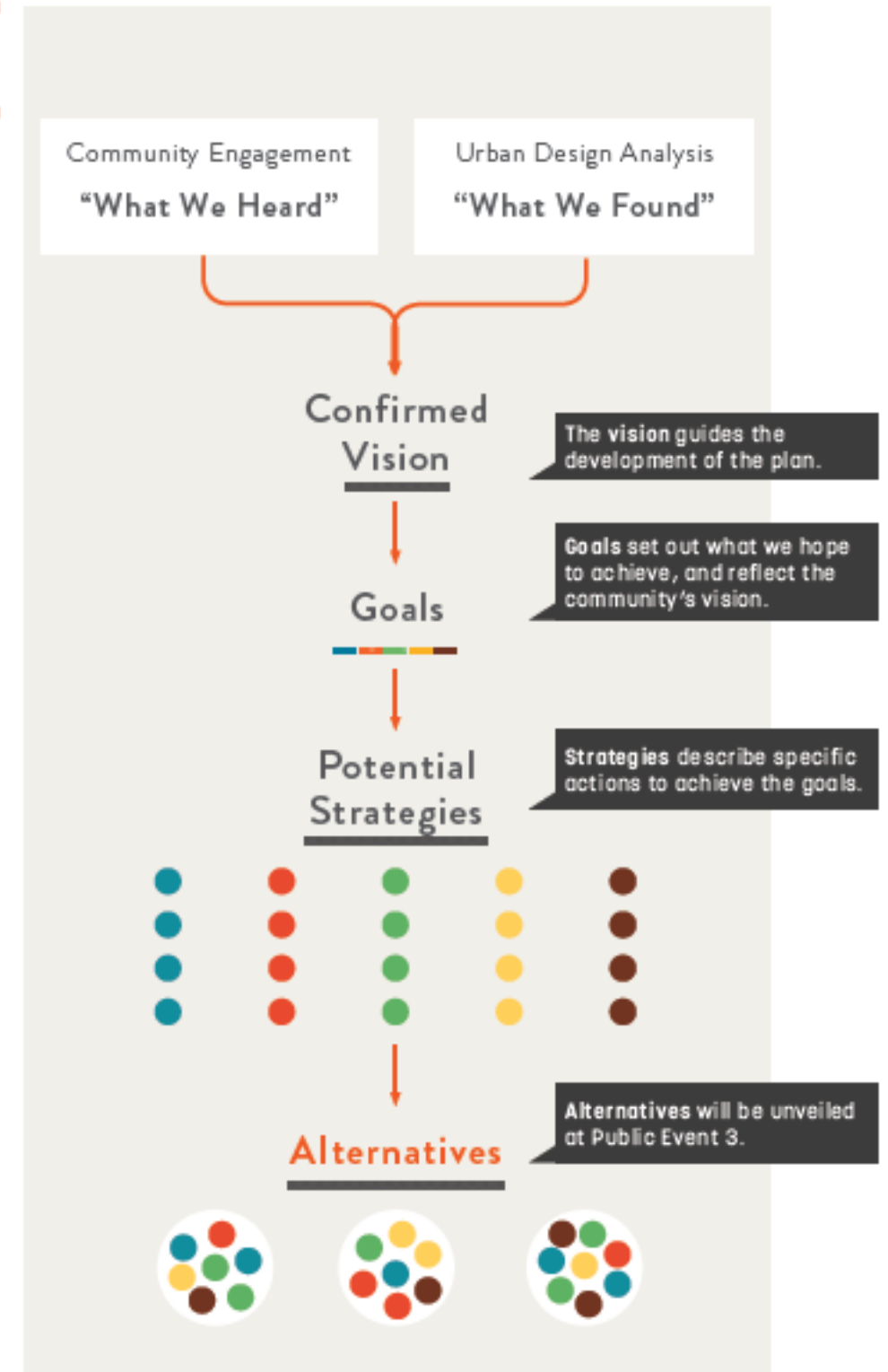
Our Congress Avenue is a great Texas people place - the cultural, historic and commercial spine of downtown Austin where people come to share, celebrate and create a bright future.

## Values

The Vision will be achieved and maintained through loyalty to a set of Values related to Character, Function and Management. A great street needs to do many things well but a street asked to perform too many tasks is likely to perform none of them well. Our efforts to achieve the Congress Avenue Vision will adhere to these Values that will guide what we ask of the Avenue and how we direct our work.



## Process



# LISTENING TO AUSTIN

## Vision, Values & Process

### PUBLIC EVENT 1

April 5 - 6, 2017

Over one hundred fifty residents, employees, visitors and friends joined the City, the Downtown Alliance, and the design team to “walk the Avenue”.

**517**

In-person question cards received

### PUBLIC EVENT 2

June 2 - 3, 2017

Over the course of two days Austinites were able to take walking tours led by seasoned professionals, bike along mocked-up streets, test the performance of materials, and even build their own Avenue with strips of paper.

**248**

Comment cards received

**48**

Street section models created

### ONLINE

April - July, 2017

Online engagement included the Our Congress Avenue survey, online comment cards, and the XYZ Atlas.

**572**

Our Congress Avenue surveys taken

### FOCUS GROUPS

May - July, 2017

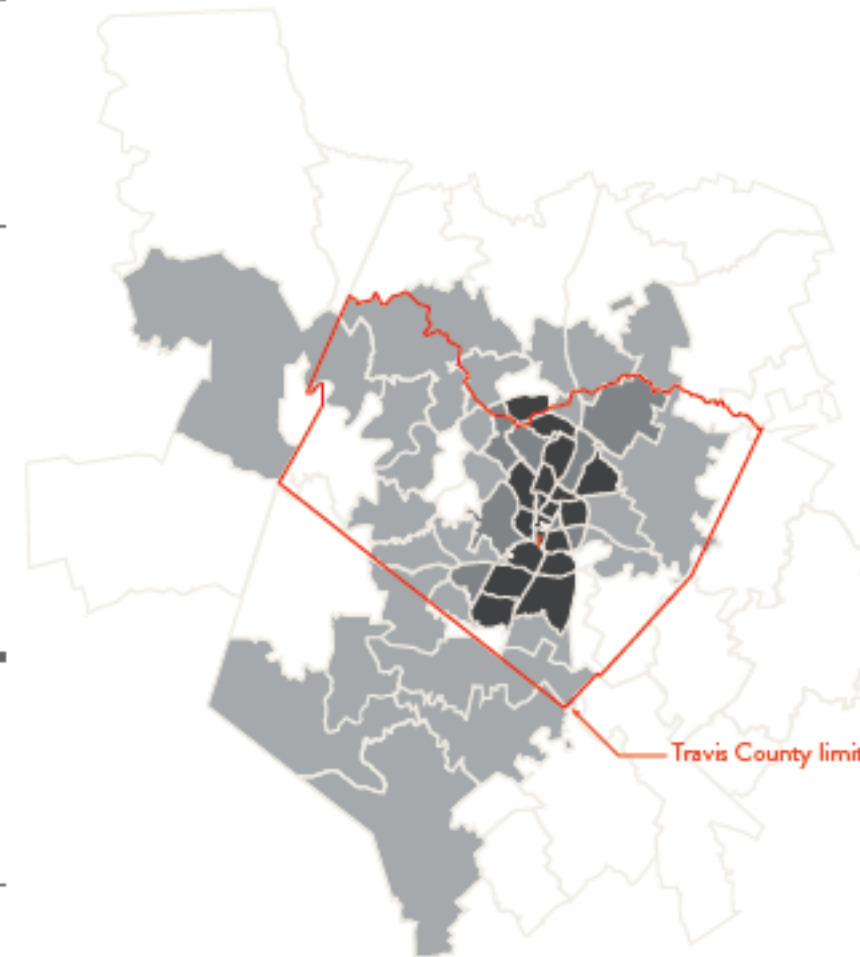
In-depth focus group conversations took place with over a hundred stakeholders across diverse interest groups.

**19**

Focus groups conducted

**103**

Attendees reached



Geographic reach of online engagement (Online comment cards + Our Congress Ave) by zip code

- 1-5 comments
- 5-10
- 10+

While many comments came from downtown residents, online engagement did significantly extend outreach to parts of Austin beyond downtown.

**500+**

Attendees at in-person events (P1, P2, Focus Groups)

**765**

In-person comment cards received

**>3000**

Total comments received

# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

## What We Heard & What We Saw

### Goals

These goals reflect the issues and challenges that we uncovered during the community engagement process and urban design analysis, and represent tangible outcomes of this process.

### Strategies

These are examples of potential specific actions to achieve the goals. Thanks for being here today, and please help us **imagine** other possibilities!

#### SOCIAL EQUITY

Ensure a  
welcoming,  
accessible, and  
representative  
space

- Accessibility
- Telling the stories
- Diverse programming
- Connectivity to neighborhoods
- Civic engagement (protest and representation)

#### MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

Balance mobility  
options along  
Congress Avenue

- Bike lanes
- Pedestrian zones and crosswalks
- Circulator
- Accessibility
- Parking management
- Signalization
- Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge improvements
- Right sizing vehicular right-of-way

#### CULTURE & HISTORY

Enhance  
Congress Avenue  
as a historic  
and cultural  
destination

- Lighting
- Public art
- Wayfinding and signage
- Place branding
- Interpretative markers
- Events and performances
- Cultural anchors (north and south of Lady Bird Lake)
- Great design

#### ECONOMICS

Amplify the  
economic strength  
and diversity of  
Congress Avenue

- Ground floor activation
- Diversity of retail options
- Pop-up food & beverage / retail opportunities
- Enhanced café zones

#### ENVIRONMENT

Celebrate  
biodiversity and  
urban habitat  
in a functional,  
resilient  
streetscape design

- Shade and thermal comfort
- Street trees
- Stormwater management
- Permeable paving
- Connection to Lady Bird Lake ecology
- Habitat diversity



# SOCIAL EQUITY

## What We Heard & What We Saw

### SAMPLE COMMUNITY INPUT

Do you or someone you know ever experience difficulties physically navigating Congress Avenue? (1 = never, 5 = very frequently)

