

**CONGRESS SQUARE REDESIGN**  
**Public Meeting #1**

*SUMMARY REPORT*

Prepared for:  
City Of Portland  
Planning &  
Urban Development

Prepared by:  
WRT

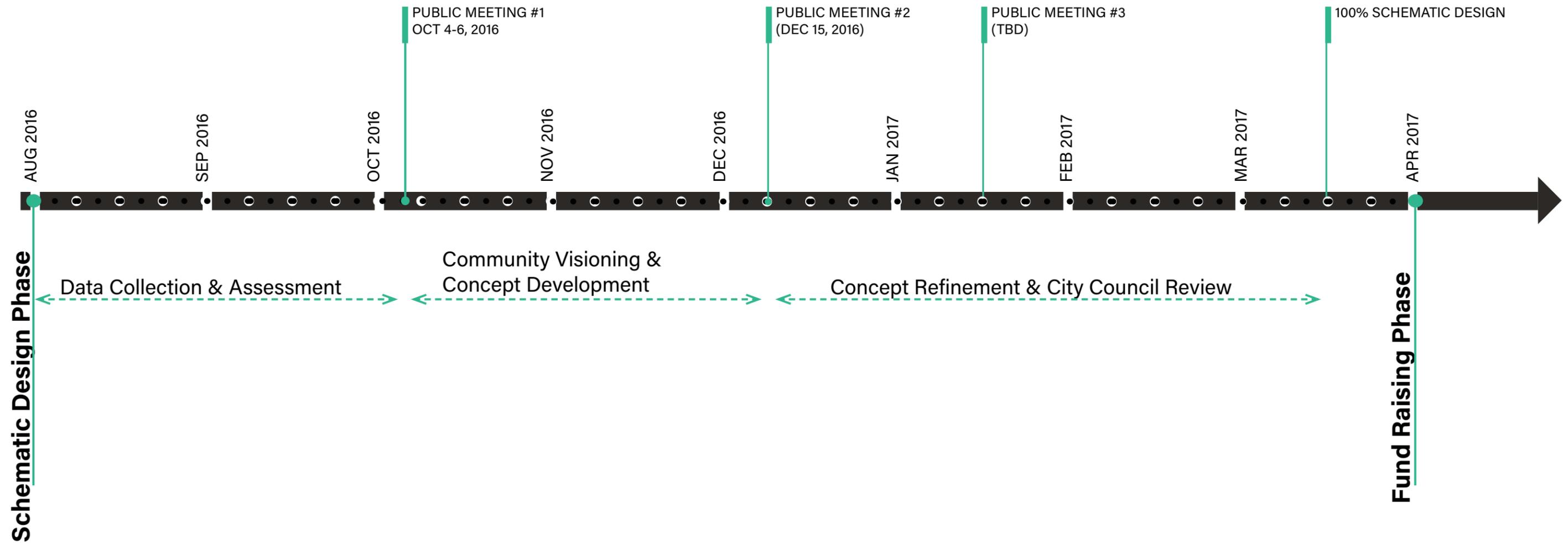
# Day 1

## Site Opportunities and Constraints

# VISION STATEMENT

**Congress Square is a high quality, distinctive urban space that epitomizes the Arts District while remaining accessible and inviting to all. Year-round, the Square provides a welcome break in the dense, historic district street wall where one encounters a range of activities including events and installations that celebrate local arts and culture, and fosters spontaneity, informal gathering, and fun. As a gateway intersection, the redesigned Congress Square places priority on the pedestrian experience and safety while accommodating all transportation modes in an efficient manner.**

# PROJECT SCHEDULE & PROCESS

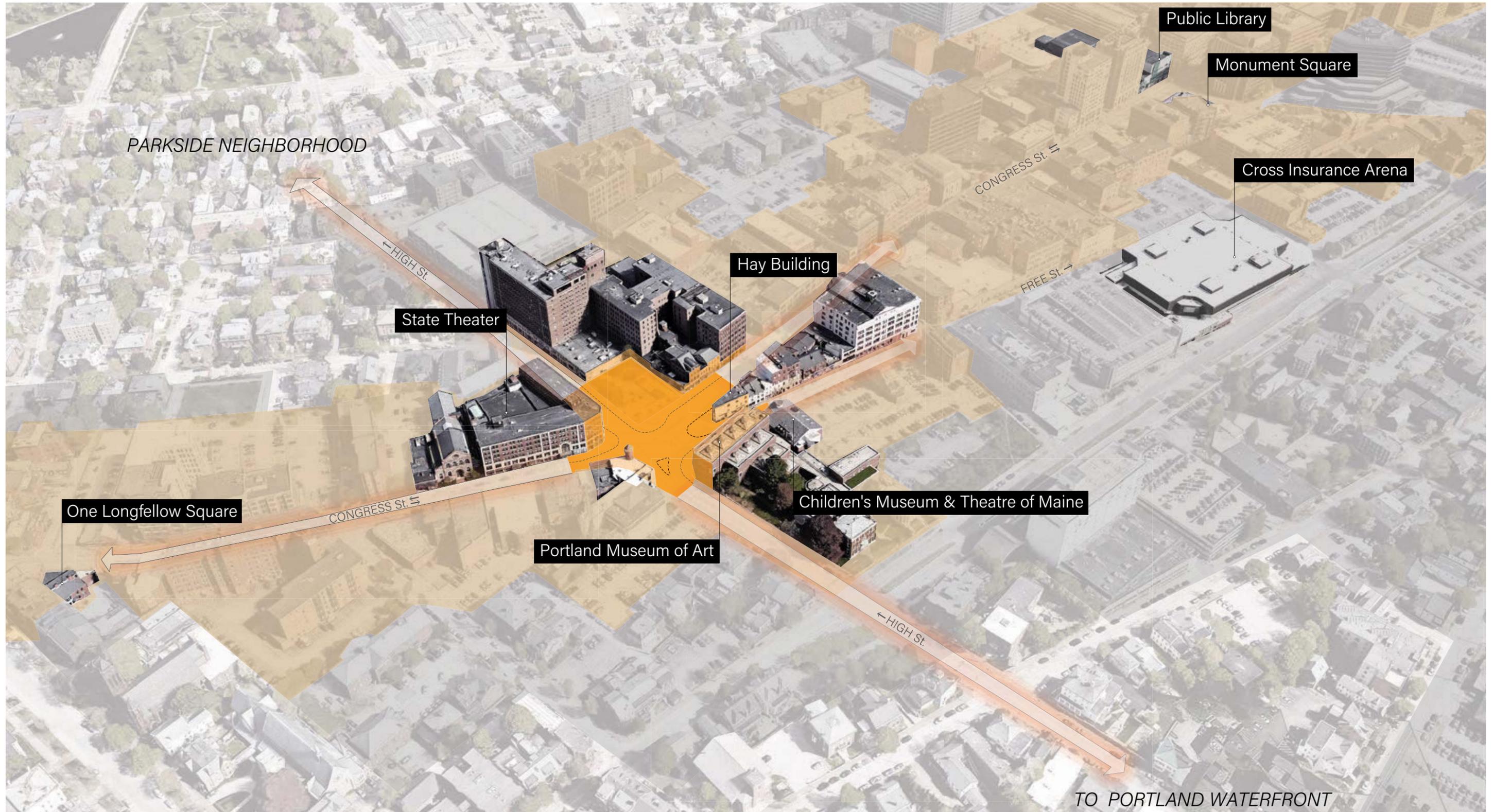


# GOALS

**Develop a cohesive Congress Square that maximizes the community's need for an open space that provides social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits.**

- . How will the five intersections be related and unified?
- . How can we design a flexible space to accommodate a wide range of uses?
- . How will the design of the square provide an identify that responds to its place in the heart of the Arts District and within the historic context?

# SITE CONTEXT



# PROJECT PARAMETERS

Here are the base assumptions we learned from the previous public meetings conducted in 2014.

## **Base Assumptions:**

- **Clock mechanism from former Union Station will be relocated**
- **Direct access for hotel through Congress Square Park will be maintained**
- **Sunken aspect of Plaza shall be re-evaluated and addressed**

# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## Shade Studies

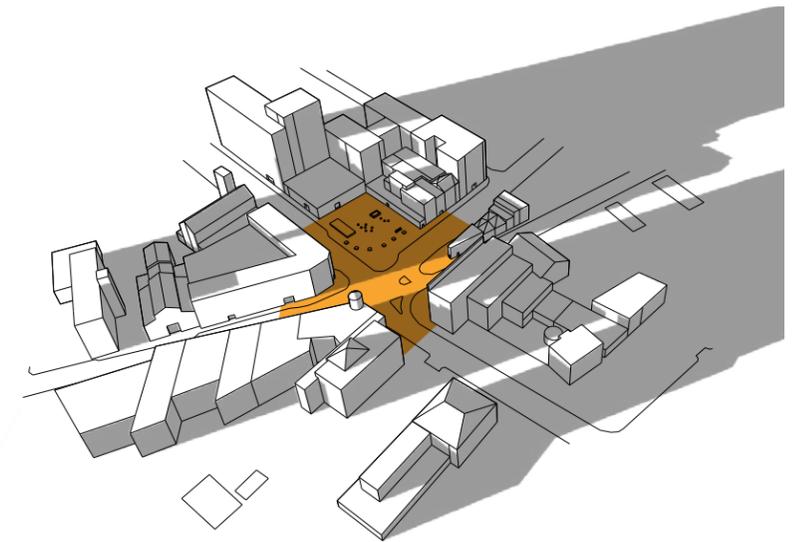
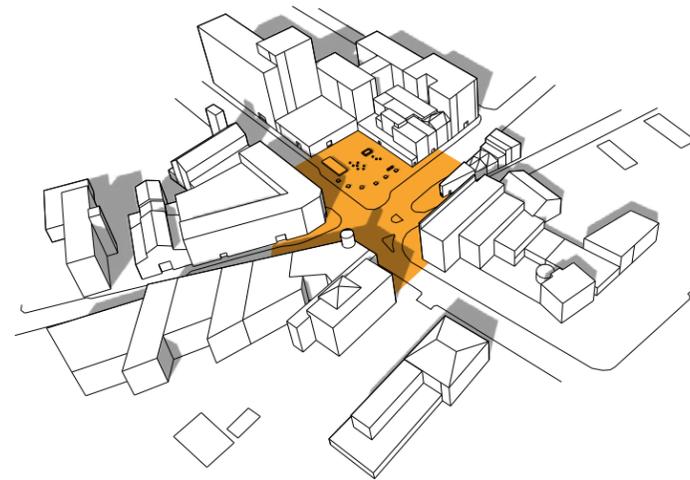
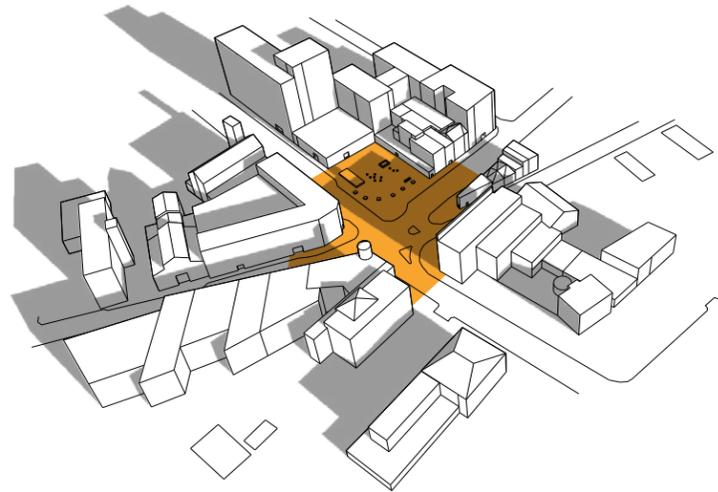
*\* In addition to the Shade Studies, we've also learned that 'Wind' factor shall be considered as it is typically very windy at this intersection during the winter season.*

