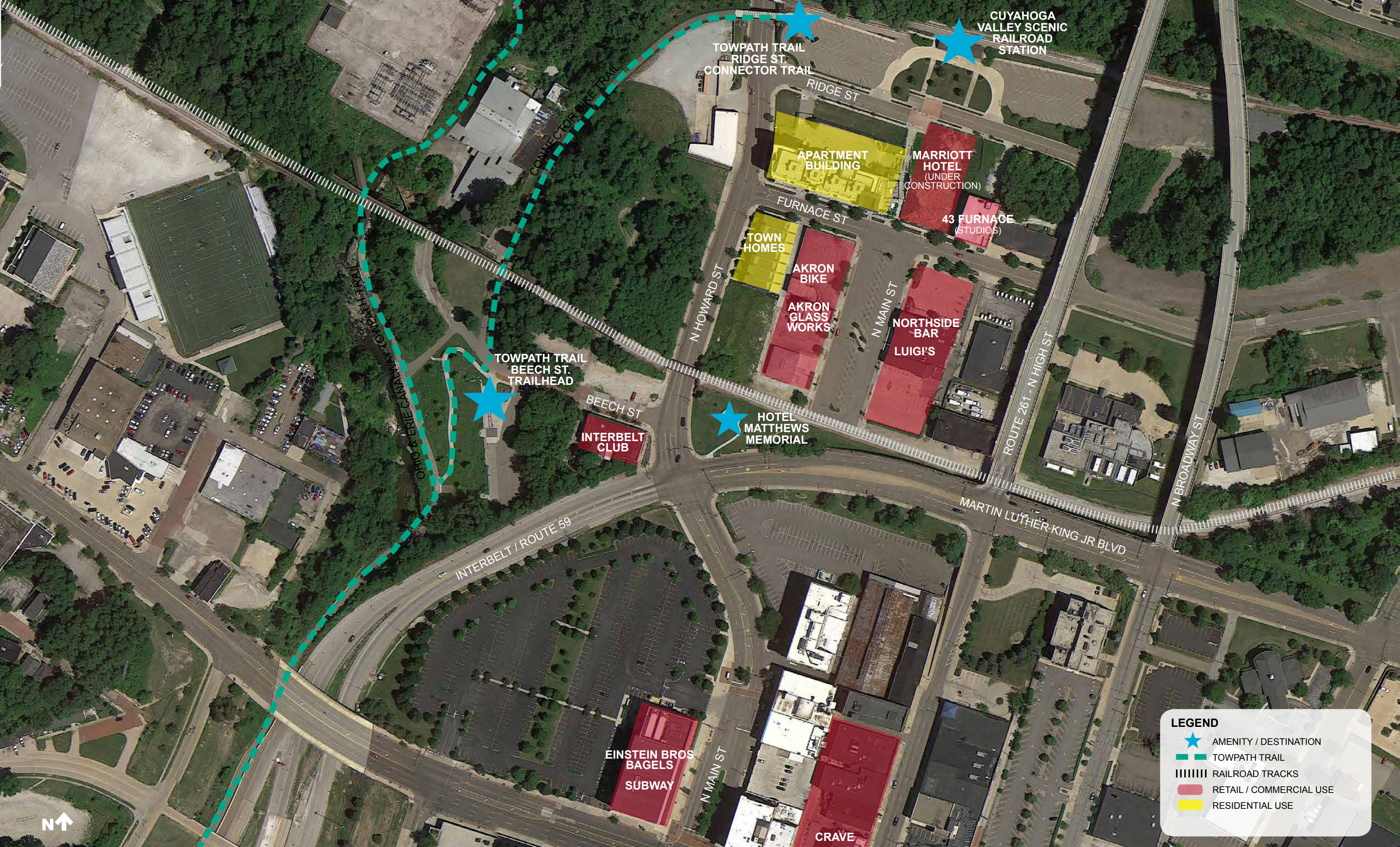









AKRON NORTHSIDE CONNECTIONS STUDY

MAY 2015





LEGEND

-  AMENITY / DESTINATION
-  TOWPATH TRAIL
-  RAILROAD TRACKS
-  RETAIL / COMMERCIAL USE
-  RESIDENTIAL USE

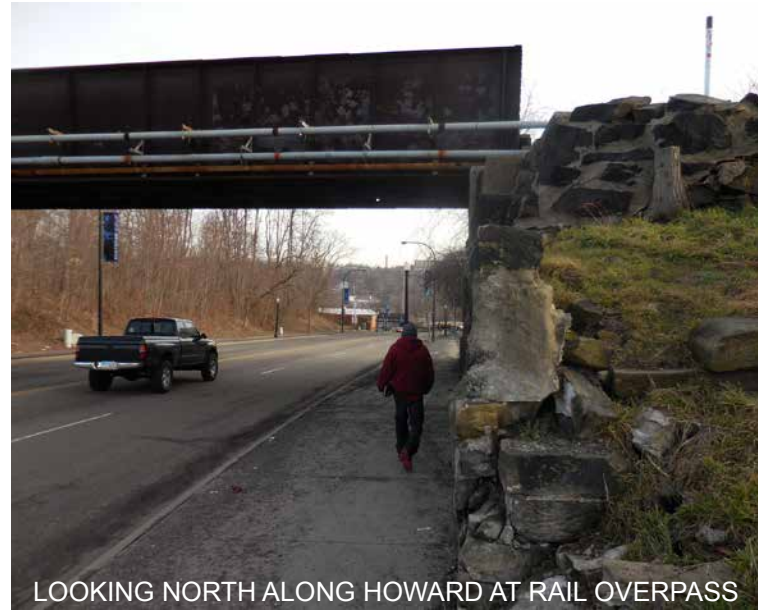




APPROACHING INTERSECTION ON N. MAIN



LOOKING EAST ALONG TRACKS



