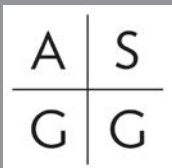




CHICAGO AVENUE—SOUL CITY CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STUDY

**NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN
2020.02.11**







INTRODUCTION

- **MISSION STATEMENT**
- **VISION**
- **POSITIONING & THEMES**



EXISTING CONDITIONS/ COMMUNITY NEEDS

- **SITE PLAN**
- **ZONING MAP**
- **SITE ANALYSIS**



RECOMMENDED Uses / STRATEGY

- **CATALYTIC PROJECTS**
- **INFRASTRUCTURE/STREETSCAPE**

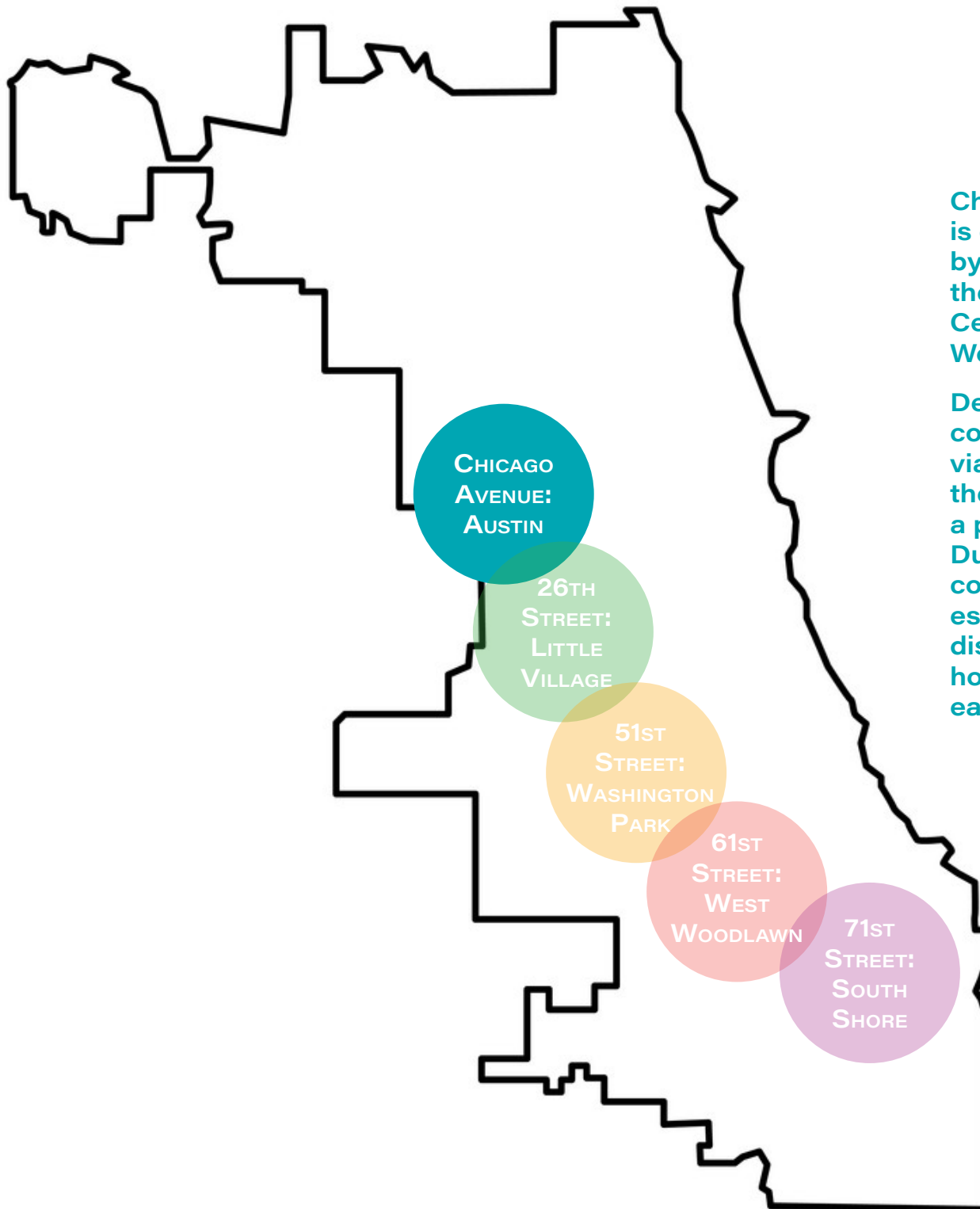


IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES/DELIVERY

- **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**
- **COST & FUNDING**
- **TIMEFRAMES**
- **NEXT STEPS**



CONCLUSION



Chicago's Austin neighborhood is one among five being reviewed by committees gathered under the auspices of the Chicago Central Area Committee and World Business Chicago.

Despite its proximity to commercial development and viable transportation options, the neighborhood has suffered a prolonged economic drought. Due to the lack of viable commercial development, an estimated 85% of the total disposable income of Austin households is spent in Oak Park each year.



INTRODUCTION

Civic and industry leaders are reviewing, considering and responding to the economic challenges that face Chicago's Austin neighborhood, centering on the segment of Chicago Avenue (800N) bounded by Austin Boulevard (6000W) and Central Avenue (5600W) branded the **SOUL CITY** corridor.

The neighborhood shares a border with Oak Park, an affluent suburb, and is served by major thoroughfares and public transit lines. Its median income per household is approximately \$32,843* compared to the \$91,945** of its western neighbor; yet, due to the lack of viable commercial development in Austin, an estimated 85% of the total disposable income of Austin households is spent in Oak Park each year.

The following is a curated response to the present conditions and recommendations intended to shape a resurgent future.

* Source: 2013-2017 American Community Survey five-year estimates (most current available), 2017 dollars

**Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey five-year estimates (most current available), 2018 dollars

MISSION STATEMENT

1. Transform the existing neighborhood into a mixed-use “Live-Work-Play” destination, for current and new residents as well as for commuter patrons
2. Optimize existing real estate options while creating new retail, recreational, and restorative spaces
3. Empower the Austin neighborhood by working with community members, local leaders and elected officials to create a genesis for its revitalization

The focus of our efforts is on creating a platform to address the issues at hand by:

- Boosting confidence in the area
- Attracting investment
- Creating a destination
- Providing an identity
- Promoting economic growth
- Creating viable, vibrant retail, recreational, and restorative spaces
- Attracting resident and commuter patrons



DOWNTOWN OAK PARK & THE SOUL CITY STUDY AREA

In the process of mapping the major places of interest around the study area of Soul City and nearby Downtown Oak Park, it is clear that the number of existing destinations is similar in both locations, although the character of the two districts differ. In the case of Oak Park, the destinations revolve around the architectural legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright and the historical birthplace of Ernest Hemingway. The entertainment & retail vibrancy of Downtown Oak Park is supported by this collection of landmarks and museums.

The Soul City study area's predominant destinations are places of worship and art centers such as Sankofa Cultural Arts, Glenn Art Farm, Austin Community Family Center, and most significantly Austin Town Hall Cultural Center. Soul City could take advantage of these centers by further focusing on community-centered events and the arts. This vision will build and strengthen a character that is intrinsic to their neighborhood and provide an opportunity for a wide range of input, consensus, and action from the community.

VISION

The Vision for the revitalization of the **SOUL CITY** corridor is that of a vibrant street with a defined character that is unique in the city but familiar to everyone. It will be a place that is comfortable and fun, safe and welcoming, and a place for inclusiveness, discovery and learning.

The location of the Soul City corridor has great potential for development—and also a great responsibility. On the western edge of Chicago and adjacent to Oak Park, it is the first impression for visitors as they enter the city from Oak Park. Accordingly, Soul City should be known as a Gateway to Chicago, capturing and conveying the vibe of our world-class city with its urban amenities, interactions, services and conveniences.

We envision the Soul City corridor as a destination that offers more than shopping or dining, but also an experience that is enriching and unique, with commercial activities as the setting and support for a new kind of place in the city.

With Humboldt Park and Garfield Park to the east, Austin connects communities with a broad array of demographics. The Soul City corridor can integrate the communities that converge here and entice neighboring communities to revitalize, as well.

With this proposal, we aim to create a road map that outlines a path for the realization of our vision. By providing a framework that focuses on promoting commercial activities, the ultimate goal is to bring people back to the Soul City corridor and to the neighborhood.

We see the Soul City corridor becoming a blueprint for urban renewal—a beacon that guides the integration of multiple uses—commercial, service, religious, cultural, etc.—into future neighborhood redevelopments. This diversity, in terms of target markets and peak usage times, will foster synergistic relationships and create a vibrant place—built from the community, for the community and for the city.

POSITIONING

The competitive positioning of Soul City seeks to add missing or symbiotic destinations/land uses to the Chicago Avenue corridor and to establish a dynamic and unique identity based on wellness, mobility, resiliency and regeneration—where the health of Austin individuals and the health of the community is networked to the corridor which serves as Austin's "Main Street."





2

EXISTING CONDITIONS/COMMUNITY NEEDS

The economic conditions and social factors that have existed in the Austin community for more than half a century have conspired to slow the pace of its growth and limit its development. The proximity of the community to Oak Park, a healthy and economically sophisticated suburb, has bled the community of retail dollars and commercial investment that might otherwise have remained within the neighborhood.

While Chicago's Central City and select neighborhoods have flourished, rapidly growing at a transformative pace in recent decades, neighborhoods without an economic engine or an iconic destination have lagged. Austin has the demographics to support economic growth and external investment, but it has none of the institutions, iconic structures, destination status, or emerging businesses to spark or sustain that kind of organic transformation.

In addition to a lack of external investment, the existing population has declined in recent years. Population loss, coupled with the expatriation of dollars from Chicago to neighboring Oak Park, has resulted in a negative (or flat as a result of the extended economic drought) growth trend.

Without any new commercial, residential or retail development in nearly six decades, Austin is at a distinct disadvantage when competing for investment dollars. Austin must pursue a marketing and development strategy that acknowledges that it has lagged far behind national economic trends and intends to overcome these obstacles with bold initiatives.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

An analysis of the current condition of the public realm, existing building stock, and current building uses provides insightful information of the obvious, as well as the underlying issues that affect this portion of the city today.

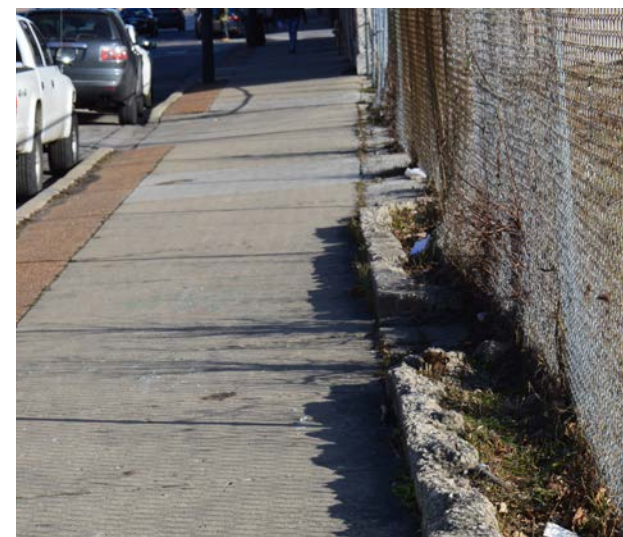
- **UNDER-UTILIZED STOCK**—The mix of existing building types would accommodate a healthy mix of commercial uses, but more than 30% of the plots are unoccupied. Only 30% of the plots are being actively used by operating business, leaving 40% of the real estate either in unusable disrepair or entirely vacant.
- **OUTDATED INFRASTRUCTURE**—Existing sidewalks, street lighting, pedestrian lighting, signage, benches, trash receptacles, etc. require significant updates.
- **IMPERCEPTIBLE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**—The corridor is under-built, lacking in the types of street-facing frontage emblematic of a vibrant commercial environment (storefront windows, awnings, etc.), resulting in an austere, uninviting appearance.
- **NARROW SIDEWALKS, INSUFFICIENT STREET TREES & URBAN VEGETATION**—The existing streetscape is not friendly to pedestrians, is not visually attractive or memorable, and is not functionally supportive of the various building uses along the corridor.



TYPICAL EXISTING RETAIL/HOSPITALITY USE



TYPICAL EXISTING OFFICE/MEDICAL USE

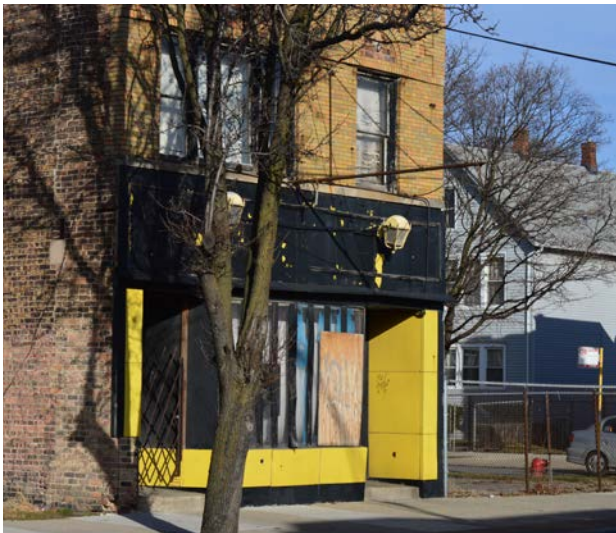


CURRENT SIDEWALK & CURB CONDITIONS

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Input from community stakeholders, residents and business owners has produced a collection of ideas, concerns and opportunities we intend to address and explore. This collection is the result of ongoing dialogue with local leaders as well as input from World Business Chicago, The City of Chicago and Near North Title Group/Chicago Title. The common themes that emerged include the following:

- Redevelop vacant lots and buildings to the maximum permitted by zoning.
- Improve infrastructure with a focus on aiding commercial development and establish a neighborhood identity.
- Add landscaping and hardscape elements that will support the commercial and residential priorities of the corridor.
- Renew a sense of identity through the use of public art, wayfinding and placemaking signage, and marketing materials, as well as public programming of activities, such as “pop-up” markets, athletic events such as races, street festivals, etc.
- Curate and connect public spaces that provide comfort, shade, fun and inspiration for visitors and residents, promoting walkability and allowing people to stay around for longer periods of time.



