

Oak Park

Special Council Meeting

March 21, 2016





CITY OF OAK PARK

City Clerk

Mayor
Marian McClellan
Mayor Pro Tem
Carolyn Burns
Council Members
Kiesha Speech
Solomon Radner
Ken Rich
City Manager
Erik Tungate

NOTICE

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE 36th OAK PARK CITY COUNCIL

March 21, 2016

6:00 PM

Notice is hereby given that a Special City Council Meeting of the Oak Park City Council is scheduled for Monday, March 21, 2016 at 6:00 PM and will be held in the Executive Conference Room of Oak Park City Hall, 14000 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, Michigan 48237.

The purpose of the Special Meeting is to conduct the following Special Business:

A. CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to Section 8 of the Open Meetings Act to convene into a Closed Session to discuss Attorney Client Privileged Communication and Pending Litigation.

B. REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE LABOR ATTORNEY

C. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE NINE MILE REDESIGN PROJECT

Notice of the above meeting of the City of Oak Park is given in compliance with the Charter, Section 7.2, and with provisions of Public Act No. 267 of 1976, as amended.

The City of Oak Park will comply with the spirit and intent of the American with Disabilities Act. The City will provide support and make reasonable accommodations to assist people with disabilities to access and participate in our programs, facilities and services. Accommodations to participate at a Special Council Meeting will be made with prior notice.


Marian McClellan, Mayor



**CITY OF OAK PARK, MICHIGAN
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE
35TH OAK PARK CITY COUNCIL
March 21, 2016
6:00 PM**

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. SPECIAL BUSINESS

A. CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to Section 8 of the Open Meetings Act to convene into a Closed Session to discuss Attorney Client Privileged Communication and Pending Litigation.

B. REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE LABOR ATTORNEY

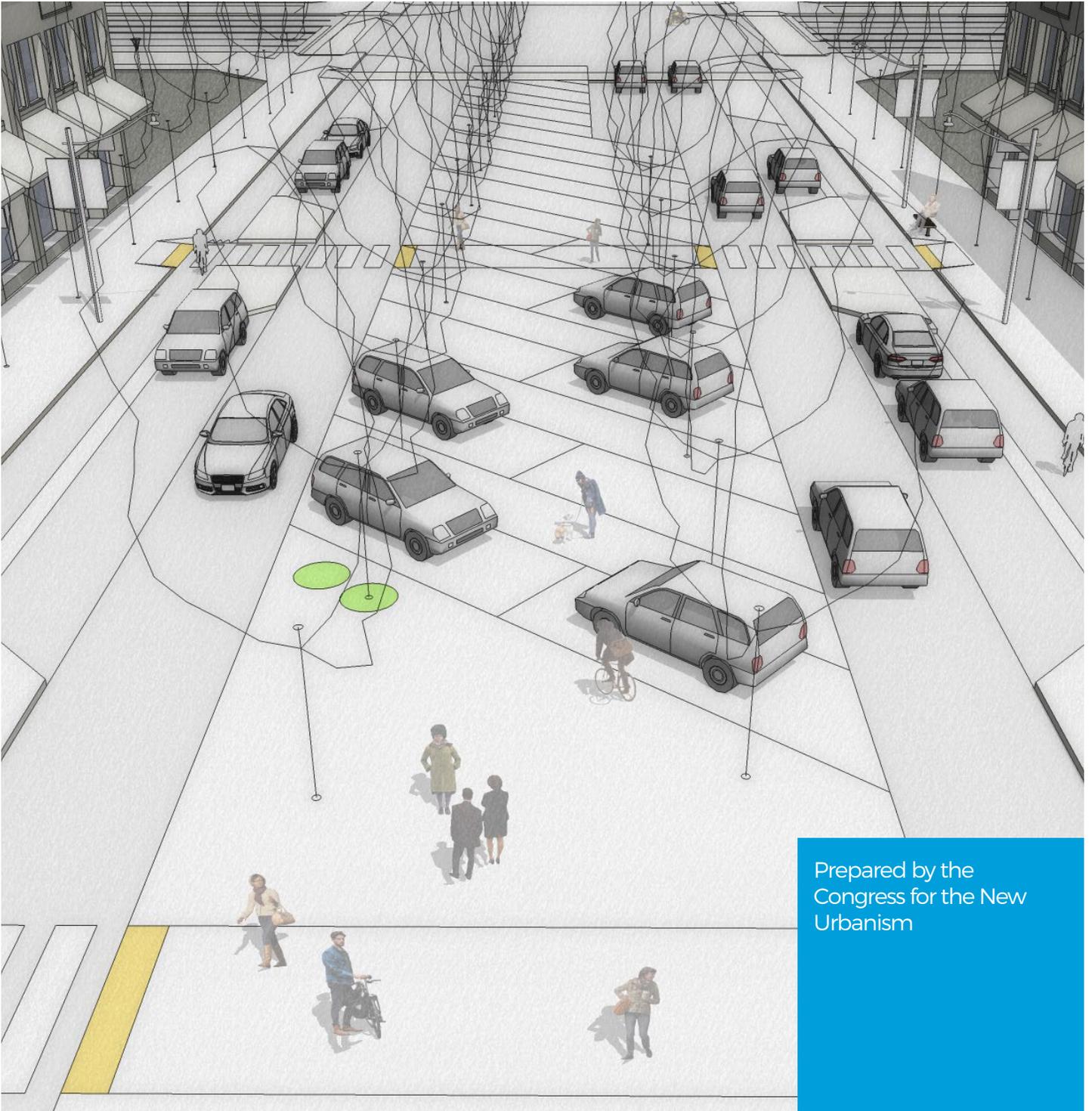
C. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE NINE MILE REDESIGN PROJECT

4. CALL TO THE AUDIENCE

Each speaker's remarks are a matter of public record; and the speaker, alone, is responsible for his or her comments; the City of Oak Park does not, by permitting such remarks, support, endorse or accept the content, thereof, as being true or accurate. There is a three minute time limit per speaker.

5. ADJOURNMENT

A NEW NINE MILE ROAD



Prepared by the
Congress for the New
Urbanism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A NEW NINE MILE ROAD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / P3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / P3

BACKGROUND / P7

WHAT WE HEARD / P11

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES / P3

OVERVIEW OF FIVE CHARACTER AREAS
& DESIGN OPTIONS / P3

RECOMMENDATIONS

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS / P17

CHARACTER AREA 1 & 3 / P3

CHARACTER AREA 2 / P3

CHARACTER AREA 4 / P3

CHARACTER AREA 5 / P3

ACTION PLAN / IMPLEMENTATION / P3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded by US EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities under their Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program via a grant to the Project for Public Spaces (PPS). The Building Blocks program funds quick, targeted assistance to communities that face common development problems.

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) would like to thank the US EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), and the City of Oak Park for making this technical assistance possible.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM

Marcy McInelly, President, Urbsworks, Inc.
Kenneth Voigt, Senior Traffic Engineer, Ayres Associates
Lynn Richards, President & CEO, Congress for the New Urbanism
Alex McKeag, Program Manager, Congress for the New Urbanism

CITY OF OAK PARK

Kimberly Marrone, Community & Economic Development Manager
Kevin Yee, Public Works Director
Erik Tungate, City Manager
Mayor Marian McClellan

A NEW NINE MILE ROAD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the U.S. EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities under their Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) offers free technical assistance to communities in need with assistance and leadership from a consortium of partners collectively known as Livability Solutions.

Livability Solutions partners, which include the nation's leading experts in creating sustainable communities, lead one- and two-day targeted technical assistance workshops in communities around the United States. Communities are selected based a number of factors, not least of which is their readiness to implement the recommendations developed during the technical assistance program. Eight to ten communities are selected to receive technical assistance each year of the program.

Selected communities learn how to use one of the Livability Solution's tools or workshop approaches, such as walkability audits, green infrastructure valuation guides, shared use agreements, and community image surveys, that can help achieve goals of enhancing livability, creating lasting economic and environmental improvements, and improving residents' public and social health.

In Spring 2015, the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) was selected to provide technical assistance to the City of Oak Park, Michigan, to develop recommendations for the redesign of Nine Mile Road through the city. Oak Park was selected because of their readiness to take the recommendations from the technical assistance and directly implement.

The City of Oak Park understands that in order to meet or exceed their livability and economic development goals, Nine Mile Road—an over-sized road for the volume of vehicle traffic that it carries—needs to be redesigned. The city understands that a redesigned Nine Mile Road needs to be built for all modes of transportation, especially walking, in order to set the framework for improved social and economic interactions within the city.

GOALS OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

1 CREATE A STREET REDESIGN CONCEPT FOR NINE MILE

2 ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO GARNER SUPPORT FOR STREET REDESIGN

3 COLLECT DATA THAT WOULD HELP TO IMPLEMENT THE STREET REDESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

4 PROVIDE ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR MAKING OAK PARK MORE WALKABLE

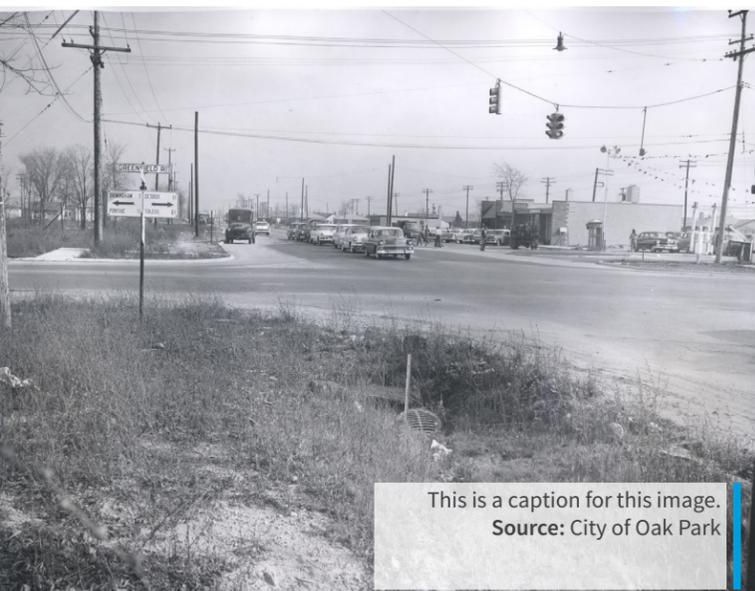
5 CONNECT EFFORTS ALONG CORRIDOR FOR ONGOING ZONING & PLANNING UPDATES

Planning and engineering recommendations from the technical assistance workshop will allow Oak Park to expedite the redesign of Nine Mile Road. Following the CNU workshop, the City of Oak Park will have the necessary planning and preliminary design information needed to bid and select an engineering firm to implement the workshop's recommendations.

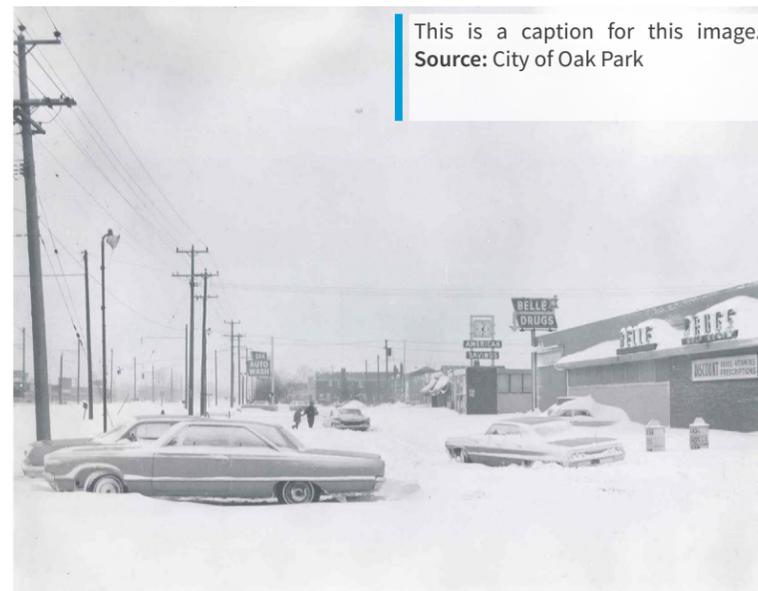
BACKGROUND



This is a caption for this image.
Source: City of Oak Park



This is a caption for this image.
Source: City of Oak Park



This is a caption for this image.
Source: City of Oak Park



This is a caption for this image.
Source: City of Oak Park

The City of Oak Park is located in the center of Metro Detroit, eight miles from downtown Detroit and adjacent to many vibrant inner ring suburbs including Ferndale, Royal Oak, and other nearby communities. The City of Oak Park is racially, culturally, and religiously diverse, boasting sizable Jewish, African-American, Chaldean, and Arab populations. Despite this diverse mix of people, Oak Park is not growing—the overall population is estimated to decline from 2.50 to 2.48 person per household between 2013-2018.

