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Engaging High Street Chestertown, MD

*Design Ideas for Activation
and Sense of Place*

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Engaging High Street Chestertown, Maryland

Design Ideas for Activation and Sense of Place

Graduate Regional Design Studio

Fall 2020

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Under the supervision of
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Graphic Editor: Kelsey Moody

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Methods

The work documented in this report was undertaken to satisfy a project component of LARC 642 Graduate III Studio and was approximately six weeks in duration. To provide a greater understanding of the community and the proposed ideas, two broad components were undertaken:

1. web research, case study development, and listening sessions with community members.
2. development of design interventions for High Street.

Steps Undertaken

The following steps were undertaken

1. Data about Chestertown was gathered from web sites and a meeting with Chestertown representatives.
2. Students made a field visit to inventory and photograph for High Street and Chestertown.
3. Case studies were selected, formatted, and presented in class with discussion exploring how case study ideas could inform proposed design interventions.
4. A goal setting exercise directed specific goals to provide a diversity of design interventions and ideas.
5. Initial concept designs were developed and reviewed with a design professional.
6. Deliverables were determined, developed, and presented via Zoom.

Summary

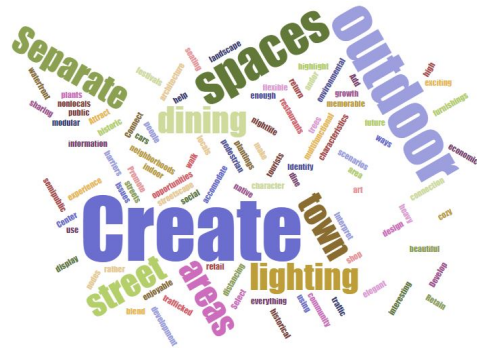
While the COVID pandemic made the process more challenging, each of the traditional process steps— inventory, analysis, stakeholder input and mid-project review—were completed in the short, six-week term due to the students' enthusiasm and the stakeholders' talents and support.





Goals

After the site visit, research, and community meetings, each student formulated three goals for the project. These goals represent their diverse and collective thinking. The word cloud image displays key concepts and the design team's overall thinking.



- Create an exciting street-scape for nightlife*
- Separate high trafficked areas from seating areas*
- Add native plants and trees to help with environmental issues*
- Interpret and display the street's historic character*
- Create an enjoyable and memorable experience that encourages people to walk, shop, dine , and return*
- Develop a flexible and modular design to accommodate social distancing to future street festivals*
- Connect indoor to outdoor spaces*
- Create outdoor spaces*
- Attract both locals and visitors*
- Create outdoor dining and retail opportunities*
- Promote economic growth and as community development*
- Separate heavy traffic from pedestrian and dining area*
- Center design on people rather than cars.*
- Retain and highlight connections to the waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods*
- Create multi-functional nodes for public and semi-public use (restaurants, art, information sharing)*
- Select distinctive street and landscape lighting*
- Create barriers with interesting and attractive furnishings and plantings*
- Create cozy outdoor spaces that blend with the town's architecture and historical character*









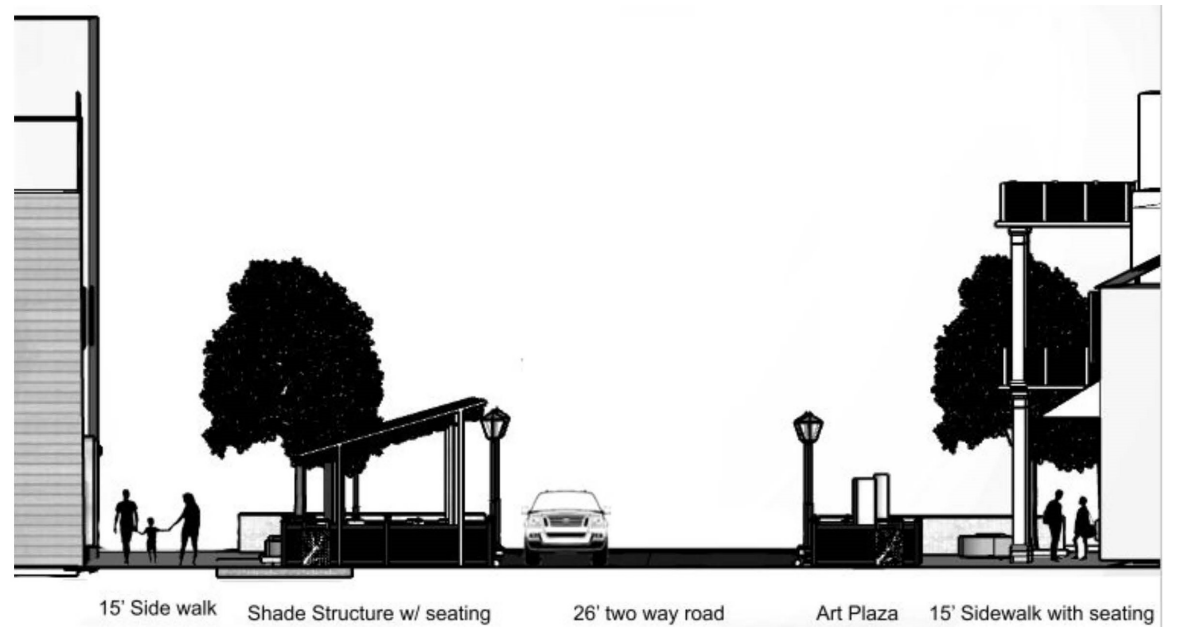
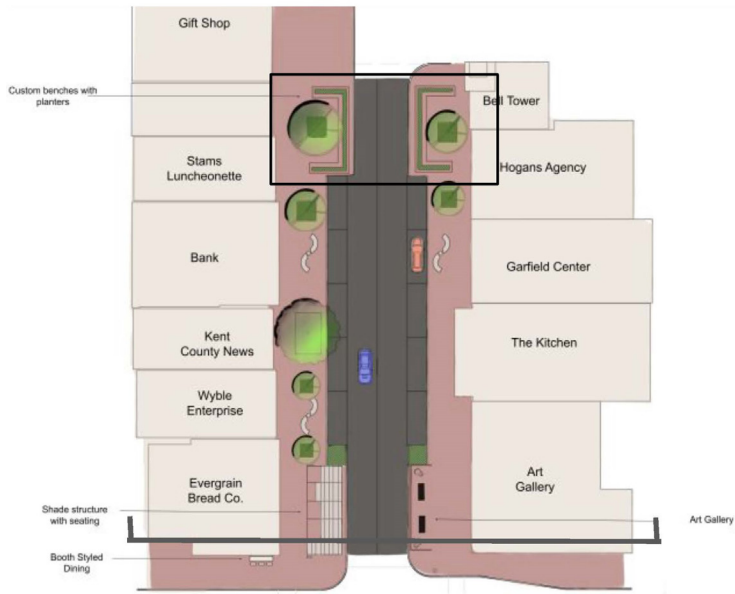
Spaces for People

