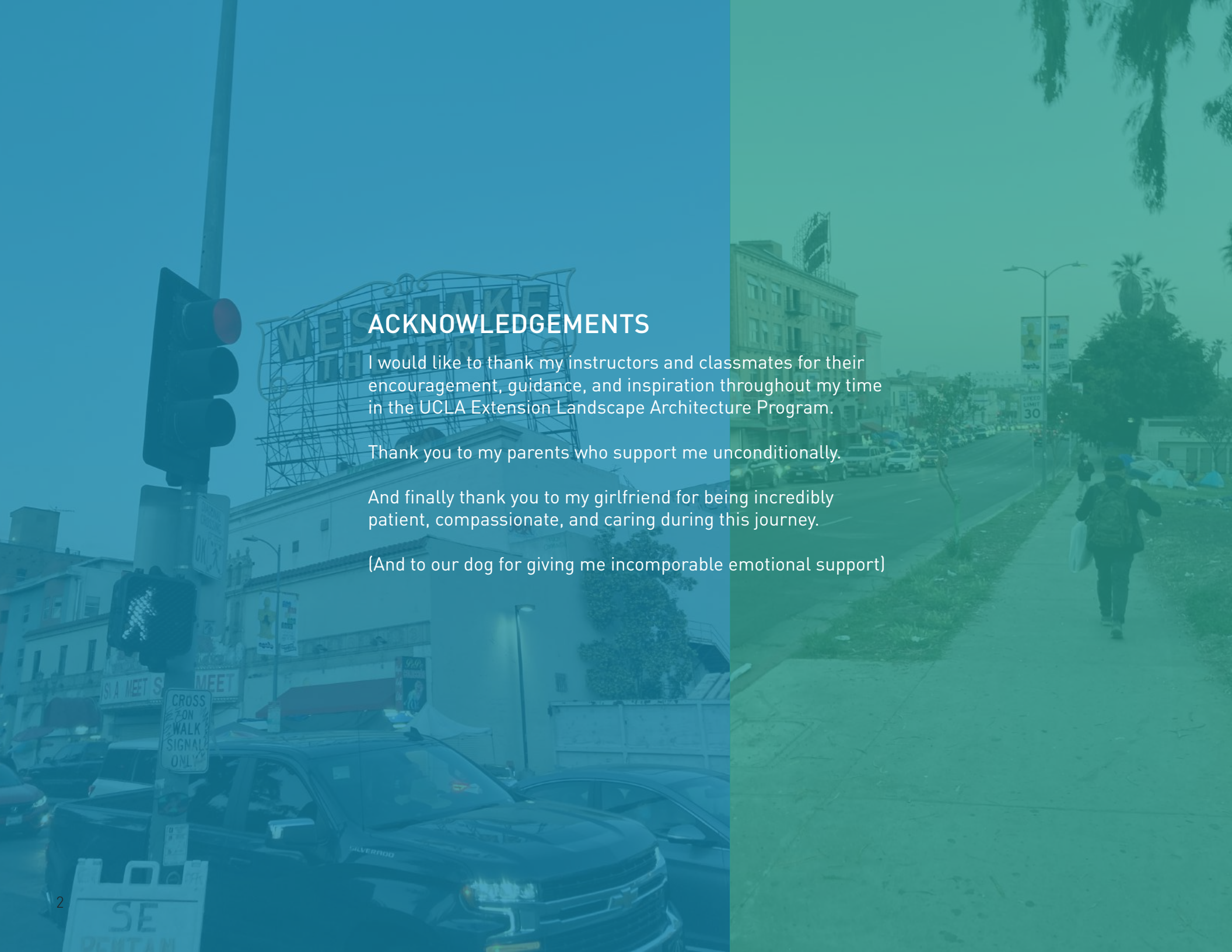
ALVARADO STREET:
Creating Walkability, Connectivity, and Accessibility for MacArthur Park

Tim Switzer
UCLA Extension Landscape Architecture Program, Capstone: Summer 2021
Instructors: Meg Rushing Coffee, Jim Pickel, Pamela Brief



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to my parents who support me unconditionally.

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(And to our dog for giving me incomporable emotional support)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT STATEMENT

This project proposes to redesign the section of Alvarado St. bordering MacArthur Park to improve the pedestrian experience and safety, enhance existing transit services, and create a better physical framework for the vendors and businesses along the bustling street. This pedestrianization effort will provide much needed public space to a historically under-served community, while drawing connections to MacArthur Park and the surrounding historic buildings.

THEORETICAL PREMISE

Located in one of the densest parts of Los Angeles, the section of Alvarado Street bordering MacArthur park is bursting with life. Rather than activating a forgotten or abandoned space, I seek to reclaim public space for a community that desperately needs it. I will attempt to enhance what already works, while creating much needed safety and flexibility. In a neighborhood that has such a distinctive culture and character, I want to use the forward thinking ideas about mobility and sustainability to let it reach its full potential. This could serve as a template for a type of lively, transit connected, pedestrian friendly, open space-adjacent street that is distinctively Angeleno.

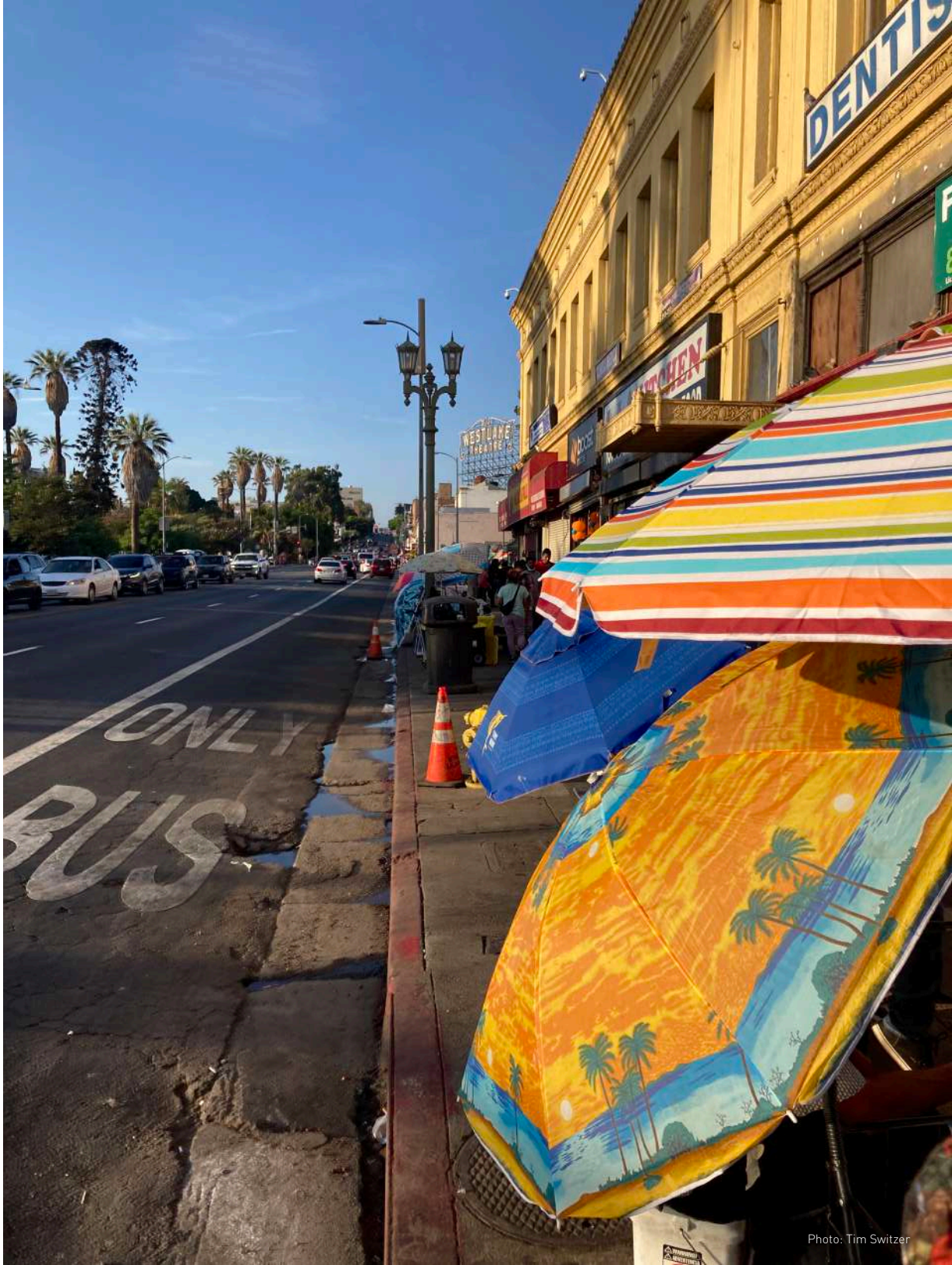


Photo: Tim Switzer

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY: A NATIONAL AND LOCAL CRISIS

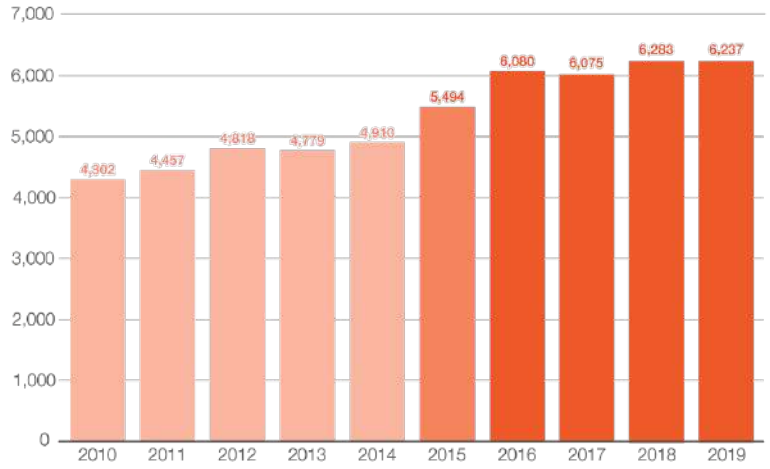


Fig. 1. National pedestrian fatalities 2010-2019

Image: Dangerous by Design 2021, Smart Growth America

Fig. 2. HIN map

Image: LADOT VISION ZERO

The number of pedestrians struck and killed by cars has risen by 45% nationally over the past decade (Fig. 2). In Los Angeles, these deaths occur at a higher rate than in comparable American cities. Compounding the issue, people in under-served communities are disproportionately killed in traffic collisions. Every pedestrian fatality is an unacceptable and unnecessary tragedy- as landscape architects, it is a paramount issue as part of our code of ethics to protect public health, safety, and wellbeing.

LADOT Vision Zero: A Step in the Right Direction but Not Nearly Enough

In 2015, Mayor Eric Garcetti joined the VISION ZERO NETWORK, an international initiative to eliminate pedestrian traffic deaths in city centers, with the goal of completely eliminating traffic deaths in Los Angeles by 2025.

Implementation:
VISION ZERO, managed by The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), identifies High Injury Networks (HIN)- 6% of streets that account for 70% of severe injuries and deaths. LADOT classifies the project site (and adjacent streets) as a HIN, with 3 deaths and 3 serious injuries from 2010-2019 along the 2 block stretch of Alvarado St between 6th and 7th street (Fig. 2). VISION ZERO sets design and community engagement guidelines, and identifies potential project sites. These projects are funded by Prop C funds, state and federal grants, and the city's redevelopment authority.

Results:
Since implementation in 2015, annual pedestrian deaths have *increased* annually (from 87 deaths in 2014, to 134 in 2019, a nearly 55% increase over 5 years). From a 2018 progress report, the city has touted 90 miles of Priority Corridor Improvements, and dozens of improved intersections, but still fell well short of its initial benchmark of reducing annual pedestrian deaths by 20% by the end of 2017.

Takeaways:
Although projects correctly attempt to reduce speeds and create safer crossings, many merely repaint crosswalks and add new crossing signals. Roll-out of projects has been slow and reactive to tragedy, prompting criticism from advocacy groups.

Any successful program to eliminate pedestrian fatalities needs to reduce the number of cars on the road and incentivise other modes of transportation.

Well established landscape architecture principles can be synthesized to provide a holistic solution to pedestrian deaths in Los Angeles that can be used as a road-map in lieu of the current disconnected interventions.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS & AIR POLLUTION

Los Angeles has highest level of ozone and particle air pollution in the country which has devastating public health effects - air pollution is linked to asthma, heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. Transportation accounts 19% of greenhouse gas emissions in Los Angeles and is the top contributor to air pollution.

Los Angeles is famous for its car-dependence. Smog and congested freeways are almost as emblematic of the city as Hollywood and year-round sunshine. However, car-dependence isn't merely a product of a sprawling city connected by massive freeways. 47% of all trips made in Los Angeles are less than 3 miles door to door, (considered walking/ biking distance), but 84% of these trips are currently made by car. Reducing the number of these short trips taken in cars is crucial to mitigating the effects of air pollution and climate change.

In tandem, the Los Angeles City Green New Deal and Mobility Plan 2035 lay out benchmarks and policy recommendations around greenhouse gas emissions and mobility goals. The Green New Deal (2019) attempts make our electric grid, transportation, and buildings carbon neutral by 2050 with an agenda of environmental justice and green economic opportunity. The LA City Mobility Plan 2035 (developed by the Los Angeles Department of Planning and adopted by City Council in 2016) offers integrated policy recommendations around safety and expanded and improved transit services. It stresses the importance of "Streets as Places" and investment in our streetscapes to encourage healthy, robust public life.

Improving streetscapes and enhancing transit connections is crucial to reducing the number of short trips taken in cars.

Creating a connected, pedestrian-centric corridor can serve as a template for achieving multiple city initiatives around mobility and climate change

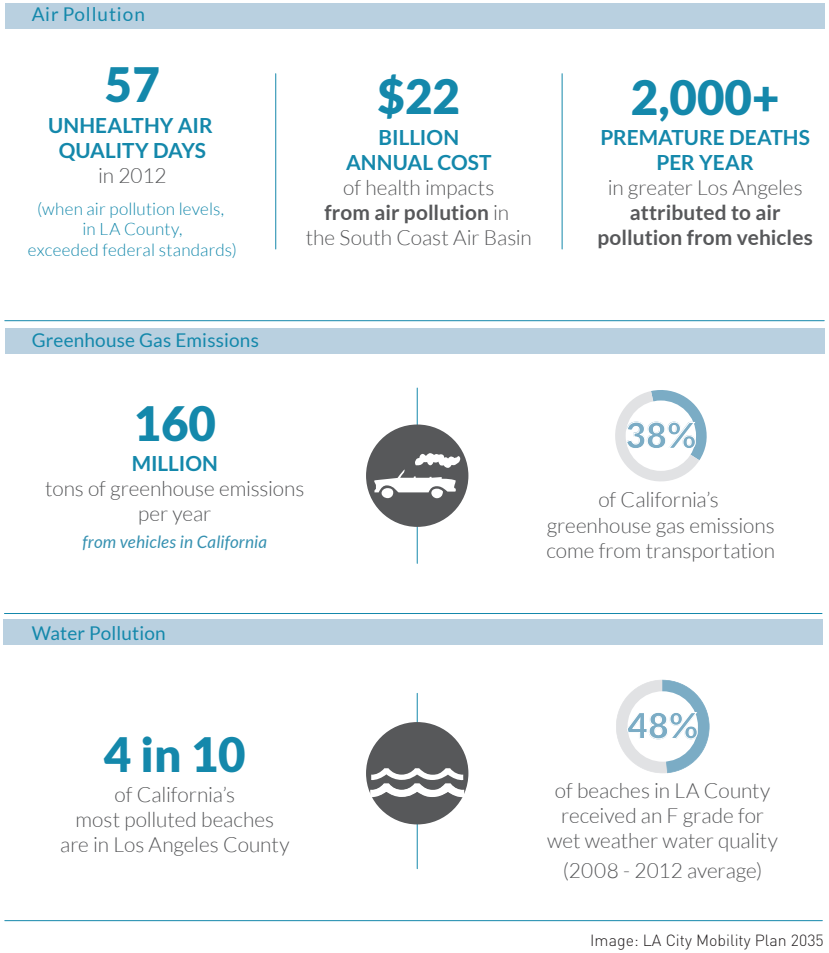


Image: LA City Mobility Plan 2035

Fig. 3. Air pollution: economic, environmental, & health impacts

Fig. 4. Street vending along narrow sidewalks

Photo: Tim Switzer

EQUITY & LIVEABLE STREETS

The Westlake neighborhood is the 2nd densest in Los Angeles, and Alvarado St. reflects this density with foot traffic and activity. In fact, 94% of Westalke residents do not own a car, putting the lack of equity in public space into stark relief. The low rate of car ownership highlights the transit-dependence of the neighborhood, while demonstrating that the majority of public space serves motorists from elsewhere. Despite this allocation of space, the streetscape is arguably the most activated in the city- a unique atmosphere created in large part by the symbiosis of the Westlake residents and street vendors.

Street vendors line the east side of the street, selling essential items like clothes, electronics, hygiene products, food, and toys (Fig. 4). They are critical to the fabric of the community, but they operate in a precarious legal gray area. Street vending provides livelihood for many undocumented residents, and has positive knock-on economic benefits (generating $517 million annually in local economic stimulus per Economic Round Table).

Rather than remove street vendors, this project proposes to reclaim public space from cars to enhance accessibility and livability.

Streetscapes make up the vast majority of public space in our city, and they are often forgotten, empty spaces - "place-less", bleak, and hostile.

By contrast, Alvarado St. is overflowing with activity even though the physical conditions imposed by the street are oppressive and inadequate.

This project seeks to capitalize on the dense, vibrant nature of the street and neighborhood - giving it the proper framework to thrive.

SITE SELECTION

The project site contains the two blocks of Alvarado Street between 6th Street and 7th Street, adjacent vacant buildings, the Wilshire Blvd. - Alvarado Street intersection, and the east edge of MacArthur park (Fig. 5).

The site is roughly 200,000 sq. feet (4.6 acres).
The many defined edges and access points presented a design challenge, as did balancing the relatively narrow linear portion of the site with desired programming.