**2.5**

Average of 113 responses

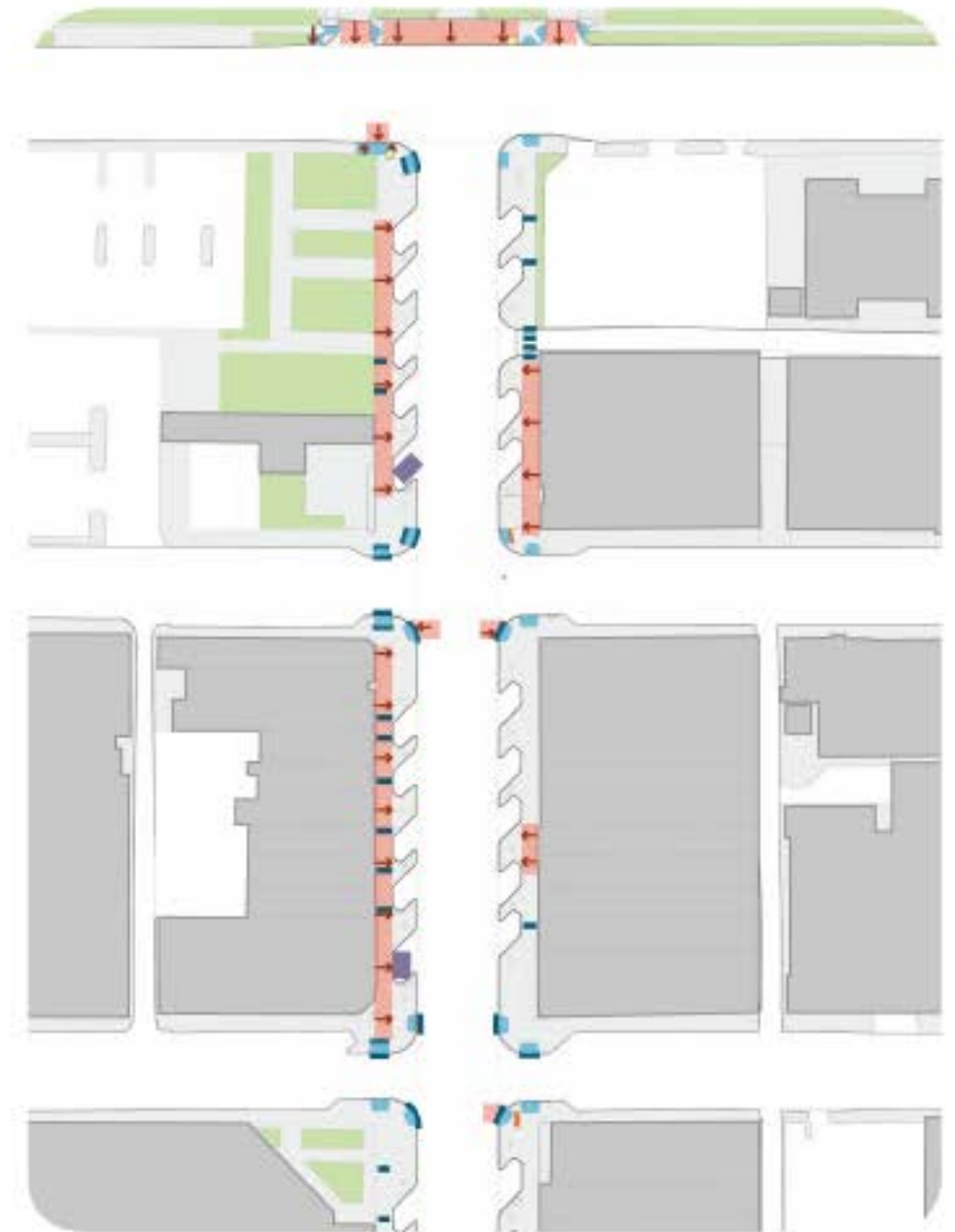
“Get in **ADA compliance** and install **benches** every block so folks can have a resting spot”

Do you think Congress Avenue can be made more welcoming to racial and other minorities? (1 = no, 5 = yes)

**3.8**

Average of 137 responses

“Ensure that there are **public spaces** that are **free, accessible, and welcoming to ALL...**”



### ADA Accessibility Issues\* Sample (above)

\*Issues to resolve in order to achieve wheelchair-accessible and walkable sidewalks for all

- Cross-slope exceeds 2%
- Curb ramp slope exceeds 8.3%
- Horizontal opening on walking surface exceeds 1/2"
- Accessible parking is non-compliant
- Push button reach range or level clear floor is non-compliant

### Our Congress Avenue Survey (left)

- Places where respondents go to exercise freedom of speech



# MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

## Potential Strategies

### Balance Mobility Options along the Avenue

- Bike lanes
- Pedestrian zones and crosswalks
- Circulator
- Accessibility
- Parking management
- Signalization
- Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge improvements
- Right sizing vehicular right-of-way



**Separated Bike and Ped Lanes**  
Bay Bridge, Oakland, CA



**Wider Sidewalks**  
The Avenue, Washington, DC



**Circulator**  
Circulator, Bethesda, MD



**Pedestrian-Focused Intersections**  
Street Color, Chicago, IL



**Parking Management**  
SF Park Mobile App, San Francisco, CA



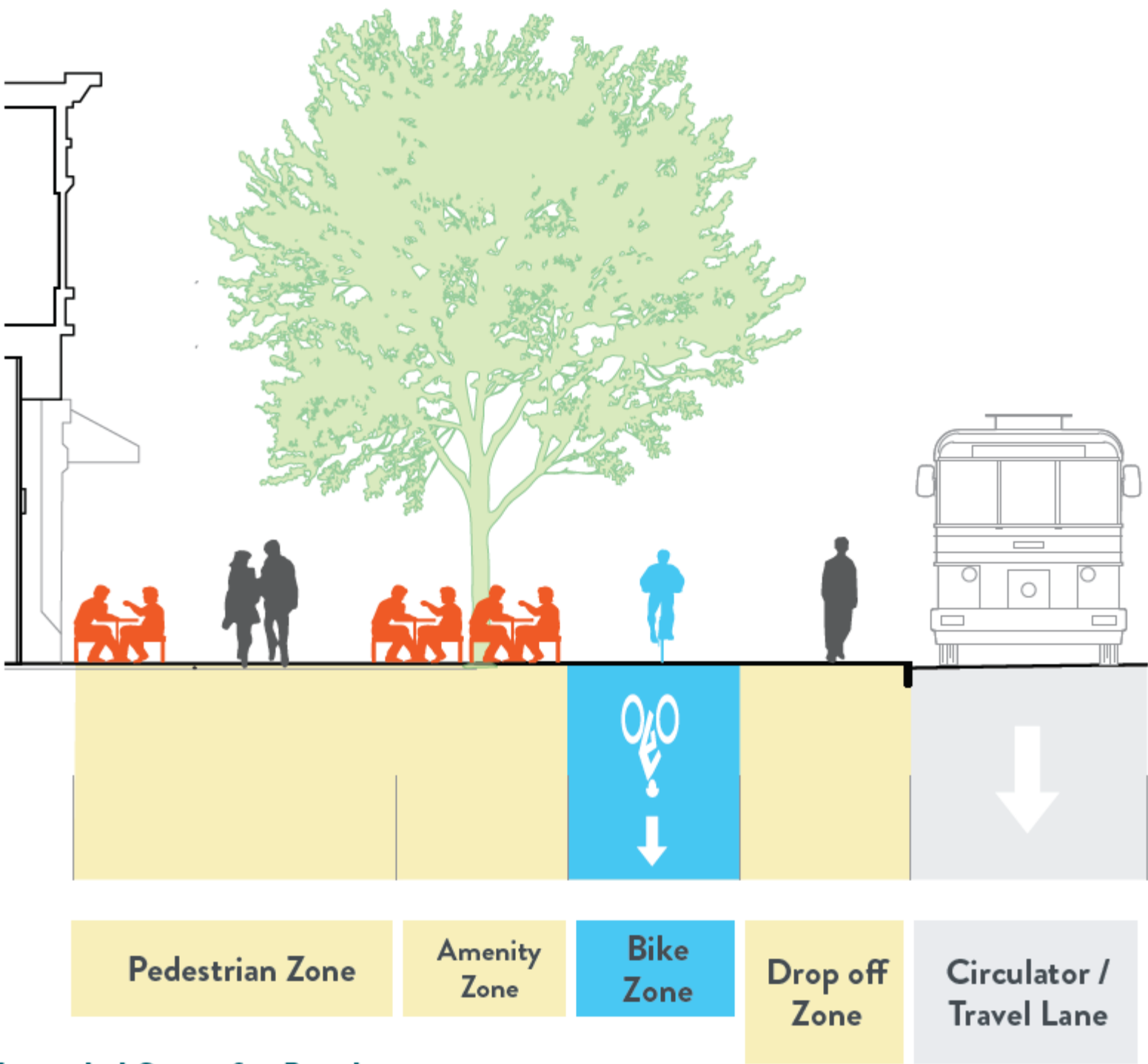
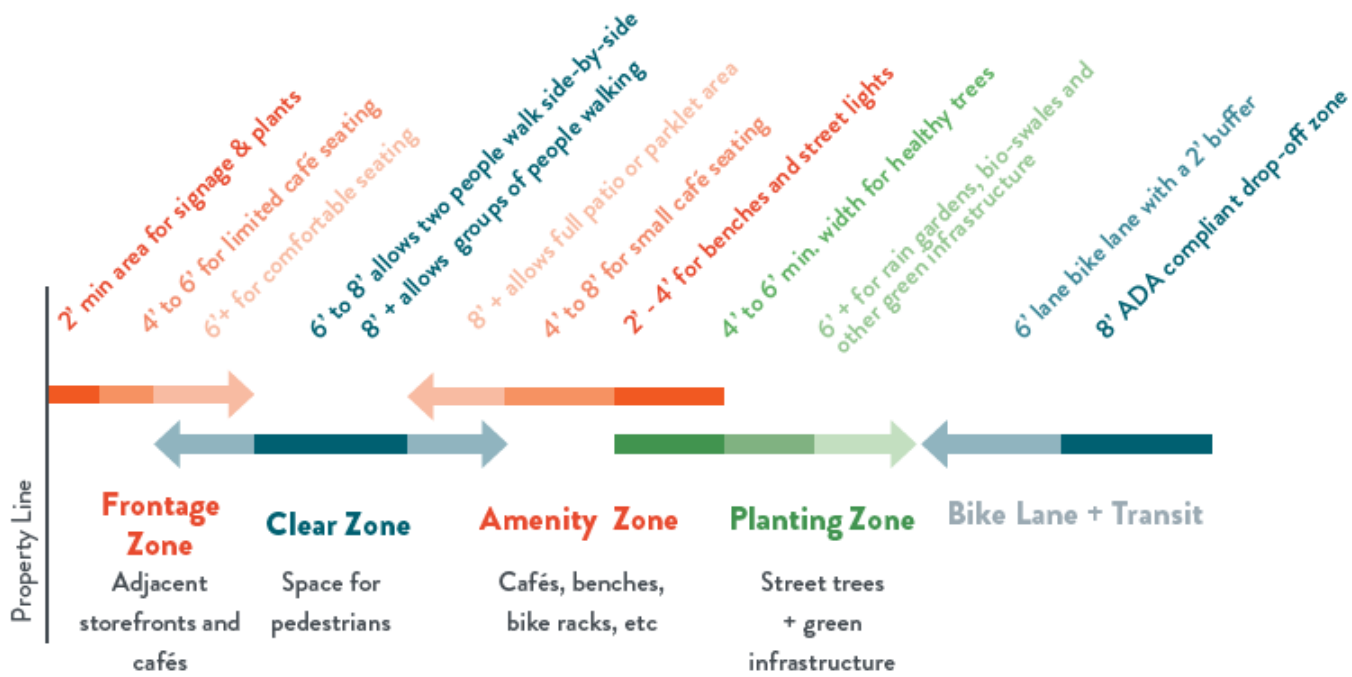
**Bike Lanes**  
Raised Bike Lane, Cambridge, MA



