

TRANSFORMATION AVENUE ROAD AVENUE PARK PARK AVENUE

Concepts for expanding the public realm on Avenue Road

Brown + Storey Architects

Avenue Road Coalition

July 2021

Transformation: Avenue Road to Avenue Park to Park Avenue

Concepts for Expanding the Public Realm on Avenue Road

Contents

3	Executive Summary
4	Introduction
6	Views of the Linear Park
14	The Structured Verge
42	Plan of the Linear Park
50	Avenue Road at Davenport
58	Connections to Ramsden Park
62	Reconnecting Fragmented Parks
68	Avenue Road at De La Salle College
80	Historic Context of Avenue Road
90	Urban Analysis



Left:

Position of Avenue Road and its potential East/West connections, superimposed on the "Park Ring", a park network identified by the City of Toronto around the downtown core for improved connection.

Executive Summary

This study proposes a re-imagining of Avenue Road from Bloor Street to St. Clair Avenue to return it to its prominent role in the city's public realm by reducing six lanes of speeding traffic to four and creating new public space. This new space would increase the area for sidewalks by 240% and accommodate 580 new trees.

Avenue Road, which was established as a major civic boulevard in its original form, punctuated by the Queen's Park precinct in the south to Upper Canada College in the north, lost its grandeur in the 1950s when, along with scores of other streets in Toronto, it was widened to accommodate motor vehicles. This intensification came at the expense of public space, verges, front gardens, sidewalks, lighting, and street addresses, but nowhere was it so destructive as it was for Avenue Road, which had been a tree-lined thoroughfare. This study suggests a reversal through tested urban design methods, precedents, visualization, research and focused directions for action.

By reversing the lane widening of the 1950s, this study seeks to address key issues of pedestrian safety. The widening of the vehicle lanes has left the sidewalks dangerously narrow, with the danger increased by six lanes of speeding traffic. By reducing lanes for vehicles from six to four, as with south of Queen's Park on University Avenue, the sidewalk can regain a more generous width that will provide a safer route for the many residents and school children who use Avenue Road as a primary daily route.

The full Right of Way (ROW) width for Avenue Road is 25 metres. Currently, that is divided between six vehicle lanes (for a total width of 20 metres) and two sidewalks at 2.5 metres each. At some points, however, the sidewalks are as narrow as 1.4 metres, below the city's guideline. The reduction of lanes to four, for a total width of 13.32 metres, would allow for an asymmetrical distribution of pedestrian / public space with a widened 3.5-metre sidewalk on one side, and 8.17 metres on the other. The asymmetrical arrangement is a key strategy for the study, allowing for the establishment of a significant linear park, with enough width for a double line of trees and generous sidewalks.

This new linear park is transformative at a civic scale. The Avenue Road Park could become a key linkage in the City of Toronto's Park Ring concept of interconnected public spaces encircling the city, while also forging new potential linkages to the Greenline and strengthened connections to Ramsden Park. This new public network would also become the northern partner to University Park, the recently proposed reconstruction of University Avenue to the south, where a similar reduction in traffic lanes and shifting of the newly achieved public realm into an asymmetric arrangement offers the opportunity to become a major civic promenade.

Avenue Road Park, at a local context, is equally transformational. The 1950s road widening created a highway where the accommodation of vehicles was paramount, when in fact Avenue Road is a richly populated city street with main street shops, institutions, parks, schools, and residential buildings. The six car lanes created not just minimal and unsafe pedestrian sidewalks, but also a great divide between one side and the other, where a more urbane street section once existed. This new cross-street condition made in this study begins to stitch together this divide, where neighbourhoods can become reconnected, and crossing the street from one side to another does not become a dare-devilish act.

Specific sections of the Avenue Road Park study show views of the proposed linear park, the structured verge as a new landscape, detailed plans and intersections. Special attention is paid to the crossing at Davenport Road, connections to Ramsden Park, reconnecting fragmented parks and to making new special urban places at De La Salle College, completed by Avenue Road's historic context and urban analysis mapping series.

This study shows how a return of balance to the space for pedestrians and vehicles would revitalize a key boulevard in the city. The reduction of lanes would offer a sidewalk esplanade with a new urban tree canopy, putting the needs of the pedestrian front and centre. The study documents the existing conditions of the thoroughfare, and explores options for reducing lanes in favour of the public realm. It shows, block by block, the resulting transformation of the sidewalk and verge accompanied by 3D views. Archival photographs and Goad's fire insurance mapping of 1884 and 1890* show what was lost when the space for vehicles was expanded and the mapping of civic relationships and physical attributes show what can be recovered for a new generation of residents.

The rediscovery of Avenue Road can be a major part of the city's infrastructure of public space networks that will have benefits of greening, interconnection and generosity to the pedestrian for a new generation of active citizens.

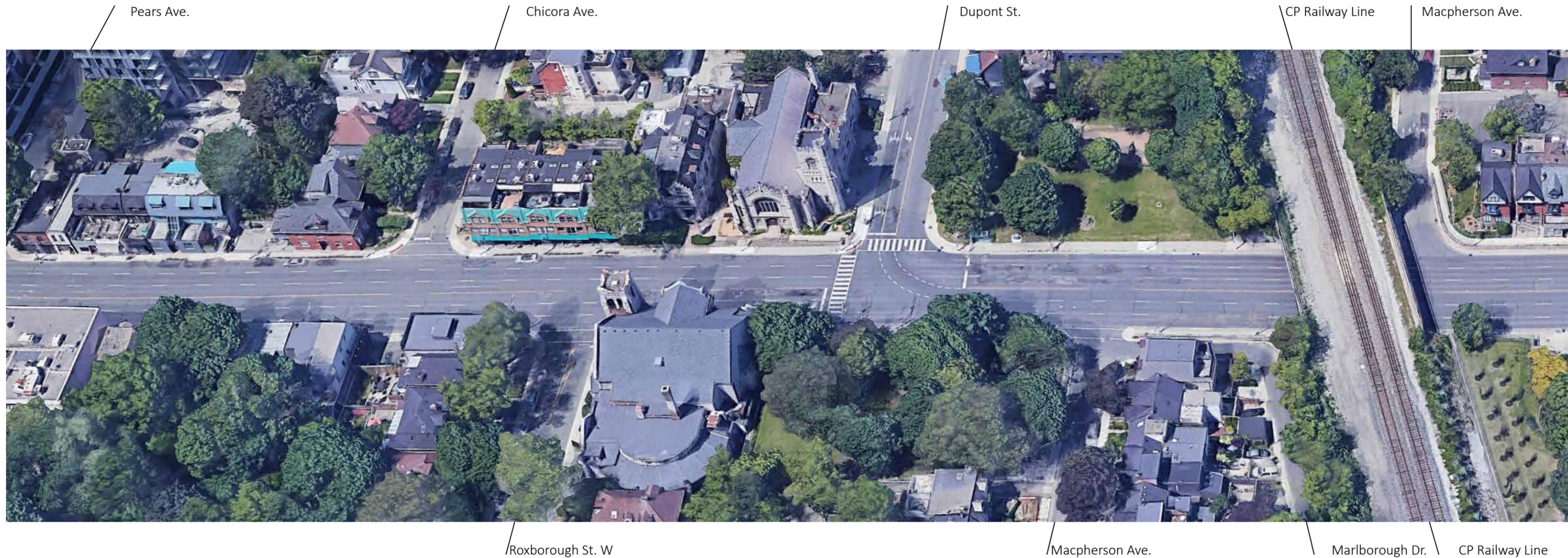
July 7th, 2021

*Goad's fire insurance plans were produced by the Charles E. Goad Company as a record of buildings, materials, fire appliances and waterworks systems for the fire insurance industry and provide a remarkable record of Toronto's evolution.

Reinventing the Avenue

Reinventing the Avenue and the Rebirth of the Promenade

A Proposal for Canada's Street



Introduction

The plans, sections and views of 'Reinventing the Avenue' are the latest stage in an ongoing initiative to transform Avenue Road from Bloor Street to St. Clair Avenue by reducing traffic lanes - providing a beautiful and functional public realm that was taken away in the road widening of the 1950's.

The recent announcement of civic improvements for University Avenue from Bloor to Queen Street – 'Rebirth of the Promenade' (Globe + Mail) is a timely complement to the Avenue Road exploration of ideas. Avenue Road is a natural extension of the 'Promenade', punctuating the strong axial relationship down its length with the spire of Upper Canada College paired with Queen's Park to the south. While the scope and scale of the University Avenue Promenade is enormous, taking in complete precincts of medicine, law courts and the University of Toronto, its relationship to Avenue Road nevertheless raises political and strategic questions.

A reinvented public realm for Avenue Road makes a better case for the immediate need for primary and fundamental changes. University Avenue already has amenities like wide sidewalks, parks, and institutions, albeit in a fragmented state that

would greatly benefit from a transformative design. But Avenue Road's sidewalks are dangerously narrow and are a real pedestrian hazard set next to six lanes of speeding traffic, having lost all of their trees in the road widening of the 1950's along with accessible neighbourhood connections and the degraded role of small parks.

A key element of the 'Promenade' initiative that helps the 'Avenue' is the traffic study that was included in the 'University Park' proposal that substantiates the reduction of 6 lanes to 4 lanes. (This reduction has been temporarily installed on University Avenue.) It seems reasonable to extrapolate that the reduction of 4 lanes, in particular between Bloor Street and Queen's Park, could be a feasible proposition north of Bloor Street, and that the traffic study used to back up the University Avenue transformation could come up with the same results if extended north of Bloor Street.

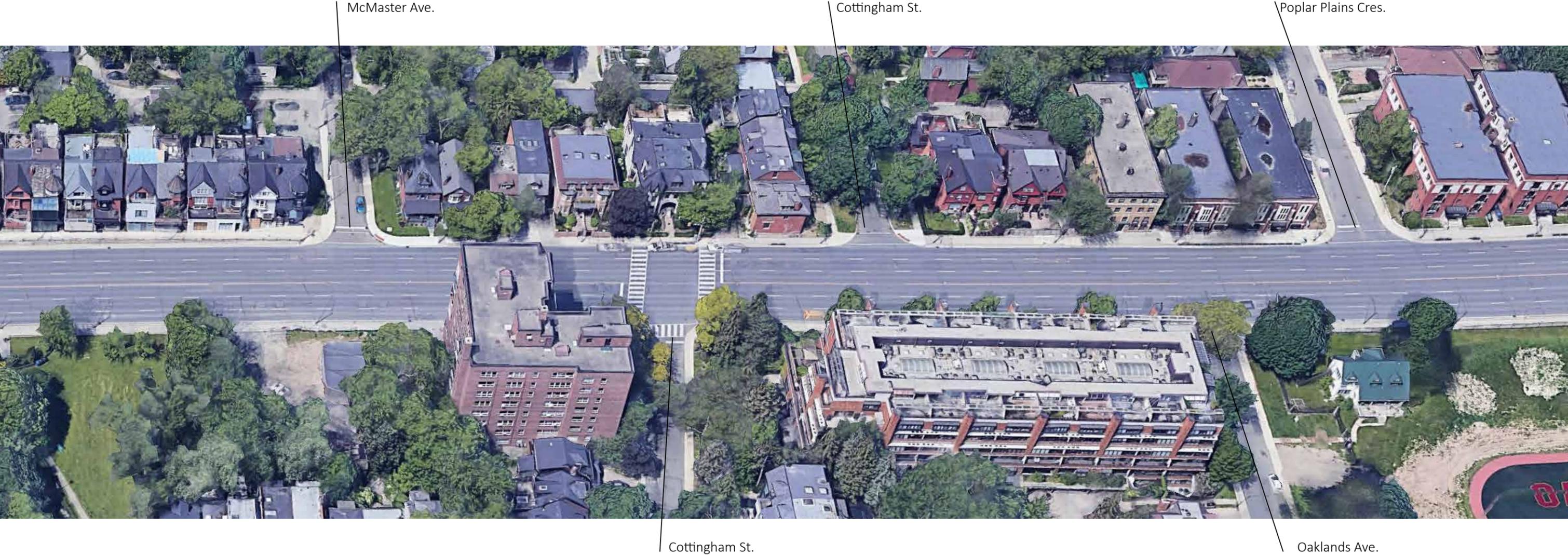
While there are substantial differences in character and functionality with University Avenue, Avenue Road is nevertheless populated with institutions, residential apartments, neighbourhoods, community parks and ravine fragments. The more extensive

residential component of Avenue Road should in fact point more significantly to the need for an enjoyable, attractive, and safe public realm, with safe conditions for people living in the residential precincts and children attending schools depending upon the sidewalk as a primary route.

Ward 19 Councillor Mike Layton has recently commented on Twitter about the 'Promenade' for University Avenue: 'Let's imagine our streets for future generations. A project like this is possible and Toronto needs to show leadership city staff to report back in early 2021 on future of University Ave'.

'Reinventing the Avenue' should now be asserted as integral to a comprehensive totality that gives Toronto its most significant civic axis. The mapping, archival photographs and analytical drawings of the Avenue initiative detail and confirm its primary role in the city that was severely diminished when Avenue Road was widened, and the sidewalks decimated. The plans, sections, and views of Avenue Road show how it can be reinvented for a new generation with generosity, imagination and civic leadership.

Reinventing the Avenue



Connecting Community

- Between two sides of the avenue.
- Between the parks along the avenue.
- Between larger natural and infrastructural systems.
- Creating a more coherent and balanced relationship between vehicles, traffic, and pedestrian space.

Objectives

- A return of balance to car and pedestrian space.
- Offering a relaxing, safe, and people friendly atmosphere that adapts to adjacent contexts specific to Avenue road.
- Deploying abundant vegetation with an iconic landscape along the avenue.
- Making pedestrian needs front and center, shifting focus and space from vehicles.
- Initiating a leap in quality for users, groups, institutions, and communities adjacent to Avenue Rd.

Elements

- A green sidewalk esplanade with a new urban tree canopy
- A continuous structured verge with trees and vegetation that creates a continuous and unifying formal gesture along the Avenue.
- Boundary parks and adjacent space enhanced with terraces, public art, performance space, furniture, and mature trees.

Aerial view of Avenue Road looking west between Pears Avenue, and Poplar Plains Crescent. Image Source: Google Earth

Avenue Road Linear Park



Proposed condition of Avenue Road and the new entrance to Ramsden Park, facing south towards Davenport Rd.

Reinventing the Avenue



Existing condition of Avenue Road
looking south from Davenport.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects Inc.

Avenue Road Linear Park



The new Avenue at Davenport Rd, facing North towards new tower blocks at Ramsden Park.

Reinventing the Avenue



Existing condition of Avenue Road
looking North towards Davenport Rd.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects Inc.

Avenue Road Linear Park



Proposed condition of the Avenue south of Davenport Rd, with the row of flower-shops flanked by new developments.

Reinventing the Avenue



Existing condition of the Avenue and Davenport.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects Inc.

Avenue Road Linear Park



Proposed condition of Avenue Road and the new entrance to Ramsden Park, facing south towards Davenport Rd.

Reinventing the Avenue



Existing condition of Avenue Road
looking south from Davenport.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects Inc.

Avenue Road Linear Park



Proposed condition of Avenue Road including bike lanes, facing south towards Davenport Rd.

Reinventing the Avenue



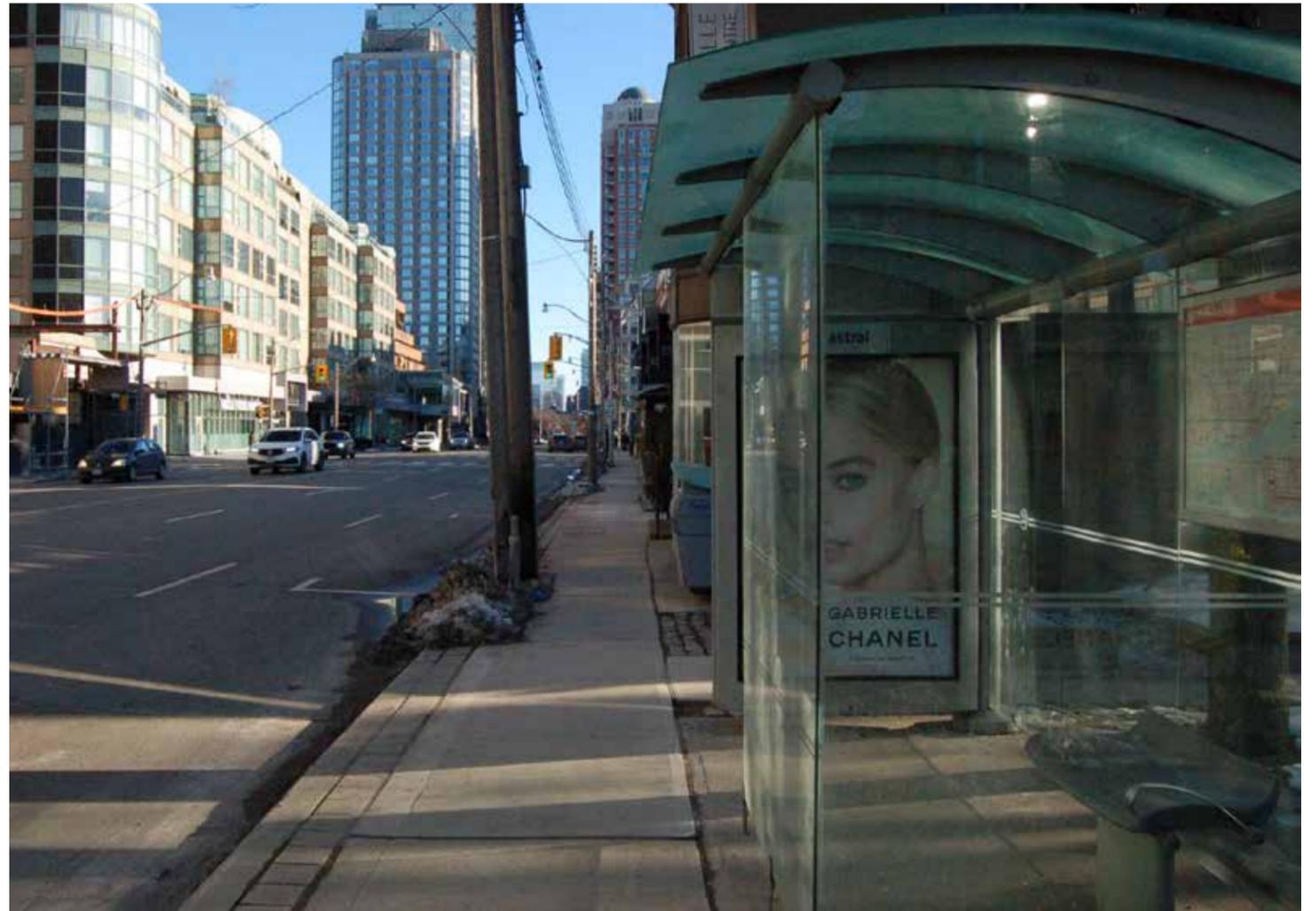
Existing condition of Avenue Road
looking north from Davenport.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects Inc.

Avenue Road Linear Park



Proposed condition of the Avenue south of Davenport Rd, including bike lanes.

Reinventing the Avenue



Existing condition of Avenue Road
looking south from Boswell Avenue Parkette.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects Inc.

Sidewalk Distribution Possibilities

Avenue Road Typical Existing Condition

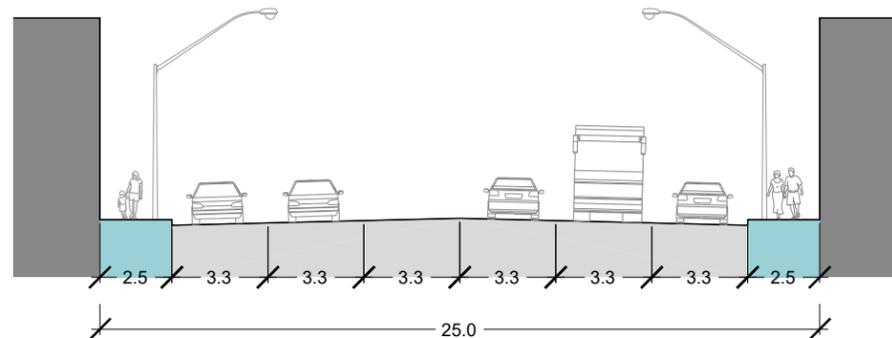
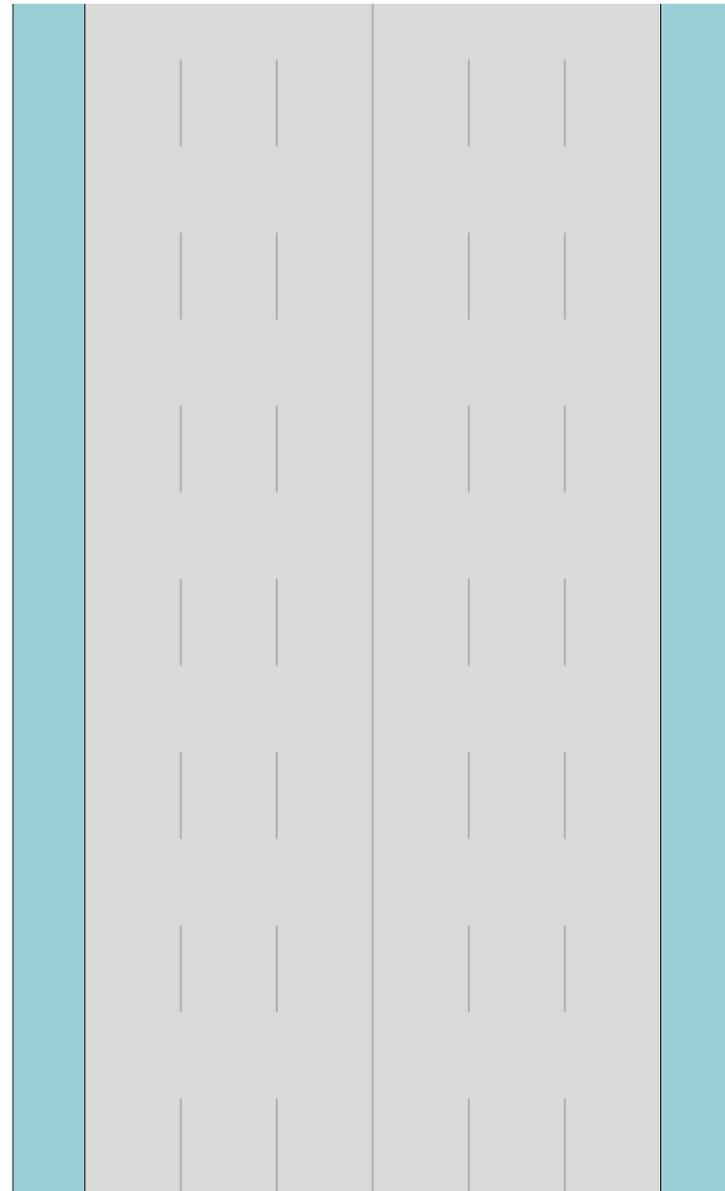
The existing avenue consists of a 25-meter right-of-way (ROW) with slight variations along its length. The stretch of Avenue Rd. between St. Clair Ave. and Bloor St. W contains 6 lanes of traffic across 20 meters, leaving sidewalks approximately 2.5 meters wide, and as narrow as 1.4 meters in certain locations.

Avenue Rd. north of St. Clair Ave. has a wider right-of-way of meters, with 4 lanes of traffic and substantially wider sidewalks. The spacious lawns of the mid-century apartment towers which line the avenue create greater separation between the sidewalk and the avenue. Avenue Rd. south of Bloor St. also has four lanes of traffic with substantially wider sidewalks leading south to Queen's Park.

The Avenue is dominated by car traffic, with pedestrian space existing as a left-over space. The width of the road given to traffic has destroyed pedestrian connections along and across it. The already narrow and dangerous sidewalks are further compromised by the placement of light and telephone poles, which often sit in the middle of the sidewalk.

The sidewalk and esplanade are treeless, with no vegetation or supporting mediators. Where the sidewalk encounters gradients, or is subjected to bridge underpasses, safety barriers crowd what little space exists.

The Avenue lacks any of the qualities of an urban boulevard, instead resembling a highway running through the center of the neighborhood.



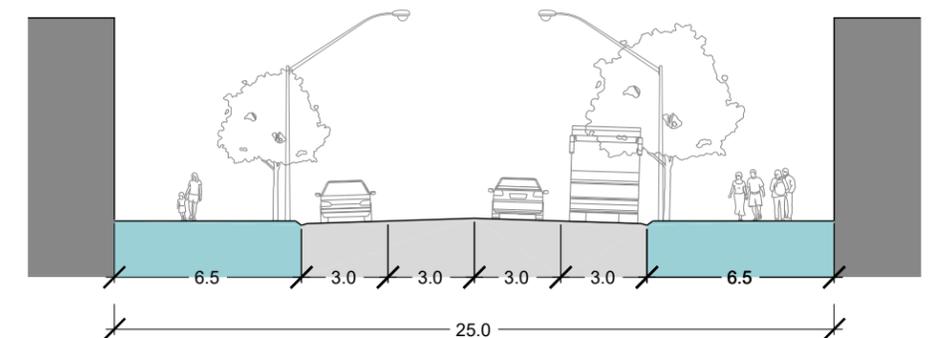
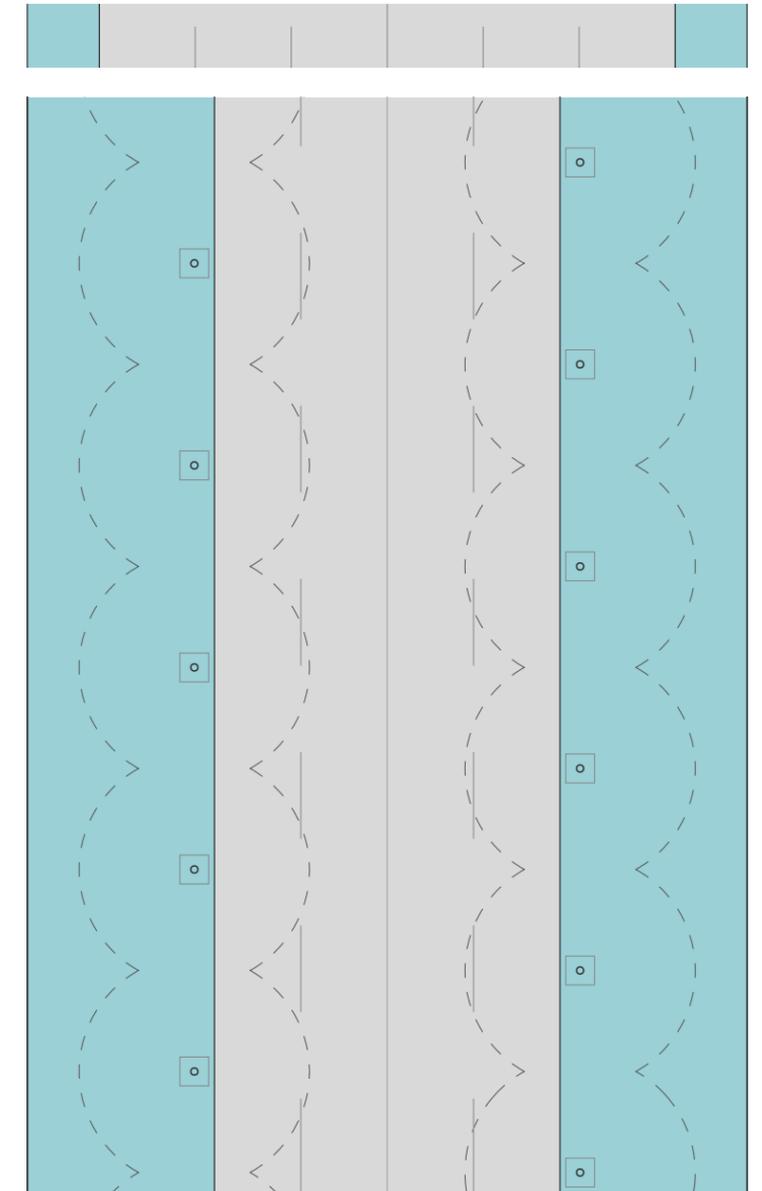
Alternative 1: Symmetrical Sidewalks

In the first alternative, six lanes of traffic @ 3.33m equalling 20m are reduced to four lanes @ 3.33m equalling 13.32m, gaining 6.68m that is added symmetrically to both sides of Avenue Road. This increases the existing 2.5m sidewalk to 5.83m on each side, creating a more generous public realm with opportunities to accommodate a substantial urban tree canopy and redistribution of street infrastructure elements.

Removing two lanes of traffic provides a substantial spatial shift that would be needed to accomplish a meaningful transformation in the rebuilding / reinventing of the Avenue.

In addition to removing two traffic lanes, the remaining four lanes can be further reduced in width to complement a reduced speed limit. These changes will substantially improve pedestrian safety, comfort, and create new qualities by connecting to adjacent parks.

The wider sidewalk esplanade has the potential to be expanded north of St. Clair Ave. to Lonsdale Rd. outside Upper Canada College, as well as to the south below Bloor Street, influencing the improvement planning for Queen's Park and University Avenue south of College Street.



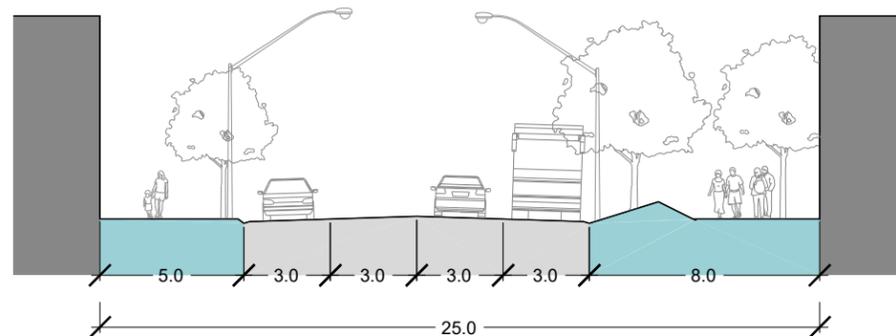
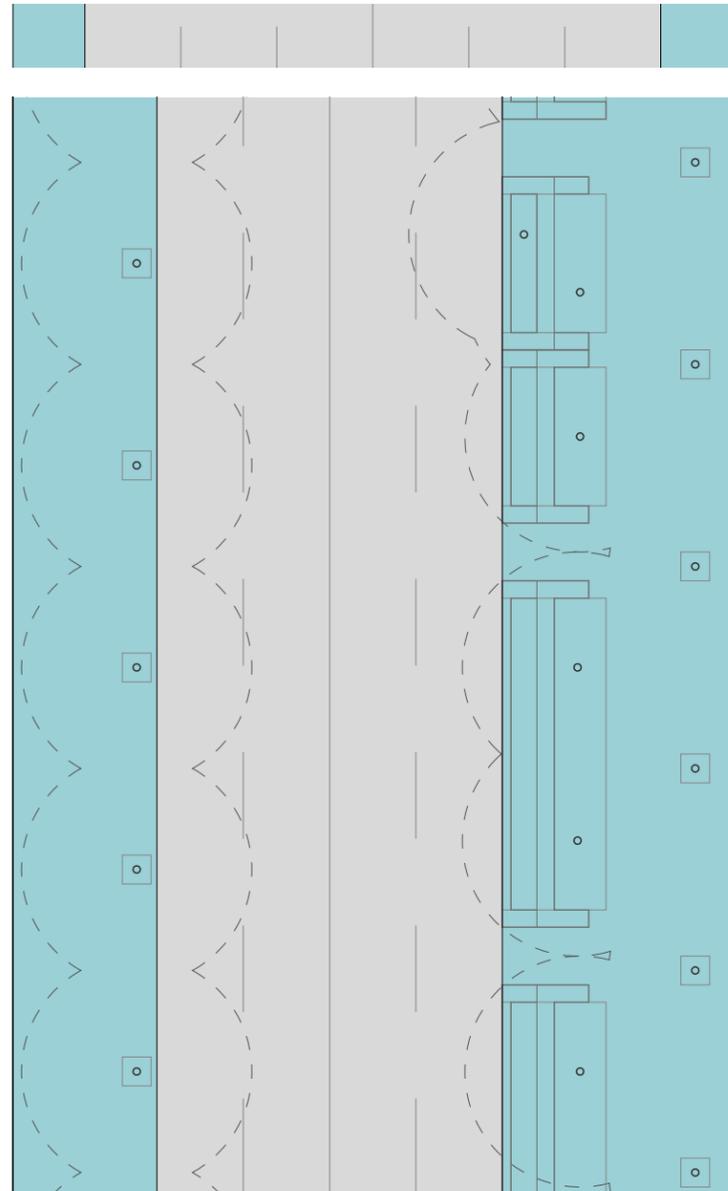
Sidewalk Distribution Possibilities

Alternative 2: Asymmetrical Sidewalks

In the asymmetrical configuration, the space gained by the reduction of six lanes to four is distributed unequally to create a modestly increased sidewalk on one side from 2.5m to 3.5m with a concentration of gained space on the other side, creating a large eplanade with a width of 8.17m. This width provides the opportunity of creating a substantial linear park and esplanade. This wider linear esplanade has implications for the full extent to future improvements north of Avenue Road to Upper Canada college as well as south to Queen's Park below University Avenue.

Shifting vehicular traffic to the east maximizes potentials for civic improvement. Multiple possibilities exist for the esplanade that have large scale potentials, with sidewalks widening to such an extent that the intervention could instead be considered a linear park.

Both the symmetrical and the asymmetrical alternates have the capacity to transform the nature of Avenue Road, in bringing together both sides of the street that were previously driven apart by the number of lanes and the speed of the traffic. The asymmetrical version, however, presents a unique opportunity to create a new linear park that would have the capacity to make significant linkages to other open space networks.

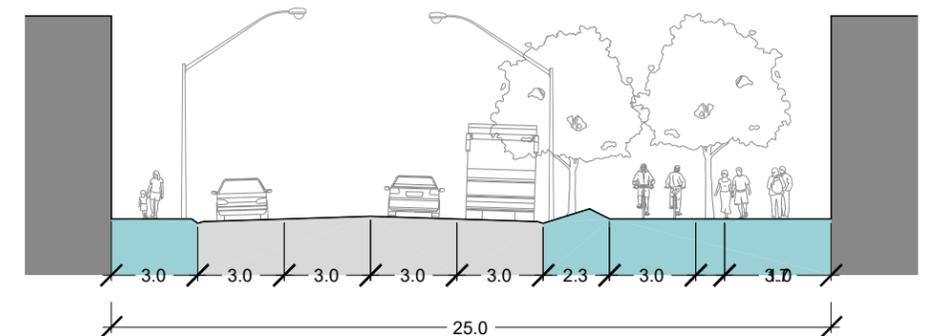
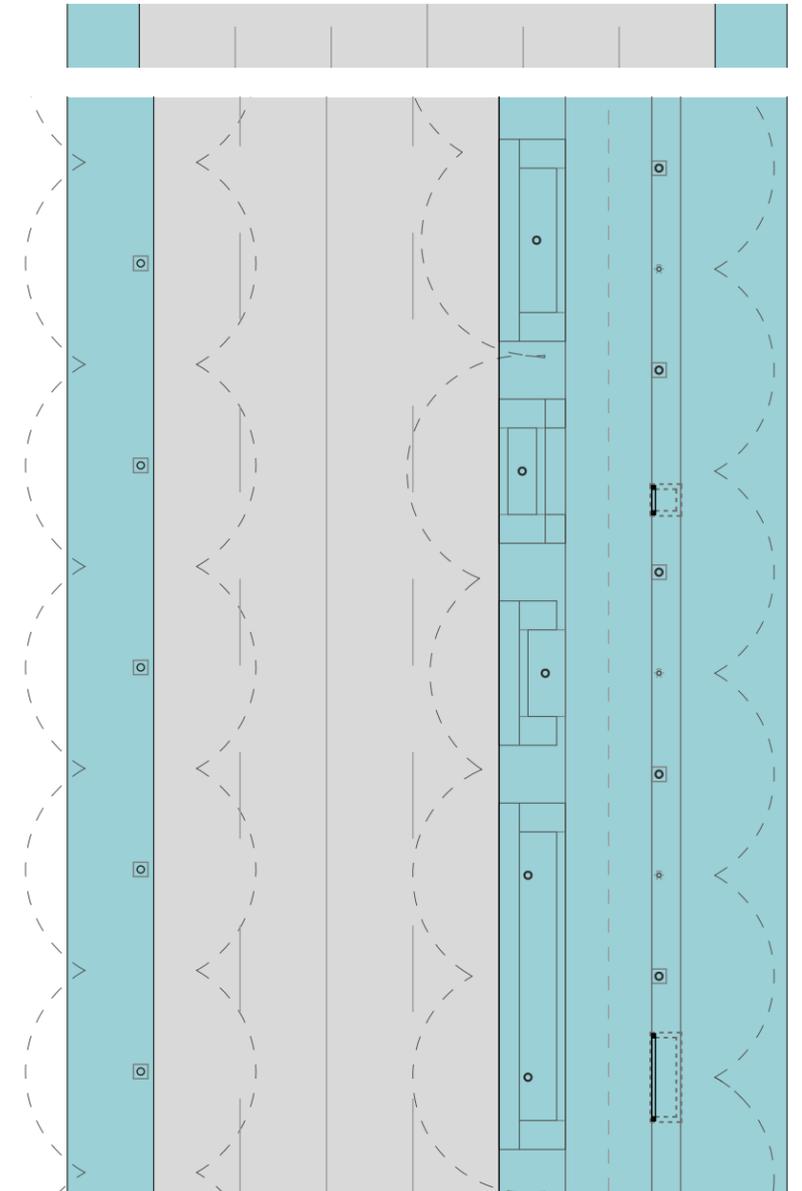


Alternative 3: Asymmetrical Sidewalks with bike lanes

The new asymmetrical configuration of Avenue can be adapted to accommodate a two-way bike lane. This configuration would create a 3.0 m sidewalk width on the west side of the Avenue, and expand the linear park on the east side to an average width of 9.0 m. The linear park is composed of parallel spaces which form a wide, continuous, and level surface between the curb and property edge.

The outermost layer are the 2.3 m wide structured verges, followed by 3.0 m bike lane broken into two 1.5 m wide lanes. The structured verges protect cyclists from vehicle traffic more effectively than the city's existing prefabricated concrete barriers by providing shade and containing water runoff and snow. Spaces between the verges can also be utilized for cycling infrastructure such as Bike Share Stations.

The next layer consists of a 1.0 m wide strip containing a second row of trees along with lighting and small multi-use canopy structures which can serve as information signs, or even cantilever out to form bus stations. The innermost layer is the pedestrian sidewalk, which can expand into the 1.0 m strip when circumstances require to increase sidewalk width.



The Structured Verge

The “Green Verge” (verge referring to an edge or border) has a long history with respect to its role as a planted edge to streets and avenues. By creating a distinct liminal space between the sidewalk and the roadbed wide enough to contain trees and other vegetation, it can enhance pedestrian safety and comfort by constraining the ability to jaywalk, as well as providing a barrier of trees and shrubs against both car traffic and the elements. In turn, it creates a zone where rainwater and snow can be safely and efficiently collected without obstructing either car or pedestrian movement. The widening of Avenue Road in the late 1950’s dramatically reduced both sidewalk width and the distance between curb and building front. This eliminated both mature trees and areas for snow which had added to both pedestrian comfort and efficiency of the Avenue.

While the initial installation in the 19th century of verges along streets in Toronto relied upon wide lawn and sidewalk space, the expansion of road traffic inevitably means a rethinking of the verge from an open strip of greenery to an integrated physical structure. Transforming the verge into a physical object rising above the level of the curb can also perceptually expand the amount of hard surface space available for pedestrian use, while accommodating lines of trees, and managing the flow of water towards them to reduce water and energy consumption.

To do this, the new “Structured Verge” replaces the ordinary curb, replacing it with elements of stone or precast concrete with a distinct sloping profiles towards the outside and inside space of the sidewalk. The resulting profile of the Verge would take the form of an obtuse triangle whose longest edge negotiates the change in grade between sidewalk and street.

The sloping sides of the Structured Verge direct water which gathers at “creases”, or junctures with the street or sidewalk, flowing parallel to the sidewalk along the crease to collect in the verge’s garden beds. The verge thereby utilizes rain fall rather than disposing of it in storm drains, reducing water consumption, energy use, labour, and costs for the maintenance and health of garden beds.

Tree cover along the verge can vary depending on its width of the sidewalk and position of adjacent buildings and bridges. On wider sections of road, the organization of trees along the verge can be multiplied, creating a double allee of trees arranged parallel to each other, utilizing the water flow over the sidewalks and into the catchment area, ensuring a systematic and even distribution of water to tree and garden beds.