 08:00 am

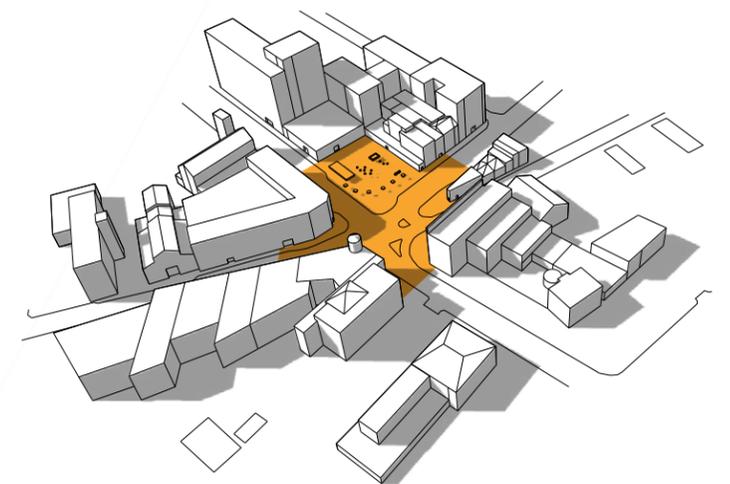
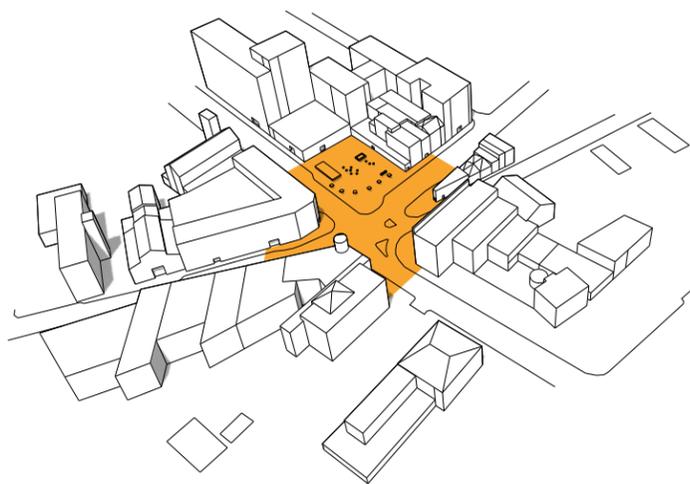
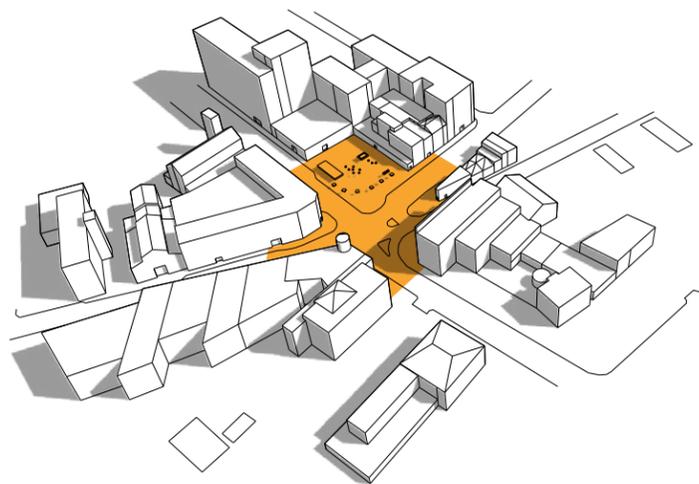
 Noon

 04:00 pm

Winter

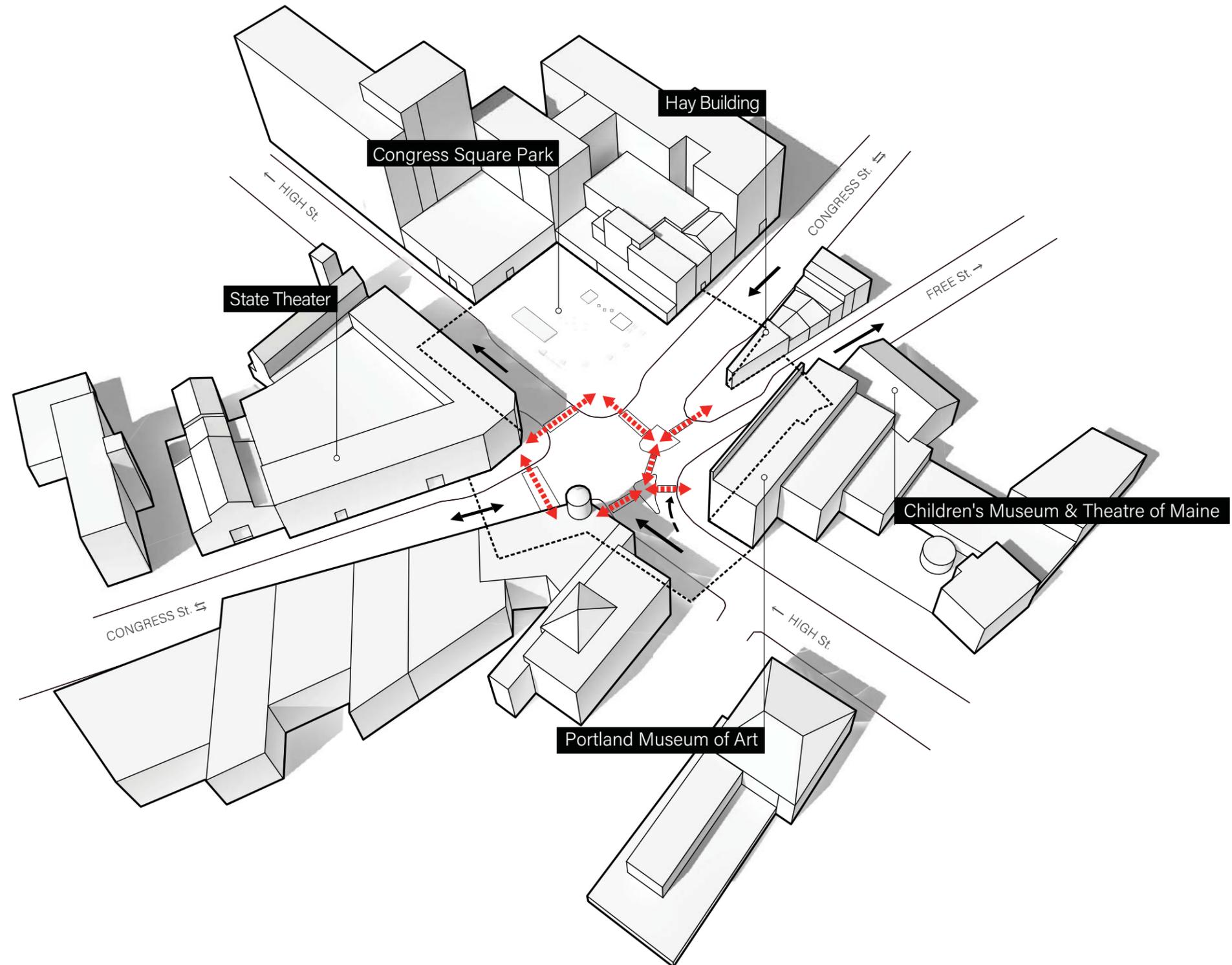


Summer



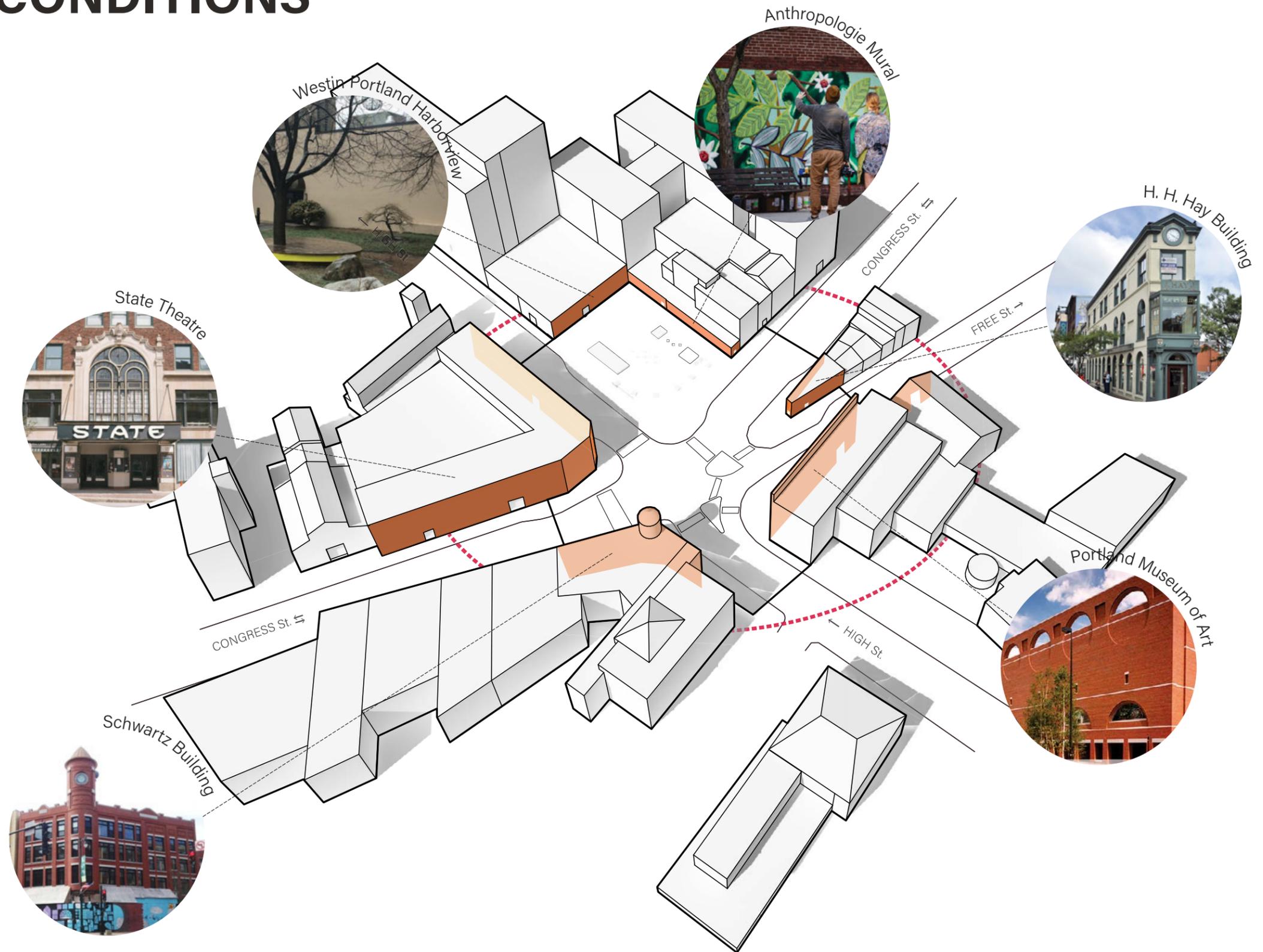
# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## Pedestrian Crossings



# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

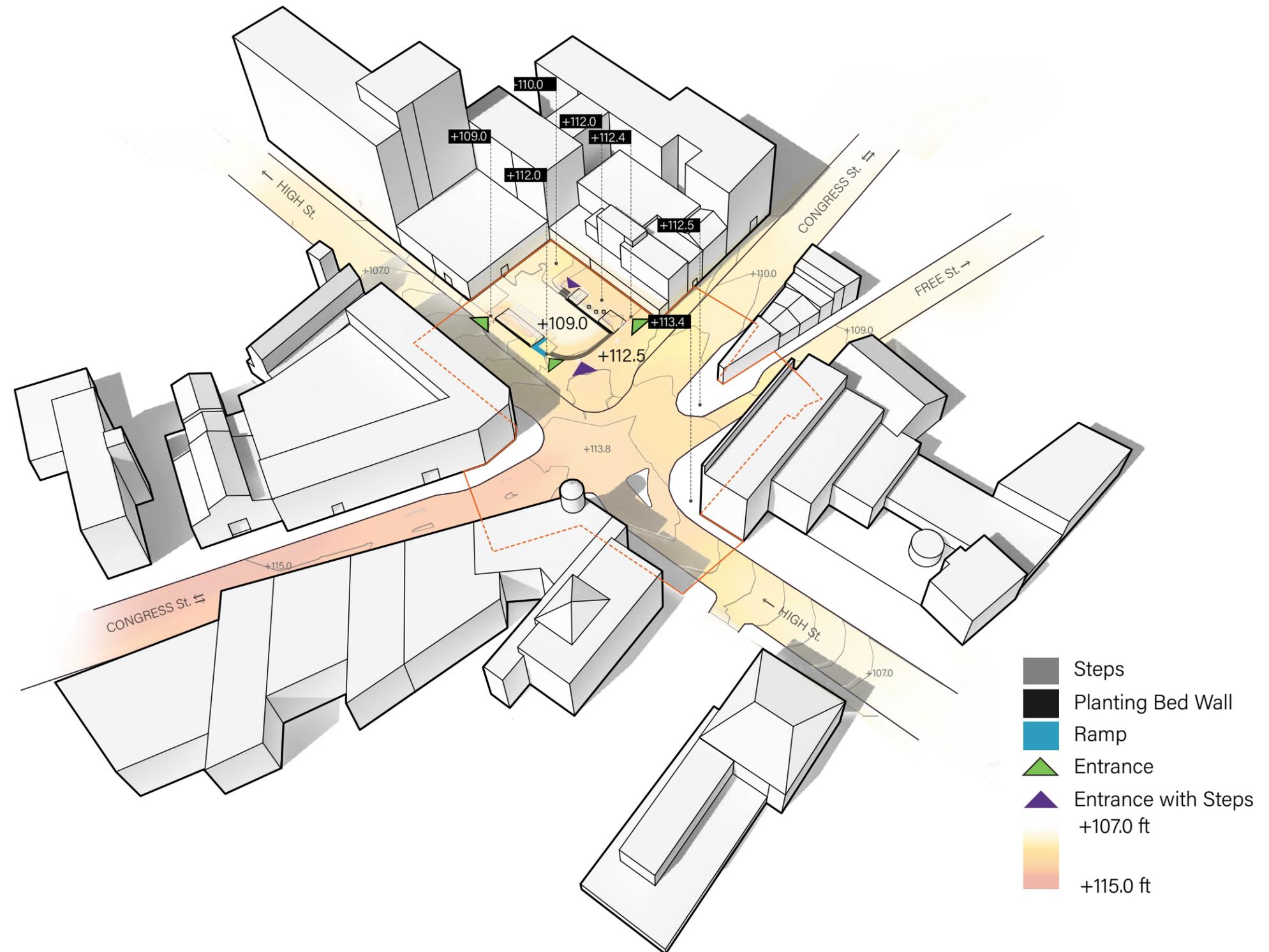
## Visual Character



# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## Site Spot Elevations

There are limited accessible entry points to enter Congress Square Park.



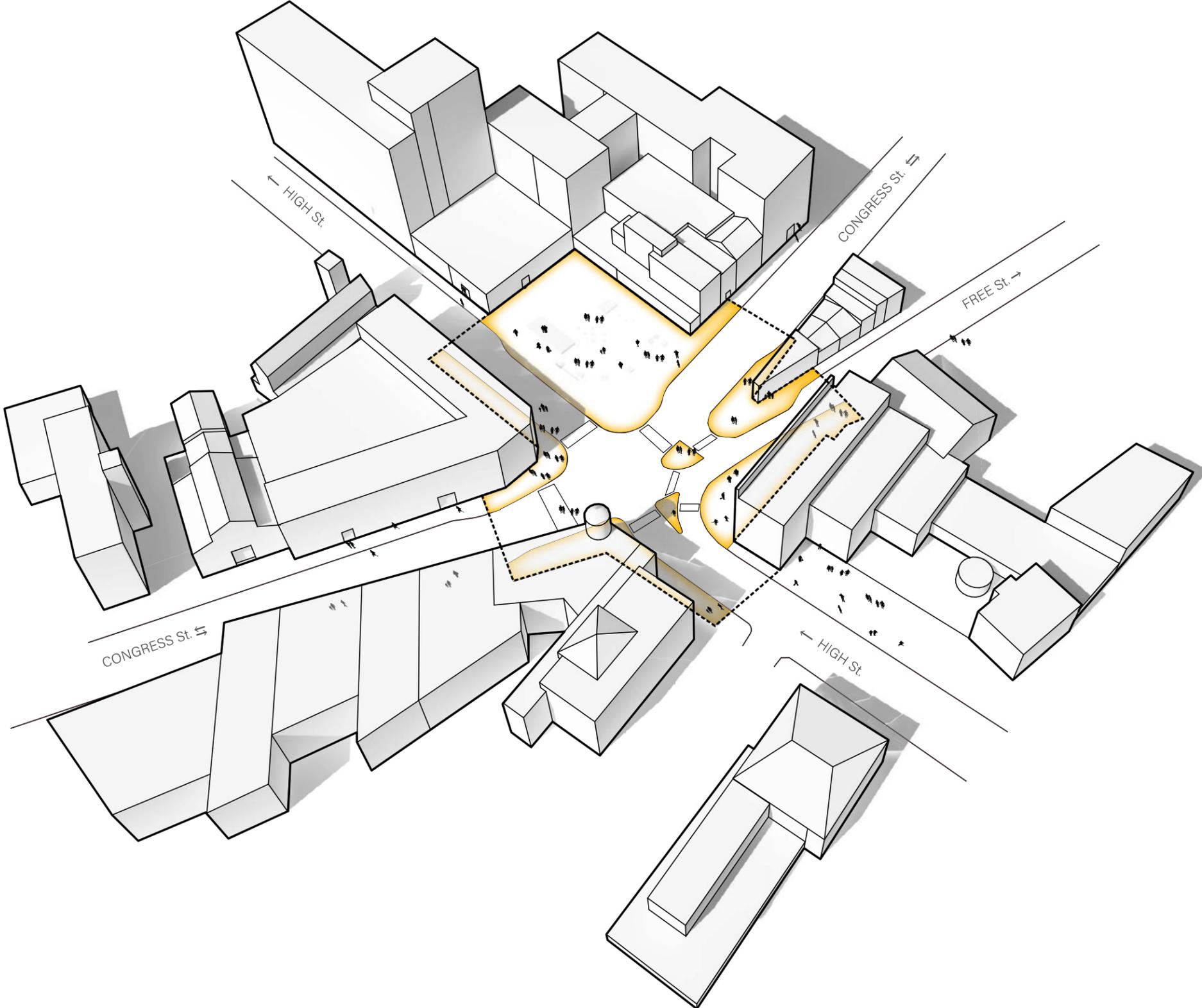
# EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

## Shade Trees



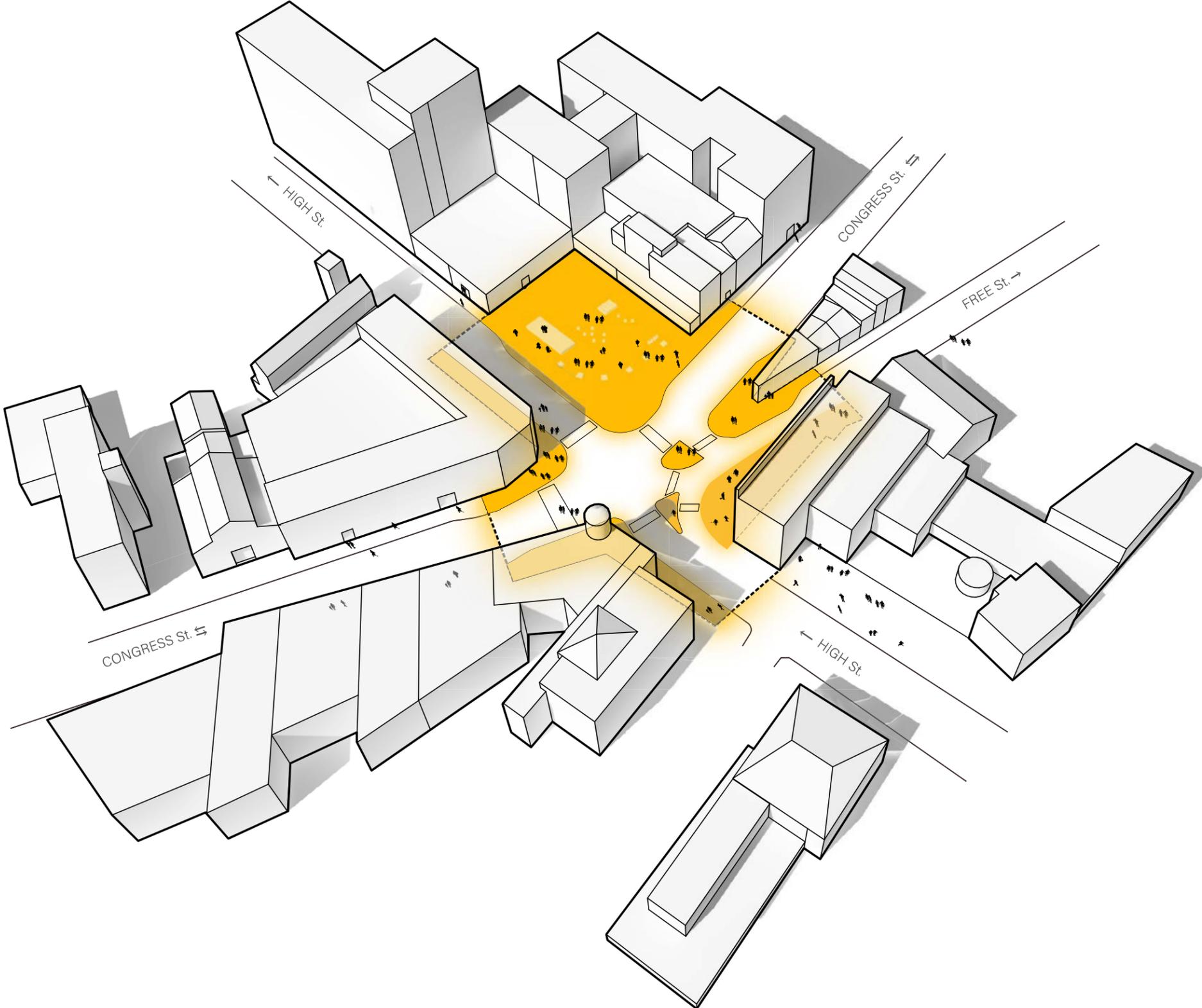
# THEMATIC APPROACH

[Accessibility]