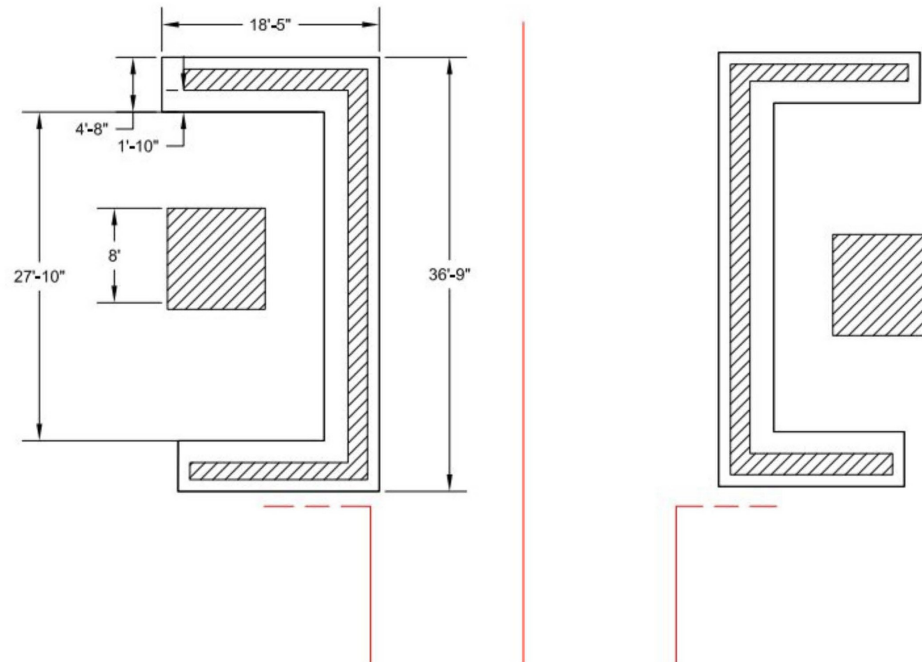
Creating Seating

Multiple well-designed seating spaces can support memorable experiences on High Street. A shade structure on the west side of High Street with an adjustable fabric ceiling allows for seasonal eating opportunities, shading in the summer and retracting in the fall and spring. The shade structure with seating provides a central element to focus the viewer's eye and a place to meet. On the east side of High Street, a protected seating area provides relaxed seating and people-watching. The trees on the northern end of the street provide shade and afford convenient parking.





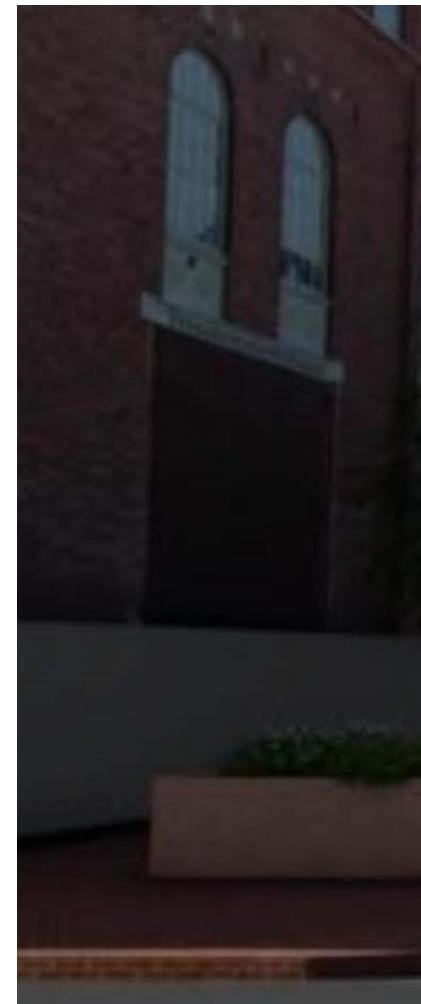




Spaces for People

Separating People from Cars

Designated sitting areas can be created in multiple ways. Sitting-height brick retaining walls enclose and create spaces that contain benches and plants. Within these enclosed protected spaces, a courtyard with benches provides opportunities and moments for eating, reading, and for groups to connect. Signature trees shade each courtyard, reinforce their identities, and provide a rhythm along High Street. Plants behind the seating benches provide a visual barrier to the street. These courtyards are protected spaces that create an ambiance and reflect Chestertown's relaxed atmosphere and charm.





