



MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

# Manchester Community Design Charrette

April 18-19, 2025



# Manchester Community Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Thank you to the individuals who donated their time, energy, and expertise for this charrette. Extra thanks to all the community members who shared their insights about Manchester.

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## Additional Thank Yous!

**The Palace Theatre**

**Diz's Cafe**

**Wrap City**

**Puritan Backroom  
Restaurant**

**Bridge Street Cafe**

**The DoubleTree Hotel**



# Who is Plan NH?

**Plan New Hampshire (Plan NH)**, is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989. Plan NH has a vision of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies, and the environment. To achieve that vision, Plan NH's mission is to foster excellence in planning, design and development of New Hampshire's built environment, because we believe that what we build, where we build, and how we build anything has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH champions principles and ideas that balance the built environment - including buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture - with:

- the needs of people, including where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, what they value;
- maintaining a “sense of place” of our towns, cities, and villages that make them unique, including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture, and farming;
- and protecting our air, water, flora, and fauna.

Among our signature programs is the Community Design Charrette Program, a participatory exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with New Hampshire communities to explore design ideas, usually around a village center or other significant neighborhood or community asset. Through recommendations made, Plan NH can demonstrate the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.





# What is a Charrette?

Simply stated, a charrette is a brief, intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this is usually related to a town center or other significant neighborhood in a community.

Plan NH's community design charrettes take place over the course of two days: eight hours on a Friday for listening and then another eight hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting thoughts to the community.

The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with each other and with local residents to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of discovery: discovering who the community is, what they value, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH charrette are general and overarching planning and design recommendations, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not dictate but suggests. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH charrette is described as a *vision*, or an expression of how things might be, based on what the team saw and heard and learned.



Sunapee, NH - Apr. 2024



Manchester, NH - July 2023



Brentwood, NH - May 2023



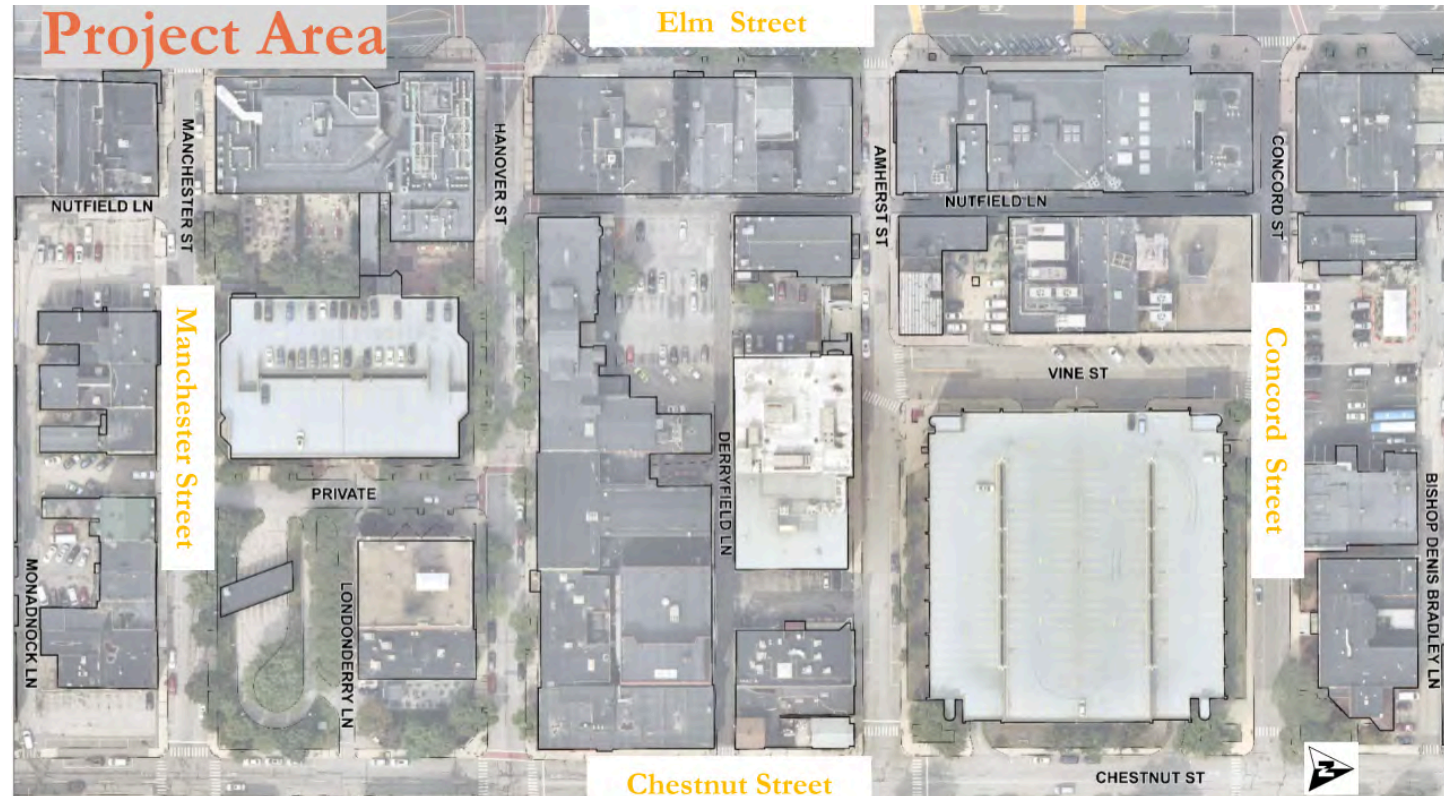
Temple, NH - Oct. 2022

*Charrettes blend the broad experience of planning and design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their own community to develop recommendations that address challenges and opportunities in the project at hand. These recommendations provide a framework within which more detailed solutions and plans of action can be developed.*

# Why Did Plan NH Come to Manchester?

The City of Manchester submitted an application to Plan NH in January 2025 to explore the Downtown area with a focus on the city blocks shown below. The primary objective for this charrette exercise was to create community-based solutions to invest in safety, opportunity, and consistency focused through the following areas:

*East-West Boundaries:*  
Chestnut St. and Elm St.  
*North-South Boundaries*  
Concord St. and  
Manchester St.



- 1 Explore opportunities to repair and enhance the street environment** to create a safer, more welcoming presence in the Downtown.
- 2 Develop connectivity and accessibility within the Downtown** to handle a growing and increasingly multi-modal population.
- 3 Utilize public arts and cultural connections** to reflect Manchester's history and strengthen community ties.
- 4 Understand the interrelationship between safe infrastructure, economic opportunity, and sense of place** to recognize and leverage underutilized histories and spaces.



# Site Tour Observations



## What the Plan NH team saw during our project area tour of Manchester:

- On Friday morning, we made several stops around downtown Manchester and the focused side streets.
- **Our first stop was Hanover Street.** Stepping outside the Spotlight Room onto Hanover Street, we observed the many local businesses, historical plaques, and artistic murals that make the area prosper.
- **From there, our charrette team walked toward Victory Parking Garage,** we noted challenges created by broken sidewalks that struggle to support larger groups and crowds as they return from the theatre and local businesses to their cars. The appearance of the garage, lack of trees, and the existing drainage areas contributed to a harsher pedestrian environment.
- **Next, we walked through the remaining side streets,** where we observed variations in sidewalk construction such as brick strips that can disrupt the eyes, and trip up feet, as broken bricks become hazards rather than homages to city history. However, we also noted the many murals, restaurants, and plaques that reinforce the culture and history of the Queen City.
- **Finally, we made our way back to Hanover Street,** noting the underutilized public areas and blank building faces that intersperse the project area. These areas were noted as great sources of potential to leverage for the charrette.

*Plan NH would like to thank our wonderful tour guides for our engaging and informative tour of Manchester!*

# What Manchester Told Plan NH

## What Plan NH Heard from Community Leaders

After the tour of the Downtown, the team met with key community leaders, including City administrators, Economic Development (MEDO) and Public Works (DPW) employees, local business owners, and key property owners. We learned about the challenges and opportunities from their perspectives as those who work in and serve the City of Manchester on a daily basis. Many of these challenges and findings are intertwined in terms of their causes and potential solutions.

### Safety and Accessibility

- Lighting – Need more to increase feeling of safety.
- Tripping on bricks – Bricks are ripped up in sidewalks which makes them hard to use for all users.
- Major activity and foot traffic from venues like The Palace and restaurants need to be accommodated.
- Speed of cars and motorcycles makes crossing streets unsafe.
- Traffic calming measures should be explored – Road Diet.
- More crosswalks that are easier to use and for drivers to see.
- Need better handicap access on streets.
- Trees are upheaving sidewalk panels creating more tripping hazards.
- Better wayfinding would be beneficial to visitors.

### Logistical Concerns

- Wiring additional lighting is hard to implement and has overloaded, utility concerns.
- Private impact and development on sidewalks create inconsistency of wear and materials.
- Seasonality – solutions need to function through the winter i.e., traffic calming vs. plows.
- Flexible road configuration for varying year-round needs (i.e., festivals, snow plowing).

### A Cohesive Downtown

- Consistent aesthetic for sidewalks and streetscape materials, add more bike racks, planters, benches.
- Utilize the potential of the Arts and Cultural District, Victory Garage.
- Create a sense of place that spreads beyond Hanover Street.





# What Manchester Residents Told Plan NH

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of Friday, April 18. The sessions served as an opportunity for the public to share their comments and ideas about the various challenges and opportunities throughout the project area. Plan NH's process encouraged participation and input from everyone in the room. The residents in attendance shared their opinions about how to improve the wonderful assets that the Manchester community already has. The vibrancy of the community and its residents was evident to the charrette team, and we were excited to explore the possibilities of what the future holds with them.

Throughout these input sessions, community members discussed (1) community strengths, (2) concerns/challenges, and (3) desired improvements. From the common themes, we distilled an overall vision.

## Overall Vision:

- Enhance multi-modal infrastructure of streets, design for greater walkability and pedestrian/bike access.
- Focus on consistent design, resilient materials, and better lighting to improve safety and street aesthetic.
- Make use of Manchester's history, culture, and arts communities that bring so much vibrancy to the City.





# What Manchester Residents Told Plan NH

*(Continued)*



## Current Conditions

- Broken down sidewalks and minimal lighting make Downtown feel unsafe.
- Transportation infrastructure feels more designed for cars than people.
- Public murals, Cat Alley, and street art add to charm.
- Growing population, restaurants, and entertainment draw visitors – major foot traffic.
- Inconsistency in aesthetic, sidewalk materials, level of investment.





# What Manchester Residents Told Plan NH

*(Continued)*

## Desired Improvements

### **Street Infrastructure and Safety:**

- Maintained sidewalks to accomodate large crowds without tripping people or forcing them off paths
- Improved lighting throughout the Downtown to feel safer at night.
- Complete Streets that are walkable, multi-modal, and encourage safe speeds.

### **Community Vibrancy and Art:**

- More public murals and art that showcase history and culture of Manchester.
- Creating a brand of consistent aesthetics and materials that represent the City to visitors and create cohesive feeling infrastructure.