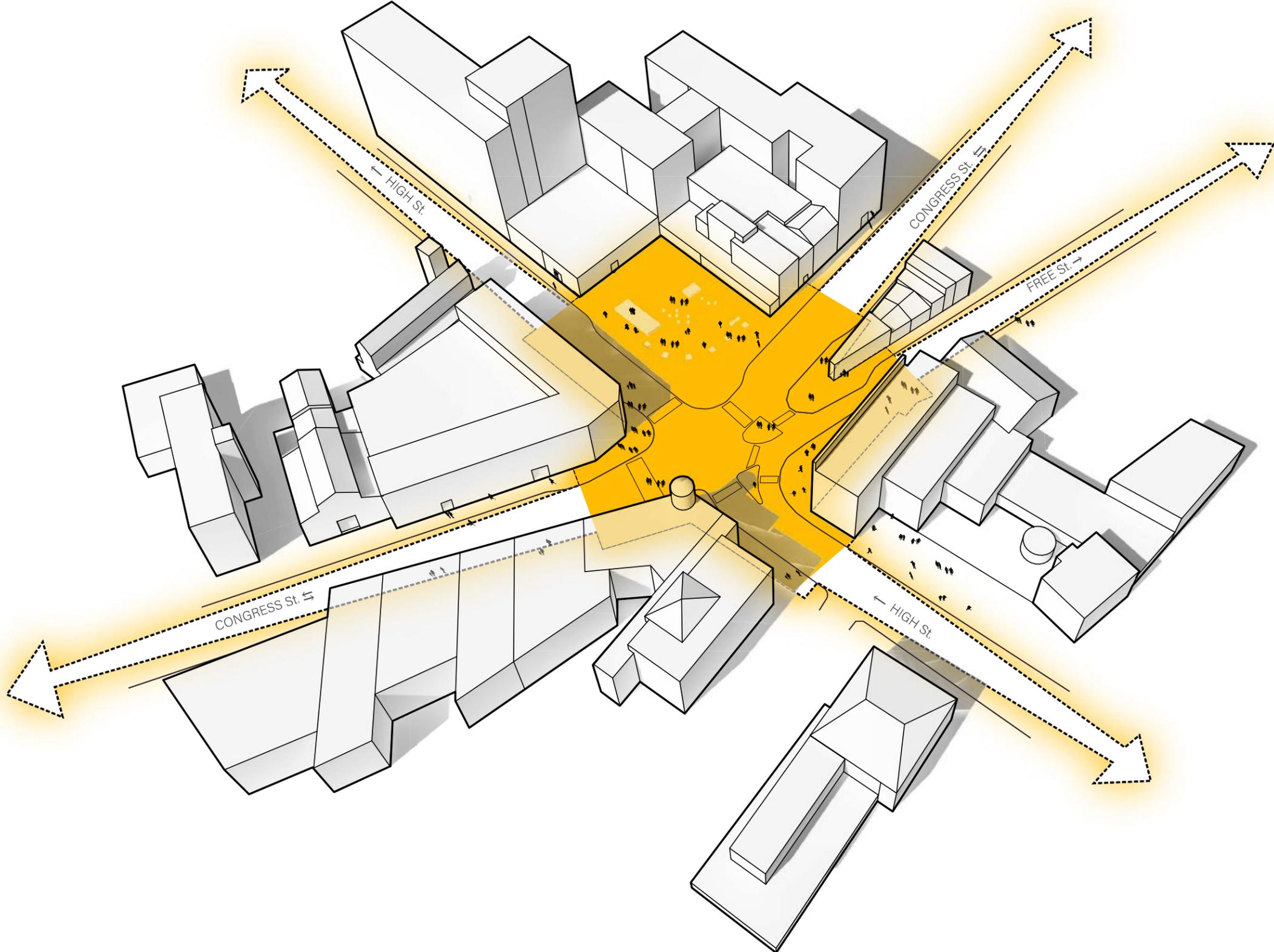
# THEMATIC APPROACH

[Connectivity]



# THEMATIC APPROACH

[Identity]



# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## Accessibility

- Sunken nature of plaza has pros and cons - Change in elevation helps park users feel removed from the surrounding traffic and noise but creates an access issue
- Need an inclusive design approach that works for those with physical and visual impairment but also creates a more accessible space for all users
- Steps have no railing hard for all physical abilities to navigate
- Need to better define pathways
- Steps provide additional seating but also impact access and connections
- Uneven pavement is difficult to navigate for many users

## Connections

- Creating a unified space
- Clarity of entrances (where the routes are)
- Alleviate traffic issues
- Access and connection into the space as well as connected to spaces across the street
- Allow diagonal movement through park
- Consider threshold; sense of arrival
- Clarify access points

## Identity

- It is not Monument Square; it is not Longfellow Square: What is Congress Square?
- Place for cultural exchange
- A place to help define who we are
- Fun new thing "I am Congress Square, I am Portland"
- How does the park fit into the continuity of the environment?
- Why do you come to the space? How do you identify with the space?
- Need to be inclusive, build community (needs to include surrounding demographics; households without cars who live adjacent to the site; seniors; families with children; those with disabilities; homeless; diverse residential population on all points, age, economics, national origin; recent immigrant population)
- Opportunity to break down barriers; social space; urban living room; places to sit facing each other to facilitate conversation, build community
- "I got to know my neighbor at the park" encourage daily, community use; "urban living room" social space
- Contemplative space and Active space (balance); space for respite vs. space to be part of urban environment
- Universal themes about people
- Area of strength; area of confluence
- Art can help to create, establish the Square's identity
- Architectural character helps to define identity and define space
- The context is in good shape but the spaces needs to be unified; more legible

- Contemporary design may help to rationalize all the layers that are found
- Congress Square is the heart of everything
- A green node as a visual surprise; a greenheart
- Every little space is planted in Portland
- Active living space
- What is the story of this place?
- Branding/Identity: Material, color, signage/wayfinding
- Living waterfront, thriving art community, active commercial corridor
- We have a signature space already; reinforcing the outdoor room
- Increase element of discovery
- Eclectic
- Amp up the space as whole; create a cohesive ground plane
- Need of flexibility “space for people to participate as they see fit”
- The sky is one of the components of that outdoor room
- Disjointed space, need for unification
- Active, strong, dynamic
- Layers of buildings, sizes, styles
- Color, vibrancy
- Congress square is in the heart of the historic district but yet it is eclectic; the space can embrace a contemporary design approach
- It’s in the heart of the commercial corridor halfway between Monument Square and Longfellow; can be a green surprise in contrast to those spaces

### **Planting/Horticulture**

- Dynamic landscape, not static but seasonal; constantly in motion
- Wind protection; provide wind break but still be open and porous
- More greener; more wildlife
- Separation of space
- Birch circle in front of Art Museum may have lived its natural cycle
- Ability for trees to provide multiple benefits- storm water management; micro-climate; seasonal interest; clean air; identity; habitat
- Achieving the right balance between hardscape (paving) and softscape (planting); 30% green vs.70% paved? Right balance?
- Planting palette for entire square is deliberate and coordinated; One cohesive identity
- Finding the right plants and placing them in the right location
- Pollinators, hardy (not too delicate for the site), native plants
- Less consumptive landscape
- Green as life, heart, vibrancy
- Tree canopy is critical; if trees need to be removed (health of Linden trees); how can we replace the lost trees with mature, fast growing species?
- Green wall along hotel wall as a backdrop
- Interpretive signage to talk about species and habitat
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- Interpretive signage to talk about species and habitat

## **Other thoughts**

- Maintenance and future management: The City has limited resources; and the Friends of Congress Square have limited resources as a volunteer organization so the design of the square will need to consider future maintenance and management
- Irrigation needs to establish planting
- Implementation budget
- What activities can teens do there?
- Don't forget cyclists
- Limited rules at the park
- Park programming (events) have been very successful but the site presents some accessibility challenges (uneven planters, change in grade, inconsistency of materials...)
- Excited about the potential for the space
- Don't forget trash, recycling, composting

## Lighting

- Safety
- Park does not close
- Lighting impacts how hospitable is the space?

## Art

Not static

Support identity

Discovery

## Spacial organization

Café on corner of hotel extending out

## Play

Kid active space/zone "not a typical playground" . Could have rocks and elements to skip, jump on, safe place to run around, explore  
Example Paris playzone along the Seine River – Climbing wall

## Water Element

Water, steam, fog

Supporting micro-climate

# Day 2 Visioning

# STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP



# IDENTITY

Creativity  
Creation

A Space to Create  
Inspiring Creativity  
"Place as modern forum"

Uniqueness → Plant Palette

Vitality  
Energy

- hazing
- Tapestry
- Permeability
- Plant material in unexpected ways
- Jarring
- diff perspective landscape to direct legibility

# Water Element

Temporary

Small

Mister?

