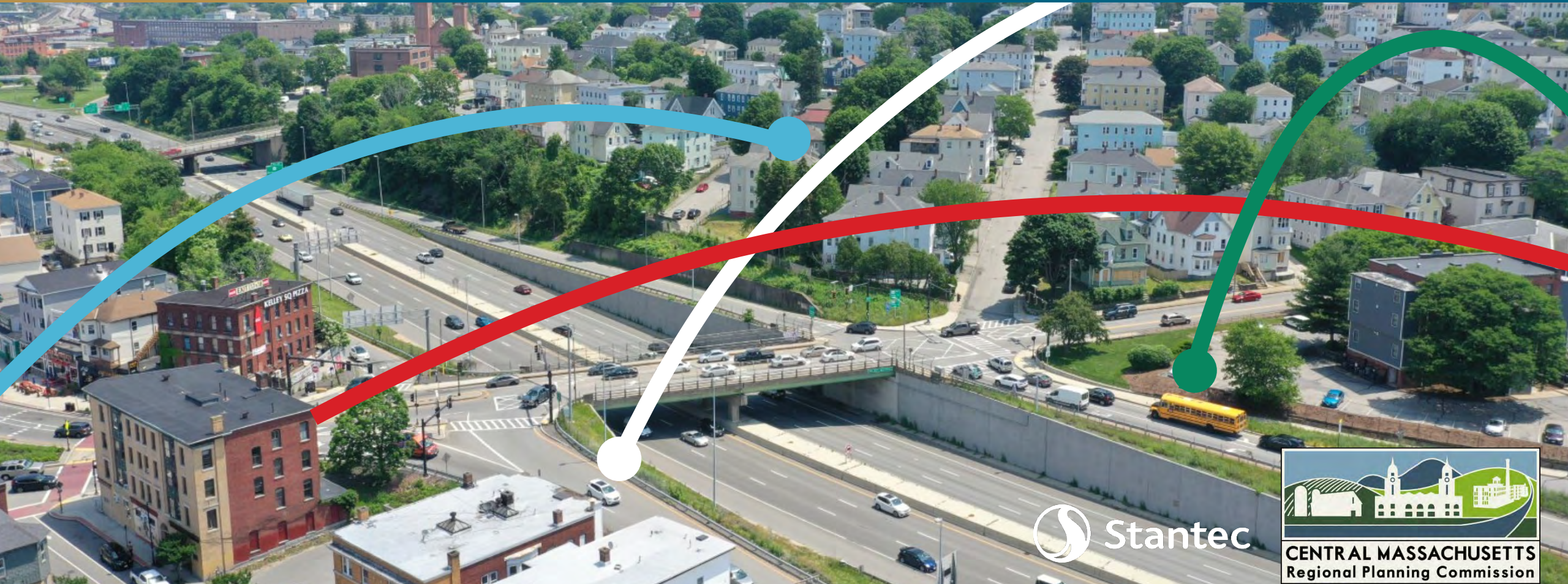


VERNON CONNECTED

UNITY • COMMUNITY • MOBILITY

CMMPO Meeting – 6/17/26



Agenda

- ▶ 2026 Public Engagement
- ▶ Overview of Scenarios
- ▶ Next Steps
- ▶ Survey!

Project Team



The City of
Worcester



Consultants



Transportation planning



Urban design / transportation policy



Urban design / planning



Regina Villa Associates
Community engagement



VERNON CONNECTED

Vernon Connected Committee Members

STEERING COMMITTEE

MassDOT

- Ross Goodale (D3)
- Patrick Hanley (D3)
- Ann Sullivan (D3)
- Joseph Rawley (D3)
- Noah Harper (FFIO)
- Derek Kravat (FFIO)
- Liz Williams (OTP)

City of Worcester Department of Transportation and Mobility

- Stephen Rolle

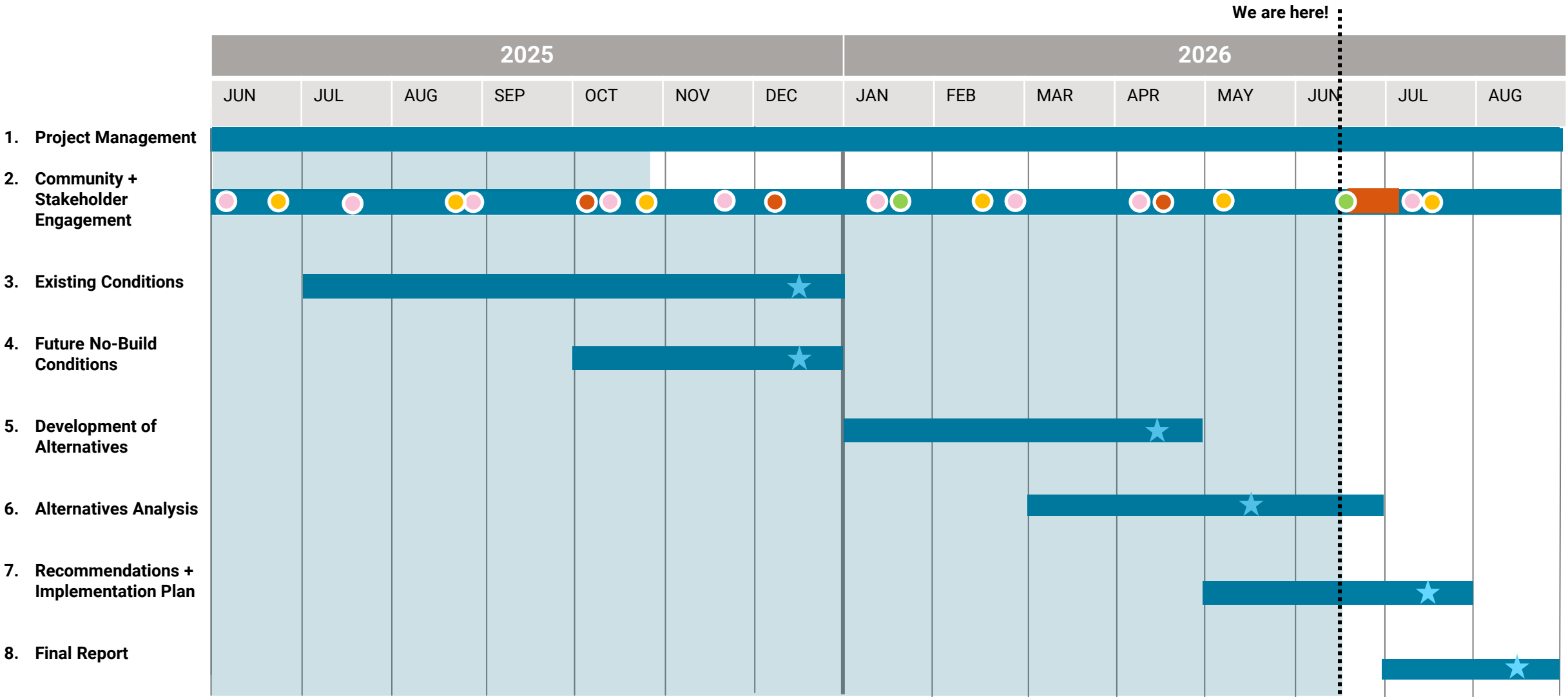
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONS/BUSINESSES

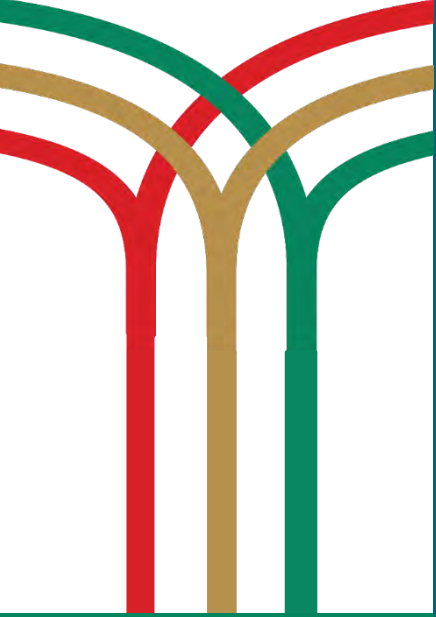
- Green Island Neighborhood
- Vernon Hill
- North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters
- Friendly House
- Clark University
- Grafton Hill Neighborhood Association
- Oak Hill & Grafton Hill
- Canal District Merchants Association
- Worcester Senior Center
- WRTA
- Girls Inc
- Hotel Vernon
- Kelley Square Pizza
- Center for Living and Working



Project Timeline

- Advisory Committee
- Steering Committee
- Public Event
- CMMPO Meeting
- Deliverable





2026 Public Engagement

Where we've been listening...



GREEN SPACE

Parks



Plantings



Trees



Community Garden



Natural Features



ACTIVE SPACE

Playgrounds



Skate Parks



Plazas/Courtyards



Amphitheaters



Sport Fields/Courts



PROGRAMMING

Food Trucks



Pushcarts



Retail Pavilion/Kiosks



Outdoor Dining



Public Art



BUILDINGS

Residential



Retail/Restaurant



Flexible Community Space



Public Restroom



Civic Space



TRANSPORTATION

Improved Bus Stops



Mobility Hubs



Bike Stations



Parking



Bike Lanes



CONNECTIONS

Pedestrian Bridge



Pedestrian Underpass



Non-Auto Bridge



Multimodal Bridge



Highway Deck



Jeff Speck Event: March 19, 2026

~160 Attendees

- Created a special social media plan and unique Instagram reel to help increase attendance



Public Workshop #3: March 24, 2026

~50 ATTENDEES

Mention of the event at the JMAC event and separate promotion the day after helped with timing to boost attendance



Public Workshop #3: March 24, 2026

Using AI as a powerful
visualization tool



Public Workshop #3: March 24, 2026

Using AI as a powerful
visualization tool



How we've gotten the word out: Fact Sheets



**VERNON
CONNECTED**

Building Connections so Community Can Thrive

Fact Sheet #2
December 2025



CMRPC
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

What can a bridge become in its "second life?"

The Vernon Street Bridge is nearing the end of its life span but there are more options for what comes in its second life besides simply replacing it to be exactly the same. The neighborhoods near here and all visitors who pass through may deserve a better option that still conveys traffic but also creates new design opportunities, public amenities, and vital connections across I-290. We'll soon be working with you to dream about the possibilities for the bridge and the nearby corridor. We are excited to hear about your big ideas for Worcester.

Here is how other communities have addressed the challenges of divisive highway infrastructure like I-290 near the Vernon Street Bridge. Do any of these solutions resonate with you?

EXAMPLE 1: Relocate and Replace the Bridge (Providence, RI)

I-95 Bridge (from 1960-2011)



Challenges

Interstate I-195 bisected downtown Providence, creating a physical barrier between downtown, the riverfront, and neighborhoods to the south. By the 1990s, the interstate became functionally obsolete. The solution was to re-route the highway to a new bridge, replacing the old bridge with the Iway walking bridge.

