

G

Street Reimagination

OVERVIEW

Great cities are experienced on foot. Downtown KC has the potential to become a terrific walkable city. Its vibrant and distinct neighborhoods, its architecture, the fountains, the murals, the human scale – are all important elements of a wonderful pedestrian experience.

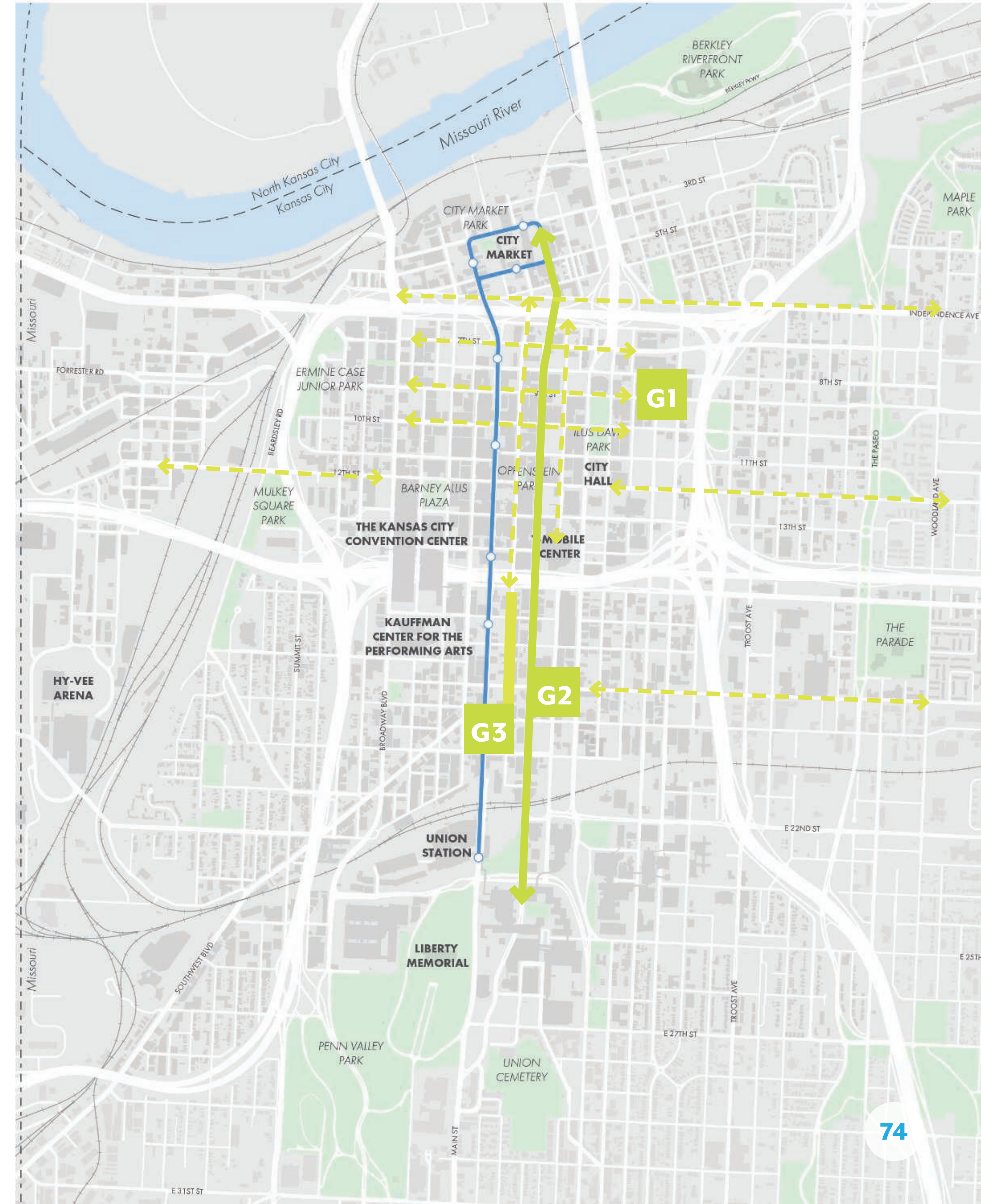
However, like many American cities, on many streets in Downtown KC the priority is given to the car, not the pedestrians. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the sidewalks and their potential for outdoor dining and safe, healthy recreation were re-discovered, and it will be a priority to retain and expand the changes that made this possible. In rethinking public space, we can look to overlooked hidden gems, like alleys, and revive good urban design plans that have been gathering dust but have the power to make significant positive change.