Ice skating rink

Reinterpreting water

## Lighting

Brighter levels - feel safer

In coordination w/ Park Closure - Ordinance Hours  
What is the message

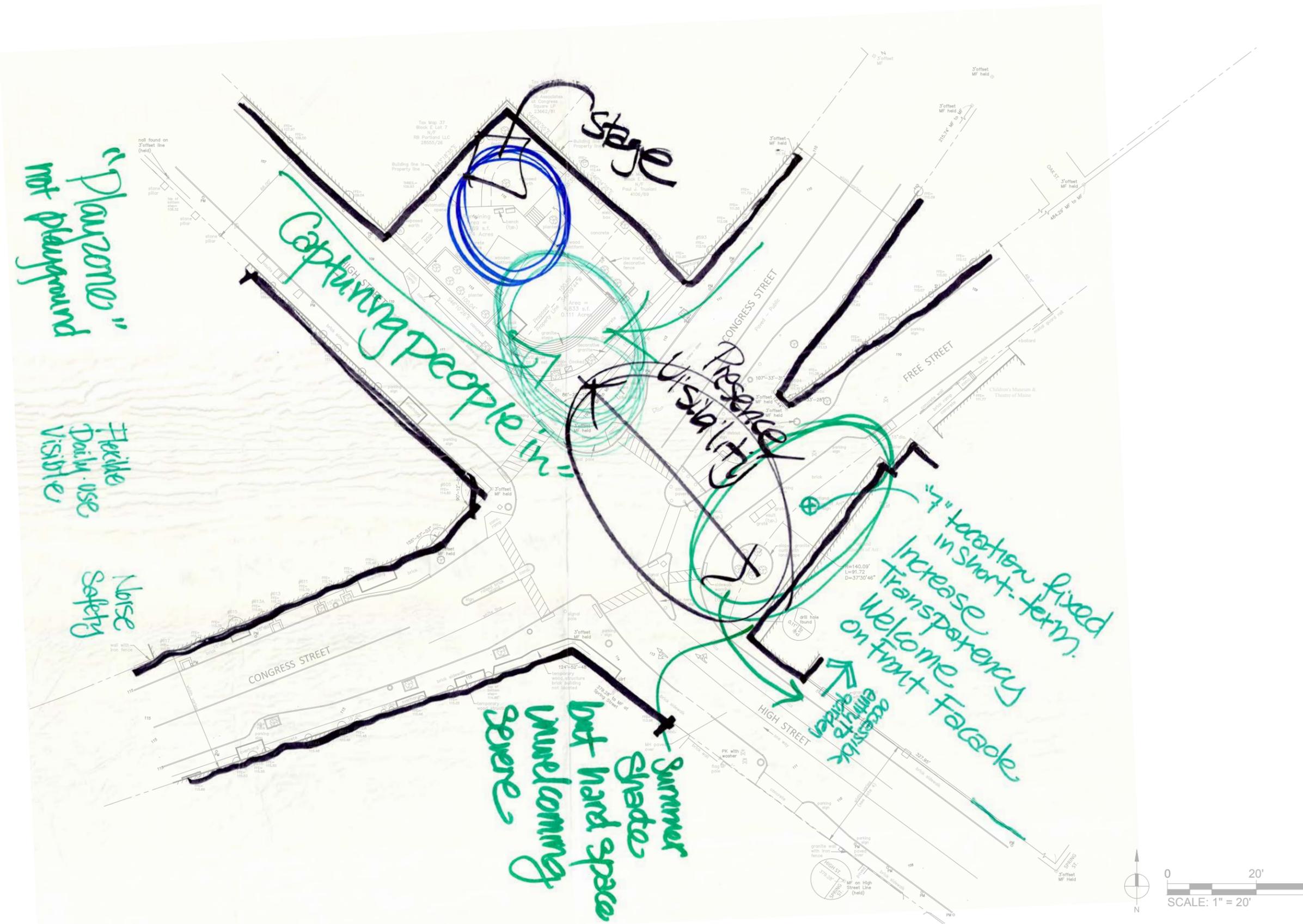
Reinforce Theme Identity of whole space

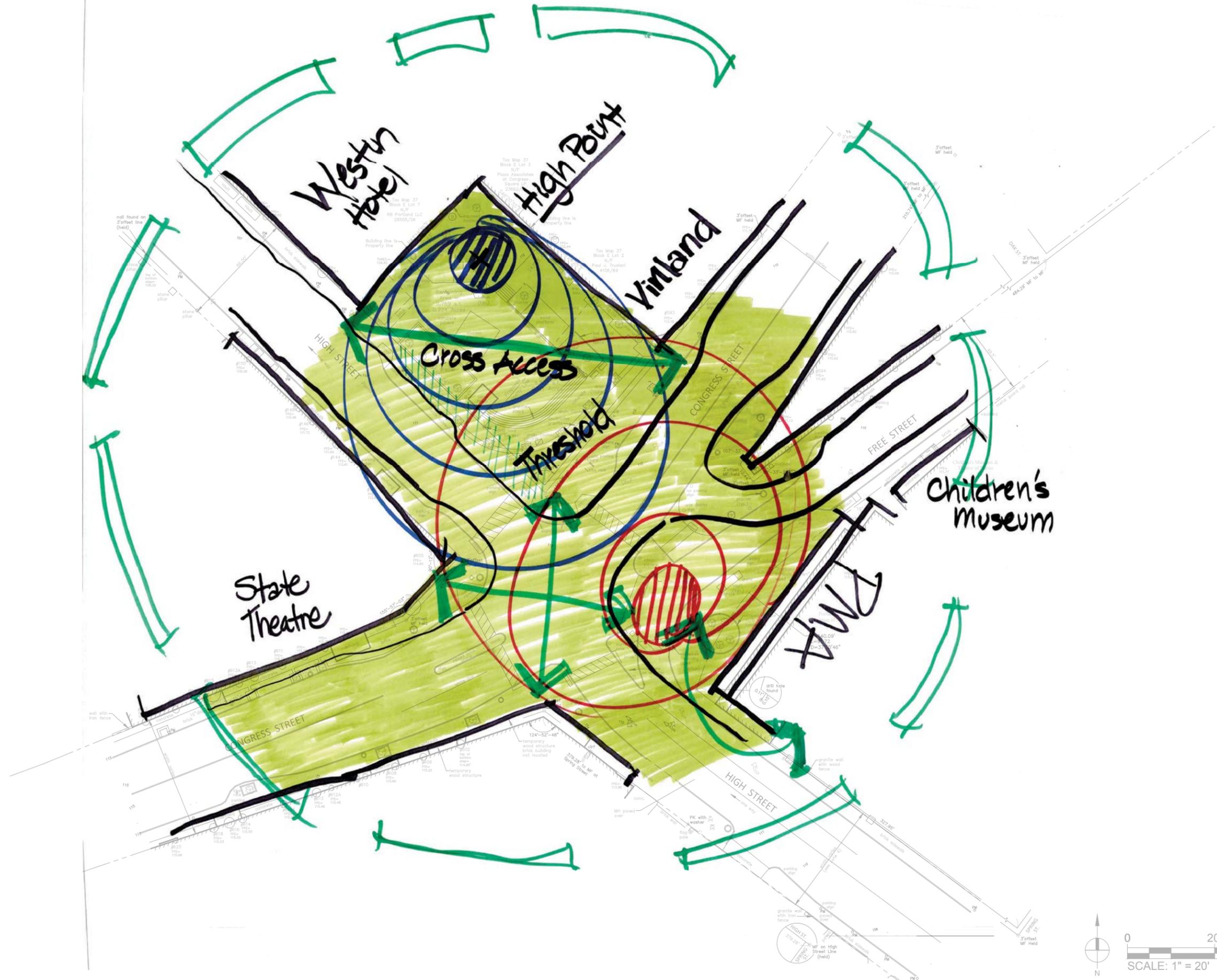
Unified light plan

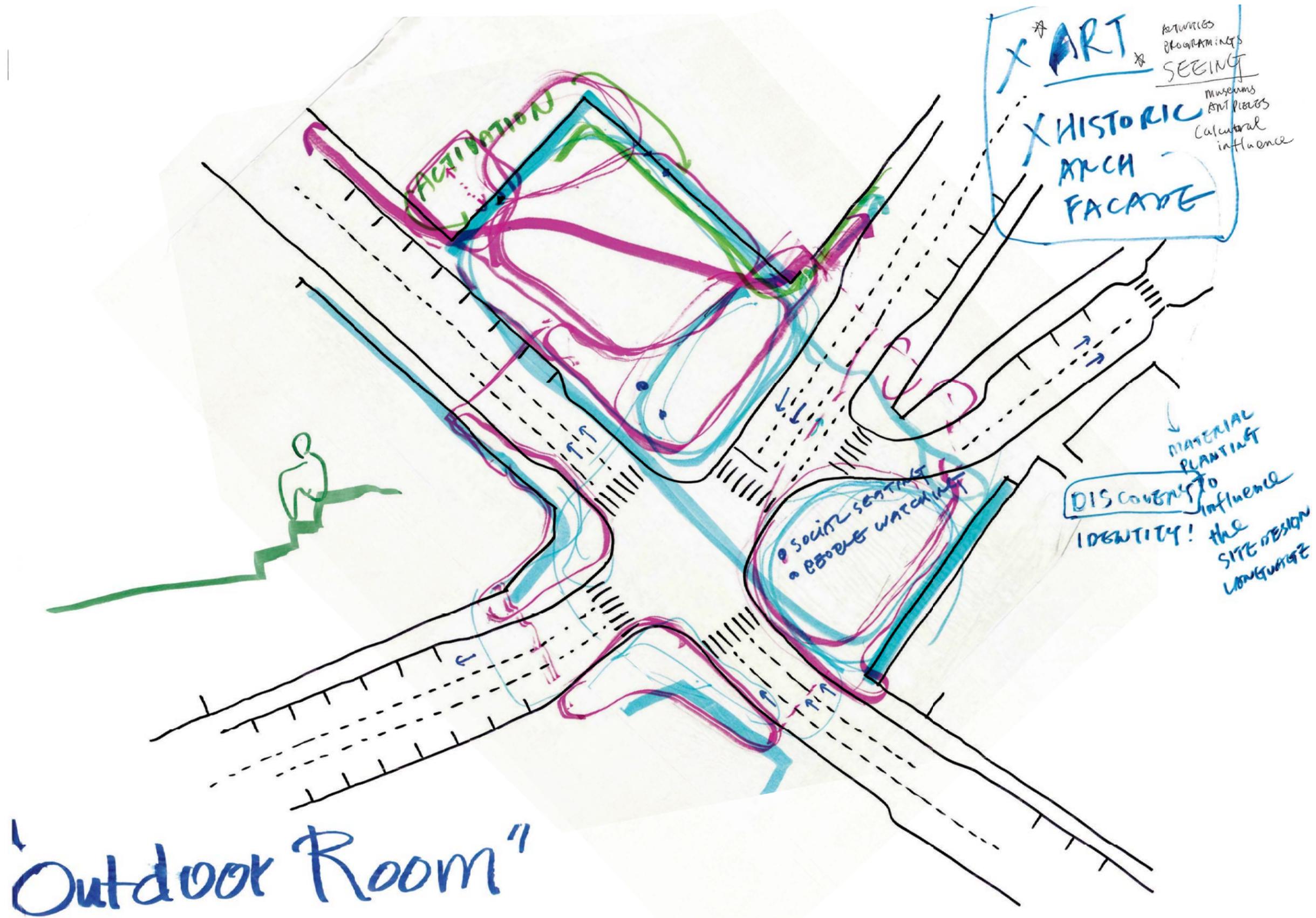
Dynamic - Not Static

"Sit outside at midnight & enjoy setting"

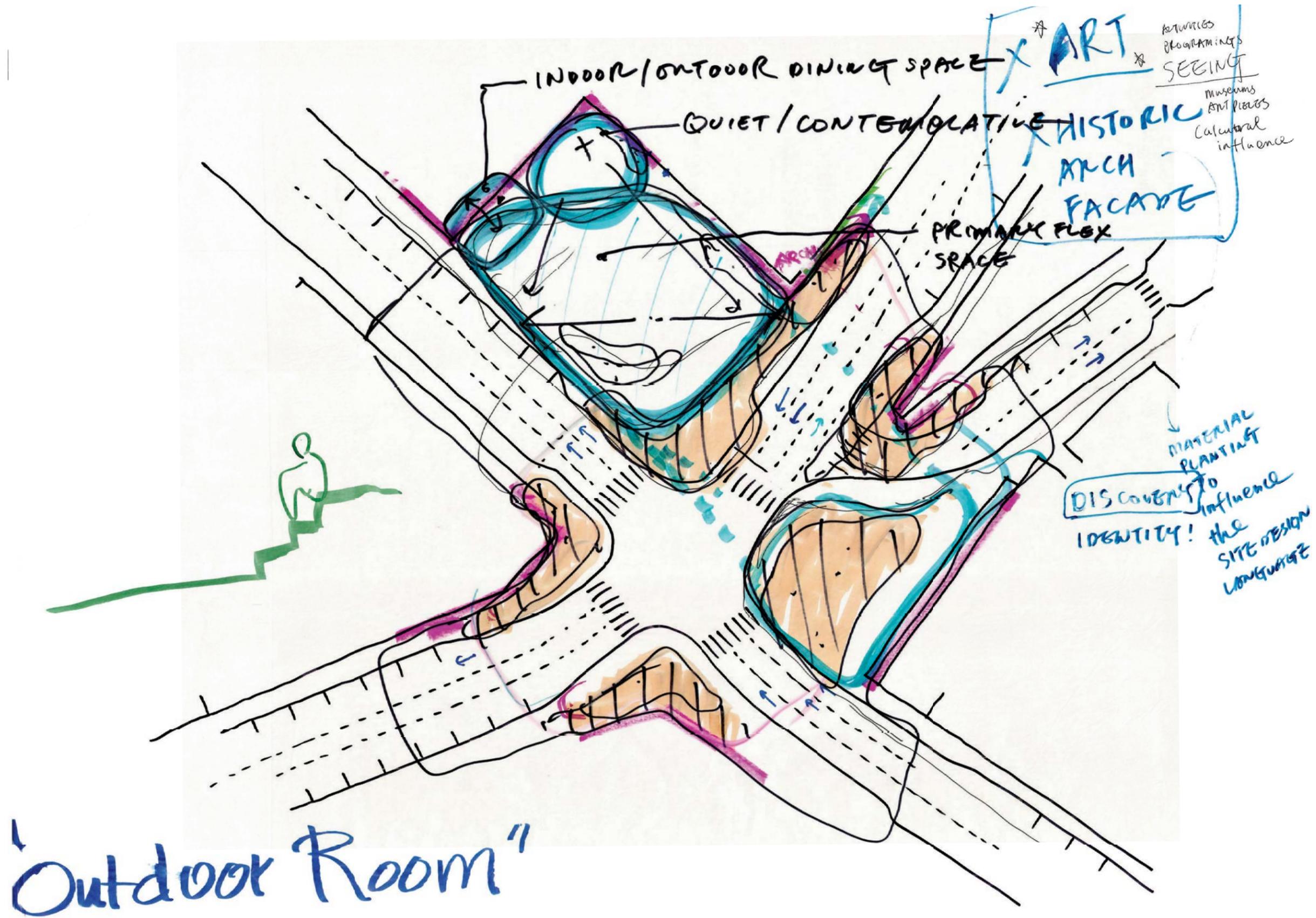








# 'Outdoor Room'





# | Defining an Identity for Congress Square - Board 1

1. Which of the following has the most influence on Congress Square's identity?  
Please select your top two using the dots provided.

- History
- Location within the heart of the arts district
- Landmarks
- Community
- meeting place - rendezvous   other?
- site for great public art   other?

