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WILDLIFE



25 Connects

A TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR W. 25TH CORRIDOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JUNE 2021

PREPARED BY

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Stantec +



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1 INTRODUCTION

25Connects is a project funded by the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Transit-oriented Development Pilot Program, is a strategic study to break down barriers along the corridor to build transit-oriented development as well as a guidebook for future bus rapid transit (BRT) implementation.

25Connects ensure that these two important tracks - development and transit engineering - are integrated with each other, even if they take place on different timelines. So named because the project connects distinct neighborhoods through transit, 25Connects aims to strengthen the links between public transit, surrounding development, and the needs of all people - a goal achieved through a robust, inclusive and active social engagement process. The study includes traditional planning tasks such as analysis of existing demographics, land use, zoning code and parking habits, and stretches beyond to implementation tools for zoning, TOD deal financing, and BRT design.



CORRIDOR NEIGHBORHOODS
 — METROHEALTH ROUTE

Key elements of the plan include:



A BRT design vision for the entire corridor - highlighting the common themes and expressing the unique character of each community where possible.



A review of current market conditions and financial tools available to provide opportunity for new transit-oriented development along the W. 25th Corridor.



A foundational policy and urban design toolkit to implement new transit-oriented development along the W. 25th Corridor in a consistent manner that supports walkable, transit-focused communities.



Identification of factors that will provide equitable housing opportunities along the corridor, ensuring displacement and gentrification are kept to a minimum.

5 REPORTS DEVELOPED FOR THIS STUDY INCLUDE :

- 1 URBAN ANALYSIS
- 2 MARKET AND FINANCE ANALYSIS
- 3 ZONING REVIEW & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
- 4 WHAT WE HEARD (PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT)
- 5 BRT DIAGNOSTIC & RECOMMENDATIONS



2 URBAN ANALYSIS

A review of all existing policy, design and community policy and planning efforts provided key insights to the community in its current context, and the aspirations and challenges that are present today. The following takeaways were highlighted as issues of consideration throughout the project.



3 MARKET AND FINANCE ANALYSIS

The approach to this work was to understand what is happening and what is possible from a real estate perspective by looking at each neighborhood individually. At the same time, we recognize that the boundary areas between neighborhoods may be influenced by market demand from an adjoining neighborhood. The market analysis was informed by engagement with a variety of market participants including brokers, developers, lenders, community development corporations and others and we remain very grateful for their time and contributions.

The market study was divided into four-character areas:

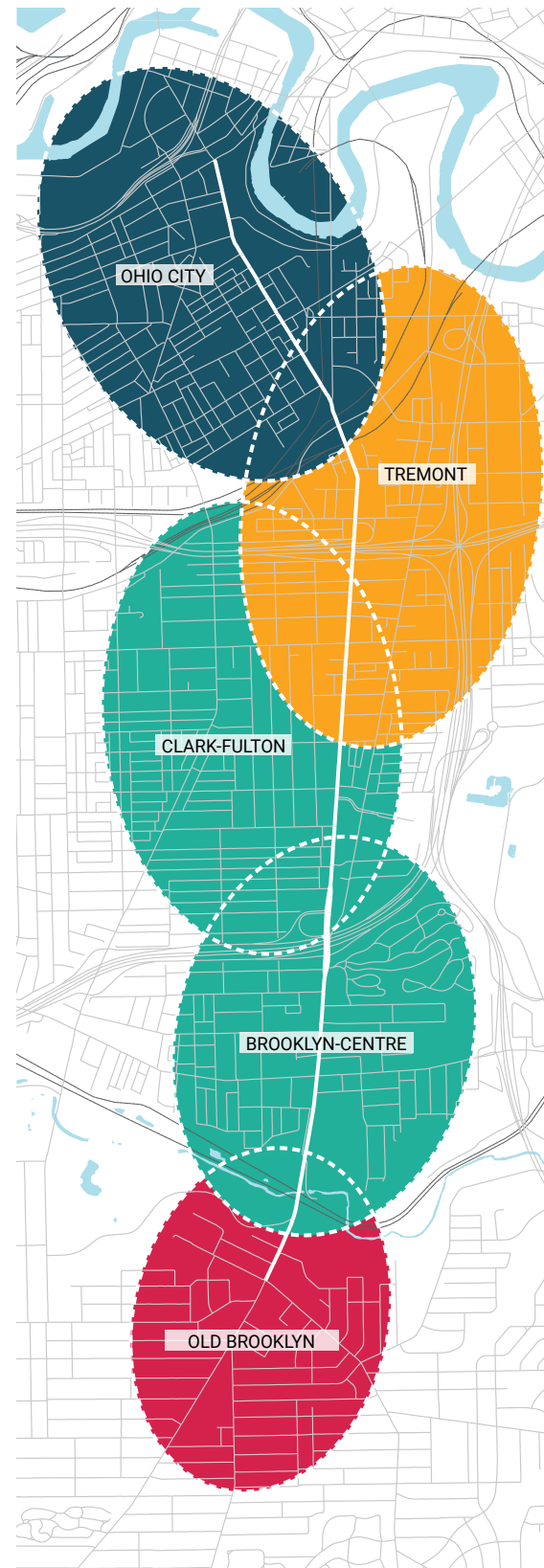
OHIO CITY is well developed and has attracted the attention of well-funded private real estate companies. There are some lenders that have concern that it is overbuilt and absorption will begin to drag, perhaps putting downward pressure on rental and for-sale prices. That said, most market participants believe there is still some runway left for development as the combination of available land, neighborhood amenities, transportation options and local landmarks/institutions should continue to appeal to a wide range of renter/buyer from young professionals to empty nesters.

