

DEAN'S CHARRETTE #7

Kalamazoo West Gateway

Reconnecting to Downtown

Final Report



PREPARED BY

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School of Architecture
Housing & Community Regeneration Initiative

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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

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John Bodway, Deacon, St. Augustine Cathedral
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Downtown Development Authority / Downtown Economic Growth Authority
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo College

The study was supported by the City of Kalamazoo.

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 carried out under the Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative is grounded in the principles of New Traditional Architecture and New Urbanism. Central to this initiative is the belief that, as stewards of our built environment, we must seek to facilitate a robust social infrastructure and create a better world for future generations by developing and promoting beautiful, enduring buildings within human-scale, walkable communities.



Walsh Family Hall of Architecture, University of Notre Dame.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kalamazoo is a unique beacon of progress and stamina among Midwestern cities. Both in spite of and because of the damage generated by 1960s urban renewal, the dynamic city staff and active community members have created a remarkable momentum of action around revitalizing their home. The city has channeled this energy into policies, regulations, plans, and developments that undo the harm of the past while creating a compelling backdrop for the future.

About the Previous Study

In August 2022, the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture's Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative engaged with the City of Kalamazoo to address the lack of usable corridors of motion between isolated pockets of activity. The resulting masterplan integrated a regulatory framework, set of catalytic development strategies, plan for complete streets, and urban landscape proposal.

The city has made quick work of raising money to realize these strategies proposed at the 2022 charrette. In the short term, public art, tactical urbanism, and securing of further grants have already begun to transform the city. In the long term, street, alley, and park designs are all carrying forward. This caliber of growth, typical of Kalamazoo but rare among its neighbors, represents an ongoing cycle of study, planning, and implementation.

About This Study

In May 2024, the Notre Dame team was invited back to Kalamazoo to expand upon the work of the first charrette. Just west of the original focus area, several simultaneous developments are under way within the city: to the north, the Kalamazoo event center has broken ground; to the west and southwest, Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University are engaging in masterplanning processes; along W. Michigan Avenue, multiple developers have purchased land with the intent to develop; and the city has received a PROTECT grant to reimagine the floodplain along the tangle of streets colloquially known as the "Spaghetti Bowl."

The area of study for this second charrette serves not only as a site of imminent development from these catalysts, but also as a critical point of connection for several areas of the city: the two colleges, emerging event district, reemerging commercial corridor along W. Michigan Avenue, student housing in the Vine neighborhood, and the city's downtown core. By addressing this integral site at a time when it is particularly malleable, there is an opportunity to bring all of these actors in conversation with one another, and to create a holistic experience of the western gateway to the city.

A Vision for Kalamazoo

The report is divided into four areas of focus:

1. *Urban Design Proposals* address three study areas with opportunity for new development: the W. Michigan Avenue Connection, St. Augustine Cathedral Block, and Michigan-Academy District. These three areas are denoted in the map below.
2. *Building Types for Block Repair* highlights strategies for filling gaps in Kalamazoo's blocks with an array of building types that reflect both the historic character of the city and its modern needs.
3. *Street Sections* provides guides to reimagining specific Kalamazoo streets to better serve all modes of transport and support pedestrian safety.
4. *Zoning & Preservation* offers zoning and historic preservation maps as tools for protecting the historic character of Kalamazoo and prompting future development to operate within its language.

The vision and action plan presented in this report work within Kalamazoo's robust system of city improvement, and can be implemented individually over time or adopted as a complete body of work. The ideas presented consider the city's existing patterns at the regulatory, architectural, urban, landscape, pedestrian, and vehicular level, while engaging directly with emerging areas of change.

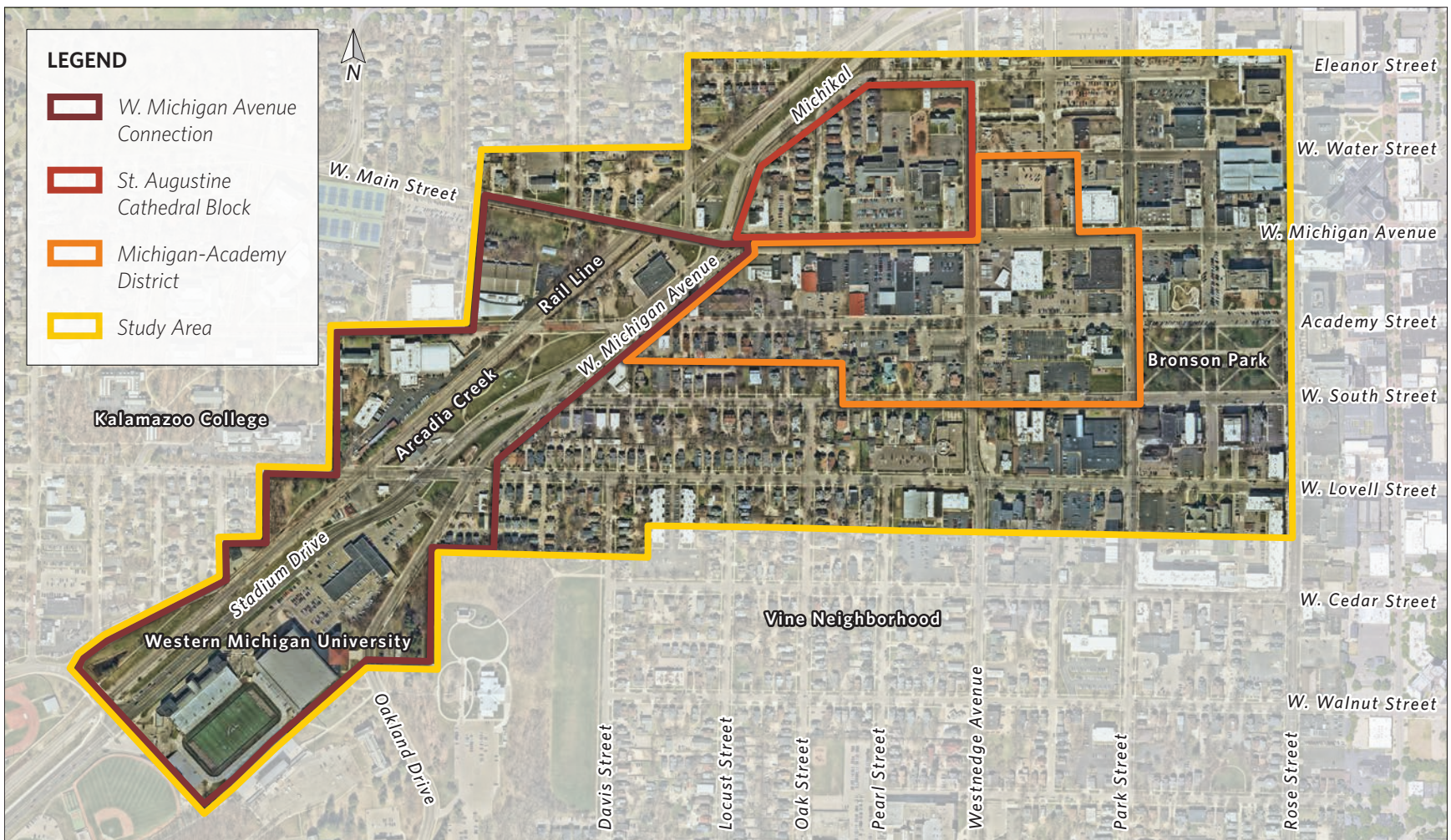


FIGURE 1: Aerial View of Overall Study Area

The west gateway of Kalamazoo incorporates: the future Event Center site, edges of Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College, blocks to the north and south of W. Michigan Avenue, and the north end of the historic Vine neighborhood. Highlighted above are three areas receiving urban design proposals.



FIGURE 2: Repair – Establish a Gateway to Downtown
The intersection between W. Main Street, Michikal, and W. Michigan Avenue represents entry from the west towards the heart of the city, and is an opportunity to create a gateway to downtown Kalamazoo.

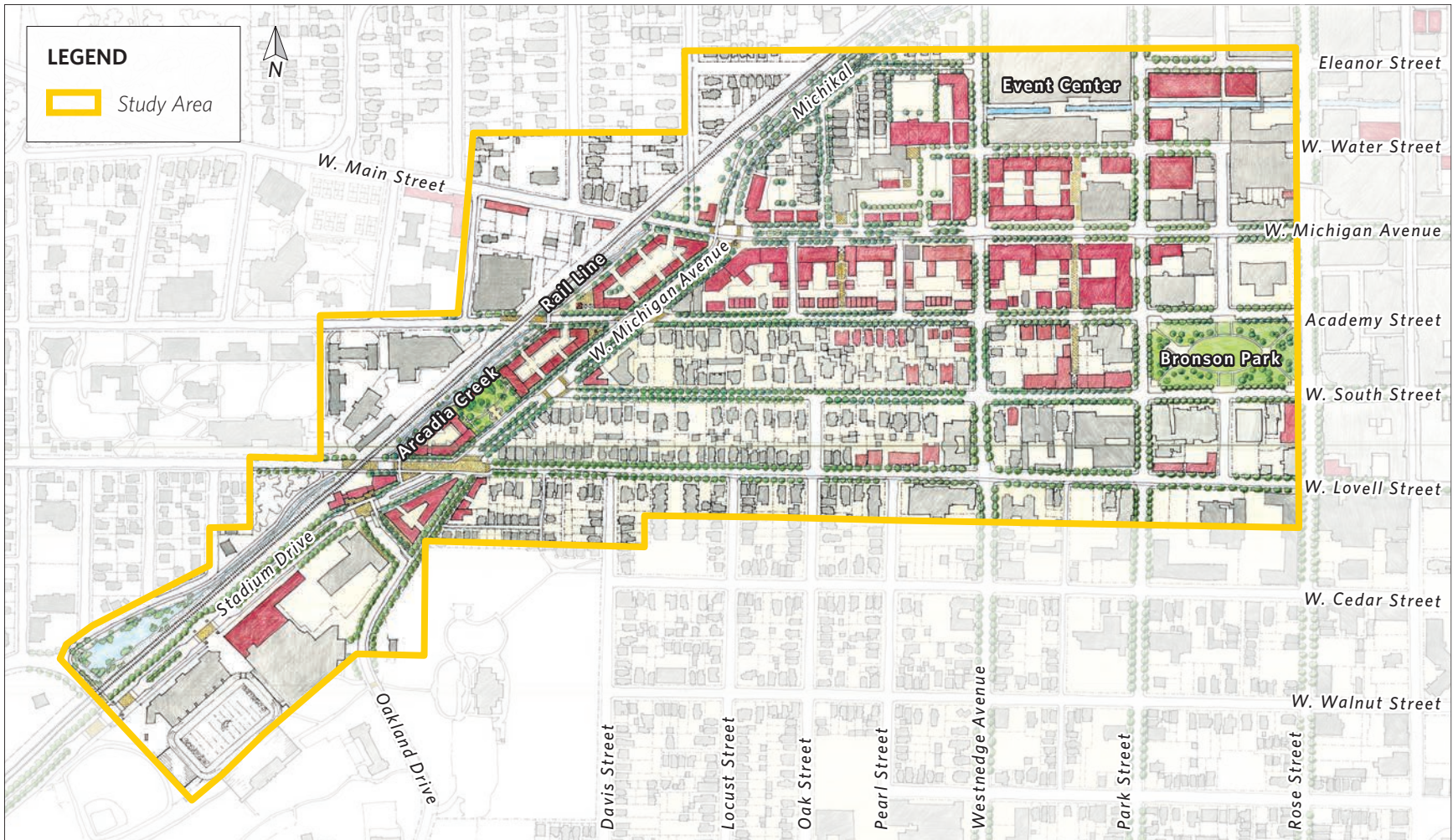


FIGURE 3: Reconnect – Provide a Continuous Experience
Establishing a comprehensive network of safe, interesting, and animated paths through the western part of downtown is the key to activating a public realm that unites the two local campuses, new event center, heart of downtown, and adjacent neighborhoods.



Charrette team photo in front of the Crawlspace Comedy Club, the venue for the final presentation.

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 that generates a continuous loop of design collaboration and immediate feedback.

The charrette for this study was held on-site in Kalamazoo, Michigan from May 20-23, 2024. The interdisciplinary team included faculty, staff, and students from the University of Notre Dame’s School of Architecture, Fitzgerald Institute of Real Estate, and Church Properties Initiative.

Dean’s Charrettes are educational charrettes – 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.

This study began with an analysis of the expanded site to the west of the 2022 study area, followed by a four-day intensive charrette and later by the production of the final report. During the four days of design, the team explored the site, explored several proposal iterations while in conversation with city staff and visitors, and rendered a final masterplan which was presented to community members of Kalamazoo. A detailed description of this sequence can be found in the page opposite this one.

The goal of the charrette is to offer concrete 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- and long-term goals. While the holistic strategies presented through this process represent a general recommendation for how to move forward strategically, many of the specific concepts proposed are only the beginning of a long and evolving process.

The charrette process is characterized by eight actions:

1. **Site & Program Assessment:** Work with city staff to clearly understand the issues the design seeks to solve.
2. **Site Analysis & Tour:** Know the context for the project at a much deeper level by fostering a connection between team members and the area of study.
3. **Iterations & Collaborations:** Work as a team to generate design concepts and ideas, then continually revise these concepts in response to feedback.
4. **Community Engagement:** Present work to city officials and local stakeholders to share concepts and get feedback.
5. **Continuous Feedback Loops:** Meet frequently, both internally with the design team and externally with stakeholders, to garner feedback regarding the designs.
6. **Short & Intense Timeline:** Maximize work product by using the short timeline and continuous feedback loop to produce a large volume of high-quality work in only a few days.
7. **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.
8. **Professional Collaborations:** Engage with industry experts and professionals to provide expertise in a range of disciplines, including architectural design, urban planning, traffic engineering, architectural illustration, and finance.



PRE-CHARRETTE

JULY/OCTOBER 2017

Approval of Strategic Vision & Master Plan for Imagine Kalamazoo 2025

City of Kalamazoo staff created a holistic guide to future regulation, policy, development, land use, and public infrastructure, with local stakeholders and members of the public.

AUGUST 2022

Kalamazoo Charrette – First Partnership with the City

The 2022 charrette addressed Kalamazoo at the street level in a series of layers: a regulatory framework, catalytic development strategies, complete streets, and landscape proposals.

MAY 2023

Issuing of “A Study of Urban Sequences & Activation of the Public Realm” Report

The report that evolved from the 2022 charrette provides a handbook of specific actions to activate the public realm and connect isolated pockets of activity.

SPRING 2024

Site Analysis

In the months leading up to the second charrette, members of the design team collected base information and generated analytical diagrams.

CHARRETTE

DAY ONE

Site Tour & Initial Concepts

The team learned about the history of Kalamazoo, the 2022 charrette, and the current planning initiatives in the context of the design goals specific to the second charrette. City staff led a walking tour through downtown Kalamazoo, along W. Michigan Avenue, and through the “Spaghetti Bowl” area. With a firsthand understanding of the pedestrian experience and local character of the site, the team broke into groups to begin studying specific areas of intervention.

DAY TWO

Stakeholder Meetings, Open Studio, & Concept Development

After a brief coordination meeting with the full team, groups developed initial concepts for their areas of intervention: specific areas of the city, as well as overall layers of design such as building types and regulatory strategies. While the team finalized proposals, community members and stakeholders visited the studio to offer feedback and ask questions.

DAY THREE

Production & Coordination

The team combined the design proposals for the separate study areas into an overall masterplan of the site that highlighted proposed work within the context of the existing city. The team produced comprehensive diagrams and elevations of the site as a whole, and narrowed in on the details of building types and preservation initiatives.

DAY FOUR

Final Presentation & Discussion

After putting the finishing touches on renderings and diagrams, the team organized graphics on a set of presentation boards. The final presentation was open to the public and attended by a wide range of local stakeholders, and followed by an open reception where attendees were invited to interact with the drawings and team.

POST-CHARRETTE

AUGUST 2025

Issuing of “Reconnecting to Downtown” Charrette Report

This report has been compiled in the months following the 2024 charrette by Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative staff, working closely with City of Kalamazoo staff.

SHORT-TERM FUTURE

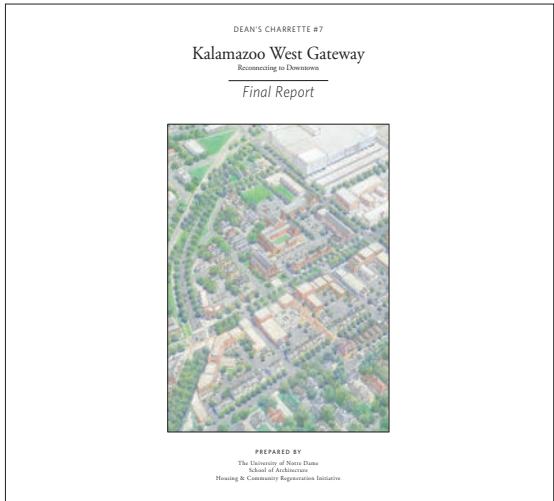
Follow-Up with Kalamazoo City Staff

As the guide to further action in the charrette study areas, this report will be the subject of continued discussion with the city regarding implementation and next steps.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM FUTURE

Possible Engagement in a Third Kalamazoo Charrette

A third charrette might examine the site to the north of downtown, including the train station and connection, with Kalamazoo Avenue as the primary artery of study.







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HISTORY

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 5), presents an aspirational vision for the future with a strong urban core. Thirty years later, in 1959, the famed shopping mall designer Victor Gruen was engaged to develop a new plan, “Kalamazoo 1980,” a dystopian mall-scape with perimeter parking lots and a ring road (Figure 6). While this plan was never fully realized, it had severe impacts on downtown, including demolished buildings and blocking off the pedestrian mall.

The destruction of Urban Renewal converted downtown city streets to high-speed one-way corridors that immediately created a hostile environment for pedestrians and businesses. Historic city fabric was replaced with surface parking lots, which reinforce a circular pattern of pedestrian disinterest and vacancy. Particularly characteristic of this change is the mass of “Spaghetti Bowl” roads that split the city, separating downtown Kalamazoo from its western neighborhoods and local colleges.



FIGURE 4: 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.

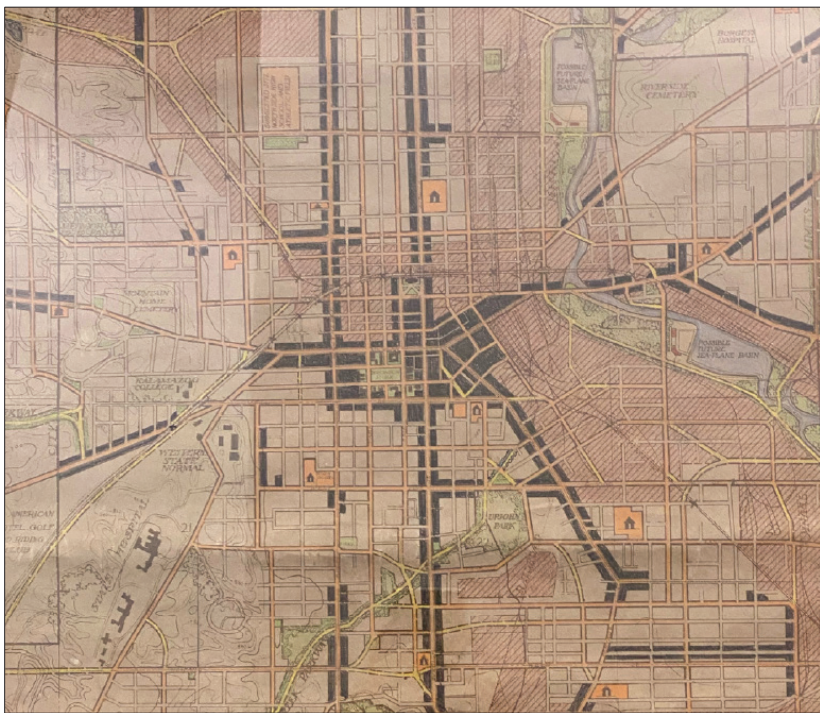


FIGURE 5: “A City Plan for Kalamazoo, Michigan” by Jacob L. Crane Jr. (1929)

Vision for Kalamazoo from 1929, illustrating a comprehensive street network and system of hubs of commercial activity.

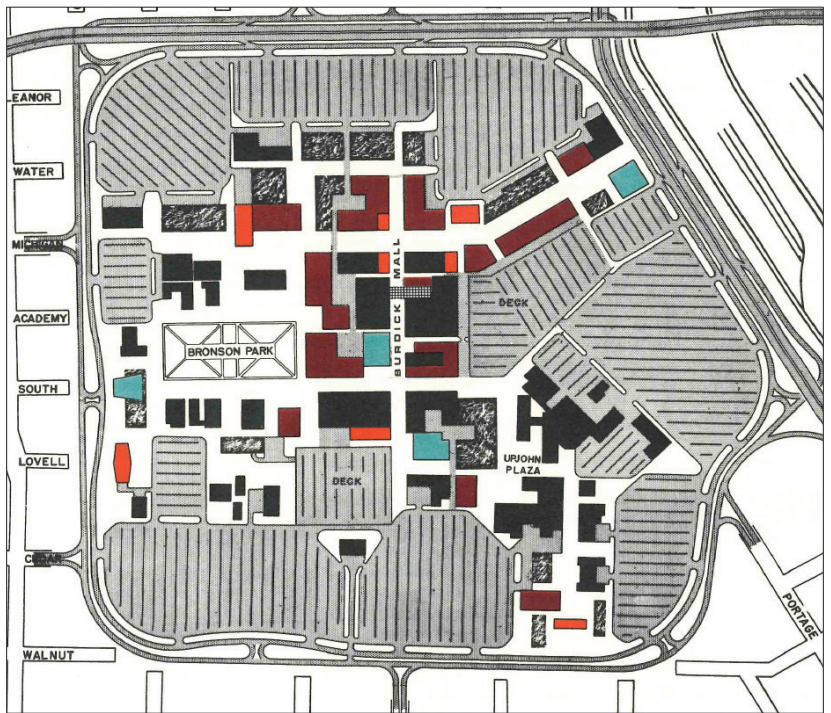


FIGURE 6: “Downtown Kalamazoo 1980.”

Victor Gruen’s Shopping Mall Vision from 1959: the conversion of downtown Kalamazoo into a pedestrian mall with surface parking lots and a perimeter road

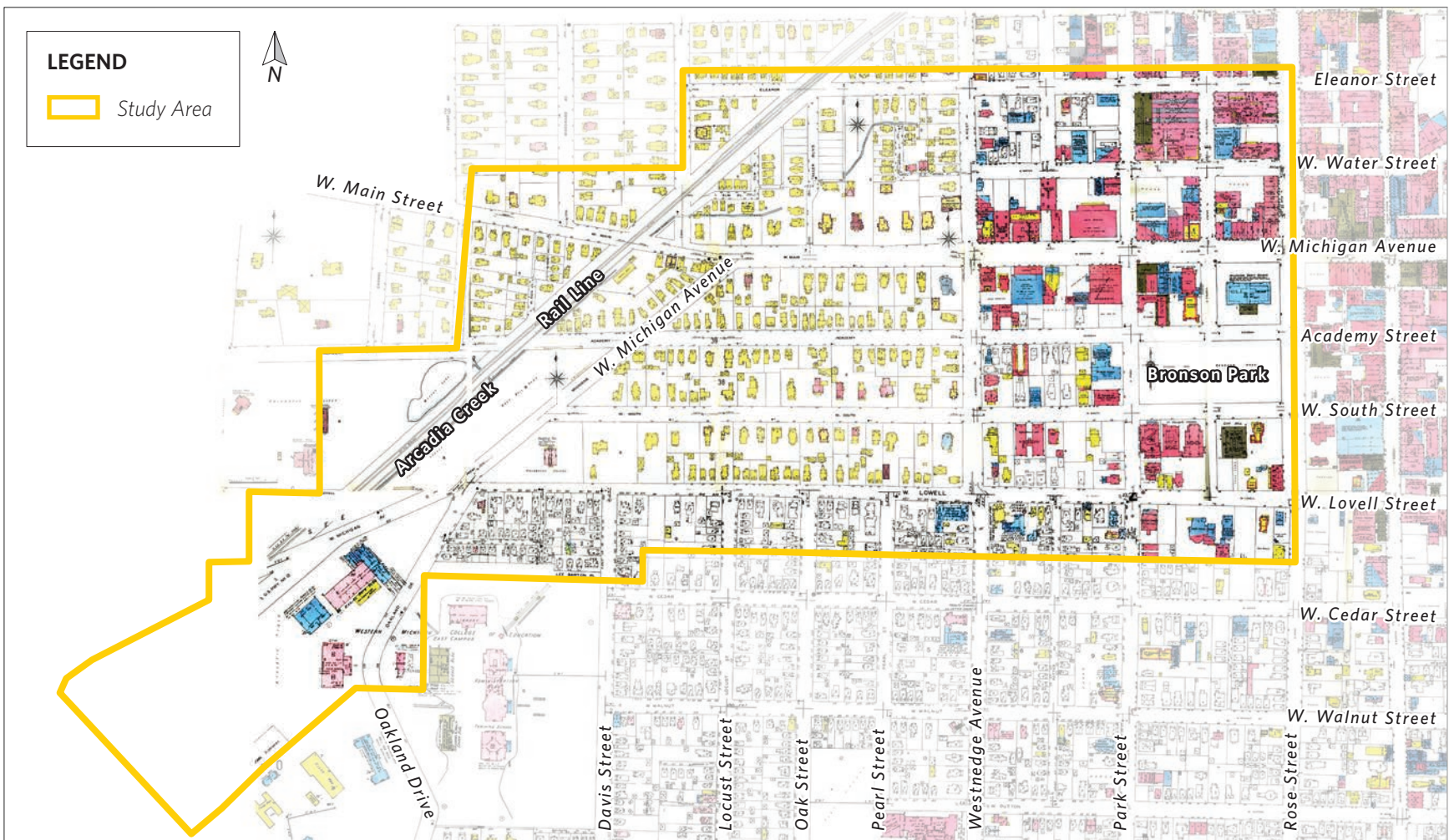


FIGURE 7: Aggregated Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Kalamazoo

The northwest portion of the study area is taken from the 1908 map; the northeastern portion from the 1932 map; the southern portion from the 1958 map.

CURRENT CITY CONTEXT

The imposition of curved highway-like streets along the diagonal portion of W. Michigan Avenue, and one-way conversion of east-west W. Michigan Avenue, caused heavy disruption to Kalamazoo’s historic block structure. W. Michigan Avenue, and the tangle of “Spaghetti Bowl” streets that accompany it, cut a diagonal gash through the city, splitting it into two halves that are essentially disconnected from each other. The vacant and underutilized land generated by this street network, as well as by the introduction of parking lots along W. Michigan Avenue, has resulted in areas that lack activation, are hostile to pedestrians, and are unsustainable for businesses.

Currently, the angled intersection of W. Main Street, Michikal, and W. Michigan Avenue is perfectly placed to welcome people to the downtown core, but the scale and entanglement of these streets instead generates non-usable land and non-navigable corridors.

In 2024, property around the St. Augustine Cathedral Block and along W. Michigan Avenue exchanged hands, creating the opportunity to convert the current area to a gateway to the city. The St. Augustine parish community invited the city to the table to participate in these development conversations.

Also in 2024, the city received a PROTECT grant to reimagine the area within the Arcadia Creek floodplain – the same area that separates western Kalamazoo along W. Michigan Avenue (Figure 23). In tandem with the removal of structures from the floodplain and generation of more buildable area, this grant also accommodates a redesign of the area that emphasizes naturalizing the creek, a more logical connection to downtown, and safer pedestrian and bicycle routes.

In the north blocks of the study area, a private developer is constructing an Event Center that will be home to Western Michigan University hockey and basketball (Figure 27). The center will also host conferences and music acts. It represents the first strong connection between Western Michigan University and downtown Kalamazoo.

With the support of these stakeholders, the W. Michigan Avenue Connection is poised to transform into a denser, walkable, functional entry to the city.



FIGURE 8: Existing Figure Ground
Existing buildings shown in black highlight areas with an intact block structure which provides a pedestrian-friendly environment.

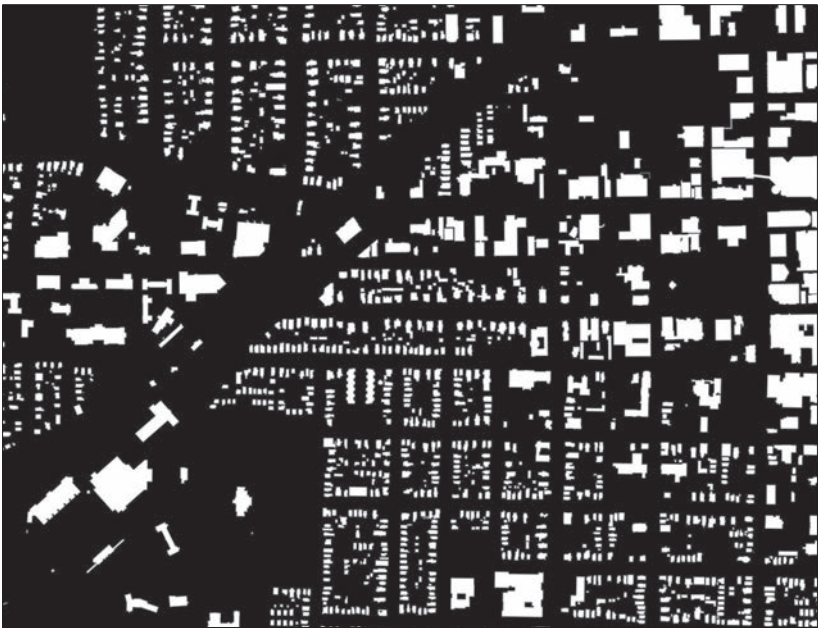


FIGURE 9: Existing Ground Figure
Open space, streets, and vacant land shown in black highlight areas lacking spatial containment. These areas require repair to make them pedestrian-friendly.

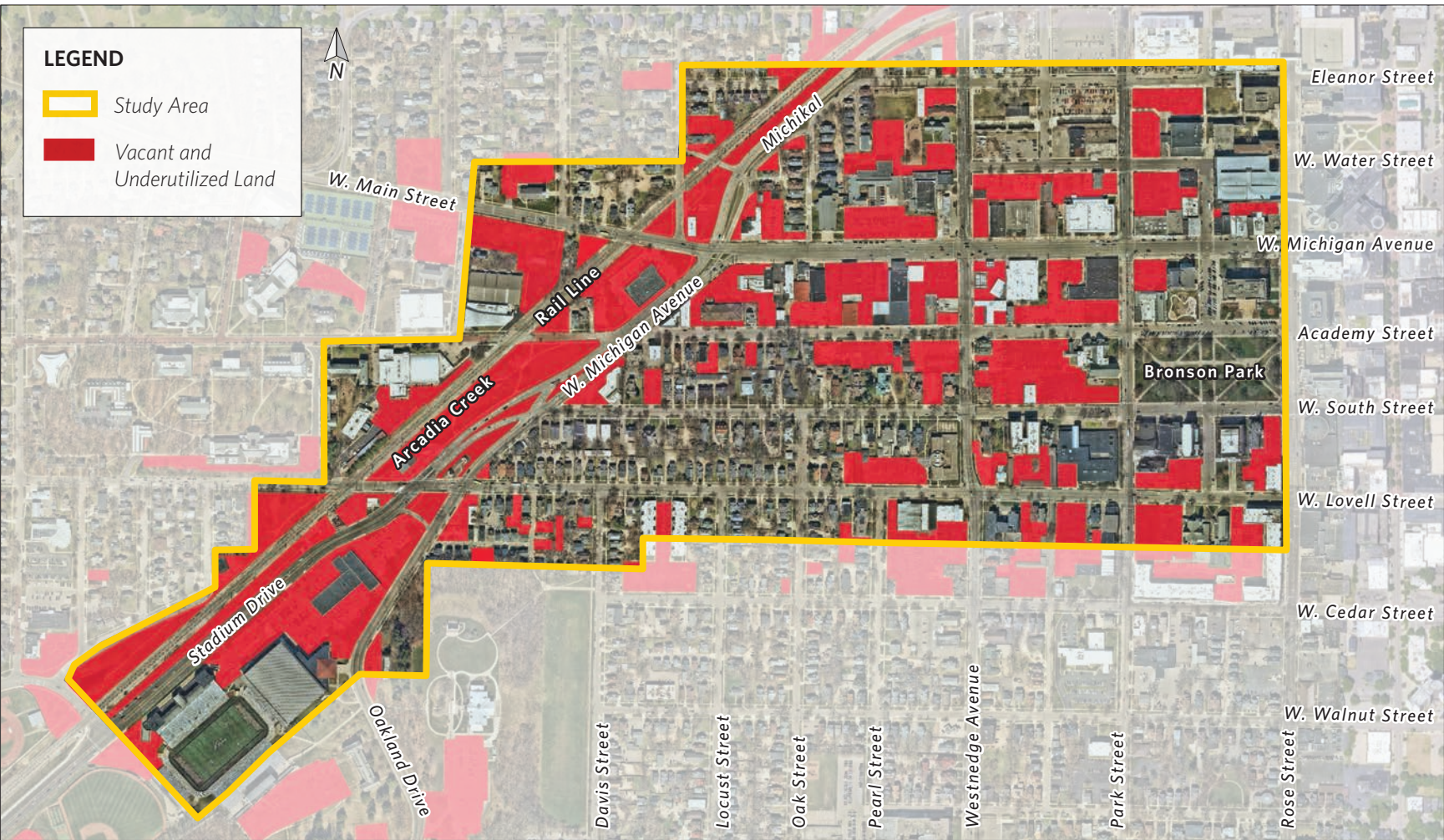


FIGURE 10: Vacant Land Diagram
Parcels highlighted in red represent the existing surface parking lots and vacant and underutilized land, which present an opportunity for new development, particularly along the “Spaghetti Bowl,” W. Michigan Avenue, and Academy Street.

2022 CHARRETTE

The first charrette collaboration between the Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative and the City of Kalamazoo was held on site from August 15-18, 2022. The team included Notre Dame School of Architecture faculty and students, leading industry professionals and experts, representatives of the City of Kalamazoo, and numerous visiting guests and local stakeholders. As a part of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 collaboration, the Notre Dame team was invited to develop a vision for the repair of damage from Urban Renewal and reconnection of activity throughout the downtown core. The scope of study was limited to the design of the public right-of-way, both at the street level and as an overall network, and offered solutions in four layers:

1. **Regulatory Framework:** An adjusted zoning map for downtown, Street Design Manual and supporting economic policies, and historic preservation strategy.
2. **Catalytic Development:** An overall vision for Kalamazoo, comprised of eleven design interventions to move pedestrians safely and comfortably among areas of activity.
3. **Complete Streets:** A network of safe and usable streets for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.
4. **Urban Landscape:** A landscape plan with an overall system of parks and tree-lined streets, and further specifications at the street, tree, and planting level.

Since receiving this report, the City of Kalamazoo has moved quickly to apply for grants, put projects into action, and make these design solutions a reality.

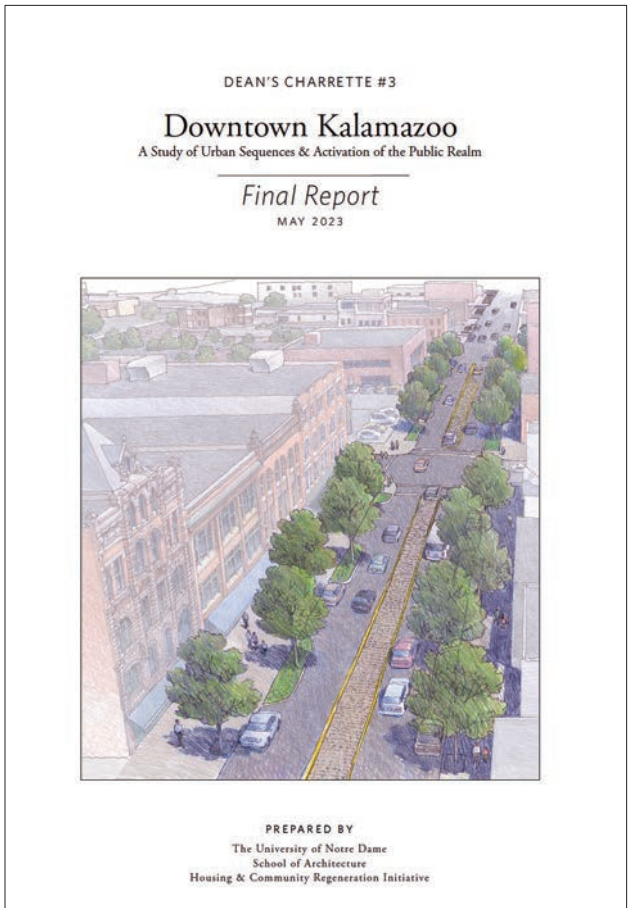


FIGURE 11: First Charrette Report Cover Page

FIGURE 12: Street Network Diagram

The highlighted street network of downtown Kalamazoo shows the intentions of the Streets for All project. The future two-way streets, in blue, will be transformed from high-speed corridors designed to move cars through downtown into pedestrian-friendly streets designed to attract people to the city on foot. This image was the catalyst for the 2022 charrette.

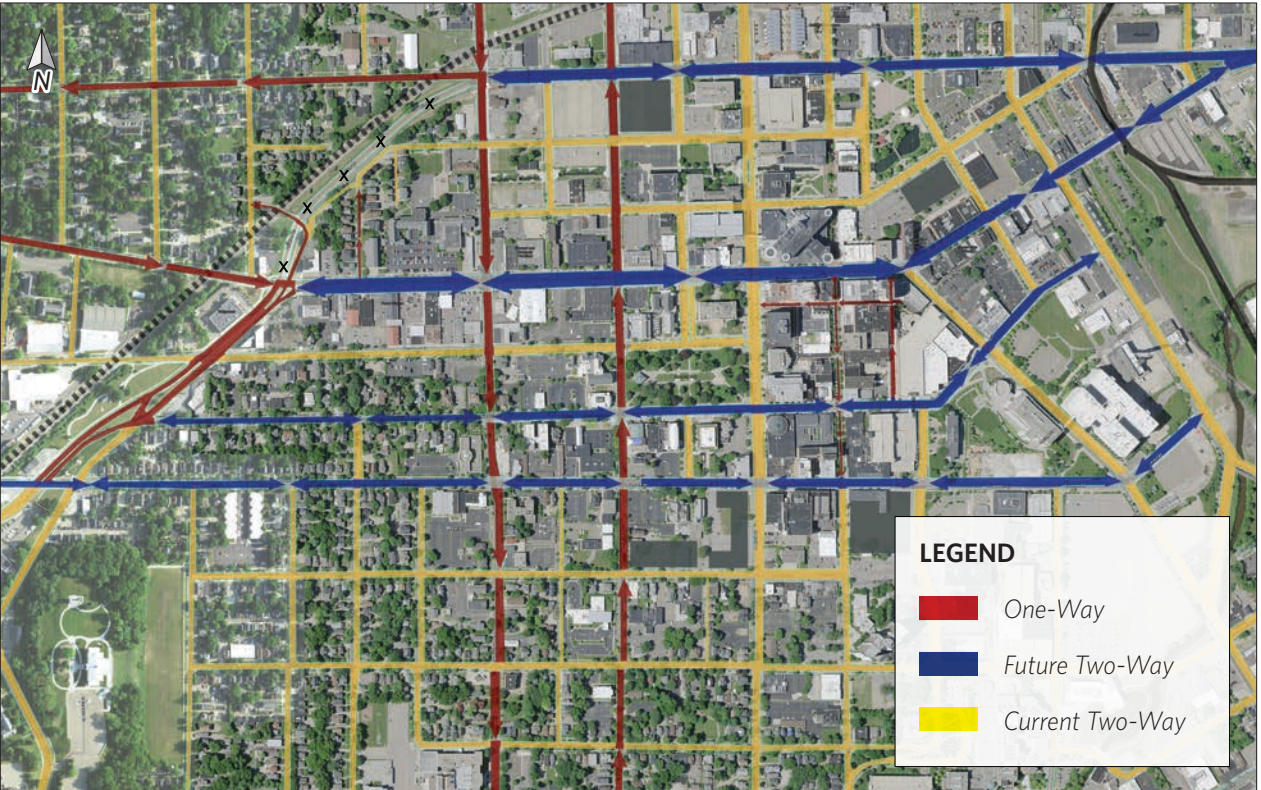


FIGURE 13: Vacant Land Diagram

Parcels highlighted in red represent the existing surface parking lots and vacant and underutilized land, which represent an enormous economic possibility. This diagram was one of the most critical visual representations of both the challenges and opportunities posed by downtown Kalamazoo.

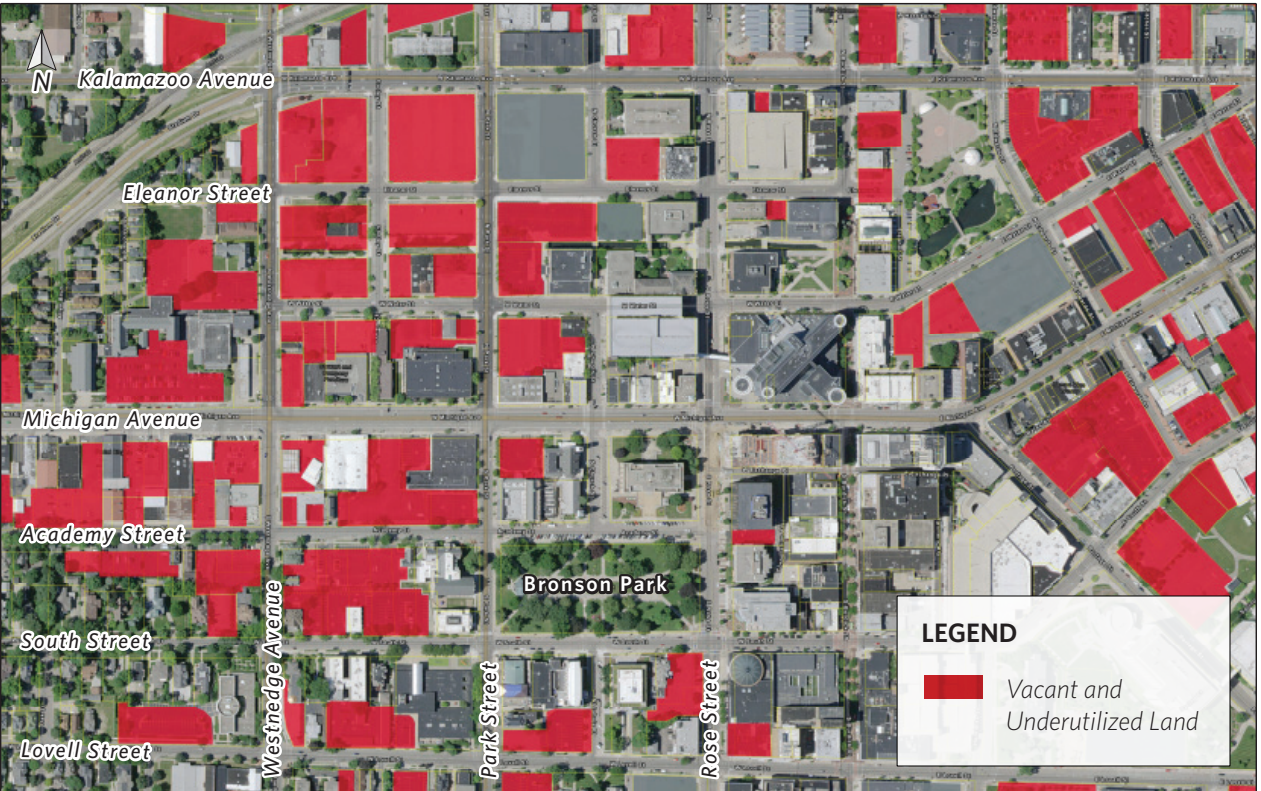




FIGURE 14: Repair
A major goal of the charrette study was to repair city streets.



FIGURE 15: Reconnect
A second goal was to reconnect isolated pockets of activity.

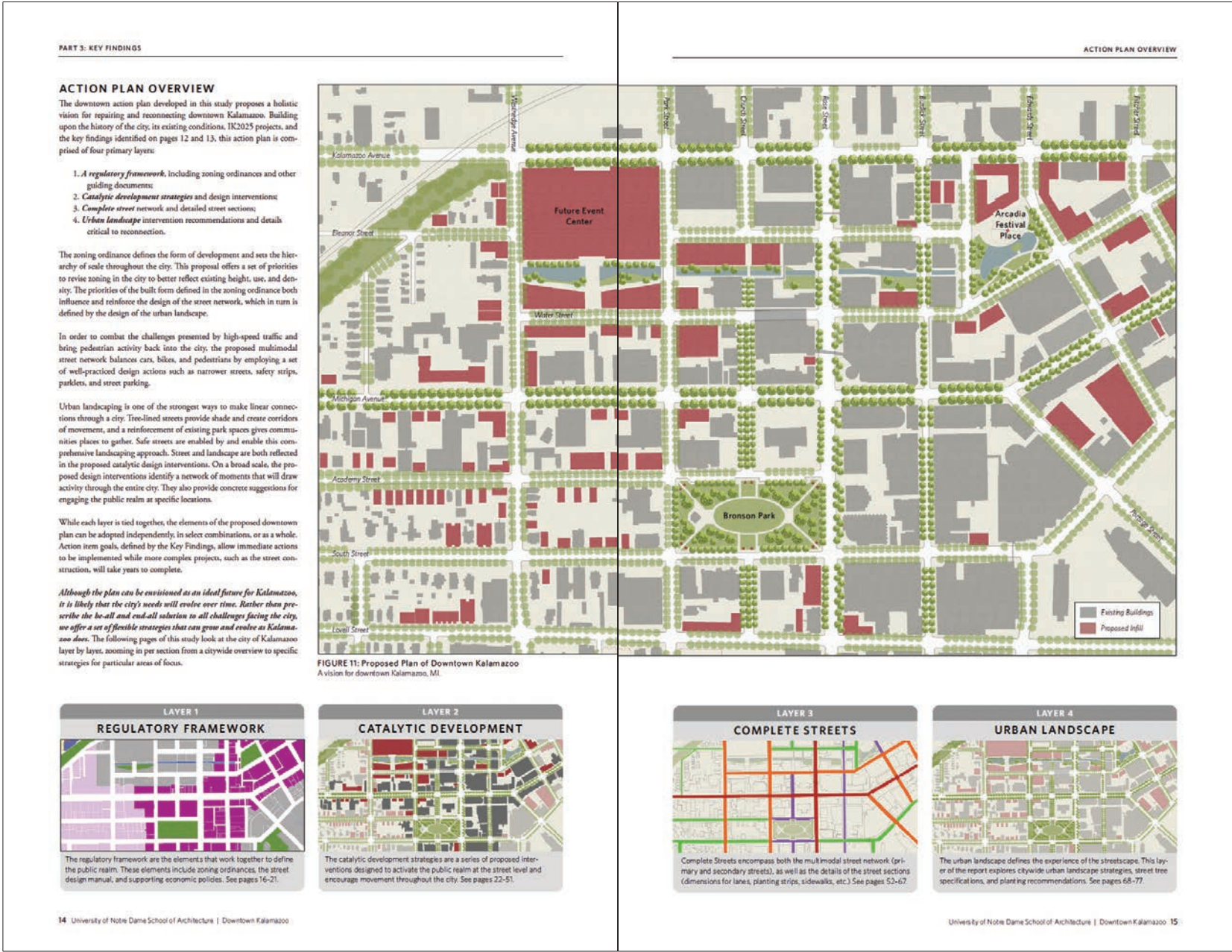


FIGURE 16: First Charrette Report Layers of Study
The report analyzed and proposed changes to downtown Kalamazoo in four interdependent layers.



FIGURE 17: E. Michigan Avenue "Before"
In 2022, the one-way downtown street was wide, unsafe, and unused by pedestrians.



FIGURE 18: E. Michigan Avenue "After"
The team proposed a greener, narrower, activated two-way street.

2022 CHARRETTE PROGRESS

Since the 2022 report was issued, over 50% of its proposals have advanced. These long-term efforts and short-term catalytic actions include:

- A **\$38 million** PROTECT Grant to restore Arcadia Creek and mitigate the floodway.
- **\$11 million** in Streets Transfer Funding from the Michigan Department of Transportation.
- A **\$6 million** RAISE Grant to fund planning, design, and engineering, followed by **\$25 million** in RAISE funding to rebuild Michigan Avenue.
- **\$12 million** in Reconnecting America funding to restore Michigan and Kalamazoo to two-way streets; in the short term, the narrowing of these streets has resulted in a 30% reduction in accidents.
- A **\$2 million** Michigan Economic Development Corporation Revitalization and Placemaking Grant to reimagine Arcadia Creek Festival Park.
- **\$2 million** in total through the American Rescue Plan Act, \$500,000 of it from HUD's Community Development Block Grant Programs.

- **\$750,000** for road safety improvements via Safe Streets and Roads for All. These changes have resulted in a 21% reduction in total traffic accidents, and a 29% reduction in fatal and personal injury accidents since the program began in 2021.
- A **\$300,000** Irving S. Gilmore grant for tactical placemaking.
- A **\$50,000** HRI grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

In total, the city has so far received \$98 million to execute the recommendations of the first charrette.

This momentum of fundraising is rare and inspiring. The City of Kalamazoo has continued to bring in grant money from local, regional, and national organizations to achieve the goals of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025, and those put forth in the 2022 charrette report. The path from community need to tangible solution to funded project has been perfected by city staff, and the example set by Kalamazoo is a beacon of hope to neighboring cities.



FIGURE 19: E. Michigan Avenue in 2022
Prior to any interventions, E. Michigan Avenue was unsafe and overly wide.



FIGURE 20: E. Michigan Avenue in 2024
With the help of several grants, the city restriped the street, narrowing it to three lanes with a protected two-way bike path.

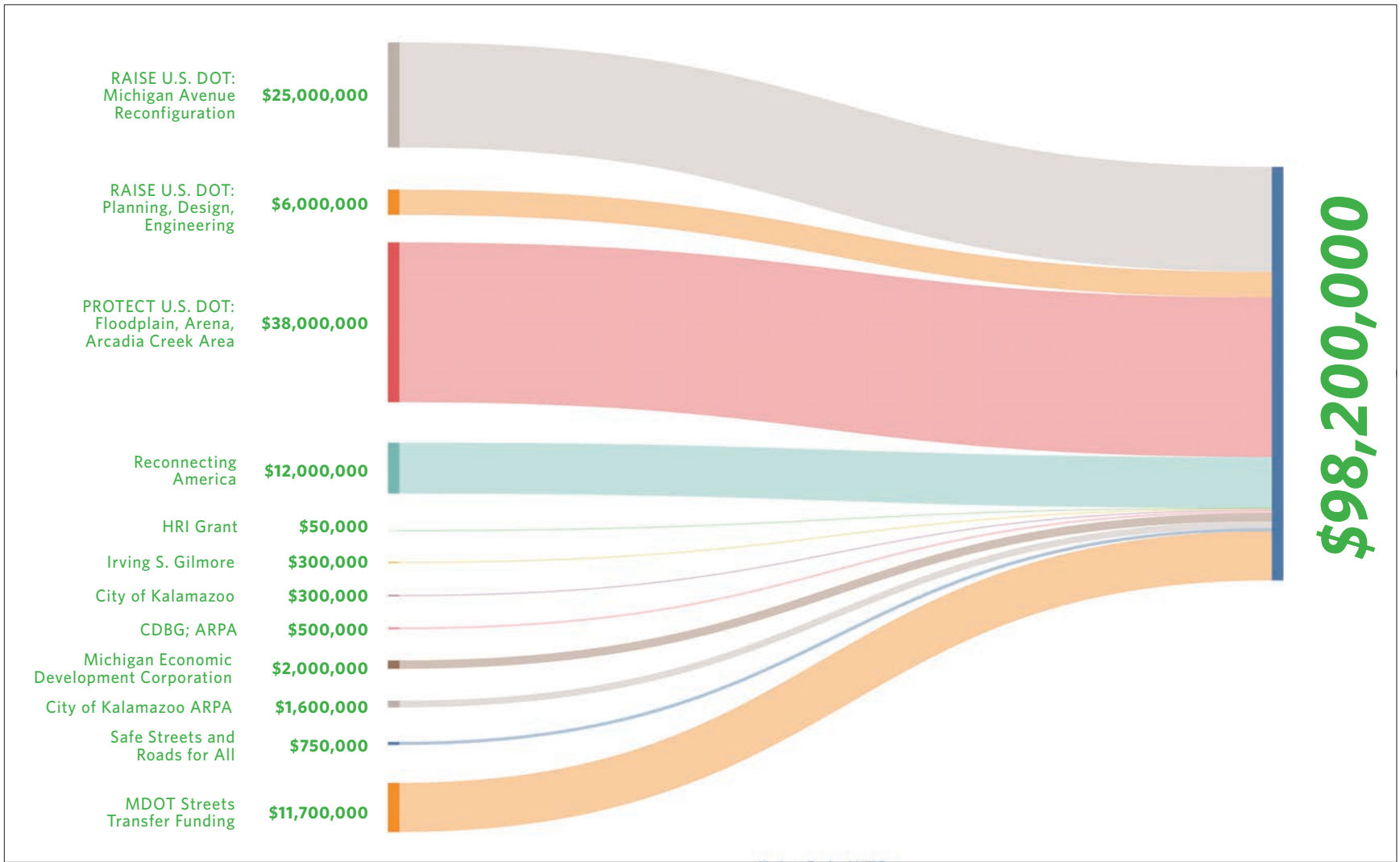


FIGURE 21: Braided Funding Graphic
The nearly \$100 million dollars that Kalamazoo has raised is the combined result of a wide array of funding sources.



FIGURE 22: RAISE Grant Graphic
The City of Kalamazoo presented a set of three focus areas in their RAISE Grant application.

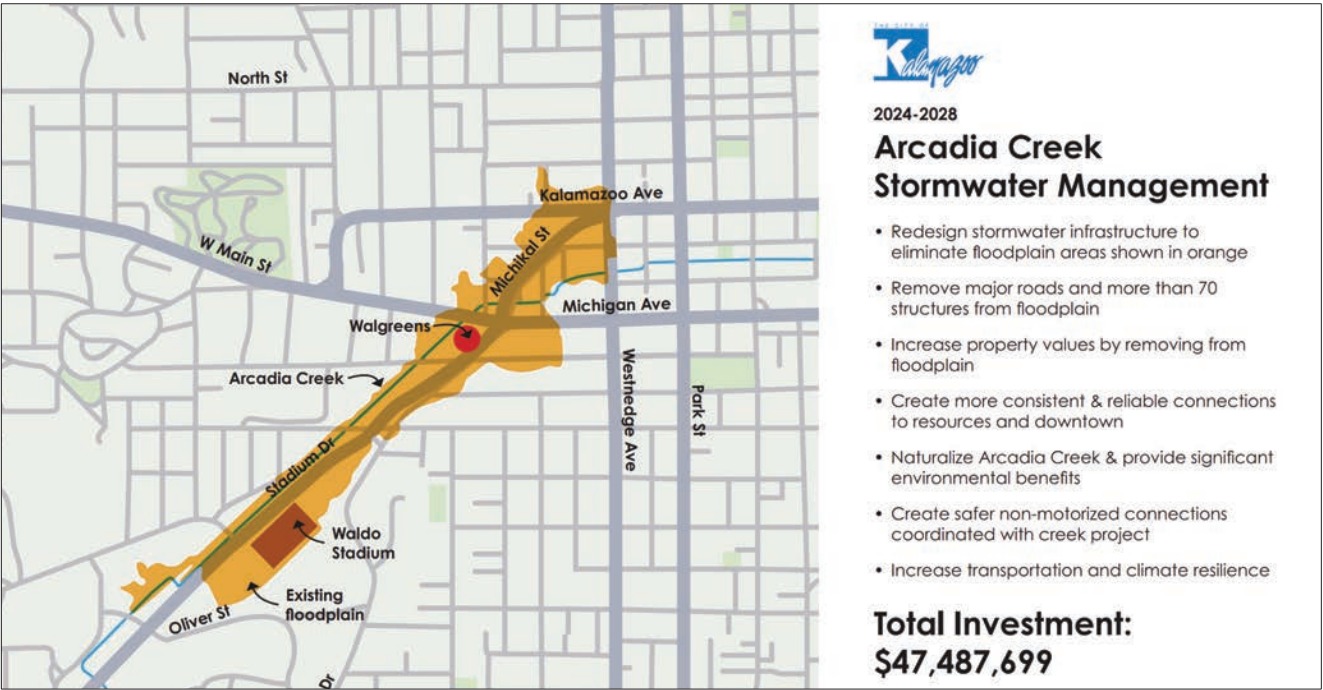


FIGURE 23: PROTECT Grant Graphic
The City received a large PROTECT Grant to restore Arcadia Creek and mitigate danger posed by future flooding.



FIGURE 24: Proposed Arcadia Park Vignette, Looking West
This view of the proposed park shows a new design that reimagines the creek and pond, activating it with a variety of features and amenities.

Source: LBA Landscape Architecture, VIRIDIS Design Group, & Zanetta Illustration

IMAGINE KALAMAZOO


Kalamazoo has established a rare and admirable trend of clear and impactful communication among stakeholders, and between city staff and community members. Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 is a collaborative vision for the future of the city, with consistent feedback and implementation cycles. This 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 are the Streets for All project and Zoning Ordinance Updates.

Imagine Kalamazoo’s zoning ordinance updates are ongoing, and focus on a form-based code to encourage future development that accords with the existing fabric of the city. This new framework will support the scale, density, and use already established by historic Kalamazoo, and work in tandem with new street designs to influence economic development. The Streets for All project addresses the city’s unsafe one-way streets, which were the catalyst for the first Kalamazoo charrette, and seeks to transform them to two-way, multimodal corridors. These changes will calm traffic, support pedestrians, and stimulate commercial activity.

Both of these citywide layers, along with the long list of area-specific projects, are aimed at bringing Kalamazoo back to the thriving, complete, urban landscape depicted in the 1959 aerial view on page 10 (Figure 4), but through a modern lens that adapts traditional city planning strategies to the needs of the current population.




FIGURE 25: Imagine Kalamazoo 2025
Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 is an ongoing, multi-project effort to crowdsource a shared vision for the future of Kalamazoo, bringing community feedback in cycle with city staff efforts.




DRAFT
IMAGINE WESTWOOD


[Westwood Neighborhood Planning](#)




[Ransom Street Reconstruction](#)




[2024 Neighborhood Betterment Projects](#)



[Convert Kalamazoo Avenue: A Streets for All Project](#)




[Zoning Code and Map Updates](#)




IMAGINE STUART
Neighborhood Plan 2023
DRAFT

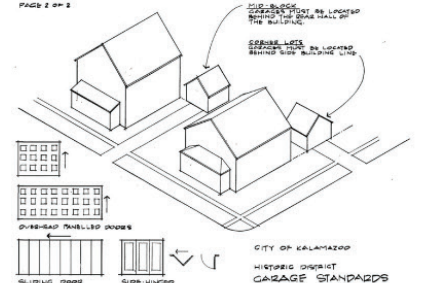
[Stuart Neighborhood Plan](#)



[Westnedge & Park Traffic Calming](#)



[Streets for All: Creating a Connected City](#)



[Local Historic District Standards & Guidelines Update](#)

FIGURE 26: Imagine Kalamazoo Projects
Beyond the more holistic street and zoning proposals that underly Imagine Kalamazoo 2025, there is an ever-growing list of local projects. These have a wide range of locations, stakeholders, and timelines, and each addresses a specific opportunity for growth. All of these projects involve a conversation between the community and city staff, and all are part of a larger vision for the future of the city.

CURRENT GROWTH CATALYSTS

After two decades of planning, the Kalamazoo Event Center will break ground in Spring 2025, with anticipated completion in 2027. Spanning four city blocks, this athletic complex connects directly to the intersection of Westnedge Avenue, Michikal, and Kalamazoo Avenue, at the northeast end of the “Spaghetti Bowl” area. The site represents a strong stimulus for growth in the area, but an intentional, functional connection to Western Michigan University and other stakeholders is critical for success.

Two campuses define much of the west side of the city. Kalamazoo College was founded in 1833 as a private liberal arts college. In 2022, Kalamazoo College worked together with the City and various neighborhood associations to create a campus masterplan within the goals of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (Figure 28). Western Michigan University was created as a teacher-training facility in 1903. The easternmost portion of the campus now features a number of sports facilities along Stadium Drive; Western Michigan University has engaged with Perkins+Will to develop a masterplan for this area (Figure 28).

The two campuses and future event center are currently siloed from each other by the inhospitable conditions of “Spaghetti Bowl” streets. All three areas hinge on the transition northeast from Stadium Drive to W. Michigan Avenue to facilitate student access to the city, engagement with the event center, and ease of motion for all.



FIGURE 27: Event Center Rendered Views
The new Kalamazoo Event Center, associated specifically with Western Michigan University, is an athletic complex that can accommodate several sports, and includes community spaces and event halls.
Source: TowerPinkster & Rosetti

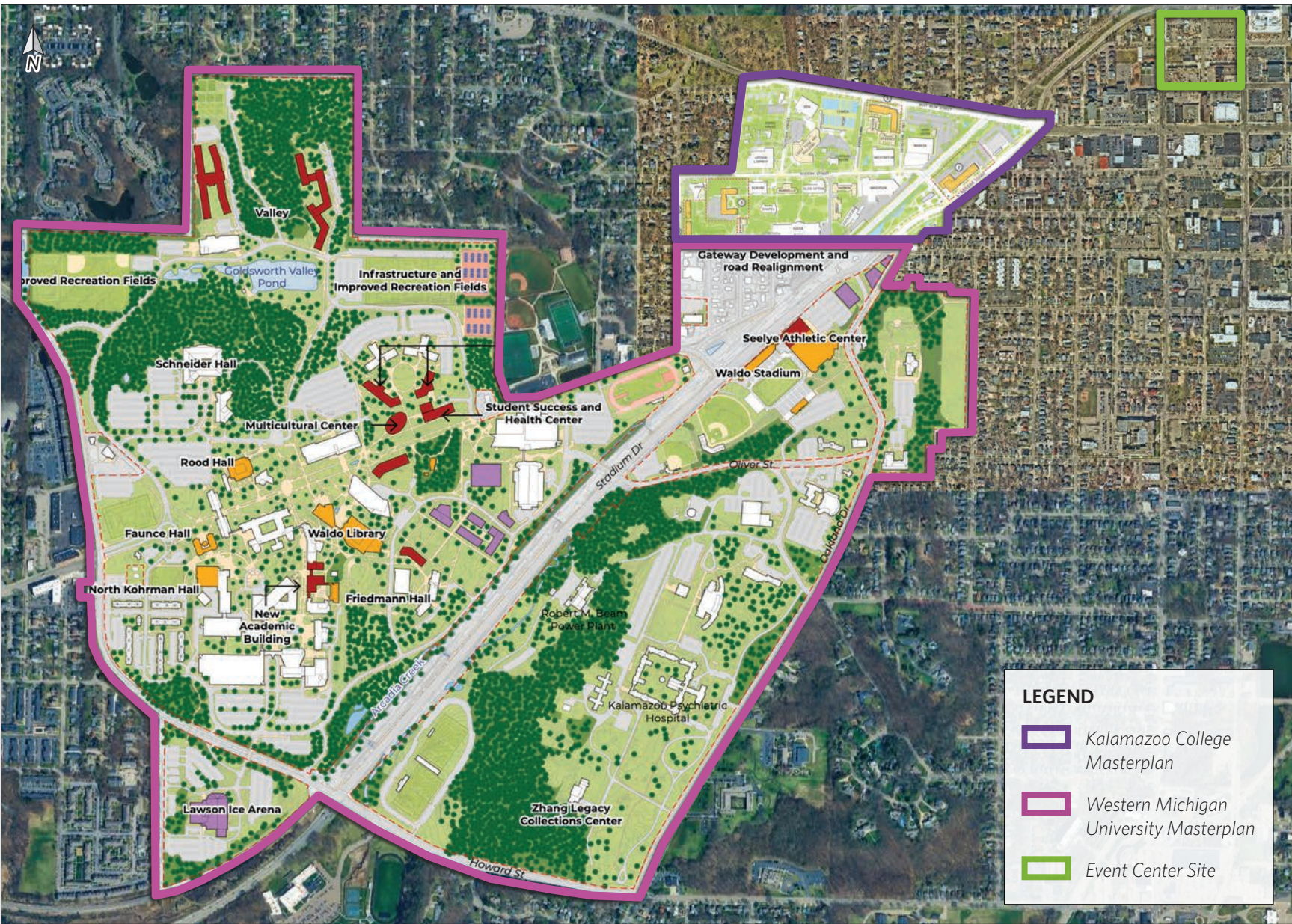


FIGURE 28: Overlay of Kalamazoo College 10-Year Masterplan and Western Michigan University Long-Term Masterplan
The Kalamazoo College 10-Year Masterplan (top right) was developed in collaboration between Kalamazoo College and the City, in line with the goals of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025. The plan focuses on expanding student housing, activating public spaces, and enhancing Kalamazoo College’s connection to the rest of the city. Western Michigan University has engaged with architecture firm Perkins+Will to develop a long-term masterplan for its campus (bottom left).
Source for top right: Kalamazoo College / The Collaborative | Source for bottom left: Perkins & Will Courtesy of Western Michigan University, Campus Master Plan 2025 and Beyond





PART 3: KEY FINDINGS

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MASTERPLAN OVERVIEW 22

KEY FINDINGS

The following Key Findings draw on information collected through stakeholder meetings and conversations with the city staff, as well as site tours and analysis by the professional team. Each represents an individual challenge or opportunity within the city, but can be considered together as a holistic approach to understanding and addressing the current state of Kalamazoo.

These seven findings form the foundation of this second report. The proposed vision and action plan outlined throughout this report will offer policy proposals and design solutions that seek to address the findings on these two pages. Many of the key findings overlap with each other, and most proposals within this report take all seven into account.

1



KEY FINDING 1:

THE W. MICHIGAN AVENUE CONNECTION IS A GATEWAY TO DOWNTOWN

W. Michigan Avenue is one of the two primary west-to-east routes into Kalamazoo's downtown core, and its intersection with Michikal and W. Main Street poses the perfect gateway point to welcome visitors, students, and community members alike. At the moment, however, W. Michigan Avenue is peppered with vacant lots and derelict buildings, and the key intersection offers an uninspiring transition into downtown. New development on both sides of W. Michigan Avenue will frame a more welcoming, walkable environment that signals the proximity of the downtown core and draws in people using any mode of transportation.

2



KEY FINDING 2:

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE AND WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY ARE DISCONNECTED FROM THE CITY

The combined presence of Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University brings a large student population to the city. These campuses are currently disconnected from the city, with the "Spaghetti Bowl" area complicating travel into downtown Kalamazoo. To address both this challenge and the need for growth, each college is engaging in current planning efforts. These efforts lack placemaking, however, as well as a holistic consideration of the overall area. Students deserve an active, livable, walkable connection to the heart of Kalamazoo, and downtown businesses need this wider base of customers.