# SIDEWALKS FOR PEOPLE

## Common Elements

### POTENTIAL DESIGN

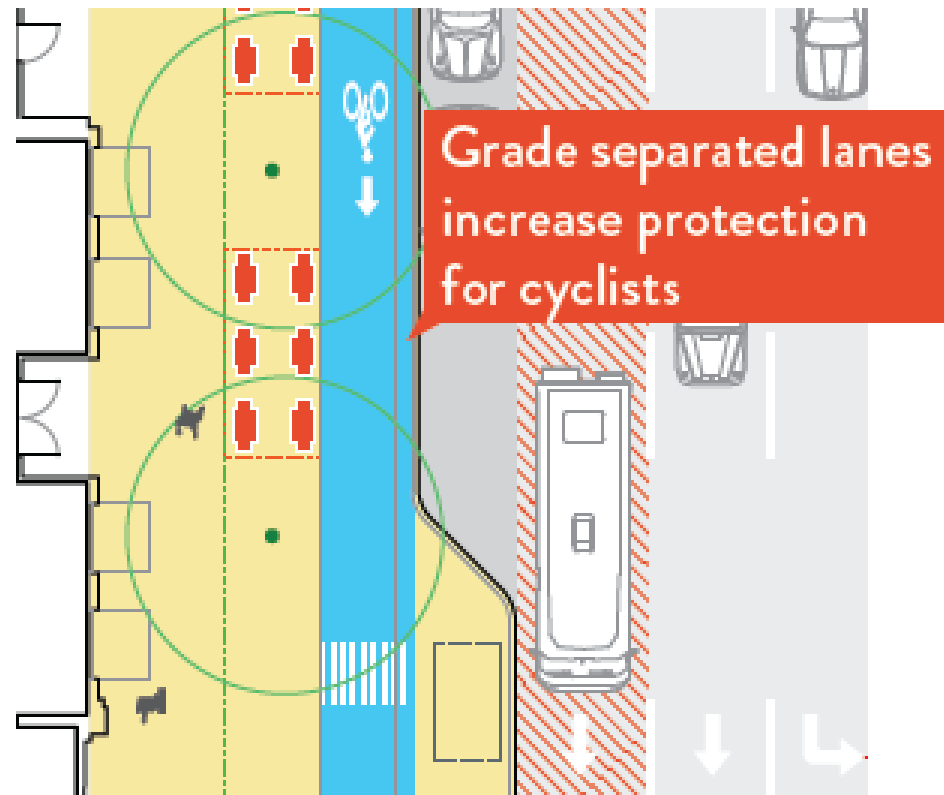


Expanded Space for People

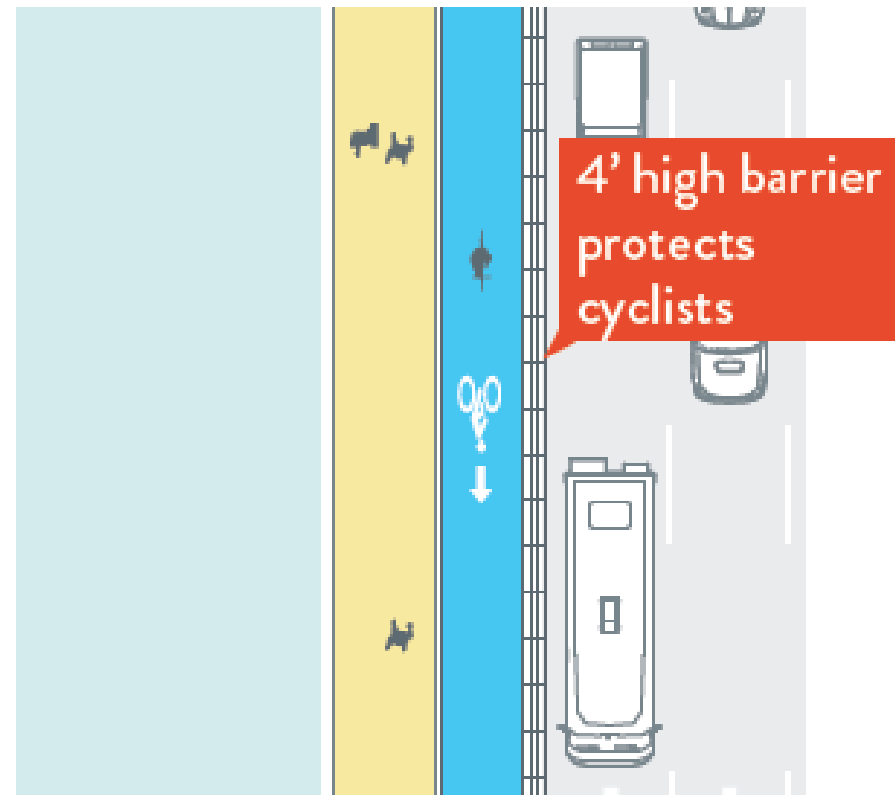
# SAFE BIKE LANES

## Common Elements

### POTENTIAL DESIGN



**Protected Bike Lane North of Lady Bird Lake**



**Protected Bike Lane on Congress Ave Bridge**



**Buffered Bike Lane South of Lady Bird Lake**



#### **Precedent:**

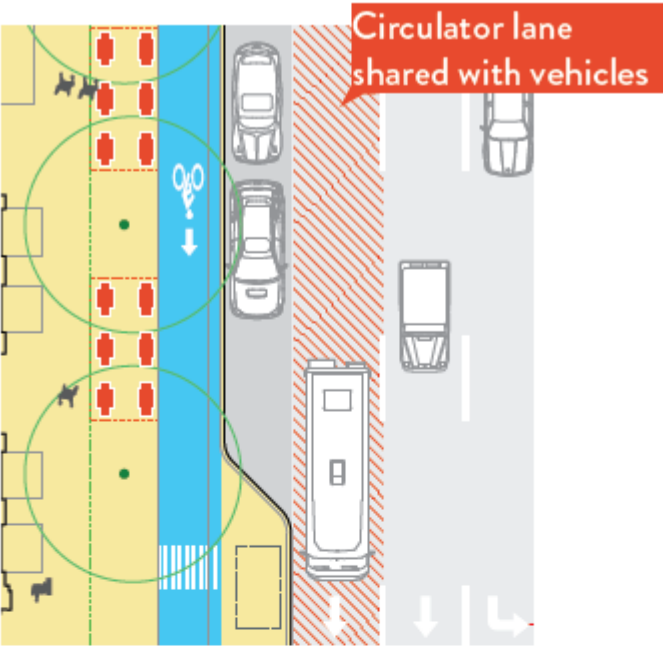
Dedicated bike lane at the same level as the sidewalk and protected from vehicles. Dexter Avenue, Seattle



