



AFFORDABILITY & EQUITY



What We've Heard:

Affordable housing is a top priority for the future of Downtown Oakland. Housing production is not keeping pace with increased market demand, and Oakland residents are increasingly being priced out of the housing market.

With rents and sales prices continuing to rise, stakeholders are concerned about displacement and want to ensure that Oakland residents can continue to afford housing Downtown. Some specific comments raised by participants throughout the process are listed below.

- There is not enough affordable housing Downtown; many Downtown residents are worried that they will not be able to afford to remain in the area.
- Some residents that have lived Downtown for decades can no longer afford to due to rapidly increasing rents.
- A hot real estate market is fueling rent increases for commercial & residential space.
- Cultural conflicts are occurring between existing residents and new residents.
- “Naturally Affordable Housing” or housing that is affordable by design, like the historic single-room occupancy residential hotels (SROs), fill a need for well-located housing that is affordable without a subsidy. Many of these are at risk of conversion to higher-end residences or hotels.
- More housing types, of all sizes (not just luxury units), are needed in Oakland to house families as well as singles. Downtown lacks residential units that have more than 1 bedroom, which is necessary to accommodate families with attendant amenities.
- Affordable housing needs to be provided for a range of incomes; affordable housing is different for everyone. Housing is needed Downtown that is affordable to households at a range of incomes; an affordable housing payment is typically defined as one that is less than 30 percent of household income.
- Grow downtown in a way that meets more of the housing needs, while respecting the context and character of each neighborhood.
- Buildings under six stories, which are less expensive to build than taller buildings, are prominent—adequate infill development should accommodate this market reality; taller buildings make sense too, in the appropriate location—variety is essential.



Single-room occupancy residential hotels (SROs)

How Can Issues of Affordability & Equity Be Addressed in the Specific Plan?

Rising housing costs are causing challenges throughout the City, and multiple initiatives are currently underway to address the need to ensure that housing is available for Oakland residents at all income levels. The Specific Plan offers an important opportunity to evaluate the critical role the Downtown plays in providing housing for residents, and to consider how citywide initiatives can be targeted to address the Downtown area. The Downtown currently includes over 2,100 subsidized housing units, representing about 21% of the City's stock of income-restricted housing. Downtown is especially important as a location for affordable housing because of its access to transportation, ability to live a more affordable lifestyle without a car or with fewer cars per household, and within walking distance of services, shopping and entertainment. Given that the area has also received a high proportion of recent new development, the Downtown is a critical place to consider ways to focus efforts to prevent displacement, preserve existing affordable units and leverage future development to help meet housing goals.

The city is considering a number of citywide policies and initiatives in an effort to address affordable housing needs in Oakland. In October 2015, the City Council approved the policy framework described in *A Roadmap Toward Equity: Housing Solutions for Oakland, California*.¹ The report recommends a wide range of strategies designed to protect existing residents, build new affordable housing and improve existing housing while maintaining affordability. The Mayor has also created a Housing Cabinet and tasked it with making recommendations about implementation.

Some of the actions that are being considered include:

- Encourage increased housing production as a way to help stabilize rents and prices.
- Protect existing tenants by expanding tenant protection laws and focusing on improved enforcement; ensure safe conditions for low income tenants through a Safe Housing Inspection Program and adoption of new seismic retrofit requirements; provide a single point of entry through the newly created Homeless Families Coordinated System, for homeless families in Oakland, to access homeless resources such as shelter, transitional housing and the new Rapid Rehousing funds.
- Create new resources for housing by adopting development impact fees, utilizing the state Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities “Cap & Trade” program, and exploring the possibility of a Regional Housing Bond
- Build new housing by developing a new Public Lands Policy, creating more lenient secondary unit requirements, and expanding the City's pilot Vacant Lot program (which creates a pipeline for nonprofit developers and owner-occupants to purchase abandoned properties).
- Add a social equity component to the specific plan that would ensure that policies are developed to address the physical environment and economic conditions for all people, including those who have been historically disadvantaged through the promotion of participatory engagement and positive social change.
- Use the Plan Downtown process to spur citywide policy and action to support equity and affordability.



Temporary artist & small business start-up space in repurposed shipping containers



ARTS & CULTURAL HERITAGE



What We've Heard:

It is clear that what Oaklanders value most strongly about their city is its the diverse cultural heritage and the creative arts. Their ideas for the future are discussed below.

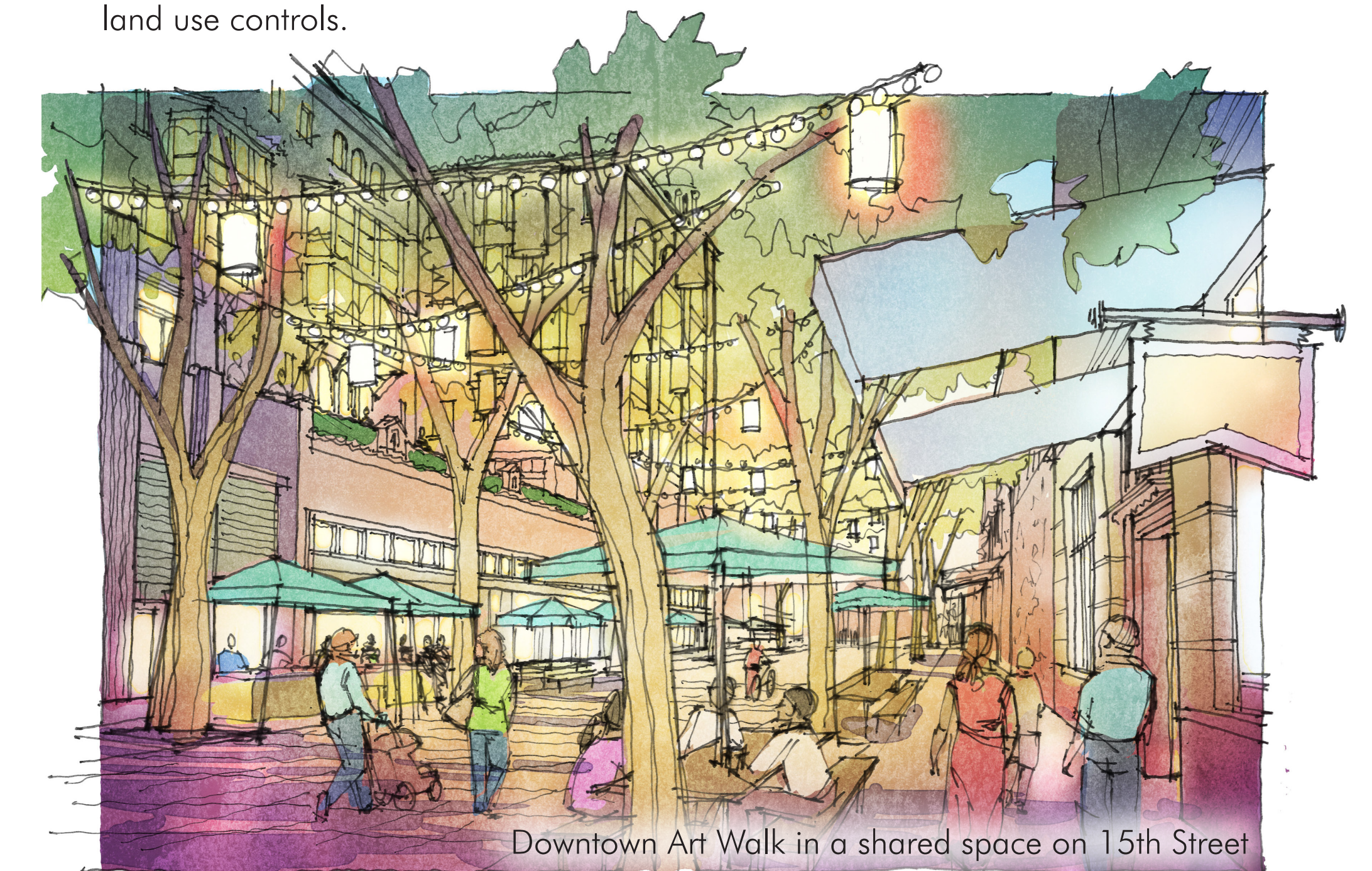
- The arts and cultural institutions Downtown are well used by residents and visitors; they are an historic part of the city and need to remain that way.
- Arts and culture are both underfunded (although very active); the previous elimination of the Arts Commission has resulted in less available funding in Oakland.
- Both new and existing artists need affordable, creative spaces of all types and sizes.
- Implement the newly created Black Arts Movement and Business District.
- Dedication to funding the arts and culture is imperative, otherwise there is a concern that organizations that have long been a part of the distinct dynamic downtown will be displaced.
- Many youth organizations have located downtown; they are well-used and need more affordable space. Participants suggested creating a Youth Empowerment Zone. A Youth Empowerment Zone would include a clear, shared vision for the area as well as incentives and other supportive mechanisms. Shared programming and coordination for events could also be a part of the designation.
- The historic area that surrounds 25th Street has existing art galleries that should be able to stay in the area and build on the arts momentum that has already gained a positive reputation.
- Many neighborhoods in Oakland already have a cohesive arts scene; participants suggested that all of Downtown be a designated arts district.



