





### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

SALT DESIGN STUDIO would like to thank everyone who participated in the City Avenue Landscape Master Plan process. The City Avenue Special Services District, the Working Group, and collective input from the public were integral to the development of the plan.

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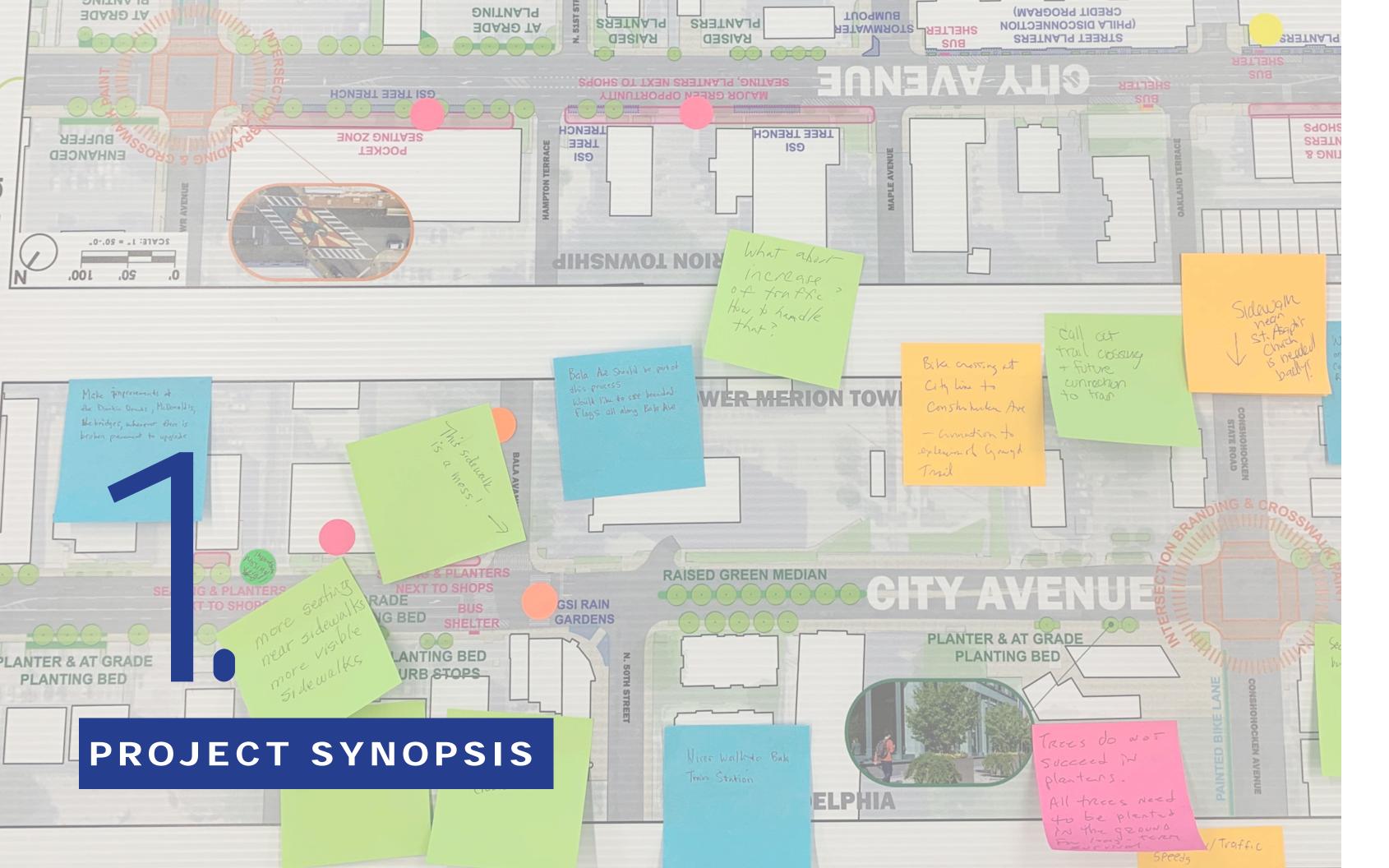
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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### INTRODUCTION

More than 340 years ago, a line was recorded as a Lenape Indian trail on a map of the Province of Pennsylvania. Today that line is the bustling corridor of City Avenue that separates the City of Philadelphia from Lower Merion Township. A highly trafficked thoroughfare, this State Route carries tens of thousands of cars daily as it spans a diversity of densely developed neighborhoods, retail shops, college campuses and food venues in two municipalities. There is enormous potential to expand pedestrian amenities, to broaden social opportunities, and to create a sense of community and connection across the Avenue. In this fast-paced, car-centric, urban environment, creating a walkable, welcoming streetscape is essential for the long-term viability of this commercial corridor.

City Avenue Special Services District (CASSD) was formed in 1999 to help with improving safety and managing development along the City Avenue corridor. The District boundaries include a selection area of City Avenue, and a portion of Bala Avenue in Lower Merion Township, from City Avenue to the intersection at Conshohocken State Road. CASSD has become an important partner to both the City of Philadelphia and Lower Merion Township in guiding changes to zoning, support for capital improvements and raising awareness about commercial, residential and professional opportunities.

CASSD commissioned SALT Design Studio (SALT) to design a Landscape Master Plan for the 2.7 mile stretch of City Avenue, from Presidential Boulevard to Wynnewood Road, included in its boundaries. The goal of the project was to develop strategic interventions that would dramatically improve the pedestrian experience along City Avenue, making it safer, more appealing and beautiful.

#### **PROCESS**

A Working Group was assembled by CASSD to represent the crosssection of stakeholders that straddle both sides of City Avenue. SALT's team met monthly with the Working Group, who provided valuable feedback on community engagement, initial ideas and planning strategies.

Our Team spent the first two months closely investigating physical conditions, interviewing stakeholders, passersby and neighbors, delving into the history and public perception of City Avenue, as well as researching relevant precedents.

The space between the curb and the property lines is the critical zone where pedestrians navigate their way for shopping, dining, or a stint of fresh air. As our team examined prior studies and news articles, and connected with community members, it became clear that discussions of how to make City Ave more pedestrian-friendly had been on the table for decades. Our team's objective was to integrate public priorities for streetscape improvements within an environmentally sustainable framework to enliven the streetscape and make it more hospitable.

Early in the planning process, SALT's team developed a Design Toolkit that established the following four categories for improvements.

#### **Pedestrian Enhancements & Branding**

[sidewalk improvements, public art, painted crosswalks]

#### **Streetscape Amenities**

[benches, bus shelters, lighting, trash/recycling bins, bike racks]

#### **Streetscape Greening**

[street trees, raised planters, depaying & green buffers]

#### Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)

[bioswales, connected, subsurface tree trenches, rain gardens]

The Toolkit was presented to the public, with images and diagrams demonstrating how different Toolkit elements would change the streetscape when implemented. Through engagement activities, our team solicited input on public priorities, conceptual ideas and furnishing aesthetics. With the desire for a more walkable corridor, increased areas for seating, trees and vegetative buffers, the need for landscape elements to serve a dual purpose in also managing stormwater became an important goal of the Plan.

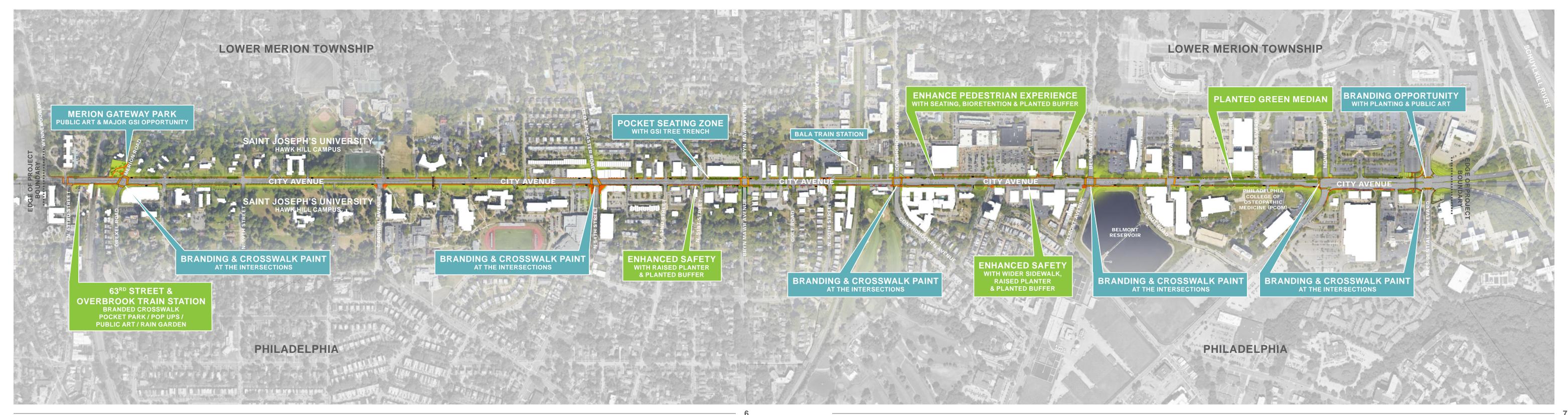
Feedback from the public and stakeholders shared throughout the project consistently expressed support for increasing green space and adding street trees, while also introducing color, public art, and much needed pedestrian amenities. The collective vision that emerged was to create a pedestrian-friendly and attractive streetscape rooted in functionality and sustainability. The end result is a Landscape Master Plan that demonstrates sensitivity to context, focuses on pedestrian needs, and promotes high-performance improvements in harmony with City Avenue's future development.

"The goal is nothing less than the reengineering of an auto-dependent
commercial strip into a walkable, urbane
street of apartments, offices, and shops.
While there are thousands of strips like City
Avenue riddling the American landscape,
surprisingly few have been reincarnated as
true city boulevards. It's not clear that such
an ambitious transformation is possible. But
if it is, City Avenue is a perfect candidate."

- Inga Saffron, July 15, 2011



### LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN











### RECOMMENDATIONS & DESIGN TOOLKIT

The City Avenue Landscape Master Plan (CALM) Recommendations are divided into the Design Toolkit categories. Subsequent Opinions of Probable Construction Cost follow these same categories for ease of bundling improvements that may require similar permitting, and for facilitating submission of grant applications. The Recommendations comprise a holistic approach to designing and managing the City Ave streetscape to create a distinctive identity within a sustainable framework. Below we have outlined the overarching strategy and Key Recommendations in each category.

#### PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS & BRANDING

This category targets pedestrian safety and, through visual branding, building a positive perception of City Ave with residents, shoppers and workers. The CALM identifies locations for:

- Widening sidewalks north of Monument Rd and around the Bala Cynywd Shopping Center to improve walkability.
- Adding interpretive signage with historical or ecological stories in key retail locations to attract and educate visitors.
- Integrating public art into social spaces to inspire, promote engagement, and activate the streetscape.

Our team identified the following nine intersections for special crosswalk pavement murals that will improve pedestrian safety, create a colorful and unique way to brand City Ave, and help establish a rhythm and cohesion to the District.

- City Ave & 63rd Street
- City Ave & Drexel Rd./Merion Rd.
- City Ave & N 54th/ Old Lancaster Rd.
- City Ave & Bryn Mawr Ave.
- City Ave & Bala Avenue
- City Ave & Conshohocken State Rd.
- City Ave & Belmont Ave.
- City Ave & King's Grant Drive
- City Ave & Monument Rd.

#### STREETSCAPE AMENITIES

The full suite of pedestrian streetscape amenities are proposed throughout the corridor to promote walkability, foster social interaction, and boost economic activity. Where feasible, site furnishings may be colored or wrapped with the City Ave logo to visually accentuate

the corridor and reinforce the City Ave brand. This category includes benches, bus shelters, street and bollard lighting (LED and solar), trash and recycling bins, and bike racks. Our team recommends site furnishings with a reduced carbon footprint demonstrated through sustainable manufacturing practices.

#### STREETSCAPE GREENING

The strategy for streetscape greening focused on carbon sequestration and mitigation of urban heat island through shade of paved surfaces, and use of native trees, shrubs and perennials to maximize habitat for vital pollinators and support a diversity of wildlife. City Ave encompasses a patchwork of subsurface and above grade utilities. Though challenging, numerous locations along the corridor were identified for adding street trees and utilizing raised planters with flowering, understory trees. In select locations, areas are proposed for depaving and multi-layered green buffers. Areas of focus in this category included:

- Gas stations with continuous curb cuts along City Ave.
- Existing lawn verges for conversion into robust green buffers with significant environmental benefits.

#### **GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE (GSI)**

GSI was strategically proposed at high and low points along the corridor where it could capture, treat and infiltrate stormwater runoff from as much area as efficiently as possible. The broader GSI scheme aims to increase vegetative cover and reduce pavement in an effort to minimize stormwater runoff into the municipal sewer systems. Many of the GSI improvements along the corridor, such as subsurface tree trenches and planted buffers, are identified in coordination with streetscape greening. Inactive or underutilized parking areas adjacent to City Avenue, such as the parking by the Vitamin Shoppe at the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center, are re-envisioned as larger bio-retention systems which can provide a multitude of ecological benefits. Additionally, the CALM accommodates both new inlets and replacements, as well as other stormwater infrastructure necessary to disconnect and capture runoff from the City Ave right-of-way.

The CALM locates two significant large GSI opportunities at adjacent public spaces in Merion Gateway Park and at Overbrook Train Station, where flood risk is higher due to proximity to the nearby stream and more land is available. The design and implementation of these two GSI efforts will require a high degree of collaboration and partnership

with neighboring residential communities and the municipal agencies responsible for maintenance of these properties, including Merion Civic Association, Friends of Merion Botanical Park, SEPTA, Philadelphia Water Department, and Overbrook Farms Club.

