

Downtown Master Plan | Wharton Texas

MASTER PLAN CONCEPTS PRESENTATION
26 September 2023

An aerial photograph of a suburban town. The image shows a grid of streets, numerous houses with lawns, and several large commercial or industrial buildings. A prominent road with a median runs vertically through the center. There are green spaces, including a large park-like area at the bottom and a golf course on the left. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing the word "Connectivity" in a bold, dark blue font.

Connectivity

Pedestrian & Bicycle Connectivity



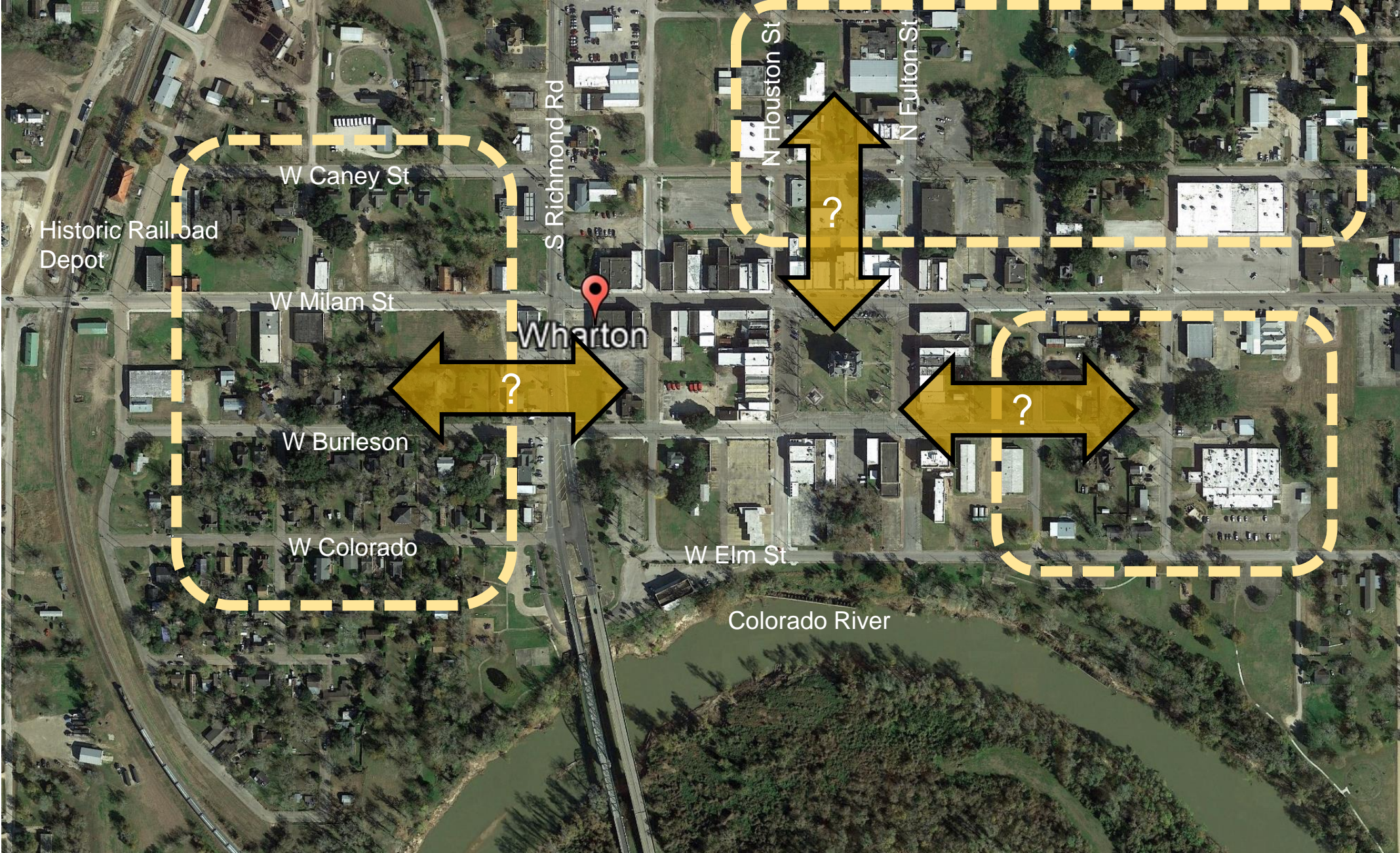
On Street Lane or Route

Off-Street Trail

Major Destination

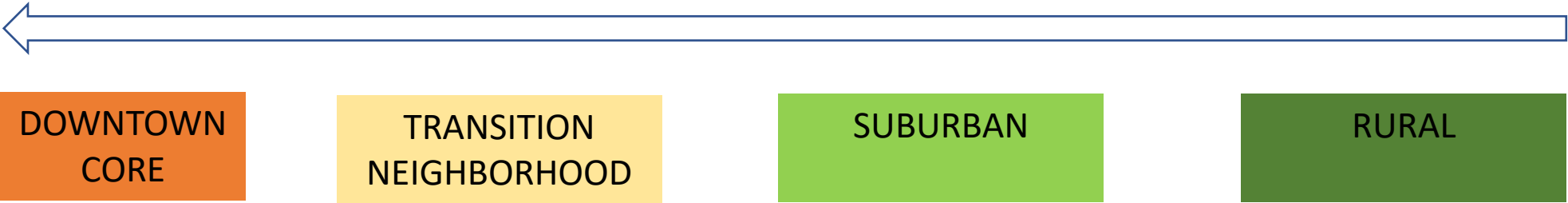


Pedestrian & Bicycle Connectivity – Neighborhoods



- West Milam neighborhood disconnected by dangerous pedestrian conditions on Richmond Rd.
- No sense of connection with Downtown
- Consider long-term goals for neighborhood connectivity
- Consider connections to neighborhoods north and east of Downtown
- Core – Transition Neighborhood – Suburban - Rural

GRADATION OF URBAN CHARACTER



Pedestrian & Bicycle Connectivity – Commercial Driveways



Example in Jasper Texas: Before

Require defined driveways with islands and crosswalks



Route pedestrians around parking bays where possible

Example in Jasper Texas: After driveway and sidewalk changes

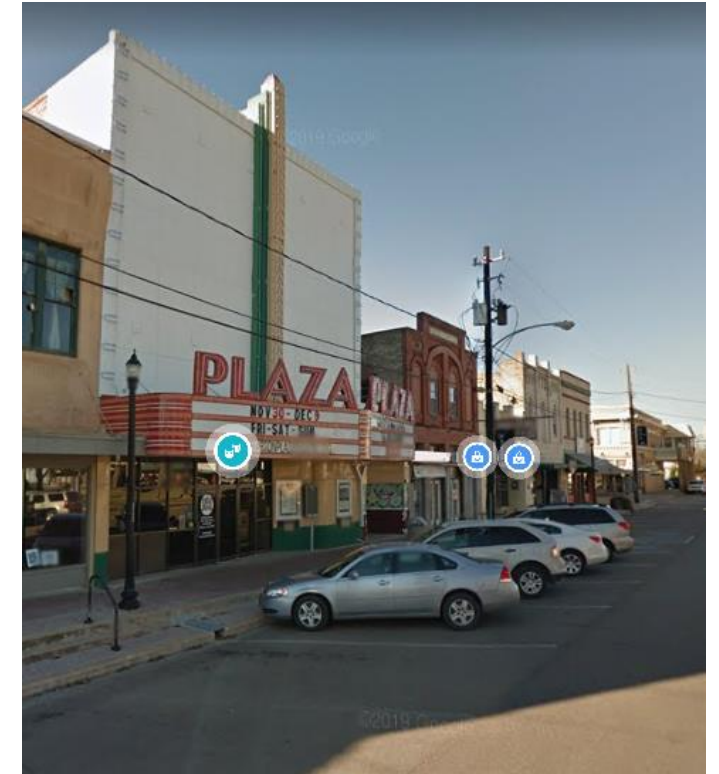


Existing

- Wide and poorly defined driveways
- Head-in parking from street
- Extensive pavement
- Unsafe pedestrian conditions



