

DEAN'S CHARRETTE #3

# Downtown Kalamazoo

A Study of Urban Sequences & Activation of the Public Realm

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## *Final Report*

MAY 2023



PREPARED BY

The University of Notre Dame  
School of Architecture  
Housing & Community Regeneration Initiative



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## WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

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...And all of the City Staff working on these initiatives in Downtown Kalamazoo.

The study was supported by the City of Kalamazoo Foundation for Excellence.

*The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture's Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative is a "Think-and-Do Tank" that provides assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations to improve economic development by reimagining the built environment. Our work targets immediate local impact as well as national and global influence through three interrelated activities: actionable projects, research, and education. Faculty, students, and collaborating professional teams carry out these activities under the leadership of the school's dean, Stefanos Polyzoides, and the Initiative's director, Marianne Cusato.*

*The work undertaken within this Initiative is based on the principles of New Urbanism and a belief that as stewards of our built environment we can facilitate a strong social infrastructure and leave a better world for future generations by developing and promoting human-scale walkable communities.*



Walsh Family Hall of Architecture, University of Notre Dame.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kalamazoo is a city of opportunity. With a unique combination of a highly effective city staff, an engaged public, the political will to act, and multiple sources of funding, this midsize college town in southwest Michigan is currently undergoing a renaissance of urban planning and economic development. ***Downtown Kalamazoo is a welcoming place full of exciting urban moments:*** pockets of activity, beauty, and possibility. The Kalamazoo Mall, the country’s first outdoor pedestrian mall, and the adjacent historic retail buildings lining Michigan Avenue create a commercial core that thrives at a community-enabling human scale. Nature is drawn through the built environment from the Arcadia Creek canal to Bronson Park at the city’s civic core.

***And yet, despite these successful individual moments, downtown Kalamazoo is a place that still bears the scars of Urban Renewal from the 1960s.*** The most prominent of these are the wide, high-speed, one-way streets that make the pedestrian experience unpleasant and dangerous. These one-way streets impair retail and have resulted in underutilized parking lots and vacant land that cover over half of downtown, leaving wide, empty spaces at the edge of what ought to be dense, framed, downtown streets. Further, because of the high-speed streets, the city has not been able to connect the energy of the surviving urban moments to spread activity throughout downtown.

Due to these past choices, walking through the city is an inconsistent experience. The Kalamazoo Mall, Bronson Park, and the denser downtown core along Michigan Avenue are all exciting to traverse on foot. Yet getting to them is difficult because some streets feel unsafe to cross, and it is not always clear from the outside that you are approaching one of these pockets of activity, which are pleasant only once you enter them. Building on these moments, connecting them together, and inviting pedestrians will provide the vibrancy the downtown streets currently lack.

### About This Study

The City of Kalamazoo engaged the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture’s Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative to devel-

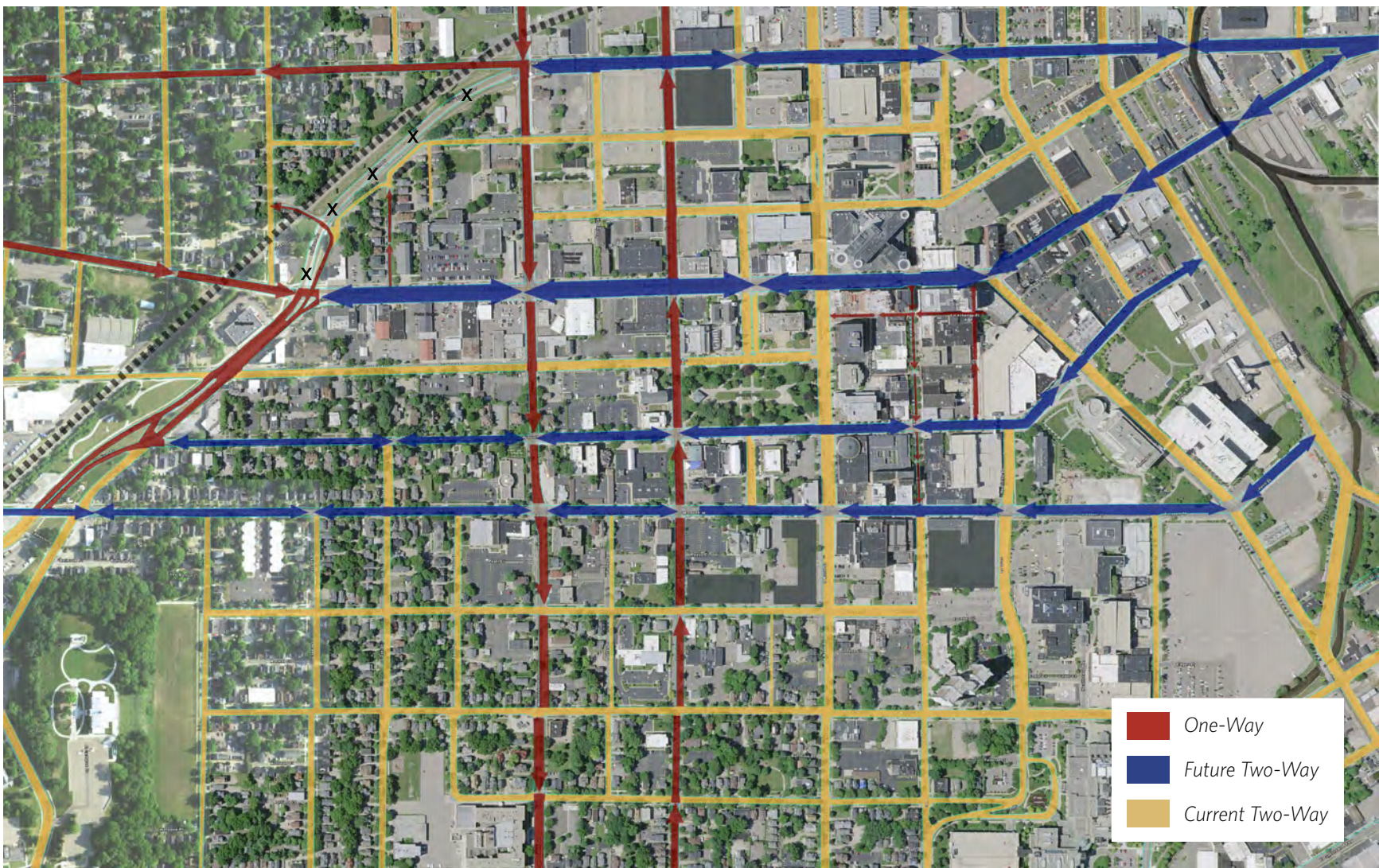
op a downtown vision to help ***repair*** the damage from Urban Renewal and ***reconnect*** activity throughout the downtown core. This study builds on the efforts of “Imagine Kalamazoo 2025,” a collaboration between city staff, local stakeholders, and members of the public working together to shape a collective vision for the city. The catalyst for this study is the city’s approval to return several of the one-way streets back to two-way traffic. The city received a \$6 million federal RAISE grant for planning and engineering as part of the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

The scope of this study is limited to the design of the public right-of-way in downtown Kalamazoo. We recognize the need to further study the connection of downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods, especially directly to the north and west, as well as the need for an in-depth study of housing types, both designs and proformas, for redevelopment sites throughout the downtown and adjoining neighborhoods.

### A Vision for Kalamazoo

***The study operates at two levels. The first seeks specific strategies to activate the public realm at street level through catalytic design proposals. The second is an exploration of how to connect isolated pockets of activity throughout the city.*** The proposals in this report identify successful moments within the city’s urban fabric, note opportunities to continue the current growth and activity, and provide specific strategies to celebrate and expand upon the best parts of Kalamazoo. They take into account already existing patterns of building use, density, pedestrian movement, car movement, and green space to recommend both short-term and long-term goals to reinforce existing momentum in the city.

The framework to repair and reconnect downtown Kalamazoo is already well underway. The vision set forth in this document supports existing momentum. The advice offered can be taken as a single body of work or as independent design proposals, with the common understanding that existing areas of activity must prioritize and enable pedestrian movement—both between pockets and as a holistic strategy. In tandem, all future development must be designed with the pedestrian citizen in mind.



**FIGURE 1: Streets for All Conversion**

Diagram of the street network of downtown Kalamazoo showing existing two-way streets (yellow), future two-way streets (blue), and remaining one-way streets in the short-term (red). The new two-way east-west streets will be transformed from high-speed corridors designed to move cars through downtown into pedestrian-friendly streets designed to attract people to experience the city on foot.





**FIGURE 2: Repair — Activation of the Public Realm at Street Level**  
A street-level view of the proposed activation of the public realm on W. Michigan Avenue. Changing to two-way streets will calm traffic. On-street parking, regular spacing of street trees, and outdoor dining make sidewalks safe, which will attract pedestrians to support local businesses.



**FIGURE 3: Reconnect — An Overview of Key Urban Elements within the Study Area**  
Aerial view of downtown Kalamazoo illustrating a network connecting the existing pockets of activity. These pockets radiate from the commercial core along both Burdick Street and Michigan Avenue (red), extending along Arcadia Creek (blue) between Arcadia Festival Place and the future event center site, then drawing activity through to Bronson Park and back to Burdick Street (yellow).





Charrette team photo on Michigan Avenue. Fifteen people across six lanes.

PROCESS

The results of this study were developed using the charrette process. A charrette is a method of design collaboration developed by New Urbanist practitioners over several decades. *At the heart of the process is the idea that complex design questions are best answered by assembling an interdisciplinary team of experts and stakeholders to participate in an intense workshop setting, with a continuous loop of design collaboration and immediate feedback.*

The charrette for this study was held on site in Kalamazoo, Michigan, from August 15–18, 2022. The team included Notre Dame School of Architecture faculty, leading industry professionals and experts, representatives of the City of Kalamazoo, and Notre Dame architecture students, as well as numerous visiting guests and local stakeholders.

Dean’s Charettes are educational charettes — a unique variation of the typical process. While the work and findings are professionally led, we employ the forum to educate the students who are working side-by-side with faculty and visiting industry guests, as colleagues. Throughout the process, students experience the dynamics of a real-world project, employ skills learned in the classroom, and have one-on-one tutorials with practicing experts in the field.

The process for this study started with an extensive site analysis, which led to a four-day intensive charrette followed by a semester-long class to assemble the final report. During the four days of design, the team explored the city, discussed overall strategies and goals in collaboration with city staff, and engaged in smaller-team design sessions. To conclude the week, the team presented its work to the mayor, members of city council, and Kalamazoo citizens and professionals at Kalamazoo City Hall. A detailed description of this sequence is outlined in the timeline below.

*The goal of the charrette is to offer specific recommendations that can be implemented, while remaining general enough to stay relevant as local conditions shift over time;* it also aims to strike a balance between short-term and long-term goals. While the holistic strategies presented as a result of this process represent a general recommendation for how to move forward urbanistically, many of the specific concepts proposed are only the beginning of a long and evolving process.

SITE ANALYSIS & PREP MEETINGS

In the months leading up to the charrette, members of the design team met with city staff several times to identify the needs of the city and create a detailed scope of work. In this period, the team collected base information for the site and generated detailed analytical diagrams documenting existing and future street direction, vacant land locations, existing pockets of activity, existing right-of-way dimensions, and more.



PRE-CHARRETTE

SITE TOUR AND INITIAL CONCEPTS

Day One began with a walking tour of the city, led by Assistant City Manager Rebekah Kik and Deputy Director/City Planner Christina Anderson. The team learned about the city’s past, present, and future; engaged with the pedestrian experience; and gathered photos and measurements to use over the next few days. After gaining a better understanding of the context and existing conditions, the team returned to the studio and developed a strategy for the design process.



DAY ONE

DEVELOP CONCEPTS & CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Day Two kicked off with a meeting to review the overall goals of the project, then the team split into small groups to develop concepts and meet with city staff and engineers. Each group comprised a mix of students, faculty, and professionals, and separately tackled issues of landscaping, street design, the downtown core, and overall connectivity. Day Two wrapped up with a presentation of the project to the mayor and city council at city hall.



DAY TWO





## THE CHARRETTE PROCESS

### Site & Program Assessment

Work with city staff to clearly understand the issues the design seeks to solve.

### Site Tours & Analysis

Foster a deep understanding of the project context through multiple site visits and the production of analytical drawings, thus establishing a tangible approach to design questions.

### Iterations & Collaborations

Work as a team to generate design concepts and ideas, then continually revise these concepts in response to feedback.

### Community Engagement

Present work to city officials and local stakeholders to share concepts and get feedback.

### Continuous Feedback Loops

Meet frequently, both internally with the design team and externally with stakeholders, to garner feedback regarding the designs.

### Short & Intense Timeline

The short timeline and continuous feedback loop allows the team to produce a large volume of high-quality work in only a few days.

### Education & Experiential Learning

Create a forum for students to engage with faculty and industry experts in a professional setting. This “teach by doing” method exposes students to experiences not possible in a classroom setting.

### Professional Collaborations

Industry professionals provide expertise in a range of disciplines, including architectural design, urban planning, traffic engineering, architectural illustration, and finance.



## PRODUCTION & COORDINATION DAY

Day Three saw continued progress on the concepts outlined previously, with meetings and collaboration with city staff for immediate feedback. After additional coordination, the team began producing presentation drawings.



DAY THREE

## FINAL PRESENTATION AT CITY HALL

The final day of the charrette was dedicated to finalizing drawings, scanning, organizing, printing, and otherwise preparing for the final presentation. The team displayed photos, diagrams, text, and renderings in the main lobby of Kalamazoo City Hall. The mayor, several members of the city council, local developers, industry professionals, community organizers, and members of the public attended the team's final presentation.



DAY FOUR

## ISSUE REPORT & FOLLOW-UP

The final steps of the process include producing this report, following up with city staff to discuss the vision and next steps for implementation, and exploring ways to continue this study to look at connecting downtown to the neighborhood directly north and an intensive study of building types for redevelopment sites.



POST-CHARRETTE



## HISTORIC CONTEXT

The City of Kalamazoo has a mixed history of commissioned plans. “A City Plan for Kalamazoo, Michigan,” prepared in 1929 by Jacob L. Crane Jr. (Figure 4), presents an aspirational vision for the future. Crane’s plan calls for a strong urban core of the city formed by the combination of a central business district, rendered in black, and a civic square at Bronson Park. Commercial corridors radiate from the center of the city, reaching out through a gridded street network to neighborhood centers, providing nodes of commercial development throughout the city.

Thirty years later, in 1959, the famed shopping mall designer Victor Gruen was engaged to develop a new plan, “Kalamazoo 1980.” This dystopian vision proposed converting downtown into a pedestrian mall surrounded by surface parking lots and ringed with a perimeter road. While this vision was never fully realized, the central feature, the nation’s first outdoor pedestrian mall, was created on Burdick Street.

As Burdick closed to cars, the city engaged Urban Renewal-era freeway designers to convert the main streets crossing through downtown from two-way to one-way traffic. The goal of this change, in keeping with national trends, was to facilitate faster movement for automobiles through the city center into growing suburban neighborhoods. Once complete, the one-way streets encouraged speeding traffic, which created a hostile environment for pedestrians and businesses. The pedestrian mall was now isolated and difficult to access. One by one, businesses closed.

While Gruen’s plan was thankfully never enacted, a comparison of the diagram of today’s parking and vacant and underutilized land (Figure 7) bears a striking resemblance to Gruen’s vision for a downtown mall. The once dense urban center, seen in the photo below from 1959, was systematically torn down and replaced with surface parking lots as the one-way streets made the downtown inhospitable for most uses. Luckily, the historic fabric buildings at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street survived, and a portion of Burdick has been reopened to traffic.

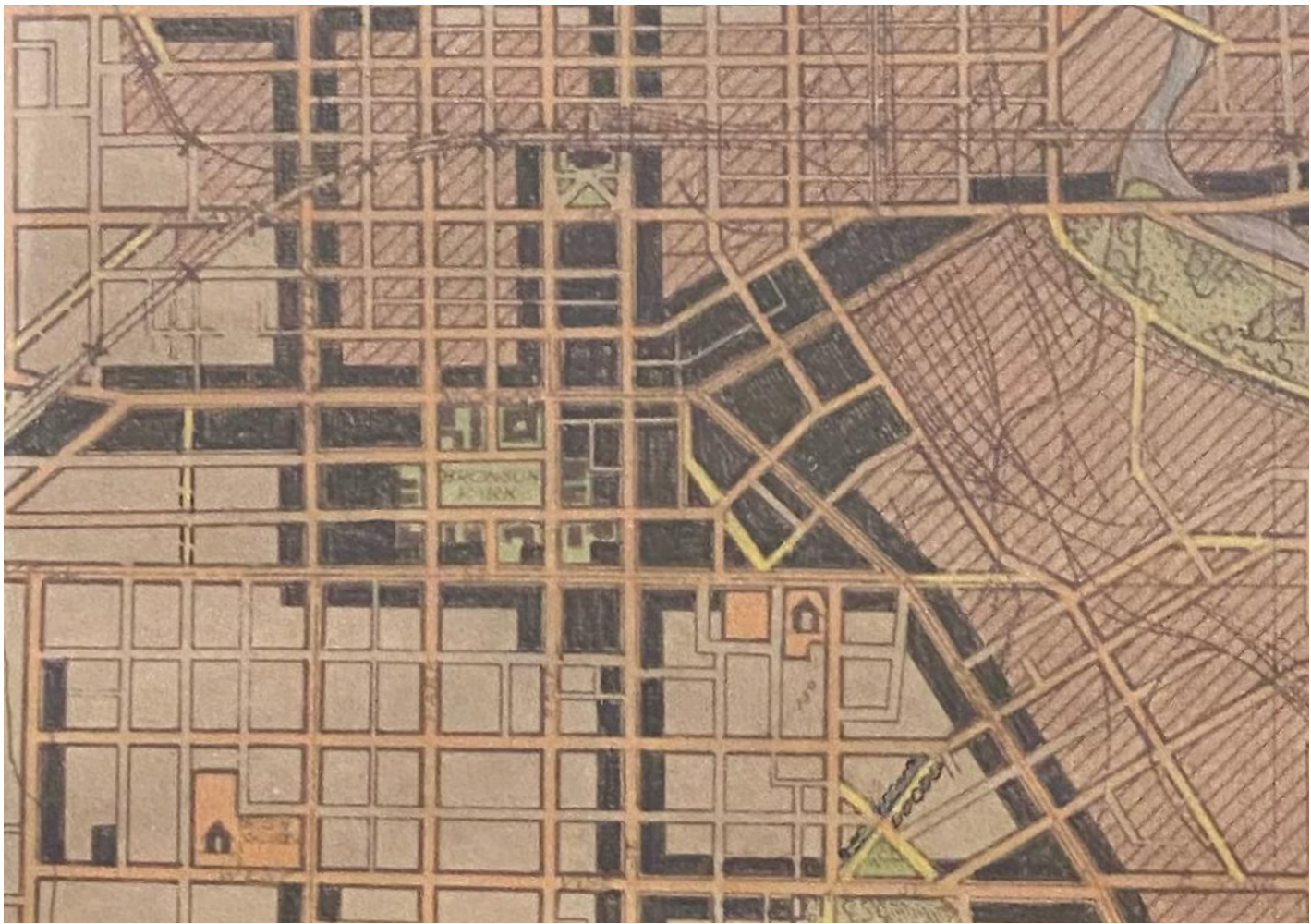


**FIGURE 4: “A City Plan for Kalamazoo, Michigan” by Jacob L. Crane Jr. (1929)**  
Vision for Kalamazoo, MI, from 1929 illustrating a comprehensive street network and system of commercial nodes that highlight the proposed series of urban moments and activity.

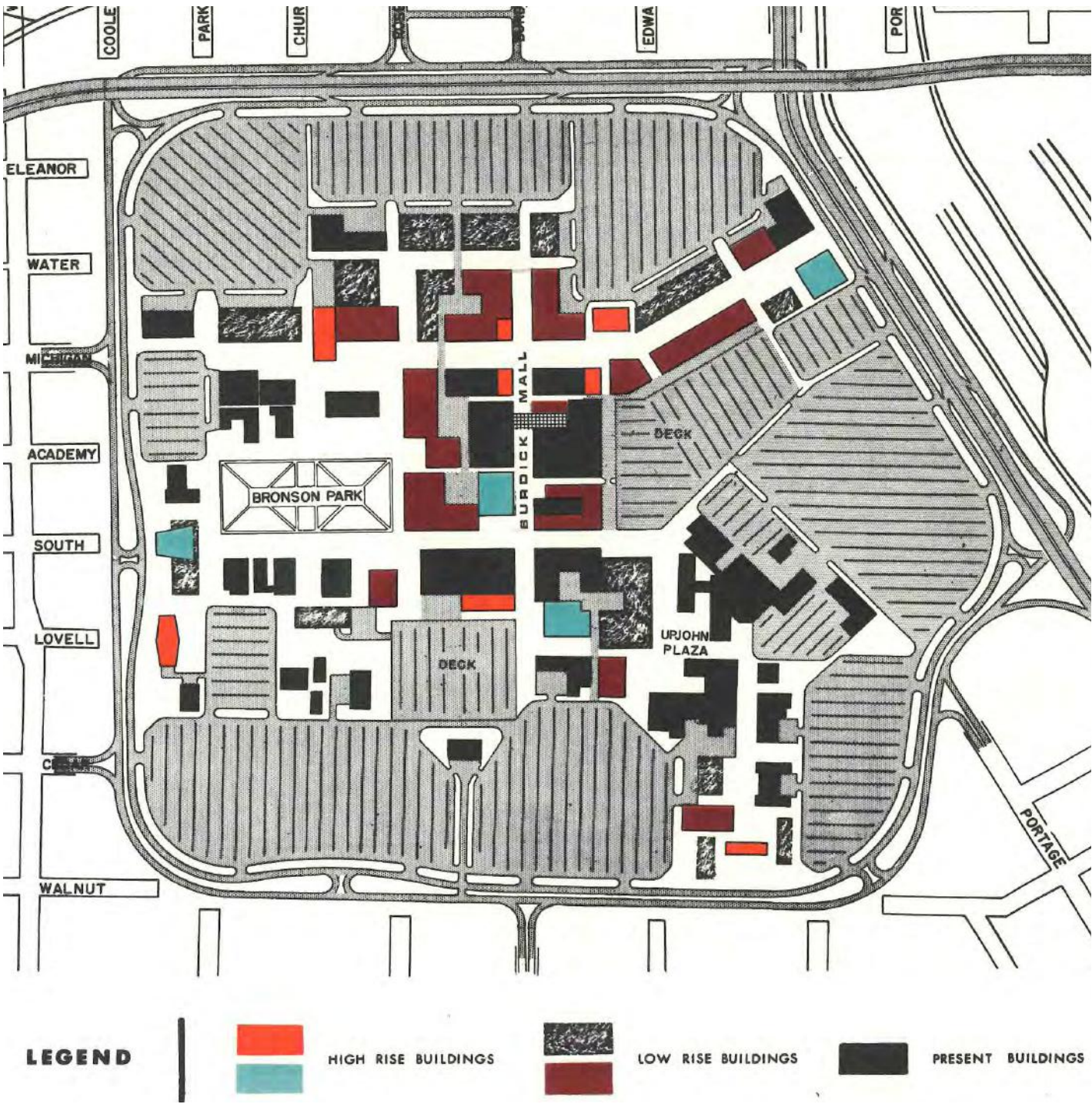


*Aerial photo of Kalamazoo, MI, circa 1959. This photo illustrates the scale and density of fabric buildings downtown before the one-way streets were imposed on the city.*





**FIGURE 5: Detail of Downtown Kalamazoo from the 1929 Crane Plan**  
Downtown Kalamazoo from the 1929 map showing the density of commercial buildings, rendered in black, radiating out from Michigan and Burdick, as well as the civic core of the city surrounding Bronson Park.



**FIGURE 6: "Downtown Kalamazoo 1980": Victor Gruen's Shopping Mall Vision from 1959**  
A vision to convert downtown Kalamazoo into a pedestrian mall with surface parking lots and perimeter road. Note the severed network of neighborhood streets cut off from through traffic.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing conditions in downtown Kalamazoo are a tale of two cities. The unsafe one-way streets and legacy of Urban Renewal has shuttered businesses and resulted in vast areas covered in surface parking lots and vacant and underutilized land (Figure 9). Yet despite these challenges, pockets of activities attract visitors to downtown. Festivals and events at Arcadia Festival Place and Bronson Park draw large crowds, local and regional shops and restaurants on Burdick and Michigan attract customers, and construction of new residences throughout the district keep streets active on evenings and weekends.

The will of pedestrians to walk through the city is so strong that as the major one-way thoroughfares of Michigan Avenue and Kalamazoo Avenue became dangerous and uncomfortable for pedestrians, people took refuge in the alleys to navigate the city. In some cases, this alley network has grown to include sidewalks and scattered retail frontage.

This combination of negative and positive aspects within the existing urban conditions sets a strong foundation for future growth and opportunity in the city. *The key to sustained success will be developing a growth strategy that balances short-term needs with a long-term vision.* As current development is unfocused and operates without a central plan, the findings in this study provide strategies that will help to focus new development or rehabilitation in areas where businesses support each other. This report also sets forth a plan for the city that draws activity to previously underutilized areas.

As the cost of living continues to rise in coastal areas, midwestern cities near fresh water that offer a high-quality public realm will become increasingly attractive to new residents, especially highly coveted skilled workers. *Kalamazoo is uniquely positioned to be on the forefront of the next wave of boutique American cities if the city is able to repair the damage highlighted on these pages.*

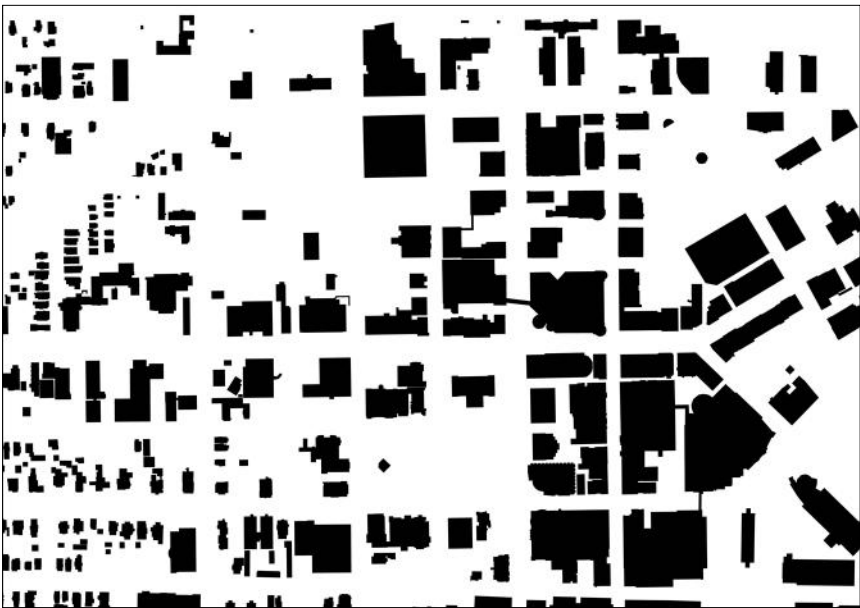


FIGURE 7: Figure-Ground Diagram  
Existing buildings shown in black to highlight areas with spatial containment.

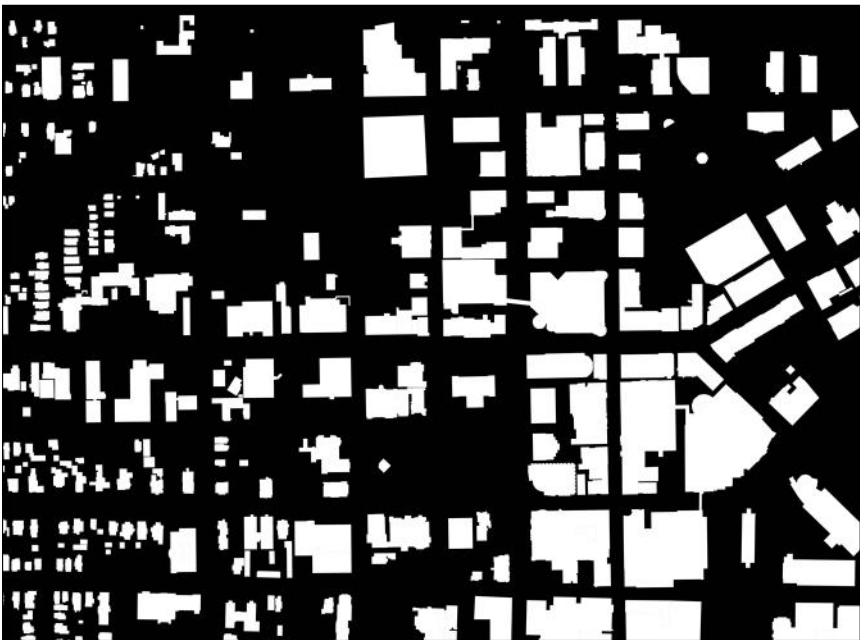


FIGURE 8: Ground-Figure Diagram  
Open space, streets, and vacant land shown in black to illustrate area lacking spatial containment.

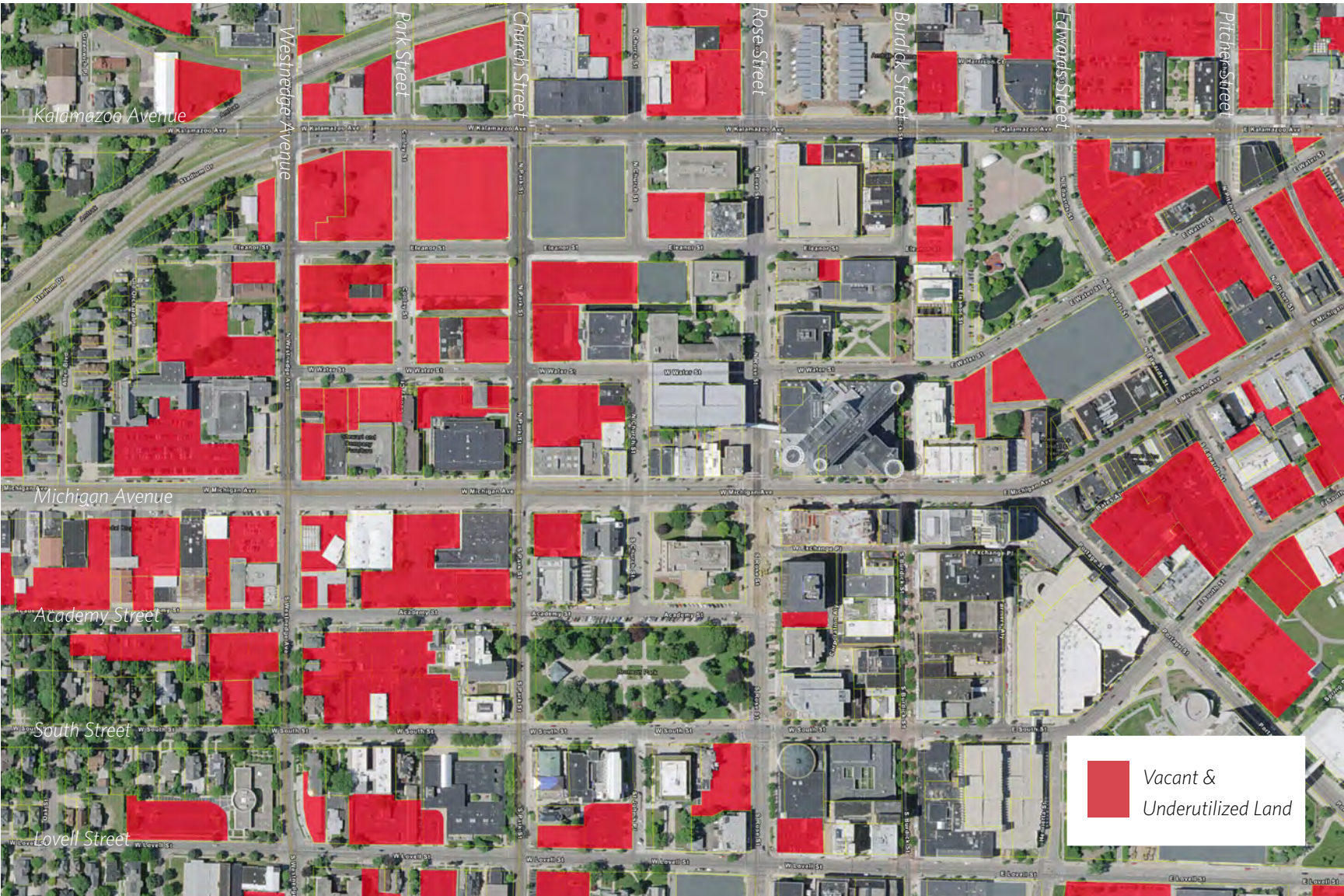


FIGURE 9: Surface Parking and Vacant and Underutilized Land Diagram  
Parcels highlighted in red represent the existing surface parking lots and vacant and underutilized land. This land represents a tremendous economic opportunity for the City of Kalamazoo.





Damage from One-Way Streets

The one-way streets in Kalamazoo have enabled cars to move at dangerously high speeds through the city. This creates an unsafe environment for both drivers and pedestrians. Accidents are common, the experience of walking through the city is unpleasant and avoided, and the retail along these streets suffer from noise pollution and a lack of foot traffic. The green freeway-like signs further encourage cars to speed because they appear to indicate unobstructed, high-speed streets just ahead. Additionally, these freeway-like streets create a barrier between downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.



Vacant & Underutilized Land

Beyond its very core, downtown Kalamazoo is largely composed of parking lots. Although the city experiences heavy car use and these parking lots further emphasize the prioritization of vehicular traffic, many remain underutilized and are not strategically placed for access to areas of activity. The vacant land presents a series of opportunities for development to restore the density and walkability of the city.



Surviving Urban Fabric & Successful Retail Core

What remains of historic Kalamazoo represents a beautiful local typology, logical density for retail, and a human scale of building. The Kalamazoo Mall in particular is a charming pedestrian-friendly downtown area. Lessons of what works well in areas such as this should be the basis for future growth.



Pedestrian Alleys Acting as Refuge from Dangerous Streets

Because moving through Kalamazoo’s street system on foot can be unpleasant, walkers have created their own network of corridors, gradually transitioning alleyways into main paths of pedestrian travel. Although some alleys have become more celebrated as a result, the network remains composed of the backs of buildings, while many fronts see little to no foot traffic.



New Development in Need of Comprehensive Vision

New development is spread throughout the city and has grown without a guided comprehensive plan shared by all partners. One example is the new courthouse, which turns its back on Kalamazoo Avenue, the main street it sits on, making future activation of this primary street challenging. The proposed event center presents an opportunity for the city, but also a potential challenge if the building is too inwardly focused and does not connect to the city at the street level. It’s critical that new development works within a set of urban principles that support street life and activity.



CURRENT PLANNING INITIATIVES

*This study builds on the work of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 initiative and current planning efforts of the city. It seeks to link this body of work into a unified plan.*

The goal of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (IK2025) is to create a shared vision for the future of Kalamazoo. City staff have partnered with community leaders to hold community engagement events throughout the city. The website ImagineKalamazoo.com, the communication hub for the initiative, highlights the many projects currently underway.

The IK2025 community feedback process has led to a wide range of improvement projects throughout the city, such as a street tree planting program, a bike lanes pilot program, neighborhood planning efforts, traffic calming projects, and more. The central projects of the initiative, and most impactful for the foundation of this study, are the Streets for All project and Zoning Ordinance Updates.

The Street for All project, now partially funded through the \$6 million RAISE grant, will return the one-way automobile-dominant streets back into a two-way multimodal street network. This redesign will not only calm traffic, but it will prioritize pedestrian safety and support commercial activities.


The updated form-based zoning ordinance for the city sets the regulatory framework for future development downtown. Coupled with the new street designs, the updated zoning will shape the urban experience and influence economic development.

These projects are reinforced by the Retail Market Analysis report prepared by Gibbs Planning Group. According to the report, “Kalamazoo’s proposed street and urban design initiatives will potentially increase the downtown’s retail and restaurant sales by an additional \$20.6 million annually. This demand could support up to 36,000 square feet (sf) of new retailers and 16,000 sf of new restaurants for a total of up to 52,000 sf of new space. This growth could be absorbed with the opening of 25 to 35 new businesses or by existing stores and restaurants through expanded operations and, or the repurposing of other downtown buildings.”

The Downtown Kalamazoo Operating System, prepared by YARD & Company, further supports the work of IK2025 by identifying layers of city and partner organization functions, conducting community engagement exercises, and proposing tactical strategies to activate downtown.



ImagineKalamazoo.com is the communication hub for Imagine Kalamazoo 2025, a city-staff-led initiative focused on creating a strategic vision for the city through community meetings and events.



**Streets for All: Creating a Connected City.**

A project to redesign several major streets in Kalamazoo to create a street network that meets the needs of the community, promotes safe transportation for all modes, and fosters more vibrant public places.

The Streets for All project is converting one-way streets into two-way streets.

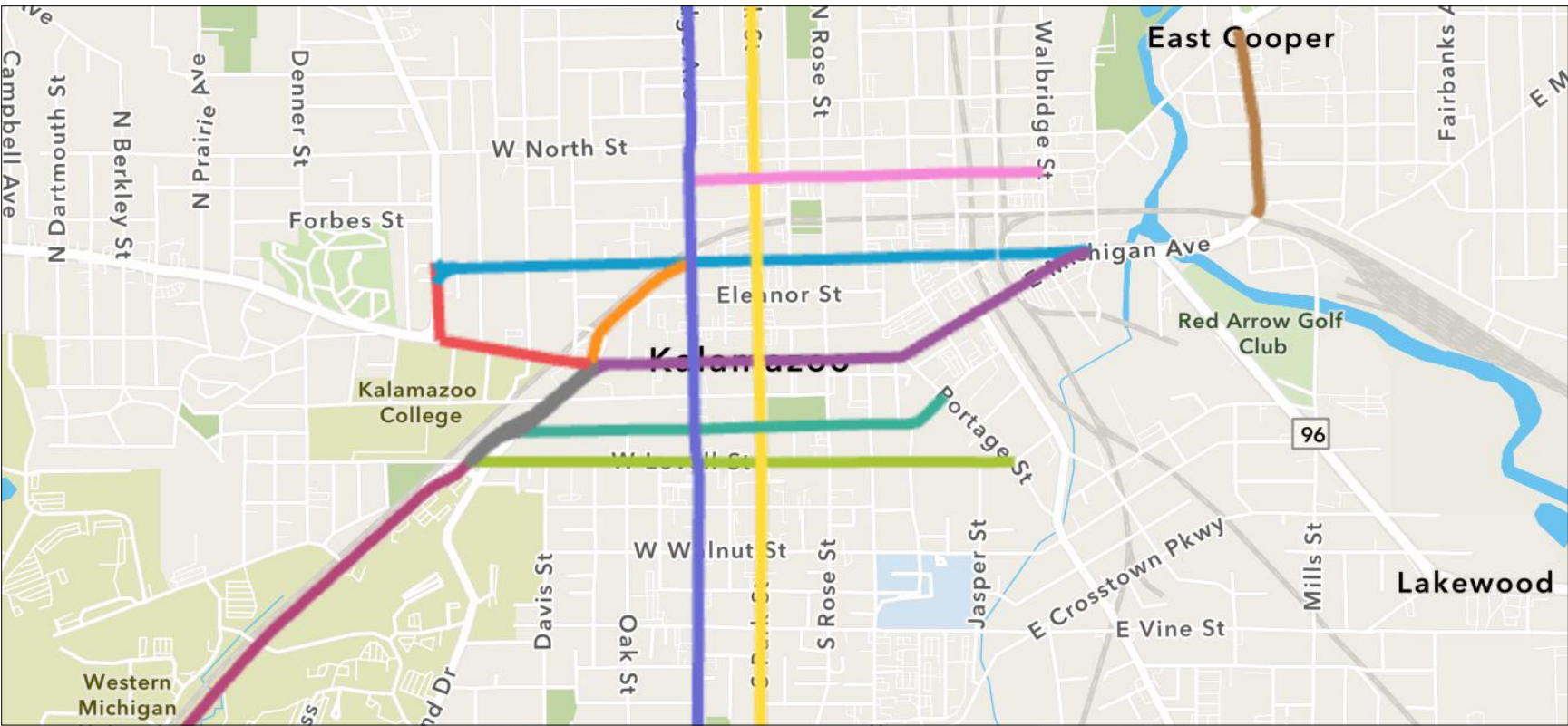
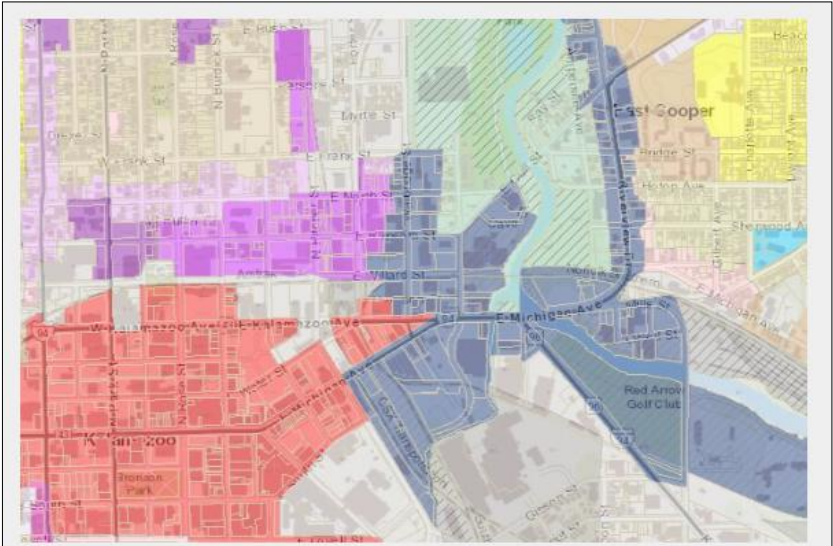


FIGURE 10: Streets for All Map

This map highlights the streets scheduled to be upgraded through the Streets for All project. The streets in the scope of this study include four east-west streets — W. Kalamazoo Avenue (blue), W. Michigan Avenue (purple), W. South Street (dark green), and W. Lovell Street (lime green) — which are currently one-way streets and will be returned to two-way streets. Two north-south streets, Westnedge Avenue (indigo) and Park Street (yellow), will remain one-way in the short term, but will be redesigned to calm traffic.





## Zoning Ordinance Update


The City of Kalamazoo will finish its update of the Zoning Ordinance in 2020, a process that was started in 2019. The goal of these updates is to ensure that the Zoning Ordinance supports the community vision as outlined in the 2025 Master Plan.

The incremental update of Kalamazoo’s Zoning Ordinance creates the foundation for the strategies proposed in this report. The form-based zoning standards guide the scale and form of development as well as the way buildings meet the street. As highlighted on the Imagine Kalamazoo website, objectives of the updated zoning include “support(ing) land use development that aligns with the street network” as well as “remov(ing) barriers to mixed-use, walkable corridors and nodes.”

Downtown Urban Initiatives Impacts

# Retail Market Analysis

Kalamazoo, Michigan



Prepared for:  
City of Kalamazoo

Prepared by:  
Gibbs Planning Group

15 June 2022

Gibbs Planning Group completed the Retail Market Analysis for downtown Kalamazoo in June 2022. This report examines existing retail trade areas, market demographics, employment base, and consumer trends to determine how the proposed Streets for All project and supporting city initiatives will impact retail demand. The report determines that “Kalamazoo’s proposed street and urban design initiatives will potentially increase the downtown’s retail and restaurant sales by an additional \$20.6 million annually.”

### 2.2 KALAMAZOO STREET TYPOLOGY

#### URBAN CENTER STREET (UC) (PRIORITY STREET)

**DESCRIPTION:** Urban Center Streets represent highly active streets with an intense combination of active ground-floor uses, pedestrian activity, and vehicle volumes. These streets are desired to be the signature gateway corridors into downtown, designed at a high level of amenity.

- **High Priority:**
  - » Create a vibrant and welcoming pedestrian environment that supports commercial activity.
  - » High quality streetscape, wide pedestrian areas for outdoor dining, and gathering space is critical.
- **Moderate Priority:**
  - » Transit service with frequent stops are important for providing easy access to destinations.
  - » Curbside uses where space allows, provided pedestrian area widths are achieved, with a focus on short-term parking and drop-off zones. Loading zones should be avoided on these streets.
- **Low Priority:**
  - » Must accommodate higher volumes of vehicle traffic, but during peak hours lower levels of service is expected (LOS E acceptable).
  - » Bicycles would typically use parallel streets, although dedicated facilities should be considered where space allows or on priority bicycle corridors.


USER PRIORITY (BASELINE)		
User Type		Priority
Pedestrians		High
Commercial Activity		High
Transit (*)		Moderate
Curbside		Moderate
Bicycles (**)		Moderate
Vehicles		Low

**DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

- Design the roadway for slower speeds (25 MPH). Lane reductions and/or narrowing should be used to the maximum extent feasible.
- Streetscape should be designed to provide flexibility in how the pedestrian area can be utilized or adapted for different purposes, depending on adjacent land uses.
- Opportunity for signature public street elements—such as public art, gateways, gathering and seating areas, landscape, etc.
- (\*) Streets in priority transit corridors should consider transit operational improvements to maintain service consistency. Higher level transit stop may be desired.
- (\*\*) On priority bikeway streets, curbside space may be reduced in order to provide appropriate low stress bicycle facilities.
- Limit driveways and curb-cuts.

**TYPICAL FEATURES:**

- 2-3 vehicle lanes
- Slow speeds (25 or less)
- Two-way travel
- Curbside lanes
- Wide pedestrian zone
- High quality streetscape
- Bus stops
- Sidewalk occupancy
- Seating & gathering space
- Sharrows or buffered bicycle lanes



DIMENSIONS SHOWN ARE FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual 31

The City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual defines and illustrates a set of street typologies. These typologies, coordinated with the zoning ordinance, sets a framework for user priorities, overall design considerations, typical features, typical right-of-way range, and typical lane configurations. All non-local designated streets (arterial or collector roads) in the city are assigned a typology. Some significant local downtown streets, such as Michigan Avenue and Kalamazoo Avenue, are also assigned typologies.



## DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO OPERATING SYSTEM

KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN  
1 AUGUST 2022

**YARD & COMPANY**

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Great places can permanently change a city and region's trajectory. They attract visitors, new residents, small businesses, and can transform a region's economy. These places, though, do not get built by accident. They are powered by operating systems that can be largely invisible but nonetheless very organized, complex, and powerful. Downtown Kalamazoo has many of the physical and operational building blocks in place to dramatically change the story of the Kalamazoo region, but it needs to update its Downtown Operating System. Ahead, you will find a roadmap for these updates with immediate opportunities for next steps and implementation.

**THE YARD & COMPANY APPROACH / OPERATING SYSTEM (OS)**

Flexibility, while powerful, does not come easy for institutions. This is where an updated operating system (OS) enters the equation. A smart OS makes it all work. Largely unseen and sometimes intentionally hidden, the internal workings of an efficient place operation are like a well-oiled machine. The makeup of a Board of Directors, smart bylaws, efficient decision-making processes, donor relationships, a precise mission/vision and clear governance structure may be boring to most but are critical to creating and sustaining the places people love.

Similar to a smartphone, a functional community operating system can be divided into two main categories: software and hardware. The first, software, is everything that the user sees, feels and experiences when visiting a place. The mix, location and scheduling of events and programming, beautification initiatives, public art, signage, retailers, shops up and permanent), and much more are all part of the software package.

The hardware of a community operating system includes the physical design, development and rehabilitation of the buildings, streets, plazas and storefronts we know as part of our day-to-day lives. While less nimble than the software of a place, hardware strategies do need to be adjusted or sometimes replaced every few years.





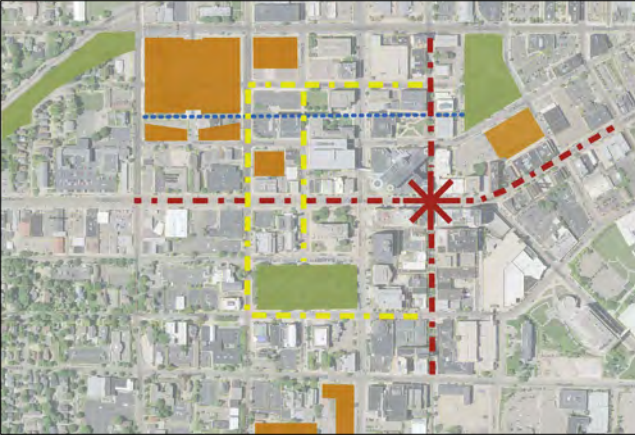

Downtown Kalamazoo Operating System | 1

The Downtown Kalamazoo Operating System, a report prepared by YARD & Company in August 2022, analyzes the city in two layers: the software is “everything that the user sees, feels and experiences when visiting a place,” while the hardware is “physical design, development and rehabilitation of the buildings, streets, plazas and storefronts we know as part of our day-to-day lives.” The report studies existing conditions, engaged with the community, and proposes several tactical strategies for activating downtown Kalamazoo.