ABANDONED FREESTANDING BUSINESS ON CORRIDOR

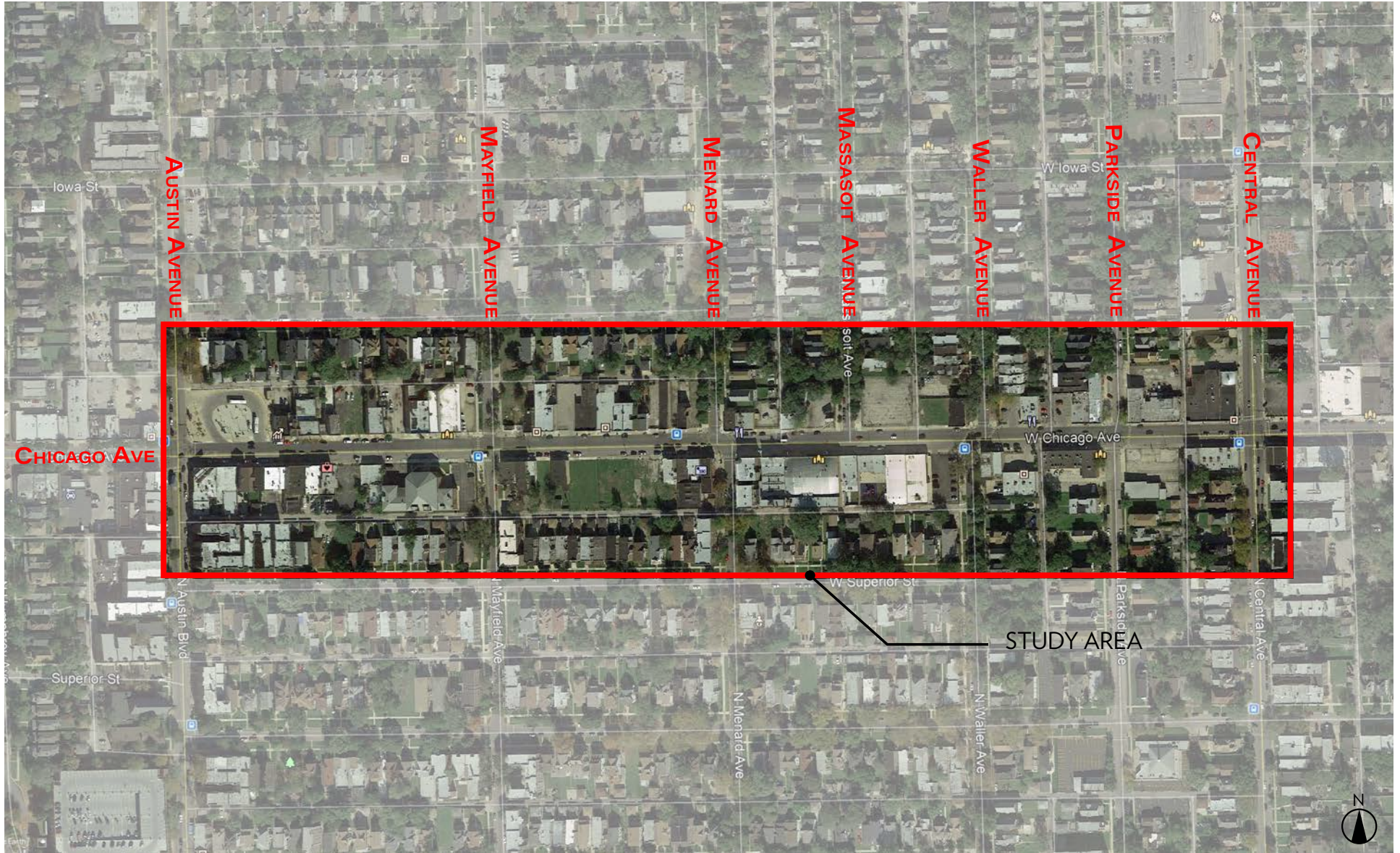


VACANT LOT ON CORRIDOR



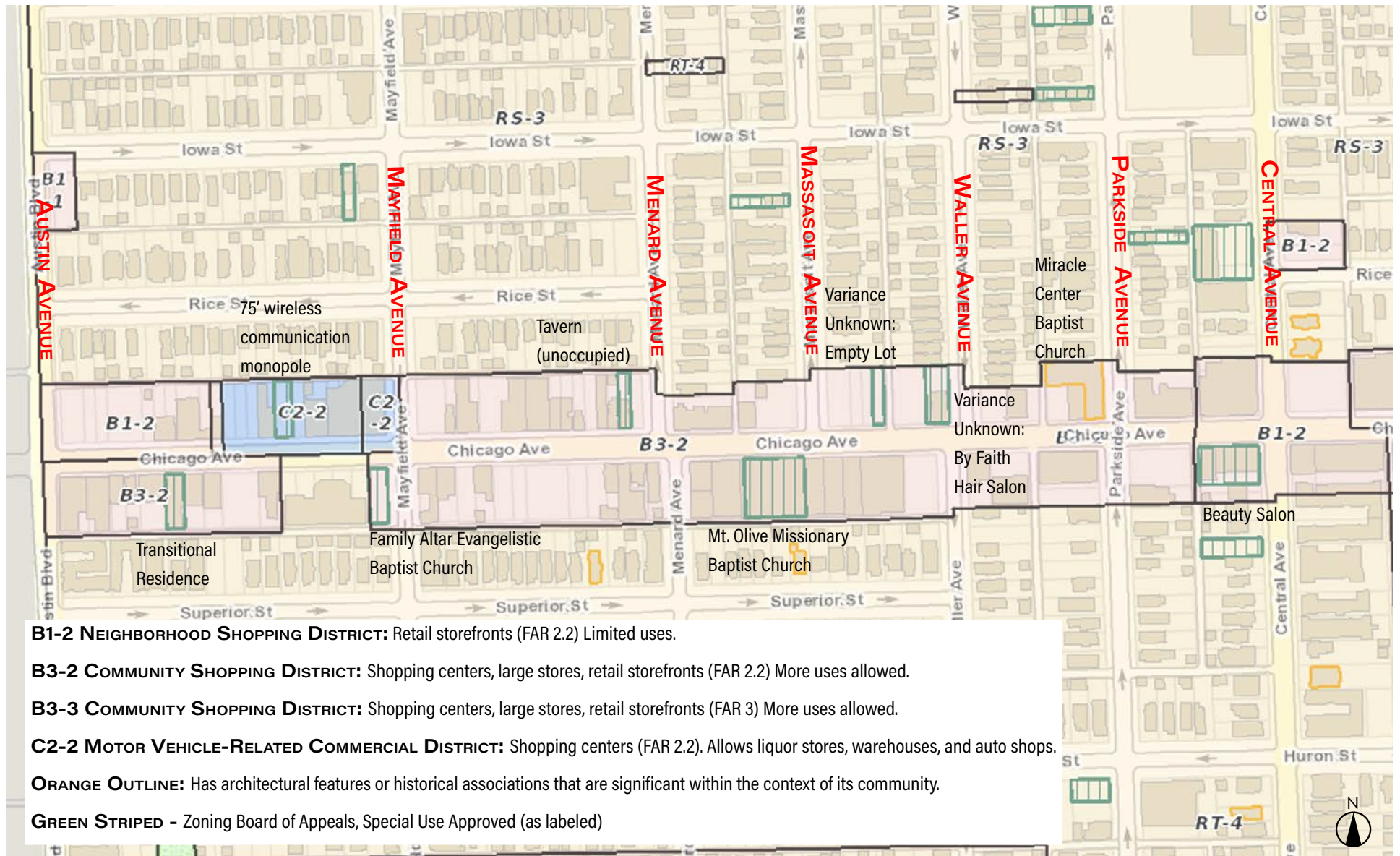
EXISTING MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

SITE PLAN



STUDY AREA

ZONING MAP



FROM CITY OF CHICAGO

SITE ANALYSIS — EXISTING USES



A mix of uses is recommended, potentially adding grocery, pharmacy, healthcare/medical, and entertainment uses. No use should exceed 30% of the frontage to keep the character vibrant. Currently, about 30% of the buildings are being actively used, with owners and tenants including:

- Barbershops/Salons/Spas:
A New U, Austin Cuts, Certified Cuts, Only by Faith, Charday's/ Tracy Traniece, Florence African Hair Braiding, Inspirational Health Spa
- Churches: Family Altar E.B., Greater Holy Temple Ministries, Miracle Center Baptist, Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist, Walking in the Shekinah Glory Global Ministry, (others listed but without signage)
- Day Cares/Academies: Betty's, Kiddie Korral, Smart Start
- Convenience/Discount Retail:
24 Hours Stop & Go, Austin Dollar+, Chicago Ave Discount, FTex, Salvation Army Thrift Store
- Restaurants/Event Venues:
Barney's Pizza, Bitoy's Sweet Treats, Bitoy's Bistro, Boombox Austin, Coleman's #2 Ribs & Tips, Genesis on the Avenue, The Jerk Shop, L.May Creations, People's Taco, Ruby's Soul Food
- Other Businesses: Avanti Elegant Boutique, Currency Exchange, Furniture Zone, Gone Again Travel Tours, Magic Cellular/Boost Mobile, Medlock & Fletcher Construction, Mom's Wash Land, "The Office" Tax Service & Insurance, Planned Parenthood, Sankofa Cultural Center, Unique Epoxy Flooring Systems, West Side Animal Hospital, Y&J Beauty Supply



SITE ANALYSIS — DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES



- Development strategies should aim at increasing a sustainable mix of business use along the corridor balanced with community goods and services.
- Development and urban improvement strategies should aim at branding the corridor so it can be identifiable.
- Identify uses that support and are complementary to business uses that can trigger development in the corridor and leverage their influence in the area, such as the Cultural Center, Planned Parenthood, and the Community Garden.
- Rezone areas for greater density, building more affordable housing on the floors above commercial uses at grade to increase a resident population and commercial patrons, to link conveniently to CTA transit services, and to provide 'eyes on the street' for public security safety.

■ BUSINESS PROGRAMS
■ NON BUSINESS PROGRAMS



SITE ANALYSIS — BUILT VS VACANT PLOTS



- The graphic above illustrates that the corridor is under-built but does have the potential for substantial redevelopment under the existing zoning ordinance.
- The lack of building frontage along the streets results in an austere urban environment for businesses and pedestrians.
- The lack of building frontage undermines a sense of place.
- Development strategies should focus on street life, street frontage and street image.
- A framework for urban amenities and urban design should focus on the experience at the pedestrian level and aim to increase the perceived street frontage along the corridors.
- Development strategies should promote infill projects to increase the street frontage.

■ BUILT
 □ VOID
 ■ FRONTAGE



SITE ANALYSIS — TRANSIT, TRAFFIC & PARKING



↔ Two-way traffic, one lane each direction, parallel parking on each side of the street

→ One-way traffic, one lane, parallel parking on each side of the street

■ Parking lots—approximately 260 privately-owned spaces for commercial use or possible day lease for CTA Park & Ride

■ CTA Bus Terminal - Chicago & Austin Terminal

● CTA Bus stops - Route 66

● CTA Bus stops - Route 85

● CTA Bus stops - Route 91

● Divvy Station

The speed limit through the corridor is unmarked, statutory 30 MPH.

There are no designated bike lanes along this corridor. To increase the width of sidewalks for streetscape improvements and to provide bike lanes, a narrowing of traffic lanes and/or elimination of curbside parking would need to be considered.

The closest Green Line L stops (Austin & Central) are 0.6 miles south—a 12-15 minute walk

The closest Metra Milwaukee District West Line stops (Galewood & Hanson Park) are 1.5 miles north—a 30-45 minute walk





Peeples'
TACO



NO PARKING
WHEN SNOW IS
OVER 2 INCHES

TOW ZONE

STREET
CLEANING

NO PARKING
7AM - 9AM
TUES & THURS
APRIL 1 - OCTOBER 1

TOW ZONE



ONE HOUR PARKING
TAM - 5PM
NOV - SEP

Happy New Year
HAPPY NEW YEAR

3

RECOMMENDED Use / STRATEGY

Investment strategies typically encourage commercial development to create jobs, diversity and vibrancy at the micro-local community. However, the value of the existing inventory or core commercial elements in Austin is sorely lacking; a different strategy needs to be employed in order to succeed.

Austin does not have the infrastructure, including existing businesses or viable commercial spaces, to compete without exploiting and developing its cultural uniqueness. It is our committee's recommendation, therefore, that promoting commercial investment should be a secondary strategy of a multi-phased effort.

To successfully grow and court commercial development, Austin, supported by the City of Chicago and Cook County, should first work to cultivate a sense of place. The marketing of the community as a hub for authentic cultural experiences can create an advantage as Austin seeks to lure dollars back across its western border.

The best alternative to entice investment is to acknowledge the existing deficit. Austin can compete by playing a different game: create a mix of uses which supports commercial activity in the corridor and serves the adjacent residential areas.



RECOMMENDED USE/STRATEGY

To make our Vision for the Soul City corridor a reality, we propose to implement our recommended strategy, which is based on three pillars:

ARTISTIC ICONOGRAPHY

- Rooted in a unique cultural identity
- That establishes a sense of place
- That engages the public

CATALYTIC ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- Built on consistent infrastructure investment
- Intended to raise the existing standard
- By the community, for the community

CONNECTIVITY

- Enhanced by a digital identity
- Focused on bridging physical spaces in the public realm
- Promoting desired outcomes

To attract more visitors and retain the dollars of its residents, Austin must accomplish the following:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ▪ ESTABLISH AND PROMOTE A UNIQUE CULTURAL IDENTITY to differentiate Austin from competing cities and healthy, iconic Chicago neighborhoods | ▪ REDEFINE AUSTIN as a place with an identity—Branded as: Soul City | ▪ SECURE INVESTMENT |
| | ▪ CONNECT commuters and residents to new, iconic structures | ▪ RETAIN POPULATION |
| | | ▪ CREATE THE NEXT GENERATION of affordable housing and commercial infrastructure |

To achieve the objectives outlined above, implementation of strategies focused on upgrading infrastructure and building catalytic projects should emphasize:

- **DESIGN FOR STRENGTHS:** Highlight the existing value to attract investment and use.
- **HIGHEST AND BEST USES OF REAL ESTATE:** Research with relevant precedents, shared with the community to discuss a relevant redevelopment strategy.
- **REPOSITIONING:** to include but not be limited to new land uses, business strategy, adaptive reuse, renovation and redevelopment.
- **PROTOTYPE AND MODEL:** Document this approach for use by future neighborhood redevelopments.

