

# CONNECTING THE CIRCLE

Public Realm & Land Use Master Plan | Executive Summary

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Connecting the Circle* is the result of a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort grounded in shared responsibility for University Circle’s public realm and civic future. This plan reflects the leadership, expertise, and generosity of many individuals and organizations who contributed time, insight, and care throughout the process. It has been shaped by the collective effort of those who contributed to it and is intended to guide future action in a way that reflects their shared commitment to creating a legacy for University Circle that endures across generations. We are especially grateful for the ongoing guidance of our Steering Committee, Advisory Group, and the University Circle Inc. Board of Trustees.

*Connecting the Circle* would not have been possible without the generous support of the State of Ohio and the Holden Parks Trust.

**University Circle Inc.** served as the client and civic steward for this work, providing clear leadership, thoughtful guidance, and a sustained commitment to aligning institutional ambition with everyday public life. UCI’s role as convener was essential to shaping a plan that reflects both the complexity and opportunity of University Circle as a shared civic district. The Steering Committee and Advisory Board played a critical role throughout the process, offering perspective, testing assumptions, and helping ensure that this plan remained grounded in institutional realities, public accountability, and long-term civic value. This plan was shaped through extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including institutional leaders, residents of both University Circle and surrounding neighborhoods, students, district employees, and visitors who experience University Circle as part of daily life. Their observations, priorities, and concerns made clear where the district succeeds, where it falls short, and where change matters most. The framework presented here is a direct response to those lived experiences and is intended to serve the people who shared them.

Wade Lagoon

**Sasaki** served as the lead planning and design consultant, responsible for overall vision, framework development, and integration of design, systems, and implementation strategy. Sasaki co-led the engagement process with Third Space Action Lab, working closely with University Circle Inc. and project partners to synthesize input from across the district and translate shared values into a coherent civic framework tailored specifically to University Circle.

**Third Space Action Lab** served as the engagement and racial equity consultant, partnering with Sasaki to design and facilitate inclusive engagement strategies that elevated lived experience and informed this plan’s priorities. TSAL served as a translator between residents and the planning team, and their contributions helped ensure that questions of access, belonging, and accountability were addressed thoughtfully and substantively throughout the planning process.

**Toole Design** served as the project lead for transportation and mobility, providing analysis and guidance related to street design, crossings, safety, multimodal access, and corridor performance. Their work informed this plan’s approach to traffic calming, connectivity, and the integration of walking, biking, and transit into a cohesive district-wide system.

**Nelson\Nygaard** served as the parking consultant, supporting the development of district-wide parking, curb management, and “park once” strategies. Their analysis helped reframe parking as a civic support system that supports walkability, access, and public realm performance rather than functioning as a standalone technical consideration.

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# A LETTER FROM KATE BORDERS

PRESIDENT AND CEO, UNIVERSITY CIRCLE INC.

University Circle has always been a place of remarkable ambition. It is where Cleveland invests in knowledge, culture, health, and discovery at the highest level, and where those pursuits meet the everyday lives of residents, students, workers, and visitors. Few places bring together so many institutions of national and global significance in such close proximity. Even fewer are so closely interwoven with their surrounding neighborhoods and the rhythms of daily city life.

*Connecting the Circle* grew out of a shared recognition that the spaces between our institutions matter as much as the institutions themselves. Over the past year, University Circle Inc., alongside the many people whose daily lives, work, learning, and creativity shape University Circle, undertook a broad planning process to better understand how the district is experienced. We listened to people who live here, work here, study here, live nearby, commute through the district, and visit from across the region and the world. We spent time in public spaces, along roadways, and at transit stops, observing the moments where people arrive, cross streets, and move between destinations.

What this process revealed was both encouraging and clarifying. University Circle is deeply valued as a source of pride, opportunity, and cultural life. At the same time, many people described moments of confusion, discomfort, or hesitation, particularly around arrival, movement, and access. These experiences shape whether people feel confident exploring the district, whether they choose to walk or linger, and whether public space feels open and shared or difficult to navigate. Importantly, these experiences are not evenly shared, reflecting deeper questions of who feels welcome and at ease in the district's public spaces. University Circle's challenge is not the quality of its institutions, but the quality of the experience between them.

This report responds to those insights with care and intention. It does not prescribe a single future or offer a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, it provides a common framework to help align design, operations, and investment around a clearer, more welcoming public realm. It recognizes that lasting change will come not from isolated projects, but from coordinated action over time and from treating public space as essential civic infrastructure rather than leftover space.

*Connecting the Circle* is grounded in responsibility. University Circle does not exist apart from its context or history, and its future depends on strengthening physical, social, and civic connections to surrounding neighborhoods. This plan reflects that understanding. It is practical as well as aspirational, attentive to everyday needs as well as long-term opportunity. Most importantly, it is designed to be used: by institutions planning new investments, by public agencies improving streets and transit, by philanthropic partners supporting civic life, and by community members who care deeply about how this place continues to evolve.

I invite you to read this document as an opening conversation rather than a final word. Its success will be measured not only by what is built, but by how University Circle feels over time—how easy it is to arrive, how comfortable it is to move through, and how clearly it signals that this is a place meant to be shared. On behalf of University Circle Inc., I look forward to continuing this work together and translating the ideas in these pages into visible, meaningful change across the district.

Warmly,  
  
Kate Borders  
President  
University Circle Inc.



# INTRODUCTION

*Connecting the Circle* is a public realm and land use master plan developed to strengthen University Circle as a connected, welcoming, and cohesive civic district. Led by University Circle Inc. in partnership with Sasaki, ThirdSpace Action Lab, Toole Design, and Nelson\Nygaard, the planning process brought together institutional leaders, residents, students, employees, and visitors to understand how the district is experienced in everyday life and where targeted investment can make the greatest impact. The plan responds to that input with a clear design framework and a set of coordinated recommendations focused on public space, access, and long-term stewardship. It establishes a shared public realm framework, identifies Signature Moves, defines the Enabling Systems that make them work, and outlines practical Implementation Pathways so coordination can translate into visible change over time. This Executive Summary distills the core ideas, design strategies, and implementation logic of the full report, offering a concise overview intended to support shared understanding, alignment, and action. The recommendations are structured so that incremental decisions made over time and across institutions accumulate into a coherent, welcoming public realm that works both on ordinary days and during special events. These recommendations provide a roadmap for advancing University Circle's public realm in a way that reflects its cultural significance and civic responsibility as Greater Cleveland's center of arts, culture, wellness, and learning.



# SECTION 1

# UNIVERSITY CIRCLE AS A CULTURAL HUB



Aerial View of University Circle

## A DISTRICT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

University Circle is one of the most significant cultural districts in the United States. Within a remarkably compact geography, it brings together internationally recognized museums and performance venues, a major research university and leaders in arts education, nationally renowned healthcare institutions, public parks, and diverse neighborhoods. Few places in the country concentrate so much cultural, educational, and medical excellence in such close proximity. These institutions collectively attract over three million visitors each year, support tens of thousands of jobs, and shape Cleveland's identity as a center of knowledge, creativity, and care.

# BEYOND DESTINATIONS: EVERYDAY CIVIC EXPERIENCE

Yet University Circle is more than a collection of extraordinary destinations. It is also a place people move through every day—arriving for work or school, visiting museums, attending performances, receiving care, passing between neighborhoods, or simply walking through public space. These everyday experiences shape how the district is understood and who feels welcome within it. They determine whether University Circle functions as a shared civic place or as a set of isolated institutions connected by roadways and parking facilities. The spaces between institutions—streets, parks, paths, plazas, and corridors—are therefore as consequential as the buildings themselves.



Wade Oval in autumn



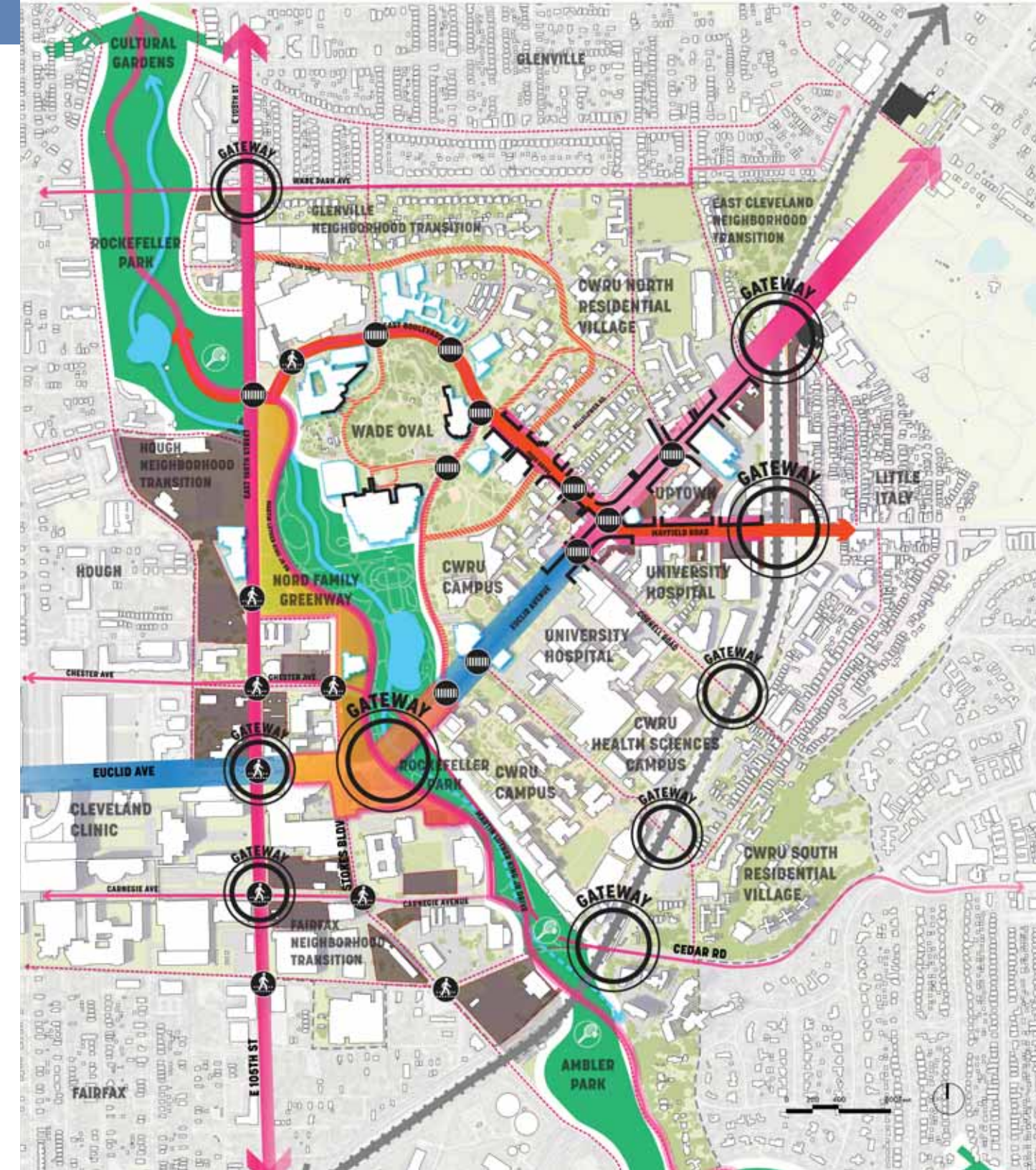
Wade Oval Wednesdays



Jazz on the Greenway

# THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A CULTURAL HUB

As a district defined by public-facing institutions and civic purpose, University Circle’s public realm must do more than accommodate movement. It must signal openness, dignity, and shared ownership. It must allow people to arrive easily, move intuitively, and linger comfortably. It must serve the unhurried Tuesday afternoon as capably as it serves the crowded opening night, serving visitors, residents, workers, and the Greater Cleveland community.



Framework of mobility as an Enabling System for connecting key points of University Circle

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR A SHARED CIVIC FUTURE

*Connecting the Circle* recognizes that University Circle's next chapter will not be defined by any single project or institution, but by how the district functions as a whole. It asks how the public realm can better support everyday life, strengthen connections between institutions and surrounding neighborhoods, and align future investment around a shared civic vision.



Conceptual Rendering of Wade Oval

# SECTION 2 THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY CIRCLE IN THE REGION



## A REGIONAL ANCHOR FOR CULTURE, INNOVATION, AND WELLNESS

University Circle plays a role in Greater Cleveland that extends far beyond its physical boundaries. As a concentration of cultural institutions, healthcare providers, and research and education hubs, it functions as one of the region's most important employment centers, visitor destinations, and engines of innovation. Millions of people pass through the district each year for work, education, medical care, cultural events, and recreation, making University Circle one of the most widely shared civic environments in Greater Cleveland.

# A DISTRICT SHAPED BY HISTORY AND PHILANTHROPY

University Circle’s development reflects over a century of philanthropic investment, institutional growth, and planning ambition. From its early conception as a cultural and educational district to its evolution into a nationally recognized institutional cluster, the area has been shaped by long-term commitments to public purpose. This legacy has produced extraordinary assets that continue to define Cleveland’s civic identity.

At the same time, the district’s physical form reflects historical planning decisions that prioritized institutional expansion and automobile access over public space continuity and neighborhood connection. Large blocks, wide roadways, surface parking, and fragmented pedestrian environments emerged gradually as institutions grew independently over time. While these patterns supported institutional success, they also introduced physical, social, perceptual, and psychological barriers that continue to affect how the district functions as a shared civic place. Understanding this history is essential not to assign blame, but to recognize the inherited conditions that shape present-day experience and require coordinated repair rather than isolated intervention.

## PHOTO LEGEND

- ① University Circle, circa 1900. Source: University Circle Inc.
- ② Nurses stand outside Cleveland Clinic Hospital’s main entrance, 1924. Source: Cleveland Clinic Magazine
- ③ Wade Park Lagoon, 1930. Source: Cleveland Historical
- ④ Severance Hall, 1947. Source: Cleveland Scene
- ⑤ Representatives of University Circle Development Foundation (UCDF) and Cleveland City Planners, circa 1950s. Source: University Circle Inc.
- ⑥ Winston Willis and Charlene, 1963. Source: Green Book Cleveland
- ⑦ Judy’s Hand Sculpture by Tony Tasset, 2018 Source: Cleveland 101
- ⑧ Aerial View of University Circle, 2021. Source: Cleveland.com
- ⑨ Wade Oval Wednesdays, 2022. Source: Cleveland.com



# CONNECTION TO SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS








University Circle is inseparable from the neighborhoods that surround it. Adjacent communities including Hough, Glenville, Fairfax, Little Italy, and East Cleveland have long provided the workforce, cultural richness, and social fabric that sustain the district. Many residents live within walking distance of its institutions, parks, and transit routes, experiencing University Circle not as a destination, but as part of daily life. Yet the relationship between the district and its surrounding neighborhoods has not always been reciprocal. Physical barriers, traffic infrastructure, and unclear thresholds have often limited ease of movement and weakened the sense of continuity between communities and institutions.

*Connecting the Circle* positions these relationships as central to the plan's purpose. Improving access, legibility, and comfort at neighborhood thresholds is not an ancillary goal; it is fundamental to University Circle's role as a regional civic district. Strengthening these connections supports economic opportunity, cultural exchange, and everyday use, ensuring that the district's benefits are more broadly and equitably shared by those who live closest to it.

# PUBLIC REALM AS REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The public realm within University Circle functions as a form of regional infrastructure. Streets, paths, parks, and plazas support daily movement between institutions, neighborhoods, and transit, while also accommodating cultural events, informal gathering, and recreation. When designed and managed well, these spaces extend the value of institutional investment, allowing people to engage with culture, education, and wellness beyond building interiors. Because University Circle serves such a wide and diverse population, its public spaces must perform reliably across a range of conditions—peak events and ordinary weekdays, daytime activity and evening use, seasonal change and long-term growth. This requires a level of coordination and intentionality that goes beyond individual projects. It calls for a shared framework that aligns design, operations, and stewardship across institutional boundaries. The regional importance of University Circle makes this coordination especially critical. Decisions made here influence travel behavior, shape development patterns, and affect how people experience Cleveland as a connected civic landscape. As such, investment in the public realm is not only a local concern, but a regional responsibility with implications for safety, access to jobs and care, and long-term economic vitality.

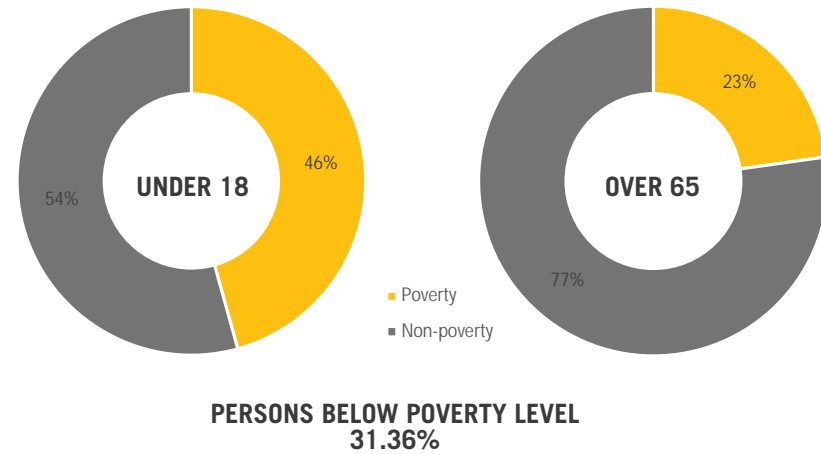
## OPPORTUNITIES IN UNIVERSITY CIRCLE

-  Primary Neighborhood Connections
-  Open Space Connections
-  Open Spaces
-  Bike Path
-  Active Edges
-  Rockefeller Park
-  Parking



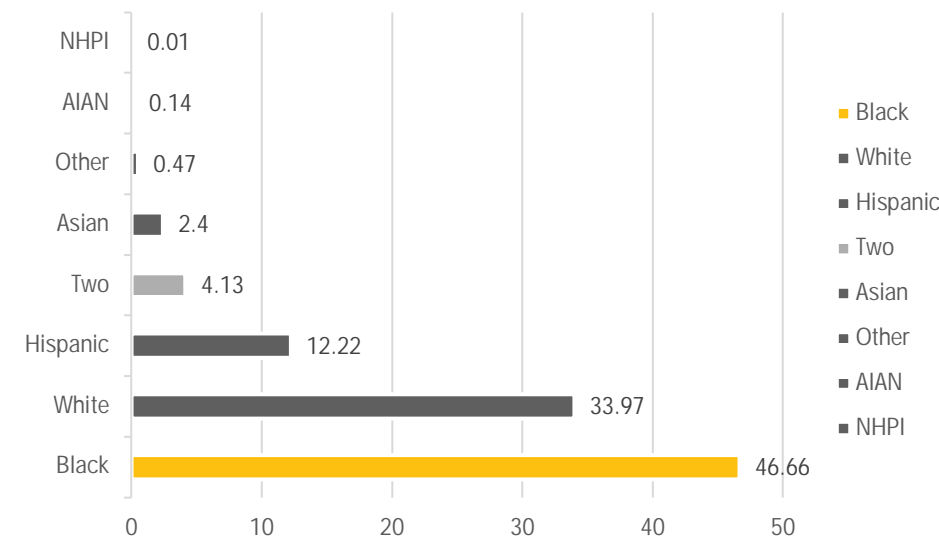
# PLANNING FOR RESPONSIBILITY AND REPAIR

*Connecting the Circle* emerges from an understanding that University Circle's future will be shaped less by expansion than by how existing spaces are repaired, connected, and reimagined. The plan recognizes that public realm investment can address long-standing gaps in access, comfort, and clarity, while also supporting institutional goals and regional priorities. Rather than proposing isolated improvements, it advances a coordinated approach that treats public space as shared civic infrastructure and emphasizes everyday experience as the measure of success.



