



DOWNTOWN'S NEXT STEP

Vivid Past, Resilient Future

EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The Existing Conditions Assessment includes background information about the role and history of Downtown Main Avenue, a summary of how existing City documents, plans and programs relate to this conceptual design effort, and base maps with analysis identifying conditions, opportunities, and constraints along the corridor.

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Background Information

History of Downtown Main Avenue

The Durango area was originally home to the Ancestral Puebloans and later the Ute Indians. Later American settlement was established largely through the influence of mining, rail, and military. The City of Durango was founded in the early 1880's and is largely considered a historic railroad town due to the influence of the Denver and Rio Grande Railway. When the earlier Animas City (now the North Main District in Durango) couldn't reach an agreement with the rail company, the rail terminus was moved south to what is now Downtown, and growth and activity soon followed. Durango's Downtown



Main Avenue, 1903

Main Avenue from 5th Street to 12th Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The architecture and history are largely representative of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historic Main Avenue also hosted the Durango Suburban and Street Railway from 1896-1921, which started with horse drawn carriages and ended with electric streetcars, the tracks of which still exist today beneath the pavement. The Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railway and station are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Role of Downtown Main Avenue in Durango

Downtown Durango is a vital center for the community and region. It's unique history and character appeal to locals and visitors alike. The attraction of Downtown Durango lies largely in Main Avenue, with a vibrant mix of local businesses along a historic corridor. Main Avenue is active weekdays, weekends and evenings and it attracts even more people Downtown with special events and festivals. Between diverse restaurants, outdoor gear and retail shops, the train station, historic hotels, clothing boutiques, offices, local watering holes, upper-story residences, public open space, and some adaptive reuse, each block of Main Avenue provides a unique experience. Downtown Durango, and Main Avenue in particular, is the most walkable, well-connected, and transit-accessible part of the City. Main Avenue also provides the highest density of local businesses in the surrounding region.



Main Avenue, pre-bump-outs program

Current Street Configuration

The public right-of-way along this stretch of Main Avenue is typically 80'. Until recent years, Downtown Main Avenue had four 10' vehicular travel lanes, two 8' parking lanes, and 12' sidewalks on either side of the road. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, a need was recognized for additional outdoor capacity for restaurant seating and retail businesses. The Bump-outs for Businesses Program included restriping of the street to two vehicular travel lanes and one vehicular center turn lane. This allowed for extra space on either side of the road for bump-outs (also known as parklets) to serve as outdoor space for businesses within the parking lane.



Main Avenue, 2021 (source: Durango Herald)

While storefronts along Main Avenue often lack a front patio zone, the Bump-Out Program has truly enlivened Main Avenue, allowing businesses to spill out into the public right-of-way and greatly increasing activation of the public realm. The roadway itself has become a valuable part of the public realm. This program has stirred up community conversations about Main Avenue's permanent streetscape design and has largely been the impetus for revisiting potential reconfigurations for Downtown Main Avenue.

Summary of Relevant Existing Documents, Plans, and Programs

Several planning and design efforts have been previously completed for Durango's Downtown and Main Avenue. A summary of the most salient guidance, context, and vision from these plans as it relates to this effort and the conceptual design for Downtown Main Avenue are summarized below.

City of Durango Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2007 and amended in 2017, includes several high-level goals and objectives that are relevant to Downtown Main Avenue, primarily in the Community Development, Transportation, and Creative Economy plan elements. Key salient recommendations related to the Downtown Main Avenue conceptual design include:

- Protect significant historic resources.
- Maintain and enhance the diverse, small-town charm.
- Embrace the principles of placemaking.
- Design and construct all streets as Complete Streets.
- Monitor and address downtown parking demand in cooperation with downtown businesses and property owners.
- Encourage increased use of shared parking areas and assess the viability of structured public parking.
- Develop safe, well-lit and attractive transit stop facilities to enhance the appeal of transit use.
- Include iconic public art in economic development investments along critical corridors.

Downtown Durango Vision and Strategic Plan

The 2006 Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan's Executive Summary states "This vibrant community provides an appealing, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, landscape and streetscape environment while preserving its historic tradition." The plan also identifies Downtown Main Avenue as the "community living room for downtown". Most relevant to this effort are the recommendations related to the Main Avenue streetscape design. Some other key recommendations are also summarized below.