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

The general recommendations in the previous section of this report, regarding infrastructure, are intended to help shape the planning for the Soul City corridor and to serve as a guide for the development of real assets.

These assets may come in the form of infrastructure and institutional investment but must also come in the form of commercial, entertainment, incubator or residential spaces that are privately owned and operated. The proposed new uses should reflect the Soul City theme and character. It is important that these new uses have open storefronts with windows, not blank walls, to contribute to visual vitality to the street frontage. Some of the recommended uses for these spaces are as follows:

ENTERTAINMENT

- Food (casual, fast casual, ethnic, bakery, café)
- Bar/Music Venue (Soul City)
- Music Venue

CULTURE/ART

- Mural
- Gallery (Indoor/Outdoor)
- Studio (YOUmedia)
- Maker Space
- Found Object Space

WELLNESS

- Medical Office Building
- Rehabilitation Facility
- Family Care
- Urgent Care
- Reproductive Care
- Outpatient Surgical Center
- Fitness Center/Club
- Athletic Training Facility
- Community Recreation Center (park/school/private hybrid facility)

INSTITUTIONAL/CIVIC

- University/College Satellite
- Trade School/Learning Center
- Tutoring Center
- Library Satellite
- Library-focused Space (art, music, history or culture)

Through team workshops and meetings with community leaders, several potential sites for catalytic projects have been identified. The sites were evaluated with regard to current ownership status, physical condition, location along the Soul City corridor, and potential impact.

The opportunity sites pose a range of functions and programs that are complementary and that work together to attain the greater vision for the Soul City Corridor as a destination that offers more than shopping or dining, but also an experience that is enriching and unique, with commercial activities as the setting and support for a new kind of urban place in the city.

1 - COMMUNITY GARDEN

2 - GATEWAY BUILDINGS REHABILITATION

3 - ENTERTAINMENT HUB

4 - SOUL CENTER MULTI-USE PARK



CATALYTIC PROJECT 1 — COMMUNITY GARDEN

A community garden is the first catalytic project recommended by this report. Green space is central to the Soul City theme. Planting, tending, and farming are fundamental ways to express our physical and spiritual connections to our land.

The community garden space identified by this effort is located on the corner west of the Sankofa Center.

The intent is for the space to grow with donations from private and corporate interests.

The garden will be supported by volunteers and non-profits connected to the Austin Community.

The garden will serve as a conduit to beauty and life cultivated by but not created by the human hand.

The core values that can be realized by the presence of a community garden include the following:

ENTERTAINMENT

- A space for reflection and nourishment
- Music Venue or outdoor gathering space

WELLNESS

- Outdoor Meditation
- Recreation

CULTURE/ART

- Mural
- Sculpture
- Maker Space
- Found Object Space

INSTITUTION/CIVIC

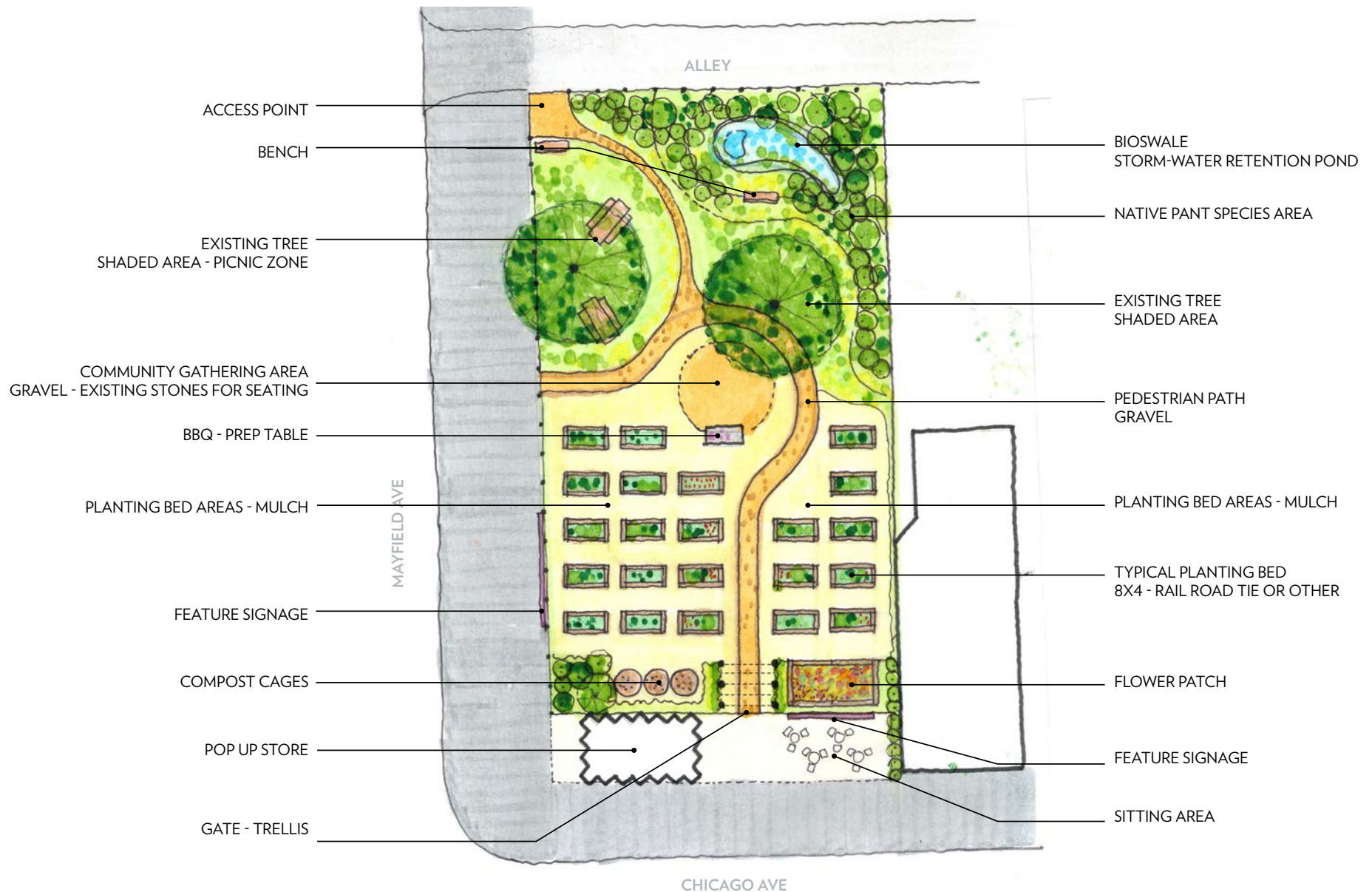
- Outdoor laboratory / agricultural learning space



CONCEPT IMAGES



COMMUNITY GARDEN — CONCEPT



COMMUNITY GARDEN — ROUGH QUANTITIES



COMMUNITY GARDEN — AERIAL VIEW



IMAGE CAPTION

COMMUNITY GARDEN — AERIAL VIEW



IMAGE CAPTION

PROGRESS PHOTOS



PROGRESS PHOTOS



CATALYTIC PROJECT 2 — SIGNAGE & BUILDING REHABILITATION

The effort to renew the Austin community must be anchored by meaningful spaces that nurture the human spirit—places of whimsy, learning and commerce. A catalytic “Gateway” project could be a foundational space to anchor the community, with the potential of attracting future development. Key considerations include the following:

- The Gateway Project must be easily identified.
- The adaptive re-use of existing properties should be a priority.
- Goods and services that Austin residents want should be offered by businesses in the corridor at reasonable yet sustainable prices.
- Existing commercial, wellness, and community-focused institutions should be key partners in assuring success in the corridor.

The core values of this effort realized by the presence of a Gateway Building include:

COMMERCE

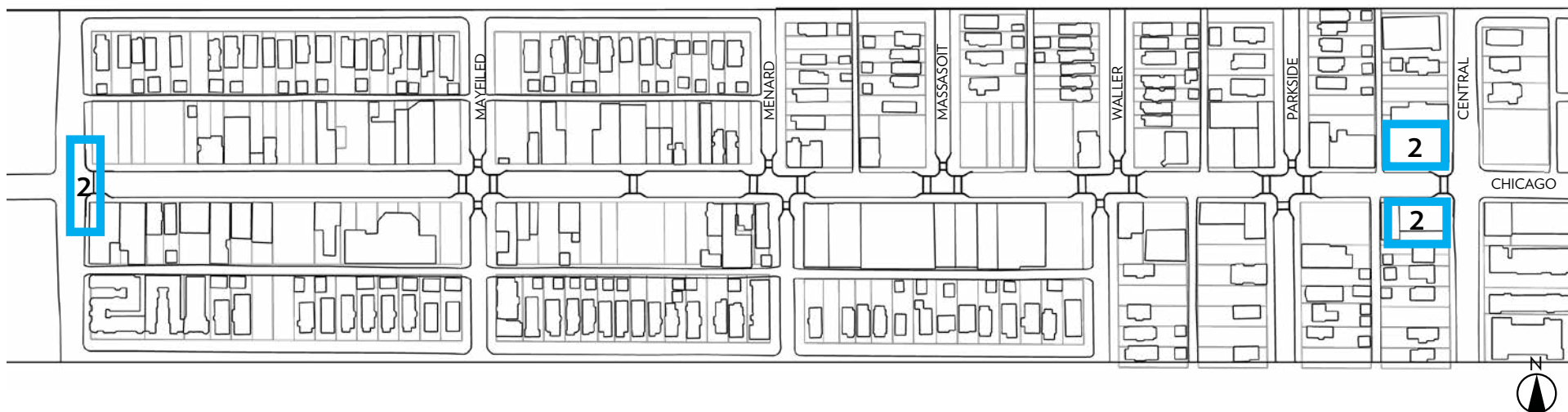
- A space for commercial tenants
- Suppliers of material goods
- Space for professional service providers
- Incubation space
- Restaurants - dining hall

INSTITUTION/CIVIC

- University/College Satellite
- Trade School/Learning Center
- Tutoring Center
- Satellite Library and associated creative space for art, music, history, culture, etc.

WELLNESS

- Medical Office Building
- Rehabilitation facility
- Family care
- Urgent care
- Reproductive care
- Outpatient surgical center
- Fitness center/club
- Athletic training facility
- Community recreation center (park/school/private hybrid facility)



CONCEPT IMAGES



EASTERN GATEWAY & STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

Westbound traffic from the city could be greeted with vertical column signage on either side of Chicago Avenue on the northwest and southwest corners of Central Avenue.

Unlike the soaring arch that is proposed for the Western Gateway, a striking yet more understated style of branding iconography is appropriate at this intersection. At the Western boundary, westbound travelers are leaving both the Austin neighborhood and the City of Chicago. At its Eastern edge, eastbound travelers will continue to be in Chicago and in the Austin neighborhood.

Building and storefront improvements, similar to those proposed for the Western gateway, are proposed for this area, as well.



BUILDINGS REHABILITATION

TOTAL

- AWNINGS: 345 LF
- STOREFRONTS: 1500 SF

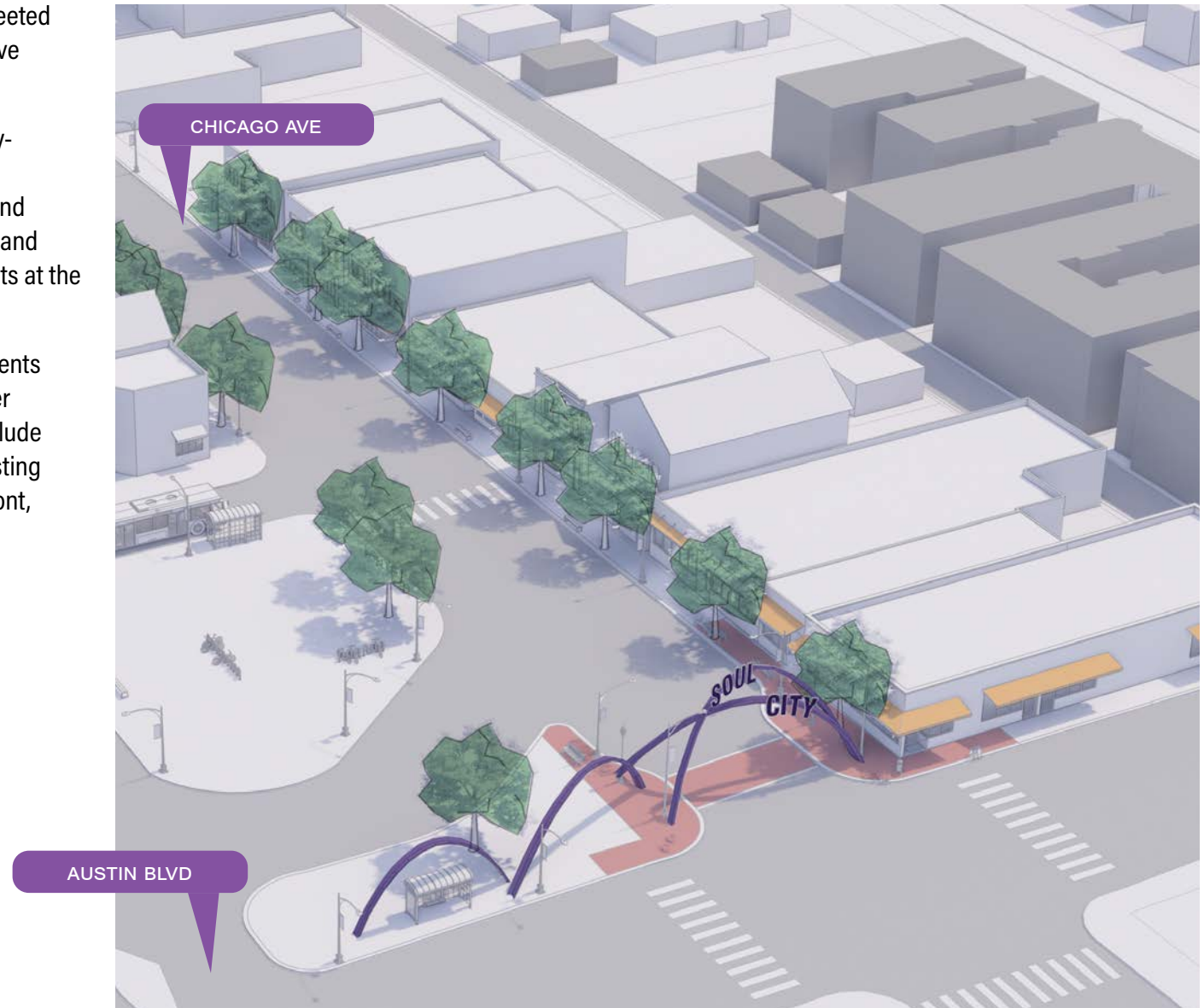


WESTERN GATEWAY & STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

Eastbound traffic from Oak Park could be greeted with signage configured as an archway above Chicago Avenue at Austin Boulevard.