Founded in 1945, much of Oak Park's building stock is from the middle of the 20th century, a large portion of single-family homes are classified as "Mid Century Modern." The street grid follows an irregular pattern, with some neighborhood and major streets connecting directly onto one of the city's major thoroughfares—Nine Mile Road—while others are purposefully disconnected. Several residential driveways and business entrances open directly onto the road. Though consistently a five-lane arterial through Oak Park, the changing land use context adjacent to Nine Mile Road and the irregularity of the street grid connectivity makes it a difficult route to characterize.

OAK PARK STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In 2013-2014, the City of Oak Park embarked on an ambitious public planning process to develop a strategy for attracting and sustaining economic development in the city. This process led to creation and adoption of Oak Park's Strategic Economic Development Plan in Spring 2014. The plan understands and reacts to changing trends in where and how people are choosing to live, work, and recreate. The plan smartly ties urban design to the economic development.

The stated purpose of the plan is to:

1. Build upon existing assets with specific recommendations for new planning, investment, and infrastructure strategies that lead to a redeveloped Oak Park in five to ten years; and
2. Serve as a tool to promote private sector development and investment and guide public sector initiatives.

At the outset, the planning process for the Strategic Economic Development Plan set a clear agenda for change and action. Because of the scope and timeliness of the Strategic Economic Development Plan, CNU's technical assistance relied heavily on the recommendations within the plan.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN SAY ABOUT NINE MILE ROAD?

The Strategic Economic Development Plan proposes three (3) areas of focus around public perception of space, including streetscape identity to "Redesign and rebrand priority streets as the arteries that anchor Oak Park's commercial sub-districts."

The Plan recognizes the need to connect the built environment to the public realm, suggesting:

“ From streets and signage to events and identity, Oak Park's public image and people's experiences in the public realm affect residents' and visitors' perception of the city. Currently, Oak Park's physical environment does not reflect the community's values in local businesses, recreation opportunities, and social experiences... ”

Commercial facades, signage, and streets are the face of Oak Park. They provide people with first impressions of the businesses that are associated with them regardless of the quality of goods and services being offered....

Events and festivals also shape experiences. While Oak Park has many annual events and ongoing programs, they are not strong regional destinations and many take place indoors, hiding the activity from the larger community....

Together, brand, events, commercial facades and signage, and a welcoming streetscape are the tools that can communicate Oak Park's unique identity and create a sense of place for residents and visitors to enjoy. ”

The recommendations in this report are intended to complement and expand recommendation with the Strategic Economic Development Plan, offering a detailed approach to redesign Nine Mile Road that will in turn provide a better foundation for economic development in Oak Park.

BACKGROUND

WHAT DOES A REDESIGNED NINE MILE ROAD MEAN FOR OAK PARK?

Streets and street networks provide a template for a rich combination of housing, shopping, and transportation choice. Nine Mile Road is the principal roadway through the center of Oak Park. Right now, it serves mostly motor vehicles and neither creates an attractive environment for pedestrians to walk or take transit nor a safe environment for cycling or other modes of transportation. Together, this reduces the economic development potential along Nine Mile Road and makes Nine Mile Road unattractive route for anyone not using a car.

Streets and street networks should support a robust mix of culture and commerce. Street networks should integrate all modes of transportation. Aligning the goals set forth by the residents of Oak Park in the Strategic Economic Development Plan, the redesign of Nine Mile Road can play a catalytic role by better connecting people to the types of places they increasingly seek and providing them with choices for how to get to them.

Though challenging, redesigning Nine Mile Road to create an identity for Oak Park and boost economic development while honoring the needs and wants of Oak Park residents is possible. To do so, a redesigned Nine Mile Road must:

- › Reallocate street space for other community-serving uses
- › Encourage biking with dedicated bike lanes
- › Integrate bike parking and bike storage to serve transit riders
- › Make crossing Nine Mile on foot and bike safe and convenient
- › Provide greater visibility and identity for commercial businesses
- › Create public gathering places
- › Create a heart for the Oak Park community
- › Bring green into the center

THE PROCESS

CNU was hired to lead technical assistance in the City of Oak Park with the expressed goal to draft recommendation for pedestrian-friendly, business-supporting design changes for Nine Mile Road. To do so, CNU turned to recommendations with the FHWA-endorsed ITE/CNU *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*. This document was created through a partnership between the CNU and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). This manual acts as a how-to document that illustrates best practices for the creation and implementation of walkable, mixed-use streets—the kinds of streets specifically endorsed by the Strategic Economic Development Plan.

Here is a breakdown of key activities over the three day technical assistance:

- DAY 1**
TOUR OF NINE MILE ROAD
EVENING PUBLIC WORKSHOP
- DAY 2**
ONE-ON-ONE TECHNICAL MEETINGS
OPEN STUDIO / DRAWING CONCEPTS
- DAY 3**
FINALIZE CONCEPTS
PRESENT FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

WHY REDESIGN NINE MILE ROAD?

CONNECT PEOPLE TO GOODS & SERVICES

CREATE A MORE WALKABLE NINE MILE ROAD CORRIDOR

INITIATE A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DEFINE AN AREA FOR A DOWNTOWN OAK PARK



WHAT WE HEARD

The CNU assistance started with a Monday night kick-off meeting, where residents were divided into five tables with maps of the Nine Mile Road Corridor through Oak Park and asked to prioritize the most important components of a redesigned Nine Mile Road. Participants were also asked, "How important is:

- > Biking
- > On-street parking
- > Pedestrian amenities, such as walkways and crossings
- > Street trees and "green" infrastructure, such as rainwater garden
- > Transit rider amenities, such as shelters and easy access to shelters
- > Other?"

More than thirty Oak Park residents participated in the workshop. Participants wrote their responses and justifications on sticky notes, which then led to a facilitated discussion around each table.

Remarkably, a consistent set of priorities emerged from these. They were:

PRIORITIES

1 PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS & AMENITIES

2 IMPROVED BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

3 BRING "GREEN" INTO THE CORRIDOR

While these three priorities were consistently held amongst the tables, other interesting and important ideas were mentioned, including - public art, sidepaths, bus stops, bike amenities, and public space improvements.

WHAT ELSE WE HEARD

TRANSIT/TRANSIT STOPS

- > Bus stop shelters with bike parking, locks, and storage
- > Cleaning and heating of shelters in the winter
- > More bus shelters, not just benches

BIKING

- > Bike rental
- > Color coded bike/footpath
- > More bike racks
- > Complete Streets with bike lanes

PARKING

- > No more angled parking
- > Public parking lot-no street parking; fee for street parking in Ferndale
- > On-street parking

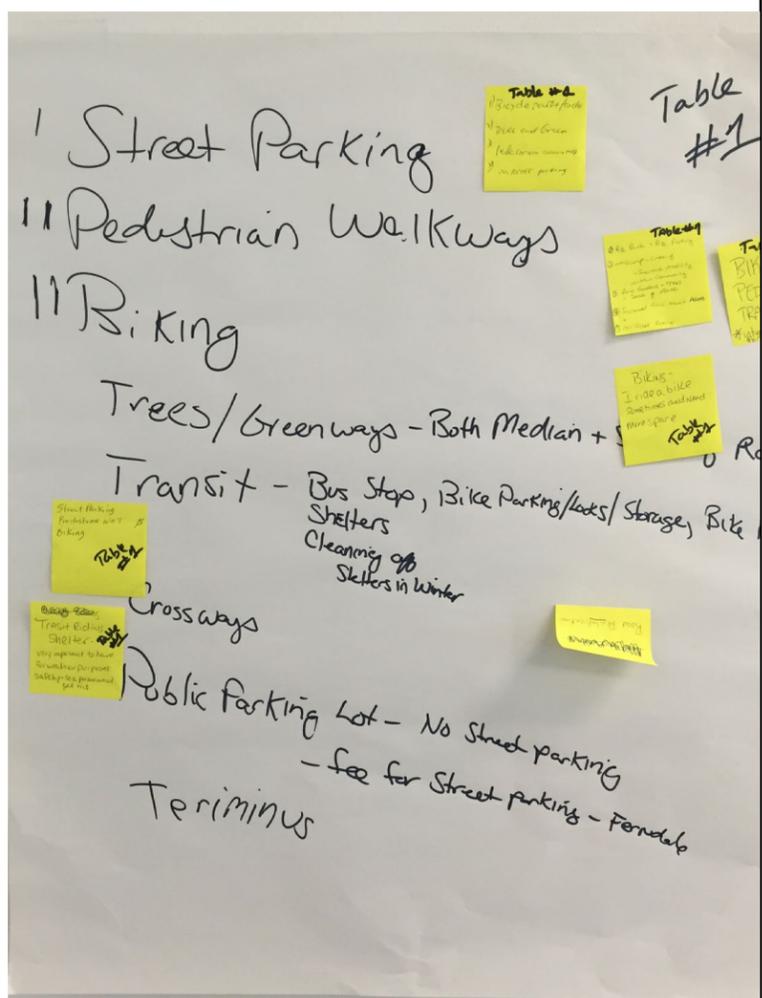
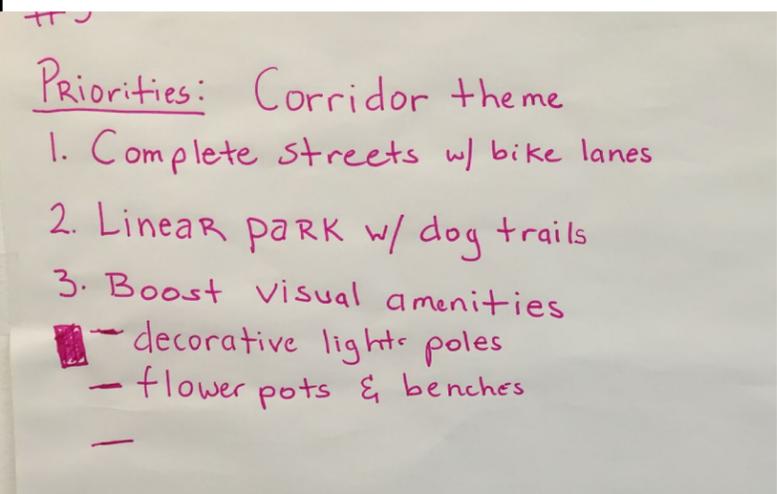
PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

- > Better, more visible walkways/crossing
- > Wider sidewalks
- > Allow for outdoor cafe-style dining
- > Well lit
- > Brick pavers are a waste of money; use rubber stamp colored concrete instead
- > Terminus with street garden/rain garden
- > Boost visual amenities like content sensitive decorative light poles, flowers pots, trees, and benches
- > Creative use of space, like swing sets for adults and kids

PUBLIC ART

- > Public art, well done and strategically placed

Additionally, most of the workshop participants agreed that the corridor needs a theme and that the corridor should be "green" and that a linear park with dog trails and with sidepaths and sidewalks should be wide enough for two people pushing strollers to walk side-by-side.=



CHALLENGES

RIGHT OF WAY

The right-of-way of Nine Mile Road—the amount of land occupied by the footprint of the roadway—is large compared to other streets in Oak Park and its adjacent communities. This poses an urban design challenge because larger roadways make it more difficult for buildings to frame the street corridor and build an attractive, inviting public realm where people want to walk or bike. However, the large amount of right-of-way is also an opportunity because the excess of land allows for more flexibility in design with fewer trade-offs (e.g. bike lanes can be easily accommodated).

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Nine Mile Road through Oak Park traverses several different land-use character areas, each with different design challenges and trade-offs that need considered.

COST/FUNDING

Funding has not yet been secured for the redesign of Nine Mile Road. Applying and securing funding from sources outside the city is essential to moving the project forward in a timely fashion.

AGING POPULATION

The population of Oak Park is decreasing slightly while the average age is climbing. As residents age, driving long distances, or even short ones, becomes more difficult and less appealing. The demographics of Oak Park make it more critical than ever for the city to invest in walking and transit as a viable form of transportation, as fewer and fewer residents will be willing and able to drive to meet their daily mobility needs. In addition, the health and cognitive benefits of daily walking should not be dismissed; an aging population can and should also be a healthy population.

TRAFFIC

Traffic levels on Nine Mile Road are very low at approximately 9,000 to 10,000 vehicles per day (vpd). The existing 5-lane roadway is designed to accommodate at least 30,000 vpd. A redesigned street width can easily accommodate existing and future traffic as well as enhance pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.



OPPORTUNITIES

STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT

For the first time since the City's founding, Oak Park boasts an Office of Economic Development. The Mayor and her team are committed to increasing economic activity in Oak Park by attracting new businesses while making the city far more attractive and safe for people to walk and ride bikes.

Residents understand that access to transit is important, as it enables non-drivers the ability to travel. As a part of a complete and connected network of streets where walking is prioritized, non-drivers, such as the elderly, those younger than the legal driving age, and others who cannot afford or choose to live without a car, can access the city's amenities.

CREATING A NEW DOWNTOWN, SENSE OF PLACE

Oak Park has never had a traditional downtown or Main Street. The redesign of Nine Mile Road provides the best opportunities for the city to connect its transportation and land-use goals together, to create a vibrant city center with a distinct character.