How Can Arts & Cultural Heritage Be Addressed in the Specific Plan?

Potential policy recommendations to explore for maintaining the existing, and growing new, arts and cultural places in Downtown Oakland, include the following:

- Recommend an initiative or study in the Specific Plan that seeks to restore the Arts Commission, or equivalent. An Arts Commission can help to coordinate events and programming for artists and institutions. The commission can also provide opportunities for funding arts events and local artists. The commission can serve as a liaison between the City and the arts community.
- Illustrate and describe recommendations for the Black Arts Movement and Business District along 14th Street such as improving the Malonga Center, increased AAMLO staffing and enhanced programing, explore zoning and tax incentives and other improvements.
- Depict and describe a clear vision for a Youth Empowerment Zone and include implementation techniques to ensure that the vision can be accomplished (e.g. neighborhood guidelines, incentives or requirements, a definition for youth related organizations).
- Define, illustrate, and envision an arts district in Downtown, which may include a series of arts districts within specific neighborhoods, that are well connected and coordinated with one another.
- Coordinate the preservation of the arts and cultural institutions with strategies for affordability.
- Help to visualize how arts and culture can remain a part of the city fabric moving forward through a menu of building types in the Specific Plan that accommodate artists and cultural organizations.
- Implement the Mayor's Artist Housing and Workspace Task Force recommendations through land use controls.



Downtown Art Walk in a shared space on 15th Street



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



What We've Heard:

Oakland is experiencing a period of sustained economic growth, with a significant increase in jobs, declining unemployment and increased investment in new businesses and development activity. Nowhere are these changes more apparent than the Downtown, which has experienced an upsurge in national attention and economic activity.

The City is increasingly known for its successful and unique arts and entertainment scene. However, residents, business owners and other stakeholders are concerned about negative consequences that have accompanied recent economic growth, including rising commercial rents and the need to stabilize existing businesses. Stakeholders strongly communicated the need to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared widely among residents, businesses, non-profits, artists and other local stakeholders. Other ideas expressed throughout the process include:

- Businesses, non-profits, and local institutions that have been central to the distinct culture that defines Oakland, are being priced out of their commercial and office spaces.
- Design and implement regulations that promote “incubator spaces” or shared office spaces, so that small businesses can share the costs of office and commercial spaces.
- Growth and change can be guided by a strong and consensus-based vision.
- Repurposed I-980 right-of-way can be a source of growth and economic benefit for Oakland, as well as a place to accommodate housing and other new construction.
- Many long term residents lack the technical skills to compete in a changing high tech workforce and are being priced out of Oakland



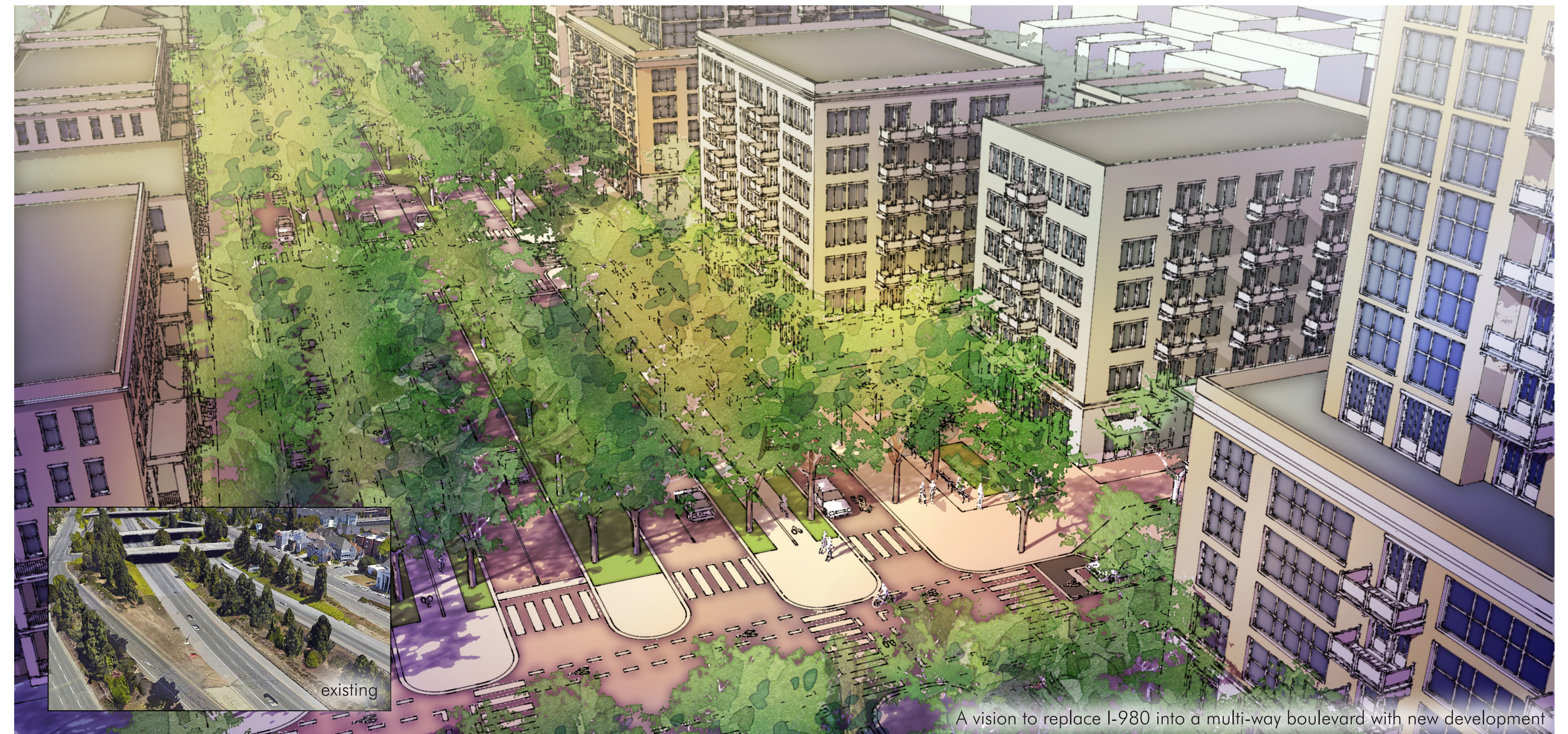
How Can Economic Development Be Addressed?

