

Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Presentation to Mixed-Use/Transit-Oriented Development Committee,
Houston Planning Commission—February 25, 2009



Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Outline

- Overview of Process
- Analysis & Benchmarking
- Conclusions & Recommendations



Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Overview of Process



Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Overview of Process

Our Goal

Provide a **thoughtful and deliberate analysis** of the development impacts and consequences of the City of Houston's Urban Corridors Planning Proposal, and to **make recommendations** as necessary based upon **real-world experiences and best practices** of the real estate development profession.

Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Overview of Process

Original City of Houston Proposal

Establishes standards for the following:

- Pedestrian realm and sidewalks
- Building location within the site
- Minimum built frontage
- Fenestrations on the building frontage and entrances
- Curb cuts (access management)
- Parking (location and quantity)



Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

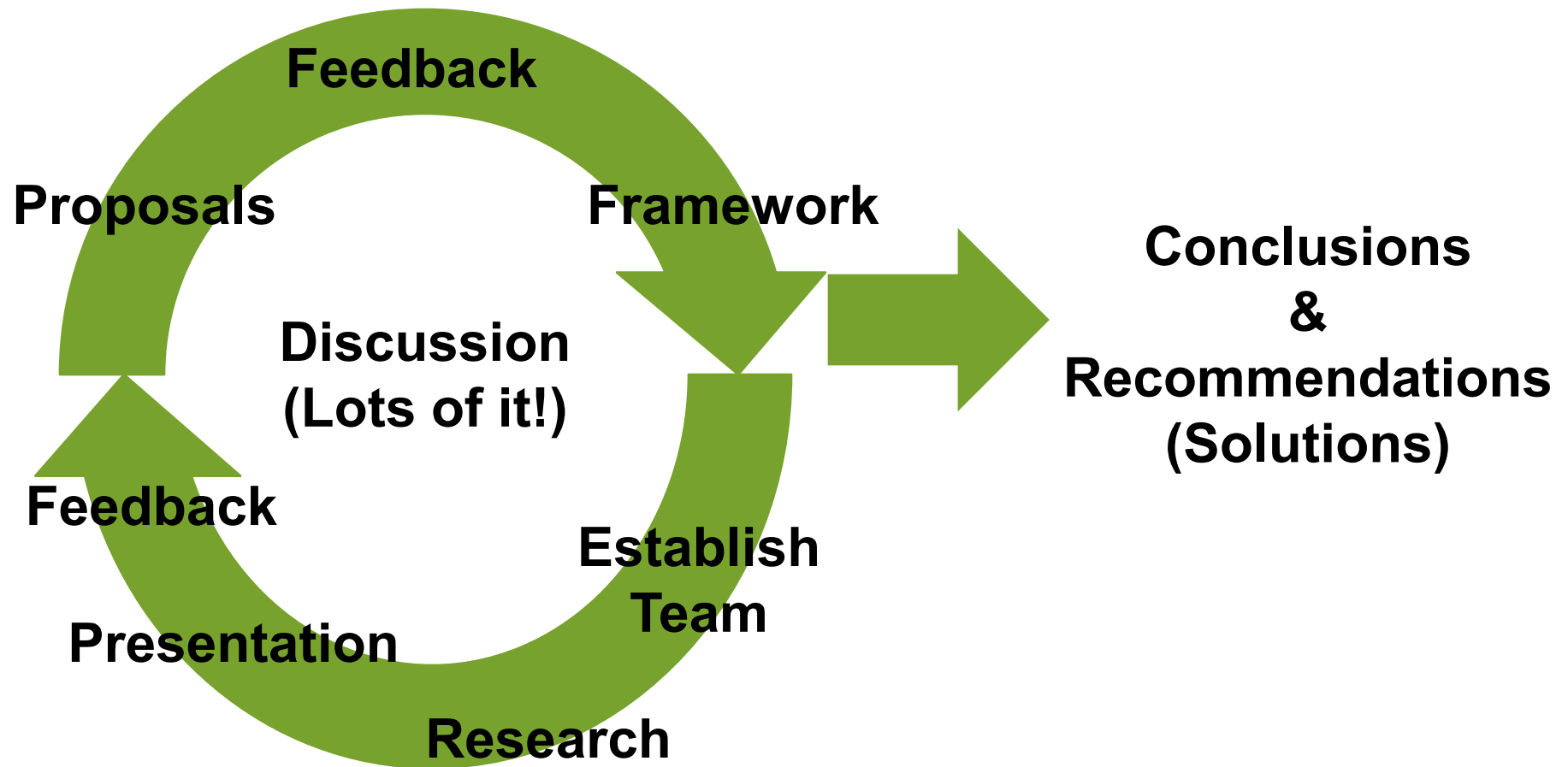
Overview of Process

The Dilemma at Hand



Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Overview of Process

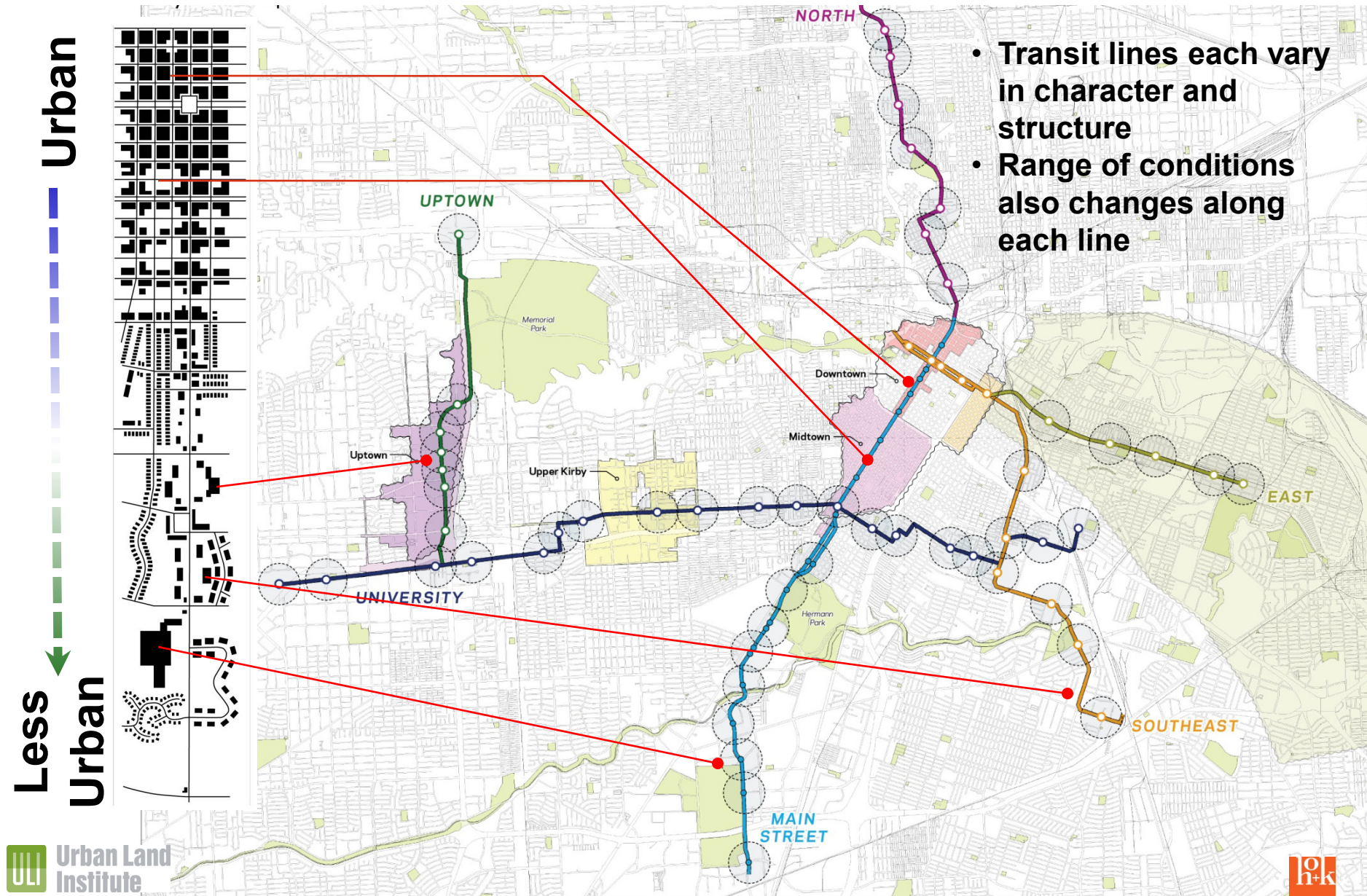


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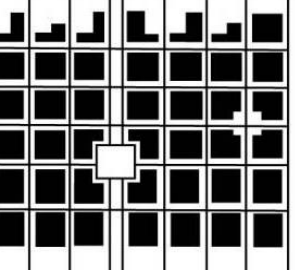
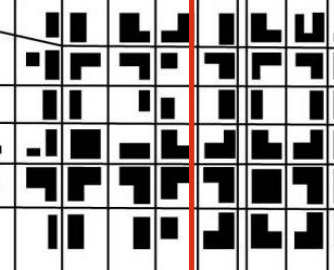
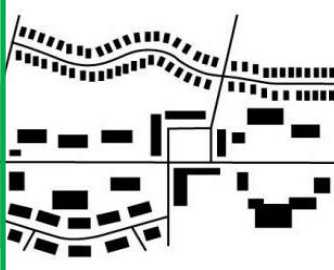
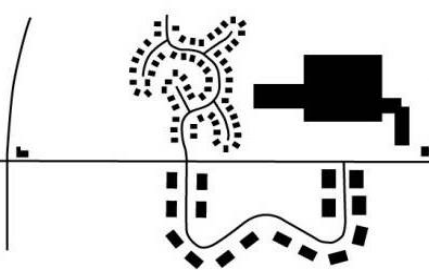
Analysis & Benchmarking



Existing Conditions – Density Typology



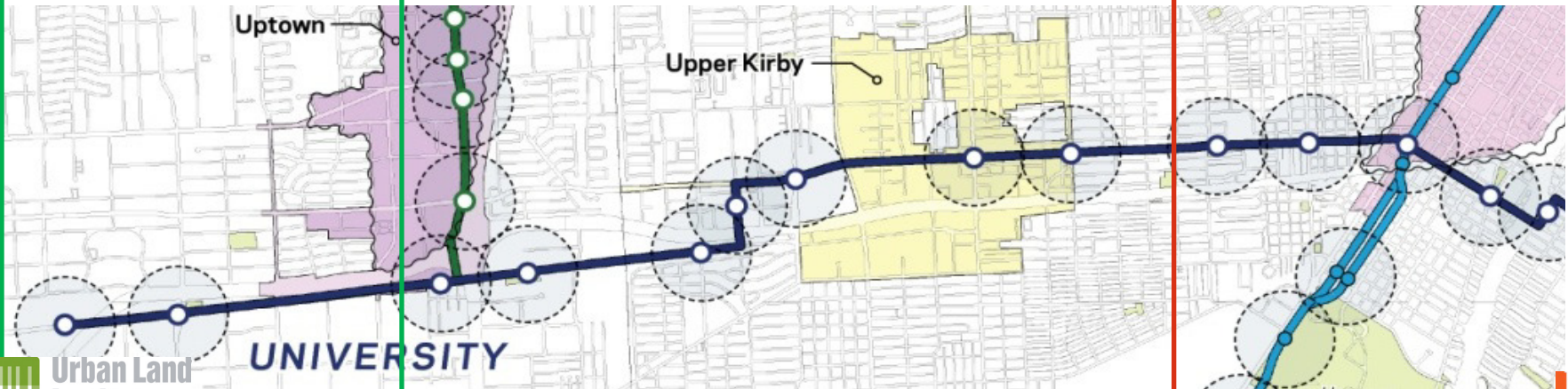
Existing Conditions – Density Typology (University Line Example)



