

FK

VISION PLAN

2021

**FISHTOWN KENSINGTON
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

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APPROACH

The Fishtown Kensington Area Business Improvement District (FKABID) engaged ISA to create a Vision Plan for the Fishtown-Kensington (FK) neighborhood in 2020. The goal of the plan, set forward in this document, is to direct BID resources toward highlighting, amplifying and expanding the existing cultural, creative, and commercial personality of the neighborhood. World-class innovation and creativity across retail, food, and nightlife are what make the FK District noteworthy, and this plan aims to extend that trajectory with a renewed sense of purpose, focus and inclusion.

The FK District draws energy from Philadelphia's highly connected urban fabric, linking Fishtown and Kensington with Northern Liberties, Port Richmond, and other neighboring communities. As the heart of Fishtown expands it is becoming a regional urban center. FKABID member businesses are located along segments of three arterial streets – North Front Street, Frankford Avenue and East Girard Avenue – and while the BID's primary aim is to support and invigorate existing businesses, its broader mission includes outreach to potential new businesses, both from within and outside the neighborhood's diverse voices. This plan therefore includes recommendations targeting the immediate needs of BID corridors alongside the future economic health of the broader neighborhood.

This document summarizes the findings of a six-month study, including analysis of existing conditions, findings from three community stakeholder workshops, a proposed future vision plan organized into a toolkit of deployable investment strategies, and immediate next steps.

BID ACTIVITIES

The BID’s charter allows it to sponsor improvements and maintenance as well as advocacy, events and engagement in service of its stakeholders. This plan identifies opportunities for both short- and long-term investments in physical improvements and maintenance, projects and events, resources and advocacy, and engagement and networking. FKABID projects should look to work across multiple categories, leveraging funds for maximum positive impact wherever feasible.

**RESOURCES
+
ADVOCACY**

- STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT
- BUSINESS RETENTION PROGRAM
- GRANTS + FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- NEWCOMER OUTREACH
- BUSINESS ATTRACTION PROGRAM
- REAL ESTATE OPPORTUNITY DIRECTORY

- LONG-TERM PLANNING + STUDIES
- FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS PLAN
- TRANSIT / TRAFFIC / PARKING PLAN

**PROJECTS
+
EVENTS**

- PUBLIC ART + FACADES
- PUBLIC ART PROJECTS
- DISTRICT BRANDING + SIGNAGE
- FACADE IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

- GREENING + VACANT LOTS
- UNDERUTILIZED SITES + GREENING GUIDE
- TREES, GREENING, PARKLETS

- EVENTS + PROGRAMMING
- SPECIAL EVENTS

**IMPROVEMENTS
+
MAINTENANCE**

- STREETSCAPES + PUBLIC SPACE
- SEATING + STREET FURNITURE
- LIGHTING
- BIKE PARKING
- CROSSWALKS + TRAFFIC CALMING
- NIGHTLIFE SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE
- DISTRICT + WATERFRONT ACCESS
- CONSTRUCTION SITES + SIDEWALKS

- TRASH + CLEANING
- TRASH + RECYCLING RECEPTACLES
- SIDEWALK SWEEPING
- STREET CLEANING

**ENGAGEMENT
+
NETWORKING**

- COMMUNICATIONS + PR
- FKABID WEBSITE
- FKABID SOCIAL MEDIA PR

- LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS
- LOCAL MAKER + SUPPLIER DIRECTORY
- LOCAL CIVIC COMMUNICATIONS GUIDE

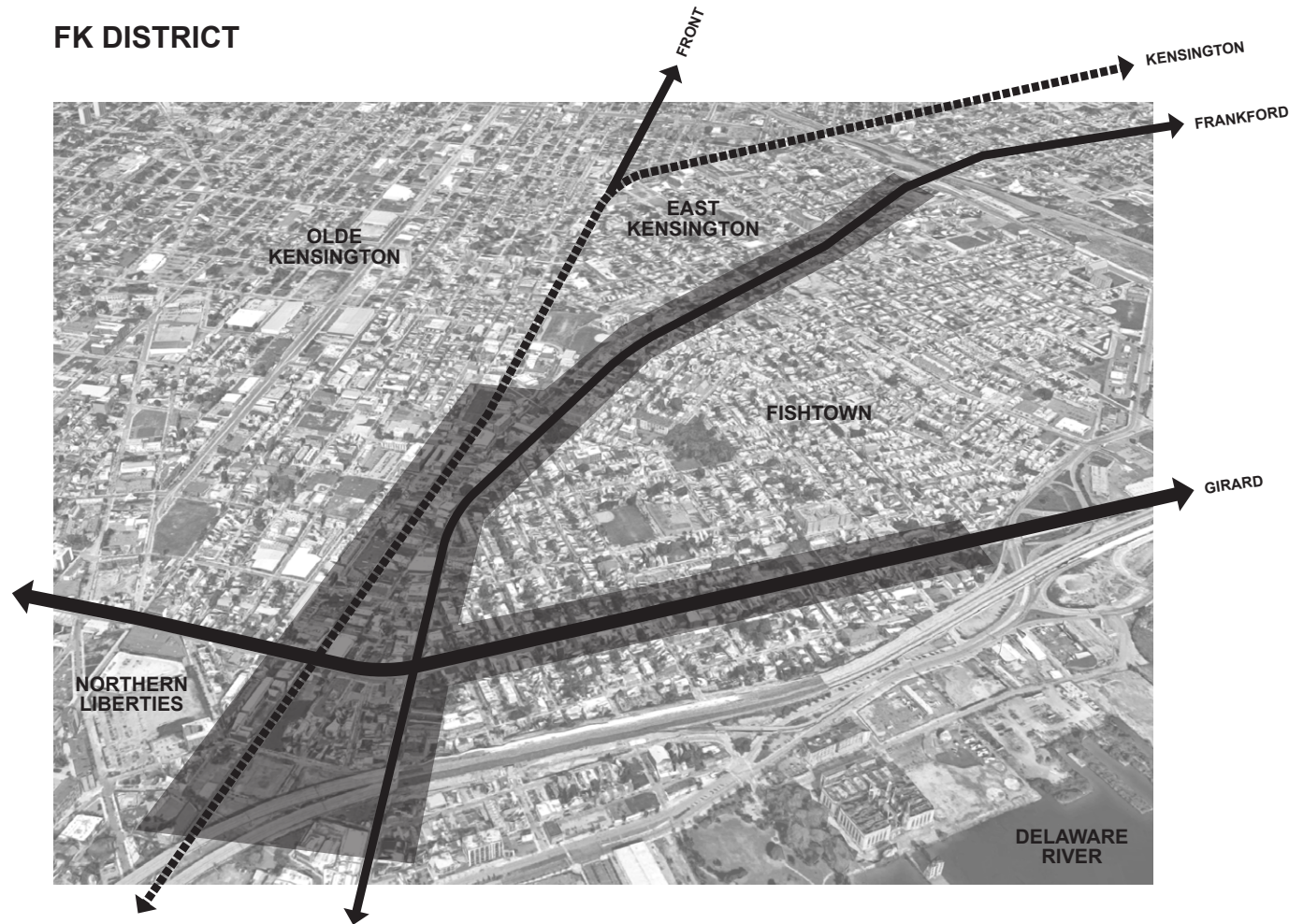
- CITY-WIDE PARTNERSHIPS
- UNIVERSITY + NON-PROFIT PARTNERSHIPS
- CITY AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

URBAN ANALYSIS

Unlike many Philadelphia neighborhoods where the orthogonal grid introduced by William Penn in the 17th Century rationalizes the fabric, Fishtown has a more complex street grid geometry. All three of the BID's primary business corridors are skewed at different angles, creating uniquely shaped spaces in and around the convergence of multiple crossing streets. A relic of the neighborhood's maritime industrial past with its orientation toward the Delaware River to the east, the shifted grid's odd angles and eccentric spaces are especially concentrated in the bowtie-shaped zone between Front, Frankford, and Girard. These intersections, with their quirky spatial identities, form a distinct neighborhood atmosphere.

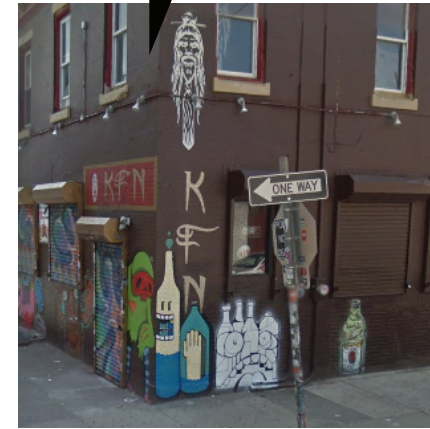
While business corridors can be thought of as pathways linking neighborhood destinations, they also can be seen as edges and boundaries, dividing and separating communities. This plan seeks to shift focus from corridors to intersections, highlighting them as micro communities, gathering points, wayfinding devices, and social connectors, and further emphasizing the unique identity of the District's existing fabric. Our urban analysis seeks to map the neighborhood's corridors, open space resources, and intersections, identifying potential sites for short- and long-term investment.

FK DISTRICT



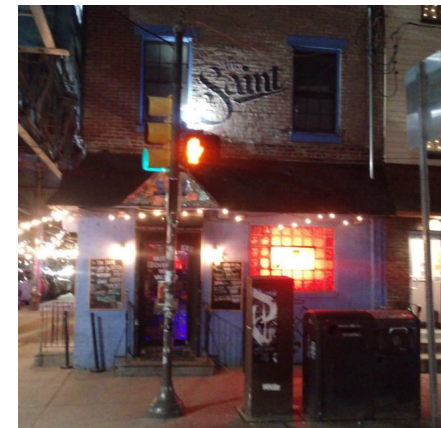
The FK District includes businesses along the North Front, Frankford, and East Girard corridors. The urban grid rotates from a primarily rectilinear geometry to the west of Front Street to an off-axis grid oriented toward the Delaware River to the east. The neighborhood's unique fabric has historically supported a diverse mix of uses, bringing together arts, culture, nightlife, food, music, and business communities with a reputation for innovation and leadership, drawing visitors and attention from across the city and beyond.

FK HAS BEEN AND SHOULD BE A LEADER, NOT A FOLLOWER.

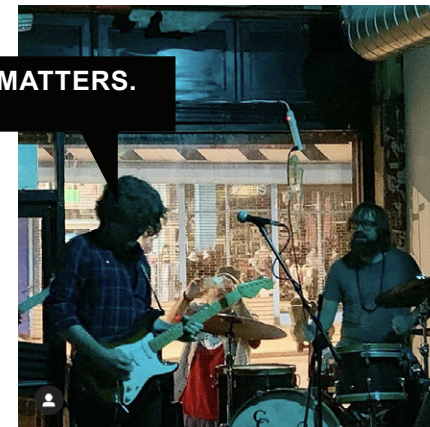


FOOD AND DRINK IDEAS START HERE.

WHERE OUTSIDERS BELONG.

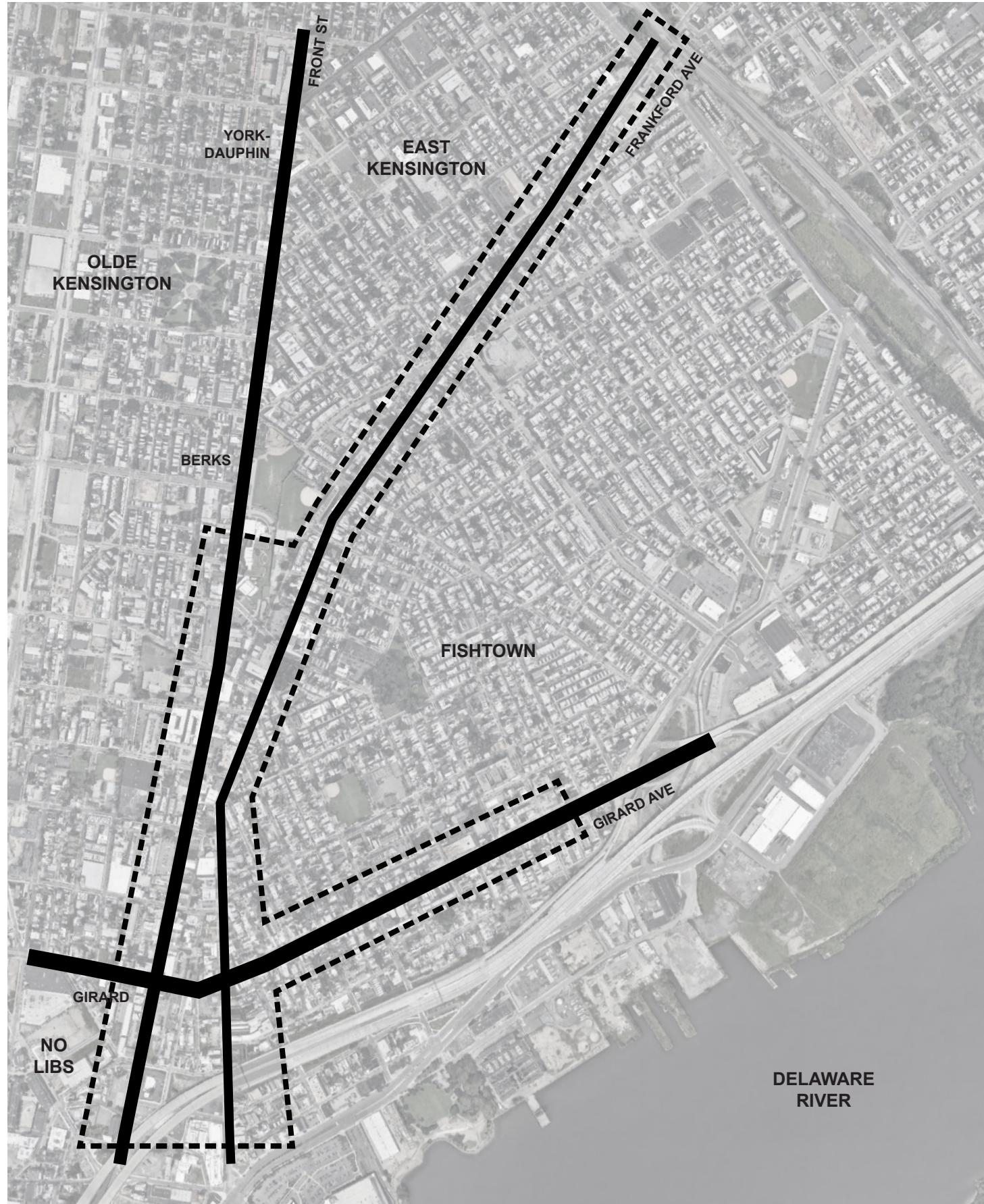


MUSIC MATTERS.

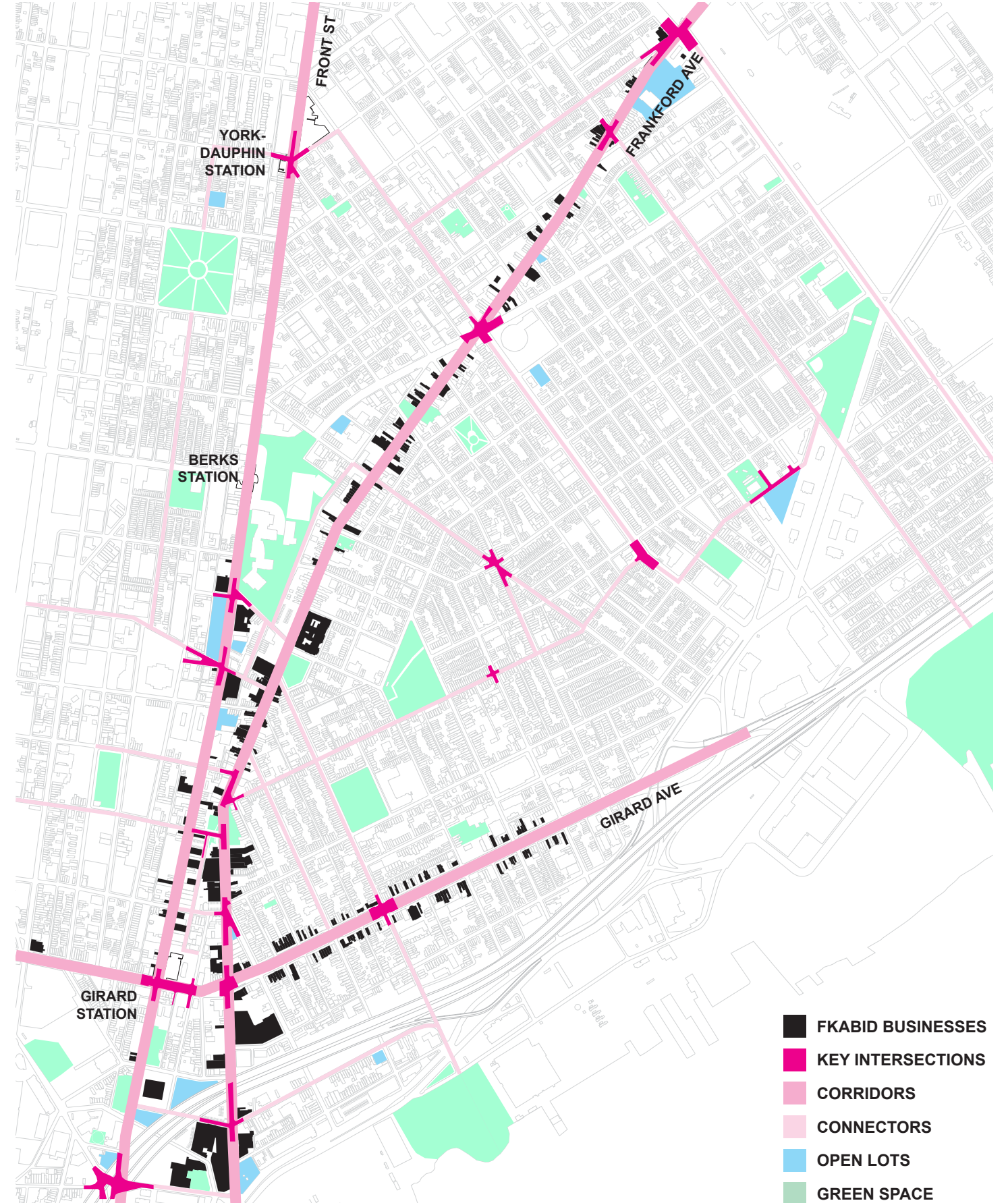


THE BITE'S NOT AS BAD AS THE BARK.

FKABID STAKEHOLDER BUSINESSES, LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: KUNG FU NECKTIE / 1248 FRONT ST, FERMENTARY FORM / 1700 PALETHORP ST, LUTHERAN SETTLEMENT HOUSE COMMUNITY GARDEN / MASTER + FRANKFORD, SAINT LAZARUS BAR / 102 W GIRARD AVE, JERRY'S ON FRONT / 2341 N FRONT ST, PIZZERIA BEDDIA / 1313 N LEE ST.