2. When you think of creating a new design for Congress Square Park what is the first word that pops into your head \_\_\_\_\_? (use sticky notes)



# Defining an Identity for Congress Square - Board 2

(use sticky notes)

3. Imagine the square is redesigned what do you see \_\_\_\_\_?

neighbourhood living room  
 Destination  
 Beauty  
 all ages enjoying  
 A constant use by a diverse group of people  
 UNIQUE  
 GREEN  
 PEOPLE  
 SUBTLE ENERGY  
 I HEAR SOFT CITY SOUNDS  
 People in the water

engaging dynamic art  
 A nice quiet spot — or — both An active performance stage  
 PLACE PEOPLE LOVE TO GATHER  
 A BUSINESS WOMAN TAKING A CAT NAP FEELING SAFE.  
 Green w/walking paths  
 Vibrant gathering place  
 people out there all year round

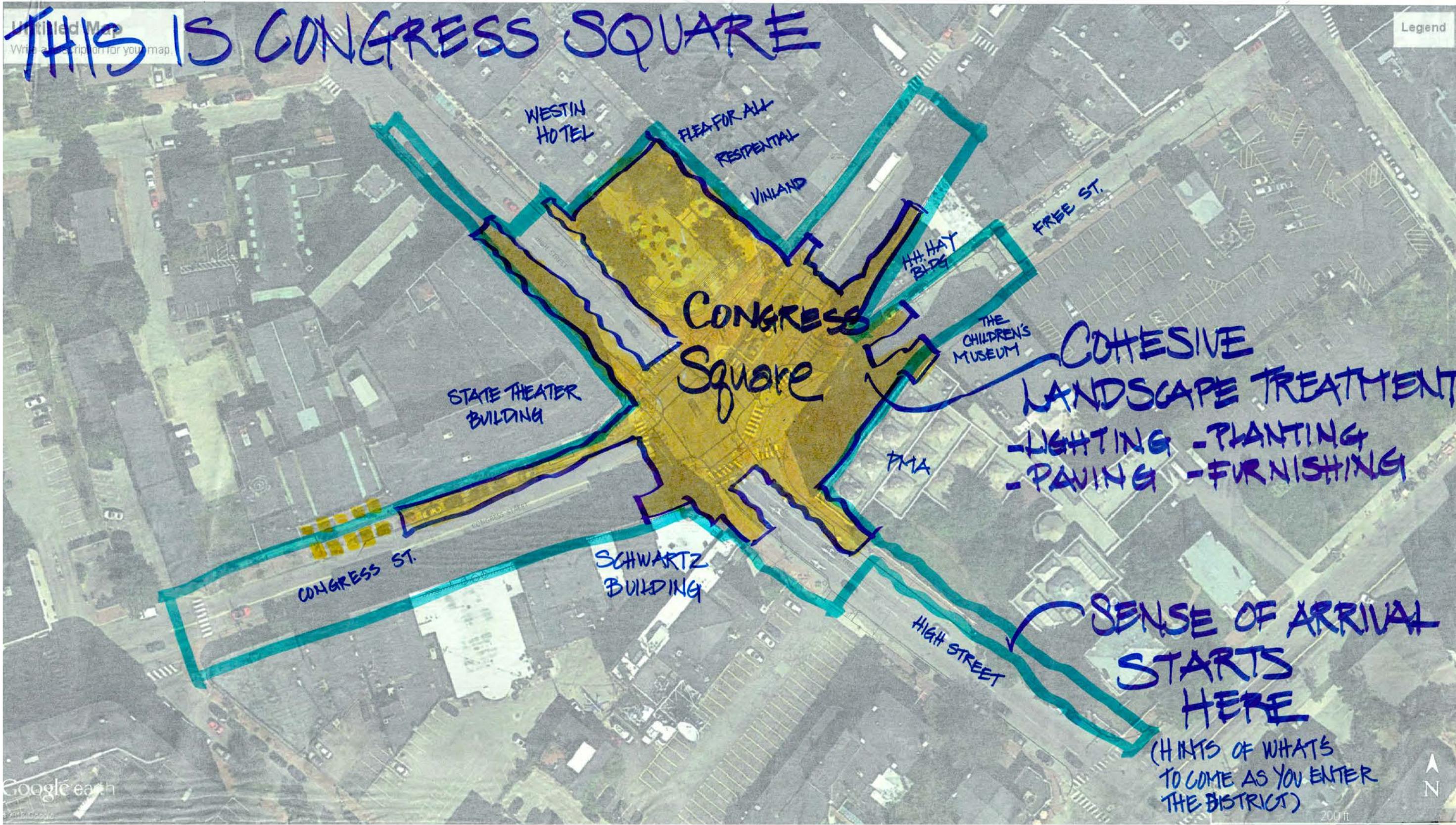
4. Please finish this sentence:

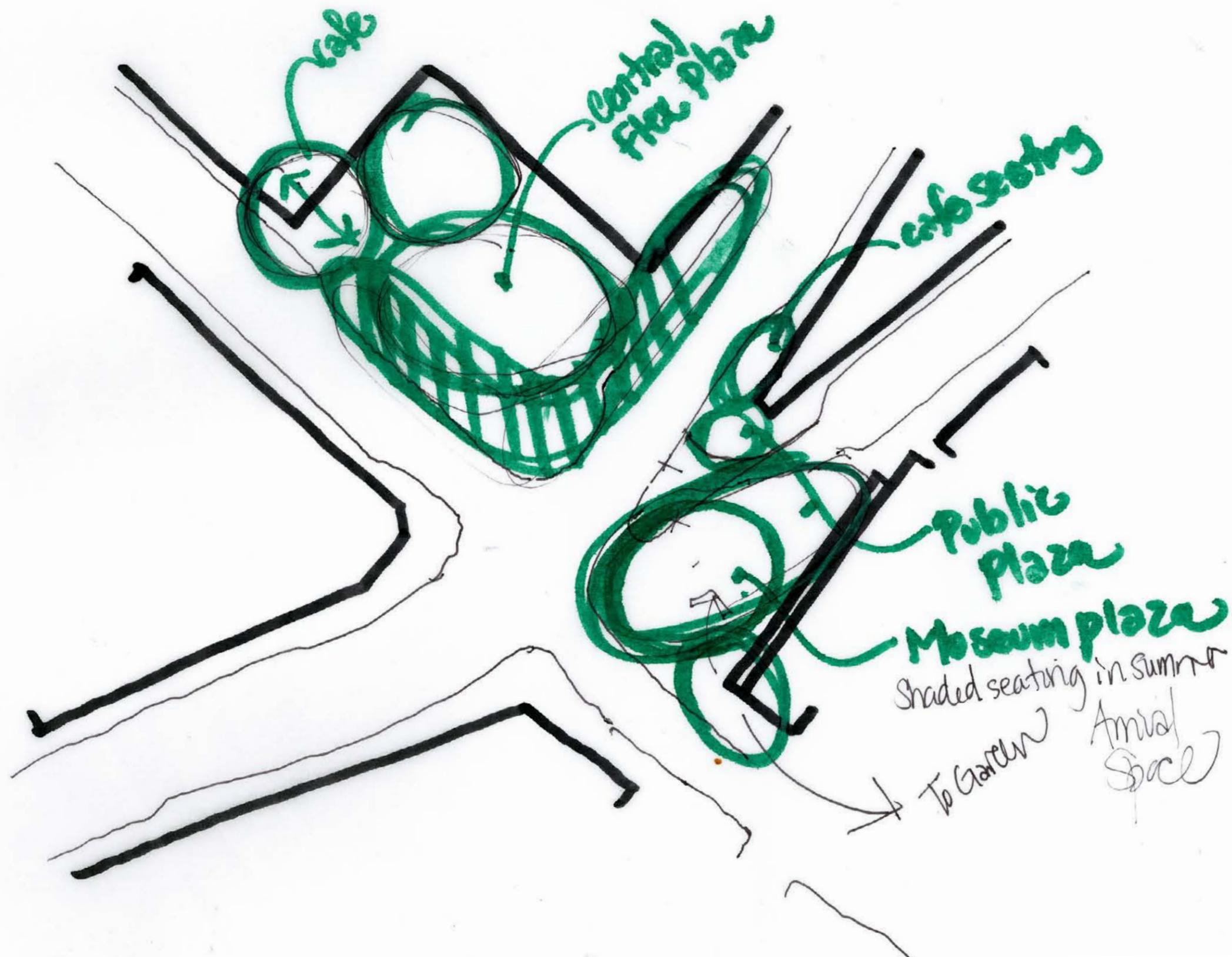
I would consider the redesign of Congress Square Park a success if:

A steady stream of people take baby steps  
 it delights diverse groups  
 ALL TYPES OF PEOPLE USING + ENJOYING THE SPACE  
 flocked to for multi uses  
 I WANT TO BE THERE IN MID-FEBRUARY  
 The park exists as a busy place 24 years ago  
 It is full of kids  
 the same people use it often and for extended periods of time  
 it is more ADA Accessible  
 full of diverse people across neighbors, business folks, tourists, kids  
 it always has something new to see (art, plants, etc., people)  
 if I overheard someone say "Meet me at CSP"  
 Great for ALL AGES TOOK IN DIVERSE NEED  
 ALL SEASON 24/7 DAY/NIGHT USE.  
 People in the square look up and around and sense the majesty of this space framed by mountains  
 diversity of uses all year round  
 "The park has people in it all the time even when there isn't a program  
 "When it is a daily destination"

# Day 3

## Preliminary Concept





(e) stage  
~~30x50~~ 15'x30'  
 elevated

900sf

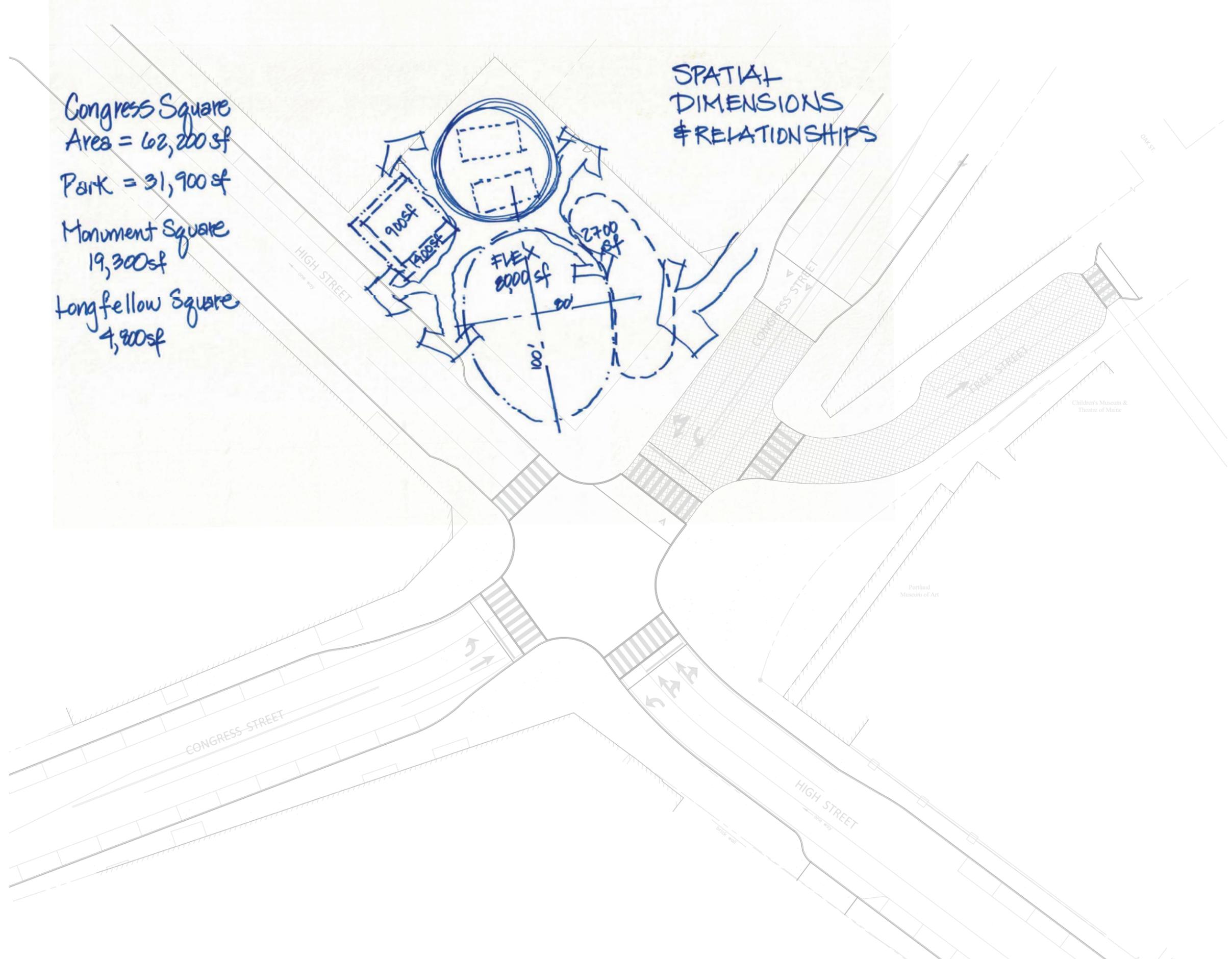
(e) Restaurant  
 (1400 max  
 by ordinance)

