



UNIVERSITY AVENUE STREETSCAPE

City Council Meeting

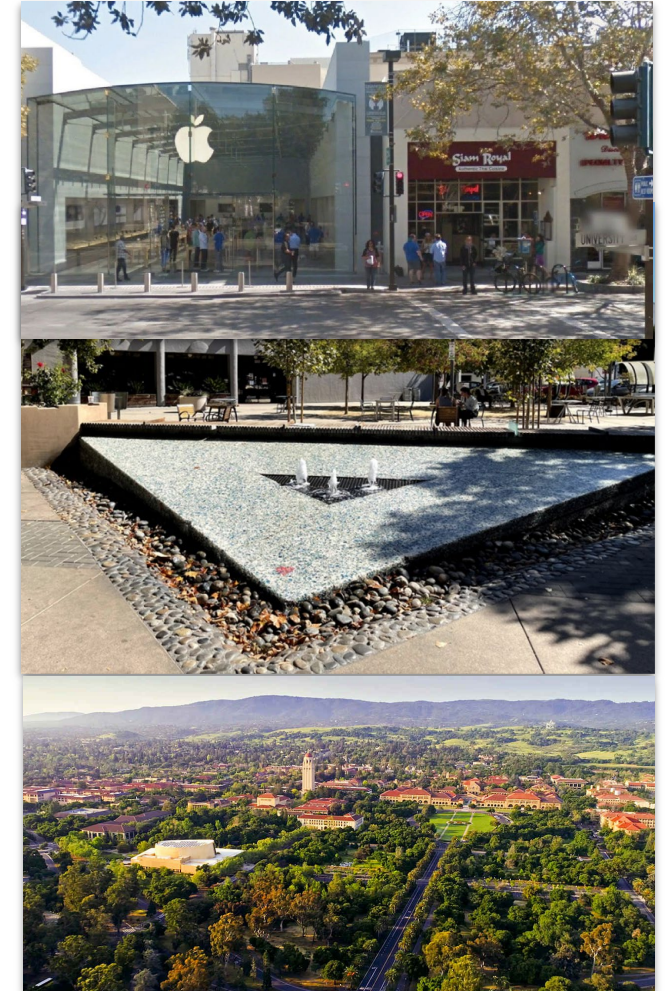
Ashwini Kantak, Project Manager

June 3, 2024

www.cityofpaloalto.org/UniversityAveStreetscape

AGENDA

- Project Background
- Vision, Goals, and Priorities
- Response to December 2023 Council Direction
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Project Timeline and Next Steps
- Council Discussion