Iway Bridge (since 2015)



Highlights

- Highway traffic was pushed outside of the heart of downtown activity.
- The Iway opened up new connections between neighborhoods and businesses.
- Acres of new riverfront park became accessible.
- Over 26 acres of land was unlocked for development.



**VERNON
CONNECTED**

Building Connections so Community Can Thrive

Fact Sheet #3
April 2026



CMRPC
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

An Evolving Collection of Community Ideas

Vernon Hill, Canal District, Green Island, and Union Hill are just a few of Worcester's historic neighborhoods that have long been impacted by the physical barrier of I-290. Each area along this corridor has its own unique character, robust community, and hidden gems that truly make Worcester "the Heart of the Commonwealth."

Vernon Connected is a year-long planning project to identify a clear vision for future of the Vernon Street Bridge and I-290 corridor between Quinsigamond Avenue and Grafton Street near Union Station. This vision is being developed by community members as part of an ongoing conversation of ideas, preferences, and priorities, and informed by design experts with thoughtful consideration of the historic and current impacts of I-290 in this area.

HOW WE HAVE BEEN CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

3	12+	2	8	1	many
Public Workshops	Pop-up Tent/ Table Sessions	Public Surveys	Steering/Advisory Committee Meetings	Active Project Website	Targeted discussions with stakeholders

We also recently held a special event with presentations by community members and renowned urbanist and author, **Jeff Speck**. During this talk, Jeff laid the foundation for the essentials of walkable communities. He also shared examples of many places that have successfully created transformational highway improvements to inspire Worcester to also dream big about *"how I-290 can become a connector again instead of a separator."*

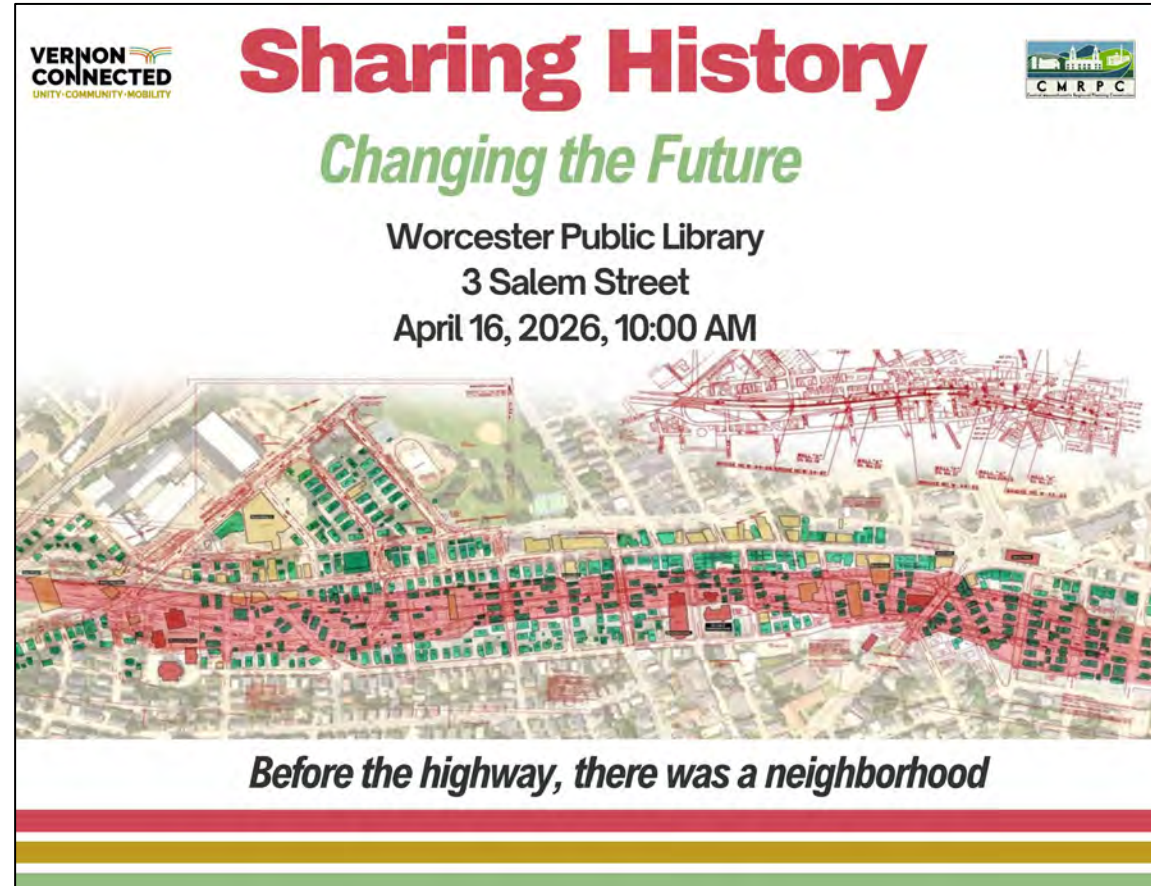


Brickbox Theater, JMAC (March 18, 2026)



Other Activities: **Connections in the Community**

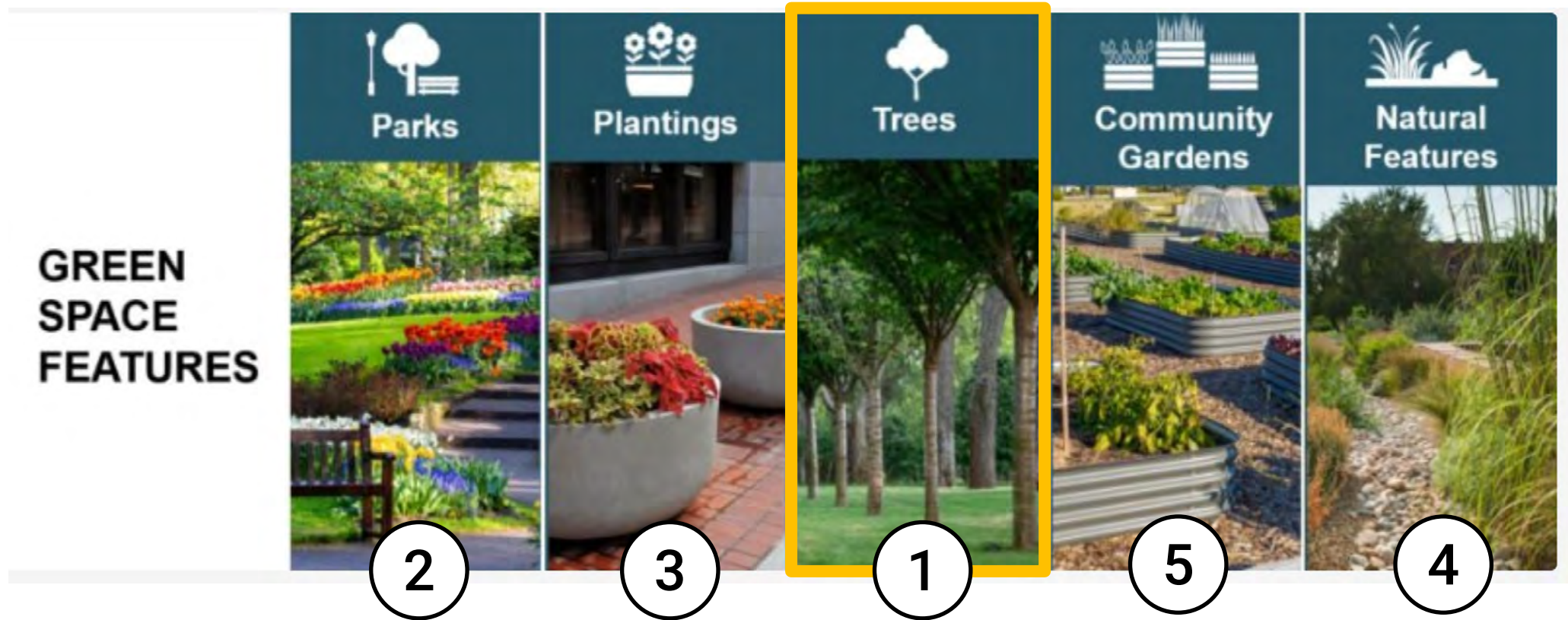
Oral History Event- April 16, 2026



Public Survey #2

When thinking about changes you'd like to see in the corridor, how important is it to include these features?

Overall order of preference. Trees ranked much higher than others.



Public Survey #2

When thinking about changes you'd like to see in the corridor, how important is it to include these features?

Overall order of preference.

Playgrounds and Plazas were tied, with very little interest in the other three options.

ACTIVE SPACE FEATURES



Public Survey #2

When thinking about changes you'd like to see in the corridor, how important is it to include these features?

Overall order of preference. Public art and dining had a similar level of response with much less interest in options related to commerce.

PROGRAMMING FEATURES



Public Survey #2

When thinking about changes you'd like to see in the corridor, how important is it to include these features?

Overall order of preference. There was consistent level of interest across all options.

BUILDINGS FEATURES



Public Survey #2

When thinking about changes you'd like to see in the corridor, how important is it to include these features?

Overall order of preference. Parking scored very low, comparatively.

TRANSPORTATION
FEATURES

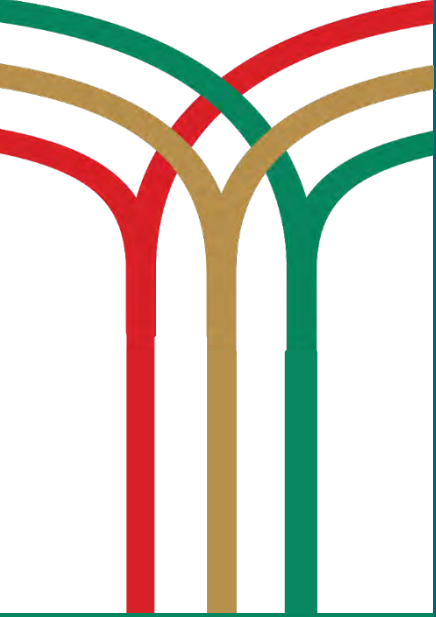


Public Survey #2

When thinking about changes you'd like to see in the corridor, how important is it to include these features?

Overall order of preference. Pedestrian and Non-Auto Bridge responses were double the response of the other options. .





Introduction to Scenarios

Project Goals



Supports community across social, cultural, economic, and racial lines



Establish the corridor as a modern model of **sustainable, innovative, and environmentally-responsible** urban design



Better connections for people walking, biking, driving, and taking transit



Expand **safe transportation options** for access to jobs, services, and other daily activities.



Drive **inclusive economic opportunity** and **local business growth**



Increase **community pride** and improve perceptions about Worcester



VERNON CONNECTED: UNITY. COMMUNITY. MOBILITY.