	CHALLENGES		PROPOSED REPAIR	
KEY FINDING 1	<div></div> <div>Unsafe one-way streets impair retail and suppress economic development.</div>		<div></div> <div>Convert to two-way streets, reduce number of travel lanes, and add street trees.</div>	
KEY FINDING 2	<div></div> <div>Diminished downtown activity.</div>		<div></div> <div>Engage the public realm with pedestrian-friendly street design and storefront activation.</div>	
KEY FINDING 3	<div></div> <div>Unfocused development spreads out new activity.</div>		<div></div> <div>Create a development plan to focus new growth.</div>	
KEY FINDING 4	<div></div> <div>Lack of overall connectivity between activities.</div>		<div></div> <div>Create a network of activity and reason to move beyond a single point in the city.</div>	



OPPORTUNITY		
	<div></div> <div>Complete streets calm traffic, attract pedestrians, and support businesses.</div>	<div>KEY FINDING 1</div> <div>Unsafe Streets Impair Retail &amp; Economic Development</div> <div>Challenges</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>The multiple lanes of one-way traffic</b> encourage speeding cars and discourage pedestrian use.</li><li>▪ <b>Wide streets are difficult to cross</b>; walking alongside speeding traffic is uncomfortable.</li><li>▪ <b>Unsafe streets impede</b> the success of established <b>businesses</b> and discourage new retail activity.</li></ul> <div>Opportunities</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Design two-way streets with fewer and narrower lanes</b>; add street trees to <b>calm traffic and make streets safer</b> for pedestrians.</li><li>▪ <b>Activate the public realm with wide sidewalks</b> for parklets and outdoor dining to support existing businesses and attract new businesses downtown.</li><li>▪ <b>Create a pedestrian experience that connects retail to parks</b> and waterways; include places to sit and enjoy the activities along the streets.</li></ul>
	<div></div> <div>Safe pedestrian environments with activated storefronts support retail.</div>	<div>KEY FINDING 2</div> <div>A Weak Public Realm Diminishes Downtown Activity</div> <div>Challenges</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Large areas of downtown</b> are framed by <b>vacant land and parking</b>, or closed businesses.</li><li>▪ <b>Even in areas with a stronger retail presence</b>, like Burdick Avenue (Kalamazoo Mall), the <b>streetscape and urban landscape are patchy and inconsistent</b>.</li></ul> <div>Opportunities</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Utilize Complete Streets to calm traffic</b> and <b>attract pedestrians</b>.</li><li>▪ <b>Support</b> businesses with <b>storefront renovation incentives</b>.</li><li>▪ <b>Make the street-level experience safe and engaging</b> so those parking several blocks from their destination will enjoy the walk and be attracted downtown.</li><li>▪ <b>Make connectivity between public spaces intuitive</b> to pedestrians.</li><li>▪ <b>Implement a connected, pedestrian-friendly street network</b> to draw activity throughout downtown.</li></ul>
	<div></div> <div>Focused development supports existing retail and attracts new retail.</div>	<div>KEY FINDING 3</div> <div>Unfocused Development Challenges Growth</div> <div>Challenges</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>New developments</b>, like the proposed event center, <b>are spread out</b>, far from existing businesses and the downtown core. <b>Downtown growth fights itself</b> without a comprehensive development strategy; businesses and <b>events do not currently benefit from shared customers</b>.</li><li>▪ <b>New buildings</b>, like the Courthouse, <b>turn their backs on primary streets</b>.</li></ul> <div>Opportunities</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Incentivize growth starting in the heart of downtown</b>, at the corner of Michigan and Burdick, then shift to streets that anchor activity.</li><li>▪ <b>Zoning ordinance</b> has a good foundation of form-based standards, but would <b>benefit from further calibration</b> to protect historic fabric buildings.</li><li>▪ <b>Place front doors of buildings strategically</b> on primary streets to reinforce connections between urban moments. Buy-in from all governmental organizations is critical to a vibrant downtown.</li></ul>
	<div></div> <div>A connected pedestrian-friendly street network draws activity throughout downtown.</div>	<div>KEY FINDING 4</div> <div>Lack of Overall Connectivity Between Attractions Isolates Downtown Activity</div> <div>Challenges</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>It is difficult to move through the downtown</b>, not just because of unsafe streets, but also because <b>wayfinding is limited</b>, and the public realm does not draw visitors to engage the city. As a result, <b>visitors come to a single destination for one activity, then leave</b>.</li><li>▪ <b>Parking</b>, while plentiful, <b>is not always near popular destinations downtown</b>. This disincentivizes visitors from staying longer.</li></ul> <div>Opportunities</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Prioritize investment in the public realm with an urban tree canopy</b> on a network of streets and alleys that connect the major downtown amenities.</li><li>▪ <b>Employ short-term tactical urbanism strategies</b>—such as temporary bike lanes, art installations, benches, and colorful lighting—to encourage movement through the city while long-term solutions are being established.</li></ul>



## ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

The downtown action plan developed in this study proposes a holistic vision for repairing and reconnecting downtown Kalamazoo. Building upon the history of the city, its existing conditions, IK2025 projects, and the key findings identified on pages 12 and 13, this action plan is comprised of four primary layers:

1. **A regulatory framework**, including zoning ordinances and other guiding documents;
2. **Catalytic development strategies** and design interventions;
3. **Complete street** network and detailed street sections;
4. **Urban landscape** intervention recommendations and details critical to reconnection.

The zoning ordinance defines the form of development and sets the hierarchy of scale throughout the city. This proposal offers a set of priorities to revise zoning in the city to better reflect existing height, use, and density. The priorities of the built form defined in the zoning ordinance both influence and reinforce the design of the street network, which in turn is defined by the design of the urban landscape.

In order to combat the challenges presented by high-speed traffic and bring pedestrian activity back into the city, the proposed multimodal street network balances cars, bikes, and pedestrians by employing a set of well-practiced design actions such as narrower streets, safety strips, parklets, and street parking.

Urban landscaping is one of the strongest ways to make linear connections through a city. Tree-lined streets provide shade and create corridors of movement, and a reinforcement of existing park spaces gives communities places to gather. Safe streets are enabled by and enable this comprehensive landscaping approach. Street and landscape are both reflected in the proposed catalytic design interventions. On a broad scale, the proposed design interventions identify a network of moments that will draw activity through the entire city. They also provide concrete suggestions for engaging the public realm at specific locations.

While each layer is tied together, the elements of the proposed downtown plan can be adopted independently, in select combinations, or as a whole. Action item goals, defined by the Key Findings, allow immediate actions to be implemented while more complex projects, such as the street construction, will take years to complete.

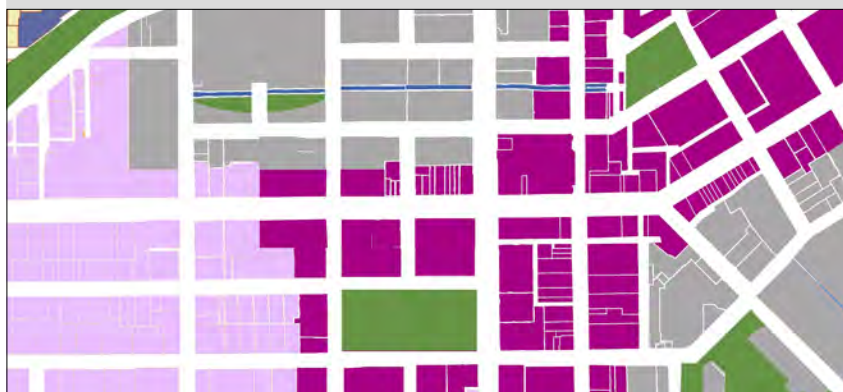
*Although the plan can be envisioned as an ideal future for Kalamazoo, it is likely that the city's needs will evolve over time. Rather than prescribe the be-all and end-all solution to all challenges facing the city, we offer a set of flexible strategies that can grow and evolve as Kalamazoo does.* The following pages of this study look at the city of Kalamazoo layer by layer, zooming in per section from a citywide overview to specific strategies for particular areas of focus.



FIGURE 11: Proposed Plan of Downtown Kalamazoo  
A vision for downtown Kalamazoo, MI.

LAYER 1


REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



The regulatory framework are the elements that work together to define the public realm. These elements include zoning ordinances, the street design manual, and supporting economic policies. See pages 16–21.

LAYER 2

CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENT



The catalytic development strategies are a series of proposed interventions designed to activate the public realm at the street level and encourage movement throughout the city. See pages 22–51.





LAYER 3

COMPLETE STREETS



Complete Streets encompass both the multimodal street network (primary and secondary streets), as well as the details of the street sections (dimensions for lanes, planting strips, sidewalks, etc.) See pages 52-67.

LAYER 4

URBAN LANDSCAPE



The urban landscape defines the experience of the streetscape. This layer of the report explores citywide urban landscape strategies, street tree specifications, and planting recommendations. See pages 68-77.



## REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The regulatory framework defines the public realm by guiding urban design and economic development. Three elements of this framework are zoning ordinances, the Street Design Manual, and supporting economic policies. Details about the Street Design Manual are included in Part 6: Complete Streets (pages 56–57). Economic policy suggestions are embedded throughout the report. The primary focus of this part of the report is the zoning ordinance.

The incremental updates to the city’s zoning ordinance in the last several years create a strong foundation for future development. The Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan inextricably links land use and transportation network, noting that zoning updates are designed to “support land use development that aligns with the street network” as well as “remove barriers to mixed use, walkable corridors and nodes.” In keeping with the incremental nature of the previous changes to the ordinance, this study proposes several calibrations to the existing ordinance to further strengthen the opportunities identified in the Key Findings.

The current form-based zoning of downtown Kalamazoo encourages the highest density development at the corner of W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street. The scale then drops as the zones move out from the core of the city to the surrounding residential areas. This zoning places pressure on historic buildings not currently protected by local historic preservation listings both at W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street as well as surrounding Bronson Park. The unprotected historic structures are at risk because the allowable height in the current D1 zone incentivizes the demolition of existing buildings and construction of replacements that would damage the current character and vibrancy of these areas.

***To further strengthen the core of downtown and create an ordinance that supports and preserves the established height and scale of the historic retail corridors, this plan proposes a change in district methodology that will be applied to the current form-based zoning.*** The current zoning allows for unlimited height at the core of the city and “steps down” in height and intensity as downtown gets closer to the surrounding neighborhoods. The new proposal limits heights in the historic core to two-to-five stories, then allows increased height and density in areas immediately adjacent to the core of downtown.

The categories for the proposed zones draw from the Future Land Use categories within the existing ordinance, with several recommended modifications. In our proposed system, we replace D1 with Urban Edge, D2 becomes Downtown, D3 changes to Neighborhood Edge, and LW1 becomes a newly proposed category, Neighborhood.

***Note that Key Finding 3– Unfocused Development Challenges Growth, on page 13 identifies opportunities that are directly influenced by the Regulatory Framework. Creating a more nuanced zoning ordinance will help to preserve and grow downtown in the way envisioned by IK 2025 input.***

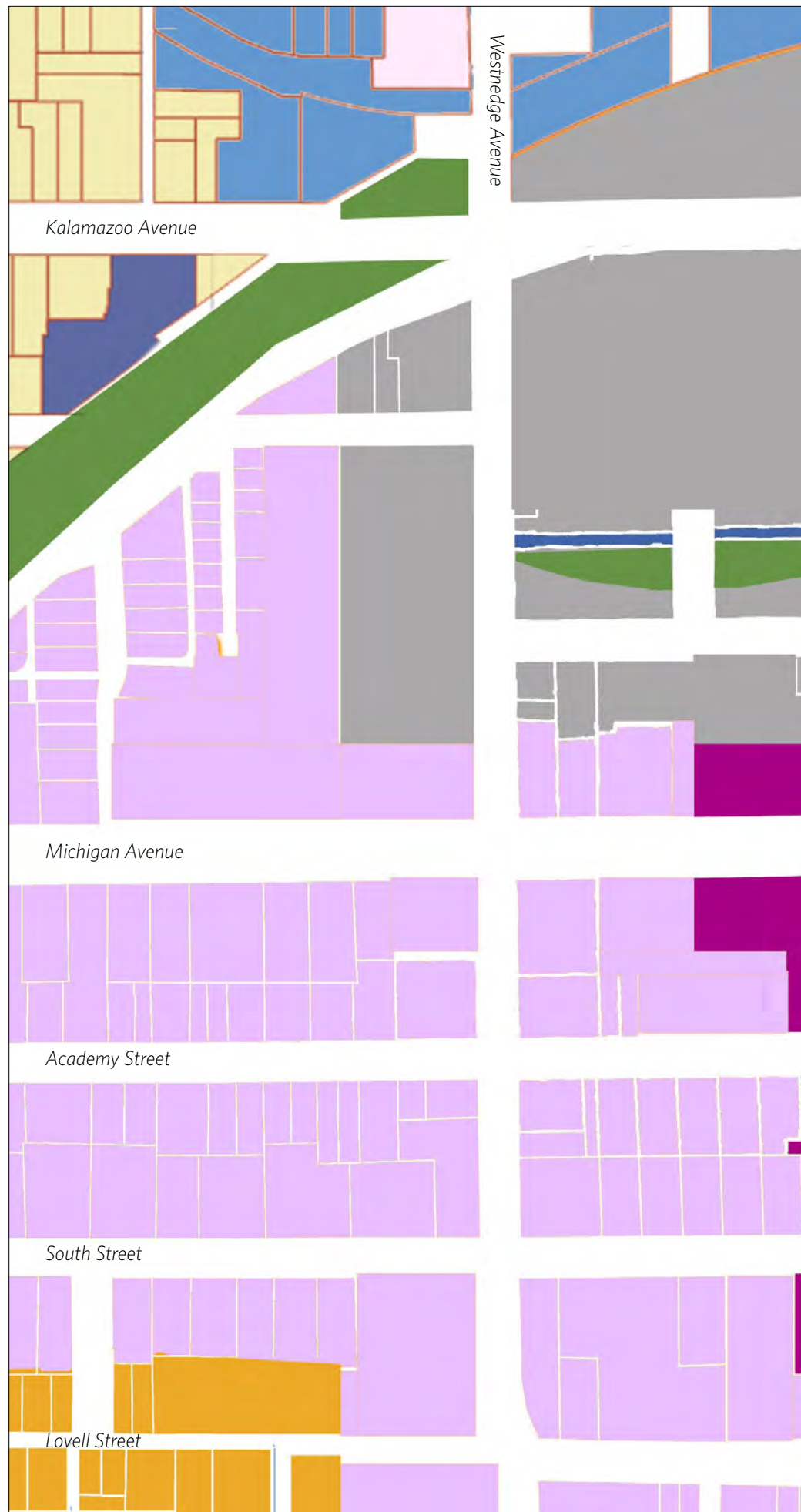
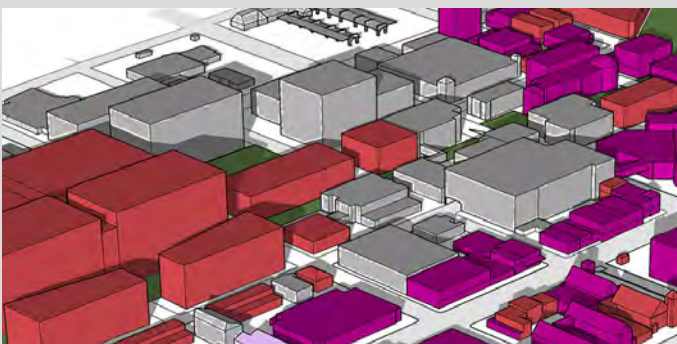


FIGURE 12: Proposed Zoning Diagram

The proposed hierarchy for downtown focuses the highest density to the northwest and southeast in order to protect the historic core of the city.

### URBAN EDGE



#### URBAN EDGE PROPOSED

Density      Highest Density  
Height      150' max height / 12 stories

### DOWNTOWN



#### DOWNTOWN PROPOSED

Density      Mid to High Density  
Height      75' max height / 5 stories



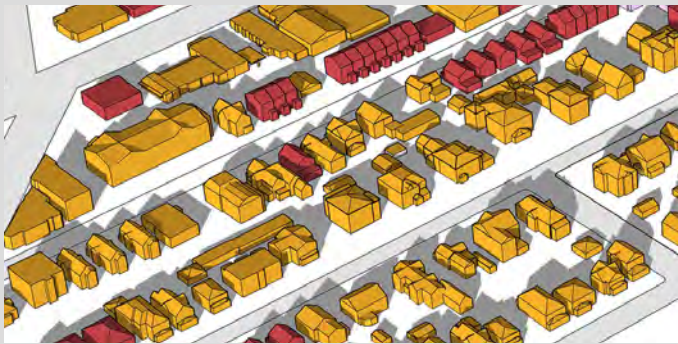


### NEIGHBORHOOD EDGE



**NEIGHBORHOOD EDGE PROPOSED**  
Density: Mid to Low Density  
Height: 40' max height / 3 stories

### NEIGHBORHOOD

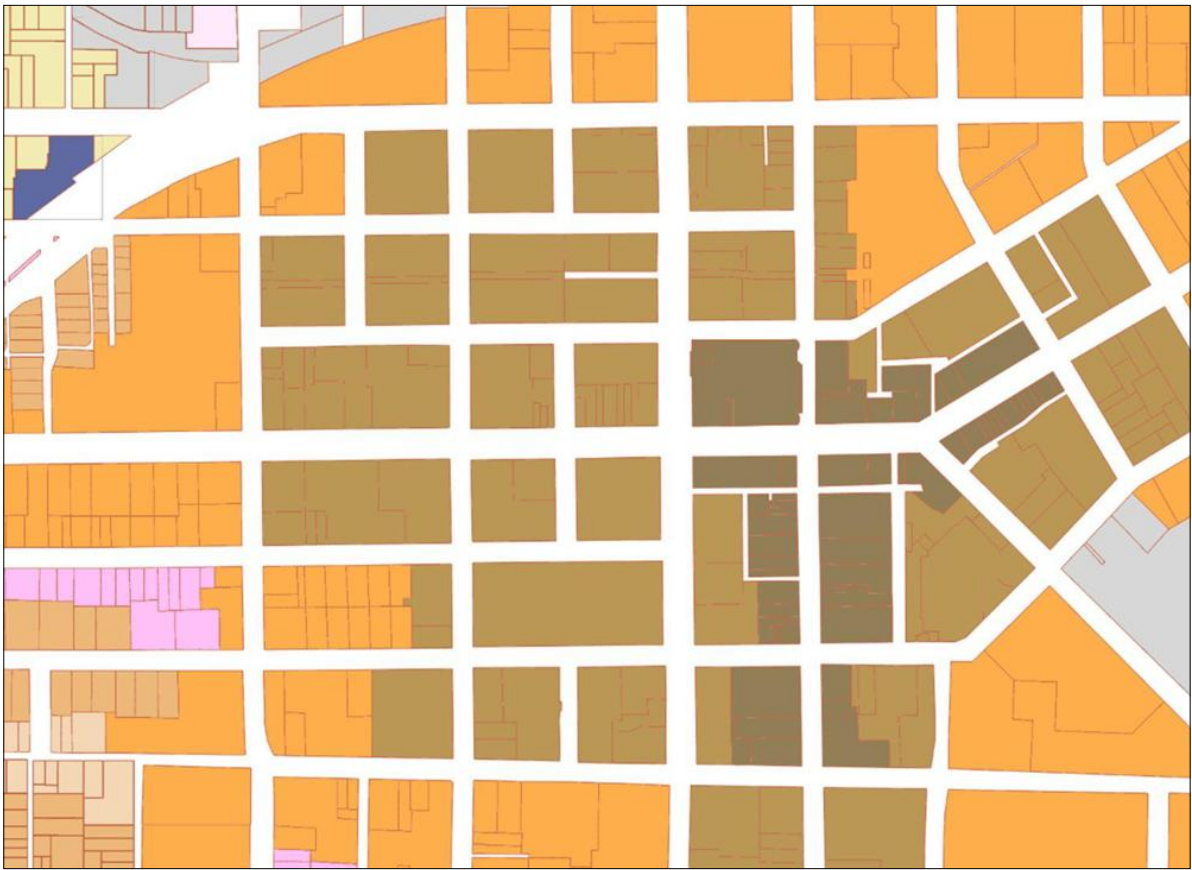


**NEIGHBORHOOD PROPOSED**  
Density: Low Density  
Height: 35' max height / 2.5 stories



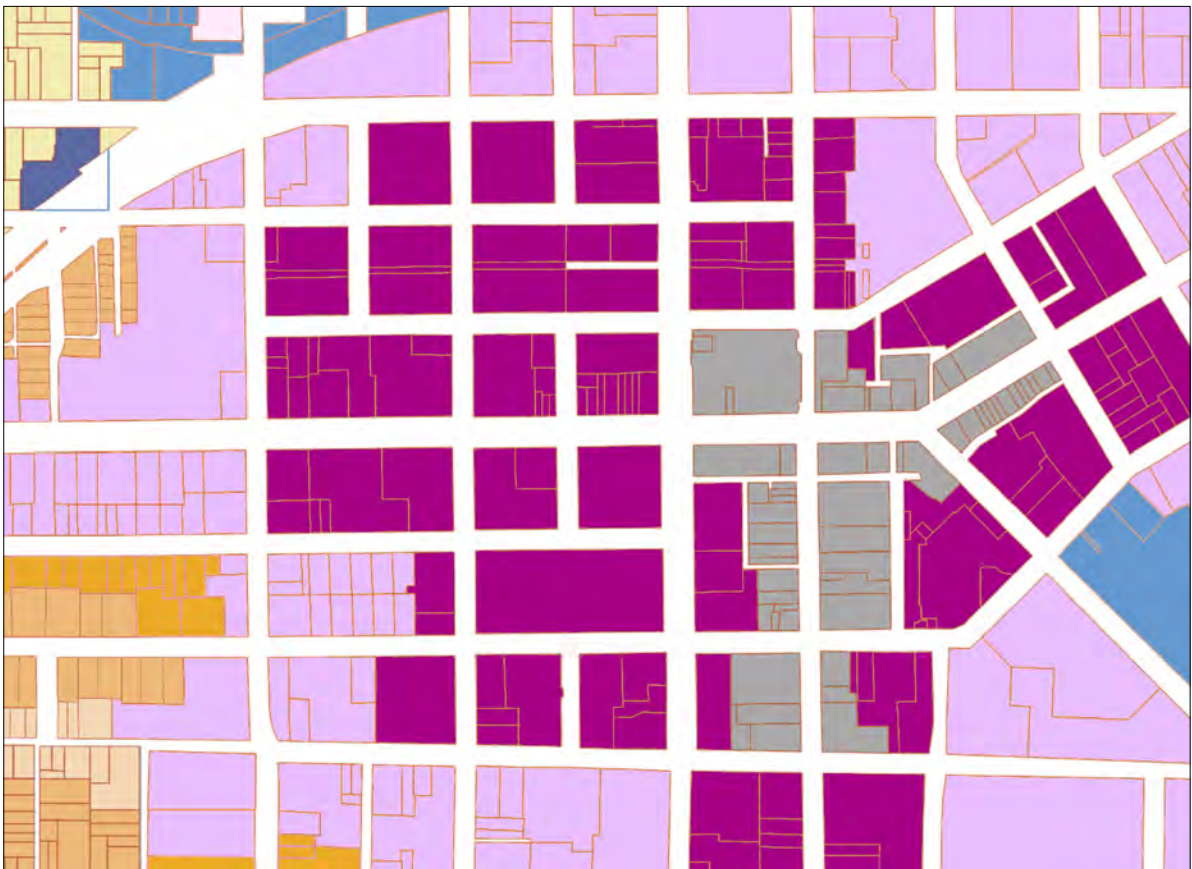
**FIGURE 13: Current Zoning with Existing Color Palette**

Kalamazoo’s current zoning highlights the downtown core with the highest density D1, at the corner of W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street. This zone is surrounded by a D2 zone, another high-density zone that spans from Bronson Park to the site of the future event center. This zoning places pressure on the historic buildings that are not currently protected by local historic preservation listings both at W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street as well as surrounding Bronson Park because the allowable height in the areas of the historic structures might encourage demolition of existing buildings and construction of replacements that offer a lower contribution to the public realm.



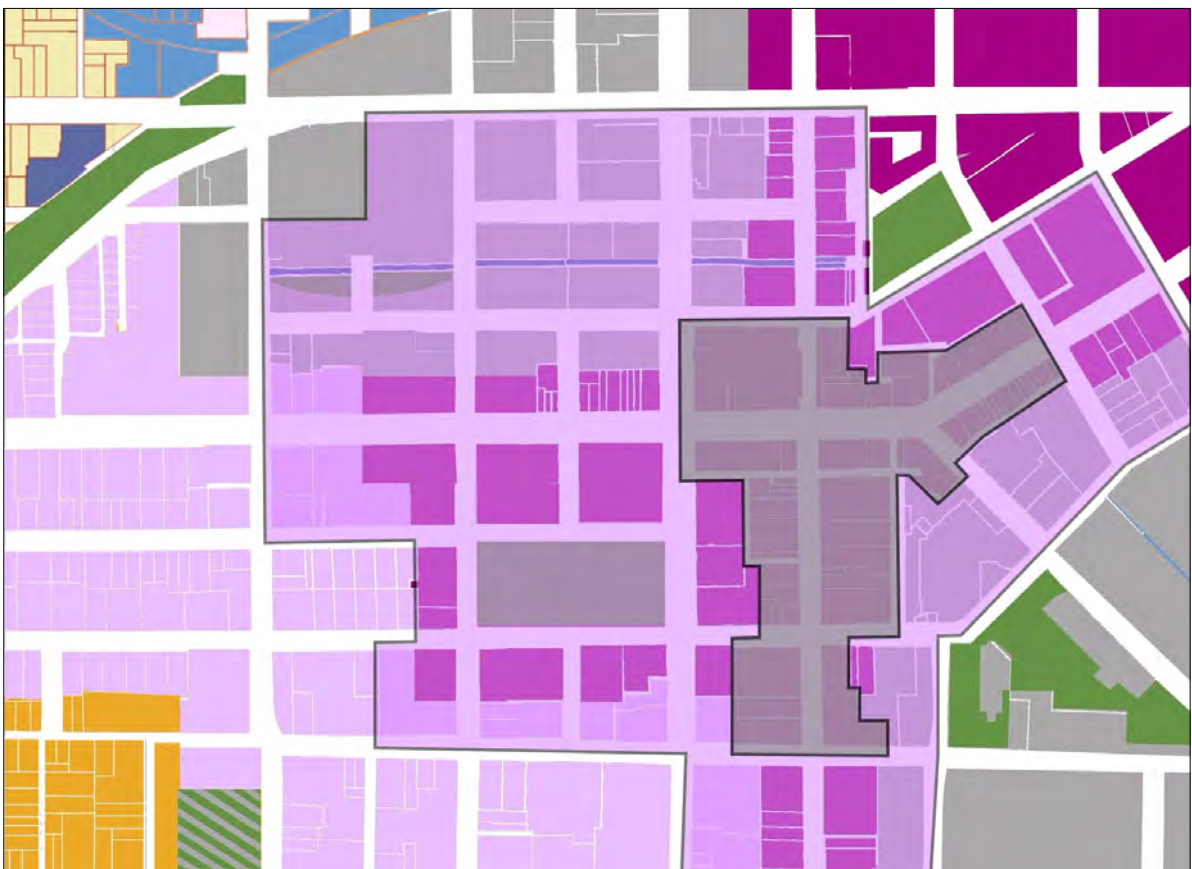
**FIGURE 14: Current Zoning Proposed Revised Color Palette**

This graphic illustrates the current zoning (same diagram as above) with a color scheme based on the Future Land Use (FLU) palette. One change from the FLU palette is Urban Edge, which we propose changes from purple to gray to clearly differentiate the densest part of the city from the lower-scale Downtown zone.



**FIGURE 15: Current & Proposed Zoning Comparison**

This diagram overlaps the current and proposed zoning in order to illustrate our desire to stay as true to the existing zoning as possible. Both diagrams indicate the downtown zones starting at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street and then expanding out to cover the area from Bronson Park to the site of the future event center. The proposed zoning calibrations are based on roughly the same boundaries as the existing zoning, but differentiate between the scale of the historic zones and potential higher-density growth areas.





Current Zones	Current Color	Current Height Limits	Proposed Color	Proposed Zones (Future Land Use*)	Proposed Height Limits	Notes
Downtown 1 (D1)		No Limit		Urban Edge	150' Max/ 12 stories	Shift this zone away from the downtown core to protect historic buildings.
Downtown 2 (D2)		6 Stories		Downtown	75' Max/ 5 stories	Overall zone covers the downtown core, Bronson Park, and Arcadia Festival Place.
NA		NA		Downtown Commercial	75' Max/ 5 stories	Sub-zone at commerical core, code to support commercial development.
NA		NA		Downtown Civic	75' Max/ 5 stories	Sub-zone at Bronson Park, code to support character of civic structures.
NA		NA		Downtown Mixed-Use	75' Max/ 5 stories	Sub-zone at near Arcadia Festival Place, code to support mix-used development.
Downtown 3 (D3)		3 Stories		Neighborhood Edge	40' Max/ 3 stories	Mid-to low-density Missing Middle Housing and neighborhood-level commercial.
Live-Work 1 (LW1)		3 Stories		Neighborhood	35' Max/ 2.5 stories	Low-density Missing Middle Housing types.
Industrial		NA		Industrial	NA	Note: Proposed color change to differentiate Urban Edge from Downtown.
NA		NA		Open Space/Parks	NA	Note: Strongly recommend including open space as a zone to protect green space.

\* Proposed zoning draws from the Future Land Use color palette and categories with two exceptions. First, the color of Urban Edge is changed to differentiate the zone from Downtown. Second, a new category, Neighborhood, is added to offer a lower-density Missing Middle Housing option.

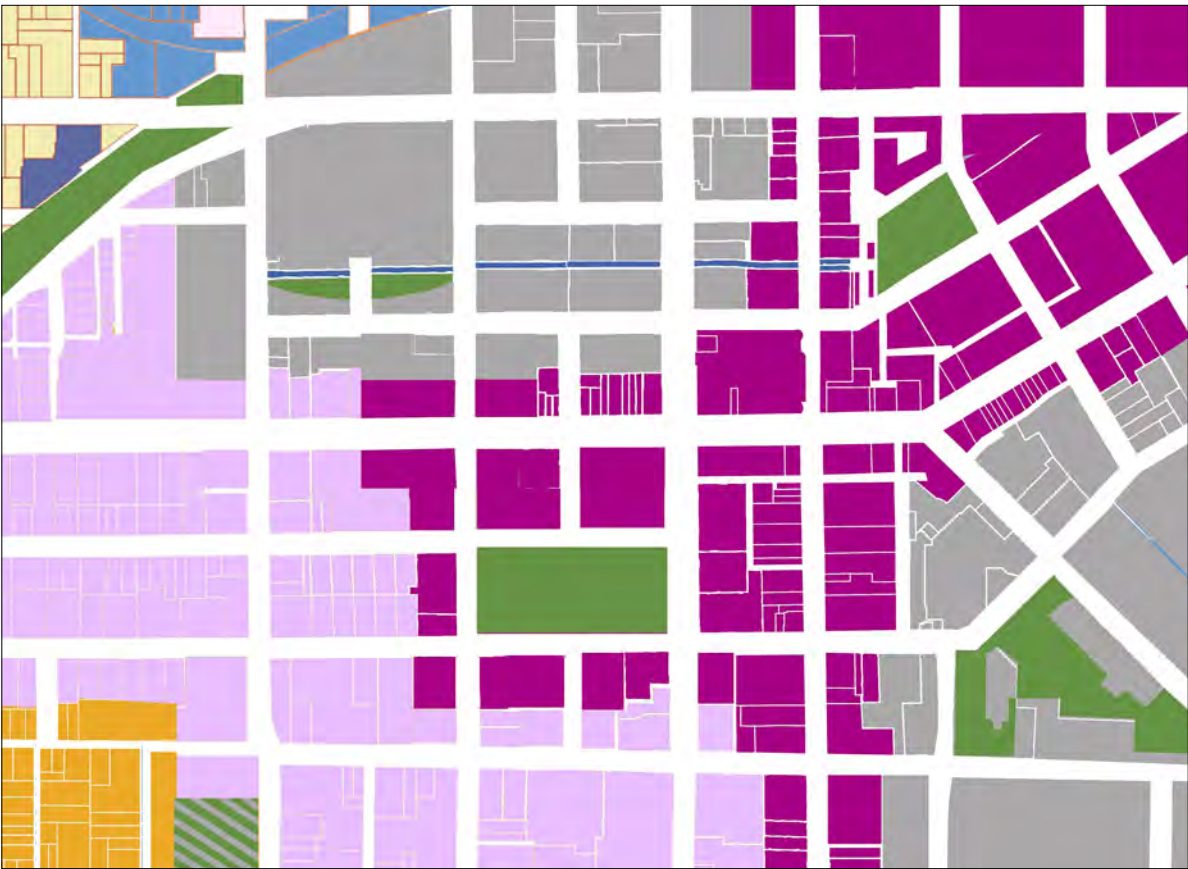


FIGURE 16: Proposed Zoning — Simple Zones

The proposed zoning pushes the highest density growth, Urban Edge, indicated in gray, away from the historic retail and civic cores of the downtown. Downtown, indicated in purple, steps down in density to better support and preserve the established height and scale of the historic retail corridors. The zones continue to reduce in scale and density as they move toward the primarily residential areas, which include a range of Missing Middle Housing types and neighborhood-focused commercial uses.

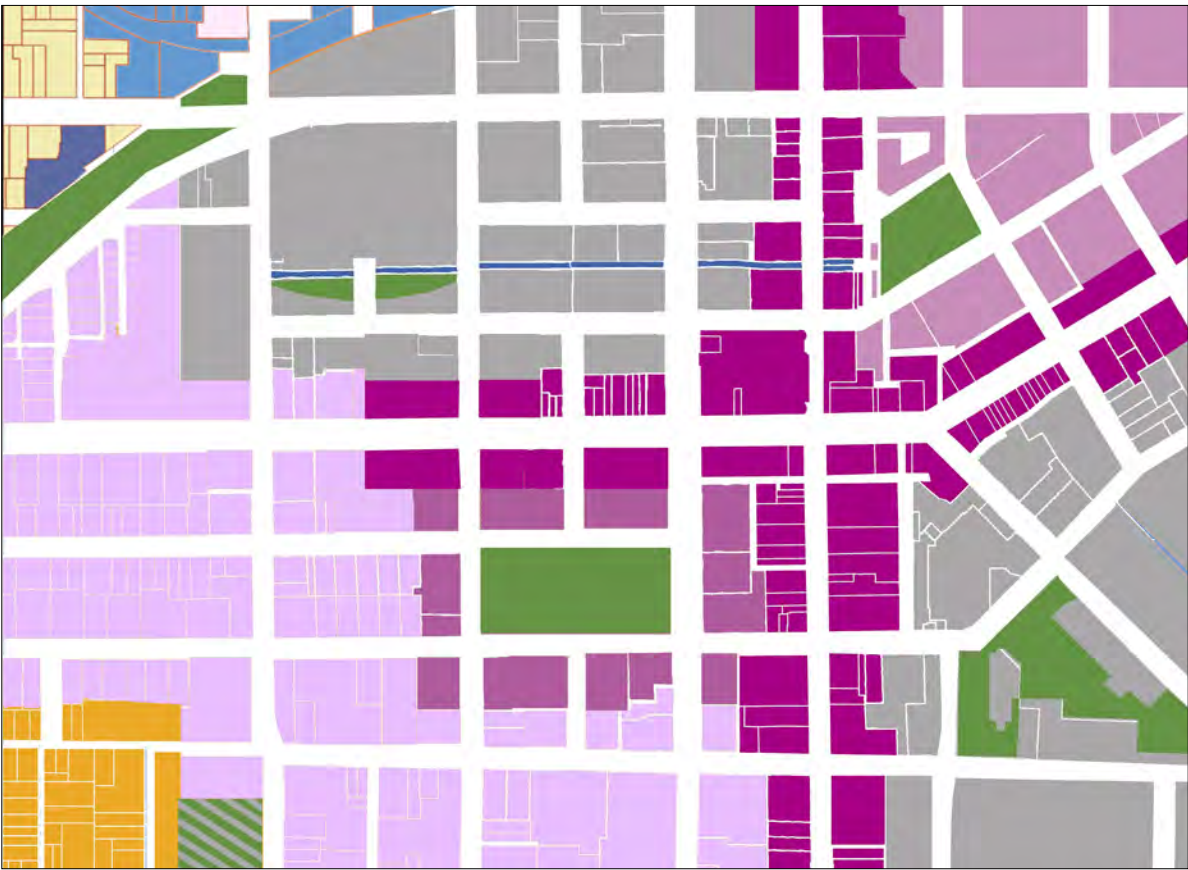


FIGURE 17: Proposed Zoning — Layered Zones

Recognizing the unique character of the areas within the historic core of the city, this diagram illustrates a differentiation between areas of the Downtown zone. The less dense and civic buildings surrounding Bronson Park are designated Downtown Civic, warm purple. The area radiating from the corner of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street is more dense and primarily mixed-use with retail on the ground floor. This is designated Downtown Commercial Core, purple. And finally, the area to the northeast surrounding Arcadia Festival Place is designated Downtown Mixed Use, cool purple.



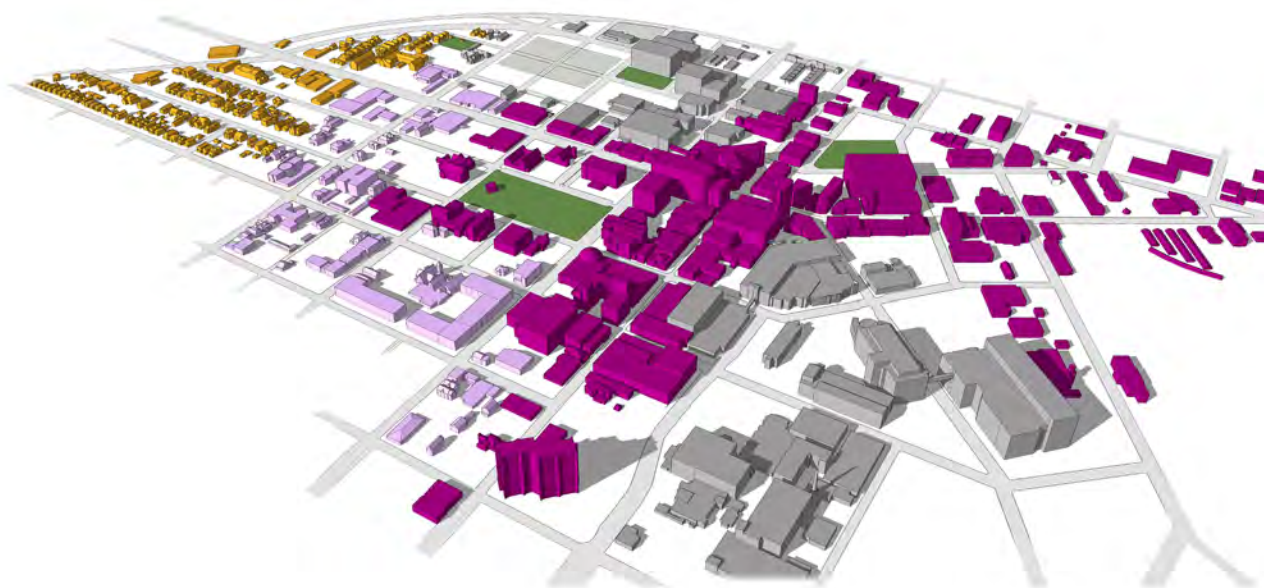
**FIGURE 18: Proposed Zoning Map with Building Footprints — No Infill**

This diagram illustrates the four downtown zones, Urban Edge (gray), Downtown (purple), Neighborhood Edge (lavender), and Neighborhood zones (yellow) on the footprints of the existing buildings. The white space indicates potential development sites.



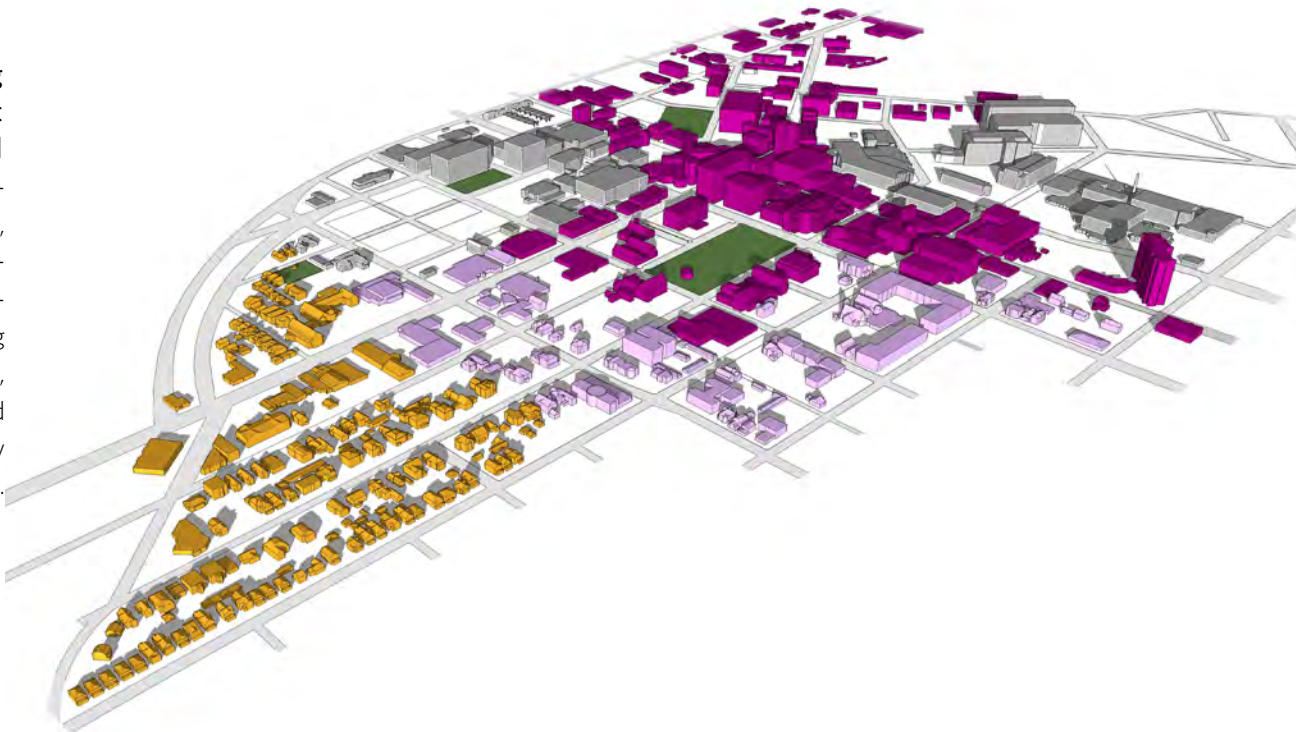
**FIGURE 19: Proposed Zoning Aerial Looking Northwest — No Infill**

Taking a three-dimensional approach to zoning enables an understanding of building heights within the different zones. This view highlights the retail corridor established along Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street and clarifies the need to protect the scale of this area.



**FIGURE 20: Proposed Zoning Aerial Looking Northeast — No Infill**

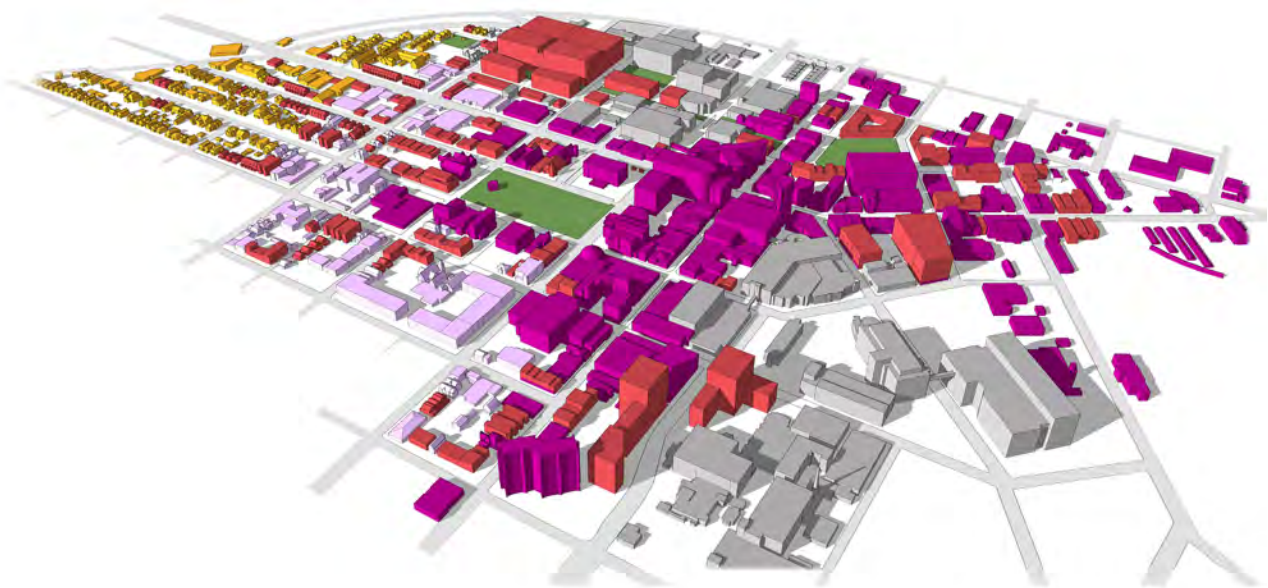
This view displays an acceleration from west to east in scale, zone, and activity. The small-scale, lower-density residential zone grows into Missing Middle Housing and retail, then into the civic core around Bronson Park, and eventually the downtown core.



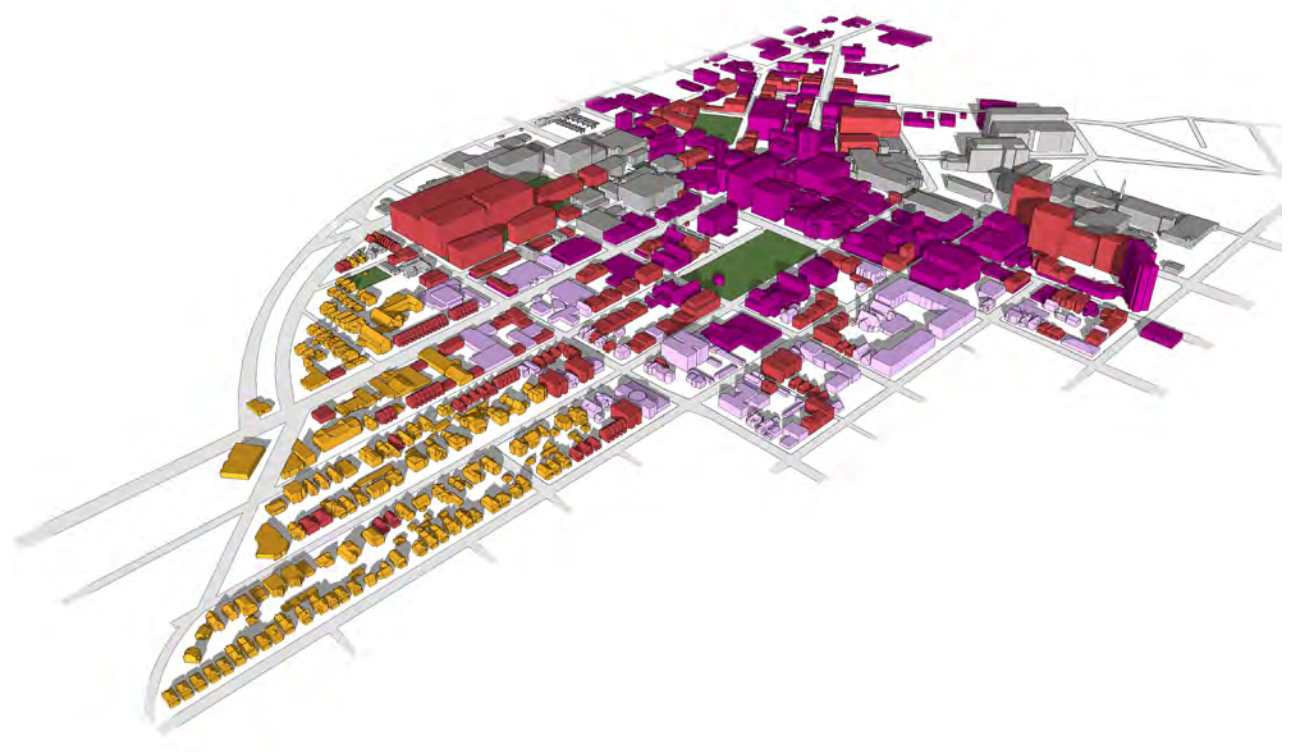




**FIGURE 21: Proposed Zoning Map with Building Footprints — With Infill**  
Indicated in red, the infill strategies of this plan are influenced by both the size and density of the zone in which they fall. Missing Middle Housing permeates the Neighborhood Edge (lavender) and Neighborhood zones (yellow). Larger scale development is anticipated in Urban Edge (gray) and Downtown (purple).



**FIGURE 22: Proposed Zoning Aerial Looking Northwest — With Infill**  
Though there are fewer gaps to fill along these retail corridors, it is critical to respect the heights of the zone in which we are infilling. While higher buildings are logical for the Urban Edge, and particularly in association with the event center and southeastern campus buildings, small-scale mixed-use buildings are the most logical infill strategy for Michigan and Burdick.



**FIGURE 23: Proposed Zoning Aerial Looking Northeast — With Infill**  
This view illustrates the mixed scale of infill progressing from the lower-density mixed-use residential areas into the civic core and beyond, into the highest-density zone adjacent to the proposed event center to the northwest and medical center campus to the southeast.



## CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENT

The plan to the right demonstrates a comprehensive vision for downtown Kalamazoo. This plan is composed of a series of individual yet interwoven proposed design interventions. Each proposal serves the dual goal of reinvigorating a specific moment in the city, while also uniting areas of activity throughout downtown. Concepts can be implemented as a whole composition or moved forward individually depending on available funding and public interest. ***Connecting underutilized land to the active pockets of downtown will require an intentional strategic work plan to focus new development.*** The city can facilitate this vision by offering incentives, establishing easy to use guidelines for storefront design, allowing Missing Middle Housing, and making sure that infill responds to the appropriate regulations for street frontage. Specific recommendations are outlined in the Key Findings listed throughout this report.

Arcadia Festival Place and Bronson Park serve as anchoring nodes, while corridors like Arcadia Creek, the pedestrian alley system, and Burdick Street serve as connectors. Together, this series of proposals provides a path for pedestrians to comfortably move through the city and pause within its most interesting areas without experiencing unpleasant or unsafe moments. The proposed infill shown in the downtown plan, indicated in maroon, represents an ideal future of appropriate scale and density. Details beyond the general footprint of the buildings are outside the scope of this study.

The goal for these strategies is to catalyze further investment and development throughout downtown Kalamazoo. While the focus of this study is the public property within the right-of-way, several of our proposed design interventions and strategies involve the activation of private property. ***Fully realizing the potential of downtown Kalamazoo will require a combination of public and private investment. The hope is that public investment will spur private growth.*** As such, the design proposals are presented as a holistic view of the two working together toward a more cohesive and pedestrian-friendly experience.