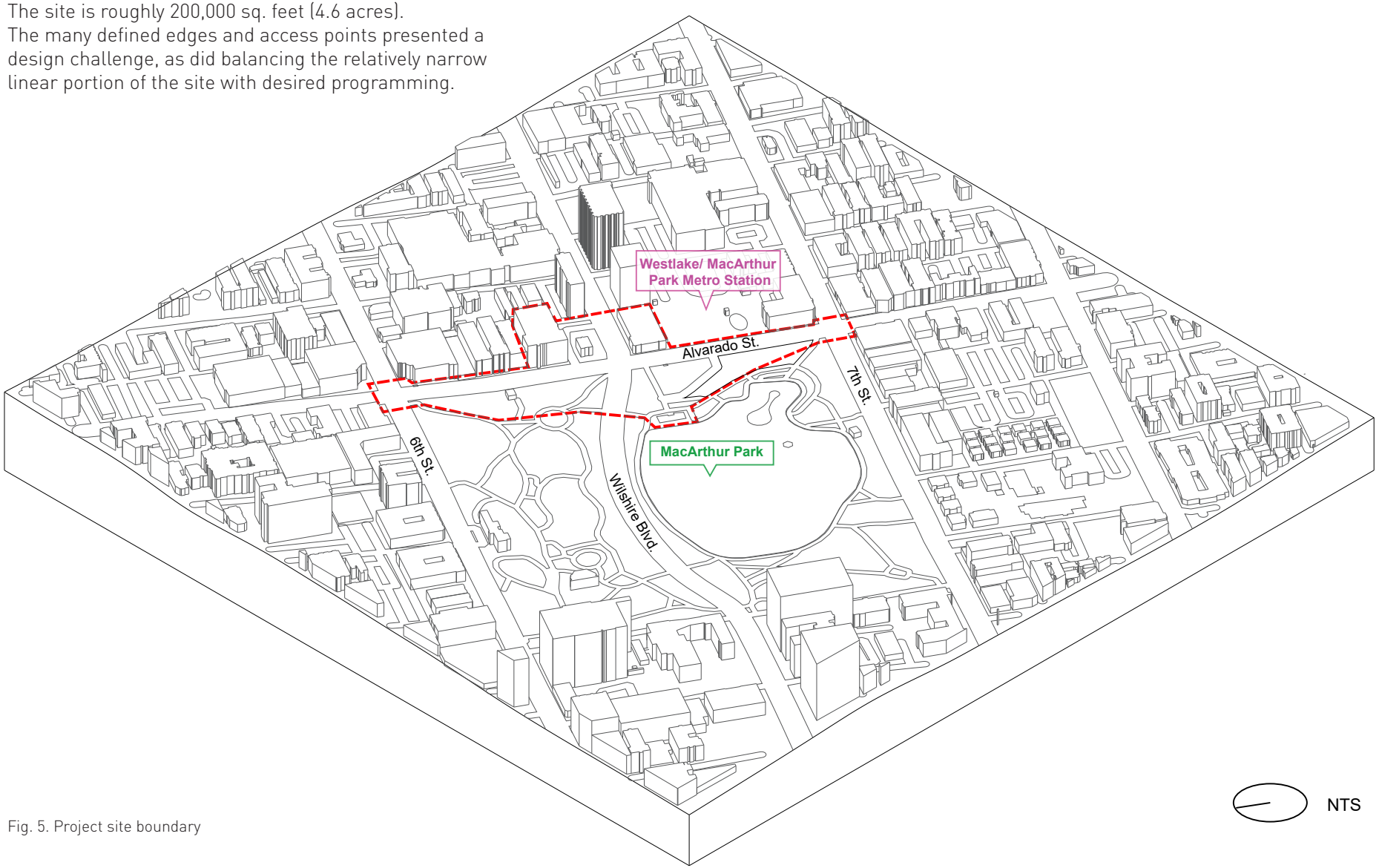


Fig. 5. Project site boundary

Fig. 6. Historic Street Marker

Image: Los Angeles County - The Model Design Manual For Living Streets (Ryan Avalon)

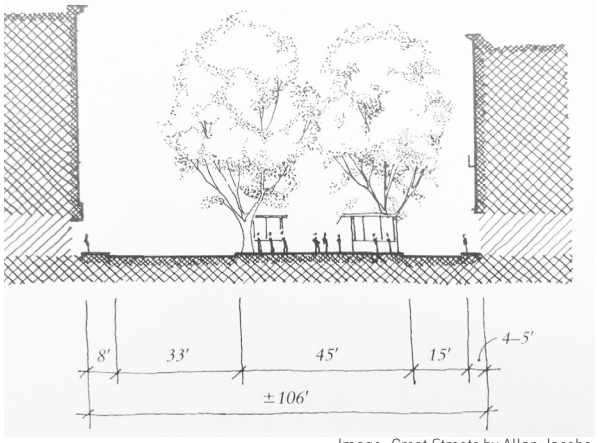


Fig. 7. Streetscape section

Image: *Great Streets* by Allan Jacobs

Fig. 8. Transit street diagram

Image: NACTO Transit Street Design Guide

LOS ANGELES COUNTY - THE MODEL DESIGN MANUAL FOR LIVING STREETS

Chapter 12: Re-Placing Streets

- Encourage active ground floor uses in adjacent buildings
- Cluster activities and amenities
- Use pedestrian scale elements: signs, lighting, seating
- Reflect community identity (Fig. 6)
- Establish how street will be used and by whom

GREAT STREETS by ALLAN JACOBS (1993)

What makes great streets:

- Avoid "universal" solutions
- Create conditions that invite leisurely, safe walking
- Physical comfort
- Quality that engages the eye
- Transparent but defined edges
- Complement buildings

Contributing qualities in great streets:

- Street Trees
- Beginnings and endings
- Many/ diverse Buildings
- Details: gates, fountains, benches, kiosks, paving, lights, signs, canopies
- Places for a break
- Slope
- Contrast

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CITY TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS (NACTO) TRANSIT STREET DESIGN GUIDE

- Identifies context-specific transit street typologies (Fig. 8)
- Provides best practices, design guidelines, and case study examples of a diverse set of transit streets

SITE USERS

LATINX RESIDENTS OF WESTLAKE

Westake is a vibrant but historically under-served community. Demographically, the neighborhood is 74% Latino (primarily Mexican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Honduran) and 64% of residents are first generation immigrants. 31% of residents live below the poverty line and 95% of residents are renters. Because parking is rare in the multi-unit apartment buildings making up the bulk of the neighborhood, the community is very transit dependent.

The working class neighborhood has a strong sense of community, typified by frequent protests in support of a path to citizenship (Fig. 9). In contrast to much of Los Angeles, daily life is very connected to public space, with residents shopping from street vendors and congregating in and around MacArthur Park. This project intends to create space for these users to express and enjoy themselves in safety and comfort, while preserving their culture and community.

Fig. 9. 2007 May Day protest on Alvarado Street

Photo: Rick Loomis / LAT

Fig. 10. Pick-up soccer game in MacArthur Park

Photo: Barbara Davidson

Fig. 11. Characteristic local business

Photo: Rick Loomis / LAT

Photo: Pueblo Plannning

Fig. 12. Permitted street vending at the Metro Station

Photo: Pueblo Planning

Fig. 13. Street vendors at collaborative design workshop

STREET VENDORS

An estimated 50,000 street vendors sell their wares in Los Angeles, and they make up a vital part of the community around MacArthur Park. Street vending is often a first job for new undocumented immigrants. The low overhead cost, off the books employment, and social aspects of the job offer many benefits.

Street vendors have long been marginalized in Los Angeles - having their possessions confiscated by LAPD, and facing fines and arrest. In 2013, there were 1,235 arrests for illegal vending. In a fight for survival, street vendors showed immense solidarity in organizing to demand decriminalization.

When the city finally decriminalized street vending in 2016, they became the last of the 10 largest cities in America to do so. Legalization followed in 2018 due to the efforts of the Legalize Street Vending Campaign. Vendors were brought into the leadership fold along with anti-gentrification non-profits, public counsel, and food security groups to propose vendor-led policies to City Council.

Since legalization, the city has set up a station for permitted vendors at the Westlake/ MacArthur Park Metro Station Plaza (Fig. 12). The results have been mixed - while some vendors enjoy the legitimacy and security of being permitted, it has created a two-tiered system that has given police the opportunity to sporadically sweep un-permitted vendors from Alvarado Street. The permitted set up at the metro station is also very rigid and set away from the street, reducing foot traffic and the number of customers. Permits are also limited in quantity and too expensive for many long-time vendors.

It is clear that vendors desire autonomy in their decision-making, and rightfully so: Monique Lopez from Pueblo Planning has engaged the vendors on Alvarado Street in design workshops to better understand their needs (Fig .13). It quickly became apparent to her, that they had an incredibly deep knowledge of the street - its circulation patterns, the people who passed by, and where the best spots were to station themselves - the type of knowledge that can only be gathered over many years of observation and interaction. Her workshops also revealed that the organization of street vendors is very socially intertwined: vendors want to be near friends they can converse with and who they trust cover their station when they need to take a break.

I intend to create spaces for these vendors that are safer, more, comfortable and functional than the current cramped sidewalk conditions, while avoiding being overly prescriptive and rigid.

SITE USERS

UNHOUSED RESIDENTS

In the past decade, the number of people experiencing homelessness in the city of Los Angeles has dramatically increased to an estimated 69,000. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly compounded this issue, but it will hard to know the extent of it, as the city has decided to cancel its annual count of homeless people for 2021. What is clear, is that MacArthur Park is currently host to a significant encampment of unhoused residents - the majority concentrated along Alvarado Street and Wilshire Boulevard.

A unique characteristic of the unhoused community at MacArthur Park is that many residents have begun to street vend themselves - inspired by their largely immigrant neighbors. While street vending may not be a stable or repeatable path out of homelessness, it is an interesting microcosm of the densely intertwined community along these two city blocks.

Fig. 14. Homeless encampments along Alvarado St. Photo: Tim Switzer

Fig. 15. Homeless encampments at the Alvarado St. - Wilshire Blvd. intersection Photo: Google Streetview

People experiencing homelessness have diverse needs like mental health services, drug treatment, and family services, and it would be a mistake to treat them monolithically as a group. However, the unifying needs of the community are the obvious - the need for shelter, food, and sanitation. While I'm skeptical of "design" solutions to homelessness, housing-first policies and harm-reduction measures are critical to mitigating its devastating effects. I don't intend to solve the root causes of homelessness through my design, but I will do my best to use my site to connect people to services, and provide democratized public space that is comfortable and safe for all.

PROJECT GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Photo: Tim Switzer

Fig. 16. Historic Westlake Theatre sign

1. CREATE A NEIGHBORHOOD-SPECIFIC PEDESTRIAN STREET:

- Create a flexible series of spaces that tie in specific community needs with broader livability goals
- Remove car access to the project site
- Increase pedestrian safety and comfort
- Create better conditions for vendors and shops
- Retain neighborhood character and mitigate against gentrification

Photo: Tim Switzer

Fig. 17. Westlake - MacArthur Park Metro Station

2. ENHANCE TRANSIT SERVICES AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION:

- Increase transit ridership, speed
- Increase bike safety, participation
- Improve amenities and strengthen connections

SITE PHOTOS

These photos, taken during various site visits over the course of the project, help to illustrate the character of the site, as well as identify opportunities and constraints

Fig. 18. Historic Westlake Theater

Fig. 19. Bus Stop at 6th. St & Alvarado St.

Fig. 20. MacArthur Park Entrance @ 6th St. and Alvarado St.

Fig. 21. Edge of MacArthur Park along Alvarado St.

Fig. 22. Cramped sidewalk conditions with street vendors

Fig. 23. Permitted street vendors at MacArthur Park Metro Station

All Photos: Tim Switzer

Fig. 24. Bonito Swap Meet

Fig. 25. MacArthur Park Entrance @ 7th St. and Alvarado St.

Fig. 26. Yoshinoya Beef Bowl @ Alvarado St. and Wilshire Blvd.

Fig. 27. Underdeveloped edge of MacArthur Park

Fig. 28. Wilshire Blvd. along MacArthur Park lake.

Fig. 29. Wall, paving, and graffiti at MacArthur Park entrance

All Photos: Tim Switzer

PROJECT PRECEDENTS: BARCELONA SUPERBLOCKS

Context:

In the early 2010s, Barcelona decided to pilot a bold new urban design typology to address urban heat-island effect and air pollution caused by congested streets. Salvador Rueda of the Urban Ecology Agency developed framework of 3 x 3 "superblocks" allowing only vehicular traffic at 10 km/h and eliminating street parking in the interior blocks (Fig. 30). Through traffic and transit was routed around permeter. There are currently plans to expand to model to 500 blocks throughout the city.

Project Goals:

- More sustainable mobility
- Revitalization of public spaces
- Promotion of biodiversity and urban green space
- Promotion of urban social fabric and social cohesion
- Promoting self-sufficiency in the use of resources
- Integration of governance processes

Outcomes/ Methods:

A Pilot Programs was launched at Poblenou in 2016, but the roll-out was confused and uncoordinated, and residents became frustrated with lack of clarity about the process. Initially, the implementation consisted a series of tactical interventions (using potted plants, tires, and other temporary materials) rather than structural ones (Fig. 31). The program became increasingly popular when more structural interventions arrived, with picnic tables proving to be especially popular (Fig. 33). The programming was intentionally undefined to start with, using a participatory framework to gauge the needs of the community.

Takeways:

- Barcelona created a bold, repeatable framework for transforming public space
- The city was uniquely suited for model (politically, historically, and physically)
- It is important to balance between tactical and structural interventions

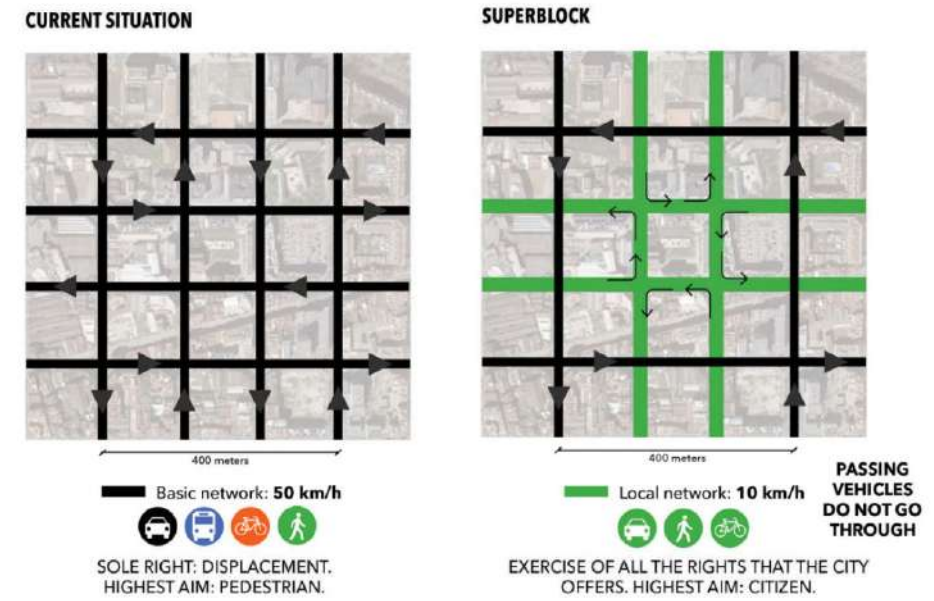


Fig. 30. Road heirarchy in a superblock model

Image: BCNUEJ, Javier Zarracina/VoxGuide

Photo: Confederación de Talleres de Proyectos de Arquitectura

Fig. 31 Early tactical interventions

Photo: Streetfilms

Fig. 32. Later structural interventions

PROJECT PRECEDENTS: KARL JOHANS GATE - OSLO, NORWAY

Fig. 33. Historic shopping district and cafes

Photo: Snohetta

Photo: Kai Jensen

Fig. 34. Framed view of Royal Palace

Fig. 35. Double alleé promenade

Photo: Snohetta

Context:

Responding to a Jan Gehl public life study in 2014, Oslo pushed back against decades of car-centric infrastructure. Gehl noted that the city center was congested during rush our and deserted after working hours. The historic city center is home to castles and government buildings and the main shopping district (Fig. 33), (Fig. 34). A section of the Karl Johans Gate borders a park on one side, and is flanked buildings on the other - a similar typology to the envelope and spatial qualities of Alvarado Street.

Goals:

The city aimed to eliminate pedestrian deaths and improve livability in its square-mile city center. In doing so, they hoped to revitalize the adjacent shopping district and integrate the historic buildings into the new pedestrian experience.

Outcomes/ Methods:

Through a combination of aggressive zoning policy and design, they eliminated car access and street parking on select streets and expanded transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure. They developed a strong central axis terminating on either end at historic buildings. By prioritizing pedestrian activation, comfort, and connectivity, they achieved their VISION ZERO goal in 2019. Not a single pedestrian died due to a vehicular collision in the city center.

Takeways:

- Oslo achieved the lofty goal of zero pedestrian deaths by focusing on livability goals first and foremost.
- Safety followed naturally from these recommendations, policies, and design decisions
- Oslo already had a substantial bike and public transportation network - something severely lacking in Los Angeles

PROJECT PRECEDENTS: CALLE REGINA - MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Context:

Calle Regina was part of a revitalization effort in CDMX's Centro Historico in the early 2000s. The street was home to an overflowing market of street vendors, but they were forced to work for various rival gangs. The area became riddled with gang-violence and drug dealing, driving out businesses.

Project Goals:

The city hoped to increase pedestrian activity and revitalize local business while improving public safety and eliminating gang activity

Outcomes/ Methods:

Using human-scale street trees, seating, murals, and converting a parking lot into a playground (Fig. 36), the city created a much more welcoming pedestrian environment. Restaurants and small shops came back after the vendors and gangs were cleared (Fig. 38). The area was transformed into a Bohemian artist community with community workshops, cafes and studios.

Takeways:

- The increased security in the area is a source of tension for the community and the vendors were a forgotten piece of the puzzle.
- The transformation of the street exacerbated gentrification, and rent in the area rose dramatically

Fig. 36. Mural at playground entrance Photo: mxcity.mx

Fig. 37. Intimate plaza Photo: mxcity.mx

Fig. 38. Cafe-lined promenade Photo: mxcity.mx

PROJECT ELEMENTS: PLAZAS

Plazas will offer respite for pedestrians to stop and relax and should allow for the possibility of all forms of spontaneity that typifies vibrant public life - performance, street vending, protest, celebration, and cultural events. They will enhance the function of existing buildings as well as complement the adjacent programming in MacArthur Park. Smaller plazas will interweave with existing street space and offer intimate spaces along the promenades.

Fig. 39. Calle Regina in Mexico City

Photo: mxcity.mx

Fig. 40. Corona Plaza in Queens

Photo: NV5

Fig. 41. Birch St. Pedestrian Plaza in Boston

Image: Merritt Chase

PROJECT ELEMENTS: TREE-LINED PROMENADES

Street trees will be used to provide shade, reduce the urban heat island effect, and give a sense of direction and rhythm to the space. Wide promenades will allow for improved pedestrian circulation while giving adequate space for commerce at the edges.

Fig. 42. Green Street in Pasadena

Photo: Walt Mancini/ Pasadena Star News/SCNG

Fig. 44. Avenue Montaigne in Paris

Photo: Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau

Fig. 43. Rambla de Poblenou in Barcelona

Photo: Alain Rouiller

Fig. 45. Ringstrasse in Vienna

Photo: UrbanGrammar

PROJECT ELEMENTS: BIOSWALES

This project proposes bioswales together with street trees, treating stormwater runoff while improving pedestrian comfort. The site is situated along a flightpath for migratory birds and was formerly a freshwater marsh- using a native semi-riparian plant palette will provide habitat and support biodiversity. Many of the area stormdrains converge at Alvarado, making it a good candidate for daylightling. Bioswales along the streetscape will also provide a vegetative buffer between pedestrians, cyclists, and buses (Fig. 47).

Fig. 46. Bioswale streetscape

Photo: TSW Design

Fig. 47. Bioswale as a buffer

Photo: Fabian Da Costa

Fig. 48. Large bioswale with check dams

Photo: Atelier Dreiseitl

PROJECT ELEMENTS: BUS AND BIKE LANES

While removing cars is relatively straightforward, bus and bike lanes must connect to the pedestrian elements in a safe and seamless way. Center-running bus lanes flanked by bike lanes and promenades will be used create nicely divided tiers of circulation. Intertwined bioswales will improve the comfort, safety, sustainability, and visual interest of the transit network.