PROXIMITY

As Detroit emerges from bankruptcy, new investment and energy is pouring into the city, with it jobs, residents, and potential. Being a part of a strong metro region is essential for the long-term success of any suburban or outlying community. Being so close to Detroit and other bustling Detroit Metropolitan communities such as Ferndal, Royal Oak, Birmingham, and others, Oak Park is better able to attract new residents and investments. To do this best, Oak Park needs to respond to the demand for places that are walkable, that offer a choice of transportation options, and a diversity of housing options.

LOCAL SUCCESS TO BUILD ON

The City of Ferndale, directly adjacent to Oak Park, had tremendous success in reorienting city streets to non-motorized transportation. The intersection of Woodward Avenue and Nine Mile Road through Ferndale is a vibrant hub of pedestrian activity. Several city streets have added sharrows or protected bike lanes, increasing the safety and number of people who bike.

OVERVIEW OF FIVE CHARACTER AREAS & DESIGN OPTIONS

SEGMENT	1	2	3	4	5
ADJACENT LAND USES, BUILDING TYPES AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	Residential north Residential south	Big box north Big box south	Residential north Residential south	Strip commercial north Linear park south	Strip commercial and multidwelling residential at north Residential with driveway access at south
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES	Residential has some alley access with very few driveways. The potential conflict between driveway users and bicyclists is limited. Therefore, a buffered bike lane is feasible	Abundant right-of-way provides options for reclaiming street space for other uses that support a more urban downtown, such as a public plaza	Same as Segment 1	East bound (south-side) buffered bike lane could occur in linear park in the form of a multi-use path, freeing up room within the ROW for selected on-street parking on the north side and a planted center median	Strip commercial needs on-street parking Multi-dwelling has no alley access and would benefit from on-street parking
CURRENT RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW) DIMENSIONS	Approximately 60 foot roadway within the curbs. The full ROW is estimated at about 120 feet, including planting strip and sidewalks. Within Segment 2 (Downtown), the full ROW is used for a plaza or a roundabout design option.				
CURRENT RIGHT-OF-WAY CHARACTERISTICS	Five lanes total; two driving lanes in each direction, center turn lane, and sidewalks.				
STREET DESIGN OPTIONS	Abundant right-of-way provides plenty of room for both continuous and intermittent street components	Abundant right-of-way provides plenty of room for continuous and intermittent street components, in a more urban configuration	Same as Segment 1	Linear parking at south side of the street provides an opportunity to locate south side bicycle path outside of the roadway curbs, freeing up ROW space on the north for selected on-street parking spaces	Same as Segment 1
CONTINUOUS STREET COMPONENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Buffered bike lane › Accessible transit stops › Continuous sidewalks and enhanced crosswalks › Vehicle travel lanes 				
INTERMITTENT STREET COMPONENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › On-street parking › Planted center median › Center turn lane for vehicles 				
RECOMMENDED STREET DESIGN COMPONENTS (IN FEET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › Center median at 24 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet <p>Total = 60 feet (curb-to-curb)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet › On-street parking at 8 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › Center plaza at 36 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › On-street parking at 8 feet › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet <p>Total = 120 feet including plant strips and sidewalk (complete ROW)</p>	Same as Segment 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet › On-street parking at 8 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › Center median at 24 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet <p>Total = 60 feet (curb-to-curb)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet › On-street parking at 8 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › Center median at 8 feet › Auto lane at 11 feet › On-street parking at 8 feet › Buffered bike lane at 7 feet <p>Total = 60 feet (curb-to-curb)</p>
OPTIONAL STREET DESIGN COMPONENTS AND TRADEOFFS				Options for north side : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › On-street parking › Buffered bike lane behind parking › Buffered bike lane outside parking › Planted median 	8 feet only for the center planted median



KIPLING

DANTE / MC CLAIN

SCOTIA

ROSEWOOD

RECOMMENDATIONS

PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Any redesign of Nine Mile Road should prioritize the pedestrian experience. By adding better pedestrian-scale lighting, wider sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks, street furniture, select on-street parking, and more, Nine Mile Road will become a more comfortable and enjoyable place to walk.

REDUCE SPEED

The safety of any roadway is heavily influenced by its design. The design of a street and its adjacent land use content provide signals to drivers to drive a certain way. Wide roads with little to no development on either side encourage high speed driving. Conversely, in urban areas, narrower streets with striped or protected bike lanes, lines of street trees, and buildings that front adjacent sidewalks give cues to drivers to slow down.

This proposed redesign of Nine Mile Road is intentionally designed to ensure slower speeds. The target speed should be no greater than 25 MPH. Target speed is “the highest speed at which vehicles should operate on a throughfare in a specific context with the level of multimodal activity generated by adjacent land uses to provide both mobility for motor vehicles and a safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. The target speed is designed to become the posted speed limit.” (ITE/CNU *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares*).

CROSSWALKS

Currently, crosswalks are few and far between on Nine Mile Road. Pedestrians must walk numerous blocks to find a marked crossing, and when they do, it is often only marked on one side of an intersection, not both. If the pedestrian does not find a crosswalk near them, they then risk walking across a wide five-lane roadway with traffic moving in excess of 40 mph. As designed, Nine Mile Road is not safe for pedestrians.

Numerous crosswalks should be added along Nine Mile Road. These crosswalks should include: continental pavement markings, pedestrian countdown timers at signalized intersections, pedestrian refuge islands and ADA Ramps. Crosswalk access should be provided at bus stops to minimize transit rider walking distances to cross Nine Mile Road. No pedestrian should have to walk more than 2 blocks before being able to safely cross the street.

LIST OF CROSSWALK LOCATIONS

- › Avon Road
- › Stratford Street
- › Marlow Street
- › Church Street
- › Gardner Street
- › Parklawn Street
- › Westhampton Avenue
- › McClain Avenue
- › Eastwood Street
- › Jerome Avenue
- › Scotia Road
- › Rensselaer Avenue
- › Oneida Avenue
- › Rosewood Avenue
- › Meadowlark Avenue
- › Republic Avenue

PEDESTRIAN REFUGES

Pedestrian crossings of the existing 60-foot wide roadway requires a 17 second gap in both directions of traffic to safely cross Nine Mile Road. A redesigned roadway with pedestrian refuge islands only requires a 7 second gap in one direction of traffic to safely cross the roadway in stages. This design not only greatly enhances pedestrian safety and friendliness of Nine Mile Road but can also serve to tame traffic speeds.

PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING

The current street lighting along the Nine Mile Road Corridor does not enhance the pedestrian experience. The existing cobra head style lighting that hangs over Nine Mile Road is more akin to highway lighting, not that of an important and dignified urban street. By adding new lighting that is scaled to the person walking or riding his/her bike (shorter poles, more ornate), the experience of commuting via walking or biking is improved and, at night provides a safer and more pedestrian friendly environment.

PUBLIC ART INTEGRATION

The City of Oak Park should consider integrating public art from local artists, similar to neighboring Ferndale’s “ART TOWN” program. Well-curated public art can create a “sense of place” and street theme identity along the corridor.

“No pedestrian should have to walk more than 2 blocks before being able to safely cross the street.”

CHARACTER AREA 1 & 3

Between Greenfield & Kipling / Between Mc Clain & Scotia

Both Character Area 1 and 3 are characterized by mostly single-family residences to both the north and south of Nine Mile Road. In some cases, the residences and few businesses have rear alley access. In other cases, driveways of single and multi-family dwellings open directly onto Nine Mile Road.

Nine Mile Road can be reconfigured to the maximum benefit of all road users. Two lanes of traffic—one in both directions—and an ample median can create an almost parkway-feel. The large right-of-way allows for two buffered bike lanes along each lane of traffic, making for a comfortable and safe ride for all types of cyclists. The limited use of the driveways on a daily basis and the use of a buffered bike lane along the entire length of Nine Mile Road means the potential conflict between driveway users and bicyclists is limited. When turning is needed, the median can slim to accommodate a center turn lane (not pictured).



Bike lane buffered by on-street parking—a safer type of bike lane.



A buffered bike lane along a major roadway with on-street parking to the right of the travel lanes.

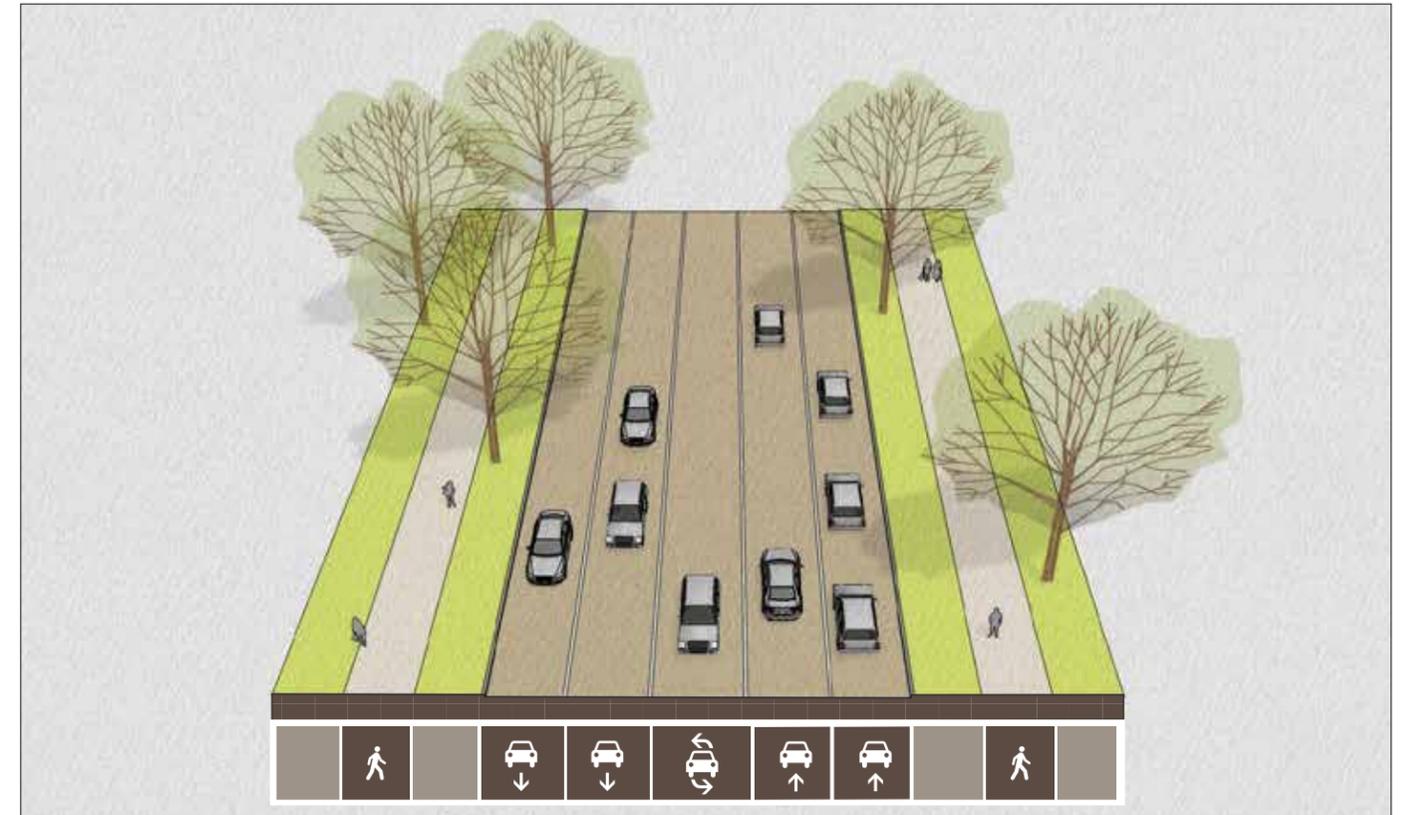
IMPORTANCE OF BIKING

Riding a bike is increasingly common among adults and, in communities that make it a priority, an acceptable, if not desirable, form of transportation—commuting daily to work via bike, riding a bike for pleasure or for exercise, and using a bike to run errands. Cities across the U.S. have embraced cycling to the happiness of some and consternation of others, primarily those who drive for most of their daily activities and consider bike riders as an obstacle.

The future of transportation is multi-modal, meaning one should have mobility choices in how he/she gets to a destination. To encourage not just those intrepid few who can and will bike in any condition, municipalities must build out bike infrastructure that promotes safe cycling to the masses, specifically that large cohort (~50%) of the population designated as “interested but concerned bikers”—those who are interesting in biking but feel it is still to unsafe or uncomfortable to do so. By building the right kind of bike infrastructure, and lots of it, the City of Oak Park can not only encourage cycling at all ages and to all cultural groups, but actually get more people to ride, thus improving quality of life and health outcomes, reducing the number of cars in traffic, and getting more people into an active, healthy street environment.

