

E

Loop Reimagination

OVERVIEW

Reimagining the I-169/ I-70/I-670 corridors (i.e., the North and South loops and the related vision for Highway 9,) could be the most important projects to reimagine and reposition Downtown economically for the next 50 years. Removing or minimizing these barriers presents opportunities to improve vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections, as well as provide cohesive visual connections to the River Market and the Crossroads District. Both projects unlock land for development by mitigating, condensing, lidding, or removing the interstates. The North Loop currently occupies a large amount of land and constructing a freeway lid over the South Loop presents an opportunity for creating a great public open space. Importantly, the North Loop project can also be designed to help solve the major regional environmental problem of combined sewer overflow, which impacts the northern part of Downtown as well as the greater Missouri river shed.

The North and South loops and the overpasses of Highway 9 are prominent Downtown design features. They are also antiquated, dangerous, and frustrating barriers between neighborhoods and the subject of plans and dreams for decades. In 2017 the Mid-America Regional Council began a concerted effort to analyze opportunities and get community input on how to look “Beyond the Loop”. The Downtown Council has an opportunity to catalyze projects for both short- and long-term implementation and begin the process of developing design and funding strategies.

PROJECTS

E1 NORTH LOOP

E2 SOUTH LOOP

**E3 BRIDGING PARK AND MARKET:
THE HIGHWAY 9 PROJECT**



Loop Reimagination

E1 NORTH LOOP

The footprint and function of the North Loop have negatively impacted the fabric and connectivity of the Downtown core, River Market area, and the Columbus Park neighborhoods. With its initial phase completed in 2018, the Beyond the Loop Planning and Environmental Linkages study provided an option for the complete removal of the North Loop with new urban development, a system of connected public spaces, and an integrated environmental strategy to enhance Downtown. A vibrant new development district can be created to reconnect the River Market to the core of Downtown by using an integrated smart stormwater system as a central amenity and organizing design feature, complete with connected trails, landscaped walkways, and activated open spaces.



TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

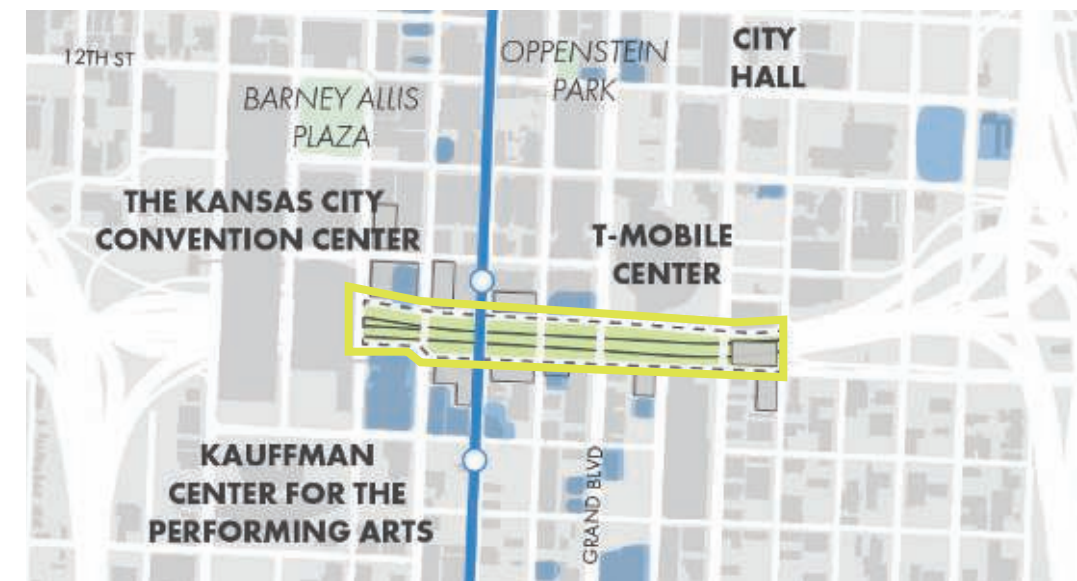
- E1a. Identify opportunities for short-term, low-cost projects that would show progress while advancing to larger goals, including strategies to reduce freeway barriers, creative improvements for freeway underpasses, new signage, transit access, and pedestrian and bicycle amenities.
- E1b. Advocate for the required engineering studies to advance the project.
- E1c. Work with neighborhood leaders to identify ways to integrate new development and public spaces into the existing neighborhoods.
- E1d. Seamlessly integrate transit with particular emphasis on the Streetcar, future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines, bicycle infrastructure and pedestrian networks.
- E1e. Explore connecting this central greenway feature to the region's trail networks, the proposed Greenline, and other multi-modal connection opportunities.