TREMONT and Ohio City share many of the same market

fundamentals and, together, form one of the healthiest sub-markets in Cleveland. Demand from new renters and homebuyers has delivered a consistent and accelerating pace of new product and prices for developable land have significantly increased. Displacement of historic residents took place many years ago. It is not clear that continued new development and price increases have led to significant additional displacement as the new product being delivered in Tremont is mostly on parking lots and conversions of old single-family homes.

CLARK-FULTON/BROOKLYN CENTRE Any meaningful development in the area will have to be heavily reliant on subsidy. An example currently is the unique set of circumstances and incentives made available on currently housing projects underway with MetroHealth as an example of what it takes to deliver new projects, at-scale, in the neighborhood

OLD BROOKLYN is a market that has a lot of assets, from its handsome historic homes to its public schools and has a baseline of community and retail assets that give it character. At the same time, it is a market that seems to be waiting for a meaningful catalytic project to spur sustained growth and healthy, community focused development.



GAP FUNDING ANALYSIS AND FINANCIAL TOOLKIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, a review of financing tools available for real estate projects along the W25th Corridor was conducted. Federal, state, and local funding programs were investigated as well as impact investing. This effort is to provide a reference to funding sources for both real estate developers and public agencies seeking to fill an apparent financing gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS



1 FINANCIAL PROGRAMS

- ▶ Establish a program to help individuals purchase lower cost homes in Clark Fulton and Brooklyn Centre. The program would make minimal but necessary improvement and finance the units so there is potential for affordable carrying cost and building of equity.



3 FUNDING

- ▶ Create a funding mechanism to assist in financing TOD developments along the 25Connects corridor.



2 COORDINATING COUNCIL

- ▶ Establish a Near Westside coordinating council of Community Development Corporations to collaborate identification of TOD sites, joint marketing initiatives, public policy goals, advocate for funding from the city, county and state and identify cross-community opportunities to invest throughout the W 25th corridor.



4 CLEARINGHOUSE

- ▶ Establish a clearinghouse within the City of Cleveland, Department of Economic Development with access to all current and applicable public sector incentives available for TOD.

4 ZONING REVIEW AND POLICY

The Zoning Review and Policy Recommendations report provides the history of zoning in Cleveland and an analysis of the City's current Land Use Code. The report also includes the existing building typology along W. 25th Corridor and identifies which building type contributed or has the potential to contribute to the character of a TOD community. The report ends with recommendations for the approval process and zoning regulation along the corridor and adjacent communities.

KEY FINDINGS

After a diagnostic review of the existing zoning code, the overlay districts, variance requests that have occurred over the last 5 years as well as conversation with City of Cleveland zoning staff on procedures and processes, the following recommendations set forward are an effort to provide a clear and concise process for anyone wishing

to engage in development activity along the corridor and the adjacent communities. These recommendations are divided along two themes: early consultation, and simplified process.

PLANNING APPROVALS RECOMMENDATIONS



1 EARLY CONSULTATION

- ▶ Establish a protocol for circulation of proposed developments at the pre-application stage and formal application stage with GCRTA on all projects that directly interface with the W. 25th Corridor.



2 SIMPLIFY THE PROCESS

- ▶ Develop materials and upgrade online portals to communicate approval processes, scale approval processes for different development types, and update current design guidelines for housing infill developments.

ZONING/DESIGN REGULATION RECOMMENDATIONS



1 DEVELOP A NEW TOD OVERLAY

- ▶ Develop a new overlay that would be more permissive and form-based focused to fix broader zoning restrictions until a formal form-based code is enacted.



2 STREAMLINE THE CONDITIONAL USES

- ▶ Reduce the number of regulatory items that would be considered to help green light project based on desired outcomes.



3 BE CLEAR ABOUT DENSITY

- ▶ Shift the zoning overlays from relying on metrics like Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and instead focus on typologies of development and unit counts.