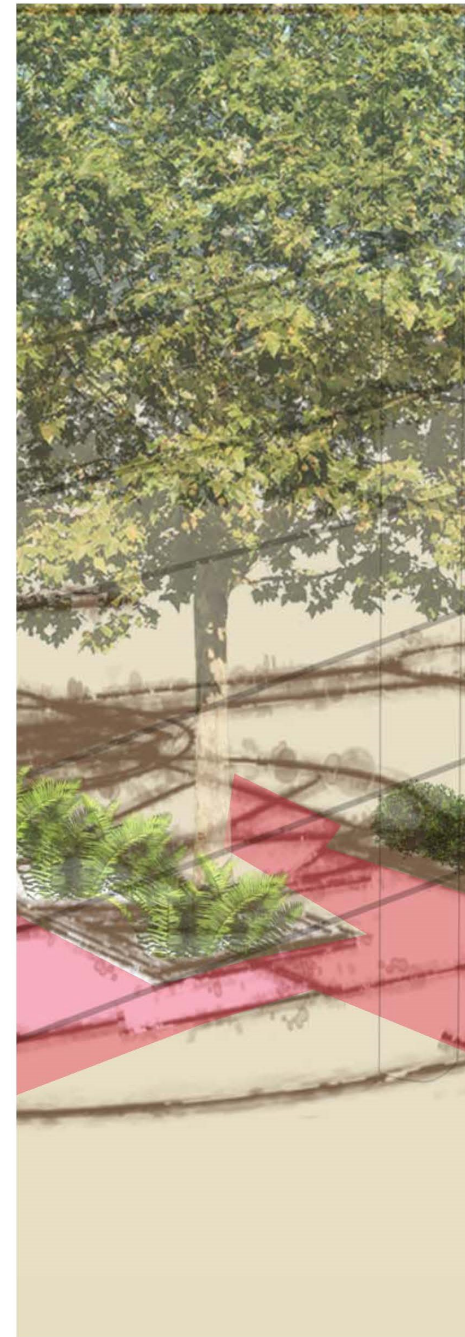


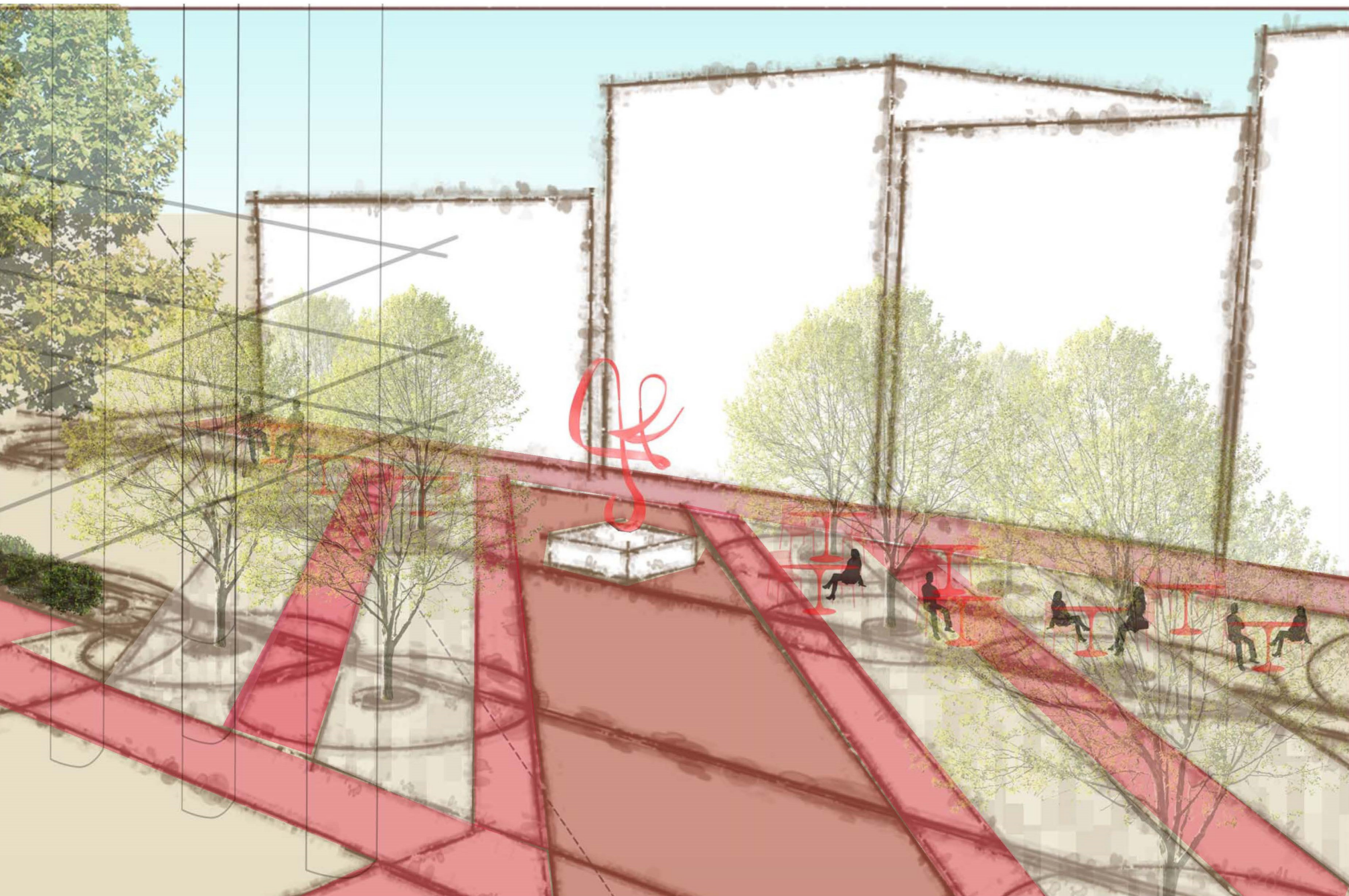


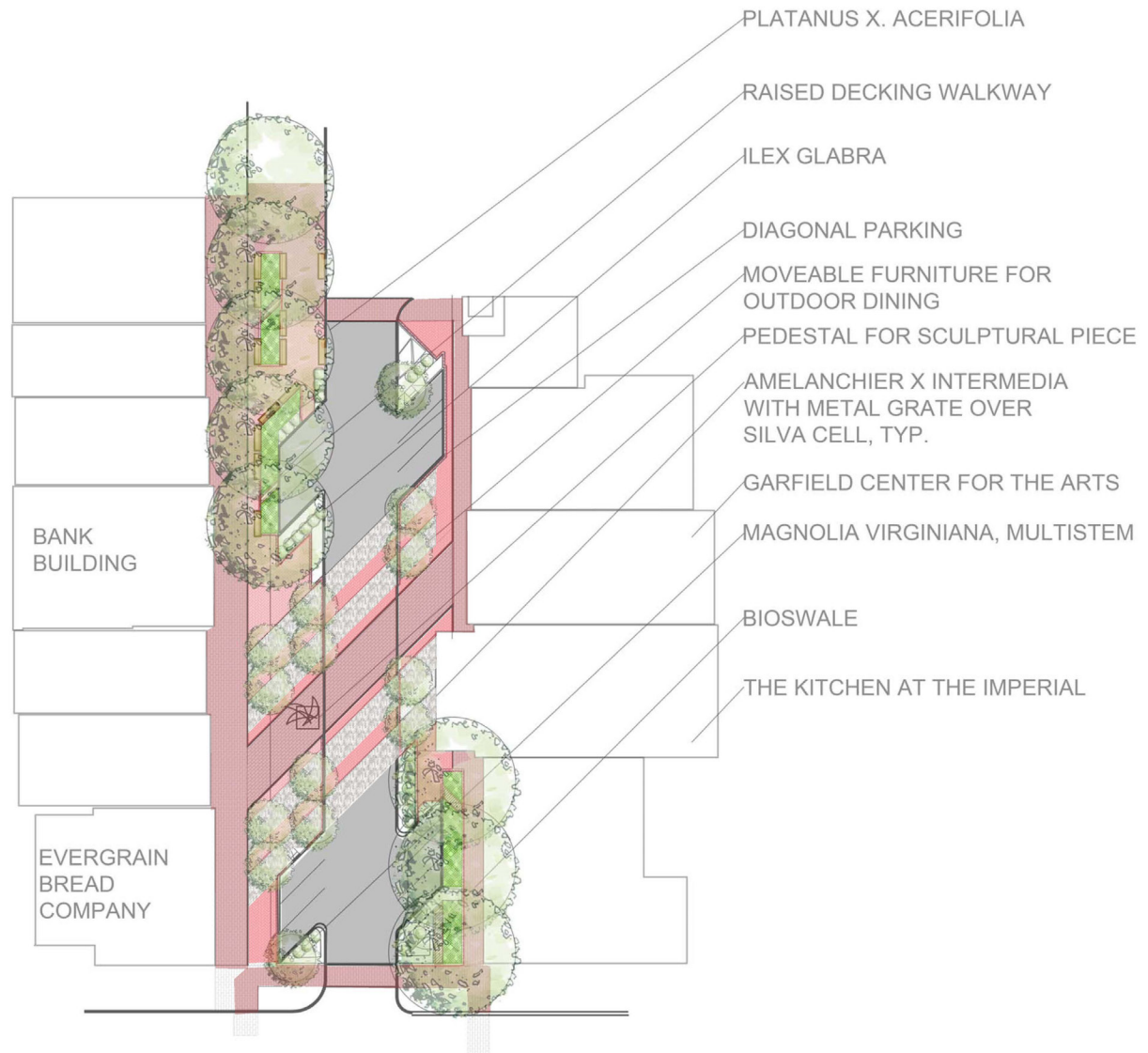
Weaving the Street

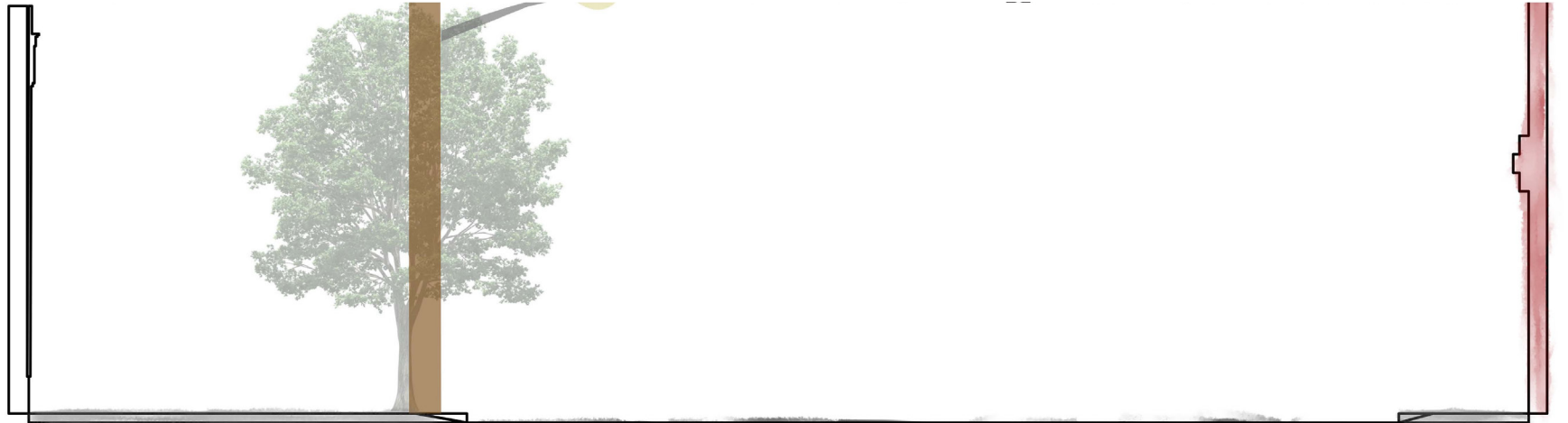
Creating a Central Plaza

A central plaza would provide a unique and unifying visual element that provides a place for permanent and temporary activities. Paving is used to create a central plaza that weaves together the east and west sides of High Street. This design also allows for easy and directed pedestrian flow between the east and west sides of the street. A sculpture placed on the east side of the plaza provides an opportunity for a signature display and a visual touch point. Adjacent trees and benches provide shade and opportunities for conversation, relaxation, and viewing of plaza activities.









