

2. Hospital District and Main Street Commercial Area

Objectives

In the northern part of the main street district (between Walnut and Vermont Streets):

- Establish a functional and attractive setting for the further development of St. Francis Hospital, other medical services, and Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC).
- Establish a density of residential and commercial development, an inviting streetscape, and public amenities appropriate for the center of a thriving small city.

Development Steps

- Replace parking lots that now front on Western Avenue with parking along Irving in spaces created by the relocation of industrial businesses and with parking lots in "interior block" parcels between Western and Gregory.
- When necessary, build a parking structure on a larger interior block location to serve the hospital, Pronger Smith, MVCC, shopping, and other businesses.
- Facilitate the development of mixed use buildings (with first floor retail and upper story apartments or offices). Over 3 to 7 years, establish walls of inviting commercial space along the length of Western Avenue from Walnut Street to the junction of Western and Gregory (with store fronts broken only by parks and public amenities).
- Create a public square, an extensive landscaped public space centered on a fountain or monument that will serve as the venue for outdoor meetings and performances and as a congenial resting/meeting place for residents and visitors. For this purpose enhance the current park on York & Western Avenue or establish a larger public space in the main street district.
- Establish a live community on Western Avenue.
- Attract retail businesses for which market analyses and community input indicates an opportunity, particularly specialty clothing stores, children's product stores, a book store, and additional or expanded quality restaurants.
- Convert Western and Gregory Avenues to two-way streets, slowing traffic to a pace that will be comfortable for pedestrians and make passing motorists aware of Blue Island's main street as a distinctive shopping district.
- Add amenities such as lowered and softened street lighting, sidewalk "bulb outs" and clearly demarcated crosswalks, trees and other greenery and street furniture that will enhance the safety, comfort, and number of pedestrians in the main street district.

Development Resources

Among other resources appropriate for use in this project, seek these types of public funds for integration with private investment: *New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)* available through the US Treasury that may provide incentives for the development of mixed use buildings and new enterprises in the main street district / *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds*, relatively flexible federal funds that may contribute to necessary adjustments and development of parking/ *Various Programs to Finance and Assist Small Business Development* available through the US Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (IDCEO) that may be used to help entrepreneurs expand or develop some of the retail and service businesses needed in the main street commercial district.



Hospital District: Concept 1

1 St. Francis Hospital

The hospital location is maintained with its recent addition along Gregory Avenue and entrance courtyard at the northwest corner of the block. The hospital has no current plans to expand beyond the existing block. Parking is a major concern for the hospital and should be maintained as close to the hospital as possible, potentially providing opportunities for future expansion as needed.

Union and High Streets provide opportunities for connections to the hospital from Western Avenue. Both streets terminate at inviting locations on the hospital site: Union leads to the new entrance courtyard, although the location of the Pronger-Smith Heart Care Center at the corner of Gregory and High suggests that High Street could serve as a connection with more pedestrian traffic.

2 Hospital Parking Lots

The lumberyard located behind the hospital should be relocated to a more appropriate location in the city, where truck traffic is routed on dedicated paths. This parcel can then serve as hospital employee parking, with access to the hospital from the rear entrance. Additionally, if the tracks were reconfigured in response to other development opportunities, this parcel could expand in depth (note the dashed line essentially bisecting the site). Finally, this parcel could serve nicely as an expansion zone for the hospital.

The relocation of Irving Avenue expands the parking lot located just south of York Street adjacent to the tracks. This parking lot could be designated for additional Metra parking if the hospital's

parking needs are met. Otherwise, this lot should be maintained as hospital parking. In all cases, the parking lot should be landscaped with a minimum of one tree per 15 spaces and screened with landscaping or low height metal fencing. Streetscape should continue along the perimeter of the lot with sidewalk, parkway and street trees at a minimum at the corners of the lot.

3 Hospital Parking Structure

To facilitate the minimization of surface parking lots in key areas, the surface lot at the corner of Union and Irving Avenue could be redeveloped as structured parking. A connection across Union to the courtyard of the hospital would lead visitors to the hospital entrance.

4 Public Parking Structure

To further minimize the impact of surface parking lots in the downtown, the City could develop a parking structure proximate to Main Street, the hospital, Moraine Valley Community College, and a new theater. This parking could be utilized on the weekends by Main Street shoppers during the day and by theater patrons in the evenings, then by hospital visitors on weekdays and by Moraine College students on weekday evenings.