An iconic presence at the entry to this newly-branded corridor immediately establishes a new mindset—an expectation for vibrancy and experience—for drivers, bikers, pedestrians, and even commuters using the bus line that starts at the northeast corner of the corridor.

In addition to other infrastructure improvements suggested elsewhere in this document, other advisable improvements at this gateway include adding operable doors and canopies on existing storefronts. Homogenizing the brick, storefront, colorblocking etc. will further establishes a human-scale, inviting sense of place.



BUILDINGS REHABILITATION



SOUTH ELEVATION
CHICAGO AVE AND AUSTIN BLVD.



NORTH ELEVATION
CHICAGO AVE AND AUSTIN BLVD.

AUSTIN BOULEVARD & CHICAGO AVENUE — WESTERN GATEWAY

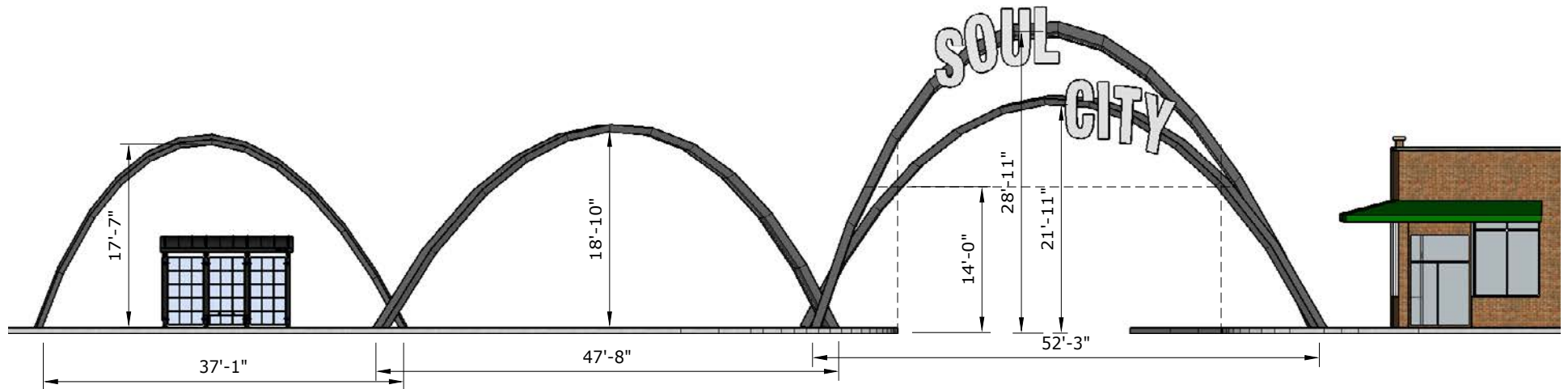


CURRENT CONDITION



PROPOSED FUTURE CONDITION

SIGNAGE DIMENSIONS — WESTERN GATEWAY



CENTRAL AVENUE & CHICAGO AVENUE — EASTERN GATEWAY

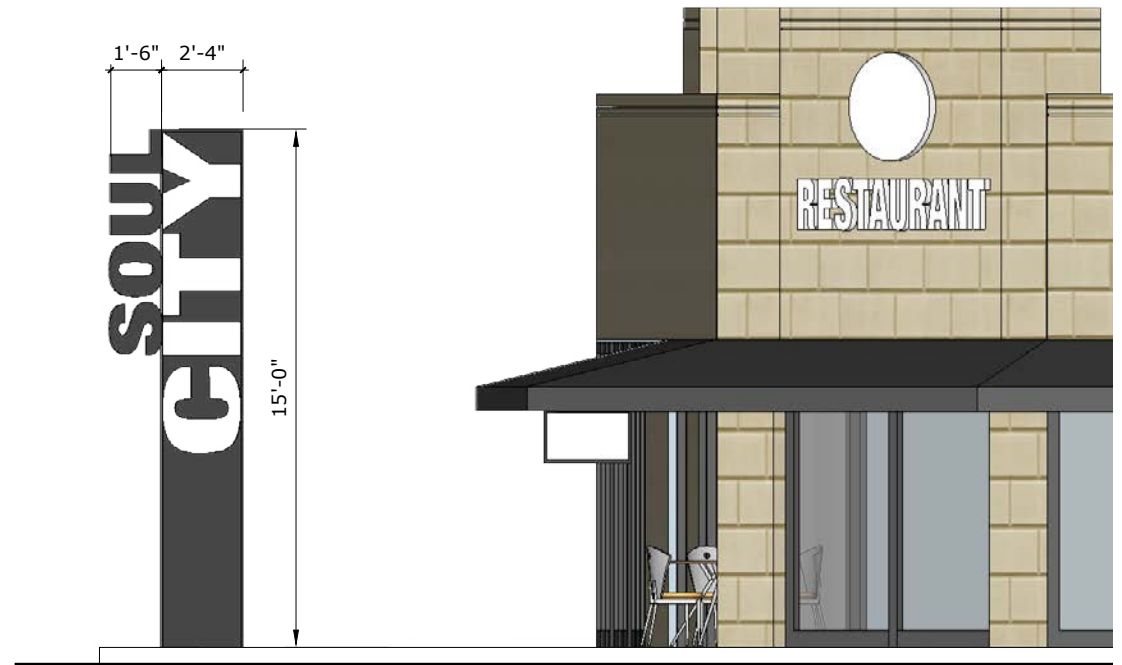


CURRENT CONDITION



PROPOSED FUTURE CONDITION

SIGNAGE DIMENSIONS — EASTERN GATEWAY



CATALYTIC PROJECTS 3 — ENTERTAINMENT HUB

A space that activates at night and with seasonal events adds character and life to a community. This project could realize the potential of available open space, built on the ideals of the Soul City concept.

- The space could have a “deconstructed” feel that promotes gatherings and creative uses, flexible to host small concerts, farmers’ markets, etc.
- To encourage performance arts within the space, the creative feel could be visually reinforced with permanent murals and sculptural installations.
- Evening illumination of the space should be branded and convey the Soul City ethos.
- Community churches should feel welcome to engage within the space for outdoor fellowship.
- The Entertainment Hub will serve as a conduit to beauty and life curated and hand-crafted.

The core values of this effort realized by the presence of a community garden include:

ENTERTAINMENT

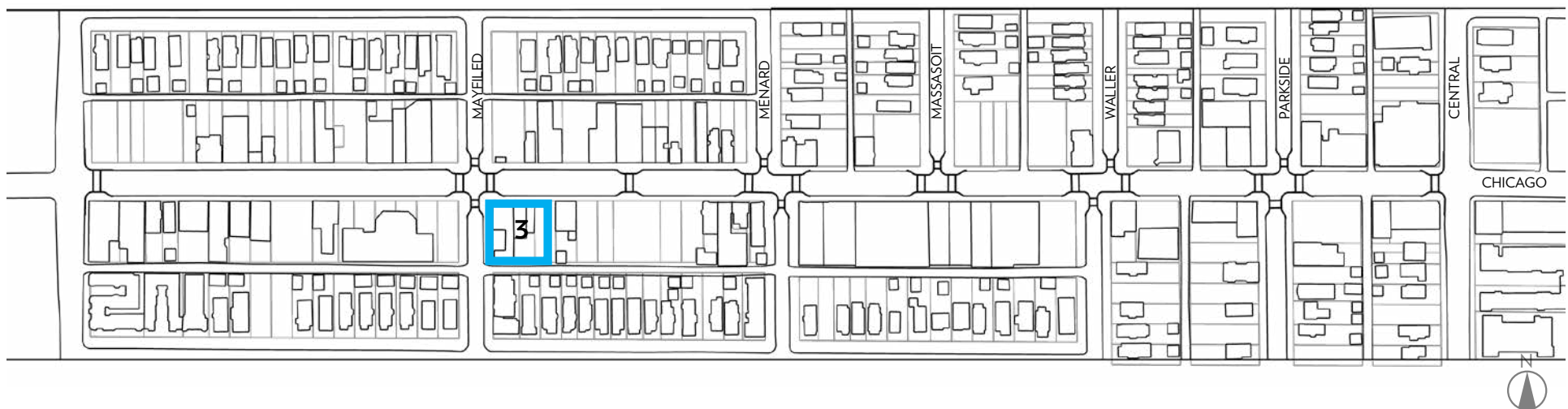
- A space for reflection and nourishment
- Music Venue or outdoor gathering space

WELLNESS

- Outdoor Meditation
- Recreation

CULTURE/ART

- Mural
- Sculpture
- Maker Space
- Found Object Space



CONCEPT IMAGES



CATALYTIC PROJECTS 4 — SOUL CENTER

More than a shopping or dining destination, Soul Center is envisioned to be an entertainment and cultural center—a place that is both inspired by the history of the neighborhood yet elevates its sense of vibrancy and community.

With many types of visitors already in the area for other purposes—church, childcare, veterinary office visits, etc.—an inviting destination with multiple, complementary uses could retain those visitors and attract others, as well. Recreational, artistic, and culinary options will encourage engagement and interaction among various populations, further enhancing the sense of inclusiveness.



CONCEPT IMAGES

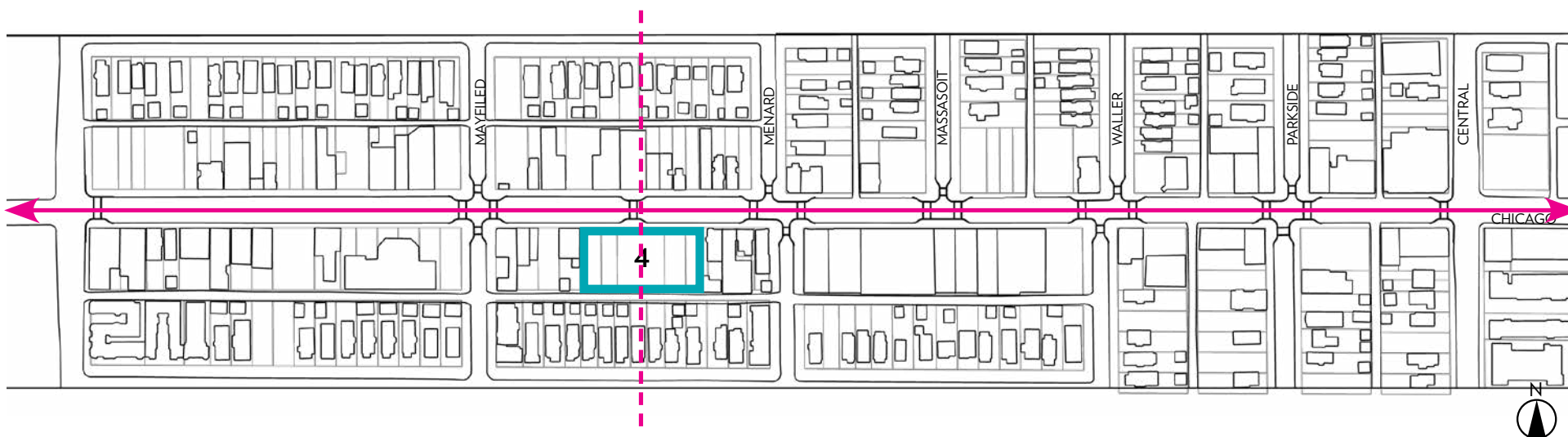


IDEAL LOCATION — CENTRAL TO THE CORRIDOR

The proposed sites for Catalytic Project 4 are a collection of contiguous sites located on the south side of Chicago Avenue between Menard Avenue and Mayfield Avenue. Three of the sites are owned by the city of Chicago and two of them are privately owned by the same owner. The current condition of the site is undeveloped and clear.

Among the key attributes of these sites that contributed to their selection as the focal point of this effort are:

- 1. LOCATION:** Centrally located along the corridor, offers accessibility to a variety of exciting key uses and promotes pedestrian traffic from and to all directions. This allows for maximum engagement from the various community groups.
- 2. ACCESSIBILITY TO THE LAND:** The sites belong to a small number of owners willing to work with the community.
- 3. SIZE:** Nearly 0.64 acres of clear land allow for maximum flexibility of programming.
- 4. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CULTURAL CENTER:** Located squarely in front of the Sankofa Cultural Arts & Business Center the plots have access and exposure to an already established community center.