# FLEXIBLE TRANSIT

Common Elements

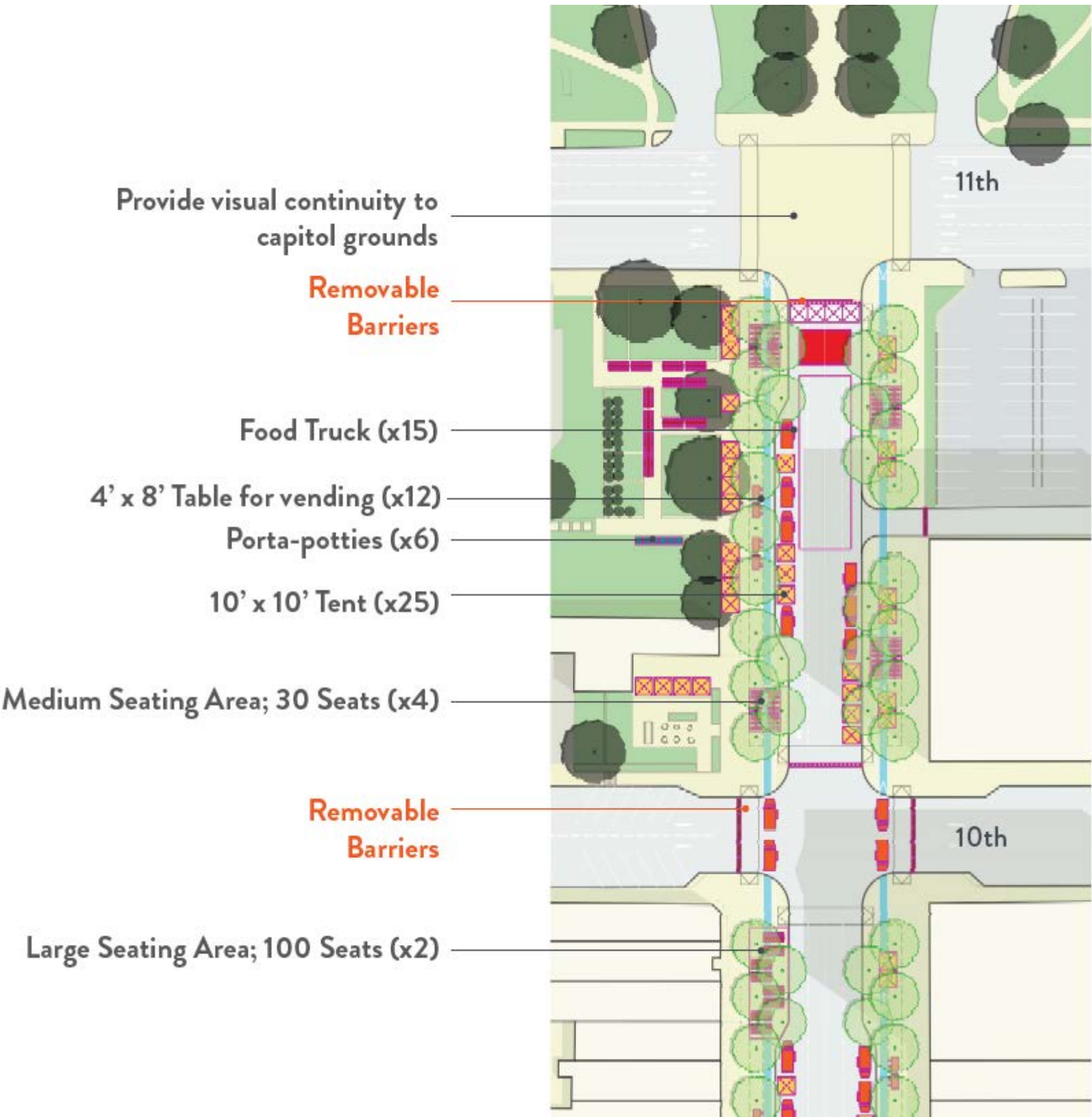
## POTENTIAL DESIGN



Circulator stop next to bike lane



Circulator stop integrated with bike lane



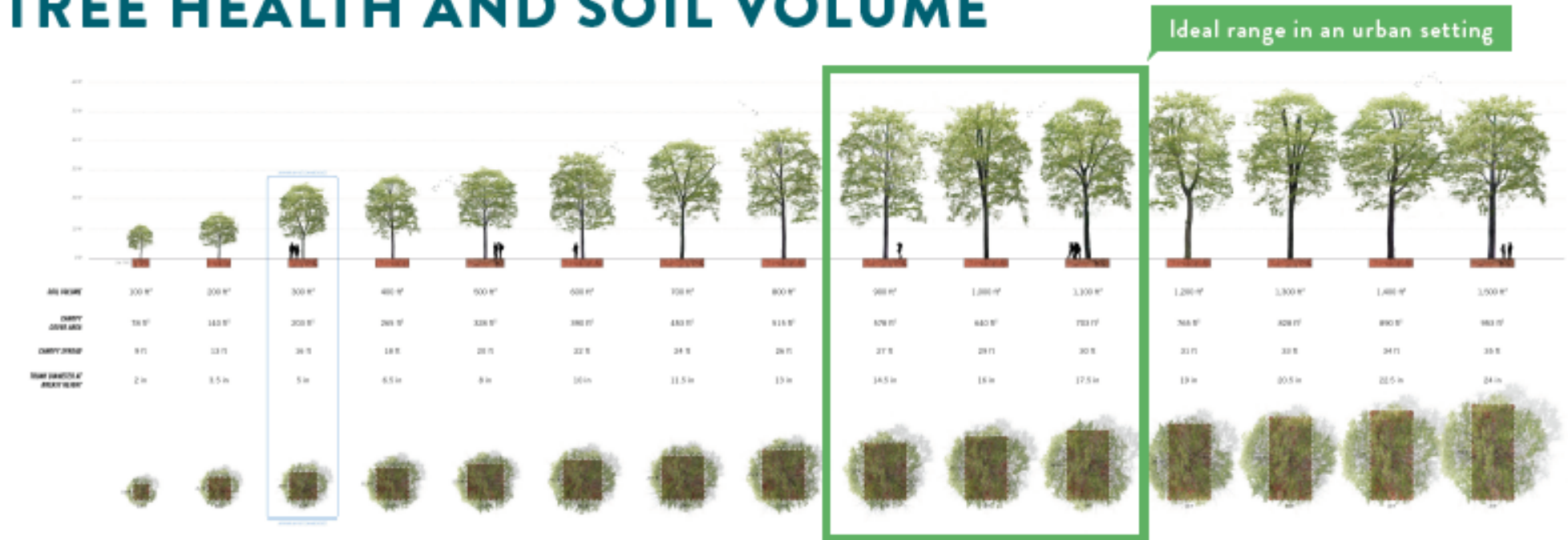
# SPACES FOR CELEBRATION

Common Elements

# HEALTHY LANDSCAPES

## Common Elements

### TREE HEALTH AND SOIL VOLUME



### STRATEGIES FOR TREE HEALTH



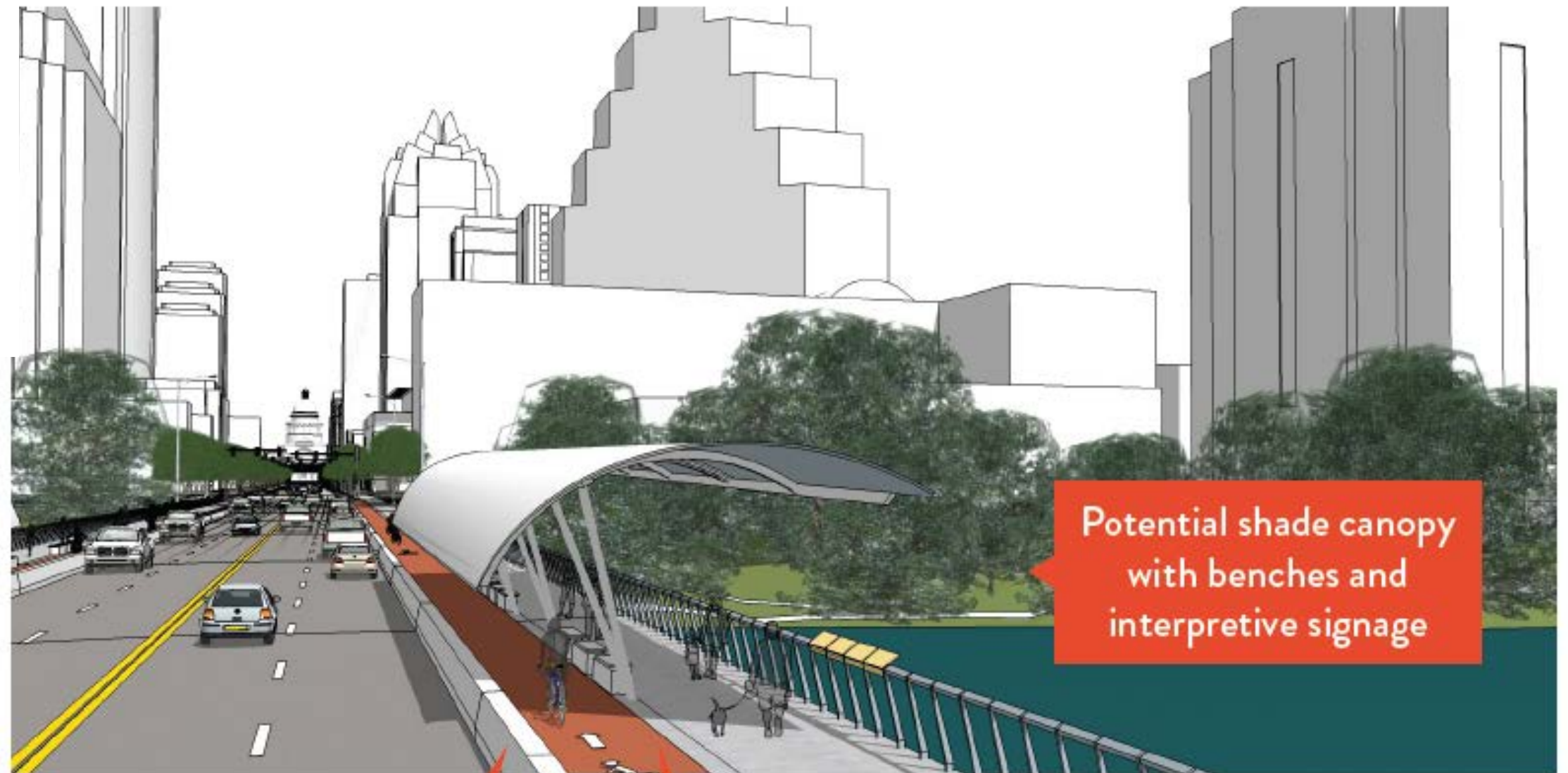


# REFRESH THE BRIDGE

## Common Elements

### 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



Vehicle barrier protects bike lanes and pedestrians

Bike lane at level of sidewalk

Potential shade canopy with benches and interpretive signage

Our  
**CONGRESS**  
**AVENUE**



# AN URBAN AVENUE

## Common Elements



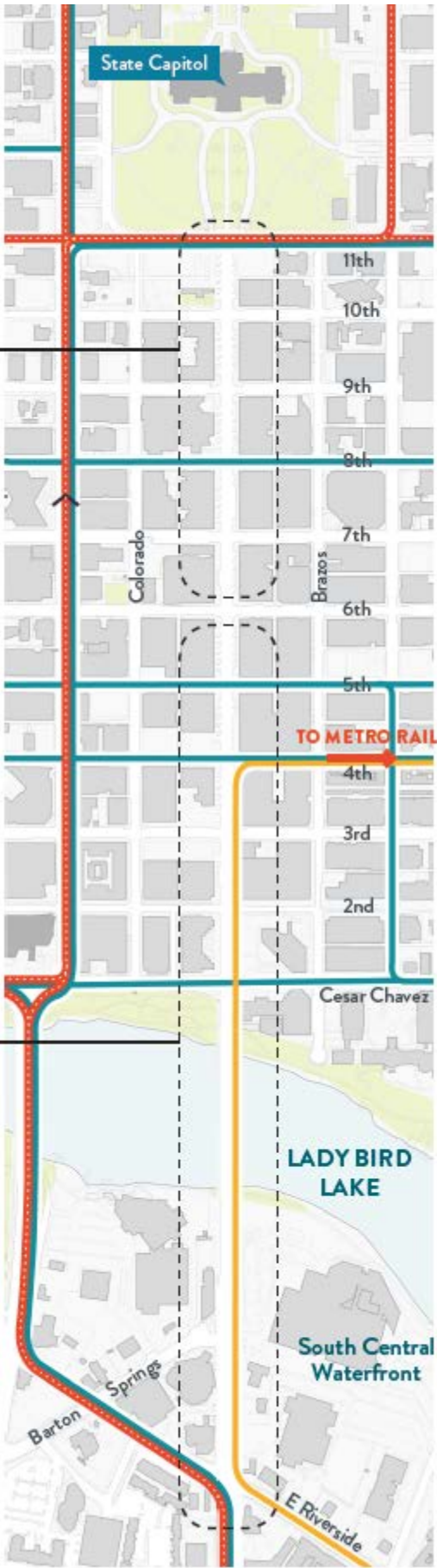
Congress Avenue is a walking street for 12,000 Downtown residents, an iconic destination for 24 million annual visitors, as well as a regional distributor for 86,000 employees, especially south of Sixth Street.