Framework of Overall Projects

ALL PROJECT IDEAS BY TYPE



Roadway

- 9** Add a new I-290 westbound off-ramp to Quinsigamond Avenue
- 11** Convert Grafton Street on-ramp to I-290 eastbound to a single ramp at the signal
- 13** Remove Millbury Street south of Arwick Street and make Arwick two-way
- 14** Make Ward Street a green street with slower traffic and safe walking/biking
- 16** Build a new multimodal bridge at Columbia Street
- 35** Make Harding Street a green street with slower traffic and safe walking/biking
- 37** Make Endicott Street a green street with slower traffic and safe walking/biking
- 38** Make Upsala and Franklin Streets green streets with slower traffic and safe walking/biking



Pedestrian and Bicycle

- 4** Widen the Vernon Street Bridge with wider sidewalks and a bikeway
- 17** Build a new pedestrian-only bridge at Fox Street
- 18** Extend the Blackstone Greenway to the WRTA hub in downtown
- 22** Improve bike/walk conditions in the Endicott Street underpass
- 23** Improve bike/walk conditions in the Seymour Street underpass
- 24** Improve bike/walk conditions in the Millbury Street underpass
- 25** Build a new pedestrian/bike underpass at Taylor Street
- 27** Add a protected bikeway on Vernon and Winthrop Streets west of Providence
- 36** Add a protected bikeway on Providence Street south of Winthrop



Green and Open Space

- 1** Cap I-290 from Vernon Street to Harrison Street with a major park and some housing
- 2** Add a triangular highway cap park between Vernon Street and Ingalls Street
- 5** Remove the northerly Vernon Street highway ramps
- 6** Narrow the Vernon Street I-290 eastbound off-ramp to one lane
- 7** Remove the southerly Vernon Street highway ramps
- 8** Add a new I-290 eastbound on-ramp from Harrison Street
- 15** Close Jefferson Street and add a pocket park at Vernon Street
- 21** Add a pocket park and new traffic signal at the Vernon Street and Winthrop St intersection
- 26** Install an eastern embankment greenway from Vernon Street to Harrison Street
- 34** Build a new park at Quinsigamond Avenue where Millbury Street was removed
- 39** Add an urban forest within the Grafton Street on-ramp

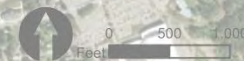
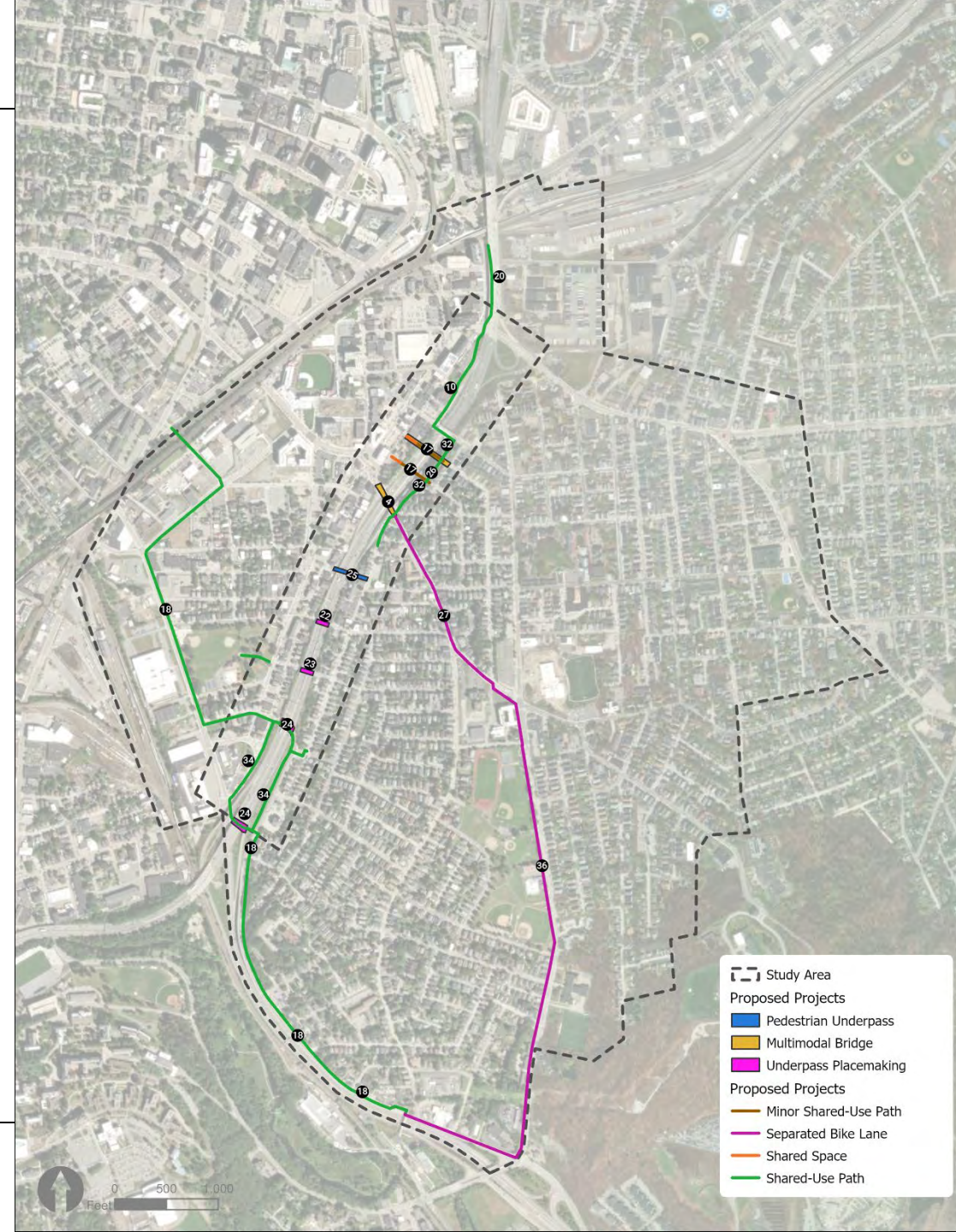
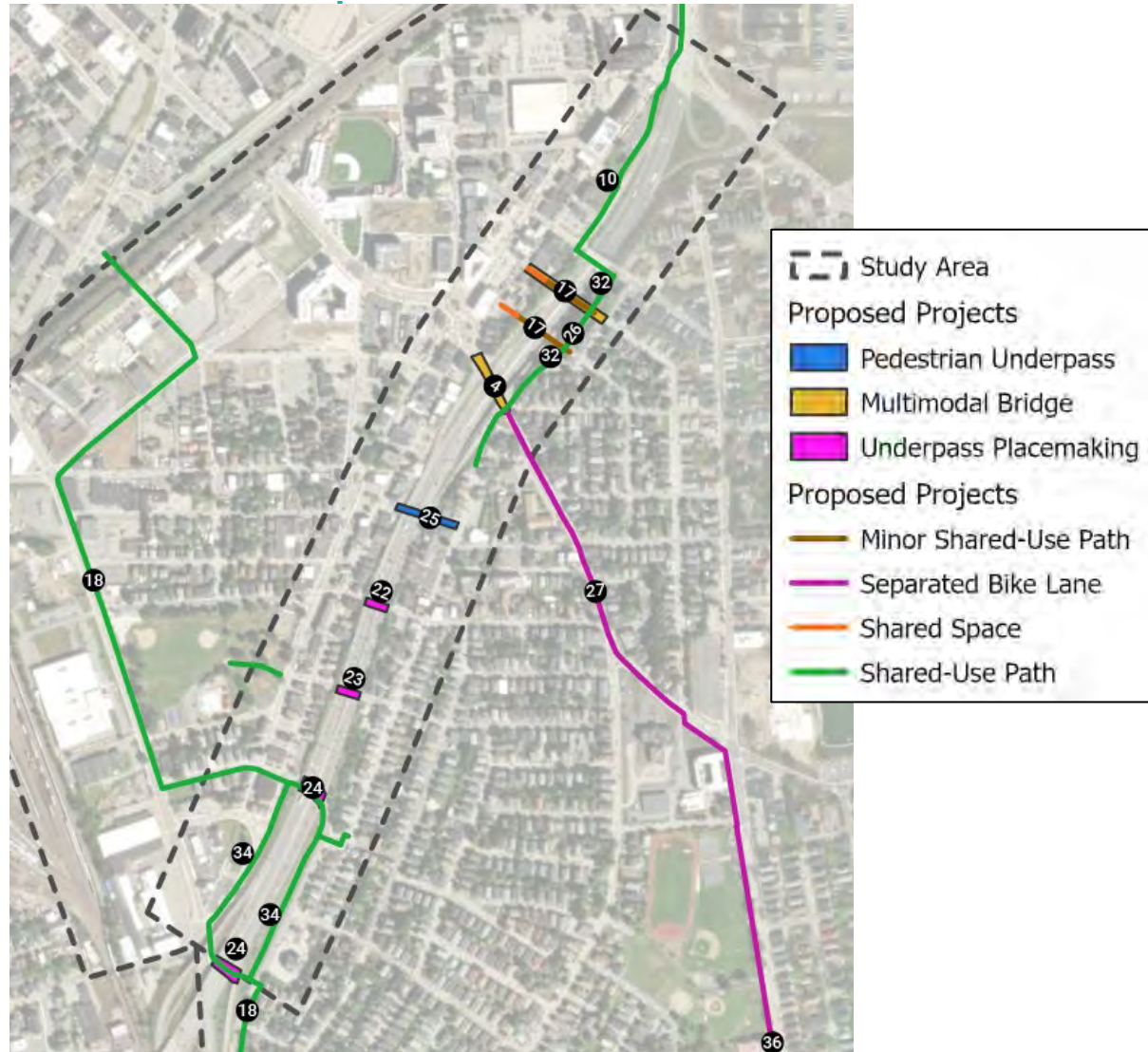