CURRENT CONDITIONS — PROPOSED SITE



SUPPORT FOR OTHER USES



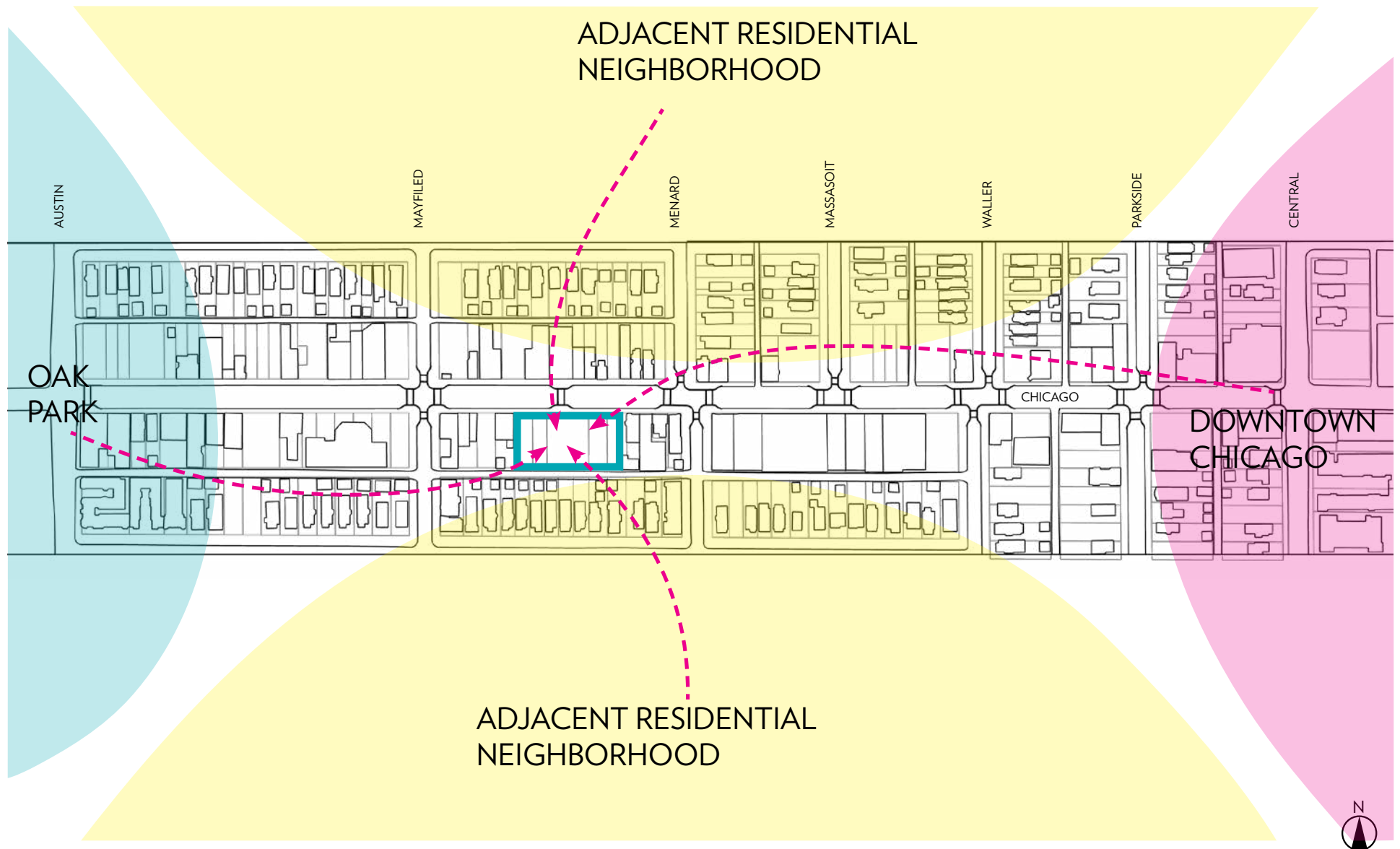
To attain this vision, the proposal for this site seeks to retain residents and visitors that come regularly to the area. These groups include people such as churchgoers, day care users, animal hospital clientele, bypassing pedestrians, and local residents. The goal is to create a place that provides uses that are relevant to diverse populations, yet are also complementary to one another.

- For churchgoers, for example, it would be nice to have a welcoming place to have brunch, play with kids or buy crafts after service, right by the church.
- For parents that use the numerous day cares in the area, a safe place with a playground for kids can prove to be very convenient on the way out of day care.
- For dog owners, a pet-friendly park near the animal hospital would be a great addition to the neighborhood. This, in turn, would also benefit the animal hospital itself, by increased exposure.
- For residents who have neither children nor pets, a place for movie night, a garden to enjoy, a basketball court, or a place for food trucks on select weekends, would provide a reason to stick around the corridor instead of leaving.

- BUSINESS -DAY CARE
- CHURCH
- INSTITUTION
- COMMUNITY CENTER
- ANIMAL HOSPITAL
- BEER GARDEN
- GARDEN



INTEGRATION OF DEMOGRAPHICS



PROGRAMMING & ACTIVITIES

We strive to create a public space, perhaps with semipublic areas within it that offers a variety of uses for various populations. A park will offer interaction opportunities through recreation, art, food, farmers market, space for kids, outdoor performances, space for pets, space for play and sports, seasonal programming, etc.

Soul City Park will encourage inclusiveness, learning and discovery. It will become the defining element of the Soul City Corridor and be a destination for people from well outside of the area. Activities and programming for Soul City Park, year-round, is fundamental to maintaining community engagement and for the success of the park.

Soul City Park will be an asset to the neighborhood and the city, organized and arranged so that it works as a unit or as a series of rooms with distinct functions that work in synergy. Four spaces will be arranged around and in direct correlation to a main central space from which all activities can be seen.

The central space—Soul City Plaza—will serve as an organizing element meant for interaction and inclusion. This space will become the heart of the park. In this main room or the “living room” of the neighborhood, activities that bring the community together will take place: farmer markets, holiday markets, public gatherings, music or theater festivals, an ice rink, dance, art making, etc.

The four rooms that surround the plaza will be more focused to specific uses such as:

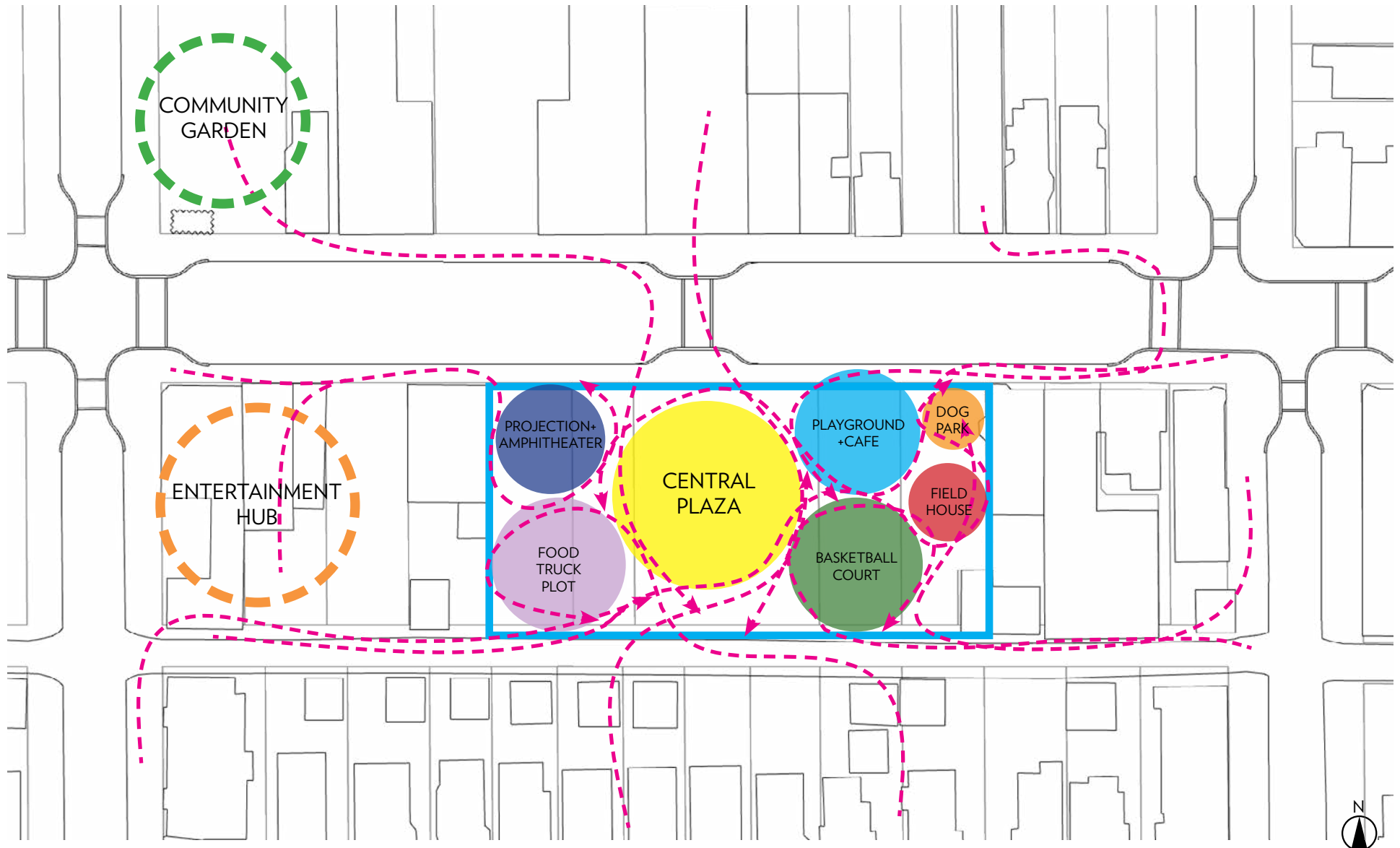
- Food—allowing for temporary food stalls and food trucks, activated on weekends and select evenings as events require, such as after church or during music festivals, dance events, or movie nights.
- Media—dedicated to promoting digital interaction, projections, movies, and art. Located next to the animal hospital to make use of the extensive existing blank wall.
- Sports—promoting physical activities with a multi-purpose court where groups can gather and practice or play an informal game.
- Play—dedicated for use by young kids and pets, with playground and a dog park. Parents and pet owners will now have access to amenities that are otherwise scarce in the current surroundings.

Support buildings, such as a field house, simple coffee shop, or small pavilions can be provided and arranged in order to create key relationships in between spaces and with the street. The spaces in between the rooms will feature low maintenance gardens with local, hardy plant species.

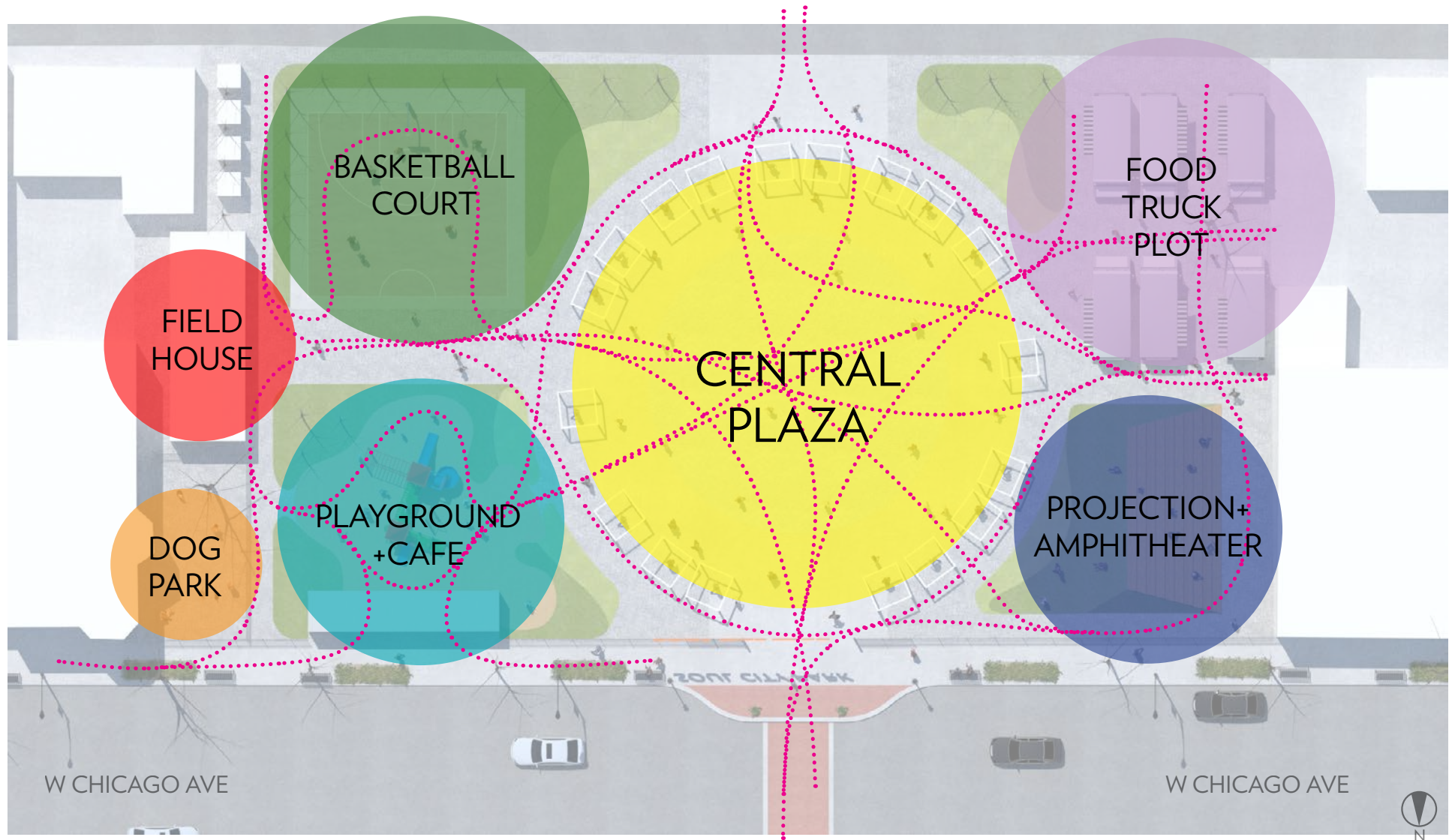
In order to ensure the success of Soul City Park and the over-arching Soul Center project, our committee encourages stakeholders to address the following:

- Who will own this space?
- Who is able to take responsibility for its maintenance—cleaning, landscaping, utilities, repairs, etc.
- Who will program and operate Soul Center—year-round events, marketing/community outreach, etc.
- How will the programs be funded, and what budget will be required to cover operational expenses?