Weaving the Street

Stitching in Trees and Seating

The Central Plaza, which integrates the east and west sides of High Street, is surrounded by groupings of medium sized trees that frame the space. Tree shaded spaces on each side to the street provide ample areas for fixed or movable tables and chairs. Adjacent to sidewalk areas, these spaces create pedestrian access and visual access to the sculpture. The tree plantings use appropriate best management planting practices, which support optimal tree growth in paved conditions and stormwater management.









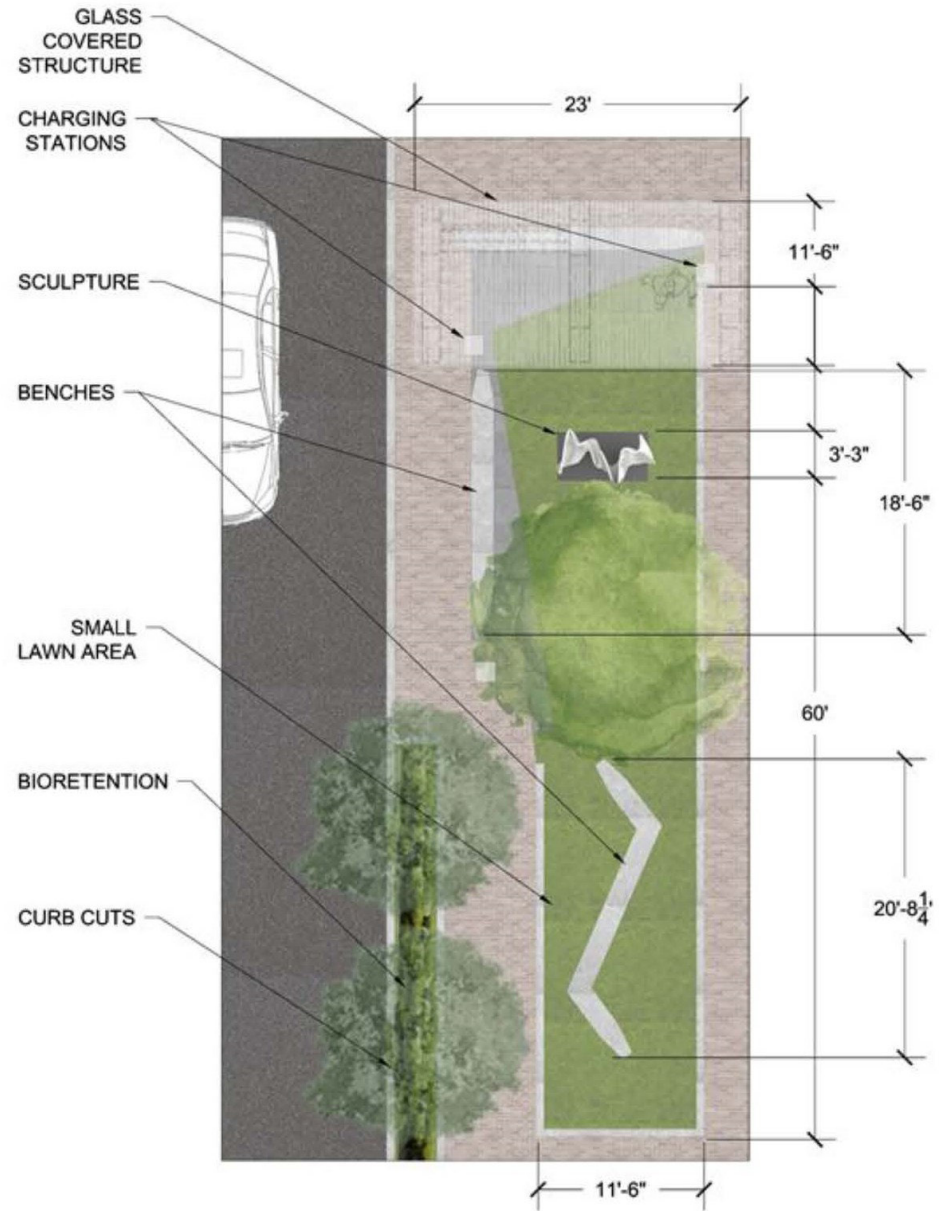
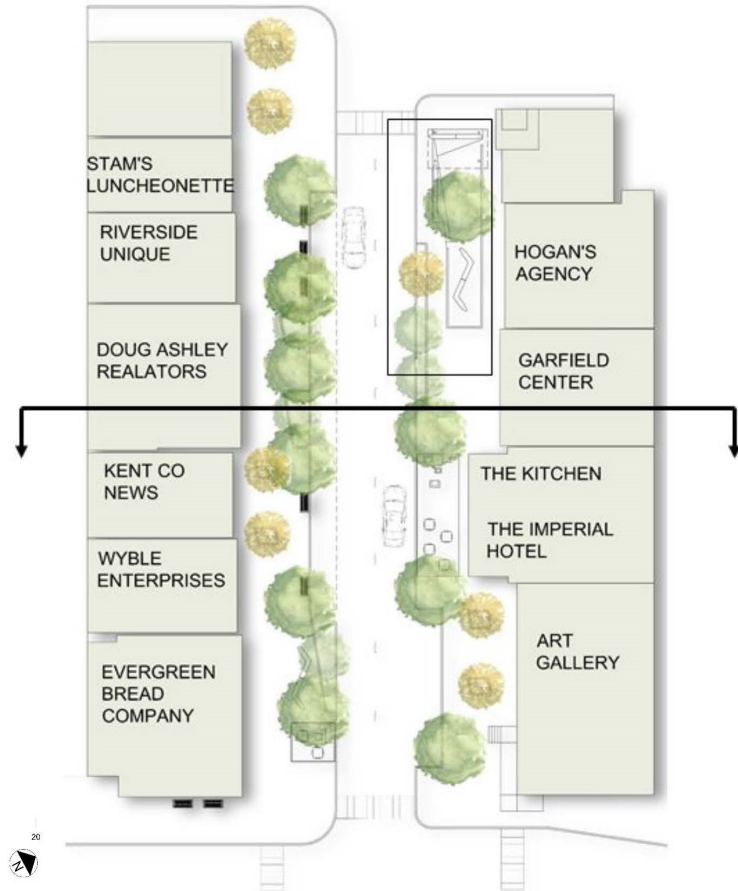
Bringing People Together