Development and Programming

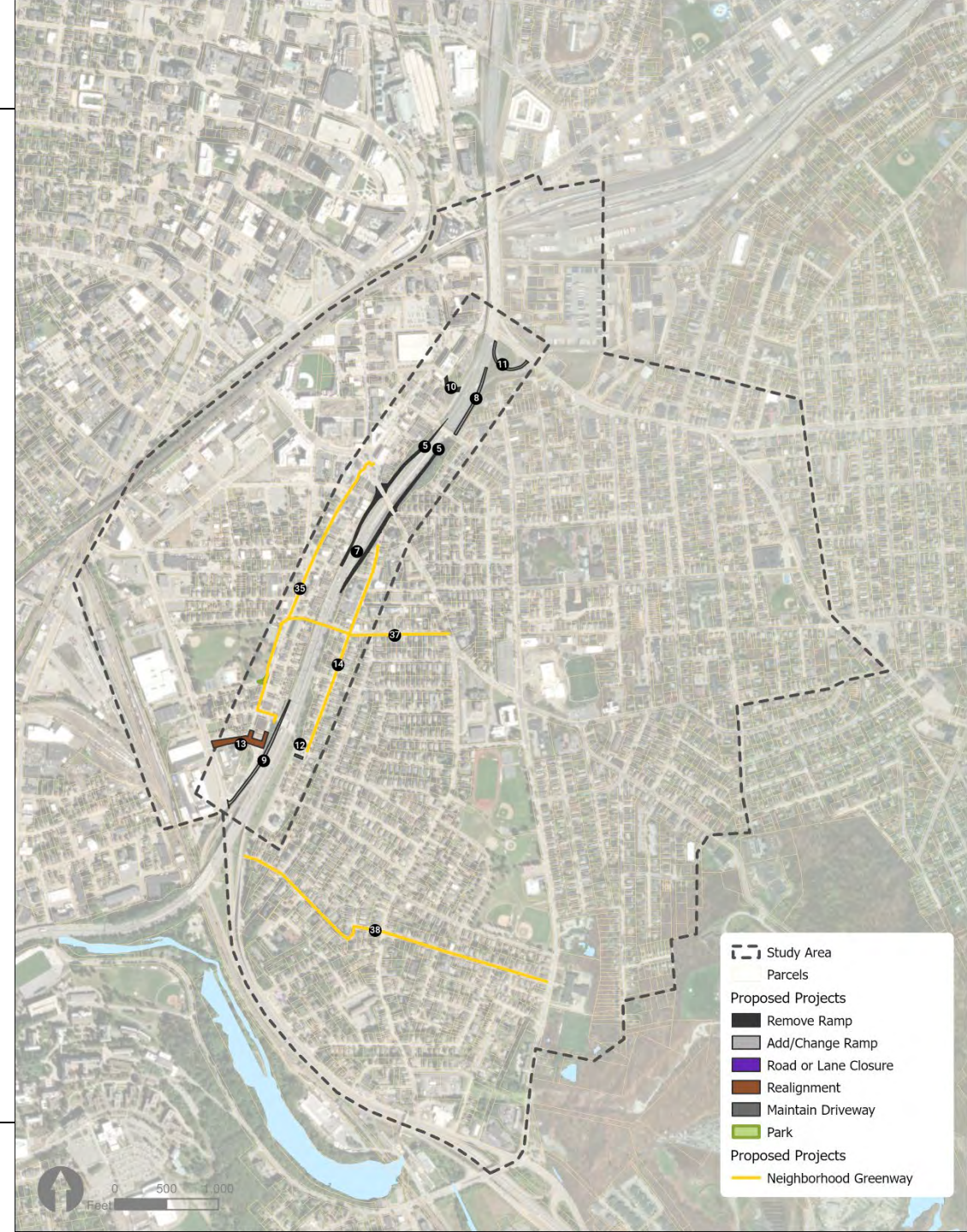
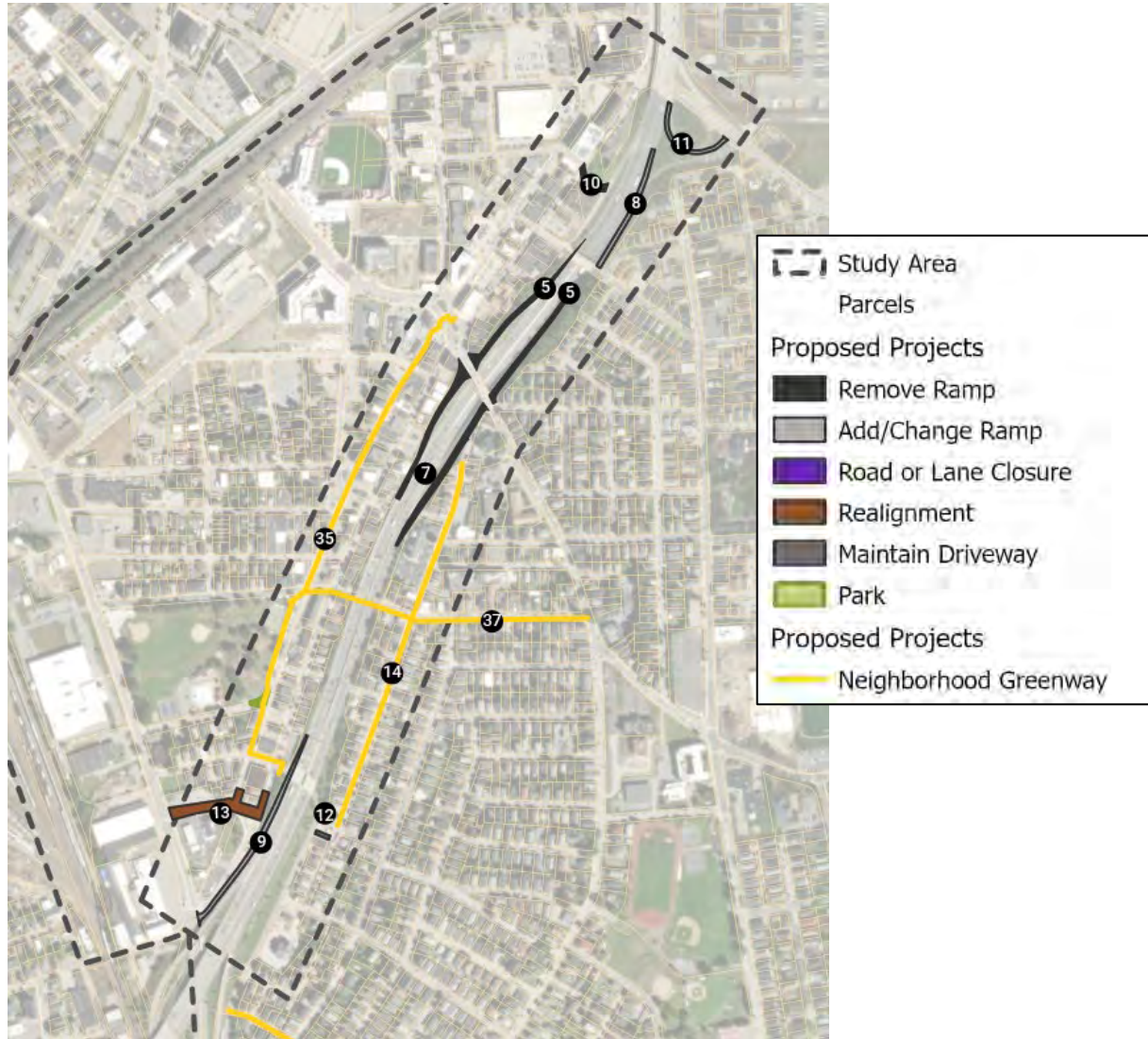
- 10** Remove the I-290 westbound U-turn off-ramp to Water Street
- 12** Convert the Millbury Street off-ramp to Ward Street into a neighborhood park
- 19** Remove the beginning of Washington Street at Harding Street to create a neighborhood park
- 20** Add a new large under-highway park north of Grafton Street
- 28** Add mixed-use development with a grocery store spanning the highway at Vernon Street
- 29** Add smaller infill housing along Harding, Millbury, Green, and Water Streets
- 30** Add housing at the rebuilt Grafton Street highway interchange
- 30** Add housing along the highway cap near Harrison Street
- 32** Add housing on the eastern highway embankment
- 33** Add housing at Quinsigamond Avenue where Millbury Street was removed