PROJECTS

G1 DOWNTOWN WALKABILITY

G2 MAKING GRAND “GRAND”

**G3 DOWNTOWN ALLEY ENHANCEMENT
(GRAND/WALNUT - OLD RAILROAD ALLEY)**



Street Reimagination

Walkability is an essential ingredient of a great city center. However, pedestrians in Downtown KC currently encounter many missing, cramped, and broken sidewalks; difficult connections to major activity centers like the Riverfront; and a lack of clear and safe connections, especially to adjacent neighborhoods to the east and west. Building from its base of historic human-scale neighborhoods – combined with key interventions – Downtown has the potential to be a truly walkable and vibrant urban core.

The City has already made a commitment to walkability, clearly stated in the Greater Downtown Area Plan. To promote strong and growing residential communities, it will be essential to have sidewalks

G1 DOWNTOWN WALKABILITY

and pedestrian pathways that safely accommodate residents with mobility challenges and provide comfortable and easy connections to local shopping, parks, and green spaces. A recent project reimagining Walnut Street as a flexible street through the City Market illustrates how a creative solution can address several concerns, including the business needs in the market, traffic flows, and pedestrian enjoyment and safety.

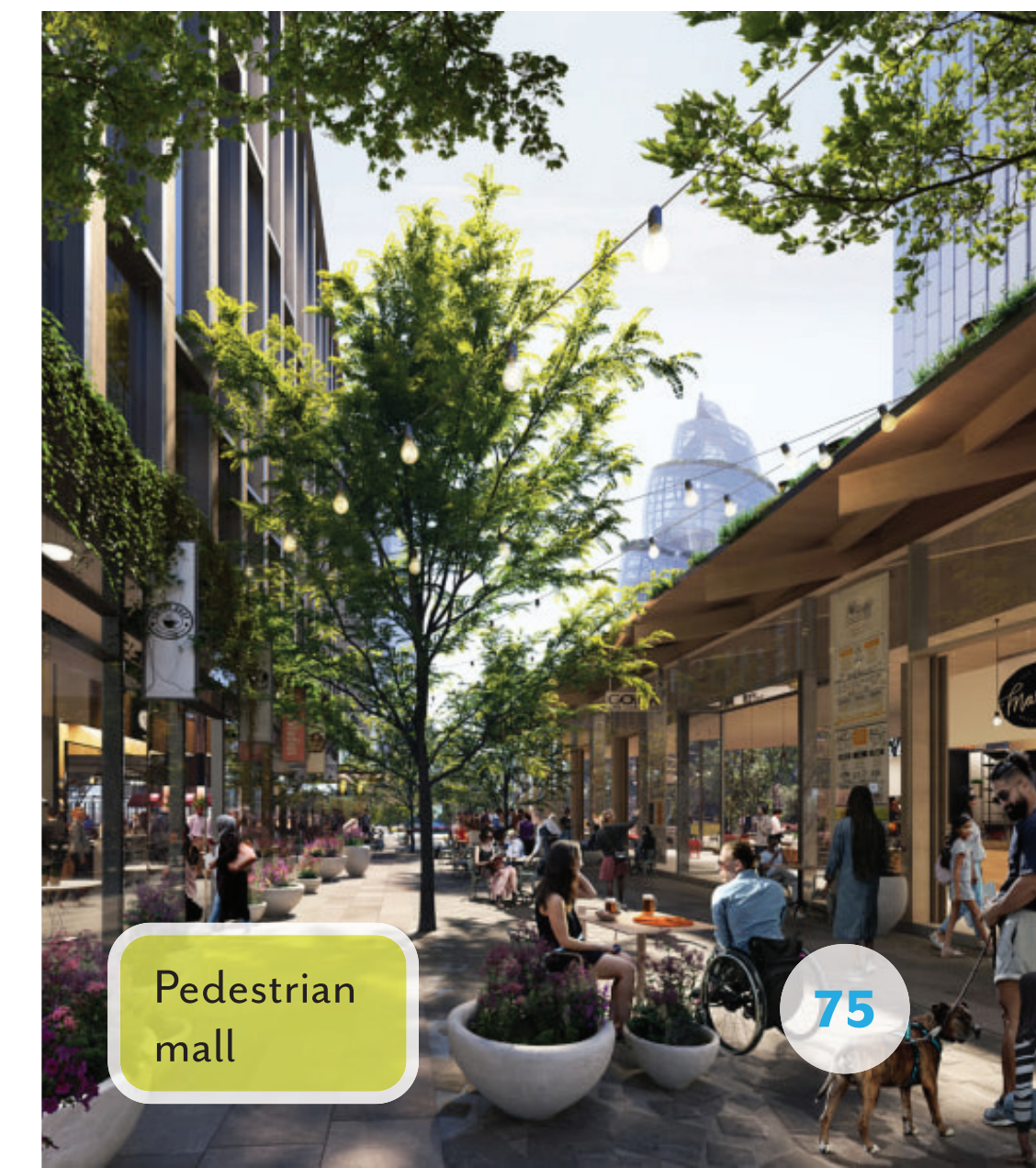
Parklets, temporary and permanent street closures, ground-floor activity and programming help cultivate walkable environments.



TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

G1a. Advocate keeping COVID-19 regulatory changes that improved Downtown walkability and retail opportunity.

- Review commercial load zone signage and pricing to accommodate restaurant pick-up zones for deliveries.
- Make permanent the flexible policies implemented during COVID-19 for outdoor dining, including parklets, open streets and play streets.



Street Reimagination

G1 DOWNTOWN WALKABILITY

G1b. Increase Downtown walkability and pedestrian safety.

- i. Advocate for Vision Zero policies that reduce speeds Downtown.
- ii. Consider piloting events such as no-car Sundays to experiment with removing cars from Main and Delaware Streets and to activate the street for pedestrians and bikes.
- iii. Incorporate Universal Design principles that support use by people of all abilities for all Downtown sidewalks.
- iv. Develop a plan and implementation priorities by working with different user groups including Downtown residents, artists, people with disabilities, and leaders from adjacent neighborhoods.
- v. Prioritize City investment in sidewalk improvements for walkability, street shade, shelters, and benches, and continue to advocate through the Public Improvements Advisory Committee (PIAC) process for the City's capital projects list.
- vi. Continue to advocate for the conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets per the City adopted two-way street conversion plan.



BEFORE/AFTER
5th St. and
Grand Blvd.



Street Reimagination

G1 DOWNTOWN WALKABILITY

G1c. Improve the design quality of Downtown sidewalks.

- i. Review the 2005 Downtown Streetscape plan, the Grand Boulevard Plan “Making Grand, Grand”, and the 20th Street plan, and advocate for the implementation of relevant plan projects and proposals.
- ii. Work with the Kansas City Design Center, using Universal Design proposals as a starting point, review and update streetscape design guidelines for Downtown and work with the City to support the guidelines.
- iii. Contact developers of Downtown projects to inform them of existing city ordinances regarding requirements to ensure the streetscape regulations are followed while implementing their development projects.
- iv. Continue to advocate for Complete Streets policies that would leverage capital projects to improve walkability and bike routes.



BEFORE/AFTER
5th St. and
Grand Blvd.



Street Reimagination

Grand Boulevard has been an important north-south vehicular connection for Downtown KC for many years. The Making Grand “Grand” study envisioned a balanced approach to corridor design for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and the urban environment.