### Poverty Rate

Cleveland, OH has a median household income of \$33,678 which contributes to a citywide poverty rate of 31.36%. Generationally, this skews more towards youth rather than elderly residents, with Cleveland's population under the age of 18 experiencing a poverty level twice that (46%) of the city's 65 and over population (23%).



### Race and Ethnicity

The 5 largest ethnic groups in Cleveland, OH are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (46%), White (Non-Hispanic) (34%), Other (Hispanic) (12%), Two or more (4%), and Asian (2.4%). Cleveland is known for being a minority-majority city, where Black Americans have historically been a primary cultural group.

Winston Willis, prominent real estate developer who established University Circle Properties Development





# SECTION 3 LISTENING, LEARNING, AND CO-DESIGN



Tabling Activities on Wade Oval



3D Model Discussion on Toby's Plaza



Master Plan Open House: Tinkham Veale

## GROUNDING THE PLAN IN EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE

*Connecting the Circle* was shaped through a robust engagement process designed to understand University Circle not only as a collection of institutions, but as a place experienced daily by many different people. The planning team worked closely with University Circle Inc. to engage institutional leaders, residents of University Circle and surrounding neighborhoods, students, employees, visitors, and civic partners within and beyond the district. Engagement was structured to capture both strategic priorities and lived experience—how people arrive, move, gather, and spend time in University Circle. Rather than relying on a single engagement format, the process combined multiple methods to reach a broad and diverse set of voices. These included workshops and meetings with institutional partners; interviews and intimate conversations with neighborhood residents and community organizations; on-site engagement and intercept conversations; walking and cycling audits; and targeted outreach to students, employees, and visitors whose daily routines depend on the district functioning reliably.

**900+**  
comments gathered through CoMap and in-person engagement events

**15+**  
public engagement events

# WHAT WE HEARD, REPEATEDLY

Across engagement activities, several consistent observations emerged. Participants spoke less about individual destinations and more about the experience of moving between them. Arrival, orientation, and safety were frequent topics, particularly for first-time visitors and those navigating the district without a car. Many described feeling uncertain about where to walk, how to cross major streets, or whether particular spaces were intended for public use. Residents of surrounding neighborhoods emphasized the importance of clear, dignified connections into and through University Circle. They noted that while institutions are physically close, the public realm often feels fragmented or difficult to navigate, especially at district edges. Students and employees echoed these concerns, describing habitual routes that avoid certain intersections or corridors due to discomfort, confusion, or perceived safety issues. Institutional partners, in turn, highlighted the challenge of operating within a complex district shaped by many independent actors. While recognizing the strength of individual investments, they noted the absence of a shared public realm framework to guide coordination, align expectations, and support long-term stewardship across boundaries and day-to-day operations.

## MAP SURVEY: WHAT WE HEARD

### PARK OR OPEN SPACE

“ I come for WOW but would appreciate a better concert goer experience ”

### OUTDOOR FURNITURE

“ Would be nice to have places to sit that are not just hard benches ”

### WAYFINDING

“ Point the way to the CULTURAL EPICENTER! ”

### SAFETY/EXPERIENCE

“ Crossing Euclid on a bike is a horrible experience ”

### GATEWAYS

“ Walking under this bridge feels unsafe ”

### FOOD & DRINKS

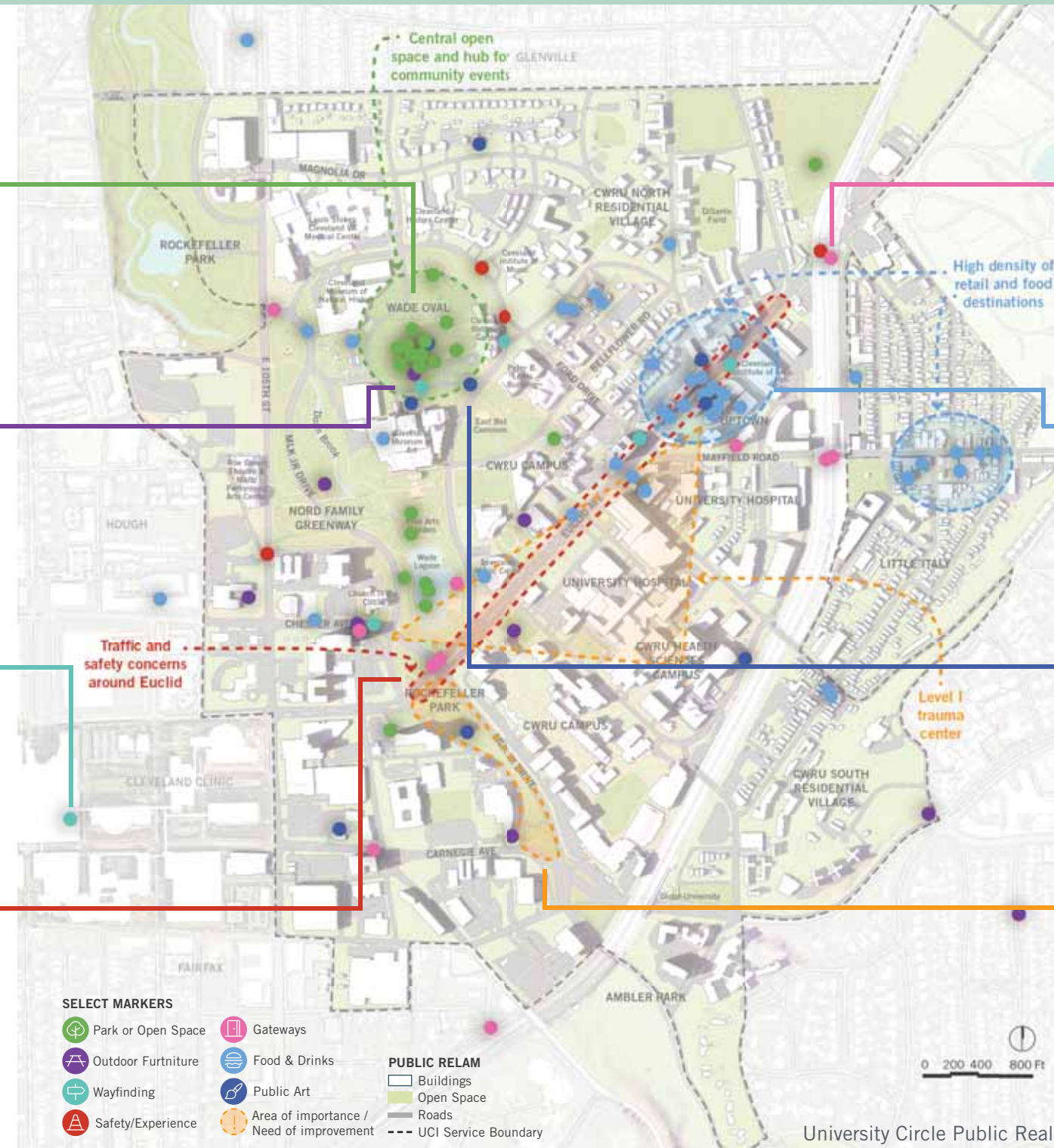
“ [Uptown is] great for something fast, but would not come here specifically for any food ”

### PUBLIC ART

“ More public art near arts organizations. Bring the art from the institutions outside ”

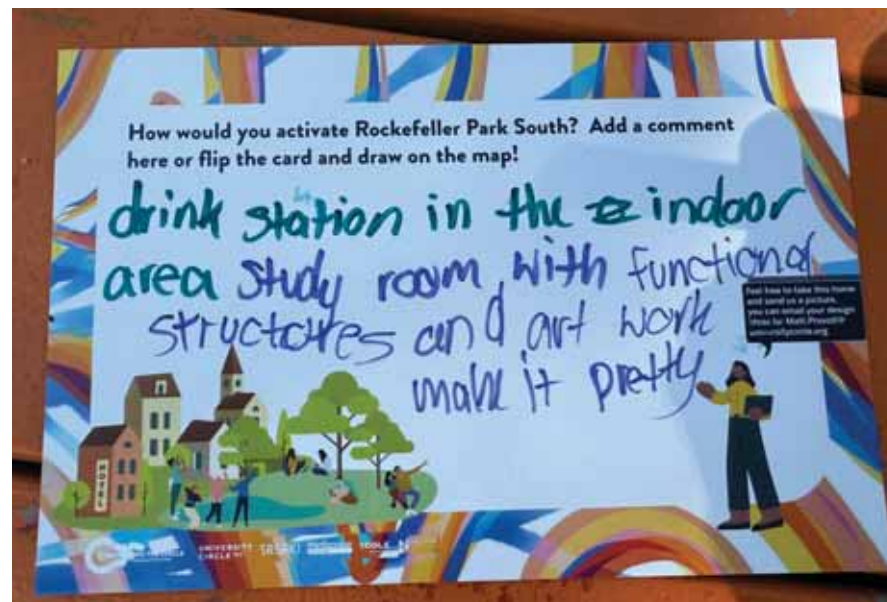
### AREA OF IMPORTANCE

“ Lots of opportunity to do something nice here. Open the area up to the community ”



# FROM LISTENING TO DESIGN DIRECTION

Engagement made clear that many of the district's challenges are not isolated design flaws, but systemic issues related to connectivity, legibility, and continuity across the public realm. This input directly informed the plan's design framework and recommendations. The concept of a Connected Civic Commons, the identification of Signature Moves, and the emphasis on coordinated Enabling Systems all reflect priorities expressed through engagement. The plan's focus on everyday experiences as the measure of success for public space investment comes directly from how people described using and navigating the district today and where confidence consistently breaks down.



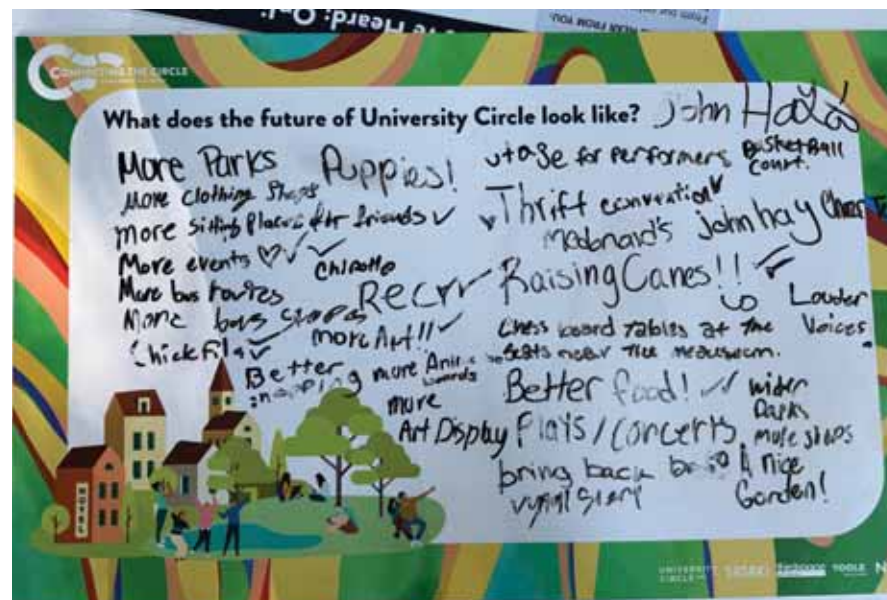
Pop-Up Activation of Rockefeller Park South



Pop-Up Activation of Rockefeller Park South with area high school students and residents called "Meet Me in the Park"



Engagement at the University Circle Community Room



Comment cards with comments from local high school students & engagement boards for Rockefeller Park & Wade Oval

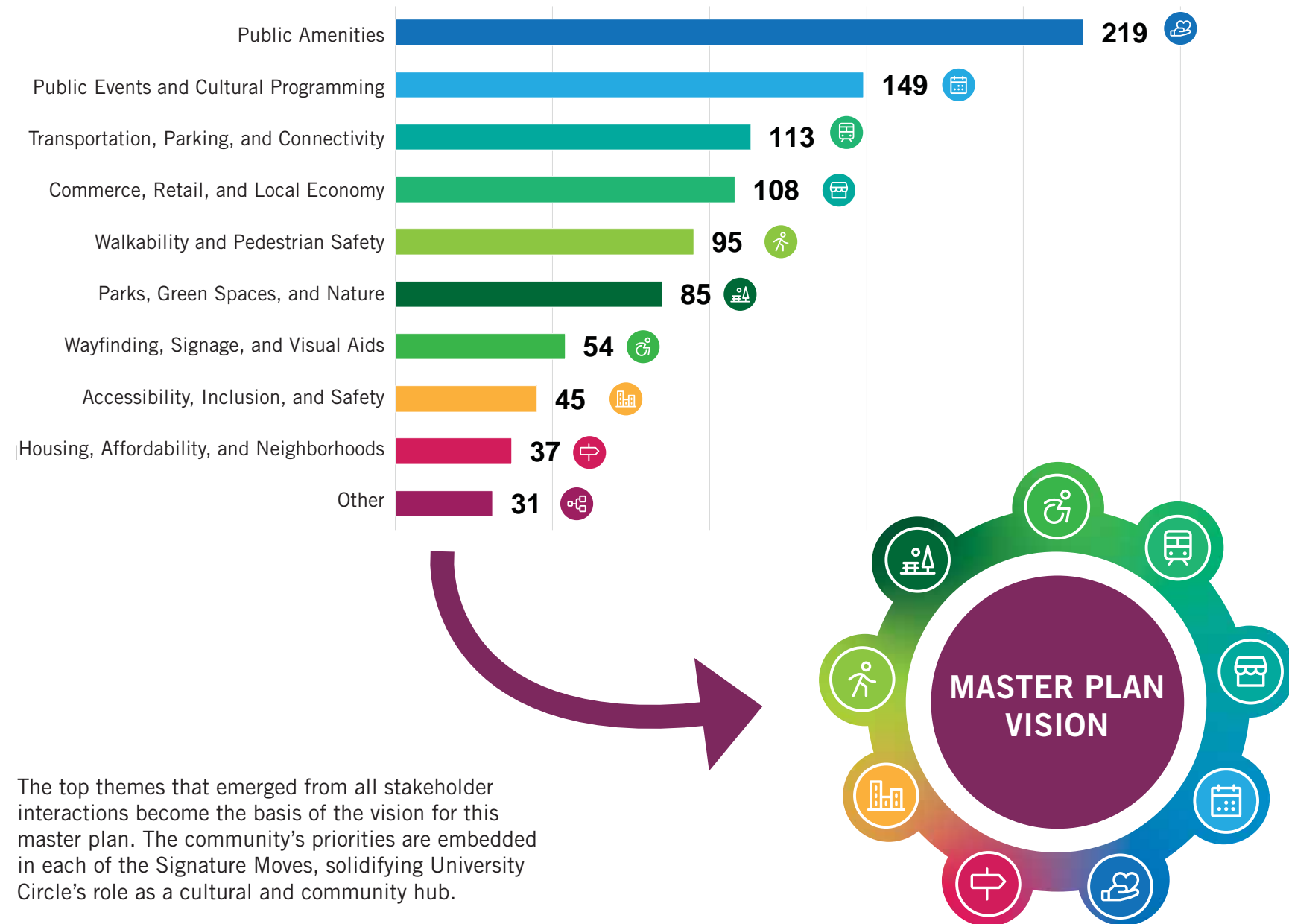


The Blue Velvet Ensemble ft. Dwyte Paris performing at Jazz on the Greenway



Jazz on the Greenway

# TOP THEMES FROM ENGAGEMENTS



The top themes that emerged from all stakeholder interactions become the basis of the vision for this master plan. The community's priorities are embedded in each of the Signature Moves, solidifying University Circle's role as a cultural and community hub.

# SETTING THE BASIS FOR ACTION

By grounding the plan in lived experience, the engagement process provided a clear basis for decision-making. It established a shared understanding of priorities that informed the diagnosis and design strategies that follow. The master plan seeks to translate what was heard into a clear assessment of where University Circle performs well and where focused, coordinated investment is needed.

“  
Parking is always a challenge  
”

“  
More picnic tables in the shade, please!  
”

“  
Outdoor dining is so nice in the summer!  
”

“  
Always can use more outdoor recreation!  
”

# ONGOING ENGAGEMENT WITH THIRD SPACE ACTION LAB

Complementing both structured events and digital engagement, Third Space Action Lab (TSAL) leveraged their ongoing, informal presence in the neighborhood during the planning process. TSAL Team members continued embedding themselves in everyday community life, hosting conversations at the Third Space Reading Room and attending local community events. This sustained presence allowed for impromptu exchanges with residents, students, workers, and visitors in authentic settings where people already gather. By showing up consistently and building trust over time, TSAL captured intergenerational perspectives and concerns that might not emerge in formal engagement settings, while also ensuring that the planning process remained visible, accessible, and responsive to the rhythms of daily life in University Circle. These informal conversations informed the broader engagement strategy and contributed to a more nuanced understanding of how different groups experience and move through the district.



