



Setti D. Warren
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Barney Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 30, 2016

TO: Councilor Deb Crossley, Chairman
Councilor Jay Ciccone, Chairman
Members of the City Council

FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
James McGonagle, Commissioner of Public Works
James Freas, Deputy Director of Planning
Nicole Freedman, Transportation Director
Rachel Blatt, Long Range Planner
Lily Canan Reynolds, Community Engagement Manager

RE: Discussion of West Newton Square Enhancements Project

MEETING DATE: January 3, 2017

CC: Mayor Warren

The West Newton Square Enhancements Project is the second village enhancements project, after Auburndale Square, and the first to be completed in conjunction with the Complete Streets Policy and Newton-in-Motion, the Transportation Strategy. The West Newton Square project started with an identified need to upgrade traffic signals and became a broader effort to improve safety and enhance the village character. The plan has developed with robust input from the West Newton community and businesses and with the guidance of the three Ward 3 Councilors.

On January 3rd, the design team will present the recommended concept plan. The presentation will walk through the goals, the process, and the plan that resulted, with a breakdown of how the plan affects walking and shopping, parking, biking, and driving through the square.

At this time we are not seeking a vote, but are asking for your thoughts and reactions. The recommended concept has been thoroughly reviewed by West Newton residents and businesses, and we seek to show you the conceptual plan before carrying it through to detail design. Votes on this

plan will be sought from the Public Facilities, Public Safety and Transportation, and Finance Committees once a detail design plan and budget are complete.

Project Goals

From the outset, the project has had the following goals:

- Maximize safety and convenience for all travel modes
- Enhance Pedestrian Experience / Village Character / Business Climate
- Benefit the Environment

Safety is the first and foremost concern for this project. The Transportation Strategy research identified West Newton as a crash hotspot, particularly for crashes involving pedestrians and/or bicyclists. MassDOT has actually identified West Newton as one of the top 5% worst crash locations for pedestrians and bicyclists in the Boston metro region.

Additionally we heard time and again that West Newton Square feels like a highway on-ramp, when it is in fact a vibrant village center and a regional destination for arts, culture, dining, and business. This project is an opportunity to enhance the village character, make it easier to walk between businesses, and still accommodate through traffic. In addition to hard infrastructure, this project intends to restore the tree canopy and landscaping. Wherever possible, the design team is looking to 21st techniques that will give plantings the best chances for survival, including looking at linking plantings with stormwater management.

Process to Date

This project has benefitted from robust community involvement. There have been three phases of public involvement to this point.

In the first phase (June-August), we asked, “What do we need to know?”

- ~ 10 people sent in inspiration photos of places they’d been and things they’d be interested in seeing in West Newton.
- 80+ people came to the evening workshop, wrote down ideas, and pointed out issue areas.
- 40+ people came to a site walk to show the design team specific things
- 125 comments were submitted on an online map
- 35+ business visits were conducted to hear from owners and clerks

In the second phase (Sept-Oct), we presented two concept plans and asked, “What do you think of the options?”

- 80+ people came to the evening workshop, asked questions, and wrote down comments
- 57 comments were submitted on the online map
- 66 emails were sent in with detailed commentary
- 15-20 businesses attended a business meeting
- 25+ follow up business visits were conducted

In the third phase (Nov-Dec), we presented the recommended concept to the West Newton community and businesses. In these meetings we have heard overwhelmingly positive feedback and excitement. On January 3rd, we will present the same recommended concept to the City Council and ask for your thoughts.

Next Steps:

Following the upcoming meeting on January 3rd, this project will transition into detail design during which the concept will be developed into detailed construction drawings, materials and fixtures will be selected and budgeted, and bid documents prepared. During this time, there will be additional opportunity for public involvement. This phase will culminate in presentation to the City Council again for adoption of the plan and budget.

Construction on this project is broken into two phases: infrastructure rehabilitation and enhancements construction. The first phase is to rehabilitate the gas main below Washington Street. National Grid is already aware of the enhancements project and is preparing to begin their work in Spring 2017. The enhancements construction would begin after the gas line work is complete in Late Summer 2017.

Project Quick Facts

Consultants: HDR, Inc. (engineering) & Klopfer Martin Design Group (landscape architecture)

Project Budget: approximately \$4 million

Funding Stream: CIP

Project Website: www.newtonma.gov/westnewtonsq

Enclosed

Enclosed is an introductory set of plans. The full presentation can be previewed on the project website.