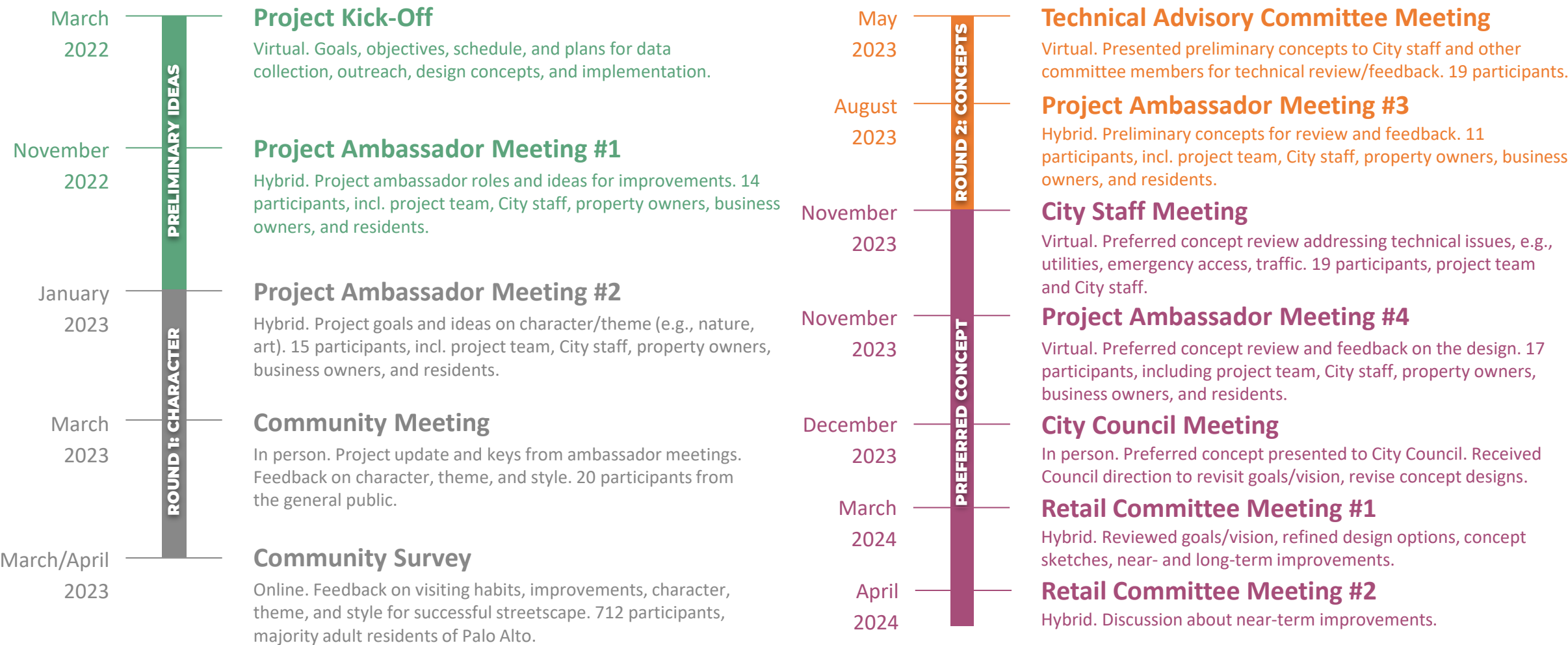
PROJECT BACKGROUND



PROJECT BACKGROUND

- **Spring 2020 – Fall 2021:** Portion of University Avenue closed to vehicular traffic through “Uplift Local” program
- **March 1, 2021:** City Council approved the University Avenue Streetscape Update project
- **September 13, 2021:** Council directed staff to issue RFP with defined Project goals
- **February 28, 2022:** Council approved consultant contract for the Project
- **March 2022-November 2023:** Feasibility analysis and design options developed; stakeholder outreach conducted
- **December 18, 2023:** Feasibility report with three streetscape options presented to Council; Council directed staff to return with additional information
- **March and April 2024:** Retail Committee presentations on near-term and long-term improvements and stakeholder engagement strategy

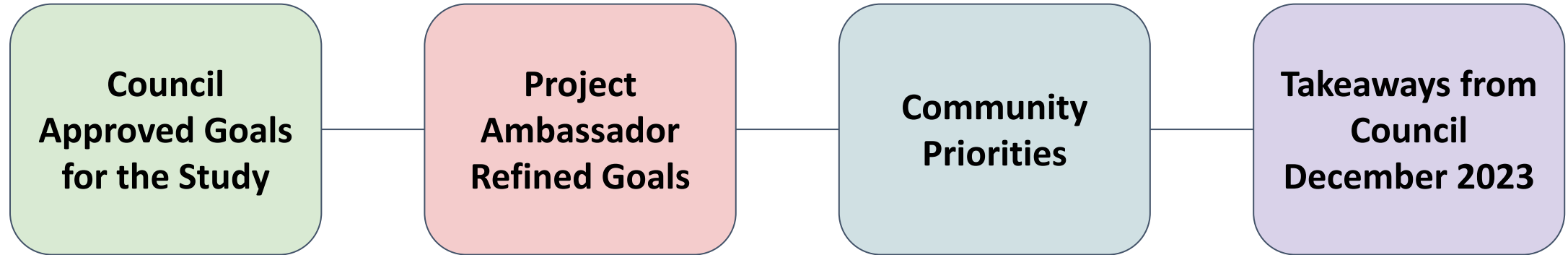
PROJECT BACKGROUND: Engagement Process to Date



VISION, GOALS, & PRIORITIES



VISION



Celebrate the unique character of the “Birthplace of Silicon Valley” by creating a vibrant, visually attractive streetscape with spaces and elements that enhance the visitor experience, provide safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists, and encourage shopping, dining, and gathering.