3



KEY FINDING 3:

THE NEW EVENT CENTER IS A CATALYST FOR GROWTH

The Kalamazoo Event Center will draw college students, visitors, and the local community to the western side of downtown. The complex is affiliated with Western Michigan University, and anticipates improving the profile of the university within and beyond Kalamazoo. This influx of new customers for downtown businesses should have a positive economic impact on the city, and encourage further growth near the center if the productive activation of the public realm is considered. Placed at the north end of the "Spaghetti Bowl" area, the center also has potential to connect to Kalamazoo College and future development there.

4

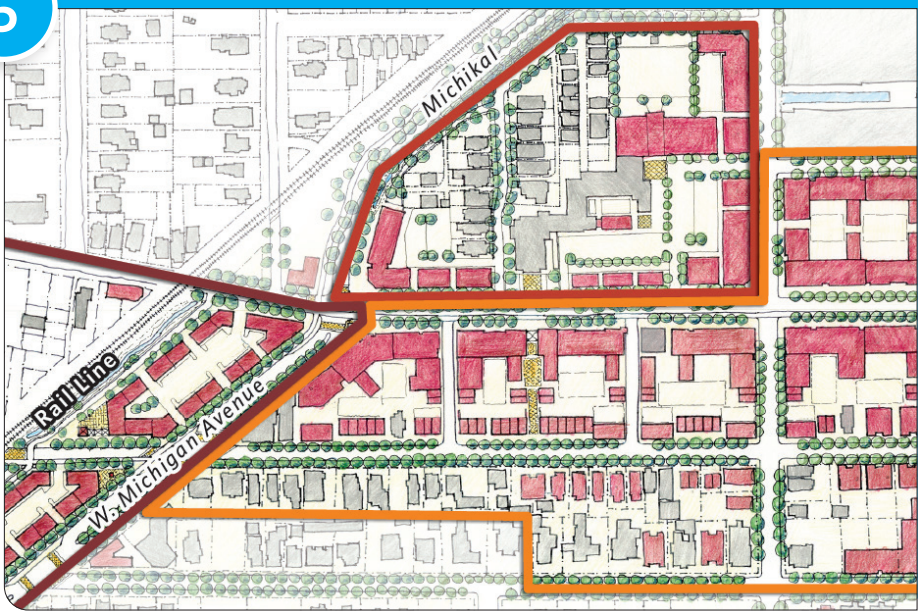


KEY FINDING 4:

W. MICHIGAN AVENUE IS UNSAFE

The tangle of streets that form the “Spaghetti Bowl” are nearly impossible to navigate on foot, and pose a heavy challenge to cyclists. Sidewalks and bike paths are discontinuous, unreliable, and unsafe; as a result, they are also unused. This set of streets discourages motion from southwest to northeast without a vehicle, because no pedestrian or cyclist will choose to walk along the “Spaghetti Bowl”; it also discourages motion from west to east, however, because the streets are also very challenging to cross. As such, it splits the city in several ways, and isolates both local colleges from downtown Kalamazoo. The reimagining of the “Spaghetti Bowl” as a safe, uninterrupted corridor, via the PROTECT grant, has the potential to reconnect these areas.

5



KEY FINDING 5:

STAKEHOLDERS NEED A COMMON VISION

The intersection of W. Michigan Avenue, W. Main Street, and Michikal is shared by several key players with a role in the future of the city. Overlapping on this hinge point are: the “Spaghetti Bowl” area, southwest connections to Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College, northeast connection to the anticipated Kalamazoo Event Center, recently-purchased land associated with the St. Augustine Cathedral campus, and several blocks with vacant lots between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street. The many stakeholders in this area have an opportunity to speak a common language, which aligns with the existing language of the city, with the help of regulatory frameworks and design guides.

6

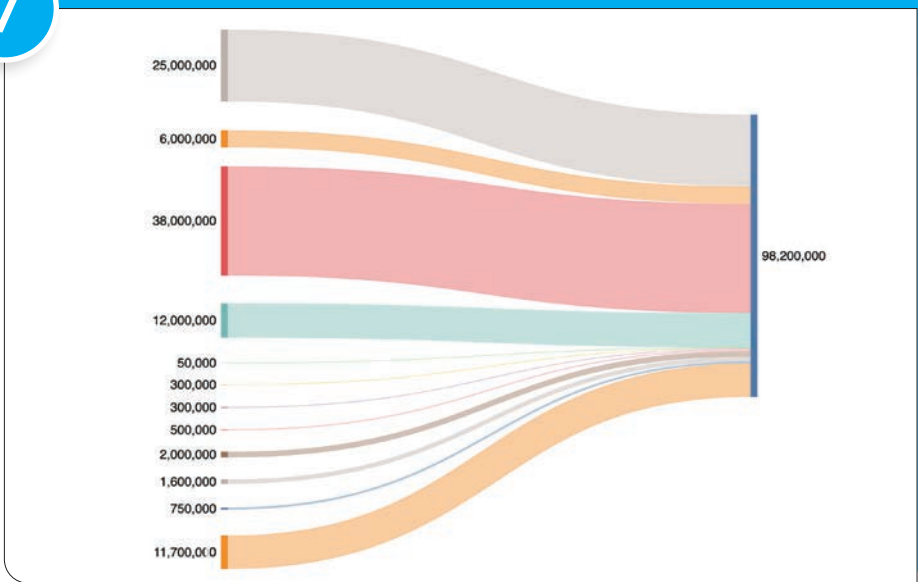


KEY FINDING 6:

NEW DEVELOPMENT MUST BE SCALED TO ITS CONTEXT

Kalamazoo has a strong historic character. Its surviving buildings and intact blocks are of a distinct scale and form that varies by block. The overall area of study ranges from high-density downtown to single-family residential, and from mixed-use buildings to two-story homes. New development that mediates among these various characters and scales will be respectful of historic shifts in scale and density within the city, while taking inspiration from the best of historic Kalamazoo. Clear cues and regulations will ensure that new development is a good neighbor that grows incrementally to support a strong economy.

7



KEY FINDING 7:

KALAMAZOO HAS A STRONG FUNDRAISING MOMENTUM

City of Kalamazoo staff have a robust history of bringing funding into their city with a variety of local and federal grants. Half of the action items proposed in the “Study of Urban Sequences & Activation of the Public Realm” charrette report have funding, and many are already in progress. The goals of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 have been met in full and with high energy. The city’s momentum of growth will carry forward into the proposals outlined in this report, and Kalamazoo will continue to repair and reconnect its city at small and large scales, in the short and long term.

MASTERPLAN OVERVIEW

This report proposes a vision for the transformation of west downtown Kalamazoo into a gateway to the city. The work seeks to connect several disjointed areas and synthesize several simultaneous catalysts for development. In order to fully address these challenges, both holistically and with specific proposals, the study operates in four parts:

- 1. *Urban Design Proposals:* Infill and redesign strategies for three study areas (highlighted to the right), centered on the concept of reconnecting to downtown and uniting around the intersection of W. Michigan Avenue, W. Main Street, and Michikal.
- 2. *Building Types for Block Repair:* A handbook for future development at a range of densities and uses, focusing on the relationship between urban and architectural scales.
- 3. *Street Sections:* Design frameworks for particular streets, both existing and proposed.
- 4. *Zoning & Preservation:* Zoning recommendations and historic preservation guides to protect and support the historic character and heritage buildings of Kalamazoo.

This plan represents a response to the moment of change and growth in which western Kalamazoo currently finds itself. With the number of moving parts and unpredictability of stakeholders, it is likely that the needs of this area and the role it plays in the city will change over time. In lieu of one rigid, overarching vision, this set of design proposals, regulations, and typologies can be interpreted as a set of flexible, symbiotic recommendations that will evolve in tandem with the evolution of the area.

The repair, revitalization, and growth of Kalamazoo is rapid and accelerating. This report acts in support of the city’s well-established pattern of identifying challenges, crowdsourcing solutions, generating funding, and implementing change. The trust and momentum built among city staff, local stakeholders, and active community members is what makes the pattern possible, and what enables this report to bring together several separate actors into a unified proposal.

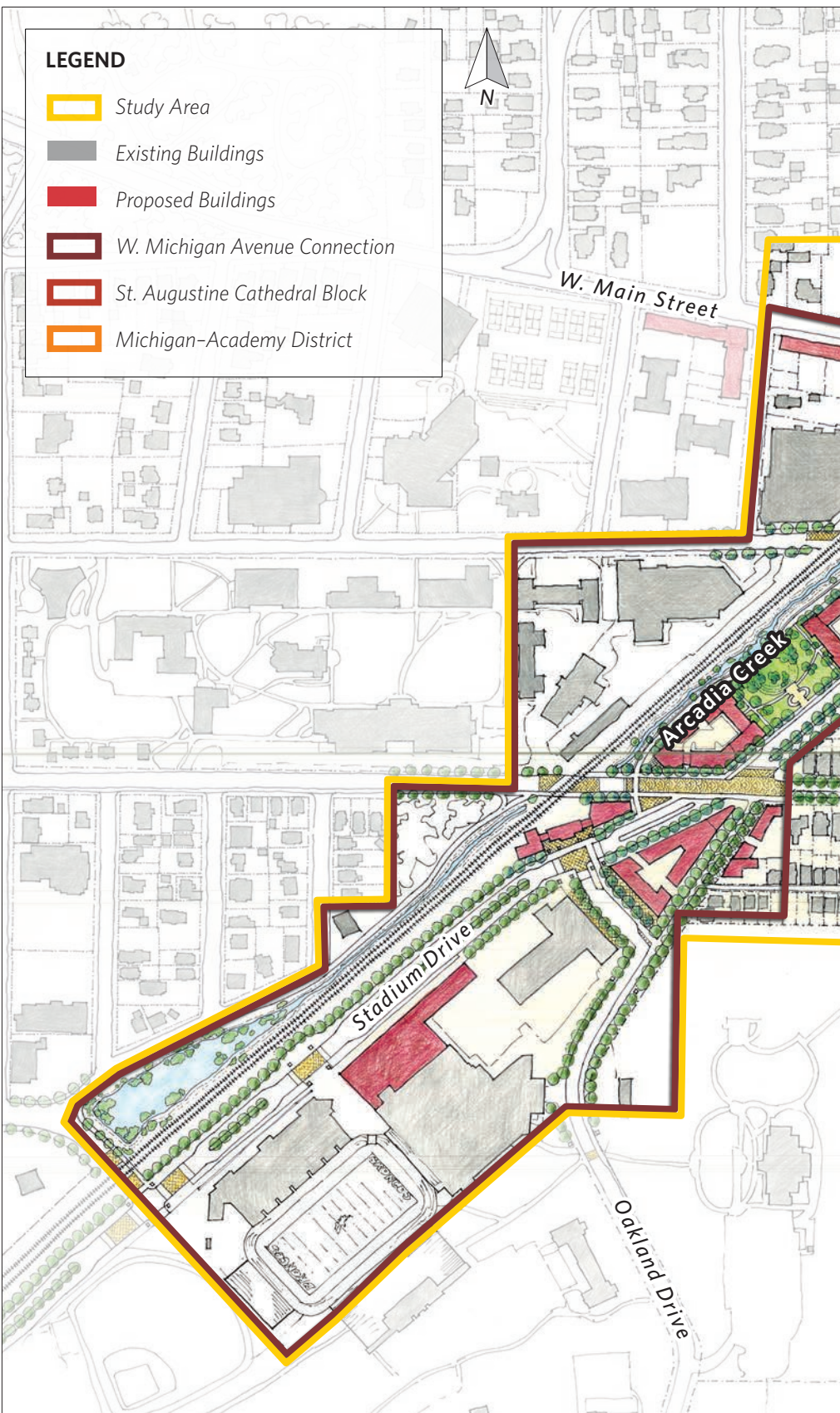


FIGURE 29: Proposed Masterplan for the Reconnection to Downtown

LAYER 1

URBAN DESIGN PROPOSALS

The W. Michigan Avenue connection, St. Augustine Cathedral campus, and blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street each pose a set of unique design challenges. The three overlap at the intersection of W. Michigan Avenue, W. Main Street, and Michikal. By prioritizing the pedestrian experience, creating parks and gathering spaces, and engaging in infill opportunities, these areas will collectively frame a future gateway to the city.

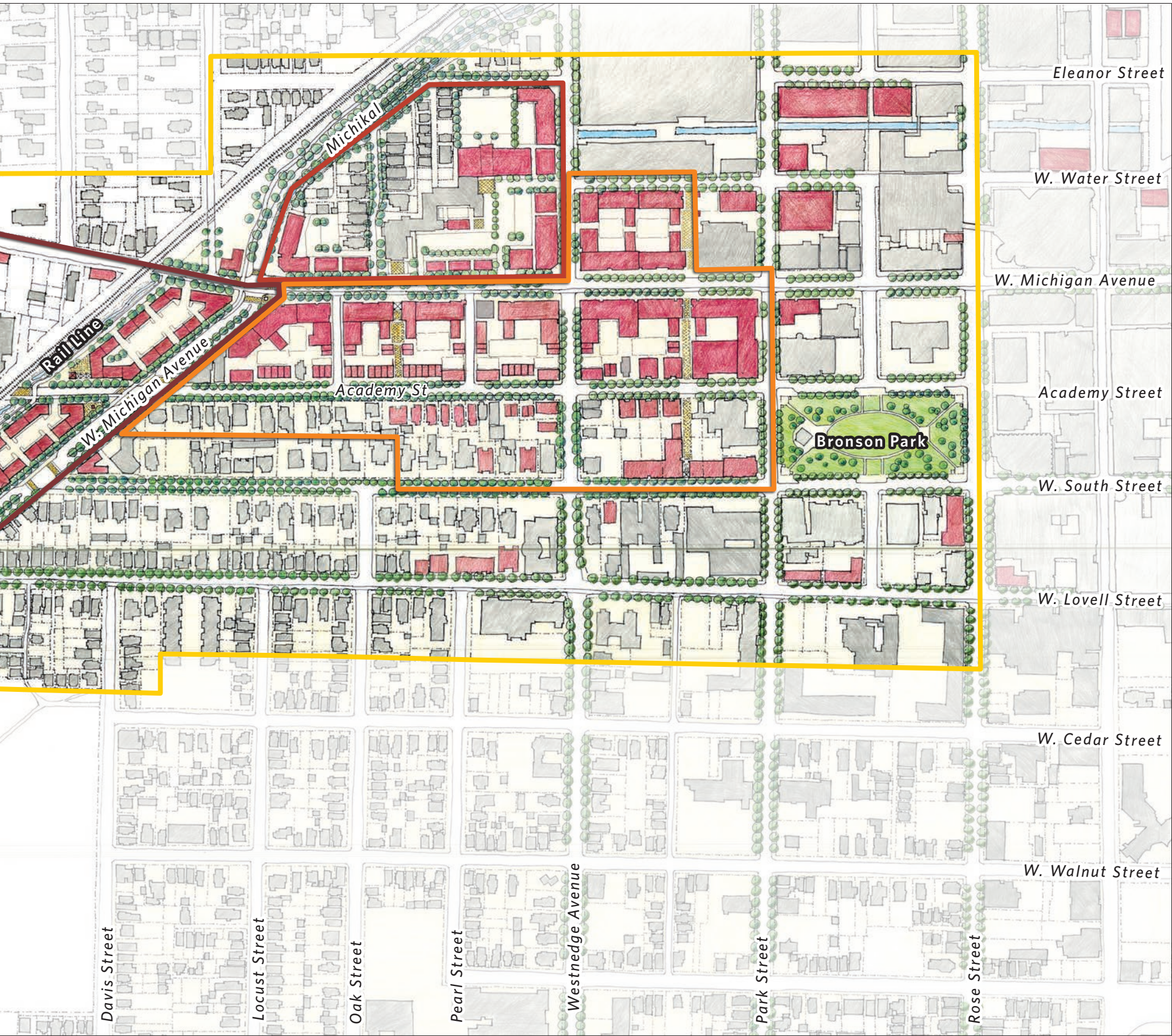
Pages 24 - 65

LAYER 2

BUILDING TYPES FOR BLOCK REPAIR

Repairing the block structure of downtown Kalamazoo requires employing a methodology that works in tandem with a careful consideration of how to incorporate different building types into infill and new blocks. Looking back at Kalamazoo’s historic block structure and historic buildings provides strong cues for character, scale, and increment of development. The proposed building types can adapt to many settings within the city.

Pages 66 - 87



LAYER 3

STREET SECTIONS



A comprehensive reconception of Kalamazoo streets is essential for a safe, walkable, and beautiful public realm. Improving current city streets, simplifying “Spaghetti Bowl” roads, and building new north-south passages will provide a functional, rational network. Narrower streets, conversions to two-way traffic, and the addition of trees, parking, bike lanes, and generous sidewalks help to activate residential and commercial corridors alike.

Pages 88 - 99

LAYER 4

ZONING & PRESERVATION



Kalamazoo has a distinct architectural and urban quality that varies dynamically from street to street. Enacting historic preservation recommendations will enable the maintenance and celebration of what remains of historic Kalamazoo. A zoning code that supports the existing character and respects the current patterns of scale and density in west Kalamazoo will prompt future development to speak the language of its context.

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PART 4:

URBAN DESIGN PROPOSALS

URBAN DESIGN PROPOSALS
OVERVIEW 26

DESIGN PROPOSAL 1:
W. MICHIGAN AVENUE
CONNECTION 28

DESIGN PROPOSAL 2:
ST. AUGUSTINE
CATHEDRAL BLOCK 46

DESIGN PROPOSAL 3:
MICHIGAN-ACADEMY
DISTRICT 58

URBAN DESIGN PROPOSALS OVERVIEW

The mosaic of development catalysts on the west side of downtown Kalamazoo requires a set of dynamic design solutions. Three distinct design proposals within the study area were examined individually, to ensure specific challenges, needs, and developers were considered, then within a united composition to ensure that the city would feel connected. All three study areas hinge on the intersection of W. Michigan Avenue, W. Main Street, and Michikal, which is reimagined as a welcoming gateway to downtown Kalamazoo.

The urban design goals were as follows:

1. **Create a Safe Pedestrian Experience:** Propose a safe and continuous pedestrian network to link the colleges to downtown and repair the damage from Urban Renewal infrastructure.
2. **Establish a Welcoming Gateway to Downtown:** Mark and open up the transition into to the west side of downtown to help activate new growth in an area of the city left behind by time.
3. **Encourage Sustainable Forms of Development:** Support a new commercial district and the construction of new residential units by developing buildings that balance the scale, density, and character of the historic context.
4. **Support Ongoing Efforts to Repair & Reconnect the City:** Repair the damage from urban renewal infrastructure and connect isolated areas of the city: colleges, downtown core, residential neighborhoods, and future event center. Take advantage of infill opportunities to reestablish the street edge and restore the urban and neighborhood fabric.
5. **Unite Stakeholders with a Shared Vision:** Unite isolated stakeholders to work together to realize a unified vision for future development.

Each of the study areas – the W. Michigan Avenue Connection, St. Augustine Cathedral Block, and Michigan-Academy District – has individual priorities that inform design decisions in the other areas, as well as within the combined study area. Preserving a view of St. Augustine Cathedral informed the spacing of mixed-use buildings on the south side of W. Michigan Avenue; the block structure in the floodplain was given a scale similar to the blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street; the southeast corner of the St. Augustine campus adapted to its role as a wayfinder for the new paths along the “Spaghetti Bowl.” Scale, density, hierarchy, and connectivity remain consistent throughout the plan, as inspired by some of historic Kalamazoo’s strongest moments in the heart of downtown.

While it would be optimal for all three proposals to be realized in complete form, each study area stands on its own, allowing for differences in timeline, scope, and developer intent. In bringing these three areas together as one plan, however, the overall proposal encourages scattered stakeholders to enter into a conversation about the city they share, and realize their mutual goals. This sort of collective action and crowdsourced decision-making is a unique and essential quality of Kalamazoo.

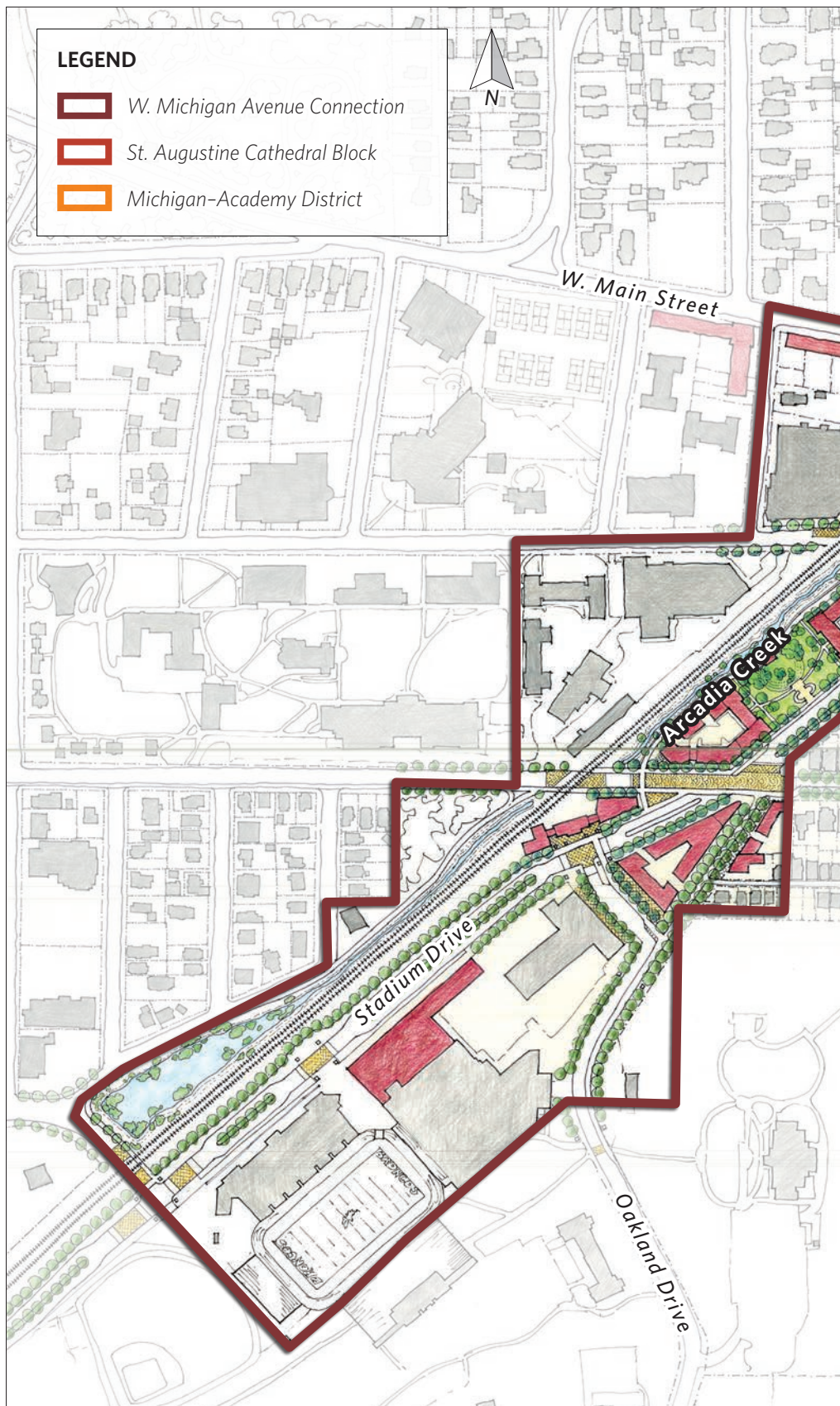


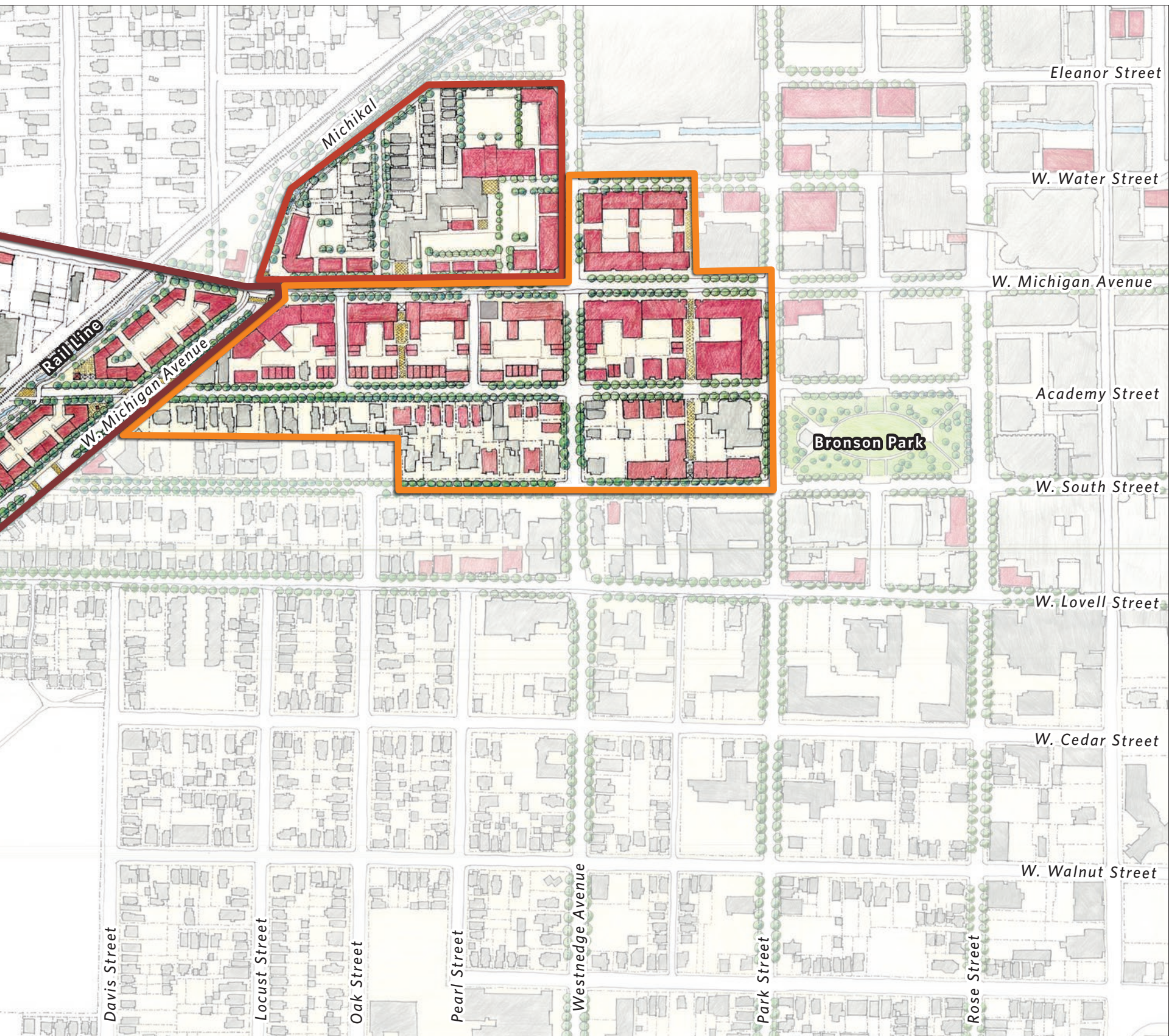
FIGURE 30: Proposed Masterplan with Study Areas Highlighted

DESIGN PROPOSAL 1

W. MICHIGAN AVE. CONNECTION

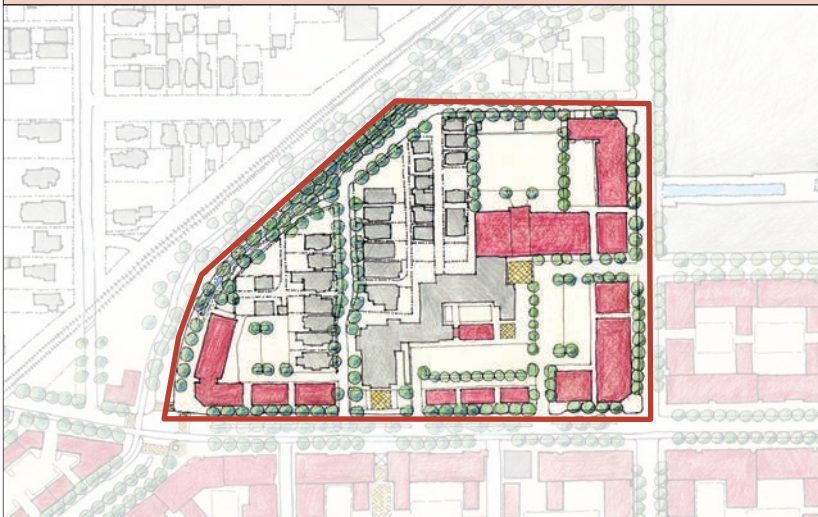
The 400-foot-wide stretch of high-speed streets along Stadium Drive and W. Michigan Avenue discourages pedestrian motion, disconnects areas of the city, and renders land unusable. A new PROTECT grant to redesign this floodplain area will enable a new corridor of motion with safe paths, connection to the future event center, and functional blocks and parks. Street work will be funded by RAISE grant money.

Pages 28 - 45



DESIGN PROPOSAL 2

ST. AUGUSTINE CATHEDRAL BLOCK

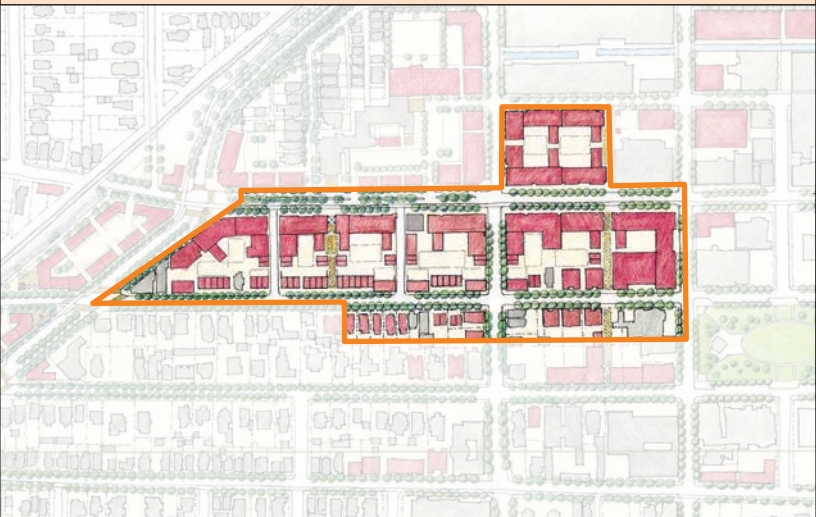


St. Augustine Cathedral is a well-loved island of community gathering in a sea of parking and vacant land. Recent parishioner interest in redeveloping this land as a gateway to the city will generate complete blocks with a lively street presence on W. Michigan Avenue, and N. Westnedge Avenue with gathering spaces and commercial opportunities.

Pages 46 - 57

PROPOSAL 3

MICHIGAN-ACADEMY DISTRICT



The blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street bridge the transition from a commercial to a residential street, but are primarily comprised of parking lots, vacant land, and buildings beyond their functional life. New development stakeholders will create the opportunity to nearly fully redesign these blocks with the richness, scale, and character of historic Kalamazoo.

Pages 58 - 65

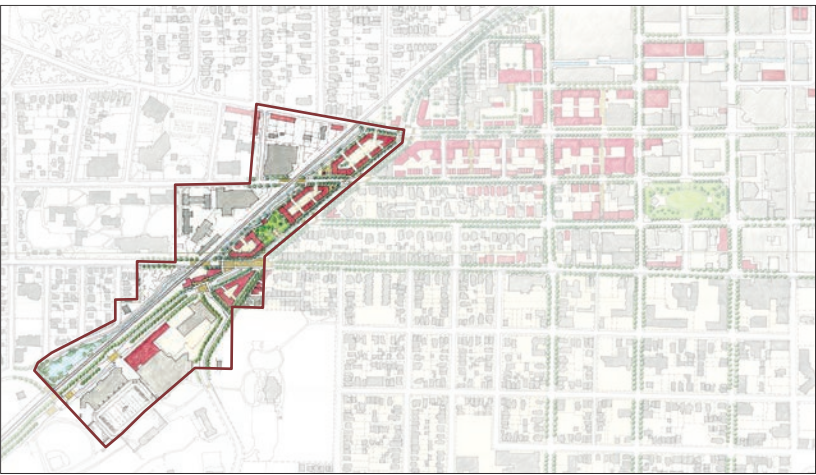
DESIGN PROPOSAL 1: W. MICHIGAN AVENUE CONNECTION

The first study area, known colloquially as the “Spaghetti Bowl,” is a 400-foot wide swath of winding roadways from the 1960’s and rail line which stretches from Stadium Drive in the southwest along W. Michigan Avenue toward W. Main Street and Michikal in the northeast. The Spaghetti Bowl prevents students, community members, and visitors from safely traversing between four points of interest: the Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College campuses, downtown Kalamazoo, and the new Kalamazoo Event Center.

Originally intended to funnel vehicular traffic as quickly as possible into downtown Kalamazoo’s one-way streets, the configuration of the Spaghetti Bowl encourages reckless driving. Over the past ten years, there have been 143 crashes at Lovell Street, where Stadium Drive becomes W. Michigan Avenue. As the city restores its one-way street network to two-way streets in the coming years, this complex network of asphalt roads will need to be consolidated.

The majority of the Spaghetti Bowl sits within a floodplain along the Arcadia Creek. The City of Kalamazoo recently received a \$38 million PROTECT grant to raise the elevation of this area and naturalize the creek, as well as multiple RAISE grants for street redesign. It is important that these efforts include the reconfiguration of impacted blocks, streets, and trails to restore a portion of the native habitat, establish a “sense of place” by developing land recovered from previous roadways, and increase the community’s overall sense of safety by reducing traffic speed, enhancing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, adding functional crosswalks, and encouraging new buildings to face W. Michigan Avenue.

The first step in the process of redesigning this area was to study the Sanborn Fire Map (Figure 31) to understand the original block structure before it was destroyed by Urban Renewal. This historic network of streets offered valuable precedent; the resulting design proposal restores an east-west continuity while creating a safe, green, urban corridor of motion.



Location Map

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Spaghetti Bowl streets are an unsafe barrier**
The complex, high-speed tangle of roads acts as a barrier to movement across the city isolating neighborhoods and campuses and posing a danger to cyclists and pedestrians.
- 2 There is excessive underutilized land along the creek**
Land is split up by traffic, curving roads, and sporadic buildings; small parks and Arcadia Creek lack activation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Repair and rationalize the Spaghetti Bowl**
Repair the historic street network to connect the colleges, neighborhoods, Event Center, and downtown with safe streets.
- 2 Activate underutilized land for the public good**
Transform empty land into public places and new buildings.

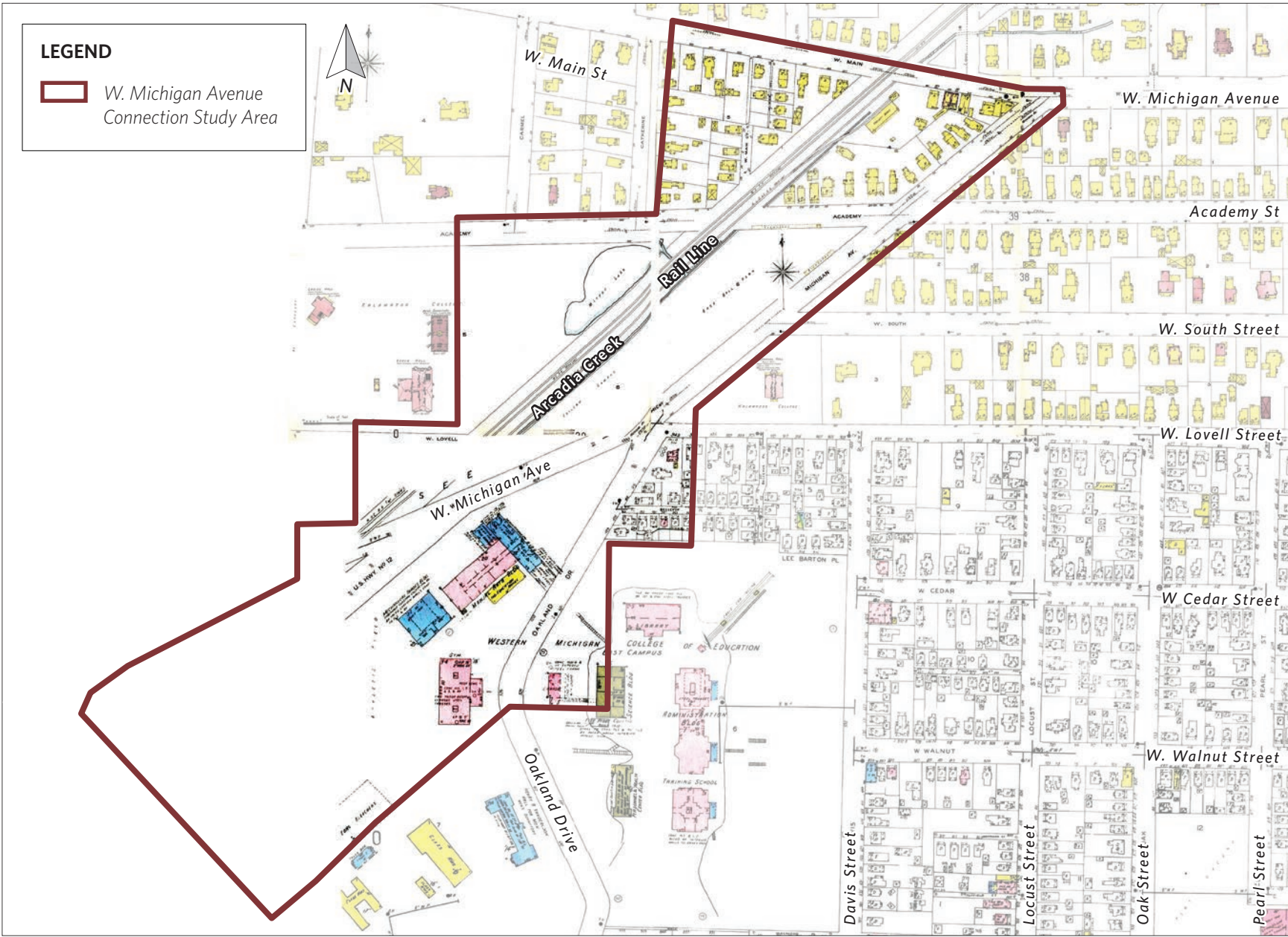


FIGURE 31: Sanborn Fire Map with Spaghetti Bowl Study Area Highlighted

This portion of the aggregated map is from 1908, and shows the historic block structure along W. Michigan Avenue prior to the addition of Spaghetti Bowl streets.



FIGURE 32: Aerial View of Existing Conditions of the Spaghetti Bowl, Looking East

Currently, this area consists of unsafe streets and disconnected, underutilized patches of land. The unsafe pedestrian experience is highlighted in the inset images.



FIGURE 33: Existing Aerial Map View of the Spaghetti Bowl


The highlighted Spaghetti Bowl currently splits Kalamazoo in two; it is difficult to cross or to use as a corridor of motion, especially for non-vehicular transportation. The unsafe pedestrian experience is highlighted in the inset images.

LAYER 1

STREET NETWORK

The proposed street network establishes clear east-west connections across an untangled Spaghetti Bowl, and logically channels north-south traffic along a single, unified route. New intersections calm the flow of cars and allow for multimodal transportation.

Pages 32 - 35

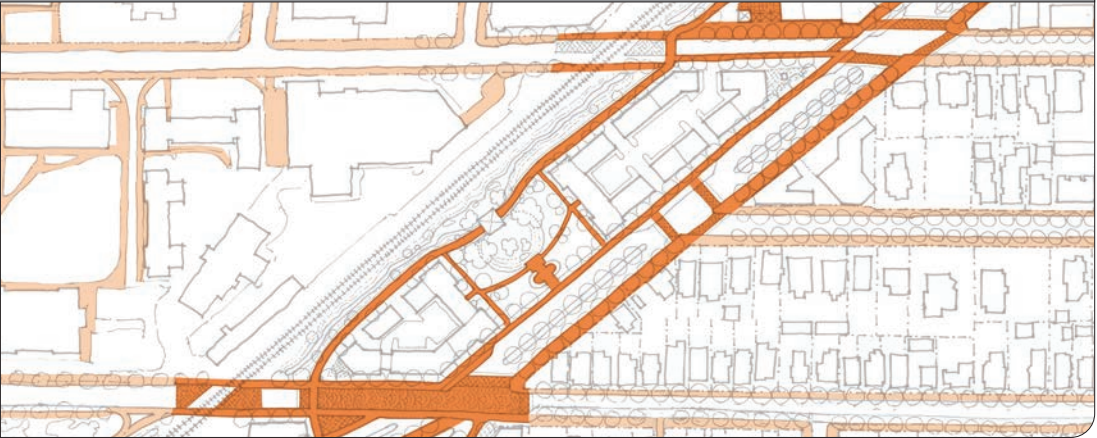


LAYER 2

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

In this proposal, pedestrians have regular, contiguous access to the floodplain area, and can move either across or through this new set of blocks with safety and ease. Beyond these basic needs, they also gain a varied and interesting experience via shaded streets, parks, and new buildings.

Pages 36 - 37




LAYER 3

BICYCLE NETWORK

The proposed bicycle network creates consistent safe passage through the Spaghetti Bowl area, with the choice between a creekside path and protected lane alongside W. Michigan Avenue. Formerly isolated routes are now linked to overall north-south and east-west routes through the city.

Pages 38 - 39




LAYER 4

OPEN SPACE & CREEK

By daylighting Arcadia Creek and highlighting it with a new park, this proposal offers usable, flexible green space. It is easy and safe to access, well-framed by new streets and blocks, and activated with a number of functional features.

Pages 40 - 41




LAYER 5

BLOCK STRUCTURE

Responding to the historic block structure discovered in the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, this proposed set of buildings holds a continuous, interesting street edge, framing the above vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian paths, as well as proposed parks and the newly-daylit Arcadia Creek.

Pages 42 - 45



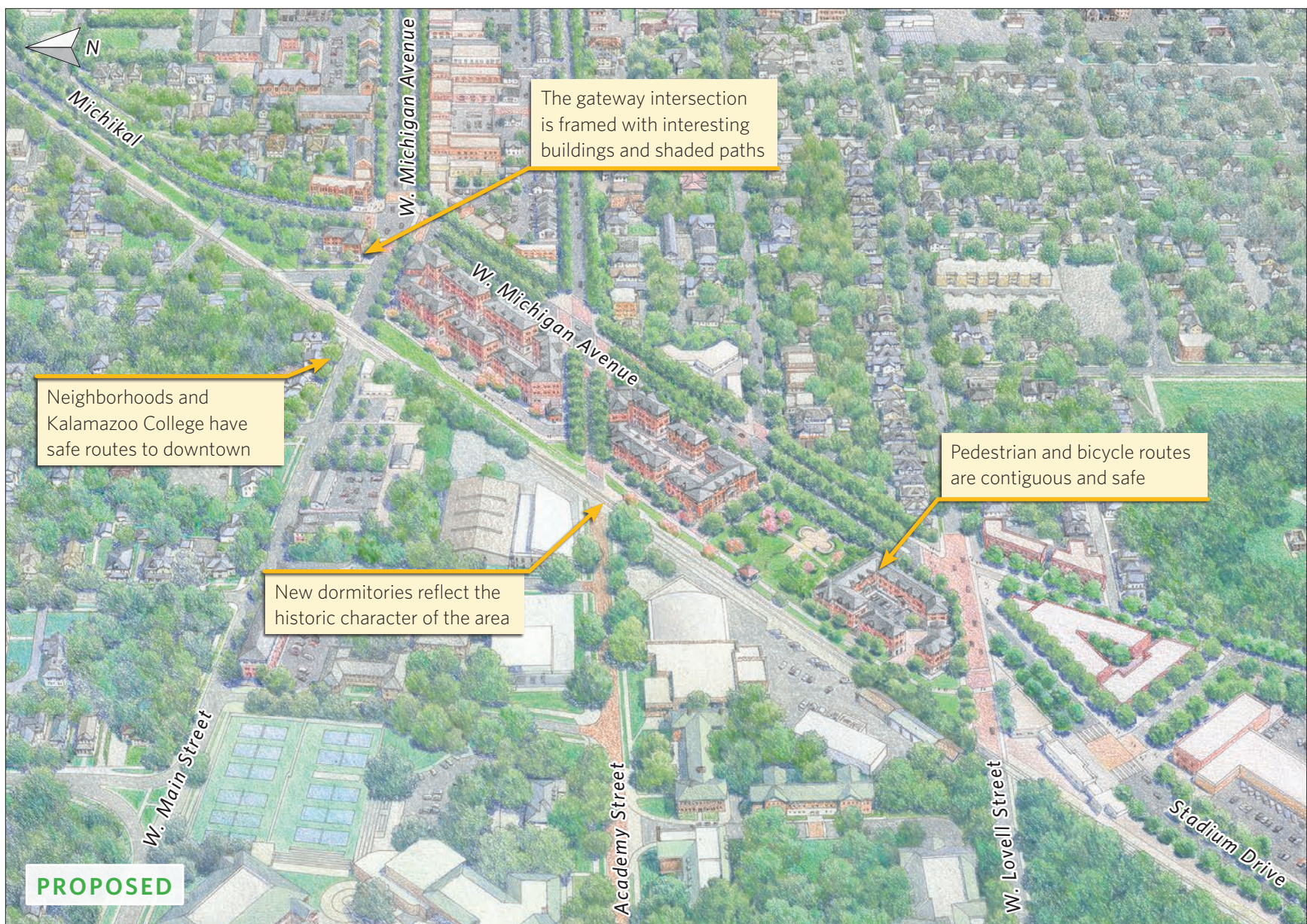


FIGURE 34: Aerial View of Proposed Conditions of the W. Michigan Avenue Connection, Looking Northeast

The new intermodal transportation network and system of blocks generates a simpler, more coherent experience both along and across the untangled Spaghetti Bowl. Proposed buildings take on the architectural language of historic Kalamazoo College buildings.

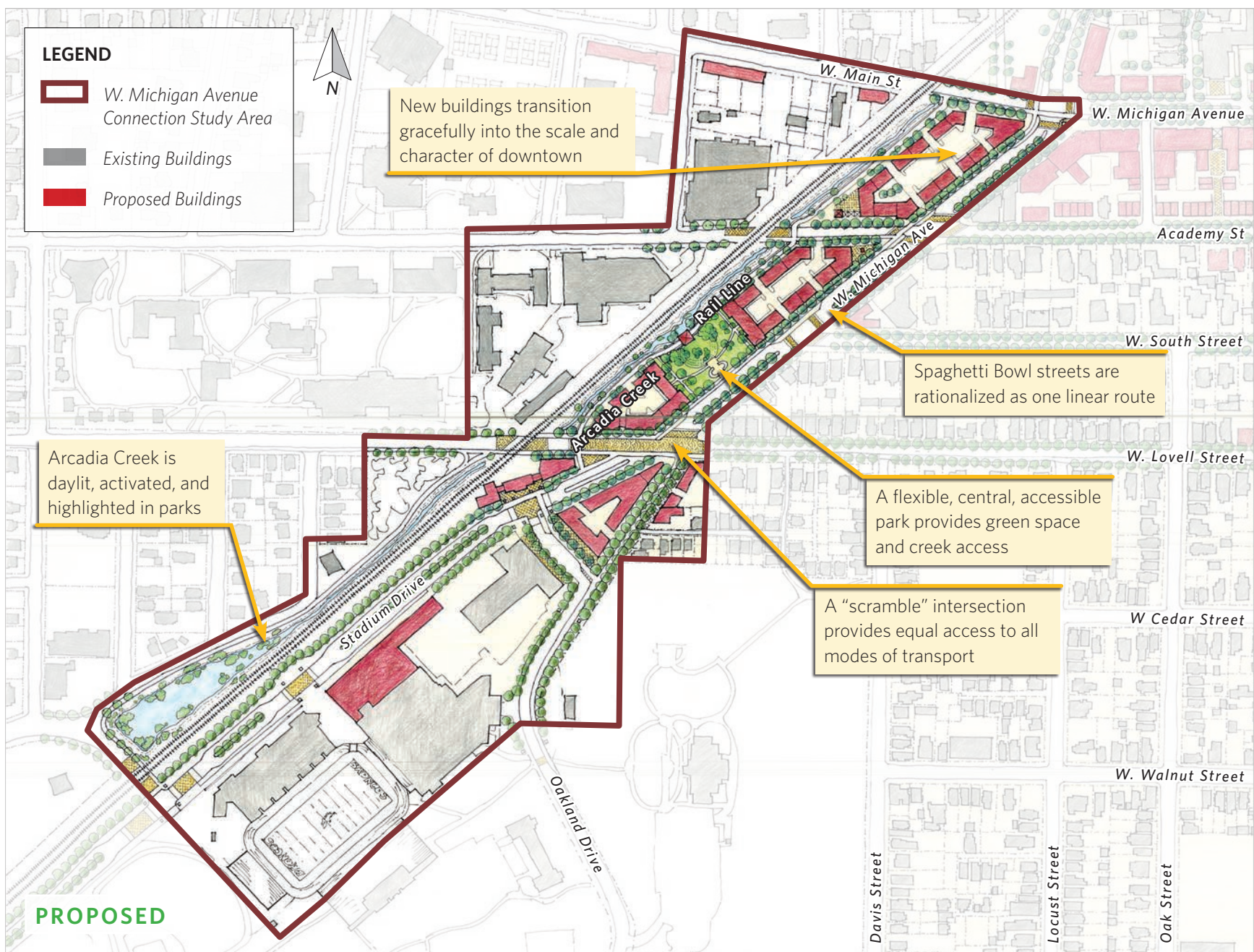


FIGURE 35: Proposed Masterplan of the W. Michigan Avenue Connection

Highlighted in dark red, this portion of the masterplan unites streets, paths, blocks, and parks to serve as a connection rather than an interruption.

STREET NETWORK

The current street network in the floodplain area is unnecessarily complicated, earning it the nickname “Spaghetti Bowl.” Several parallel streets wind in and out of each other at illogical places, trapping the land in between and rendering it unusable. While it is technically possible to navigate this area as a pedestrian or cyclist, the experience is unreliable, unpleasant, and unsafe. Though the current network fully prioritizes the car, the vehicular experience also lacks a cohesion and logic.

The proposed network takes cues from the historic streets of the Sanborn Fire Map, clarifying the excess of curving drives into one continuous street. The connection between Western Michigan University and the future event center has a single, logical axis of motion, and is available to pedestrians and cyclists alike. Crossing east-west is no longer an impossibility, and every street that meets the floodplain area has a clear, safe path forward. The streets provide shade, a varied experience, and a consistent edge of buildings or park. For a more detailed look at proposed street sections, see pages 90-99.

KEY FINDING

Spaghetti Bowl streets are illogical and unsafe, acting as a barrier to connectivity

The tangle of roads is confusing for all modes of transportation, and particularly unsafe for pedestrians and bicycles. Crossing east-west is as challenging as moving along it north-south.

RECOMMENDATION

Rationalize the street network, enabling safe passage across and through the area

Combine curving roads into rational, linear streets with north-south and east-west continuity. Incorporate complete intersections, medians, and street parking.



FIGURE 36: Existing Street Network

The current network incorporates a number of illogically connected streets, which generate pockets of unusable space and create an unsafe experience for non-vehicular transport to move across or through the Spaghetti Bowl. The highlighted areas are explored in greater depth on the following spread.



W. Michigan Avenue & W. Main Street is a particularly tangled intersection



It is a challenge to cross several wide streets and the tracks at once



FIGURE 37: Proposed Street Network

The proposed network simplifies the Spaghetti Bowl, allowing east-west streets to carry all modes of transport across with ease, and uniting north-south streets as one contiguous corridor of motion. The highlighted areas are explored in greater depth on the following spread.

FIGURE 38: Existing Conditions of Stadium Drive and W. Michigan Avenue

This intersection of roadways was designed to funnel one-way traffic eastbound into downtown and southbound onto Oakland Drive. There are only two pedestrian crossings in this stretch of road. Each is dangerous and ineffective

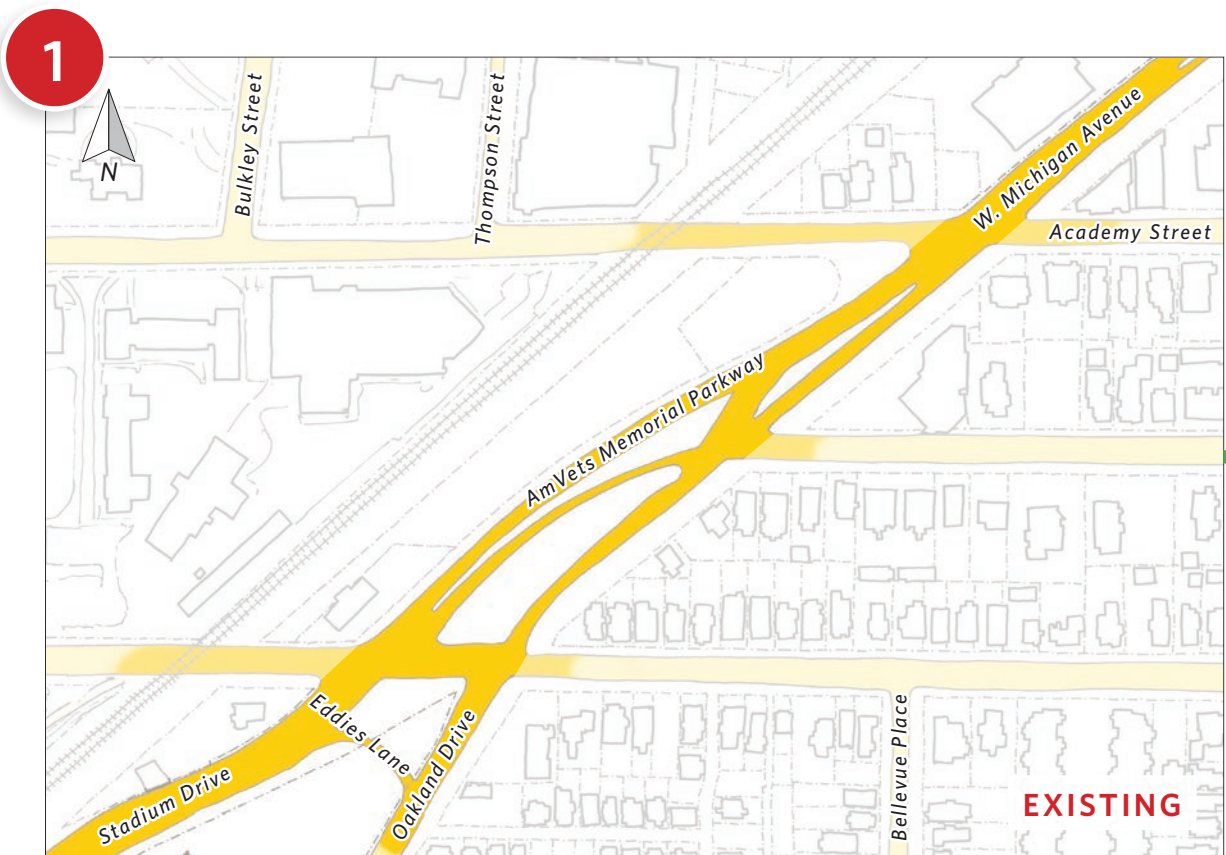


FIGURE 39: Existing Conditions of the Lovell Street, Oakland Drive, & Stadium Drive Intersection

The current configuration of this intersection involves two roadways (Stadium Drive and Oakland Drive) intersecting W. Lovell Street adjacent to one another, which requires pedestrians to wait several minutes and cross three roads to go from southwest to northeast. The leftover green space has been turned into a neglected park, which is only accessible by crossing a fourth time in the reverse direction.

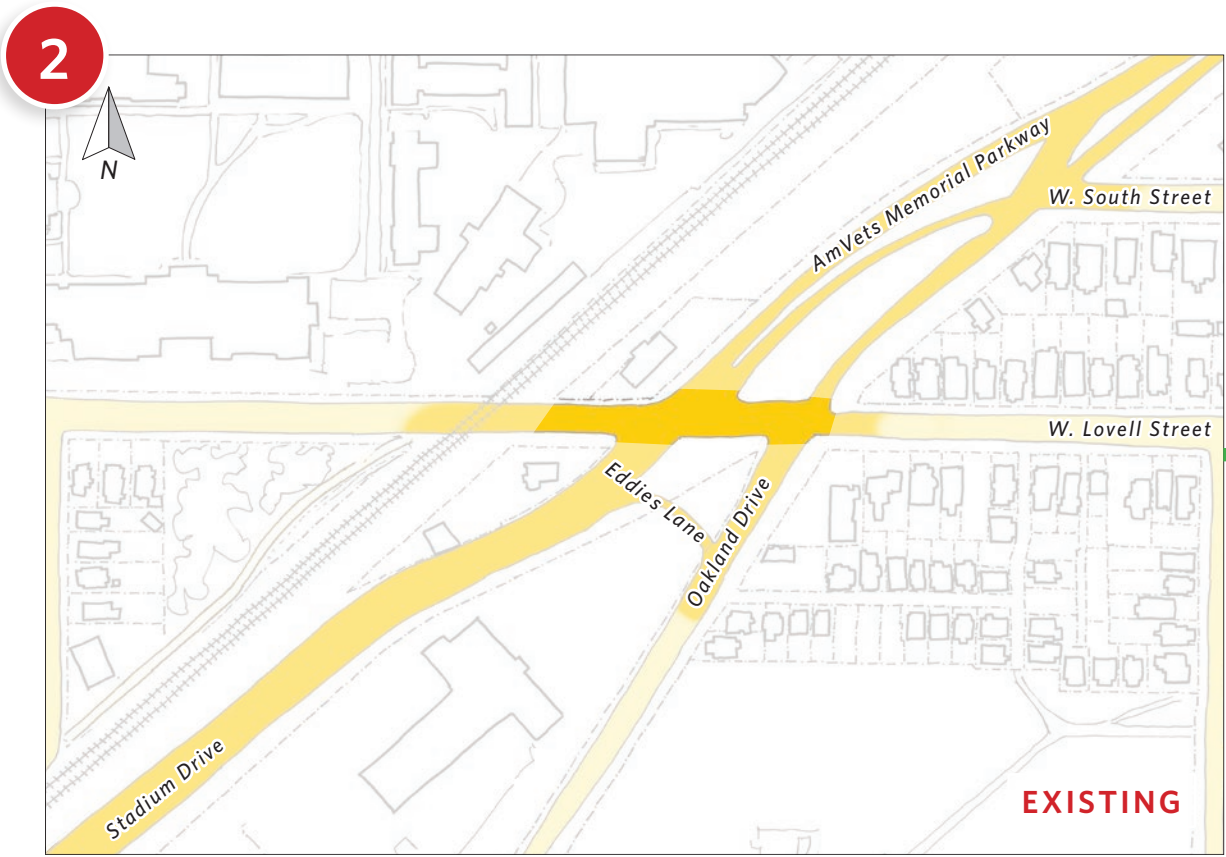
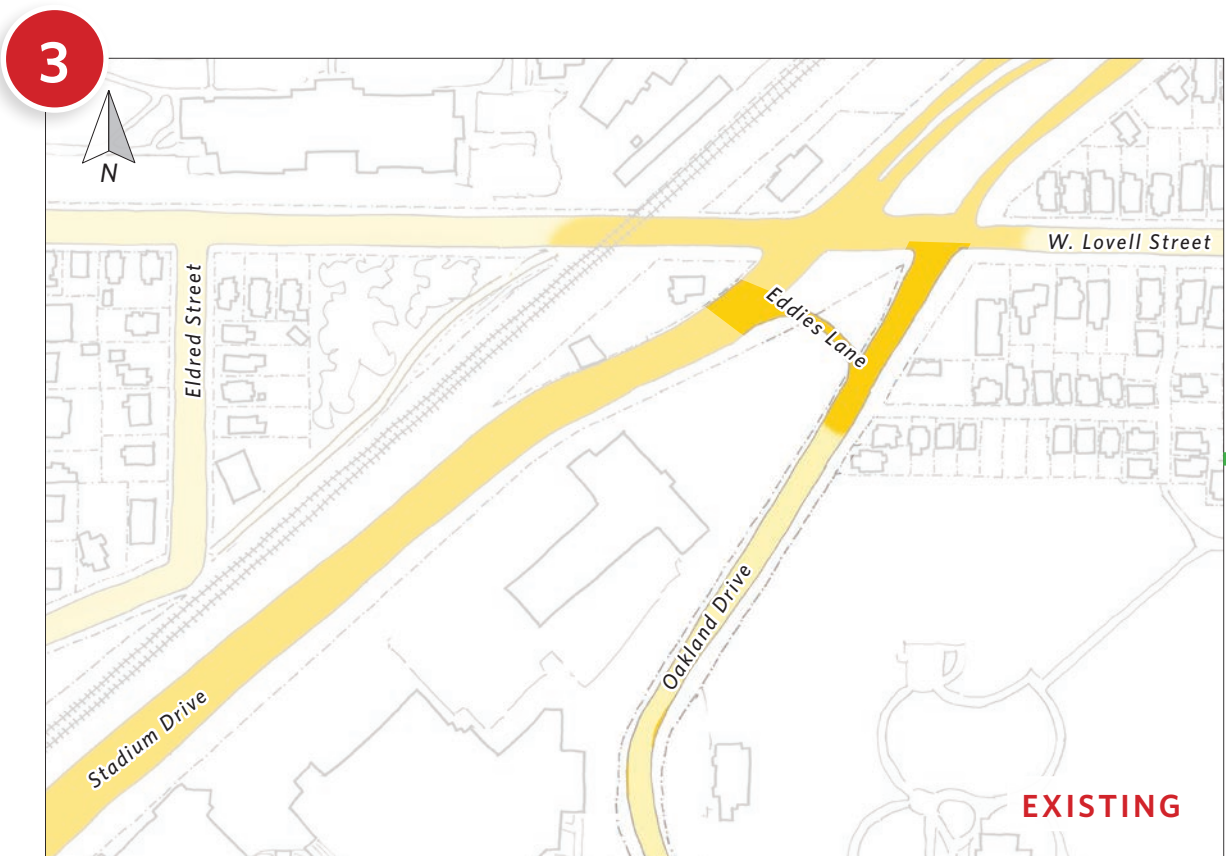


FIGURE 40: Existing Conditions of Oakland Drive

Stadium Drive, its intersection at W. Lovell Street, and Eddies Lane occupy approximately 1.25 acres and uses six pedestrian crosswalks – far fewer than are needed to safely and efficiently navigate the intersection without an automobile. The current configuration of winding roadways was designed to quickly funnel automobile traffic in and out of the city’s one-way street network. The 1/3 acre of green space between the roadways, where the Western Michigan University entrance boulder is located, is manicured like a park, but the hostile environment coupled with the lack of programming makes it unlikely that any person will enjoy the open space as it is. At this point in the street, the building frontages on either side are nearly 400 feet apart, making this space feel open, noisy, and unsafe.



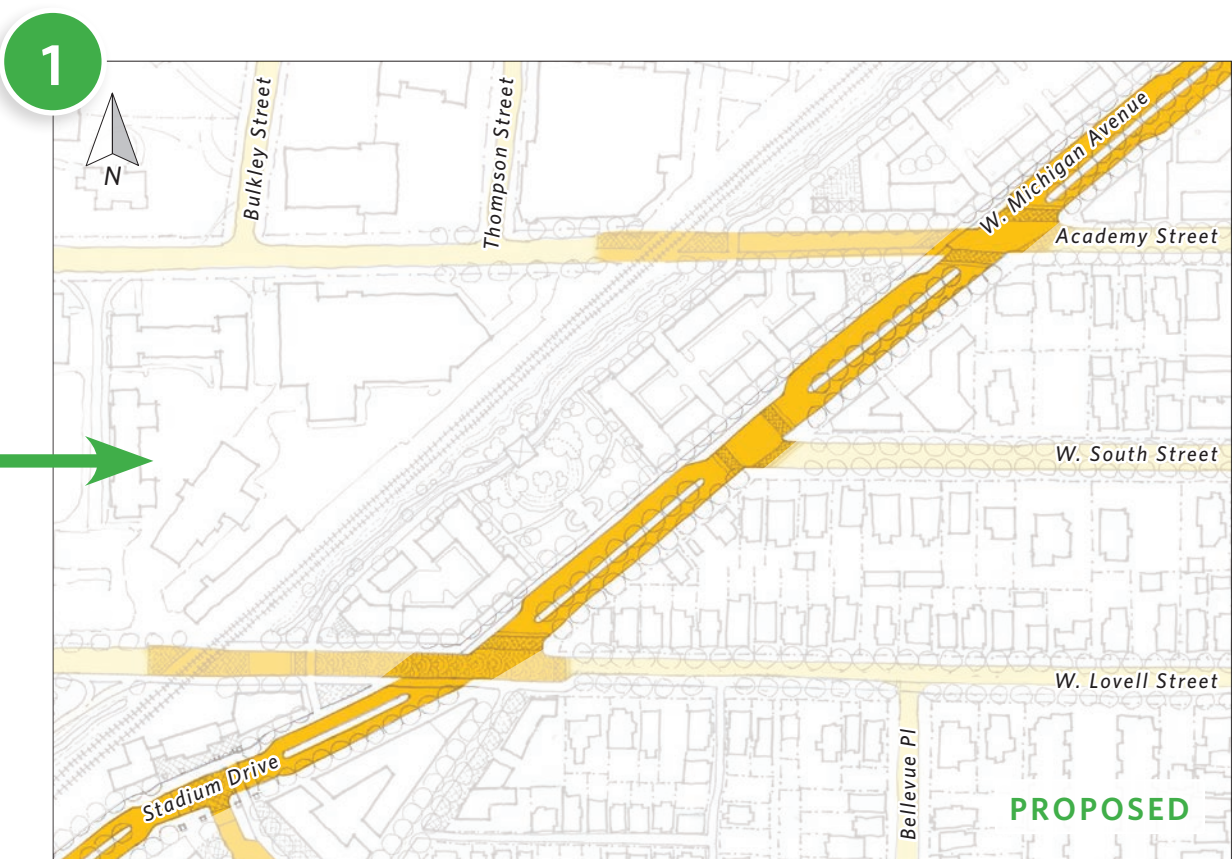


FIGURE 41: Resolution of Stadium Drive and W. Michigan Avenue

When W. South Street is converted to a two-way street, simplify W. Michigan Avenue (currently AmVets Memorial Parkway and Oakland Drive) into a single street. Terminate W. South Street on-center with the corner element of a proposed Kalamazoo College dormitory building across the street, northeast of the proposed park. Provide generous pedestrian crossings at this intersection. Consider installing a scramble intersection to allow pedestrians on W. South Street to walk due west to the proposed park.

Refer to pages 93 and 95 for detailed street section proposals.

