

CITY OF PORTAGE

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

SMITHGROUP



HWC
ENGINEERING





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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WELCOME TO PORTAGE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 CHARRETTE PROCESS

Photos and graphics summarizing the intensive three day workshop

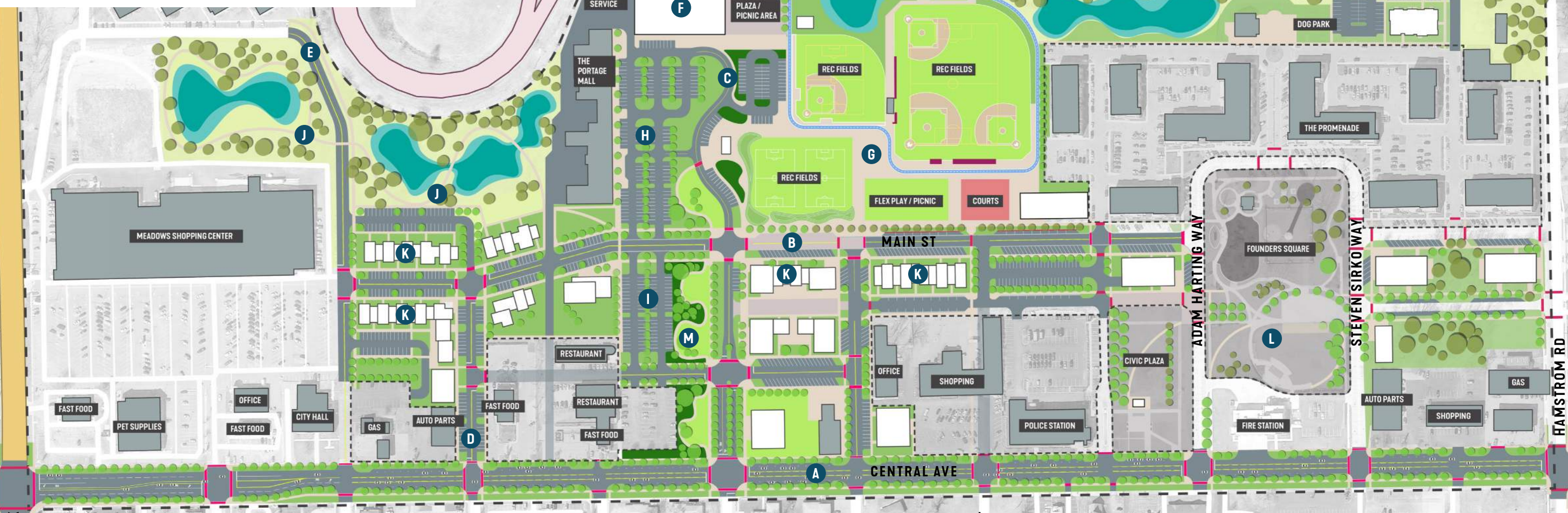
02 TOOLS

Toolkit for achieving the preferred plan in terms of housing, streetscape, and open space typologies

03 PREFERRED PLAN

Recommendations for Downtown Portage

PREFERRED SITE PLAN



- A** Central as Complete Street
- B** Extend Main St
- C** Extend Vivian St
- D** Extend Eleanor St
- E** Extend Lois St
- F** New Community Rec Center
- G** Develop Sports Complex
- H** Reconstructed Parking Lots
- I** New Parking Lots
- J** New Trails and Greenspace
- K** New Townhomes
- L** Tactical Improvements at Founders Square + Plaza
- M** Flexible Open Space and Trails

LEGEND

	Proposed Buildings		Naturalized Area
	Existing Buildings		Water
	New/ Modified Roadway		Plaza Space
	New Walks		Festival Street Space
	New Track		Crosswalks
	Lawn (programmable)		Proposed Trees
	Lawn		Existing Trees
	Stormwater		Limit of Existing to Preserve
			Study Area Limits

0' 250' 500'



01 CHARRETTE PROCESS



STUDY AREA

Bordered by Willowcreek on the west, Hamstrom Rd on the east, Central Ave to the south, and Interstate 80/90 to the north, the study area composes the heart of Downtown Portage. City Hall, the Portage Police Station, and Portage Fire Department are all located on site. The library, post office, and multiple schools are within a 1/4 mile walk of the site. These destinations are shown in blue.

Significant developments have happened in Portage over the last five years including The Promenade and completion of Founders Square, the marquee open space for downtown. These serve as the center for downtown and linking to these spaces to capitalize on their success is crucial.

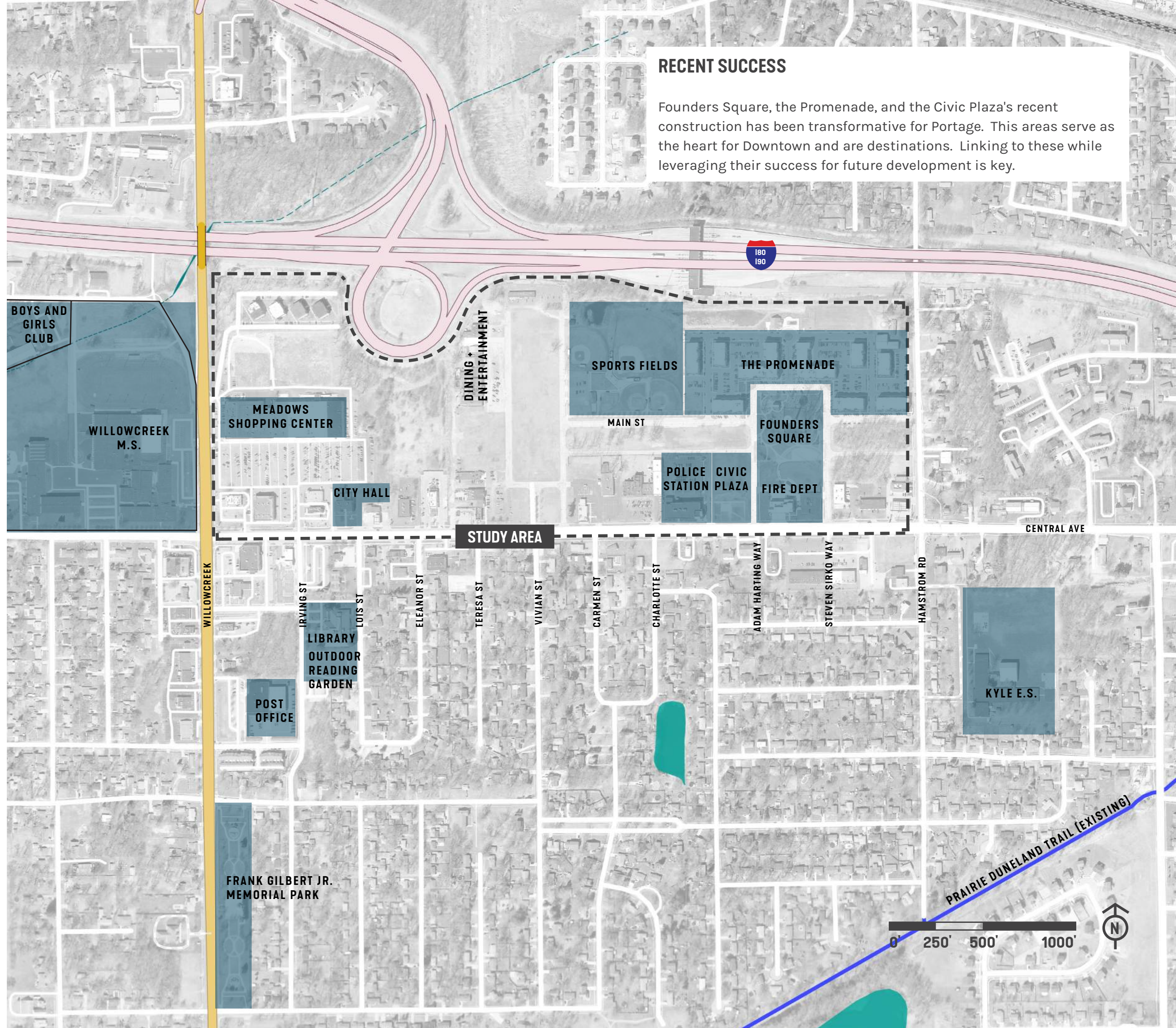
The street network north of Central limits mobility due to a fragmented block pattern. Furthermore, Central Avenue's wide and open streetscape hampers accessibility throughout downtown. Re-envisioning Central's streetscape and reestablishing the formal city block will reconnect downtown. This is a primary focus in linking the study area to other destinations to create a walkable downtown.

PROJECT PURPOSE

This project seeks to identify an achievable development pattern for downtown Portage that is supported through a robust open space network and leverages recent success at Founders Square.

RECENT SUCCESS

Founders Square, the Promenade, and the Civic Plaza's recent construction has been transformative for Portage. This areas serve as the heart for Downtown and are destinations. Linking to these while leveraging their success for future development is key.





NCI 3 DAY CHARRETTE

[NATIONAL CHARRETTE INSTITUTE]

The Portage Downtown Charrette was an intensive three day workshop with city staff, steering committee, community members, neighbors, and the design team. A quick and iterative process identified and analyzed key design variables to generate rapid solutions. This process was conducted in an open house so the public could participate in the process. The design team made presentations on days 1 and 3 to share progress and solicit feedback.



DAY 1 - BROAD STROKES

The design team reviewed goals, opportunities, and guiding principles with stakeholders to consider potential design alternatives and program. These initial studies culminated in an evening presentation to the community.

DAY 2 - DIAL IN A DIRECTION

Working in an open studio, the design team narrowed down priorities to develop a single plan based upon community feedback.

DAY 3 - DEVELOP THE PLAN

A preferred master plan and a supporting 3D model were developed throughout this closed-door working day. In the evening the plan was presented and critiqued by the community and city staff.

The charrette was actively promoted. Fliers were published in print and social media to spread the word and encourage participation. All events were held at City Hall and received a steady stream of visitors throughout all three days.

CITY OF PORTAGE

DOWNTOWN CHARRETTE

Join in the community charrette and be a part of shaping the future of downtown Portage! Feel free to drop in at the studio to see the drawing live or come to the community meetings to share your thoughts and learn more!

<p>DROP INTO THE OPEN STUDIO <i>[work sessions with live drawing and open dialogue]</i></p>		<p>All events will be held at PORTAGE CITY HALL 6070 Central Ave</p>
<p>Tuesday, Sept 13 1 - 8pm</p>	<p>Wednesday, Sept 14 9 - 11am ; 1 - 6:30pm</p>	
<p>ATTEND THE COMMUNITY MEETINGS <i>[presentations displaying progress work]</i></p>		<p>OPEN TO THE PUBLIC</p> <p><small>WHAT IS A CHARRETTE? char-rette (/SH-ret/) is an accelerated, collaborative, design-based process that harnesses the talents and energies of all interested stakeholders to create and support a feasible plan.</small></p>
<p>Tuesday, Sept 13 6:30pm - 8pm</p>	<p>Thursday, Sept 15 6:30pm - 8pm</p>	



DAY 1 BROAD STROKES

The charrette was launched by defining key variables for success. A discussion between the design team and the steering committee established a mission statement:

INSPIRE A LONG AND SHORT TERM VISION WITH LOCAL GROUNDING AND COMMITMENT THAT

1. Defines Portage Downtown

- Unique, competitive choice for residents
- Livable, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood
- Economic driver
- Market agile and durable
- Home grown business
- Beautiful and vital place
- Central Avenue gateway streetscape

2. Calibrates expectations

- Feasible, market driven plan
- Demonstrates commitment to existing businesses while celebrating recent success

3. Charts a course

- Identify gaps and ways to fill them
- Create a realistic but aggressive timeline



WHAT WE HEARD FROM STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT

TELL US ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE PORTAGE DOWNTOWN?

TAKEAWAYS

1. Desire for walkable connections- Central does not feel like a safe route
2. Need more destinations. Founder's is successful and the Portage Mall has consistent patrons, but there is very little between. No real places to go out.
3. Reduce Central to a narrower street section, similar to how the street is west of Willowcreek and east of Hamstrom Rd.
4. This area should bring people together through connected open spaces.

Need to provide more spaces for local restaurants. Enjoy the addition at Founders and the Portage Mall is successful. But along Central, which is our front door, is primarily fast food.

Portage has seen a lot of success recently with the addition of Founder Square and the Promenade. We need to continue to leverage this energy.

We have a lack of things for the kids to do- basketball courts/ skate park/ grassy areas to play

An opportunity exists to enhance the sense of safety + belonging

Central - is the place for our downtown. We just need to know what it should be - should be more buildings, parks, retail?

Carry the aesthetic from Founders to Central Ave with the columns and signage.

Take two lanes out of Central Ave- reduce vehicle speed and provide safe crossings. Central should be walkable.

We need outdoor activities, entertainment, outdoor spaces for dining, and recreational spaces.

Getting to destinations throughout the downtown is tough. Lack of safety and designated routes.

Portage had been focused on Central initially, but overtime that changed, and sprawled out. We do have a lot of beauty, but not a lot of it is connected.

We need places to help pull everyone together throughout the study area including at the Portage Mall, the ball fields, and along Central.

The events at the amphitheater are enjoyed by the community, but they also seek a complete experience for all ages. Can we provide linked activities that support each other or bundle errands together.

TESTING ALTERNATIVES

The design team studied a range of development and open space configurations on Day 1. Simultaneously, alternatives for reducing the scale of Central Avenue were explored.



ALTERNATIVE 1: INTERSECTIONS

Concentrate development on key intersections of the site to create a dense, downtown feel north of Central Ave while framing key open spaces. Approx: 750,000 Gross Square Feet of development



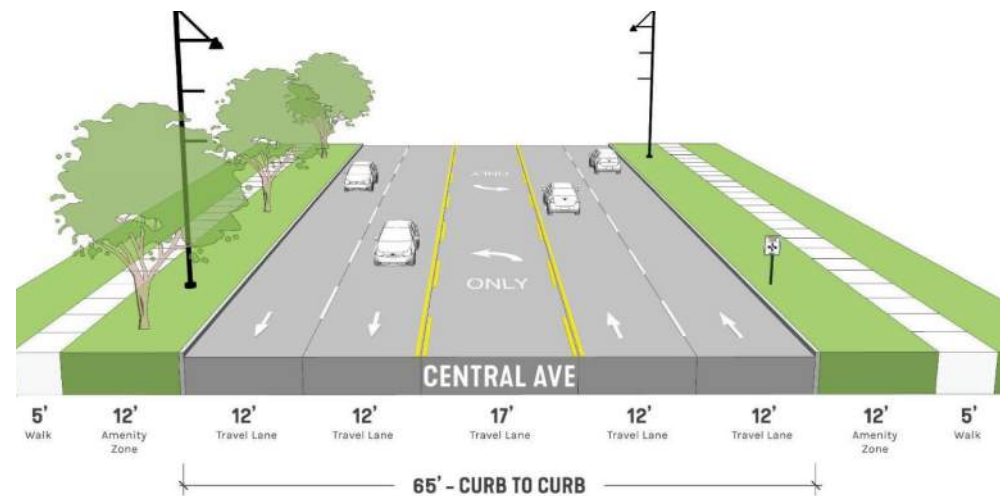
ALTERNATIVE 2: COMPLETE MAIN STREET

Extend the feel of Founders Square down Main St. by infilling with mixed-use residential fronting the proposed redevelopment of the sports complex. Approx 625,000 Gross Square Feet of development



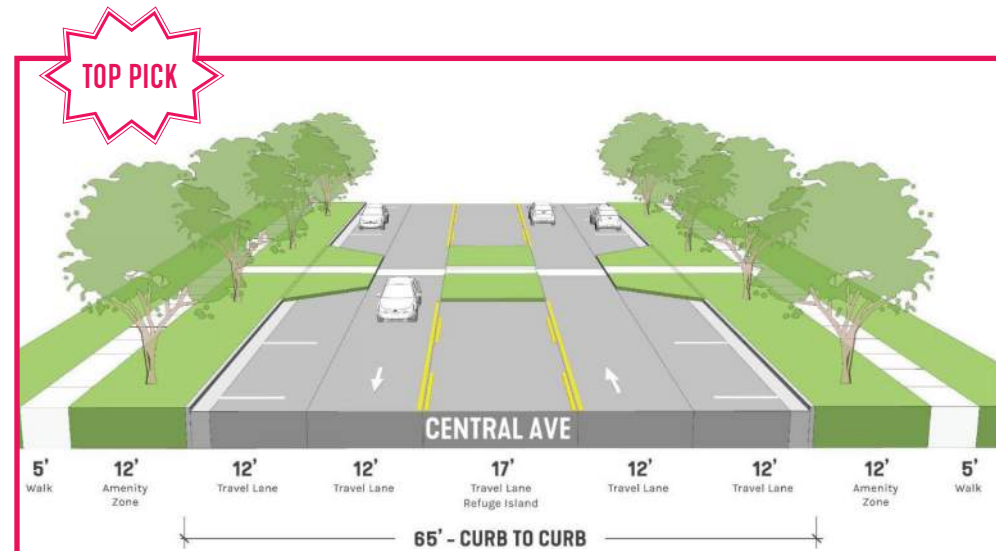
ALTERNATIVE 3: CENTRAL PARK

Leverage the success of Founder's Square to develop a robust open-space network with low-impact development. Approx 300,000 Gross Square Feet of development



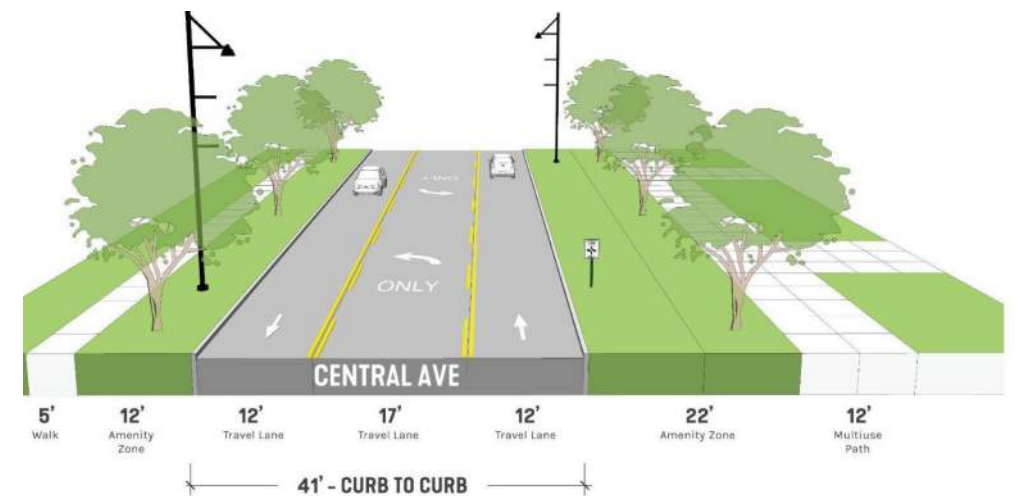
ALTERNATIVE 1: KEEP EXISTING CENTRAL AVE

Central Ave widens to a 5 lane cross section within the study area which prioritizes vehicles and creates challenging crossings.



ALTERNATIVE 2: RE-PURPOSE LANES FOR ON-STREET PARKING

Keeping the curbs in place and re-purposing the outer lanes for parking is a cost effective solution to slow speeds while supporting potential business along Central Ave. 9,000 average daily trips is suitable for two travel lanes in each direction with a center turn lane.



ALTERNATIVE 3: ROAD DIET

DiETING Central to 3-lanes is consistent with stretches directly adjacent to the study area. This reduces the crossing distance from 65' to 41'. Sliding the southern curb 22' north expands the parcels creating flexibility for a denser future use.

DAY 2 DIAL IN A DIRECTION

A studio day open to the public, the design team went heads down to push the feedback from the public presentation on the first night into a single plan. Pin up boards with precedent imagery and large plots engaged the public and helped communicate a vision for what Portage can be.