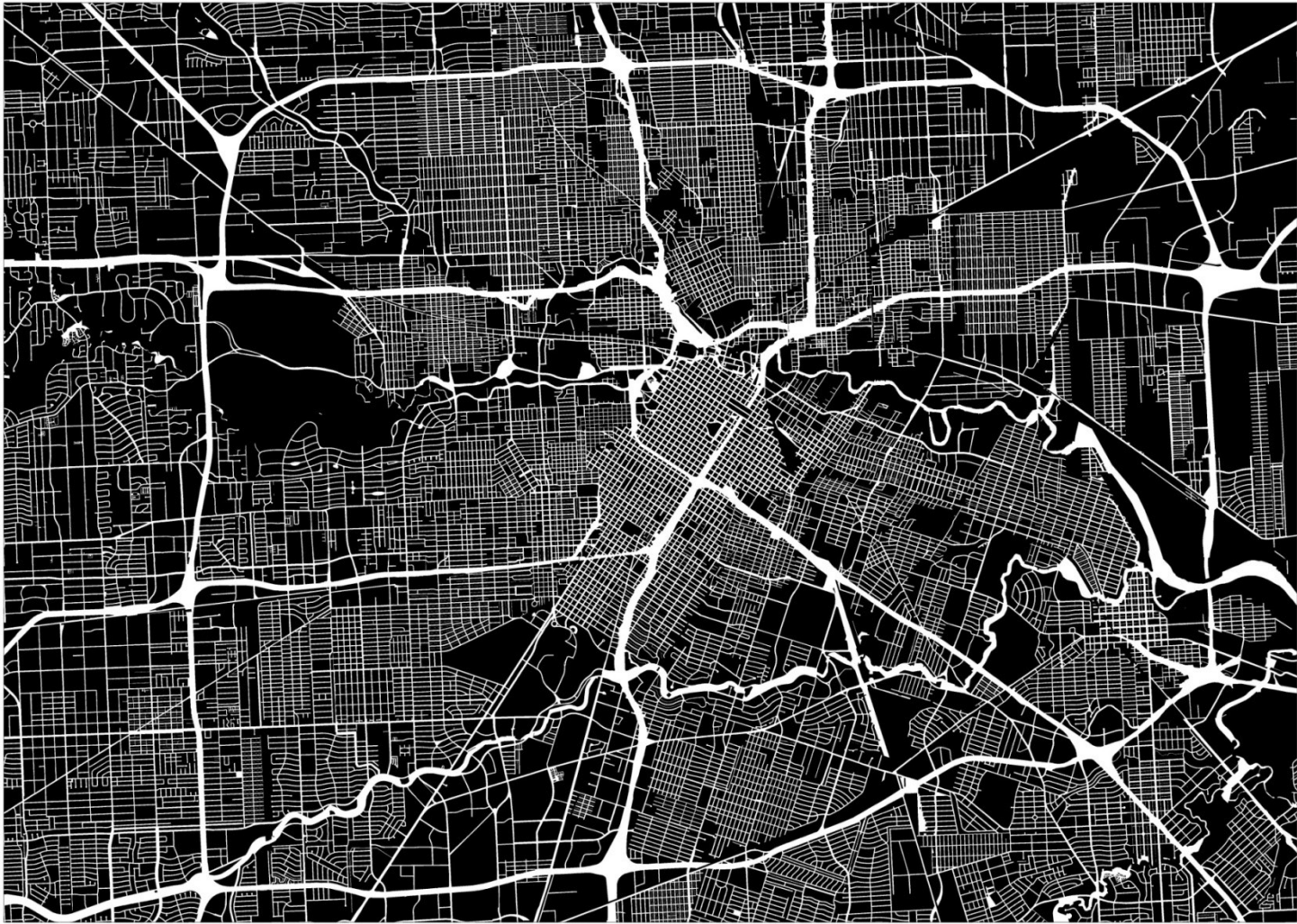
Less Urban



Urban



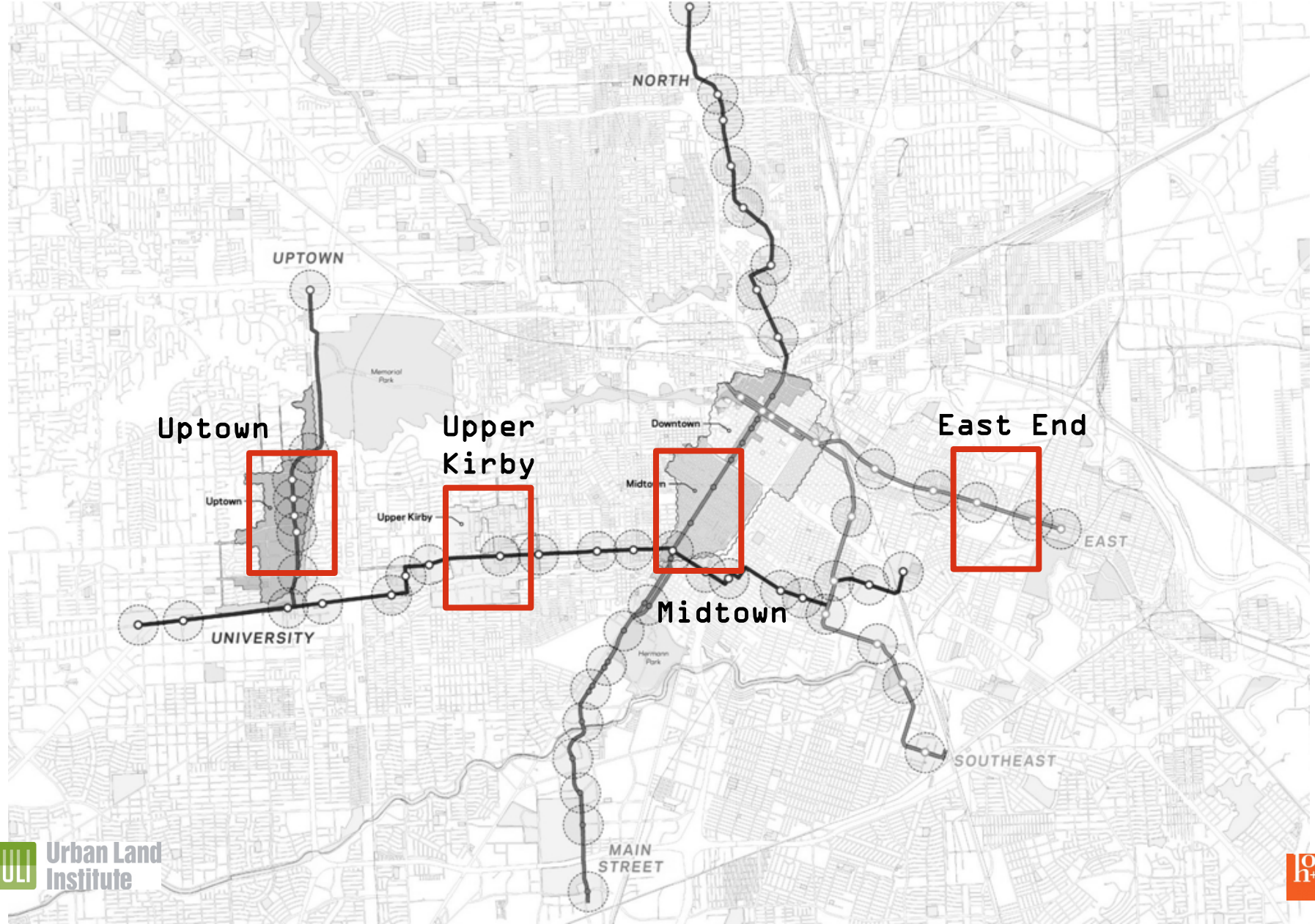
Existing Conditions – Block Typology



Blocks form the basic framework for development.....

