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NODES**

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THROUGH MASON SQUARE**

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CULTIVATING PLACE THROUGH KEY NODES

Zach DeLorenzo and Julia Slater



PROJECT NARRATIVE

Mason Square is a vibrant district of Springfield that encompasses the junction of four key neighborhoods: McKnight, Bay, Upper Hill, and Old Hill. During our site visits it became clear that although State Street is a major artery for the city, Mason Square lacked a visible community identity that might attract more pedestrian activity and encourage exploration of the area. We identified three key areas in the Mason Square TDI District that can serve as nodes of development and activity. Our team seeks to develop the following three areas with a focus on creating vibrant green spaces, providing and improving small business opportunities, establishing places for creativity and art to thrive, and focusing on enhancing the pedestrian experience.

The “Anchor Node” that envelopes the Mason Square Park and Ben Swan Way, is defined by anchor institutions and businesses in the area such as the Mason Square Public Library, the Rebecca M. Johnson School, The Deberry-Swan School, and the Laundromat. This area will focus on revitalizing small businesses, provide flexible outdoor space for commercial and public use, increasing accessibility for pedestrians and bikers across State St.

The “Gateway Node” lies further East on State Street near the entrance of the American International College at the corner of State st and Homer st. This node serves as a visual entrance for commuters that travel on State st throughout the day. It will provide opportunities for small-scale flexible public uses, community gardening, and increase safety for both pedestrians and bikers along State st.

The “Outdoor Node” reclaims the currently vacant MCDI lot that abuts Springfield Water and Sewer and above the new Samuel Bolden Park. This area provides an opportunity for the integration of music and arts, new small businesses, and recreation. It is our goal for this node to be able to host large-scale events, establish a center for arts and music for the Mason Square Communities, and create shaded areas for commerce and recreation.

Using a bold pattern and a vibrant color scheme to create a branding pattern for Mason Square will provide a brand identity to the area. Examples of this branding can be seen below and can be implemented in the logo as well as on the side of bus stops, light post signage, wayfinding, painted crosswalks, and patio spaces throughout Mason Square to help visitors identify the boundaries of the Mason Square area.



Anchor Node



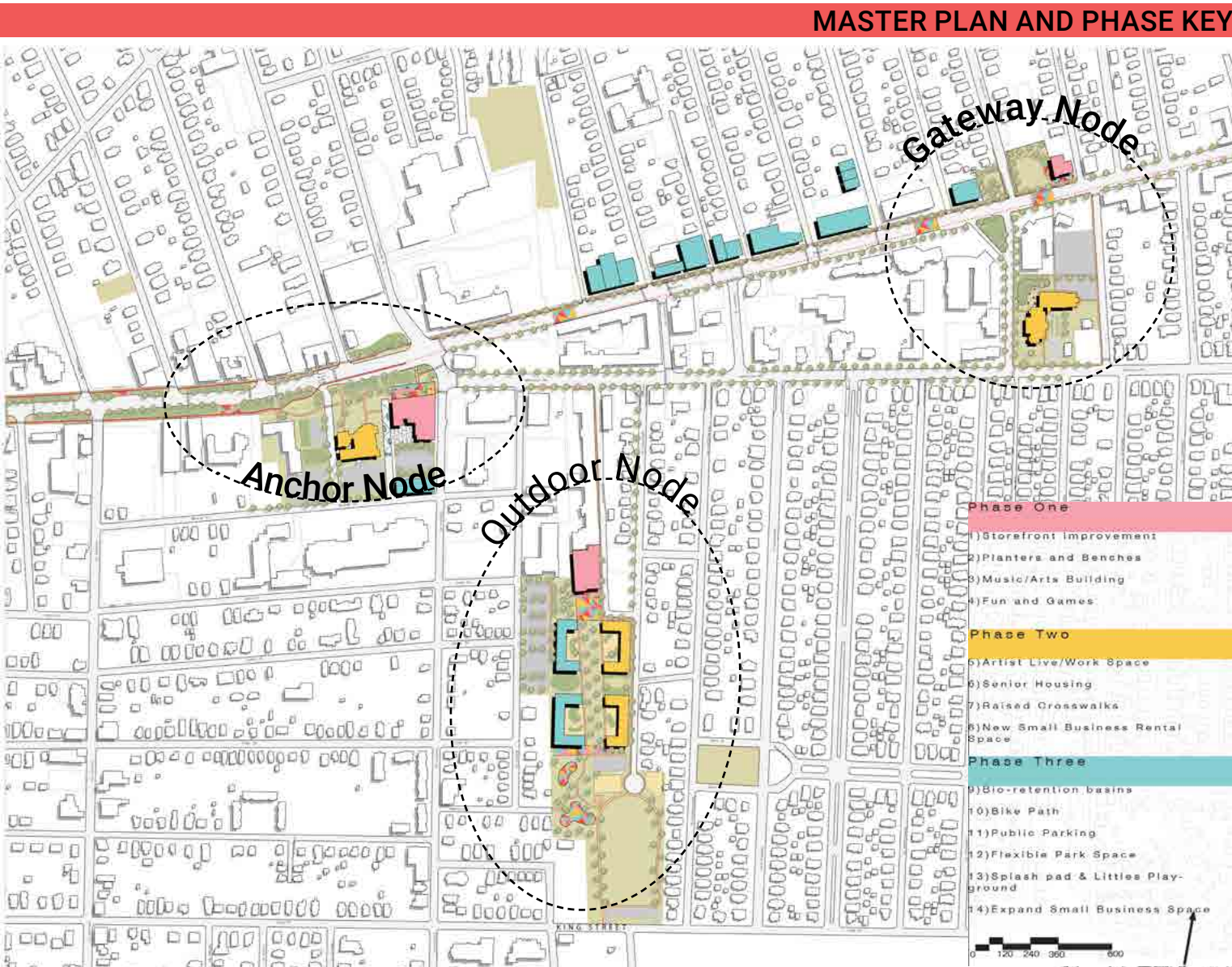
Gateway Node

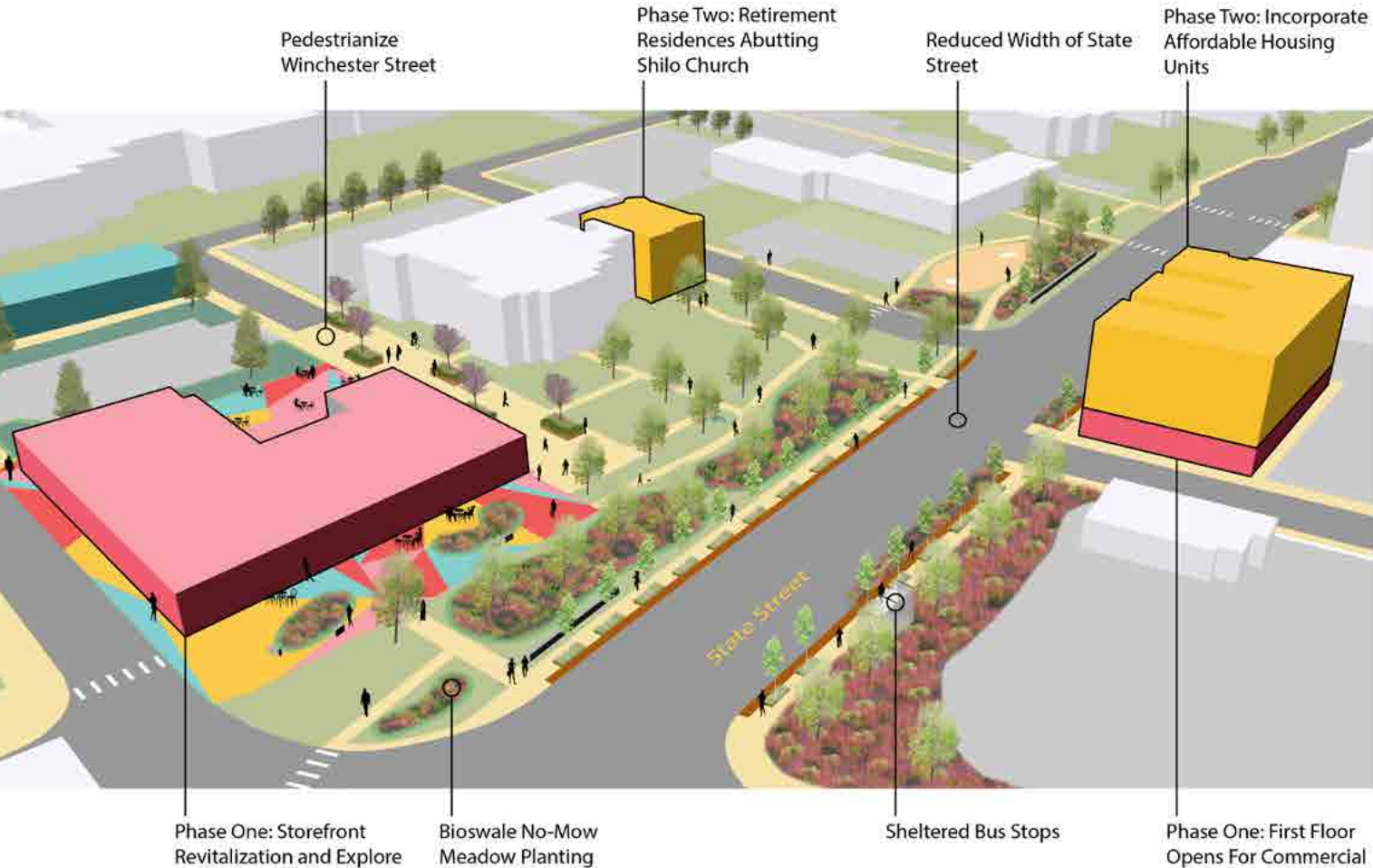


Outdoor Node



MASTER PLAN AND PHASE KEY





Phase One includes adding ornamental planters and human-scale lighting along storefronts to create areas for commerce and gatherings. Areas of respite and beautification of this section may encourage more activity and curiosity among residents and commuters. Tapping into key existing programs like the storefront revitalization funds.

ANCHOR NODE PHASE TWO



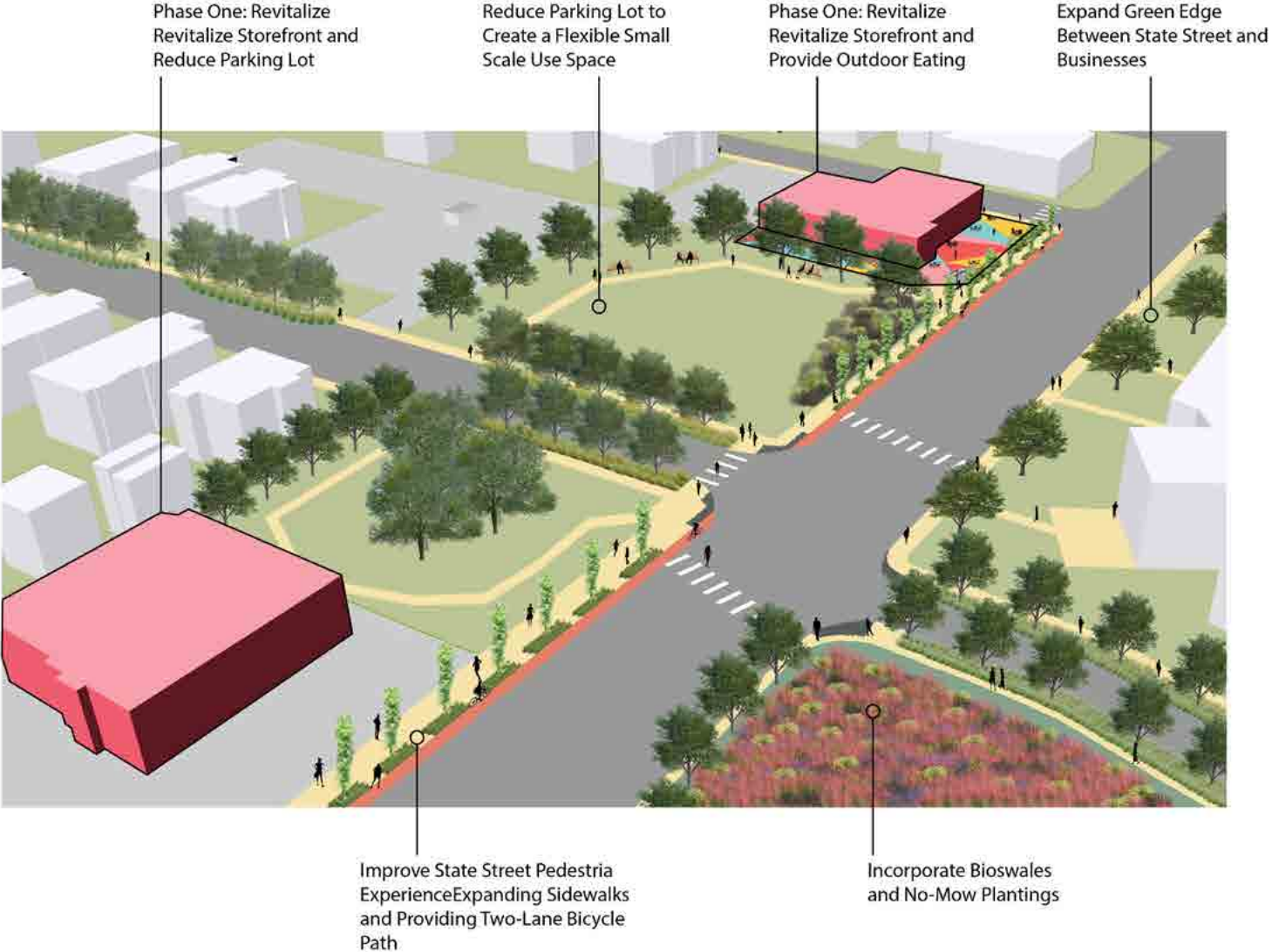
Phase Two will include the periodic closing of Ben Swan Way to automobile traffic to host “Block Party” type events and experiment with pedestrianization of the area. Seating, pathways, and lighting will be expanded into Mason Square Park.

ANCHOR NODE PHASE THREE



Phase Three will include the final stages of pedestrianizing Ben Swan Way and the adjacent Winchester street, expanding storefront space to include a patio and vegetated bioswales to buffer noise pollution from State street. Expanding crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike paths to accommodate foot traffic between local institutions and businesses.

GATEWAY NODE



GATEWAY NODE PHASE ONE



Phase One will focus on revitalizing a currently vacant, medium size grocery at the corner of State st and Willard ave, and creating a small plaza for dining and recreation. This plaza will be define by vegetated buffers separating it from pedestrian paths and the road.

GATEWAY NODE PHASE TWO

68



Phase Two aims to reinhabit the recently closed Homer Elementary School as a mix-use building by converting the first floor to commercial and community spaces and the upper floors into live-work housing for local artists. The lot surrounding the old school will establish areas of green space, public recreation, and community garden plots.

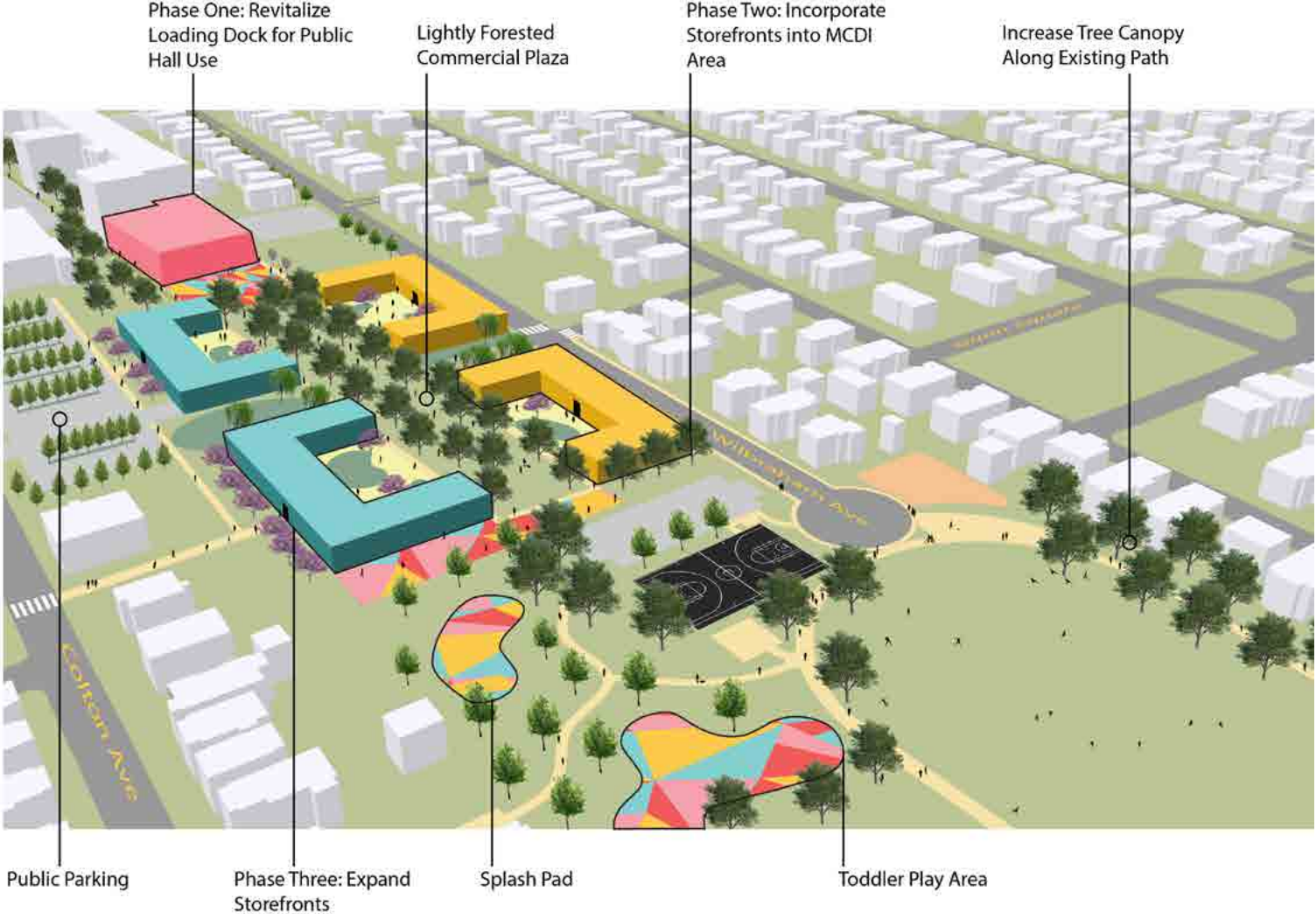
GATEWAY NODE PHASE THREE

69



Phase Three will convert the southern half of an AIC parking lot on the corner of State st and Maynard st and a portion of Antonio's parking lot into a small public park adjacent to the refurbished grocer from phase one. This area will allow flexible use by local residents, businesses, and institutions, and may serve as a visual gateway for commuters along State st.

OUTDOOR NODE



OUTDOOR NODE PHASE ONE



Phase One will establish a currently vacant industrial building, adjoining the southern portion of the Knox building, as a public music and arts center for the public. This institution will act as a draw to the Mason square area for local residents as well as the broader city of Springfield, bringing in visitors from outside the community.

OUTDOOR NODE PHASE TWO



Phase Two encompasses the building of new spaces for small businesses that are small, affordable, and do not require a long term lease from tenants. Ideal for small shops and start-ups, and expanding tree canopy and smaller plantings to define spaces and provide shaded areas. This space will be adjacent to the building from phase 1 and act as the beginnings of a new development.