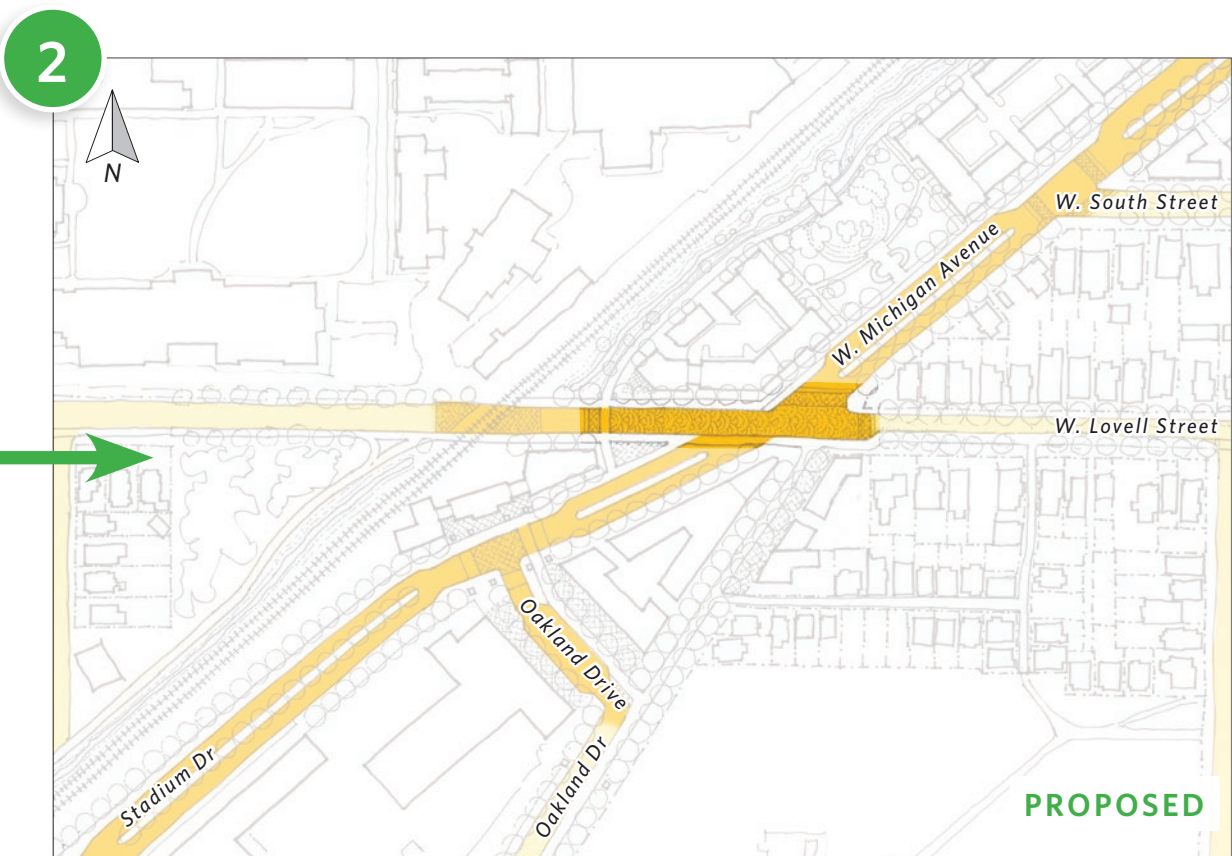


FIGURE 42: Scramble Intersection at Lovell Street

When W. Lovell Street is returned to being a two-way street, convert this intersection into a signalized scramble intersection, where the first signal allows only pedestrians to cross in all directions for a proportionally-extended period of time. A second and third signal allows vehicular crossing. Due to tight corners, prevent northeast-bound vehicular traffic from turning left and prevent southwest-bound vehicular traffic from turning left. The former stretch of Oakland Drive south of W. Lovell Street will be open only to local and non-motorized traffic. Only non-motorized traffic may enter the scramble from this path.

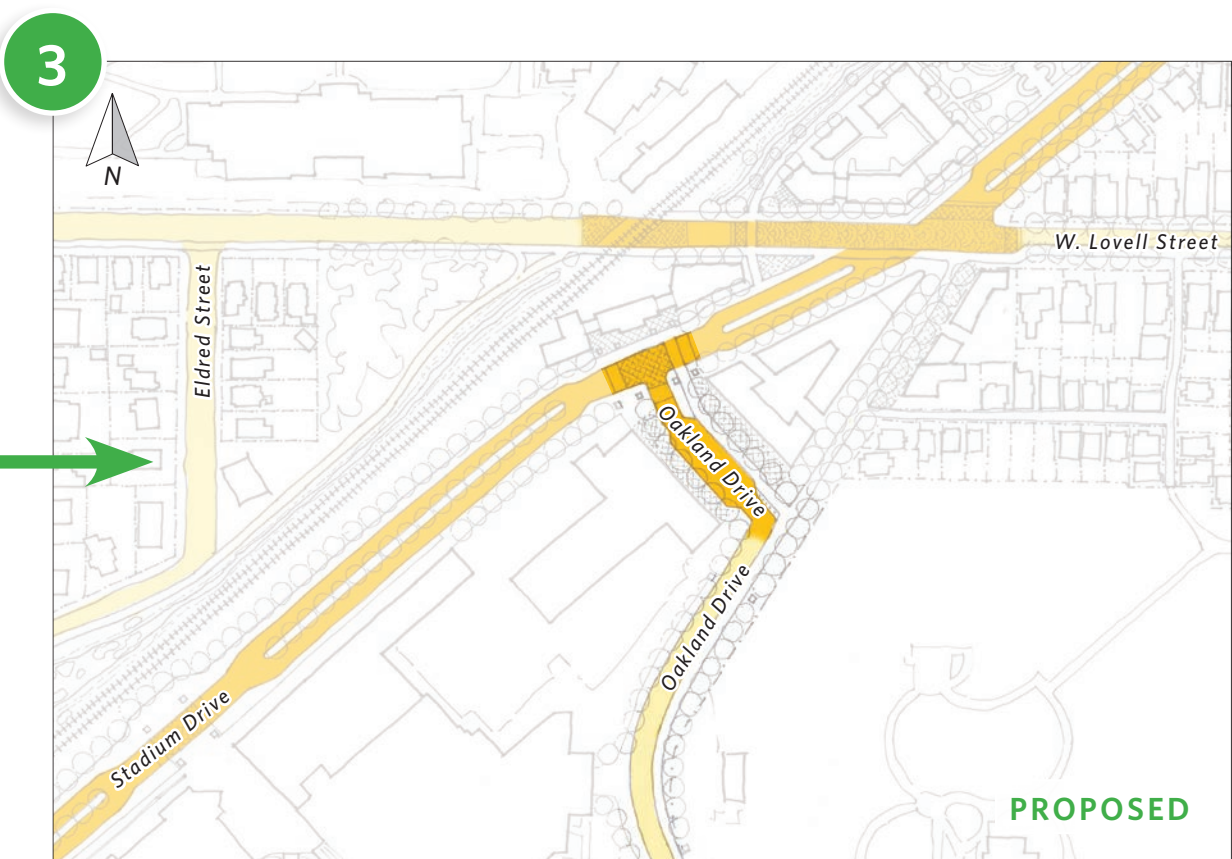


FIGURE 43: New Oakland Drive

Adjust the course of Stadium Drive to reflect the historic trajectory of W. Michigan Avenue (Figure 7). Regrade Oakland Drive and reroute it to the left, just north of the Western Michigan University Facilities Building to meet Stadium Drive at a perpendicular angle. Narrow Stadium Drive as it approaches the new Oakland Drive intersection. Allow bicycle/pedestrian traffic to continue along the original Oakland Drive route toward W. Lovell Street. The newly rerouted Oakland Drive provides a complete street experience just outside the Western Michigan University stadium that can serve as a restaurant, retail, and entertainment destination that serves gameday participants.

Refer to page 94 for a detailed street section proposal.

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

On either side of the Spaghetti Bowl, the historic block structure of Kalamazoo has a relatively intact and comprehensive pedestrian network. The Spaghetti Bowl interrupts this network, both as a barrier to east-west motion and an overcomplication of north-south motion. Crossing over this area involves vast and unsafe crosswalks, and walking along it takes pedestrians on illogical, winding paths, through unactivated parks and along busy highways. Along the Western Michigan University athletic buildings towards the southwest of the Spaghetti Bowl, sidewalks simply stop, and pick back up again two buildings later.

The proposed plan reimagines the area as a bridge among Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, downtown Kalamazoo, and the new Event Center. Each of these can be an origin or destination for pedestrians who are newly encouraged to make the journey via clear, safe, contiguous routes. While the existing paths are unshaded and provide little visual interest, the new paths take pedestrians along a creek trail, through parks, and past new buildings, under the cover of a tree canopy.

KEY FINDING

Pedestrian paths are inconsistent, making the experience unsafe and unpleasant

Sidewalks take illogical routes, abruptly stop, lack shade and reliable paving, and often run along busy roads; wide, frequent, unclear intersections pose danger.

RECOMMENDATION

Create a continuous network of paths to make sidewalks safe and engaging

Establish safe passage with uninterrupted paths and complete intersections. Incorporate trees, parks, and buildings to create a pleasant walking experience with strong buffers against traffic.

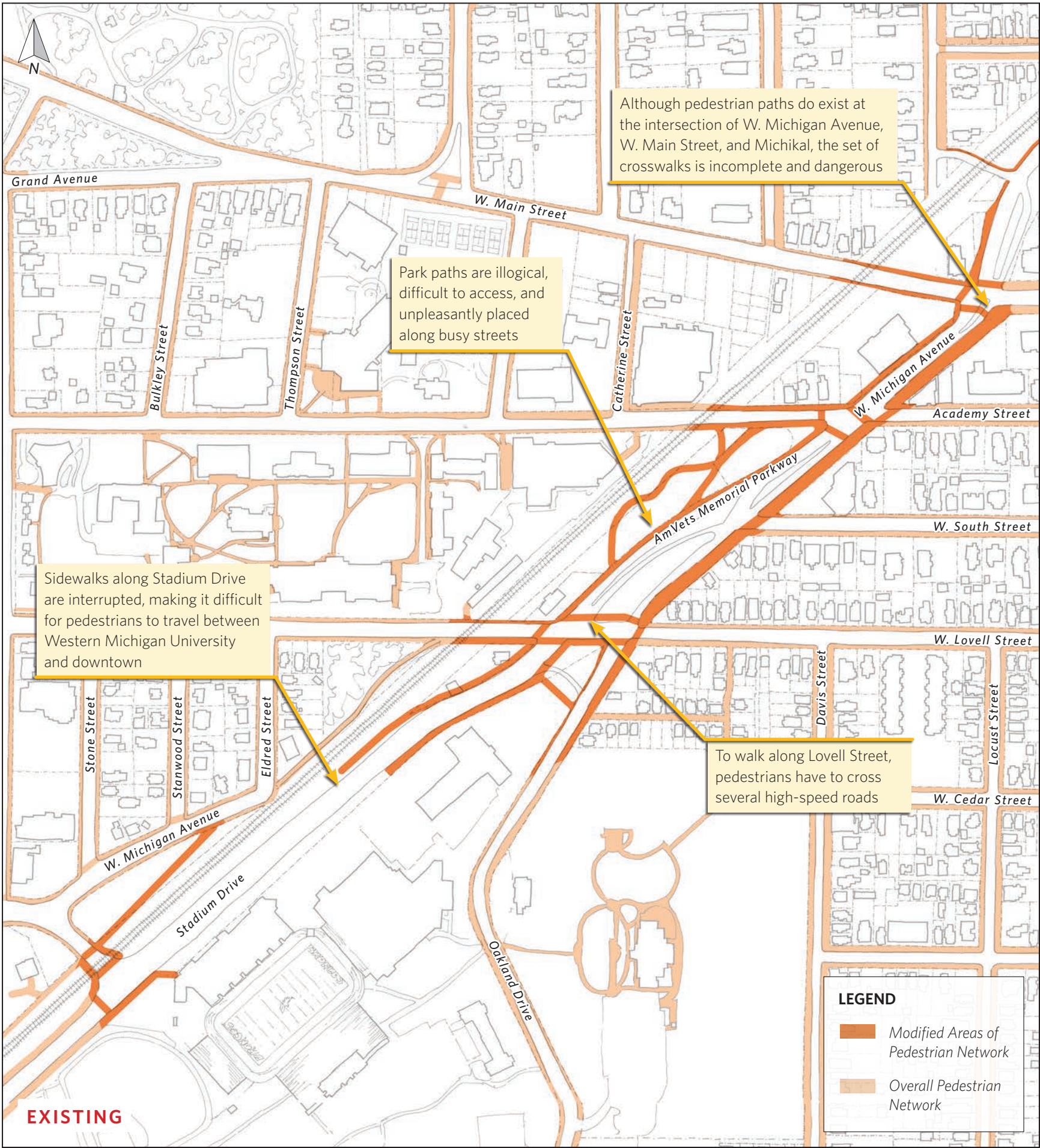


FIGURE 44: Existing Pedestrian Network Diagram
The current pedestrian network is inconsistent, incomplete, and unsafe.



Pedestrian paths are not protected along the road



Heavy truck traffic poses a danger, even at crosswalks

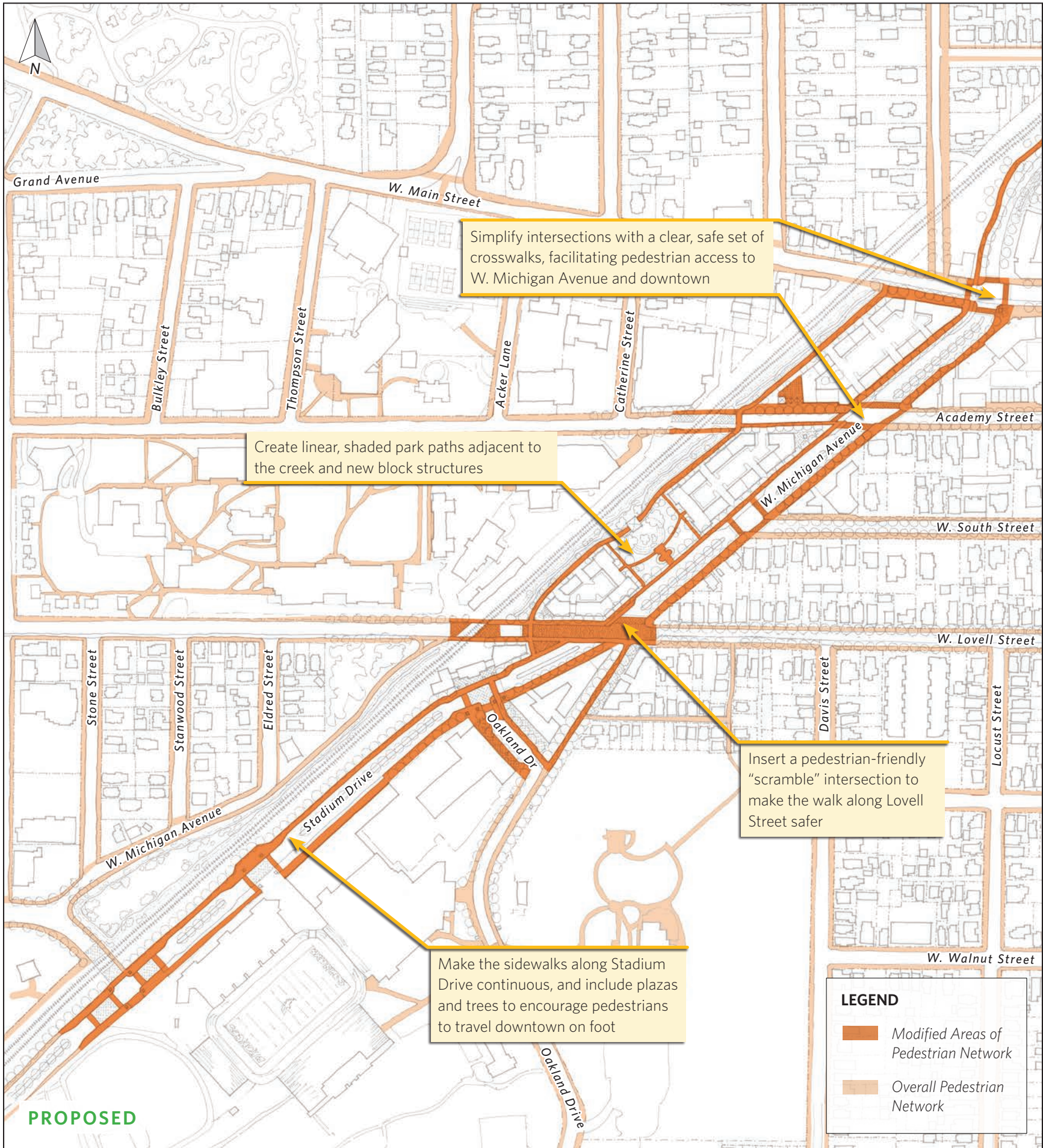


FIGURE 45: Proposed Pedestrian Network
A simplified street network rationalizes and completes the pedestrian network, making it safe and navigable.

BICYCLE NETWORK

The current bicycle network throughout the west end of downtown Kalamazoo is disconnected, irregular, and sparse. While there is a greater continuity of paths towards the downtown core, the floodplain area presents a jagged, severed route. Cyclists moving north-south are cut off as Stadium Drive transitions into W. Michigan Avenue, and are not offered the opportunity to move east-west. Those paths that do exist are unshaded and dangerous, and take riders in a wide berth around several possible destinations with no opportunity to stop.

The proposed bicycle network establishes continuity, safety, and ease. It is designed to provide passage through the current Spaghetti Bowl area, use it as a corridor of motion, and even have a variety of enjoyable experiences. At the intersection of Stadium Drive and Lovell Street, a “scramble” allows vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians safe and easy passage. The additions of trails, parks, and interesting buildings encourage not just passage through the area, but a visit to it.

KEY FINDING

Bicycle paths are sparse, unpleasant, and unsafe

Cyclists lack east-west routes across the Spaghetti Bowl, and must take illogical, interrupted paths to travel along it. Many bicycle paths lack protected bike lanes, and are generally unsafe with proximity to high-speed traffic.

RECOMMENDATION

Create connected, protected paths through the area

Define and connect paths for cyclists looking to cross the area, and rationalize north-south paths along the Spaghetti Bowl. Create safe passage with a combination of protected bike lanes along roads and new non-vehicular paths.

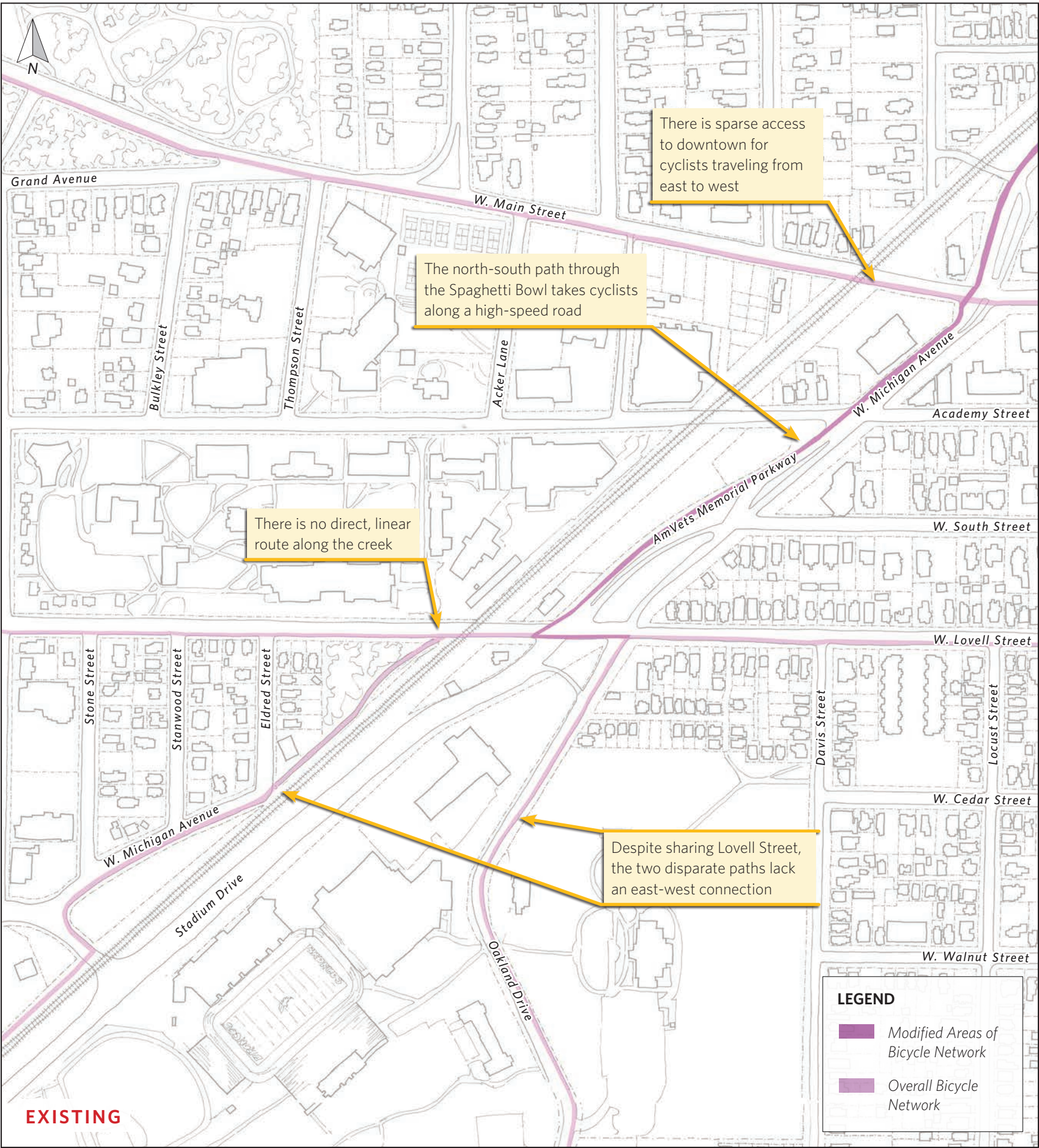


FIGURE 46: Existing Bicycle Network Diagram
Current bicycle paths lack continuity and move sparsely through the city.



Existing trails are difficult to access and use



Bicycle paths are often not included along major thoroughfares

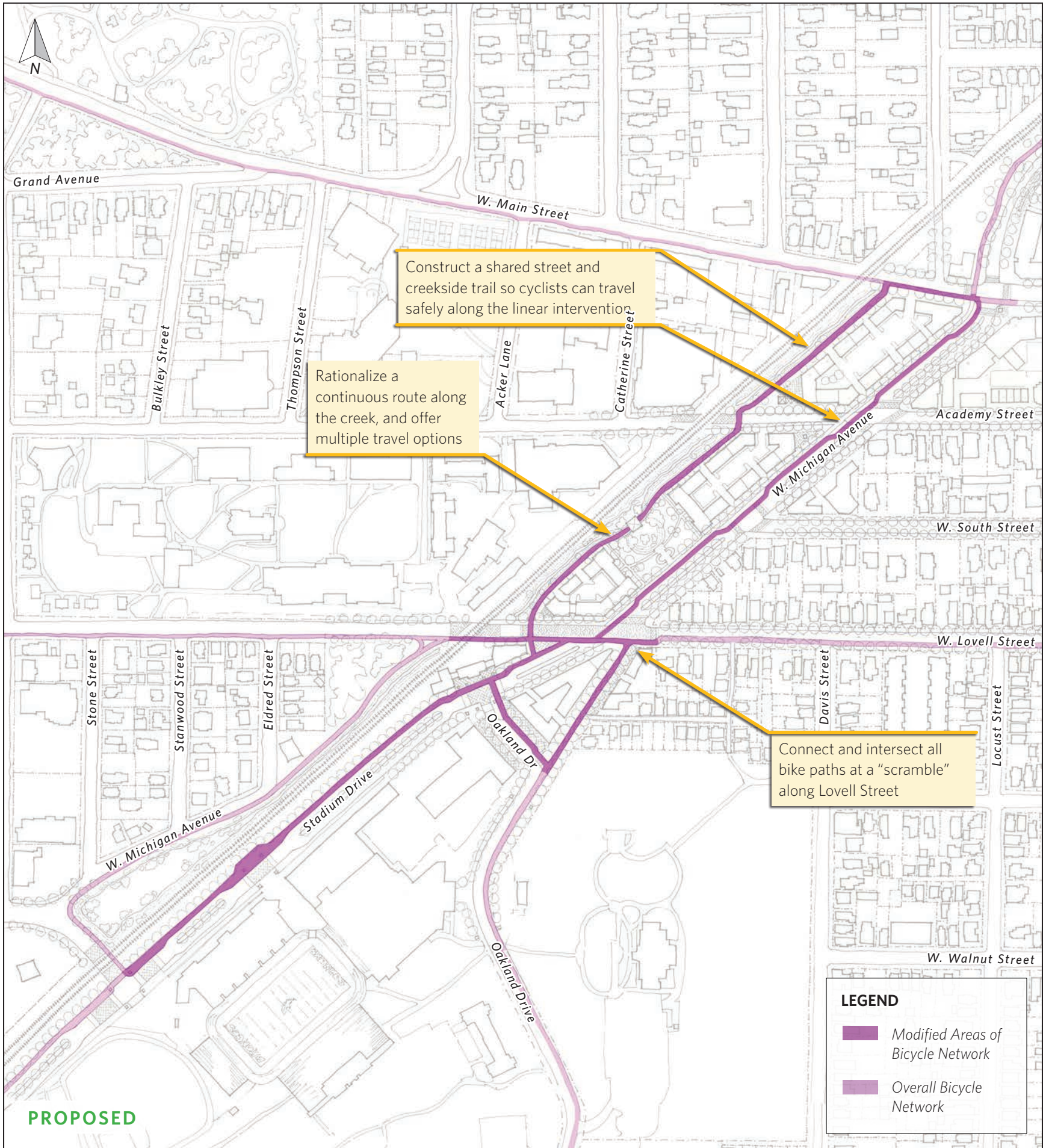


FIGURE 47: Proposed Bicycle Network Diagram
The proposal connects existing bike paths and creates new, safe corridors of motion.

OPEN SPACE & CREEK

A number of green spaces currently line the Spaghetti Bowl area, but they do not function as parks. Busy streets separate these spaces from each other, and from pedestrian access, creating an unusable barrier to motion rather than a point of arrival. The lack of shade and park features increase the unactivated nature of the area, which is further exacerbated by the hidden character of Arcadia Creek as it runs along the rail line.

The \$38 million PROTECT Grant received by the City of Kalamazoo poses an opportunity to reimagine this area with the fully-daylit creek as a central element. Arcadia Creek is highlighted by and in turn adds interest to new trails, parks, and buildings. At the center of the proposed network, a new park activates the area for pedestrians, cyclists, and residents of the proposed buildings. It is a shaded, well-framed, flexible space with a number of features, and invites a peaceful pause in an area currently characterized by speed, noise, and traffic.

KEY FINDING

Creek and parks are inaccessible and unactivated

Spaghetti Bowl roads trap existing green space. Parks are difficult to access and lack shade and usable features. Though Arcadia Creek is daylit for a portion of its run along the floodplain area, it is hidden by fences and overgrowth.

RECOMMENDATION

Create an accessible, activated park and daylit creek

The new park should be accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, and activated by features, framing buildings, and Arcadia Creek. Open the entire creek, highlight it with parks access and trails, and terminate it in a pond.

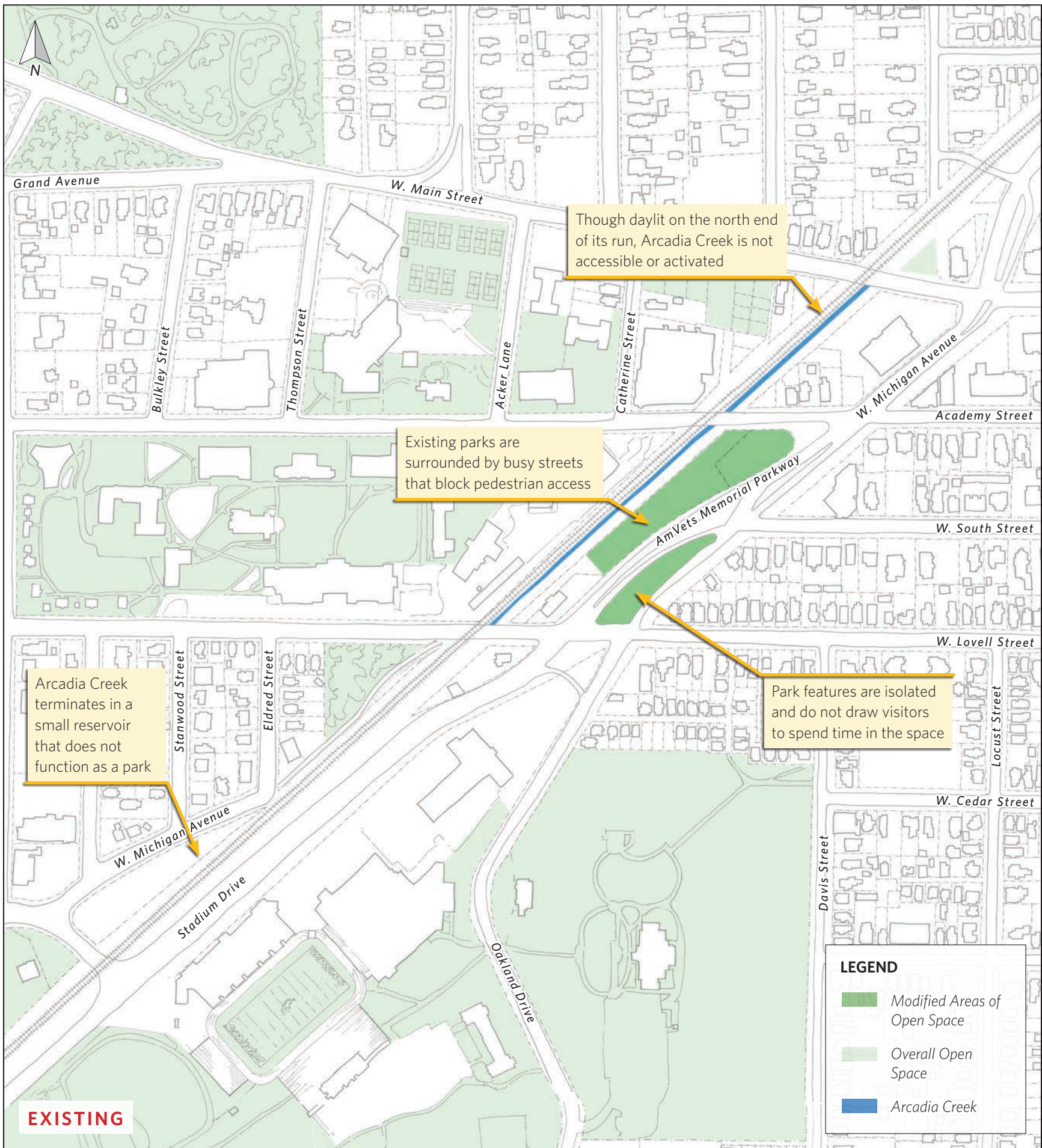


FIGURE 48: Existing Open Space and Creek Network Diagram
Current parks and creeks lack activation and visitors



Local art does not enhance the experience of existing parks



The path along the creek hides it from view

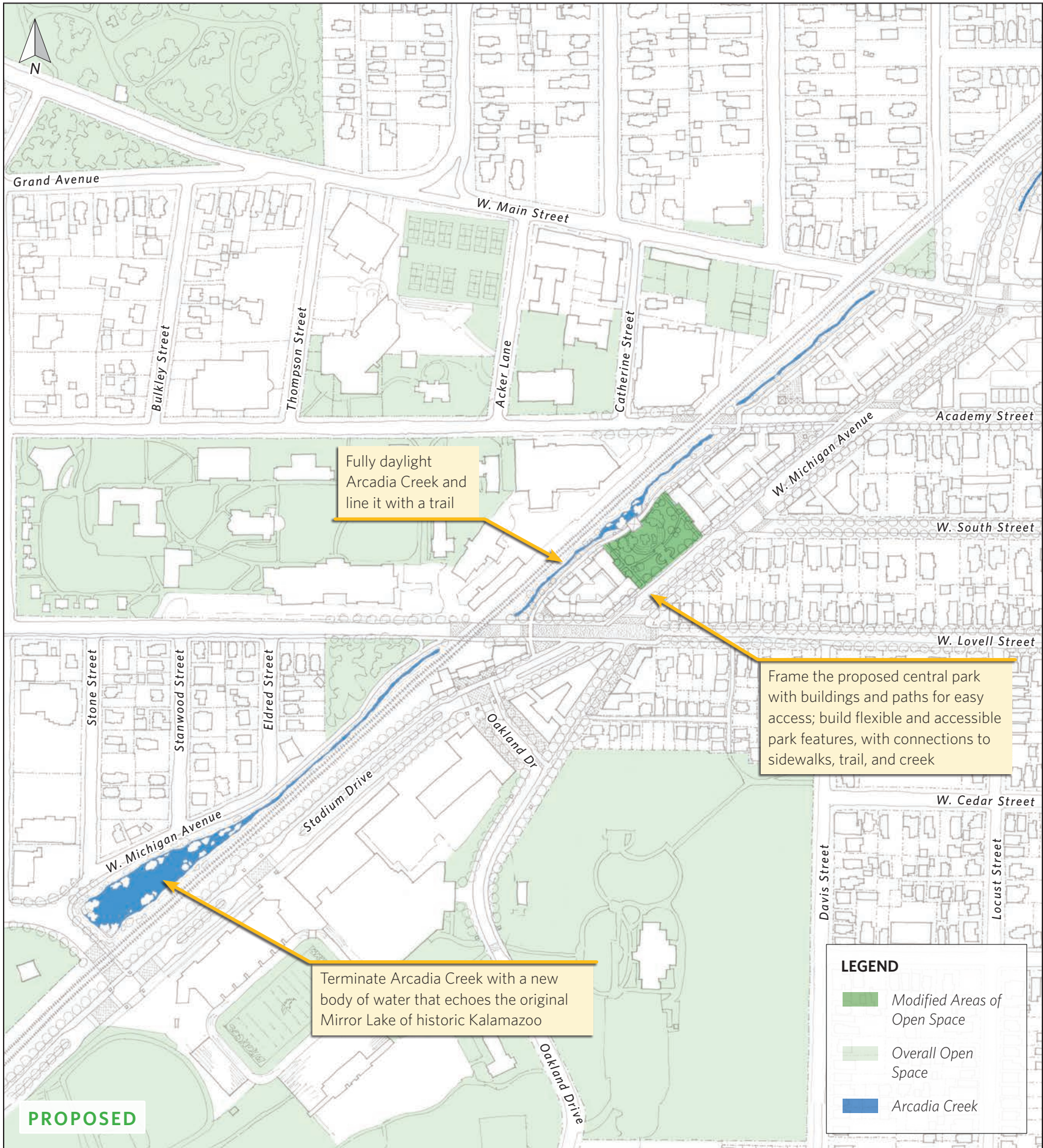


FIGURE 49: Proposed Parks and Creek Network Diagram
The proposal consolidates green space into one functional park, which highlights the daylight creek.

BLOCK STRUCTURE

Though it is surrounded by many complete or partially-complete blocks on either side, the Spaghetti Bowl itself does not currently have a block structure. Instead, it is characterized by a scattering of buildings, which lack a common architectural language or a relationship to each other. These buildings are difficult to access on foot, but boast large surface parking lots that further distance them from the street edge.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of historic Kalamazoo reveal the original structure of the area: a network of complete blocks with linear streets and consistent street edges. Responding to the demand for student housing at both Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College, this proposed block network combines dormitories with the commercial, mixed-use character as Stadium Drive transitions into W. Michigan Avenue and turns. The proposed buildings frame interior spaces and hold exterior edges; further infill at the edges of the study area brings buildings to the street. This intervention transforms the area from unusable vacant land into a fully-activated series of masses and spaces.

KEY FINDING

Buildings in the area are sporadic and unengaging, and do not satisfy current student housing demands

The Spaghetti Bowl contains a range of scattered buildings which do not contribute to the environment. There is a new demand for student housing in the area.

RECOMMENDATION

Create complete blocks with dormitory buildings

Build space-framing blocks with a continuous street edge; restore the historic block structure of the area while adapting it to intermodal transportation needs and demand for student housing at Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College.

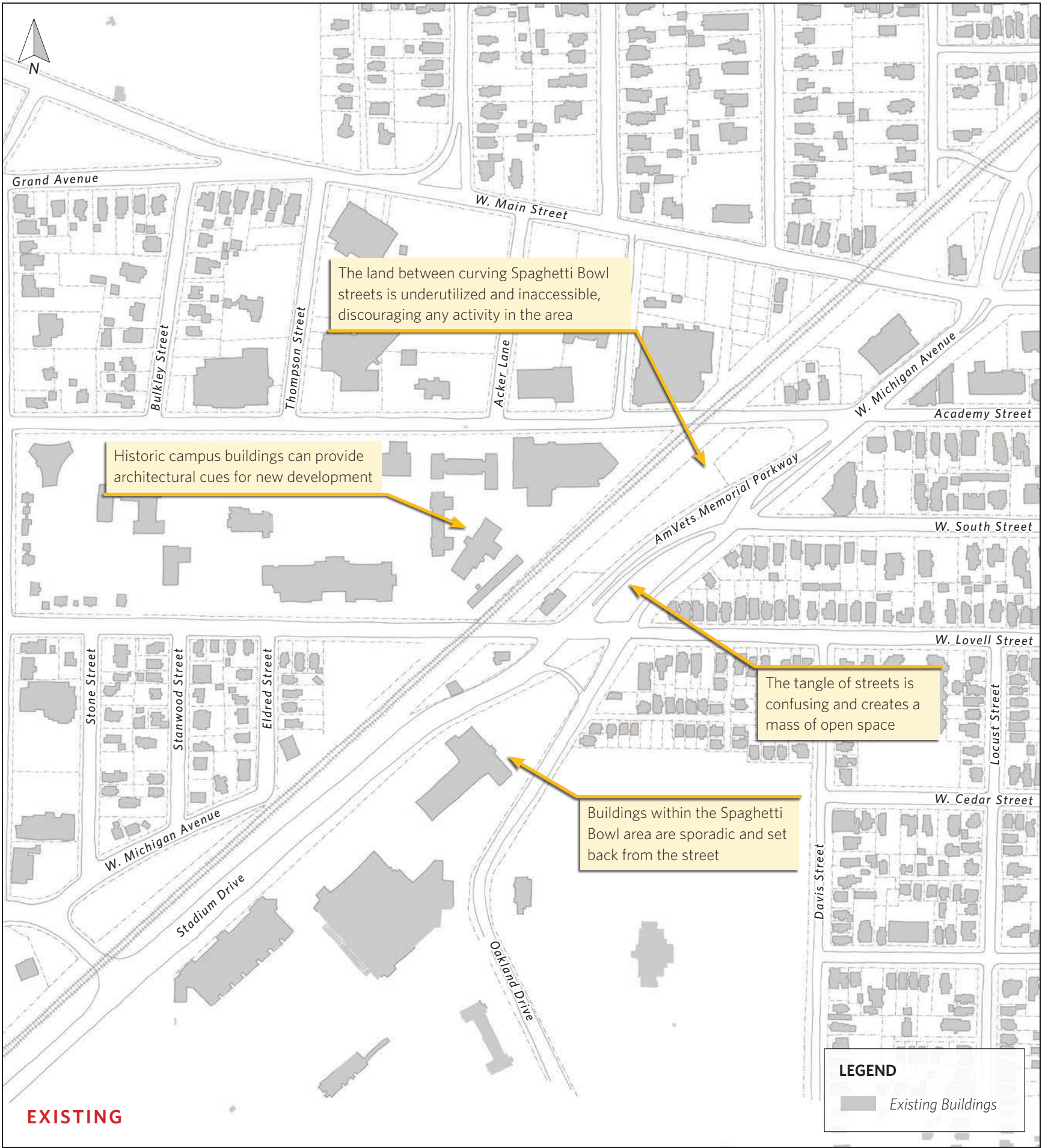


FIGURE 50: Existing Block Structure Diagram

Currently, the Spaghetti Bowl area lacks a formal block structure.



Many buildings do not meet the street or contain space



Wide open space offers the opportunity to restore the historic block structure

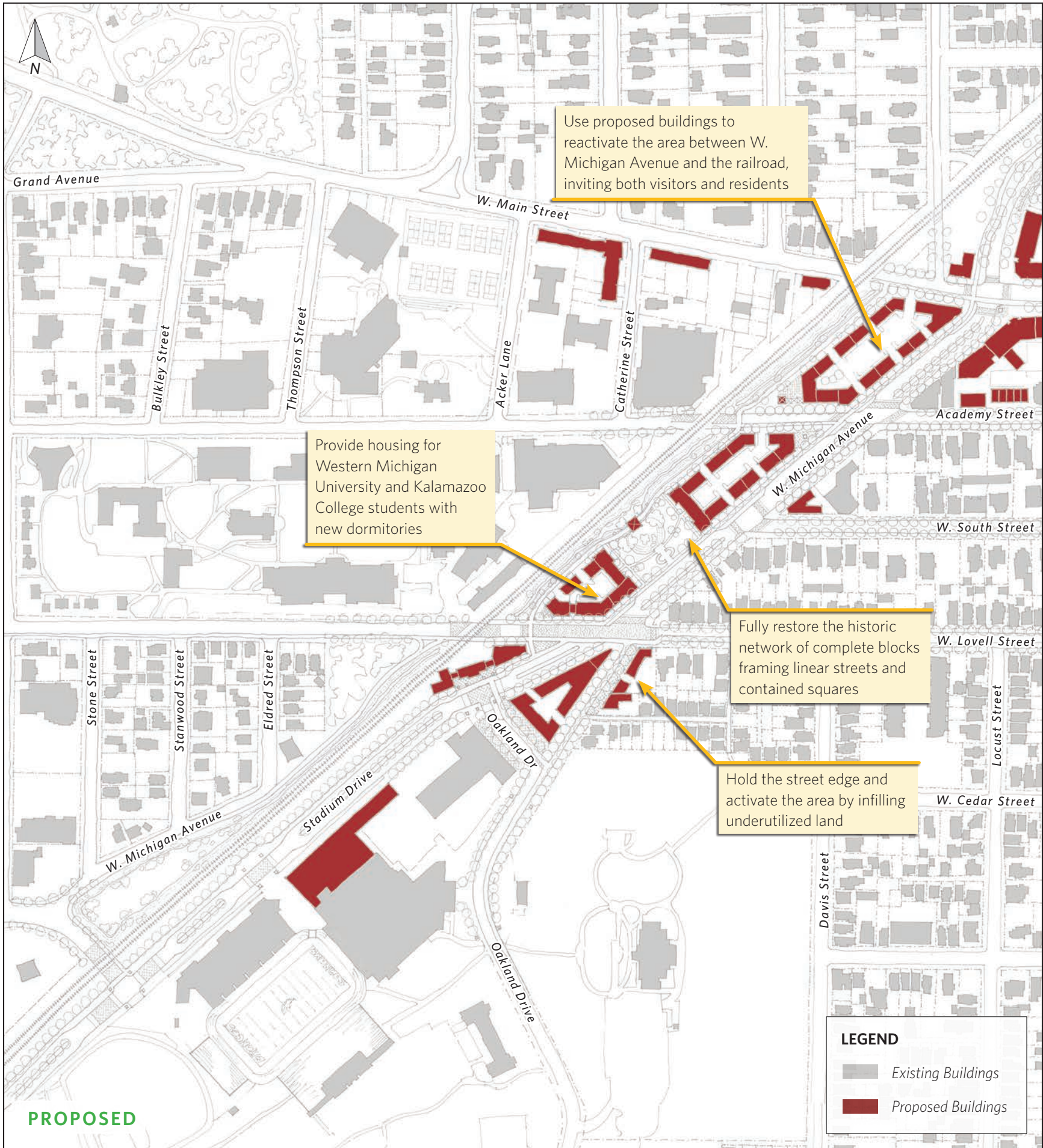


FIGURE 51: Proposed Block Structure Diagram
The historic block structure of Kalamazoo is restored, creating new opportunities for mixed-use buildings, campus buildings, and student housing.

BUILDING CHARACTER

The area surrounding the Spaghetti Bowl currently has very few buildings, and those that do pepper the landscape are isolated and overparked. The area as a whole lacks buildings capable of activating public space or holding the street edge. As W. Michigan Avenue intersects with W. Main Street and Michikal, drivers entering downtown Kalamazoo are greeted by a t-shirt shop.

Kalamazoo College intends to expand their campus to the east, and there is a demand from both colleges for student dormitories. The proposed infill blocks satisfy this need with new buildings adjacent to the college, which can serve as a transition from campus to downtown by incorporating residential and commercial uses. At the gateway intersection, new structures on every corner frame this hinge point, and a corner building on the St. Augustine block welcomes pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike. The character of the proposed new buildings draws from the historic red-brick Georgian structures of the original Kalamazoo College, bringing continuity and beauty to the campus experience.

KEY FINDING

Historic college campus buildings provide architectural cues

Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University share an architectural character when it comes to their original campus buildings, which are elegant and well-proportioned.

RECOMMENDATION

Design new structures inspired by the historic context of the area

Newer campus buildings have stepped away from the character of these original structures, but the demand for student housing opens doors to bringing this language back into modern use.



Renovations to East Hall, Western Michigan University
Source: Adobe Stock



Bay of Hoben Hall, Kalamazoo College
Source: Kalamazoo College Archives



Dewing Hall, Kalamazoo College
Source: Kalamazoo College Archives



Front of Hoben Hall, Kalamazoo College
Source: Kalamazoo College Archives

FIGURE 52: Precedent Images from Historic Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University Campus Buildings

Both Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College have experienced many eras of architectural character, but their oldest buildings speak a common language of elegant masonry with dark bricks and classical details. The demand for new dormitories offers the opportunity to bring this architectural character back into play.



FIGURE 53: Dueling College Buildings – Western Michigan University vs. Kalamazoo College

With new development coming to both campuses, there is the potential for new buildings associated with Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College along W. Michigan Avenue. This proposal offers the opportunity for “dueling college buildings” in the parcels on either side of the new park and Arcadia Creek restoration area. A portion of the area to the northeast of the park is already owned by Kalamazoo College, and the area to the southwest is just across the street from the Western Michigan University campus’s facilities building.



FIGURE 54: Flatiron Dorms – Oakland Drive & Lovell Street

A flatiron-shaped building proposed in place of the northern portion of the Western Michigan University facilities parking lot works in tandem with the Oakland Drive redirect. This structure would offer Western Michigan University updated facilities offices, potential student residences, and a ground floor restaurant or retail opportunity to serve stadium guests on game days and the general public as they make their way in and out of downtown at this important junction.

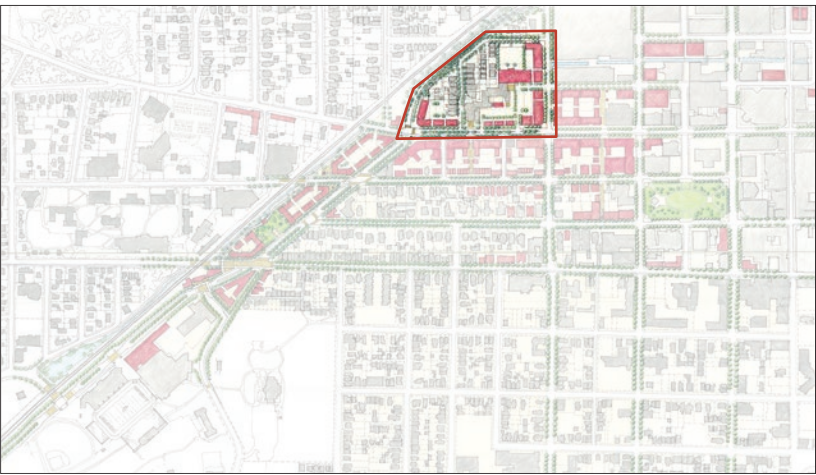
DESIGN PROPOSAL 2:
ST. AUGUSTINE CATHEDRAL BLOCK

The St. Augustine Cathedral block holds St. Augustine Cathedral at its center, a Catholic church with attached elementary school. The campus is composed of red-brick gothic structures around programmed green space. Despite a campus setting, the buildings feel scattered and undefined. Most of the land between the campus buildings is given to parking lots, which line W. Michigan Avenue in front of the cathedral school and N. Westnedge Avenue to the east.

The rest of the block offers a range of scale, density, and use. To the northeast, a historic district of single-family homes line small residential streets that break up the block. These houses are directly adjacent to commercial buildings, the back of the cathedral, and the school’s playground. At the southwest corner, a t-shirt shop, vacant lot, billboard, and abandoned building face W. Michigan Avenue. The southeast corner is occupied by a gas station. Together with the cathedral parking lot, these paved, unshaded properties struggle to frame W. Michigan Avenue.

Recently, the vision for this area has shifted to incorporate the potential of the cathedral block as a gateway to downtown Kalamazoo. Visitors and community members who travel along the Spaghetti Bowl are greeted by the southwest corner of the cathedral block as they turn onto W. Michigan Avenue. Currently, the corner is anchored by a dilapidated low-rise t-shirt shop, which fails to hold the corner. This land is ripe for redevelopment into something more urban, shaded, walkable, and welcoming.

Inspired by the architectural language of the cathedral and the historic character of Kalamazoo’s urban fabric, the proposal completes the block with new buildings fronting W. Michigan Avenue and N. Westnedge Avenue. These structures create exterior corridors by framing the streets and holding the edge, while mediating the subtle shifts in scale and use; they also generate a collection of interior spaces, enclosing parks, smaller lots, and welcoming gathering spaces for the parish and school.



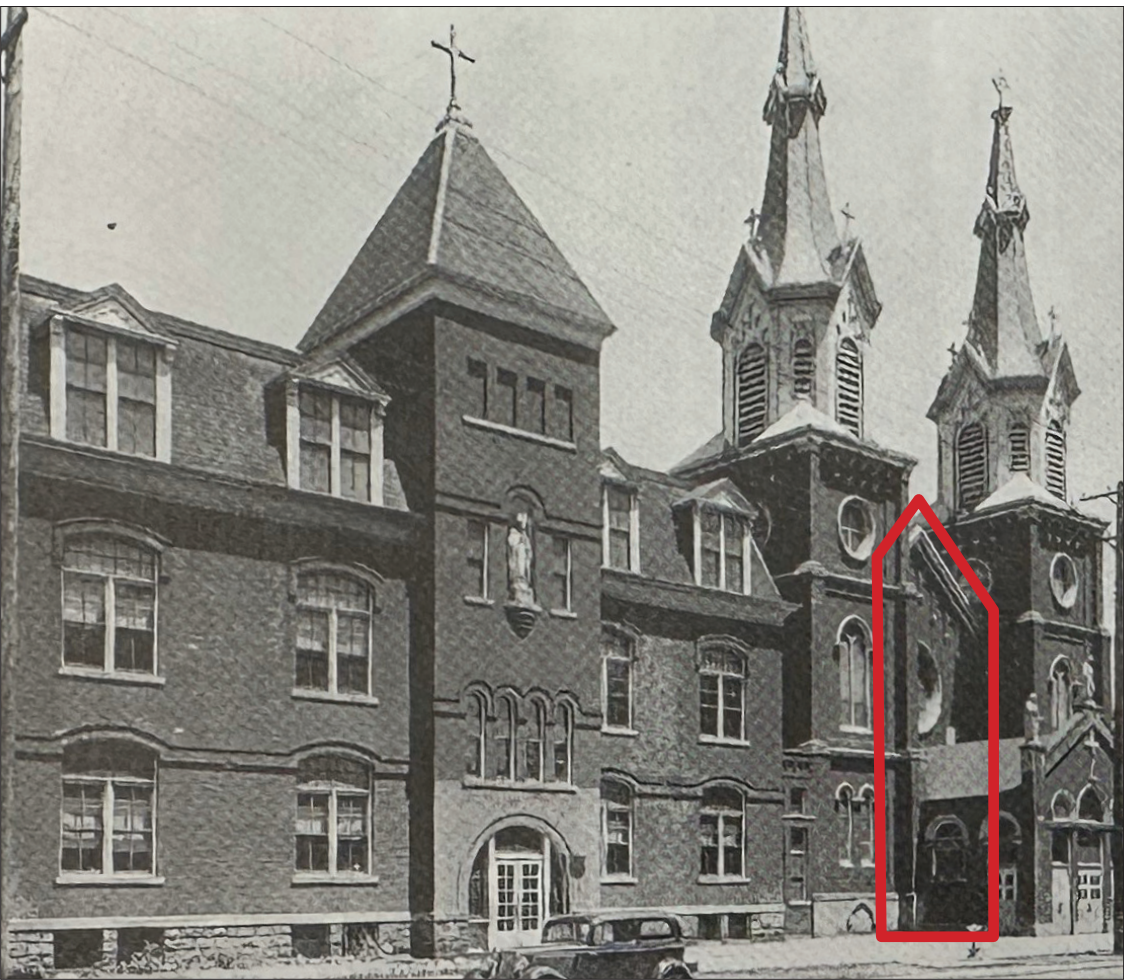
Location Map

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 The block’s southwest corner has potential as a gateway to the heart of downtown**
This corner currently has an underwhelming t-shirt shop, which is the main vista that transitions from the Spaghetti Bowl area into downtown Kalamazoo.
- 2 The cathedral block needs infill and containment**
There are several parcels of underutilized land, particularly along the edges of the block. The cathedral and school need containment and a public/private divide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Anchor the gateway to downtown**
Use a commanding corner building with an angled facade to cue the turn and transition to downtown.
- 2 Strategically infill the block at its edges and center**
Take cues in scale and architectural character from the existing St. Augustine campus, and create contained community spaces. Establish the street edge along W. Michigan Avenue and N. Westnedge Avenue.



Source: “Kalamazoo Lost & Found,” by Pamela Hall O’Connor and Lynn Smith Houghton, Courtesy of the Kalamazoo Public Library Local History Collection

FIGURE 55: Existing and Historic Photos
The St. Augustine Cathedral was originally part of a large, elaborate red-brick complex on a different site (left), but rebuilt in a smaller form on W. Michigan Avenue in the 1950s (below). The newer cathedral is still in use and well-patronized by its local parishioners. Highlighted in red (left) is the original central facade, whose form is echoed by the current structure (below).





FIGURE 56: Aerial View of Existing Conditions of the St. Augustine Cathedral Block, Looking Northeast

The existing cathedral block is characterized by a charming but incomplete campus with historic architecture to draw from, smaller residential sub-blocks, a sporadic commercial edge, and significant quantities of open land.



FIGURE 57: Existing Aerial Map View of the Cathedral Block

The cathedral block is centrally placed along W. Michigan Avenue, with its southwestern corner as the point of transition into downtown.

ELEMENT 1

GATEWAY TO DOWNTOWN

The southeast corner of the cathedral block is the first thing that current vehicular traffic and eventual pedestrian and cyclist traffic see when traveling northeast along W. Michigan Avenue towards downtown Kalamazoo.

Though the corner is currently occupied by a small home converted to single-use retail, this corner has the opportunity to act as a gateway to the heart of the city for visitors, residents of west-side neighborhoods, and Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University students. The proposed gateway building receives northeast motion with an angled facade that redirects the corridor to W. Michigan Avenue, which continues the proposed character of mid-rise, mixed-use buildings with an activated streetscape.

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ELEMENT 2

ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

The St. Augustine campus frames the street and invites people into the block. Though the cathedral's public facade fronts a major commercial corridor, its associated school is at the center of the block.

The proposed campus design establishes layers of public and private space, with gathering space for parishioners closer to W. Michigan Avenue and N. Westnedge Avenue, and school playgrounds and cloisters in the center, or the more residential northern portion of the block.

New additions to the school help to frame these spaces and provide room for growth, while keeping to the scale and architectural character established by the current structures.

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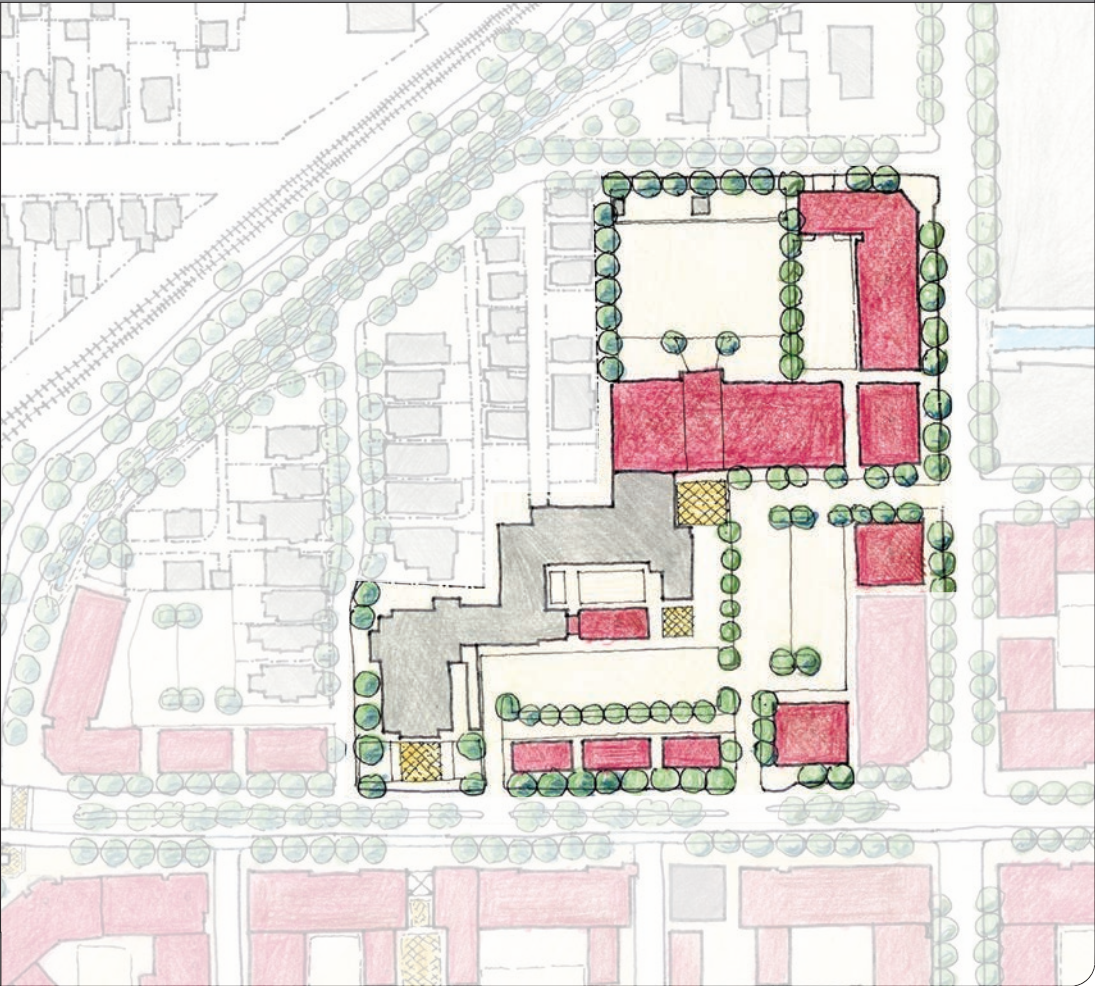




FIGURE 58: Aerial View of Proposed Conditions of the St. Augustine Cathedral Block, Looking Northeast

The proposed scheme completes the block and holds the street edge with new buildings that speak the language of the cathedral, taking advantage of the underutilized land that characterized the existing block.

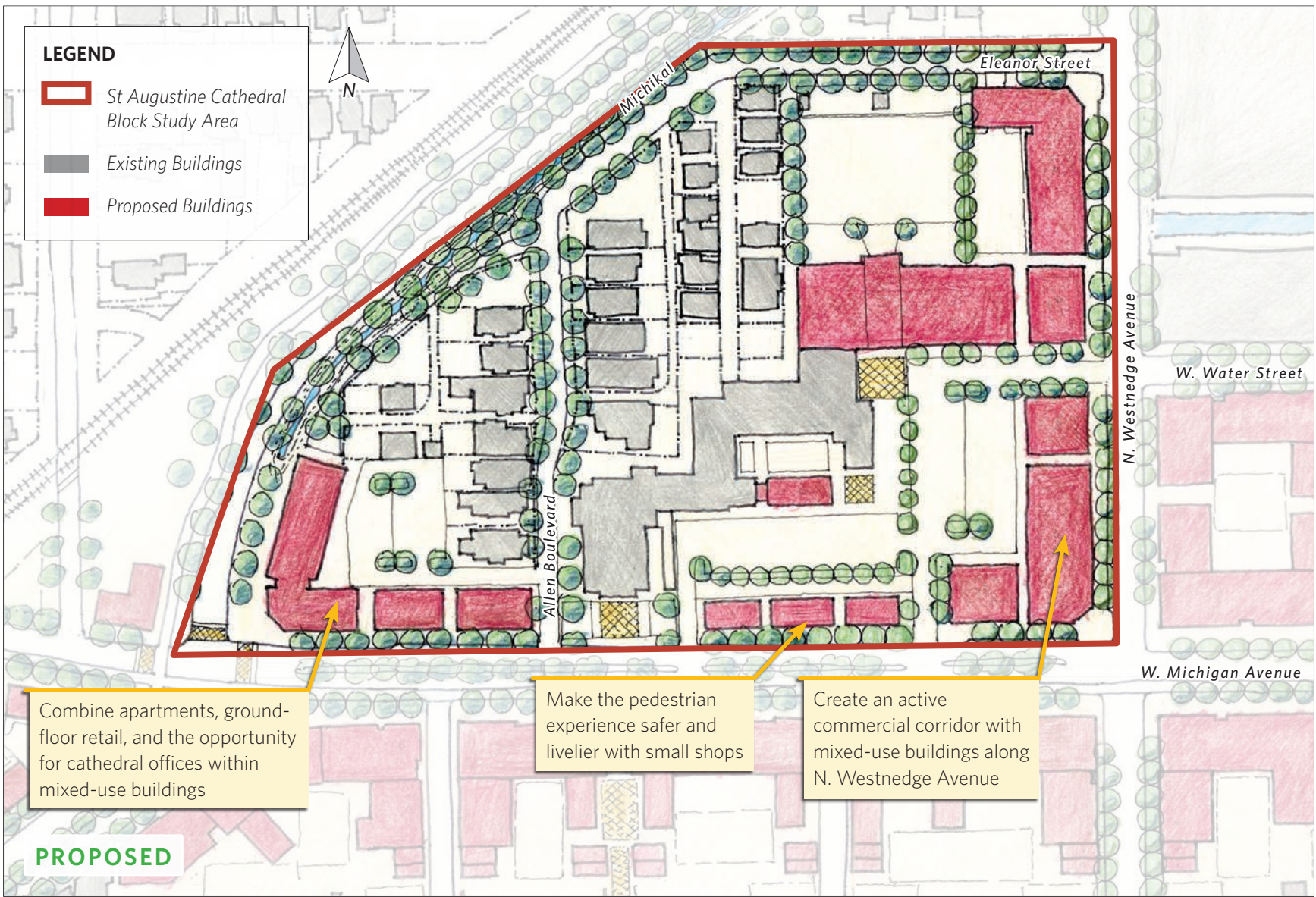


FIGURE 59: Proposed Masterplan of the St. Augustine Cathedral Block

This proposal creates a series of framed spaces, which range from public parking court to private cloister, supporting and protecting the school.

GATEWAY TO DOWNTOWN

When cars – and the occasional pedestrian or cyclist – turn east on W. Michigan Avenue, they are entering the core of downtown Kalamazoo and moving directly towards the heart of the city. This becomes apparent eventually, with the civic structures and historic fabric buildings near Park, Church, and Rose Streets. The first view of the city’s future commercial corridor, however, presents small, underutilized buildings, vacant parking lots, few trees, and a deactivated street. This experience continues for two blocks, with a sporadic, single-story commercial presence that fails to signal the entry into downtown Kalamazoo.

The proposed gateway design transforms the intersection of W. Michigan Avenue, W. Main Street, and Michikal, taking advantage of its role as beacon and transition. In tandem with the clarified, safer, and more urban experience of the W. Michigan Avenue Connection area, the southwest building of the St. Augustine block holds one of four framing corners. Its striking angled facade redirects visitors towards the east, drawing pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists alike into a continuation of the tree-lined corridor. Immediately adjacent, the two mixed-use buildings to the east help to indicate the overall character of W. Michigan Avenue, taking architectural and massing cues from the three-story buildings closer to the historic city center.



FIGURE 60: Existing Gateway, View from W. Michigan Avenue

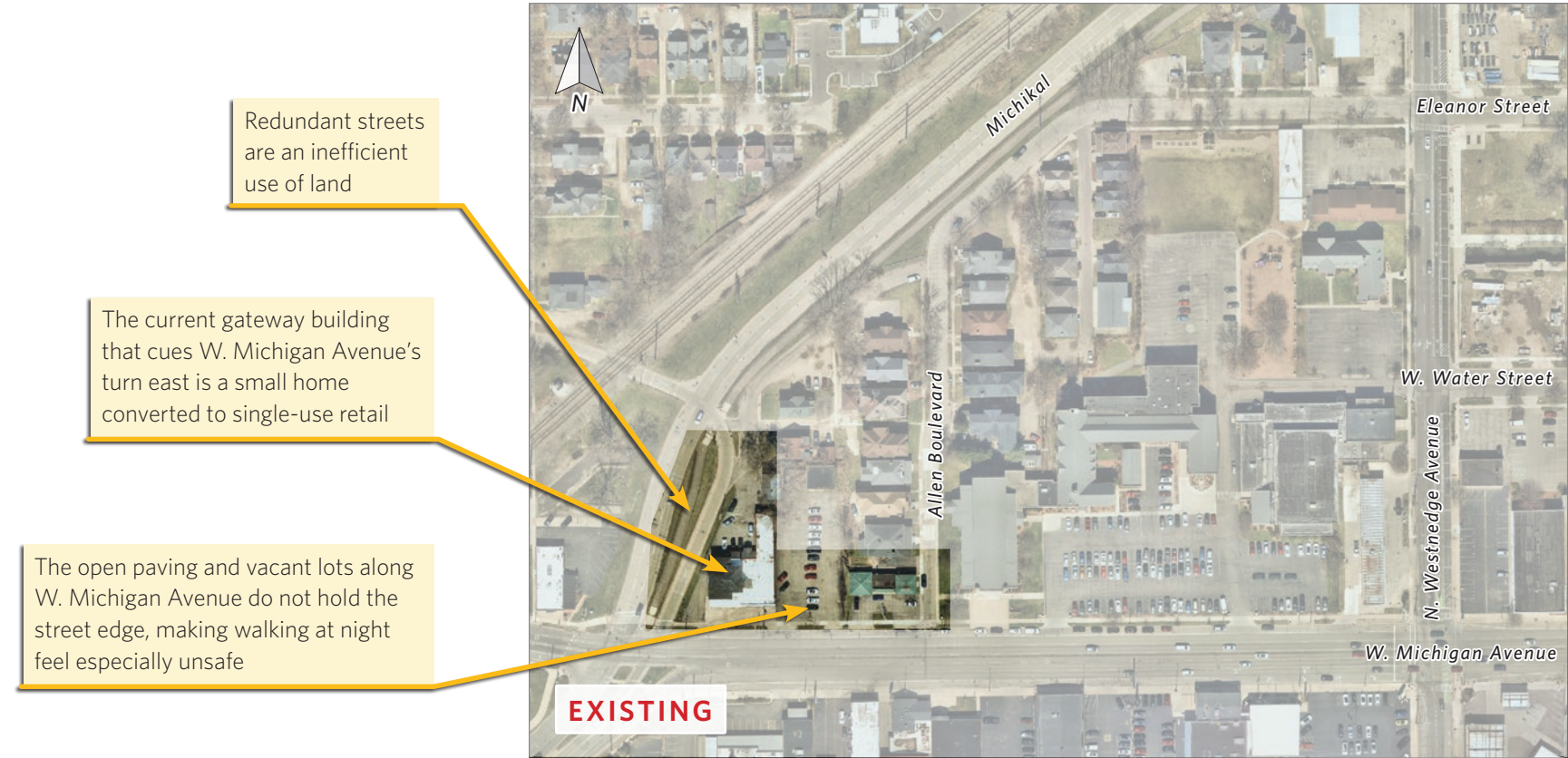


FIGURE 61: Existing Aerial View of the Cathedral Block



FIGURE 62: Proposed Street Elevation along W. Michigan Avenue, Facing North

The west end of this elevation shows the proposed gateway building. Moving east, a series of two-story buildings transitions into the scale and character of the St. Augustine Cathedral and Cathedral School.