Identity



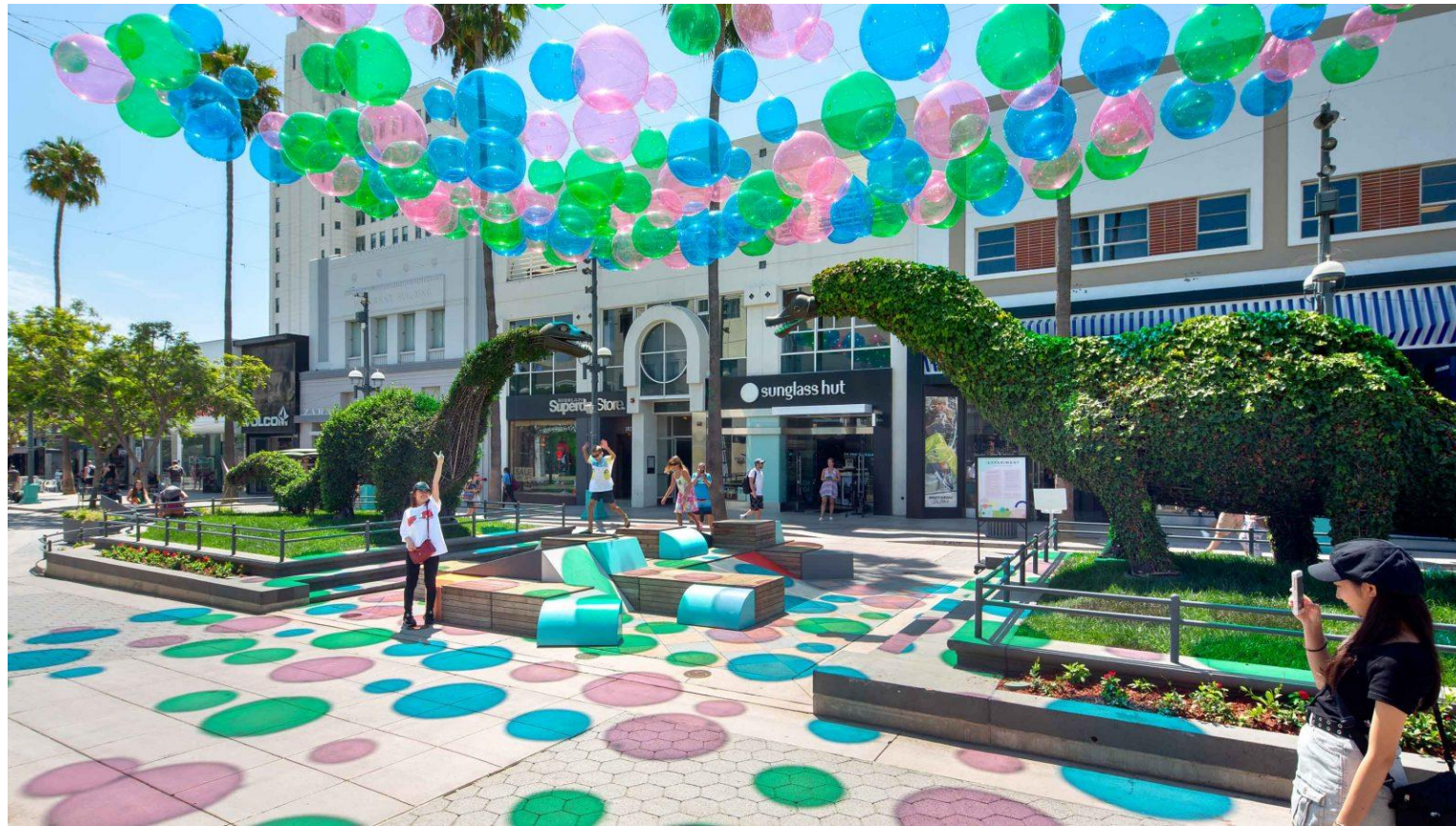
What makes Wharton unique?

- Festivals and Events
- Wharton Movie Night
- Wharton Farmer's Market
- Architecture
- Quirky Places



What makes great downtowns?

- Walkable shopping / dining
- Easy access
- Festivals & Events
- Special public open spaces
- Safe, understandable and comfortable
- Beautiful authentic architecture
- Great restaurants and entertainment

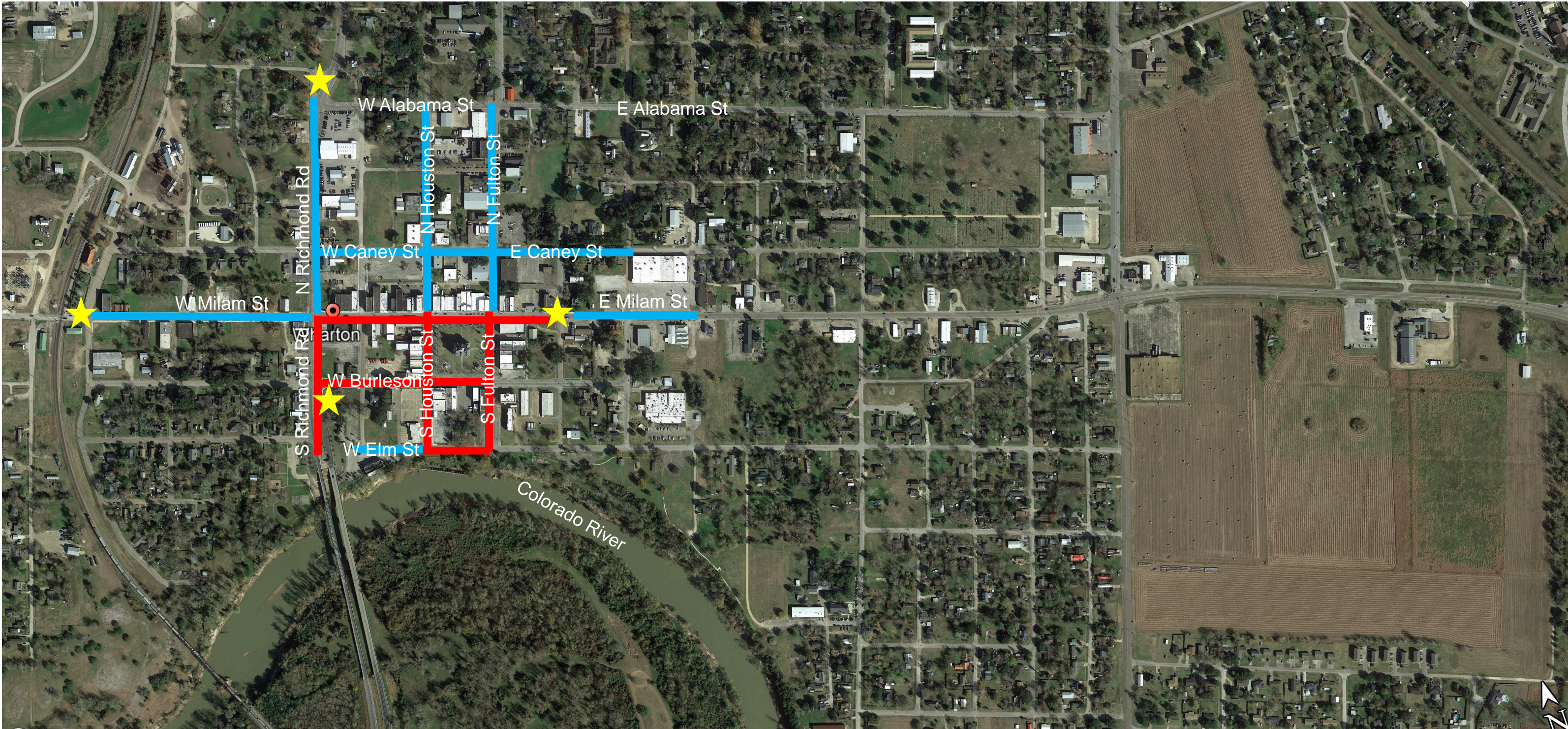


Placemaking Tools

- Furnishings
- Lighting
- Banners
- Traffic Lights & Regulatory Signs
- Entry Signage & Monuments
- Art
- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Controlled Driveways
- Special Paving
- Planting
- Way-finding



Identity – Overall Identity Plan



Possible Downtown Entry



Linear Streetscape Improvements – Tier 1



Linear Streetscape Improvements – Tier 2

Identity - North Downtown Entry



- Opportunity for Downtown Entry marker
- Landscape island at Bolton
- Building density becomes more urban at W Alabama



 Possible Downtown Entry

Identity – North Downtown Entry



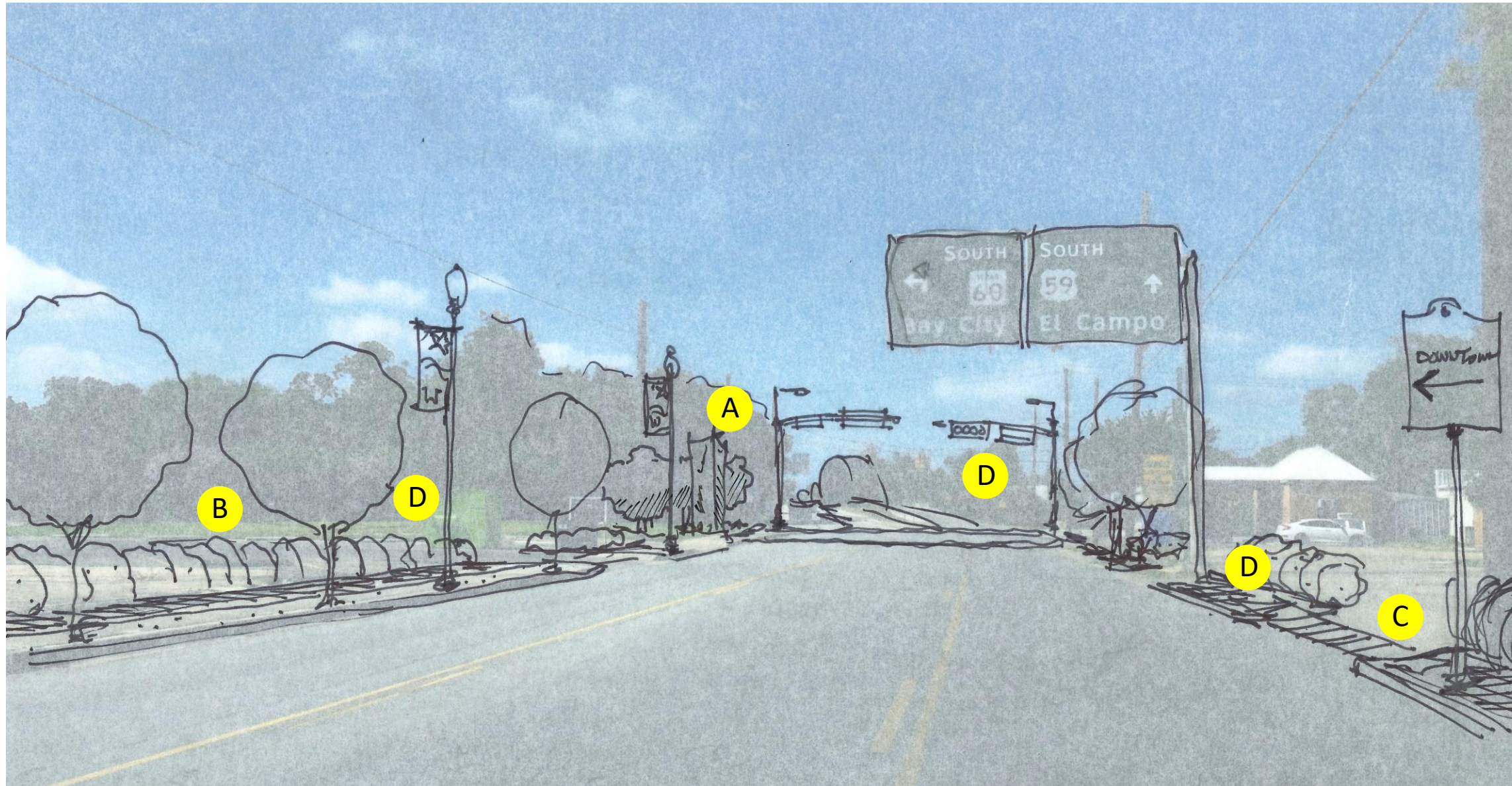
- Connection to Downtown is unclear
- West Milam is one-way west-bound and intersection does not appear urban
- No crosswalks and reported as unsafe for pedestrians
- Sense of passing Downtown and leaving Wharton
- W Burleson is actual connection to Downtown but no visual clues
- Open lot at W Burleson potential Downtown marker