Source: ThirdSpace Action Lab

# SECTION 4 WHERE WE ARE TODAY



Harrison Dillard Trail Concept

## EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE ACROSS THE DISTRICT

For many people, the most frequent interactions with University Circle occur not inside buildings, but in the spaces between them. Streets, sidewalks, crossings, paths, and parks shape how the district is experienced on ordinary days when arriving for work or school, walking between classes, visiting a museum, attending an appointment, or passing through to nearby neighborhoods. Some areas feel active, welcoming, and intuitive, while others feel fragmented, unclear, or difficult to navigate. Routes that appear short on a map may feel long or uncomfortable in practice due to wide roadways, indirect crossings, limited pedestrian amenities, or abrupt changes in character. In several locations, people express uncertainty about where to walk, how to cross safely, or whether a space is intended for public use. These conditions influence behavior. People choose to drive short distances rather than walk. Visitors limit their movement to a single destination due to perceived parking constraints. Residents and employees rely on habitual routes that avoid certain intersections or corridors. Over time, these patterns reduce opportunities for shared use of public space and limit everyday engagement with the district's cultural assets despite their physical proximity.

# ARRIVAL, ORIENTATION, AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Arrival into University Circle is a defining moment in the district experience, and one where challenges are especially apparent. Whether arriving by car, transit, bicycle, or on foot, people encounter a district with multiple gateways but limited visual and spatial clarity. Major approaches prioritize vehicular movement, while cues that signal arrival into a civic place, such as changes in scale, materials, landscape, or orientation, are often subtle or absent along key corridors and gateways. Wayfinding is fragmented across institutions and systems. Signage, landmarks, and spatial cues vary widely in form and placement, offering limited assistance to those unfamiliar with the district. As a result, many visitors rely on digital navigation rather than the physical environment, reducing opportunities for intuitive exploration and discovery. While gateway markers and directional signage establish a foundation along primary vehicular routes, the district could develop a cohesive orientation system that extends beyond the car, providing pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders with consistent cues to navigate and explore with confidence.

# MOVEMENT, SAFETY, AND COMFORT

Movement through University Circle reflects long-standing priorities that emphasize vehicular access and institutional servicing. Wide roadways, large curb radii, frequent driveways, and complex intersections support traffic flow but create challenging conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. In several locations, crossings are long, indirect, or feel exposed, discouraging walking between destinations that are otherwise close together. Perceptions of safety are shaped as much by design and activity as by traffic conditions. Inconsistent lighting, limited street-level activation, and gaps in visual continuity contribute to areas that feel empty or uncertain. While these conditions are not uniform across the district, their presence along key corridors affects overall comfort and willingness to move freely. Addressing them requires coordinated attention to movement, safety, and comfort as interrelated aspects of everyday experience rather than isolated fixes.



MLK Jr Drive cross section (Source: StreetMix)



Midblock crossing on MLK Jr Drive near Capers Courts



The Harrison Dillard Trail in Rockefeller Park

Source: Cuyahoga County Planning Commission



Weak connection from the Harrison Dillard Trail to Wade Oval



Signage for the Harrison Dillard Trail

Source: uGO University Circle



Proposed rendering of improvements looking east toward East Cleveland

## EDGES, THRESHOLDS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD INTERFACES

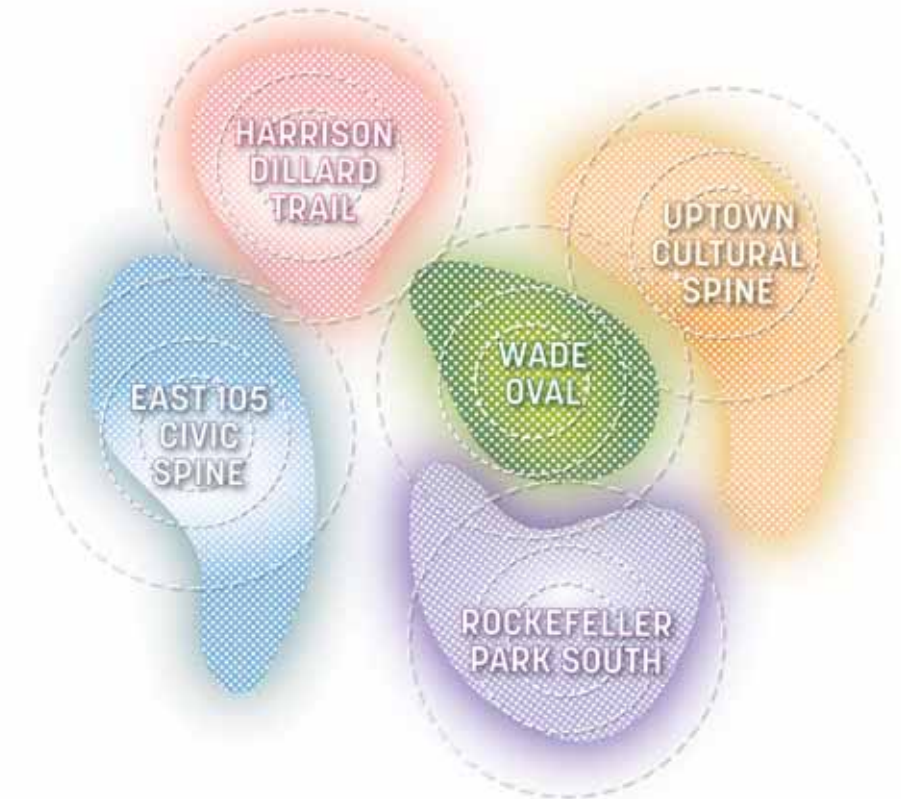
University Circle's boundaries are among its most consequential spaces. Where the district meets surrounding neighborhoods, the public realm should signal continuity, access, and welcome. In practice, many of these edges function as unclear or uncomfortable thresholds. Traffic infrastructure, abrupt changes in street character, and limited pedestrian amenities can make transitions feel difficult to cross or visually disconnected. In some locations, spaces intended to link neighborhoods to institutions instead reinforce separation, discouraging walking and limiting everyday interaction. These conditions affect not only visitors but also residents who rely on University Circle for employment, education, services, and cultural life. Improving comfort, clarity, and dignity at neighborhood interfaces is essential to strengthening the district's role as a shared civic environment and ensuring that its benefits are accessible to those who live closest to it.

## A FRAGMENTED PUBLIC REALM

Taken together, these conditions point to a central issue: University Circle lacks a cohesive public realm framework to guide how streets, open spaces, and connections function collectively. While individual projects and investments have succeeded on their own terms, their cumulative effect has been uneven, resulting in a district that feels fragmented rather than continuous. Without a shared framework, even well-designed projects can contribute to disconnection rather than cohesion. These challenges are therefore systemic and experiential.

## SETTING UP THE DESIGN RESPONSE

This diagnosis clarifies the task ahead. University Circle does not lack destinations, activity, or investment. What it lacks is a coordinated public realm structure that allows people to arrive with confidence, move around it intuitively, and experience the district as a connected whole. For this reason, the plan advances a network-based response focused on Signature Moves and the Enabling Systems that support them rather than a standalone list of individual micro-projects.



The five Signature Moves work together to create a coordinated public realm across University Circle.

An aerial, slightly hazy photograph of a city street scene. In the background, a prominent water tower stands against a light sky. The street below is lined with trees, some of which are in bloom. People are seen walking on the sidewalks, and a few cars are visible on the road. The overall tone is warm and urban.

## SECTION 5 MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

### THE BIG IDEA: A CONNECTED CIVIC COMMONS

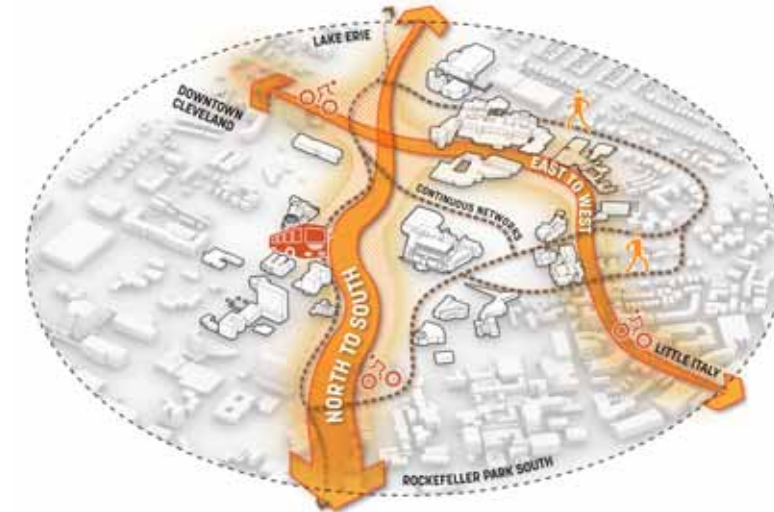
*Connecting the Circle* is guided by a simple but consequential idea: University Circle should function as a Connected Civic Commons. This means treating the district's streets, parks, paths, and public spaces not as residual space between institutions, but as shared civic infrastructure—the ground through which institutional excellence becomes everyday public experience. This commons is not one park or plaza. It is a network of places and connections that shape how the district works in daily life: how people arrive, orient themselves, move between destinations, and choose to stay. The concept is intentionally pragmatic rather than symbolic. It provides a design and governance framework for coordinating investment across institutional boundaries such that individual projects reinforce one another rather than accumulating into a series of isolated improvements. In practical terms, this approach prioritizes clearer arrivals, safer and shorter crossings, more comfortable places to pause and gather, and more intuitive connections between institutions, transit, and surrounding neighborhoods.

# ORGANIZING THE FRAMEWORK

Three interrelated principles organize this framework:

- **Connection:** Linking destinations, neighborhoods, transit, and open spaces into a legible, walkable system.
- **Welcoming Threshold:** Designing clear, dignified transitions that signal arrival, guide movement, and mark the shift from roadway to civic place. “Thresholds” are the gateways, crossings, and arrival points that most strongly shape first impressions, confidence, and navigation.
- **Commons:** Treating public space as shared civic infrastructure that supports daily use, cultural life, and long-term stewardship.

Together, these principles establish a consistent lens for evaluating design decisions, aligning institutional action, and prioritizing investment where it can have district-wide impact. The recommendations that follow translate this lens into action through a small set of Signature Moves, each supported by the Enabling Systems and Implementation Pathways required to make it work in everyday life.

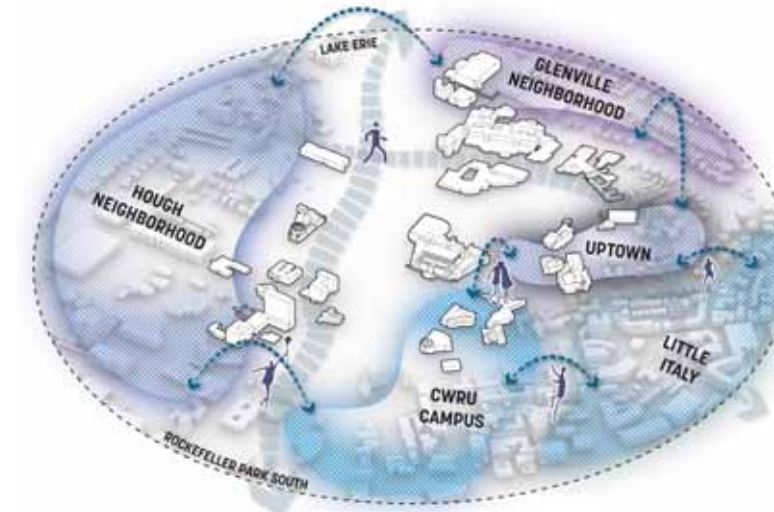


## CONNECTION

Public spaces and corridors must enable safe, intuitive movement across University Circle and beyond. Across engagement, participants consistently described that many of the district’s challenges stem not from distance, but from discontinuity: interrupted routes, uncomfortable crossings, and unclear relationships between places. This plan prioritizes:

- Clear east–west and north–south connections
- Continuous, low-stress pedestrian and bicycle networks
- Legible transitions between neighborhoods, campuses, and cultural destinations

Connection is designed not only to move people efficiently, but to invite exploration, reduce uncertainty, and shorten the perceived distance between institutions, destinations, neighborhoods, and public spaces.

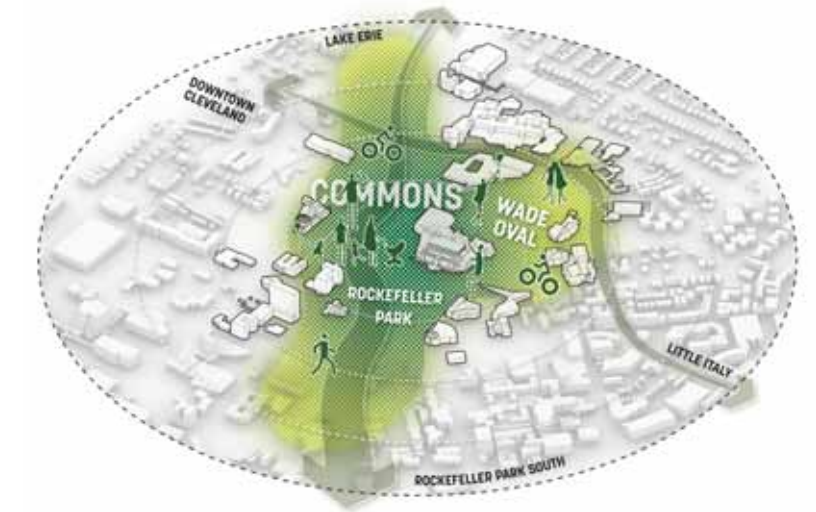


## WELCOMING THRESHOLDS

Public space plays a critical role at edges, where neighborhoods meet institutions, where parks meet streets, and where people first arrive in the district. Participants consistently described moments of uncertainty at these edges: where to enter, whether they were welcome, and how to orient themselves upon arrival. This plan focuses on reshaping key thresholds such that:

- Institutional edges read as civic front doors rather than barriers
- Neighborhood connections are visible, comfortable, and welcoming
- Arrival points provide orientation, dignity, and a sense of place

Thresholds are treated as moments of transition that communicate values, signaling openness, shared ownership, and belonging. In University Circle, many of these thresholds occur at rail corridors, major arterials, and underpasses—places that function not only as physical crossings, but as psychological gateways where first impressions are formed and where clarity, safety, and welcome are either reinforced or undermined.



## COMMONS

Finally, the public realm must function as a shared civic commons: spaces designed for everyday life rather than occasional events alone. Participants consistently emphasized the need for places to pause, gather, play, and linger, and that feel authentic and comfortable outside of formal programming. These spaces are designed to:

- Support a range of ages, abilities, and uses
- Function throughout the day and across seasons
- Reinforce University Circle’s identity as a place for daily civic life, not only destinations

Commons are where culture becomes lived experience and where institutions are encountered not as isolated buildings, but as part of a shared civic landscape that supports everyday presence.

## SIGNATURE MOVE #1

## EAST 105TH STREET: TRANSFORMING A BARRIER INTO A CIVIC SEAM

East 105th Street sits at the center of the district's most important civic challenge: how to reconnect University Circle with the surrounding neighborhoods of Glenville, Fairfax, and Hough in ways that feel safe, dignified, and promote daily use by residents, visitors, and commuters. Engagement consistently identified East 105th Street not simply as a busy arterial corridor, but as a psychological and physical barrier that people approach with caution, cross with hesitation, or avoid altogether. Within the Connected Civic Commons framework, East 105th Street is treated not as a conventional corridor beautification project, but as a sequence of critical civic thresholds supported by coordinated public-realm investment and infill development that support daily neighborhood needs.



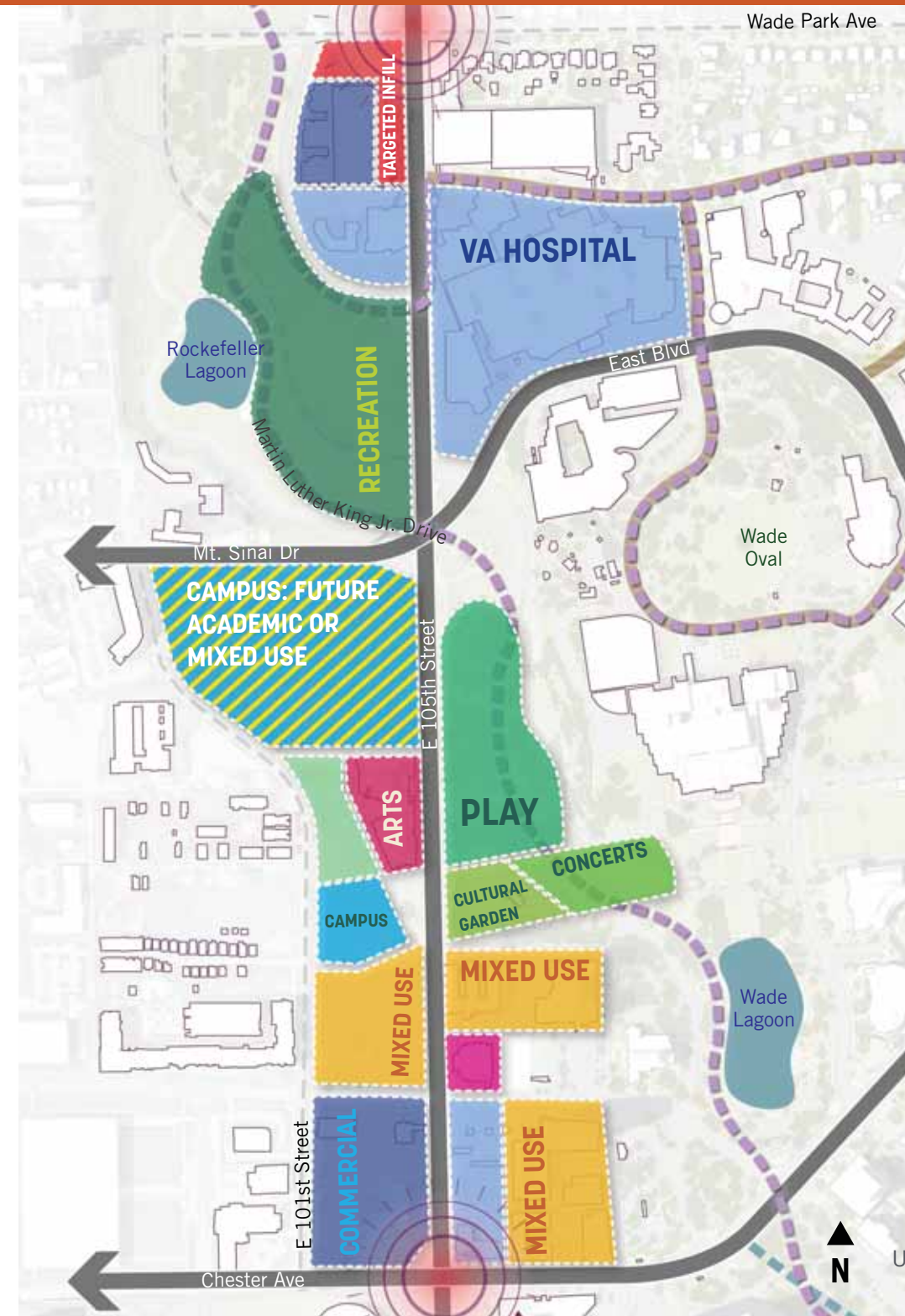
Signature Move #1: East 105th Street's primary location within University Circle



Conceptual rendering of potential infill development and improvements to East 105th Street.