LOOKING NORTH ALONG HOWARD AT RAIL OVERPASS



LOOKING SOUTH FROM NORTHSIDE STAIR / PATIO



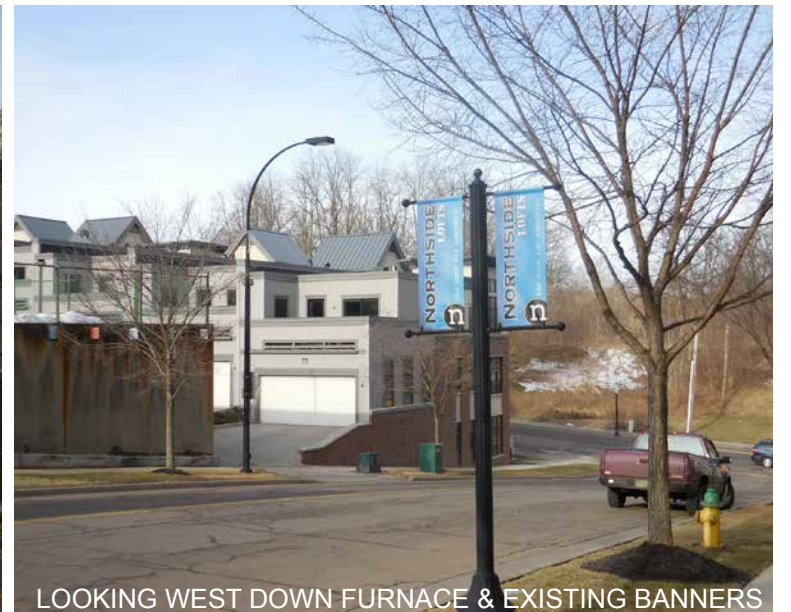
EXISTING SIGNAGE



EXISTING NORTHSIDE GATEWAY SIGNAGE



ALLEY BEHIND TOWNHOMES



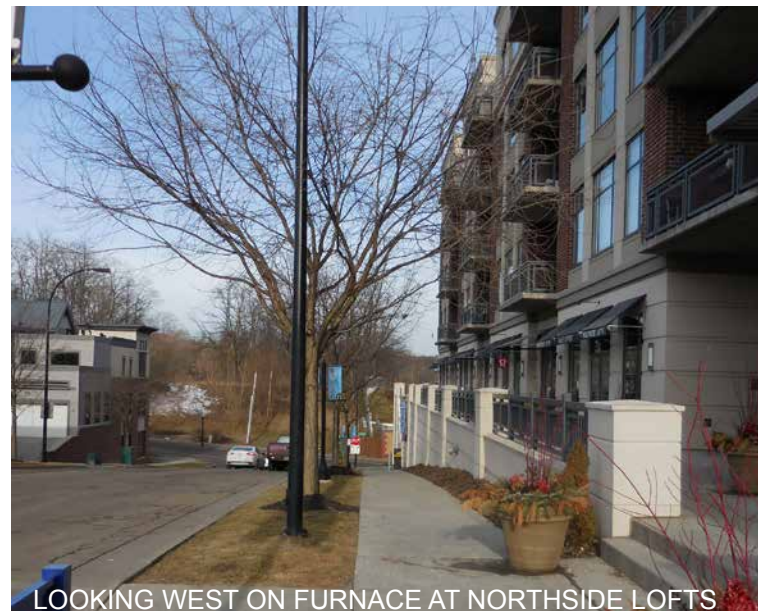
LOOKING WEST DOWN FURNACE & EXISTING BANNERS



HISTORIC MARKER