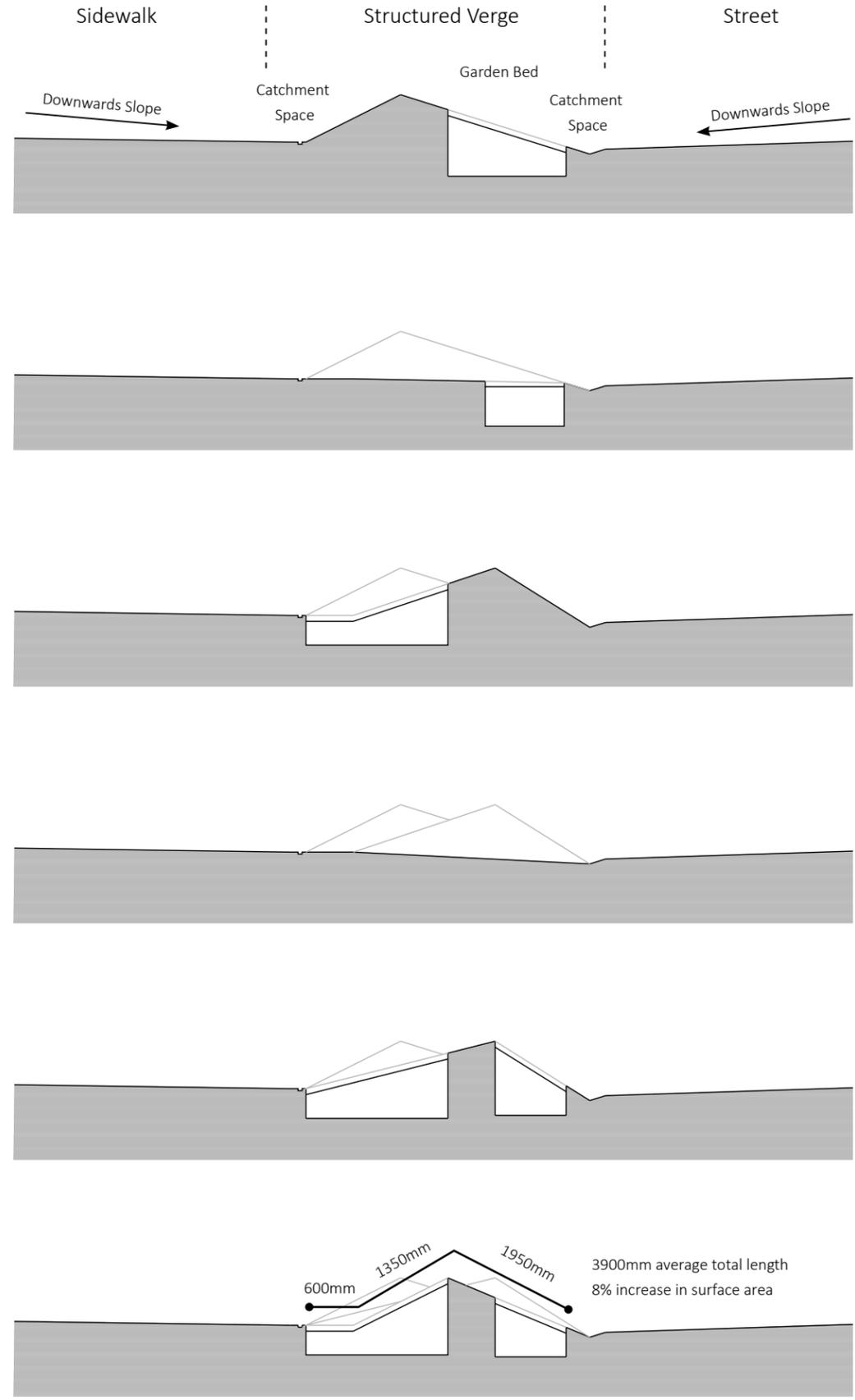
Top:

Calle Gran Via de Colon under construction , Granada, Spain
Munoz Miranda Architects, 2005-06. Image Source: Munoz Miranda Architects

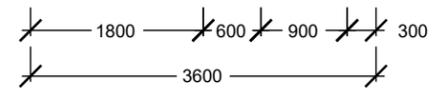
Bottom:

Verges of the Calle Gran Via de Colon under construction.
Image Source: Brown + Storey, 2006

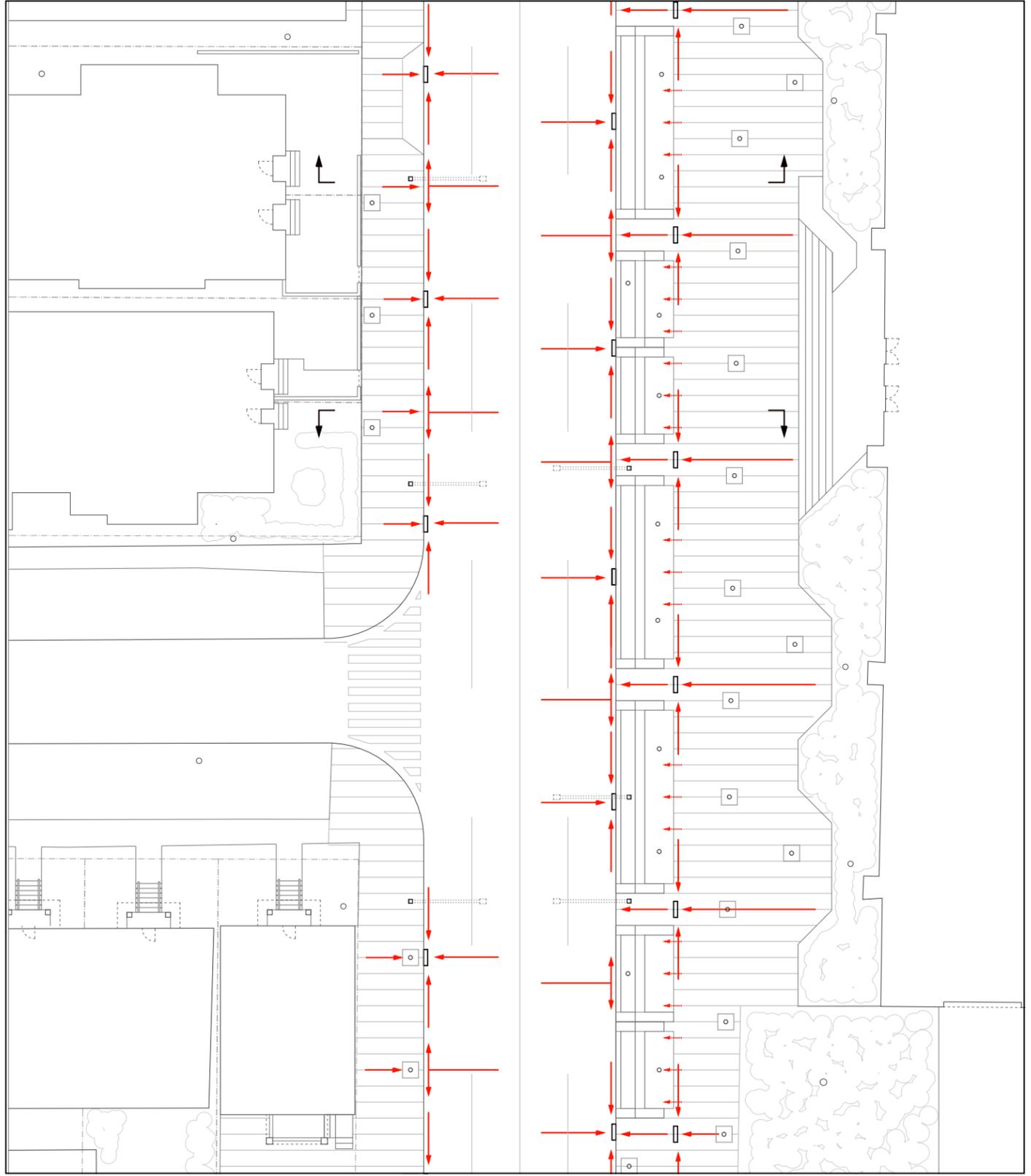
Reinventing the Avenue



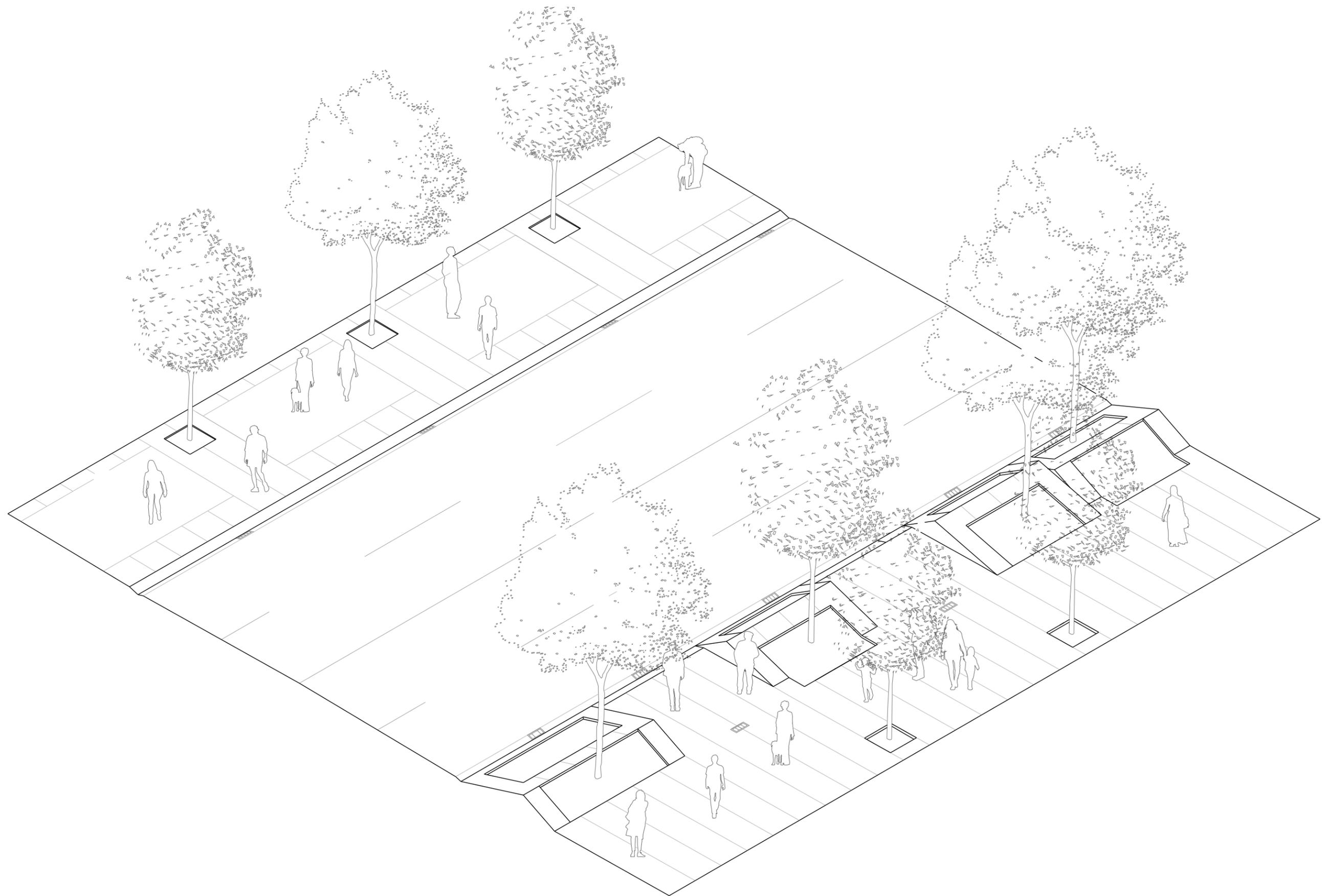
600mm 1350mm 1950mm 3900mm average total length 8% increase in surface area



Right: Section Profiles of Structured Verges. Scale 1:75 @ 11x17

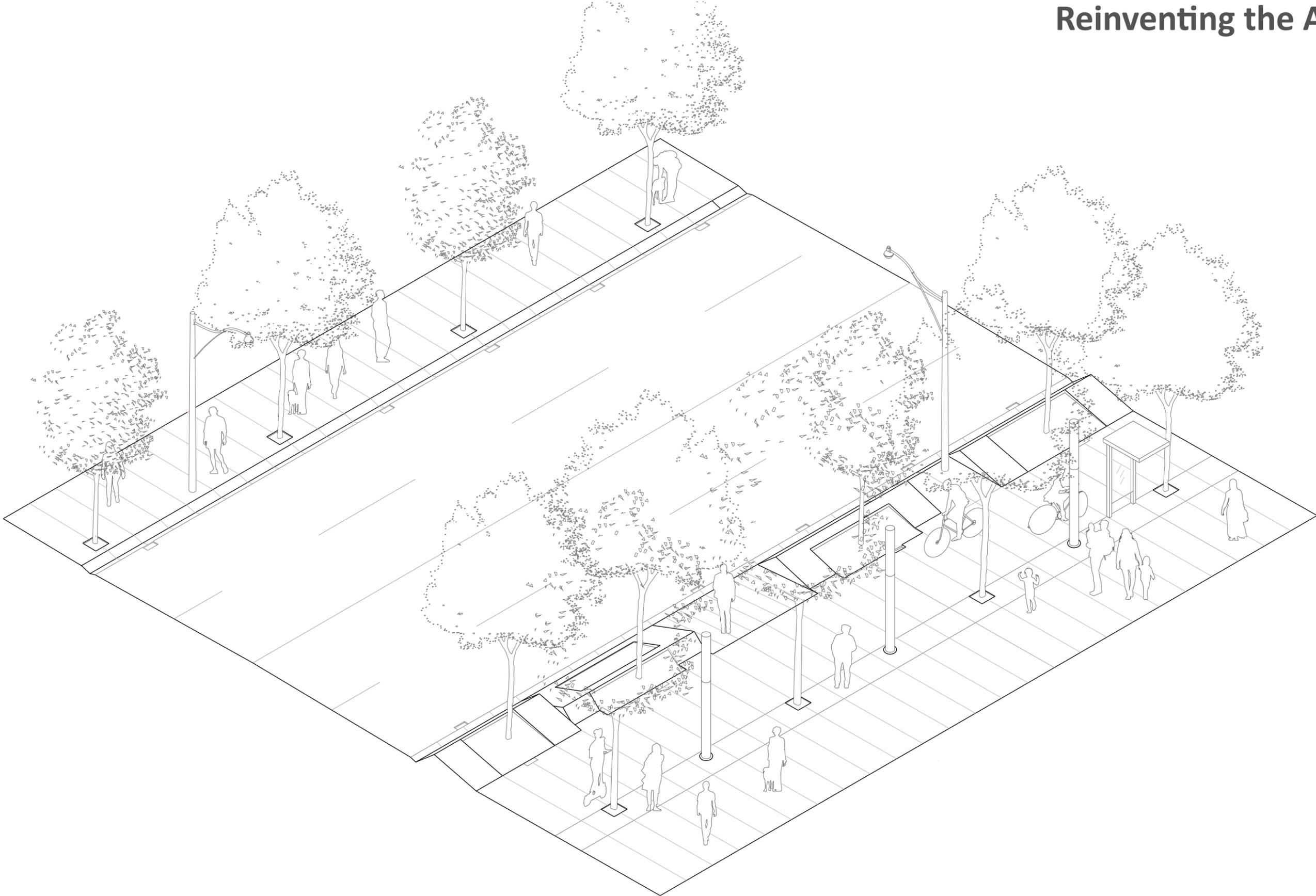


Above: Diagram of Waterflow along the widened sidewalk

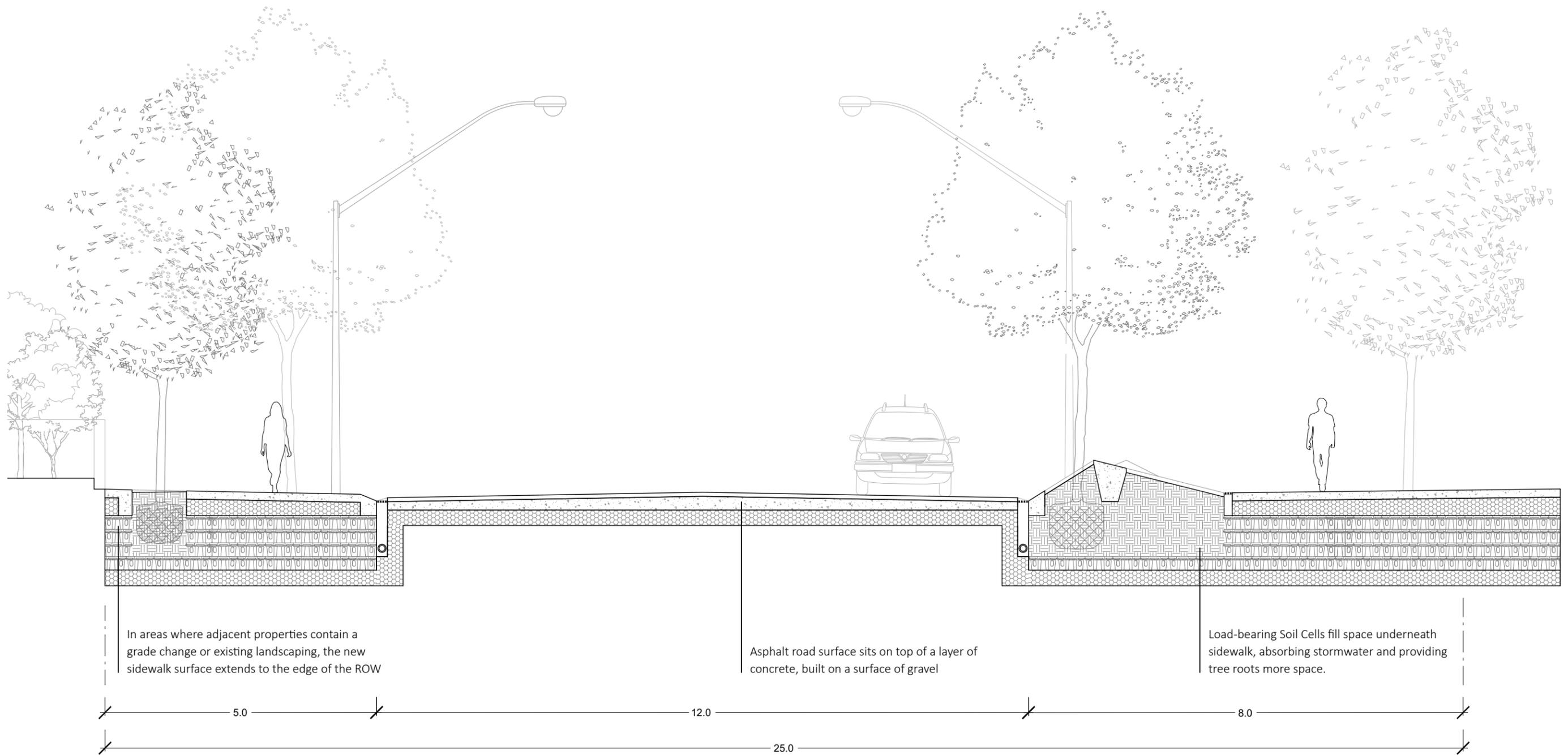


Isometric drawing of a section of street with various Verge modules.
Scale 1:100 @ 11x17

Reinventing the Avenue

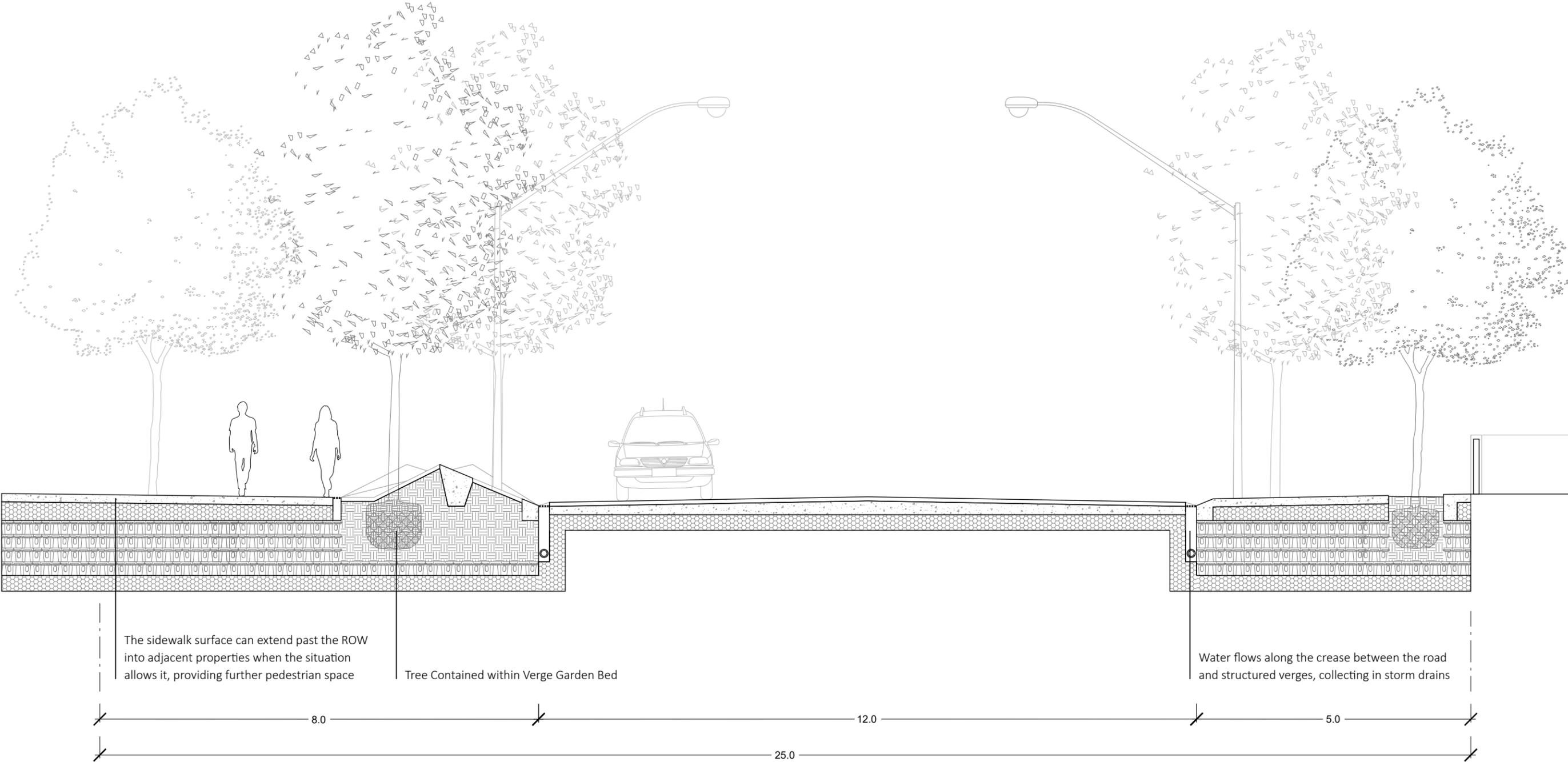


Isometric drawing of a section of street with bike lanes, lights, and canopies.
Scale 1:100 @ 11x17



North-Facing Section of Avenue Road between Cottingham and Oaklands.
 Scale 1:75 @ 11x17

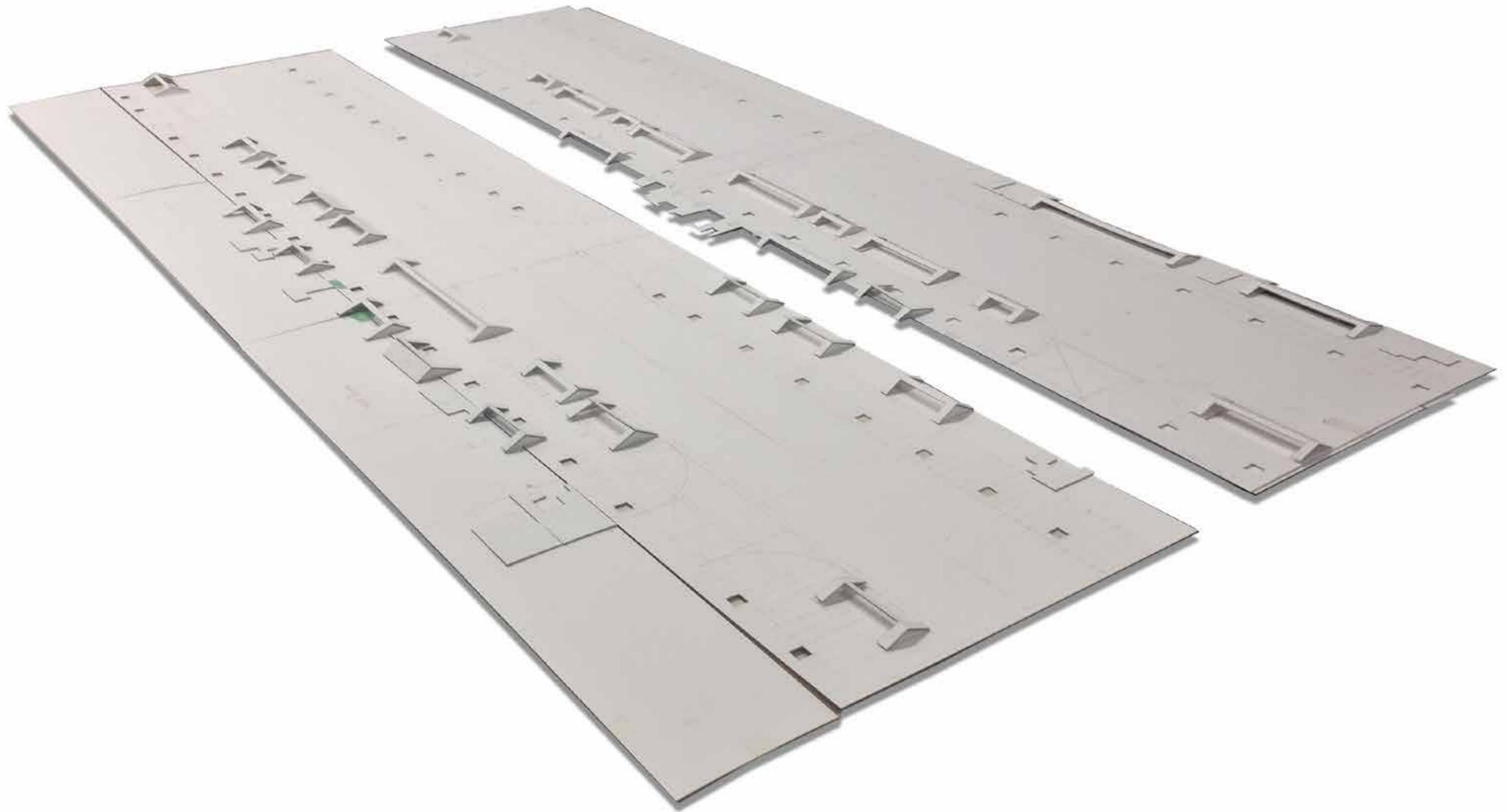
Reinventing the Avenue



South-Facing Section of Avenue Road between Cottingham and Oaklands.
Scale 1:75 @ 11x17

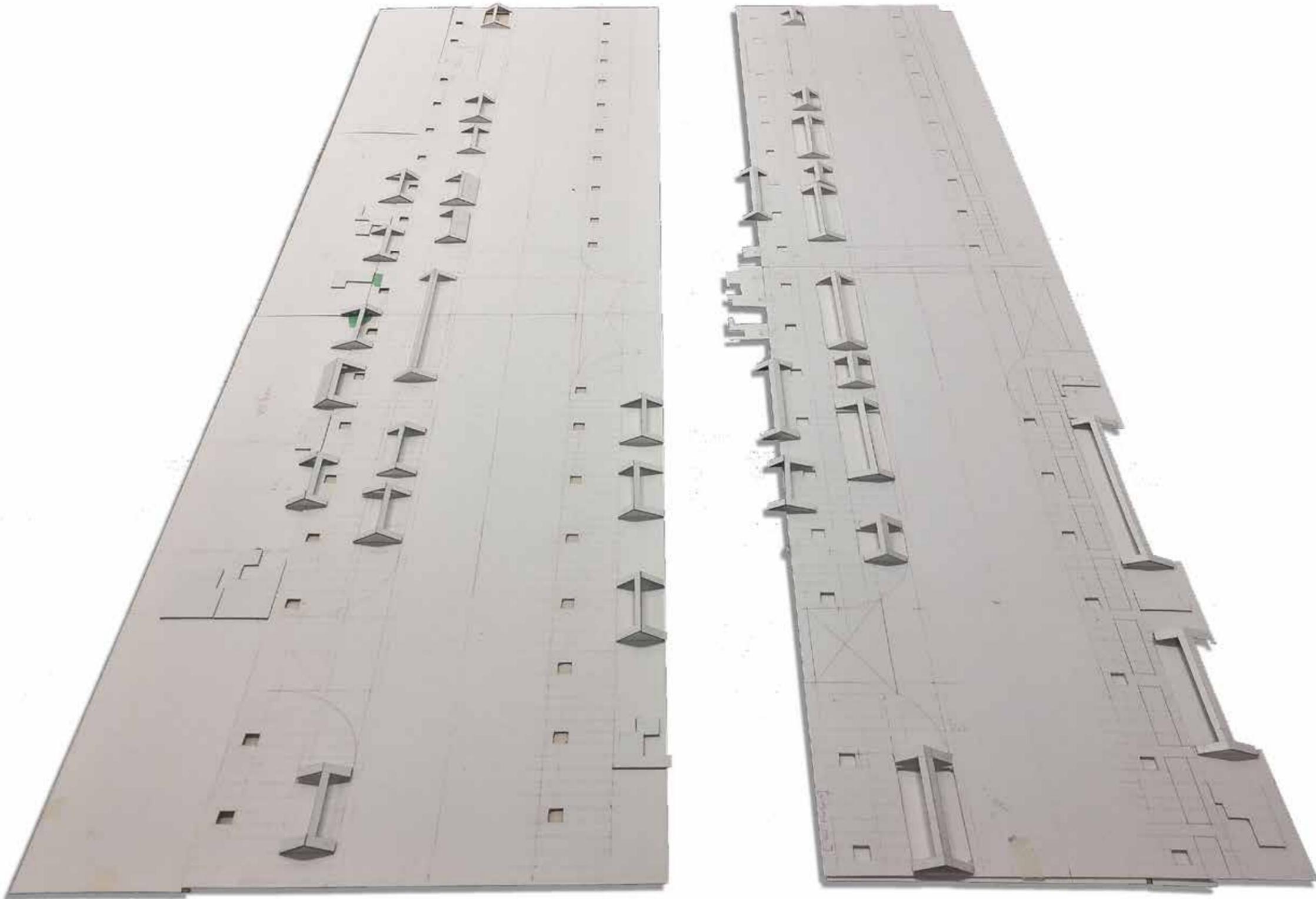
Verge Study Models

Area of Avenue Rd. and Dupont St.



Linear Park Models

Two examples of structured verges applied to a narrowed Avenue Road, with 4 lanes of traffic, and a eastern sidewalk widened to 8 meters.

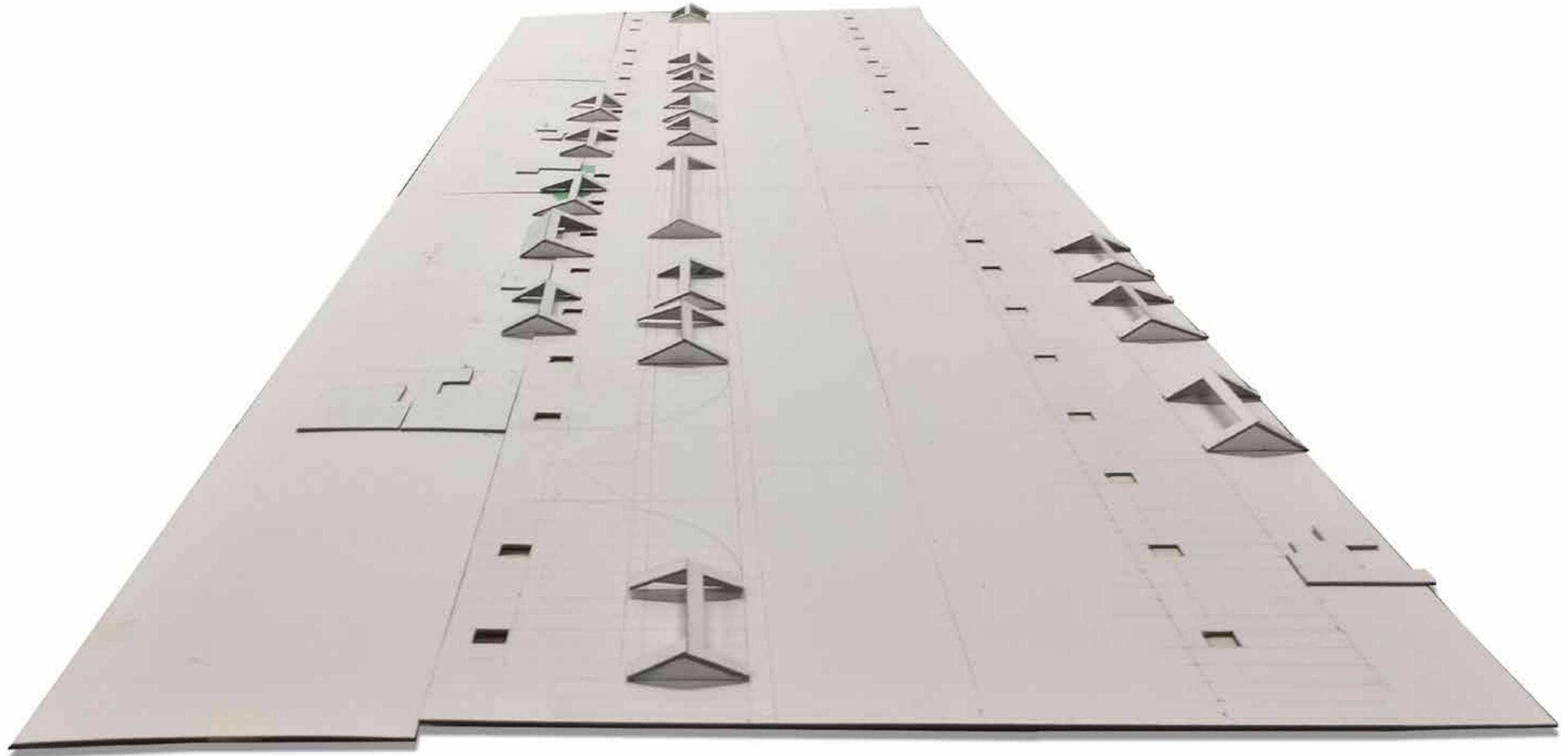


Placement of Structured Verges.

Double lines of structured verges can be placed along stretches of the Avenue which border parks. The Verges also contain garden beds and support a new tree canopy.

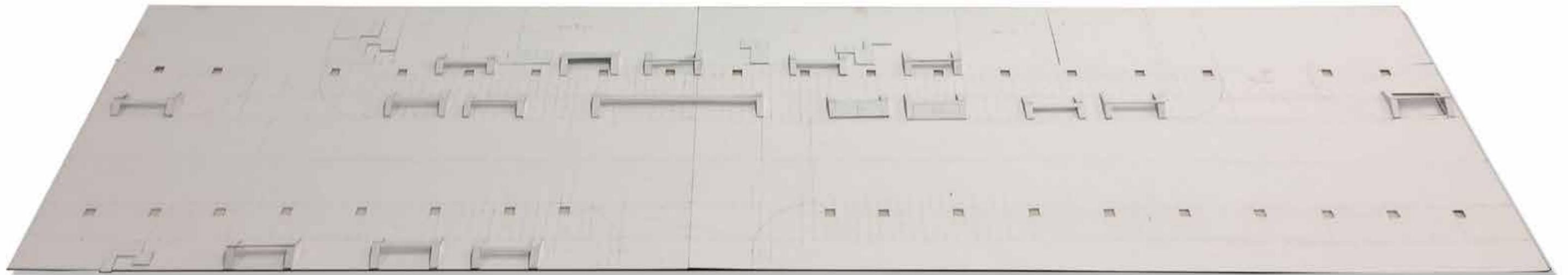
Verge Models

Area of Avenue Rd. and Dupont St.



Organizing pedestrian movement

The structured verges provide a safe barrier between pedestrians and cars, while framing crosswalks and entrances to adjacent parks.



Responding to immediate context

The west side of Avenue Road is lined with a new tree canopy, with structured Verges located only along the intersection with public parks.

Verge Species List

Trees



Freeman Maple



Common Hackberry



Tulip Tree



Sugar Maple



Kentucky Coffee Tree



White Oak



Red Maple



London Plane Tree



Red Oak



Redmond Linden



Homestead Elm



Northern Catalpa

Small Flowering Trees



Serviceberry



Ivory Silk Tree



Redbud

Ornamental Grasses



Bebbs Sedge



Switch Grass



Bottle Brush Grass



Little Blue Stem



Brown Eyed Susan



New England Aster



Pearly Everlastings



Mountain Mint



Common Yarrow



Canada Anemone



Day Lily

Shrubs



Fragrant Sumac



Bayberry

Expansion of public realm on University Avenue

University Park, Evergreen & PUBLIC WORK, 2018 - Present

“The proposal would create a strip of green all the way from Queen’s Park Crescent at Bloor Street, past the University of Toronto’s downtown campus and the provincial legislature, to City Hall. “With those nine acres,”... “it would knit together a continuous system of 90 acres.”

How? By turning back the clock. In the 1940s and 1950s, University was reshaped to accommodate subways and a river of car traffic. Vehicle lanes were added; mature trees were destroyed. The University Park proposal ... basically reverses those changes.”

-Alex Bozikovic, “Rebirth of the Promenade”, Globe and Mail, Nov 13th, 2020

REBIRTH OF THE PROMENADE

A proposal for 'Canada's street' from prominent architects PUBLIC WORK shows what is possible in a postpandemic world



Changes proposed by landscape architects PUBLIC WORK, the Michael Young Family Foundation and the non-profit Evergreen would convert 9.5 acres of University Avenue into green space. PHOTOS BY PUBLIC WORK.

More than 100 years ago, Charles Dickens visited the young city of Toronto, and one place impressed him: what's now University Avenue. In the centre of downtown, its 120-foot width was lined with rows of flowering chestnut trees. Dickens wrote that it might be "the finest [avenue] in the Dominion, or perhaps on this continent."

Not many people would describe today's University Avenue that way. It is not a place for a promenade. But it could be — at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has made open space more precious. Cities around the world are opening up their streets to allow more room for people to walk, cycle and simply relax at a safe distance. Most of these changes are modest.

In Toronto, University Avenue could get an overhaul on a grand scale. The landscape architects PUBLIC WORK, the Michael Young Family Foundation and the non-profit Evergreen have a vision they call "University Park." Their plan would convert 9.5 acres of asphalt into green space, creating a larger network of green space that could be Toronto's equivalent of La Rambla in Barcelona.

This would deliver huge benefits: green space to serve thousands of hospital workers and patients from neighbouring institutions; cycling infrastructure; and a place of great symbolic power. "Public

space is more important than it's ever been," said Adam Nicklin, a partner in the firm PUBLIC WORK. "And this is Ontario's street. It's Canada's street. It could be the heart of the city."

The proposal would create a strip of green all the way from Queen's Park Crescent at Bloor Street, past the University of Toronto's downtown campus and the provincial legislature, to City Hall. "With those nine acres," Mr. Nicklin said, "it would knit together a continuous system of 90 acres." How? By turning back the clock. In the 1940s and '50s, University Avenue was reshaped to accommodate subways and a river of car traffic. Vehicle lanes were added; mature trees were destroyed. The University Park proposal — based on an idea PUBLIC WORK developed while working on the city's 2018 TOCore plan — basically reverses those changes.

It would keep the same traffic flow that exists now, following the installation of bike lanes earlier this year: four lanes of car traffic and two bike lanes. But all vehicles would end up on the west side in a two-way street. The other half of the avenue, which Mr. Nicklin calls "an underperforming civic asset," would become largely green space with bike lanes. The impact on vehicle traffic, according to a traffic study commissioned by the Young Foundation, would be near zero, but the effect on the city could be enormous.



QUEEN'S PARK

The changes would begin on the doorstep of the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada's most visited museum in 2020. Here, the street consists of six fast-moving lanes of traffic. These would shrink to four, giving the museum a grander front yard.

Further south, Queen's Park Crescent splits into a circle. The entire west side of this roadway would become parkland, linking the public park within the circle and the university campus beside it. Tadpole Creek, a historic waterway long buried in a tunnel, would surface here in a wetland and pond. "This would increase the biodiversity of the area," PUBLIC WORK partner Marc Ryan said, "and expand the sense of nature that's possible in this kind of urban setting."

ALEX BOZIKOVIC ARCHITECTURE CRITIC



South of College Street, University Avenue runs in two sections divided by a median, seen at top. The vehicle lanes would be gathered into the west side, with remaining asphalt replaced by green space topped with two-way bike lanes.

HOSPITAL DISTRICT

South of College Street, University Avenue runs in two sections divided by a median. All the vehicle lanes would be gathered into the west side. The remaining asphalt would be replaced by green space topped with two-way bike lanes. This would be a people plaza, serving the five major hospitals located here: staff and patients, some of whom come from across Ontario for extended treatment at Sick Kids or Princess Margaret, currently have very little space outdoors to breathe. "We should be applying a welcome sign to public space," said Nina Pezzavento of the Young Foundation. "Here, we should improve the quality of life for people who live in Toronto and across the province."

Mr. Nicklin says the city, as part of its TOCore planning process, studied how pedestrians currently behave in the area: very few stop and linger. The current street "has got all the ingredients of a grand public avenue," he said, "but it simply doesn't function that way." This is true. Even the 12 islands in the middle, created by designers Dunnington Grubb & Stronach in the 1960s, are little used, traffic makes them unpleasant and hard to reach. These modernist landscapes would be "folded into a new, larger civic space," Mr. Nicklin says, "one that would lend itself better to walking and public life."

The green space would include a continuous trench of soil, to nurture large trees and absorb large amounts of stormwater — a meaningful climate-change adaptation measure. "This is a 21st-century landscape, and it needs to deal with 21st-century challenges," Mr. Nicklin said.

FUTURE OF CITIES

This is the kick-off to a week-long series in The Globe examining how the pandemic will shape our cities in the years to come.



PUBLIC WORK proposes opening the iron fences around Osgoode Hall at University Avenue and Queen Street, and creating a plaza and fountain that cuts east along Queen Street.

OSGOODE PARK

Where University Avenue meets Queen Street, you are close to Toronto's greatest civic space, Nathan Phillips Square. In between lies Osgoode Hall, the 170-year-old home of the province's legal profession, surrounded by iron fences.

PUBLIC WORK proposes opening those fences, and creating a plaza and fountain that cuts east along Queen Street. This link between Nathan Phillips Square, Osgoode and University Avenue would cement the avenue's status as a gathering place for major civic events.

FINAL SECTION

PUBLIC WORK says the project would be relatively simple to construct. They estimate it could be achieved within 10 years for \$250-million — about the cost of purchasing five downtown acres — and would be worth it. "Parks are central to the experience and the identity of a city," Mr. Nicklin said. He is right. Such a large, continuous green space would become an instant landmark, serving local residents, workers, hospital visitors and eventually tourists.

Toronto currently lacks such a central public space. City Hall is imagining one with Rail Deck Park, which would be built over a rail corridor near Union Station. (PUBLIC WORK has been involved in planning it as well.) That's a worthy idea, but it's complex and expensive at an estimated \$1.6-billion. University Park would complement Rail Deck, and it could be done much sooner.

It would also be a fitting response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It would improve on historic parks that already exist, making a gathering place that is greener, safer and entirely public. "The park creates a new mental map of the city," said Marc Ryan. "Instead of having many separate pieces, you have one unified thing." If we really see all in this together, this would be an excellent way to prove it.