### EAST 105TH STREET: DESIGN INTENT

The plan focuses on targeted investment at priority crossings and decision points, where East 105th Street most directly affects access between neighborhoods, institutions, parks, and transit. The design intent is to change behavior: to make crossing feel routine rather than stressful, and to make arriving on foot feel legitimate rather than conditional. Over time, these threshold investments are reinforced by infill development that helps East 105th Street function as an active edge of the district rather than solely as a vehicular thoroughfare.



East 105th Street Design Concept Diagram



Safe pedestrian crossings



Equitable urban infill



Space for social cohesion and play

### EAST 105TH STREET: KEY MOVES

**Priority crossings as civic infrastructure:** The plan concentrates design effort at the crossings that carry the greatest civic consequence, treating them as the points where the corridor becomes either a seam or a boundary.

**Geometry and operations that reduce conflict:** Shortened crossing distances, simplified signal phasing, reduced turning conflicts, improved visibility, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and better alignment with desired lines reinforce predictability.

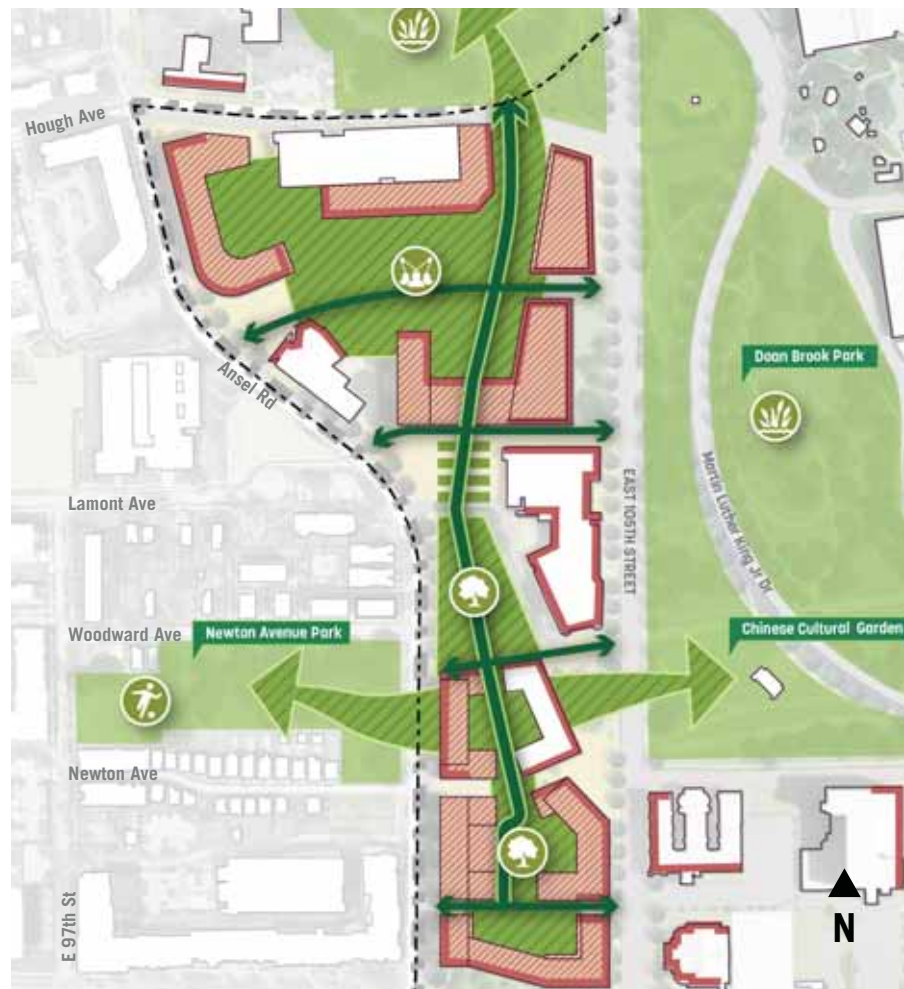
**A strategy focused on key welcoming thresholds rather than a continuous streetscape overlay:** The corridor is reframed as a set of high-impact edges where investment can unlock broader access and economic opportunity. At these locations, new infill development can play a complementary role by introducing active uses and visible presence along the street, helping to shift East 105th from an edge condition to a lived-in part of the district fabric.



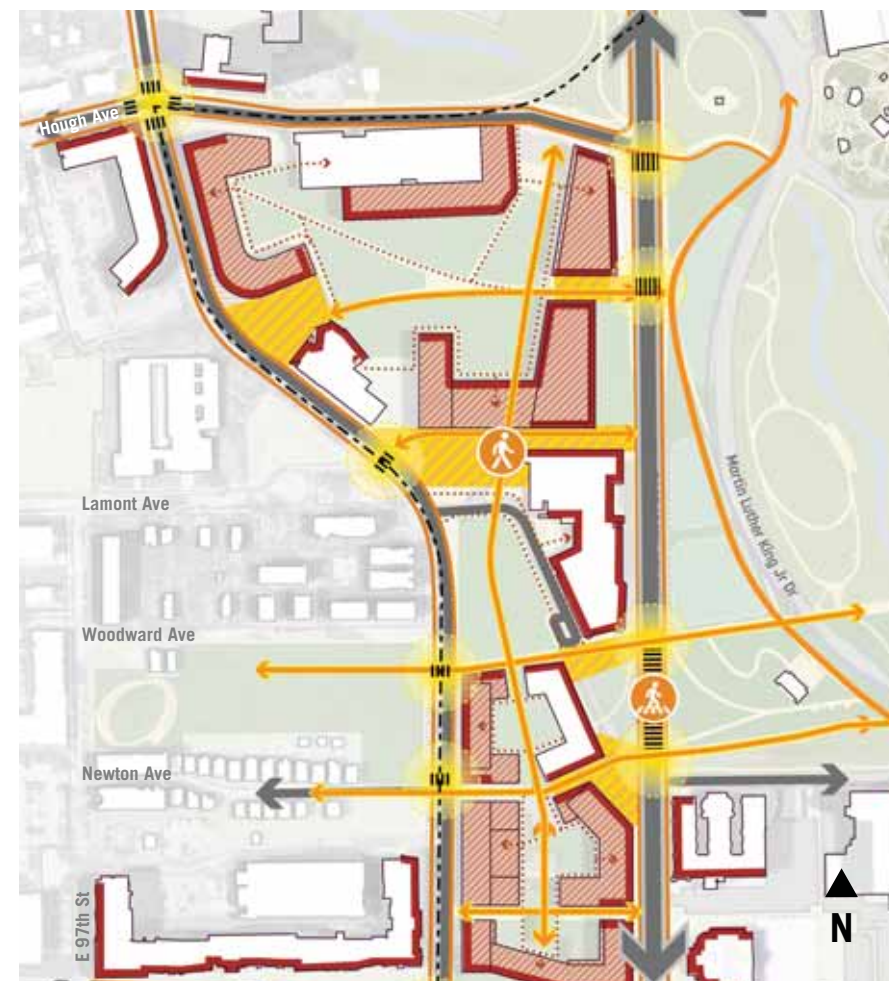
Safe pedestrian crossing



Sidewalk continuity



Circulation around playscape area and adjacent open spaces



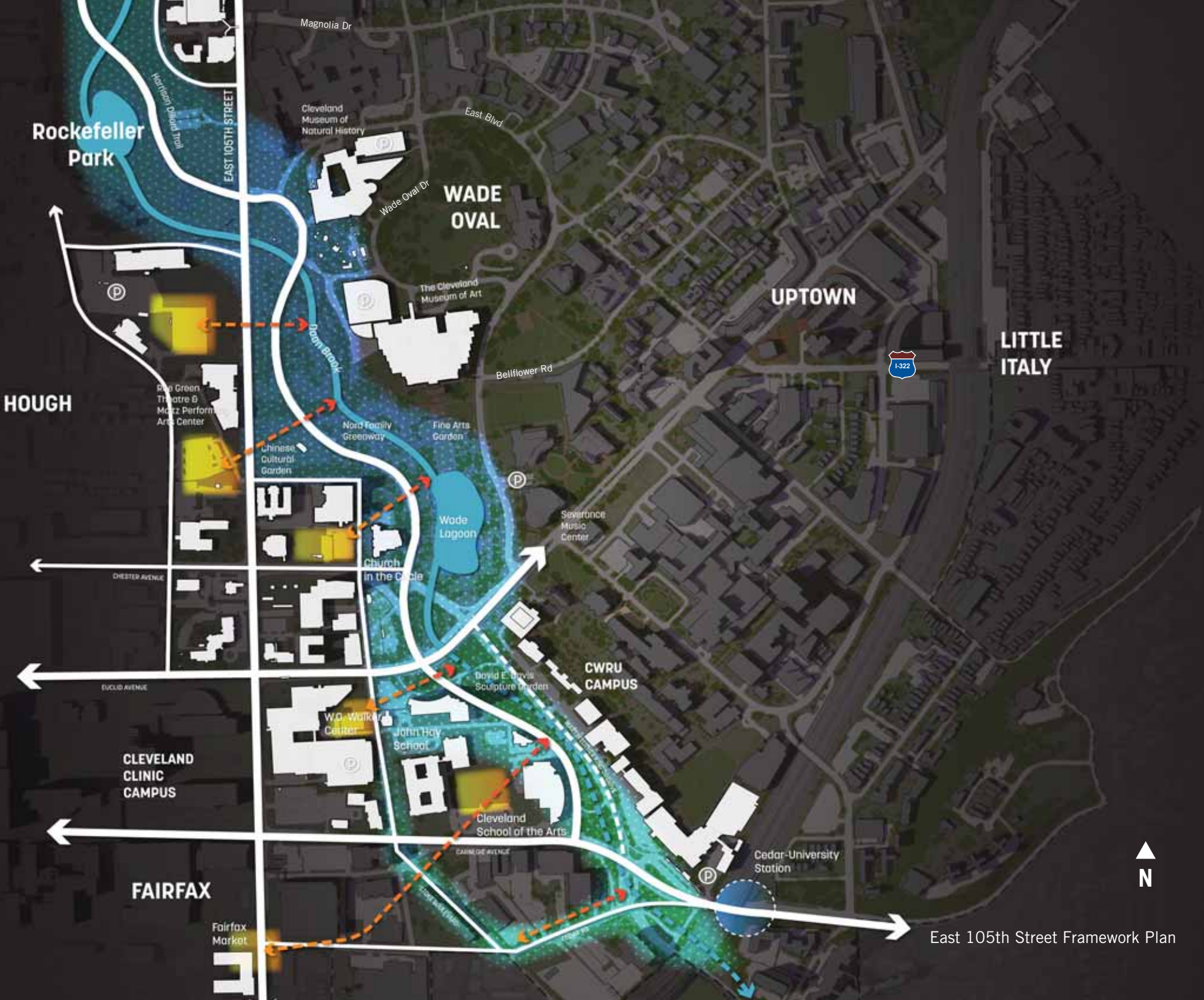
Primary crossings, pedestrian pathways, and routes



Community-serving destinations







New residential and commercial development



**IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS**

Implementation requires close coordination with the City of Cleveland, ODOT, and transit partners. Because much of the work occurs in public rights-of-ways, University Circle Inc.'s role is to convene and advocate around shared threshold priorities rather than generic corridor treatments. UCI can also play a coordinating role in aligning public-realm investments with infill development opportunities, ensuring that new projects reinforce crossing priorities, ground-floor activation, and neighborhood-serving uses. Many improvements can be advanced through phased, opportunistic action: bundling crossing upgrades with resurfacing projects, deploying lighting interventions and wayfinding packages, and leveraging state and federal safety funding. These moves are intentionally scalable, allowing early progress to build confidence and momentum while larger infrastructure and development decisions advance. When East 105th Street works, people cross without hesitation, transit feels viable, and neighborhoods and institutions reconnect through routine movement.

**EAST 105TH STREET FRAMEWORK PLAN**

-  Open Space Connections
-  Open Spaces
-  Rockefeller Park
-  Parking



Conceptual rendering of potential infill development and improvements to East 105th Street.

## SIGNATURE MOVE #2 EUCLID AND THE CULTURAL CORRIDOR: THE EAST-WEST CIVIC SPINES

The intersection of Euclid Avenue, Ford Drive, and Mayfield Road at Uptown serves as the core of the enhanced east-west connective tissue through University Circle. It is a primary destination along the link between the Little Italy-University Circle Red Line station and Wade Oval, museums, academic campuses, dining, and everyday services. More than any single destination, this east-west spine determines whether the district reads as a connected place or as adjacent parts stitched together primarily by roads and parking. Within the Connected Civic Commons framework, the Cultural Corridors of Euclid Avenue and Mayfield Road-Ford Drive-East Boulevard are positioned as the district's everyday streets, where movement, activity, and public life overlap across the day and into the evening.



Signature Move #2: Euclid & the Cultural Corridor's primary location within University Circle

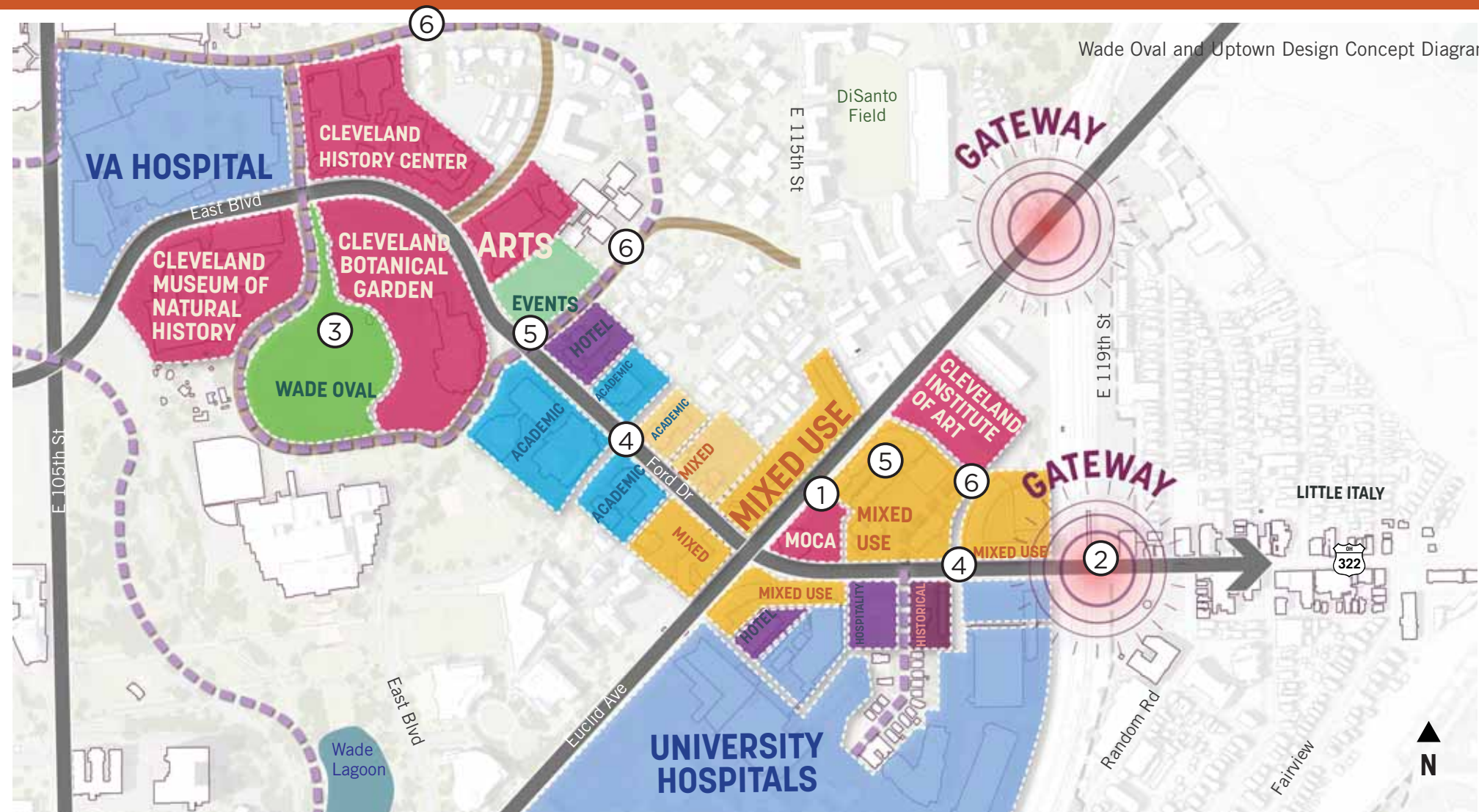


Conceptual rendering of streetscape and roadway interventions at the intersection of Euclid Avenue, Mayfield Road, and Ford Drive

**CULTURAL CORRIDORS: DESIGN INTENT**

This plan creates Cultural Corridors by treating streets and their edges as primary public spaces, where comfort clarity, and activity are designed, not assumed.