### **Sense of Place and Investment:**

- Wayfinding, signage, and seating for visitors and residents to easily get around and enjoy public space.
- Take the feeling and investment of Hanover Street and bring through the rest of the Downtown.
- Flexibility of street and parking areas for multiple uses, community spaces.





# Recommendations

Based on what the Plan NH Charrette Team learned from our walking tour and the stakeholder and community listening sessions, we developed a series of custom recommendations meant to address the concerns we heard about the project area. These recommendations were presented in-person to the community on Saturday, April 19, and are included in more detail in this report.

The following is a list of the recommendations developed by the Charrette Team for potential ways to address the community's vision. More detail regarding each recommendation is provided on the following pages.

- 1. Streetscape Improvements**
- 2. Victory Garage Options**
- 3. Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration**
- 4. Traffic Calming Opportunities**
- 5. Arts and Cultural District Revitalization**
- 6. Leveraging Underutilized Spaces**
- 7. Zoning And Design Standard Opportunities**





HANOVER ST

ELM ST

MANCHESTER ST

PRIVATE LONDONDERRY LN

EXISTING

LN



# Streetscape Improvements - Manchester Street

The current sidewalks have been compromised by mature tree roots and are a mix of materials that have failed or are in disrepair. The street favors vehicles over pedestrians and does not employ traffic calming measures. The goal would be to reconstruct the streetscape, holding the current layout of lanes and parking with materials, pavement markings, and hardscape features that calm traffic and make the pedestrian the focus.

The plan at right shows the addition of bump outs, which could be flush changes in pavement or raised islands that help protect the pedestrians at crossings. Crossings could be marked by a change in pavement to visually reenforce that pedestrians are present. Street parking would remain but loading areas and no parking zones could be marked by a cobblestone pavement set flush, giving a sense of street narrowing to vehicular traffic.

The existing parking lots along the south side of the street that currently break up the linear street facade could be screened with the addition of metal sculptural panels or fencing. This would strengthen wayfinding and add visual interest.

We heard from participants that there is a lack of lighting along Manchester Street. The existing lighting should be supplemented with additional streetlights, building mounted lights that have been coordinated with property owners, and the addition of café lights that create a canopy spanning the street.





# Streetscape Improvements - Manchester Street

The existing trees should be assessed. It is recommended that they be replaced with trees that can withstand urban conditions using construction practices that allow for healthy growth. Trees should be planted on the north side of the street. Additional plantings that do not impede sight-distance should be added to the raised islands.

The eastern portion of Lot 201-0036, currently used as a drive-up ATM, is underutilized. The frontage on Manchester Street is a blank single-story wall and hedge that generates no activity. It is suggested that the City Economic Development team work with landowners to develop this lot to its potential.

The conceptual plan and illustrations show at grade parking along Londonderry Lane, with two or three floors of residential units above first floor restaurant and retail space. The southwest corner of the building is set up well for restaurant space with outdoor seating. Fronting both Manchester Street and the private access drive (Londonderry Lane), a new vibrant building would visually draw pedestrians up the street. Smaller retail shops would create additional energy.

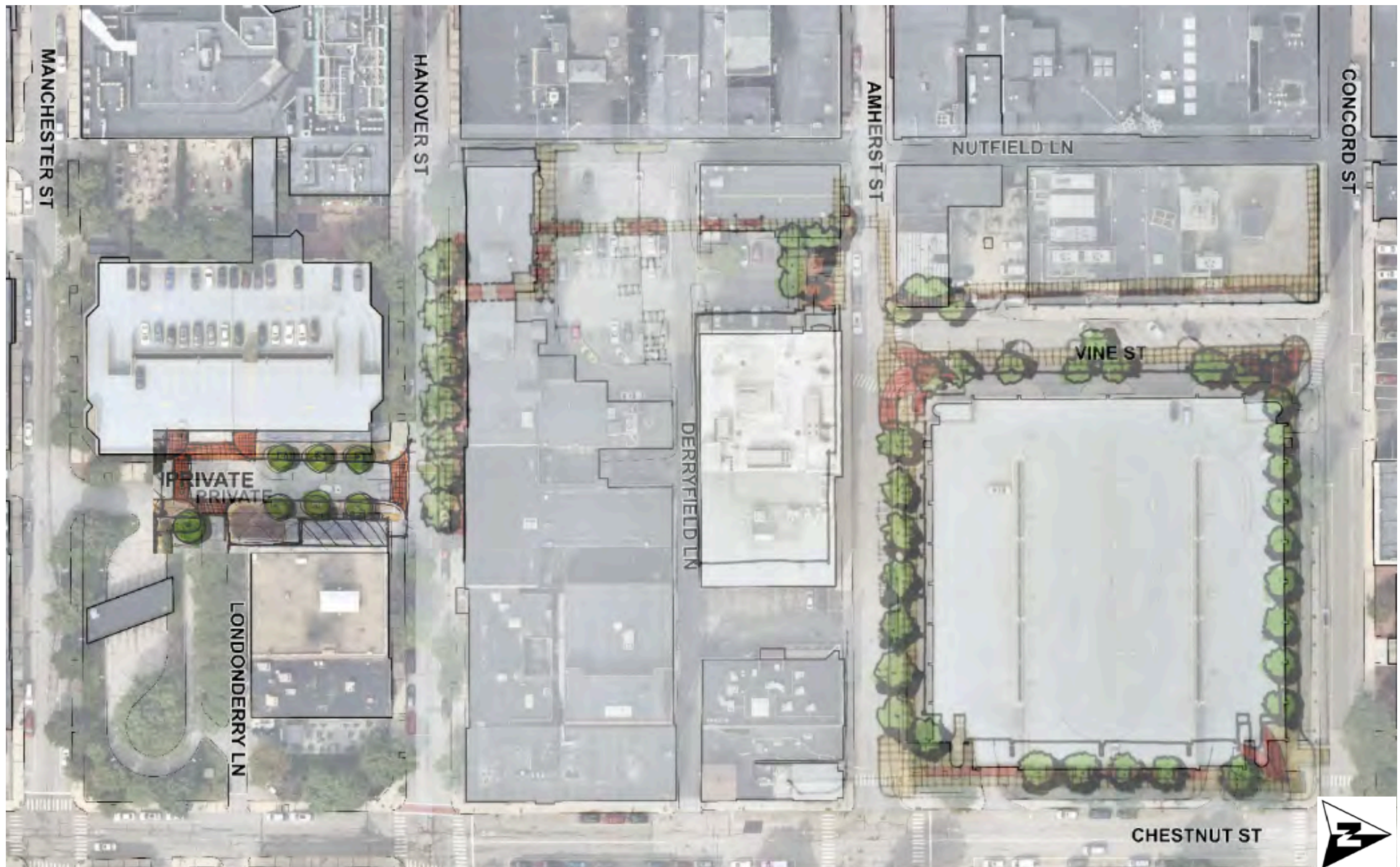
The private access drive that connects Hanover Street to Manchester Street should be enhanced with like pavement materials, additional pavement marking crossings and the addition of street trees where possible. Similar street lighting should be added.





# Streetscape Improvements - Overview Design Plan

Below is a design plan of proposed alternative walkways, landscaping, and infrastructure changes which are outlined in the following pages – you may wish to refer back to this page. This series of improvements is intended to **create cross-district pedestrian connections to support access to parking** – both for Victory Garage and other parking zones of the project area.



# Streetscape Improvements - Connectivity

**Victory Parking Garage** is a significant contributor to the economic viability of the project area. Within walking distance of Elm Street, the garage provides extensive parking availability, however, it is underutilized. Leveraging improvements to the garage has the potential to create ease, comfort, and attractiveness of connection to Elm Street and the adjacent blocks in a thriving cultural district between Manchester Street and Concord Street.

Under existing conditions, functional sidewalks connect to the garage from Elm Street and from Chestnut Street. However, residents and businesses defined those connections along the streets as being challenged by lack of illumination and lack of comfortable space on the sidewalks. One option of improved connectivity is to create an attractive, intermediate, walkable, and accessible route to bring people from the Victory Garage to the Theatre District and its restaurants and venues. The plan on this page demonstrates how this vision could be potentially choreographed with several segments:

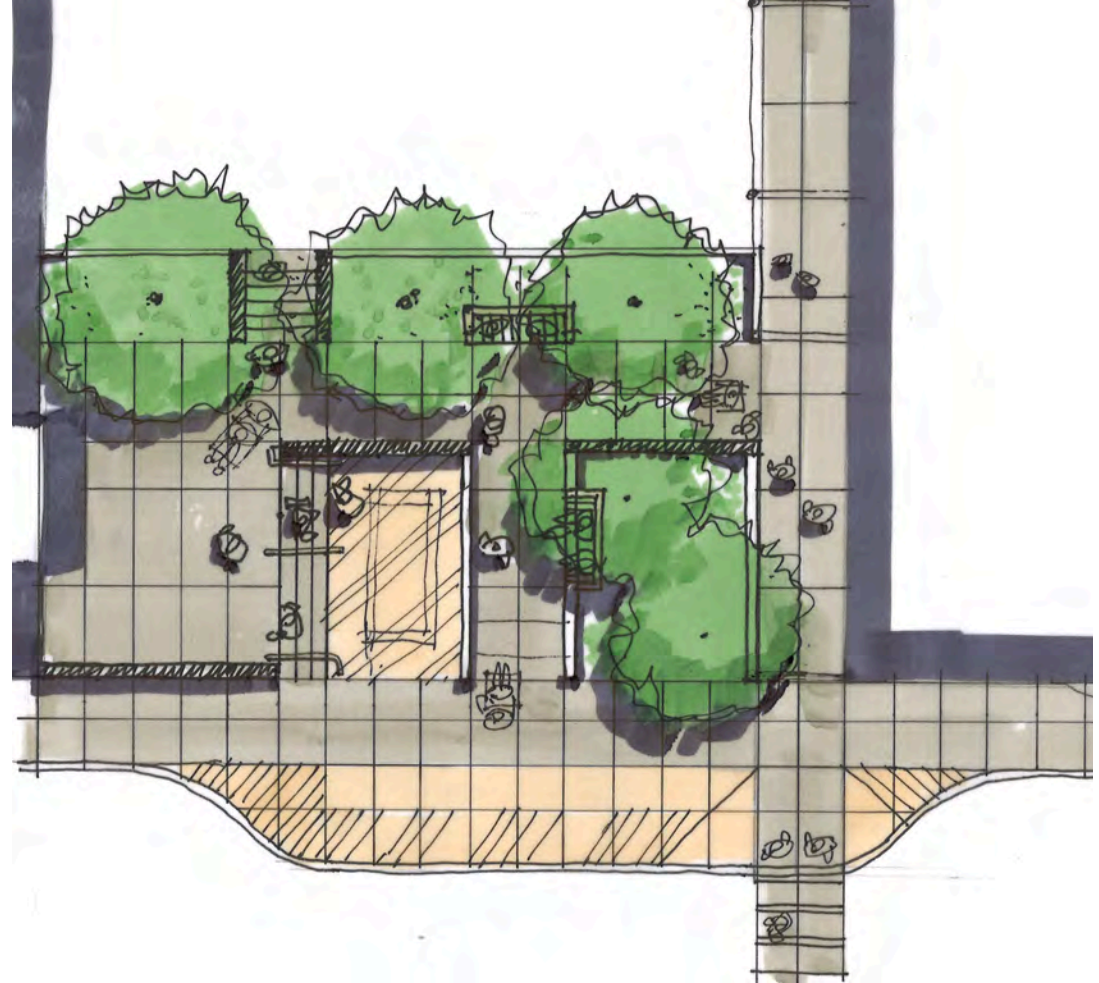
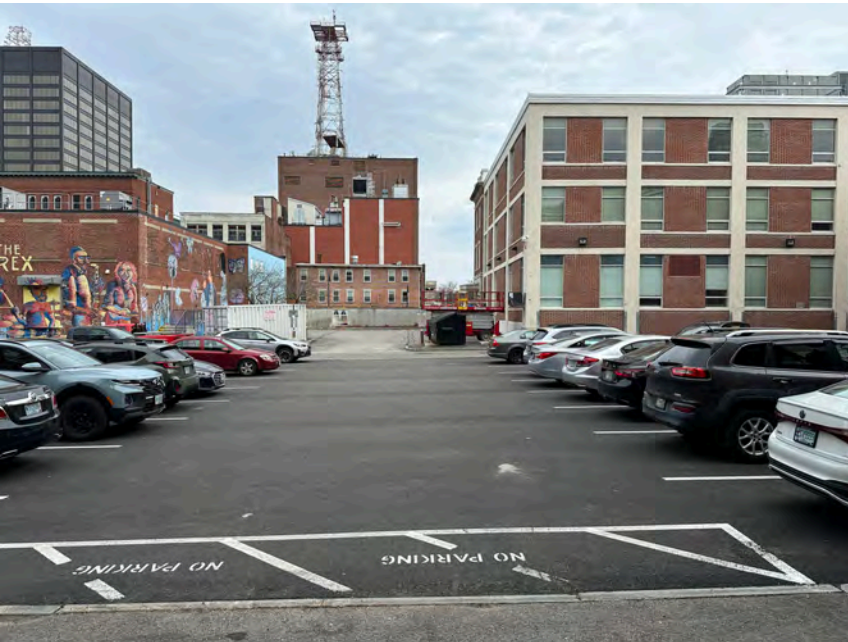
- From Manchester Street to Hanover Street, existing sidewalks along the Red Oak private parking garage could be enhanced for connectivity and attractiveness with landscaping, furniture, wayfinding, and other amenities.
- From Hanover Street, there is an arched opening through the Opera Block building into the back of the lot that is used for access to the parking areas. This opening could be an attractive pedestrian connection to the benefit of both the tenants of the building as well as the general public, moving through the area as customers and visitors. To accomplish this, option however, some striping modification of the parking layout to create a walkway for accessibility and wayfinding is proposed.



Connectivity Overview - Highlighted Paths and Walkways



# Streetscape Improvements - Connectivity



## Courthouse Entrance

The front entrance and streetscape of the Courthouse can be improved to function as both an entrance and a public space. Views in support of connectivity can be opened up and amenities such as street trees, improved pedestrian flow, and accessible routes to entry can be implemented.

See Revised Plan Above.



# Streetscape Improvements - Connectivity



## Parking Improvements

The crossing of the parking lot requires a cooperative city - private agreements for redesigned parking spaces and visual designs to present the new pedestrian way. Vertical elements such as a trellis-like structures, umbrellas or banners are all possible.

*Parking Lot Redesign (Left) and Parking Pavillion Design (Right)*



# Streetscape Improvements - Connectivity

The design plan looked at the parking area and proposed rotating 90° such that the delineation of realigned parking spaces still maintains the number of parking spaces from the existing lot. The reconfiguration allows a designated cross-parcel walking route. This vision has been demonstrated in the plan. The parking spaces rely in some cases on the use of the existing alleys for circulation parking adjacent to them. While this option would likely require city approval, this condition is a common occurrence throughout Manchester and may be a reasonable exception here.

Proceeding across the parking lot, the walking route approaches the accessibility route to the courthouse. The present condition of this area is one of imposing concrete walls that enclose an accessible wheelchair ramp. But the area is dark and uninhabitable – this area would benefit from lighting and other amenities for the cross-block connection.

A conceptual sketch has been prepared for the **courtyard area** to reconfigure the ramps and the steps. This redesign would make it a more enjoyable space for people to enjoy while maintaining a secure entranceway for the courthouse that allows for the security and safety of court attendees.



*A New Vision of Liberty Parking Garage and Crosswalks.*

# Streetscape Improvements - Connectivity

Enhanced sidewalks approaching the Victory Garage are defined when crossing Amherst Street; these also connect on Vine Street and Chestnut Street.

However, sidewalks on Amherst Street and Concord Street connect visually but are physically separated under present conditions to the adjacent Victory Park, which is a fantastic green space amenity for the city.

Reconfiguration of the sidewalks on Amherst Street and Concord Street approaching the garage and Chestnut Street would include realignment of reconstructed, widened, and better-lit sidewalks.

These have been adjusted to have a visual sight line to the walkways along the entire frontage of the park. This change would allow space for continuous street trees on either side of the Victory garage to make the area more comfortable and visually soften the brutalist concrete façade.

Vine Street also features enhancements to reorganize the on-street parking into parallel parking on alternating sides. This layout would slow traffic speeds and widen the pedestrian walkable areas on both sides of the street facing the garage, as well as the adjacent telephone company building.

Additionally, modifications to Chestnut Street in areas where there cannot be on-street parking could be redesigned to allow for additional street trees to complement Chestnut Street.



*Vine Street, Amherst Street, Chestnut Street Enhancements – Can Cross to Victory Park at Bottom*



# Streetscape Improvements - Connectivity

## Victory Park Walkways



Current Condition

Revision



Sight Line from Victory Park to the Garage Revised Walkways.



# Streetscape Improvements - Lighting

Second only to sidewalks, the quality of light throughout the city and through the project area was identified as a significant concern for residents and businesses. Based on observations of the lighting conditions Friday night of the Charette, the team identified several options for enhanced lighting solutions. There are two priorities to lighting: reducing darkness and decoration. These options can overlap, however, the focus of these recommendations remains on reducing darkness and improving safety in the area.

## Shining (and Glaring) Lights from Elm Street

There are tall light-emitting diode (LED) street lights up at a height of approximately 25 feet to illuminate the roadway. In general, these lights are intended to create an overall even level of visibility for both vehicles traveling on Elm Street, as well as pedestrians approaching crosswalks. Elm Street also has a more decorative, historical style of acorn-style street lighting. These tree lights appear to have been retrofitted to LED, perhaps from an earlier generation of lighting type.

These lights appear to be well-applied to Elm Street, but they could be brought to other side streets where **strategically placed additional illuminations would improve both the perceived and actual conditions of comfort and safety.**

In addition, we recommend **exploring different options for LED lighting that produce less glare** and are less visually obtrusive to passers-by using smoother lighting characteristics. Avoiding wiring and lights that may harm street trees should also be a priority. Involving a lighting designer in this process may create opportunities for retrofitting existing lighting sources.



*Standard Elm Street Light Pole*



*Historical Acorn-Style Elm Street Light Pole*



# Streetscape Improvements - Lighting

Present lights with frosted globes counterintuitively can reduce visibility by creating a **“light bomb”** where a large halo of upright illumination around each pole creates a dominant, blinding visual effect. When people transition their focus away from these lights, their eyes do not have the time to visually adapt to the reduction in light, creating greater perceived darkness.

This concept is important because it reorients demand for increased lighting to include **the perception of adequate lighting**, rather than purely the number of street lights.

To combine aesthetics and safety, new lighting installations throughout the district should consider ornamental poles that take better advantage of controlled illumination. Certain light poles, or even individual fixtures, could be retrofitted instead of the frosted globes.



*Higher performance LED lamps remove the globe and the resulting glare for dark sky compliance and still retain historic character.*



*An example of a pedestrian scale light along Elm Street, also used along the side streets.*



*An example of a fixture that could potentially accomplish this objective in stylish and compatible fashion.*

# Victory Garage Options - Leveraging Space

## Victory Garage - A Blank Canvas

In its current state, Victory Garage is an underused resource for the City. Visitors are unaware of its use as a public parking garage. Members of the public find it uninviting and potentially dangerous due to a lack of lighting and its grey, nondescript surface. To improve its image, Victory Garage can be used as a canvas to showcase aspects of the City while simultaneously becoming more welcoming and noticed by the public as a resource for visitors to engage with locally promoted events. Like the examples below, the exterior and interior walls of Victory Garage can be decorated with lights and murals that reflect the culture and vibrancy of the city. Banners could be hung to celebrate and raise awareness for Manchester events. These projects would serve to create a welcoming presence for Victory Garage and more clearly communicate its public use.