ANALYSIS

- A. Downtown entry from North Richmond not well marked.
- B. Open parking lots and undeveloped land lack urban character. Feels and appears separate from Downtown.
- C. Wide driveways confusing, encourage speed, and unsafe for pedestrians
- D. Lacks landscape, sidewalks, decorative lighting and signals, and furnishings.

Identity – North Downtown Entry - Proposed Concepts



- A. Create iconic, highly visible downtown entry marker to direct traffic to downtown.
- B. Encourage an urban character in future development.
- C. Narrow and define driveways.
- D. Add urban streetscape elements to create safe pedestrian environment and Downtown character:
 - Sidewalks
 - Landscape
 - decorative crosswalks
 - Decorative lights & banners
 - Decorative traffic signals
 - Wayfinding
 - Furnishings

Identity – South Downtown Entry - Proposed Concepts

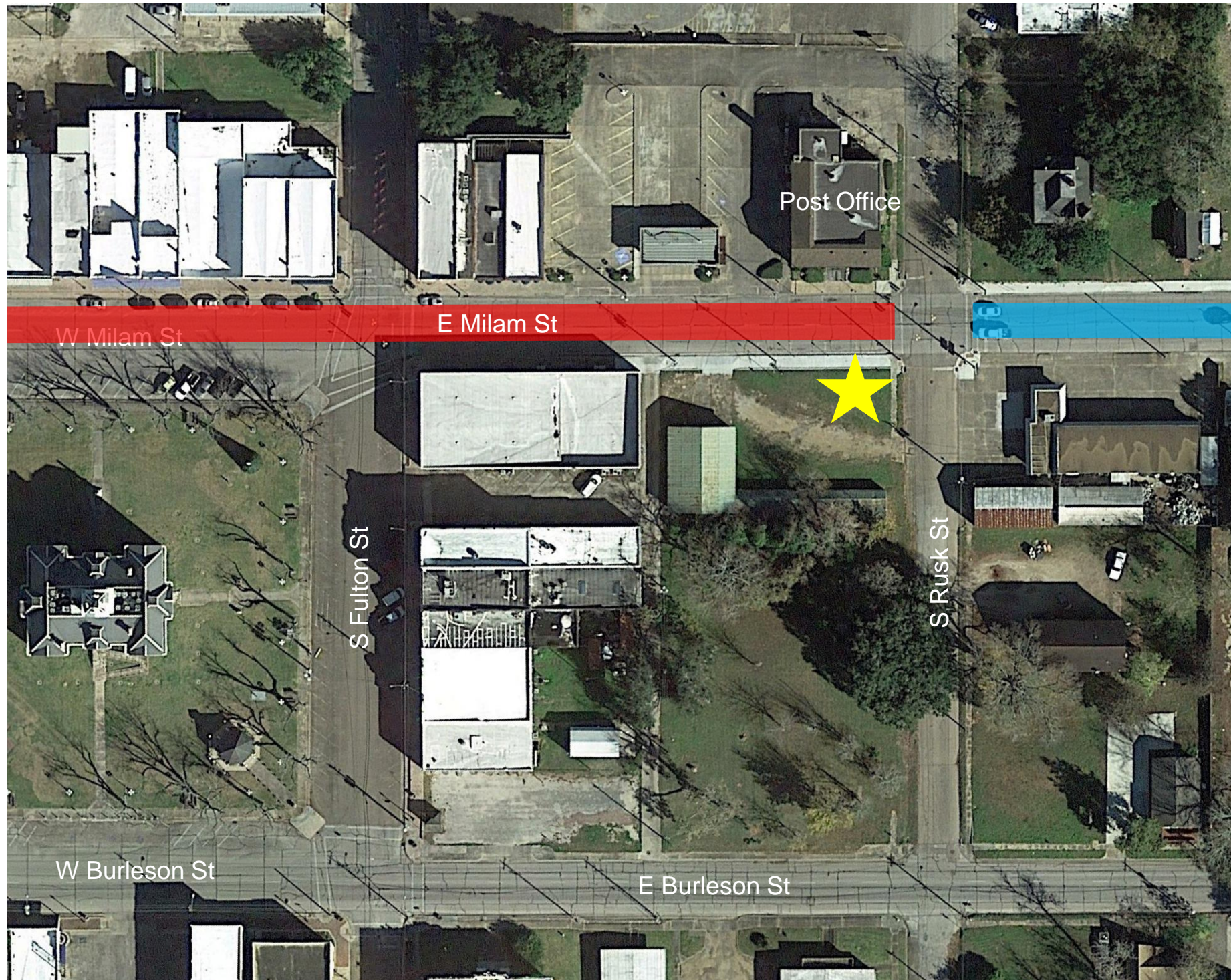


- Approach from south Business Hwy 59 from River bridge
- Sense of arrival but connection to Downtown unclear
- Opportunity for entry identification at undeveloped lot at W Burleson St.
- No crosswalks and reported as unsafe for pedestrians
- Combined marker location for north and south arrivals



Possible Downtown Entry

Identity – East Downtown Entry



- Approach from east along Bay City Hwy (Hwy 60/E Milam) – arrival point is not clear
- Rusk St – building density becomes more urban. First traffic signal
- Vacant lot at 120 E Milam potential gateway location
- Begin 1st Tier streetscape enhancements

 Possible Downtown Entry

Identity – West Downtown Entry



- Different factors than N, S and E arrivals
- Approach from west across RR tracks and along W Milam – arrival point is not clear
- Historic train depot
- Short section of urban storefronts
- Generally density is not urban
- Transition neighborhood?



Streetscape

Placemaking Tools

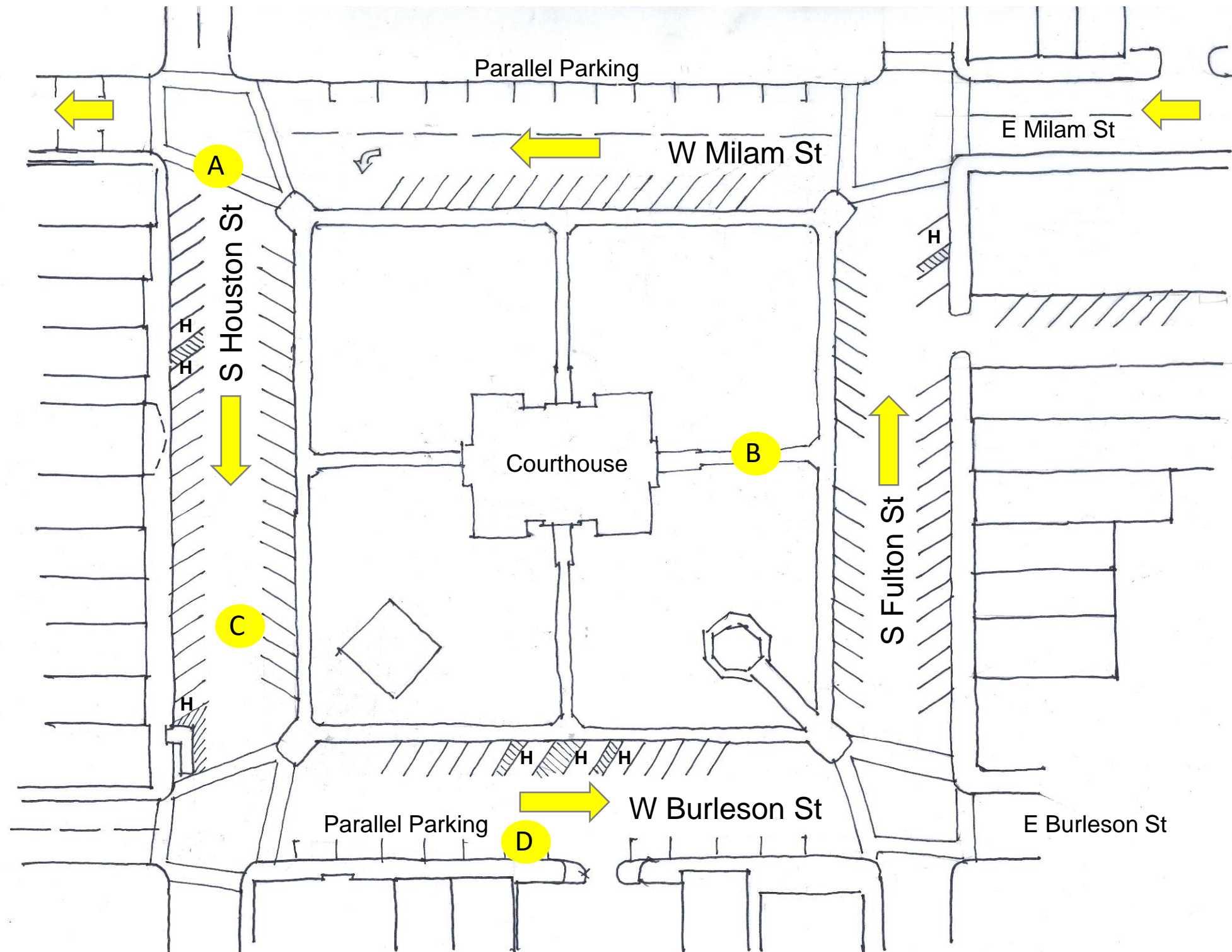
- Furnishings
- Lighting
- Banners
- Traffic Lights & Regulatory Signs
- Entry Signage & Monuments
- Art
- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Controlled Driveways
- Special Paving
- Planting
- Way-finding