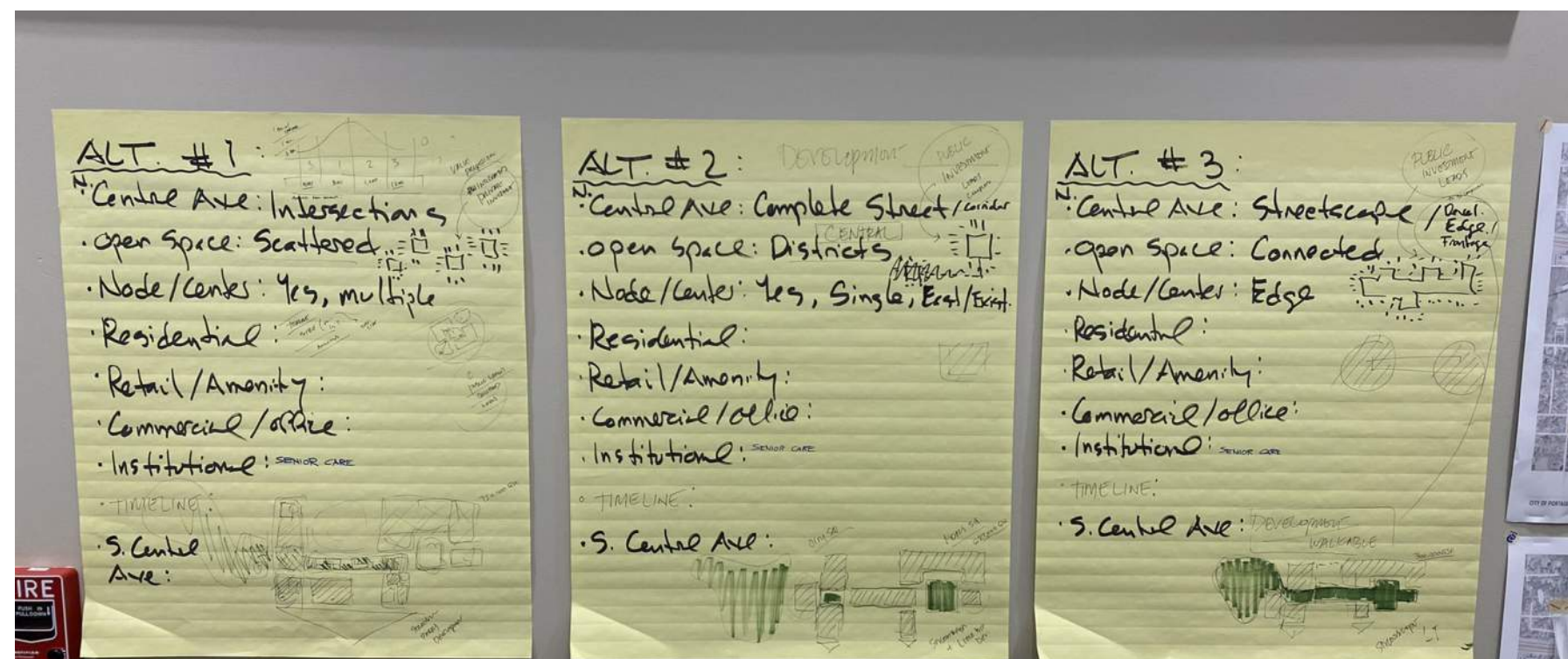
GROUND TRUTHING

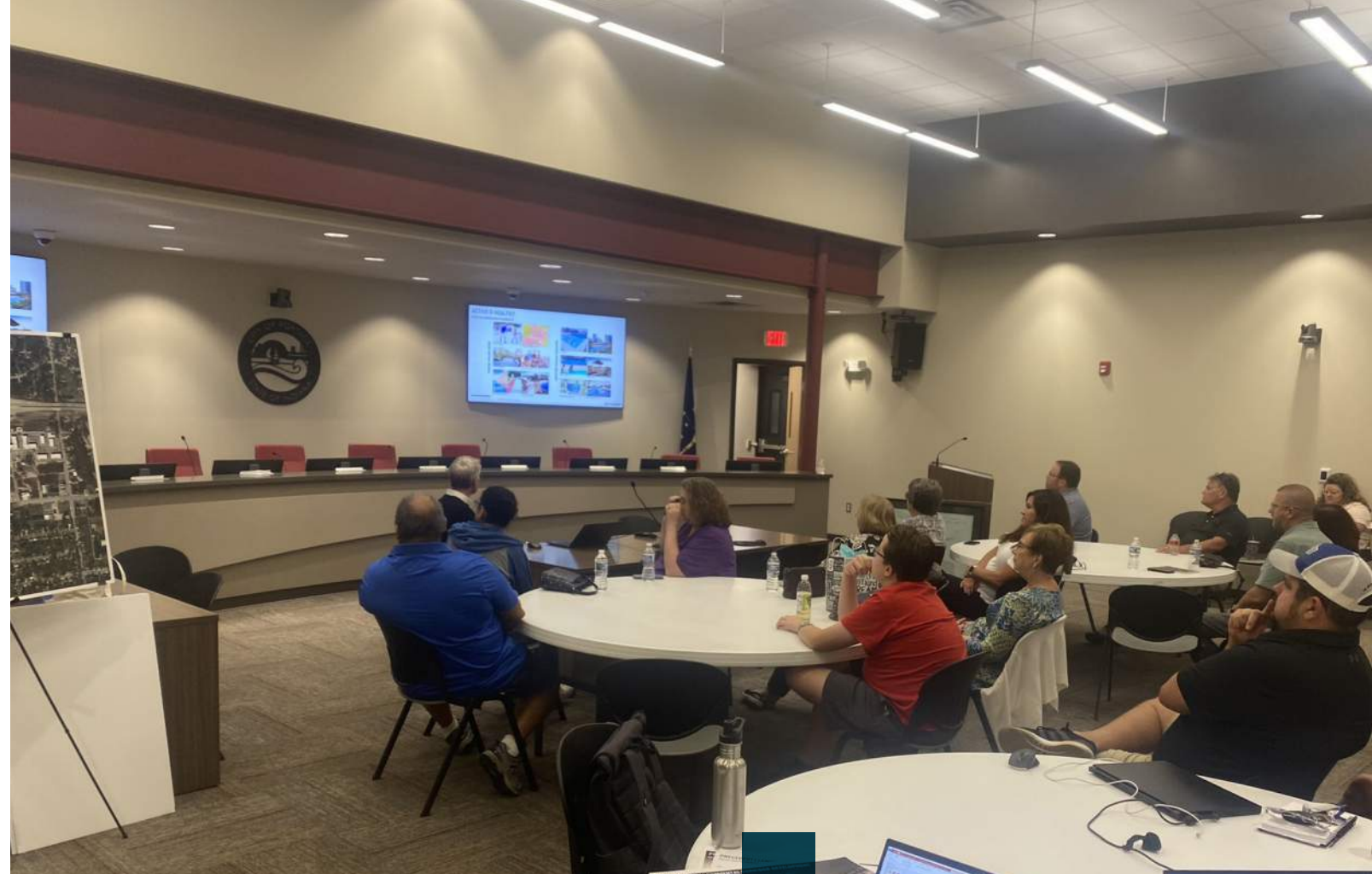
Site walks granted the ability to grasp the importance of how small investments would complete Founders Square, such as aligning walks, identifying shade locations, gateway locations, and signage opportunities.

Workshopping within the study area was invaluable for easily testing the viability of ideas in real space. This area has seen growth recently in Founders Square, and understanding the interface between proposed designs and the existing character underpinned decision making.

Walking the site the afternoon of Day 2, the Portage Mall came alive and the parking lots filled. These locally owned and operated bars and restaurants help define the character in this area and are assets ripe for enhancement. The grittiness of these popular business serve as an antithesis to the refinement of Founders. Supporting these business through reinvestment and public-private partnerships became an important driver for the plan.

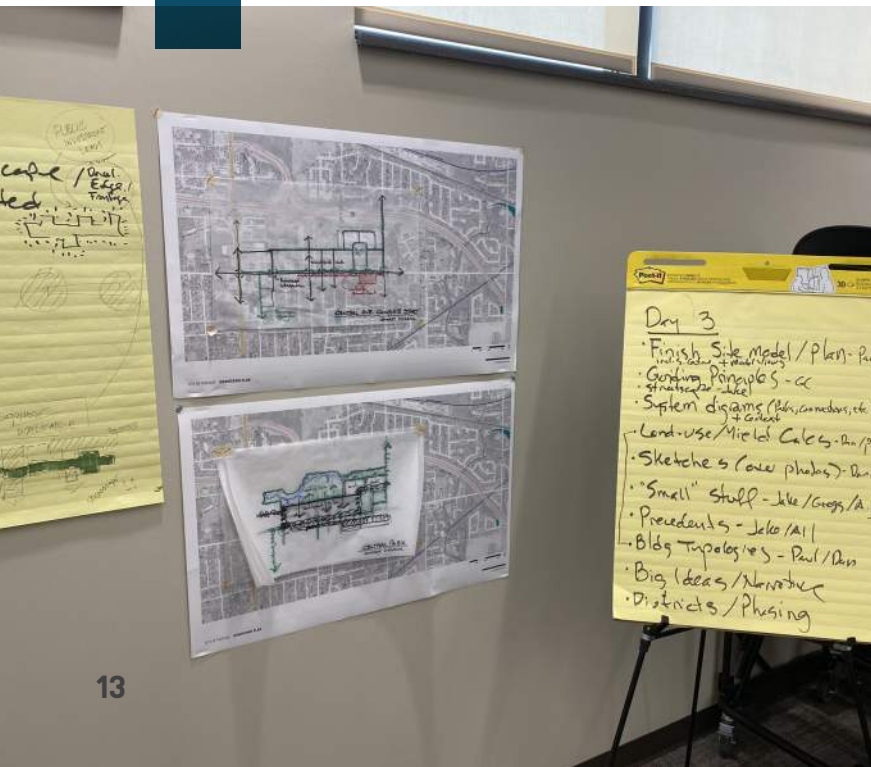
“THE MOST VITAL DISTRICTS AND DOWNTOWNS CAN SEAMLESSLY ATTRACT AND RETAIN CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES AND RESIDENTS WHILE YIELDING A VALUE PROPOSITION THAT COMPELS THEM ALL TO STAY.”





DAY 3
DEVELOP THE PREFERRED PLAN

Day 3 continued the development of the preferred master plan while fine tuning details. The design team sketched ideas and built a 3D model to show potential improvements. A model fly-through with supporting precedent imagery was presented to the public to generate feedback and create excitement.



02 TOOLS

The success of master plans is proportionate to the effectiveness of the implementing tools generated to bring the plan to life. With this in mind, the following section outlines a range of tested tools that were used to inform decision-making and ensure the broader vision of the Downtown Portage Master Plan will be achievable over time.

These tools include defining building and open space typologies appropriate for Portage's downtown. The appropriateness of these design solutions was calibrated through process that examined trends in the market, analyzed site microclimates, and defined desirable aesthetics for the urban form. These calibrated tools crafted the preferred plan presented in Section 3.



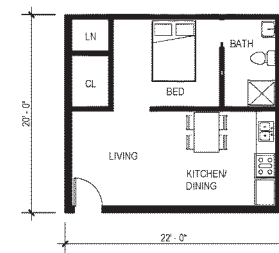
TYOLOGY PROCESS

UNITS, ZONING, AND LOT COMBINATIONS

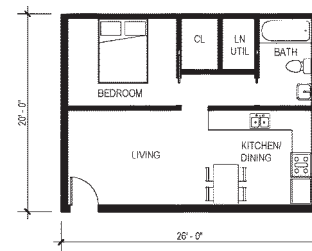
A process was developed to investigate possible typologies based on quantity of lots combined and zoning classification.

The deployment of these typologies on various sites in the proposed plan is dictated by the long term vision for the city the includes current real estate market conditions, future trends, and demographic trends.

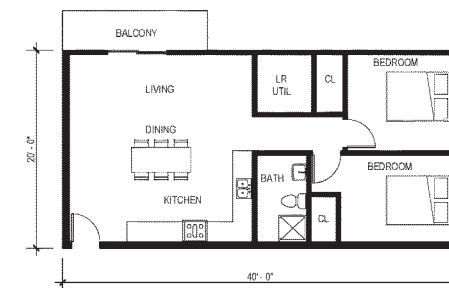
Additionally, the proposed phasing broken down into three main areas along Main Street starting from founders Square and moving west helps create different zones or "districts."



Studio



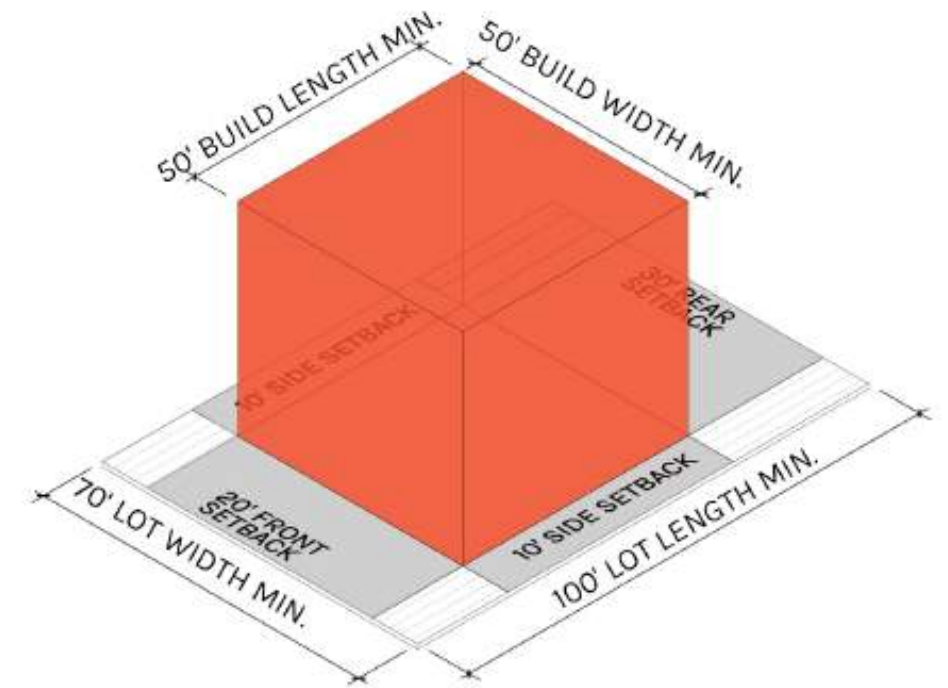
One Bedroom



Two Bedroom

TYPICAL UNIT PLANS

1. Establish Typical Unit Size



LOT SIZE & COVERAGE

- Min. Lot Area:
- Lot Coverage:
- Rec. Space Rat.:

BUILD ALLOWANCES

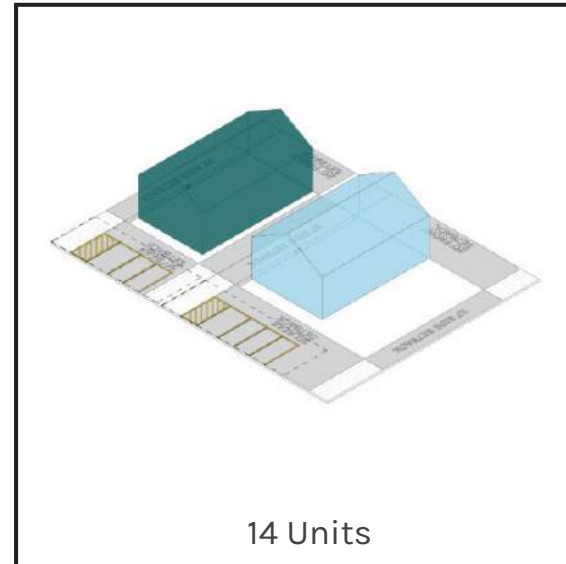
- Min. Buildable Area:
- FAR:
- Max. Build Height:

2. Review Zoning Ordinance

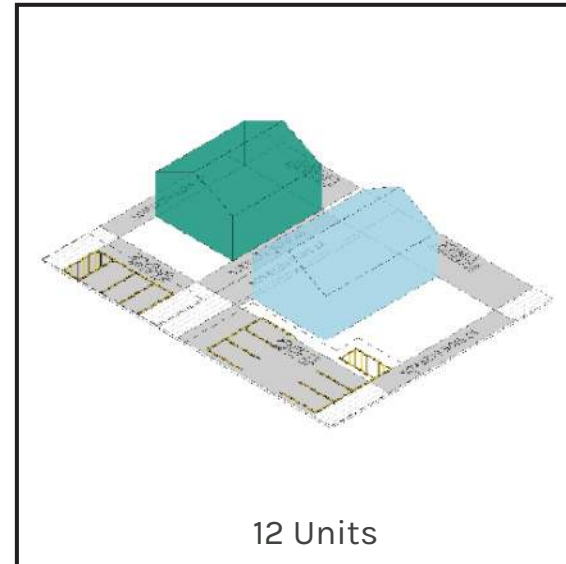
RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATION

PARKING

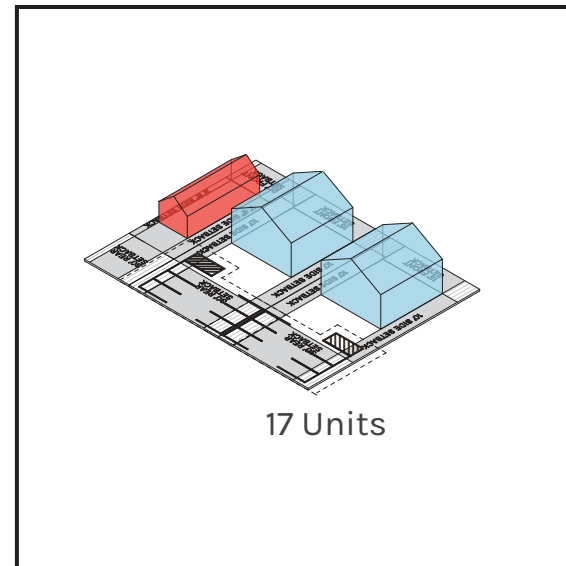
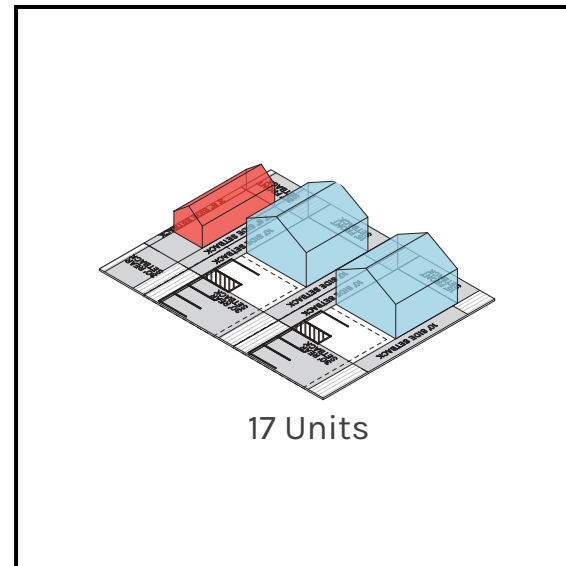
Low



High

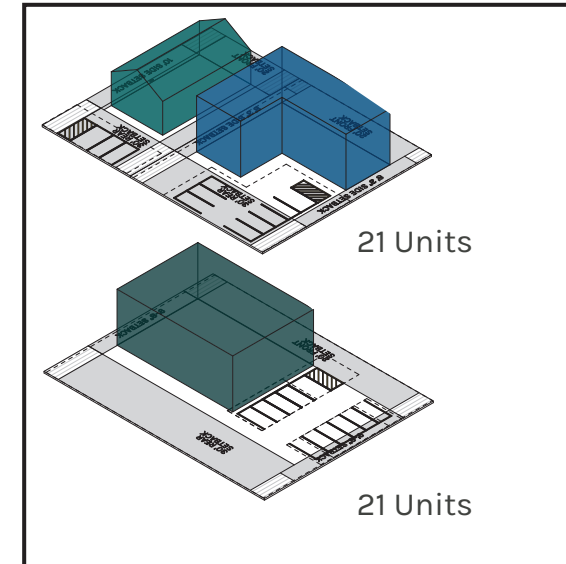


SCENARIO

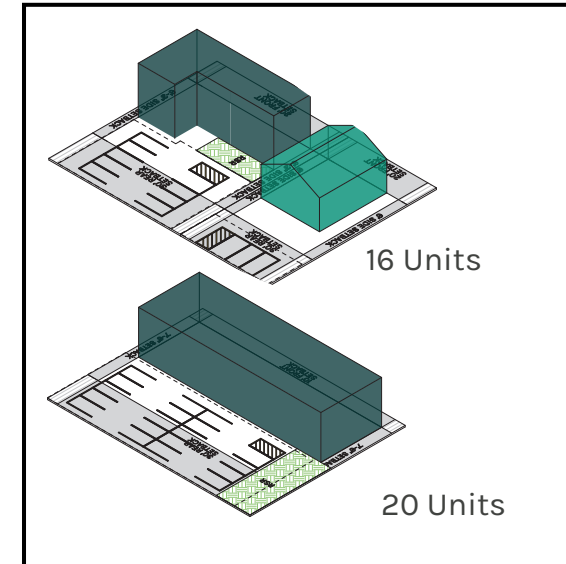


PARKING

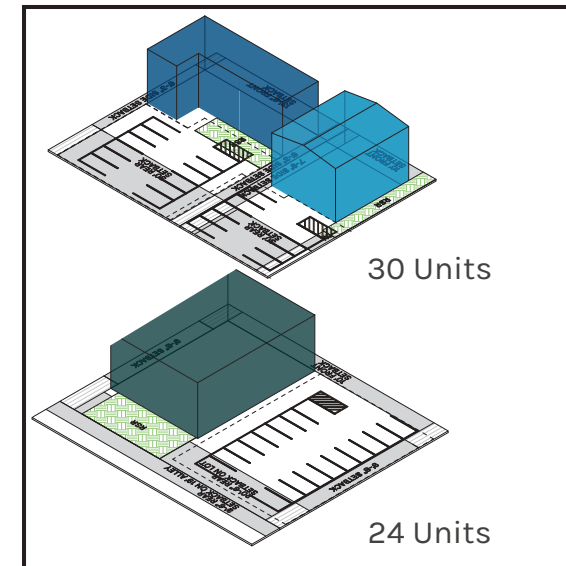
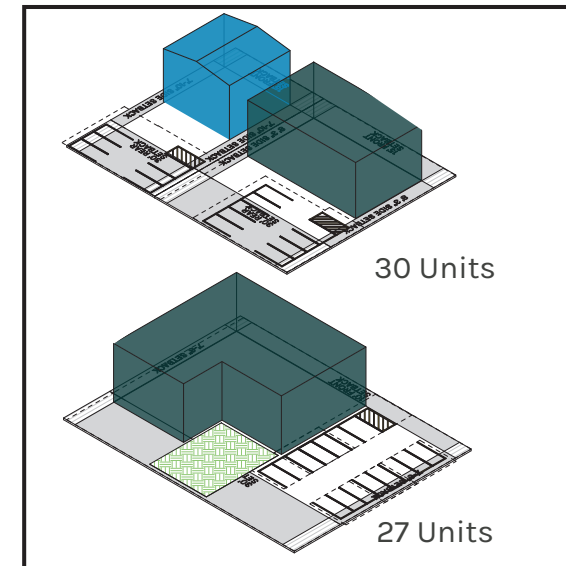
Low



High



SCENARIO



21 Units

21 Units

30 Units

27 Units

16 Units

20 Units

30 Units

24 Units

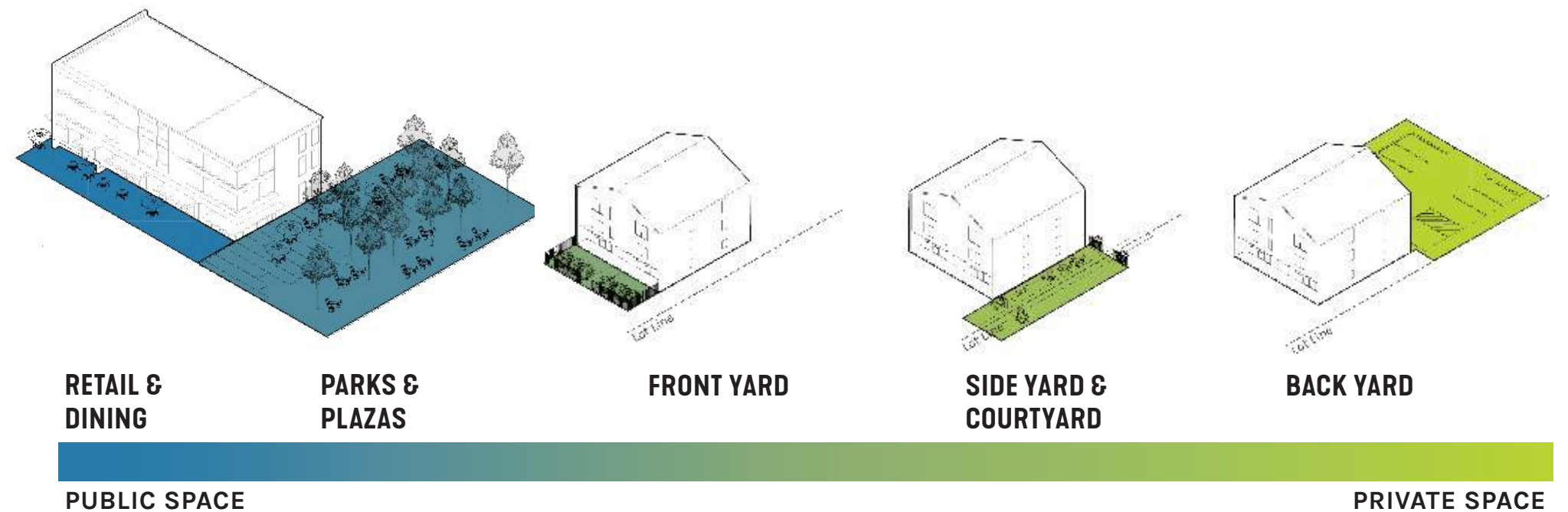
3. Select Possible Typology Outcomes (Example of lot combinations)

The iterative process revealed unit efficiencies, optimum lot combinations, and possibilities in building scale. Each scenario can have multiple outcomes that would later be reduced to a “best” choice based on overall goals of the development.

