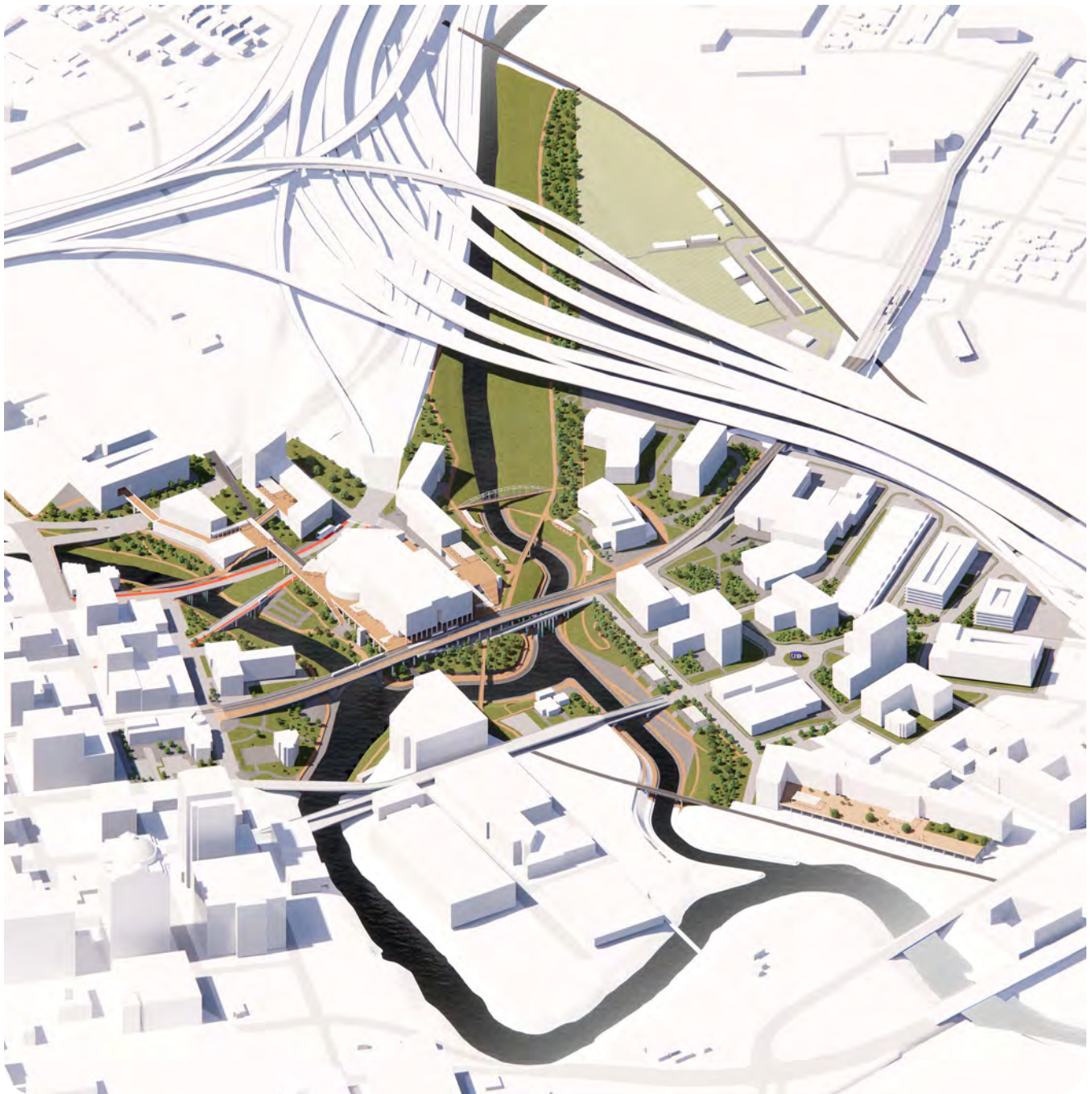




CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

University of Houston-Downtown

September 2023 - Draft



Executive Summary

The University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) is a uniquely urban university campus. The University has an exceptional opportunity to redefine a campus that is embedded in the life of the city, surrounded by history, an integral part of Houston's most important cultural centers, and Downtown's most vital economic engine. That's one of the University's great strengths: "Determined, Dedicated, Downtown." But UHD also has significant challenges that few universities have to contend with: busy streets, two flood-prone bayous, an interstate highway, and a transcontinental freight rail line cutting through the heart of campus. This is not a campus with a neat boundary or an extensive real estate footprint it can control.

To grow and thrive, the university must adopt innovative approaches to these challenges to take advantage of this location and all it has to offer the institution, its students, and its faculty and staff.