- Streets, Streetscape, and Urban Design
 - In order to create additional outdoor space for people, the plan specifically recommends reducing Main Avenue from four lanes down to three and expanding the sidewalks on either side between College Drive and 14th Street, and considering bulb outs at intersections between 12th Street and College Drive. It recommends maintaining continuous on-street parking on both sides of the street, resulting in a net gain of about five feet per side. The expanded 15' public space is recommended to be divided into three 5' zones for amenities/loading, walking, and sidewalk cafes. While Main Avenue has recently been reduced from four lanes to three, the sidewalks have not been expanded.
 - The plan also recommended conversion of Narrow Gauge Avenue from one-way to two-way and additional diagonal parking. This has been partially implemented and helps to reduce vehicular and parking pressure on Main Avenue.
- Parking and Transit
 - This plan, and two noted previous studies, recommends building a parking structure between 7th, 8th, the DSNRR, and Camino Del Rio. The parking garage would be mixed use, containing both the post office and transit center existing uses, with additional retail/commercial uses wrapping the garage. The full buildout of this recommendation would include 625 parking spaces which would greatly increase the downtown parking supply. The project was projected to cost about \$14 million dollars. The center of this property is about a three-minute walk from Main Avenue.
 - The City has allowed use of a "fee-in-lieu-of-providing parking" option for some downtown businesses. This plan also recommends further reduction in parking requirements downtown.
- Land Use Strategies and Opportunity Sites
 - The plan identifies gateway opportunities at 14th and College, and particularly the need for an anchor at the north end of Main Avenue. This may be implemented as part of the MidTown Urban Renewal Plan, but this streetscape effort can contribute to that gateway experience as well.
- Economic Conditions and Potentials
 - The economic analysis portion of the plan identifies the restaurant and specialty businesses downtown being especially strong along Main Avenue. It notes "The market orientation of businesses on Main Avenue ranges from predominately visitor or tourist oriented south of 8th Street to primarily locally-oriented north of 12th Street." It also identifies the blocks between 7th and 10th Streets as the strongest blocks on Downtown Main Avenue.

Multimodal Transportation Plan

The Multimodal Transportation Plan (MTP) includes policies and objectives specific to different modes of travel that reflect the vision of a connected transportation network for the City of Durango. The MTP also includes a detailed action plan specific to the unique sub-geographies in the City. Currently, the City is working on an update to the 2016 MTP which should be completed in 2022. The 2017 MTP includes several proposed projects for Zone 6, the Historic Downtown and Camino Del Rio Corridor, some of which are noted below. This section also contains background on the 2007/2008 Main Avenue Sidewalk Project.

- Zone 6 – select proposed projects
 - Main Avenue from 5th Street to 14th Street: Road diet. Reduce the speed limit. Extend sidewalks allow café seating additional public space.
 - Main Avenue from 5th Street to 12th Street: Convert Main Avenue into a pedestrian mall.
 - Main Avenue - Covered parking facility for bicycles on the end of each block.
 - Main Avenue from 5th Street to 14th Street: Reconstruct street cars lines and pull up from underneath pavement.
 - East 2nd Avenue City Lot: Analyze feasibility of a parking structure.
- Zone 1 – select proposed projects
 - Alleys between East 2nd and 3rd Avenues: Maintain and repair alleys in use by cyclists as an alternative to main streets.
 - Historic District: Create Residential Parking Permit Program
 - Business District: Future need for parking structure(s)
- The MTP succinctly summarizes the previous study for redesigning Downtown Main Avenue. The MTP states:
 - “Main Avenue Reconfigurations - Possible modifications to Main Avenue were discussed at length in 2007 and 2008 during the Main Avenue Sidewalk Project. This project was part of the City’s implementation of the 2006 Downtown Durango Vision and Strategic Plan. Phase I of the project included data collection, alternatives analysis, public meetings, and the finalization of the preferred concept plan. As a result of the public process, the decision was made to repair the existing sidewalks with their current configuration. One exception was the intersection of College Drive and Main Avenue. A patterned concrete crossing and “Barnes Dance” pedestrian crossing were installed at this location.”

Downtown Overlay District Design Guidelines

The Downtown Design Guidelines primarily provide architectural and renovation guidelines intended to preserve the character of the Downtown area. Chapter 8 Design Guidelines for Site Design includes many policies and guidelines specifically relevant to streetscapes. Some key guidelines relevant to the conceptual design level of this process are highlighted below.