#### **PRIORITIES FOR 2024**

Based on available funding and the need for CASSD to implement select improvements by end of 2024, our team recommends a focus on Branding and Streetscape Amenities. Streetscape Greening and GSI projects will require a lengthy design, documentation and permitting process with various municipal agencies. As such, we suggest that CASSD select discrete site furnishings, branded components and commissioning of public art to create an immediate visual impact on the corridor

#### **Recommended Improvements for 2024**

- Bus Shelters, with a priority on Philadelphia side
- Public Art (Window Treatments & Facade Improvements, Sculpture & Murals)
- Vertical Pole Banner & Branded Holiday Decorations
- Expanded Amenities to advance a Clean & Safe Streetscape

With broad support from the public for this Landscape Master Plan, the next step for CASSD is acquisition of funding for design and implementation of future Improvements. It is important to note that as new streetscape improvements are constructed, there will be increased demands on CASSD for landscape management and maintenance. Teaching people who work, live and dine in the District about the ecological benefits and economic value of expanded greening and stormwater managements will be instrumental to ensuring public support and promoting community stewardship of the streetscape.

# PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS & BRANDING



### STREETSCAPE AMENITIES



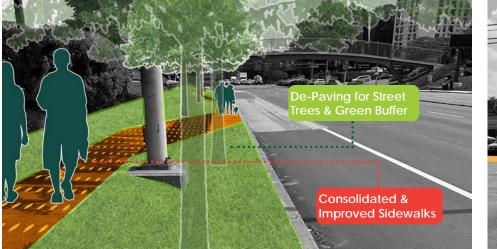
#### STREETSCAPE GREENING



### GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE











LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN





#### **DESIGN TOOLKIT IN ACTION**





# OPINION OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COSTS

#### **METHODS**

SALT and our subconsultant E&LP prepared Opinions of Probable Construction Costs in accordance with the categories established in the Design Toolkit to facilitate acquisition of funding through local, County State and Federal sources. Quantities used for cost calculations are approximate. Pricing information was based on construction data for projects completed in 2023.

Opinions of Probable Construction Cost in this Report are made on the basis of our team's professional judgment and experience. SALT and our subconsultants have no control over the cost or availability of labor, equipment or materials, over market conditions or the Contractor's method of pricing. SALT and our subconsultants make no warranty, express or implied, that actual bids or the negotiated cost of the Work will not vary from our opinion of probable construction cost. The Opinions of Probable Construction Cost in this Report are provided as a tool to guide planning and fundraising efforts, and shall not be considered a substitute for the work of an independent professional cost estimator.

Section	Description	Amount
Jection	Description .	Amount
01	Streetscape Amenities	\$2,704,300.00
	10% Design Contingency	\$270,430.00
	10% Overhead & Profit	\$270,430.00
	3% Escalation	\$81,129.00
	STREETSCAPE AMENITIES SUBTOTAL	\$3,326,289.00
	10% Construction Contingency	\$332,628.90
	Soft Costs (Site Surveying, Professional Design Fees)	\$498,943.35
	STREETSCAPE AMENITIES TOTAL:	\$4,157,861.25
02	Greening	\$1,046,720.00
	10% Design Contingency	\$104,672.00
	10% Overhead & Profit	\$104,672.00
	3% Escalation	\$31,401.60
	GREENING SUBTOTAL	\$1,287,465.60
	10% Construction Contingency	\$128,746.56
	Soft Costs (Site Surveying, Professional Design Fees)	\$193,119.84
	GREENING TOTAL:	\$1,609,332.00
02	Cycon Stowerston Infrastructure (CSI)	
03	Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)  10% Design Contingency	\$542,067.00
	10% Design Contingency 10% Overhead & Profit	\$54,206.70
	3% Escalation	\$54,206.70
	GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE SUBTOTAL	\$16,262.01 <b>\$666,742.41</b>
		\$66,674.24
	10% Construction Contingency	·
	Soft Costs (Site Surveying, Professional Design Fees)	\$100,011.36
	GREEN STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE TOTAL:	\$833,428.01
04	Pedestrian Enhancements	\$1,994,685.00
	10% Design Contingency	\$199,468.50
	=======================================	T = , 3 · - 3 · - 3
	10% Overhead & Profit	\$199.468.50
	10% Overhead & Profit 3% Escalation	\$199,468.50 \$59.840.55
	10% Overhead & Profit  3% Escalation  PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS SUBTOTAL	\$59,840.55
	3% Escalation PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS SUBTOTAL	\$59,840.55 <b>\$2,453,462.55</b>
	3% Escalation  PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS SUBTOTAL  10% Construction Contingency	\$59,840.55 <b>\$2,453,462.55</b> \$245,346.26
	3% Escalation PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS SUBTOTAL	\$59,840.55 <b>\$2,453,462.55</b> \$245,346.26 \$368,019.38
	3% Escalation  PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS SUBTOTAL  10% Construction Contingency  Soft Costs (Site Surveying, Professional Design Fees)	\$59,840.55 <b>\$2,453,462.55</b> \$245,346.26





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### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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NOTE: FOR ALL OTHER DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS & FEEDBACK, PLEASE SEE APPENDIX B

### SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



SIDEWALK INTERCEPT INTERVIEWS



**ONLINE OPINION** SURVEY



**STAKEHOLDER** INTERVIEWS



**PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE** 



**WORKING GROUP** INTERACTIVE SESSION



**FOCUSED** WORKSHOPS

Community engagement was a primary focus for the team from the project start in May and continuing through October. A variety of inperson and virtual engagement activities were conducted by SALT and Connect the Dots (CtD). The insight gathered from community members, business owners, civic leaders, stakeholders and CALM Working Group members was critical to informing priorities and design opportunities for

#### SIDEWALK INTERCEPT & STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

CtD interacted with 32 individuals through 30 touch points during the first two months of the project. CtD spoke to people new to the area, as well as long-time residents or workers of businesses along City Ave. Individuals' comments related to the pedestrian experience spanned the range of good, neutral, and poor.

Overall, the majority of the input did not contain specific suggestions of landscape additions, but instead provided important context and insight into the vision and desires of people who live, work, dine and shop in the District. Generally, interviewees and survey respondents felt a poor sense of community in the District and found the experience of City Ave to be disjointed and not unified visually or physically. Many found walking on City Ave to be unpleasant due to the noise, pollution, and reckless driving of cars navigating the street. The sense many had towards City Ave is that it is akin to a highway or thoroughfare somewhere one passes through rather than lingers. Most respondents mentioned wanting a landscape which would calm traffic through additional greening or an additional buffer between cars and pedestrians. Interviewees were generally frustrated with the quality of retail offerings and social destinations. Given the lack of an appealing destination, many felt that the landscape was insufficient to make them want to walk City Ave. Respondents noted that more shade, seating, and trash cans were important for pedestrian comfort, and that landscape could potentially unify the District and attract businesses that could become a significant draw.

Aggregated interview comments were found to reflect common themes repeated throughout the interviews, which was confirmed through the opinion survey as well. Raw data from community engagement activities and the opinion survey is anonymous and included in the Appendices.

#### **ONLINE OPINION SURVEY**

SALT developed an Online survey (using Survey Monkey) that was distributed by the CASSD and Working Group members through their mailing lists. The survey was open to the public from June 16, 2023, until July 3, 2023. During this period, a total of 262 responses were

#### **WORKING GROUP INTERACTIVE SESSION**

Midway through the planning process, SALT conducted a virtual interactive session with the CALM Working Group to tease out concerns, understand priorities and solicit comments on conceptual ideas. Using the interactive online platform Miro, SALT presented precedent studies of other streetscape design of similar scales to City Ave and guided a discussion about potential strategies for improving the pedestrian experience along the corridor.

#### **PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE**

A public Open House was conducted on September 15, 2023 to solicit input on the Draft Landscape Master Plan. SALT developed a series of activities and exercises with multiple stations to engage attendees and encourage participation. A total of 121 people attended the Open House and an abundance of feedback and comments were received.

#### **FOCUSED WORKSHOPS**

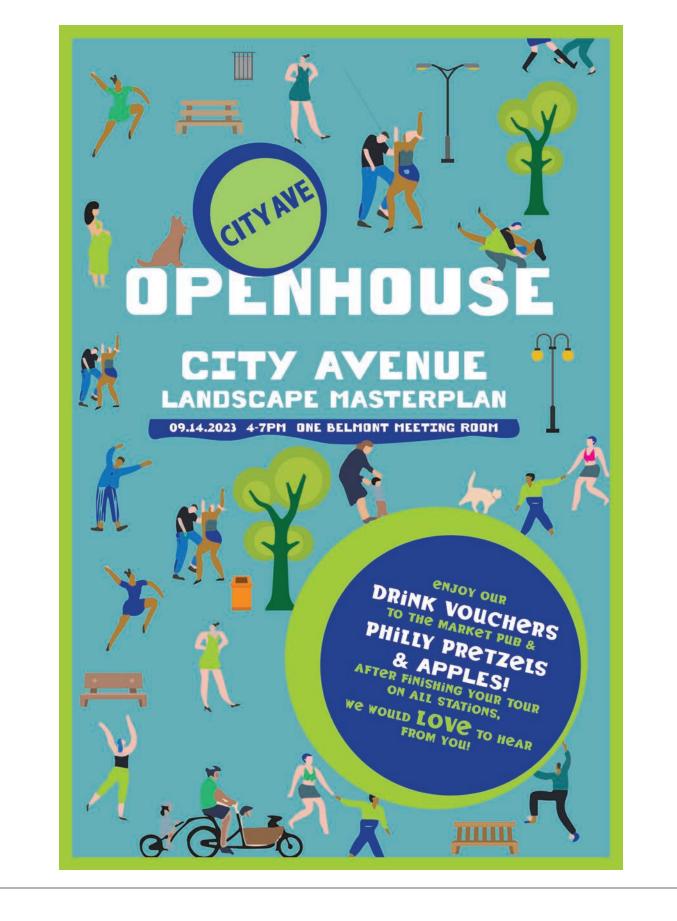
Though turnout for the Open House was quite high, our team wanted to ensure there was sufficient representation from both municipalities on the draft Landscape Master Plan. Two additional workshop-style meetings were conducted to capture a broader selection of residents in Philadelphia. SALT facilitated one in-person workshop on October 4, 2023 at the Wynnefield Public Library and a virtual meeting was held later that evening. Together, these two events captured an additional 35-40 participants.

"Right now, City Avenue divides rather than unites the Lower Merion and Philadelphia sides. By turning City Avenue into more of a destination and a pedestrian-friendly area with shops, cafes, small businesses, areas for recreation, and safe pedestrian and bike crossings, the two sides could be united rather than isolated from one another."

- Anonymous Online Survey Respondent, 2023

"More activation, more traffic calming, more activities will mean more eyes on the street and more eyes mean more safety."

- Anonymous Stakeholder Interview, 2023











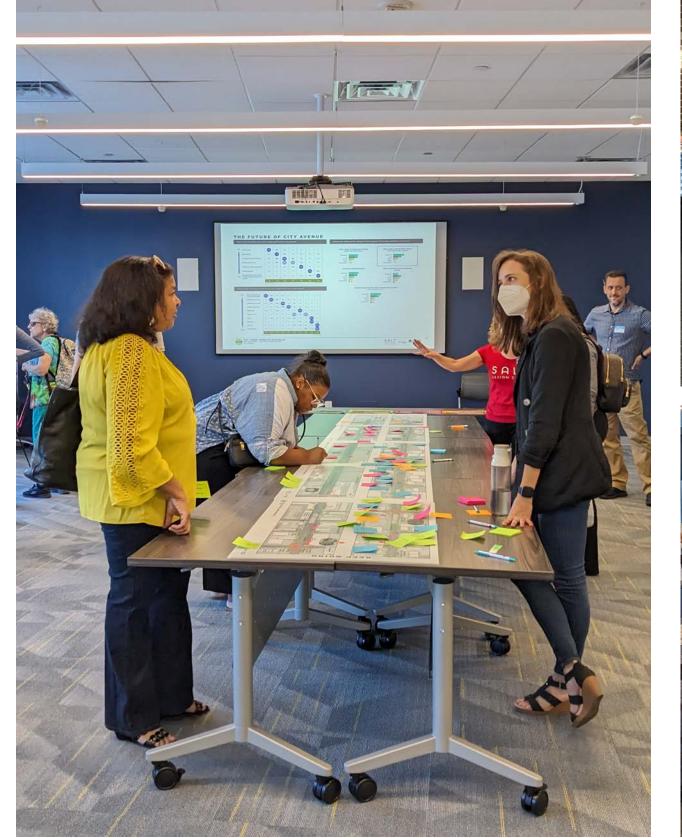
























### SITE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

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### SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS

#### **BACKGROUND & METHODS**

The City Avenue Special Services District spans two municipalities — the City of Philadelphia and Lower Merion Township — that traverse six different neighborhoods across significant topographic change. Remnants of various periods in Philadelphia's regional history can be found along City Avenue, making the streetscape an eclectic mix of architecture, materials and vegetation, sidewalk conditions, lighting and furnishings.

CASSD provided survey data for portions of City Avenue. Our team supplemented that information with field verification of visible surface conditions in the Right-Of-Way (ROW) for the entire 2.7 mile length of the District. In addition, our team interviewed a variety of business owners, stakeholders and passersby, and researched site history and relevant precedents for transforming and improving commercial boulevards. An opinion survey was distributed through an online platform to gauge public perception about safety and walkability, and to request input and priorities on desired amenities and types of improvements.