### Proposed Design Interventions to Spur Catalytic Development:

- A Commercial Core & Retail Strategy**  
The surviving historic core of downtown at the corner of W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street forms the retail center of the city. Incentivize commercial activity at this intersection so visitors park once to meet more than one need. See pages 24–25.
- B Storefront & Fabric Building Design Principles**  
Stimulate commercial activity with storefront design principles proven to increase curb appeal and support retail performance. These principles, for both the storefront itself and the full facade of a fabric building, enhance the pedestrian experience by offering a richness of texture to the streetscape. See pages 26–27.
- C Historic Preservation**  
The rich character at the center of downtown, at Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street, is defined by the two- and three-story historic fabric buildings. Yet only some of these buildings are protected by local historic preservation listings. The successful regeneration of downtown will put pressure on the historic fabric. We strongly recommend adding protections to additional buildings to protect the character at the heart of the city. See pages 28–29.
- D Design Audit for Existing Storefronts**  
Not all of the existing buildings on W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street are as engaging as the historic structures. This audit ranks the existing buildings in three action categories: Preserve (historic building, offers high value to the city); Reskin (overall scale supports the public realm, but needs new skin to meaningfully contribute to pedestrian experience); and Consider Replacing (a category not taken lightly, but proposed for buildings that severely detract from the public realm). See pages 30–33.
- E Burdick Street Strategies**  
S. Burdick Street, also referred to as the Kalamazoo Mall, is successful despite several urban challenges. We propose an immediate redesign and reconstruction of the stretch north of Michigan

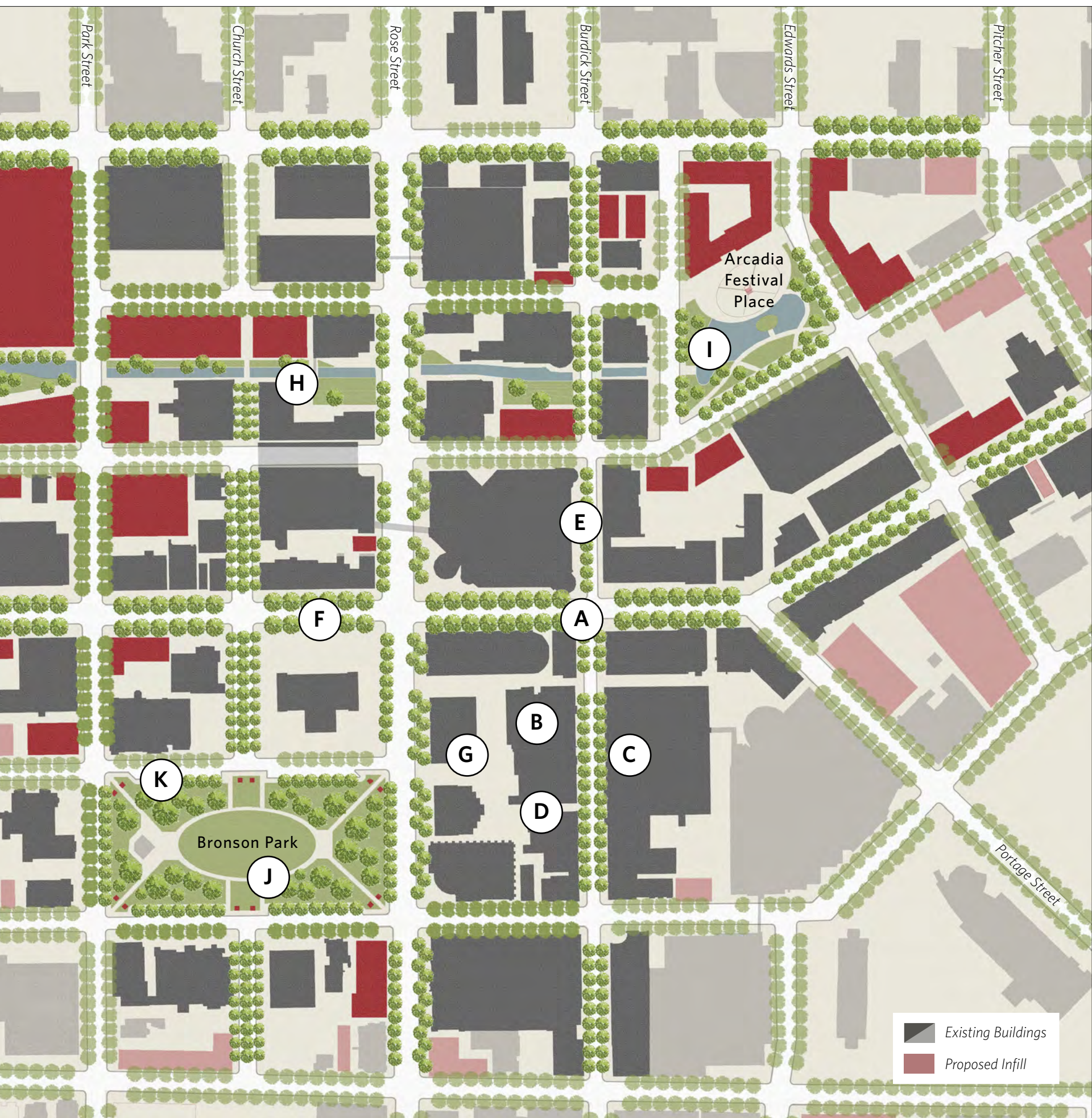


**FIGURE 24: Proposed Plan of Downtown Kalamazoo**  
A vision for downtown Kalamazoo, MI.

Avenue that remains closed to traffic while seeking approval to open this section of the street. We also propose a redesign and pause for the stretch of S. Burdick Street south of Michigan Avenue to be prepared with a preferred street section if the approximately 100-year-old infrastructure fails. See pages 34–35.

- F Michigan Avenue Strategies**  
W. Michigan Avenue is slated to be rebuilt in the first phase of the Streets for All one-way to two-way conversion project. The proposals in this section offer specific design suggestions for the implementation of the two sections of this street, the wider east-west portion that extends from Westnedge Avenue to Portage Street, as well as the narrower portion that angles from Portage Street to merge into Kalamazoo Avenue. See pages 36–39.
- G Alley Activation**  
Repelled away from dangerous one-way thoroughfares like Michigan Avenue, pedestrians found refuge in an intricate alley system. Yet while isolated sidewalks and storefronts have sporadically





emerged over time, the alley network as a whole lacks coherence. Activation of the alley network through the design of an engaged public realm will help the city show tangible results in the short-term and will provide continuous safe pedestrian routes through the city when the primary streets are under construction. See pages 40–41.

H

#### Creek Activation

The goal of daylighting Arcadia Creek in the 1980s was to draw nature throughout downtown. While well intended, this vision was only partially realized because the design as executed isolates the creek and separates it from the pedestrian experience. We propose activating the creek through a range of terracing strategies that allow pedestrians access to the water. See pages 42–45.

I

#### Arcadia Festival Place

Arcadia Festival Place is a popular destination for events, but when it is not in use for festivals, the space is uncomfortable and overscaled. And despite the size, much of the existing acreage is

not fully utilized. We propose reducing the footprint of the overall park, fully engaging the land remaining for an event space with a water feature, and then framing the park with a new mixed-use building. See pages 46–47.

J

#### Bronson Park

Historic Bronson Park anchors the civic district of downtown Kalamazoo. The park attracts visitors for events, but is often empty at other times. We propose a refreshed design for Bronson Park with an open a central green that works as a seating area for events and as a play area for kids and dogs, and feels complete when not in active use. See pages 48–49.

K

#### Tactical Urbanism

Realizing the long-term vision put forward in the proposals in this section will require substantial funding, formal approval, and will take years to complete. This section identifies short-term tactical projects that can be implemented quickly and affordably to help the city build toward its larger goals. See pages 50–51.



COMMERCIAL CORE & RETAIL STRATEGY

It is instantly clear, with both a walk through the city and a glance at a map of Kalamazoo, that the core of downtown is centered at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street. Currently a high-speed east-west thoroughfare, Michigan Avenue is partially framed by high-quality historic fabric buildings but has lost its pedestrian traffic because of the speed of traffic. Burdick Street, the Kalamazoo Mall, is a partially pedestrian retail corridor that runs north and south.

The Gibbs Planning Group’s Retail Market Analysis (Figure 26) determined that once the one-way streets are changed to two-way, downtown “could support up to 36,000 square feet (sf) of new retailers and 16,000 square feet of new restaurants for a total of up to 52,000 sf new space.” Since the transition of the roads will take many years to fully deploy, this new business growth will not happen all at once. As such, it is important to encourage new and growing businesses to open in close proximity to each other to form a more attractive destination for visitors to downtown.

As the proposals in this report start to be implemented, it will be natural for new businesses to be attracted to the west end of Michigan Avenue, near Westnedge Avenue, because there is ample surface parking and lower density. This is not ideal for the growth of the city because it will create more congestion as visitors to downtown will be forced to drive between each destination.

We recommend offering incentives to new and growing businesses to keep commercial activity near the current retail core of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street. That way, downtown visitors are able to park once to make several stops. With this growth model, businesses will support each other by attracting shared customers.



KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

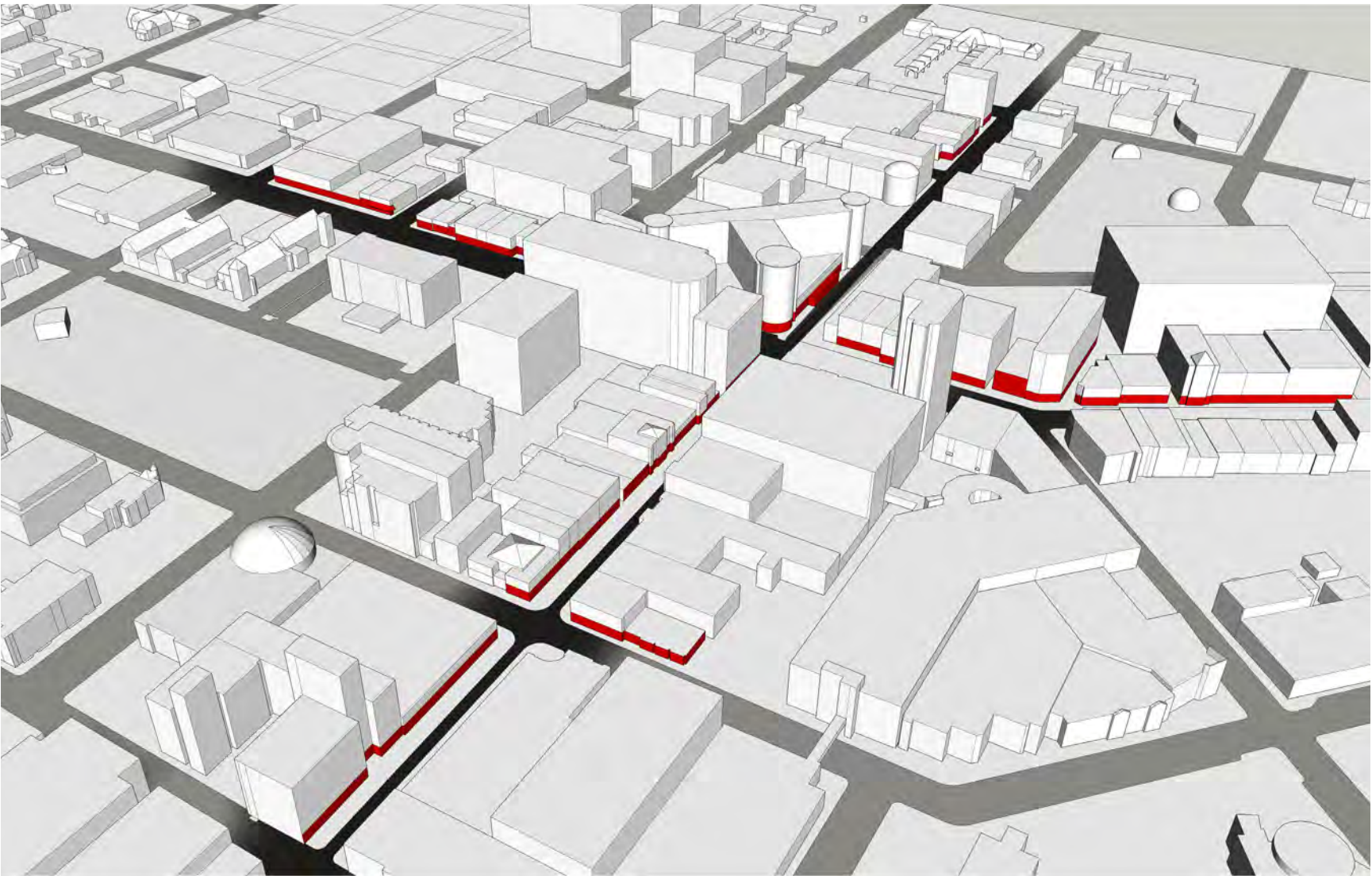
- KF

**Retail Core of Downtown Is at Michigan & Burdick**  
*The surviving historic core of downtown, the corner of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street, forms the retail center of the city.*
- KF

**Scale of Historic Buildings Supports Active Street Life**  
*Two- and three-story historic buildings define the character of the retail core. The scale of these buildings is ideal for pedestrian activity.*
- R

**Incentivize Economic Development at Retail Core**  
*Incentivize commercial activity, supporting existing businesses and encouraging new ones near this intersection so downtown visitors park once to meet more than one need.*
- R

**Continue to Incentivize Storefront Activation**  
*Continue to support activation of the street through the existing storefront renovation grant program.*



**FIGURE 25: Model Highlighting First Floor Retail at the Commercial Core**  
The first-floor retail that extends from the corner of Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street forms the commercial core of downtown Kalamazoo. The scale of the historic two- and three-story buildings at the crossing define the character of the public realm.



Downtown Kalamazoo  
Retail Market Urban Design Impact Analysis  
15 June 2022



**Figure 2:** Downtown Kalamazoo (above right) looking northeast. Michigan Avenue is shown upper left between the Radisson Hotel and the Mall-Burdick Street downtown shopping district (Source Google Earth)

**Executive Summary**

This analysis concludes that Kalamazoo’s proposed street and urban design initiatives will potentially increase the downtown’s retail and restaurant sales by an additional \$20.6 million annually. This demand could support up to 36,000 square feet (sf) of new retailers and 16,000 sf of new restaurants for a total of up to 52,000 sf new space. This growth could be absorbed with the opening of 25 to 35 new businesses or by existing stores and restaurants through expanded operations and, or the repurposing of other downtown buildings.

If implemented as planned, the proposed urban design and traffic calming improvements may potentially support the following additional businesses in downtown Kalamazoo:

- 12,000 sf – Apparel, Jewelry, Shoes
  - 7,000 sf -Specialty Grocery & Pharmacy
  - 21,000 sf -Food, Beverage & Restaurants
  - 12,000 sf - Specialty Retailers: Books, Gifts, Home, Toys, etc.
- 52,000 sf Total Supportable Additional Retail Space with proposed street improvements**

The downtown’s untapped market reflects increasing preferences for urban living and shopping by many demographic groups, especially by millennials, empty nesters, seniors and single households. Following this trend, leading retailers are leaving the suburbs to deploy new stores into attractive, walkable, well managed city or new urban town centers. Medium sized, upper Midwestern cities have become identified as desirable regions for new development due to their quality of life, affordability and possible climate change impacts.

However, the current trend of declining demand for conventional shopping centers and increasing appeal for urbanism has been widely acknowledged by a new generation of real estate developers who are building large, mixed-use new town centers. These new towns offer comfortable, walkable, shopping, entertainment and employment town-like experiences. They feature a wide selection of popular brands, extended shopping hours, perceived safety and easy parking. The potential Kalamazoo retail market demand outlined by this research is likely also to be understood by the real estate industry. Kalamazoo’s opportunities to meet the urban preferences and aspirations of its community may be time sensitive, underling the importance of implementing the urban design, traffic calming and policy proposals in the near future.



**Figure 3:** Above left, 1960’s view of the Kalamazoo Mall; Above right, view of Burdick Street before its transformation to the pedestrian mall.

**FIGURE 26: Retail Market Analysis Prepared by Gibbs Planning Group**  
Key findings from the Retail Market Analysis prepared for the City of Kalamazoo by Gibbs Planning Group, issued in June 2022.



## STOREFRONT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Fabric buildings make great places because they work together to create the walls of outdoor rooms. These “walls” set the scale and character of the pedestrian experience. Even on Michigan Avenue east of Portage, where traffic routinely speeds by at upwards of 50 mph, the character of the historic fabric buildings calms the experience at street level. Once this street is returned to two-way travel, the outdoor experience will be truly extraordinary, due in large part to the design of these buildings.

And while Kalamazoo is fortunate to have such rich surviving historic fabric buildings, not every building in the commercial core rises to such prominence. As economic development focuses near the existing retail core at Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street, we recommend either requiring or incentivizing storefront renovations and future infill designs to draw from traditional fabric building and storefront design principles.

Key features of fabric buildings include: two to five stories in height; distinction between the storefront level and upper office/residential levels; simple massing, often walls with punched openings, and topped with a cornice. Storefront design elements include a cornice for signage, a deep awning, transom windows, shop display windows, often a recessed door to maximize display area, and low panels or benches at the ground level. While less is more in regard to the elements in the kit of parts, they combine together for a limitless range of design configurations and possibilities that can be replicated in new buildings that enhance the existing fabric.

More critical than the individual design and detailing of a fabric building is its contribution to the overall streetscape: the way in which these buildings sit next to each other and work together to create a greater whole. We recommend producing a Storefront & Fabric Building Design Manual to offer guidance for renovations and new construction.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Fabric Buildings Are Critical for Retail Success

*Kalamazoo fabric buildings range from two to five stories and work together to form the walls of outdoor rooms in the commercial core.*

KF

#### Successful Storefront Designs Are Human Scale

*Storefronts are successful when designed with traditional elements such as shop windows, transom windows, recessed doors, deep awnings, and painted signage; these elements relate to the scale of the human body.*

R

#### Encourage Infill Development in Scale of Existing Fabric

*For both the new storefronts and the full facades of new infill, encourage fabric buildings that enhance the pedestrian experience by offering a richness of scale and texture to the streetscape.*

R

#### Incentivize Use of a Storefront Design Manual

*Create a Storefront & Fabric Building Design Manual to help renovations and new infill to activate commercial activity with storefront design principles proven to increase curb appeal and support retail performance.*



#### Building Cornice

Decorative top of building, practical use to keep water away from the face of the building and transition from the materials used on the finish wall to the roof.

#### Windows — Punched Openings

Fabric buildings typically have a simple wall plane with punched openings with double hung windows.

#### Storefront Cornice with Signage

The storefront cornice divides the retail portion of the building and the residential or office upper floors as well as providing a place for store signage. If using an awning, attach it below the storefront cornice so signage remains visible. Also, if using an awning, specify a deep one, minimum 8”.

#### Shop Display Windows

Display windows come in all configurations, but will typically have a low panel for protection from foot traffic, a large display area, and transom windows above.

#### Outdoor Seating

Storefronts scaled to people attract people. For restaurants, this presents the opportunity for outdoor dining and seating areas.

**FIGURE 27: Key Design Elements of Mixed-Use Fabric Buildings**

Fabric buildings work together to define the character of the public realm. The coordinated nature of these buildings relieves the pressure on each individual design to be the center of attention. Rather, the best fabric buildings are simple forms with great proportions. The details that matter most are the details you can touch and feel at the level of the storefront.



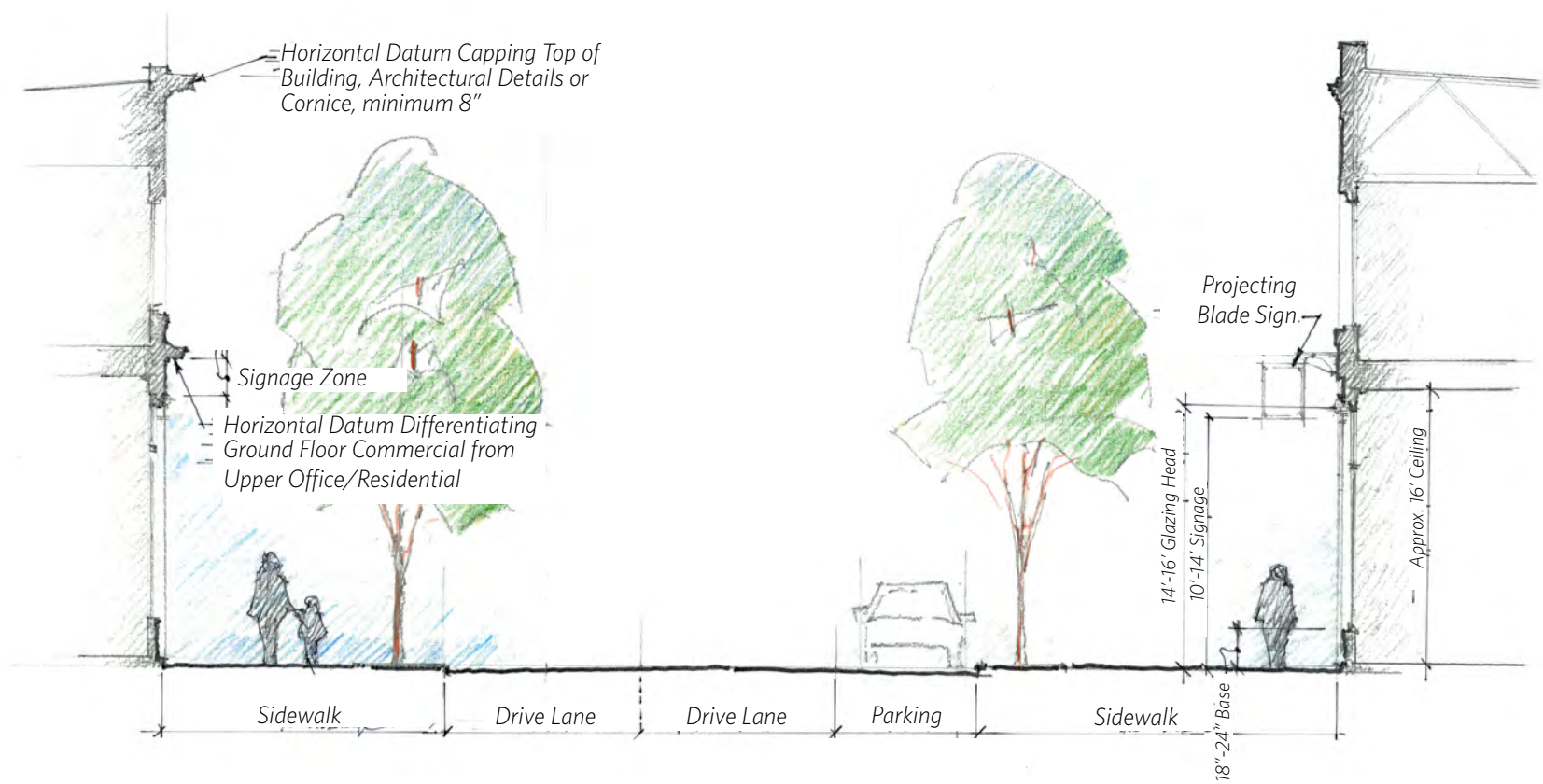


FIGURE 28: Mixed-Use Fabric Buildings — Street Section Details

Fabric buildings form the walls of an outdoor room, which means they are closely tied to the street section to define the pedestrian experience. This drawing illustrates the key elements of the fabric buildings and storefronts that shape a sense of enclosure in this outdoor room.

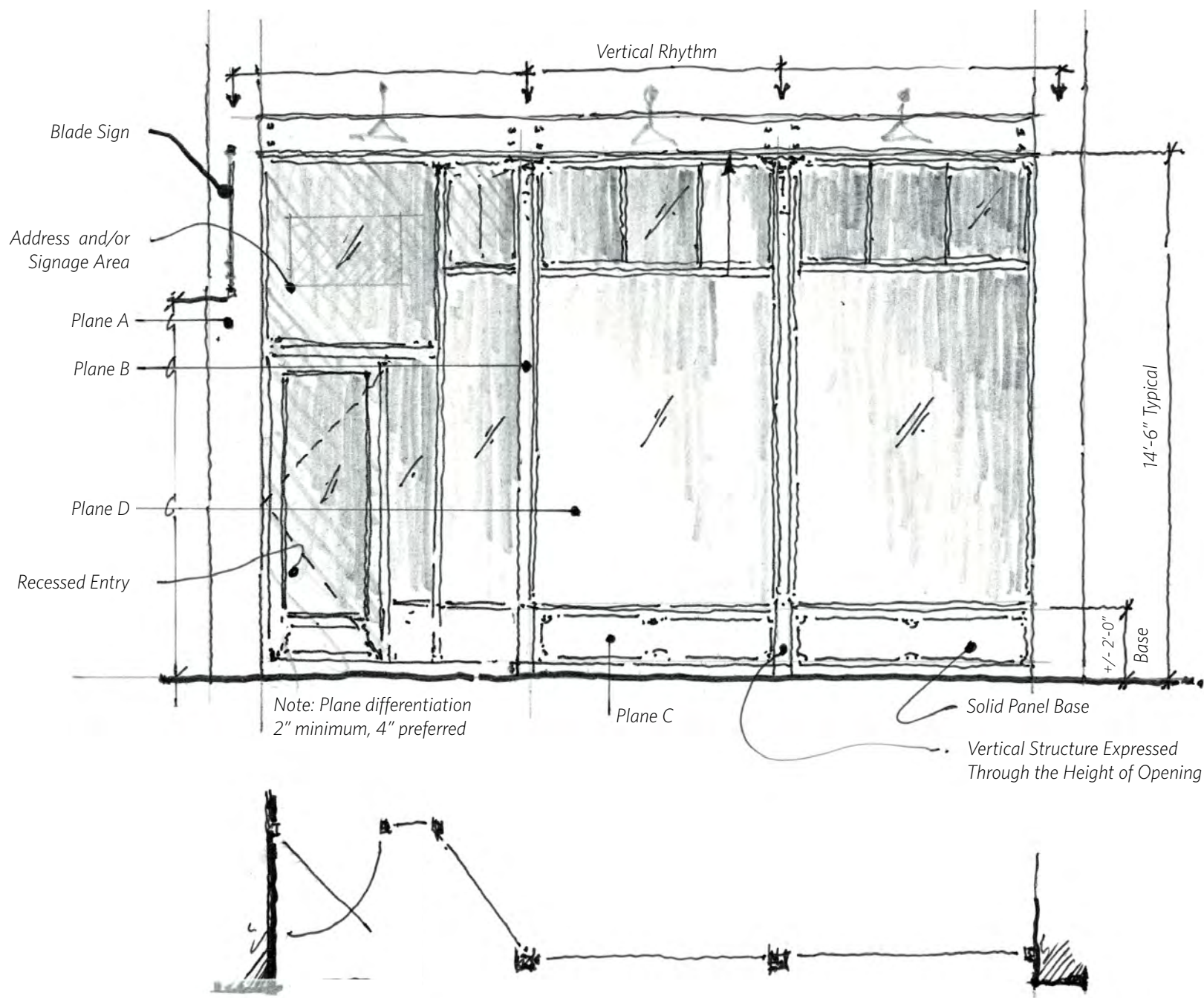


FIGURE 29: Storefront Design Details

Storefront design configurations are limitless, but draw from a basic kit of parts: low panel or base, display windows, door — often recessed — transom windows, mullions or frame. The richness of a pedestrian experience depends on the scale and detailing of these elements since it is the portion of the building that meets the ground.



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Kalamazoo is fortunate to have retained a critical mass of high quality, historic, mixed-use fabric buildings. These buildings define the character of a place and create a richness that cannot be quantified. Future development and growth will build on these existing historic fabric buildings to further enrich the city. But new development can only complement these buildings; it cannot replace them. A loss of any of these historic buildings will work against all the economic goals of the city.

The best of these buildings, along W. Michigan Avenue between Portage Street and S. Pitcher Street, are locally protected in the Haymarket Historic District. While this is good for the city, shockingly, the buildings of a similar character that formed the first pedestrian mall in the nation, the Kalamazoo Mall on S. Burdick Street, are not protected and are vulnerable to demolition.

The first step in protecting these important buildings is adjusting zoning to limit the height in this area by pushing higher density development away from the commercial core at W. Michigan Avenue and S. Burdick Street (see more on pages 16–21). The successful regeneration of downtown will put pressure on the historic fabric; adjusting zoning will limit economic pressure to replace smaller structures with larger ones.

Locally designating buildings on a historic registry is a complex process. If this isn't possible, create a Demolition Delay Ordinance to buy time to negotiate an alternative to destroying a historic building, or create a Conservation District to further support the preservation of irreplaceable buildings.

This is a critical issue that must be prioritized. Many historic buildings that made up the fabric of these retail streets have already been torn down and replaced with buildings that have a less pleasant appearance, less human street presence, and less appropriate scale or density. Much of this destruction happened before we understood the economic value of historic structures. Additional losses at this point are not acceptable because we now know better. We must do better for the future generations who will inherit this great city.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Locally Protected Buildings Are Safe; Federally Protected Buildings Are at Risk

*Local protections limit the demolition of historic structures, while the federal projection can only discourage demolition.*

KF

#### More Buildings Need Protection

*The fabric buildings along S. Burdick Street and adjacent are of high value to the city and are not currently protected by local or federal historic listings.*

R

#### As Possible, Add Local Protections for Key Buildings

*Add protections for fabric buildings of high quality along S. Burdick and close proximity to ensure the city retains the rich characteristics and feel as it grows in the future.*

R

#### Demolition Delay Ordinance and Conservation District

*Make demolishing historic fabric buildings more difficult by slowing demolition. This can buy time to find viable economic solutions that can save important fabric buildings.*



FIGURE 30: E. Michigan Avenue, North Side of Street — AT RISK

The north side of E. Michigan Avenue between Burdick Street and Portage Street is of high quality but not protected within the Haymarket District.

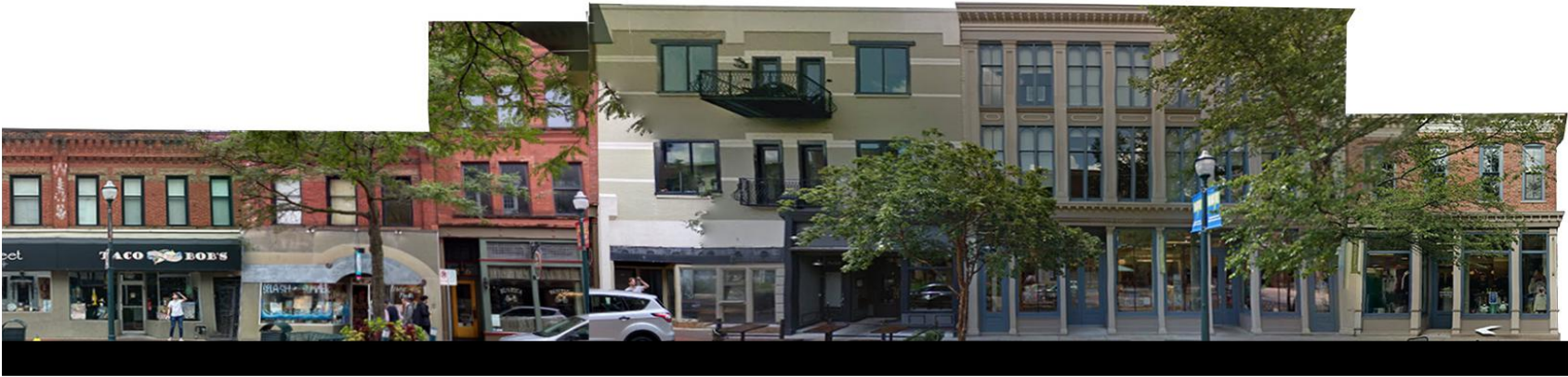
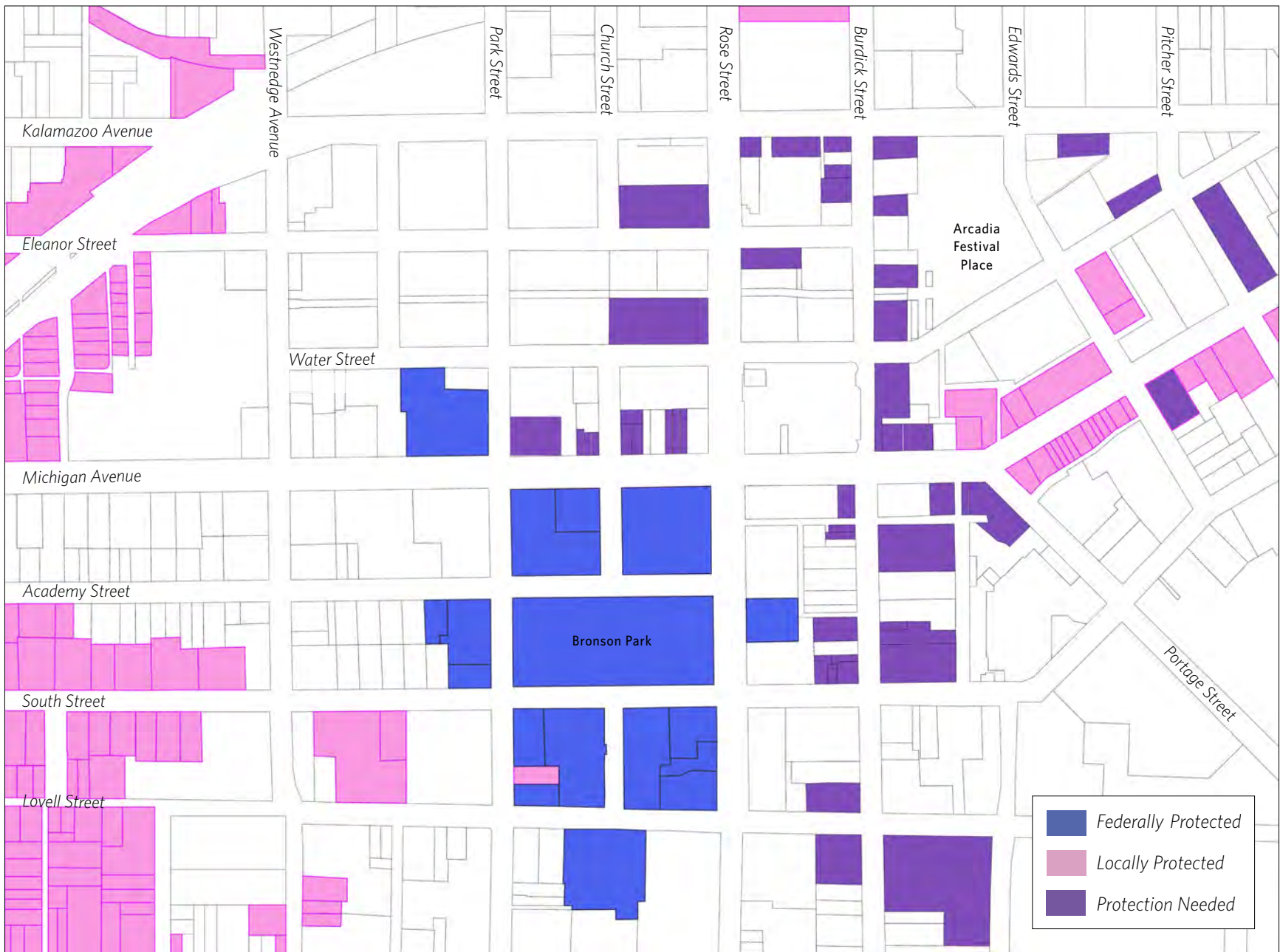


FIGURE 31: S. Burdick Street, West Side of Street — AT RISK

Building on the west side of the historic Kalamazoo Mall on S. Burdick Street are at risk for demolition without protection.





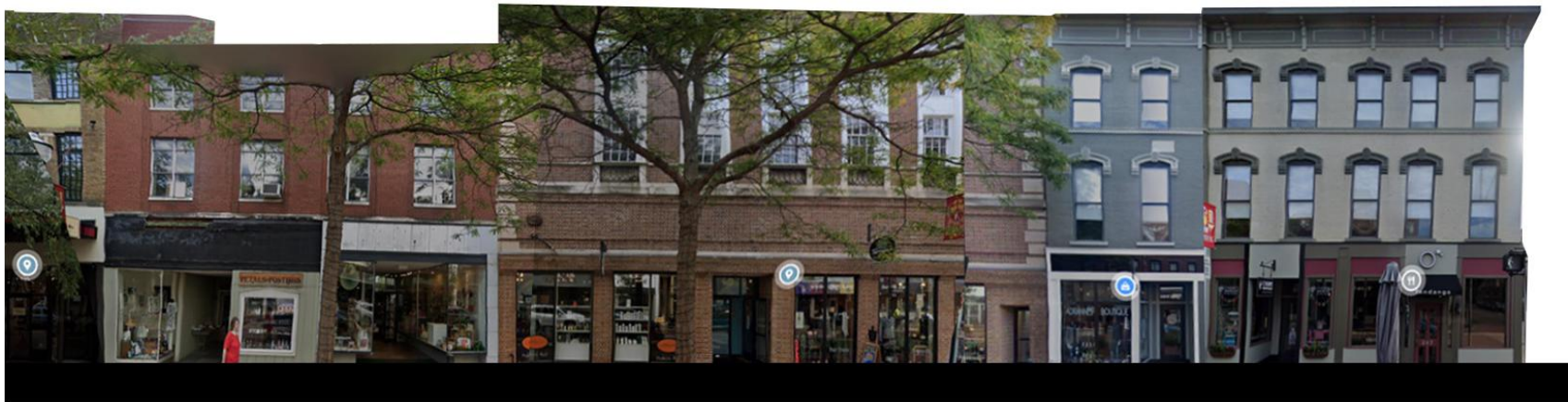
**FIGURE 32: Proposed Historic Preservation Map of Downtown Kalamazoo**

The Haymarket District, pink, indicates locally protected buildings that are extremely difficult to demolish. The Bronson Park Historic District, blue, is federally protected, which offers incentives not to demolish, but does not have the power to stop the destruction of historic structures. We propose the buildings indicated in purple be protected to whatever level is practicable.



**FIGURE 33: Michigan Avenue Historic Haymarket District, South Side of Street — PROTECTED**

Protected Haymarket District buildings. South side of Michigan Avenue between Portage Street and Edwards Street.



**FIGURE 34: S. Burdick Street, East Side of Street — AT RISK**

East side of the historic Kalamazoo Mall on S. Burdick Street. These buildings are at risk for demolition without protection.



## EXISTING STOREFRONT DESIGN AUDIT

As historic fabric buildings were demolished over the years, very often the city received replacement buildings that do not contribute to, and in fact may detract from, the richness of the urbanism and public realm. Elements that detract from the public realm include large blank walls, large walls of glass that do not look into a storefront, and out-of-scale elements such as blank panels or dark tinted windows.

The activation of the public realm, one of the primary goals of this study, requires developing a strategy to engage the existing buildings in the commercial core that do not serve the street as well as their predecessors. Tearing them all down and replacing them is neither sustainable nor practical. Instead, a more viable option is reskinning, which can happen in a number of ways, and to a number of degrees of completeness and complexity. This is a facade-only strategy, with the focus being the ground-level storefront and general streetscape experience of pedestrians.

So, while it is critical to fight for the historic structures that are not yet protected, we also need to consider strategies for reviving the public realm adjacent to these existing buildings, and only in extreme cases should we consider replacing buildings that are anti-urban. With this in mind, the team looked closely at a number of commercial streets in the city, classifying existing buildings into three categories: preserve, reskin, and consider replacing.

As with the overall set of design proposals, this category takes priorities and time into account. In the short term, Kalamazoo must protect its historic fabric such that it cannot be torn down or replaced. The next priority is a reskinning of those facades that detract from the public realm, beginning in areas with the most foot traffic, such as Burdick Street. In the long term, the city has the opportunity to reexamine some of its most anti-urban structures and consider replacing them with something more appropriate.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Commercial Core Has a Range of Architectural Quality

Not all of the existing buildings on Michigan Avenue and Burdick Streets offer the same high architectural value to the city as the historic structures.

KF

#### Some Existing Buildings Work Against the Public Realm

How a building meets the street defines the public realm. Several buildings within the historic core create dead zones in the pedestrian experience, limiting the success of businesses as well as overall growth of the area.

R

#### Proposed Ranking System Identifies Mix of Design Quality

Assign three action categories to the buildings in the historic commercial core: Preserve (historic, high value to the city), Reskin (supports public realm, needs new skin); and Consider Replacing (detracts from the public realm).

R

#### Incentivize Preserving & Reskinning

Connect with property owners to discuss incentives for preserving high-value historic structures and reskinning buildings that can be renovated to better support the public realm.



#### Preserve (purple)

Historic building, offers high value to the city



#### Reskin (orange)

Overall scale supports the public realm, but needs new skin to meaningfully contribute to pedestrian experience



#### Consider Replacing (black)

A category not taken lightly, but proposed for buildings that severely detract from the public realm.

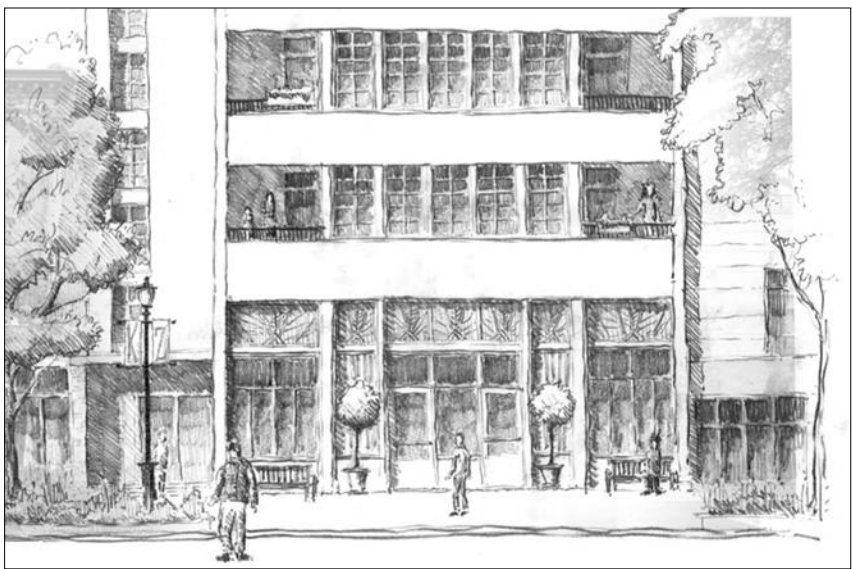
FIGURE 35: Storefront Audit Diagram

This plan illustrates the locations of the three categories of the audit: preserve (purple), reskin (orange), and consider replacing (black). See street elevations on pages 32–33 for examples.





Existing



Proposed Reskin

**FIGURE 36: 336 S. Burdick Street — Existing Conditions and Proposed Reskinning Design**

The mostly solid recessed wall at the street level of this building offers very little to the public realm. The proposed design draws on the modulation of the windows on upper floors to create a storefront that is both in keeping with the existing building and scaled appropriately to help activate the street. The proposed design also pulls the front facade out to align with the neighboring buildings and upper floors; this additional square footage now captured space for use in the building.



Existing



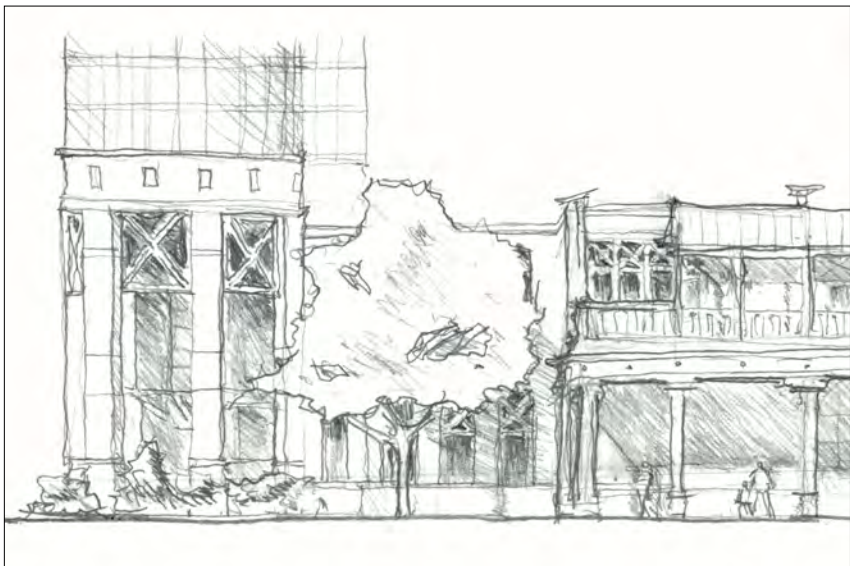
Proposed Reskin

**FIGURE 37: 230 N. Rose Street — Existing Conditions and Proposed Reskinning Design**

Blank walls challenge the activation of the public realm. This building is located at the intersection of N. Burdick and Arcadia Creek and faces an empty lot that currently houses a pop-up flea market. As Arcadia Creek is activated (see pages 42–45), the vacant lot may become a development site with frontage facing both the creek and N. Burdick Street. While the interior layout of 203 N. Rose Street right now limits engagement with the street, we recommend considering a redesign over time that encourages replacing the blank wall with openings that engage and support the activation of the pedestrian experience. If new openings are not possible, consider covering the facade with a mural.



Existing



Proposed Reskin

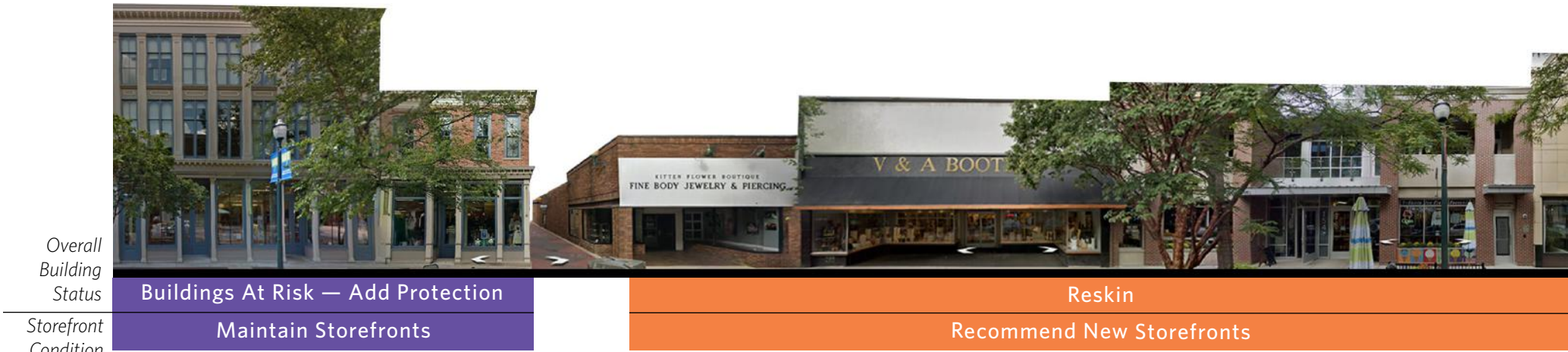
**FIGURE 38: 100 W. Michigan Avenue — Existing Conditions and Proposed Reskinning**

The Radisson Plaza Hotel is a challenge for the urbanism, not just because the building is much larger than neighboring buildings, but more critically, because the flatness and texture of the facade as it meets the street is out of scale with adjacent historic structures. This proposal softens the building by proposing an arcade that screens the building and offers an amenity to the street.





**FIGURE 39: S. Burdick Street — East Side**  
Recommend new storefronts for all buildings, preservation of high quality fabric buildings (purple) and reskinning of remaining buildings (orange).



**FIGURE 40: S. Burdick Street — West Side**  
Preserve at-risk buildings and storefronts, reskin remaining buildings.



**FIGURE 41: E. Michigan Avenue — South Side**  
All buildings in this image are protected. Recommend updating two storefronts of lower architectural quality.



**FIGURE 42: E. Michigan Avenue — North Side**  
Protect at-risk buildings and storefronts (purple), reskin buildings and storefronts that do not contribute to the public realm (orange).

<div></div> <div>Building Preservation Status — At-Risk</div> <div></div> <div>Storefront Condition — Maintain</div>	<div></div> <div>Building Preservation Status — Protected</div> <div></div> <div>Storefront Condition — Maintain</div>	<div></div> <div>Building Preservation Status — Reskin</div> <div></div> <div>Storefront Condition — Reskin</div>
<div></div> <div>Building Preservation Status — At-Risk</div> <div></div> <div>Storefront Condition — Reskin</div>	<div></div> <div>Building Preservation Status — At-Risk</div> <div></div> <div>Storefront Condition — Reskin</div>	





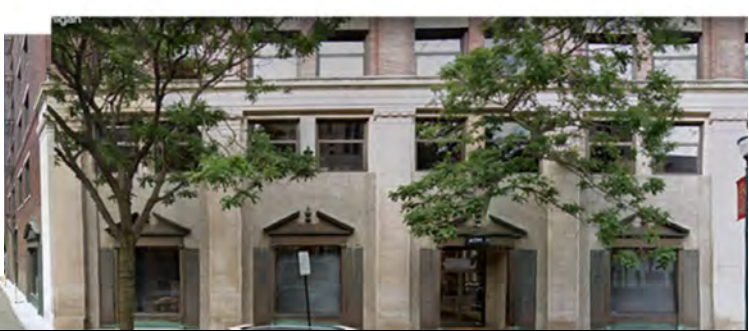
Reskin	Buildings At Risk — Add Protection
Reskin	Recommend New Storefronts

Overall  
Building  
Status

Storefront  
Condition



Reskin	At Risk — Add Protection
Recommend New Storefronts	



Building At Risk — Add Protection
Maintain Storefronts

Overall  
Building  
Status

Storefront  
Condition



Protected Buildings	
New Storefront	Maintain Storefronts

Overall  
Building  
Status

Storefront  
Condition



Protected Buildings	Protected Buildings
Recommend New Storefront	Maintain Storefronts

Overall  
Building  
Status

Storefront  
Condition



## BURDICK STREET STRATEGIES

Burdick Street is one of Kalamazoo’s strongest assets; it is dense, full of ground-floor businesses, landscaped, and arguably the most pedestrian-friendly part of the city. The historic buildings on the street are an inspiration for the character of future expansion.

An overarching facade strategy — as detailed in the earlier discussion of storefront design — has the power to unite a streetscape at a human scale both aesthetically and logistically, in a way practical for pedestrian retail. The challenge and joy of a street like Burdick is finding the balance between celebrating the uniqueness of each building and curating the collective aesthetic of the corridor as a whole.

The space between street facades is as important as the facades themselves, and does the majority of the work uniting the street in a number of layers: sidewalks, landscaping, benches, streetlamps, curbs, parking, street width, etc.

In the short term, we recommend redesigning N. Burdick to be a festival street with street trees and designated lanes for eventual driving and parking. Keep the street closed while this design is being implemented; as possible open to traffic. At the same time, design and engineer a new street section of S. Burdick Street. Do not disrupt retail on this portion of the street with construction; rather, hold the design to be prepared when the century-old infrastructure under the street fails, then implement the design on S. Burdick Street. See pages 66–67 for detailed street sections for N. and S. Burdick Street.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### N. Burdick Street Underperforms Because of Design

*The design of N. Burdick limits pedestrian movement because the street is closed to traffic and because the buildings facing the street are largely closed off at the street level; together these factors offer little to draw pedestrians down the street.*

KF

#### S. Burdick Street Has Untapped Potential

*S. Burdick attracts many shoppers and pedestrians because it is open to traffic and is lined by storefronts that house successful shops, yet the design of the street section and several of the buildings could be enhanced to further support the economic growth of this street.*

R

#### N. Burdick Street — Redesign and Reopen

*Redesign and reconstruction of the stretch north of Michigan Avenue that remains closed to traffic while seeking approval to open this section of the street.*

R

#### S. Burdick Street — Redesign and Pause

*Redesign S. Burdick Street, then hold the design in reserve to be prepared with a preferred street section if/when the century-old infrastructure below the street fails.*



Existing view of S. Burdick Street showing a single lane of one-way traffic, on-street parking, patchwork paving, and irregular landscape.





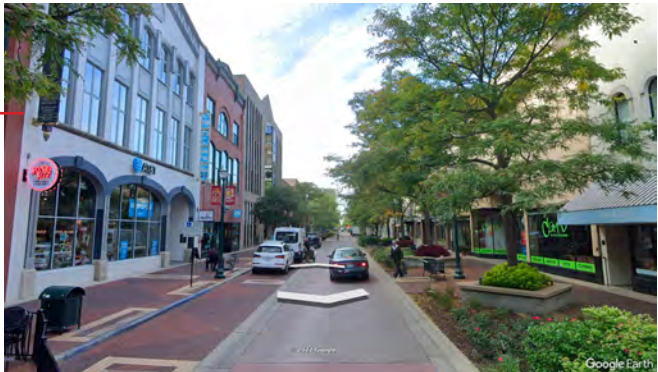
FIGURE 43: Plan of Burdick Street and Michigan Avenue



N. Burdick Street — Existing Conditions — Closed to traffic and framed by buildings that are largely closed off at the street level. Limited pedestrian engagement.



Intersection of Burdick & Michigan Avenue — Existing Conditions — Heart of the downtown commercial core.



S. Burdick Street — Existing Conditions — Successful retail street with one-way traffic. Draws active pedestrian engagement and has potential for further economic growth.



Proposed view of S. Burdick Street showing two-way traffic, on-street parking, and regular street tree planting that generates more usable space on the sidewalks for outdoor dining and seating.



## MICHIGAN AVENUE STRATEGIES

Michigan Avenue, in contrast to Burdick Street, is a varied experience from end to end. West of the downtown core, it is characterized by alternating retail buildings and vacant parking lots. There are fewer historic buildings, and very few trees; the most notable aspect of walking down Michigan is the street itself, with its four, and sometimes five, lanes of high-speed traffic. On a Sunday morning during the charrette, Rick Hall, our traffic engineer, registered several cars traveling over 60 mph and one as fast as 82.5 mph.

The character of Michigan becomes denser and more pedestrian friendly at the downtown core, then changes again to the west with two blocks of historic fabric buildings. Although this should enable a pedestrian corridor, the traffic, already moving quickly, has no reason to slow down.