OUTDOOR NODE PHASE THREE

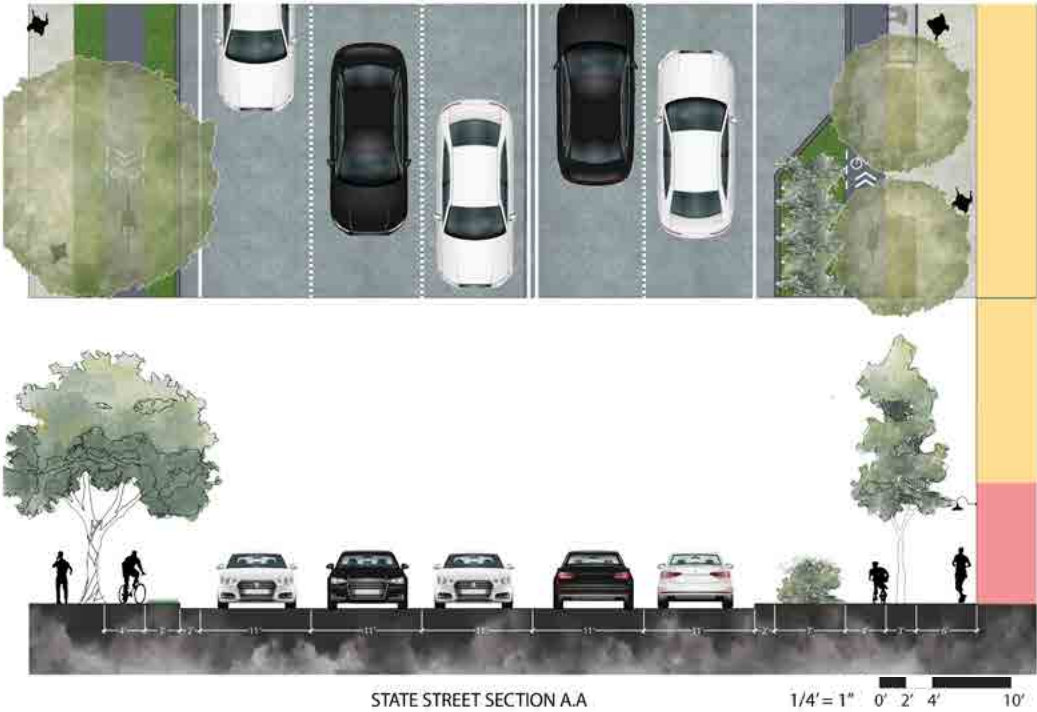


Phase Three aims to expand small commercial spaces and establishing a shaded plaza that can be easily accessed by surrounding residential communities. The area will be able to host a variety of events and become a destination for the Mason Square District.

STREET SECTION A



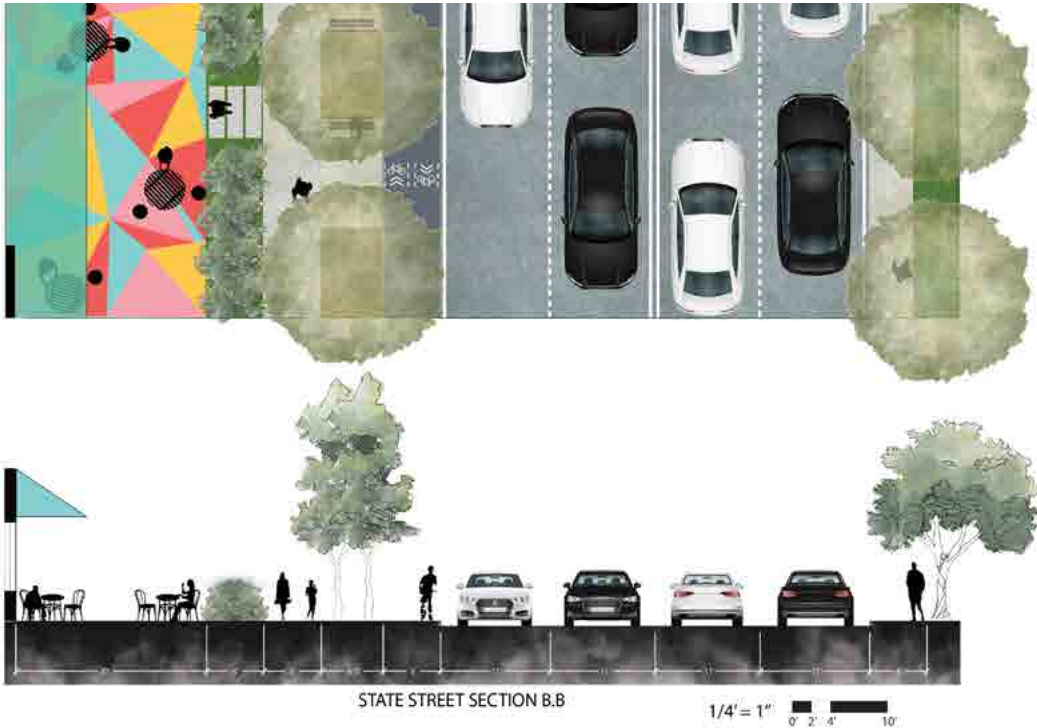
State Street Redesign: To be implemented during Phase Three in order to create a comfortable and safe pedestrian connection between established nodes within the Mason Square TDI District and the greater Springfield Community. Section A accomplishes these connections by removing the planted medium on State street and removing the eastbound right turn only lane. This provides an opportunity to provide vegetated bioswale buffers on State street, the creation of a Bus bay and sheltered bus stop, one-way bicycle paths on either side of the road, tree plantings to buffer pedestrians from bicyclists, and expanding the sidewalk on both sides.



STREET SECTION B



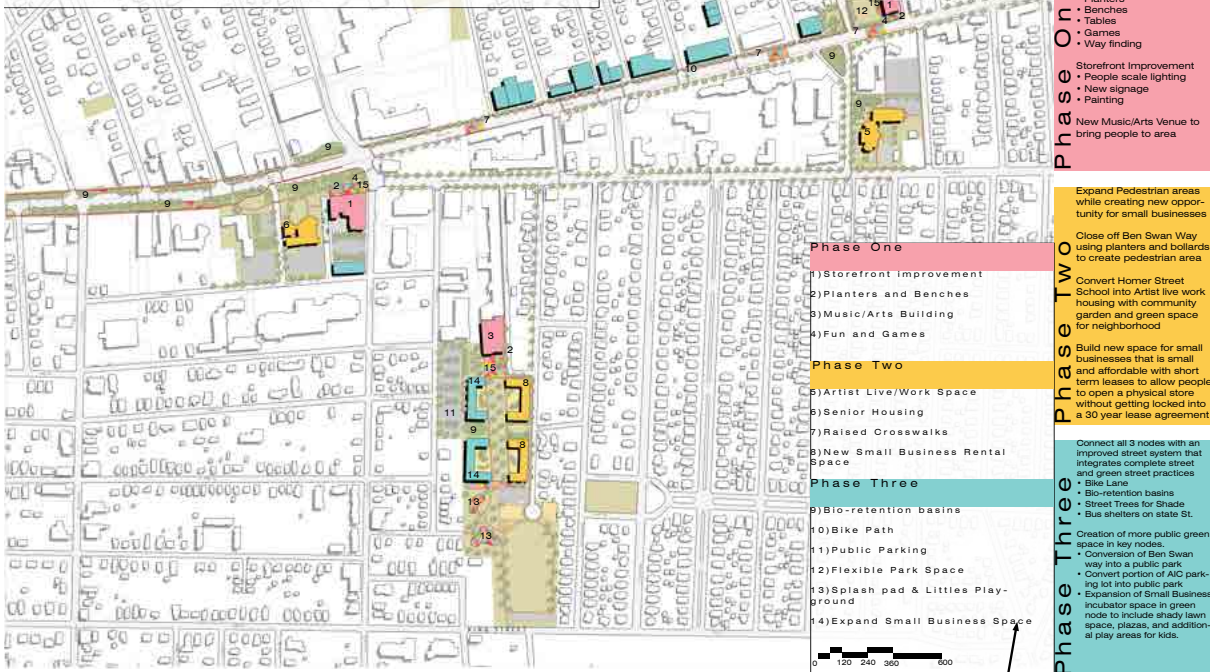
State Street Redesign: To be implemented during Phase Three in order to create a comfortable and safe pedestrian connection between established nodes within the Mason Square TDI District and the greater Springfield Community. Section B forges connections by increasing the setbacks of commercial buildings on the northern side of State street. Allowing for the creating of a two-lane bicycle path on the northern side, street tree planters to buffer bicyclists from pedestrians and provide benches for respite. There will be a continuity of low vegetated buffers between businesses and State street to provide a sense of safety, comfortability, and visibility from the road.



Mason Square

Cultivating Place through Key Nodes

Zach DeLorenzo | Julia Slater



Anchor Node



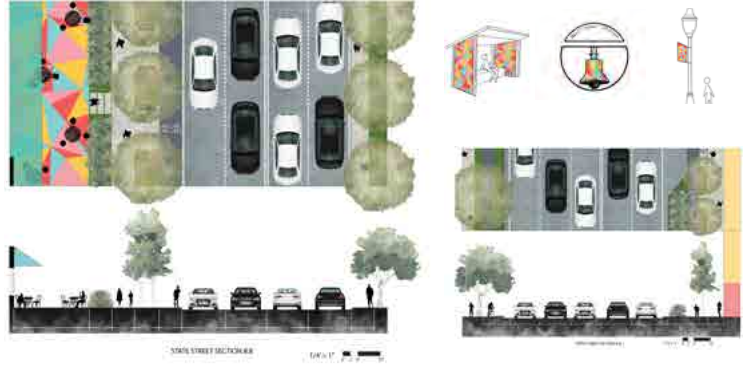
Gateway Node



Outdoor Node



Connections



Anchor Node



Gateway Node



Outdoor Node



CULTIVATING PLACE THROUGH KEY NODES

DESIGN BOARD

Cultivation Place Through Key Nodes seeks to systematically develop three key areas identified within the Mason Square TDI District in Springfield to serve as incubators that cultivate local identity, a safe and expansive pedestrian experience, and a hub for local and small businesses.





EXTENDING THE ARC OF RECREATION THROUGH MASON SQUARE

Jacqueline Berlin & Michael Chancellor



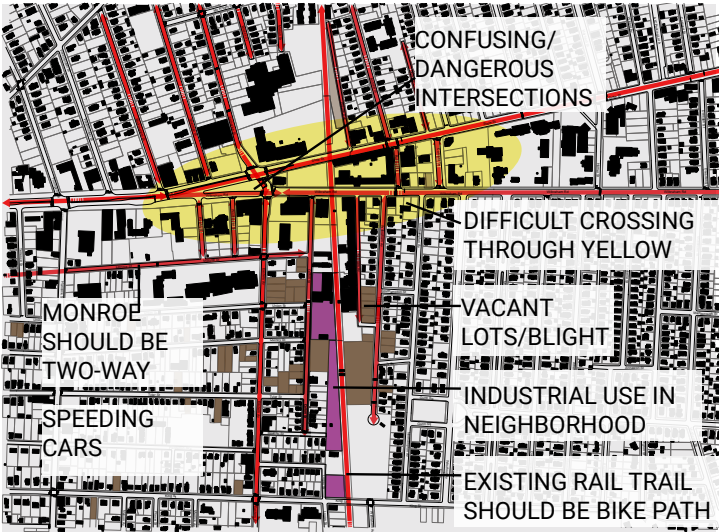
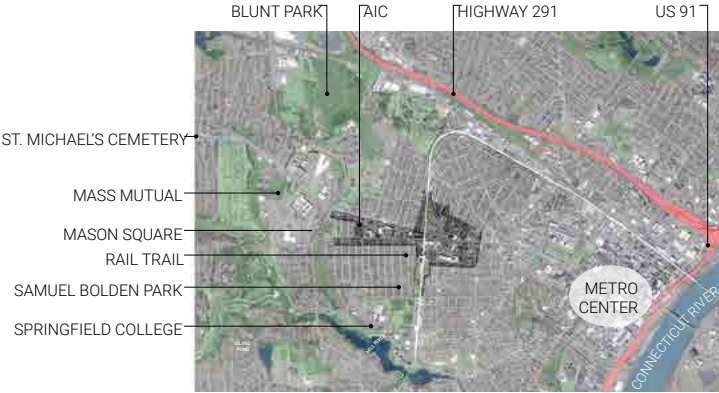
We heard that children who live in the Mason Square neighborhoods do not feel safe traveling the few blocks from the elementary school to the Public Library. We want to implement changes to the city that directly improve the street scape in Mason Square for all residents.

State Street serves as an artery from the highway to Mass Mutual's campus, and drivers treat it as an extension of the highway. If the goal is to make State Street a hub for local businesses, then we need to slow down the traffic. Because State Street already functions well as a transportation artery, its use as a through-way should be encouraged with additional public transportation options. Public transportation should be made a more desirable option by increasing efficiency with dedicated bus lanes. There should be direct buses that only stop downtown, at AIC, and at Mass Mutual along with buses that stop frequently along State Street for Mason Square Residents. People on public transportation and bikes are more likely to stop at small businesses, so those modes of transportation should be made more desirable than driving. Physical barriers, such as trees, shall be planted along State Street to absorb noise and make the street safer for pedestrians and bikers.

We also want to complete the rail trail and acquire the sewer lots. These moves will serve as a catalyst for transforming Mason Square into a walkable, vibrant place. We would like to expand Samuel Bolden Park and connect it to State Street through a patchwork of green and mixed-use spaces.

GOALS AND THEMES

Increase **walk-ability** and **safety** on State Street
Create **bike path** on existing rail trail
Reclaim sewer treatment plant in neighborhood
Connect the neighborhood with green paths.



Neighborhood needs and Responses

DETAILED POLICY AND DESIGN OBJECTIVES

SAFETY

- Increased the width of sidewalks on state street to make it more inviting for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Dedicated bike lanes
- New traffic circle at State Street/Wilbraham/Eastern intersection.

•PLAYFULNESS

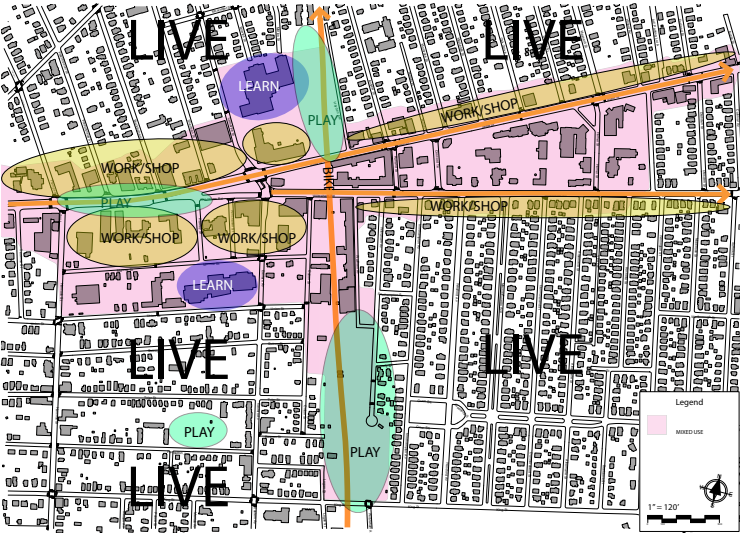
- Rail Trail/Bike Path • New Parks • Tot Lot.

•COHERENCE

- Green patchwork of paths through Mason Square neighborhood

•ECONOMIC VIBRANCY

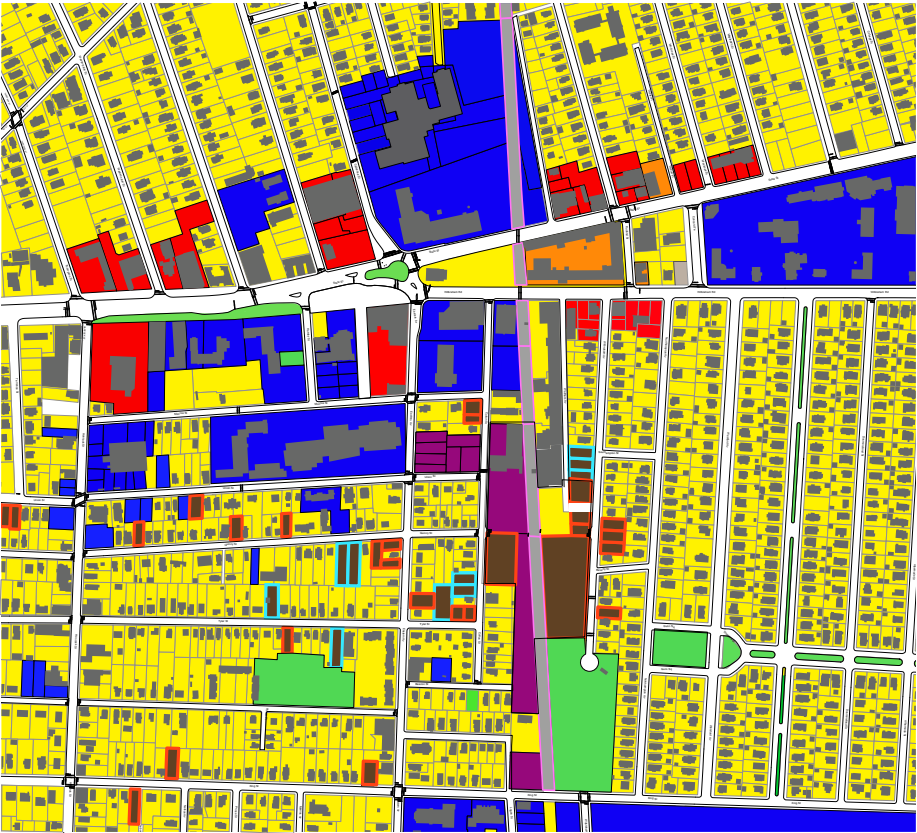
- New mixed-use properties/businesses
- Invest in the youth with recreational and educational assets that foster connections



Concept Diagram

LAND USE

EXISTING



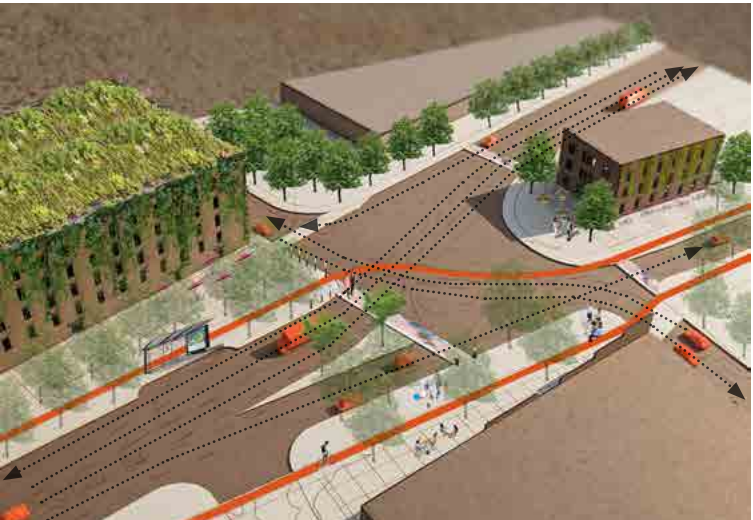
- Publicly owned vacant lots
- Vacant lots owned by absentee landlords and defunct businesses

All the vacant lots in Mason Square are mapped and to categorized based on ownership. That information was used as the basis for planning green corridors and forging connections through the neighborhood.