5 Public Square

The existing park at the corner of Western and York serves as the civic space for the downtown. In Concept 2, this park is maintained but enhanced by creating appropriate edges. A new building constructed in the existing parking lot defines the eastern edge of the space; an entrance from this building should open onto



Hospital District: Concept 2

the park. The building face on the north edge of the park should be improved; a mural could be applied to the building surface, a trellis or overhead shade structure could be constructed along the face of the building, a sculpture could be developed that could move from the ground in front of the building face to the building surface and back down, or a row of trees could be planted along the building edge.

In Concept 1, the existing park is replaced by a more traditional town square located between Union and High Streets. This larger park would be more visible and accessible from all directions, surrounded by street with on-street parking. The open quality also makes the square feel safer yet more public. This new square would also serve as entranceway to Main Street from the north, a gateway to the hospital from Western Avenue, and a forecourt for a community theater across Western. The intersections surrounding the new "square" should be highlighted with pedestrian-scaled pavers to designate the entire area as a pedestrian zone.

6 Moraine Valley Community College Branch

This branch of a regional junior college system is a significant new institution in Blue Island. It plays a critical role in workforce development for the hospital and for local industrial businesses which should be expanded. Its students contribute to the clientele of Main Street businesses. The public square of the North Main Street Hospital District should provide a campus for this community college branch.

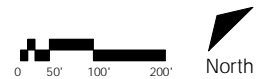
7 Community Theater

During the public charrette exercise, community residents designated this building as appropriate to house a new community theater. A theater is an excellent additional use to activate Main Street without distracting from the existing retail uses; it could also serve as an additional anchor for the downtown, attracting visitors from surrounding communities.

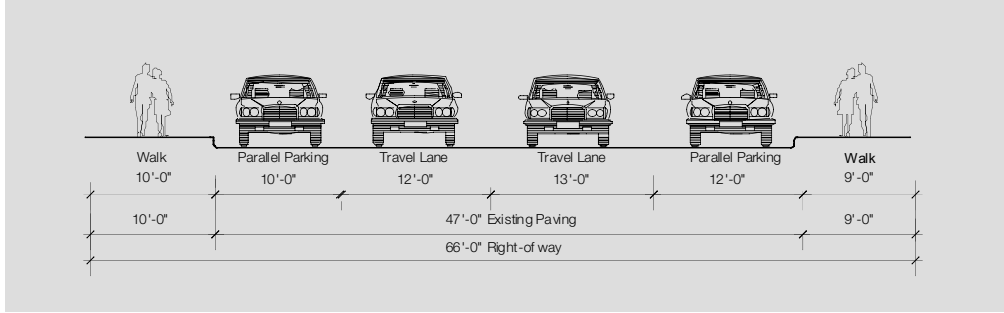
8 Infill Buildings

Along Western Avenue, several vacant or underdeveloped parcels should be redeveloped with small scale mixed use, office or residential buildings to define the streetwall of the public space of the street. Vacant parcels surrounding parks or squares should be redeveloped with building fronts facing the parks. On Gregory Avenue, buildings should line the street and could consist of office uses, hospital-related uses or residential.

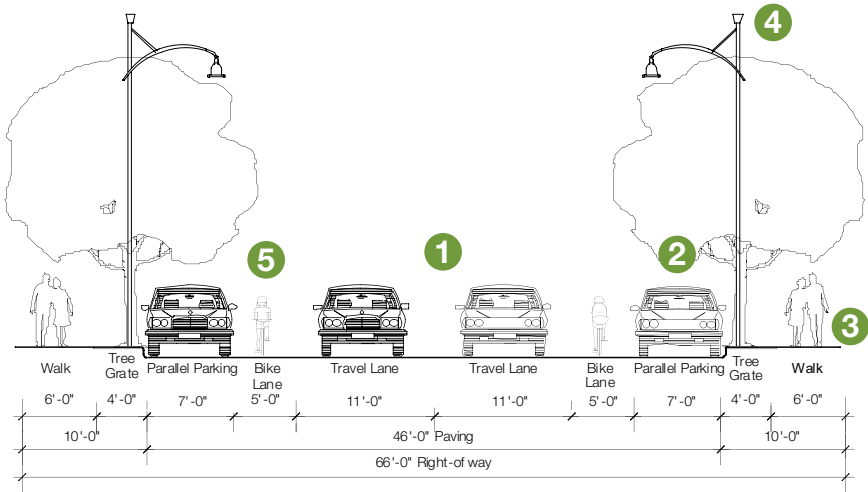
Parking lots should not be located on Western Avenue or Gregory but should be maintained on interiors of blocks, accessed off side streets. Because of the dominance of 2 to 3 story buildings along Western and Gregory, buildings should be a minimum of 2 stories. All corner parcels should absolutely be occupied by an appropriately scaled building to "hold the corner" and maintain the feel of the main street.