Design strategies prioritize continuous pedestrian clear zones, consistent furnishing and planting bands, and simplified crossings that reduce turning conflicts and reinforce block-to-block continuity anchored by active ground-floor uses. Civic nodes such as Toby's Plaza are treated as anchors within this system, where seating, lighting, and activity concentrate to support everyday use rather than isolated moments.



**RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS**



Welcome Plaza with Outdoor Amenities and Retail

Pop-up or temporary play equipment can be installed to provide more street life and activation during key events.



Underpass Activation

Activating underpasses can strengthen gateways and edge conditions, while promoting a stronger sense of place.



Pavilion for Gathering

Semi-open structured pavilions can help support a range of programming and recreational amenities. These can be sized appropriately to their context and can be small or large.



Pedestrian Street

Develop more pedestrian friendly environments, that during certain occasions can accommodate no vehicular traffic and be turned into celebratory street experiences.



Outdoor Dining

Enhance the outdoor programming experience with temporary activations and vendors who can create temporary pop-up events that can draw people in to socialize and linger.



Natural Destination

Integrate nature into the hardscape. Create destinations for gathering between the natural and built environments.

### CULTURAL CORRIDORS: KEY MOVES

**A continuous pedestrian realm that holds block to block:** Sidewalk continuity, consistent lighting, and predictable furnishings establish a corridor that reads as one connected sequence rather than a patchwork of conditions.

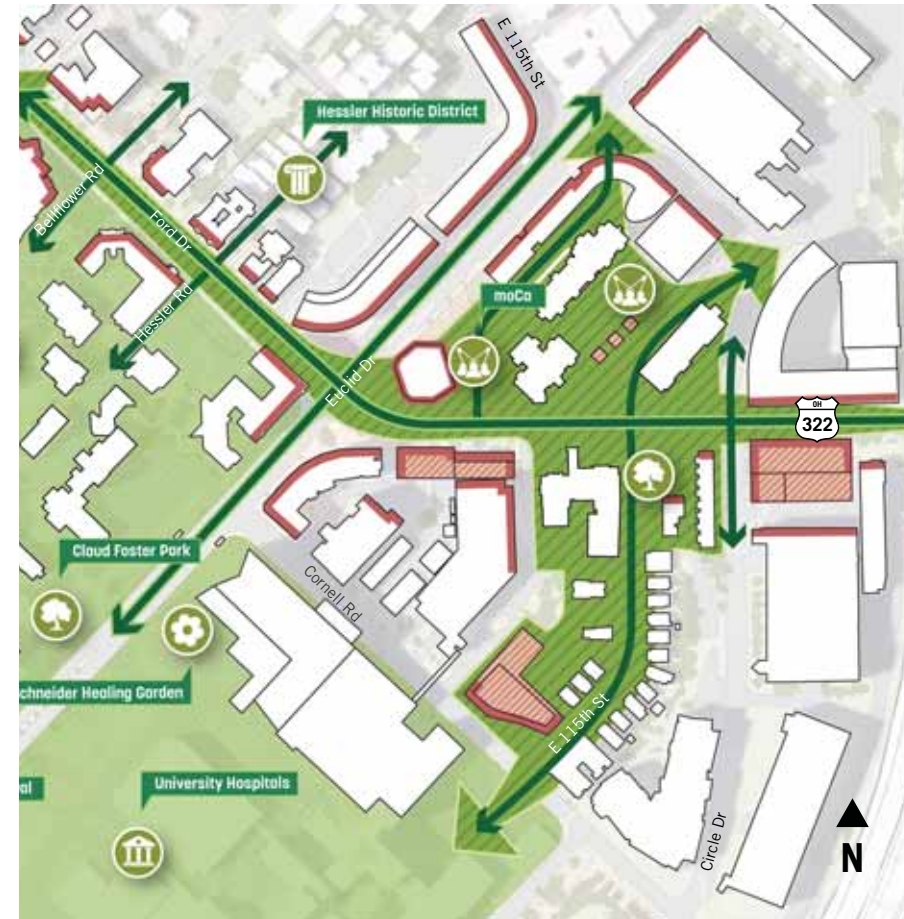
**Crossings and intersections that support everyday walking:** Comfort at crossings—especially where people decide whether or not to continue—is treated as essential civic infrastructure.

**Edges and ground floors that reinforce public life:** The design intent is explicit: transparency, visible entrances, active ground floor uses, and clear thresholds that support street life and perceived safety without relying on episodic programming.

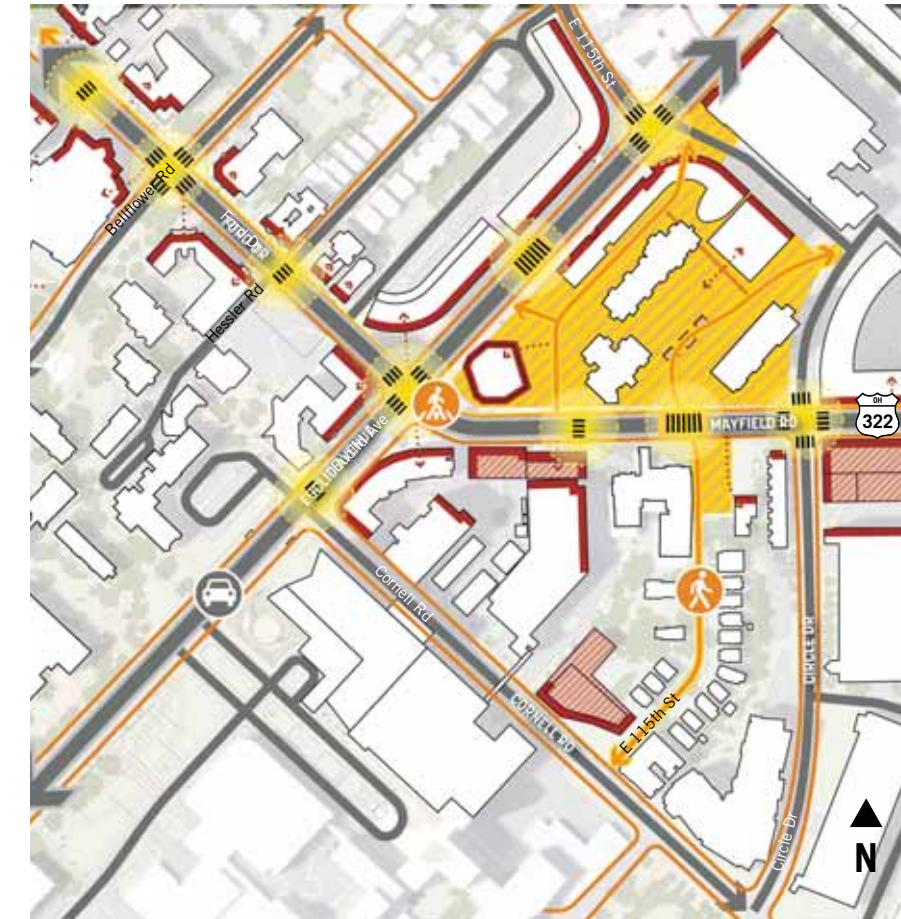
**A corridor designed for time and use:** The Cultural Corridors must work not only at lunch or during events, but in the evening, during winter, and in shoulder seasons.



Underpass with lighting



Landscape Framework for Uptown



Urban Framework for Uptown



Pedestrian-friendly environments



Sidewalk continuity



### IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

Implementation of the Cultural Corridors is inherently coordinated. Streetscape and crossing improvements must align with institutional reinvestment, private development, and public infrastructure work so continuity is strengthened rather than reset parcel by parcel. Public investment sets the framework (sidewalks, crossings, lighting, trees, furnishings) while private development extends it through active ground floors and frontage contributions. University Circle Inc. can work with partners to support consistent furnishings, lighting standards, maintenance expectations, and winter operations across ownership boundaries. When the Cultural Corridors perform as intended, they function as the district's everyday civic spine, supporting transit-first arrival, enabling walking between institutions, and reinforcing district-wide coherence.

### FRAMEWORK OF EAST-WEST CONNECTIONS

- East - West Connection
- North - South Connections
- Active Edges
- Parking



Conceptual rendering of streetscape and roadway interventions at the intersection of Euclid Avenue, Mayfield Road, and Ford Drive

SIGNATURE MOVE #3

# HARRISON DILLARD TRAIL: THE DISTRICT'S EQUITY SPINE

The Harrison Dillard Trail is the most consequential connective element in the plan. As part of a regional system, it has the potential to function as the calmest, most legible, and most equitable route through one of Cleveland's busiest districts. For many people—students, neighborhood residents, employees, and transit riders—the Trail is not recreational infrastructure but daily mobility. It links neighborhoods and transit to Wade Oval, Rockefeller Park South, and key institutional destinations through a north-south route. When it works, it expands access across the district without the need for a car. Within the Connected Civic Commons framework, the Trail is treated as essential civic infrastructure: a spine that anchors first- and last-mile transit access, links neighborhoods to jobs and institutions, and provides a safer alternative to stressful arterial streets.



Signature Move #3: Harrison Dillard Trail's primary location within University Circle



Conceptual rendering of Harrison Dillard Trail at East 105th Street

### HARRISON DILLARD TRAIL: DESIGN INTENT & KEY MOVES

While the Trail appears continuous on maps, the experience on the ground includes gaps, abrupt transitions, constrained widths, and uncomfortable crossings, especially where the Trail intersects major streets, rail overpasses, and institutional edges. The plan prioritizes the Trail's weakest points because users judge the corridor by where confidence breaks down.

Design strategies focus on:

**Critical crossings and junctions:** The Trail is strengthened at the points where people decide whether to proceed or turn back. Predictable priority, reduced vehicle conflict, and clear continuity are treated as the core performance test.

**A consistent corridor identity that celebrates the legacy of Harrison Dillard and signals it as a primary pedestrian and bicycle network:**

Lighting, materials, interpretive storytelling, and wayfinding are used to reinforce that the Trail is not residual infrastructure; it is part of the district's primary public realm system.

**Infrastructure thresholds, including underpasses:** Underpasses and infrastructure crossings are treated as critical civic thresholds. Improvements focus on lighting, drainage, surface quality, and opportunities for public art so these segments function as gateways rather than avoidance zones.

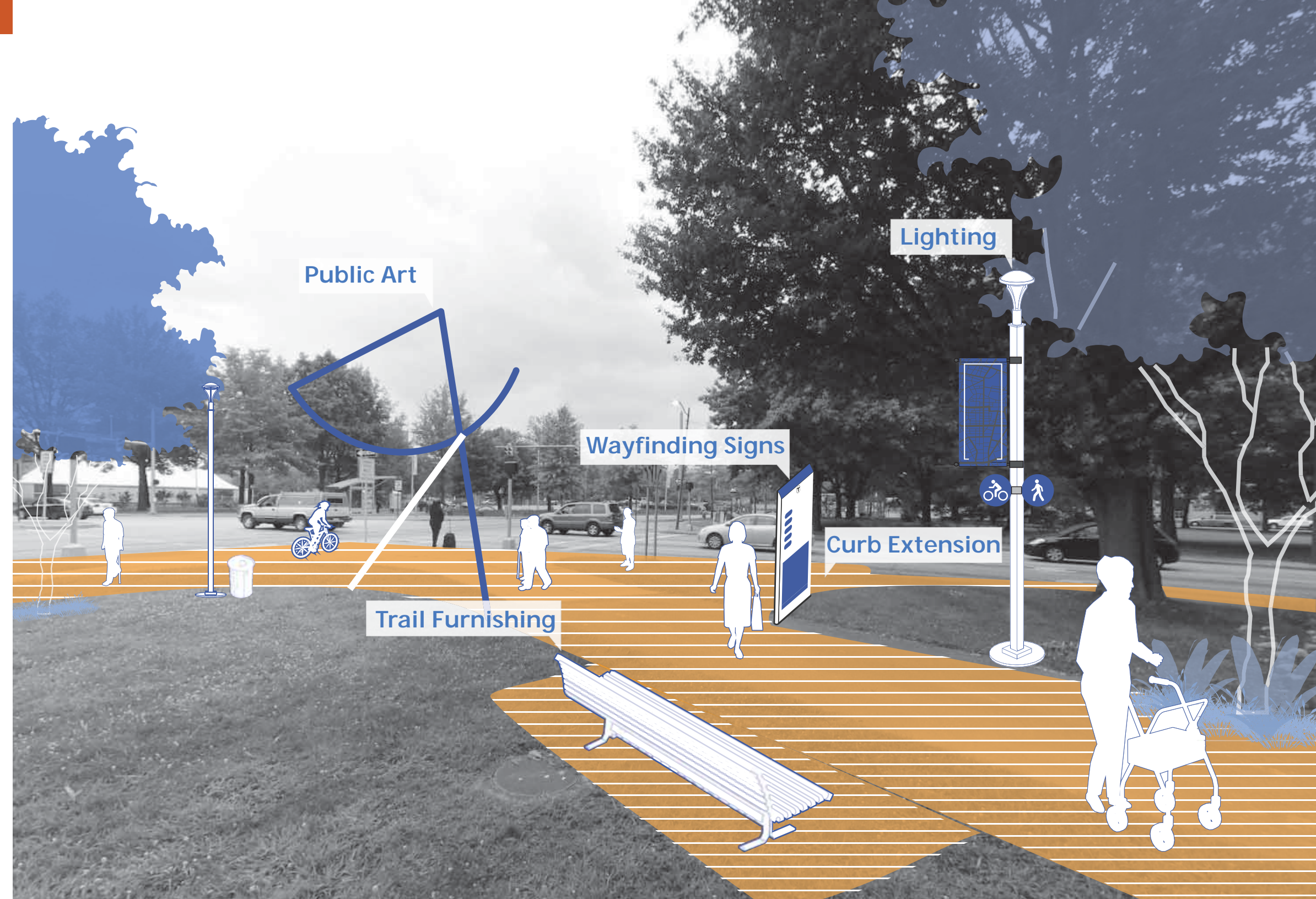


Midblock crossing on MLK Jr Drive near Capers Courts



The Harrison Dillard Trail near the Chinese Cultural Garden

Harrison Dillard Trail Framework Concepts



### ENABLING SYSTEMS THAT MAKE THE HARRISON DILLARD TRAIL WORK








The Trail’s performance as equity infrastructure depends on reliability:

- **Crossings and decision points:** Predictable priority and reduced conflict at intersections are the core performance test.
- **Underpasses as critical thresholds:** Underpasses and infrastructure crossings must be treated as civic gateways that are well-lit, dry, and maintained, because a single intimidating segment can undermine the entire route.
- **Street network study:** Street reconfiguration allows trail realignment with fewer, simpler crossings, potentially reducing the 17-lane challenge to a single well-designed intersection, making the trail credible as commuting infrastructure.
- **Wayfinding and district integration:** The Trail should read as part of the district’s primary public realm network, with confirmation cues that support confident everyday use.
- **Stewardship and seasonality:** Lighting, snow clearance, pavement repair, and maintenance standards are not secondary. They determine whether the Trail functions year-round for the people who rely on it most.

### IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

Upgrading the Harrison Dillard Trail requires coordination across jurisdictions and ownership. The plan advocates for University Circle Inc. to track capital cycles, convene agencies and institutions before decisions are locked, and advocate for Trail priorities when projects are still flexible. Delivery should be incremental and repeatable: crossing packages aligned with safety funding, targeted underpass improvements as early trust-building signals, lighting and wayfinding pilots at high-stress segments, and selective widening or realignment where feasible. Together, these coordinated investments build trust in the Trail as everyday infrastructure. When it works, behavior shifts: people choose it for daily travel, transit riders use it confidently for first- and last-mile connections, and neighborhoods and institutions reconnect through routine movement. In this way, the Trail signals that everyday mobility for historically marginalized communities is treated as essential civic infrastructure.

### THE TRAIL TOOLKIT

	Public Restrooms	Seating	Weather Protection	Waste bins	Lighting	Flex Space	Wayfinding
							
	Source: Alissa Widman Nessel/Axios	Source: Toole Design Group	Source: Toole Design Group	Source: Toole Design Group	Source: Toole Design Group	Source: Toole Design Group	Source: Toole Design Group
Description	Thoughtfully-designed restrooms prioritize function, durability, safety, and cleanliness, and can meet needs of visitors, transit riders, and individuals experiencing homelessness.	Seating along walkways and in communal areas provide rest and fit nicely into the surroundings.	Weather protection shelters provide a safe place to cool off in extreme heat and protect against strong winds that can make outdoor activities uncomfortable.	Proper waste disposal options encourage responsible behavior among visitors and reduce the workload for maintenance crews.	Pedestrian scale lighting improves safety in the early morning and evening hours, and can help a recreational trail serve a transportation purpose.	Small, adaptable spaces promote community collaboration, and can easily transform to meet a variety of meetings, events, picnics, or casual gatherings.	Wayfinding includes a variety of methods and techniques that clearly, quickly, and effectively help trail users make decisions and navigate the trail.
Placement Guidance	Place where feasible, in flex spaces, near transit stops and communal hubs.	Place at parks, communal hubs, and access points. Additional seating should be considered every quarter mile along the route.	Place in communal gathering spaces and areas with limited shade.	Place at trailheads and access points where they can be maintained and serviced regularly.	Place pedestrian scale lighting where applicable and ensure the entire route is lit.	Consider construction several flex spaces along the Harrison Dillard Trail. Good candidate locations might include the Capers tennis courts or playground area near East 105th; the segment between Jephtha Drive and the Nord Family Greenway; and in South Rockefeller Park (between Stearns Road and MLK Jr Drive).	Place and install signs at important decision points, access points, and trail intersections. Also, add educational signs to showcase historical sites along the route.
Accessibility Considerations	Out-swinging doors need at least 60-inches and features like grab bars, accessible toilets, and clear floor space.	Needs sufficient clear space for placement.	Needs a flat surface.	Needs a flat surface.	Avoid light fixture obstructions and ensure proper illumination to prevent shadows.	Ensure the ground is firm, stable, and slip resistant.	Use plain language, proper color contrast, accessible font style and size, and tactile features such as raised characters and Braille.