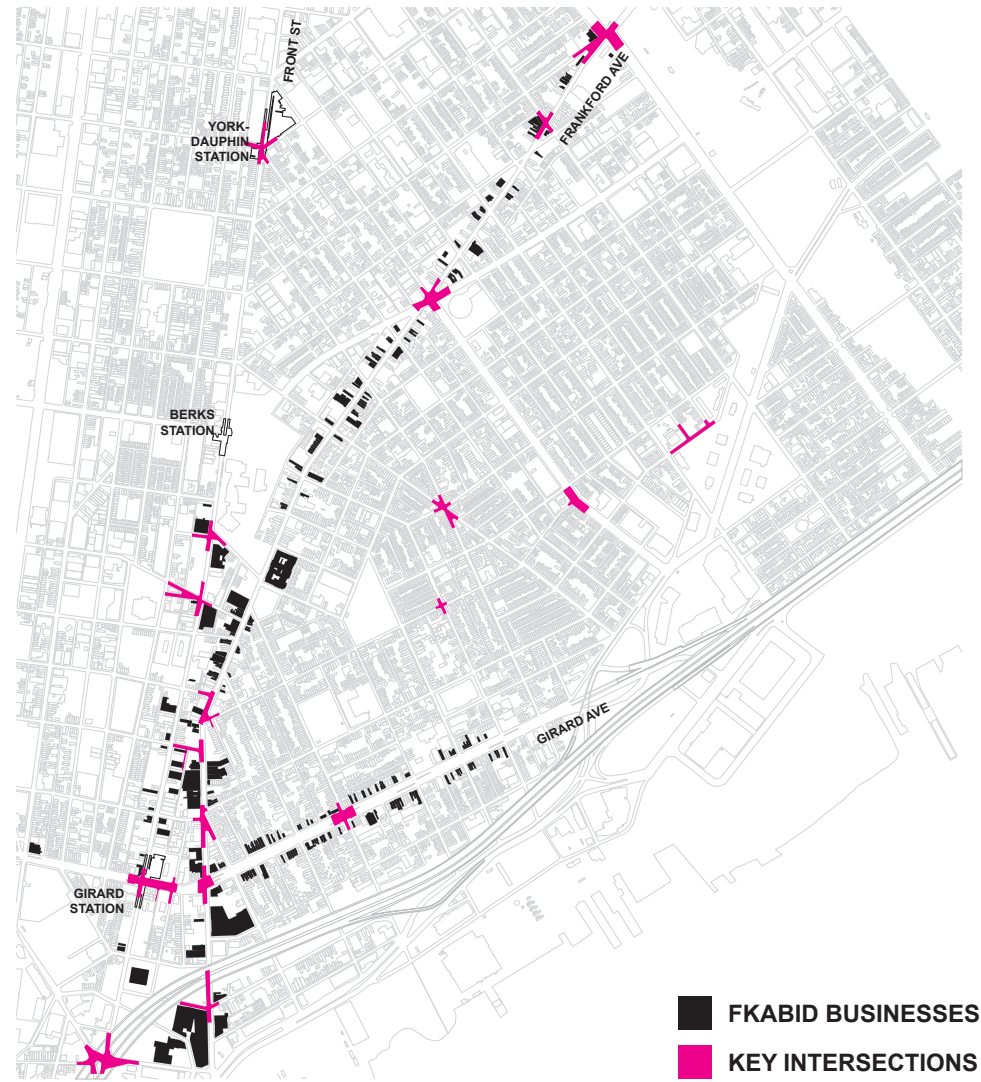


AERIAL

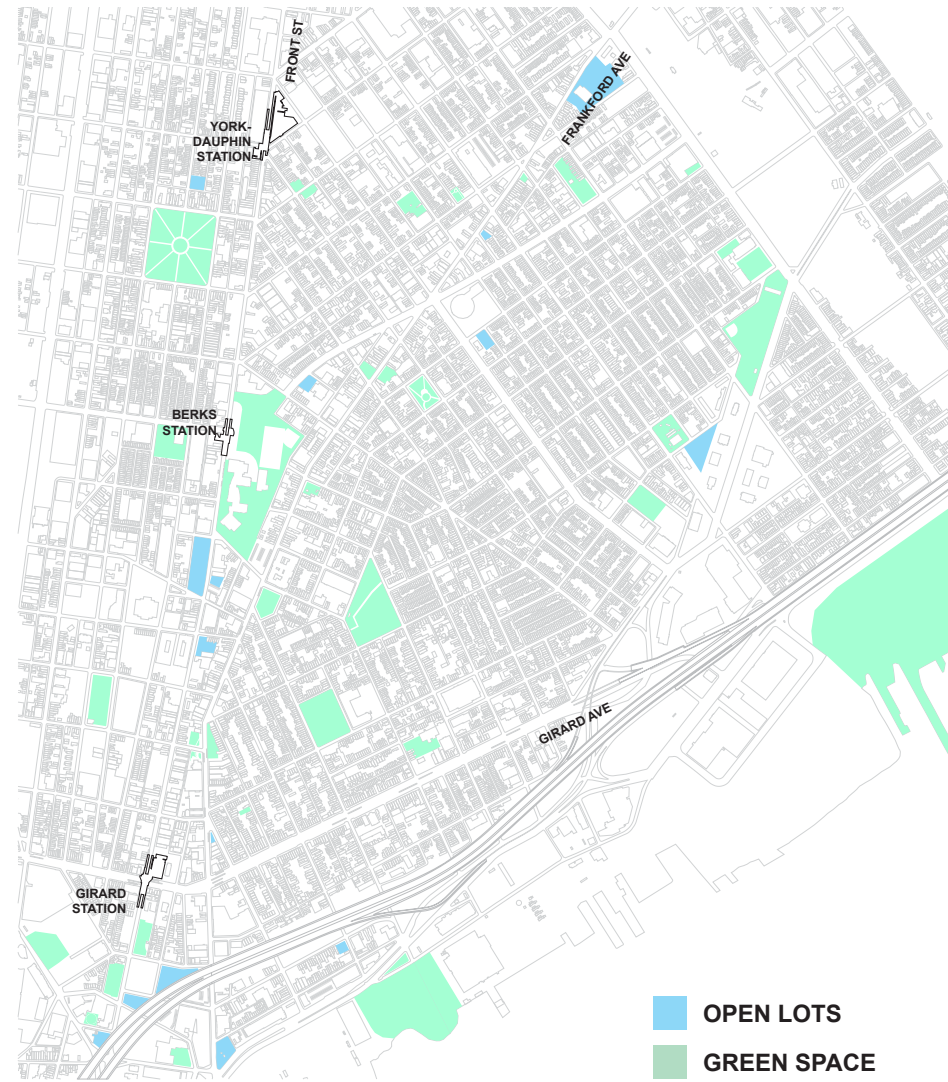


MAP

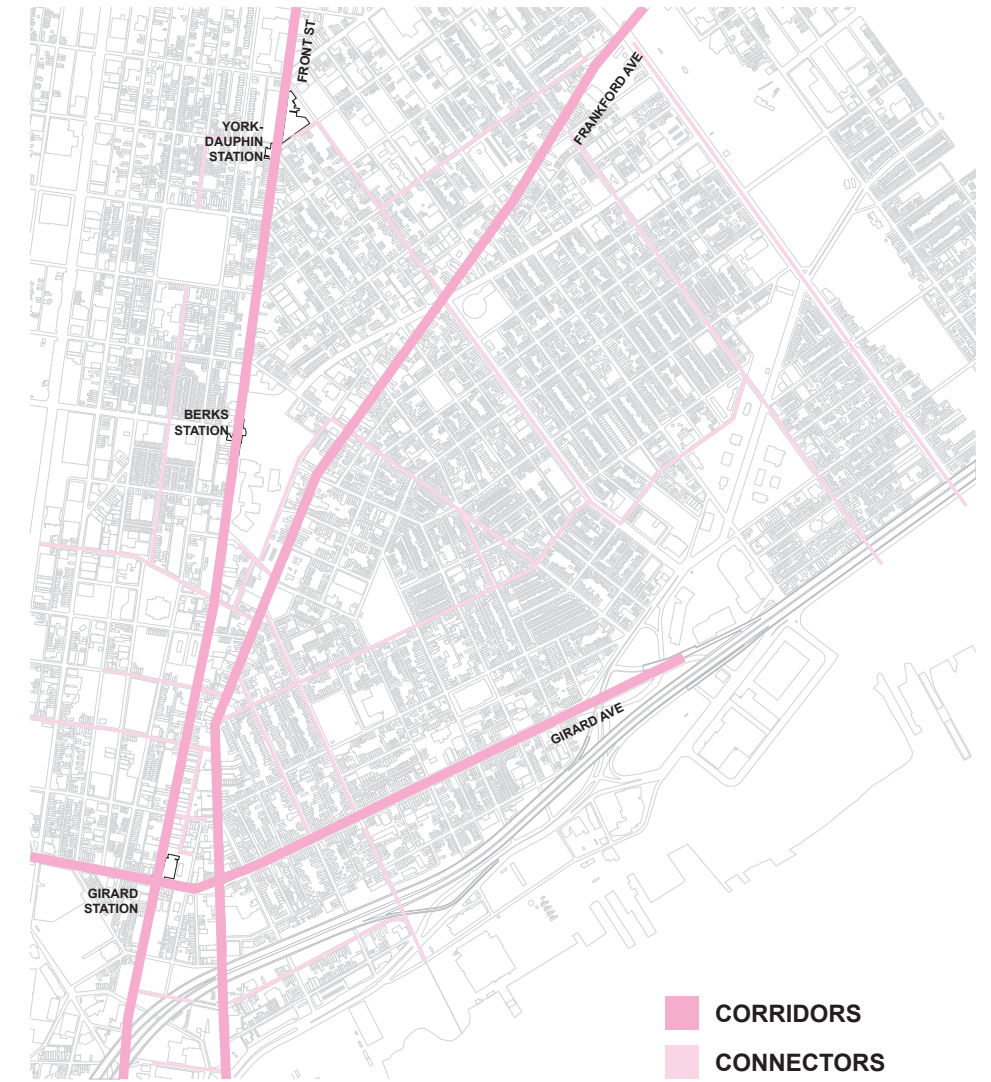
BUSINESSES & INTERSECTIONS



OPEN LOTS & GREEN SPACES

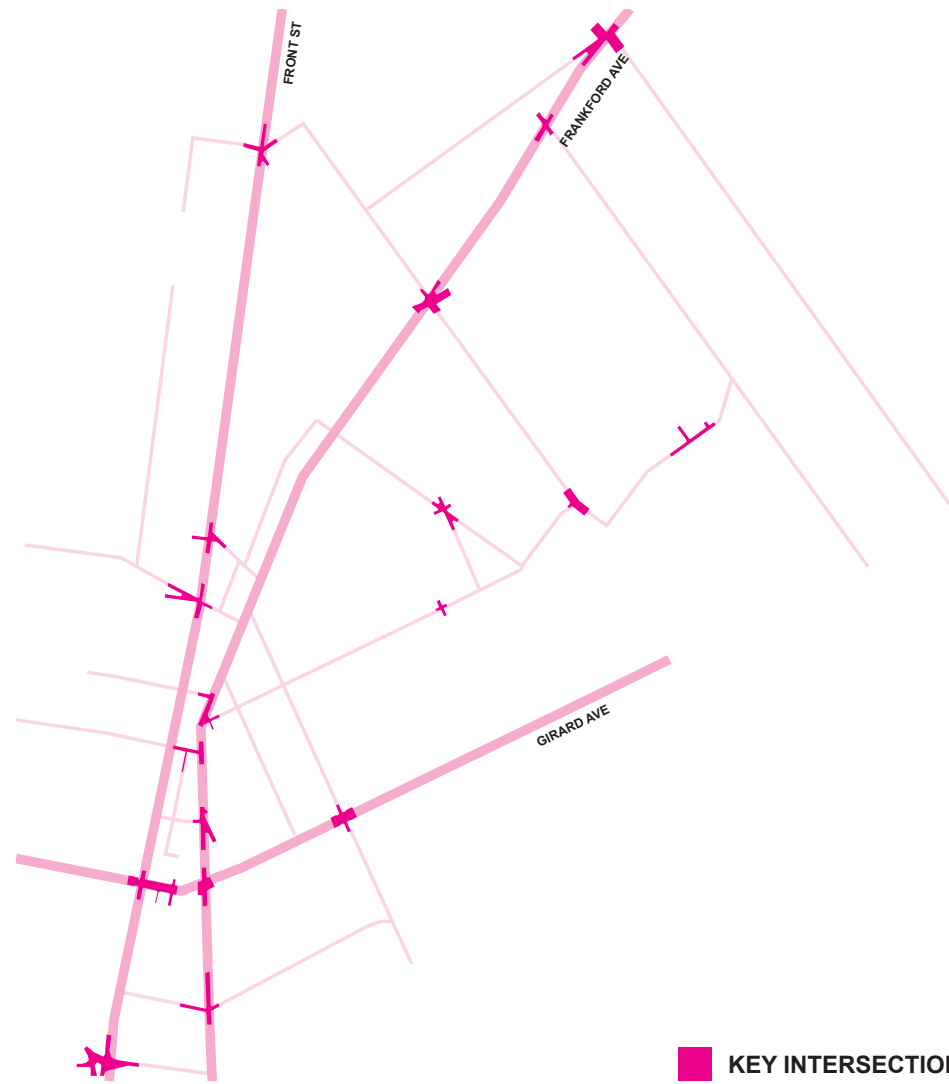


CORRIDORS & CONNECTORS



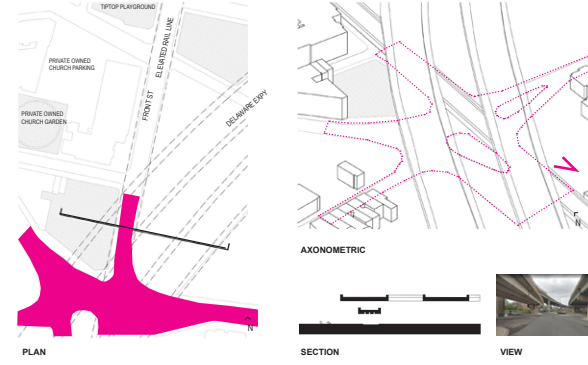
INTERSECTIONS

Many District intersections include three, four or even five streets converging in dynamic and whimsical ways. Their unique, quirky physical shapes are spatially and visually interesting.

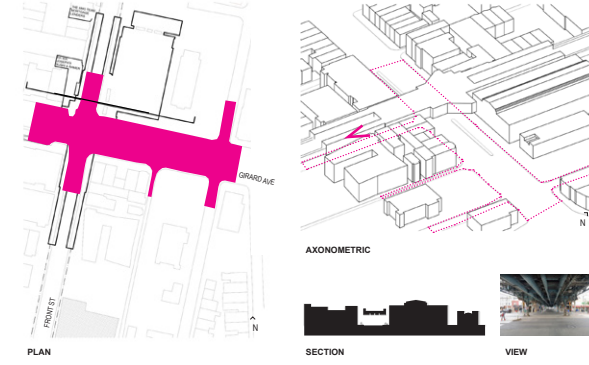


KEY INTERSECTIONS

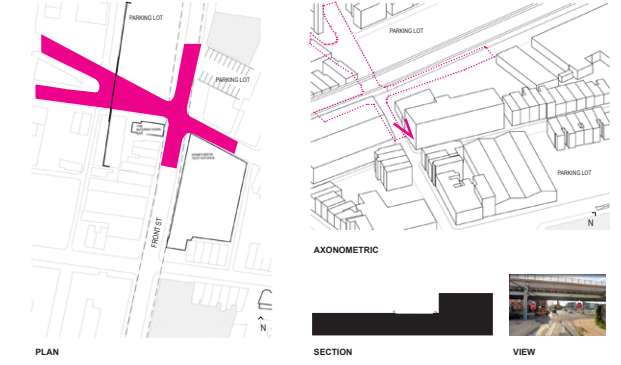
FRONT + DELAWARE EXPY



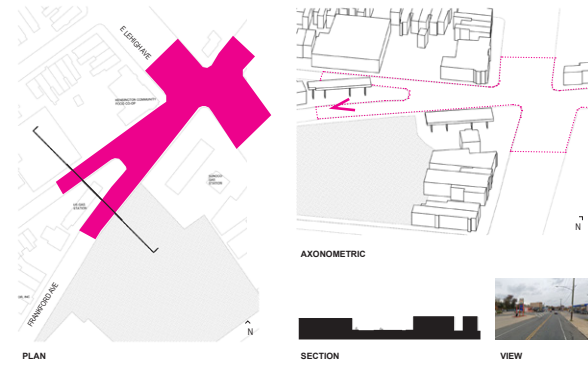
GIRARD + FRONT



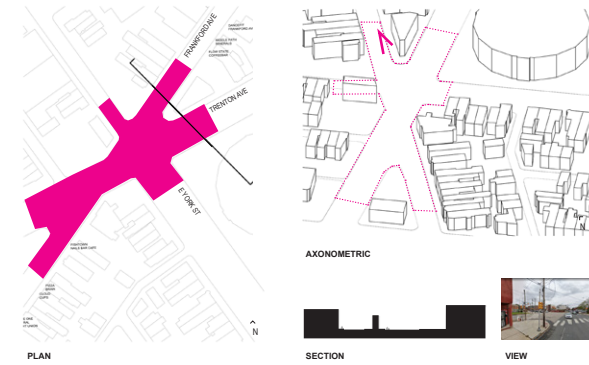
CECIL B MOORE + FRONT



FRANKFORD + LEHIGH



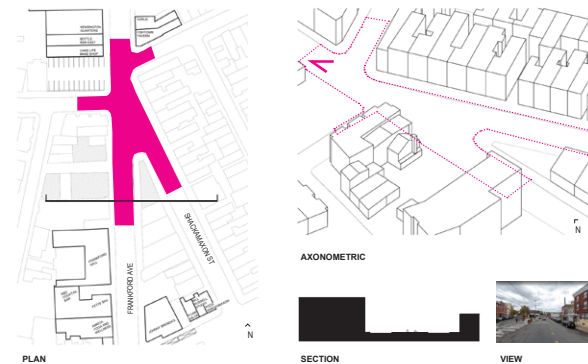
FRANKFORD + YORK



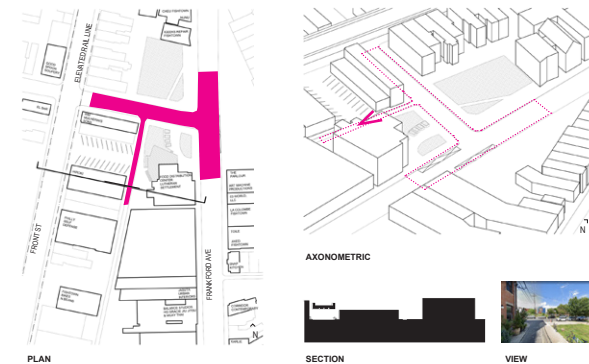
SUSQUEHANNA + CEDAR



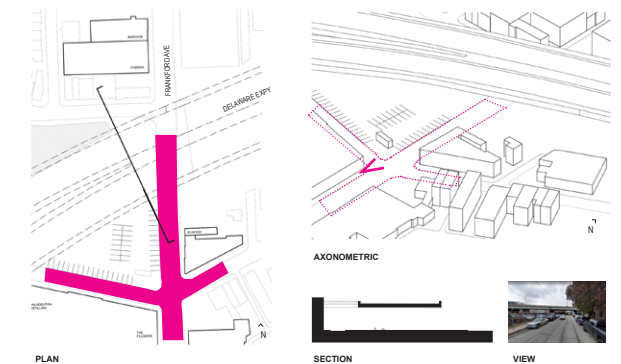
FRANKFORD + SHACKAMAXON



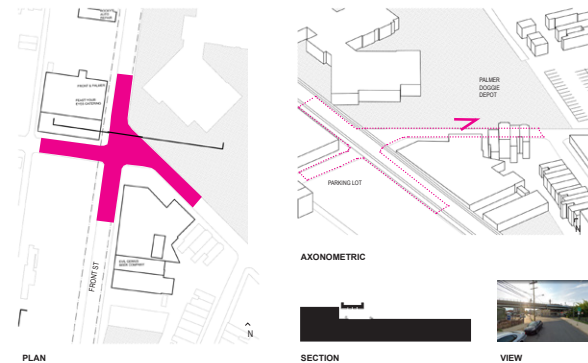
LEE + MASTER



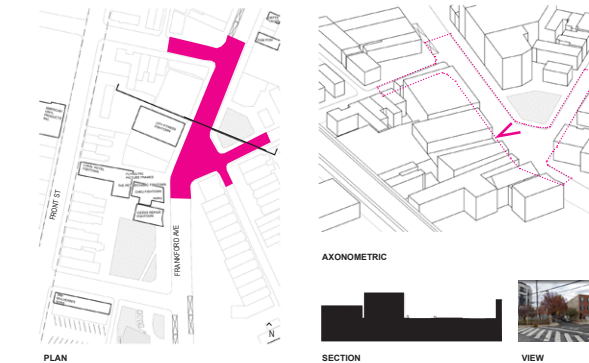
FRANKFORD + DELAWARE EXPY



PALMER + FRONT



BELGRADE + FRANKFORD



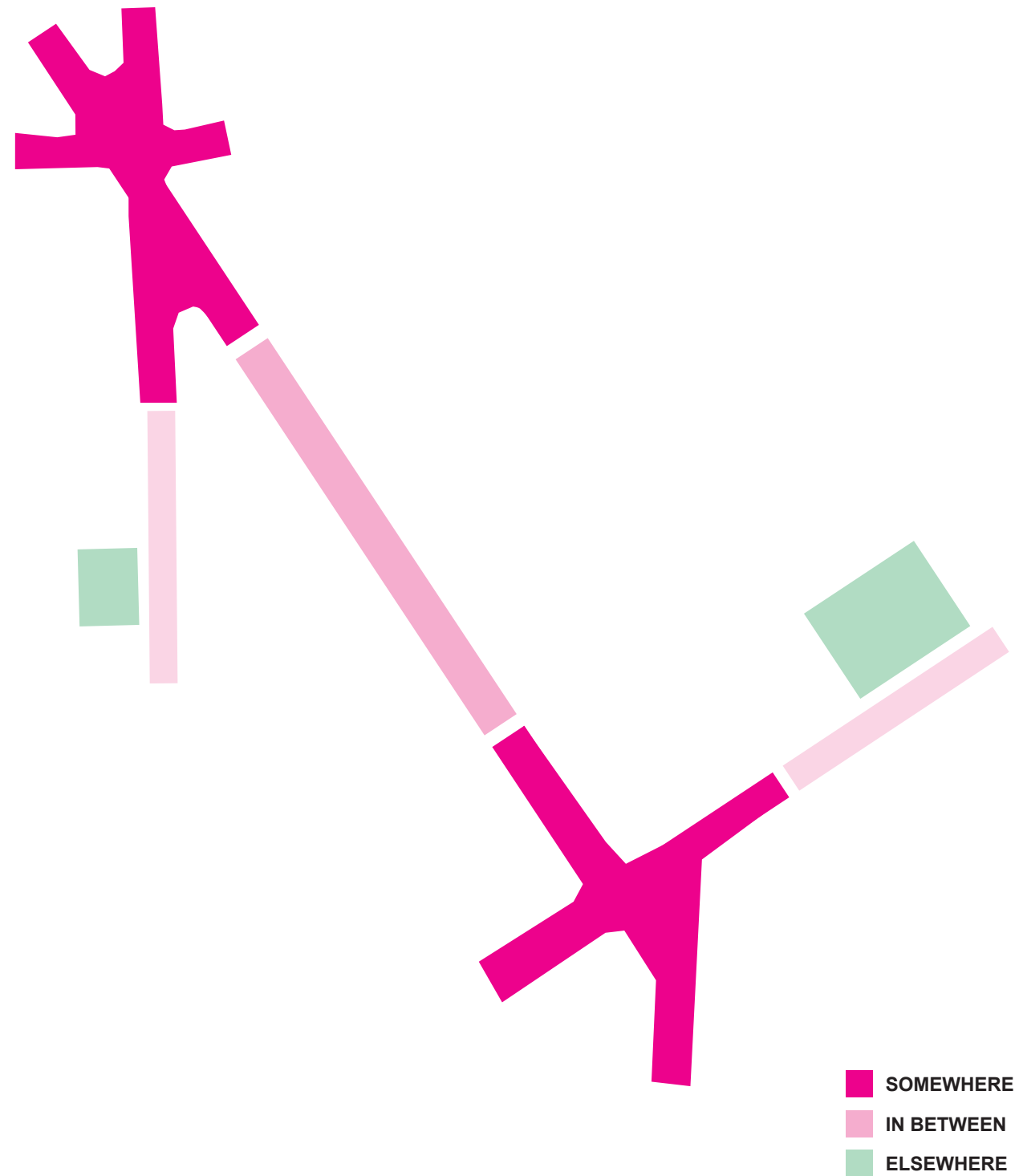
*LARGER VERSIONS OF INTERSECTION DIAGRAMS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX

FUTURE VISION

This Vision Plan seeks to create a framework for design action that focuses future BID investment and creative energy in a consistent and provocative manner. Proposed interventions are concentrated at intersections and dispersed along connecting corridors, allowing for a phased and layered approach that celebrates diverse community voices while forming a coherent neighborhood identity.

With intersections as a centering concept, the proposal defines a site strategy and companion toolkit to flexibly impact the BID service area. Sites include key nodes and connecting street segments between them. The toolkit is organized by spatial deployment categories – surfaces, edges and objects – with smaller scale tactical concepts appearing alongside larger scale interventions. An imagined intersection scenario is used to illustrate all the toolkit elements operating together.

Intersection sites and toolkit elements are intended as initial concepts, to be fleshed out through additional development phases by local designers, makers and entrepreneurs. BID investment in these efforts should seek to stay within the BID community as much as feasible to maximize the positive impacts of funds and enhance community connectivity. This plan seeks to provide opportunities for continued creative collaboration, strengthening existing connections while anticipating future growth.



SOMEWHERE, ELSEWHERE & IN BETWEEN

Navigating the unusual geometry of the FK grid and its densely packed homes and businesses can be challenging for newcomers and locals alike. A visitor planning to go somewhere in the District should continue to experience the possibility that they may end up elsewhere, and encounter something unexpected in between. An intersection-oriented wayfinding strategy supports the sense of exploration and discovery inherent in this urban fabric, allowing visitors to find novel surprises while en route to their known destinations.

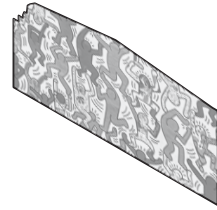
To this end, rather than spread BID resources evenly, we recommend targeted interventions that meet acute needs and maximize positive impacts. Key intersections serving as District gateways (such as Front & Girard to the south and Frankford & Lehigh to the north) as well as internal social hubs (like Front & Cecil B Moore) can serve as initial test cases for improvements. Additional investment layers along corridors, like trashcans, lighting and street furniture, should be concentrated along corridors connecting these intersections with nearby open space and community resources.

TOOLKIT

Surfaces

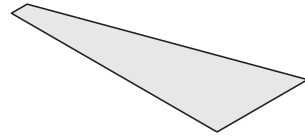
ART WALLS

Match building owners with non-profits and artists to encourage murals and wall art on highly visible underutilized surfaces.



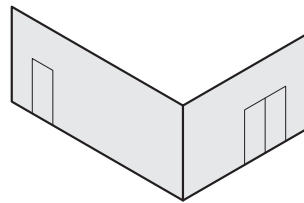
PAINTED GROUND

Define pedestrian zones within streets, sidewalks, and surface parking lots through painted ground surfaces.



STOREFRONTS

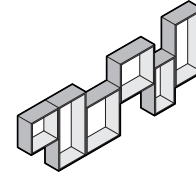
Encourage active street-facing facades through storefront installations, operable windows and lively lighting.



Edges

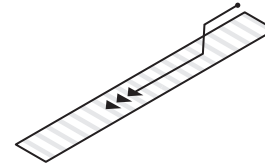
PROGRAM FRAMES

Define and activate edges of vacant lots and surface parking with programmable structures.



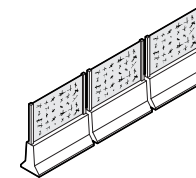
EXPRESS LANE

Define clear circulation paths around construction sites and other streetscape interruptions.



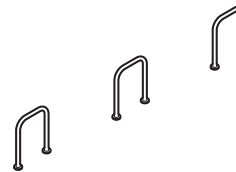
BETTER BARRIERS

Create opportunities for art, branding, wayfinding and signage atop Jersey barriers used along construction edges.



BREADCRUMBS

Position recurring streetscape elements (like bike racks and trash cans) in trails defining corridor connections.



IN THE MEANTIME...

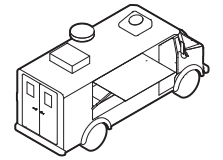
Identify sites slated for future development and fund temporary improvements that allow activation through pop-up events.



Objects

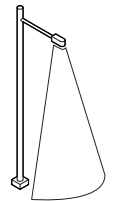
POP-UP PLUG-INS

Provide infrastructure in surface parking lots and underutilized street zones for food trucks and pop-up vendors.



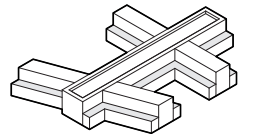
LIGHTING

Coordinate with city and transit agencies to upgrade lighting for safety, wayfinding and branding.



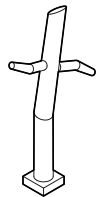
PLANTER SEATING

Install and maintain planter benches, adding greenery and street furniture for public use.