Fig. 49. Bike lanes and vehicular traffic

Photo: NYC DOT

Fig. 50. Bike lanes with planting buffer

Photo: NV5

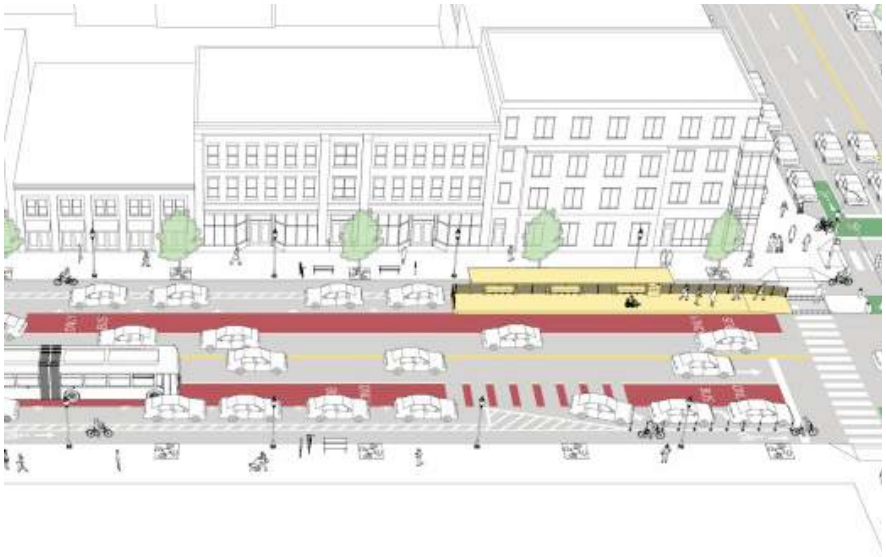


Fig. 51. Transit street schematic diagram

Image: NACTO

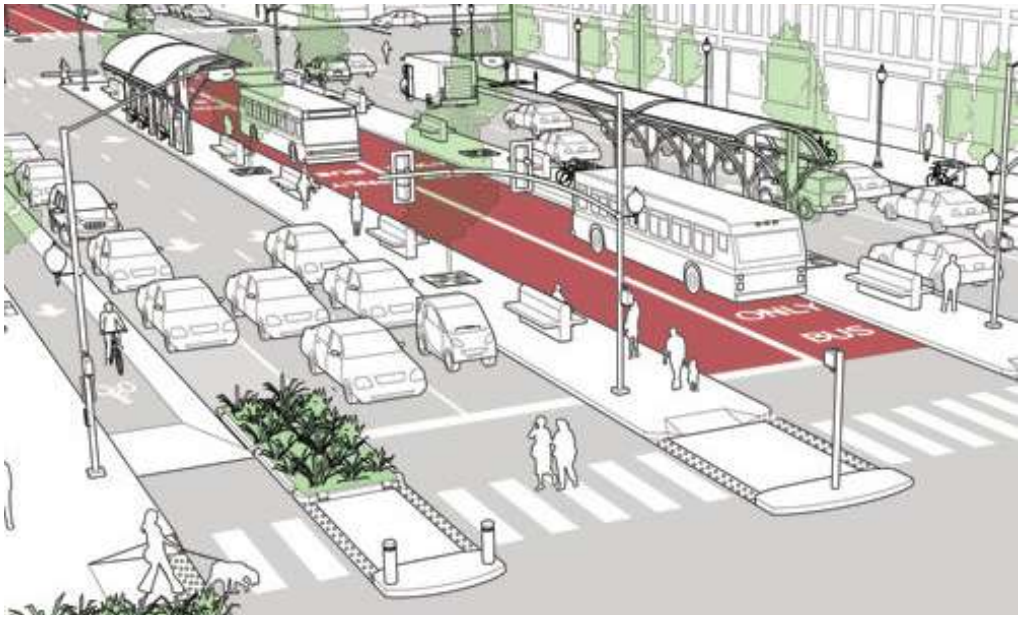


Fig. 52. Transit street schematic diagram

Image: NACTO

PROJECT ELEMENTS: HOMELESS SERVICES NAVIGATION CENTER

MacArthur Park has a significant population of unhoused residents. Some kind of center to connect them with services will be needed to ethically go through with this project.

There are delayed plans for a 77 unit shipping container bridge housing facility at nearby Lafayette Park, but the scale of homelessness in the area needs as many routes into housing and services as possible.

Fig. 53. Embarcadero Navigation Center in San Francisco

Photo: Beth LaBerge/KQED

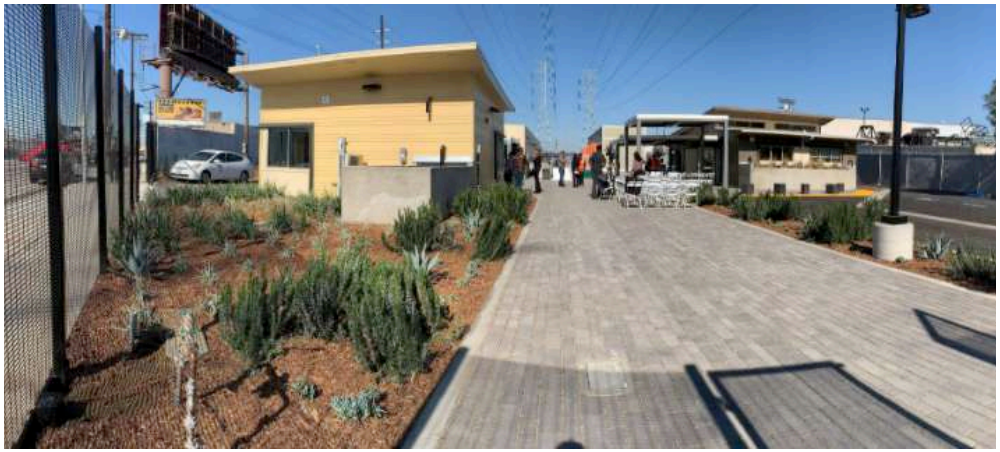


Fig. 55. Hope of the Valley Navigation Center in N. Hollywood

Photo: Hans Gutknecht, Los Angeles Daily News SCNG

Fig. 54. Fremont Housing Navigation Center

Photo: Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group

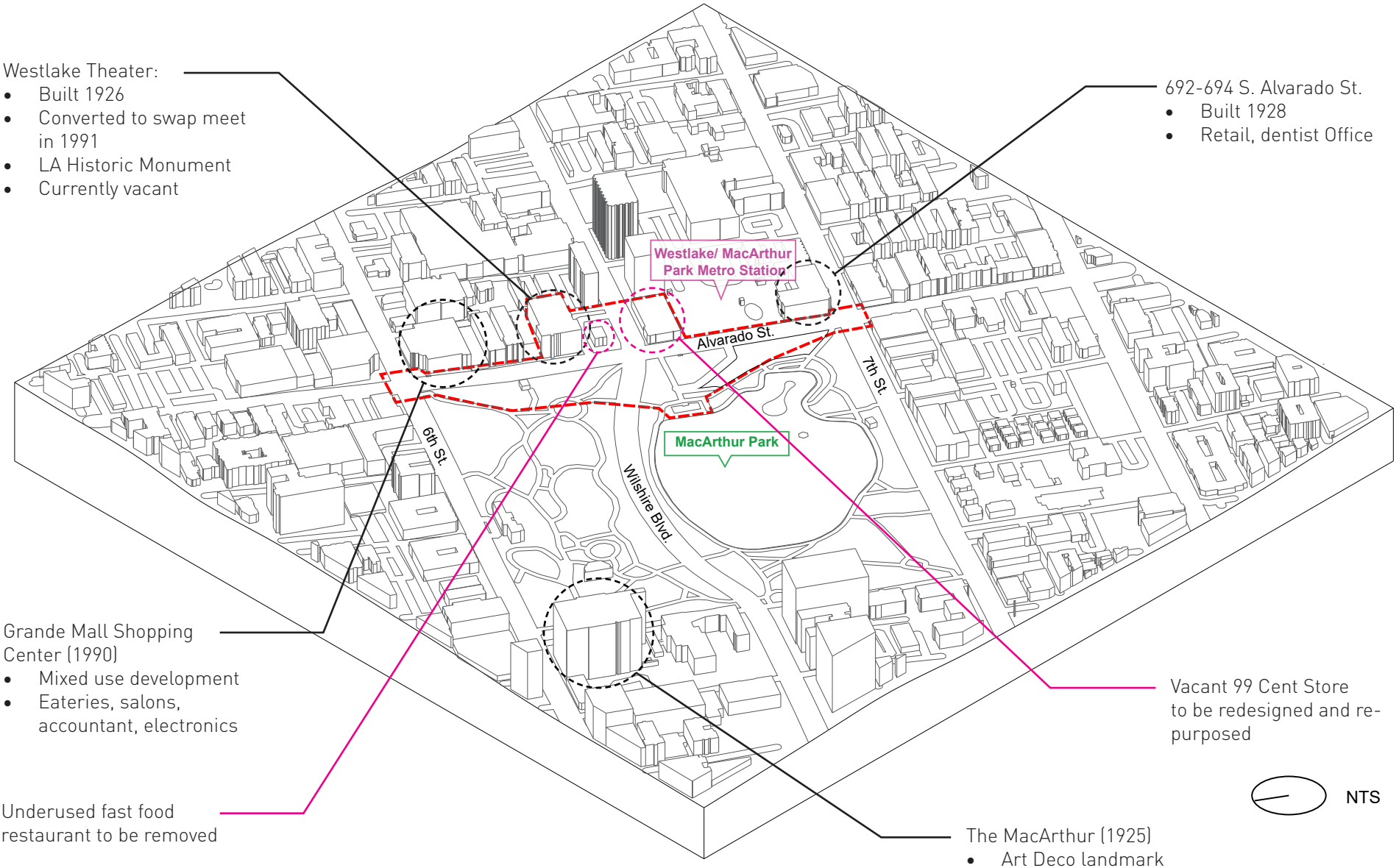
Fig. 56. A Bridge Home Shelter in Los Angeles

Photo: Beth LaBerge/KQED

SITE CONTEXT: ZONING

MacArthur Park is almost entirely surrounded by by commercial zoning. The residential buildings are all multi-family, and there is an interesting pattern in which the commercial buildings wrap around the residential along the more major streets. Although zoned as commercial, there are many multi-family residential units along 6th Street. This zoning reflects the extremely dense nature of the site and surrounding neighborhood.

SITE CONTEXT: NOTABLE BUILDINGS



Westlake Theater:
- Built 1926
- Converted to swap meet in 1991
- LA Historic Monument
- Currently vacant

692-694 S. Alvarado St.
- Built 1928
- Retail, dentist Office

Grande Mall Shopping Center (1990)
- Mixed use development
- Eateries, salons, accountant, electronics

Vacant 99 Cent Store to be redesigned and re-purposed

NTS

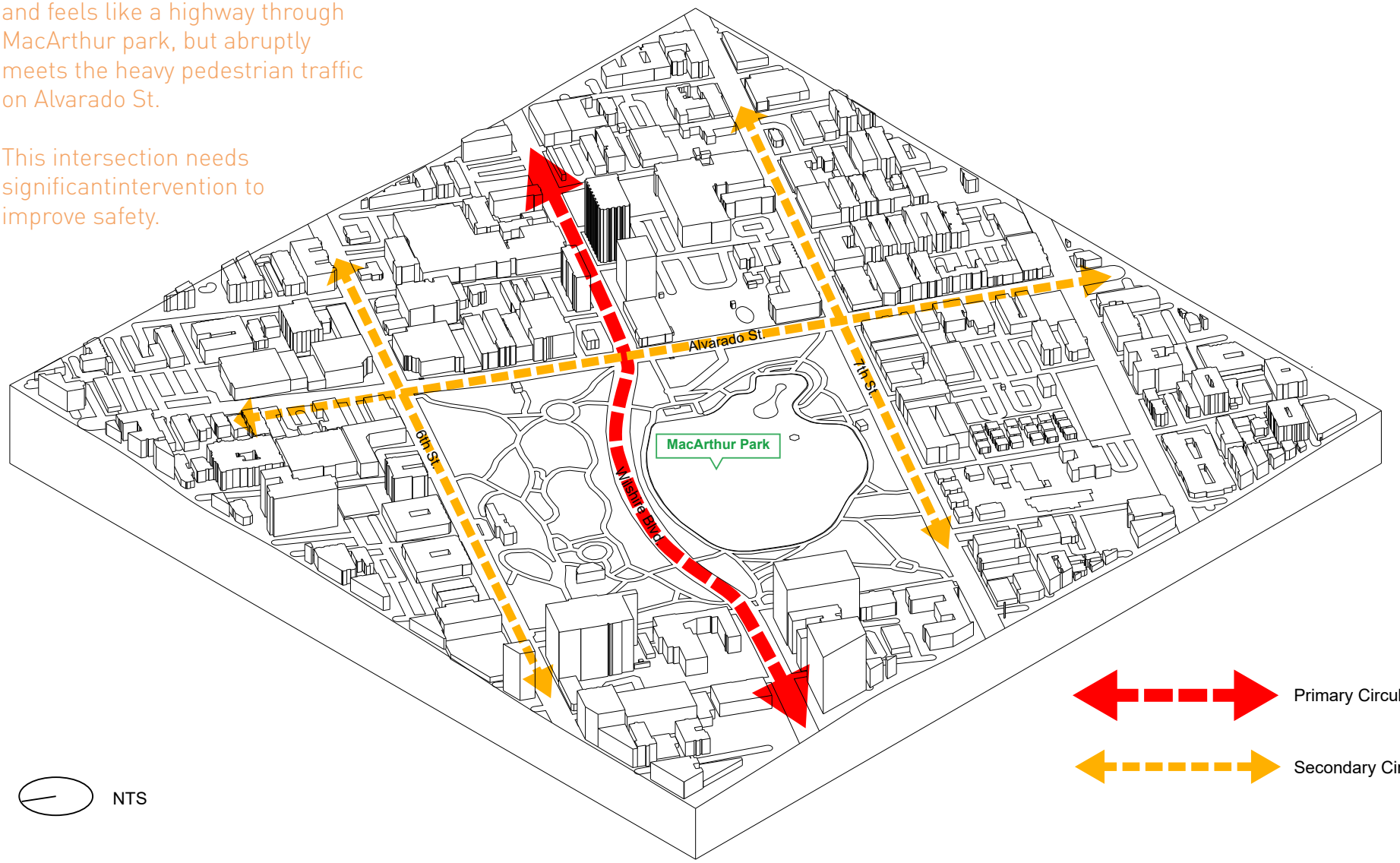
Underused fast food restaurant to be removed

The MacArthur (1925)
- Art Deco landmark
- Former hotel turned event space
- Use as borrowed view

EXISTING CONDITIONS: VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

Vehicular traffic along Wilshire Blvd. is very heavy - it is raised and feels like a highway through MacArthur park, but abruptly meets the heavy pedestrian traffic on Alvarado St.

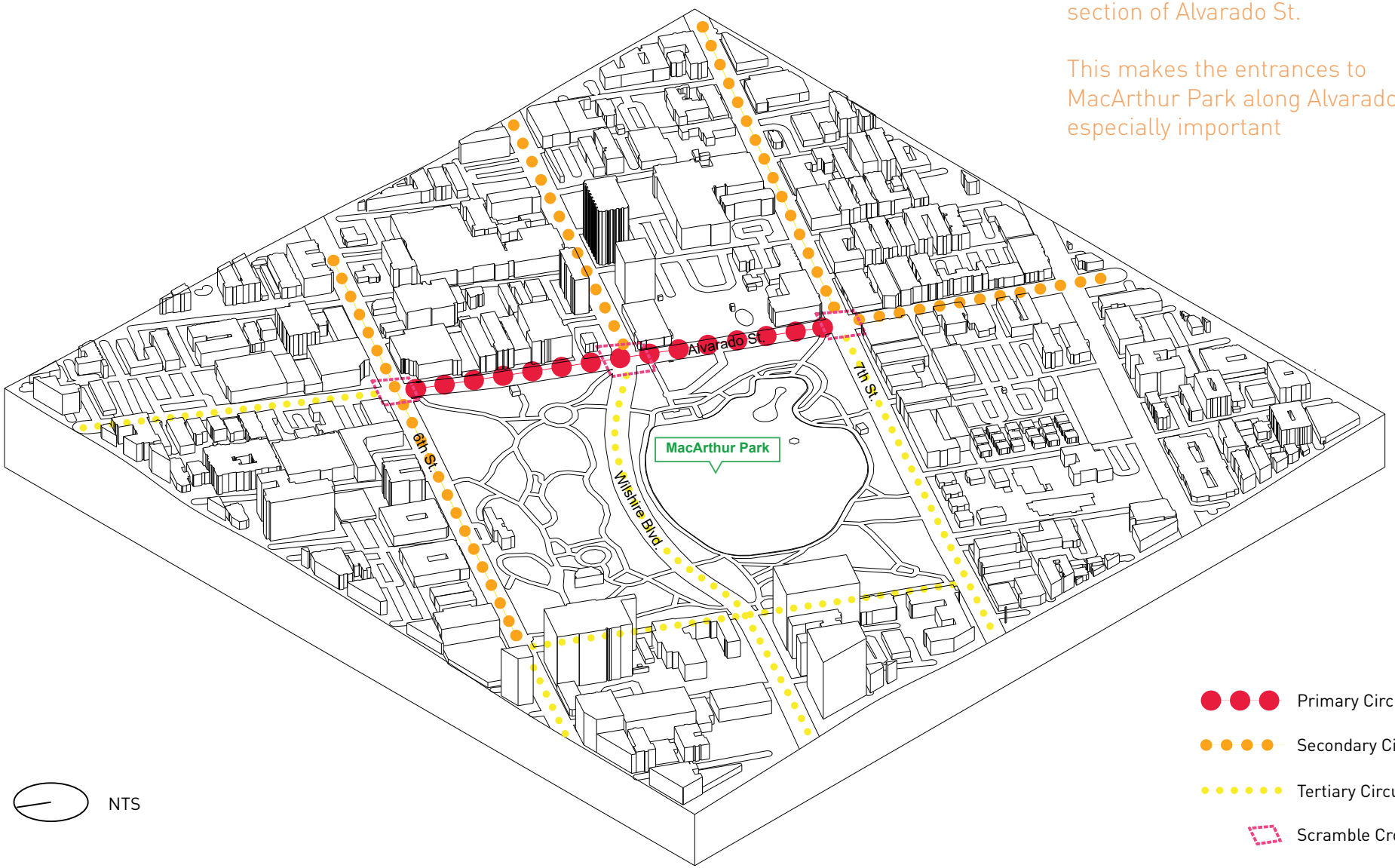
This intersection needs significantintervention to improve safety.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Pedestrian traffic is heavily concentrated in the project site section of Alvarado St.