ANALYSIS

- A. Historic buildings with original architectural style (unpainted brick, clear glass windows, original style canopies, painted wood details, decorative entries) enhances downtown.
- B. Occupied buildings with retail and restaurant tenants contribute to a lively downtown.
- C. Brick sidewalk pavers are attractive upgrade.
- D. Use of decorative streetlights enhance downtown character





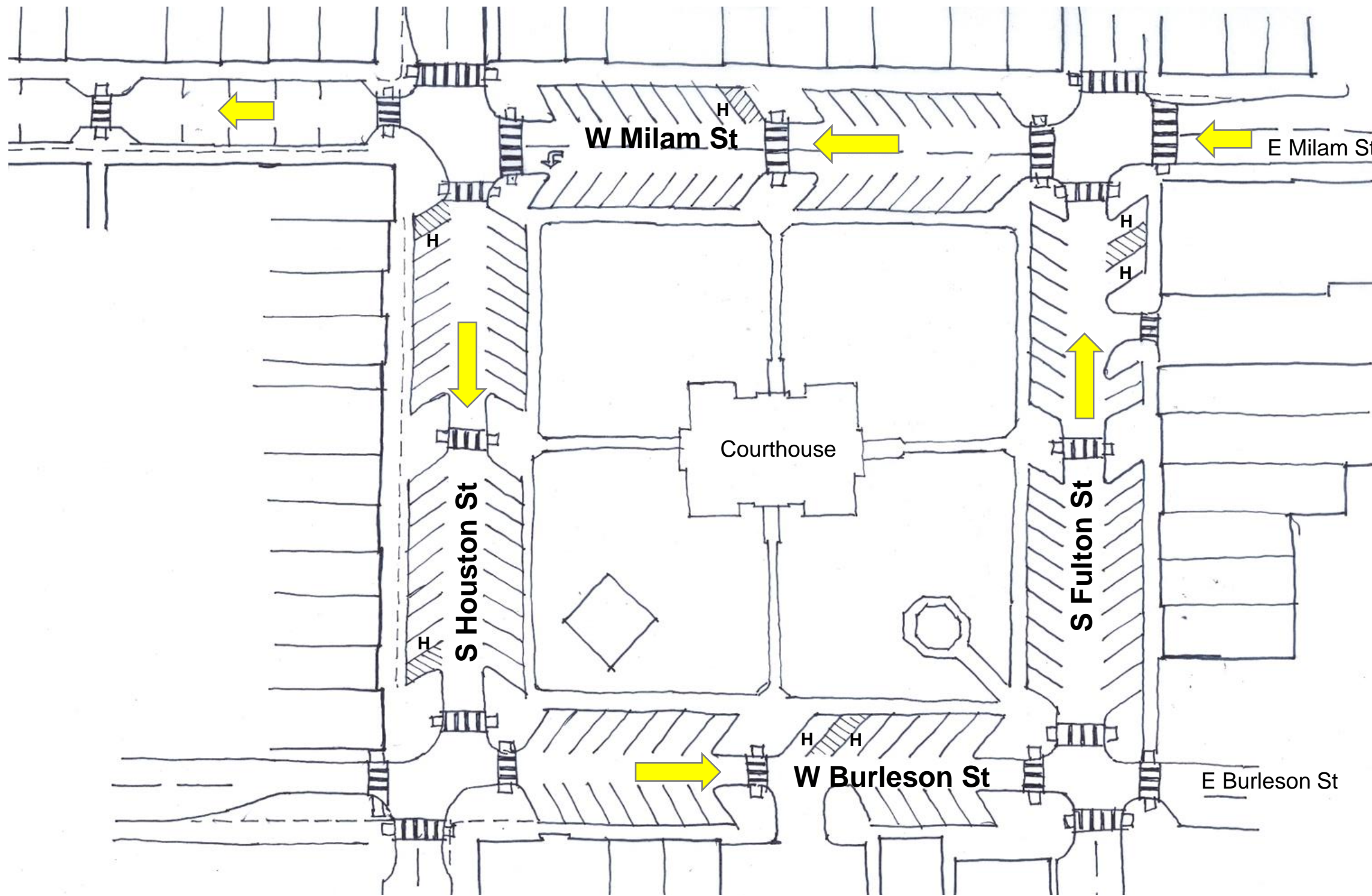
 Traffic Direction

Head-In Parking: 96
 Handicap Parking: 7
Parallel Parking: 21
 Total Spaces: 124

ANALYSIS

- A. Milam and Burleson are TxDOT ROW.
- B. Traffic lanes on Milam and Burleson are wider than required (16' to 17').
- C. Wide lanes encourage driving speed and unsafe pedestrian conditions. Limit opportunities for sidewalk amenities.
- D. Long crosswalks unsafe and inconvenient.
- E. Parallel parking on Milam and Burleson is inefficient.

Downtown Streetscape – Proposed Concepts



 Traffic Direction

CONCEPTS

- A. Change parallel parking on Milam and Burleson to angled head-in. Gain parking spaces.
- B. Add intersection bump-outs
- C. Add mid-block bump-outs and pedestrian crossings
- D. Slightly reduce lane widths on Milam and Burleson to gain room for head-in parking. Retain dedicated turn lane on Milam.
- E. Reduce Burleson from two lanes to one-lane, to match Houston and Fulton.

Angled Parking: 119
 Handicap Parking: 7
Parallel Parking: 0
 Total Spaces: 126

Increase of 2 spaces



INTERSECTION ANALYSIS

- A. Long crosswalks unsafe.
- B. Concrete bump-outs unsightly. No opportunities for pedestrian amenities.
- C. Inconsistent crosswalk markings add to visual clutter.
- D. Suspended traffic signals contribute to visual clutter and not visible to pedestrians .
- E. Old-style cobrahead street lights do not contribute to the downtown character.





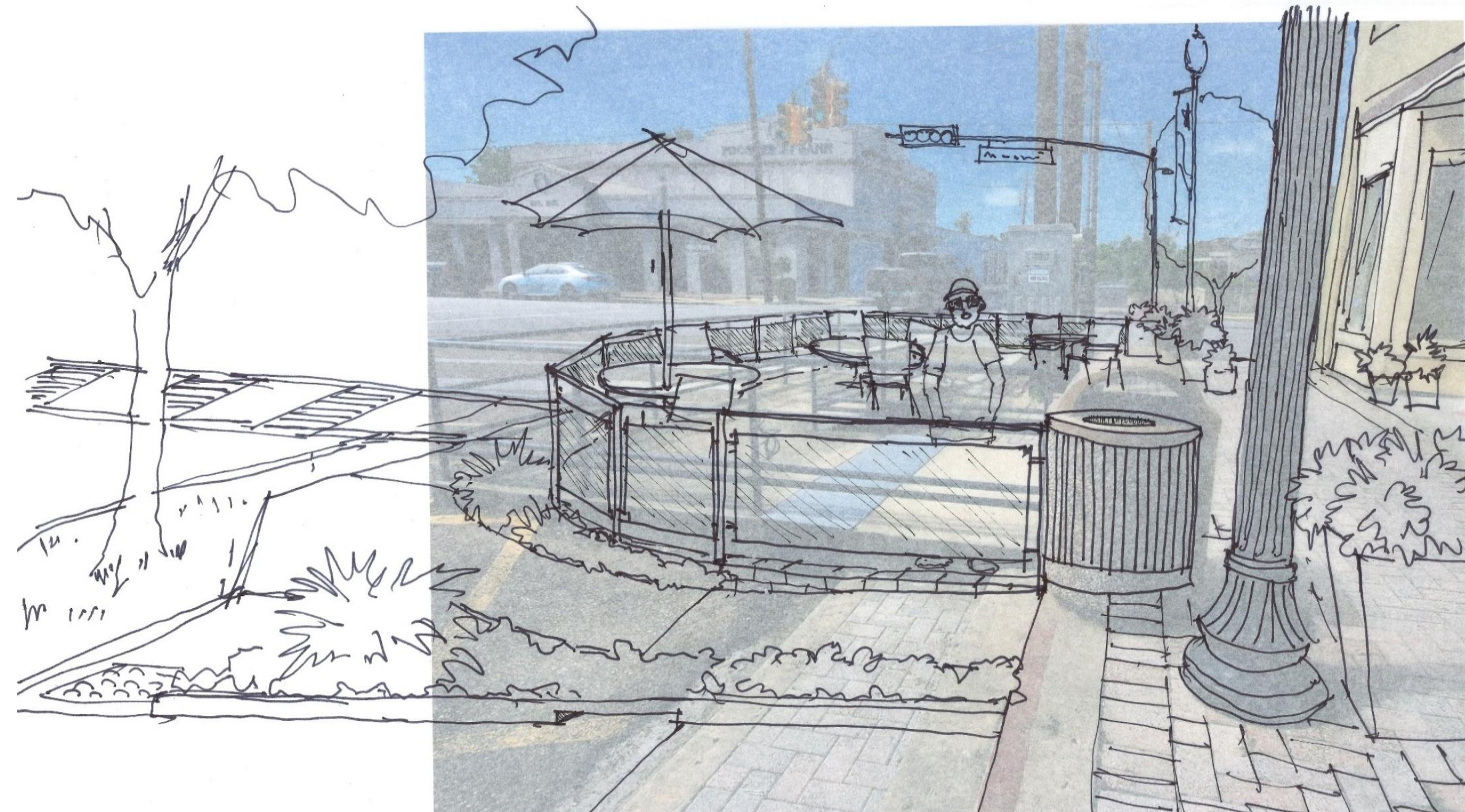
PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Existing concrete bump-outs at courthouse reconfigured to provide space for streetscape amenities.
- Intersection bump-outs enable shorter crossings, safer and easier for pedestrians.
- Bump-outs define drive lane, calm traffic speeds, differentiate parking bays, provide space for trees, landscape, seating, lighting, banners.
- Paver crosswalks help define the intersection and add to the overall downtown character. More visible to drivers and safer.
- New, slim LED cobrahead streetlights can be incorporated into the streetscape components.