An aerial photograph of West Newton Square, showing a mix of residential houses, commercial buildings, and a large parking lot. A church with a steeple is visible in the center. A road runs horizontally across the bottom of the image, with a bridge crossing over it.

West Newton Square Enhancements Project

City Council Presentation
January 3, 2017

Department of Planning and
Community Development

Department of Public Works

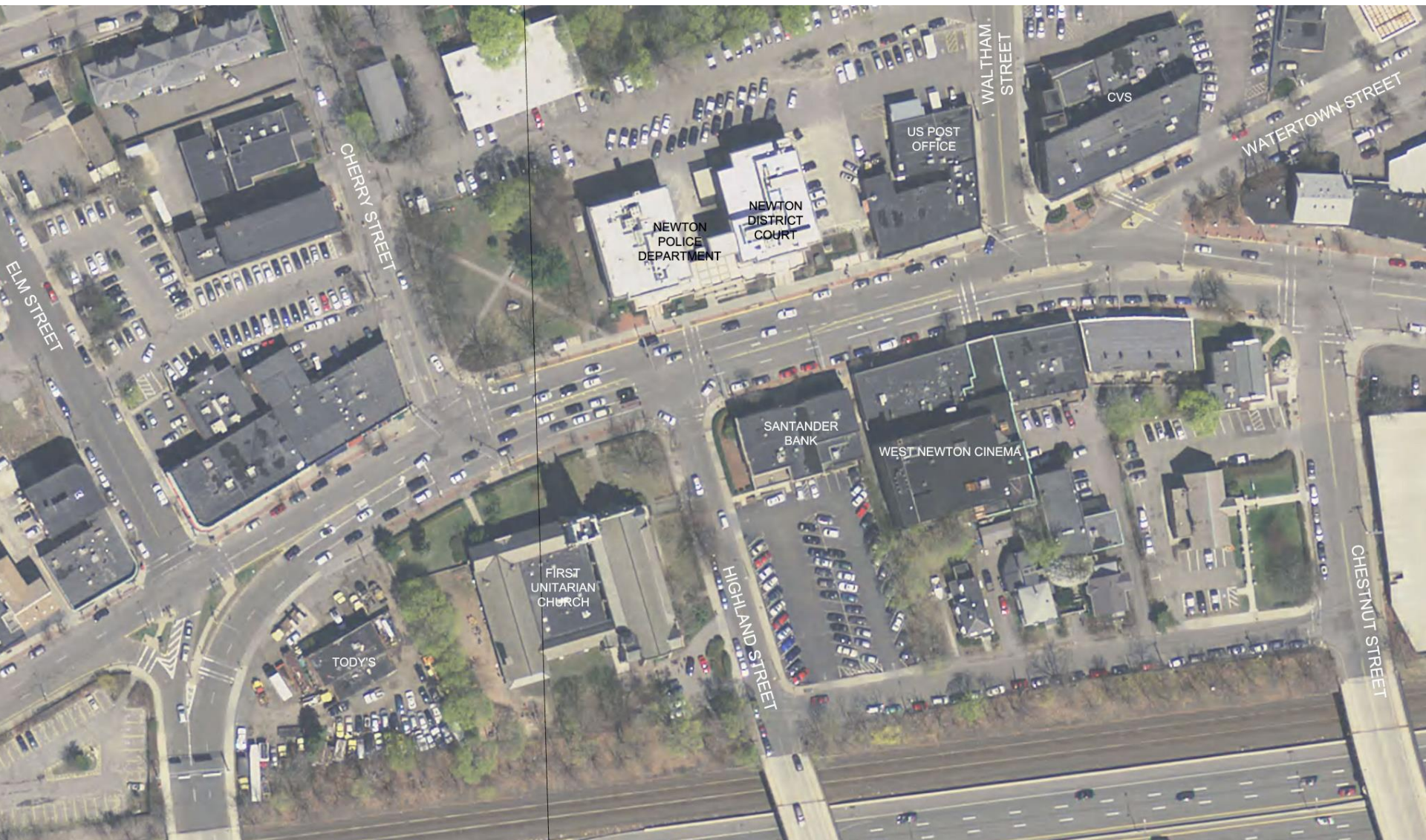


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What is the West Newton Square Enhancements Project?