Loop Reimagination

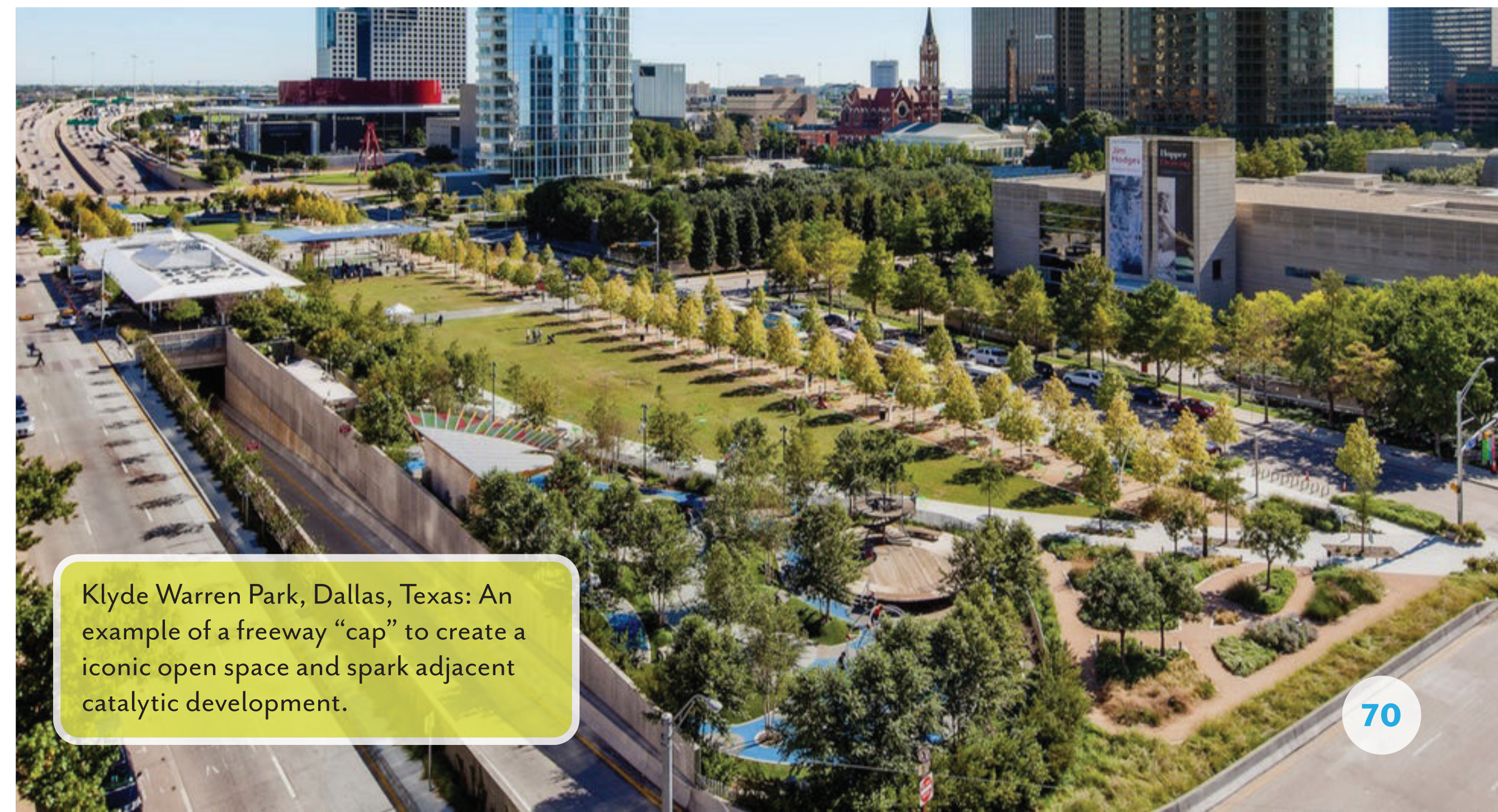
The Central Business District and the Crossroads Arts District are currently divided by the below-grade I-670 freeway. Both neighborhoods also lack public parks and plazas. The 2018 South Loop study – conceived to help unite these two important urban communities together with a public realm green space – proposed placing a lid over a three- or four-block long span, which would include a destination park with gardens, an open green lawn, a playground, public art, and outdoor seating with shade structures.

E2 SOUTH LOOP



TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- E2a. Continue to advocate for future implementation of this initiative to reconnect the Central Business District with the Crossroads Arts District.
- E2b. Identify the economic development benefits that could be achieved by this project, including opportunities for this to be led by the private sector as a public-private partnership while determining an appropriate level of public investment to move it forward.
- E2c. Determine the ongoing operation and maintenance costs and related funding mechanisms needed to support the anticipated park programming efforts to ensure it can serve the needs of the community long-term.