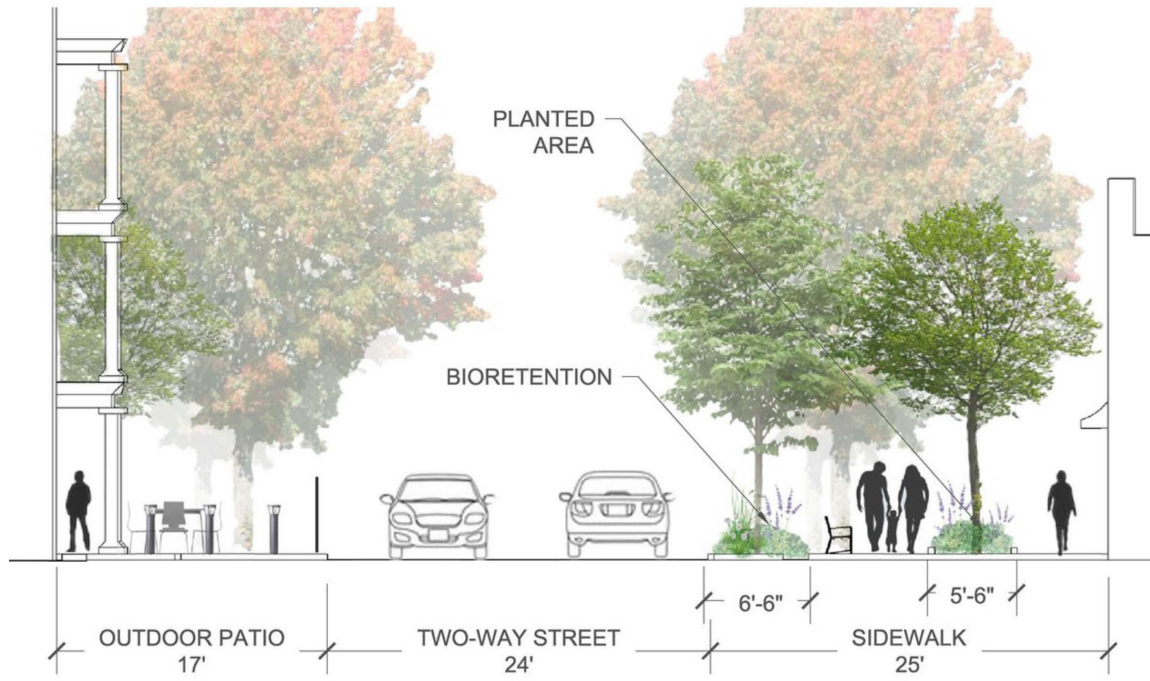
Combining Elements for Interest

Spaces with multiple elements provide spaces for people to gather, relax, and enjoy a moment in the sun on High Street. As families and individuals walk through Chestertown, they can stop to view and use artwork. An abstract bench serves both as art and an object for sitting, leaning, and gathering. This creative use of multiple design intentions builds interest and excitement. The space also allows for a more traditional sculpture display, either a permanent work or rotating works of different local artists. A contemporary structure and bench emphasizes the sculpture and provides protection from the elements and sitting space for art contemplation and enjoying ice cream.









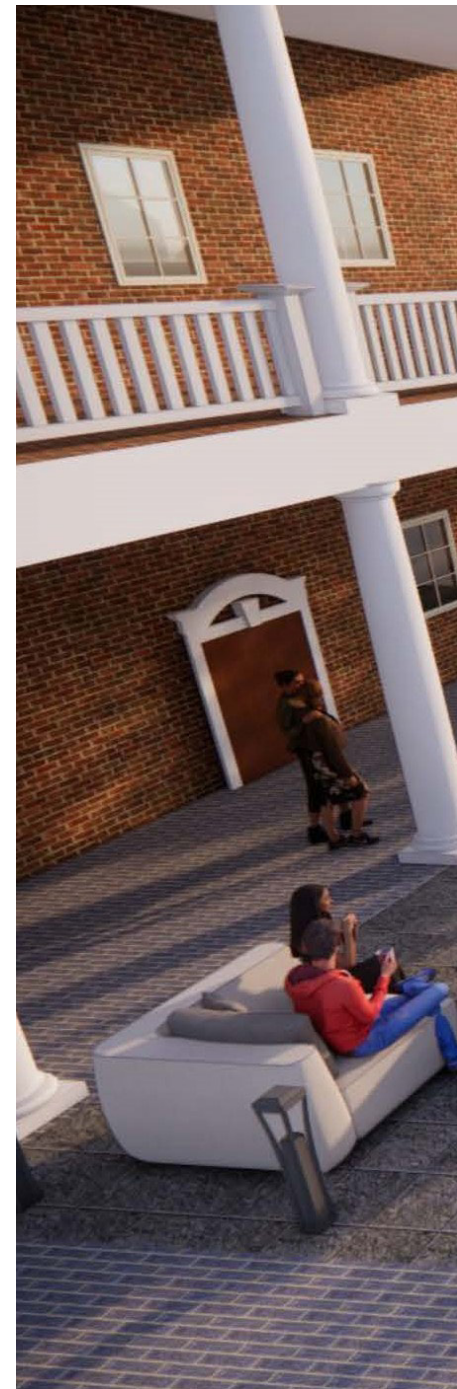




Bringing People Together

Choices for Seating and Gathering

People love choices. This design provides a well-integrated space that incorporates both multiple and movable choices for sitting. The oversized outdoor sofas and coffee tables invite users for comfortable relaxation and conversation. An adjacent area provides a space for quick set-up and take-down of smaller chairs and tables for busy restaurant times or weekend events. Both sitting areas are designated by a change in sidewalk pavers, emphasizing the area as a place to stop and relax. The seating areas are further defined by bollards and a low metal fence separating the sitting areas from the street.









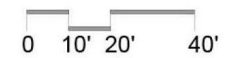
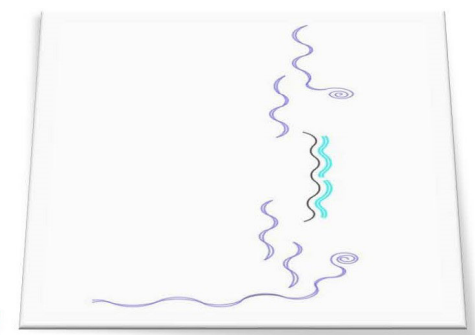
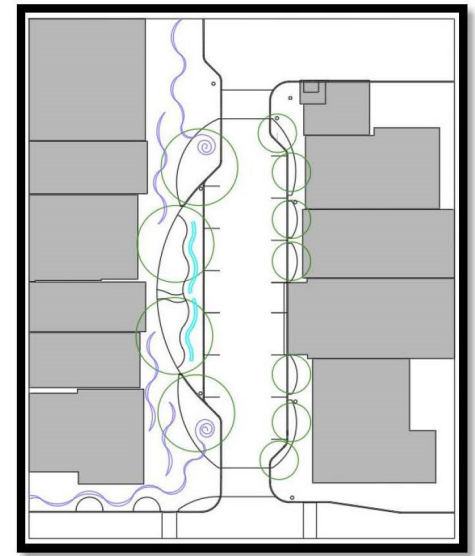
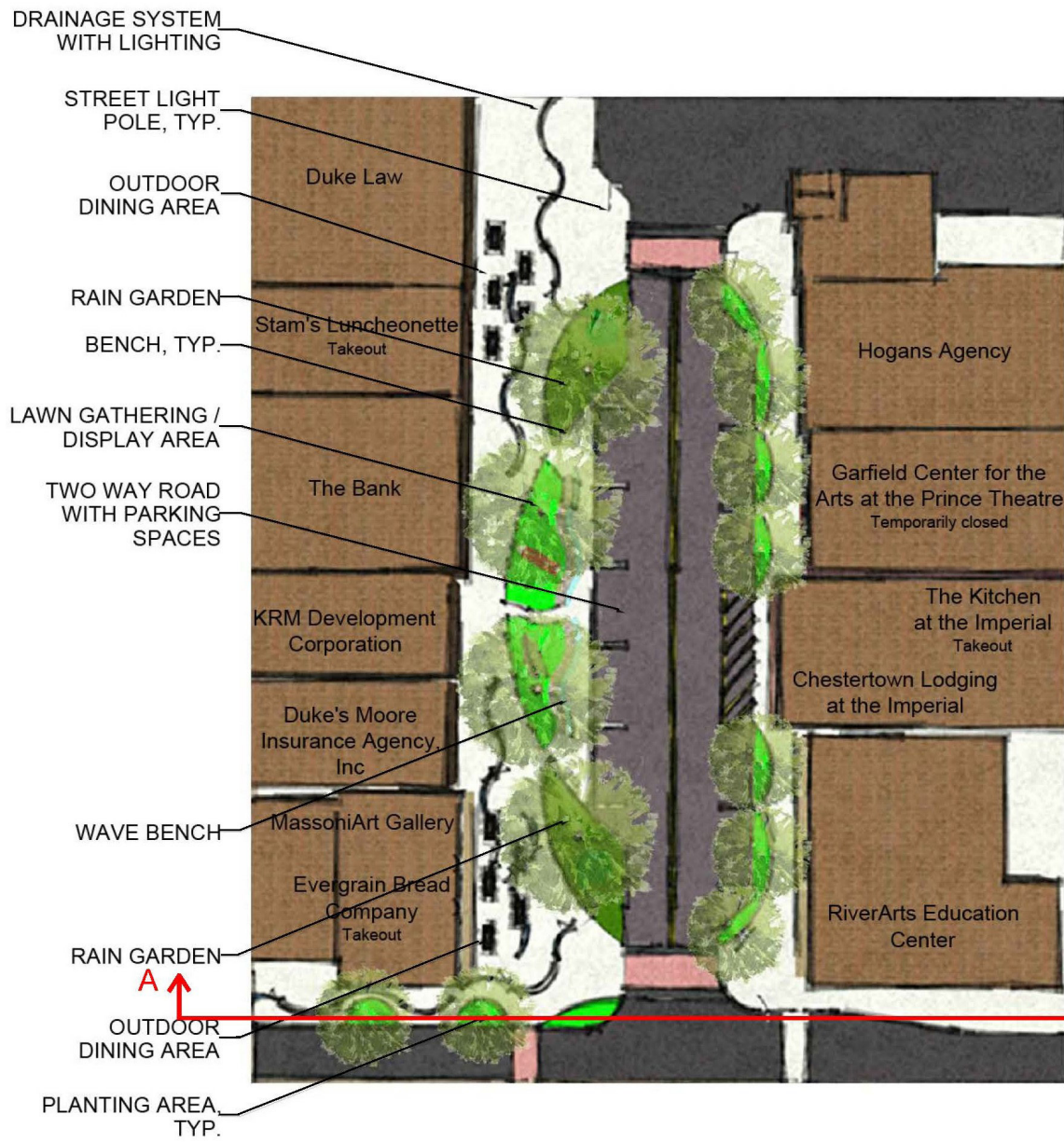
Bringing the Flow