The most urgent short-term goal is safety, which can be improved with fewer lanes, a narrower street, additions of trees and parklets, safety strips, and other traffic-slowing strategies. In the longer term, Michigan can work toward becoming an increasingly pleasant pedestrian experience, especially as buildings, businesses, and trees grow to the east. See pages 60–61 for detailed street sections for both portions of W. Michigan Street.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Two-Way Traffic Will Reduce Width Required for Cars

Restoring two-way traffic to Michigan Avenue will reduce the width of paving necessary for travel and parking lanes. This creates an opportunity to further enhance the pedestrian experience.

KF

#### Michigan Avenue Has Two Distinct Street Sections

The stretch of Michigan Avenue between Westnedge Avenue and Portage Street has a wider right-of-way and supports larger buildings, while the stretch of Michigan Avenue east of Portage is smaller in scale and framed by historic fabric buildings.

R

#### Apply Reclaimed Width of Street to Sidewalks

Increase the sidewalk width to accommodate larger street trees and parklets to support restaurants.

R

#### Create Two Distinct Street Sections for Michigan

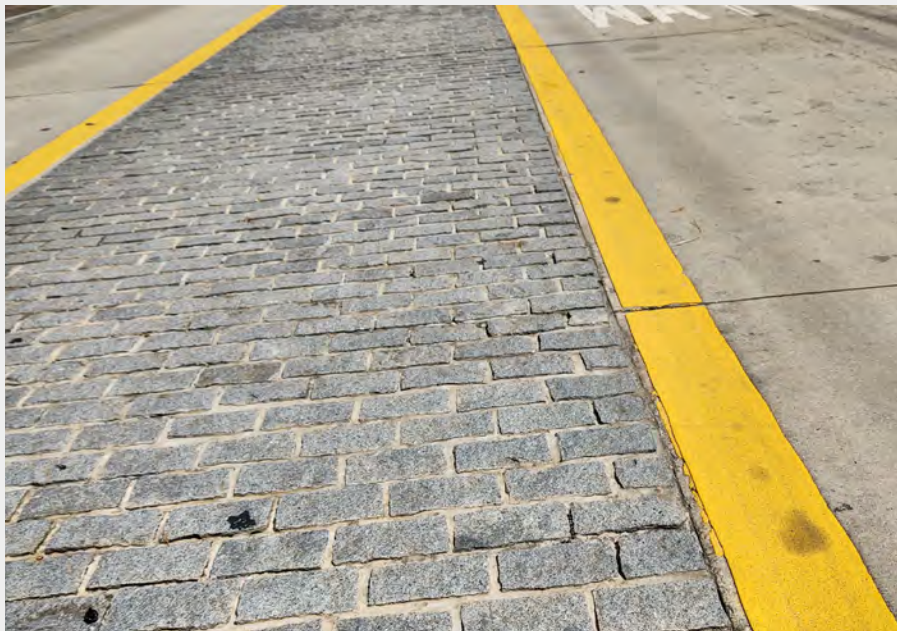
Calibrate the street sections to allow unique sections that adapt to the varied character of the different widths of Michigan Avenue.



**FIGURE 44: Existing Conditions of E. Michigan Avenue**

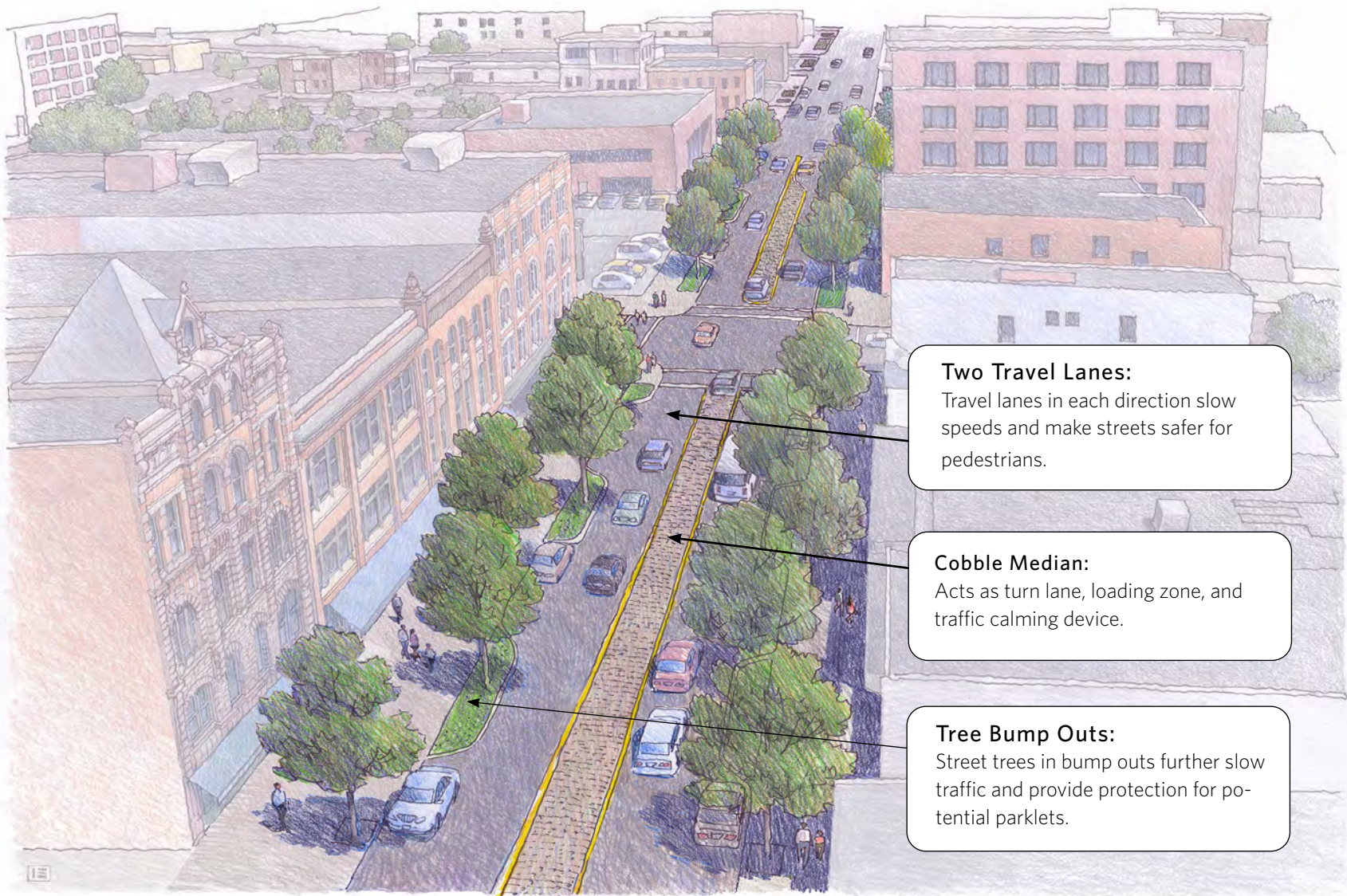
Existing conditions on the historic portion of E. Michigan Avenue. While the reduced width of the right-of-way changes the character of the street, it is not enough to slow speeding traffic.





- Rough Cobble Strip**
- Safety Strip — not a travel lane
  - Allows space to pass stopped vehicles
  - Allows for emergency mobility
  - Rough surface stops travel at posted speeds
  - Provides an area for brief loading and delivery zone
  - Smooth at crosswalks for ADA accessibility

**FIGURE 45: Rough Cobble Safety Strip Examples**  
Built example of a rough cobble safety strip in New Orleans, LA. (Image courtesy of Rick Hall, Hall Planning & Engineering, Inc.)



**FIGURE 46: Proposed New Street Section at Michigan Avenue**  
Proposed redesign of E. Michigan Avenue. Two-way traffic separated by a cobble safety strip will calm traffic. See page 61 for a detailed street section.





Curbside parklet in Minneapolis, MN.



Curbside parklet in Minneapolis, MN.

**FIGURE 47: Parklet Design Precedent — Pop Up**

For immediate impact, consider installing protected pop-up parklets to slow traffic and increase the size of the existing sidewalks. Images courtesy of LBA Landscape Architects.



**Narrow Sidewalks**

The extra travel lanes required for one-way traffic reduce the space for sidewalks, limiting activity and drawing speeding traffic closer to the buildings.

**Limited Street Trees**

Street trees in this portion of W. Michigan Avenue are inconsistently located and small. Without trees, traffic is louder and streets are less protected from hot summer sunlight.

**Four Lanes of One-Way Traffic**

Failed traffic engineering created unsafe streets that have severely impacted retail and pushed pedestrians into the alleys.

**FIGURE 48: Existing Conditions of W. Michigan Avenue**

Existing conditions on W. Michigan Avenue. The view is taken just west of Portage Street looking west. Speeding traffic has no incentive to slow down, which creates dangerous conditions.





Built-in parklet example.



Built-in parklet example.

**FIGURE 49: Parklet Design Precedent — Built In**

Permanent and semi-permanent parklets offer a long-term amenity that supports businesses and makes sidewalks safer for pedestrians. Images courtesy of LBA Landscape Architects.



**Wide Sidewalks with Parklets**  
Wide sidewalks are made possible by reducing the number of travel lanes. This allows space for parklets and outdoor dining, vehicles, and pedestrians.

**Consistent Street Tree Canopy**  
Street trees planted consistently on the street calm traffic and provide shade on hot days. See pages 70-77 for species and planting specifications.

**Two Travel Lanes Divided by Cobble Median**  
Separating travel lanes with a cobble median calms traffic while also providing a passing lane.

**FIGURE 50: Proposed New Street Section at Michigan Avenue West of Portage Street**

Proposed redesign of W. Michigan Avenue looking west from Portage Street. One lane of traffic in each direction is calmed further by the cobble safety strip. Wide sidewalks allow space for parklets and regularly placed street trees. See page 60 for a detailed street section.



## ALLEY ACTIVATION

Responding to dangerous one-way streets such as Michigan Avenue, the citizens of Kalamazoo turned to service alleys for safe pedestrian passage. This system, which jogs around buildings and through blocks, provides several paths through the south and east portions of downtown.

Some alleys are improved with the addition of sidewalks, and several businesses have even created storefronts on the backs of their buildings facing the alleys. Yet despite their use as pedestrian corridors, the alleys remain in active use as service lanes. This presents an identity question: are the alleys service areas that pedestrians use (current conditions), or pedestrian areas that provide service access to buildings? We propose the latter of these two options is of greater value to the city, and that activating the alley for shared use will benefit pedestrians and service needs alike.

Many of these strategies highlighted in this section are short-term or light-impact solutions that focus on turning the alleys into gathering places and corridors of motion. This activation of the alley network through the design of an engaged public realm will help the city to show tangible results in the short-term and provide continuous safe pedestrian routes through the city when the primary streets are under construction.

The first step in this process is public investment of new paving — ideally pavers to soften space, as well as street trees where the geometry of the alley allows for a pocket park. As public investment progresses, work with property owners encourages and incentivizes the addition of architectural features that help to activate the space. These features include, but are not limited to, pergolas, awnings, new openings, hung lighting, and murals.

The images on this spread illustrate the activation of Corporation Alley, located between S. Burdick Street and S. Rose Street. The principles used in the design and kit of parts presented can be applied to the activation of the remaining alleys in the network.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### **Dangerous Streets Pushed Pedestrians into Alleys**

*Pedestrians repelled from dangerous one-way thoroughfares, like Michigan Avenue, found refuge in an intricate alley system that allows passage through large areas of downtown without engaging with high-speed traffic.*

KF

#### **Alley System Is Not Fully Activated**

*With high foot traffic, over time sidewalks and storefronts have sporadically emerged in the alley system. Yet despite isolated improvements, the alley network as a whole lacks coherence and does not perform to its full potential.*

R

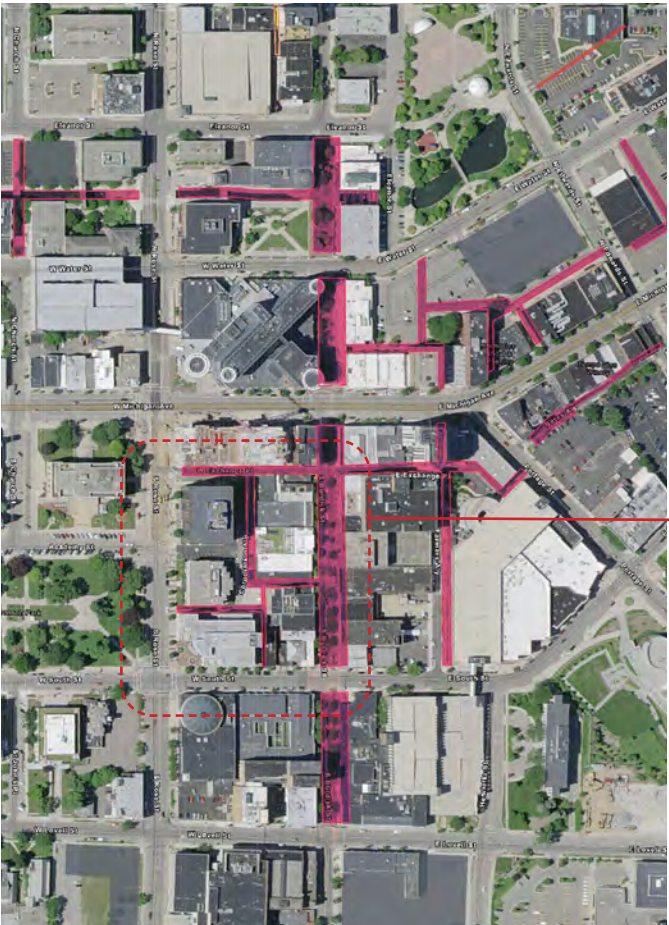
#### **Public Investment — Repave Alleys & Plant Trees**

*The first step in activating the alleys will be to repave, with pavers where possible, and plant trees in larger open areas.*

R

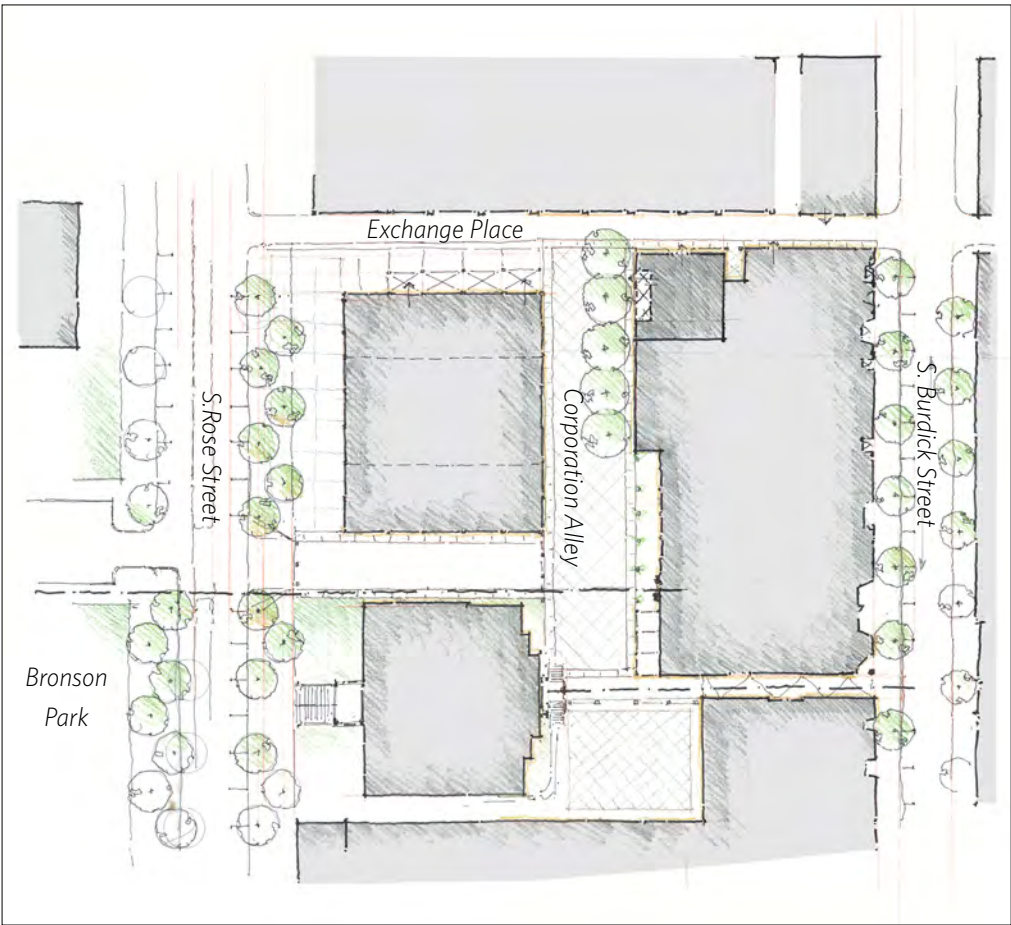
#### **Private Investment — Incentivize Activation**

*Work with property owners to incentivize the introduction of elements that will engage the public realm, such as pergolas, awnings, new openings, and murals.*



**FIGURE 51: Alley Diagram**

Diagram of alleys and pedestrian path network.



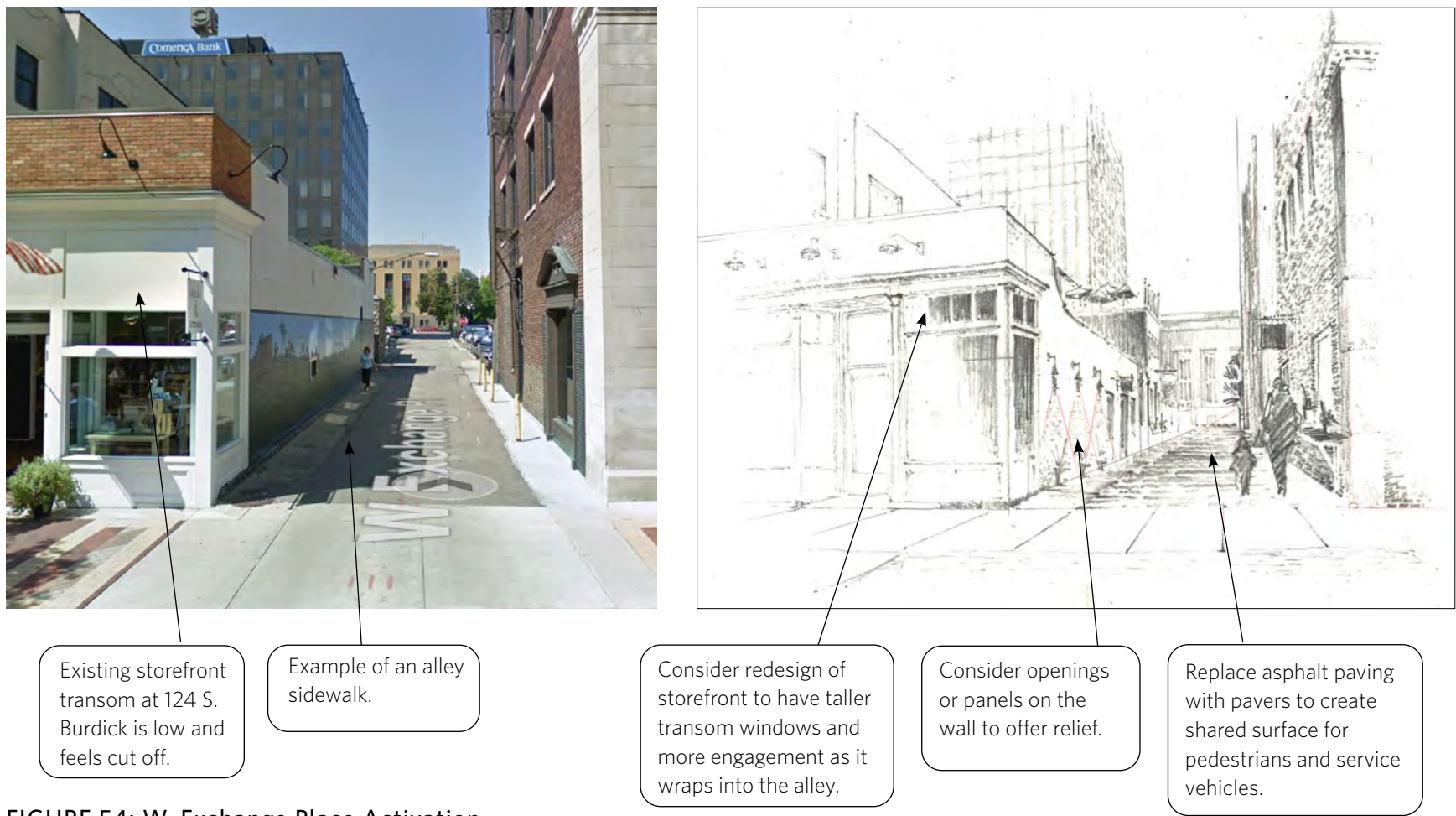
**FIGURE 52: Corporation Alley & W. Exchange Place Plan**

Detailed plan of Corporation Alley, located between S. Rose Street and S. Burdick Street, highlighting alley activation strategies and view corridors.





**FIGURE 53: Corporation Alley Activation**  
Existing conditions (source: Google.com) and proposed activation.



**FIGURE 54: W. Exchange Place Activation**  
Existing conditions (source: Google.com) and proposed activation.



## CREEK ACTIVATION

Arcadia Creek is one of the most interesting linear moments within the city, and one of the areas with the most potential to evolve. Currently there is almost no pedestrian activity to the west and little to the east save the passage adjacent to Arcadia Festival Place. The creek is already equipped with benches, bridges, places to watch the water, and even a bit of landscaping — but these remain unused and uncared for, in part due to the depth below grade and lack of access to the lower level. The buildings along the creek to the east are sparse, and some are uninhabited; there is also vacant land that erodes the containment of space. In general, the area feels unwelcoming, and at times unsafe.

The creek presents the opportunity to create an extensive linear park by improving all of these factors, and by doing so in a variety of ways such that the different areas of the creek in different parts of the city can have different characters in tandem. This can be achieved in a generative, evolving way through a combination of new construction and interactive landscaping. Because the creek spans so many blocks, there is a chance to vary the ways in which pedestrians are able to engage, from bench views to bridges to steps down to the water's edge.

The creek also acts as a corridor. At one end, it connects directly to Arcadia Park. At the other, it simply stops when it hits Westnedge, which has the potential to evolve into a more interesting ending. One way to do so is to engage the creek more thoroughly with the future event center, integrating it into one of the most exciting pockets of new development that the city has to offer.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Arcadia Creek Is Isolated from Pedestrians

*The current design isolates the creek and separates it from the pedestrian experience.*

KF

#### Important Future Corridor

*Arcadia Creek links the future event center to Arcadia Festival Place, and onward to S. Burdick.*

R

#### Create Moments that Open the Creek to Pedestrians

*Where space allows, create a series of terraces that allows pedestrians to move down to the creek level.*

R

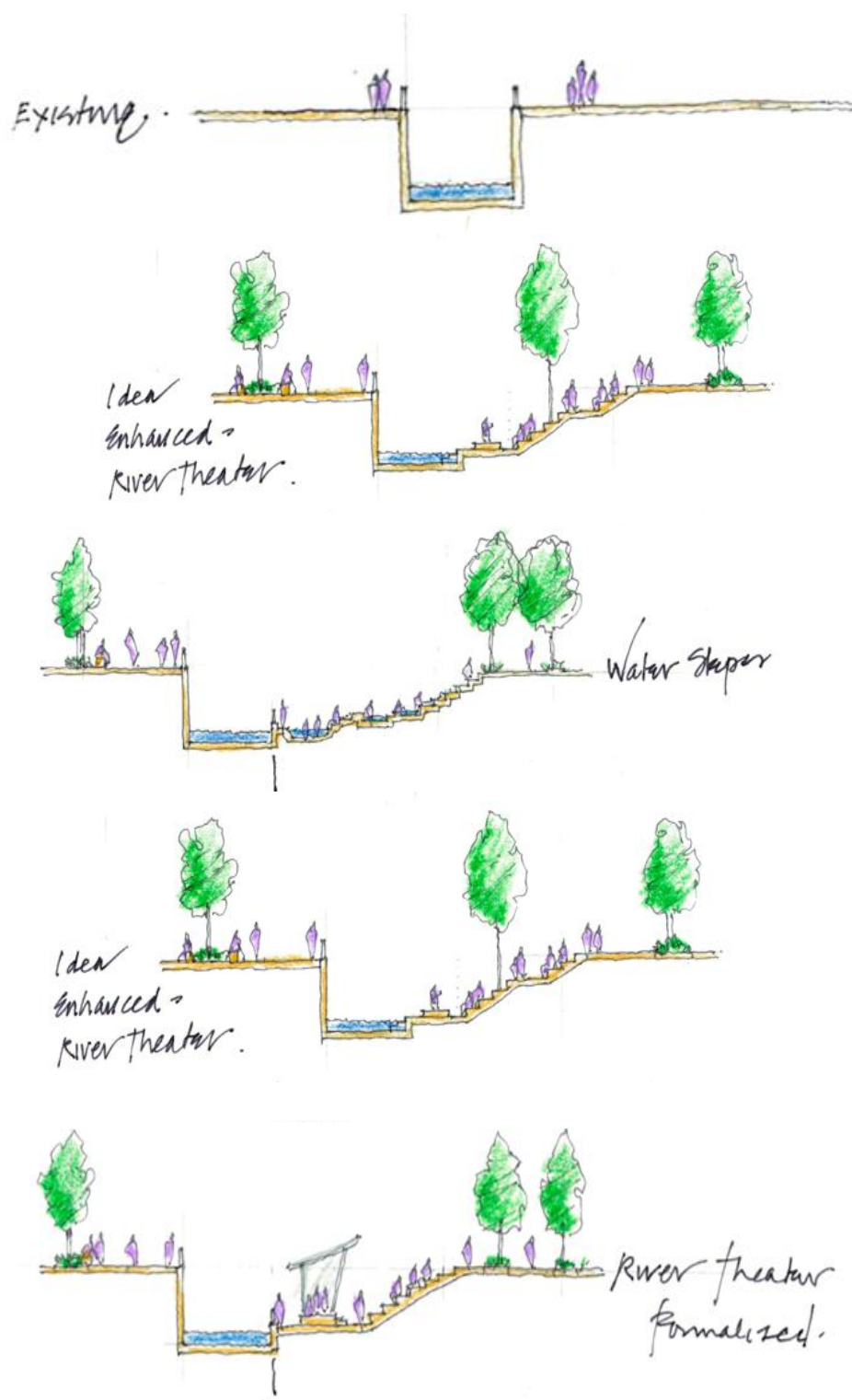
#### Design the Corridor to Encourage Use

*Compose the individual moments so they link together and draw pedestrians between the event center and Arcadia Festival Place. We strongly recommend a dedicated study of the corridor to unlock its full potential.*



View of proposed terrace to engage Arcadia Creek at N. Rose Street.





**Existing Creek Section**

Deep recess with straight sides and no access. Passersby can hear the creek, but it is hidden from view and separate from the street-level experience.

**Terraced Steps**

Open the creek to the sidewalk in select urban moments with a series of terraced steps; connect between moments with a path at the creek level.

**Water Steps**

Depending on the quality of the water, consider drawing the creek up into the terraced steps.

**Creek Theater**

At Arcadia Festival Place, consider converting the creek into the stage of a theater with the terraced steps serving as the seating area.

**Creek Theater Formalized**

Formalize the Arcadia Festival Place creek theater with a stage structure.

**FIGURE 55: Strategies for Creek Activation**

The diagrams above illustrate a range of potential ways to activate Arcadia Creek and connect to street level. A final design will most likely deploy a combination of these configurations, and others. The strategies will be guided by available width at any given moment, water quality, and other safety considerations.



View of proposed terrace to engage Arcadia Creek at N. Rose Street.





Precedent — Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas. Images courtesy of LBA Landscape Architects.

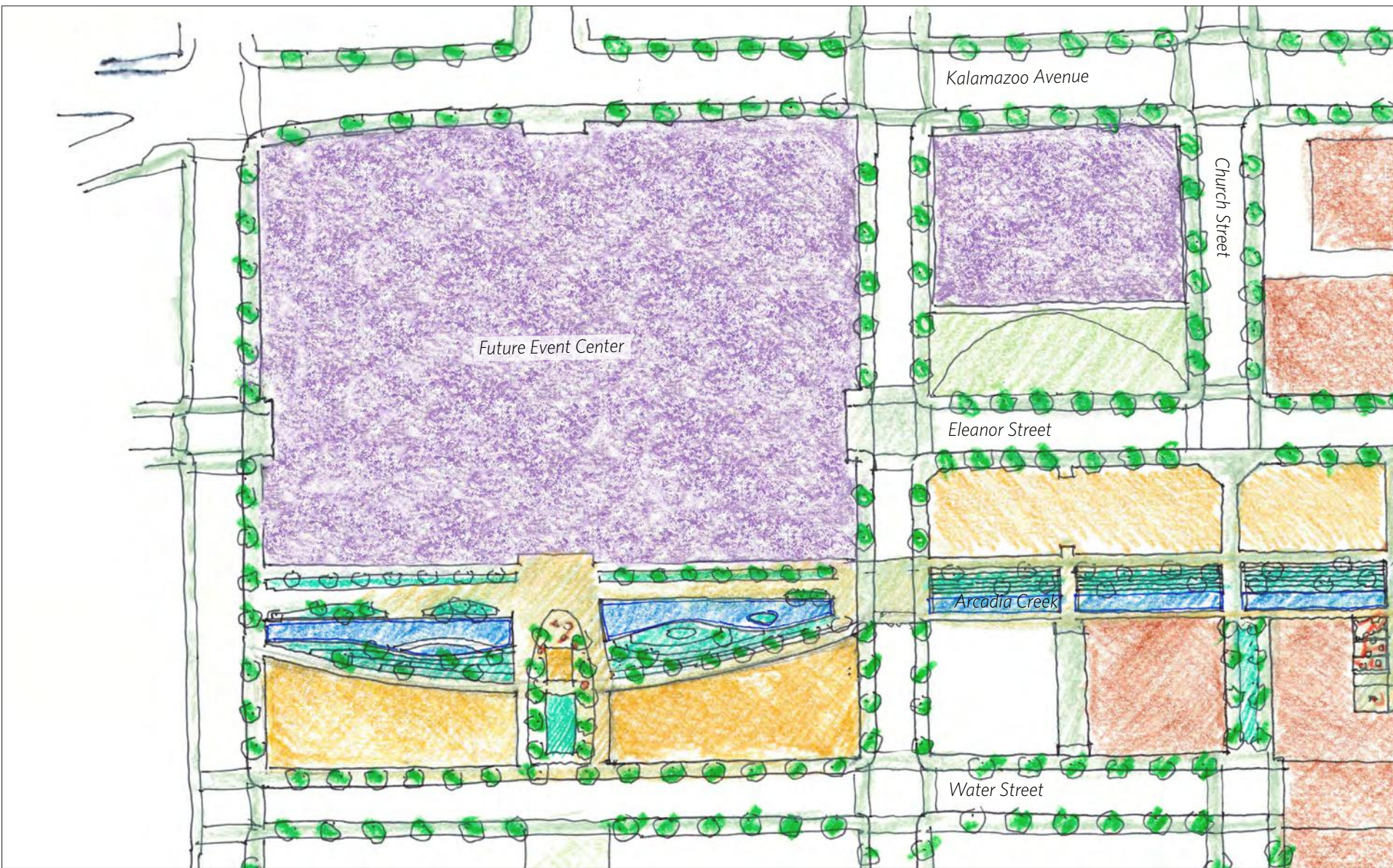


FIGURE 56: Proposed Arcadia Creek Corridor Plan

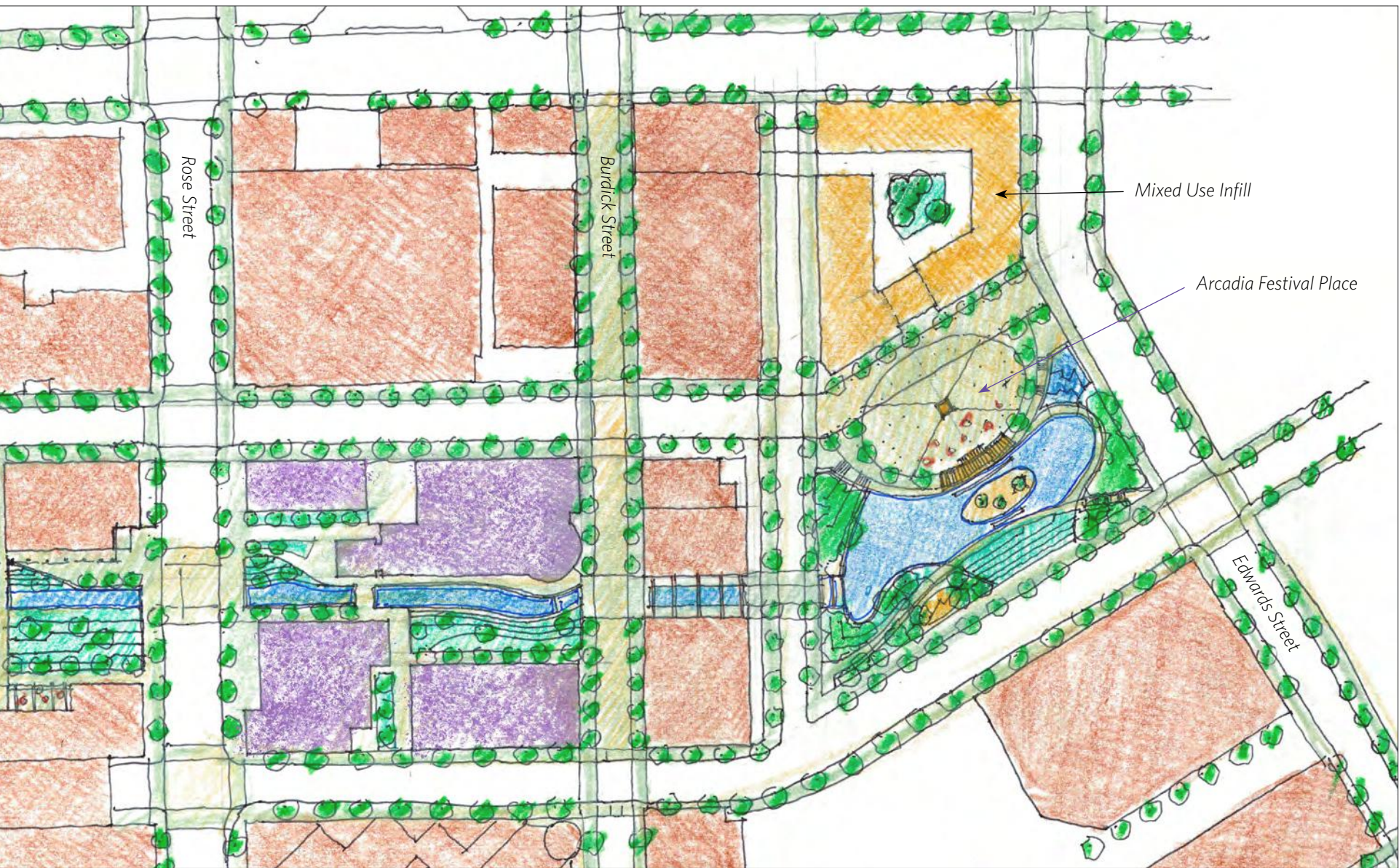


FIGURE 57: Proposed Section of Arcadia Creek Corridor at Potential Event Center





Precedent — Riverwalk in Frederick, Maryland. Images courtesy of LBA Landscape Architects.



Section



Existing conditions.

FIGURE 58: Proposed Section of Arcadia Creek at N. Rose Street



## ARCADIA FESTIVAL PLACE

Arcadia Festival Place marks the eastern end of the visual axis of both Arcadia Creek and Eleanor Street. It is the anchor for the northeast corner of downtown. As such, it needs both the long-distance character of a terminus and the character of a public park. The creek widens when it hits the park, and the views of water from the edge and from the bridge over it are some of the loveliest in Kalamazoo.

Currently, an outdoor event space provides an expansive hardscape venue on the north side of the park. Though this space is well-used by the city for concerts, it is not a multiuse space, and it is largely unused by the general public most of the time. The park is heavily used by unhoused people and those staying at the nearby homeless shelter. This civic offering of a public amenity available to all is important; any redesign should seek to include unhoused people and create a place where everyone feels welcome and safe.

The proposed redesign of Arcadia Festival Place starts by reducing the overall size of the park in half to be approximately two acres, which will allow full activation of the remaining area, framed by a proposed new mixed-use building on the northern half of the current park. This shifts a large central gathering space down to terminate the view corridor from Eleanor Street. At the center of this new plaza is an obelisk, designed not only to help resolve the geometry of the park, but also to act as a wayfinder, drawing people who are coming from the new courthouse or event center through the city.

The arrival of the activated Arcadia Creek offers full engagement of both the upper and lower levels of the park. It is important, though, to carefully consider safety in the redesign of this area, and to minimize dark areas hidden from view.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Uncomfortable & Overscaled Space

Arcadia Festival Place is a popular destination for events, but when it is not in use for festivals, the space is uncomfortable and overscaled.

KF

#### Park Acreage Not Fully Utilized

Despite the size of the park, even when in active use, much of the existing acreage is not fully utilized.

R

#### Reduce Size of Park & Frame with Mixed-Use Development

Shift the event space to terminate the end of the Arcadia Creek corridor, then frame the space with a mixed-use infill building.

R

#### Fully Activate Remaining Park

Redesign the creek area to provide access to the water and open up the full southern portion of the park for active engagement.

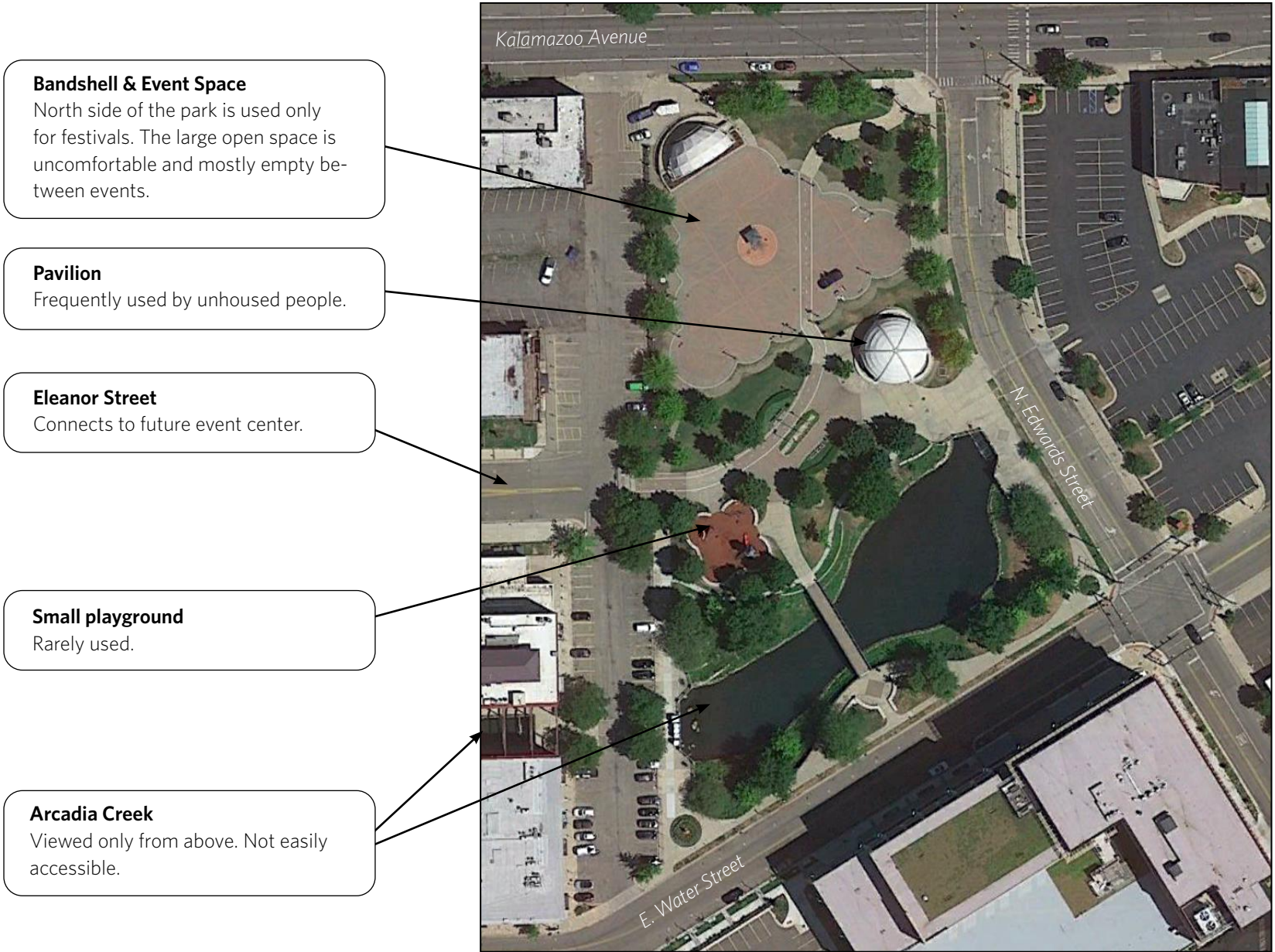


FIGURE 59: Arcadia Festival Place Existing Conditions





Existing bandstand, event space, and pavilion.



Existing view of Arcadia Creek.

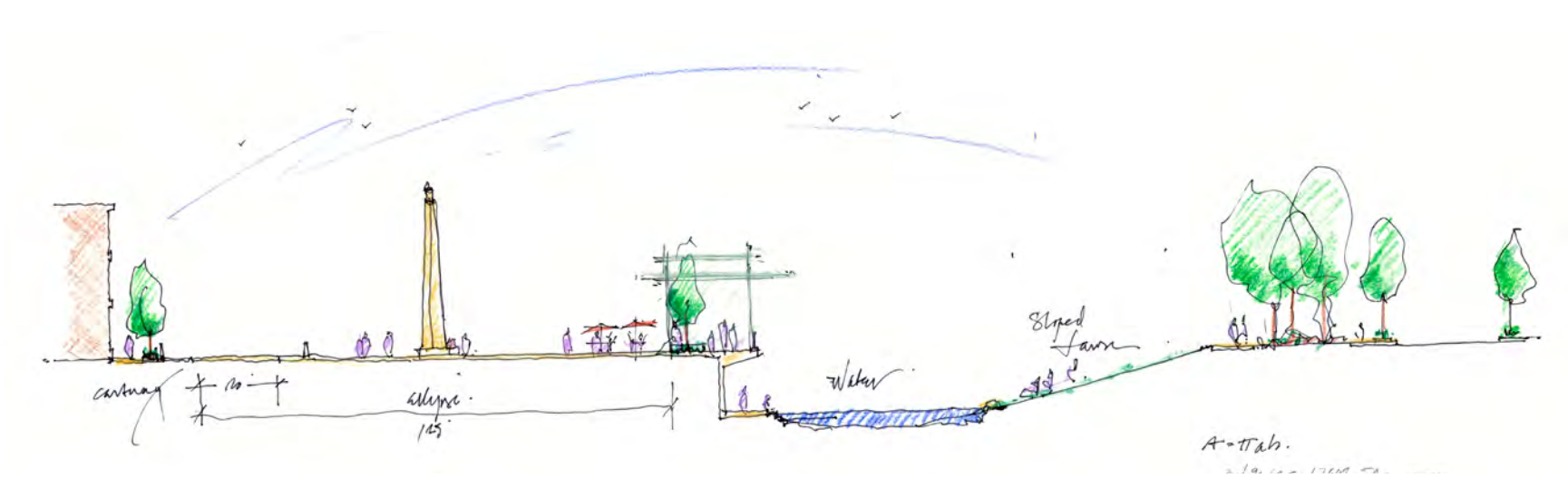
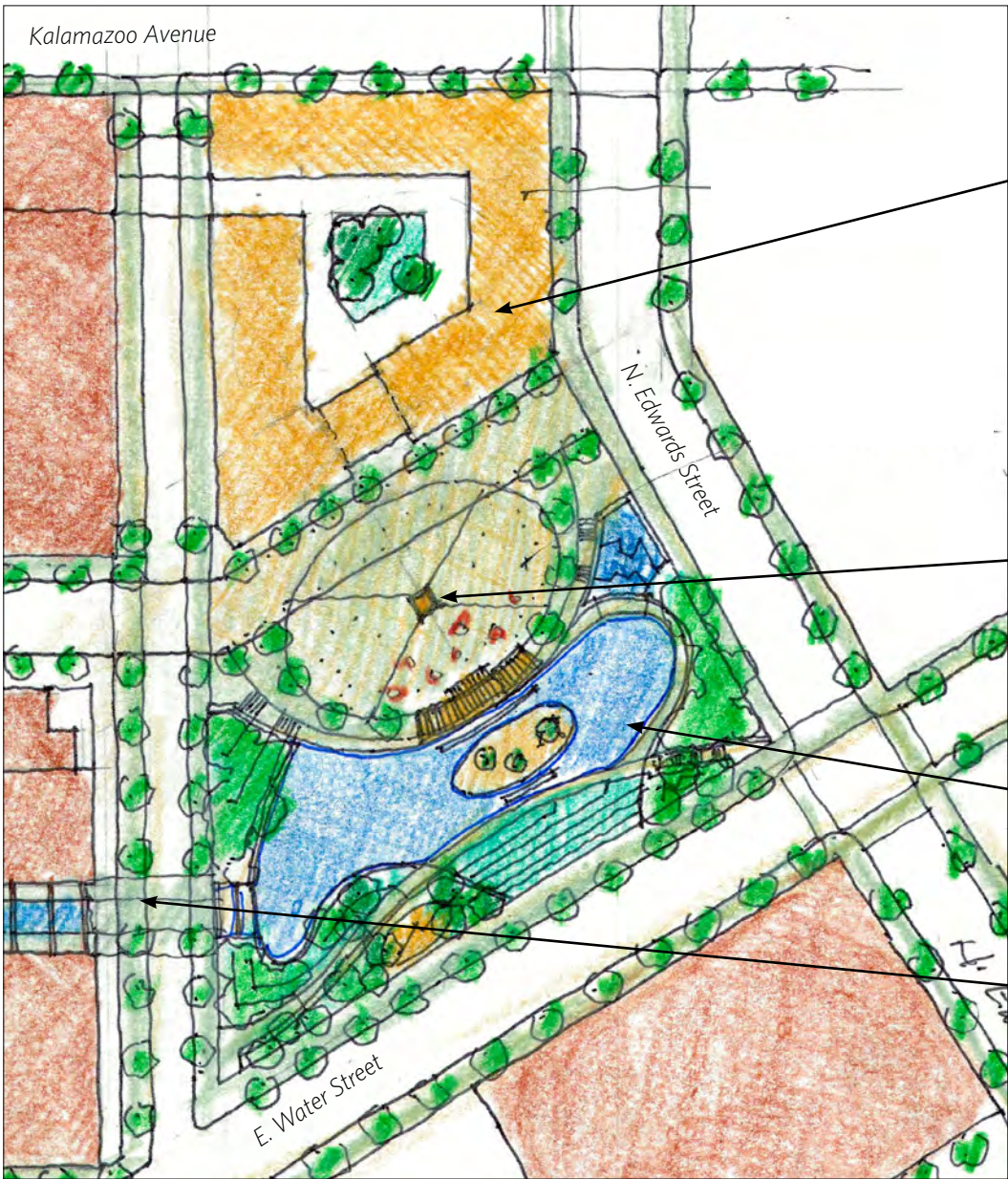


FIGURE 60: Section through Event Space & Creek

Spatial containment of the proposed park and access to the creek level will make the space more active and more fully engaged than the current park.



**New Infill Development**

Proposed mixed-use infill building to frame the park.

**New Event & Festival Space on Center with Eleanor Street**

Obelisk to terminate the view from Eleanor Street to help with wayfinding and to draw pedestrians through downtown.

**Arcadia Creek Activation**

Open the creek level of the park to the public with terraced steps and potential a theater (see page 43).

**Arcadia Creek Connection**

Create an active connection between Arcadia Creek and Arcadia Festival Place.

FIGURE 61: Proposed Redesign of Arcadia Festival Place



## BRONSON PARK

Historic Bronson Park is framed by Kalamazoo City Hall and the Old Courthouse. It anchors the civic district of downtown Kalamazoo. The park itself is the symbolic heart of Kalamazoo’s cityhood. As it exists now, Bronson Park is framed by a mature tree canopy and is in good condition overall.

The park attracts visitors for events, but it is not used as a day-to-day gathering place. Rather, it is a place pedestrians pass through on their way elsewhere. This is fitting in part because it is a node that connects to many critical areas of the city. But rather than simply hosting transient visitors, the park could be a great urban center that is itself the attraction.

The proposed landscaping plan provides an open, grassy, central space for the community to pause. This central space can be used as a seating area for formal events and, in ordinary times, a play area for kids and dogs, or simply a nice place to sit and enjoy the day.

To support the containment of this larger space, the proposal keeps existing trees and proposes planting even more. To further encourage pedestrians to stop and spend time in Bronson Park, the proposal also includes kiosks that enable pop-up retail, which also serves to support local businesses.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Civic Core of the City

*Historic Bronson Park anchors the civic district of downtown Kalamazoo.*

KF

#### People Pass Through, but Don’t Stay at the Park

*The park is used for formal events and to pass through, but not actively used on a daily basis.*

R

#### Adjust Design to Open Central Green

*Open the center for a large green that can be used as a seating area for formal events and, in ordinary times, a play area for kids and dogs, or simply a nice place to sit and enjoy the day.*

R

#### Install Pop-Up and/or Permanent Kiosks

*Draw activity into the park during the day with kiosks, either pop-up or permanent, in the corners of the park and centered on Church Street.*



Photos of existing conditions at Bronson Park.



