



City Manager's Office

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 30, 2023

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Doug Thornley, City Manager Approved Electronically

FROM: Amy Pennington, Special Projects and Outreach Coordinator
Kerrie Koski, Director of Public Works

SUBJECT: Virginia Street Placemaking Study Recommendations and Implementation Phases

Gehl returned to Reno on February 23rd for their final public engagement session. Based on the public engagement process up to that point, Gehl presented preliminary design and programming recommendations, which are included below.

Based on feedback from the public engagement session and following survey, Gehl refined the recommendations and completed a recommendation for a phased implementation plan.

Staff will present the Virginia Street Placemaking study to Council on April 12, 2023, requesting that Council accept the study and adopt the phased implementation plan as presented. Pending Council direction, staff will use the priorities to develop more detailed design, cost estimates, and identify funding sources for the outlined recommendations. Staff will return to Council at a later date to seek approval for the projects.

Gehl's Implementation Plan

Placemaking actions prioritization, Phase 1

1. Streetscape furnishing zone improvements
 - Implement public seating on every block of Virginia Street.
 - Pilot wayfinding signage with walking distances to districts and destinations.
 - Assess opportunities for integration of shade: trees where not in conflict with underground, other shade.
 - Assess need for upgrades to event infrastructure.
2. Facade improvement & activation
 - Develop program and source funding for facade improvement program to manage vacancies and support ground floor activation.

- Pilot ground floor activation, starting with micro-retail for local businesses in the edge of the Circus Circus parking garage.
- 3. Locomotion Plaza 2.0
 - Site and implement event infrastructure and storage facilities.
 - Source and implement movable chairs and tables, including lounge style chairs.
 - Pilot a shade structure.
 - Develop and communicate a plan for recurring events.
- 4. The ROW Placita
 - Source and implement seating elements, movable by forklift, and include wayfinding with walking distances to districts and destinations.
 - Coordinate operations and maintenance agreement with the ROW and DRP, consider using this as a pilot for a partnership program for activation of privately owned public space.

Placemaking actions prioritization, Phase 2

1. Streetscape improvements across the site
 - Implement signal timing for slower speed in preparation for physical improvements to the right of way.
 - Assess need and feasibility of implementation of PUDO's in middle and upper area - will require curb adjustments.
 - Assess impact of proposed intersection upgrades to the wider bike and vehicular network.
2. Streetscape improvements lower area
 - Implement continuous on-street parking and bollard and buffered protected bike lanes - elimination of turn lane.
 - Implement bike markings across intersections.
 - Assess how the Liberty intersection can be upgraded to better serve people walking and wheeling, including removal of slip lane.
3. Streetscape improvements middle area
 - Implement two-lane bi-directional vehicle lanes and continuous buffered bike lanes - including elimination of turn lanes and center loading.
 - Implement intersection improvements; tightened corner radii, bike marking, and planned changes to cross streets within the block.
4. Believe Plaza 3.0 initiation
 - Pilot a concession stand and tourist information outpost. Consider implementation of a permanent structure in relation to further planned improvements to the plaza.
 - Implement movable seating and shade.
 - Implement bleacher seating and pilot a play feature.

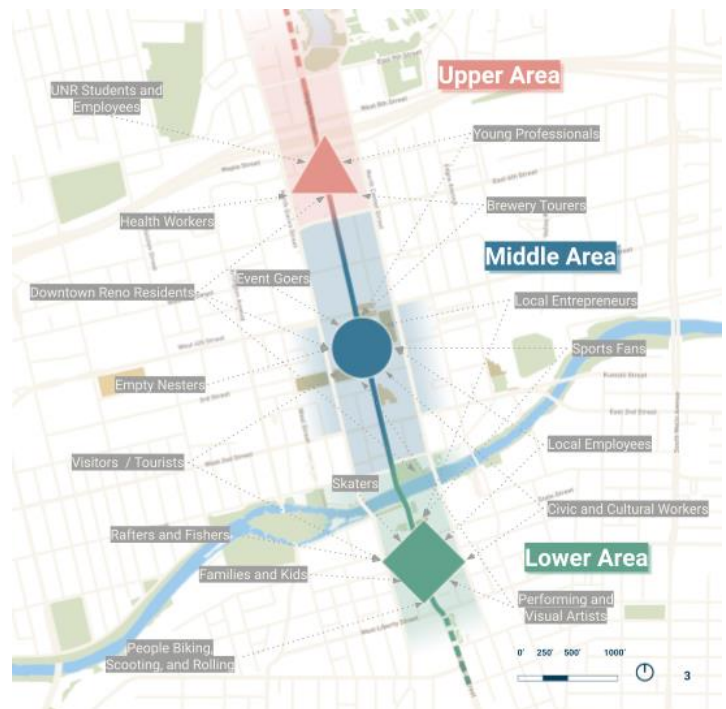
Placemaking actions prioritization, Phase 3