#### **KEY CONSTRAINTS**

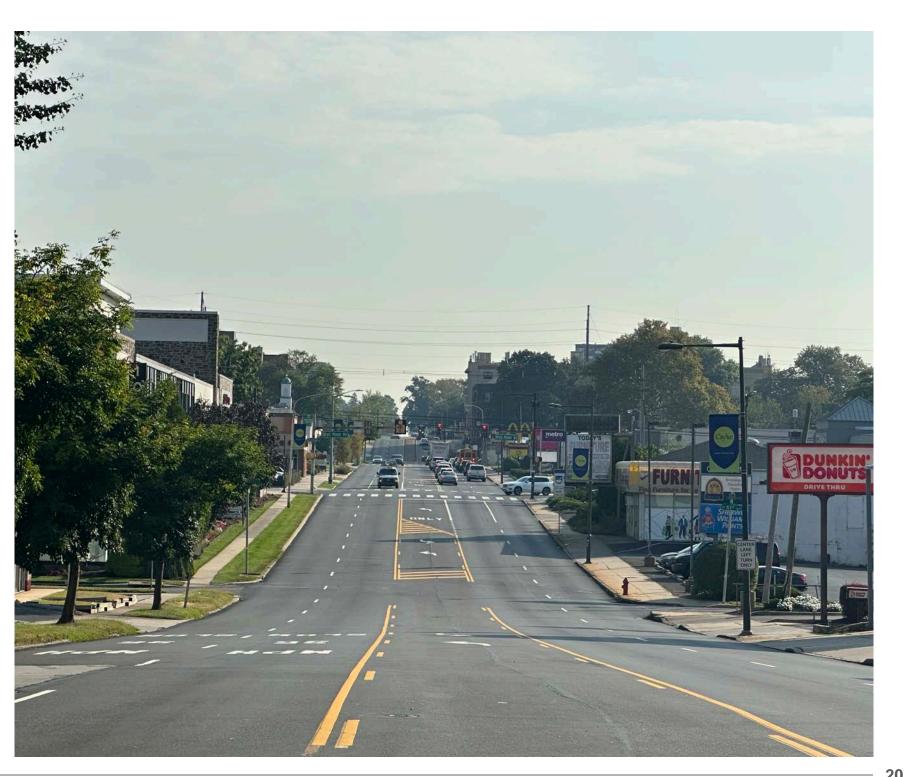
To a driver, City Ave may appear green and walkable, with CASSD light pole banners peppering the route. Yet, the experience for the pedestrian is often uncomfortable, noisy and unsafe due to constraints noted below.

- Numerous utilities are located in the ROW.
- Pedestrian sidewalk experience is loud due to high traffic volume. In warmer months, it is very hot due to lack of sufficient shade in most of the commercial areas.
- There is not an adequate buffer (green or otherwise) between people and fastmoving cars, making the sidewalk feel unprotected and unpleasant.
- Excessive curb cuts in the commercial areas and numerous intersections wider than 50' make it challenging for pedestrians to safely walk to destinations and cross the street during the light change.
- There are very few places to sit, socialize and relax on or near the streetscape.
- Overall, City Ave is lacking sufficient visual or physical cohesion to make it recognizable as a "District."

#### **KEY OPPORTUNITIES**

During Inventory & Analysis, our team identified four major types of Opportunities.

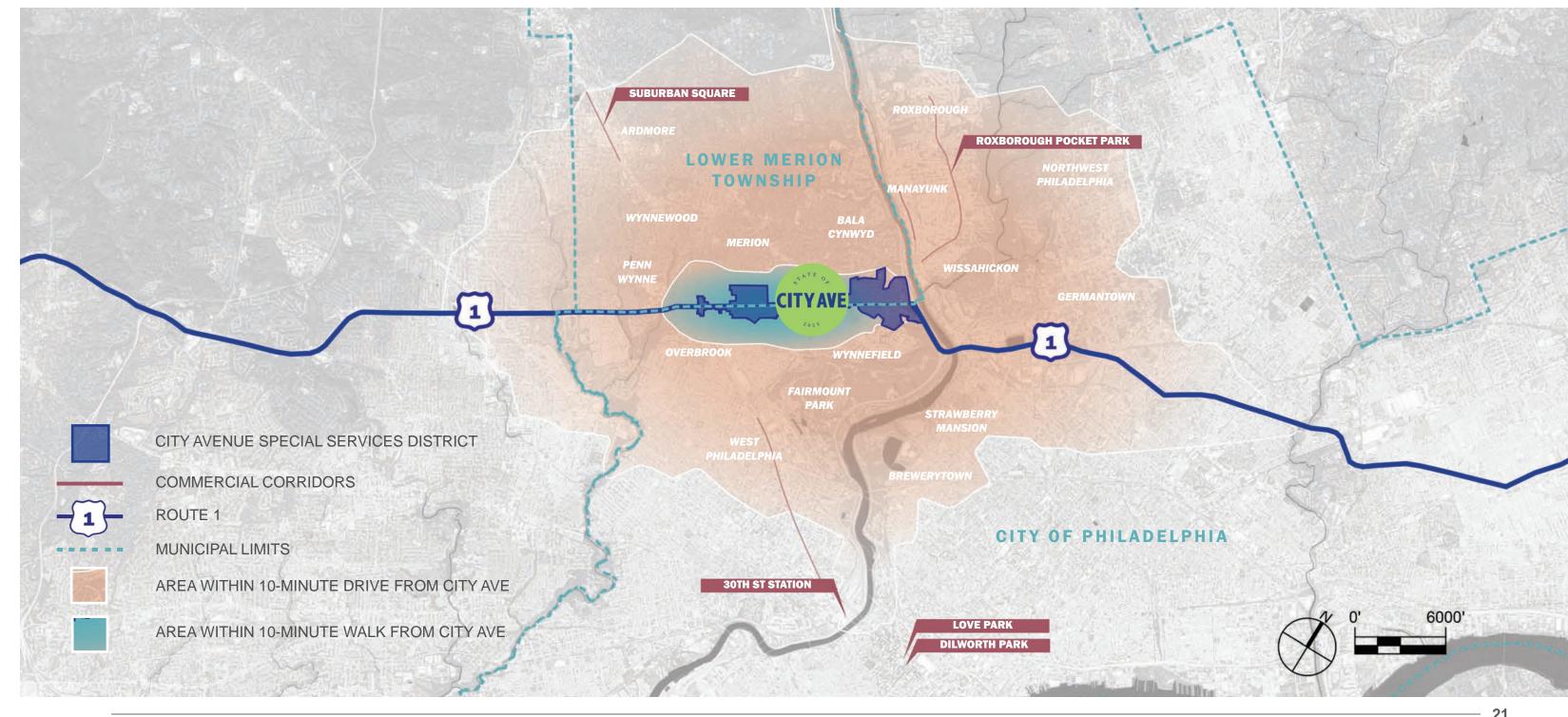
- Open Space: leverage open space for socializing & gatherings
- Branding: increase awareness and promote the CASSD brand
- Arts: enhance pedestrian safety at intersections through art
- Neighborhood: form stronger connections with surrounding communities







## CONTEXT MAP REVITALIZING THE GOLDEN MILE ALONG U.S. ROUTE 1

















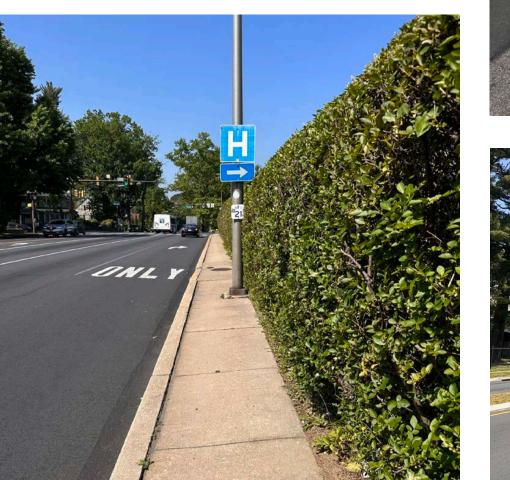
















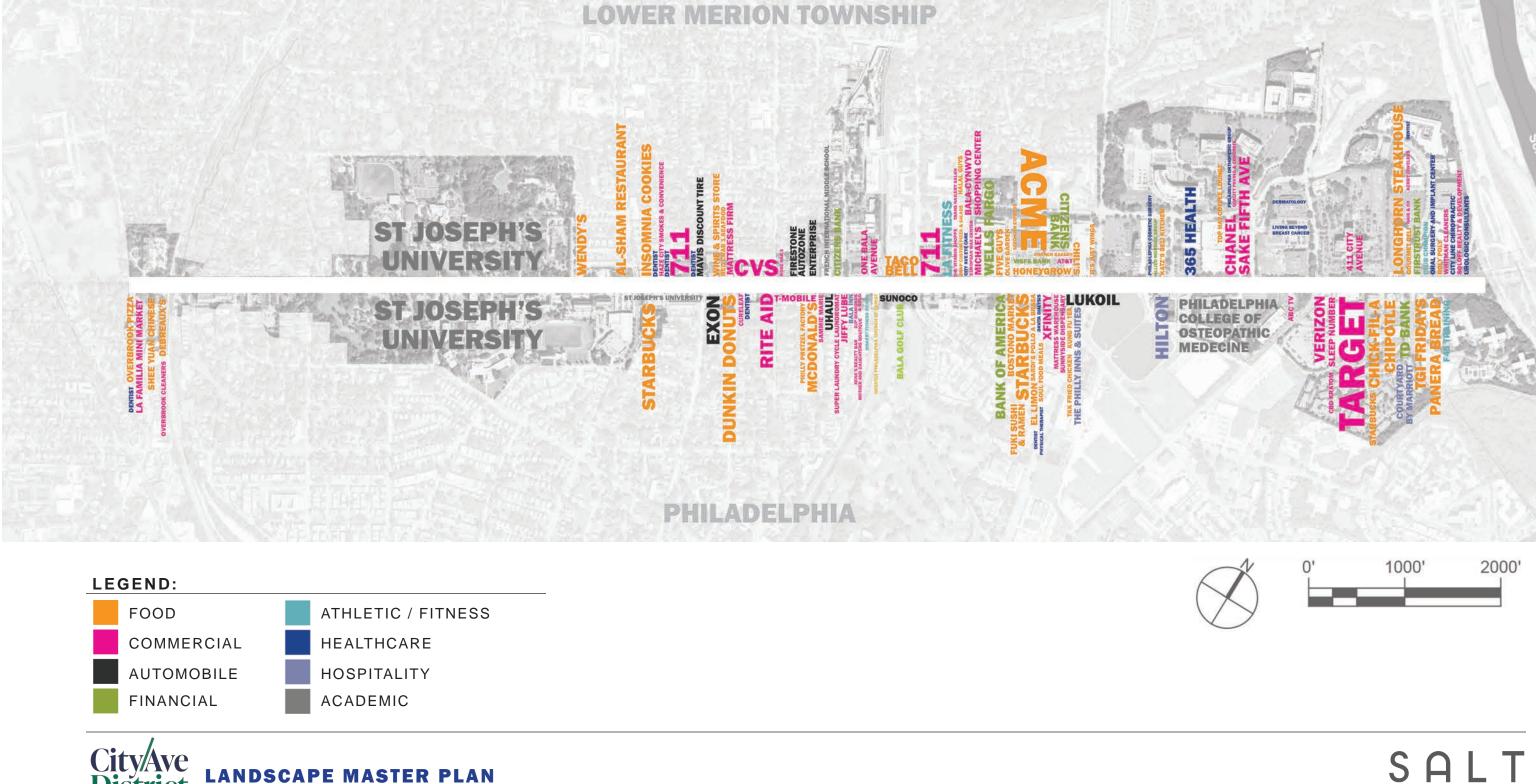




### NEIGHBORHOODS & COMMUNITY AMENITIES

### INSTITUTIONS & COMMERCIAL AMENITIES







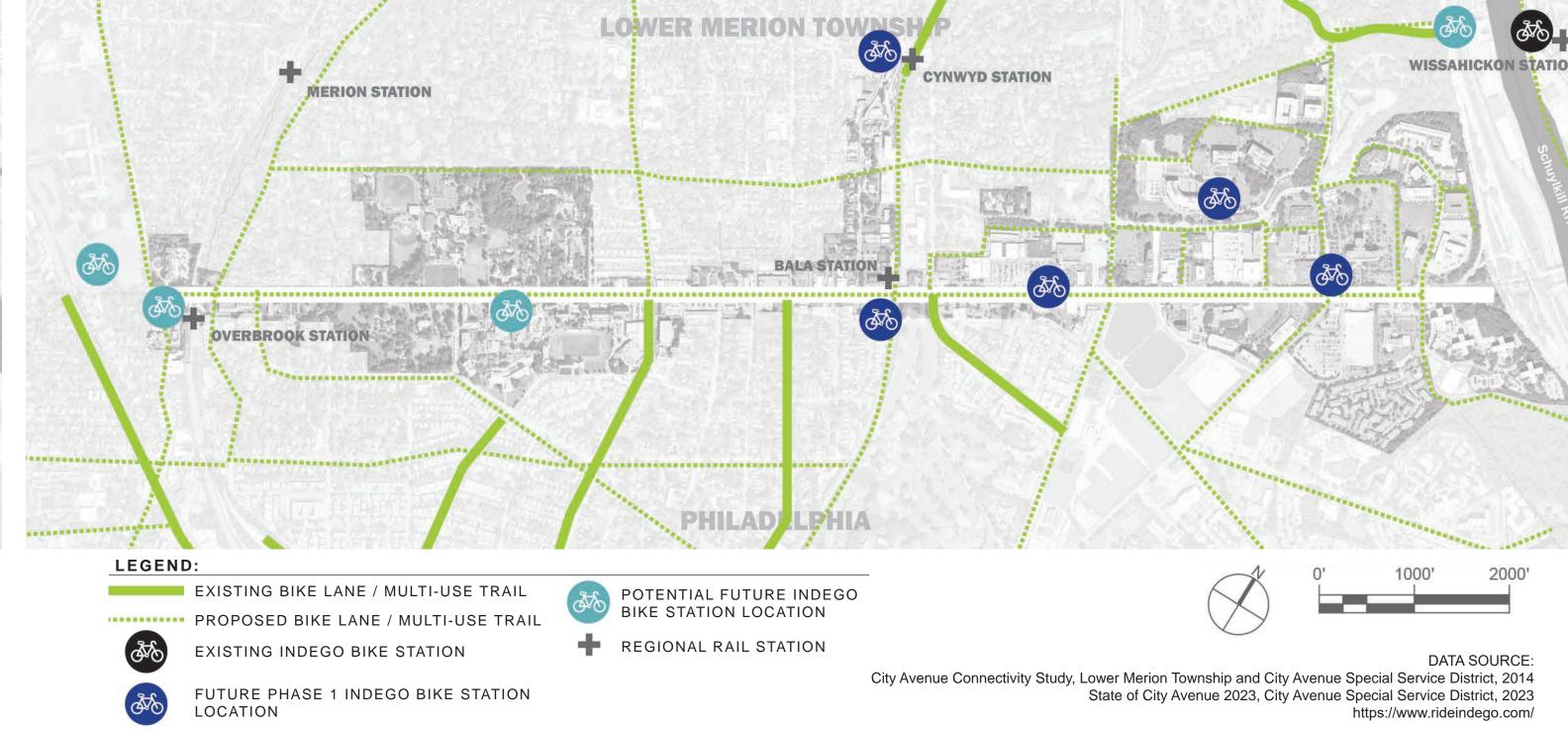
### DISTRICT ZONING & MAJOR INTERSECTIONS

# PHILADELPHIA LAND USE LEGEND: LOW-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL / ACADEMIC INSTITUTION RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL / COMMERCIAL PARKS / OPEN SPACE