**Walking Heatmap**  
Congress Ave is the main pedestrian route in Downtown



**Biking Heatmap**  
Even without protected bike lanes, Congress Ave serves as the most important bicycle route.

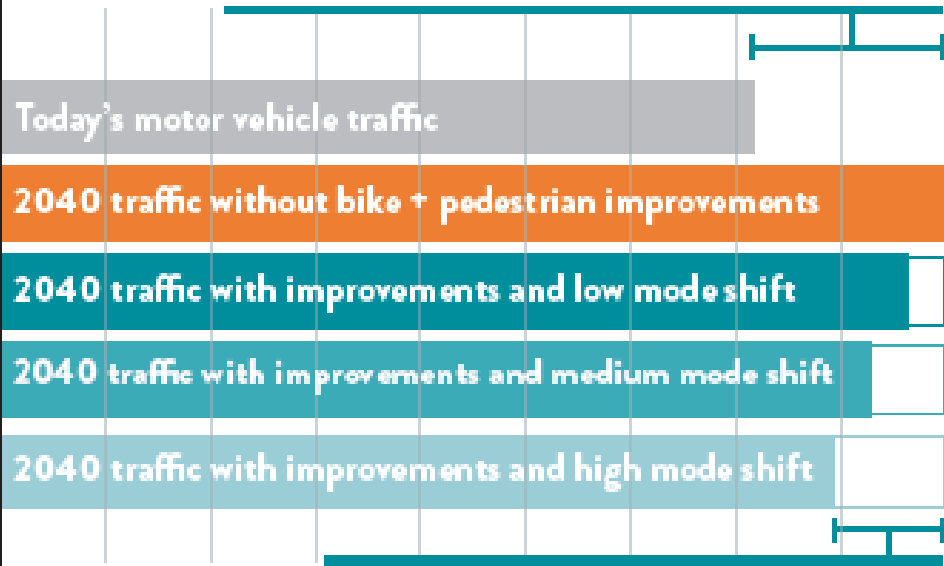




# A MULTIMODAL FUTURE

As Downtown Austin and the surrounding neighborhoods continue to attract more residents and jobs, strategies to mitigate congestion will become even more important. As part of this initiative, a study was commissioned to determine how regional trends and future development would affect traffic along Congress Avenue.

Travel demand is projected to increase by .5% each year, plus trips generated by new development, in particular, the South Central Waterfront. Without any improvements, most of these additional trips will be by vehicle.

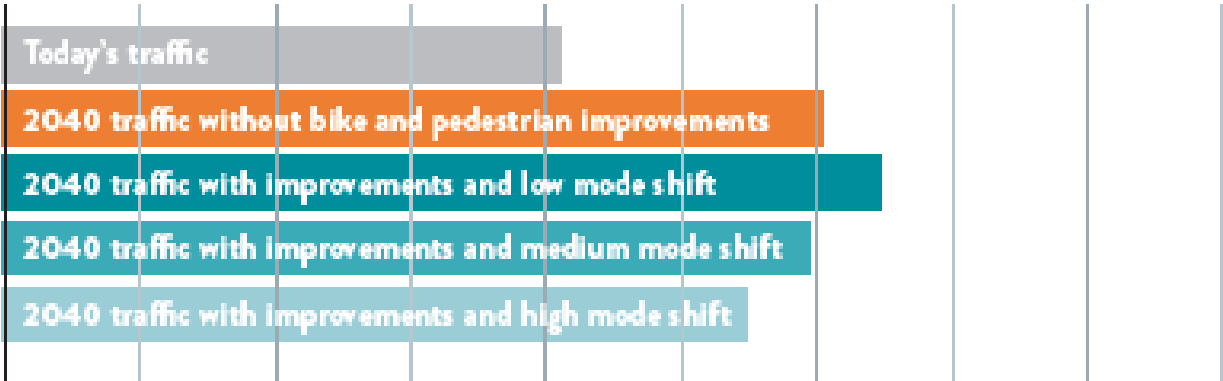


Improved bike, pedestrian, and transit facilities could mitigate congestion by shifting up to **12%** of trips to alternative modes of transportation in 2040

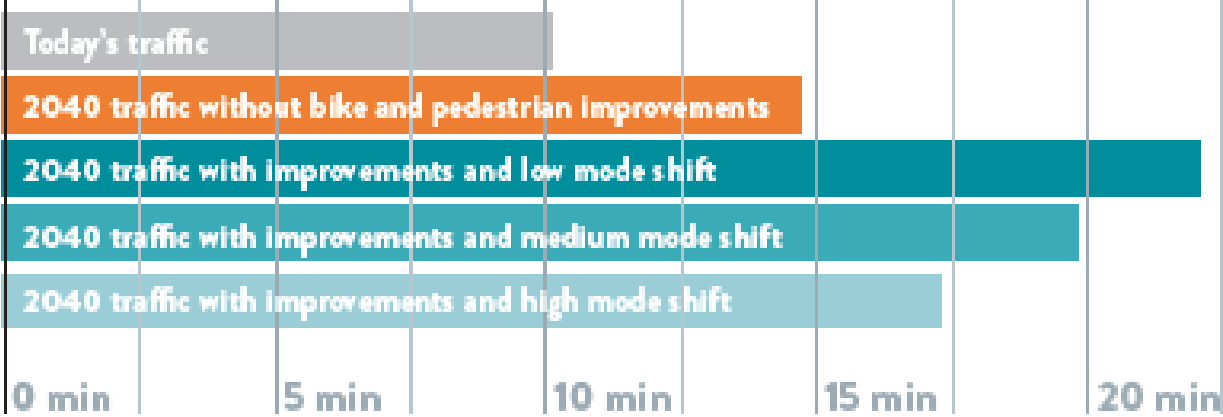
Breakdown of Multimodal Shift by Scenario	
SCWF*	Overall**
N/A	N/A
30%	0%
40%	4%
50%	8%
60%	12%

## PEAK HOUR TRAVEL TIMES

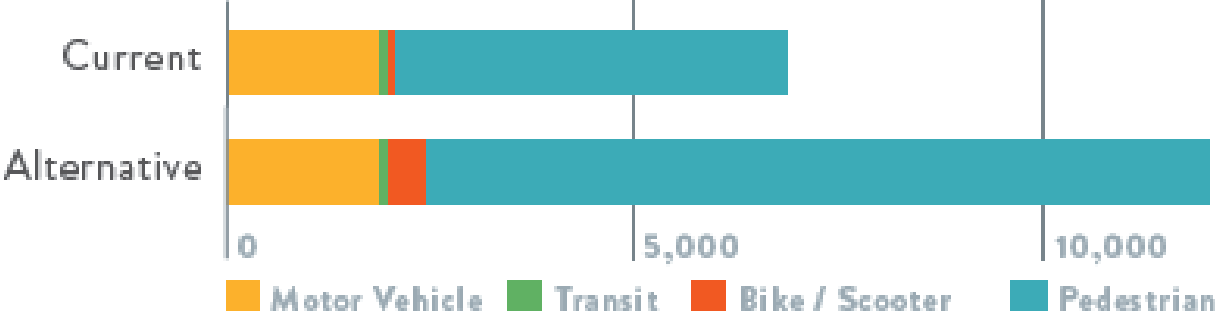
### AM Northbound from Riverside to 11th



### PM Southbound from 11th to Riverside



### Peak Hour Person Capacity of Congress Ave

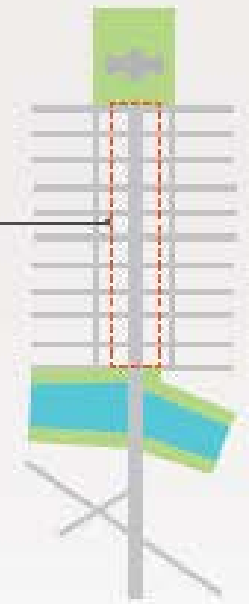


# EXISTING (6 LANES / 13' SIDEWALK)

## Balance The Avenue

The existing roadway prioritizes vehicles more than necessary and leaves little room for creating a unique public realm and an iconic place that anchors Downtown Austin.

View below  
applies to these  
blocks with some  
variations



Pedestrian Zone

Parking

Travel Lane

Travel Lane

Travel/Turn  
Lane

Travel/Turn  
Lane

Travel Lane

Travel Lane

Parking

Pedestrian Zone





## Key Components

The current six dedicated travel lanes and diagonal parking reserve 80% of the ROW for motor vehicles, leaving the Avenue with minimal pedestrian and café space and without safe bicycle paths.