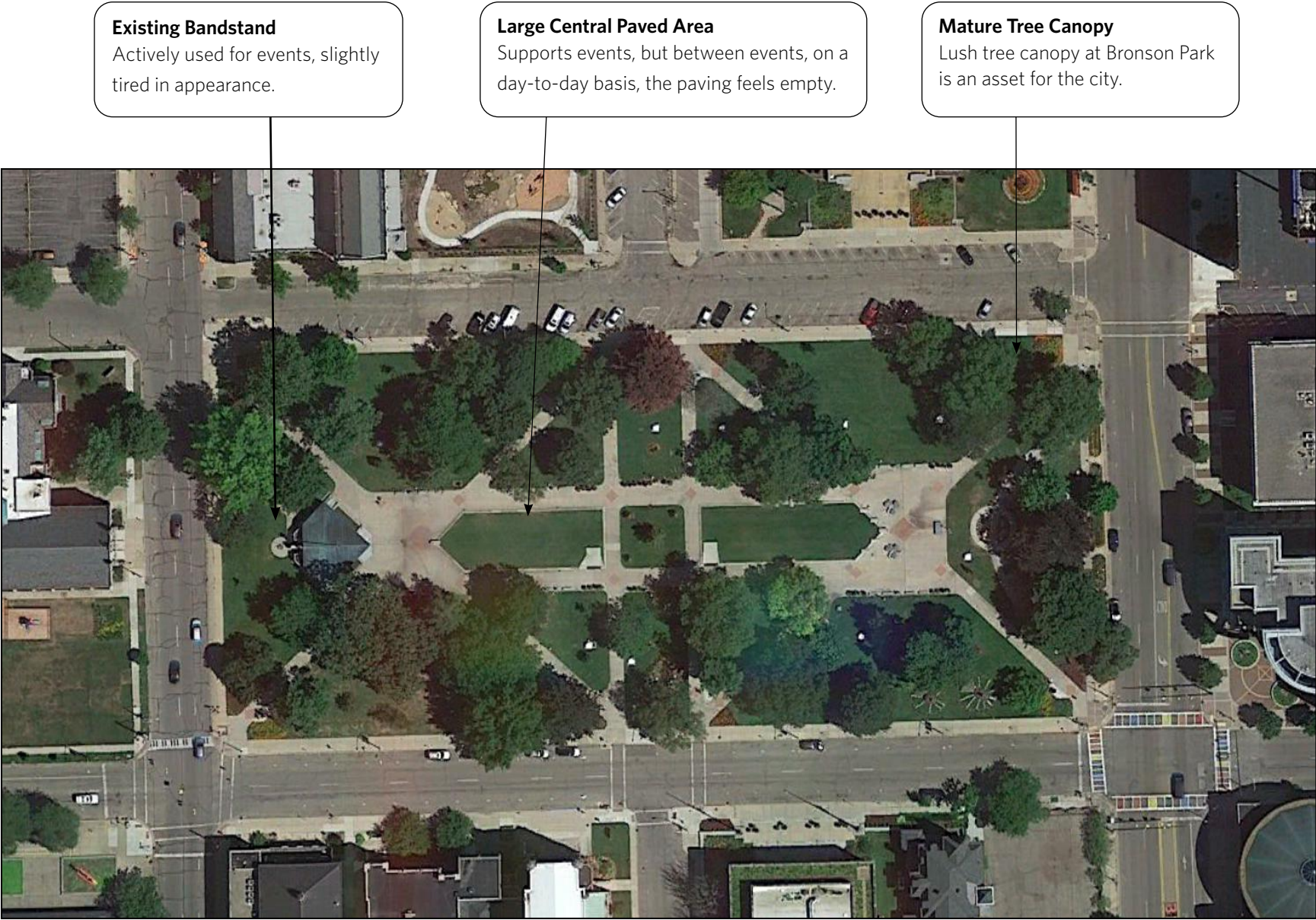


FIGURE 62: Bronson Park Existing Conditions

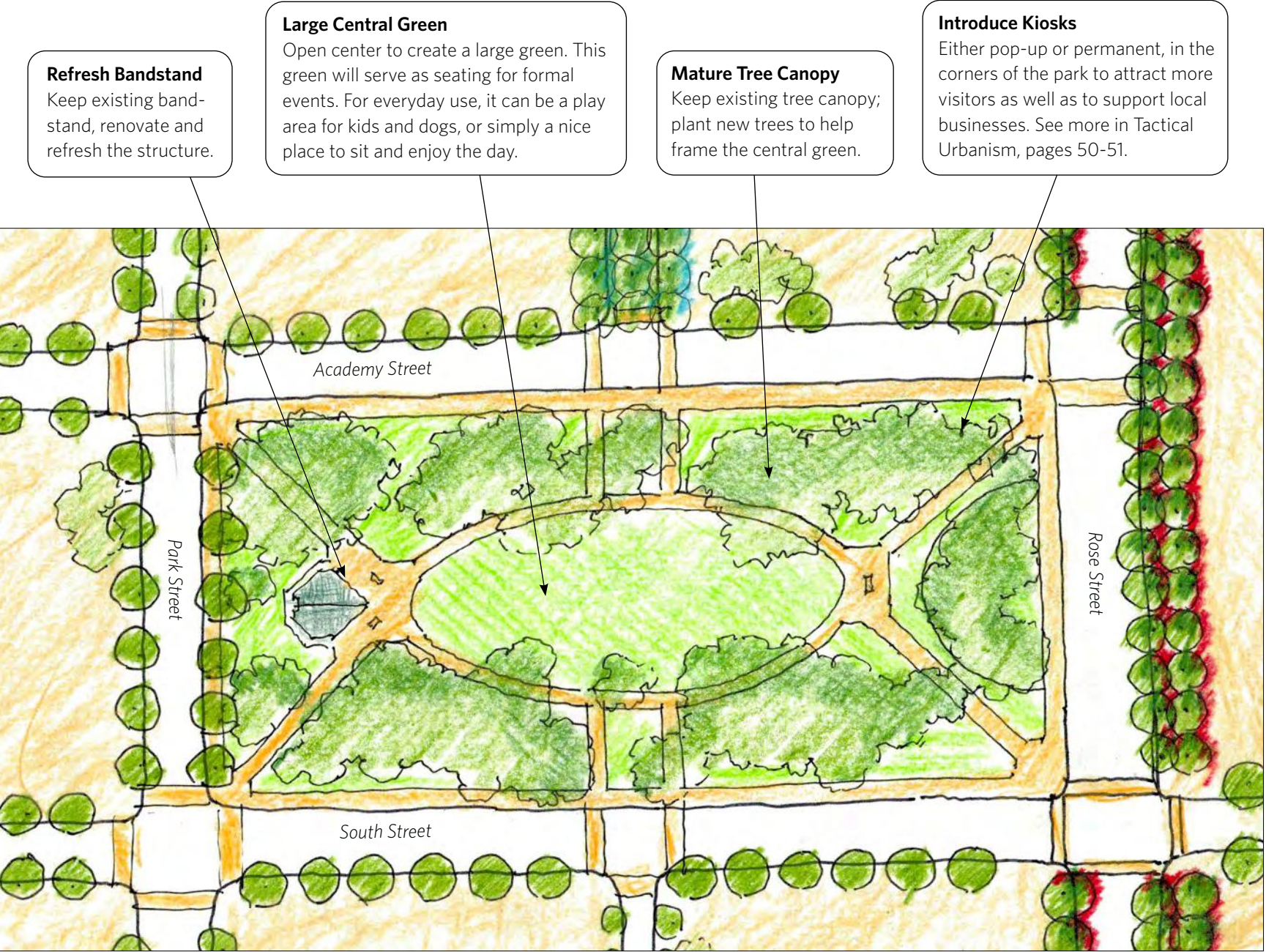


FIGURE 63: Proposed Redesign of Bronson Park



## TACTICAL URBANISM

Implementing the full vision of this study will take years, in some cases decades. It will require securing substantial funding sources, navigating the entitlement process, and then years of construction disruption. Tactical interventions provide a means of achieving immediate and short-term wins that can improve the quality of life downtown and keep public interest while the larger projects move forward at a slower pace.

Tactical interventions come in many forms. They can be used to test ideas like pop-up kiosks or bike lanes. They can also be placeholders for future development, like food trucks parking in a vacant lot until infill development is built. Tactical art can be used to make up for the failure of the built environment to offer an engaging outdoor room; this can be done by painting murals to activate walls, creating spatial containment with pop-up planters, and painting paving at crosswalks to privilege pedestrians over cars.

Community engagement of tactical urbanism comes in many forms. The most successful projects are designed with active community involvement, because no one knows a city better than its own residents. Very often the local residents also help to install tactical projects, especially when they are pop-up in nature.

The ideas put forward in this section are broad in nature and are presented to show how a potential tactical urbanism kit of parts might be applied to activate key moments in downtown Kalamazoo, but also to help more people between these moments. Further dedicated study is needed to create a detailed tactical action plan.



### KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

#### Tactical Interventions Provide Immediate Results

Most of the proposals and strategies put forward in this report require substantial funding, navigating a multistep approvals process, and a lengthy construction period. While this process is necessary to realize the long-term vision, tactical interventions address immediate concerns and maintain public interest and participation in the process.

KF

#### Tactical Interventions Can Test Ideas

Tactical strategies can be employed to test new ideas like parklets and kiosks by using pop-up and temporary structures to gauge demand.

R

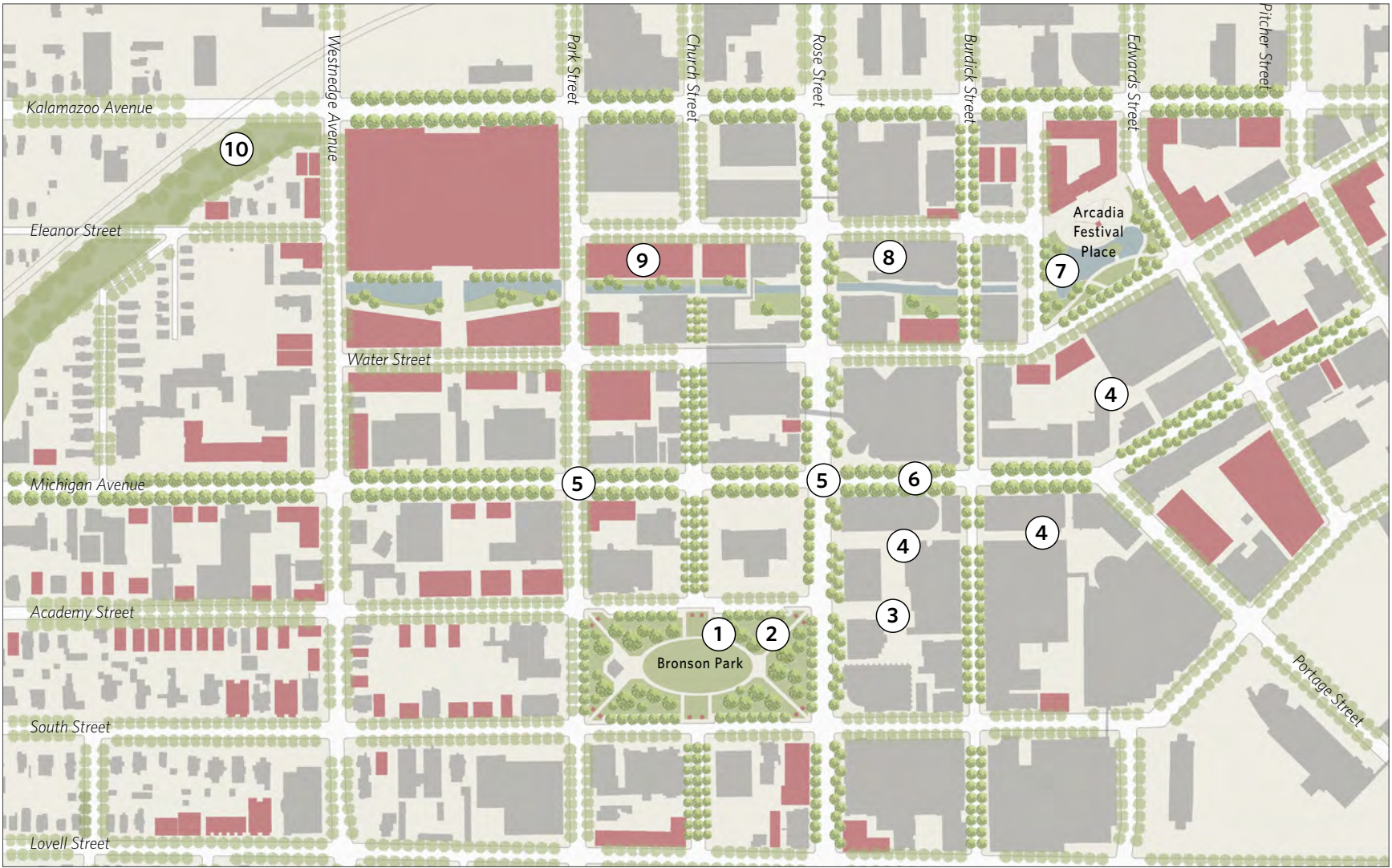
#### Engage Public Participation

Tactical urbanism at its best fully engages the public process. It engages residents in planning and executing concepts.

R

#### Engage in a Targeted Tactical Strategies Study

The tactical concepts outlined in this report only scratch the surface of the potential opportunities for downtown Kalamazoo. Further dedicated study is required to generate an actionable tactical plan.



**FIGURE 64: Plan of Downtown Kalamazoo Highlighting Potential Tactical Interventions**

Pop-up and temporary tactical interventions activate vacant areas of the city and help to connect urban moments while larger projects with longer timelines are being planned and implemented.





Pop-up retail kiosks



Food trucks



Pop-up seating and planting



Lights over streets



Painted pavement and crosswalks



Public art and murals



Pop-up play areas



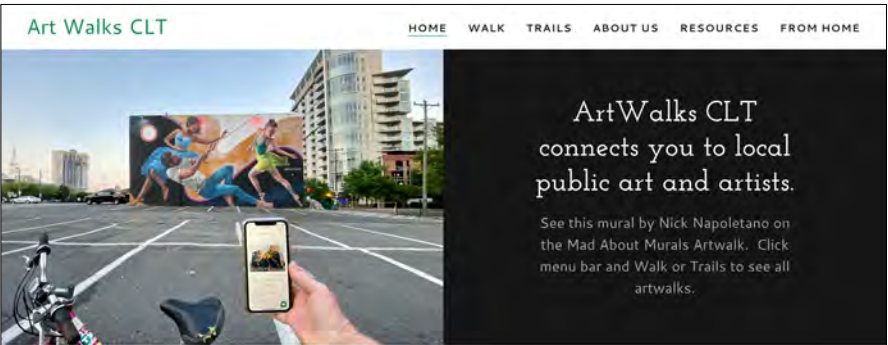
Community gardens & farmers market stands

**FIGURE 65: Tactical Urbanism Precedent**

The images above illustrate several potential categories for tactical projects. The photos show just some of limitless design options. *Images courtesy of LBA Landscape Architects.*

**KEY**

1. Pop-up retail kiosks at Bronson Park
2. Food trucks at Bronson Park
3. Pop-up landscaping in Corporation Alley
4. Hung lighting across alleys
5. Painted crosswalks on W. Michigan Avenue at S. Park Street and S. Rose Street to make access to Bronson Park safer
6. Parklets on W. Michigan Avenue
7. Pop-up playground at Arcadia Festival Place
8. Pop-up pocket park with seating and landscaping
9. Food trucks in parking lots near new courthouse
10. Community garden in new park.



**FIGURE 66: Art Walks**

As several tactical installations begin to emerge in downtown, especially murals and public art, curate and advertise the path for self-guided art walks through the city. Both Art Walks CLT in Charlotte, North Carolina ([artwalksclt.com](http://artwalksclt.com)) and Chicago's Pilsen district ([pilsenartscommunityhouse.org](http://pilsenartscommunityhouse.org)) offer examples to emulate.



COMPLETE STREETS OVERVIEW

Streets are the primary component of the public realm. A good street not only connects locations within the city, but also creates spaces for people to gather, to exercise, to dine and shop, or simply to be outside. It is not uncommon for contemporary planning efforts to overlook this public role of a street in favor of quick vehicular movement, as seen in downtown Kalamazoo.

Primary corridors running through downtown — Kalamazoo Avenue and Michigan Avenue — are beltways of noisy, high-speed, one-way vehicular traffic. Because of this, commercial activity along these corridors has struggled, pedestrians have resorted to using alleys to navigate downtown safely, and recent infrastructure development has seemed unfocused and often misplaced.

The city is fortunate to have the resources, knowledge, and vision to ameliorate the effects of the one-way conditions on downtown Kalamazoo streets. Imagine Kalamazoo 2025, a Master Plan led by the city staff that has since become a work plan dedicated to collecting data and implementing city improvement projects, provides a wealth of information to build on in these efforts. The Land Use and Transportation framework of the Master Plan paves the way for the city to create a Complete Streets policy. *Complete Streets in the City of Kalamazoo are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.* Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.

A Complete Streets network operates on three layers: the **Context** — consideration of the surrounding context of each street; the **Typology** — the range of street design conditions that create the framework for a multimodal network; and **Street Sections** — the detailed design calibrated for specific streets. These layers work within a Context Classification system. This system, which is explained in more detail in the following pages, is an emerging best practice in transportation engineering that directly aligns with the foundational work of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025’s Street Design Manual.

Throughout the four-day charrette process, the team crafted street designs that meet these criteria while additionally establishing varied urban experiences. The designs acknowledge that streets serve unique roles throughout the city in addition to sharing the common goal of connectivity and accessibility.

Redesigning the streets of downtown Kalamazoo will repair damage to the public realm caused by the one-way streets and will reconnect downtown into a unified composition. *While this transformation will take years — and in some cases decades — to fully realize, the suggestions in this part of the report are intended to be paired with the catalytic design intervention proposals to keep continuous momentum forward.*

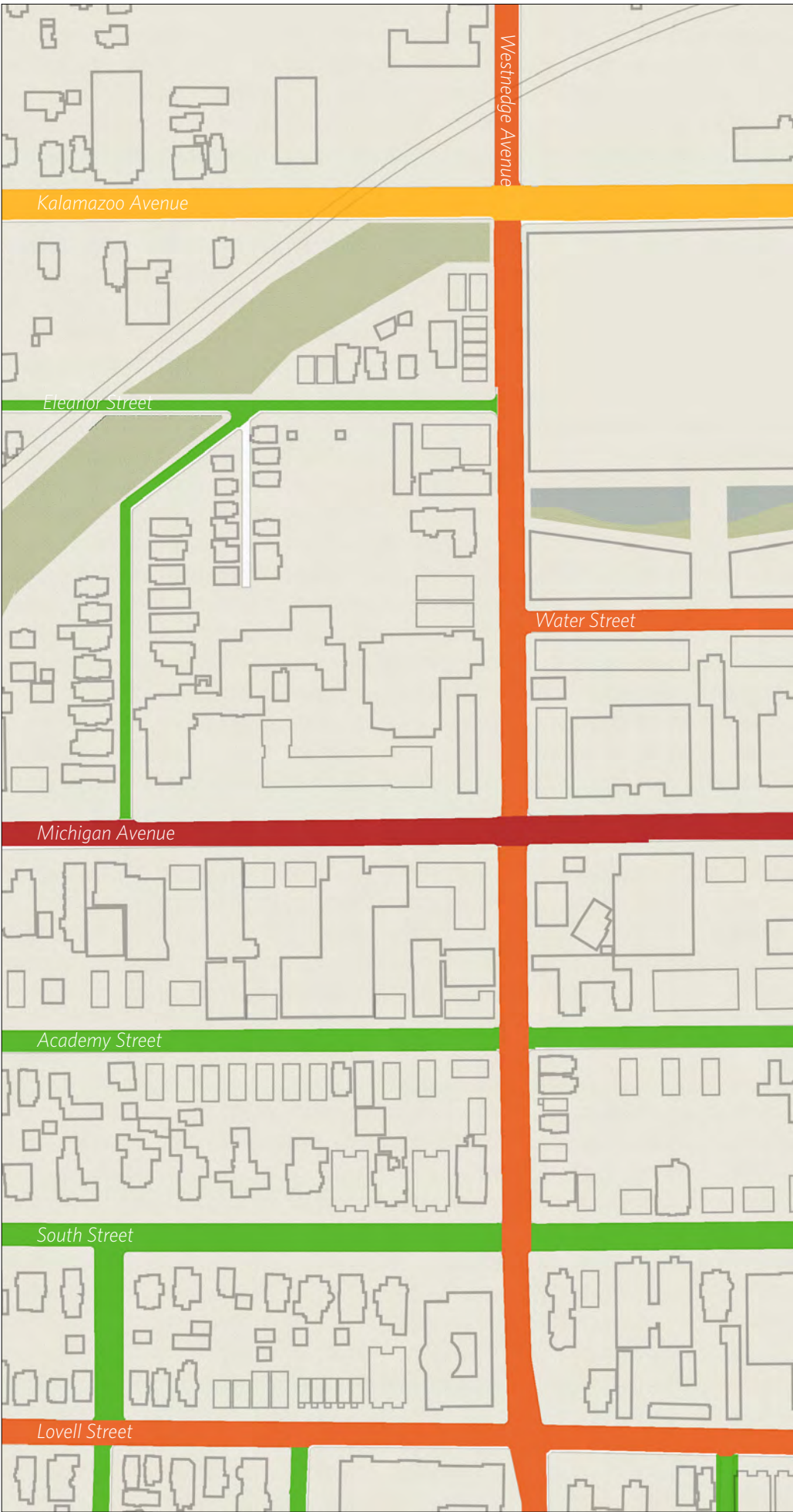


FIGURE 67: Proposed Street Typologies  
Diagram illustrating street typology hierarchy.

LAYER 1

CONTEXT CLASSIFICATIONS

The design of the street is guided by a set of principles that draw from its context within the city and its hierarchy within a multimodal network. See pages 54–55.

LAYER 2

STREET TYPOLOGY

URBAN CENTER STREET (UC)  
(PRIORITY STREET)

**DESCRIPTION:** Urban Center Streets represent highly active streets with an intense combination of active ground-floor uses, pedestrian activity, and vehicle volumes. These streets are desired to be the signature gateway corridors into downtown, designed at a high level of amenity.

- High Priority:**
  - » Create a vibrant and welcoming pedestrian environment that supports commercial activity.
  - » High quality streetscape, wide pedestrian areas for

USER PRIORITY (BASELINE)

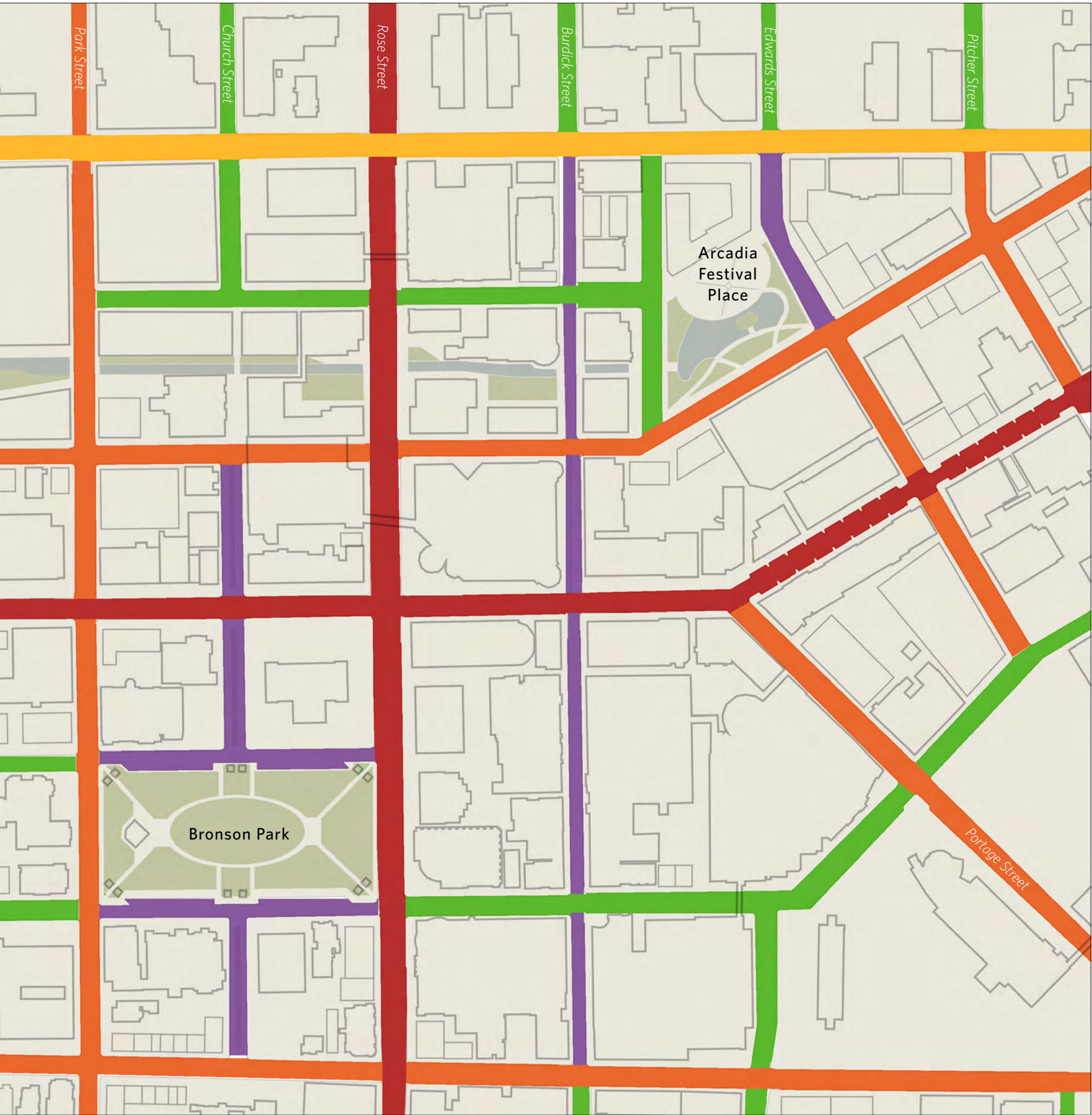
User Type		Pri
Pedestrians		High
Commercial Activity		High
Transit (*)		Mod
Curbside		Mod
Bicycles (**)		Mod
Vehicles		Low

**DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

- Design the roadway for slower speed reductions and/or narrowing should maximum extent feasible.

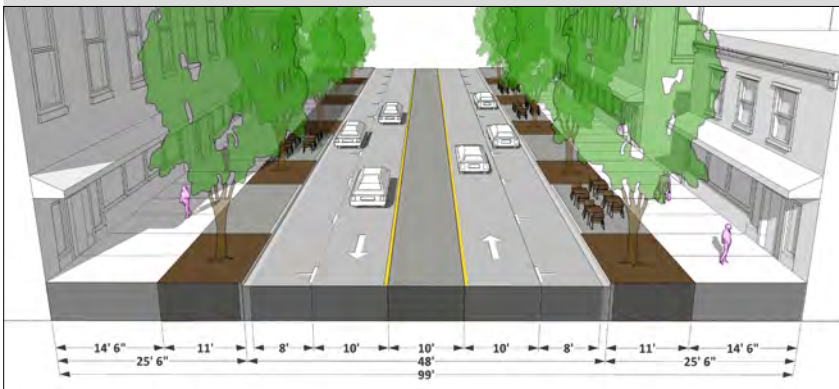
Street typologies, established by the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual, define characteristics, priorities, and design considerations for street types that address different contexts and needs. See pages 56–57.





LAYER 3

STREET SECTIONS



Working within the typologies defined by the Street Design Manual, each street downtown has a unique set of requirements and an individual identity within the overall network. See pages 58–67.

KEY

Context Classification Zones

- Urban Center
- Urban General

Street Typologies

- Urban Center Street
- Commercial Business Street
- Neighborhood Business Street
- Main Street
- Event/Festival Street



CONTEXT & MULTIMODAL NETWORK

The first layer of a Complete Street system is the context. Historically, traffic engineers start with the use of the street when determining its design. Use-based street design considers the distance traveled but doesn't consider the context of the street or allow for differentiation based on context. This results in the same street design in all settings: urban, suburban, and rural. This mindset led to the freeway-like conditions on the one-way streets in downtown Kalamazoo.

A new methodology, Context Classification, is being adopted in cities nationwide that prioritizes placemaking and multimodal transportation over one-size-fits-all auto-dominated street design. This system for street design and engineering is now included in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Green Book. The Green Book is the primary source of standards referenced by traffic engineers. It provides legally binding standards for municipal codes. *This new methodology does not replace any of the work produced to date through the Land Use and Transportation framework of the Master Plan, the Complete Streets policy, or the Street Design Manual. Rather, it is a construct that builds on existing efforts by translating placemaking principles into legally recognized traffic engineering standards.*

The first consideration of street design in a context-based system isn't the street itself; it is everything outside of the right-of-way that informs the street. AASHTO now recognizes five Context Classification categories ranging from urban to rural. Some states, such as Florida, have further divided the categories into eight context zones (see Figure 69). After context, travel distance is also taken into consideration on three levels: arterial (longest distance), collector ('A' streets that carry heavier traffic); local ('B' streets with shortest distance and least traffic). Context Classification systems align closely with form-based zoning. The importance of this system is that it creates a framework that translates the design intent of a zoning ordinance into a language that relates to traffic engineers. *States and municipalities nationwide are adopting Context Classification codes and resolutions that allow this interface between form of the private realm and design of the streets in the public realm.*

Context Classifications for Kalamazoo

Downtown Kalamazoo has two context zones: Urban Center and Urban General. Assigning zones is complex when balancing current conditions

with future vision. The classifications proposed in this report seek to repair the current conditions through a long-term vision that includes the full reversal of all one-way streets, including Westnedge Avenue and Park Street.

In the proposed context system, Michigan Avenue and Rose Street are classified as Urban Center. Both are considered collector streets — high traffic, but not long distance. The rest of downtown is classified as Urban General. This includes both local streets as well as the arterials of Westnedge Avenue, Park Street, and Kalamazoo Avenue. While these three streets will continue to be arterials once redesigned, the new sections paired with future infill will transform their character and overall feel. The Urban Center classification is focused along Michigan Avenue and Rose Street to reinforce a return to a strong center for the city. It is held off Burdick Street to maintain the scale of the historic buildings.

The findings in this section are a cursory review of this topic. To fully support the Complete Streets implementation, we recommend further study to see how a Context Classification policy for the City of Kalamazoo can fully integrate engineering standards with design intent.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)	
KF	<b>National Transportation Policy Is Changing</b> <i>Association of State Highway and Transportation Official's (ASHTO) Green Book now recognizes the context of street in the standards it provides for traffic engineers and cities.</i>
KF	<b>Context-Based Systems Support a Multimodal Network</b> <i>Considering context of the street before use/distance creates a safe public realm and allows a multimodal street network.</i>
R	<b>Context Classification Categories for Kalamazoo</b> <i>Set Michigan Avenue and Rose Street as Urban Center streets to protect the historic fabric buildings on Burdick Street.</i>
R	<b>Context Classification Policy</b> <i>Consider codifying a Context Classification policy to fully integrate engineering standards into design intent.</i>

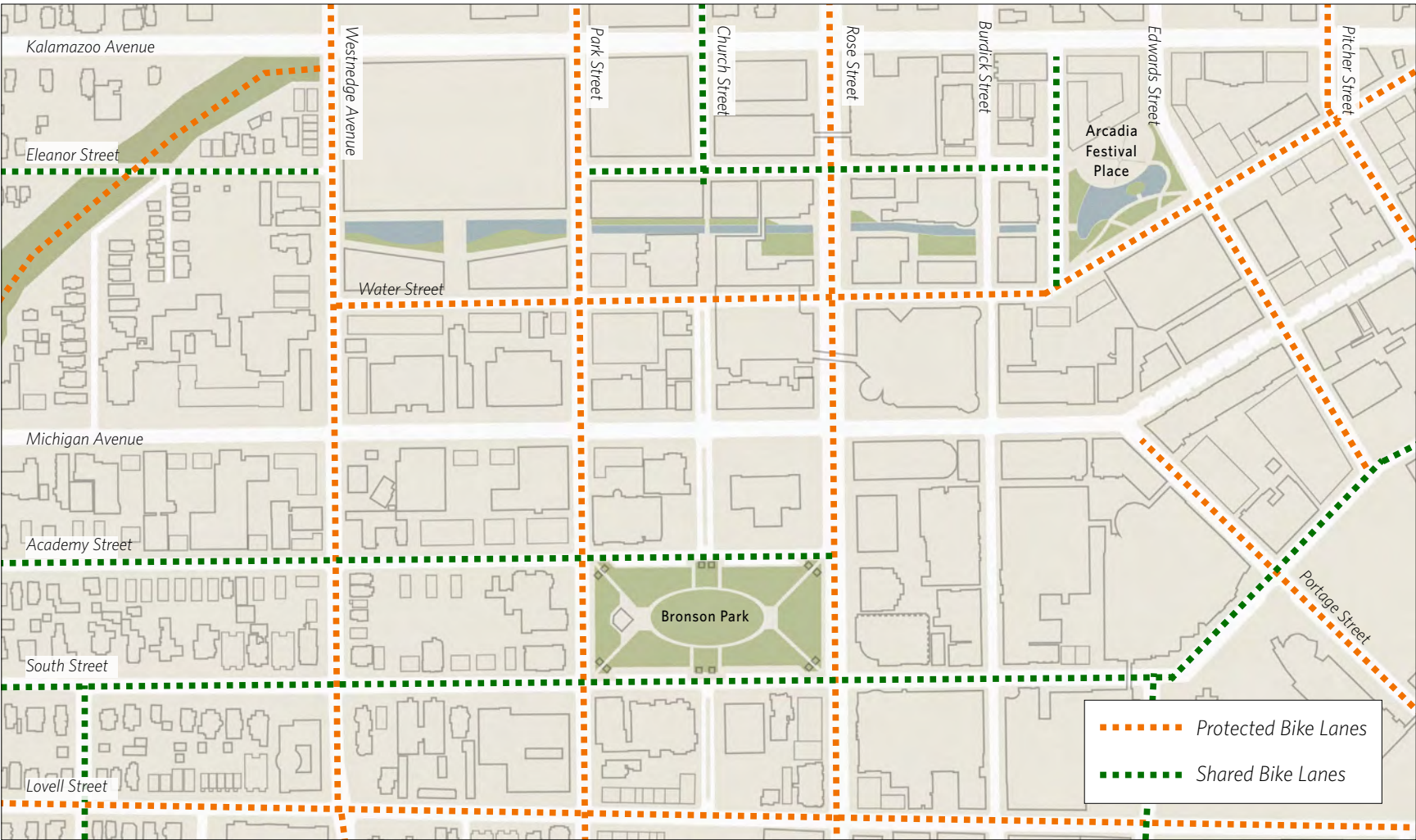
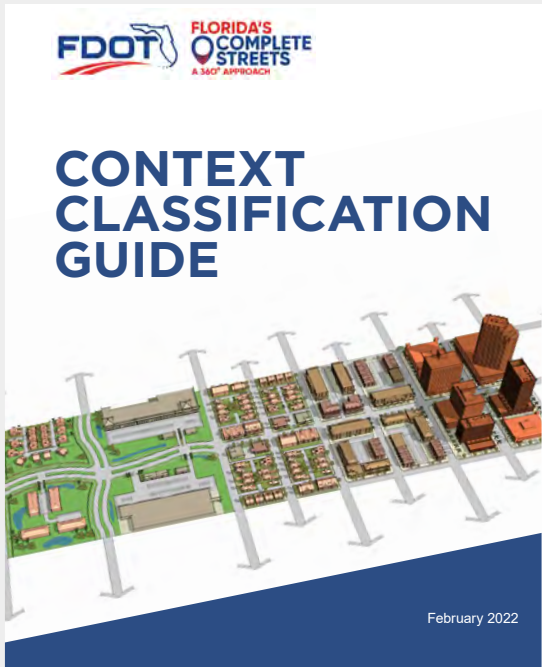


FIGURE 68: Proposed Bike Routes & Multimodal Network  
Plan of downtown Kalamazoo illustrating streets with protected bike lanes (orange) and streets with shared bike lanes (green).





Cover image of Florida Department of Transportation Context Classification Guide.

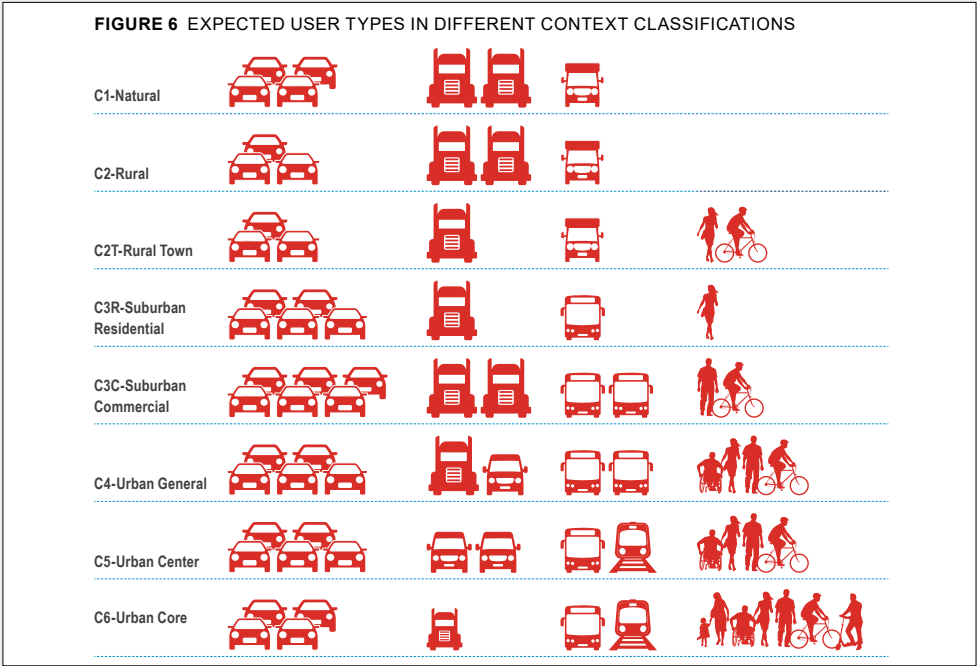
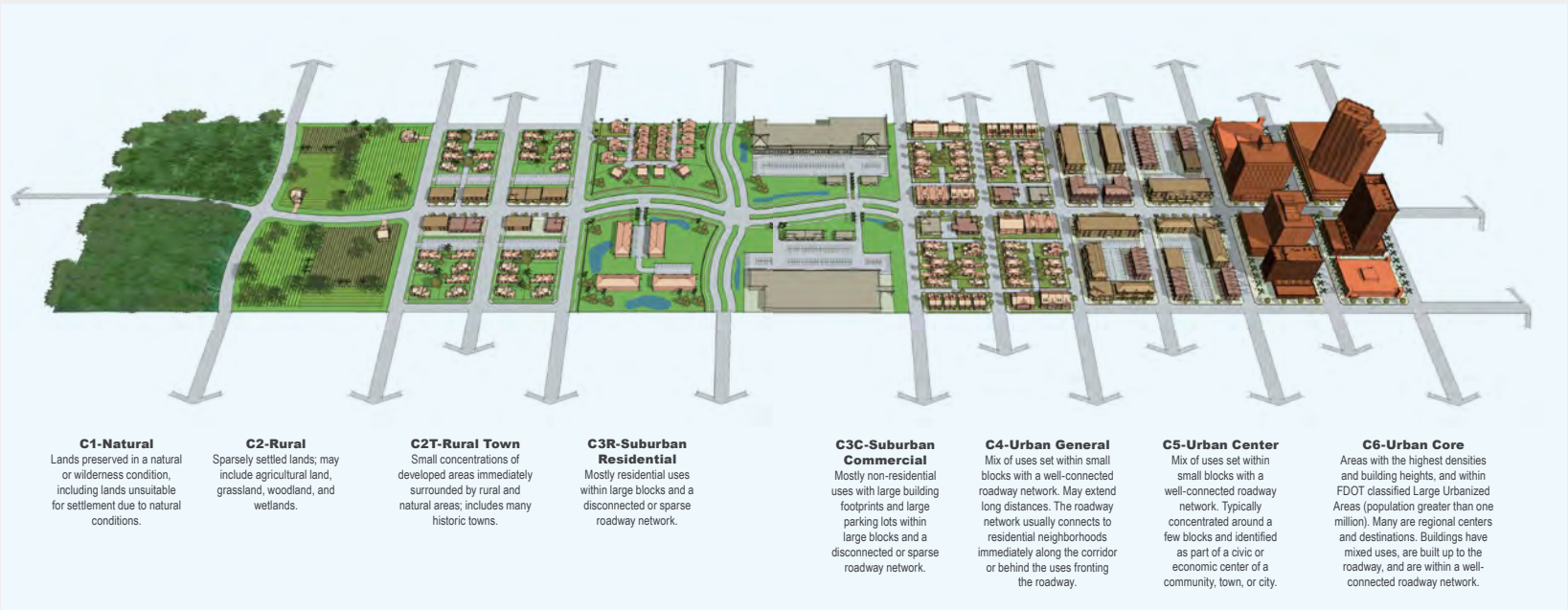
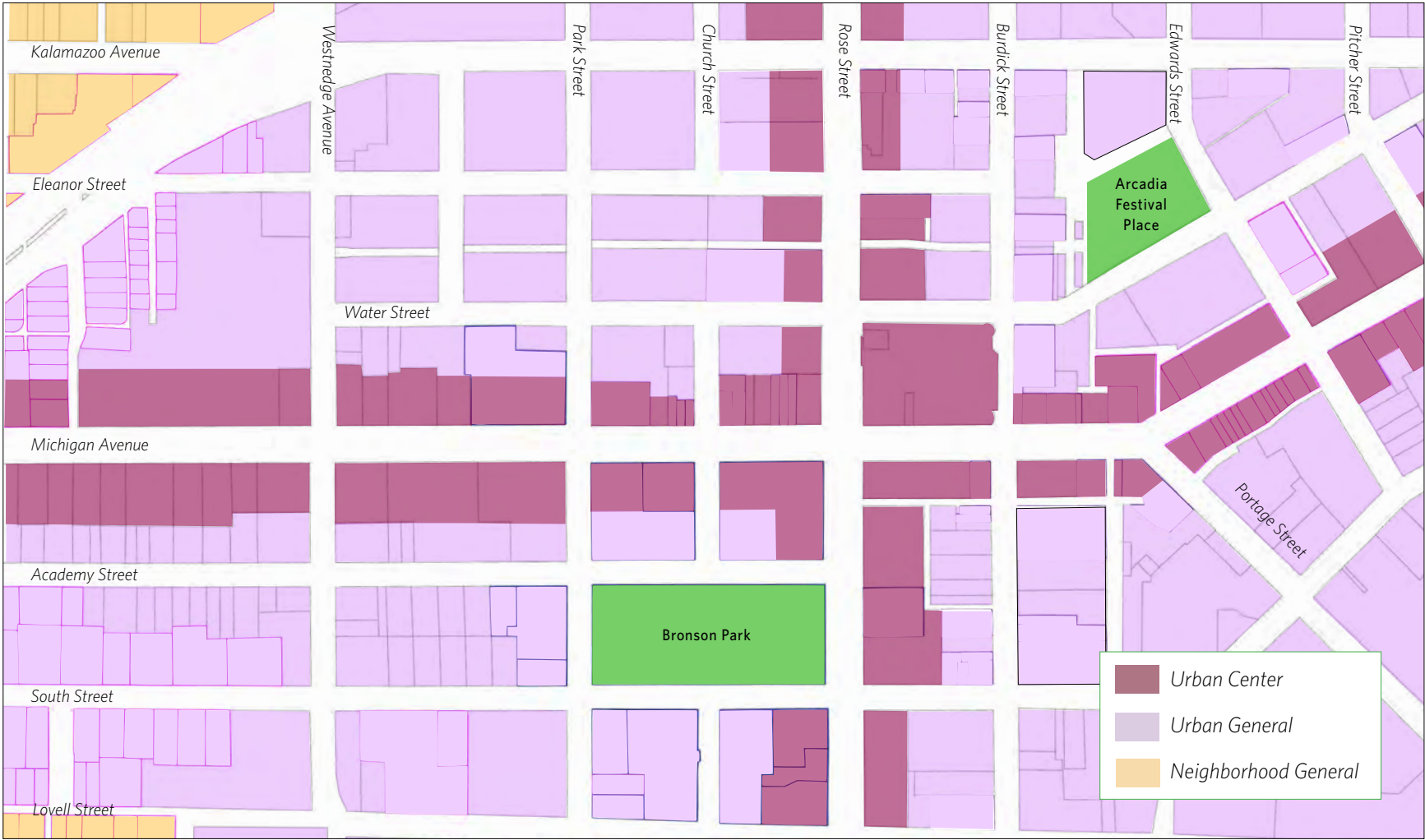


Chart illustrating modes of transportation in each context zone.



**FIGURE 69: Context Classification Guide — Example from the Florida Department of Transportation**

The images above are part of the Florida Department of Transportation’s Context Classification Guide, which supports the state’s Complete Streets initiative. The images illustrate the elements of the different context zones.



**FIGURE 70: Proposed Context Classifications for Kalamazoo**

The two primary context zones identified for downtown Kalamazoo are Urban Center (mauve) and Urban General (lavender). The neighborhoods surrounding downtown are classified as neighborhood general (yellow).



STREET TYPOLOGIES

Once Context Classifications are determined, the next layer is the Functional Classification system. Functional Classifications are also known as street typologies. Each specific street section falls under a typology. The City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual defines the typologies for the city.

These typologies, coordinated with the zoning ordinance, set a framework for user priorities, overall design considerations, typical features, typical right-of-way range, and typical lane configurations. All non-local designated streets (arterial or collector roads) in the city are assigned a typology. Some significant local downtown streets, such as Michigan Avenue and Kalamazoo Avenue, are also assigned typologies.

The street sections on the following pages are each assigned to one of the existing street typologies from the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual. While we are recommending detailed changes to each specific street section to make them safer and pedestrian friendly, we are not recommending any changes to the typologies themselves as defined in the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual.

It is important to note that the proposed street-specific sections presented in this report are typical conditions for each street. Most streets vary slightly, and in some cases greatly, from block to block. The sections presented are intended to offer a point of departure for the overall character, not exact details, of each street. Further study will be necessary to design and engineer each street. When possible, maintain the existing curb-to-curb dimension and existing street trees.

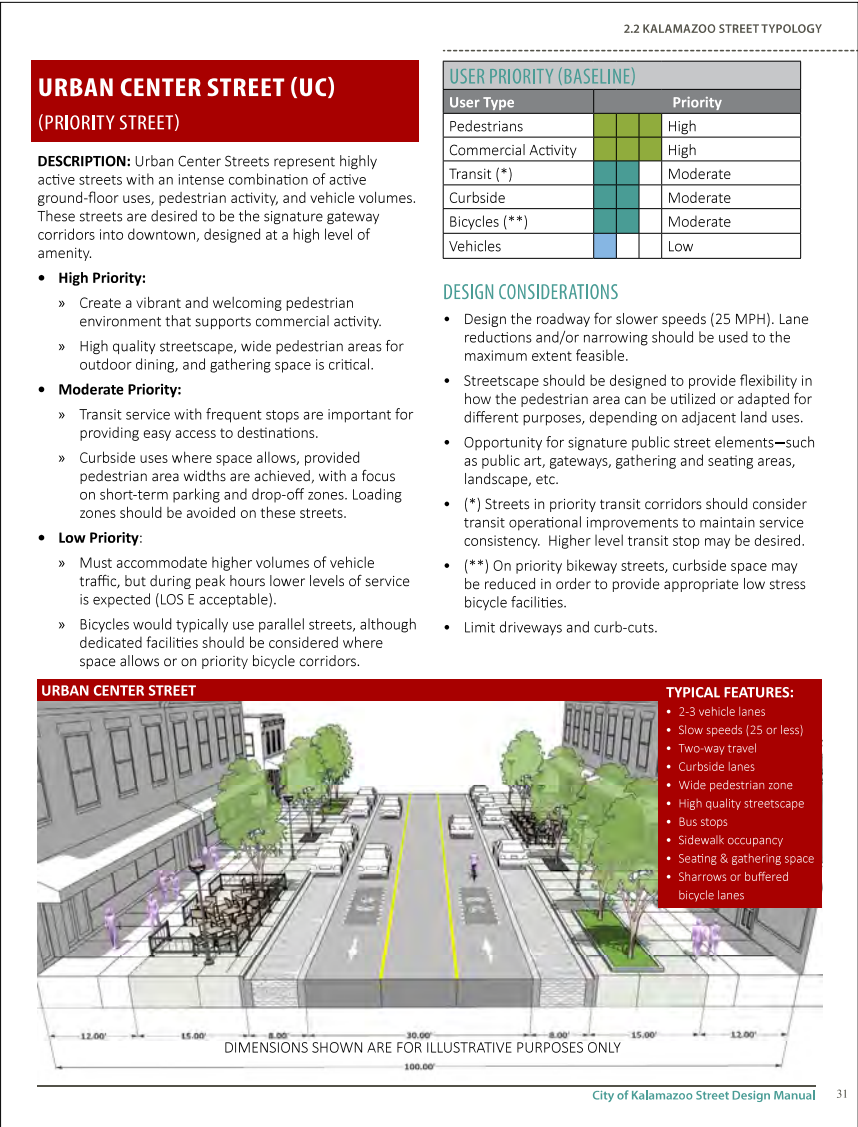


FIGURE 71: City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual — Urban Center Street

This page from the Street Design Manual shows the typology features and design considerations for the Urban Center Street Typology used for Michigan Avenue and Rose Street.

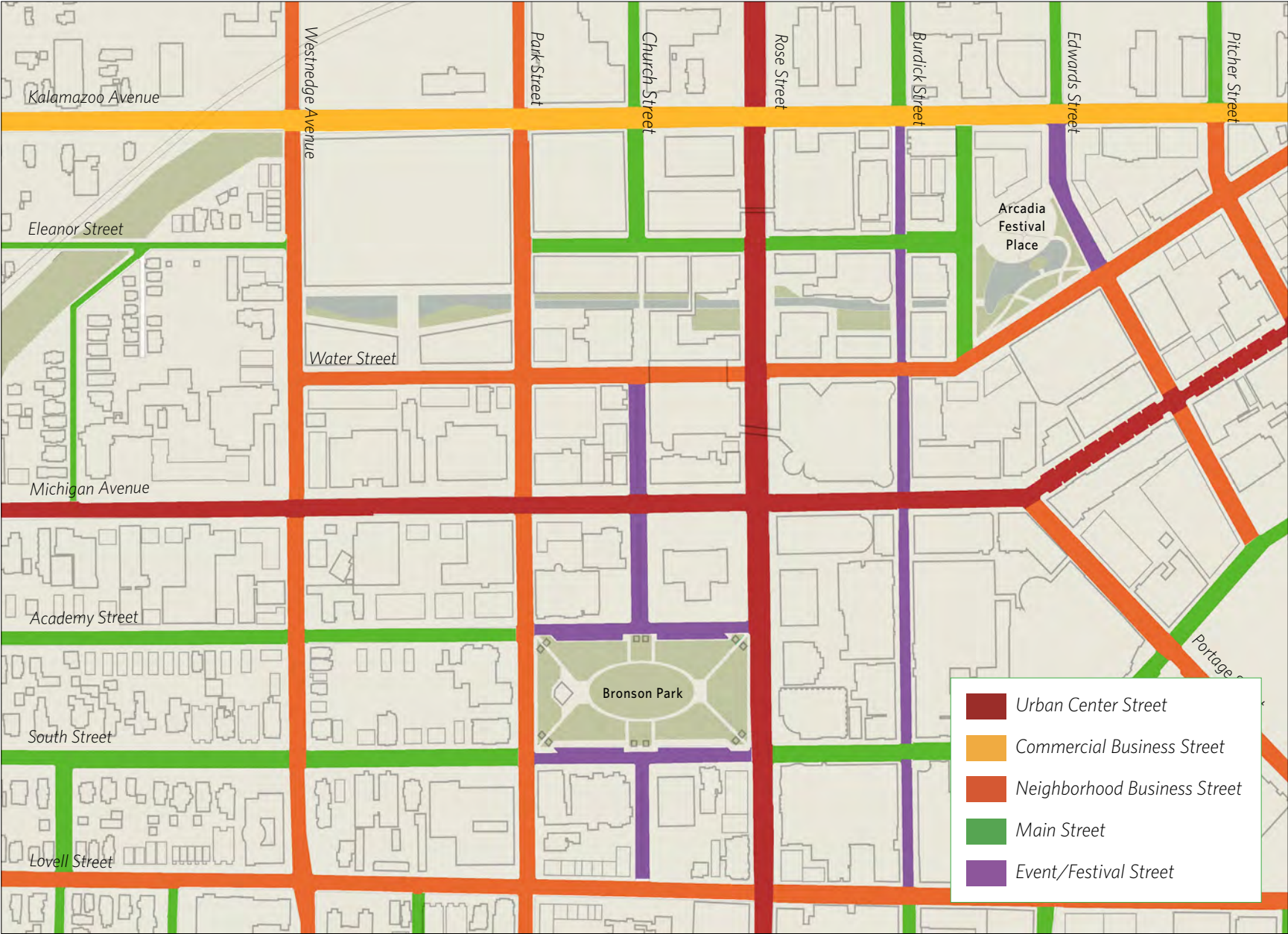
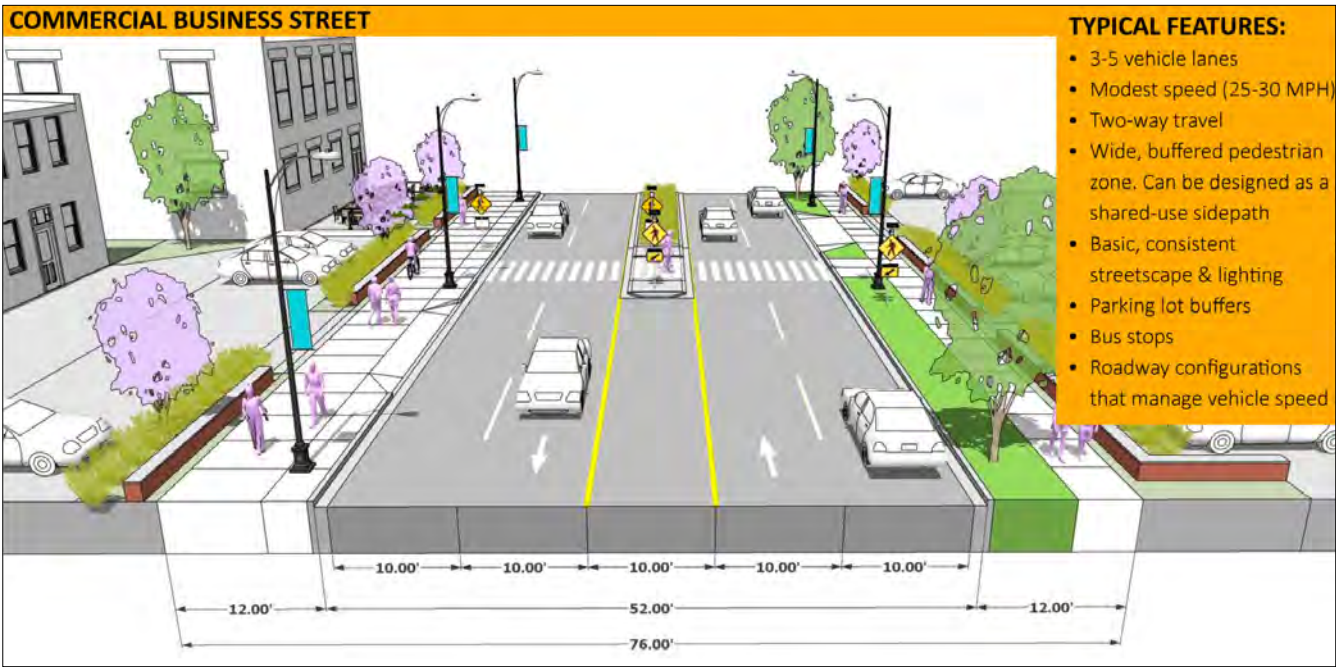


FIGURE 72: Street Typology Diagram

Diagram showing the proposed street typology assignment from the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual for each street in downtown. The detailed sections on the following pages use these typologies as a point of departure and are then calibrated for the specific conditions and needs of the individual streets.