The Specific Plan will articulate a clear vision to guide future growth and development. It will consider how economic activity can help pay for needed public improvements and affordable housing, and also consider policies that help to protect and nurture a diverse set of local businesses, artists, and other desired uses.

The City is developing an economic development strategy, focused on supporting business growth and linking residents to jobs. As the most important center of economic activity and jobs in Oakland, the Specific Plan will link to this strategy and include specific policies and initiatives that can achieve these goals. Additional ideas that may be considered include:

- Define an implementation strategy, with both near-term and long-term goals, that captures the economic benefits of a strong market, to help bring plan goals to fruition.
- Provide incubator and co-working space to support new businesses.
- Encourage spaces for local businesses and arts uses within new development projects.
- Expand the City's existing programs and relationships with Community Development Financial Institutions to provide financial and technical assistance to local women- and minority-owned businesses, worker-owned cooperatives and businesses that are in danger of having to relocate.

- Offering a density bonus for arts or cultural uses in new development projects.
- An improved Howard Terminal could bring new energy to the Jack London District and Downtown. Create a community asset at Howard Terminal, which may include a new stadium, stronger connections to Jack London Square, and improved public access and amenities.
- Investigate the removal/burying of I-980
- Work with anchor institutions and new development projects to negotiate local hiring and purchasing agreements that will have a multiplier effect in the local economy.
- Invest in workforce development that connects residents with training and apprenticeships for living wage jobs in fields needed in Oakland, such as construction and health care.
- Maintain zoning for a variety of job types including jobs in the trades and industry and maker space.



A vision to replace I-980 into a multi-way boulevard with new development



BUILT ENVIRONMENT, PRESERVATION & HOUSING



What We've Heard:

Oakland has a wealth of historic buildings, cultural landmarks, and open spaces that tell the story of its history and diverse communities.

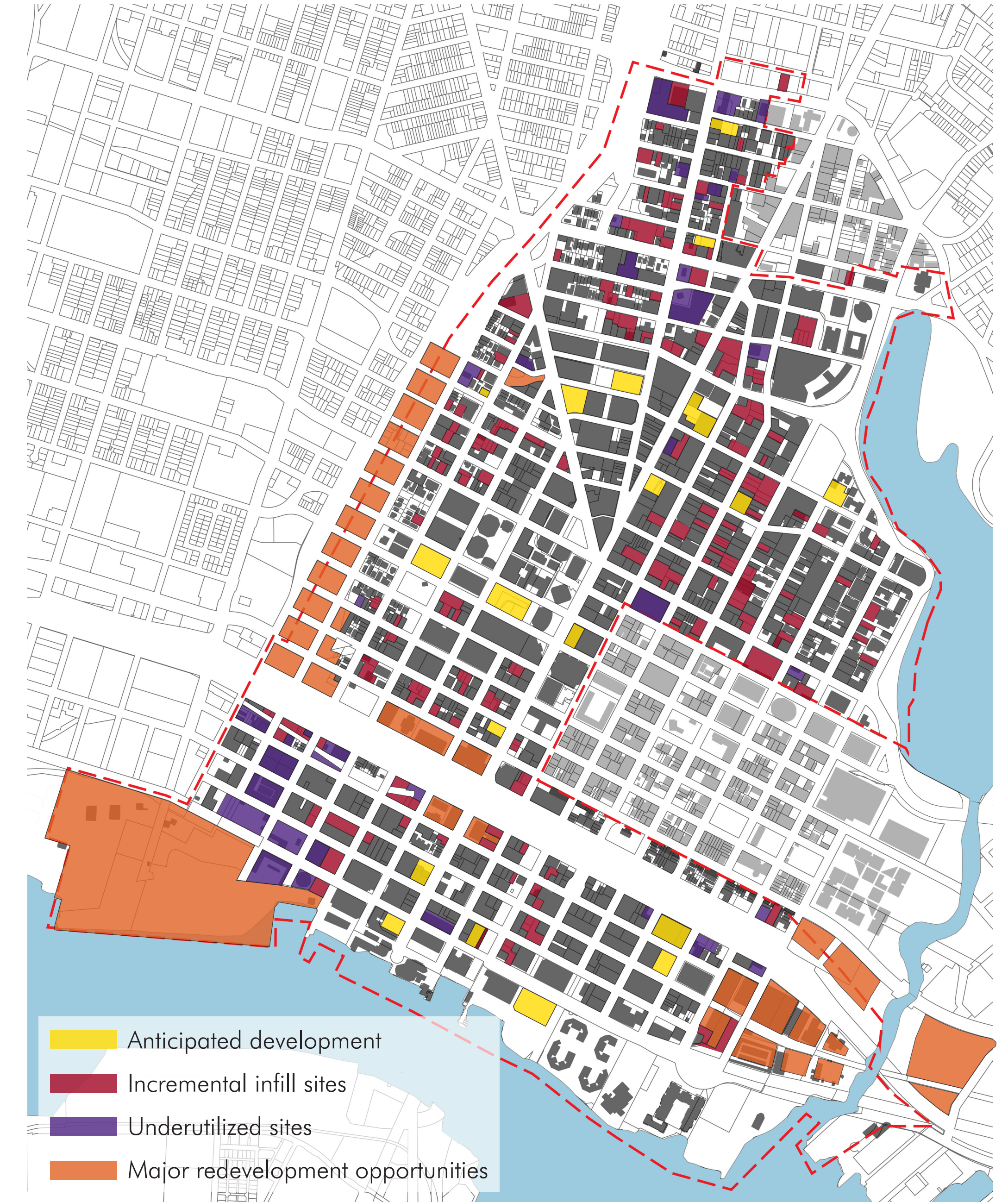
Within Downtown there are several different types of historic districts, including the National Register-listed Downtown Oakland Historic District as well as a number of locally-designated historic districts. Oakland local historic districts are designated within a two-tiered system. One tier is Areas of Primary Importance (API), which are National Register-quality, but not necessarily listed, historic districts. The other tier is Areas of Secondary Importance (ASI) or districts of local interest.

Major concepts that have been expressed regarding preservation and the future of the built environment are described below.

- In the future, Downtown will need to grow and adapt (in order to provide more housing, for example). However, the unique, historic buildings, spaces and places also need to be protected.
- Consider the important view corridors through Downtown Oakland.
- Understand there is a clear connection between Downtown and Chinatown that requires continued planning and historic preservation practices.

How Can the Specific Plan Address This?

- Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized historic buildings by creating an easily available and implemented set of incentives for property owners that include permit streamlining and fee reductions, application of the California Historic Building Code, adjustments to parking requirements, Transfer of Development Rights, Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits, and Mills Act Contracts.
- Consider expanding the boundaries and district contributors to the Oakland Downtown National Register Historic District to create additional opportunities for use of the wide range of historic preservation incentives available through local, state, and federal programs.
- Provide strategies that will ensure a mix of building types, heights, and uses in Downtown. There are a wealth of smaller-scale, masonry buildings in Downtown that significantly contribute to the character of Oakland's urban fabric.
- Study, develop, and implement a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR program) that will assist in the overall preservation efforts Downtown.
- Investigate a rehabilitation program for owners of SRO hotels to encourage needed upgrades in these facilities while continuing to provide an affordable housing option within downtown.
- Strengthen recommendations to be used to guide the rehabilitation of buildings within designated and qualified historic districts. Focus on the frequent change that occurs to the lower stories of these structures as merchants change.
- Make the preservation and rehabilitiztion of SROs a priority





OPEN SPACE & RECREATION



What We've Heard:

Downtown has several great parks and open spaces. In the future, the existing parks need to be maintained and new parks and cultural spaces should be incorporated into the neighborhoods.

Oakland has an historic system of parks located throughout the City. Some of these parks are well-used and are neighborhood serving. Others are in need of revitalization. Lake Merritt is one of the best locations for recreation and local events—for both residents and visitors in Oakland.

