

Our
CONGRESS AVENUE

**STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS
URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVE**

Downtown Commission June 20, 2018

Our CONGRESS AVENUE

Vision

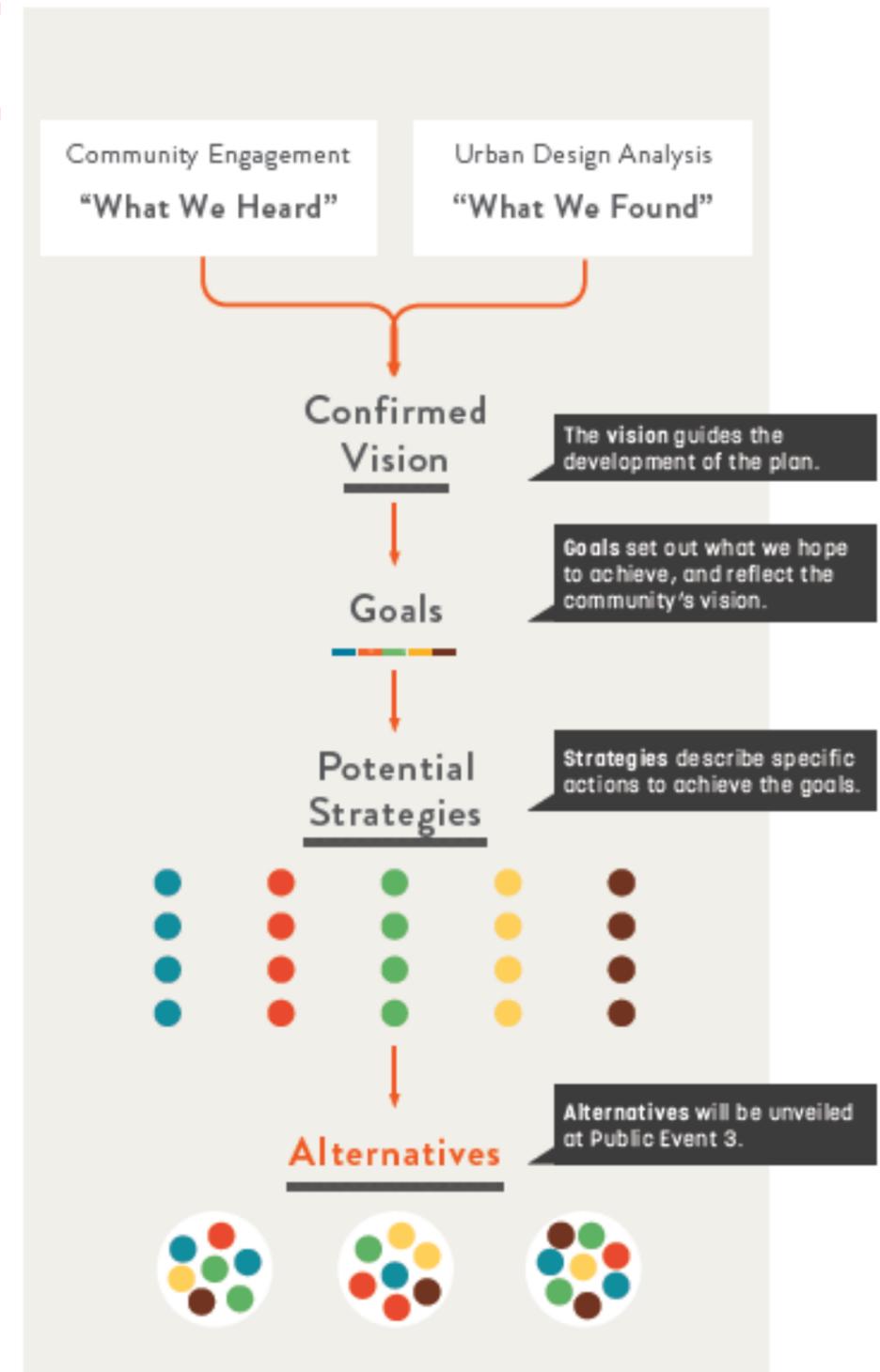
Our Congress Avenue is a great Texas people place - the cultural, historic and commercial spine of downtown Austin where people come to share, celebrate and create a bright future.