1. Streetscape improvements upper area
 - Implement continuous bollard and buffered protected bike lanes through redesign of the central median. Include raised bike lanes at the bus stops for bus access.
 - Implement clear bus lane markings.
 - Assess how the freeway intersections can be upgraded to better serve people walking and wheeling.
2. Maker Row @Court
 - Pilot edge activation of the county parking lot with micro-units for local makers and artists. Use lessons learned from implementation of the Circus Circus parking garage.
3. Believe Plaza 3.0 capital improvements
 - Develop a comprehensive plan for transformation of the plaza.
 - Include additional greening and trees.
 - Include permanent play and urban sports and games features. E.G. splash-pad, ping-pong, chess, dedicated area for skateboarders.

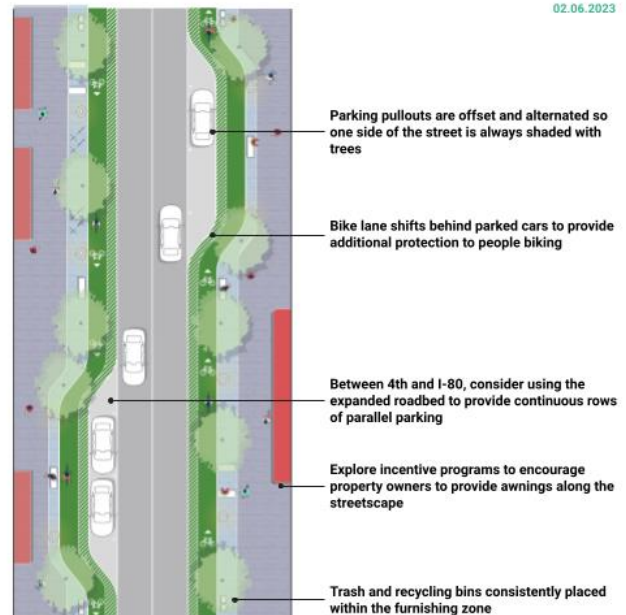
Gehl's Design and Programing Recommendations

Gehl categorized their recommendations into five strategic moves, which are summarized below.

1. Celebrate the Character Areas: Gehl organized the stretch of Virginia Street between the University and Liberty Street into three character areas to help focus placemaking efforts based on a more targeted audience.
 - a. Upper area: Focus is on students and proximity to the university.
 - b. Central area: Focus on entertainment core and bringing more small events in between large scale events.
 - c. Lower area: Focus on where Reno's civic and cultural life meets the Riverwalk.

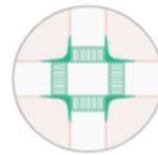


2. Elevate the Baseline: Gehl proposes changes that would elevate the right of way experience within the existing curb lines. We heard that people wanted north and south bike facilities while preserving north and southbound traffic. In the most constrained part of the street, this is possible by removing the center turn lane and better utilizing loading and parking bump-outs.



3. Connect the Dots: Gehl recommends options for improving Downtown’s connectivity and safety for pedestrians, micromobility users, and drivers by improving signal timing and intersection features.

- a. Corner Radii + Crossings
- b. Bike Crossing + Boxes
- c. Refuge Islands
- d. Neckdowns
- e. Removing Slip Turns
- f. Signal Timing + Prioritization



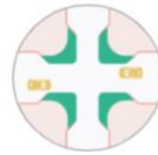
Corner Radii + Crossings
Tighter corner radii reduce turning speeds and pedestrian crossing distances, which should be clearly marked.



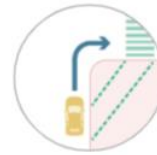
Bike Crossing + Boxes
Prioritize cyclist safety by providing indicated travel, queuing, and turning routes.



Refuge Islands
Break long crossings into two parts for pedestrian ease and safety.



Neckdowns
Reduce crossing distances for pedestrians, calm traffic, and create opportunities for bus stops and parking.