PROJECT GOALS

- Maximize **pedestrian** and **bicycle** use
- Maintain **vital 2-way vehicular access**
- Maintain **parking** opportunities
- Maintain **delivery and loading zones, rideshare spaces**
- Include **performance space** between Alma and Middlefield Road
- Showcase **unique character** of University Avenue
- Explore opportunities to present **public art** and provide **technology exhibits**
- Create **gathering spaces**
- Maximize opportunities for **outdoor dining**
- Explore **cost-effective interim measures** to show progress

BALANCING VARIOUS INTERESTS ACROSS GOALS

- Balance desire for outdoor dining and gathering spaces with on-street parking for retail customers
- Reduce congestion and enhance pedestrian and bicycle experience while maintaining vehicular access
- Balance desire for special events while minimizing negative financial impacts on businesses from temporary road closures
- Balance desire for wider sidewalks, gathering spaces, and enhanced streetscape with direction to explore lower cost alternatives

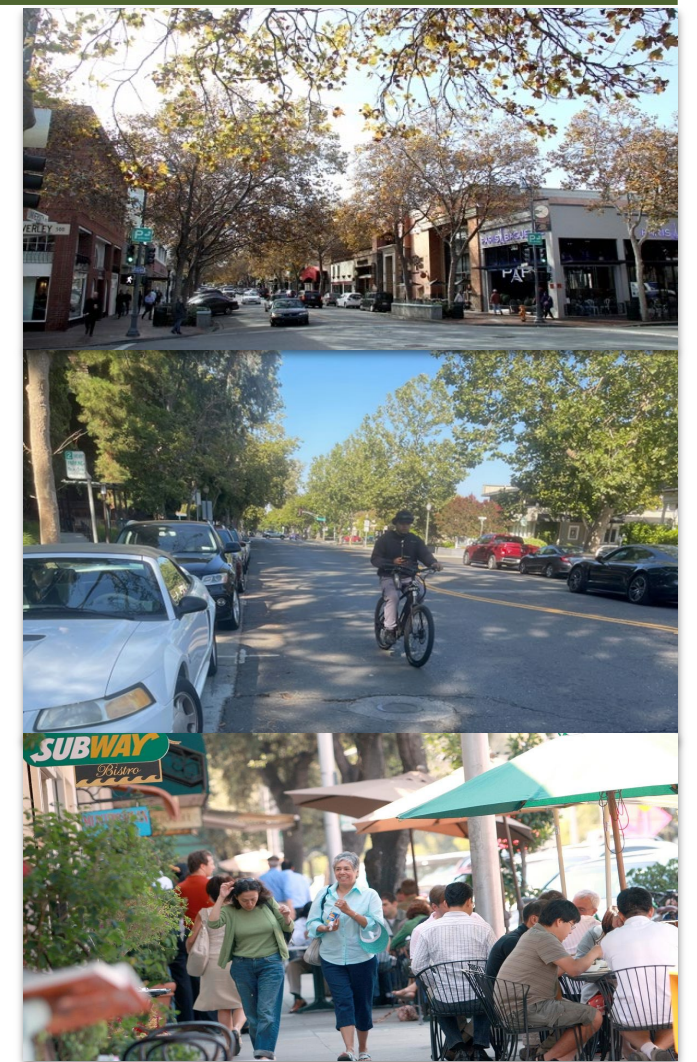


RESPONSE TO DECEMBER 2023 COUNCIL DIRECTION



COUNCIL DIRECTION: December 18, 2023

1. Direct staff to draft additional alternatives that would include one option with the current parklet plan and that sidewalks should be variable or outdoor dining space comparable to the current parklet plan.
2. Consider moving bikes to Hamilton and Lytton and or shrinking the travel lane.
3. Direct staff to present options to the Retail Ad Hoc Committee and come back to Council with interim measures that we can do cheap and quickly that will show progress in that area.
4. Alternatives should cover a range of costs.