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

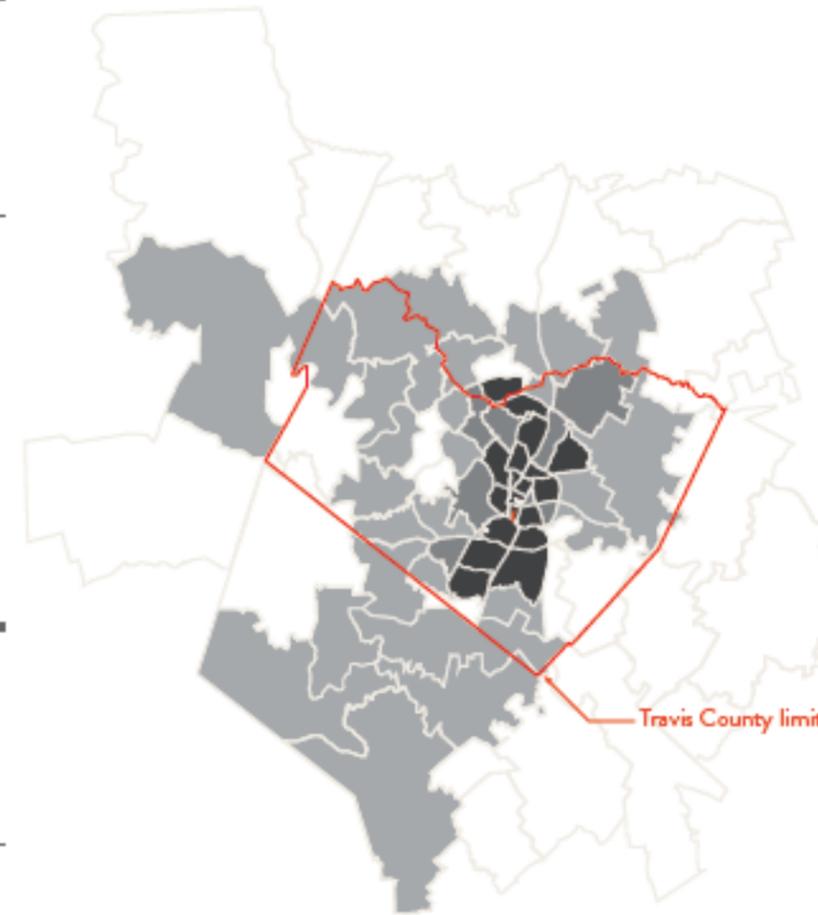
FOCUS GROUPS

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

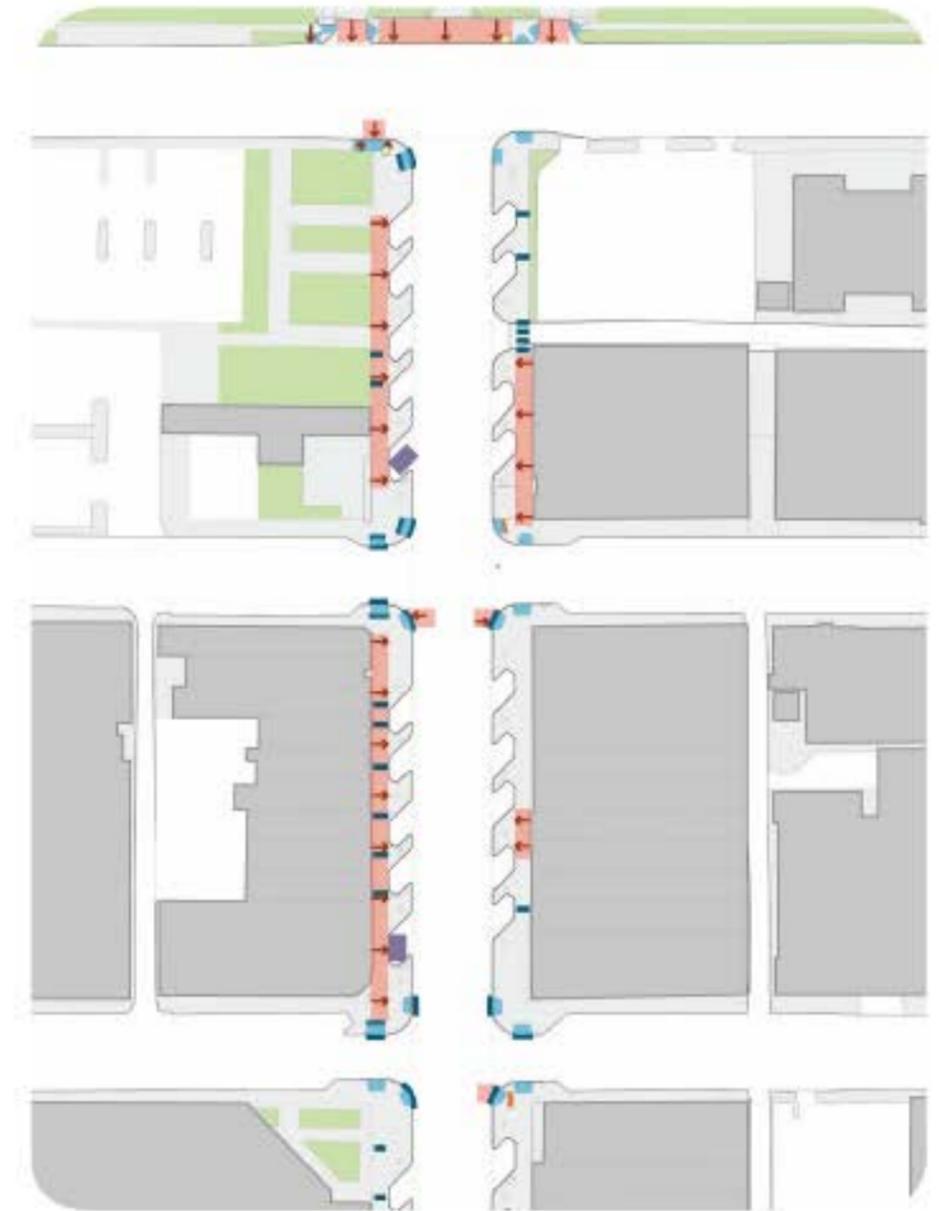
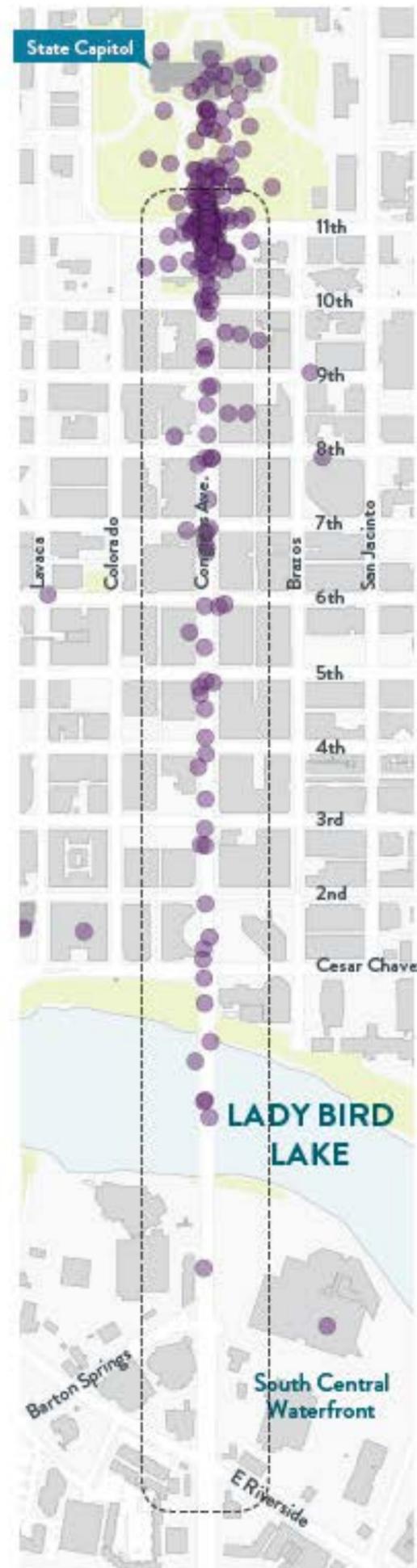
“ Get in **ADA compliance** and install **benches** every block so folks can have a resting spot ”

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



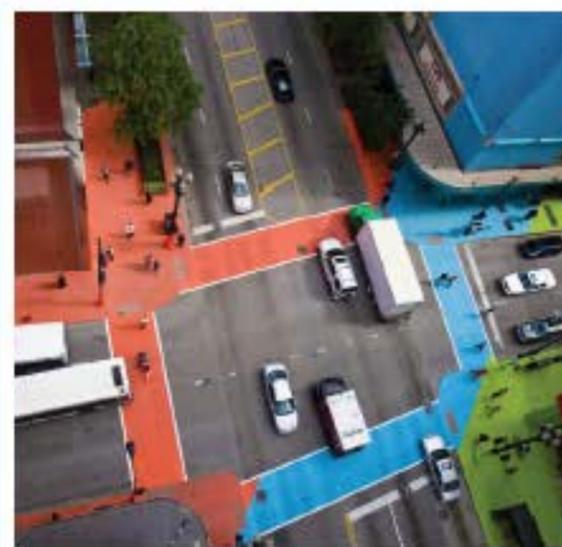
Separated Bike and Ped Lanes
Bay Bridge, Oakland, CA



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

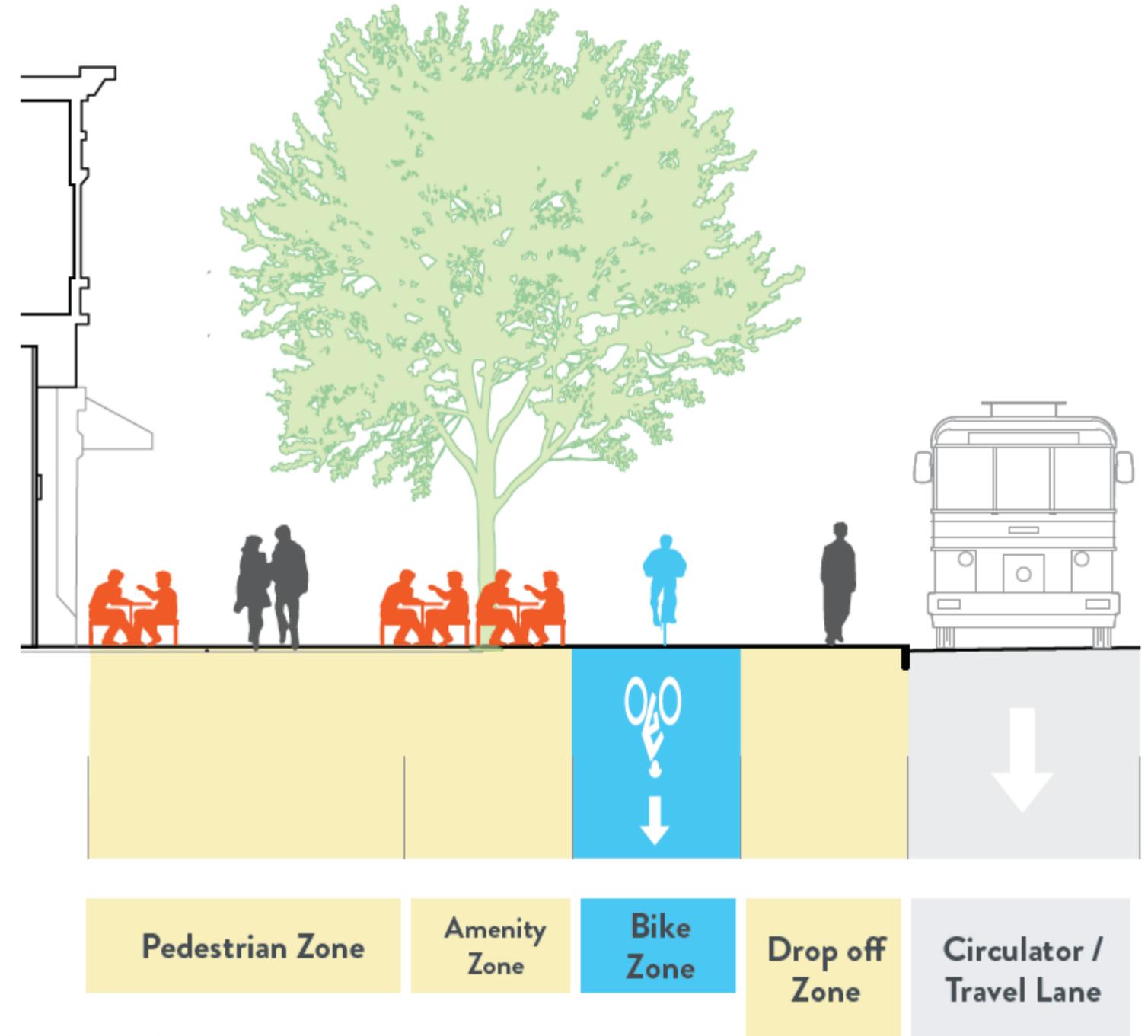
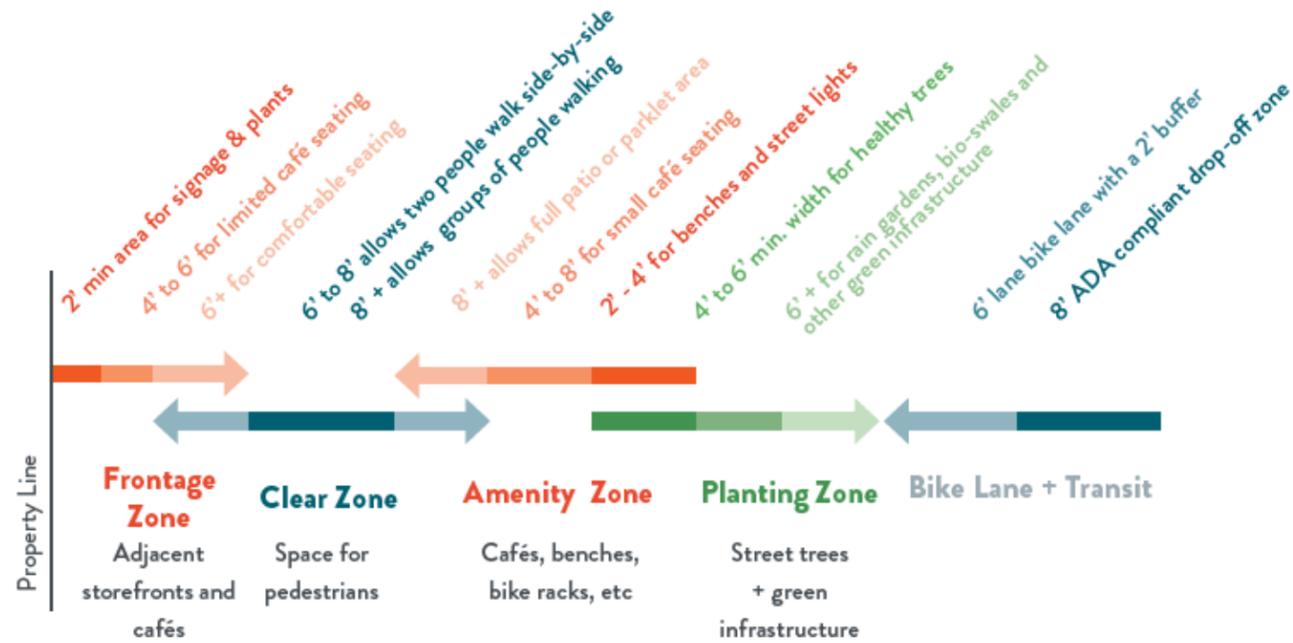