PROGRAMMING & ACTIVITIES



PROGRAMMING & CIRCULATION



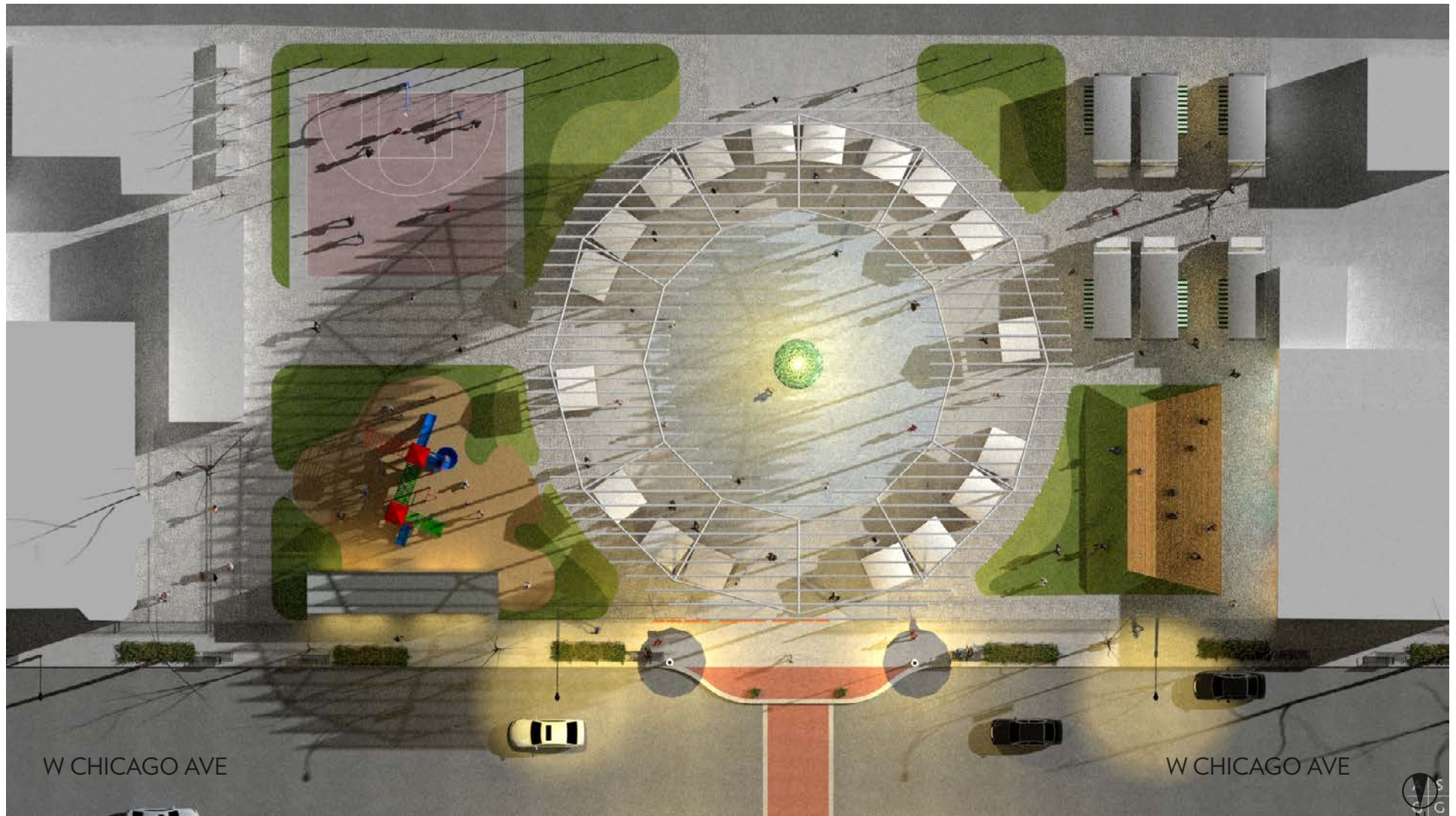
SITE PLAN



SITE PLAN WITH TRELLIS



SITE PLAN WITH TRELLIS — NIGHT VIEW



VIEW FROM CHICAGO AVENUE



NIGHT VIEW FROM CHICAGO AVENUE



VIEW FROM COMMUNITY CENTER



NIGHT VIEW FROM COMMUNITY CENTER



THE TRELLIS

To address the idea of an iconic and memorable event in the city and to enhance the functions that the park will house, the Soul City Park could feature a shading structure that acts as the center piece of the park. This multi-use structure won't only be the iconic image of the park and corridor, but it will play a functional role for shading, lighting, audio, projection, and iconography in the Park.

With a simple yet memorable silhouette, this trellis will catch the attention of passers by, enticing them to learn more about the park and to use it. Its unique design and functionality will make the trellis an icon and provide the Austin neighborhood with a positive element to be known for.

The trellis can be simply constructed with a metal structure, and the shading portion can be attained by hanging fabric strips to create depth and mass without excessive weight or cost. This will create a surface that will have a strong visual presence, provide shade during daylight and be lit or projected on at night. It's sure to become an "Instagram moment" and catch the attention of anyone that goes by.

Projections onto the trellis can promote programming at the park, such as movie nights, or blues artists set to perform at an upcoming festival.

Trade/Materials	Trellis	Sitework	Total
Permits	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Testing and Inspections	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$8,000
Survey and Layout	\$0	\$3,000	\$3,000
Cleaning and Protection	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000
Site Requirements	\$0	\$10,000	\$10,000
Temporary Fencing	\$0	\$7,500	\$7,500
Site Security	\$0	\$7,500	\$7,500
Demolition	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
Excavation	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$40,000
Concrete	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Site Concrete	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
Paving and Surfacing	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
Landscaping	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000
Benches and Site Amenities	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
Steel Framework	\$150,000	\$0	\$150,000
Fabric & Hanging System	\$100,000	\$0	\$100,000
Ornamental Fencing	\$0	\$30,000	\$30,000
Rough Carpentry	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
Joint Sealants	\$0	\$2,500	\$2,500

Trade/Materials	Trellis	Sitework	Total
Painting	\$20,000	\$0	\$20,000
Signage	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
Electrical	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$50,000
Voice/Data	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
Security	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000
Subtotal	\$363,000	\$232,500	\$595,500
General Conditions: 10.00%	\$36,300	\$23,250	\$59,550
General Liability Insurance: 1.00%	\$3,993	\$2,558	\$6,551
Overhead and Profit: 5.00%	\$20,165	\$12,915	\$33,080
Construction Contingency: 7.00%	\$29,642	\$18,986	\$48,628
Design Contingency: 7.00%	\$29,642	\$18,986	\$48,628
TOTAL	\$482,742	\$309,194	\$791,936

This estimate only includes the space within the trellis area; the playground, dog park, basketball court, food truck area, etc. are not included in this pricing.

Also not included/anticipated for construction of the trellis: Winter Conditions, Masonry, Stonework, Flagpoles, Flashing/Sheet Metal, Plumbing, HVAC, Fire Protection, Audio/Visual.

NIGHT VIEW FROM COMMUNITY CENTER WITH PROJECTION



VIEW AT CENTRAL PLAZA



NIGHT VIEW AT CENTRAL PLAZA



AERIAL VIEW



AERIAL NIGHT VIEW



NORTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



INFRASTRUCTURE

Commercial investment often follows significant infrastructure investments. Transit-oriented development, for instance, is the most widely recognized example of the phenomenon. The link between economic activity and infrastructure spending is real, and has been proven time and again. While substantive investment of any kind has the potential to create transformative outcomes, the strategy to lead with infrastructure emphasizes modest, repetitive investments designed to elevate from a baseline. The result should be increased, consistent investment in infrastructure, furnishings and fixtures observable to visitors, residents and potential investors.

Austin is starving for features that other, healthier neighborhoods boast, such as:

ART STRUCTURED PARKING FURNISHINGS

May include fencing, lighting, signage, play spaces, seating and branding (noted below)

TRAFFIC CALMING

- Bump out curbs at key intersections and pedestrian crossings
- Sidewalk improvements (colored pavement)
- Increased pedestrian lighting (decorative)

LANDSCAPING

- Intensified tree planting (increased placement)
- Planters and spaces with low-maintenance native plants
- Irrigation

- Defined parking areas which signal a commercial or cultural corridor
- Protected to facilitate hosting pop up recreational space e.g. "People Spots"

BIKE LANES

- Intended to positively increase traffic
- Create a different type of commuter/visitor

SIGNAGE

- Wayfinding
- Place setting
- Branding
- Public Art

FENCING

- Artistic wayfinding integrated signage/fencing
- Decorative

- Benches
- Bike Racks
- Found Objects (play space or art)
- Trash Receptacles

PARKS

- Places for recreation and social interaction
- Meditation
- "Green Space"

PEDESTRIAN LINKS

- Between cultural and park sites
- Between institutions that are important to the larger strategy

In this context, and to guide the investment on infrastructure, it is important to highlight and recognize that public realm improvements are a fundamental part of the rehabilitation efforts for the Austin corridor. The public realm can become the framework of interaction of the businesses with their patrons, and it has an immense role on the vibe and the identity of a place. The design and spatial qualities of the public realm have a great influence on people perceptions of an area, their willingness to walk it and to spend time in it.

A set of principles are set forth to promote an environment that is friendly to the pedestrian and that is conducive to shopping and commercial activities.

1. WALKABILITY & PEDESTRIAN COMFORT

- Clearly defined street intersections.
- Implement curb extensions to minimize crossing distances and define parking zones.
- Provide a consistent tree canopy for shading.

2. SAFETY

- Improved pedestrian lighting.
- Curb extensions to minimize crossing distances and define parking zones.
- Add housing above the ground floor commercial to provide “eyes on the street”.

To attain those principles, we propose specific and measurable efforts as follows:

1. STREET TREES

2. SIDEWALKS & CROSS WALKS

3. PUBLIC & URBAN ART

4. URBAN FURNISHINGS

3. VISUAL INTEREST

- Utilize blank walls next to empty plots for murals.
- Incorporate public art such as sculptures at intersections and street terminations to enhance interest and engagement.

4. PLACEMAKING

- Define the street as a space by containing it with fencing, landscaping, signage and displays.
- Allow for areas for rest and observation by providing benches and other urban furnishings.

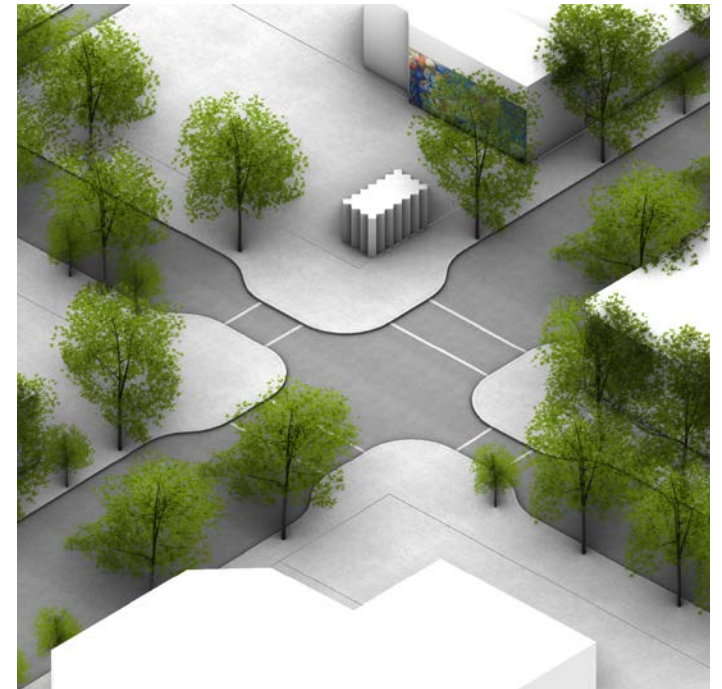
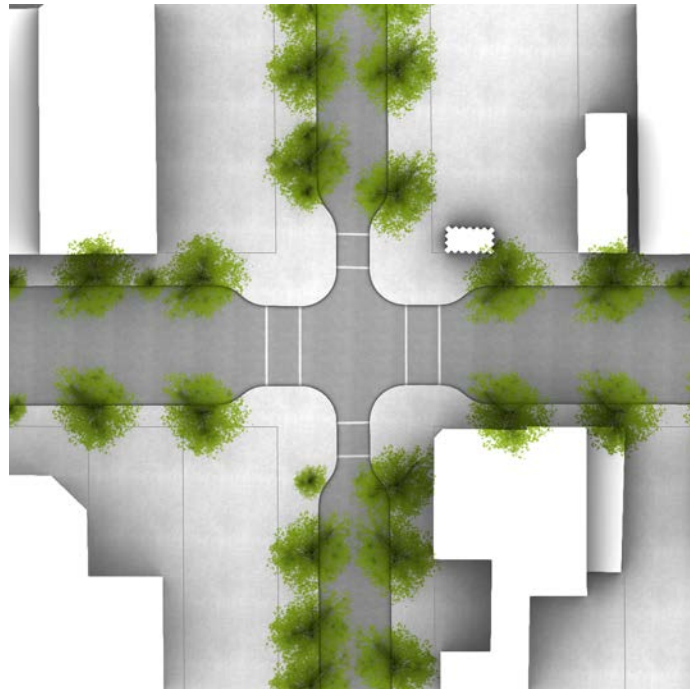


STREET TREES



- 71 existing trees
- 102 new trees proposed

Note: A detailed sidewalk survey needs to be completed to confirm the viability of the existing trees and the ability to locate new trees as proposed.