UNIVERSITY AVENUE AS A DESTINATION

- **Showcase Unique Character**
 - Reflect unique history of Palo Alto as “Birthplace of Silicon Valley”
 - Partner with Palo Alto Historical Society, Stanford University and others
 - Leverage historical Ramona Street to create a special destination
- **Explore Opportunities for Public Art and Technology Exhibits**
 - Collaborate with the City’s Public Art program and local artists to create vibrant spaces
 - Explore the use of City’s fiber network for technology exhibits
- **Create Gathering Spaces**
 - Design sidewalks, corner bulb outs, and plazas to be inviting spaces for people to gather
 - Incorporate design features to make spaces more bike and pedestrian friendly
 - Allow temporary closure of streets to further activate downtown with special events and performances
- **Maximize Opportunities for Outdoor Dining**
 - Create opportunities through design to allow outdoor dining on sidewalks and in parklets

PROJECT AREA (INITIAL BOUNDARY)



- Along University Avenue between High Street and Webster Street
- Streetscape improvements within the public right of way

LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Sketches



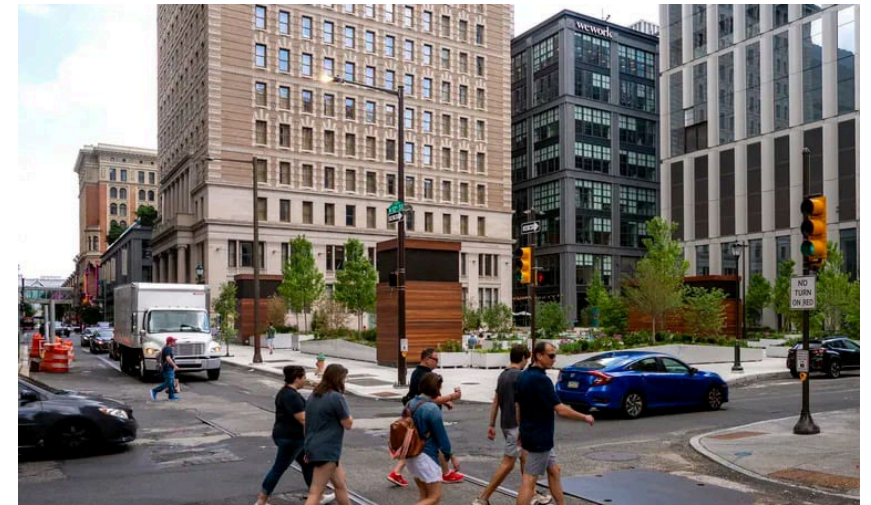
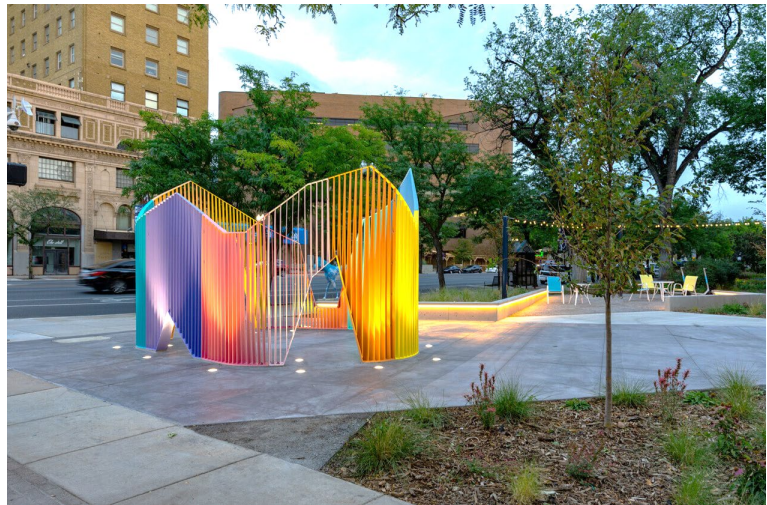
Corner Plaza