“Rebirth of the Promenade”, article on the redevelopment of University Avenue. Alex Bozikovic, Globe and Mail, 2020. Image Source: Globe and Mail, PUBLIC WORK

Reinventing the Avenue



“University Park” , proposal to turn east shoulder of University Avenue into public park space.
Image Source: PUBLIC WORK

Expansion of public realm on University Avenue

“The Art of the Avenue”, DTAH, 1989

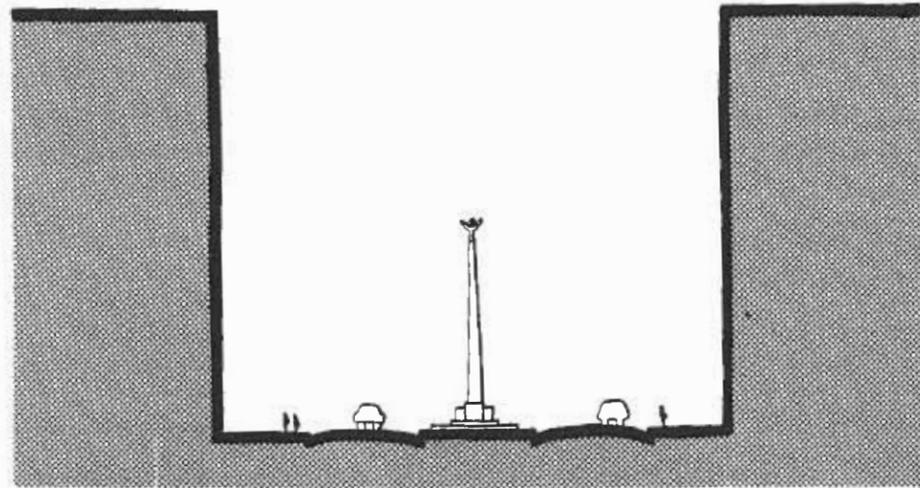


Figure 49: Civic Boulevard

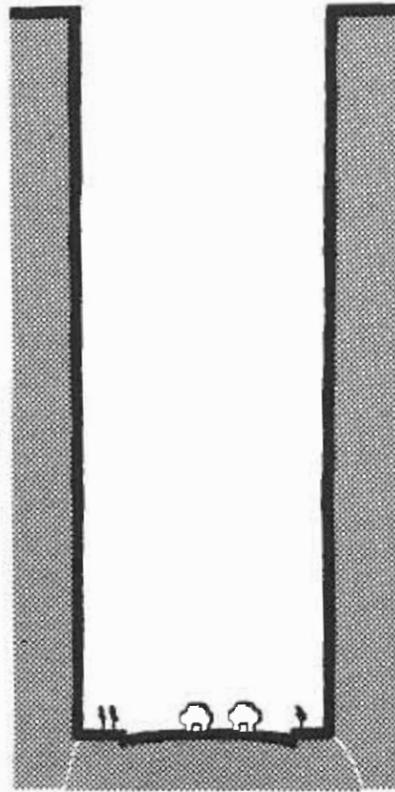


Figure 50: Commercial Artery

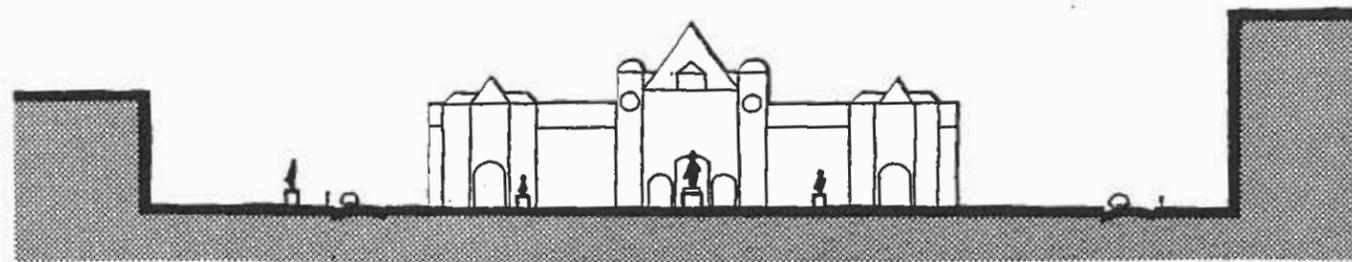


Figure 51: Queen's Park

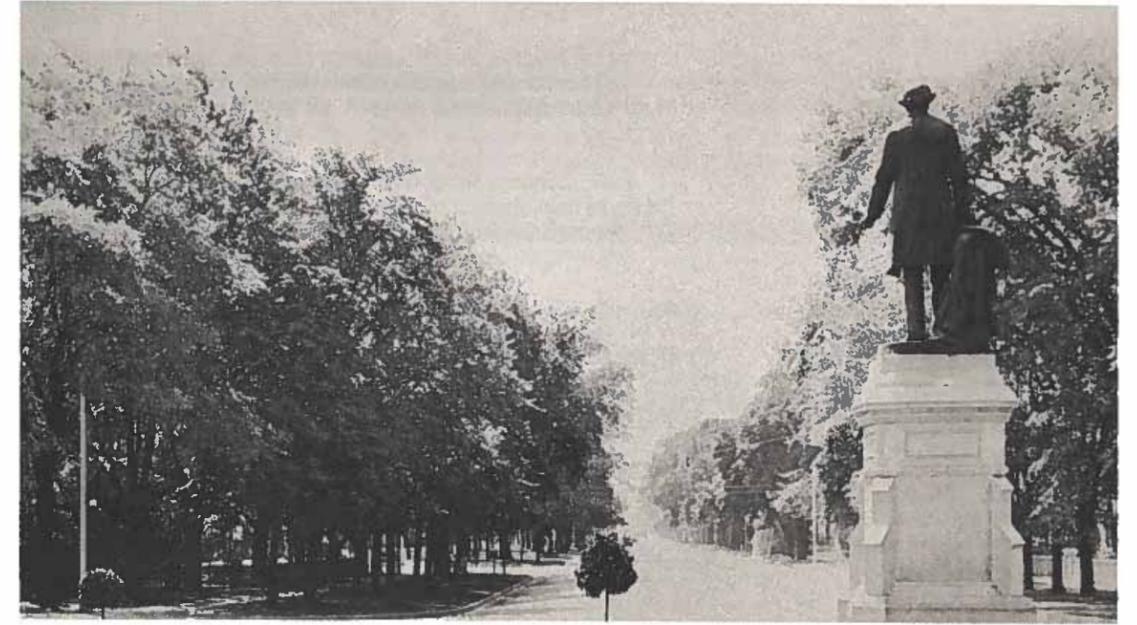
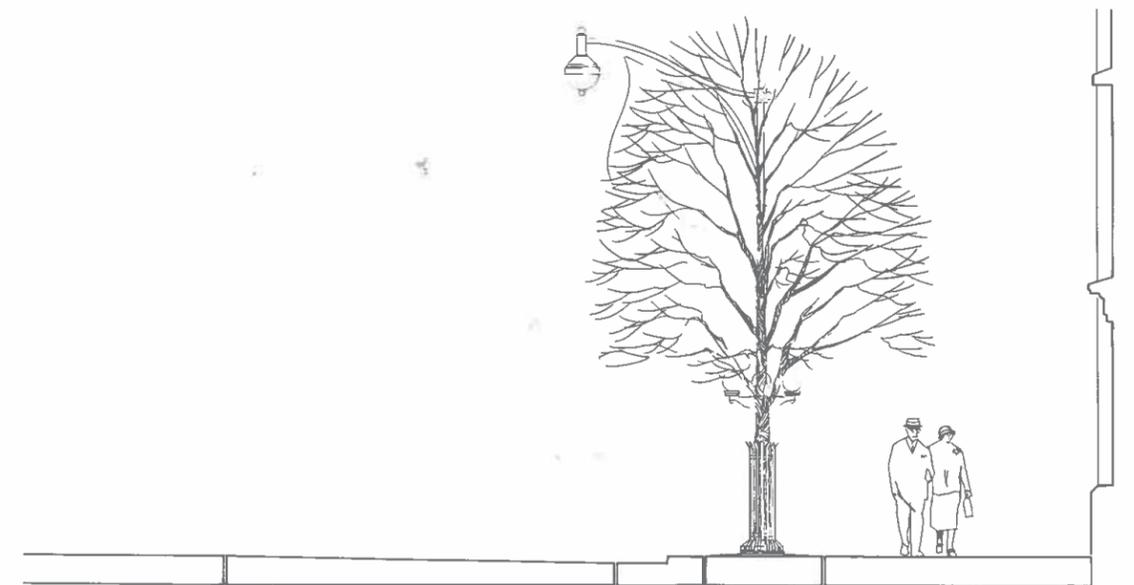


Figure 81: University Avenue 1914, with Mature Trees



Reinventing the Avenue

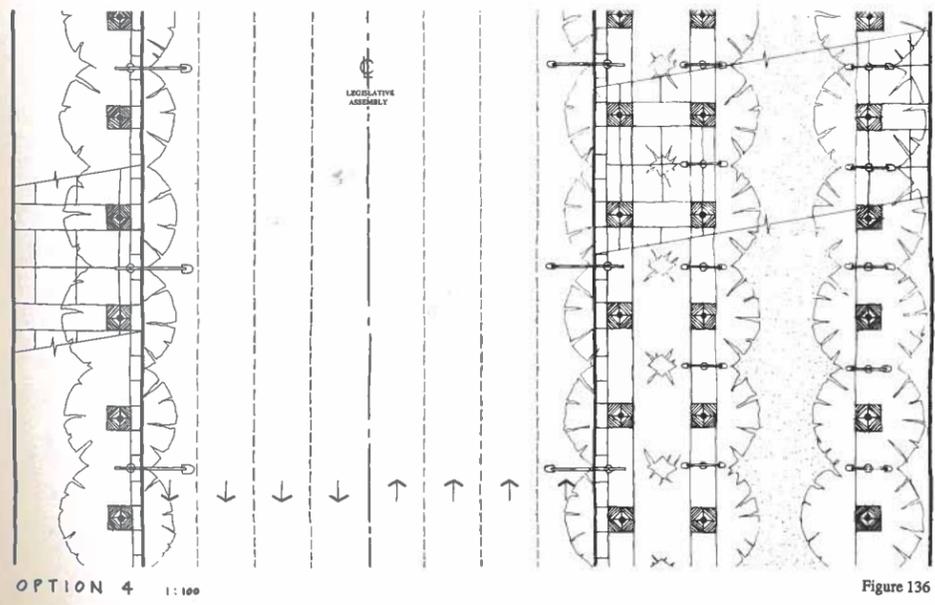
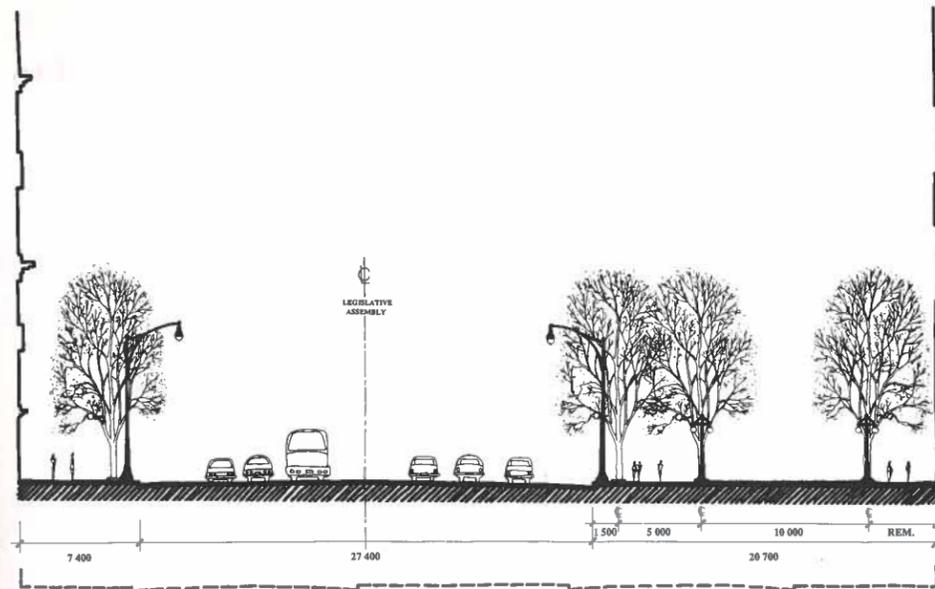


Figure 136

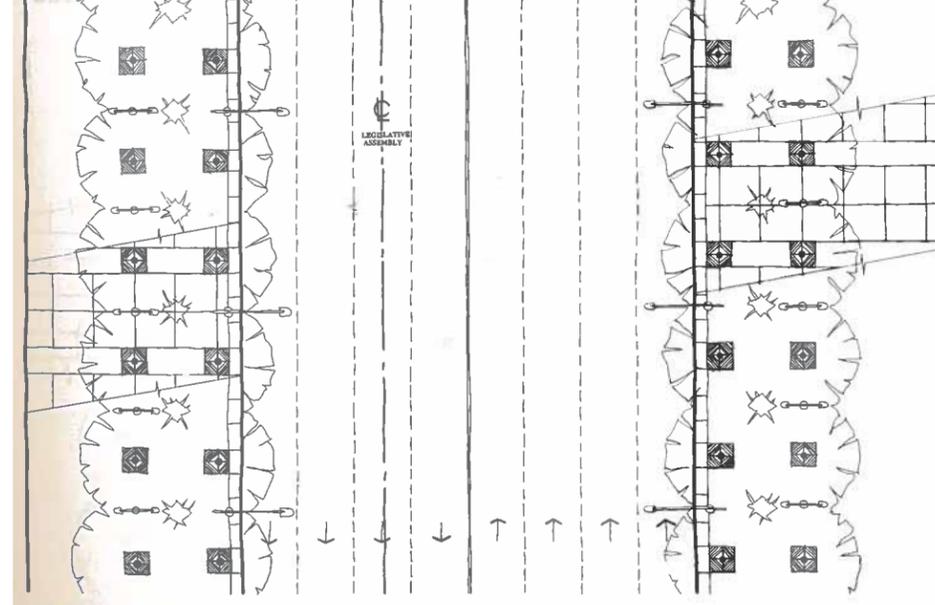
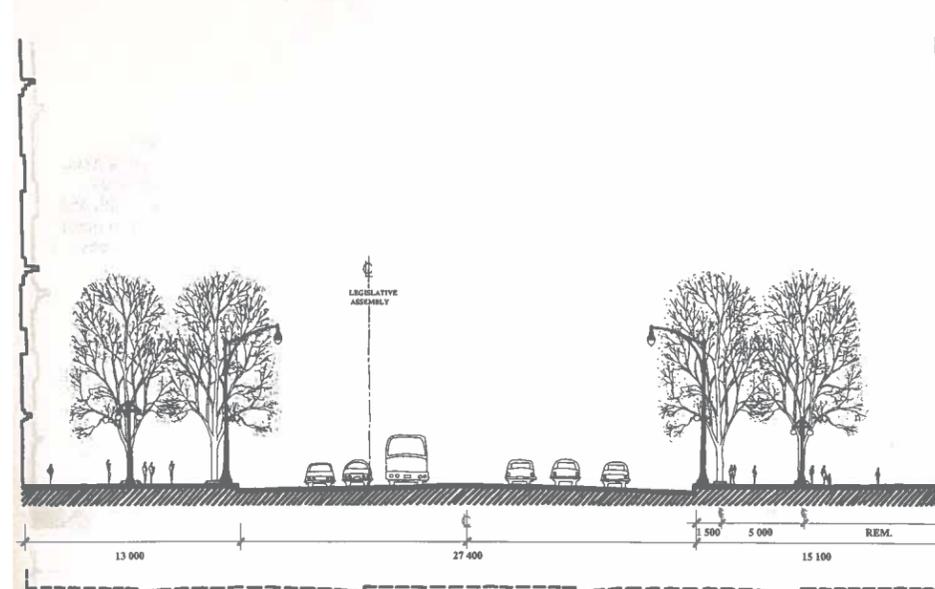
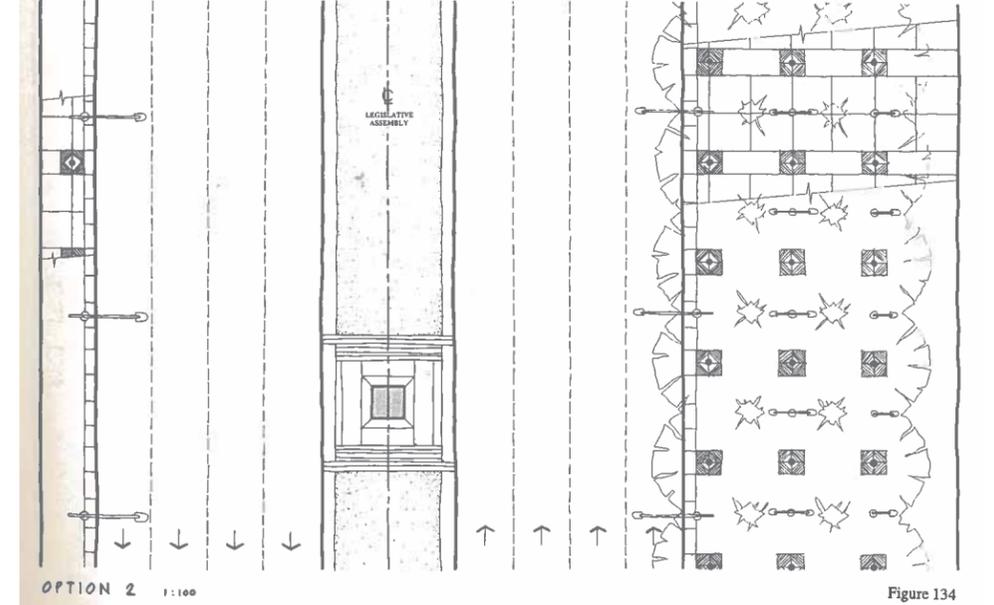
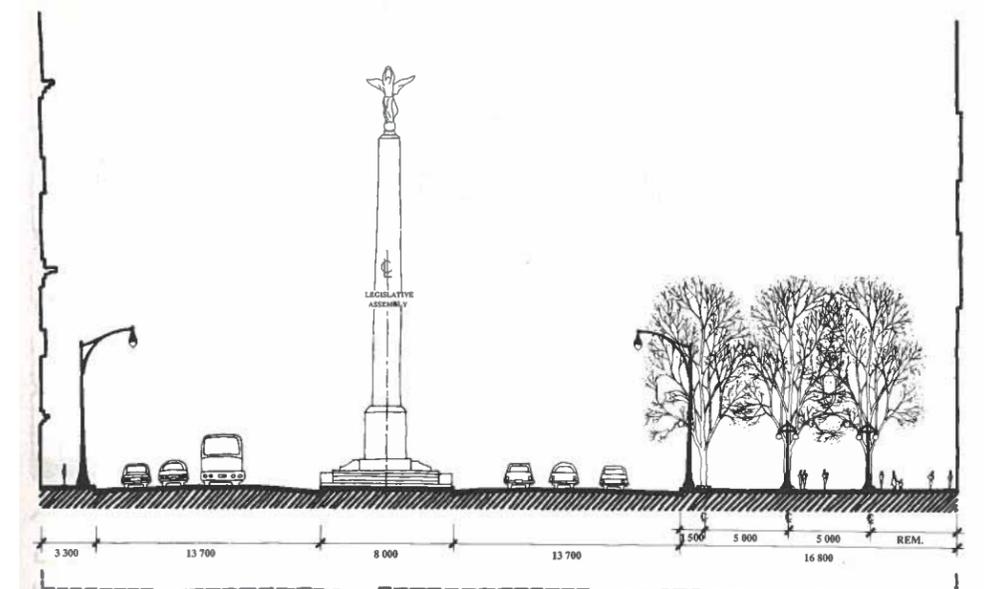


Figure 134



Images from "The Art of the Avenue - University Avenue Public Art Study" duToit Allsopp, Hillier (DTAH), June 1989. Image Source: DTAH

International Precedent: Champs-Élysées Redevelopment

Phillipe Chiambaretta Architecte, Comité Champs-Élysées , Paris, France, 2021 -



Image Source:
Phillipe Chiambaretta Architecte

Reinventing the Avenue

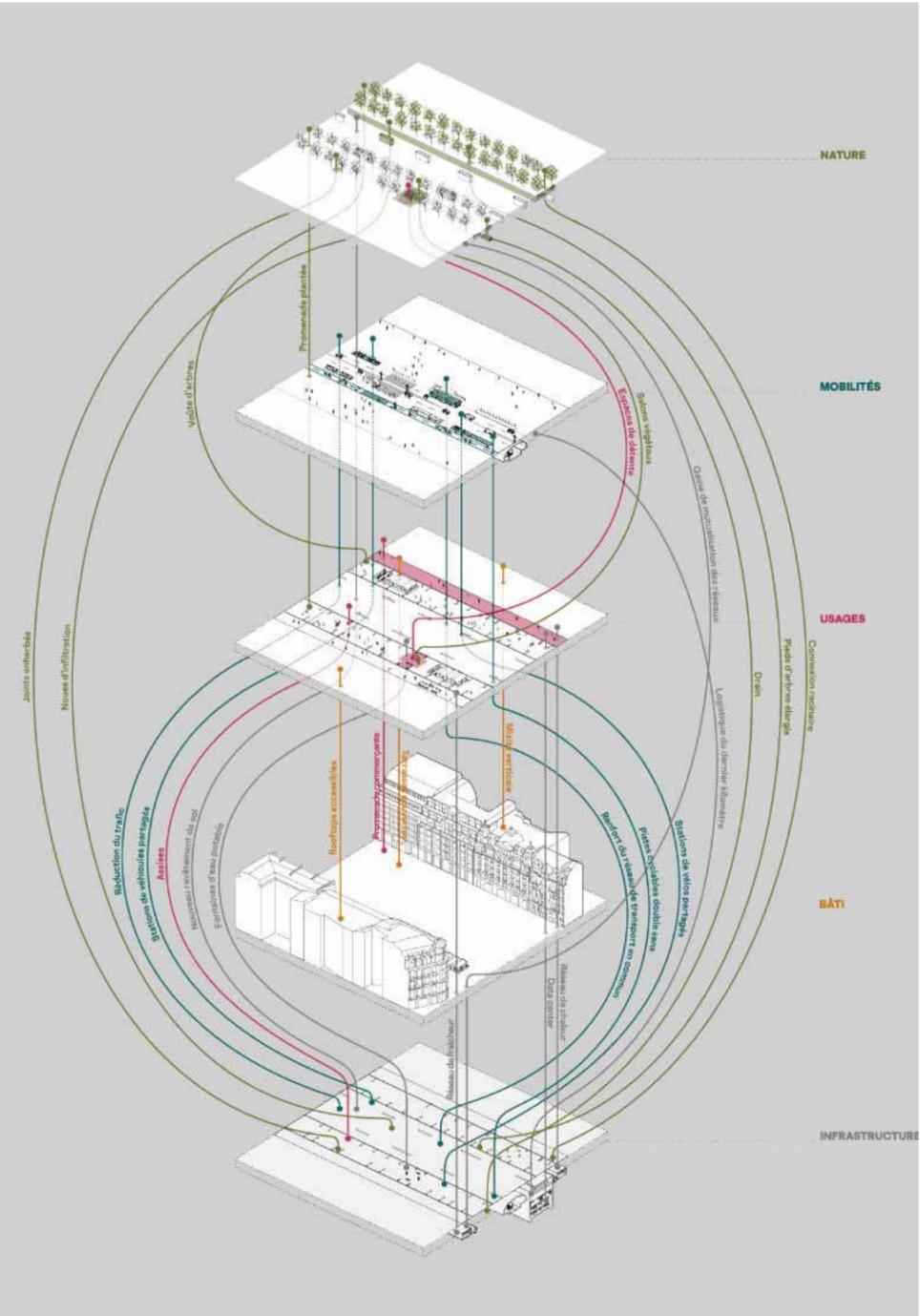
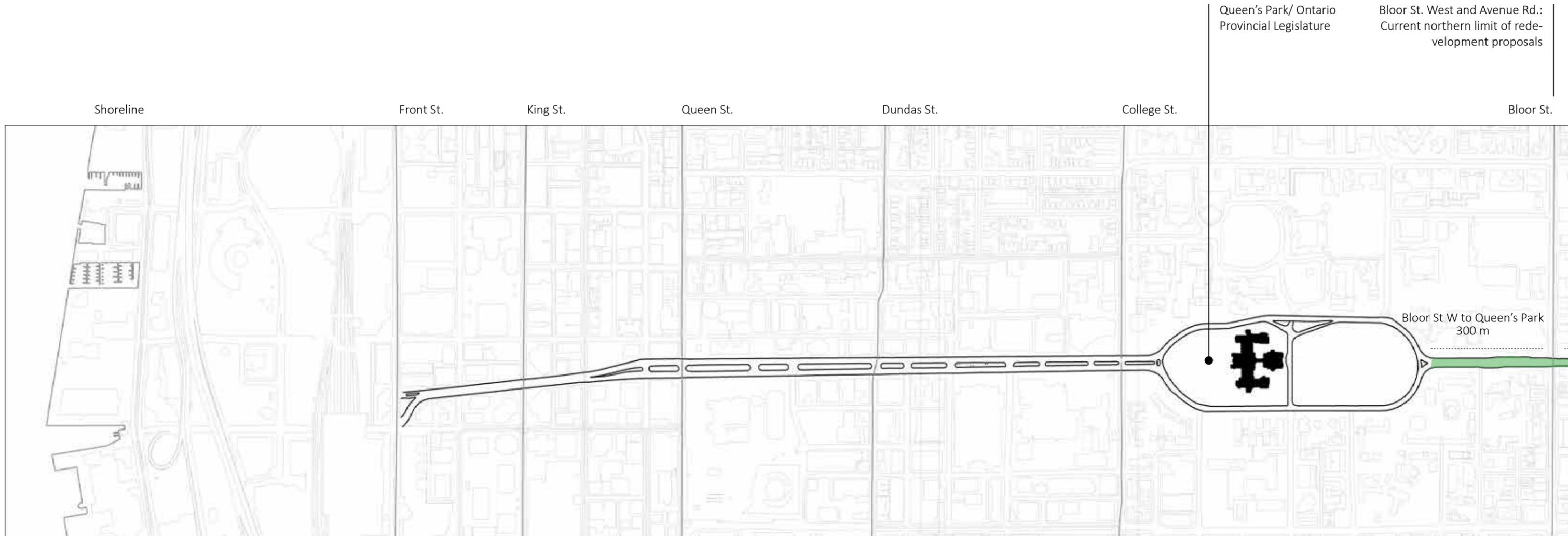


Image Source:
Phillipe Chiambaretta Architecte

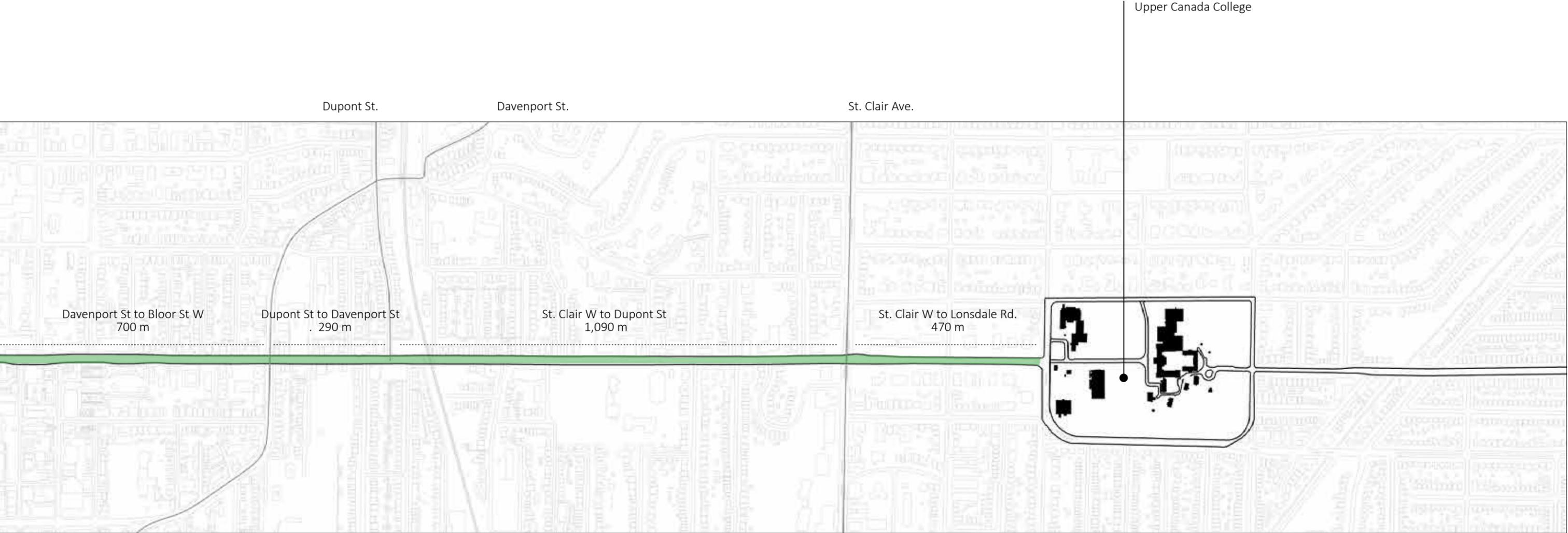
Avenue Road as an Urban Set Piece



University Avenue

2,600 metres from Queen's Park to Front St.
Proposals like *University Park* extend only as far as Bloor St. West without consideration to the situation on Avenue Road.

Reinventing the Avenue

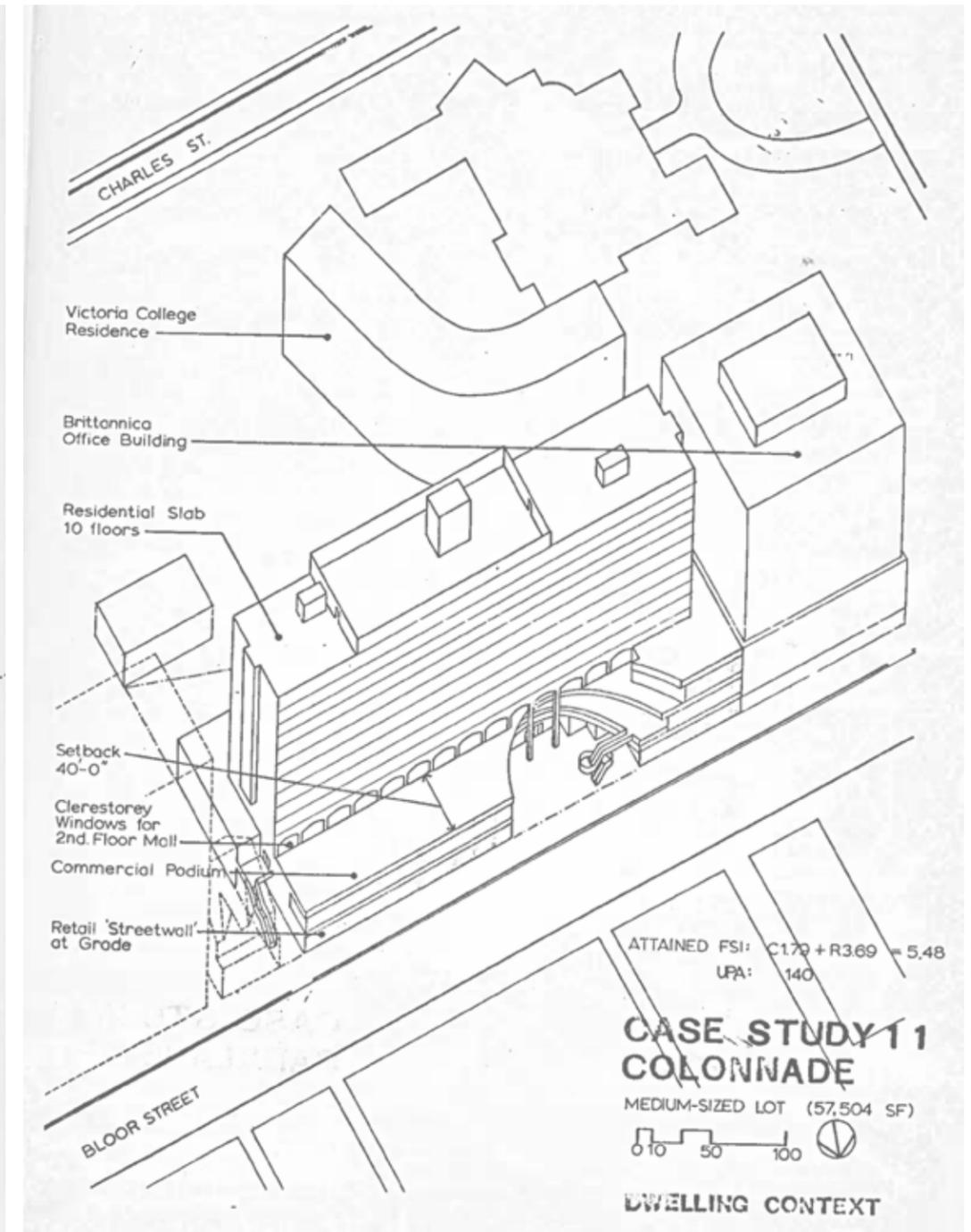
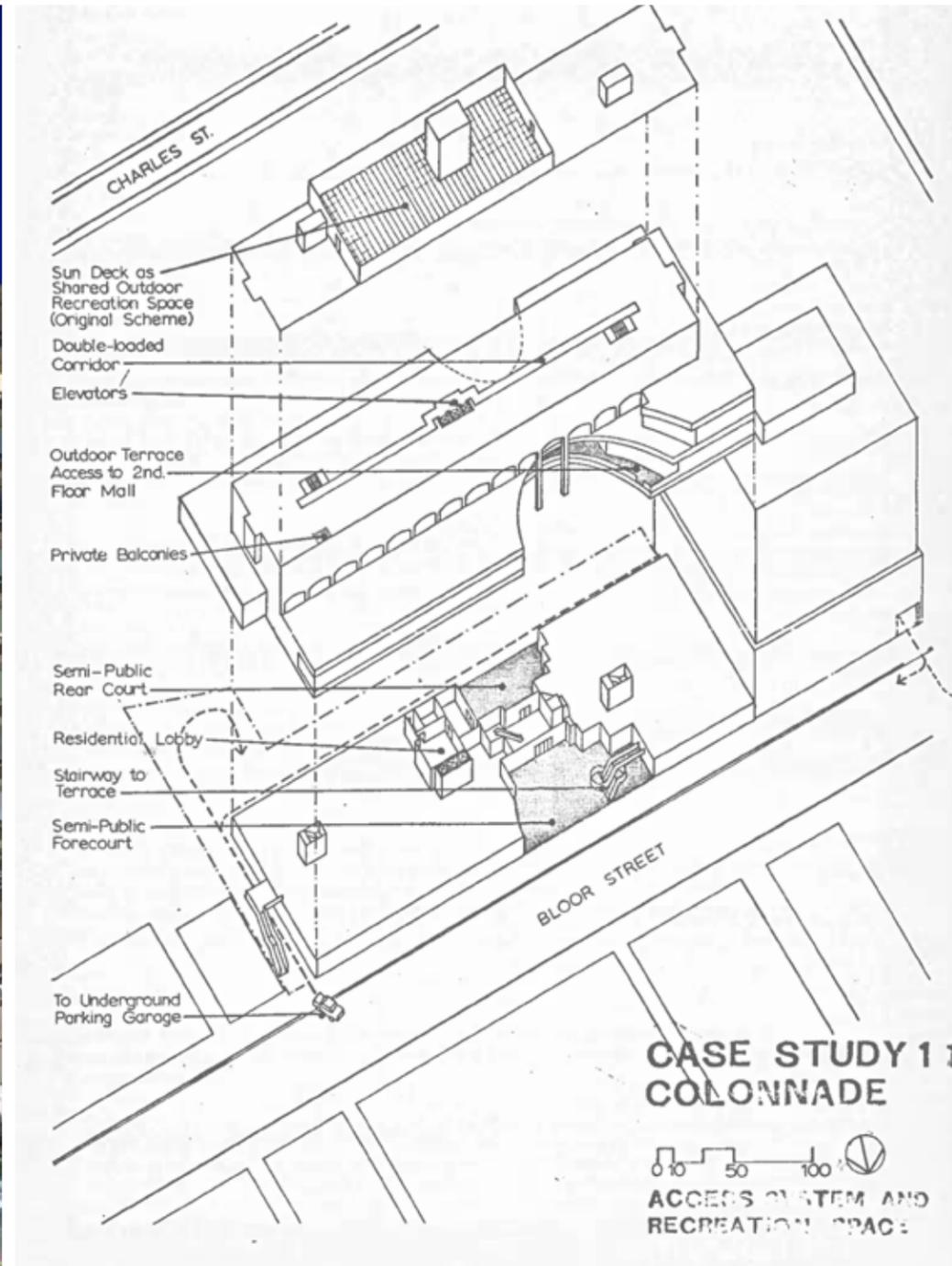


Avenue Road

2,850 metres from Queen's Park and Upper Canada College. Overlooked space bounded by two large institutional roundabouts has the potential to become a new linear park and stitch together public spaces.

Map of Avenue Rd. and University Ave. from Front St. to Eglinton Ave.

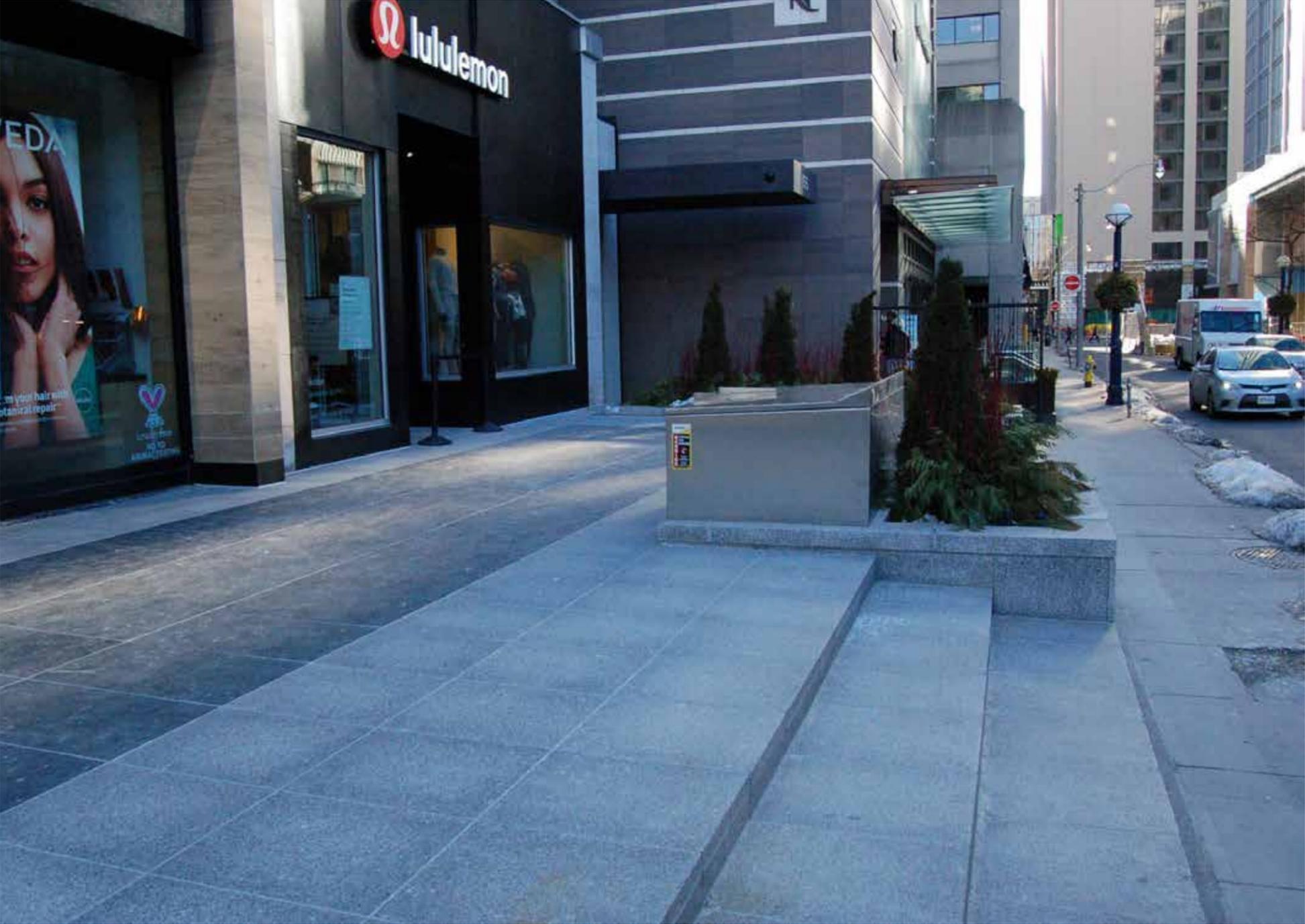
Privately Owned Public Spaces in Yorkville



Left:
The Colonade forecourt on Bloor St. West
Source: Walkscore.com

Center and Right:
Park Hyatt Colonade at Bloor St. W. Source: George
Baird, Built Form Analysis. 1975

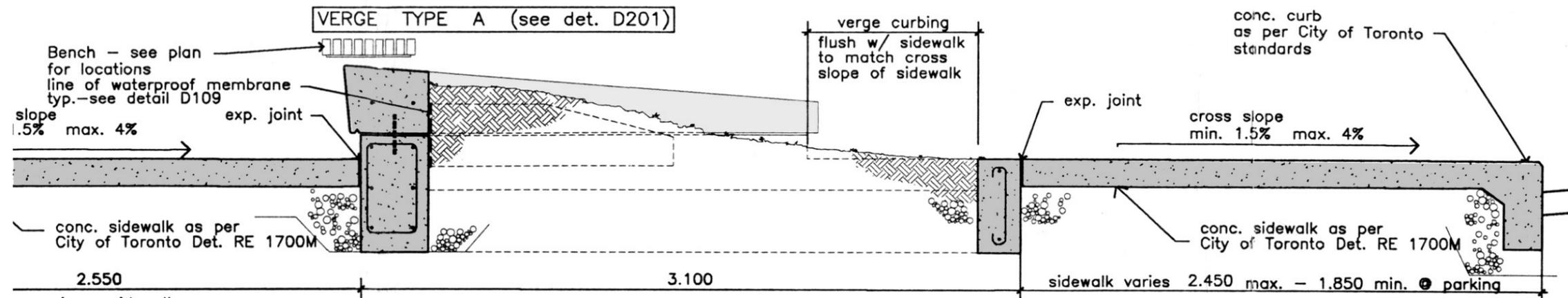
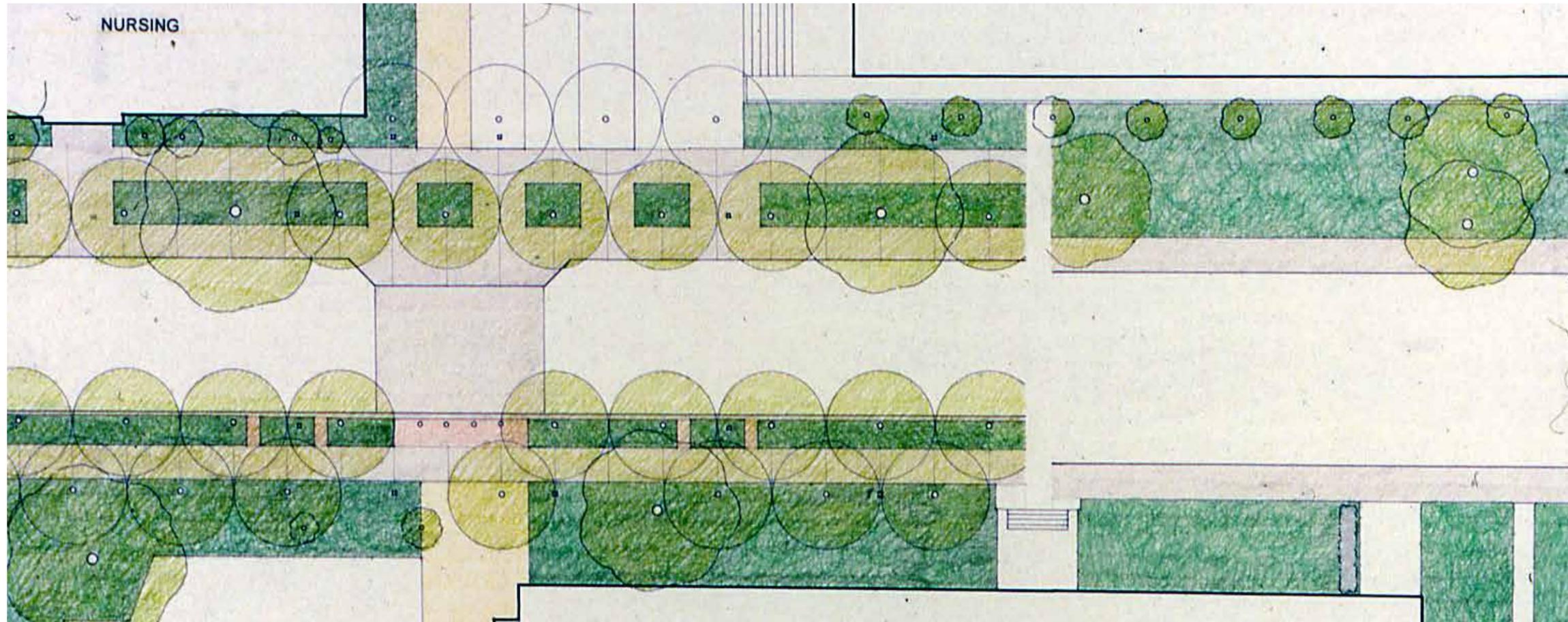
Reinventing the Avenue



Right:
Plinth outside Aveda, Cumberland St.
Source: Brown + Storey Architects

St. George Street Revitalization

Brown + Storey Architects, 1997



Reinventing the Avenue

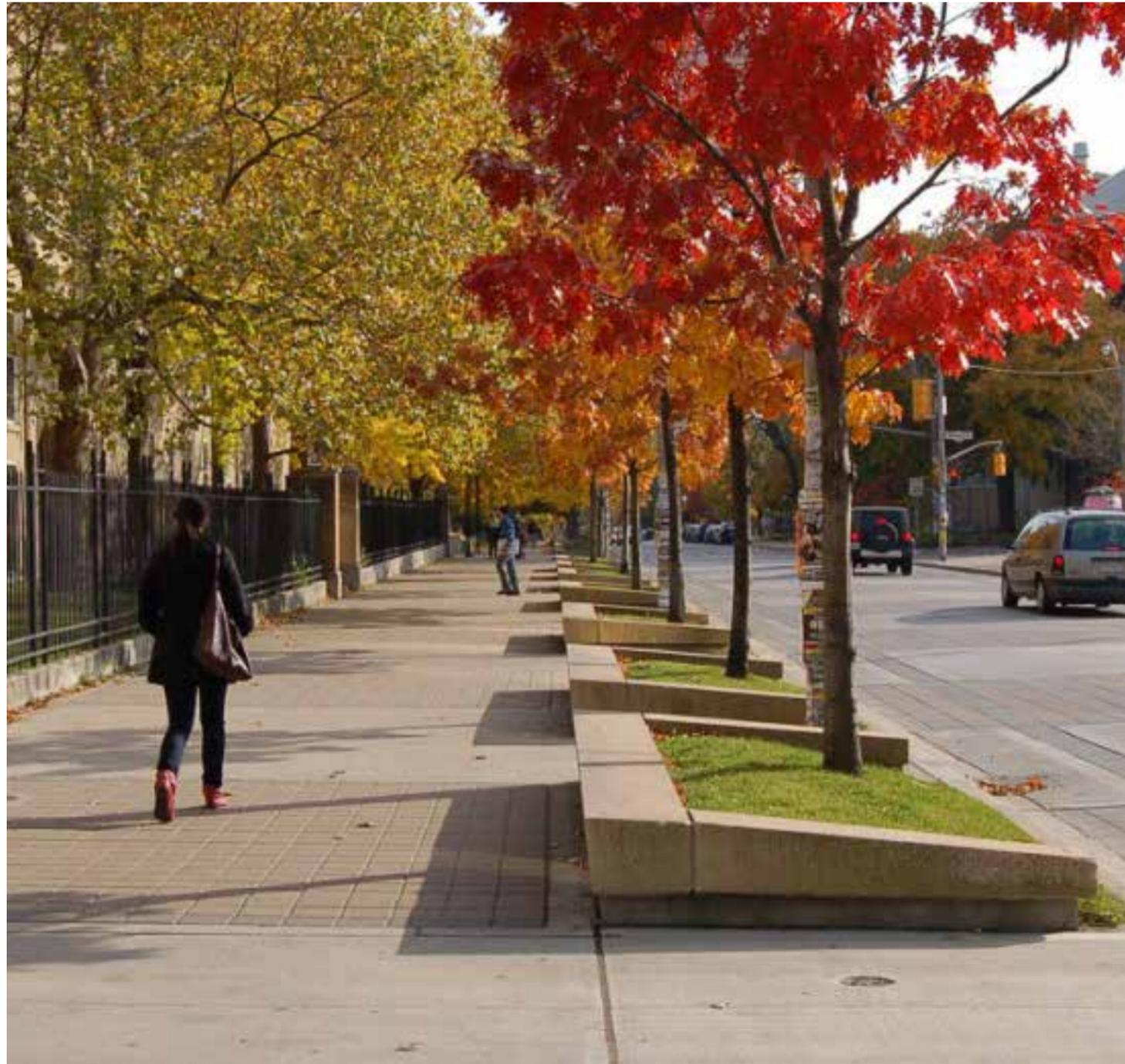


Image Source:
Brown + Storey Architects, 2006

Asymmetrical Avenue Road Plan

The impact of a reinvented Avenue and the corresponding expansion of the pedestrian realm will have a dramatic impact on the buildings and spaces which border it. The existing park fragments are isolated from one another by the Avenue and disconnected from the adjacent pedestrian activity. This new expansion of sidewalk width in concert with public space provides the opportunity for a leap in quality and materiality to re-engage park space.