4 ELIMINATE ALLEY CLOSURES AND PRIORITIZE ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS

- ▶ Alley closures should be discouraged as they provide additional opportunities for parking options and serve as a vital component to walkable communities.



5 PROVIDE WIGGLE ROOM FOR SETBACKS

- ▶ Setbacks should consider minimum and maximum opportunities to maintain consistent building edge while preserving future right-of-way needed to support public realm improvements to create walkable communities.



6 CONCENTRATE RETAIL AREAS

- ▶ Consider focusing retail opportunities within a 5-minute walk of key nodes along the corridor.



7 GET CREATIVE WITH PARKING

- ▶ Remove visitor parking requirements for all retail and commercial uses and update and clarify residential parking requirements that support the need of a transit-oriented development.



8 CONSIDER INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Focus on built forms and typologies first and embrace more than just one residential typology such as low scale residential developments.

5 WHAT WE HEARD

The What We Heard report provides an overview of the Community Engagement process. The following document presents the neighborhood documentation, demographics data, and ethnographic research, which informed the engagement actions. A wide range of engagement actions were used to provide easy and intuitive ways for diverse community members to share their concerns and ideas. The community feedback drove the project recommendations shown in the other four sections of the final plan.

KEY THEMES

The 25Connects planning process collected a large quantity of community feedback through a wide range of engagement methods. Some of the feedback pointed to particular spots along the corridor, such as missing crosswalks or preferred locations for a new bus shelter. But much of the feedback is applicable to the overall project area. Several key themes emerged from the engagement data. The key themes are organized into four categories:



1 TRANSIT

- ▶ Prioritize comfort and reliability
- ▶ Provide culturally relevant identity and service
- ▶ Improve safety by design.



3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Create TOD with actions to address displacement.
- ▶ Support local businesses eager to grow.
- ▶ Target investments to increase street level activities.



2 USE AND BUILT FORM

- ▶ Collaborate with local retail to better serve riders.
- ▶ Focus on affordability and cultural identity.
- ▶ Remove barriers for equitable access.



4 PARKS AND RECREATION

- ▶ Implement programs to welcome community members.
- ▶ Provide more green spaces of different sizes.
- ▶ Integrate design features to serve all mobility needs.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT BIKE TOURS



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MOBILE TOURS

We distributed **2,500 items** to reach 5% of the entire corridor

Bilingual postards
Neighborhood flyers Bus shelter handouts

We held **21 events,** seven for each phase

Mobile tours Las Dos Fronteras event
User Experience (UX) walks
Latinx events Public Virtual Mtgs
Stakeholder Virtual Mtgs Youth Focus Group

We engaged **772** participants which is **332** more people than we planned

Station Design Survey 2.0

BRT Priorities Survey 1.0 Stakeholder Virtual Mtgs
Ethnographic interviews

Mobile tours Las Dos Fronteras event Youth Focus Group
User Experience (UX) walks Public Virtual Mtgs

Social media ads
Website Email Campaigns
User Experience (UX) walks

Latinx events Stakeholder Virtual Mtgs
Las Dos Fronteras event Public Virtual Mtgs
Mobile tours Ethnographic interviews Youth Focus Group

We got **65k impressions,** from all around the corridor

6 BRT DIAGNOSTIC

The overarching purpose of 25Connects study is to examine the barriers to transit-oriented development along the W. 25th Corridor. A key component to the success of TOD is the "T" itself. The BRT Diagnostic is a high-level examination of the physical requirements of the future bus rapid transit line, from platform spatial requirements that might impact future development setbacks to the impacts to the street design itself. This element of the plan is not meant to be a final design, but rather to set the stage for preliminary engineering work.