DATA SOURCE: Lower Merion Township Zoning Map, 2020 City of Philadelphia Zoning Base Districts Map, 2023



### WALKING & CYCLING CONNECTIONS





SALT

MEDIUM-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL /

RESIDENTIAL MIXED-USE

MIXED-USED

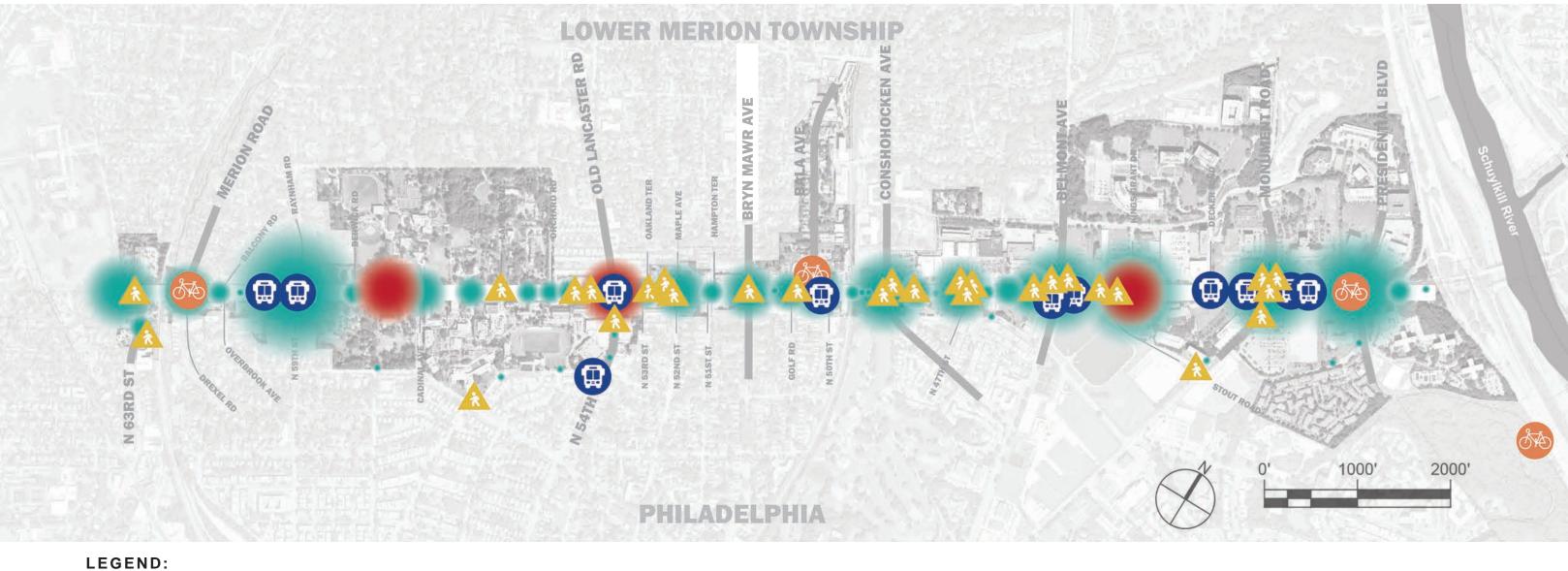
### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

## LOWER MERION TOWN **CYNWYD STATION MERION STATION** OVERBROOK STATION LEGEND: REGIONAL RAIL LINE X BUS STOP WITH SHADE REGIONAL RAIL STATION BUS STOP WITHOUT SHELTER OR SHADE **BUS ROUTE** BUS STOP OUTSIDE OF PROJECT AREA BUS STOP WITH SHELTER

### LACK OF TRANSIT SAFETY

#### "TRAFFIC IS A BIG REASON I DON'T LIKE WALKING OUTSIDE ON CITY AVENUE...YOU TAKE YOUR LIFE IN YOUR HANDS TO CROSS AT A CROSSWALK."

- Anonymous Respondent, Public Online Survey



TRAFFIC COLLISION RELATED FATALITIES



A TRAFFIC COLLISION INVOLVING A PEDESTRIAN

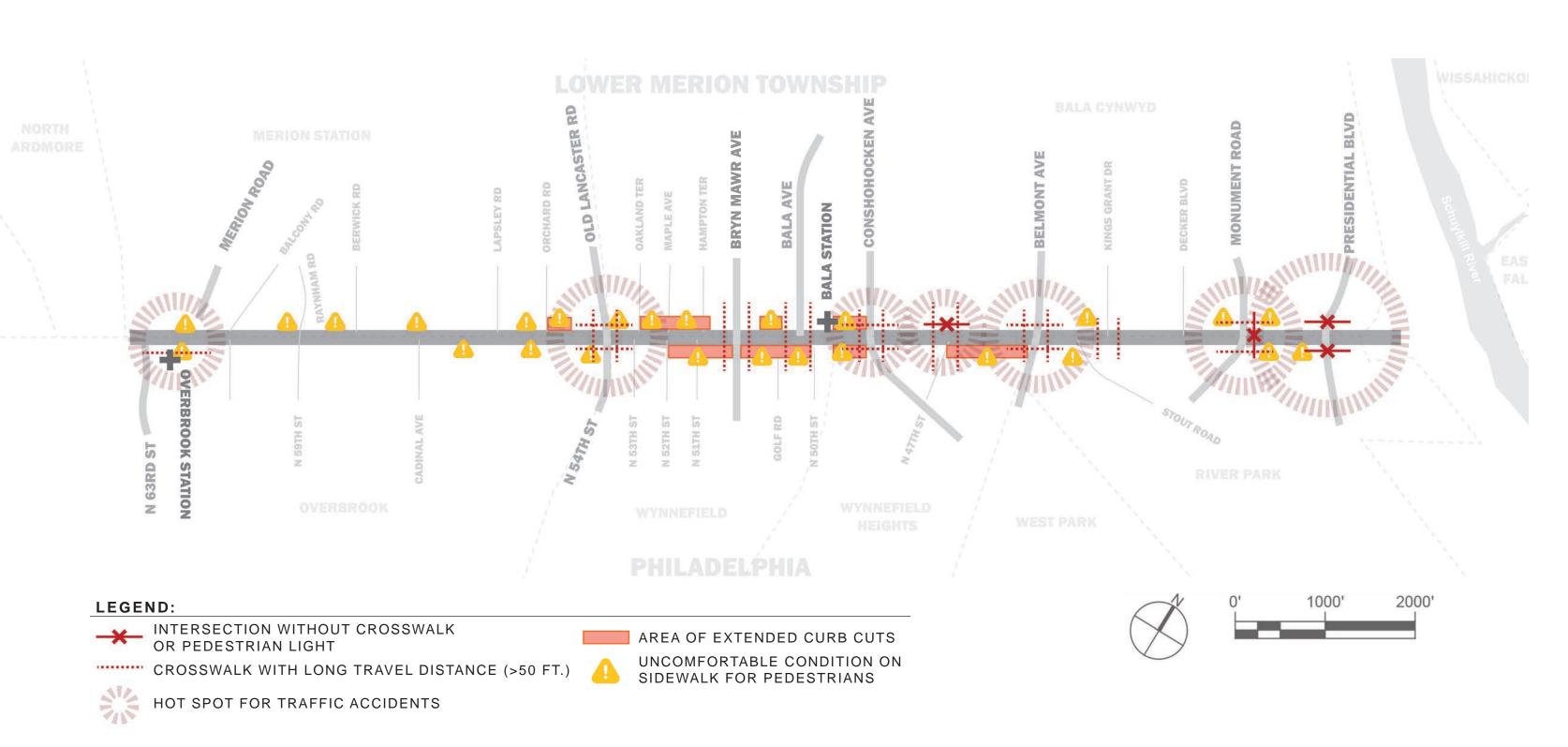
TRAFFIC COLLISION INVOLVING A CYCLIST

DATA SOURCE:
Crash Data 2016-2020 (Vision Zero Subset)
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)