The typical boundary between sidewalks and park space takes the form of a grass edge, with the more varied content of the park (large trees, manicured gardens, playgrounds, support facilities, splash pads, etc.) set back many meters from the park edge and sidewalk. A more responsive approach would create varying widths of the sidewalk along the park threshold, allowing it to dip in to and out of the park, thereby blurring the boundary between them.

This reciprocity acts like a filter of relations between the two realms of sidewalk and park, with the filter space a holding spaces with different qualities, scales, and materials. This approach can be instituted not just at the boundary between sidewalk and park, but around the entire perimeter of parks along Avenue Road which often circumstantially front onto laneways, left over spaces, and the sides of houses and shops. The structured verge acts as a strong unifying formal gesture which can link the currently disparate sidewalk and park conditions along Avenue Road.

The sloping sides of the Structured Verge direct water which gathers at “creases”, or junctures with the street or sidewalk, flowing parallel to the sidewalk along the crease to collect in the verge’s garden beds. The verge thereby utilizes rain fall rather than disposing of it in storm drains, reducing water consumption, energy use, labor, and costs for the maintenance and health of garden beds.

Tree cover along the verge can vary depending on its width of the sidewalk and position of adjacent buildings and bridges. On wider sections of road, the organization of trees along the verge can be multiplied, creating a double allee of trees arranged parallel to each other, utilizing the water flow over the sidewalks and into the catchment area, ensuring a systematic and even distribution of water to tree and garden beds.

580 New Trees

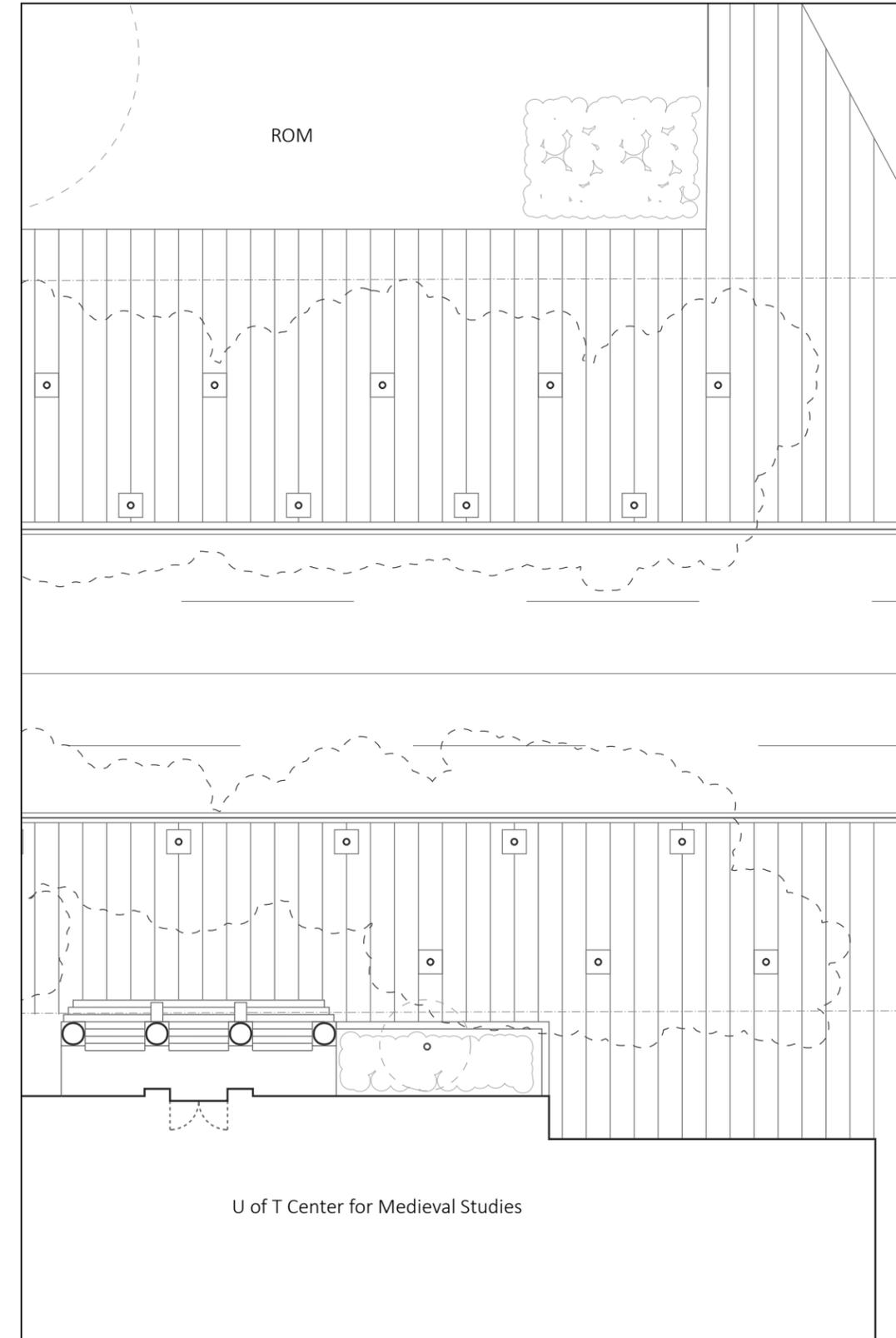
240% increase in sidewalk area (21,850m²)

5 meter average sidewalk width (West Side)

8 meter average sidewalk width (East Side)

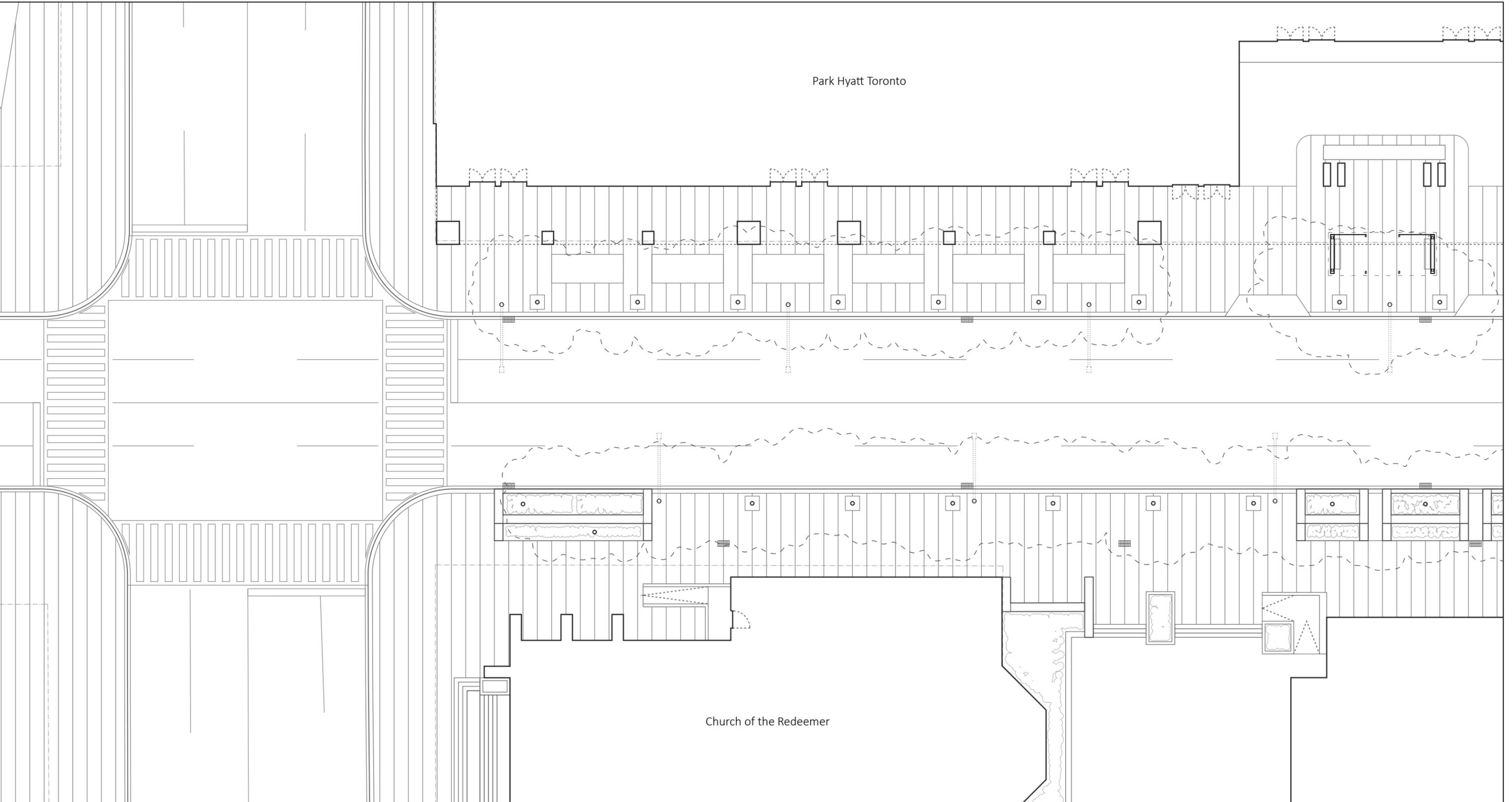
4 Narrowed Traffic Lanes

2,430m² of Softscape



Bloor St. W to Cumberland St.

Bloor St. W

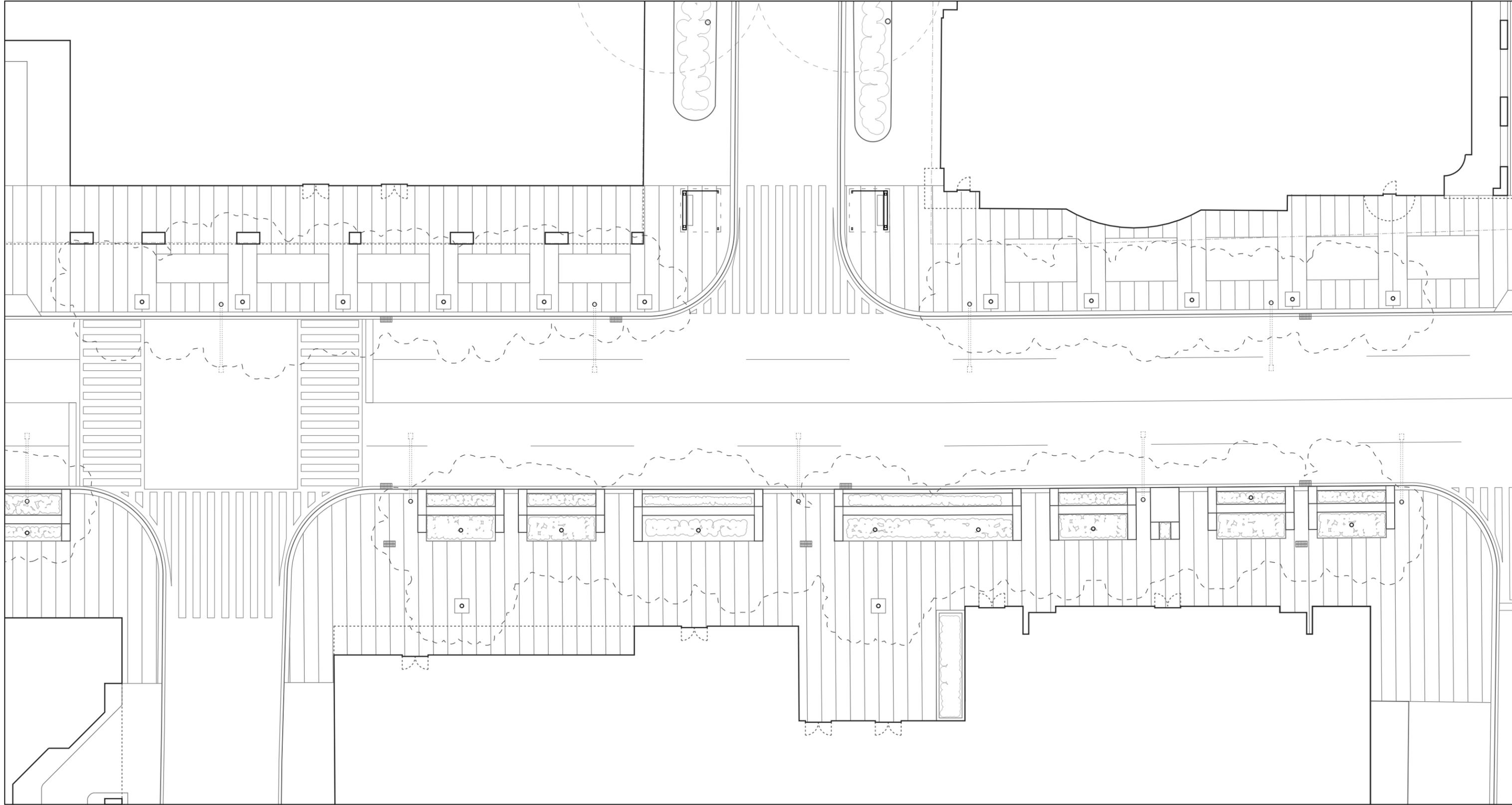


Bloor St. W

0 5m



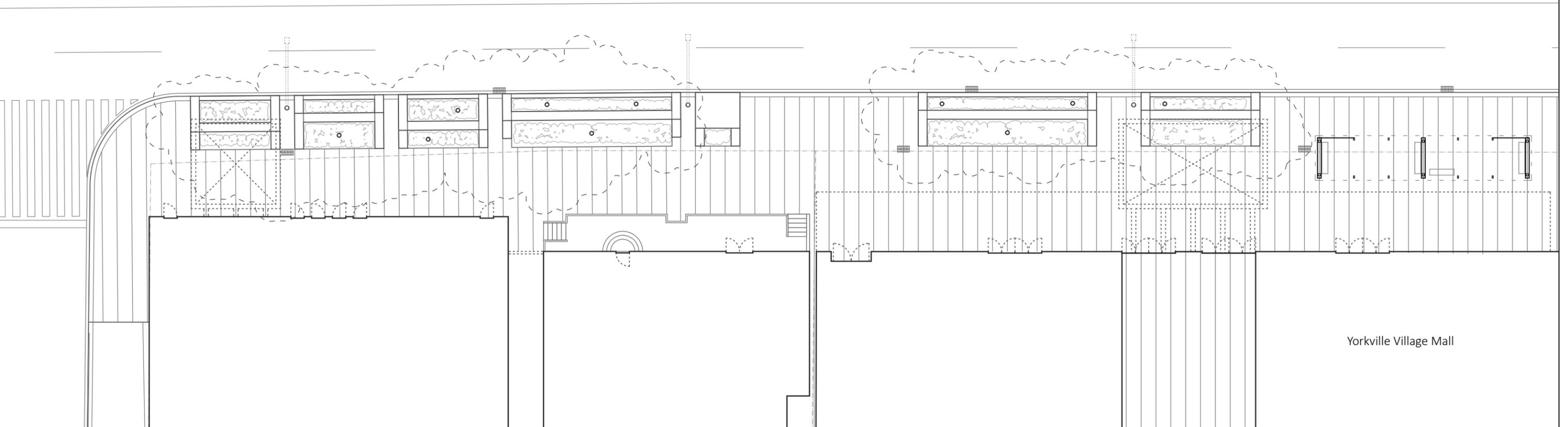
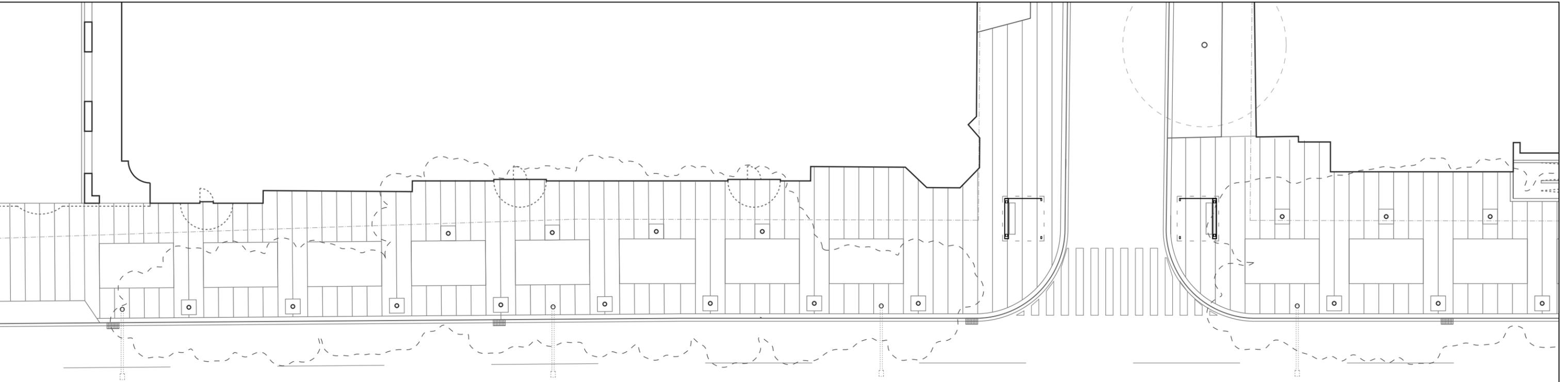
Prince Arthur Ave.



Cumberland St.

Cumberland St. to Lowther Ave.

Lowther Ave.



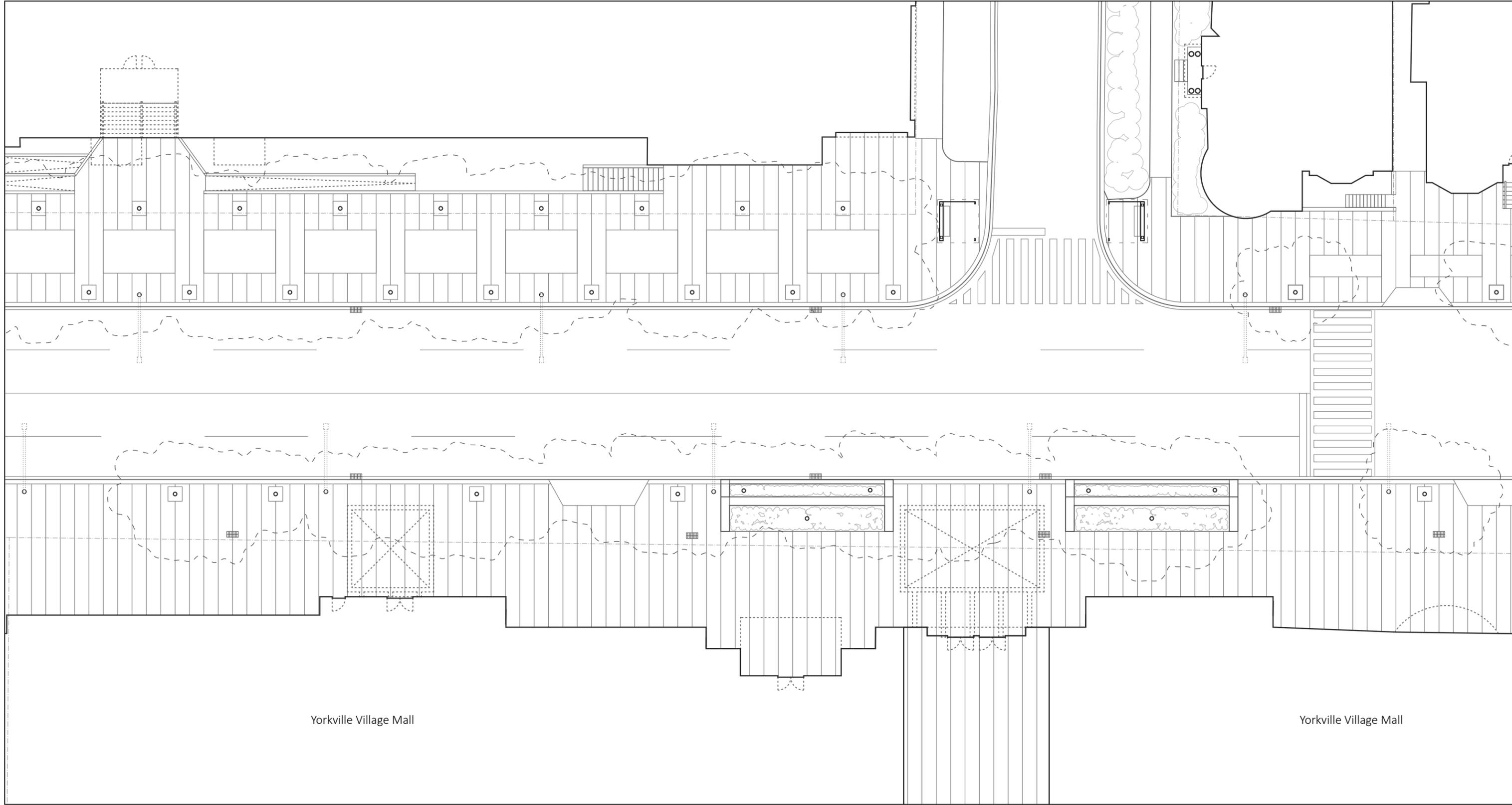
Yorkville Village Mall

Yorkville Ave.

0 5m



Elgin Ave.

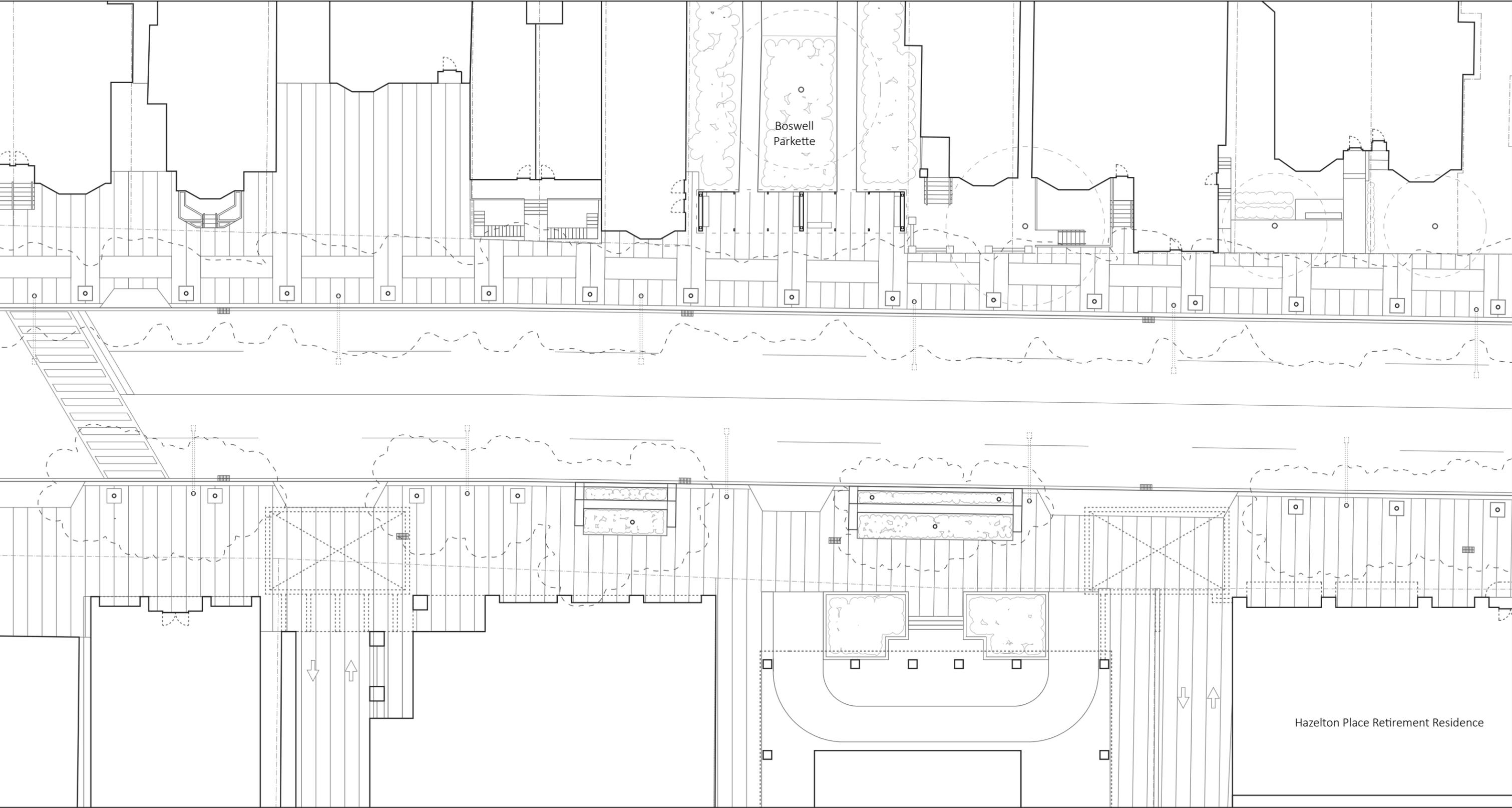


Yorkville Village Mall

Yorkville Village Mall

Lowther Ave. to Boswell Ave.

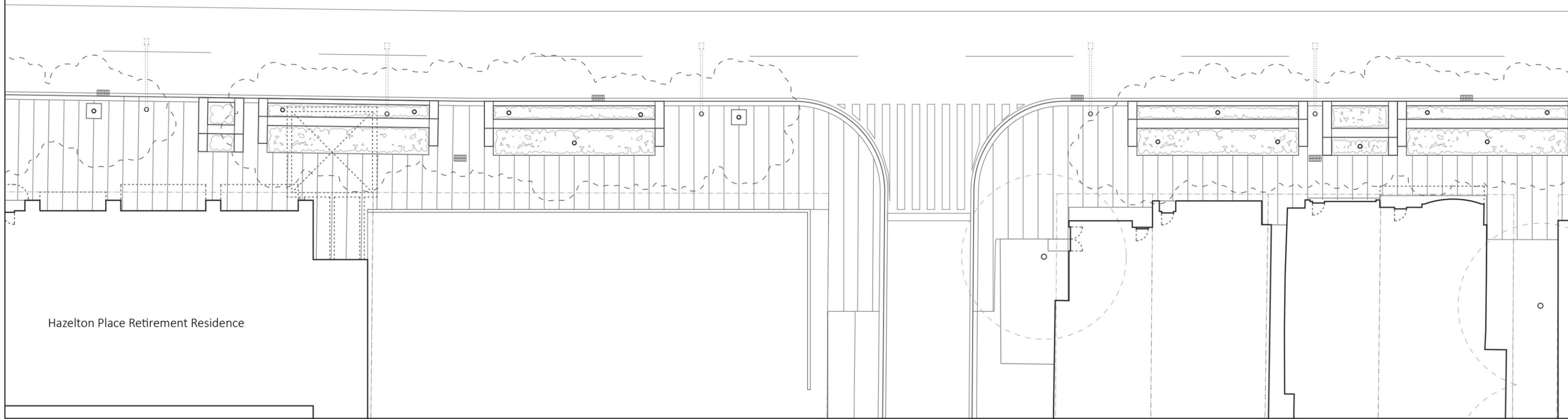
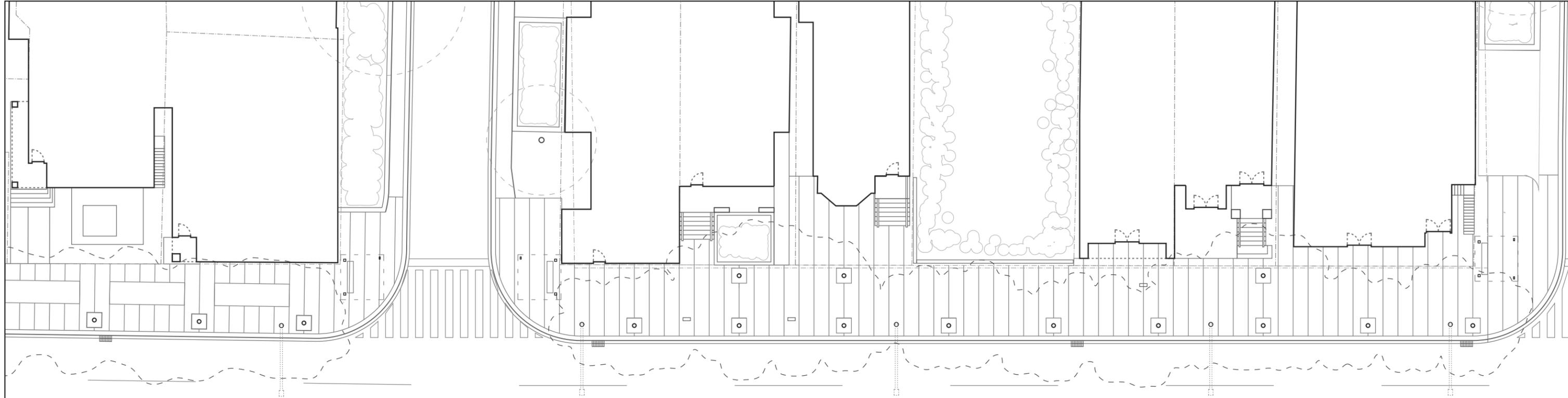
Boswell Ave.



Linear Park Plan
0 5m



Tranby Ave.



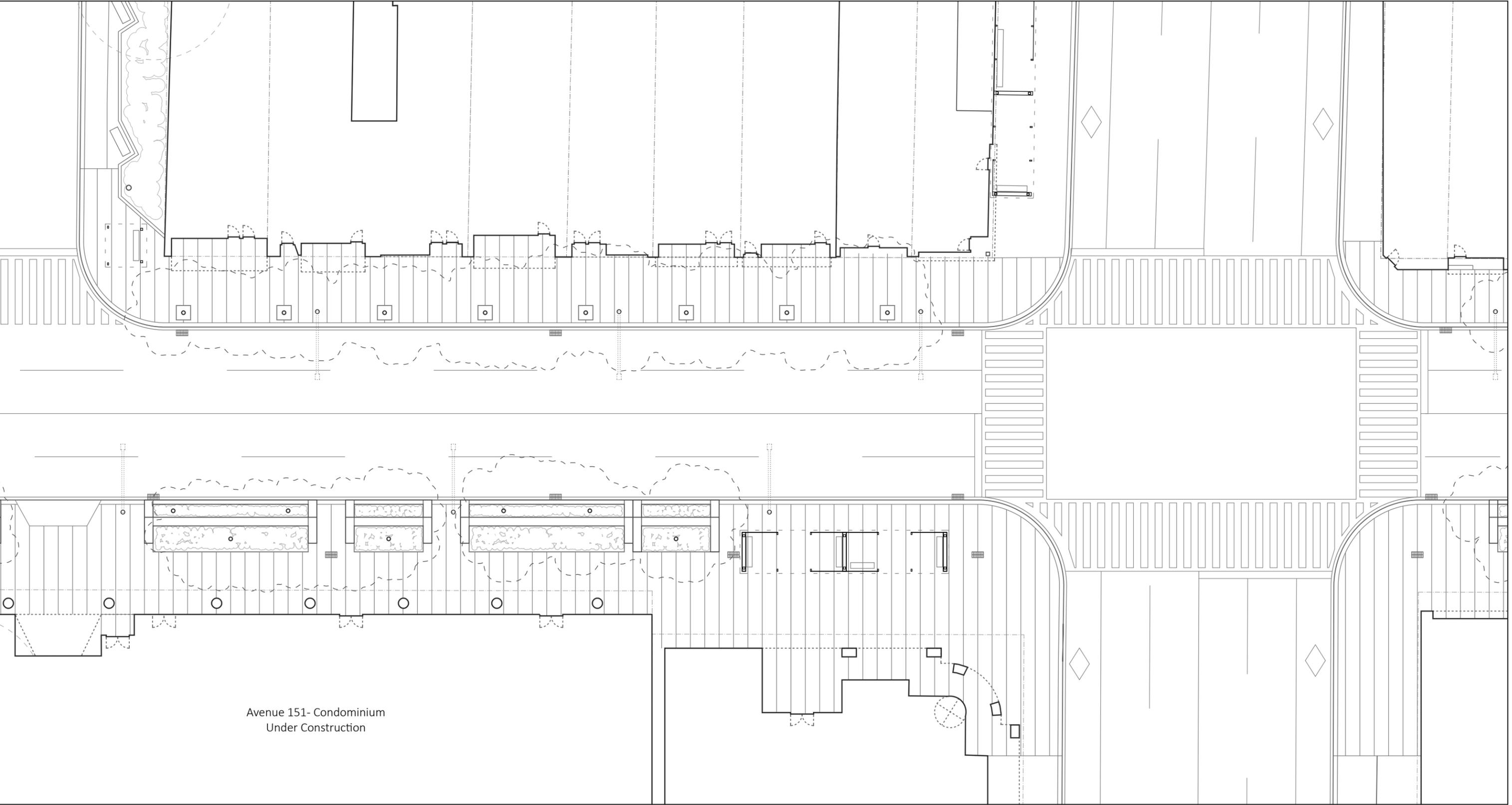
Hazelton Place Retirement Residence

Webster Ave.

Tranby Ave. to Davenport Rd.

Bernard Ave.

Davenport Rd.



Davenport Rd.

Linear Park Plan

0 5m



Tranby Ave. to Chicora Ave.

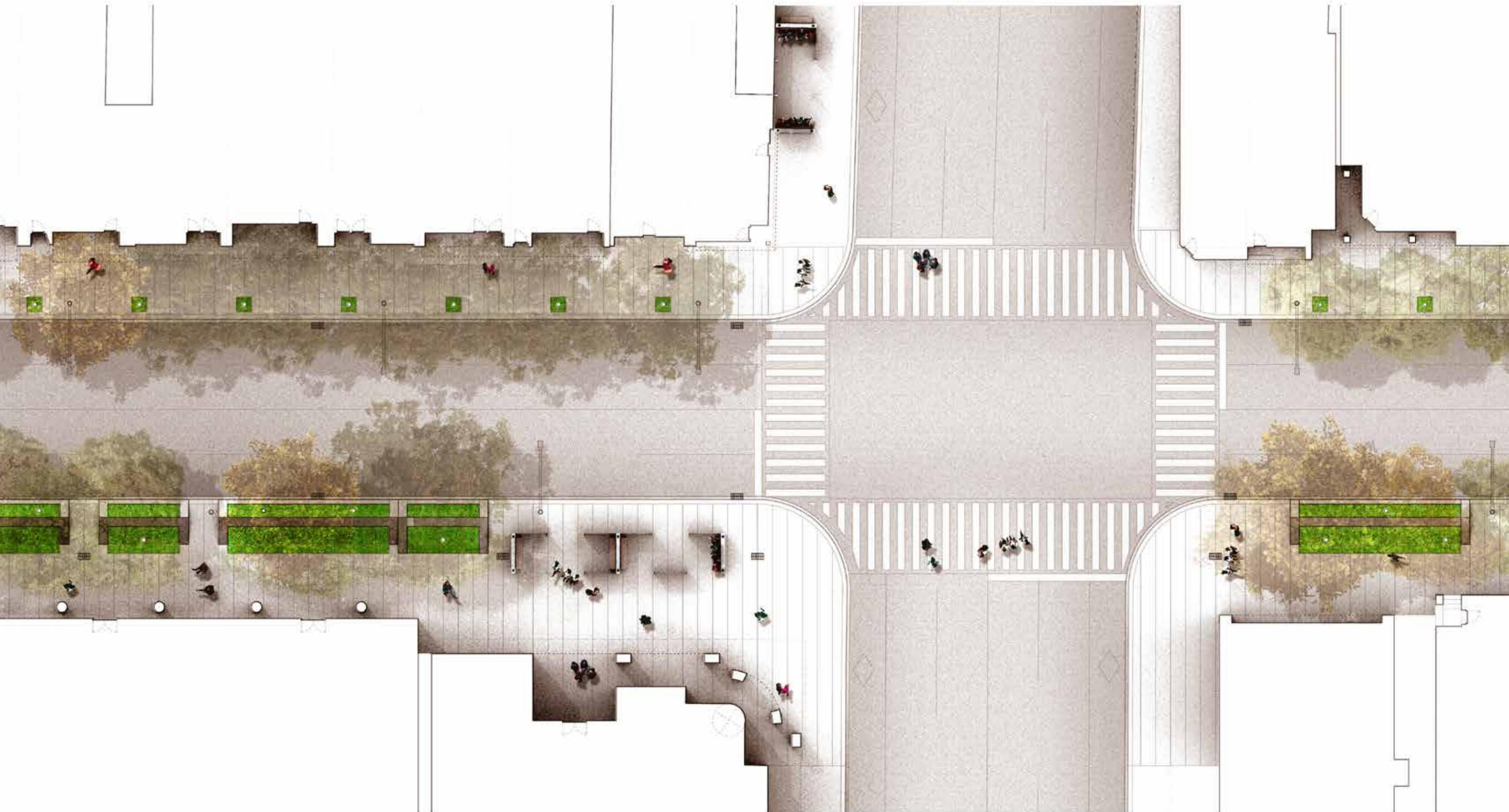
Tranby Ave.

Bernard Ave.



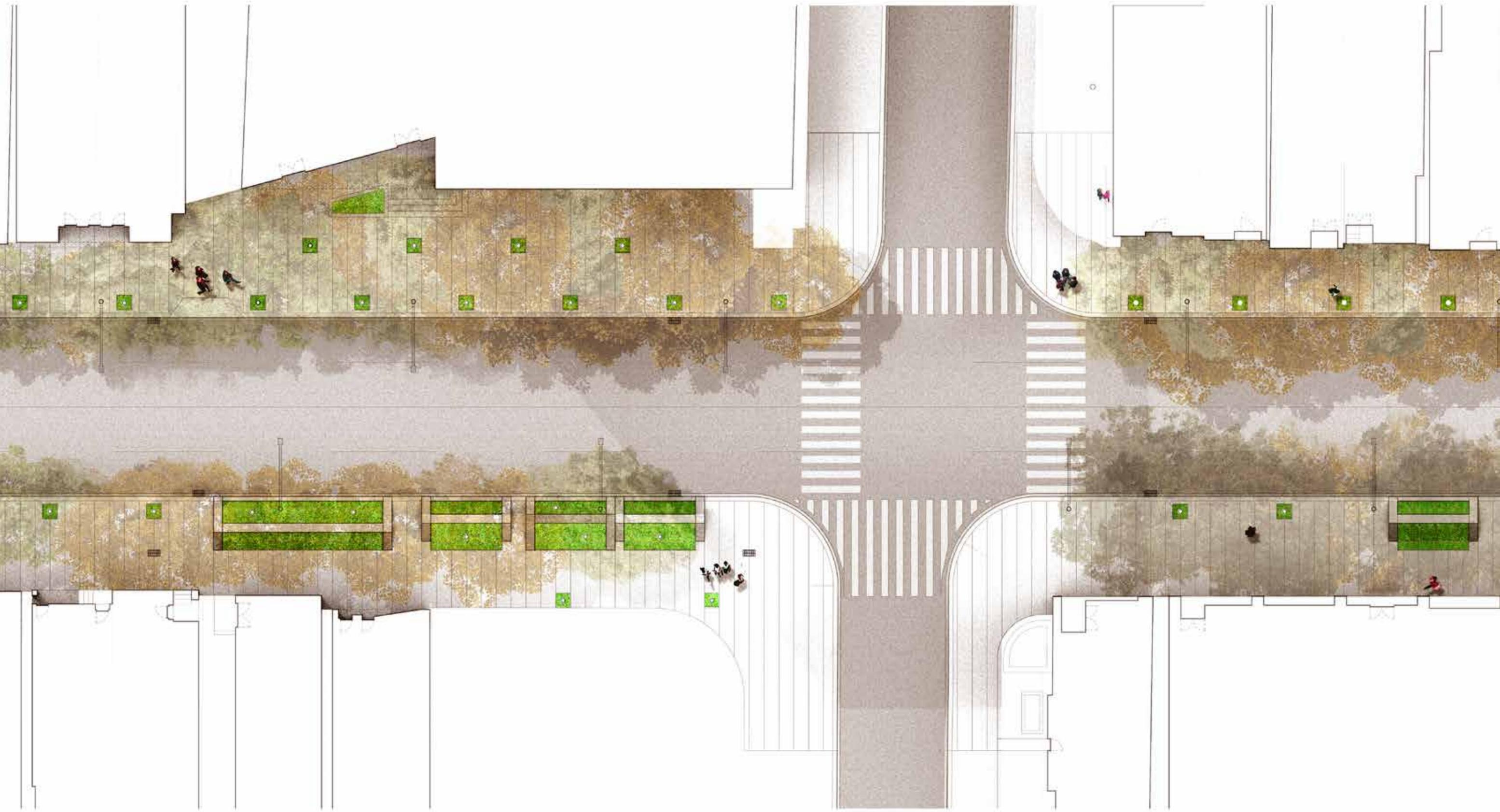
Webster Ave.

Davenport Rd.



Davenport Rd.

Pears Ave.