This plan is based on four major goals:

- Create a campus with a clear sense of identity and shared gathering spaces
- Increase multimodal access to and through campus
- Integrate the UHD campus with downtown Houston
- Provide the needed space for a variety of programs

To create the space for expanded programs, more amenities, and student housing, the university must expand significantly. The plan identifies directions for that growth, using a combination of university-owned land, other public land, partnerships, and property acquisition. This includes major expansion to the east into the Warehouse District, new buildings and facilities on UHD land to the north, and a strategic extension towards the center of Downtown. This is designed around TxDOT's North Houston Highway Improvement project, which is planned to relocate the freeway through campus, using a significant swath of UHD land for the new expanded freeway footprint while freeing up other land.

This expansion is tied together by "big ideas."

Defining a **Campus District** that gives the university a clear identity and entry moments.

Bridges over Barriers that extend the campus' elevated deck across bayous, roads, and railroads for more direct connections.

A **One Main Quad** that transforms spaces inside and around the campus' original building into a central gathering space.

Diverting car traffic onto Fannin St. and San Jacinto St. to transform the Main Street bridge into a pedestrian- and shuttle-oriented **UHD Main St.**

Gator Green, an active green space along the banks of the bayous that ties the entire campus together.

New facilities for **Competitive Sports.**

Student Housing to allow students to live on UHD campus.

A Link to the Theater District, creating physical and institutional connections to the cultural center of Downtown.

A Complete Downtown Grid that transforms freeway on ramps into connected city streets, creating entries to campus for drivers and transit riders.

This vision will require many distinct projects, including both buildings and infrastructure. It will also require collaboration with the City of Houston, the Harris County Flood Control District, METRO, TxDOT, and others. The result of that work is a stronger university, a stronger region, and, most importantly, new opportunities for thousands of students.

SCENARIOS FOR CAMPUS EXPANSION

UHD's One Main Building is the beginning and center of campus. As the campus grew and new programs and buildings were added, the campus expanded north-south, with Main St. tying everything together. The latest campus buildings – the Science and Technology and the Wellness and Success Center – continue the expansion pattern.

There are three preferred scenarios for the expanded UHD master plan. Scenario 1 continues the existing pattern and extends north of the Daly parking lot into the Near Northside neighborhood. Scenario 2 expands westward into Downtown Houston, POST HTX, and the Theater District. Scenario 3 extends east into the Warehouse District. The diagram to the right summarizes the opportunities and challenges of each of the scenarios.

Through direction from the UHD Steering Committee, an analysis of the different scenarios, and feedback gathered from students, faculty and staff, alumni, neighboring residents, and nearby employees through a questionnaire, the design team determined that the best direction for growth is a hybrid version of Scenarios 2 and 3, with the primary expansion extending eastward.

Campus Expansions

- ☐ Existing Building
- ☐ Existing Building Renovation
- ☒ New Building
- ☒ Existing Campus Boundary
- ☒ New Campus Boundary
- ☒ New Pedestrian Connections

SCENARIO 1

Opportunities

- UHD already owns the property
- Allows a large contiguous campus
- Builds on current expansions
- Simpler property acquisition

Challenges

- Expansion happens away from the center of the campus
- The campus is bisected by the railroad
- If the I-45 expansion project moves forward, the freeway becomes a major barrier in this scenario

SCENARIO 2

Opportunities

- Be a front door to the theater district
- Connects to Post HTX
- Strengths One Main as the center of campus
- Takes advantage of Buffalo Bayou Park space
- Further integrates the UHD campus with Downtown
- Street closing opportunities (Washington Ave)

Challenges

- Connections need to be made across the railroad, highway ramps, streets, and the bayou
- Property values are higher due to their proximity to downtown

