



GREENING AMERICA'S CAPITALS
MILO-GROGAN NEIGHBORHOOD, COLUMBUS, OHIO

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Greening America's Capitals is a project of the Partnership for Sustainable Communities between U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to help state capitals develop an implementable vision of distinctive, environmentally friendly neighborhoods that incorporate innovative green infrastructure strategies. EPA is providing this design assistance to help support sustainable communities that protect the environment, economy, and public health and to inspire state leaders to expand this work elsewhere. Greening America's Capitals will help communities consider ways to incorporate sustainable design strategies into their planning and development to create and enhance interesting, distinctive neighborhoods that have multiple social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Columbus, Ohio, was chosen in 2014 as one of five state capital cities to receive this assistance along with Austin, Texas; Carson City, Nevada; Pierre, South Dakota; and Richmond, Virginia. More information is available at <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/greening-americas-capitals>.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city of Columbus, Ohio, requested assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through its Greening America's Capitals program to create several design options for the western portion of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood—a low-income, but vibrant neighborhood a mile north of Downtown. The city wants to make near-term improvements themselves in the neighborhood; leverage new investments that will be coming with development of a former brownfield (the Timken site); and expand the economic development opportunities that adjacent neighbors such as Italian Village, Downtown, and Weinland Park are currently enjoying. But the city wanted to hear first from the residents as to what those investments should be, and where they should be located to best improve the lives of those currently living there. The city also wanted to explore the use of green infrastructure—using plants and trees to manage and treat stormwater—as a way to reduce localized flooding (currently some streets have no curb and gutter to convey stormwater to inlets) and improve the appearance of the neighborhood.

The portion of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood that is the subject of this report is a 39-acre residential neighborhood (242 parcels) along with the two commercial corridors that link the neighborhood to Downtown to the south and the nearby neighborhoods of the Short North as well as the University District to the west. Within this study area a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line is currently under design on Cleveland Avenue and two BRT stations will provide service to the Milo-Grogan neighborhood.

EPA brought together a team of federal agency staff and consultants to help the city create a plan for the Milo-Grogan area. The following report includes input the EPA team garnered from city stakeholders and residents in developing design options for the Milo-Grogan neighborhood, as well as an analysis of the area's existing physical conditions. The team held a three-day charrette during the city's 'Neighborhood Pride' week. This event involved several meetings with community members, area commission representatives, city departments, and professionals. Charrette participants helped the team develop the design options presented in this report.

The design options offer an array of green infrastructure approaches to sustainable stormwater management, including bioretention cells, porous pavement, street trees, and vegetated curb bulb-outs. Additional design strategies include streetscape improvements, lighting, and public/civic art expressions. All of the options incorporated 'Complete Streets' design principles which address all modes of transportation safely and effectively, while adding the additional layer of sustainable stormwater management. The design options include the redevelopment of a key gateway to the neighborhood as well as the redesign for neighborhood streets. One of the most well received design options within the community, was a neighborhood park and art park adjacent to a large art studio, both linked by an alley that can be used for outdoor performances (and also incorporates green infrastructure). Finally, this report offers a series of steps the city and state could consider when planning and implementing design changes.

INTRODUCTION

The Milo-Grogan neighborhood is located one mile north of Downtown, and adjacent to the burgeoning Italian Village neighborhood to the west (further west is the Short North neighborhood—the city’s thriving arts and entertainment district). The neighborhood is bisected by Interstate 71. The portion of the neighborhood that is the subject of this report is west of Interstate 71. The neighborhood forms an L-shape around a former brownfield industrial site known as the Timken Site. The neighborhood thrived when the Timken Company opened a roller bearing facility in 1920, and by the 1950s the company employed over 4,000 people. Disinvestment began in the 1960s when the construction of I-71 divided the community. Many manufacturers ended up closing their doors and Timken closed in 2001. At the time this report was prepared the site was going through a redevelopment process with Rogue Fitness, a manufacturer of fitness equipment (plans for the site were not formalized but owners were informed of the visioning process).

The redevelopment of the Timken site is expected to bring economic revitalization to the neighborhood, and with it new investments. The city seeks to ensure that these investments are not only environmentally responsible, but also strengthen neighborhood identity and cohesion. For this reason the city requested technical assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Greening America’s Capitals Program to develop design options through a public engagement process for specific focus areas within the Milo-Grogan neighborhood. These options explored how to

make the streets more pedestrian and bicycle friendly; create identifiable gateways to the neighborhood; use landscape elements to collect and treat stormwater runoff—known as “green infrastructure;” and create a new park that would be a fun and attractive gathering place for the neighborhood. These options were explored to help encourage economic and community redevelopment within the study area.

Columbus has had success in the downtown area with green investments, including the redevelopment of an abandoned shopping mall into a park and an extensive bio-cell network, which has encouraged private investment and redevelopment in various downtown locations. Milo-Grogan provides an opportunity to implement such investments at the neighborhood level as well as provide viable solutions to the urban challenges faced by most municipalities in Ohio.

Design options were created for five focus areas within the neighborhood:

Focus Area 1 | Cleveland Avenue Corridor

The design option for Cleveland Avenue explores revitalization of this commercial corridor through improvements to the pedestrian, bicycling, and transit infrastructure, as well as incorporating green infrastructure elements.

Focus Area 2 | East 2nd Avenue Gateway

The design option for East 2nd Street enhances arrival into the Milo-Grogan neighborhood from the Italian Village neighborhood to the west. The option improves pedestrian, bicycling, and transit options, and incorporates green infrastructure elements and public gathering areas into adjacent vacant and under-utilized lots.

Focus Area 3 | Typical Collector Street (East 2nd Avenue)

The design option for East 2nd Avenue offers pedestrian and bicycle improvements on a residential street, as well as on-street parking and green infrastructure elements.

Focus Area 4 | Typical Residential Street (North 9th Street)

The design options for North 9th Street offer pedestrian and bicycle improvements on a neighborhood street (that typically has lower traffic volumes) as well as green infrastructure elements.

Focus Area 5 | Neighborhood Park

This design option converts vacant lots within the neighborhood into a neighborhood park, that includes green infrastructure and public art elements.

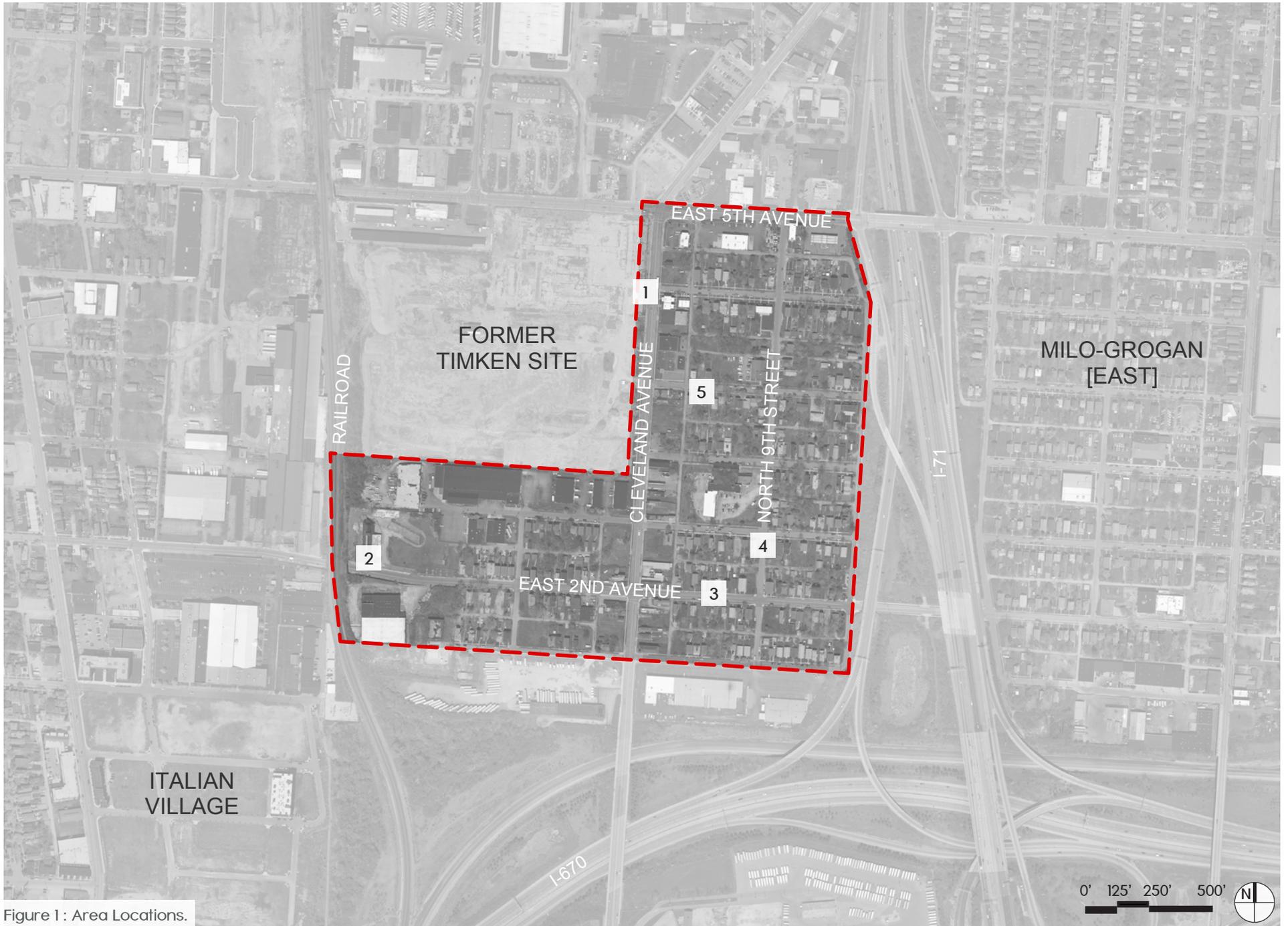


Figure 1 : Area Locations.

PUBLIC INPUT

From September 14, 2015 to September 16, 2015, the city of Columbus, Ohio, and EPA hosted a workshop and series of interview sessions to gather stakeholder input and present preliminary design options to the community for the southwest quadrant of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood.

Attendees included representatives from multiple city of Columbus departments, including: Planning, Public Utilities, Office of Environmental Stewardship, Economic Development, and Transportation. Local residents, neighborhood representatives, business owners, clergy, and artists also participated in the three-day workshop. Input was solicited through multiple methods, including: identifying strengths, weaknesses and priorities; comment cards; discussions; sketching exercises with designers; and “visual listening boards,” where participants voted on images that best represented what they wanted to see in their neighborhood.

Participants wanted design options to build from the current strengths of their neighborhood, which were identified as:

- A strong sense of community among past and present residents.
- An engaged arts community that includes the Milo Arts Center and the 934 Art Gallery.
- Community institutions such as the Lord Jesus Christ’s Church and the Boys and Girls Club.
- An area commission that has interest of residents at heart and understands neighborhood issues.
- Proximity to downtown Columbus.
- Historically significant architecture.

Through meetings and open houses, participants expressed many concerns about needing more economic development and employment opportunities in the neighborhood. Specific design requests within the scope of this project include:

- Safer, greener, and more park space (especially for children).
- Development of vacant properties and accountability measures for absentee land owners.
- Improvements to the East 2nd Avenue and East 5th Avenue gateways.
- More sidewalks and safer crossings at street intersections.
- Better street edge treatments that reduce ponding.
- Enhanced neighborhood character and public spaces.