Pears Ave.

Chicora Ave.



Entrance to Ramsden Park

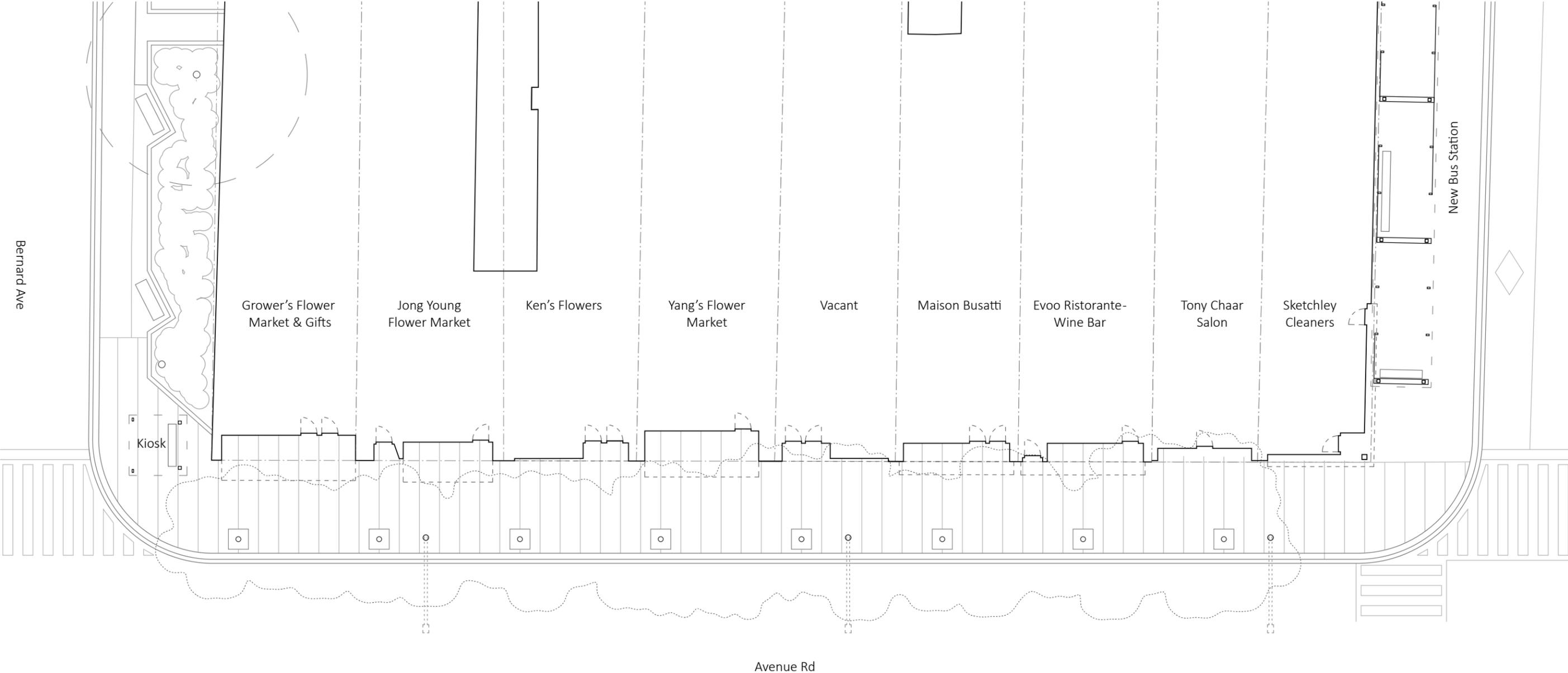
Street Commerce - The Flower Shop Block

The grouping of flower shops at the southwest corner of Avenue and Davenport is a unique space for reimagining the Avenue, as these shops with their intense and lively storefronts make the street animation of this short block more interesting, especially given Avenue's relative lack of street-level retail in comparison to other major North/South streets. Given the expansion of Avenue Road's sidewalks and the accompanying expansion of garden space in the form of the structure verges, the unique commercial block could contribute to the beautification of the verges and reconnected park spaces through the sale and/or donation of their products, allowing portions of the verge to become lively flowerbeds at certain times of the year. The placement of flowers in the verges could also act as advertising for the various flower shops.



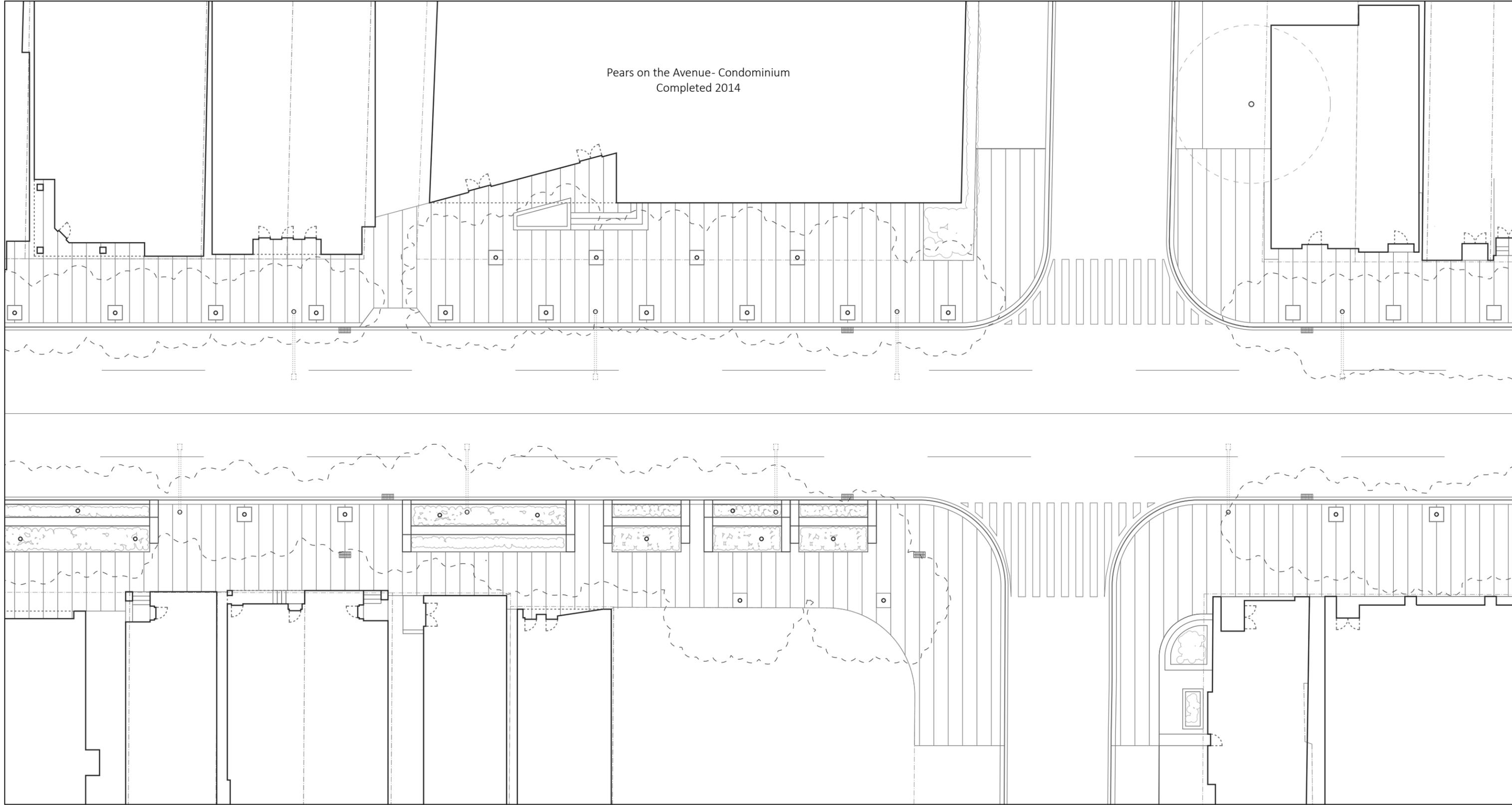
Proposed Plan and Elevation of the Flower Shop Block at Avenue and Davenport, showing the extended sidewalks

Reinventing the Avenue



Pears Ave.

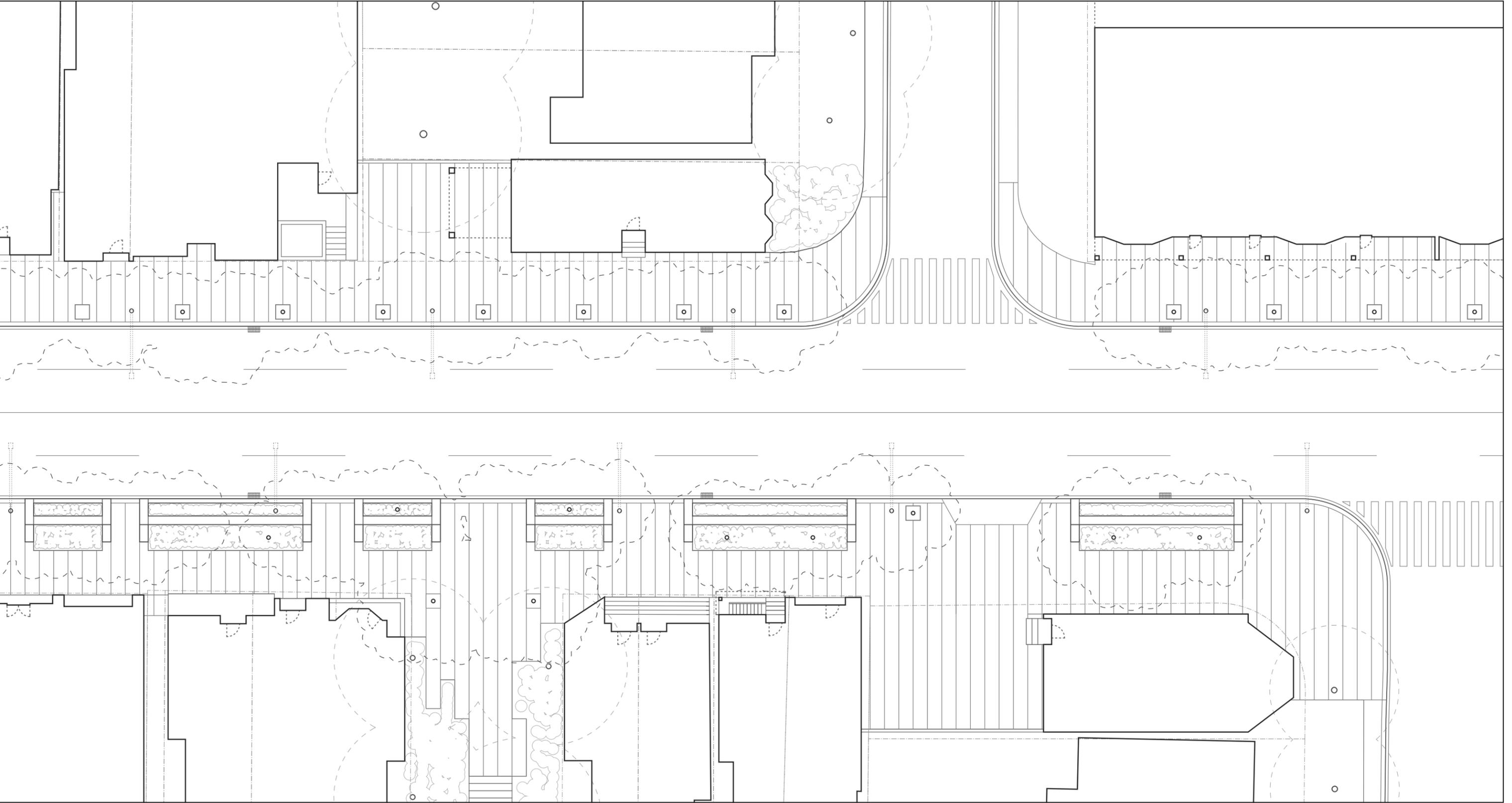
Pears on the Avenue- Condominium
Completed 2014



Pears Ave.

Davenport Rd. to Roxborough St. W

Chicora Ave.



Ramsden Park Entrance

Roxborough St. W

Linear Park Plan
0 5m



Ramsden Park

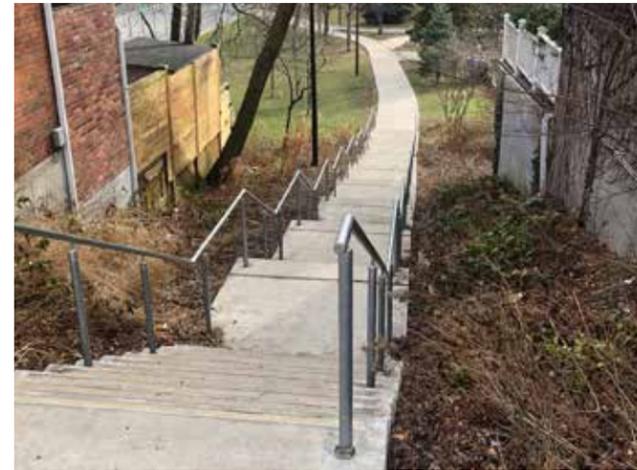
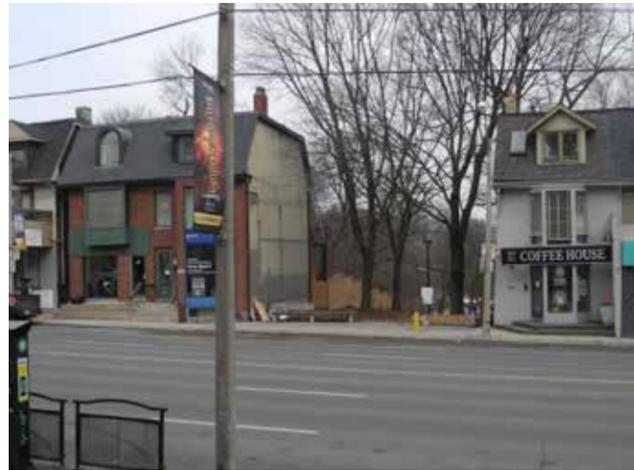
Connecting the Avenue to Yonge St. and the Don Valley

The existing buildings backing onto Ramsden Park hide a large metropolitan park. The replacement of these buildings would provide a new frontage for the park to match its frontage onto Yonge Street, as well as establishing a new relationship to discontinuous streets like Pears Avenue. New structures reaching south towards Davenport would re-establish a strong urban presence to Avenue Road and Davenport as a gateway site of significance to the entire Avenue.

The expansion of the public realm on the Avenue can have a large impact on improved paths for pedestrian movement from Yonge Street, and for the Avenue's improved connection to the wider city. Currently connected by a narrow gap north of Pears Avenue, the large park stretches between Avenue Road and Yonge Street, sitting across from the Rosedale Subway Station and Aylmer Avenue which winds down the Rosedale Ravine to the Don Valley and the lakeshore.

The new linear park on Avenue Road can have both an impact on pedestrian life and the course of future developments in the area. The many new condominiums which are being built and will be built in the future can respond to the new linear park by creating courtyards and forecourts which orient towards the Avenue. These extensions of the widened Avenue sidewalk can be created not only as part of individual developments, but can be used to improve circulation within Ramsden Park.

Up to this point into the evolution of the Avenue and its possible reinvention, this new identity generated by a public space into Ramsden Park would be a natural extension and ambition for the entire community and surrounding neighbourhoods.



1 Existing Entrance to Ramsden Park from Avenue Rd

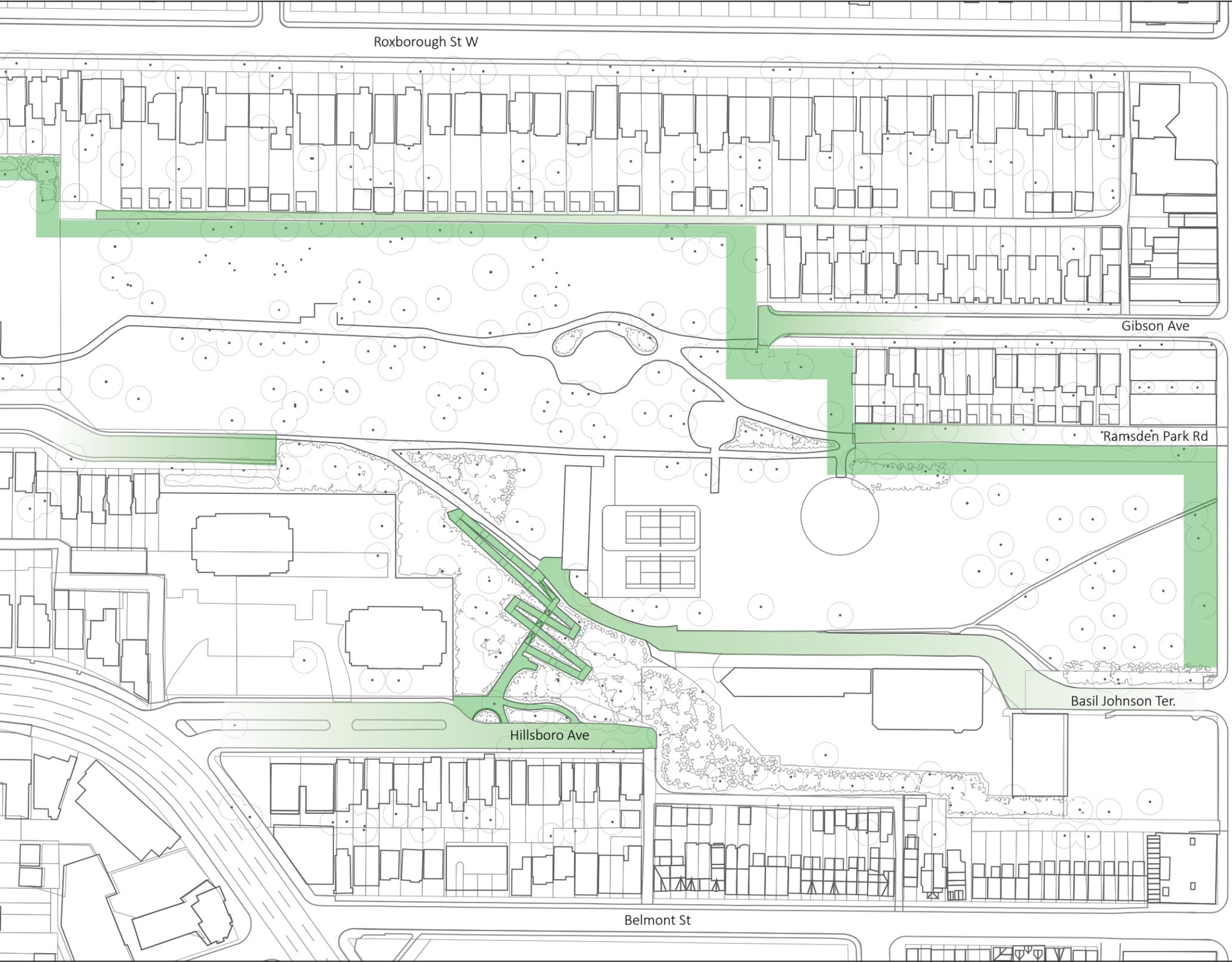
2 Existing Entrance to Ramsden Park from Roxborough St

The Linear Park as a Guide for Intensification

The proposed state of Avenue Road, highlighting the pathways and roads within Ramsden Park. Scale 1:1500 @ 11x17.



Reinventing the Avenue



Davenport Rd

Yonge St

Yonge Subway Line

Aylmer Av

0 30m



Dupont St.

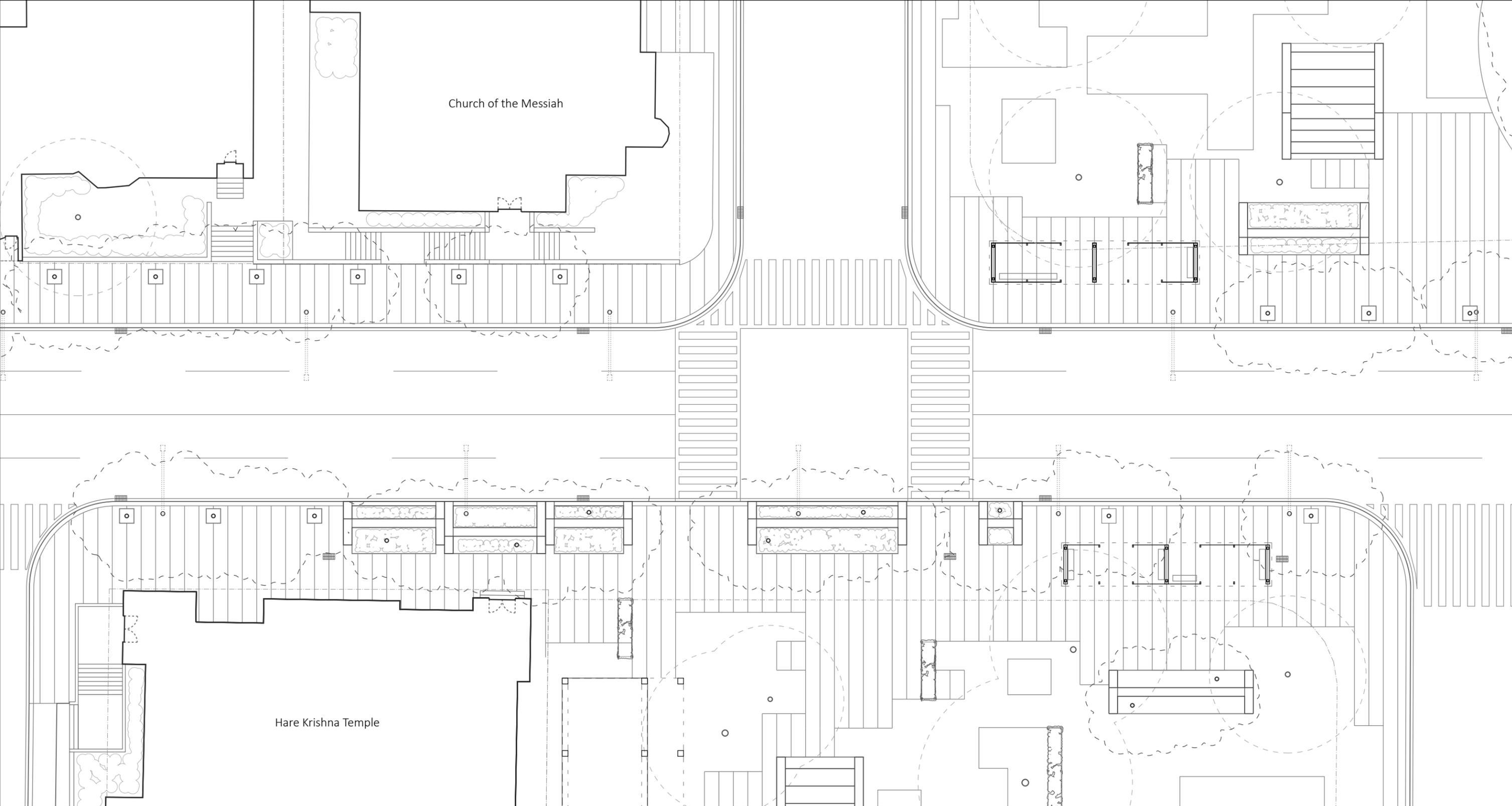
Sgt. Ryan Russel Parkette

Church of the Messiah

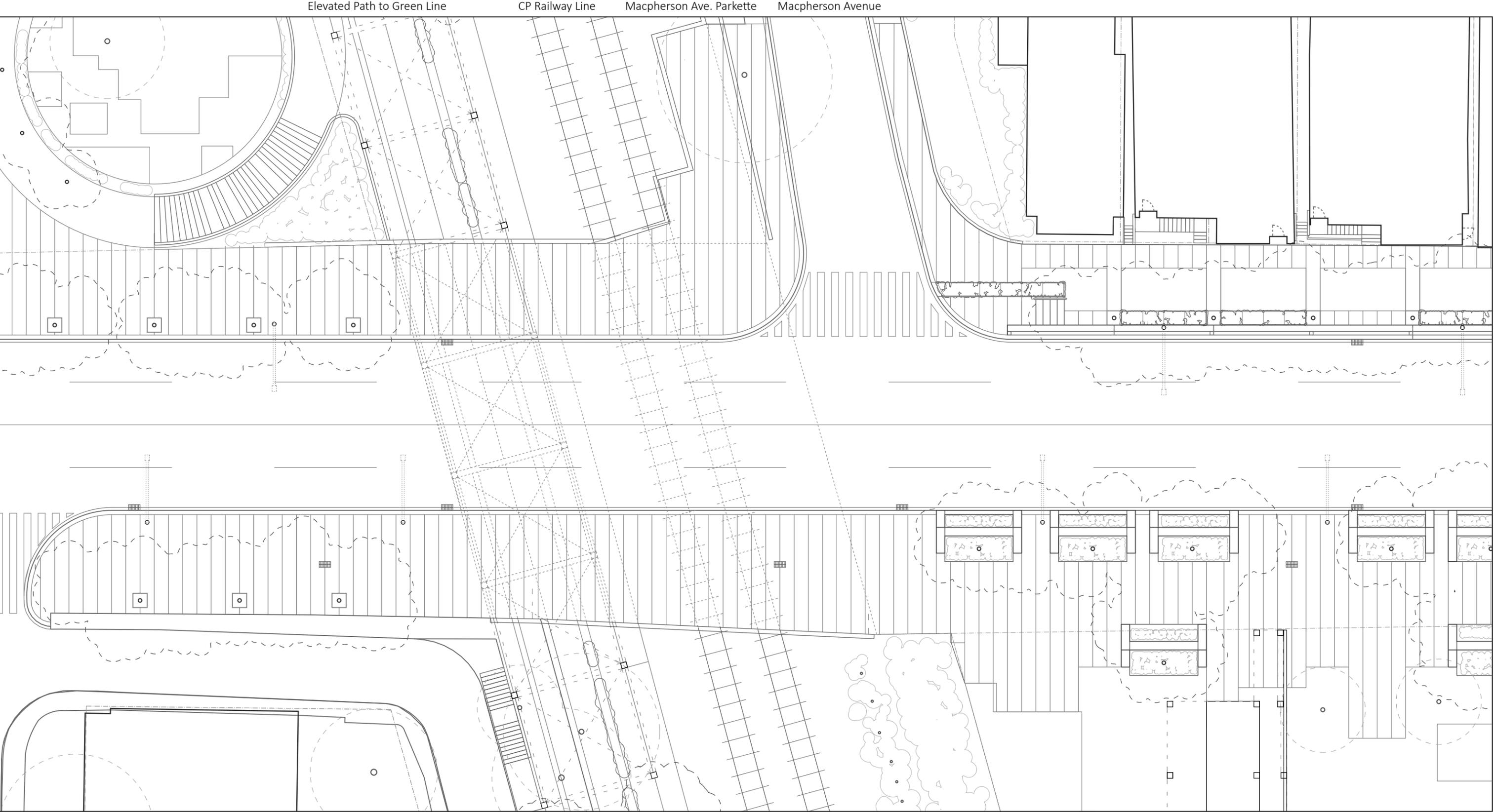
Hare Krishna Temple

Jay Macpherson Green

Macpherson Avenue



Roxborough St. W to Macpherson Ave.



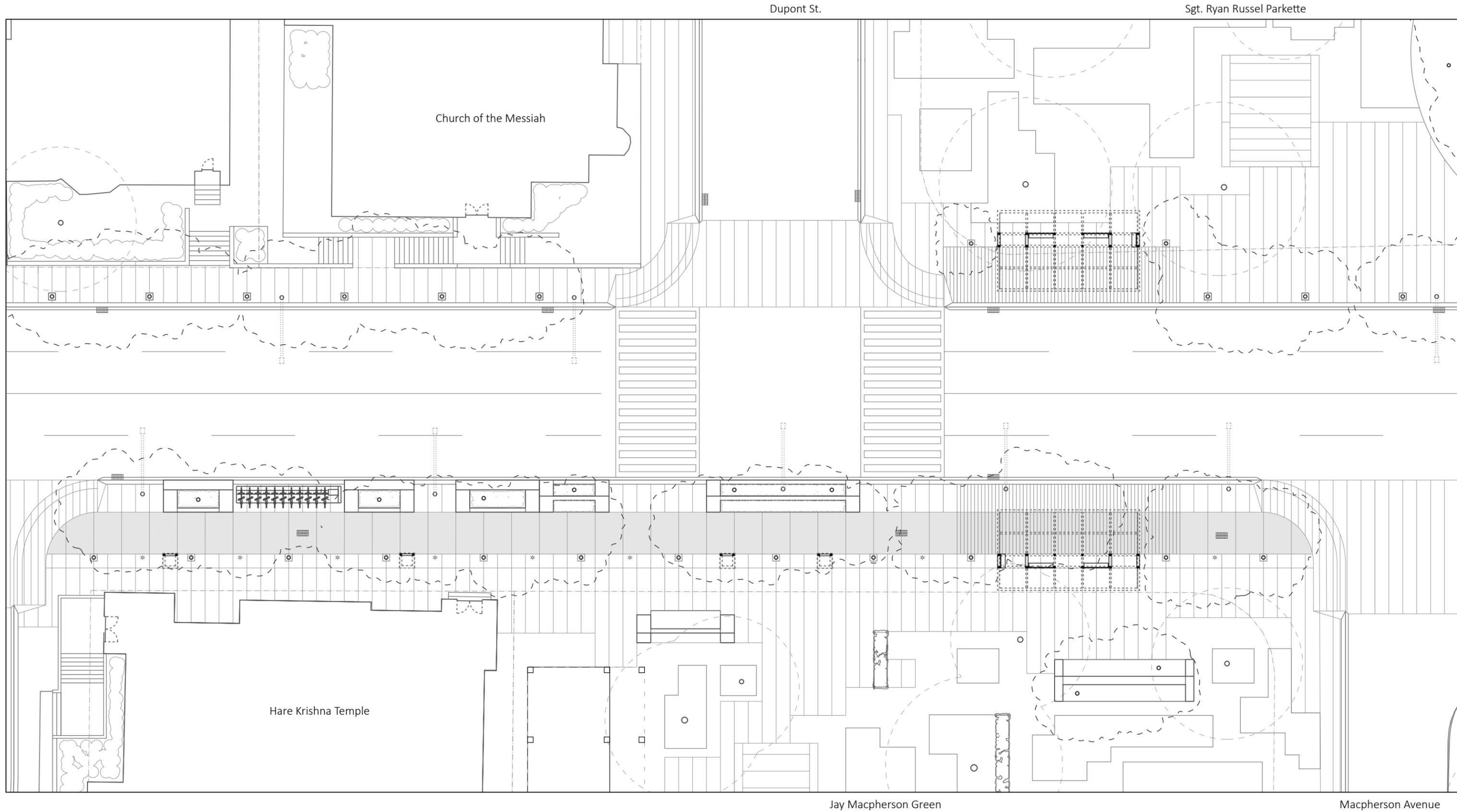
Marlborough Pl.

Elevated Path

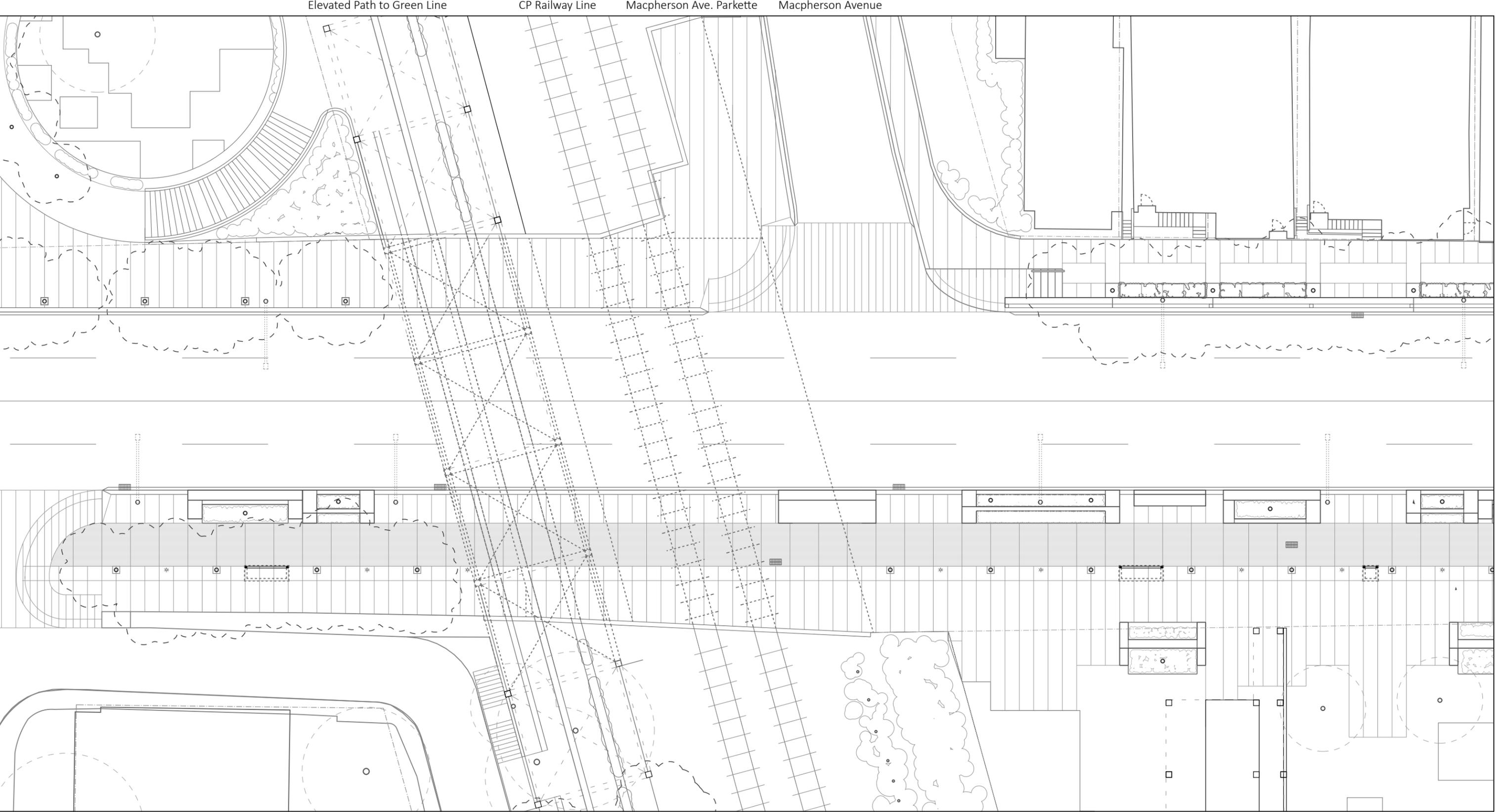
CP Railway Line

Robertson Davies Park

Bike Lane Design Option



Roxborough St. W to Macpherson Ave.



Elevated Path to Green Line

CP Railway Line

Macpherson Ave. Parkette

Macpherson Avenue

Marlborough Pl.

Elevated Path

CP Railway Line

Robertson Davies Park

Park Networks

Reconnecting fragmented public spaces along the Avenue

The current condition of parks and institutions that mark the crossroads of Dupont Avenue and the elevated beltway (adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Rail Line), exist as separate and disjointed fragments despite their proximity to one another. Avenue Road, with its six lanes of fast traffic and minimal sidewalk space further isolate this collection of public spaces. These four small parks exist more as left over space, without any particular attention to their design, with open laneways along their edges and a bisected by the CP Rail line.

The long-term effects of this separation have meant that the isolated parks have a hostile address to the traffic and passersby on Avenue Road. The park's immunizing response is to avoid any program on their exterior edges and frontages, instead front onto Avenue and other streets with bare patches of grass. This retreat explains the current functions and furniture placement which are oriented towards a protected park interior, with the parks indicating a reluctance to utilize their boundary spaces. Compounding this physical separation of users and spaces, the biopolitical sense of this forced retreat from the avenue has a social / environmental impact which is quite intentionally aimed against the pedestrian park user dominated by the car that separates the community. This retreat of the parks from their "outside" in favour of what remains inside further diminishes any available qualities to the meager quantity of available spaces, in what is repeated as a condition of avoidance between the street and the park, rendering them inoperative and used only for circulation.

The expansion of sidewalk space along the Avenue provides an opportunity to connect these fragmented and underused park spaces. The structured verges and trees which line the new Avenue will insulate the park interior from car traffic, along with extending the green spaces of the park to the sidewalk edge. Three parks - Robertson Davies Park, Sgt. Ryan Russel Parkette, and Jay Macpherson Green - are redesigned with a matrix pattern of different pavements and gardens which interpenetrate with the sidewalk surface. A small loggia structure is inserted around the perimeter of each park, adding public program and sheltered spaces to the underused periphery of the parks. The loggia structure at Sgt. Ryan Russel Parkette connects to a new pedestrian path running along the CP Railway Corridor towards Davenport Rd and the Green Line to the west. Across the rail corridor to the north, the loggia structure at Robertson Davies Park fits into the slope leading to the railway, creating a courtyard space and framing the park boundaries in response to the recently completed condominium to the north.



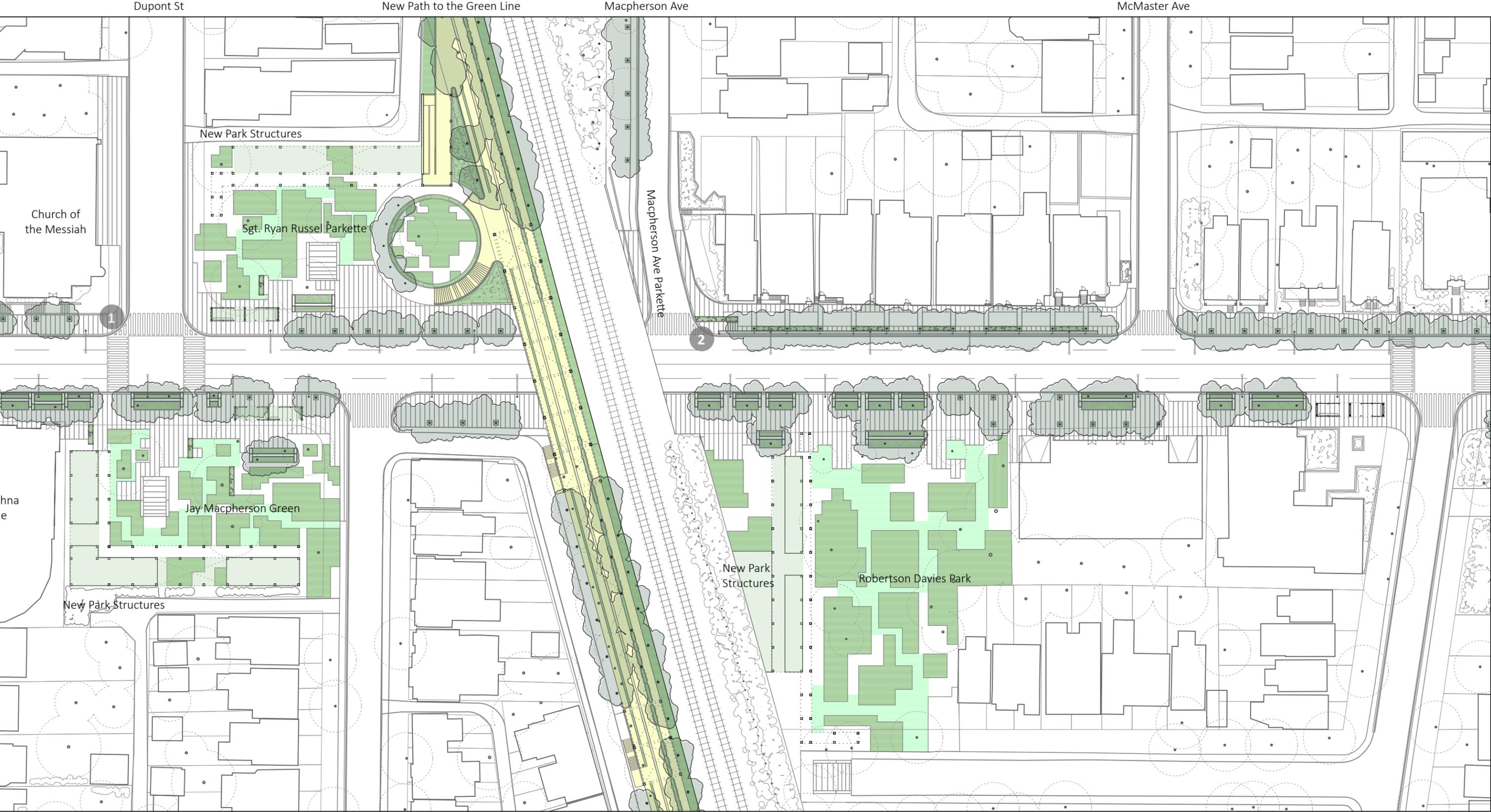
1 View northeast from Avenue and Dupont, showing the Avenue fragmenting the park spaces

2 View east to Robertson Davies Park, with its retaining wall constraining pedestrian movement

Proposed Condition of Avenue Road around its Dupont Intersection, with improved connections to the five adjacent parks. Scale 1:750@ 11x17.