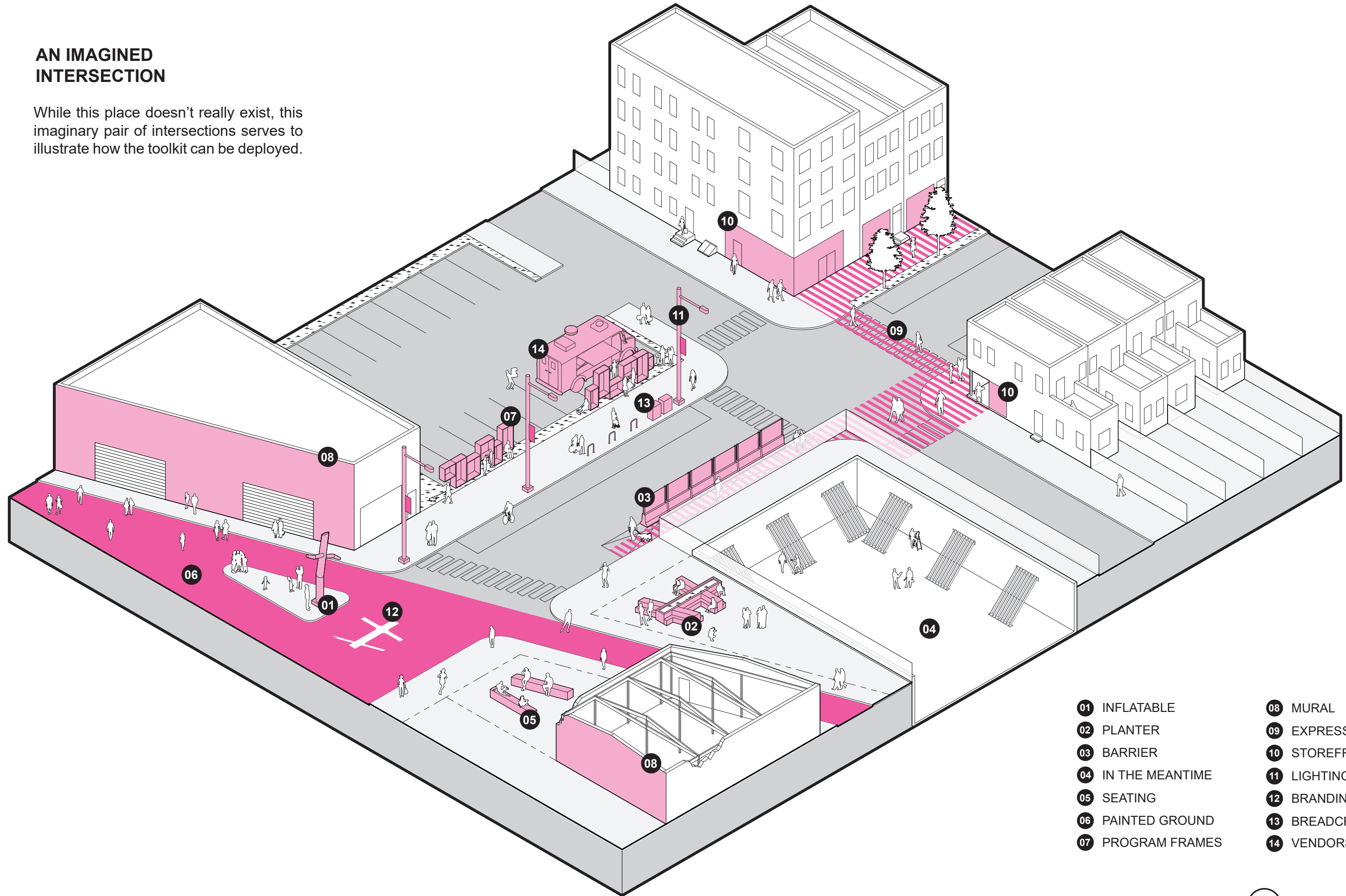
INFLATABLES

Create high visibility, low cost branding with colorful, inflatable sculptures commissioned from local artists.

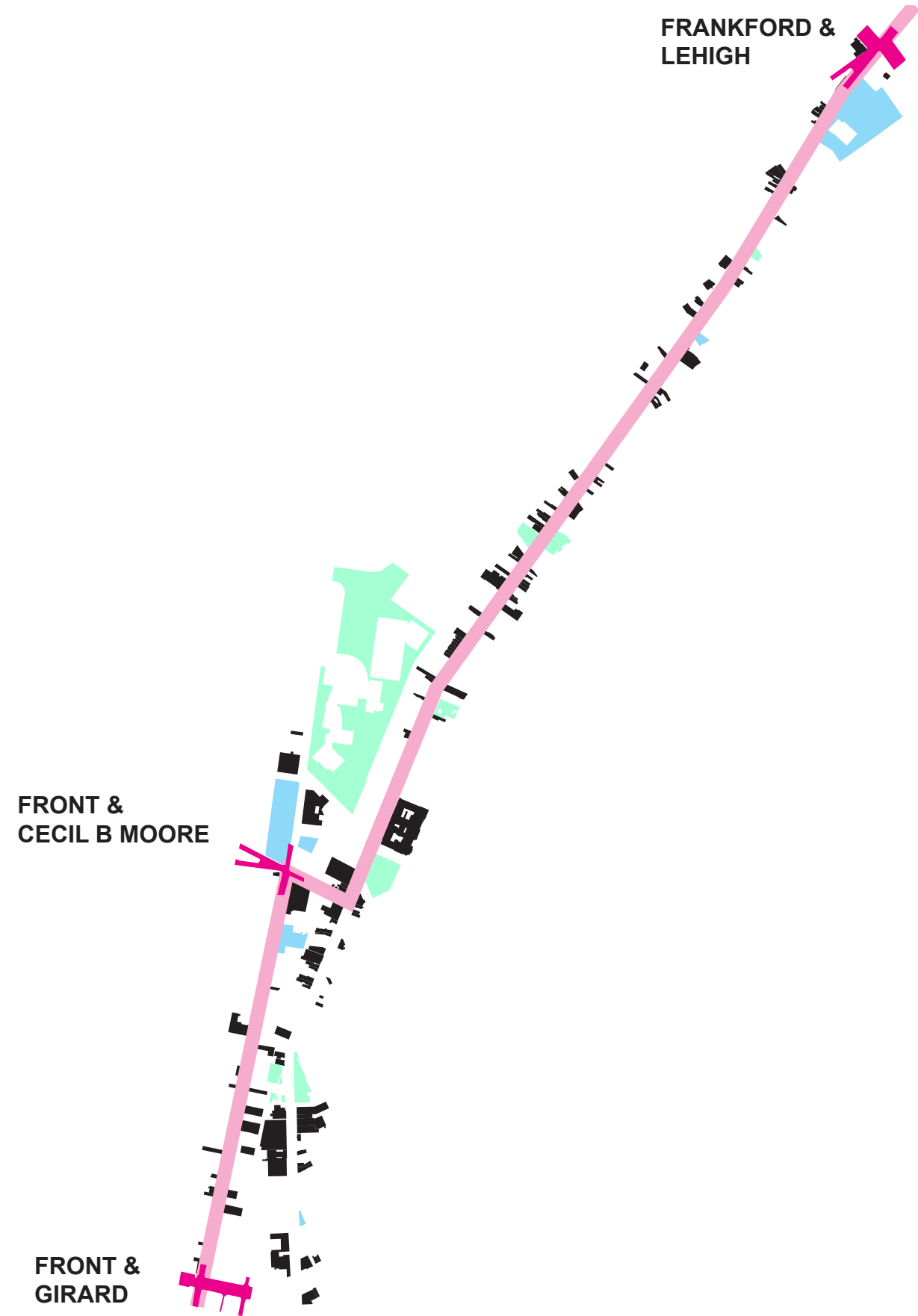


AN IMAGINED INTERSECTION

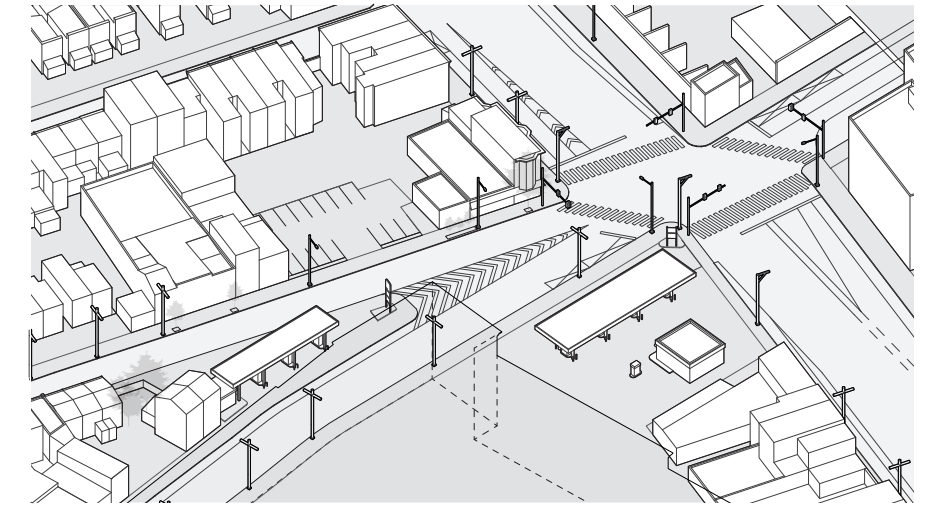
While this place doesn't really exist, this imaginary pair of intersections serves to illustrate how the toolkit can be deployed.



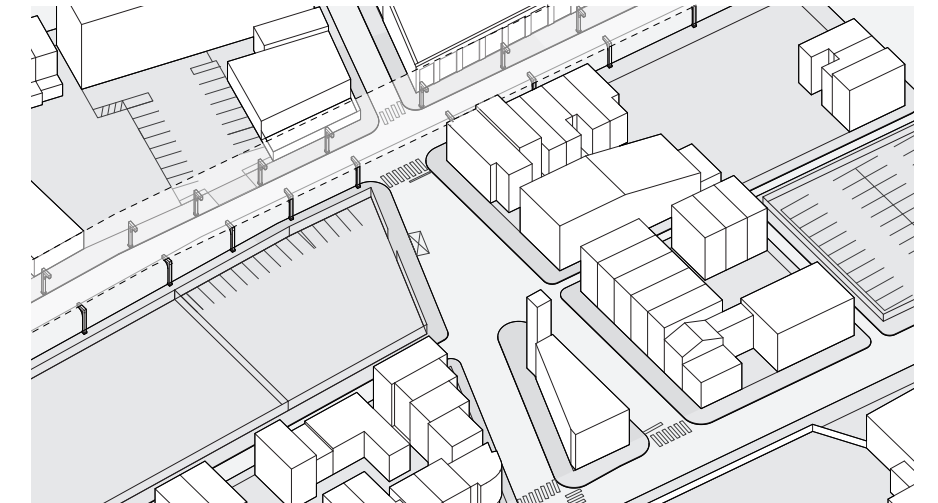
- 01 INFLATABLE
- 02 PLANTER
- 03 BARRIER
- 04 IN THE MEANTIME
- 05 SEATING
- 06 PAINTED GROUND
- 07 PROGRAM FRAMES
- 08 MURAL
- 09 EXPRESS LANE
- 10 STOREFRONTS
- 11 LIGHTING
- 12 BRANDING
- 13 BREADCRUMBS
- 14 VENDORS



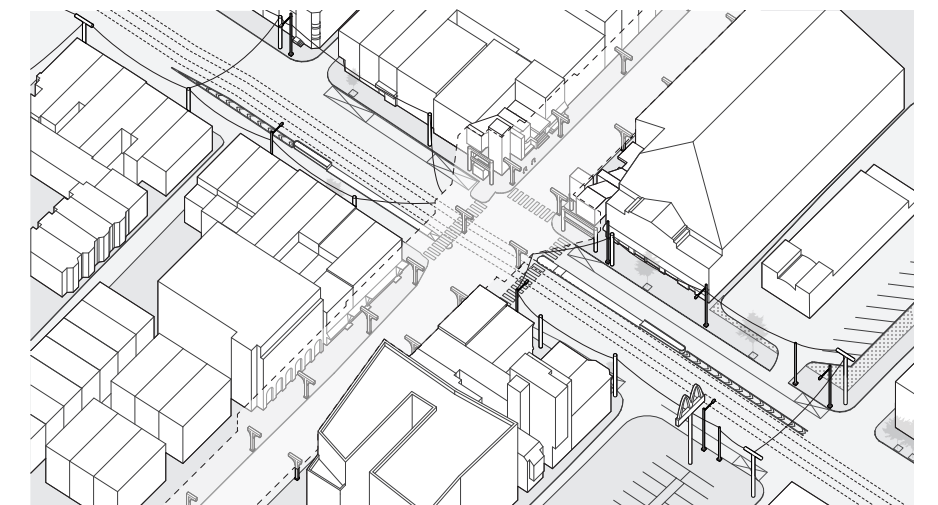
FRANKFORD + LEHIGH



FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE



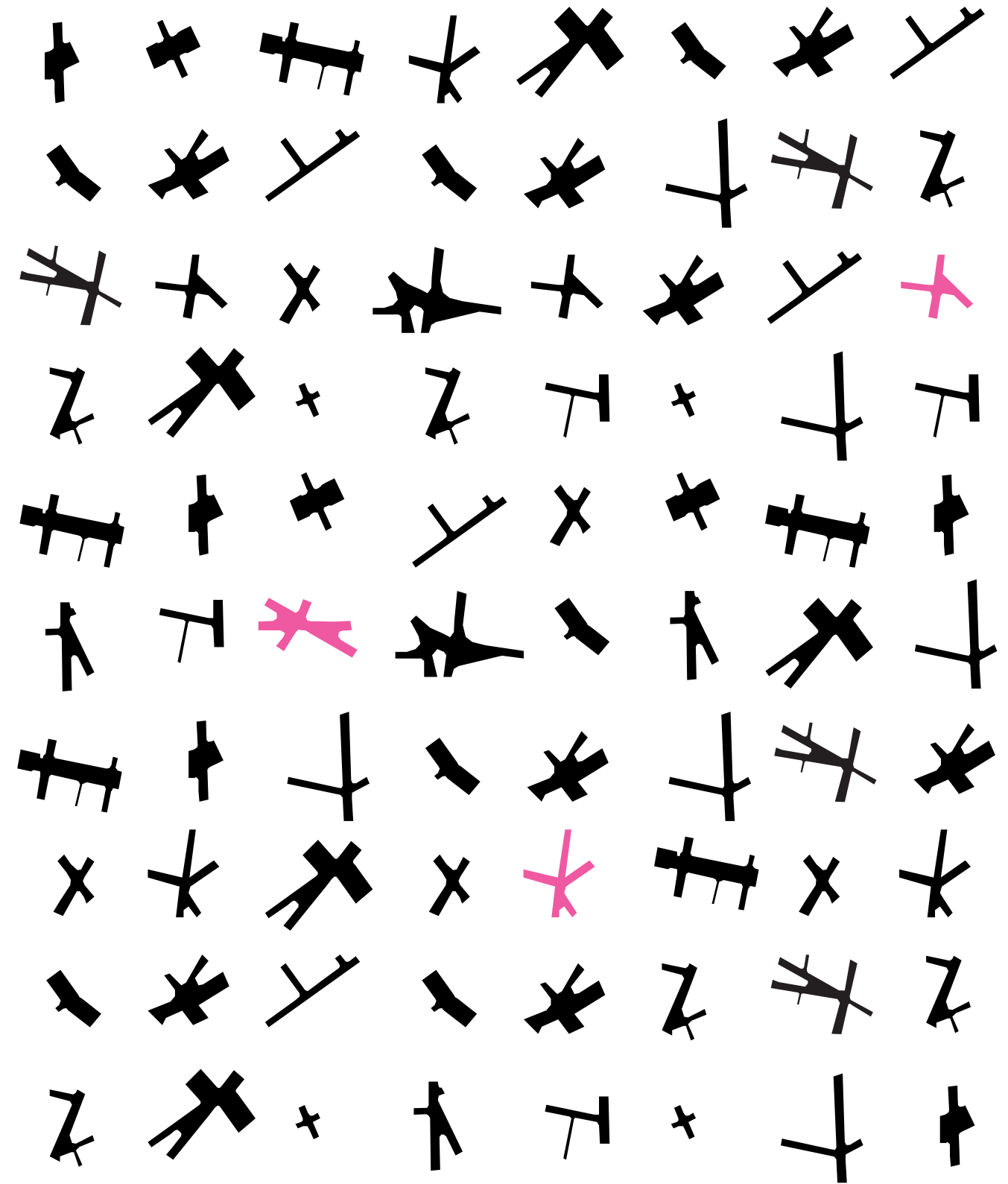
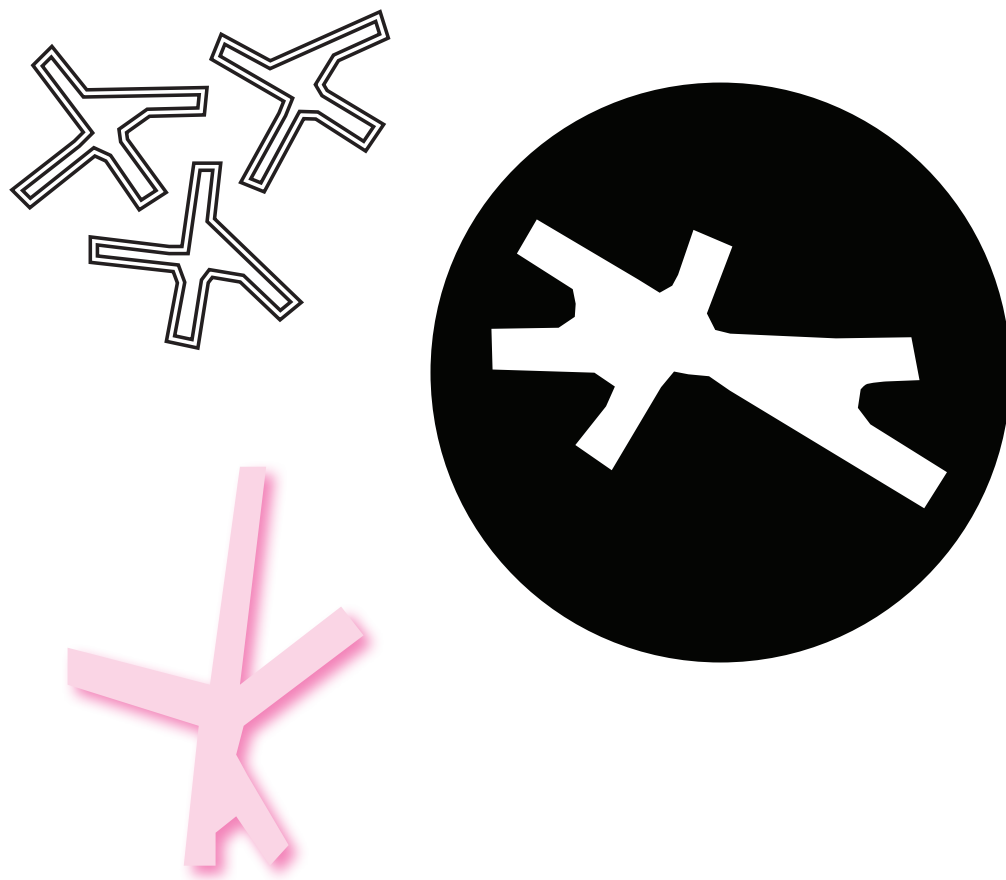
FRONT + GIRARD



*LARGER VERSIONS OF AXON DRAWINGS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX

ICONS & IDENTITIES

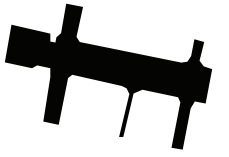
The dynamic shapes of intersections are positioned to become iconic landmarks for the FK District. Each intersection is identified with a recognizable and unique visual symbol which may be deployed to represent the local networks of businesses and community members sited nearby. Intersection-specific wheatpastes, stickers, street furniture, and social media campaigns designed by local stakeholders allow each group to interpret the landmark and promote itself in its own unique way. Intersection icons serve as a unifying visual language for FK District branding and wayfinding.



ENGAGEMENT

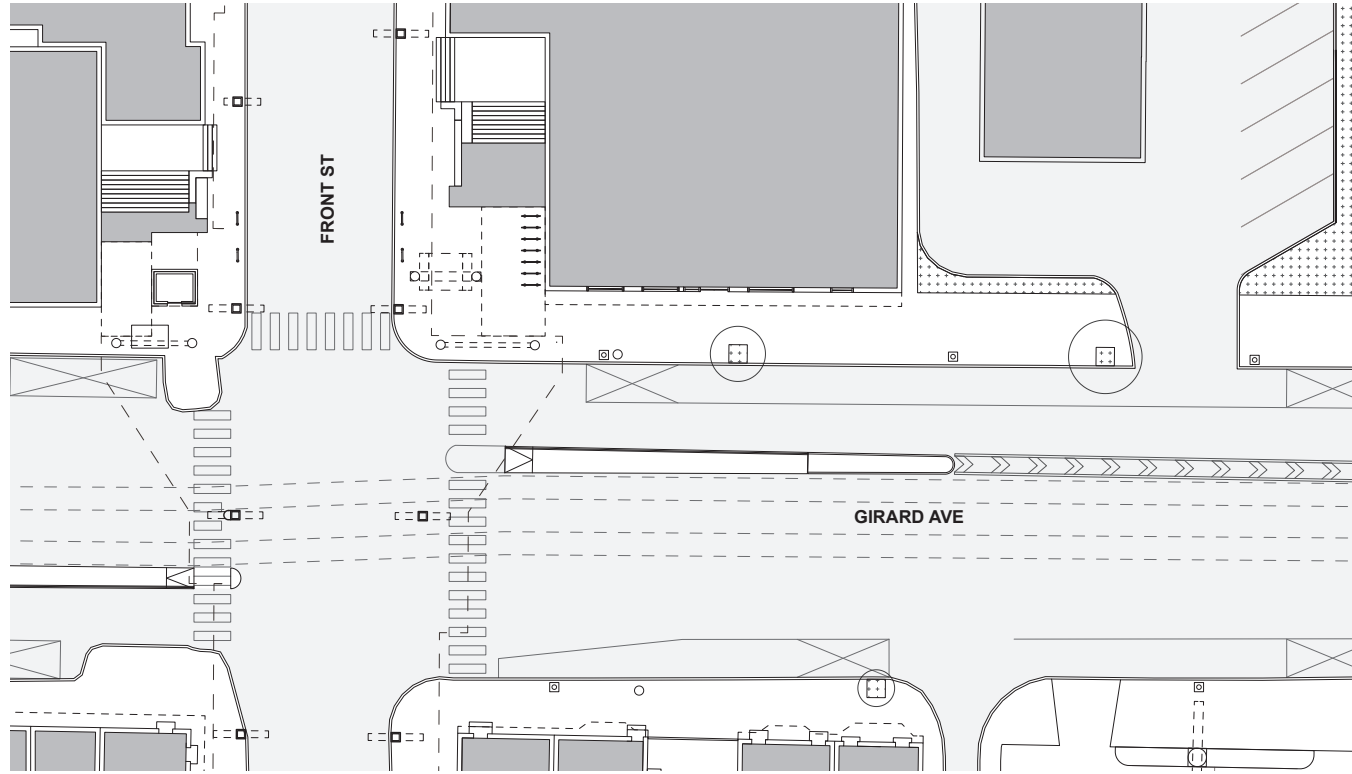
Intersections already serve as important neighborhood markers, with businesses identified in clusters around them – for instance, The International Bar and Evil Genius at Front and Cecil B Moore, or Johnny Brendas, Garage Bar and Joe’s Steaks at Frankford and Girard. BID stakeholders already draw energy from these communities, and formalizing those connections through intersection workshops has the potential to further strengthen aligned interests and future investment. Local business owners are on-the-ground experts on existing challenges and possibilities for directing future investment.

Three intersections with diverse spatial conditions were identified to test drive intersection workshops, bringing together micro communities of business owners, neighborhood stakeholders, and city representatives to discuss challenges, possibilities, and priorities for future projects.