ANALYSIS

- A. TXDOT handicap ramps are unsightly and not integrated with streets and sidewalks.
- B. Limited opportunities for sidewalk amenities such as trees & planting, lights, and seating/ gathering areas.
- C. Use of decorative light poles enhance downtown character



PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Bump-outs create well-defined, shorter intersection crossings, and calm traffic.
- Incorporate accessibility and reduce need for ramps.
- Provide space for streetscape amenities.
- Reduce need for steps between parking and storefront sidewalk.



ANALYSIS

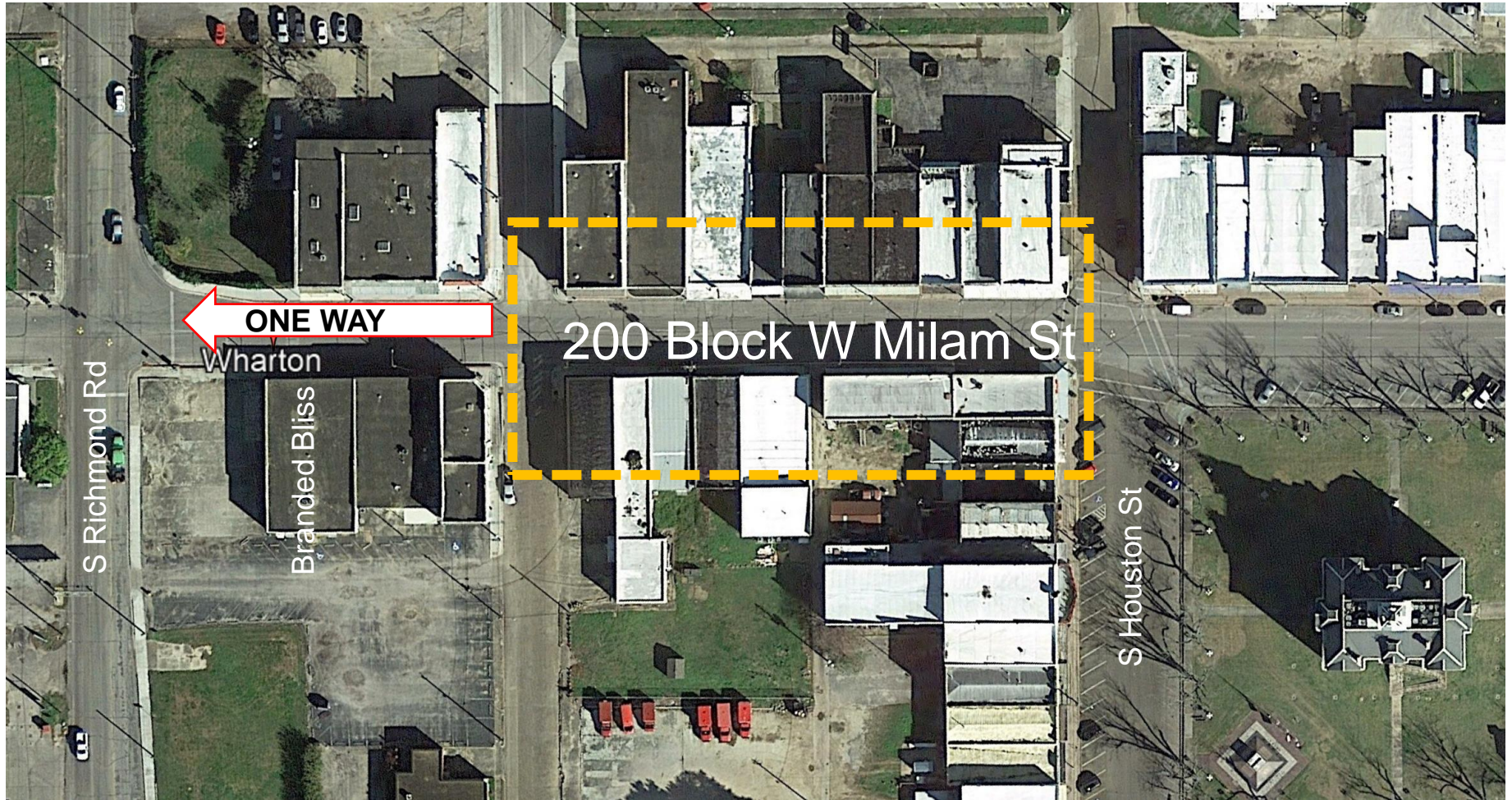
- A. Brick sidewalk pavers are attractive upgrade.
- B. Overhead canopies provide shade for pedestrians.
- C. Steps from curb up to sidewalk limit access for many and pose safety hazard.



PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Add bump-outs to create defined, shorter crossings between storefronts and courthouse building.
- Provide space for streetscape amenities.
- Reduce need for steps between parking and sidewalk.
- Calm traffic speeds.

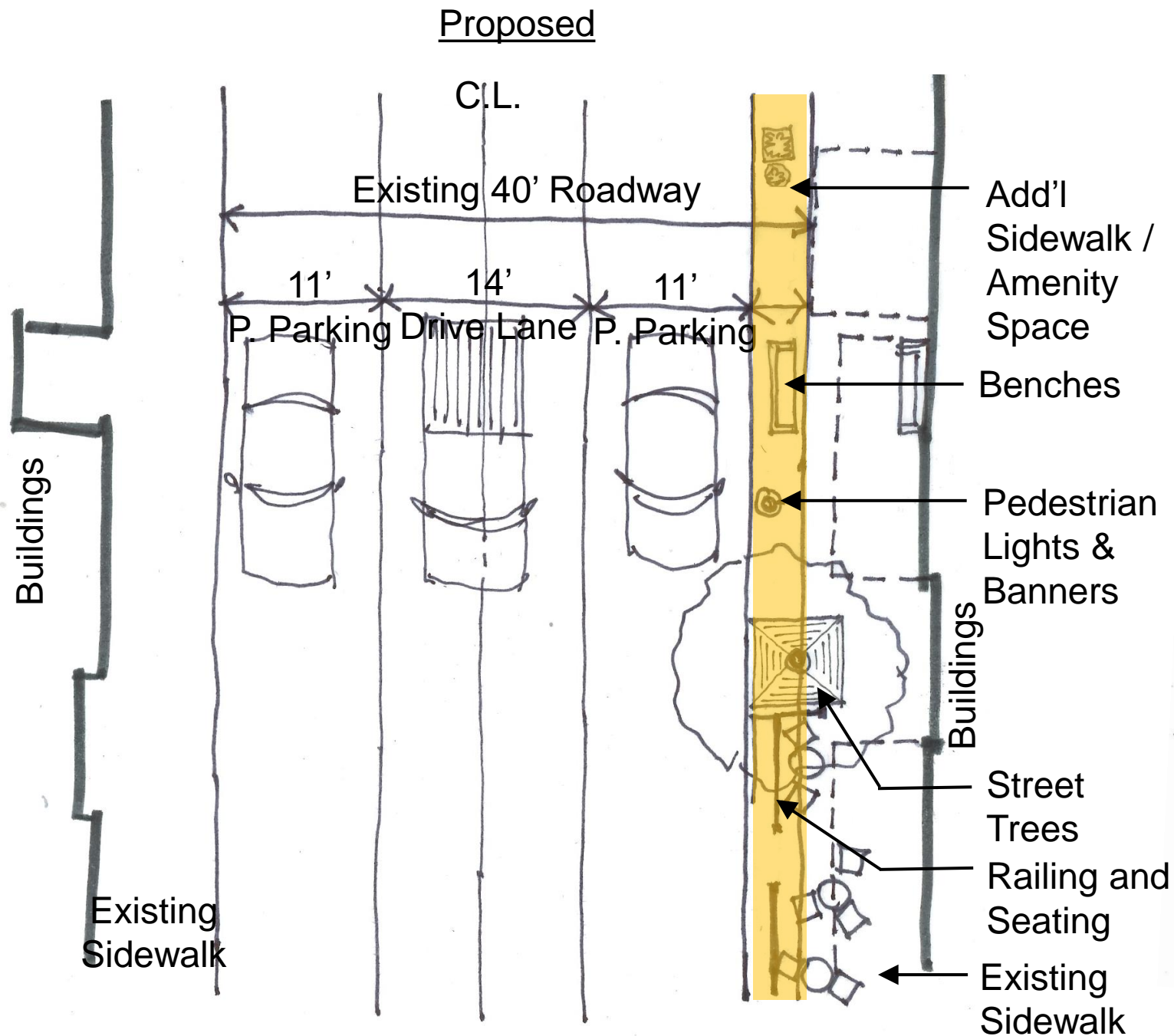
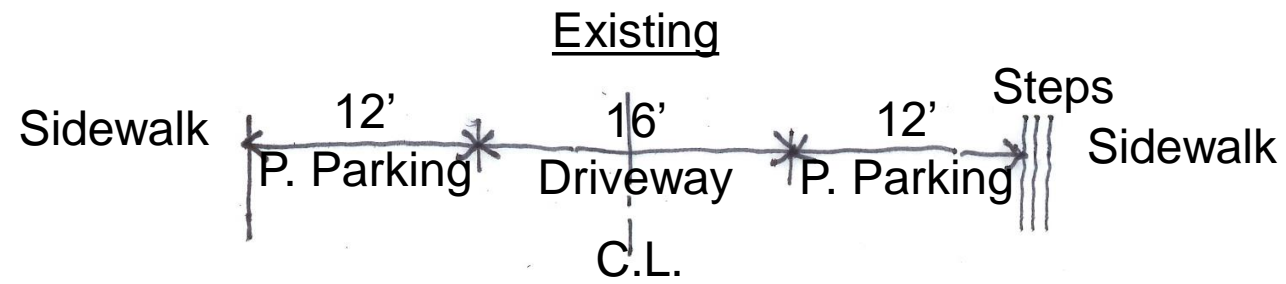
Downtown Streetscape - 200 Block West Milam