### SITE CONSTRAINTS













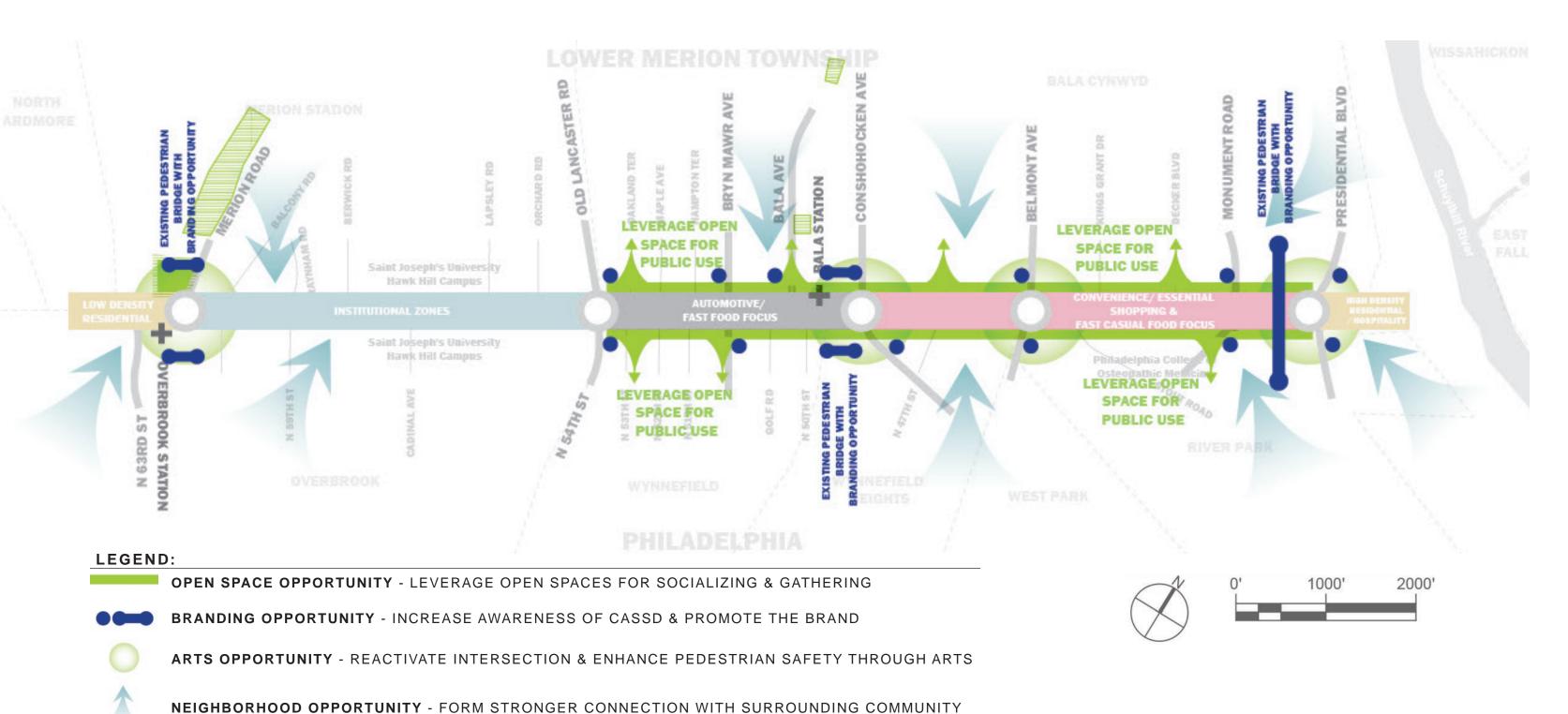








### SITE OPPORTUNITIES: PHYSICAL & VISUAL











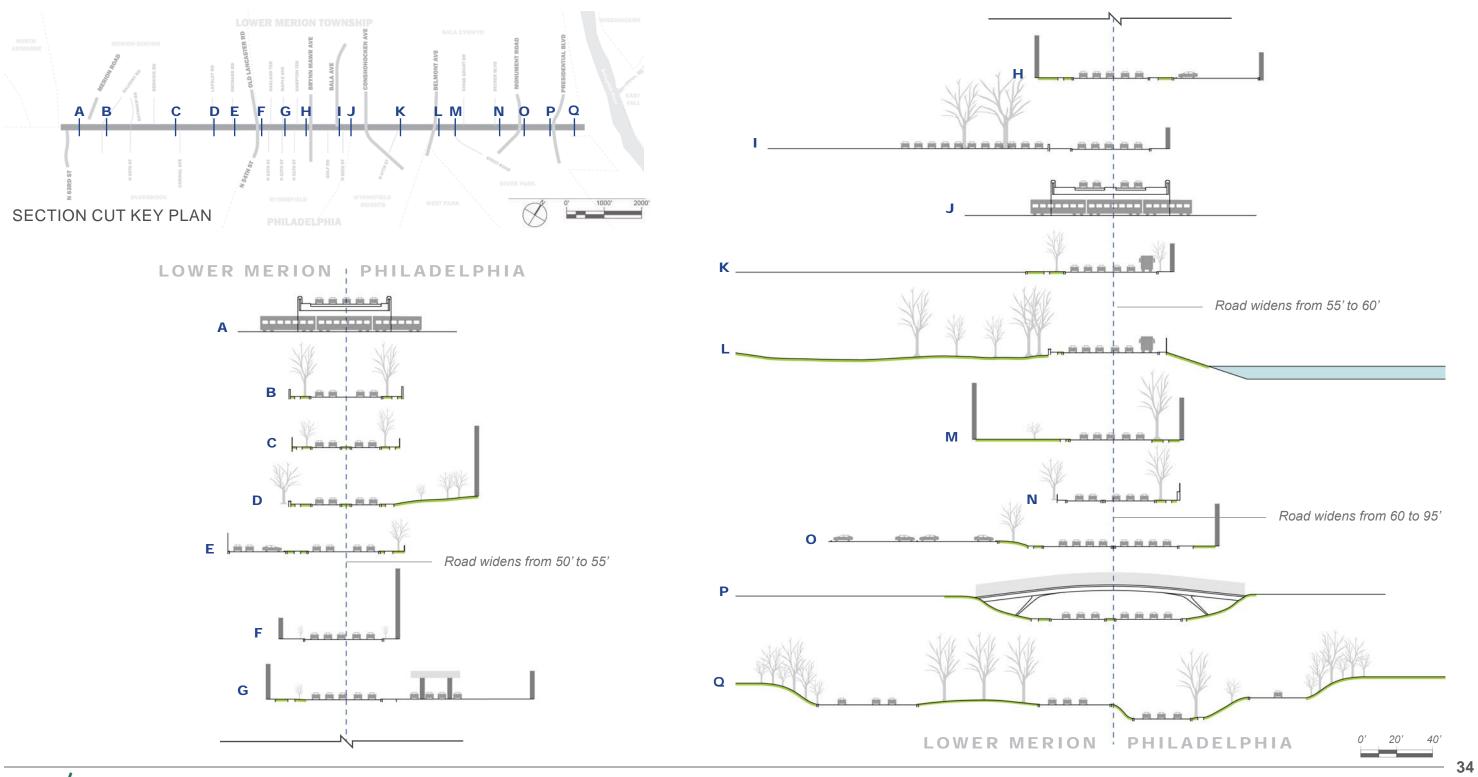








### **EXISTING SITE SECTIONS**



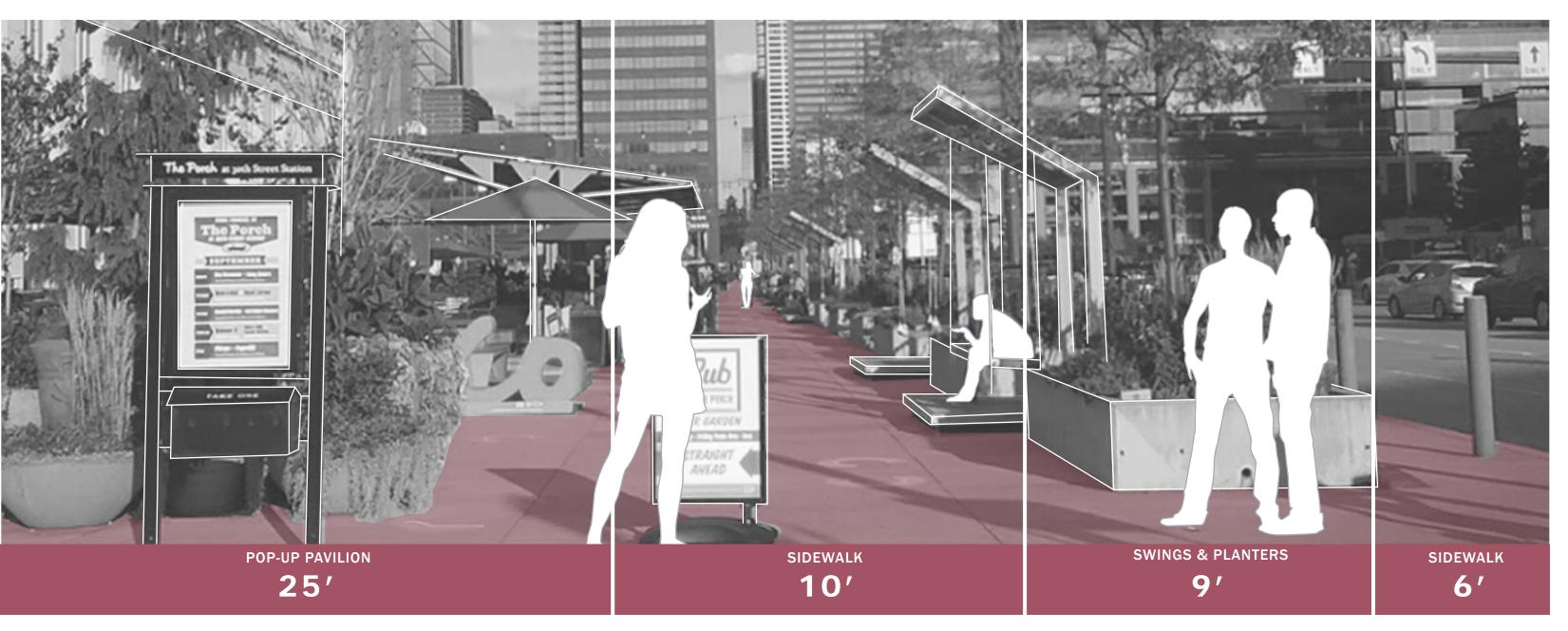


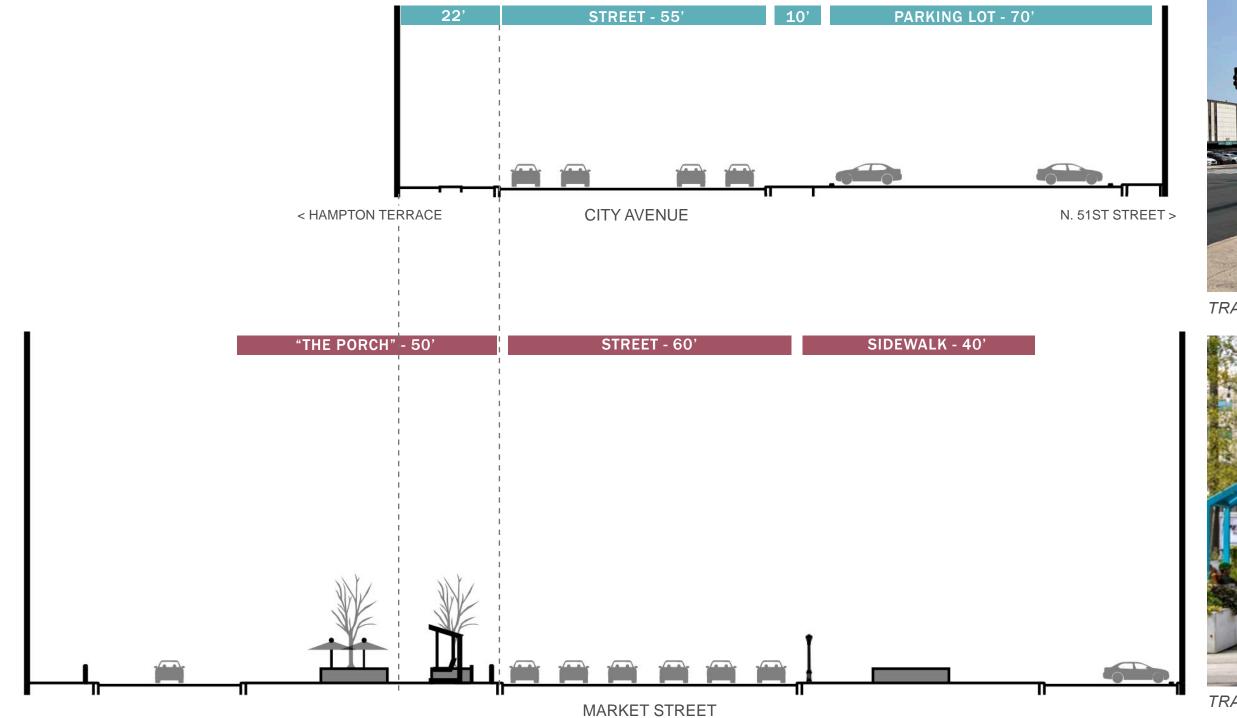
SECTION G AT MAPLE AVE. & CITY AVE, VIEW NORTHEAST

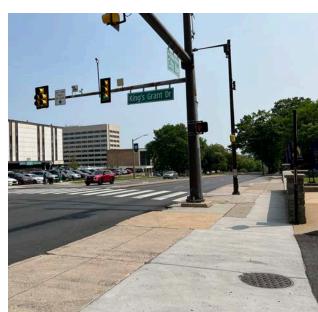




### PRECEDENT SECTION STUDY: 30TH STREET STATION







TRANSPORTATION / COMMERCE



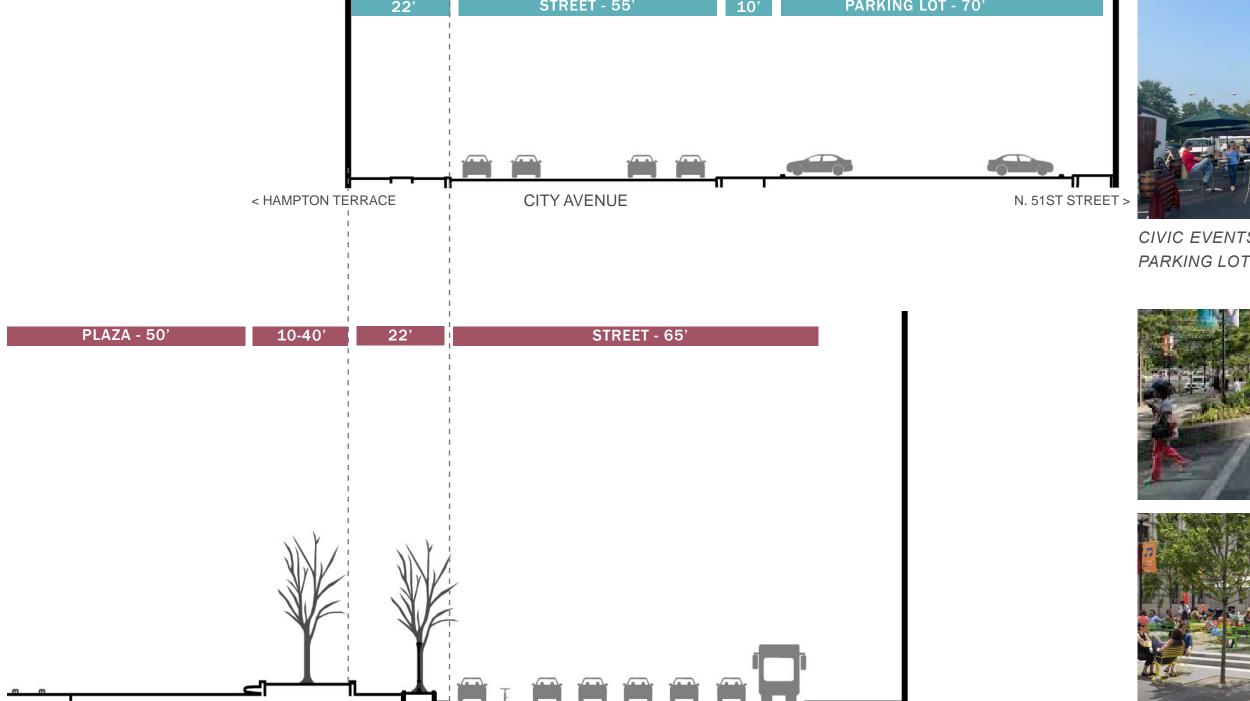
TRANSPORTATION HUB





### PRECEDENT SECTION STUDY: DILWORTH PARK







CIVIC EVENTS (FARMERS MARKET IN PARKING LOT OF ONE BELMONT)