RIDERSHIP

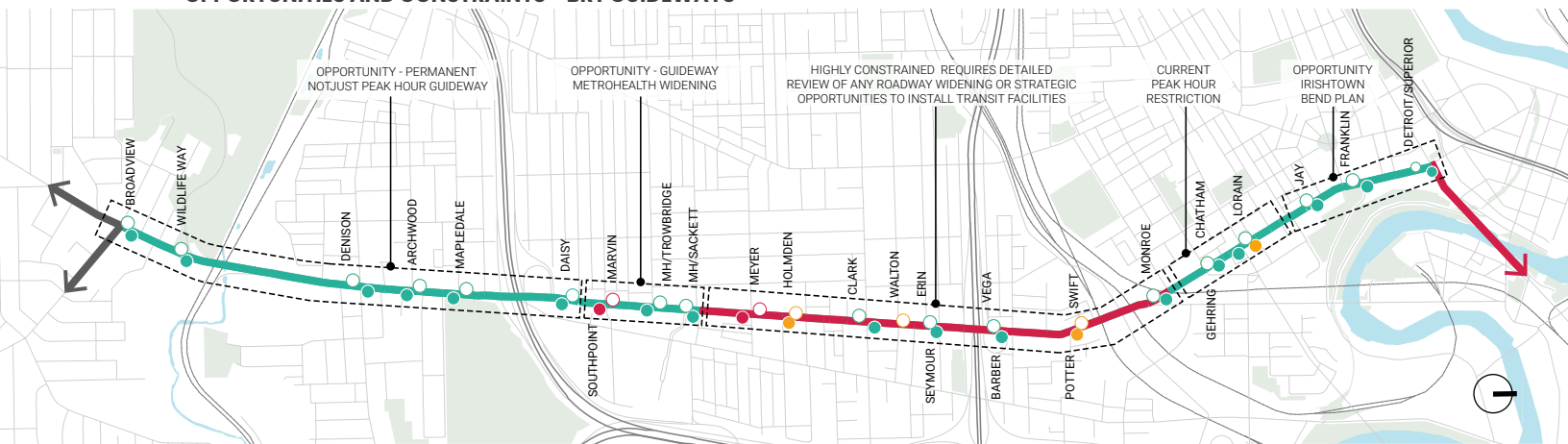
The combined MetroHealth line (routes 51 A/B/C) has a total average daily ridership (weekday) of approximately 5,409 riders. The 25Connects study area (Detroit Avenue to Broadview Road) accounts for approximately 43% of this ridership, with the area immediately north and south of Lorain Avenue having the highest ridership along the whole corridor. High ridership is also noted on major streets intersecting the W. 25th Corridor, including Detroit Avenue in Ohio City, Clark Avenue and Trowbridge Avenue in Clark-Fulton, Denison Avenue in Brooklyn-Centre, and Broadview Road in Old Brooklyn.

100% dedicated BRT guideway along W. 25th

~ **65%** : 24/7 dedicated lanes

~ **35%** : peak hour dedicated lanes

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS - BRT GUIDEWAYS



PROPOSED BRT BUS STOPS

- NORTHBOUND
- SOUTHBOUND
- ALTERNATIVE NORTHBOUND
- ALTERNATIVE SOUTHBOUND

EXISTING BUS STOPS TO BE STUDIED FURTHER

- NORTHBOUND
- SOUTHBOUND

BRT GUIDEWAYS

- 24/7 DEDICATED LANES
- PEAK HOUR DEDICATED LANES

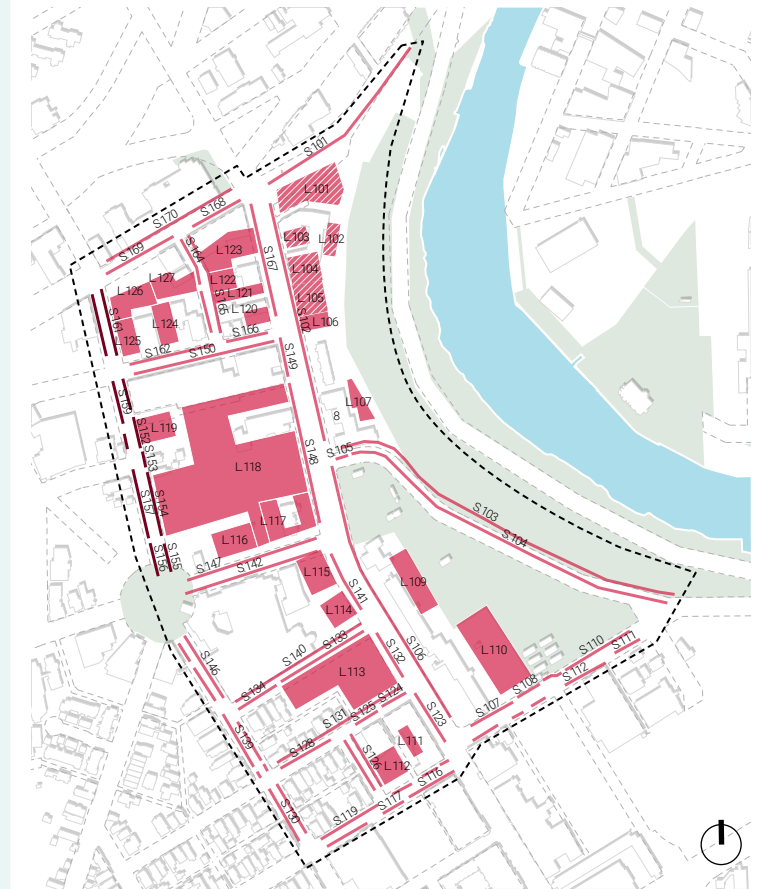
PARKING

Parking is a critical piece of unlocking an area's potential. Always a hot (and often divisive) topic, the 'where' and 'how much' of parking inform development plans, station locations, and potential corridor operations. 25Connects identified five station areas as priorities for more detailed parking analysis: Franklin, Clark, MetroHealth, Denison, and Broadview station areas.