LANDSCAPE TYPOLOGIES

The goal of the proposed plan's landscape strategy is to create a sense of place that supports the new developments and new energies in the Portage Downtown project area. This manifests in a strong streetscape design, clear connections and sightlines to adjacent neighborhoods, central open spaces, intimate corridor spaces and other passive opportunities for residents to engage and create community.

The strategy considers the proposed architecture and scale to create a variety of spaces and key destination points within the project area. The strategy also considers site sustainability by incorporating low maintenance stormwater management to offset maintenance and related fees. This curb appeal strategy compliments the proposed streetscape, adding diversity to the pedestrian experience.



STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

The street is one of the most dynamic features of a downtown, hosting a myriad of users. The future build will take advantage of the street-grid and implement strategies that will ensure that the streetscape becomes more intimate, friendly, and accessible. The streetscape will promote a sense of community, perception of safety, and energizes the commercial bookends identified in the proposed development.



PARKS, PLAZAS, AND DINING SPACE

The integration of public space along a well-defined business corridor is a supportive tool for local retail, restaurants, and events that serve the every-day life of Downtown Portage residence. Properly using existing outdoor public space, for example the Park and spaces between existing and future development becomes a vibrant key destination, not just within the immediate downtown area, but also for the entire community.

Within the development, public space can operate at a variety of scales from small-scale parklets for leisure or programmed events, sidewalk seating for resting, or secure alleys to move through the neighborhood.

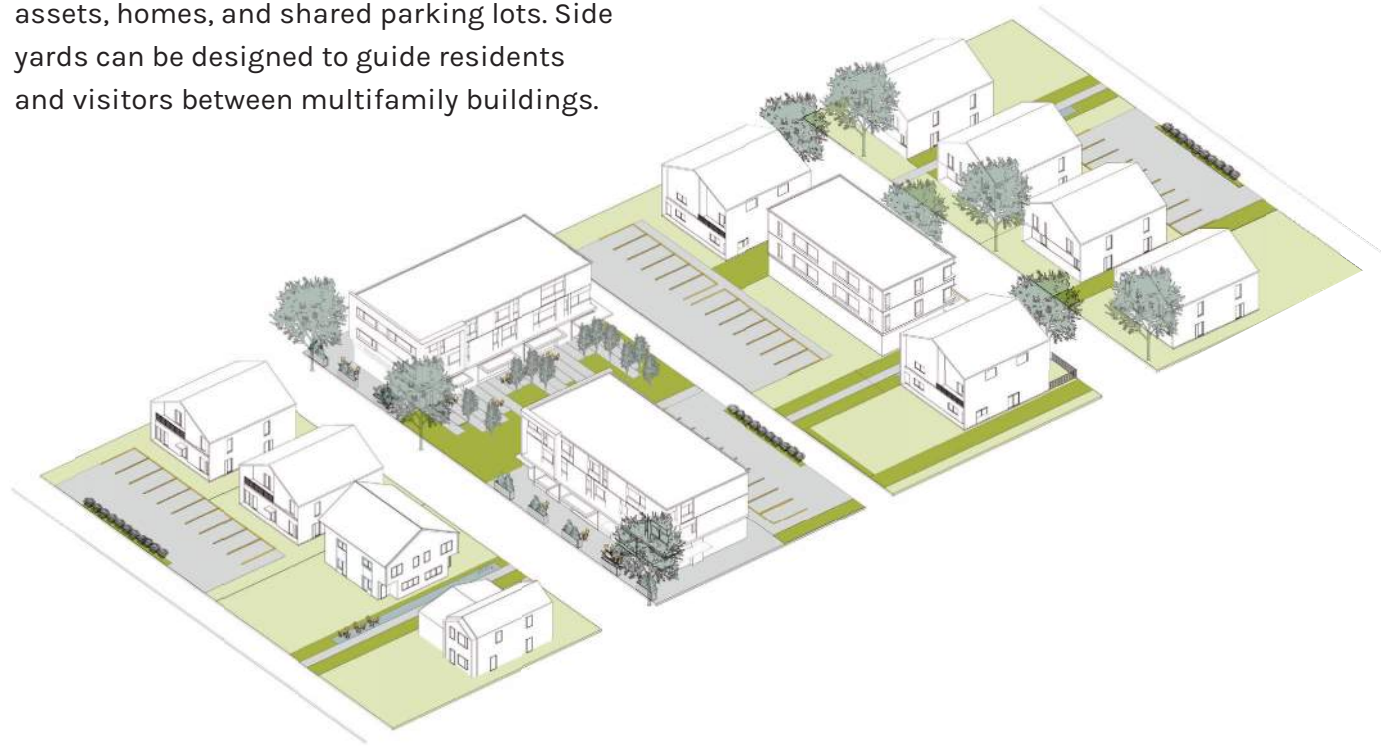
The area has multiple possibilities for programming events, bringing a burst of nature into public space typologies while remaining true to the neighborhood and a dynamic compliment to the development.



BUILDING BLOCKS

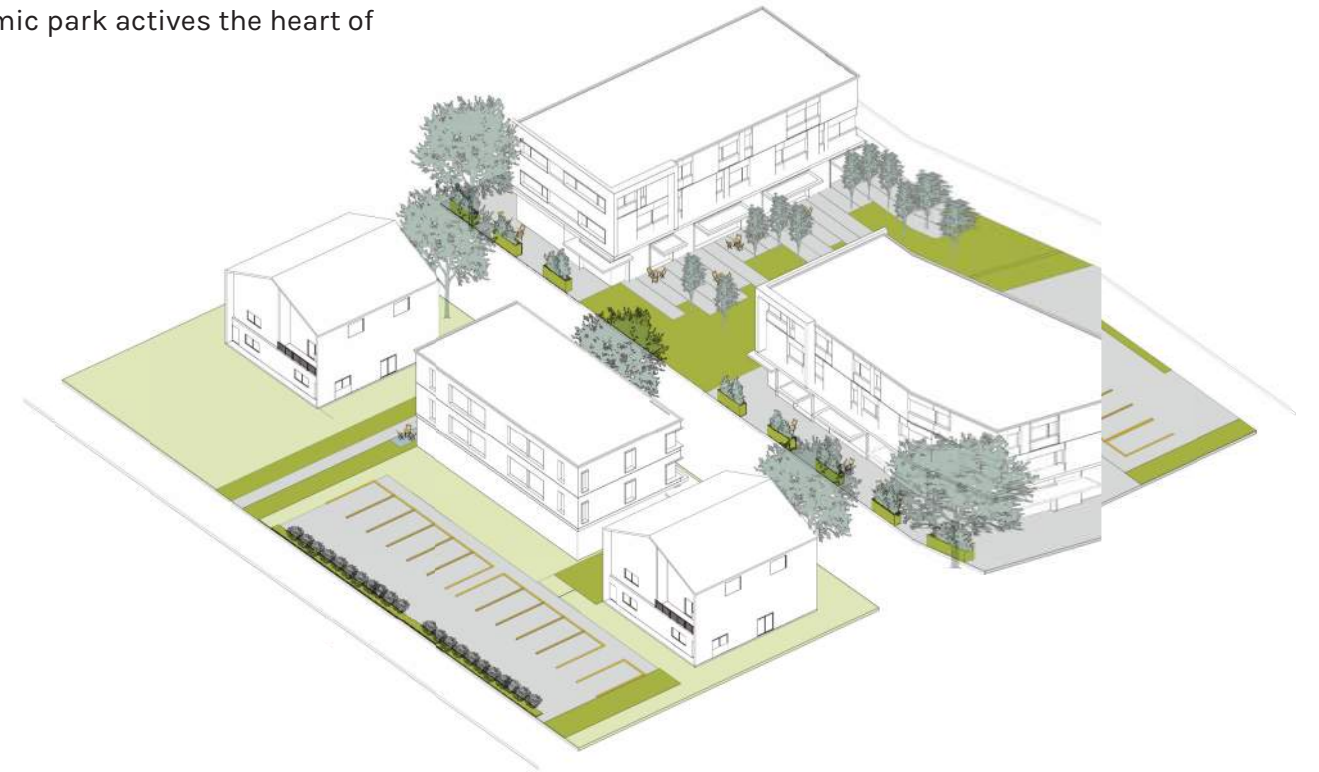
NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTION

Neighborhood connections provide comfortable and safe paths between key assets, homes, and shared parking lots. Side yards can be designed to guide residents and visitors between multifamily buildings.



MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD DESTINATION

Mixed-use nodes are a critical component to support the livability of residence in the area. Mixed-use buildings paired with a small but dynamic park activates the heart of the retail area.



WEALTH CREATION

Improve Access to Funding

Provide financial assistance for tax delinquent properties to mitigate public ownership and combat homeownership slip

Increase zero-percent loans and grants for home improvement projects and critical upgrades

Provide Quality Job Opportunities

Connect residents to high-wage job opportunities

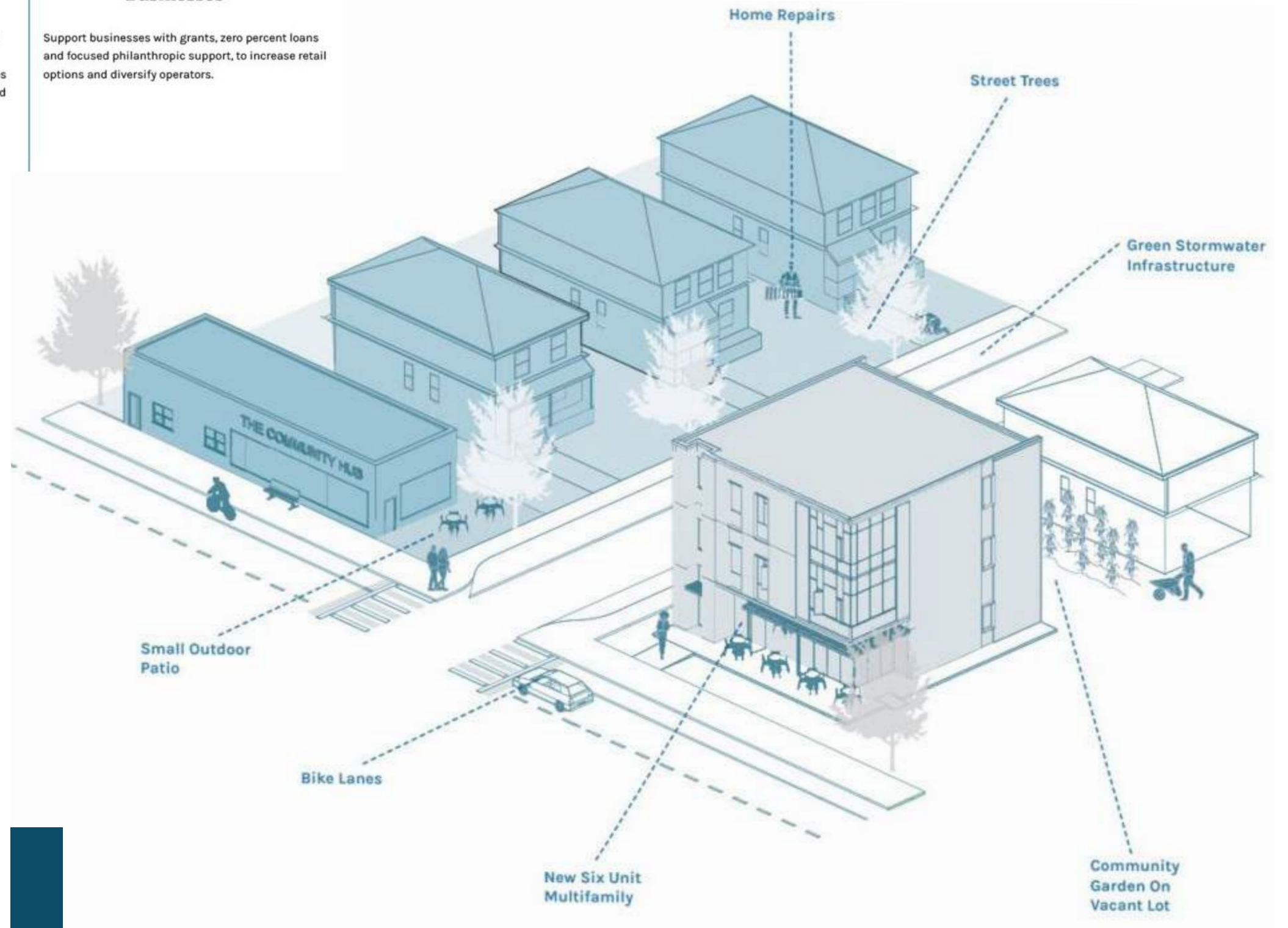
Offer workplace diversity for an array of businesses and individuals to grow and thrive, linked to skilled labor and professional training for long-term financial growth

Prepare Retail Space For Businesses

Support businesses with grants, zero percent loans and focused philanthropic support, to increase retail options and diversify operators.

Achieving the overall vision of the Downtown Portage Design Charrette and resulting Master Plan can be best supported by not only documenting the structures and spaces that may define it, but by also depicting broadly beneficial outcomes that can yield over time by following the plan. This provides important northstars for implementation that keep development on target to achieve impact, including improved quality of life. From housing and commercial activities that support wealth creation, to development and circulation approaches that foster effective connectivity, while also yielding environmental resilience and digital access. Supporting this vision and the outcomes depicted in the Master Plan include thoughtful understanding of important trends in development that will directly impact residents, employees, patrons and visitors to Downtown Portage. Understanding microclimate specific to Portage is also a driving factor in the comfort of outdoor spaces.

The result can create welcoming and engaging spaces that are interconnected, authentic and vibrant while also creating places that support activity and health, along with dynamic, supportive, engaging and inviting functions. These all combine to generate and sustain the dynamism and attraction that make urban districts such an important part of our lives.



MOBILITY + CONNECTIVITY

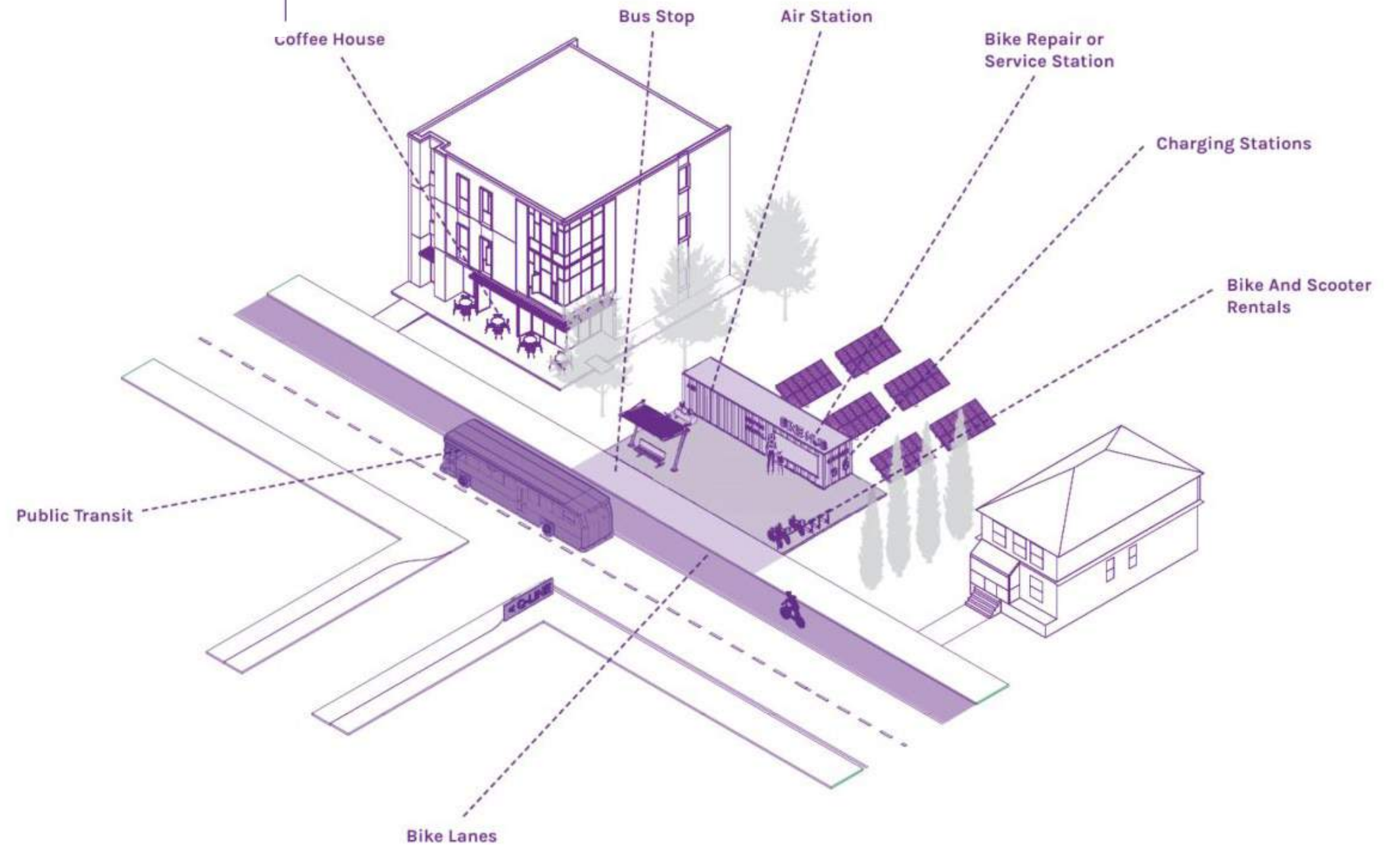
Mobility Options

Consider low-cost improvements to test opportunities for road diets and on-road bike lanes, and to support infrastructure grants

Improve Street Infrastructure

Coordinate with the City to add on-street protected bike lanes, and improved sidewalks with adequate lighting, street trees and green stormwater infrastructure to support neighborhood connectivity

Coordinate with the City to improve bus infrastructure, including additional routes or frequent service



ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Expand on Clean Energy

Establish a shared district energy system with solar PV production on vacant parcels without structures to support low-cost renewable energy