In addition to incorporating participants’ ideas into design options, the team also spent time discussing options for implementation and the applicability of the design options to several funding sources and current city programs and initiatives. The workshop closed with a public presentation of the design options. The general consensus was that the design options and goals outlined above had merit and could go a long way toward making Milo-Grogan vibrant again.



Figure 2 : Day 1 Stakeholder meeting.



Figure 3 : Public open house visual listening boards.



Figure 4 : Day 3 Public Presentation.

EXISTING CONDITIONS LAND USE

Milo-Grogan's historical context is an industrial-based neighborhood with residents living within a walkable distance to work and common services. Much of the residential fabric remains intact east of Cleveland Avenue. Institutional uses such as churches and the Boys and Girls Club are centrally located, and the former school site has been converted into the Milo Arts Center. A smaller, but relatively newer portion of the neighborhood's homes are west of Cleveland Avenue, surrounded by industrial and commercial uses, occupying properties near an active rail line. Older, historically significant businesses located along Cleveland and Fifth Avenues have largely been vacated; larger building footprints and auto-dependent uses have taken their place, especially along East 5th Avenue.

LEGEND

	MULTI-FAMILY
	SINGLE-FAMILY
	COMMERCIAL, RETAIL, OFFICE
	INDUSTRIAL, MANUFACTURING
	CITY OWNED LAND BANK
	INSTITUTIONAL (SCHOOLS, CHURCHES)

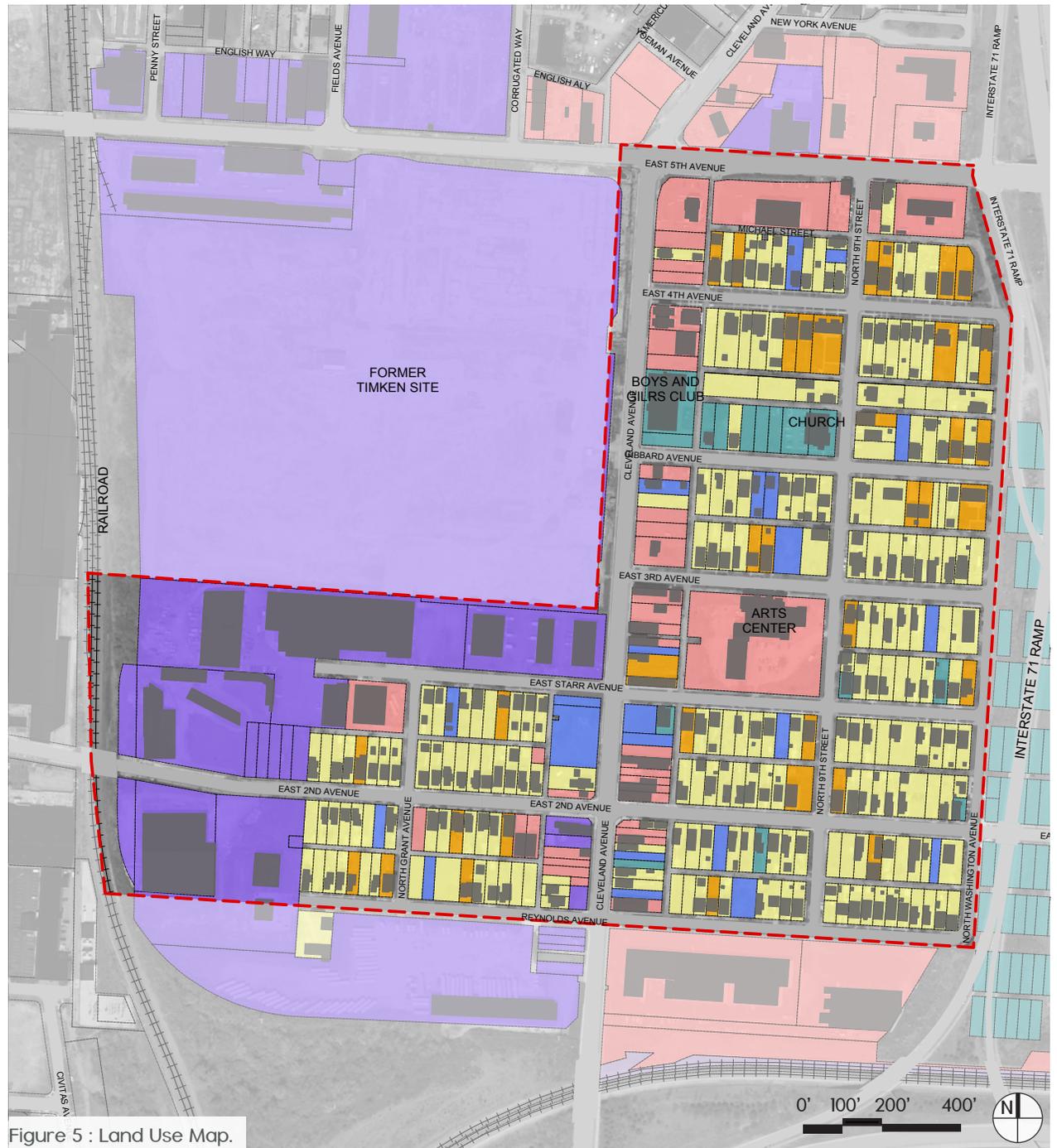


Figure 5 : Land Use Map.

VACANT SITES

As the economic drivers of Milo-Grogan relocated out of the neighborhood, many residents followed suit. As such, many properties were vacated, abandoned, or fell into disrepair. Commercial businesses and services closed, including those at the neighborhood gateway intersection of Cleveland and 5th Avenues and the south end of Cleveland Avenue. This shift left many holes in the community fabric of Milo-Grogan. The city of Columbus has acquired many parcels, mostly in the eastern portion of the study area, and placed them into a land bank program for future community redevelopment.

The quantity of vacant and land bank properties allows for numerous community redevelopment opportunities. The adjacency of many of these parcels creates opportunities for combining them as needed and the use of new context appropriate infill and economic drivers. Some vacant areas are in ideal locations for green infrastructure improvements and new neighborhood parks and open space. Historically significant properties such as the Power & Light facility and the Arts Center should be improved to celebrate and preserve the character of Milo-Grogan.

LEGEND

	VACANT PARCEL
	LAND BANK PARCEL
	STUDY AREA

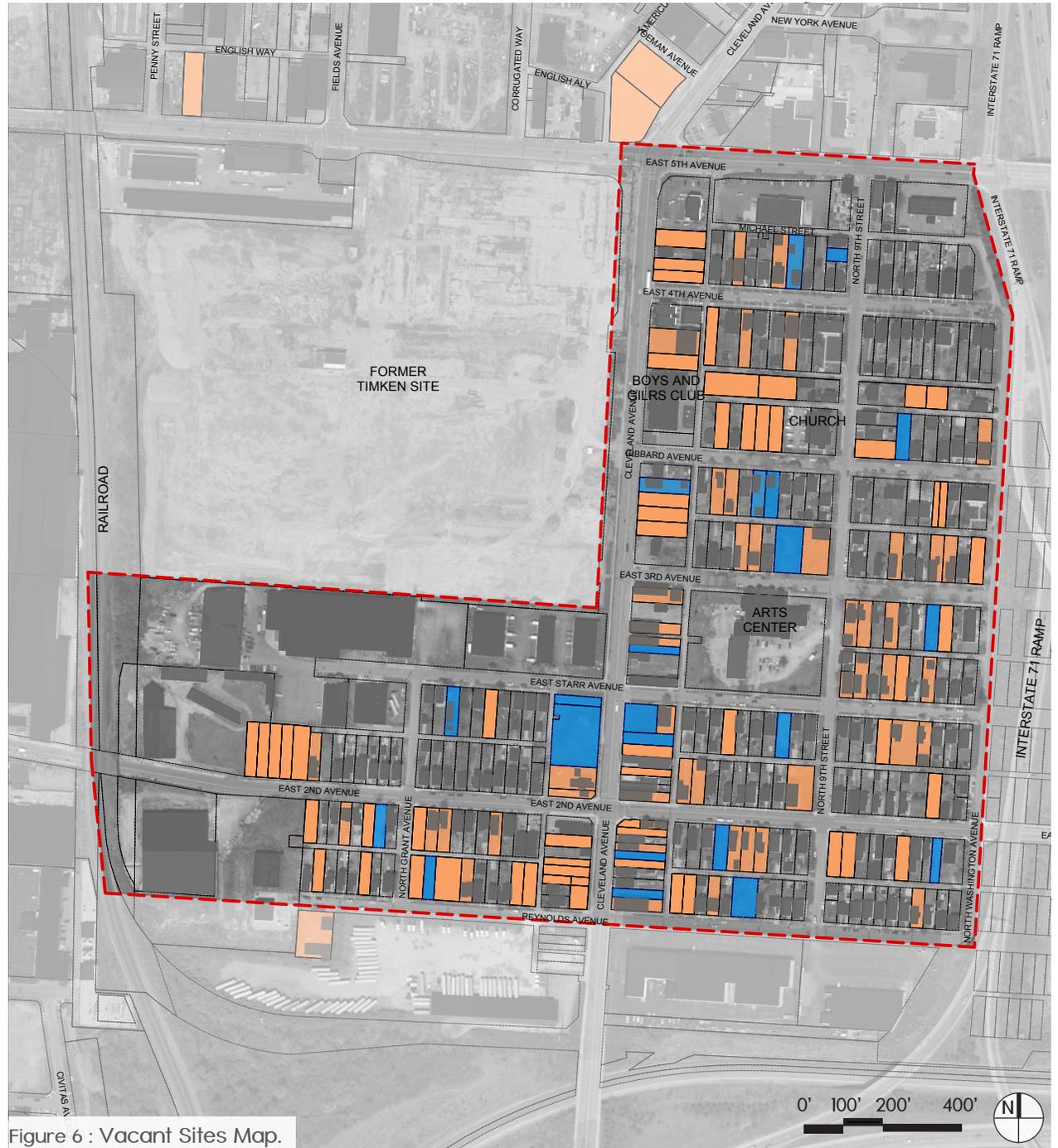


Figure 6 : Vacant Sites Map.

HYDROLOGY

Surface stormwater generally drains to the south and west within the Milo-Grogan study area. A ridge line follows North 9th Street and divides the area into two sub-watersheds—one that drains toward Cleveland Avenue and the other toward Washington Avenue. Curbs and gutters do not exist along North 9th Street, further allowing for sheet flow drainage into adjacent private properties. Stormwater is collected in drainage inlets that are typically located at roadway intersections.

Due to existing drainage patterns, Cleveland and Washington Avenues and the east/west streets have the highest potential for stormwater capture. Green infrastructure techniques, such as bioretention cells and permeable pavement could be designed and used along these roadways; and at their intersections to provide localized and highly visible stormwater treatment. This system of green infrastructure would aid in removing stormwater from the city's overburdened combined sewage system.

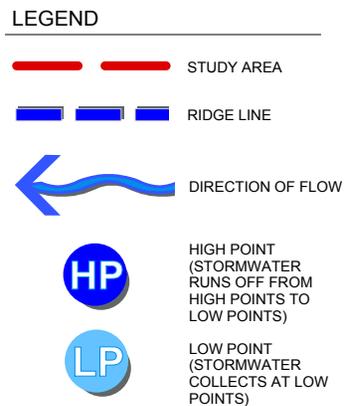


Figure 7 : Hydrology Map.