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Images



Corner Plaza



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Sketches



*Sidewalk & Parking
with Outdoor Dining*



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Images



*Sidewalk & Parking
with Outdoor Dining*



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Sketches



*Sidewalk & Parking
with Outdoor Dining
(Parklet)*



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Images



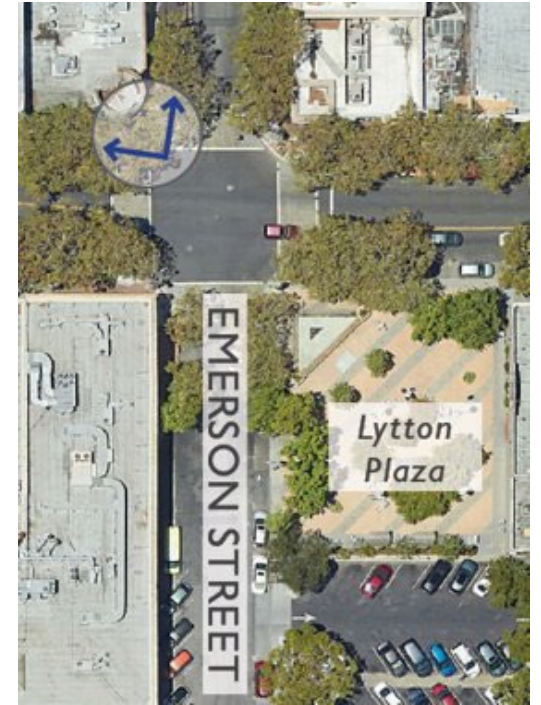
*Sidewalk & Parking
with Outdoor Dining
(Parklet)*



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Sketches



Corner Bulb Out



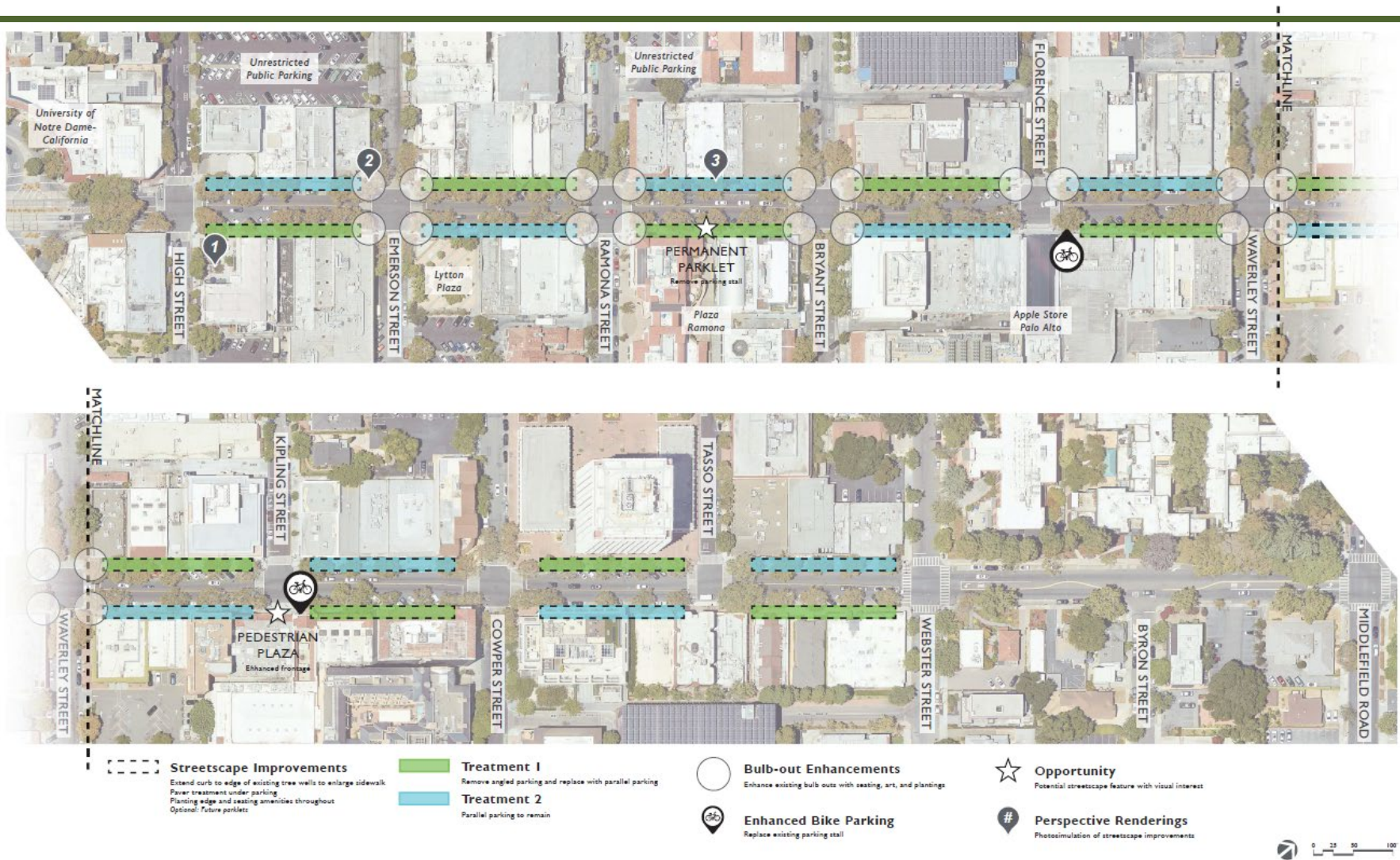
LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Concept Images