- Downtown needs more parks and open spaces near residences so that families and children have a nearby place for recreation and leisure.
- The idea for the Webster Green in the Jack London district would provide a much needed park and also create a more inviting experience, connecting the city center to the waterfront.
- More cultural gathering spaces are needed in all neighborhoods. Improved streets and new plazas that encourage cultural activities and events are desired.
- In addition to new parks and programming, the existing parks in the Downtown area need to be maintained.
- Lake Merritt is an iconic part of downtown. The streets connecting over to the waterfront, such as 14th street should be more inviting so there is a better experience as people travel towards the lake and surrounding open space.
- Small scale pocket parks or plazas in the neighborhoods that are located west of San Pablo would add needed outdoor space to that section of Downtown.
- In the future, Howard Terminal should increase waterfront access for residents and visitors. Park space, a waterfront stadium, and other active spaces are suggested.

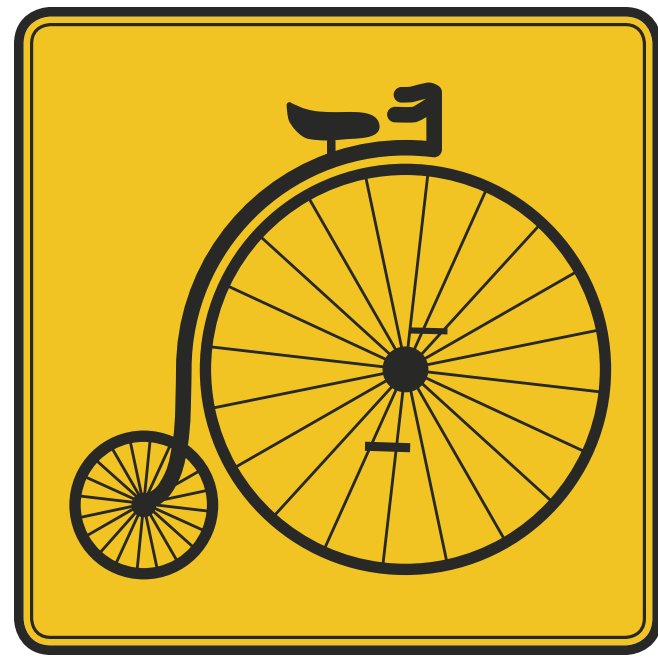
How Can Open Space & Recreation Be Addressed in the Specific Plan?

The Specific Plan can play a key role in coordinating previous plans for parks and open spaces as well as identify new locations for active and recreational space.

- Prioritize locations for new outdoor gathering, performing and exercise space in each of the neighborhoods.
- Working with members of staff, the process can identify existing parks that can benefit from maintenance improvements.
- Build upon the Measure DD improvements to Lake Merritt in order to identify areas for improvements, such as roof top gardens, community gardens, pocket parks, and dog parks.
- New development and revitalization needs to be well coordinated with new parks, cultural gathering spaces and street improvements.



Enhance and expand Snow Park along the edge of Lake Merritt.



CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

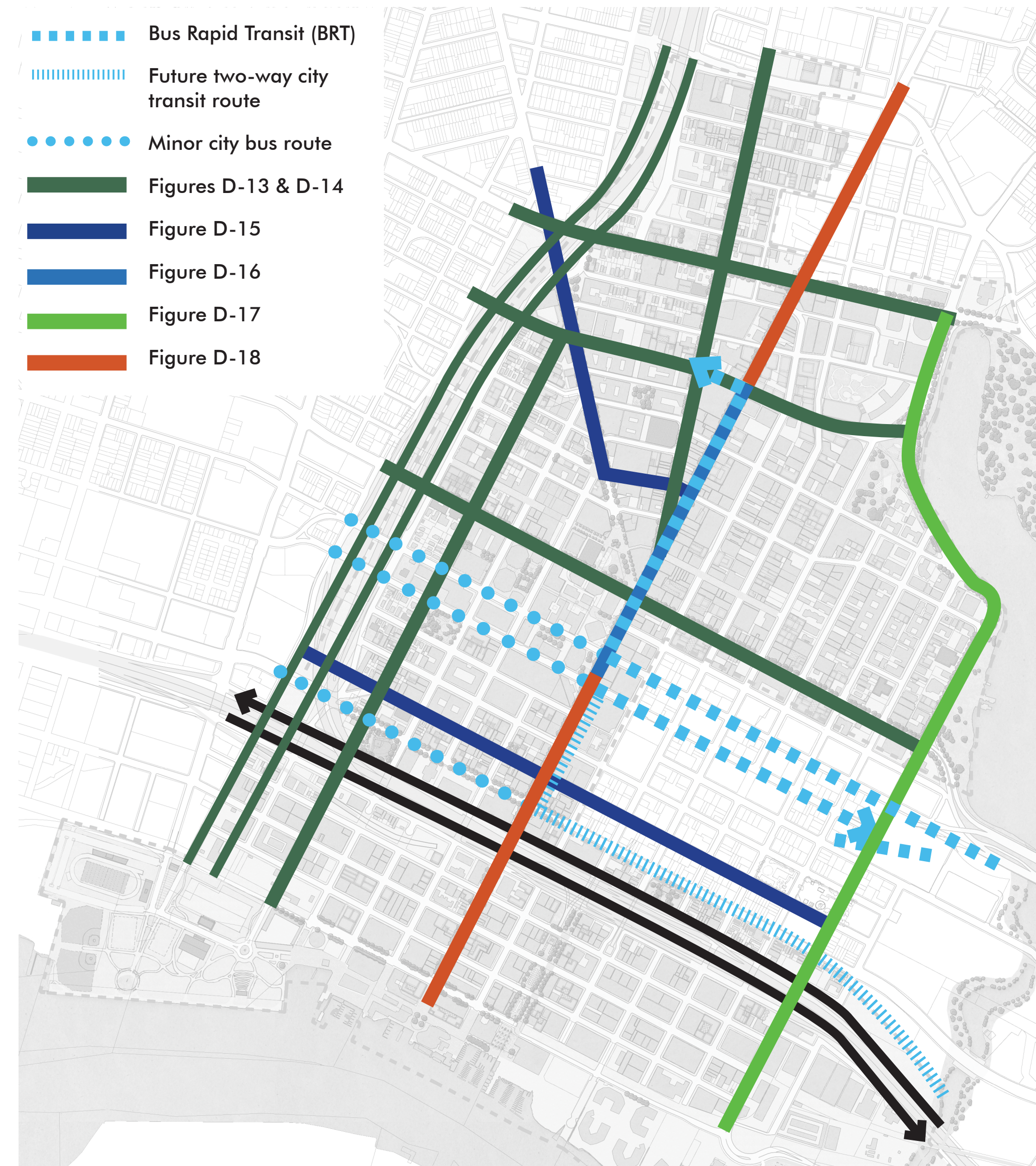


Figure D-12: Street map depicting major routes Downtown. Colors on map correspond with street sections on the following pages.