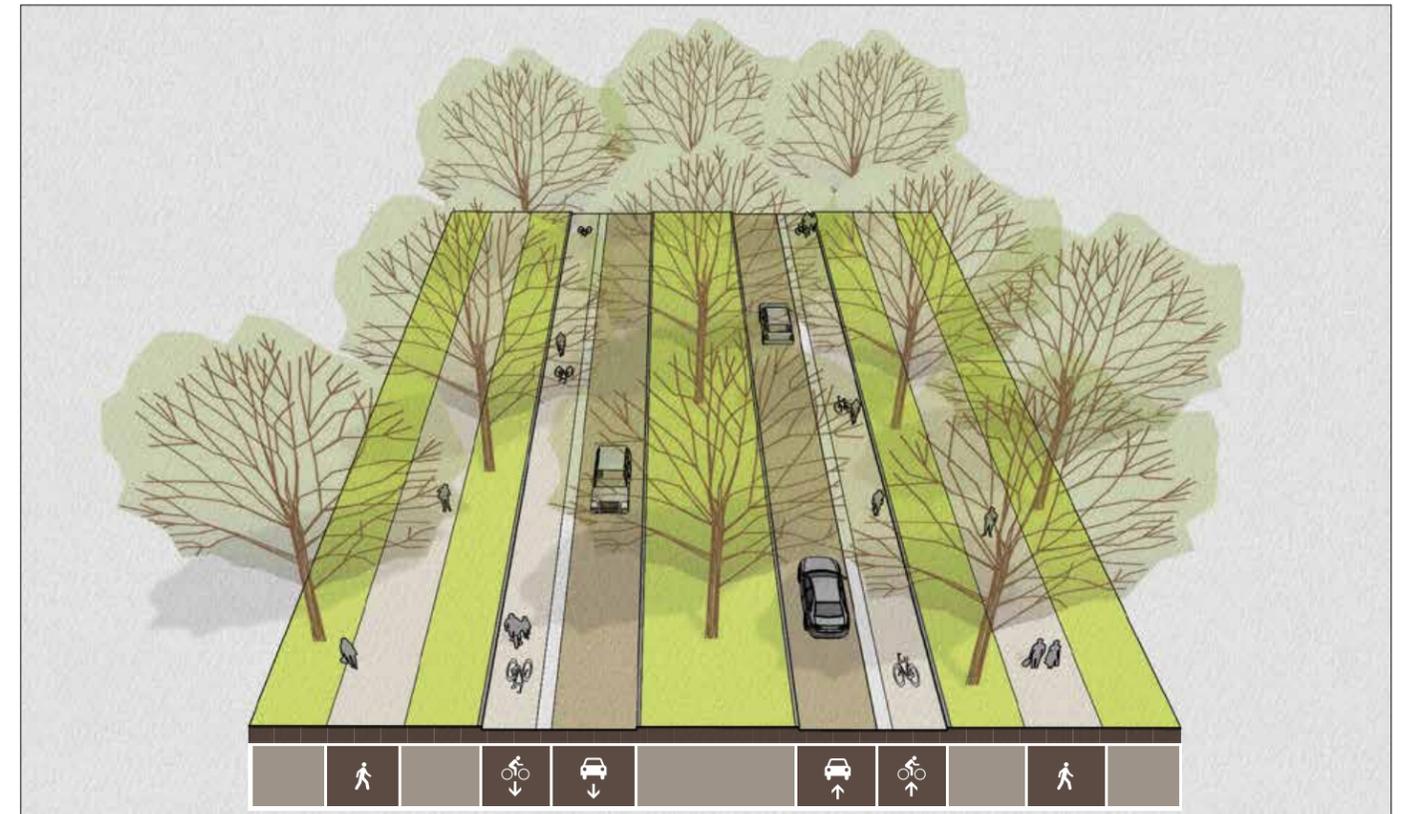
U-TURNS

Left turn lanes should be added to the median at every major intersection. For individual driveway accessibility, because the traffic volumes are low, a driver should be allowed to make a legal u-turn from these left turn lanes (see “After View”, right).



BEFORE VIEW

AFTER VIEW



CHARACTER AREA 2

Between Kipling & Mc Clain

The City of Oak Park lacks a traditional downtown or city center, restricting its attractiveness to capture new retail and commercial activities. The 2014 Economic Development Strategy Plan identifies the intersection of Nine Mile Road and Coolidge Highway and the area immediately surrounding it as the logical nexus of the community, stating:

“This area physically and psychologically represents the Oak Park’s gathering places, including civic buildings, Shepherd Park, Oak Park High School, and the Nine Mile & Coolidge shopping cluster. This area already generates much activity between daily uses and special programs, and it has the potential to be a connected, walkable district activated by a revitalized mixed-use retail center.”

Character Area 2 is the de facto center of Oak Park. Big box stores—retail stores that occupy large tracts of land and are surrounded by parking lots—are located at all corners of Nine Mile Road and Coolidge. The current abundant right-of-way of these two roadways provides options for reclaiming street space for other uses that support a more urban downtown, such as a public plaza as well as plenty of room for continuous and intermittent street components, in a more urban configuration.

The following recommendations are two potential design improvements for the intersection of Nine Mile Road and Coolidge Highway. Either option will dramatically change the character of Nine Mile Road and the City of Oak Park. Only one option can be chosen and built. If the city is to become a more attractive destination that is walkable, getting this intersection correct is key.

ROUNDAABOUT OPTION

Roundabouts are not new to Michigan or Metro Detroit. Many residents in Oak Park have encountered newly constructed roundabouts in nearby suburbs and towns, including Southfield and Ann Arbor. News coverage and actual usage of these roundabouts can color people’s perceptions of what a roundabout is and how it functions. In some cases, as we heard during our final workshop presentation, many people’s perceptions of roundabouts are less than positive. What distinguishes the proposed roundabout in Oak Park is that it is truly urban: It has two approach lanes feeding into the roundabout, instead of three or more, and is small in scale.

Roundabouts have proven to be pedestrian-friendly as well as safer and more efficient than standard signalized intersections. They also can slow traffic speeds and, when done well, can serve as aesthetic community landmarks. At high pedestrian locations, yellow rapid-flashy beacons could be installed to enhance roundabout safety for use by pedestrians.

As with anything new, drivers in the United States tend to approach roundabouts with trepidation. This is to be expected and embraced. If the roundabout option is selected and built, an extensive education campaign should accompany the decision to acclimate drivers to rules of the roundabout. These rules, which differ only slightly from a traditional signalized intersection, include:

- › Slow down and choose the correct lane
- › Yield to pedestrians and traffic on your left already in the roundabout
- › Do not change lanes in roundabout
- › Yield to pedestrians as you exit roundabout

WHY A MODERN ROUNDAABOUT?

REDUCES TRAFFIC CONFLICT POINTS

REDUCE TOTAL CRASHES BY 29%

REDUCES INJURY CRASHES BY 31%

SAFEST TYPE OF AT-GRADE INTERSECTION

SLOWER SPEEDS

SIMPLIFIED DECISION MAKING

PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY

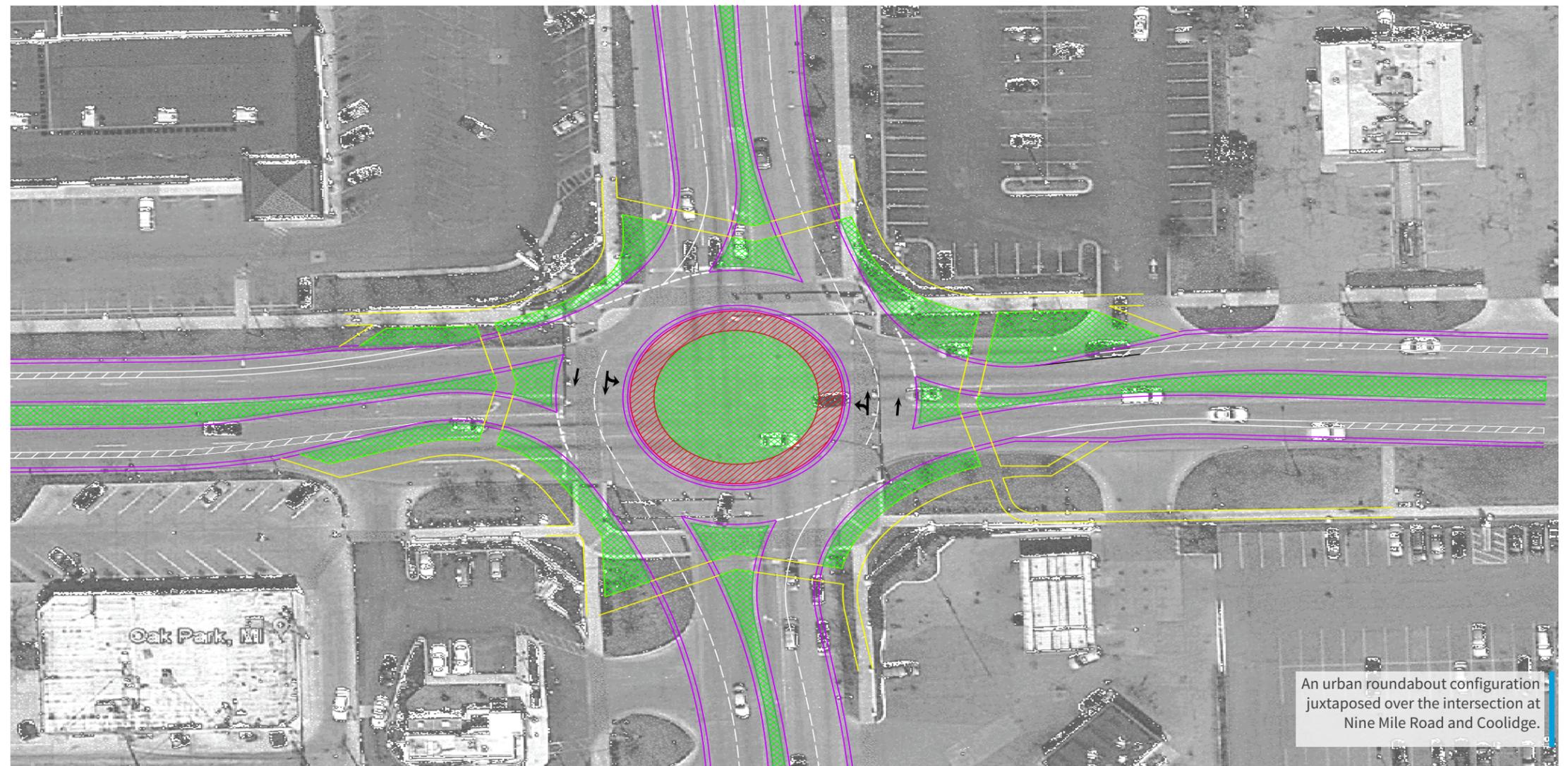
REDUCES PEAK HOUR DELAYS FROM 75 SECONDS TO 5 SECONDS

REDUCES BACK-UPS

OPERATES DURING ALL TIME PERIODS OF DAY

BETTER TURNING RADII FOR TRUCKS

CREATES AN AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT



CHARACTER AREA 2

Between Kipling & Mc Clain

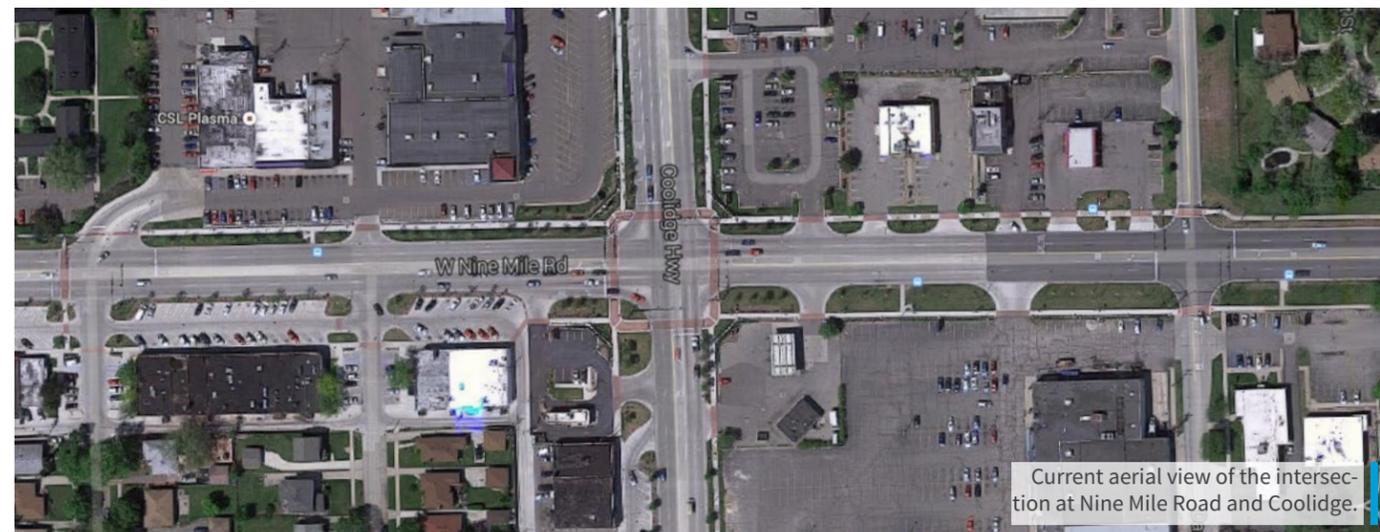
PUBLIC PLAZA OPTION

For a municipality searching for its identity, a project like the major roadway redesign provides an excellent opportunity to achieve multiple community goals. To do so, this often requires thinking outside of the box.