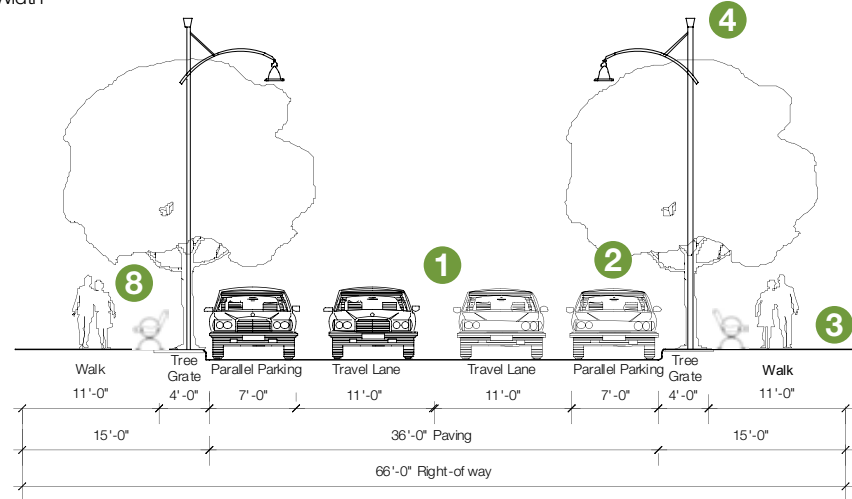
Existing Western Avenue
66' Right-of-way
47' BOC to BOC Paving Width



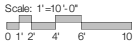
Proposed Western Avenue: Alternative 1
66' Right-of-way
46' BOC to BOC Paving Width



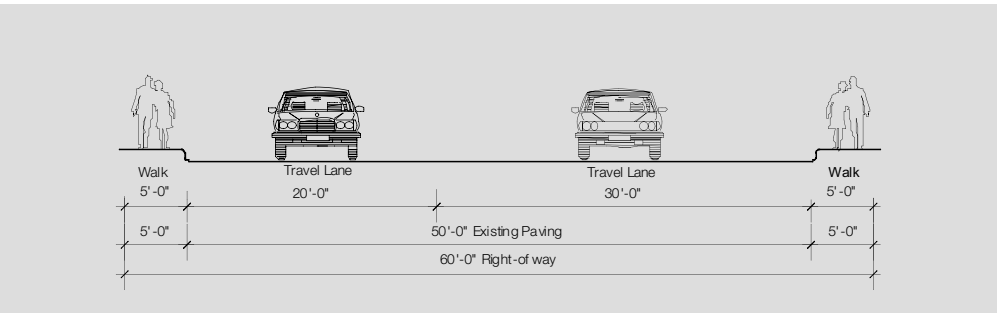
Proposed Western Avenue: Alternative 2
66' Right-of-way
36' BOC to BOC Paving Width