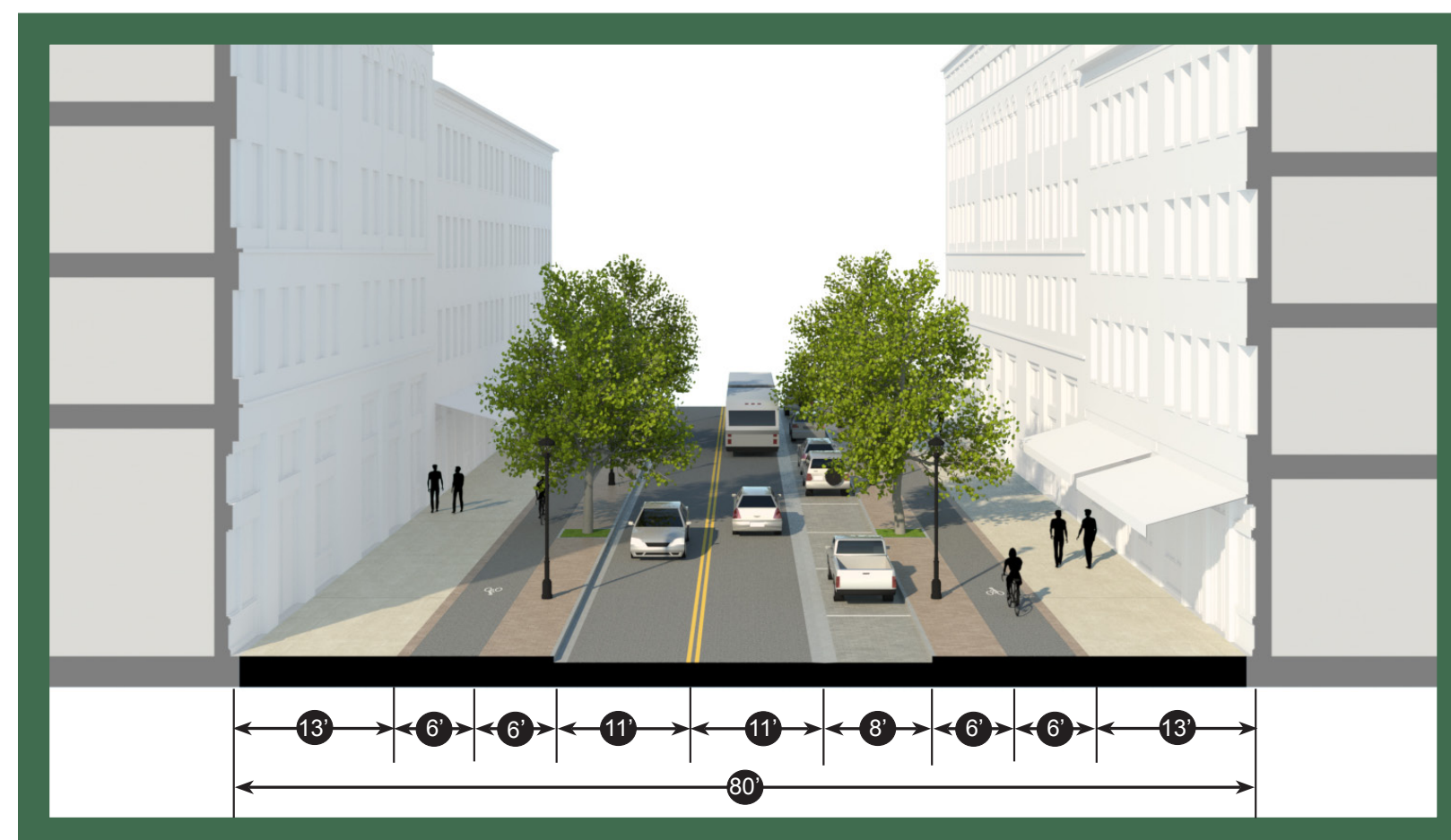


Figure D-13: 25 MPH Streets. Asphalt travel lanes, separated, buffered bike lanes, vertical curbs, street trees along with cars, busses, and bikes all share space on this street. Parallel parking occurs on one side of the street. This design is recommended for streets like 14th Street, 20th Street, Grand Avenue and Jefferson Street.

How Can Connectivity & Access Be Addressed?

In response to preliminary feedback on big ideas identified about transportation, the following recommendations are suggested for further investigation as the plan develops.

- Implement designs for streets, where pedestrians, cyclists and transit users are the priority.
- Implement policy and initiate a process to remove or re-purpose the I-980 freeway, freeing-up underutilized land and reconnecting West Oakland with Downtown.
- Study policy options that will result in a two-way restoration of as many downtown streets as is feasible; categorize and prioritize streets for a two-way conversion.
- Study policy alternatives that prioritize “road diets”, slimming unnecessarily wide car travel lanes and allocating equal space for bikes, pedestrians, transit as well as cars.

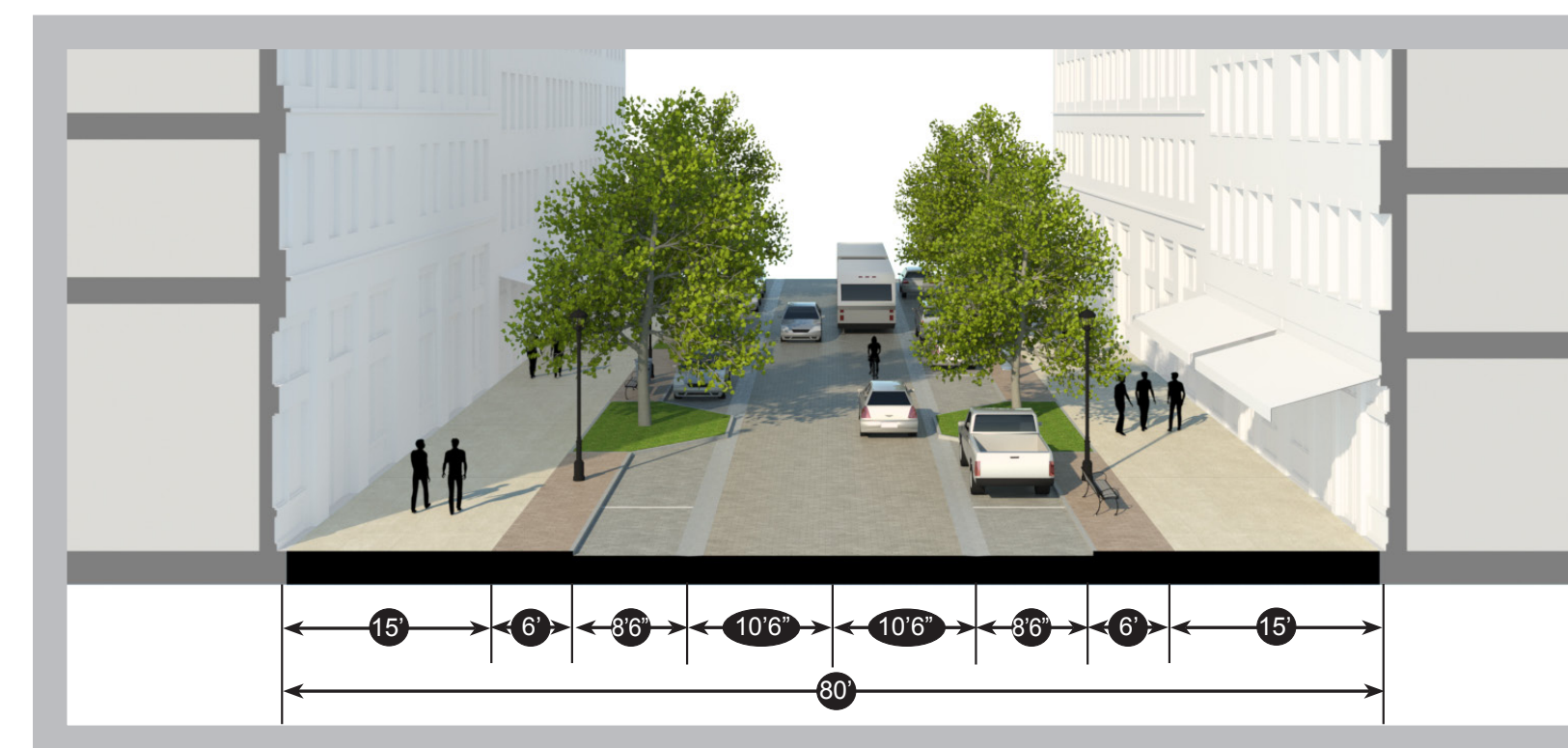


Figure D-19: Typical Streets, 20 MPH (slower). Texture, enclosure (trees), curb-less, parking on each side of the street and rain gardens define this type. Cars, buses, and bikes share space. This design is recommended for most side streets that are not primary traffic routes.