- 8.2 When new sidewalks are to be installed, they shall be compatible with the traditional character of the streetscape.
- 8.3 Expanded sidewalk areas (bulb-outs) may be considered at street intersections.
- 8.6 Street furniture should be located in areas of high pedestrian activity.
- 8.7 Street furnishings should be clustered in “groupings,” when feasible.
- 8.13 Use indigenous, native and drought-tolerant plant materials when feasible.

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Existing Conditions Assessment

- 8.14 Install new street trees to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- 8.16 Use lighting for the following: To illuminate sidewalks and pedestrian routes
- 8.22 Preserve and enhance existing landscape elements and natural features.
- 8.30 Where a parking lot abuts a public sidewalk, provide a visual buffer.
- 8.31 Providing facilities for storage of bicycles is encouraged.

Bump-outs for Businesses Program

This temporary program was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to allow businesses in Durango to expand outdoor dining and business activity, including into the on-street parking zone on Main Avenue. The program started in Spring of 2020, occurred again in 2021, and is planned to be brought back in 2022. Bump-outs were active on Main Avenue typically from mid-Spring to mid-Fall each year, and then taken down for winter. As part of this effort, Main Avenue was restriped to three lanes to increase safety and space for bump-outs. Large concrete planter boxes were also used as barriers for the bump-outs. The 2021 program resulted in (across downtown): 24 outdoor dining spaces, 12 bike rack spaces, and 23 free 10-minute parking spaces. Along Main Avenue, 56 on-street parking spaces were removed to accommodate bump-out improvements. The program included design guidelines and a grant opportunity to build the bump-out.

Main Avenue National Register Historic District

Downtown Main Avenue is on the National Historic Register (NHR) and contains several significant historic buildings. The majority of the buildings along the corridor are contributing to the Historic District. The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation pursuant to the NHR are primarily related to the buildings and not the public right-of-way, although anything within this conceptual design effort will consider the potential impact on adjacent historic buildings.

MidTown Urban Renewal Plan

This plan was adopted in March 2021 and is Durango's first Urban Renewal Area. The area includes Main Avenue from the Animas River south to halfway between 11th and 12th Streets. While the plan is largely focused on incentivizing redevelopment in this area, it also recommends intersection, walkability, and downtown gateway improvements.

Base Maps and Analysis

See following pages for base maps and key takeaways.



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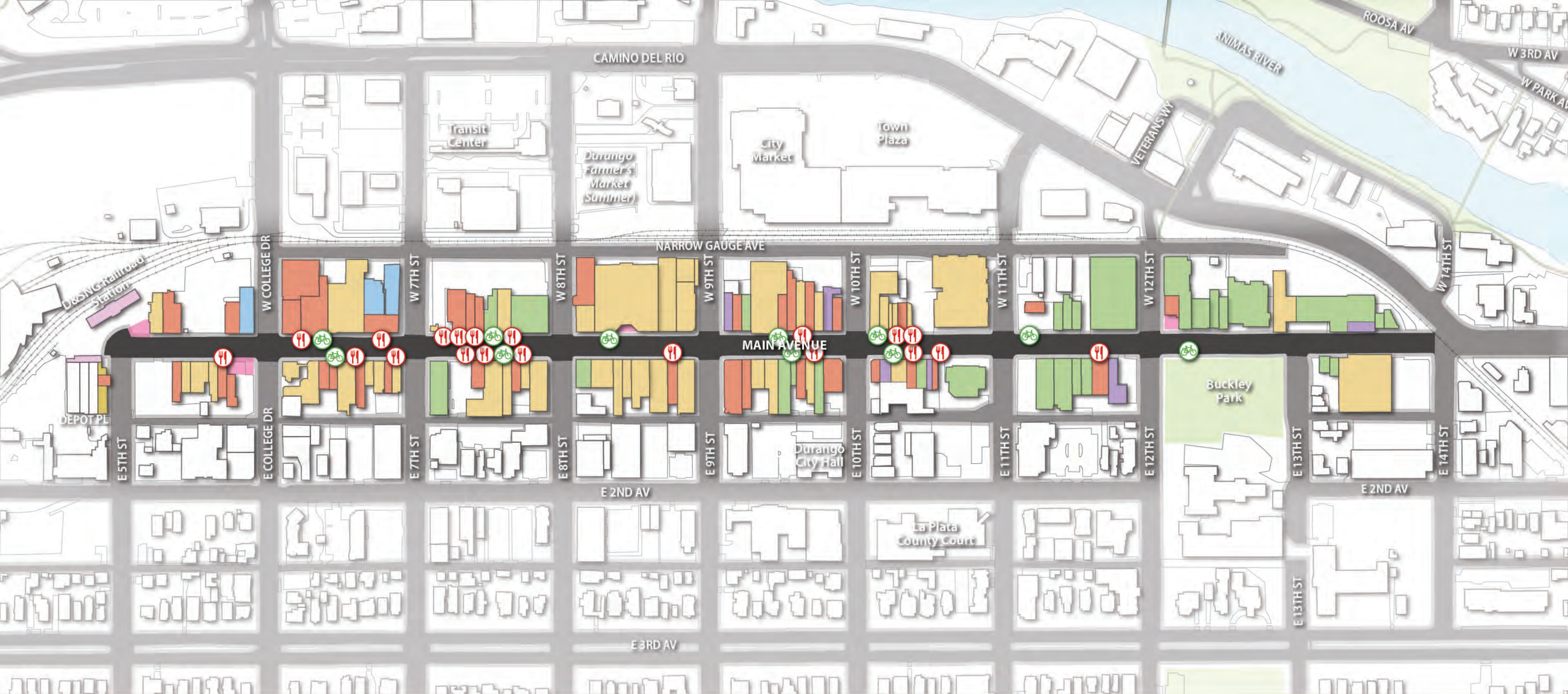
Vivid Past, Resilient Future