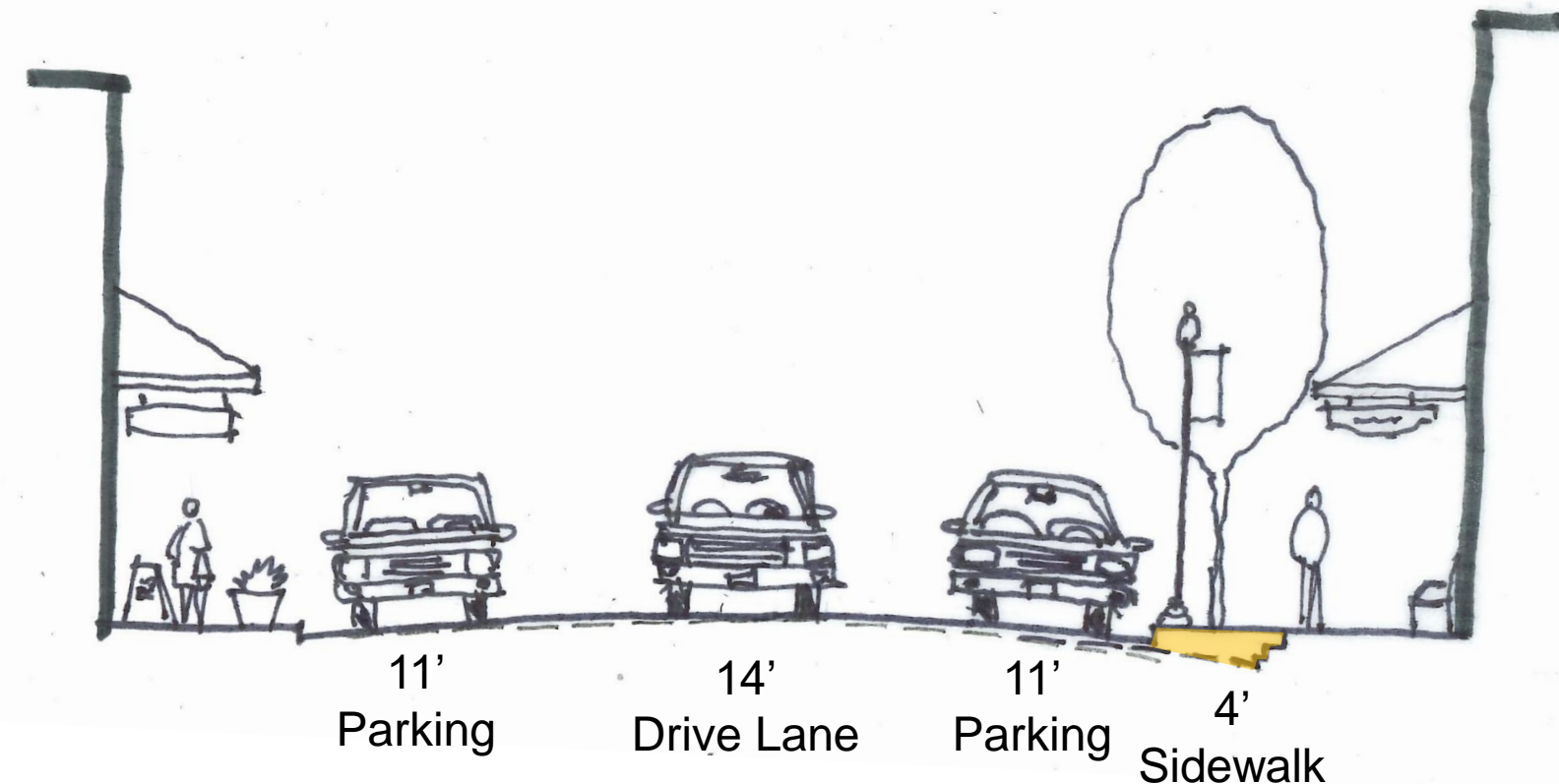
ANALYSIS

- A. 16' wide drive lane encourages speed and limits sidewalk amenity zone.
- B. Long distance between pedestrian crossings.
- C. Steps up from parking on most of south side.
- D. Many beautiful old buildings with canopies but canopies limit space for trees and pedestrian lights.



PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Narrow traffic lane to 14' wide (wider than US 59 lanes) – calms traffic speed and shortens crosswalks
- Narrow parallel parking bays from 12' to 11' wide
- Widen south sidewalk by 4'
- Eliminate steps
- Create amenity zone for decorative pedestrian lights, trees, seating, furnishings





PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Narrower drive-lane reduces speed and adds room for sidewalk amenities on south side and fewer steps behind curb.
- Midblock crossing can be added with bump-outs.

An aerial photograph of a town, likely Riverfront, showing a grid of streets, residential buildings, and a river. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the top portion of the image, containing the text 'Riverfront'. The river flows from the top left towards the bottom center. The town is situated along the riverbank, with a mix of residential and commercial buildings. The surrounding area includes open fields and some industrial structures.

Riverfront

Riverfront



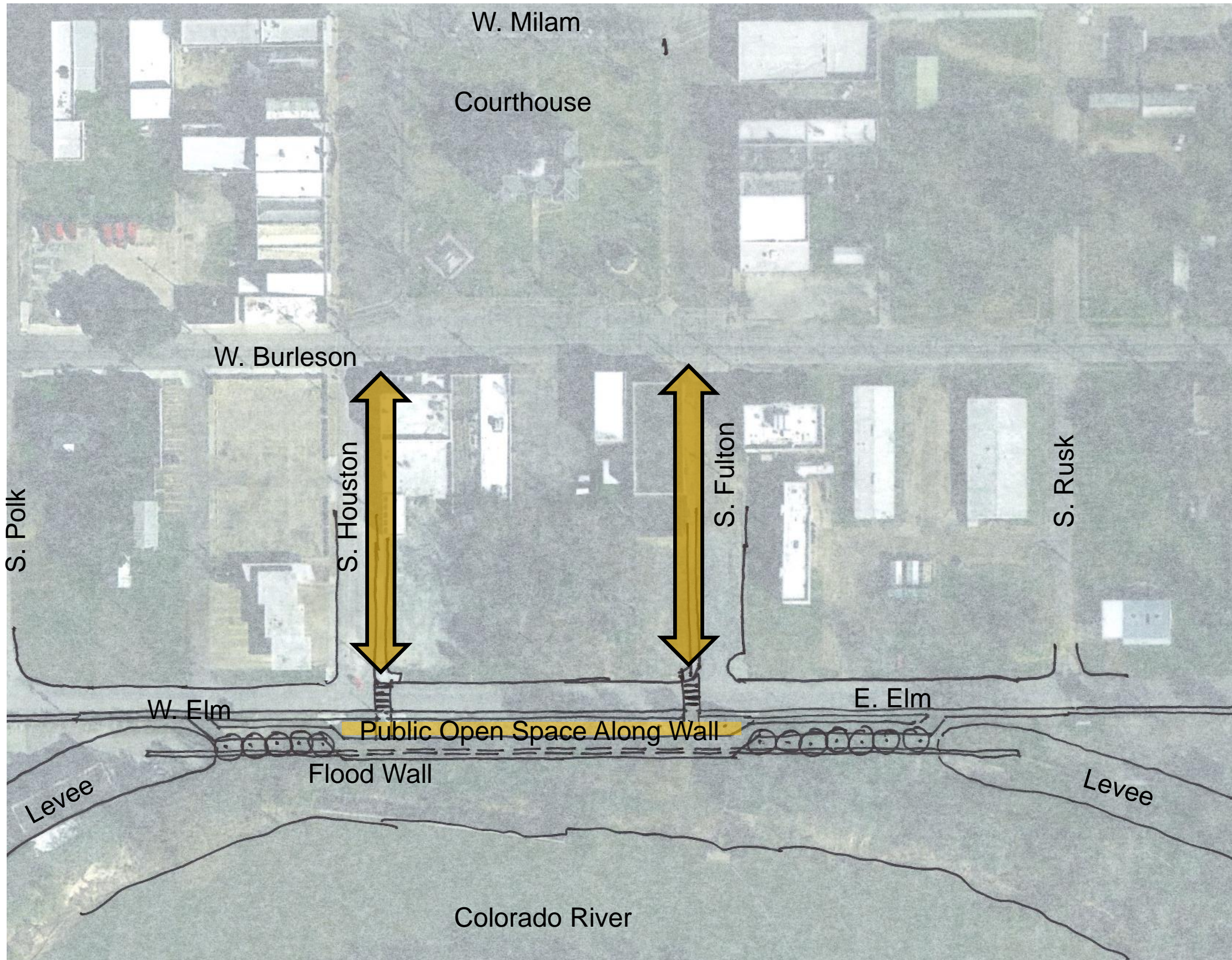
- Colorado River is adjacent to Downtown.
- Unique identity and resource
- Current park
- Flood hazard
- Difficult access