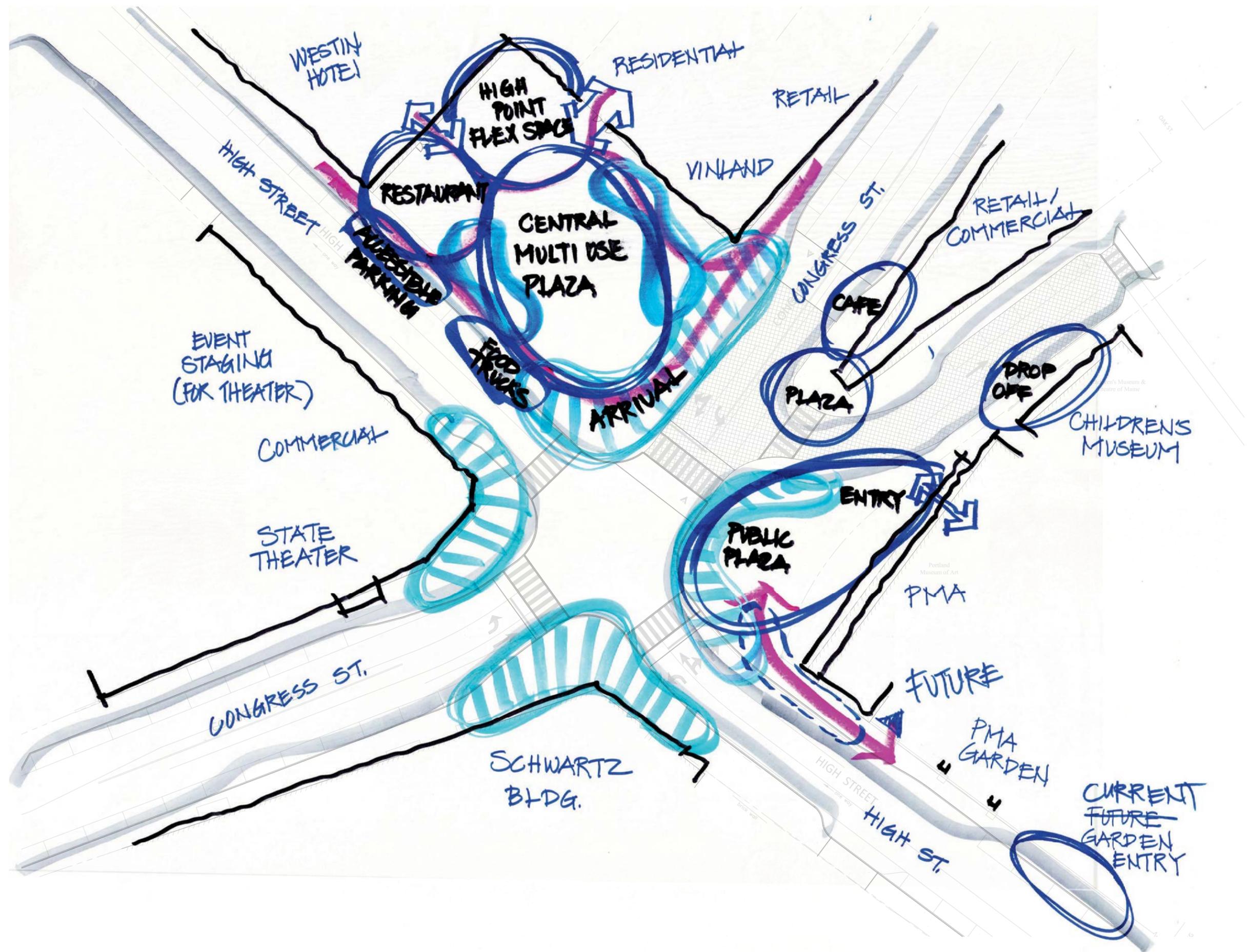
Salsa dancing  
 (12x22)x3  
 dance  
 Floors

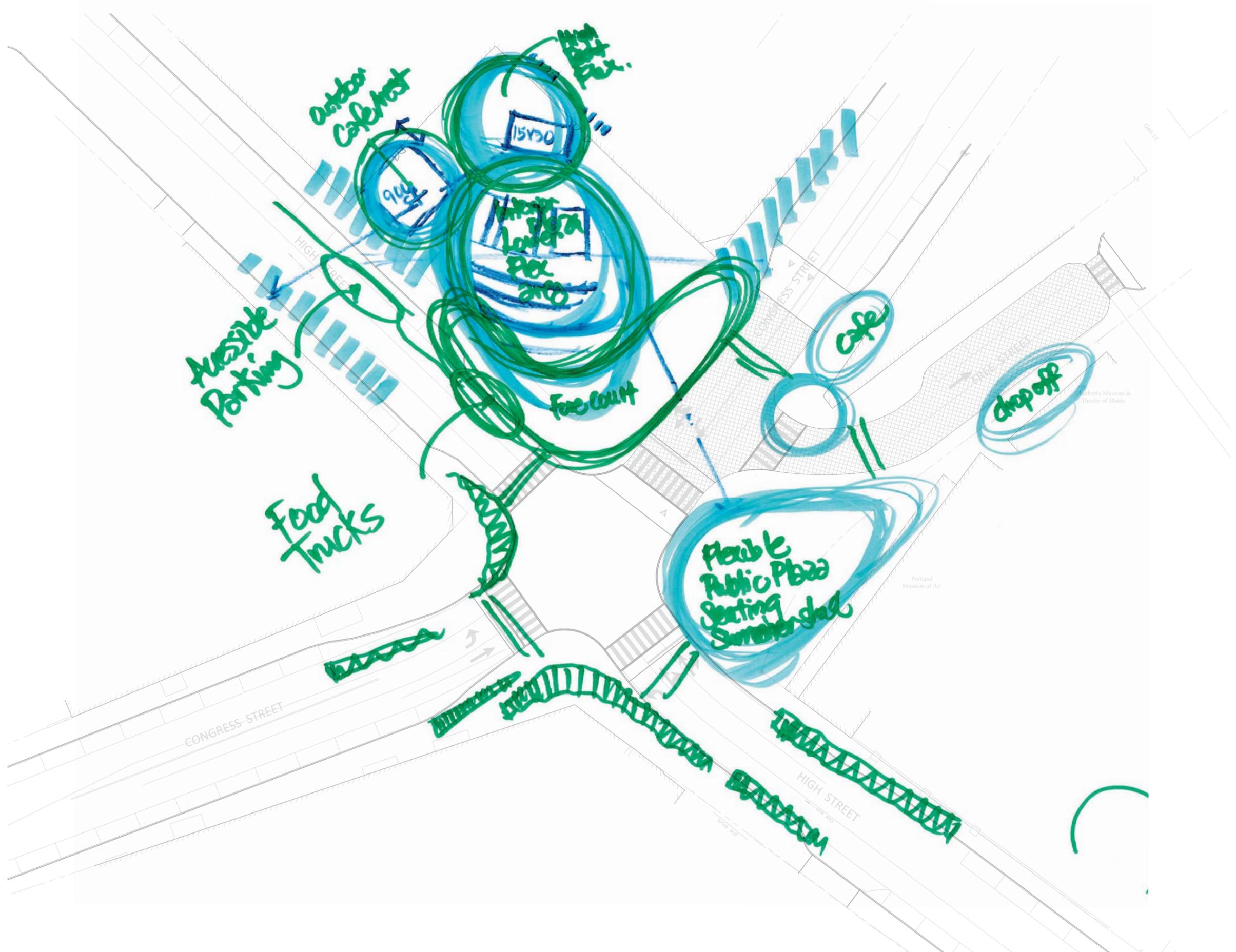
65' max  
 food trucks  
 to cafe

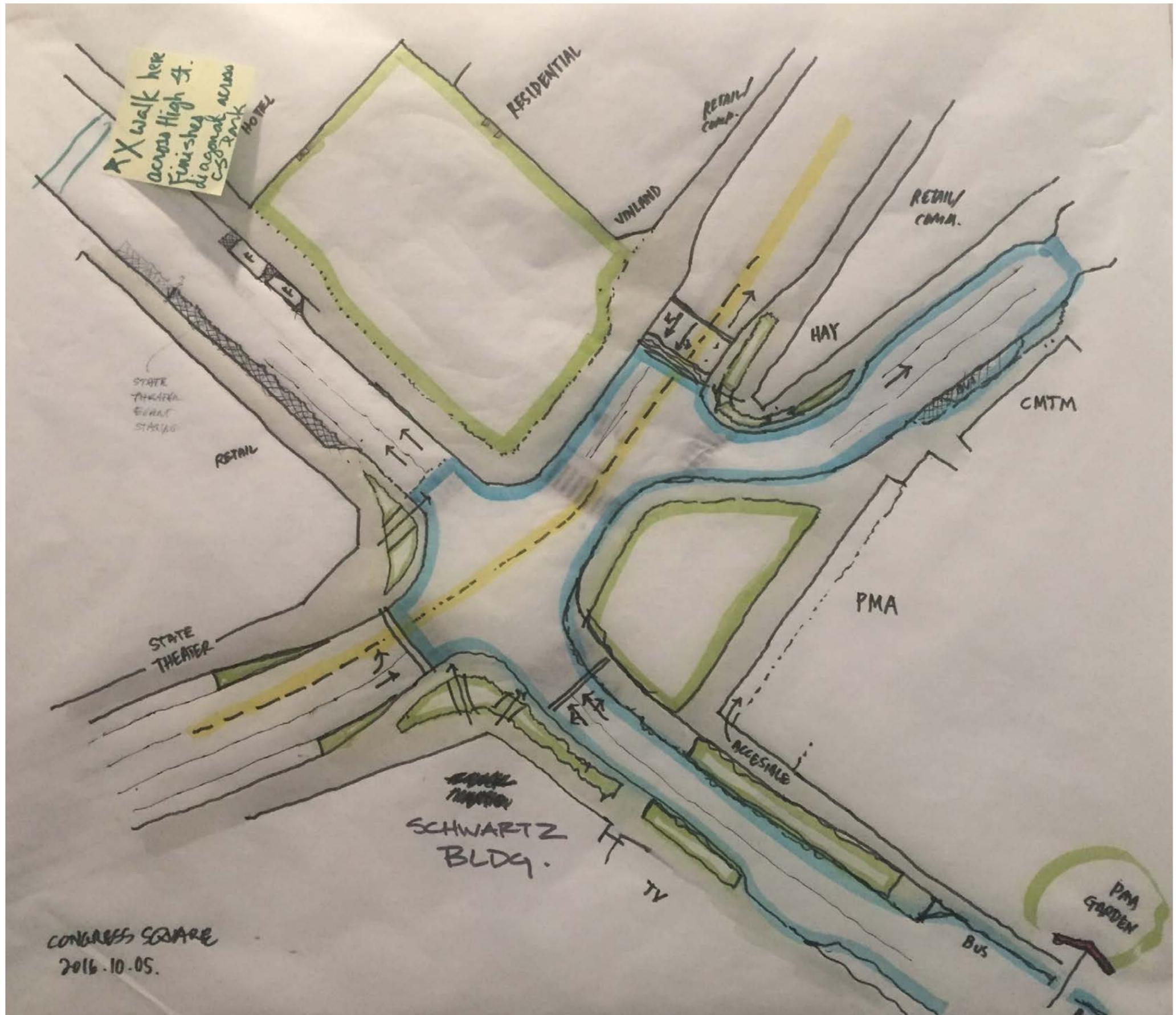
Congress Square  
 Area = 62,200 sf  
 Park = 31,900 sf  
 Monument Square  
 19,300sf  
 Longfellow Square  
 4,800sf