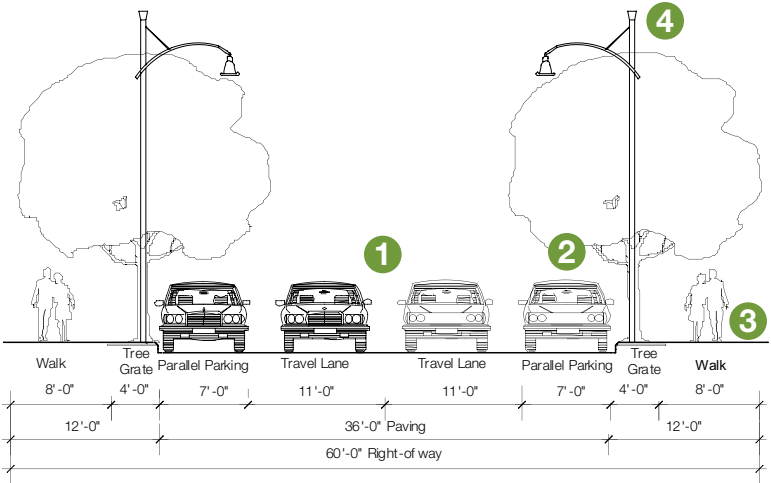
Street Sections: Western Avenue



Existing Vermont Street
60' Right-of-way
46' BOC to BOC Paving Width



Proposed Vermont Street
60' Right-of-way
46' BOC to BOC Paving Width



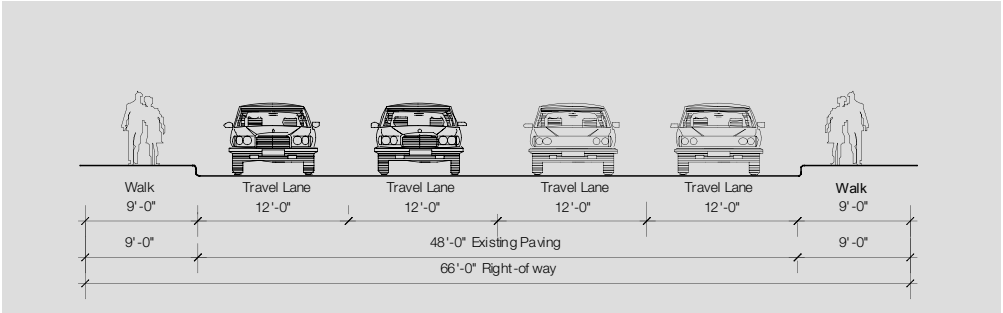
Street Sections: Vermont Street

- 1 Travel Lanes**
11' travel lanes are an accepted IDOT standard and help to reduce the pavement width, making crossings shorter for pedestrians and slowing the traffic.
- 2 On-street Parking**
On-street parking decentralizes parking, reducing the need for large expanses of parking lots. It also slows traffic and provides a buffer between pedestrians and traffic. Additionally, on-street parking provides teaser parking for retail uses, allowing for quick stops and increasing the activity on the street.
- 3 Pedestrian Zone**
Sidewalks should be a minimum of 5' with a 5' parkway for tree planting in residential areas and 10', allowing for street trees in grates in commercial areas. Street trees should be required on all primary streets to further define the pedestrian area and soften the street.
- 4 Pedestrian-scaled Light Fixtures**
More interesting vehicular light fixtures would be intermingled with pedestrian-scaled light fixtures to provide an appropriate light level for comfort and safety. Detailed fixtures foster a sense of civic pride for a downtown, further enhanced by banners and added flower baskets.
- 5 Bike Lanes**
Bicycle lanes provide a designated space for bicyclists, increasing

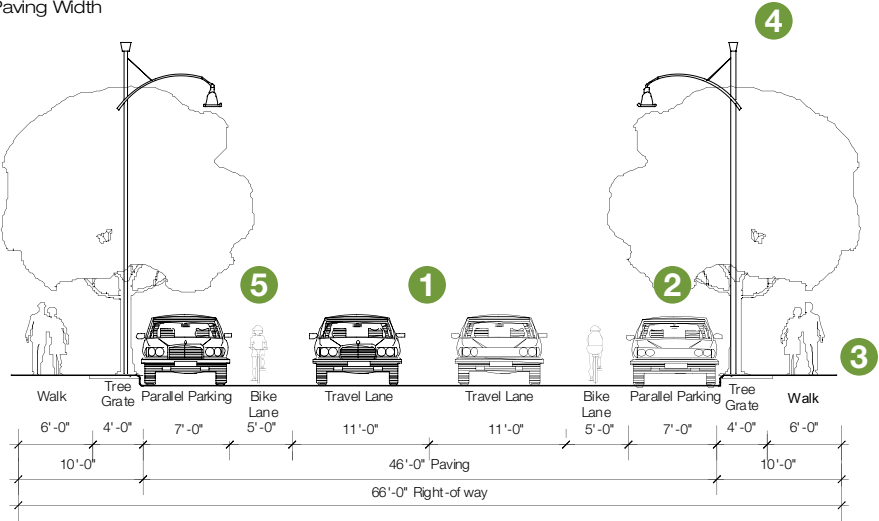
their feeling of safety and right of way. Additionally, the more modes of transportation available, the more active, inclusive and accessible the area.