TREE COVER + VEGETATION

The Milo-Grogan neighborhood currently has a 15% tree canopy coverage, whereas the city of Columbus' 2015 urban tree canopy study recommends a 27% canopy (the city's current average is 22%). Many east/west streets throughout the residential portions of Milo-Grogan have street trees, but the spacing is not consistent. Street trees are mostly non-existent along the north/south streets. The majority of trees are located on private property. Vegetation coverage is heaviest along the railroad and adjacent interstate highway right-of-ways.

LEGEND

-  STUDY AREA
-  BUILDING
-  EXISTING TREE CANOPY
-  PAVED AREAS



Figure 8 : Tree Cover + Vegetation Map.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Milo-Grogan is served well by public transportation, and further improvements are planned. All of the neighborhood study area is located within a 5-minute walk of a public transportation stop, allowing for easy access into downtown Columbus and beyond. Four Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) bus lines serve the neighborhood with three major lines, converging near the intersection of Cleveland and East 5th Avenues. Another bus line travels along the eastern portion of East 2nd Avenue, connecting portions of Milo-Grogan across Interstate Highway 71. In October 2013, COTA began a Transit System Re-design (TSR), to improve its systems service. As a part of the TSR, an existing line that runs on East 2nd Avenue will be eliminated; and the line that runs along East 5th Avenue will be replaced with a crosstown route serving Grandview Yard, The Ohio State University (OSU) and Rickenbacker. The current timeline for implementation of the TSR is May 2017. An additional COTA project that impacts the study area is a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route along the Cleveland Avenue corridor. In December 2015, Congress appropriated to COTA capital funds for the CMAX BRT. An additional local-stop line will serve all stops between the study area and Downtown, while the CMAX BRT will serve select enhanced stations at a higher frequency. The current timeline for implementation of the CMAX BRT project is January 2018.

LEGEND

	COTA BUS STOP		PROPOSED BRT LINE (BUS RAPID TRANSIT)
	COTA BUS LINE		SCHOOL BUS ROUTE
	PROPOSED BRT STOP (BUS RAPID TRANSIT)		STUDY AREA

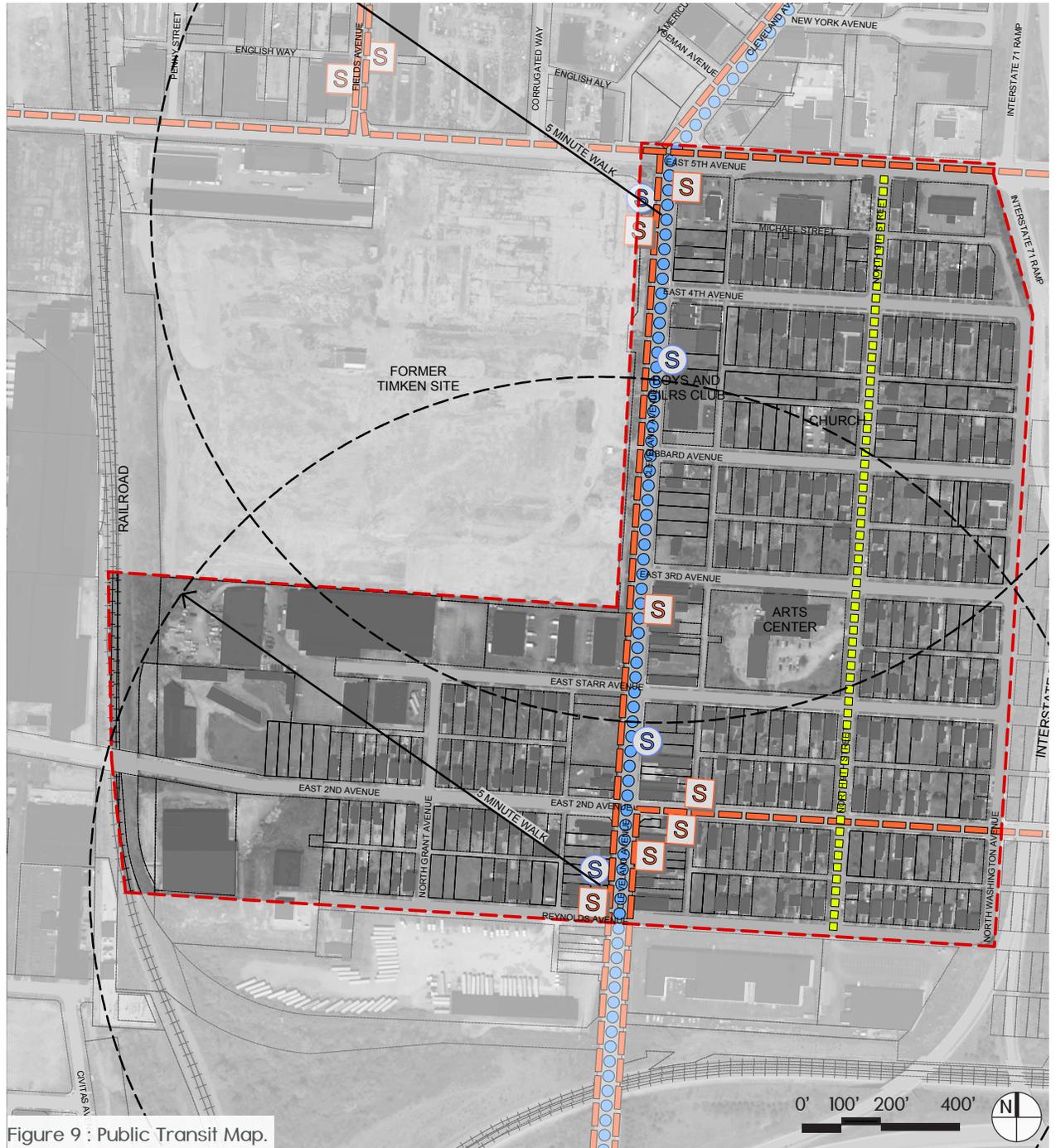


Figure 9 : Public Transit Map.

VEHICLE CIRCULATION

The study area is served by many vehicular access points. Aside from its own residents, Milo-Grogan experiences many vehicles passing through the neighborhood daily to access the interstate highway, downtown Columbus, or neighborhoods to the north. It is bound on the east by Interstate Highway 71, with an average daily traffic (ADT) count of 150,000. Drivers find it convenient to enter or exit I-71 at East 5th Avenue, which adds to traffic volumes on Cleveland and East 5th Avenues during peak travel times. Although it has much lower ADT counts, East 2nd Avenue is a significant travel route across the south portion of the study area. Observations indicate drivers will use North 9th Street between East 2nd and East 5th Avenues to avoid Cleveland Avenue during peak congestion.

LEGEND

-  ARTERIAL
-  COLLECTOR
-  LOCAL
-  ALLEY
-  GATEWAY / THRESHOLD
-  MAJOR INTERSECTION
-  STUDY AREA

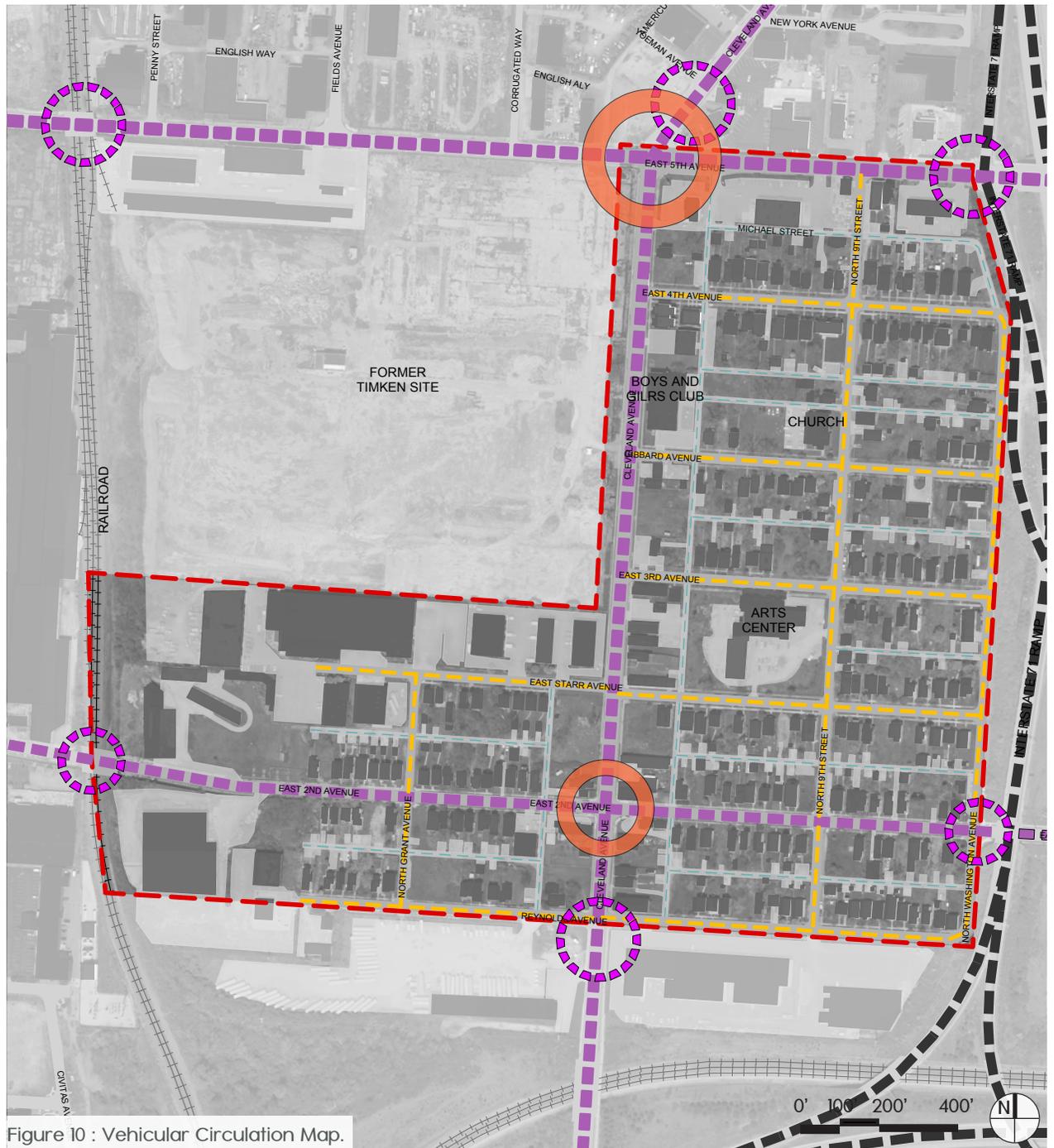


Figure 10 : Vehicular Circulation Map.

DESIGN OPTIONS FOCUS AREA 1 CLEVELAND AVENUE CORRIDOR

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Cleveland Avenue is an important corridor running north-south through the neighborhood. It is a state highway with two northbound and two southbound traffic lanes, with no on-street parking lanes. The speed limit is 35 miles per hour along the corridor. There are currently no bicycle lanes. Sidewalks fill a narrow space between the curb and zero lot line building frontages. Street trees are located sporadically and mostly where vacant lots are present.

Cleveland Avenue has the potential to once again be the commercial focal point of the neighborhood. The 934 Art Gallery has rehabbed a building, a potential seed for continued commercial revitalization. Development of the former Timken site is expected to further revitalize the street.