Bike/Pedestrian Projects



Roadway Impact Projects



Open Space Projects



Development Projects



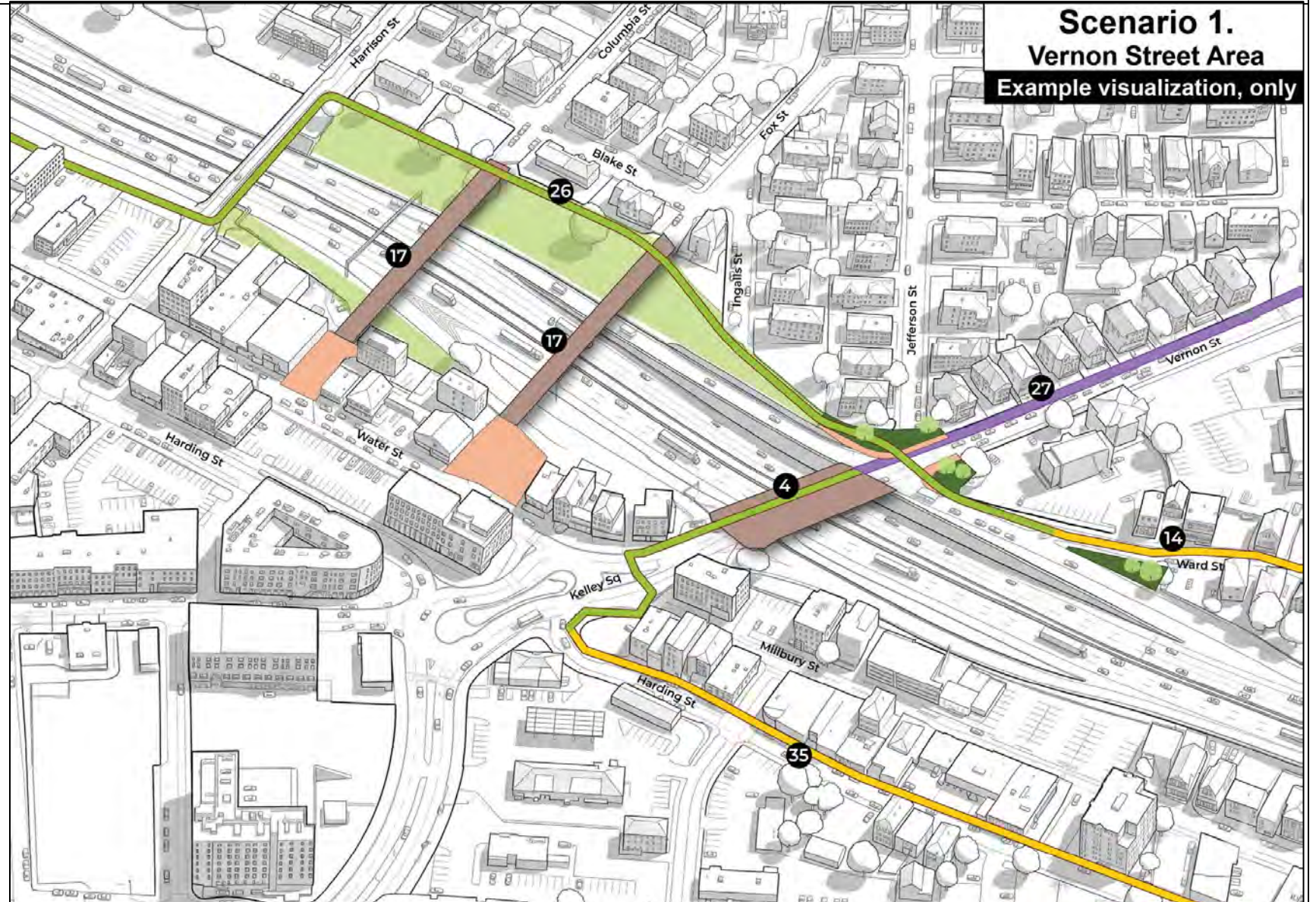
Scenario 1. Neighborhood Connections



Scenario 1. Neighborhood Connections

Big impacts-

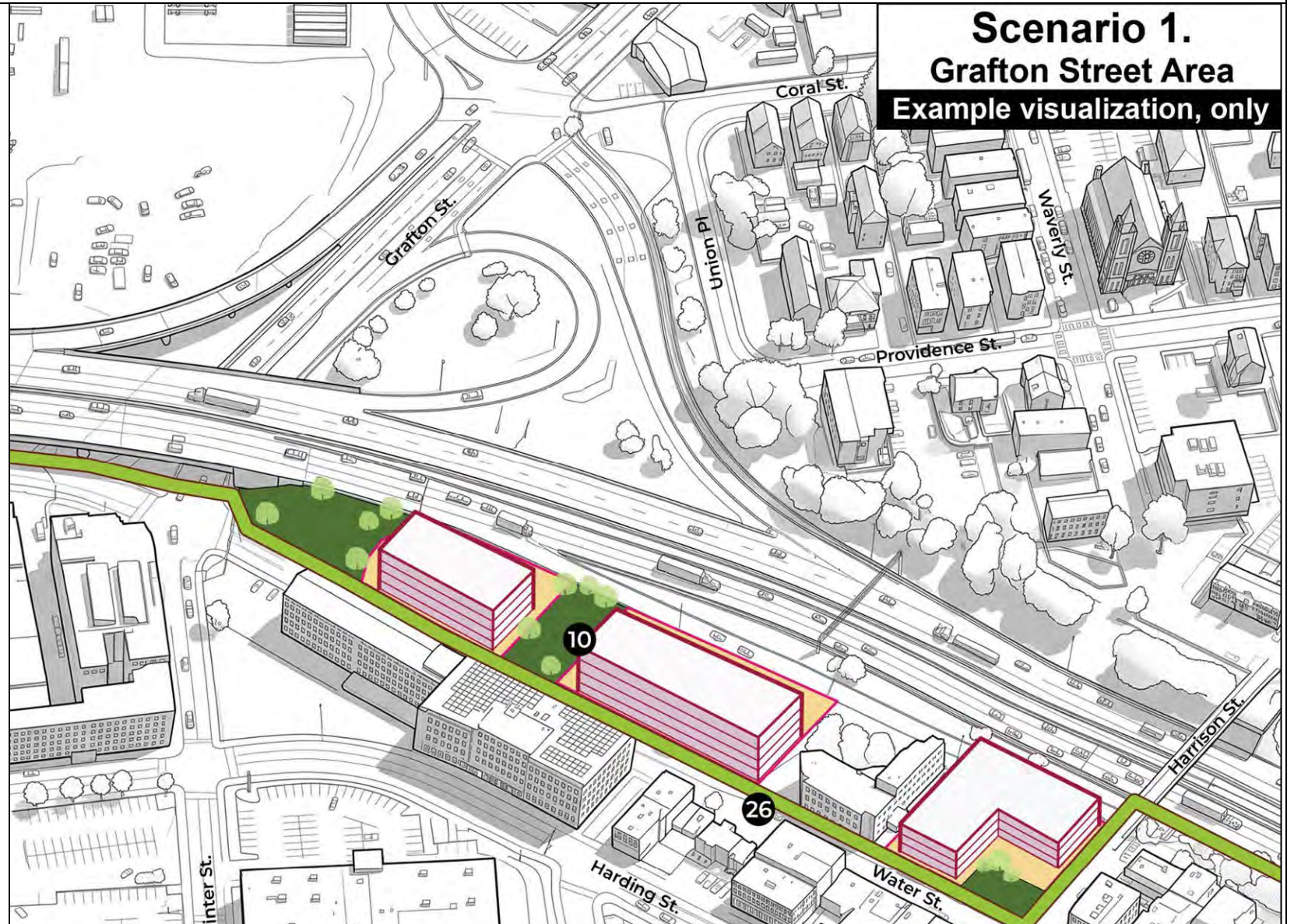
- New ways to cross I-290
- A wider, multimodal-friendly bridge
- Connect bike networks



Scenario 1. Neighborhood Connections

Big impacts-

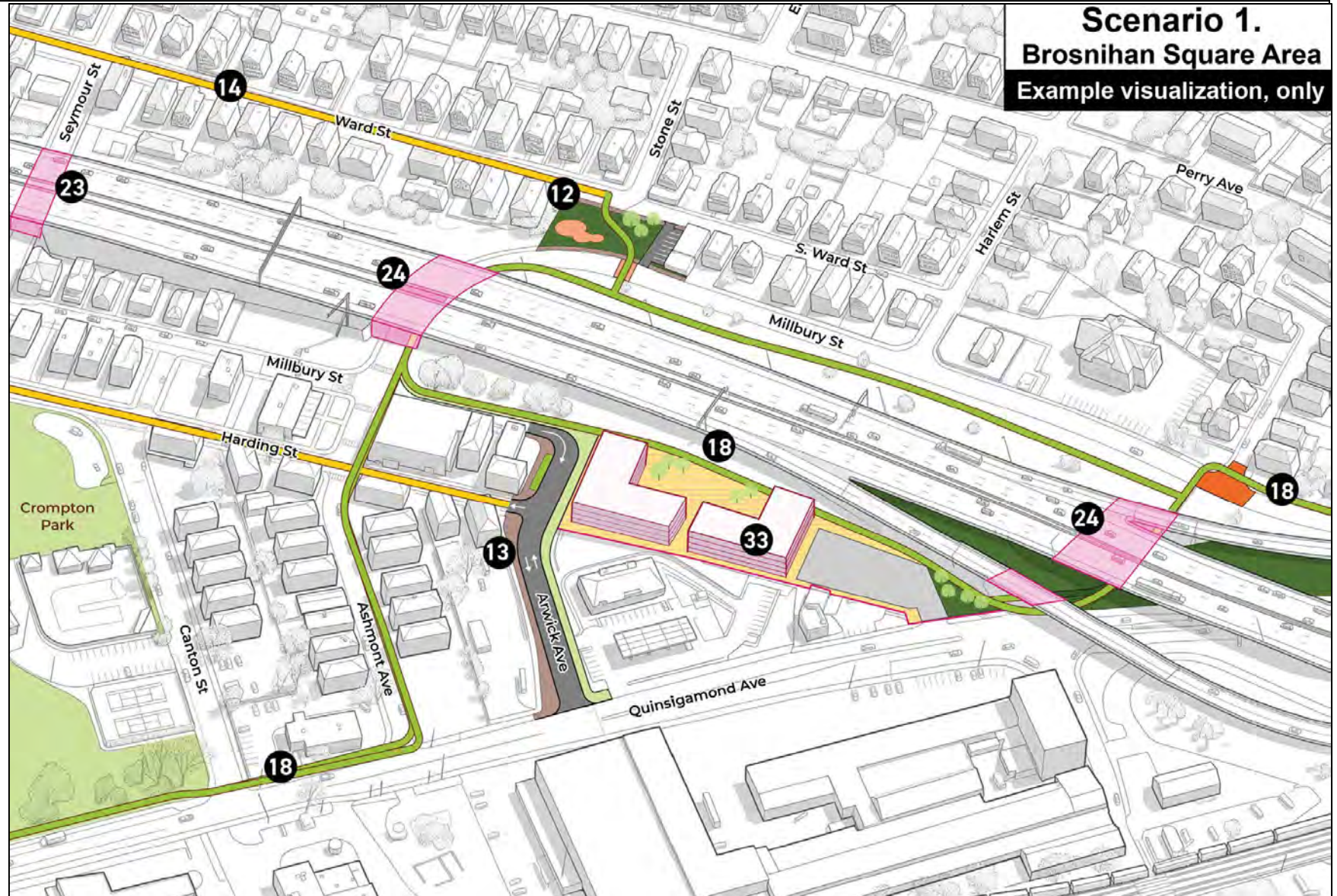
- New development to address housing and needs for other uses in Worcester
- North to south bike connections along the corridor



Scenario 1. Neighborhood Connections

Big impacts-

- Repurpose segment of Millbury St
- Activate Brosnihan Sq with new uses
- Improving existing underpasses



Scenario 2. Nodal Focus



Scenario 2. Nodal Focus

Big impacts-

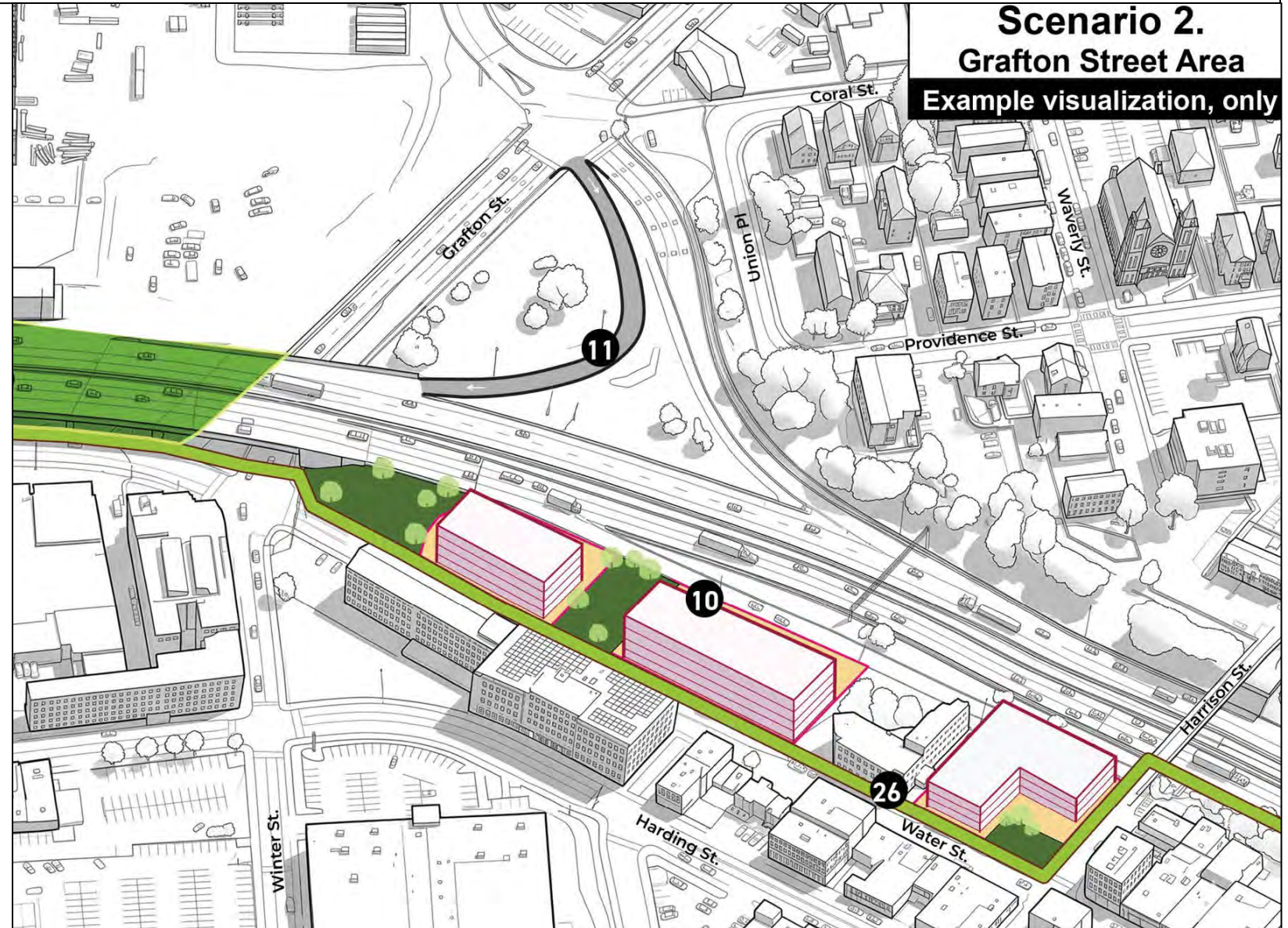
- Partial highway cap to introduce green space
- Widen the bridge and add a bikeway
- Create a new multimodal bridge across Columbia