Riverfront – Future Flood Protection



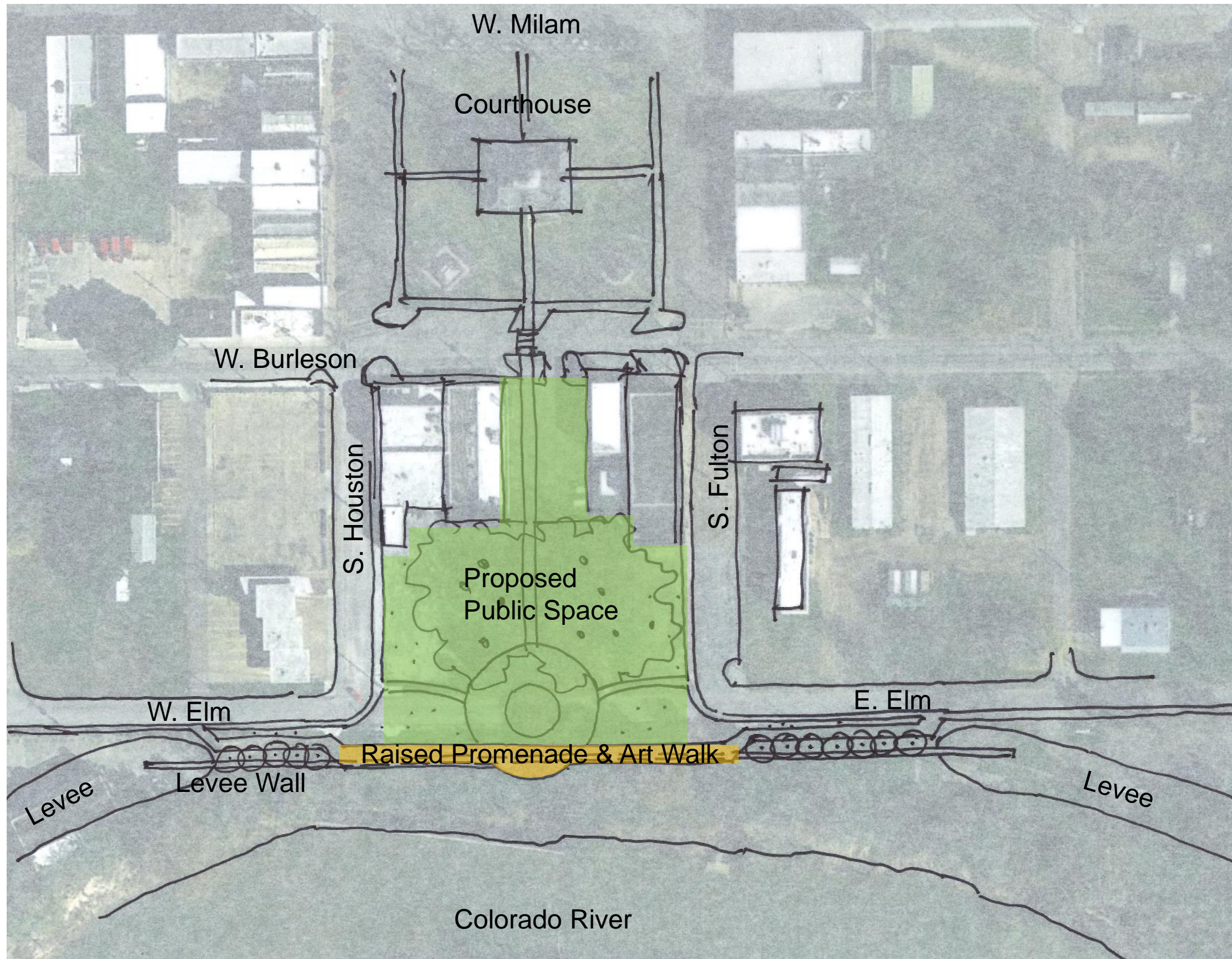
- Levee and Flood Wall in design by US Army Corps of Engineers
- Location and extent approximate
- Flood wall estimated to be about 6' high above Elm Street
- Conversations with USACE indicate openness to City open space improvements along levee and wall. Advance coordination required.
- Significant impacts – positive and negative to Downtown
- Important to seize opportunity to ensure flood improvements are positive civic amenities



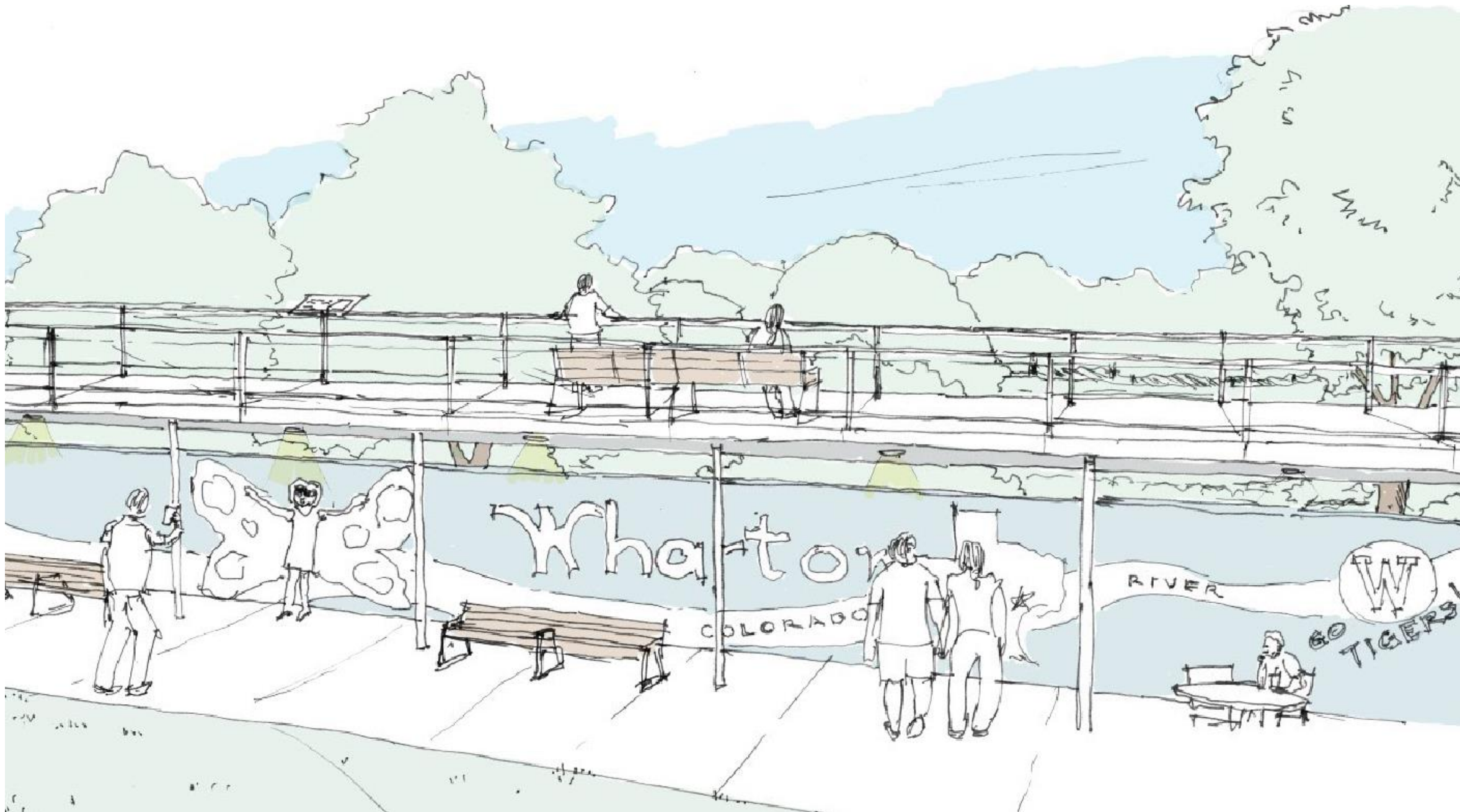
PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Public Open Space along Elm Street and Riverfront Park
- Connections along Houston and Fulton Streets. Crosswalks improve connection from downtown to Riverfront Park.