CONCEPT IMAGES



ADD VISUAL INTEREST



PROVIDE SHADE



DEFINE PEDESTRIAN ZONES



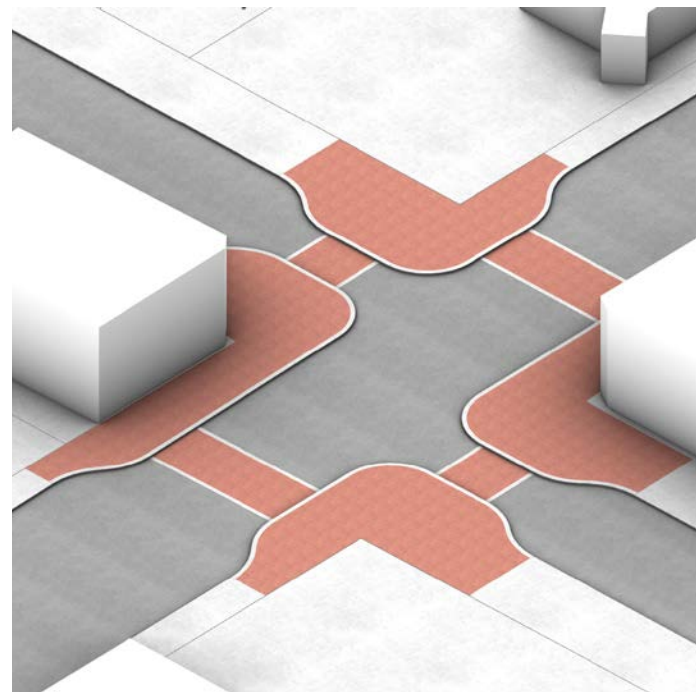
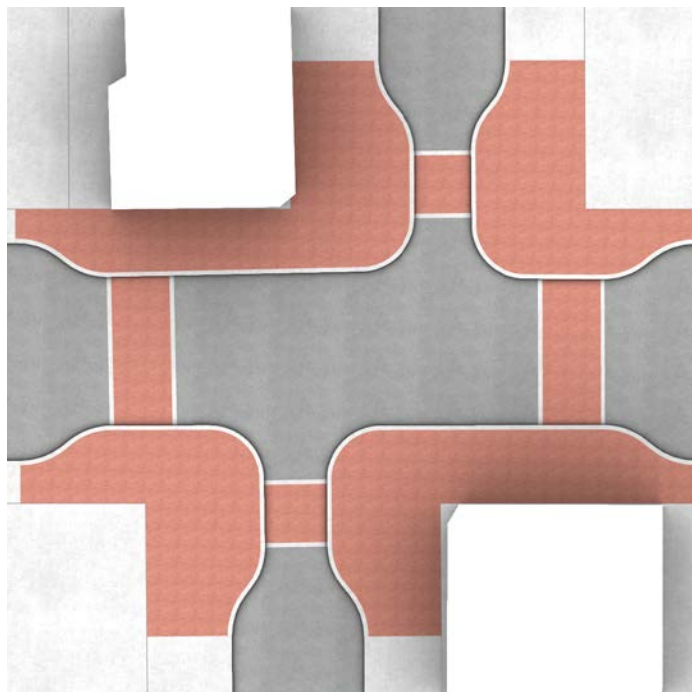
AID STREET IDENTITY

SIDEWALK & CROSSWALKS — STREET INTERSECTIONS



Curb extensions clearly define intersections, promote pedestrian safety by minimizing crossing distances and signal to drivers a pedestrian-priority hierarchy. The increased surface area of the pedestrian zone at corners allow for public art to be displayed, or for informal performances to take place. It also provides rest and observation spaces, such as benches and other furnishings. Curb extensions, in this case, will not reduce the traffic capacity of the street; in fact, by indicating parking zones more clearly, traffic is disrupted less frequently by drivers seeking spaces for their cars in undefined areas.

POTENTIAL INTERVENTION AREA:
40,400 SQ FT

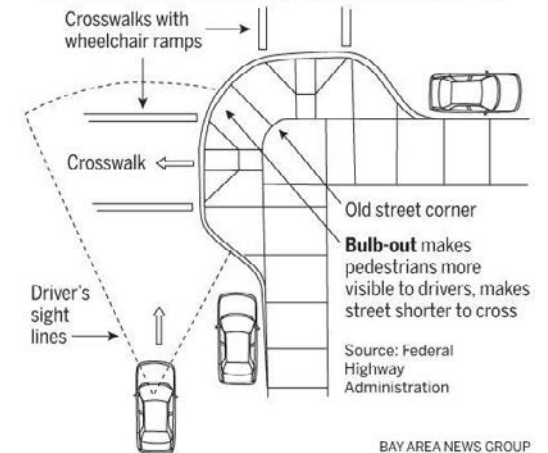


CONCEPT IMAGES



About the bulb-out

Road planners increasingly favor a street-corner design called a "bulb-out" that makes it safer for pedestrians to cross streets.



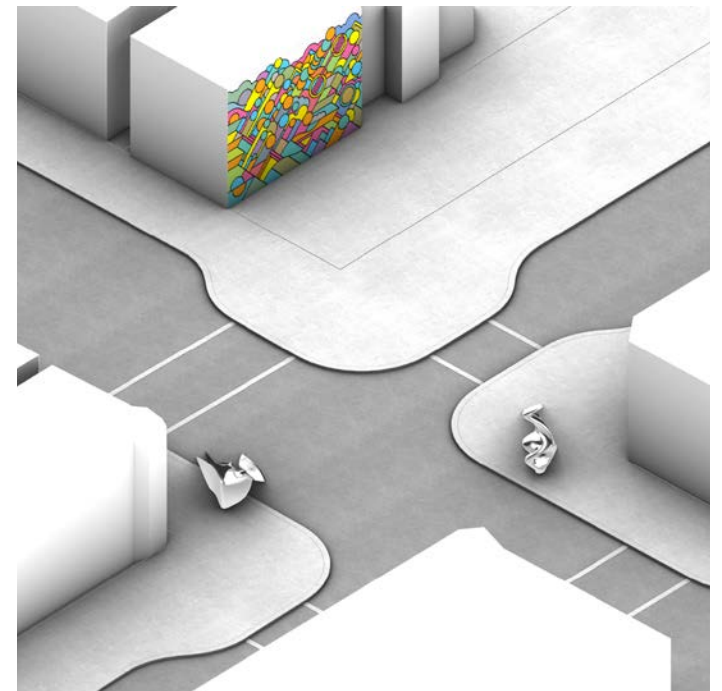
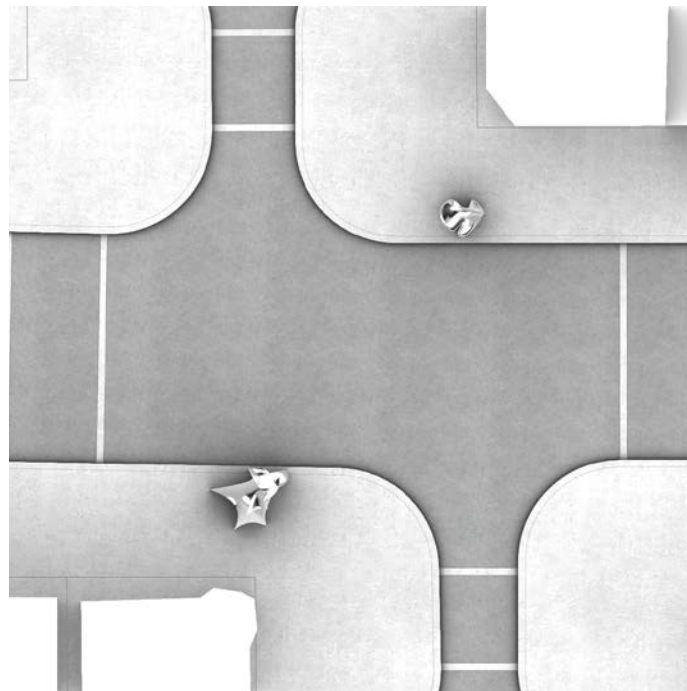
BAY AREA NEWS GROUP



PUBLIC ART, SCULPTURE & MURALS



- 6 new sculptures/ public art
- 7 new murals (7,240 sq ft)
 - Provides visual interest
 - Engagement of the community and local artists
 - Creates a sense of place



CONCEPT IMAGES

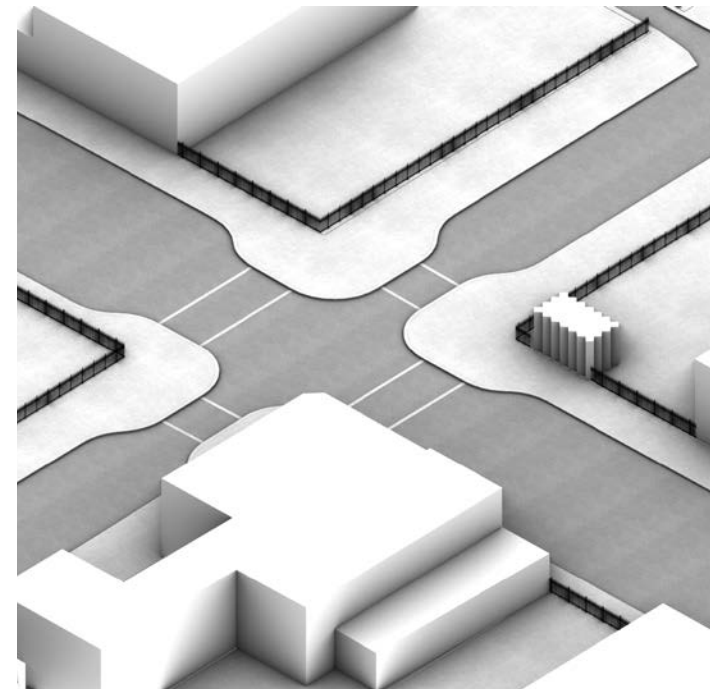
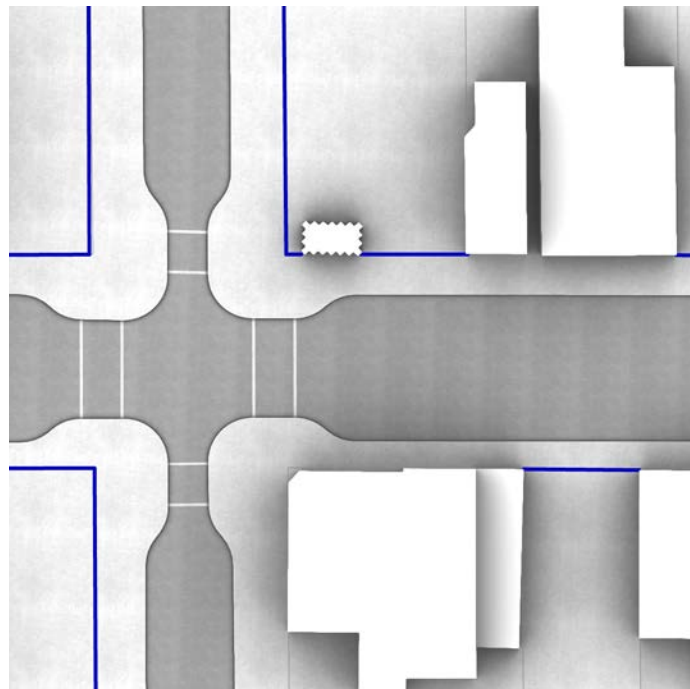


FENCING & EDGE DEFINING



2,700 ft of fencing and other devices

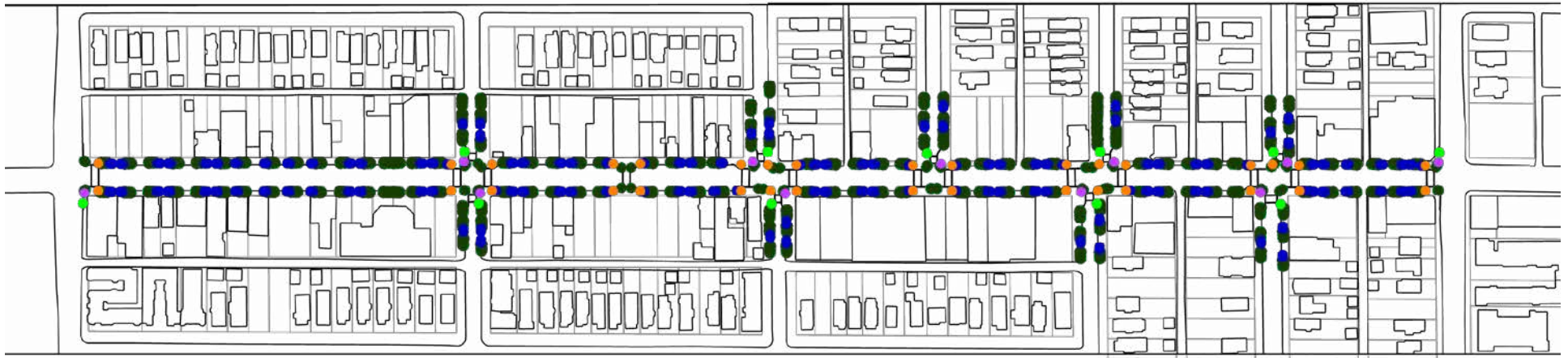
- The use of fencing improves pedestrian comfort and scene of safety
- Define private / public spaces
- Frame and define the street
- Contain the space
- Can be used for signage and positive messaging
- Green fences improve visual impact of empty plots.