Bike Lanes
Raised Bike Lane, Cambridge, MA

SIDEWALKS FOR PEOPLE

Common Elements

POTENTIAL DESIGN

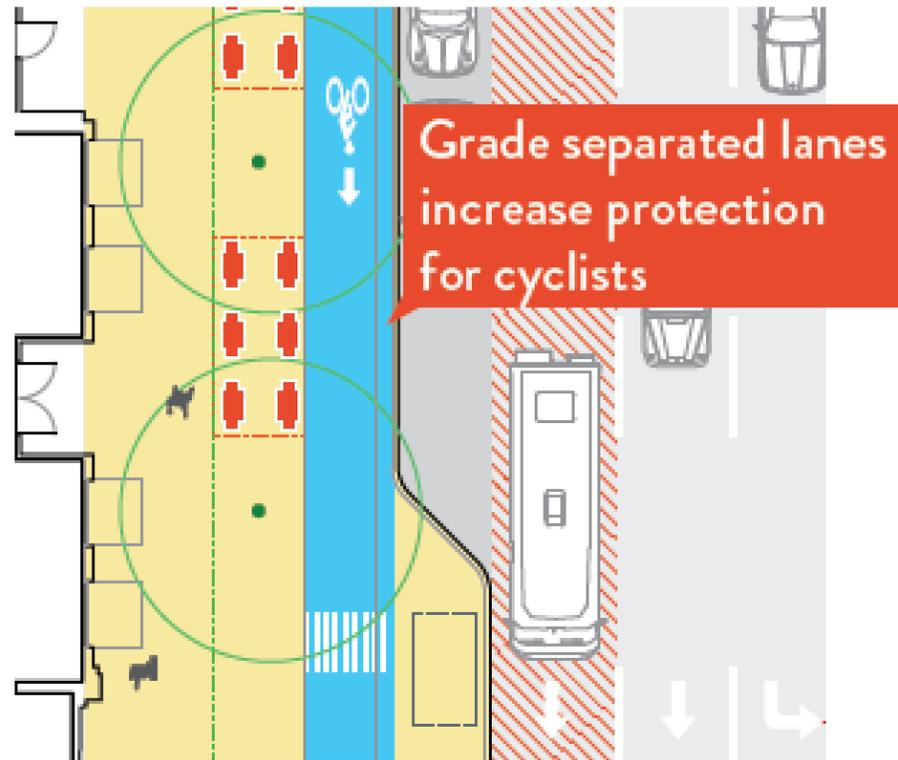


Expanded Space for People

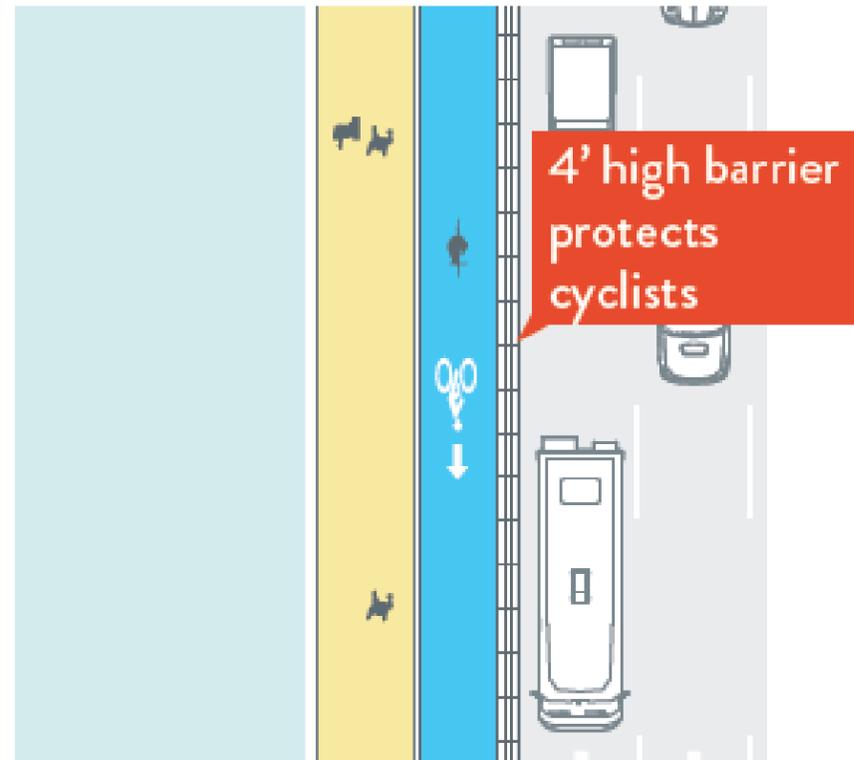
SAFE BIKE LANES

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



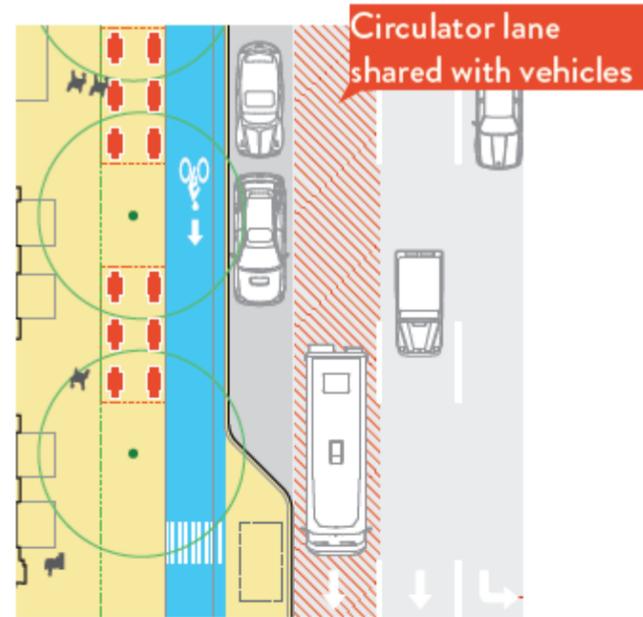
Precedent:

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

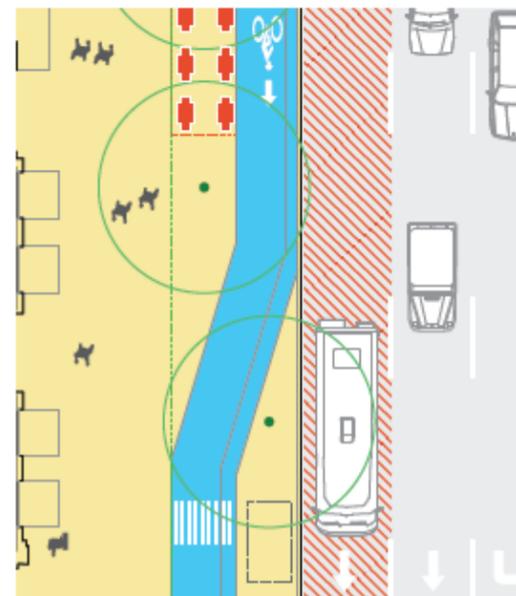
FLEXIBLE TRANSIT

Common Elements

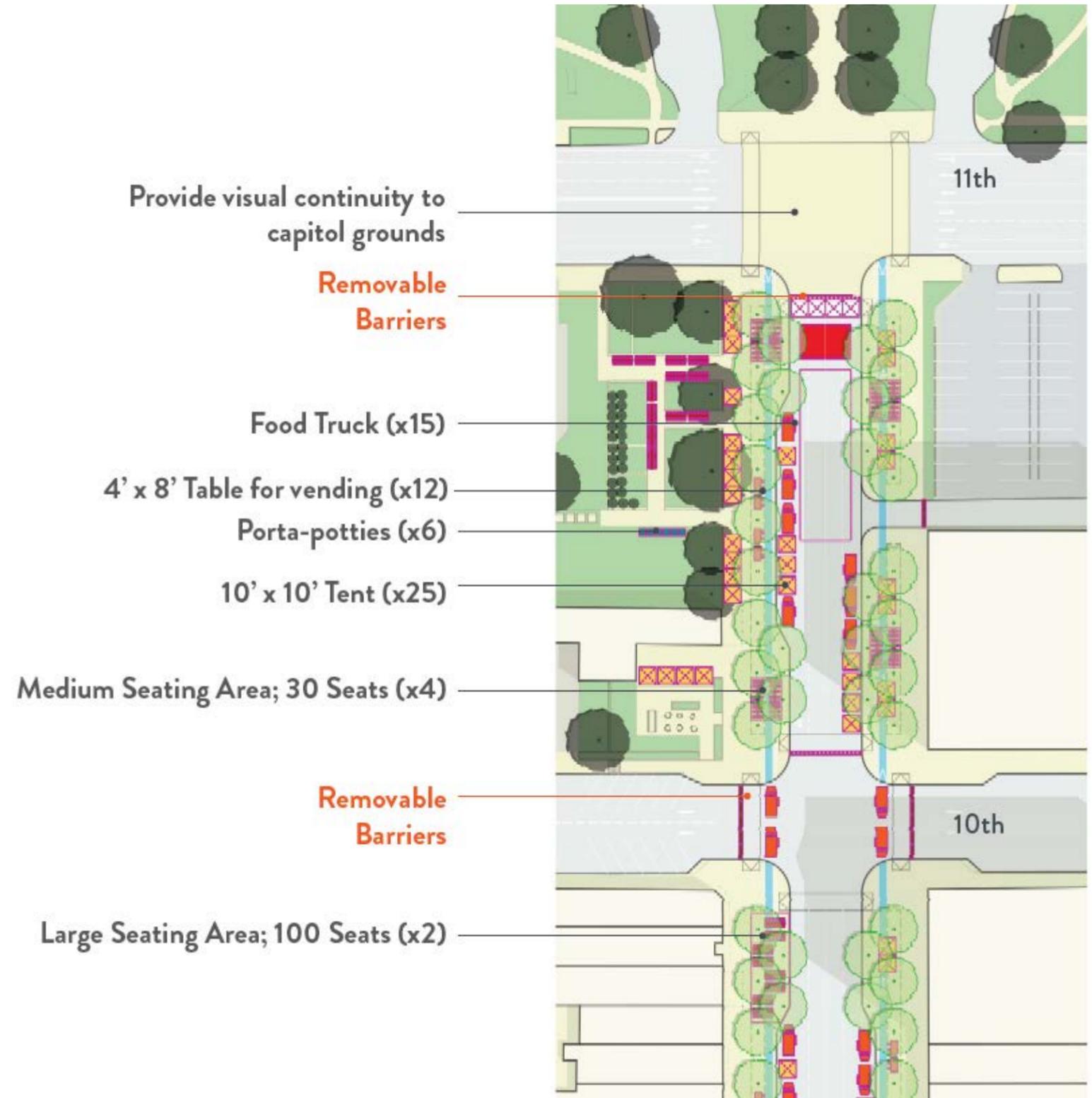
POTENTIAL DESIGN



Circulator stop next to bike lane



Circulator stop integrated with bike lane



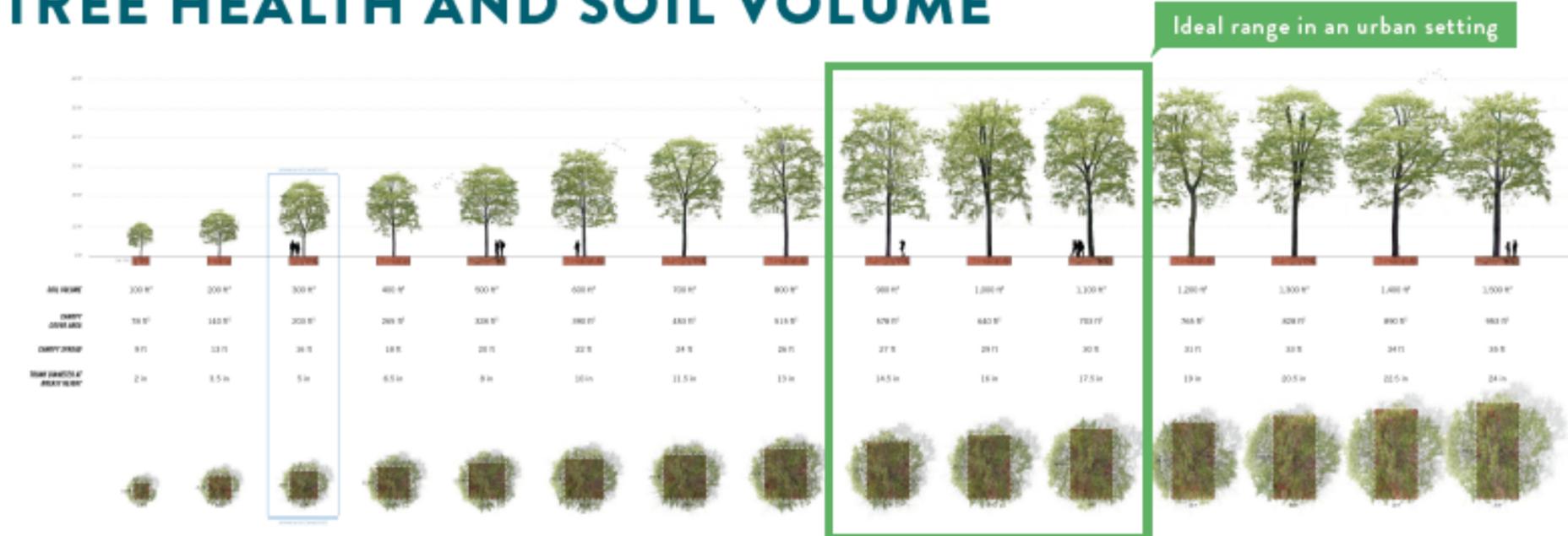
SPACES FOR CELEBRATION

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



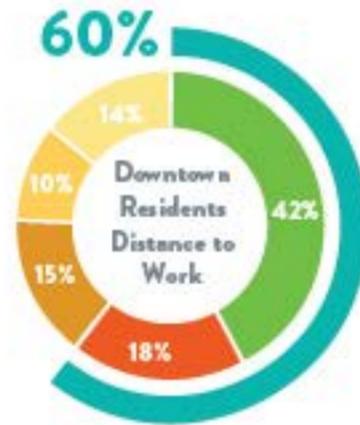
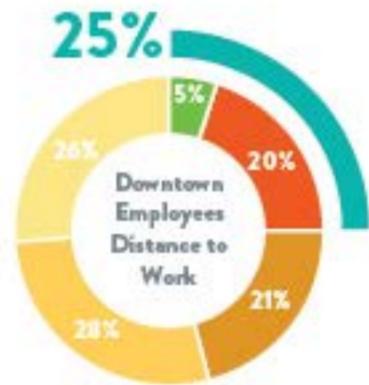
Potential shade canopy with benches and interpretive signage

Vehicle barrier protects bike lanes and pedestrians

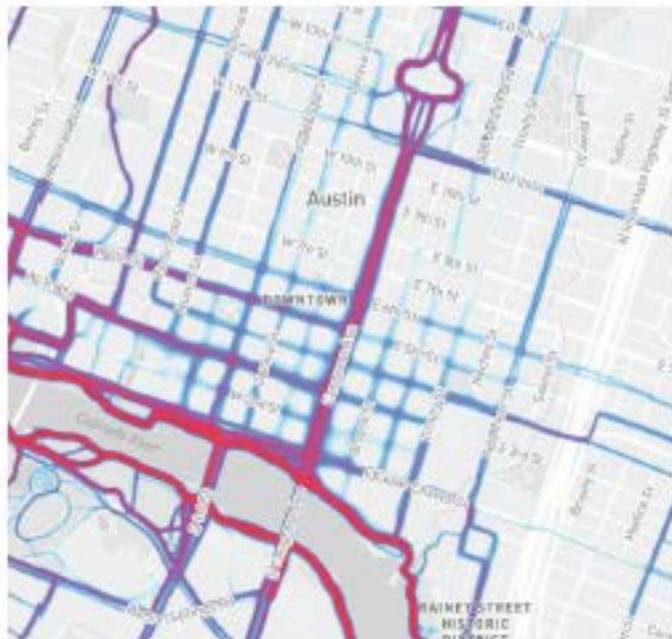
Bike lane at level of sidewalk

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.