Riverfront – Option 2

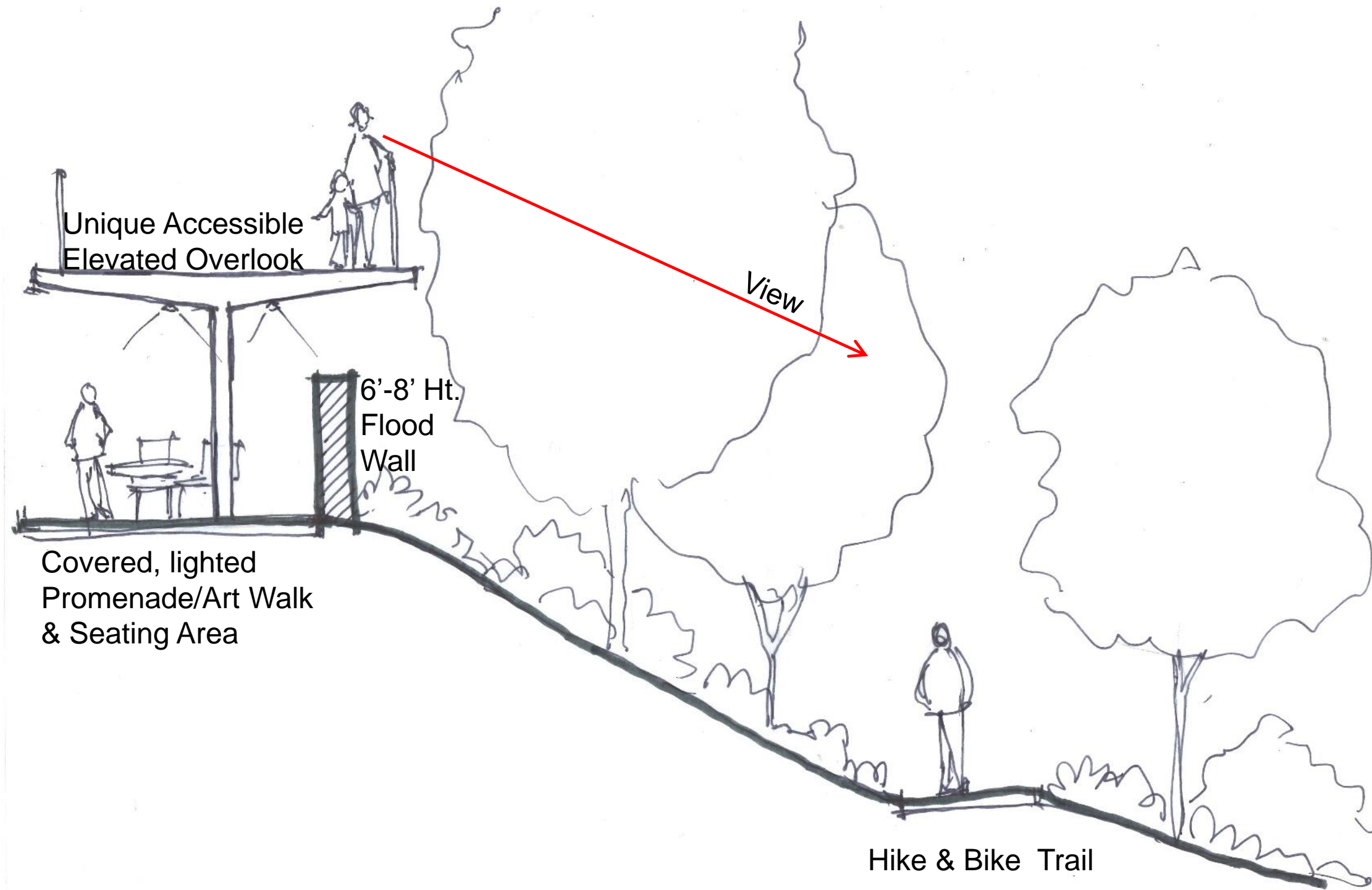


- Increase connection and public use of the Riverfront.
- Elm Street closed from Houston to Fulton.
- Acquire property between Fulton and Houston to develop as public park



PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Riverfront Promenade Park converts flood wall into civic landmark and attraction.
- Raised walkway with views over flood wall to river
- Shaded lower walk – potential for unique urban space including art and farmer’s market.
- Lighted at night for safety and inviting.
- Turn levee wall into public art canvas .



PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- Urban Riverfront Promenade Park along top of bank and flood wall.
- Natural environment and hike & bike trail along river slopes.
- Safe, attractive and unique civic open space.

SECTION



New York City High Line

LANDMARK CIVIC OPEN SPACES

- Many cities are known for their landmark parks and civic spaces.
- Landmark should reflect a unique aspect of the city.
- Create a place for residents to enjoy and be proud of and to attract visitors.
- Important part of overall Downtown placemaking.



San Antonio Riverwalk



New York City Battery Park

Storefronts



Downtown Storefronts





ANALYSIS

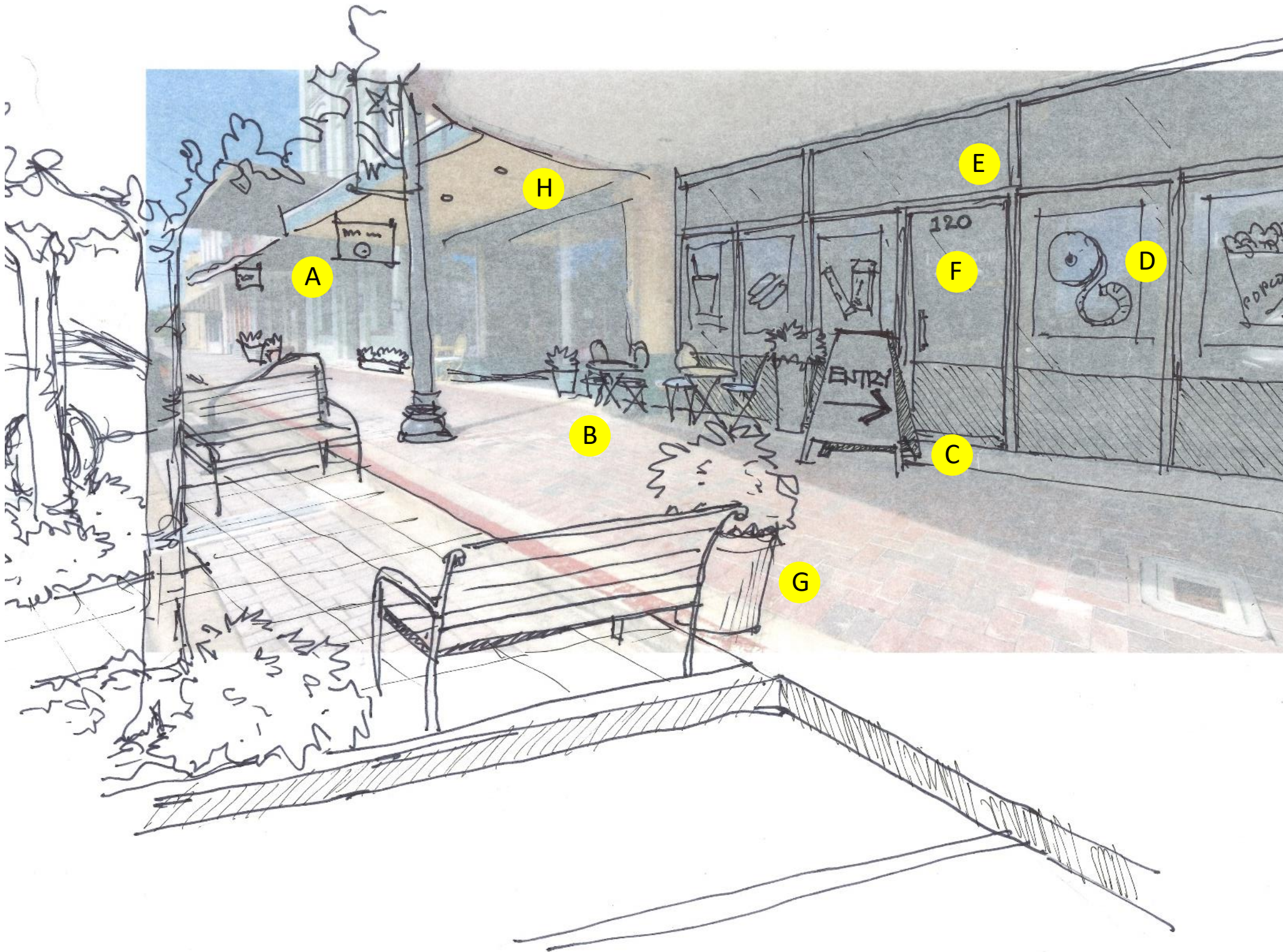
- A. Some 'upgrades' incompatible with historic architecture:
- Bronze colored door & window frames
 - Colored or reflective glass
 - Residential doors
 - Residential window coverings
 - Residential-style lights
- B. Most canopies appropriate for architecture but lack lighting and signage.
- C. Seating and window displays are inviting.
- D. Address numbers, lighting, and doors are inconsistent.



ANALYSIS

- A. Some contemporary window 'upgrades' are inconsistent with historic architecture style.
- B. Streetscape furnishings should be compatible with historic building architecture.
- C. Paver sidewalks add texture and interest, and should remain.
- D. Encourage original-style recessed entries with display windows, commercial doors and special flooring.





PROPOSED CONCEPTS

- A. Encourage 2-sided hanging signs visible to street and sidewalk.
- B. Encourage private outdoor dining. Private tables/chairs provide variety.
- C. Encourage sidewalk displays; advertising and sandwich boards add life and interest.
- D. Windows:
 - Clear glass most appropriate.
 - Add architectural films for privacy
 - Graphic displays add interest and connect stores to the street.
- E. Encourage clerestory windows over doors as architecturally-appropriate features.
- F. Encourage appropriate address numbers.
- G. Planting and streetscape furnishings should be public improvements to provide consistency.
- H. Encourage appropriate private accent lighting under-canopy and on building face.



- CONNECTIVITY
- IDENTITY
- STREETScape
- RIVERFRONT
- STOREFRONTS