FIGURE 63: Proposed Gateway, View from W. Michigan Avenue, Looking Northeast

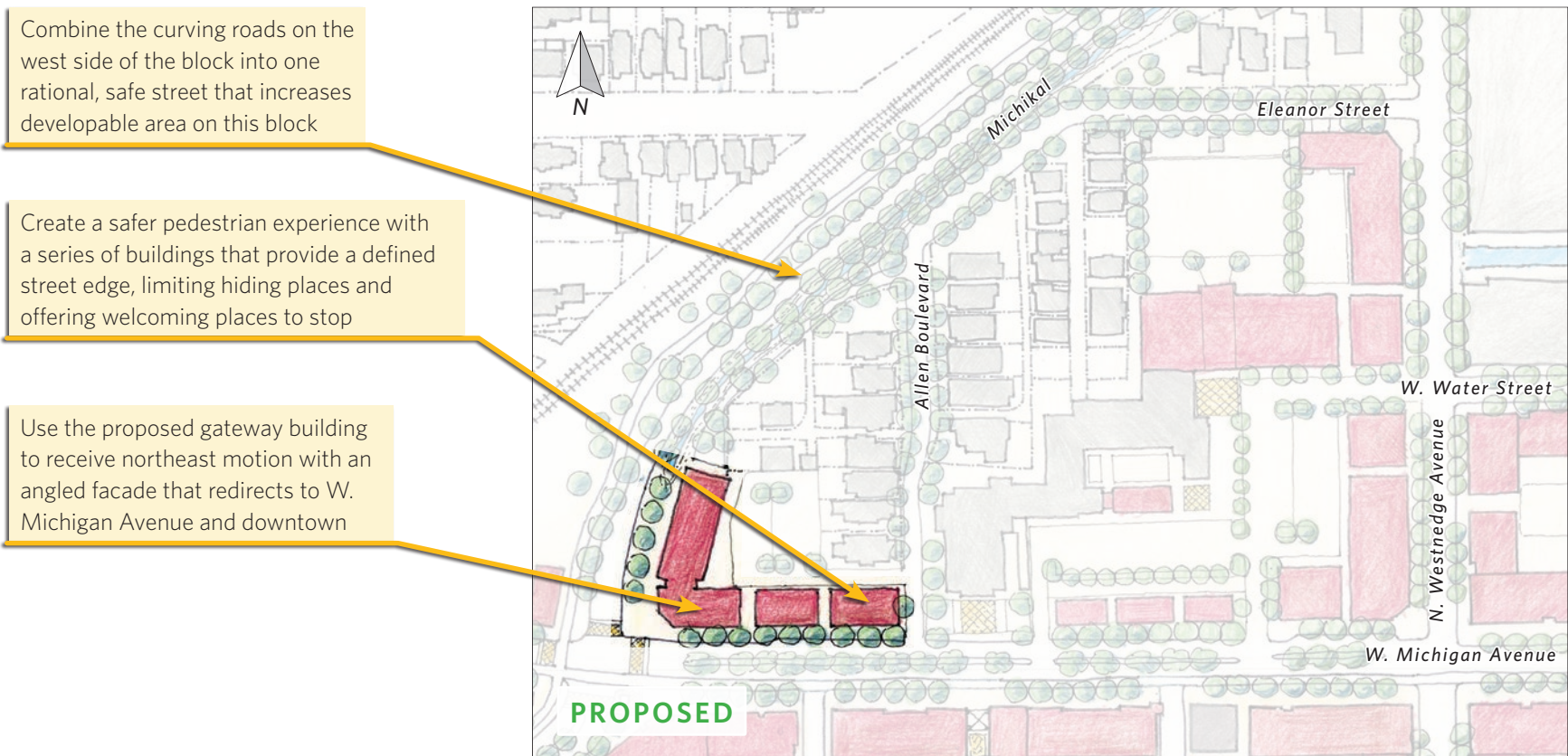


FIGURE 64: Proposed Masterplan of the Cathedral Block



ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

The current St. Augustine campus is composed of the St. Augustine Cathedral, Cathedral School, Diocese of Kalamazoo, Sanctuary School, and associated thrift store in a zigzag of buildings interwoven with parking lots and play areas. The campus facilities are dated, in need of renovation, and do not meet the growth needs of the church. The campus is currently undergoing a programming exercise to plan for its future facilities needs (Figure 65). A central goal of these planning efforts is to meet the programmatic needs of the Cathedral and school operations, while also opening its arms to the community. The campus is situated directly along the pedestrian path for students from Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College who will soon walk to and from the Event Center at night. New pedestrian traffic provides a unique opportunity for the campus to welcome and engage with members of the public.

The proposed design (Figure 69) builds upon the programming recommendations of the Progressive Companies study (Figure 65). The key features of the design include new two-story buildings along W. Michigan Avenue to complete a parking court that can be closed to vehicles for events, and a plaza in front of the cathedral entrance. These coordinate with the scale and character of the red-brick gothic campus, and provide a series of complementary functions: bookstore, cafe, shop, and second-floor living spaces for local college students or visiting clergy.



FIGURE 65: Site Diagram by Progressive Companies

This programming study was presented by Progressive Companies for a reconfiguration of the St. Augustine Campus.

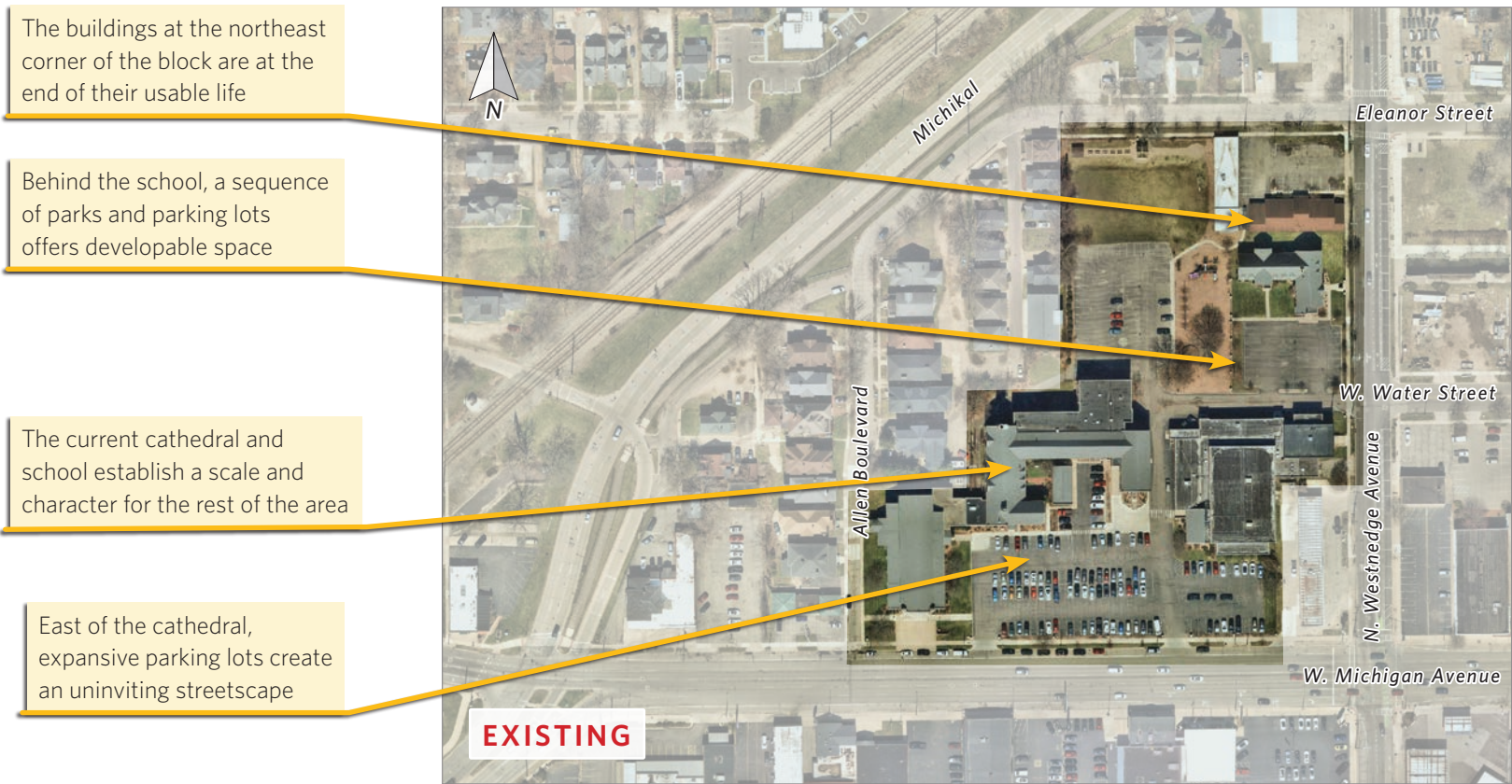


FIGURE 66: Existing Aerial View of the Cathedral Block

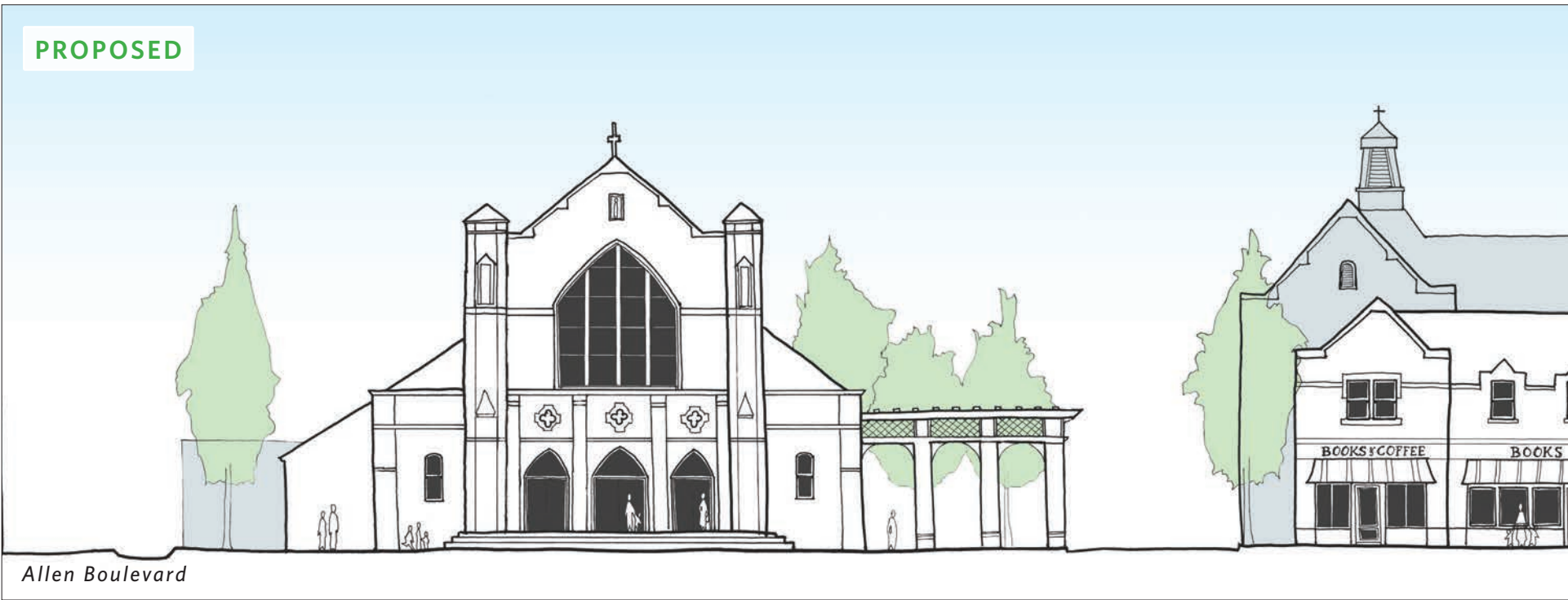


FIGURE 67: Proposed Street Elevation along W. Michigan Avenue, Facing North

The east end of this elevation shows St. Augustine Cathedral, with the existing cathedral school sitting behind a series of two-story buildings that echo the architectural character of the campus and activate the street with a continuous commercial ground floor.



FIGURE 68: Axonometric View of the Proposed St. Augustine Cathedral Campus
The massing, roof lines, and placement of buildings complement existing structures to complete the campus, framing public, semiprivate, and private spaces.

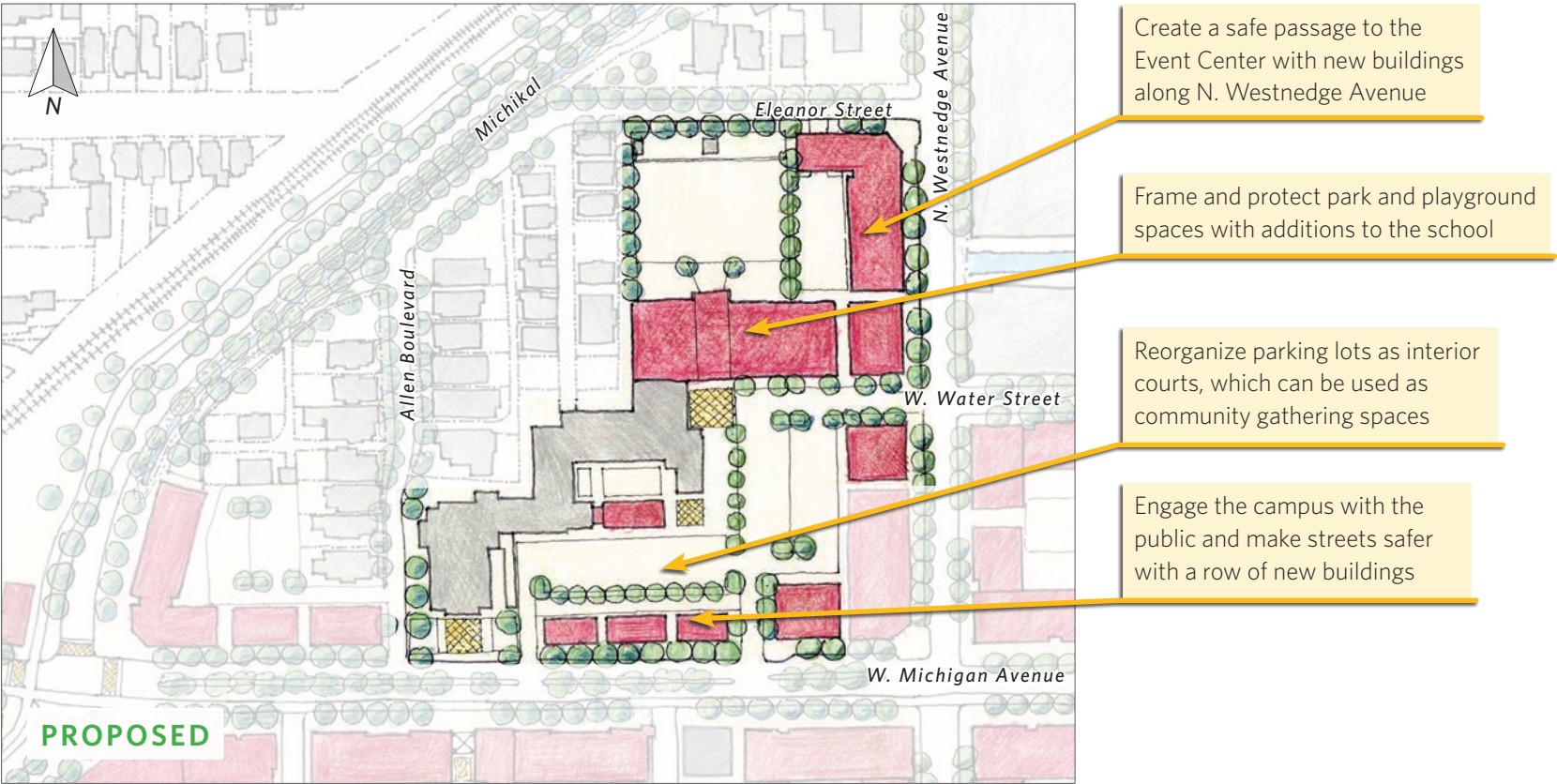


FIGURE 69: Proposed Masterplan of the St. Augustine Cathedral Block



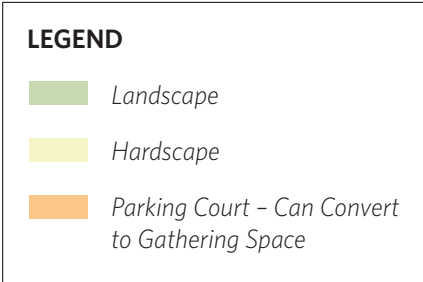


FIGURE 70: Outdoor Space Diagram
The proposal creates a variety of new public spaces, which are framed by a combination of existing and proposed structures. These spaces are a mix of landscape and hardscape, at a range of scales and levels of privacy. The paved spaces include a public plaza fronting the cathedral, parking court that can be converted to an outdoor event space, arched passageway through the school to a private green, and improved sidewalk and intersection conditions along W. Michigan Avenue and N. Westnedge Avenue.

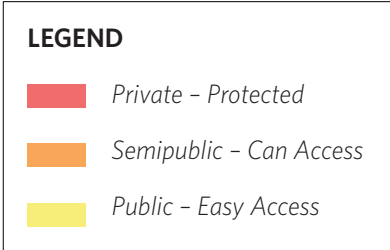
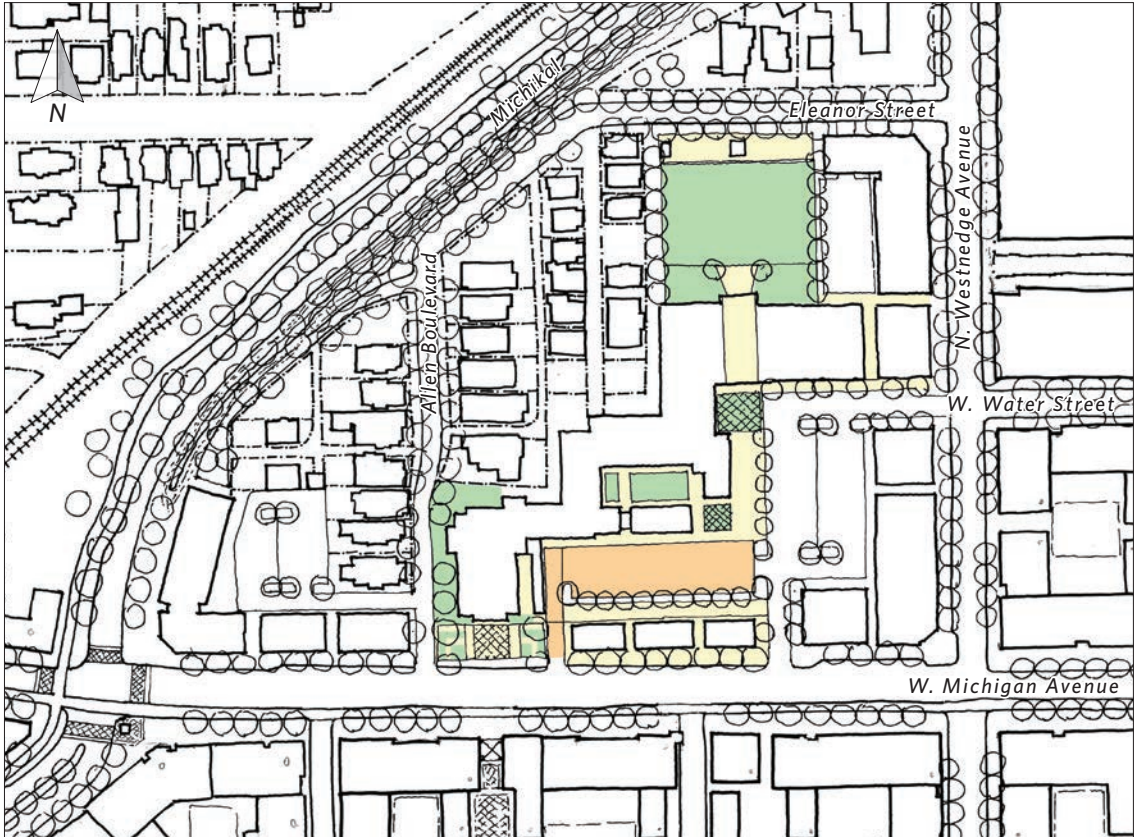


FIGURE 71: Public-to-Private Diagram
Negotiating a range of privacy levels within a small campus, the proposal keeps areas that are most public at the street edge, and areas that are most private at the center of the block. Commercial buildings activate W. Michigan Avenue and N. Westnedge Avenue, but also provide a barrier between these streets and the semiprivate zone behind, where the cathedral and diocese building are located. In this diagram, yellow highlight the most public areas where visitors can enter with few restrictions; orange represents semi public areas, where visitors are welcome, but the spaces are more formal; and red represents fully private areas where children are protected from the public as they learn and play.

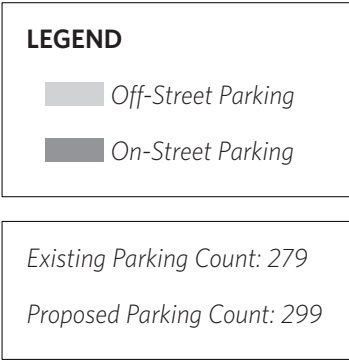
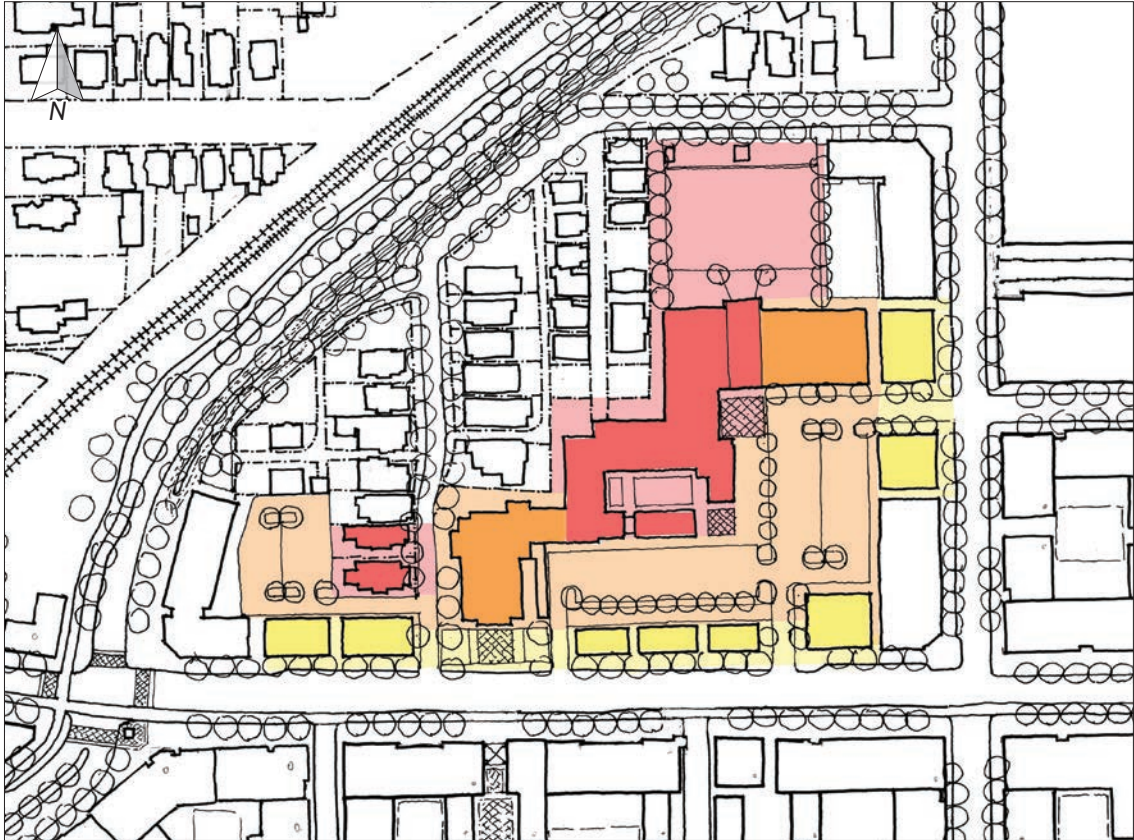


FIGURE 72: Parking Diagram
The proposed parking scheme reorganizes and optimizes lot space, by creating internal parking courts and expanding street parking along W. Michigan Avenue and N. Westnedge Avenue. This allows new buildings to hold the street edge, hide parking from pedestrian view, and create semiprivate space. The parking lot adjacent to the cathedral can be gated off and used as an event space for parishioners. Though individual lot sizes are smaller and less publicly visible, the number of spots grows.

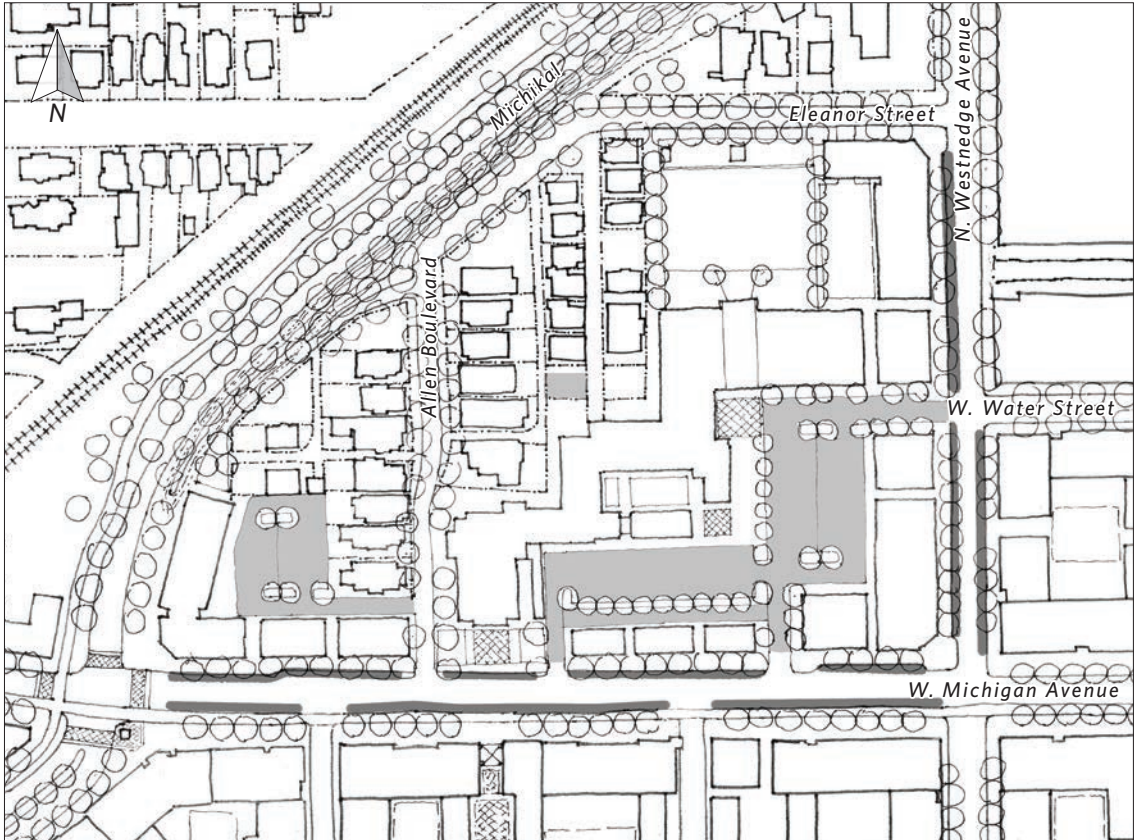




FIGURE 73: Architectural Character of the Existing Cathedral and School
Often, the best precedents for new structures are the historic buildings closest to the site of new construction.



FIGURE 74: Existing View Down W. Michigan Avenue, Looking East
Currently, W. Michigan Avenue offers sporadic buildings of an inconsistent character, few trees, heavy traffic, and little to interest pedestrians.



FIGURE 75: Proposed View Down W. Michigan Avenue, Looking East
Both sides of W. Michigan Avenue feature two- and three-story buildings with commercial ground floors, creating a shaded, activated corridor that accommodates pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed St. Augustine Cathedral block structures extend its architectural character along the street.

FIGURE 76: Existing Conditions

The current state of the St. Augustine Cathedral block is dense and activated in pockets, but vacant in others. W. Michigan Avenue is met by paved lots and parking, which do not hold the street edge. The northeast portion of the block features various characters of open land: green, park, and additional parking lots. These open spaces provide an opportunity for infill that reinforces the character and function of the existing St. Augustine Cathedral campus.

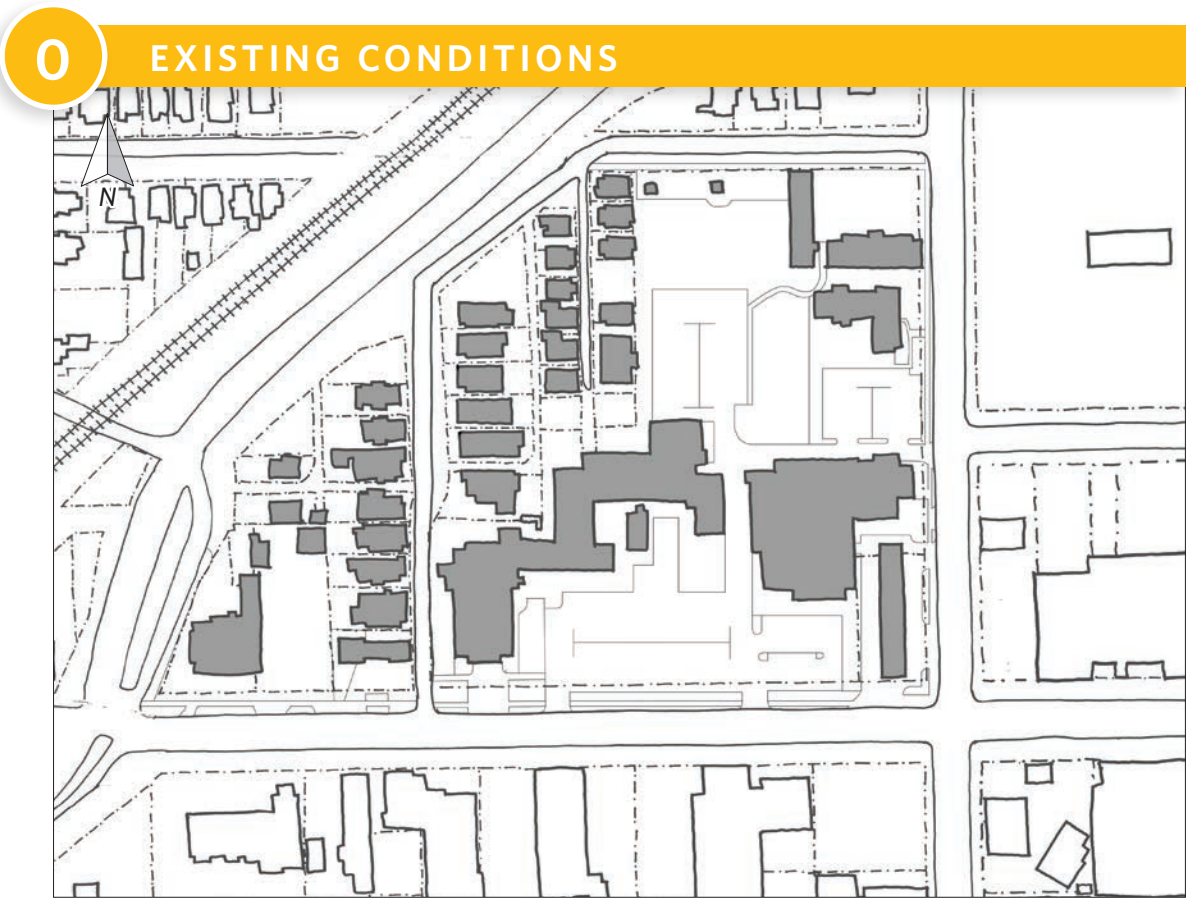


FIGURE 77: Phase 1 – Build Liner & Corner Buildings

Along W. Michigan Avenue, begin to renew the street edge with a set of three two-story buildings; follow the architectural character and scale of the St. Augustine Cathedral School, and include a commercial ground floor with flexible upper units, with the potential to provide space for local college students or clergy. Use the south facades activate the street, and the north facades to frame a semiprivate space for the parish and school. At the northeast corner of the block, replace the existing diocese building, thrift store, and parking lot with a corner building that interacts directly with the street while still creating a barrier between N. Westnedge Avenue and the school playground within the block.

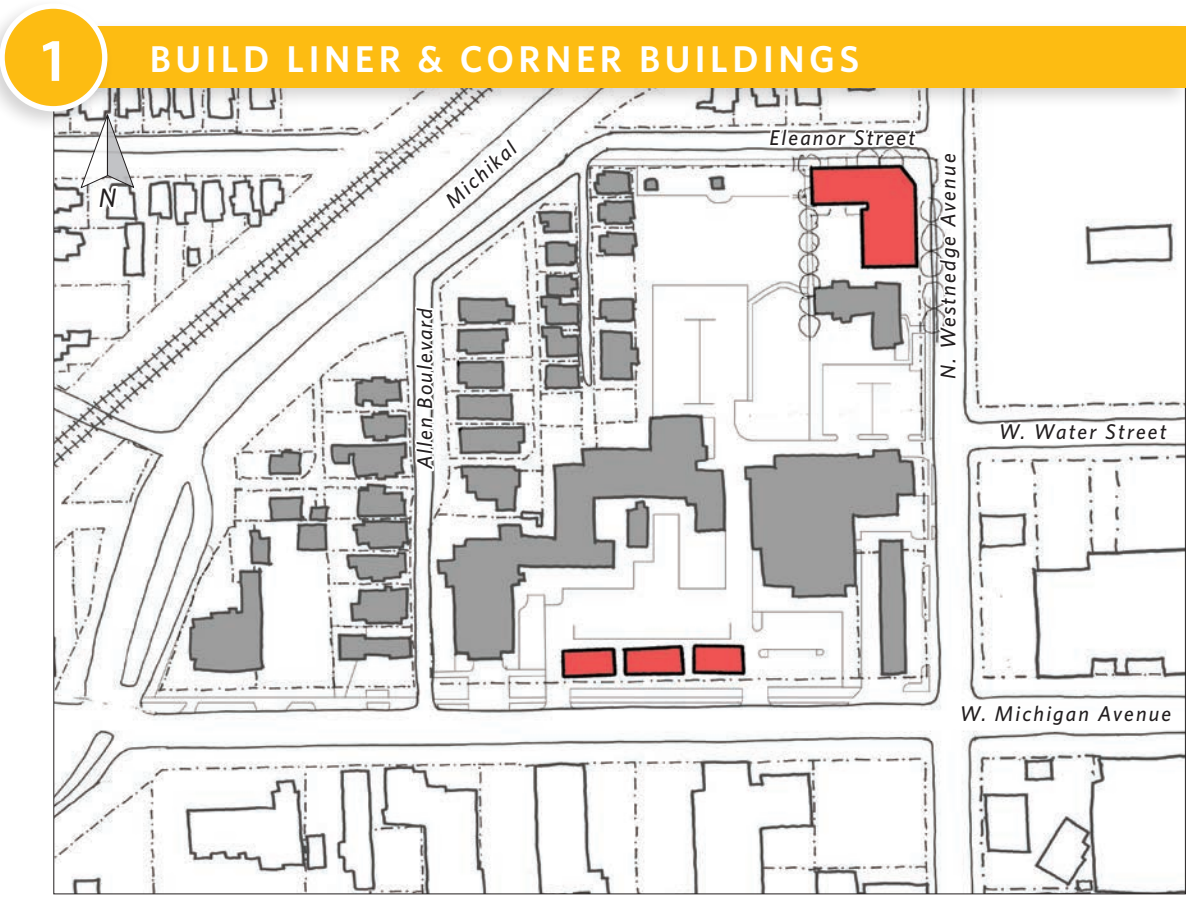
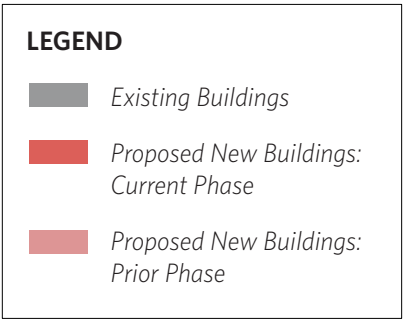
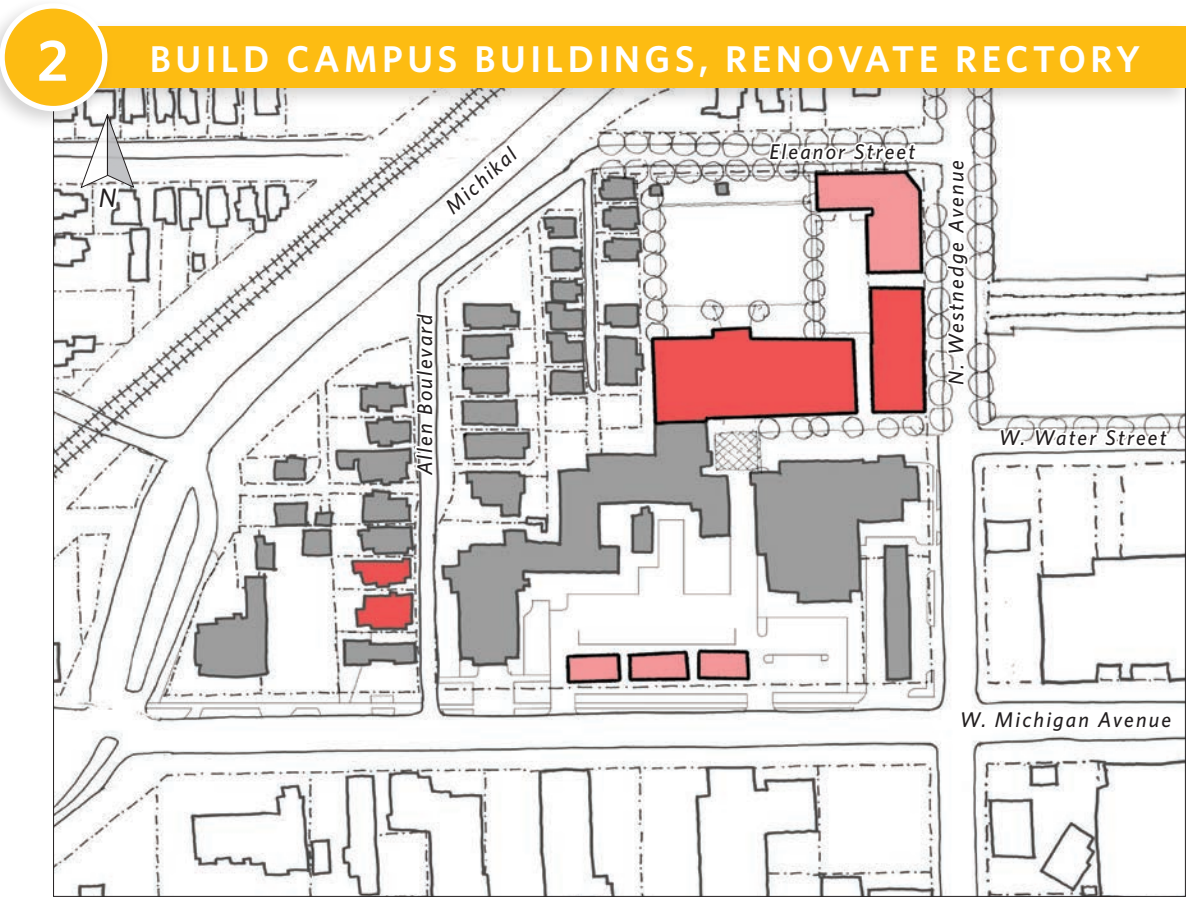


FIGURE 78: Phase 2 – Build Campus Buildings, Renovate Rectory

In this second phase, develop the interior and exterior of the block in tandem, dividing it into a series of linked spaces. Add a northern addition to the St. Augustine Cathedral school to further enclose the children's park, while providing direct access to it. On N. Westnedge Avenue, continue the commercial character established at the northeast corner in Phase 1 with a new building just south of it, completing the street edge. Renovate the parish rectories.



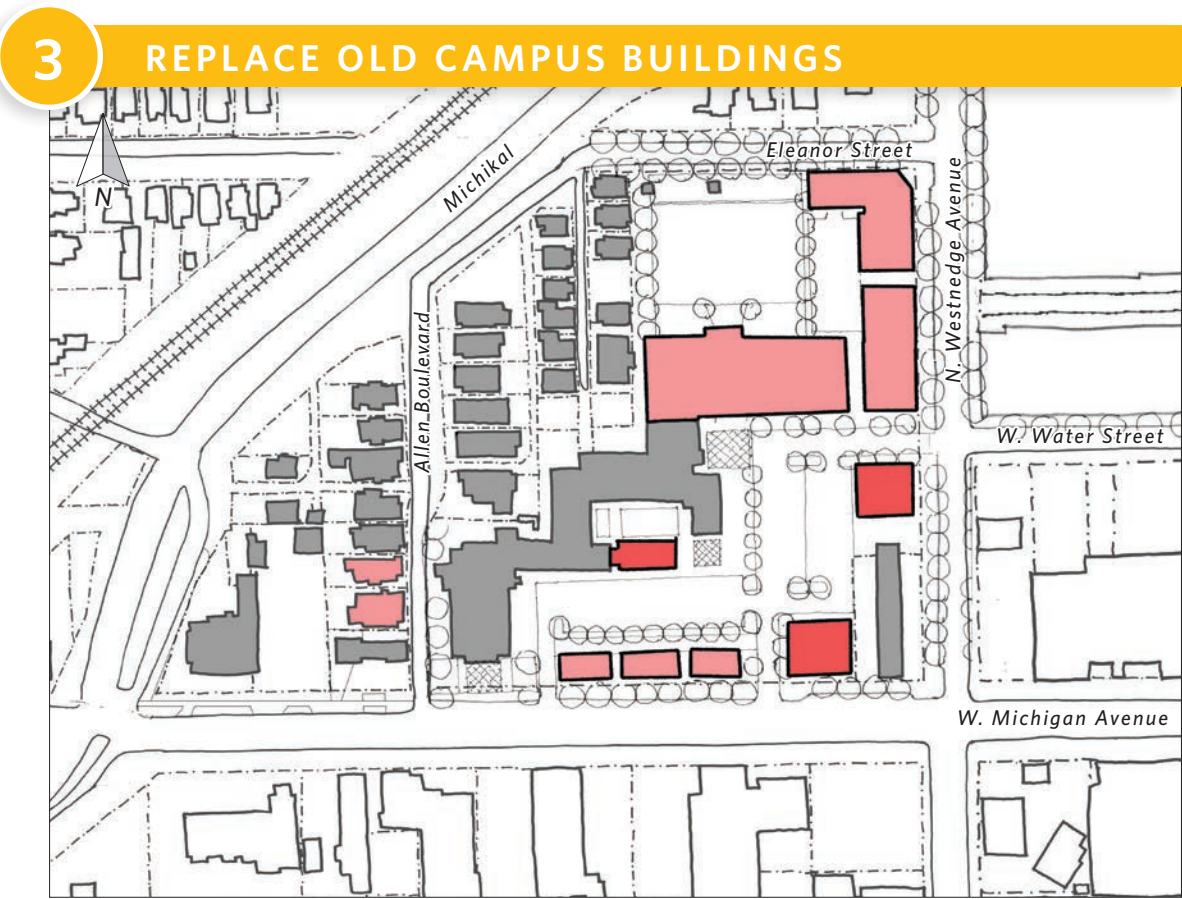


FIGURE 79: Phase 3 – Replace Old Campus Buildings
Continue the character established in Phases 1 and 2 along N. Westnedge Avenue with a third new building, which frames an interior parking lot to make up for parking taken by a new building on W. Michikan Avenue. Use this proposed mixed-use structure on the southern face of the block to continue the commercial ground floors established along the street in Phase 1, while beginning to transition into a building depth more characteristic of further east along the street. At the interior of the block, frame a private cloister with a southern addition to the St. Augustine Cathedral School, further delineating the block’s layers of outdoor space.

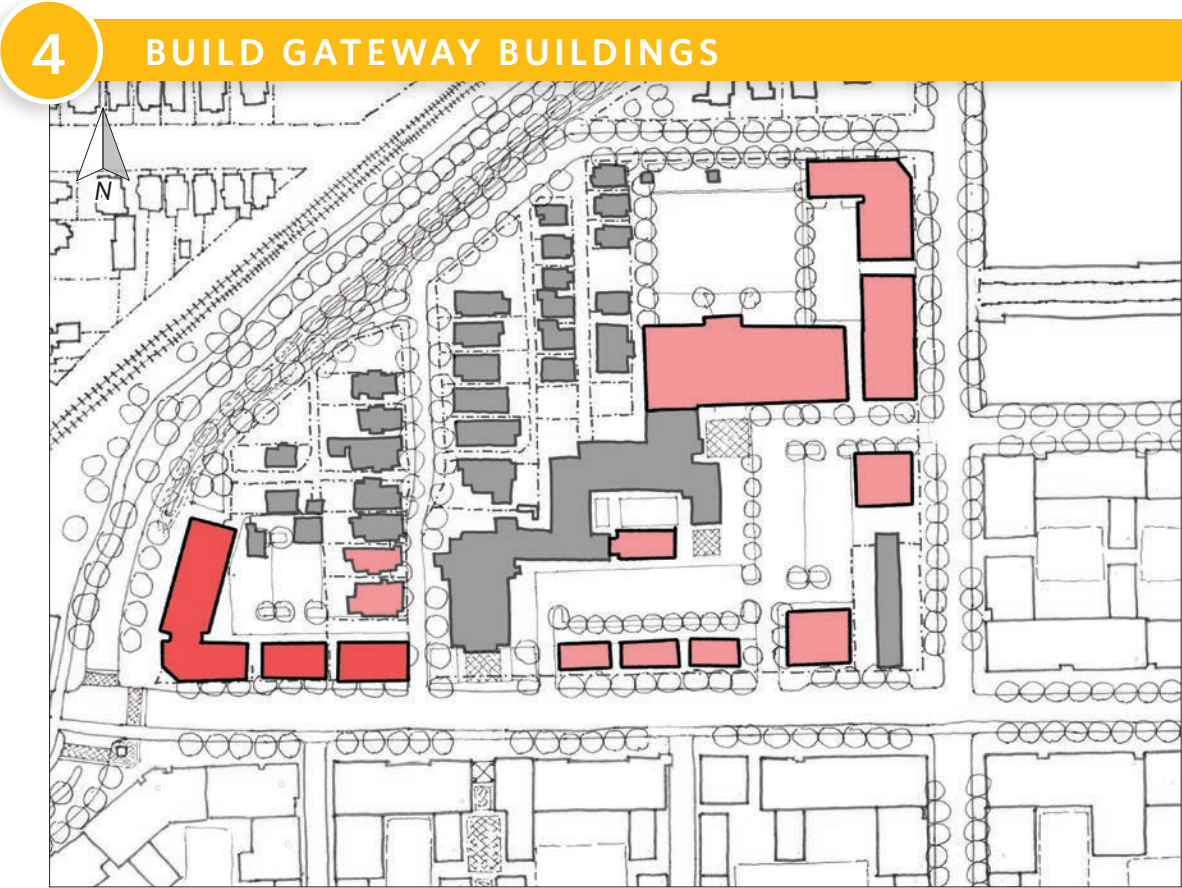


FIGURE 80: Phase 4 – Build Gateway
Build up the southwest corner of the block during this fourth phase, increasing scale and density. This proposal transforms the undersized commercial buildings and vacant land into a gateway to downtown Kalamazoo. Facilitate W. Michigan Avenue’s turn to the east with an angled facade, supported with additional land from the reimagined intersection. Use these three buildings to mediate a transition from the proposed scale and urban character of the W. Michigan Avenue Connection into the smaller St. Augustine Cathedral structures from Phase 1.

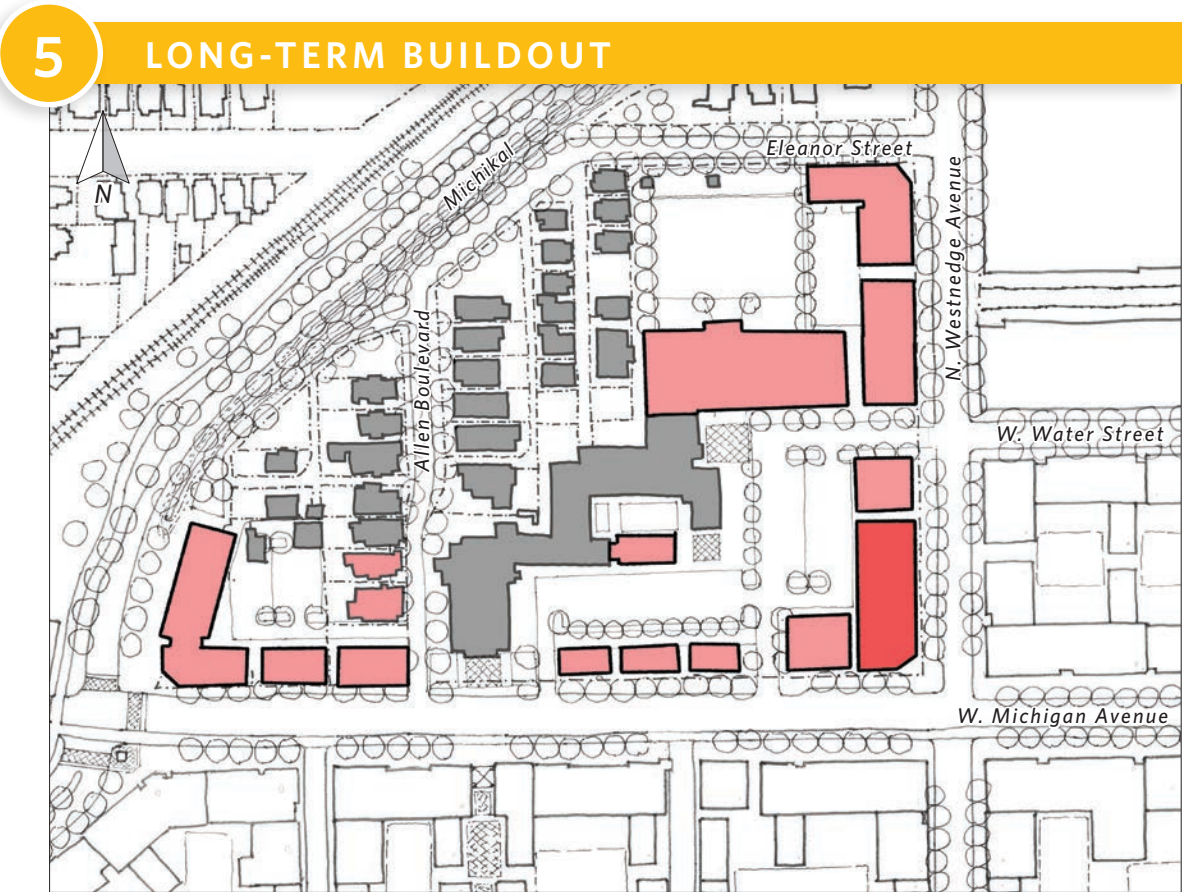


FIGURE 81: Phase 5 – Long-Term Buildout
In the long term, complete the edges of the block along N. Westnedge Avenue and W. Michigan Avenue. Eventually replace the existing gas station, currently under private ownership, with a mixed-use building that continues the scale established by Phases 1-4. Use this structure to maintain the commercial ground floor along both streets, and hold the corner with an angled facade that mirrors the gateway building at the southwest corner of the block.

At the time of issuing this report, the proposed phasing represents a possible urban design solution; phasing may readjust on the basis of campus priorities and funding constraints.

DESIGN PROPOSAL 3: MICHIGAN-ACADEMY DISTRICT

The blocks along the western end of W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street in downtown Kalamazoo are characterized by large parking lots, an inconsistent street edge, and low-scale dilapidated buildings. Only a few blocks away from the heart of the city, whose dense buildings are rich in historic character, these blocks are comprised almost entirely of underutilized real estate.

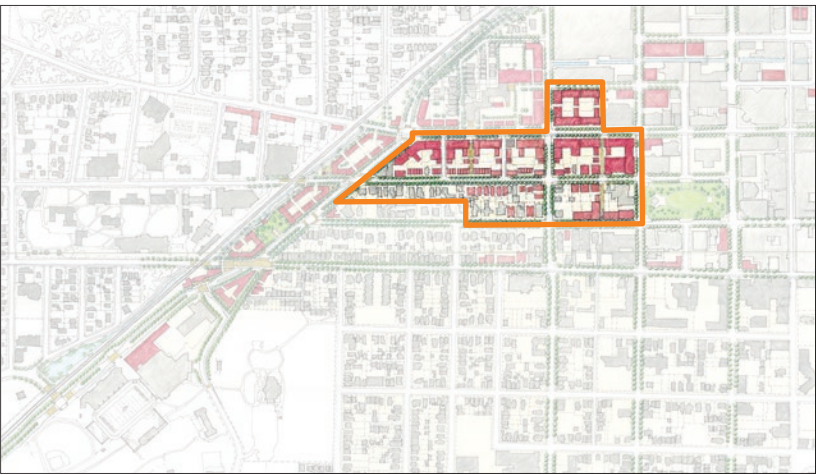
The south side of Academy Street is more intact than W. Michigan Avenue, with historic homes lining the southwestern street edge. As demand for student housing increases, many of these homes have become multi-unit rentals. Further east, however, Academy Street presents much the same trend as W. Michigan Avenue: vacant or parking lots between sporadic buildings that do not speak a common language.

Recently several properties entered the market; many were bought by the same automobile dealership, and many others remain available. Nearly all of these parcels are vacant or parking lots, or have buildings reaching the end of their usable life. The long block between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street has three historic buildings that contribute value to the city, and the block just east of it has only one. To the north, a federal post office stands alone among low-rise, poorly-scaled buildings. To the south, historic buildings are isolated by seas of parking.

The overall Michigan-Academy District is bordered by and connects four key zones of the city: the “Spaghetti Bowl” connection to the west, South Street and Vine historic residential districts to the south, the downtown core to the east, and future Kalamazoo Event Center to the north. With property in flux, there is the chance for a fresh start for this district, as a contextual, appropriately scaled, walkable, and dense place.

From south to north, the district experiences a shift from detached single-family homes to mid-rise, higher-density mixed-use buildings. From west to east, W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street experience a second shift, moving from lower to higher height and density on W. Michigan Avenue, and from residential to urban forms on Academy Street.

This proposal primarily addresses the blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Streets, but also takes advantage of nearby opportunities for infill that can contribute to the overall vision for the area. The proposal breaks up overlarge blocks into a linear cluster of smaller blocks with consistent edges and interior spaces, prioritizing a scale, character, and pedestrian experience appropriate to the context and shift in scale.



Location Map

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 New stakeholders bring open land into play**
The blocks surrounding W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street contain a great deal of vacant and underutilized land, much of which has recently become available or purchased.
- 2 The blocks have a poor street presence**
Overlarge blocks with vast areas of underutilized land do not hold the street edge, and create a poor pedestrian experience.
- 3 The area has shifts in scale and density**
North to south, the blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street transition from larger-scale, higher-density commercial to smaller-scale, lower-density residential. East to west, the blocks transition from urban center to urban core.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Create a common vision among all stakeholders**
With so much land available, new development will be expansive and needs a contextual, comprehensive vision.
- 2 Build complete blocks that hold the street edge**
Frame both streets and internal courts with new buildings to create an interesting and consistent pedestrian experience.
- 3 Mediate transitions between scales and densities**
Use a variety of building types contextually to create a gradual transition from residential streets to the urban core. Use missing-middle housing types to bring higher density to residential infill opportunities along Academy Street, and three- to five-story mixed-use buildings inspired by Kalamazoo's historic downtown to create a commercial corridor along W. Michigan Avenue.

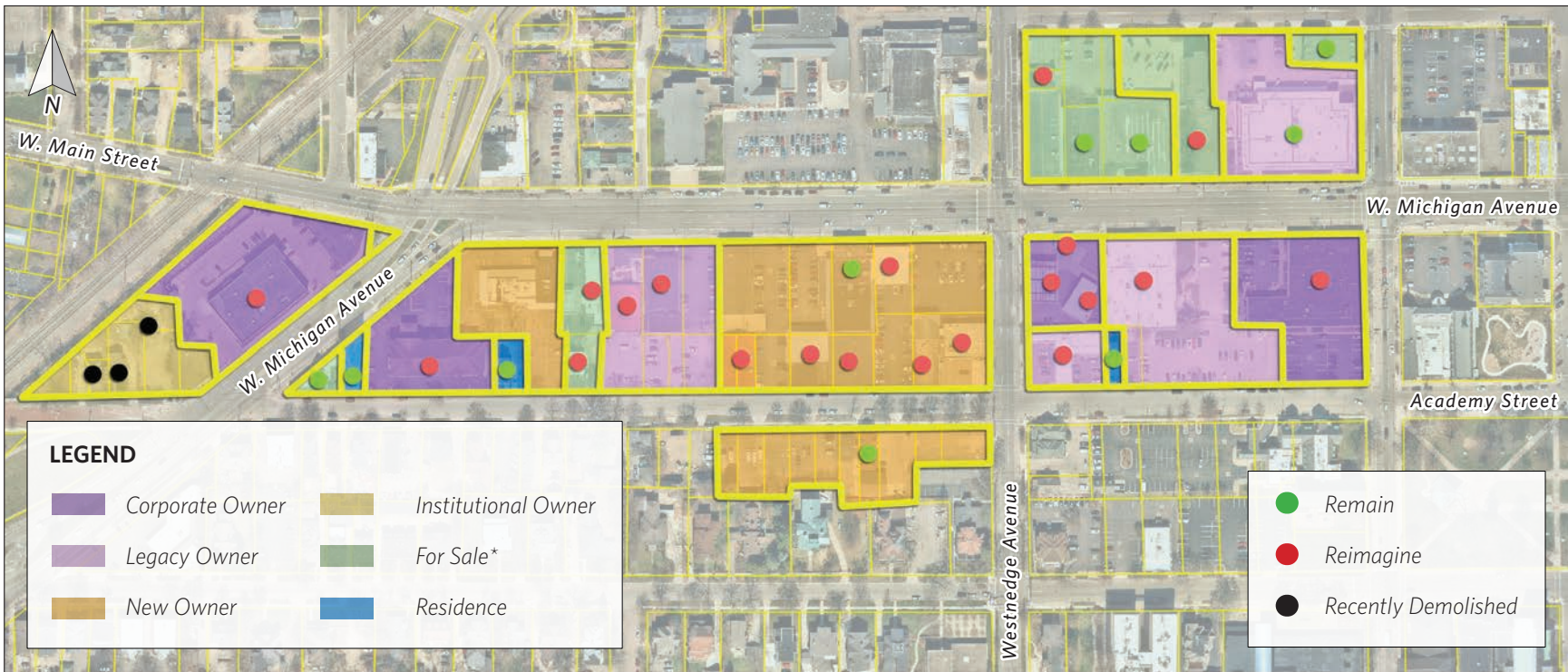


FIGURE 82: Property Status Diagram

A variety of stakeholders own the parcels of land between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street; many of these parcels are recently available or acquired, bringing large portions of these blocks into play as infill and development opportunities.

* at time of printing



FIGURE 83: Aerial View of Existing Conditions of the W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street Blocks, Looking Northeast
The existing blocks between and surrounding W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street have a great deal of vacant and underutilized space.



FIGURE 84: Existing Aerial Map View of the W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street Blocks
The blocks represent a wide range of scales, densities, and uses.

ELEMENT 1

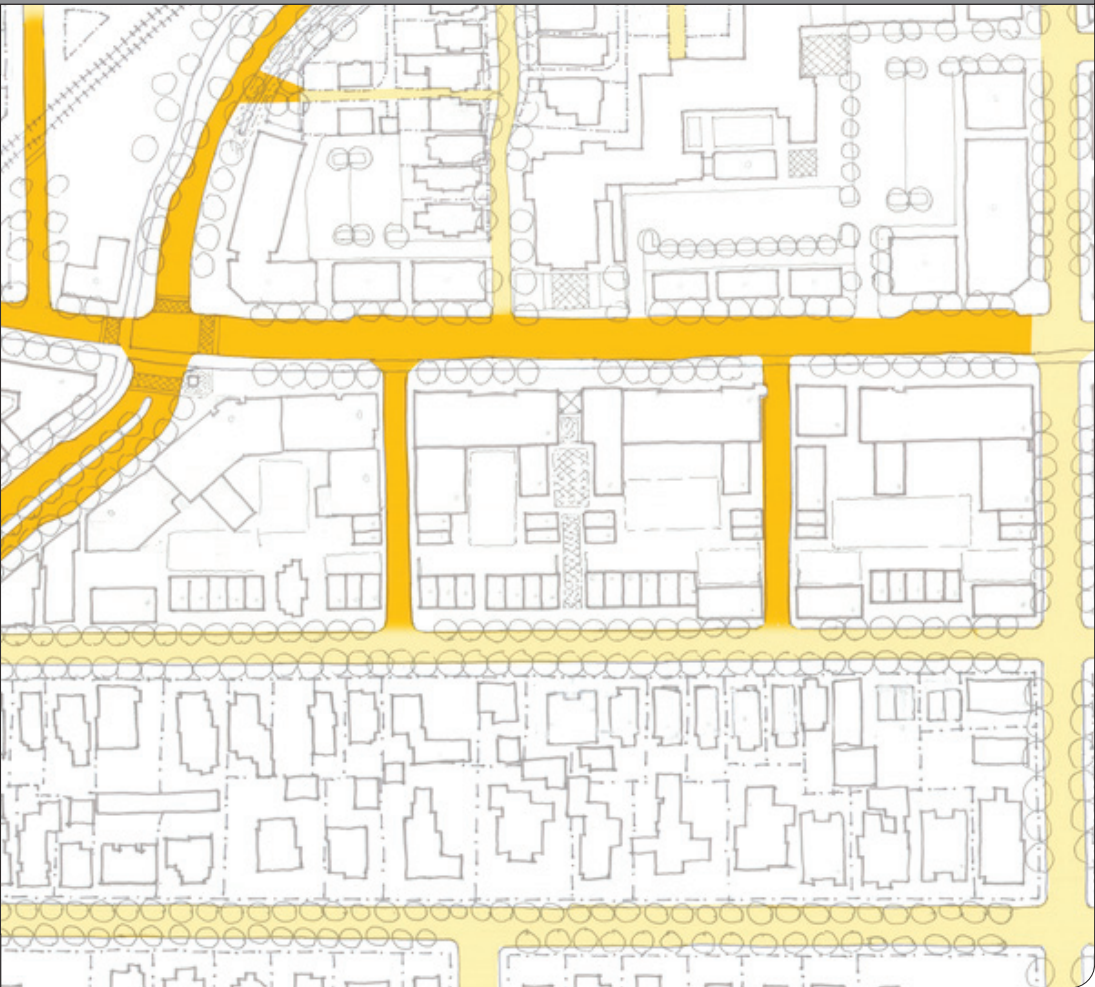
BLOCK STRUCTURE

This proposal breaks up long blocks with new streets and pedestrian passages, creating new blocks of a scale comparable to the historic block structure of the city.

Proposed buildings create a consistent street edge at the exterior of the block, and a series of spaces at the interior that can function as plazas, greens, or parking courts.

A large amount of vacant land and shifting property ownership allows the primary blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street to be nearly blank slates for reestablishing the scale and density of historic Kalamazoo.

Pages 62 - 63



ELEMENT 2


STREETSCAPE PROPOSALS

Because this set of blocks sits among so many different scales and uses of building, proposed structures must be highly conscientious and contextual.

Despite the pressure to construct tall, high-density buildings, new development will be stronger if it respects the scale of both its existing neighbors and lost historic structures. In accordance with the D3 zone (see page 102), buildings along W. Michigan Avenue can be up to five stories high. The market will likely dictate maximizing scale; even so, breaking up facades and keeping some buildings lower will create a stronger public realm.

The character of these proposed streetscapes is drawn jointly from historic Kalamazoo buildings and regional themes.

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60 University of Notre Dame School of Architecture | Kalamazoo, Michigan



FIGURE 85: Aerial View of Proposed Conditions of the W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street Blocks
Between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street, use a series of complete, well-scaled blocks to bridge the transition from residential to commercial.