Addresses Public Realm Improvements

- Streets, sidewalks, plazas, and related public infrastructure
- How they look and function
- How they can contribute to the West Newton you envision



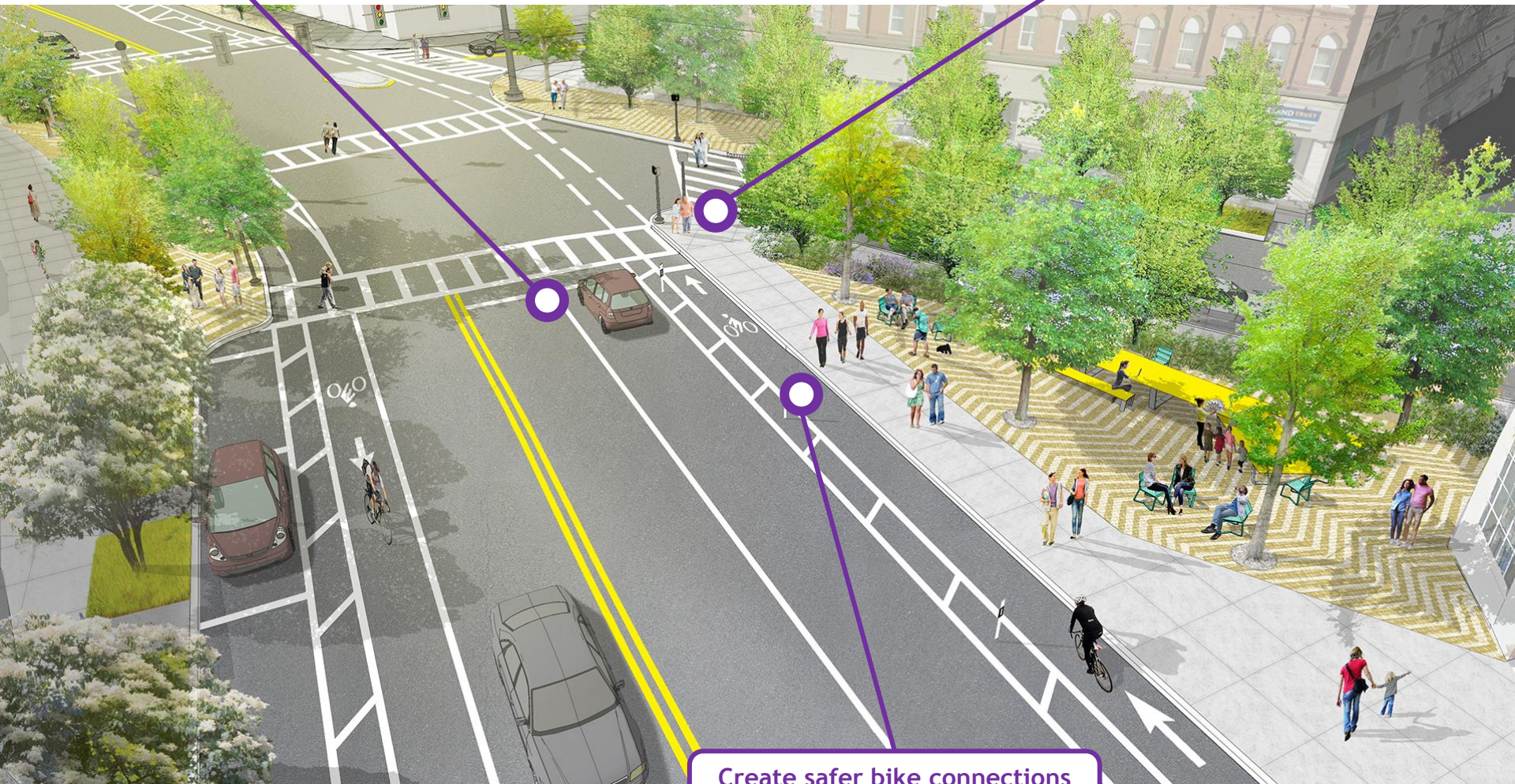
An aerial photograph of a city street intersection, likely in West Newton Square. The image shows a multi-lane road with yellow double lines, crosswalks, and surrounding buildings and trees. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title 'Project Goals:' and a bulleted list of three goals. The background image shows a mix of urban infrastructure, including sidewalks, trees, and buildings, with some people and vehicles visible.