Expand Education Partnerships

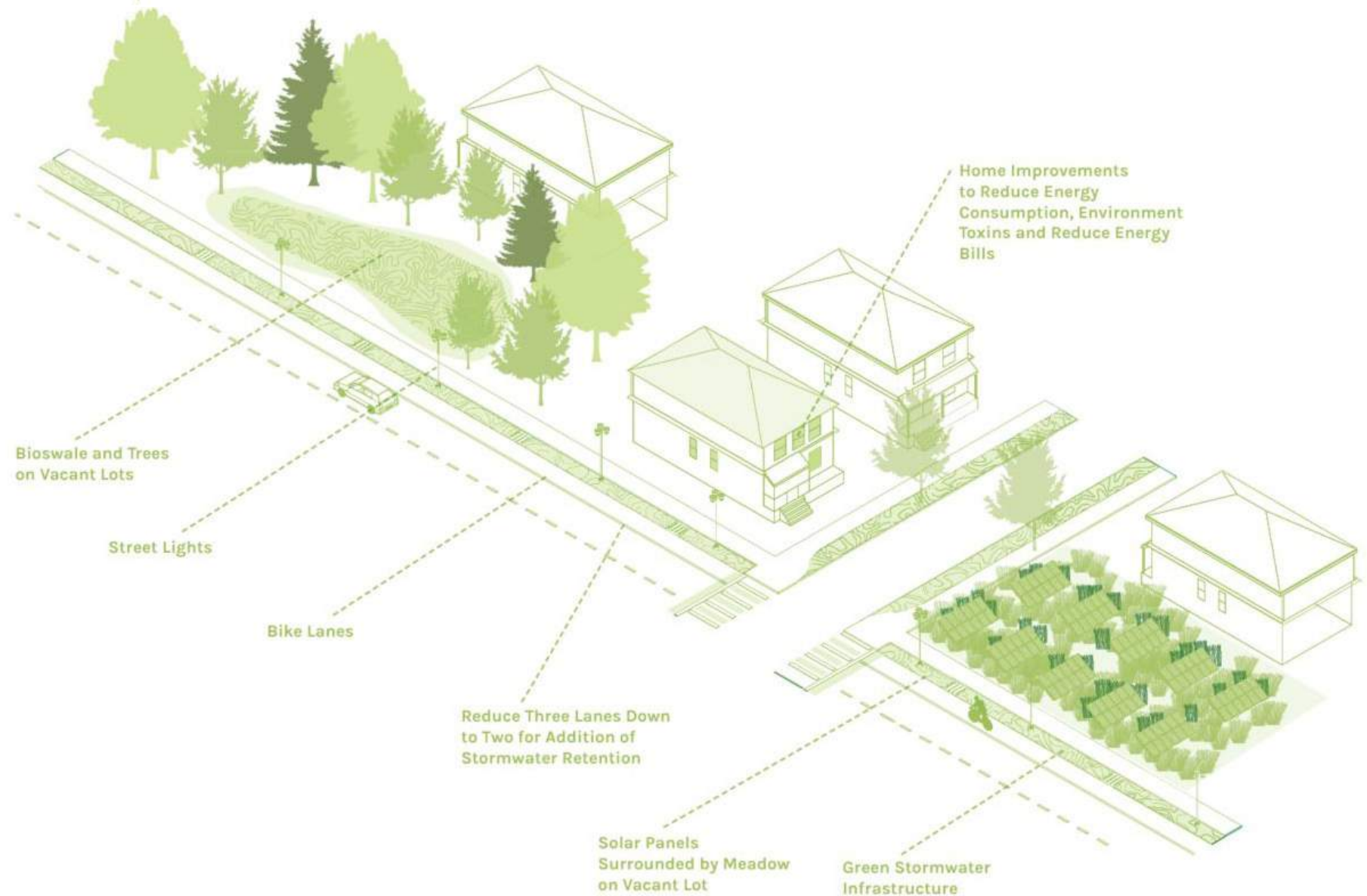
Partner with local organizations to support community education on urban systems to inspire careers in engineering and conservation

Support Housing Programs

Partner with local organizations that support old home upgrades and retrofits to support the efficiency of older homes in the area.

Enhance Green Spaces

Leverage the clean energy system as part of the Downtown's network of green spaces to support neighborhood recreation and access to active and passive landscapes as well as local urban wildlife



DIGITAL ACCESS

Subsidized Connectivity

Partner with service providers for subsidized Internet packages to ensure all families have connectivity

Consider partnerships to support students with home computers or laptop to ensure they can succeed at school and graduate

Consider opportunities to train adults to maintain broadband facilities

Job Training Resource Center

Establish a resource center that provides in-neighborhood courses for adults including computer literacy and Internet access.

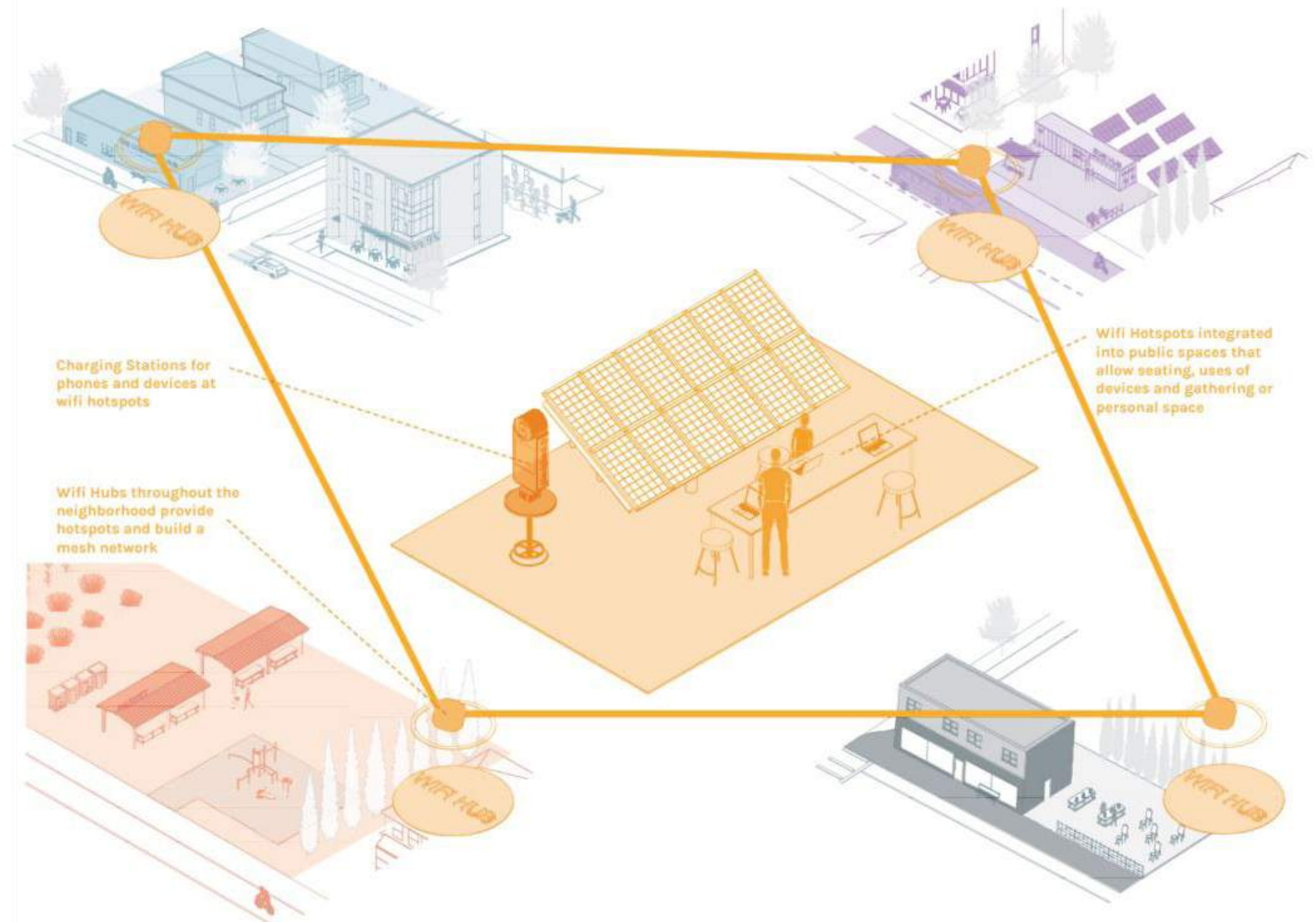
Consider a resource center that provides computers and other tech to introduce youth to new programming

Broadband Infrastructure and Wireless Hotspots

Install district broadband Internet to ensure every household has access to quality and reliable Internet service

Wireless Hot Spots

Identify neighborhood locations for hotspots to support connectivity on-the-go. Partner with local businesses to expand their wireless service to support activity and foot traffic to commercial corridors



TRENDS

MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSING

PEW RESEARCH CENTER | MARCH 24, 2022



Financial Issues Top the List of Reasons U.S. Adults Live in Multigenerational Homes

Nearly four-in-ten men ages 25 to 29 now live with older relatives

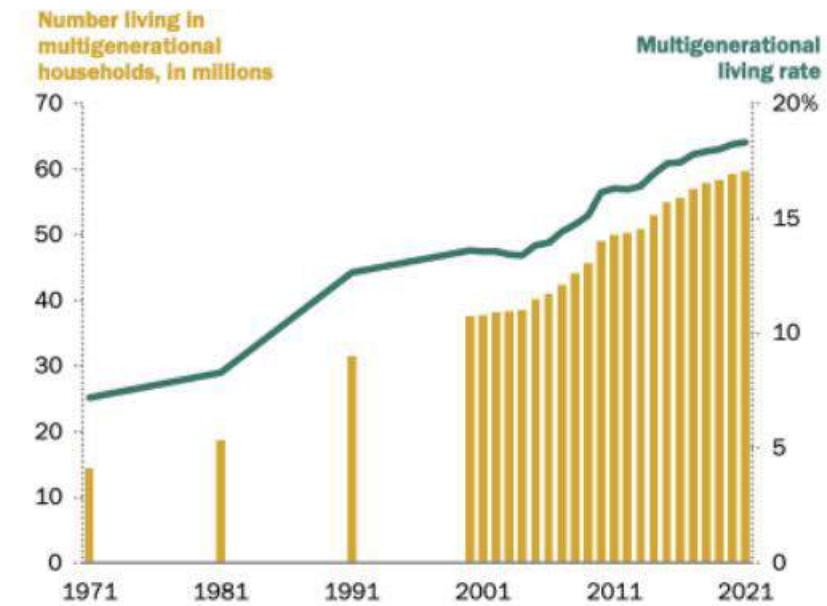
BY D'VERA COHN, JULIANA MENASCE HOROWITZ, RACHEL MINKIN, RICHARD FRY AND KILEY HURST



Why U.S. Adults Live in Multigenerational Homes | Pew Research Center

U.S. population in multigenerational households quadrupled since 1971

Number and % of people who live in multigenerational households in U.S.



Note: Multigenerational households include at least two generations of adults mainly 25 and older or grandparents and grandchildren younger than 25.
 Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) data files for 1971, 1981, 1991, and 2000-2021 (IPUMS).
 Financial Issues Top the List of Reasons U.S. Adults Live in Multigenerational Homes

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

For many, multigenerational living has practical reasons and emotional results

Among adults in multigenerational households ...

% saying each of the following is a major reason why they live with adult family members*



% saying they find living with adult family members to be ___ all or most of the time



* Only top three reasons shown.

** Includes those who say giving or receiving care for an adult or child family member is a major reason.

Note: Based on adults ages 25 and older who live with a parent or grandparent or who live with an adult child or grandchild age 25 or older.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 18-24, 2021.

Financial Issues Top the List of Reasons U.S. Adults Live in Multigenerational Homes

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

According to an analysis of census data from 1971-2021, the number of people living in multigenerational family households quadrupled during that time period, reaching 59.7 million in March 2021. The share more than doubled as well, to 18% of the U.S. population. – Pew

TRENDS | MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSING



Why U.S. Adults Live in Multigenerational Homes | Pew Research Center

In 2019, 20% of households are shared households, up from 17% in 2007. Most age groups are living in larger households this decade. The change is most apparent for adults ages 35 and older. For example, in 2017, 67% of 35- to 54-year-olds lived in a household with three or more people, an increase from 64% in 2010.

OCTOBER 1, 2019



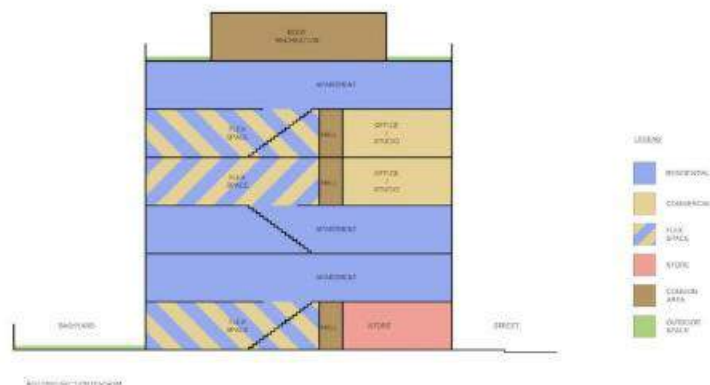
The number of people in the average U.S. household is going up for the first time in over 160 years

BY RICHARD FRY



Dean Kaplan, a graduate student, chats with Sarah Heintz in the kitchen of the apartment they share in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Since the Great Recession, more Americans have "doubled up" in shared living quarters. (Jessica Rinaldi/The Boston Globe via Getty Images)

TRENDS | LIVE / WORK



Boomers Driving the Business-at-Home Trend

With apartment living surging in popularity at the same time many Americans are embracing business ownership, the apartment-as-workspace trend may well accelerate. Millennials seem to be getting all the attention as a target market, but Baby Boomers, too, represent a large segment of the workforce. Each year, 5 million turn 62—technically retirement age—but it's well documented that many Boomers don't want to stop working, not to mention the question of whether they can afford to retire.

[Live-Work Spaces Present New Opportunity for Owners, Operators | Multifamily Executive Magazine](#)

Common Areas as Business Incubators

All of these examples reflect the evolution of the apartment complex from being solely a place to hang one's hat at night to a venue where professionals are increasingly incorporating their work into their living space. Whether they're small-business owners, telecommuters, artists, traveling salespeople, or entrepreneurs seeking communal work spaces, this business-oriented population is having an impact on apartment developers, says Caitlin Walter, senior research analyst for the Washington, D.C.-based National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC).

[Live-Work Spaces Present New Opportunity for Owners, Operators | Multifamily Executive Magazine](#)

[Live-Work — Missing Middle Housing](#)

[The Case for Live-Work Buildings Work Design Magazine](#)

TRENDS | AFFORDABILITY

Housing Affordability Remains a Challenge

By taking money out of some Americans' paychecks and creating a housing shortage, the coronavirus delivered a blow to housing affordability. However, in a countertrend that has softened the blow to buyers' budgets, the pandemic drove mortgage rates to record lows.

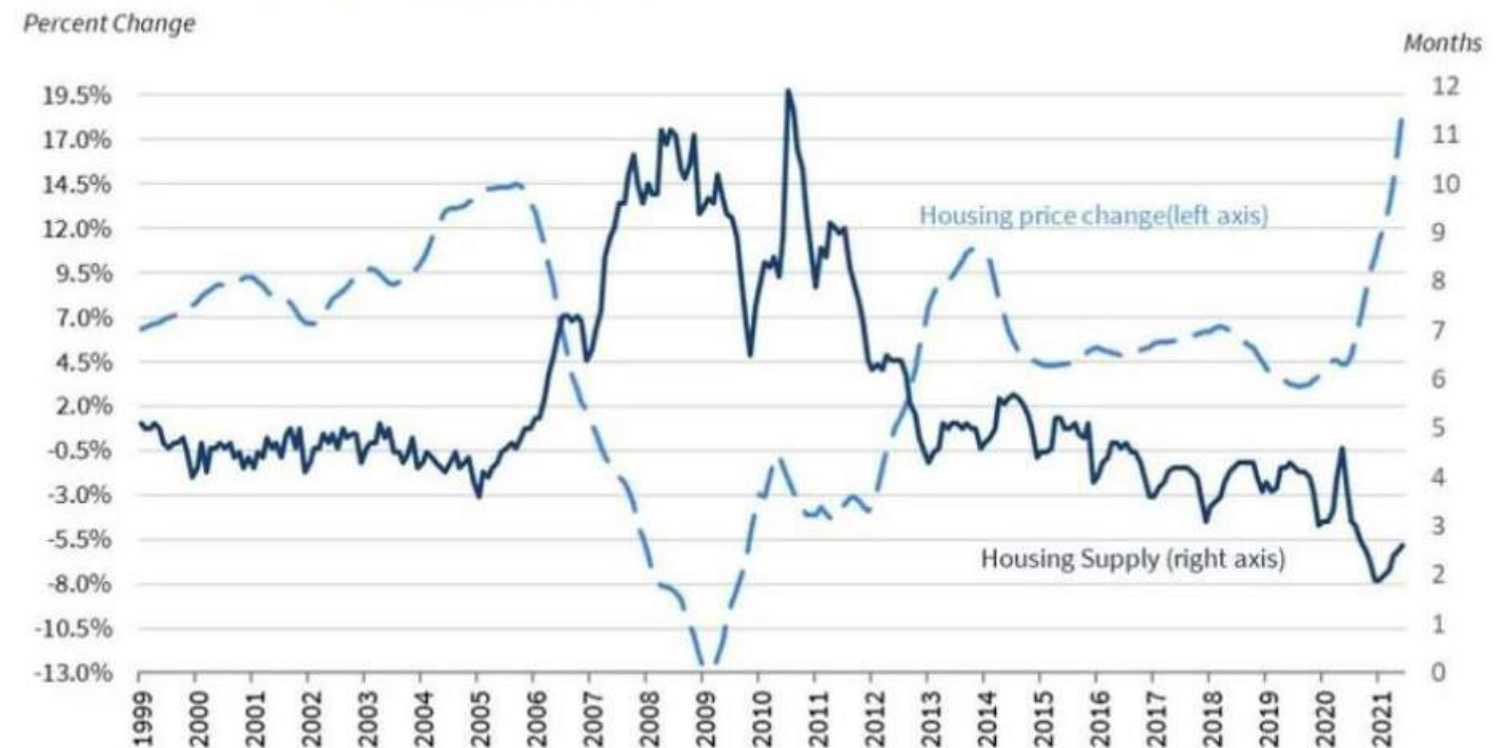
The National Association of Home Builders estimates the median price of all new and existing homes sold in the United States rose to \$355,000 in the summer of 2021 from \$320,000 in the third quarter of 2020.

As a result of skyrocketing prices, it's getting harder for Americans to afford homes. Just 56.6 percent of homes sold during the third quarter were affordable to families earning a typical income. That was unchanged from the second quarter but down from 63.1 percent in the first quarter of this year and 66 percent in the first quarter of 2020, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index.

[Housing Affordability Remains a Challenge - Bankrate](#)



Figure 1: Housing supply and prices

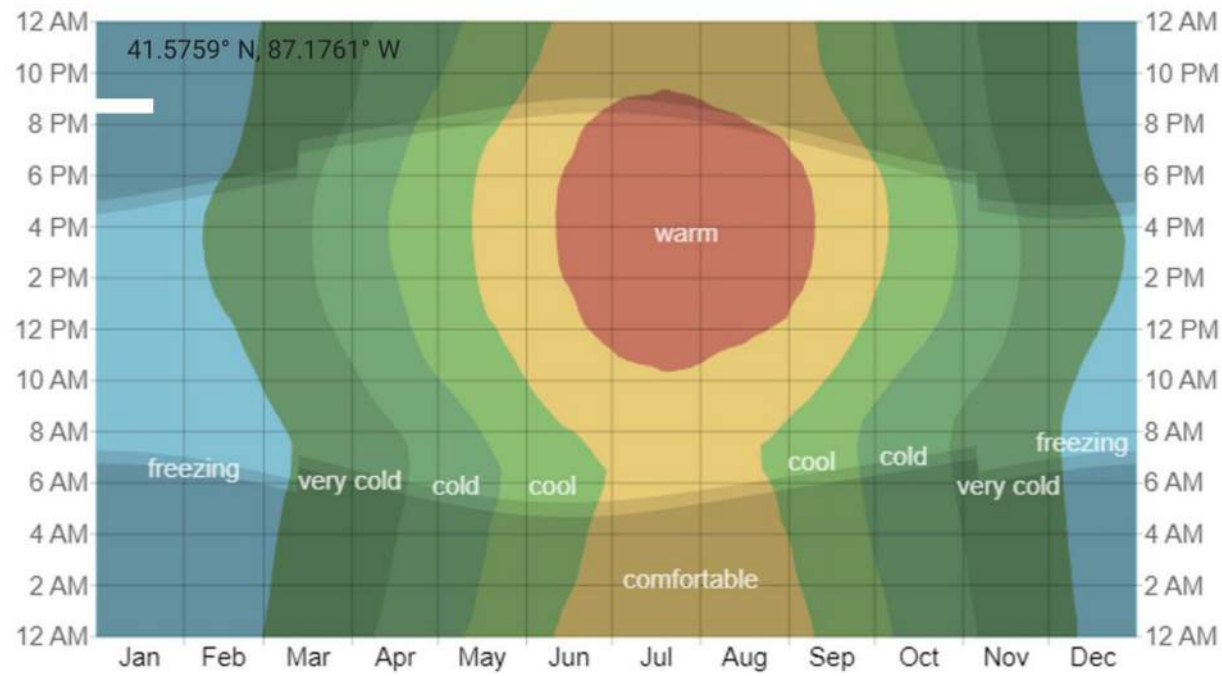


Alleviating Supply Constraints in the Housing Market | The White House
Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data; National Association of Realtors Monthly Supply Data

MICROCLIMATE

The following Wind Analysis and Solar Analysis reflect precedents showing the types of analyses that will help to inform more detailed implementation strategies and decision making regarding open space and development.