Figure 11 : Existing Cleveland Avenue looking south from East 3rd Avenue.



Figure 12 : Existing Cleveland Avenue and East Starr Avenue looking north.

Four local bus routes travel through the study area, with three of the routes traveling along the study area portion of the Cleveland Avenue corridor; providing an important transportation link from the Milo-Grogan neighborhood to other areas throughout Columbus. A future BRT line is currently being designed to travel the entire corridor length through the study area, further connecting the neighborhood to the city.

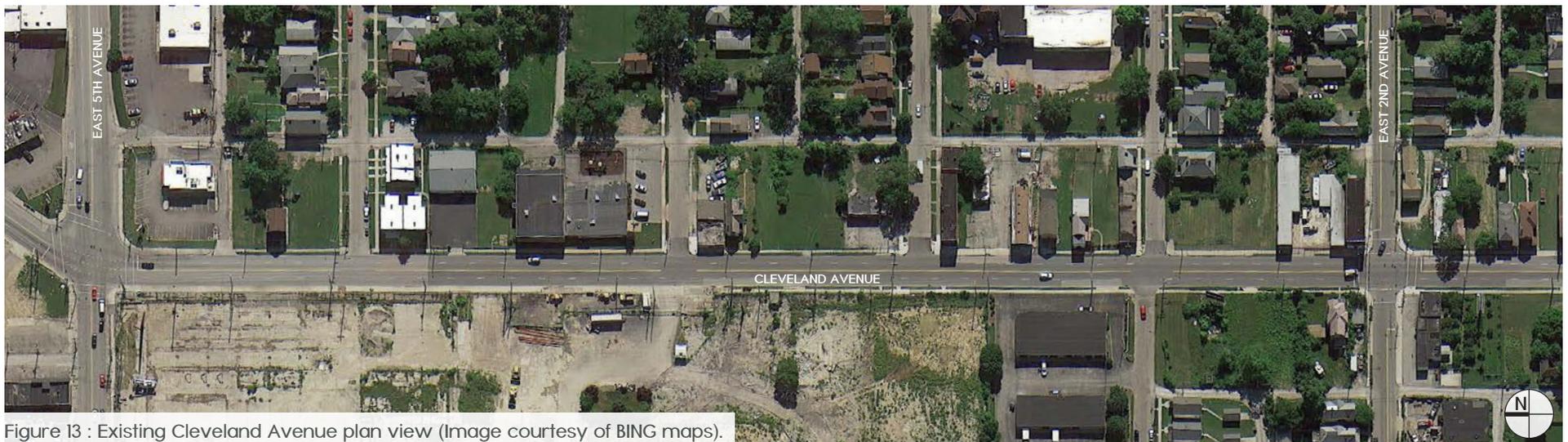


Figure 13 : Existing Cleveland Avenue plan view (Image courtesy of BING maps).



Figure 14 : Proposed Cleveland Avenue plan view.

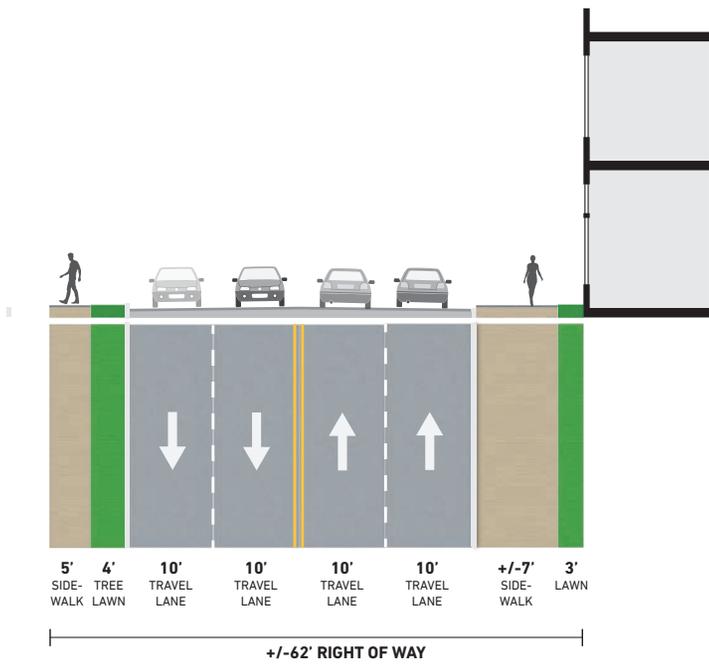


Figure 15 : Cleveland Avenue Existing Section.

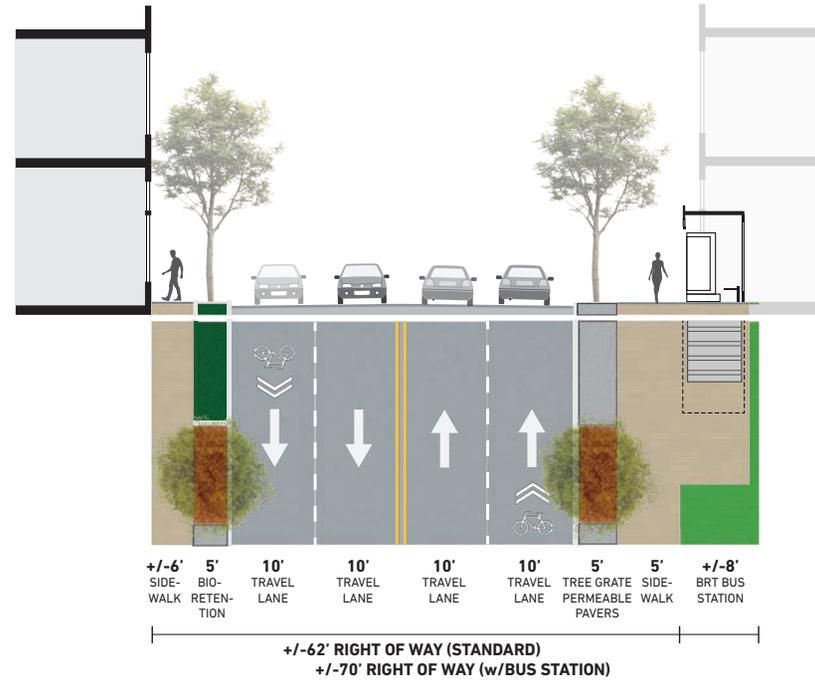


Figure 16 : Cleveland Avenue Proposed Section.

FOCUS AREA 1 CLEVELAND AVENUE CORRIDOR

Cleveland Avenue is situated to become a vibrant and improved business district corridor reminiscent of its historic prime. It already has a steady volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and is easily accessible by foot, bike, and vehicle.

It is suggested that the pedestrian realm include the creation of a safety zone between cars and people. The walking experience along Cleveland Avenue could be improved through the addition of permeable pavers/pavements, bioretention cells and street trees. Bioretention cells are also located at street intersections where low areas exist to collect stormwater runoff through curb cuts to be naturally filtered and percolate back into the ground. The inclusion of sharrows promotes the usage and integration of bicycle users. As new infill projects are developed upon vacant parcels, a stronger neighborhood identity is achieved as small gathering plazas are created and new buildings define the corridor edges.

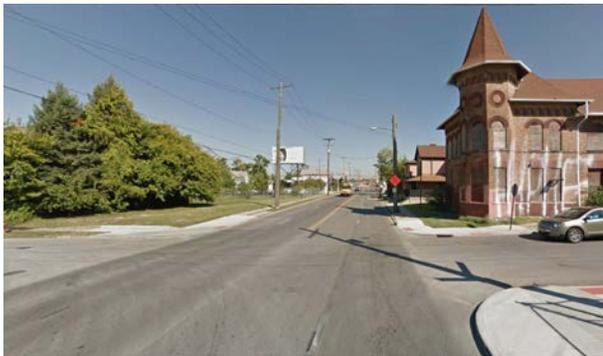


Figure 17 : Existing Cleveland Avenue.



Figure 18 : Proposed Cleveland Avenue looking north.



Figure 19 : Proposed Cleveland Avenue looking north.

FOCUS AREA 2 EAST 2ND AVENUE GATEWAY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

East 2nd Avenue is the southernmost east-west thru-street in the neighborhood, where it crosses under an active rail line. The sidewalk is unmaintained and overgrown with weeds, and retaining walls are crumbling. It is generally unwelcoming to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Along with East 5th Avenue to the north, it is one of only two access points to the neighborhood from the west (i.e., Italian Village and the Short North) and east. As such, there is an opportunity to enhance this underpass and build on the redevelopment potential of existing industrial structures (some of which are in need of environmental remediation), in order to connect to the current redevelopment just a few blocks west in the Italian Village neighborhood.



Figure 20 : Existing East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking west.



Figure 21 : Existing East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking south.



Figure 22 : Existing East 2nd Avenue Gateway plan view (Image courtesy of BING maps).



Figure 23 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue Gateway plan view.

FOCUS AREA 2 EAST 2ND AVENUE GATEWAY FROM THE EAST

Residents voiced concern that the entry to the neighborhood at this location was unwelcoming. Participants suggested a mural be added to the existing walls to enliven the space and tell the story of this historically significant neighborhood. The addition of street trees would provide much needed shade and help define the street and make the area more of a gateway. Underpass lighting (See Figure 27) would create a safer walk for pedestrians and enliven the structure. The addition of a screening element on the overpass could be a piece of public art that is made from industrial materials and pays homage to the heritage of the neighborhood.

The street width remains the same. However, to reduce the perceived width, an 8 foot wide permeable parking bay is suggested along the north side of the street. Street trees and bioretention cells are added to capture stormwater, reduce runoff, and enhance the public realm with thoughtful plant selection.



Figure 24 : Existing East 2nd Avenue Gateway.



Figure 25: Proposed East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking west.



Figure 26: Proposed East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking west.



Figure 27 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking west at night.

FOCUS AREA 2

EAST 2ND AVENUE GATEWAY

FROM THE WEST

When entering the neighborhoods from the west there is an opportunity to enhance current structures and features along East 2nd Avenue. Figure 29 illustrates how renovating the vacant building on the north side of East 2nd Avenue (a former casket factory) into a multi-use residential, commercial, and office space with formal entry plazas would begin to frame and invigorate plans for Milo-Grogan.

Gateway elements utilizing contemporary materials notify travelers that they are entering a revitalized area of Columbus. Similar to the approach from the east, the west side of the rail line is also fitted with the same screening element that signifies entry to the Milo-Grogan neighborhood.

Bioretention cells line both sides of the street, capturing stormwater from the sidewalks and street. Additionally, new sidewalks with a decorative edge play off the rail infrastructure through selected patterning and materials.



Figure 28 : Existing East 2nd Avenue Gateway.