PATH LEADING TO MATTHEWS HOTEL MONUMENT

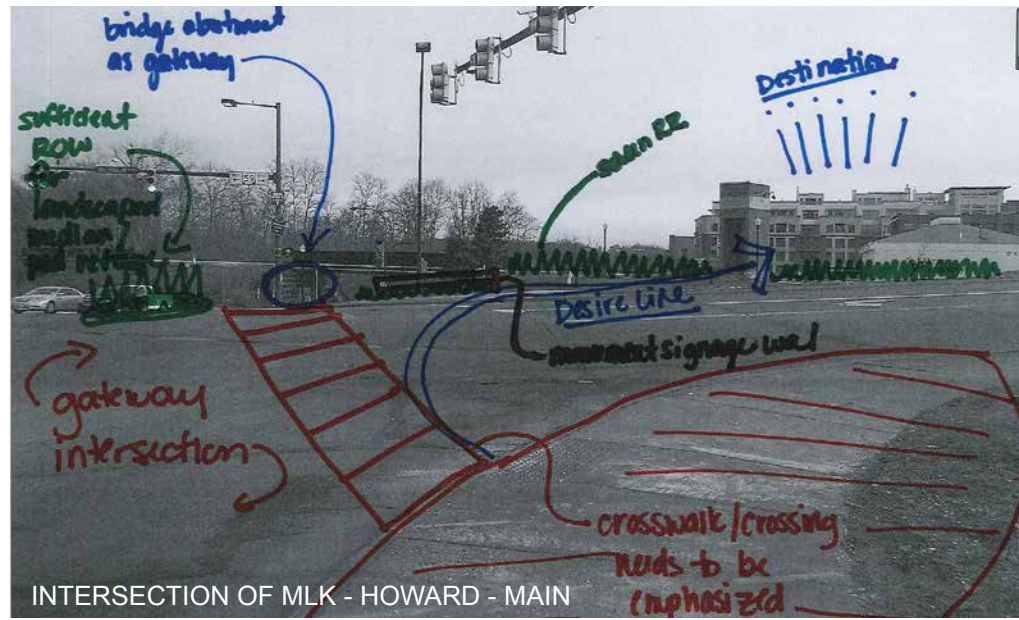


LOOKING WEST ON FURNACE AT NORTHSIDE LOFTS

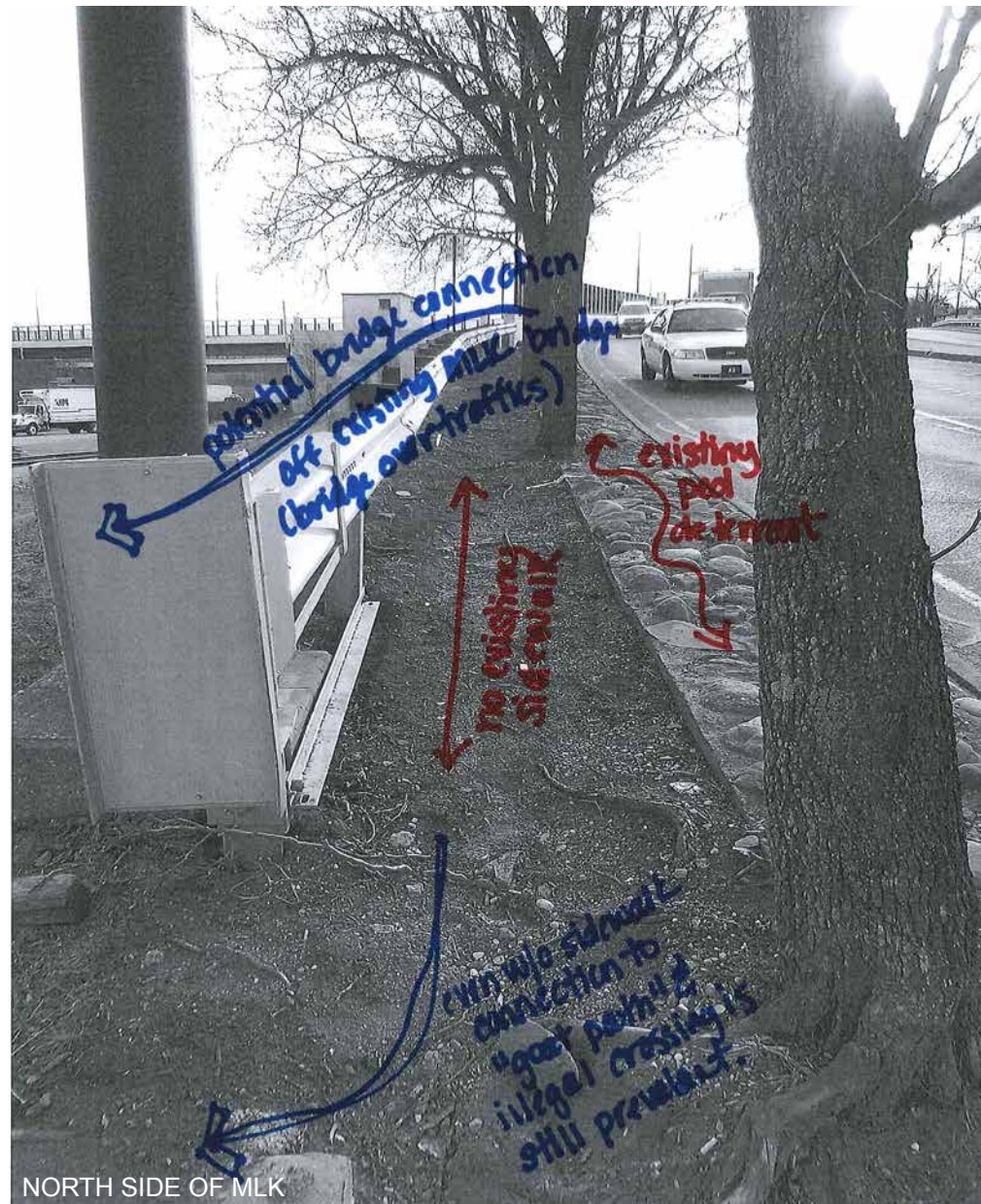


STAIR CONNECTING SCENIC RAILWAY TO NORTHSIDE

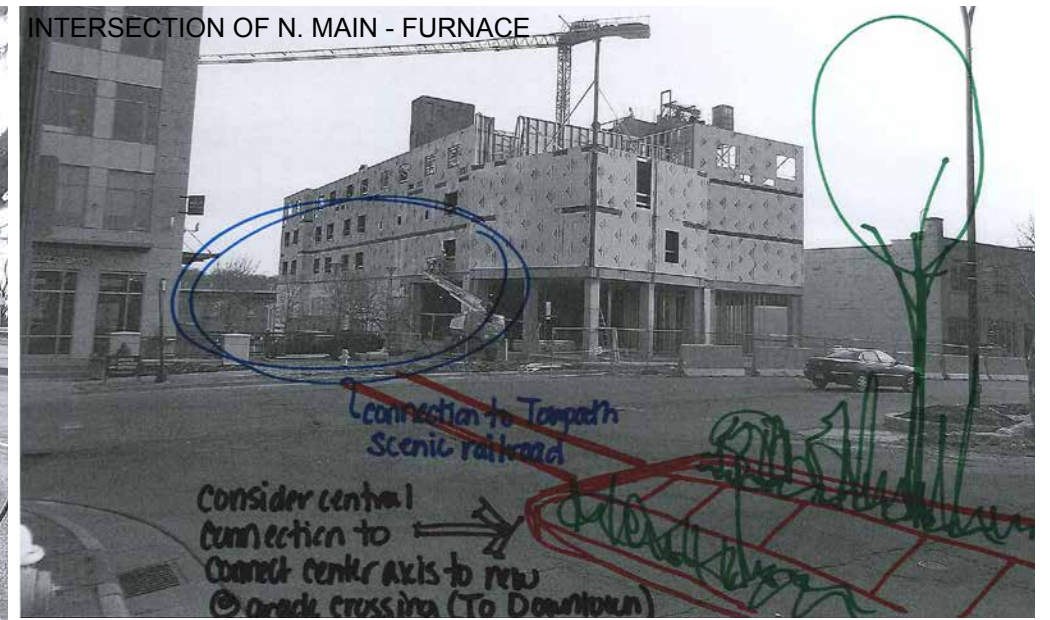
AKRON NORTHSIDE CONNECTIONS STUDY - EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTOS



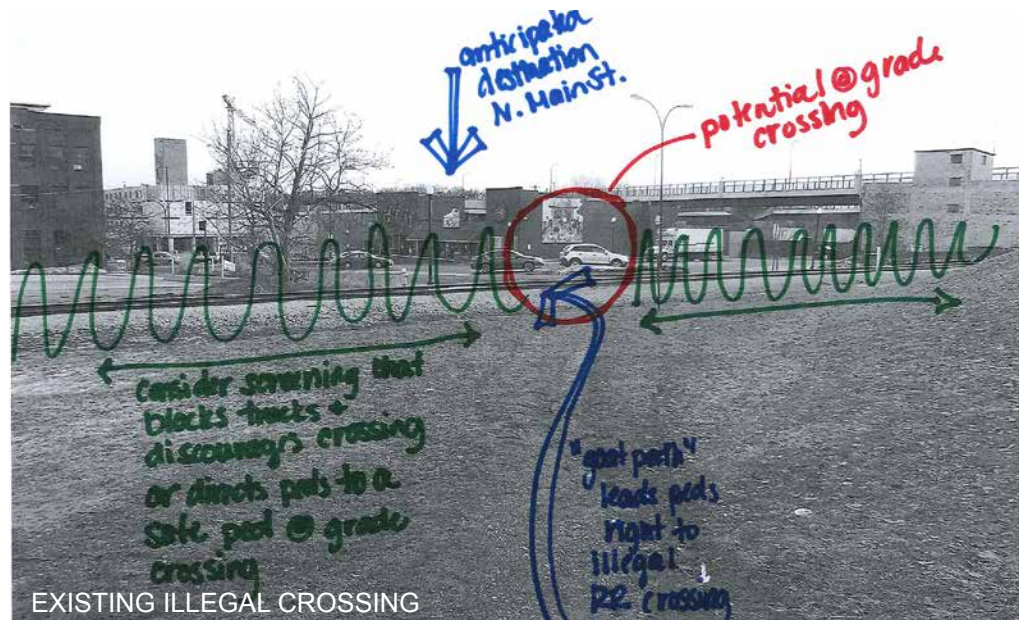
INTERSECTION OF MLK - HOWARD - MAIN



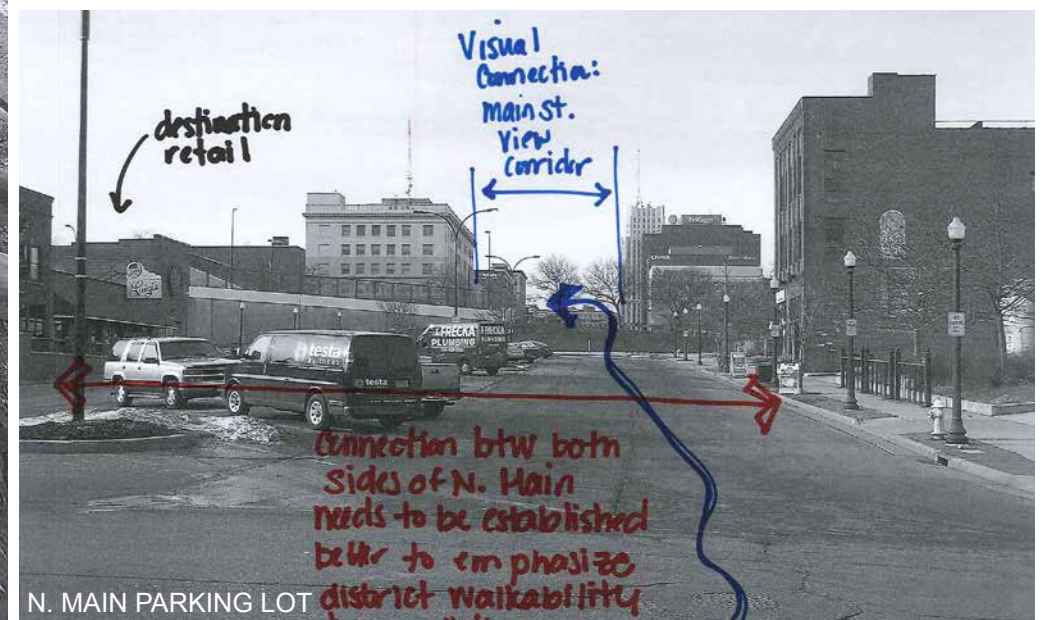
NORTH SIDE OF MLK



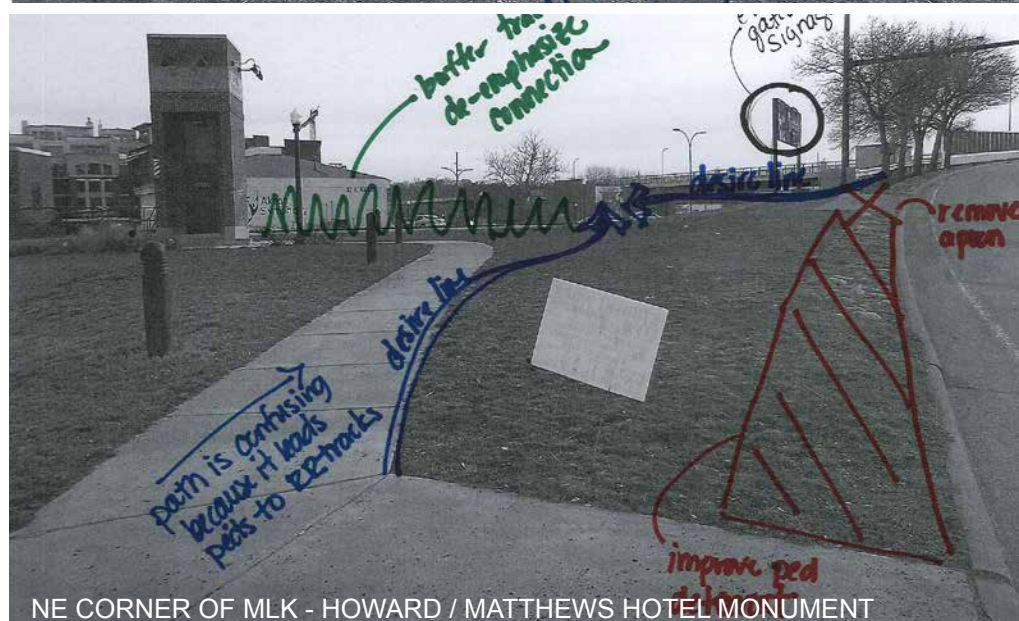
INTERSECTION OF N. MAIN - FURNACE



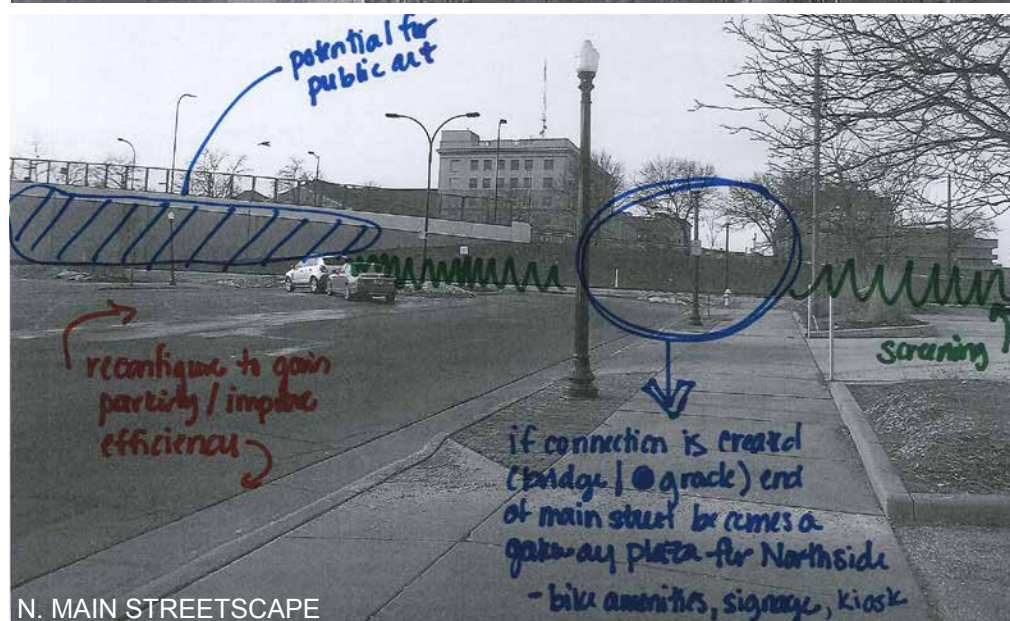