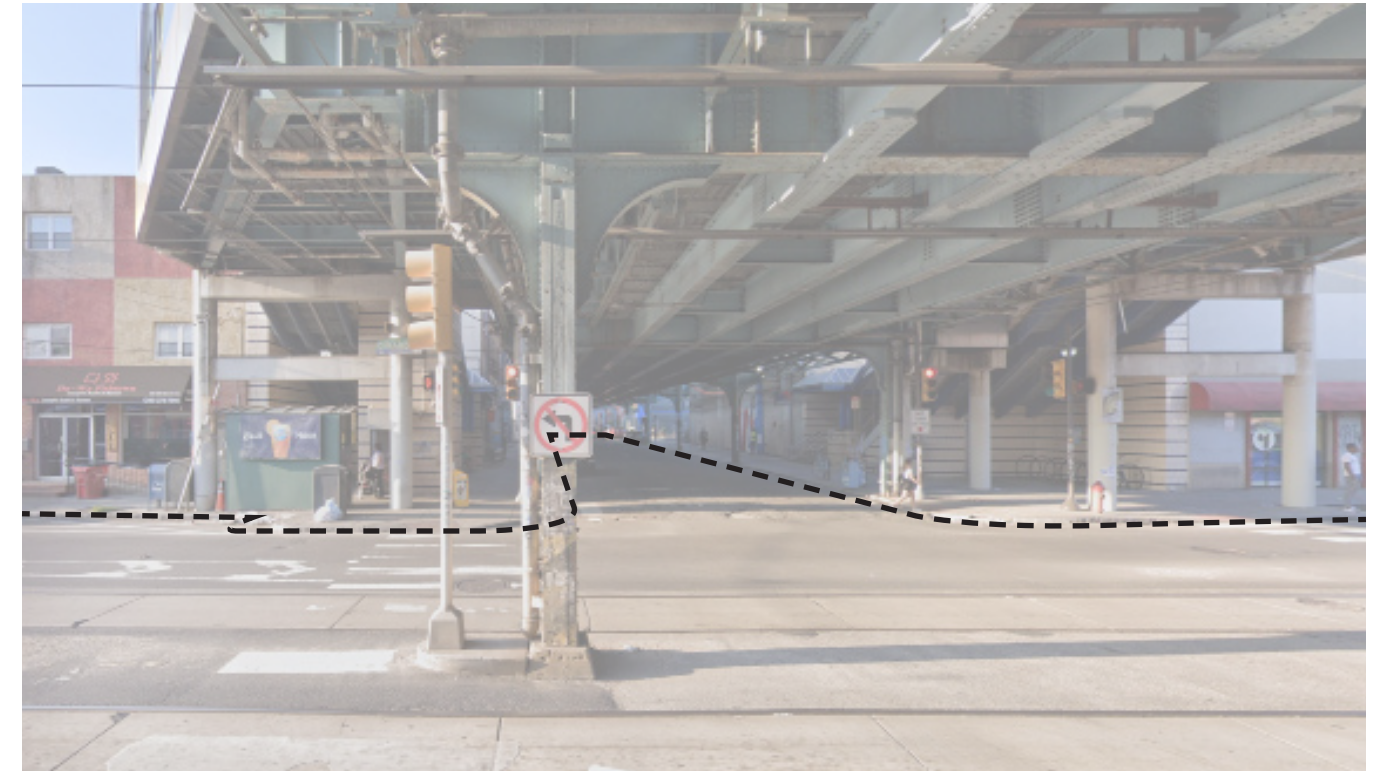
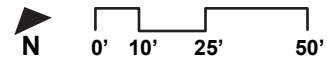


FRONT + GIRARD

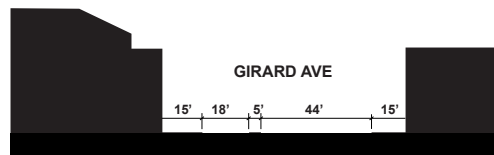
2020



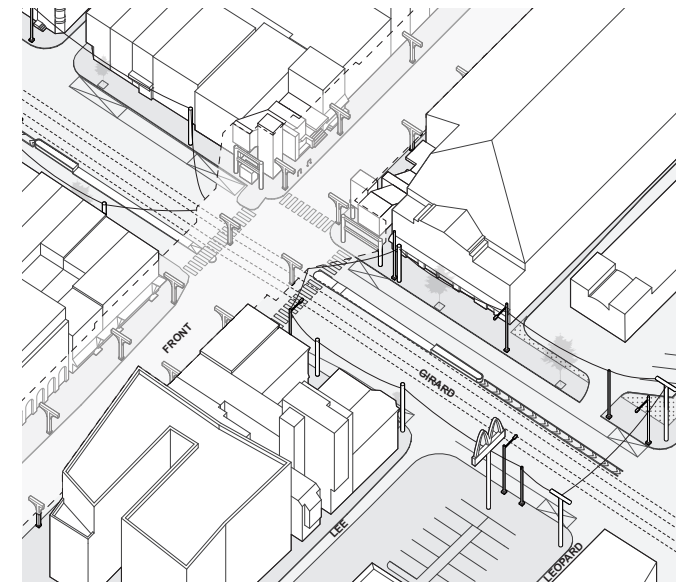
SITE PLAN



CORNER VIEW

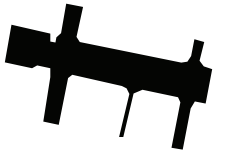


SECTIONS



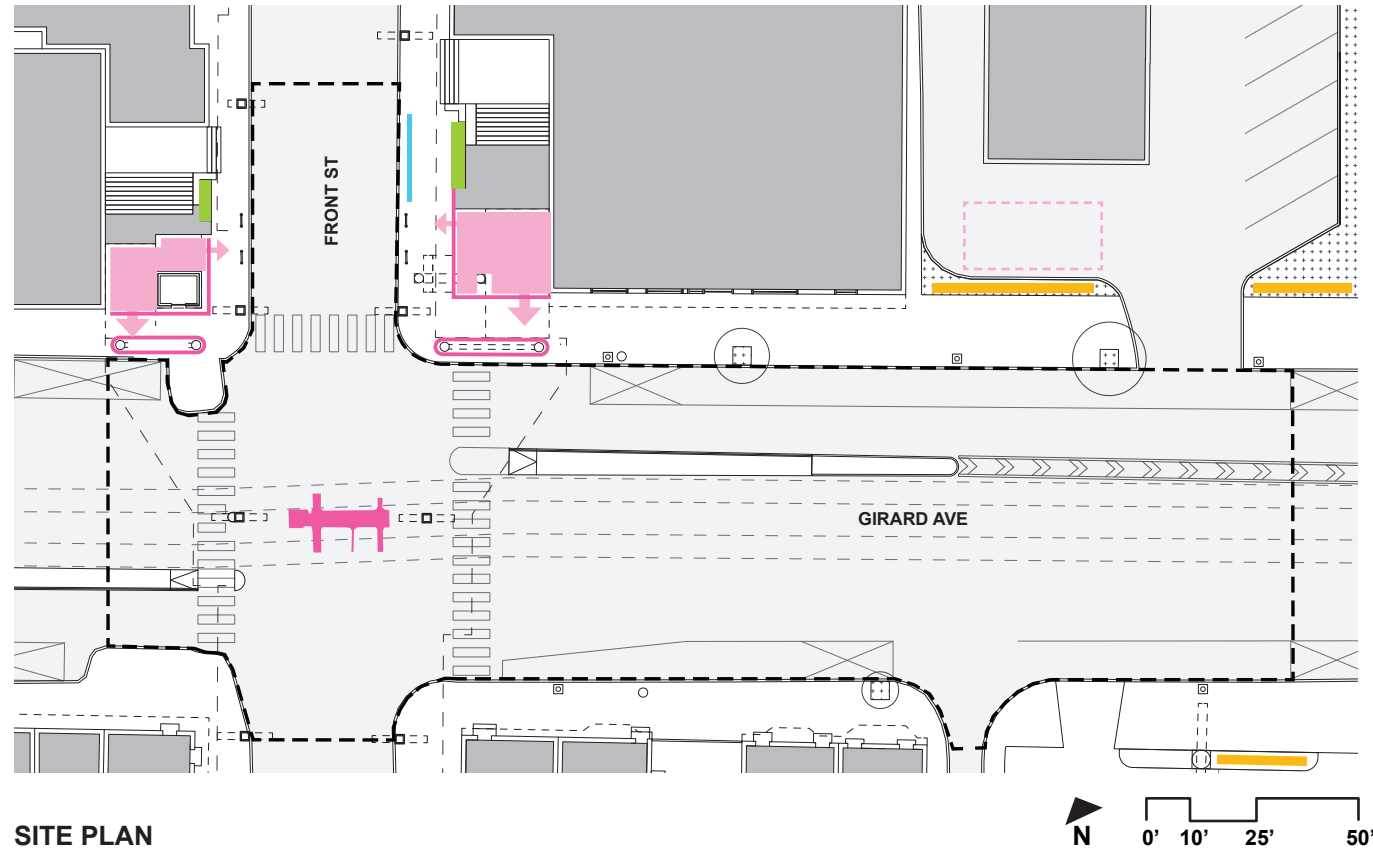
3D VIEW

*LARGER VERSIONS OF SITE PLAN + INTERSECTION VIEWS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX PG. 30-34

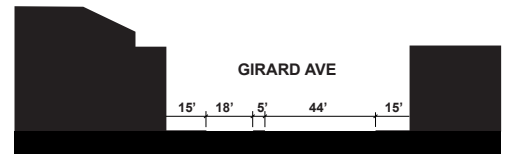
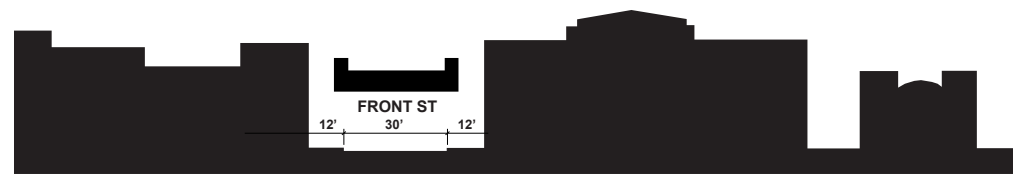


FRONT + GIRARD

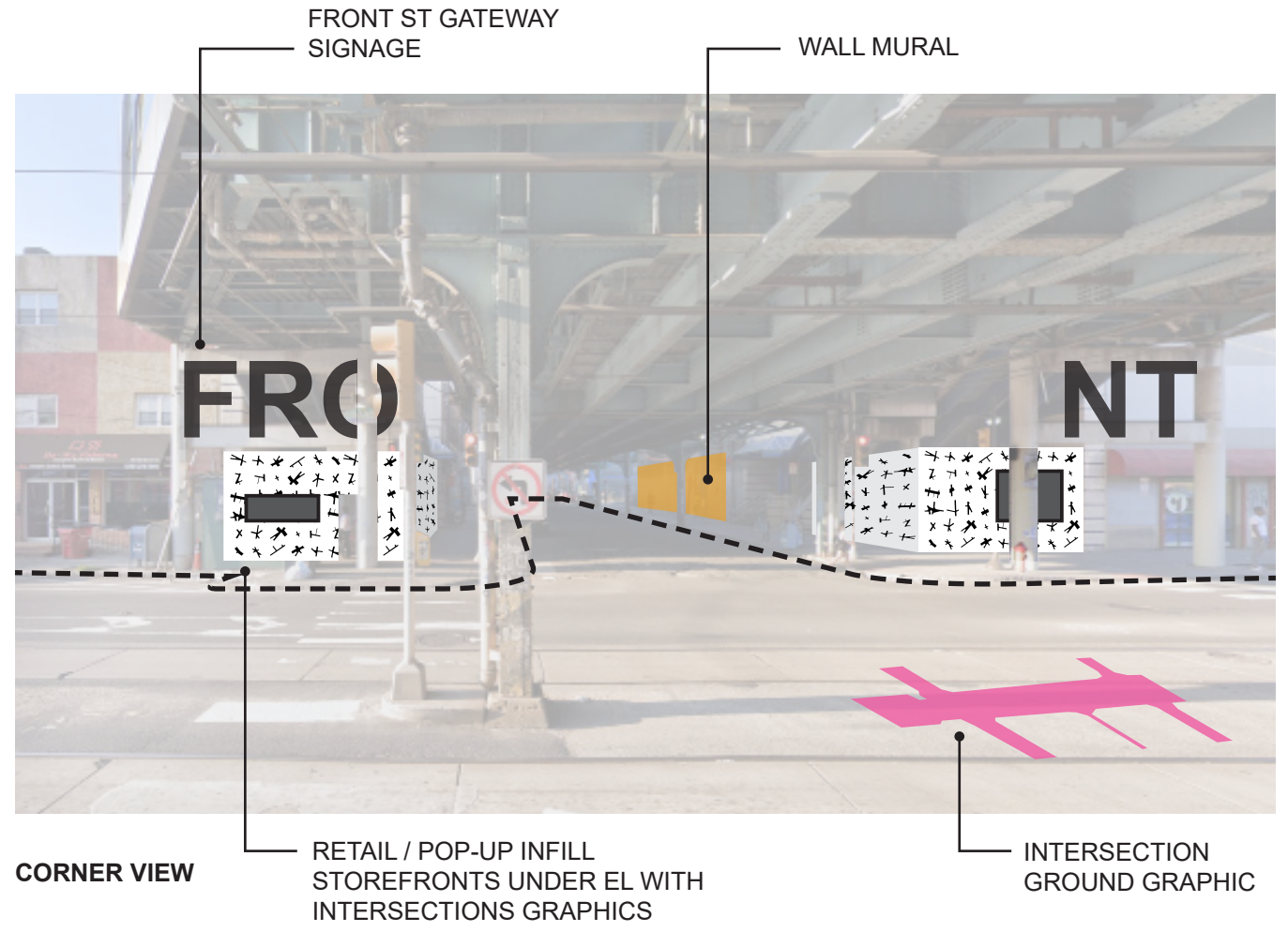
FUTURE



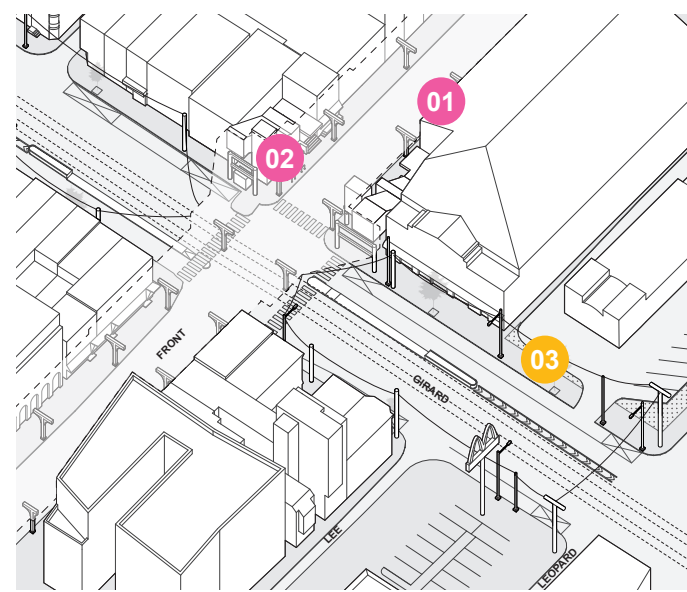
SITE PLAN



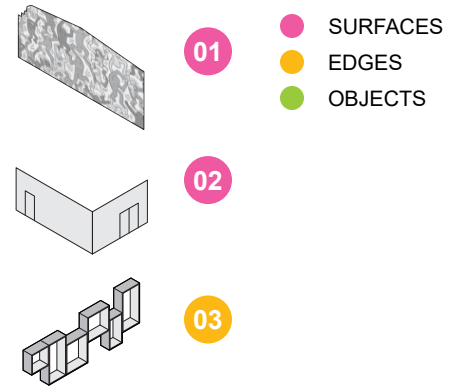
SECTIONS



CORNER VIEW



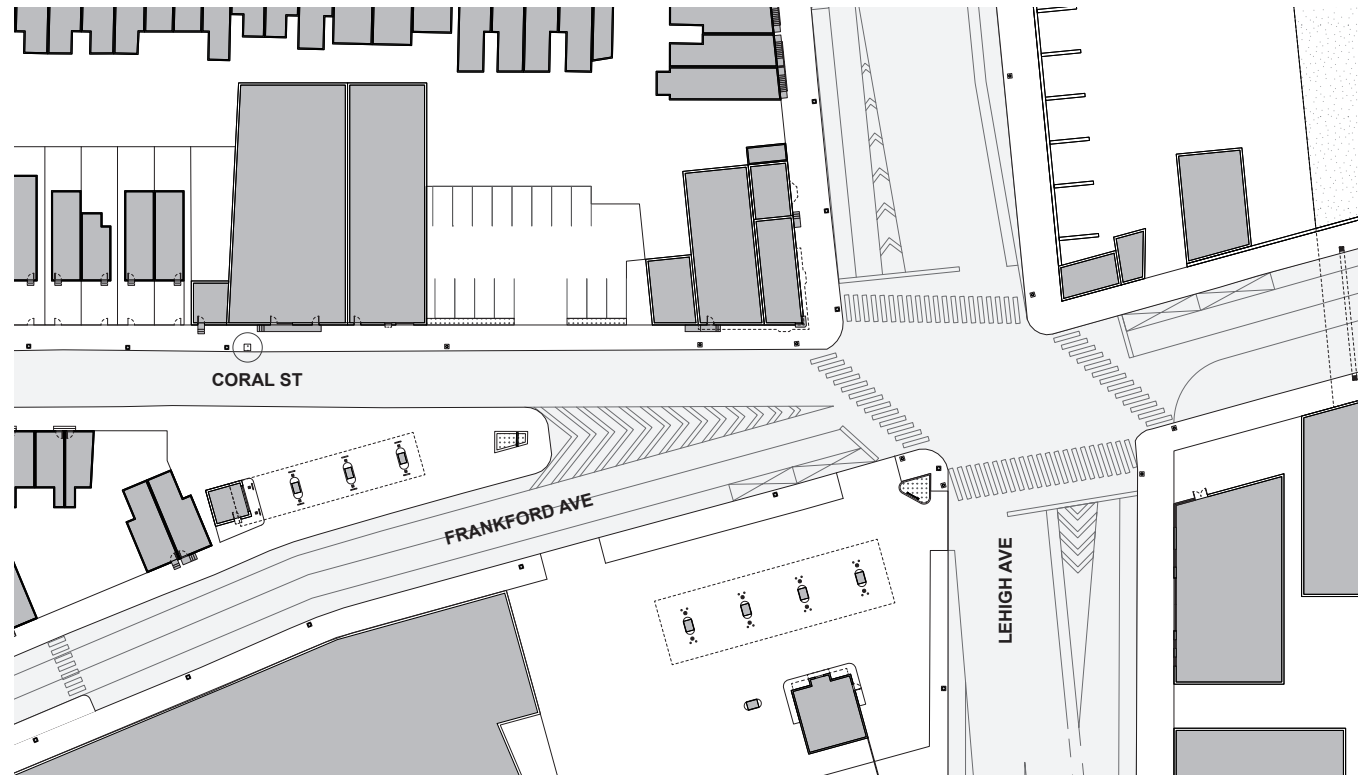
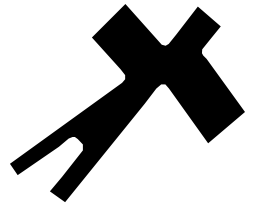
3D VIEW



*LARGER VERSIONS OF SITE PLAN + INTERSECTION VIEWS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX PG. 30-34

FRANKFORD + LEHIGH

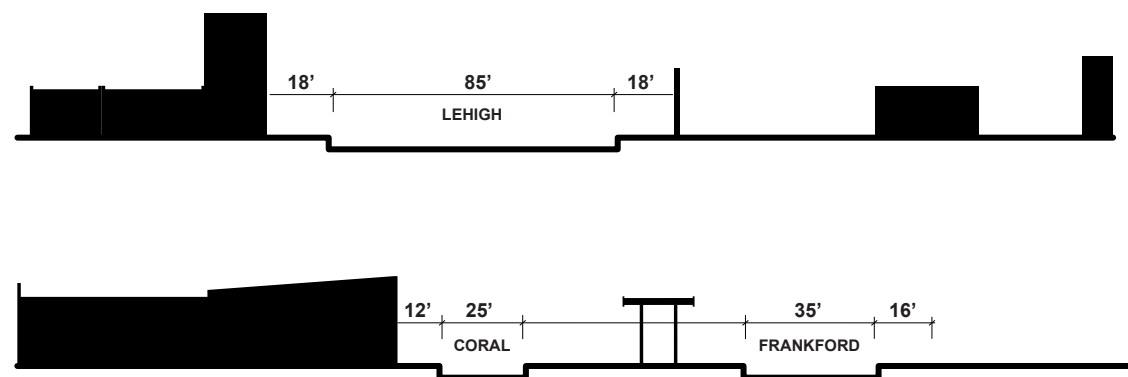
2020



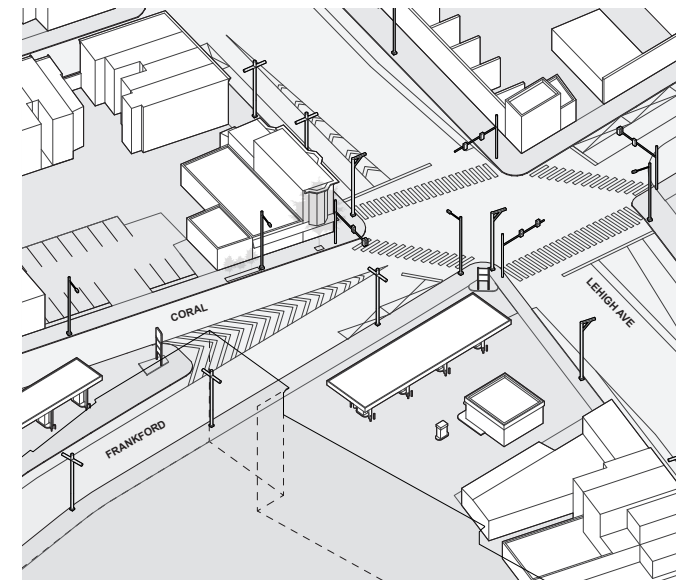
SITE PLAN



CORNER VIEW



SECTIONS

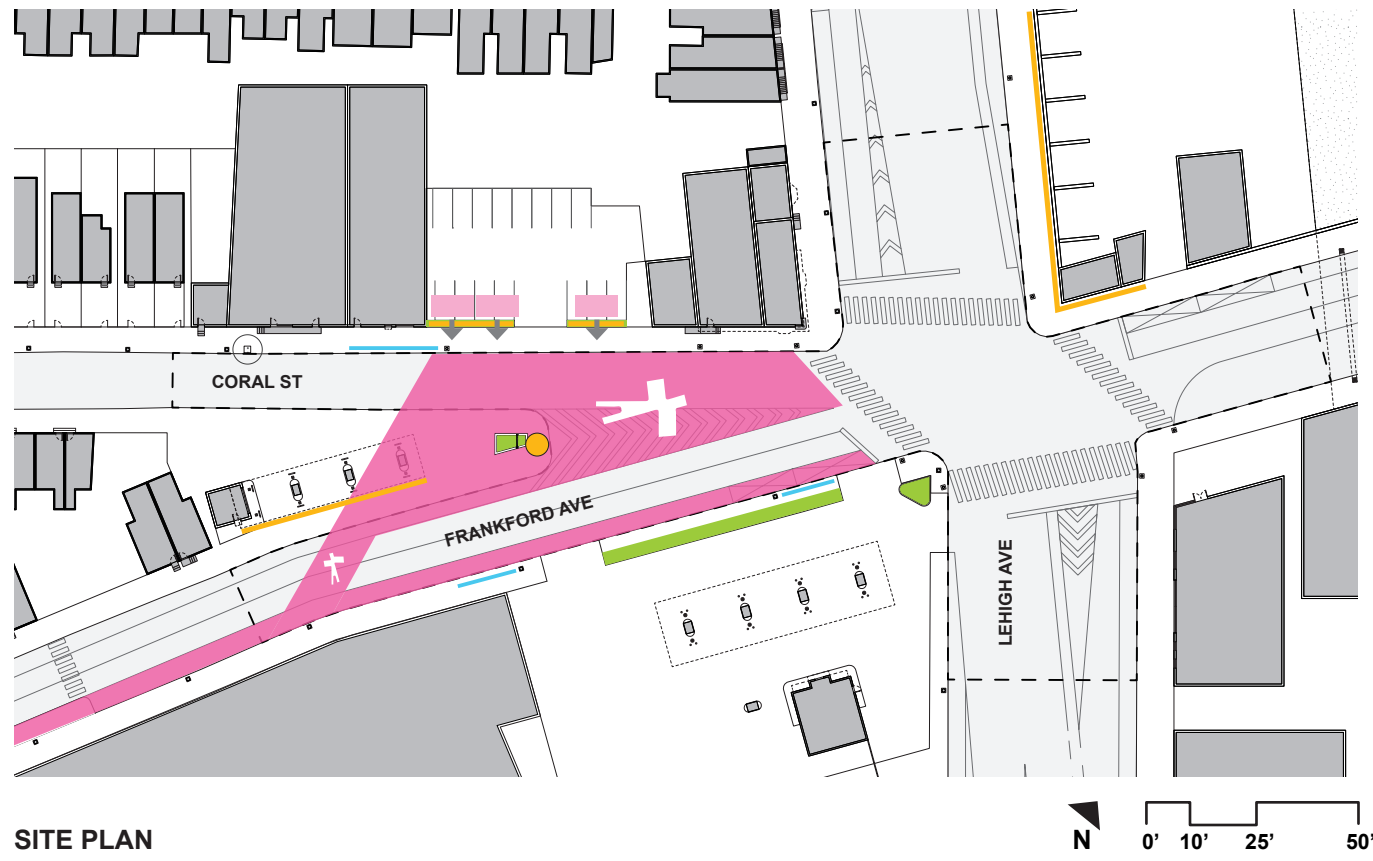


3D VIEW

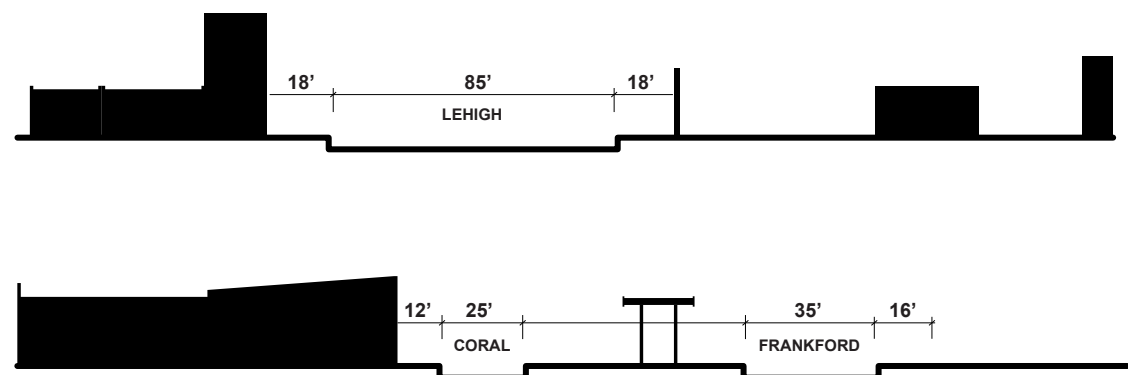
*LARGER VERSIONS OF SITE PLAN + INTERSECTION VIEWS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX PG. 35-39