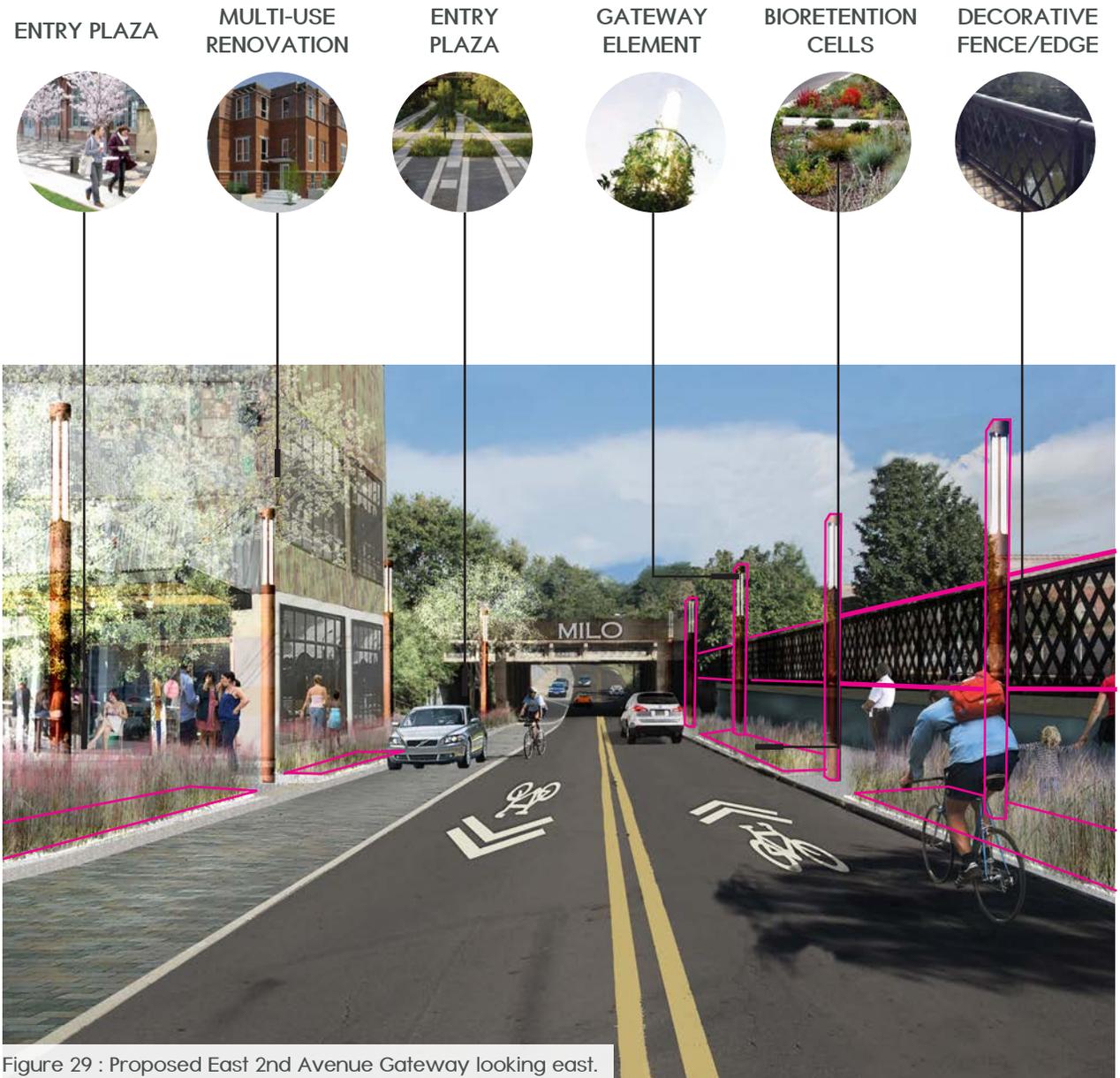


Figure 29 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking east.



Figure 30 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue Gateway looking east.

FOCUS AREA 3 TYPICAL COLLECTOR STREET EAST 2ND AVENUE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

East 2nd Avenue is one of two collector streets providing access into the Milo-Grogan study area from both the east and west. Unlike East 5th Avenue to the north which has a commercial character, East 2nd Avenue is fronted by residential properties. The existing streetscape is in need of improvements that leave a welcoming neighborhood impression on people utilizing East 2nd Avenue.

In its current condition, East 2nd Avenue appears as a vehicular means to pass through the neighborhood without providing any identity or sense of place. Vehicular traffic uses one travel lane in each direction, with unclear on-street parking along the south side. Although there are many lots with trees in front yards, street trees are rarely present. There are no defined areas for bicycle traffic.



Figure 31 : Existing East 2nd Avenue looking west from North 9th Street.

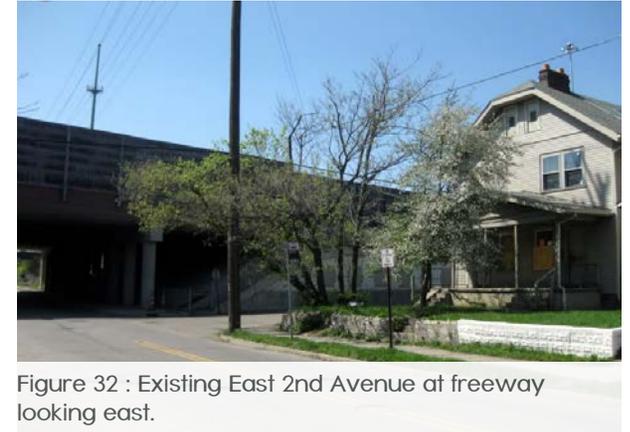


Figure 32 : Existing East 2nd Avenue at freeway looking east.



Figure 33 : Existing East 2nd Avenue plan view (Image courtesy of BING maps).



Figure 34 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue plan view.

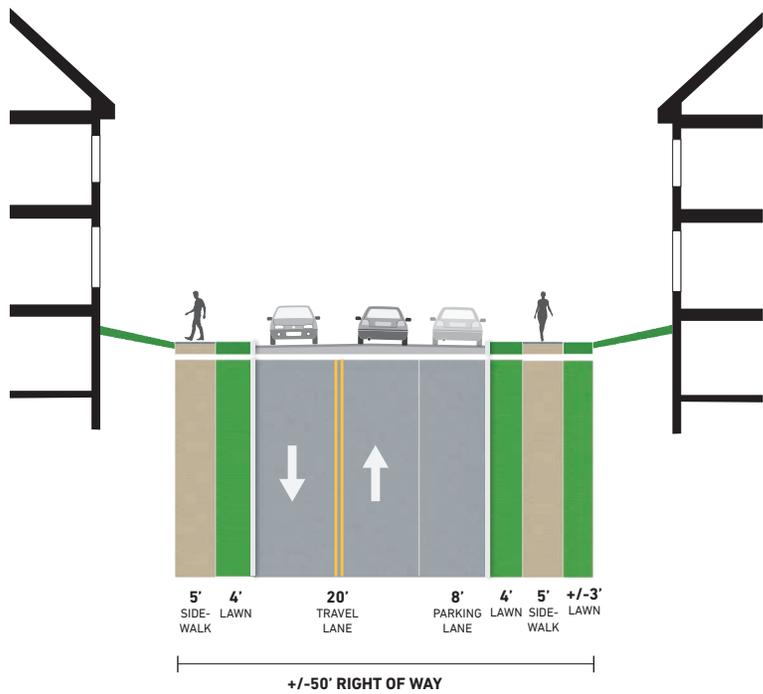


Figure 35 : East 2nd Avenue Existing Section.

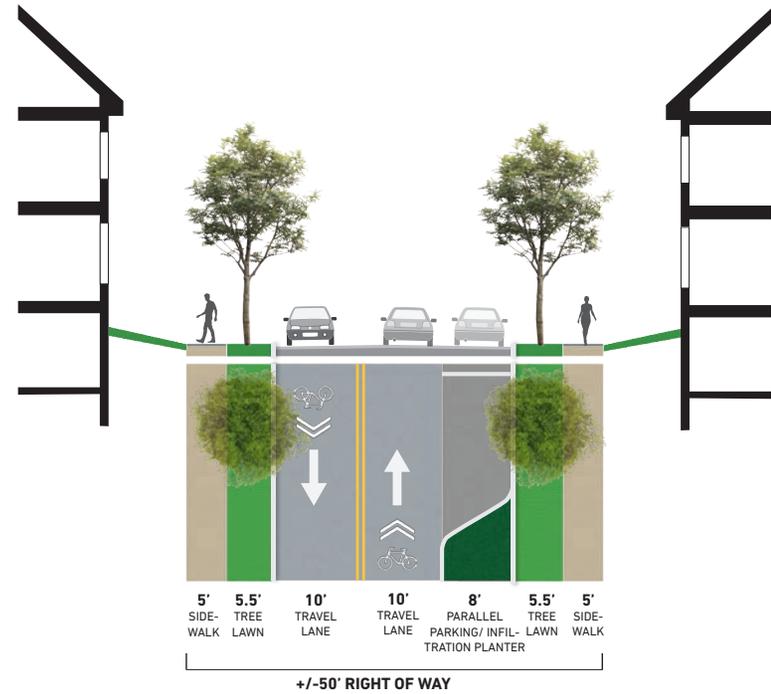


Figure 36: East 2nd Avenue Proposed Section.

FOCUS AREA 3

TYPICAL COLLECTOR STREET

EAST 2ND AVENUE

As an important east-west connector, East 2nd Avenue is the front door into the residential portion of the Milo-Grogan neighborhood. The addition of complete streets features, combined with the character of the adjoining residential properties, create a sense of place that is uniquely identified as Milo-Grogan.

Along East 2nd Avenue, multiple modes of transportation are included. Sharrows, low-traffic automobile lanes that have been marked with common symbols (arrows and bicycle graphic), clearly indicate shared roadway use for vehicles and bicycles. On-street parking along the southern side is better defined by curb bulb-outs at intersection corners, and a permeable pavement surface. The permeable parking areas and bioretention cells along the northern street side allow for improved stormwater runoff infiltration and diversion from the municipal stormwater system. Equally spaced street trees along both sides of the street provide much needed shade on new sidewalks; and aid in increasing urban tree canopy cover. These improvements create a character that is residential in nature and signal to users that they are within Milo-Grogan.



Figure 37 : Existing East 2nd Avenue looking east.