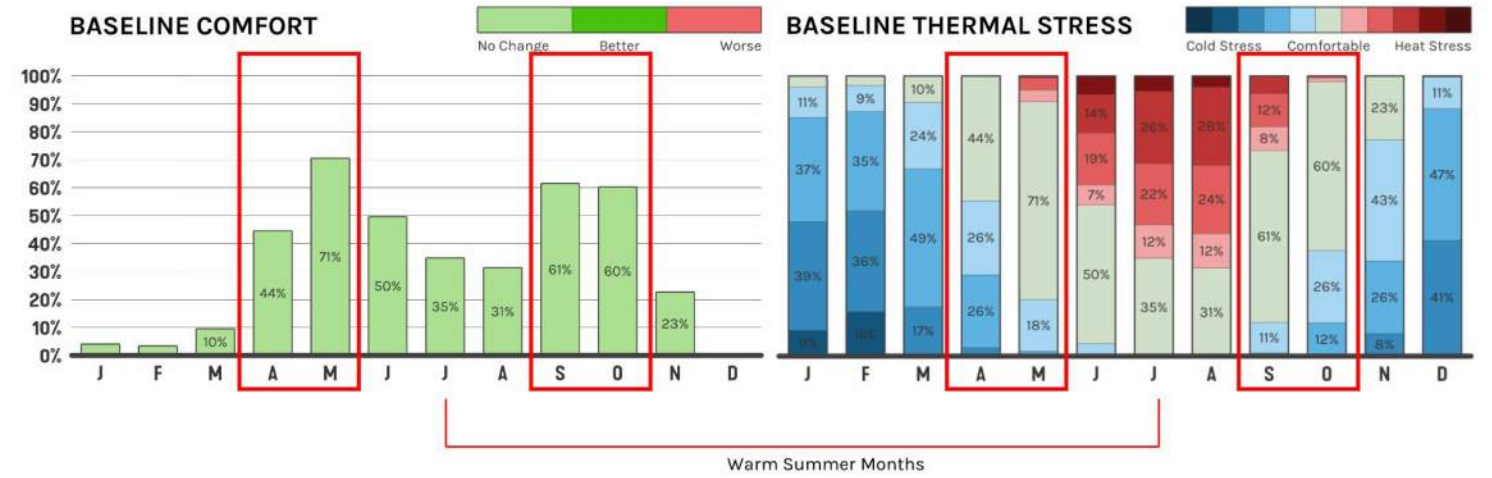
LOCAL CLIMATE



WIND ANALYSIS



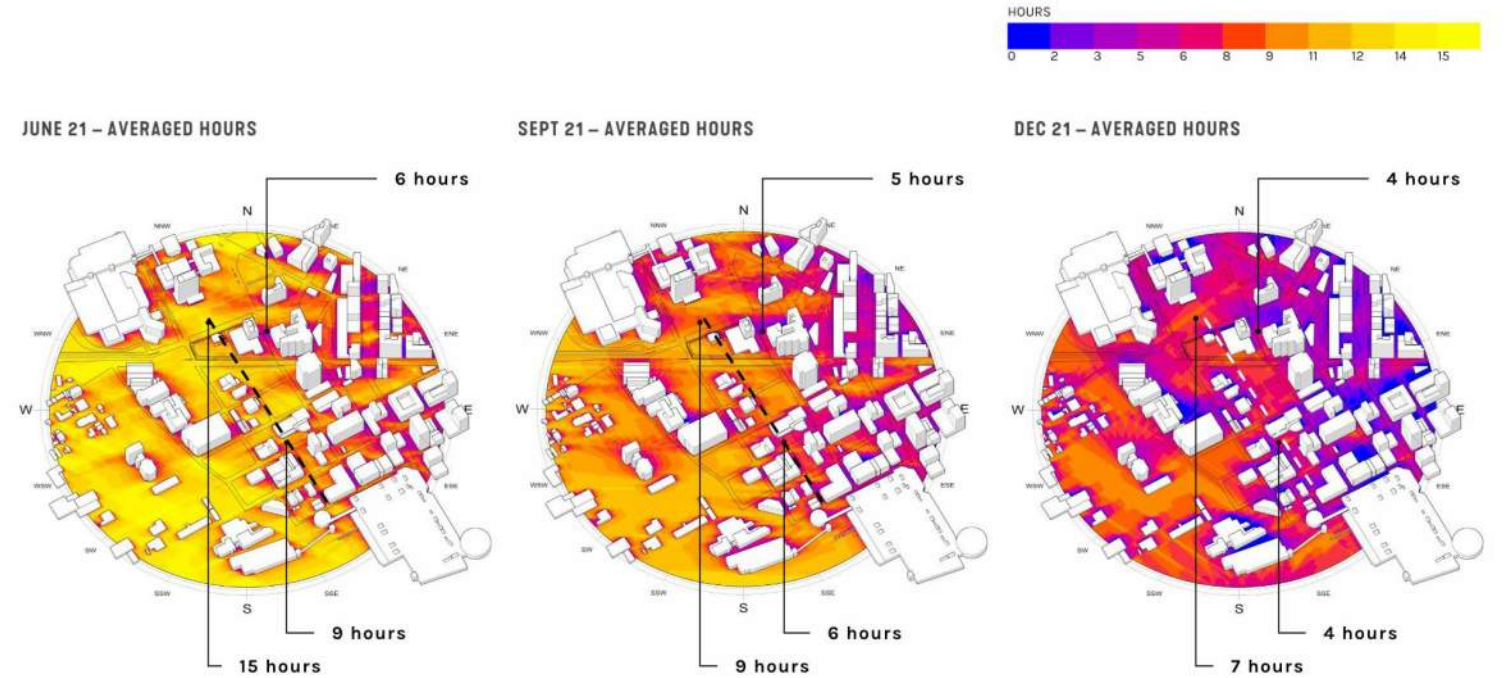
OUTDOOR THERMAL COMFORT - BASELINE



COMFORT

Most prevalent in spring and fall
Significant heat stress in summer and cold stress in winter

SOLAR ANALYSIS



FOSTERING QUALITY SPACES

ACTIVE AND ENGAGING



FLEXIBLE AND OPEN



COMFORTABLE AND INVITING



WELCOMING AND ENGAGING



INTERCONNECTED



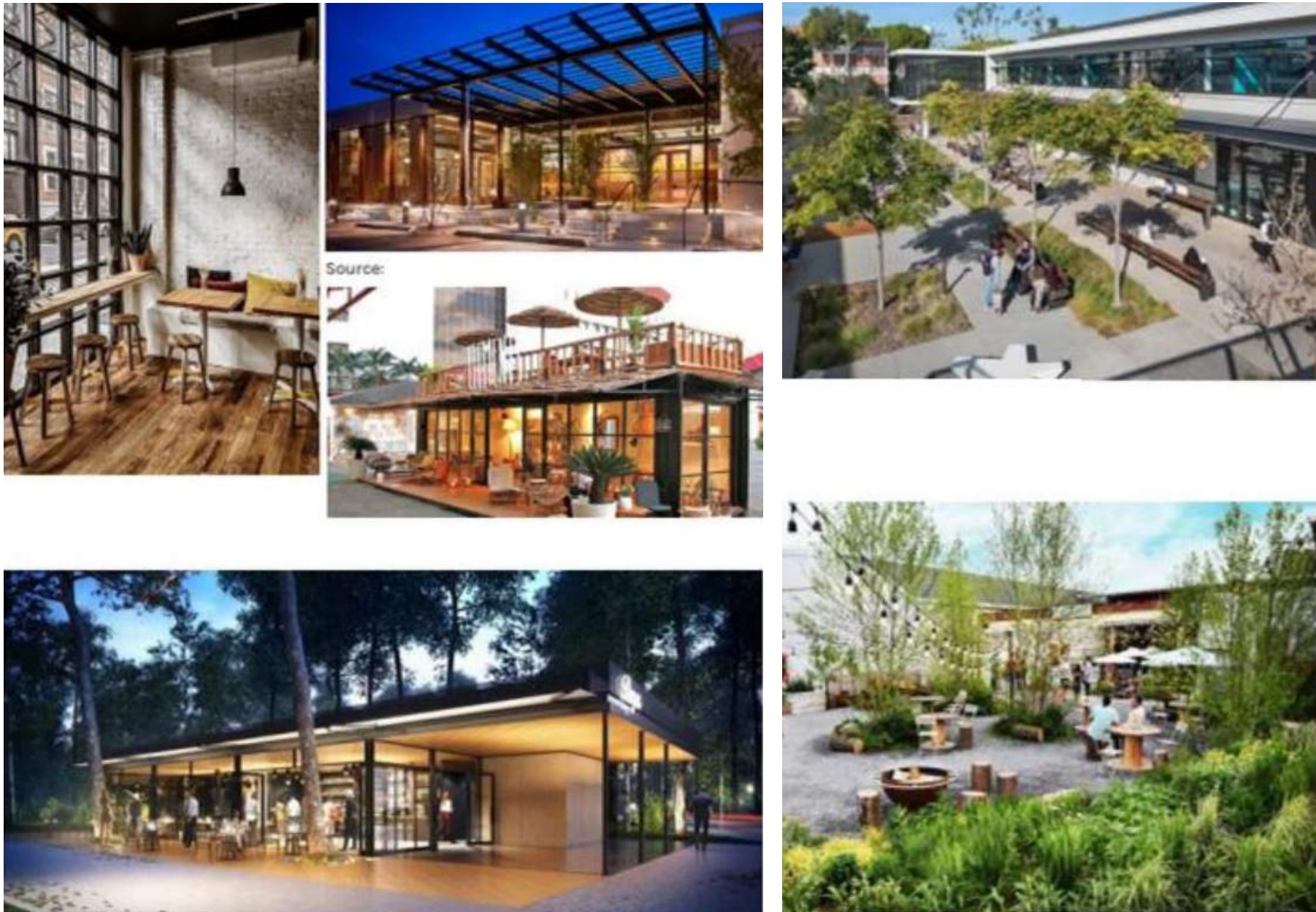
AUTHENTIC AND VIBRANT



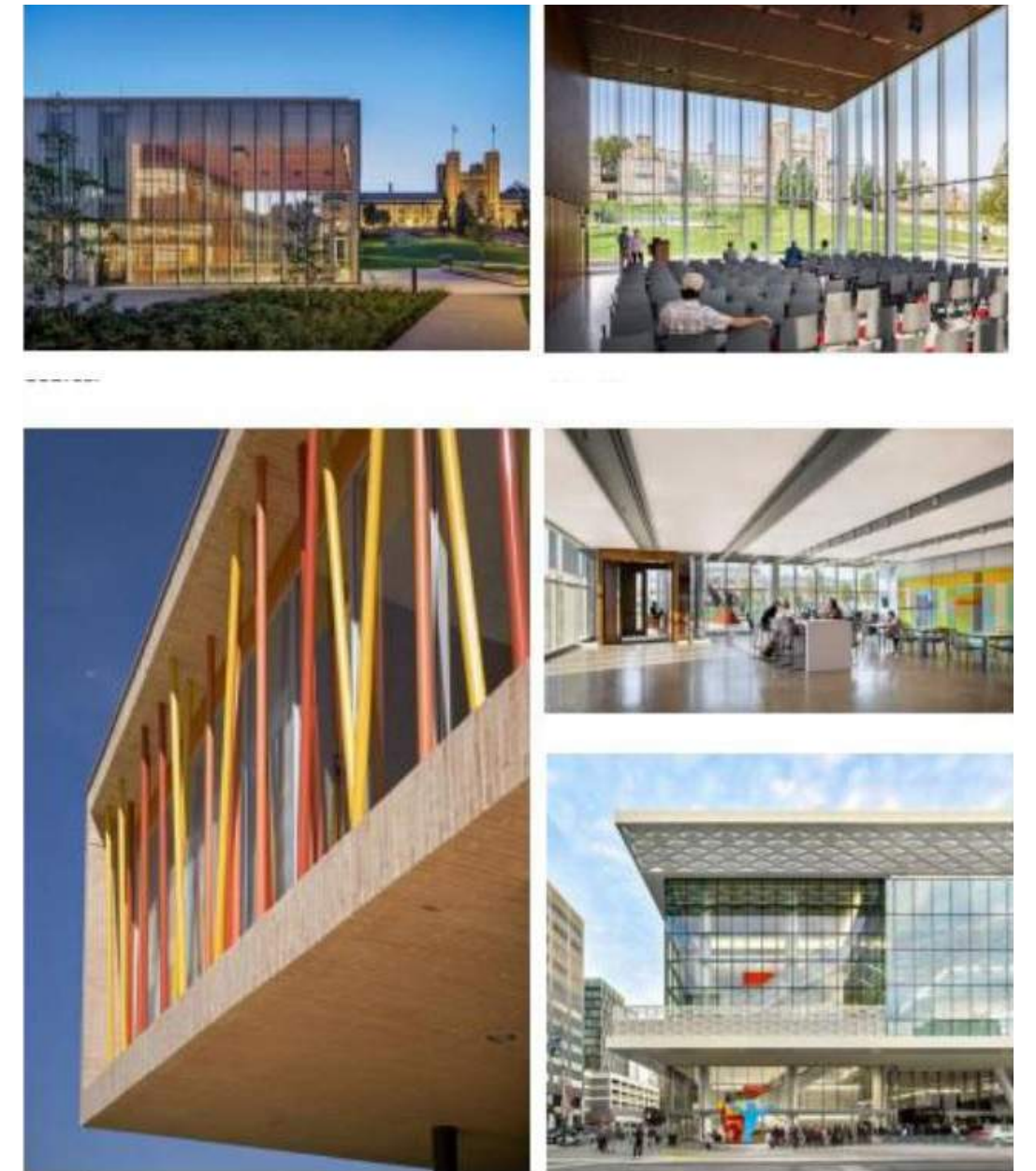
CATALYZING, ACTIVATING, AND COMPLEMENTING



SUPPORTIVE AND RESTORATIVE



OPEN AND BRIGHT



03 PREFERRED PLAN



NEW HOUSING FRONTS MAIN STREET

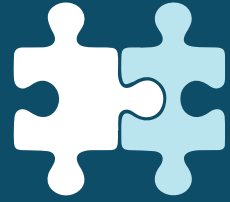
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This plan identifies opportunities for potential development and open space, and establishes a set of guiding principles to guide decision making. These principles form the overarching themes among the steering committee, city staff, and the public. They remain flexible to adapt to future market trends, ever-changing demographics, and development scenarios.

“THE VITALITY AND DYNAMISM OF OUR DOWNTOWNS AND DISTRICTS ARE SHAPED BY THE SPACES WE DEFINE AND THE EXPERIENCES WE HAVE WITHIN THEM.”



FINISH FOUNDERS SQUARE



ENLIVENED BY LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



DRIVEN BY WALKABILITY



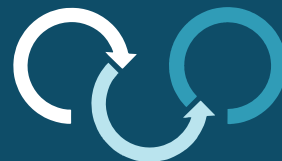
CONNECTED BY OPEN SPACE



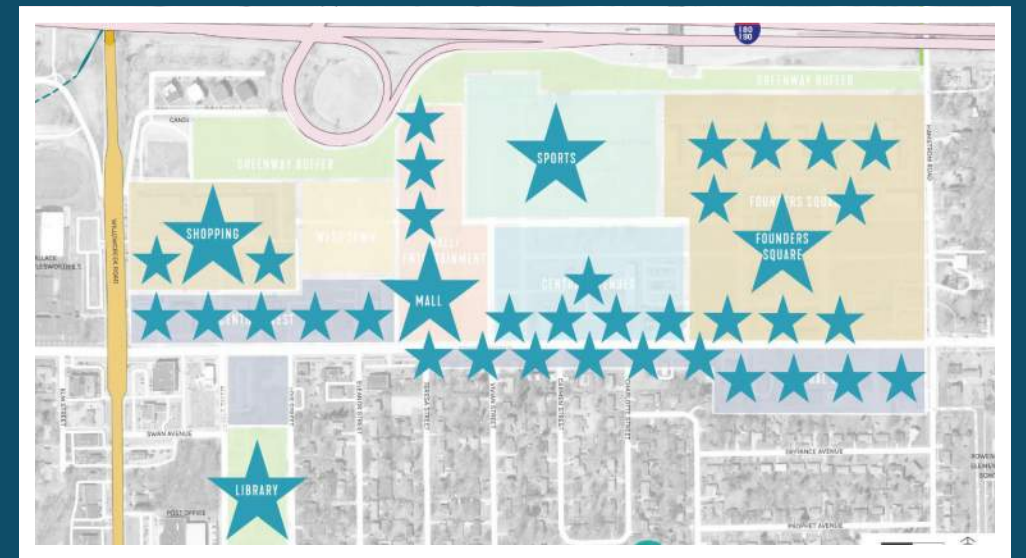
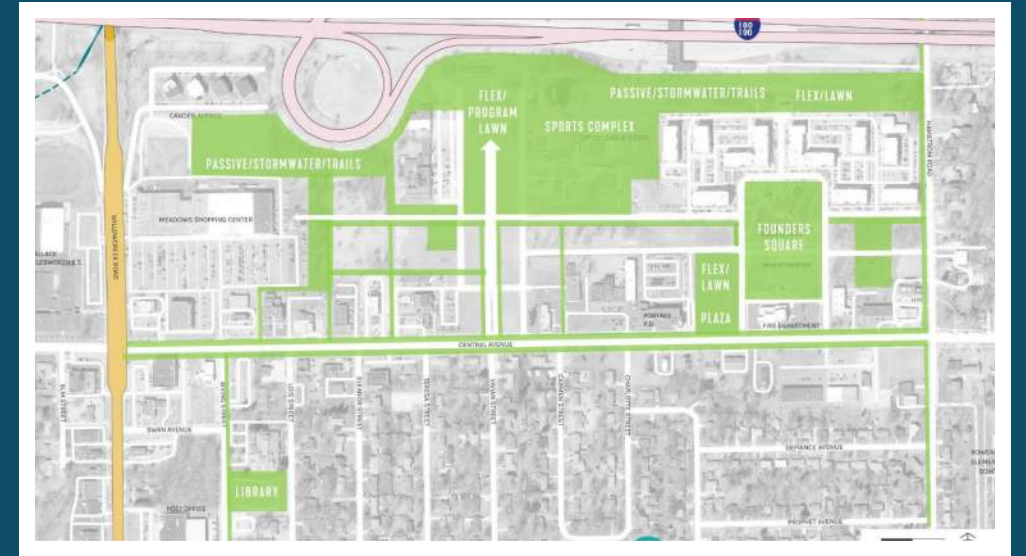
ENERGIZE CENTRAL AVENUE



PERSONALIZED BY AUTHENTIC DISTRICTS AND CENTERS



GUIDED BY AN INFORMED PHASING STRATEGY



THE PROMENADE

FOUNDERS SQUARE

CIVIL PLAZA

FIRE STATION

AUTO PARTS

SHOPPING

GAS

COURTS

X PLAY / PICNIC

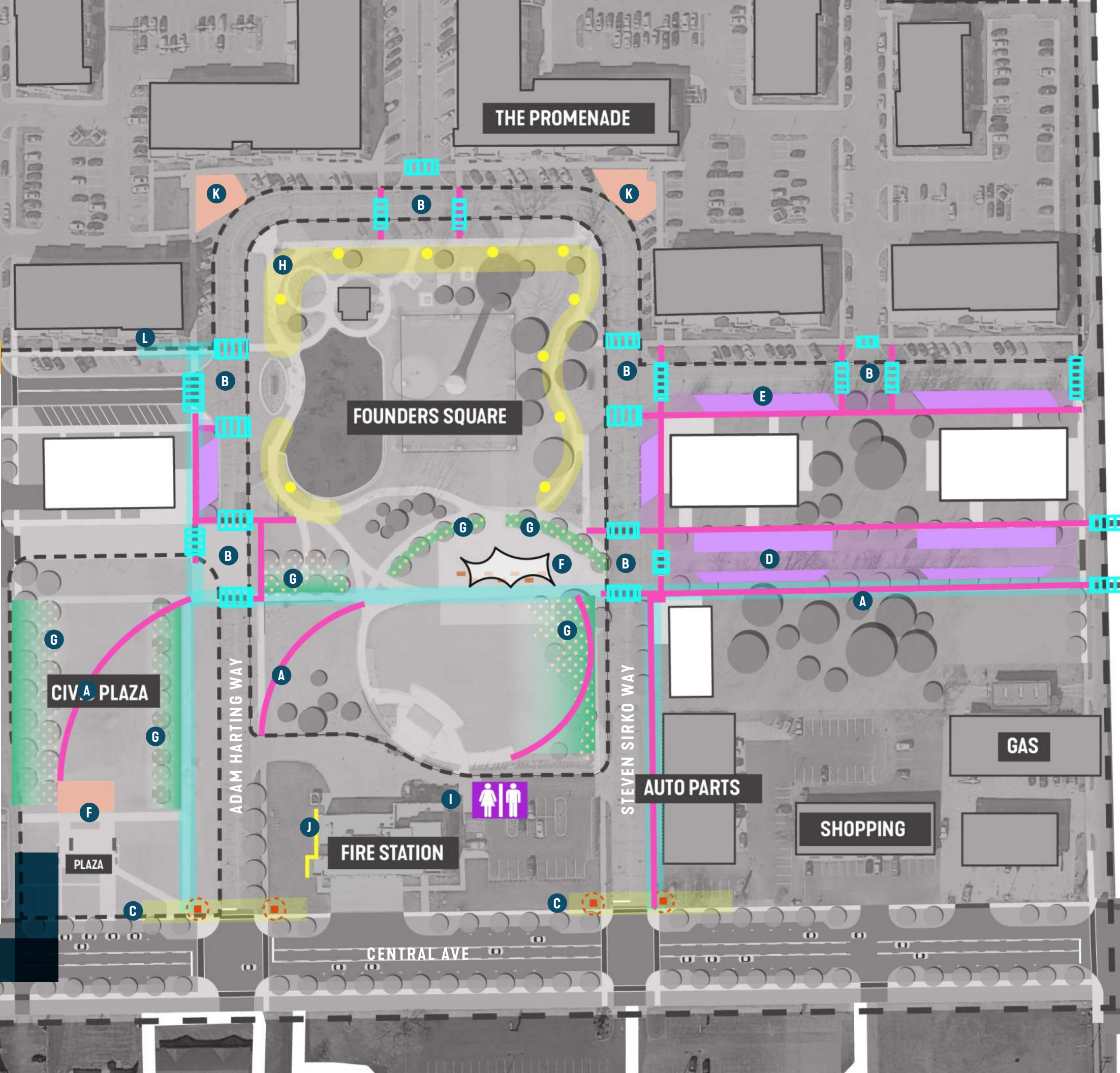
GUIDING PRINCIPLE:



FINISH FOUNDERS SQUARE

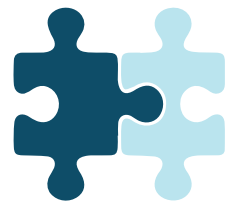
[TACTICAL 0-2 YR PROJECTS]

- A Extend Walks
- B Delineate Crossings
- C New Founders Columns
- D Head-In Parking Along North side of Alley
Parallel Parking Along South side of Alley
- E Add Angled Parking
- F Add Shade Structure, Plantings, Furnishings
- G Plant Trees
- H Add Pedestrian Scale Lighting
- I Sign Public Restroom
- J Advertise for Founders on Fire Dept Wall
- K New Patio/ Plaza Space
- L Establish Primary Downtown Connector Route





GUIDING PRINCIPLE:



ENLIVENED BY LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Well-formed plans yield clarity and confidence in the marketplace, helping to reveal opportunities that otherwise may not be seen. By incorporating insight from a wide range of stakeholders who have contributed to the planning process, the Downtown Portage Master Plan represents important investments that reinforce partnerships and mutually beneficial outcomes.