The public plaza option for the intersection at Nine Mile Road and Coolidge would reduce the number of lanes on Nine Mile Road to one in each direction with on-street parking on either side. The center median would be expanded to accommodate a large, paved plaza space with planted trees that could be used for outdoor events and, when not in use for special events, double as parking spaces (see rendering, page 24).

For the space to feel urban and attractive, the surrounding land use—big box stores and parking lots—would need to fill in over time with buildings that front the street, providing an inviting pedestrian realm and a true downtown for the City of Oak Park.

Because the intersection at Nine Mile Road and Coolidge “has the potential to be a connected, walkable district activated by a revitalized mixed-use retail center” and residents and the city officials alike have pointed out the need for public space worthy of special events, something truly “out of the box” deserves consideration. Such a radical transformation is not without precedent. The City of Lancaster, California is proof.



LANCASTER BOULEVARD

The City of Lancaster, California, converted a drab, automobile-oriented arterial at the heart of downtown into a lively, pedestrian-friendly center. The nine-block makeover of Lancaster Boulevard has become a regional draw and attracted significant economic development in its first two years.

In a dramatic demonstration of the value of smart streetscape investment, Lancaster spent \$11.5 million on a project and, within four years, attracted \$130 million in private investment and generated \$273 million in economic output, according to estimates by the California Redevelopment Association. Between 2007, the year before revitalization efforts began, and 2012, tax revenues from the downtown area nearly doubled.

Now, downtown Lancaster has 48 new businesses adding 802 permanent jobs and 1,100 construction jobs, according to a recent study. By 2013, three years after project completion, total collisions fell by nearly one third, and injuries among all users decreased by 67 percent.

Space for automobiles along the corridor has been drastically reduced, but not eliminated, since the boulevard’s completion in 2010. Five lanes of traffic, including a center turn lane, were reduced to two lanes, with a wide, tree-shaded public ramblas in the center of the thoroughfare. A true ramblas—a center promenade—was provided only for the busiest blocks, with stylistically consistent angle-in parking anchoring the outer blocks (see transformation, right).



THE OLD LANCASTER BOULEVARD, AKA HIGHWAY 14. SOURCE: JOHN MASSENGALE

HARVEST FESTIVAL ON LANCASTER BOULEVARD. SOURCE: MYANTELOPEVALLEY.COM



CHARACTER AREA 2

Between Kipling & Mc Clain

SNOW REMOVAL & STORAGE

The plaza space can be used year round. In warmer months, the plaza becomes a public spaces that can be highly programmed. In the winter months, part or much of the plaza can be used for snow storage. Porous paving options should be studied.

The plaza should be designed curbless, allowing easy snow plowing on adjacent streets. Trees should be moved out of the snow plow line, as to not impede the snow removal process.

PLAZA USES

The public plaza can be used for recreational and social uses and will be an exceptional space for for events like farmers markets and live music, or for food trucks and carts to park and operate during the week.

The main and most-often use of this public plaza should for social and civic functions. However, the space is also design to accommodate vehicles, with diagonal parking, to accommodate instances in which more parking is needed.

PUBLIC PLAZA OPTION, VIEW LOOKING EAST



CHARACTER AREA 2



Bird's eye model of existing conditions at 9 Mile & Coolidge, viewing northeast.



A vision for a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown Oak Park. Source: Oak Park Strategic Economic Development Plan

Bird's eye model of potential development concept at 9 Mile & Coolidge, viewing northeast.

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES: NEW STREET CONNECTIONS/STREET FRONTAGE

The Economic Development Strategy Plan makes astute observations about the current and potential character of the intersection of Nine Mile Road and Coolidge Highway. It states:

“The Nine Mile Road and Coolidge Highway intersection is considered Oak Park’s main shopping cluster. Although the area has seen recent streetscape enhancements, the auto-oriented design (drive-thrus, gas stations, parking lots at street corners) has prevented this area from becoming an attractive retail destination because it is not walkable. Overall, there is a lack of street frontage, especially at the intersection’s corners where it is most desirable. Places like these - low-rise shopping centers that are setback from the street and surrounded by parking lots - are auto-oriented, not pedestrian friendly, and not successful layouts for retailers, as exemplified by the vacant retail spaces in all four quadrants.

Nine Mile and Coolidge has potential for both new development and redevelopment with 30,000 to 40,000 SF estimated supportable retail, or 10 to 12 stores. Long-term strategies focus on creating a walkable, mixed-use retail destination by encouraging development that fronts the street, high-quality public spaces that catalyze new development, and multi-family housing connected to retail by comfortable non-motorized paths.

In the short-term, low cost, high impact projects can be implemented to get the community thinking about this area differently, such as activating underutilized parking spaces with movable chairs, food trucks, and Wi-Fi hot-spots. ”

This design alternative for Nine Mile Road keeps the signalized intersection at Nine Mile Road and Coolidge. It embeds public space into the center of the roadway, creating a “living room” for Oak Park. It create a public space worthy of annual outdoor public events, like an annual 4th of July celebration. Not only this, but the public plaza makes a statement: Oak Park is a place for people.

Once built, the public plaza could also spill onto the adjacent street for public events that warrant partial or full street closures. It goes a long way in creating a “sense of place” and a civic space for the city.

Adjacent land-uses should transition over time to come up to the street, where shops and restaurants open up onto the adjacent sidewalk, instead of parking lots. It will take time for this transition to occur, but zoning updates should be made now to allow for this redevelopment to take place in future.

CHARACTER AREA 4

Between Scotia & Rosewood

The diversity of contexts along Nine Mile Road is what makes it an interesting corridor to study. Character Area 4 is characterized by pockets of strip commercial buildings on the north side of the road and a large swath of greenspace and footpath to the south. We propose that this green space be extended and repackaged as a beautiful linear park with multi-use path and the north side of the road provide on-street parking for nearby businesses.

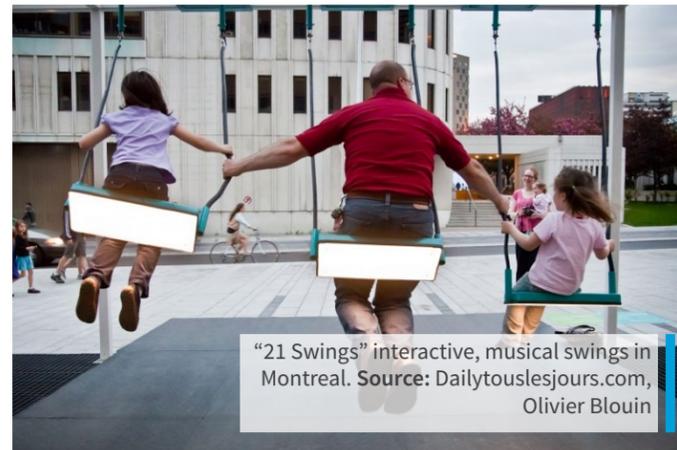
LINEAR PARK

Unlike most large and small neighborhood parks that focus on recreation or play, linear parks tend to have a different focus: to take you somewhere. Linear parks, longer than they are wide, are connectors between different parts of a city or town.

In Oak Park, a linear park would encourage walking and biking in pleasant, green environment. The park would be a unique amenity to the city—a place for families and people of all ages to enjoy together.



Inexpensive, interactive public art. Source: Flint Public Art Project

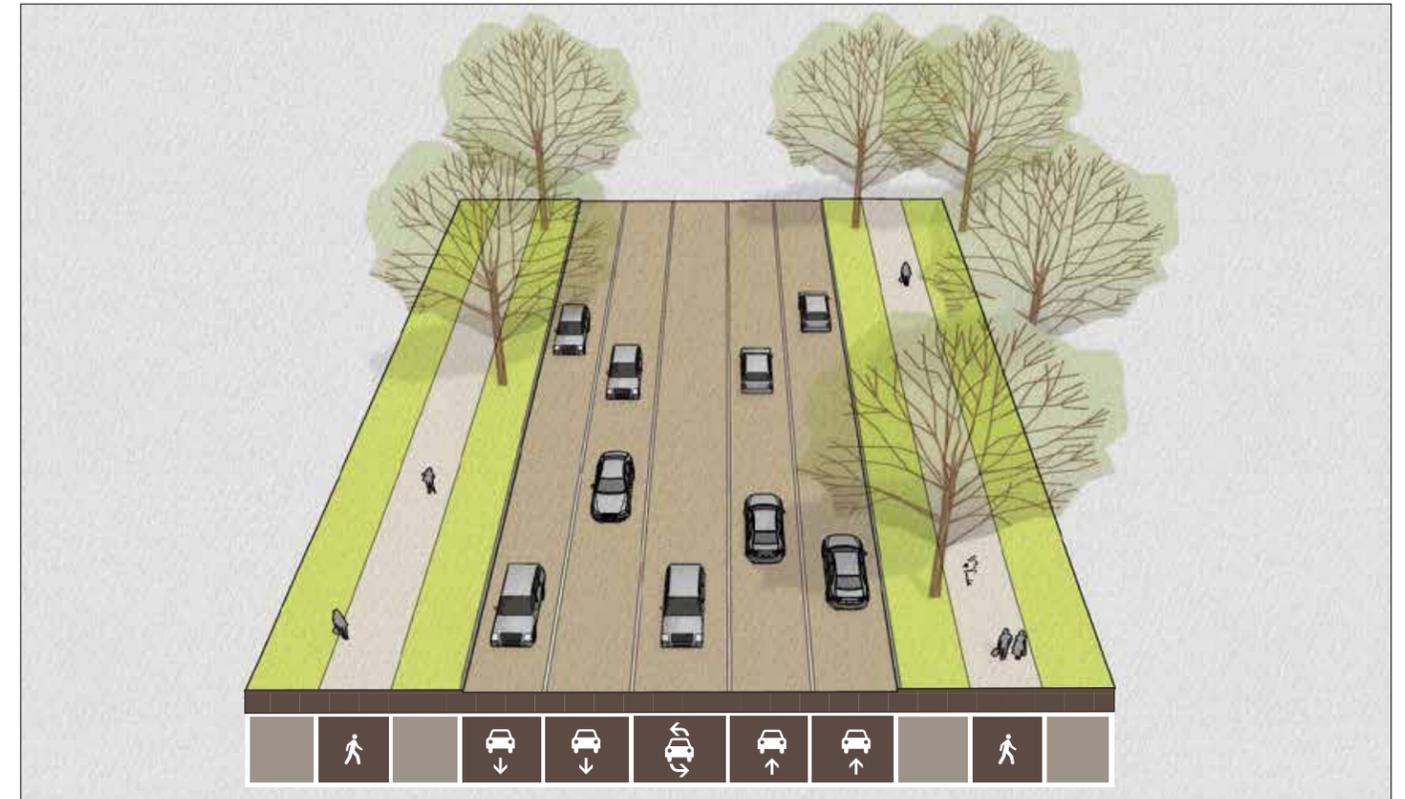


“21 Swings” interactive, musical swings in Montreal. Source: Dailytouslesjours.com, Olivier Blouin

By capturing additional width from the current Nine Mile Road right-of-way, this linear park can accommodate a larger multi-use path for biking and walking as well as have ample space for fun recreational activities. Swings for children and adults could be added to provide additional uses of the linear park. A diversity of plantings could add visual interest to users and public art could be interspersed inside the park.