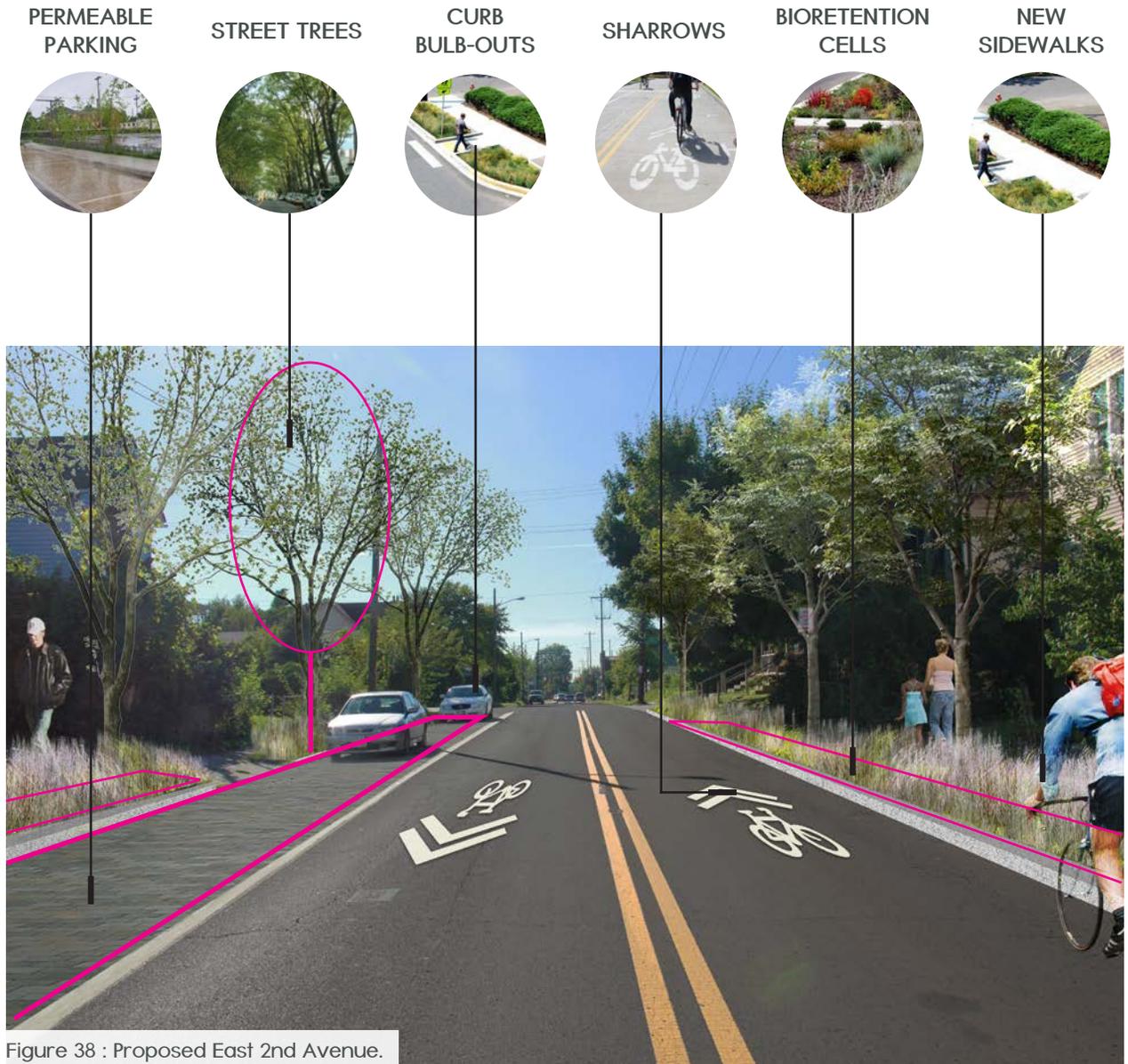


Figure 38 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue.



Figure 39 : Proposed East 2nd Avenue.

FOCUS AREA 4 TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL STREET NORTH 9TH STREET

EXISTING CONDITIONS

North 9th Street has become a convenient short-cut for many driving through the Milo-Grogan study area, creating an unsafe pedestrian experience at the center of the area's residential core. Children are picked up and dropped off by school buses along North 9th Street.

The streetscape is not well defined and in need of major repair. Sidewalks and street trees are non-existent and parking occurs at scattered gravel pull-offs. The topography of North 9th Street follows a critical ridge that runs through Milo-Grogan. The street edges lack curbs and allow stormwater to flow over the surface to both the east and west. In its existing condition, North 9th Street appears more as a widened alley than a primary local street through the neighborhood.



Figure 40 : Existing North 9th Street looking south from East 3rd Avenue.



Figure 41 : Existing North 9th Street looking north from Gibbard Avenue.



Figure 42 : Existing North 9th Street plan view (Image courtesy of BING maps).

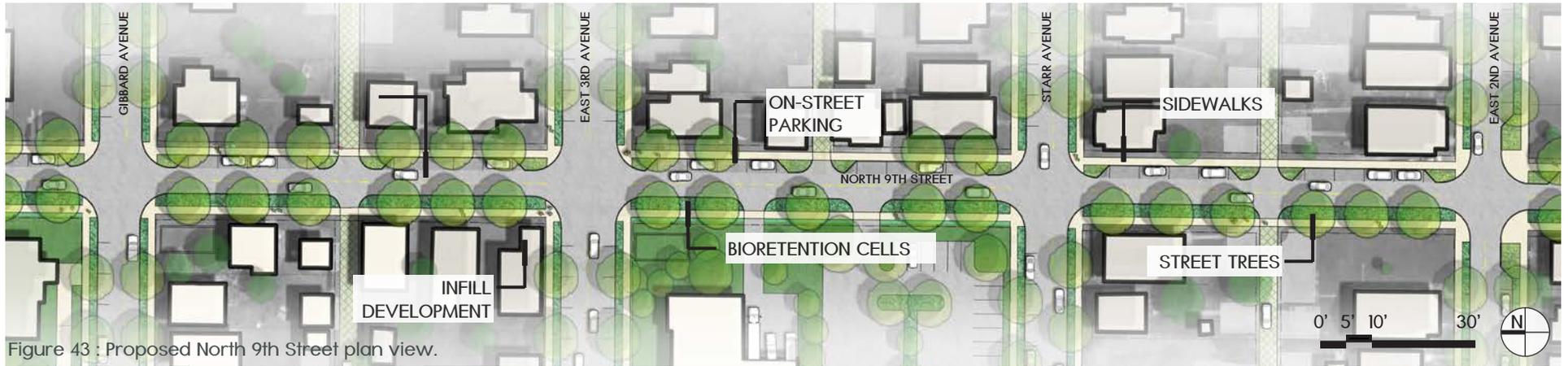


Figure 43 : Proposed North 9th Street plan view.

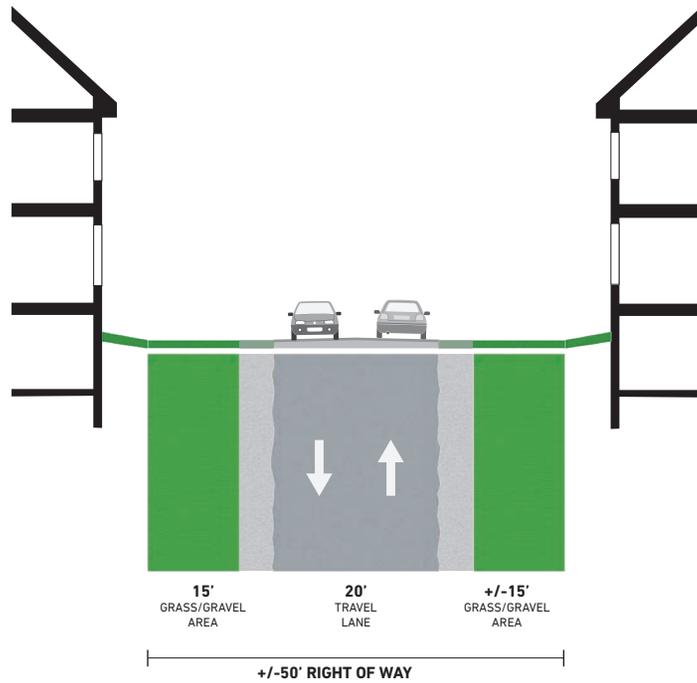


Figure 44 : North 9th Street Existing Section.

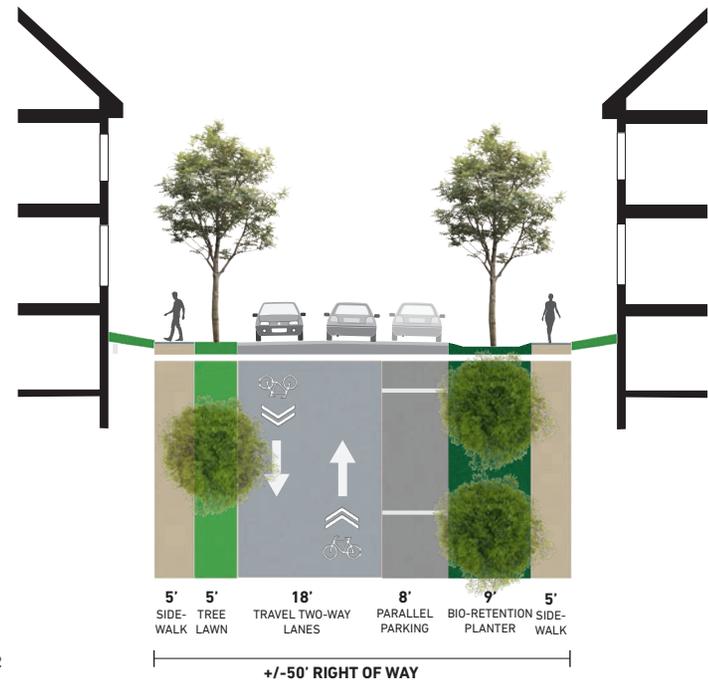


Figure 45 : North 9th Street Proposed Section.

FOCUS AREA 4 TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL STREET NORTH 9TH STREET

North 9th Street is a significant route through Milo-Grogan and residents wanted it to be safer for children walking to and from the school bus stop. In the first option, preferred by most at the charrette, North 9th Street is a narrow, two-lane street with sharrows designating shared use with bicycle traffic. New sidewalks are added to each side of the street and separated from cars by planting strips, including street trees, ground cover, and bioretention to provide for a safer pedestrian zone. Parking is neatly organized on the east side of the street and defined by permeable paving and curb bulb-outs at street intersections and alleyways.



Figure 46 : Existing North 9th Street looking north.

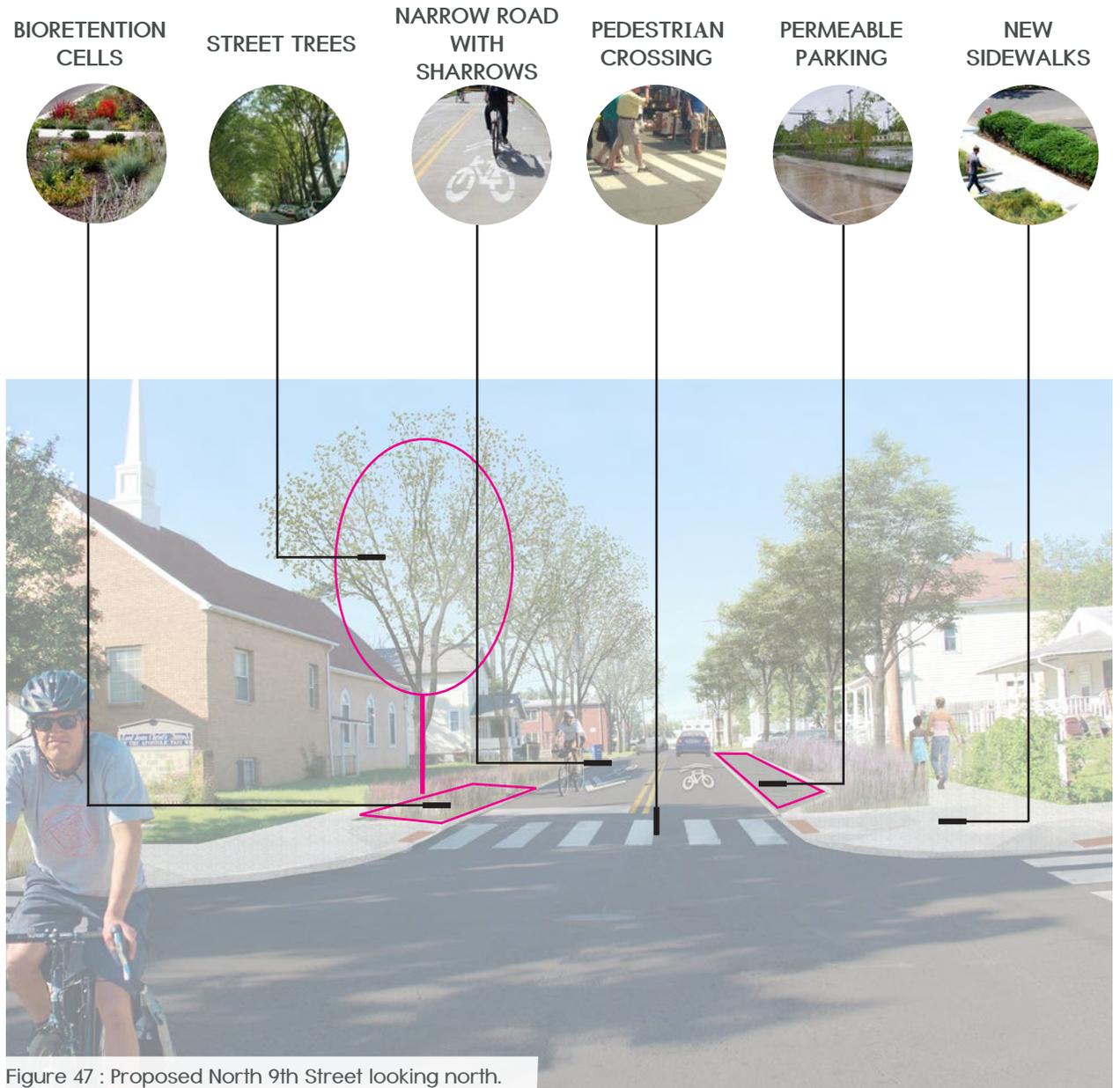


Figure 47 : Proposed North 9th Street looking north.