## SIGNATURE MOVE #4

## ROCKEFELLER PARK SOUTH: A CIVIC THRESHOLD BETWEEN CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY

Rockefeller Park South occupies one of University Circle's most consequential positions: the southeastern gateway where neighborhoods, schools, transit, and institutional campuses converge. Within the Connected Civic Commons framework, it functions as a threshold, commons, and connector—a place where arrival, movement, and daily public life intersect. Engagement and observation consistently identified Rockefeller Park South as difficult to navigate and uncomfortable to linger in, shaped more by traffic geometry and fragmented crossings than by civic intent. It is frequently crossed but rarely used, reinforcing the perception of University Circle as something to pass through rather than a shared place embedded within surrounding neighborhoods.



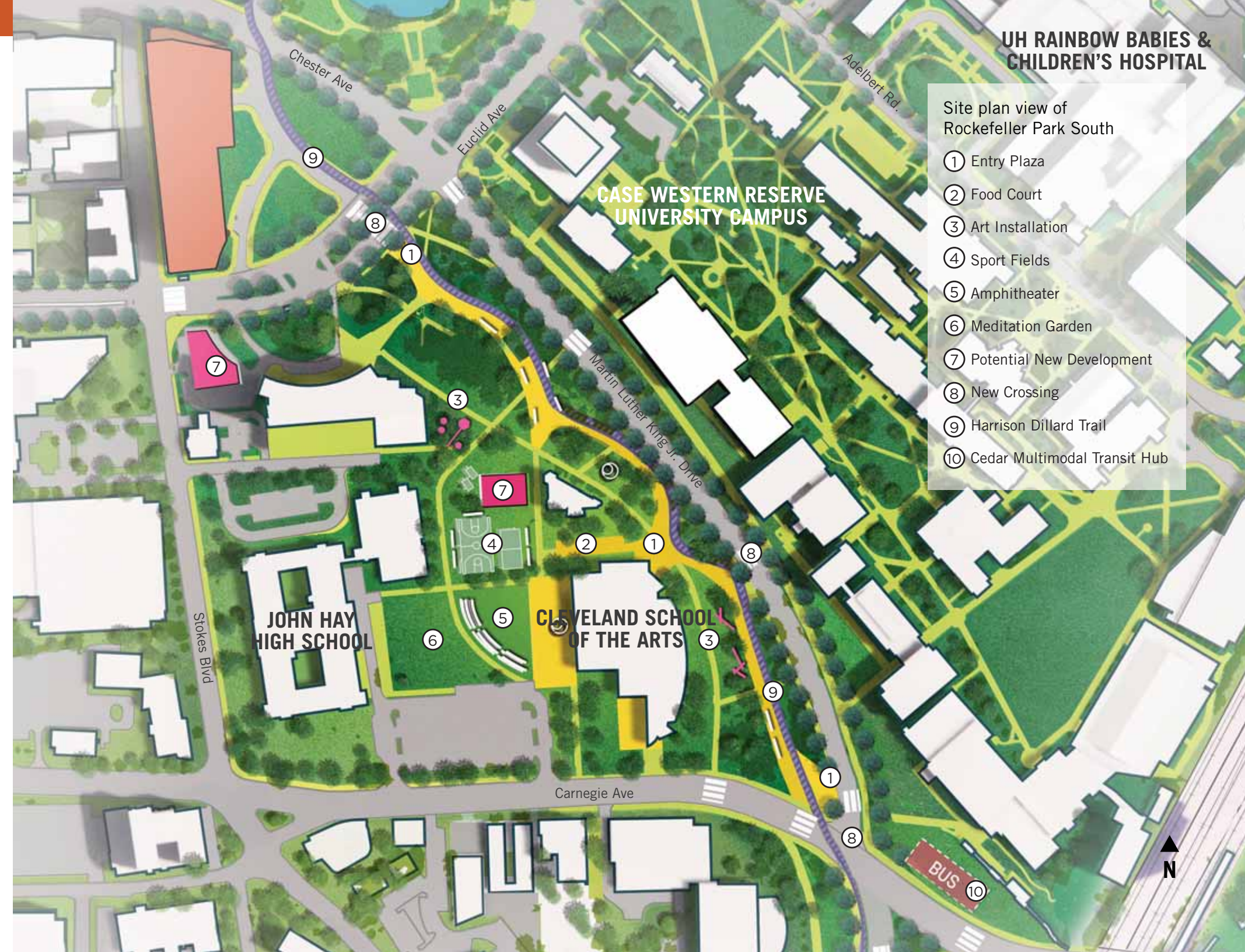
Signature Move #4: Rockefeller Park South's primary location within University Circle



Conceptual rendering of Rockefeller Park South

### ROCKEFELLER PARK SOUTH: DESIGN INTENT

The plan repositions Rockefeller Park South as a shared civic landscape that bridges campus and community while supporting everyday use, especially for students and surrounding residents. The intended redesign transforms this park from one that suffers from the existing roadway dominance into a space that is attractive, comfortable, and sought out.



- Site plan view of Rockefeller Park South
- ① Entry Plaza
  - ② Food Court
  - ③ Art Installation
  - ④ Sport Fields
  - ⑤ Amphitheater
  - ⑥ Meditation Garden
  - ⑦ Potential New Development
  - ⑧ New Crossing
  - ⑨ Harrison Dillard Trail
  - ⑩ Cedar Multimodal Transit Hub

### ROCKEFELLER PARK SOUTH: KEY MOVES

**Stearns Road closure as a public-space unifier:** The core structural move is the closure of Stearns Road, removing a condition that divides the park and interrupts pedestrian logic. This street network change is the primary design lever that allows the park to function as one coherent civic landscape. A dedicated Street Network Study — explored as one of the core enabling systems of this plan — examines the feasibility and configuration of these changes in detail, and will support unlocking key transportation changes like this.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard reconfiguration as a two-way street to reduce conflict and simplify movement:** Reconfiguring MLK is not treated as a traffic project in isolation. It is a public-realm move that reduces turning conflicts, clarifies pedestrian priority, and supports direct routes between schools, neighborhoods, transit, and the institutional core. The proposed Street Network Study would also enable this aspect of the project.

Source: Landart Design



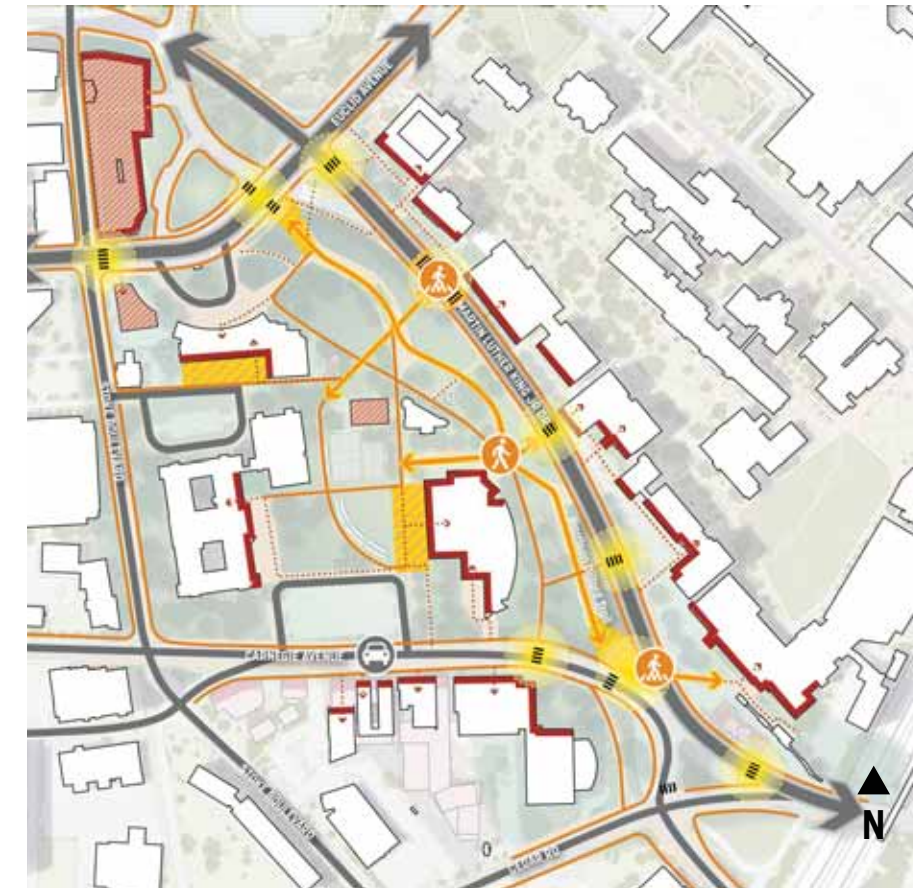
Transformation of a former road into a pedestrian path

**A daily student commons and neighborhood park:** Paths, entries, and gathering areas are reorganized to support direct, intuitive movement between John Hay High School, the Cleveland School of the Arts, Case Western Reserve University’s Case Quad, transit, and University Circle’s institutional core. The intent is to provide legitimate places to pause and gather before and after school, between activities, and on the way to transit. Integrated within this framework are flexible outdoor amphitheater elements and multipurpose plazas that can accommodate outdoor learning, impromptu performance, rehearsal, and informal student gathering—supporting both structured educational use and spontaneous activity throughout the day.



Landscape Framework for South Gateway Park

**A welcoming threshold:** The park’s edges, crossings, and arrival moments are strengthened so the southern gateway reads as a dignified entrance into a civic district, not a confusing intersection of infrastructure. Paths, seating, and open areas are organized to support informal gathering, pause, and outdoor learning, allowing the park to function as a daily extension of nearby schools and neighborhoods rather than solely as a movement corridor. Designated hardscape areas and curb-adjacent zones are also planned to accommodate food trucks and mobile vendors, responding directly to student feedback about limited nearby dining options and enabling affordable, flexible food access as part of everyday park life.



Urban Framework for South Gateway Park

**Legacy design anchors:** The existing David E. Davis Sculpture Garden is preserved and reinforced as a civic amenity within the redesigned landscape, with improved sightlines, access, and integration into the broader park framework. Harrison Dillard’s legacy, rooted in this neighborhood, provides a narrative thread that informs the character of gathering spaces and honors the district’s relationship to the surrounding community.



Source: Ohio Outdoor Sculpture  
David E. Davis Sculpture Garden



Source: Google Earth  
Harrison Dillard Trail



Source: The Office of James Burnett

① Sculpture Garden Integrated with Playground



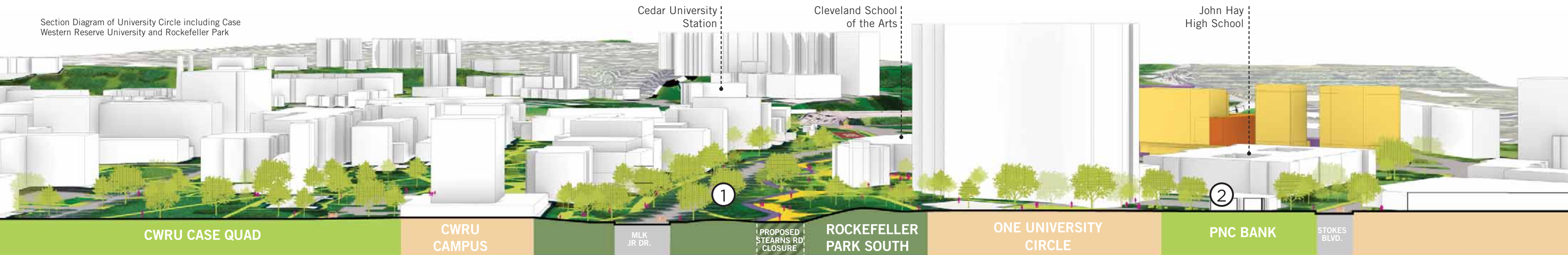
Source: Hacin

② Public Space with Amenities for All

### IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

The roadway reconfiguration is treated as an early catalytic investment because it unlocks all other improvements. Delivery requires early coordination with the City of Cleveland and ODOT, supported by engineering and traffic analysis. While larger infrastructure advances, early visible actions—path repairs, lighting upgrades, seating, and wayfinding—should be implemented quickly to demonstrate change and build confidence. Over time, Rockefeller Park South becomes a clear, welcoming front door and a legitimate daily place for students, neighbors, and visitors. By transforming infrastructure into civic landscape, it signals that arrival into University Circle communicates openness rather than separation.

Section Diagram of University Circle including Case Western Reserve University and Rockefeller Park





Conceptual rendering of Rockefeller Park South

## SIGNATURE MOVE #5

**WADE OVAL: THE DISTRICT'S CIVIC HEART**

Wade Oval is the symbolic and functional heart of University Circle, framed by world-class cultural institutions and anchored by open space. Yet engagement made clear that its everyday performance does not yet match its civic importance. Within the Connected Civic Commons framework, Wade Oval is positioned as the district's primary shared civic space: a place designed for regular use across seasons, ages, and abilities. Its success is measured by whether people can arrive with confidence, stay comfortably, and move easily between museums, Euclid Avenue, and nearby corridors without friction and without unnecessary reliance on cars.



Signature Move #5: Wade Oval's primary location within University Circle



## WADE OVAL: DESIGN INTENT

The plan strengthens Wade Oval as an everyday place by treating it as civic infrastructure rather than an event lawn. The design intent is to make the Oval easy to use without special knowledge, and comfortable enough that lingering feels normal on an ordinary weekday.

The design reorganizes internal circulation so paths, edges, and gathering areas reinforce intuitive movement across the Oval, clarifying how people pass through, arrive, and stay. The Pavilion is intentionally sited to anchor this circulation system, serving as both a physical landmark and an organizing element that aligns movement, orientation, and daily activity around a clear civic center.



Site plan view of the playground concept within Wade Oval.

- ① Geological Garden
- ② Seasonal Meadow
- ③ Art Installation
- ④ Pavilion/Amphitheater
- ⑤ Lookout Platform
- ⑥ Trellis & Swing
- ⑦ Outdoor Seating
- ⑧ Great Lawn
- ⑨ Pedestrian-oriented Street
- ⑩ Tree Canopy Walk

## PRECEDENT IMAGES



Outdoor Swing



Pavilion / Amphitheater



Seasonal Meadow



Ramp and Lookout Tower



**WADE OVAL: KEY MOVES**

**The Wade Oval Pavilion as Civic Infrastructure:** The Pavilion is not framed as a decorative amenity. It is the enabling building that makes the Oval more equitable and functional on a day-to-day basis by providing restrooms, food access, utilities, informal performance support, and a visible, staffed presence that signals welcome. This move fundamentally changes how long people can stay and what activities are possible in everyday use.

**Everyday comfort and “stay” conditions:** The Oval is reorganized to support play, shade, seating, and weather protection as baseline conditions rather than optional enhancements. The intent is to support families, older adults, students, and transit-dependent visitors who need predictable amenities to use the space.

**Clear edges, paths, and connections:** The Oval is treated as a district reference point with clearer circulation and legible connections to surrounding destinations, such as a potential canopy walk, as well as interactive garden spaces that reference the collections of the adjacent museums and extend their cultural and educational experiences into the public realm. The goal is not only internal clarity, but stronger spatial continuity outward—to Euclid Avenue, to nearby trails and corridors, and toward transit approaches so that Wade Oval reads as part of a connected civic sequence rather than a standalone green.

**A civic space that works beyond programmed moments:** The design supports informal use (sitting, gathering, small performances, casual eating) so the Oval functions on weekdays and shoulder seasons, not only during major events.