Transit Options

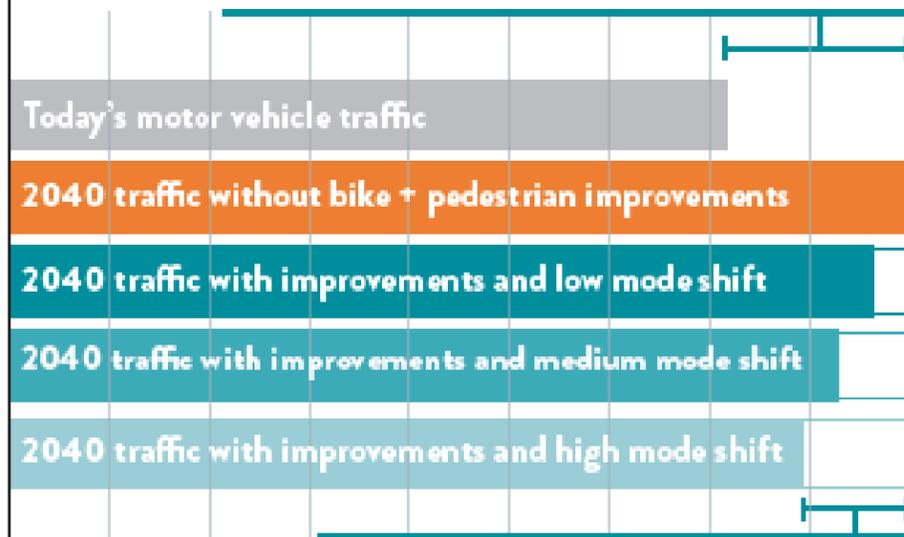
- High Frequency Bus Routes —
- Special / Airport Bus Routes —
- Local Bus Routes —



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.



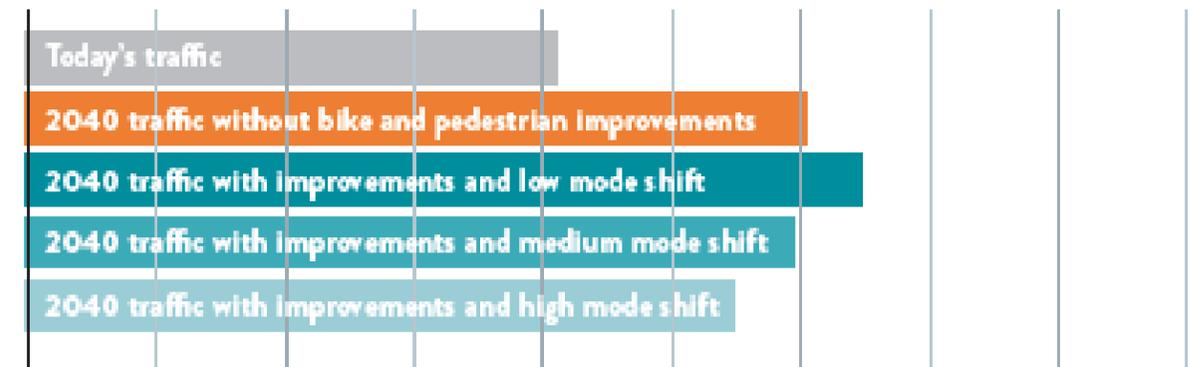
Improved bike, pedestrian, and transit facilities could mitigate congestion by shifting up to **12%** of trips to alternative modes of transportation in 2040

Breakdown of Multimodal Shift by Scenario

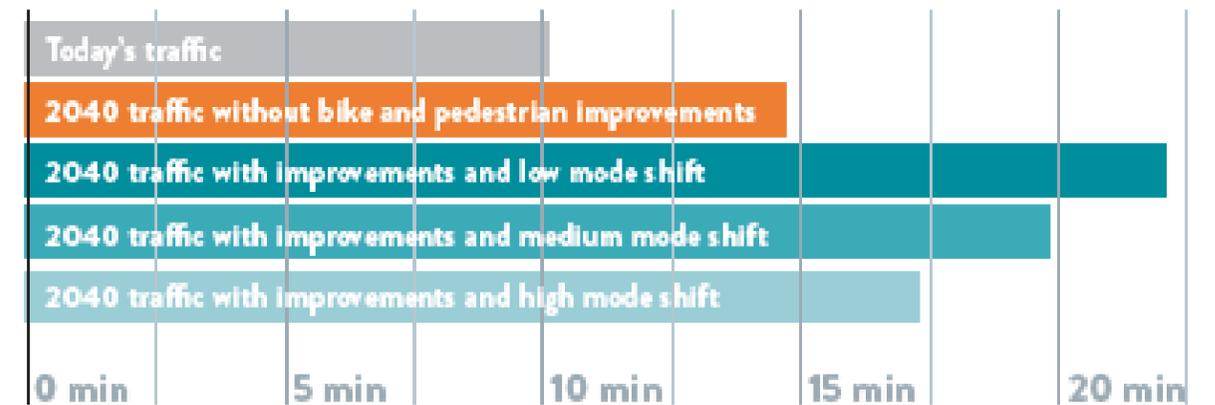
SCWF*	Overall**
N/A	N/A
30%	0%
40%	4%
50%	8%
60%	12%

PEAK HOUR TRAVEL TIMES

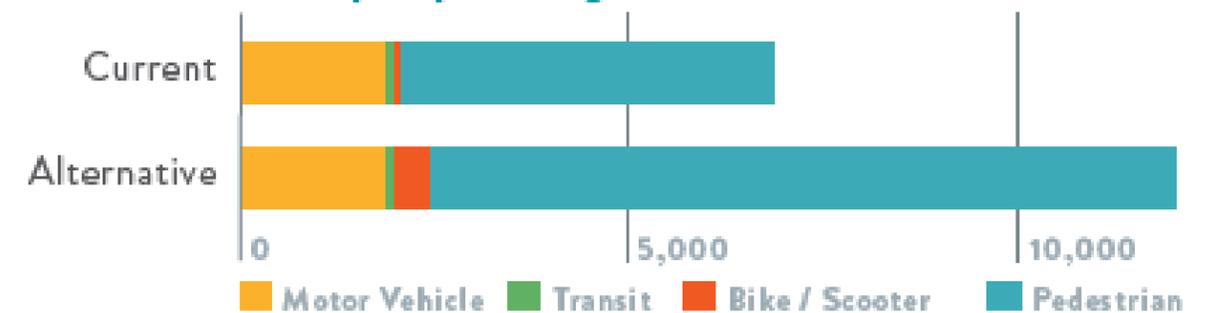
AM Northbound from Riverside to 11th



PM Southbound from 11th to Riverside



Peak Hour Person Capacity of Congress Ave

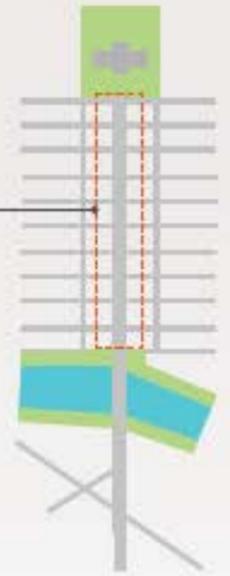


EXISTING (6 LANES / 13' SIDEWALK)