Existing Conditions | Study Area

Legend

- Base
- Main Avenue Project Area





DOWNTOWN'S NEXT STEP

Vivid Past, Resilient Future

Existing Conditions | Ground Floor Uses and 2021 Bumpouts

Legend

Base

- Main Avenue Project Area
- Open Space
- Plaza
- Water
- Roadway/Sidewalk
- Buildings
- Parking
- Railway

Ground Floor Uses

- Shopping
- Dining/Nightlife
- Attractions/Activities
- Personal Services
- Office/Professional
- Hotel

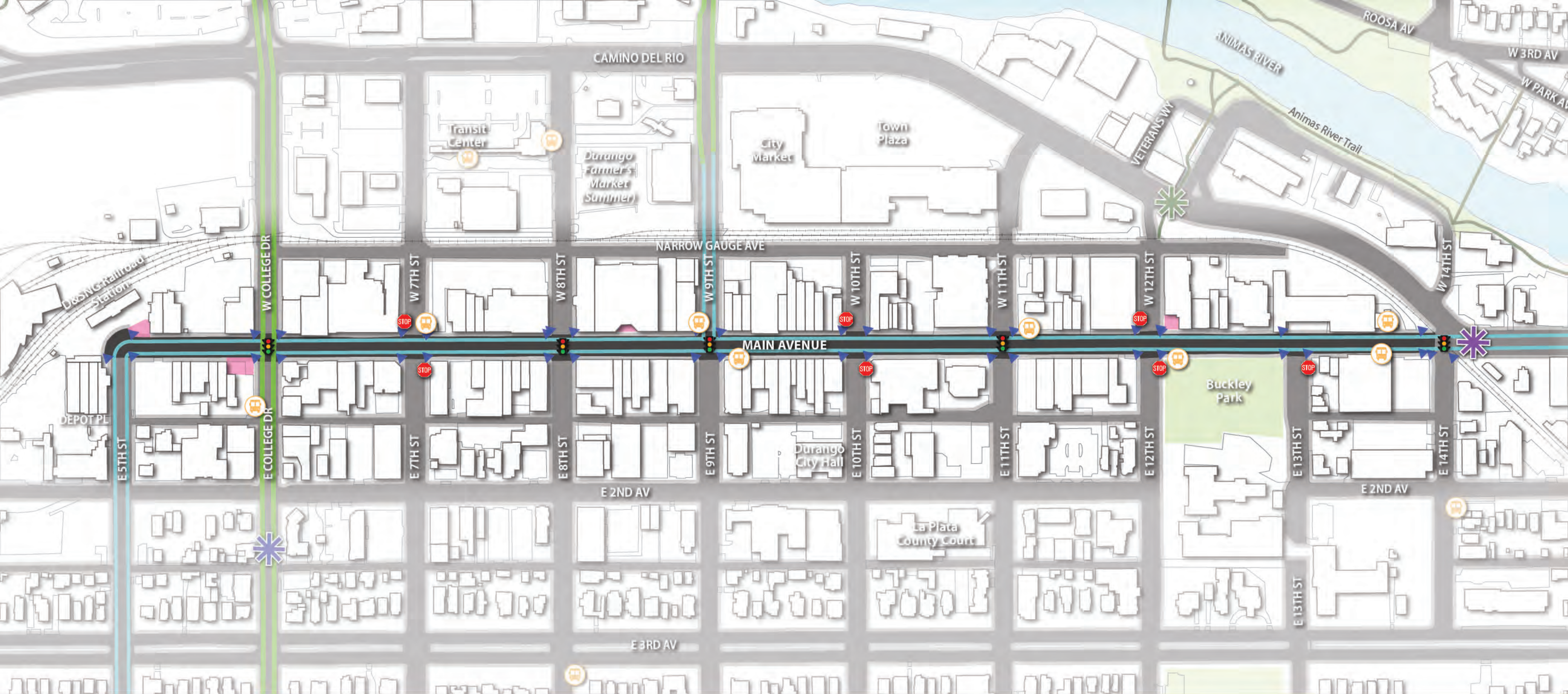
2021 Bumpouts Along Main Avenue

- Dining - 20 Total Along Main
- Bike Corrals - 11 Total Along Main

Key Takeaways

- From 14th Street to 11th Street, the vast majority of ground floor uses are office/professional.
- The most significant cluster of dining/nightlife occurs between 11th Street and 9th Street. This stretch also includes the most variety in ground floor uses. There were also the most frequent dining and bike parking bumpouts in this section.
- From 9th Street to 8th Street, the vast majority of ground floor uses are shopping.
- Between 8th Street and 5th Street, there is a balance of shopping and dining/nightlife ground floor uses.
- Hotels only occur on the south end of Main Avenue at College Drive and 7th Street.
- South of 9th Street, bumpouts were primarily used for dining, while north of 11th street, bumpouts were primarily used for bike parking.





DOWNTOWN'S NEXT STEP

Vivid Past, Resilient Future

Existing Conditions | Multimodal Facilities

Legend

Base

- Main Avenue Project Area
- Open Space
- Plaza
- Water
- Roadway/Sidewalk
- Buildings
- Parking
- Railway