- 6 Bus Stops**
The six Pace bus routes that serve Blue Island provide an important channel of connectivity for the city. The Blue Island Plan also provides for a shuttle bus, facilitated by Pace, that will link the main street and hospital districts with the station area, residential neighborhoods, and industrial employment centers. Bus stops should provide shelter for patrons and be notable and tastefully blended elements of the streetscape.
- 7 Public Art**
The viaduct at Gregory Avenue and Vermont Street should be enhanced with Public Art to announce the entrance to downtown. The art could consist of mural or sculpture applied to the surface of the viaduct walls. Gateway art elements should also be incorporated into the design of the new Metra station on Vermont, the public park in the north main street hospital district, and the reconstituted Gregory - Western intersection at the southern entrance to downtown.
- 8 Street Furnishings**
Benches, trash receptacles and planters create places in the streetscape for pedestrians to pause or rest. Designating areas for these activities on the overall plan will help define the locations for street furnishings. An enhancement of the overpass at Gregory and Vermont could create a special location.

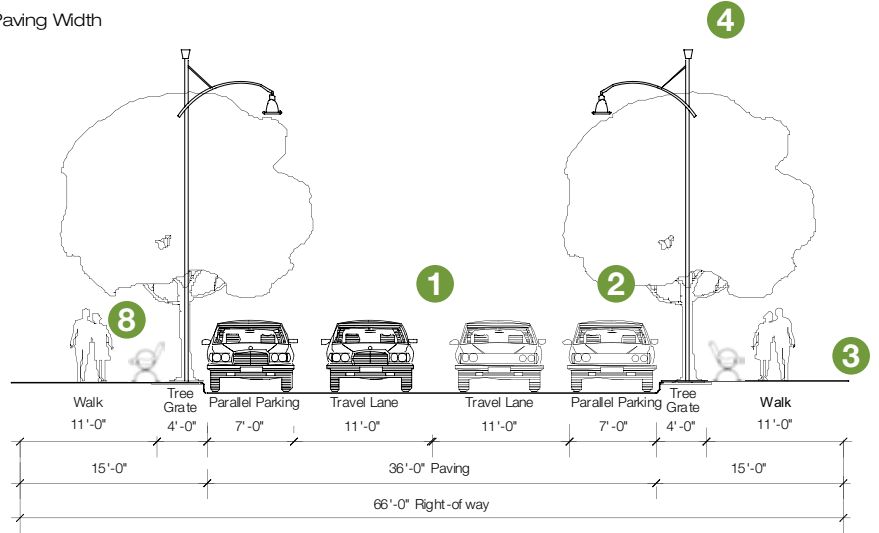
Existing Gregory Avenue
66' Right-of-way
46' BOC to BOC Paving Width



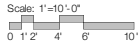
Proposed Gregory Avenue: Alternative 1
66' Right-of-way
46' BOC to BOC Paving Width



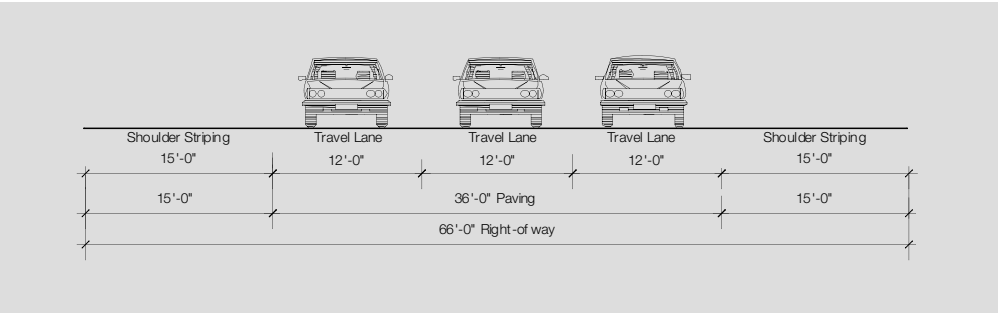
Proposed Gregory Avenue: Alternative 2
66' Right-of-way
36' BOC to BOC Paving Width