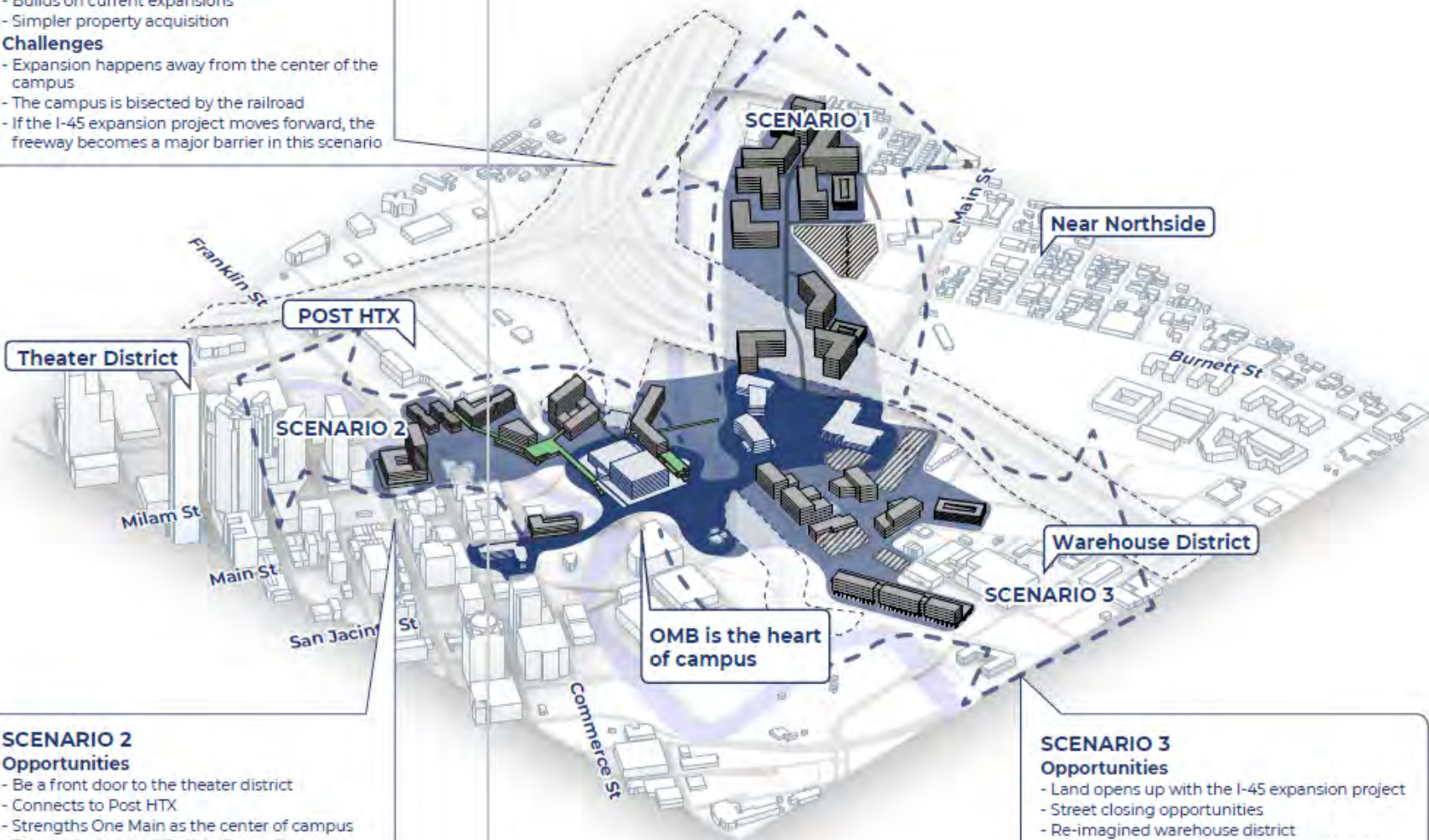
SCENARIO 3

Opportunities

- Land opens up with the I-45 expansion project
- Street closing opportunities
- Re-imagined warehouse district
- Generally, the lowest appraised values of all expansion scenarios
- Keeps with the UHD tradition of building preservation.

Challenges

- Land acquisition is harder because the properties are small and have various owners
- Coordination between the North Canal and I-45 expansion project