Corner Bulb Out



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS: Site Plan



ON-STREET PARKING CONSIDERATIONS

- **Conversion of angled parking to parallel parking spaces to allow wider sidewalks**
 - 193 on-street parking spaces reduced by 48, providing 145 spaces; includes 5 required accessible spaces (13' x 24' each)
- **Maximizing Gathering spaces**
 - Expanded bulb-outs at intersections and mid-block bulb-outs, loss of one parking space for a bulb-out at each corner; expanded corner plaza will require removal of four parking spaces each
- **Outdoor Dining**
 - Temporary parklets using 18 on-street parking spaces; number of ongoing parklets could be more or less, and vary over time

ON-STREET PARKING CONSIDERATIONS (contd.)

- **Potential On-Street Parking Scenario**

- The conversion from angle to parallel parking removes 48 stalls.
- University Avenue on-street parking could be further reduced by 70 stalls to expand gathering spaces and provide outdoor dining in parklets, retaining 75 on-street parking spaces.
- Assuming no further loss of off-street parking spaces, parking occupancy would be 87%, 79%, and 68% at 12 p.m., 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. respectively using the 2017 parking counts. Using the 2023 parking values, parking occupancy would be 56%, 48%, and 36% during the same times.

- **Considerations for Council feedback**

- Preserve sufficient on-street parking to maintain retail functionality
- Potentially limit number of parklets while continuing to allow outdoor dining and retail on wider sidewalks, and gathering spaces at expanded bulb-outs and plazas

LOWER COST ALTERNATIVES

- **Estimated Costs**

- \$40-\$45 M to realize vision over nine blocks; each block estimated at \$5M in 2030 dollars
- Scope includes curb and utility relocations, widened sidewalks, decorative paving, street furniture and amenities, a corner plaza and/or corner bulb-outs
- 80% of costs attributable to curb and utility relocations for an enhanced pedestrian experience; limitations on ability to significantly lower cost

- **Implement Project in Phases**

- Higher overall cost due to escalation and less efficiency, higher level of disruption for downtown business community and patrons
- Staff would recommend no more than two phases

- **Significantly Reduce Project scope**

- Retain the current alignment and parking configuration; invest in enhanced landscaping, decorative paving, updated bulb-outs, and street furnishings
- Estimated cost of \$800K - \$1.5 M per block in 2030 dollars
- Will not align with Project vision and goals, as proposed