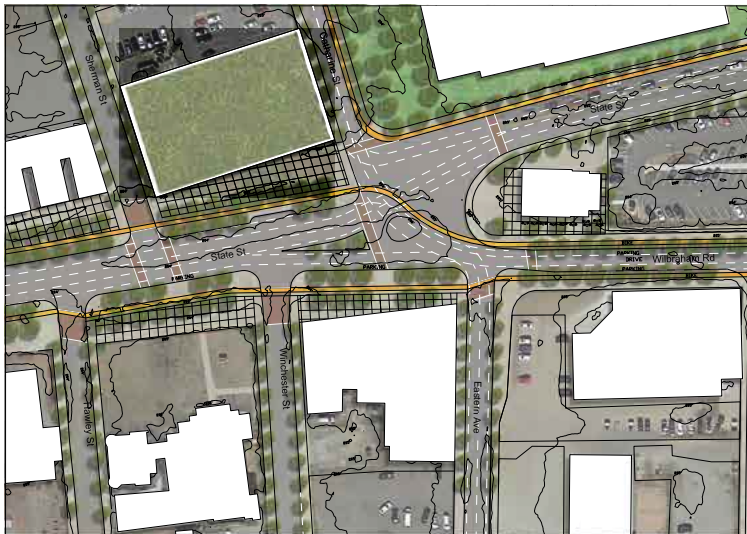
Before



After



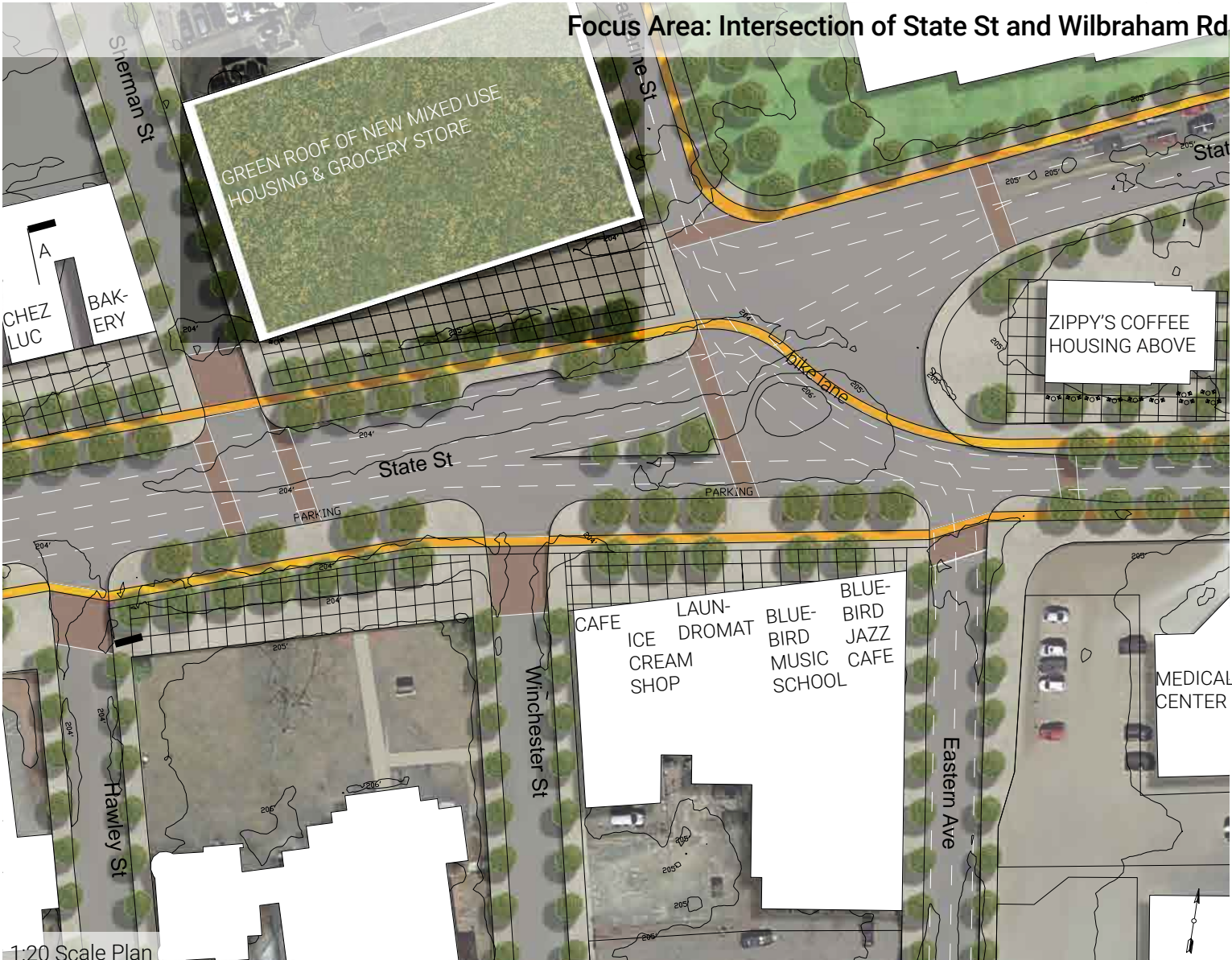
After

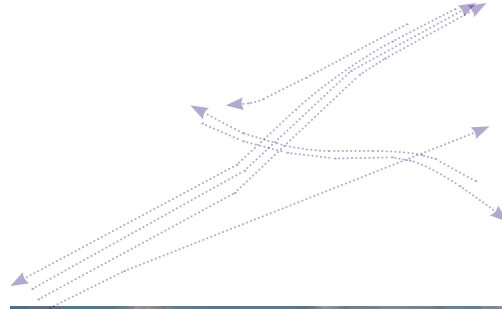


Proposed New Traffic Diagram



Focus Area: Intersection of State St and Wilbraham Rd





Side walks are expanded, decreasing the time it takes pedestrians to cross the street. These expanded sidewalks also allow for many more trees, outdoor dining tables, and buffered bike paths. Residents are given bus shelters to make public transportation more convenient. Street lights for the pedestrian scale are installed. Business, such as coffee shops, Jazz clubs, Music stores and Grocery stores are proposed for this central business hub of Mason Square. These interventions enliven State Street.

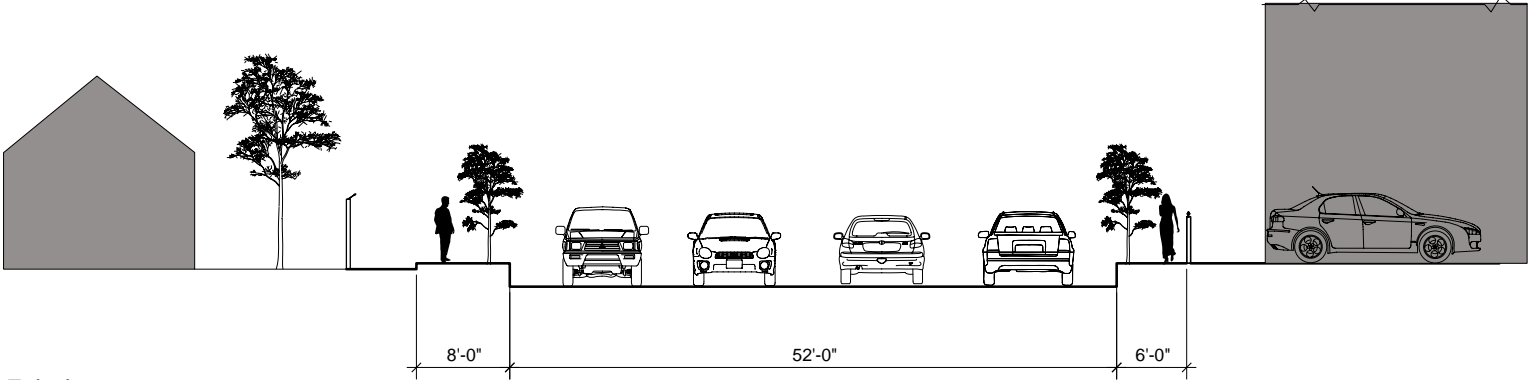


SECTION A

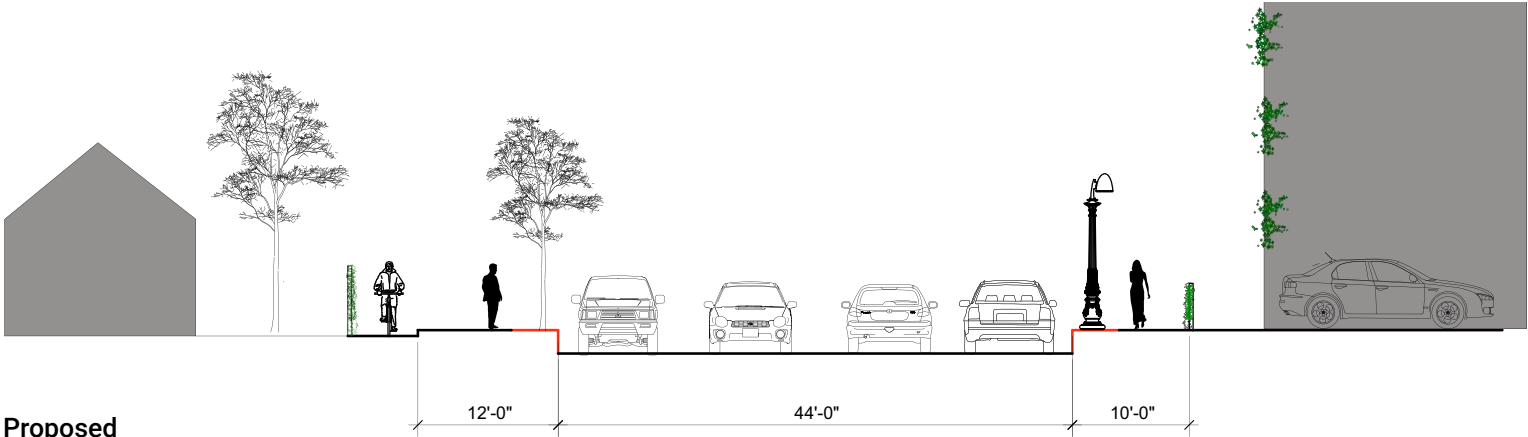


Each car lane is 11' wide and each bike lane is 5' wide.

STATE STREET SECTION



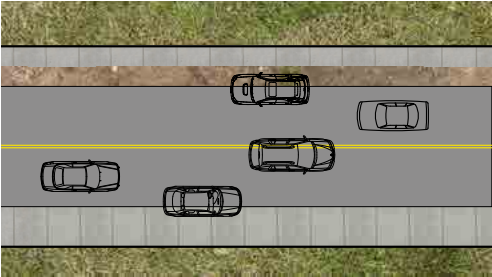
Existing



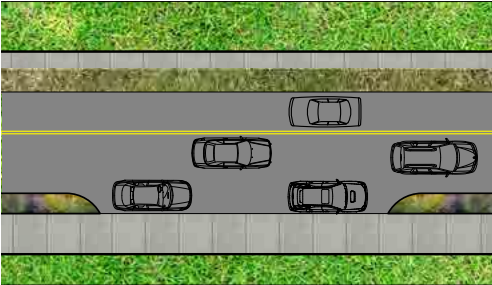
Proposed

This section taken along State St. in front of the Indian Motorcycle Building is representative of the vision of the street east of the rail trail. Some space is gained with a reduction in the width of each lane. This allows for expanding the sidewalks on both sides of the road, creating space for additional trees, lighting, and a protected bike lane on one side. One further design suggestion would be to explore green walls on the faces of buildings. There are certain areas, such as the north side of Indian Motorcycle Building, that will be difficult to support large street trees, but a properly implemented green wall could thrive and outperform the air and noise pollution benefits of a mature tree.

EASTERN AVENUE PROPOSAL

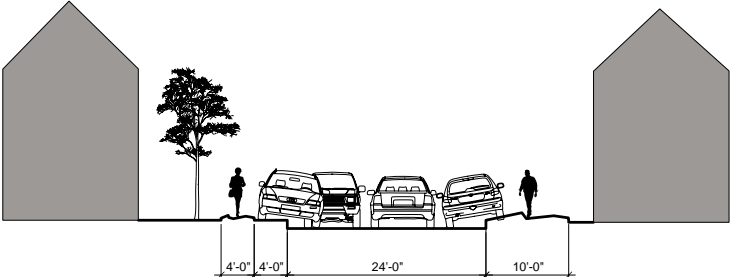


Eastern Ave, Existing

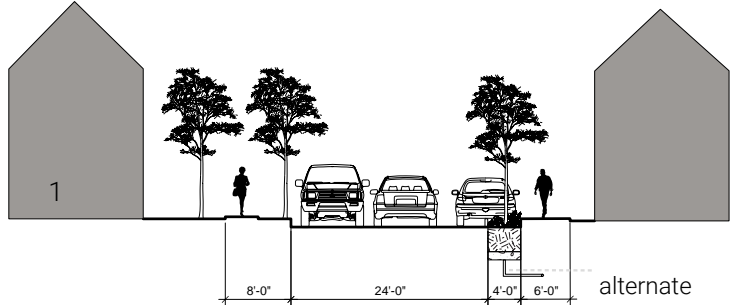


Eastern Ave, Proposed

Currently, cars park on both sides of the road on Eastern Ave. and many other streets in the neighborhood, pulling up onto the sidewalks. This blocks the flow of traffic, disrupts walking paths, destroys the sidewalks, and creates a dangerous situation if children or pets were to run out into the street. A possible solution to this would be to implement bioswales along the street, directing traffic and organizing the parking. By carving out specific spaces for cars to park, while making it impossible to park elsewhere, this would add clarity and a sense of order to the streets, as well as all capturing stormwater runoff in the bioswales.



Existing

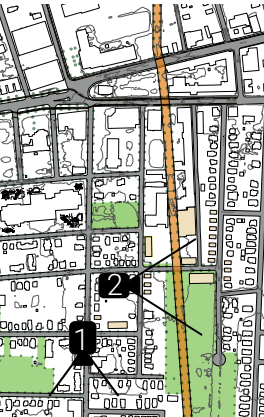


Proposed

alternate placement of bioswale every block

Eastern Ave Sections

THE SEWER AND WATER COMISSION LOT EXTENSION



The Sewer and Water Commission lot is not only used to house the headquarters, but many parcels are used for industrial storage. The industrial storage completely divides the neighborhoods of Old Hill and Upper Hill. Residents voiced complaints over how this makes life difficult, and how the land use is out of line with the surrounding residences. If the spaces used for storage were to be relocated, this would create an incredible opportunity for new developments and allow for a safe, easy connection between Old Hill and Upper Hill.



Before

RAIL TRAIL ENTRANCE, BAY ST & CLIFFORD STREET



Before



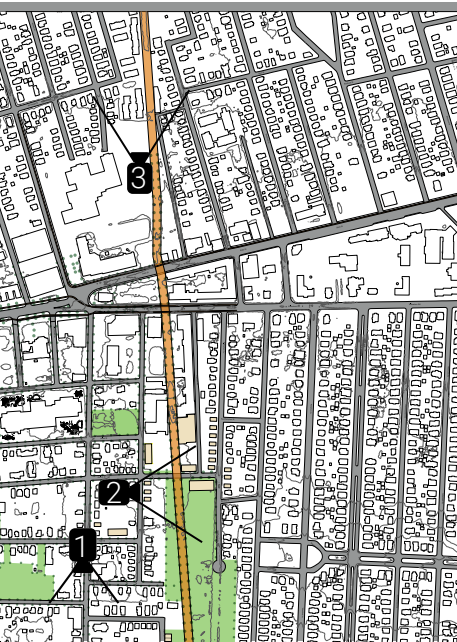
Eye-catching signage is created to build awareness and create a sense of arrival.

After

RAIL TRAIL, CLIFFORD STREET

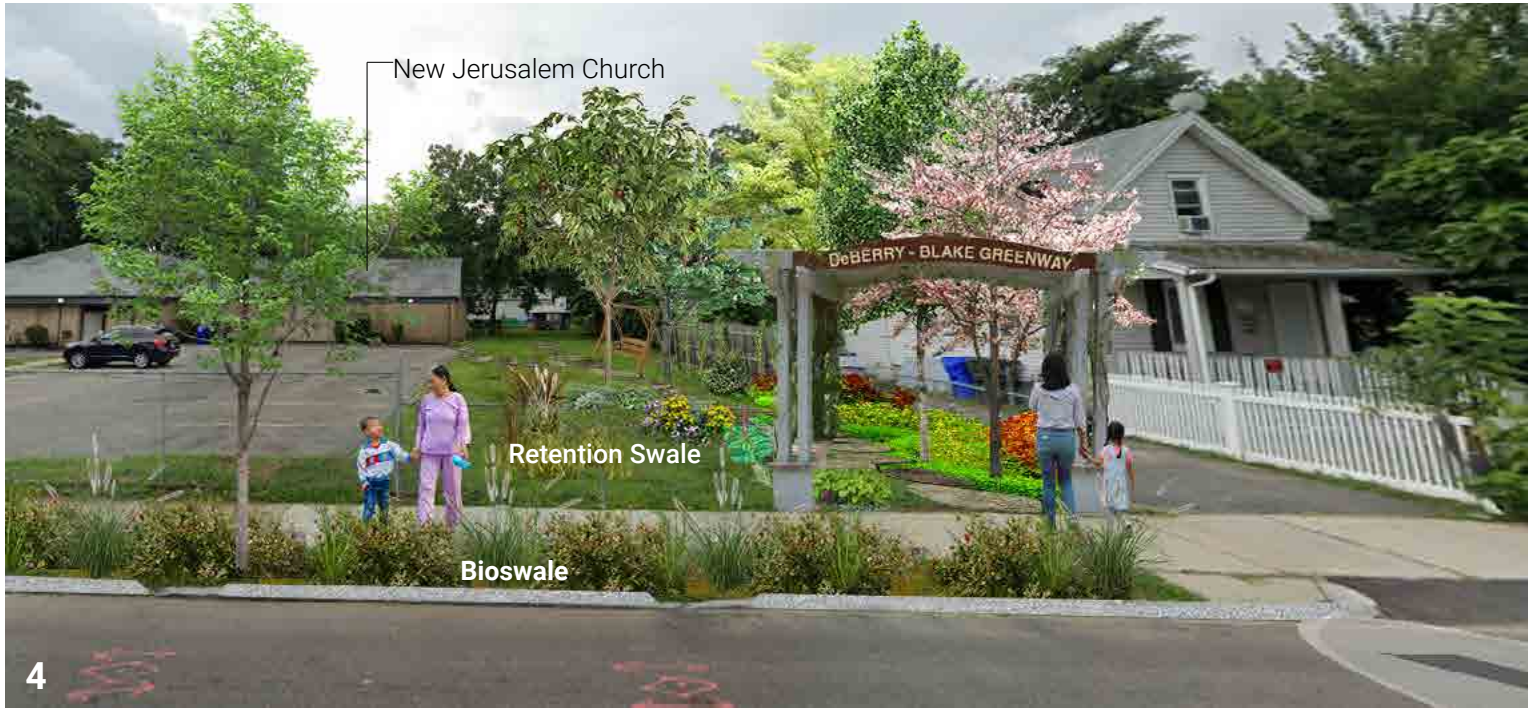


Before



After

An important factor is to find the right balance between creating a visible, welcoming path for all to use, while maintaining a sense of privacy for the homes that directly border the trail. Trees can be used to create borders and frame the experience, but the underbrush can also be developed into a more vibrant grassland, which may provide a more welcoming atmosphere for those who may not feel safe traveling through a dense wooded area. Grasslands are also a critical habitat that are underrepresented in Springfield.