*Victory Garage, brimming with potential for public art, signage, and murals.*

*Examples of parking garage murals and event banners.*



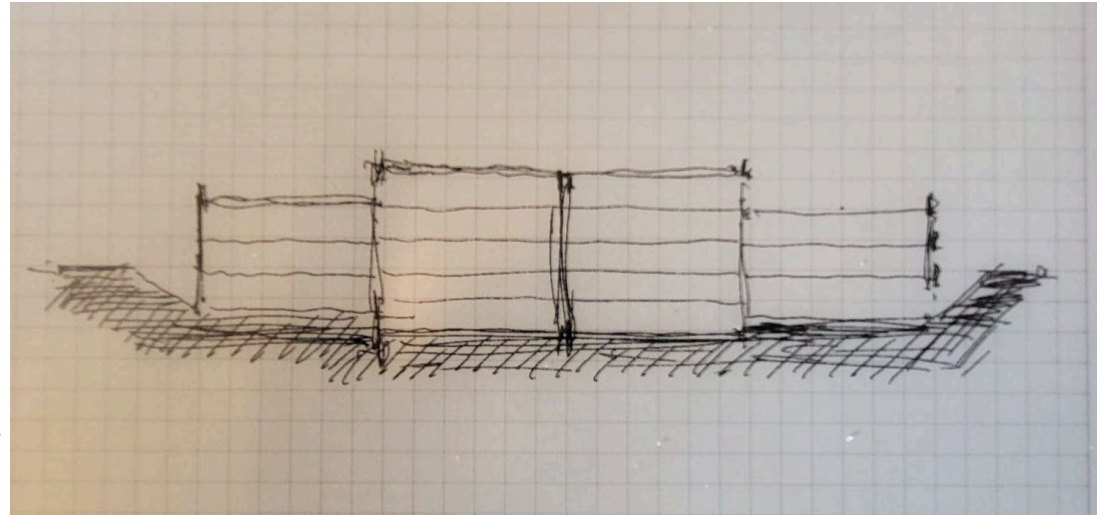


# Victory Garage Options - Sidewalk Expansion

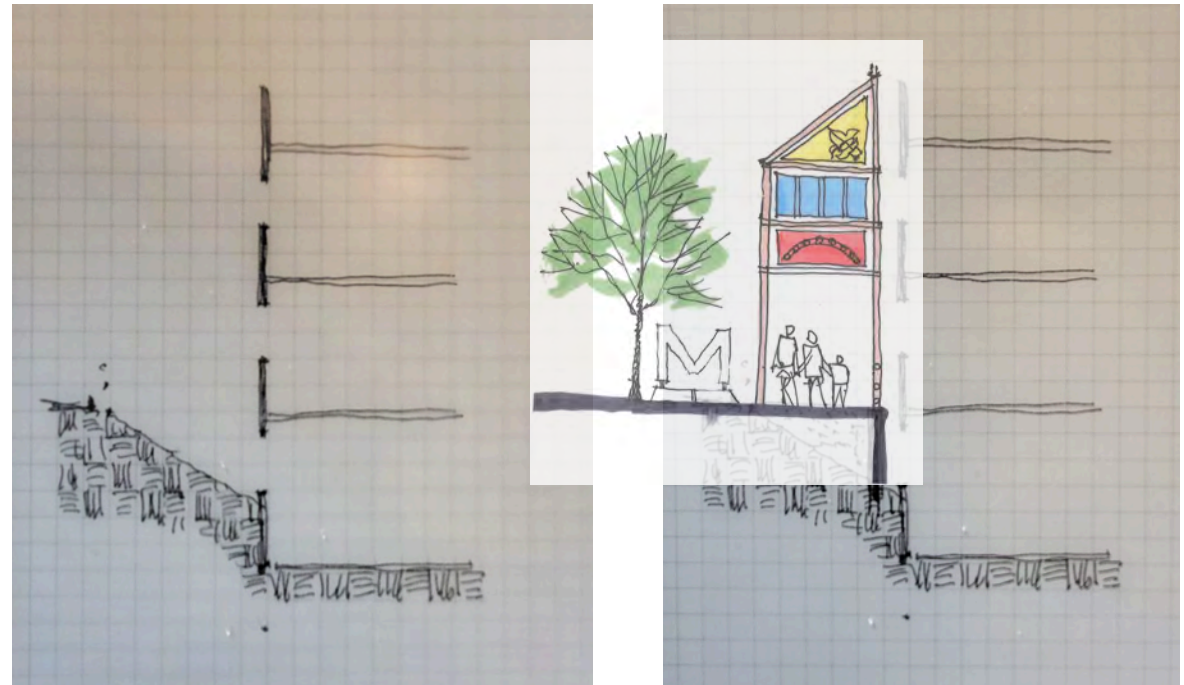
## Victory Garage - Creating More Public Space

When the restaurants close and the shows let out, the sidewalks around Victory Garage are filled with pedestrians that the infrastructure cannot handle. Limited space forces pedestrians to walk off the concrete, creating dead lines (paths) of grass. At the same time, space is wasted between the sidewalk edges and sloping ditches beside Victory Parking Garage.

This condition is both unsafe and does not leverage the potential to beautify this space beside the parking garage for the most pedestrian enjoyment. Infilling the area to expand the sidewalk would increase pedestrian safety and create potential with extra public space.



*Current cross-section of Victory Parking Garage.*



*Filling the grade around Victory Garage may provide a more inviting public space, which can be enhanced with streetscape amenities.*



# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Hanover Street

## Existing Sidewalk Usage



*Lightpoles, planters, street signage, and seating all reduce area for pedestrians to take advantage of the sidewalk.*

The existing sidewalks along Hanover Street are used by a combination of outdoor seating for restaurants, street trees, signage, and planters. These issues are common throughout the side streets of the Downtown. People love the vibrancy of the activity but the space is also congested. The team looked at ways to gain effective width for pedestrians and amenities.

The following pages are options for revisioning sidewalk and street useage for Hanover Street and Amherst Street, as well as more general alternatives that can be applied throughout the Downtown.



# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Hanover Street

## Flex Space Design



### Flex Space Design

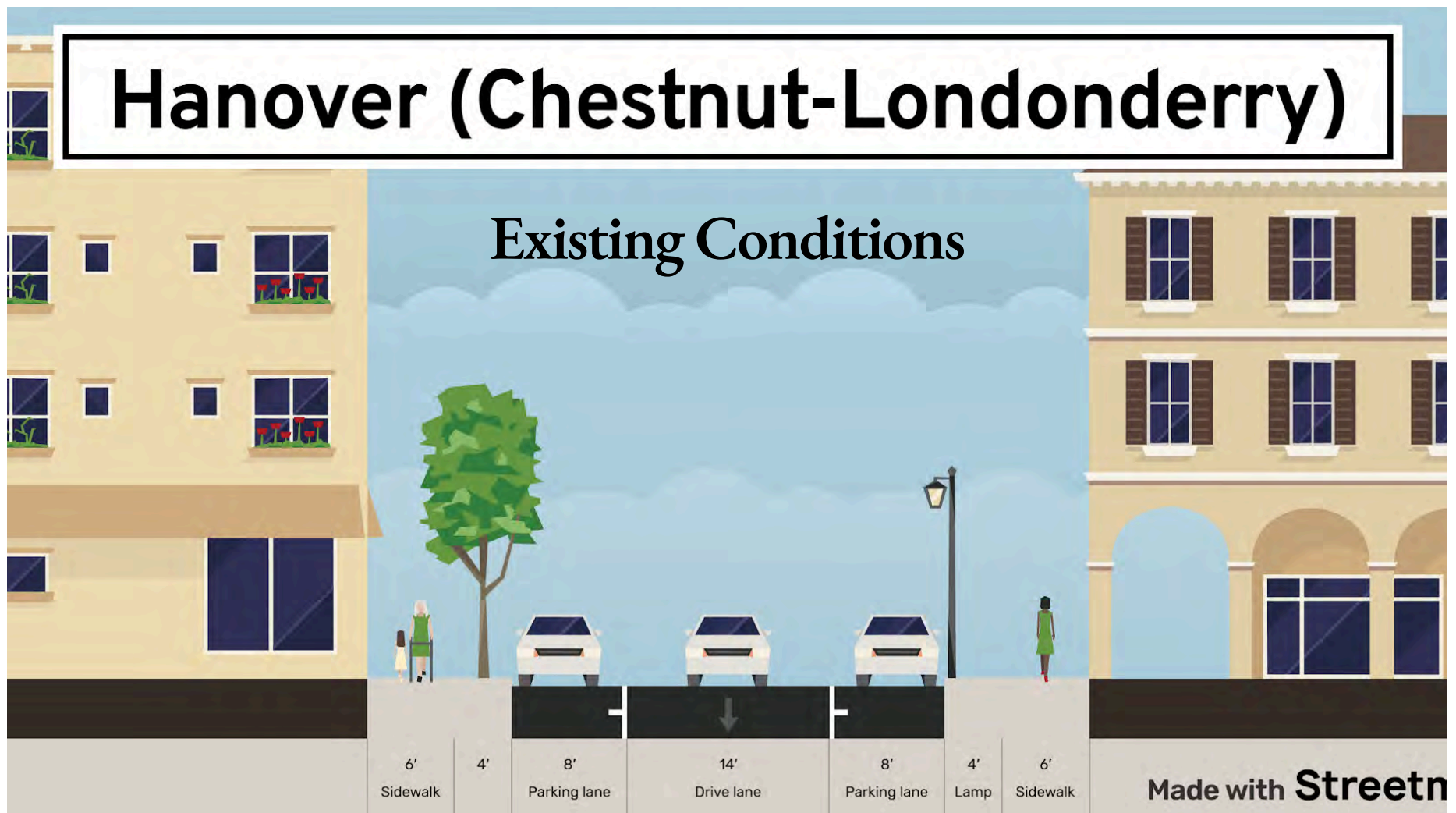
Existing Hanover Street has parking on both sides. While the team was cautious against removing on-street parking, we thought that a flex space could be developed as part of the streetscape to allow the northern side of the street parking to be taken from car use on weekends and summer weekday evenings for extended outdoor activities. See right partial sketch.

# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Hanover Street

## Existing Conditions:

Between Chestnut Street and Londonderry Lane (roadway leading to Red Oak parking garage), Hanover Street has approximately 50 feet of width (building face to building face).

- From north to south, there is approximately a 6-foot wide sidewalk, a 4-foot wide area for trees, an 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane, a 14-foot wide westbound travel lane, an 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane, a 4-foot wide area for street lights, and a 6-foot wide sidewalk.
- Effective width of the sidewalks is reduced due to planters, light poles, mailboxes, signs, and outdoor seating.