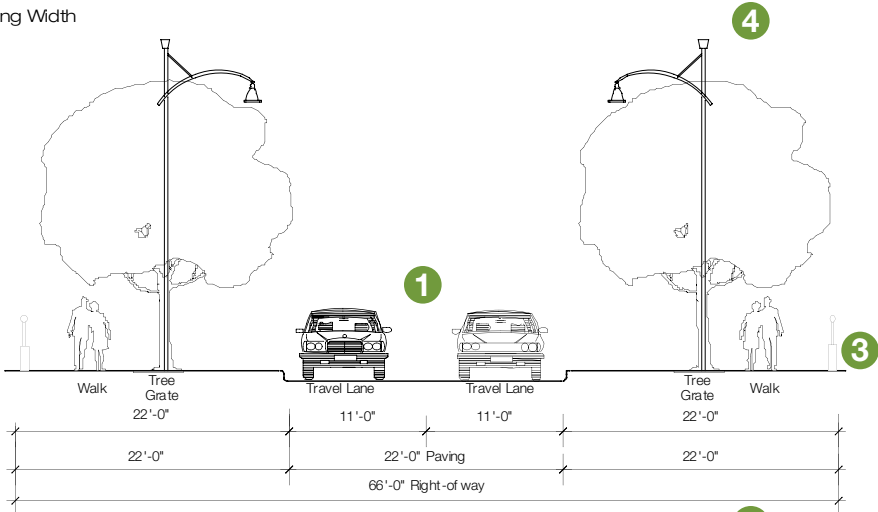
Street Sections: Gregory Avenue



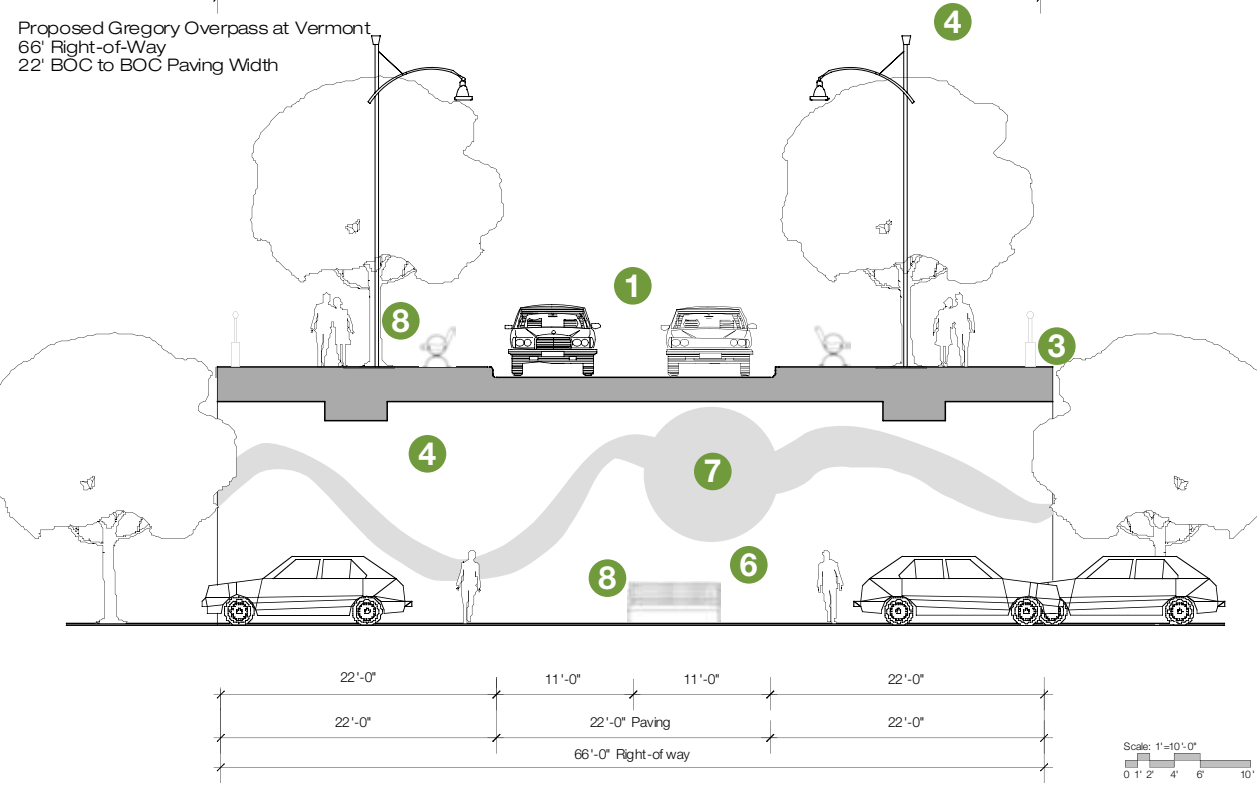
Existing Gregory Avenue at Bridge
66' Right-of-way



Proposed Gregory Avenue at Bridge
66' Right-of-way
22' BOC to BOC Paving Width



Proposed Gregory Overpass at Vermont
66' Right-of-Way
22' BOC to BOC Paving Width



Street Sections: Gregory at Bridge