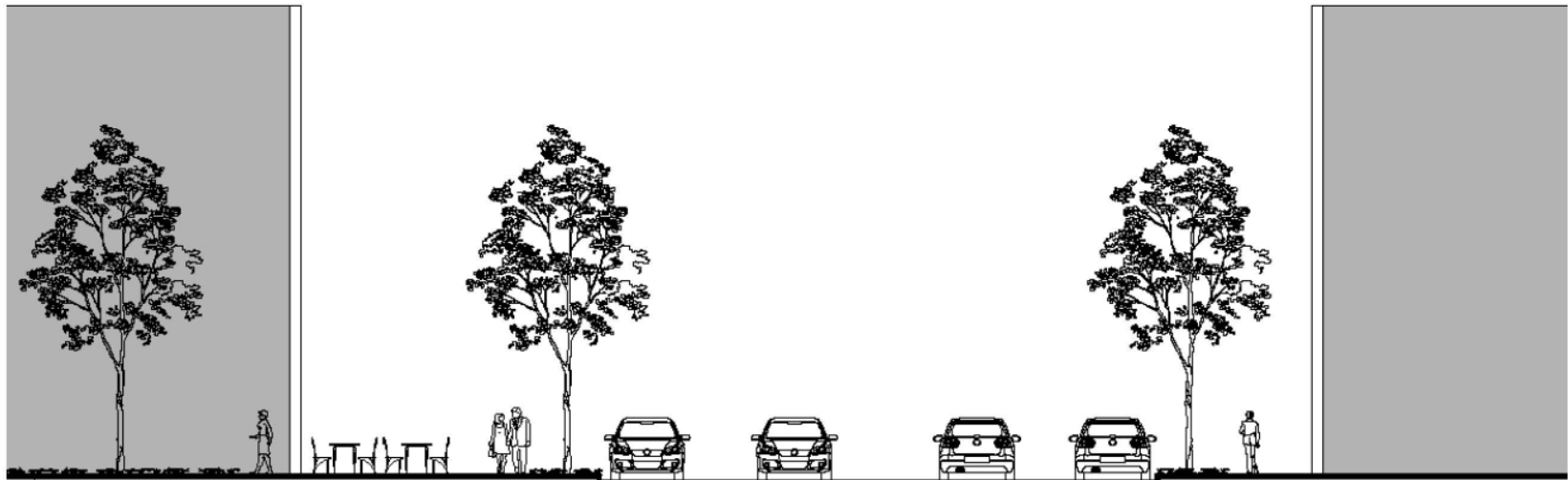
Celebrating the River

Chestertown's identity and character is informed by the Chester River. A wave-inspired concept supports this relationship and includes designs that incorporate the character and elements of water. Here, the oval green space in the center of High Street provides for a nautical-themed playscape with places to sit and a chance to capture an iconic photograph. Wave-shaped benches separate the street from the green oval, providing a barrier and a place to sit and people watch. Other wave elements are incorporated throughout for a playful, integrated design based on water.





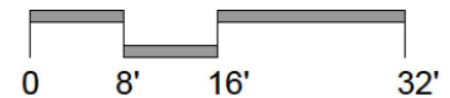


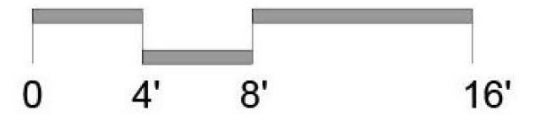


Before



After







Bringing the Flow

Linking the River: Day and Night

The wave concept continues with the activated space on the corner of High Street and Queen Street. Sidewalk wave patterns are a distinct material during the day and are illuminated at night to create an engaging and active streetscape in front of Evergreen Bread. The wave patterns emanate from a bioretention planter on the street that support native plantings and stormwater. Additional integrated lighting throughout High Street makes the entire space inviting and enjoyable for a nighttime stroll. The patio, with its day and nighttime waves, brings attention and celebration of the Chester River to this corner of High Street.