Reinventing the Avenue



Dupont St

New Path to the Green Line

Macpherson Ave

McMaster Ave

New Park Structures

Sgt. Ryan Russel Parkette

Macpherson Ave Parkette

Church of the Messiah

Jay Macpherson Green

New Park Structures

Robertson Davies Park

New Park Structures

Macpherson Ave

Marlborough Pl

CP Railway Corridor

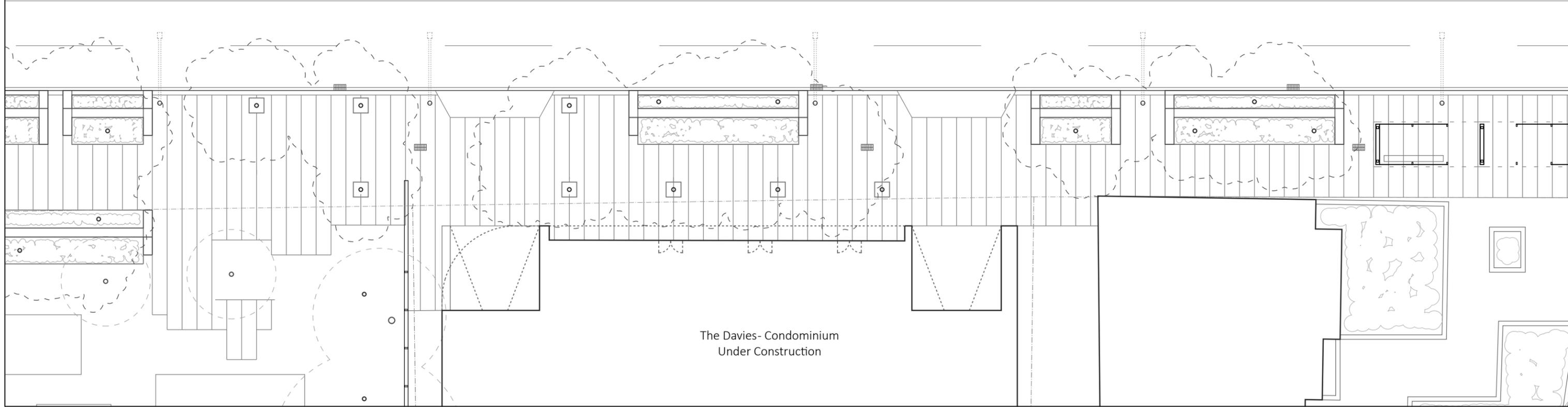
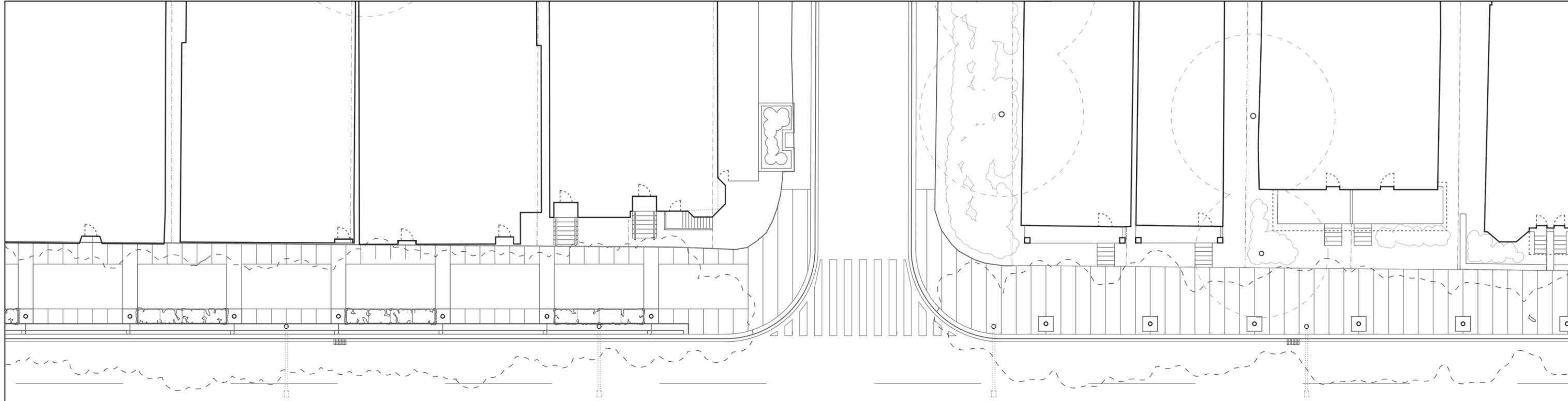
Sidney Ave

Cottingham St

0 30m



McMaster Ave

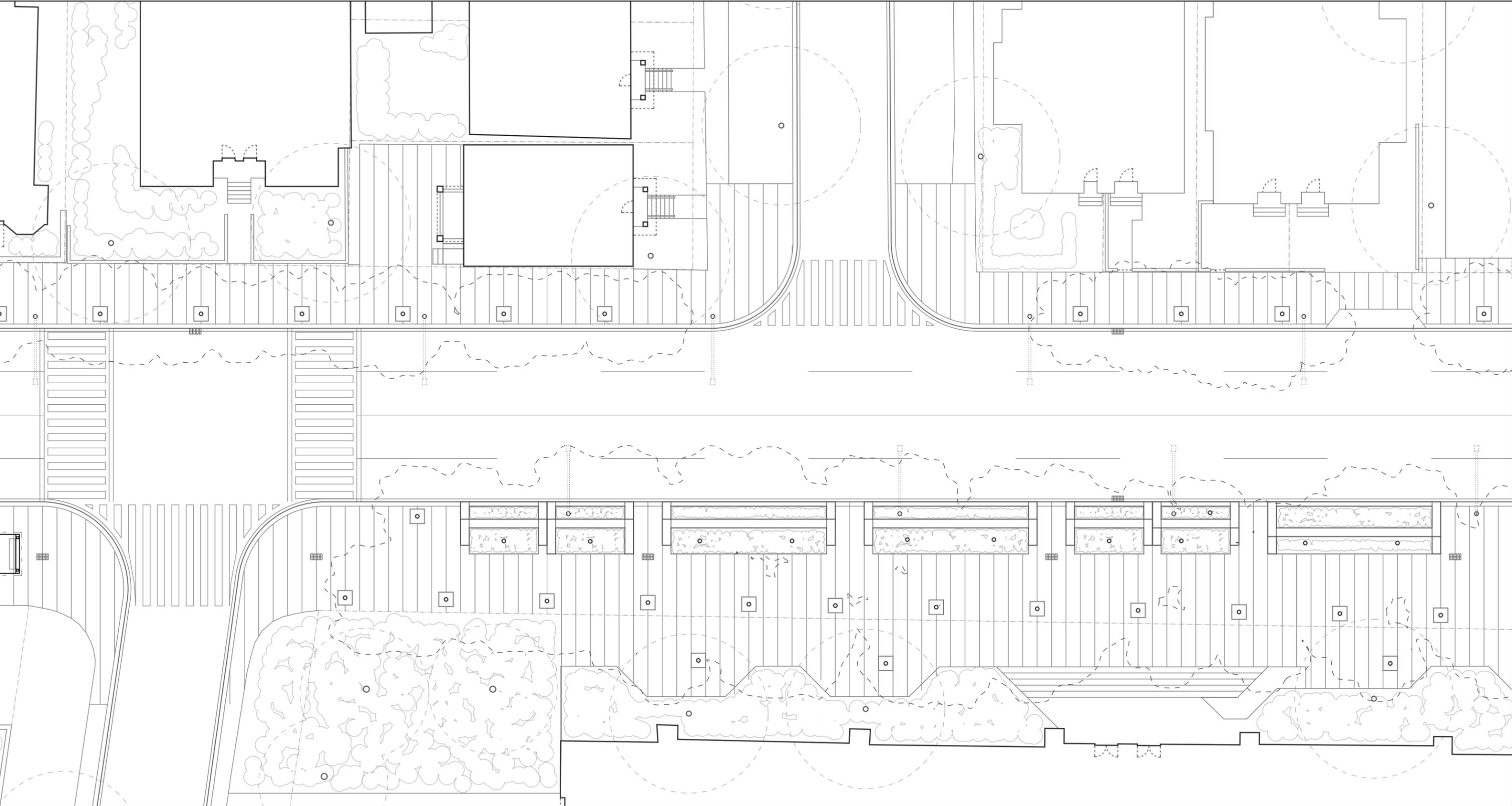


The Davies- Condominium
Under Construction

Robertson Davies Park

Macpherson Ave. to Cottingham St.

Cottingham St.

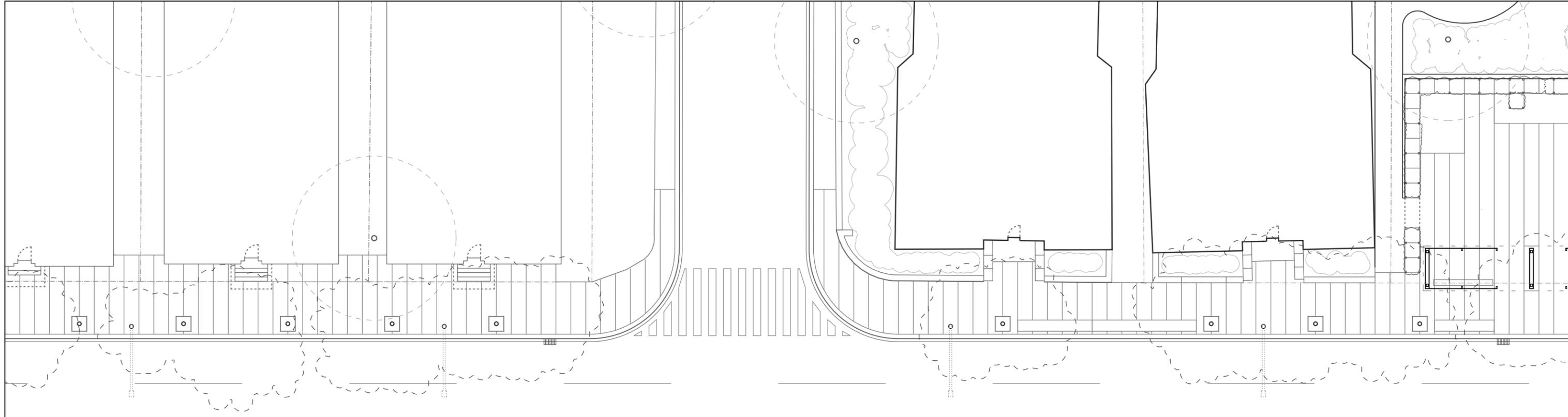


Cottingham St.

Linear Park Plan
0 5m



Poplar Plains Cr.



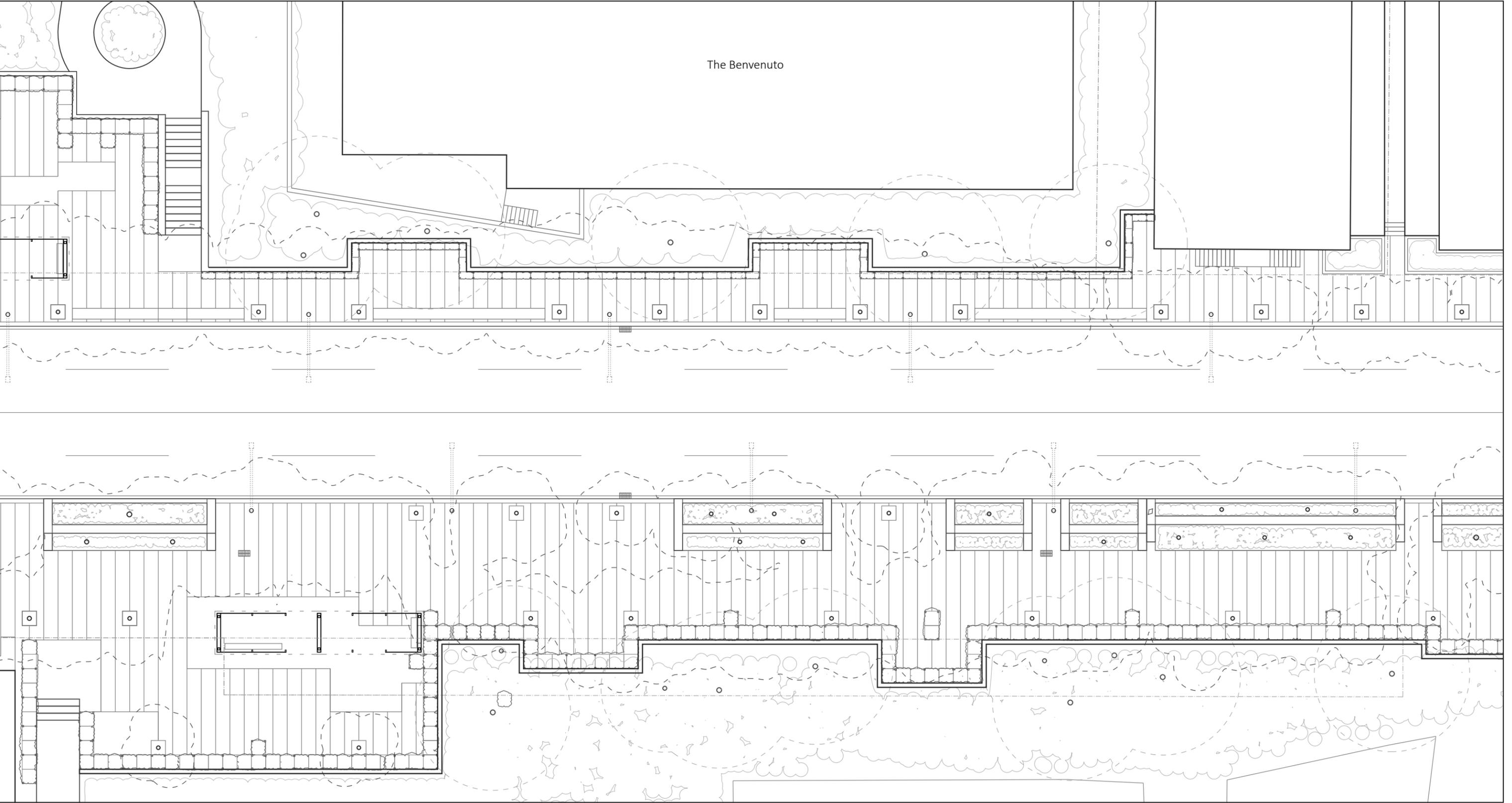
Oaklands Ave.

Charbonnel Townhomes
Under Construction

Oaklands Ave. to De La Salle College

Pathway to Benvenuto Pl.

The Benvenuto



Pathway to De La Salle College Field and Campus

De La Salle College

Linear Park Plan
0 5m



De La Salle College

Creating public spaces along the escarpment

The walled canyon-like condition that runs along the frontage of De La Salle College, along with its narrow side-walks and raised passages are possibly the worst condition along the entire Avenue between Bloor and St. Clair. This hostile space pushes pedestrians between the wide Avenue and high retaining walls, with conditions further worsened by the high speeds of vehicles travelling up and down the hill.

This steep and hostile section of Avenue Road travels along a large escarpment, which once formed the shore-line of the glacial Lake Iroquois, Lake Ontario's much larger predecessor. For millennia, the indigenous peoples used the base of this escarpment as a portage route between the Don and Humber Rivers. Colonization and the expansion of Toronto through the 19th and early 20th centuries saw the densely wooded escarpment divided between private estates like Casa Loma and Spadina House. The City of Toronto has identified private spaces along the escarpment such as Wychwood Park to the west, as crucial in forming a ring of park spaces around the downtown core.

The original topography of the escarpment was heavily modified in the construction of Avenue Road, with its original steep slope further altered by the widening of the Avenue in the late 1950's. The gentle eroded ravines along the escarpment were replaced with a large buttressed wall against the surrounding terrain. This continuous solid wall fronts both sides of the Avenue as the escarpment rises, without any means of access to the surrounding institutions. No freedom is given to the pedestrian to experience anything but the constant movement of cars as they climb the hill. The retaining walls also prevent pedestrians from having a clear view and connection with the spaces which lie beyond them, notably the lush forests surrounding the Benvenuto apartment block, and recreational and green spaces of De La Salle College. The challenge is how to recover and reconnect the topography of the lake ridge which cuts across Avenue Road to create a coherent public realm and improved circulation which better connect the surrounding buildings and green spaces.

The Linear Park along Avenue Road can stitch together latent connections and pathways along the forests of private properties. Shown in the drawing are two paths branching out from Avenue Road. One forms a loop around the property of the Benvenuto, a mid-century modernist housing block, connecting the Avenue westward to the neighbourhood of South Hill. The other utilizes the existing paths of De La Salle College, a private Catholic school, connecting the Avenue eastward to the neighbourhood of Summerhill.



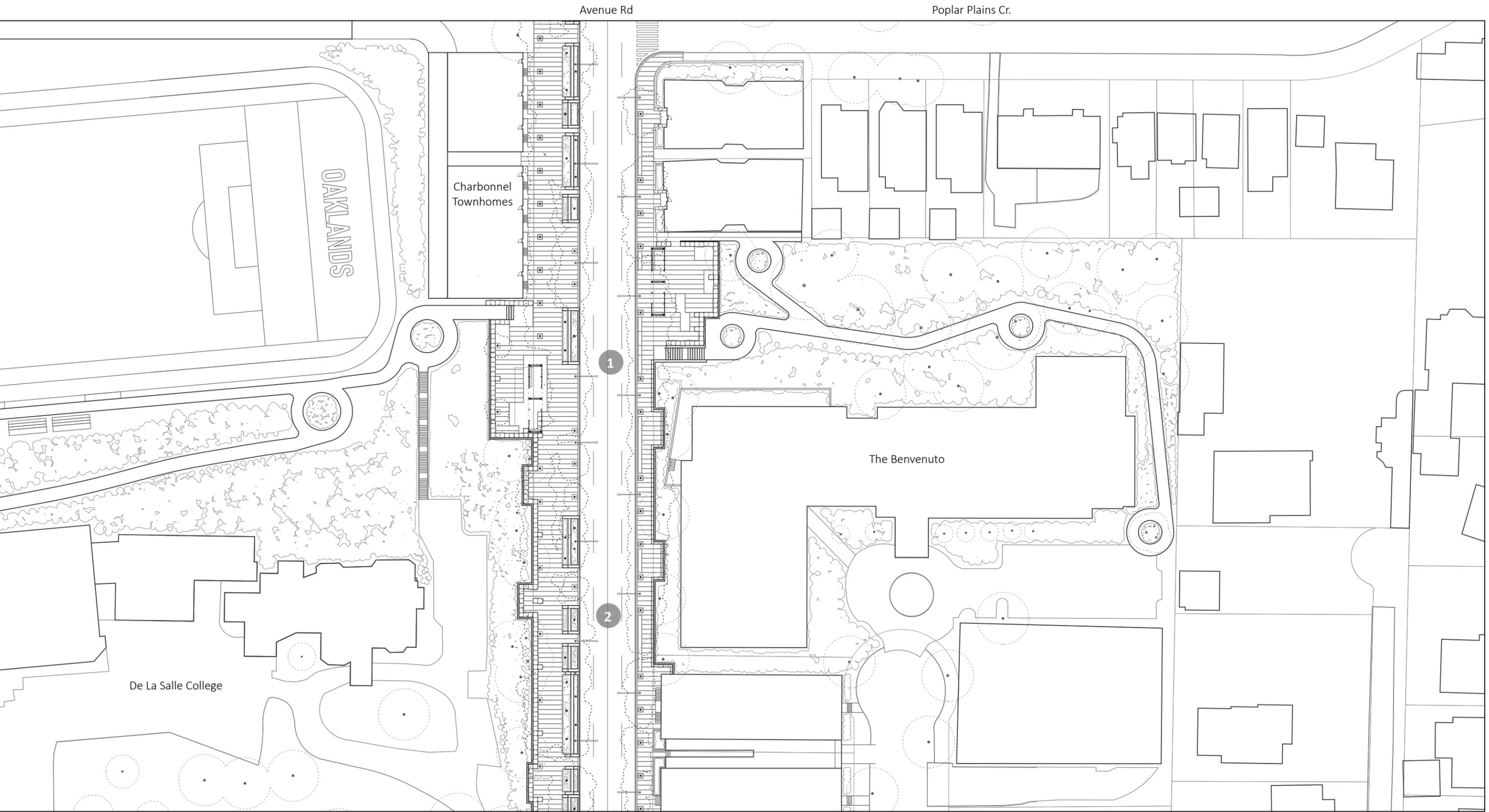
1 Looking southeast from the bottom of the retaining wall around the Benvenuto

2 View east showing the separation of De La Salle College from the Avenue by the Retaining Wall

The Linear Park at the Escarpment

The proposed state of Avenue Road with paths connecting De La Salle College to the Benvenuto. Scale 1:1000 @ 11x17.





Avenue Rd

Poplar Plains Cr.

Charbonnel Townhomes

OAKLANDS

De La Salle College

The Benvenuto

1

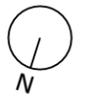
2

Avenue Rd

Benvenuto Pl

Linear Park Plan

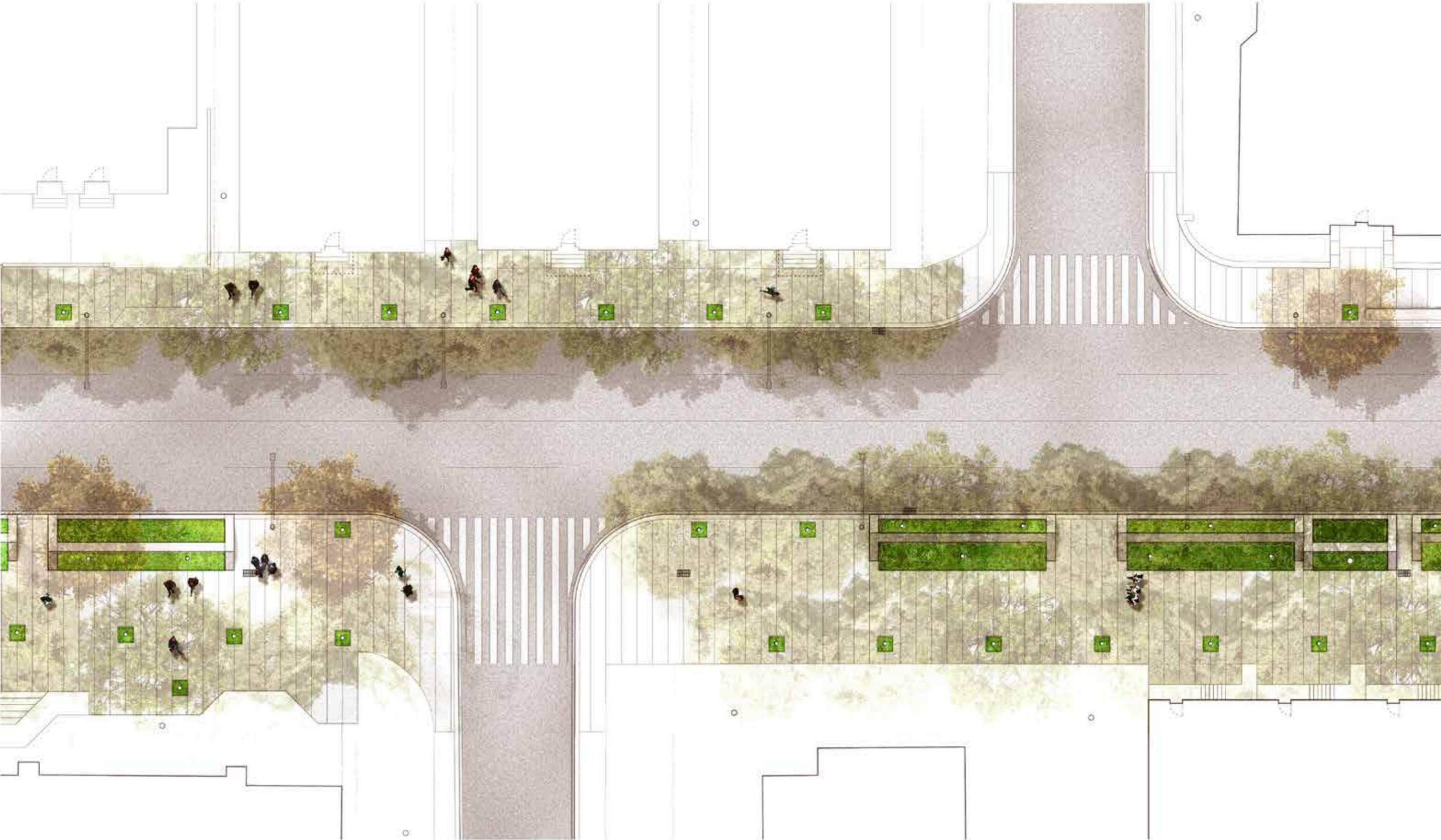
0 15m



Avenue Road Coalition

Linear Park at De La Salle College

Poplar Plains Cr.

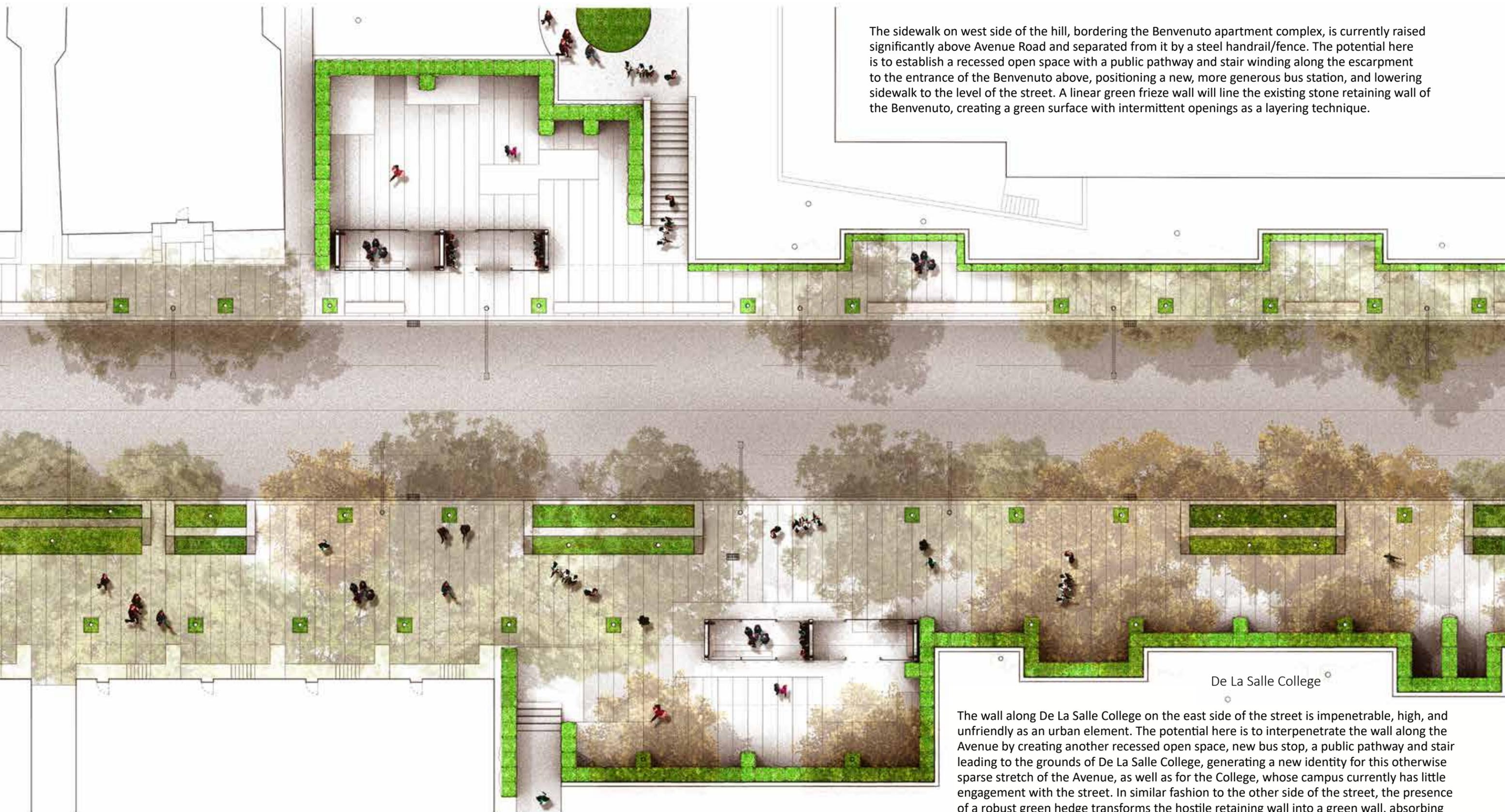


Oaklands Ave.

Pathway to Benvenuto Pl.

The Benvenuto

The sidewalk on west side of the hill, bordering the Benvenuto apartment complex, is currently raised significantly above Avenue Road and separated from it by a steel handrail/fence. The potential here is to establish a recessed open space with a public pathway and stair winding along the escarpment to the entrance of the Benvenuto above, positioning a new, more generous bus station, and lowering sidewalk to the level of the street. A linear green frieze wall will line the existing stone retaining wall of the Benvenuto, creating a green surface with intermittent openings as a layering technique.



Path to De La Salle College

De La Salle College

The wall along De La Salle College on the east side of the street is impenetrable, high, and unfriendly as an urban element. The potential here is to interpenetrate the wall along the Avenue by creating another recessed open space, new bus stop, a public pathway and stair leading to the grounds of De La Salle College, generating a new identity for this otherwise sparse stretch of the Avenue, as well as for the College, whose campus currently has little engagement with the street. In similar fashion to the other side of the street, the presence of a robust green hedge transforms the hostile retaining wall into a green wall, absorbing runoff from the sidewalk.

Edmund Ave.



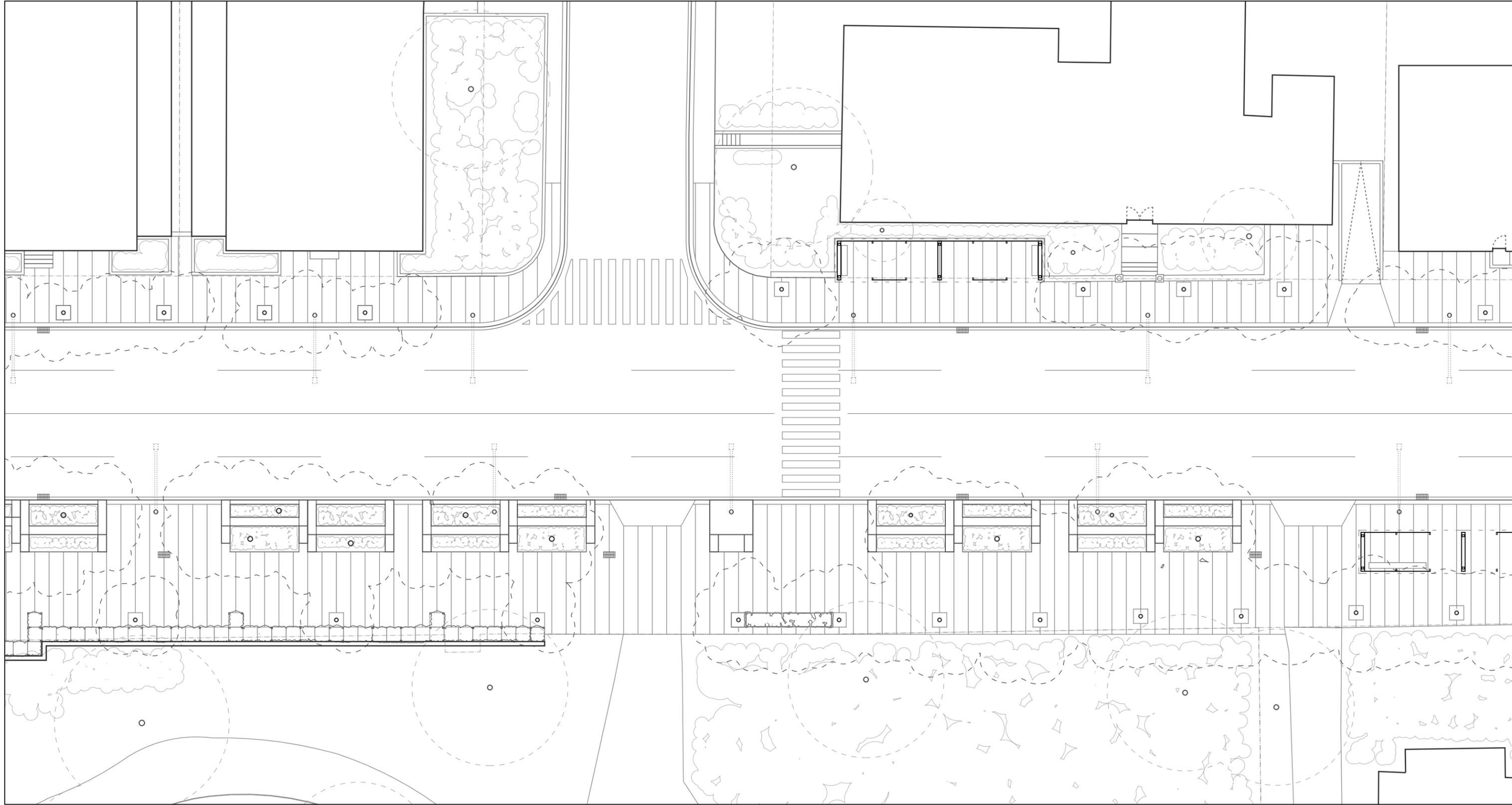
De La Salle College Campus

Clarendon Ave.



Farnham Ave.
Avenue Road Coalition

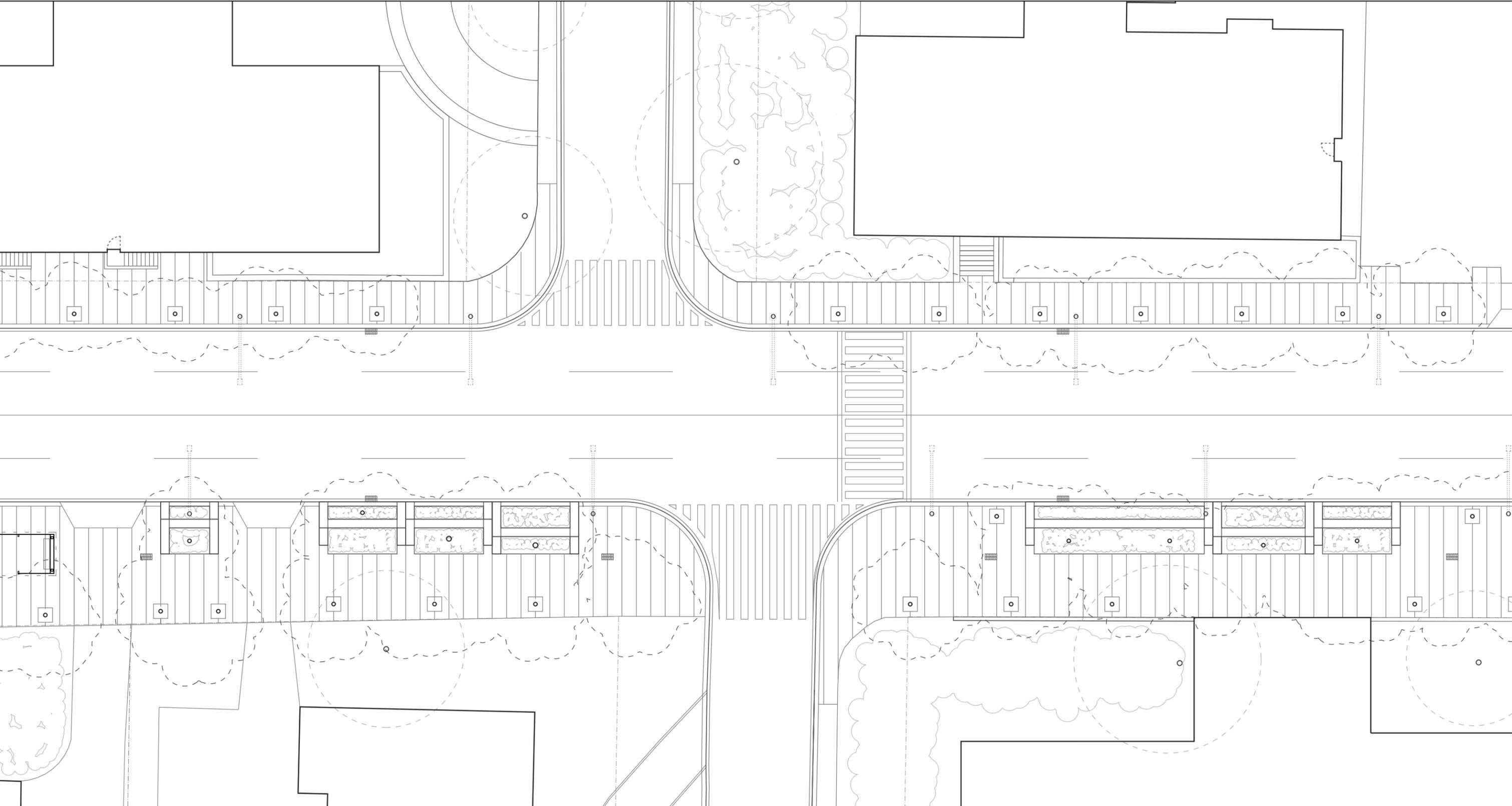
Edmund Ave



De La Salle College

Edmund Ave. to Farnham Ave.

Clarendon Ave.

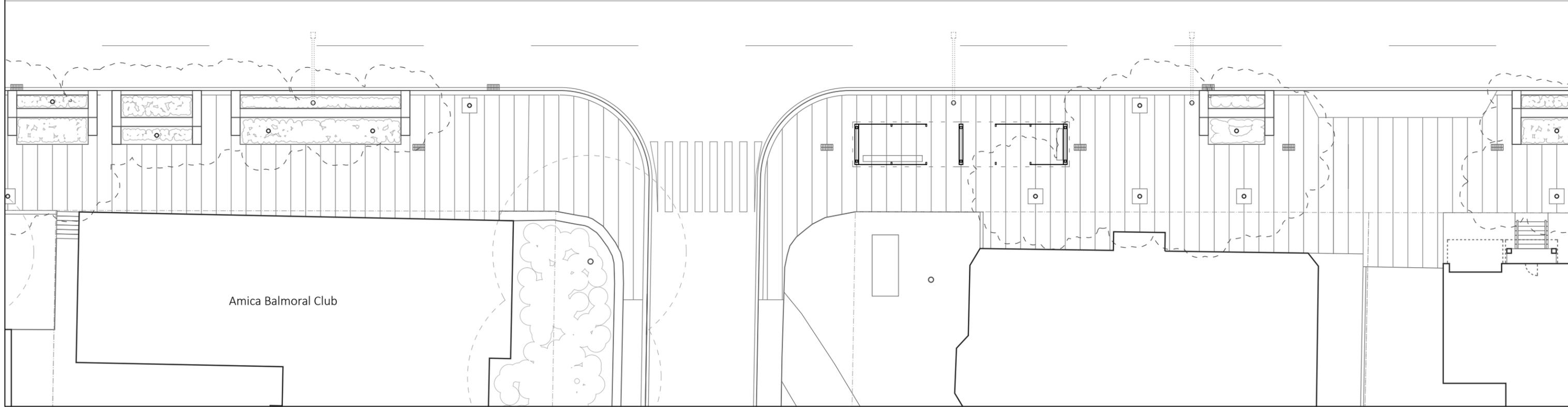
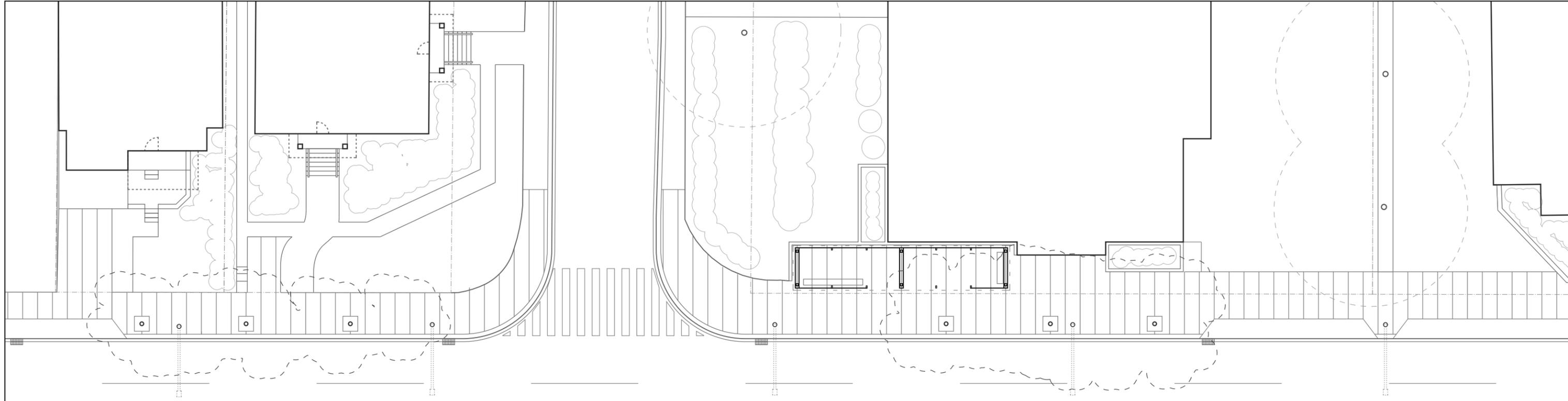


Farnham Ave.

Linear Park Plan
0 5m



Balmoral Ave

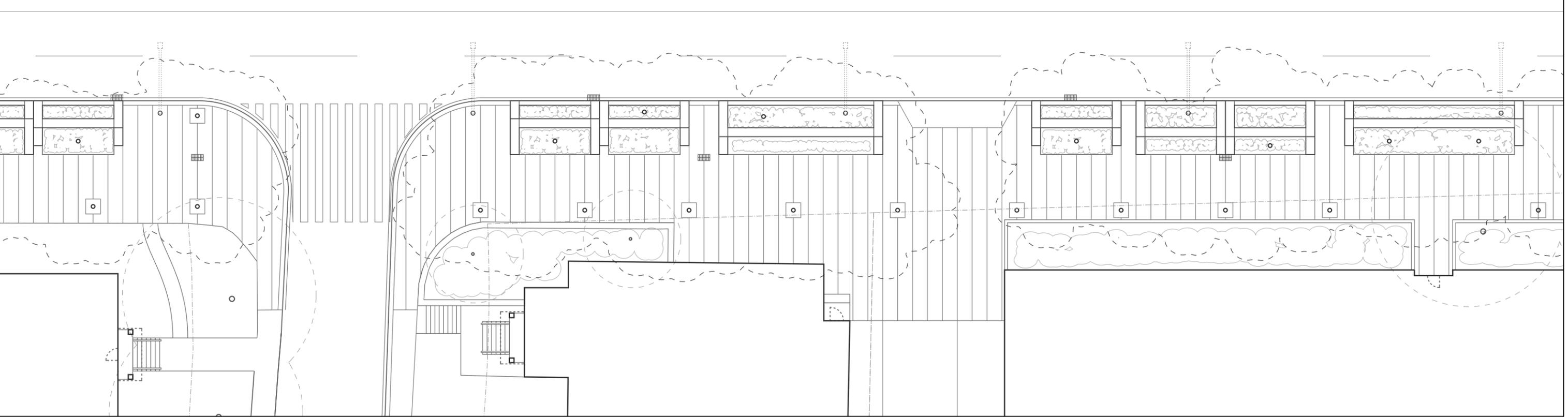
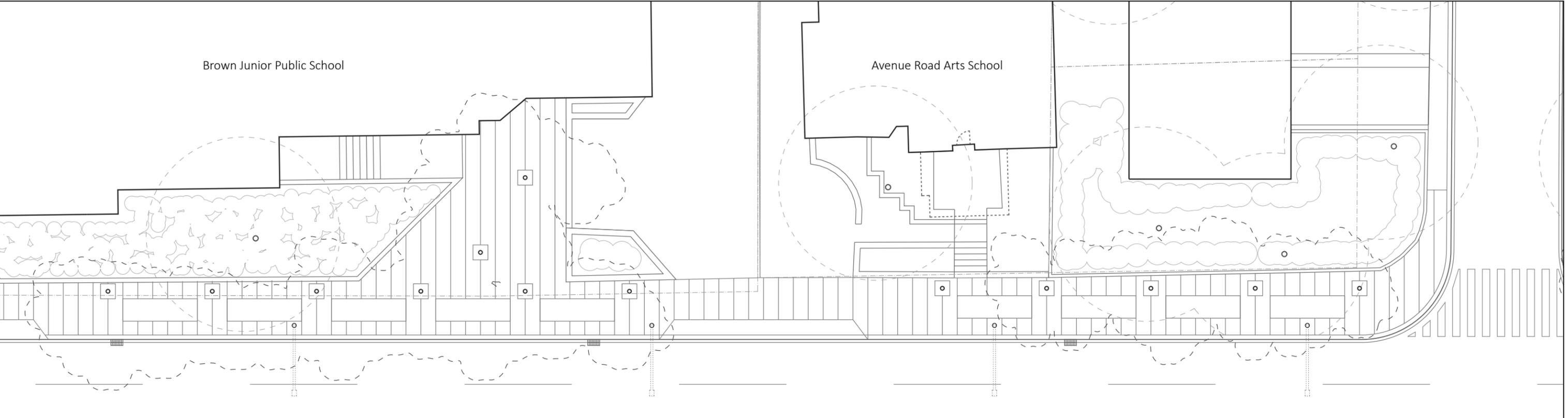


Amica Balmoral Club

Balmoral Ave

Balmoral Ave. to Lynwood Ave.

Lynwood Ave.



Foxbar Rd.