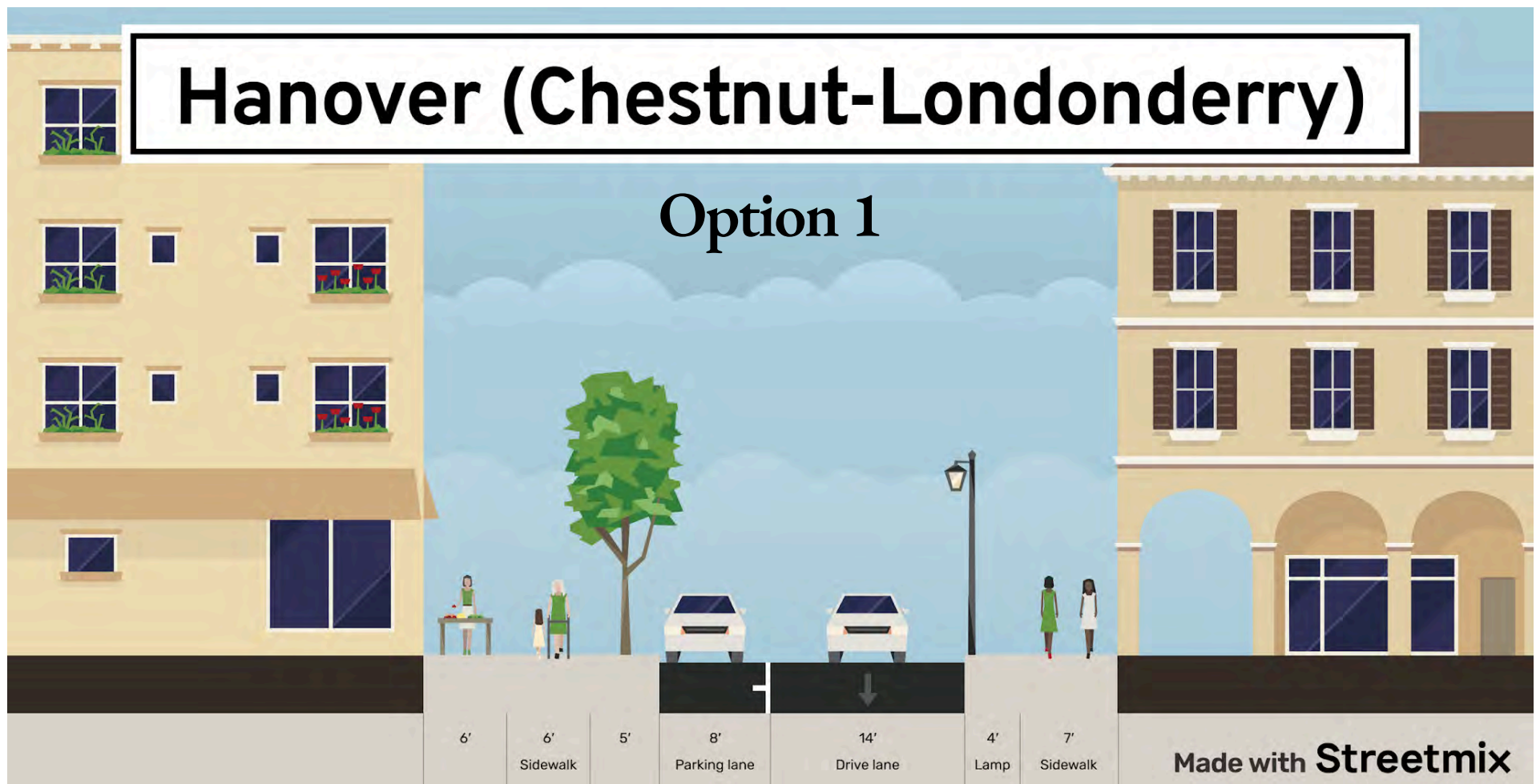


# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Hanover Street

## Option 1 (This option can also be considered for Manchester Street):

From north to south, consider providing a 6-foot wide outdoor seating area, a 6-foot wide sidewalk, a 5-foot wide area for trees, an 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane, a 14-foot wide westbound travel lane, a 4-foot wide area for street lights, and a 7-foot wide sidewalk.

- To achieve this option, the existing 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane on the south side would be removed.
- Provide bump-outs (curb ramp extensions) at the existing crosswalks across Hanover Street to provide more visibility between Hanover Street vehicles and pedestrians.

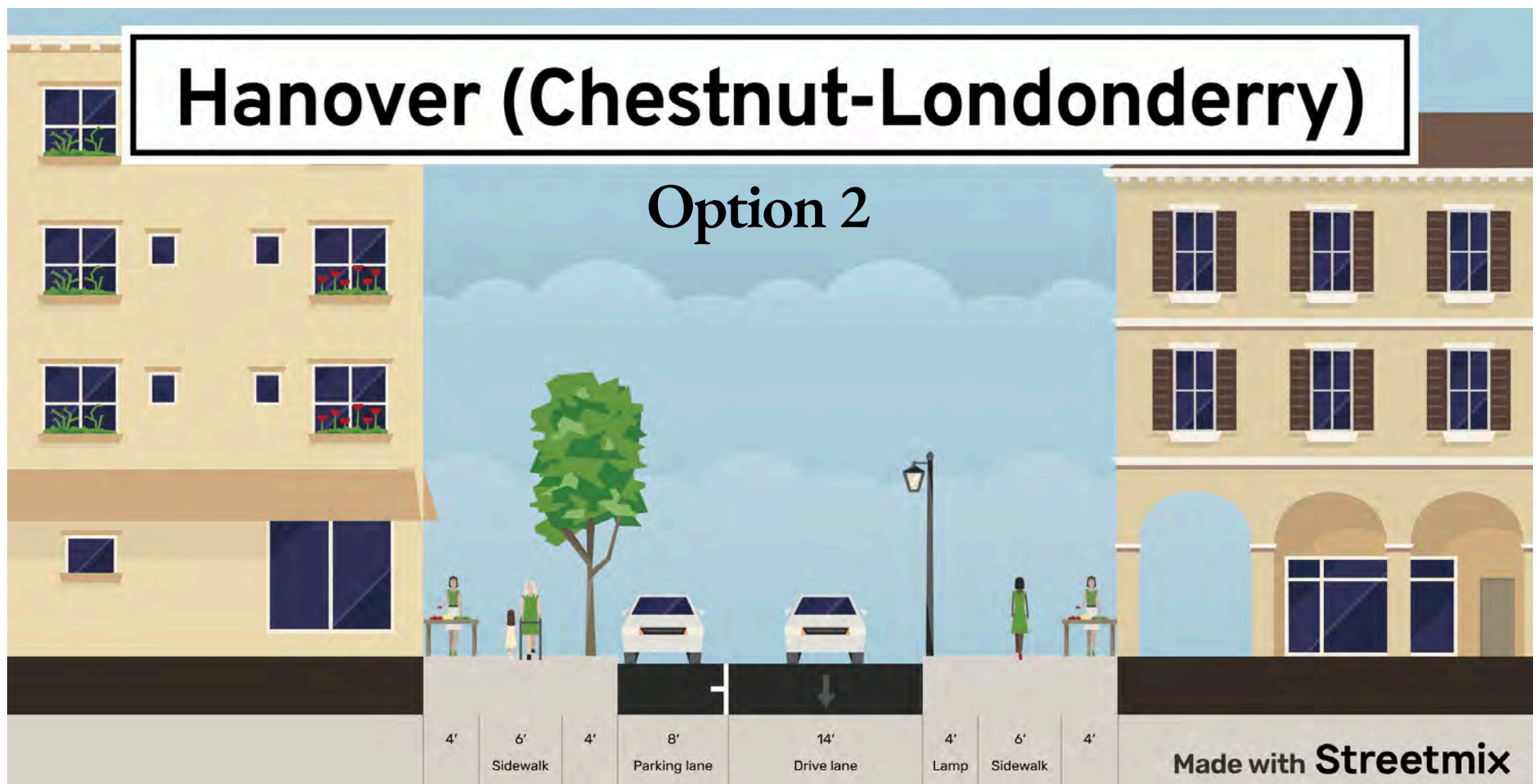


# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Hanover Street

## Option 2 (This option can also be considered for Manchester Street):

From north to south, consider providing a 4-foot wide outdoor seating area, a 6-foot wide sidewalk, a 4-foot wide area for trees, an 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane, a 14-foot wide westbound travel lane, a 4-foot wide area for street lights, a 6-foot wide sidewalk, and a 4-foot wide outdoor seating area.

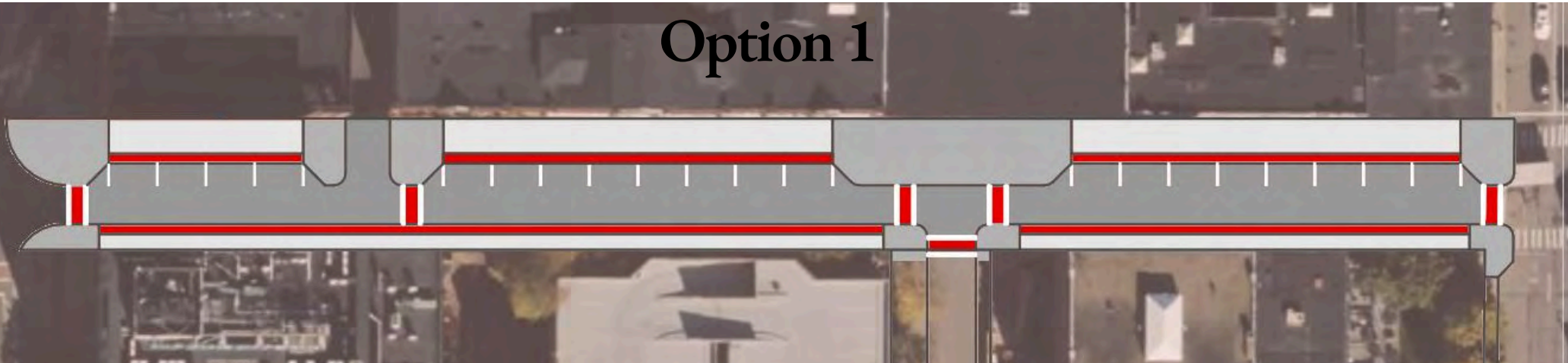
- Similar to Option 1, this alternative would be achieved by removing the existing 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane on the south side.
- Similar to Option 1, provide bump-outs (curb ramp extensions) at the existing crosswalks across Hanover Street to provide more visibility while also calming traffic between Hanover Street vehicles and pedestrians.



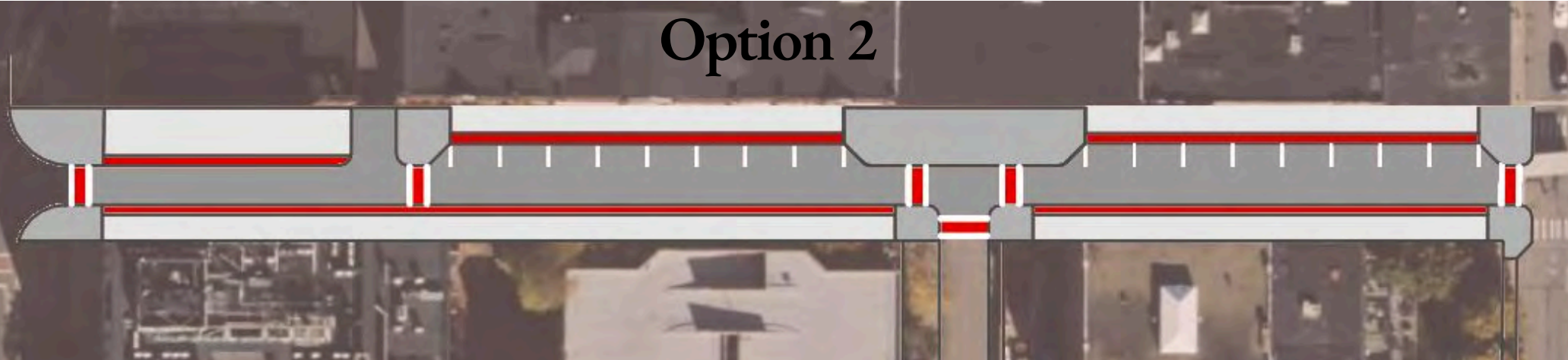


# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Hanover Street Option Overhead Diagrams

Option 1



Option 2





# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration

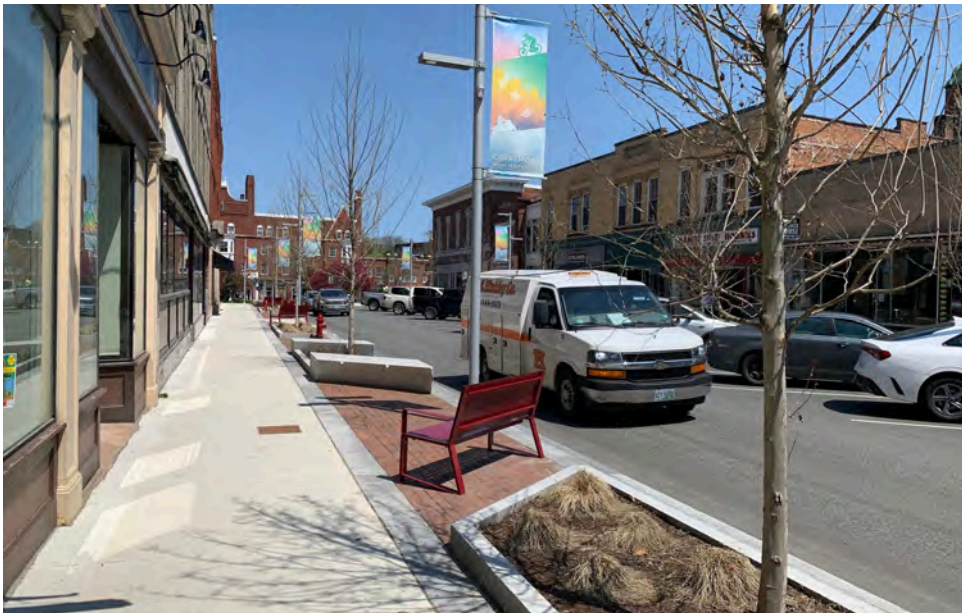
## Recommendations

### Examples

Expanding sidewalk space creates opportunities for more outdoor seating, dining, landscaping, and lighting which can create more attractive gathering spaces, especially at curbed bumpouts for crosswalks. However, relocating curblines, roadway drainage, and constructing wider sidewalks can be costly. **Using removable elements** such as concrete barriers or large planters can create the same pedestrian space at a much lower cost. Temporary measures can be removed during the winter months when outdoor dining and gathering are less likely and on-street parking can be returned when people want to park closer to their destinations.