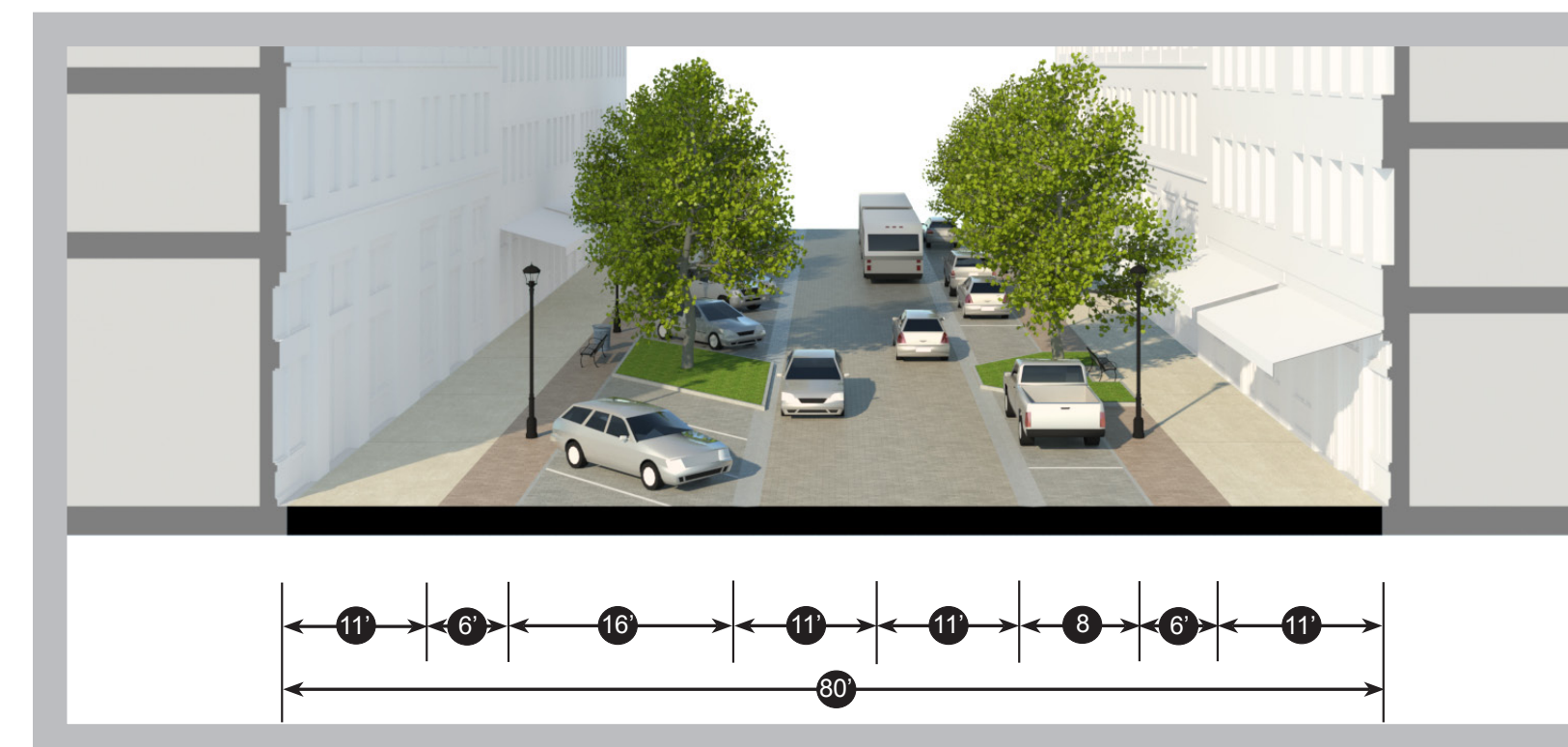


Figure D-20: Typical Streets: 20 MPH (slower) - with reverse angle parking. Texture, enclosure (trees), curb-less parking on each side of the street and rain gardens define this type. Reverse angle parking on one side is an alternative option for parking that provides more parking spots. Cars, buses, and bikes share space.

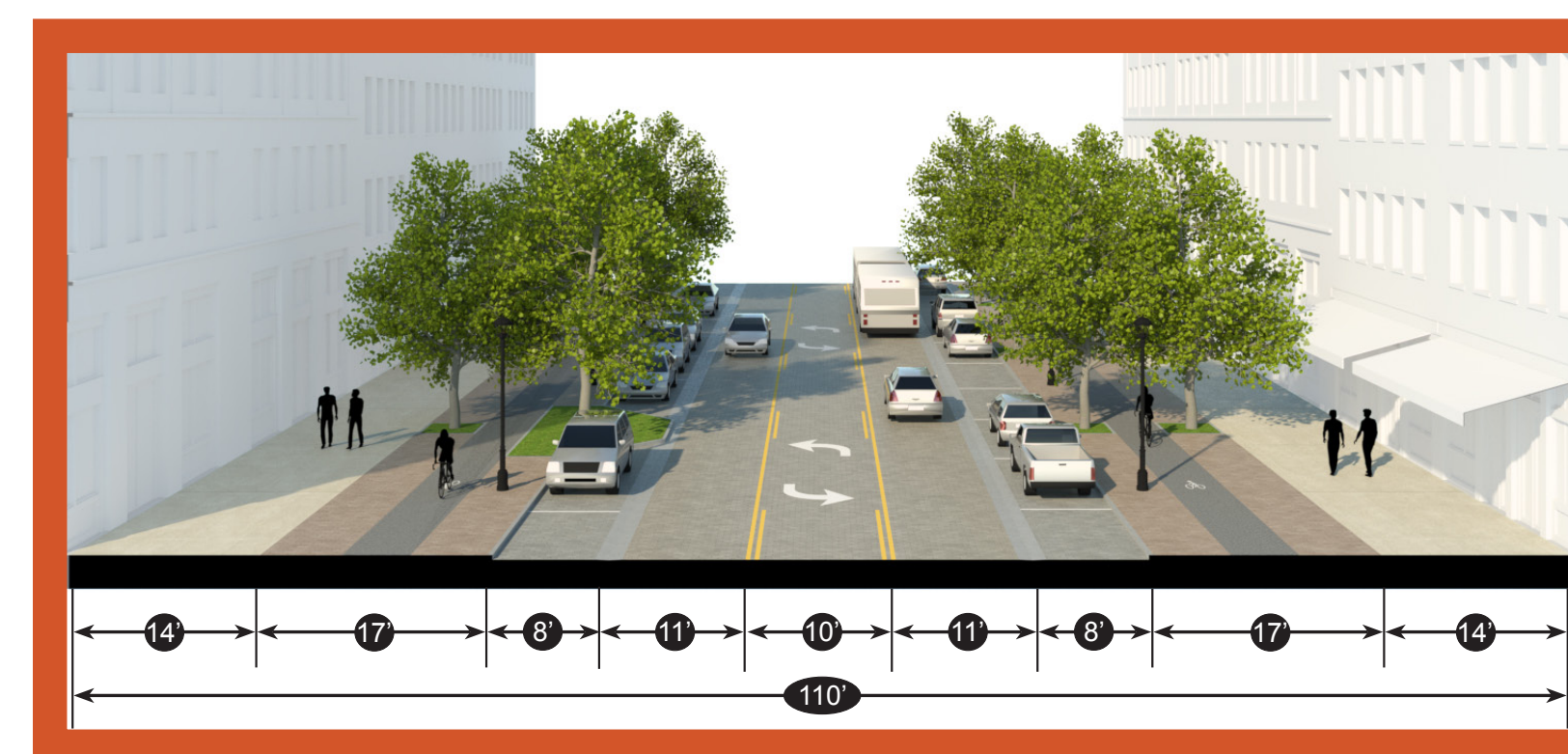


Figure D-18: 25 MPH Streets - Northern Part of Broadway and Southern Part of Broadway. The northern and southern portions of Broadway have a larger right-of-way. For these sections, when BRT stations are not present, the street design can accommodate transit, cars, separated bike infrastructure as well as parallel parking.