FRANKFORD + LEHIGH

FUTURE

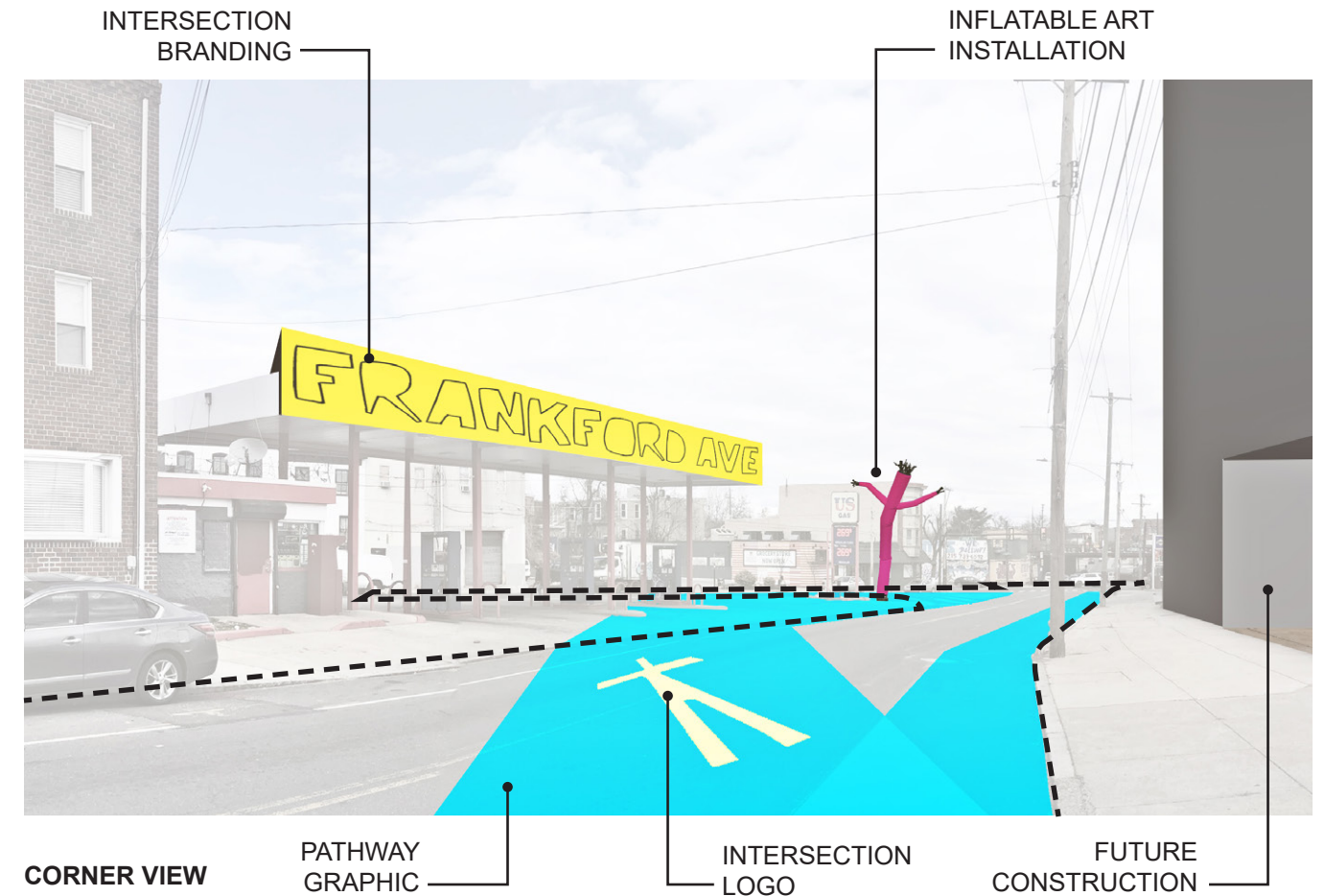
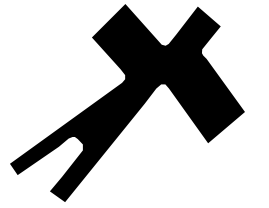


SITE PLAN



SECTIONS

*LARGER VERSIONS OF SITE PLAN + INTERSECTION VIEWS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX PG. 35-39

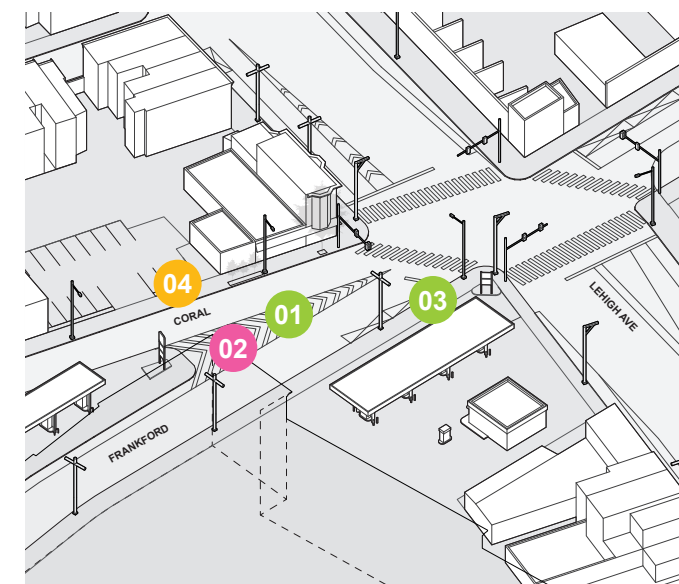


CORNER VIEW

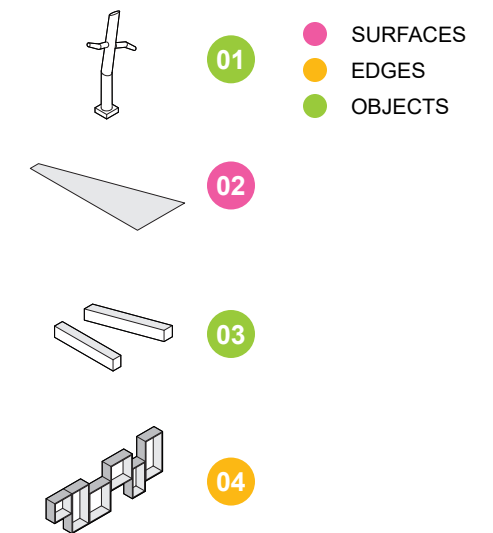
PATHWAY GRAPHIC

INTERSECTION LOGO

FUTURE CONSTRUCTION

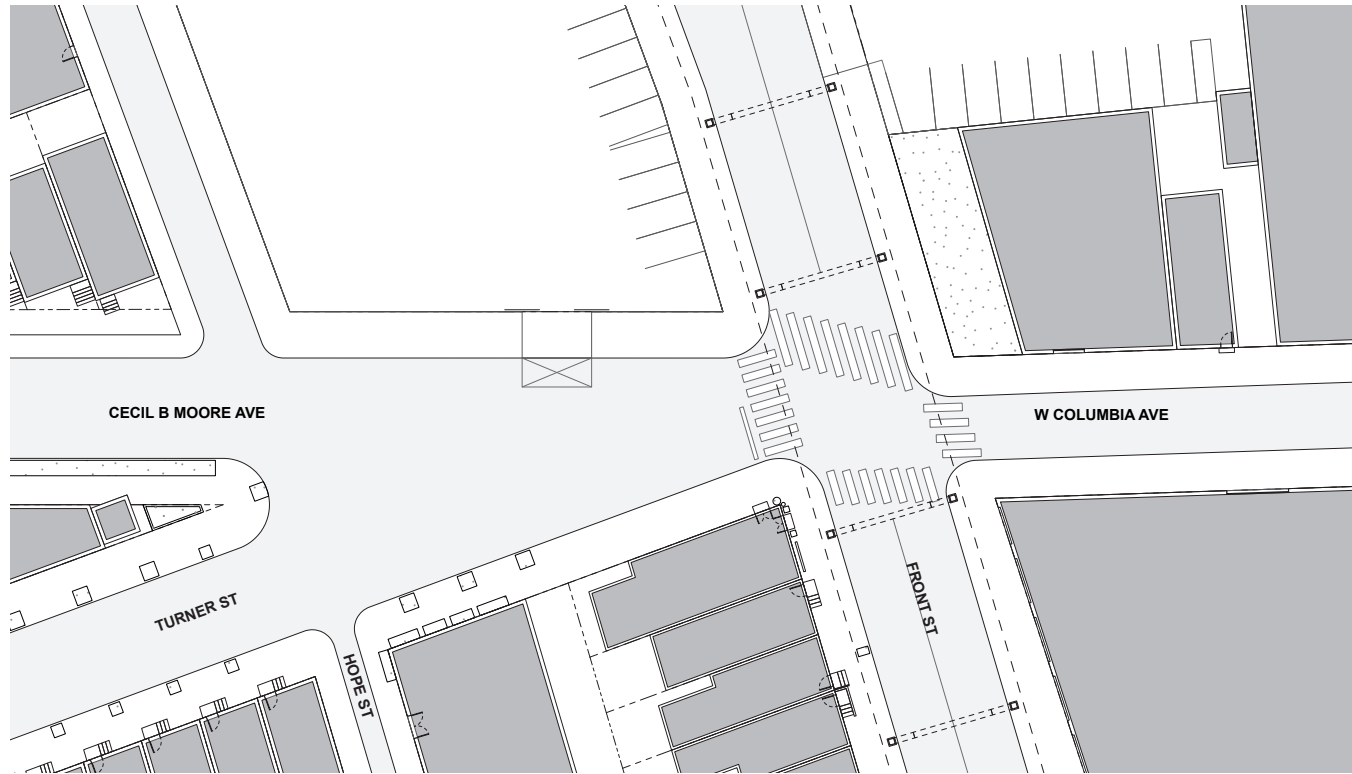


3D VIEW

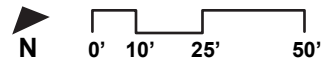


FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

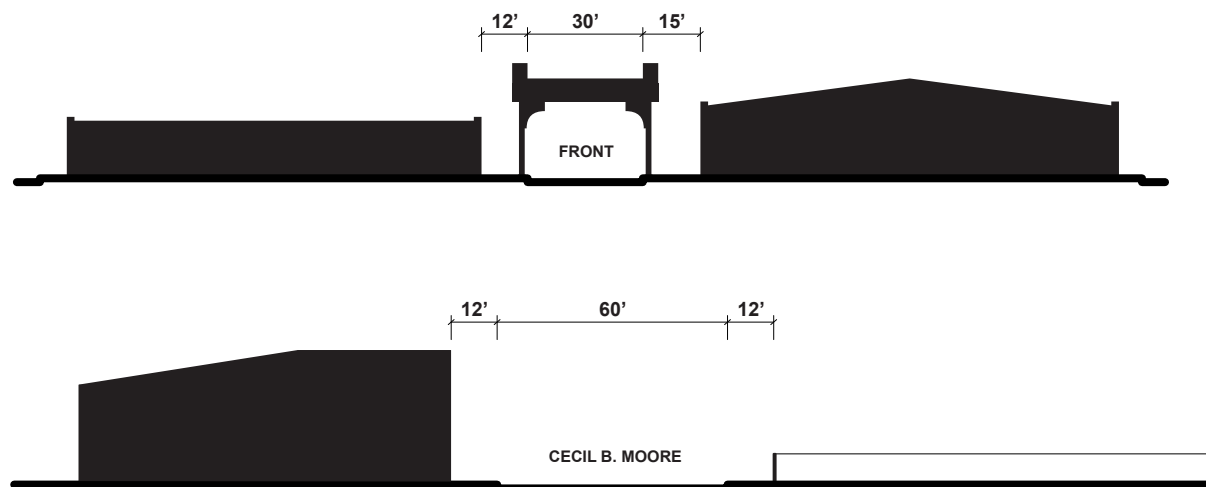
2020



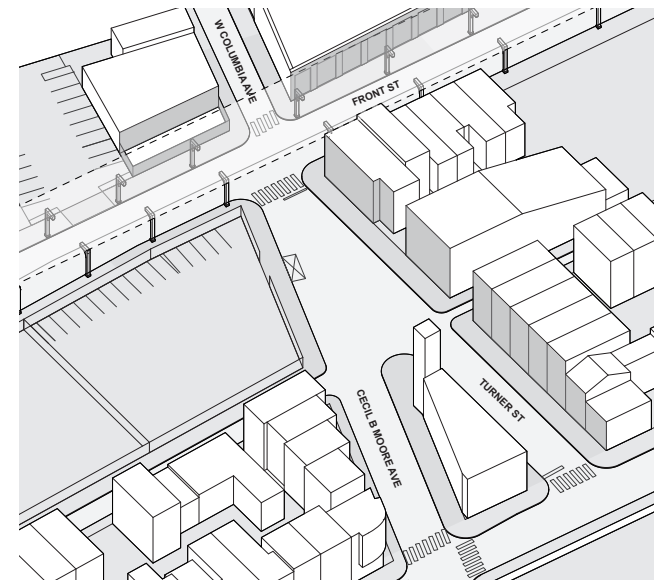
SITE PLAN



CORNER VIEW

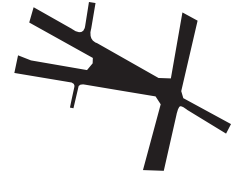


SECTIONS



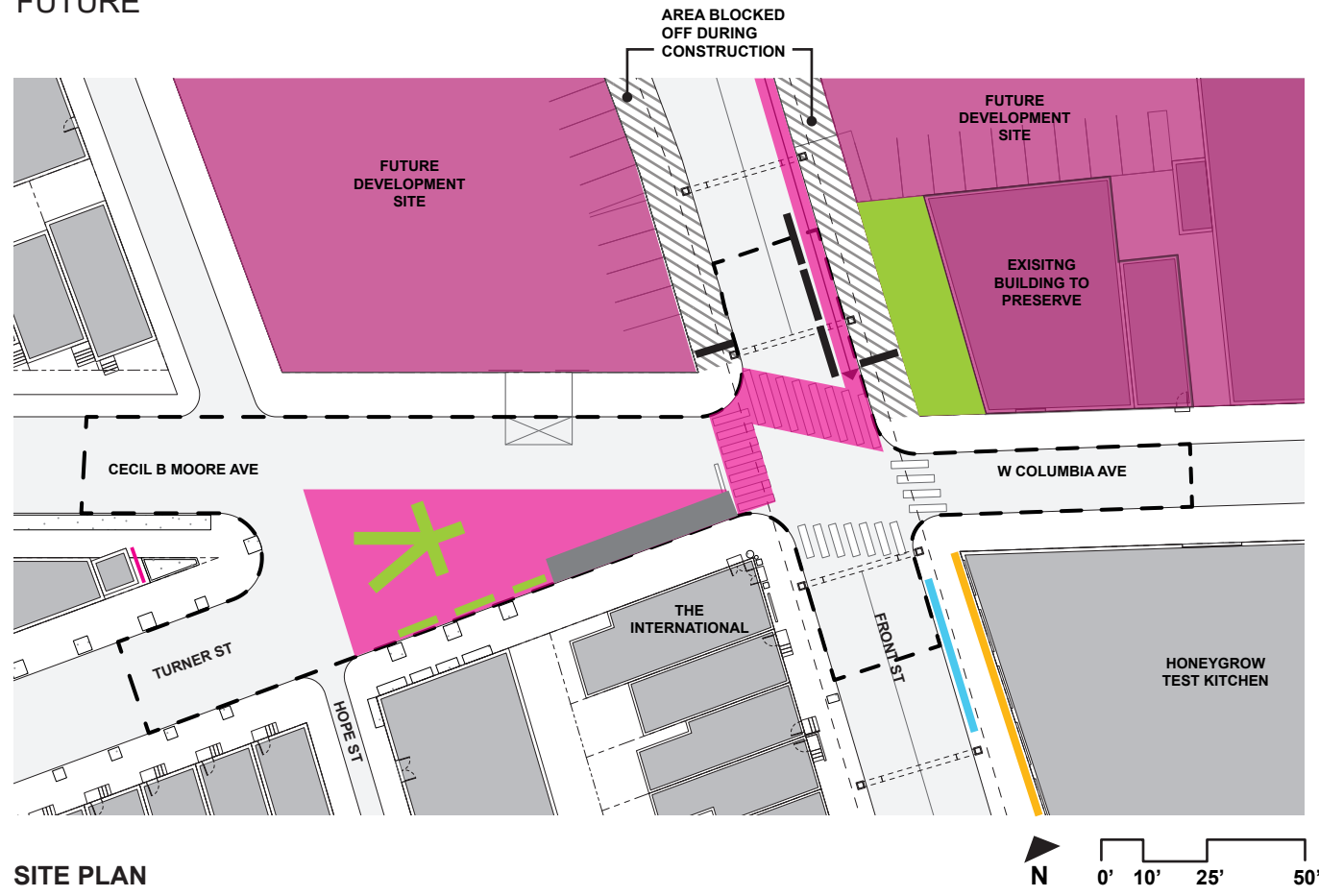
3D VIEW

*LARGER VERSIONS OF SITE PLAN + INTERSECTION VIEWS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX PG. 40-44



FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

FUTURE



SITE PLAN

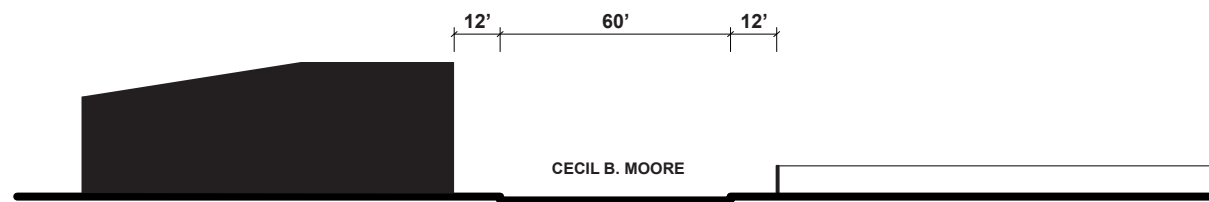
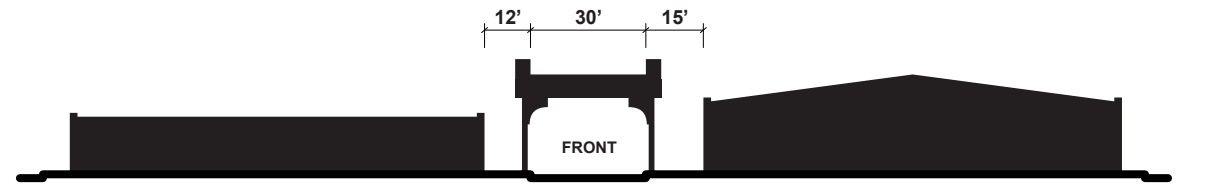


CORNER VIEW

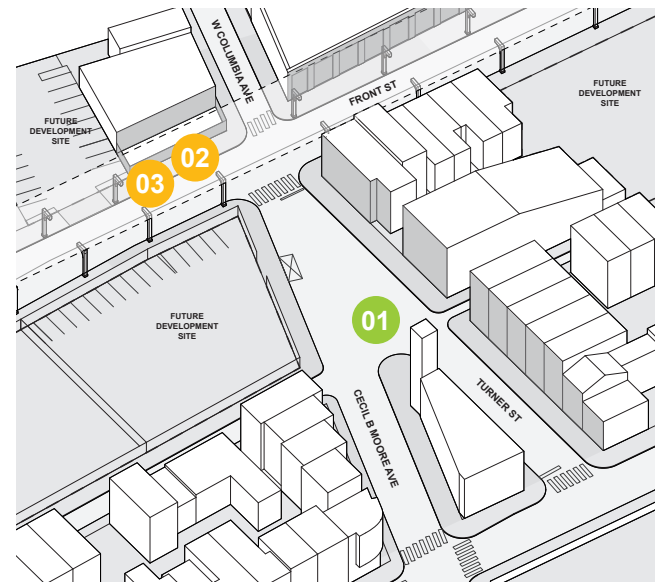
EXTERIOR SEATING @ THE INTERNATIONAL

PATHWAY GRAPHIC

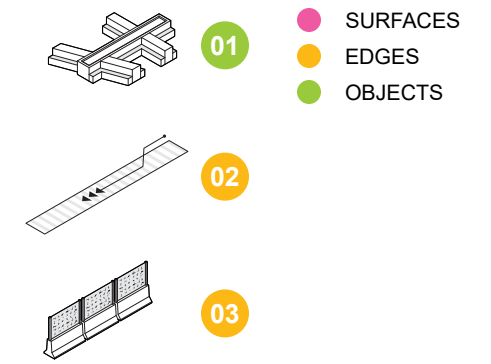
MOVABLE SEATING ELEMENTS + PLANTERS



SECTIONS



3D VIEW



*LARGER VERSIONS OF SITE PLAN + INTERSECTION VIEWS AVAILABLE IN APPENDIX PG. 40-44

NEXT STEPS

This planning effort was carried out from late 2020 through early 2021 – a time of intense and unprecedented challenges for cities, neighborhoods, and small businesses across the globe. As the City of Philadelphia moves toward reopening its economy amid what seems to be a receding pandemic, the Fishtown-Kensington District has already begun to witness a return to crowded sidewalks, busy train stations, and 2AM last call. But the experiences and traumas of the past year will not be easily forgotten, and we cannot and should not return to business as usual.

One key lesson is that the artistic, social, and economic production of urban streetlife is both resilient and fragile. Without it, we lose many of the fundamental joys of city living and miss opportunities for building community and entrepreneurship. The pandemic year taught us how streets and sidewalks are lifelines – providing parklets, streeteries, and social connections at a time of extreme isolation – and proving that small businesses have much to offer when called upon to engage in the creative reshaping of urban fabric. We expect these new models and resources to remain well into the future, reaching new customers and enhancing the street life of neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia.

The strategies and recommendations included in this document are intended as a starting point. We hope the plan becomes a template for additional community workshops, detailed design proposals, artist calls, and continued collaboration with neighborhood stakeholders and city agencies. The plan should be used to take risks, unlock the creative expression of the neighborhood, and enhance its business environment. Bolstering existing businesses while inviting new energy from diverse voices in and around the District, the plan should be used to resist a tendency to smooth edges and make FK like other places, instead charting new territory for a unique, inclusive, and dynamic business community.

FK STREETSCAPES, 2020



VISION PLANNING TEAM

In 2020, the Fishtown Kensington Area Business and Improvement District (FKABID) engaged our firm, ISA, to develop a vision plan for commercial corridor improvements in the Fishtown-Kensington (FK) area. As a small business engaged in architecture and design operating out of the Crane Arts Building in Kensington for over 15 years, our studio is deeply invested in working to preserve the FK area’s unique character while positively shaping its potential future transformations. We approached this project from the standpoint of designers of many new and adaptively re-used residential and mixed-use buildings in the area, as well as decades-long patrons of the many vibrant restaurants, bars, retail, and arts and culture venues that have made the neighborhood attractive to newcomers and longtime residents alike. Our core team included the following individuals:

ISA

Brian Phillips	Principal
Deb Katz	Principal
Matt Mayberry	Designer
Calvin Vannoy	Designer
Maura Chen	Designer

FKABID

Marc Collazzo	Executive Director
Kae Anderson	Director of Operations

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPANTS

Throughout the creation of this plan, ISA considered the FKABID’s primary mission to serve its member businesses while also looking to engage a broader group of community stakeholders in setting a positive tone for future development. The below list includes some of the many neighborhood voices that contributed to the plan.