CORRIDOR OPERATIONS

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts Grant funding requires dedicated BRT guideway for at least 50% of the corridor's length in peak period direction. A review of operations noted that peak period for the W. 25th corridor is in both directions, and at a planning for 50% of the corridor's length, and at a conceptual study, the W 25th Corridor can meet this requirement through a combination of 24/7 dedicated lanes and peak hour/peak direction dedicated lanes.

Franklin parking inventory

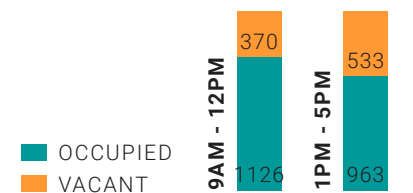


- OFF-STREET PARKING
- ▨ OFF-STREET OVERGROWN/ABANDONED PARKING LOTS
- ON-STREET PARKING
- - UNDER-CONSTRUCTION ON-STREET PARKING

All parking facilities

~ **75%** of all parking facilities is occupied in the AM

~ **65%** of all parking facilities is occupied in the PM



STATION TYPOLOGIES

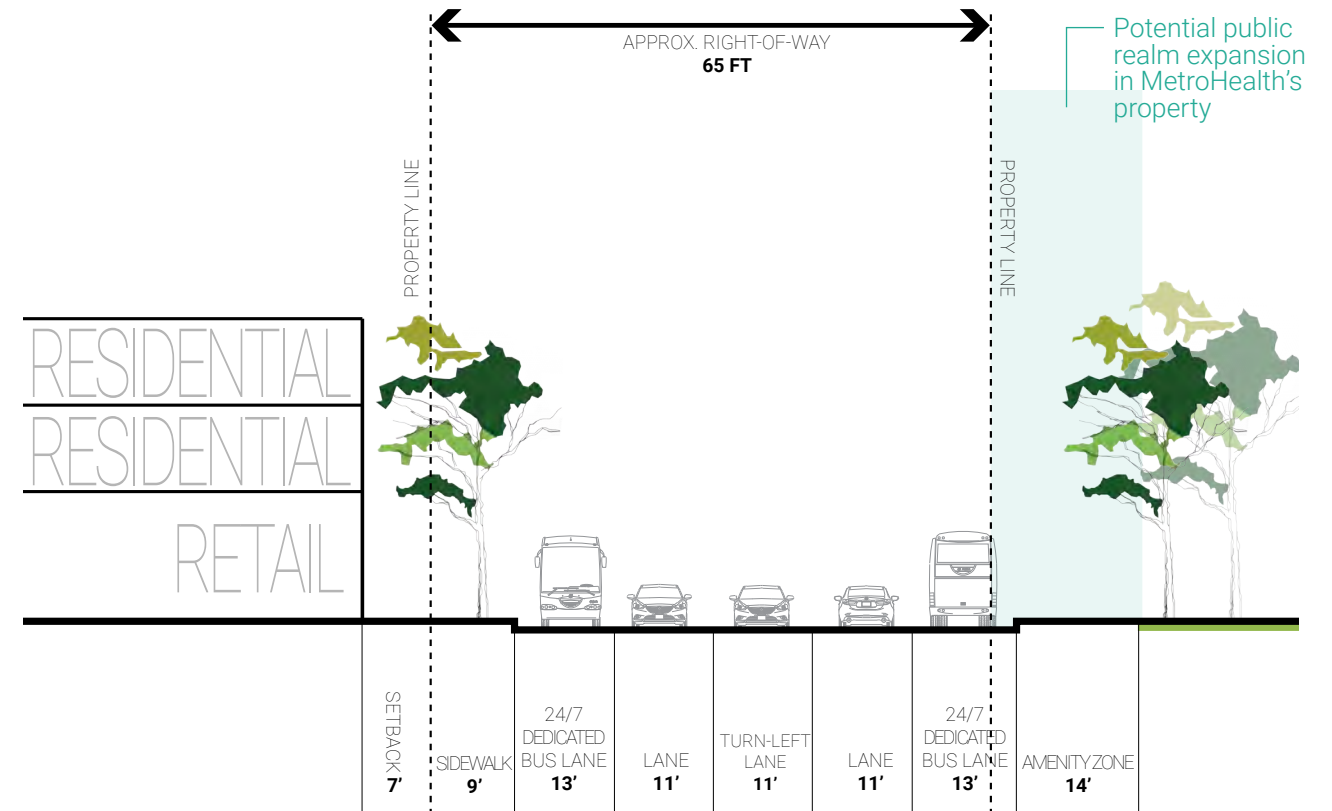
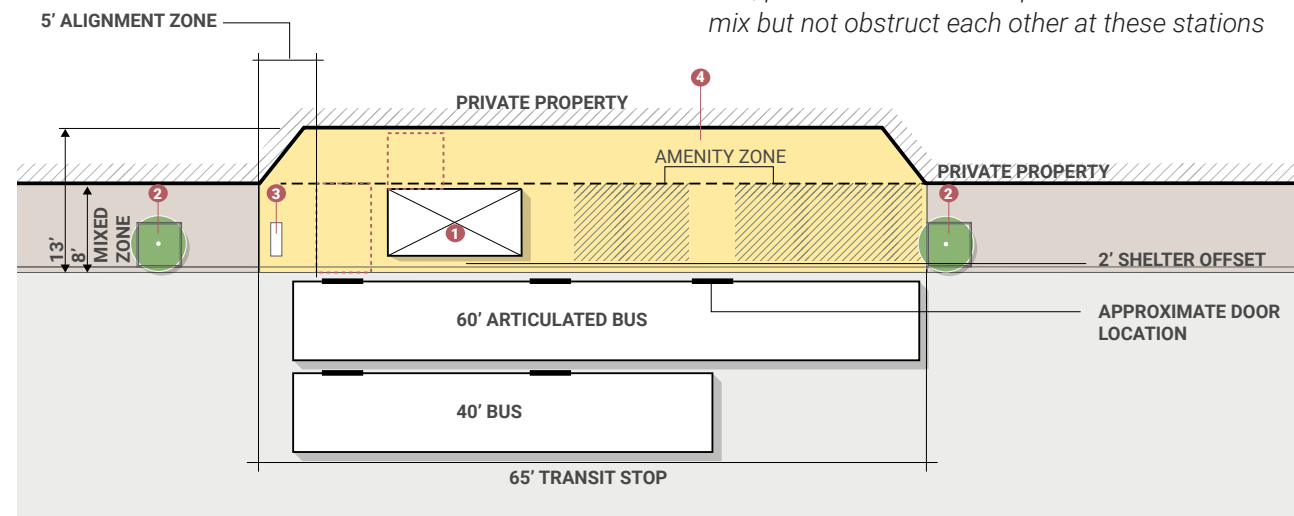
The challenge for the MetroHealth BRT is to provide a consistent, instantly recognizable station that maximizes RIDER comfort while still fitting into a very small footprint. 25Connects developed a series of five station typologies to address local station context and available right-of-way; each station has a template showing how transit elements will fit into the existing streetscape. In some cases, stations may consider the use of small portions of adjacent private property through private use agreements, in order to provide sufficient use for pedestrian circulation:

STATION LOCATIONS

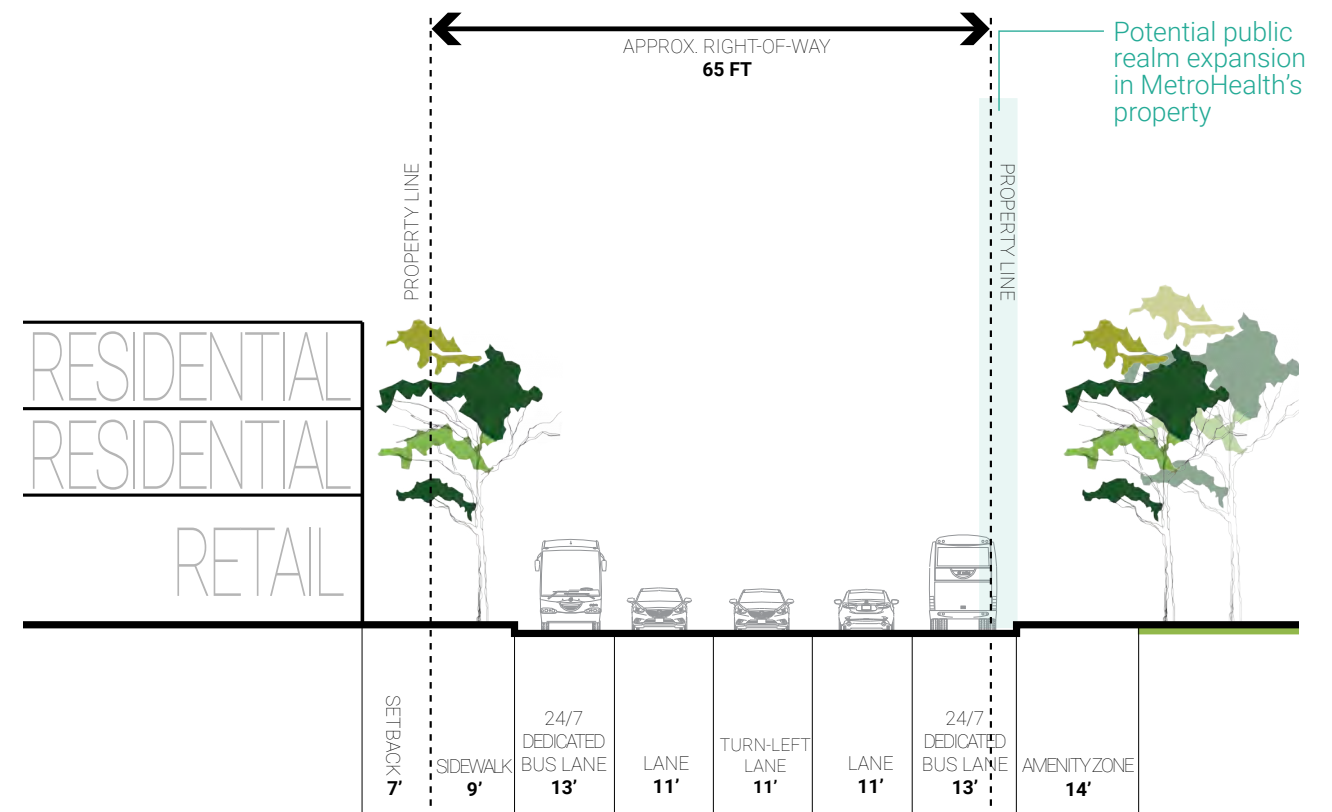
Specific block-by-block station location is informed by a variety of factors, including operational efficiency, available sidewalk width, or adjacency to busy destinations. 25Connects assessed the location of each proposed station and recommended optimal location for each. In some cases, stations remained where stops are today; in other cases, stops shifted slightly to accommodate longer buses, and in still other cases, stations shifted across an intersection so buses could clear a traffic light before stopping.

EXAMPLE OF STATION TYPOLOGY FOR 25CONNECTS

Regular Station (13' wide) used at locations with average width sidewalks, pedestrian and transit patron circulation will mix but not obstruct each other at these stations



METROHEALTH STATION AREA CORRIDOR CROSS-SECTION (OPTION 1)



METROHEALTH STATION AREA CORRIDOR CROSS-SECTION (OPTION 2)

TOD NODES

Five station areas were identified along the corridor to conceptualize Transit-oriented Development ideas that would meet both community need and align with the market conditions along the corridor. The five study areas are intended to be a guide for future development and are diagrammatic to highlight considerations from built form typologies to parking strategies and urban design considerations.

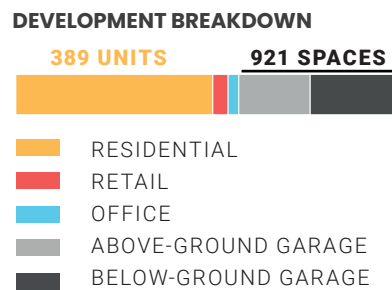
The Franklin station TOD node is located in Ohio City, an active real estate environment where developments have multiplied over the past few years. A significant challenge is the existence of large surface parking lots, especially those belonging to the Lutheran Clinic. These lots create a gap in urban form and deter the creation of thriving urban environments. Parking structures, in contrast, require less space for the same amount of parking and leaving lot edges free for TOD development.

The Clark station TOD node is located within an ethnically diverse neighborhood with a growing Latinx community. This area is characterized by many vacant and underutilized buildings and parcels. The project aims to revive economic development in tandem with La Villa Hispana, a major cultural hub immediately adjacent to the existing Clark bus stop.

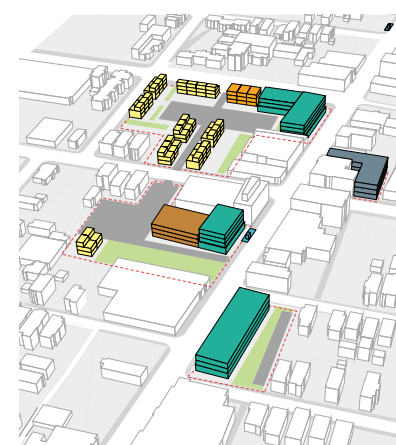
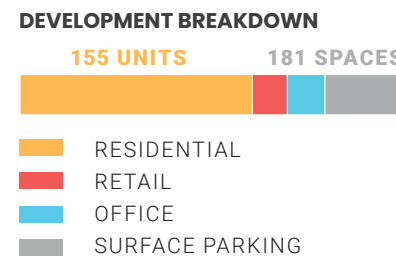
The MetroHealth station TOD node is located across the street from the MetroHealth Campus whose masterplan, currently under study, features a 25-acre park bordering the W. 25th Corridor. Responding to ridership in the area and ensuring easy access to the future hospital buildings is key to determining station location and dimensions.