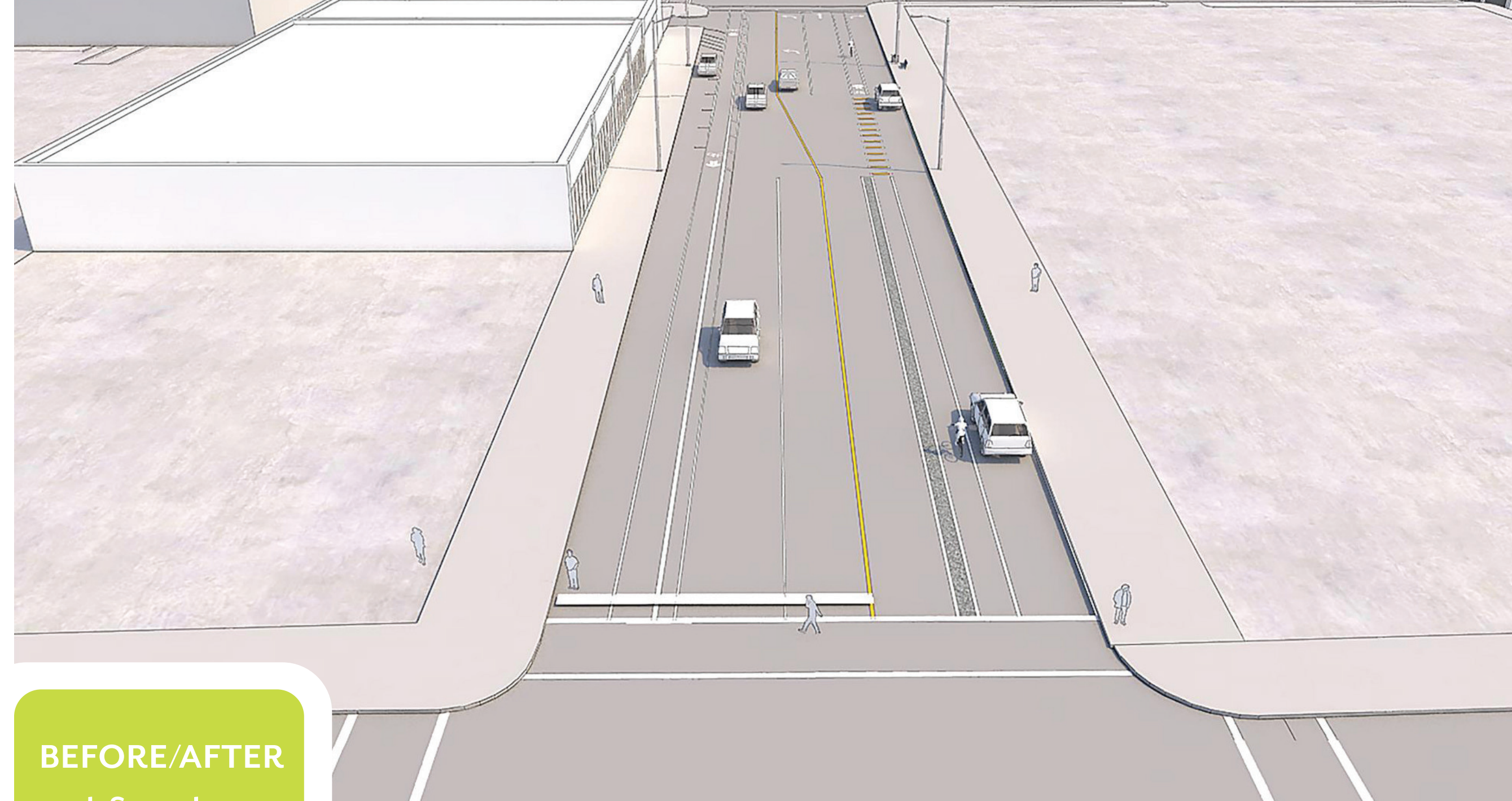
The City recently advanced the first step in making this a Complete Street by incorporating a bike facility along Grand Boulevard from 20th Street in the south to Missouri Street to the north, connecting

G2 MAKING GRAND “GRAND”

Crown Center, the Crossroads Arts District, the Central Business District, and the River Market. This is an important first phase, but many improvements remain to be implemented, including planting trees, widening sidewalks, adding landscaped planters, incorporating stormwater management, and creating public art and spaces for pedestrians to connect and socialize.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- G2a. Implement the Grand Boulevard Streetscape Plan.
- G2b. Work with property owners of underutilized parking lots along the corridor to leverage future development as a catalyst for additional sidewalk improvements.
- G2c. Encourage the City department of Parks and Recreation to consider this iconic corridor’s potential to be a showcase Complete Street in its network of historic and beautiful parkways and boulevard system.



BEFORE/AFTER
20th St. and
Grand Blvd.



Street Reimagination

Alleys are important connectors and functional elements in an urban environment. This proposed alley transformation is both a pedestrian linkage and a destination. The alley between Grand Boulevard and Walnut Street has a unique quality because it connects two future iconic destination park spaces – the transformed Washington Square Park to the south and the South Loop to the north. The alley would intersect with the Greenline and serve as a pedestrian north-south artery for the Crossroads Arts District.

G3 DOWNTOWN ALLEY ENHANCEMENT

The alley is currently used for service functions as well as vehicle parking, but it has the capacity to transform into a public realm amenity. The alley corridor can become an arts destination and reflect the Crossroads Arts District's aesthetic with a tapestry of murals and sculptures as well as restoration of the historic signage for the old rail spur. Buildings can be re-developed to address the alley, creating seating elements and new retail, bar, and restaurant spaces, and through creative environmental design that can address stormwater quality improvements.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- G3a. Partner with the Kansas City Design Center to develop creative ideas and a vision to transform the alley.
- G3b. Meet with property owners to understand daily operations and needs and opportunities to activate the alley side of their buildings.
- G3c. Discuss the idea of partnering with local artists to create murals and paintings that draw people to the alley.
- G3d. Create a committee that touches all parts of the design (architecture, landscape architecture, artist, civil engineer) to guide the process.



BEFORE/AFTER

Grand/Walnut -
Old Railroad Alley