Scenario 2. Nodal Focus

Big impacts-

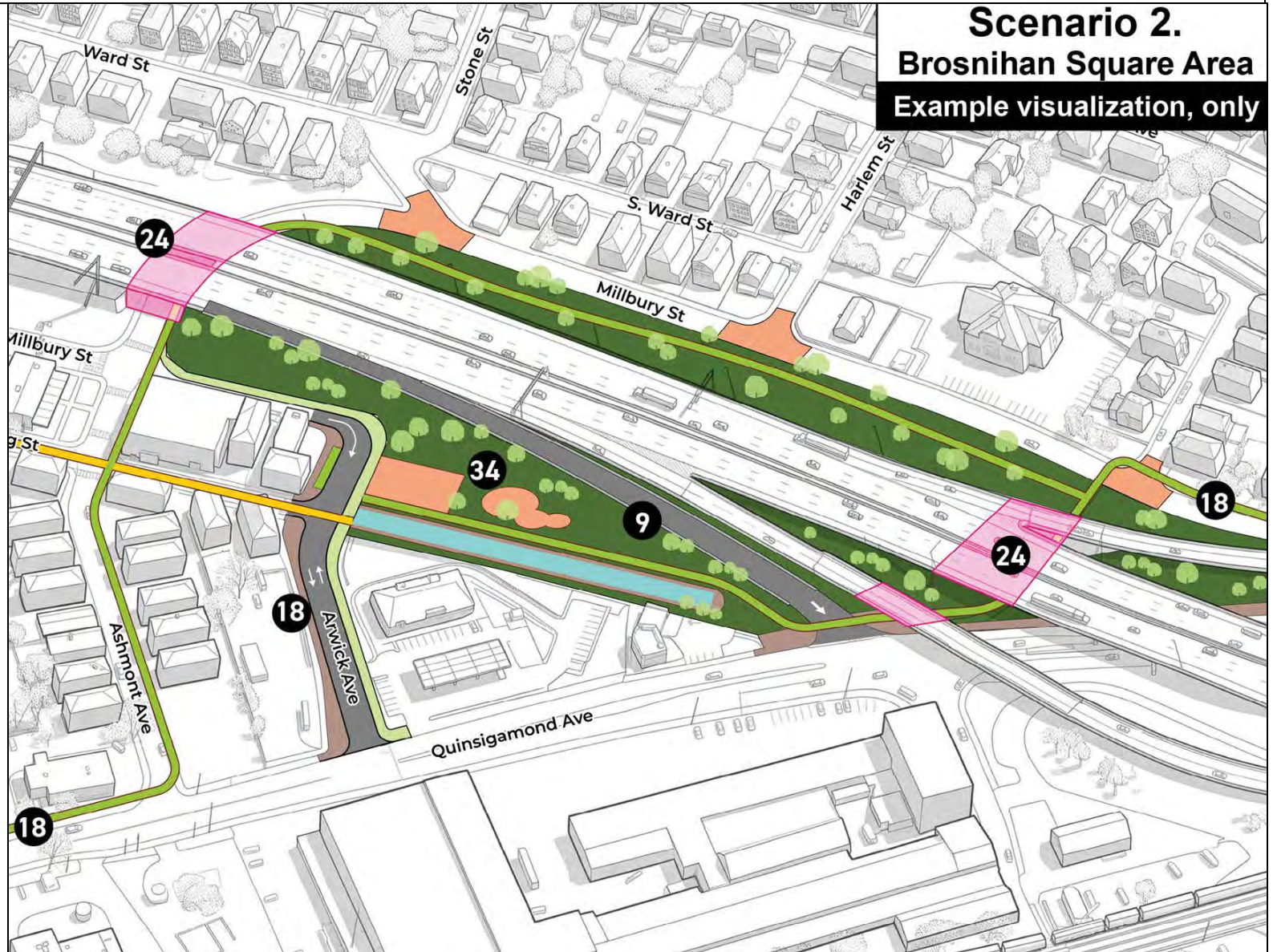
- Relocate the highway access from Grafton St
- New development to address housing and needs for other uses in Worcester
- North to south bike connections along the corridor



Scenario 2. Nodal Focus

Big impacts-

- Add a new off-ramp at Quinsigamond Ave
- Daylight a portion of the Blackstone Canal
- Create a larger gateway park