The Denison station TOD node is located in Brooklyn Centre, a national historic district. While this area is rich in historic architecture and design, there are many auto-oriented commercial developments surrounding the station. While most if not all of these low-density sites may eventually redevelop, market reality suggests that transit-oriented change will be a prolonged process.

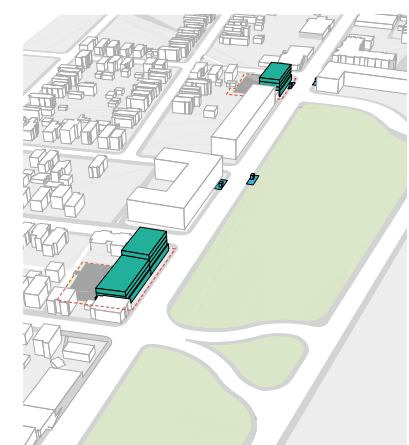
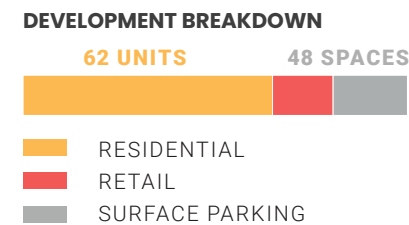
The Broadview station TOD node offers a variety of development incentives: a second MetroHealth campus entrance, historic buildings with redevelopment potential, the new Brighton Park, and generally affordable housing stock. Disadvantages include a lack of the land uses, density, and housing diversity that support high quality transit. In addition, the existing public realm is challenged by a lack of pedestrian amenities and active storefronts.



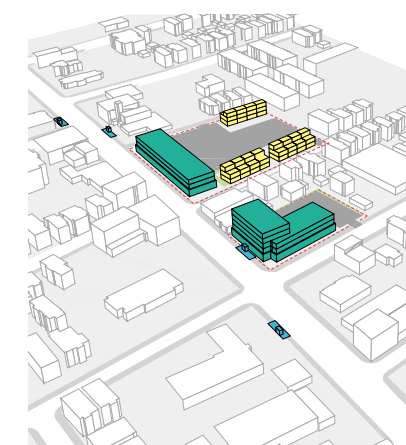
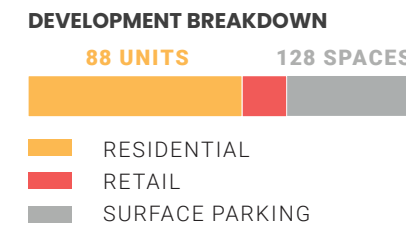
FRANKLIN STATION CONCEPT



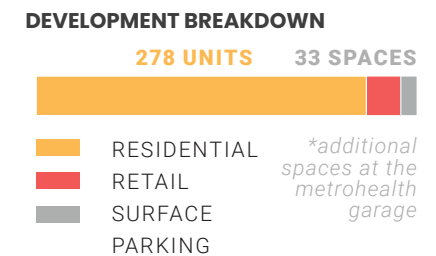
CLARK STATION CONCEPT



METROHEALTH STATION CONCEPT



DENISON STATION CONCEPT





BROADVIEW STATION CONCEPT

- TOD 3D DIAGRAMS**
- TYPE 1: TOWNHOMES
 - TYPE 2: STACKED FLATS
 - TYPE 3: RESIDENTIAL BUILDING
 - TYPE 4: OFFICE BUILDING
 - TYPE 5: MIXED-USE (RET.+RES.)
 - TYPE 6: MIXED-USE (RET.+OFF.+RES.)
 - PARKING
 - TOD PROJECT
 - BRT STATION


7 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS


As noted with the community and stakeholders, this is not the final piece of collaboration or work to be done to support transit-oriented development along W. 25th Street Corridor. Following this body of work, the following next steps are recommended:


- 


Formalize a new development review process along transit priority corridors (City of Cleveland and GCRTA)
- 


Continue dialog with community on transit, housing and economic development needs. (GCRTA)

 - ▶ Facilitate community consensus as details on BRT design and implementation are developed
- 

Initiate the Preliminary Engineering work for the MetroHealth BRT. (GCRTA)
- 

FTA Small Starts Initiation
- 

Identify existing proposed development applications that might benefit from review by GCRTA along the W. 25 Street Corridor (City of Cleveland and GCRTA)
- 

Develop an Equitable TOD playbook that will highlight ways to mitigate displacement while supporting new development within the corridor. (City of Cleveland & GCRTA)
- 

Initiate updates to the zoning code and land use planning policy (City of Cleveland) to support TOD along the corridor (City of Cleveland)