RECONFIGURATION OF PARKING AND AMENITY SPACE AT THE PORTAGE MALL

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

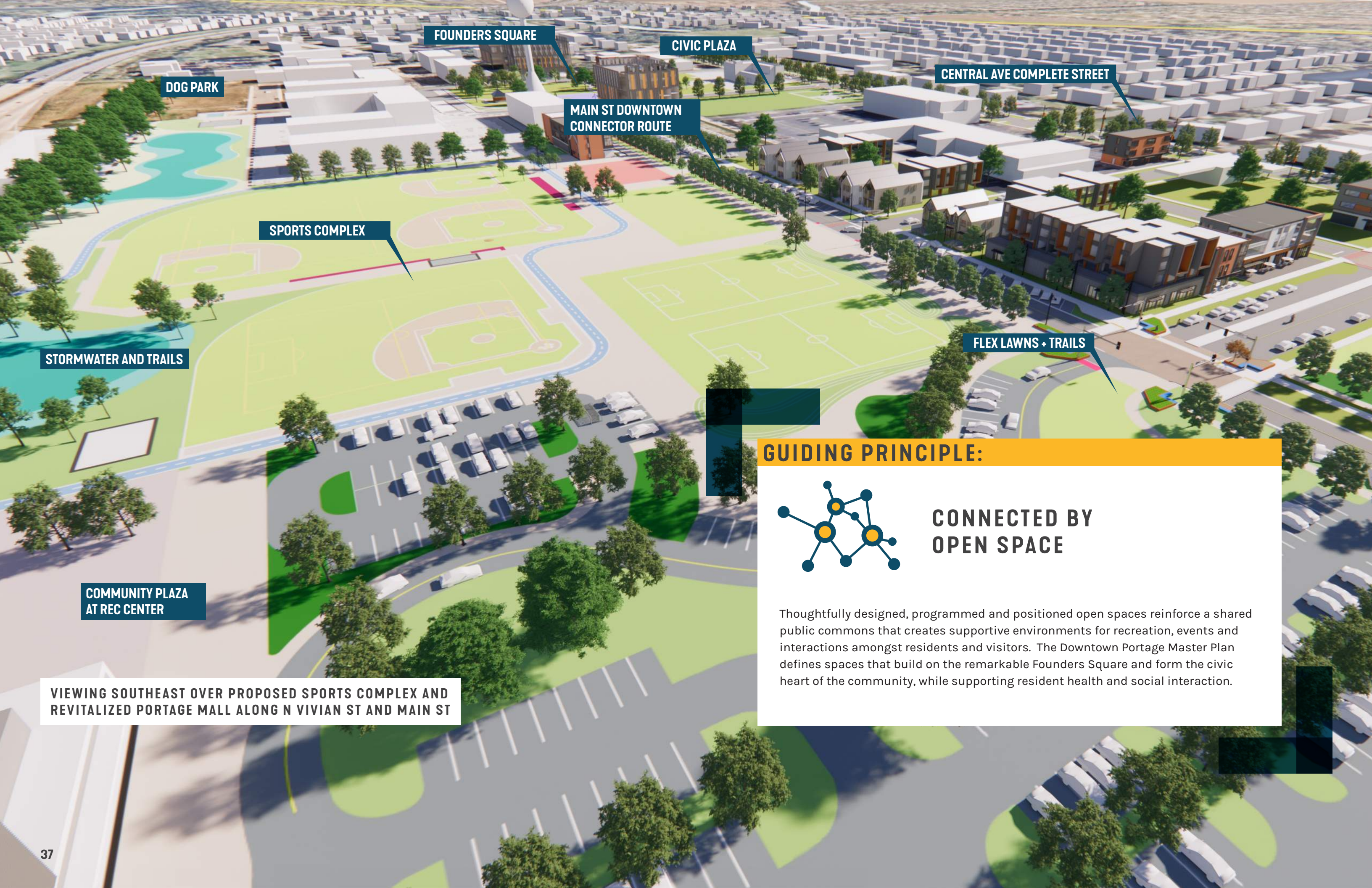


DRIVEN BY WALKABILITY

Walkable districts support health and social interaction while reinforcing a strong sense of place that fosters community. By thoughtfully linking walkable density housing types, commercial destinations, parks and engaging districts, the Downtown Portage Master Plan drives pedestrian civic activity that reinforces a dynamic experience.



MAIN ST AND VIVIAN ST LOOKING SOUTHEAST



FOUNDERS SQUARE

CIVIC PLAZA

CENTRAL AVE COMPLETE STREET

DOG PARK

MAIN ST DOWNTOWN
CONNECTOR ROUTE

SPORTS COMPLEX

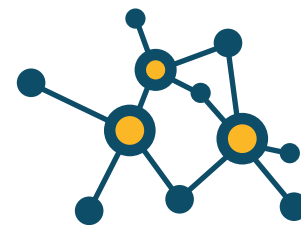
STORMWATER AND TRAILS

FLEX LAWNS + TRAILS

COMMUNITY PLAZA
AT REC CENTER

VIEWING SOUTHEAST OVER PROPOSED SPORTS COMPLEX AND
REVITALIZED PORTAGE MALL ALONG N VIVIAN ST AND MAIN ST

GUIDING PRINCIPLE:



**CONNECTED BY
OPEN SPACE**

Thoughtfully designed, programmed and positioned open spaces reinforce a shared public commons that creates supportive environments for recreation, events and interactions amongst residents and visitors. The Downtown Portage Master Plan defines spaces that build on the remarkable Founders Square and form the civic heart of the community, while supporting resident health and social interaction.

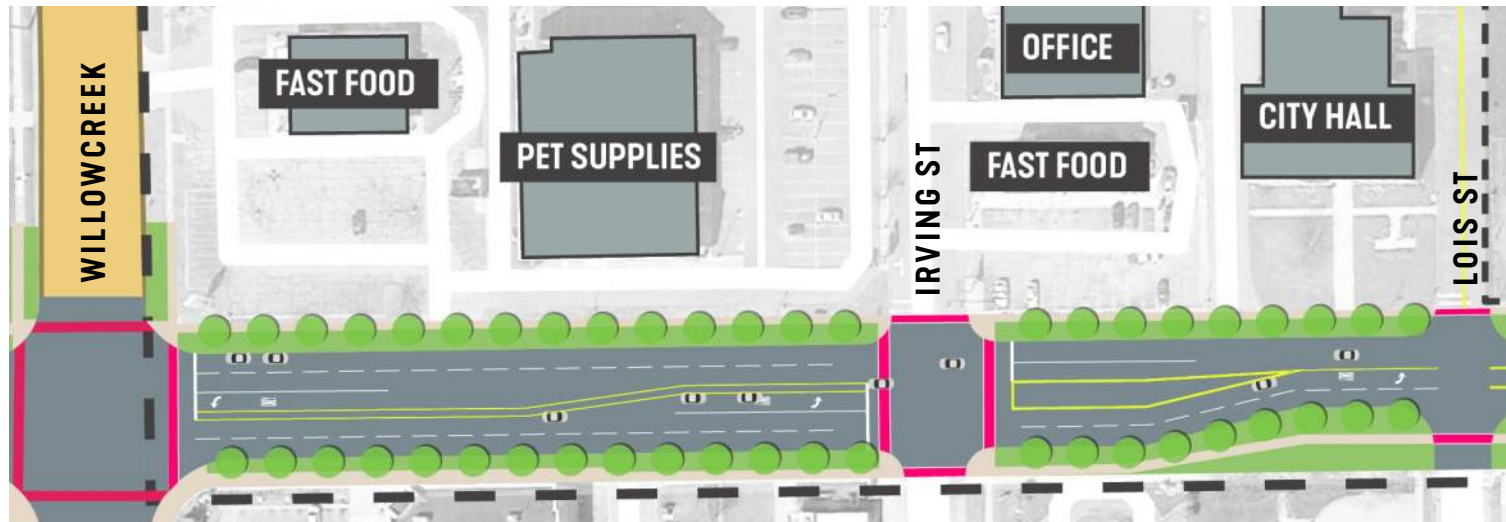
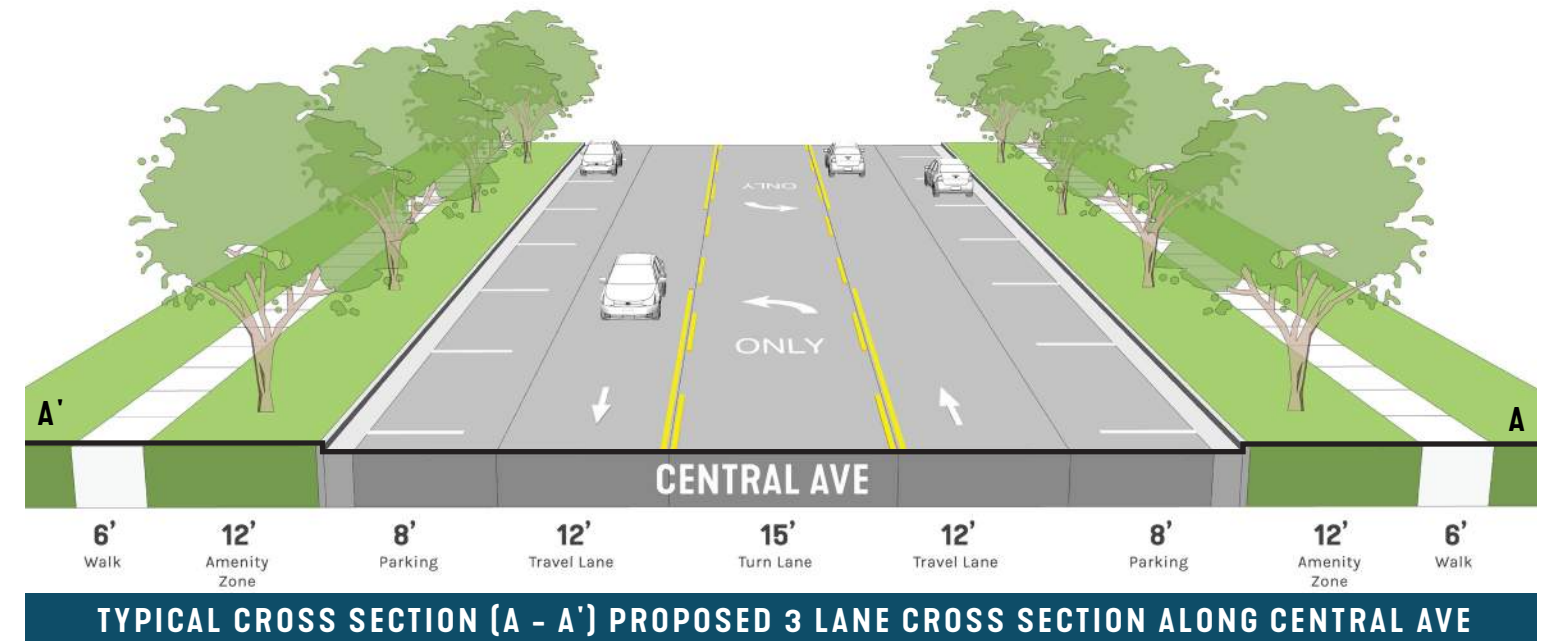
GUIDING PRINCIPLE:



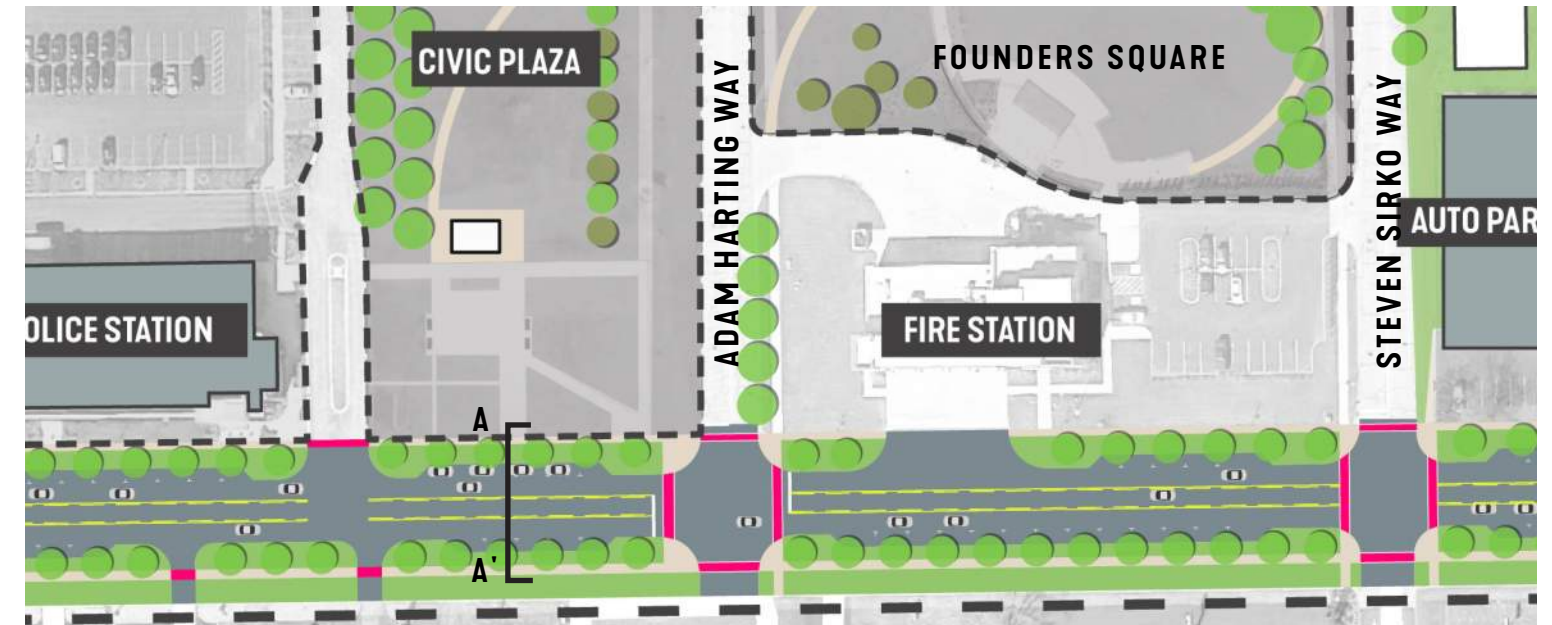
ENERGIZE CENTRAL AVE

[STREETSCAPE ENHANCEMENTS]

A connected downtown district relies upon a walkable Central Avenue. Currently, the wide-open five lane arterial serves as a major barrier to pedestrians and severs the study area from amenities throughout Portage. An opportunity exists to transition on-going maintenance costs spent on replacing aging roadway lights and the imminent repaving of Central Avenue into a three-lane cross section with streetscape improvements. Improvements such as on-street parking and a regular rhythm of street trees, street lights with banners, and crosswalks narrows the perceived width of Central which slows drivers and encourages walking.



1 SECTION: WILLOWCREEK TO LOIS ST
TRANSITION FROM 5 LANES TO 3 LANES



2 SECTION: ADAM HARTING WAY TO STEVEN SIRKO WAY
3 LANE TYPICAL SECTION ADJACENT TO FOUNDERS SQUARE AND CIVIC BUILDINGS



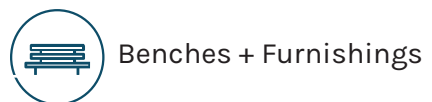
GUIDING PRINCIPLE:



ENERGIZE CENTRAL AVE

[STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS]

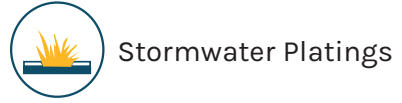
Transform Central Ave into a complete street focused on improved pedestrian safety, accessible walks, and improved streetscape. Enhance the primary intersections at Irving, Vivian, and Steven Sirko Way to integrate stormwater, furnishings, signage. These interventions provide visual interest while reducing Central Avenue to a pedestrian scale and encourage exploring downtown by foot.