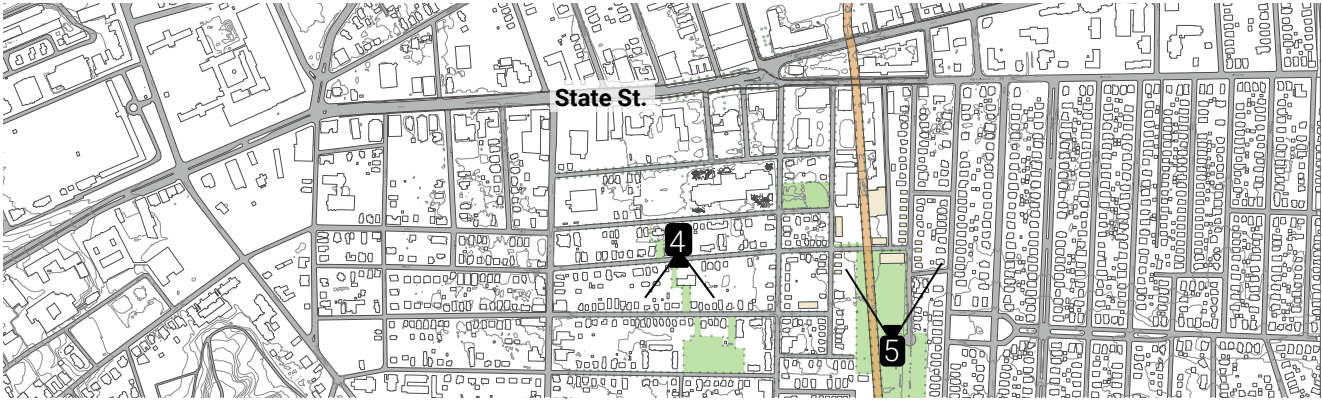


After

The DeBerry Blake Greenway is a proposed off street walking path connecting Donna Blake Park to DeBerry - Swan Elementary School. This would make use of several vacant lots and one yard owned by New Jerusalem Church. The intent is to have an edible, educational path bisecting the long blocks of the neighborhood, providing a fun and safer way to travel on foot.



Before



EXTENDING THE ARC OF RECREATION THROUGH MASON SQUARE

Green, Equitable, and Livable -- Transforming the Core of Mason Square
Jacqueline Berlin and Michael Chancellor
Spring 2023 Final Presentation



Goals and Themes:

- Increase **walk-ability** and **safety** on State Street with dedicated bike lanes, enlarged sidewalks, and a redesigned intersection at State St/Wilbraham rd/Eastern Ave
- Create **bike path** on existing rail trail
- **Reclaim** sewer treatment plant in neighborhood
- **Connect** the neighborhood and parks with green paths
- Invest in the youth with **recreational** and **educational** assets that foster connections

We heard that children who live in the Mason Square neighborhoods do not feel safe traveling the few blocks from Elementary School to the Public Library. We want to implement changes to the city that directly improve the street scape in Mason Square for all residents.

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We also want to complete the rail trail and acquire the sewer lots. These moves will serve as a catalyst for transforming Mason Square into a walkable, vibrant place. We would like to expand Samuel Golden Park and connect it to State Street through a patchwork of green and mixed-use spaces.

190 trees planted in the core of Mason Square

Car Crash Statistics:

76 Car Crashes near the Intersection of State St and Wilbraham Ave between 2/12/2020-1/1/2023 according to MASSDOT
1 Car Crash At Santa Monica Blvd and Melrose (which was our precedent for our intersection redesign) between 2/12/2020-1/1/2023 according to LAPD



Existing conditions at Mason Sq.

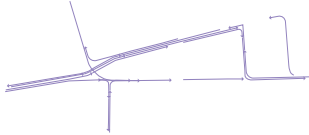
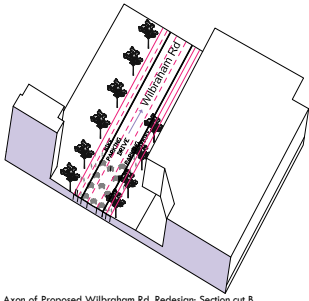
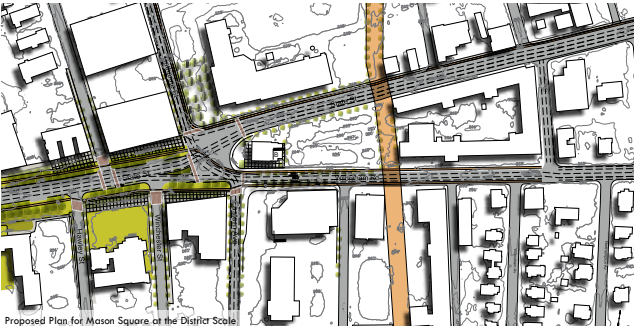


Diagram of Proposed Traffic Circulation



Axon of Proposed Wilbraham Rd. Redesign: Section cut B



Proposed Plan for Mason Square at the District Scale



State Street Proposed Section A



Ben Swan Plaza



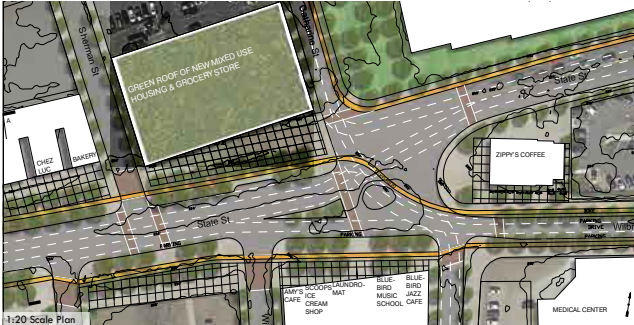
4



Rail Trail 2



Axonometric Model Photo



1:20 Scale Plan



Ben Swan Plaza Perspective



Neighborhood Scale Plan



Metro Scale Plan



1



New Quincy St Extension



DeBerry Blake Greenway

EXTENDING THE ARC OF RECREATION THROUGH MASON SQUARE

DESIGN BOARD

The Arc of Recreation is Extended Through Mason Square so residents are safe to walk, bike, and shop in Mason Square through interventions including protected bike lanes, extended sidewalks to a plaza scale allowing for outdoor dining, 190 trees planted as traffic and sound buffer, the State Street and Wilbraham intersection is simplified to decrease crashes, and green corridors connecting the elementary school to nearby parks and the public library are created to allow for even more pleasurable and safe pedestrian and bike route for all (especially the neighborhood youth). Nearby parcels, such as the Sewer Commission Lot and the currently vacant MCDI lot would be repurposed into youth centric programming that invests in their futures and forges new connections between the neighborhoods of Old Hill, Upper Hill, and McKnight.





REVITALIZING MASON SQUARE THROUGH URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS

Michael Amato, Chandana Palika

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENTS



- GOALS:**
- Reassess Circulation: State street redesign, connectivity throughout district, bike trail connections.
 - Revitalization: Destination place-making, new ‘downtown’, cafés & restaurants, focus on blight and vacant lots.
 - Food Access: Food co-op, food hall, community orchards, community gardens, food as education outdoor kitchen.
 - Green Spaces: Improve existing parks, design green streets, implement greenway network.

BIG INTERVENTIONS

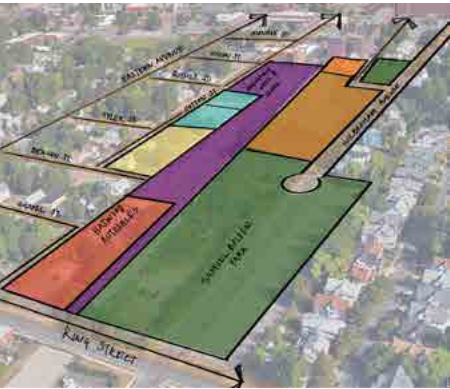


Image showing existing Land use.



Image showing proposed Land use.

The overarching goal for the revitalization of Mason Square is to create a walkable ‘downtown’ district within the heart of Springfield, MA. Residents of the district lack access to affordable local produce, well-designed parks that appeal to a wide variety of users, and ‘downtown’ area with cafés or restaurants. Through design interventions that emphasize urban greening, address traffic calming, and place-making urban agriculture initiatives, the core of mason square will be transformed.

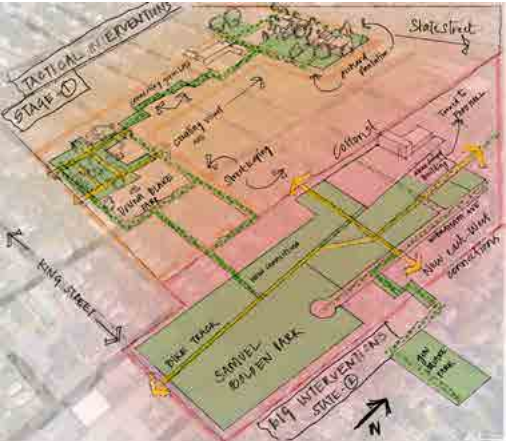
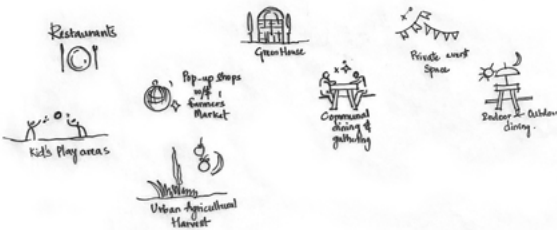


Image showing design interventions stage 1 and 2



Image showing green space connectors

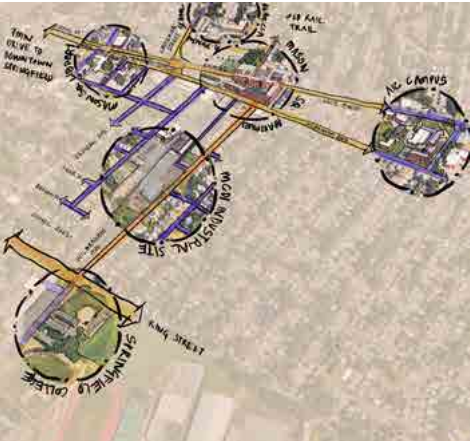


Image showing district hubs and connectivity



Image showing major and minor traffic zones

SITE PLAN : MCDI SITE

Key for Interventions
1: Food hall. 2: Municipal parking. 3: Food hall greenhouses. 4: Playgrounds. 5: Basketball court. 6: Multi-use patio.
7: Education kitchen & pavilion. 8: Community orchard. 9: Coffee shop. 10: Bike shop. 11: Book store. 12: Splash pad & restrooms. 13: Health food store. 14: Florist. 15: Restaurant. 16: Dog park. 17: Interpretive meadow. 18: Community garden. 19: Skate park.



View of Green house



View of Kitchen & Pavilion



View of Splash pad



View of Garden & Bike Trial



View of Playground



View of Dog Park



View of Store fronts



View of Community Garden

MASTER PLAN

LOCALLY PRODUCED HEALTHY FOOD:
BUILDS COMMUNITY. STRENGTHENS RESILIENCY. COMBATS FOOD APARTHEID.

The Mason Square District of Springfield Massachusetts sits at the center of four neighborhoods living under food apartheid. The McKnight, Bay, Old Hill, and Upper Hill neighborhoods are classified as by the PVPC as food deserts. Food apartheid is a near synonymous term; the difference being its recognition of the racially discriminatory social and political structures that have led to a lack of food access and food sovereignty. Community members in these neighborhoods want access to affordable food, a grocery store that meets their needs, urban agriculture interventions across the district, and a major design intervention at the recently demolished MCDI Building site.



Image showing focus area TDI MASON SQUARE DISTRICT at district scale-
1"=200 scale

The main artery of the district, State street, is a dangerous road that prioritizes vehicular circulation over any other circulation system. Pedestrian crossings can be 80’ long, speeding is frequent, and pedestrian safety is a major concern. A complete street redesign, with safety and green space in mind is desired by the community. The district is disjointed, separated into areas that lack easy access to one another by both state street and the water and sewer property that runs north to south for 2,000 ft. uninterrupted. Furthermore, the district lacks a central hub for social gathering and recreation.

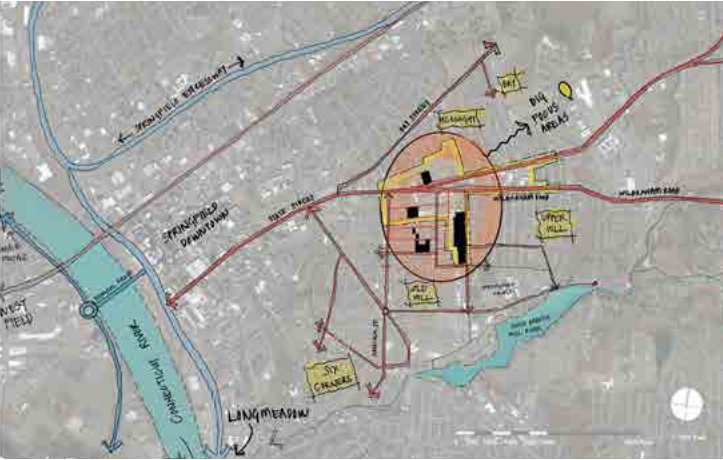
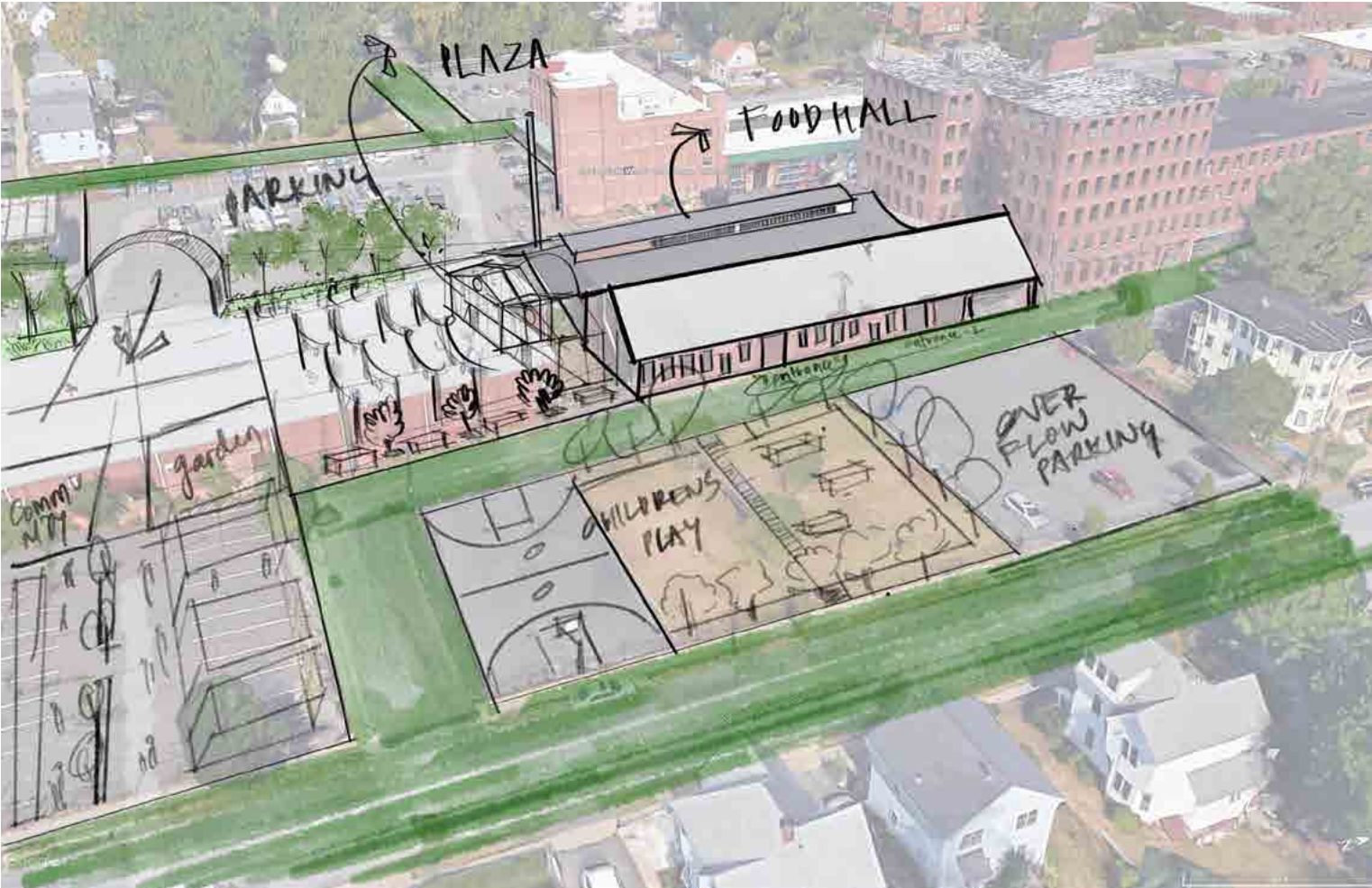


Image showing focus area TDI MASON SQUARE DISTRICT at metro scale
1"=500 scale



The vacant MCDI site off of Wilbraham Ave is directly adjacent to a set of vacant industrial buildings. The design for this renovated site calls for a new food hall in the vacant buildings, with large greenhouses on their south side leading to an open plaza area that serves the community as a multi use venue.



This plaza can be used for outdoor dining, pop up beer gardens, live music events, food truck festivals, and similar events throughout the fall, summer and spring. In the winter, the greenhouses double as event spaces.

TACTICAL INTERVENTIONS

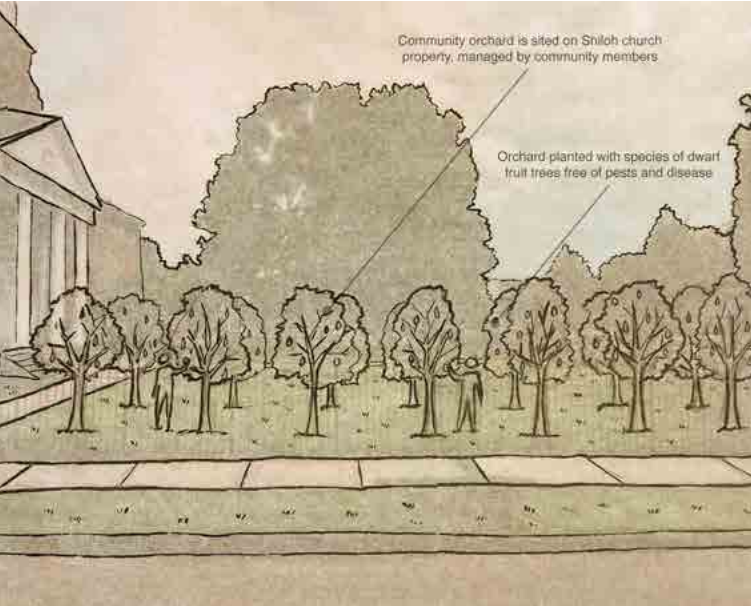


Proposed tactical interventions prioritize existing open space and establish greenways throughout the district. Our design intends to create a network that connects existing community spaces, hubs, landmarks, and parks with proposed small scale, easy, cheaper, quicker interventions.

TACTICAL INTERVENTIONS

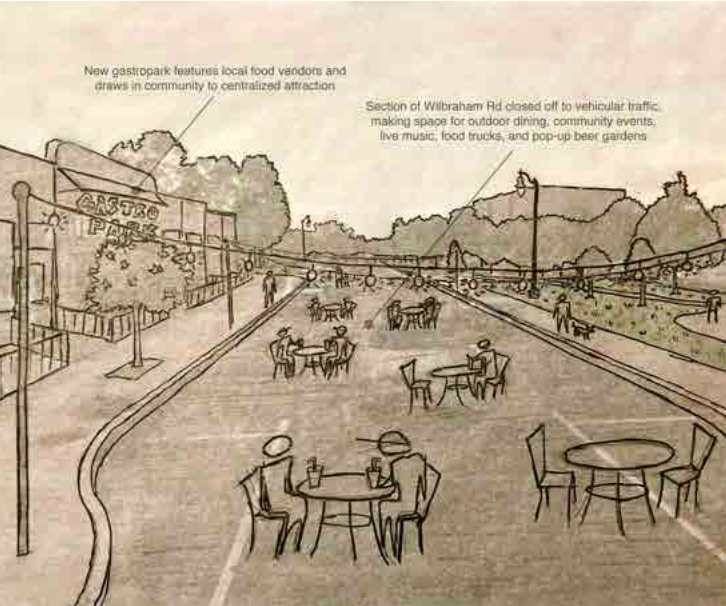
COMMUNITY ORCHARD AT SHILOH SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

The proposed community orchard at the Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church is sited on church's the front lawn. Planted with dwarf fruit tree cultivars selected for pest and disease resistance, the orchard is accessible to community members and church goers as well as the wider Mason Square community. Fruit from the orchard can be harvested directly by individuals who are experiencing food insecurity. Excess fruit from the orchard is donated to local food banks.