CONCEPT IMAGES

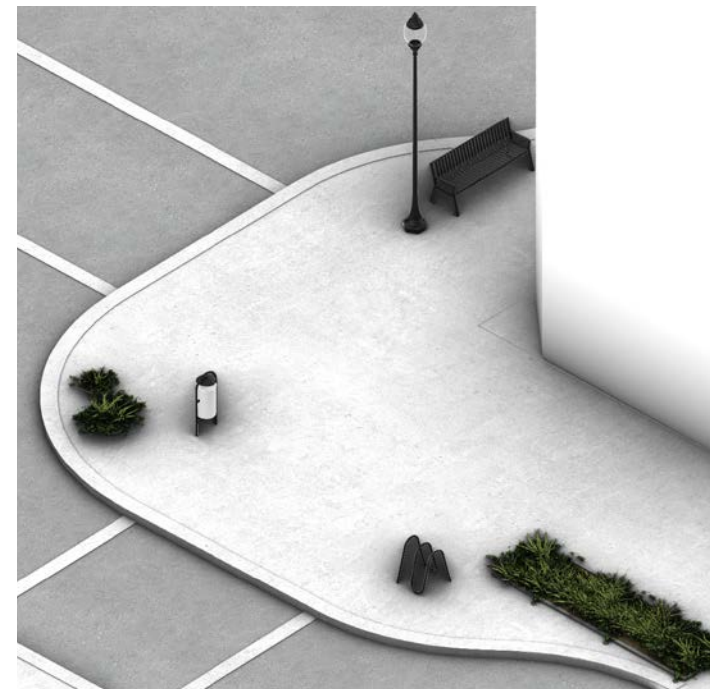
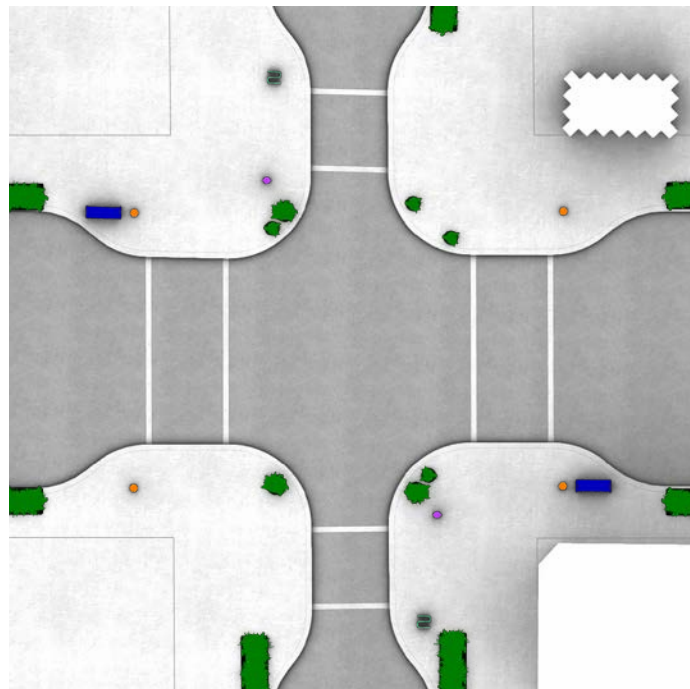


URBAN FURNISHINGS



- 150 sidewalk planters
- 50 decorative planters
- 120 metal benches
- 33 street lamps
- 11 trash cans
- 11 bike racks

- Increase pedestrian safety
- Provide pedestrian comfort
- Allow for a more usable and enjoyable public space
- Entice pedestrians to stay and use the public realm
- Improve aesthetics



CONCEPT IMAGES



INTERSECTION OF CHICAGO & MAYFIELD AVENUES — BEFORE



INTERSECTION OF CHICAGO & MAYFIELD AVENUES — AFTER



INTERSECTION OF CHICAGO & MENARD AVENUES — BEFORE



INTERSECTION OF CHICAGO & MENARD AVENUES — AFTER



INTERSECTION OF CHICAGO & MASSASOIT AVENUES — BEFORE



INTERSECTION OF CHICAGO & MASSASOIT AVENUES — AFTER



RECOMMENDED STRATEGY — OPPORTUNITY PLOTS



The graphic above illustrates opportunity plots in pink.

Opportunity Plots are plots or existing buildings with the potential to be developed with business oriented uses or uses that are complementary to businesses.

Vacant sites should be redeveloped to the maximum permitted by zoning to create more intensity and density of uses and activities in the corridor.

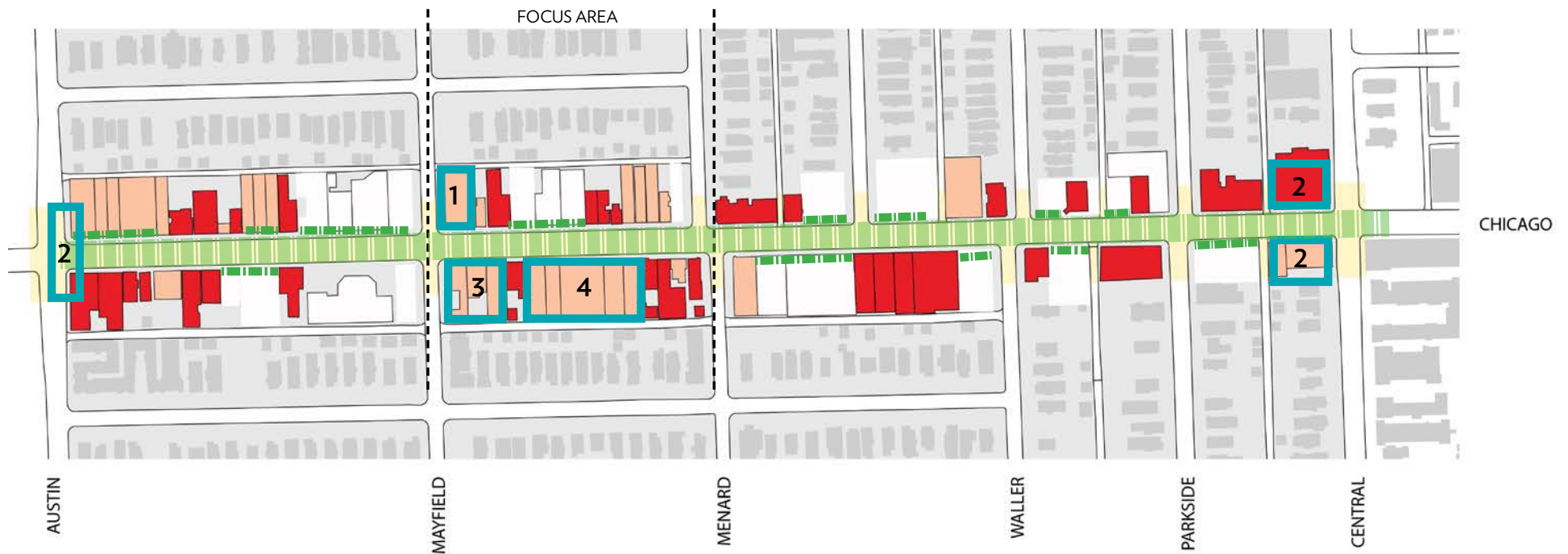
Focus development efforts and strategies around opportunity sites.

Note that a more detailed survey of existing buildings needs to be undertaken to determine which buildings can be successfully rehabbed and adaptively reused.

■ BUSINESS
■ OPPORTUNITY SITES
 (BUSINESS OR BUSINESS PROMTING USES)



RECOMMENDED STRATEGY — CATALYTIC PROJECTS



CATALYTIC PROJECT 1 — Community Garden

CATALYTIC PROJECT 2 — Gateway Buildings Rehabilitation

CATALYTIC PROJECT 3 — Entertainment Hub

CATALYTIC PROJECT 4 — Multi- Program/Use Park

Focus on the easier, more straightforward projects first, including enhancing the public realm, then address the cluster of projects proposed for the central area within the corridor.





4

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES/DELIVERY

The analysis of the site, context, and demographics concluded that a mixed-use corridor, transit-oriented, and improved visually will be needed to revitalize the Austin Chicago Avenue corridor. The input of the stakeholders in the neighborhood led to the identification of cultural, health, and education as needed facilities to serve the community.

Other successful corridor revitalizations in Chicago have demonstrated that beautification of streets and facades alone will not guarantee the revitalization desired, but an integrated effort of catalytic projects, infill and redevelopment, and infrastructure/streetscape improvement can achieve the desired socio-economic advancement.

The key is the implementation of the Vision through these catalytic projects and infrastructure improvements. The strategies, roles and responsibilities to implement the vision, and designation of delivery timeframes will create a certainty and predictability for revitalization which is needed for public investment in the community and for attracting private development and investment.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Austin Soul City Corridor Association needs to be created and become responsible for the redevelopment, operations and maintenance of the revitalization. This can be in the form of a business improvement district similar to other places in Chicago.

The City with CDPD, CDOT, and CTA need to be active promoters and funders of the revitalization plan, including the regeneration of City-owned parcels.

Strategic partnerships with other entertainment, cultural, health organizations need to be fostered to provide the facilities needed to serve the Austin community and to support revitalization of the corridor.

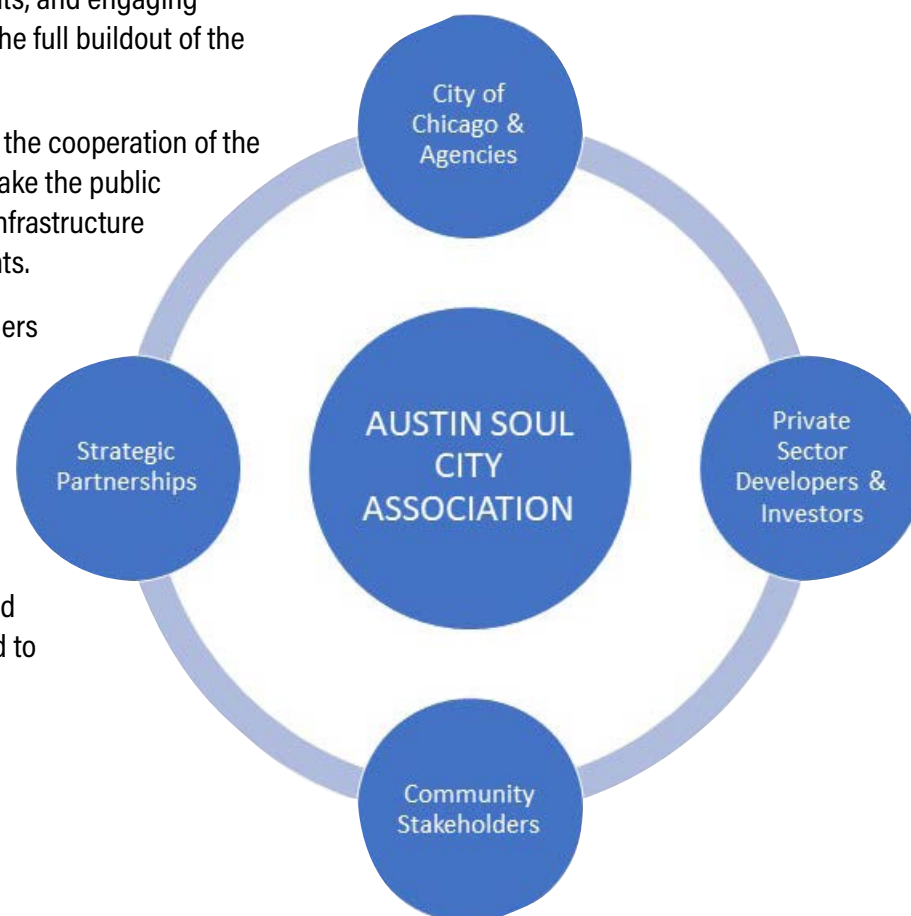
Private sector developers, investors and property owners will be responsible for the rehabilitation of facades and buildings, infill redevelopment, and vacant site development.

The Austin Soul City Association will be responsible for the public and private sector marketing and promotion of the corridor, development of strategic partnering with health, cultural, entertainment, and service providers, collaboration with the City and cooperating agencies for infrastructure and streetscape improvements, and engaging developers and investors in the full buildout of the revitalization plan.

The City of Chicago will, with the cooperation of the Association, fund and undertake the public sector scope of projects for infrastructure and streetscape improvements.

The corridor's Strategic Partners in entertainment and culture, health and wellness, education and training will incorporate the Austin corridor in their own growth and development plans, promote the partnerships, and build out the facilities needed to serve the Austin community.

Potential developers and investors - at the invitation of the Association - will be invited to propose regeneration plans for individual or groups of parcels, especially those owned by the City, and then with City approval, undertake the renewal process.



COST & FUNDING

A critical part of implementation of the Austin Chicago corridor revitalization plan is the costing and funding of catalytic projects, infrastructure improvements, renovation and upgrading of properties and buildings, and new infill development on vacant sites.

Recently, Austin was awarded a part of a citywide fund to use for revitalization efforts. The cost of the Austin Chicago corridor improvement should be a primary line item in this grant.

In addition, traditional tax benefit programs, which encourage private investment, and new financial instruments, should be considered alongside traditional investment strategies that have been successfully deployed in the stressed communities.

Austin is a City of Chicago Designated Retail Thrive Zone. This designation provides property tax abatements, small business grants and neighborhood opportunity funds, enterprise zone and tax increment financing (TIF) benefits.

All relevant financing options and support agencies should be engaged to achieve and maintain a sustainable and predictable level of support for Austin.

TIMEFRAMES

The Austin Soul City Vision is a blueprint for 2030+ and intended to be built out over the next ten years and beyond with each successive and successful phase built upon the work completed and celebrated.

2020-2022

The Soul City Association in cooperation with the City publish the Vision and begin marketing the mix of uses and concepts to strategic partners, developers and investors.

2022-2024

The City commits to and executes the final design of infrastructure and streetscape improvements.

2024-2026

The Austin Soul City Association with its strategic partners and the private sector renovate and build out the needed facilities in the corridor to serve the Austin community.

2026-2030

Investors and developers renovate the remaining existing buildings and build out the vacant lots.

NEXT STEPS

1. Create the Austin Soul City Association
2. Publish and promote the Vision
3. Build strategic partnerships with entertainment, health, and education organizations
4. Develop final design, cost estimates and funding mechanisms for the catalytic projects and public improvements, property rehabilitation, and infill development.
5. Proceed with the City to execute the catalytic projects and infrastructure/streetscape improvements.



5

CONCLUSION

The Chicago Central Area Committee, Central City Strategy White Paper, concluded: "A framework that encourages diverse, community-based businesses to thrive will increase the flow of dollars, jobs and contracting opportunities from the Central City to the neighborhoods, between neighborhoods, and from the suburbs into the City of Chicago. Labor market links need to be strengthened, as well, to ensure that neighborhood residents can connect to growing job opportunities throughout the City."

This Commercial Development Study & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan envisions both cooperation and investment from the public and private sectors. The transformations that could come from the kinds of projects and collaborations described herein are sincerely needed by the Austin neighborhood, particularly along the Chicago Avenue "Soul City" corridor.

World Business Chicago has published examples of strategies and techniques to improve business procurement strategies and link small businesses with investors and resources. Cooperation can also come in the form of reforms for policies and practices. Zoning, planning and construction permitting should all be considered as segments of the development process that could be refined to help encourage economic development in Austin.