COMMUNITY / BUSINESS

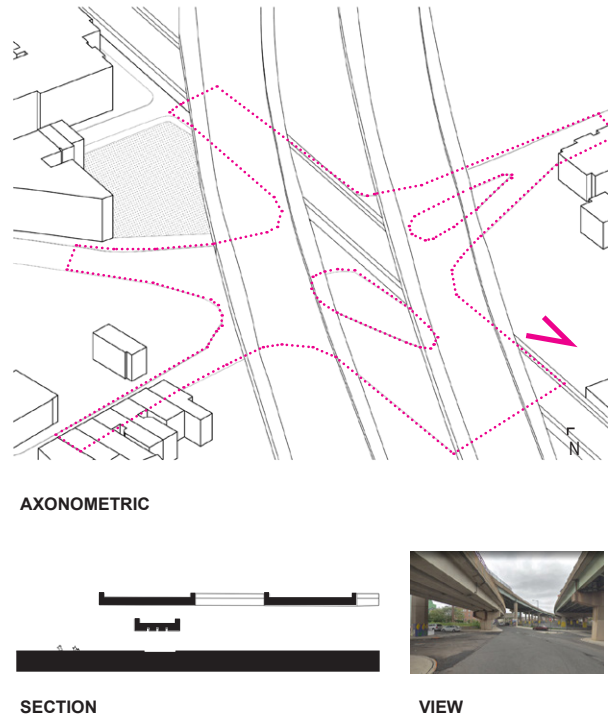
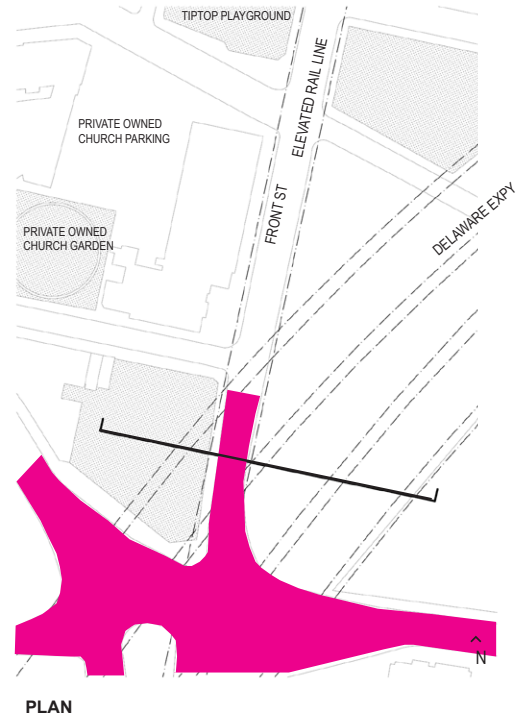
Randi Sherwood	Fishtown District
Patricia Coyne	Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations
Kwanzaa Parker	Philadelphia Freedom School
Lee Stoetzel	The West Collection
Chad Ludeman	Lokal Hotel
PJ Hopkins	Liberty Kitchen
Marc D’Agostino	Resident
Jane Golden	Mural Arts
Chris Romano	Sire Press
Kelsey Romano	Teacher
Rachel Penny	Mural Arts Program
Roy Alpert	RA Partnerships
Roland Kassis	Domani Developers
Venise Whitaker	Citizens Planning Institu
Skip Schwarzman	Feast Your Eyes Catering
Janay Green	Saint Lazarus
David Chiles	Lutheran Settlement House
Bruce Fox	Building Owner
Lisa Anne McHenry	The Head & The Hand Bookstore
Linda Gallant	The Head & The Hand Bookstore
Lee Nentwig	New Kensington CDC
Jessi Koch	New Kensington CDC
Paul Kimport	The International
Ravi Bayanker	Barbary
Jon Geeting	Engagement Editor, Plan Philly, WHYY
William Reed	Standard Tap
Andrew Ortega	East Kensington NA
Mike Richards	Kensington Co-op

CITY / GOVERNMENT

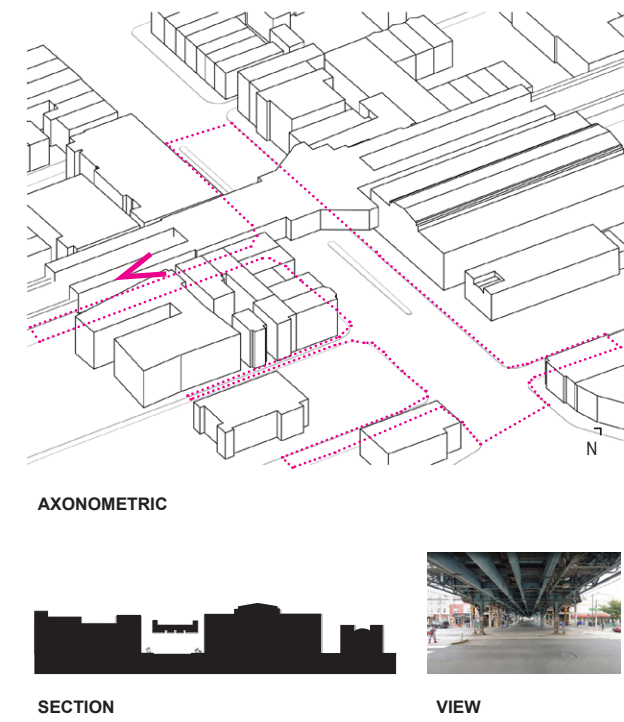
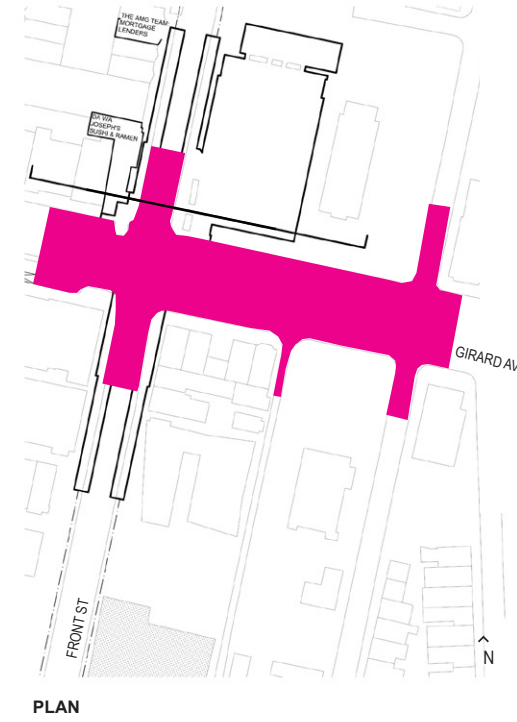
Kate O’Connor	SEPTA
Rochelle Culbreath	SEPTA
Wendy Green-Harvey	SEPTA
Mike Liberi	SEPTA
Mary Louise Isaacson	PA House of Representatives
Samantha Pearson	PA House of Representatives
John Massi	Philadelphia Police Dept
Steve Lorenz	Philadelphia Streets Dept
Kisha Duckett	Philadelphia Streets Dept
Richard Montanez	Philadelphia Streets Dept
Corey Bell	Philadelphia City Council
Sean McMonagle	Staff, Councilmember Mark Squilla
Michelle Brisbon	City of Philadelphia
Greg Waldman	Dept of Planning and Development
Marco Gorini	Delaware Valley Regional Planning

APPENDIX

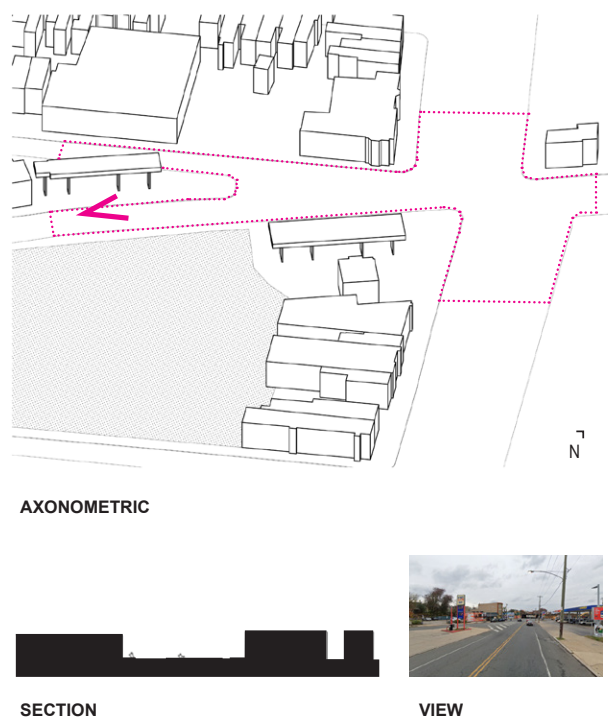
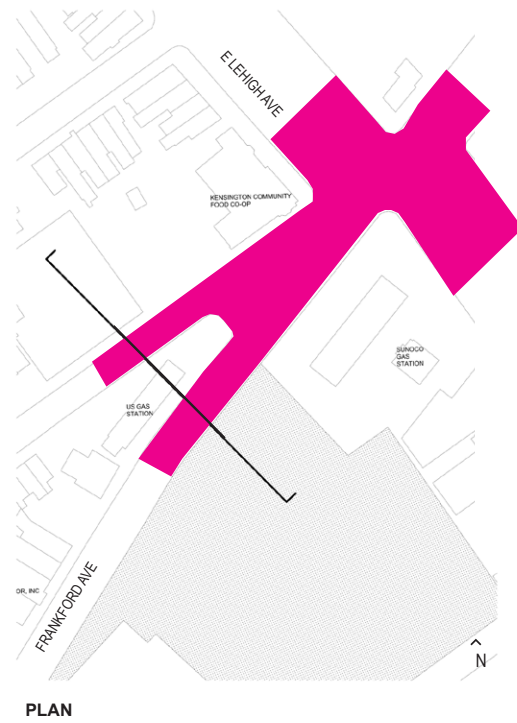
FRONT + DELAWARE EXPY



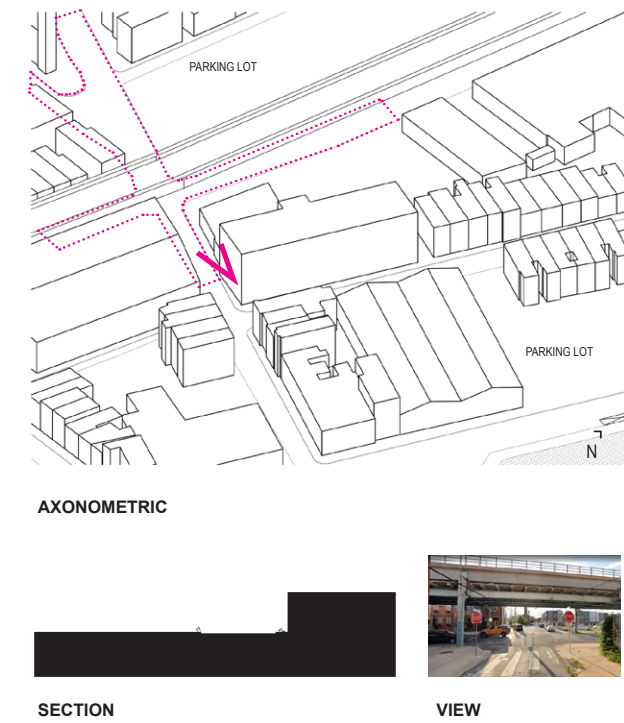
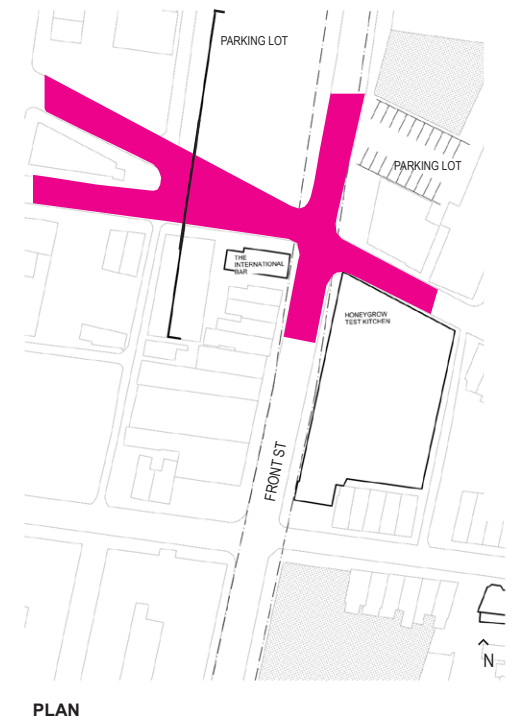
GIRARD + FRONT



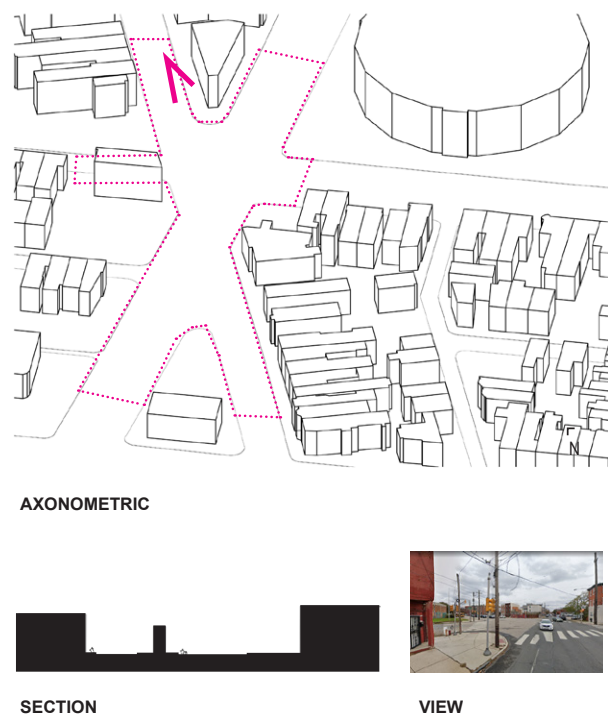
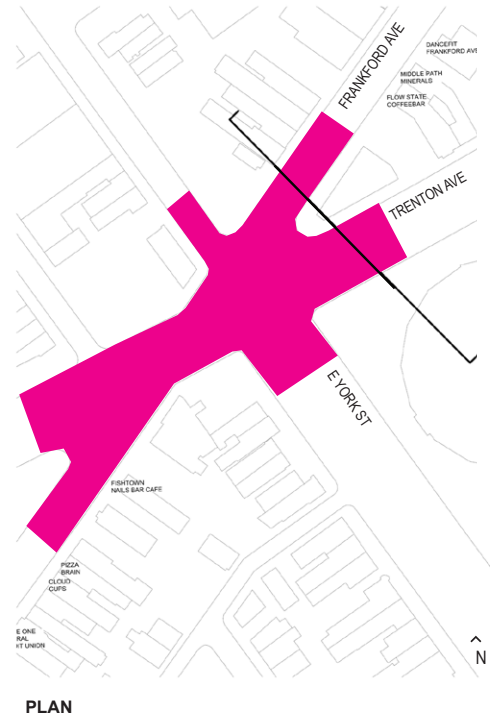
FRANKFORD + LEHIGH



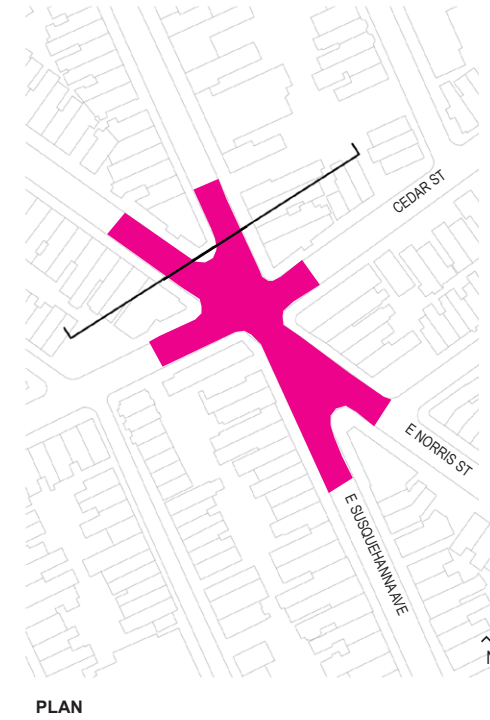
CECIL B MOORE + FRONT



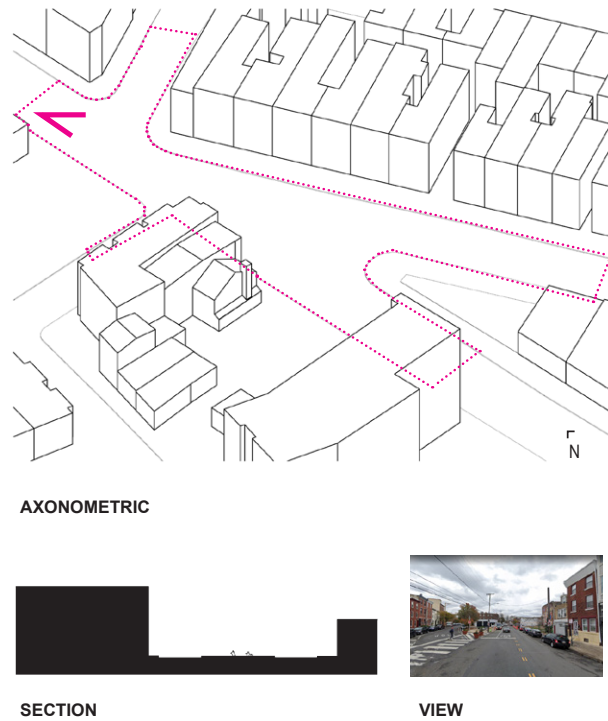
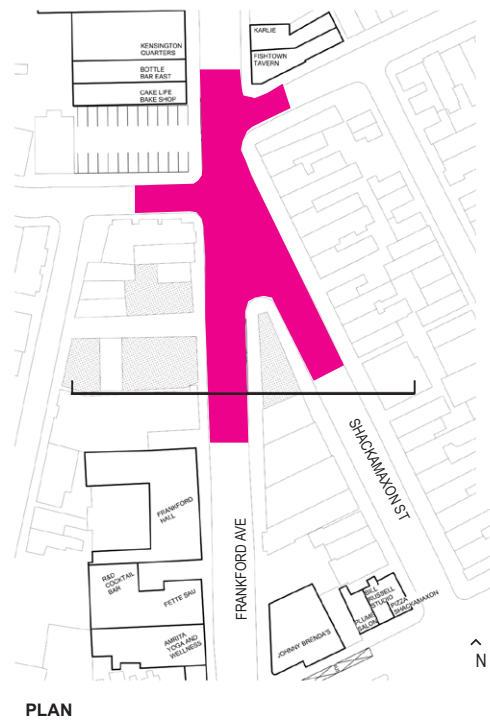
FRANKFORD + YORK



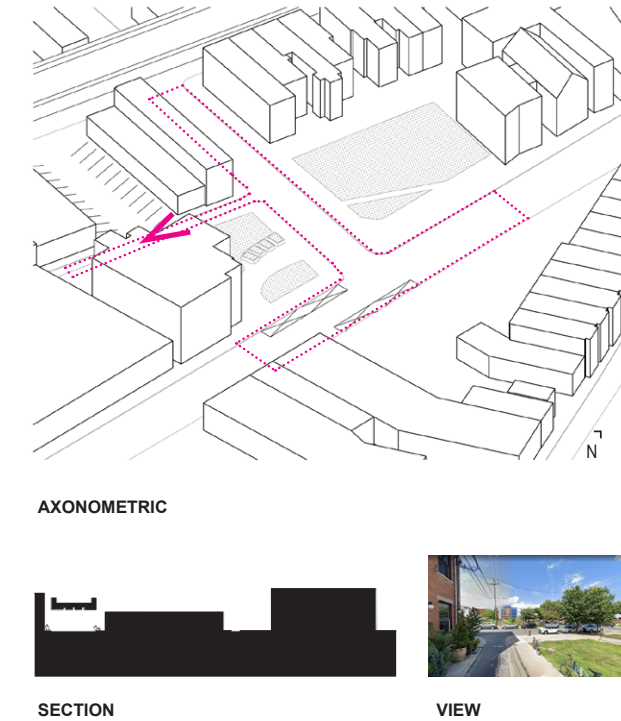
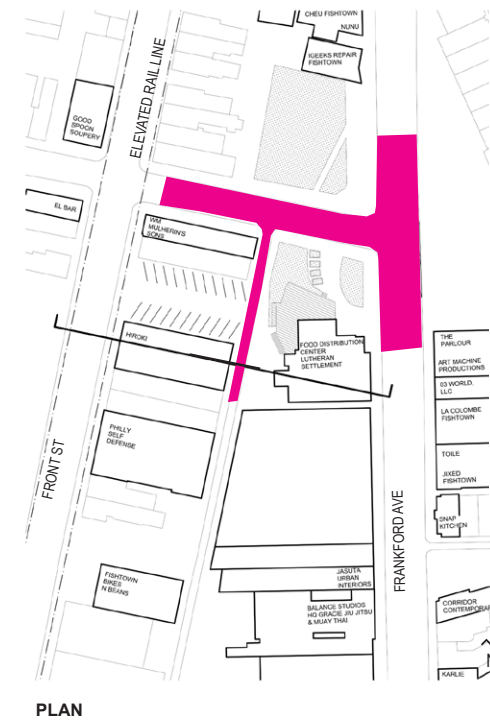
SUSQUEHANNA + CEDAR



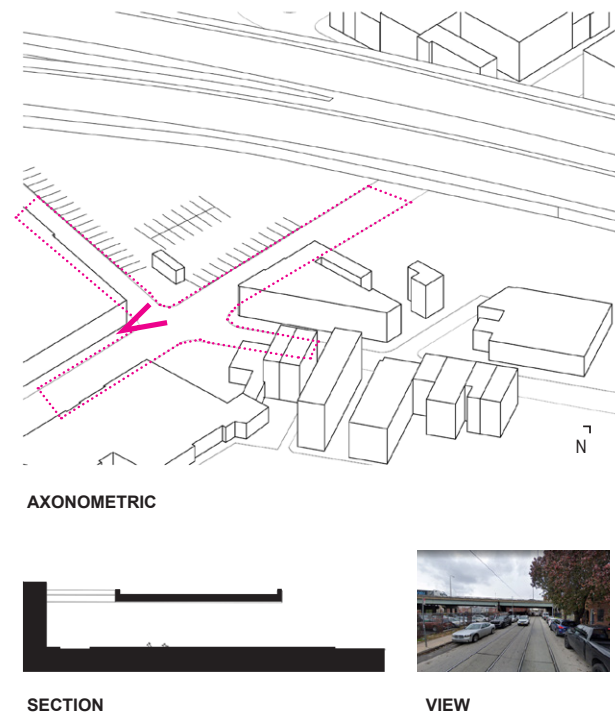
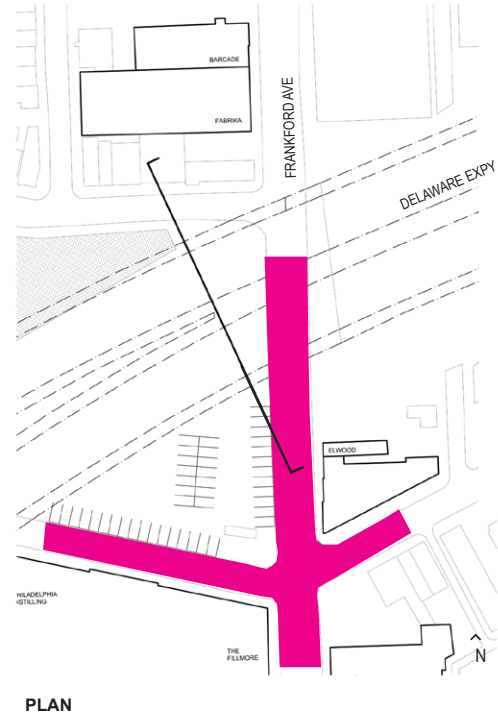
FRANKFORD + SHACKAMAXON