Klyde Warren Park, Dallas, Texas: An example of a freeway “cap” to create a iconic open space and spark adjacent catalytic development.

Loop Reimagination

E3 BRIDGING PARK AND MARKET: THE HIGHWAY 9 PROJECT

As an interconnected part of the North Loop, Highway 9 serves a major arterial highway bringing in commuters from the north into Downtown. Like the North Loop, Highway 9 has been a barrier between the River Market and Columbus Park neighborhoods for decades and has inhibited development immediately adjacent to the roadway.

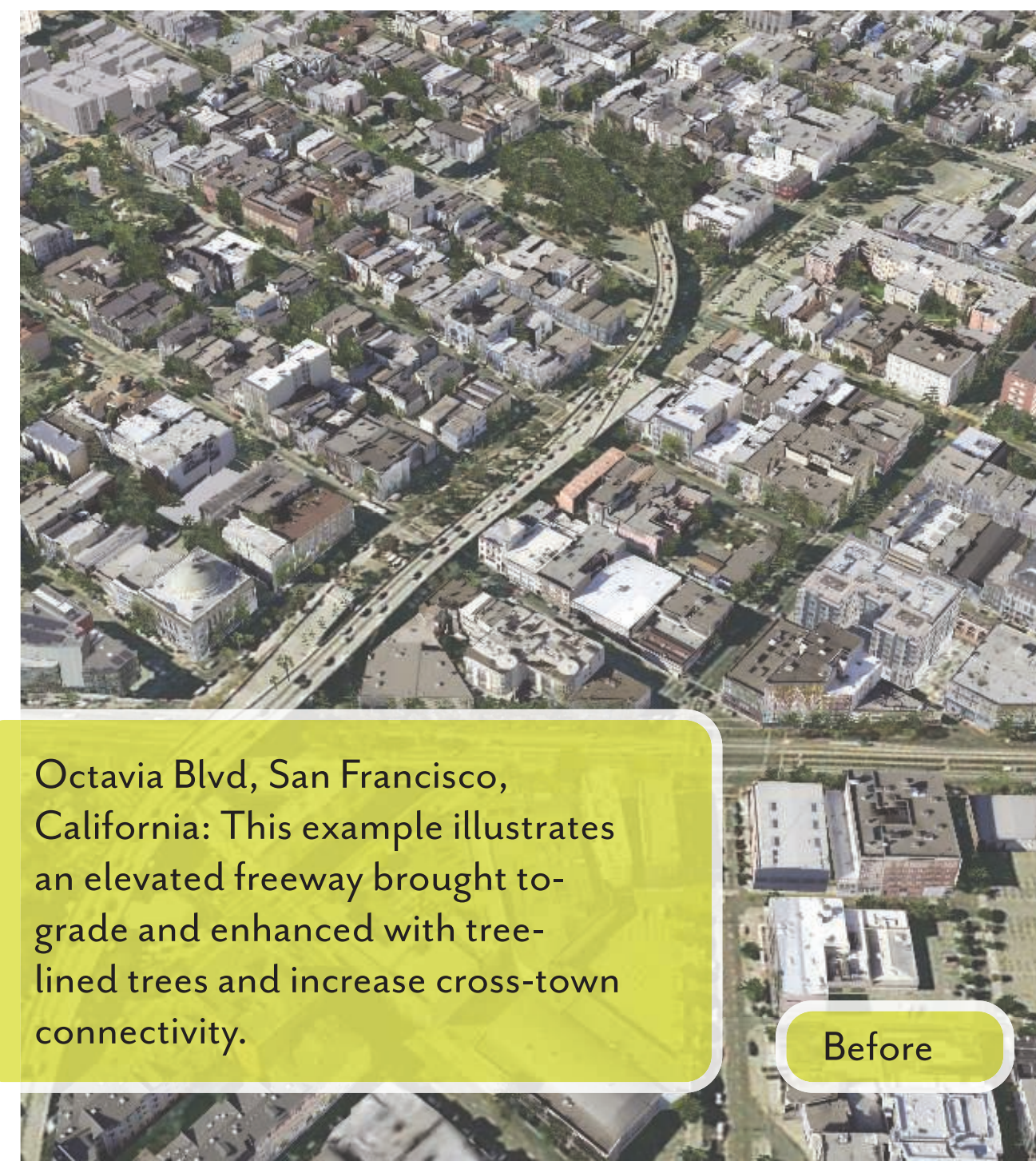
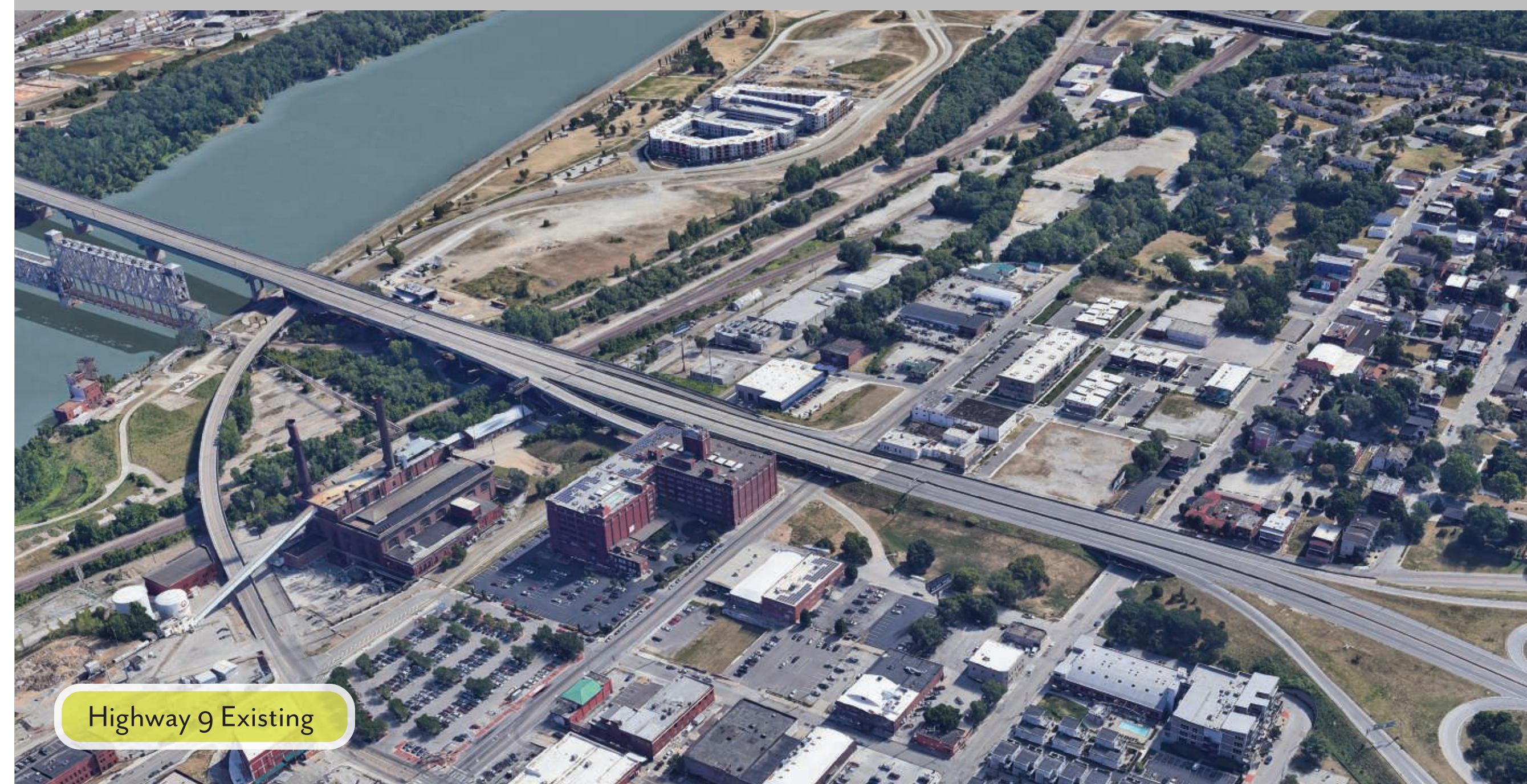
The 2018 Beyond the Loop study recommended that Highway 9 be brought down to grade to better integrate into the urban environment and provide land that is ripe for new development. The city recently commissioned an additional study exploring options for implementing this project, which included extensive community engagement. Although this feasibility study did not recommend a final solution, options to move the project forward

are still available to be evaluated and determined in conjunction with the eventual configuration of the North Loop area.



TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- E3a. Continue studying the feasibility of bringing Highway 9 down to grade between the Missouri River and the Central Business District.
- E3b. Engage River Market and Columbus Park neighborhood leaders and residents and ensure new development in Highway 9 footprint meets their needs and goals and includes strategies to avoid displacement.
- E3c. Integrate multi-modal transit along Highway 9 and Independence Avenue.



Octavia Blvd, San Francisco, California: This example illustrates an elevated freeway brought to-grade and enhanced with tree-lined trees and increase cross-town connectivity.