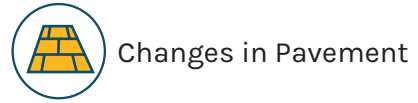
Benches + Furnishings



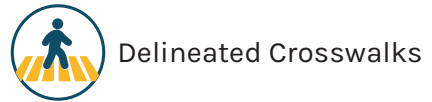
Bump Outs



Stormwater Platings



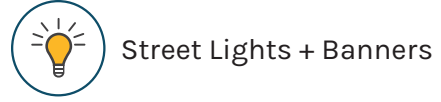
Changes in Pavement



Delineated Crosswalks



Street Trees



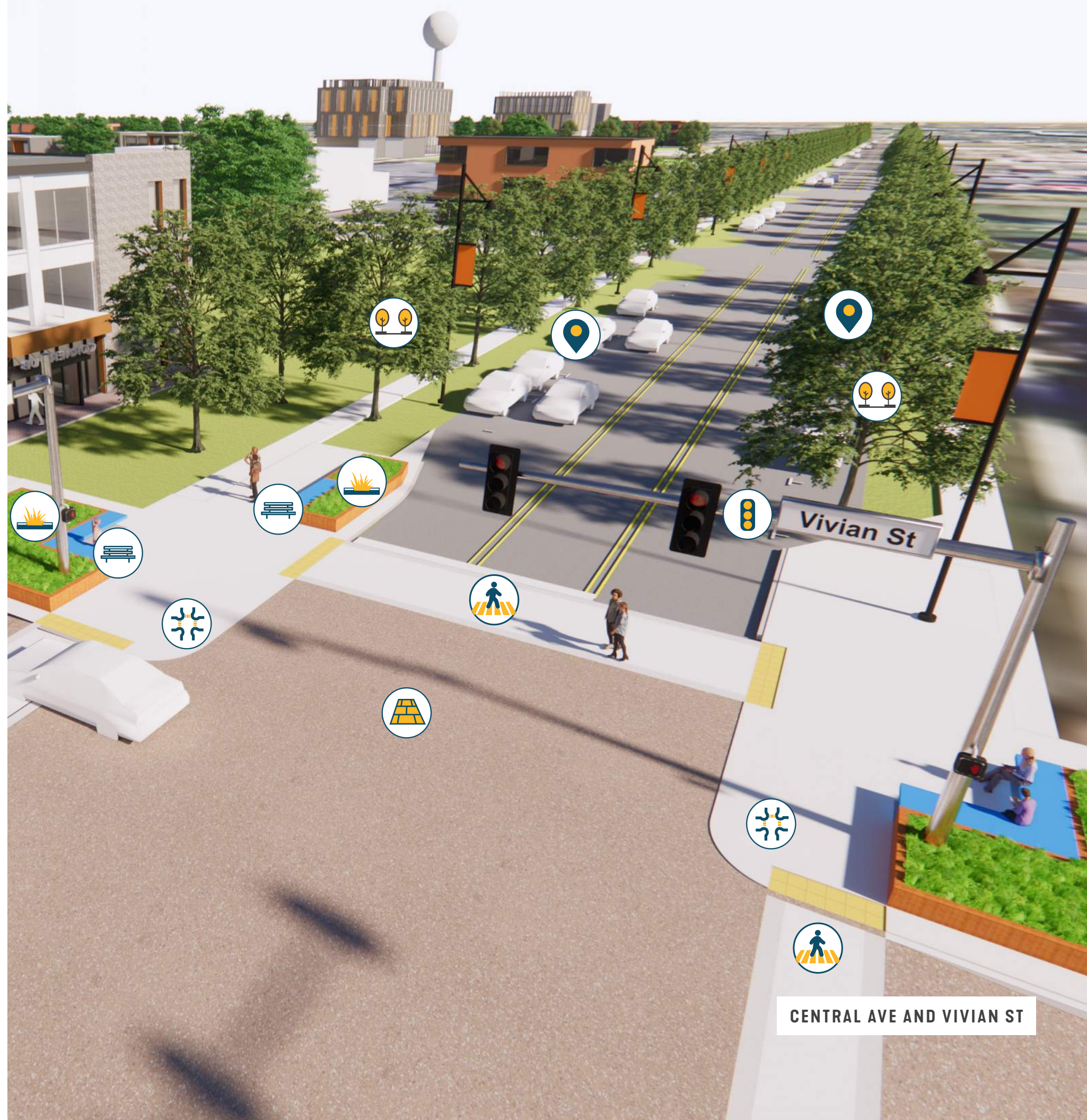
Street Lights + Banners



On-Street Parking



Signal Timing



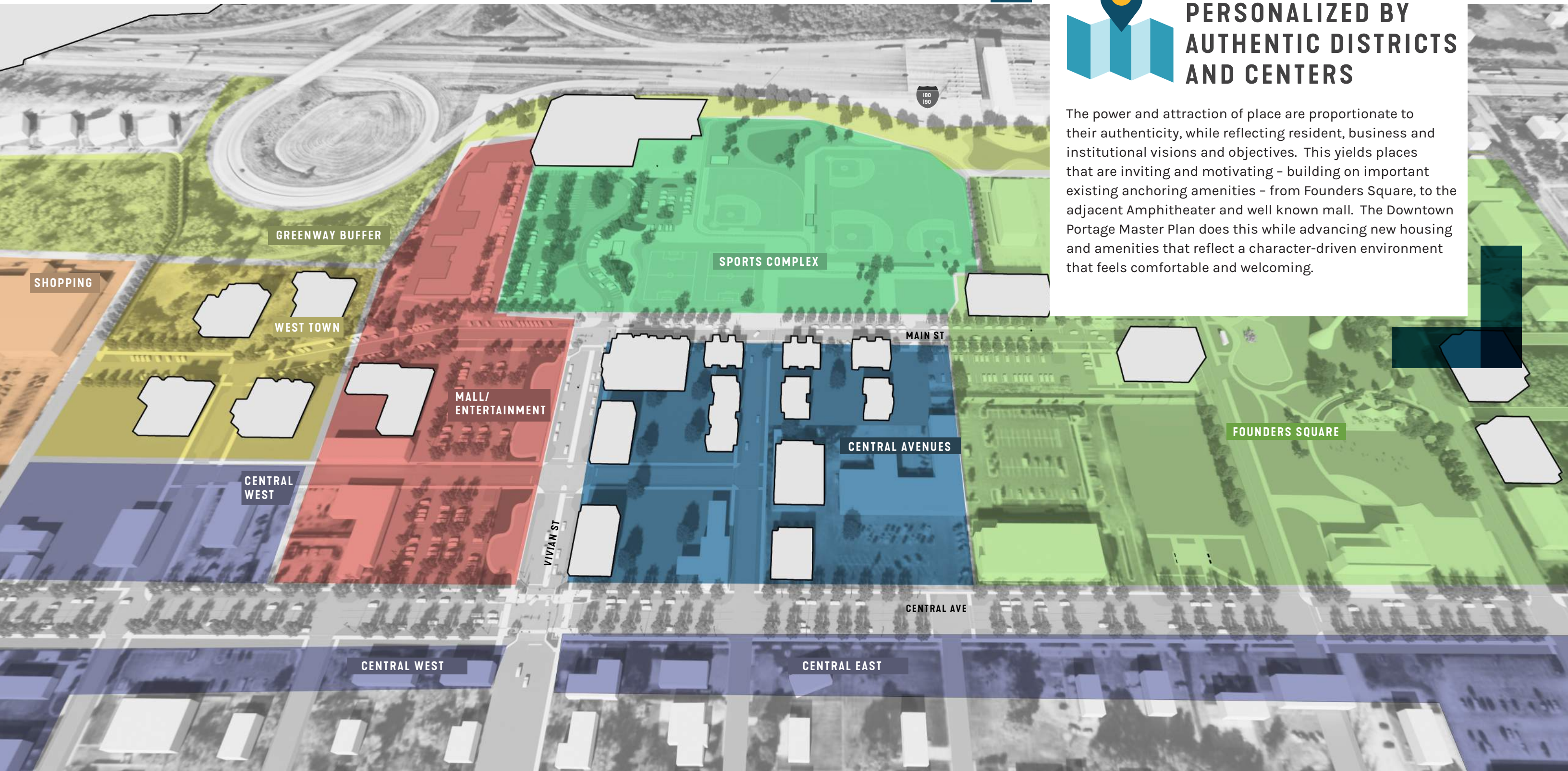
CENTRAL AVE AND VIVIAN ST

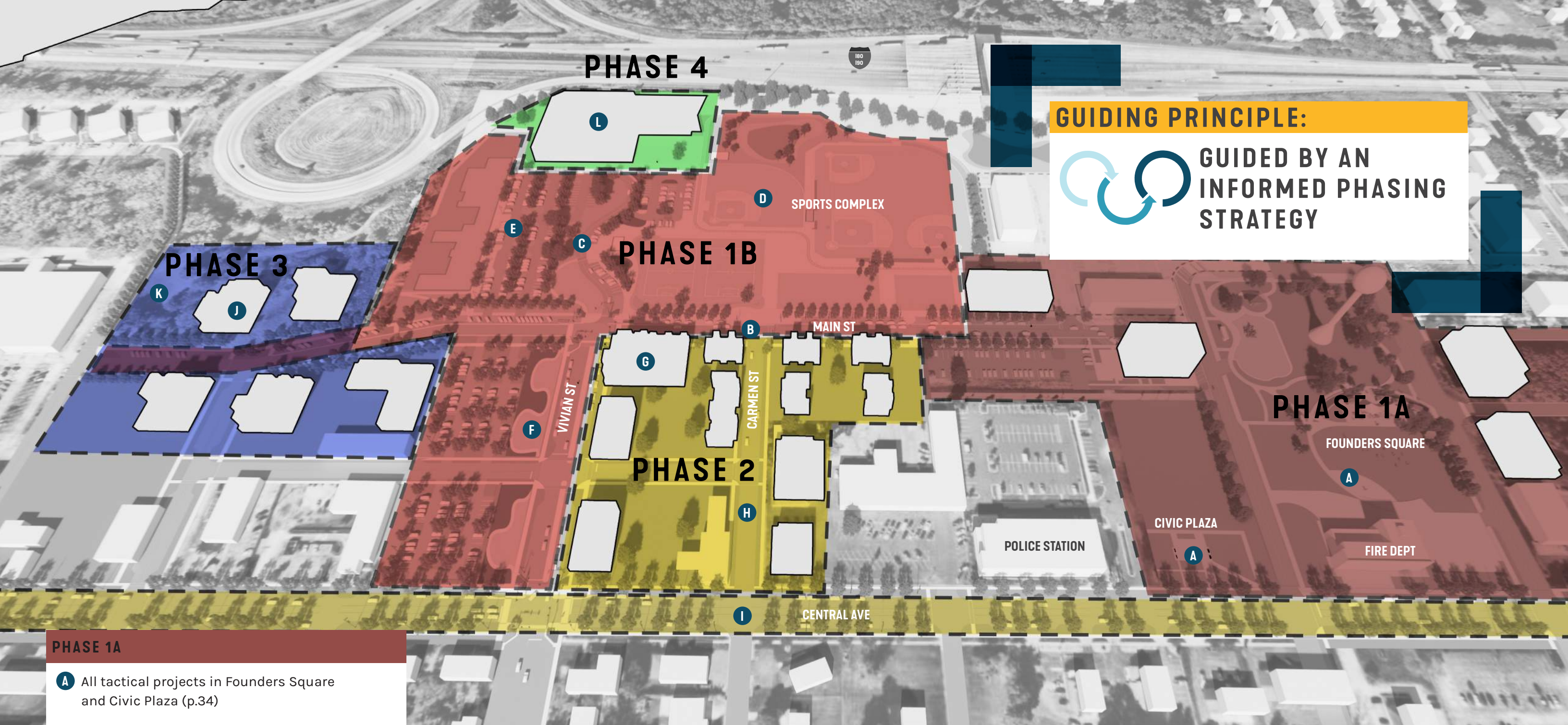
GUIDING PRINCIPLE:



PERSONALIZED BY AUTHENTIC DISTRICTS AND CENTERS

The power and attraction of place are proportionate to their authenticity, while reflecting resident, business and institutional visions and objectives. This yields places that are inviting and motivating - building on important existing anchoring amenities - from Founders Square, to the adjacent Amphitheater and well known mall. The Downtown Portage Master Plan does this while advancing new housing and amenities that reflect a character-driven environment that feels comfortable and welcoming.





GUIDING PRINCIPLE:
 GUIDED BY AN INFORMED PHASING STRATEGY

PHASE 1A

- A** All tactical projects in Founders Square and Civic Plaza (p.34)

PHASE 1B

- B** Extend Main St
- C** Extend Vivian St
- D** Develop Sports Complex
- E** Reconstruct Parking to Support Portage Mall and Sports Complex
- F** Flexible, Linear Greenspace and Trails

PHASE 2

- G** Mixed-use / Townhome Development
- H** Extend Carmen St
- I** Central Avenue Streetscape

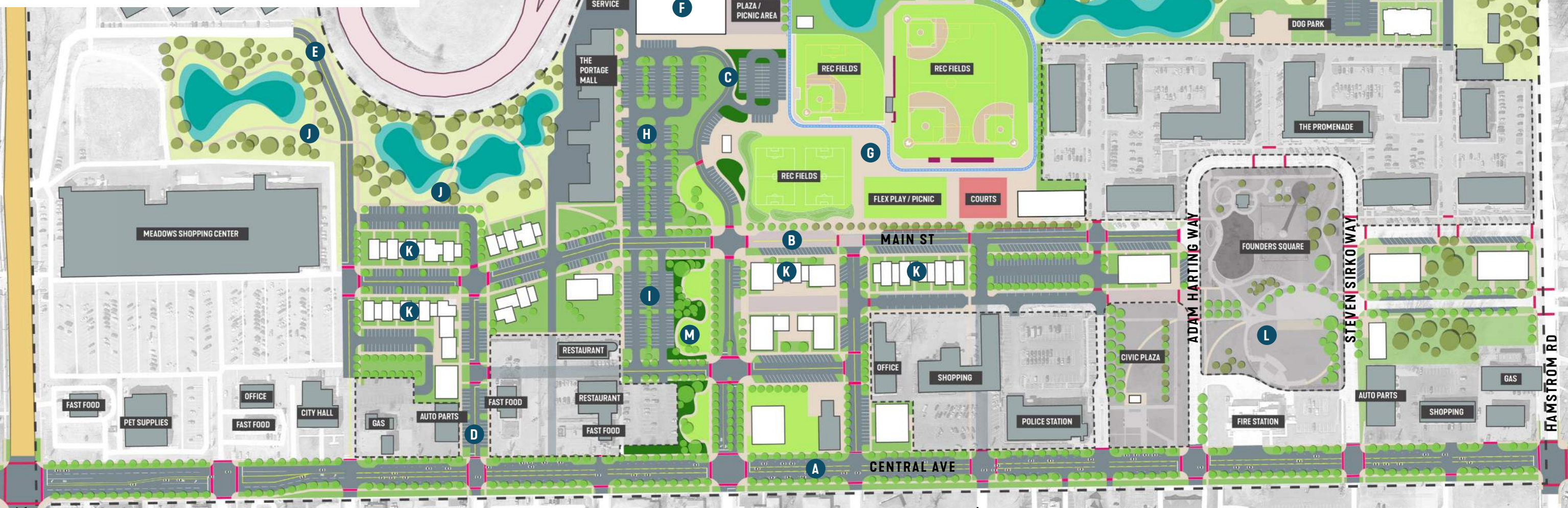
PHASE 3

- J** Mixed-use / Townhome Development
- K** Stormwater Management

PHASE 4

- L** Community Rec Center Building, Plaza, and Landscaping

PREFERRED SITE PLAN



- A** Central as Complete Street
- B** Extend Main St
- C** Extend Vivian St
- D** Extend Eleanor St
- E** Extend Lois St
- F** New Community Rec Center
- G** Develop Sports Complex
- H** Reconstructed Parking Lots
- I** New Parking Lots
- J** New Trails and Greenspace
- K** New Townhomes
- L** Tactical Improvements at Founders Square + Plaza
- M** Flexible Open Space and Trails

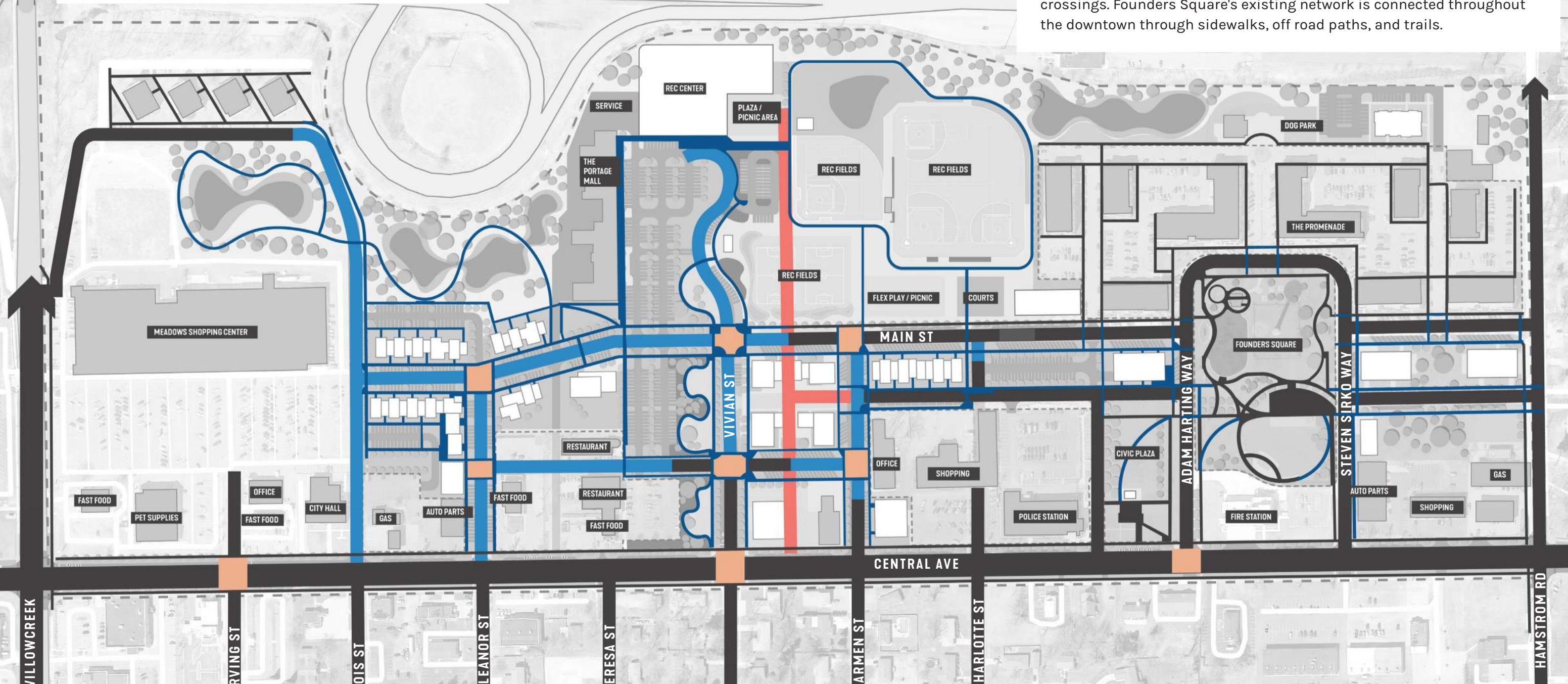
LEGEND

	Proposed Buildings		Naturalized Area
	Existing Buildings		Water
	New/ Modified Roadway		Plaza Space
	New Walks		Festival Street Space
	New Track		Crosswalks
	Lawn (programmable)		Proposed Trees
	Lawn		Existing Trees
	Stormwater		Limit of Existing to Preserve
			Study Area Limits



CIRCULATION

The proposed circulation pattern re-establishes the grid north of Central Avenue to give the study area the same block pattern as the rest of downtown. This creates regular development blocks and a connected walkable district with sidewalk and a rhythm of intersections for safe crossings. Founders Square's existing network is connected throughout the downtown through sidewalks, off road paths, and trails.



LEGEND

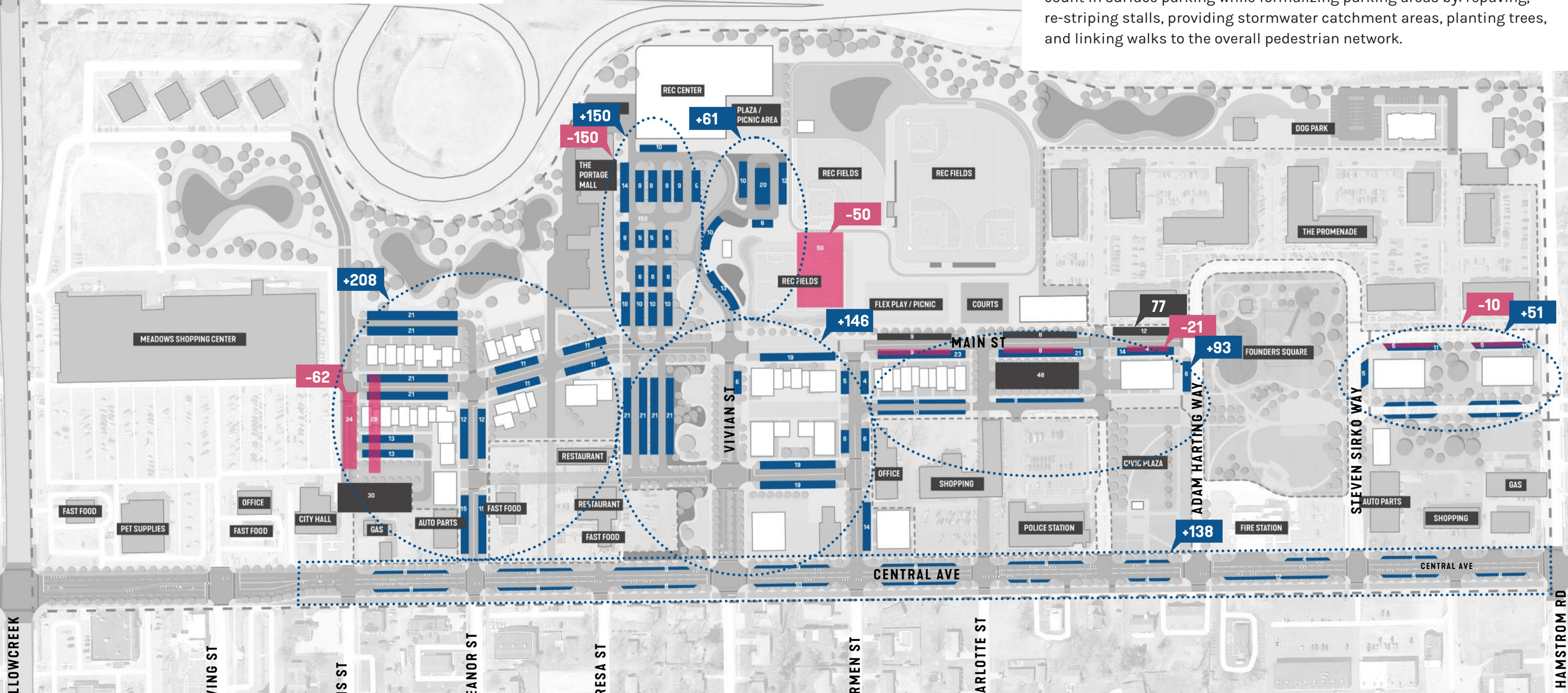
- Proposed Road
- Existing Road
- Existing Alley to be Removed
- Proposed Walk/ Path
- Existing Walk
- Improved Intersection

0' 250' 500'



PARKING

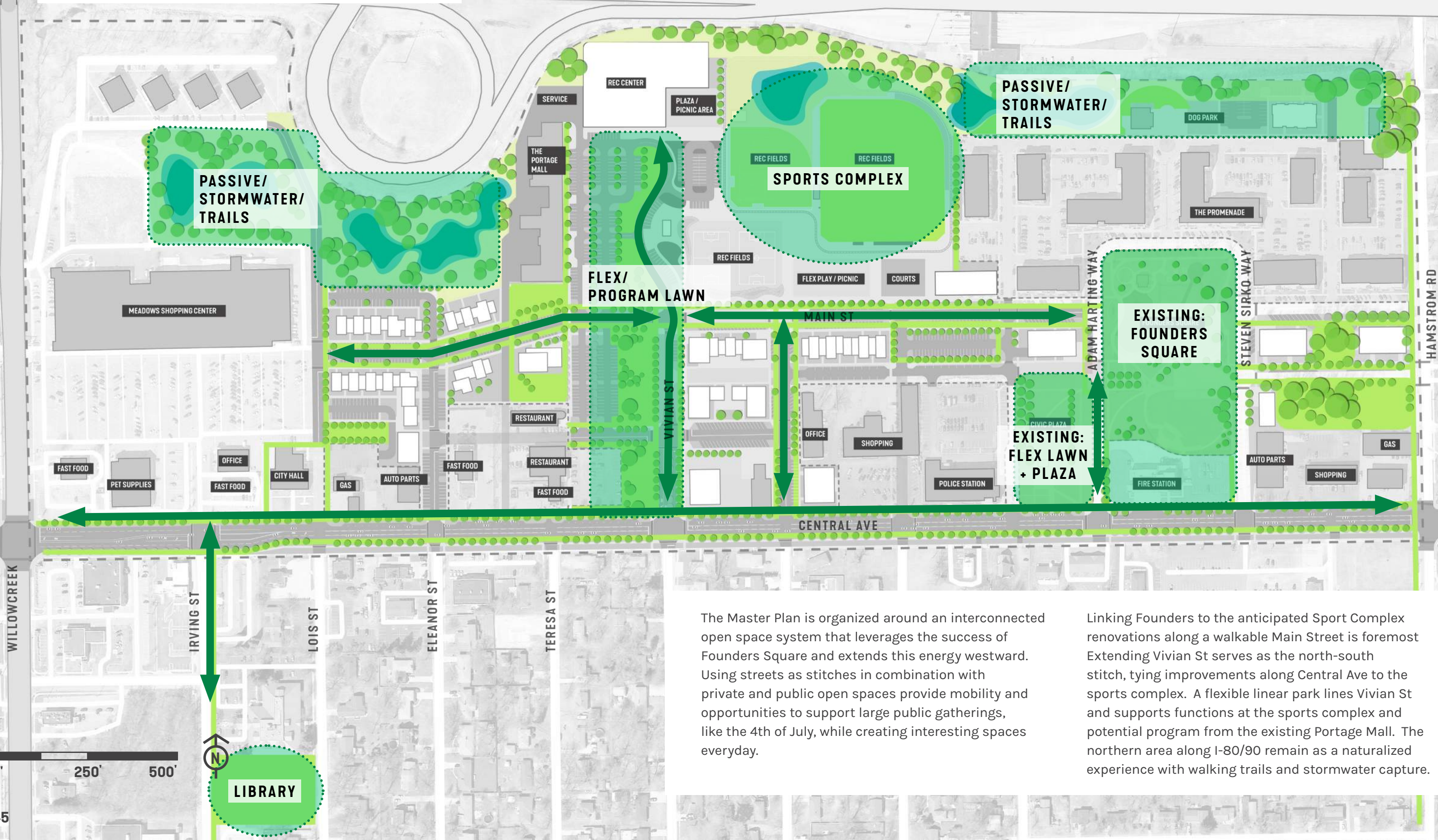
The parking strategy is to maximize roadway parking to reduce the demand on off-street lots. Formalized parking is provided around high demand areas such as the Portage Mall and rec fields. Currently ~200 stalls service this northern area, and the proposed plan matches this count in surface parking while formalizing parking areas by: repaving, re-striping stalls, providing stormwater catchment areas, planting trees, and linking walks to the overall pedestrian network.