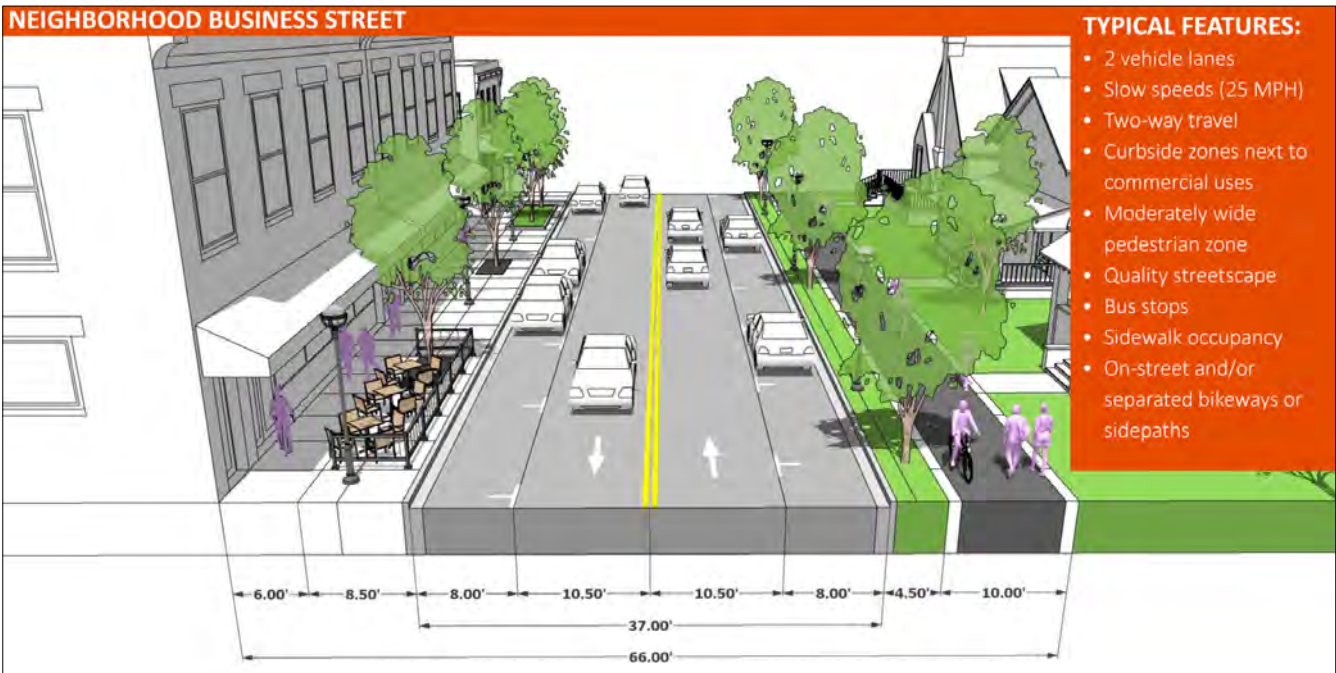




**FIGURE 73: Commercial Business Street**

Commercial Business Street typology from the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual used for:

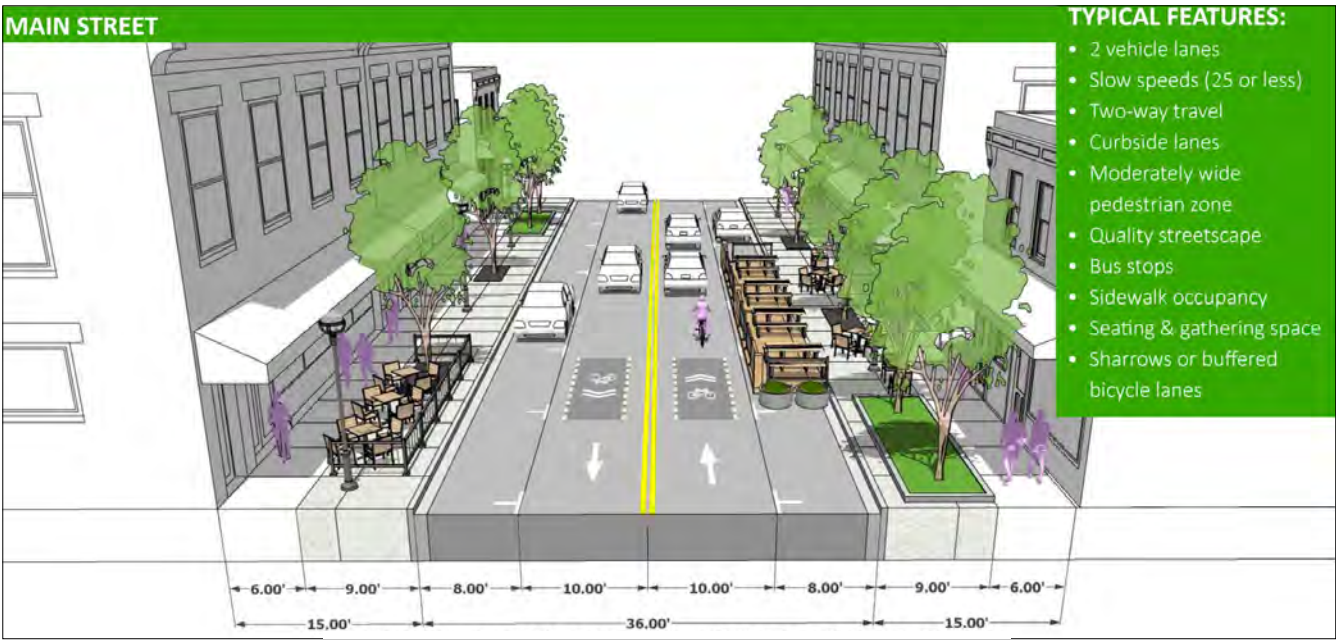
- Rose Street
- Kalamazoo Avenue



**FIGURE 74: Neighborhood Business Street**

Neighborhood Business Street typology from the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual used for the typical downtown street with protected bike lanes:

- N. Westnedge Avenue
- N. Park Street
- Portage Street
- N. Edwards Street
- N. Pitcher Street
- W. Water Street
- Lovell Street



**FIGURE 75: Main Street**

Main Street typology from the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual used for the typical downtown street with shared bike lanes:

- Academy Street
- South Street, away from Bronson Park



**FIGURE 76: Event/Festival Street**

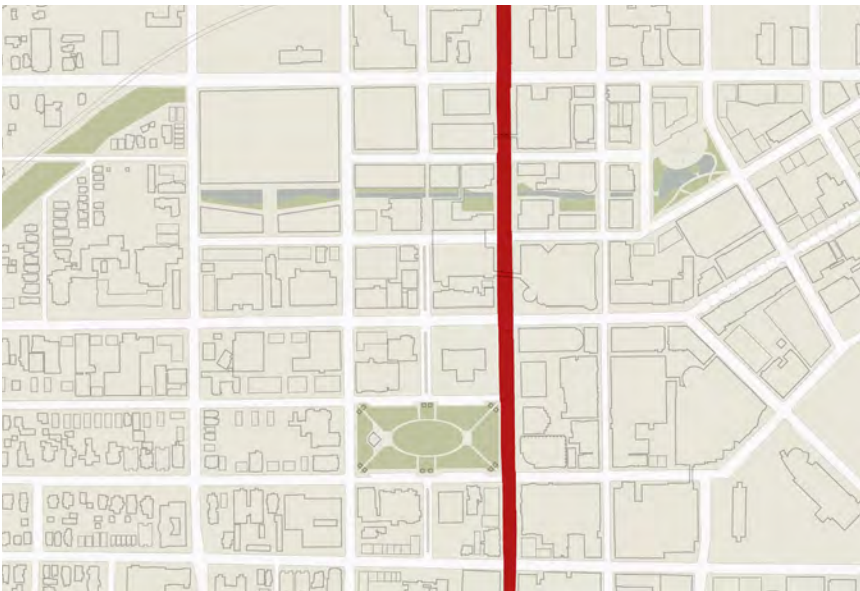
Event/Festival Street typology from the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual used for:

- Burdick Street
- Academy Street at Bronson Park
- South Street at Bronson Park
- Edwards Street at Arcadia Festival Place



ROSE STREET

Rose Street is a north-south corridor that extends through downtown. Unlike the other major north-south corridors, Westnedge Avenue and Park Street to the west, Rose Street remained open to two-way traffic and did not become incorporated into the state road system that connects to the greater Kalamazoo area. Rose Street has a 90-foot right-of-way, the widest in downtown, and is an important means of connection locally to the neighborhood directly to the north of downtown. Current conditions along Rose Street vary highly per block. To absorb some of these irregularities, an asymmetrical street section is proposed to allow for a variety of uses and activities, while creating a unique urban experience for the pedestrian and not restricting vehicular use. A unique feature of the proposed design is a shared-use protected path for bikes and pedestrians on the east side of the street.



STREET TYPOLOGY

**Urban Center Street**  
“Urban Center Streets represent highly active streets with an intense combination of active ground-floor uses, pedestrian activity, and vehicle volume.”

**High Priority**  
“High quality streetscape, wide pedestrian areas for outdoor dining, and gathering space is critical.”

**Design Considerations**  
“Design the roadway for slower speeds (25 mph). Lane reductions and/or narrowing should be used to the maximum extent feasible.”

Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual

FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS															
<b>Proposed Section</b>	<b>Notes</b>														
<table><tr><td>Right-of-Way</td><td>99'</td></tr><tr><td>Typical Curb-to-Curb</td><td>62'</td></tr><tr><td>Travel Lanes</td><td>Four Lanes — Two in each direction</td></tr><tr><td>Median</td><td>4' cobble safety strip</td></tr><tr><td>Parking</td><td>Parallel on both sides</td></tr><tr><td>Bike Lane</td><td>Shared use path on east side</td></tr><tr><td>Trees</td><td>In sidewalk; double layer on east side</td></tr></table>	Right-of-Way	99'	Typical Curb-to-Curb	62'	Travel Lanes	Four Lanes — Two in each direction	Median	4' cobble safety strip	Parking	Parallel on both sides	Bike Lane	Shared use path on east side	Trees	In sidewalk; double layer on east side	<b>Street Configuration</b> Create an asymmetrical section by widening the eastern sidewalk depth to accommodate a shared-use path and allee of trees.
Right-of-Way	99'														
Typical Curb-to-Curb	62'														
Travel Lanes	Four Lanes — Two in each direction														
Median	4' cobble safety strip														
Parking	Parallel on both sides														
Bike Lane	Shared use path on east side														
Trees	In sidewalk; double layer on east side														
	<b>Traffic Calming &amp; Pedestrian Safety</b> On-street parking and a central cobble safety strip calm traffic and aid pedestrian crossing.														
	<b>Activation of Public Realm</b> Street furniture such as benches and luminaries create gathering spaces along the east side of the street.														

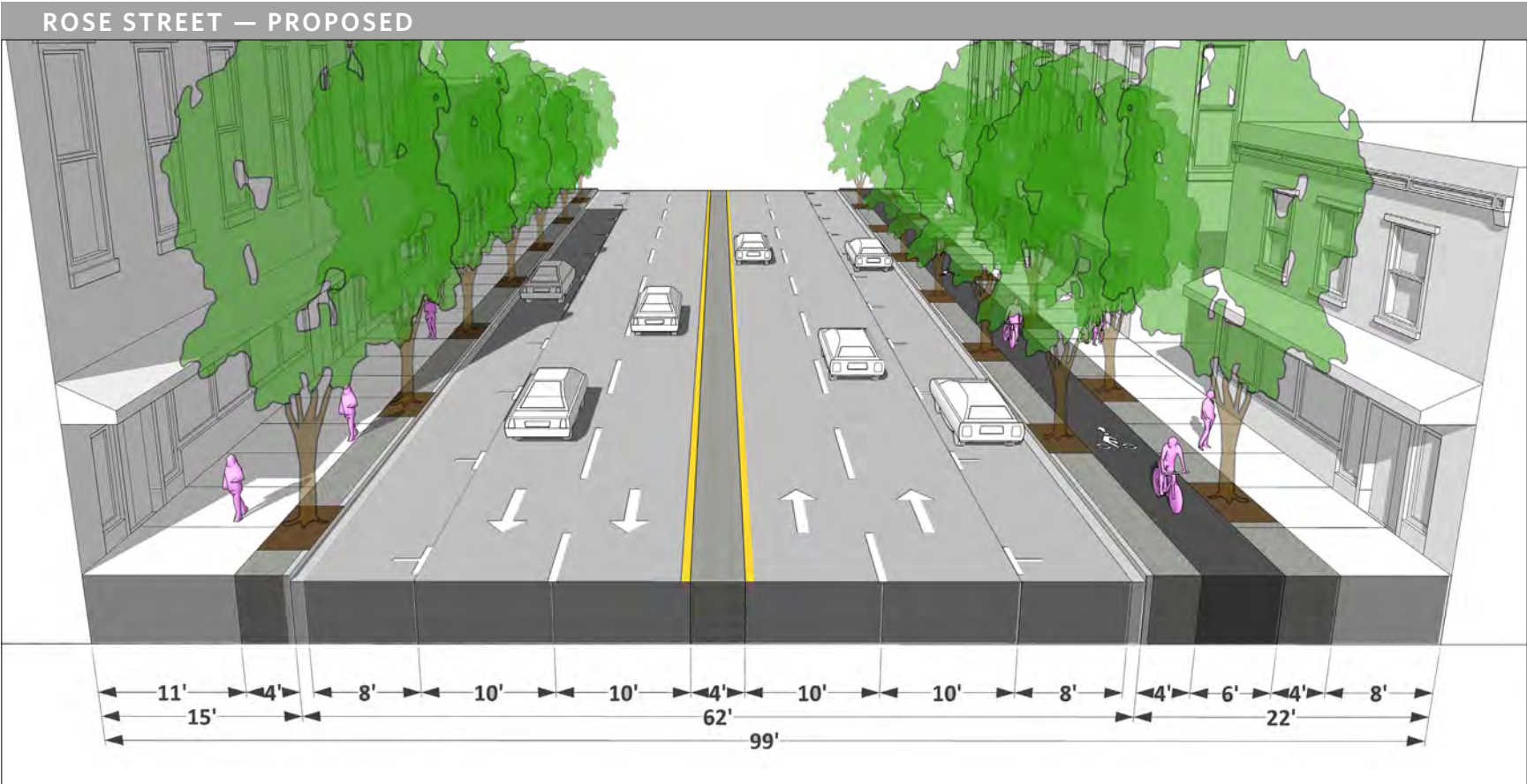
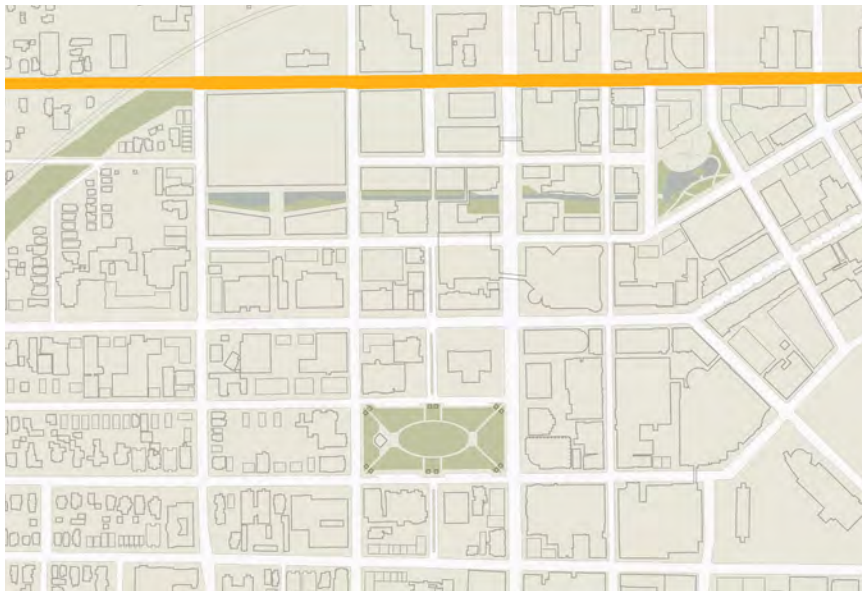


FIGURE 77: Rose Street — Proposed Street Section





KALAMAZOO AVENUE

Kalamazoo Avenue is a primary east-west urban corridor that flows into the north-south one-way streets, Westnedge Avenue and Park Street. Kalamazoo is currently a one-way street and will be among the first streets to be converted back into a two-way street. The current conditions on Kalamazoo Avenue, paired with the train tracks one block north, create a moat-like edge to downtown. These conditions are a result of the one-way traffic and numerous parking lots lining the street, along with the Kalamazoo Transportation Center, a homeless shelter, and associated supportive services that make this area feel unsafe and detached. These conditions are further exacerbated by the design of the new courthouse, which turns its back on the street with a large blank wall. The section below is the first step in reconnecting Kalamazoo Avenue to downtown. Further study will be needed to repair the connections to the north.

STREET TYPOLOGY

**Commercial Business Street**  
“Commercial Business Streets are located along significant transportation corridors in the city.”

**High Priority**  
“Streets must be designed for pedestrian safety and comfort as a priority, especially at intersections. Pedestrian areas should be buffered against vehicle traffic.”

**Design Considerations**  
“Streetscape should emphasize creating buffers and a sense of separation between pedestrians and vehicle travel lanes.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*



FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Proposed Section

Right-of-Way	83'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	60'
Travel Lanes	Four Lanes — Two in each direction
Median	4' cobble safety strip
Parking	Parallel on both sides
Bike Lane	No
Trees	In sidewalk

Notes

**Street Configuration**  
Return to two-way traffic with two travel lanes in each direction and street parking on each side.

**Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety**  
Use a 4' cobble safety strip to calm traffic and aid pedestrian crossing. Separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic with the planting of street trees.

**Activation of Public Realm**  
Create a wider sidewalk on the south side of the street to increase winter sun exposure.

KALAMAZOO AVENUE — PROPOSED

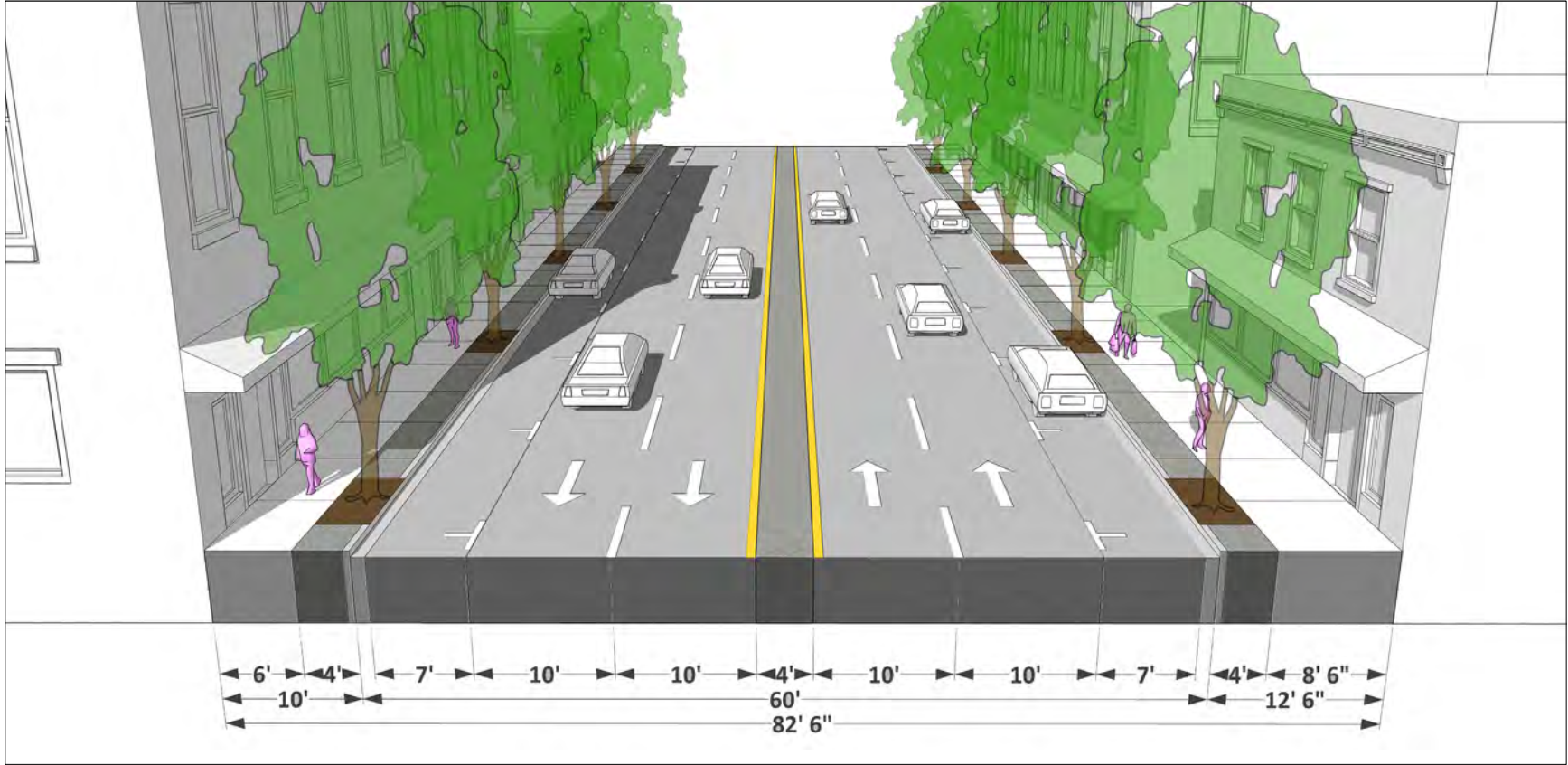
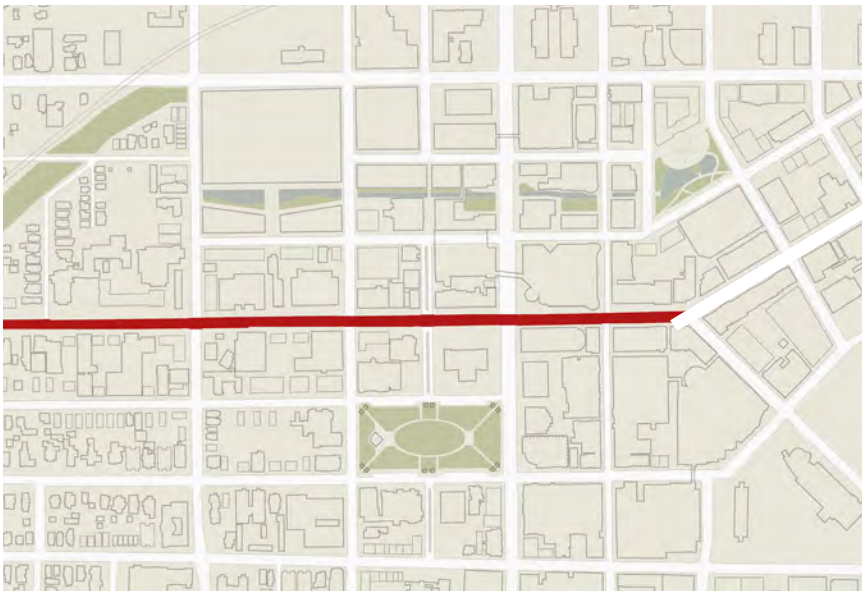


FIGURE 78: Kalamazoo Avenue — Proposed Street Section



W. MICHIGAN AVENUE

W. Michigan Avenue is downtown Kalamazoo’s main street. This east-west corridor is currently an unsafe one-way street due to speeding traffic, but will soon be converted back into a pedestrian-friendly two-way street. The eastern end of W. Michigan Avenue at the corner of Burdick Street forms the commercial center of downtown Kalamazoo. Despite dangerous conditions created by speeding traffic, the retail core of the city has survived, largely due to the surviving historic building fabric. The redesign of this street will be transformational for the city, as the wider sidewalks will make the streets safer for pedestrians, outdoor dining, and commercial activity. See pages 36–39 for detailed proposals for catalytic development on W. Michigan Avenue.



STREET TYPOLOGY

**Urban Center Street**

“Urban Center Streets represent highly active streets with an intense combination of active ground-floor uses, pedestrian activity, and vehicle volume.”

**High Priority**

“High quality streetscape, wide pedestrian areas for outdoor dining, and gathering space is critical.”

**Design Considerations**

“Design the roadway for slower speeds (25 mph). Lane reductions and/or narrowing should be used to the maximum extent feasible.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*

FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS															
<div>Proposed Section</div> <table><tr><td>Right-of-Way</td><td>99'</td></tr><tr><td>Typical Curb-to-Curb</td><td>48'</td></tr><tr><td>Travel Lanes</td><td>Two Lanes — One in each direction</td></tr><tr><td>Median</td><td>10' cobble safety strip</td></tr><tr><td>Parking</td><td>Parallel on both sides</td></tr><tr><td>Bike Lane</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Trees</td><td>In sidewalk</td></tr></table>	Right-of-Way	99'	Typical Curb-to-Curb	48'	Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction	Median	10' cobble safety strip	Parking	Parallel on both sides	Bike Lane	No	Trees	In sidewalk	<div>Notes</div> <div><p><b>Street Configuration</b></p><p>Return to two-way traffic and reduce the number of traffic lanes while accommodating regular vehicular traffic. Separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic with the planting of street trees.</p><p><b>Traffic Calming &amp; Pedestrian Safety</b></p><p>Use a 10' cobble safety strip to calm traffic, offer a passing lane, and aid pedestrian crossing.</p><p><b>Activation of Public Realm</b></p><p>Maximize pedestrian experience and safety while supporting commercial activity with wide sidewalks and planting of street trees.</p></div>
Right-of-Way	99'														
Typical Curb-to-Curb	48'														
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction														
Median	10' cobble safety strip														
Parking	Parallel on both sides														
Bike Lane	No														
Trees	In sidewalk														

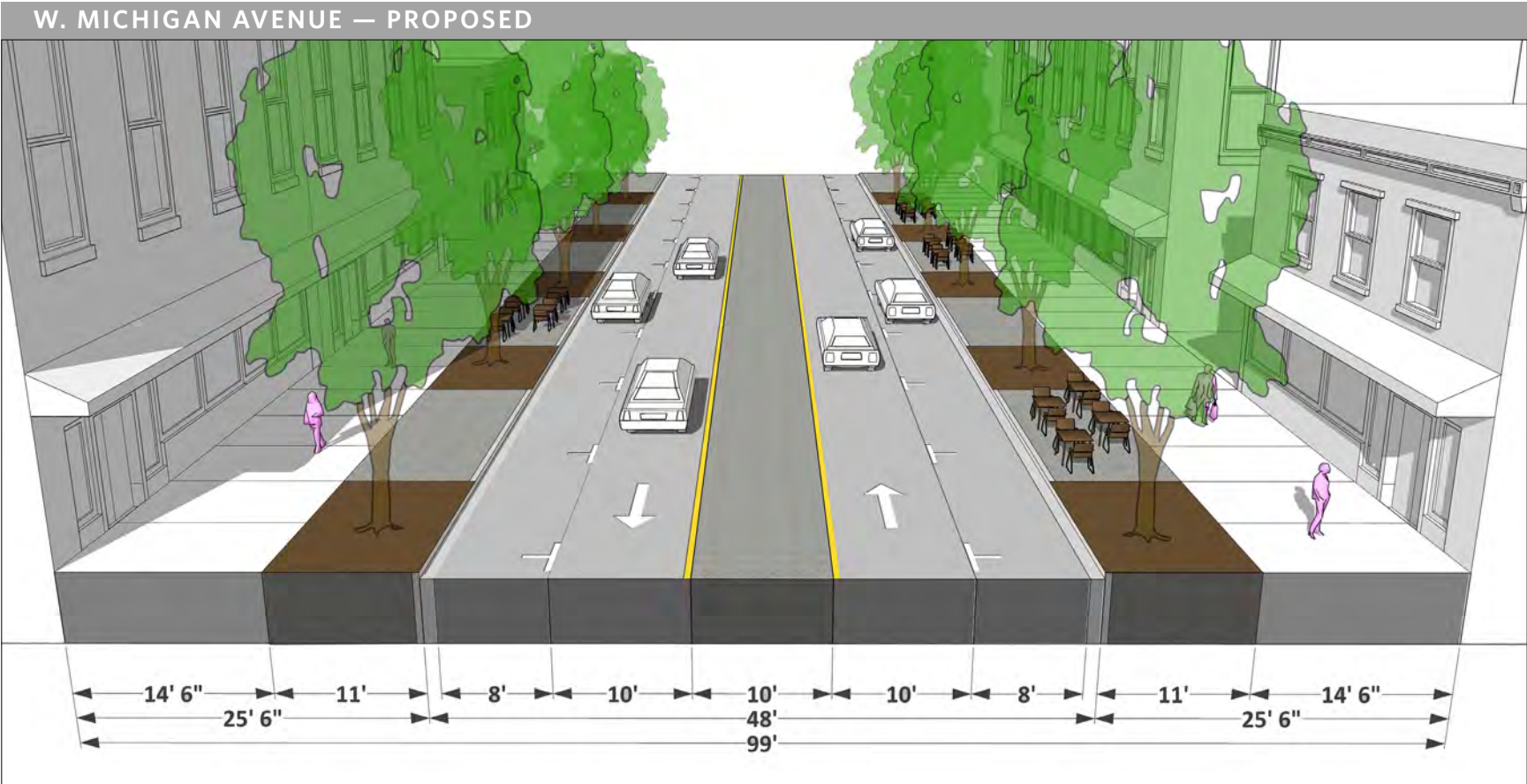
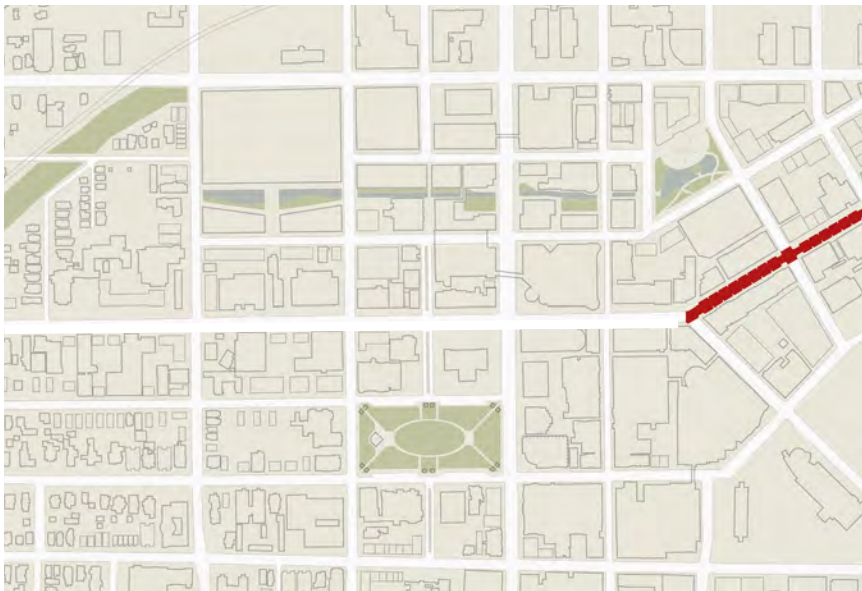


FIGURE 79: W. Michigan Avenue — Proposed Street Section





E. MICHIGAN AVENUE

E. Michigan Avenue starts at Burdick Street and angles up to the north-east. This area of downtown is home to extremely high-quality historic fabric buildings and storefronts. The importance of the buildings on this street is discussed on pages 24–33 of this report. Despite the successful scale of these historic structures, the current one-way traffic makes the street dangerous for pedestrians and challenging for retail. In order to maximize this street’s potential, the street section is designed to prioritize the pedestrian experience through the use of parklets as gathering spaces. See pages 36–39 for detailed proposals for catalytic development on E. Michigan Avenue.

STREET TYPOLOGY

**Urban Center Street**  
“Urban Center Streets represent highly active streets with an intense combination of active ground-floor uses, pedestrian activity, and vehicle volume.”

**High Priority**  
“High quality streetscape, wide pedestrian areas for outdoor dining, and gathering space is critical.”

**Design Considerations**  
“Design the roadway for slower speeds (25 mph). Lane reductions and/or narrowing should be used to the maximum extent feasible.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*



FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Proposed Section

Right-of-Way	82'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	48'
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction
Median	10' cobble safety strip
Parking	Parallel both sides, between bump outs
Bike Lane	No
Trees	On sidewalk and in bump outs

Notes

**Street Configuration**  
Return to two-way traffic and reduce the number of traffic lanes while accommodating regular vehicular traffic. Separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic with the planting of street trees.

**Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety**  
Use a 10' cobble safety strip to calm traffic, offer a passing lane, and aid pedestrian crossing.

**Activation of Public Realm**  
Use tree bump outs to further calm traffic and open the sidewalk up for parklets and outdoor dining. If desired, close off isolated parking.

E. MICHIGAN AVENUE — PROPOSED

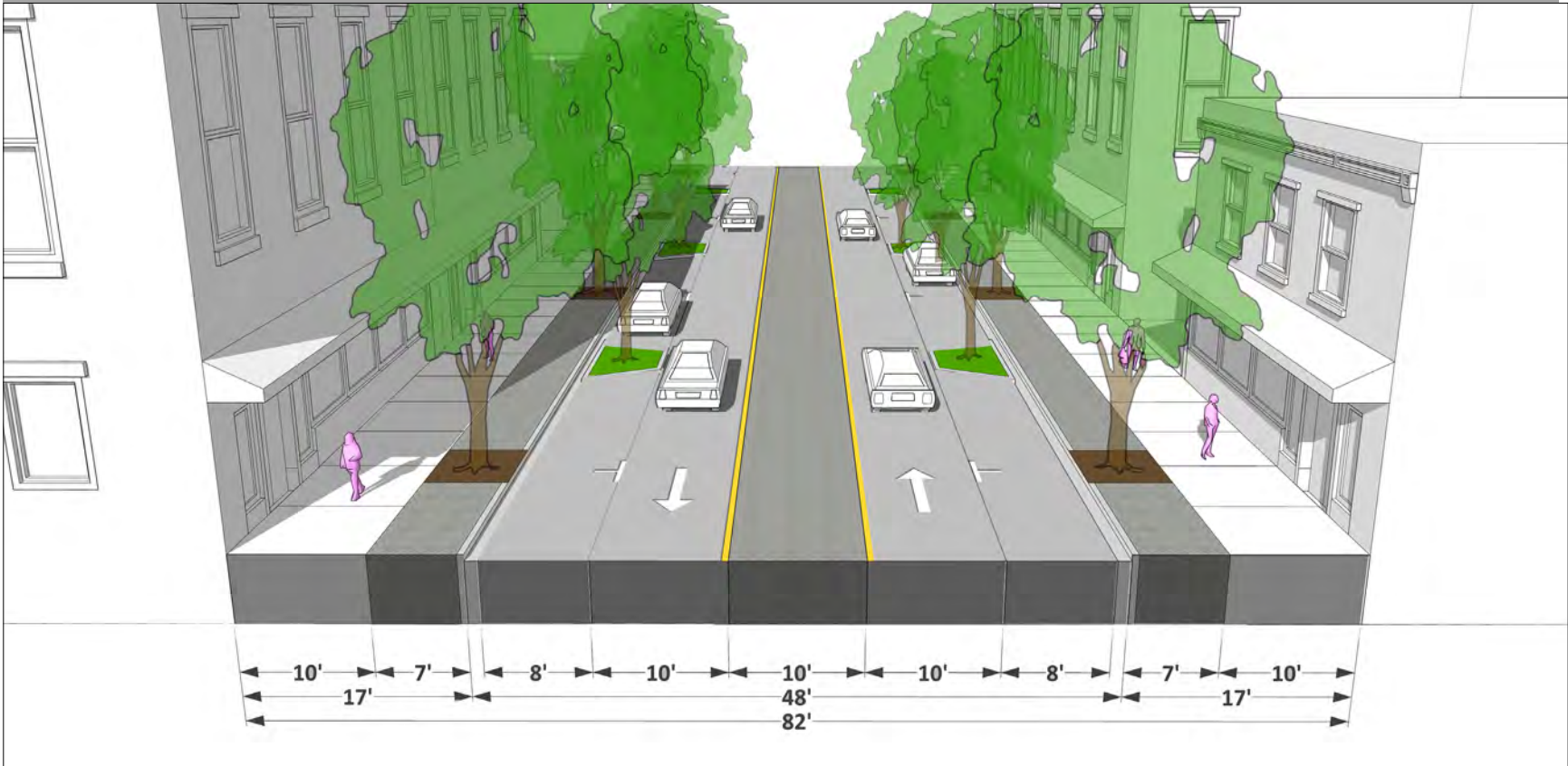
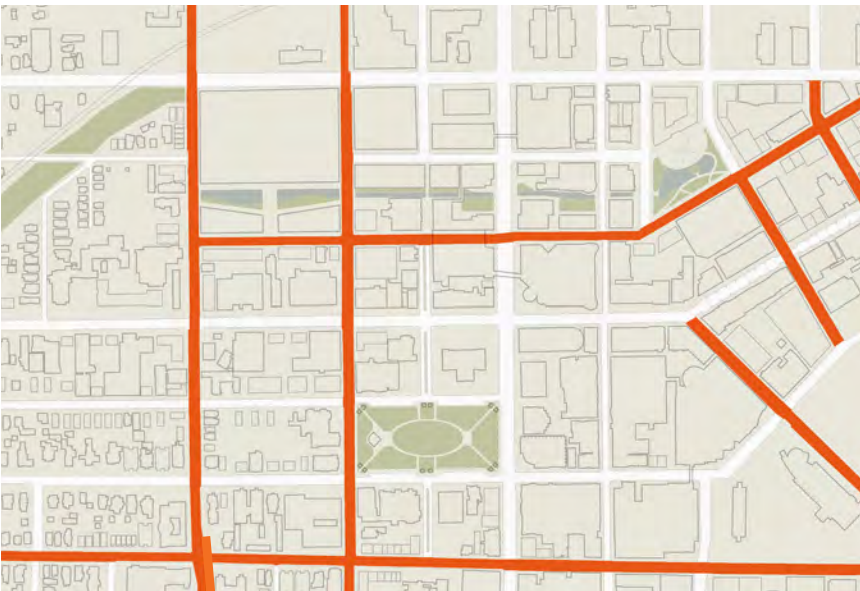


FIGURE 80: E. Michigan Avenue — Proposed Street Section



TYPICAL STREET — PROTECTED BIKES

Westnedge Avenue, Park Street, Portage Street, Edwards Street, Pitcher Street, Water Street, and Lovell Street (shown in photo) are essential urban corridors that together form the street network of downtown Kalamazoo. The proposed section will vary slightly to meet a variety of conditions and will need to modulate slightly in each case. If extra sidewalk depth is required, space can be taken from the designated bike lane. It is important to note that Westnedge Avenue and Park Street are currently high-speed, one-way state roads that feed into a large area network. While they will remain one-way streets in the short-term, they are shown in this report as two-way to include the long-term vision of a fully intact street network. We strongly recommend working with the State of Michigan to resolve the downstream traffic concerns that have held these streets out of the current Streets for All phases.



STREET TYPOLOGY

Neighborhood Business Street

“Neighborhood business streets are typically major connecting streets in the city where clusters of smaller scale or traditional commercial/mixed-use buildings are located.”

High Priority

“Pedestrian safety and comfort is critical for supporting access to neighborhood commercial areas and supporting business activity.”

Design Considerations

“Conventional buffered bicycle lanes should be avoided in favor of separated bicycle lanes or even shared-use sidepaths.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*

FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Proposed Section

Right-of-Way	66' — Typical
Typical Curb-to-Curb	46' — Typical
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel on both sides
Bike Lane	Protected path on one side
Trees	In sidewalk

Notes

Street Configuration

Two-way traffic with a single lane in each direction.

Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety

Use on-street parking to create a protected bike lane on one side of the street.

Activation of Public Realm

Increase the sidewalk depth to 10' on each side, protected by street trees.

TYPICAL STREET — PROTECTED BIKE LANES

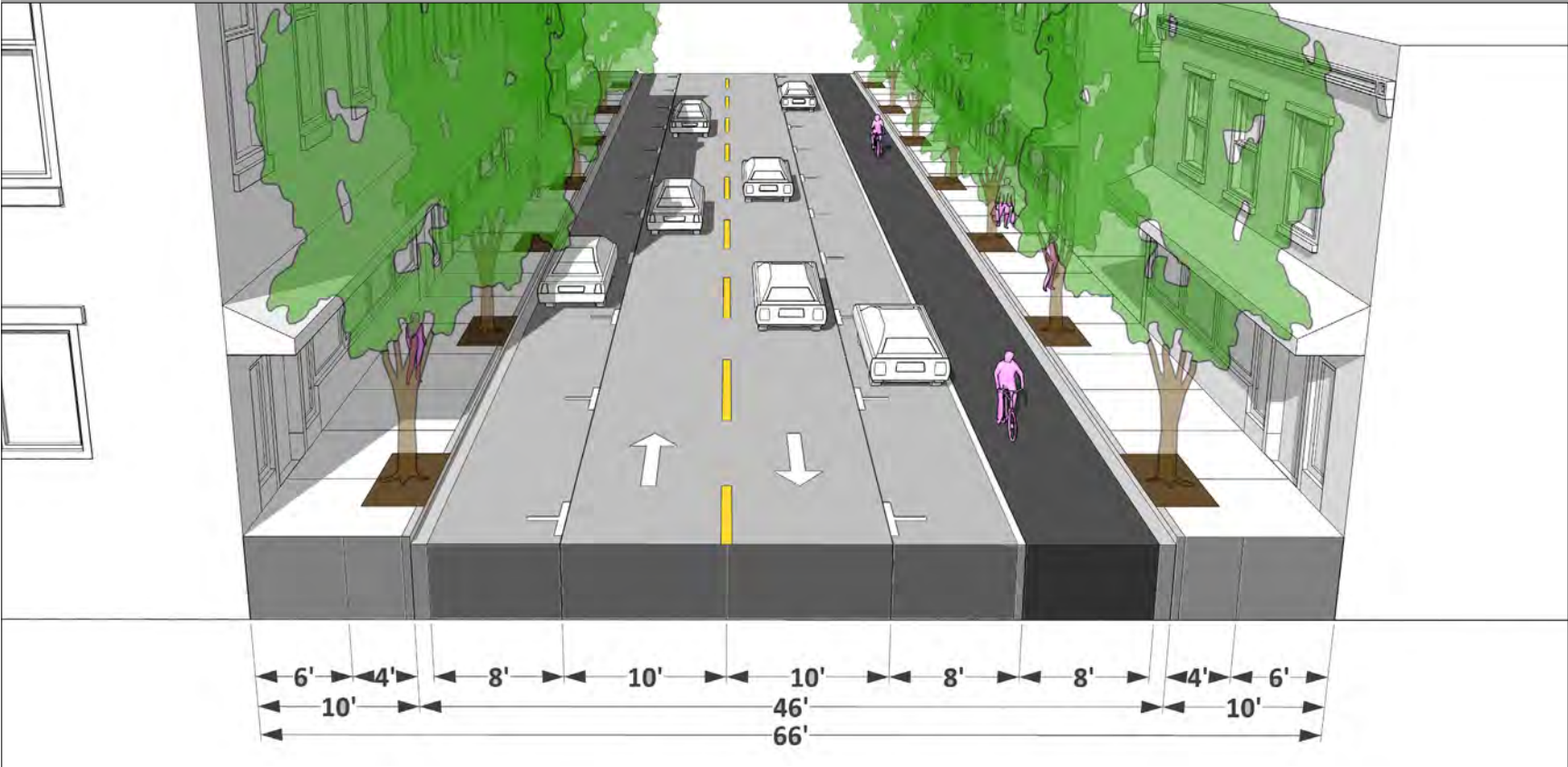
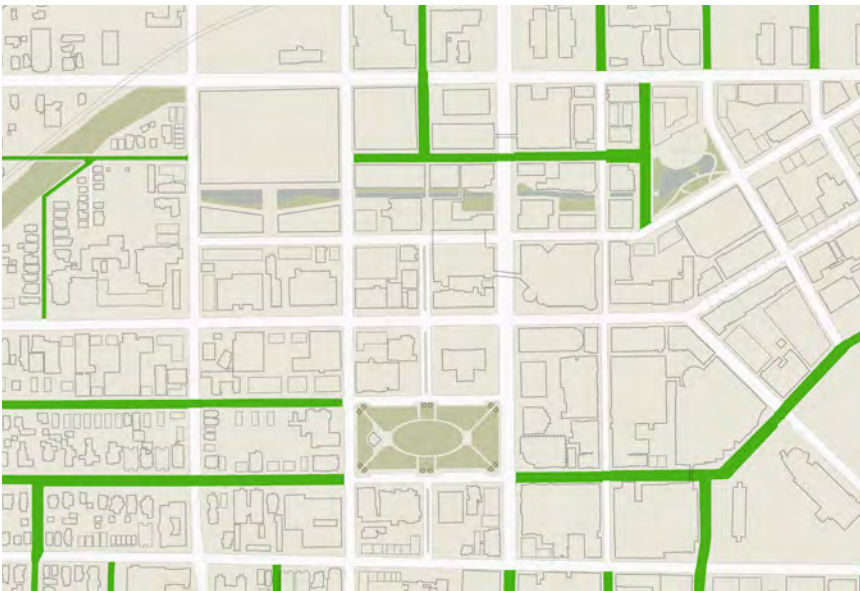


FIGURE 81: Typical Street with Protected Bike Lane — Proposed Street Section





TYPICAL STREET — SHARED BIKES

A series of smaller secondary streets, including Eleanor Street (shown in photo), Academy Street, South Street, and Lovell Street, all of which run east-west, are joined by several short north-south streets to fill out the street network of downtown Kalamazoo. These streets are typical urban neighborhood streets and accommodate daily use for pedestrians, bikes, cars, and buses alike. Like the typical street section with protected bike lanes, exact conditions will vary slightly on specific streets. With the exception of South Street, these streets are currently already two-way streets.

STREET TYPOLOGY

**Main Street**  
“Main Streets constitute the majority of downtown streets and near-downtown areas. These streets must balance a broad range of needs and demands.”