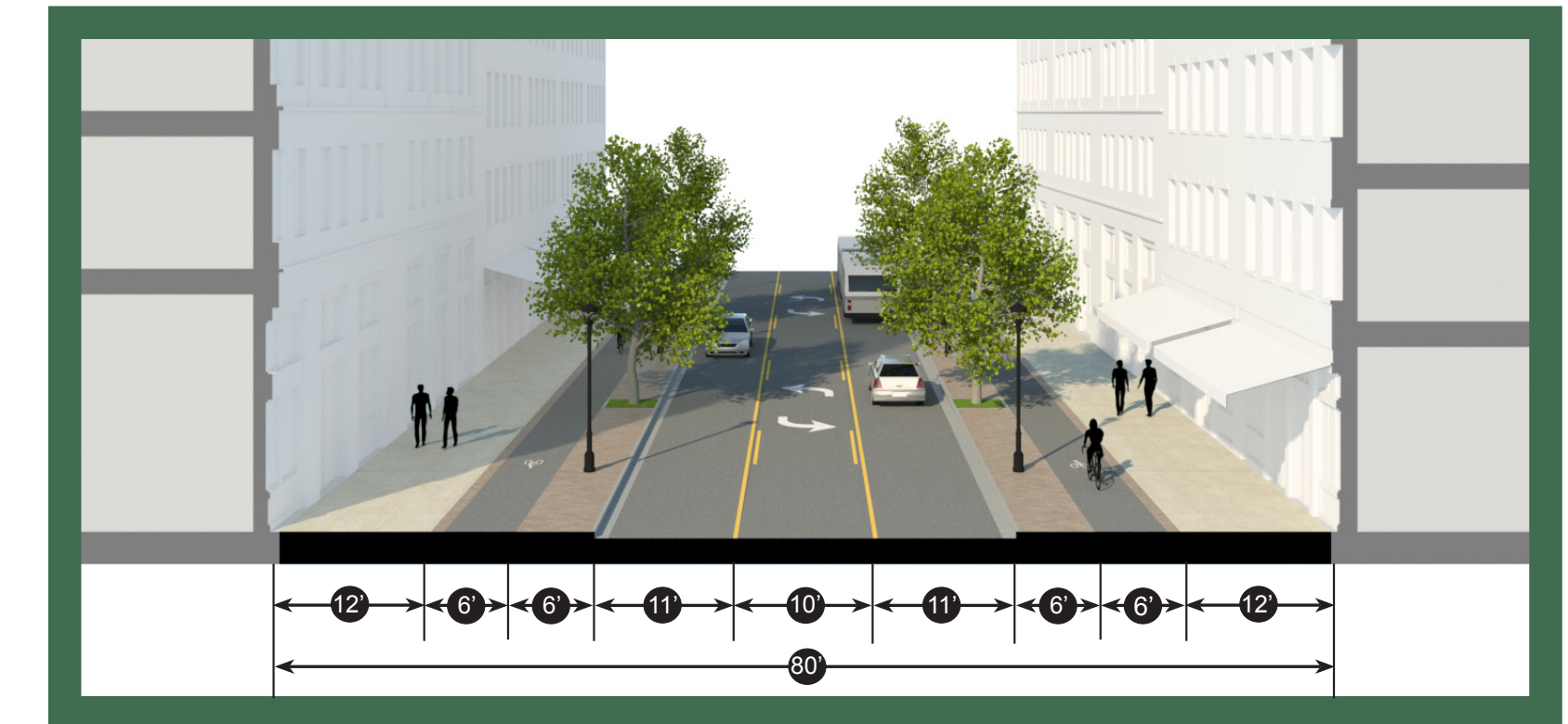


Figure D-14: 25 MPH Streets - with Center Turn Lane. For streets where a center turn lane is required. Separated, buffered bike lanes, trees along with cars, buses, and bikes all share space. This design is recommended for streets like 14th, 20th, Grand and Jefferson.

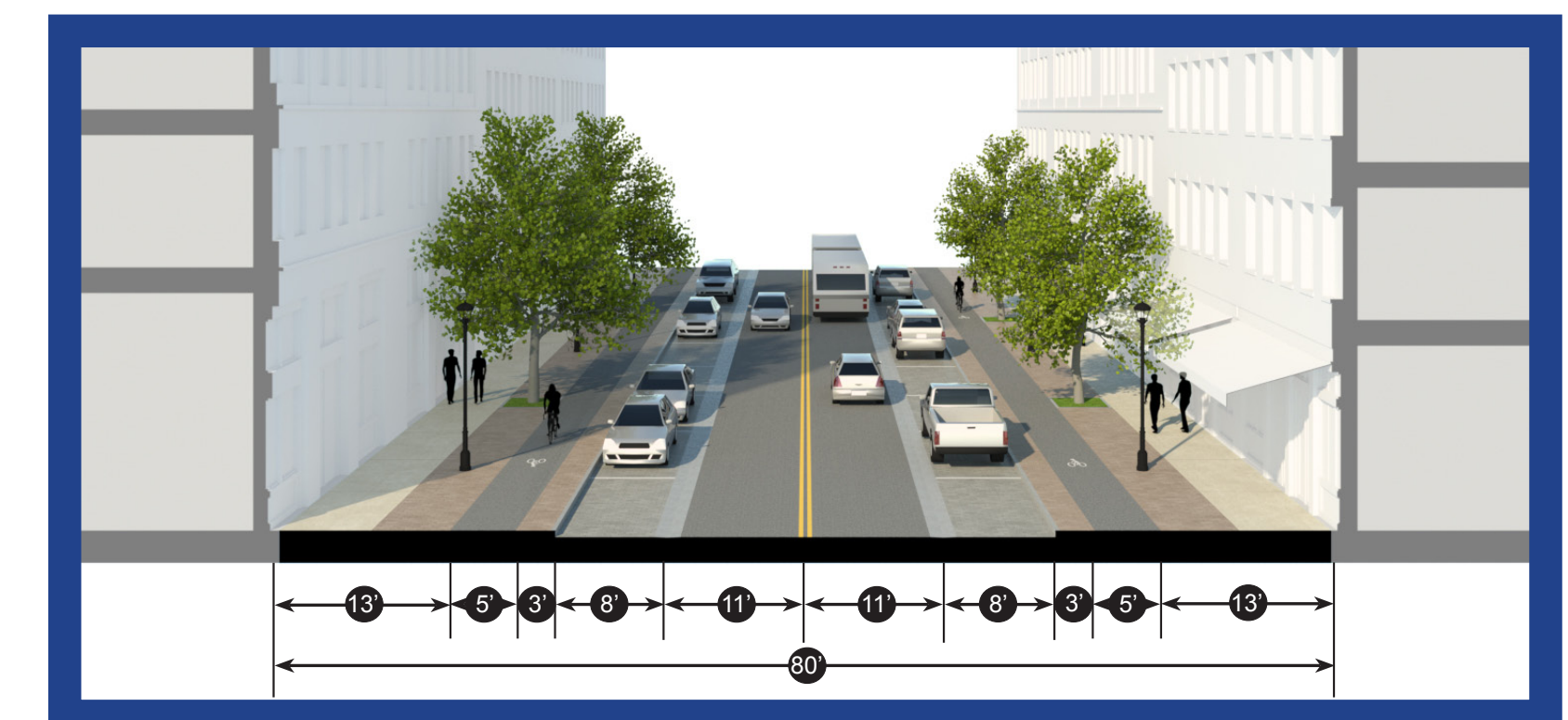


Figure D-15: 25 MPH Streets - with parking on each side. Separated bike lanes, vertical curbs, trees along with cars, buses, and bikes all share space on this street. This design is recommended for streets like 8th street and other side streets.