EXISTING ILLEGAL CROSSING



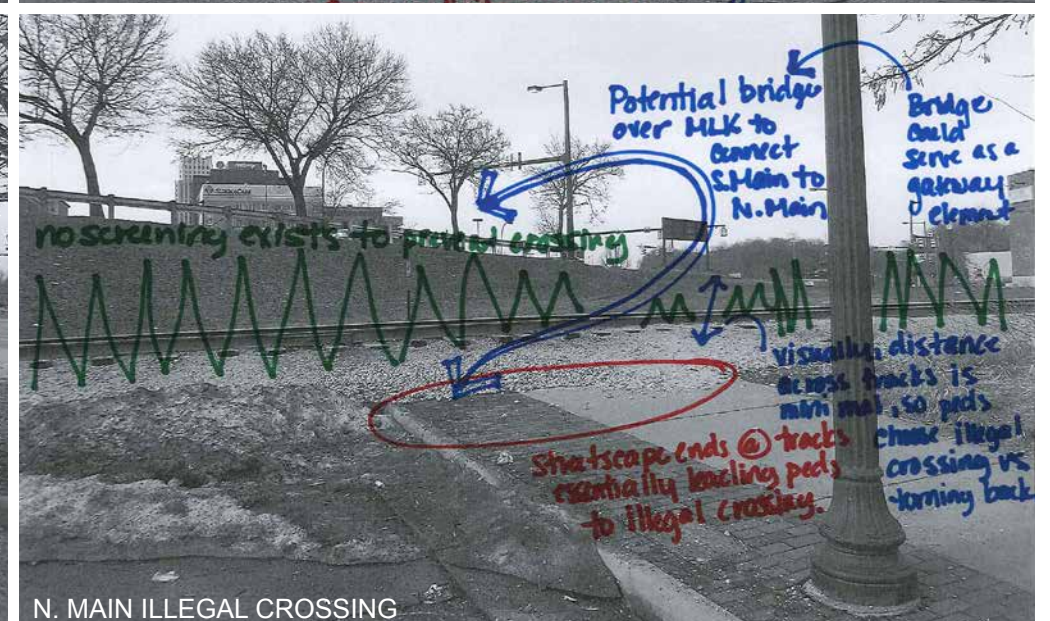
N. MAIN PARKING LOT



NE CORNER OF MLK - HOWARD / MATTHEWS HOTEL MONUMENT

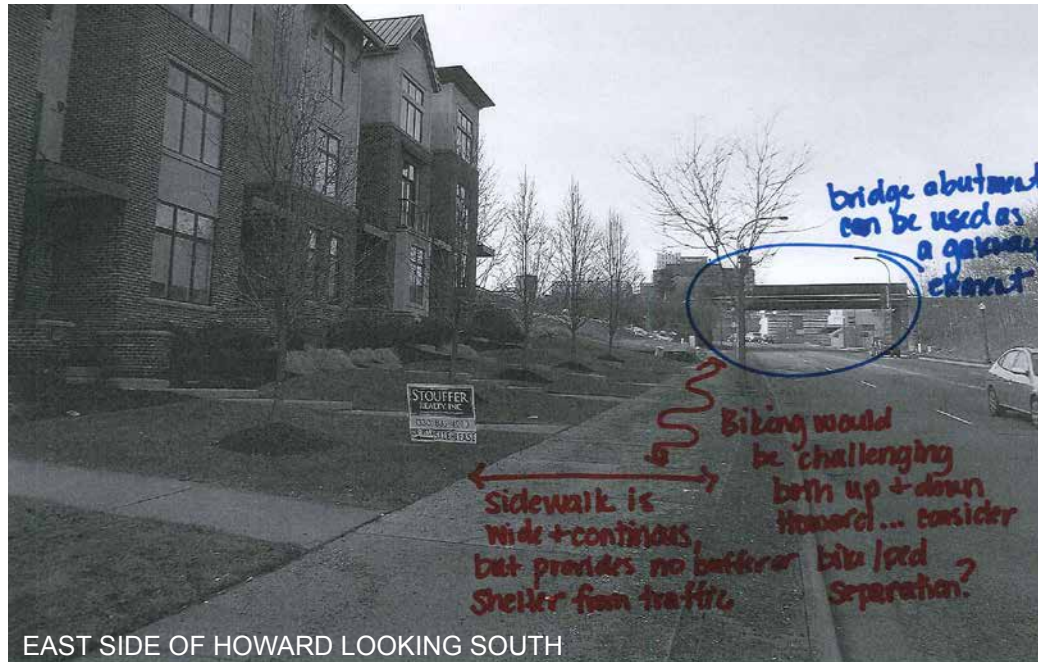
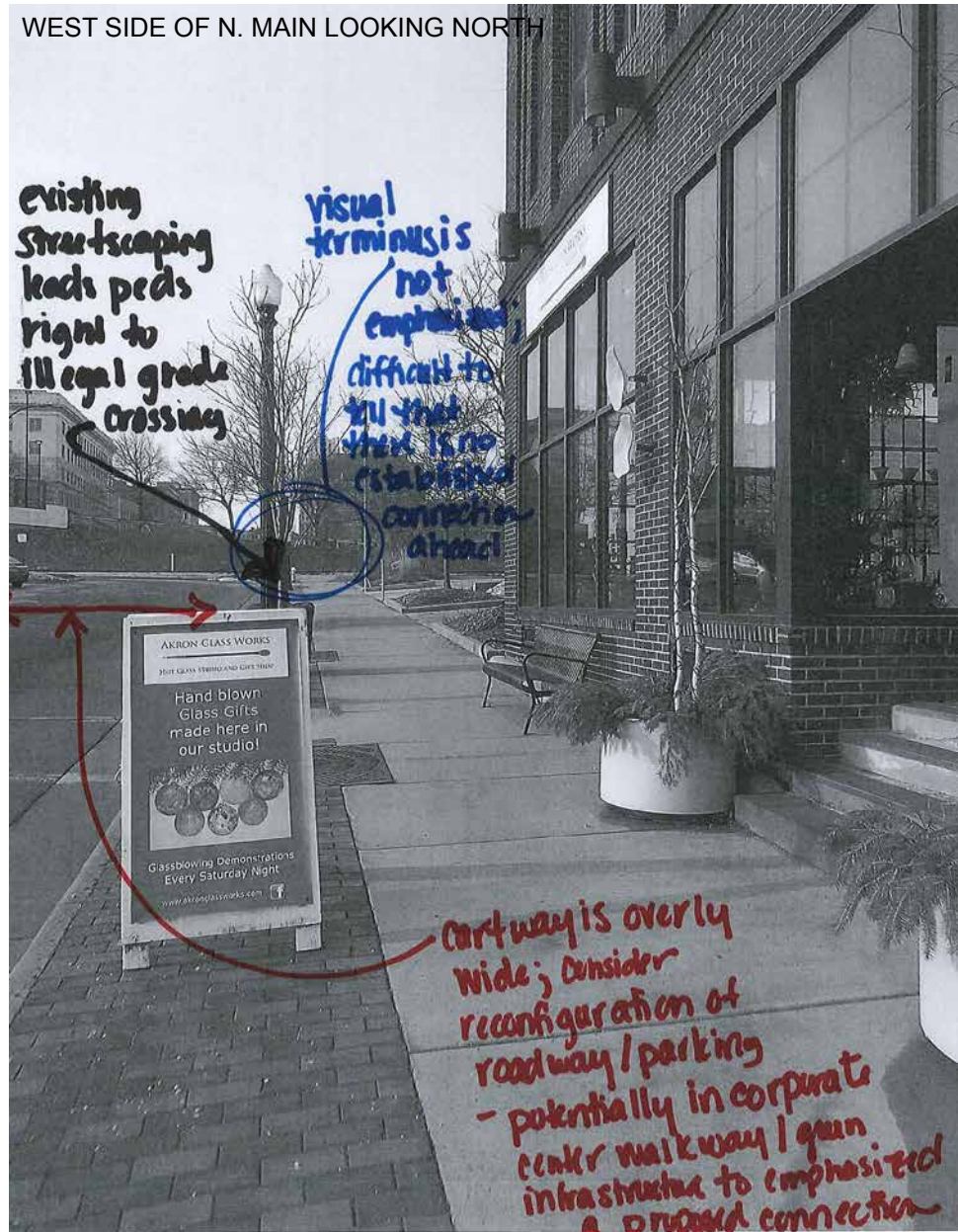