PARKING COUNT	
77	EXISTING PARKING TO REMAIN
-293	EXISTING PARKING TO BE REMOVED
+847	PROPOSED PARKING STALLS



OPEN SPACE NETWORK



The Master Plan is organized around an interconnected open space system that leverages the success of Founders Square and extends this energy westward. Using streets as stitches in combination with private and public open spaces provide mobility and opportunities to support large public gatherings, like the 4th of July, while creating interesting spaces everyday.

Linking Founders to the anticipated Sport Complex renovations along a walkable Main Street is foremost. Extending Vivian St serves as the north-south stitch, tying improvements along Central Ave to the sports complex. A flexible linear park lines Vivian St and supports functions at the sports complex and potential program from the existing Portage Mall. The northern area along I-80/90 remain as a naturalized experience with walking trails and stormwater capture.

LIBRARY

BUILDING PROGRAM

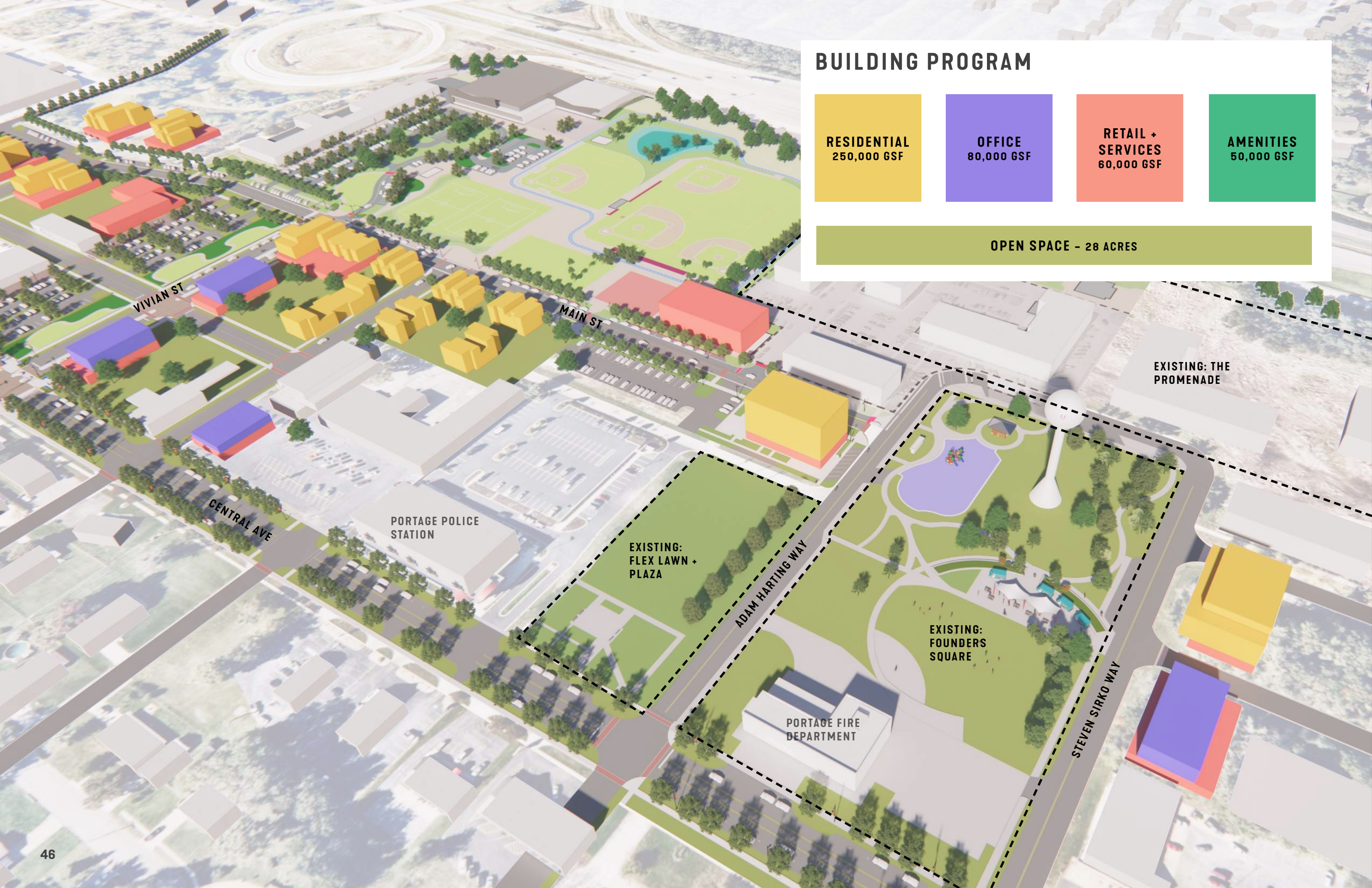
RESIDENTIAL
250,000 GSF

OFFICE
80,000 GSF

RETAIL + SERVICES
60,000 GSF

AMENITIES
50,000 GSF

OPEN SPACE - 28 ACRES



VIVIAN ST

MAIN ST

CENTRAL AVE

PORTAGE POLICE STATION

EXISTING:
FLEX LAWN +
PLAZA

ADAM HARTING WAY

EXISTING:
FOUNDERS
SQUARE

PORTAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

EXISTING: THE PROMENADE

STEVEN SIRKO WAY

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

	Portage	Portage, Valparaiso, Chesterton	LaPorte, Valparaiso, Crown Point	National
Rental Rate (\$/SF annual)	\$14	\$14	\$15	\$20
Days on Market	202	287	291	244
Area (average SF)	5,000	2,590	2,641	1,581

Source: CREXi Report

Housing Market Data

Topic	0.5 Mile Radius	1 Mile Radius	3 Mile Radius
Number of Housing Units	681	3,077	17,670
Population	1,346	8,214	43,008
Owner Occupied	402	2,247	11,212
Rental Occupied	192	654	5,396
Vacant/Transitioning	60	146	1,071
Median Contract Rent	\$828	\$862	\$784
Median Gross Rent	\$942	\$986	\$942

Radius area based on intersection of Central Avenue and Vivian Street

Source: ESRI ACS Housing Summary, 2016-2020 ACS Estimates

Construction Cost Data

Input	Inline Commercial/Retail	Residential Apartment	Restaurant	Retail/Office
Building Type	Brick Veneer	Brick Veneer	Brick Veneer	Brick Veneer
Stories	1 Story	1-3 Story	1 Story	1 Story
Floor Area (SF)	25,000	22,500	5,000	8,000
Cost/SF	\$157	\$256.64	\$268.60	\$205.65
Total Cost	\$3,913,494.44	\$4,774,372.62	\$1,342,983.66	\$1,645,225.26

Source: RS Means data, pulled 09.13.2022

Comparable Sales

Address	Building Type	Tenancy	Sq Ft	Suites	Rate
2563 Willowcreek Road	Retail	Multiple	2,500 - 5,000	3	N/A
1575 Adler Cir	Office	Multiple	2,272	1	\$14 Sq Ft / YR
6515 Ameriplex Dr	Office, Industrial	Multiple	100 - 100,000	1	N/A
5991 Central Ave	Retail, Restaurant	Single	5,000	1	\$14 Sq Ft / YR
3564 Scottsdale St	Office	Multiple	5,000 - 13,008	1	\$14 Sq Ft / YR
5991 Central Ave	Retail, Restaurant	Single	5,000	1	\$14 Sq Ft / YR
1605 Adler Circle	Office	Multiple	1,143	3	\$14 Sq Ft / YR
6540 US Highway 6	Retail	Multiple	2,104	1	\$17 Sq Ft / YR
Nwc Willowcreek Road & Us Highway 6	Retail	Multiple	1,995	2	N/A
6100 Southport Rd	Office	Single	3,781	1	N/A

Source: CREXi Report

Introduction

The City of Portage has initiated a downtown charrette process to establish an updated master plan for its downtown district. HWC Engineering was retained to participate in this process and tasked with guiding the plan toward a realistic and market-based development strategy.

The following analysis and recommendations are a preliminary assessment of potential impacts during and after the first phase of development and identify key development principles city officials should use to guide development decisions. Note that this assessment is based on the preliminary Portage Downtown Charrette Package by SmithGroup, and not a final document.

Research and Analysis Breakdown

Local Data

Research was completed to understand potential costs and benefits of development occurring from the Downtown Master Plan. These data points helped influence the numbers seen in the economic assessment and set the framework for what can realistically occur in Portage.

The Promenade at Founders Square Rates

Apartment Type	Area (sq. ft.)	Lease (per month)
Studio	447	\$1,434
1BR	647	\$1,497
2Br	1019	\$1,488
3Br	1610	\$2,407

Source: www.foundersliving.com

Portage City/Portage Township Tax Rates

Entity	2022 Tax Rate
City/Town	1.2012%
County	0.4364%
Library	0.0664%
School	0.8846%
Special Unit	0.0093%
Township	0.1261%
Gross Rate	2.7240%

Source: Porter County

Rental Rates

Market Observations

A key challenge when determining the feasibility of the Downtown Master Plan is understanding how current market forces will dictate a developer's ability to fill commercial, office, and residential spaces. The following observations were discussed during and after the charrette, and should be considered when determining the feasibility of specific development types within Portage's downtown:

- Most commercial rental rates in the Portage area are lower than national averages (\$14-15 local, vs. \$20 national). To attract local or "mom and pop" businesses, there may be a need to incentivize retail to keep rates at \$14-15. Otherwise, small businesses may be priced out by national retailers who are willing to pay higher rates.
- Commercial lease spaces in Portage (approximately 5,000 sf average) are generally larger than commercial lease spaces in comparable cities in northwest Indiana (2,500 sf average) and nationally (1,500 sf average).
- Residential lease rates at the Promenade at Founders Square (\$1,434 to \$2,407) exceed median rents in the vicinity of the downtown (\$828-942) and within a 3-mile radius of the downtown (\$784-942).
- The Promenade at Founders Square has generally maintained full occupancy even though rental rates exceed area averages.
- There is concern that owner-occupied products may not be feasible because of potential price points, as owner-occupied townhome products are currently running \$400,000 or more. Townhomes would be an attractive product in this district but would likely need to be renter-occupied.

Portage Mall –Redevelopment vs Reinvestment

Along the west edge of the planning site lies the remaining section of the Portage Mall, which once filled the majority of land west of SPC Roy Buckley Way. While the mall has shrunk in the last decade, it is still 40,000 sq ft of long-standing businesses that continue to draw traffic from across the community. A key discussion during the charrette was what should be done to revitalize the mall area. Discussions identified two main options:

- Redevelopment: The Portage Mall could be removed, and the site redeveloped. To do this, approximately 40,000 square feet of new first floor commercial space would need to be developed to give current business owners a place to relocate.
- Reinvestment: The facility could also be revitalized with investment in the façade and parking areas.

While both options are possible, acquiring the Portage Mall and constructing up to 40,000 square feet of new commercial development to support business relocation would be a costly and slow alternative. Even more, lease rates for new commercial space would be considerably higher than current lease rates. To keep existing businesses from being priced out, the city would likely need to consider lease subsidies as part of a development agreement.

In contrast, the revitalization of the Portage Mall could be completed as a public-private-partnership much quicker, and likely for a lower cost.

Guiding Principles

Over the course of the downtown charrette several economic guiding principles that support downtown redevelopment were identified. These recommendations are meant to advise community leaders during the multiple phases of redevelopment efforts and keep the vision for the area focused on the great positive impact for the community. The guiding recommendations are as follows:

Public investment comes before private development.

Public dollars leverage private development, and even small investments on the city's behalf can lead to major development down the road. Ongoing public investment is often needed in districts, even when previous investments are needed.

Competitive incentives are needed to attract the desired level of development.

While mixed use developments are common in northwest Indiana and across the state, a strong majority of these developments were public-private-partnerships that relied on a package of incentives from local government as part of the development agreement. Common incentives can be land, tax abatement, lease subsidies or public infrastructure investment.

Establish and maintain a strong "downtown" or "district" brand.

Not everyone within Portage recognizes this area as the downtown. New development should have a unique character and branding that sets it apart from other areas of the city, whether it be as a downtown, Founders Square, or something entirely new. Establishing this brand is essential to fostering a market environment that does not rely long term on local incentives to attract development.

Successful downtown/district development requires strong supporting staff and programming.

Great public spaces require strategic programming to achieve the desired level of activity on the site. Not only do they require programming, but also the organizations and staff who are able to provide support and guidance. Successful downtown districts are backed by Main Street Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and other local organizations dedicated to helping their community. Again, establishing these structures fosters a market that does not rely on long term use of local incentives to attract development.

Redevelopment of existing facilities will support lower lease rates attractive to local businesses.

While new construction brings a variety of benefits to a community, it usually comes with higher leasing rates that could price out existing businesses. Reinvestment in existing structures within the downtown can keep rates more competitive in Portage's market while allowing current businesses to stay in their original locations.

Economic Assessment

Phase 1 Potential Impacts

The downtown charrette identified multiple phases of development. In the first phase, five structures were proposed (see graphic this page). Three of these structures had previously been proposed and are in various stages of development. Together, these properties represent two to five years of development potential.

Estimates were used to approximate the costs, incomes, and tax revenues for the Downtown Master Plan's first phase of development. While these numbers are not exact, they can be used to gauge where funding gaps are likely to occur, where public investments can be leveraged for the most benefit, and as a general guide for what site should be the next focus. The four tables below break down the Phase 1 developments into size and cost, annual incomes (rents), and tax revenue. The map identifies the sites listed on each table.



Source: SmithGroup

Phase 1 – Footprint and Square Footage

Site	Building Footprint (sq ft)	Total # of Floors	Commercial Sq Ft	Office Sq Ft	Residential Sq Ft	Approx. # of Residential Units
Founders Square - Building 1	12,000	5	12,000	36,000	12,000	12
Founders Square - Building 2	7,000	5	7,000	0	28,000	28
Main Street - Building 3	10,500	3	10,500	0	21,000	21
Founders Square - Building 4	10,500	5	10,500	0	42,000	42
Founders Square - Building 5	7,000	3	7,000	14,000	-	-
TOTAL	47,000	21	47,000	50,000	103,000	103

Phase 1 – Estimated Construction Costs

Site	Commercial Cost Estimate	Office Cost Estimate	Residential Cost Estimate	Building Cost Estimate
Founders Square - Building 1	\$2,400,000	\$7,200,000	\$2,400,000	\$12,000,000
Founders Square - Building 2	\$1,400,000	\$ -	\$5,600,000	\$7,000,000
Main Street - Building 3	\$2,100,000	\$ -	\$4,200,000	\$6,300,000
Founders Square - Building 4	\$2,100,000	\$ -	\$8,400,000	\$10,500,000
Founders Square - Building 5	\$1,400,000	\$2,800,000	\$ -	\$4,200,000
TOTAL	\$9,400,000	\$10,000,000	\$20,600,000	\$40,000,000

Based on a conservative cost estimate of \$200/sq ft

Phase 1 – Tax Revenue (annual)

Topic	Assessed Value (improvements)	Property Tax (city/town)	Tax Revenue
Founders Square - Building 1	\$12,000,000	1.2012%	\$144,144
Founders Square - Building 2	\$7,000,000	1.2012%	\$84,084
Main Street - Building 3	\$6,300,000	1.2012%	\$75,675
Founders Square - Building 4	\$10,500,000	1.2012%	\$126,126
Founders Square - Building 5	\$4,200,000	1.2012%	\$50,450
TOTAL	\$40,000,000	1.2012%	\$480,480

Local Incentives to Drive Development

There are multiple avenues Portage can take to support development and reinvestment within the downtown, each with their own benefits and challenges. Some measures of support are the direct responsibility of local government, such as infrastructure investment. Other measures of support are intended to help allocate the financial risks of development or to make up the gap between the development product desired by the city compared to what the market may support. While the following examples briefly detail how they could be used in this situation, it will ultimately be up to community leaders to determine the best fit for the city and the projects at hand. Updates to city codes and ordinances may be needed to implement some of these recommendations.

Infrastructure Investment: Public investment in infrastructure is a way communities can support development, often increasing the financial feasibility of the project. These improvements can include construction of roadways, sidewalks, water infrastructure or sewer extensions. An example within the project area would be continuing Main Street west towards the grocery store and enhancing pedestrian facilities along the street that would directly benefit future commercial and residential activities.

Public Space Investment: Similar to investing in infrastructure to offset costs of development, a city can also build public spaces within developments which create new destinations and provide additional entertainment and recreation opportunities for users. The vision for Portage's downtown includes a variety of green spaces and active recreational opportunities that could be supported by the city. While these areas do not necessarily need to match the programming seen in Founders Square Park, they can provide activity spaces for nearby businesses and residents at little to no cost for developers.

Lease Guarantees: Lease guarantees are a way to allocate risk of development. For example, an all-residential building is often able to be supported at market rates. However, a mixed use building with commercial/office space adds cost to the development and may not be supported at market rates. Some communities help share the risk with the developer by guaranteeing a percentage of occupancy, or by guaranteeing a certain rent rate.

Tax Abatement: A typical economic development tool used by many communities across the state, tax abatement programs reduce or eliminate the tax property owners pay on new construction, rehabilitation, or major improvements. Tax abatements can incentivize developers and owners to invest in a property, as they won't be directly impacted by a raise in property taxes following a project's completion. While tax abatements have proven successful in many communities, it does reduce the tax revenue generated by the development.

Forgivable Loan: A forgivable loan program provides funding for building improvements. This type of program is specifically targeted to existing building owners looking to rehabilitate structures. Monies can be targeted to facades, structural, electrical, heating and cooling, signage or renovation/reuse projects. These programs are attractive to small businesses because the forgivable loan is considered equity in a bank loan. The loans are usually structured to be forgivable if project scope and schedule commitments are met. For Portage, this type of program could be part of a strategy for encouraging redevelopment of the Portage Mall and other existing properties.

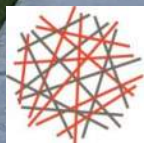
Summary of Recommendations

The following is a brief summary of key recommendations related to the proposed downtown plan.

1. The proposed plan for Phase 1 development represents an attainable goal for the next 2-5 years of development. Still, the City may not be able to secure a development agreement for the commercial/office/retail components without some level of development incentives. Preliminary data indicates that these developments could generate \$500,000 in city tax revenue annually, so there is room to consider incentives on these projects.
2. To provide the city with more flexibility in negotiating development agreements, it is recommended that the city review their current ordinances to open additional incentive options that can be considered.
3. Many stakeholders have noted that the current condition of the Portage Mall is a limiting factor in new investment. Accordingly, it is important that the facility be improved to attract new downtown development contemplated in Phase 2. It is recommended that the city work with property owners on a revitalization plan as a public-private-partnership.
4. The proposed plan allocates approximately 25% of the built space for upper story office uses. In the current "work from home" environment post-covid, the market for office space in northwest Indiana has greatly diminished. To be supported at market rates, one floor of office or retail use is viable for every three or four floors of residential use. The one market that could exist for office space in Portage would be small office suites. If more office space is desired, Portage may be able to attract this type of development without as much incentive.



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