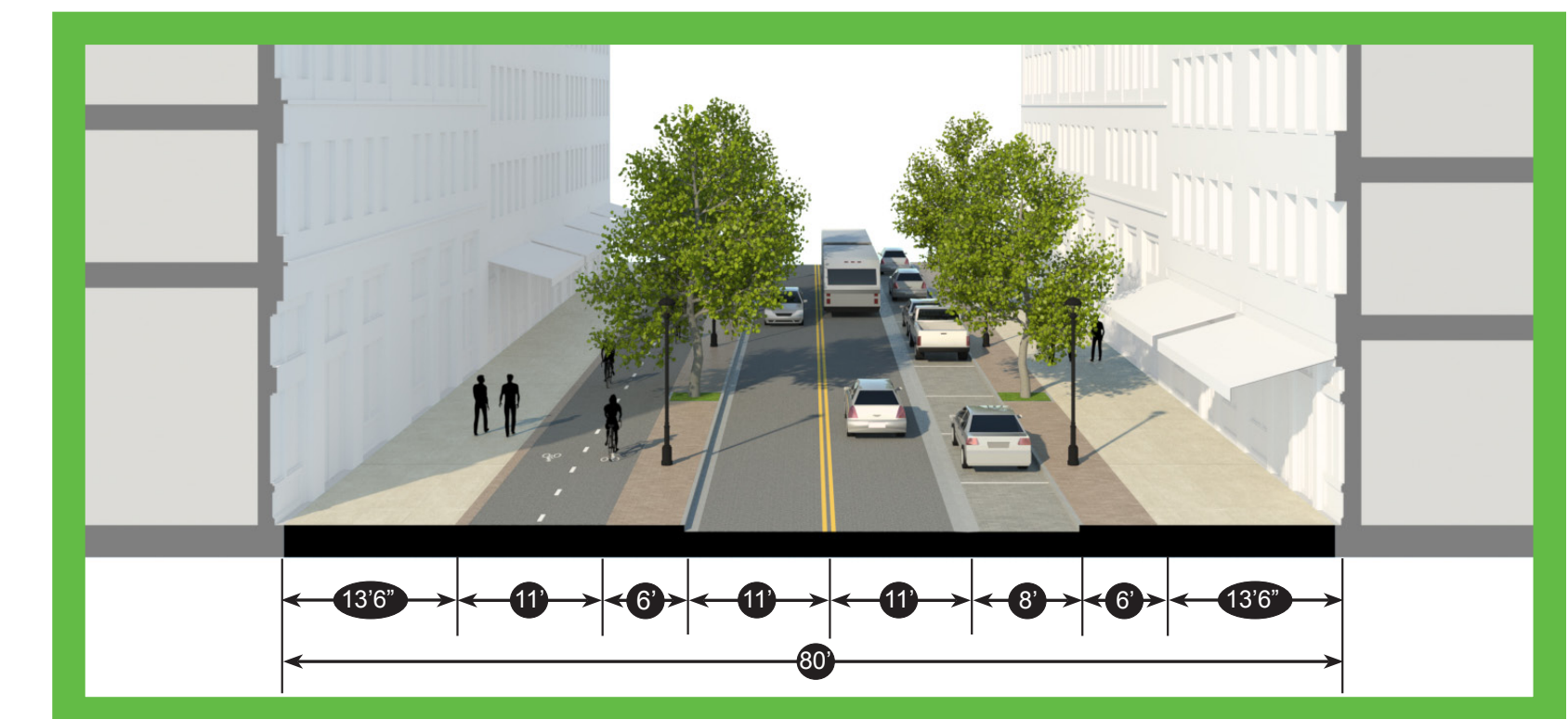


Figure D-17: 25 MPH Streets - with two-way cycle track. A separated, two-way cycle track, vertical curbs, trees along with cars, buses, and bikes that all share space. Parallel parking occurs on one side of the street. Recommended for streets like Oak Street and Lake Merritt Boulevard.

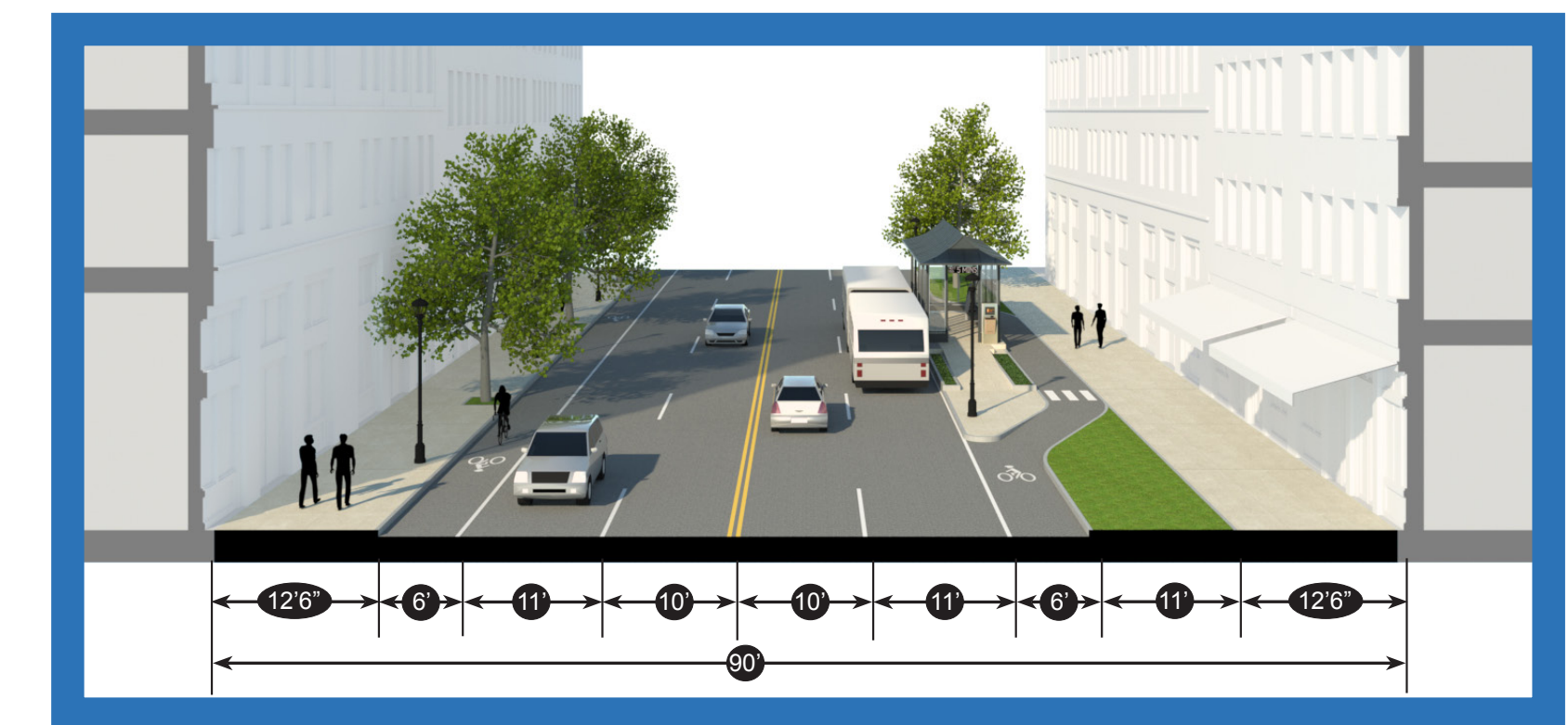


Figure D-16: Narrowest Section of Broadway. The right-of-way on Broadway varies. At its narrowest, the street section should include two BRT lanes, two car lanes, two bike lanes and sidewalks with street trees.