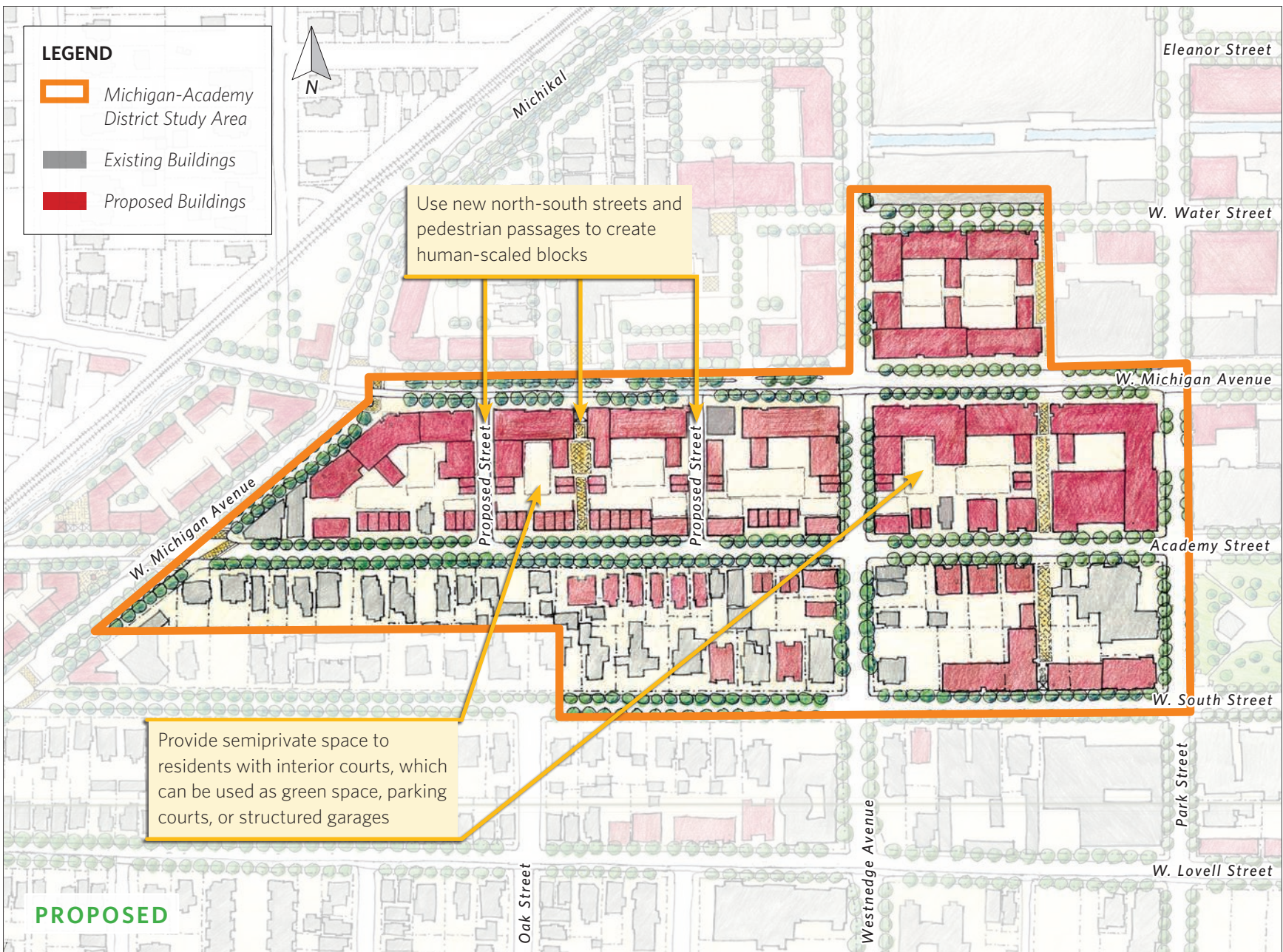


FIGURE 86: Proposed Masterplan of the W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street Blocks
The proposal incorporates interior courts, pedestrian passages, and infill strategies to frame streets and spaces.

BLOCK STRUCTURE

The walk east to Westnedge Avenue along W. Michigan Avenue feels interminable. Even without the challenges of poor street frontage and few trees, the block between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street is uniquely long among Kalamazoo blocks, and lacks critical north-south connections. On the whole, the blocks in this area lack density, defined edges, and framed spaces. Views are not welcoming, and the street does not provide a sense of containment.

The proposed block structure breaks up the blocks surrounding W. Michigan Avenue with a combination of north-south secondary streets and pedestrian passages. Each street is well-contained and lined with trees. The pedestrian passage to the west creates a visual axis with the St. Augustine Cathedral facade, and its associated plaza spaces are open to businesses and pedestrians alike. The passage to the east continues through three blocks, connecting residential and commercial buildings with an axis of motion that terminates at the Kalamazoo Event Center.

Each intact block in the proposal maintains the edge of the street, creating spatial containment, while navigating different needs of scale and use. The buildings fronting the block also contain interior parking courts, parking structures, semiprivate gathering spots, or private yards. In blocks south of Academy Street, which are more intact, the proposal takes advantage of infill opportunities to reinforce the scale and character of the street while increasing density with Missing Middle typologies.

While adding these streets will require properties owners to relinquish land to the city, the benefit of this exchange is additional street frontage and richer activation of the full block which will increase the value of the property.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Blocks along W. Michigan Avenue & Academy Street are overlong**
In the east-west direction, these blocks are relentlessly long, especially for pedestrian traffic.
- 2 There are scale and density shifts across the blocks**
The form of buildings in these blocks changes in the north-south direction and east-west direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Break up long blocks with streets and passages**
Use new streets and pedestrian passages perpendicular to the long block, creating the opportunity to move north-south and access the framed interiors of the blocks.
- 2 Adapt new blocks to existing transitions**
Use new development to reinforce the existing shifts in scale, density, and form with a character established by historic Kalamazoo.

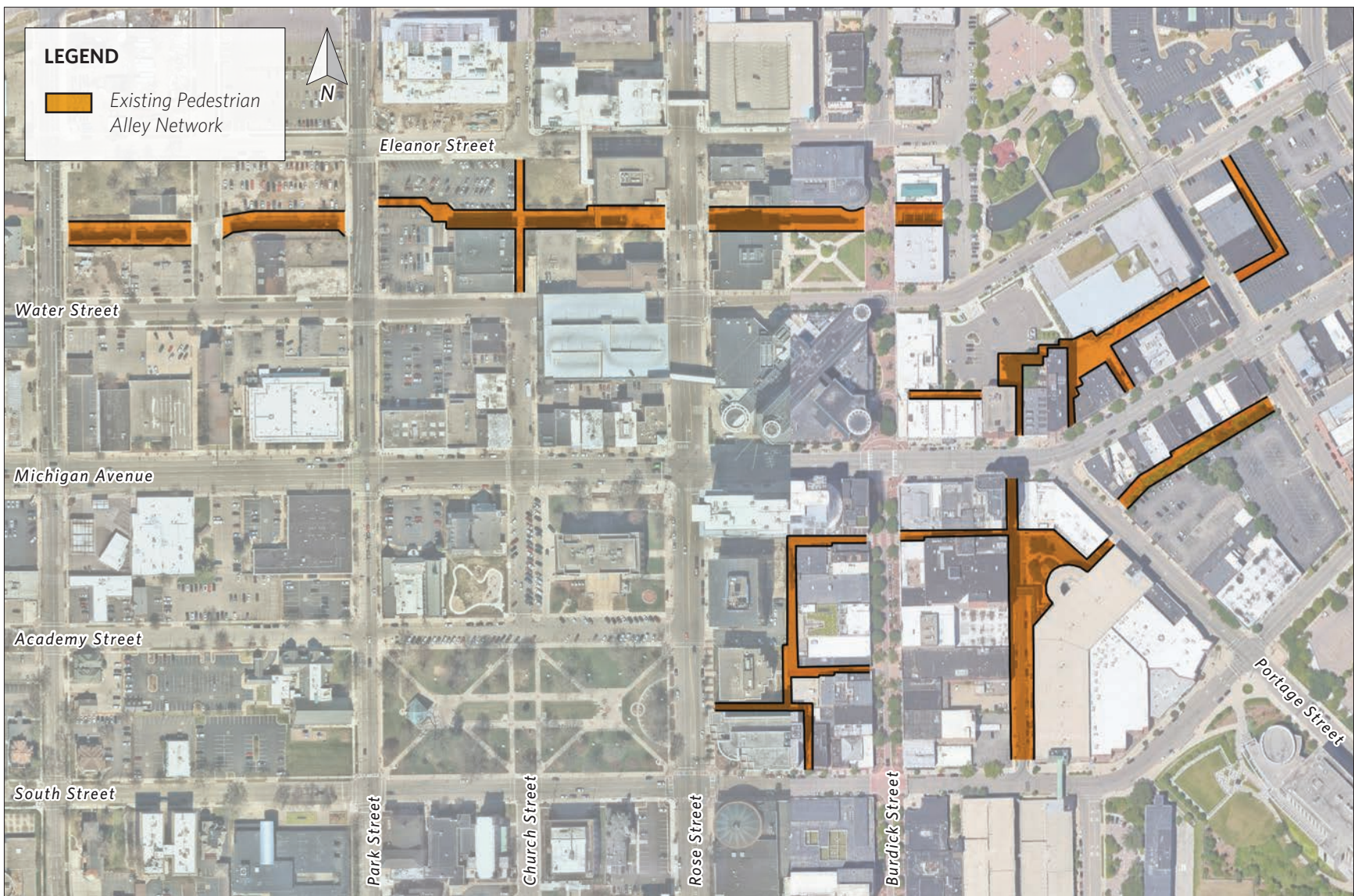


FIGURE 87: Existing Pedestrian Alley Plan

In response to the unpleasant, unsafe pedestrian conditions created by heavy traffic on Kalamazoo streets, community members turned to the city's alley system, and gradually generated a comprehensive pedestrian alley network with shops and public art. These pedestrian alleys are the inspiration for the through-alley conditions on the opposite page.

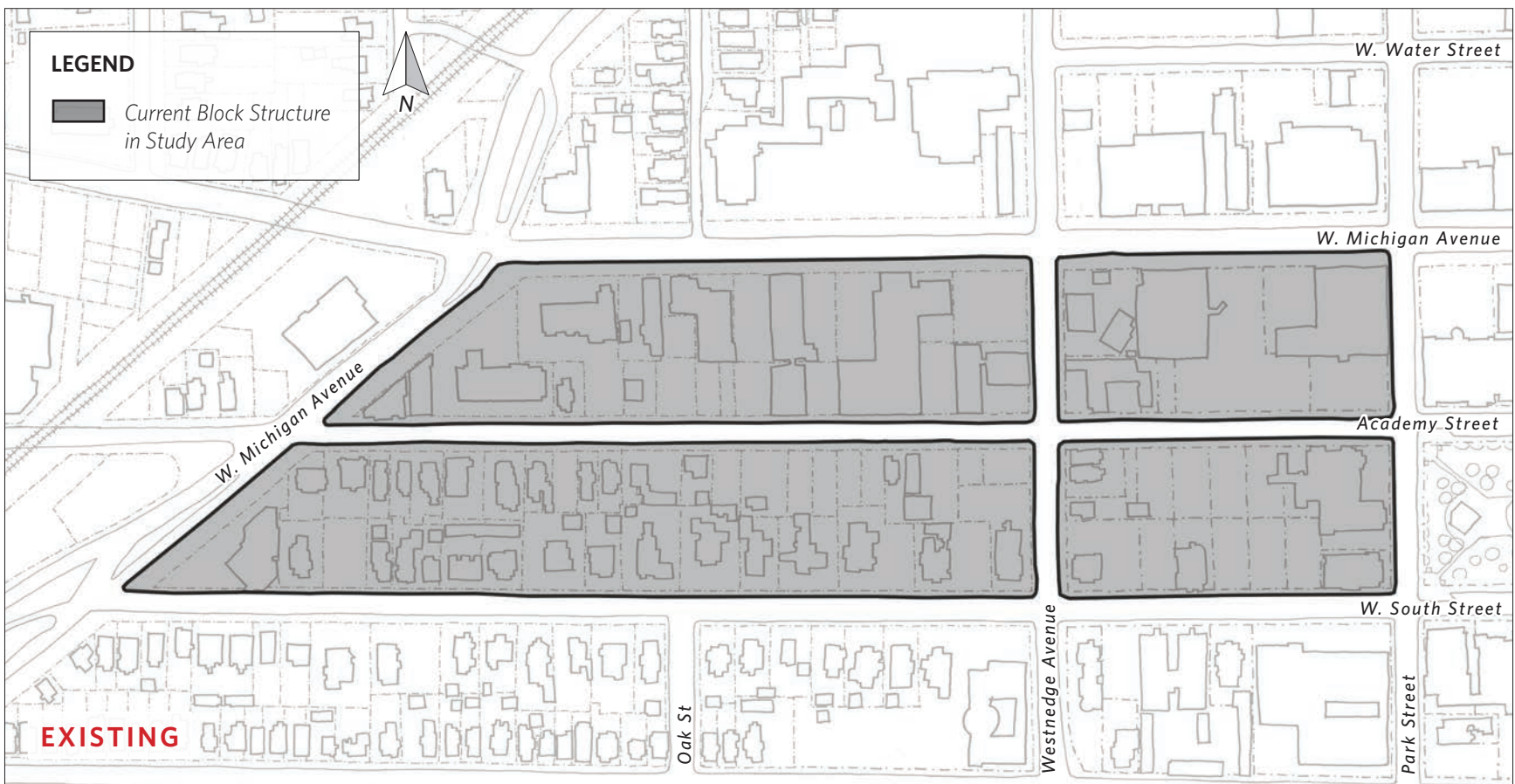


FIGURE 88: Existing Block Structure
The blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street are overlarge in the east-west direction, which undermines variety in route in the pedestrian experience. Because W. Michigan Avenue will become a mixed-use commercial corridor, its connection to adjacent residential streets and overall permeability are key issues to solve.

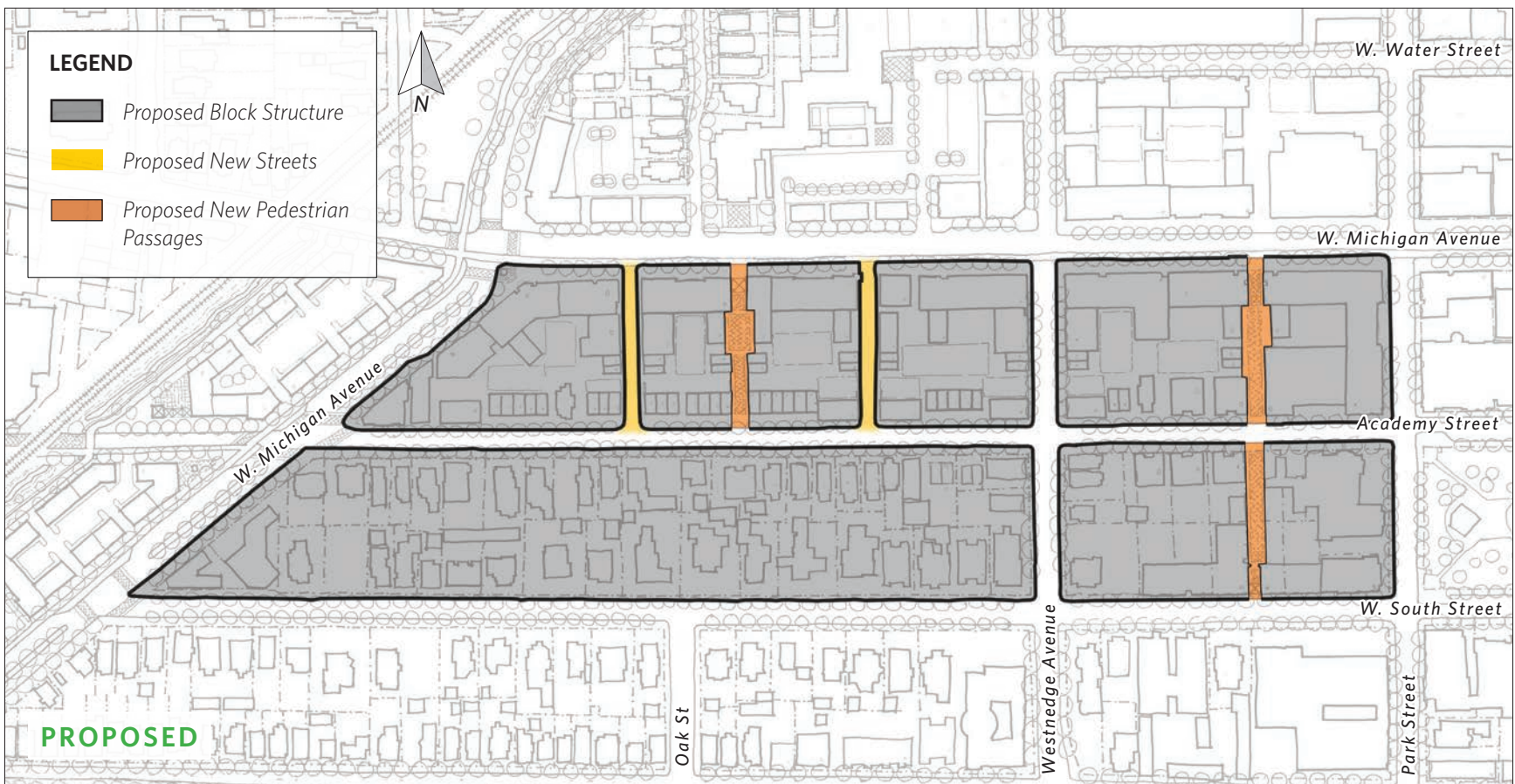


FIGURE 89: Proposed Streets and Pedestrian Passages
These recommendations expand the street network significantly, creating north-south corridors of motion that connect residential Academy Street to commercial W. Michigan Avenue and add variety to the public realm. In keeping with Kalamazoo’s history of pedestrian alleys, two north-south passages are proposed to continue the retail nature of W. Michigan Avenue while transitioning south into residential areas.

Refer to page 99 for a detailed street section proposal for these new north-south streets.

STREETSCAPE PROPOSALS

Historic Kalamazoo has a singular architectural character, evocative of Midwestern building types yet uniquely local. Elaborate cornices and brackets, arched windows with decorative lintels, and complex brickwork embellishments are distinctive elements of three- and four-story downtown fabric buildings. The proposed streetscapes below are inspired by images of Kalamazoo's historic mixed-use facades, storefronts, ornament, and relationships among adjacent buildings. To restore a walkable and well-scaled commercial corridor along W. Michigan Avenue, the proposal reintroduces classic, well-scaled, ground-level retail, complete with awnings and glassy shopfronts.

Investors will likely be pressured to build higher and larger buildings. Unfortunately, this form of development is typically difficult to finance without a large subsidy and will be over-scaled for the west end of downtown. While many smaller properties are being aggregated into larger development sites, mid-size increments of development will not only offer a more sustainable business model, this scale of development – evocative of historic downtown Kalamazoo, with humble but dignified facades – will provide a more active and vibrant public realm.

Raised entrances and smaller windows distinguish fully-residential buildings along W. Michigan Avenue, and the character of residences changes to detached single-family homes on Academy Street. The blocks introduce Missing Middle housing both as a transition between these more extreme forms, and as a way to bring more density to the area without sacrificing scale and character. Architecturally, the housing combines historic midwestern character with Missing Middle typologies: duplex, four-plex, multiplex, and townhouse. These types are explored in more depth on pages 80-87.

LEGEND

- Legacy Owner
- New Owner
- For Sale*

* at time of printing



FIGURE 90: Building Divisions by Property Ownership along W. Michigan Avenue, Facing South

The orange, yellow, and green overlays indicate three different property owners with different property widths. It is possible to achieve a consistent rhythm along the street by strategically dividing facades within aggregated parcels.

KEY FINDINGS

1

Historic fabric buildings provide architectural cues

Kalamazoo's historic fabric buildings vary from facade to facade with unique details, but sit side-by-side in the same plane.

2

Building scale varies by block

As W. Michigan Avenue continues east towards the downtown core, buildings increase in height and density.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

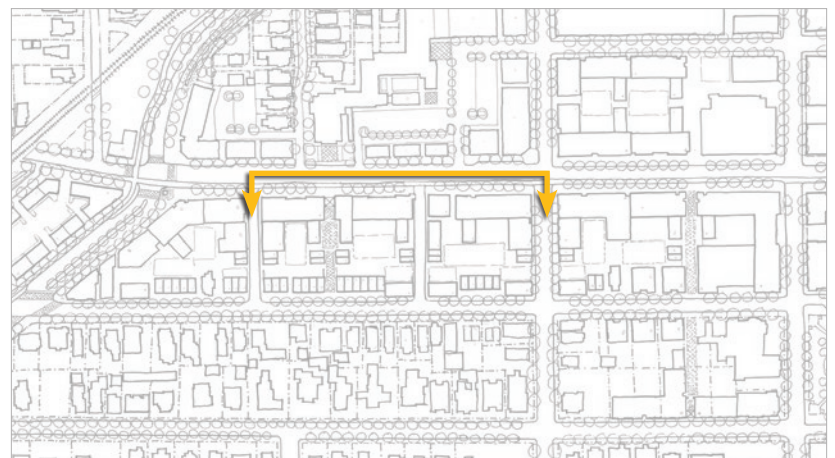
New development can continue the historic character

Though new buildings may be larger than their historic precedent, they can still present a human scale.

2

Scale new buildings to their context

Operate within the existing transitions of scale and density to create new buildings that respect their context.



Location Map for Figure 90 & Figure 91

PROPOSED



S. Westnedge Avenue

Proposed New Street

DOUBLE-LOADED MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

EXISTING COMMERCIAL

DOUBLE-

FIGURE 91: Building Forms along W. Michigan Avenue, Facing South

A varied streetscape with a consistent rhythm activates the public realm and provides an interesting pedestrian experience.



Fabric buildings on W. Michigan Avenue at Rose Street



Fabric buildings on W. Michigan Avenue at Church Street



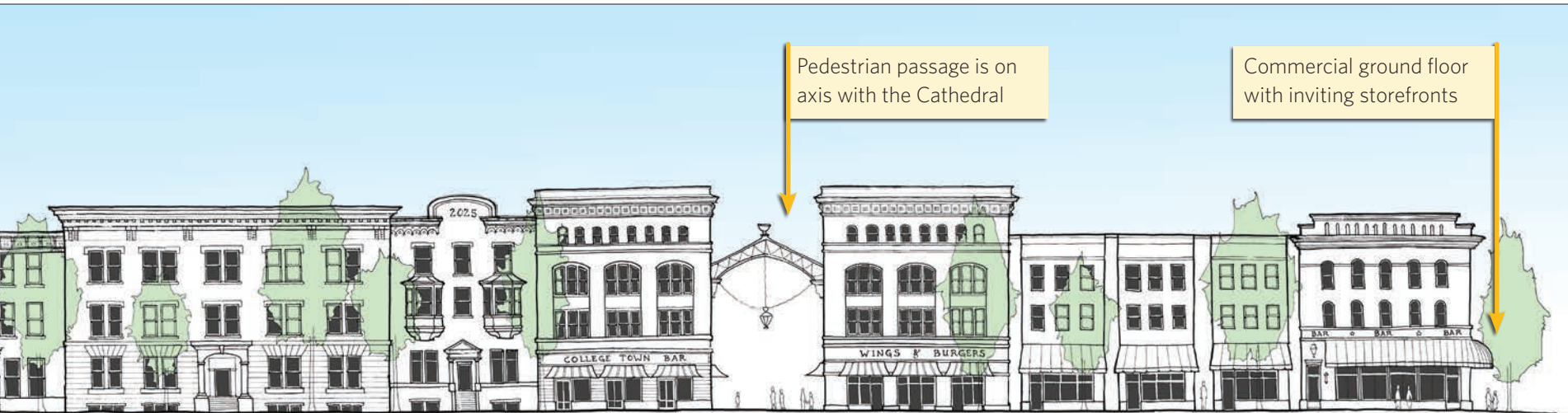
Fabric building in the Haymarket District by Adler & Sullivan



Row of fabric buildings on W. Michigan Avenue at Burdick Street

FIGURE 92: Precedent Images of Historic Downtown Kalamazoo Fabric Buildings

Kalamazoo fabric buildings share a typical form, but each facade has a slightly different expression despite sitting side-by-side in the same plane. The same effect can be achieved in new construction by varying facade expression along the same long building.



Proposed New Pedestrian Alley

Proposed New Street

DOUBLE-LOADED RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

DOUBLE-LOADED MIXED-USE BUILDINGS





PART 5: BUILDING TYPES FOR BLOCK REPAIR

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BLOCK REPAIR & BUILDING TYPES OVERVIEW

Block repair takes a downtown with “missing teeth” and infills these gaps with buildings of a scale and character that will support an active public realm. Successfully repairing the historic block structure of Kalamazoo to meet the needs of a modern downtown requires that urban and architectural strategies work in tandem. This section considers two layers:

- 1. *Block Repair Methodology* – Recommended steps for repairing a variety of blocks, as informed by historic and existing patterns of scale, density, and form. This section focuses on mixed-use buildings, the most frequent type in the proposed masterplan to the right.
- 2. *Proposed Building Types* – A set of mixed-use and residential building types appropriate to Kalamazoo, which emphasize Missing Middle and historic scale, and can be infilled into different blocks depending on the context.

To the right is the proposed incorporation of building types into a holistic block repair strategy, which follows historic and current patterns but adapts to modern conditions. A majority of the proposed structures fall into one of the six categories illustrated on the opposite page. Some new buildings are more specific to their site, however, such as campus buildings within Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and Saint Augustine Cathedral School properties; these buildings will require interpretation beyond the six types listed here.

The placement of these types within the masterplan to the right reinforces and expands upon existing patterns of scale and density within the city. Attention to these citywide patterns, both existing and future, is essential to reinforcing different parts of the city as both unique and able to transition into one another: the energy and density of downtown, the youth and activity within university areas, and the peace of residential areas. Moving from one area of the city to another provides a variety of experiences, each supported by its buildings and block structure.

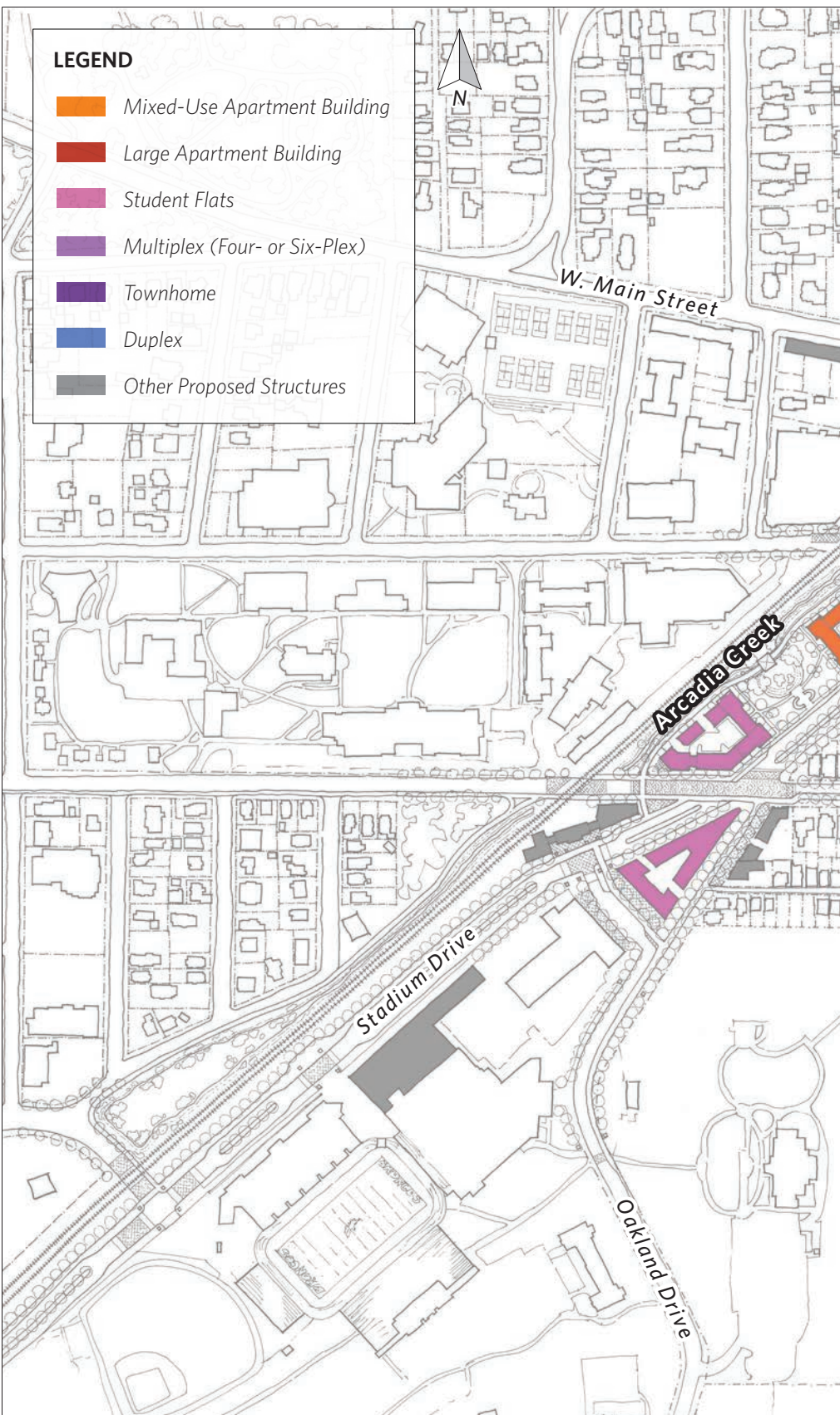


FIGURE 93: Proposed Masterplan with Building Types Highlighted

LAYER 1

BLOCK REPAIR METHODOLOGY

The principles of block repair in these pages propose an order of operations for repairing blocks with a large amount of open land. These principles emphasize urban, mixed-use fabric buildings in more specific detail, as well as how to locate different building types within the historic and existing patterns of scale and density.

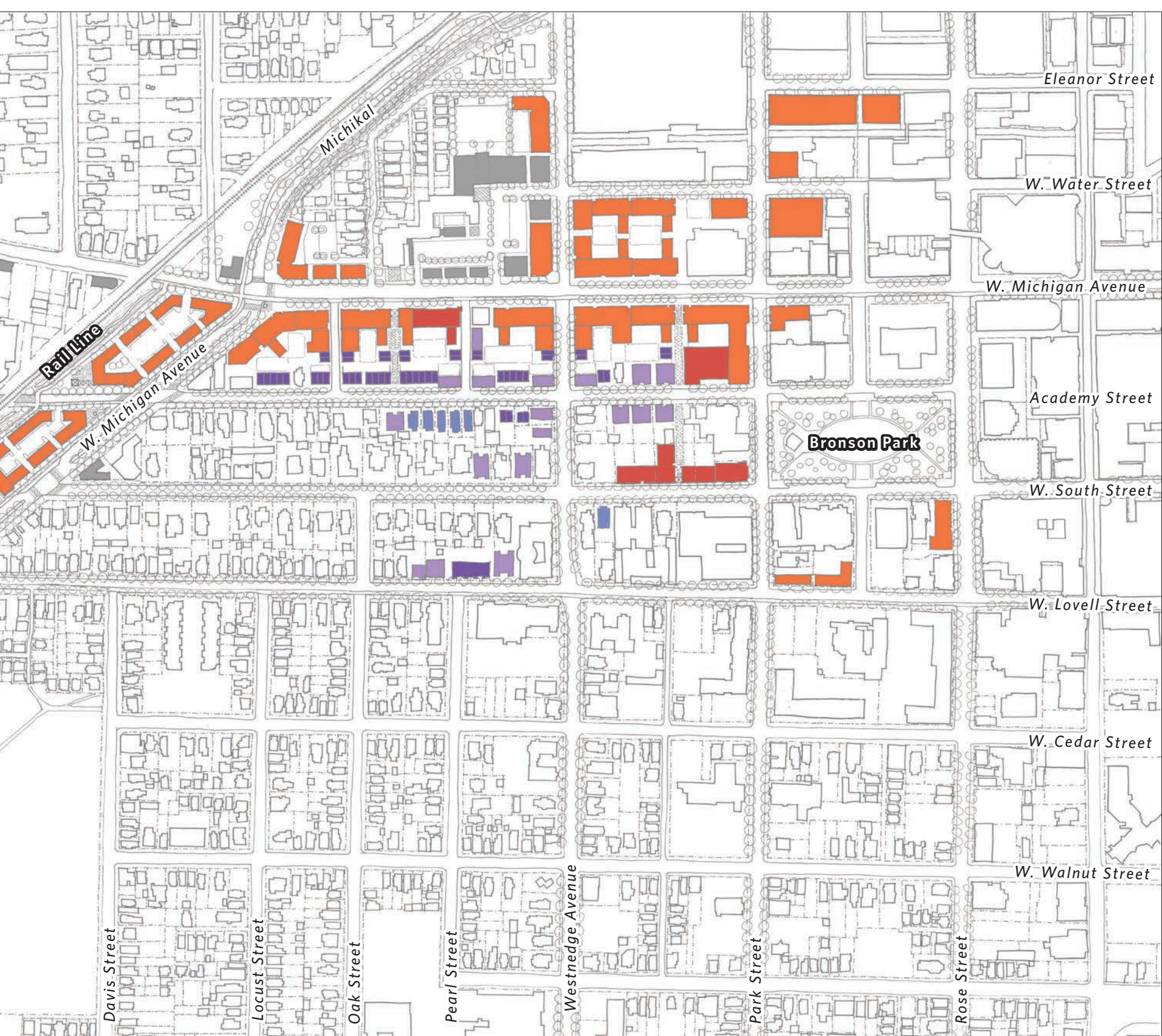
Pages 70—79

LAYER 2

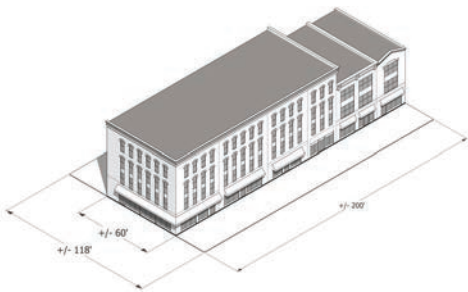
BUILDING TYPES

The building types elaborated in this section provide a range of scales and densities, as well as a combination of mixed-use and residential types. These types represent the individual built elements that can be combined into a complete block. All should be considered within the context of the street and block, rather than as isolated objects.

Pages 80—87

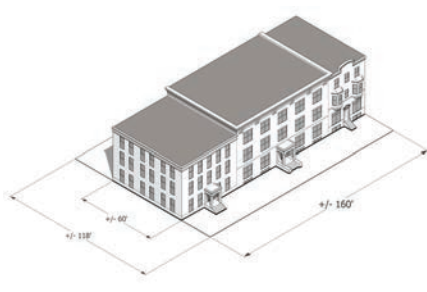


MIXED-USE APARTMENT



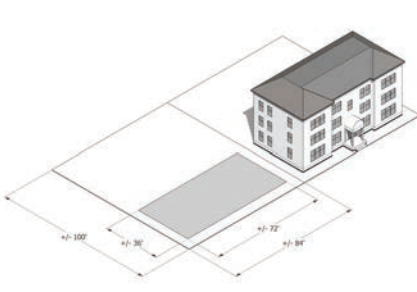
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LARGE APARTMENT



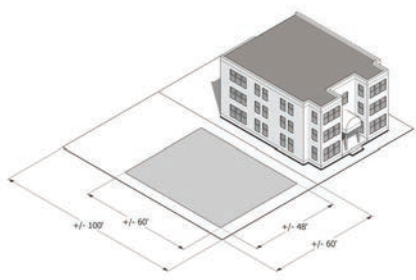
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STUDENT FLATS



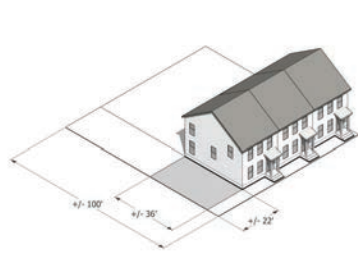
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MULTIPLEX



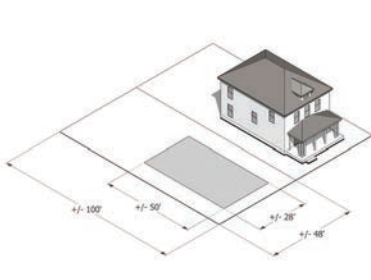
Page 85

TOWNHOMES



Page 86

DUPLEX



Page 87

BLOCK REPAIR METHODOLOGY

This block repair methodology *emphasizes the inclusion of mixed-use fabric buildings*, which are the most prevalent type in the proposal and will be needed to repair the original Kalamazoo block structure. These strategies include both the architecture and the siting of new structures: how to design an urban building with a contributing facade, as well as how to line a street with a series of facades. The lessons elaborated within these steps are applicable beyond this proposal to Kalamazoo as a whole:

1. **Identify Open Land:** Understand what land is available for new development, and reconceive of parking lots as buildable area.
2. **Adopt & Adapt Patterns of Intact Historic Blocks:** Bring buildings forward to meet the street and create a unified series of distinct facades, but adapt to larger buildings and use the interior of the block for parking.

3. **Design Urban Buildings Inspired by the Best of Kalamazoo:** Use the city's remaining historic fabric as inspiration for new downtown structures.
4. **Use Storefronts to Activate the Public Realm:** A series of strong storefronts creates an active retail corridor at the edges of repaired blocks.
5. **Apply Building Types at the Correct Scale of Development:** Use the proposed set of building types (and others as appropriate) where they fit best into the existing scale and density of a block.

Step 1 has been explored in the context chapter of the report (page 11). Steps 2-5 are explored in the following pages.



Existing conditions of the Michigan-Academy District, with needs for repair highlighted



Proposed conditions of the W. Michigan Avenue Connection, with successful block repair highlighted

FIGURE 94: Existing and Proposed Conditions of the Michigan-Academy District, Highlighting Principles of Block Repair
The proposal above identifies, fills, and activates open land with well-scaled urban buildings, inspired by historic patterns and forms.

STEP 2: ADAPT PATTERNS OF INTACT HISTORIC BLOCKS

After open land has been identified, look to historic mixed-use blocks for two key principles:

- *No Setbacks*: Urban fabric buildings meet the street, framing a commercial corridor.
- *Whole Greater than the Sum of its Parts*: Urban blocks are composed of a series of humble but dignified buildings, which results in unity without uniformity; there are some ‘hero buildings’, but not many.

In order to appropriately adapt a historic mixed-use block structure to modern practicalities, consider these two key needs:

- *Parking*: Demand for parking beyond street spaces can be satisfied by converting inner blocks to parking courts or structured garages, which can be converted to gathering space in the future as needed.
- *Larger Buildings*: Market realities will make maximizing the scale of a building the default strategy, but a building that takes up an entire city block is not of a compatible scale with the existing downtown. Applying the lessons of historic buildings to larger buildings, or to multiple facades within the same structure, will create a more vibrant public realm.

Within overall rules for mixed-use block structure, individual facades can make or break the success of the public realm. The following pages explore how to design an urban fabric building, as inspired by historic Kalamazoo.

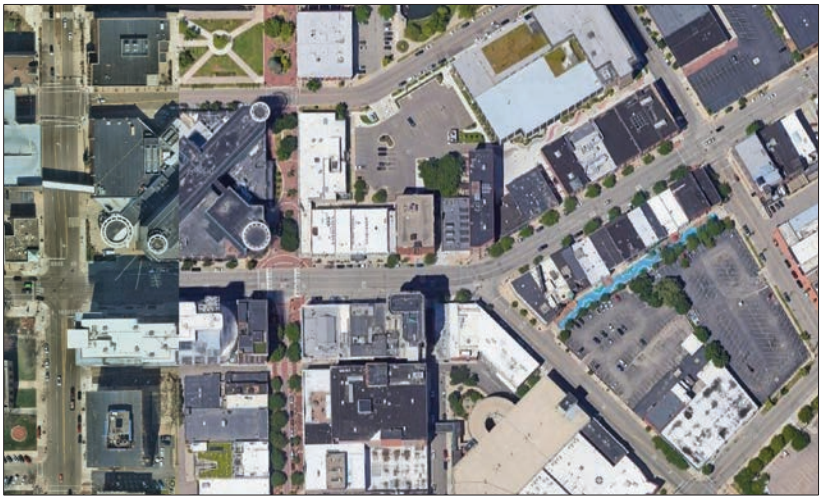


FIGURE 95: Aerial Highlight of Remaining Historic Block Structure
The downtown core of historic Kalamazoo brought buildings to the street.

KEY FINDINGS

1

Historic downtown blocks activate the public realm with key elements
Historic downtown blocks tend to meet the street with buildings directly at the sidewalk, and combine rows of narrow, attached structures.

2

Needs have changed since the design of historic block structures
Increased use of cars and higher parking needs, as well as the practicality of constructing larger buildings, have emerged since the original construction of downtown Kalamazoo.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Repair blocks with applicable elements of historic patterns
New buildings should meet the street and present a series of unified facades.

2

Adapt historic block structures to satisfy modern needs
Parking courts can be tucked into the interior of the block, and larger buildings can still present a series of varying facades.



FIGURE 96: Street View of Remaining Attached Buildings
Downtown buildings were attached to form a continuous street wall.

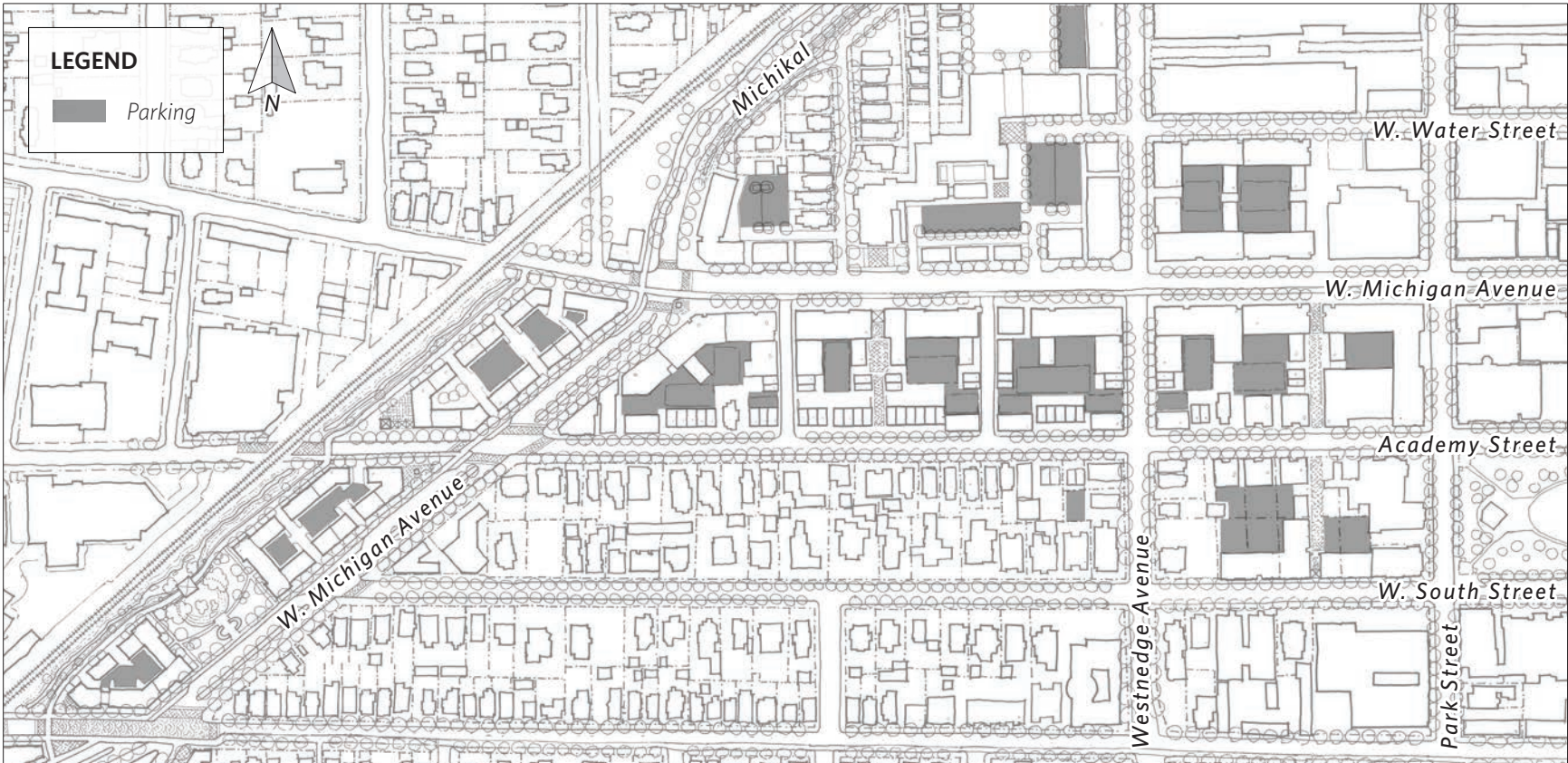


FIGURE 97: Use of Parking Courts in Interior Blocks
Instead of parking lots along streets, which impair the public realm, the proposal provides space at the interior of the blocks for parking courts for larger building types, or garages for smaller residences. Consider an overall, citywide parking strategy to distribute parking among these blocks.

STEP 3: DESIGN URBAN BUILDINGS INSPIRED BY THE BEST OF KALAMAZOO

Kalamazoo, like many Midwestern cities that retain portions of a historic downtown, exhibits a catalog of mixed-use fabric buildings. These buildings are usually masonry, two to five stories tall, and collectively frame a walkable urban street. They are not the “hero buildings” of a downtown, but rely on classic proportions, careful details, and good materials to create a varied, interesting, and activated backdrop to the activity of a city.

Designing a new mixed-use building involves attention to themes and variations. Studying Kalamazoo’s historic fabric buildings teaches two primary lessons: of specific details unique to the city, and of overall formal themes common to mixed-use buildings of the wider era and region.

The below diagram indicates key elements that can be found in some form on almost every fabric building within Kalamazoo. Each new mixed-use building should incorporate most or all of these elements: a cornice or parapet, well-proportioned punched openings, and an enticing storefront with signage and display windows.

The vibrance of Kalamazoo’s downtown comes from the variations on this theme, and new buildings would be remiss if they all ended up looking the same as a result of following this template. Within the parapet or cornice element, there are several shapes, textures, and materials that can be used to crown a building. Within the punched openings, which can vary in proportion, there are many window types to choose from. The storefront is especially malleable, and has the opportunity to create a unique and enticing experience, with signage and other interchangeable elements specific to the business within. Fabric buildings work together to make a continuous, ground-floor commercial corridor that engages with pedestrians and activates an entire street.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Historic fabric buildings provide architectural cues**
Kalamazoo’s downtown fabric buildings, particularly along Burdick Street and in the Haymarket district, have an architectural character unique to the city but evocative of fabric buildings throughout the Midwest.
- 2 Mixed-use buildings have several key elements**
When analyzed as a set of variations on a theme, Kalamazoo’s mixed-use structures share a number of essential features.
- 3 For fabric building facades, less is more**
Though each historic fabric building has a degree of ornament and detail, most are relatively simple; some of the best main streets are a series of humble facades.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Match new mixed-use buildings to their context**
New buildings have a responsibility to the context into which they are inserted, and should feel like they belong in Kalamazoo.
- 2 Determine and apply essential mixed-use elements**
The essential elements of a mixed-use building can be summarized as a template for new buildings. Within this template, many variations are possible.
- 3 Create a whole greater than the sum of its parts**
While a downtown needs some hero buildings, elaborate or iconic architecture is better suited to civic buildings. New fabric buildings should prioritize adding up to a strong public realm, rather than standing out.



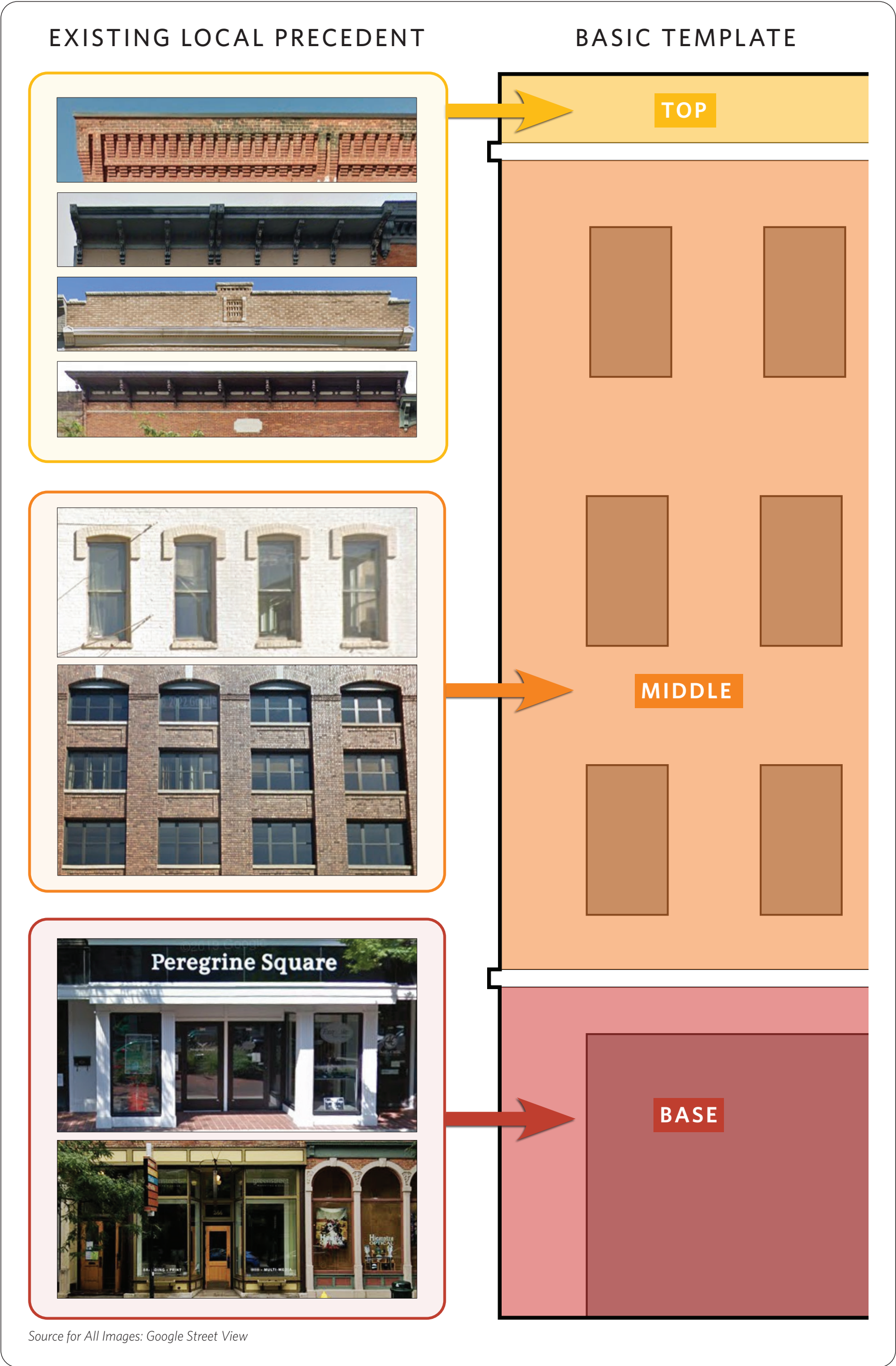
- Building Cornice**
The cornice is the decorative crown of a building, with a practical use to keep water away from the face of the building and transition from the materials used on the finish wall to the roof.
- Windows – Punched Openings**
Fabric buildings (defined in the caption below) typically have a simple wall plane with punched openings and double hung windows.
- Storefront Cornice with Signage**
The storefront cornice divides the retail portion of the building and the residential or office upper floors while also 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 98: 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 99: Annotated Solid-Void Studies of Kalamazoo Fabric Buildings
This study reduces facades of existing fabric buildings to their essential elements of proportion and opening.





TYPICAL NEW DESIGN

This series of buildings represents a character typical of new development. The building does not meet the street in a way that invites or supports the public realm, its windows lack depth and rationality, its top has an imposing lid, and its facades are split by bands that do not relate to any other elements. These traits contribute to the building’s lack of engagement with the people and environment around it; the structure cannot create place. While this building attempts to establish an urban presence, it fails to relate to the human scale. Designs like this initially draw interest, but rarely stand the test of time; in a few short years, the retail will struggle and materials will age poorly.



STEP ONE: USE HUMAN-SCALE STOREFRONTS

In contrast to the all-glass storefronts shown above, which are unwelcoming and overly tall, create an active street presence by designing storefronts at a pedestrian scale. Engaging storefronts have signage bands and awnings to signal retail establishments. Recessed openings with masonry piers break up the storefronts vertically, giving a rhythm to the street.



STEP TWO: RECESS WINDOWS

Recess windows a minimum of 4” from the face of the facade. Recessing windows adds depth to the facade, creating texture and cadence, as well as a sense of strength and solidity. A brick return casts a shadow to show the depth of the materials and counter the feeling above that the bricks and windows belong to the same thin skin. The windows shown above in Step 1 are flush with the facade, making the building feel flimsy and shallow



STEP THREE: RATIONALIZE WINDOWS

A rational organization of windows has a more elegant effect than the somewhat scattered arrangement above. Lintels and sills, as an alternative to the randomly-placed bands above, frame an opening and make it feel more solid. Ganged or double-hung windows add further vertical and horizontal divisions to an opening. The overall window-to-wall ratio is similar, but the spacing and division of windows is more well-regulated into a rhythm that relates to both the overall composition of the structure and the storefront below.



STEP FOUR: ARCHITECTURAL CORNICE

An architectural cornice provides a subtle, graceful resolution of the top of the building. Modulation in the height and shape of the parapet relates to the window arrangement and storefront, creating a cohesive whole. The forms represented by these cornices are historic, linking new development to the original architectural style of local urban buildings. Avoid top-heavy buildings, as shown in Steps 1-4, that are overshadowed by a projecting lid.

FIGURE 101: Four Steps to Place-Making Buildings

Much of new construction has good intentions, but there are many common errors that compromise the ability of new development to productively activate space, contribute to place, and reflect the architectural character of an area. These four steps highlight and correct key elements.

STEP 4: USE STOREFRONTS TO ACTIVATE THE PUBLIC REALM

Kalamazoo has uniquely strong commercial corridors. The mall on Burdick Street, also known as the Kalamazoo Mall in its downtown blocks, was the first pedestrian mall in the United States, and has remained an active public space since that time. The historic Haymarket District, which extends from E. Michigan Avenue to the east, is rich in fabric buildings and offers a diverse range of shops and dining options. The city has other, less-intact corridors as well, all of which are kept activated and vibrant by ground floor storefronts.

The design of a storefront operates at two levels: an underlying basic form, and variations from shop to shop within the unique architectural language of the city. Each storefront is an exciting opportunity to communicate the unique personality of a business, while being part of something greater and contributing to the overall public realm.

A separate Storefront Guide acts as an accompanying document to this report, with a breakdown of storefront forms and how-to for composing and decorating storefronts. The guide presents a decision tree for designing a storefront from scratch, as well as typical dimensioned templates, precedent analyses, and design principles. These tips are applicable both to ground floor retail in new development and to the renovation of historic storefronts.

KEY FINDINGS

1

Mixed-use storefronts have several standard forms
Historic storefronts, though widely varied, exist within a set of standard forms, which can act as an underlying template.

2

Kalamazoo has a strong existing retail character
Kalamazoo shops are well-designed and well-visited, especially along the Kalamazoo Mall and in the Haymarket District. All shops vary, but contribute to an overall character.

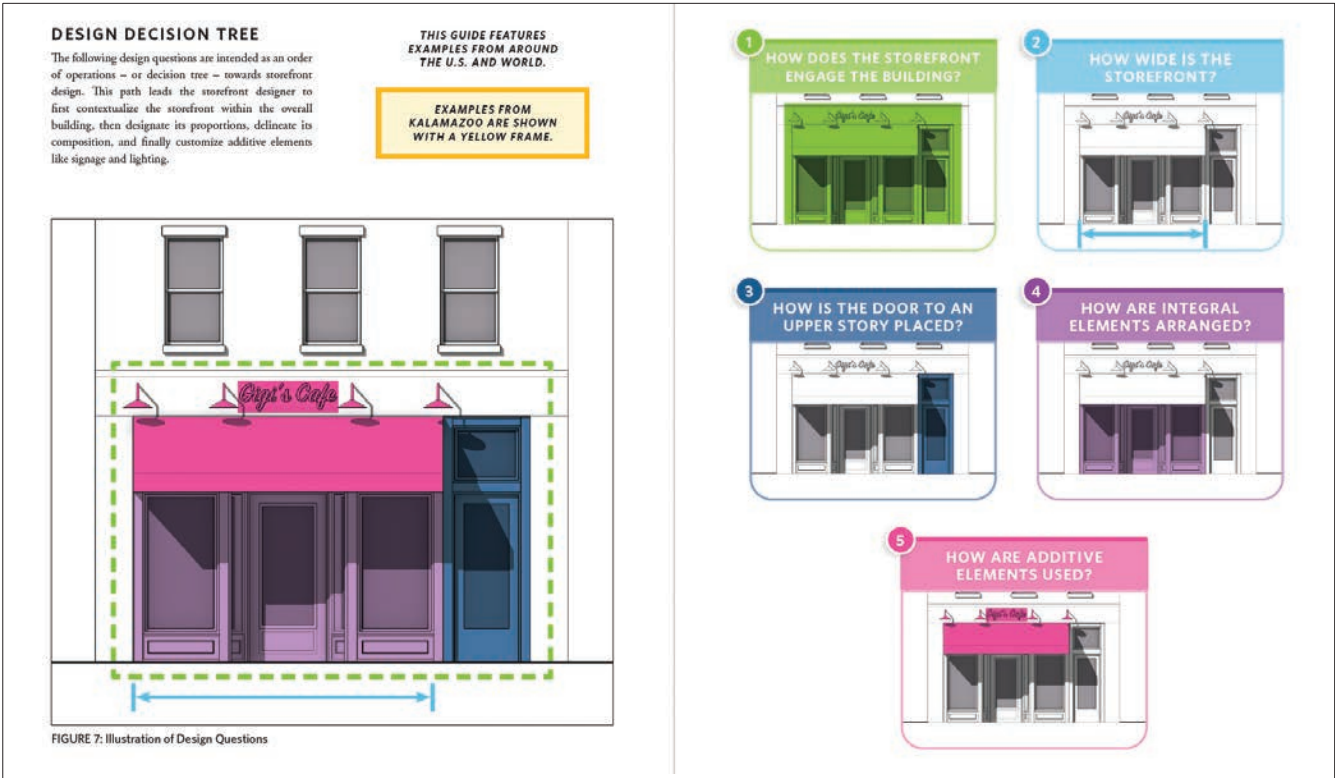
RECOMMENDATIONS

1

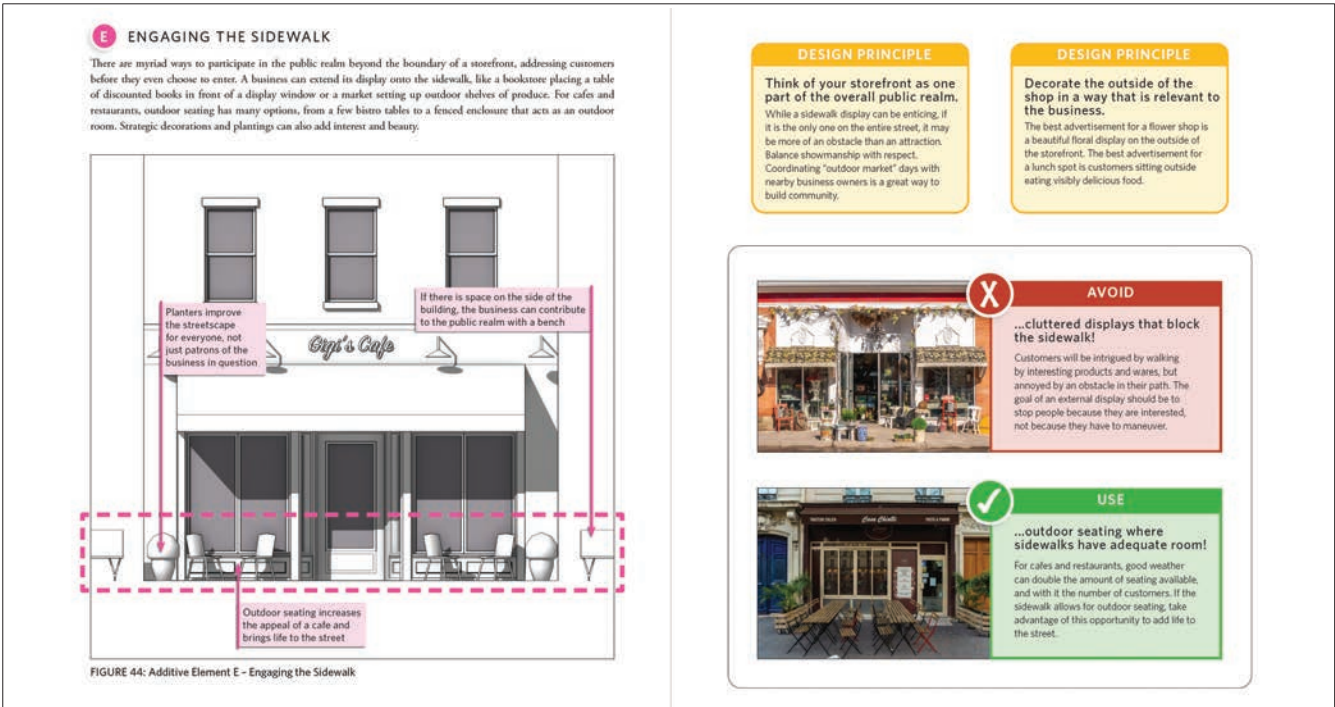
Identify and quantify storefront forms and elements
Study standard forms for mixed-use storefronts, identify their key elements, and define specific guidance for successful execution of the form.

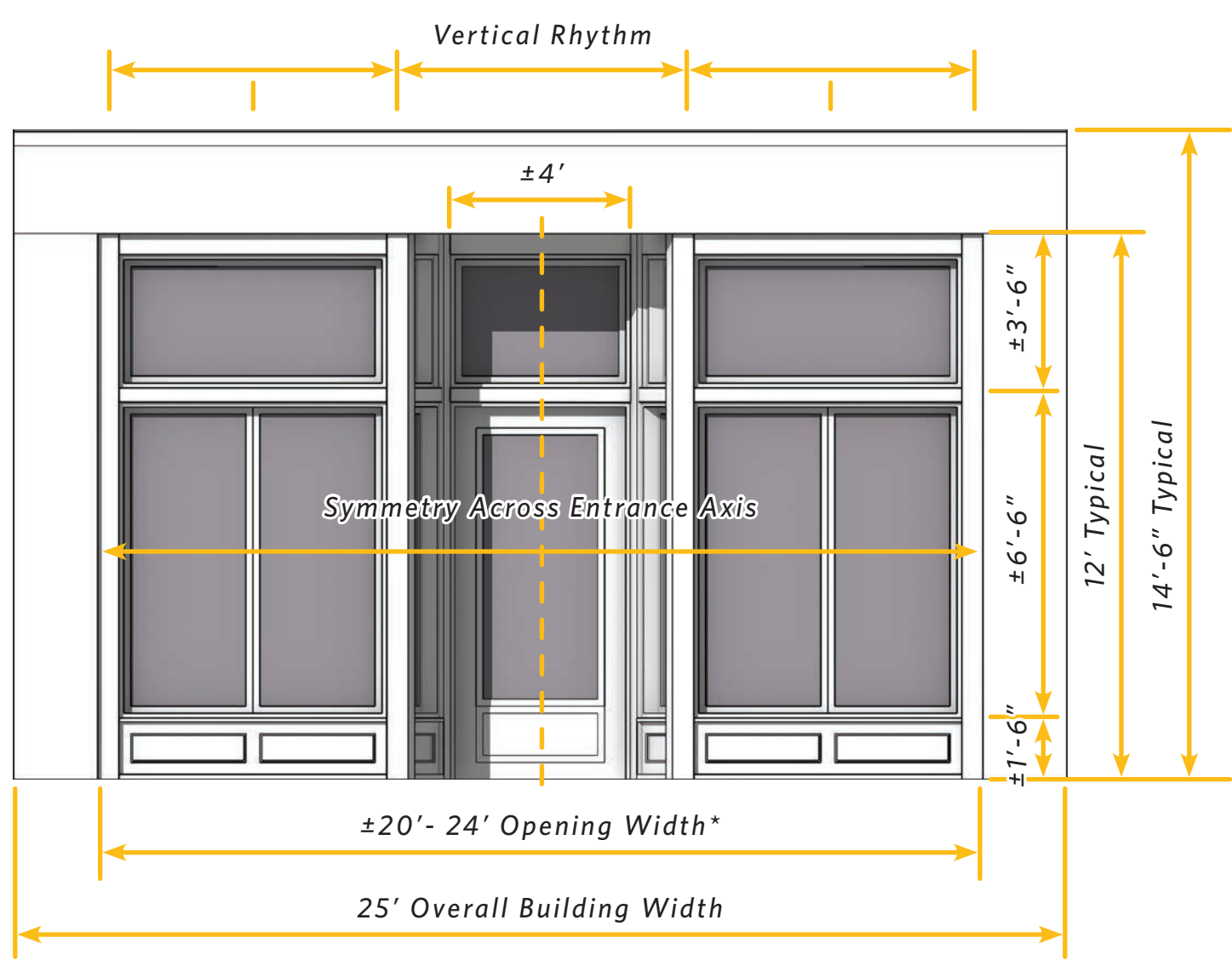
2

Design new storefronts within the area's character
Use existing signage, materials, colors, and ornament as inspiration for a storefront that will contribute to the overall commercial character of the area.

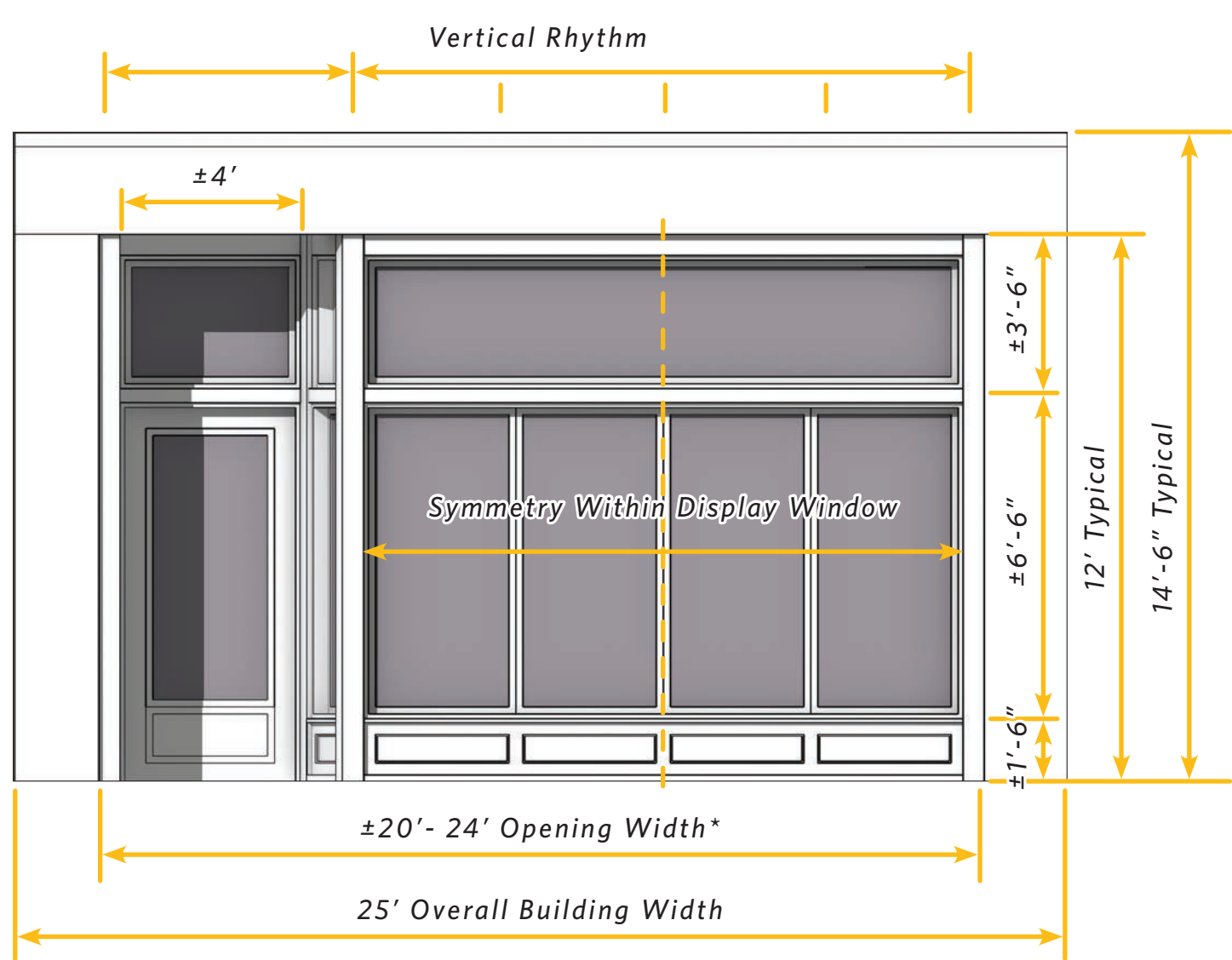


Design Decision Tree Overview Spread





Storefront with Central Entrance



Storefront with Off-Center Entrance

FIGURE 103: Examples of Storefront Design Details Based on Local Precedents
Storefront design configurations are limitless but draw from a basic kit-of-parts: low panel or base, display windows, door – often recessed – transom windows above, and mullions or frame between glass panels. 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 where people walk.