BIKE LANES

- **Consider moving bike lanes to Hamilton and Lytton Avenues**

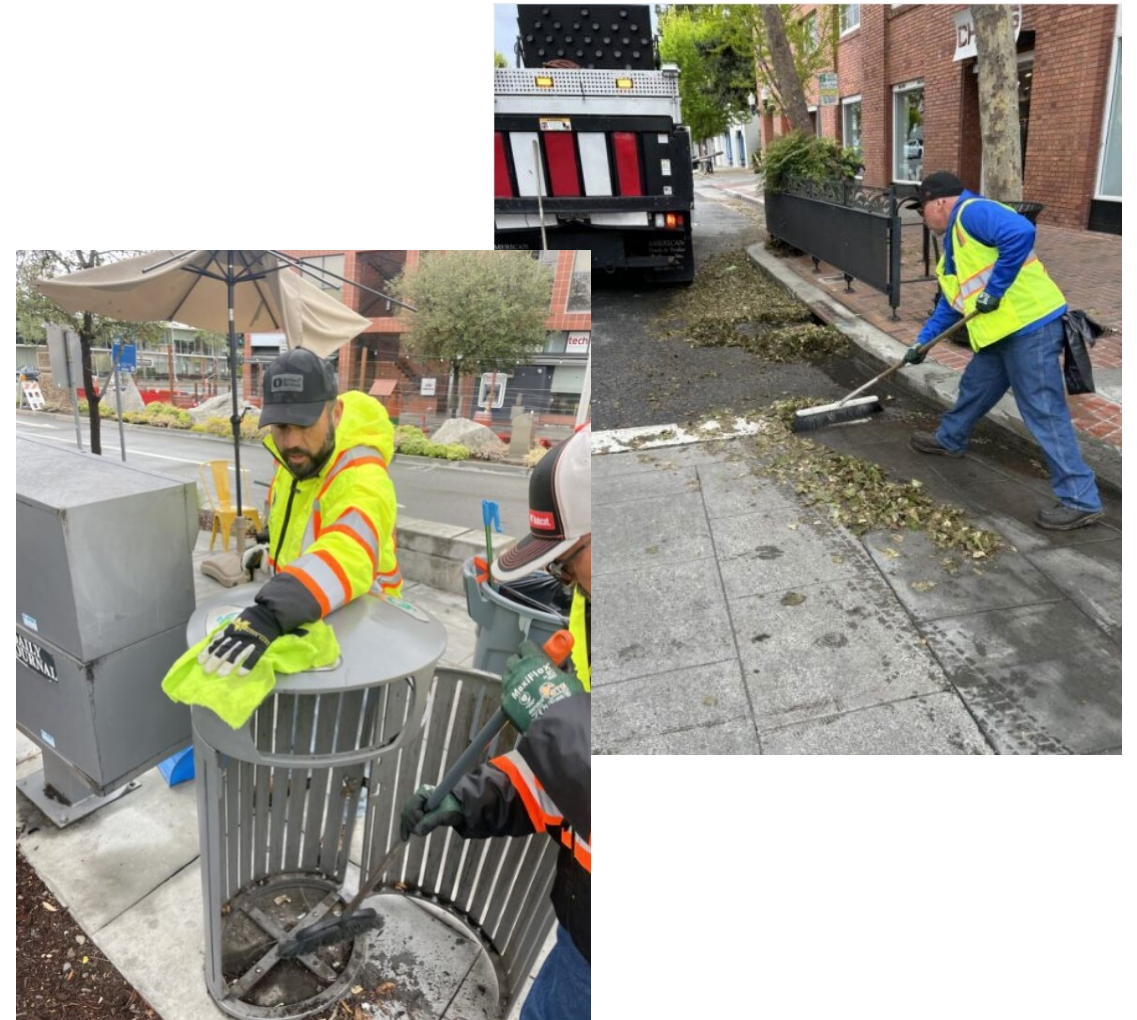
- University Avenue to continue as a Class III shared bike route, convenient and safe bike parking to be provided
- Use of Hamilton and Lytton Avenues as preferred bike routes to be communicated through signage and education campaigns
- Additional recommendations will be provided through the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan Update in 2025

- **Alternatively shrink the travel lane**

- Fire Code and City Ordinance require a minimum travel lane width of 20 feet; Fire Code requires a 26-foot-wide fire access for buildings more than 30 feet tall
- Recommend maintaining the current total travel lane width of 26 feet; decreasing width would significantly impact future development along University Avenue

NEAR-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

- Presented to Retail Committee in March and April 2024
- Enhanced Cleaning Pilot Programs
 - Power Washing/Steam Cleaning of Sidewalks
 - Additional Trash Pick-up Services
- Miscellaneous Improvements Underway
 - Replace trash receptacles and liners
 - Remove aging and unused news racks
 - Identify locations for bike parking and install bike racks
 - Minor infrastructure improvements



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- **Approach and Purpose**

- Solicit feedback from key stakeholders on near-term and long-term streetscape improvements in the Downtown District
- Provide timely updates to the downtown community and Palo Alto community at large, seek feedback at key milestones through the course of the improvements
- Engage relevant Boards, Commissions, and Committees on specific topic areas during the design process
- Ensure the Retail Committee receives regular updates and provides feedback
- Ensure the City Council receives timely input from all stakeholders to inform Council's decision-making process

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (contd.)