*Temporary Parking Lane Conversion - Portsmouth, NH*



*Pleasant Street - Claremont, NH*



*Crosswalk Bumpout - Pleasant Street - Claremont, NH*

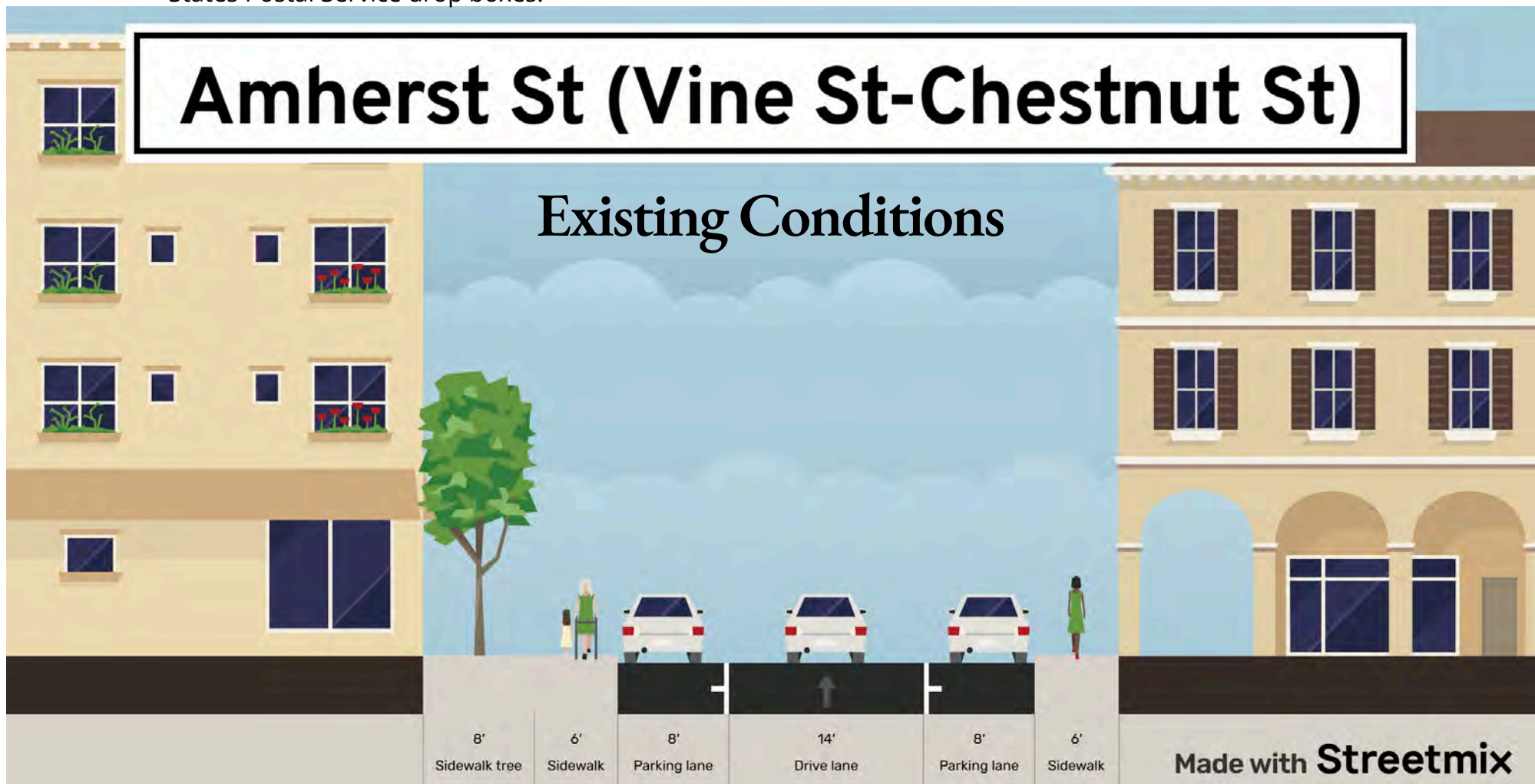


# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Amherst Street

## Existing Conditions:

Between Chestnut Street and Vine Street, Amherst Street has approximately 50 feet of width.

- From north to south (Victory Parking Garage to Manchester Courthouse), there is approximately an 8-foot wide area for trees, a 6-foot wide sidewalk, an 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane, a 14-foot wide eastbound travel lane, an 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane, and a 6-foot wide sidewalk.
- The effective width of the sidewalks is reduced due to signs, light poles, fire hydrants, parking meters, and United States Postal Service drop boxes.

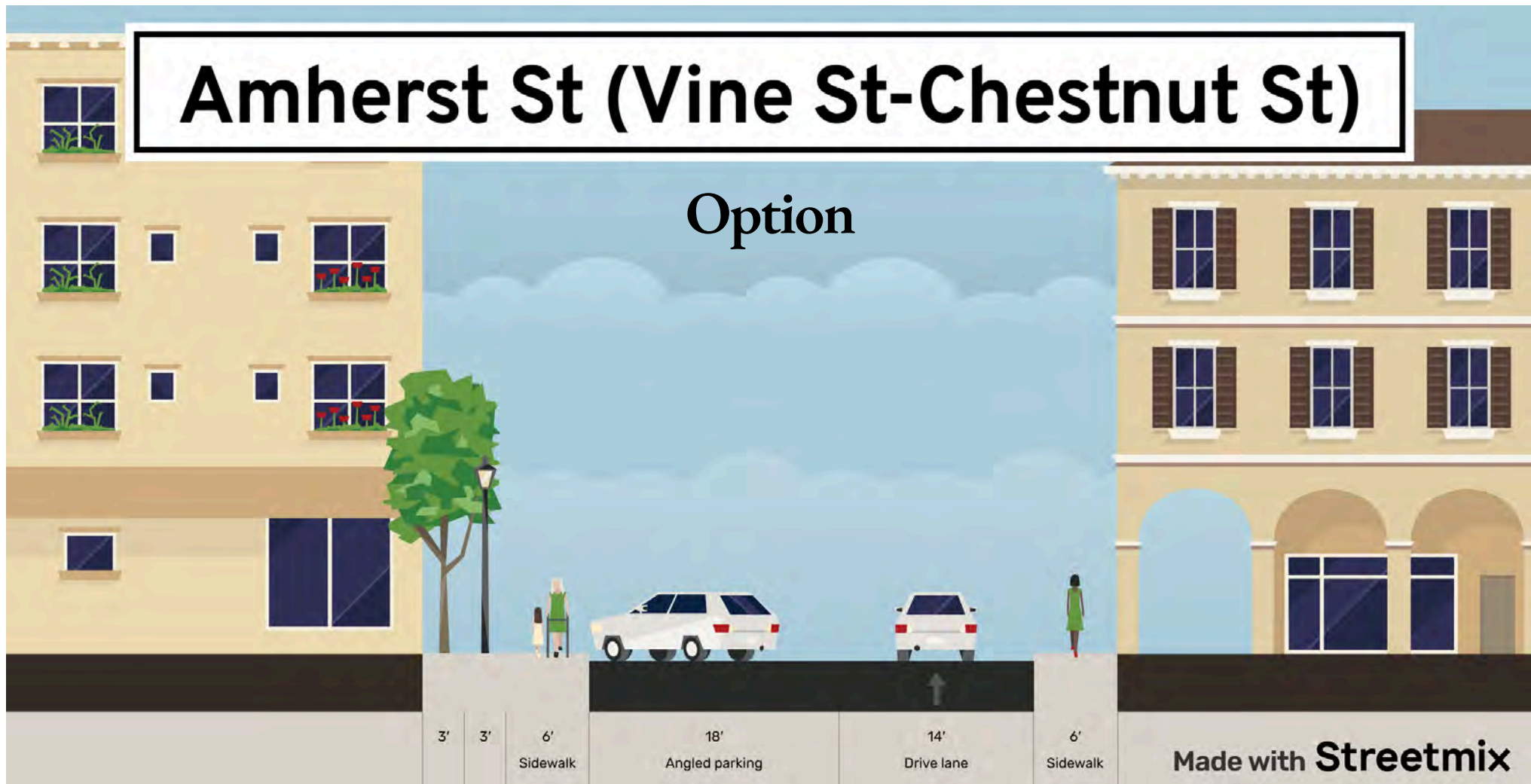


# Street/Sidewalk Reconfiguration - Amherst Street

## Option (This option can also be considered for Concord Street):

From north to south, consider providing a 3- to 4- foot wide area for trees, a 3-foot area for street lights, a 6-foot wide sidewalk, 18-foot wide angled parking spaces, a 14-foot wide eastbound travel lane, and a 6-foot wide sidewalk.

- For this option, the existing 8-foot wide on-street parallel parking lane on the south side would be removed.
- Alternatively, the on-street parallel parking lane on the north side could be removed and 18-foot wide angled parking spaces could be located along the south side of the roadway.