STEP 5: APPLY BUILDING TYPES TO THE CORRECT SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

Though the preceding pages have focused primarily on mixed-use fabric buildings, a range of types is necessary to respond to different scales of development across the city. Streets and blocks have different roles in this: while streets tend to mirror scale, bringing a similar frame to either side of the corridor, blocks can be used to transition from one scale to another. The blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street are prime examples, as illustrated in the section below (Figure 104).

Because this set of blocks sits among so many different scales and uses of building, proposed structures must be highly conscientious and contextual. Despite the pressure to develop tall, high-density buildings, new development has the potential to instead respect the scale of both its existing neighbors and the historic scale of the area. Commercial, mixed-use, and residential buildings alike have a responsibility to sit within their context rather than looming over it.

The network of blocks surrounding W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street represents two simultaneous shift in scale and density: from north to south, and again from west to east. Academy Street is the northern boundary of the Vine neighborhood, characterized by

historic two- and three-story detached homes. W. Michigan Avenue, one street north, will become a high-density, larger-scale, commercial corridor. One more block north, Water Street is the southern boundary of the anticipated Kalamazoo Event Center, which denotes a rapid increase in scale. Moving west-to-east along W. Michigan Avenue or Academy Street is a similar but more gradual transition, with scale and density increasing with proximity to the civic core of the city.

The proposal adapts to all of these shifts in type, scale, density, and use. Infill in the southern residential blocks respects the massing already typical of those blocks, but adapts to the emerging neighborhood trend of multi-unit rentals by introducing various Missing Middle housing types. From Academy Street to W. Michigan Avenue, these blocks transition from Missing Middle housing to three- and four-story mixed use buildings that form a street wall, mediated by lower-rise building wings at the middle of the block. From west to east, each street accelerates as it approaches the downtown core: the residential axis of Academy Street and commercial axis of W. Michigan Avenue increase in density and scale.

1

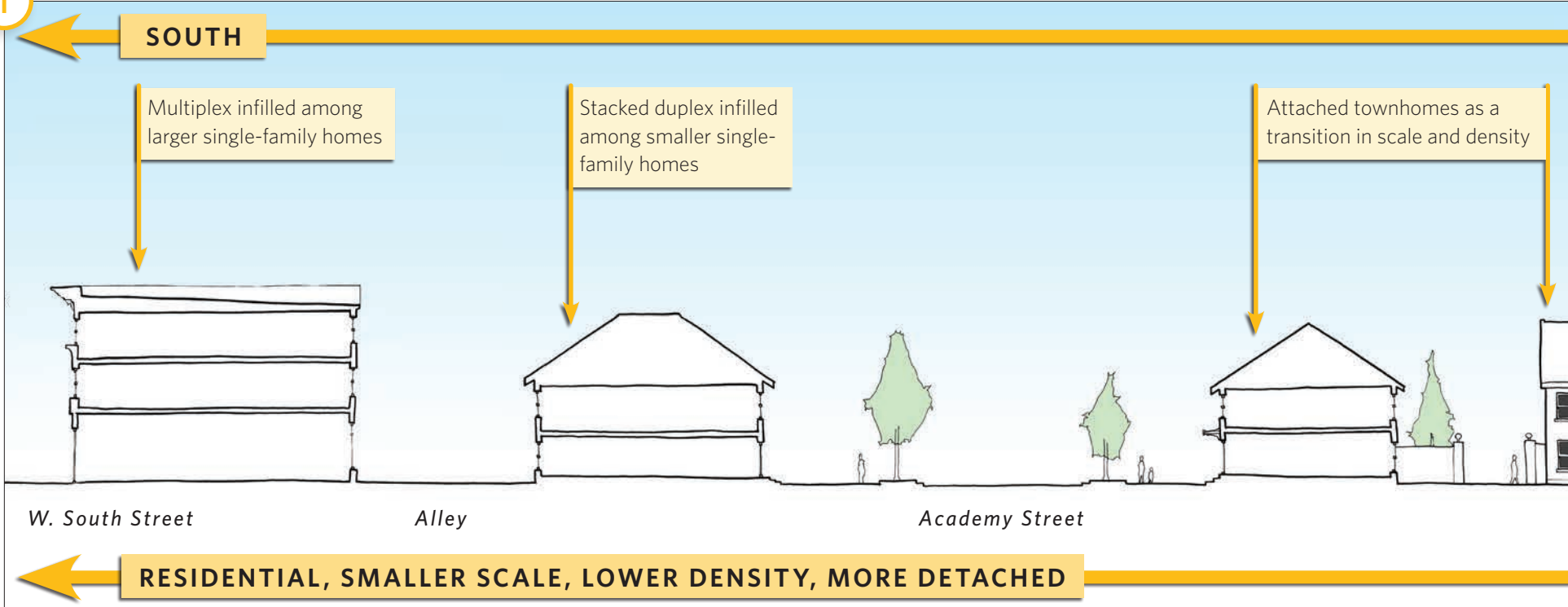


FIGURE 104: Street Section from South Street to W. Michigan Avenue, Facing West

New growth transitions from the smaller, lower-density residential character of Academy Street into a larger, higher-density character along W. Michigan Avenue.

2

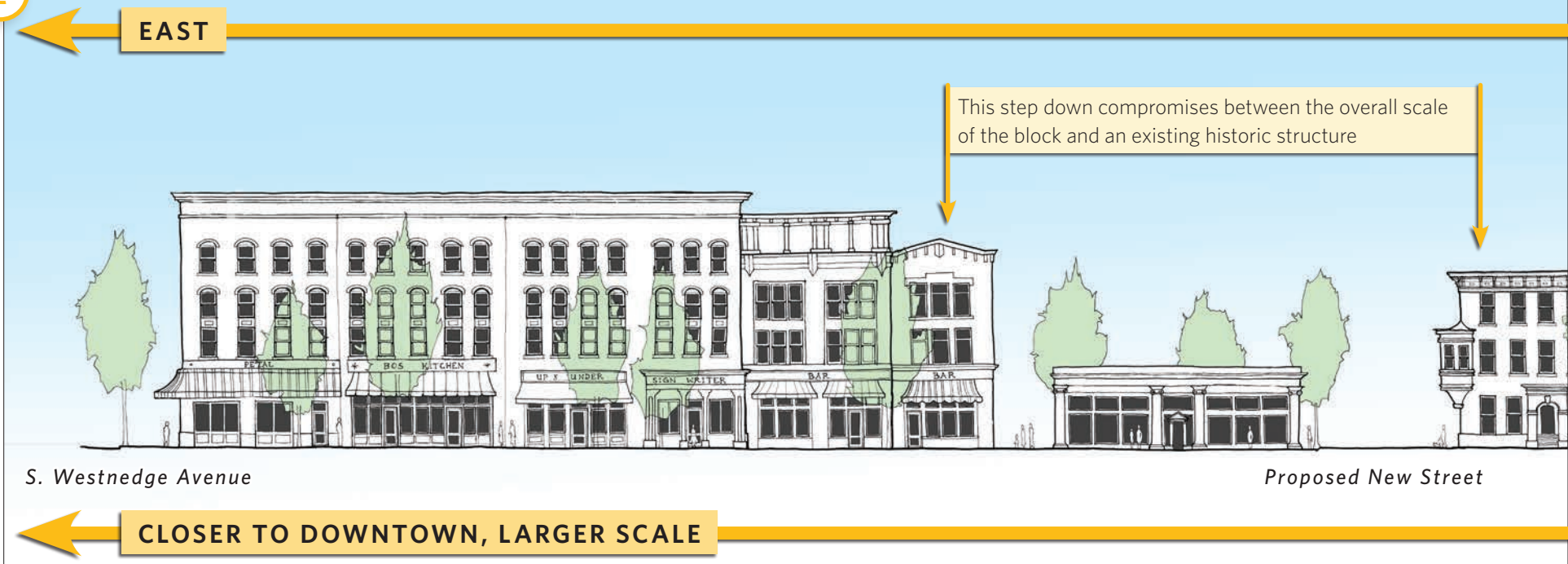


FIGURE 105: Street Elevation along W. Michigan Avenue, Facing South

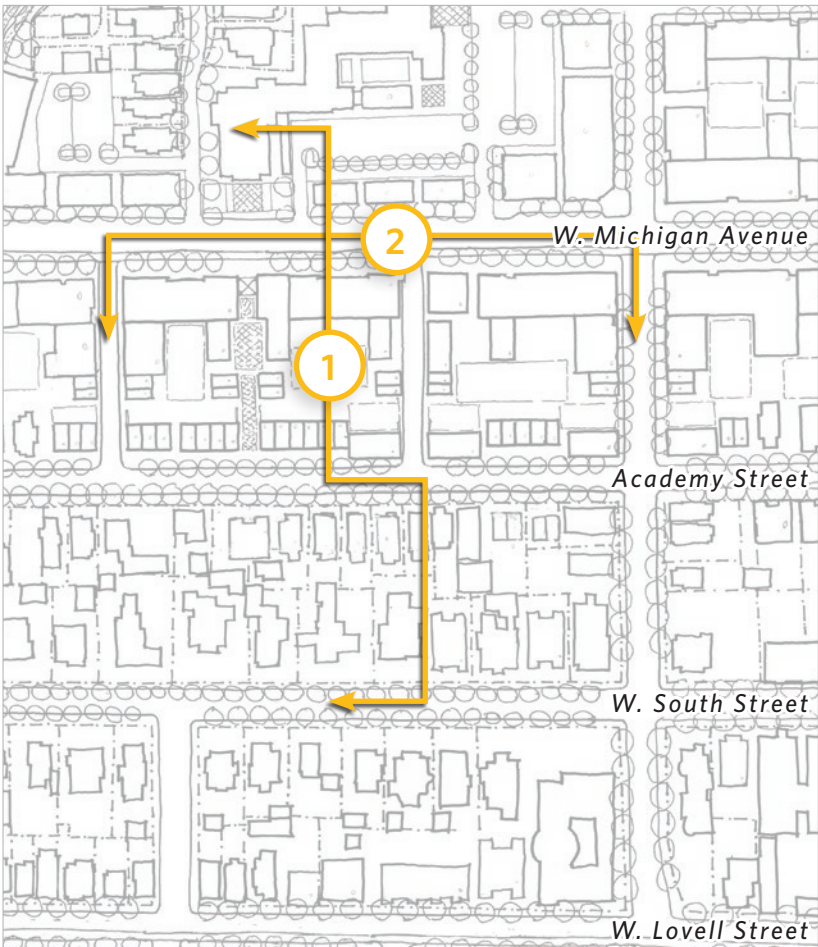
Residential apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings coexist at a shared scale and density, which shifts slightly as the blocks get closer to downtown.

KEY FINDINGS

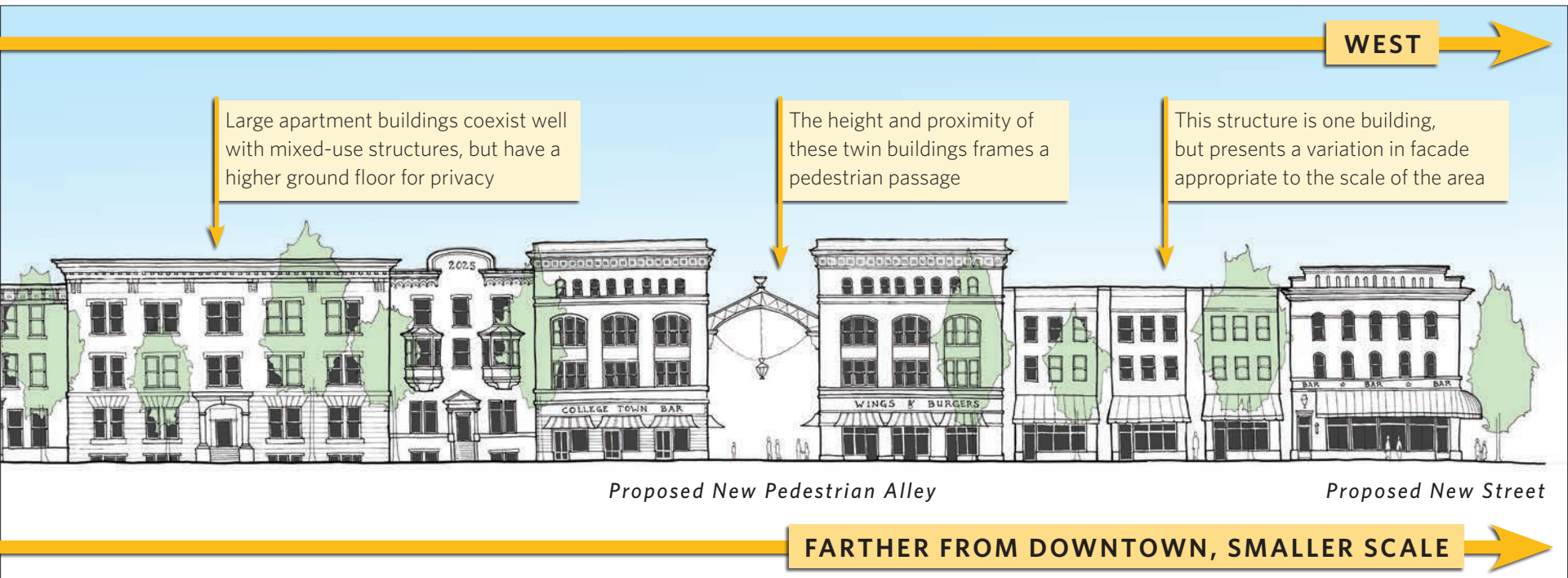
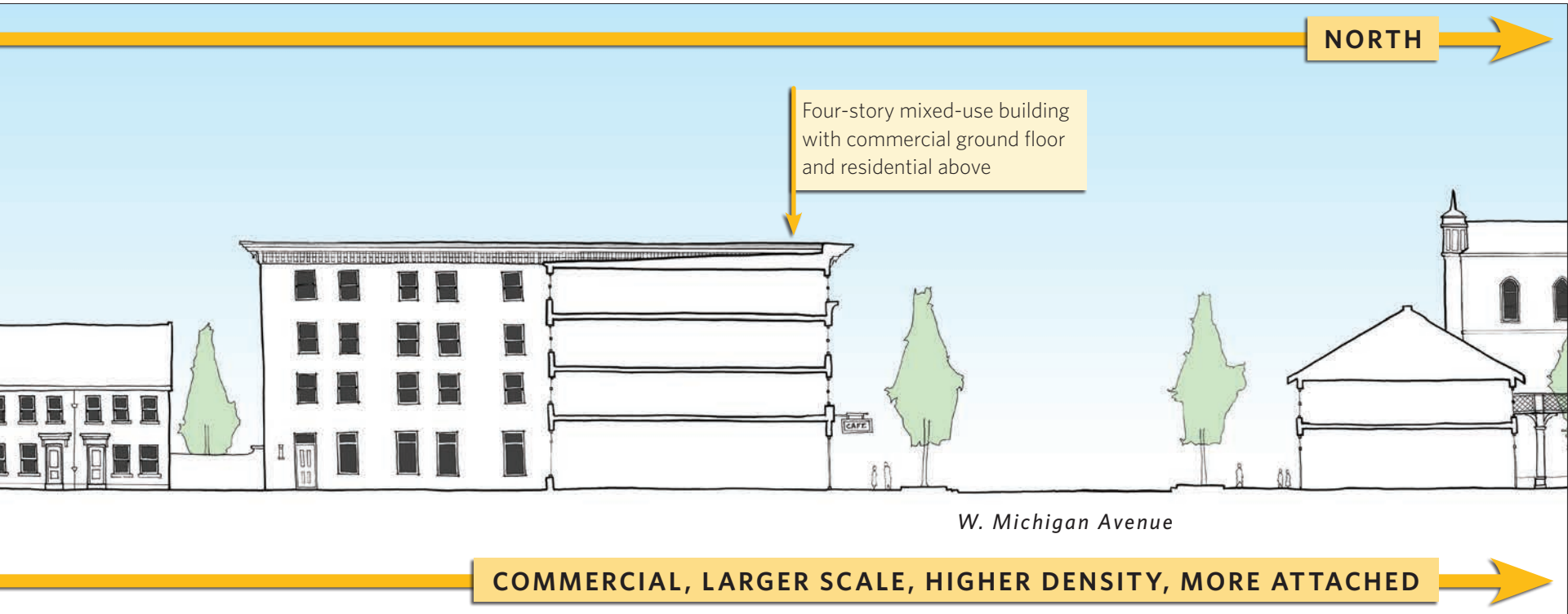
- 1 Blocks show historic patterns of scale and type**
Kalamazoo's downtown blocks incorporate different scales and types based on where they are located within the overall city.
- 2 Blocks mediate changes in scale and density**
The blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street mediate the transition from a commercial north side to a residential south side.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Reinforce historic patterns while adapting to market needs**
Historic downtown provides cues for scale, density, and form, but was restricted to the area east of Westnedge Avenue; to support Kalamazoo's growth, downtown types and higher density should expand to the west along W. Michigan Avenue.
- 2 Use different building types that fit the scale of development**
Mixed-use buildings or larger apartments are a better fit for more active, commercial corridors, while Missing Middle types or single-family homes are a better fit for residential streets.



Location Map



PROPOSED BUILDING TYPES OVERVIEW

Kalamazoo currently boasts a range of housing options, from large single-family homes to multi-unit apartment buildings. Currently, demand is high for multi-unit buildings and student housing. This collection of proposed building types works within the existing language of scale and density in three categories:

- 1. *Large Apartment & Mixed-Use:* These taller buildings are calibrated to the W. Michigan Avenue commercial corridor, and offer either a fully-residential option or units above a commercial ground floor. The type respects Kalamazoo’s historic mixed-use buildings by incorporating an appropriate scale and character.
- 2. *Missing Middle Housing:* The duplex, four-plex, six-plex, and townhomes provided here are all examples of “Missing Middle” housing, a category between single-family and large apartment buildings that already have a presence in Kalamazoo. Within the study area, these Missing Middle types are proposed both as infill between existing residential buildings and as a part of the new blocks along W. Michigan Avenue.
- 3. *Student Flats:* The student flat type responds to the demand for student housing near local colleges, and provides the option for a commercial ground floor to bring student life directly into the overall experience of the city.

These categories calibrate to specific zones of the city, with respect to existing use, scale, density, and form, but with flexibility and overlap. While dormitories are more particularly adjacent to Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College in the “Spaghetti Bowl” area, the transition from Missing Middle infill to larger-scale mixed-use buildings reinforces the existing shift in scale from residential Academy Street to the W. Michigan Avenue commercial corridor.

KEY FINDINGS

1 **Kalamazoo has a range of housing types and scales**
Kalamazoo’s housing stock includes many single-family homes, duplexes, multiplexes, and larger apartment buildings. Closer to downtown, the city has historic mixed-use buildings as well.

2 **There is demand for multi-unit and student housing**
Recently, many single-family homes have been split into multiple units to satisfy demand for rental units. Many of these renters are students of West Michigan University or Kalamazoo College.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 **Calibrate new types to existing scale and character**
All new types, from duplex to mixed-use, should support existing streetscapes. Missing Middle housing can take respectful advantage of infill opportunities, and larger buildings can take cues from existing historic structures on commercial streets.

2 **Propose a range of multi-unit and dorm buildings**
Offering a variety of rental housing options is welcoming to all income levels, including student renters.

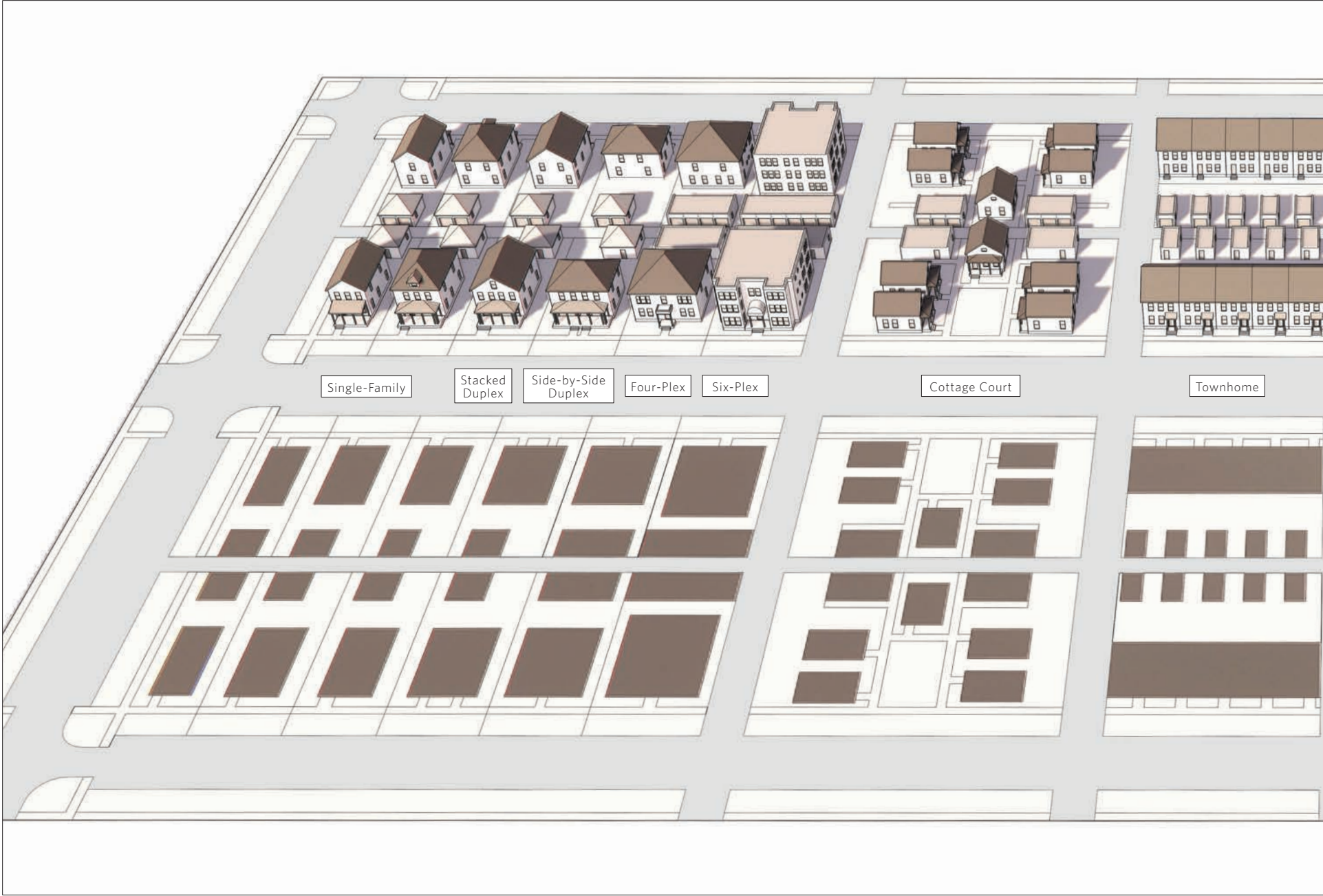
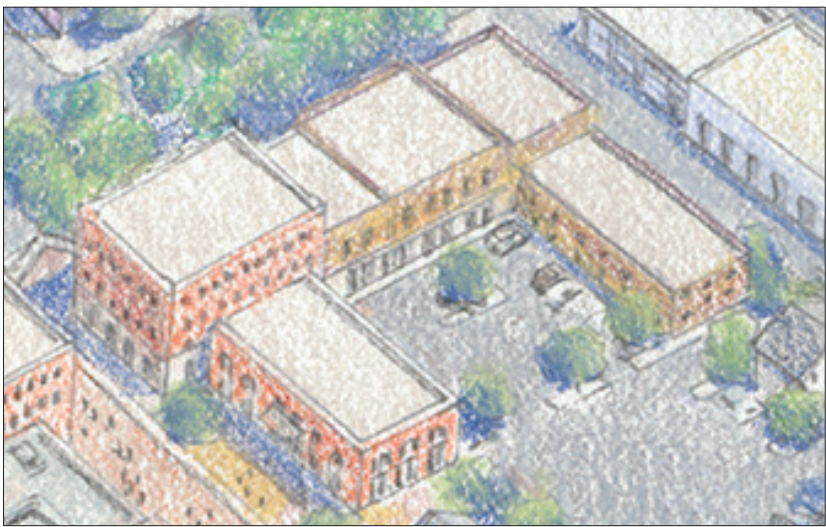


FIGURE 106: Scale & Density Diagram
The range of building types, from lowest to highest density, can be conceived as a spectrum overlaid on the form and density spectrum of a city.



Proposed character for the Student Flats type



Proposed character for the Large Apartment and Large Mixed-Use types

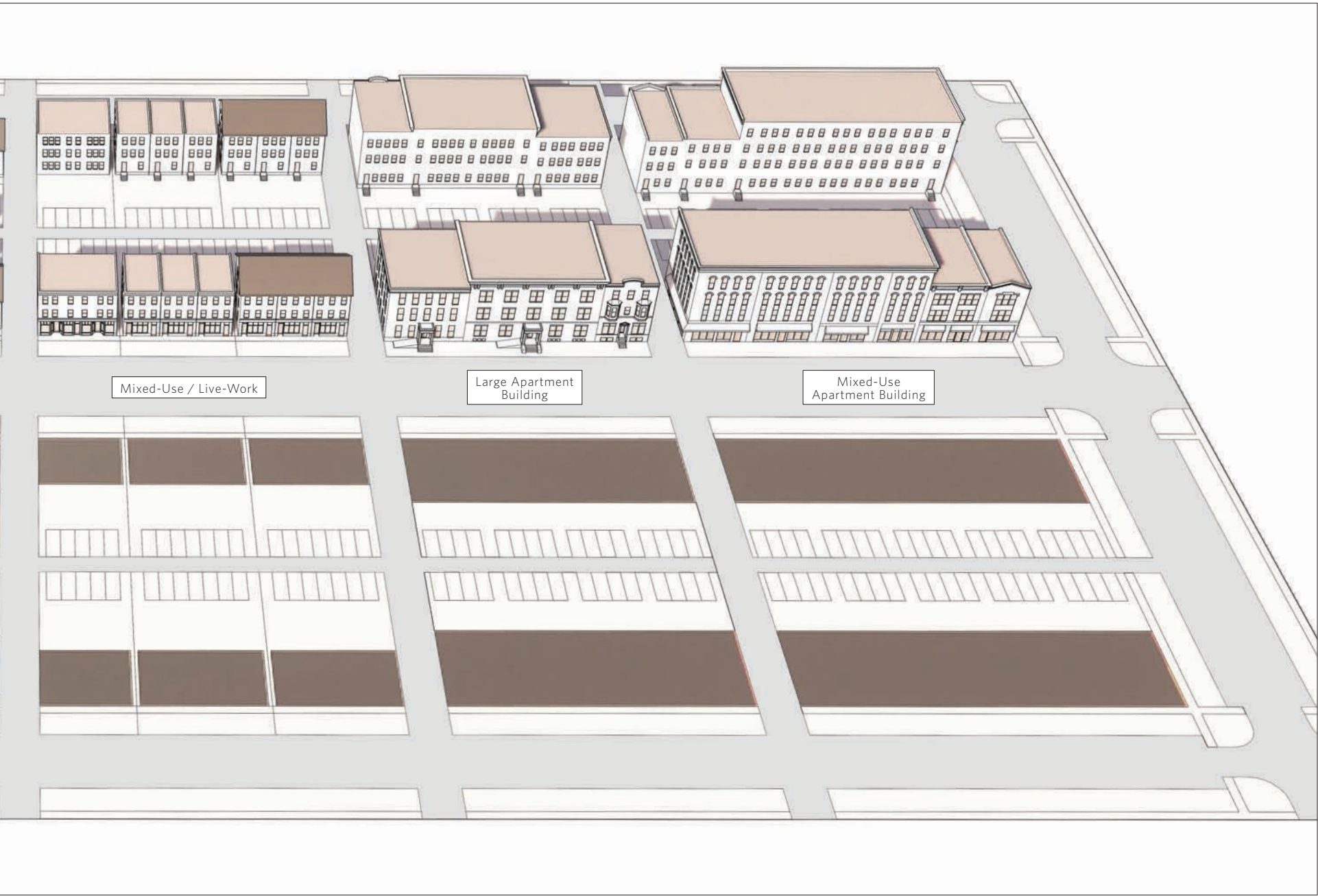


Proposed character for the Six-Plex type



Proposed character for the Townhome type

FIGURE 107: Aerial Highlights of Proposed Buildings



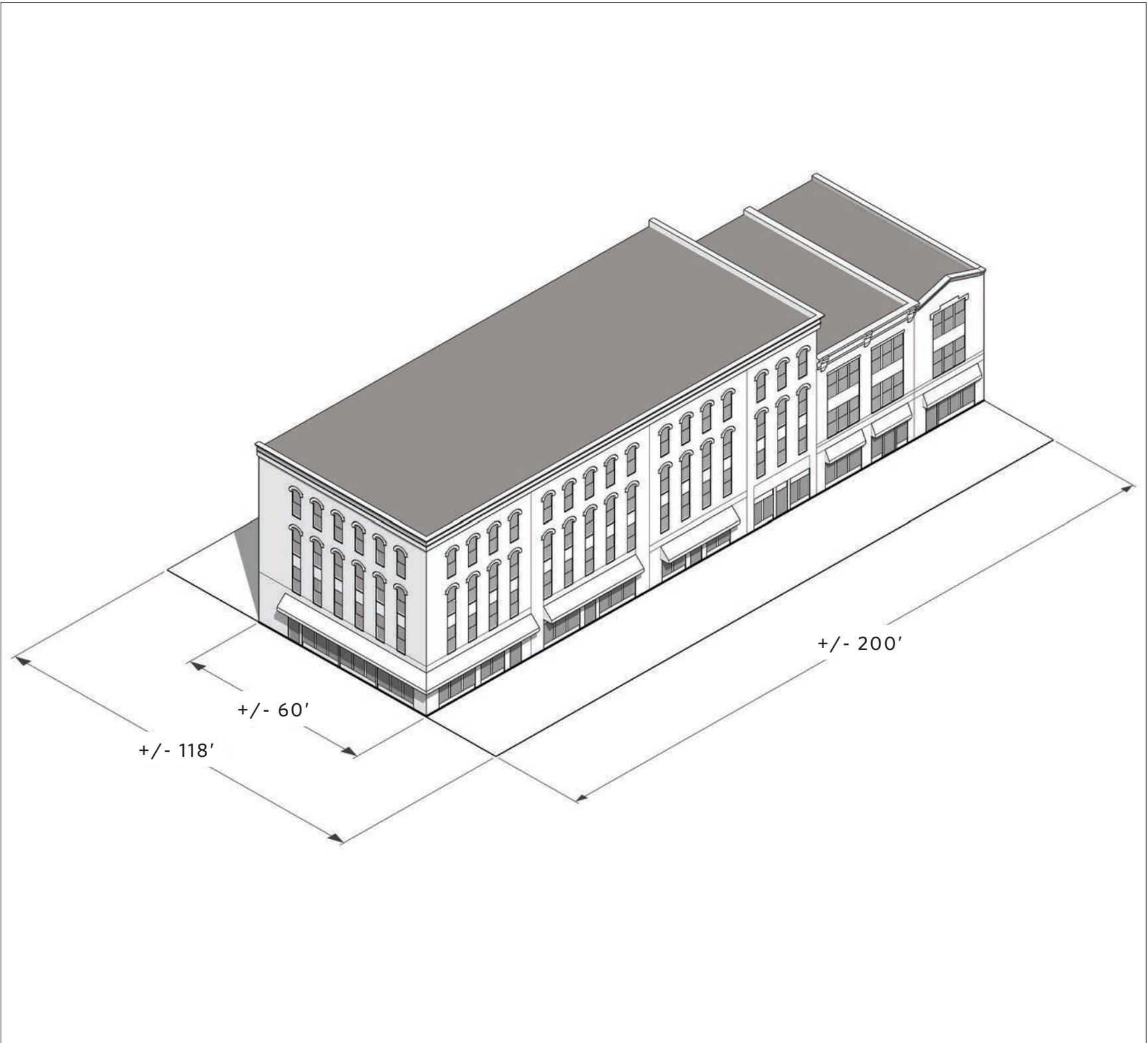


FIGURE 108: Mixed-Use Apartment Building
A double-loaded-corridor building with a commercial ground floor and two to three upper stories of residential units.



A row of historic mixed-use Haymarket District buildings



The Prange Building on Rose Street



A row of historic mixed-use buildings on Burdick Street



A row of historic mixed-use buildings on Pitcher Street

MIXED-USE APARTMENT BUILDING

The mixed-use apartment building represents the largest scale and density within this set of building types, and will primarily line W. Michigan Avenue, framing a commercial corridor that leads to the core of the city.

The above graphic acts as an example of how a mixed-use apartment building could be generated for a Kalamazoo main street from a kit of parts: cornice or parapet options, window arrangements, and storefront setups. Like the Large Apartment Building (Figure 109), this type creates the appearance of several buildings within one mass, to more closely evoke the narrower mixed-use buildings of historic Kalamazoo.

As elaborated in the principles of block repair, less is more when it comes to a fabric building. Instead of standing out from the crowd, these buildings have a responsibility to the streetscape as a whole. The above examples exemplify a balance between the distinct character of each building and the overall character of the public realm.

Mixed-use buildings have a commercial ground floor. Occupancy of this level can vary widely in both scale and use, from multi-storefront retail to single-bay shops, groceries to bookstores to restaurants. For more specific recommendations, please consult the storefront guide that accompanies this report (see page 76).

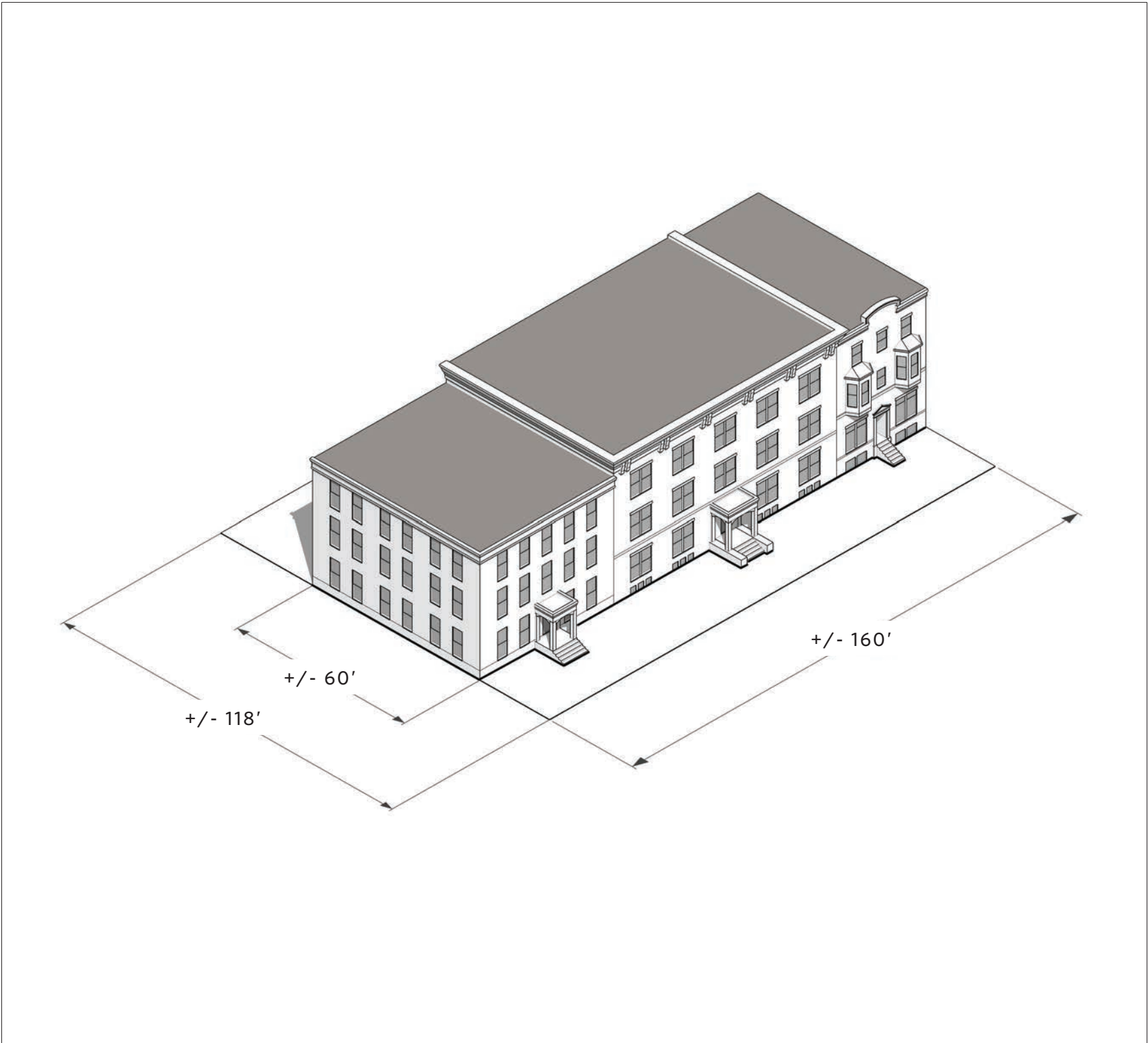


FIGURE 109: Large Apartment Building

A double-loaded-corridor building with three to four stories of residential units, and a shared entry.



Kalamazoo's Marlborough Apartments on South Street



The Adelheid Apartments on Academy Street



A three-story apartment building on Academy Street

LARGE APARTMENT BUILDING

Along with the mixed-use building opposite, the large apartment building represents the maximum scale and density within this set of proposed types. This building is designed to continue a downtown street edge without providing a commercial ground floor. Due to their likely placement along active corridors, the residential units on the ground floor of these buildings must be designed to provide adequate privacy for residents: raise the ground floor above grade, and add planters to keep pedestrians away from windows. Planters can also be used to hide ramps.

As shown above, the appearance of several buildings can be created within one structure by varying facade elements: the parapet or cornice, window arrangement, entry, presence of bays, and so on. The use of all of these

elements is inspired by Kalamazoo's historic downtown buildings. Brick parapets, tall punched openings, and bracketed cornices are all examples of features particular to Kalamazoo.

While building depth is consistent to keep unit plans the same, width can vary heavily by the needs of the block. In response to the overlong blocks between W. Michigan Avenue and Academy Street, however, north-south streets or pedestrian passages are recommended to break up the street wall. There are opportunities to add lower-rise wings to the rear of the building to transition into a lower-scale area. With the number of occupants likely for this building type, it is encouraged to frame parking courts at the center of the block.

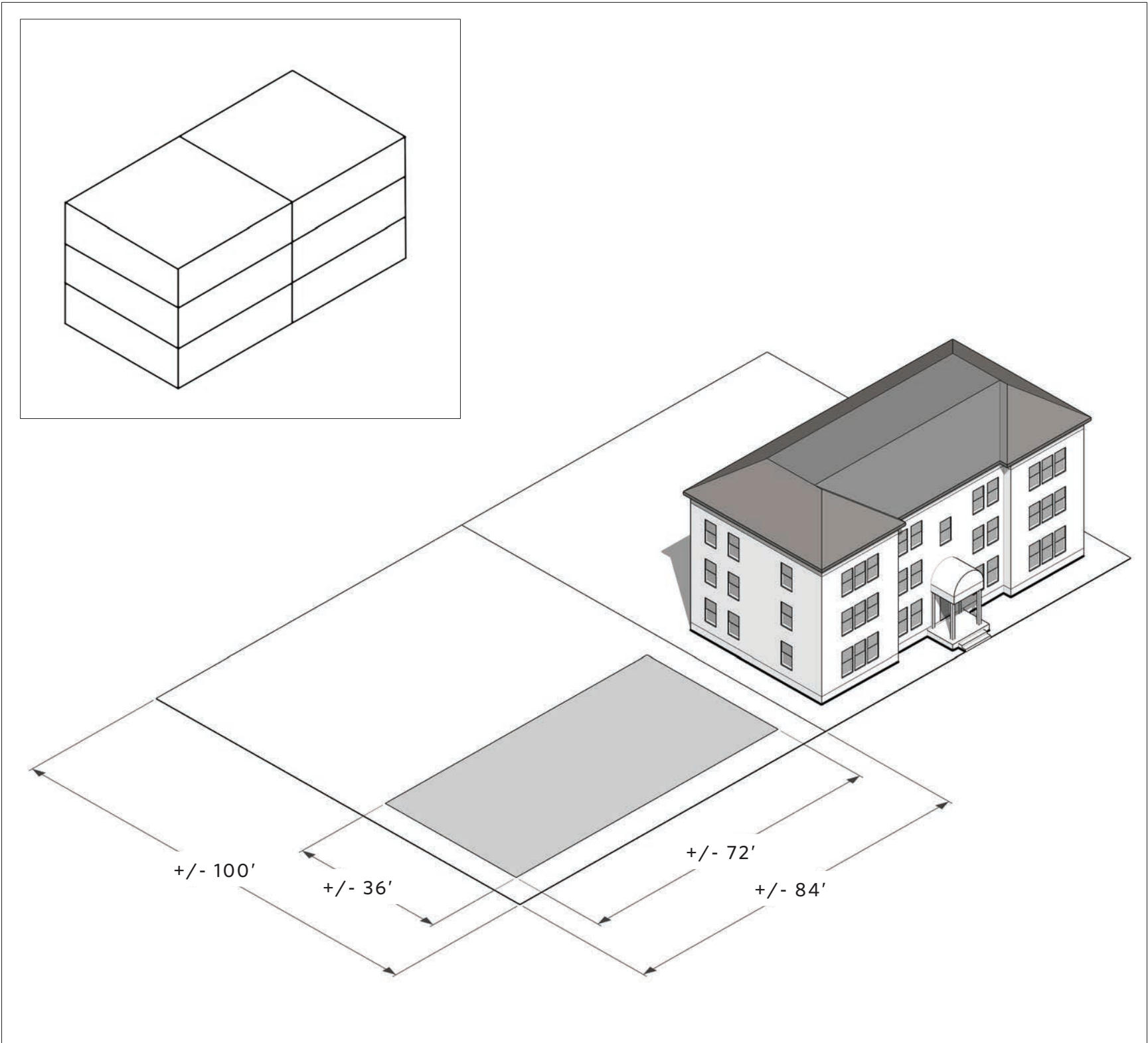


FIGURE 110: Student Flats
A flexible multi-unit type which can change mass or height depending on the context.



Dewing Hall, Kalamazoo College



Bay of Hoben Hall, Kalamazoo College



Front of Hoben Hall, Kalamazoo College

STUDENT FLATS

These flats are similar to the multi-plex types on the opposite page, but cater more particularly to the student population of Kalamazoo. Student renters are common in neighborhoods near downtown, and local landlords have responded by splitting up historic, large-scale, single-family homes into multiple smaller units.

This type has the potential to adapt to a dorm configuration, with common spaces such as kitchens and living rooms, but individual bedrooms. This structure provides several benefits: shared responsibilities for shared spaces, security, a sense of community, and lower rent for a bedroom rather than a full solo unit. If dormitories do not represent the market need for these buildings, they can be reimaged as apartments.

The version of this type shown above fits the footprint of the walkup apartment buildings proposed for Academy Street closer to downtown, in the Michigan-Academy District. The type is also adaptable to other study areas, however, and its width and height can adjust, particularly to satisfy the proposal for new dormitories in the “Spaghetti Bowl” area. Architecturally, the form is inspired by the historic dormitory buildings of Kalamazoo College.

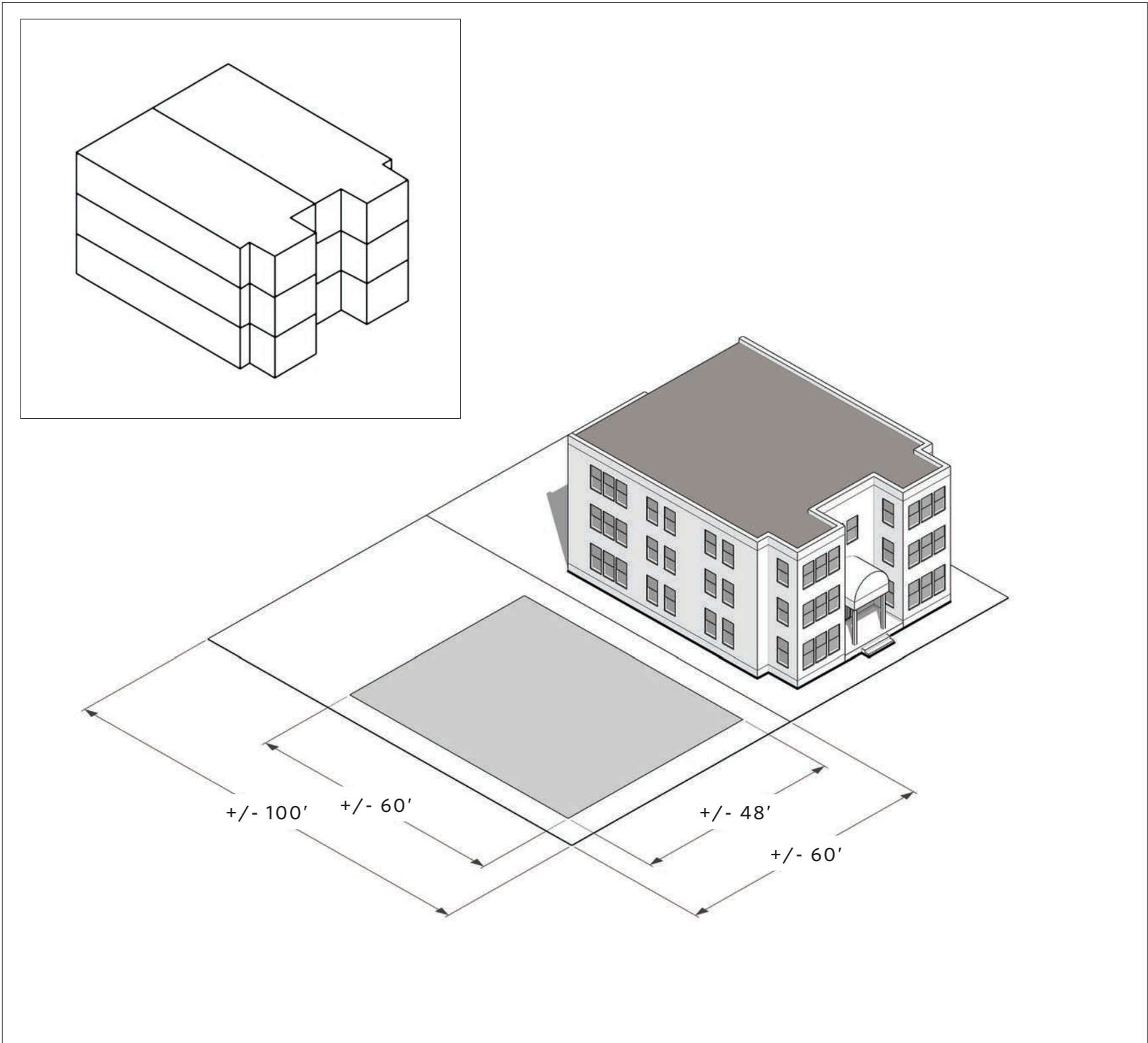


FIGURE 111: Six-Plex
A medium-sized structure with between four and six dwelling units, typically with a shared entry.



Existing Kalamazoo four-plex in the Michigan-Academy District



Kalamazoo multi-plex at the corner of Cedar Street and Rose Street



Kalamazoo multi-plex at the corner of Westnedge Avenue and Walnut Street

MULTI-PLEX: FOUR-PLEX & SIX-PLEX

The multi-plex, though present in Kalamazoo, is not prevalent. The city has few four-plex and six-plexes, which provide a modestly-scaled middle ground between duplexes and apartment buildings. The type can feel like a large single-family home and fit into a residential setting, or take on a more urban feel, which helps to transition between denser mixed-use areas and residential neighborhoods.

The number of units will vary, as will the scale of the buildings. Because multi-plexes with more units, such as the six-plex depicted above, read less like a large home than a four-plex, they can act as a transition type between single-family or medium-density neighborhoods to larger apartment buildings.

Modest multi-family buildings are also an option for small developers looking to occupy the building as an owner/tenant. This type requires less capital than a larger building, which can quickly convert into rental income, bringing investment into the Michigan-Academy district and other areas of the city. As with the rest of Missing Middle housing, these stacked units use the land more efficiently and increase density in a context where the alternative would most likely house just one family.

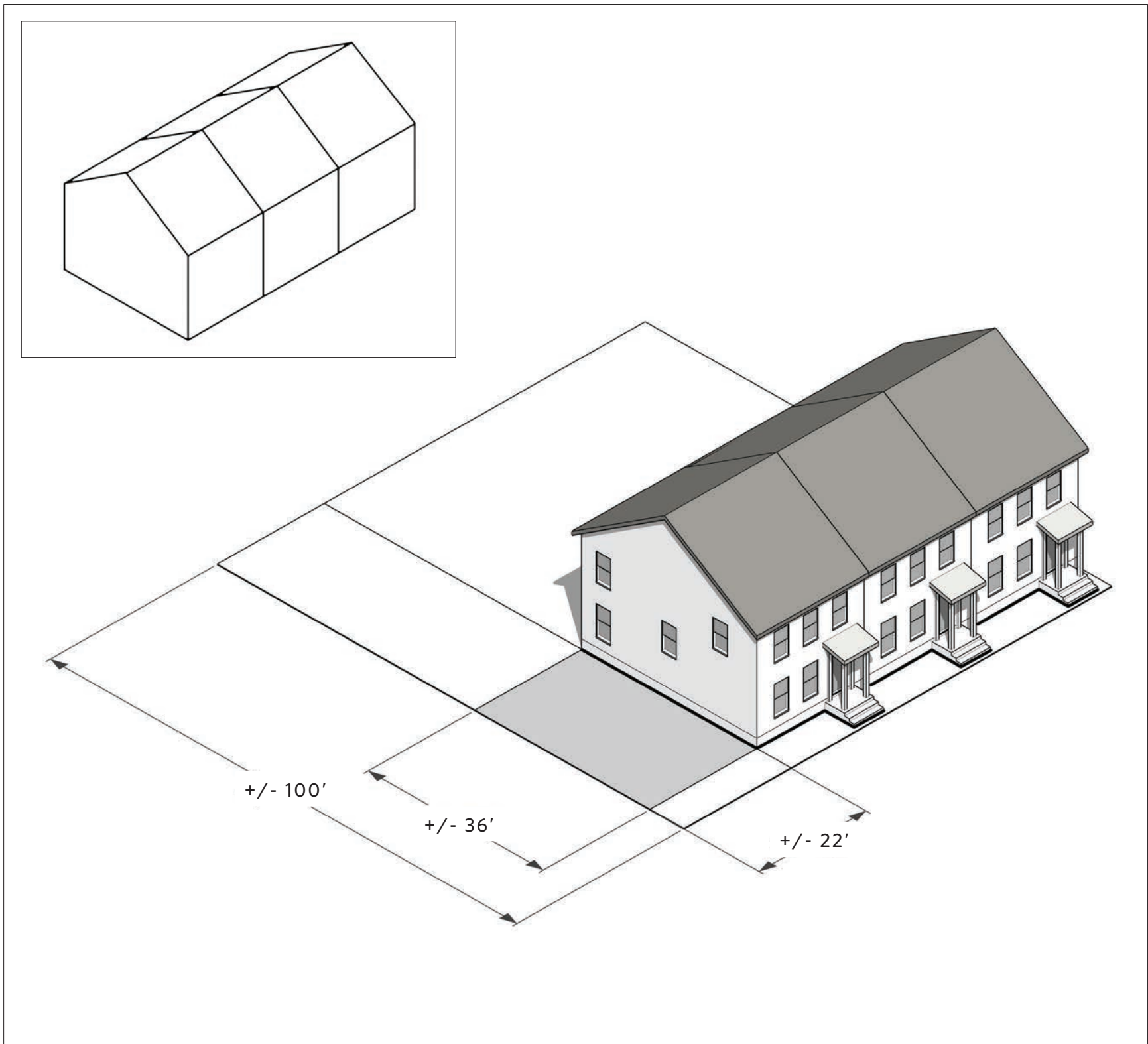


FIGURE 112: Townhome
A two-story, attached unit found in rows of varying numbers.



A row of townhomes on Vine Street



A row of Chicago townhomes with mirrored plans



A row of townhomes in South Bend

TOWNHOME

Townhomes are units with shared walls and are generally two or three stories tall. They are typically fee simple properties with individual owners that are governed by an HOA agreement. Though townhomes are a less common type in Kalamazoo, and particularly within the area of study, they nevertheless provide a strong option between homeownership and higher-density urban living. The type is highly efficient, and can range from entry-level to high-end.

Townhomes attract residents interested in the advantages of a multi-story home, such as a private door off the street and small yard, with added benefits of shared maintenance and a sense of security.

A townhome is particularly appealing to a student renter, as a lower-responsibility model of renting a house. The multi-bedroom unit is flexible to a variety of living arrangements including different configurations of roommates.

Townhomes are typically long and narrow. Townhome plans depend on deep rooms to draw light into the unit, because with the exception of the end unit, there are no side windows. This is achieved by keeping bathrooms and circulation in the center of the plan, and habitable rooms on the exterior walls.

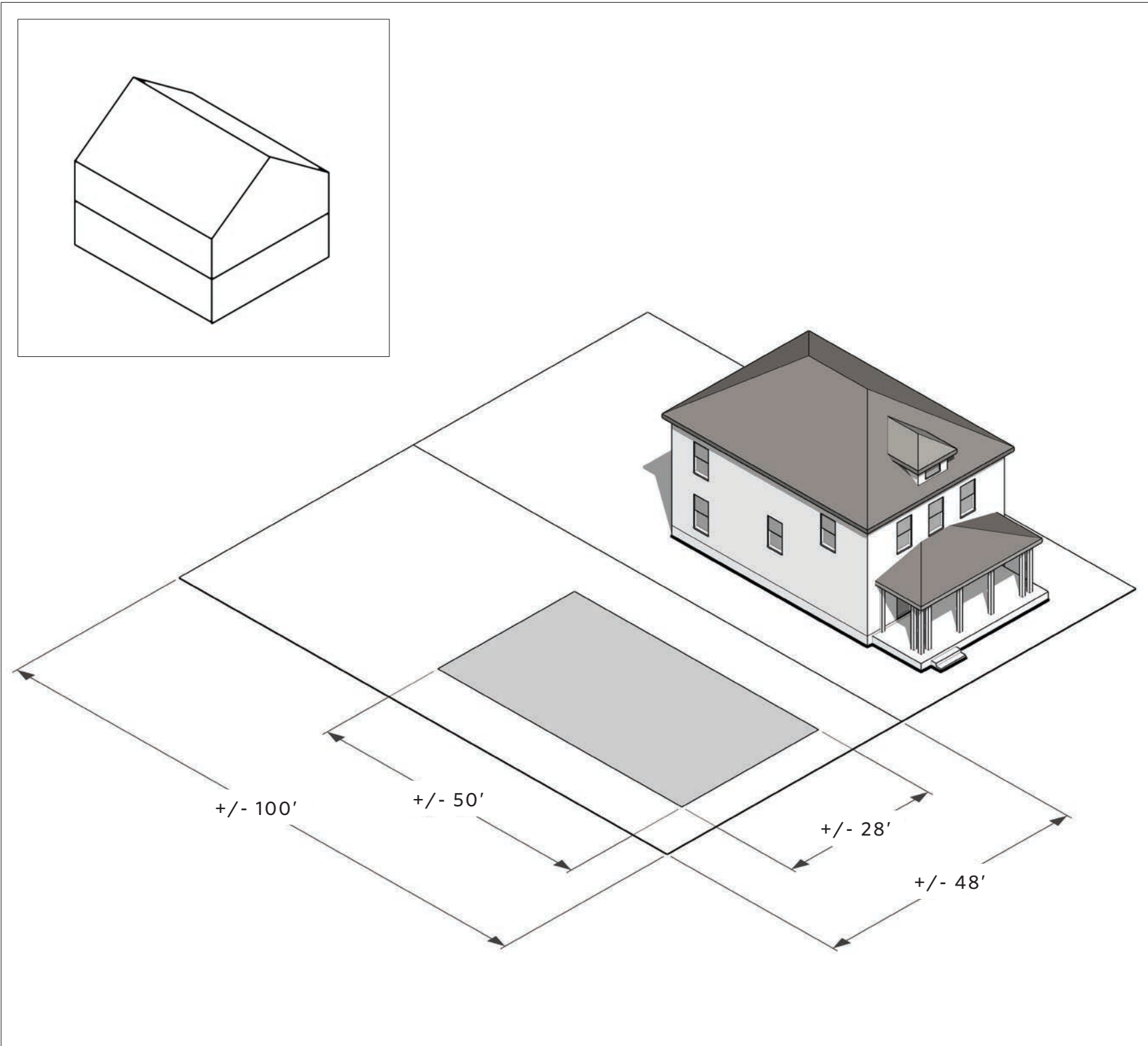


FIGURE 113: Stacked Duplex
A detached building with two units, arranged one on top of the other.



Existing Kalamazoo Duplex in the St. Augustine Cathedral Block



Existing Kalamazoo Duplex in the Vine Historic District



Existing Kalamazoo Duplex in the Michigan-Academy District



Existing Kalamazoo Duplex in the Michigan-Academy District

DUPLEX

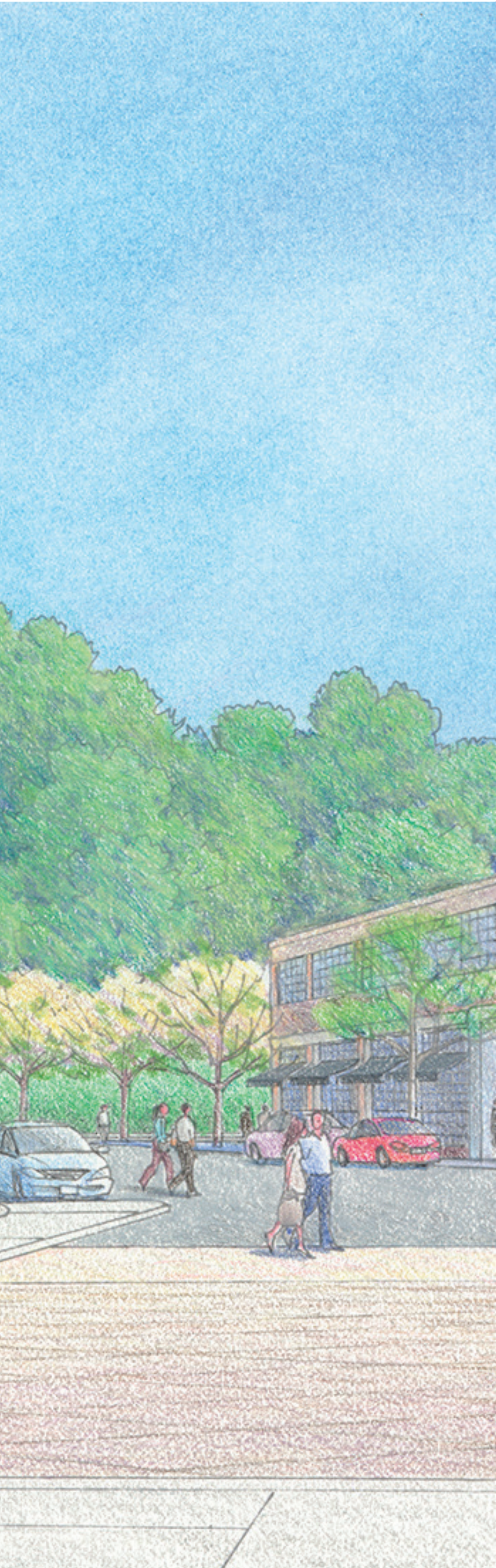
Kalamazoo has a number of historic duplexes, with a wide range of architectural character. The model provided here represents a stacked duplex, with one ground-floor unit and one above. The side-by-side duplex is another version of this type, with mirrored two-story units. Duplexes can have many configurations and articulations.

With rising demands for student housing in the study area, many historic Kalamazoo homes have been converted to duplexes. When done well, this can bring a wide range of residents to a neighborhood by creating naturally affordable units. When done poorly, this split enables absentee landlords to cycle through renters without maintaining a structure.

Despite their prevalence and visual merit, duplexes are an overlooked and underappreciated housing type, which is rarely built new. Beyond this reputation, the type exemplifies seamless integration of Missing Middle housing into a traditional residential neighborhood. Duplexes offer density and affordability, but blend in via both form and scale.

These units provide variety in the market and are suitable for a wide range of potential residents, including older couples looking to downsize from a single-family home to a unit that still has a similar feel, and student roommates who want more space and yard than an apartment can provide. As a pair of units, the type can also take the form of a starter home paired with an investment property, or a multigenerational household.





PART 6:

STREET SECTIONS

STREET SECTIONS OVERVIEW90

STREET SECTIONS 92

STREET SECTIONS OVERVIEW

Streets are the primary component of the public realm. A well-designed street network establishes strong connections between different locations in the city, thus creating a cohesive neighborhood feel. The strength of this network depends on the design of the streets. Successful street designs not only service vehicular traffic, but also welcome pedestrians, creating spaces for people to exercise, dine, shop, and simply enjoy being outdoors. Failure to account for these uses creates an unpleasant experience for pedestrians and is detrimental to the economic success of the community in the long run.

A safe street design provides a buffer between moving vehicles and pedestrians. This buffer is created by placing the sidewalks behind parked cars and street trees. Pedestrians are further protected through corner bump-outs at the sidewalk that reduce the width pedestrians must cross at busy intersections (Figure 115). Reducing the number of lanes and narrowing the remaining lanes will also slow traffic with minimal impact to travel times.

The following pages illustrate existing and proposed street sections throughout the study area. These designs build upon the Streets for All initiative in the City of Kalamazoo. Streets vary in width and design depending on location and hierarchy within the street network, but all are based on the same safe street principles. These proposals correspond to the Kalamazoo Street Design Manual and work within this existing system of types.

The appropriate street trees need to be selected by a professional arborist with consideration for the depth and connectivity of tree roots to ensure that trees can thrive longterm and that sidewalks are not disrupted as they mature. Refer to the 2022 Kalamazoo “Study of Urban Sequences and Activation of the Public Realm” report for an in-depth discussion of incorporating and caring for street trees.

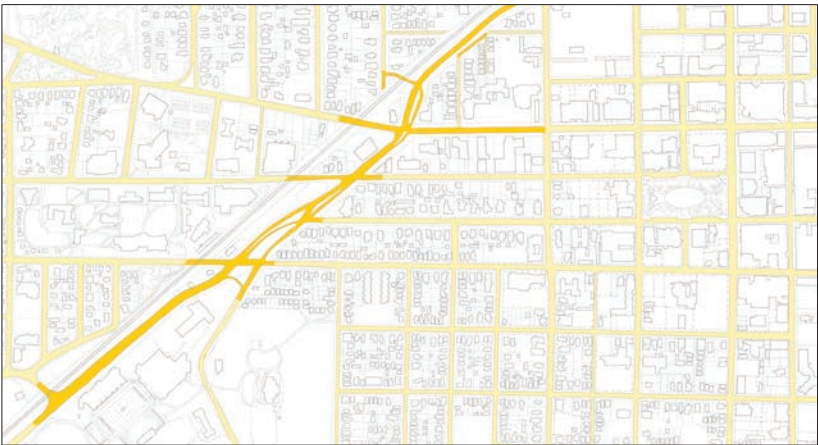


FIGURE 114: Existing Citywide Street Network

KEY FINDING

Safe Streets Require Fewer and Narrower Lanes

Reducing the number and width of lanes will slow traffic enough to make streets safer without causing delays.

RECOMMENDATION

Protect Sidewalks Behind Street Trees and Street Parking

Pedestrian activity and street life flourish when protected from automobiles.

CORNER BUMP-OUTS AT INTERSECTIONS

Before: Intersection without bump-outs.
In this example, drivers are encouraged to drive at higher speeds, and pedestrians have to cross four travel lanes.

After: Intersection with bump-outs (in yellow) with on-street parking.
In this example, drivers are encouraged to slow down at intersections, and pedestrians only need to cross half of the distance. Use only when not in conflict with protected bike lanes.