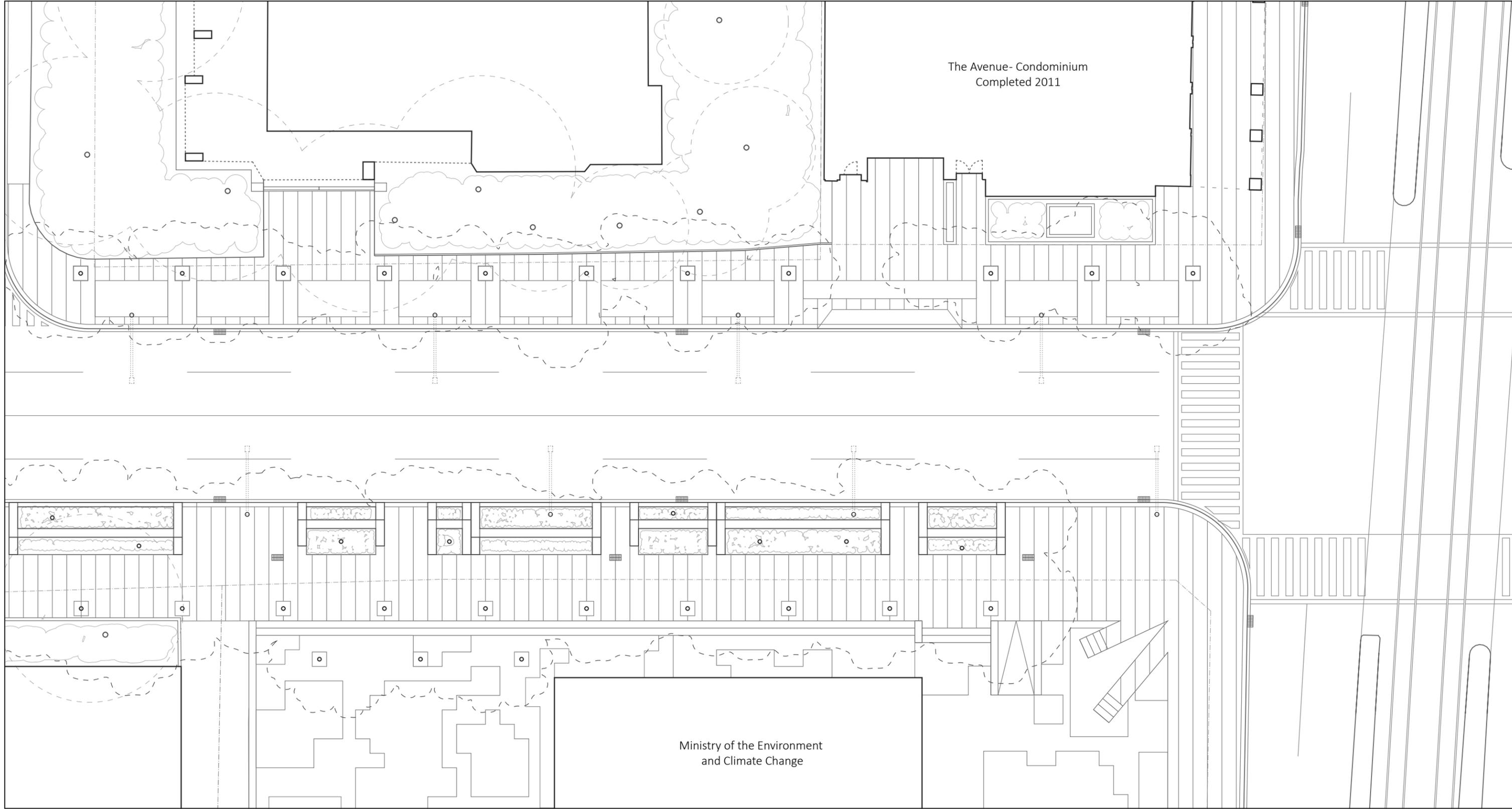
Linear Park Plan

0 5m



Lynwood Ave.

St.Clair Ave. W



St.Clair Ave. W

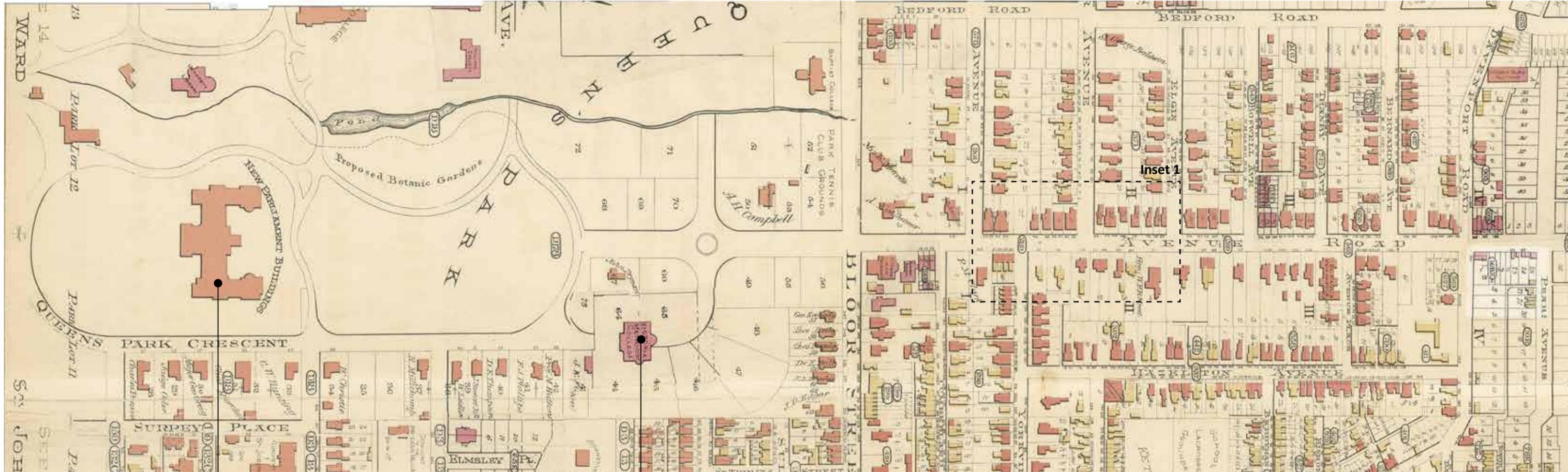
Lynwood Ave. to St. Clair Ave. W



Linear Park Plan
0 5m



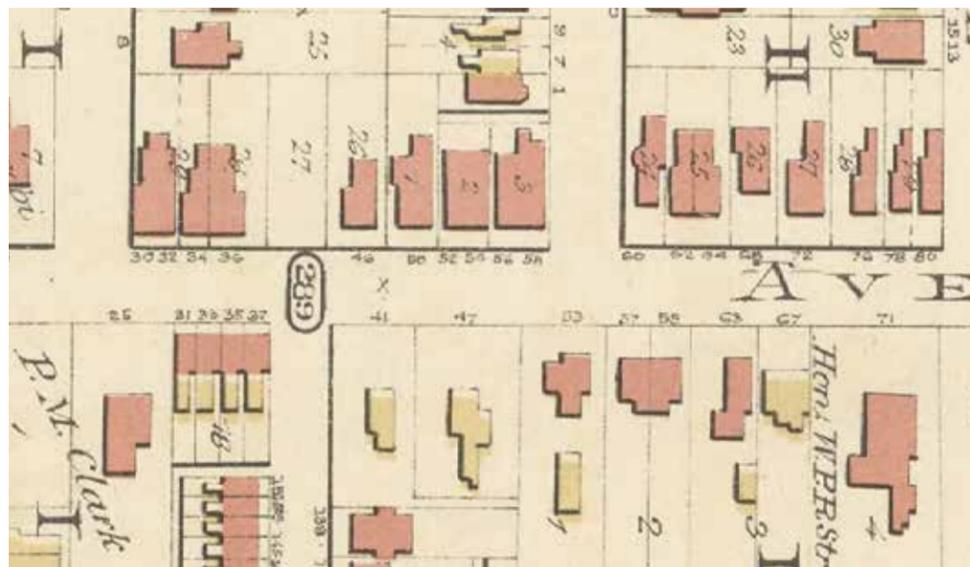
Avenue Road - 1899



Provincial Legislature

Victoria College

Bloor St. W

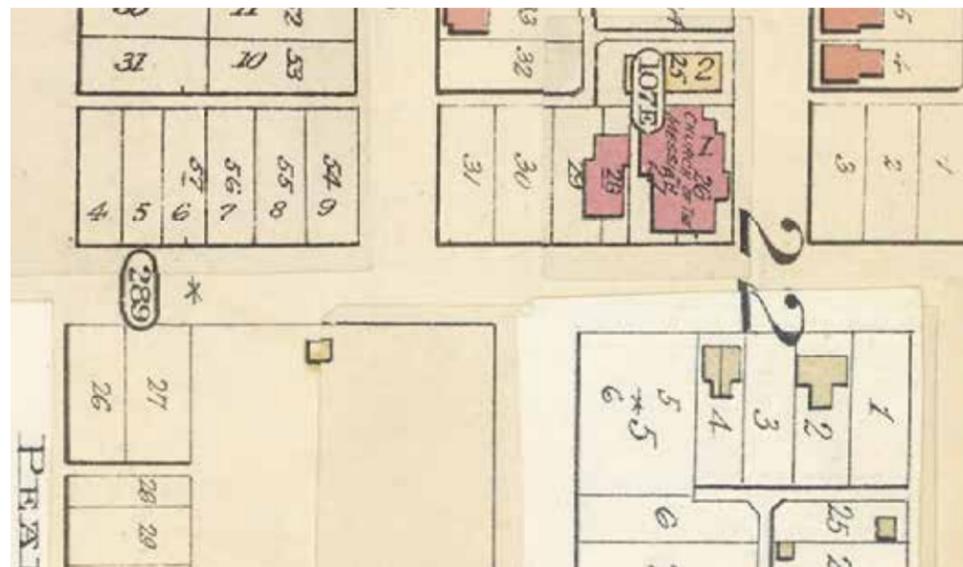


Inset 1: Yorkville

Note the similar width of Avenue Road to adjacent streets.

The blocks of Avenue road immediately north of Bloor St. W were occupied by narrow residential lots at the turn of the century.

The expansion of the Avenue in the late 1950's removed the front lawns of these residential properties.



Inset 2: Avenue and Dupont

Note the absence of park space.

Public spaces like Ramsden Park and Jay Macpherson Green are composed of preexisting estates and park lots.

Reinventing the Avenue



Inset 2

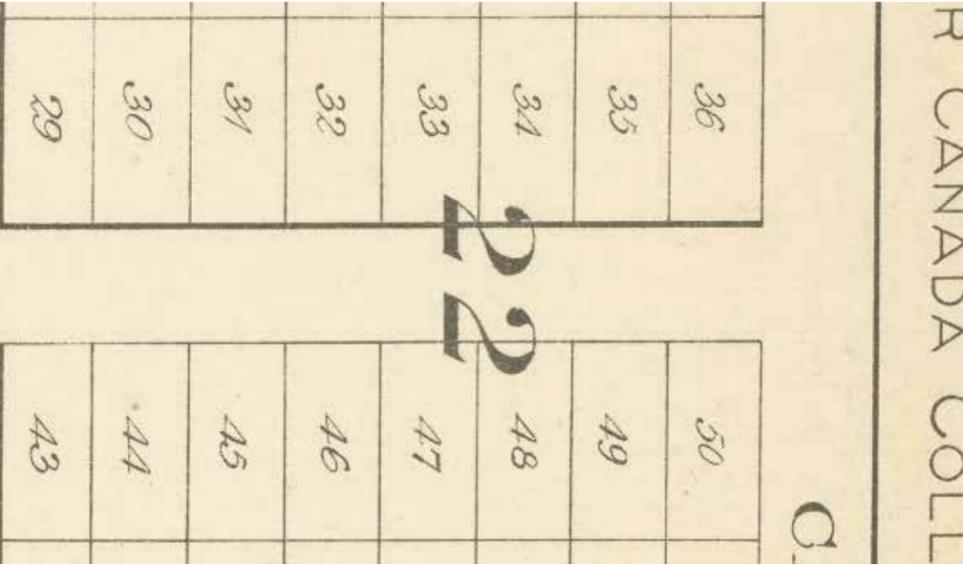
Inset 3

CP Railway Line

Old City Limit

St. Clair Ave. W

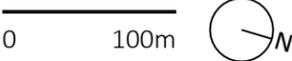
UCC



Inset 3: Upper Canada College

Note the larger property size.

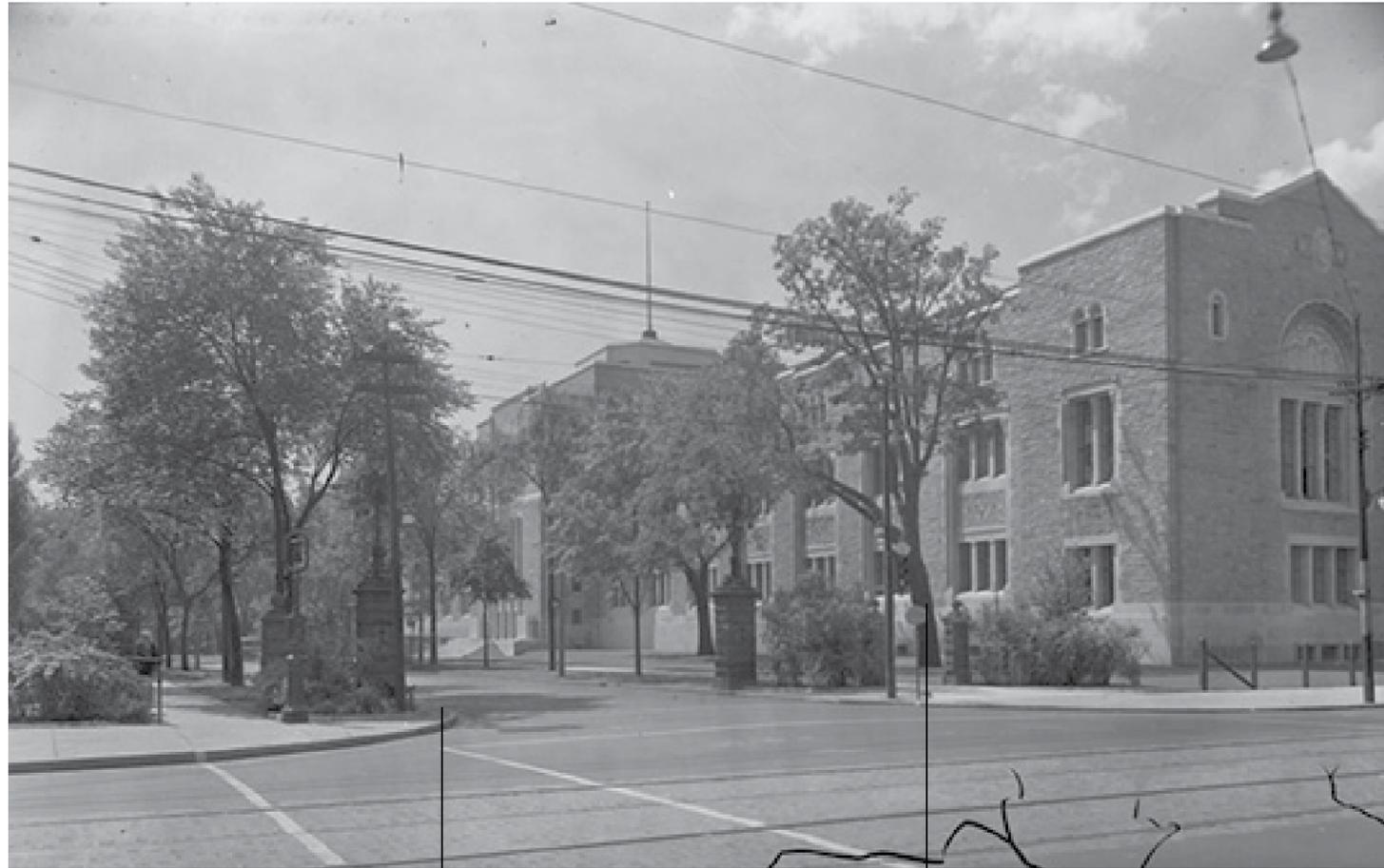
The stretch of Avenue Road fronting onto the affluent neighborhood around Upper Canada College is substantially wider than areas to the south.



Goad Fire Insurance Map of Avenue Road from Upper Canada College (far right), to Queen's Park (far left), 1899
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Historical Images

Before



Avenue Road and Bloor St. W, 1930
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Existing



Avenue Road and Bloor St. W, 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

Layers of landscaping and verges break up wide street space

Urban canopy removed as a result of street widening.

Avenue Rd. Location

0 250m



Reinventing the Avenue

Before



Avenue Road and Yorkville Ave., 1938
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Lines of trees inside
Right-of-Way

Snow accumulates
on roadside and
lawns without ob-
structing pedestrians

Existing



Avenue Road and Yorkville Ave., 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

6 wide lanes of
traffic leave
minimal sidewalks

Historical Images

Before



Avenue Road and Lowther Ave., 1933
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Existing



Avenue Road and Lowther Ave., 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

Hedges and fences adjacent to sidewalk

Infrastructure in remaining sidewalk space obstructs pedestrian movement

Avenue Rd. Location
0 250m



Reinventing the Avenue

Before



Avenue Road and Davenport Rd., 1938
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Snow accumulates without obstructing pedestrians

Original sidewalk had space between utility poles and exterior walls.

Existing



Avenue Road and Davenport Rd., 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

The widened streets result in inadequate pedestrian space, with light and electrical poles often placed in the middle of sidewalks.

Historical Images

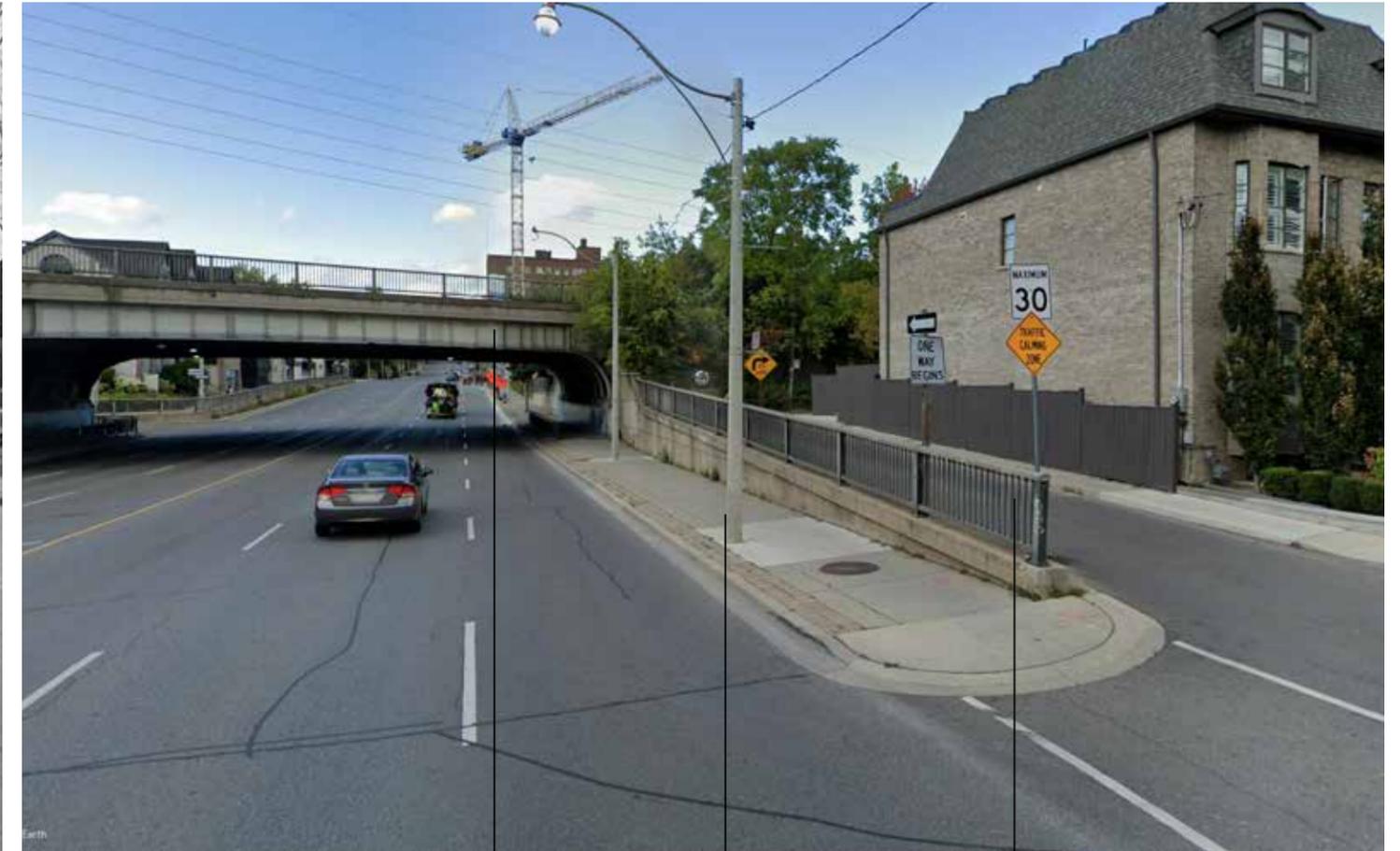
Before



Avenue Road and Macpherson Ave., 1959
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

The CP Railway Bridge over Avenue at Macpherson was reconstructed to accommodate the wider Avenue.

Existing



Avenue Road and Macpherson Ave., 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

Current CP Railway Bridge

Inconsistent placement of utility poles

Highway fencing along the Avenue

Avenue Rd. Location
0 250m



Reinventing the Avenue

Before



Avenue Road at De La Salle College during road widening, 1959
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Retaining wall for the original curb during demolition and expansion of Avenue Road

Existing



Avenue Road at De La Salle College, 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

Sea of asphalt

All trees within Avenue Rd. Right-of-Way have been removed- tree canopy remains only on private properties

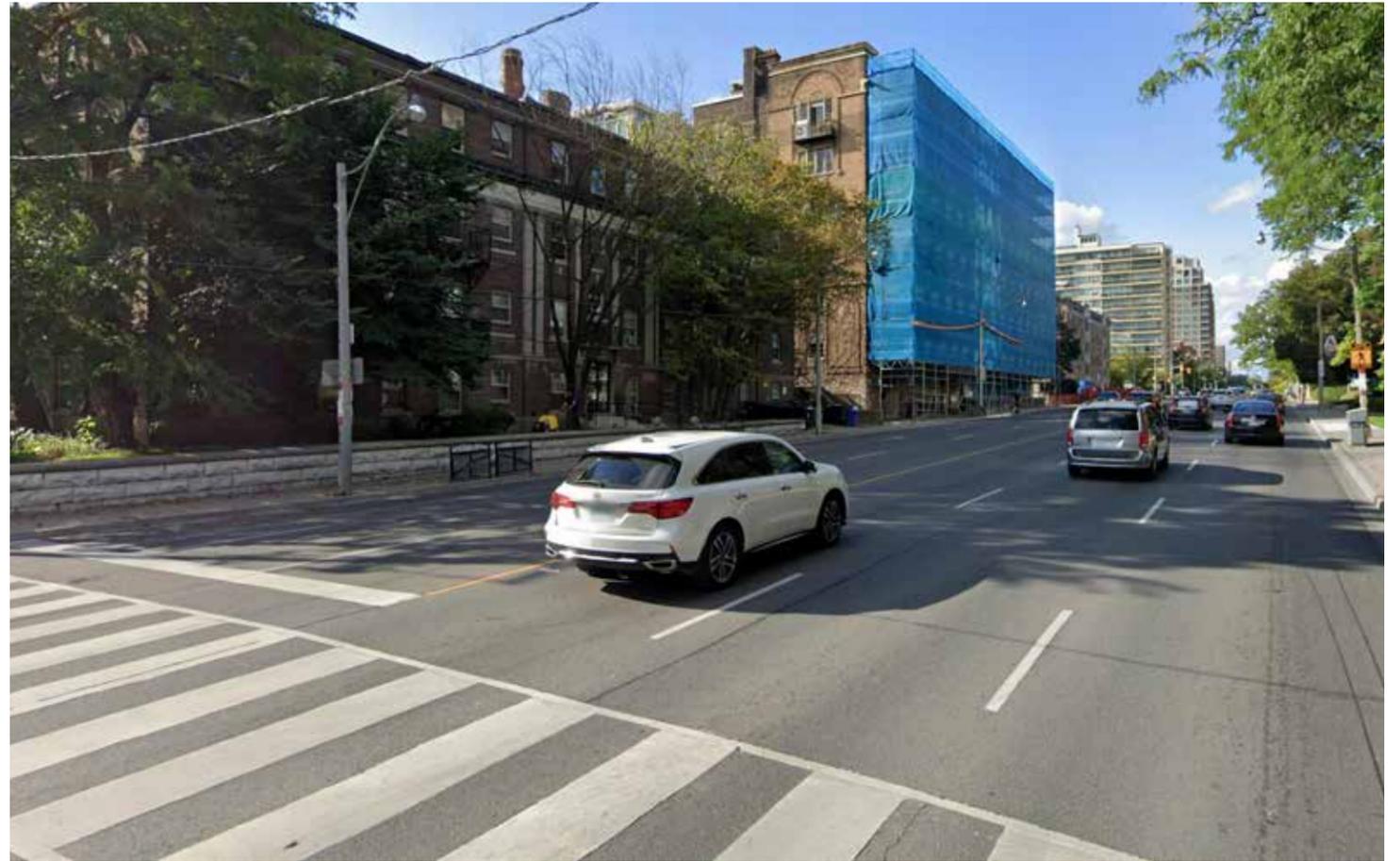
Historical Images

Before



Avenue Road and Edmund Ave., 1959
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Existing



Avenue Road and Edmund Ave., 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

Pre-1960 sidewalk
during demolition

Lost space on both
sides of the Avenue

Current sidewalk

Avenue Rd. Location
0 250m



Before



Avenue Road and Farnham Ave., 1952
Image Source: City of Toronto Archives

Widening of Avenue Rd. removed trees, front lawns and wide sidewalks at the Amica Balmoral Club

Existing



Avenue Road and Farnham Ave., 2020
Image Source: Google Earth

Today, guardrails are required by the city to account for the dangerously inadequate pedestrian space.

Series A-1: Urban Context

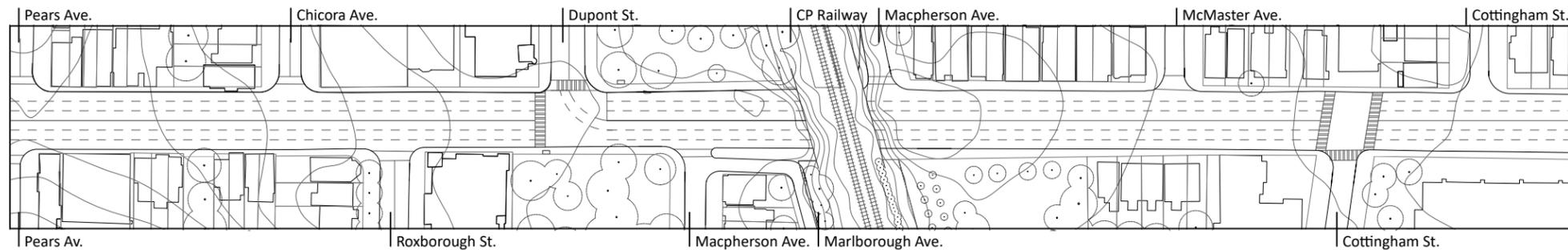


Avenue Road - Queen's Park to UCC

0 250m

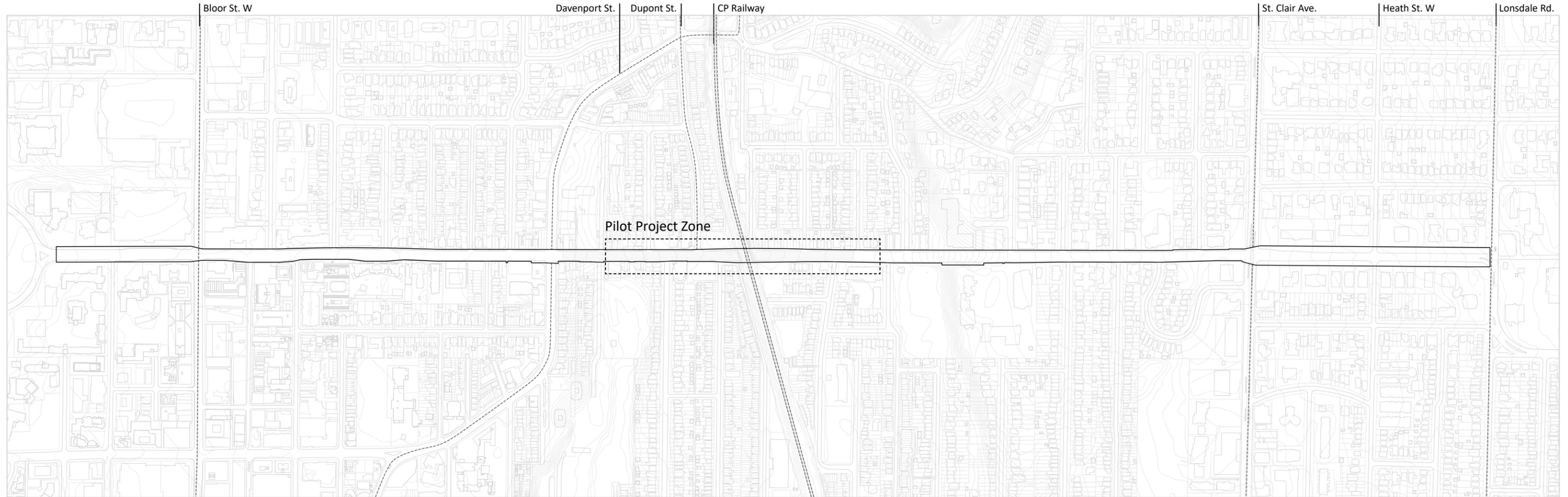
Proposed Pilot Zone

0 50m



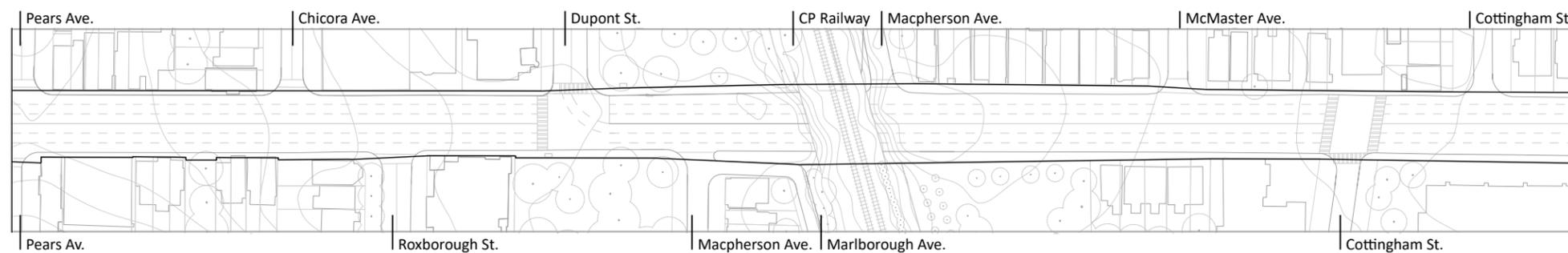
Comment

The area of focus for this report comprises Avenue Road between Upper Canada College in the north to Queen's Park in the south. In addition to our examinations of this 2.5 kilometer stretch of Avenue, we have developed in further detail a small stretch of the Avenue extending from Pears Avenue in the south to Cottingham Street in the north. This stretch contains several parks which have been adversely affected by the widening of the Avenue, as well as the intersecting CP Railway line and Green Belt.



Right-of-Way Area

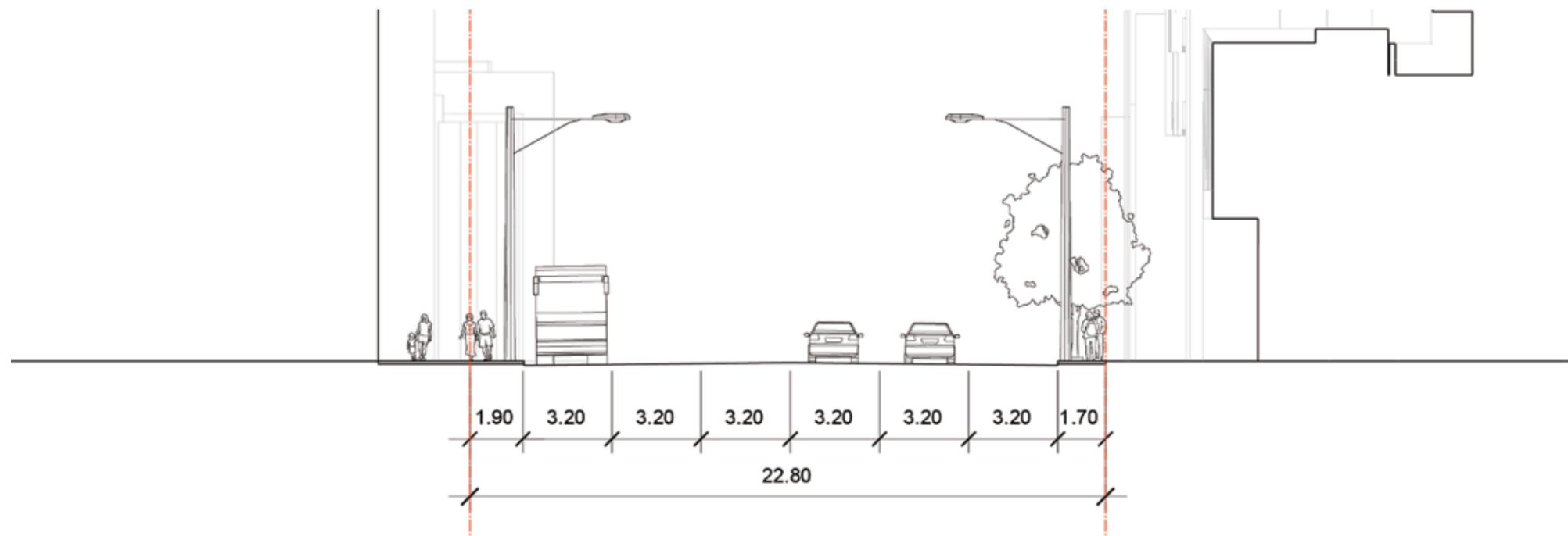
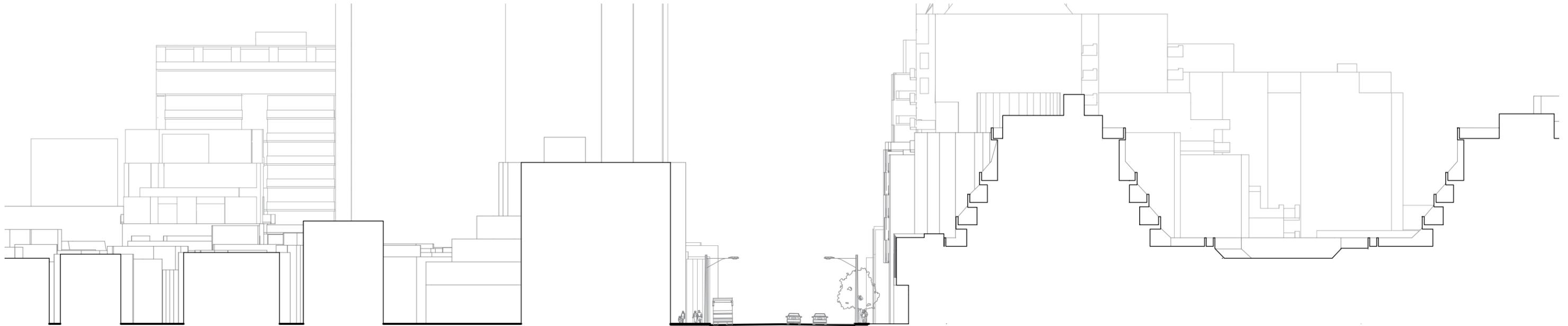
Road:	57,037 m ²	83.6 %
Sidewalks:	8,983 m ²	13.1 %
Driveways:	2,261 m ²	3.3 %
Landscaping:	6,122 m ²	8.9 %
Right-of-Way:	68,037 m²	100 %



Comment

The Right-of-Way along Avenue Rd. between St. Clair and Bloor averages 25 meters. North of St. Clair to Upper Canada College, the right-of-way expands to 36 meters in width, while sidewalks remain just 1.5 meters wide with large spaces between both the Avenue and adjacent apartment blocks.

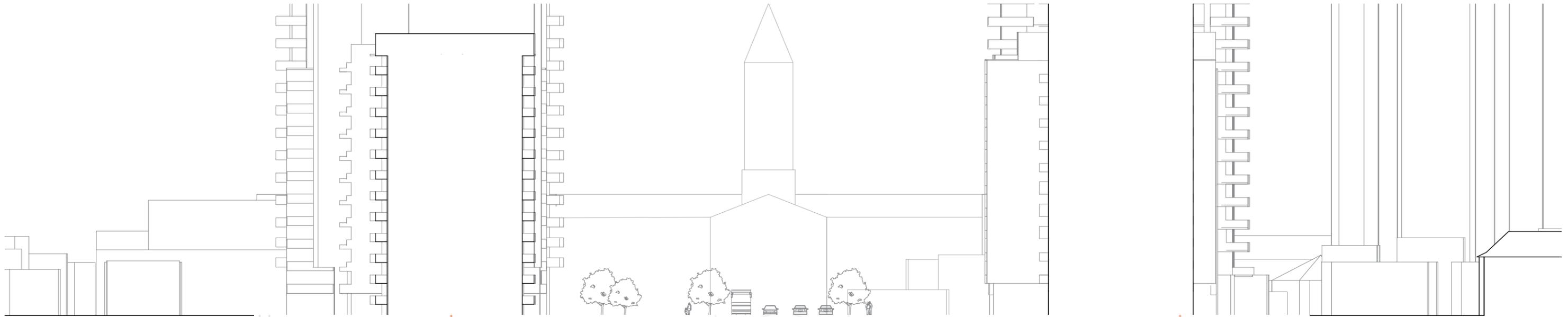
Section - North of Lowther Avenue



Section of Avenue Road at Lowther Ave.

Section - South of Heath

Reinventing the Avenue



Section of Avenue Road at Heath St. W

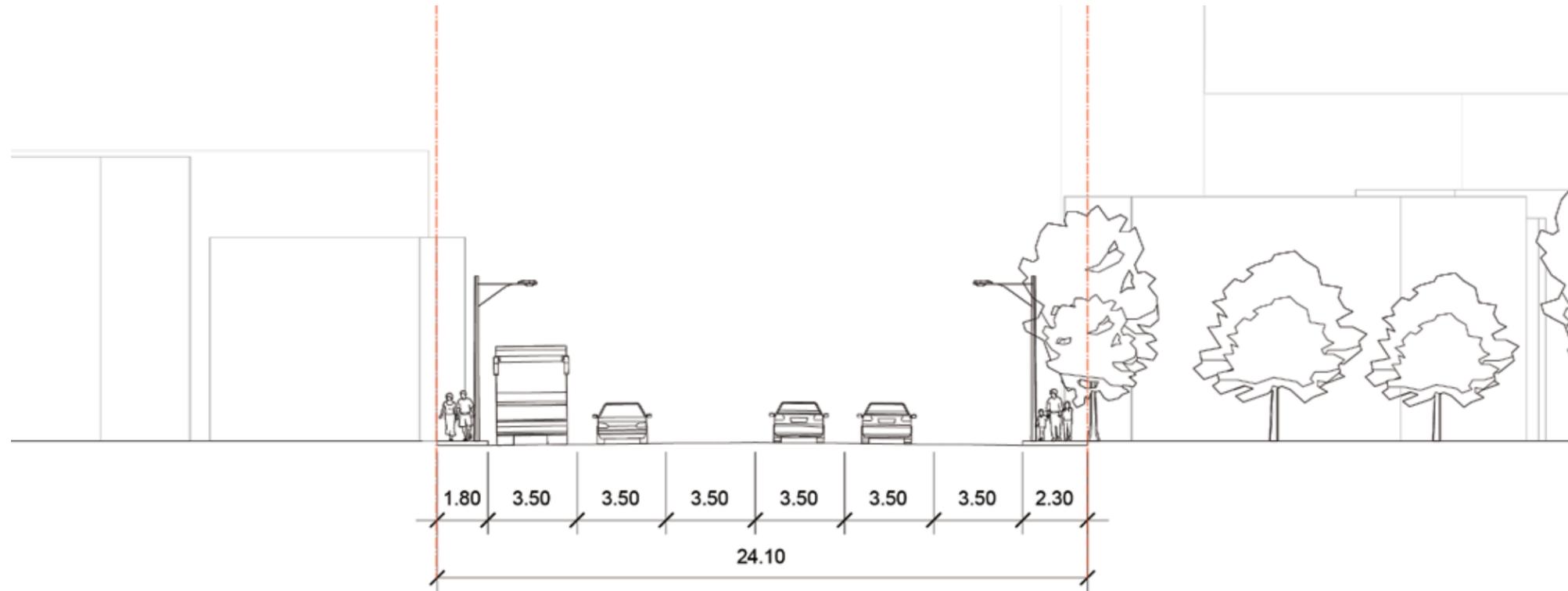
Section (Top)

0 15m

Section (Detail)

0 6m

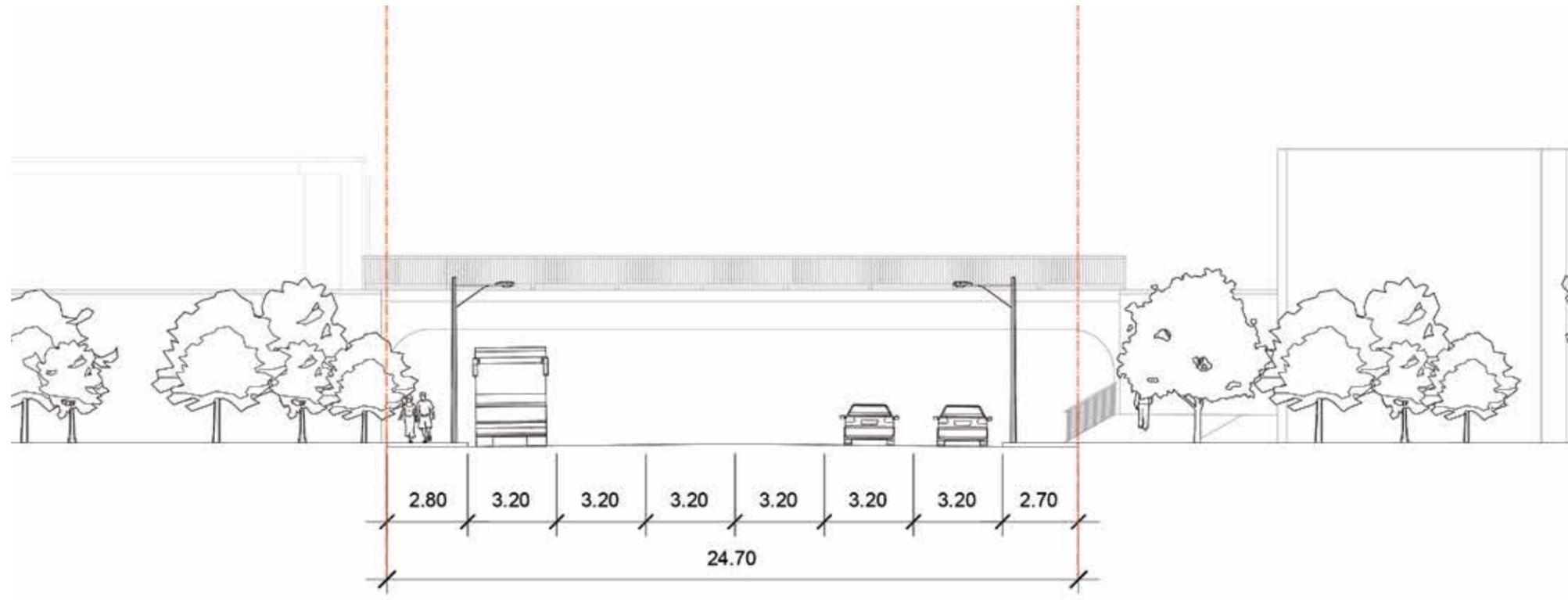
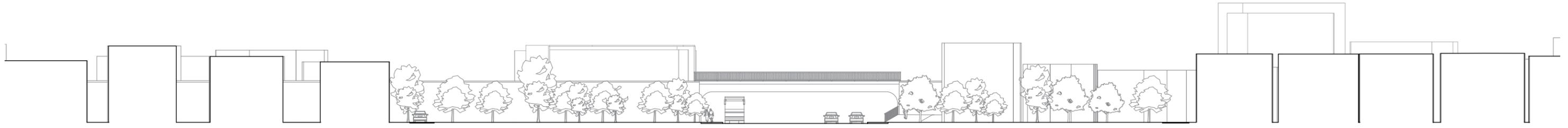
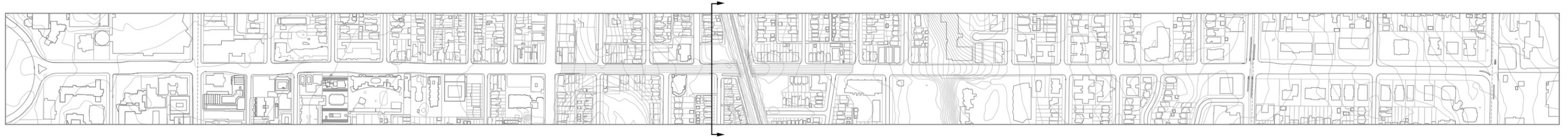
Section - Ramsden Park Entrance



Section of Avenue Road at Chicora Ave. / Entrance to Ramsden Park

Section - North of Dupont

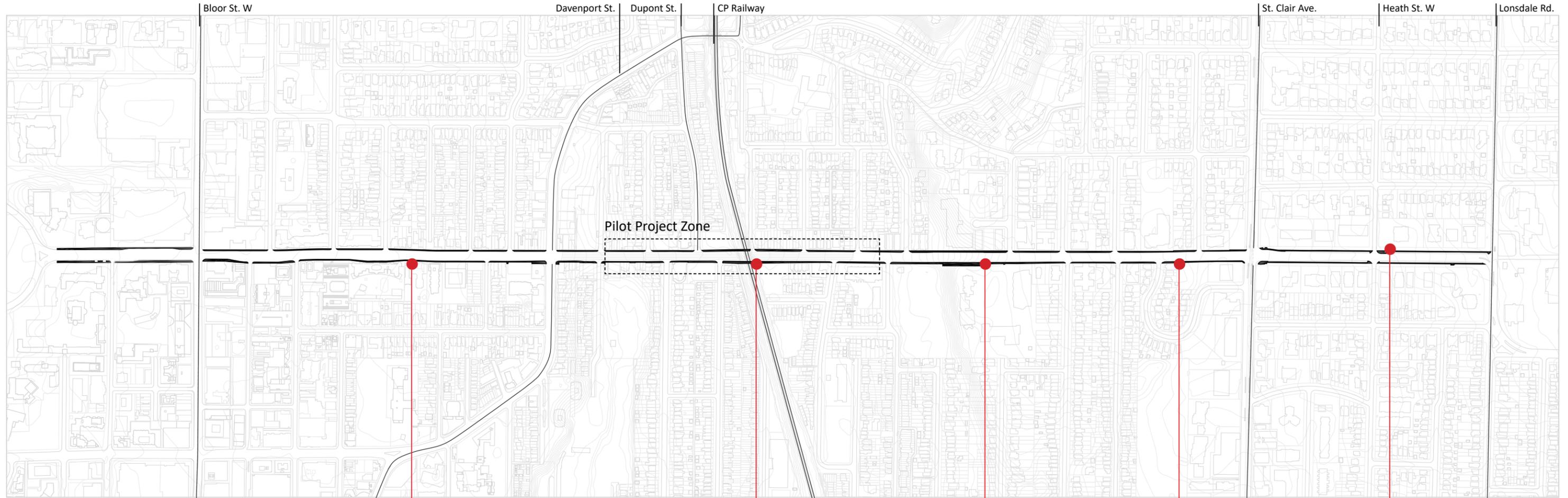
Reinventing the Avenue



Section of Avenue Road at Macpherson Ave.