N. MAIN STREETSCAPE

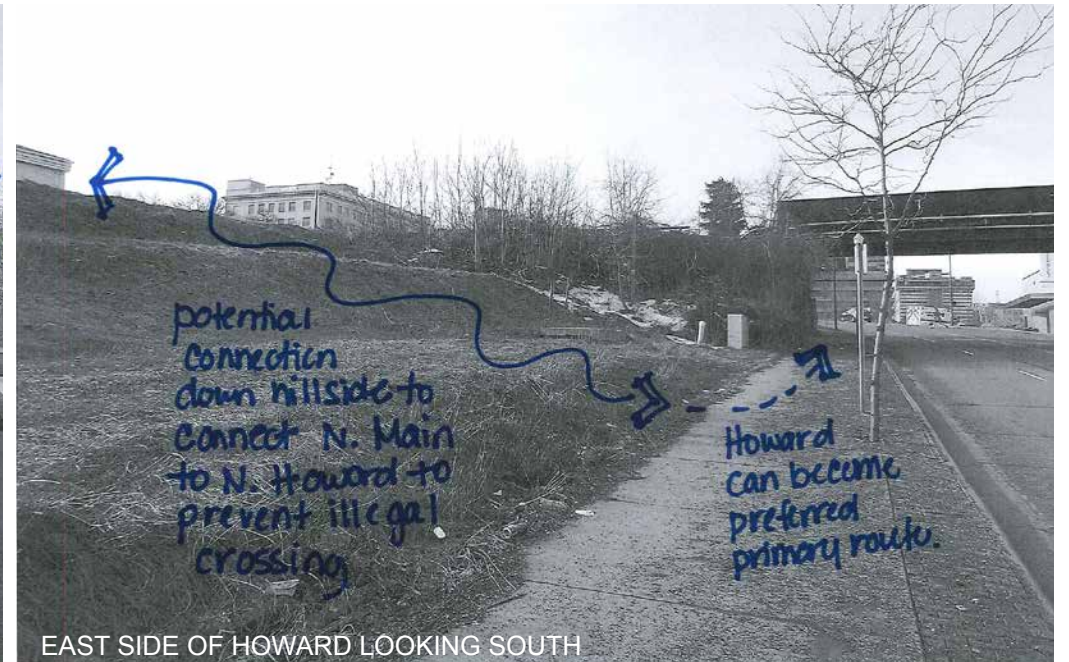


N. MAIN ILLEGAL CROSSING

WEST SIDE OF N. MAIN LOOKING NORTH

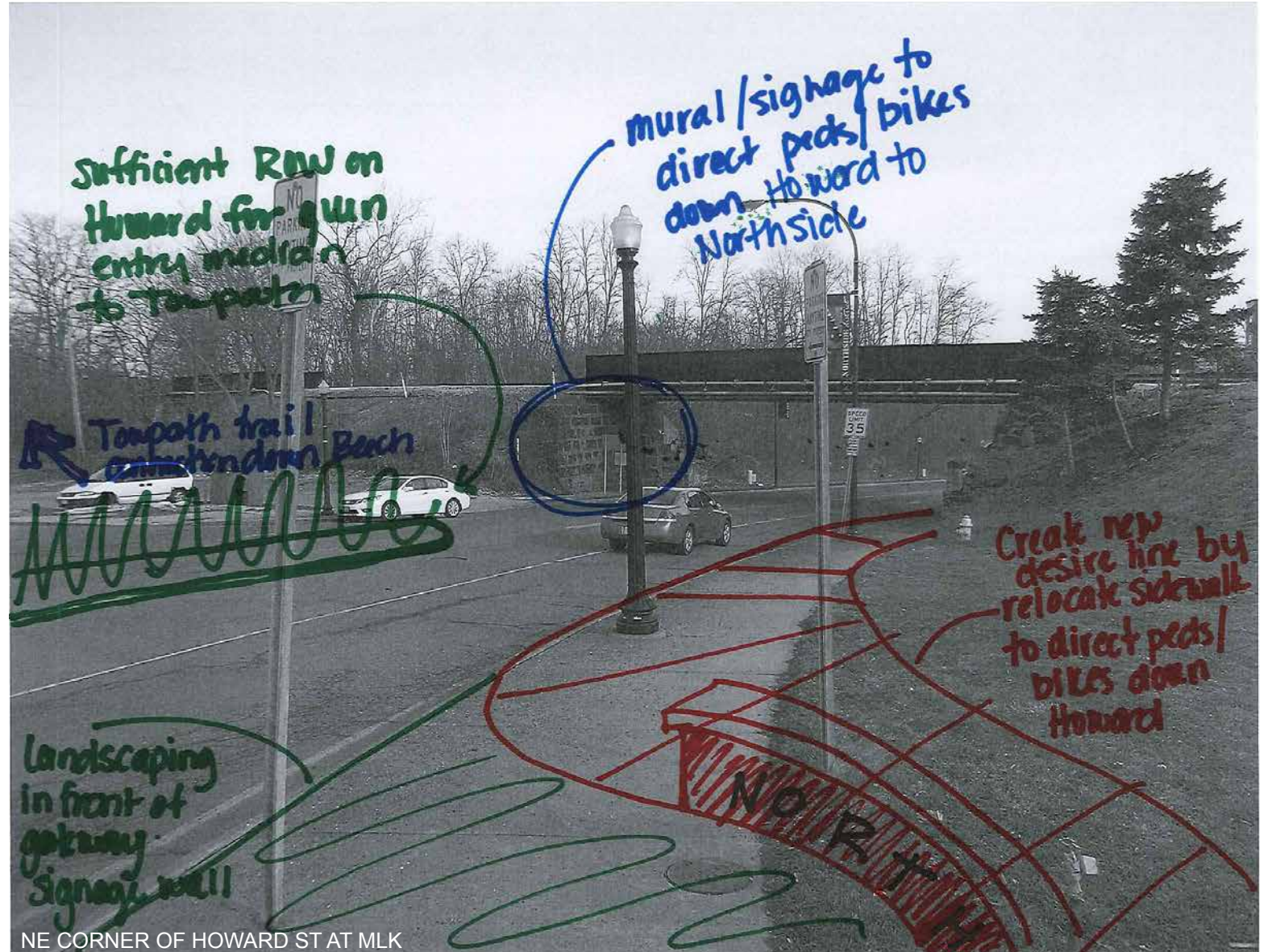
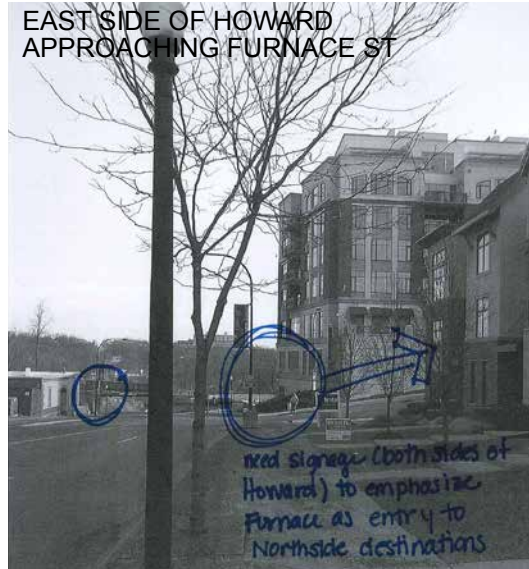