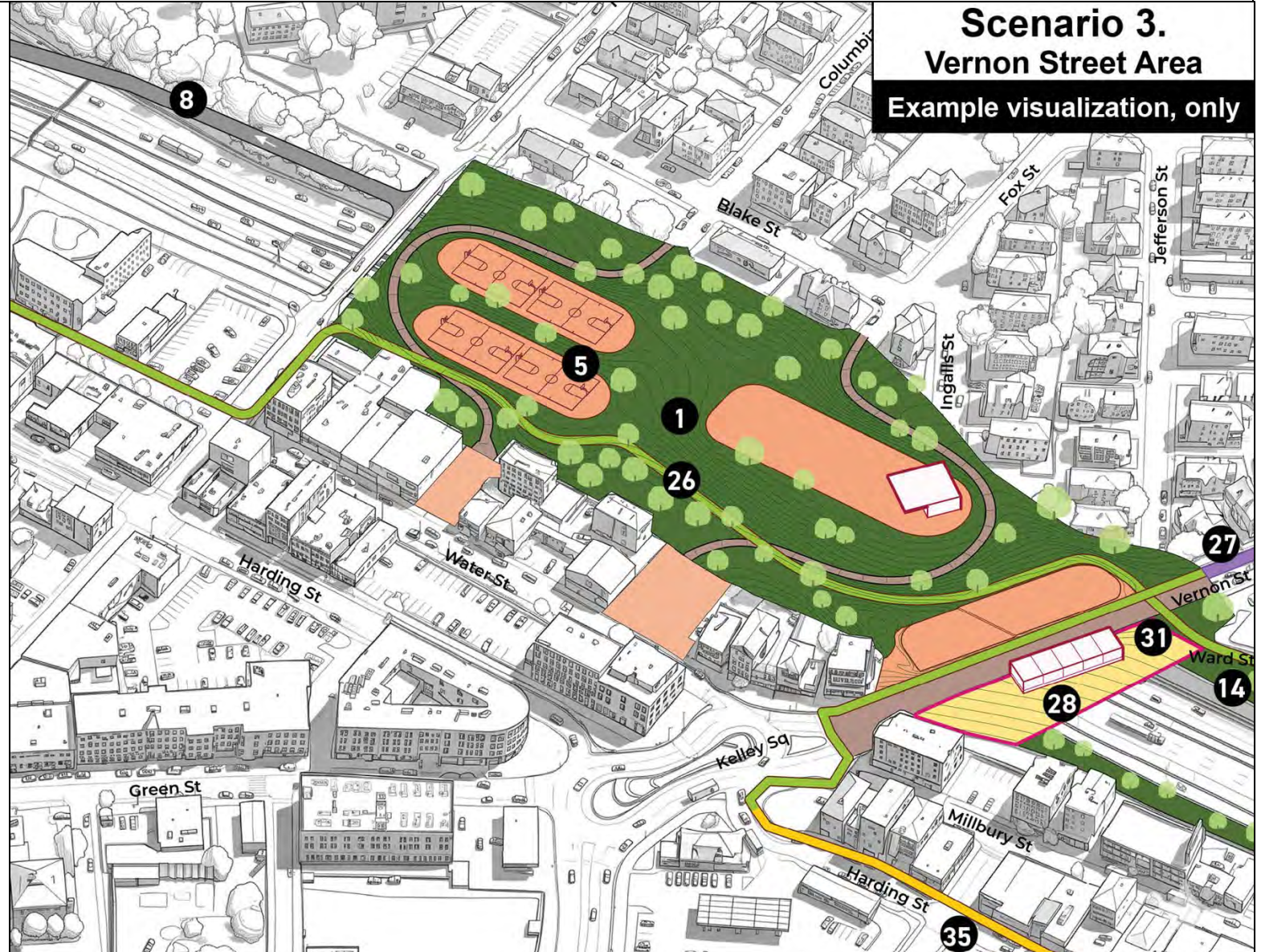
Scenario 3. Major Park Focus



Scenario 3. Major Park Focus

Big impacts-

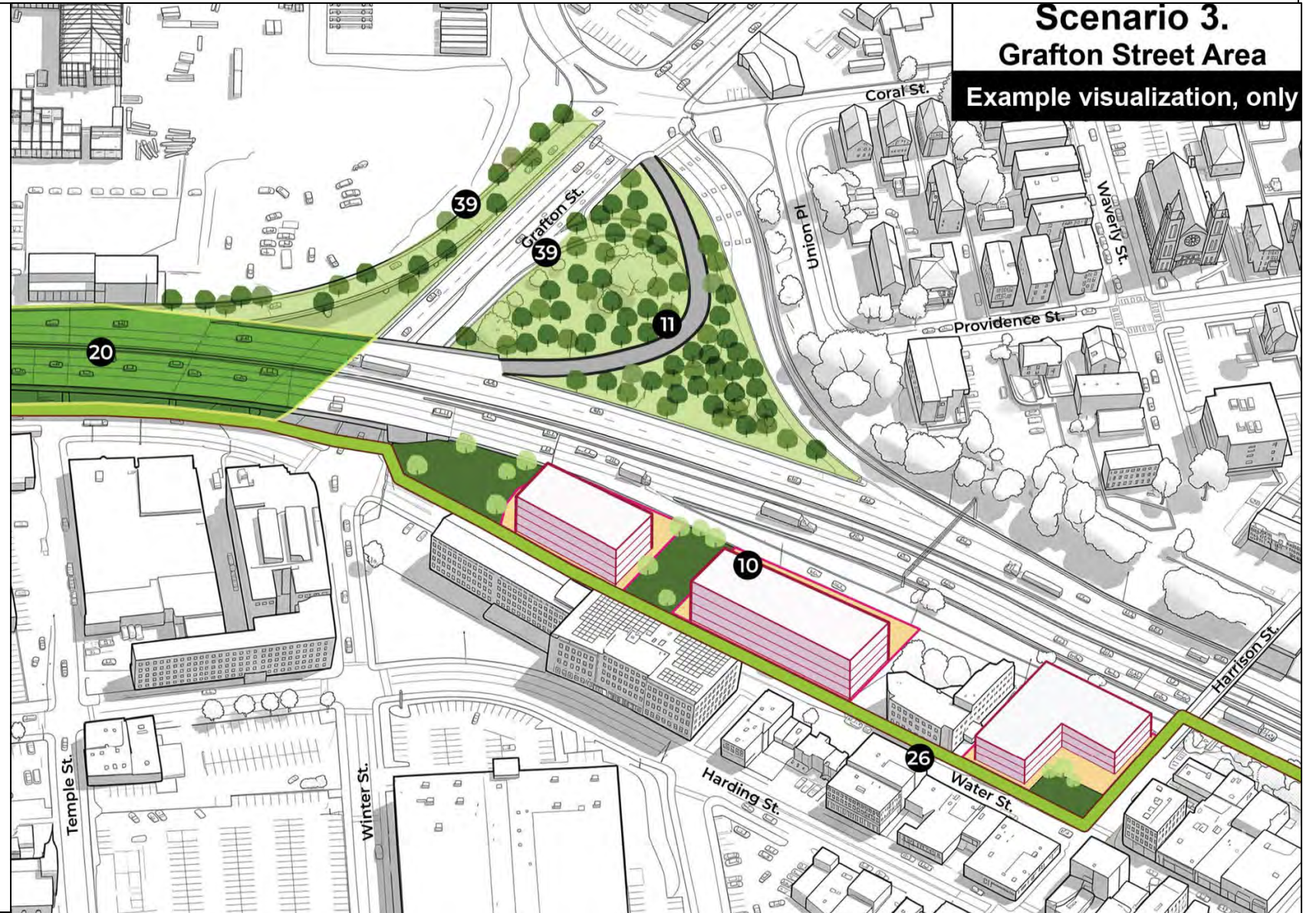
- Fully cap the highway between Vernon and Harrison for significant green and active space
- Widen Vernon St bridge and activate with new uses

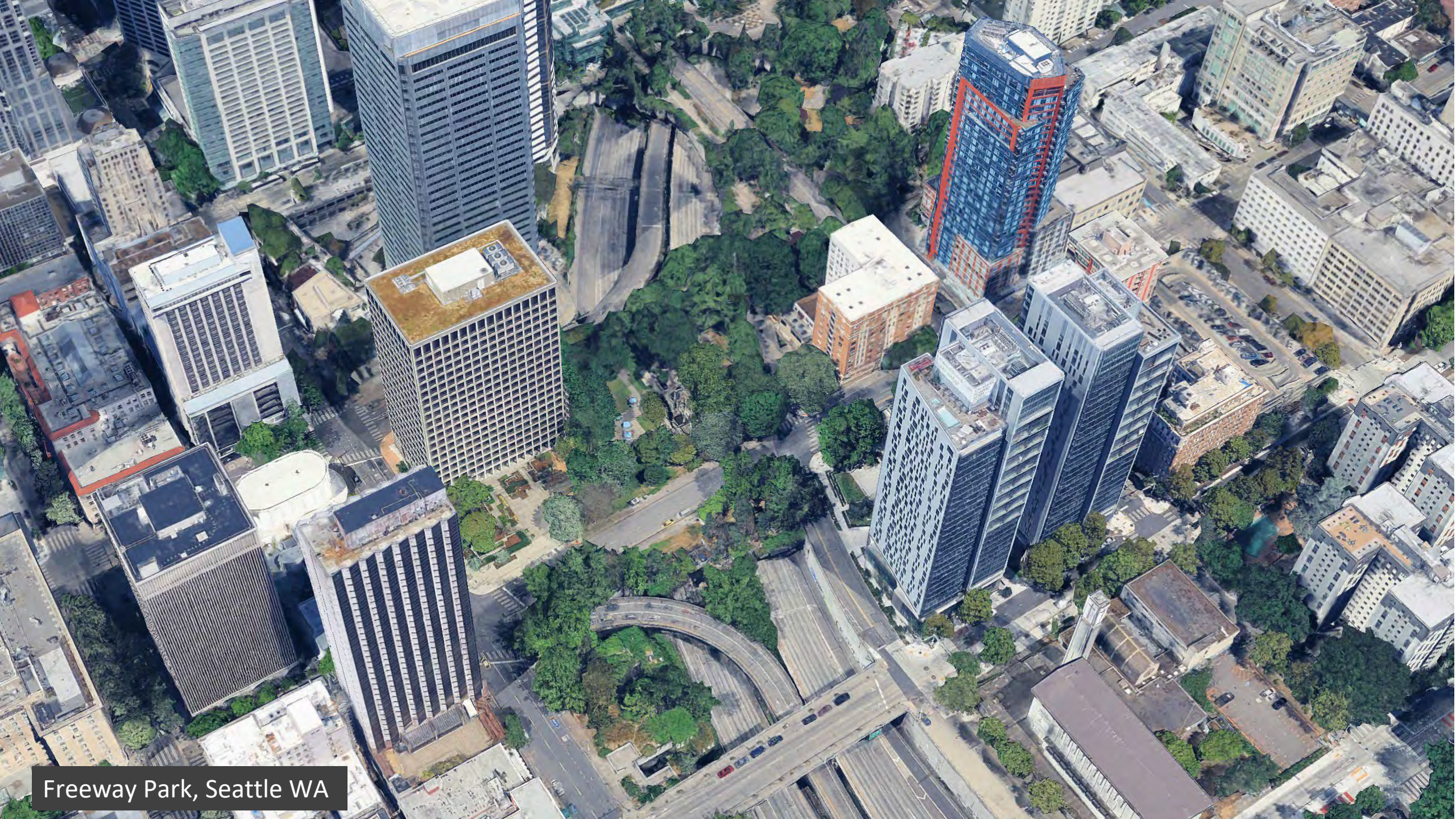


Scenario 3. Major Park Focus

Big impacts-

- Large under-highway park
- Relocate the highway access from Grafton St
- New development to address housing and needs for other uses in Worcester