**High Priority**  
“Provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment. Quality street-scape is desirable.”

**Design Considerations**  
“Street improvements should anticipate future land use change and potential demand for pedestrian area and curbside uses.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*



FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Proposed Section

Right-of-Way	66' — Typical
Typical Curb-to-Curb	38' — Typical
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel on both sides
Bike Lane	Shared in travel lane
Trees	In sidewalk

**Notes**

**Street Configuration**  
One lane of traffic in each direction, each lane is a shared lane with bikes.

**Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety**  
Calm traffic with on-street parking and street trees.

**Activation of Public Realm**  
Wide sidewalks host a variety of pedestrian activities.

TYPICAL STREET — SHARED BIKE LANES

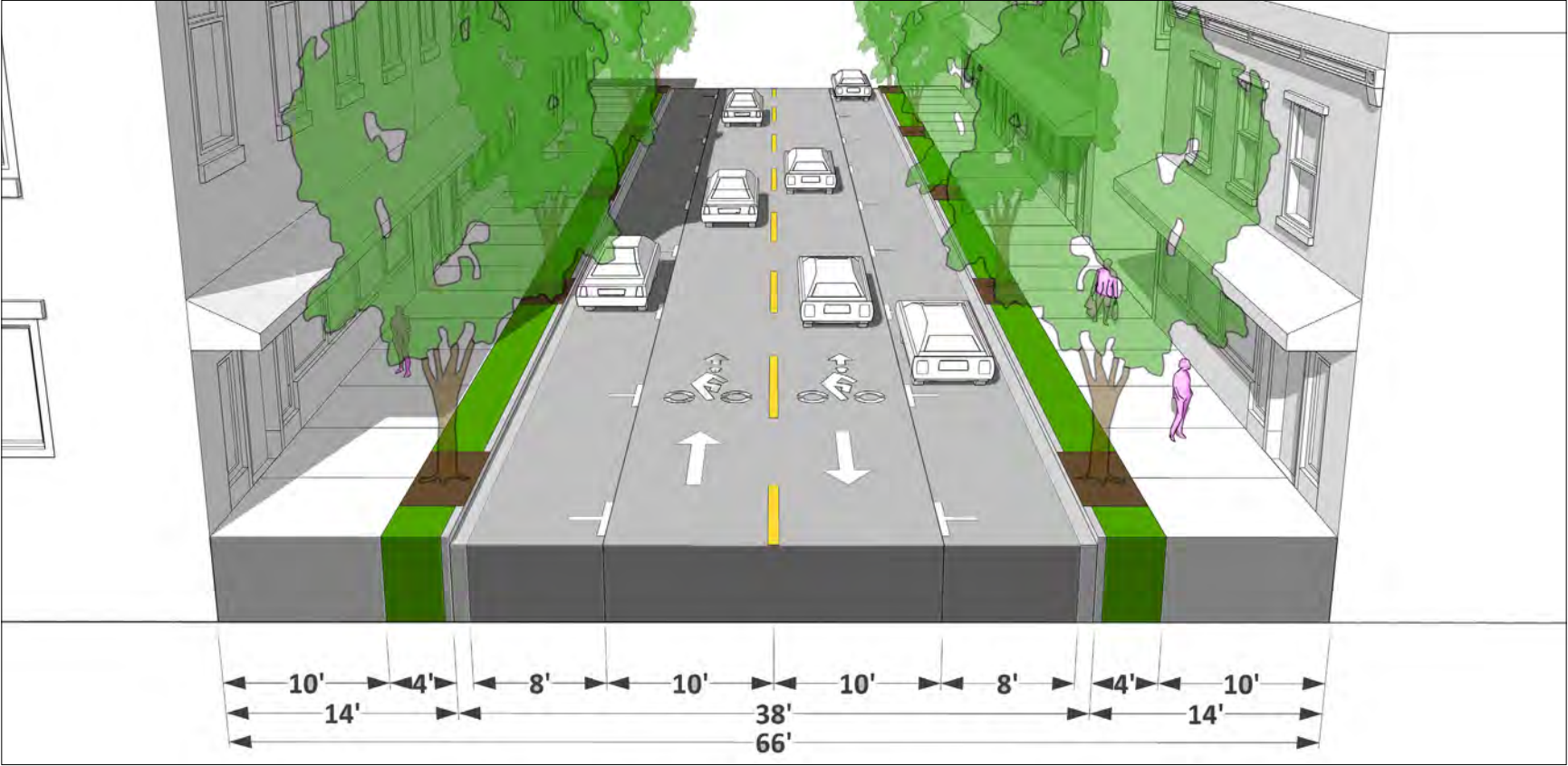
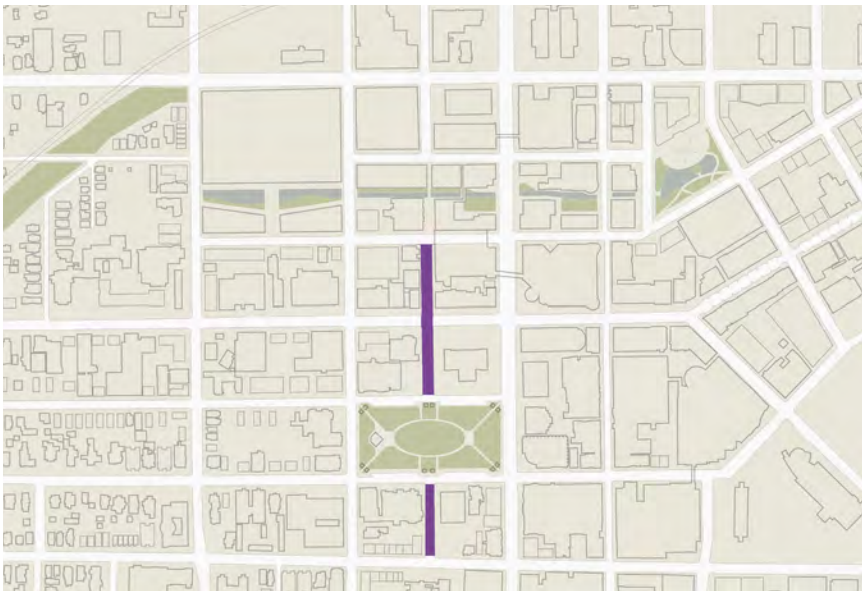


FIGURE 82: Typical Street with Shared Bike Lane — Proposed Street Section



CHURCH STREET

Church Street is a short north-south street that runs from Water Street on the north end, terminates into Bronson Park, then connects down to Lovell Street. Currently a forgotten side street, this design envisions an event street that helps to draw pedestrians through the city from Arcadia Creek through the commercial core on Michigan Avenue, and down to the civic center of the city at Bronson Park. The defining feature of the proposed design is a new tree-lined median, the only one in the city, which will create a uniquely intimate shaded street section that can be closed for events and festivals.



STREET TYPOLOGY

**Event/Festival Street**  
“Event/Festival Streets are special streets throughout the city that are dominated by pedestrian-centric activity.”

**High Priority**  
“Pedestrians are the priority; the street should be designed to look and function as a pedestrian-dominated space.”

**Design Considerations**  
“The design of the street should consider the operations of special events and/or street closures, so that the space can be readily closed to vehicle traffic and used entirely by pedestrians.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*

FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS															
<b>Proposed Section</b>	<b>Notes</b>														
<table><tr><td>Right-of-Way</td><td>66'</td></tr><tr><td>Typical Curb-to-Curb</td><td>46'</td></tr><tr><td>Travel Lanes</td><td>Two Lanes — One in each direction</td></tr><tr><td>Median</td><td>Treed median</td></tr><tr><td>Parking</td><td>Parallel on both sides</td></tr><tr><td>Bike Lane</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Trees</td><td>In sidewalk and median</td></tr></table>	Right-of-Way	66'	Typical Curb-to-Curb	46'	Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction	Median	Treed median	Parking	Parallel on both sides	Bike Lane	No	Trees	In sidewalk and median	<p><b>Street Configuration</b> One travel lane in each direction separated by a tree-lined median to create a boulevard.</p> <p><b>Traffic Calming &amp; Pedestrian Safety</b> The tree canopy from the median and on-street parking will slow traffic.</p> <p><b>Activation of Public Realm</b> 10'-wide sidewalks and shaded street connected to Bronson Park can be closed off for festivals and events.</p>
Right-of-Way	66'														
Typical Curb-to-Curb	46'														
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction														
Median	Treed median														
Parking	Parallel on both sides														
Bike Lane	No														
Trees	In sidewalk and median														

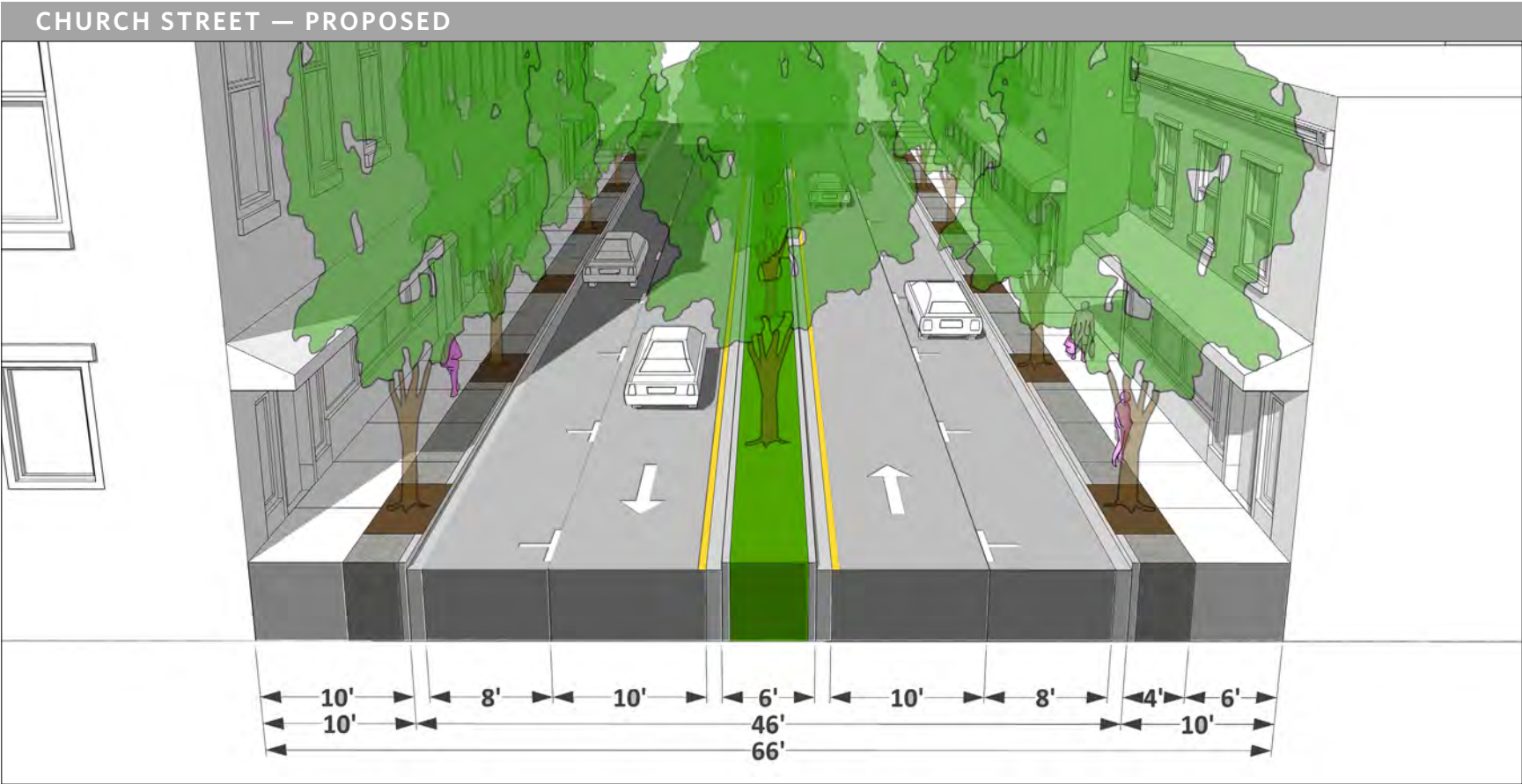
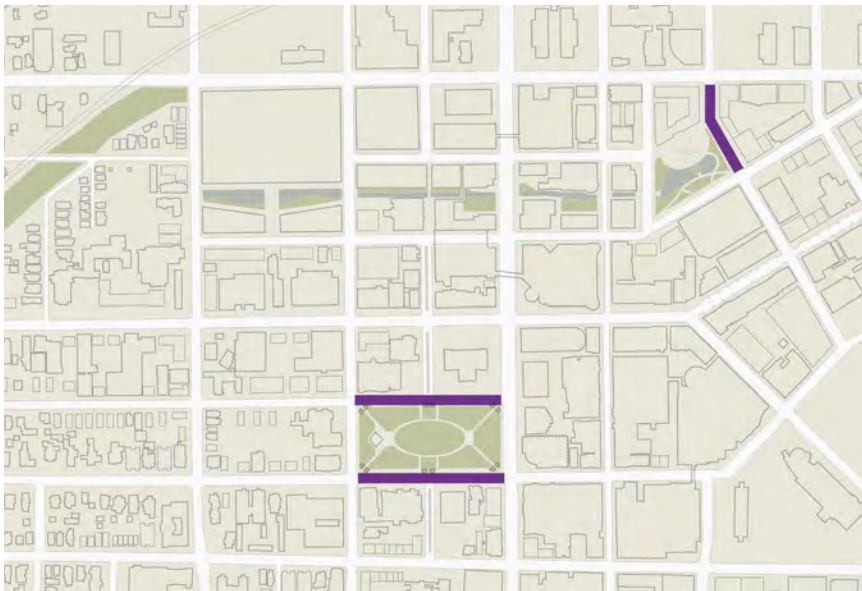


FIGURE 83: Church Street — Proposed Street Section





ACADEMY & SOUTH AT BRONSON PARK

Bronson Park, lined by city hall and the old courthouse, is the civic center of downtown Kalamazoo. The east-west streets on the north and south sides of the park present an opportunity to draw activity to the park by designing them as festival streets. Consider changing the paving to visually prioritize pedestrians. Angled parking against the park can house food trucks and pop-up kiosks when the street is open and closed. Also, note that street trees are specified for the side of the street opposite the park. The tree strategy for the park should be coordinated with a comprehensive landscape plan for the entire park. See pages 48–49 for detailed proposals for catalytic development at Bronson Park. Apply this section to N. Edwards Street at Arcadia Festival Place.

STREET TYPOLOGY

Event/Festival Street

“Event/Festival Streets are special streets throughout the city that are dominated by pedestrian-centric activity.”

High Priority

“Pedestrians are the priority; the street should be designed to look and function as a pedestrian-dominated space.”

Design Considerations

“The design of the street should consider the operations of special events and/or street closures, so that the space can be readily closed to vehicle traffic and used entirely by pedestrians.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*



FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Proposed Section

Right-of-Way	81'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	30'
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel away park; angled at park
Bike Lane	No
Trees	In sidewalk away from park

Notes

Street Configuration

One lane of traffic in each direction; angled parking along the park.

Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety

Designate angled parking with a special paving material to highlight its role in the park.

Activation of Public Realm

Support park programming by utilizing a portion of the angle parking for vendors and food trucks. This can be executed in a range of ways, from fully closing the streets for events to parking a few food trucks daily to serve a lunch crowd.

BRONSON PARK — PROPOSED

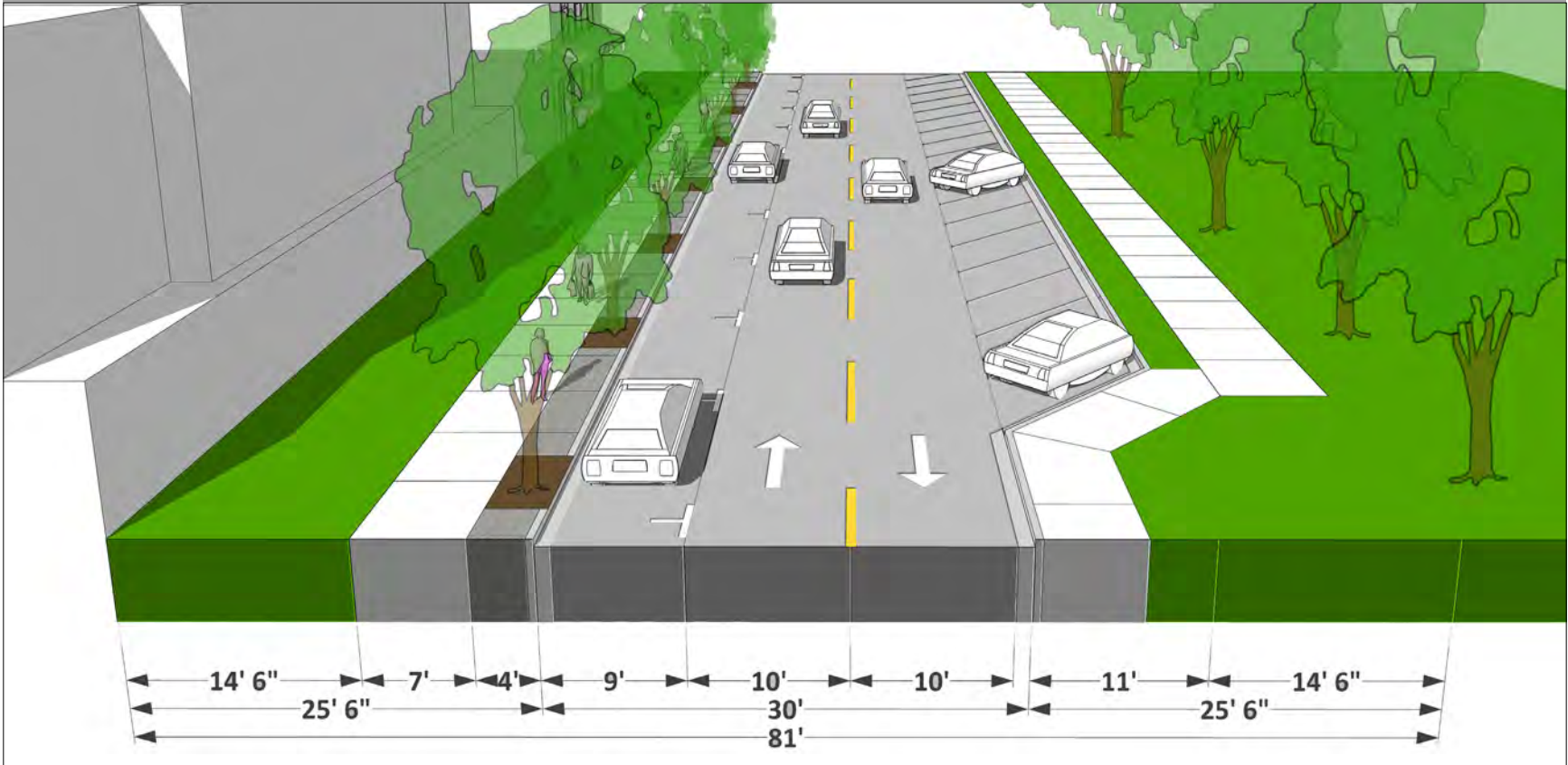
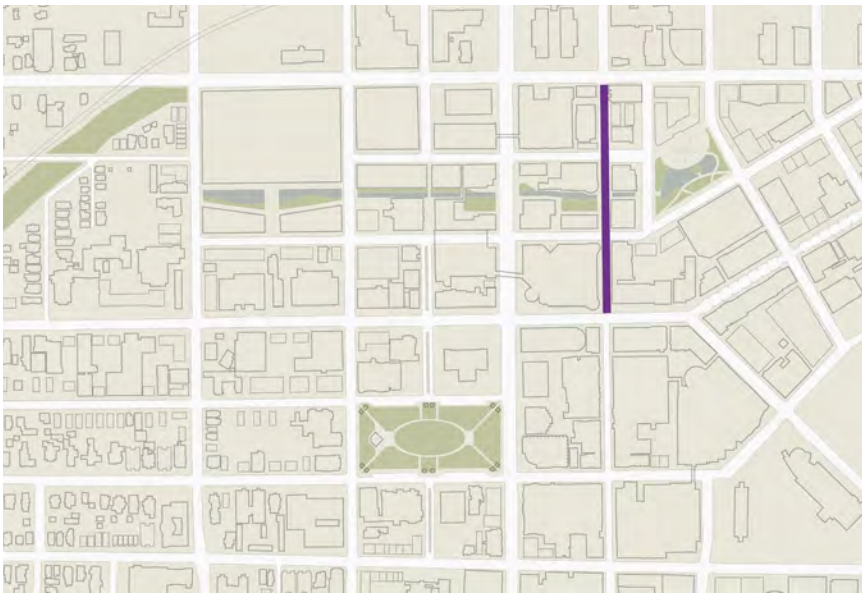


FIGURE 84: Academy Street & South Street at Bronson Park — Proposed Street Section



N. BURDICK STREET

Burdick street, also known as the Kalamazoo Mall, is the north-south axis of the commercial core of downtown. N. Burdick Street starts at Michigan Avenue, crosses over Arcadia Creek, and continues north. Two blocks of the street, from Michigan to Eleanor Street, are mostly vacant because the street remains closed to vehicular traffic, and the space is filled with dated landscaping and lined with unengaged buildings. Since the street is technically a city park at this point, redesigning and implementing a new street section can be done at the city staff level. We suggest replacing the dated landscaping with a festival street, then work through the public process to open the street to two-way traffic. Burdick Street is discussed in detail on pages 34–35 of this report.



STREET TYPOLOGY

**Event/Festival Street**  
“Event/Festival Streets are special streets throughout the city that are dominated by pedestrian-centric activity.”

**High Priority**  
“Pedestrians are the priority; the street should be designed to look and function as a pedestrian-dominated space.”

**Design Considerations**  
“The design of the street should consider the operations of special events and/or street closures, so that the space can be readily closed to vehicle traffic and used entirely by pedestrians.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*

FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS															
<div>Proposed Section</div> <table><tr><td>Right-of-Way</td><td>66'</td></tr><tr><td>Typical Curb-to-Curb</td><td>30' — Varies</td></tr><tr><td>Travel Lanes</td><td>Two Lanes — One in each direction</td></tr><tr><td>Median</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Parking</td><td>One side</td></tr><tr><td>Bike Lane</td><td>No</td></tr><tr><td>Trees</td><td>In sidewalk</td></tr></table>	Right-of-Way	66'	Typical Curb-to-Curb	30' — Varies	Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction	Median	No	Parking	One side	Bike Lane	No	Trees	In sidewalk	<div>Notes</div> <div><p><b>Street Configuration</b> Currently closed; redesign as a festival street with the possibility of two-way traffic. Open to traffic as possible.</p><p><b>Traffic Calming &amp; Pedestrian Safety</b> ADA-compatible pavers with curbless design will distinguish N. Burdick as a pedestrian zone.</p><p><b>Activation of Public Realm</b> The buildings on this portion of the street present a challenge to the activation of the public realm. Work with property owners to explore ways to open activities onto the street.</p></div>
Right-of-Way	66'														
Typical Curb-to-Curb	30' — Varies														
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction														
Median	No														
Parking	One side														
Bike Lane	No														
Trees	In sidewalk														

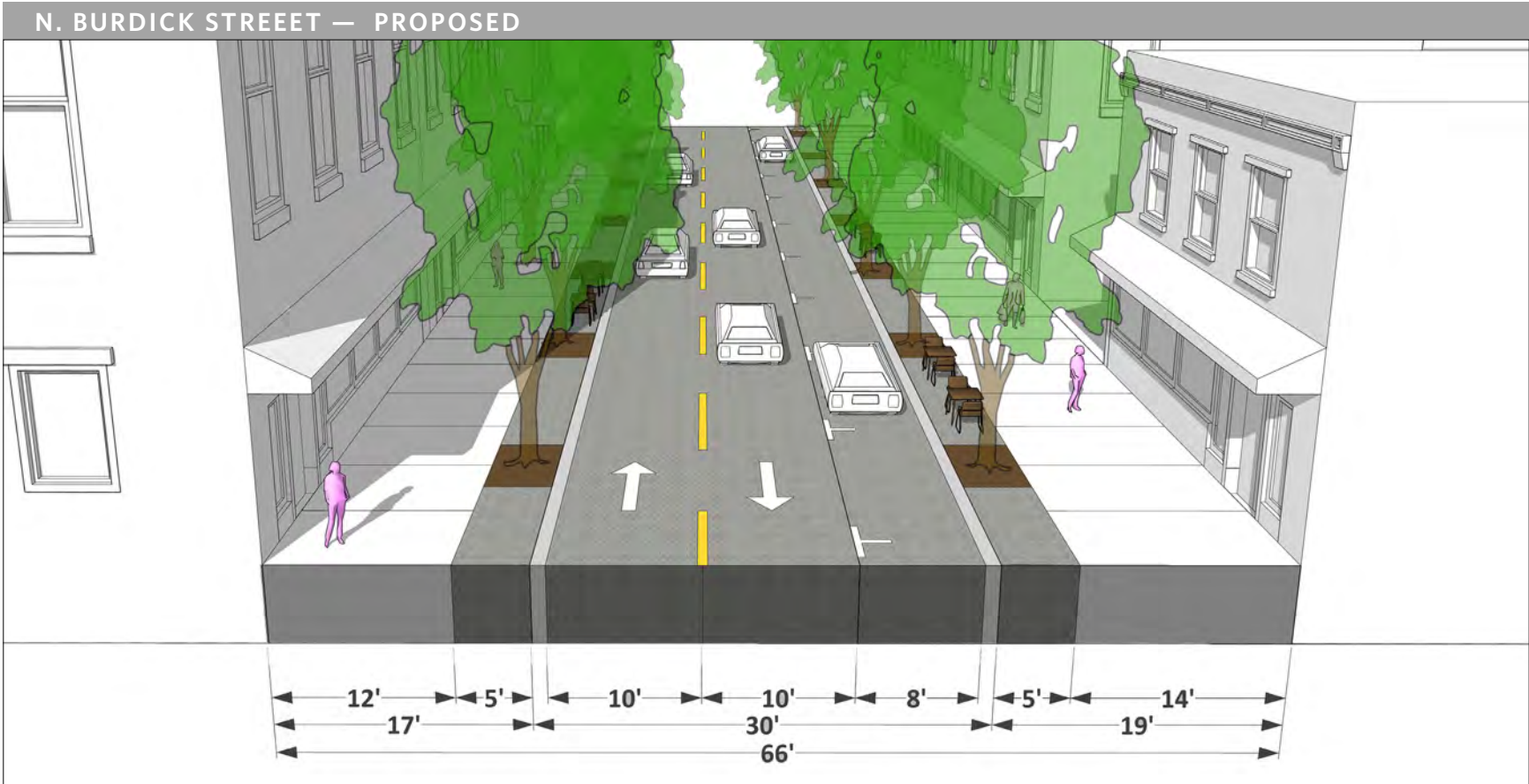
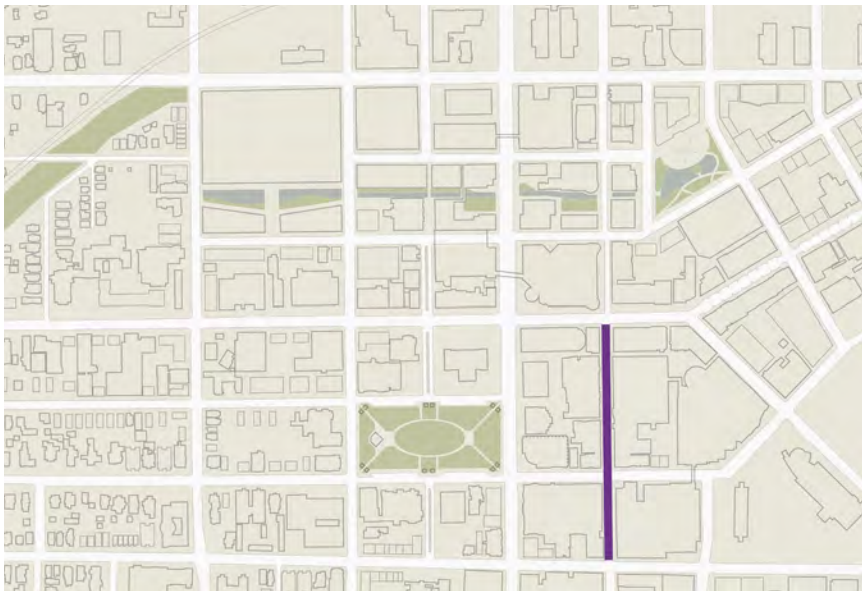


FIGURE 85: N. Burdick Street — Proposed Street Section





S. BURDICK STREET

Burdick Street, also known as the Kalamazoo Mall, is the north-south axis of the commercial core of downtown. S. Burdick Street extends south from Michigan Avenue. This portion of the street, which was the first pedestrian mall in the United States and was once closed to vehicular traffic, has been reopened to one-way traffic flowing south. While aspects of the street do not realize their full potential (i.e., dated paving and urban landscape), successful businesses along this street continue to grow. The proposed section below is not intended for immediate action. Rather, we recommend designing and engineering the new section, then holding on construction to avoid disrupting existing businesses. The pipes and infrastructure under this street are +/-100 years old. When this infrastructure fails, then the city will be prepared with a replacement design that will enhance the public realm.

STREET TYPOLOGY

Event/Festival Street

“Event/Festival Streets are special streets throughout the city that are dominated by pedestrian-centric activity.”

High Priority

“Pedestrians are the priority; the street should be designed to look and function as a pedestrian-dominated space.”

Design Considerations

“The design of the street should consider the operations of special events and/or street closures, so that the space can be readily closed to vehicle traffic and used entirely by pedestrians.”

*Quotes from the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual*



FEATURES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Proposed Section

Right-of-Way	66’
Typical Curb-to-Curb	30’
Travel Lanes	Two Lanes — One in each direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel on west side
Bike Lane	No
Trees	In sidewalk

Notes

Street Configuration

Currently one-way with parking on one side; redesign to be two-way with parking on one side.

Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety

ADA-compatible pavers, with a curb, will distinguish S. Burdick as a pedestrian zone.

Activation of Public Realm

The proposed redesign will create more usable space for outdoor dining and gathering by replacing dated urban landscape elements that currently create barriers and obstacles on sidewalks.

S. BURDICK STREET — PROPOSED



FIGURE 86: S. Burdick Street — Proposed Street Section



## URBAN LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

The transformation of the public realm in downtown Kalamazoo offers opportunities for pedestrians to engage in a greener, more naturalized park environment. Streets will become an integral part of a network linking existing parks and downtown destinations into a seamless landscape framework. Successful urban landscape is considered on four layers: the overall citywide strategy (outlined below), street level design, tree specification, and planting details.

*Urban landscaping is one of the strongest ways to make connections through a city.* Tree-lined streets provide shade, create corridors of movement, and reinforce parks to provide protected places to gather. Safe streets are enabled by, and enable, a comprehensive landscaping approach. *On a broad scale, the proposed design interventions identify a network of moments that will draw activity through the entire city, while also providing concrete suggestions for engaging the public realm at specific locations.*

### Citywide Landscape Urbanism Strategy

Critical components of a citywide landscape urbanism strategy align with the overall urban sequences prioritized throughout this report. These include:

- **Greening of the Core** — Softening hard edges and adding nature to the central core of downtown Kalamazoo. Bringing nature to the city.
- **Streets as Parks** — Providing enhanced mobility and livability by the application of landscape techniques to create a green network of connectivity. Streets as linear gardens.
- **Enhancing the Parks** — Enhancing programming and activation and create a network of parks that are complimentary, flexible, and more sustainable.
- **Placemaking** — Formalizing the unique pedestrian network of alleys, internal connections, and public spaces as a destination itself. Defining this network in a new way that reflects Kalamazoo’s culture and history, but more importantly, its future as contemporary city that celebrates a new social, experiential, and equitable dynamic. Utilize integrated art and programming to create a unique ambiance.

### Citywide Landscape Urbanism Strategy

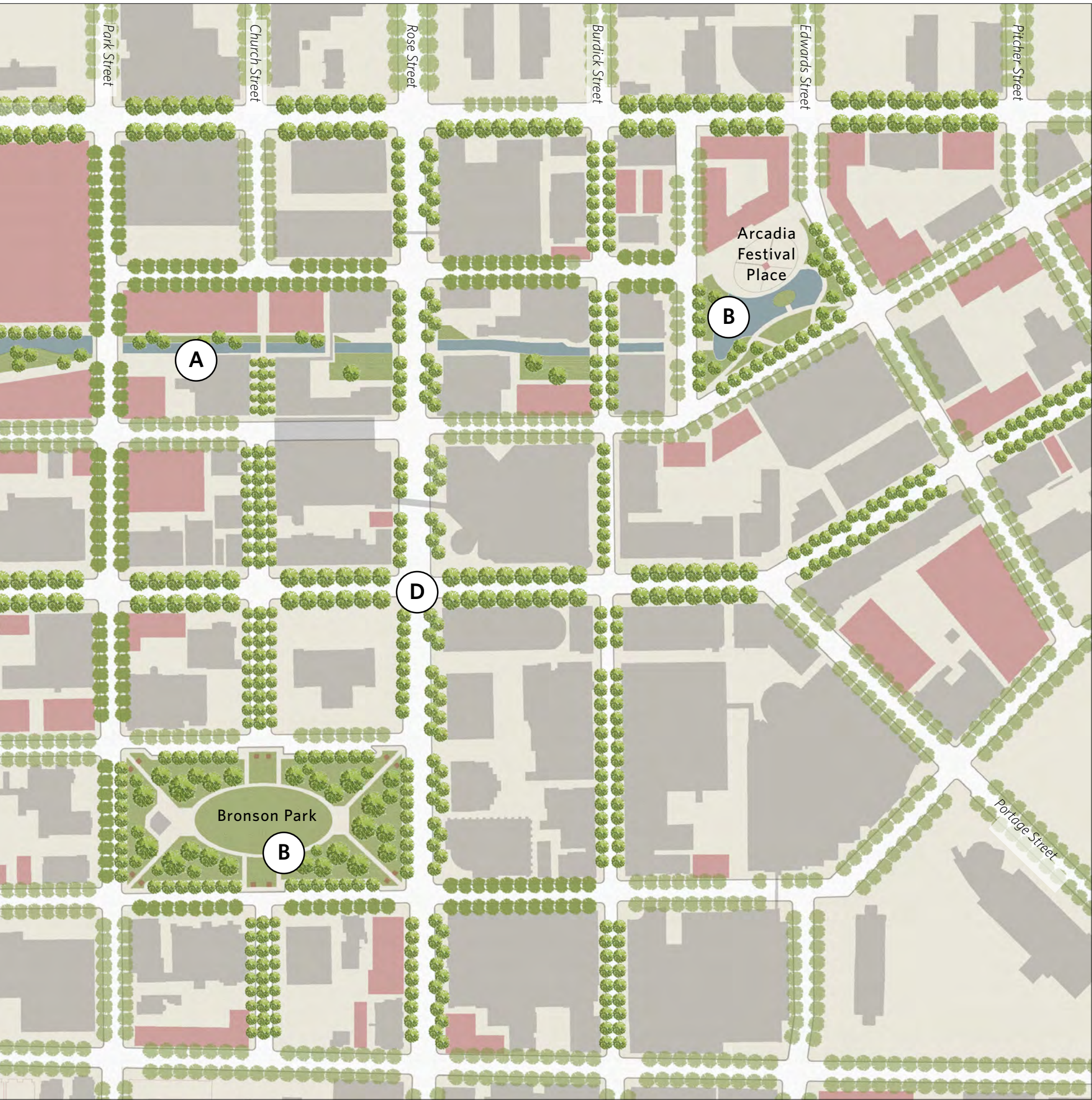
- A Redefining the Core**  
Arcadia Creek Park can be transformed as Kalamazoo’s Central Greenway (pages 42–43) by softening the hard edges of the engineered creek bed and opening access and visibility to water. Using terraced amphitheater steps and green slopes will establish the creek as a unique destination, promote a healthier quality of life, and catalyze economic development and investment. The greening of this corridor will also allow for planted meadows, gardens, and trees that create beauty and an enhanced ecosystem.
- B Renewed Parks**  
Kalamazoo has a wonderful system of downtown parks and green spaces that are well used and historically significant, including Bronson Park and Arcadia Festival Place. Bronson Park (pages 48–49) is iconic with its civic legacy and stunning tree canopy. Activating the edges and creating a central green will allow for more diverse uses and enhance it as a family destination. Arcadia Festival Place (46–47) has great bones but needs well defined edges and a focus on flexible, multipurpose spaces to enhance daily use, which is the single most important role of great parks — creating a welcoming environment for all.
- C New Park**  
Consider creating a neighborhood park in the southwest corner of downtown to attract future residents with children.
- D Enhanced Connectivity**  
Create a public realm with a distinctive landscape vocabulary for streets and public access ways that improve mobility, create vibrancy, enhance economic development, and foster a more social, livable, and resilient environment. The proposed streetscape standards will provide continuous shade, public gardens, storm-water catchment, and curbside parklets, all of which will enrich the public realm of downtown Kalamazoo.



FIGURE 87: Landscape Strategy Diagram  
Diagram of downtown Kalamazoo, highlighting the urban landscape.







LAYER 2

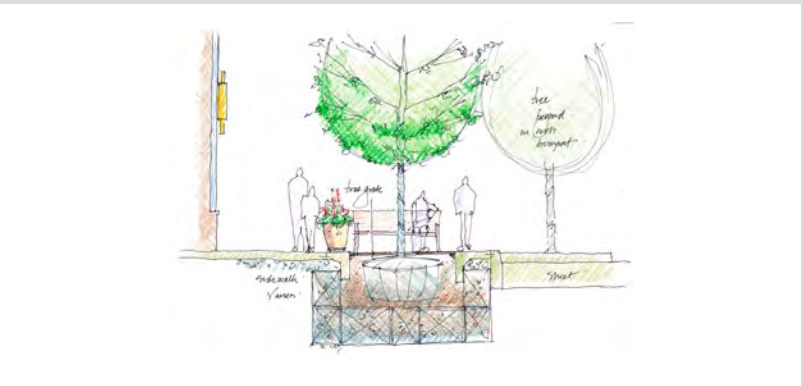
TREE SPECIFICATIONS



The tree canopy provides the sense of enclosure that fully activates the public realm. Specifications are calibrated by several considerations, including existing conditions and street typology. See pages 70-73.

LAYER 3

HARDSCAPE & PLANTING DETAILS



Longevity of the tree depends on care and consideration for many factors, especially the ability of the root structure to connect into a continuous root zone below grade. See pages 74-77.



STREET TREE SPECIFICATIONS

The presence of nature in the city provides rich psychological and practical benefits. Street trees contribute to the quality of the public realm by moderating the heat island effect produced by streets; they encourage walkability on urban sidewalks and produce a landscape continuity from the edge of street to the front yards of houses and other buildings. The form of each street is characterized by its own unique streetscape. The shape and particular horticultural characteristics of trees are the key ingredient in differentiating the form of one streetscape from another. Street trees are chosen and planted in patterns that provide streets with a unique identity and a sense of composed ensemble. The correct planting of trees and their relationship to the hardscape around them is a major factor in ensuring that street trees thrive over time.

Tree Canopy

Enhancing the tree canopy is vital to creating healthy cities and promoting wellness. Streets with a uniform tree canopy provide shade, now one of the most important elements in current urban landscape typologies and habitat.

The aim of urban trees is to provide a continuous high canopy and, when the street has been successfully narrowed, to provide an arch of branches across the asphalt. This park layer gives the look of a prosperous and beautiful neighborhood in its varied seasonal dress, a demonstration of care that brings in families and children to the society of the sidewalks. Tall, canopied trees mitigate summer heat at a time of increased warming and moderate glare and gusts in winter. A canopy also provides year-round privacy for upper stories, as even bare branches provide psychological space.

This vertical landscape “meets” the vertical building and requires only a small horizontal landscape. But this part is vital if the investment is to produce the desired result. To achieve this result and avoid losing the tree investment within a generation, it is important to modify current practices, especially when it comes to providing a deeply ditched and amended planting strip. The life and health of a tree is in its roots — and so is its death or stunting.

Planting Palette

The planting palettes include specifications for canopy trees, understory trees, and ground plane plantings. Large canopy trees, coupled with understory trees, provide habitats at different levels, adding diversity to urban ecosystems.

To achieve the important objective of a mature canopy of street trees in downtown Kalamazoo, the urban trees list must be tested and further developed by field checking successful mature group survival in the streets of the climactic region. Field observation must supersede all other sources of information. Concentrate on floodplain trees that grow as “single stands” or in ecological communities so that roots may graft, lending support and developing defenses as a single unit. Interspersing different species leads to unit defenselessness. This can be observed in local planning strips where only congruent clusters prosper.

Be aware of the limitations of the literature. Even if it is reliable, it may not be accurate in its calibration of urban conditions or for distinguishing secondary scourges in the continuing siege of the American biome by the Eurasian one.

RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

R

**Prioritize Saving Existing Trees**

*As much as possible while planning for and implementing the Complete Streets redevelopment projects, preserve and protect existing street trees.*

R

**Aim for One Tree Type Per Street**

*Specify only one tree type per street to strengthen the tree network. When interspersing new trees with existing trees, use a Thornless Honeylocust as infill.*

R

**Use Different Tree Species Throughout the City**

*On streets without existing trees, vary the specification from street to street — not within the street — to add biodiversity to the overall network.*

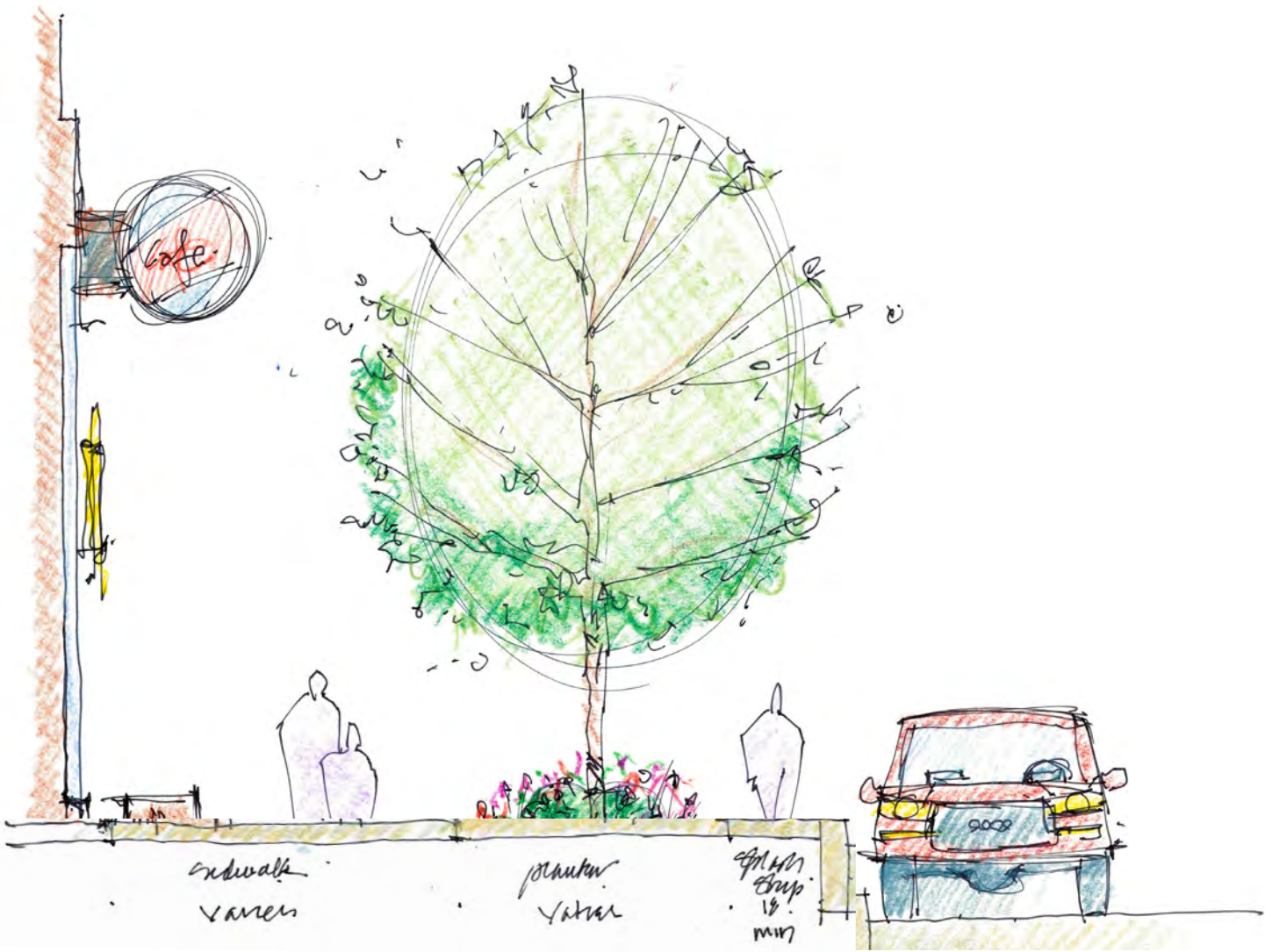


Figure 88: Street Tree in Context

Street trees and urban landscape soften and frame the pedestrian experience. The selection of a tree palette and specification of planting details will determine the success of this critical layer of the public realm.



			
<p>Bald Cypress (<i>Taxodium distichum</i>)</p>	<p>London Plane Tree (<i>Platanus x acerifolia</i>)</p>	<p>Sycamore — American Plane Tree (<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>; not London or hybrids) W. Michigan Avenue — white bark</p>	<p>Tulip Tree (<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>)</p>
			
<p>Ginkgo Biloba (‘Princeton Sentry’ Ginkgo)</p>	<p>Green Ash ‘Patmore’ (<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>)</p>	<p>Norway Maple (<i>Acer platanoides</i> — species) Church Street</p>	<p>Resistant American Elm (<i>Ulmus americana</i>)</p>
			
<p>Thornless Honeylocust (<i>Gleditsia triacanthis inermis</i>) Typical Infill Tree</p>	<p>Black Tupelo (<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>)</p>	<p>Japanese Elm (<i>Ulmus japonica</i> ‘Accolade’)</p>	<p>Red Maple (<i>Acer rubrum</i> ‘Red Sunset’ or ‘October Glory’)</p>
			
<p>Autumn Blaze Maple (<i>Acer x ‘freemanii’</i>)</p>	<p>Sweetgum (<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>)</p>	<p>Upright Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i> ‘Fastigiata’)</p>	<p>Tree of Heaven (<i>Ailanthus altissima</i> — male only) Kalamazoo Avenue</p>

TABLE 1: Street Tree Palette Images  
Typical images of an urban street tree palette. See pages 72 and 73 for locations and specifications.



TABLE 2: Street Tree Types for Wide Canopy/Allee — Avenues

Street Tree Type	Scientific Name	Notes	Location
Bald Cypress	Taxodium distichum	Distinctive aesthetic	Option for wide typical streets
London Plane Tree	Platanus x acerifolia	Wide planting strip; 45'-60' o.c.	Option for wide typical streets
Sycamore — American Plane Tree	Platanus occidentalis (not London or hybrids)	Wide planting strip; 30'-44' o.c. (T5)	W. Michigan Avenue — Select for white bark
Tulip Tree	Liriodendron tulipifera	Deep planting strip	Option for wide typical streets

- For use Urban Edge and Downtown zones
- Planting hole with root network required
- Shared space, cobble over uncompacted mixed backfill between trees — ideal condition

TABLE 3: Tree Types for Typical Street Tree Canopy/Allee — Streets

Street Tree Type	Scientific Name	Notes	Location
Ginkgo Biloba	'Princeton Sentry' Ginkgo	T6	Option for typical streets
Green Ash 'Patmore'	Fraxinus pennsylvanica	Allee; 24'-36' o.c. (T4)	Option for typical streets
Norway Maple	Acer platanoides (species)	Allee; 20'-40' o.c.	Church Street
Resistant American Elm	Ulmus americana	Medium-wide planting; 36'-45' o.c.	Option for typical streets
Thornless Honeylocust	Gleditsia triacanthos inermis	Allee; 30'-40' o.c. Do not substitute with a London Plane Tree	Primary infill tree on E. Michigan Avenue; Rose Street; Burdick Street; and Academy Street and South Street at Bronson Park.

- For use in Downtown and Neighborhood Edge zones
- Planting hole with root network required
- Shared space, cobble over uncompacted mixed backfill between trees — ideal condition

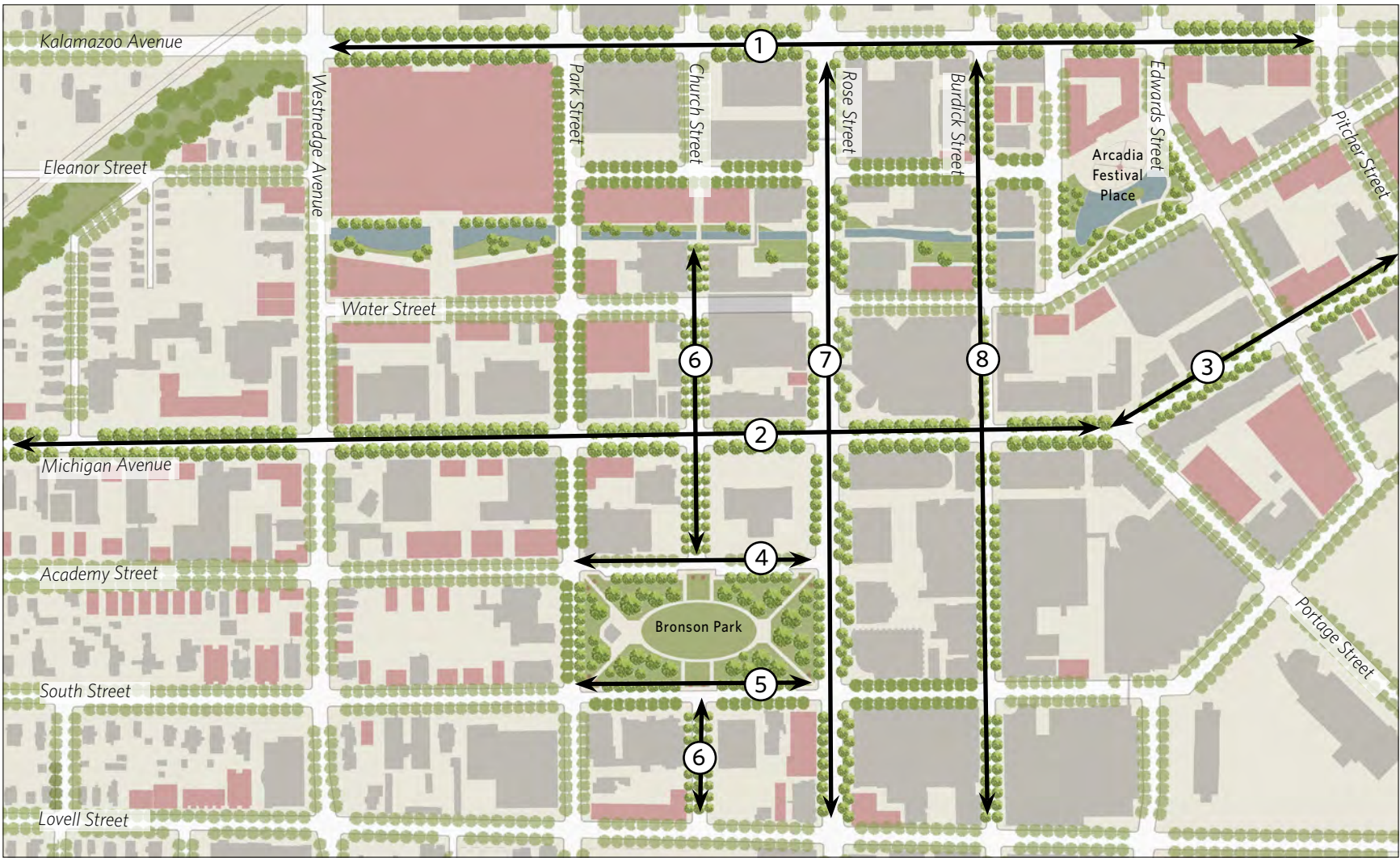


FIGURE 89: Plan of Downtown Kalamazoo with Street Types  
Diagram showing street type specifications for primary streets.

KEY

1. Kalamazoo Avenue — Tree of Heaven

2. W. Michigan Avenue — Sycamore — American Plane Tree — Select for white bark

3. E. Michigan Avenue — Infill with Thornless Honeylocust

4. Academy Street at Bronson Park — Thornless Honeylocust — Infill on opposite side of park only
5. South Street at Bronson Park — Thornless Honeylocust — Infill on opposite side of park only

6. Church Street — Norway Maple

7. Rose Street — Thornless Honeylocust — Infill

8. Burdick Street — Thornless Honeylocust — Infill

9. Typical Streets — Thornless Honeylocust or select from chart



TABLE 4: Street Tree Types for Small Tree Canopy — Infill, Alleys, and Small Streets

Street Tree Type	Scientific Name	Notes	Location
Black Tupelo	Nyssa sylvatica	Alley; 20’-40’ o.c. (until mature)	Option for typical streets/alley
Japanese Elm	Ulmus japonica ‘Accolade’	Small street	Option for typical streets/alley
Kentucky Coffeetree	Gymnocladus dioicus	Alley or infill	Option for typical streets/alley
Red Maple	Acer rubrum ‘Red Sunset’ or ‘October Glory’	Park, narrow street; preferred infill tree	Option for typical streets/alley
Sweetgum	Liquidambar styraciflua	Tough tree; use on narrow urban side-walks with tree grates, female seedless	Option for typical streets/alley
Upright Oak	Quercus robur ‘Fastigiata’	Use with narrow urban sidewalks	Option for typical streets/alley

- For use in Downtown and Neighborhood Edge zones
- Planting hole with root network required
- Shared space cobble over uncompacted mixed backfill between trees — ideal condition

TABLE 5: Street Tree Types for Isolated Planting Holes

Street Tree Type	Scientific Name	Notes	
Seedless Sweetgum	Liquidambar styraciflua ‘Rotundifolia’	Planting Hole; 24’ o.c.	Option for typical streets
Tree of Heaven	Ailanthus altissima (male only)	Planting Hole; 45’-56’ o.c. (only T6)	Kalamazoo Avenue

- For use when root network is not possible, and the only option is to use an isolated planting hole.