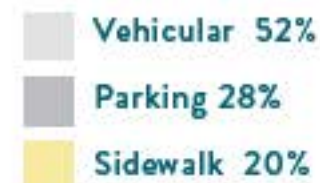
### PROS:

- Most convenient parking
- More travel lanes

### CONS:

- Pedestrian crossing difficult
- Inadequate, unsafe, shared bike lanes
- Angled parking disrupts pedestrian realm and cannot be used for drop-offs
- Safety issues from left turning vehicles blocking inside lanes

## Allocation of Space



No Dedicated Bike Lane

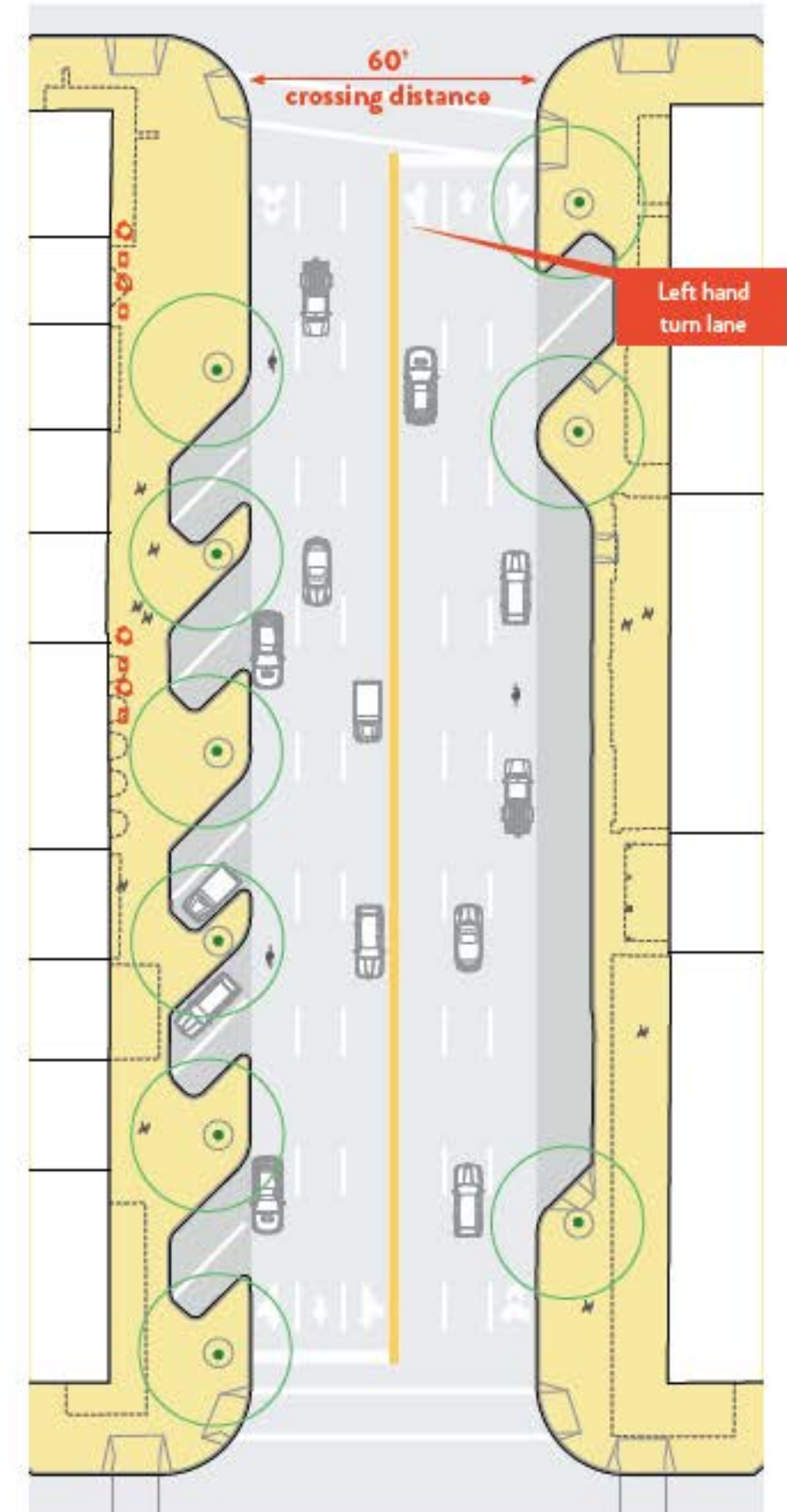
### Parking:

Up to 20 spaces per block at all times



### Left Turns:

Allowed with option for dedicated lane



# B (5 LANES FLEX / 27' SIDEWALK)

## Balance The Avenue

Dynamic use of roadway combines Alternative A's level of service for travel and turning during peak periods and creates a public realm wide enough for extensive activities and landscape areas.

Lane & sidewalk option could apply to these blocks

5 Lanes (no flex parking) could apply to these blocks



Pedestrian Zone	Amenity Zone	Bike Zone	Flex Parking / Travel Lane / Circulator Lane	Travel Lane	Turn Lane	Travel Lane	Flex Parking / Travel Lane / Circulator Lane	Bike Zone	Amenity Zone	Pedestrian Zone
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## Key Components

A five lane roadway accommodates similar motor vehicle level of service as the existing roadway north of Cesar Chavez, allows parking during off-peak times, and creates space for a vibrant and iconic public realm.

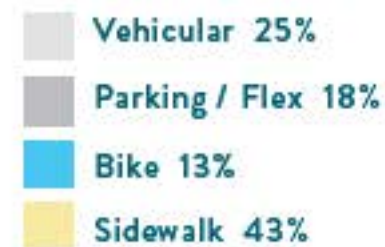
### PROS:

- Efficient use of Right-of-Way
- Creates an ample public realm
- Left hand turn lanes as needed

### CONS:

- No parking during rush hour (peak)
- Requires more intense lane management
- Slight diversion of bike lanes at circulator drop off

## Allocation of Space



## Parking:

~ 16 spaces per block at off-peak times



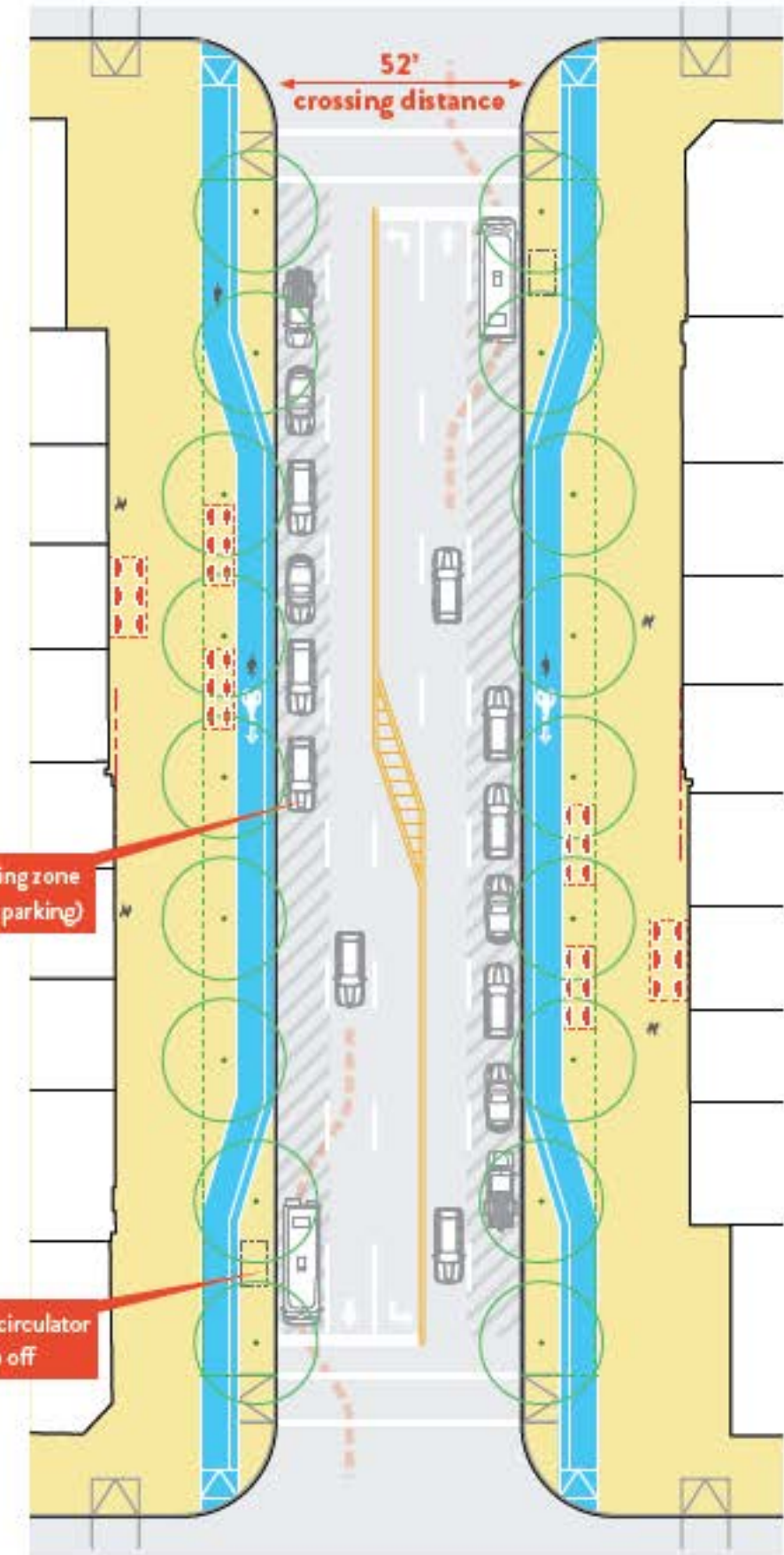
## Left Turns:

Allowed with dedicated lane

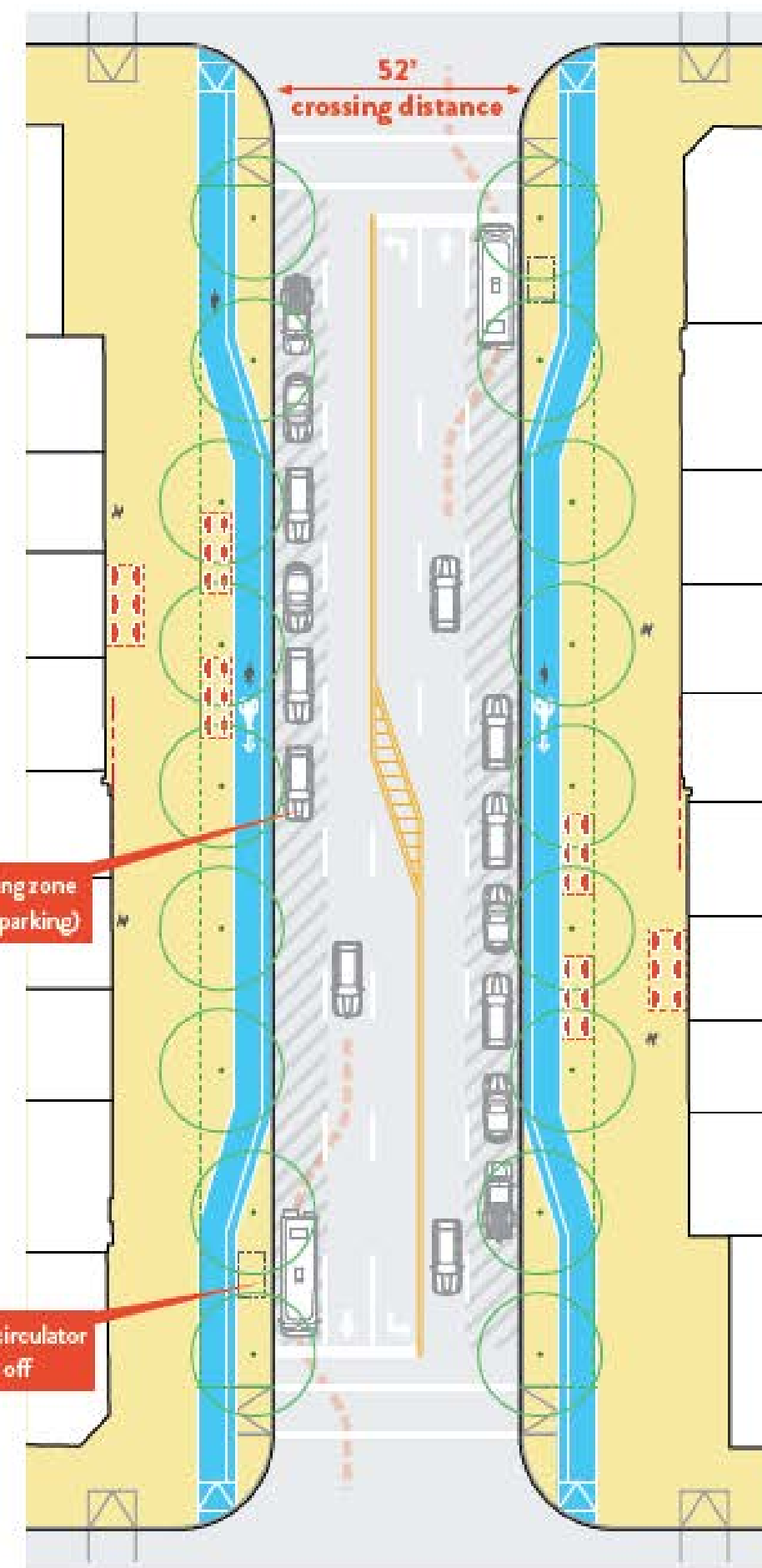


Flex parking zone (off-peak parking)

Potential circulator drop off







## Key Components

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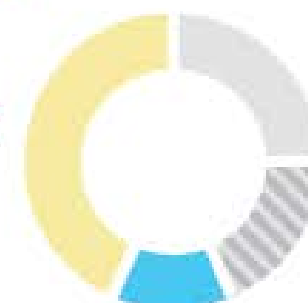
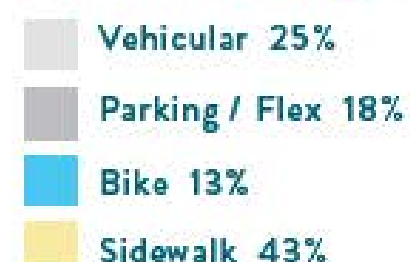
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## Allocation of Space



## Parking:

~ 16 spaces per block at off-peak times



## Left Turns:

Allowed with dedicated lane





# OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

## Balance The Avenue

### Existing (6 lanes / 13' Sidewalk)

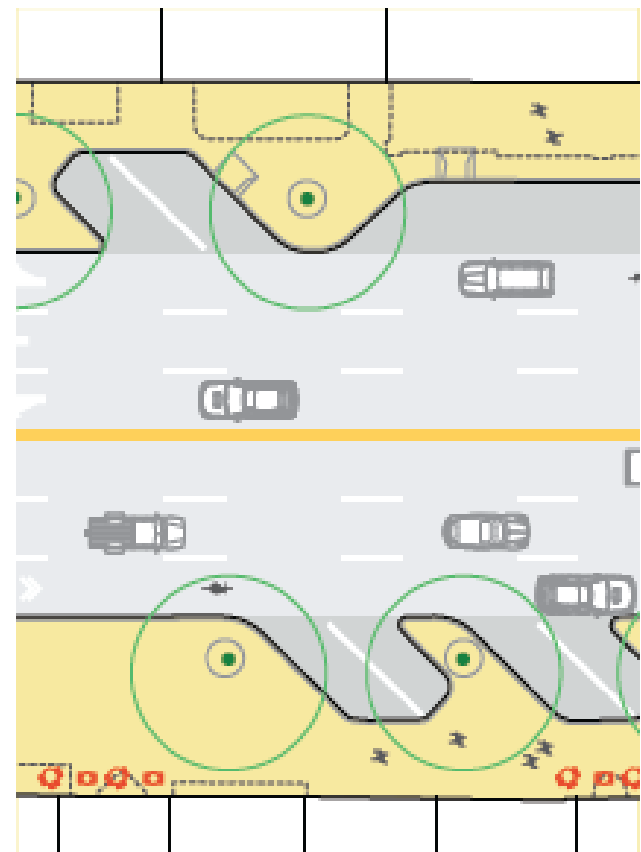
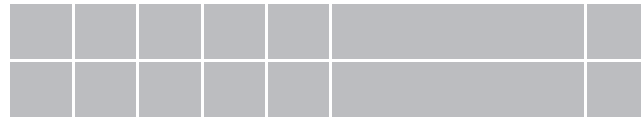
Six travel lanes and parking

Vehicular 52%  
Parking 28%\*  
Sidewalk 20%

\*no dedicated bike lane



Up to 20 parking spaces per block



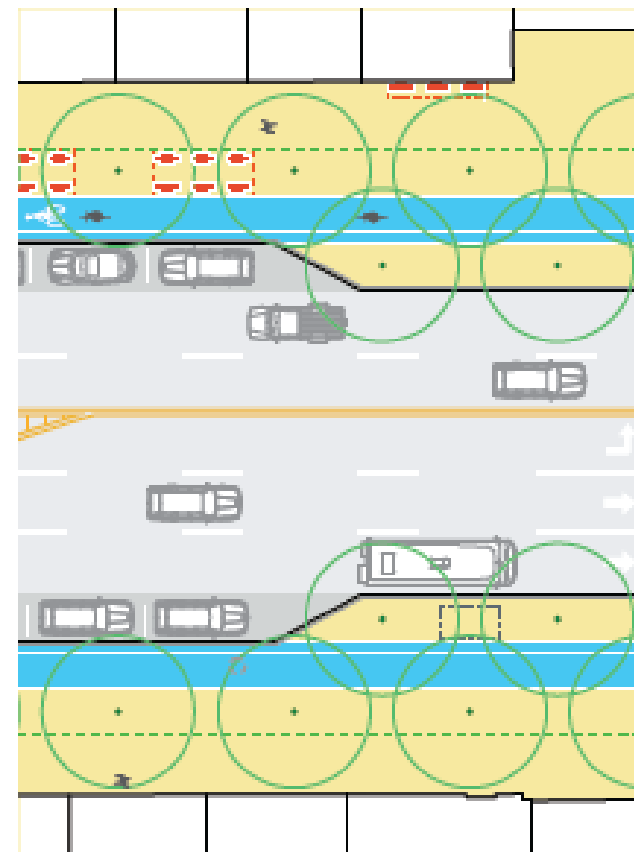
### A (5 lanes / 18' Sidewalk)

Five travel lanes plus parking and raised bike lane

Vehicular 43%  
Parking 13%  
Bike 13%  
Sidewalk 30%



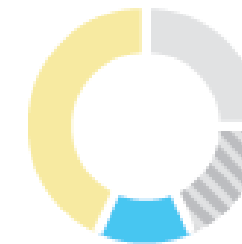
~ 10 parking spaces per block



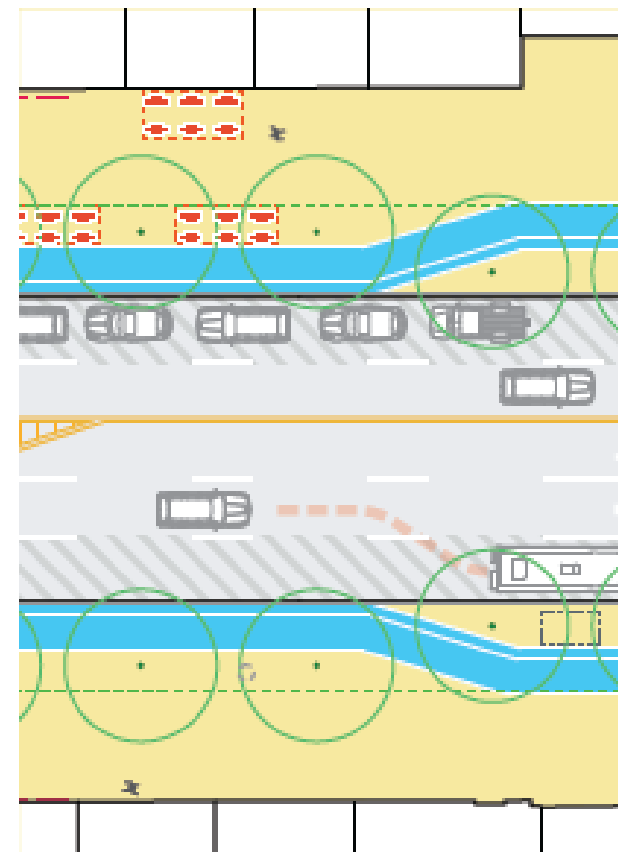
### B (5 Lanes Flex / 27' Sidewalk)