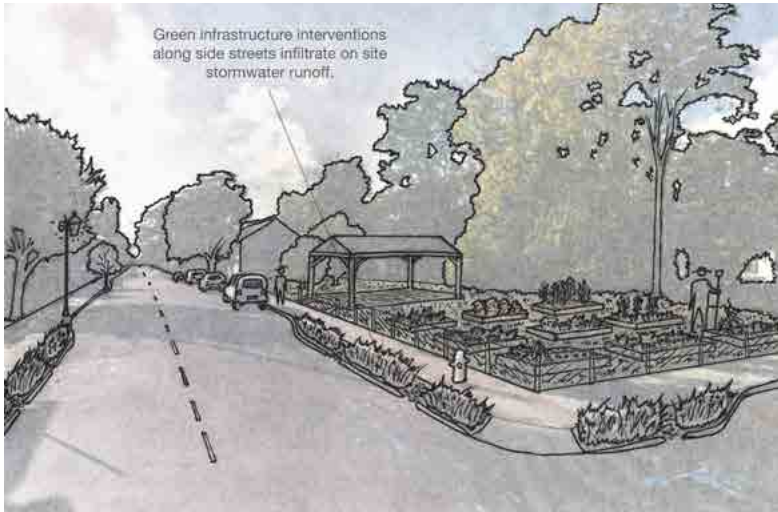
BEN SWAN WAY TACTICAL INTERVENTIONS

Ben Swan Way is shut down to vehicular traffic during specific weekends in the summer. This tactical intervention allows for creative re-imagining of the space. Food trucks festivals, live music events, and outdoor dining can all take place in this newly transformed park-like atmosphere. The road closure is enforced with physical barriers that prevent cars from entering the plaza.



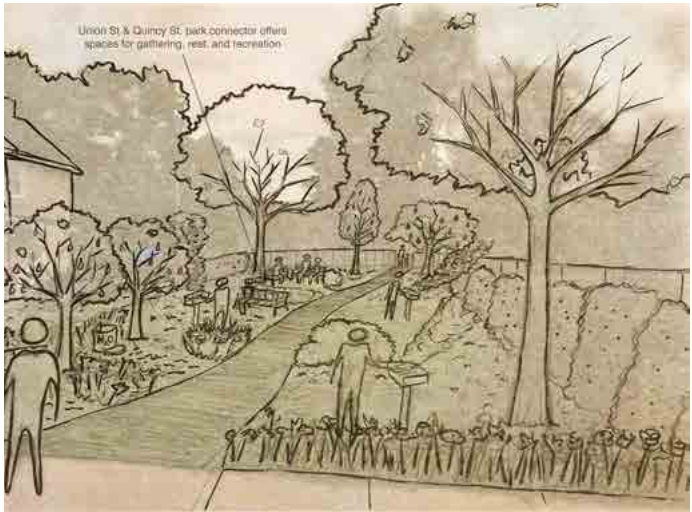
COMMUNITY GARDEN & EDUCATION PAVILION -
CORNER OF TYLER STREET & COLTON STREET

Located at the corner of Tyler Street and Colton Street the new community garden features a pavilion that is used for educational purposes and as a communal gathering space. All along the newly redesigned streetscape, green infrastructure interventions soak up stormwater from cloudburst events, and street trees planted in bump outs reduce speeding up and down this residential road.



UNION ST. TO QUINCY STREET PARKWAY
CONNECTOR

This pocket park is one section of a greater network of a neighborhood scale greenway that connects local hubs in the community to one another. This Union Street to Quincy Street park connector allows for pedestrian travel from the Mason Square City Library and Ben Swan Consolidated School to Donna Blake Park to the south.



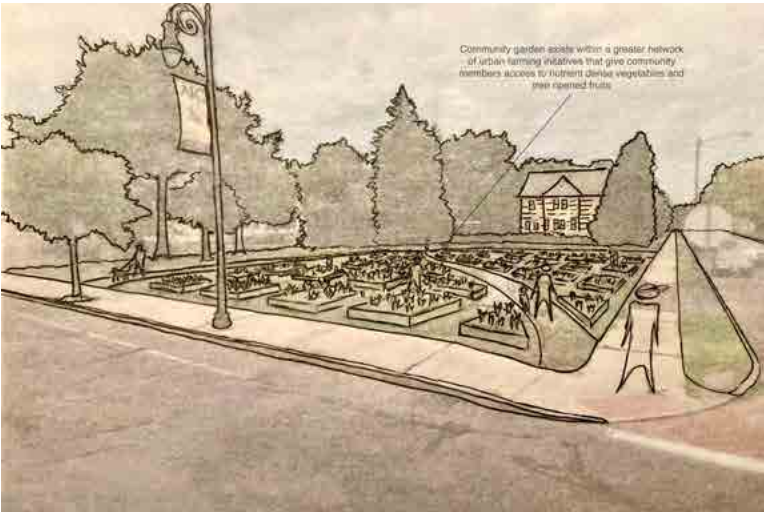
POCKET PARK AT THE CORNER OF MONTROSE
AND COLTON STREET

Located at the corner of Montrose Street and Colton Street the new pocket park features a space for resting, relaxation and social activity. This pocket park design can be used as a tool kit to redevelop the vacant lots. It has amenities like water fountains, benches for people and their pets provide respite from summer heat.



COMMUNITY GARDEN AT CORNER OF
MONTROSE AND STATE STREET

Located at the corner of Montrose Street and State Street the new community garden features a pavilion that is used for educational purposes and as a communal gathering space. This community garden exists within a greater network of urban farming initiatives that give community members access to nutrient dense vegetables and tree ripened fruits.



STREET TREE TYPOLOGY

DESIGN INTERVENTION FOR STREET TREE
TYPOLOGY- 1

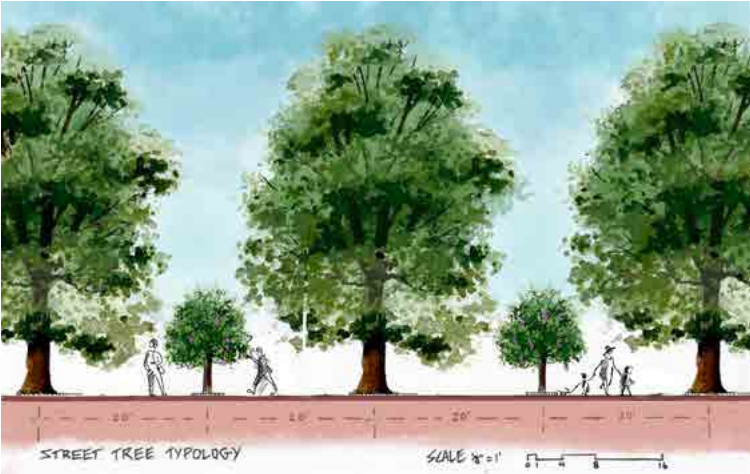
The design idea is to propose 40-60’ tall canopy trees are interplanted with fruiting varieties of mulberry trees. 20’ spacing allows for dwarf mulberry trees, which are tolerant of partial shade, to set easily accessible fruit.

CANOPY TREES:

Ulmus americana ‘Valley Forge’
Quercus spp.

FRUIT TREES:

Morus alba x rubra ‘Gerardi Dwarf’
Morus alba ‘Pendula’



DESIGN INTERVENTION FOR STREET TREE
TYPOLOGY- 2

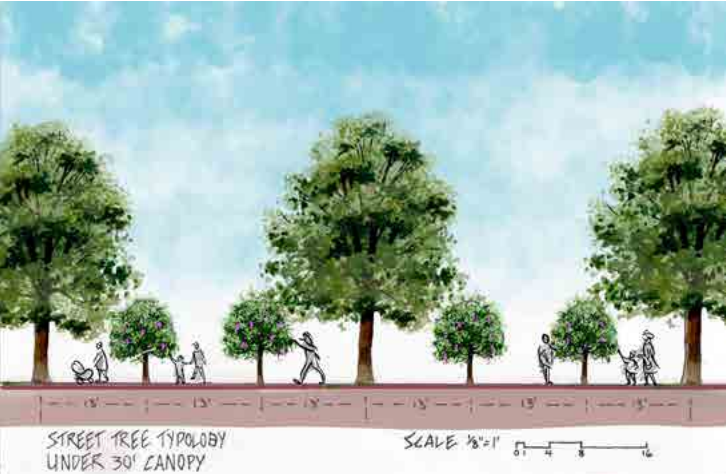
The design idea is to propose canopy trees under 30’ are interplanted with fruiting varieties of dwarf fruit trees. This typology is suitable for streets where power lines are a concern.

CANOPY TREES:

Acer campestre
Acer griseum
Carpinus caroliniana
Syringa reticulata

FRUIT TREES:

Morus alba x rubra ‘Gerardi Dwarf’
Morus alba ‘Pendula’



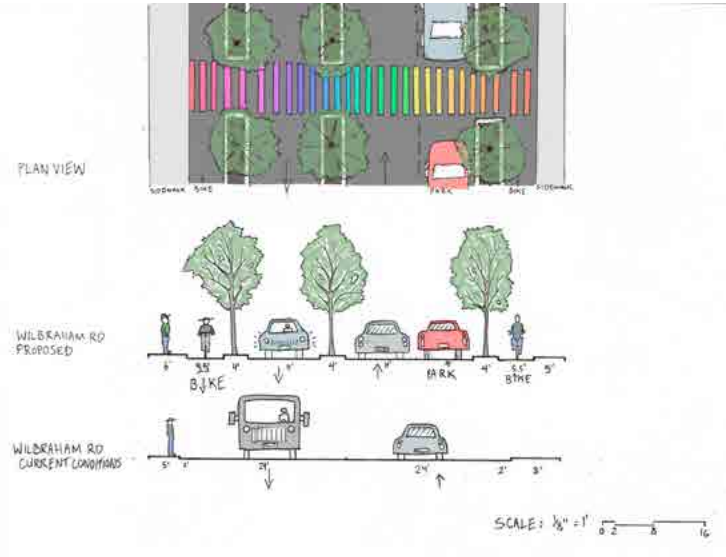
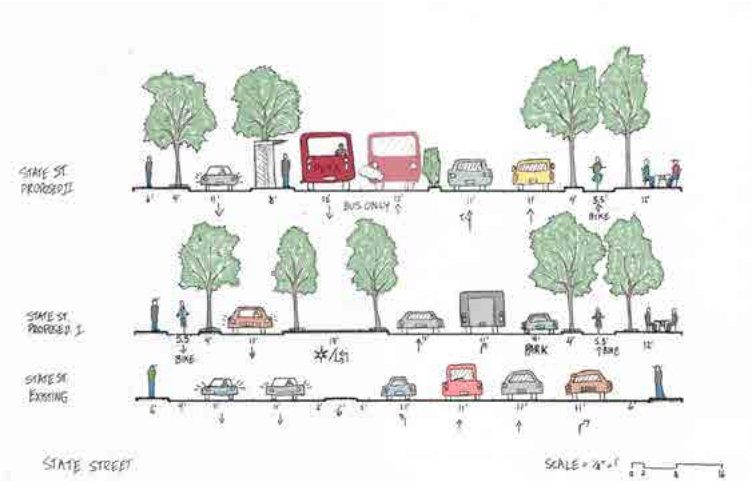
TRAFFIC CALMING

WILBRAHAM ROAD - PROPOSED AND EXISTING
DESIGN STRATEGY

Current conditions along Wilbraham road are bleak with limited pedestrian crossings, bike lanes, traffic calming interventions. Our proposal prioritizes multi-modal transportation, creates on street parking, and increases urban canopy.

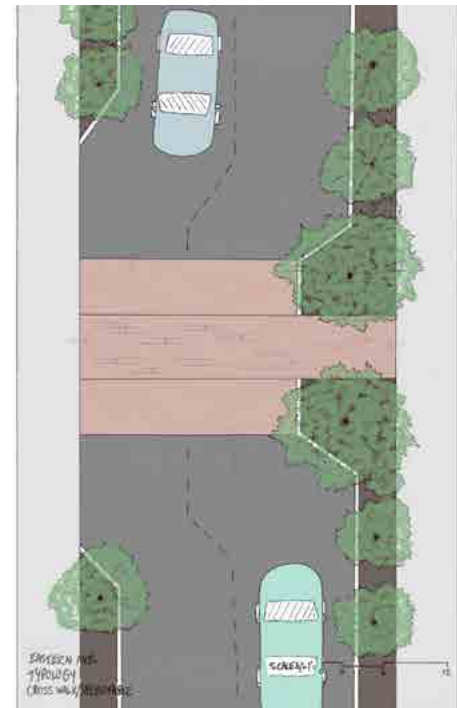
STATE STREET- PROPOSED AND EXISTING
DESIGN STRATEGY

Existing conditions on state street are vehicle centric. Proposed interventions prioritize multi modal transportation, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, increase urban tree canopy, and allow space for outdoor dining experiences. Increased vertical elements along roadway (trees) and reduced lane widths promote slower traffic speeds.



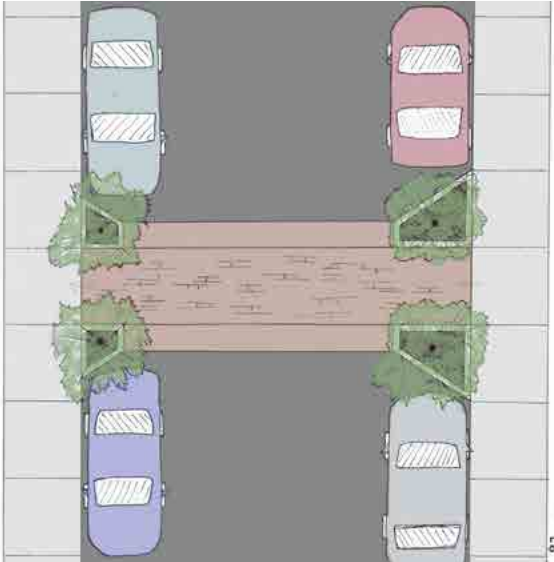
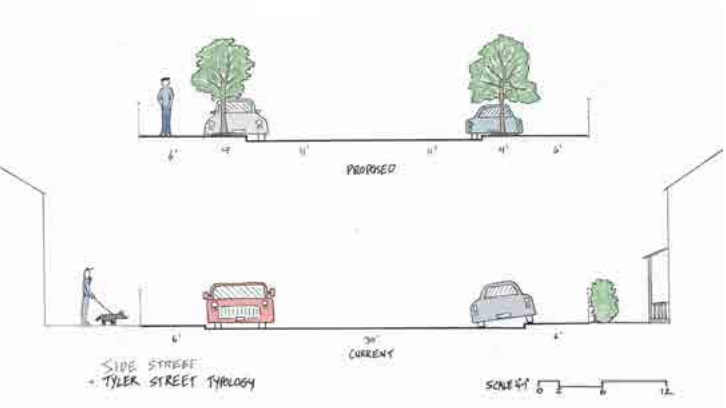
TRAFFIC CALMING

DESIGN STRATEGY FOR TRAFFIC CALMING IN EASTERN AVENUE



Materiality change of crosswalks, speed humps, and speed tables communicate a pedestrian area to vehicular traffic and encourage drivers to slow down. Road widths are reduced, forcing drivers slow down and navigate road obstacles (other cars, street trees plantings in green infrastructure interventions and tree pits).

DESIGN INTERVENTION FOR TYLER STREET



Along side streets, residents frequently currently park on sidewalks. Regrading of side streets to include 6-8" curbs, reducing road widths, and incorporating trees in protected raised planting beds creates safer streets in neighborhoods adjacent to Mason Square.

We would like to thank City of Springfield, PVPC and community members for their valuable feedback throughout our semester long studio. A very special thank you to Professor Frank sleepers for his supports and guidance.

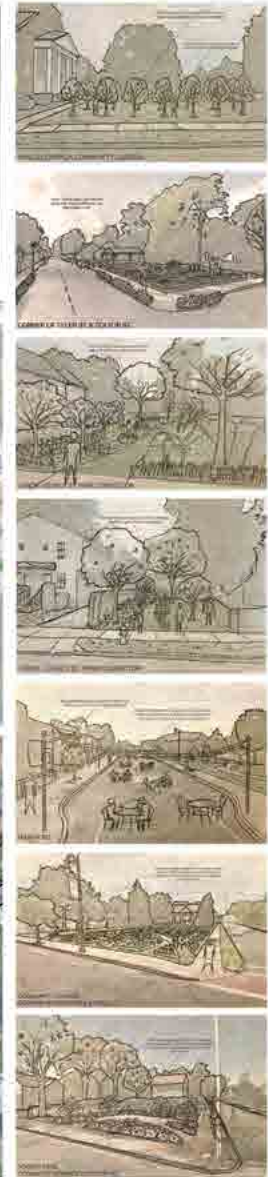
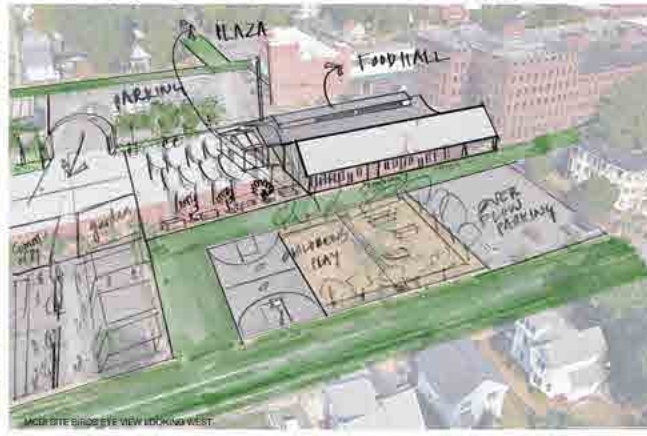
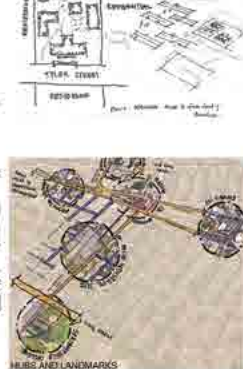
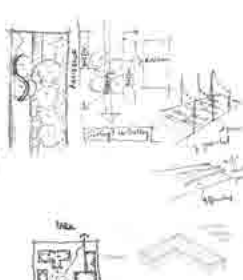
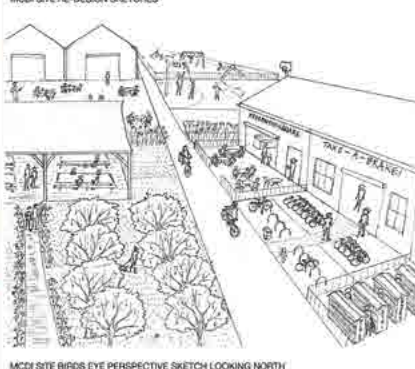
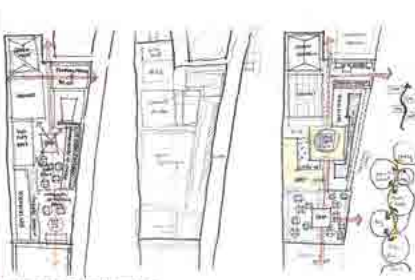
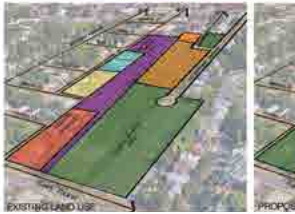


REVITALIZING MASON SQUARE
MICHAEL AMATO, CHANDANA PALIKA

LOCALLY PRODUCED HEALTHY FOOD
BUILDS COMMUNITY, STRENGTHENS RESILIENCY, COMBATS FOOD APARTHEID

The Mason Square District of Springfield Massachusetts sits at the center of four neighborhoods living under food apartheid. The techniques they deploy and their use of landscape are identified as the PAFIC food district. Food apartheid is a new phenomenon born from the intersection of the racialized, discriminatory social and political structures that have led to a lack of food access and food sovereignty. Community members in these neighborhoods want access to affordable food, a grocery store that meets their needs, urban agriculture interventions across the district, and a major intervention at MCDI building site. Through design interventions that emphasize urban greening, address traffic calming, and place-making urban agriculture initiatives, the core of Mason Square will be transformed.