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

Existing Conditions – Block Typology



Existing Conditions – Block Typology



East End



Midtown








Upper Kirby



Uptown

**Although there are hundreds and hundreds of blocks...
Five block types begin to emerge as “typical” conditions**

BLOCKS

-  Large Block
400' x 600'+
-  Large Rectangular Block
200' to 400' x 600'+
-  Narrow Block
<200' x 600'+
-  Regular Block
200' to 400' x 600'+
-  Small Block
250' x <200'

Existing Conditions – Parcel Typology



East End



Midtown



Upper Kirby









Uptown

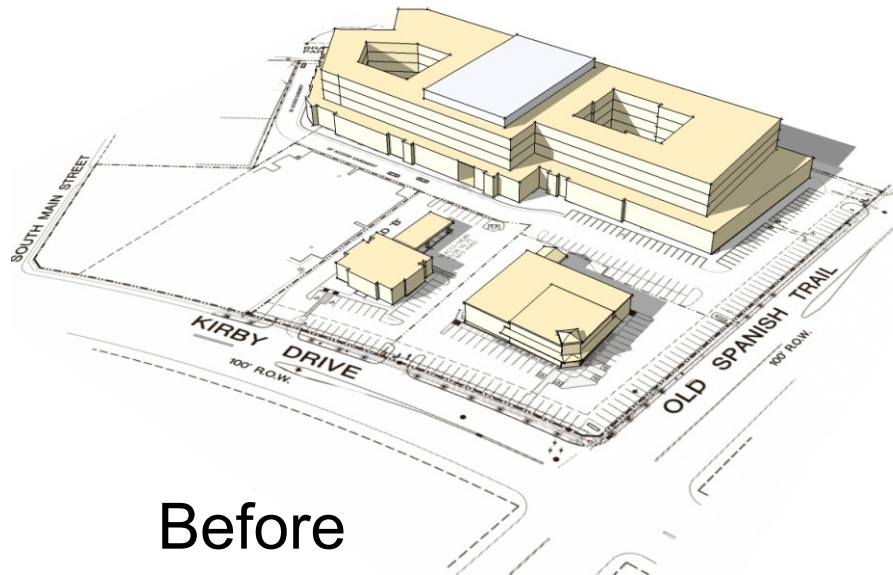
Upon closer examination...

Six parcel types begin to emerge as “typical” conditions

PARCELS

-  Large Parcel
400' x 600' +
-  Large Rectangular Parcel
200' to 400' x 600' +
-  Regular Parcel
250' to 400' x 400' to 600'
-  Narrow Parcel
>250' x <250'
-  Wide Parcel
<250' x >250'
-  Small Parcel
200' x <200'

Case Studies – Mixed Use



Before



After

75% minimum building frontage



15' pedestrian realm



parking on side or rear of buildings



Parking lot screening



75% of facade to facilitate visibility into building

Benchmarking Analysis

Review of Pedestrian Oriented / Mixed Use Ordinances

- Atlanta, GA - Midtown
- Charlotte, NC – Mixed Use Development & Pedestrian Overlay District
- Denver, CO – Main Street Zone District
- Phoenix, AZ – Interim TOD Overlay District
- Arlington, VA – Rosslyn – Ballston Corridor

Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

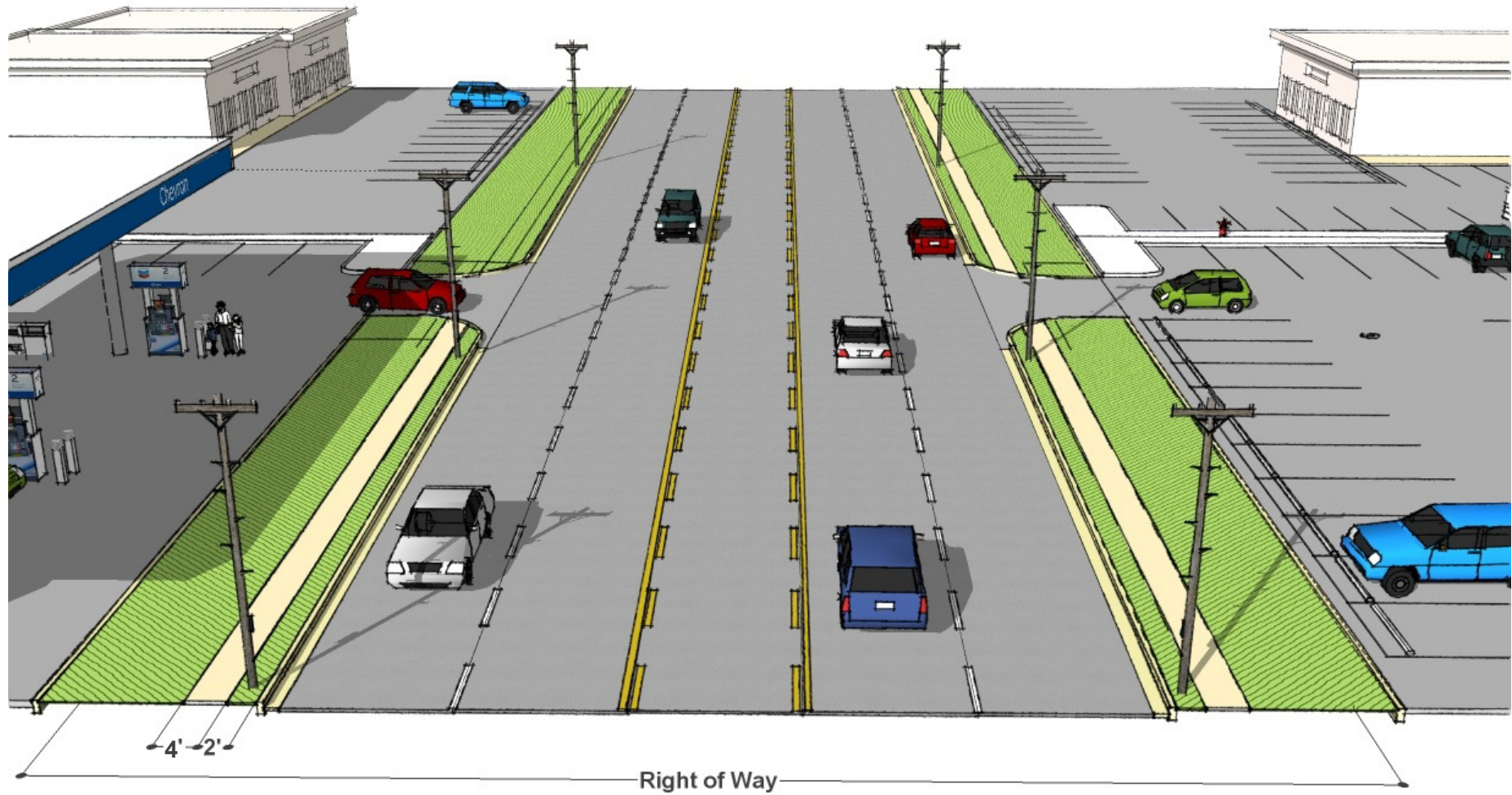
Conclusions & Recommendations



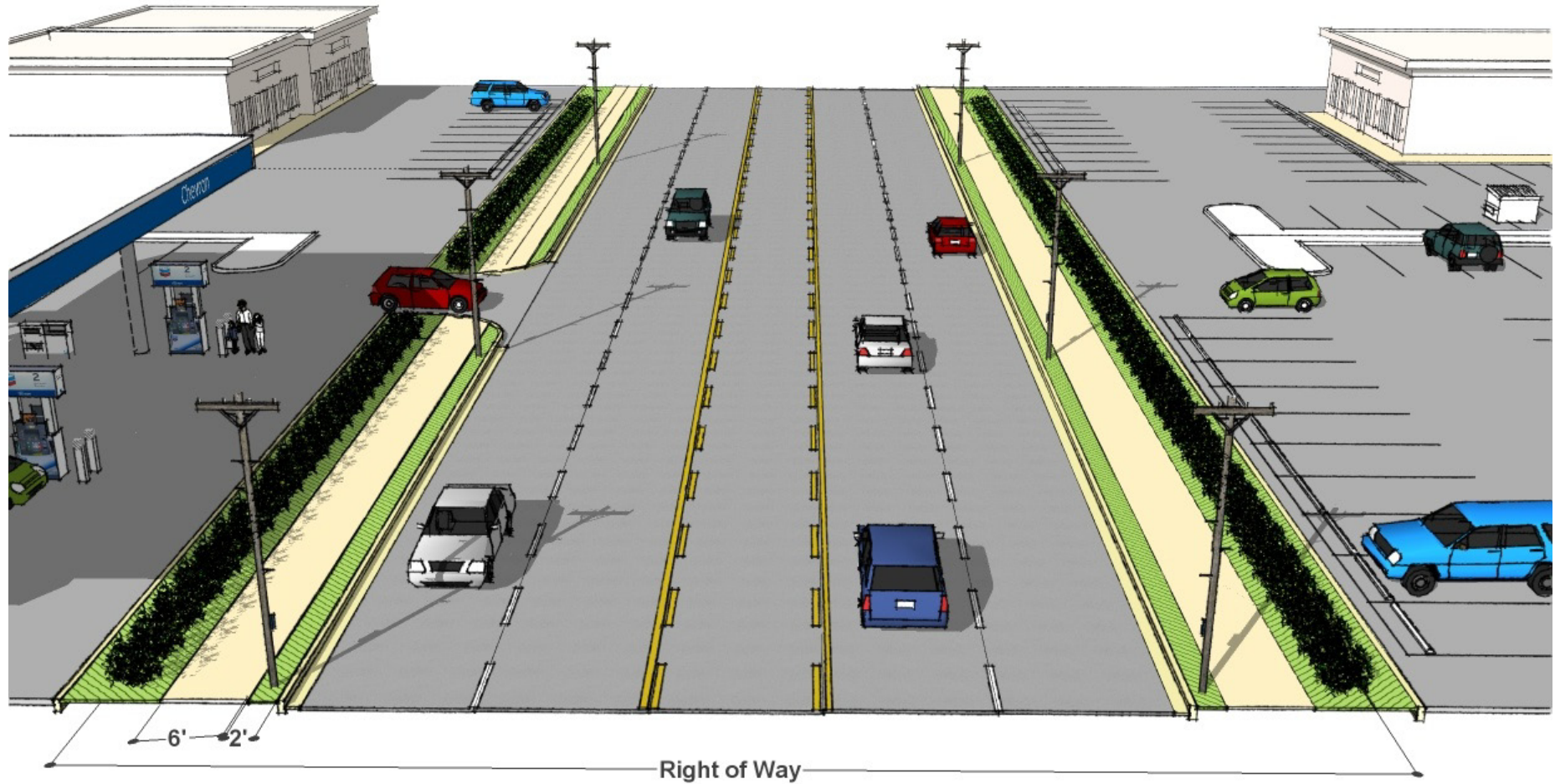
Conclusions & Recommendations

- Our objective is to provide a *streamlined regulatory framework* with *reasonable mandates* for pedestrian-friendly development in specific areas of the city located in close proximity to existing and proposed light rail transit stations.
- The City, Private Utilities, METRO and the private development community must *work together in a constructive and collaborative partnership* to achieve this objective.