EAST SIDE OF HOWARD LOOKING SOUTH

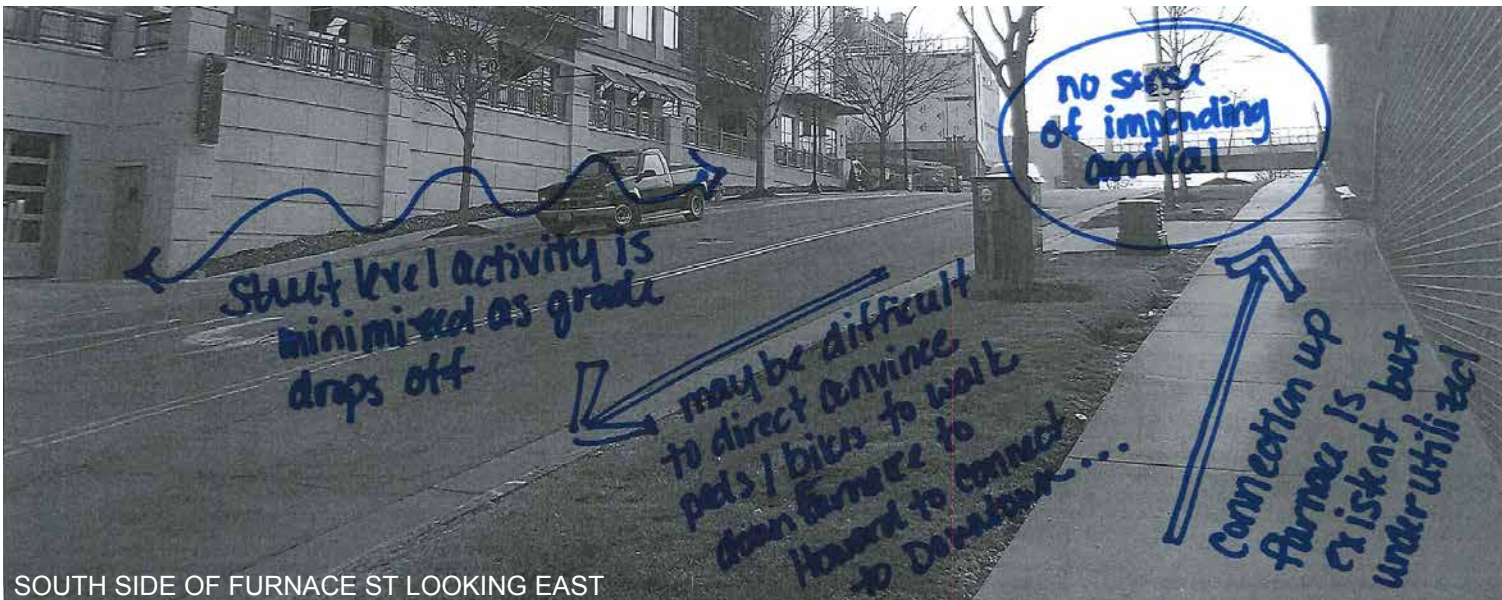


EAST SIDE OF HOWARD LOOKING SOUTH

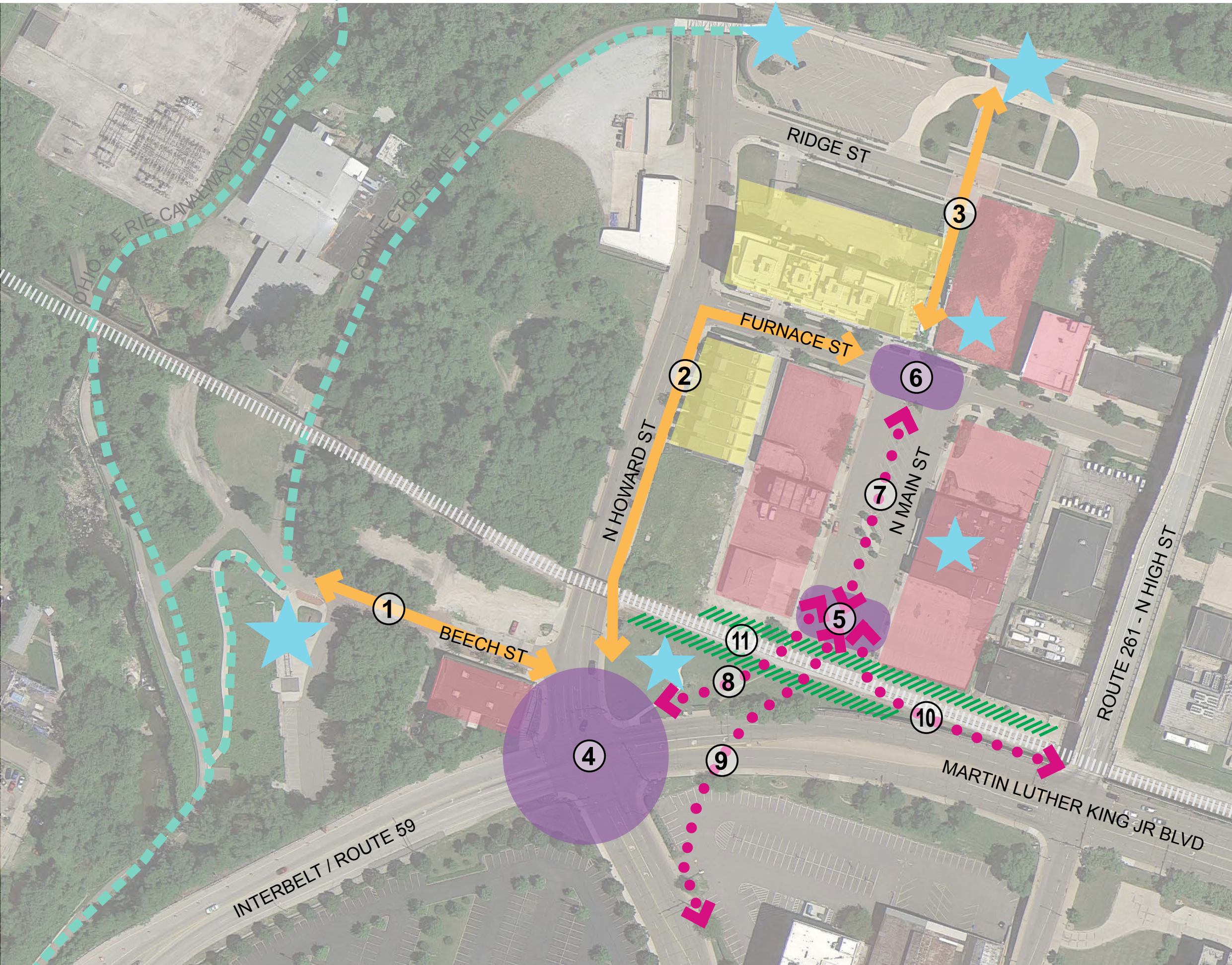
EAST SIDE OF HOWARD APPROACHING FURNACE ST



NE CORNER OF HOWARD ST AT MLK



SOUTH SIDE OF FURNACE ST LOOKING EAST



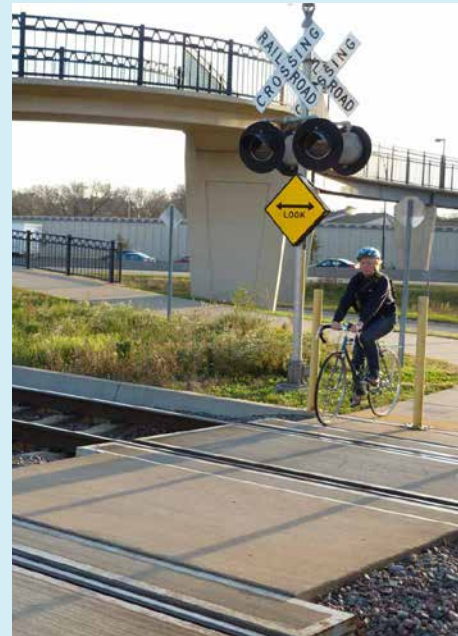
FOCUS AREAS & CONNECTIONS

1. Strengthen existing connection to Towpath trailhead along Beech St
2. Enhance Howard St to Furnace St connection - emphasize destination ahead, wayfinding, and improve upon existing streetscape by increasing sense of separation and safety from busy roadway and reduce emphasis on autos
3. Emphasize established connection from station to Furnace St. and maintain axial alignment
4. Reconfigure / enhance MLK-Howard-Main St intersection to promote walkability and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Create Northside Gateway intersection
5. Consider treatments at the end of N. Main St that promote the safe entry into Northside and create a gateway to the neighborhood
6. Intersection of N. Main & Furnace St improvement to promote walkability of the district, add crosswalks, wayfinding, etc.
7. Redesign existing parking lot to create a central path / trail for pedestrians & cyclists. Roadway is overly wide, auto centric, and discourages walkability
8. Potential at grade crossing with signals & control gates - improve existing movement and make safer
9. Potential overhead bridge connection that completely separates pedestrians and cyclists from MLK & train tracks - bridge could serve as a gateway element
10. Potential pedestrian bridge that springs off of existing MLK bridge
11. Screening of rail tracks to prevent or control crossing

LEGEND

- AMENITY / DESTINATION
- TOWPATH TRAIL
- RAILROAD TRACKS
- FOCUS AREAS
- EXISTING CONNECTIONS TO BE IMPROVED
- POTENTIAL CONNECTION
- POTENTIAL SCREENING





OPTION 1: BRIDGE

- Completely separates pedestrians from roadway & rails
- Can serve as an overhead gateway element into the Northside District - visual demonstration of the value of cycling in Akron
- Will likely require substantial financing, potential property acquisition and will take several years to fund and eventually construct - long term solution
- Will require coordination of air rights with railroad
- May discourage street level activity
- Precedence exists for this level of infrastructure in areas in and around Akron, also on the towpath trail where the trail meets roadway or rail connections

OPTION 2: CREATE AT GRADE CROSSING [PREFERRED OPTION]