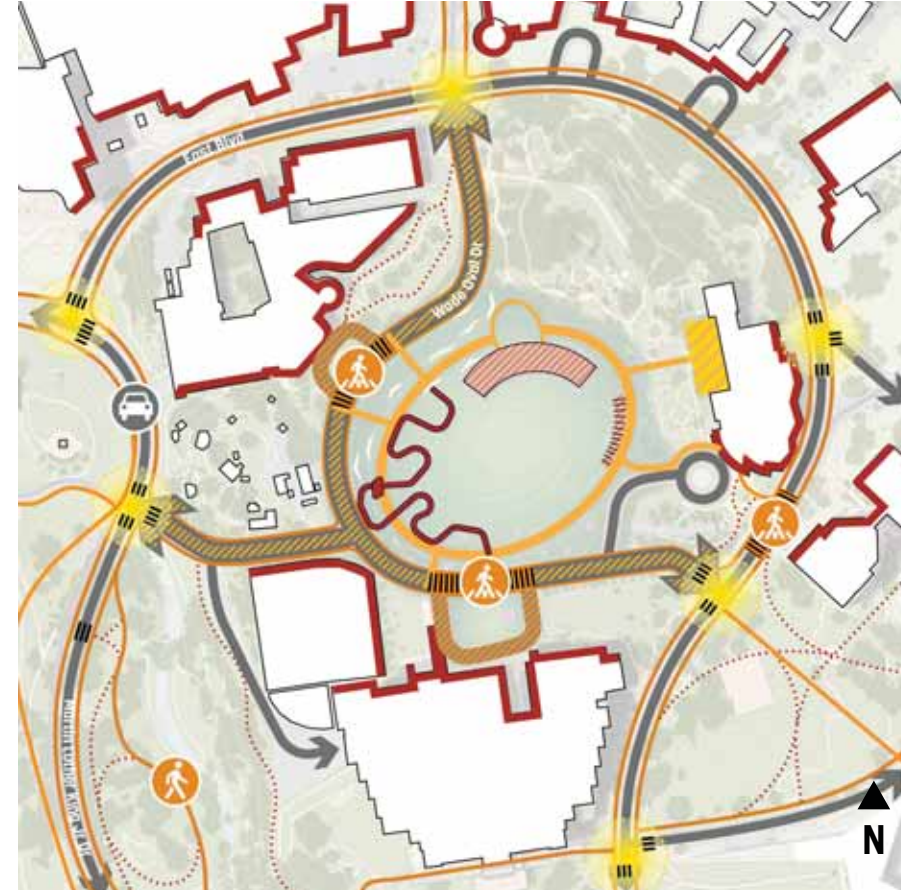
Multipurpose Pavilion



Pavilion / Amphitheater



Circulation around playscape area and adjacent open spaces



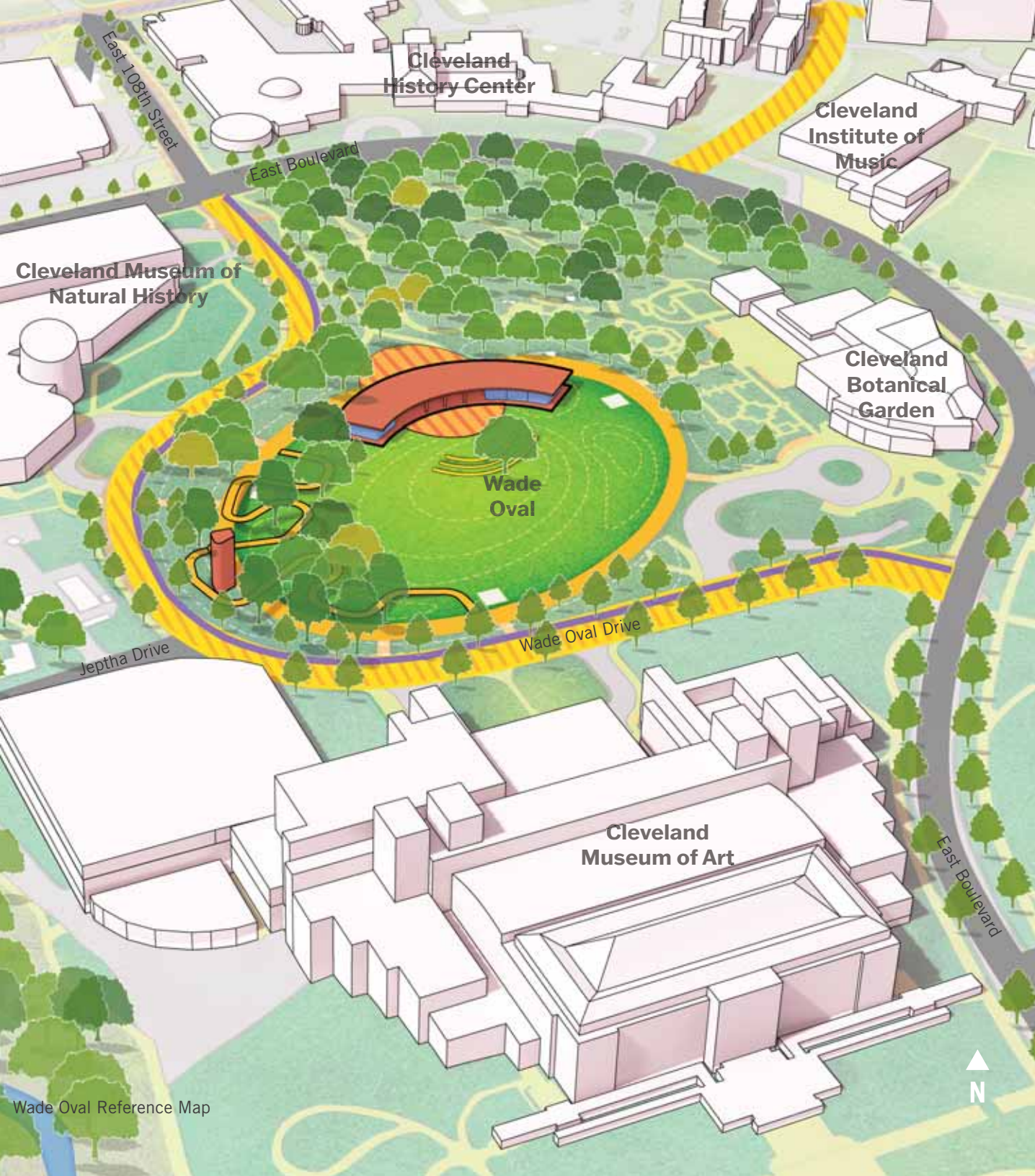
Primary crossings, pedestrian pathways, and routes



Play and discovery gardens



Elevated tree canopy

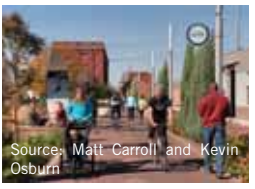


Wade Oval Reference Map

**Near-term actions**



**Mid-term actions**



**Long-term actions**



**IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS**

The plan treats the Wade Oval Pavilion as civic infrastructure, not an optional amenity. While the Pavilion is a high-capital investment, its civic return is unusually broad. It reduces reliance on temporary event infrastructure, extends the Oval's usability beyond programmed moments, and supports smaller cultural organizations by providing them with visibility on Wade Oval.

Implementation should be layered and parallel: advance fundraising and delivery for the Pavilion while deploying near-term interim measures (e.g. pilot food services and temporary placemaking infrastructure) so everyday conditions improve immediately without weakening the case for permanent investment. In parallel, complementary elements such as a potential Canopy Walk, interactive gardens that reflect and interpret the collections of adjacent museums, and shade and swing structures can be implemented incrementally—either as early pilots or as phased capital projects—to expand everyday use, introduce moments of discovery, and reinforce the Oval as an outdoor extension of the cultural institutions that frame it. These elements can be delivered independently, allowing visible progress even as larger investments advance.

Funding is expected to come from major philanthropic donors and foundations aligned with arts access and public space, supplemented by public sources tied to accessibility and green infrastructure. Philanthropic partnerships tied to individual institutions or a collective may be especially well suited to supporting interpretive gardens, canopy elements, and play or shade structures, allowing multiple contributors to participate in shaping the Oval while reinforcing a shared civic outcome.



Conceptual rendering of Wade Oval

# THE ENABLING SYSTEMS

The Signature Moves presented in this plan (Wade Oval, Rockefeller Park South, Euclid and the Cultural Corridor, East 105th Street, and the Harrison Dillard Trail) depend on more than strong design. They depend on a set of Enabling Systems that determine whether public space feels safe, understandable, and usable on ordinary days, and during festivals or peak events.

These systems are the operating conditions that make the Signature Moves work. Parking that is clearly shared, crossings that feel predictable, lighting that holds after dark, and trails that are maintained through winter are the factors that determine whether people arrive with confidence, stay longer, and move between destinations on foot. Without them, even the strongest design loses credibility.

University Circle Inc. does not own or control these systems directly. Its role is to convene, align, and advocate, helping ensure that decisions made by institutions, agencies, and property owners reinforce a shared civic framework rather than accumulate into isolated improvements. The Enabling Systems are the mechanism through which that alignment becomes lived experience.

### Signature Moves

- Wade Oval
- Rockefeller Park South
- Harrison Dillard Trail
- Cultural Corridors
- East 105th Street

## #1 STREET NETWORK STUDY: THE FOUNDATION THAT UNLOCKS EVERYTHING ELSE

University Circle’s most persistent mobility challenges are the are symptoms of a street network designed for regional vehicle throughput rather than local access and civic life. Multiple traffic streams converge at the same intersections, creating confluences: overbuilt, high-stress environments that make crossings daunting and prevent meaningful street redesign. Reconfiguring key routes, beginning with the Cedar/Carnegie/ Stearns/MLK confluence, shortens crossing distances, reduces turning conflicts, and redistributes traffic across the network in ways that unlock protected bike lanes, transit priority, and new civic landscape on streets that cannot be meaningfully changed today.

All five of the Signature Moves are supported by the Street Network Study.



One potential concept to be considered by the Street Network Study

## #2 SHARED FUNDING & DELIVERY CAPACITY

University Circle’s public realm crosses too many ownership boundaries and budget cycles to be improved by any single partner acting alone. Shared district-level capacity—covering early design, pilots, wayfinding, stewardship, and operational coordination—ensures that cross-cutting improvements don’t fall through the gaps between institutions. Rather than prescribing a single model, the approach supports a hybrid funding structure that builds the collective readiness needed to make individual projects more competitive and the district as a whole more coherent.

All five of the Signature Moves are supported by Shared Funding & Delivery Capacity.



## #3 PARKING AND CURB MANAGEMENT

Parking in University Circle is more of a legibility and coordination problem than an issue with the parking supply. With an estimated 18,000 off-street spaces distributed across many independent owners, the visitor experience is shaped less by total availability than by whether parking feels understandable, shared, and accessible. This system reframes parking as a district-wide support structure, coordinating shared garages, time-based curb allocation, event operations, and clear visitor-facing information so that “park once” behavior becomes the easiest and most obvious choice. It also treats the curb itself as civic infrastructure, ensuring that competing demands like ride-hail, ADA access, deliveries, transit stops, and event loading are deliberately managed so conflicts don’t spill into sidewalks and crossings.

Four out of the five Signature Moves are supported by Parking and Curb Management.



Facility	Spaces Available for Park Once Access		
	Daily	Evenings	Weekends/Events
Little Italy Lot		297	297
Campus Center Garage		623	623
Veale Center Parking Garage			1070
Lot 54	75	75	75
Uptown Triangle Lot	60	60	60
Uptown Triangle Garage	385	385	385
Lot 13A		50	50
Cleveland Museum of Art	610	610	610
Cleveland Botanical Garden	200	200	200
CMNH	300	300	300
Cleveland History Center	93	93	93
Centric Garage	360	360	360
Uptown North	133	133	133
Church of the Covenant	66	66	66
Artisan	100	100	100
<b>ALL</b>	<b>2382</b>	<b>3352</b>	<b>4422</b>

Focusing informational resources on park-once options by location will help manage supply and demand



Aerial view of parking and transportation along Euclid Avenue

### #4 ACCESS AND ARRIVAL

This system addresses access at three interrelated scales: regional gateways that signal entry into a shared civic district; district thresholds that convert points of hesitation into civic invitations; and the last 300 to 500 feet, where a single uncomfortable crossing, unlit underpass, or unclear sign can undermine the quality of the destination itself. Red Line stations are repositioned as front doors rather than endpoints, with surrounding public realm that communicates where to go next through direct, well-lit routes and wayfinding that makes distances feel short and manageable.

All five Signature Moves are supported by Access and Arrival.



CircleLink service active in University Circle

### #5 WAYFINDING AND DISTRICT LEGIBILITY

University Circle’s curvilinear streets, shifting street names, large institutional parcels, and oversized intersections make it difficult to navigate, even for regular users. This system goes beyond signage to address the underlying spatial complexity that causes people to rely on insider knowledge, take circuitous routes to feel safer, or default to short car trips rather than walking between nearby destinations. Walking-time cues replace abstract distances; consistent environmental signals at thresholds and decision points provide orientation and reassurance; and transit, shuttle, trail, and pedestrian routes are integrated into a single legible system so that transfers feel intentional and exploration feels possible.

All five Signature Moves are supported by Wayfinding and District Legibility.



One of many paths within Smith Family Gateway

### #6 SAFETY, COMFORT, AND EVERYDAY PRESENCE

Safety in University Circle is not experienced uniformly, and it is shaped as much by environment as by enforcement. This system addresses the physical and psychological conditions that determine whether people move through the district confidently after dark, in winter, and outside of programmed events. Priorities include crossing geometry that shapes driver behavior; pedestrian-scaled lighting as civic infrastructure on primary routes; experiential improvements to rail underpasses, and active ground floors that generate the “eyes on the street” presence that makes public space feel welcoming.

All five Signature Moves are supported by Safety, Comfort, and Everyday Presence.



RRFB on East 105th Street adjacent to the VA.

### #7 TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT AND TRANSIT-FIRST ACCESS

For many people, active transportation is the only viable way to reach jobs, education, healthcare, and cultural destinations in University Circle. This system treats transit-first access as equity infrastructure, expanding who can reach University Circle without a car by strengthening sidewalk continuity and ADA compliance, upgrading bus stop infrastructure, integrating CircleLink shuttle routes into district wayfinding and regional trip-planning tools, advancing bicycle facilities through coordination with scheduled resurfacing projects, and aligning employer-based commuter programs across institutions.

All five Signature Moves are supported by Transportation Demand Management and Transit-First Access



Little Italy - University Circle Rapid Station

### #8 FLEXIBLE STREET OPERATIONS (FESTIVAL STREETS)

In select locations, streets can be designed to function as adaptable civic spaces that support everyday use while periodically transitioning to accommodate events, markets, performances, and cultural programming. Rather than committing immediately to permanent curbless reconstruction, this system establishes a framework for testing operational models first including piloting coordinated closures, traffic calming measures, and event support infrastructure using existing street geometry before advancing to capital redesign.

All five Signature Moves are supported by Flexible Street Operations (Festival Streets).



Source: Cleveland Museum of Art  
Parade the Circle

### #9 STEWARDSHIP, OPERATIONS, AND MAINTENANCE

Well-designed places lose trust quickly when lighting is broken, snow is uncleared, restrooms are unavailable, or routes feel neglected outside of peak events. In a district as complex as University Circle, where streets, parks, trails, transit facilities, and institutional frontages are maintained by many different entities with varying standards and response times, stewardship is not a background task but a primary enabling system. This system establishes coordinated maintenance hierarchies that prioritize primary pedestrian routes and transit connections for snow clearance, lighting repair, and surface upkeep; ensures that public amenities are reliably available so that lingering feels possible; and develops event operations protocols that protect everyday access during major programming moments.

All five Signature Moves are supported by Stewardship, Operations, and Maintenance.



Source: University Circle Inc  
Wade Oval in winter

## WHEN THE SYSTEMS ARE ALIGNED

When these systems work together, friction disappears at the moments that matter most: arriving at a station, crossing a busy street, finding a place to park, or deciding whether to walk between destinations on a winter evening. Walking becomes easier than driving a short distance. Transit becomes an attractive choice rather than a last resort. Public spaces support everyday presence as confidently as they support major events.

Progress on these systems will be iterative and opportunistic, bundled with resurfacing projects, transit upgrades, development cycles, and funding windows so incremental investments accumulate toward a coherent experience. The Enabling Systems are the difference between a district that looks complete on opening day and one that remains usable, understandable, and welcoming across seasons, schedules, and years.



Source: University Circle Inc  
Wade Oval Wednesdays

# FROM FRAMEWORK TO ACTION: SIGNATURE MOVES, ENABLING SYSTEMS, AND IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAYS

The Connected Civic Commons framework is implemented through Signature Moves—strategic places where design, systems, and coordinated investment can change how the entire district functions. These moves are not interchangeable projects. Each occupies a distinct civic role within the district, whether as a commons, a connector, or a threshold, and each can influence everyday experience well beyond its footprint. Crucially, each Signature Move is conceived together with the Enabling Systems that determine whether public space performs reliably on ordinary days—not only during festivals, peak hours, or special events. Parking and curb management, access and arrival, wayfinding and legibility, safety and everyday presence, transit-first mobility, and stewardship are not secondary to design. They are the operating conditions that determine whether design works in practice and whether public investment delivers everyday value.

Implementation in University Circle does not occur under a single authority or through a single capital program. It unfolds through overlapping investments, operating decisions, maintenance practices, and partnerships spanning multiple institutions and jurisdictions. Accordingly, each Signature Move is paired with a clear implementation logic: early actions that build visible trust, capital projects that unlock multiple outcomes, and coordination structures that protect continuity over time without requiring uniform participation from every institution. Progress is expected to be iterative and opportunistic, bundled with development, resurfacing cycles, transit upgrades, and funding windows so incremental investments accumulate toward a coherent district experience. To make coordination decipherable, the plan anticipates a “start with confidence” sequence: near-term, district-wide standards and quick-build actions that are highly visible and repeatable, followed by a small number of catalytic capital projects that unlock multiple outcomes, and then longer-horizon redevelopment and corridor changes that reinforce continuity over time.

## ELEVATE AND ACTIVATE THE PUBLIC REALM (DISTRICT-WIDE STANDARD)

Streets are the largest share of public space in University Circle, and the plan treats them as civic rooms—scaled to people, not only vehicles. Across corridors and everyday spaces, recommendations prioritize sidewalk continuity, shorter and more comfortable crossings, street trees, lighting, and furnishings that support routine walking and lingering. The public realm is strengthened not through uniformity, but through coherence: a shared family of landscape, lighting, and wayfinding elements that makes the district readable while allowing institutional identity to remain distinct. Ground floors and edges are treated as part of the public realm: visible entrances, transparency, active uses, and clear thresholds improve comfort and perceived safety. Arts and culture extend beyond ticketed spaces through public art, interpretation, and flexible outdoor programming that reinforce University Circle’s cultural identity in daily use.



Conceptual rendering of a multipurpose pavilion within Wade Oval

## IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE DISTRICT (ARRIVAL, WALKING, TRANSIT, PARKING, WAYFINDING)

Access is the first test of the civic commons: how people arrive, orient, and move determines whether the district feels welcoming and intuitive. The plan organizes access as a coordinated system. Gateways and crossings signal arrival; a connected walking network links Signature Moves, neighborhoods, transit, and parking; and a transit-first approach treats Red Line stations as front doors supported by lighting, wayfinding, and “first blocks” maintenance commitments. Parking strategy emphasizes the last 500 feet: clear pedestrian paths, lighting, and wayfinding from garages and lots into the district. Curb management is treated as civic infrastructure, balancing drop-offs, ADA access, loading, and transit operations so sidewalks and crossings remain functional. A district wayfinding system focuses on key decision points (stations, garages, gateways, major intersections) using consistent graphics and walking-time cues that encourage exploration.



HealthLine service active in University Circle

## IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT ALIGNMENT (HOW THE FRAMEWORK GETS DELIVERED)

Because no single entity controls the public realm, implementation depends on coordination, phasing, and shared standards rather than a single project list. University Circle Inc. serves as convener and civic integrator, aligning institutions and agencies around Signature Move priorities, access standards, and stewardship expectations while allowing flexibility in how individual partners participate. Phasing is structured around impact and dependency: near-term pilots and early actions build confidence while larger projects advance through engineering and fundraising. Implementation is layered across institutional capital, public infrastructure programs, federal safety and active transportation funding, philanthropy for visible civic commitments, and shared funding models for baseline operations and matching leverage. Development is treated as a public realm lever: active ground floors, permeable edges, pedestrian connections, and coordinated curb access extend continuity block by block. Transitional sites such as surface parking are improved in the near term (paths, lighting, buffers, wayfinding) while preserving redevelopment potential. Progress is evaluated through everyday performance including comfort, legibility, safe crossings, transit arrival confidence, and year-round reliability.