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

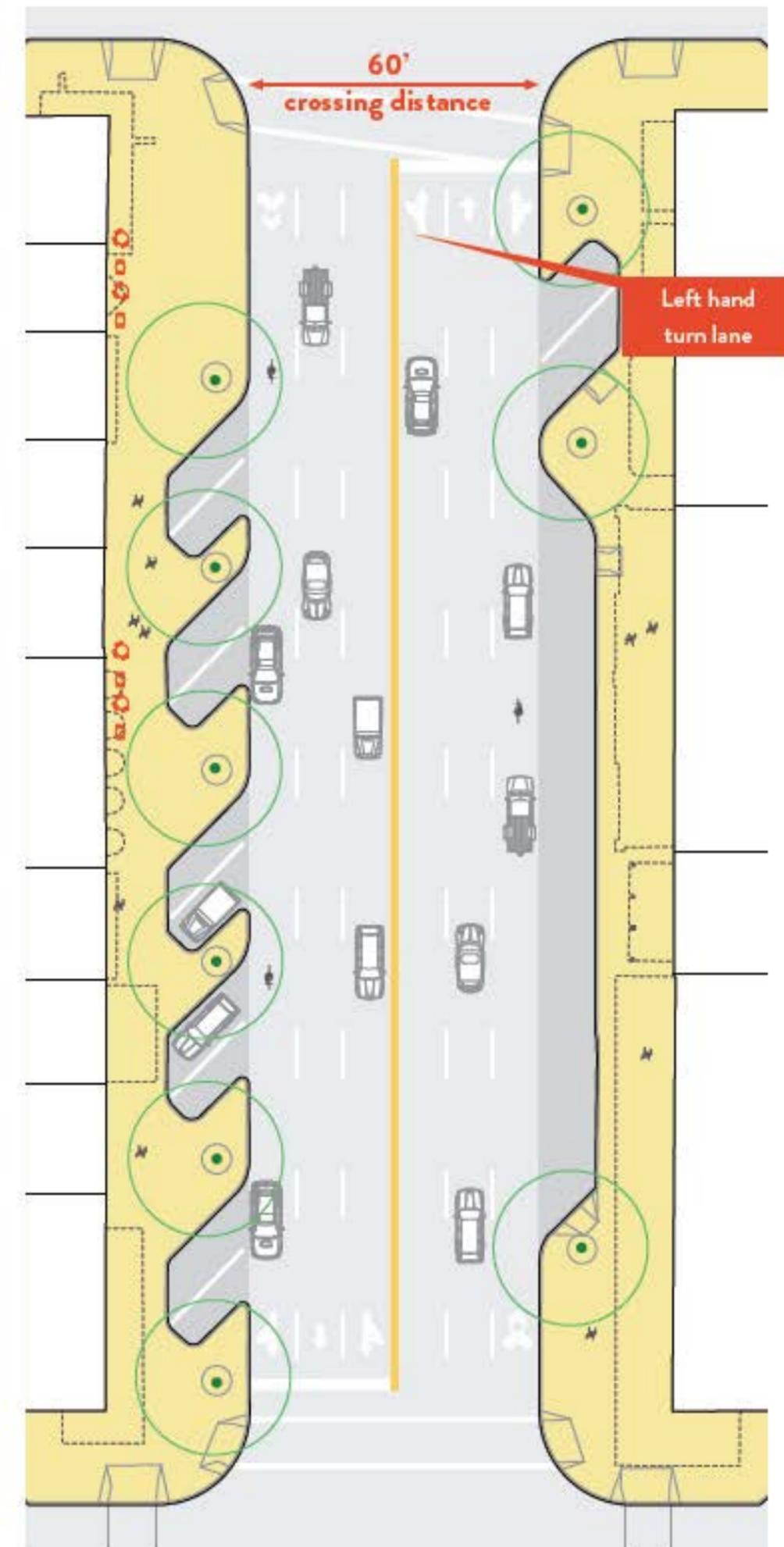
Travel/Turn Lane

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



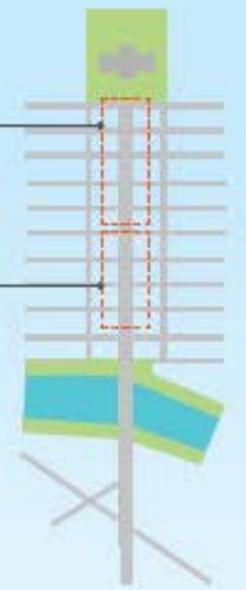
B (5 LANES FLEX / 27' SIDEWALK)

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



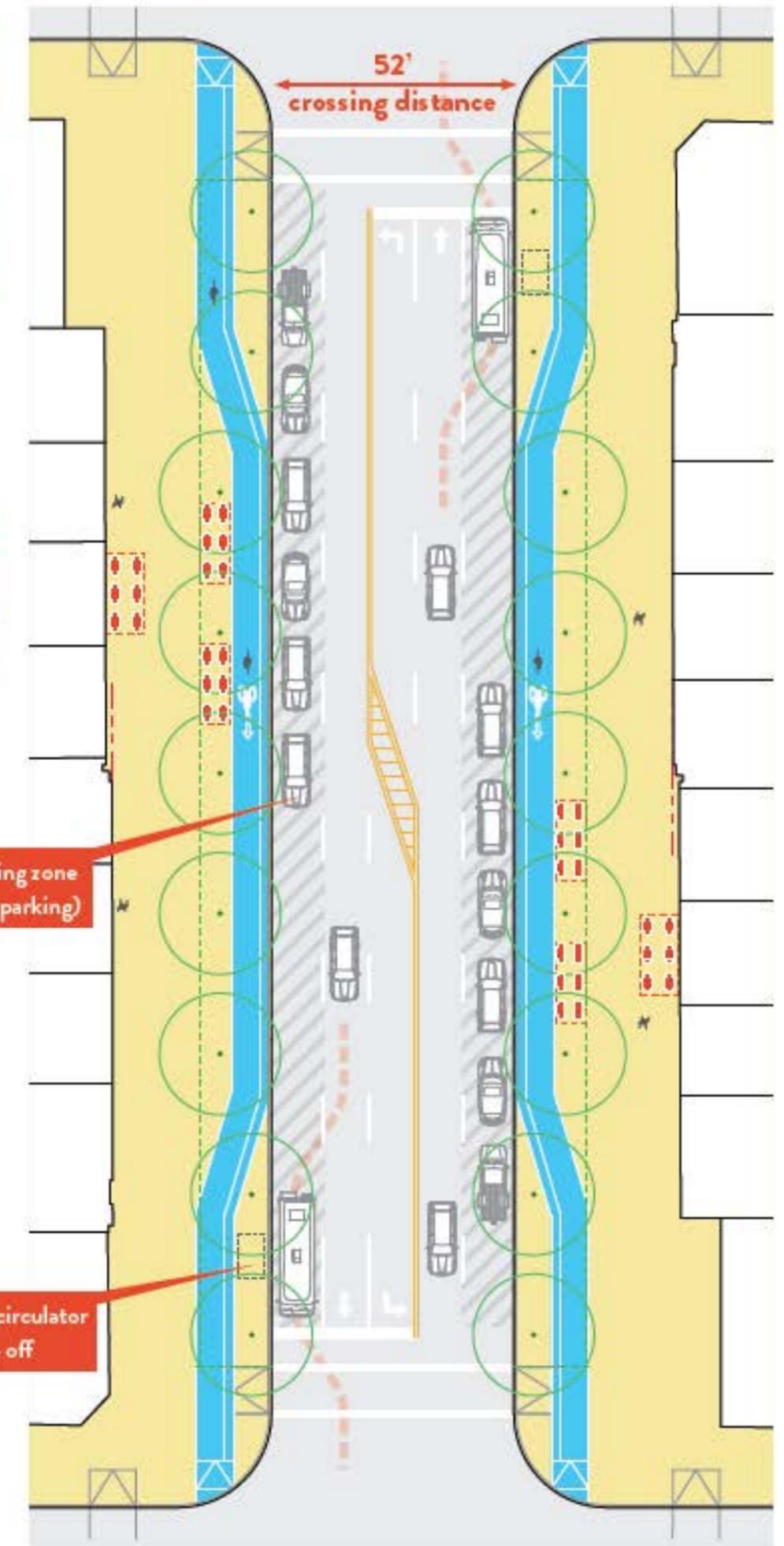
Parking:

~ 16 spaces per block at off-peak times



Left Turns:

Allowed with dedicated lane

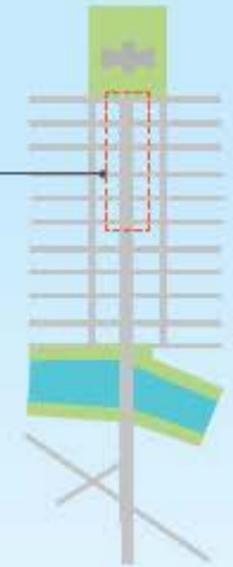


C (4 LANES / 24' SIDEWALK)

Balance The Avenue

Provides a comfortable amount of space for amenities and green infrastructure, but traffic flow is somewhat restricted.

Lane & sidewalk option could apply to these blocks



Amenity Zone	Pedestrian Zone	Bike Zone	Parking / Planting Zone	Circulator/Travel Lane	Travel Lane	Travel Lane	Circulator/Travel Lane	Parking / Planting Zone	Bike Zone	Pedestrian Zone
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Key Components

Four travel lanes with parking requires restricted left turns, but creates the most comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

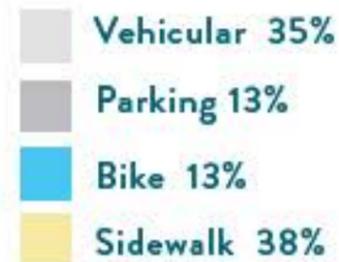
PROS:

- Ample space for sidewalk cafés, amenities, and green infrastructure
- Allows parking at all hours
- Safe 42' distance for pedestrian crossing

CONS:

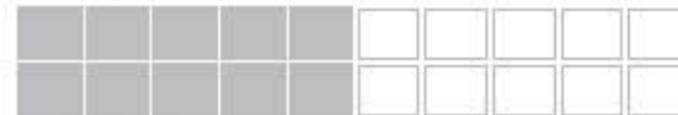
- Prohibited left turns and likely need for on-going enforcement to achieve compliance
- Reduces capacity for vehicular traffic resulting in increased delays due to drivers making illegal lefts
- narrowest pavement for parade function