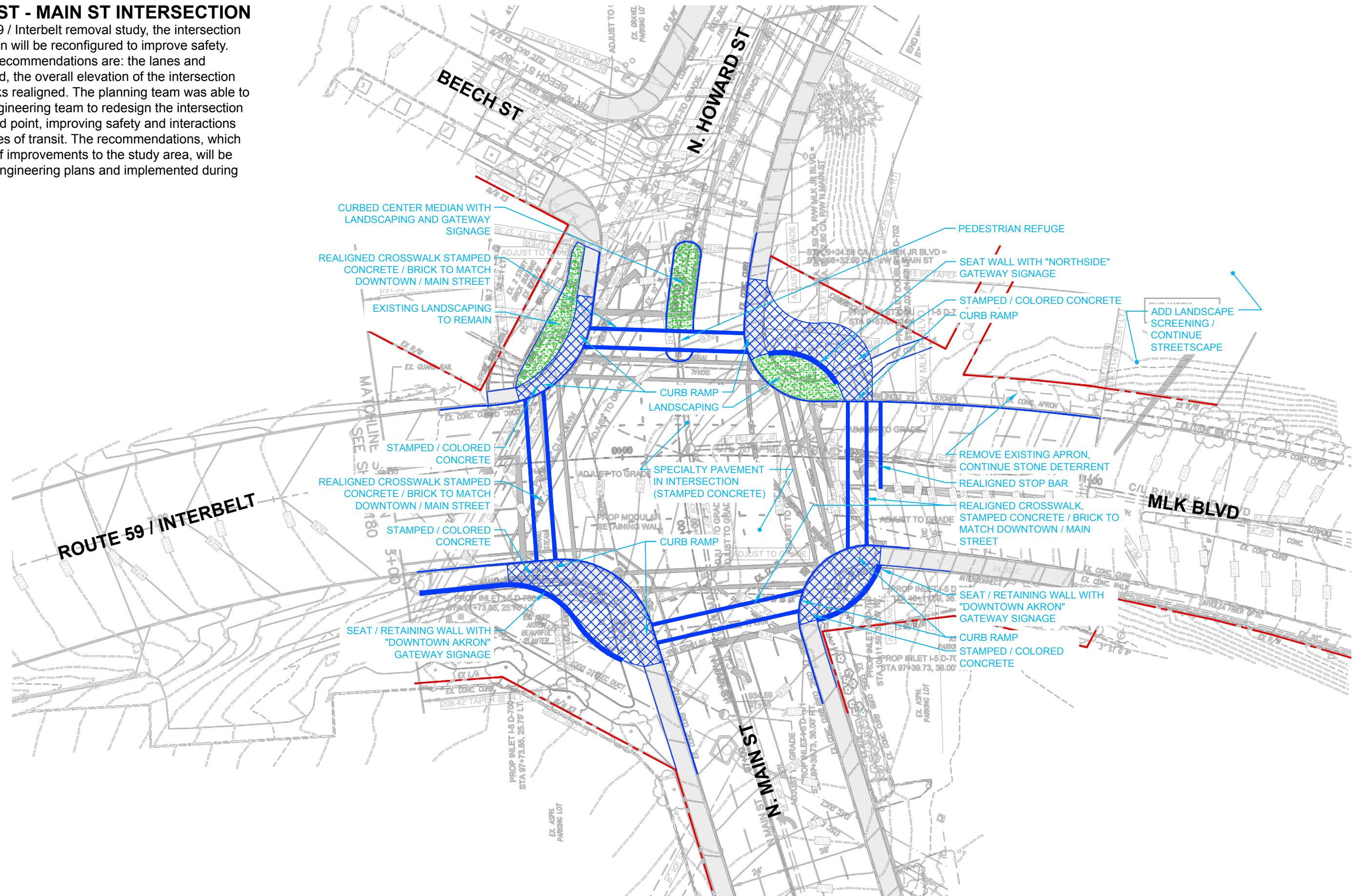
- Improves existing illegal crossing and replaces it with a safe at grade pedestrian / cyclists trail crossing
- Maintains existing movement - aligns naturally with view shed & building lines - takes advantage of alignment and visual connection across MLK; least overall grade change to transverse
- Shortest movement across MLK - will maintain existing street level activity
- Will require screening that discourages / prevents bypassing the crossing - coordination with railroad
- Use of chicane gate will encourage awareness and prevent cyclists from crossing while riding
- Variety of local examples on towpath trail

OPTION 3: DIRECT ACTIVITY TOWARDS HOWARD ST & FURNACE ST + PREVENT AT GRADE CROSSING

- Can be implemented quickly through a series of interventions
- Uses existing infrastructure
- Will require preventive strategies to block at grade rail crossing with screening, fencing, etc and coordination with railroad
- Existing abutment can be used public art & wayfinding that directs pedestrian traffic down Howard & up Furnace
- Large scale planters can be added to increase separation and sense of security from sidewalk to street - used as wayfinding
- Traverses steep inclines, and is not very direct or intuitive
- Reconfiguration of intersection of Howard - MLK - Main can be included in Interbelt project (short term < 5 years)

MLK - HOWARD ST - MAIN ST INTERSECTION

As part of the Route 59 / Interbelt removal study, the intersection of MLK - Howard - Main will be reconfigured to improve safety. Among the proposed recommendations are: the lanes and traffic patterns changed, the overall elevation of the intersection lowered and crosswalks realigned. The planning team was able to coordinate with the engineering team to redesign the intersection from a pedestrian stand point, improving safety and interactions between multiple modes of transit. The recommendations, which serve as a first wave of improvements to the study area, will be incorporated into the engineering plans and implemented during construction.



PROPOSED CONFIGURATION - AT GRADE CROSSING

Building on the intersection enhancements, that will be constructed within a relatively short term as part of the Interbelt / Rt 59 project, the proposed configuration creates an at grade crossing that serves to safely direct walking and biking traffic over the tracks and connects the Northside neighborhood to Downtown. Since N. Main Street historically ran North-South and was severed by the creation of MLK Blvd and Rt 59, the natural progression remains to follow the former right of way directly across the tracks. The view corridor, which is strengthened by the stair that connects the scenic railroad station to Northside Lofts and Furnace St, remains intact and helps serve as a visual cue to visitors wanting to travel to Downtown for dinner or other amenities. Rather than fighting this established connection and directing all traffic to utilize the steep slopes of Furnace and Howard, the concept makes the natural path safer and establishes a link over the train tracks. Dense evergreen landscaping and small boulders at the crossing serve to direct the pathway and deter unsafe, illegal crossing. Chicane gate style landscape walls ensure safe crossing for cyclists. Pedestrian scale automated gate systems and signage provide visual and physical alerts of oncoming trains. As part of the reconfiguration, N. Main Street becomes a primary connection, emphasizing the historic central axis, and promoting continued development. By changing the layout from angled parking to 90 degree parking, 20 more spaces can be accommodated. The reconfiguration also reallocates underutilized lane / shoulder width to create a central walkway with brick amenity strips and tree grates to match N. Main's existing streetscape. A mid-block plaza can host public art and connects the two primary businesses on the street.

PROPOSED NORTHSIDE TRAIL CONNECTION

1. Reconfigured intersection (part of the Interbelt / MLK / Route 59 project)
2. New brick paver crosswalk (to match Downtown Akron)
3. New gateway signage walls & paver plazas at intersection corners
4. Remove existing curb cut and extended pedestrian deterrent (north side of MLK)
5. New 8' wide multi-modal path that connects Matthews Hotel monument to new at grade crossing
6. Landscape screening to direct pedestrians & cyclists to at grade crossing and deter illegal crossing (layered evergreen trees, shrubs, and boulders / crushed gravel)
7. Chicane gate to slow pedestrian / bicycle traffic at crossing - low walls & special paving to alert users
8. Pedestrian scale at grade crossing with signalized swing gate to alert pedestrians and cyclists
9. Reconfigured N. Main Street with 8' wide center walk with amenity strips & tree grates to match streetscape (96' ROW; original parking lot configuration: 32' drives + angled parking = 42 spaces; proposed configuration: 24' drives + head in parking + 12' center walk = 62 spaces)
10. Center walk with public art piece and landscaped planters
11. Trail connects to Northside Marriott & Lofts to stair / Scenic Railway Station / Towpath