- **Stakeholder Working Group (15 members)**
 - Business Interests, Community Partners, and Residents; call for volunteers with appointments by City Manager
 - Convene every two months and special meetings as needed, meetings open to the public
 - Members shall represent interest areas and facilitate two-way communication
- **Downtown Community and Palo Alto Community at Large**
 - Engagement through social media, printed and e-newsletters, utility inserts, project web page and Palo Alto Connect blog, tabling at community events, and Open Townhall surveys
- **Boards, Commissions, and Committees**
 - Engage BCCs after Council provides direction on vision and preliminary design
 - Architectural Review Board, Historic Review Board, Pedestrian/Bike Advisory Committee, Planning/Transportation Commission, Public Art Commission
- **Retail Committee and City Council**
 - Regular updates to the Retail Committee and to City Council at key milestones

STAKEHOLDER WORKING GROUP

Interest Areas	Stakeholders
Business (9)	Commercial property (2), Chamber of Commerce (1), Retail (2), Restaurant (2), Personal Services (1), Other business (1)
Community Partners (4)	Stanford University (1), Palo Alto Historical Association (1), Silicon Valley Bike Coalition (1), Community/youth/children services (1)
Residents (2)	Resident from Downtown District (1), Palo Alto Neighborhoods (1)

PROJECT TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

TENTATIVE PROJECT TIMELINE



NEXT STEPS

- Based on Council direction, commence stakeholder engagement and prepare a preferred concept design
- Present preferred concept design to **Retail Committee in August** and **City Council in September**
- Consultant contract amendment upon approval of preferred concept design
- Assessment district feasibility and environmental analysis for approved design (fall 2024 - spring 2026)
- Design and construction (spring 2026 – spring 2029)

COUNCIL DISCUSSION



COUNCIL DISCUSSION – VISION AND GOALS

- **Affirm Long-Term Vision**

Celebrate the unique character of the “Birthplace of Silicon Valley” by creating a vibrant, visually attractive streetscape with spaces and elements that enhance the visitor experience, provide safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists, and encourage shopping, dining, and gathering.

- **Affirm Project Goals**

- **Maximize pedestrian and bicycle use**
- **Maintain vital 2-way vehicular access**
- **Maintain parking opportunities**
- **Maintain delivery and loading zones, rideshare spaces**
- **Include performance space** between Alma and Middlefield Road

- **Showcase unique character** of University Avenue
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COUNCIL DISCUSSION – BALANCING GOALS

Balancing Various Interests Across Goals	Staff Recommendations
Balance desire for outdoor dining and gathering spaces with on-street parking for retail customers	<i>Retain at least 1/3 of on-street parking to support retail, capping number of parklets, and use wider sidewalks for outdoor dining, retail, and gathering spaces</i>
Reduce congestion and enhance pedestrian and bicycle experience while maintaining vehicular access	<i>Maintain existing width of travel lanes on University Avenue, expand sidewalks, and encourage the use of Hamilton and Lytton Avenue as bike routes</i>
Balance desire for special events while minimizing negative financial impacts on businesses from temporary road closures	<i>Seek additional stakeholder feedback to determine number and duration of events</i>
Balance desire for wider sidewalks, gathering spaces, and enhanced streetscape with direction to explore lower cost alternatives	<i>Do not reduce scope significantly as that does not support the vision If phasing is desired, implement in no more than two phases to minimize total costs and negative impacts to businesses</i>

COUNCIL DISCUSSION (contd.)

- **Design Concepts and Images**
 - Outdoor dining on sidewalks and in parklets
 - Expanded bulb-outs at intersections and mid-block
 - Expanded plazas at select locations
- ***Stakeholder Engagement Strategy***
 - Stakeholder Working Group
 - Downtown and Palo Alto Community at Large
 - Boards, Commissions, and Committees
 - Retail Committee
 - City Council



RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council:

1. Receive an update and provide direction on long-term vision, goals, and design themes for the University Avenue streetscape project, including feedback on the project's impact on street parking inventory, and the balance between project costs and scope; and
2. Provide feedback on the stakeholder engagement strategy for the University Avenue streetscape project

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Thank you!