Figure 48 : Proposed North 9th Street looking north.

FOCUS AREA 4
RESIDENTIAL STREET
NORTH 9TH STREET
ALTERNATIVE OPTION

The second option narrows North 9th Street further (9' travel lanes) and the street meanders in order to slow traffic. The narrow roadway is shared by both vehicles and bikes. Similar to the first option, new sidewalks are added to each side of the street and separated from cars by planting strips, including street trees, ground cover, and bioretention cells.

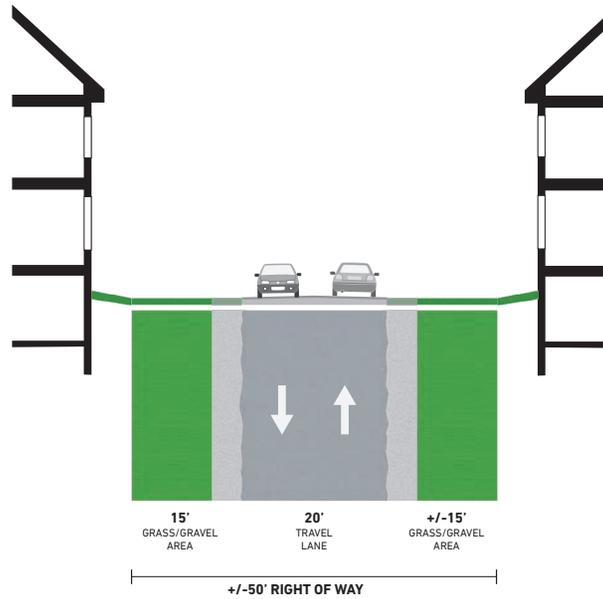


Figure 49 : North 9th Street Existing Section.

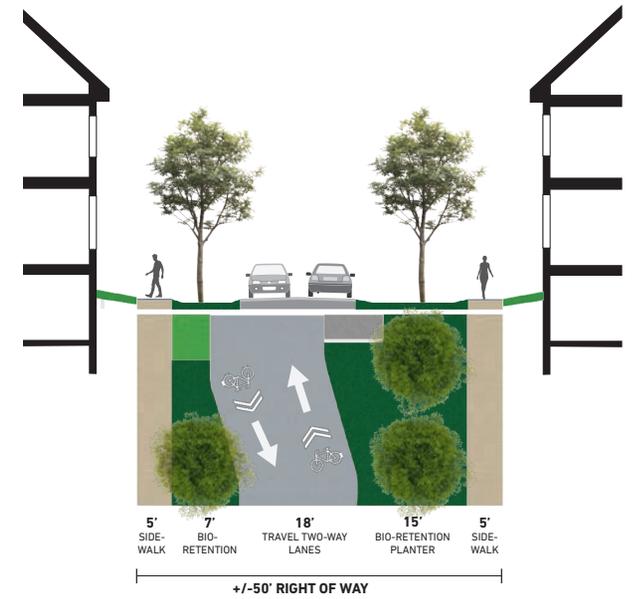


Figure 50 : North 9th Street Proposed Alternative Option Section.

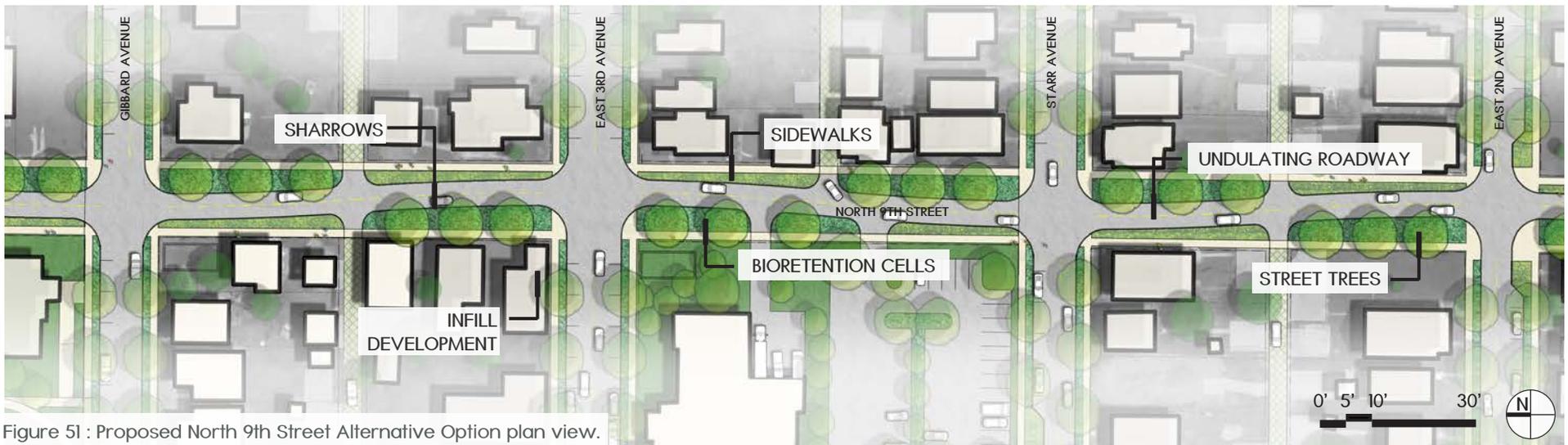


Figure 51 : Proposed North 9th Street Alternative Option plan view.

FOCUS AREA 5 NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Milo-Grogan neighborhood is one of the most under-served communities in Columbus, regarding formalized public park space. Aside from the Milo-Grogan Community Recreation Center, one half-mile east of the study area and separated by Interstate 71, and a few additional small open spaces, the neighborhood does not have a defined public open space that strengthens community ties and serves as a healthy, active space.



Figure 52 : Existing view from North 9th Street looking northwest.



Figure 53 : Service alley looking north from Starr Avenue.



Figure 54 : Existing Neighborhood plan view (Image courtesy of BING maps).

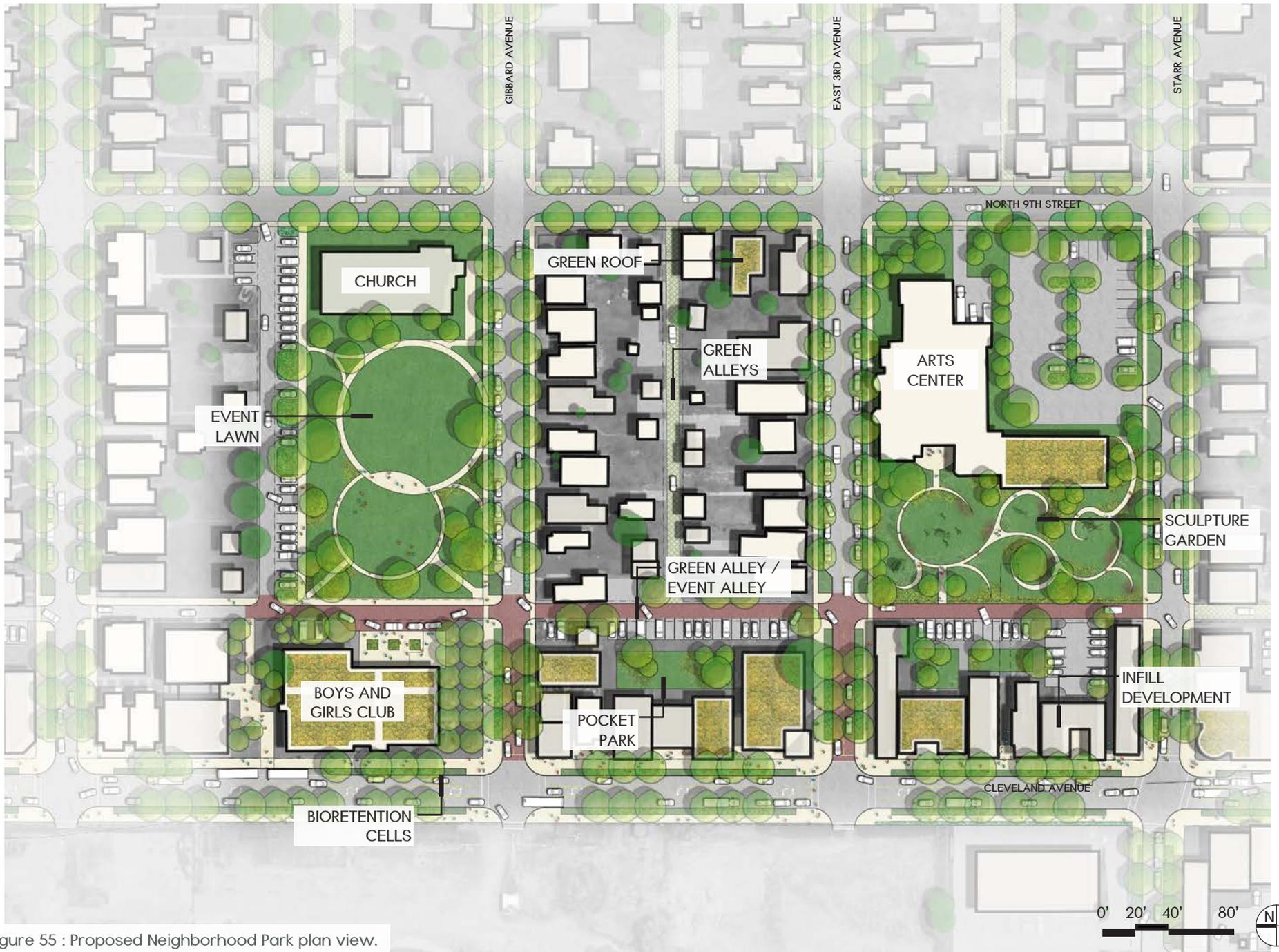


Figure 55 : Proposed Neighborhood Park plan view.