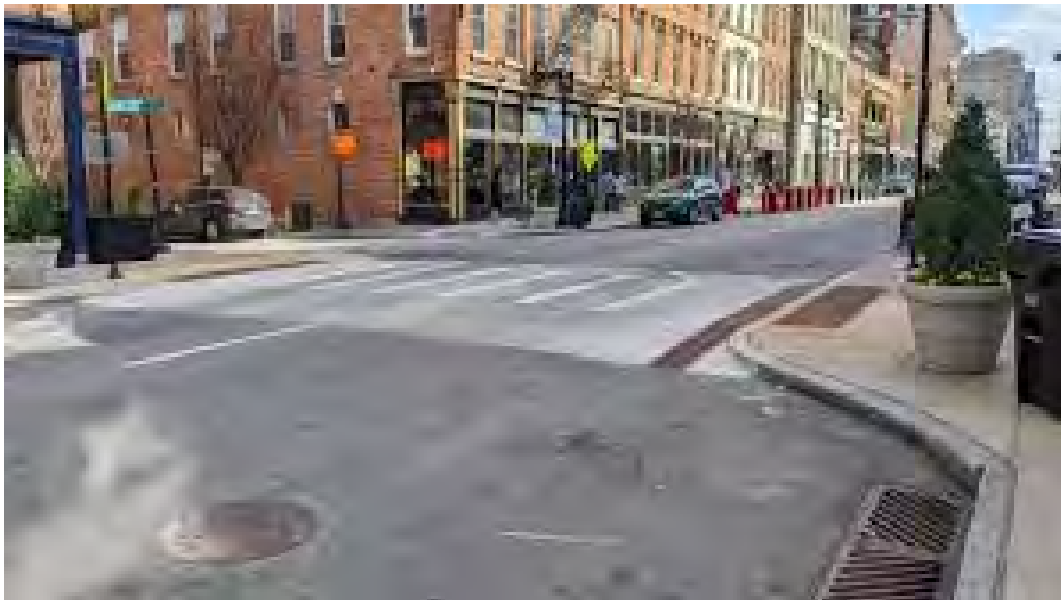


# Traffic Calming - Opportunities

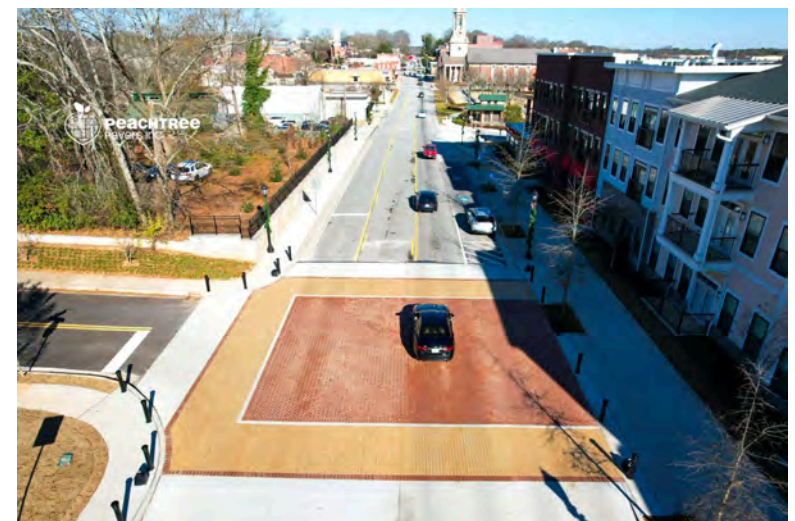
Reducing speeds and increasing pedestrian safety were major concerns for all project area streets. In order to safely cross streets, pedestrians need to see and be seen by passing vehicles. **This safety measure can be accomplished by reducing the size of the roadway and increasing visibility of crosswalks.** Bumpouts physically narrow the roadway to encourage vehicles to slow down and take note of street features like crosswalks. Street trees can achieve the same effect by supporting the illusion of a narrowed roadway – with the added benefit of improving the visual appeal of the streetscape with greenery and shade. Raising crosswalks to act as speed tables will also incentivize drivers to reduce their speed. Visually marking crosswalks and major pedestrian intersections with paint, changes in material, or other symbols can also signal to a driver that this is an area to be on the lookout for pedestrians.



*Example of trees “narrowing” the roadway to reduce speed.*



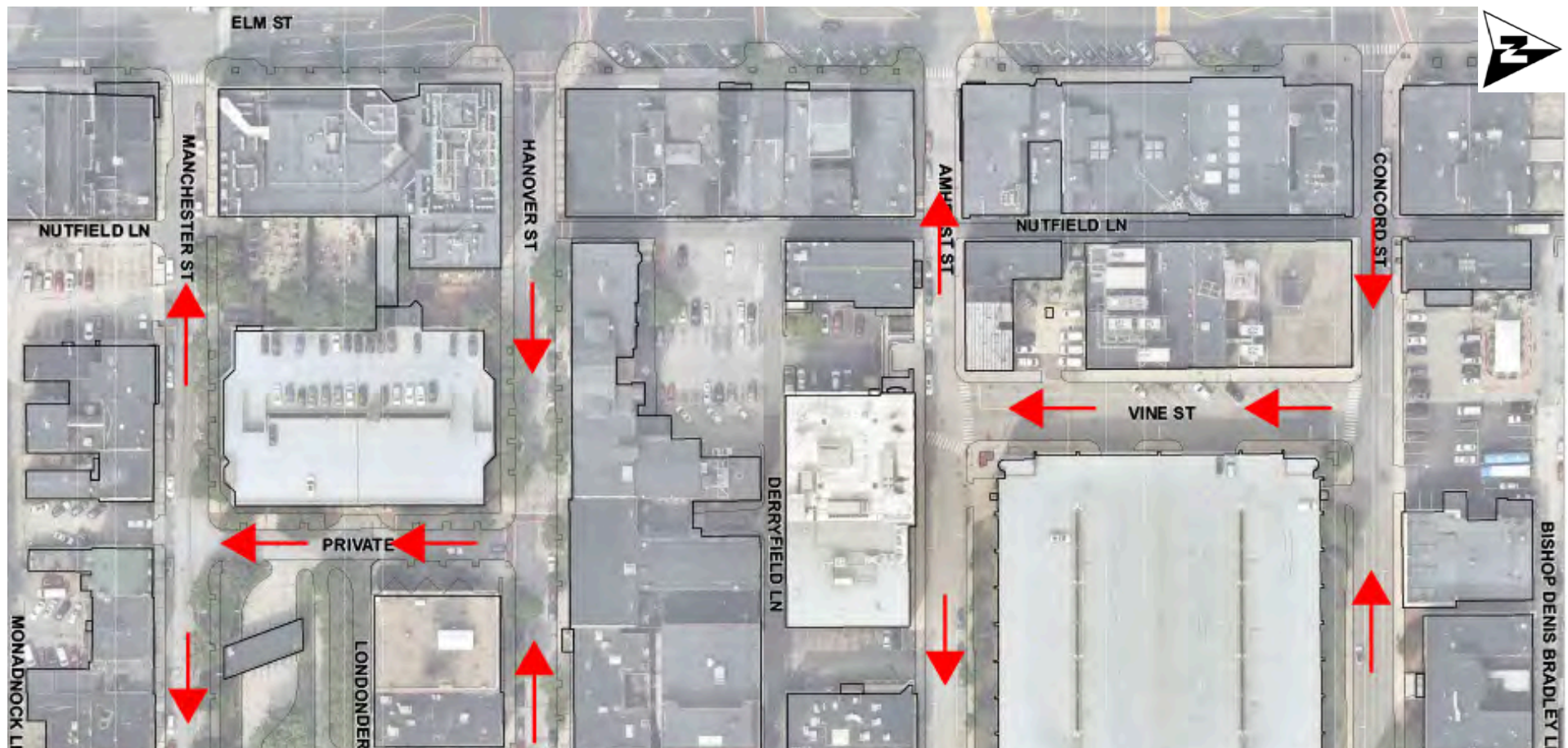
*Examples of speed tables, bump outs, and highly visible raised crosswalks.*



# Traffic Calming - Circulation Diagram

Side streets off of Elm Street currently serve as east-west access to Elm Street, especially Hanover Street which extends to I-93. These side streets, serving as connector roads for vehicles, often create friction with pedestrians enjoying the shops and businesses between Elm Street and Chestnut Street – likely contributing to the higher, unsafe speeds.

**To support a 'destination' vision of the side streets within the study area**, reconfiguring the one-way traffic flow on each street and utilizing the existing north-south connector streets will create a circulation pattern that allows drivers to access all of the businesses while deterring drivers from using the side streets to simply cut through to access Elm Street. Further study will be needed to evaluate the impact of diverting east-west cut-through traffic to other side streets outside of the study area. Cooperation will be needed from the owners of the private connection (Londonderry Lane) between Hanover Street and Manchester Street. By creating a new traffic flow pattern, both the volume of traffic and its speed should be reduced on streets within the study area which will enhance the pedestrian experience of one of the City's great destination locations.





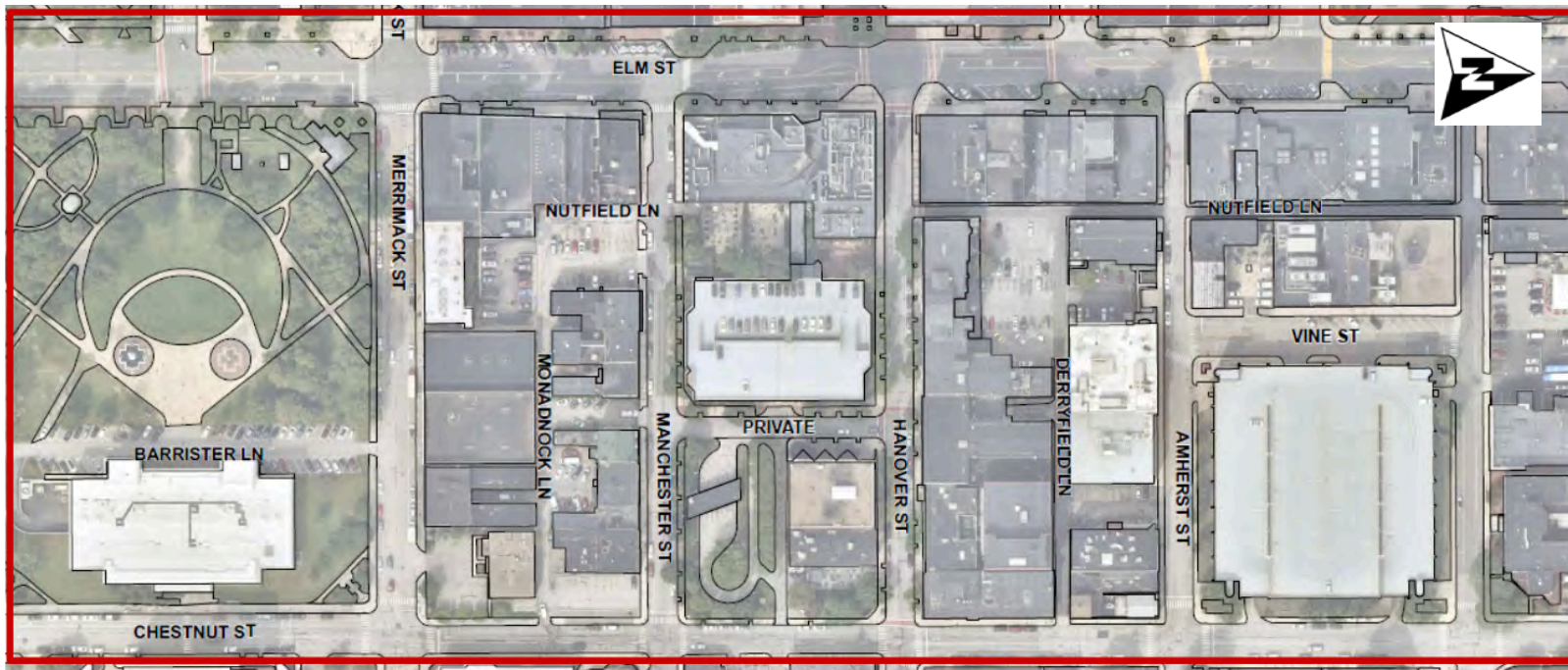
# Arts and Cultural District Revitalization

The Palace Theatre is an anchor in this part of Downtown Manchester, which actively mobilizes cultural and artistic activities in the immediate area. The Charrette team proposes that the City should **consider redrawing the boundaries of the existing Arts & Cultural District** to capitalize on this demonstrably significant impact more directly. The proposed redefined boundaries would be as follows and are depicted below:

- North and south between Concord Street south to Veterans Memorial Park
- East to west between Elm Street east to Chestnut Street.