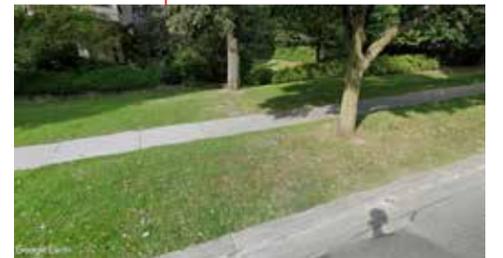
Section (Top)
0 15m
Section (Detail)
0 6m

Series A-3: Sidewalk Area

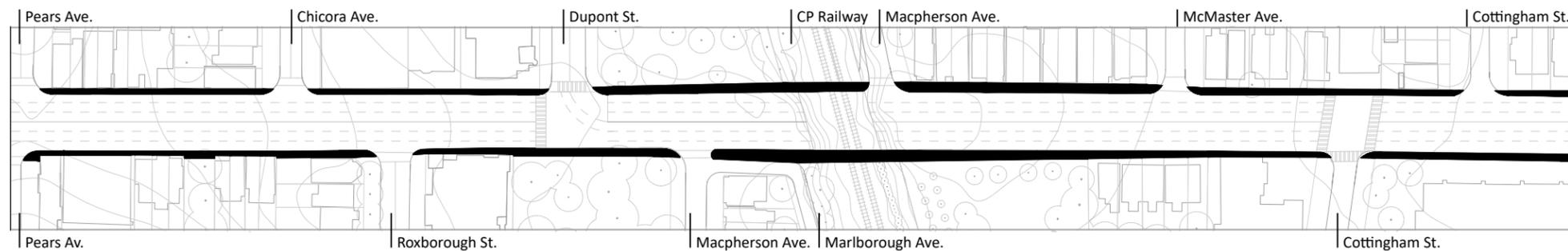


Avenue Road - Queen's Park to UCC

0 250m

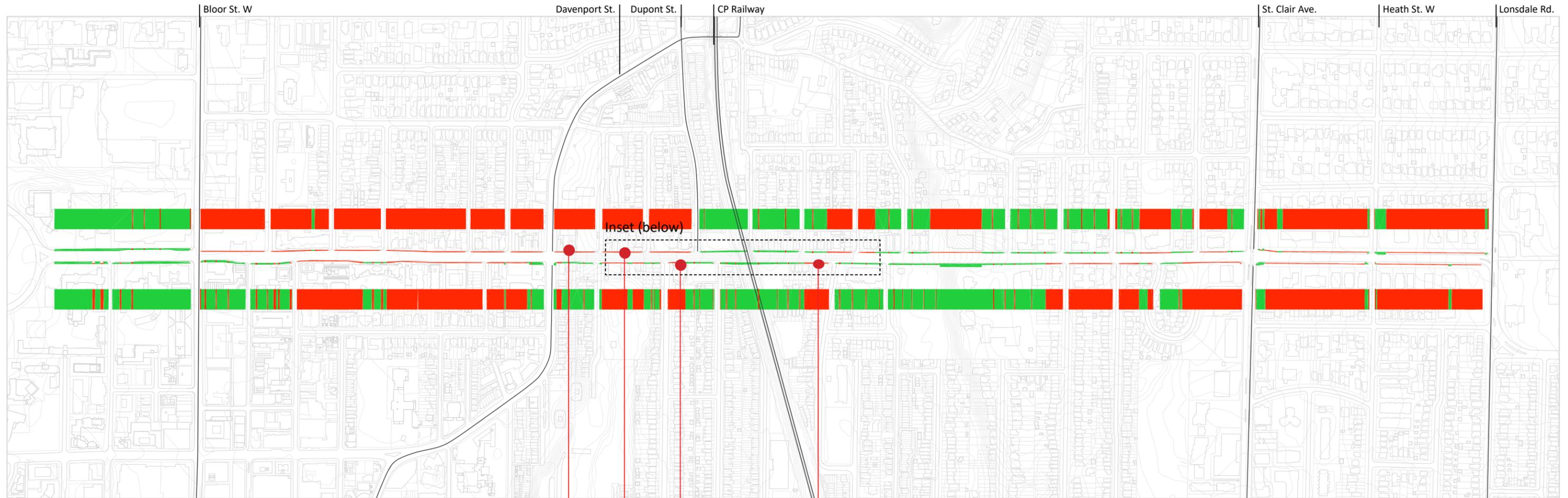


Inset
0 50m



Comment

The typical width of sidewalks on Avenue road is 2.5m, but this already modest distance can be further constrained to as little as 1.4m. In addition, the sidewalk is often interrupted by obstacles such as utility poles, reducing passable width to as little as 0.9m. The images above show the varying conditions of the sidewalk along Avenue road, illustrating how the Avenue's focus on high-speed traffic has compromised pedestrian safety and public space.



- Insufficient sidewalk width (<2.1 meters) - 42.9 % of length
- Acceptable sidewalk width (>2.1 meters) - 57.1 % of length



North of Davenport Rd. on Western Sidewalk



Between Chiroca and Pears Ave. on Western Sidewalk

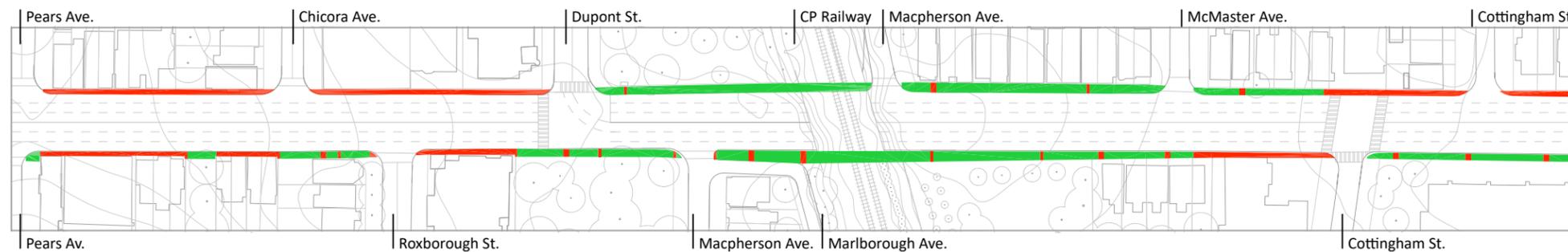


Outside Hare Krishna Temple on Eastern Sidewalk



North of Cottingham Ave. on the Eastern Sidewalk

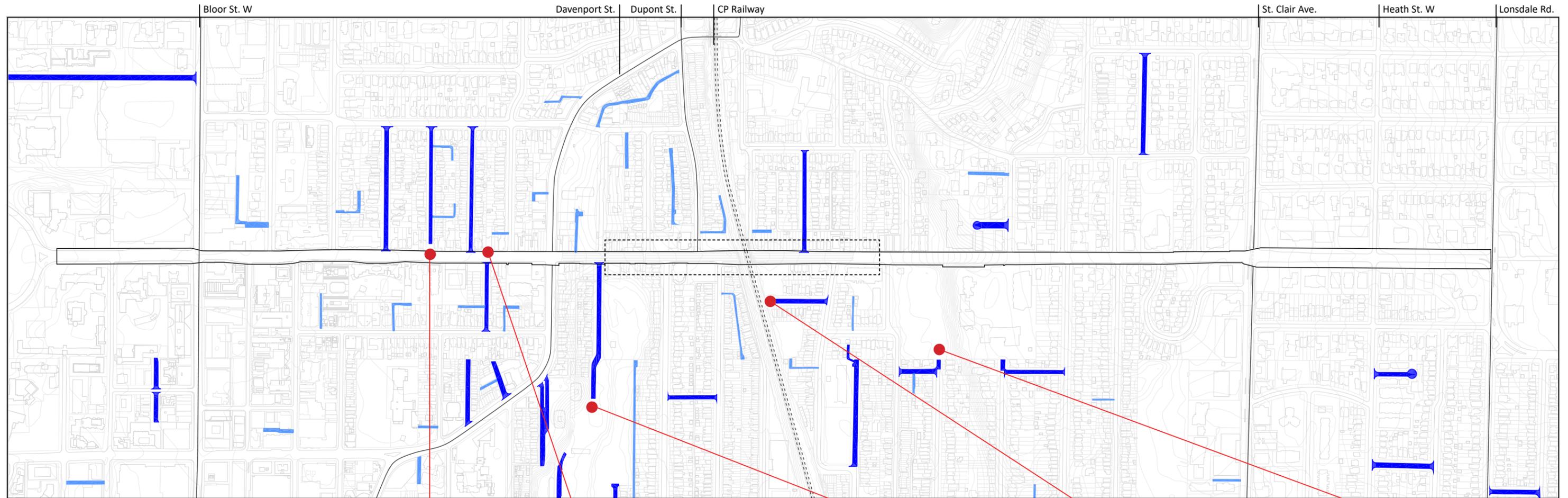
Utility Poles Interrupting the sidewalk along Avenue Road
Photo Source: Ken Brown, ARSC



Comment

Large stretches of Avenue Road do not fulfill the City of Toronto's 2.1 m guideline for sidewalks on major streets. In addition to the inadequacy of the sidewalk area, poorly placed utility poles often site in the middle of the sidewalk, further narrowing access. The thin red strips in the diagrams depict show how the frequent placement of poles in the middle of the sidewalk disrupt pedestrian movement.

Series A-5: Discontinuous Streets



Avenue Road - Queen's Park to UCC

0 250m

- █ Streets
- █ Laneways

Inset

0 50m



Boswell Avenue (with Boswell Parkette)



Webster Avenue



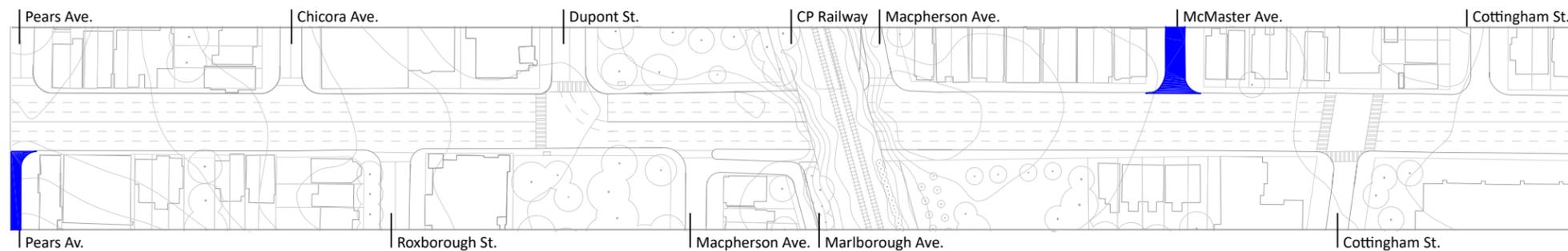
Pears Avenue at Ramsden Park



Sidney Street at Robertson Davies Park / Rail Corridor

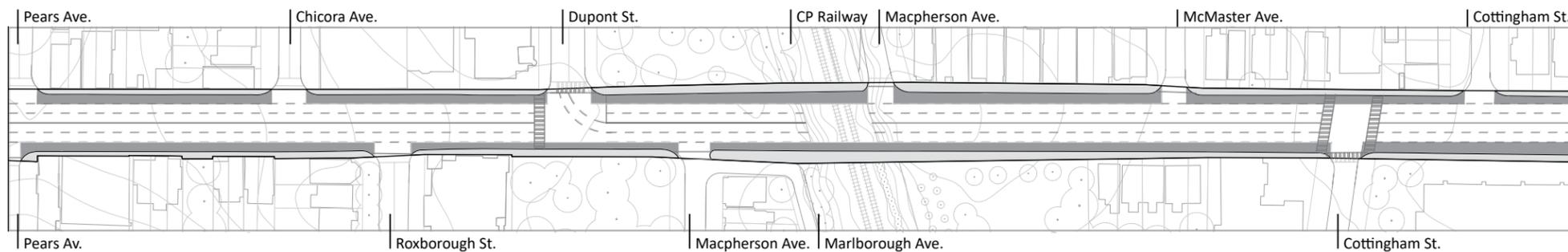
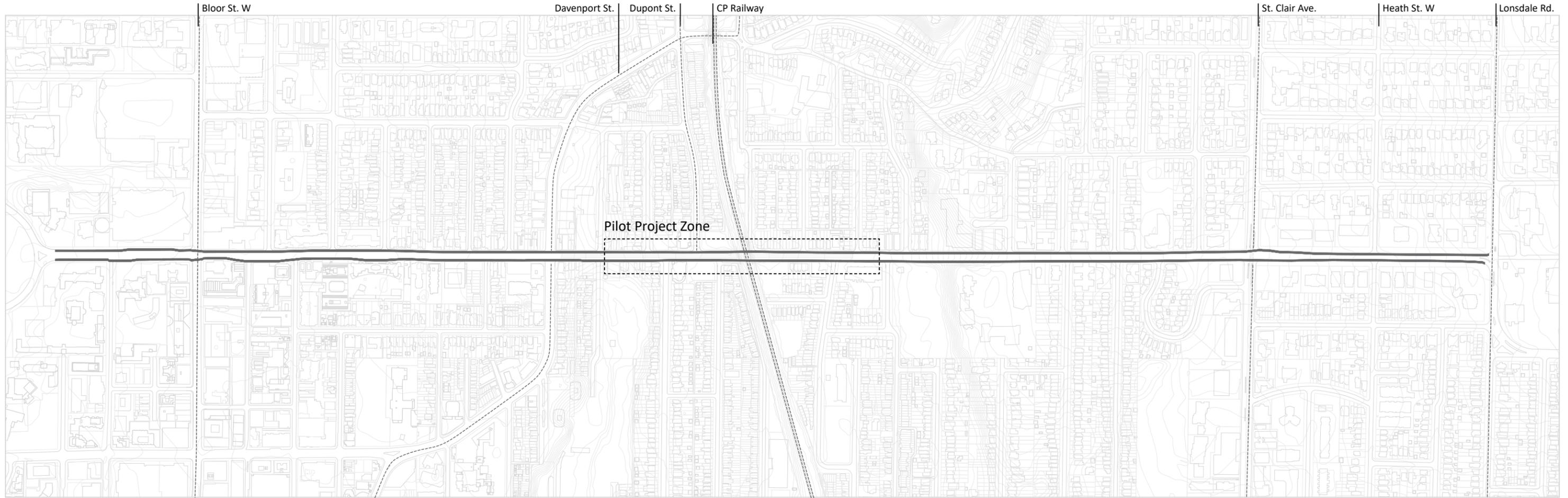


Walker Avenue at De La Salle College



Comment

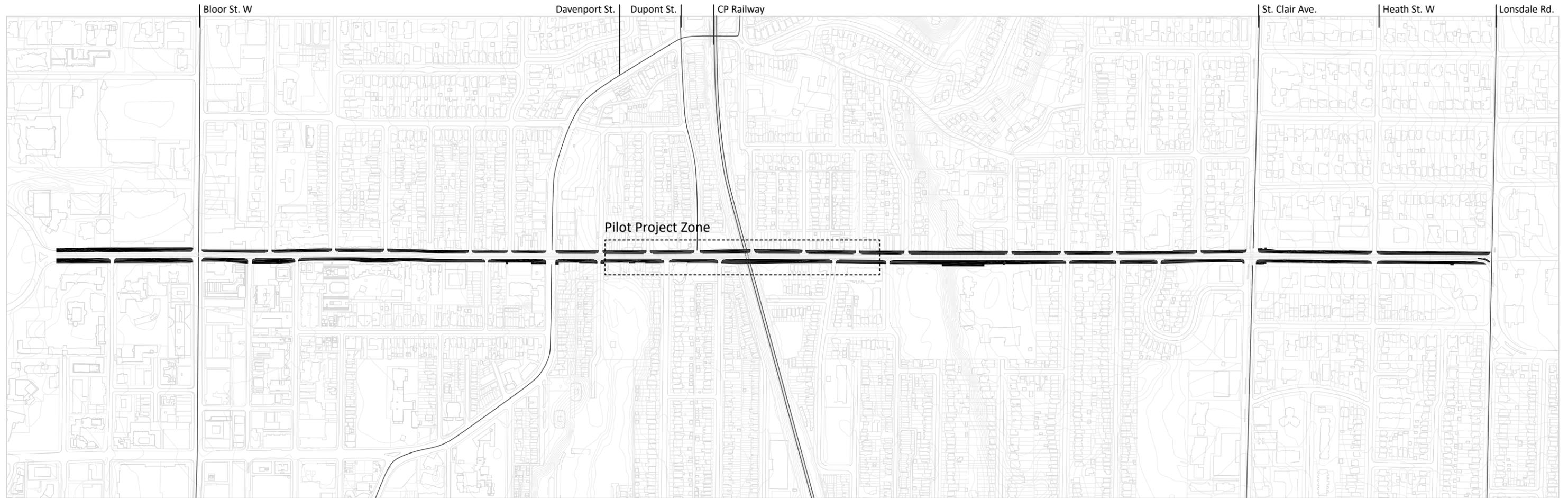
The expansion of Toronto through the development of narrow parklots throughout the 19th century has led to a circumstantial and discontinuous street network filled with cul-de-sacs and single block streets. Numerous streets and laneways of this kind branch off from Avenue Road. Their low traffic volumes can allow them to be closed to cars at their intersection with the Avenue. This approach can be seen at the Boswell Parkette at the intersection of Boswell and Avenue (far left).



Comment

Removing two traffic lanes on Avenue Road presents the best option for substantially expanding the public realm and pedestrian safety. The resulting 4 traffic lane Avenue will return many of the streetscapes which were lost during the 1959-60 widening.

Series A-7: Widened Sidewalks - Symmetric



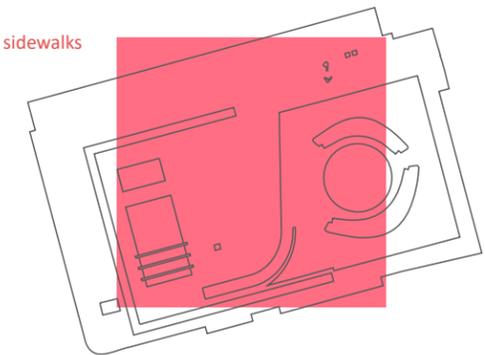
Avenue Road- Queen's Park to UCC

0 250m

New Sidewalk Area

Road:	33,215 m ²	48.7 %
Sidewalks:	35,061 m ²	51.3 %

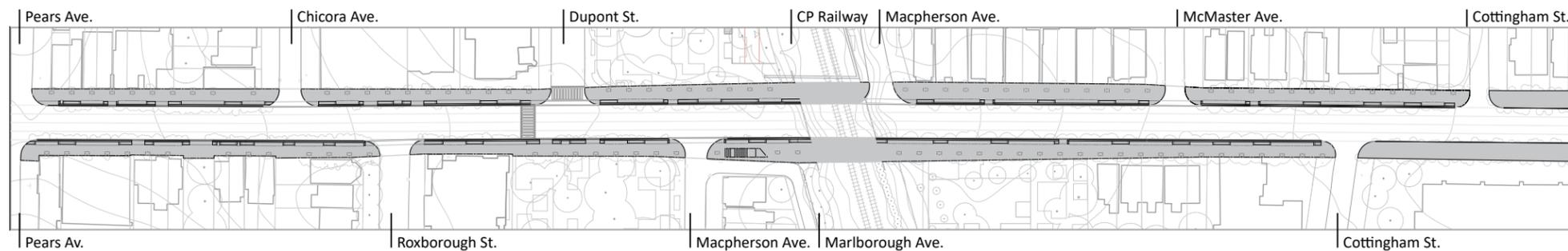
Area of extended sidewalks
187 x 187 m



Outline of New City Hall

Proposed Pilot Zone

0 50m

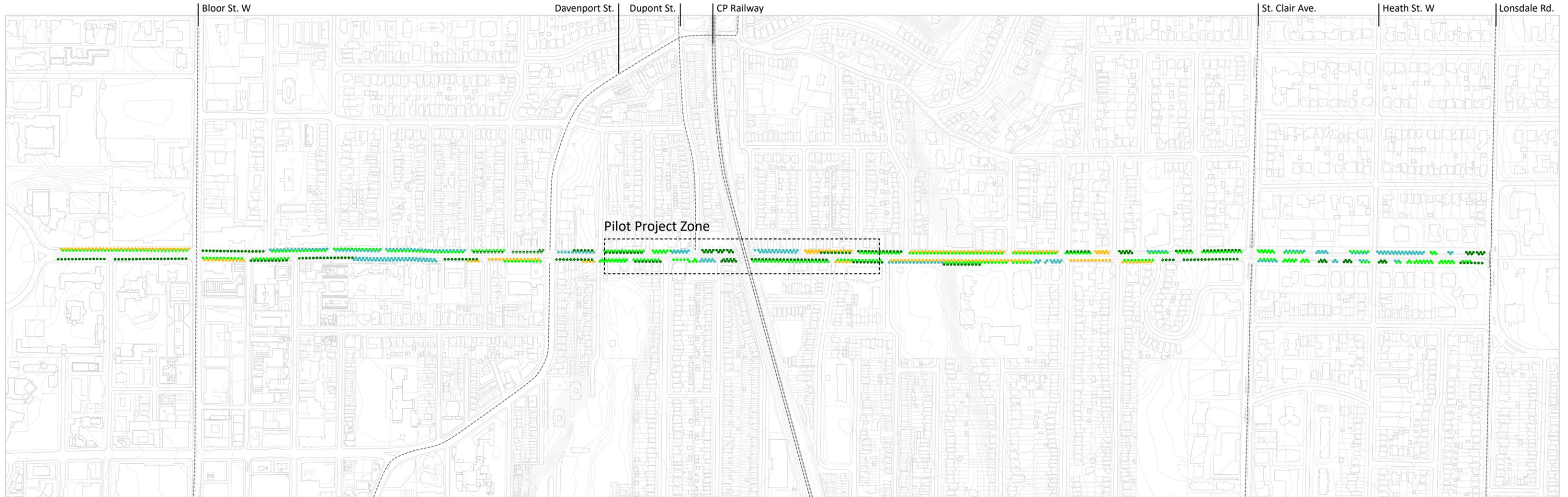


Comment

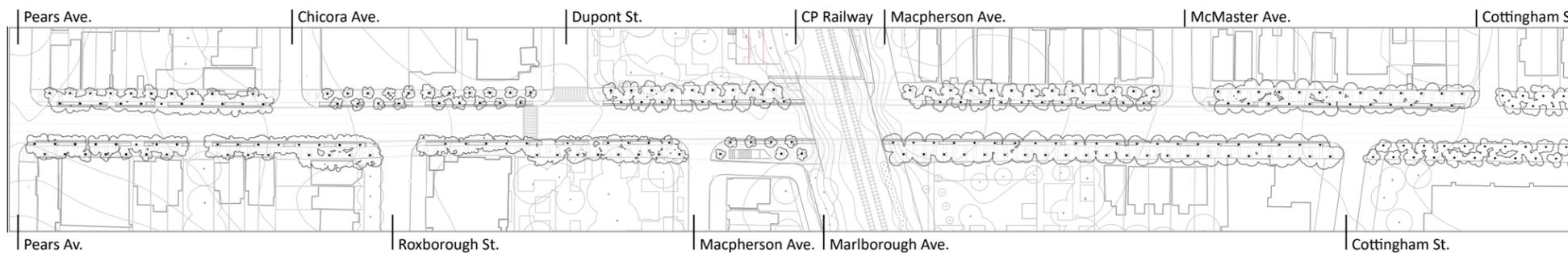
Widening the sidewalks of Avenue Road by removing one traffic lane on each side of the street will reclaim more than 2.6 hectares (6.4 acres) of land for the public. These new linear park spaces will yield a total of 3.5 hectares (8.6 acres), comprising slightly over half of the total right-of-way on Avenue Road between Upper Canada College and Queen's Park.

Series A-8: New Urban Tree Canopy - Symmetric

Reinventing the Avenue



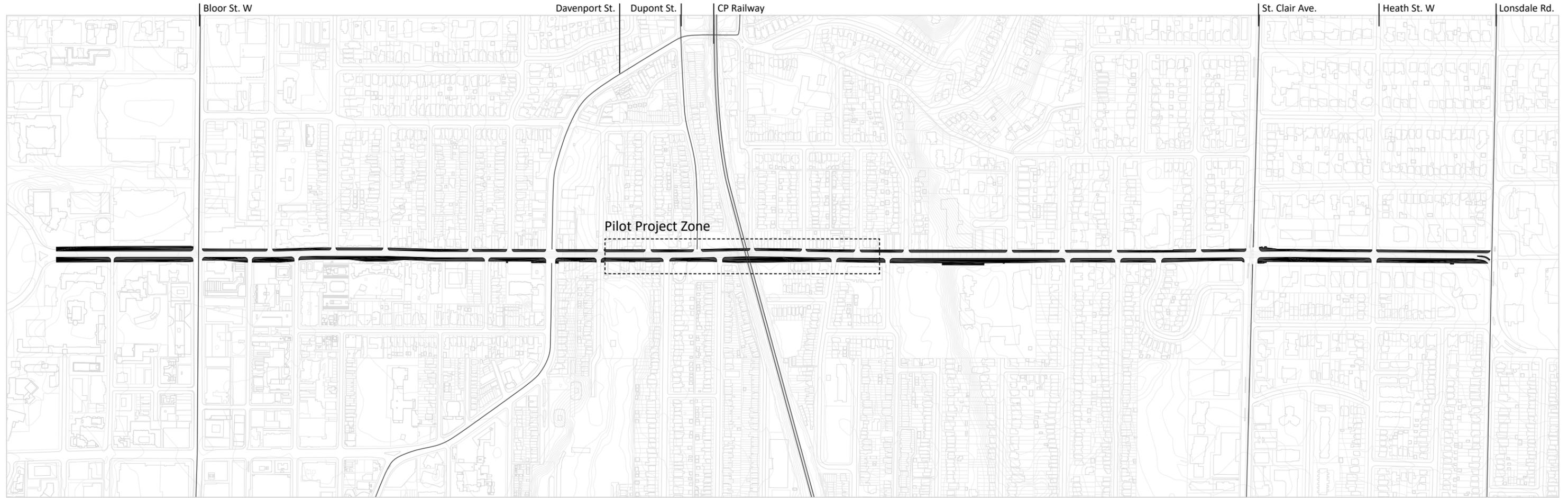
Existing Trees in R.O.W	0
New Trees	1,200



Comment

Expanded sidewalk width can create space for over 1,200 new trees along Avenue Road between UCC and Queen's Park. Mixing varieties of tree species with contrasting seasonal interest will change the appearance of the Avenue throughout the seasons, and provide improved shady streetscapes for pedestrians.

Series A-9: Widened Sidewalks - Asymmetric



Avenue Road- Queen's Park to UCC

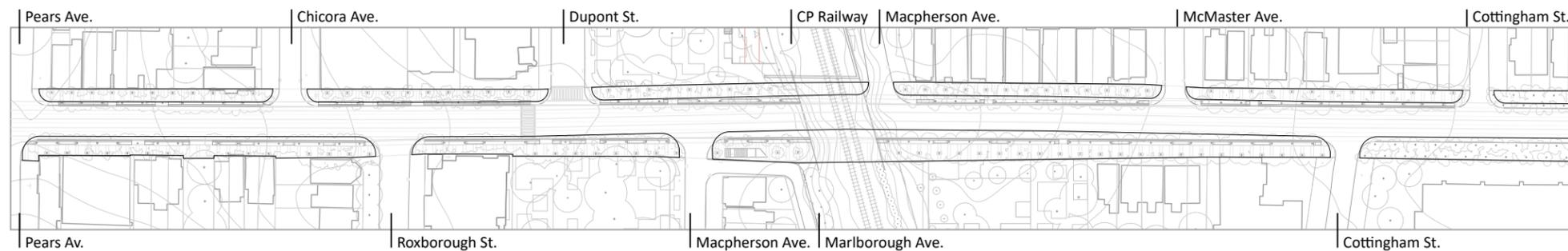
0 250m

New Sidewalk Area

Road:	43,416 m ²	56.5 %
Sidewalks:	33,527 m ²	43.5 %

Proposed Pilot Zone

0 50m



Comment

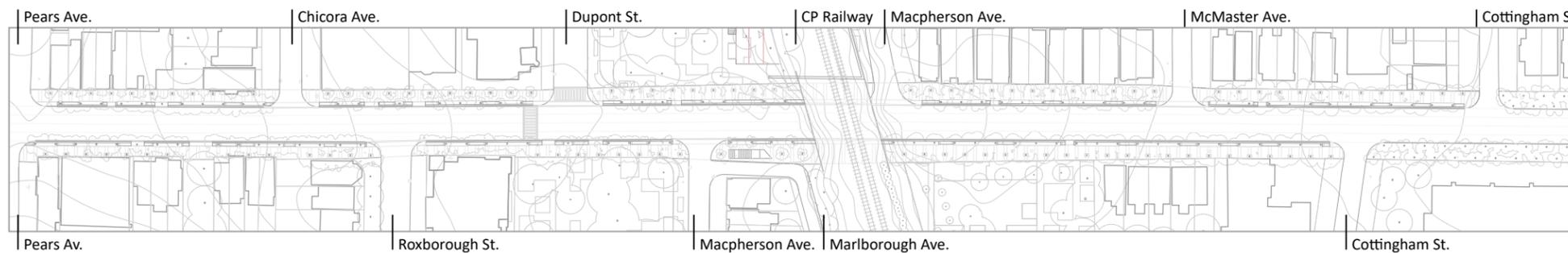
Widening the sidewalks of Avenue Road by removing one traffic lane on each side of the street will reclaim more than 2.6 hectares (6.4 acres) of land for the public. These new linear park spaces will yield a total of 3.5 hectares (8.6 acres), comprising slightly over half of the total right-of-way on Avenue Road between Upper Canada College and Queen's Park.

Series A-10: New Urban Tree Canopy - Asymmetric

Reinventing the Avenue



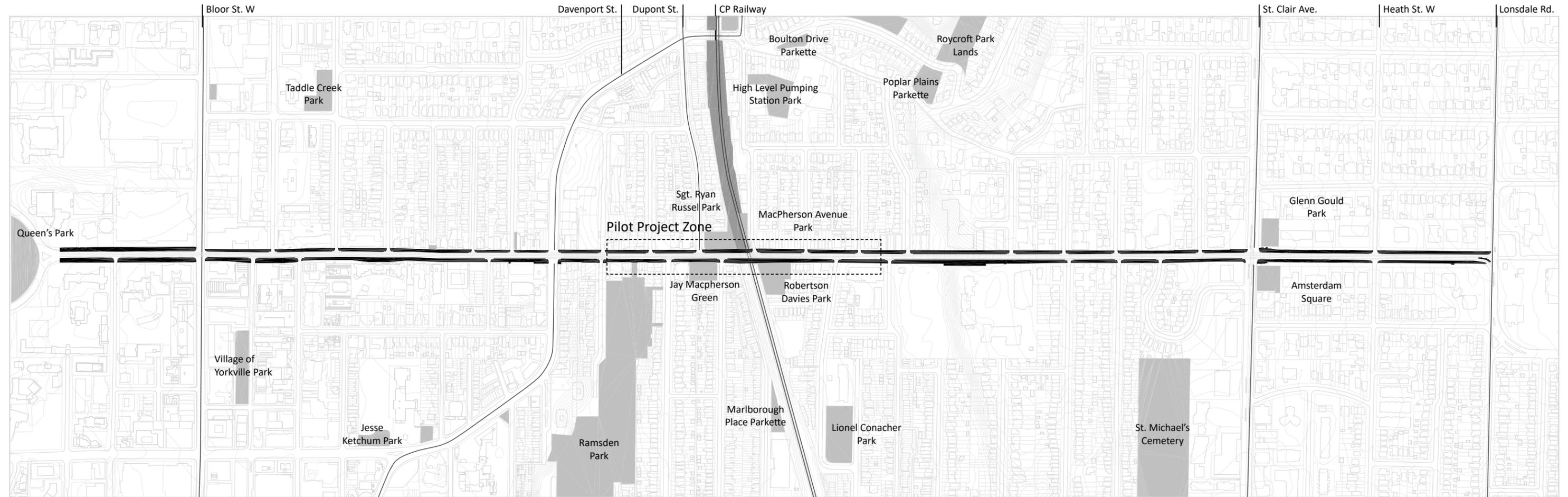
Existing Trees in R.O.W	0
New Trees	750



Comment

Expanded sidewalk width can create space for over 1,200 new trees along Avenue Road between UCC and Queen's Park. Mixing varieties of tree species with contrasting seasonal interest will change the appearance of the Avenue throughout the seasons, and provide improved shady streetscapes for pedestrians.

Series A-11: Founding Natural System



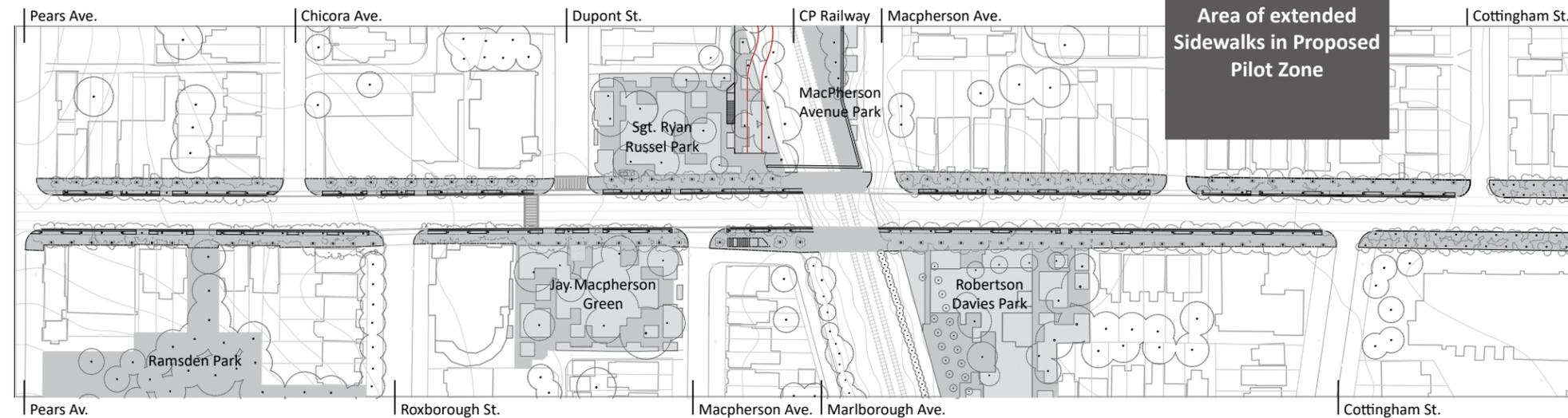
Avenue Road- Queen's Park to UCC

0 250m

■ Parks
■ Green Line/CP Railway Corridor

Proposed Pilot Zone

0 50m



**78 x 78 m
Area of extended
Sidewalks in Proposed
Pilot Zone**

Pilot Zone Park Areas

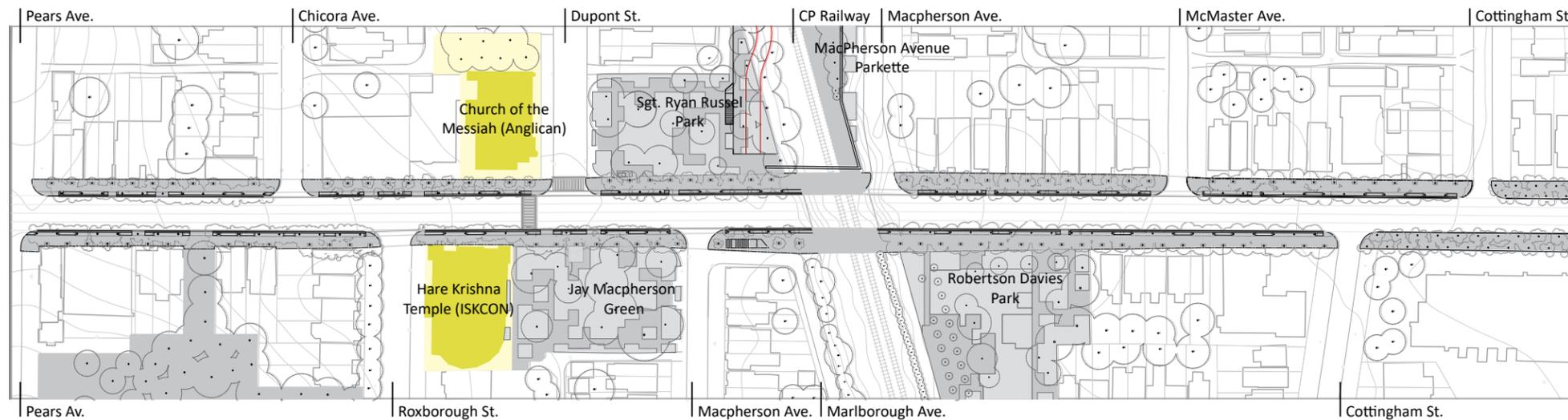
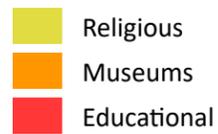
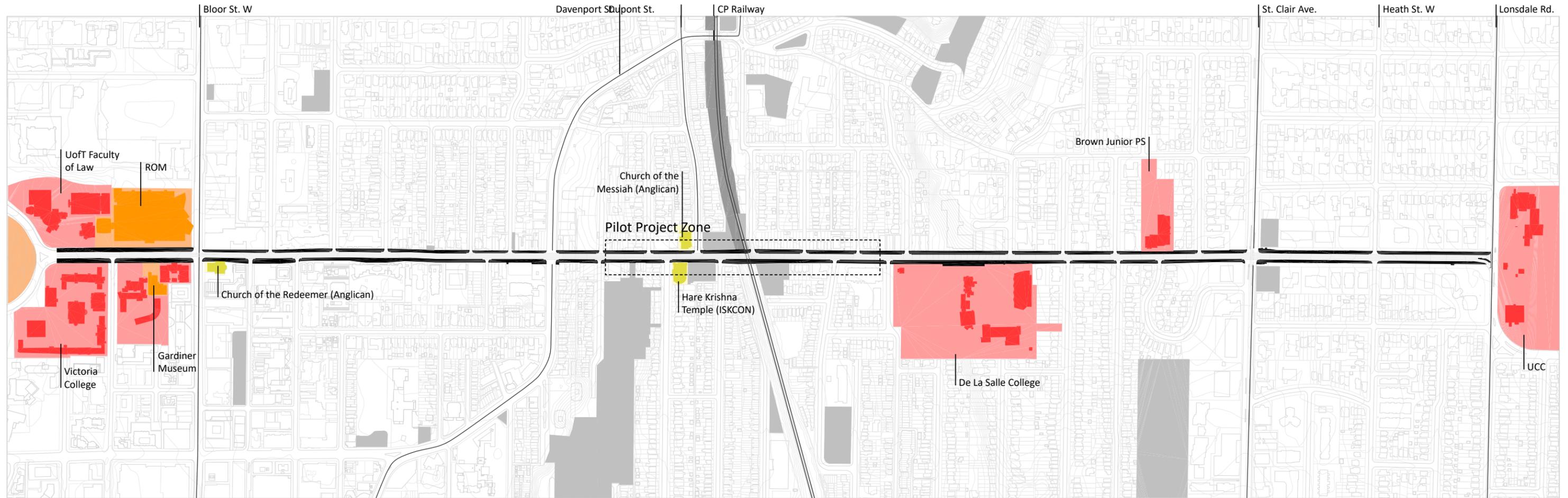
Jay Macpherson Green:	2,025 m ²
Robertson Davies Park:	3,245 m ²
Sgt. Ryan Russel Park:	2,199 m ²
MacPherson Ave. Park:	808 m ²

Total Park Area: 8,277 m²

Extended Sidewalk in Pilot Zone: 6,193 m²

Comment

Extension sidewalks on Avenue Road will impact the numerous parks in its vicinity. These parks, as well as spaces like the Green Line and CP Railway Line, create new East-West connections for a Avenue which has few unbroken intersecting streets.



Comment

In addition to parks, the large lawns and gardens of adjacent educational and religious institutions can be revitalized by new pedestrian space. These institutions, like Upper Canada College, De La Salle College, the University of Toronto, ROM, and Brown Junior PS, have large public frontages and green spaces which can be adapted from their current defensiveness towards the Avenue.