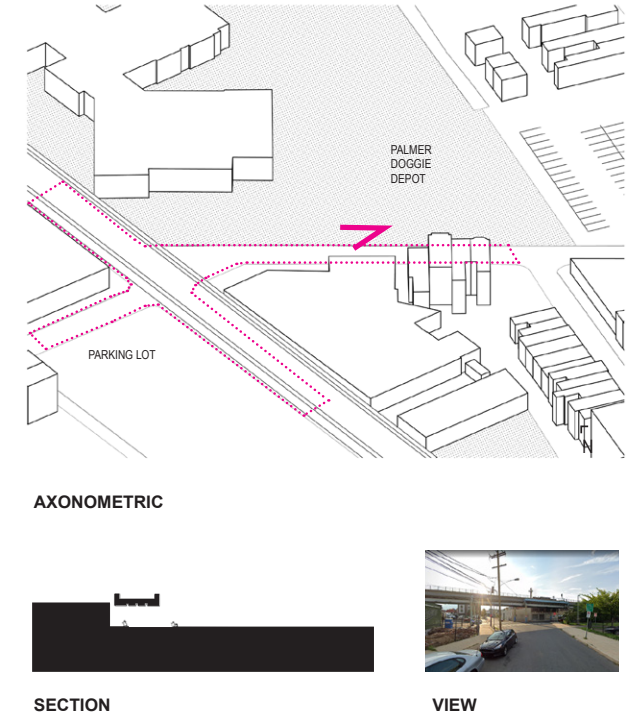
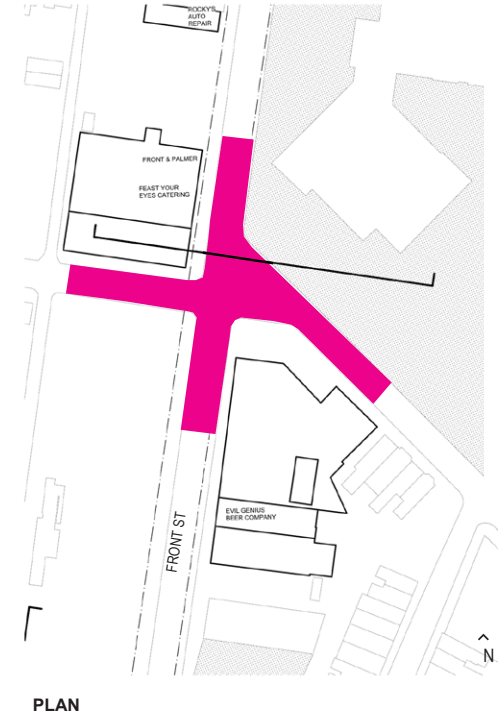
LEE + MASTER



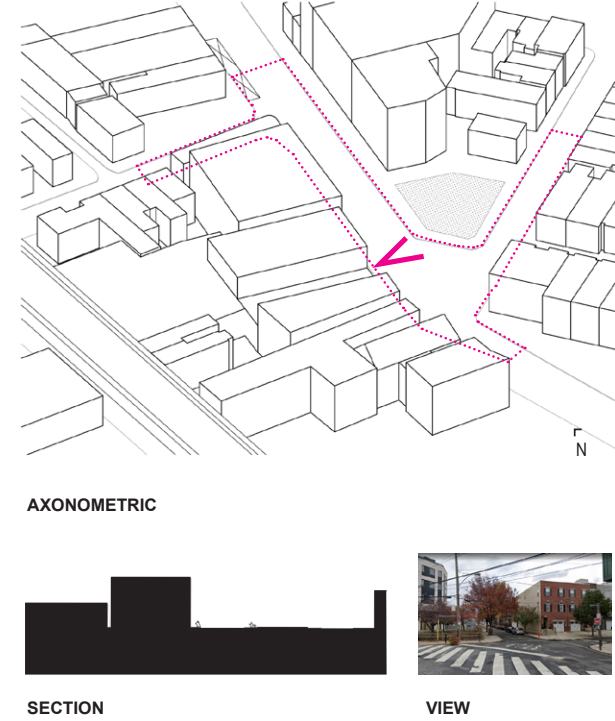
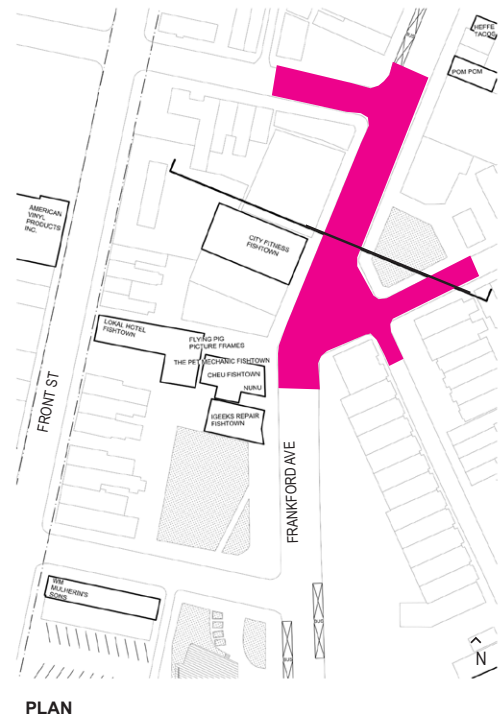
FRANKFORD + DELAWARE EXPY



PALMER + FRONT

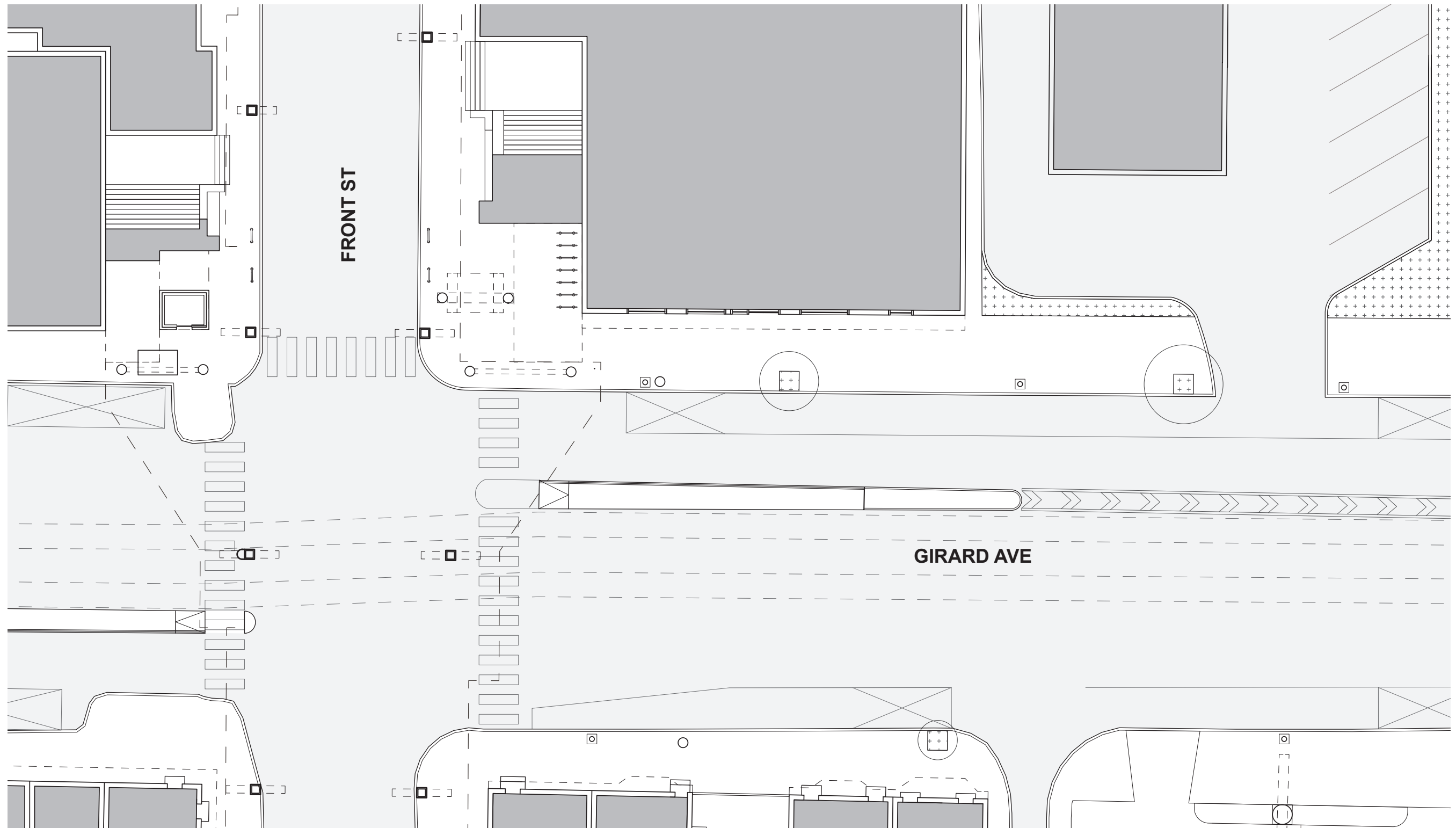


BELGRADE + FRANKFORD

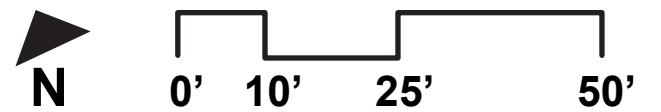


FRONT + GIRARD

2020

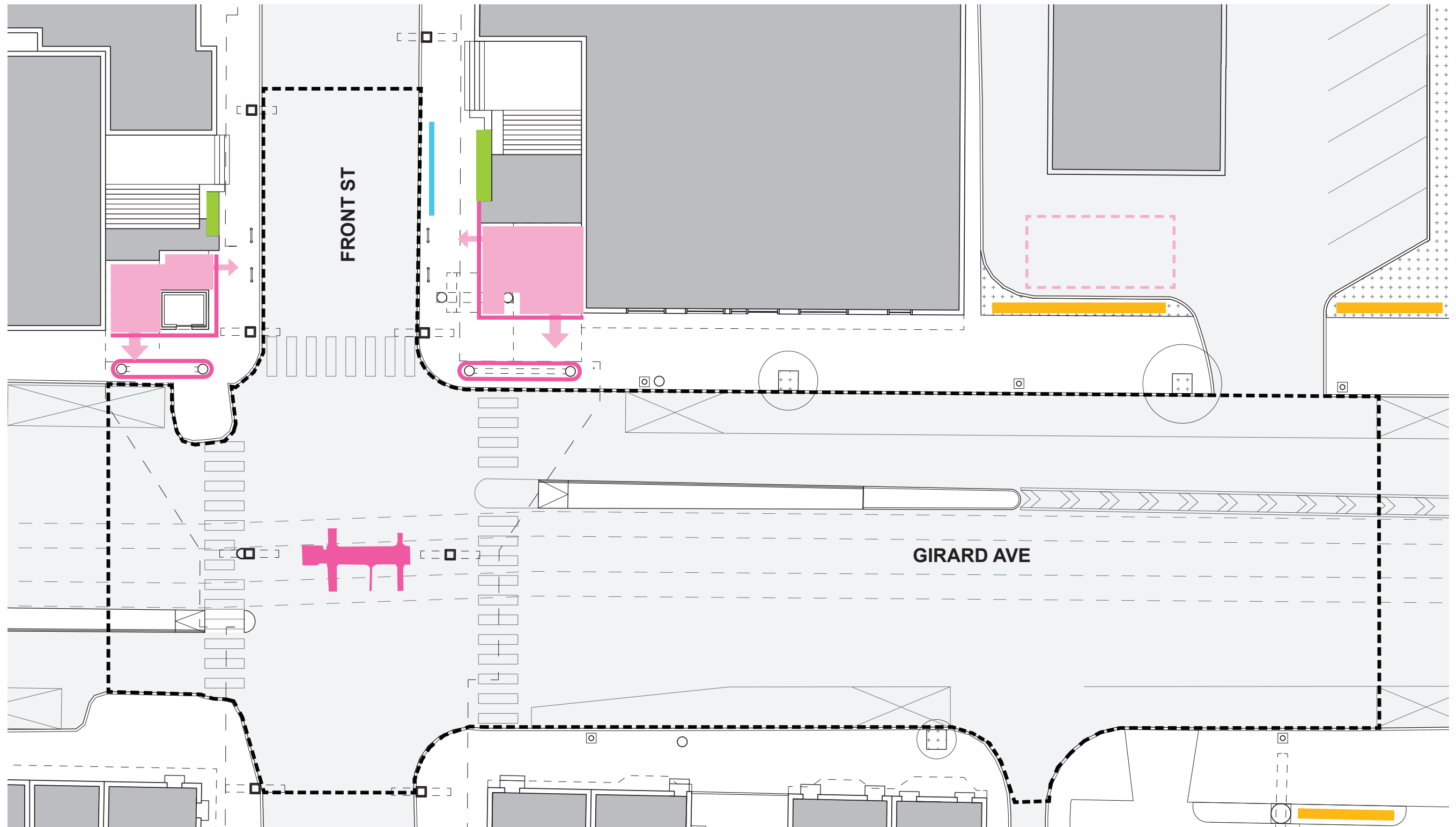


SITE PLAN

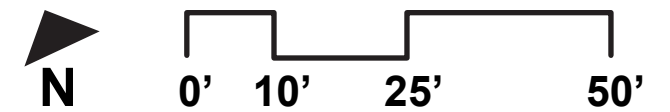


FRONT + GIRARD

FUTURE

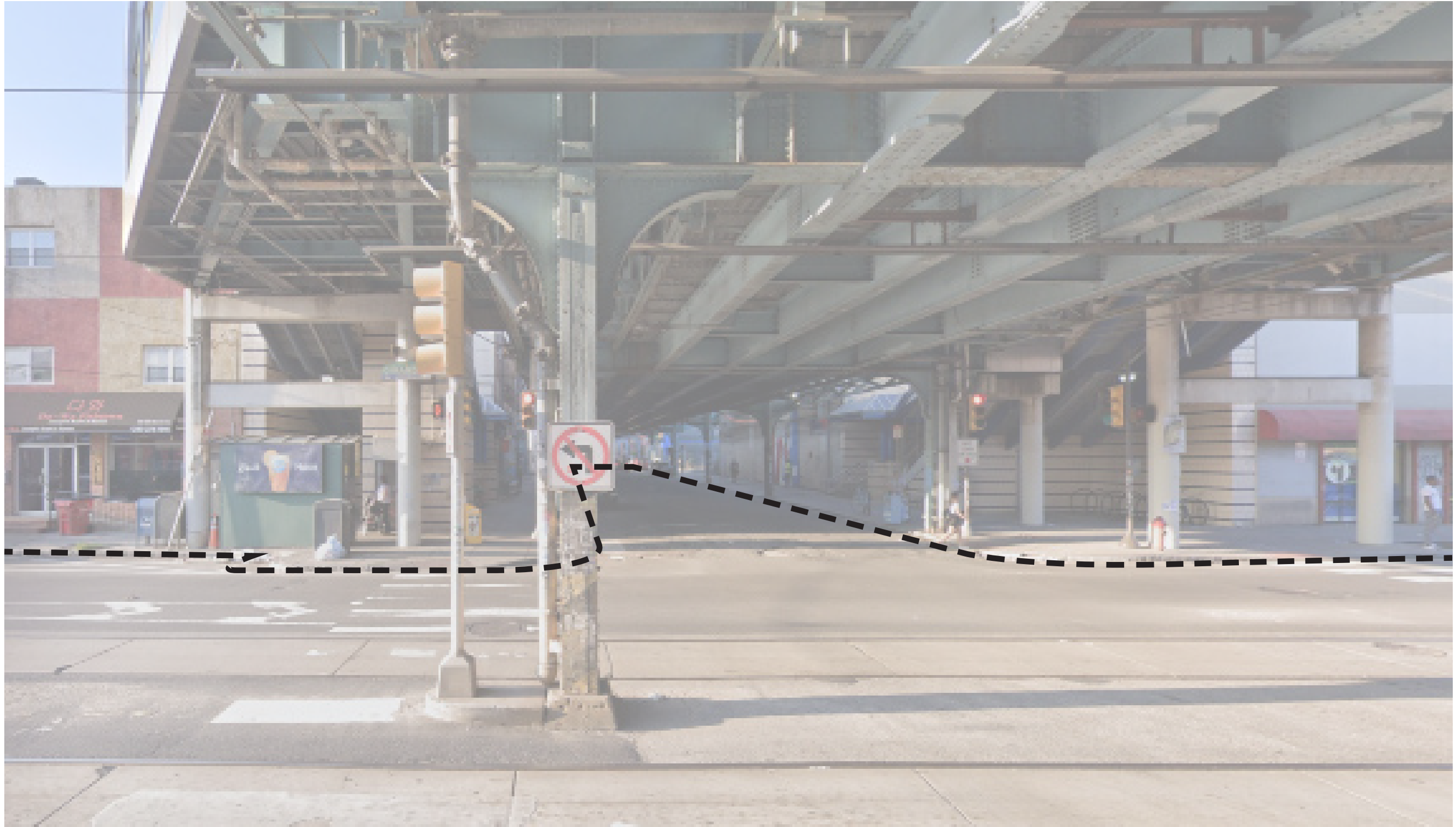


SITE PLAN



FRONT + GIRARD

2020



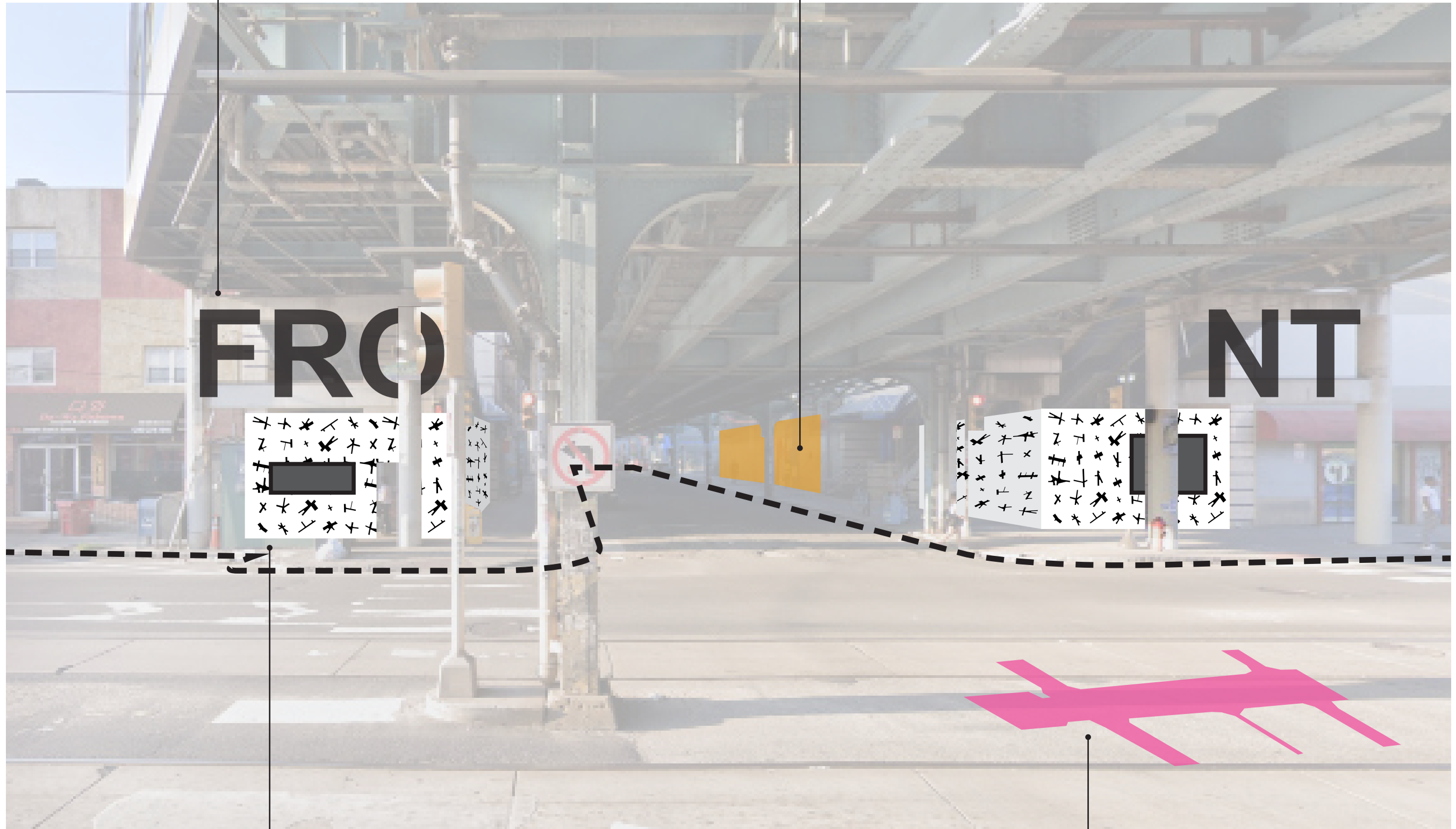
CORNER VIEW

FRONT + GIRARD

FRONT ST GATEWAY SIGNAGE

WALL MURAL

FUTURE



FRO

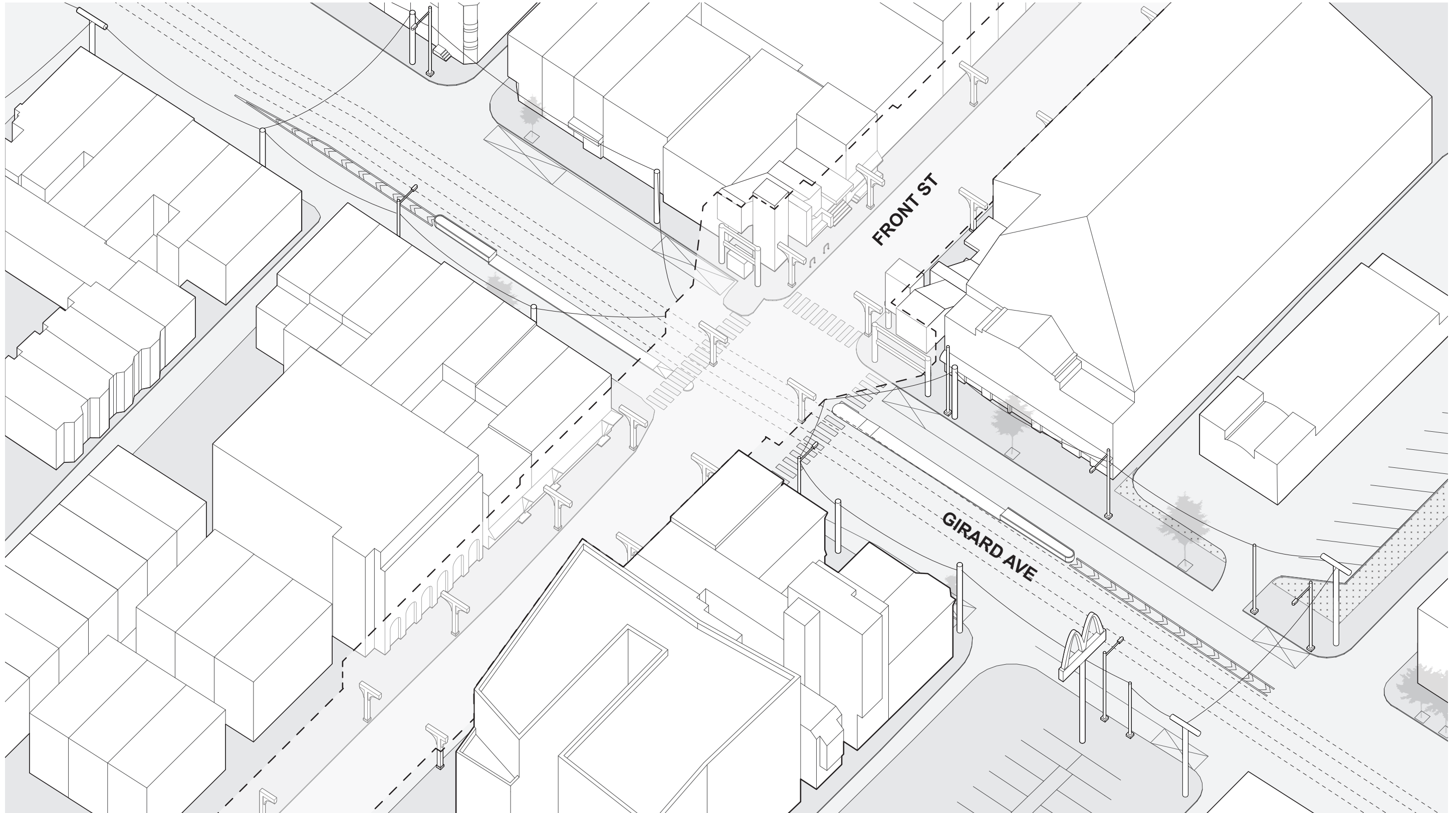
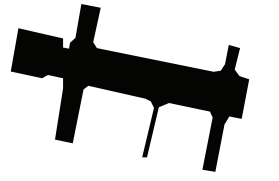
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CORNER VIEW