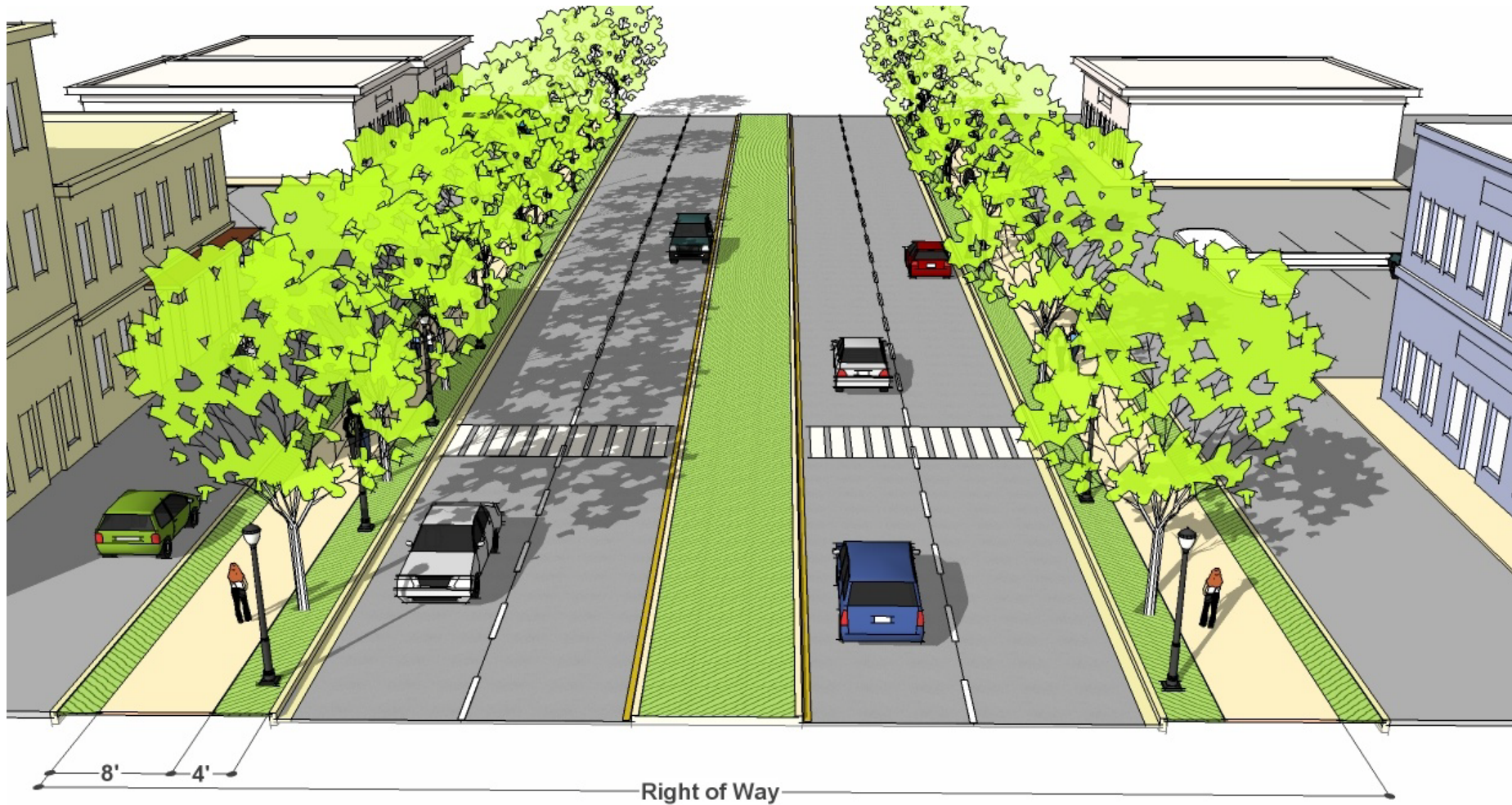
Conclusions



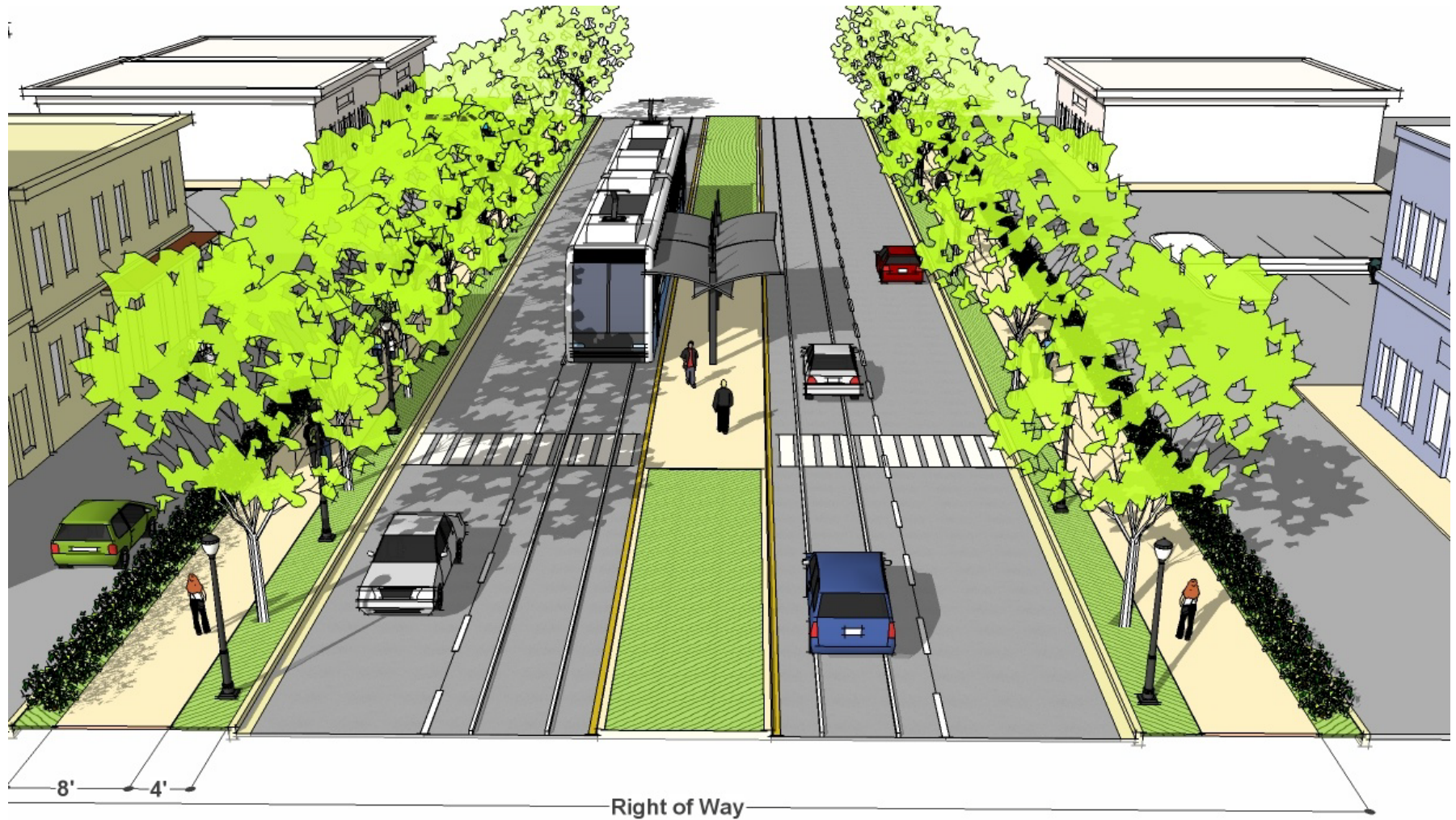
Conclusions



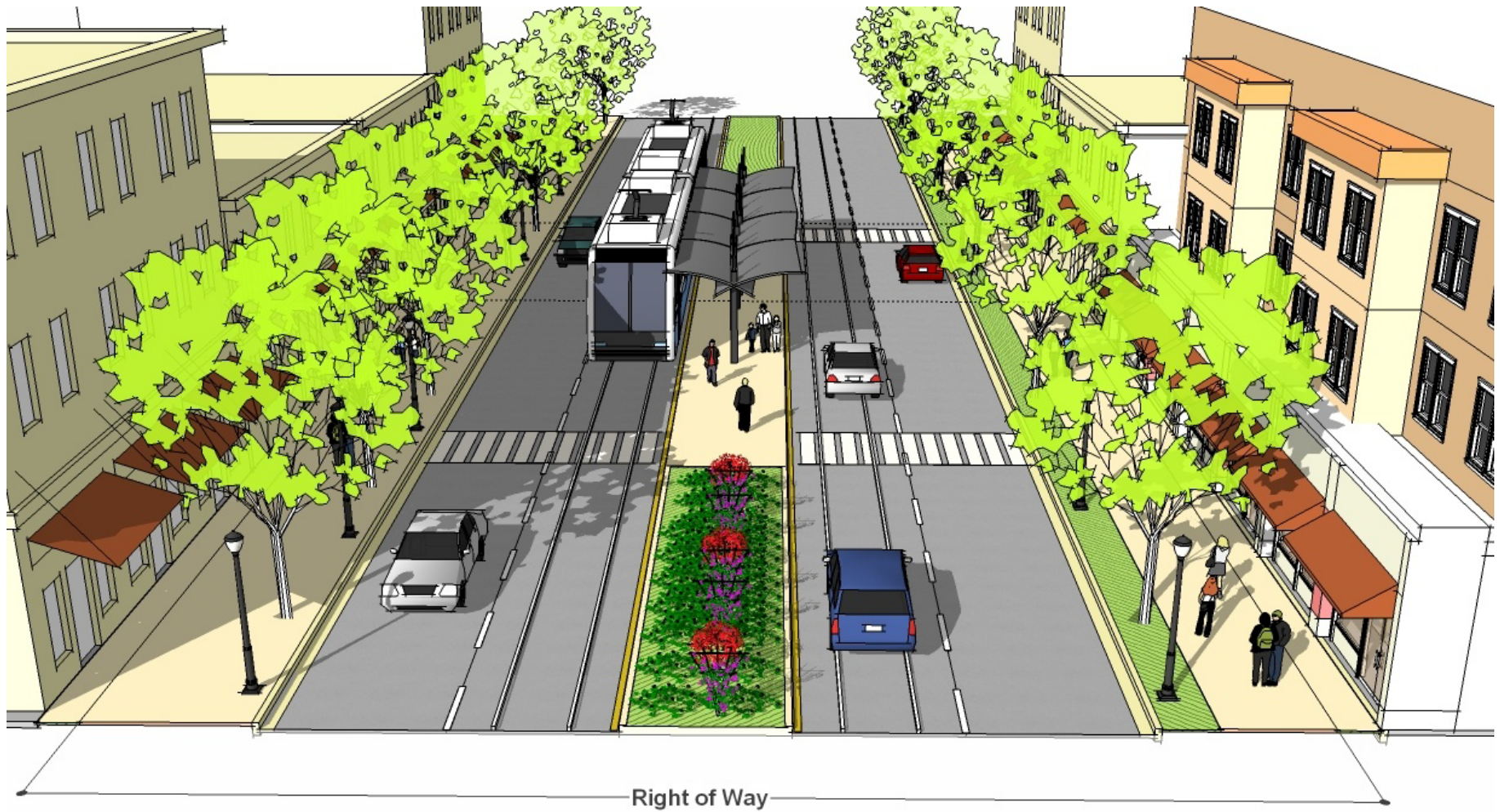
Conclusions



Conclusions



Conclusions



Conclusions & Recommendations

- Preserve the tradition of diversity in Houston and **avoid a "one size fits all" approach.**
- **Delineate a hierarchy of streets** - Transit Streets, "A" Streets and "B" Streets - with different levels of requirements and incentives for each.
- **Support performance standards** instead of prescriptive land use and density regulations.
- **Calibrate incentives** using a performance-based scale to evaluate walkability.
- **Promote "opt-in" provisions** for developments that adhere to the proposed guidelines, but are outside of the urban corridor boundary.
- Provide additional incentives to encourage existing landowners to achieve **continuity of the pedestrian realm** with greater speed.
- **Recognize the importance of utilities**, and particularly the location of overhead and buried power lines, as a critical factor in the success of any proposed guidelines.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Preserve the tradition of diversity in Houston and avoid a "one size fits all" approach.



We believe the same standard cannot reasonably apply in all conditions across our diverse city. Therefore, we **advocate flexibility** to achieve the overarching goal of a quality pedestrian realm.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Delineate a hierarchy of streets - Transit Streets, "A" Streets and "B" Streets - with different levels of requirements and incentives for each.



We believe the "A" Streets, which run perpendicular and provide access to the Transit Streets, are vitally important to achieve the stated aims of the proposed ordinances. "B" Streets support both Transit Streets and "A" Streets to fulfill a variety of conditions in the City.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Support performance standards instead of prescriptive regulations.



We believe prescriptive regulations that dictate specific land use and density do not support the stated objective of improving walkability, pedestrian access and encouraging a variety of transportation modes. We believe **the market will guide land use and density** in our dynamic city.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Calibrate incentives using a performance-based scale to evaluate walkability.