*Expansion to the SNHU Arena would capture additional economic impact, which may boost statistics for grant applications in future – however the boundaries below would prioritize small business development.*

We recommend the City's Arts Commission or other assigned group undertake a more in-depth asset count to best **identify the existing opportunities** and inform planning for further investment/development. A quick count of assets within the charrette project area identified the following:



- 14 arts organizations and creative businesses
- 17 murals
- 46 restaurants
- 5 retail shops/boutiques
- 11 service businesses
- 2 parking garages
- City Hall Plaza pocket park
- Victory Park

**Branding** could feature the **Amoskeag historic motif** (at right) already used in archways and light poles, and can be expanded for use in District welcome signage and wayfinding, benches, tables, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc., in addition to all marketing and promotional materials. A coordinated marketing campaign would bring visibility to the District as a whole and drive traffic across the area.



# Arts and Cultural District Revitalization

A defined and promoted arts district can contribute to local spending and economic growth. For example, the Arts & Economic Prosperity (AEP) survey undertaken in Portsmouth, NH in 2022-2023 reported that local and nonlocal visitors to arts events spent **\$37.16pp (local visitors) and \$67.93pp (non-local visitors)**, respectively, on restaurants, retail, hotel, parking, transportation, and more.

These amounts **do not include the cost of the arts event ticket or spending at the arts venue** and are only calculated for the day on which the arts event occurred. Considering that arts tourists may spend a weekend or longer visiting an area, the overall economic impact is greater than reflected in this study.

The **Arts & Economic Prosperity (AEP) study** is undertaken each five years by Americans for the Arts (AFTA) in partnership with municipalities, counties, and regions across the U.S. In New Hampshire, the following six communities partnered with AFTA in the most recent AEP survey: Cities of Portsmouth, Nashua, and Dover; Sullivan County; and the Monadnock Region and Upper Valley Region (NH/VT). This report presents actual information gathered via surveys of visitors to arts events and is not estimated or extrapolated data.

It's important to note that Portsmouth's results are boosted by the City's the historic coastal setting and are reflective of its **mature established arts community**.

The proposed redrawn district in Manchester currently includes a combination of established and emerging arts organizations/activities and a vigorous network of restaurants. Ongoing and intentional development of arts & cultural assets and businesses could allow the redefined Arts & Cultural District to drive similar results.

**Arts & Cultural Districts provide significant economic opportunities which can:**

- Attract new businesses
- Act as a considerable draw for tourism
- Increase desirability as a livable community
- Improved aesthetics and increased foot traffic can lead to increased safety
- Increase property/lease values
- Create benefits which bleed over into adjacent neighborhoods
- Leverage potential for private and public investments, e.g.:
  - Chapter 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive
  - Business Improvement District (BID) designation: Appropriates funds within a defined area to finance enhanced services (security, maintenance, marketing, economic development, parking, special events)





# Leveraging Underutilized Spaces - Installations

Opportunities abound in Manchester to utilize blank walls, alleys, and other public spaces that can highlight the great historical, arts, and cultural assets the city is known for. Murals are already an appreciated resource in the City – a quick assessment of the Charrette project area identified potential sites for further mural creation at:

- Nutfield Lane
- Victory Garage exterior and stairwells
- Red Oak Garage
- Consolidated Communications building



*Mural highlighting The Rex Theatre*

Turning to a more historically-focused installation, the Charrette team identified Nutfield Lane as a specific opportunity to amplify underutilized spaces by creating a **Vintage Neon Sign Outdoor Gallery** which would:

- Clean up and revitalize Nutfield Lane as a pedestrian connector from The Rex to Hanover Street.
- Leverage the existing collection of vintage neon signs stored and preserved at the Manchester Historic Association.
- Mounting the vintage signage along Nutfield Lane provides an opportunity to share and celebrate physical artifacts of Manchester's history.
- The signs provide visual interest, education, and lighting to draw pedestrian traffic and increase safety after dark.



*Neon signs retained by the City could be repurposed with new life (and light!).*

# Leveraging Underutilized Spaces - Pop-Up Shops

One opportunity to leverage underutilized spaces in Manchester and enrich economic development alongside culture would be the creation of a pop-up shop program. The Arts District offers an opportunity to develop a pop-up shop program. Modeled after a similar model in Portland, ME, this program would act as an incubator for emerging retail businesses, repurposing and subdividing shipping containers on vacant and underdeveloped lots as sites for micro shops.

- Units would provide limited square-footage retail space available via a short-term lease, with the intent to provide an incubator space where individuals with new business concepts can test the viability of their business model and interest in products before committing to a permanent lease. This opportunity would uniquely position Manchester as a small business incubator hub.
- This testing phase may improve opportunities for funding/investment in participating small businesses.
- After the termination of the short-term lease, the program would help participants identify and access long-term lease options, with the goal of invigorating local, small business development across Manchester.
- Pop-up Shop sites would be available for year-round use and can be marketed seasonally as a walking holiday market in multiple locations. While common in Europe, holiday markets are rare in the U.S. This would be a unique asset in New Hampshire.

## Possible sites include:

- Corner of Merrimack Street and Chestnut Street (currently in use for construction staging)
- Hartnett Parking lot (proposed for mixed-use development)
- Victory Park
- Veterans Memorial Park



As a final note, Arts & Cultural Districts are often managed by a **municipal-led arts commission guided by a cultural plan**. The creation of a cultural plan would identify opportunities and priorities for economic and community development driven by arts & cultural businesses and activities.

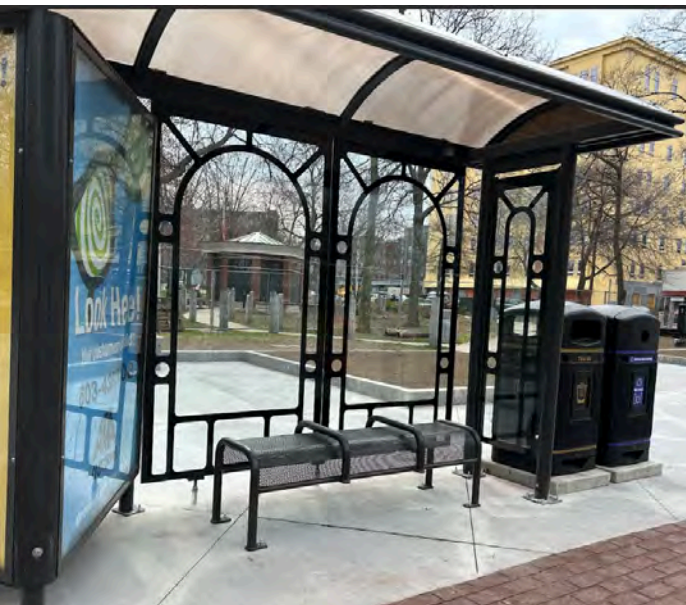


# Planning Recommendations - Design Standards

**Manchester is in the middle of a zoning rewrite**, making now the time to implement regulatory items like design standards that can create a sense of consistency. Materials, fixtures, and treatments of city sidewalks and public areas can help construct the **brand of a community** and have the potential to unify Manchester's streets through zoning regulations.

Establishing a menu of 'approved' options and regulating their use can shape future developments in ways that will create safer and more unified city streets. A great example might be requiring the use of resilient materials in sidewalks to cut down on maintenance needs, i.e., stamped concrete vs. bricks.

**New zoning regulations can build upon what is already in the Downtown!** Ongoing work and completed treatments at Victory Park provide great examples for the city to follow.



*Images of current improvements taking place at Victory Park in Downtown Manchester.*

Recommendations from the Plan speak to some of the same key themes and focuses that the public brought to this charrette:

- The next step is action!** With examples and potential visions for the future redesign of Manchester's streets, we hope that this charrette provides substantial momentum in Manchester's journey to continue towards its mission statement:



# Visioning for the Future: *It is Up to You!*

**Manchester** is a wonderful city with residents that are passionate about finding ways to create safe, beautiful, and welcoming streets to highlight the best of what the city has to offer its growing and diverse community. How you choose to do that is up to you!

This report provides recommendations, not mandates, which are for you to explore, evaluate, and discuss. Ultimately, the choice of where to take Manchester is up to its community members - **and that means all of you!**

We recommend that you circulate this report to all residents and community members of Manchester, so that anyone interested can come together for a general review of the recommendations and a discussion about what's next.

Further, as recommendations from this charrette are further developed, we recommend that interested people be fully welcomed in for both the planning and implementation. Manchester is already in a great spot with a collaborative spirit that will guide your future.

Good luck!



*What is next for Manchester? Instead of focusing on challenges, think about possibilities!*

# Resources & Funding

## **\*\*Community Design & Placemaking:**

- [Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide](#)
- [National Endowment for the Arts, Our Town](#)
- [New Hampshire State Council on the Arts Grants](#)
- [UNH Cooperative Extension, Characteristics of a Vibrant Downtown](#)
- [New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Historic Preservation Grants](#)
- [Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 \(Americans for the Arts\)](#)

## **Economic Development:**

- [UNH Cooperative Extension](#)
- [Regional Economic Development Center](#)
- [New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority](#)
- [Chapter 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief](#)
- [Business Improvement District \(BID\) Designation](#)

## **Housing, Planning, & Zoning:**

- [Plan NH Community Design Charrette Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Housing Grant Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Housing Toolbox](#)
- [Housing Champions Program](#)
- [New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority Planning Grants](#)
- [New Hampshire Preservation Alliance Planning Grants](#)

## **Transportation, Traffic Calming, Parking:**

- [NH Department of Transportation Transportation Alternatives Program](#)
- [Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission](#)
- [DOT Navigator](#)

## **Other Resources/Funding Opportunities**

- [AARP Livable Communities Resources & Grants](#)
- [New Hampshire Charitable Foundation Community Grants Program](#)



*\*\*Note: Some of these may be unavailable due to changes in state funding and support.*





[www.plannh.org](http://www.plannh.org)

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