Revisions: Circulation: State street redesign, connectivity throughout district, site re-design, pedestrian greenway, new greenway, public & restaurant
Food Access: Food co-op, food hall, corner, outdoor, corner, gardens, corner, bridge
Green Spaces: Improve existing parks, design green assets, gateway network



REVITALIZING MASON SQUARE
THROUGH URBAN FOOD SYSTEMS

DESIGN BOARD

The Mason Square District of Springfield Massachusetts sits at the center of four neighborhoods living under food apartheid. Food apartheid is a near synonymous term; the difference being its recognition of the racially discriminatory social and political structures that have led to a lack of food access and food sovereignty. Community members in these neighborhoods want access to affordable food, a grocery store that meets their needs, urban agriculture interventions across the district, and a major intervention at MCDI building site. Through design interventions that emphasize urban greening, address traffic calming, and place-making urban agriculture initiatives, the core of Mason Square will be transformed.





PLACEMAKING FOR MASON SQUARE

Chaitrali Doke and Pavana Jairaj

Placemaking, revitalizing, pedestrianizing, are words that basically shine light on the importance of designing a space for the people in the community, to use and to cherish.

One way to do this so that it is effective and economic is by improving public spaces, widening sidewalks and encouraging bikes on the street.

Now these interventions don't necessarily take months to build. Some can be introduced in a matter of days. Examples of these interventions are addition of trees, improving commercial activities, adding more crosswalks, and implementing traffic calming techniques like artistic crosswalks.

In order to revitalize Mason Square district to make it more accessible, inviting and relatable to people wanting to use the space, we made a series of diagrams to achieve it in an effective manner.

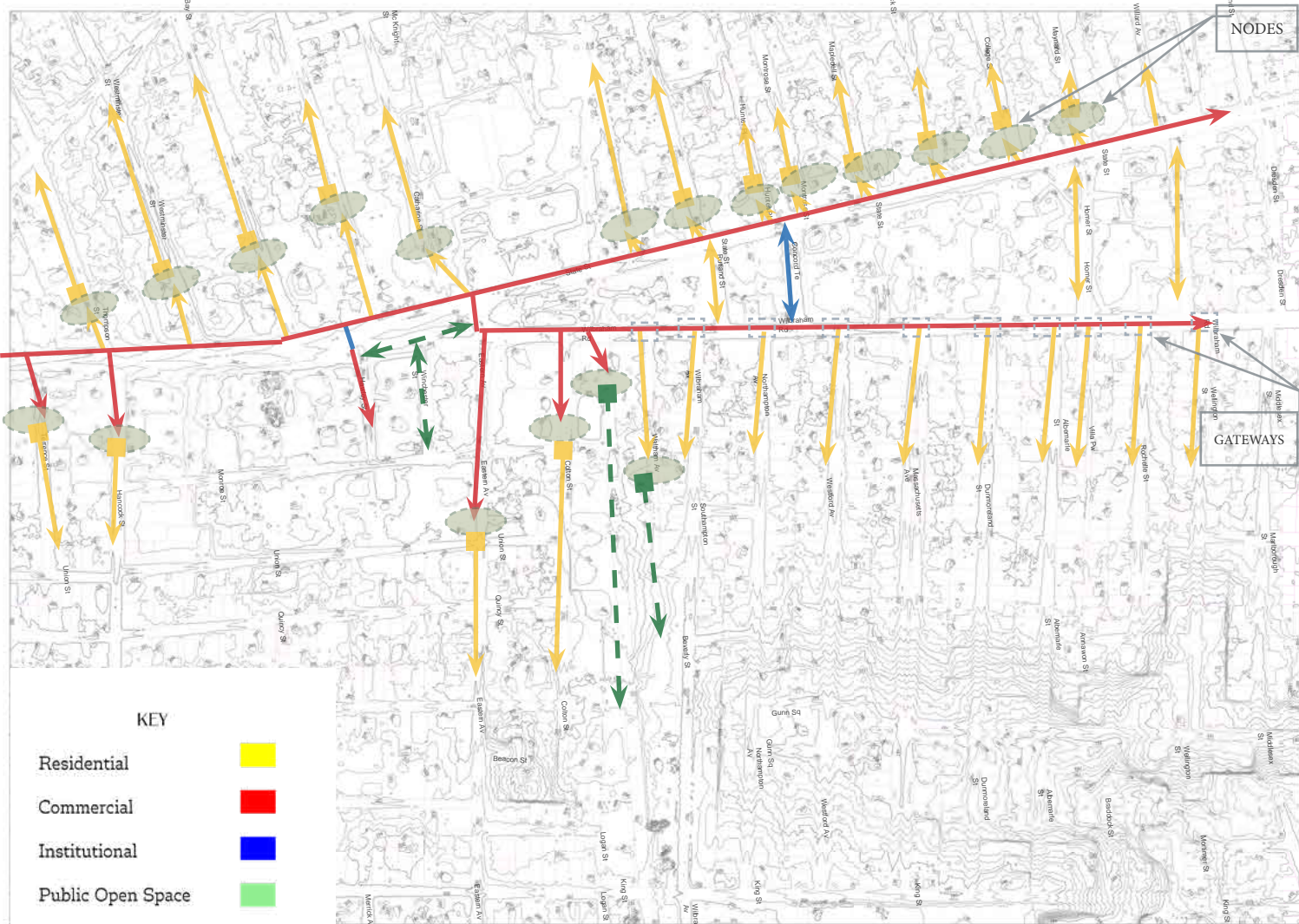
Introducing components to help connect places which are important to the community as well as ensuring a safe, enjoyable commute to these places are our primary objectives. Incorporating green connections help encourage people to be outdoors more and also plays a significant role in reducing environmental pollution and mitigating urban heat island effect.

Quick access routes to educational facilities and open areas have been prioritized throughout the design. The inclusion of green connectors help improve natural percolation of surface runoff, thereby reduces stormwater runoff. In order to achieve a coherent urban space that helps us achieve all that we talked about until now, we are using 3 comprehensive ideas which can be replicated throughout the district.

The first one being a pedestrianized Ben Swan Way which is designed in such a way that is discourages vehicular passing. Some of the placemaking strategies for Ben Swan Way include creating a space to hold festivals which would help promote local culture.

The second is a gateway concept to be applied to the end of a residential street so that it creates a visual barrier and serves as a transition from a highly public and busy street to a quiet residential zone. These gateways are a sure way to create a transition from a busy noisy street to a quiet residential zone. This strategy has been adopted to help the user easily feel a change in the type of zone they have entered and hence be cautious of it.

The third are green connectors that encourage biking, and storm water infiltration. Planting trees is the most economic method to create a tranquil experience. Commercial streets would benefit from these which will eventually boost local economy. These connectors also facilitate storm water infiltration.





STATE STREET

- WIDENED SIDEWALKS
- ADDED BIKEPATHS
- MORE PERVIOUS SURFACES
- WIDER TREE CANOPIES
- COMMERCIALIZED STREET

BEN SWAN WAY

- PEDESTRIANIZED STREET
- A SPACE FOR THE COMMUNITY
- ALTERNATING TREE PLANTERS TO DISCOURAGE VEHICLES
- WIDER TREE CANOPIES

MASON SQUARE PARK

- AN URBAN PARK
- SERVES AS A RESPITE
- BUFFERING VEHICULAR NOISE
- SHADED SEATING AREAS



Sketch showing pedestrianized Ben Swan Way, looking towards redesigned urban park at Mason Square

Wide & Shaded
Sidewalks

Narrower Car Lanes to reduce
speeds and facilitate safe
pedestrianization

Well-lit
Bikepaths

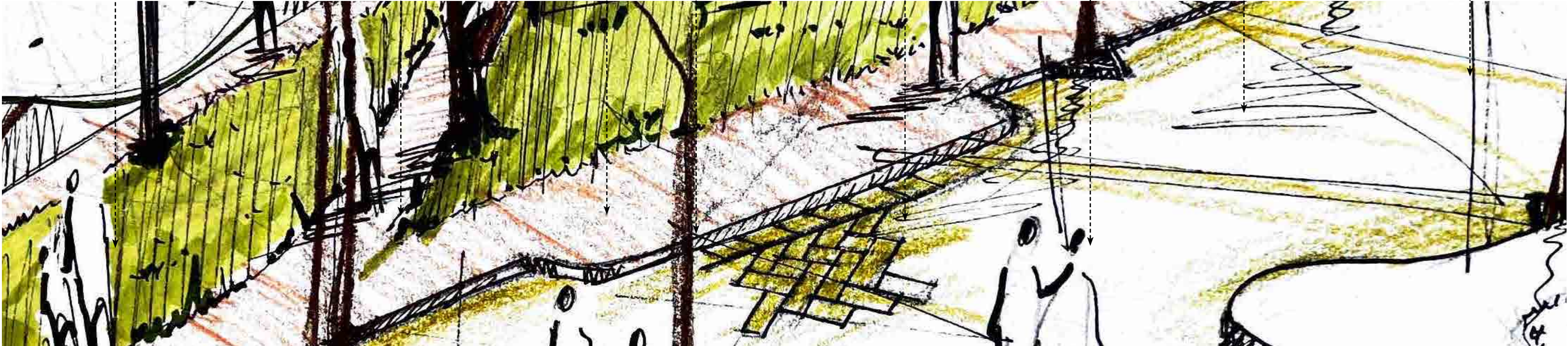
Redesigned
Park

Pedestrianized
Street for Local
Festivals

Alternating Planters to
discourage vehicular traffic

Designed Commercial
Facades to facilitate
engagement

Green Roofs to mitigate
urban heat islands and
facilitate storm water
infiltration



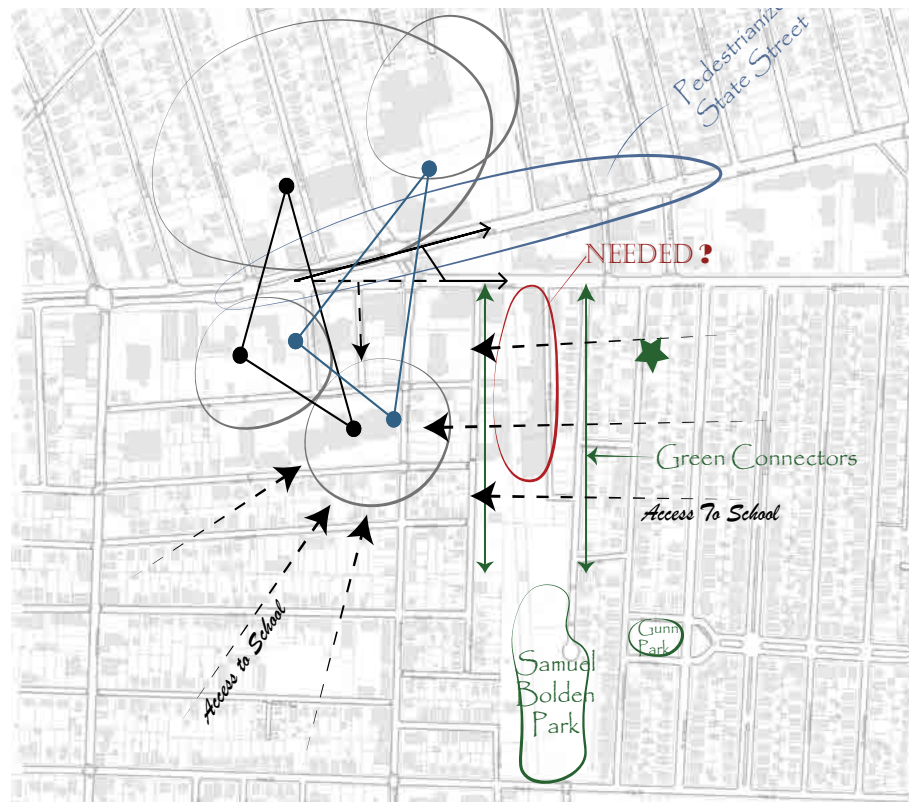
Section through Ben Swan Way, State Street and Mason Square: Implementation of redesigned storefronts and traffic calming.



When entering a quiet residential street from a busy street (like state street), a gateway treatment facilitated by an island helps create a transitional experience. Artistic cross-walks help slow down traffic before approaching these quiet residential zones. The use of anti-skid material for the bike trails and wide tree canopies are some other techniques proven to help reduce traffic speeds.



Sketch showing gateways at intersections of commercial and residential streets



Green connections facilitate unsupervised usage of streets from schools to residences, playgrounds and libraries. Activating these streets involves reducing lanes dedicated for vehicles and encouraging bikes and pedestrians. Green connectors are streets designed to promote pedestrian activities which would make people use these streets in a safe way. Widened sidewalks and the addition of street-lights at regular intervals work towards making these busy streets walkable and safe. Artistic cross-walks- slow down vehicular traffic and encourage children to cross roads more safely.

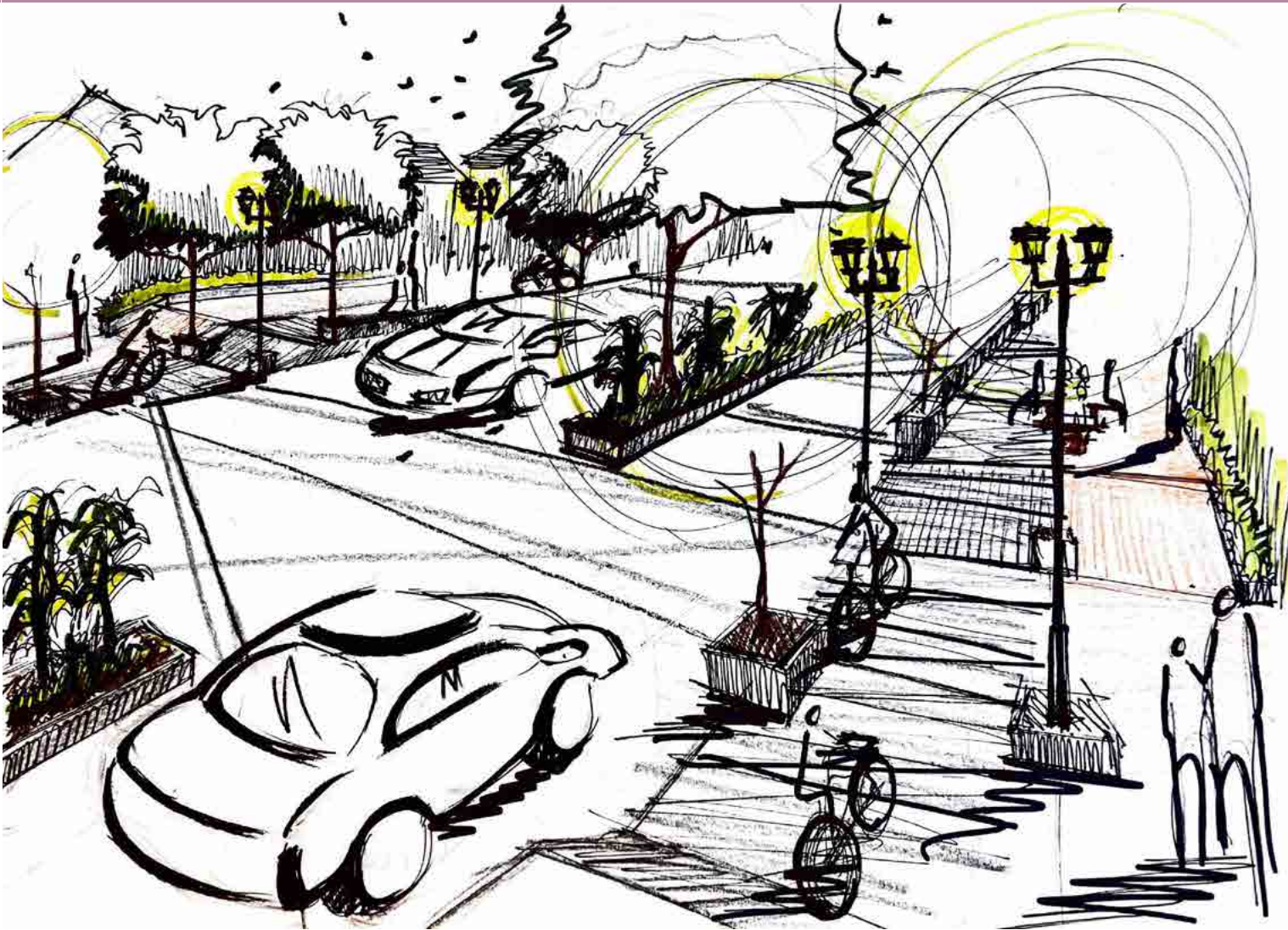




Massachusetts Avenue



Residential Streets



Sketch showing Green Connectors with improved storm water infiltration and well-lit and well shaded bikepaths and sidewalks.

Wider Sidewalks

Artistic Crosswalks for traffic calming



Section through State Street: Traffic calming through artistic crosswalks.

Shaded and Well-Lit Bikepaths

Improved Stormwater Infiltration



Section through State Street and Wilbraham Road: Traffic calming through artistic crosswalks and boulevard treatment.



Sidewalks and Bus Stops



Storefronts

These include design interventions that don't take months to construct and can be implemented within a matter of weeks. Covered bus stops, streetlights, trash cans and bike racks at regular intervals to make a street a usable space. Redesigned storefronts would have shaded seating areas, clear well-lit name boards, and an awning with wall-lamps and green elements to make the space inviting to the public.



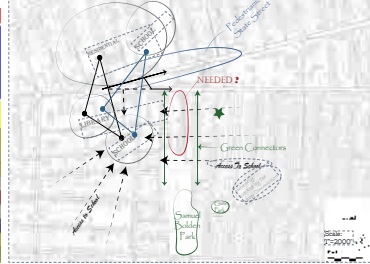
STUDIO 607/608- GREEN, EQUITABLE AND LIVABLE - TRANSFORMING THE CORE OF MASON SQUARE
PAVANA JAIRAJ | CHAITRALI DOKE

PLACEMAKING FOR MASON SQUARE

DESIGN BOARD

“Placemaking by means of a toolkit design helps to connect places which serve to be of importance for the community. It looks at modular designs to be replicated throughout the district to better the green connections and residential gateways. Pedestrianizing Ben Swan Way serves to bring the neighborhoods together and enables on-street activities for festivals, gatherings, etc.”

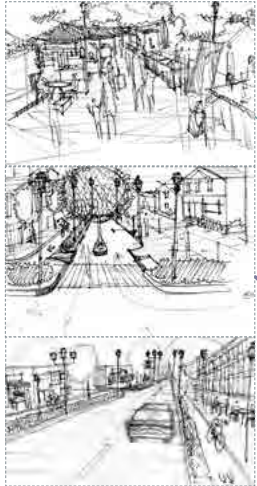
134



Design Approach

To revitalize something is to activate it, make it more accessible, inviting and reliable to people wanting to use the space. Mason Square right now needs to be activated. It has the potential to become a space for the people, not just vehicles. It needs a framework that reimagines life in its streets and corridors. By creating intimate urban spaces, urban streets become more than just highways - they become attractive lively places for the users to thrive. These urban streets are much more beneficial to the residents as well as to the commuters when they are safe and accessible. Introducing urban open spaces in conjunction with green streets provides socio-economic benefits including an increase in local shopping and dining, ultimately increasing in the local economy, increase community engagement and instill greater pride in the community as a whole.

- Design Objectives:**
- To revitalize Stone Street by featuring a street scape and improving commercial facades.
 - To activate the district and make it more inviting by introducing more community open spaces along with urban green spaces.
 - To create green corridors and connecting urban landscapes.
 - To improve commercial facades, parks and vacant lots.
 - To facilitate safe connections, green corridors and pedestrianization.
 - To introduce Street Markets and Traffic calming measures to facilitate safe and pedestrian friendly street.
 - To create safe connections to schools, public parks and libraries.
 - To establish Ben Swan Way and create a community space.