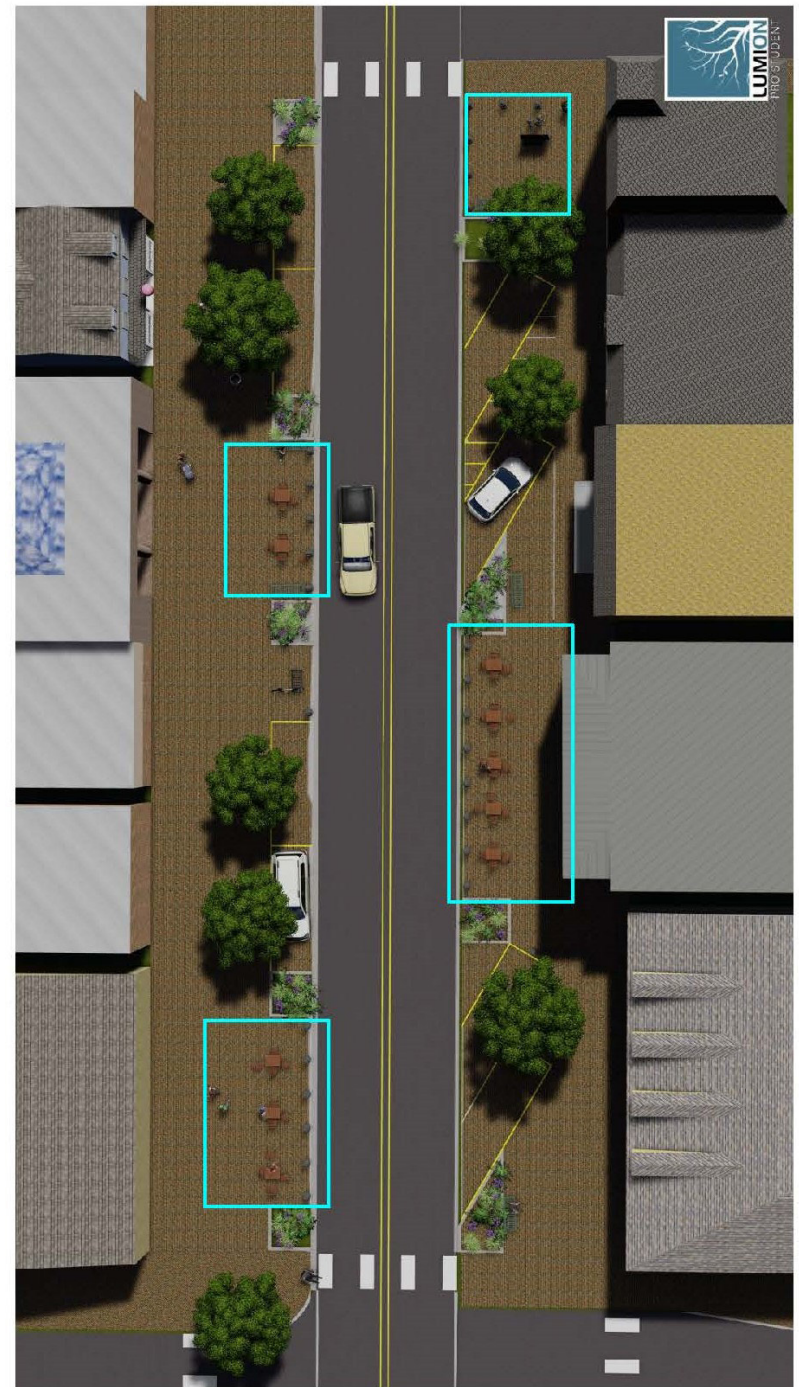
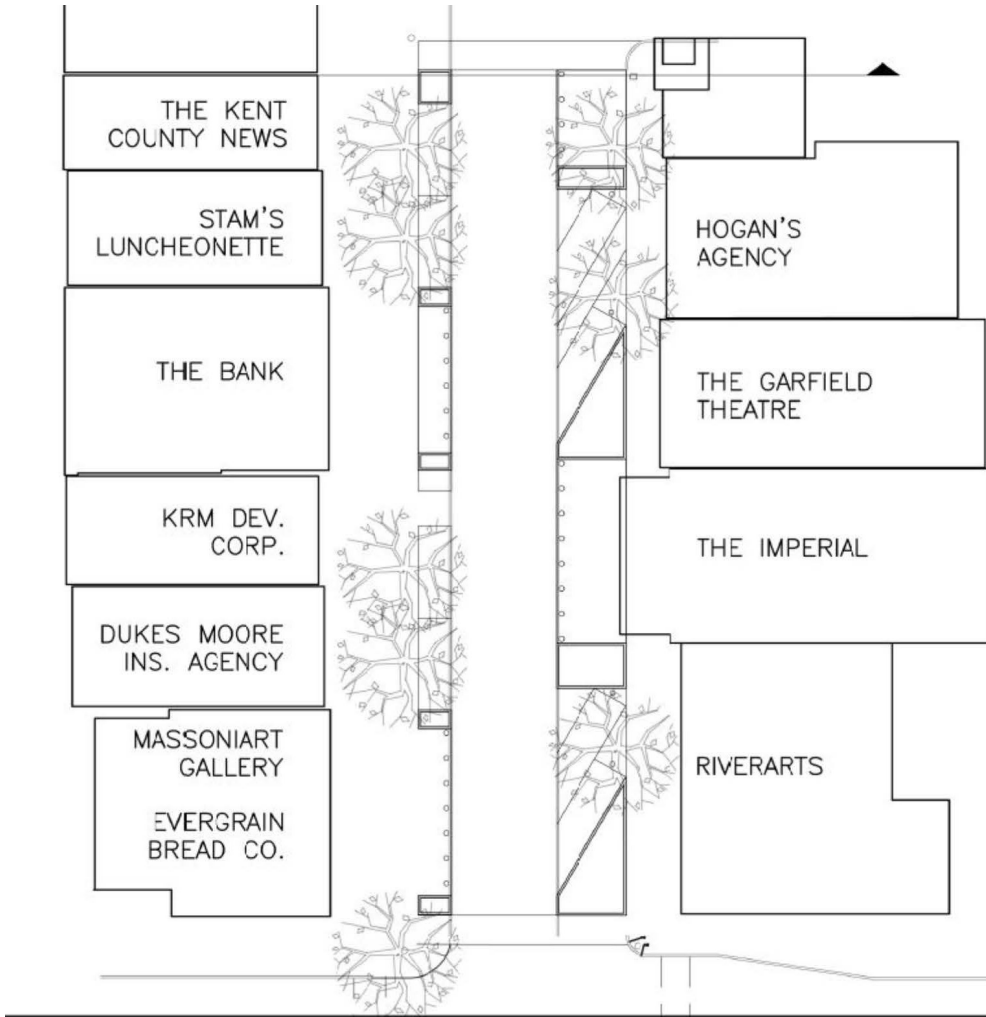
Attending to People

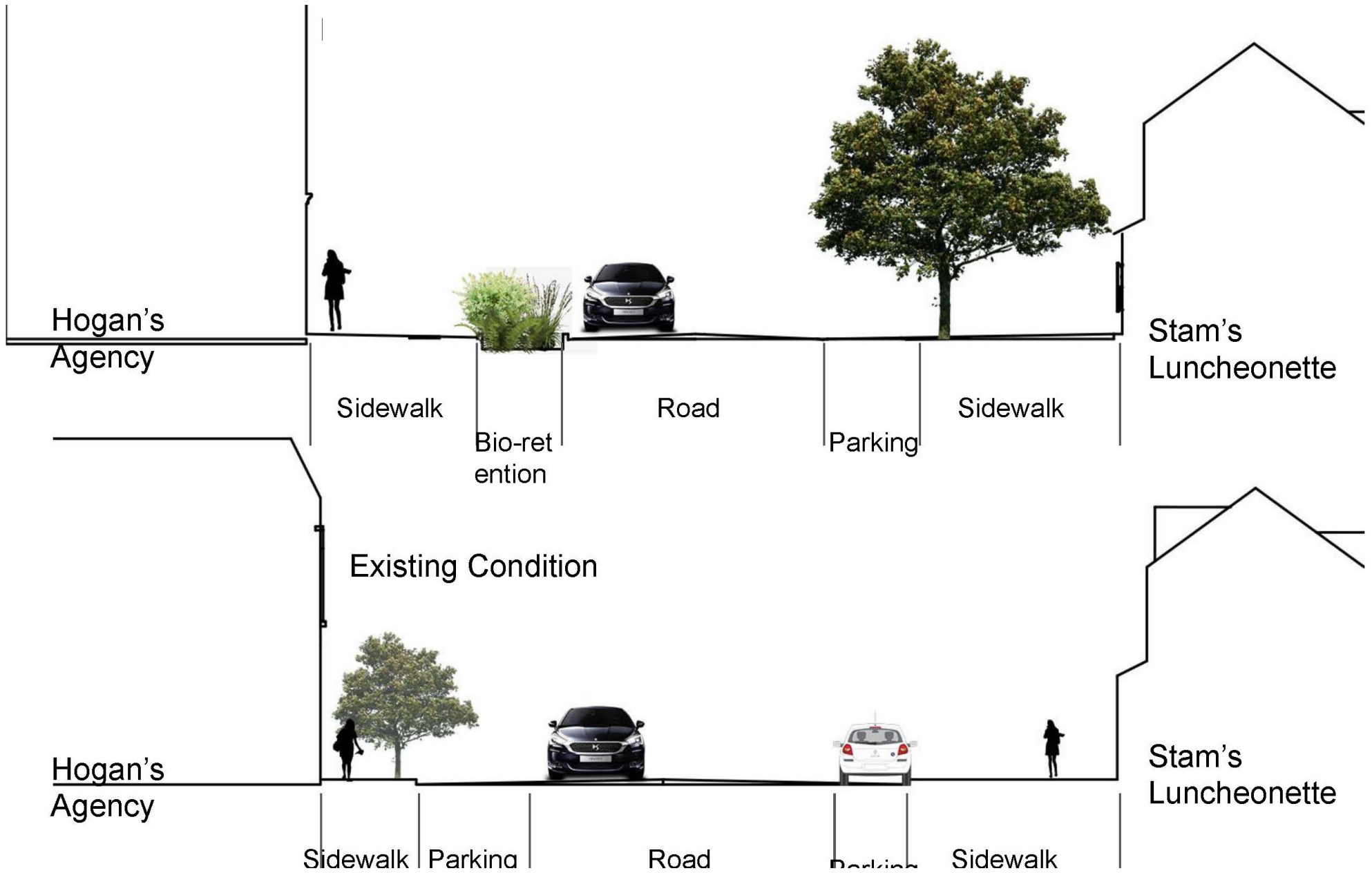
Bringing in the Plants

People love plants. This design incorporates a rich contemporary palette of native plantings and grasses to High Street. Bollards are styled from a historical motif acknowledging Chestertown's history and architecture. The bollards and plantings frame a sitting area, protected from the street, creating a flexible space for movable chairs and benches. This is ideal for activities on the weekend and busy evenings. The mix of historical and contemporary planting design adds a fresh feel to the streetscape. Planting areas also provide stormwater benefits.