Point System



Incentives



Permitting

Parking

Setbacks

Utilities

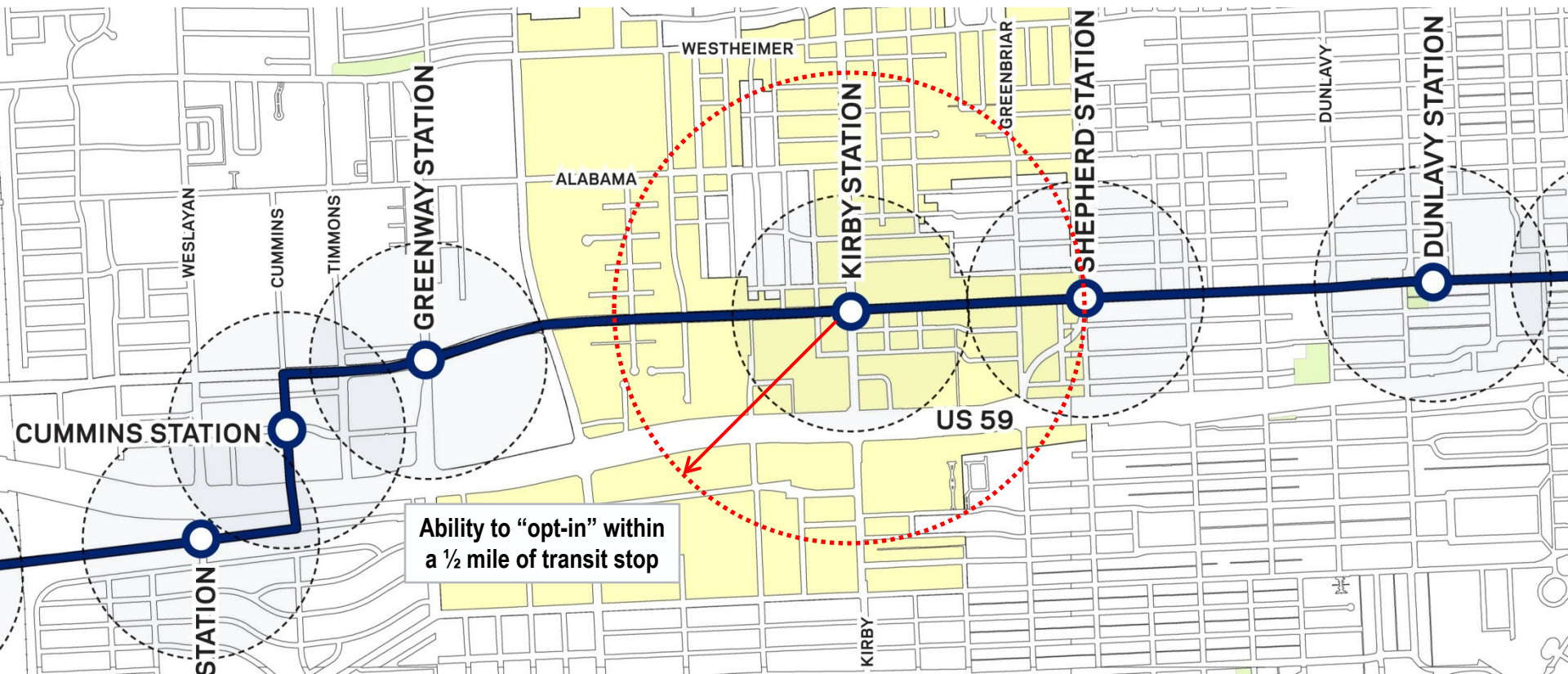
Public

Realm Funding

We believe incentives should reward a higher level of walkability with a higher level of **incentives to encourage quality development practices**. Incentives should also be **made available to existing landowners** to achieve continuity of the pedestrian realm with greater speed.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Promote “opt-in” provisions for developments within the area influenced by the transit corridor which also adhere to the proposed guidelines.



This option will help reduce the need for variances and will **encourage a greater number of pedestrian-friendly developments** across the City. The same incentives should be offered to properties that “opt-in” to the guidelines.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Recognize the importance of utilities, and particularly the location of overhead and buried power lines, as a critical factor in the success of any proposed guidelines.



Conclusions & Recommendations

ULI Urban Corridors Planning Assessment Group

		Transit Street	A Street	B Street
PEDESTRIAN	Pedestrian Clear Zone	8' Min (Required)	6' Min (Required)	6' Min (Required)
	Pedestrian Realm	15' Min (Preferred) / 12' Min (Required)	12' Min (Preferred) / 10' Min (Required)	10' Min (Preferred) / 8' Min (Required)
	[If preferred pedestrian realm widths are not met, then Trees in Grates and 3 of the 5 options are required]	* Trees in Grates (Required)	Trees in Grates (Required)	
		1 Specialized Paving	Specialized Paving	
		2 Street Furniture (cannot be in clear zone)	Street Furniture (cannot be in clear zone)	
		3 Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance	Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance	
		4 Awnings / Canopies	Awnings / Canopies	
	5	Enhanced Landscaping or Other Planting Materials	Enhanced Landscaping or Other Planting Materials	

Conclusions & Recommendations

ULI Urban Corridors Planning Assessment Group

		Transit Street	A Street	B Street
BUILDING	* Build Within Zone	0-10' (Required) From Edge of Pedestrian Realm	0-20' (Required) From Edge of Pedestrian Realm	
	* Minimum Built Frontage	75% Min (Preferred) / 60% Min (Required)	60% Min (Preferred) / 40% Min (Required)	
	Façade Articulation	40% Transparency (Preferred) [1]	25% Transparency (Preferred) [1]	
	[If preferred transparency percentages are not met, then 2 of the 4 options are required]	1 Continuous run of blank walls not to exceed 30' in length and not to comprise more than 25% of the total façade length	Continuous run of blank walls not to exceed 30' in length and not to comprise more than 25% of the total façade length	
		2 Façade must be articulated through change in materials, change in depth, etc	Façade must be articulated through change in materials, change in depth, etc	
		3 "Soft" landscaping (plant material) that will be continuous along the linear frontage (gaps for utility access permitted) and a minimum height of 72" upon full growth; cannot encroach in pedestrian clear zone	"Soft" landscaping (plant material) that will be continuous along the linear frontage (gaps for utility access permitted) and a minimum height of 72" upon full growth; cannot encroach in pedestrian clear zone	
		4 Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance	Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance	
	* Façade Height	24' Min (Required)	24' Min (Required)	

*The Planning Commission, after public notice and hearing, shall issue a special exception under the following circumstances:

i) A "significant project"

ii) Located in a "major activity center"

iii) Providing alternative public benefits, such as, but not limited to, publicly available plaza, superior design characteristics, upgraded landscaping, alternative pedestrian-friendly design, or other enhancements to the pedestrian realm

Conclusions & Recommendations

ULI Urban Corridors Planning Assessment Group

		Transit Street	A Street	B Street
BLOCK	Block Length	600' Max (Preferred)	600' Max (Preferred)	
		Block face may be broken by a publicly accessible street. Street must be open at least from dawn to dusk. Street may be pedestrian/bike only.	Block face may be broken by a publicly accessible street. Street must be open at least from dawn to dusk. Street may be pedestrian/bike only.	
	Curb Cuts / Driveways	100' spacing between curb cuts OR 1 per parcel (Preferred)	100' spacing between curb cuts OR 1 per parcel (Preferred)	100' spacing between curb cuts OR 1 per parcel (Preferred)
		If access is available from an A or B street, it is preferred over parcel access from a transit street		
	Parking	Located at rear of parcel (Preferred)	Located at rear of parcel (Preferred)	Located at rear of parcel (Preferred)
		The visual impact of structured parking garages should be mitigated by façade articulation, change in materials, louvres, landscaping, or other architectural treatments	The visual impact of structured parking garages should be mitigated by façade articulation, change in materials, louvres, landscaping, or other architectural treatments	The visual impact of surface or structured parking should be mitigated through the use of landscape screening
			On-Street Parking - Parallel or Angled (Preferred)	On-Street Parking - Parallel or Angled (Preferred)

Note [1]: Percentage is measured from grade vertically up to 10' of façade.

Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Task Force Members

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Daniel Barnum, Midtown Mgmt District

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Abbey Roberson, HOK

Jason Tramonte, HOK

Avanish Pendharkar, HOK

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John Mooz, Hines

John Anderson/Derek Darnell, Pelican Builders

Carlton Riser, Transwestern

Adam Saphier, Trammell Crow Company

Matt Stoval, Crosspoint Properties

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Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

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