This makes the entrances to MacArthur Park along Alvarado St. especially important



NTS

Primary Circulation

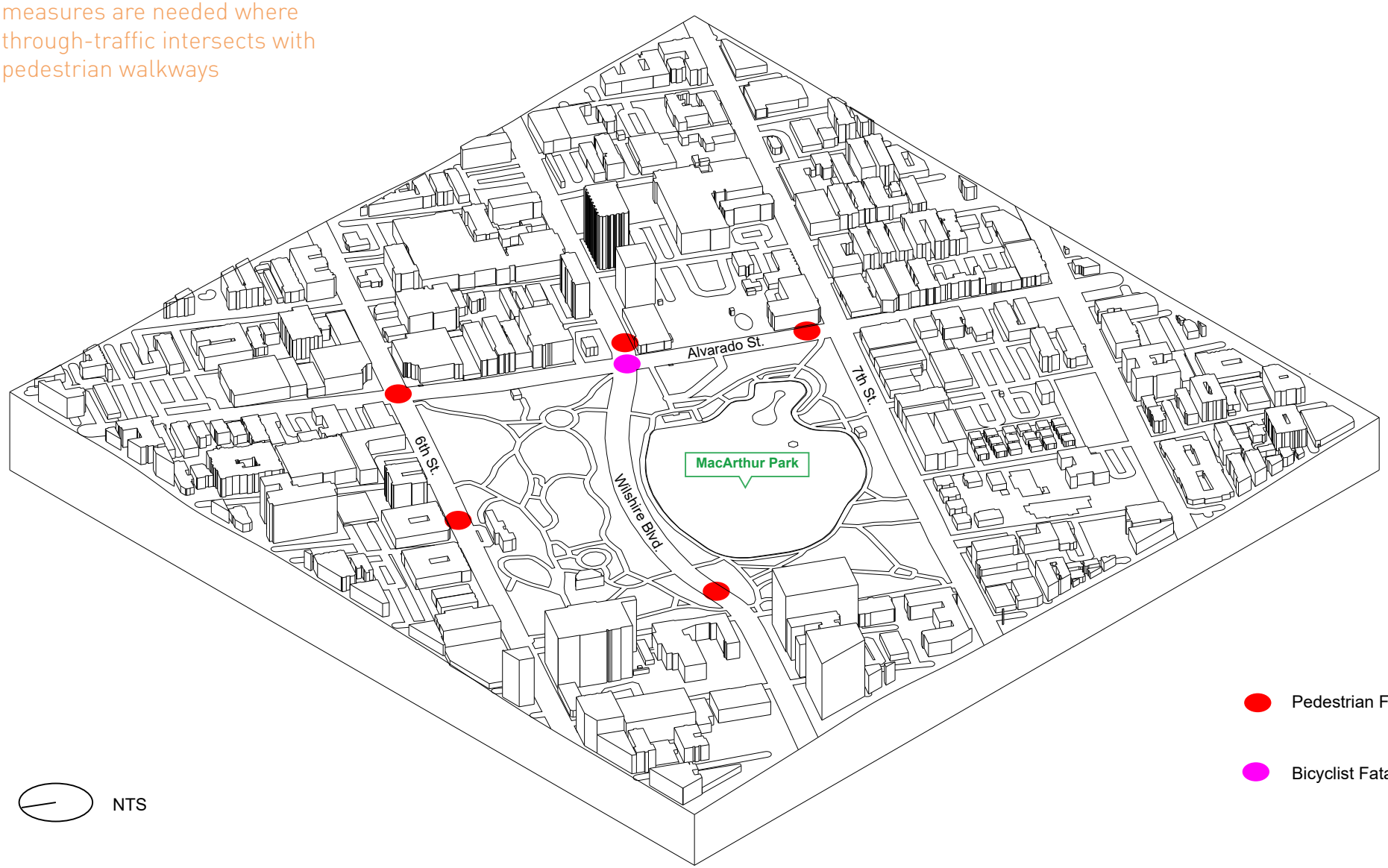
Secondary Circulation

Tertiary Circulation

Scramble Crosswalk

EXISTING CONDITIONS: PEDESTRIAN & CYCLIST DEATHS (2009-2019)

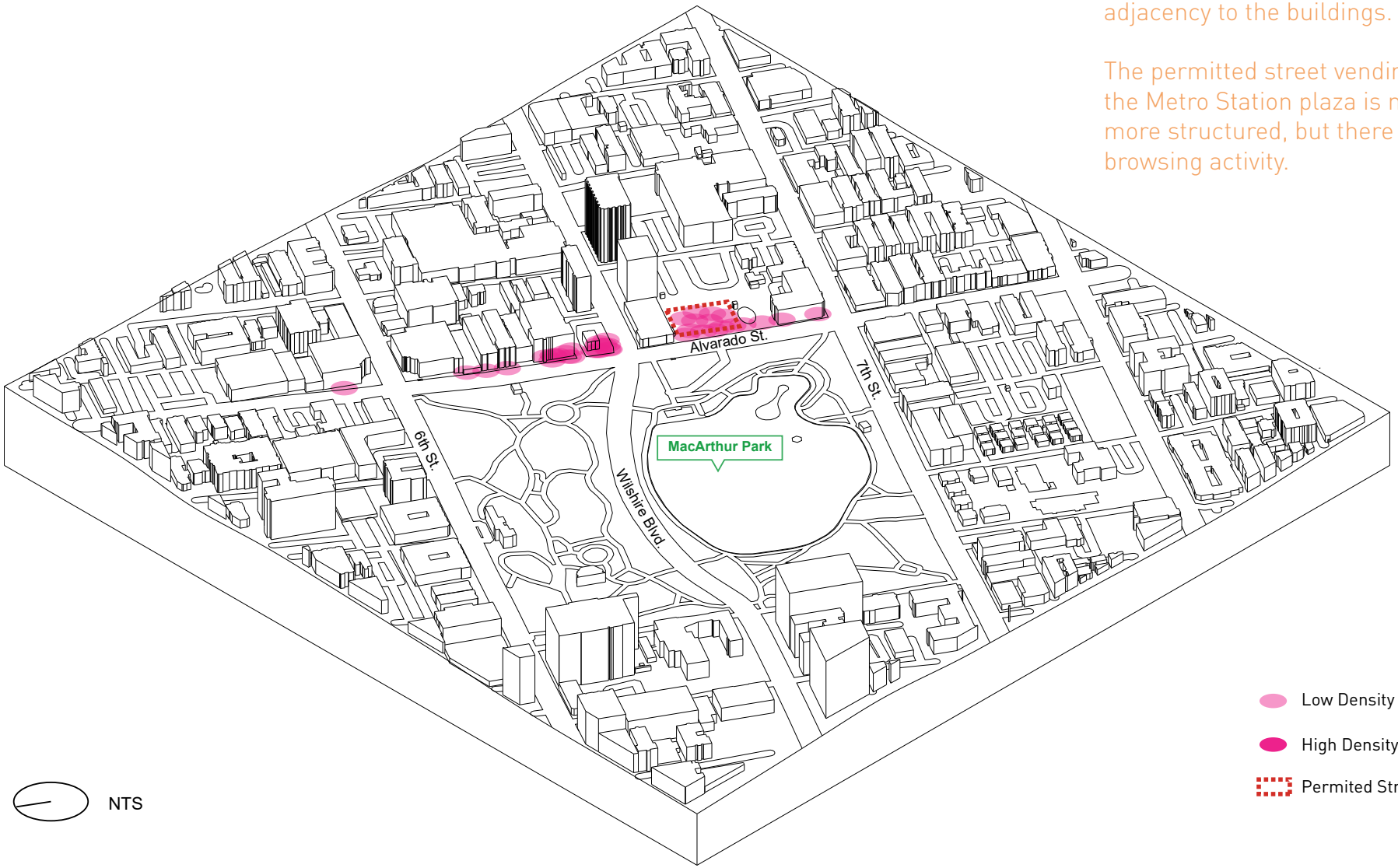
Most fatal accidents occur at intersections - traffic calming measures are needed where through-traffic intersects with pedestrian walkways



EXISTING CONDITIONS: STREET VENDING

Street vending is concentrated across the street from MacArthur Park - vendors seem to prefer the adjacency to the buildings.

The permitted street vending in the Metro Station plaza is much more structured, but there is less browsing activity.



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Low Density Street Vending

High Density Street Vending

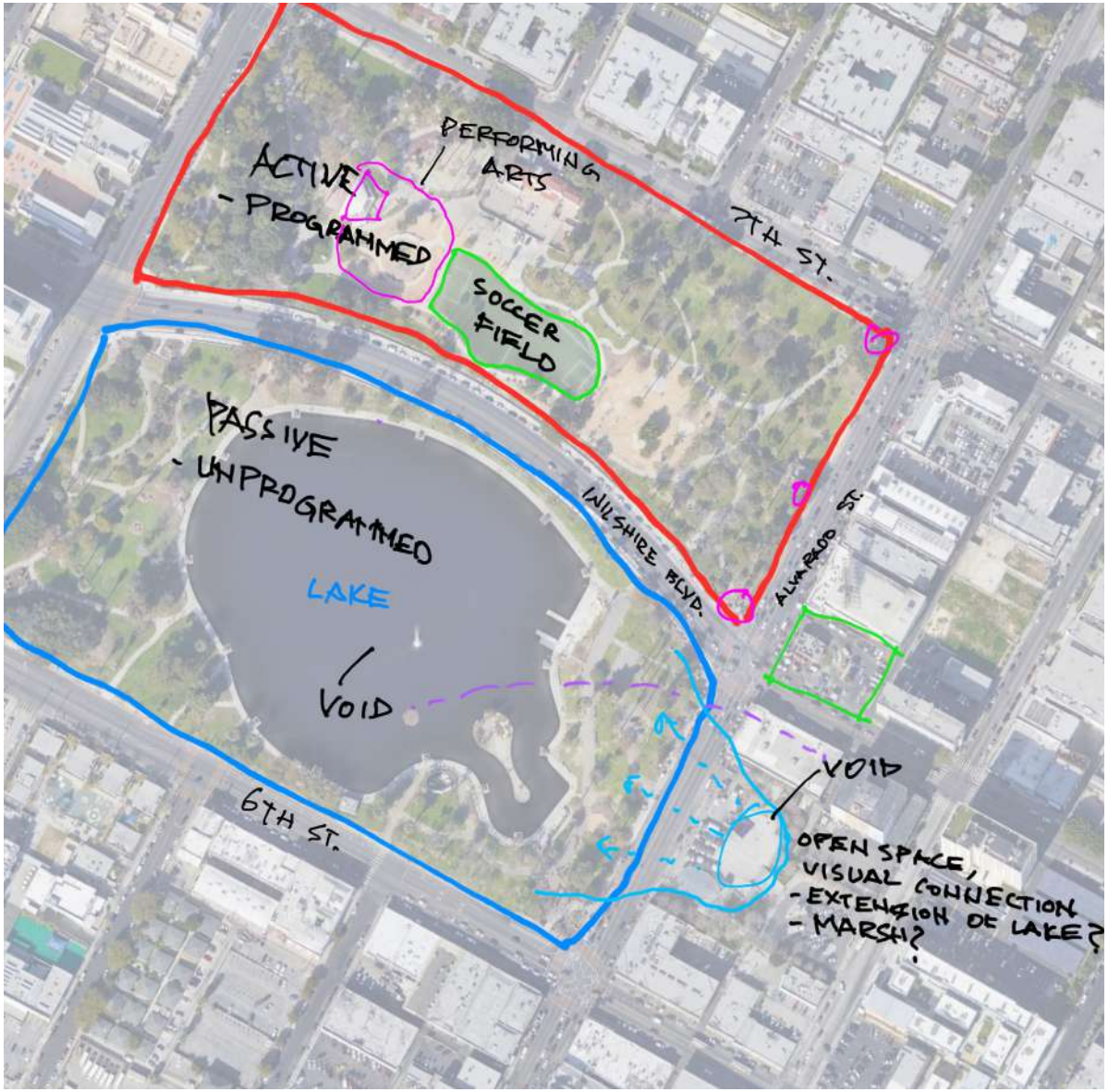
Permited Street Vending

ADJACENCIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

MacArthur Park and Westlake/ MacArthur Park Metro Station

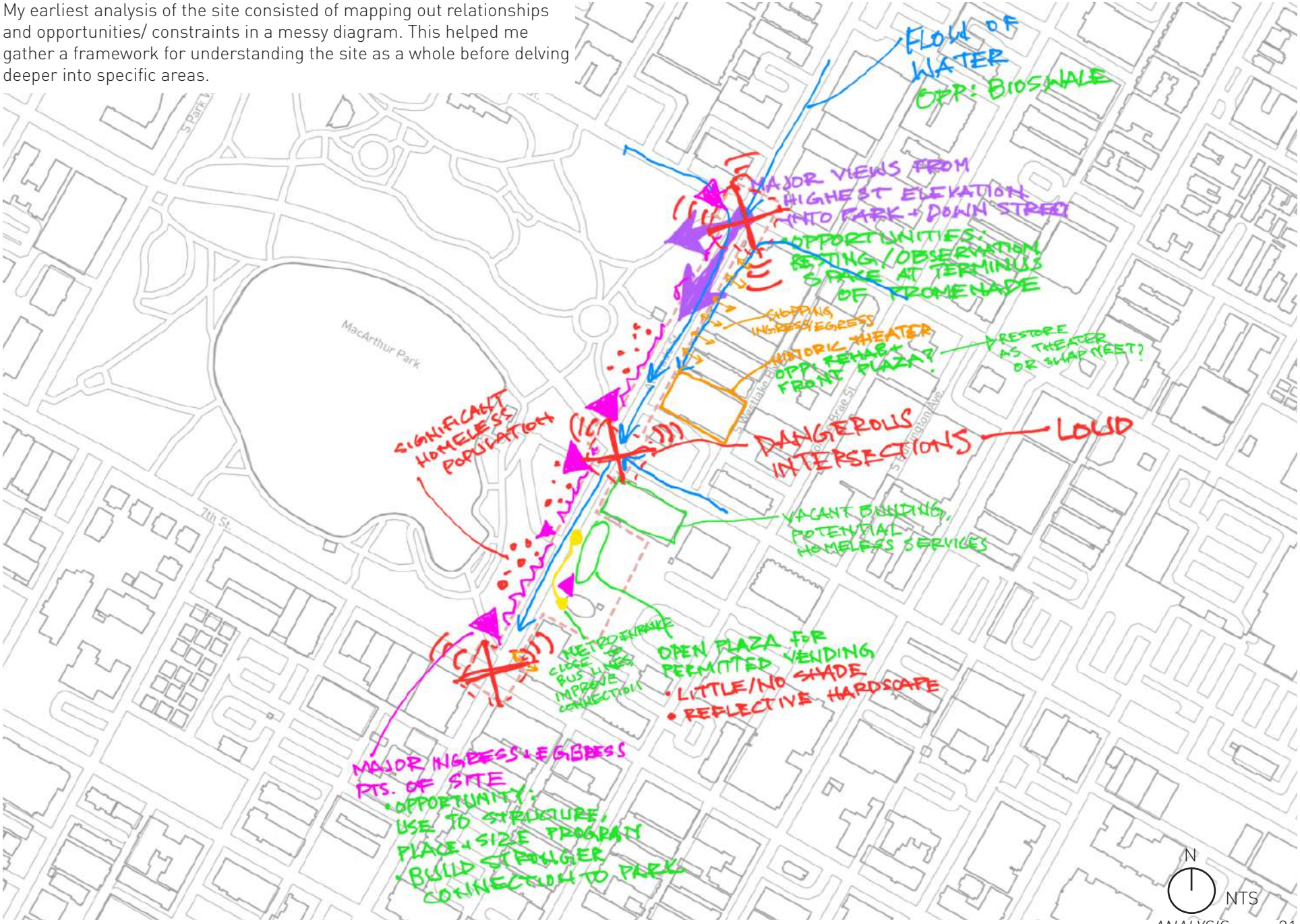
MacArthur Park is bisected by Wilshire Blvd, with much more active programming in the smaller northern half. An always busy soccer field and a performing arts space with programmed concerts ensure a regular buzz of activity. The southern half of the park is centers around a lakefront walk, with all of the edges sloping down to meet the depressed lake.

This mirrors the typology on Alvarado, with the void space of the Metro Station reflecting the lake, while the dense retail space between Wilshire and 7th St. reflects the active half of MacArthur Park



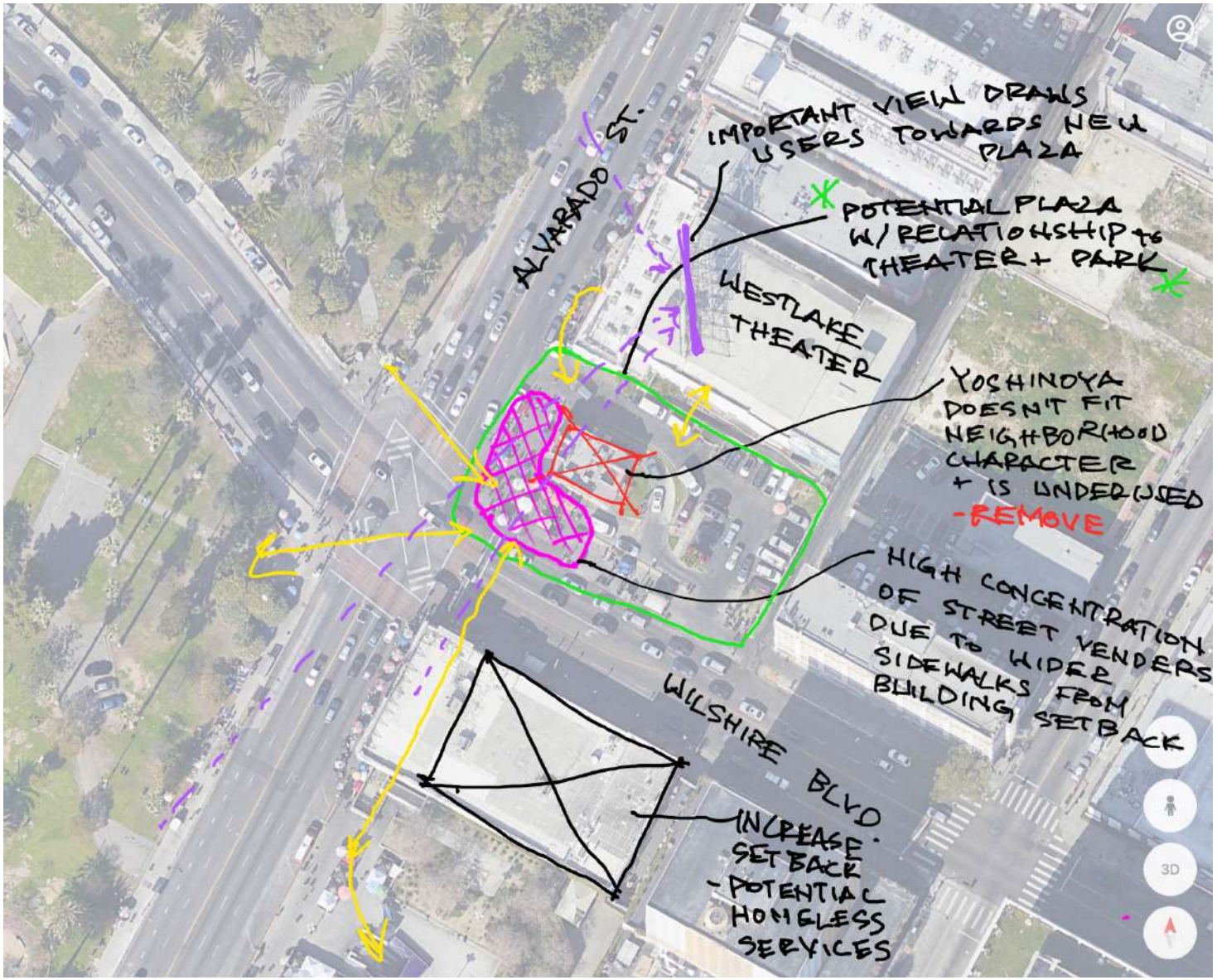
INITIAL SITE ANALYSIS

My earliest analysis of the site consisted of mapping out relationships and opportunities/ constraints in a messy diagram. This helped me gather a framework for understanding the site as a whole before delving deeper into specific areas.