Allocation of Space



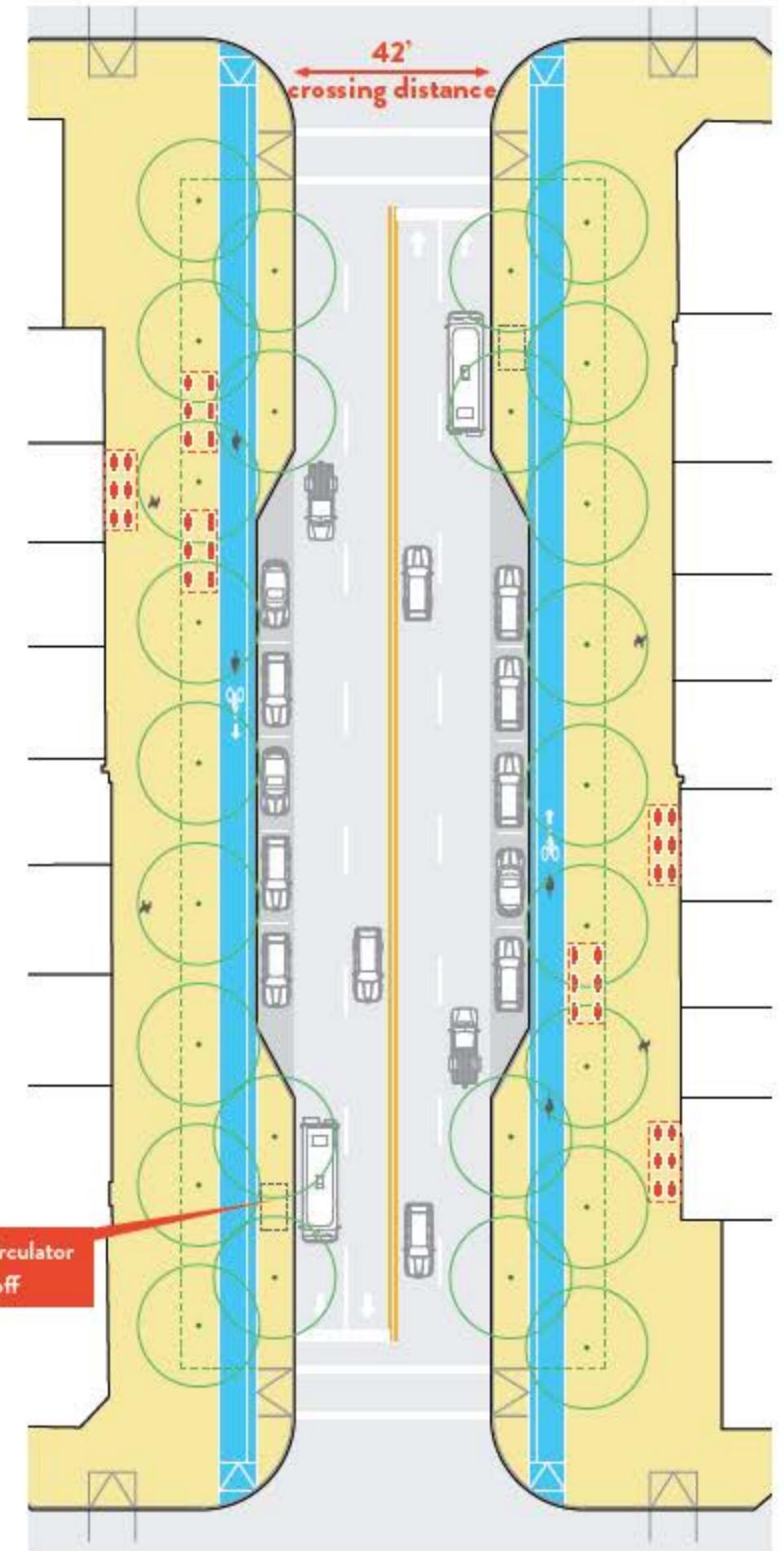
Parking:

~ 10 spaces per block



Left Turns:

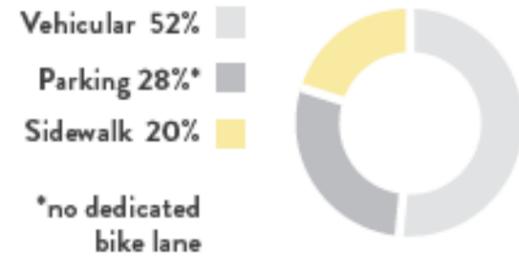
No left turns allowed



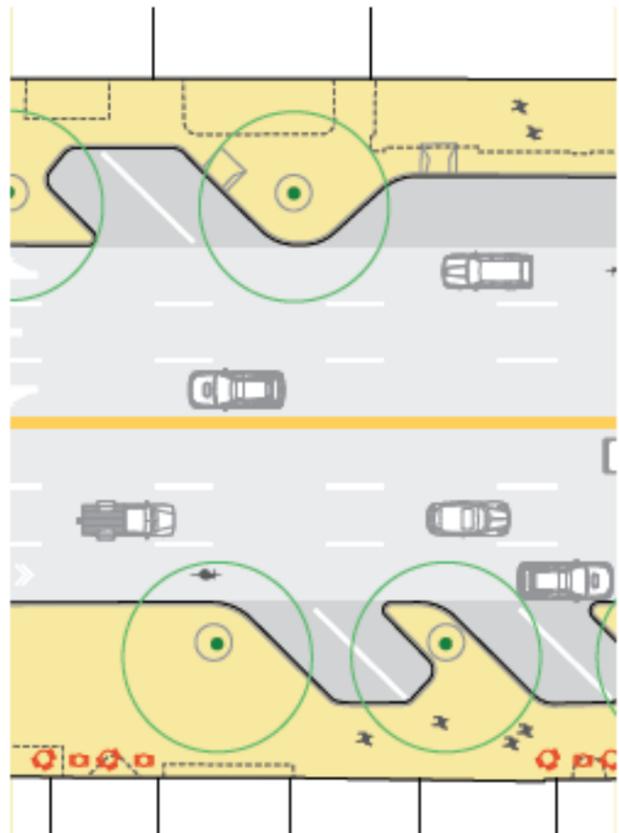
OVERVIEW OF OPTIONS

Balance The Avenue

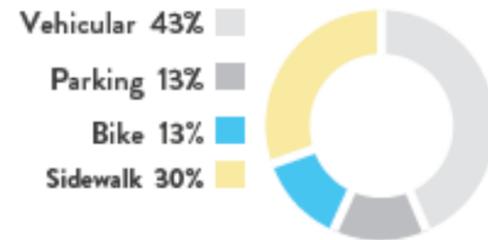
Existing (6 lanes / 13' Sidewalk)
Six travel lanes and parking



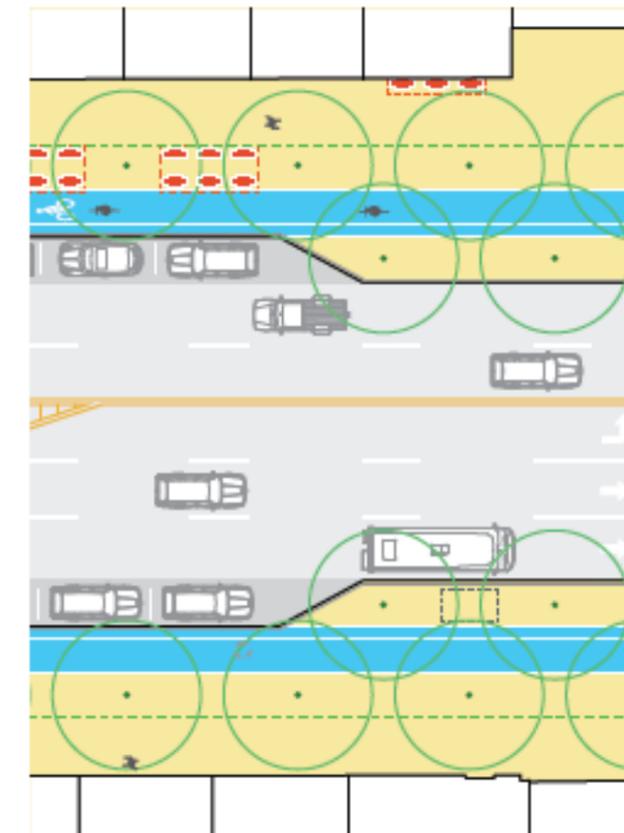
Up to 20 parking spaces per block



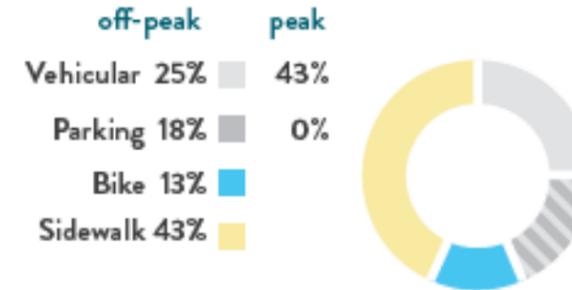
A (5 lanes / 18' Sidewalk)
Five travel lanes plus parking and raised bike lane