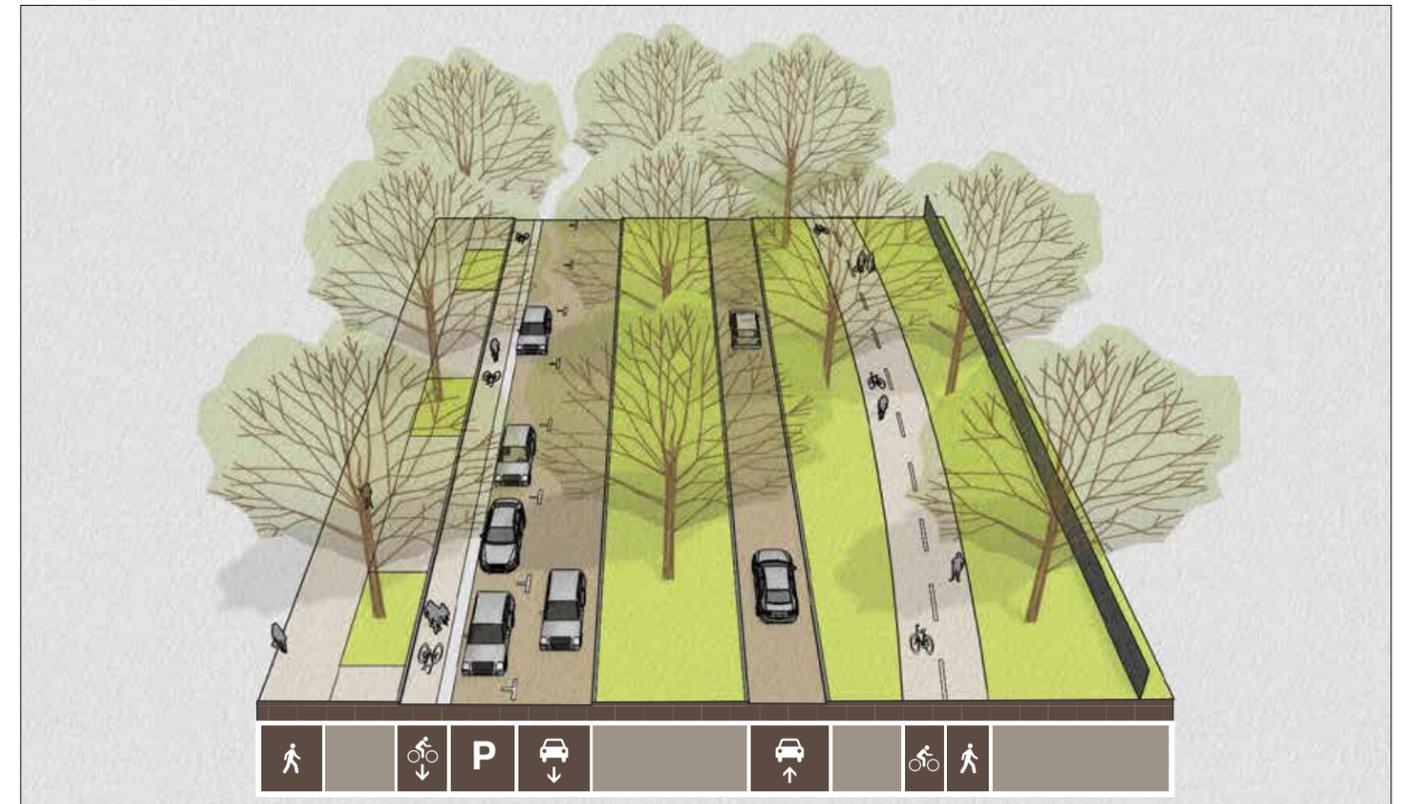
Many cities have successfully integrated linear parks and trails into urban neighborhoods. Cities have used linear parks and paths along rivers, as in San Antonio and Philadelphia, or along former rail lines, such as Atlanta’s Beltline or Chicago’s recently opened 606 trail. Other cities have successfully used linear parks to connect residential neighborhoods to commercial activity. In all cases, the parks became social and cultural, as well as physical, connectors.

With the use of a linear park, the east bound (south-side) buffered bike lane could occur within the linear park in the form of a multi-use path, freeing up room within the right-of-way for selected on-street parking on the north side and a planted center median (see right, “After View”).



BEFORE VIEW

AFTER VIEW



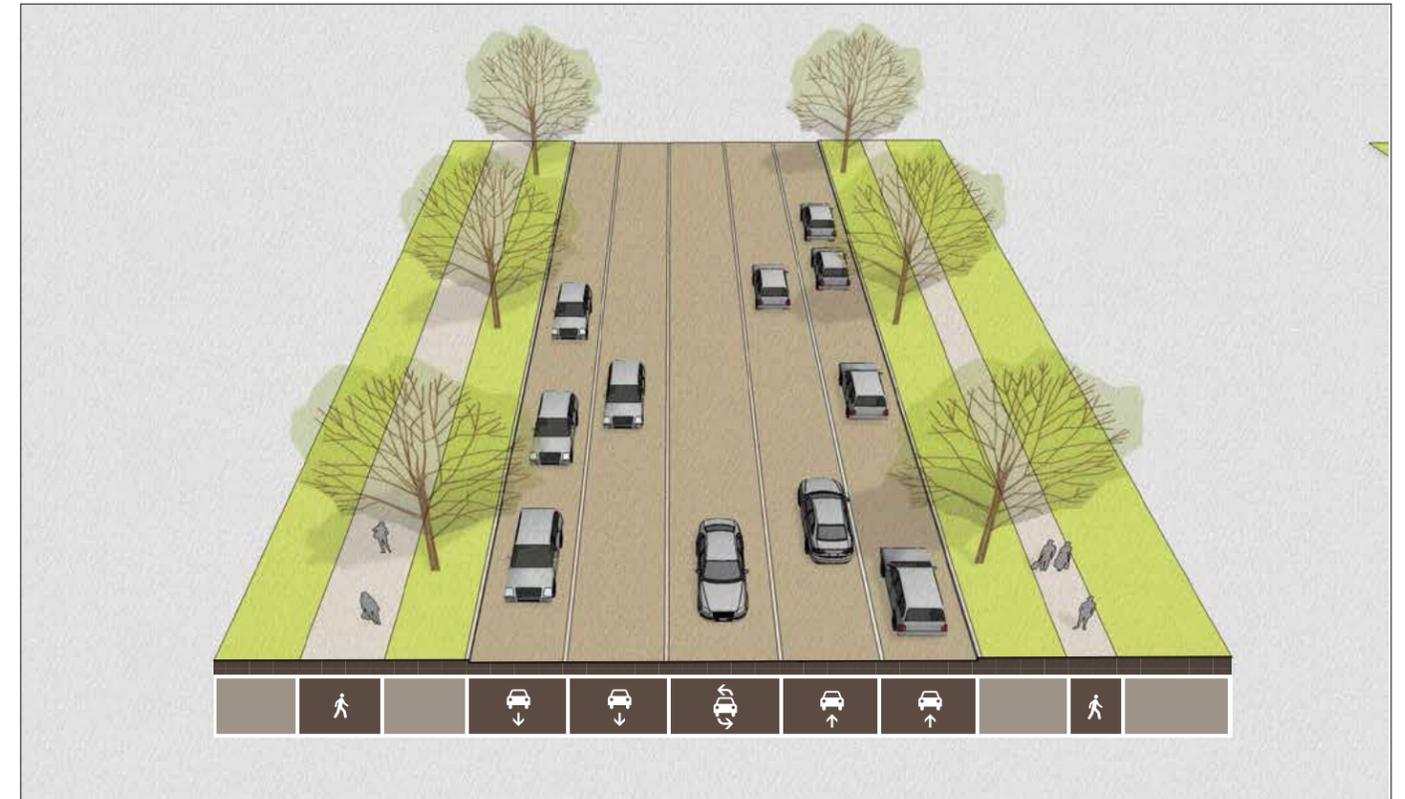
CHARACTER AREA 5

Between Rosewood & Central

Character Area 5 is characterized by one-story strip commercial buildings and multidwelling residential along the north and residences with driveway access along the south. We propose keeping on-street parking on both sides of Nine Mile Road to accommodate current and future customers of the adjacent businesses. The adjacent multi-dwelling units have no alley access and would benefit from on-street parking.

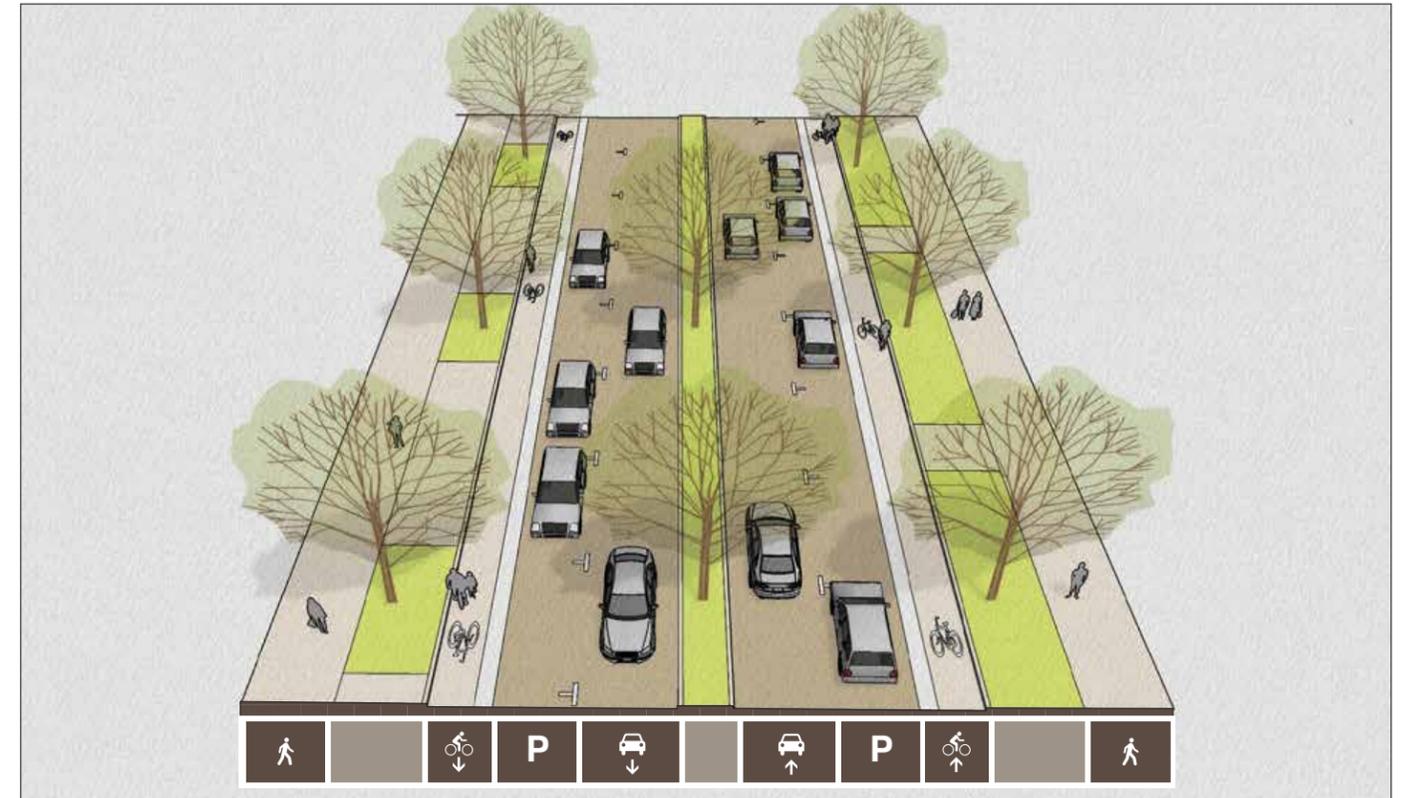
The plan continues the buffered bike lanes near the curb, buffered by the row of parked cars, which provide additional protection for cyclists on this stretch of Nine Mile Road (see right, "After View").

The City of Ferndale, adjacent to Oak Park, has shown that one-story commercial along Nine Mile Road can thrive. By investing the right street infrastructure, the City of Oak Park could have similar success with its existing commercial buildings.



BEFORE VIEW

AFTER VIEW





ACTION PLAN / IMPLEMENTATION

NEAR-TERM

These recommendations can be implemented within a 6 month time frame.

- › Seek funding, via Michigan’s TAP Grants or similar funding source, as was done in Ferndale, to help pay for these street improvements.
Responsibility:
- › Calculate the cost of the street improvements by soliciting a quote for improvement design/construction cost estimates.
Responsibility:
- › Use tactical urbanism to activate public space along Nine Mile Corridor, specifically in the linear park area, inviting temporary exhibits and sculpture works, with the hope that some art will find a permanent home with the completed redesign.
Responsibility:
- › Mark additional pedestrian crosswalks along Nine Mile Road.
Responsibility:
- › Reduce the posted speed limit from 45 mph to 35 mph and interconnect existing traffic signals for 35 mph traffic progression speed.
Responsibility:
- › Install bike racks at bus stop locations.
Responsibility:
- › Adopt ITE/CNU *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach* for arterial street design standards.
Responsibility:

MID-TERM

These recommendations should be implemented within one to three years.

- › Submit a public RFP seeking engineers and designers for the redesign of Nine Mile Road.
Responsibility:
- › Initiate Form-Based Code land use zoning initiative.
Responsibility:
- › Prepare right-of-way acquisition action to acquire vacant property on south side of Nine Mile Road midway between Geneva and Rensselaer Streets for a neighborhood pedestrian path connection.
Responsibility:
- › Initiate discussion with commercial property owner at northwest quadrant of Nine Mile Road and Coolidge Highway to begin planning new local street connection to Nine Mile Road.
Responsibility:
- › Implement bike lane implementation study for other city arterial streets.
Responsibility:

It is important to note that the recommendations herein are not contingent about State or Federal funding. If the City of Oak Park is committed to a walkable, bike-friendly, and vibrant Nine Mile Road, the city should proceed with the engineering and construction.