INITIAL SITE ANALYSIS

I identified the area centering around the Westlake Theatre and Wilshire Blvd. as being particularly important and full of opportunities. The proximity to the Metro Station, major park entrances, and vacant or underused buildings became crucial to my biggest design decisions.



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OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Views**: The site slopes down from 6th street to Wilshire, offering a great view down Alvarado. There is an opportunity to enhance the axis down the street and provide a place to stop and take in the view. There are also views across to historic buildings on the opposite side of MacArthur Park.

- **Density**: The area is already very dense, making it a great candidate for pedestrianization. There are opportunities to enhance connections to the ground-floor retailers along the street.

- **Pedestrian Activity:** There is a large amount of pedestrian activity already, and there is an opportunity to better accommodate the existing flow of pedestrian traffic.

- **Adjacency to MacArthur Park:** A stronger connection can be made to the parks entrances and diffuse edges. The program of this streetscape should complement the program of the park.

- **Street Vendors:** The street vendors currently activate the space. Designing space for these vendors to be better accommodated in a formal or informal market setting will enhance the experience for vendors and patrons.

- **Adjacency to Metro Station:** The pedestrian street can take advantage of connectivity to public transit, namely the Westlake/ MacArthur Park Metro Station.

CONSTRAINTS:

- **Intersections:** The intersections at 6th St., 7th St., and Wilshire Blvd. provide a constraint that needs to be addressed in terms of safety, noise, and integration.

- **Homelessness:** The significant homeless population is an indictment of our public policy, and addressing the needs of these residents is paramount to the success of the project.

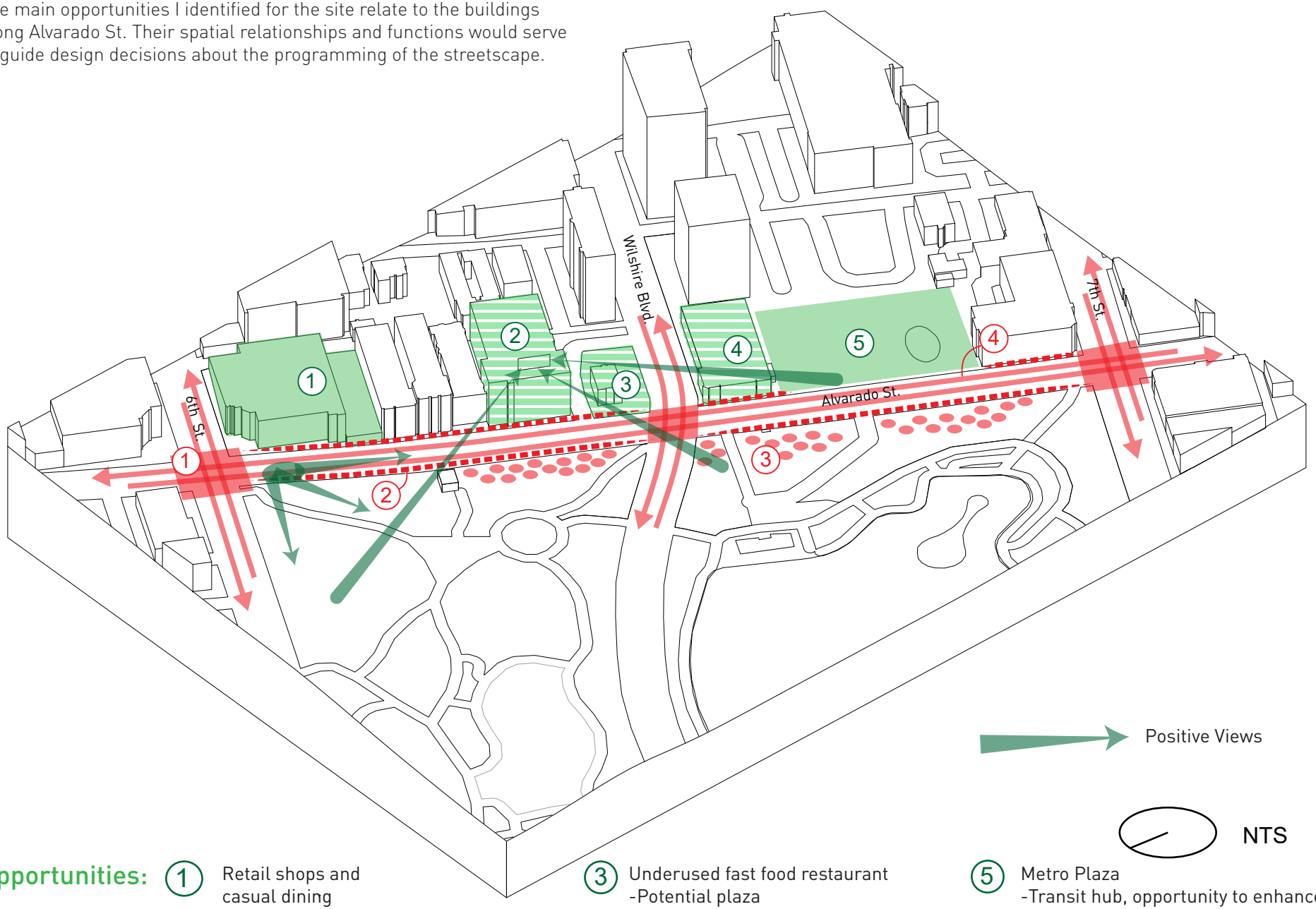
- **Heat:** The street is currently very hot and paved with asphalt. In creating plazas and promenades, appropriate green space and tree canopy need to address climatic conditions.

- **Gentrification:** The neighborhood is currently one of few in the area that remain ungentrified. Special attention must be paid to the common gentrifying effects of new urban green space

- **Bus Lanes:** While improving transit is an important opportunity for the project, bus lanes will complicate the design and constrain the layout of some elements.

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

The main opportunities I identified for the site relate to the buildings along Alvarado St. Their spatial relationships and functions would serve to guide design decisions about the programming of the streetscape.

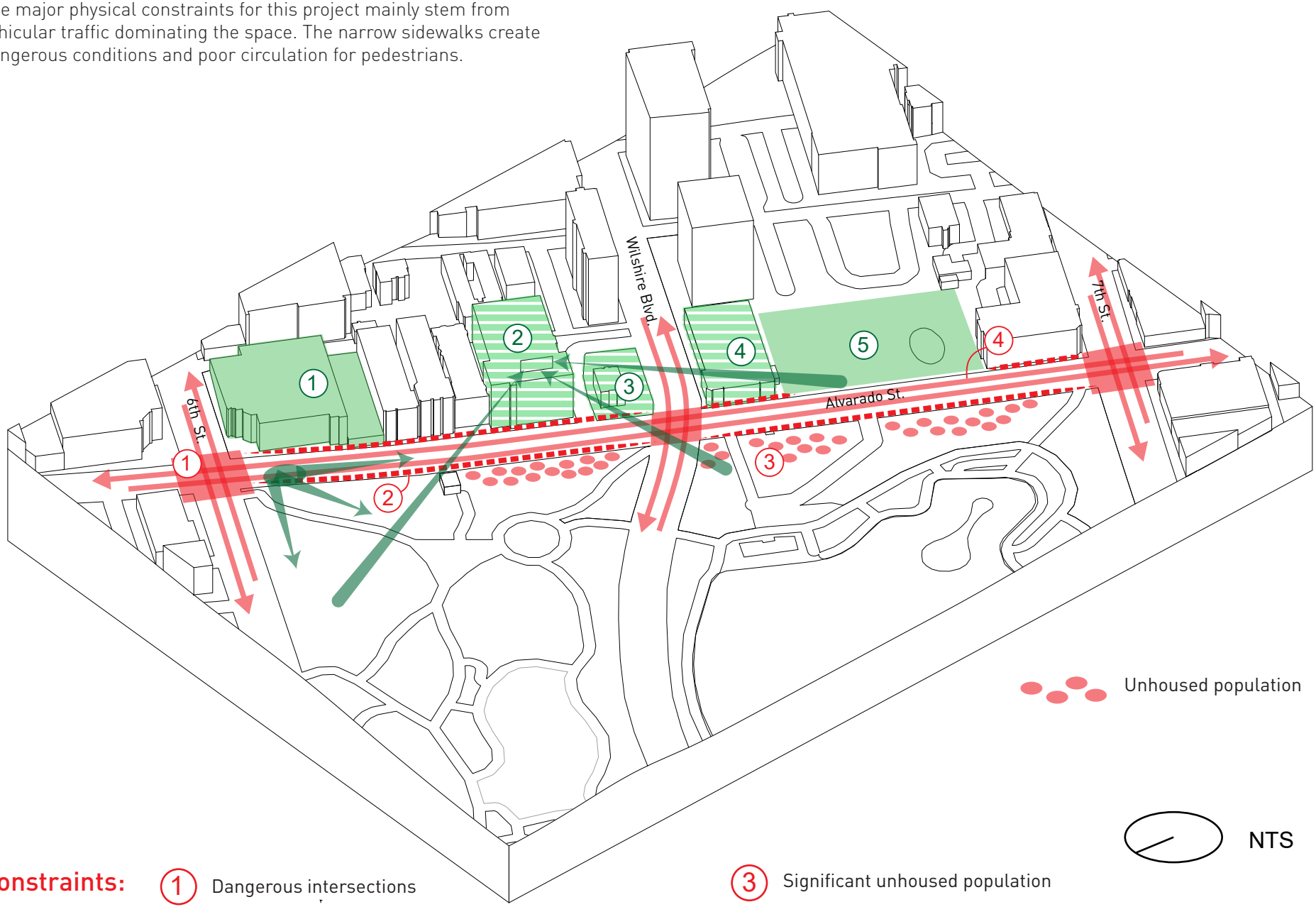


Opportunities:

1. Retail shops and casual dining
2. Historic Westlake Theater - restore and reprogram
3. Underused fast food restaurant -Potential plaza
4. Vacant 99 Department Store -Potential homeless services center
5. Metro Plaza -Transit hub, opportunity to enhance connections

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

The major physical constraints for this project mainly stem from vehicular traffic dominating the space. The narrow sidewalks create dangerous conditions and poor circulation for pedestrians.



Constraints:

1. Dangerous intersections
2. Narrow Sidewalks
3. Significant unhoused population
4. Vehicular traffic takes up majority of public space

PROPOSED ROUTE CIRCULATION: VEHICULAR

After conducting my research and site analysis, it became clear that completely removing vehicular access from the project site was paramount to acheiving my project goals and maximizing benefits to site users. I propose to re-route vehicular circulation to the west side of MacArthur Park, along the wide and under-used Park View St. There is significantly less foot traffic along the west edge of the park, and Park View St. is the only neighboring street with the capacity for two lanes of traffic in each direction.

While the inconvenience of a detour would undoubtably infuriate Los Angeles drivers, I believe that it is a small concession to make compared to the equity it would restore to the residents of Westlake. Additionally, incentivizing walking, biking, and public transportation necessitates expanding infrastructure for these modes of transportation. Any serious effort as a city to reduce our dependence on cars and acheive our mobility goals will inevitably make it more inconvenient to drive.

LEGEND:

Proposed Vehicular Closure

Proposed Vehicular Circulation

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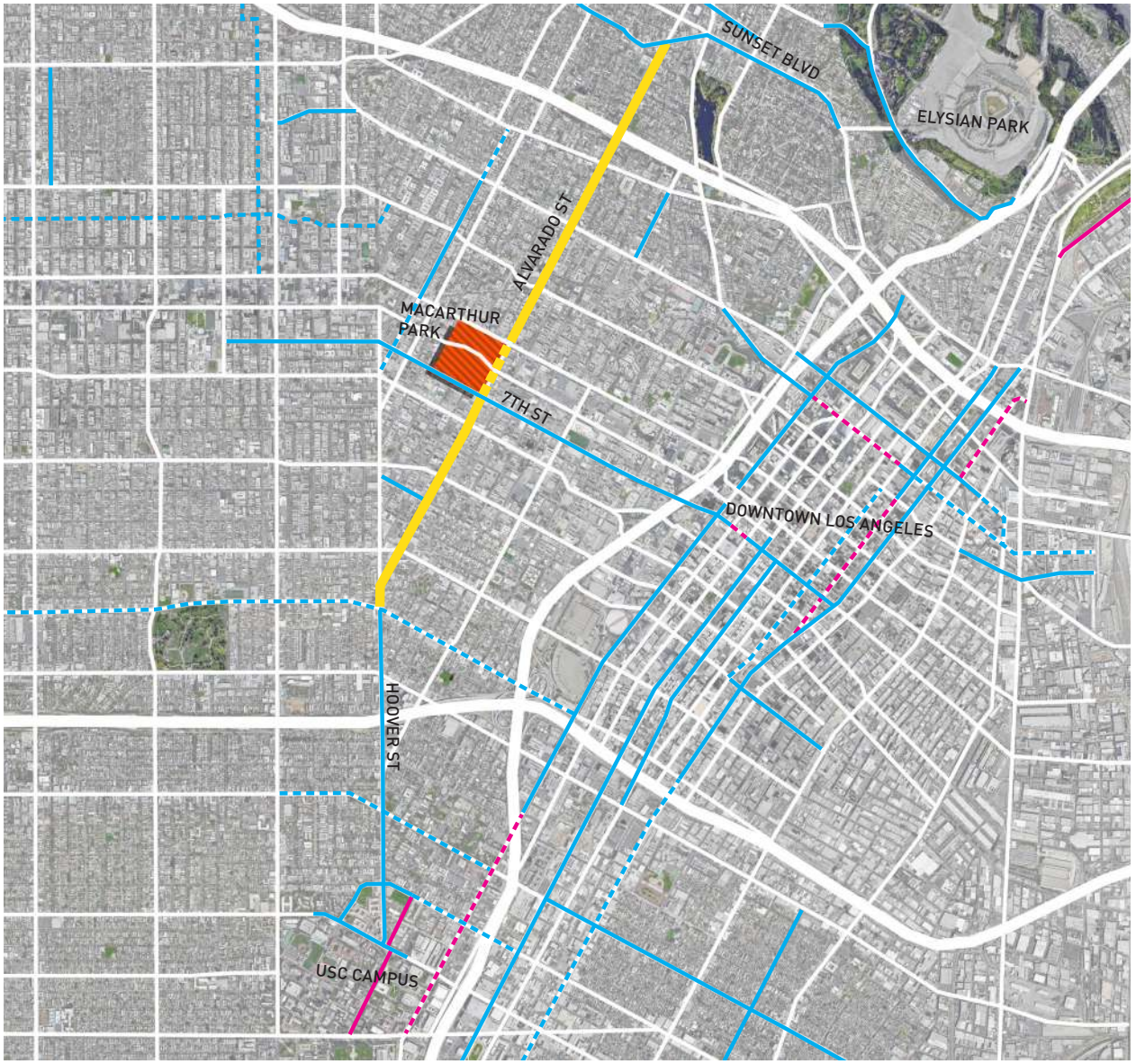
PROPOSED CIRCULATION: BIKE NETWORK



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Being wary of creating bike lanes to nowhere, I propose to expand and connect Los Angeles's fragmented bike network. There is currently no north-south connection between Westlake and Sunset Blvd. in Echo Park to the north, nor to the more extensive bike infrastructure at the USC campus. A continuous bike lane from the Hoover St. - Alvarado St. intersection, through the project site, and to Sunset Blvd. would provide much needed connectivity to existing bike lanes. The bike lane along 7th St. currently provides the only bike access from the area into downtown, reinforcing the decision to make the site a biking hub.

LEGEND:

Separate Pathways

- Bike Path (I)
- Cycle Tracks (IV)

Marked Streets

- Bike Lanes (II)
- Bike Routes (III)

Proposed

- Cycle Tracks (IV)
- Bike Lanes (II)

DESIGN METAPHOR: THE MARSH

Echoing Past Ecology and Flexible Futures

This design metaphor draws on MacArthur Park's historical roots as a freshwater marsh. In terms of form, marshes are ever-changing and organic, with inundation creating shifting swaths of vegetation amidst the water. These organic forms have served as an interesting means to mirror the fluctuation and organic ebb and flow of activity along the street.

The relationship of program elements should reflect this - promenades and plazas overlapping and merging - to create flexible space that can support pedestrian circulation and street vending without being overly persciptive about where, specifically, activities should occur.

The metaphor also has a more literal manifestation, with bioswales being seasonally inundated with stormwater runoff. A plant palette reflecting the ecological history of the site will imbue the street with a sense of place while restoring lost habitat and biodiversity.

Wetlands are fragile, delicately balanced ecosystems and their biggest threat is encroachment from human development. Similarly, the human ecosystem of Alvarado St. is threatened by the encroachment of the automobile.