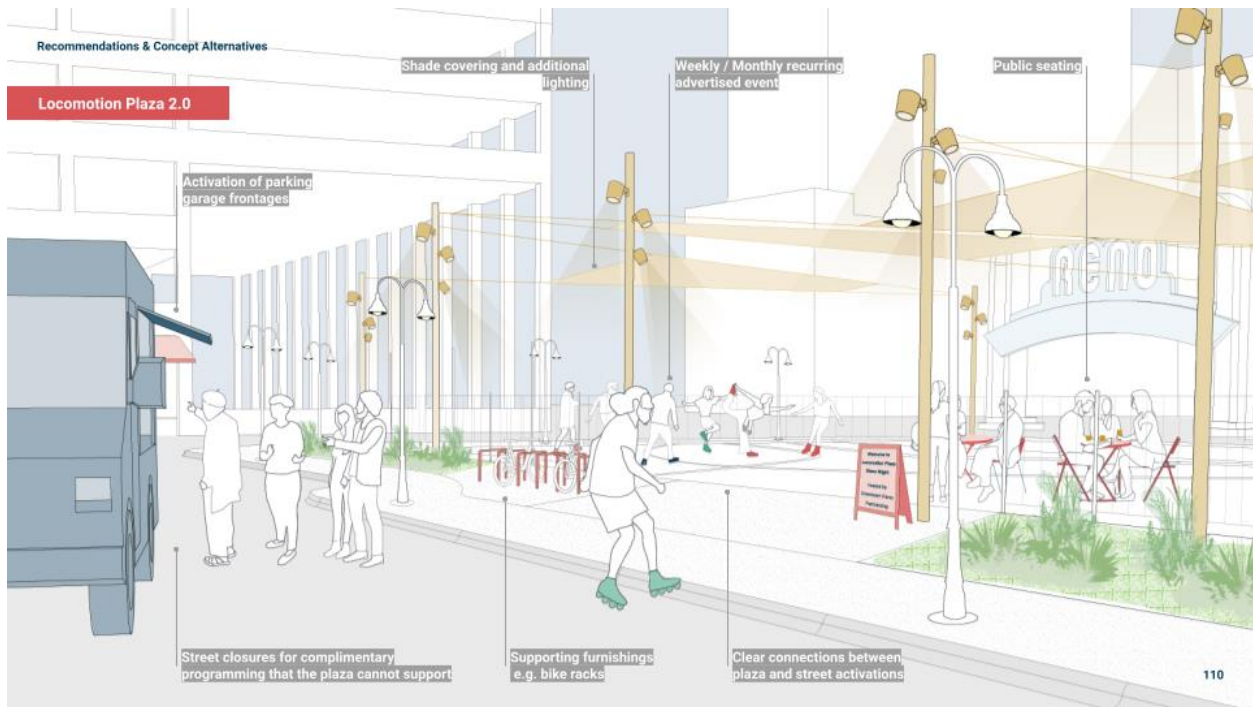


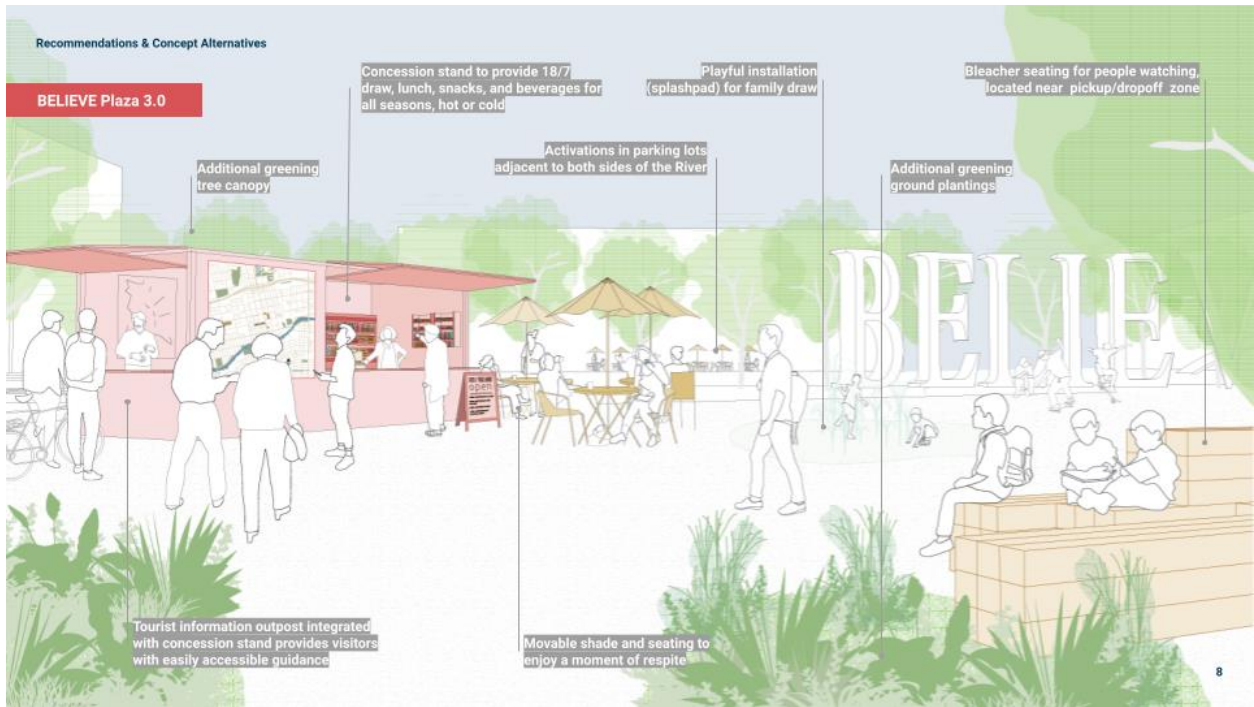
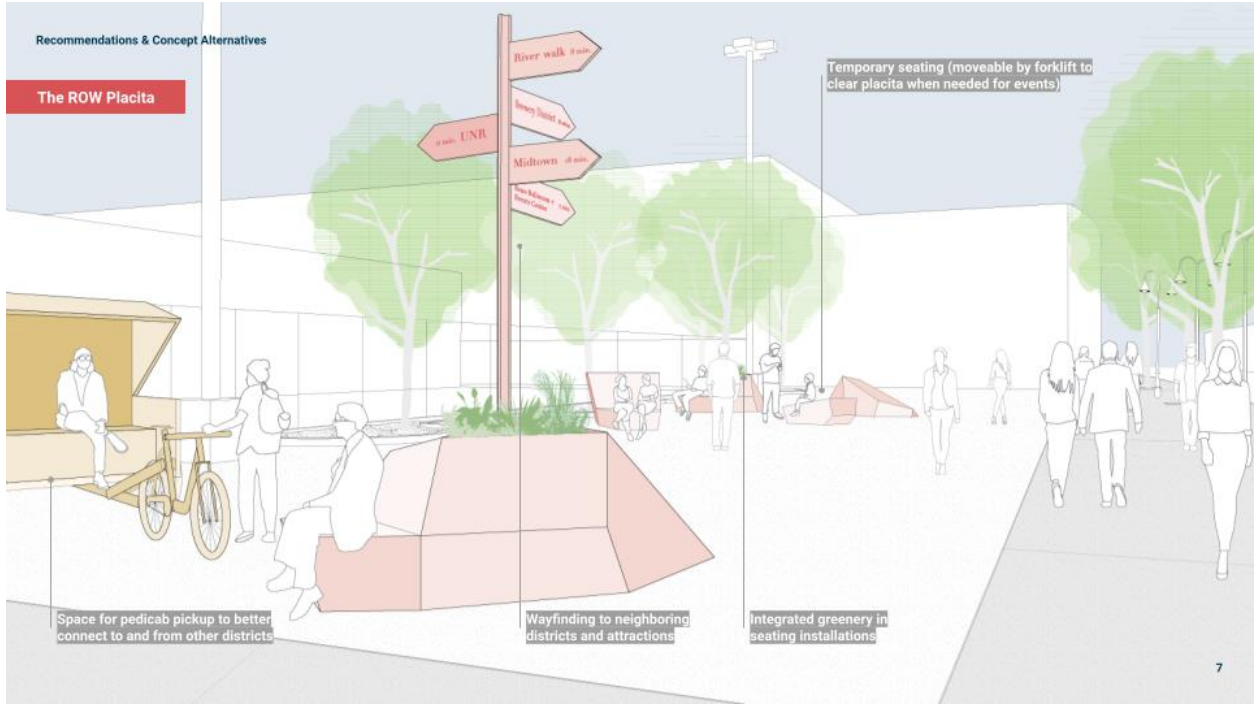
Removing Slip Turns
Reduces dangerous vehicular-pedestrian conflicts and prioritizes safety over speed.



Signal Timing + Prioritization
Prioritizes active modes of transportation, calm traffic, and reduce conflicts. Consider removing right-on-red.

4. Activate the Underutilized: Gehl recommends making physical improvements to plazas, setbacks, unbuilt lots, and larger adjacent public spaces along Virginia Street with shade, lighting, power and other amenities. This will make these spaces more conducive to small scale and recurring activation with third parties and our partnership with the DRP.





5. Activate the Edges: Gehl recommends improving the street level experience of Virginia Street with improved access to existing businesses, activation of underutilized building edges, and access to affordable food and beverage venues, local retail, and other needed Downtown amenities.
 - a. 70 percent of the edges along Virginia Street are inactive, providing many opportunities to improve through new micro retail and facade improvements.