FOCUS AREA 5 NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

The park option responds to neighborhood residents' desire for a safe, attractive gathering space in the heart of the community, and builds off the three major community assets identified by residents: Youth (the Boys and Girls Club), Arts (Milo Arts Center), and Church (Lord Jesus Christ's Church). The proposed 1.5-acre park is comprised of vacant/land bank parcels, a narrow piece of land that has been an unused open space for decades; and currently owned parcels by the three key players (Boys and Girls Club, Milo Arts Center, and Lord Jesus Christ's Church). The park is designed to use green infrastructure practices, native plantings, and nature play areas that would include climbing structures, paths, and play equipment that utilizes natural materials. There is also a lawn area to accommodate gathering and recreation activities. Permeable parking and green alleys ring the park and allow for large existing shade trees to be preserved. New sidewalks and the "event alley" on the east side, feature various porous materials that divert stormwater from the often overburdened municipal stormwater system. Street trees and new shade trees in the park help to formalize the area, providing much needed tree canopy.



Figure 56 : Existing Neighborhood looking southeast.



Figure 57 : Proposed Neighborhood Park looking southeast.



Figure 58 : Proposed Neighborhood Park looking southeast.

NEXT STEPS ACTIONS

The design options presented in this report can spur further interest and investment in the Milo-Grogan neighborhood and catalyze future improvements. These options have certain elements that could be taken on by community members while others may require more investment and guidance from the city of Columbus. The designs are presented to illustrate a number of ways in which green infrastructure may be incorporated into the neighborhood over time. A number of the recommendations would require investment on the part of a private sector or nonprofit developer. Others would require implementation by the city of Columbus. It will be important to fully understand the policy implications of these design elements as some may not be viable given current conditions. An important implementation step will be to identify potential priorities.

This section discusses potential near-, mid-, and long-term steps, key community partners, and funding sources identified and discussed during the design workshop that could help the city of Columbus and the Milo-Grogan neighborhood achieve its goals.

The following discusses the three tiers of actions and identifies the type of improvements, funding options, potential leadership, and partners that could be involved for each of the various improvements.

NEAR-TERM ACTIONS (one to two years)

Near-term actions, those that could begin in the next one to two years, include activities the neighborhood association and its residents, nearby institutions, and the city could continue to build upon to strengthen the community. Actions could start with simple improvements such as repairing sidewalks, enhancing crosswalks, and adding street trees. Developing a campaign that starts with the little things can develop neighborhood enthusiasm and momentum, to then move towards building new sidewalks, adding new crosswalks, and building stormwater planters. Concurrently, the neighbors, through their Area Commission, could ask for a road diet study for East 2nd Avenue be done in order to implement sharrows and improve bicycle accessibility. Arts organizations, such as Milo Arts and the Columbus Arts Council can get involved in developing gateway elements and other public art projects to strengthen the neighborhood's identity.

For making the park a reality, the Area Commission could start facilitating neighborhood conversations with residents, the church, Milo Arts, and the Boys and Girls Club. As conversations progress and a consensus begins emerging, discussion could be expanded to involve city departments and potential funders. It is important, though, that the neighborhood speaks with a clear and united voice.

MID-TERM ACTIONS (three to five years)

Mid-term actions, those that could begin in the next three to five years, are opportunities stemming from the near-term successes or larger investments that could use design and planning services. These projects require more funding and planning and design efforts to mobilize and set the stage for larger investments and redevelopment in the neighborhood. These are likely the precursor to major transportation and infrastructure projects, or build upon currently planned projects in the surrounding area (i.e., Cleveland Avenue improvements for Bus-Rapid Transit (CMAX)). These actions could include the construction of bioretention cells and other streetscape improvements, as well as pedestrian crossing improvements and vacant lot infill, with additional residential housing. Efforts to develop the neighborhood park could likely continue during this phase with consolidation of church properties, Boys and Girls Club property, and vacant/land bank parcels; as well as the acquisition of the remaining parcels and public alley.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS (five to 10 years)

In the long term (five to 10 years), the city could investigate the construction of larger infrastructure improvements, as well as redeveloping vacant lands and repairing existing housing in the neighborhood. These could include larger infill projects along Cleveland Avenue that mix commercial space with residential, or creating greater links to the city's bikeway system.

POTENTIAL FUNDING

This section identifies potential funding sources for projects identified in this report. These include grants, loans, and tax credit programs, among others. These sources could fund planning, design, construction, and educational initiatives that relate directly to the successful implementation of the design options.

The following funding sources are listed for any number of potential applicants, including the city of Columbus itself, local developers, community groups, and/or community improvement corporations. The funding available from many state, federal, and local funding sources is contingent on the type of applicant. Often, the key to unlocking additional funding for capital projects is through partnerships with other agencies, private entities, or nonprofit organizations. This places particular importance on raising awareness of Milo-Grogan projects within local government agencies. It is recommended that local leaders could meet with local agencies and discuss the goals and project requirements of various elements of the neighborhood's design options; this could increase the likelihood of inclusion on future capital improvement budgets. Given the ever-changing nature of funding programs, community organizations may wish to designate a person or group familiar with funding processes to consistently communicate with local agencies and other entities about new or ongoing opportunities. Potential partners and supporting entities are listed below.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ohio Environmental Education Fund

Grants are available to public and nonprofit entities for up to \$50,000 and require a 10% or in-kind match. The fund must be used to enhance the public's awareness and understanding about issues affecting environmental quality in Ohio. Creative, innovative projects are targeted for grant awards.¹

EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund

Loans are available to municipalities that receive state funding. Loan amounts vary by project and require a 20% state match to federal funds. Loans can be used for green infrastructure projects that manage, treat, or reuse stormwater.²

EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Grants

Grant amounts depend on the project and funding availability, since it is a Congressional appropriation (in 2015 Ohio received \$4.8 million). Although these are federal grants, funding comes through the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. Grants can fund a wide range of projects ranging from education, training, demonstration projects, monitoring, and technical assistance for local nonpoint source (NPS) pollution efforts. Projects must address NPS objectives, and be identified by the state and championed by the local government.³

Ohio Office of Energy and Redevelopment Alternative Stormwater Infrastructure Loan Program

This program provides local governments and private parties (partnered with public entities) low-interest loans of up to \$5 million for construction of alternative stormwater infrastructure to help decrease stormwater runoff, while improving neighborhood character. Projects must have a redevelopment plan demonstrating economic benefits, such as job creation, new or rehabilitated housing, and

¹ Ohio EPA. "Office of Environmental Education." <http://www.epa.ohio.gov/oeeef/EnvironmentalEducation.aspx>. Accessed Jan. 12, 2016.

² EPA. "Clean Water State Revolving Fund". <https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf/learn-about-clean-water-state-revolving-fund-cwsrf#assistance>. Accessed Jan. 12, 2016

³ EPA. "Clean Water Act Section 319." <http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/cwact.cfm>. Accessed Jan. 12, 2016.

⁴ Ohio DSA. "Alternative Stormwater Infrastructure Loan Program." https://development.ohio.gov/cs/cs_allstormwater.htm. Accessed Jan. 12, 2016

POTENTIAL FUNDING

other redevelopment efforts.⁴

City of Columbus Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund (UIRF)

The UIRF's funding is variable and targeted at projects that the neighborhood has identified as significant. These can range from sidewalks, to stormwater upgrades, to street trees. Neighborhoods must create a list of projects that could be supported by the Neighborhood Area Commission and funded by the city. It is advisable to discuss applicable projects with City Planning and Economic Development beforehand.¹

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT

Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Safe Routes To School Program

Grant amounts depend on project, and are available to municipalities and school districts to improve safety and encourage and enable children—including those with disabilities—to walk or ride their bikes to school.²

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) Attributable Funding Programs: Transportation Enhancement Program (TE)

Funding varies (up to 20% of construction costs, and 100% of design costs) and is intended to enhance and expand transportation choices in a community. Local public agencies enter into a contract with ODOT to plan and construct things like sidewalks, bikeway, and streetscape improvements.³

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits

Private or not-for-profit developers can receive a 20% tax credit for rehabilitation fees to preserve non-public historic buildings that have no deed restrictions. Applicants should demonstrate additional funding sources, such as other tax credits and grants, to strengthen their applications.⁴

Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credits

Private or not-for-profit developers can receive a 25% tax credit for rehabilitation fees up to \$5 million for preservation of non-public historic buildings that have no deed restrictions. The credit is typically paired with the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program.⁵

Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit Pipeline Pilot Initiative

The initiative provides property owners, local governments, or other civic organizations small grants between \$4,000 to \$12,000, as well as technical assistance; to help in nominating buildings and districts to the National Register of Historic Places. The initiative is intended to create a “pipeline” of properties that are eligible for redevelopment assistance through the Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit program.⁶

¹UIRF. “Columbus Department of Development Urban Infrastructure Recovery Fund.” <https://columbus.gov/planning/uirf/>. Accessed Jan. 16, 2016

²ODOT SRTS. “Safe Routes to School.” <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/ProgramManagement/HighwaySafety/ActiveTransportation/Pages/SRTS.aspx>. Accessed Jan. 15, 2016.

³MORPC. “MORPC-Attributable Funding.” <http://www.morpc.org/transportation/funding-grants/morpc-attributable-funding/index>. Accessed Apr. 20, 2016.

⁴NPS. “Technical Preservation Services.” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/before-you-apply.htm>. Accessed Apr. 20, 2016.

⁵Ohio Development Services Agency. “Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit.” https://development.ohio.gov/cs/cs_ohptc.htm. Accessed Jan. 16, 2016.

⁶Ohio Development Services Agency. “Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit Pipeline Pilot Initiative.” https://development.ohio.gov/summary_13ohptcppi.htm. Accessed Jan. 22, 2016.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

This tax credit, administered by the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), is for affordable housing developers and varies based on project equity. The credit is intended to fund housing projects, such as single family infill, historic rehabilitation, and new multi-family development. Projects must include an affordable housing component.¹

Finance Fund Pre-Development Grant (OHFA)

These grants are available to nonprofit community development corporations for up to \$30,000 (but must leverage other funds at a minimum of 15%). The grants can be used to pay predevelopment costs, such as environmental studies, architectural drawings, appraisals, among other technical assistance.²

Finance Fund Economic Development Grant

These grants are available to private nonprofit organizations for up to \$150,000 (requiring a 2:1 match). Applicants must demonstrate that their projects can create long-term private sector jobs, and are located in a low-and-moderate income neighborhood. Funds must be used for construction of housing developments that include an affordable housing component.³

PLACE-MAKING AND PUBLIC ART

National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) Our Town Program

NEA's grants are available to any well-defined leadership entity for \$25,000 to \$200,000 (requiring a 1:1 match). The grants support creative place-making projects that help to transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at their core. Creative place-making is when arts and culture are deliberately integrated into community revitalization work.⁴

Greater Columbus Arts Council Grants

These grants are available to nonprofit organizations involved in arts and cultural programming for 25% of project costs, up to \$30,000 (requiring a match for the additional 75% or more). The grants support a broad array of existing or new programs provided by professional artists and arts and cultural organizations.⁵

¹ Ohio Housing Finance Agency. "Housing Tax Credit Program." <http://ohiohome.org/ppd/htc.aspx>. Accessed Jan. 22, 2016.

² Ohio Housing Finance Agency. "Housing Investment Fund." <http://ohiohome.org/compliance/hif.aspx>. Accessed Jan. 18, 2016.

³ Finance Fund. "Core Programs: Economic Development Grant". <http://www.financefund.org/funding-programs/finance-fund/grants#EconD>. Accessed Jan. 18, 2016.

⁴ National Endowment for the Arts. "Our Town Grants" <https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/our-town-introduction>. Accessed Jan. 18, 2016.

⁵ GCAC. "Grants & Services." <http://www.gcac.org/grants-services/>. Accessed Jan. 18, 2016.