RETAIL / POP-UP INFILL STOREFRONTS UNDER EL WITH INTERSECTIONS GRAPHICS

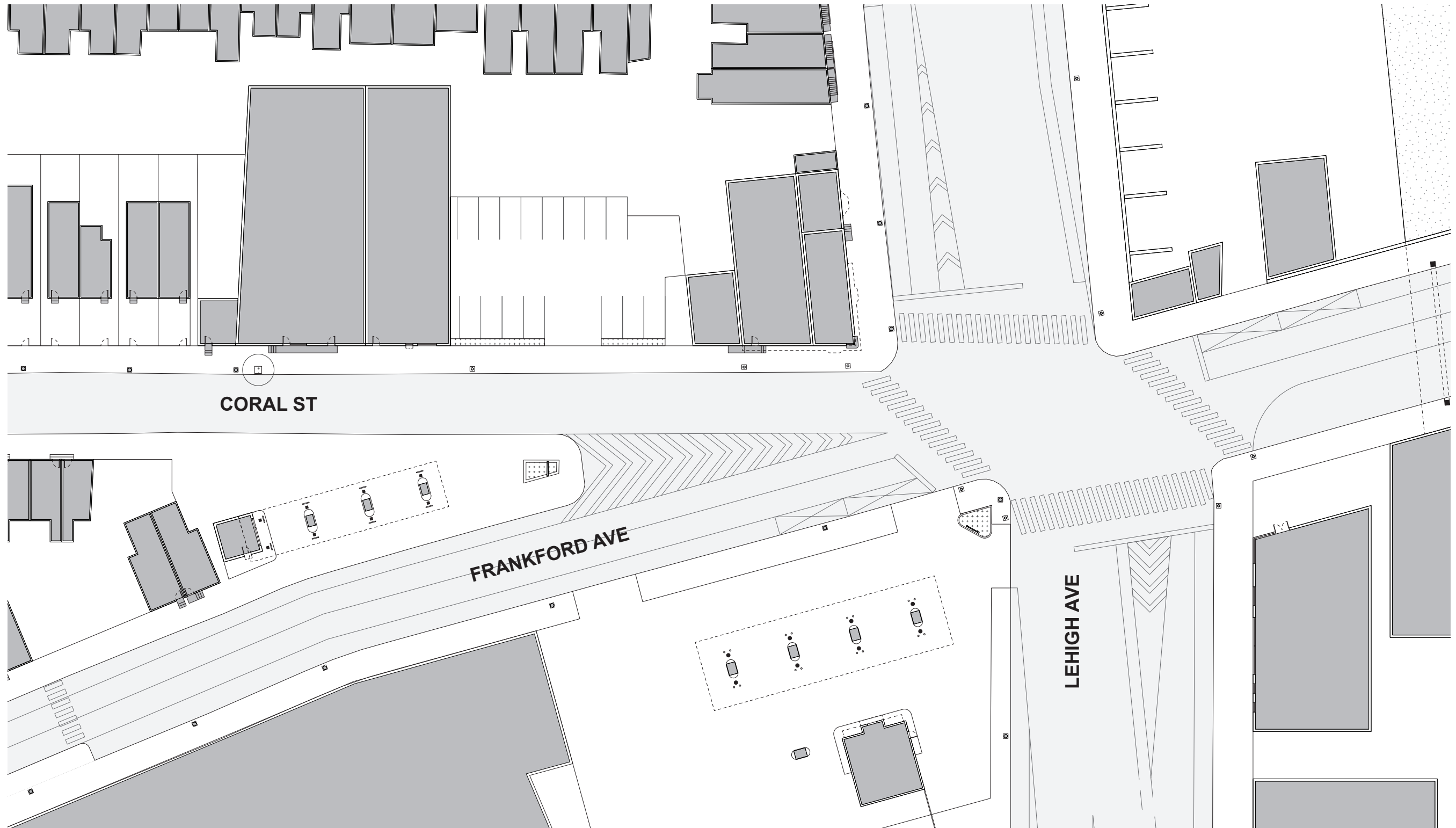
INTERSECTION GROUND GRAPHIC

FRONT + GIRARD



FRANKFORD + LEHIGH

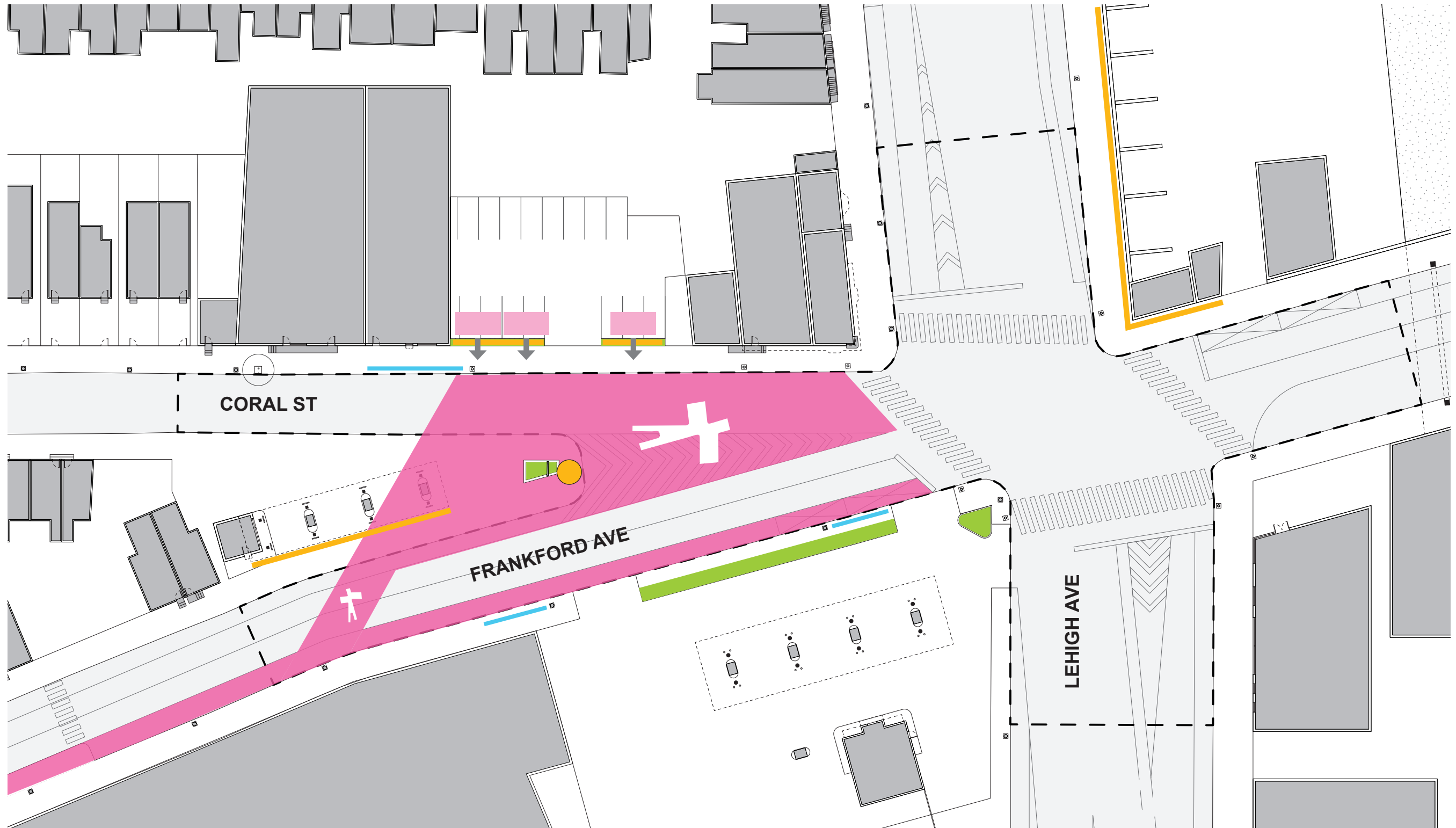
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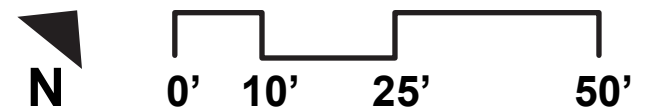
SITE PLAN

FRANKFORD + LEHIGH

FUTURE



SITE PLAN

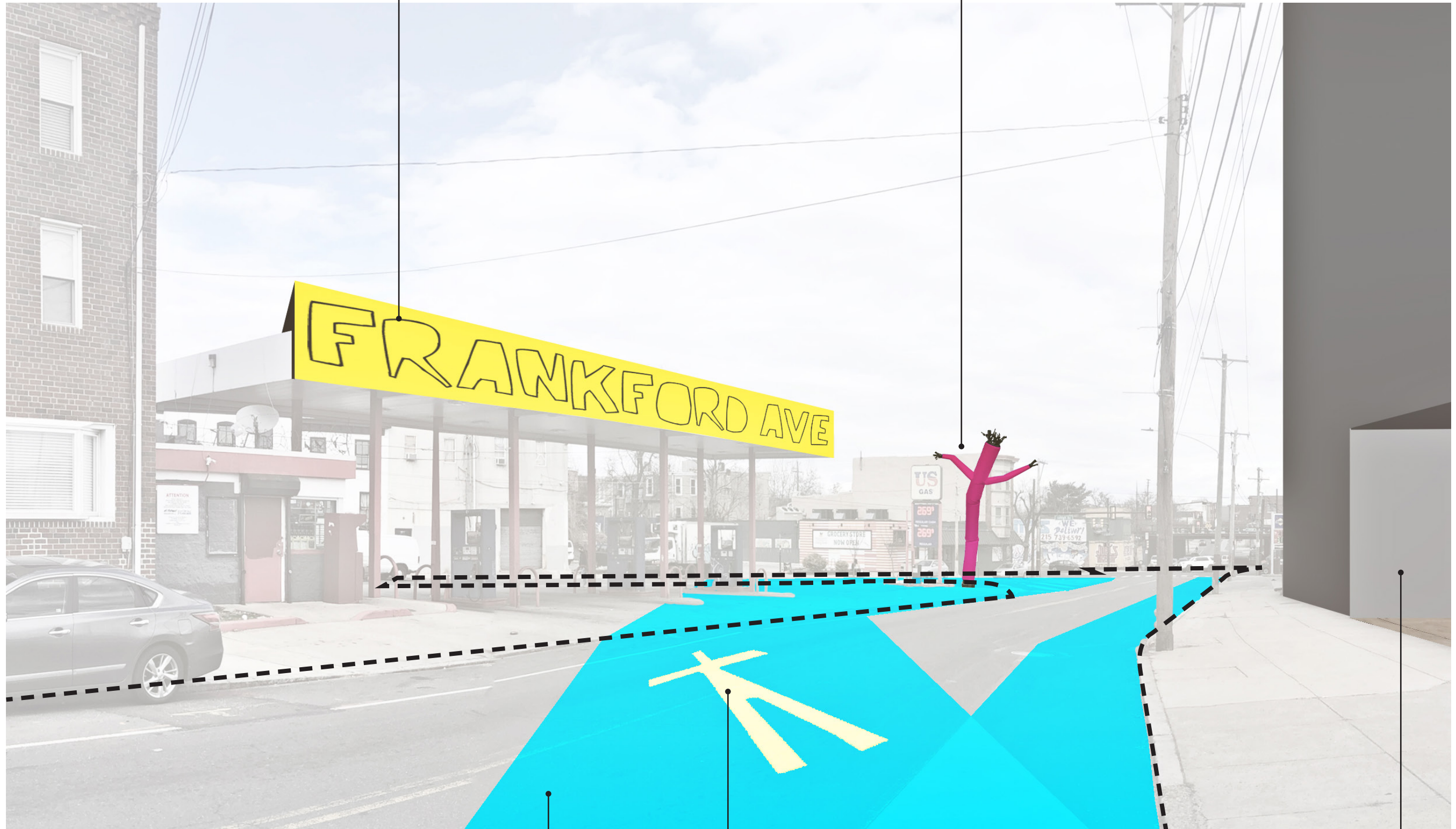




CORNER VIEW

FRANKFORD + LEHIGH

FUTURE



INTERSECTION BRANDING

INFLATABLE ART INSTALLATION

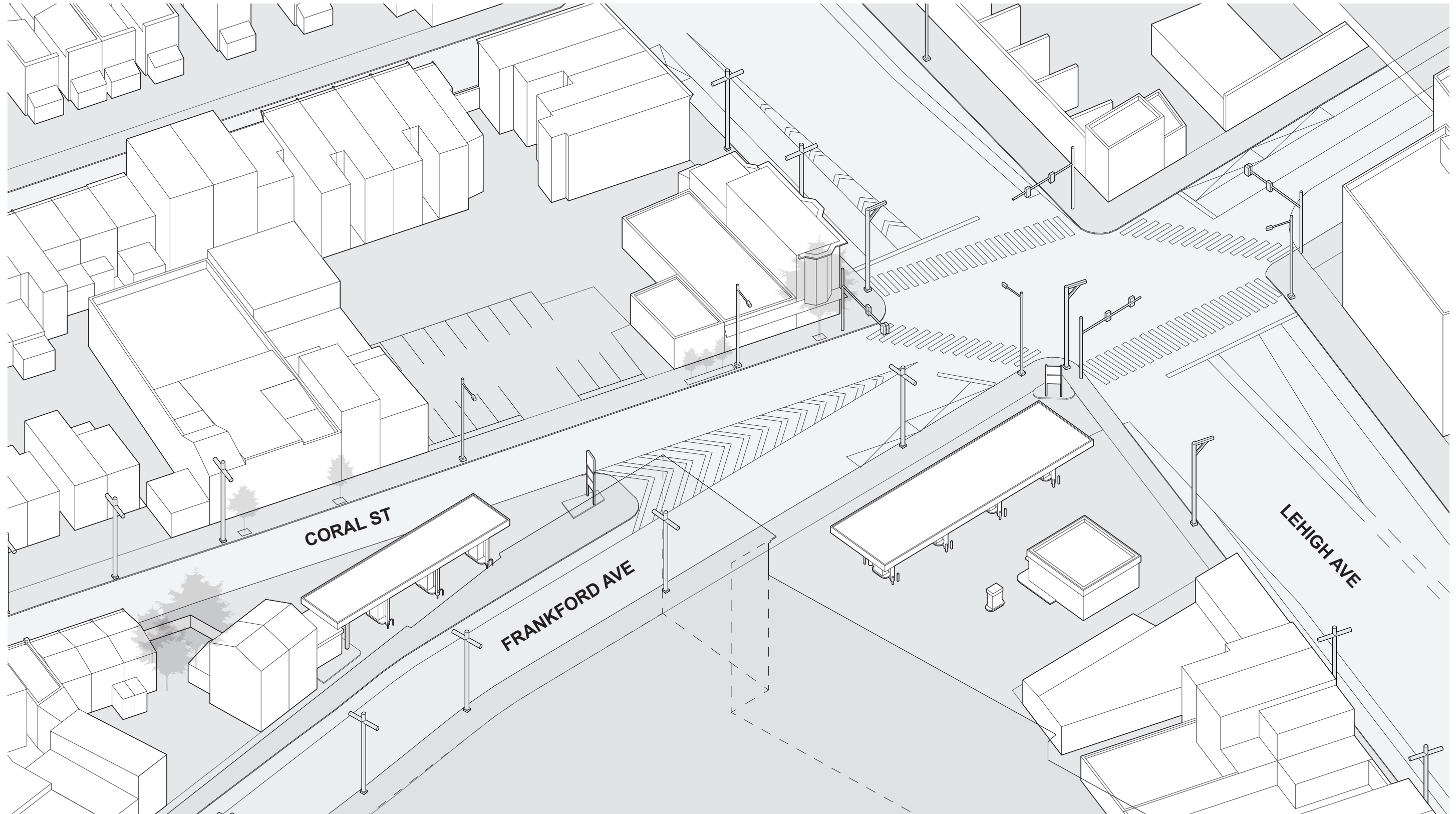
CORNER VIEW

PATHWAY GRAPHIC

INTERSECTION LOGO

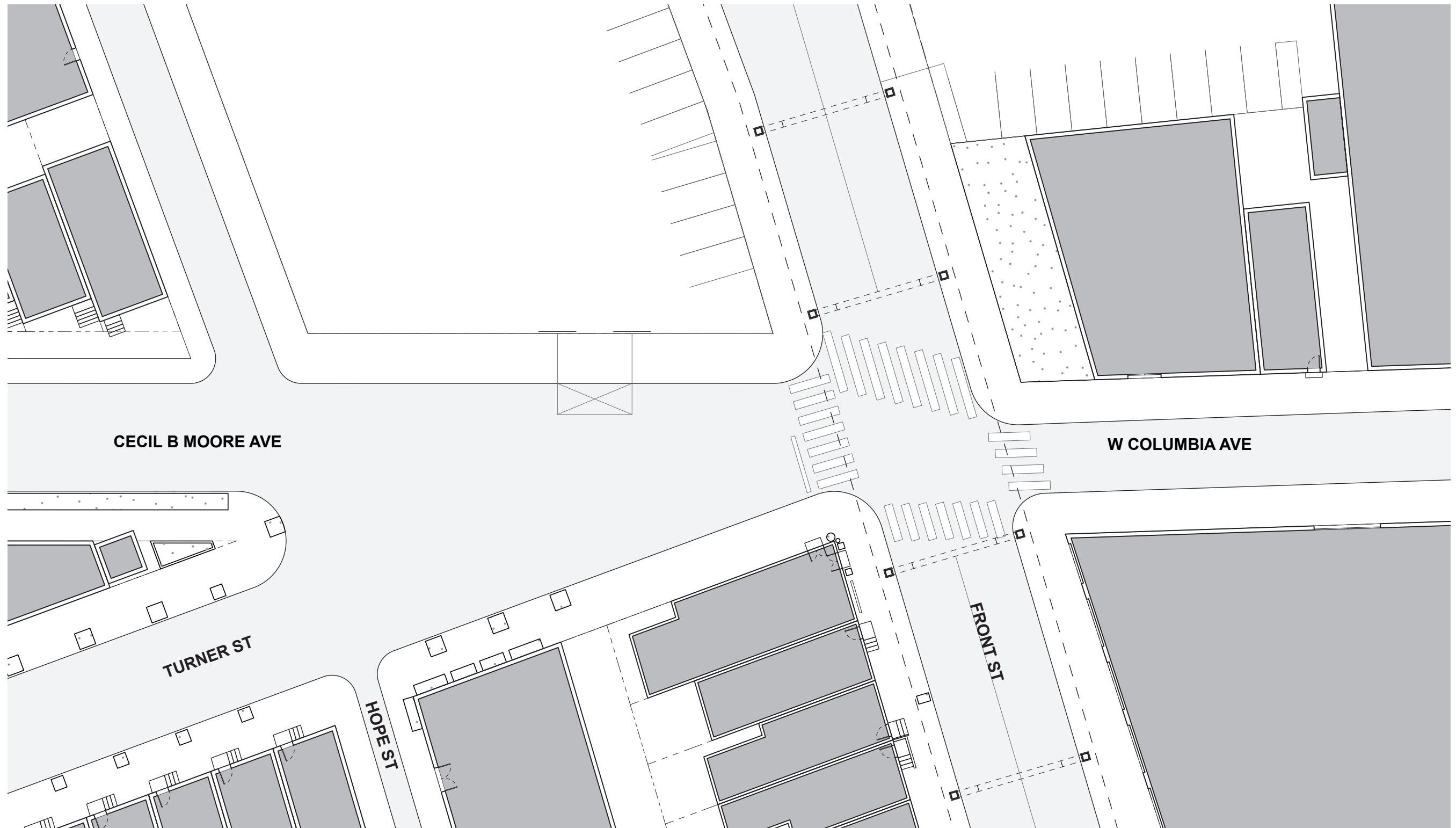
FUTURE CONSTRUCTION

FRANKFORD + LEHIGH

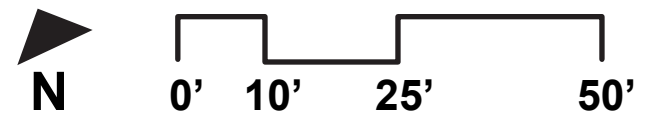


FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

2020

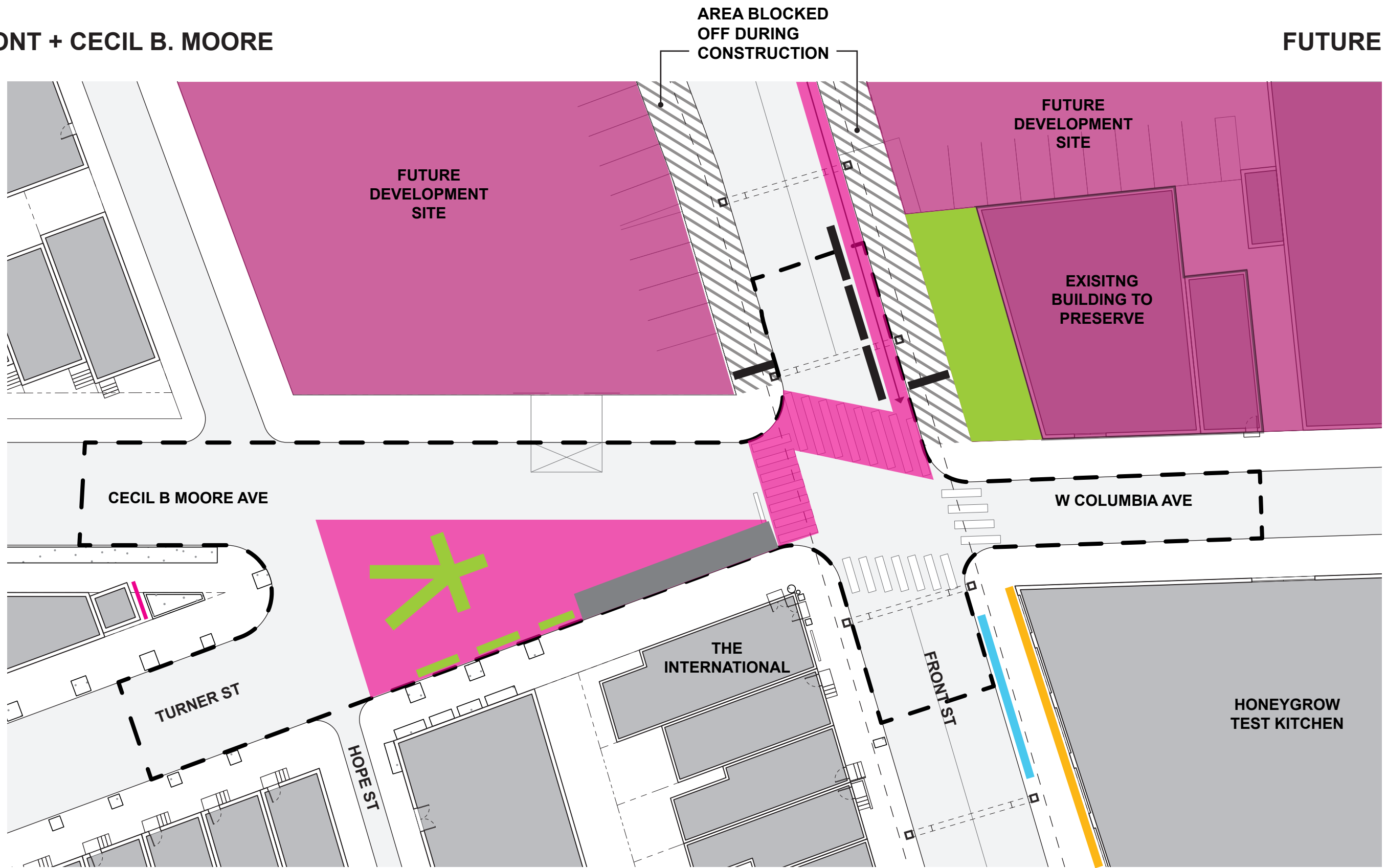


SITE PLAN

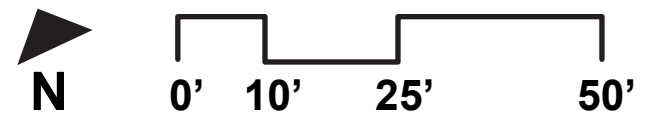


FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

FUTURE



SITE PLAN



FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

2020



CORNER VIEW

FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

LIGHT AT TOWER

FUTURE



CORNER VIEW

EXTERIOR SEATING @ THE INTERNATIONAL

PATHWAY GRAPHIC

MOVABLE SEATING ELEMENTS + PLANTERS

FRONT + CECIL B. MOORE