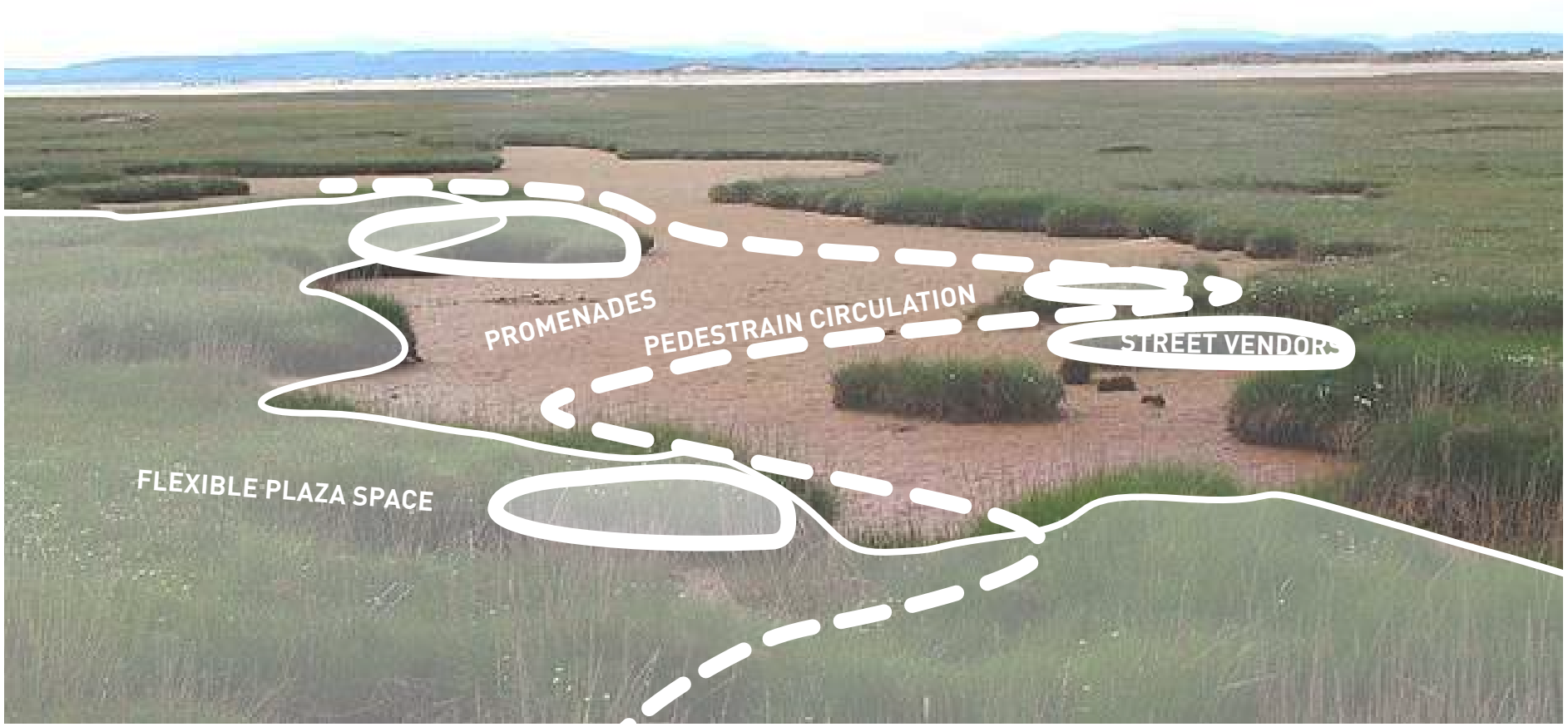
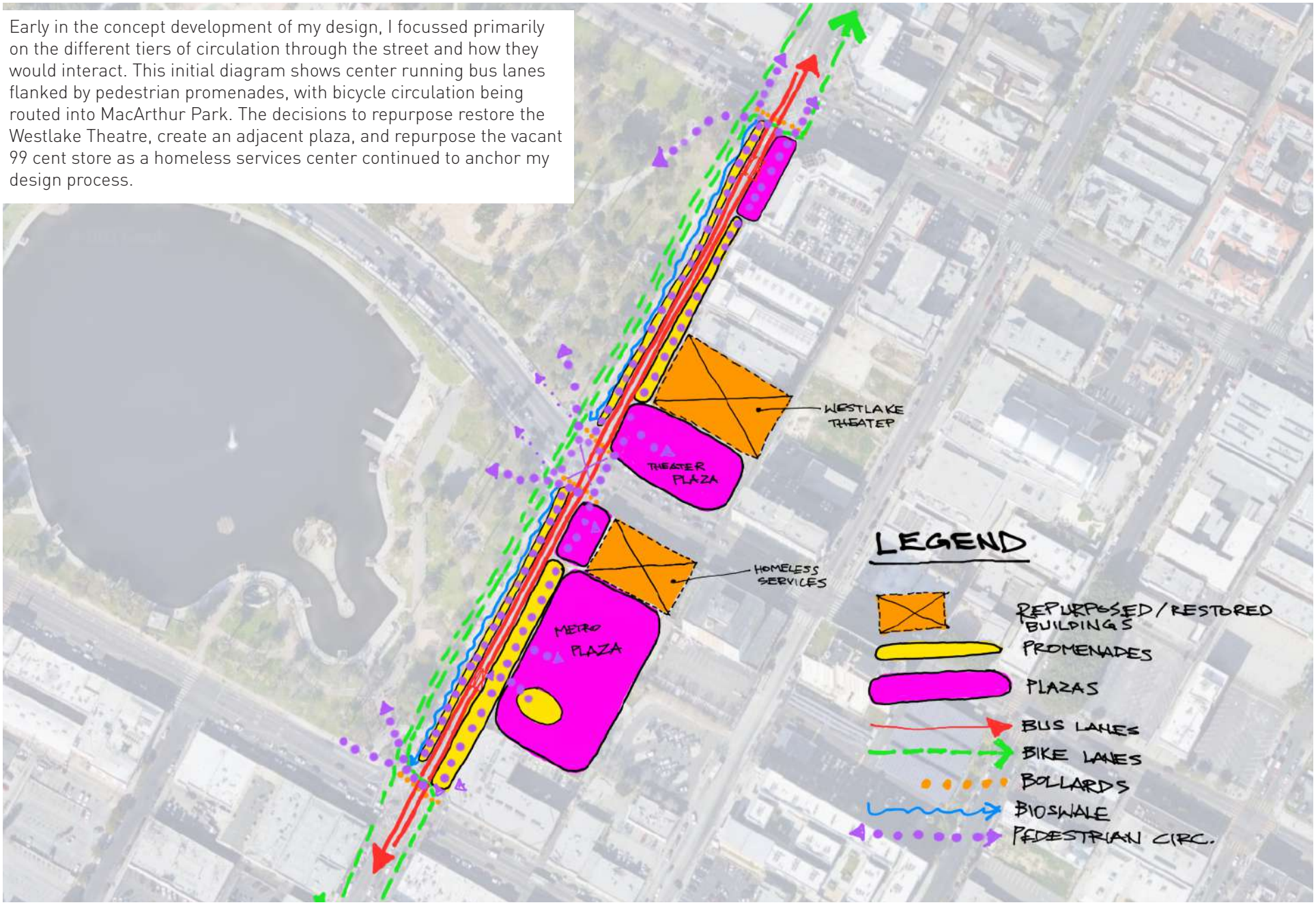


Photo: Gary Rogers

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: PROCESS DIAGRAMS

Early in the concept development of my design, I focussed primarily on the different tiers of circulation through the street and how they would interact. This initial diagram shows center running bus lanes flanked by pedestrian promenades, with bicycle circulation being routed into MacArthur Park. The decisions to repurpose restore the Westlake Theatre, create an adjacent plaza, and repurpose the vacant 99 cent store as a homeless services center continued to anchor my design process.



PRELIMINARY CONCEPT DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 1

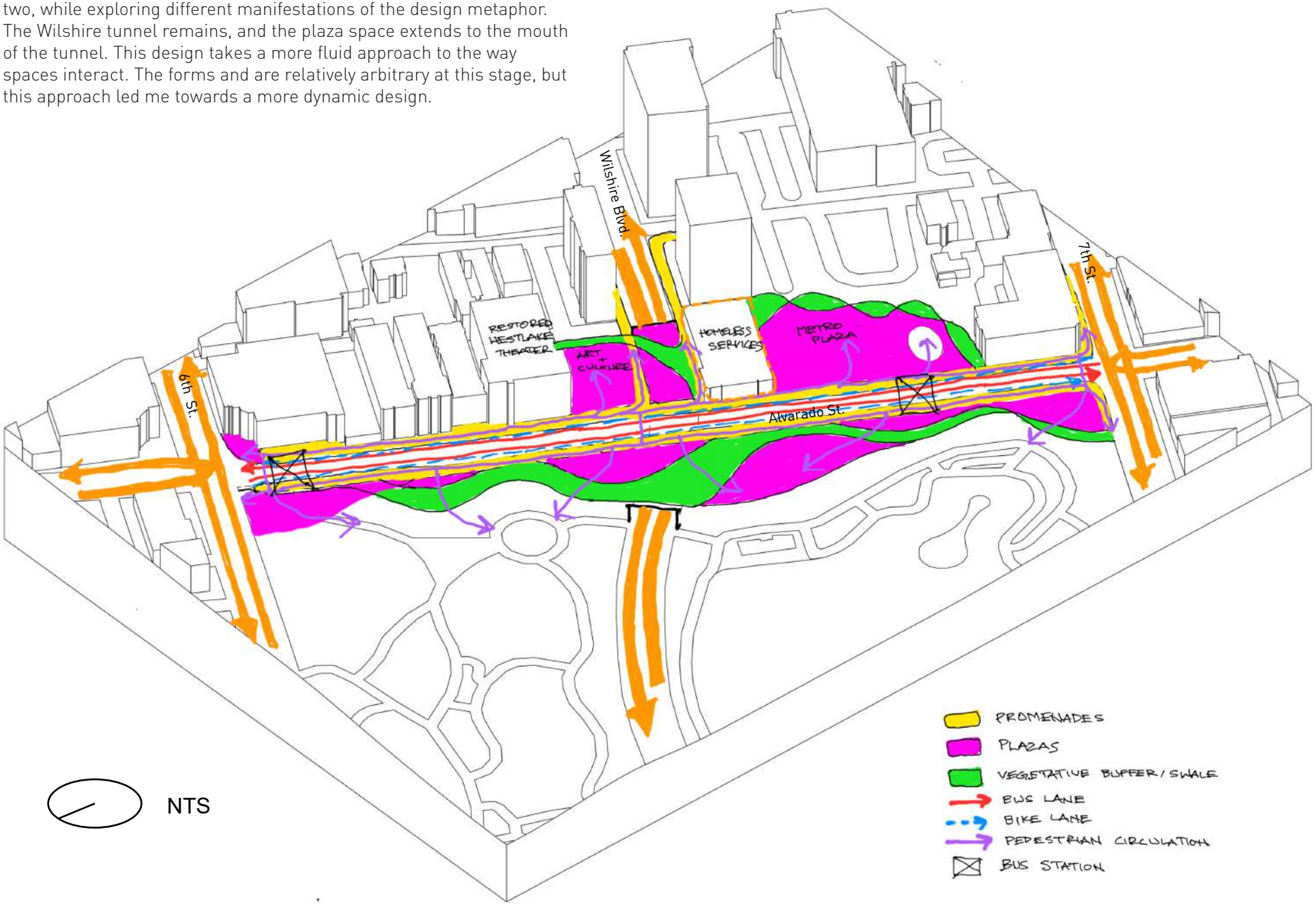
In the first concept design alternative, I proposed center-running bus lanes with mid-block stations, and bike lanes along each outer edge. Bioswales border the bike lanes, and irregularly shaped parklets meet the bioswales from the main pedestrian promenades. I also identified the need for additional mid-block entrances into MacArthur Park in order to strengthen the connectivity of the street.

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 2

This second concept design alternative proposes to tunnel Wilshire Blvd. under Alvarado St. This bolder move unifies the two halves of the Alvarado St. as well as MacArthur Park. It also encouraged me to explore more expansive plazas protruding into the soft edge of the park. This plan also uses center median plazas/bus stops alternating with bioswales - although I later determined that the site is not wide enough to support meaningful median plaza space.

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 3

The third concept design alternative merges elements of the previous two, while exploring different manifestations of the design metaphor. The Wilshire tunnel remains, and the plaza space extends to the mouth of the tunnel. This design takes a more fluid approach to the way spaces interact. The forms and are relatively arbitrary at this stage, but this approach led me towards a more dynamic design.



SYNTHESIZED CONCEPT DESIGN

SCALE: 1" = 200'

0 100' 200' 400' 800'

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This synthesized concept plan combines elements of the previous alternatives, and moves from diagrammatic to a more literal representation.

Center-running bus lanes prove to be the most appropriate for the space, and the bike lanes stay alongside to allow for continuous plaza space extending into MacArthur Park. Bioswales and parklets separate the transit circulation from pedestrian promenades, and the crosswalk and bus stations move to the center of the site to minimize the number of bus stopages.

The Wilshire tunnel is further developed with a terraced section of the Westlake Theatre Plaza accommodating the slope of Wilshire Blvd as it returns to street level.

SYNTHESIZED CONCEPT DESIGN: WILSHIRE BLVD. - 7TH ST.

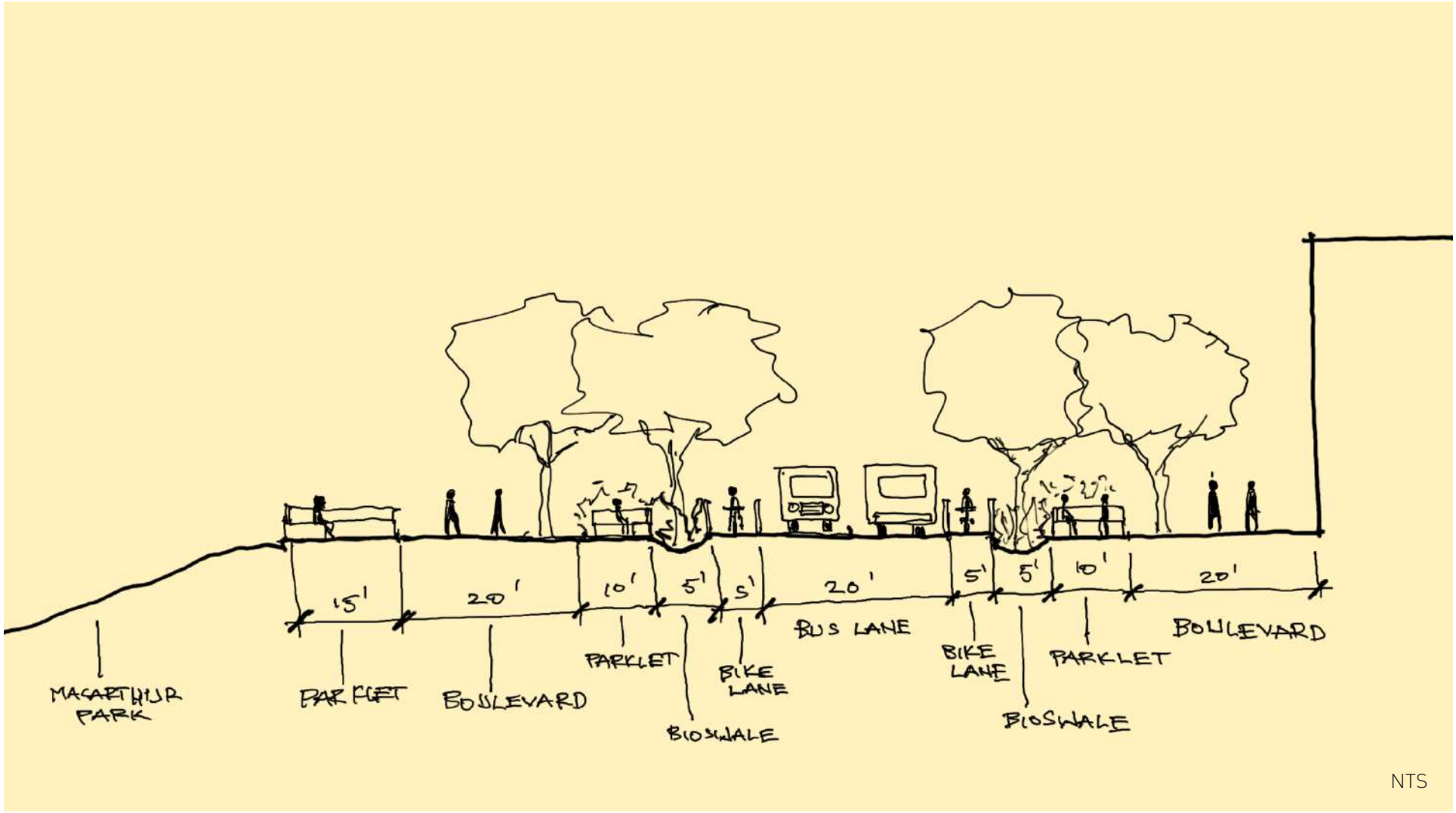
In the southern half of the site, plazas extend to site of the former MacArthur Park Boat house, taking advantage current city plans to renovate it. The terraced plaza seating provides vantage points to a small stage in the Westlake Theatre Plaza. After further study in section, the terraces were abandoned because they would have needed to be too tall to be feasable.

SYNTHESIZED CONCEPT DESIGN: 6TH ST. - WILSHIRE BLVD

In the northern half of the site, a wide promenade winds into the park, opening up into a large plaza over the Wilshire tunnel. The exact form and dimensions of these yet to be defined.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: STREET SECTION

This process section helped to solidify the basic pattern of circulation and streetscape elements. It also ensured that each element had appropriate space to accomodate its use. Extending from the buildings, a promenade is supported by parkets. A bioswale buffers the transit while supplying an additional layer of street trees. Bike lanes and bus lanes take up the center of the street, and a similar pattern is repeated on the far side of the street.



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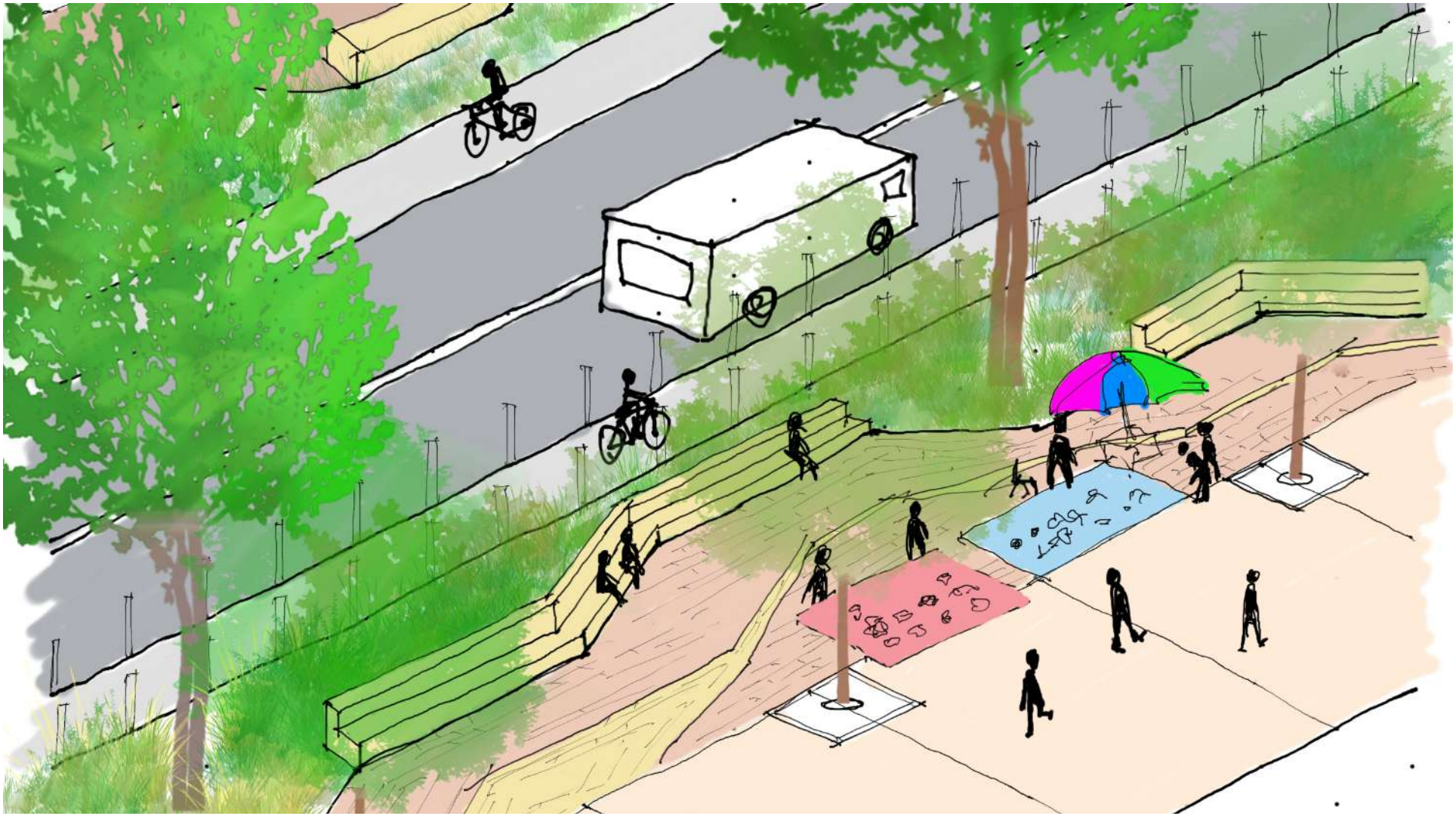
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: STREETSCAPE SKETCH

This process sketch shows an early attempt to visualize the how the parklets, bioswales, and transit lanes would feel at a human scale. The parklets provide flexible spaces for rest, vending, or observing in the bioswale without impeding pedestrian circulation along the main promenade. The bioswale effectively protects pedestrians from the faster moving transit lanes while low planting still allows for a visual connection to the street.