Project Goals:

- Maximize safety and convenience for all travel modes
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- Benefit the Environment

Simplify traffic signals

Reduce Jay-Walking:
Make it easier to cross the street &
allow people to cross more often

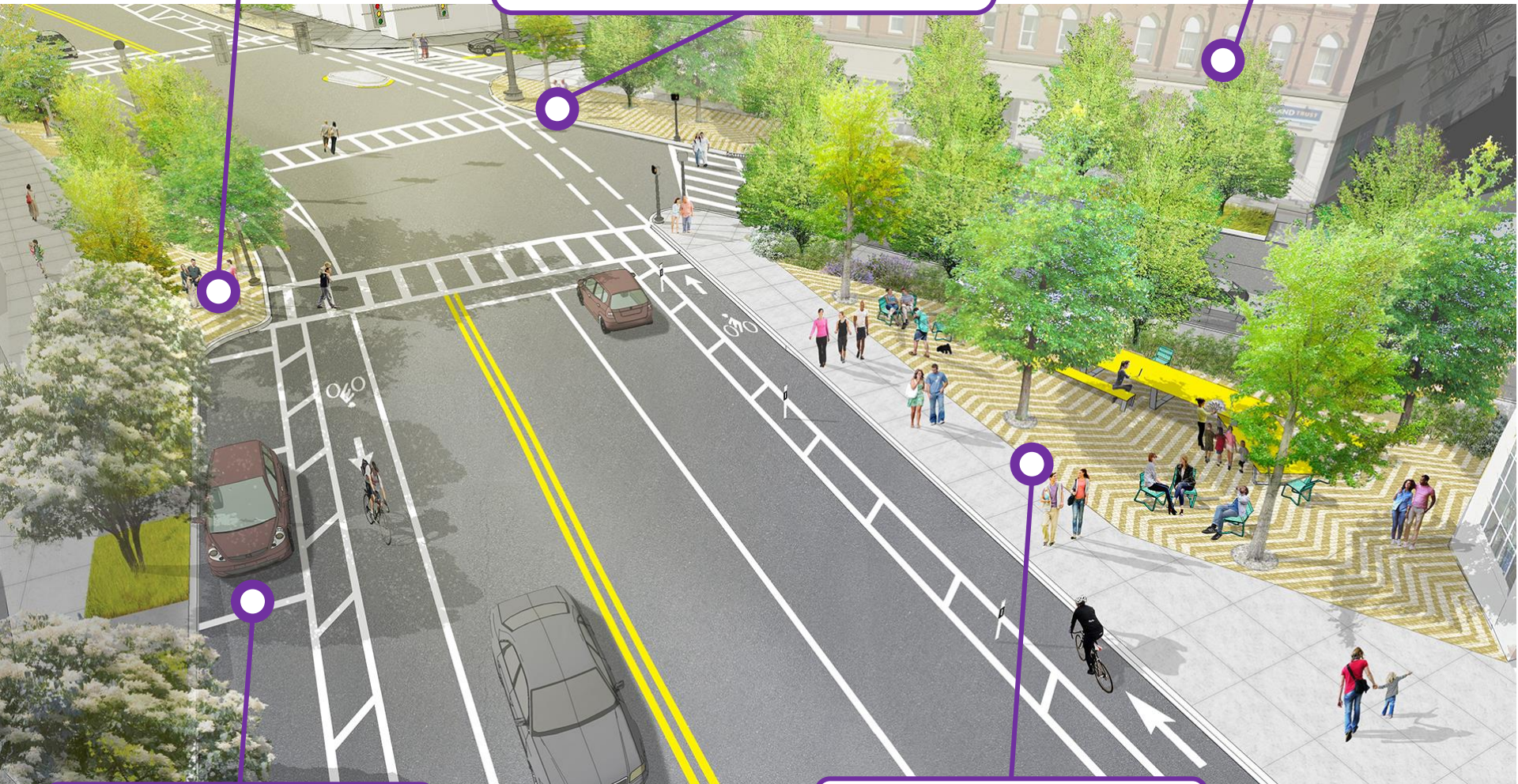


Create safer bike connections
through the square

Widen sidewalks at key points

Establish crossings that follow “desire lines” to encourage walking between businesses