Massachusetts Avenue
Scale: 1:20



Waltham Avenue
Scale: 1:20



Typical Design for Residential Streets
Scale: 1:20



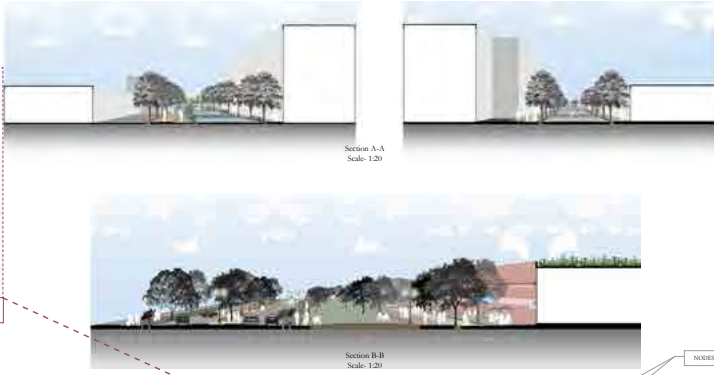
Gateways to Residential Streets
Scale: 1:20



Sidewalk & Bus Stop Detail
Scale: 1:20

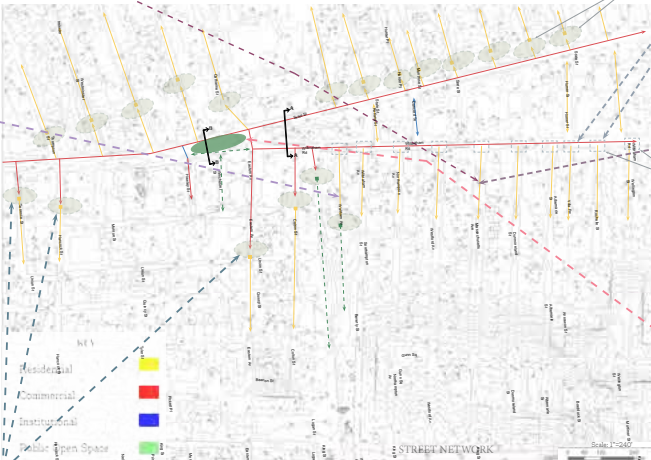


Storefront Detail
Scale: 1:20



Section A-A
Scale: 1:20

Section B-B
Scale: 1:20



NODES

GATEWAYS



Ben Swan Way
Scale: 1:20

135





FORGING COMFORTABLE CONNECTIONS

Michael Riccio, Jeffrey Taylor

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The district of Mason Square in Springfield, Massachusetts is a vibrant and important nexus of the four neighborhoods of McKnight, Bay, Old Hill and Upper Hill. State Street, which runs in an east-west direction, has historically served as the area’s major thoroughfare, but it has become both a community barrier to movement and core legibility due to its current configuration and the high speed of vehicle traffic. This situation has contributed to a lost sense of place within Mason Square on a human scale. The high prioritization of a vehicle-centric roadway has led to “through-not-to” feeling within the landscape, and the low prioritization of alternate transportation modalities have led to a lack of safety and pride of place that would otherwise reflect the wants and needs of residents within the community.

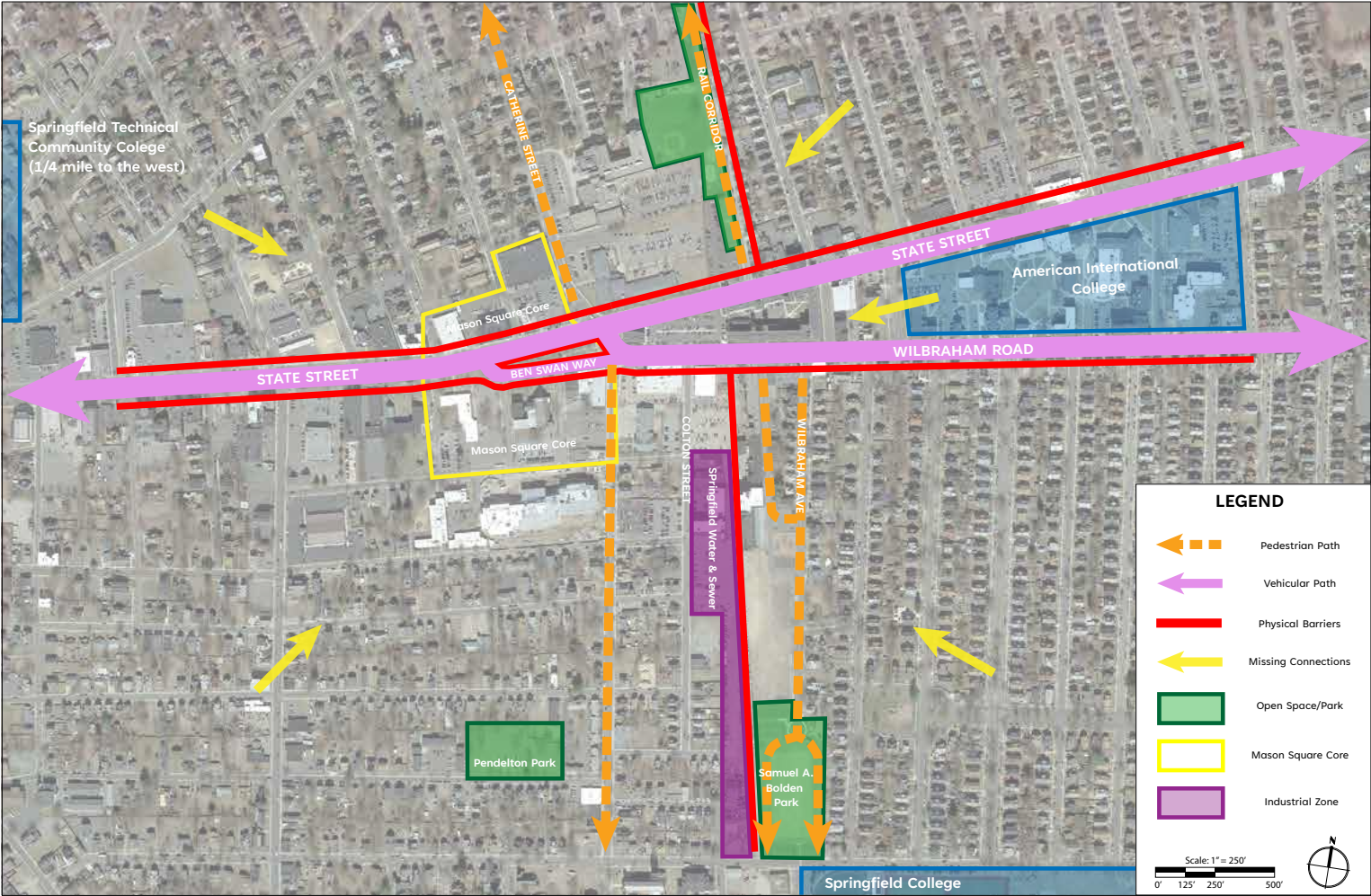
The team’s design goals for Mason Square leverage the heritage and neighborhood desires for connectivity through rebalancing the corridors of State Street, Wilbraham Road and Eastern Avenue to support multi-modal transportation and amenities for the people who live there. In particular, we have created a phased approach to rebalancing and adding friction to State Street that aims to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety and reduce vehicular speed . Additionally, all three streets include raised crosswalks, increased tree canopy, better lighting, longer walk signals, and sidewalk bump-outs that incorporate stormwater infiltration measures. The proposed rail trail is also a main design detail aimed at forging stronger physical connections, in all four directions, that tie into adjacent park and community spaces via perforations through former industrial properties that historically have created barriers to movement and community interaction. Ben Swan Way and the blocks running adjacent to it are similarly given focus to pedestrian friendly spaces via the creation of venues for local gatherings and special events that celebrate local black and diverse heritages. Coupled with increases to mixed-use residential and commercial spaces that front a revitalized core with public parking behind, we are establishing locations that prioritize resident’s needs and desires for beautiful, functionally diverse, and safe places to live, shop and celebrate life in Mason Square.



MASTER PLAN

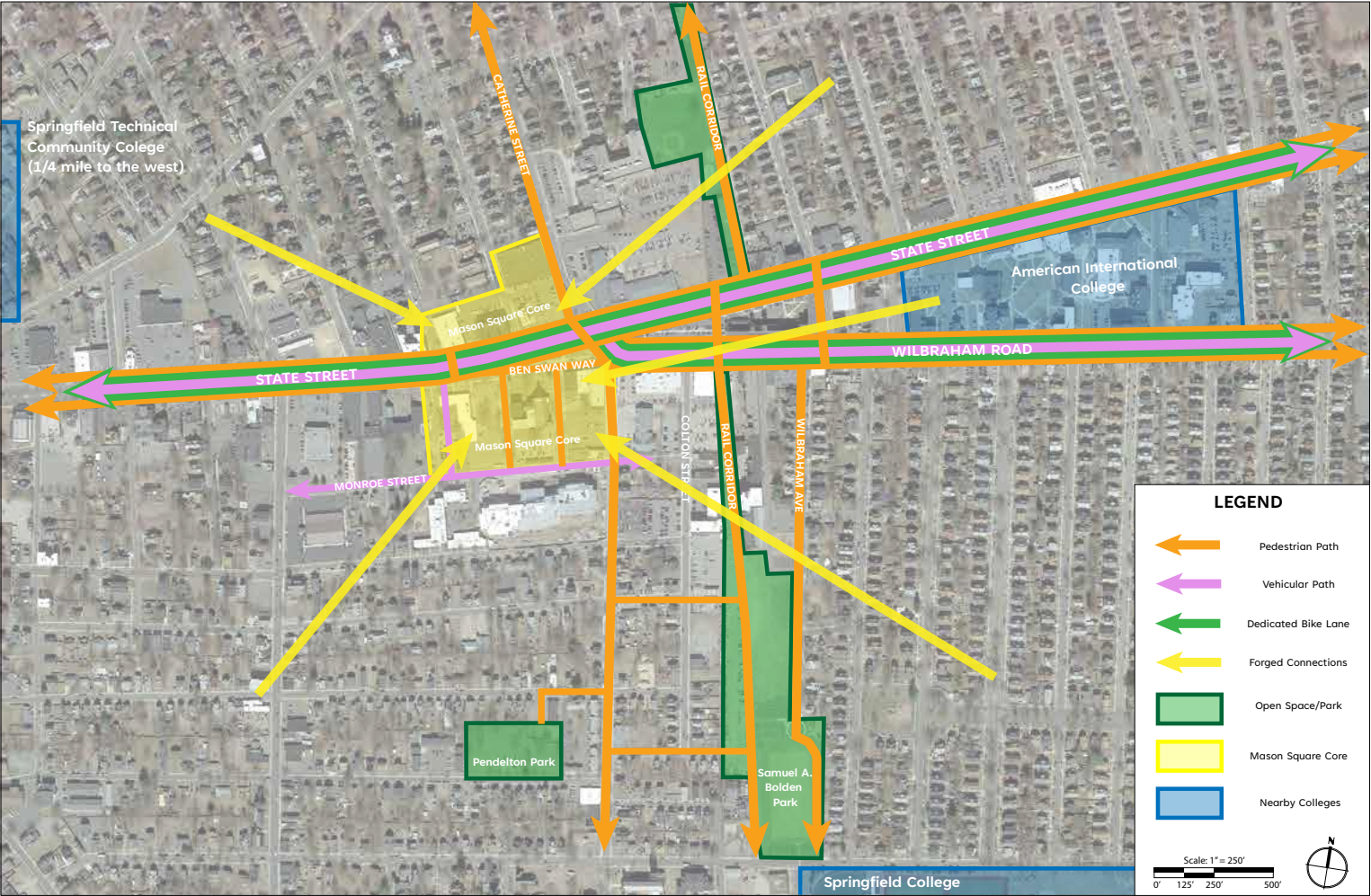


CHALLENGES OVERVIEW



Physical barriers, vehicle-centric roads and an under-activated core area limit safe pedestrian circulation within and across the abutting neighborhood and give Mason Square a distinctly “Through-not-To” identity. This identity is not representative of the strong sense of community exhibited by its residents.

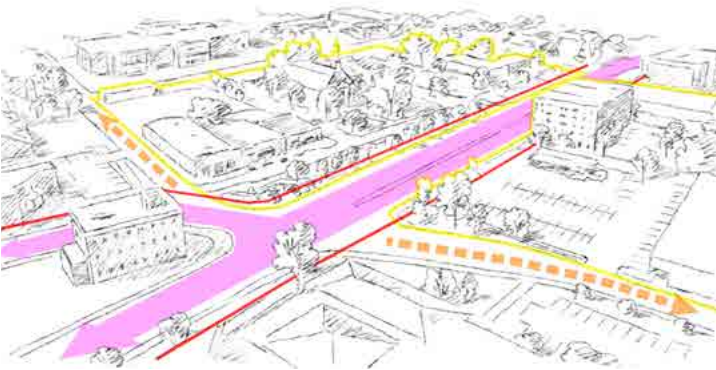
OPPORTUNITIES OVERVIEW



The primary goal of this project is to forge stronger, safer connections that unify the neighborhoods of Mason Square and promote a “To-Not-Through” identity, where residents, students and visitors alike have ample opportunities to access and experience all that Mason Square has to offer.

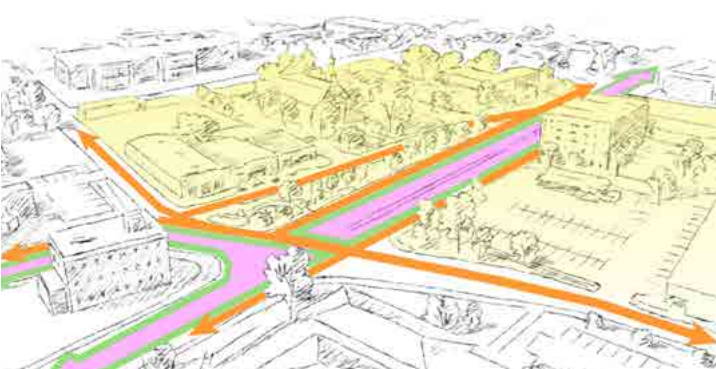
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGE: LACK OF NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIVITY



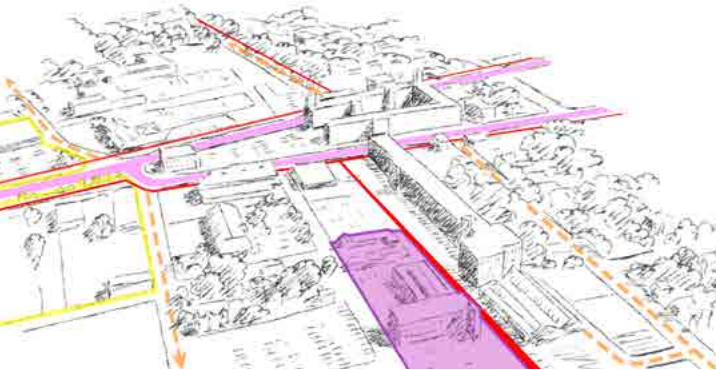
The width and high number of lanes on State St. and Wilbraham create a barrier between neighborhoods, fragmenting the landscape

OPPORTUNITY: REBALANCE STREETS WITH MULTI-MODAL PATHWAYS AND CREATE ACTIVATED NEIGHBORHOOD HUB



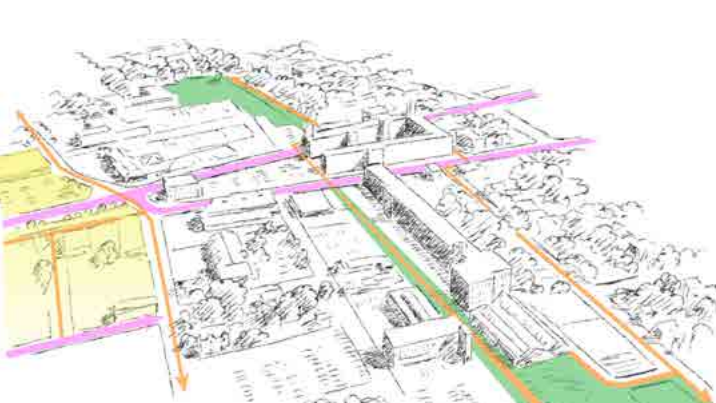
The width and high number of lanes on State St. and Wilbraham create a barrier between neighborhoods, fragmenting the landscape.

CHALLENGE: RAIL LINE & HOLDOVER INDUSTRIAL USE



Former industries and supporting infrastructure such as the rail old line limit east-west connectivity and access to Samuel Bolden Park.

OPPORTUNITY: RAIL TRAIL EXTENSION, GREEN CORRIDOR AND NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



Former industries and supporting infrastructure such as the rail old line limit east-west connectivity and access to Samuel Bolden Park.

MASTER PLAN NINE PRECEDENTS

STOREFRONTS FOCUSED ON INVITING AND ATTRACTIVE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

- Expand existing sidewalks, create spaces for eating, resting and sitting
- Create buffer between people and vehicles
- Include different seating, socializing options
- Enhance storefront aesthetics to attract customers, community to shop and gather
- Limit vehicular traffic to local deliveries, emergency vehicle access

BUILDINGS IN FRONT, PARKING IN BACK: PRIORITIZING PEOPLE OVER VEHICLES

- Multi-use buildings to increase both housing and commercial opportunities in the district
- Parking in rear gives privacy to people for living and working in buildings
- Narrowing of streetscape calms traffic
- Street parking in front of buildings slows vehicles, buffer for customers and residents and creates additional draw for businesses

MIXED-USE, MULTI-STORY BUILDINGS FOR STATE STREET CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT

- Expand use of existing multi-story structures for both stores and affordable housing
- Create attractive residence options that vary in unit size and location in buildings
- Ground-level commercial units for business and restaurant space to attract visitation
- Create raised beds for gardening, green infrastructure improvements incorporated within interior and exterior spaces

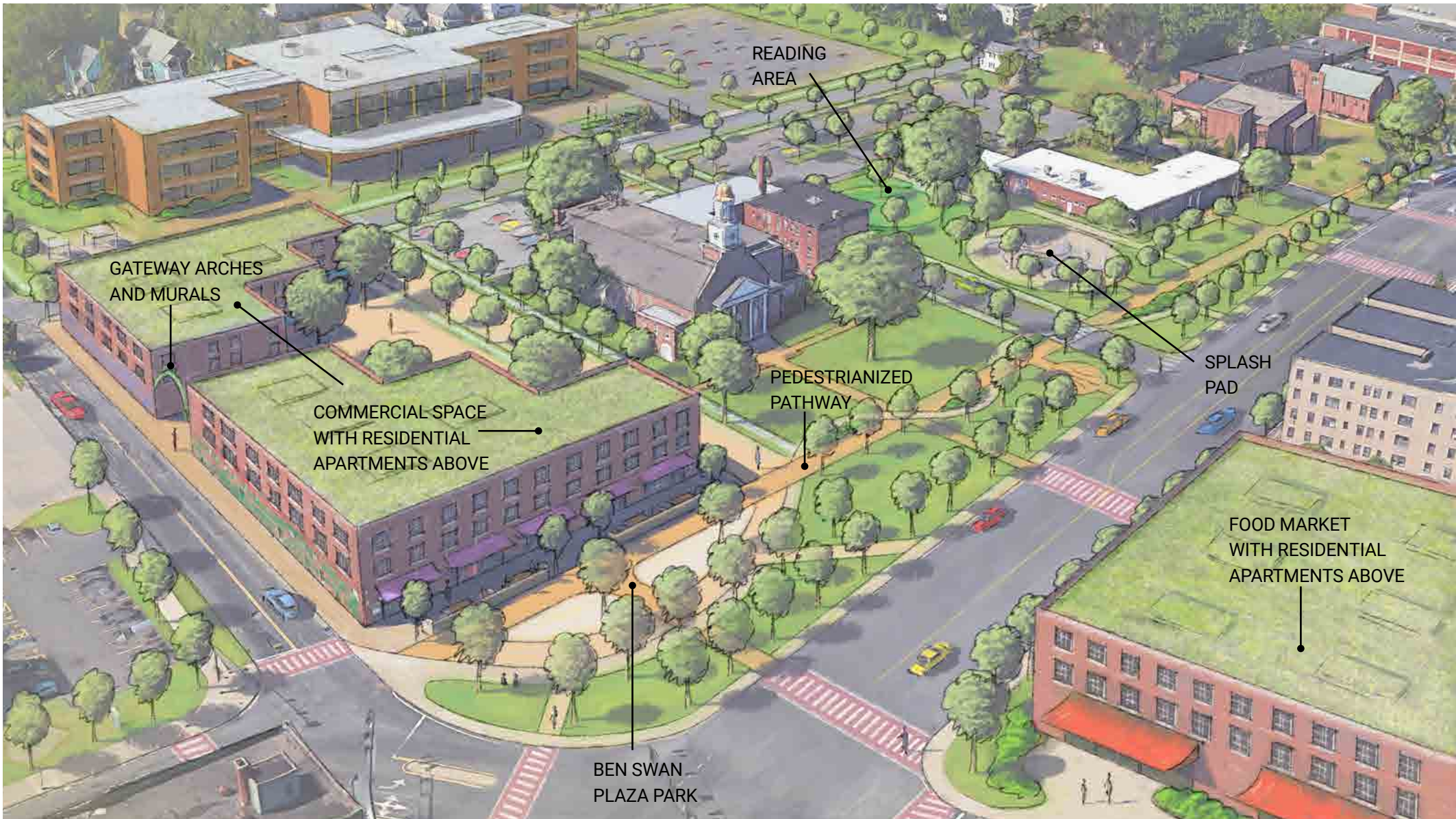


In developing a Master Plan that achieves the project goals, a series of precedent studies were considered with respect to how they might fit within the Mason Square landscape.