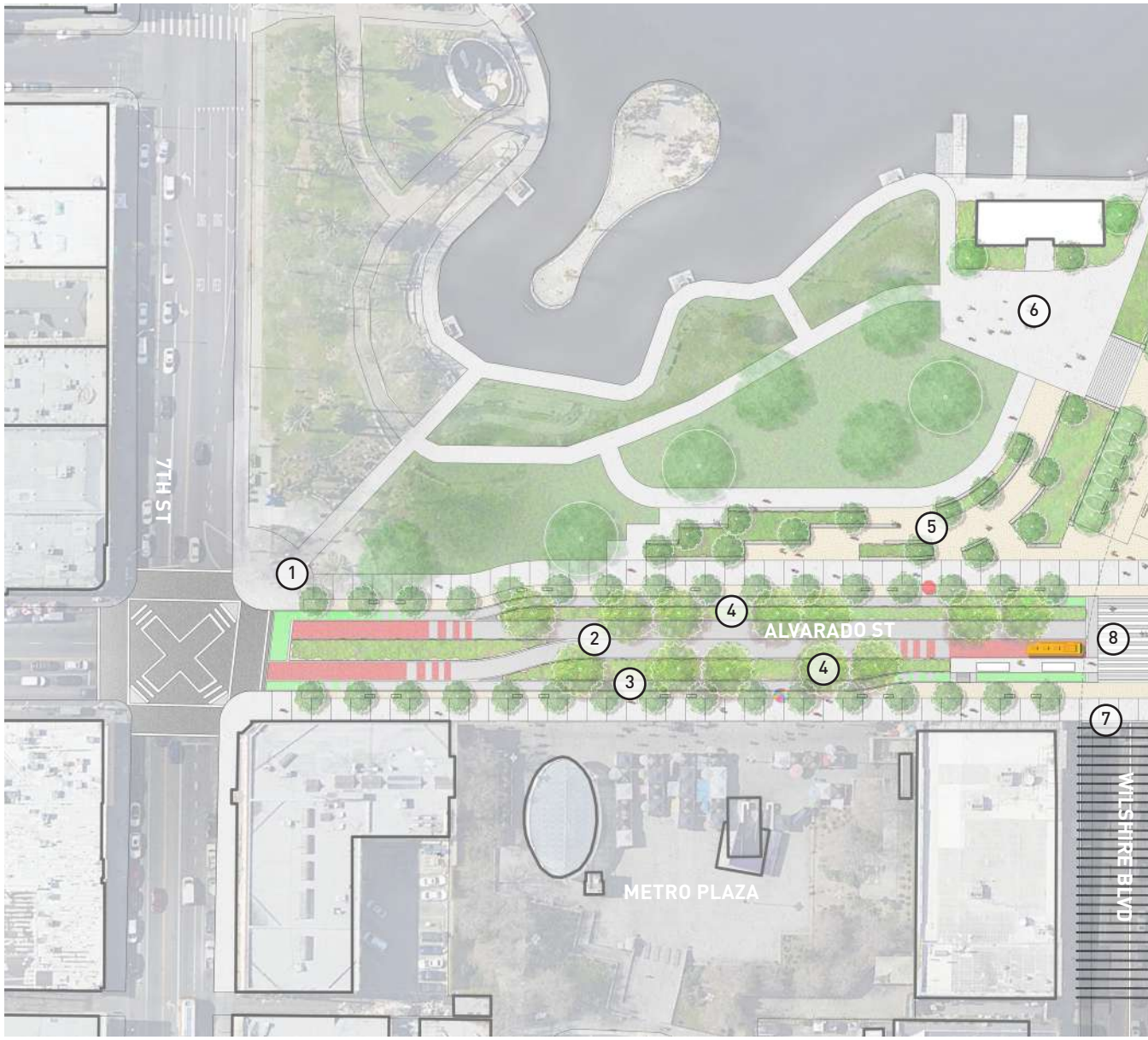
MASTER PLAN

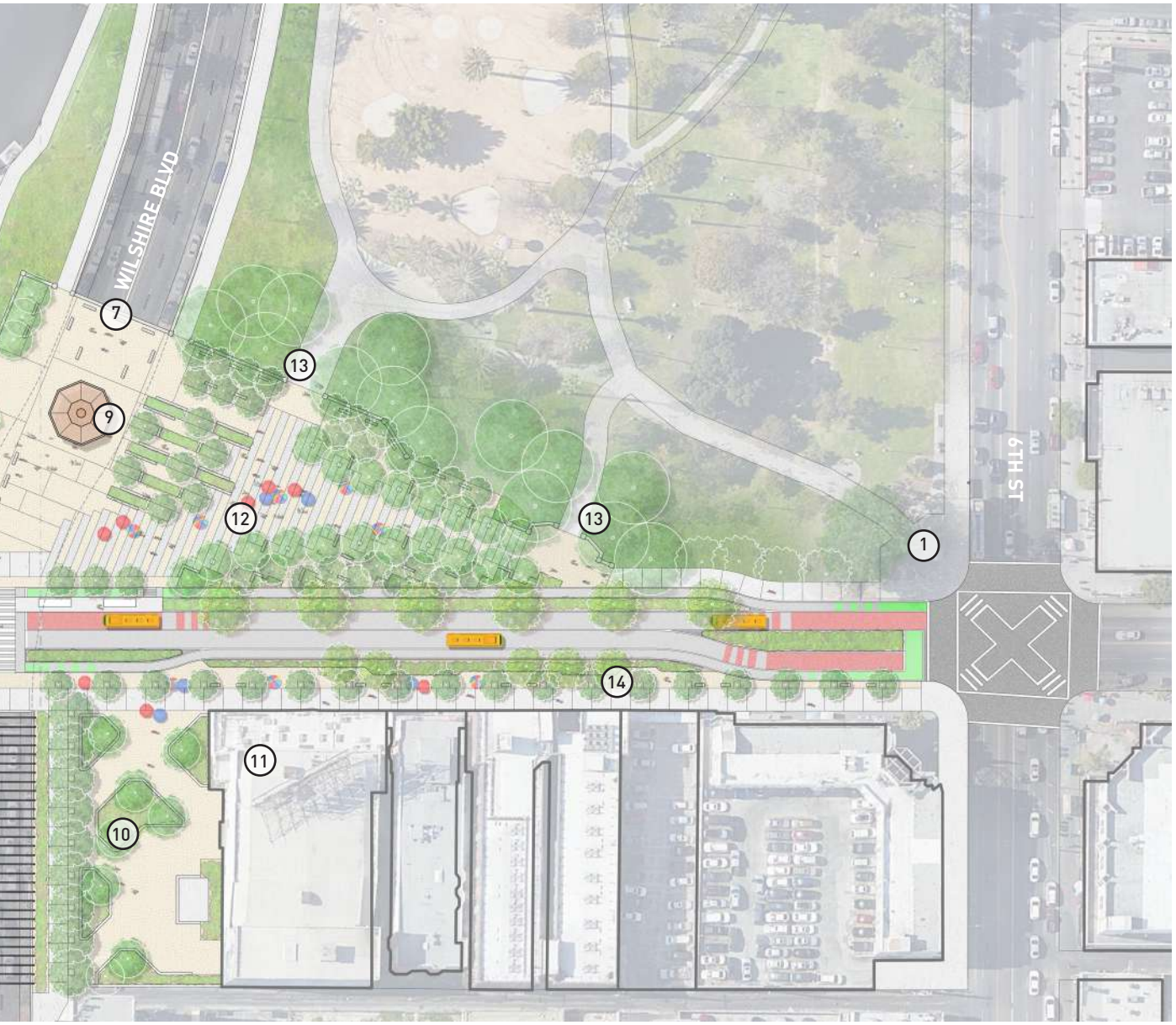
The Alvarado Street Master Plan creates a series of interconnected spaces that give users a variety of experiences without being rigid about the intended use of any single area. Rather than dictate specific vending zones, vendors are empowered to interpret the space and create informal markets wherever it is appropriate.

Along the building-side of the street, a wide linear promenade is supported by parklets and the new Westlake Theater Plaza. The parklets and furnishing zone of the sidewalk give a chance for efficient circulation, commerce, and leisure to coexist side by side.

Across the street, promenades and plazas flow seamlessly into one another with two new park entrances and the new Wilshire tunnel dictating the organization of the space. A large gazebo anchors the widest part of the plaza and references those typical of Latin American public spaces.

Garden paths offer a more intimate leisure experience and gently slope to the new boat house, plaza, open lawn, and the lake..





SCALE: 1" = 100'

0 50' 100' 200' 400'

N

LEGEND:

1. EXISTING PARK ENTRANCES
2. CENTER-RUNNING BUS LANES
3. BIKE LANES
4. BIOSWALE
5. GARDEN PATHS
6. BOAT HOUSE PLAZA
7. WILSHIRE TUNNEL ENTRANCES
8. BUS ISLANDS & CROSSWALKS
9. GAZEBO
10. WESTLAKE THEATRE PLAZA
11. RESTORED WESTLAKE THEATER
12. MARKET PROMENADE
13. NEW PARK ENTRANCES
14. BUILDING-SIDE PARKLETS

BUILDING-SIDE PARKLETS: LOCATION

SCALE: 1" = 200'

0 100' 200' 400' 800'

N

BUILDING-SIDE PARKLETS: ENLARGEMENT

SCALE: 1" = 20'

0 10' 20' 40' 80'

LOCATION MAP

The pattern of street trees, streetlights, and benches in the parklets create a sense of rhythm for the streetscape.

In the bioswale, regular inlets allow water to enter from the street, and check dams help to slow water speeds along this steeper part of the street.

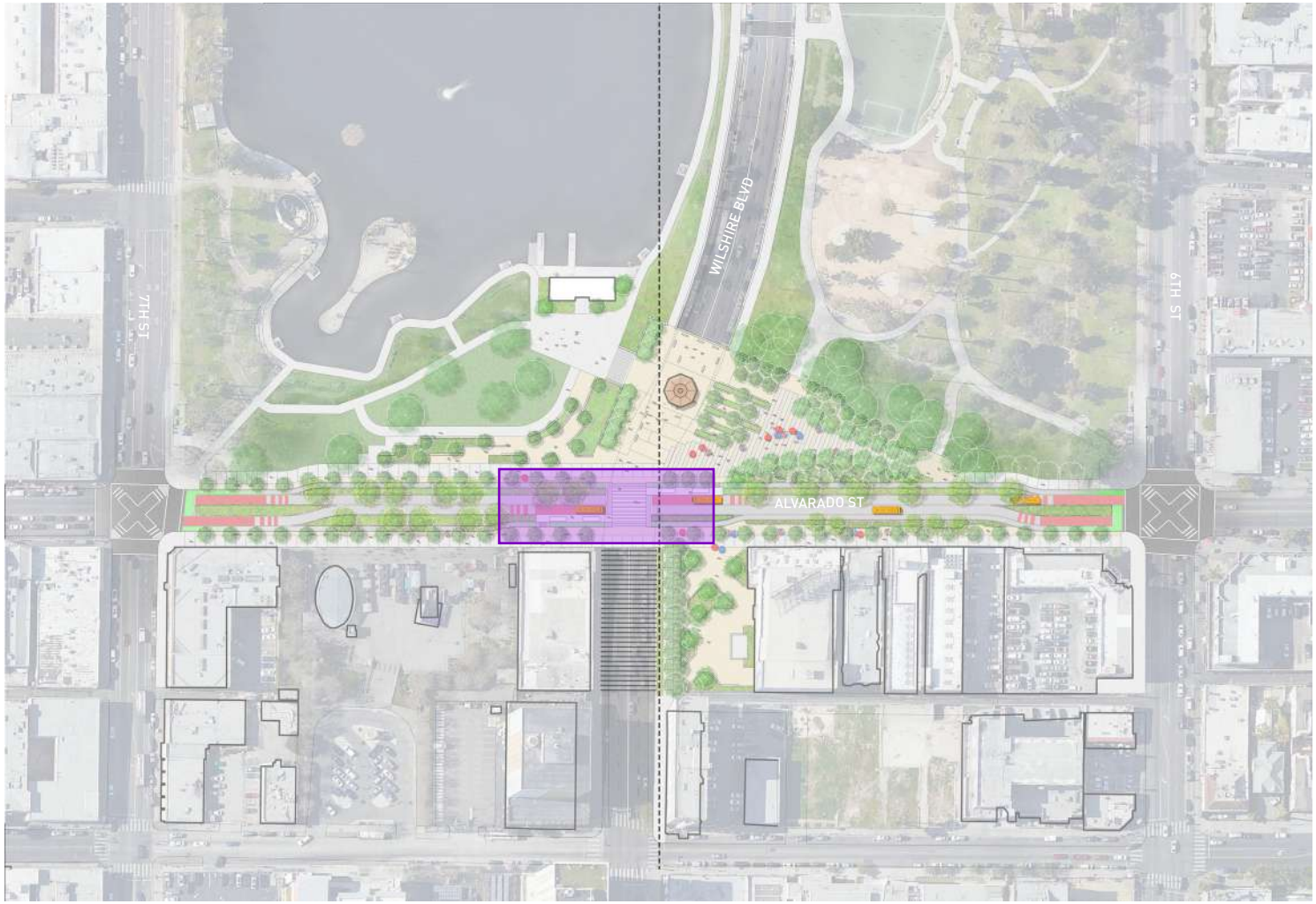
LEGEND:

1. 12' WIDE PEDESTRIAN ZONE
2. 8-13' WIDE FURNISHING ZONE
3. BIOSWALE PLANTING
4. BIOSWALE CHECK DAMS
5. BIOSWALE INLETS
6. BIKE LANE
7. BUS LANE
8. STREETLIGHTS

BUILDING-SIDE PARKLETS: PERSPECTIVE

Pedestrians enjoy a stroll along the retail-heavy section of Alvarado Street. Vendors take advantage of the activity and sell their wares in the loose, open parklets.

BUS ISLAND & CROSSWALK: LOCATION MAP



SCALE: 1" = 200'

0 100' 200' 400' 800'

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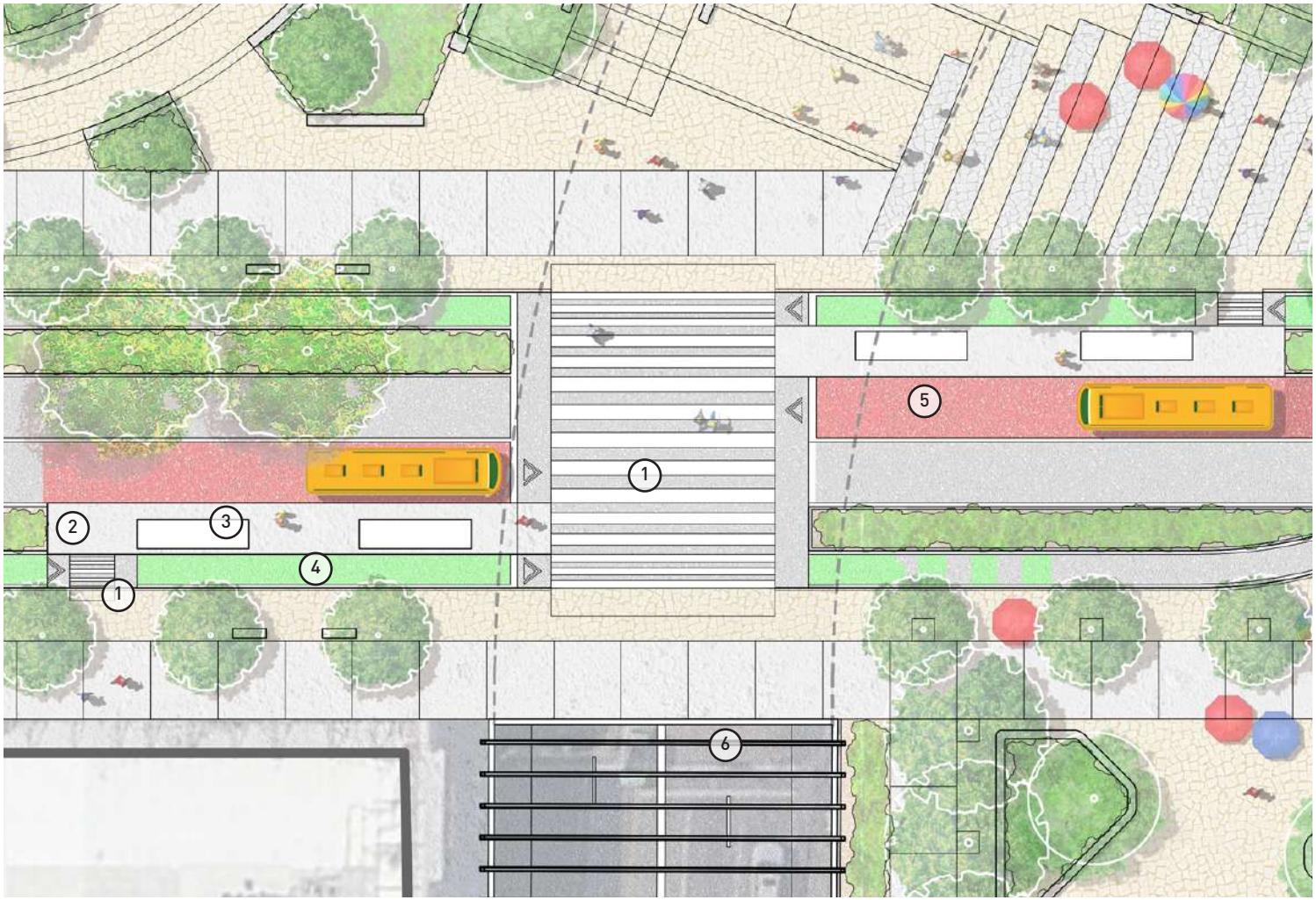
BUS ISLANDS & CROSSWALK: ENLARGEMENT

Bus island stations let buses make in-lane stops, reducing travel times. The stations are long enough to accommodate local and rapid buses at the same time. A raised crosswalk meets the sidewalk and bus islands at grade to improve accessibility, while also enhancing visibility and acting as a speed bump for buses and bikes.