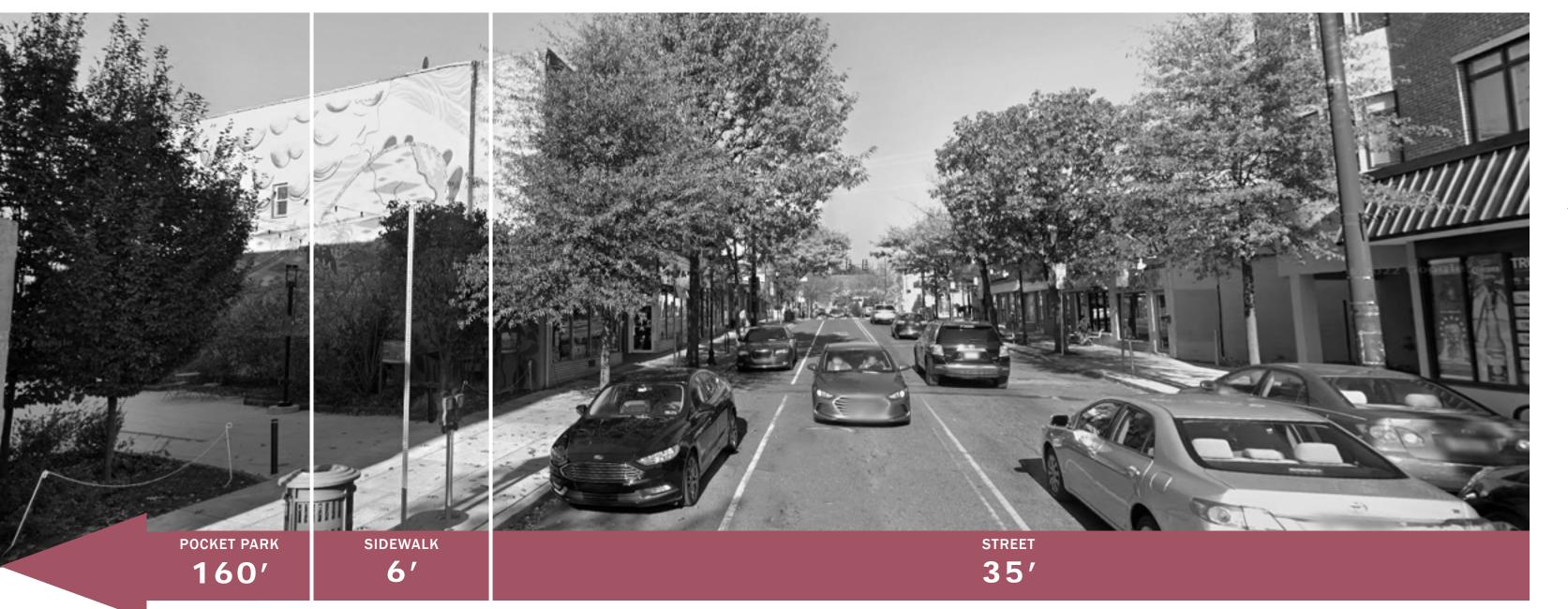


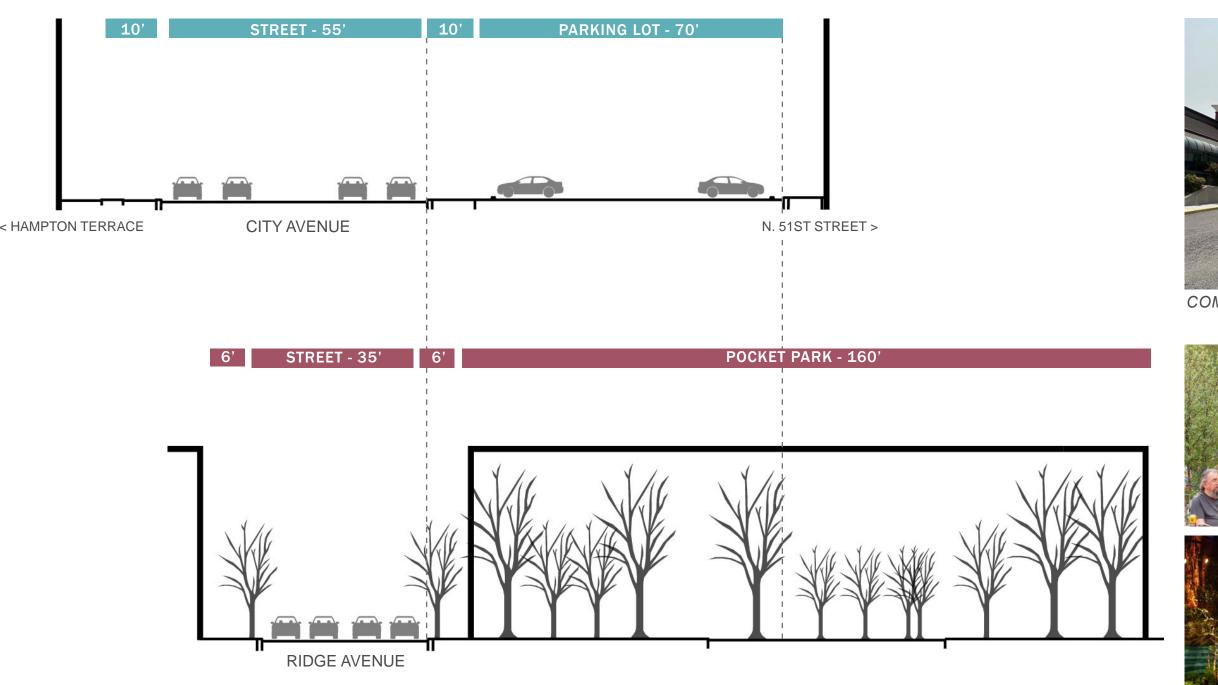
CIVIC SPACE / LARGE EVENTS





### PRECEDENT SECTION STUDY: ROXBOROUGH POCKET PARK













SMALL GATHERINGS / COMMERCIAL









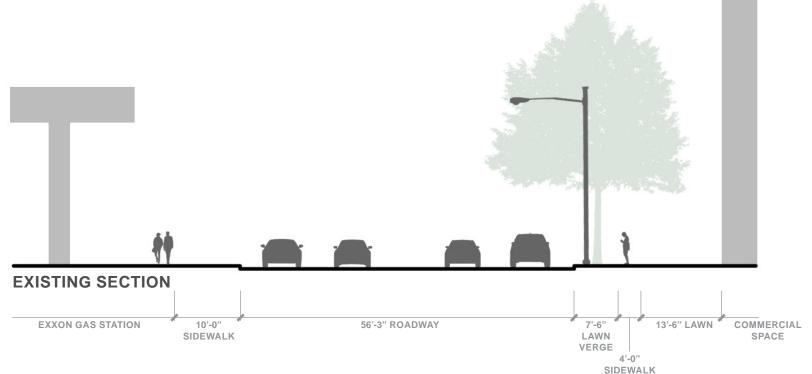
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### SECTION: N. 52<sup>ND</sup> ST, VIEW SOUTHWEST