Substantial landscape & hardscape improvements

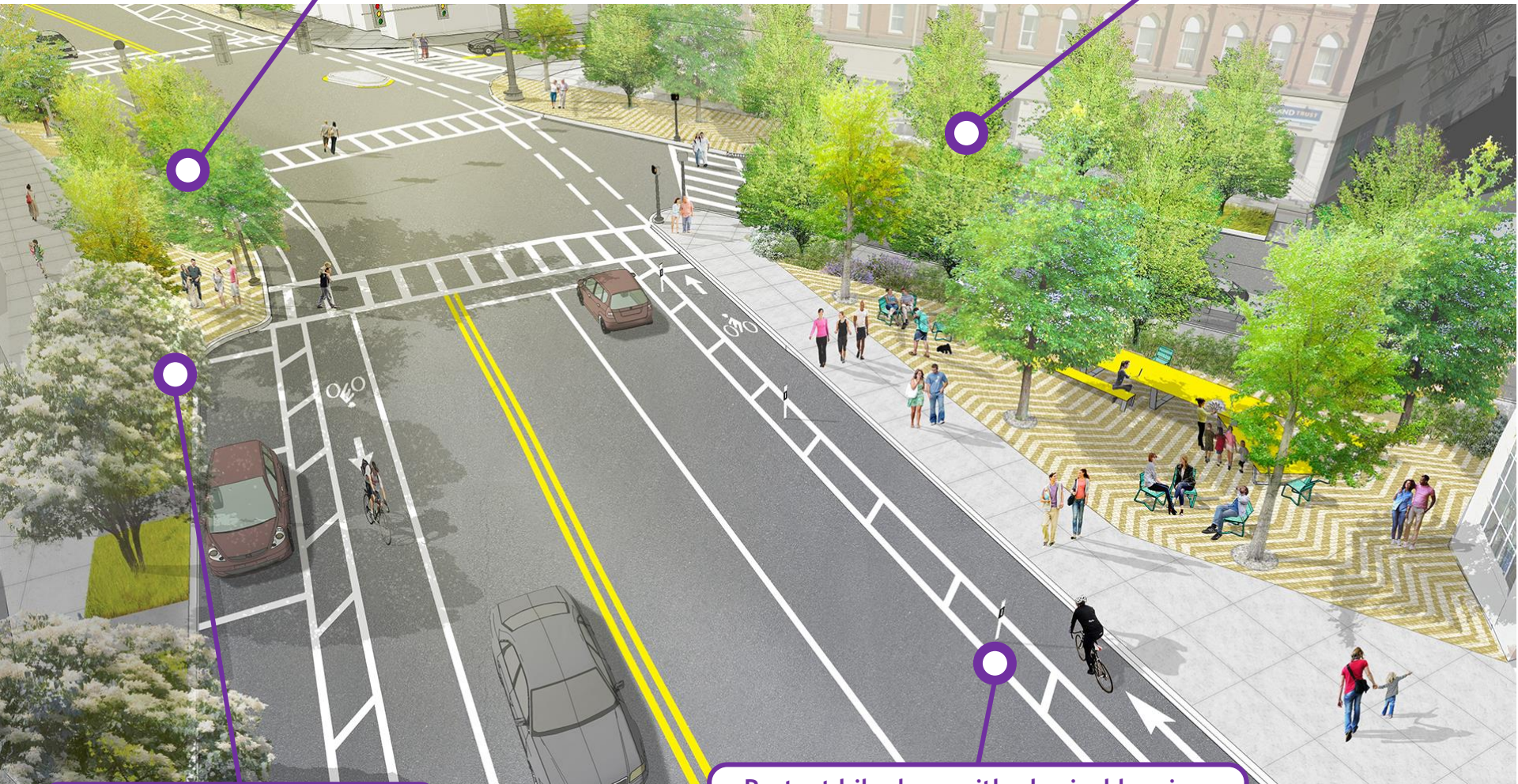


Preserve and expand on-street parking

Expand and reconstruct plaza

Intermix Lighting and Canopy Trees to make walking comfortable day & night, year round

Establish healthy tree canopy using 21st century tree planting techniques



Use porous ground materials around tree plantings

Protect bike lane with physical barriers to increase safety & encourage riders with broad range of skill levels