Freeway Park, Seattle WA



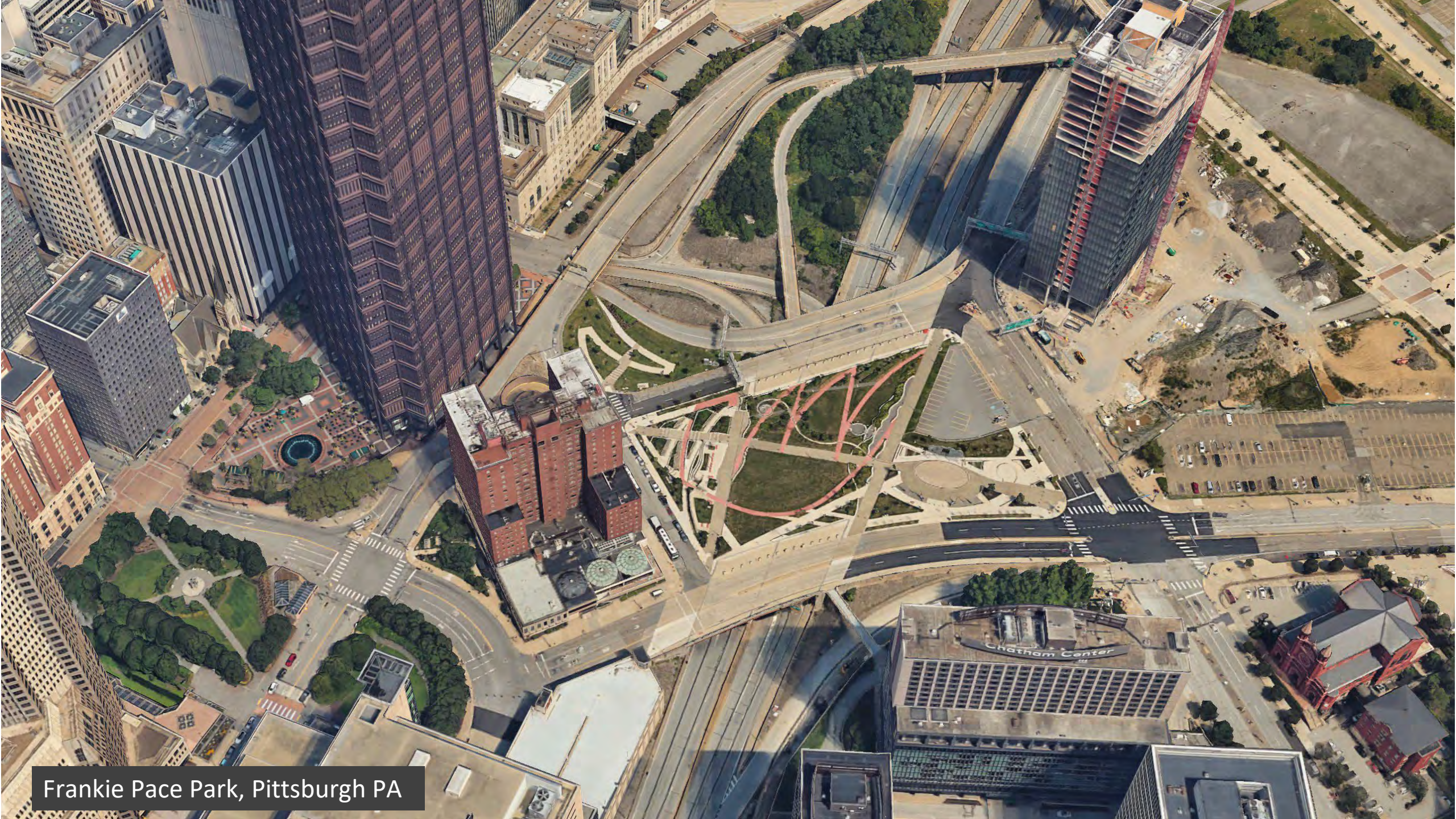
Freeway Park, Seattle WA



Klyde Warren Park, Dallas TX



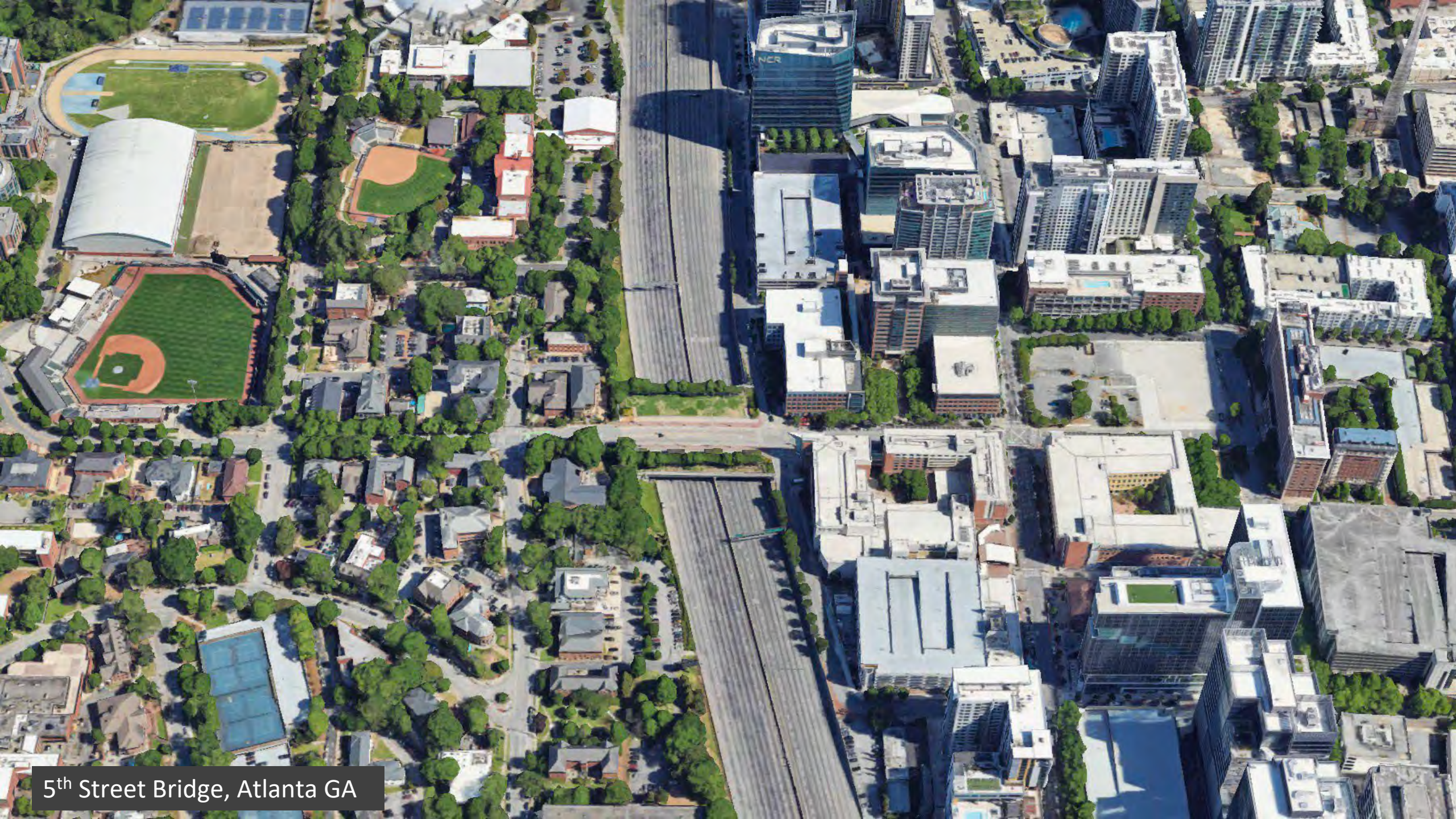
Klyde Warren Park, Dallas TX



Frankie Pace Park, Pittsburgh PA



Frankie Pace Park, Pittsburgh PA



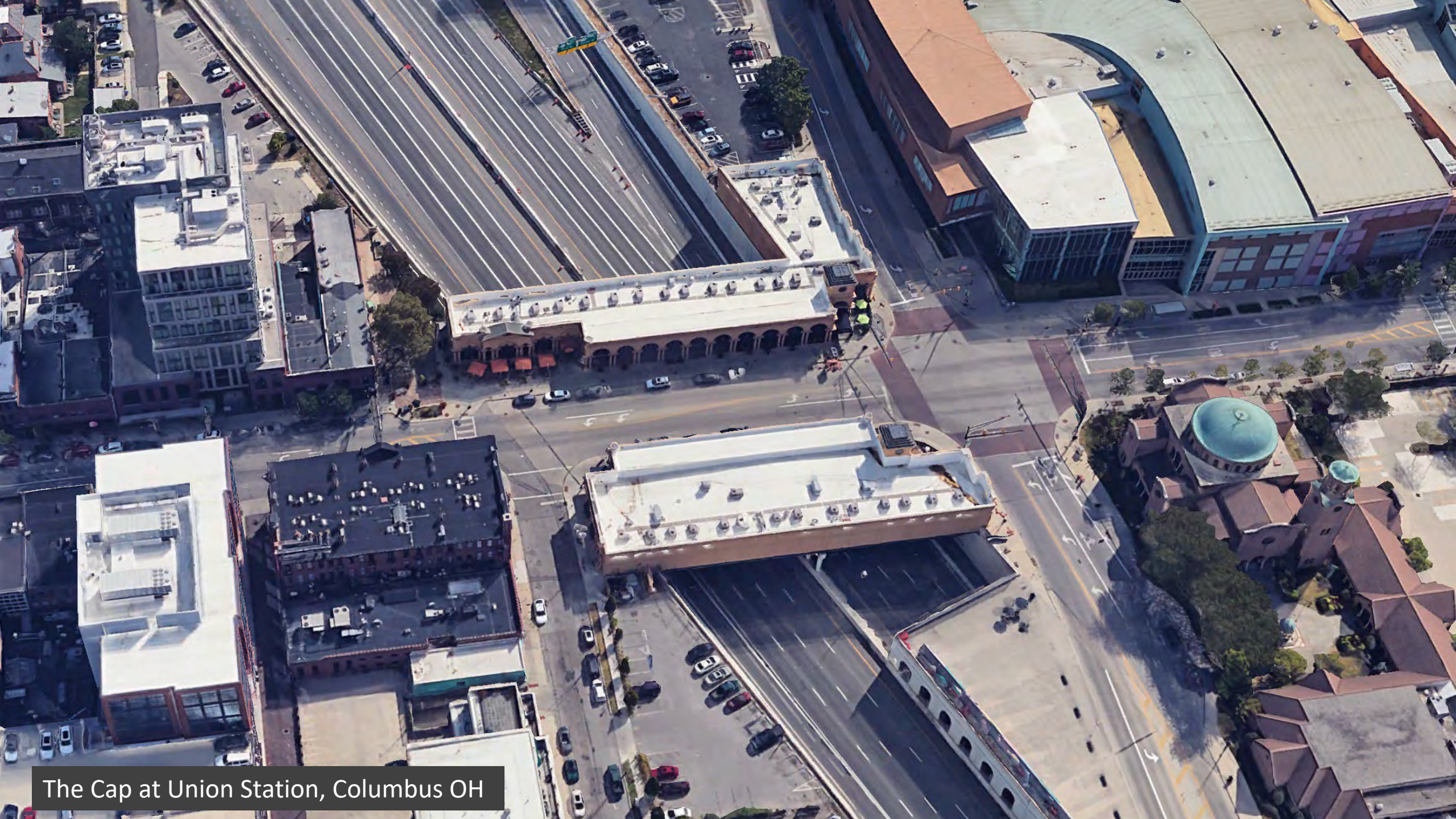
5th Street Bridge, Atlanta GA



5th Street Bridge, Atlanta GA



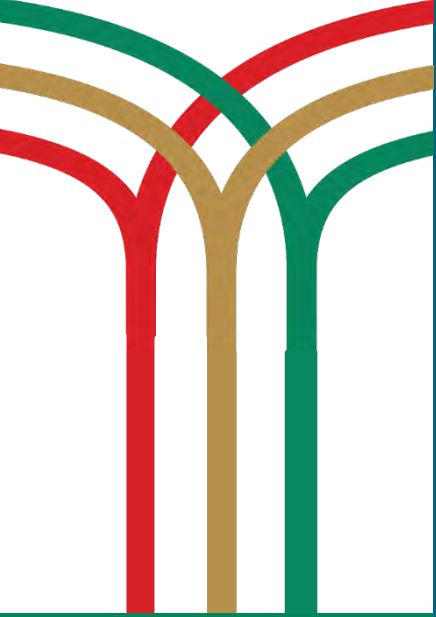
The Cap at Union Station, Columbus OH



The Cap at Union Station, Columbus OH



The Cap at Union Station, Columbus OH



Next Steps

Analyze Metrics for Preferred Scenario

Metric	Aligned with Project Goal:
1. Crash locations by risk factor (i.e. speed, prox to schools, etc.) associated with vulnerable road users.	Expand safe transportation options for access to jobs, services, and other daily activities.
2. Vehicle LOS	Drive inclusive economic opportunity and local business growth
3. % of streets w/bicycle facilities or low-stress connections for whole study area (focus on w/in 1 mile of schools)	Better connections for people walking, biking, driving, and taking transit
4. Level of traffic stress for walk connections (also a measure of last mile connection to transit)	Better connections for people walking, biking, driving, and taking transit
5. Amount of green/open space	Establish the corridor as a modern model of sustainable, innovative, and environmentally-responsible urban design
6. % of study area w/in 5 minute walk of activities: churches, parks, schools, grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants (maybe), healthcare facilities, transit stops	Supports community across social, cultural, economic, and racial lines
7. % of study area w/in 10 minute walk of space for community: community center, cultural facilities, public art, senior center, community rooms, Polar Park	Increase community pride and improve perceptions about Worcester



Take and share our final
survey before July 6th!



Vote for



VERNON 
CONNECTED

Vote for the future of Vernon Street today!
tinyurl.com/VCProjects



This is just the beginning!

Project Timeline



Vernon Connected Project Timeline Spring 2025-Summer 2026

PHASE 1

Discovery: Analyze data to identify the key needs, challenges, and priorities the project should address. Define a range of broad solutions

PHASE 2

Ideation: Identify general preferences of improvements, geographic areas of opportunity, and develop design alternative options



PHASE 3

Finalization: Refine the design alternatives to one preferred design option, based on feasibility, meeting project goals, and community preference.



Preferred Alternative Design Planning and Coordination

PHASE 4

- Necessary technical studies
- Coordination with impacted landowners
- Final engineering plans
- Secure funding
- Secure approvals/permitting

Project Construction

PHASE 5

- Shovels in the ground
- Construction phasing initiated