# SECTION 7 IMPLEMENTATION — FROM PLAN TO ACTION

## PHASING BY IMPACT, DEPENDENCY, AND CIVIC RETURN

### PRIORITIZING WHAT UNLOCKS THE DISTRICT

Implementation in University Circle cannot be governed by capital cost alone. Some of this plan's most consequential moves—particularly those that enable everyday use, equity, and district coherence—require significant upfront investment, but unlock the success of multiple other actions. Delaying these moves in favor of only “easy wins” would risk producing well-designed fragments without the enabling civic infrastructure needed to sustain them. For this reason, implementation is organized around three lenses applied together:

- 1. Civic Impact:** How fundamentally a move changes ordinary-day experience
- 2. Dependency:** Which other Signature Moves rely on it to succeed
- 3. Feasibility:** Including capital cost, operating requirements, approvals, and funding readiness

Phases therefore overlap in scale. High-capital projects may occur early when their impact is catalytic, while lower-cost interventions recur across phases as reinforcing investments. Phasing is treated as strategic leverage, not delay, so that near-term actions build visible credibility and long-term actions are layered onto a functioning system rather than expected to create vitality on their own. This approach acknowledges current public funding constraints while focusing early effort on moves that unlock multiple outcomes, align with existing capital cycles, and are competitive for state, federal, and philanthropic support.

## PHASE ONE: CATALYTIC INVESTMENTS THAT UNLOCK EVERYTHING ELSE

Phase One prioritizes high-impact, high-dependency moves, including select high-capital investments, that establish the structural and experiential conditions for the public realm to function as a district rather than a set of adjacent destinations. These actions reshape how University Circle is entered, used, and understood on ordinary days. Primary Signature Moves advanced in Phase One include:

- Wade Oval: Pavilion as Civic Infrastructure
- Rockefeller Park South: Stearns Road closure and MLK reconfiguration
- Harrison Dillard Trail: Repaving, widening, signage, continuity, and identity
- East 105th Street: Priority threshold crossings
- Euclid and the Cultural Corridor: Placemaking and Programming



Proposed Wade Oval Pavilion

### WADE OVAL PAVILION

HIGH CAPITAL, HIGHEST CIVIC RETURN

The Wade Oval Pavilion is treated as an early catalytic investment, not a deferred amenity. Engagement made clear that restrooms, food, everyday seating and shade, basic performance infrastructure, and visible cultural presence are prerequisites for Wade Oval to function as an equitable, daily commons. Without this infrastructure, other investments—perimeter improvements, play gardens, programming—remain constrained, and the Oval continues to operate primarily as an event space rather than a dependable civic room. Although the Pavilion carries a high capital cost and ongoing operational requirements, early delivery produces unusually broad return:

- Enables longer stays and broader participation across ages and abilities
- Reduces reliance on temporary event infrastructure and one-off logistics
- Supports smaller cultural organizations and community groups with low-barrier access to performance and gathering space
- Creates a clear philanthropic proposition: a visible public commitment that can anchor major gifts, campaigns, and civic funding

Funding strategy should be explicit and layered: lead gifts and naming opportunities; private foundation support aligned with arts access, public space, and equity; and state/federal funding tied to accessibility, cultural facilities, and green infrastructure. To protect momentum while fundraising proceeds, interim strategies should be advanced in parallel—temporary or leased restrooms, seasonal food service, and pilot placemaking and performance infrastructure—so the everyday commons begins to function earlier without compromising the case for the Pavilion as permanent civic infrastructure.

### ROCKEFELLER PARK SOUTH: STEARNS ROAD CLOSURE AND MLK TWO-WAY CONVERSION

HIGH CAPITAL, HIGH DEPENDENCY

This transportation reconfiguration is an early structural move that unlocks the park's function as a civic threshold, student third space, and neighborhood park. Treating it as an early investment establishes safety, legibility, and continuity that subsequent landscape improvements depend on—particularly for daily movement between John Hay High School, the Cleveland School of the Arts, surrounding neighborhoods, and University Circle's institutional core. This move requires early coordination with the City of Cleveland and ODOT and should be paired with near-term visible safety improvements and path and lighting upgrades so progress is tangible while engineering advances. Funding pathways include federal and state transportation and safety programs, access and equity grants, and philanthropic contributions aligned with youth, education, and neighborhood connectivity given the park's role in daily student life and arrival from the Cedar–University Red Line station.

### DISTRICT-WIDE SAFETY AND TRAIL DECISION POINTS

MODERATE CAPITAL, HIGH BEHAVIORAL IMPACT

For the Harrison Dillard Trail, the first phase should prioritize safer crossings, wayfinding, and developing a clear identity as the most immediate and high-impact improvements. While several crossings along the corridor ultimately require broader traffic pattern changes to fully resolve safety concerns, early investment in trail quality, signage, and low-cost intersection treatments can substantially improve comfort, clarity, and usability in the near term.

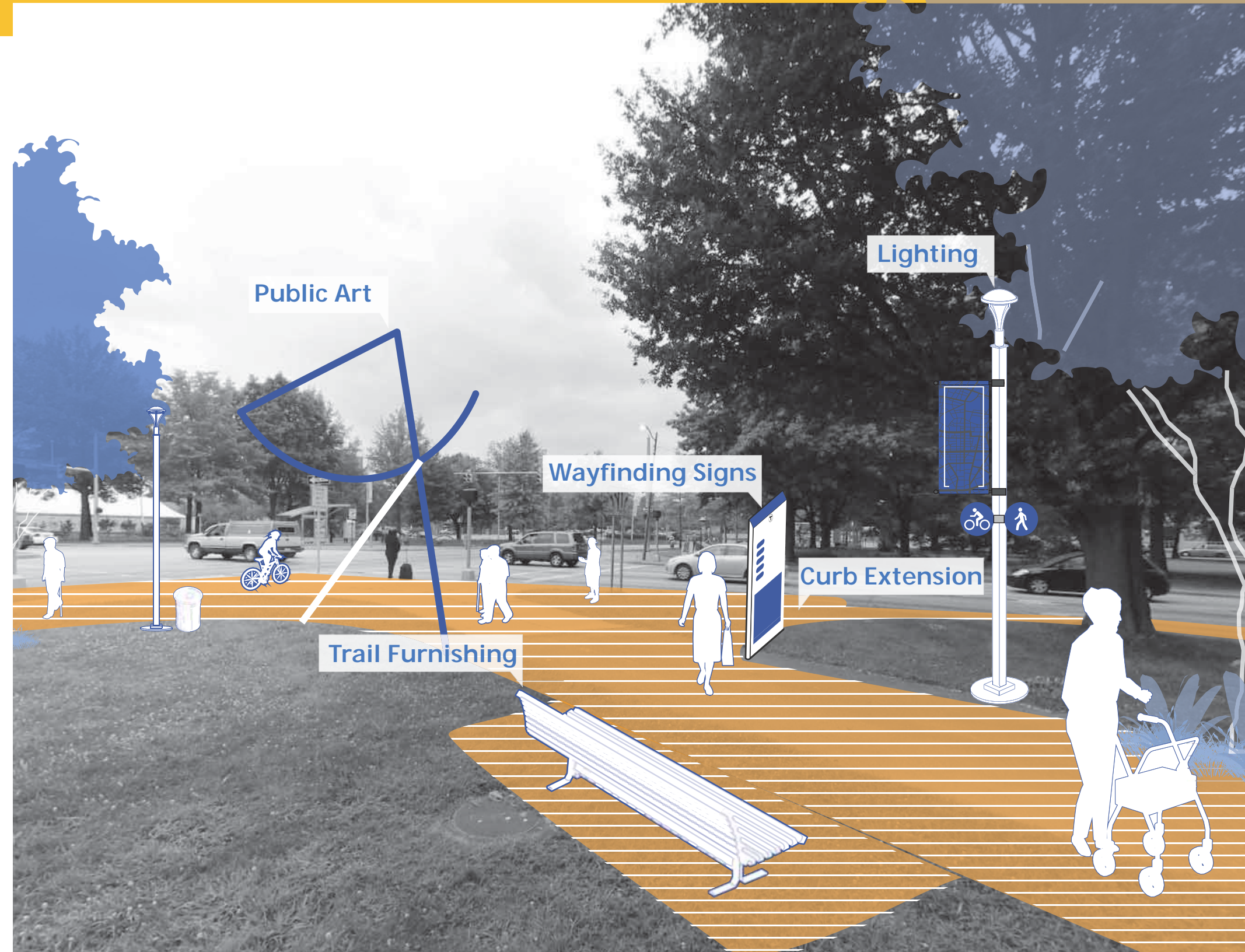
The corridor should be addressed segment by segment. North of University Circle to Gordon Park, the trail functions as both a regional connector and a key gateway into the district and should be evaluated comprehensively for widening and resurfacing. At the East 105th Street entry into University Circle, at least one if not both pathways flanking MLK Jr. Drive should be widened to full trail width to reduce user conflicts. Because MLK Jr. Drive is scheduled for roadway work in 2029, there may be a future opportunity to evaluate on-street bicycle facilities. However, given the corridor's curves and vehicular speeds, separated bicycle facilities should be prioritized to improve safety and user comfort. In the central segment between Mt. Sinai Boulevard and Chester Avenue reconstruction should address pooling water, pavement deterioration, constrained width, and outdated amenities, with upgrades to drainage, surface conditions, lighting, and furnishings. South of Chester Avenue, and pending the outcomes of the street network study, portions of the trail may be expanded or realigned, particularly if the closure of Stearns Road creates new flexibility. Under the rail overpass near Ambler Park, the existing sidewalk should be evaluated for conversion to full trail width where feasible to eliminate pinch points and improve continuity.

Signage is an especially pressing need throughout the corridor. Clear, consistent wayfinding at entry points, trail-street crossings, and decision nodes is essential to reduce hesitation at intersections, reinforce the Bikeway's identity, and strengthen its connection to district destinations and the regional trail network. University Circle Inc. is well positioned to advance signage improvements quickly through partnerships with Cuyahoga Greenway Partners and other regional organizations, leveraging shared production standards and installation support to deliver cost-effective, near-term implementation.

At trail-street crossings and intersections, the first phase should emphasize low-cost, quick-build safety treatments such as high-visibility crosswalks, delineators, curb extensions, daylighting, signage upgrades, and signal timing adjustments, allowing measurable improvements while more complex traffic pattern changes are studied and coordinated with future capital projects. Additional trail spurs should be developed to connect the Bikeway more directly to destinations near Wade Oval, within South Rockefeller Park, and toward the Case Western Reserve University campus, increasing overall utility and access.

Reinvigorating the corridor will also require coordinated investment in amenities and long-term maintenance, with clear stewardship responsibilities established as part of implementation. By focusing first on trail width, surface quality, signage clarity, and targeted quick-build safety upgrades, University Circle can deliver meaningful near-term improvements while positioning more substantial crossing and traffic network changes for subsequent phases.

Harrison Dillard Concepts



### ROLE OF SHARED FUNDING IN PHASE ONE

The identification of new shared funding models plays a critical role in Phase One, not as the sole funding source, but as a signal of collective institutional commitment and a practical mechanism for baseline capacity. The Special Improvement District (SID) is one approach to establishing this shared funding structure, but not the only option. Shared funding models can support:

- Early design and engineering
- Public realm operations and maintenance pilots that enhance district safety (especially winter, lighting, and wayfinding)
- Matching funds that strengthen state, federal, and philanthropic applications
- District-wide programs that require consistency across boundaries (park-once messaging, unified wayfinding standards, stewardship performance expectations)

A shared funding model is valuable not because it solves capital costs, but because it demonstrates governance readiness and provides the glue that lets larger funding sources land effectively.

As we invest in the public realm, there will also be opportunity for new private and institutional development in the Circle.

The graphic to the right illustrates a mid-term scenario with the potential to add another estimated 2,100,000 square feet of development.

#### MID-TERM DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Master Plan Recommendation
- Under Construction/Approved Plans
- Planned/Potential Development
- Recently Completed Development
- Existing Buildings
- Landscape Improvements



## PHASE TWO: BUILDING OUT THE EVERYDAY COMMONS

With catalytic conditions in place, Phase Two focuses on completing the everyday public realm so that coherence is experienced block by block and season by season. Primary Signature Moves advanced in Phase Two include:

- **Wade Oval:** Pavilion, perimeter paths, play and discovery gardens, seating, shade, and lighting. (Pending fundraising, the pavilion and landscape improvement could be split into phases).
- **Harrison Dillard Trail:** Continued work on trail widening and repaving, new lighting, and construction of new trail spurs that connect the trail to key destinations, especially near Wade Oval and within Rockefeller Park South, including better connections to the Case Western Reserve University campus. Full corridor completion to a consistent standard.
- **Uptown and cultural spines:** Permanent streetscape upgrades aligned with infill and redevelopment.
- **Rockefeller Park South:** Improvements to the park include permanent path realignment, new gathering spaces, landscape upgrades, signage, and improved street crossings.

Phase Two investments are often moderate but cumulative. In this phase, operational responsibility becomes more explicit and should be treated as part of capital planning rather than an afterthought. At Wade Oval, permanent paths, seating, landscape, and lighting increase maintenance needs—making SID-supported operations, institutional agreements, and shared stewardship essential. Along the Harrison Dillard Trail, completing gaps and standardizing design language turns a route into reliable civic infrastructure. In Uptown, public realm upgrades must be tightly coordinated with private development so that continuity is strengthened rather than reset parcel by parcel. Here, public investment sets clear expectations, and private capital extends the civic framework block by block through ground-floor activation and frontage contributions.

## PHASE THREE: AMPLIFICATION, INTEGRATION, AND LONG-TERM CAPACITY

Phase Three focuses on amplifying identity, capacity, and regional integration, layering additional value onto a public realm that is already trusted and well used. Primary moves advanced in Phase Three include:

- **Wade Oval:** Canopy walk and expanded programming capacity.
- **Harrison Dillard Trail:** Regional connectivity enhancements and network integration, including intersection and crossing realignments to coincide with major reconfiguration of street networks.

These investments are justified because the district has already demonstrated sustained use, stewardship capacity, and institutional alignment. Capital costs may be significant, but they are layered onto a functioning system rather than expected to generate everyday vitality on their own. Funding in this phase relies on major philanthropic gifts and endowments, long-range institutional capital planning, and regional/state/federal funding tied to infrastructure, climate resilience, and mobility.

The graphic to the right shows a longer-term vision of future development in University Circle. The legend assumes that recommendations called out in the mid-term map on the previous page are complete, and adds another 1,000,000 square feet of new development.

### LONG-TERM SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Master Plan Recommendation
- Under Construction/Approved Plans
- Planned/Potential Development
- Recently Completed Development
- Existing Buildings
- Landscape Improvements



# MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

## MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

*Connecting the Circle* establishes a shared framework for strengthening University Circle's public realm over time. It reflects a collective commitment to coordination, stewardship, and everyday experience, recognizing that no single project or institution can achieve these goals alone. The work ahead is not about waiting for perfect conditions or comprehensive implementation. It is about aligning decisions as opportunities arise, investing strategically in the Signature Moves and Enabling Systems that underpin them, and applying a consistent lens to design, access, and development across the district. Early actions can build confidence and momentum, while longer-term investments reinforce continuity, reliability, and shared purpose. Over time, this approach allows incremental decisions to accumulate into a coherent civic experience—one that works on ordinary days as well as during moments of celebration. University Circle has long been defined by the strength of its institutions. This plan offers a path to match that strength with a public realm that is cohesive, welcoming, and worthy of the district's civic role. Moving forward will require leadership, partnership, and sustained commitment. But the logic is clear, the framework is in place, and the priorities are shared. The opportunity now is to act with intention so that the spaces between institutions become as meaningful, trusted, and generous as the institutions themselves.

## FROM DIRECTION TO ACTION

The next phase is about acting with alignment, confidence, and intent so that design, operations, funding, and stewardship reinforce one another. For institutions, this means advancing capital projects, campus improvements, and operational decisions with clear attention to how edges, ground floors, and connections contribute to district-wide public life. For public agencies, it means prioritizing safety, crossings, arrival, and transit integration at the locations where everyday experience is most constrained. For philanthropic partners, it means investing in civic systems and shared infrastructure, so that generosity produces lasting public benefit. For University Circle Inc., it means convening, coordinating, and stewarding the framework so that momentum is sustained and intent is protected over time.

Near-term efforts should be judged by a simple standard: do people feel the difference on an ordinary day? This includes initiating design and engineering for the most catalytic Signature Moves, particularly those that improve safety, clarity, and comfort at key thresholds and crossings. It also includes early operational alignment—piloting shared wayfinding, strengthening park-once strategies, coordinating transit and shuttle information, and reinforcing stewardship in the places people already use most. These actions are intentionally practical. They are meant to make University Circle feel different quickly, through reliability, legibility, and welcome.

Implementation also requires discipline and visible follow-through. Clear project champions must be established. The public realm working group must be convened with a predictable cadence. Capital, operating, and maintenance commitments must be aligned across institutions and agencies so that early wins are not episodic, but cumulative. Fundraising, grant applications, and public funding requests should be framed as contributions to a shared civic system that has been tested through engagement and grounded in lived experience. This alignment strengthens credibility with funders and reduces risk for all involved.

Just as importantly, *Connecting the Circle* succeeds only if it is governed by use. Early projects should be treated as opportunities to learn as well as to build, using observation and feedback to refine design, operations, and stewardship before larger investments are finalized. In this way, progress remains responsive rather than rigid, and accountability remains visible in everyday life.

What comes next is a sequence of deliberate actions that make University Circle easier to reach, easier to understand, safer to move through, and more fully shared. With this plan, the district now has a common language for decision-making and a clear sense of direction.

**The task now is to steward University Circle's existing momentum: to make the first set of moves unmistakable, to hold the line on shared standards, and to build a track record of delivery that earns the right, and the support, to do more. If University Circle commits to that standard, the outcome is larger than any single project. It is a district that functions as a civic commons: coherent, dignified, and generous; welcoming to the world while remaining a source of pride and belonging for Clevelanders for generations to come.**