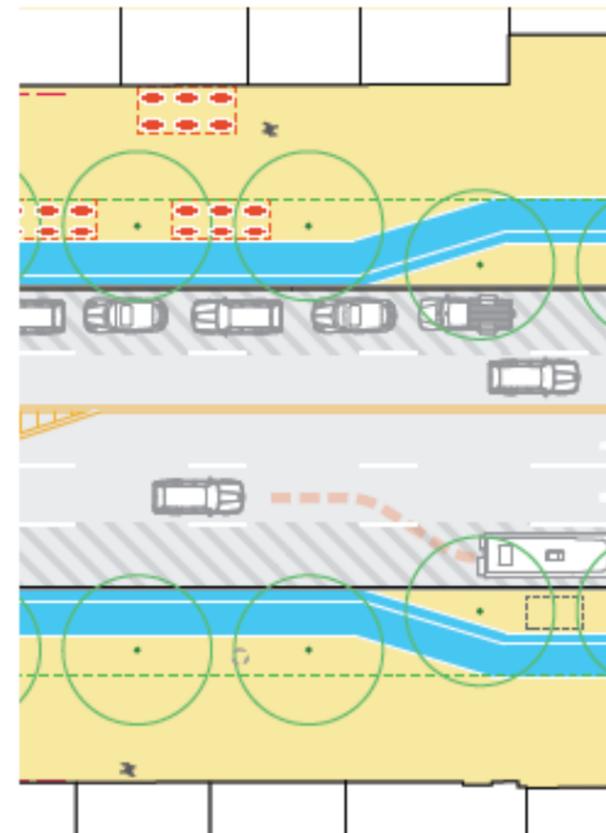
~ 10 parking spaces per block



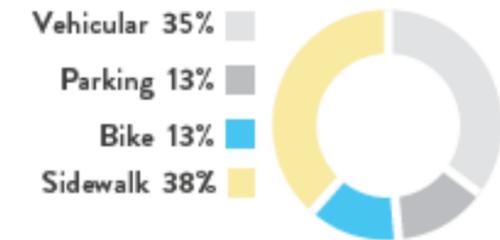
B (5 Lanes Flex / 27' Sidewalk)
Five flex-lanes including off-peak parking and raised bike lane



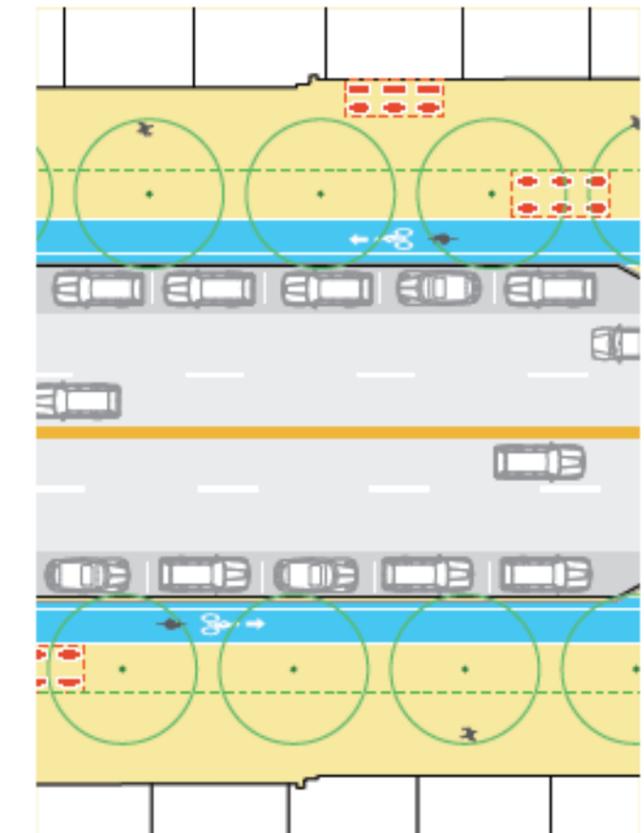
~ 16 parking spaces per block at off-peak times



C (4 Lanes / 24' Sidewalk)
Four travel lanes plus parking and raised bike lane



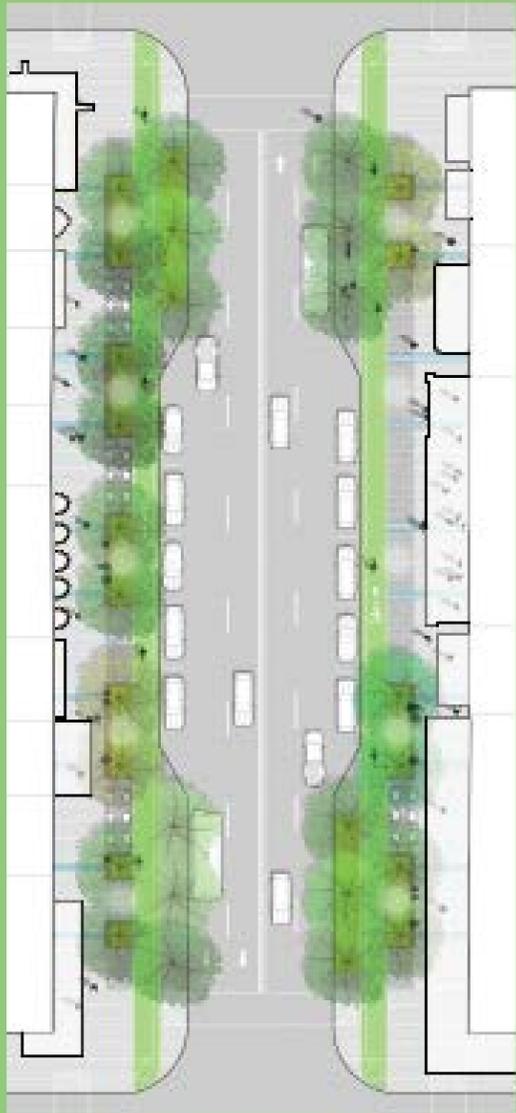
~ 10 parking spaces per block



GREEN & BLUE

Design Character

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

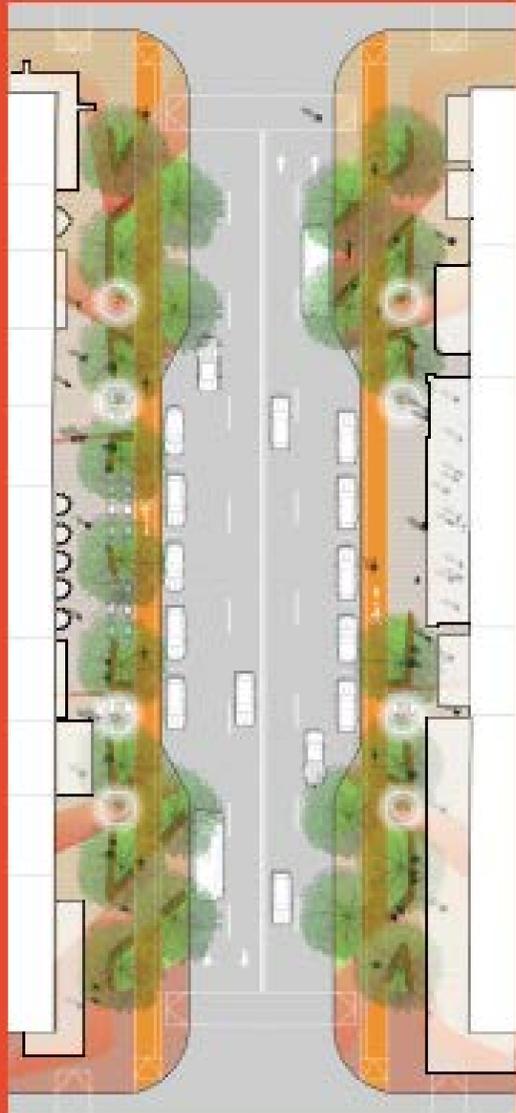


NORTH BRIDGE LANDING - STORMWATER TERRACES



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

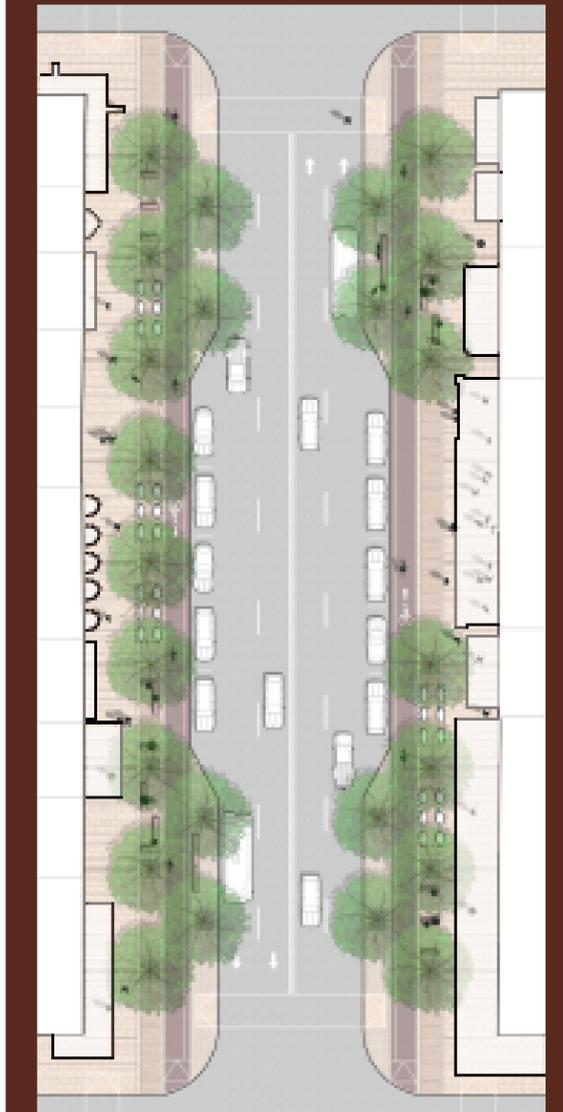


Bridge gateway elements

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!

Website: www.austintexas.gov/congressavenue

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