TABLE 6: Street Tree Types for Neighborhood Streets

Street Tree Type	Scientific Name	Notes
Autumn Blaze Maple	Acer x freemanii	Allee; Park 30’-40’ o.c.
Northern Red Oak	Quercus rubra	36’-45’ o.c. (T3)

- For use in Neighborhood Edge and Neighborhood zones, not for use in urban conditions
- Planting hole with root network required
- Wide grass planting strip between trees, not hardscape

TABLE 7: Tree Types for Parks

Street Tree Type	Scientific Name	Notes
Locust	Robinia pseudoacacia	No cultivars except rare
Eastern Redbud	Cercis canadensis	
Heritage Birch	Betula nigra	
Ivory Silk Tree Lilac (ornamental)		
Autumn Blaze Maple	Acer x freemanii	Allee; Park 30’-40’ o.c; Wide grass planting strip

Ground Planting Palette for Parks

Groundcovers, Grasses, and Perennials — Park

- Liriope (ornamental)
- Purpleleaf Wintercreeper (ornamental)
- St. John’s Wort Varieties (ornamental)
- Aster
- Blue Star
- Catnip
- Coneflower
- Black-eyed Susan
- Iris
- Karl Foerster Reed Grass (ornamental)
- Dwarf Fountain Grass (ornamental)

- Little Bluestem
- Prairie Dropseed
- Little Spire Russian Sage

Shrubs for Structure and Year-Round Aesthetic — Park

- Viburnum
- Ilex Varieties
- Itea Varieties
- Rock Cotoneaster
- Lo-Hugger American Cranberry
- Gro-low Sumac



## HARDSCAPE & PLANTING DETAILS

The lifespan and health of a street tree will depend on how it is planted. Beware that conventional practices very often will stunt the growth and limit the longevity of a tree. Investing in best practices up front, while carrying a higher initial expense, will pay dividends in the long run by minimizing the need to frequently replace dead trees as well as in the contribution to the public realm made by a large mature tree canopy. Longevity of the tree depends on care and consideration for many factors, especially the ability of the root structure to connect into a continuous root zone below grade.

### Planting Ditches

Tree balls should be subsurface, as they always have been. Perched root balls on top of compacted or badly drained planting strips often fail after the first year. In this regard, do not accept any tree with a root ball that was not root pruned before one growing season and that has not been kept continuously humid during transport. These details should be added to the standard contract. A lot can go wrong.

Planting preparations must be modified to ensure root grafting by ditching all new and compacted planning strips three feet deep and replacing the backfill with a mixture of one-third coarse sand (not mason’s sand) at the bottom, shading to one-third fully composted organic material or topsoil toward the top. Backfill and amendment must be well mixed. The use of any form of peat or black swamp soil would be disastrous, as it would rob the planting ditch of nitrogen after the first year. Mixing with genuine topsoil is acceptable. Remember to inoculate the mix with commercial fungi additives or merely by adding local well-rotted leaves from a healthy natural tree stand.

Relatively uncompacted pre-existing planting strips (or sections thereof) may only require surface de-compaction. Use the same mix of sand and compost in the hand or rototill. Grass seed (or other short ground cover in grated planting holes) is always necessary to avoid surface hydrological impermeability.

In all cases, the volume directly underneath the planted root ball should be either the original soil or well compacted so as to support the tree.

These practices redirect investment into the preparation of the soil with a care that matches other investments in the hardscape. But beware of default settings. To a surpassing extent, practices and decisions in the landscape industry are driven by short-term financial considerations.

### Hardscape and Roots

Using the same mix of coarse sand and full compost under sidewalks adjacent to planting holes is an inexpensive way to connect roots to setbacks and dooryards. This tactic explains the happy existence of large trees in old towns. Compact the sand and compost under the brick, cobble, or sidewalk pores, as it will take years for the roots to replace the organic matter.

Adjacent sidewalks should be fiberglass-reinforced with wire mesh and rebar held two-thirds of the way up during the pour, a position aimed at flexibly containing root pressure from below. Inexpensive wholesale industrial filter cloth can be used to line the planting strip or serve as the base for the concrete pour and cobbled or bricked planting strips. Using these materials is the low-tech way to achieve the same root constraint that much more expensive materials achieve, but it requires crews that are experienced in judgment. It’s possible to use the same technique to connect grated tree planting holes, but this requires special coordination to allow oxygenation and water; trees in Paris are planted with simple air tubes and traditionally have deliberate drip leaks provided for them behind the curb.

### Root Zone Soils

Expanded Root Zone Soils allow street trees to reach a mature size. The recommended detail here is to provide continuous root zone soils linking individual tree plantings. Use of new technologies such as silva cells or similar products to gain additional root zone soil volume as will provide proper aeration and moisture to maximize tree growth.

### Stormwater

In areas where water collection and flooding occur, stormwater tree planters can be used to collect and cleanse stormwater from streets and sidewalks. Using this technique, 40 percent — and in some cases 100 percent — of runoff can be captured using this streetscape typology. Porous pavers can also be added to sidewalks and parking lanes to further capture stormwater.

### Planting Techniques

Two types of details can be used for street tree plantings:

***Flush Tree Planting Islands:*** Using tree grates or ground plane plantings. The use of tree grates should be limited to intensely used streets. If tree grates are not used, ground plane plantings can be protected with low fencing or careful placement of street furnishings.

***Curb Planters:*** Providing a landscape curb around street tree planting zones helps control foot traffic and protect ground plane plantings, thereby reducing root zone compaction. When this technique is used, the edge along the street curb should allow for a minimum 18” paved splash strip that provides pedestrian access and protects the plantings from salt spray during the winter months. This technique has been proven to enhance tree growth and survivability.

For each type of planting, the above-mentioned enhanced root zone soils zone methods will improve the survivability and growth of the trees so that they will reach a maturity that provides enough canopy to reduce the urban heat zones.

### Splash Strips

Salt spray from parking cars will damage a tree. Install a splash strip, 18” minimum, between the edge of the tree opening and the curb. This protects the tree from salt and it will provide a solid surface for people to stand while entering and existing parked cars.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

R

#### Tree Roots Must Connect for the Tree to Mature

*The root structure of the tree must connect into an interwoven network in order for the trees to survive until maturity.*

R

#### Soil Cells Allow Roots to Connect Below Ground

*Soil cells allow tree roots to connect between trees. Verify the warranty before purchasing.*

R

#### Lower-Cost Alternatives to Soil Cells

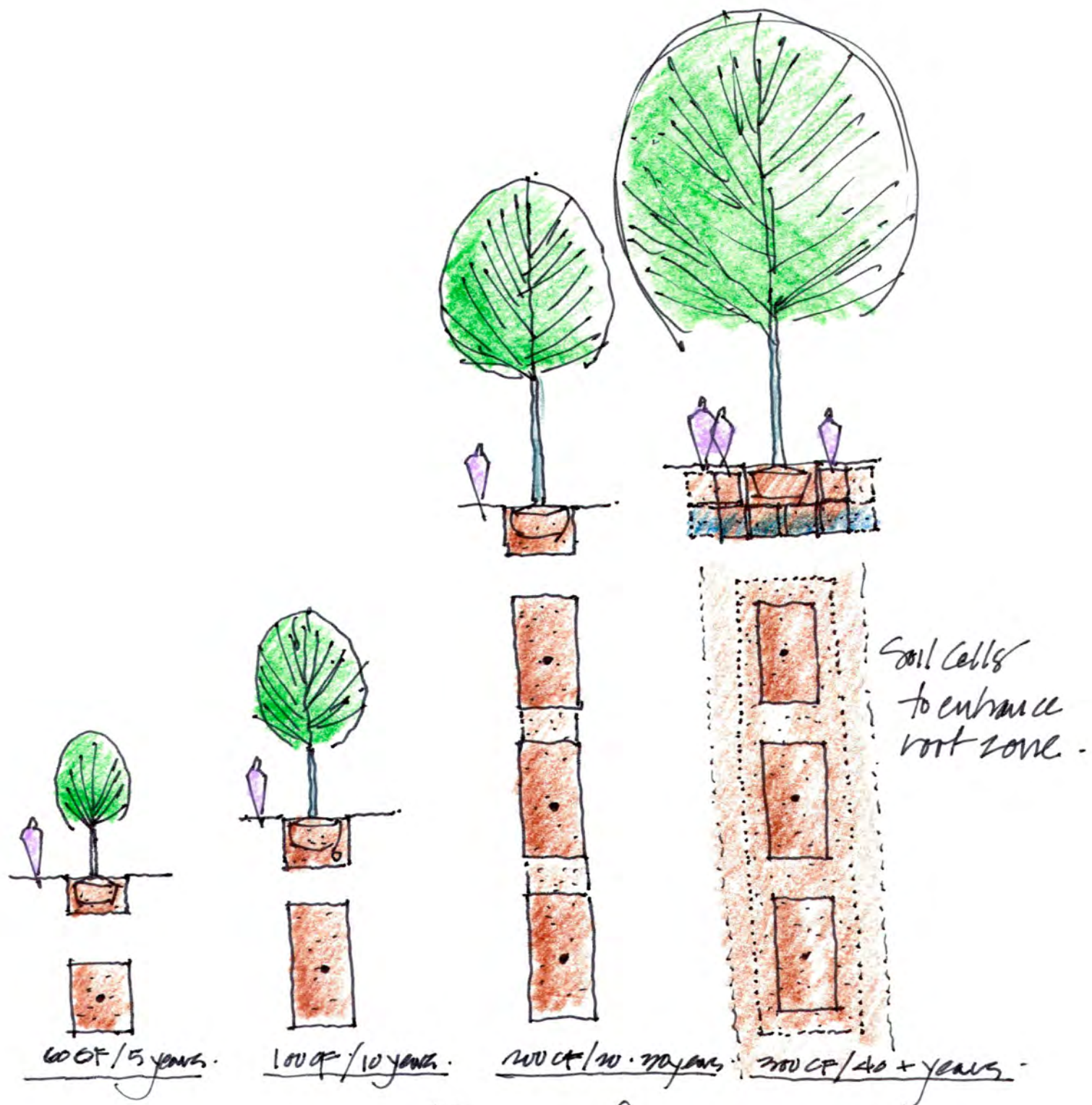
*Soil cells may be cost prohibitive to use in all cases. A lower-cost alternative strategy is to dig a continuous ditch between trees and edge with industrial filter cloth. Backfill with a mix of fully composted compost and coarse sand. Bridge between the trees with a 5” structural sidewalk with rebar and mesh set high, not low, over uncompacted compost combination.*

R

#### Protect Streets from Salt with an 18” Splash Strip

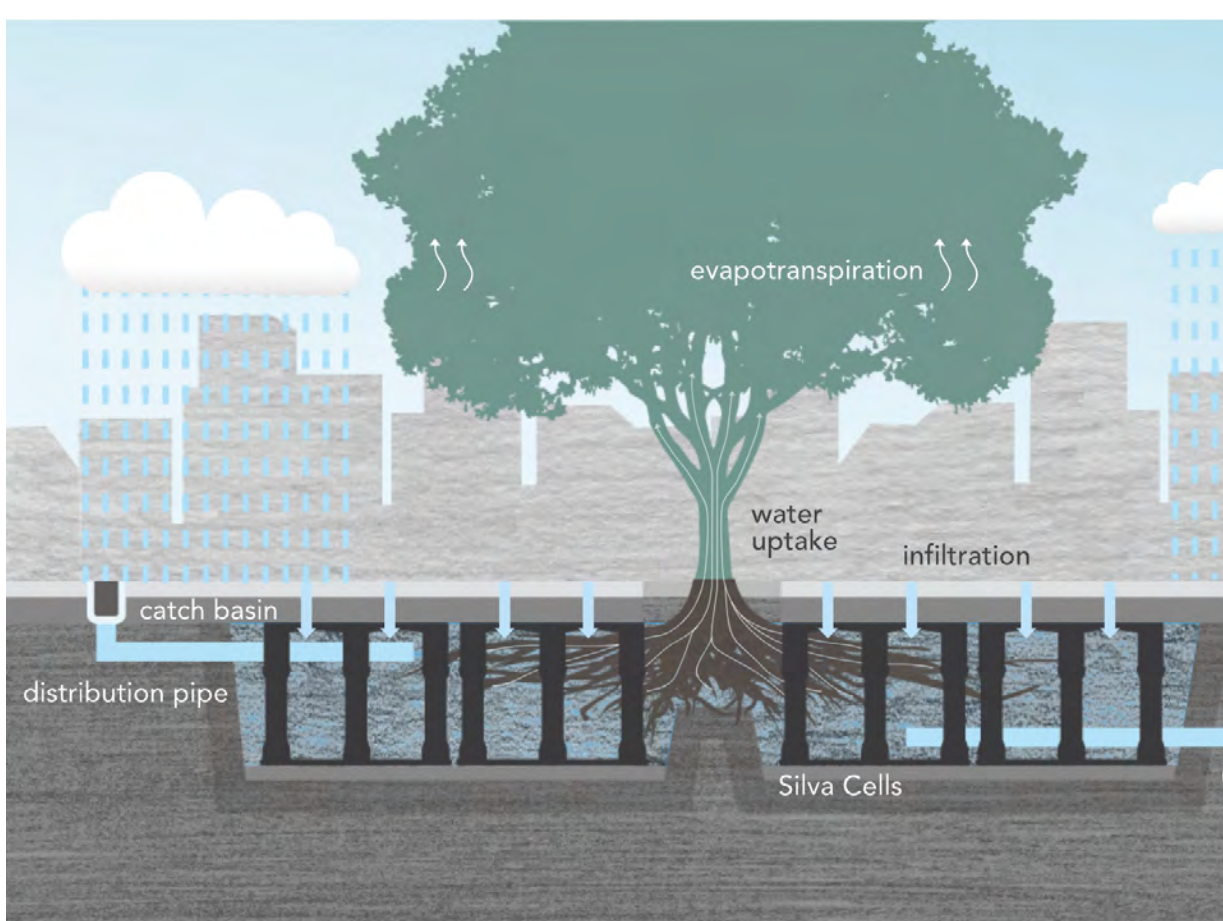
*Install a splash strip, minimum of 18”, between the tree well and curb to protect the street from salt spray as cars park, as well as to provide a place to stand as people enter and exit their cars.*





**FIGURE 90: Tree Longevity Related to Root Structure**

Trees planted in isolated tree holes will have stunted growth and a short life. Larger ditches and greater connectivity between tree roots will result in the highest return on investment in terms of lifespan, size at maturity, and contribution to the public realm.



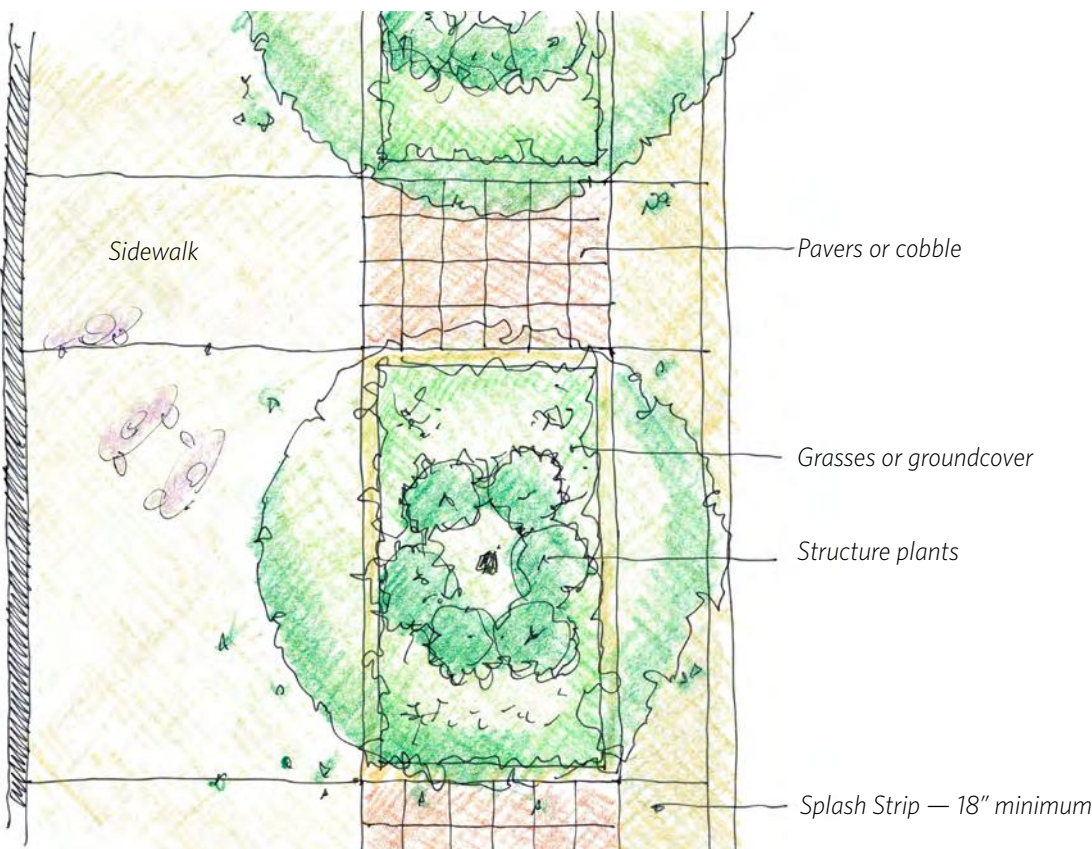
**FIGURE 91: Soil Cell Examples — Tree Root Structure**

Soil cells hold back the earth and allow the tree root structure to connect into an interwoven network that supports larger tree growth and contributes to the city's stormwater management system. Images courtesy of DeepRoot Silva Cell.



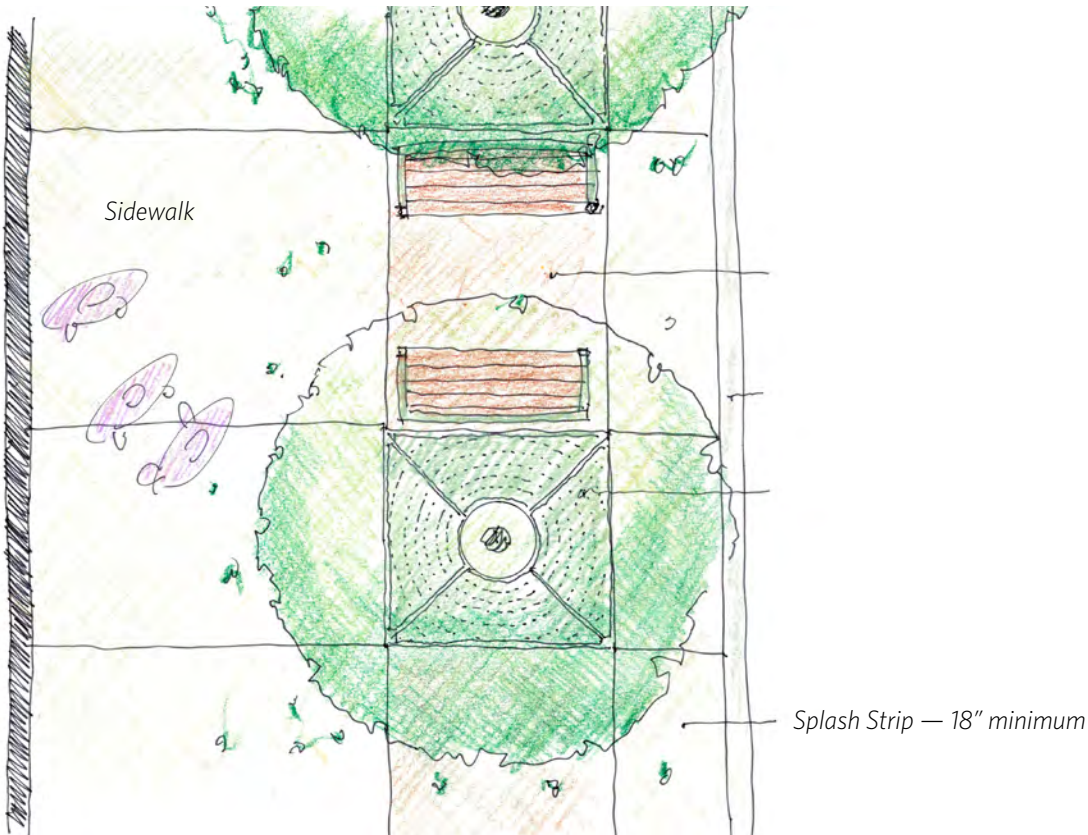
**FIGURE 92: Street Tree Planting Details with Structural Sidewalk — Plan**

Plan view with structural sidewalk allowing root zone. Note the tree wells are set 18" away from the curb to protect from salt spray and provide a place to stand when entering and exiting parked cars. Sidewalk material changes between trees. Trees are surrounded by plantings and ground coverings.



**Figure 93: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells — Plan**

Soil cells facilitate root structures between trees. In urban conditions, pair with tree grates. Continue to set tree wells back 18" from curb to protect them from salt spray. Use benches and urban landscape features to enhance engagement with the public realm.

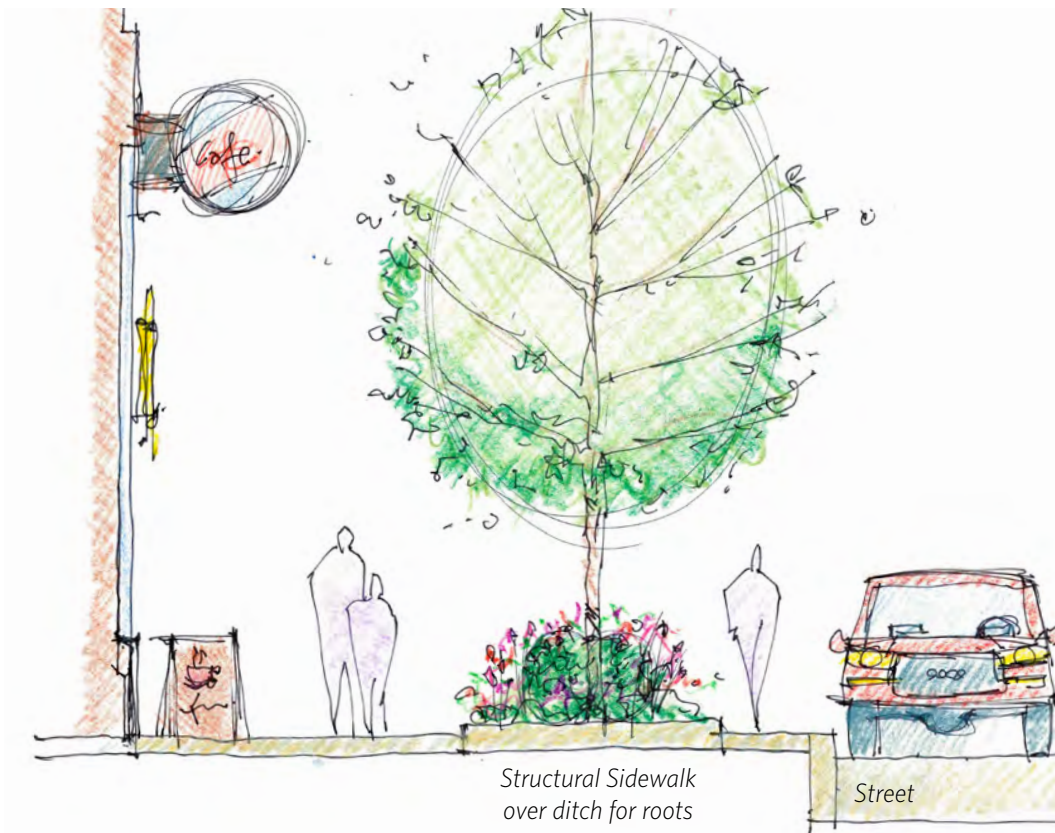


**FIGURE 94: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells & Bump Outs — Plan**

Bump outs into the street provide additional sidewalk area for outdoor dining and seating. The example illustrates the bump out paired with a soil cell system. Tree wells remain set back 18" from the street to protect from salt spray. In this example, ground cover is shown covering the tree well area. Tree grates are typically reserved for the most urban conditions, due to cost. Ground cover, as show, is used in all other areas.

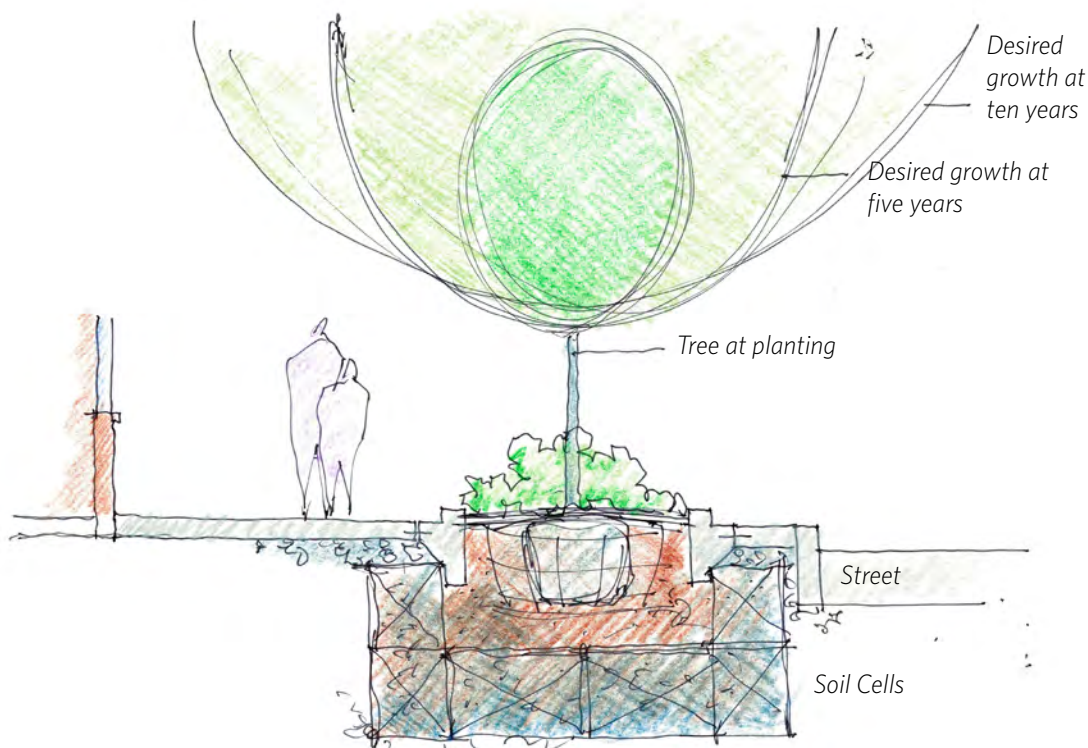






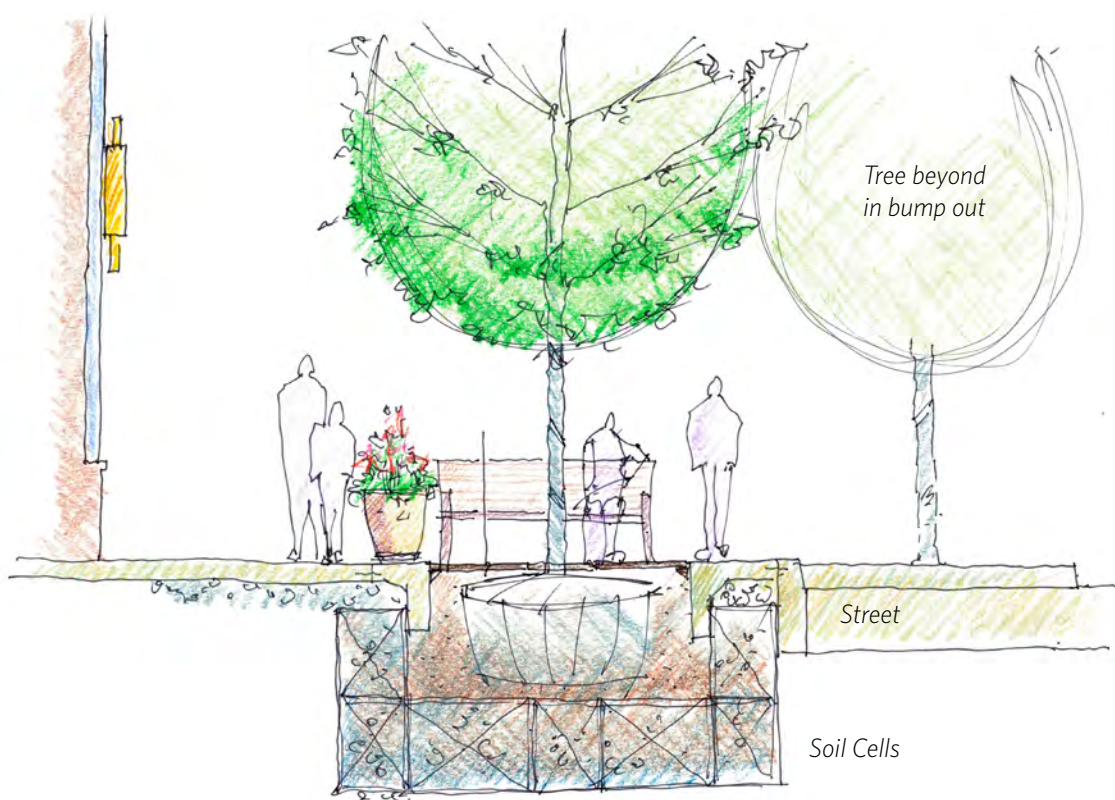
**FIGURE 95: Street Tree Planting Details with Structural Sidewalk — Section**

Section view with structural sidewalk allowing root zone. Dig a continuous ditch between trees and edge with industrial filter cloth. Backfill with a mix of fully composted compost and coarse sand. Bridge between the trees with a 5" structural sidewalk with rebar and mesh set high, not low, over uncompacted compost combination.



**FIGURE 96: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells — Section**

Soil cells protect the root structure as it grows and allows a root system to become intertwined between adjacent trees; see pages 74–75 for more details. The size of the root ball will depend on the species and maturity of the tree. The potential for growth over time will depend on how the tree is planted. This image shows a progression of healthy growth by maturity.



**FIGURE 97: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells & Bump Outs — Section**

Create the largest tree well possible within budget considerations and available sidewalk depth to give the tree the longest lifespan. This illustration also shows tree bump outs that extend into the street between on-street parking. Tree bump outs can be paired with multiple forms of tree planting details.



## IMPLEMENTATION & NEXT STEPS

*The next frontier of great American urbanism will be found in midsize cities throughout the Midwest. As the cost of living continues to rise in larger coastal areas, midwestern cities near fresh water that offer a high-quality public realm will become increasingly attractive to new residents. This migration will accelerate as remote work options transform the workforce.*

Kalamazoo, Michigan, is perfectly positioned to be at the forefront of this movement. Kalamazoo, once a place of industry, is emerging as a city of opportunity. The bones of a great place survived the demolition from Urban Renewal of the 1960s and the subsequent decades of disinvestment. This foundation, combined with enormous public support for change,

the political will of elected officials to act, a highly skilled city staff ready to implement, and available funding, position the city for success. The first step in this process is well underway through the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 initiative. This report builds on those efforts. The goal of this study is to help repair the street-level pedestrian experience while reconnecting a series of places of throughout the downtown. Our Key Findings, outlined on pages 12–13, identified four primary challenges:

- **Unsafe streets** impair retail and economic development;
- **A weak public realm** diminishes downtown activity;
- **Unfocused development** challenges retail;
- **A lack of overall connectivity** between attractions isolates downtown activities.

TABLE 8: Immediate Actions

Action #	Description	Cost Range	Impact Timeline	Action Category	Page
1	Revise zoning ordinance to protect historic fabric buildings (adjust color scheme).	\$	Immediate	Regulatory Framework	16–21
2	Create a Demolition Delay Ordinance and Conservation District to protect historic fabric buildings.	\$	Immediate	Regulatory Framework	28
3	Commission Storefront & Fabric Building Design Manual.	\$	Immediate	Regulatory Framework	26
4	Continue to incentivize facade improvement grants.	\$\$	Immediate	Incentive/Catalyst	26
5	Create incentive program for investment at the commercial core of the city.	\$\$	Short-Term	Incentive/Catalyst	24
6	Design/engineer new festival street and urban landscape for N. Burdick Street.	\$	Immediate	Design/Engineering	34 & 66
7	Design/engineer new paving and urban landscape for alley system.	\$\$	Mid-Term	Design/Engineering	40
8	Continue to design/engineer conversion of Kalamazoo Avenue and Michigan Avenue from one-way to two-way traffic.	\$\$\$	Short-Term	Design/Engineering	59–61
9	Design/engineer Arcadia Creek activation and Arcadia Festival Place redesign.	\$\$\$	Mid- to Long-Term	Design/Engineering	42–47
10	Design/engineer new street section and urban landscape for Eleanor Street and N. Edwards Street at Arcadia Festival Place.	\$	Immediate	Design/Engineering	63 & 65
11	Engage public participation for tactical urbanism concepts.	\$	Immediate	Tactical Intervention	50–51
12	Install pop-up kiosks in Bronson Park; Install lights over alley system; Paint crosswalks at Michigan Avenue.	\$	Immediate	Tactical Intervention	50–51



FIGURE 98: Diagram of Immediate Actions



To address these challenges, we analyzed downtown in four layers: Regulatory Framework, which defines the form and scale of buildings; Catalytic Development, which proposes design interventions; Complete Streets, which addresses width and configuration of lanes and sidewalks; and Urban Landscape, which details tree specifications. Each layer is interwoven with the others; together, they establish a holistic vision.

The proposals and findings presented in this report can be adopted individually, in any combination, or as a whole. The ideas are presented not as fully developed proposals, but rather as an introduction to the issues with highlighted key findings and recommended next steps. Additional study and professional engagement will be necessary to fully realize these

concepts. Of the actions proposed in this report, the most critical is the preservation of the historic mixed-use fabric buildings on Michigan Avenue and Burdick Street. Downtown Kalamazoo’s regeneration depends on the richness these buildings contribute to the public realm.

The scope of this study is limited geographically to downtown, and specifically to the area within the public right-of-way. To fully realize the potential of downtown Kalamazoo, we recommend two additional layers of exploration. The first layer is a study of how downtown connects to it is surrounding residential neighborhoods, starting with the Northside Neighborhood directly north of downtown. This will require proposing a vision for bridging “the moat” currently created by Kalamazoo Avenue

TABLE 9: Short-Term Actions

Action #	Description	Cost Range	Impact Timeline	Action Category	Page
13	Link existing facade improvement grant program to the Storefront Design Manual.	\$	Immediate	Incentive/Catalyst	24
14	Incentivize preserving and reskinning fabric buildings on Burdick Street & Michigan Avenue.	\$\$	Immediate	Incentive/Catalyst	30
15	Add local historic preservation protection for high quality fabric buildings.	\$	Immediate	Regulatory Framework	28
16	Incentivize activation of blank walls in alleys with property owners.	\$\$	Immediate	Incentive/Catalyst	41
17	Implement new festival street at N. Burdick Street.	\$\$	Short-Term	Implementing	34
18	Implement new paving and urban landscape in alley system.	\$\$\$	Immediate	Implementing	40
19	Design/engineer new street section and urban landscape for S. Burdick. Hold design. Do not implement until needed.	\$\$	Long-Term	Design/Engineering	34 & 67
20	Continue planning efforts and study the connection of downtown to surrounding neighborhoods, starting with the Northside neighborhood.	\$	Mid- to Long-Term	Vision/Planning	79
21	Commission a redevelopment site/vacant land activation plan and housing type study.	\$	Immediate	Vision/Planning	80
22	Implement tactical concepts from public events.	\$	Immediate	Tactical Intervention	50
23	Hire a team of muralists to activate blank walls.	\$	Immediate	Tactical Intervention	50
24	Document tactical interventions with Art Walks.	\$	Immediate	Tactical Intervention	51

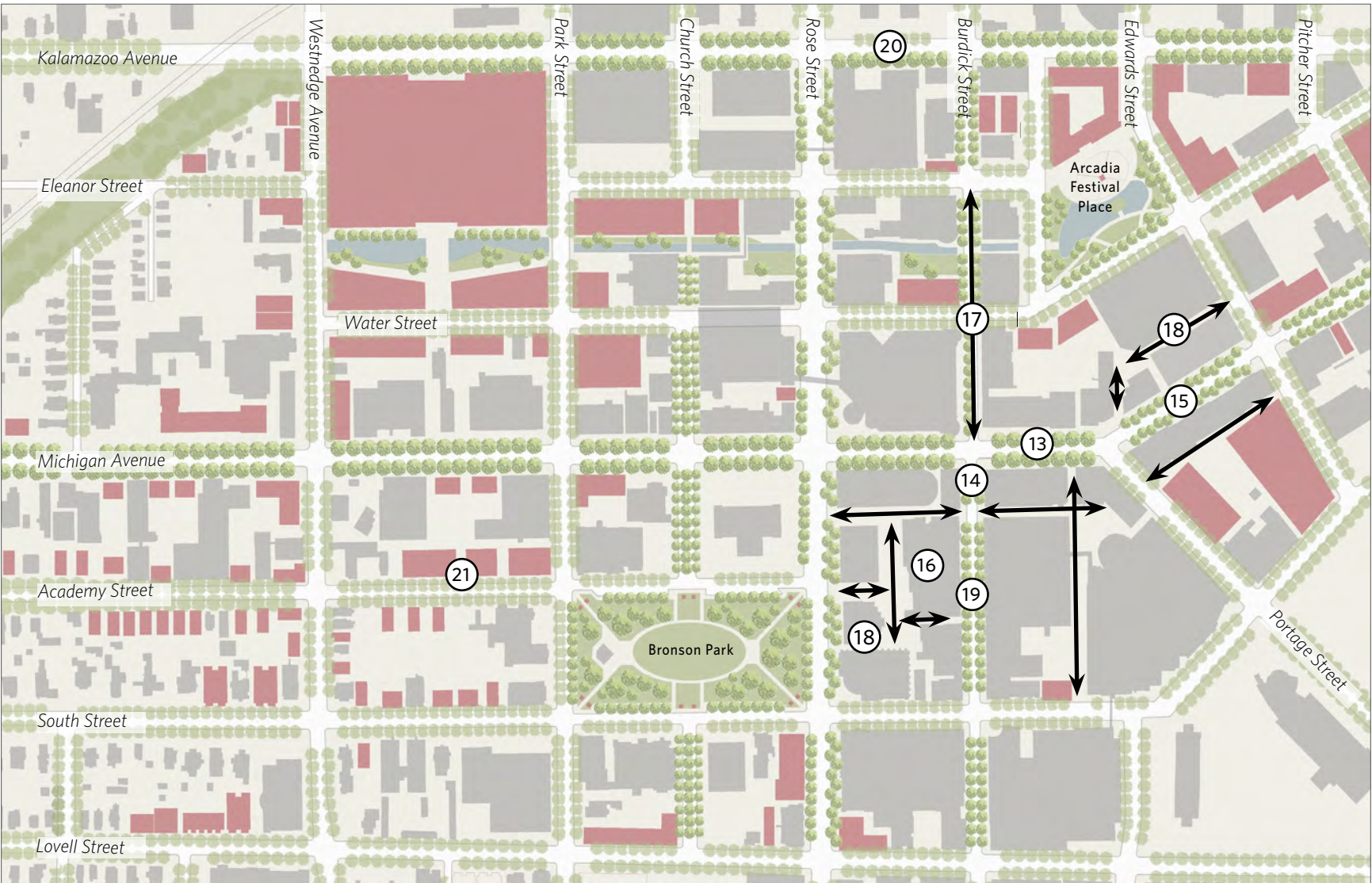


FIGURE 99: Diagram of Short-Term Actions



and the train tracks. The second layer is a study of housing types, specifically looking at Missing Middle Housing types and how they might be implemented on redevelopment sites throughout the city. The following action plans offer a strategy for implementation that balances immediate and short-term visible impact with mid-term and long-term goals for each of the layers described above. Reversing the one-way streets will take years and create substantial disruption throughout downtown. The strategy put forth targets areas of activation and reconnection that will allow

downtown Kalamazoo to thrive throughout the entire process. Stewardship of the vision and attention to details are essential for realizing the full potential of downtown Kalamazoo. This must come from both within the city staff, in the form of a vision keeper or town architect, as well as from elected officials and the general public. This transformation will be expensive and take years, but it will be well worth the effort as Kalamazoo is uniquely positioned to become a thriving boutique city with a fully engaged public realm.

TABLE 10: Mid-Term Actions

Action #	Description	Cost Range	Impact Timeline	Action Category	Page
25	Issue RFP/develop mixed-use infill at Arcadia Festival Place.	\$\$	Mid-Term	Incentive/Catalyst	46
26	Encourage development of Missing Middle infill housing to the north and southwest of downtown.	\$\$	Mid-Term	Incentive/Catalyst	20
27	Implement conversion of Kalamazoo Avenue and Michigan Avenue from one-way to two-way traffic.	\$\$\$\$\$	Mid-Term	Implementing	59-61
28	Implement Arcadia Creek activation and Arcadia Festival Place redesign.	\$\$\$\$\$	Mid-Term	Implementing	42-47
29	Implement new street section and urban landscape at Eleanor Street and N. Edwards Street at Arcadia Festival Place.	\$\$\$\$\$	Mid-Term	Implementing	63 & 65
30	Design/engineer new street section and urban landscape at Church Street, Rose Street, Water Street, and Academy Street at Bronson Park.	\$\$\$	Mid- to Long-term	Design/Engineering	58-65
31	Design/engineer new design and landscape in Bronson Park.	\$\$\$	Mid- to Long-Term	Design/Engineering	48
32	Design/engineer conversion of Lovell Street and South Street from one-way to two-way traffic.	\$\$\$	Mid- to Long-term	Design/Engineering	62-63

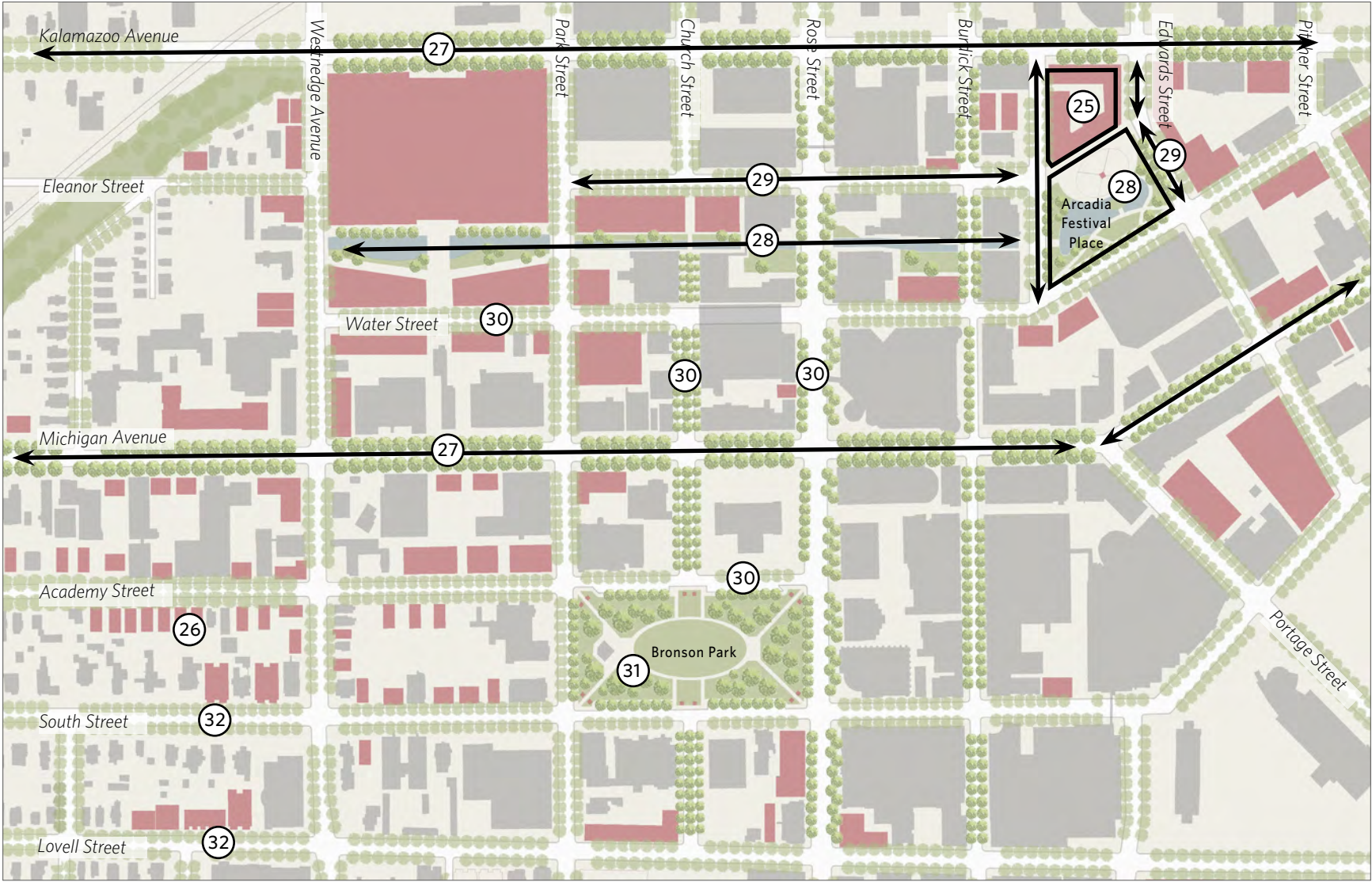


FIGURE 100: Diagram of Mid-Term Actions

TABLE 11: Mid- to Long-Term Actions

Action #	Description	Cost Range	Impact Timeline	Action Category	Page
33	Implement new street section and urban landscape at Church Street, Rose Street, Water Street, and Academy Street at Bronson Park; Implement conversion of Lovell Street and South Street from one-way to two-way traffic.	\$\$\$\$\$	Mid- to Long-term	Implementing	58-65
34	Implement new design and landscape in Bronson Park.	\$\$\$\$	Mid- to Long-term	Implementing	48
35	Design/engineer remaining typical streets.	\$\$\$\$	Long-Term	Design/Engineering	62-63
36	Design/engineer Westnedge Avenue and Park Street to convert from one-way to two-way traffic.	\$\$\$\$\$	Long-Term	Design/Engineering	62-63





FIGURE 101: Diagram of Mid- to Long-Term Actions

TABLE 12: Long-Term Actions

Action #	Description	Cost Range	Impact Timeline	Action Category	Page
37	Implement new street section and urban landscape on remaining typical streets.	\$\$\$\$	Long-Term	Implementing	62-63
38	Implement conversion of Westnedge Avenue and Park Street from one-way to two-way traffic.	\$\$\$\$\$	Long-Term	Implementing	62-63
39	Implement new street section and urban landscape on S. Burdick Street, if not needed previously.	\$\$\$	Long-Term	Implementing	34 & 67

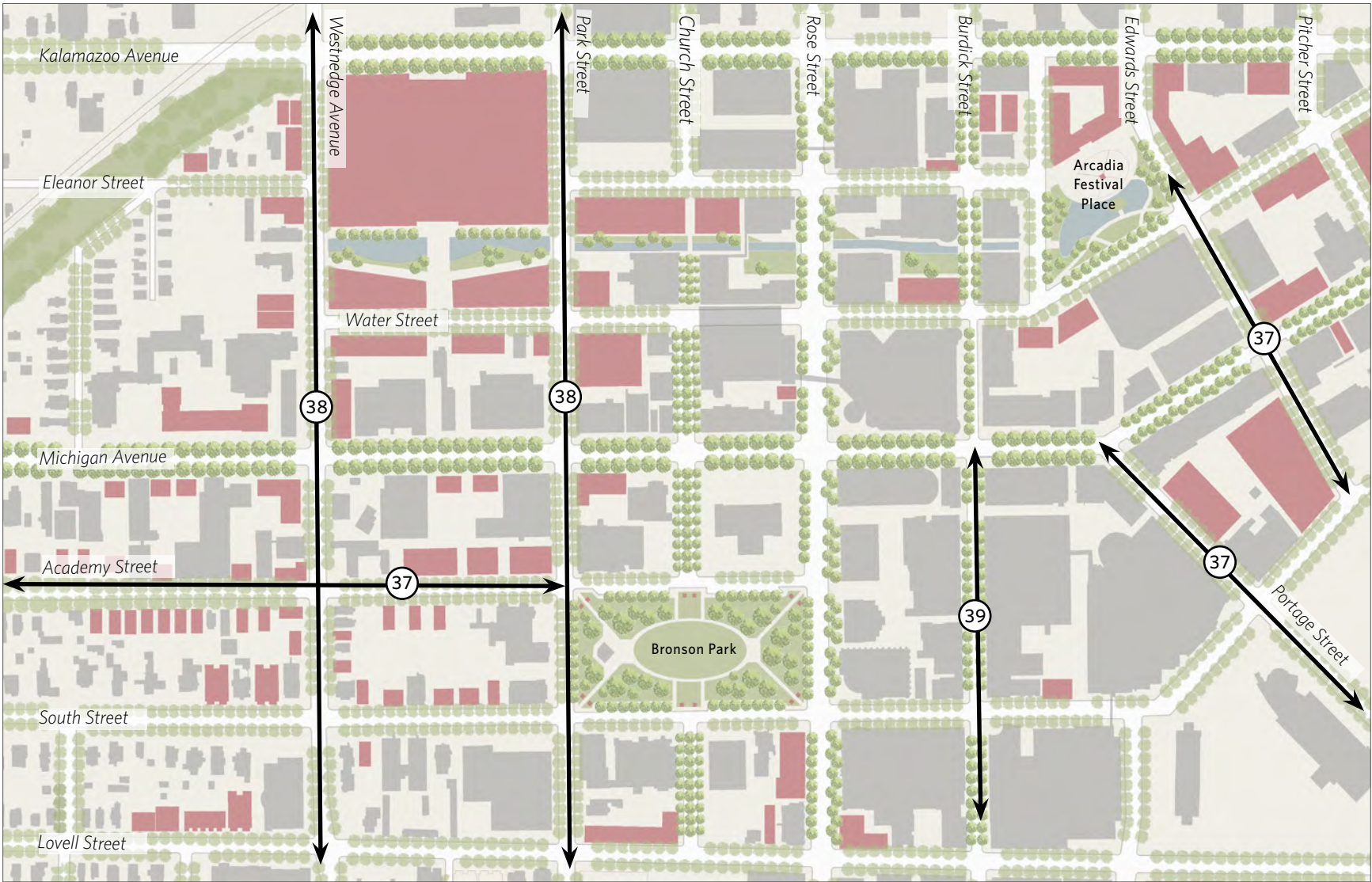


FIGURE 102: Diagram of Long-Term Actions





*Proposed view of Arcadia Creek.*