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

off-peak peak  
Vehicular 25% 43%  
Parking 18% 0%  
Bike 13%  
Sidewalk 43%



~ 16 parking spaces per block at off-peak times



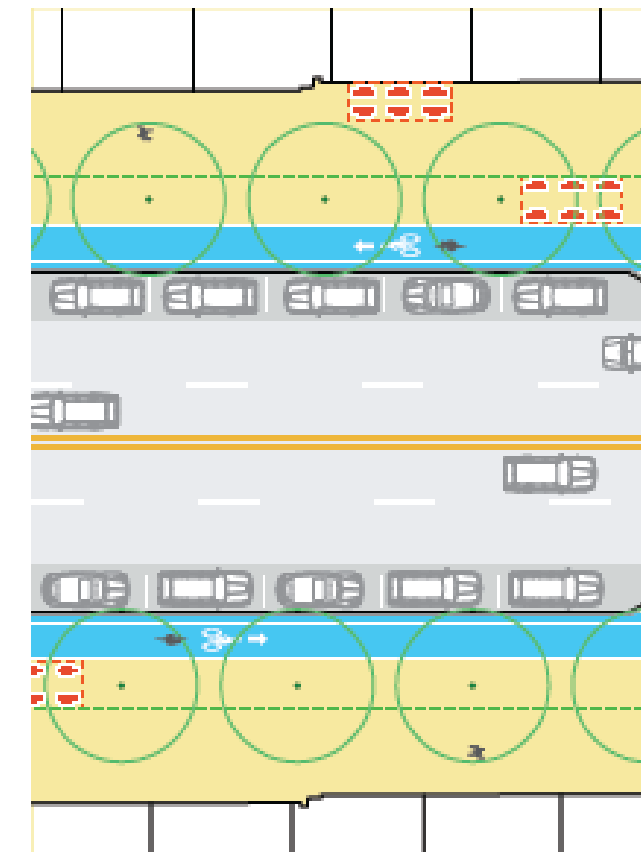
### C (4 Lanes / 24' Sidewalk)

Four travel lanes plus parking and raised bike lane

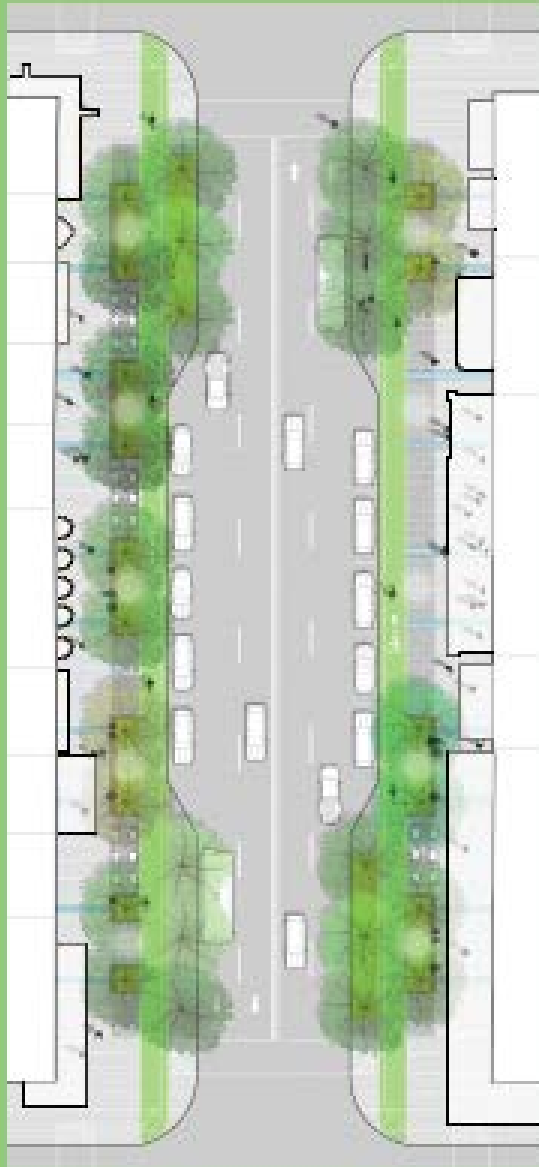
Vehicular 35%  
Parking 13%  
Bike 13%  
Sidewalk 38%



~ 10 parking spaces per block



The plan includes canopy trees surrounded by native plants, with a zone for stormwater treatment under the sidewalk.



# GREEN & BLUE

## Design Character

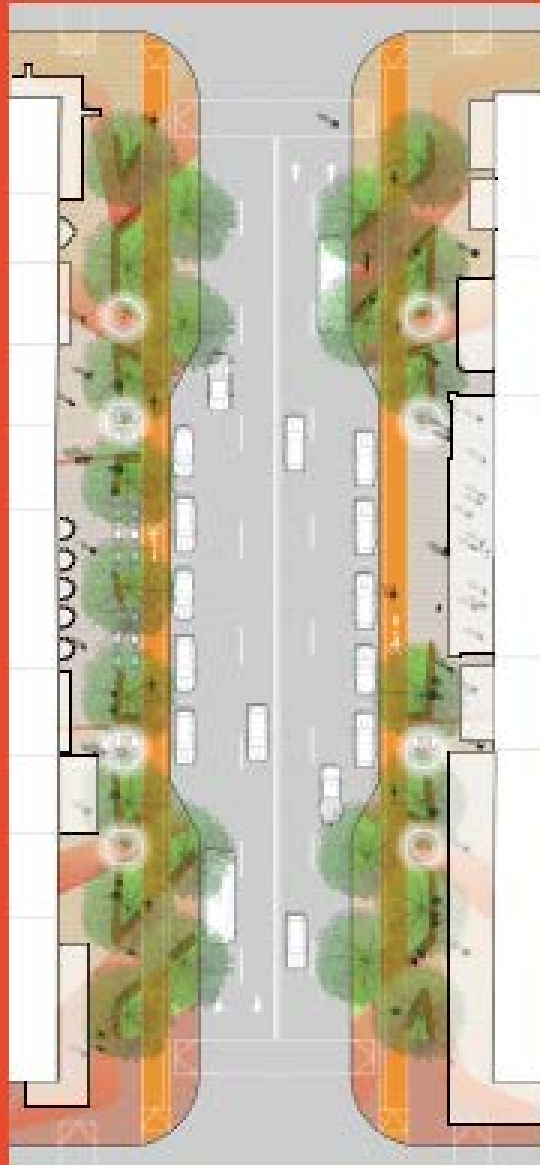
### NORTH BRIDGE LANDING - STORMWATER TERRACES



### SOUTH BRIDGE LANDING - STORMWATER SCULPTURE



A dynamic streetscape has graphic paving and clusters of seating emphasizing crossings.



# VIBRANT CROSSINGS

## Design Character



# CAPITOL DISTRICT

## Design Character



Grand ceremonial stairs



Accessible ramp along seating terraces



Bridge gateway elements

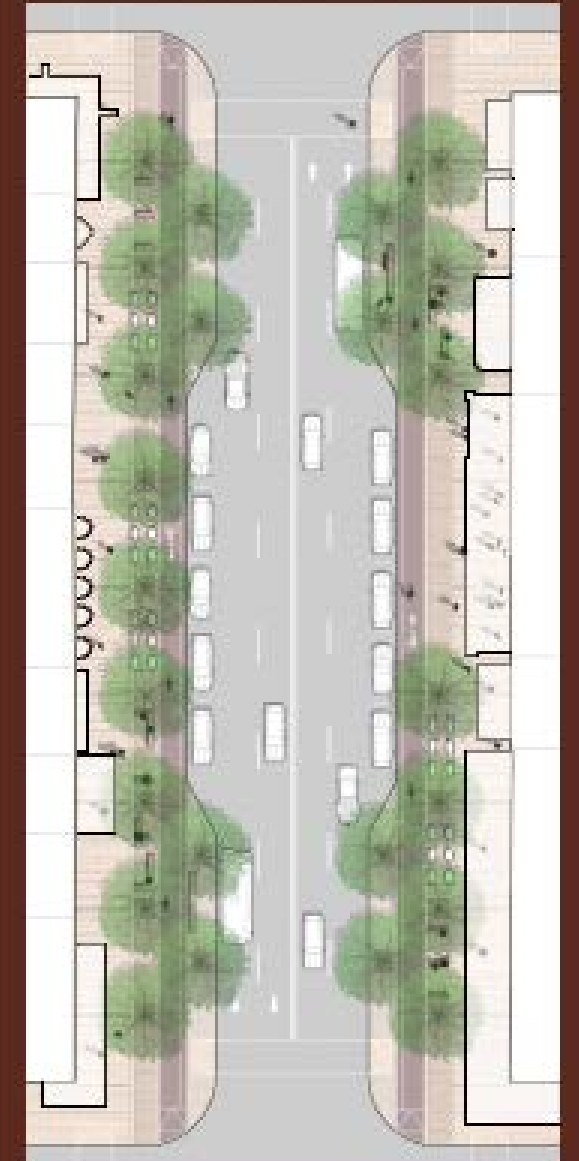


Bridge gateway elements

SOUTH BRIDGE LANDING - GRAND STAIRS



The elegant patterning of the streetscape draws inspiration from the architecture of the Texas Capitol building.





# REMAINING SCHEDULE

- **P3 IMAGINE! was held 5/15**
  - **Survey online closed 6/1**
  - **Select Boards and Commissions**
  - **Focus Groups**
- **P4 Draft Recommendation late summer**
  - **Public comment period**
  - **Final Boards and Commissions**
  - **Leading to Council acceptance**



**Our**  
**CONGRESS**  
**AVENUE**  
**IMAGINE!**

The logo is set against a white rectangular background. The word 'Our' is in orange. 'CONGRESS' is in large, multi-colored block letters (blue, green, orange, red). 'AVENUE' is in large, multi-colored block letters (blue, green, yellow, orange, red). 'IMAGINE!' is in orange block letters with an exclamation mark.

## **Contact Information:**

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