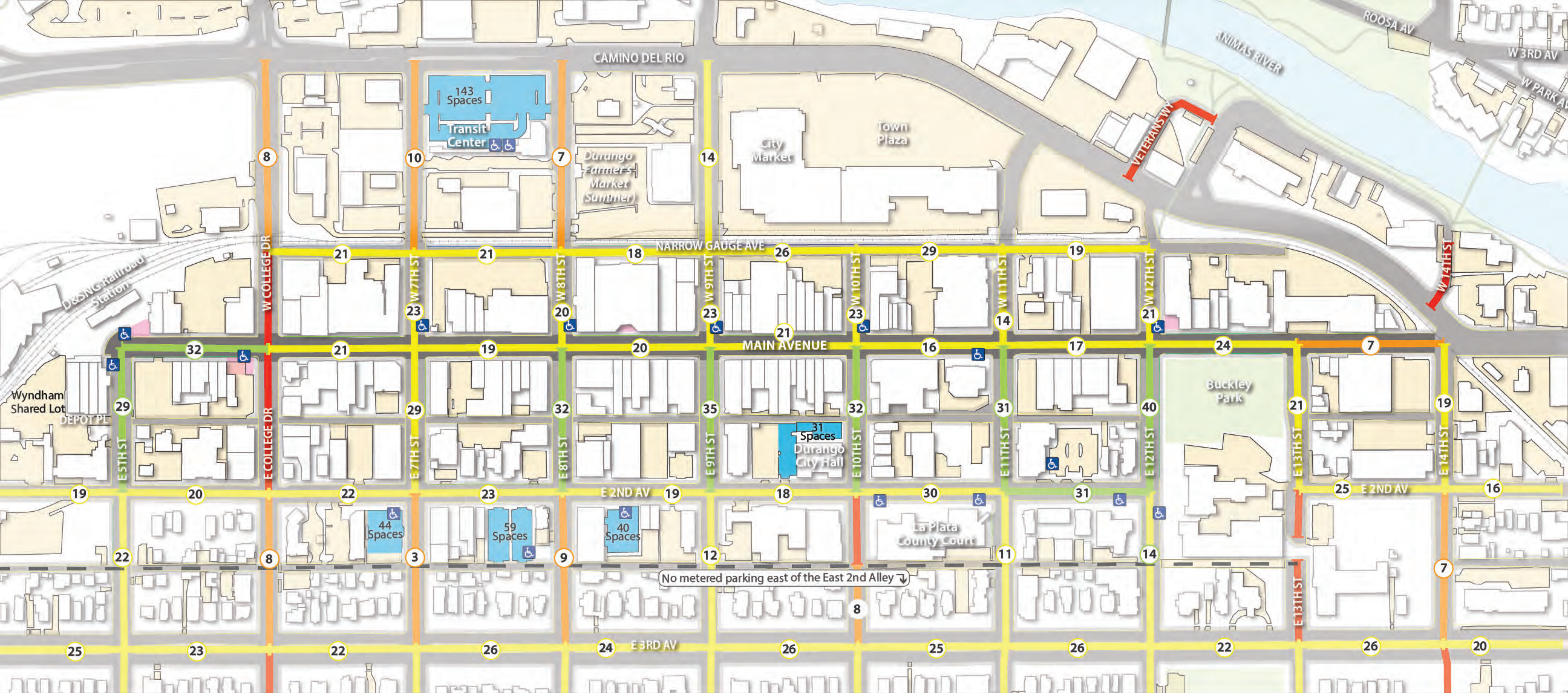
Multi-modal Facilities

- Transit Stops
- Signaled Intersection
- Stop Signs
- ADA Ramps
- Bike Lane
- Bike Sharrow
- Animas River Trail
- Planned Pedestrian/Bike Underpass
- Planned MidTown Safety Improvements
- Planned College Drive Safety Improvements

Key Takeaways

- College Drive and 9th Street provide significant connections to the east and west for all modes.
- 12th Street is also particularly significant for bikes and pedestrians to connect to the Animas River Trail, especially given the planned underpass.
- College Drive provides the only dedicated bike facilities that intersect Main Avenue. 9th Avenue's dedicated facility stops just a block short of Main Avenue to the north.
- Transit stops are regularly spaced every two blocks on the west side of Main Avenue, and less consistently (every 1-3 blocks) along the east side of Main Avenue.
- ADA ramps and marked crossings exist consistently at intersections. Truncated domes are only located at some ADA ramps.
- Of the ten intersections along this stretch of Main Avenue, half are signaled and half utilize stop signs.
- Bike parking exists on parking meters on each block and occasionally at bike corrals and additional racks along Main Avenue.
- Sidewalks occur consistently in Downtown with the only gaps within private development west of Narrow Gauge Avenue.





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Existing Conditions | Parking Supply

Legend

Base

- Main Avenue Project Area
- Open Space
- Plaza
- Water
- Roadway/Sidewalk
- Buildings
- Parking
- Railway

Surface Lots

- Private Lots
- Public Lots - 317 Spaces
- Accessible Parking (Public Lots / On-street)