Attending to People

Wayfinding and Orientation

“Mom - look where we are.” With maps and information, a wayfinding element helps visitors orient themselves and learn about Chestertown. A wayfinding kiosk is located in the historic brick pattern sidewalk. There are numerous possible design treatments of static kiosks as well as integrated virtual interpretations systems that could support connecting users to eating, shopping, and history. A wayfinding kiosk engages visitors, is a point of departure for tour groups, and helps communicate a wide range of information.









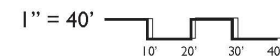
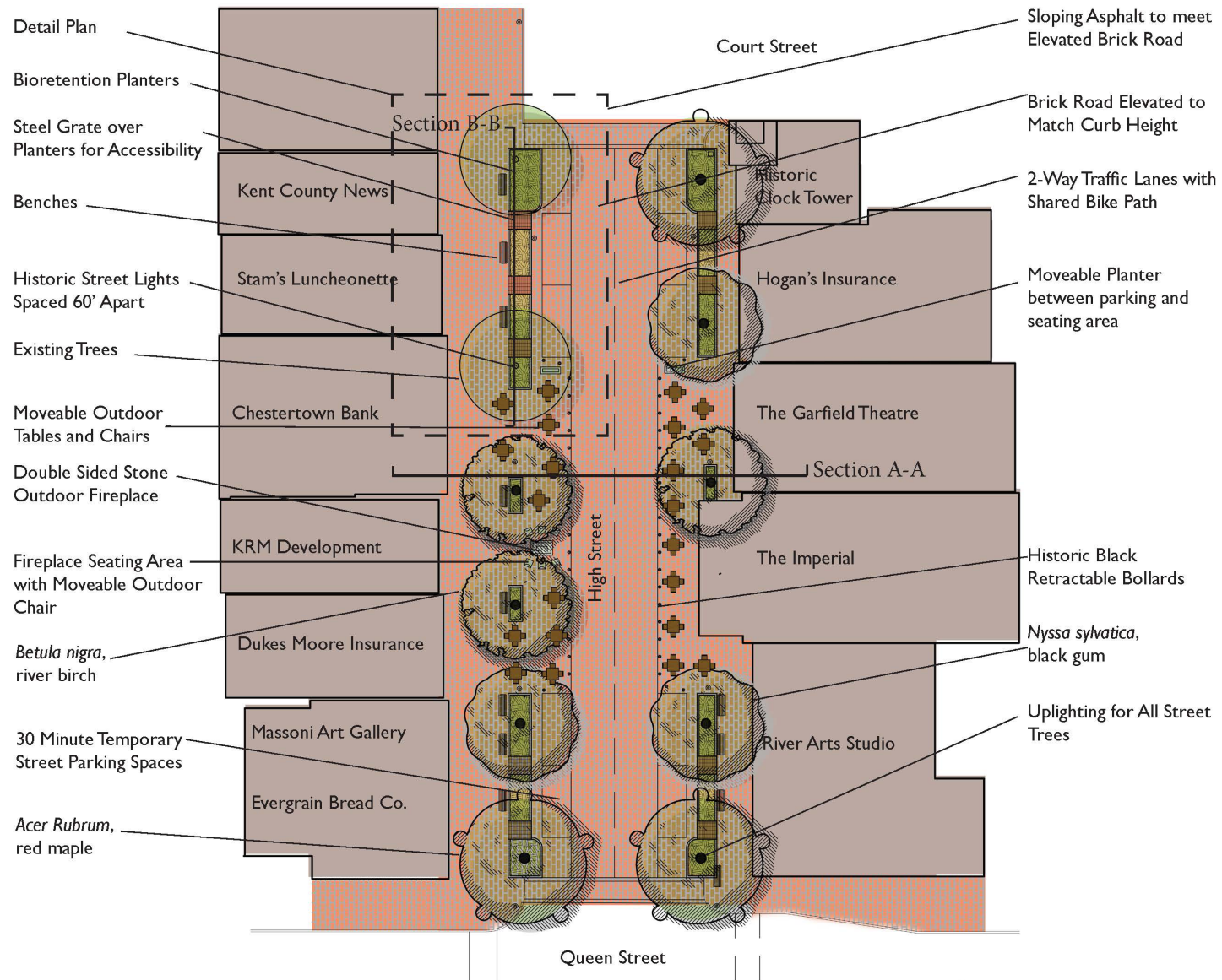
Home Is Where the Hearth Is

Home in Chestertown, MD

A fire is a time-honored element that brings people together. A double-sided hearth sculpture provides a central icon representing community on the new extended sidewalk plaza on the west side of High Street between Chestertown Bank and Evergreen Bread. The Plaza is separated from the street by stately bollards and provides room for movable chairs and tables. Comfortable chairs surround the hearth sculpture and provide opportunities for casual discussions, contemplation, and enjoying the day. Tree wells define appropriate tree placement and stormwater retention. A well-designed plaza like this provides a new look for High Street while reflecting the values of the community.







High Street - Detail Plan

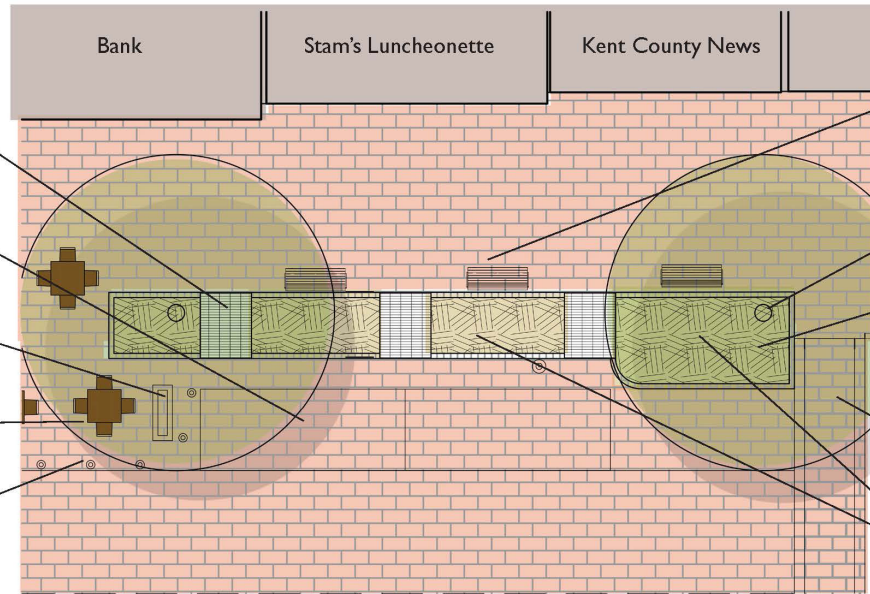
Steel Grate over Planters for Accessibility

30 Minute Temporary Street Parking Spaces

Moveable Planter between parking and seating area

Moveable Outdoor Tables and Chairs

Historic Black Retractable Bollards



Benches

Existing Trees

Water Tolerant Native Grasses

Crosswalk

Concrete Bioretention Planters

High Street - Detail Section



High Street Section - Existing



High Street Section - Proposed





Home Is Where the Hearth Is

Creating a Central Plaza

This design celebrates High Street as home - a place where pedestrians take precedence over cars, where visitors and locals alike can feel safe, enjoying the comfort of a beautiful space that celebrates both High Street and Chestertown. Benches provide opportunities for people watching and resting. Open hardscape areas, well-articulated in the overall design, provide temporary seating for casual eating, businesses, and events. Bioretention will support stately trees which provide canopy to the plaza area as well as ground level plants. The design and materials should reflect the citizens' pride in their home - High Street, Chesterton Maryland.