MASON SQUARE CORE DESIGN

- Ben Swan Way is reconfigured as a pedestrian-centric pathway through texture and edge treatments, yet is still drivable for drop-offs, deliveries, special events, etc.
- Public parking immediately adjacent to the center and proposed 3-story mixed-use commercial and residential structures.
- Library adjacencies feature outdoor reading and assembly area, splash pad for neighborhood and a green space for gatherings for accessibility to all users.
- Heritage of neighborhood leveraged through murals, entry signs and monuments

MASTER PLAN - DETAIL



ROAD REBALANCING DESIGN - STATE STREET

- The intention of these designs prioritize safety and user experience for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicycles, public transportation and motorists.
- Designs were configured to account for a phased approach to lane rebalancing as needs, services and density changes over time.
- Special consideration was given to the pedestrian experience with decreased crosswalk lengths, speed tables, shade, bus shelters, sidewalk widths and buffers of vegetated infiltration gardens and on-street parking.
- Speeding issues of motorists along State Street are addressed through lane adjustments that vary depending upon specific context and location rather than monolithic or “one-size-fits-all” solutions.

PLAN: STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE. - BEFORE



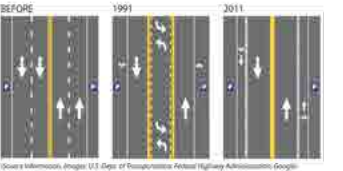
PERSPECTIVE: STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE. - BEFORE



ROAD REBALANCING - PRECEDENTS

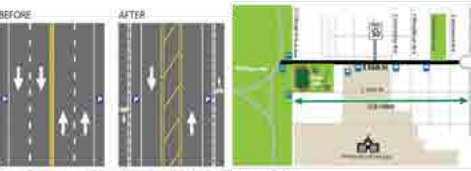
DEXTER AVENUE - SEATTLE, WA

This 2-mile street section was originally 4 lanes and was reduced to 3 in the early 1990's to make it favorable for all users. By 2011, it was further modified to accommodate 2 vehicle lanes and buffered bicycle lanes with street parking. These changes maintained transit times and has increased bus ridership 30% between 2010 and 2013.



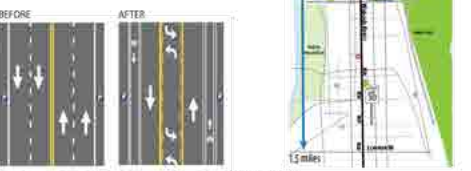
55th STREET - CHICAGO, IL

An 0.8-mile section that was originally 4 lanes was modified to 3 with buffered bicycle lanes and bus stops. Speeding issues prior to the change were resolved with drivers closely adhering to the 30 mph limit. Pedestrians also have an easier time crossing the street at intersecting roadways, and has increased the livability with these pedestrian and bicycle amenities adjacent to the University of Chicago campus.



WABASH AVENUE - CHICAGO, IL

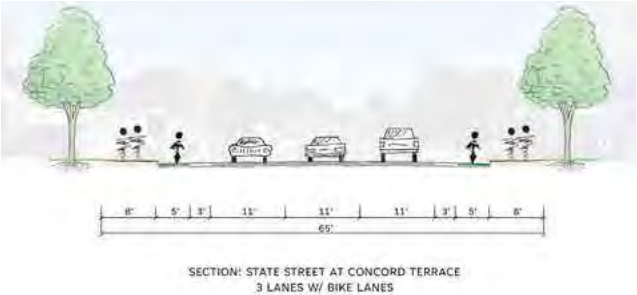
This 1.5-mile 4-lane section was rebalanced to a 3-lane street giving greater priority and safety to bicycles with buffered lanes in both directions. Traffic signals also underwent optimization to mitigate traffic operation concerns. Overall capacity and level of service improved as a result.



The design team examined a number of precedents from different parts of the country that corresponded with similar contextual components of State Street, and the most successful of these were emulated with regards to their phasing, layout and organization.

STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE - PHASING

PHASE ONE: 3 LANES WITH BIKE LANES

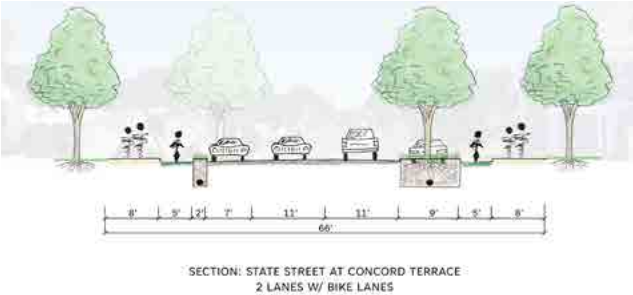


Phase One modifications to State Street at Concord Terrace would include a reduction of lanes from two (2) lanes in each direction, to one (1) lane in each direction, with a middle turn lane and separated bike lanes in both directions. This phase would not require any new construction. Rather, it would fit within the existing road width and could be achieved with only changes to the road paint.
Left: Section of Phase One modifications
Above: Plan view of Phase One modifications
Right: Perspective rendering of Phase One modifications



STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE - PHASING

PHASE TWO: 2 LANES WITH BIKE LANES



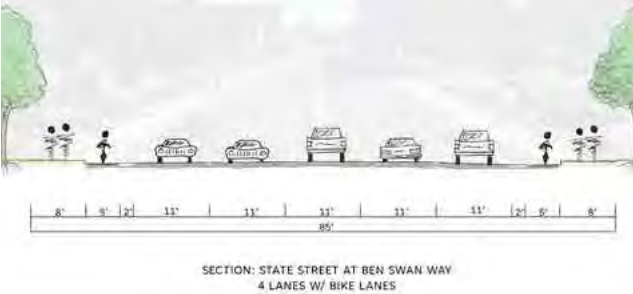
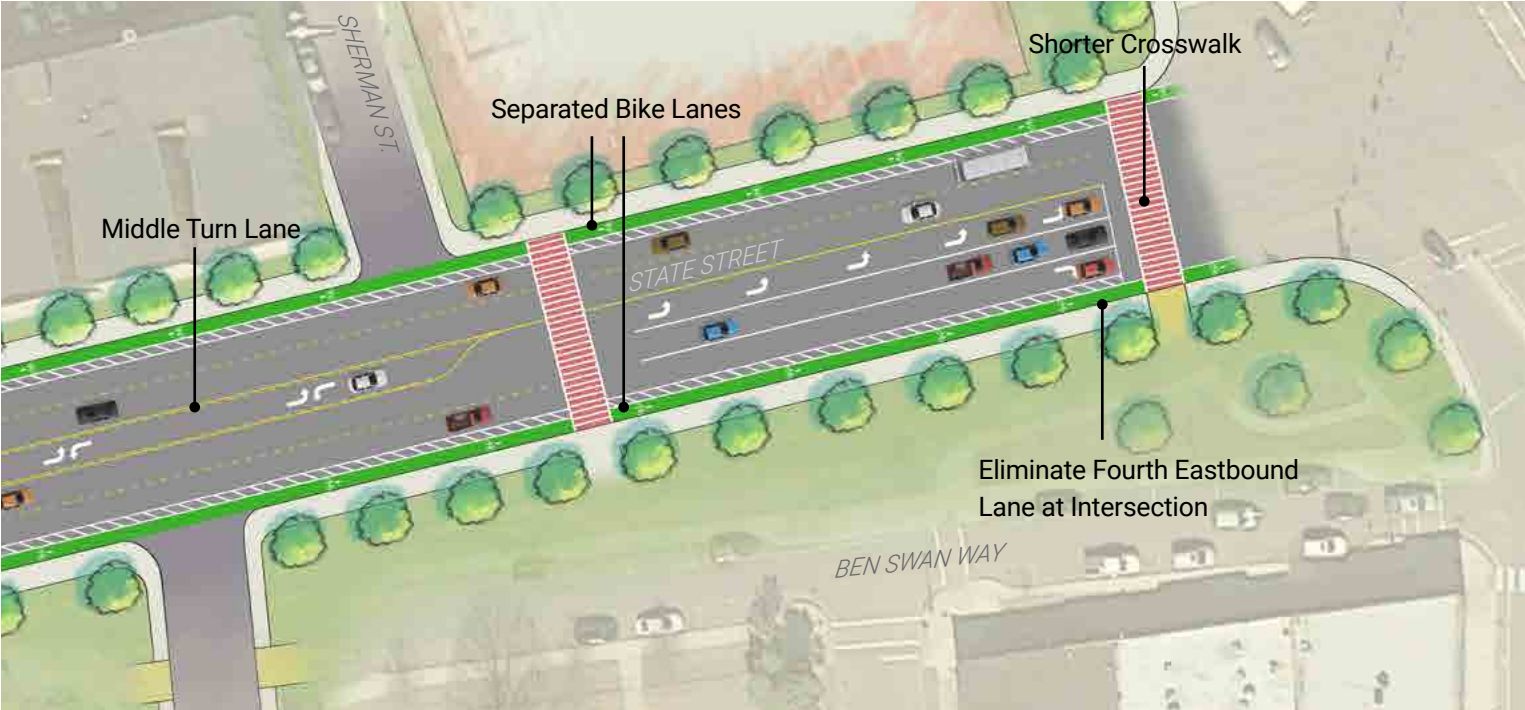
Phase Two modifications to State Street at Concord Terrace would include a further reduction of lanes from one (1) lane in each direction with a middle turn lane to one (1) lane in each direction, no middle turn lane, and street parking, separated bike lanes and rain garden bump outs on both sides of the road.

Left: Section of Phase Two modifications
Above: Plan view of Phase Two modifications
Right: Perspective rendering of Phase Two modifications



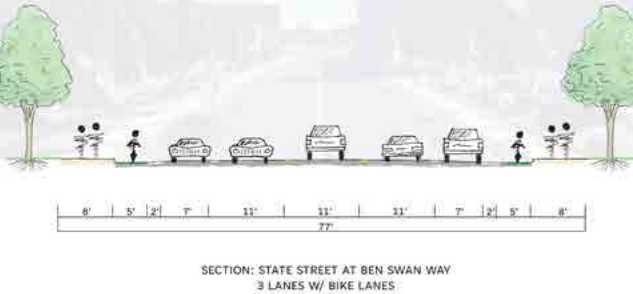
STATE STREET AT BEN SWAN WAY - PHASING

PHASE ONE: 4 LANES WITH BIKE LANES



Phase One modifications to State Street at Ben Swan Way would include removal of the existing median and reduction of turn lanes at the intersection of Catherine Street as well as the creation of separated bike lanes on both sides of the road. Eliminating the median would narrow to overall corridor, allow for separated bike lanes and better enable Phase 2 modifications if they were to become justified.
Left: Section of Phase One modifications
Above: Plan view of Phase One modifications

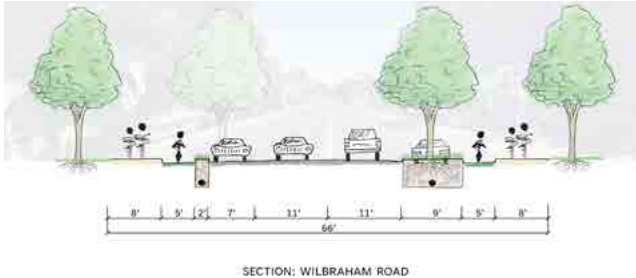
PHASE TWO: 3 LANES WITH BIKE LANES



Phase Two modifications to State Street at Ben Swan Way would include a reduction of travel lanes from two (2) lanes in each direction to one (1) lane in each direction, with a middle turn lane, separated bikes lanes and new street parking. The addition of street parking would offset parking lost per Ben Swan Way Master Plan modifications, and would add a buffer between vehicular traffic and bike traffic.
Left: Section of Phase One modifications
Above: Plan view of Phase One modifications

WILBRAHAM AT COLTON STREET

2 LANES WITH BIKE LANES



Modifications to Wilbraham Road would not require phasing. The road currently has one (1) travel lane in each direction, but those lanes are much wider than needed. By reducing the lane width to 11', the additional space could then be used to establish separated bike lanes, rain garden curb bump-outs and street parking in between.

Left : Section Wilbraham Road modifications

Above: Plan view of Wilbraham Road modifications

Right: Perspective rendering of Wilbraham Road modifications





This rendering depicts a re-imagined Ben Swan Way, which would include a small plaza, dense tree canopy, ample seating and a new mixed-use commercial/residential storefront. Restricted vehicular access would create a safer, more inviting, pedestrian-centric space, thereby creating a highly active hub that helps unify and strengthen the identity of Mason Square.



Tactical Interventions refer to short-term, low-cost, scalable interventions aimed at catalyzing long-term, meaningful changes to a community. For this project, tactical interventions would include temporary closures of Ben Swan Way and subsequent programming of the Mason Square core area, which would offer the community an opportunity to re-envision how the space can be used now and into the future.

MASON SQUARE: FORGING COMFORTABLE CONNECTIONS

The district of Mason Square in Springfield, Massachusetts is a vibrant and important nexus between the four neighborhoods of McKnight, Bay, Old Hill and Upper Hill. State Street, which runs in an east-west direction, has historically served as the area's major thoroughfare, but it has become both a barrier to community movement and core legibility due to its current configuration and the high speed of vehicular traffic. This situation has contributed to a lost sense of place within Mason Square on a human scale. The high prioritization of a vehicle-centric roadway has led to "through-traffic" feeling within the landscape, and the low prioritization of alternate transportation modalities have led to a lack of safety and pride of place that would otherwise reflect the current wants and needs of residents within the community.

Our design goals for Mason Square leverage the heritage and neighborhood desires for connectivity through rebalancing the corridors of State Street, Wilbraham Road and Eastern Avenue to support multi-modal transportation and amenities for the people who live there. In particular, we have created a phased approach to rebalancing State Street that aims to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety and reduce vehicular speed through friction. Additionally, all three streets include raised crosswalks and tree canopy, better lighting, longer walk signals, and sidewalk bump-outs that incorporate stormwater infiltration measures. The proposed rail trail is also a main component of design aimed at forging stronger physical connections, in all four directions, that tie into adjacent park and community spaces via perforations through former industrial properties that historically have created barriers to movement and community interaction. Ben Swan Way and the blocks running adjacent to it are similarly given focus to pedestrian friendly spaces through the creation of venues for local gatherings and special events that celebrate local black and diverse heritages. Coupled with increases to mixed-use residential and commercial spaces that front a revitalized core with public parking behind, we have established locations that prioritize resident's needs and desires for beautiful, functionally diverse, and safe places to live, shop and celebrate life in Mason Square.

CHALLENGE: LACK OF NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIVITY



The width and high number of lanes on State St. and Wilbraham create a barrier between neighborhoods, fragmenting the landscape

OPPORTUNITY: REBALANCE STREETS WITH MULTI-MODAL PATHWAYS



Creation of complete street designs with mixed-use structures and pedestrian pathways to make safe and accessible travel possible

CHALLENGE: RAIL LINE AND INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR



Former industries and supporting infrastructure such as the rail old line limit east-west connectivity and access to Samuel Bolden Park.

OPPORTUNITY: TRAIL, GREENWAY AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



Streetscapes and pathways focused on movement of people over vehicles, creating connections to neighborhoods and core area.

NEW CONNECTIONS DIAGRAM



VEHICULAR PATHWAYS DIAGRAM



SCHEMATIC DESIGN OF MASTER PLAN



PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS DIAGRAM



BICYCLE PATHWAYS DIAGRAM



VEGETATION DIAGRAM



LANDSCAPE DESIGN - CUMULATIVE



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF MASON SQUARE CORE DESIGN

ROAD REBALANCING - COMPLETE STREETS

- The intention of these designs prioritize safety and user experience for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicycles, public transportation and motorists.
- Designs were configured to account for a phased approach to lane rebalancing as needs, services and density changes over time.
- Special consideration was given to the pedestrian experience with decreased crosswalk lengths, speed tables, shade, bus shelters, sidewalk widths and buffers of vegetated infiltration gardens and on-street parking.
- Speeding issues of motorists along State Street are addressed through lane adjustments that vary depending upon specific context and location rather than monolithic or "one-size-fits-all" solutions.



REBALANCED WILBRAHAM ROAD - 2 LANES WITH BIKE LANES



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF WILBRAHAM ROAD NEAR COLTON STREET

MASON SQUARE CORE

- Ben Swan Way reconfigured as a pedestrian-centric pathway through texture and edge treatments, yet is still drivable for drop-offs, deliveries, special events, etc.
- Public parking immediately adjacent to center and proposed 3-story mixed-use commercial and residential structures.
- Library adjacencies feature outdoor reading and assembly area, splash pad for neighborhood and a green space for gatherings accessible to all users.
- Heritage of neighborhood leveraged through murals, entry signs and monuments accompanied with didactica.



DETAIL OF MASON SQUARE CORE DESIGN



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF PEDESTRIANIZED BEN SWAN WAY



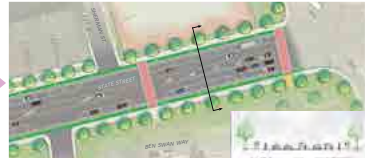
PHASE 1 OF STATE STREET AT BEN SWAN WAY - 4 LANES W/ BIKE LANES



PHASE 1 OF STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE - 3 LANES W/ BIKE LANES



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF PHASE 1 OF STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE



PHASE 2 OF STATE STREET AT BEN SWAN WAY - 3 LANES W/ BIKE LANES



PHASE 2 OF STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE - 2 LANES W/ BIKE LANES



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF PHASE 2 OF STATE STREET AT CONCORD TERRACE

FORGING COMFORTABLE CONNECTIONS

DESIGN BOARD

"Forging stronger physical and community connections across the Mason Square neighborhoods by eliminating physical barriers, creating safer, pedestrian-centric road networks, enhancing public greenspace, and establishing an active community hub where the four neighborhoods converge."