LONG-TERM

These long-term and policy recommendations will take time and due diligence to implement. It is wise to begin now, as implementation of these recommendations can serve as a catalyst to improve the whole of Oak Park.

- › Implement Form-Based Code land use zoning initiative.
Responsibility:
- › Consider the recommendations and lessons from Nine Mile Road redesign and apply to Coolidge and other streets in Oak Park
Responsibility:

CONCLUSION

The residents of Oak Park have a clear set of priorities for Nine Mile Road. They want more pedestrian walkways/amenities, improved bike infrastructure, and a “green” corridor. A well-designed Nine Mile Road that meets the needs and desires of residents can be accomplished. With strategic planning and investment from the City of Oak Park, Nine Mile Road will become a more active, vibrant corridor that is inviting to all modes of transportation.

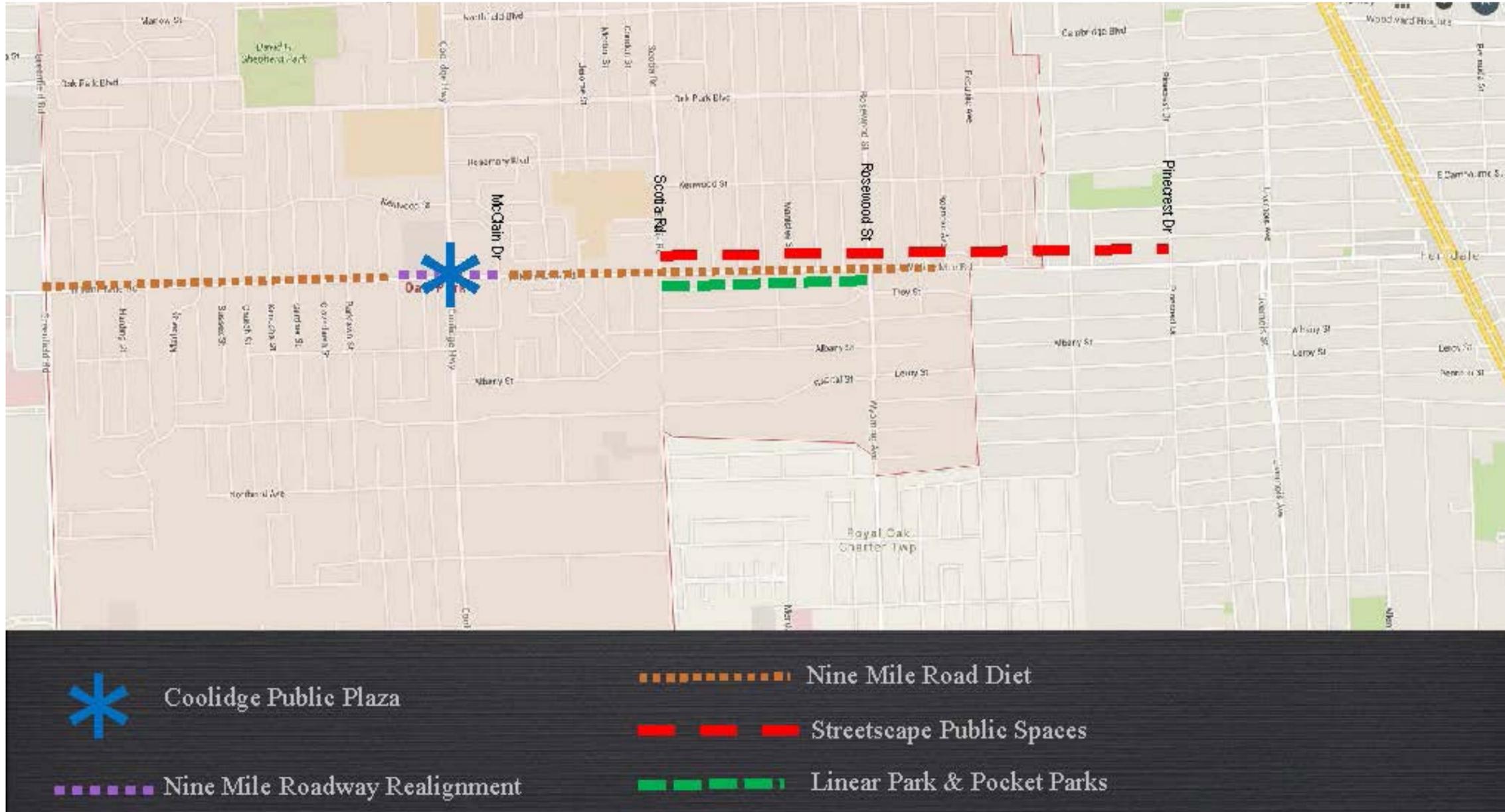
For the redesign to be successful, designs and trade-offs in this report need to be discussed and debated. There is not enough money or roadway to accommodate at the needs and desires of users at all times. And not every recommendation is appropriate for every one of the five character areas that comprise the corridor.

CNU

BUILDING PLACES PEOPLE LOVE

The Marquette Building
140 S. Dearborn Street
Suite 404
Chicago, IL 60603
312.551.7300 **tel**
312.346.3323 **fax**

cnuinfo@cnu.org
cnu.org



Meeting Recap

- Do not like the CNU plan recommendation for a median on Nine Mile Road
- Bike lane is preferred
- Maintain existing curb location when possible
- Re-striping of roadway is preferred
- On-street parking is preferred in commercial district

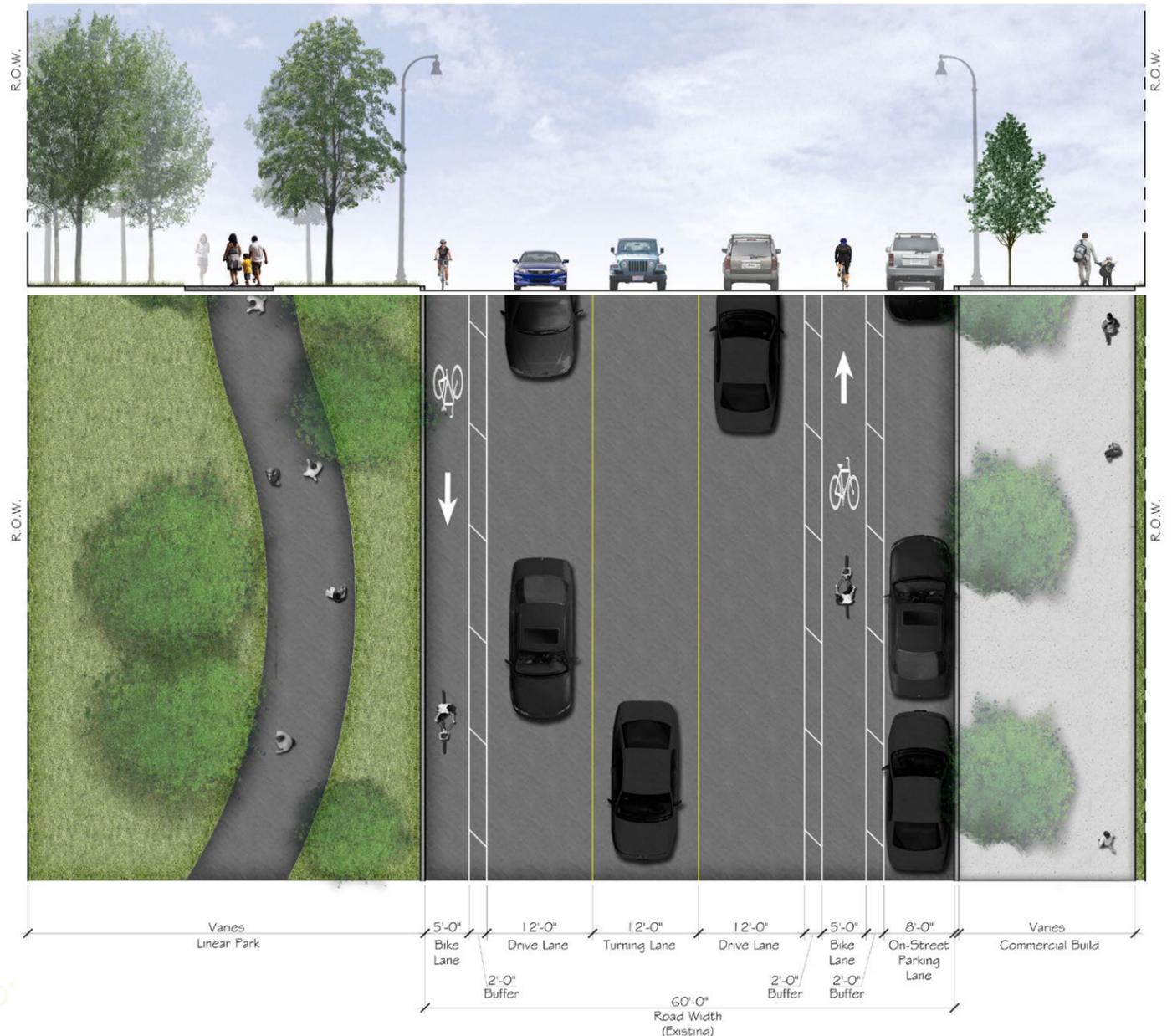
PROJECT OVERVIEW

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI



Legend

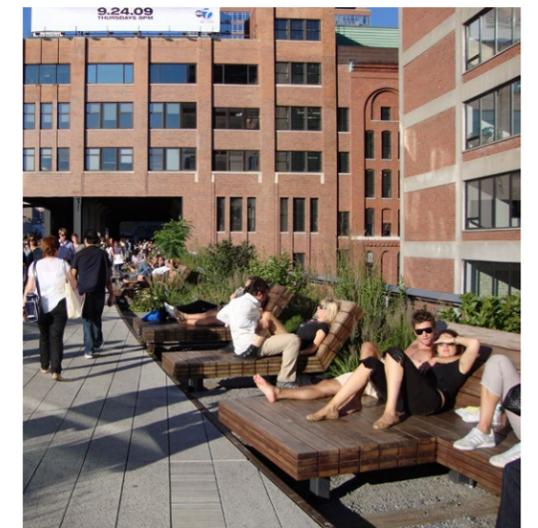
- Roadway Realignment & Roundabouts
- Road Diet Type 1 - No On-street Parking, Shifted Curb
- Road Diet Type 2 - On-Street Parking, Existing Curb Remains



ROAD DIET CONCEPT

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI





SELECTED IMAGES

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI



LINEAR PARK REFERENCE IMAGES



LINEAR PARK CONCEPT

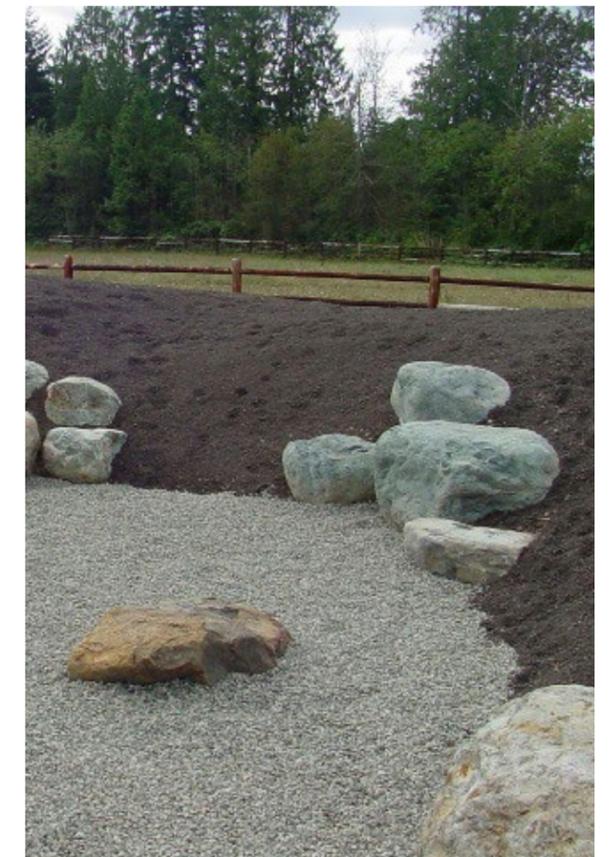
NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI



PASSIVE NODE LOCATIONS



PASSIVE NODE 1 - ARCHITECTURAL SEATING



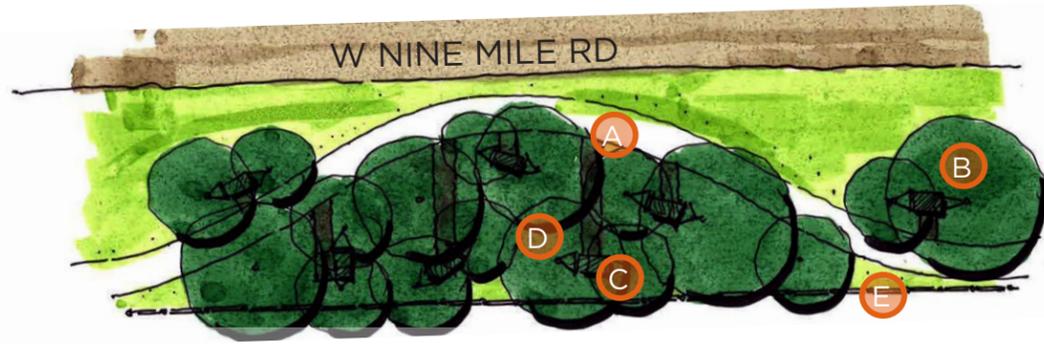
Legend

- A Boulders for Seating
- B Architectural Benches
- C Sloped Landscape - Flush with Top of Bench
- D Maintain Existing Plant Material
- E Decorative Gravel

LINEAR PARK PASSIVE NODES

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI

PASSIVE NODE 2 - HAMMOCK GROVE

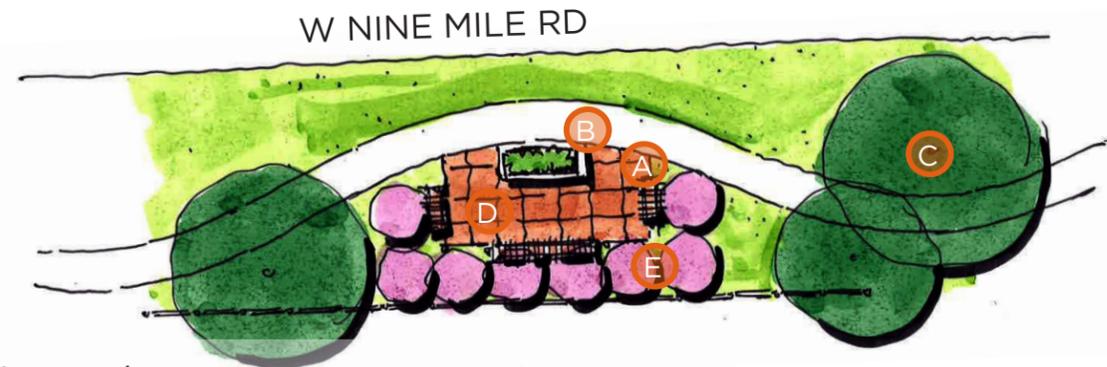


Legend

- A Decorative Hardscape Pathways to Hammocks
- B Maintain Existing Plant Material
- C Hammock
- D Tree Grove
- E Ornamental Fence



PASSIVE NODE 3 - SWING PLAZA



Legend

- A Swinging Bench
- B Raised Planter / Seat Wall
- C Maintain Existing Plant Material
- D Decorative Paving
- E Ornamental Trees

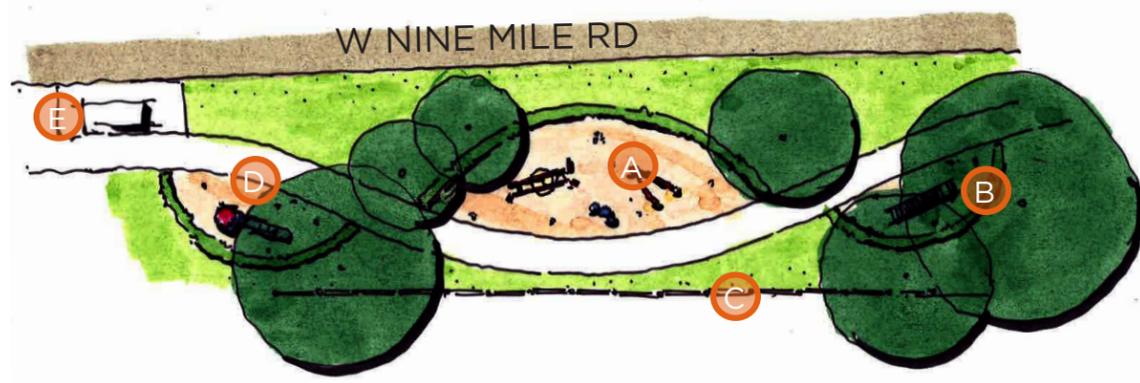


LINEAR PARK PASSIVE NODES

ACTIVE NODE LOCATIONS



ACTIVE NODE 1 - PLAY TRAIL



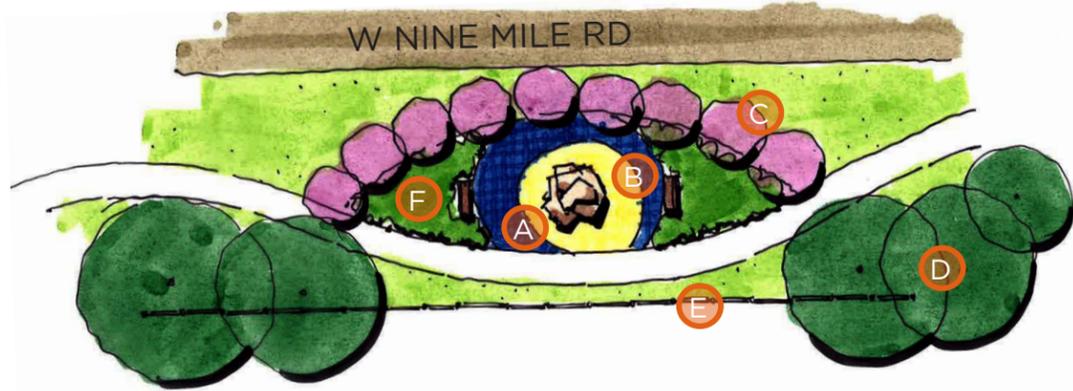
- Legend**
- A Small Playground Equipment
 - B Evergreen Hedge
 - C Decorative Fence
 - D 'Play Trail'
 - E Existing Bus Stop



LINEAR PARK ACTIVE NODES

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI

ACTIVE NODE 2 - BOULDER PLAYGROUND

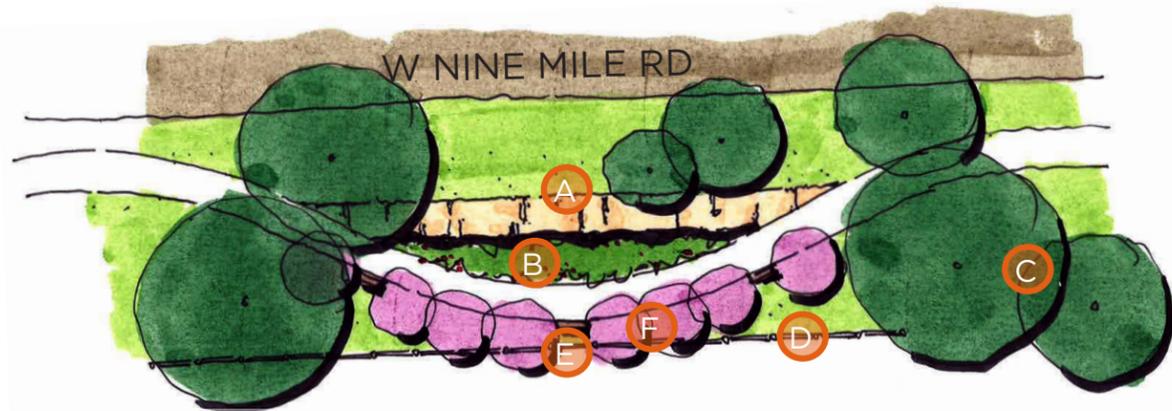


Legend

- A Climbing Boulder
- B Rubberized Play Surface
- C Ornamental Trees
- D Maintain Existing Plant Material
- E Decorative Fence
- F Low Maintenance Plantings



ACTIVE NODE 3 - BIKEWAY CHALLENGE



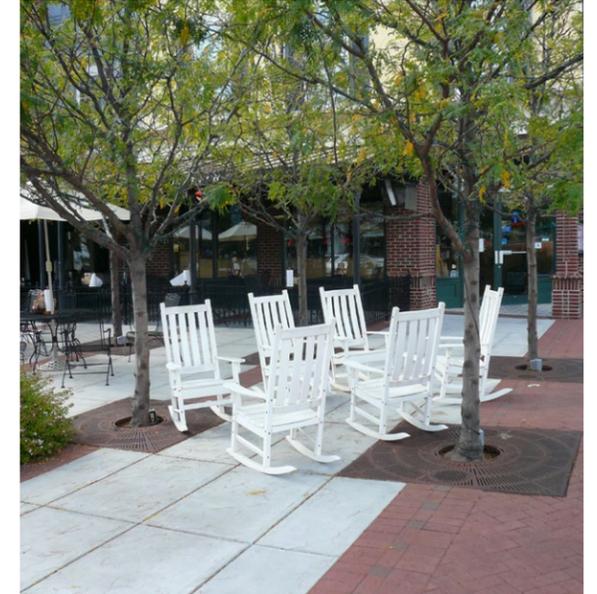
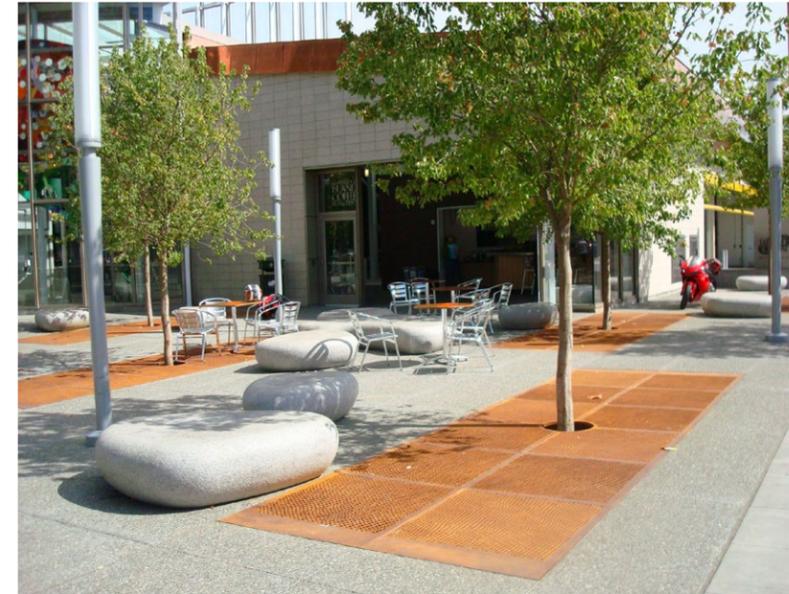
Legend

- A Undulating Bikeway Challenge
- B Low Maintenance Plantings
- C Preserve Existing Trees
- D Decorative Fence
- E Bench
- F Ornamental Trees



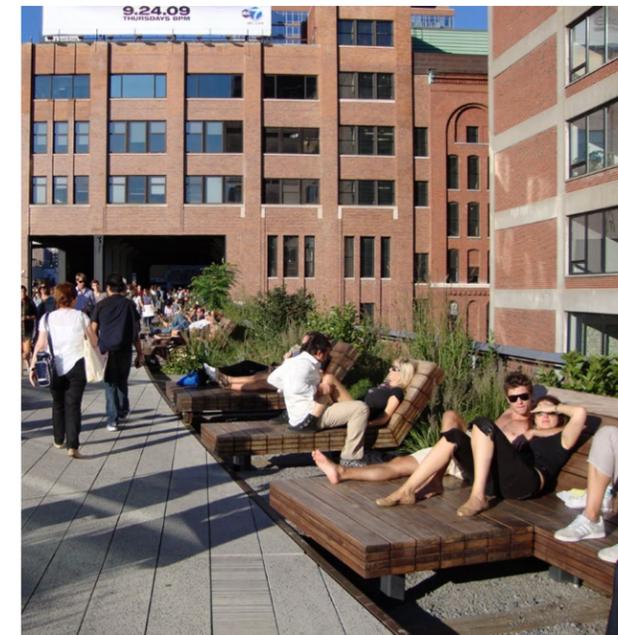
LINEAR PARK ACTIVE NODES

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI



Legend

- A Art
- B Preserved Existing Trees
- C Hammock (Typ. Of 3)
- D Stepping Stone Path
- E Bench (Typ. Of 2)
- F Elevated Seating Platforms
- G Informal Seating Nodes
- H Landscape Buffer
- I Lawn



LINEAR PARK - PASSIVE POCKET PARK A

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI



Legend

- A** Art
- B** Entry Planting
- C** Climbing Play Equipment
- D** Evergreen Hedge
- E** Playground Mulch
- F** Lawn
- G** Swings
- H** Ornamental Tree Buffer
- I** Benches & Trash cans



LINEAR PARK - ACTIVE POCKET PARK B

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI



TRAIL HEAD REFERENCE IMAGES - HILLIARD STATION PARK



LINEAR PARK CONNECTIONS

NINE MILE ROAD | OAK PARK, MI