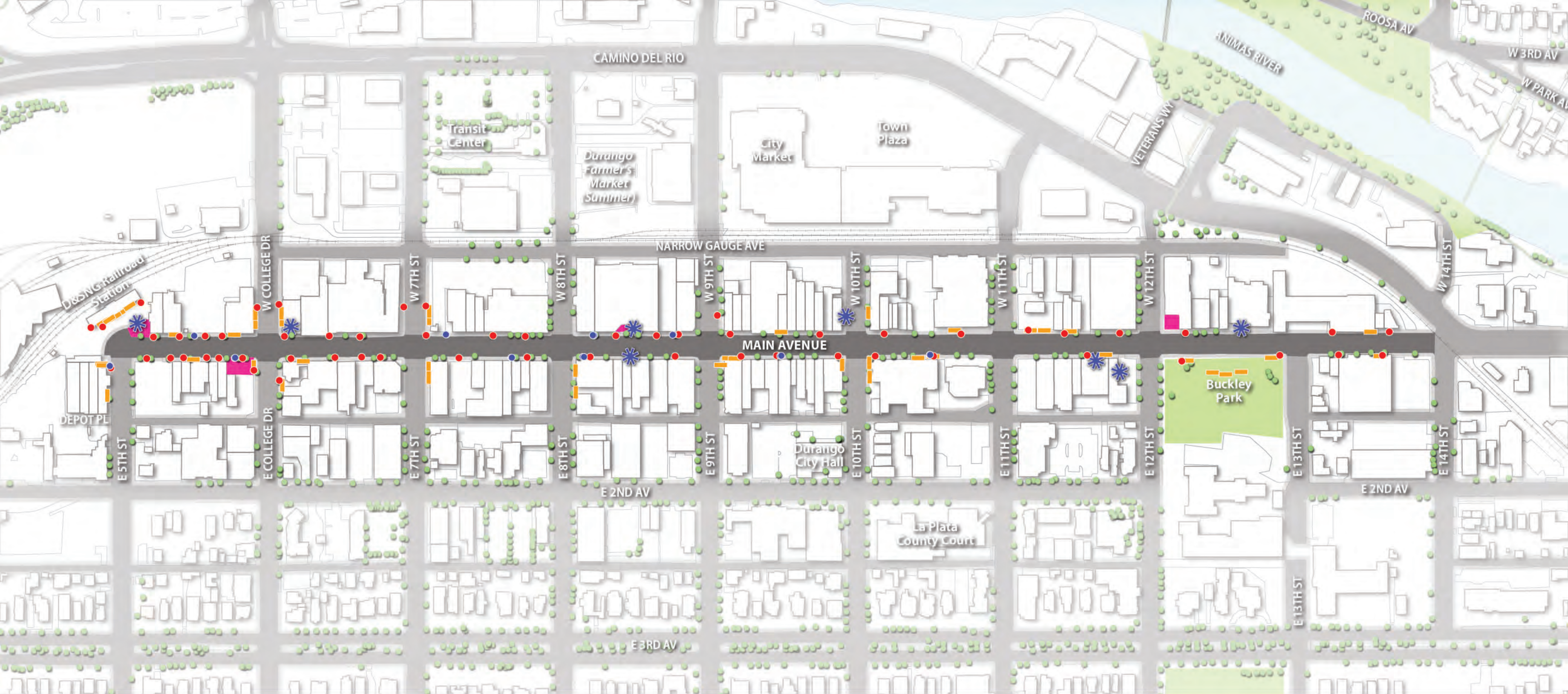
On-street Parking per Block

- No Parking
- Less than 10
- 11 - 30
- 31+

Key Takeaways

- Blocks along Downtown Main Avenue contain an average of 20 on-street parking spaces.
- On street parking is available throughout Downtown on every block and meters are located everywhere west of the East 2nd Alley.
- Public surface lots are primarily located on the south end of Downtown including on E 2nd Ave between College Drive and 9th Street, at the Transit Center, and at City Hall. No public surface lots exist along Main Avenue or north of 10th Street.
- No public structured parking exists in Downtown.
- Private parking lots exist on nearly every block in Downtown, including along Main Avenue.
- Private lots are typically accessible both via an alley and a street.





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Existing Conditions | Public Realm Amenities

Legend

Base

- Main Avenue Project Area
- Open Space
- Plaza
- Water
- Roadway/Sidewalk
- Buildings
- Parking
- Railway