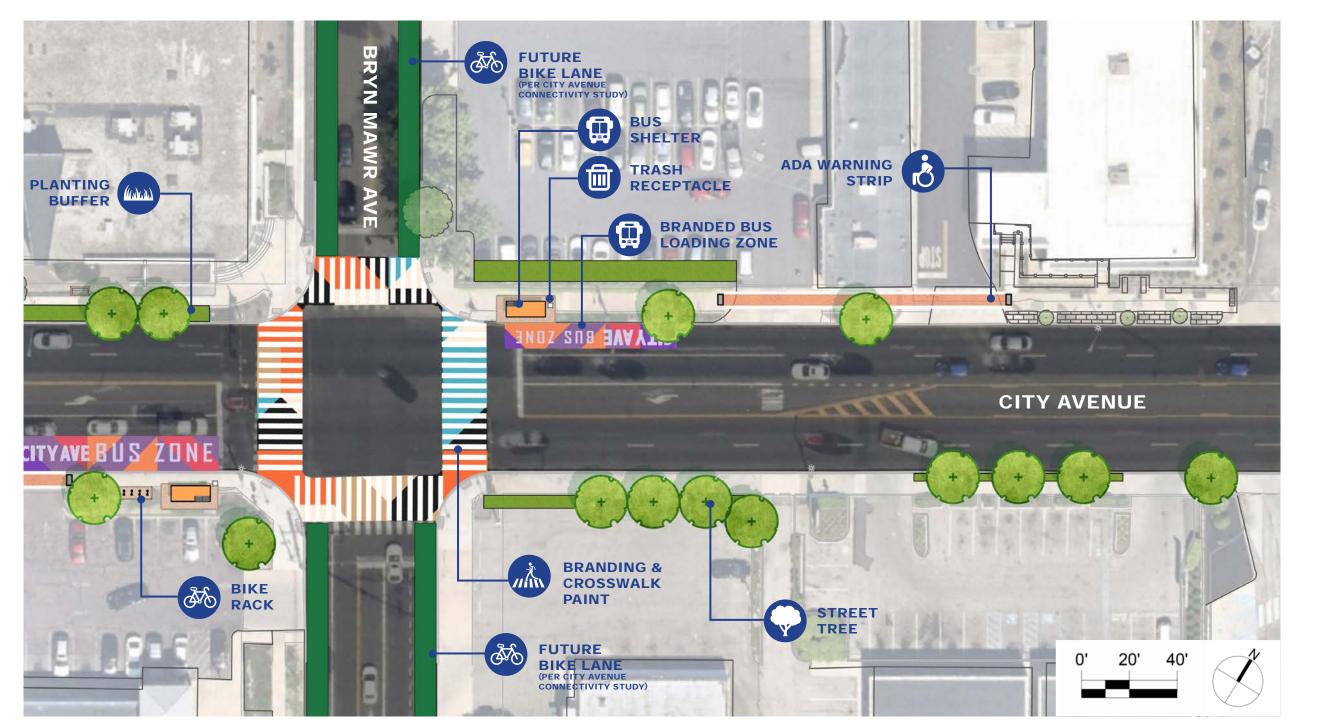






### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: BRYN MAWR AVE

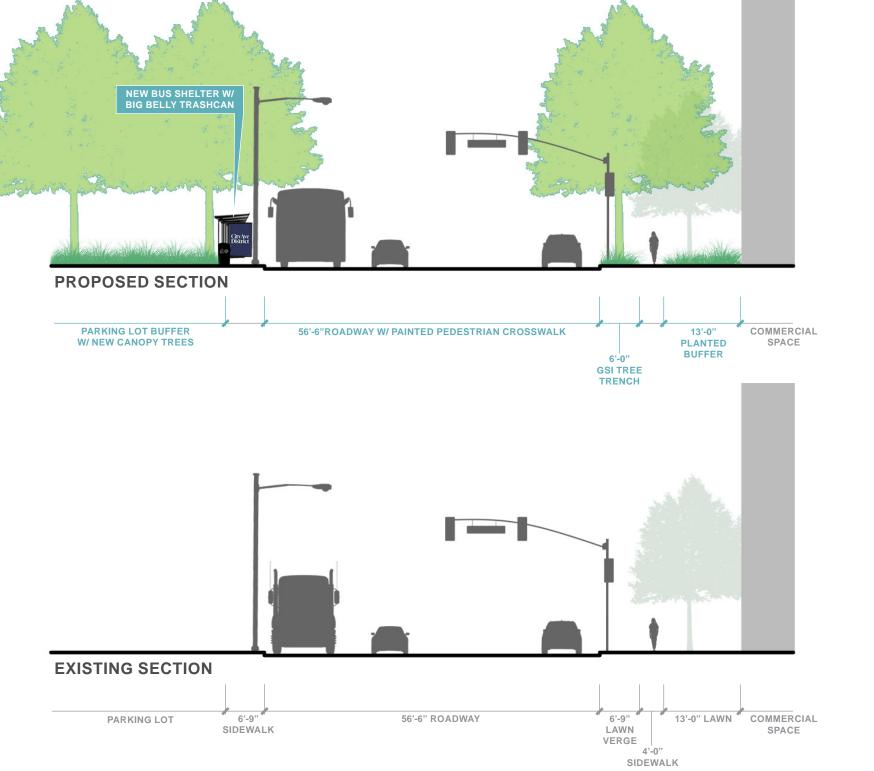








# SECTION: BRYN MAWR AVE, VIEW SOUTHWEST





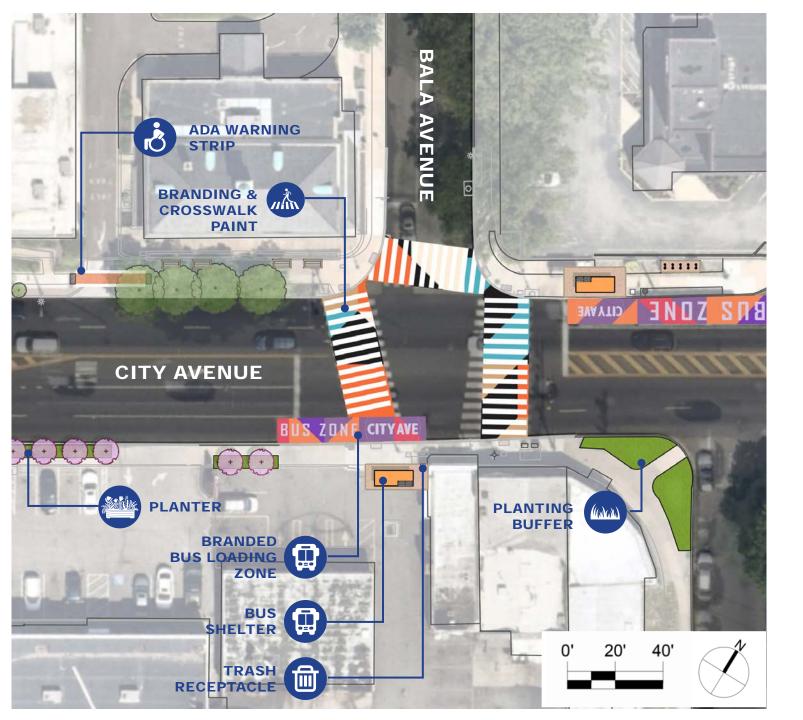






### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: BALA AVE















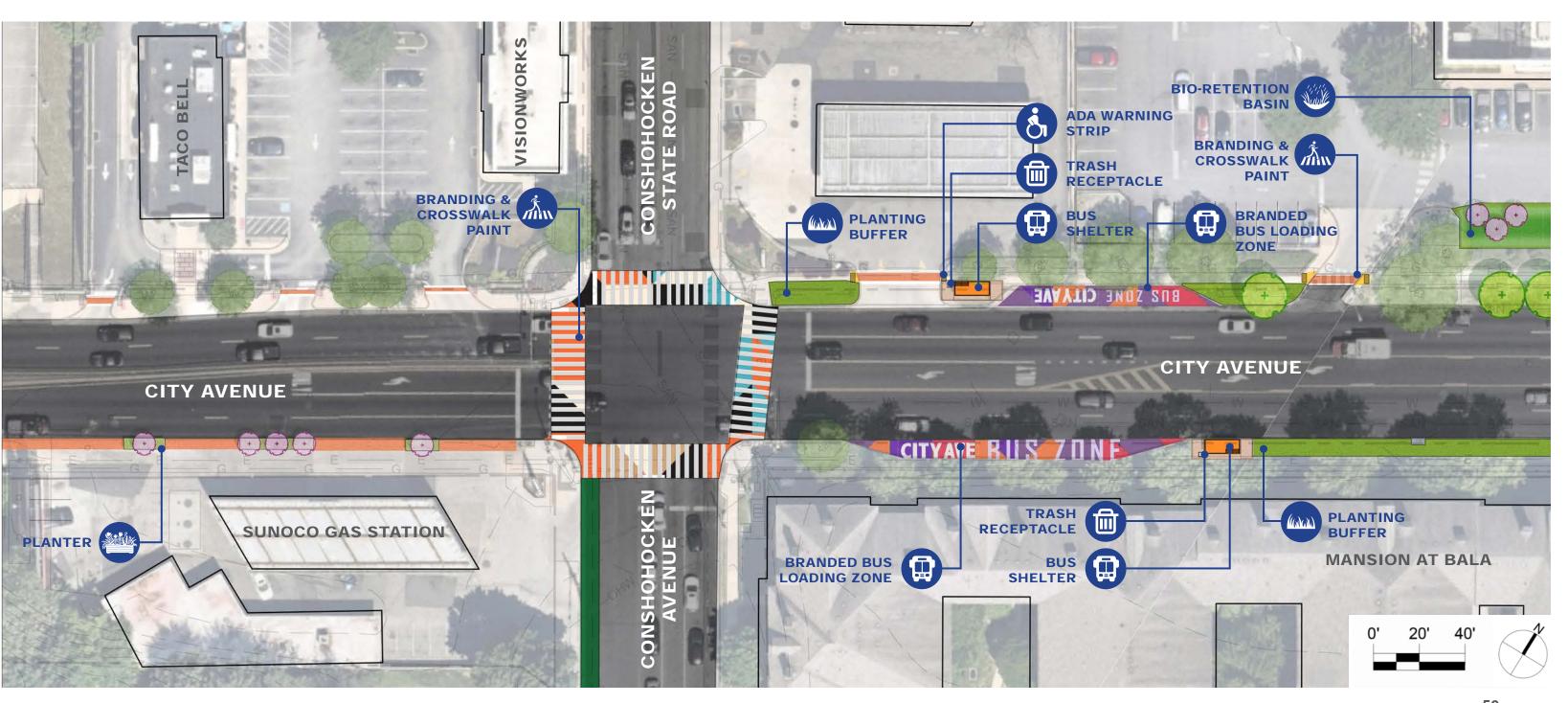


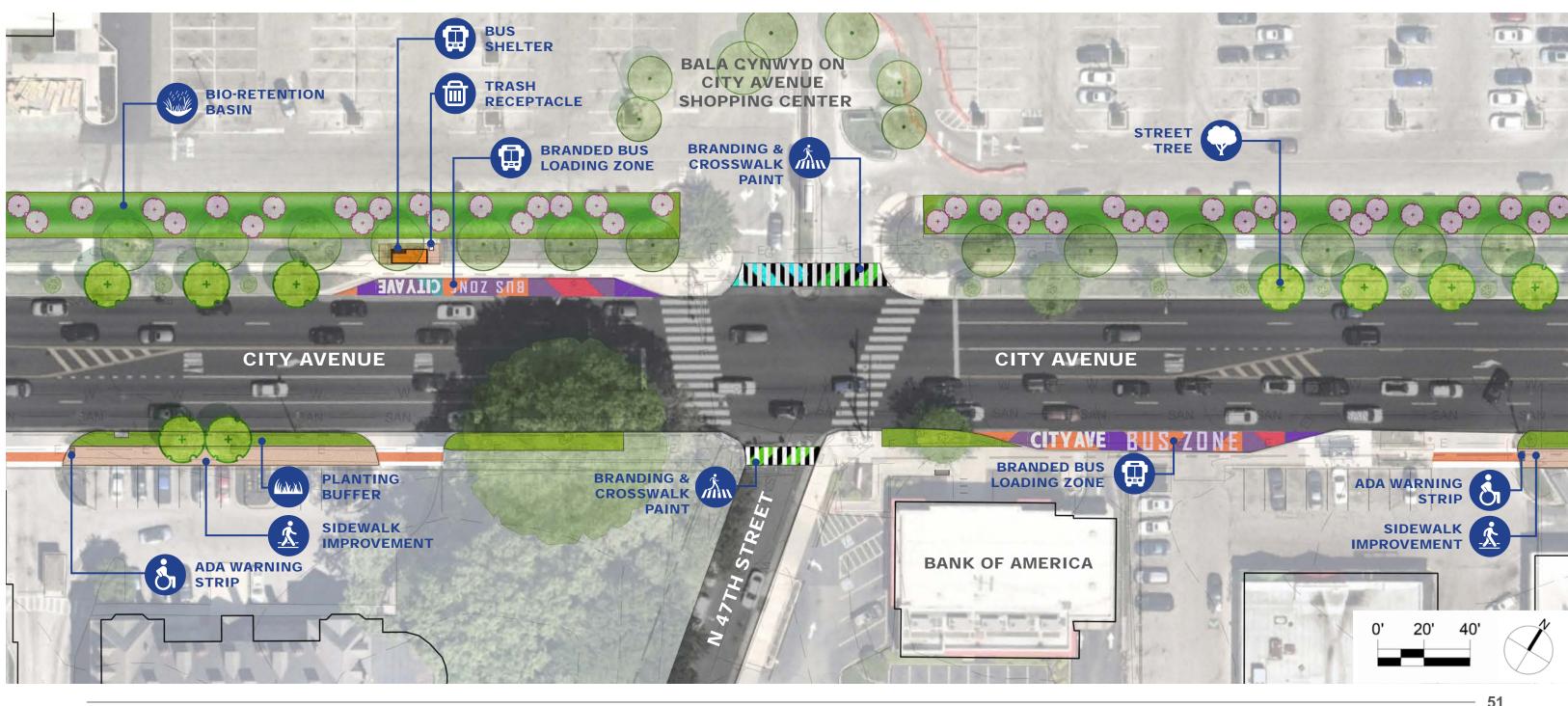
### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: CONSHOHOCKEN STATE ROAD



### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: N. 47<sup>TH</sup> ST





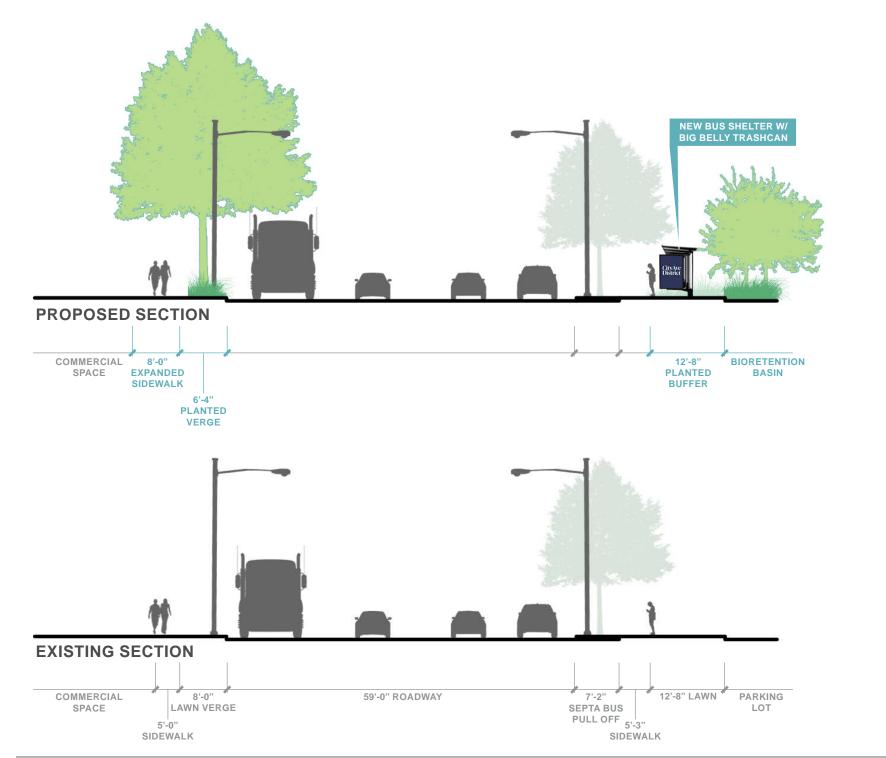


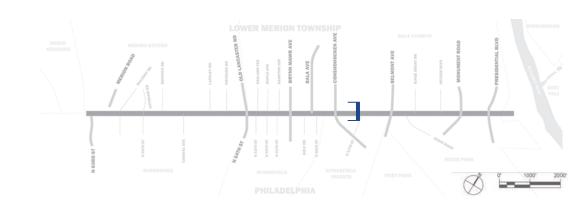






### SECTION: N. 47<sup>TH</sup> ST, VIEW SOUTHWEST











# PERSPECTIVE: BALA CYNWYD SHOPPING CENTER, VIEW NORTHEAST



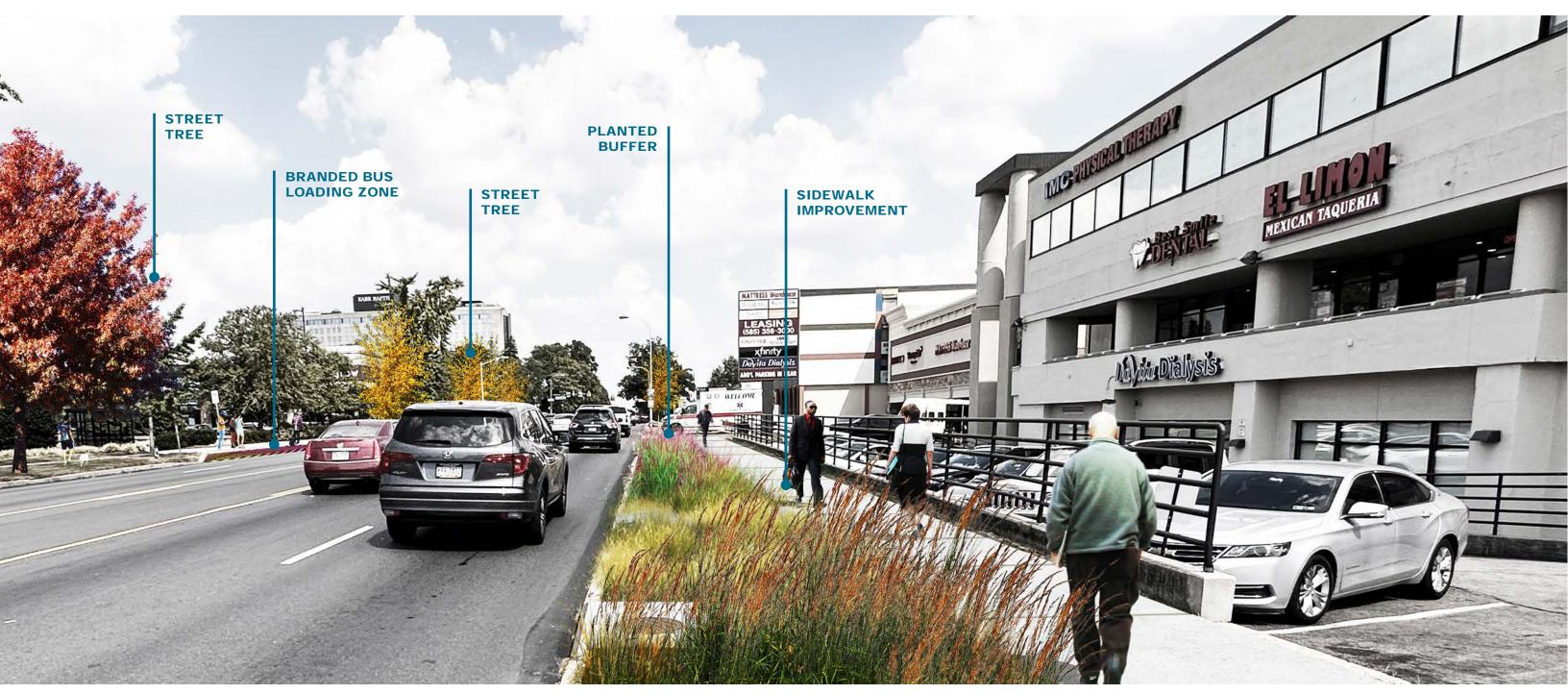






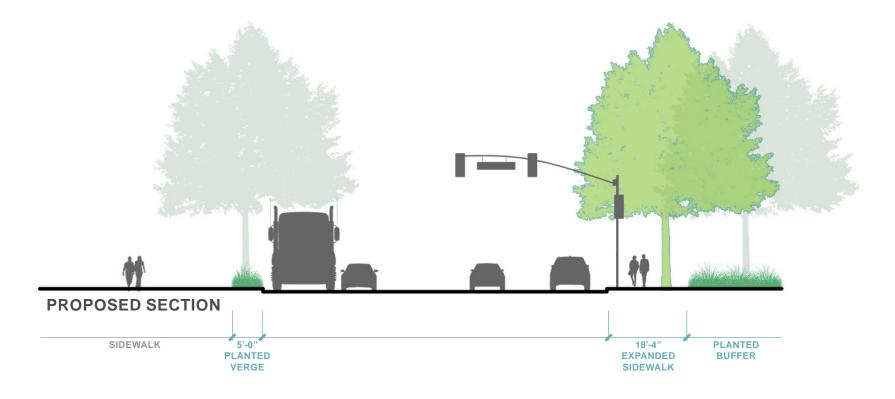
# PERSPECTIVE: BELMONT SHOPPING AREA, VIEW NORTHEAST



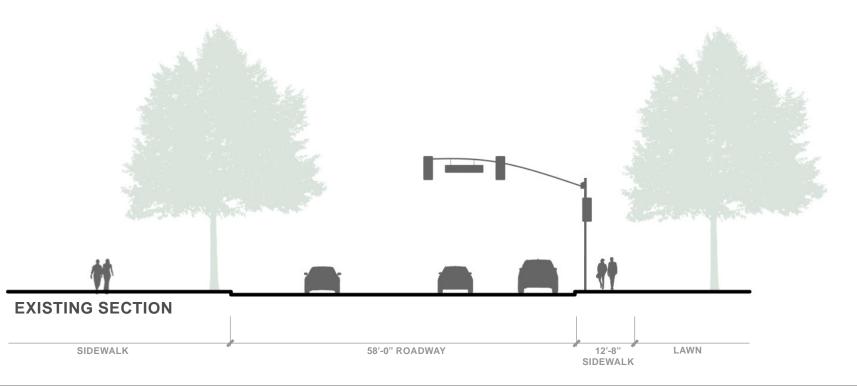










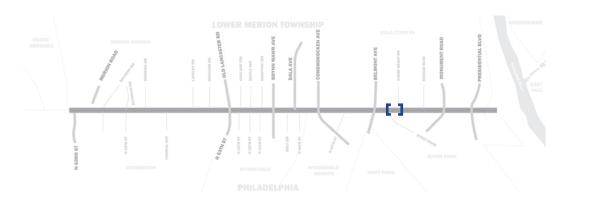






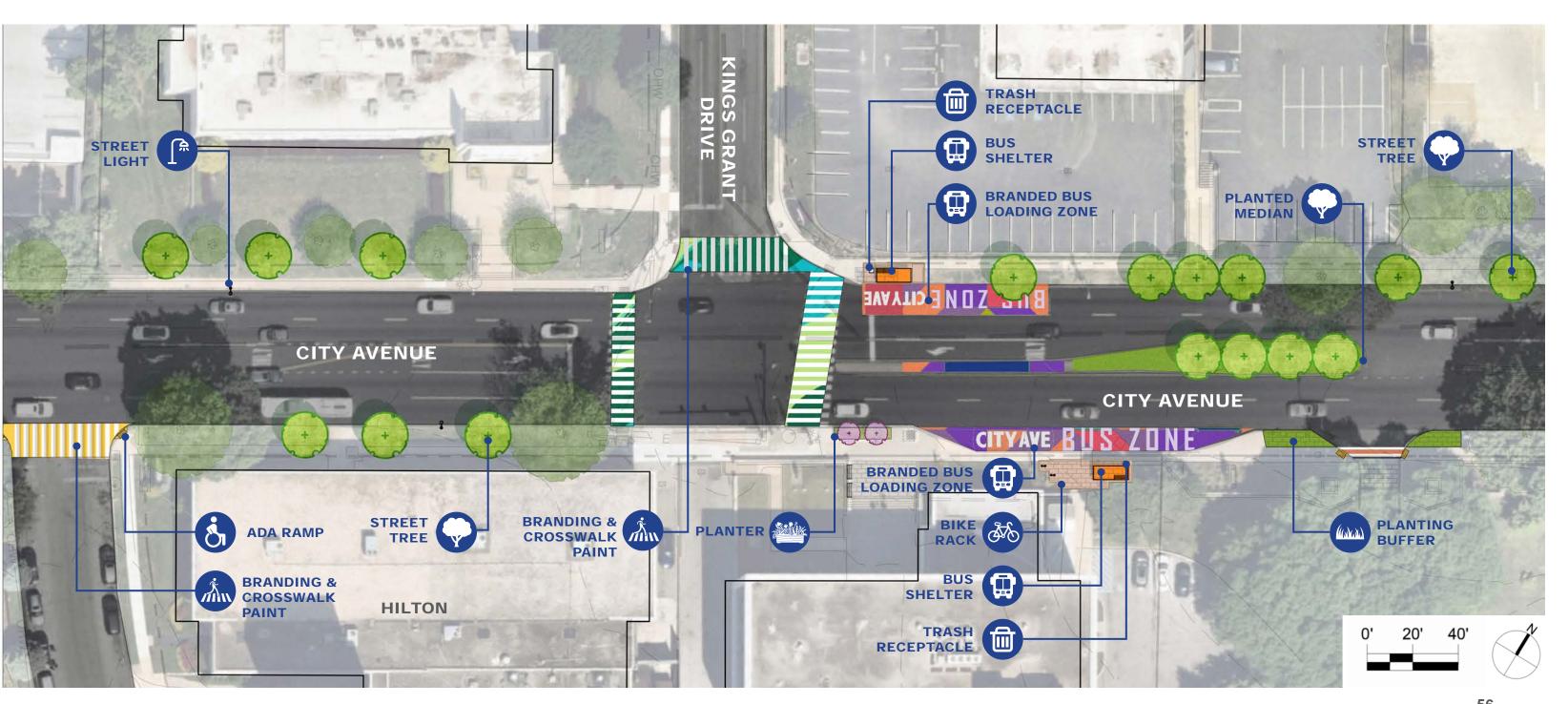


### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: KINGS GRANT DRIVE



### PERSPECTIVE: KINGS GRANT DRIVE, VIEW NORTH







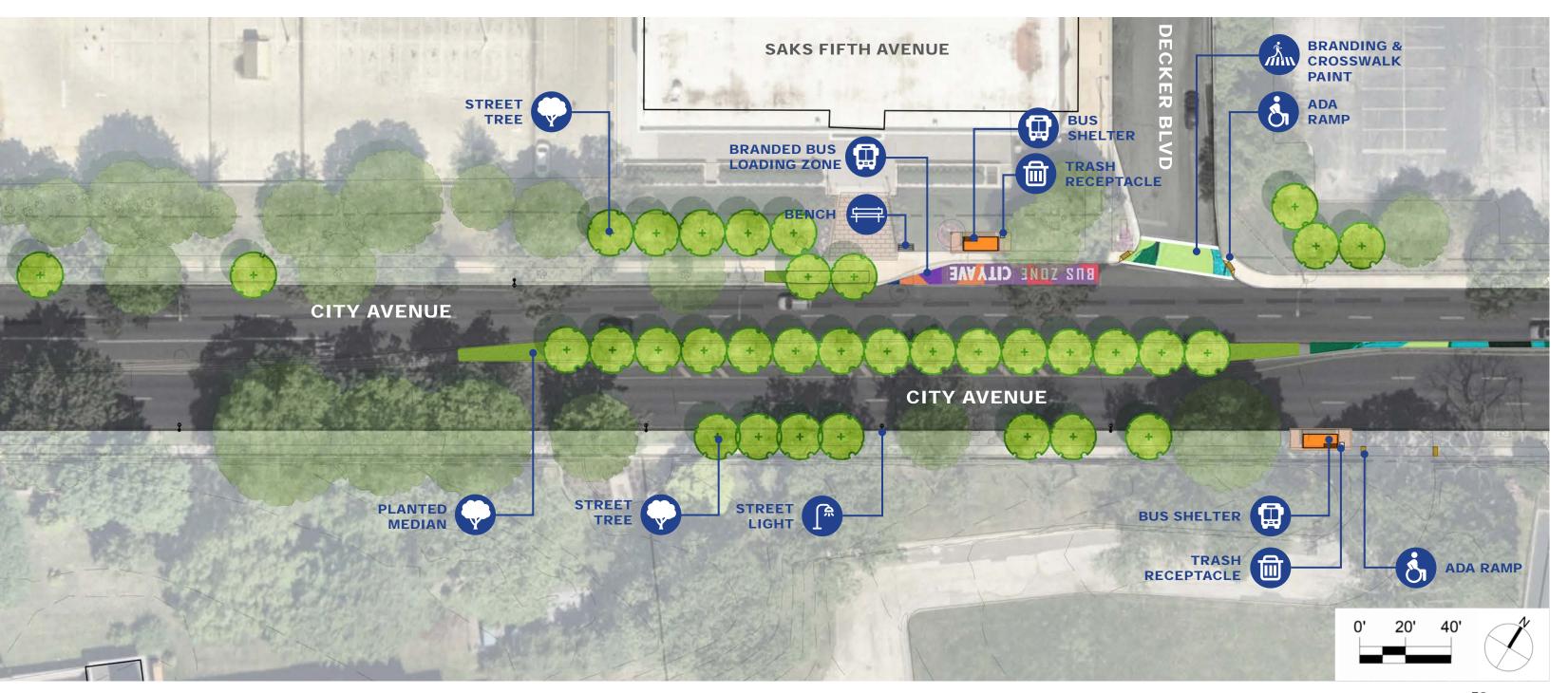






### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: DECKER BLVD

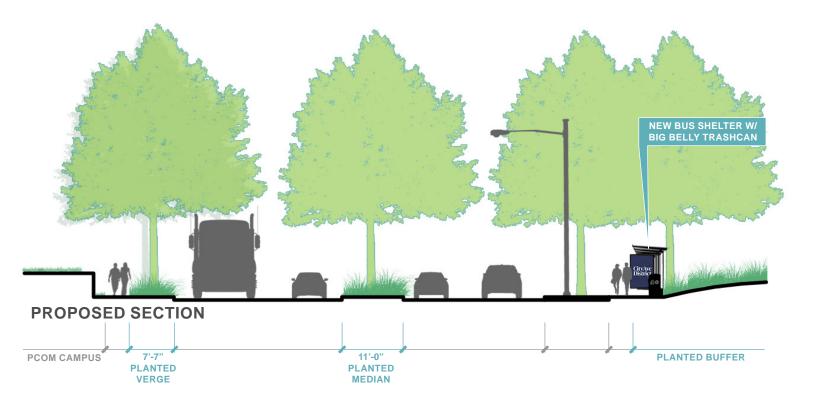




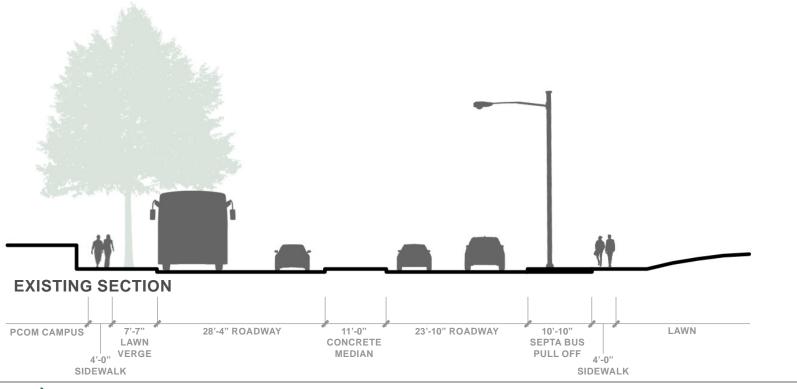




# SECTION: DECKER BLVD, VIEW SOUTHWEST







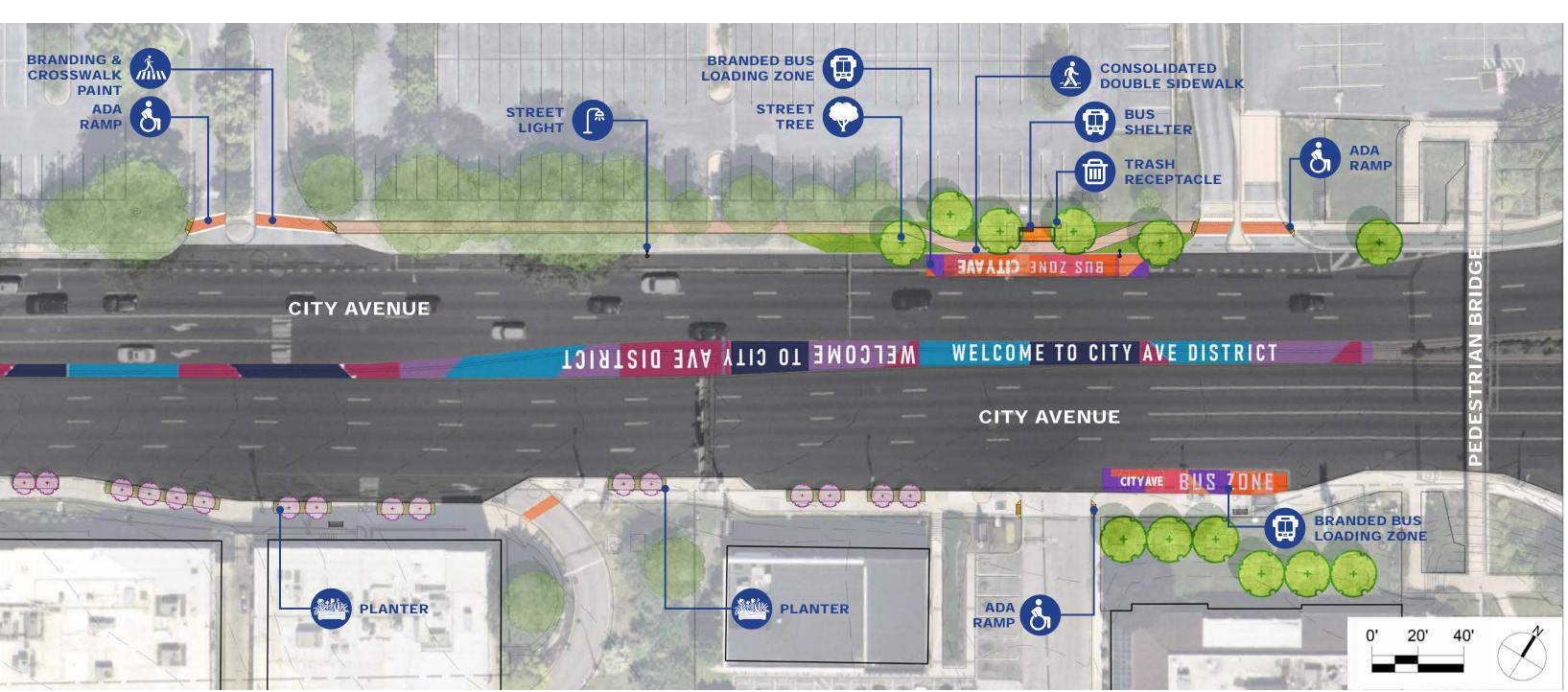






### PLAN ENLARGEMENT: MONUMENT ROAD









# SECTION: MONUMENT ROAD, VIEW SOUTHWEST