FIGURE 115: Corner Bump-Outs at Intersections

SAFE STREET PRINCIPLES

Buildings frame the street, engage pedestrians, and create the walls of an outdoor hallway that makes drivers more cautious

Pedestrians are protected by on-street parking and street trees

Traffic is naturally slowed by reducing vehicle travel to one lane in each direction

FIGURE 116: Safe Street Principles

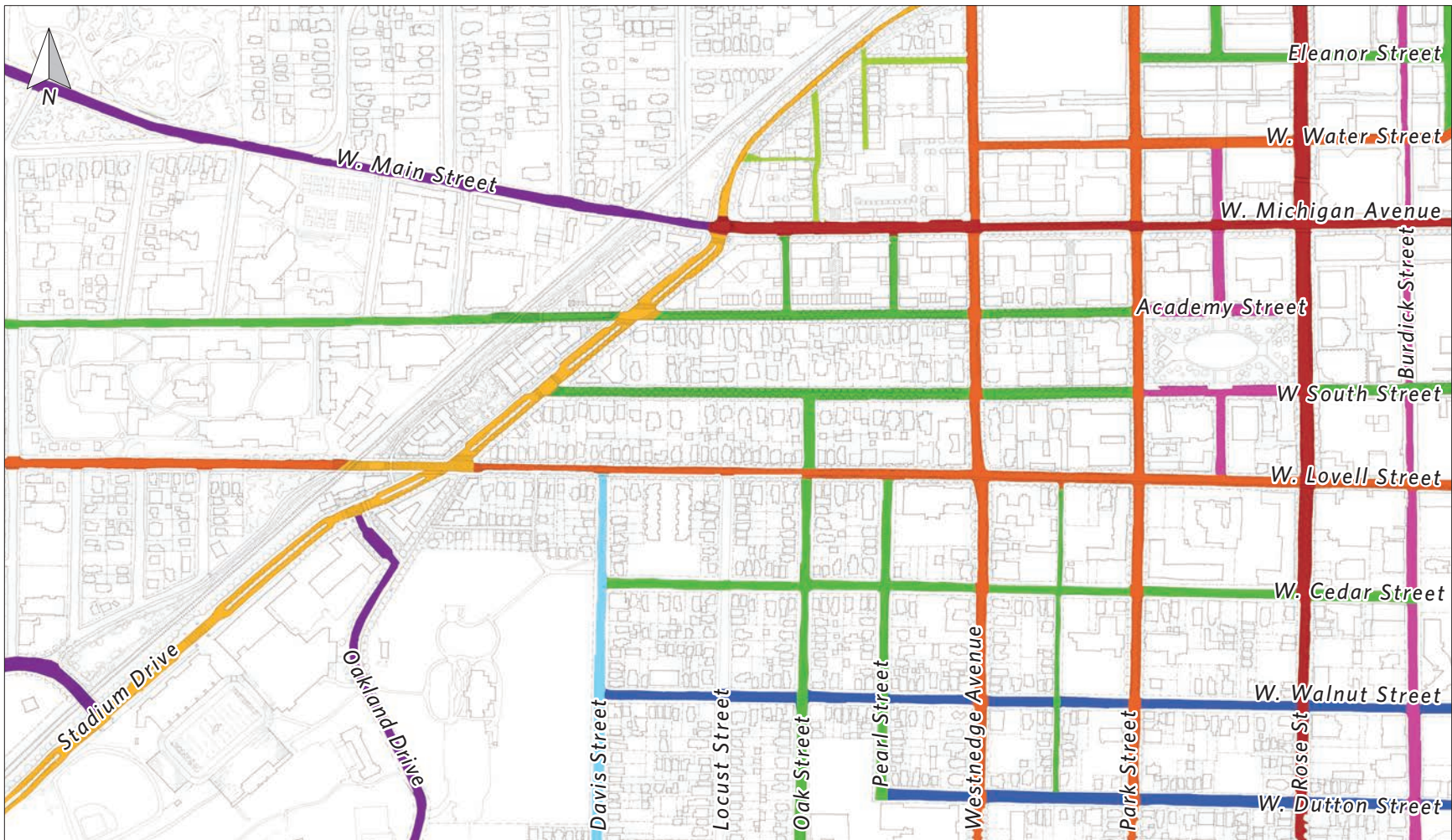


FIGURE 117: Diagram of Street Types

The 2022 Kalamazoo charrette worked with the set of street types delineated by the City of Kalamazoo Street Design Manual, part of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025. This proposal expands the street network within this language of types with the goal of a consistently functional experience for all modes of travel. Streets to the northwest were not a part of this study.

LEGEND

Urban Center

Neighborhood Business Street

Commercial Business Street

City Connector Street

Main Street

Event / Festival Street

Neighborhood Network Street

Enhanced Neighborhood Street

Local Neighborhood Street

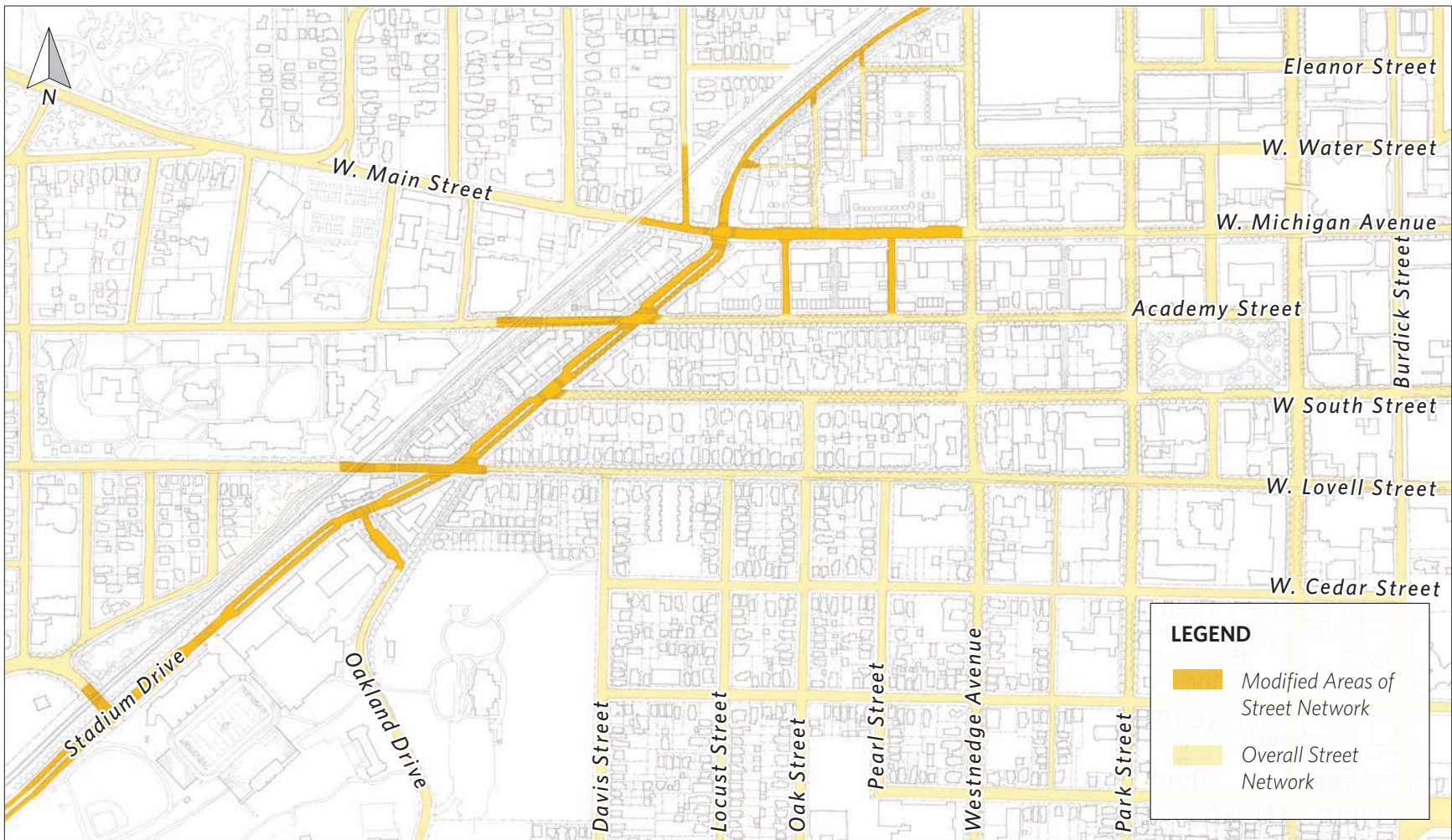


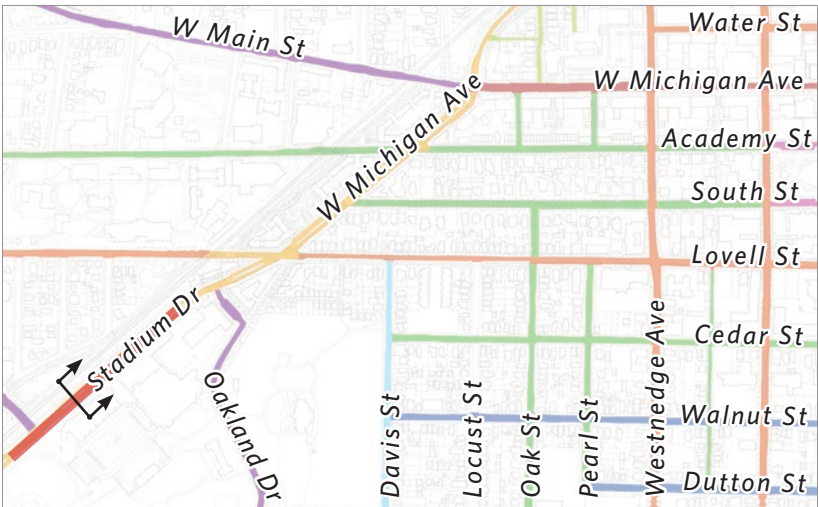
FIGURE 118: Proposed Street Network

The proposed street network deals primarily with the rationalization of the “Spaghetti Bowl” area. Street sections are proposed along the new boulevard to meet the needs along the route.

STADIUM DRIVE AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ATHLETIC BUILDINGS

Stadium Drive, along the athletic buildings at the north end of the Western Michigan University campus, has five lanes of high-speed traffic. The building shown in this street section interrupts the sidewalk, blocking pedestrian motion along the “Spaghetti Bowl.” The proposed section reduces traffic to four lanes, with a two-way protected bike lane and shaded sidewalk each protected by a buffer of trees.

Refer to pages 28-45 for corresponding urban design recommendations.



FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS

EXISTING

Right-of-Way	81'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	72'
Travel Lanes	Five lanes, three in southwest direction
Median	12' planted strip
Parking	No
Bike Lane	No
Trees	No
Sidewalks	No

PROPOSED

Right-of-Way	73'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	48'
Travel Lanes	Four lanes, two in each direction
Median	8' treed median
Parking	No
Bike Lane	Two lanes, on northwest side
Trees	Both sides in planting strip, in median
Sidewalks	7', on southeast side

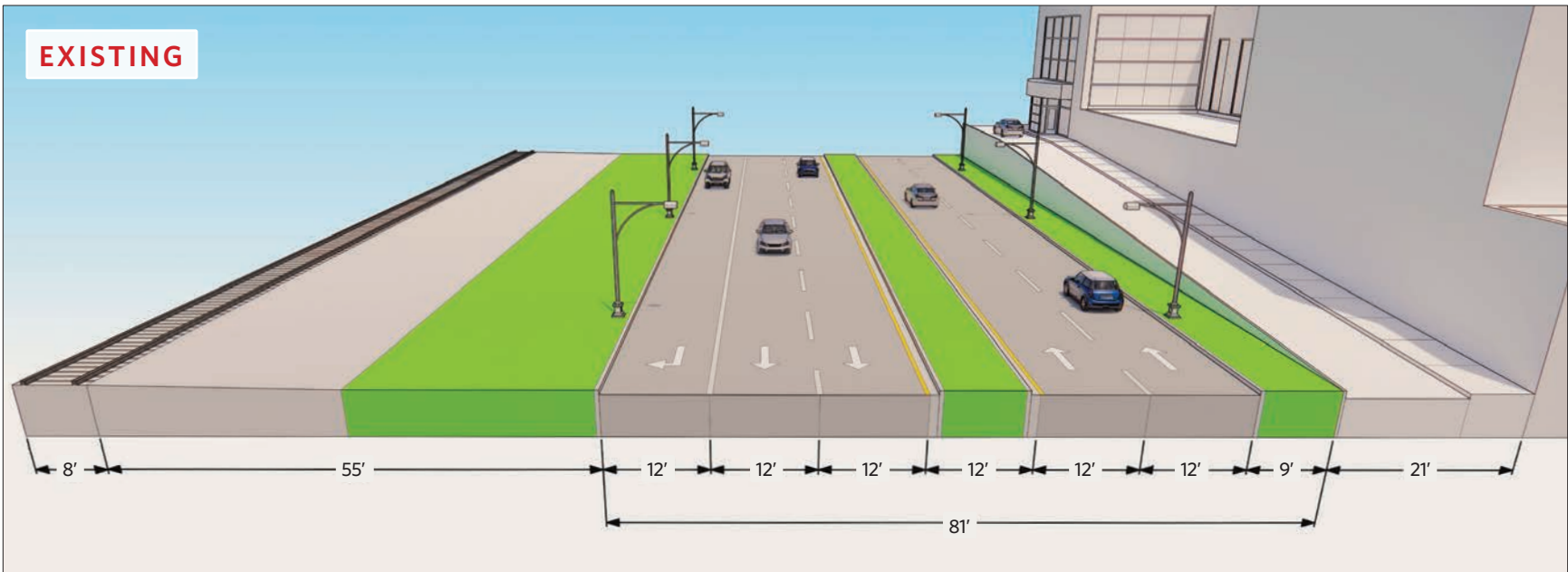


FIGURE 119: Existing Street Section for Southwest Stadium Drive, Looking Northeast

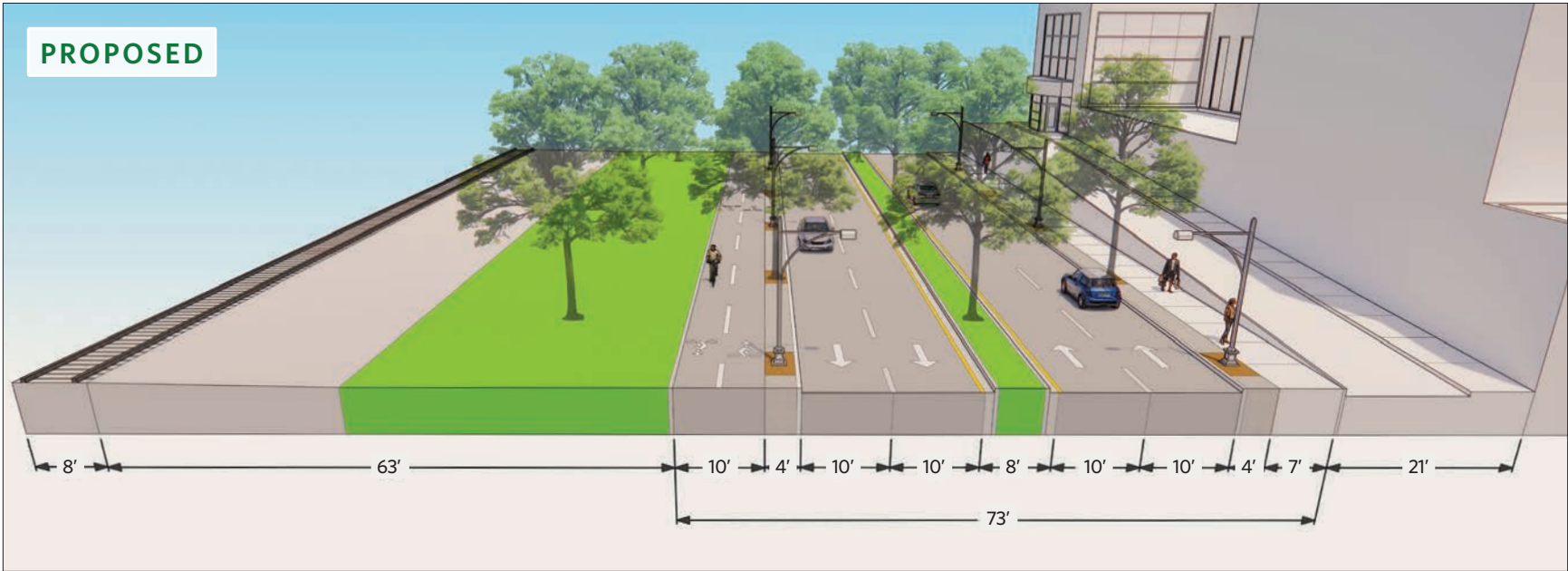
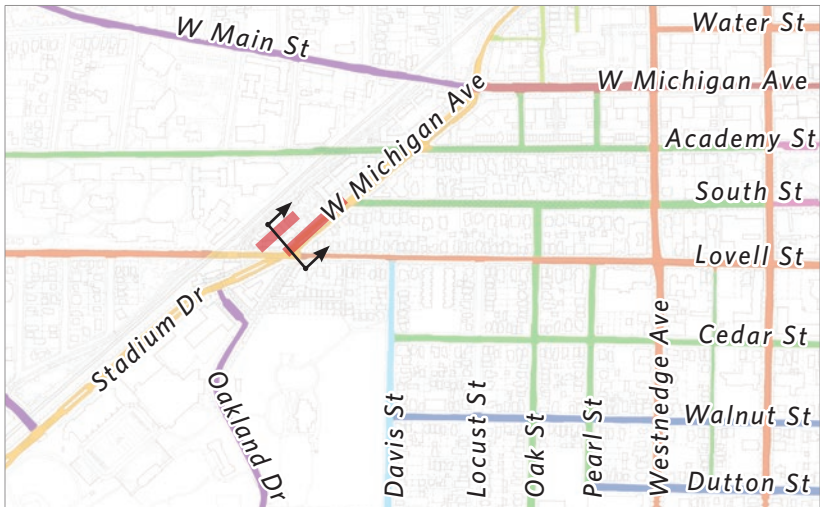


FIGURE 120: Proposed Street Section for Southwest Stadium Drive, Looking Northeast



W. MICHIGAN AVENUE BETWEEN SOUTH & LOVELL STREETS

W. Michigan Avenue, between South and Lovell Streets, has three separate segments of road that converge and diverge, with a total of seven traffic lanes. One consistent, unshaded sidewalk runs along the southern edge, but pedestrian access to the park feature is cut off by traffic. The proposed street, conceived in coordination with the new Kalamazoo College masterplan, consolidates the three roads into one linear route, with four total lanes of traffic, a parking lane, and two-way bicycle path. Consistent, shaded sidewalks run along either side of the street, shaded and separated from traffic by a buffer of trees. A new, accessible park is proposed to the north.

FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS

EXISTING

Right-of-Way	179'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	53' in west path, 40' in east path
Travel Lanes	Seven lanes total, across two travel paths
Median	5' Concrete and planted strip
Parking	No
Bike Lane	No
Trees	No
Sidewalks	4'

PROPOSED

Right-of-Way	110'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	56'
Travel Lanes	Four lanes, two in each direction
Median	8' Treed median
Parking	Parallel, on southeast side
Bike Lane	Two lanes, on northwest side
Trees	Both sides in planting strip, in median
Sidewalks	12'

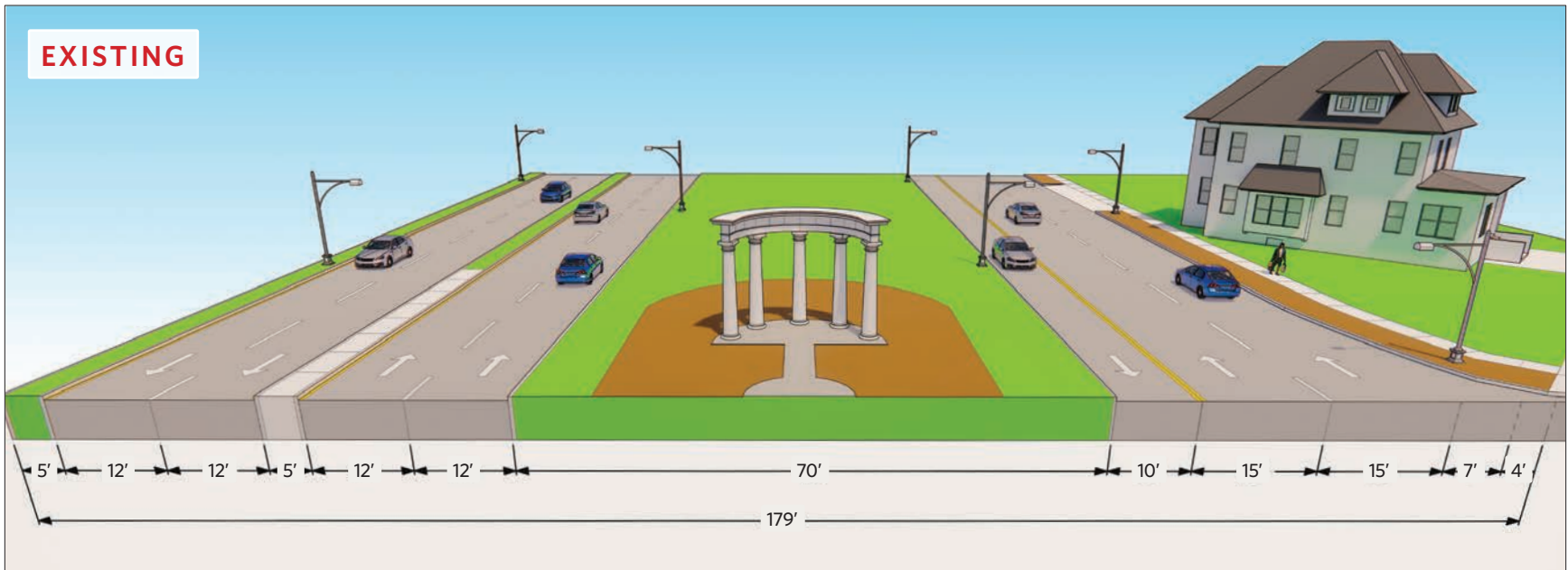


FIGURE 121: Existing Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue between South and Lovell Streets, Looking Northeast

There are two travel paths where only one is needed.

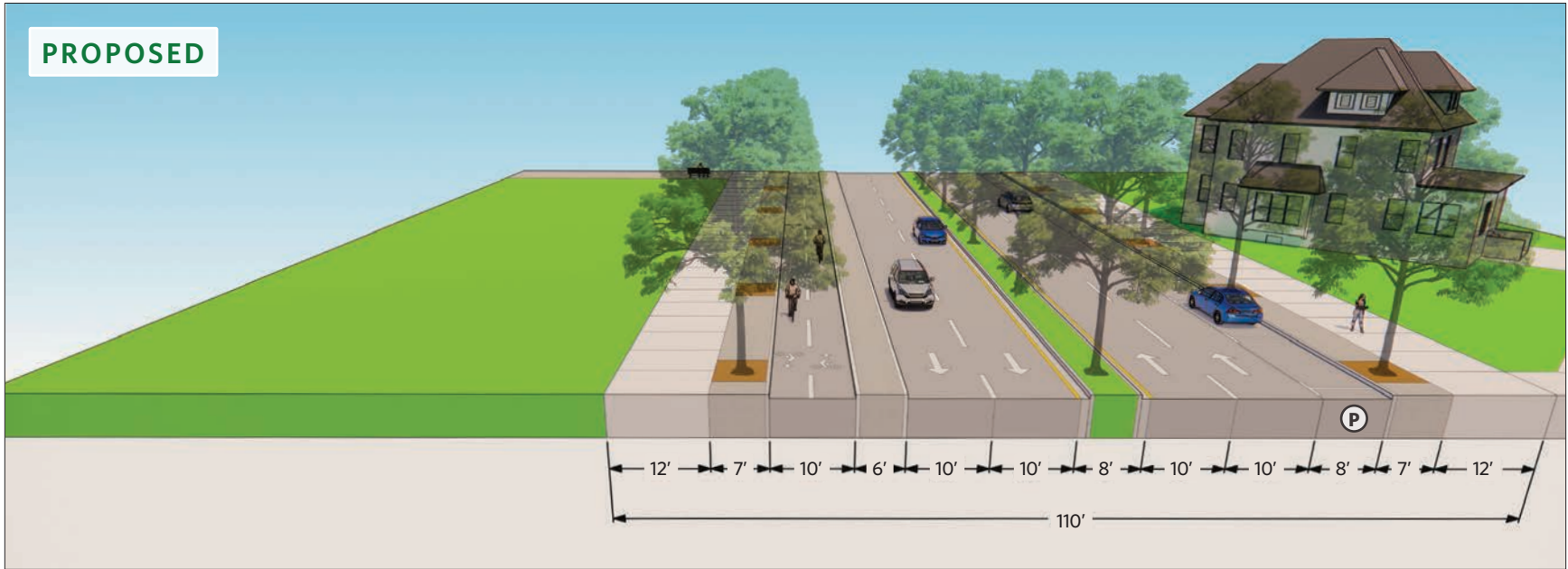


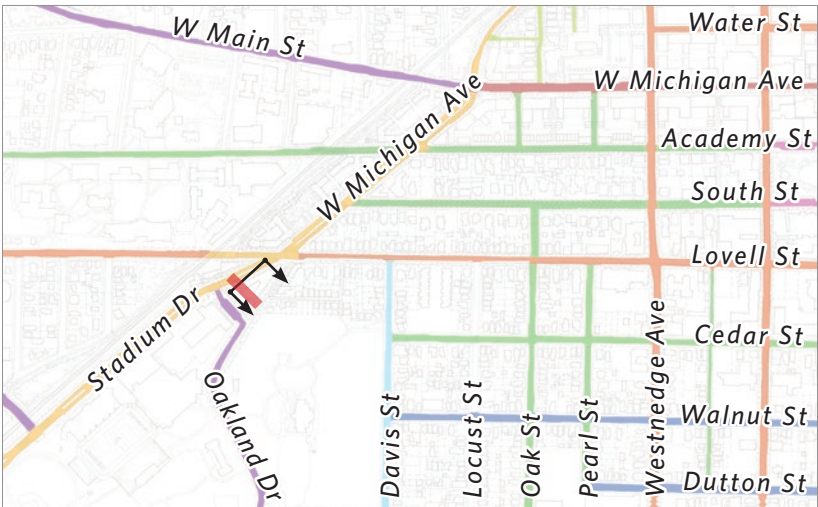
FIGURE 122: Proposed Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue between South and Lovell Streets, Looking Northeast

This proposed section matches Figure 120 on the opposite page for consistency along Stadium Drive as it transitions into W. Michigan Avenue, despite such disparate existing conditions.

NEW OAKLAND DRIVE AT EDDIE’S LANE

Currently, Oakland Drive extends northeast to merge with W. Michigan Avenue. Moving east-west between Oakland Drive and Stadium Drive is a difficult process. The land in front of the Western Michigan University Physical Plant building between these two streets is occupied by parking, which provides the opportunity to add a road. The proposed Oakland Drive turn transforms underutilized land into a functional streetscape with new buildings and pedestrian plazas. Oakland Drive becomes a three-lane road at this juncture, with two parking lanes, a two-way bicycle route, and shaded sidewalks protected from traffic by a buffer of trees.

Refer to pages 28-45 for corresponding urban design recommendations.



FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS	
PROPOSED	
Right-of-Way	98'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	56'
Travel Lanes	Three lanes, two in northwest direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel, on both sides
Bike Lane	Two lanes, on northeast side
Trees	Both sides, in planting strip
Sidewalks	10'-12', varies



FIGURE 123: Proposed Street View of Oakland Drive, Looking Southwest

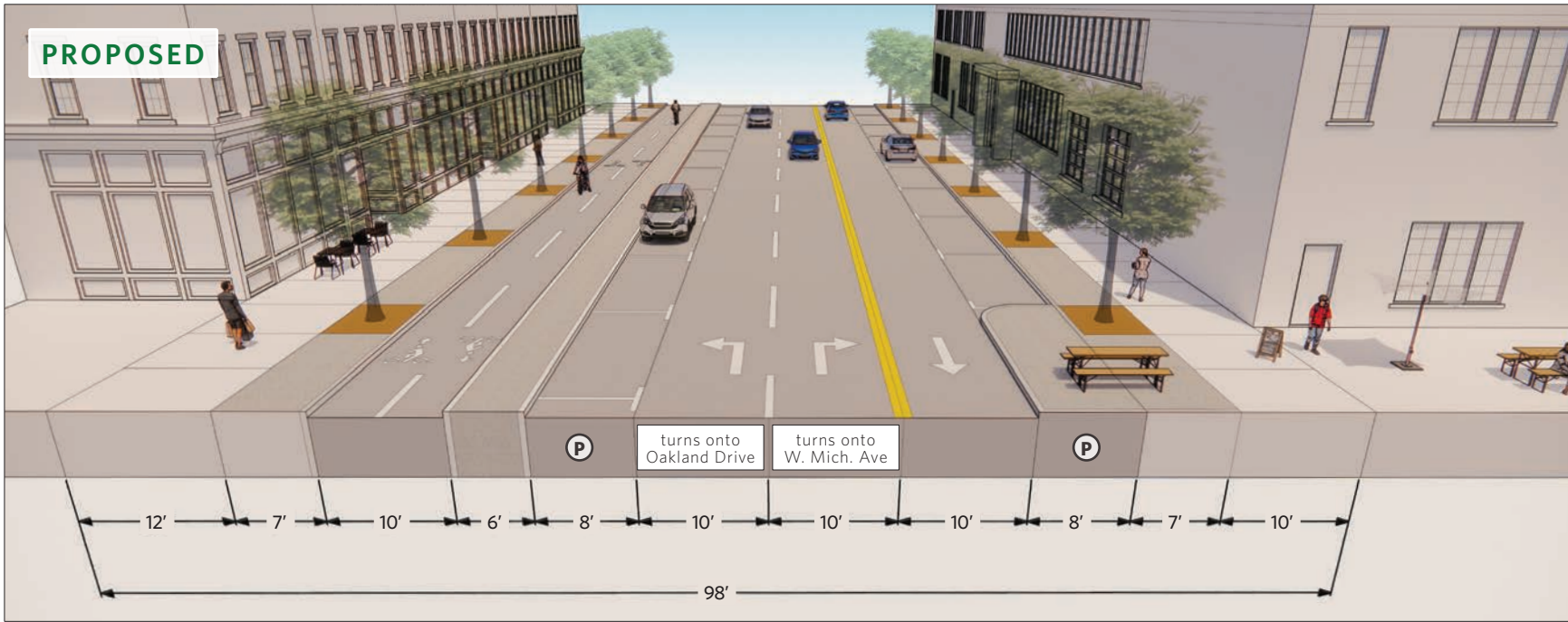
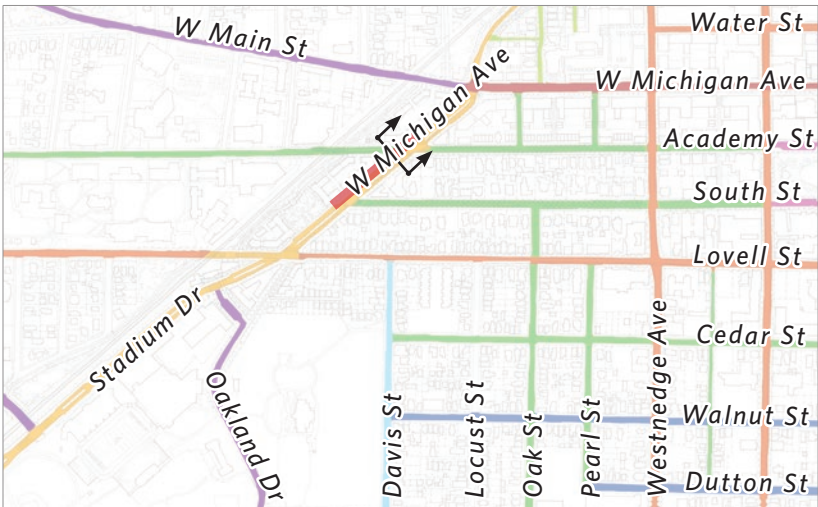


FIGURE 124: Proposed Street Section for Oakland Drive, Looking West



W. MICHIGAN AVENUE BETWEEN ACADEMY & SOUTH STREETS

Between Academy and South Streets, W. Michigan Avenue is a wide, unshaded road with six lanes of traffic that do not accommodate pedestrians or cyclists. The proposed street is reduced to two lanes of traffic in each direction, with a lane of parking and two-way bicycle path on the north side. Rows of trees on either side shade the sidewalks and create a buffer between pedestrians and traffic.

Refer to pages 28-45 for corresponding urban design recommendations.

FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS

EXISTING

Right-of-Way	104'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	77'
Travel Lanes	Six lanes, three in each direction
Median	5' Concrete strip
Parking	No
Bike Lane	No
Trees	No
Sidewalks	10'-12', varies

PROPOSED

Right-of-Way	104'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	68'
Travel Lanes	Four lanes, two in each direction
Median	8' Treed median
Parking	Parallel, on west side
Bike Lane	Two lanes, on west side
Trees	Both sides in planting strip, in median
Sidewalks	12'

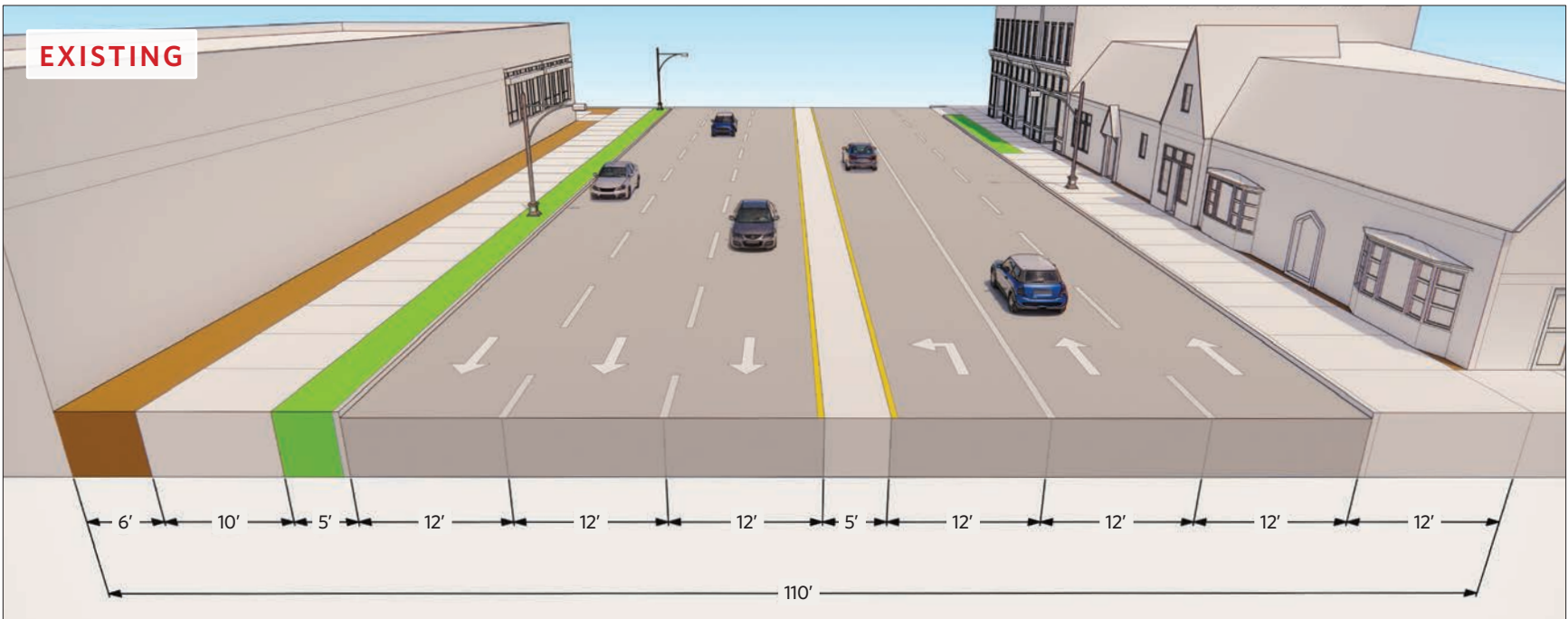


FIGURE 125: Existing Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue between Academy and South Streets, Looking Northeast

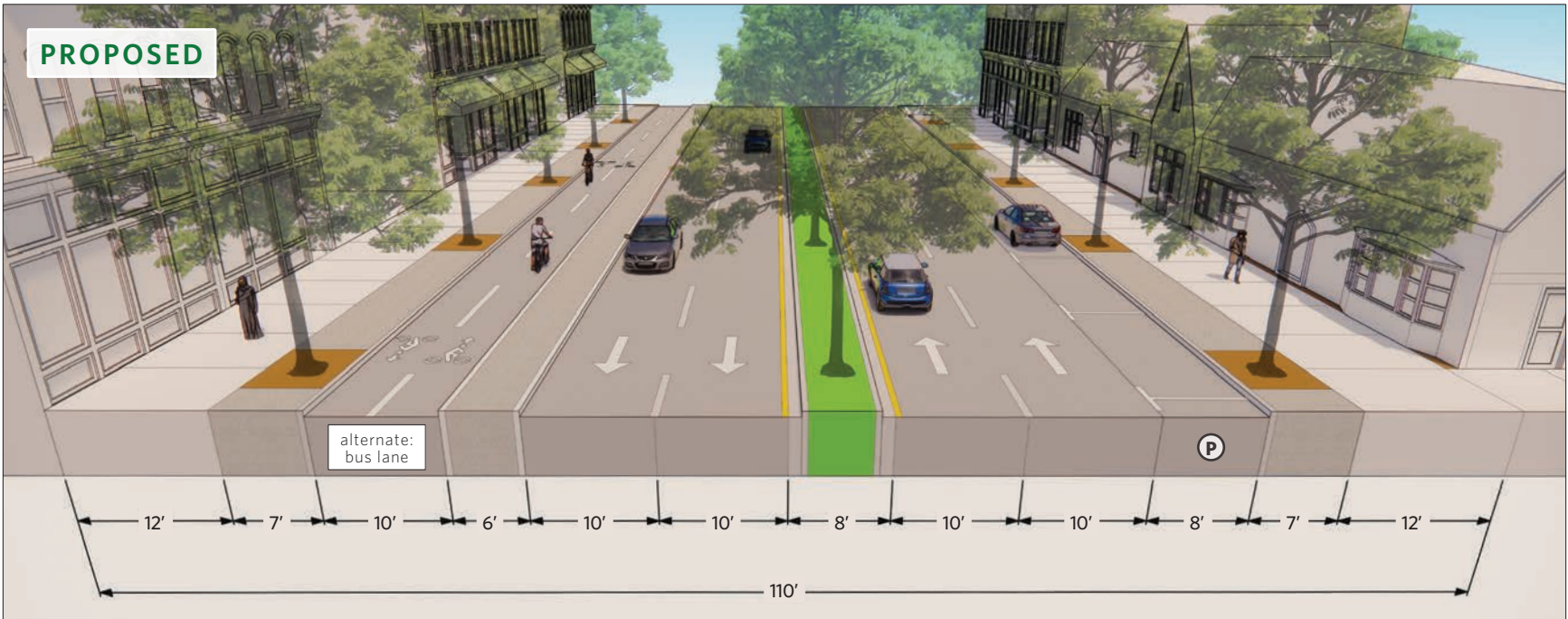
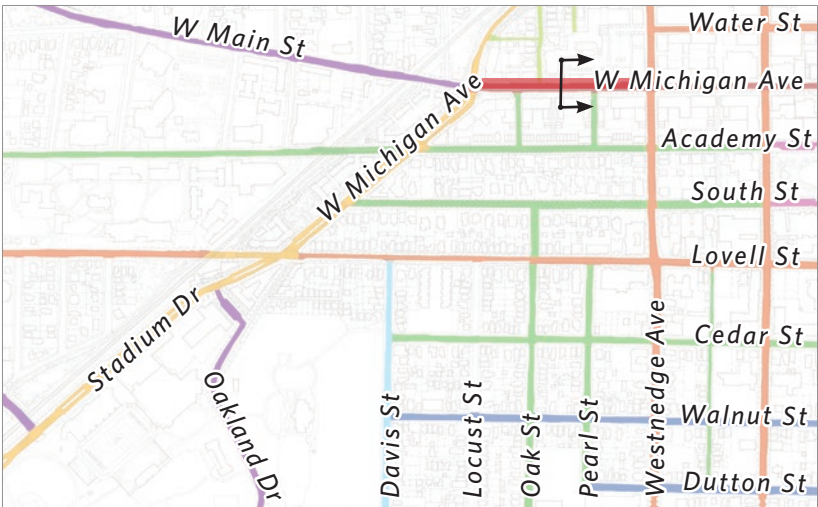


FIGURE 126: Proposed Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue between Academy and South Streets, Looking Northeast
The cycle track to the left may adjust to a bus lane in future schemes; the Kalamazoo College masterplan indicates a bus lane here.

W. MICHIGAN AVENUE, WEST OF WESTNEDGE AVENUE

The pair of proposed street sections on these two pages for W. Michigan Avenue continues existing efforts to return W. Michigan Avenue to a narrower, two-way street. This page shows a proposed section for the portion of the avenue west of Westnedge Avenue. In tandem with the new mixed-use buildings proposed for the street, wide sidewalks and space for outdoor seating support local businesses and create a comfortable pedestrian experience. A cycle track acts as a buffer between pedestrians and cars. Beyond the shade provided by street trees, a treed median adds to this verdant canopy.

Refer to pages 58-65 for corresponding urban design recommendations.



FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS

EXISTING

Right-of-Way	99'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	77'
Travel Lanes	Three lanes in east direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel, on north side
Bike Lane	Two lanes, on south side
Trees	No
Sidewalks	5'-12', varies

PROPOSED

Right-of-Way	99'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	48'
Travel Lanes	Two lanes, one in each direction
Median	10' Treed median
Parking	Parallel, on both sides
Bike Lane	No
Trees	Both sides in planting strip, in median
Sidewalks	14'6"

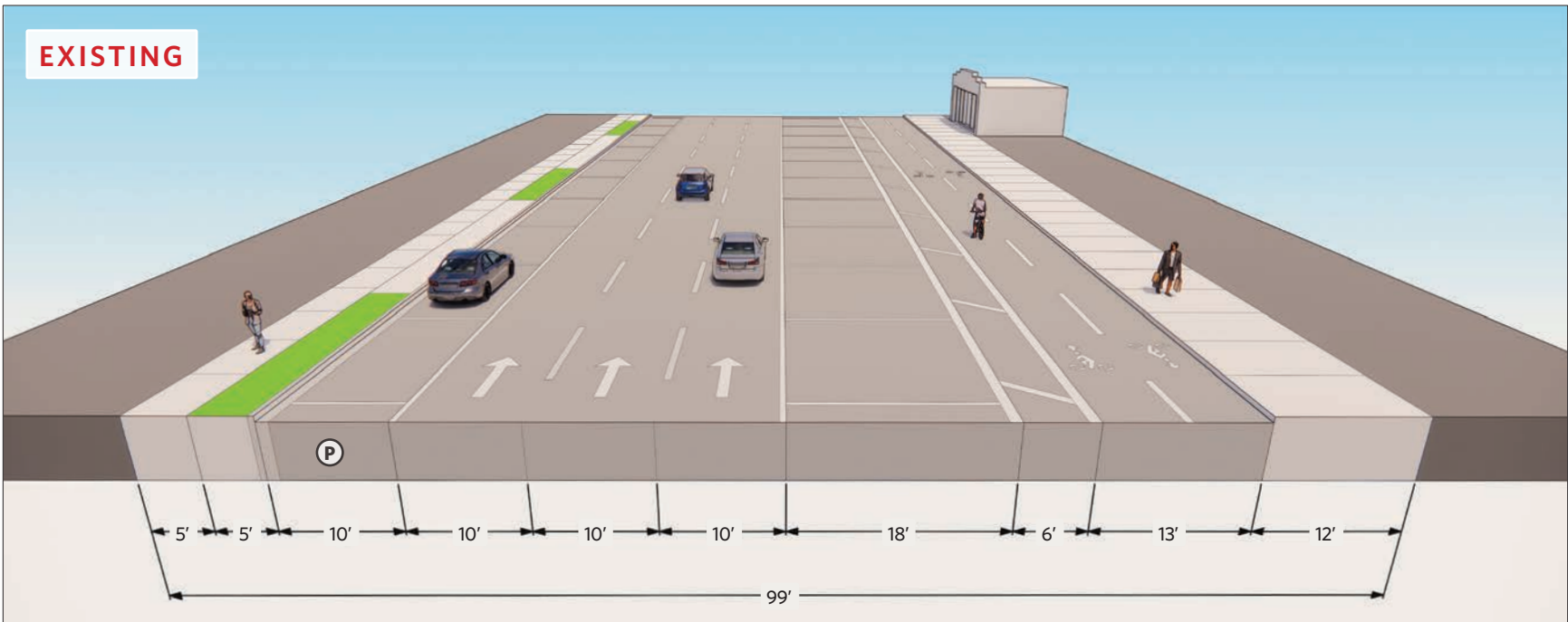


FIGURE 127: Existing Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue, Looking East

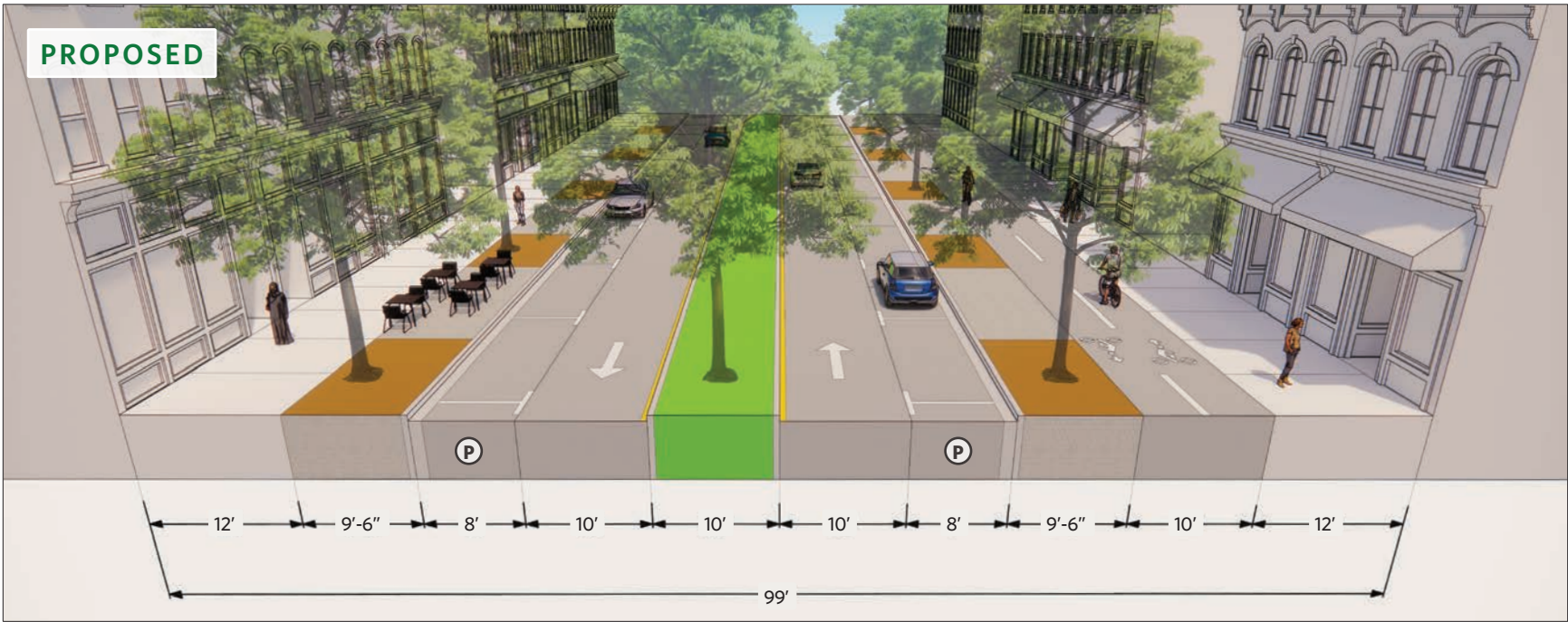
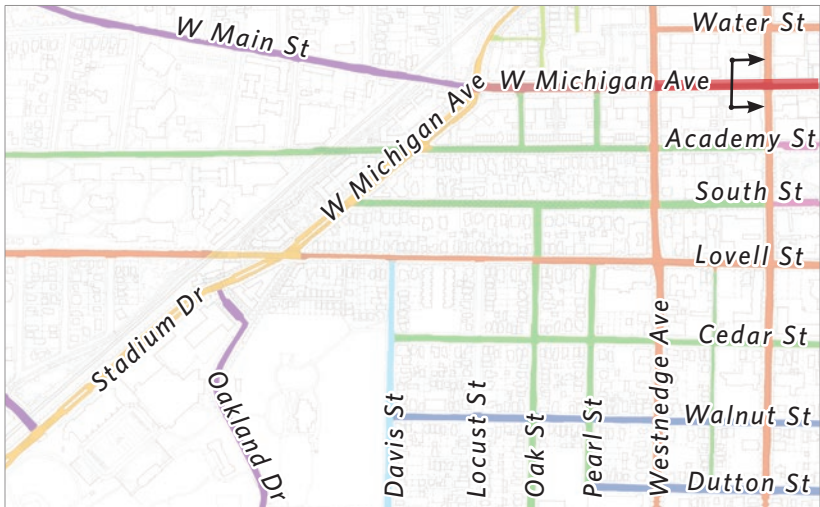


FIGURE 128: Proposed Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue, West of Westnedge Avenue, Looking East



W. MICHIGAN AVENUE, EAST OF WESTNEDGE AVENUE

This section for W. Michigan Avenue shares the dimensions of the section in Figure 128, but removes the median east of Westnedge Avenue to facilitate turning. In lieu of plantings, this median could be a cobble strip or center turn lane. A cycle track extends to Rose Street.

Refer to pages 58-65 for corresponding urban design recommendations.

FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS

EXISTING

Right-of-Way	99'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	77'
Travel Lanes	Three lanes in east direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel, on north side
Bike Lane	Two lanes, on south side
Trees	No
Sidewalks	5'-12', varies

PROPOSED

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	Both sides, in planting strip
Sidewalks	14'6"

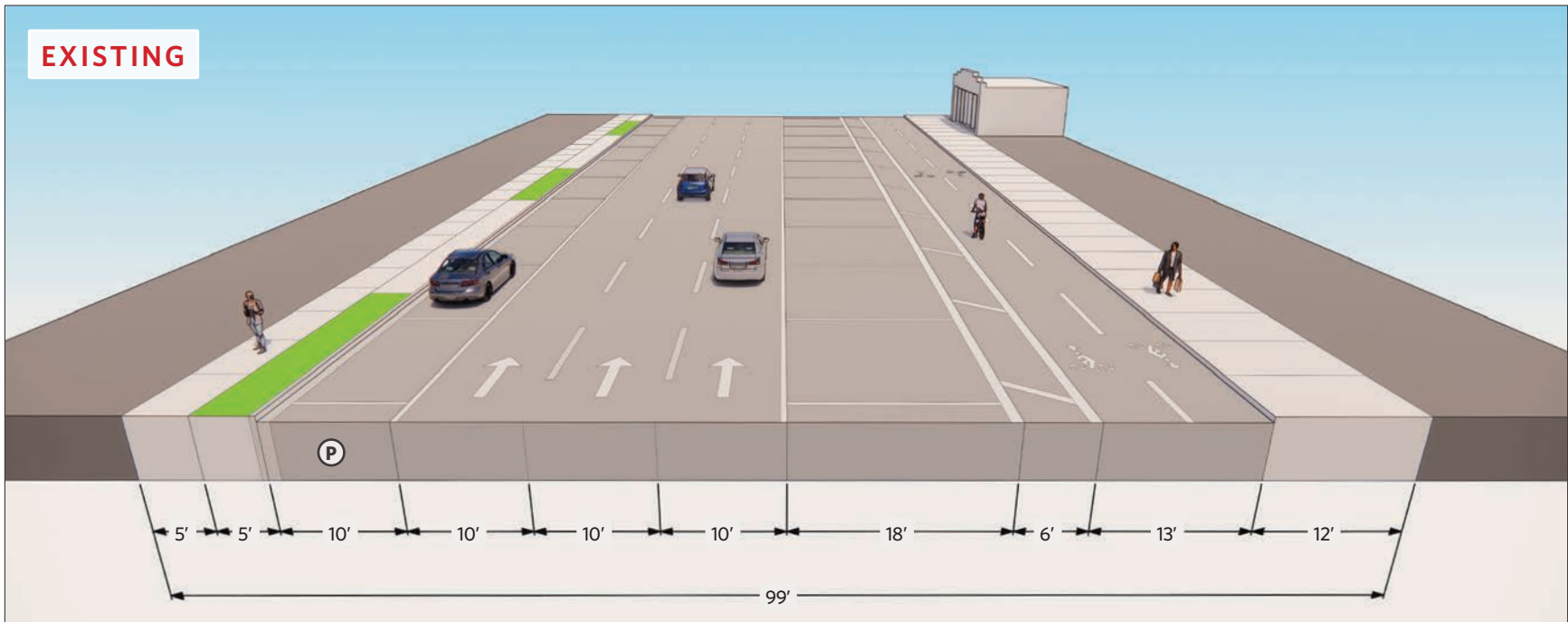


FIGURE 129: Existing Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue, Looking East

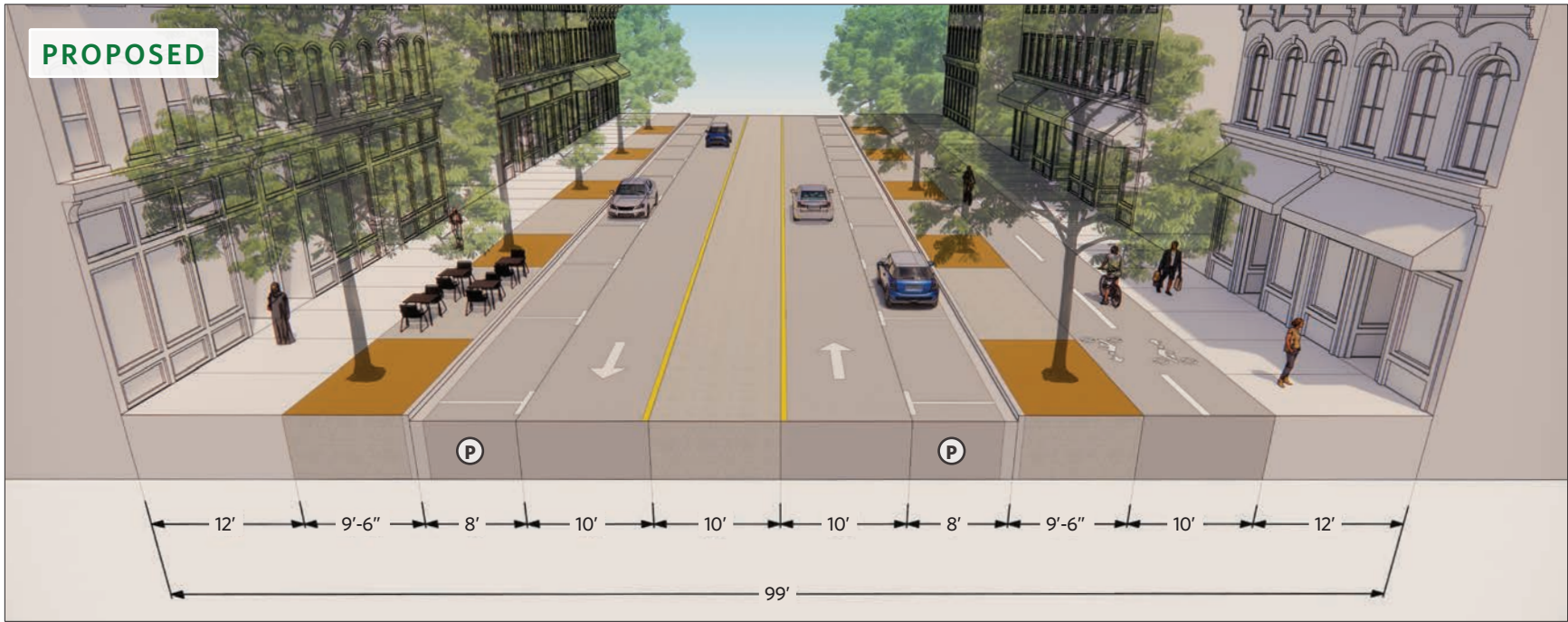
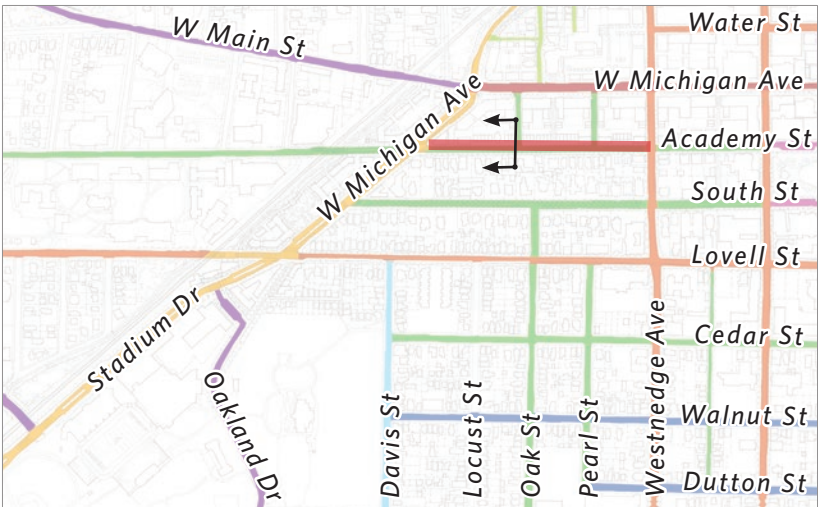


FIGURE 130: Proposed Street Section for W. Michigan Avenue, East of Westnedge Avenue, Looking East

ACADEMY STREET

While the street itself does not change, this proposal illustrates the impact of adding residences across the street and repairing the street edge. Striping the street will help to slow traffic and encourage on-street parking.

Refer to pages 58-65 for corresponding urban design recommendations.



FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS			
EXISTING		PROPOSED	
Right-of-Way	66'	Right-of-Way	66'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	36'	Typical Curb-to-Curb	36'
Travel Lanes	Two lanes, one in each direction	Travel Lanes	Two lanes, one in each direction
Median	No	Median	No
Parking	Parallel, on both sides	Parking	Parallel, on both sides
Bike Lane	No	Bike Lane	No
Trees	Both sides, in planting strip	Trees	Both sides, in planting strip
Sidewalks	5'	Sidewalks	5'

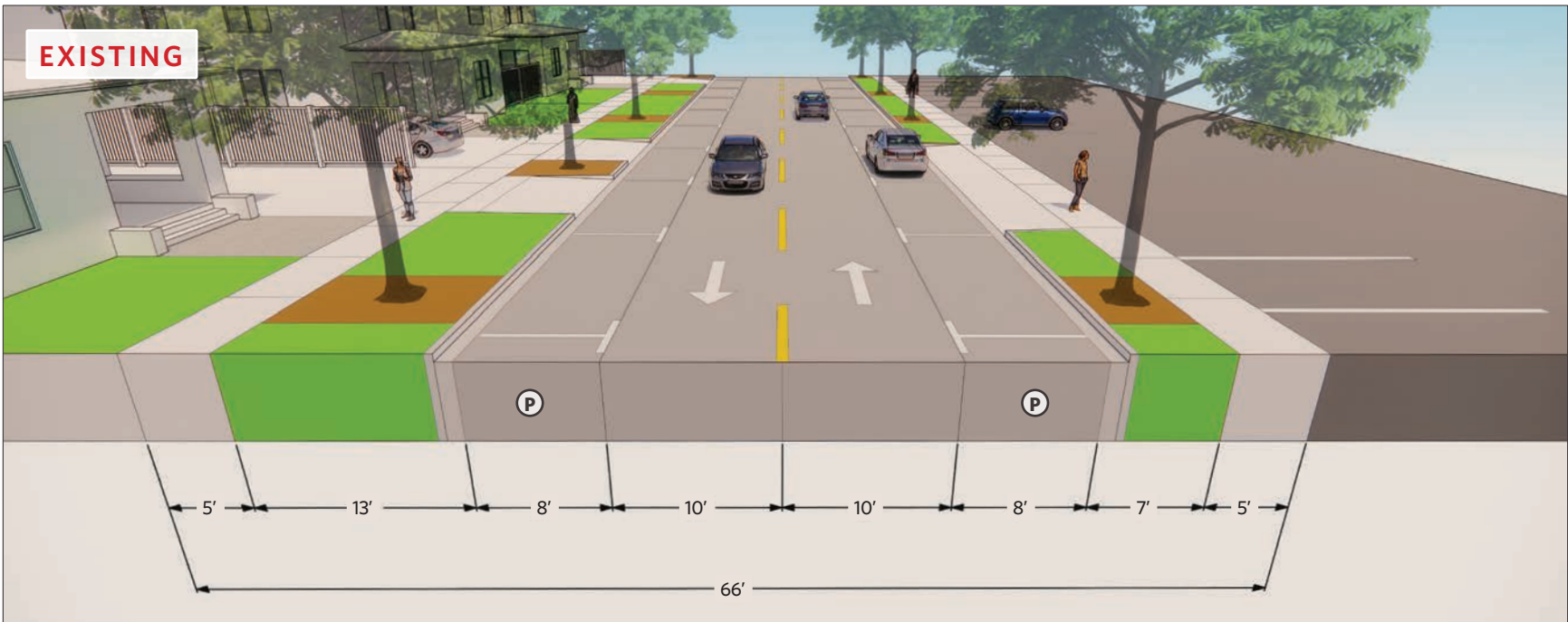


FIGURE 131: Existing Street Section for Academy Street, Looking West

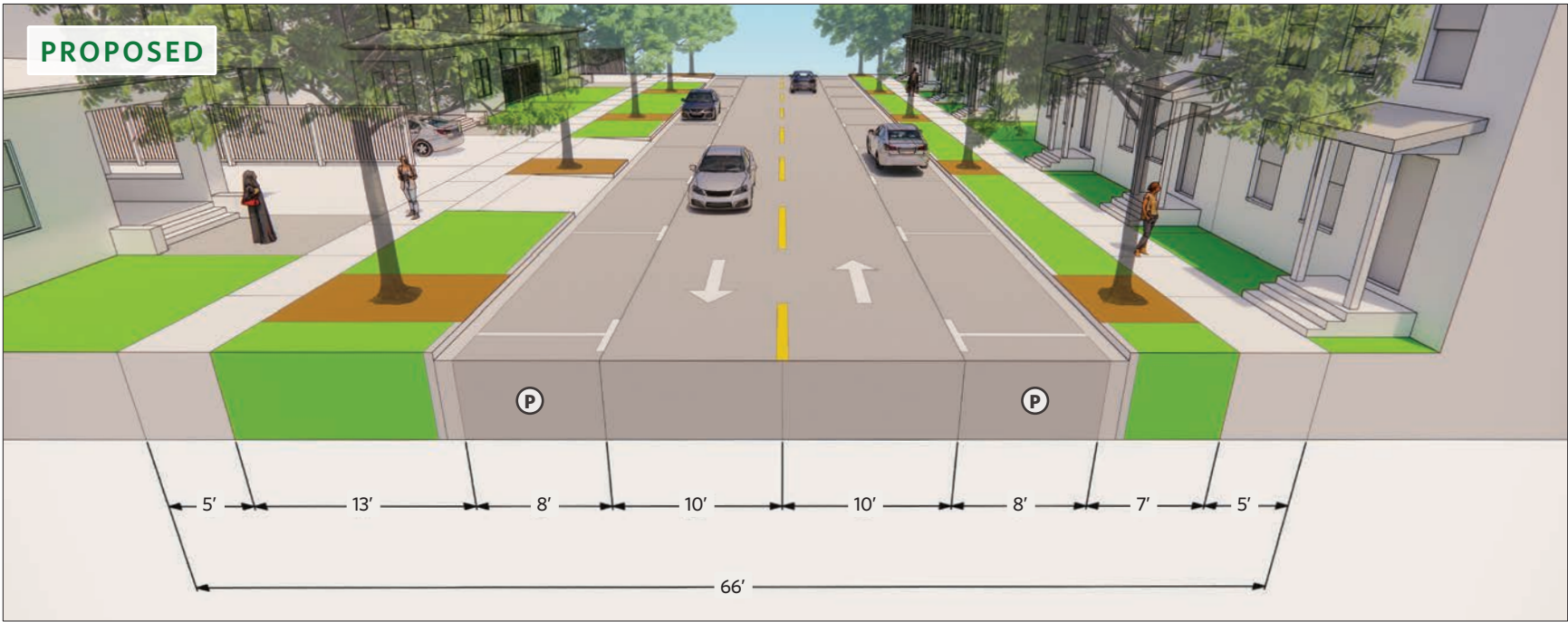
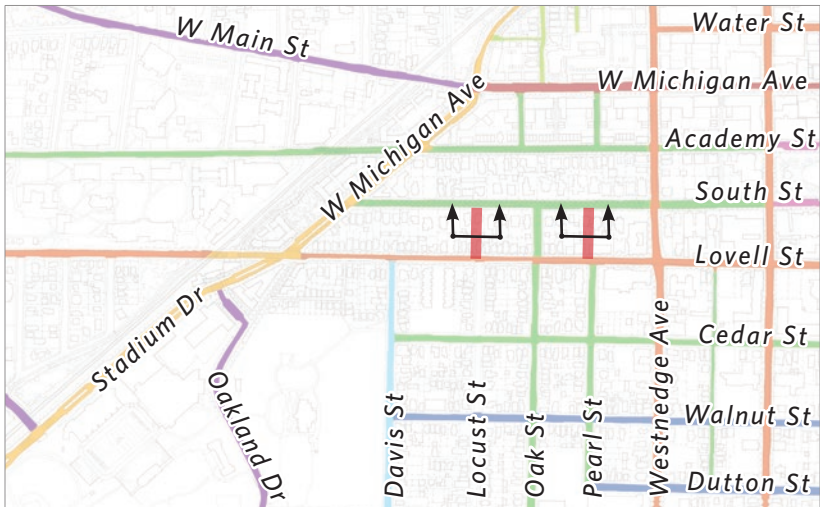


FIGURE 132: Proposed Street Section for Academy Street, Looking West

Though dimensions remain the same, this pair of images illustrates the effect of new housing on the north side of the street, which provides containment.



NEW NORTH-SOUTH CROSS-STREETS

The block between W. Michigan Avenue, Academy Street, and Westnedge Avenue is overly long in the east-west direction. These two new streets are proposed as a solution that breaks up the one block into three (see page 63). The proposed street fits into the overall proposals for narrower, two-way, shaded streets. Buildings in the rendering are indicative of possible new Missing Middle infill housing at Academy Street and new mixed-use buildings transitioning to W. Michigan Avenue.

Refer to pages 58-65 for corresponding urban design recommendations.