SPATIAL  
 DIMENSIONS  
 & RELATIONSHIPS

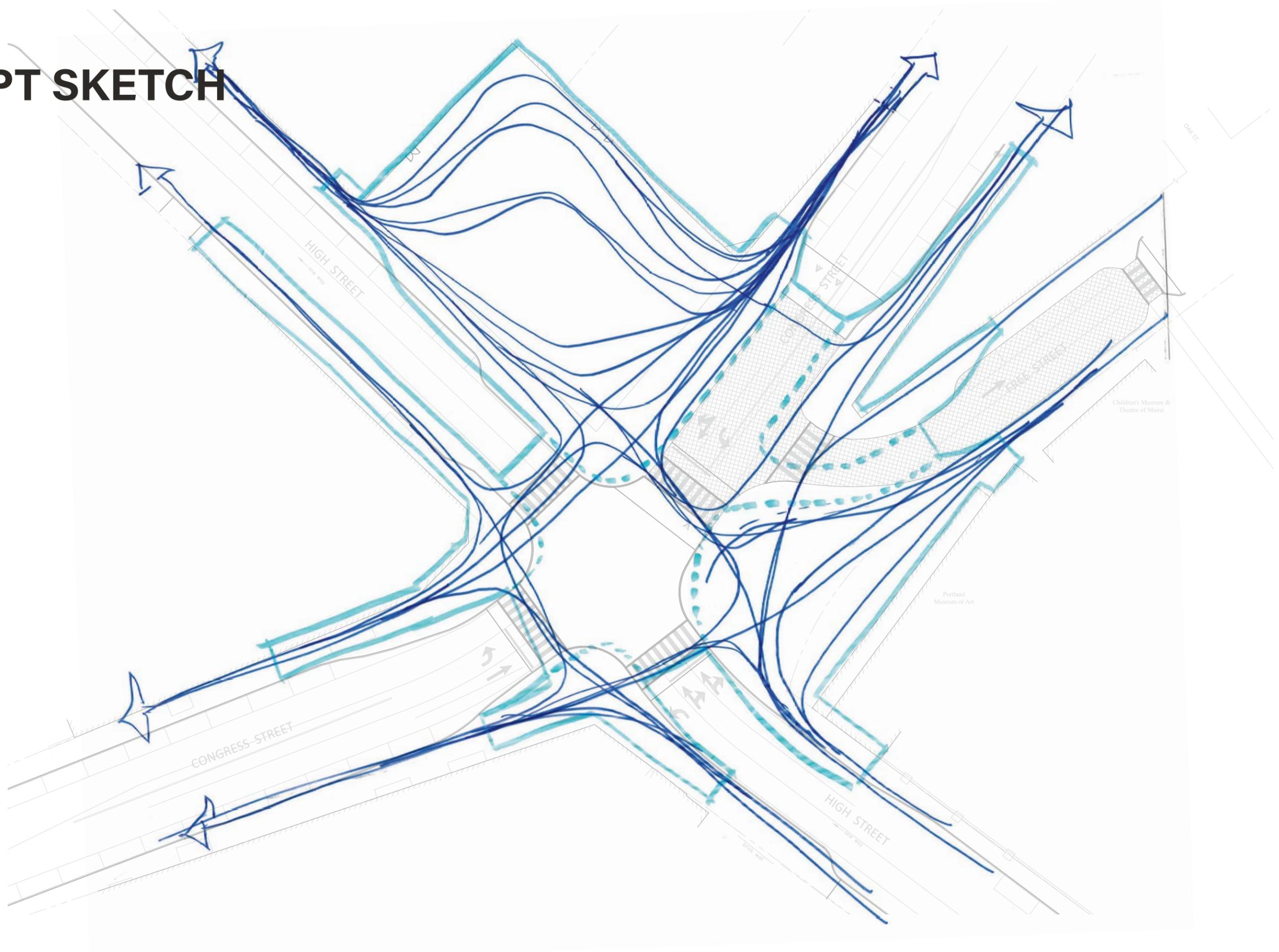








# CONCEPT SKETCH



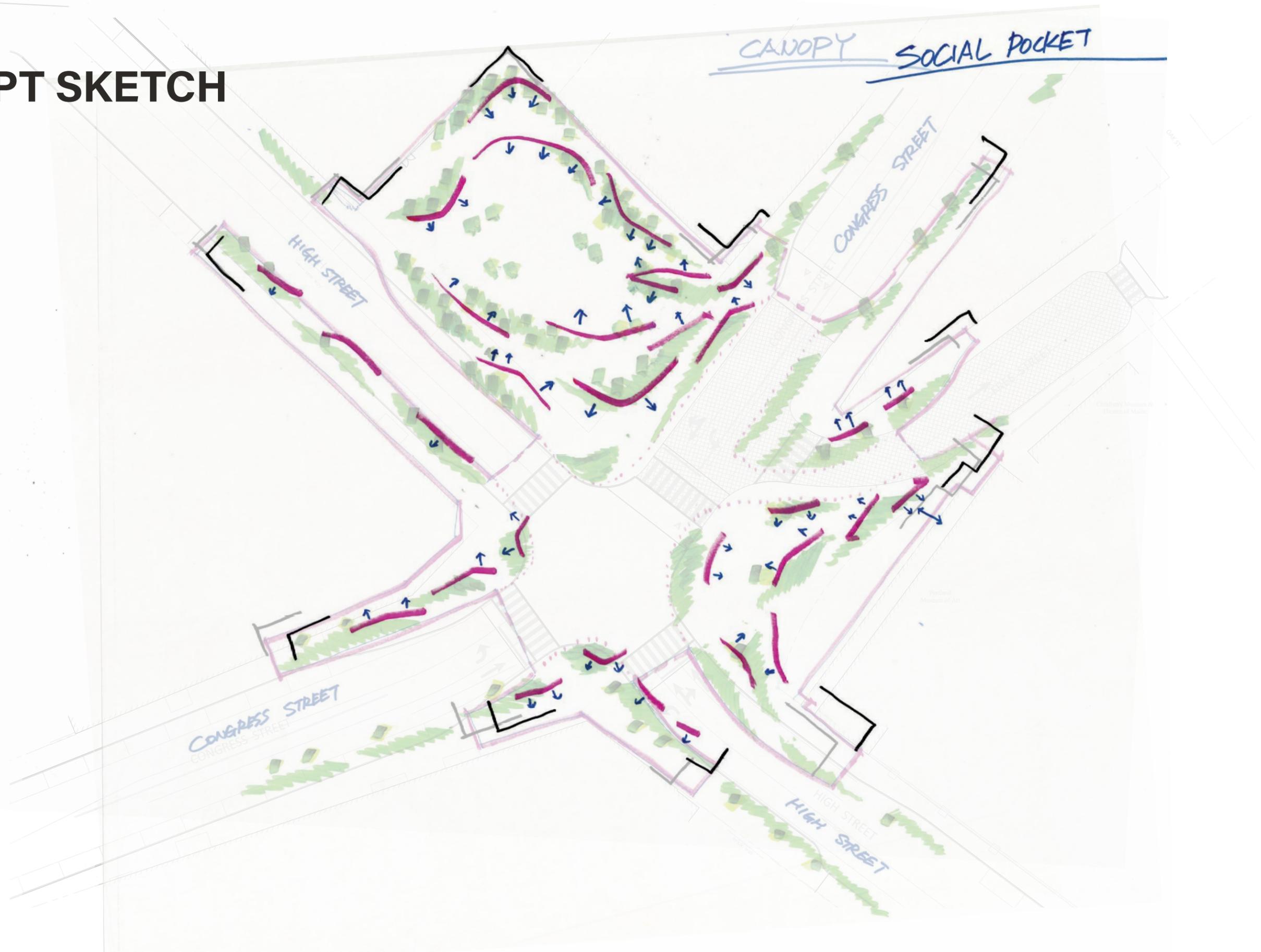
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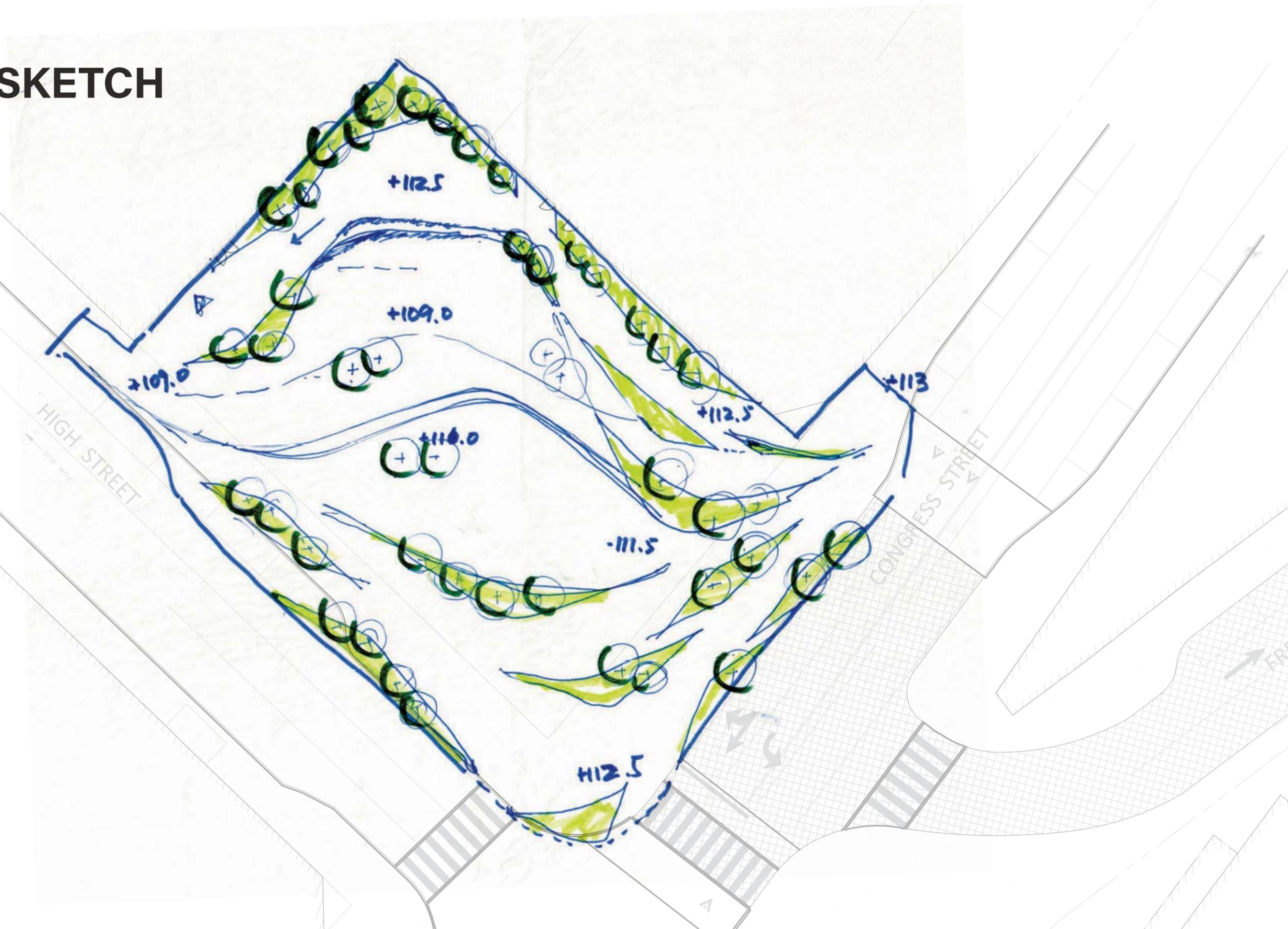
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