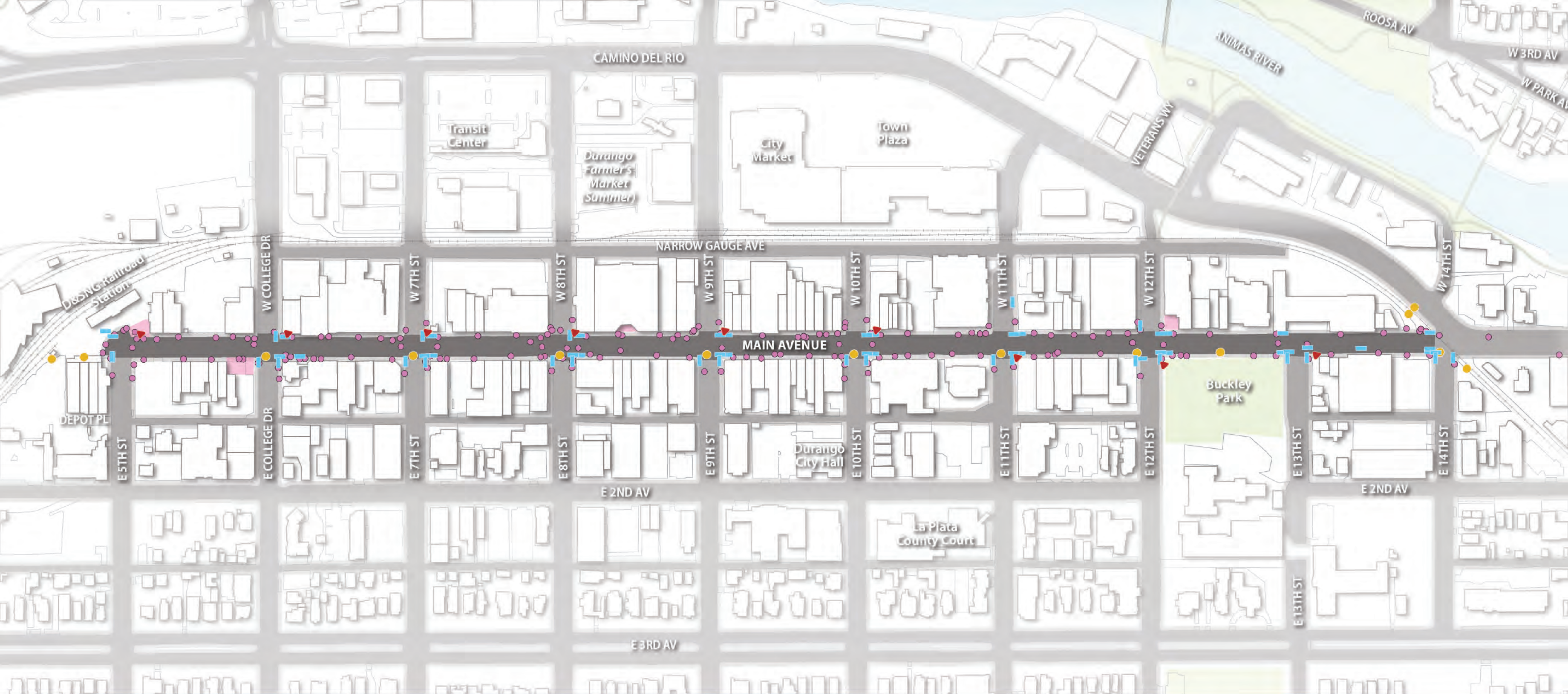
Street Furnishings

- Street Tree
- Private Plaza
- Trash Bin
- Recycle Bin
- Bench
- Art in Public Places

Key Takeaways

- Small private plazas/gathering spaces occur occasionally along Main Avenue with Buckley Park providing the only significant public open space.
- Street trees occur irregularly along Main Avenue, with an average of about 7 trees per block (including east and west sides combined).
- Trash cans exist on every block and are occasionally paired with recycling bins. There are only two recycling bins north of 9th Street.
- Benches/public seating are more frequent on cross streets south of 9th Street and along Main Avenue north of 9th Street.
- The block nearest the train station contains the most street furnishings and gathering spaces.





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Existing Conditions | Above Ground Utilities

Legend

Base

- Main Avenue Project Area
- Open Space
- Plaza
- Water
- Roadway/Sidewalk
- Buildings
- Parking
- Railway

Above Ground Utilities

- Manhole
- Fire Hydrants
- Storm Structures
- Street Pole/Post

Key Takeaways

- There are typically at least ten street posts per block (including east and west sides). These include light posts, regulatory signs, and wayfinding signs.
- Concrete bollards often protect street posts from vehicular traffic at street corners.
- Other significant above-ground utilities are typically focused at intersections.
- The location of above-ground utilities are typically outside of the pedestrian/sidewalk clear zone.





DOWNTOWN'S NEXT STEP

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Existing Conditions | Character Areas

- Legend**
- Base**
- Main Avenue Project Area
- Character Areas**
- Depot Block
 - Strater Block
 - Central Core
 - North Core
 - Midtown Connection