LEGEND:

1. RAISED, AT-GRADE CROSSWALK
2. BUS ISLAND, NEAR-SIDE IN-LANE STOPS
3. BUS SHELTERS
4. BIKE LANE
5. BUS LANE
6. WILSHIRE TUNNEL ENTRANCE
7. WESTLAKE THEATER PLAZA

SCALE: 1" = 30'

0 15' 30' 60' 120'

N

LOCATION MAP

BUS ISLANDS & CROSSWALK: PERSPECTIVE

Buses, cyclists, and pedestrians meet at the center of the site as a safe, integrated, and harmonious ensemble. The restored Westlake Theatre, adorned with new murals, provides a scenic backdrop as people go about their day.

WILSHIRE TUNNEL: FRAMED VIEW

Tunneling Wilshire Blvd. under Alvarado St. reveals a stunning view of the downtown skyline previously only visible briefly while crossing the intersection. Gently rising and undulating metal beams over the mouth of the tunnel frame the view and play off of forms inspired by the marsh.

WILSHIRE TUNNEL: SECTION-ELEVATION

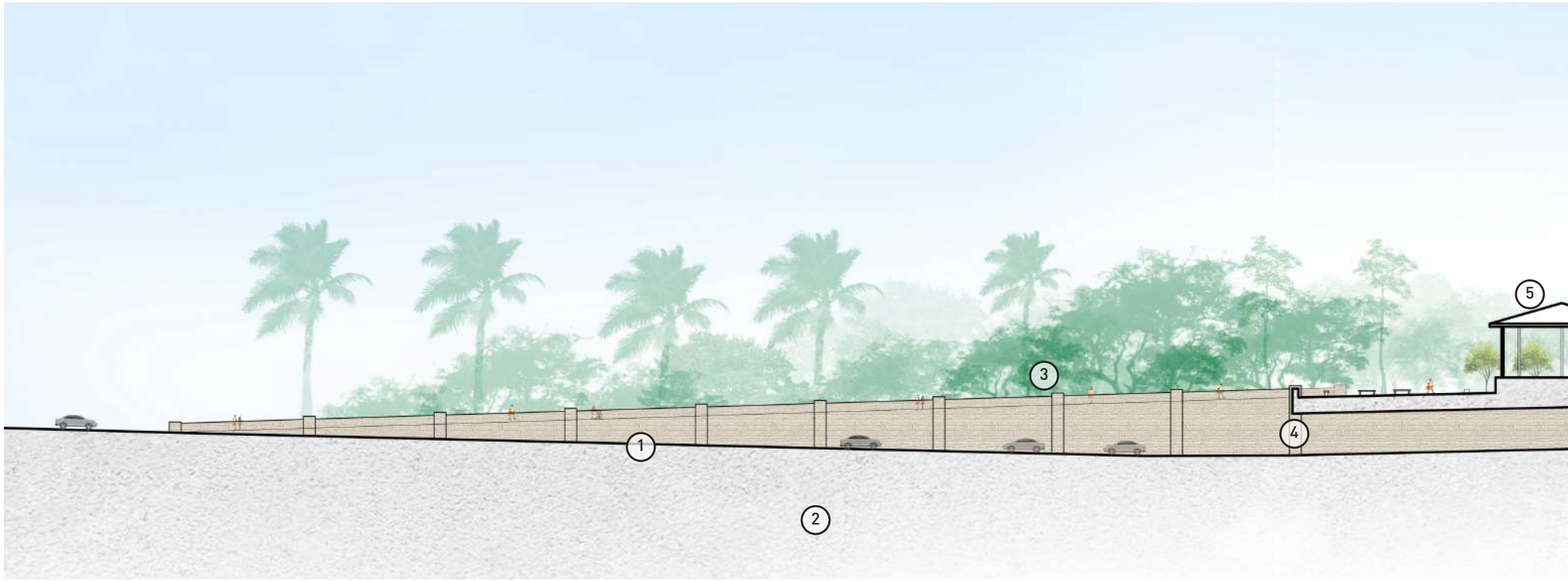
SCALE: 1" = 200'

0 100' 200' 400' 800'

N

WILSHIRE TUNNEL: SECTION-ELEVATION

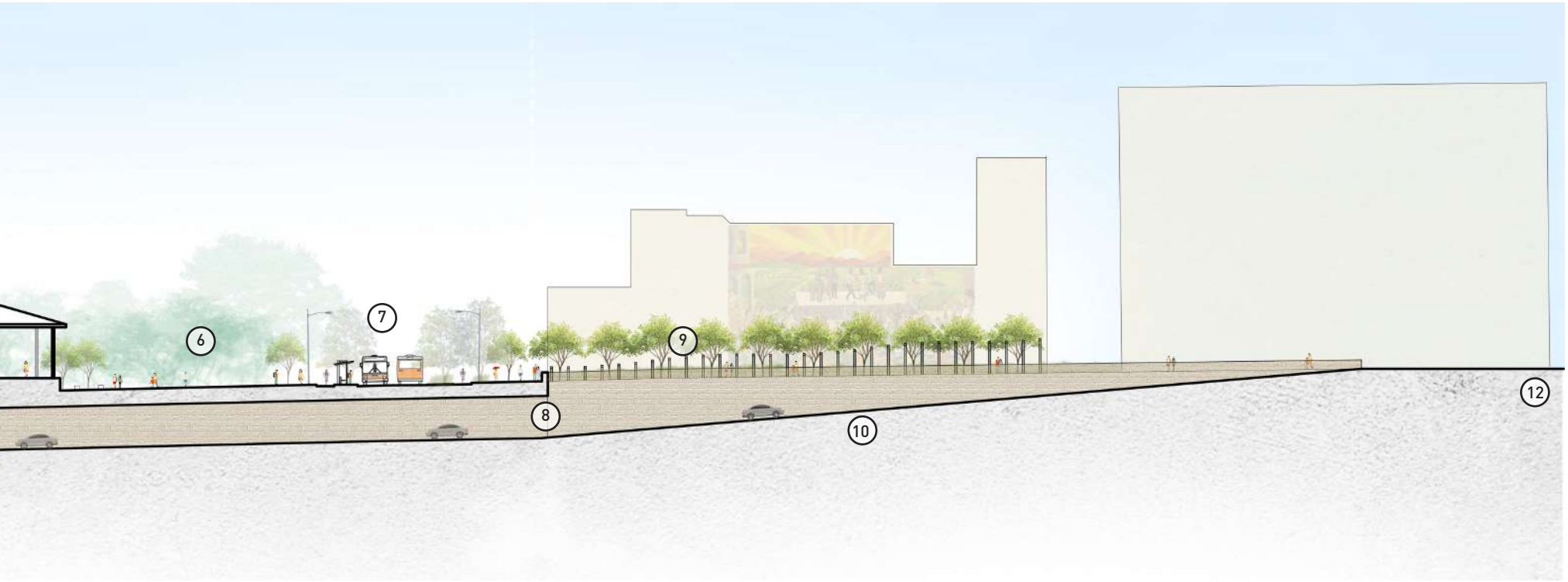
This section-elevation demonstrates the feasability of the Wilshire tunnel with respect to grading, while also showing the spatial relationship of the buildings, streetscape, plazas, and tunnel. The plaza space created above the tunnel is a crucial element that connects the two halves of the street and park. This wide continuous space is suitable for large-scale cultural celebrations and protests - a type of space that Alvarado Street desperately needs.



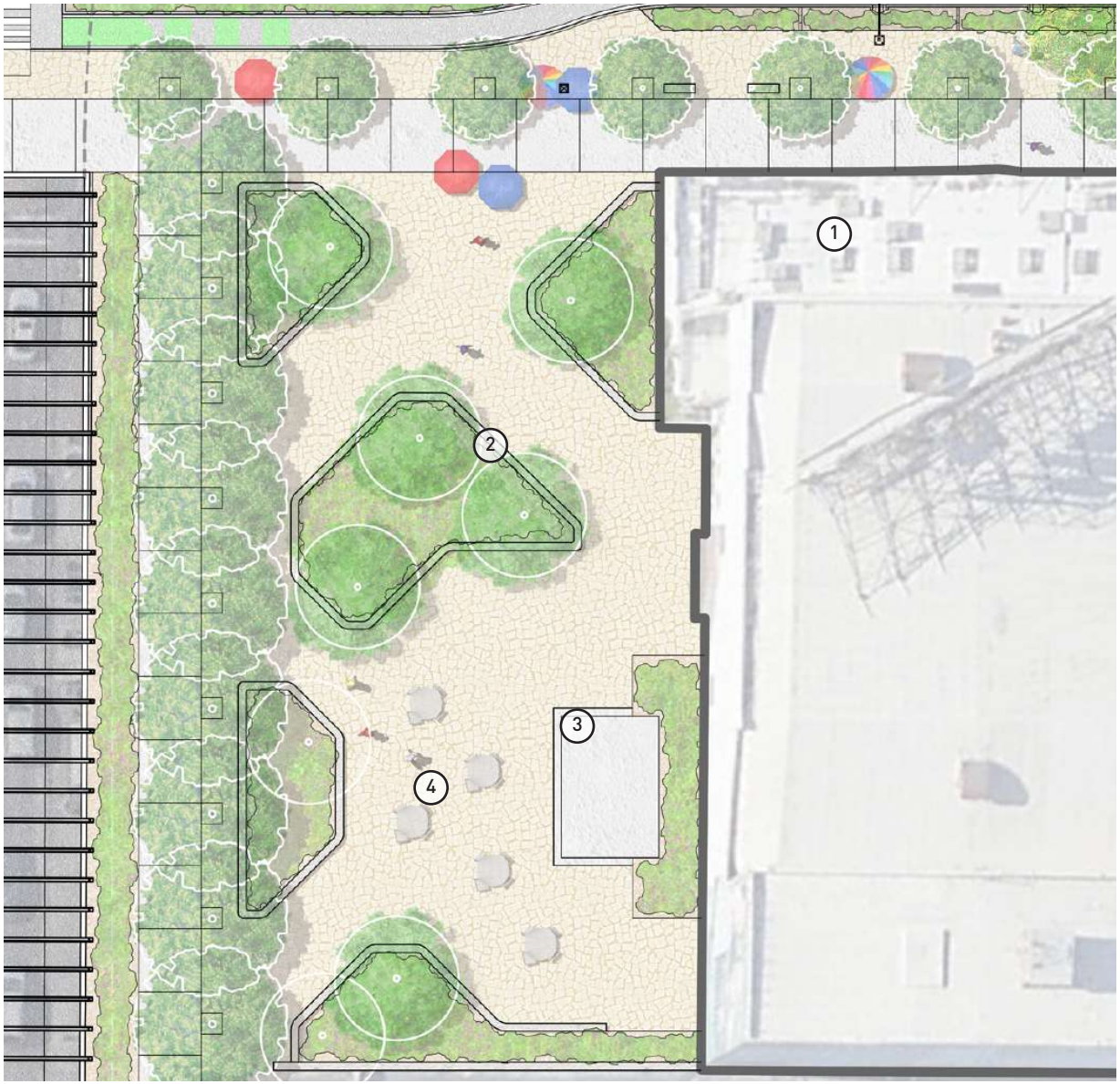
SCALE: 1" = 50'

LEGEND:

1. RAISED PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY
2. VEHICULAR TRAFFIC TUNNEL APPROACH AT 4% SLOPE
3. VIEWS INTO MACARTHUR PARK
4. TUNNEL ENTRANCE WITH 14 FT CLEARANCE
5. GAZEBO
6. OPEN PLAZA SPACE
7. TRANSITWAY
8. TUNNEL ENTRANCE WITH 14' CLEARANCE
9. SCULPTURAL ARCHES
10. VEHICULAR TUNNEL APPROACH AT 6% SLOPE
11. WESTLAKE THEATER MURALS
12. S WESTLAKE AVE INTERSECTION



WESTLAKE THEATRE PLAZA: ENLARGEMENT



SCALE: 1" = 30'

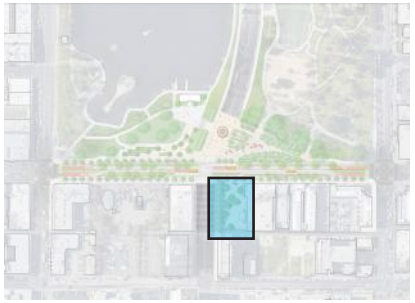
0 15' 30' 60' 120'

The Westlake Theatre Plaza provides a space for people to gather before and after shows at the restored theater. Seat lead to an open courtyard featuring cafe table seating. A small stage encourages impromptu and informal performance against the backdrop of freshly painted murals.

LEGEND:

1. RESTORED WESTLAKE THEATER
2. SEAT WALL PLANTERS
3. SMALL STAGE
4. CAFE TABLE SEATING

LOCATION MAP



MARKET PROMENADE: LOCATION MAP

SCALE: 1" = 200'

MARKET PROMENADE: ENLARGEMENT

The market promenade is a hybrid plaza-promenade that offers flexibility and a variety of experiences. Vendors have adequate space to cluster at the edges of pedestrian circulation, and smaller decomposed granite plazas on either side provides shady refuge. The linear garden paths and planters break up the hardscape and lead to the gazebo and grand staircase.

SCALE: 1" = 30'

LEGEND:

1. WIDE PROMENADE
2. INTIMATE DECOMPOSED GRANITE PLAZAS
3. OPEN PLAZA CENTRAL
4. NEW PARK ENTRANCE
5. LINEAR GARDEN PATHS

LOCATION MAP

MARKET PROMENADE: PERSPECTIVE

Pedestrians stroll down the market promenade, stopping to grab a bite to eat from a food cart. The gazebo. The tree-lined promenade opens up like a funnel to the wider plaza and gazebo in the distance.

GARDEN PATHS: LOCATION

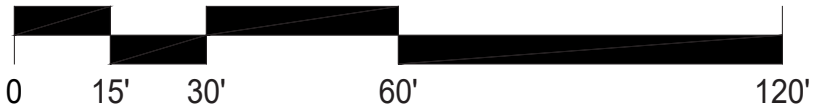
SCALE: 1" = 200'

0 100' 200' 400' 800'

N

GARDEN PATHS: ENLARGEMENT

SCALE: 1" = 30'



The Garden Paths act as a more subtle entrance to the south side of MacArthur Park. The staggered sloped paths are engulfed by a California native garden and seat walls before opening up to a small turf area, the boat house, and a grand staircase leading to the gazebo and market promenade.

LEGEND:

1. GENTLY SLOPING PATHS
2. CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTING
3. SEAT WALL BENCHES
4. TURF AREA
5. GRAND STAIRCASE

LOCATION MAP

GARDEN PATHS: PERSPECTIVE

A mother and son enjoy a walk through the garden paths. The young boy is captivated by the busy pollinators and the fragrance of the plants. Behind them, the grand staircase rises up through planted embankments.

PLANT PALETTE: BIOSWALES

GRASSES & PERENNIALS


Fig. 57

Leymus 'Canyon Prince'
Canyon Prince Wild Rye


Fig. 58

Muhlenbergia rigens
Deergrass


Fig. 59

Juncus patens
Common Rush


Fig. 60

Artemisia douglasiana
Mugwort


Fig. 61

Oenothera elata ssp. hookeri
Hooker's Evening Primrose


Fig. 62

Symphyotrichum chilense
Pacific Aster


Fig. 63

Anemopsis californica
Yerba Mansa


Fig. 64

Erythranthe cardinalis
Scarlett Monkeyflower


Fig. 65

Achillea millefolium
Yarrow

TREES


Fig. 66

Platanus racemosa
Western Sycamore

PLANT PALETTE: GARDEN PATHS

TREES

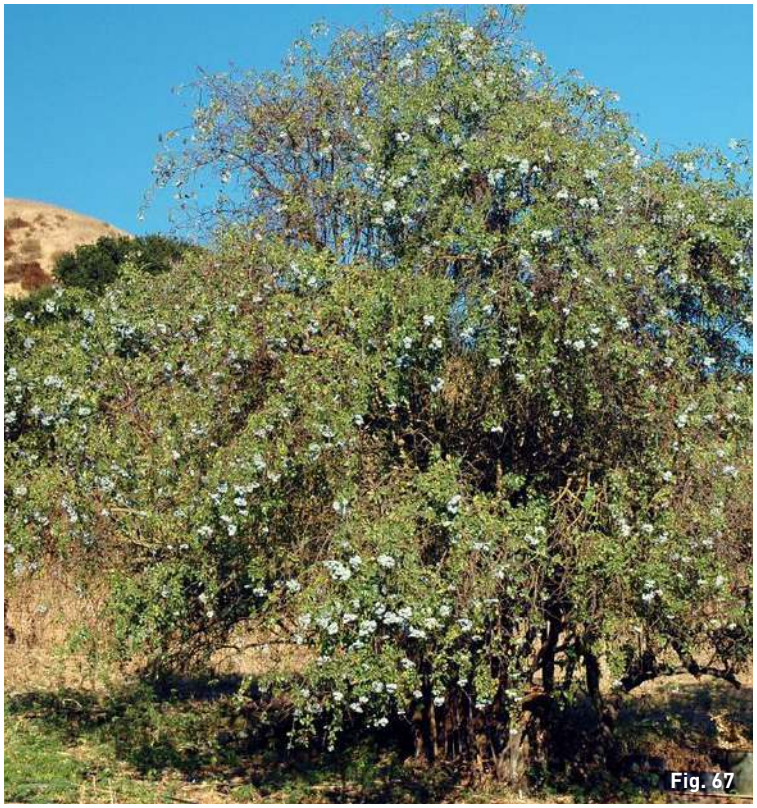


Fig. 67

Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea
Blue Elderberry

SHRUBS & PERENNIALS


Fig. 68

Artemisia californica
California Sagebrush


Fig. 69

Eriogonum fasciculatum
California Buckwheat


Fig. 70

Salvia apiana
White Sage


Fig. 71

Epilobium canum
California Fuchsia


Fig. 72

Salvia mellifera 'Terra Seca'
Creeping Black Sage


Fig. 73

Baccharis pilulosa
Pacific Aster


Fig. 74

Encelia californica
California Brittlebush


Fig. 75

Frangula californica
Coffee Berry


Fig. 76

Romneya coulteri
Matilija Poppy

CONCLUSION

Over the course of researching and designing this project, I have increasingly come to understand that public safety, livable streets, and equity are deeply interconnected.

I originally hoped to develop a pedestrian and transit-centered streetscape typology that could be replicated across Los Angeles. While many guidelines and standards do apply broadly in urban design, it is also important for landscape architects to radically embrace what already works - the unique and successful ways that a community engages with a place.

In my process, I researched the site thoroughly and responded to issues as best I could, but I still made assumptions about the what measures would best address the needs of the community. Extensive community engagement in every part of the process would have lead to a drastically different design solution.

That said, I firmly believe that expanding the streetscape, taking back public space from cars, and bostering transit along Alvarado Street would enhance its strengths and mitigate many of its problems. And if any part of this project could serve as a template for future projects, it is the notion that underserved communities deserve space safe, comfortable public space that encourages their sense of ownership and allows them decision-making power over how to use it.

LIST OF FIGURES

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