FEATURES & CONSIDERATIONS

PROPOSED

Right-of-Way	60'
Typical Curb-to-Curb	28'
Travel Lanes	Two lanes, one in each direction
Median	No
Parking	Parallel, on west side
Bike Lane	No
Trees	Both sides, in planting strip
Sidewalks	10'

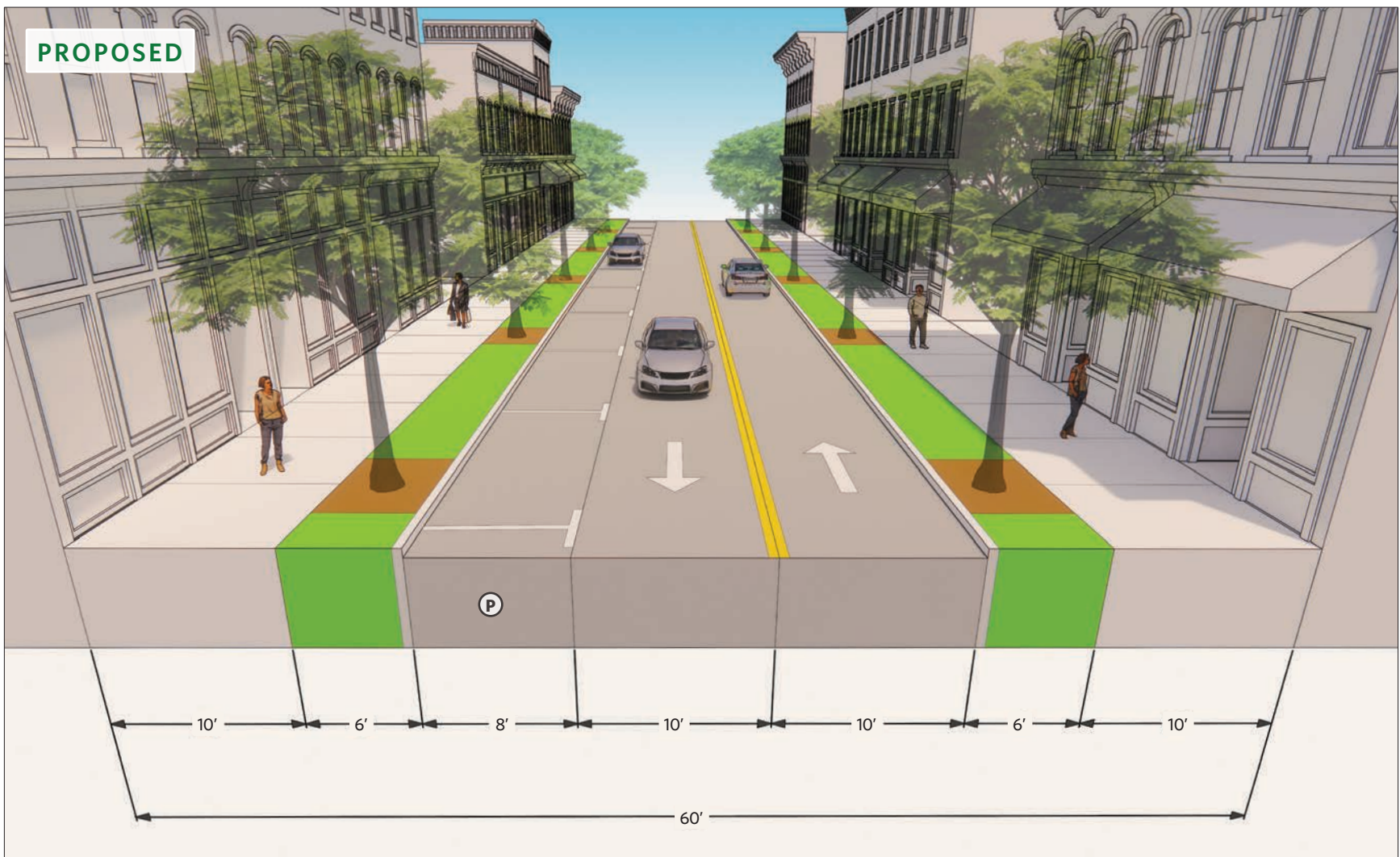


FIGURE 133: Proposed Street Section for New North-South Streets, Looking North





PART 7: ZONING & PRESERVATION

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ZONING CONCERNS

City of Kalamazoo staff have been recalibrating the city’s zoning as a part of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025. The new framework focuses on a form-based code to regulate future development. With pressures to build higher regardless of context, new structures risk overshadowing or turning their backs to historic structures, both in mid-rise mixed-use and smaller-scale residential areas. Part of the charm of Kalamazoo is the scale and character of its buildings. Future growth, when appropriately regulated, can reinforce and support this experience, rather than undermining it.

The zoning map below highlights four recommended adjustments to the current draft of the Kalamazoo code:

- A. Downzone historic areas to impose a height limit
- B. Lower the maximum building height on Academy Street
- C. Specify facade treatment along Academy Street
- D. Downzone at key corners to establish height limits

These small changes do not require an overhaul of current zoning actions, but provide valuable calibrations that will have a lasting impact on the character of the city.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 The pressure to develop large buildings threatens historic structures**
Demand for efficient use of land puts pressure on developers to build tall structures. The most lucrative land on which to do so is often already occupied by smaller-scale buildings, which are threatened with demolition.
- 2 Large buildings can overshadow existing buildings, and often create front-back issues**
Overlarge new buildings cast long shadows on their smaller neighbors. When parcels are combined for buildings that take up the full depth of a block, the secondary street is likely to be deprioritized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Enforce height limits and facade treatments to protect existing buildings**
Restricting building heights and requiring active facades on secondary streets will protect the historic buildings, public realm, and overall character of the area.

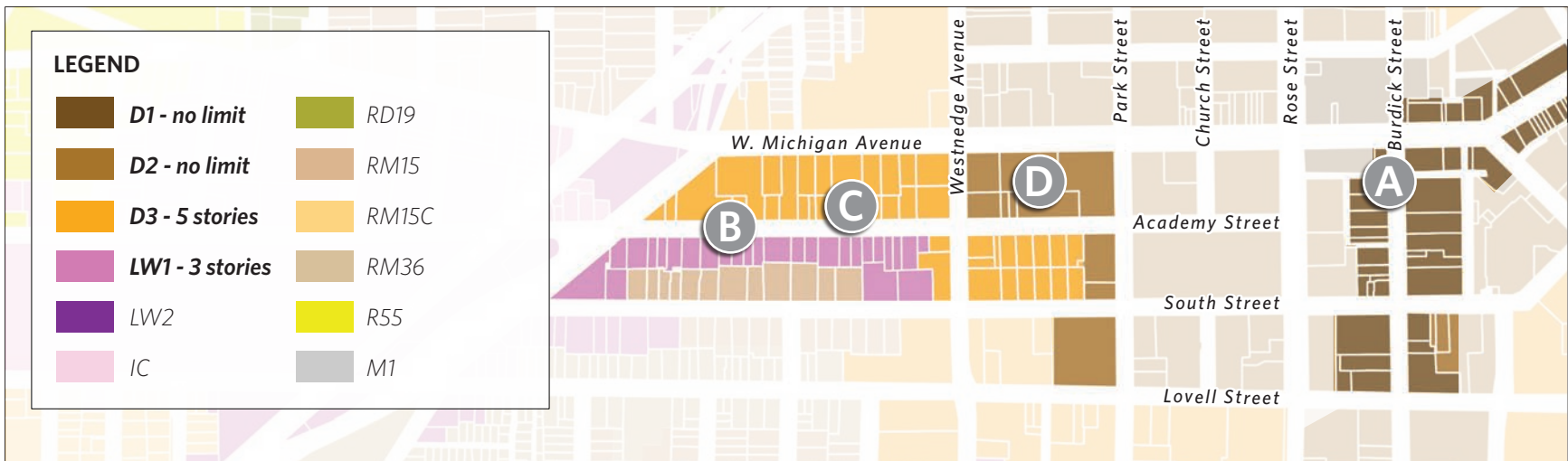


FIGURE 137: Zoning Map with Area of Concern Highlighted

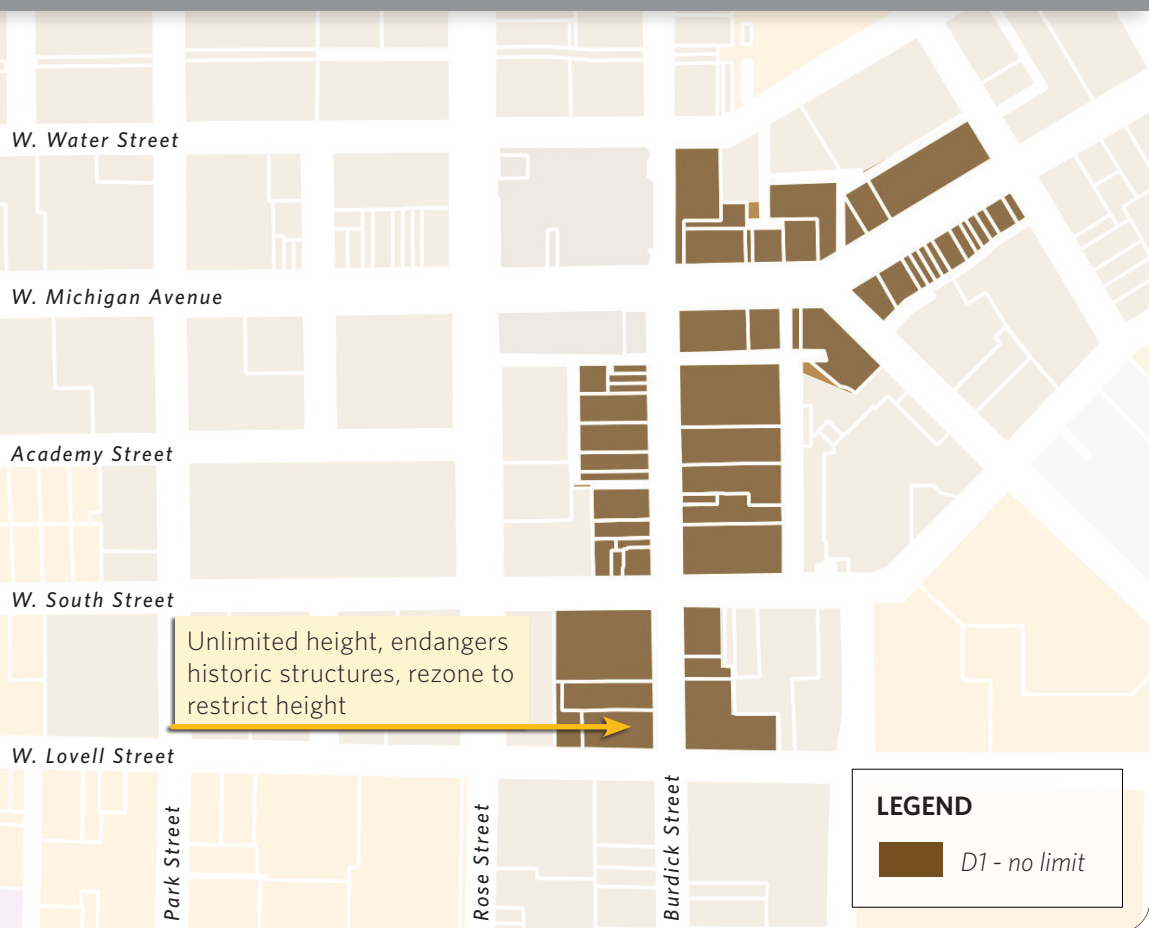
This map shows the city’s current zoning, with areas of concern that key to the suggestions on these pages.

A

HISTORIC AREAS UNDER PRESSURE FOR HIGHER BUILDINGS

Historic Burdick Street between W. Michigan Avenue and Lovell Street, as well as the Haymarket District along E. Michigan Avenue, are currently zoned D1. This zone has no height limits, and demand for higher structures will put pressure on smaller historic buildings.

Separate from historic district designations, as recommended on the following spread, these shorter buildings can be protected from demolition by either changing the zone of these parcels or changing the description of this zone to have a height limit of five stories.



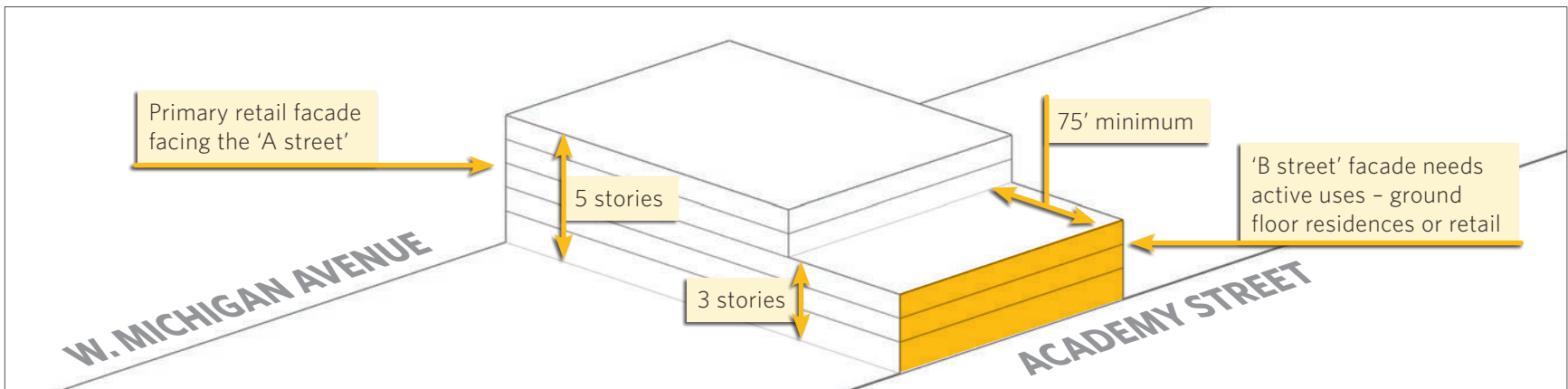
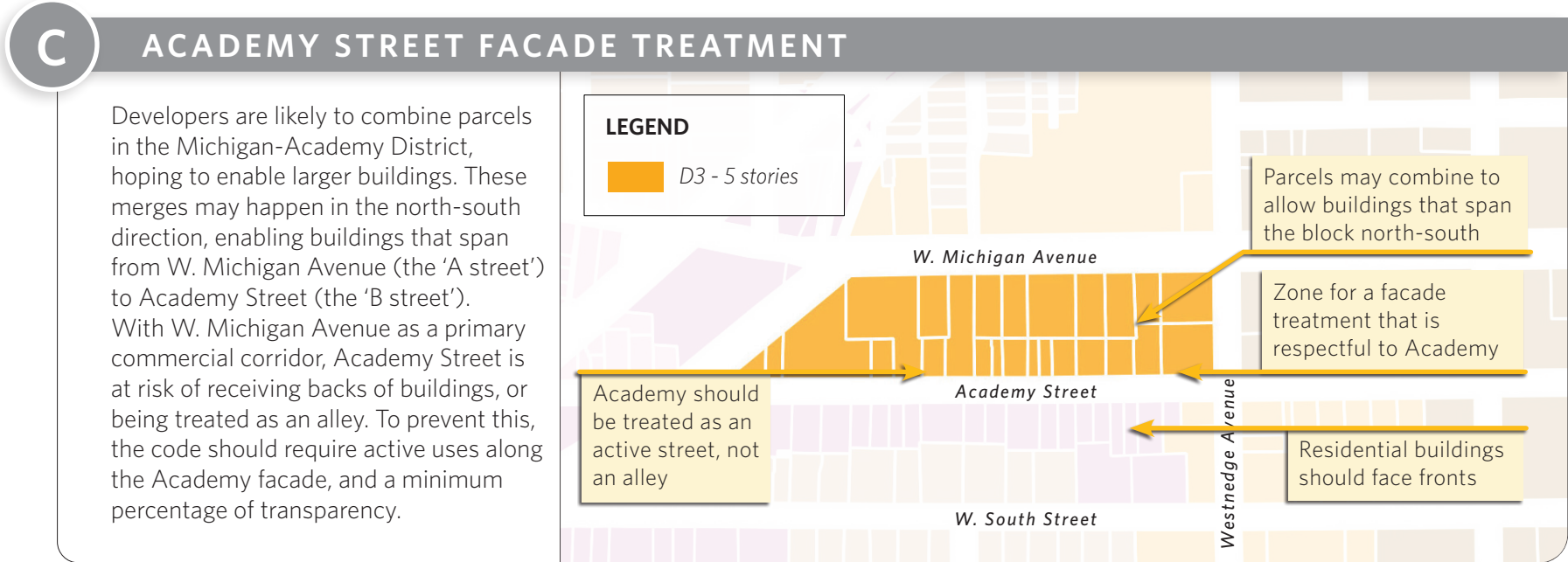
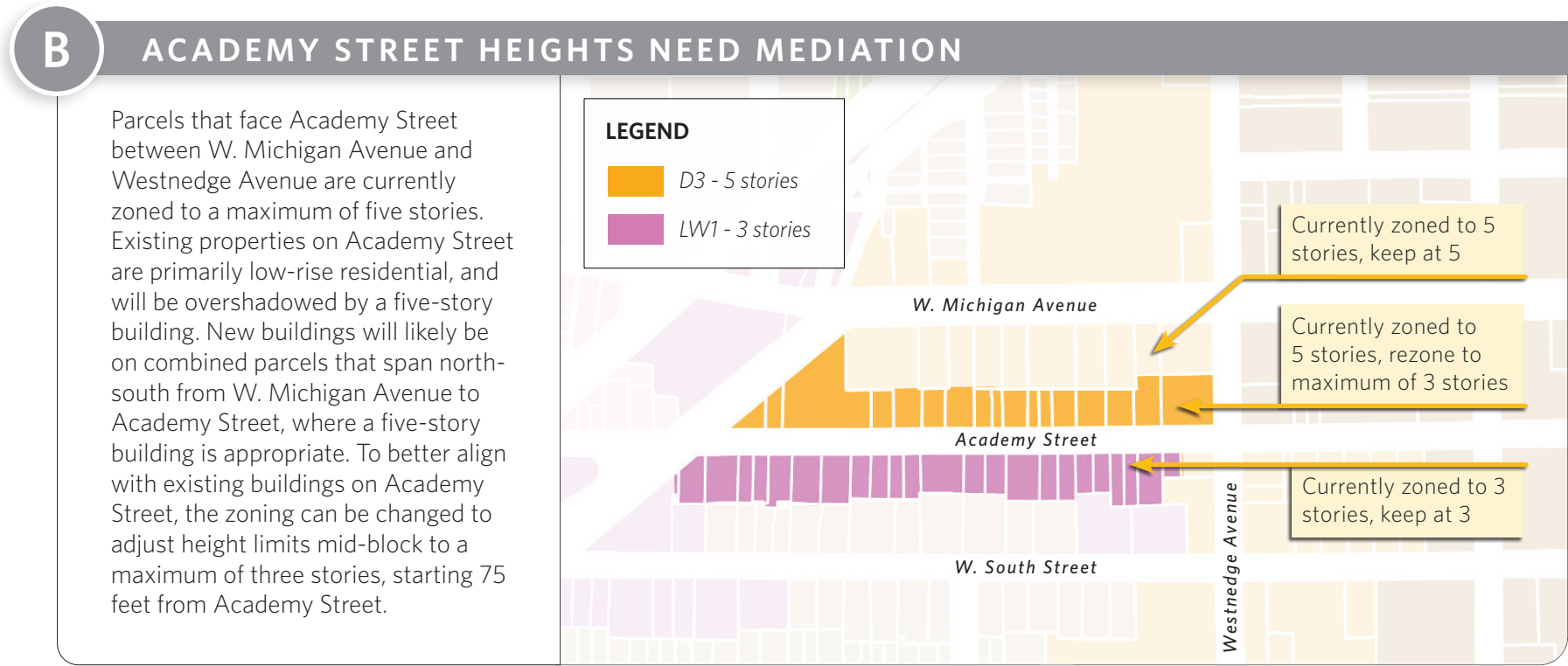
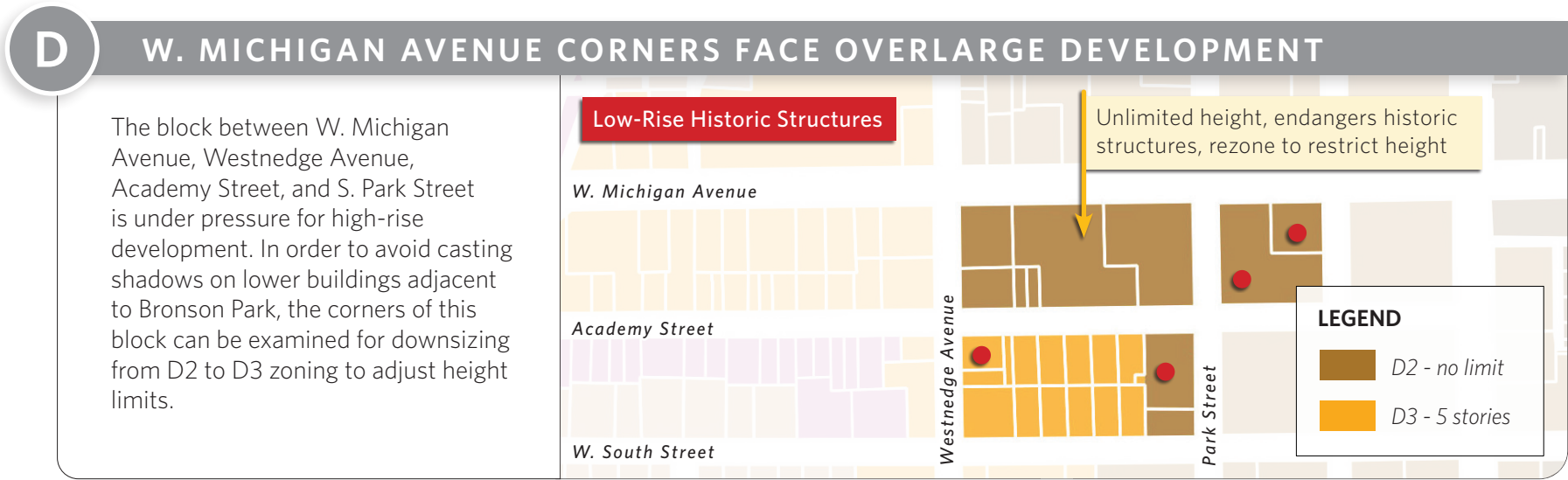


FIGURE 138: Illustration of Recommendations (A) and (B) for the Michigan-Academy Block
This unique area of transition must activate W. Michigan Avenue, but must also balance activation with a respectful height along Academy Street.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONCERNS

Existing Kalamazoo buildings are in danger without robust legal protection. The City has lost several historic properties at the heart of downtown to new development because these properties do not have a local historic designation. These gaps must be filled proactively in order to maintain the heritage and beauty of the area.

The map below highlights two recommended additions to historic designations:

- A. Protect heritage buildings around Bronson Park
- B. Protect low-rise commercial buildings along Burdick Street

A regulatory strategy designed to preserve the best of Kalamazoo will ensure that the cultural treasures of the past are joined by – rather than replaced by – the development of the future.

KEY FINDINGS

Historic structures are in danger

Kalamazoo recently lost several historic buildings because they lacked adequate protection. Pressure to develop puts remaining buildings in danger, especially near the center of the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Use historic designations to prevent demolition

Proactive designation of historic structures can give these buildings adequate legal protection against developers looking to demolish, preserving the heritage of the city.

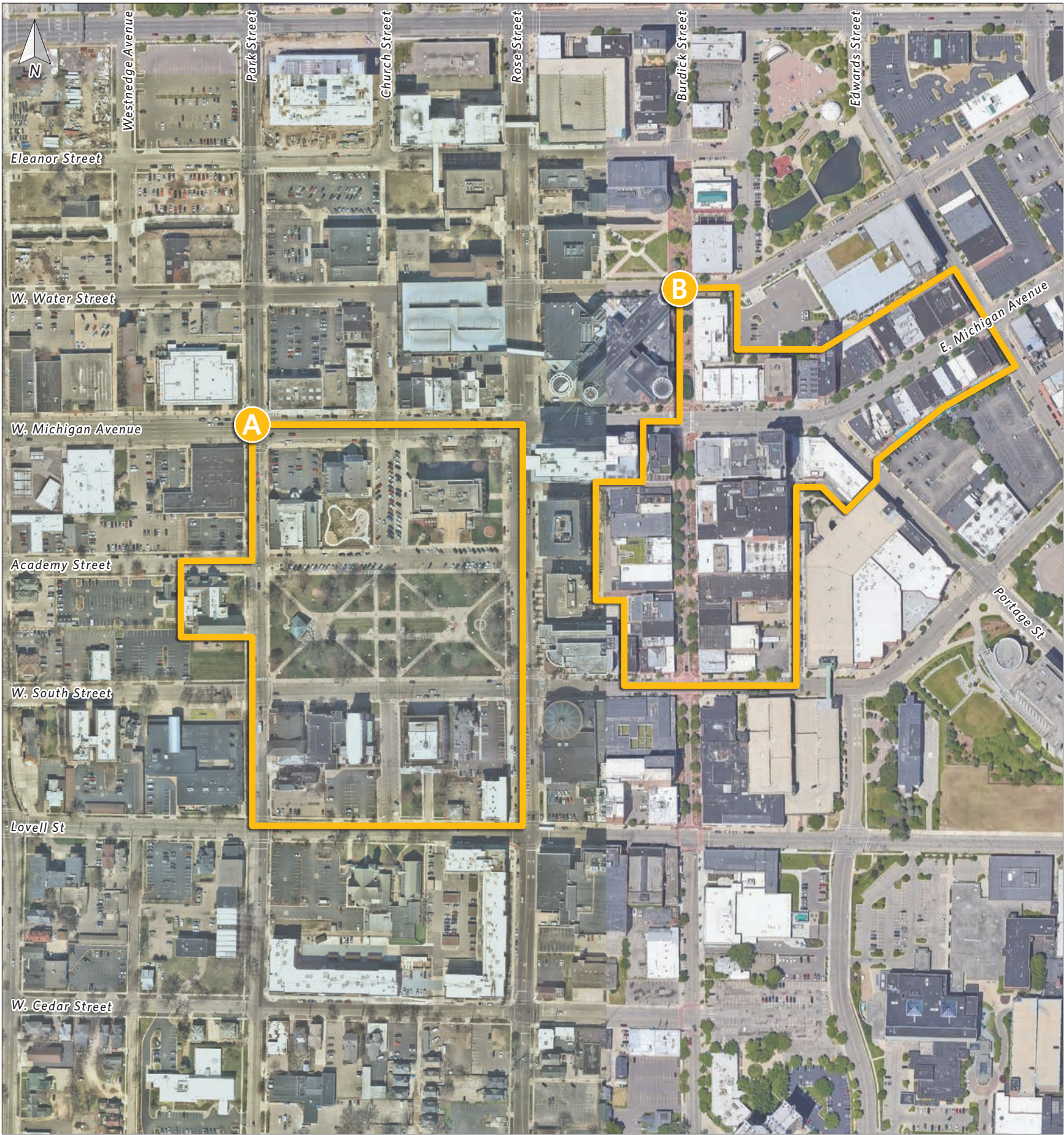


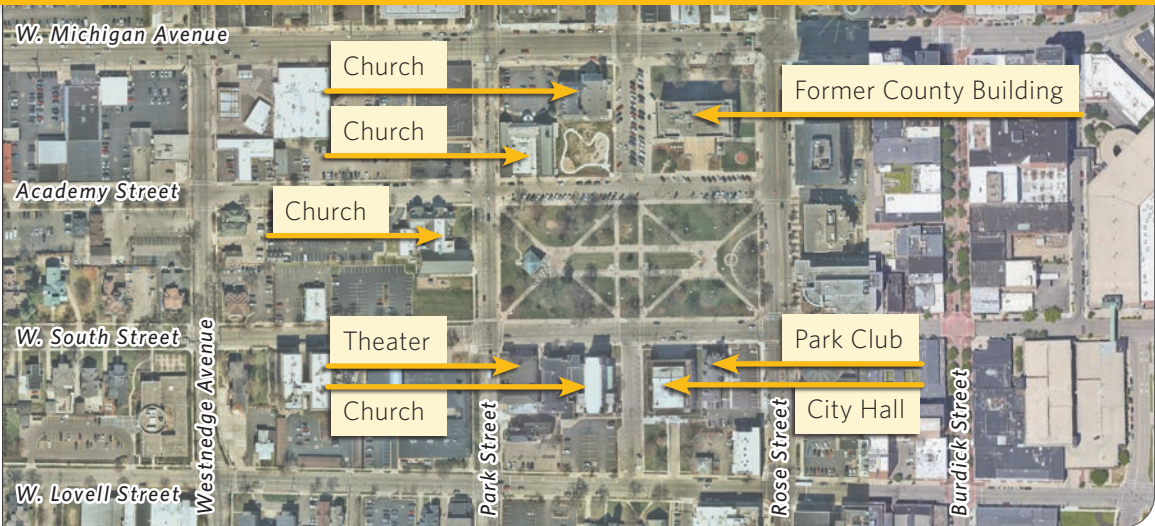
FIGURE 139: Map with Area of Concern Highlighted

This map highlights areas where historic buildings are in particular danger and need protection.

A

IMPORTANT BRONSON PARK BUILDINGS ARE AT RISK

Directly adjacent to the heart of downtown, Bronson Park is framed by several civic and religious buildings. Protection can be added to the park's historic assets by adjusting height limits on the blocks to the northwest and south to a maximum of five stories. Unfortunately, a number of historic buildings have already been lost to demolition in this area. It is imperative to grant a local historic designation to the remaining historic buildings to provide adequate protection.



First Presbyterian Church
Source: Google Street View



First United Methodist Church
Source: Google Street View



Kalamazoo Park Club
Source: Google Street View



Former County Building
Source: Google Street View



First Congregational Church
Source: Google Street View

FIGURE 140: Bronson Park Historic Structures Highlighted in Recommendation (A)

The historic structures noted in the map highlights above are cultural touchpoints for the city and require local protection.

B

KALAMAZOO MALL ZONE IS AT RISK

The mall on Burdick Street is a historic touchstone for the city, and lined with many low-rise mixed-use buildings. These historic structures can be protected by changing the zoning along Burdick Street between Kalamazoo Avenue and Walnut Street to a maximum of five stories, and adding demolition protection to heritage buildings.



PRESERVATION NETWORKS

The preservation of a city’s historic buildings goes beyond designations and legal protection; it is the product of an engaged network of organizations, institutions, districts, and individuals. The city’s Historic Preservation Commission plays a critical role, promoting preservation through “publications, education, the collection of historical materials, and the identification of historical resources which warrant preservation.”¹

The Commission, and each other player within the network map to the left, has a different set of priorities, stakes, barriers, and areas of expertise. These communities may be involved in a particular layer of the city, a particular neighborhood, or even a particular building.

A heritage network unites all of these players under a common goal: the historic preservation of the city of Kalamazoo. Preservation takes place at building, neighborhood, district, and city scales, all of which overlap. It also combines various aspects of a structure: its materials, state, repair needs, surroundings, occupants, and role in a community. While these specific layers may be catered to by specific groups, it is the collaboration among these groups that keeps a city like Kalamazoo not only in good condition but well-loved.

[1] “Historic Preservation Commission” (City of Kalamazoo, 2025).

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Kalamazoo has robust preservation organizations**
Despite some losses of historic buildings, there are dedicated community members and organizations ready to protect city structures, particularly the Historic Preservation Commission.
- 2 The study area has a range of preservation needs**
Commercial, mixed-use, religious, civic, and residential properties all have different specific needs, but share overall preservation goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Bring players in conversation around common goals**
Awareness of the particular needs and barriers of different parts of the city can strengthen community and solve problems.
- 2 Pool preservation resources for holistic support**
The specific skills and expertise of different organizations and individuals can fill gaps in others, leading to a stronger overall preservation strategy.

HERITAGE NETWORK HIERARCHY

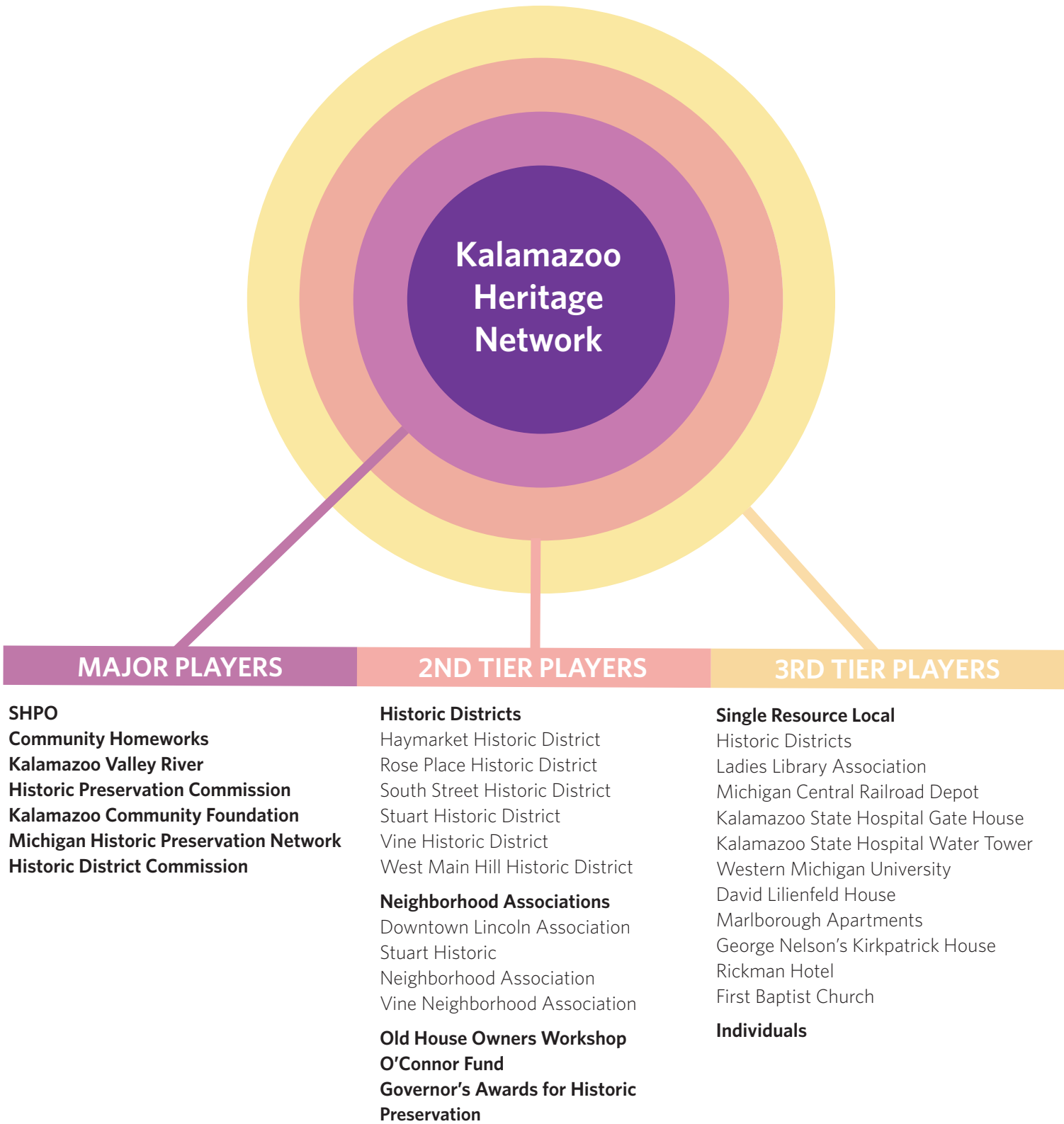


FIGURE 141: Kalamazoo Heritage Network Structure

An understanding of the hierarchy of different network members can provide a structure of communication and action.

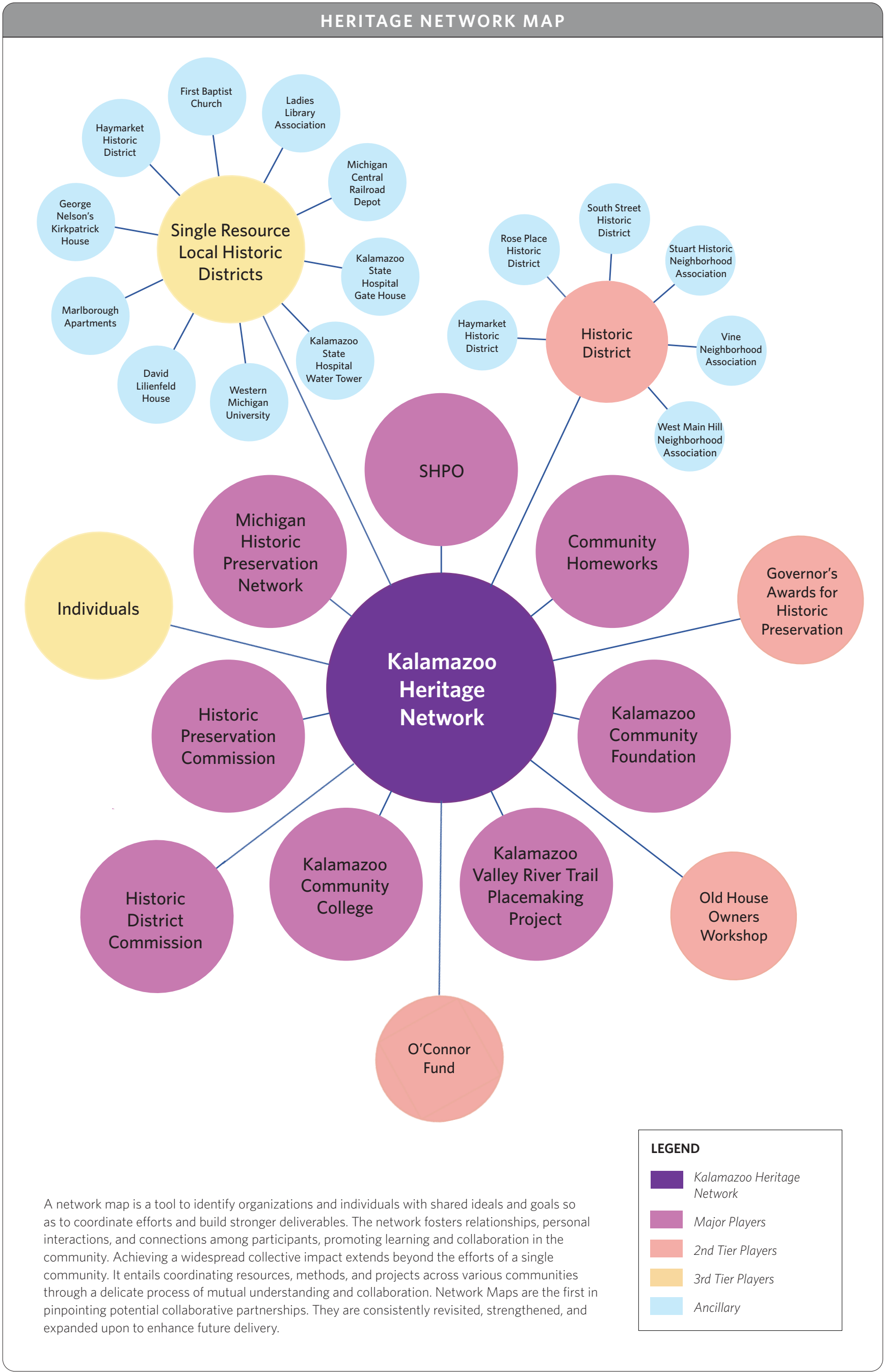


FIGURE 142: Kalamazoo Heritage Network Map
There are many overlapping categories of players within the heritage network, all of whom have a particular role to play and voice to contribute.

PRESERVATION DISTRICTS

Historic districts are the foundational underpinning of a city’s preservation efforts, offering regulatory protection of a particular area against forces of destructive change. Districts tend to vary in scope and character, but all represent a group of historically-relevant structures.

Kalamazoo incorporates two categories of historic district: national and local. Each has very different levels of protection and restriction. National historic districts, designated at the federal level, tend to be more symbolic than serviceable. Placing a building or area on the National Register of Historic Places offers that building an honor, but few or no protections against the whims of property owners or developers. Several of Kalamazoo’s national districts fall within the study area: Stuart, South Street, Bronson Park, and Vine (Figure 143).

At the local level, far more regulation is provided. Municipalities such as the City of Kalamazoo use the local designation to protect historic properties from incongruous alteration or demolition, and can even prevent new construction within a district. Kalamazoo’s south side, including the South Street and Vine districts, has robust local protections. Towards the heart of downtown, however, this protection is missing, leaving many of Kalamazoo’s most beloved structures and core areas vulnerable.

Kalamazoo has lost many historic structures to demolition and new development in recent years. Each loss impacts the long-term value of all adjacent properties. Recently, the First Reformed Church and North Westnedge Church of Christ were demolished, leaving holes in the city’s heritage. Similar buildings in the same area now face the same threat, making expansion of local protection more urgent. Once the protection of these properties is stabilized, they can be looked upon as an example of good urban fabric for new growth that continues the same historic patterns.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1

Kalamazoo has established some districts
Historic areas in Kalamazoo are well-documented, and protected at the local and/or federal level, but some structures still lack any historic designation, making them vulnerable.
- 2

Federal protection is an insufficient defense
Despite status on the national register, buildings and neighborhoods with federal protection alone are still in danger of demolition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1

Fill in gaps of unprotected historic buildings
Identifying structures that lack a historic designation is the first step towards protecting them from demolition.
- 2

Consider local protection
Because federal protection does not provide the robust defense necessary to protect against demolition, both national districts and areas with no protection should acquire local protection.

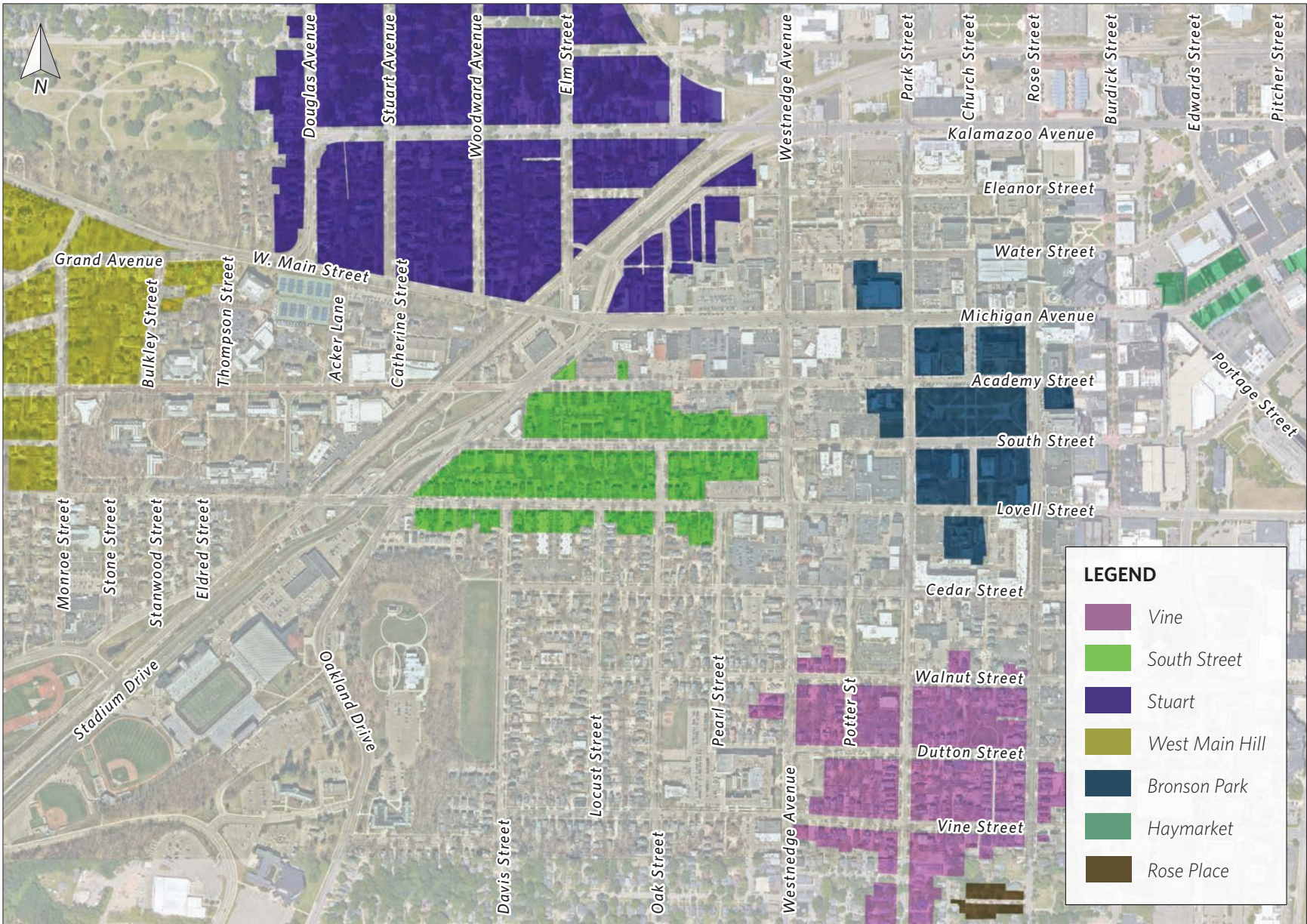


FIGURE 143: Existing National Zones
Protection at the national level, though important, does not prevent demolition or new development.

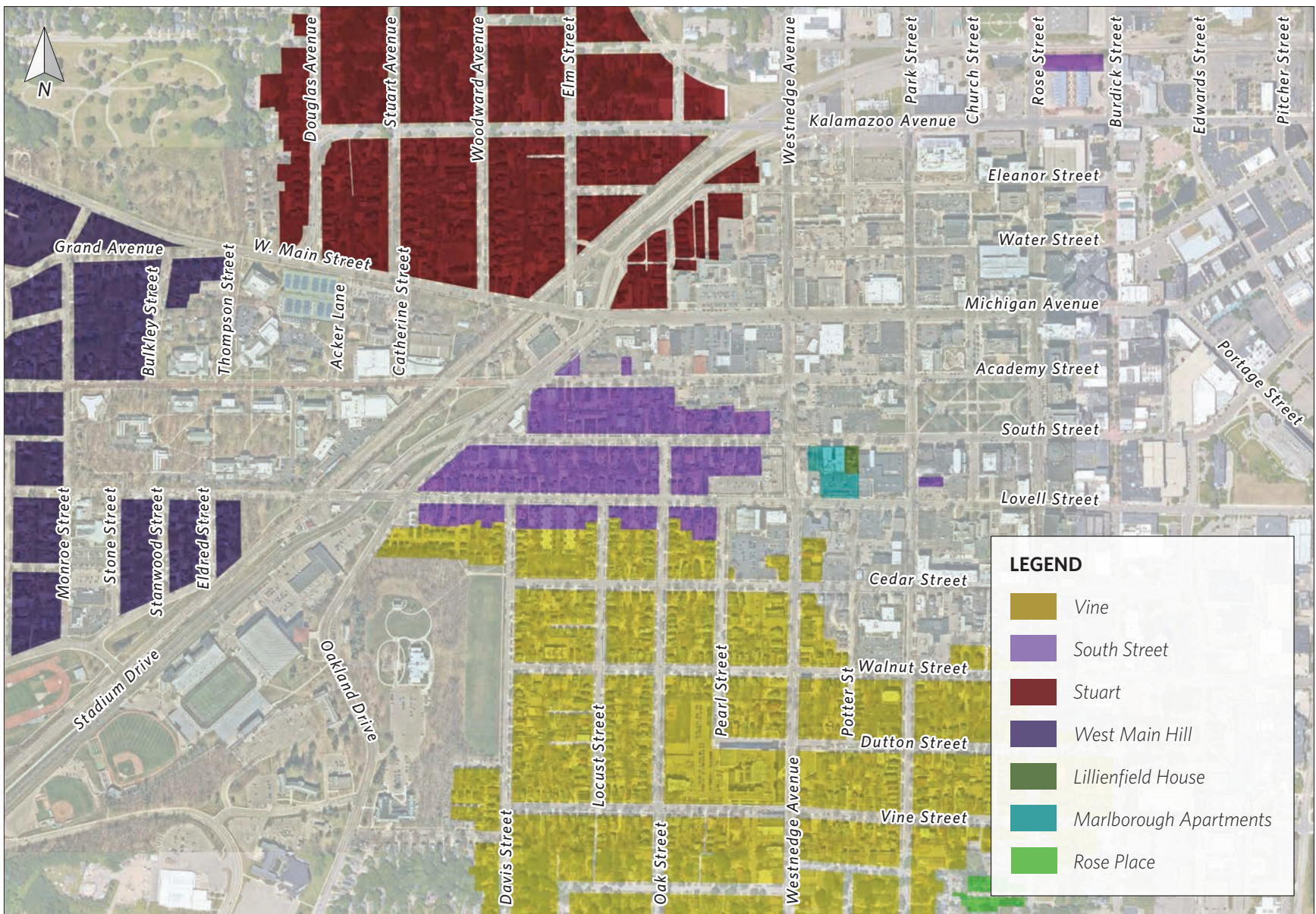


FIGURE 144: Existing Local Zones
Protection at the local level is more restrictive, and keeps historic structures safe.

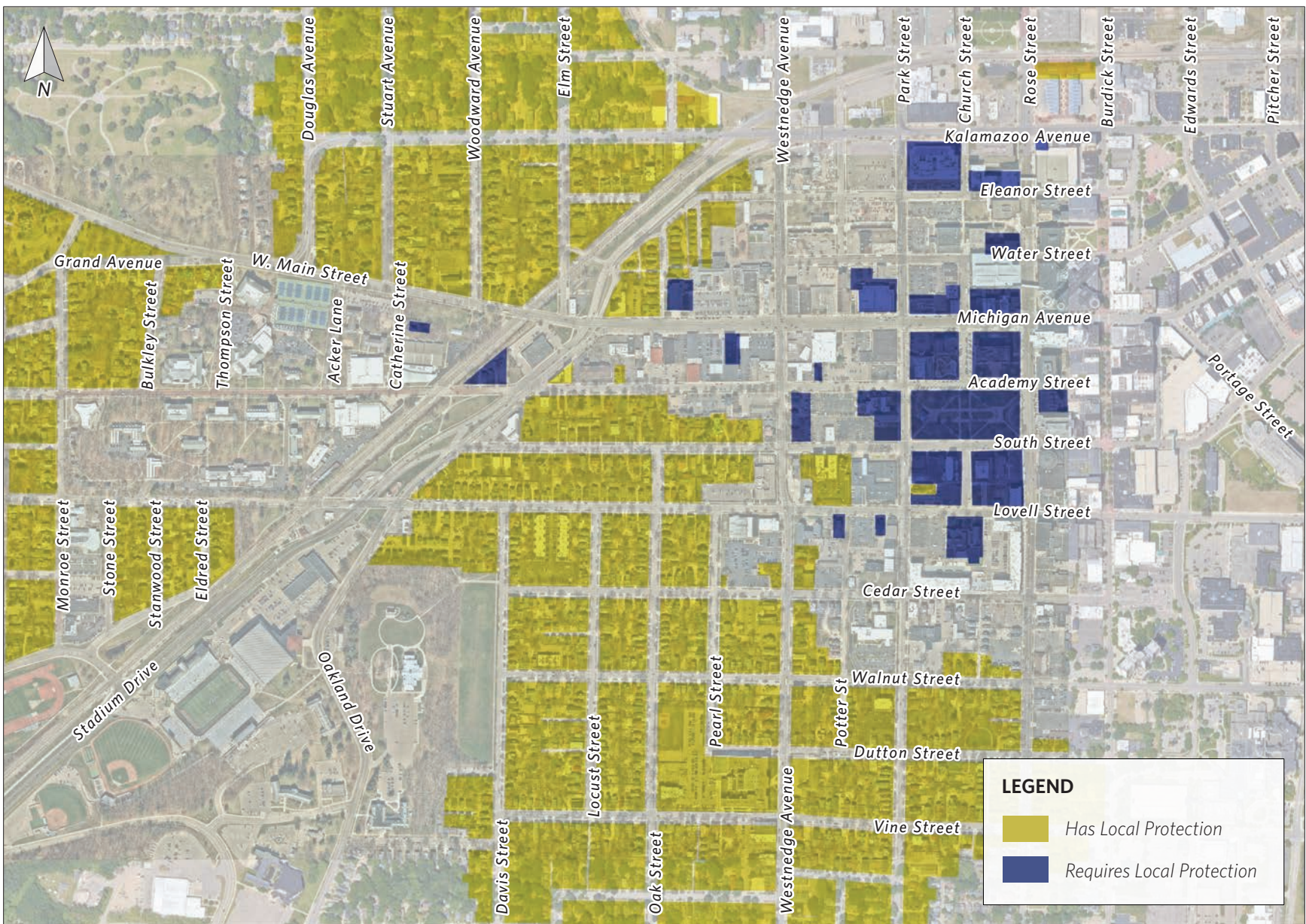


FIGURE 145: Local Protection Needed
Several heritage buildings and historic areas within the city lack local protection, and are in danger of demolition.

VINE NEIGHBORHOOD SPOTLIGHT

With a preservation framework as the foundation for protecting historic buildings, local communities have the underpinning necessary to maintain, activate, and continually evolve their neighborhoods. The Vine Historic District is a superb example of a mixed income, mixed use neighborhood with a variety of housing stock options. Ranging from grand single-family homes to multifamily units, the neighborhood provides an important setting to promote connections between the numerous residential groups existing in the City of Kalamazoo. The neighborhood is a vibrant, active community of homeowners, college-age and young professionals, and other renters.

Like any mixed income community, the Vine neighborhood faces challenges. Absentee landlords are prevalent, numerous houses are in need of repair, and some parts of the neighborhood are not well lit. Despite these issues, the Vine Historic District represents what many consider an ideal neighborhood setting. This perception can be both a blessing and a curse for the community. Its proximity to downtown and lower than average home prices and rents make it an attraction to those wishing to live in the neighborhood.

Understanding the current and future issues facing the neighborhood, it is recommended that a collaborative effort be initiated to ensure that the Vine Historic District maintain both its architectural character as well as its unique identity. Entitled *Keep Vine Eclectic*, this initiative is a joint endeavor between both residents and the larger Kalamazoo community to protect this valuable asset.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1

Many historic buildings need repair
Costs of upkeep and the natural aging process of buildings have left numerous historic homes in need of repair. Absentee landlords exacerbate this situation by ignoring problems.
- 2

New development threatens local character
Tall, acontextual buildings are common fare for contemporary developers. These out-of-scale structures cast shade on existing homes and take away from a neighborhood's local heritage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1

Strategically stack renovation resources
Combine education, community events, and key regulations to collectively fuel efforts around renovating at the home and neighborhood scale.
- 2

Require development to reinforce existing character
Use height limits and form-based codes to cue new development to be more respectful of its context. In tandem, fortify the existing character with social events, public art, and neighborhood pride.



FIGURE 146: Vine Historic District
The Vine neighborhood has a strong sense of place and takes great pride in its historic character.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Like any community, the Vine neighborhood has issues which need to be addressed:

- 1 Out-of-scale development is infringing on the neighborhood and overshadowing local buildings.
- 2 Absentee landlords are prevalent, allowing homes to fall into disrepair, and taking particular advantage of cycles of student renters.
- 3 Many historic houses are in need of repair, and are facing aesthetic and/or structural issues
- 4 Parts of the neighborhood feel unsafe at night, due to both dilapidated properties and a lack of street lights.

Despite these issues, the Vine Historic District represents what many consider an idea neighborhood setting. This perception can be both a blessing and a curse for the community. Its proximity to downtown and lower than average home prices and rents make it attractive.



INITIATIVES & PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

- 1 Initiate landlord, owner, and resident, education programs to inform the neighborhood on the value of preservation to their community and the resources available to them.
- 2 Set a series of hands-on preservation trades training workshops to help with maintaining the properties.
- 3 Establish a streetlight program in the neighborhood to encourage more community interaction and deter crime.
- 4 Explore code changes or HOC standards to encourage rehabilitation of historic structures within the district.
- 5 Support and promote additional community events and engagement activities.
- 6 Encourage artistic expression within the neighborhood through a thematic art installation throughout the neighborhood.
- 7 Work with the business owners in the neighborhood to create a cohesive marketing plan to encourage increased visitors to the area.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Expanding and strengthening the preservation network in Kalamazoo creates both the demand for and the supply of workers in a variety of trades. The education of property owners with preservation-guided repair strategies will encourage them to hire skilled workers, a trend which can operate cyclically with a local renaissance of historic but forgotten arts, crafts, and trade skills. Landlords and contractors have the opportunity to bolster this system by incorporating preservation best practices into their properties, encouraging the current workforce to gain new skills. This demand from small and large players alike can both encourage new workers to join the workforce and enable training at all levels.

A three-pronged approach to training will ensure a sturdy preservation industry in Kalamazoo:

1. **Landlords & Contractors:** Upskill existing workforce to utilize best practices in maintaining/restoring historic properties.
2. **Property Owners & Residents:** Train property owners in correct repair techniques on their properties; determine how to pick a contractor to execute their project.
3. **Workers:** Provide training for entry-level employment as well as skills advancement.

This overall framework has room for all players identified within the heritage network and beyond. The impact of workforce development stretches to neighborhood pride, engagement with local schools, and the empowerment of homeowners to appropriately maintain their own property.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 **A culture of preservation creates new jobs**
When homeowners, landlords, and large-scale developers all operate within a shared vision of preserving historic structures, they work together to support a strong workforce.
- 2 **A skilled workforce revives and spreads knowledge**
The skills and tools needed for preserving historic structures are specialized and often forgotten. A workforce focused on preservation can keep this knowledge alive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 **Involve all players in workforce development**
A capable workforce does not operate in isolation. The new jobs created within Kalamazoo's culture of preservation should operate within a wider network of developers, landlords, homeowners, and community members.
- 2 **A strong education strategy benefits everyone**
Workers and homeowners alike can reap the benefits of education about the specifics of historic home maintenance, from gaining new skills to repairing their home.

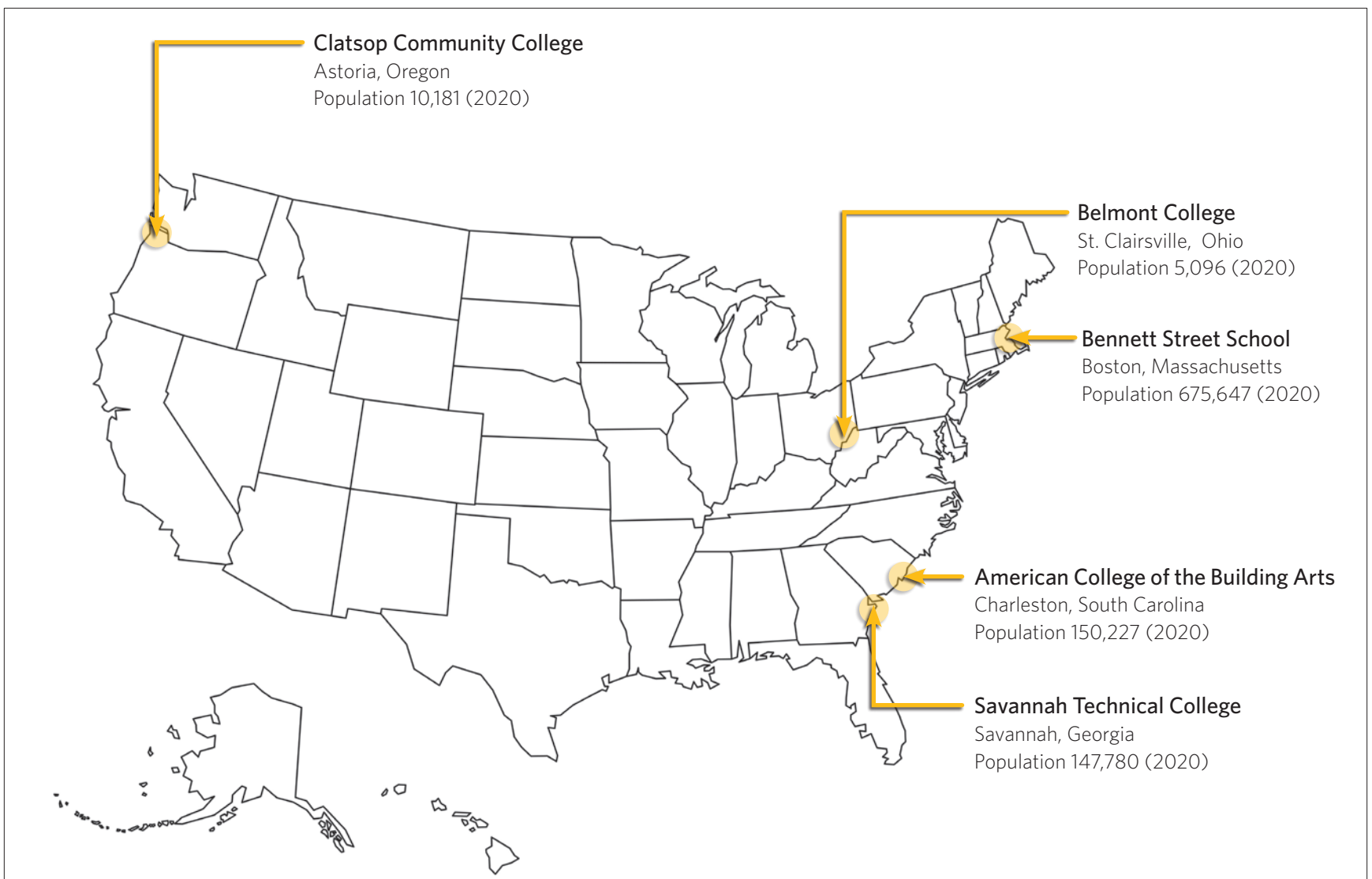


FIGURE 147: Map of Current Educational Offerings

Though the trade schools highlighted on this map do excellent work, they are too few and far between to serve the growing need for specialized skills in historic preservation. This image underscores the need to establish local educational opportunities for building crafts.

Source for Background: Adobe Stock

PRESERVATION MAKER SPACE & TOOL-LENDING LIBRARY

Establish a non-profit organization at a location in town in which dues paying members can use stationary equipment and space to work on their preservation projects. Potential members include both property owners and smaller companies that cannot afford a workshop space.

Modeled after the popular STEM or craft maker space models, the non-profit will solely focus on preservation activities and serve as both a working space as well as a community center in which training can occur and social events can be organized.

Members can check out specialized hand tools without having to invest significant resources on short-term projects. Potential tools could include masonry tools and mixers, infrared heat guns, HEPA filtration systems, tools, air compressors, and other portable hand tools.



POTENTIAL COURSES

- The courses below should be offered to equip participants with knowledge on how to participate in preservation and repair projects.
- Preservation 101
 - Tool Use and Safety
 - Carpentry 101
 - Carpentry 201
 - Windows 101
 - Windows 201
 - Door Restoration
 - Historic Flooring
 - Masonry 101
 - Masonry 201
 - Plaster Basics
 - Lead Remediation
 - Painting 101
 - Painting 201
 - Home Mechanics
 - Planning Your Project 101
 - Planning Your Project 201



POSSIBLE FUTURE PARTNERS



Kalamazoo**VALLEY**TM
community college
Source: Kalamazoo Valley Community College



Source: Michigan Historic Preservation Network





PART 8: NEXT STEPS

ACTION PLAN 116

ACTION PLAN

KEY POINTS FOR ALL PHASES
<div><div>1. Maintain Fidelity to the Vision</div><div>The specifics will adapt over time, but remain true to the overall vision.</div></div> <div><div>2. Continue to Nurture a Relationship with the Public</div><div>Check in frequently with the public to share progress, educate about the process, and gain feedback.</div></div> <div><div>3. Continue to Set a High Bar for Development Partners</div><div>Only offer incentives to development partners willing to construct buildings that will provide long-term value to the city.</div></div>

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN
<div>COORDINATION & PLANNING:</div> <div><div>1. Form a Stakeholder Workgroup</div><div>Include Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, St. Augustine Parish, city departments, property owners and developers. Lead partners: City of Kalamazoo, Institutions, Developers</div></div> <div>PROJECT PRIORITIZATION:</div> <div><div>2. Align with Charrette Recommendations</div><div>Coordinate with Imagine Kalamazoo, Streets for All, and zoning updates. Lead partners: City Planning, Consultants</div></div> <div>COMMUNICATIONS:</div> <div><div>3. Launch Public Communication Campaign</div><div>Share findings and next steps with the public to reinforce the shared vision. Lead partners: City Communications Team</div></div> <div>REGULATORY PREP:</div> <div><div>4. Begin Zoning Code & Preservation Review</div><div>Identify necessary updates for form-based code and preservation zones. Establish a sub-area development regulation through a zoning overlay or incentive district. Begin conversations with Historic Network Partners about the steps to create a workforce development program. Lead partners: Planning, Preservation Coordinator, Historic Preservation Commission/ Historic District Commission</div></div> <div>FUNDING ALIGNMENT:</div> <div><div>5. Identify Available Grant Funds</div><div>Match existing PROTECT, RAISE, and other funding with short-term priorities. Lead partners: City Finance, Grant Admin</div></div> <div>Engage historic district neighborhoods about a tool lending library. Lead partners: Historic Preservation Commission/ Historic District Commission</div> <div>Issue an RFP for design and engineering for the Stadium Drive and W. Michigan Avenue Corridor.</div>

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (6-24 MONTHS)
<div>DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION:</div> <div><div>1. Launch Detailed Design Work</div><div>Begin streetscape redesign, daylighting Arcadia Creek, and park planning. Lead partners: Engineering, Public Works</div></div> <div>INFRASTRUCTURE:</div> <div><div>2. Start “Spaghetti Bowl” Simplification</div><div>Reconfigure intersections and roadways for safer, multimodal access. Lead partners: Consultant, City Engineer</div></div> <div>CATALYST SITES:</div> <div><div>3. Start St. Augustine Block Redevelopment Planning</div><div>Initiate plans for mixed-use redevelopment aligned with historic preservation. Lead partners: Parish, Developers, Planning</div></div> <div>PLACEMAKING:</div> <div><div>4. Initiate Tactical Urbanism & Activation Strategies</div><div>Deploy interim public realm strategies (e.g., pop-up parks, art, furniture). Lead partners: CPED, Arts Council</div></div>

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (6-24 MONTHS), CONTINUED

RETAIL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

5. **Develop a Storefront Handbook & Business Models**
Provide retail templates and supports for small business growth. Lead partners: Economic Development, Local Businesses

COORDINATION & PLANNING:

6. **Involve Developers in Regulations & Coordinated Action**
Engage local developers who currently own properties in the sub-area development zoning overlay or incentive district to define regulations as they support the vision. Encourage the creation of a development coalition between Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, St. Augustine Catholic Church, and majority property owners on W. Michigan Avenue to coordinate development efforts using the proposal in this report.

MID-TERM ACTIONS (2-6 YEARS)

CONSTRUCTION & INFRASTRUCTURE:

1. **Begin Phased Construction of Redesigns**
Execute initial construction in the reconfigured “Spaghetti Bowl,” park areas, and reconnected corridors.
Lead partners: Engineering, Contractors

DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION:

2. **Support Mixed-Use Infill on Priority Blocks**
Work with developers to build residential and commercial units from the charrette designs. Lead partners: CPED, Planning, Private Developers

STREETSCAPE ACTIVATION:

3. **Implement Tree Canopy, Lighting, & Mobility**
Install complete street elements like trees, protected bike lanes, and pedestrian lighting. Lead partners: Public Works, DDA/DEGA

POLICY & REGULATION:

4. **Adopt Updated Zoning & Preservation Code**
Fully integrate charrette zoning and preservation proposals into city code. Lead partners: Planning Commission, Preservation Team

BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM:

5. **Launch Small Business Support Programs**
Recruit and support small businesses using business models and storefront guidelines. Lead partners: Economic Development, Chamber, Nonprofits

EVALUATION & ADJUSTMENT:

6. **Midpoint Evaluation of Outcomes**
Assess safety, connectivity, and economic indicators to refine future investments. Lead partners: Planning, External Evaluators

LONG-TERM ACTIONS (6-10 YEARS)

INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT:

1. **Complete Street Network Transformation**
Commence the full build-out of the W. Michigan Avenue Connection with green infrastructure. Lead partners: City Engineering

URBAN FABRIC:

2. **Infill & Repair Blocks (Michigan-Academy District)**
Execute development of blocks based on charrette building types and scales. Market and promote the newest pre-approved plans for four and six-plex designs represented in this plan. Lead partners: CPED, Private Developers

MONITORING & ADJUSTMENT:

3. **Establish Evaluation Metrics & Phasing Reviews**
Track safety, business success, and multimodal use to inform adjustments. Lead partners: Planning, Public Works

EDUCATION & REPLICATION:

4. **Launch a Third Charrette**
Study the area north of downtown (train station, Kalamazoo Avenue) for a next phase. Lead partners: City, Notre Dame Partnership

STEWARDSHIP:

5. **Create a Gateway Stewardship Council**
Ongoing oversight of quality, design integrity, and stakeholder engagement. Lead partners: Community Leaders, City Officials



Proposed gateway to downtown Kalamazoo