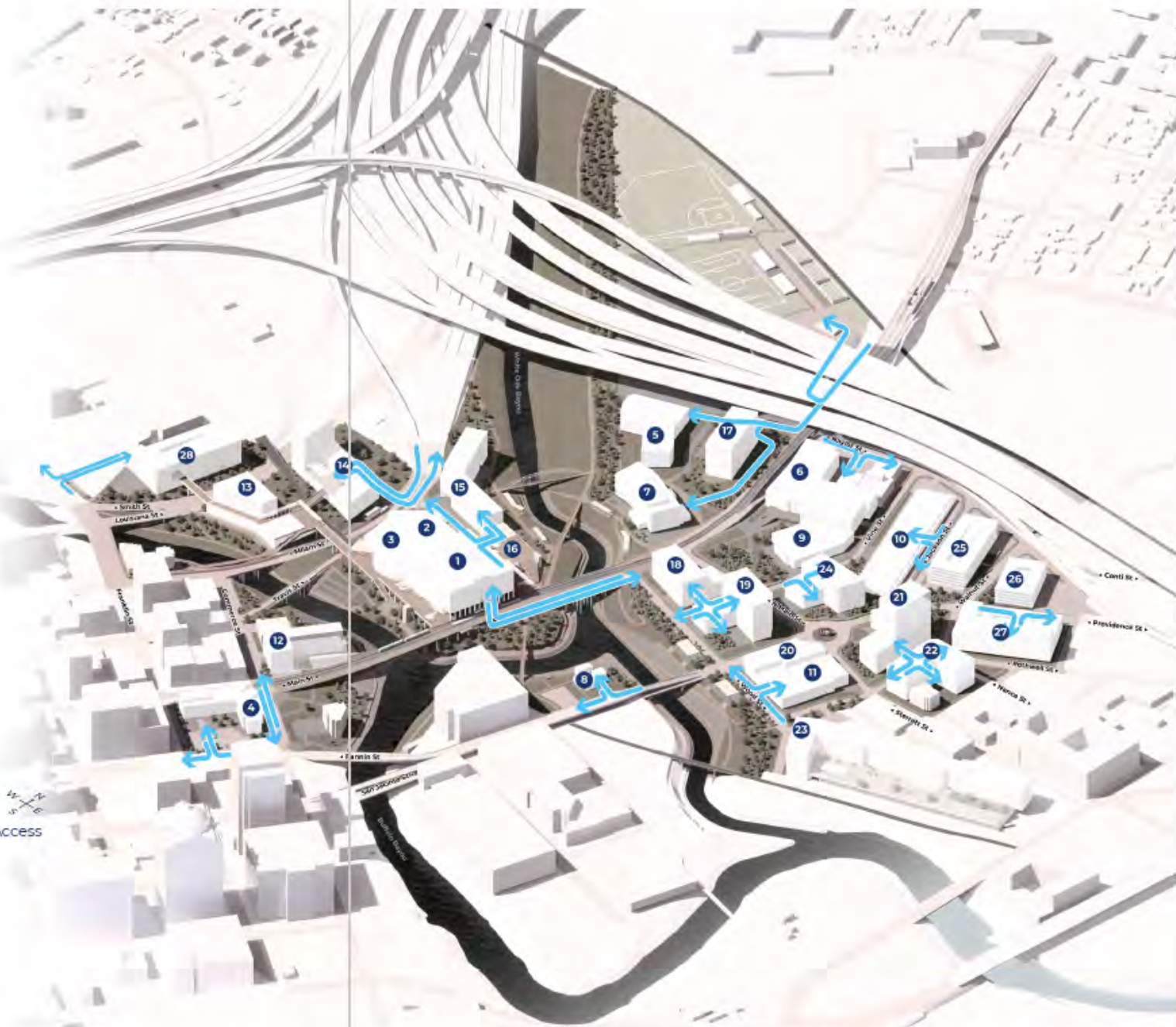
UHD Service Access

The proposed Master Plan 2050 proposes improving service spaces on campus. Girard St. is one loading area that is particularly hard for delivery drivers to access. Girard St. should be extended from Travis/Milam St. to Louisiana St. to help complete the street grid, make accessing campus from the freeway easier, and convert the Girard St. and Travis/Milam intersection to a typical 4-way intersection. This plan also proposes opening up the service access between Girard St. and N Main St. through traffic to further enhance vehicular mobility within the campus. The improved freeway access will make getting to many of the loading zones on campus much easier, specifically, the one on Girard St. Opening up the current Girard St. service access off of N Main St. to through traffic will mix service access with through traffic, making accessing and navigating the service area easier.

All new buildings on campus should have direct service access and can be designed to provide easy service access since the street grid will be more complete on both the east and west sides of campus.

Legend

Service Access



UHD Vehicular Access

The proposed Master Plan 2050 will not change the fact that city streets continue through the campus, but it does present some significant changes for the campus. UHD should work closely with the City of Houston to solve access and circulation issues. Many questionnaire respondents asked UHD to add directional signage and make navigating through campus more intuitive for drivers. They also asked for more incentives to carpool or use park-and-rides to help alleviate traffic around campus.

The master plan includes several new or newly reconnected streets under the current freeway, which will help to restore the downtown grid and provide access to a new wing of the campus east of the College of Business. Parking can be located under the new freeway and in parking garages along the border of campus, with access from the new street connections.

Girard St. stood out as a concern for questionnaire respondents. This plan proposes converting the Girard and Travis/Milam intersection to a 4-way intersection and extending Girard St. to Louisiana St. to complete the street grid and to make it easier to access campus from the freeway. Service access between Girard St. and N Main St. should also be opened to through traffic to allow Girard to two-way traffic. Washington Ave. should also be closed to traffic and used for campus shuttle access and layover space since it is not used for public access.

Respondents also want a better drop-off zone. UHD could build a drop-off zone along N Main St. across from the light rail station that would allow drivers to drop off their passengers right at the front door of campus.

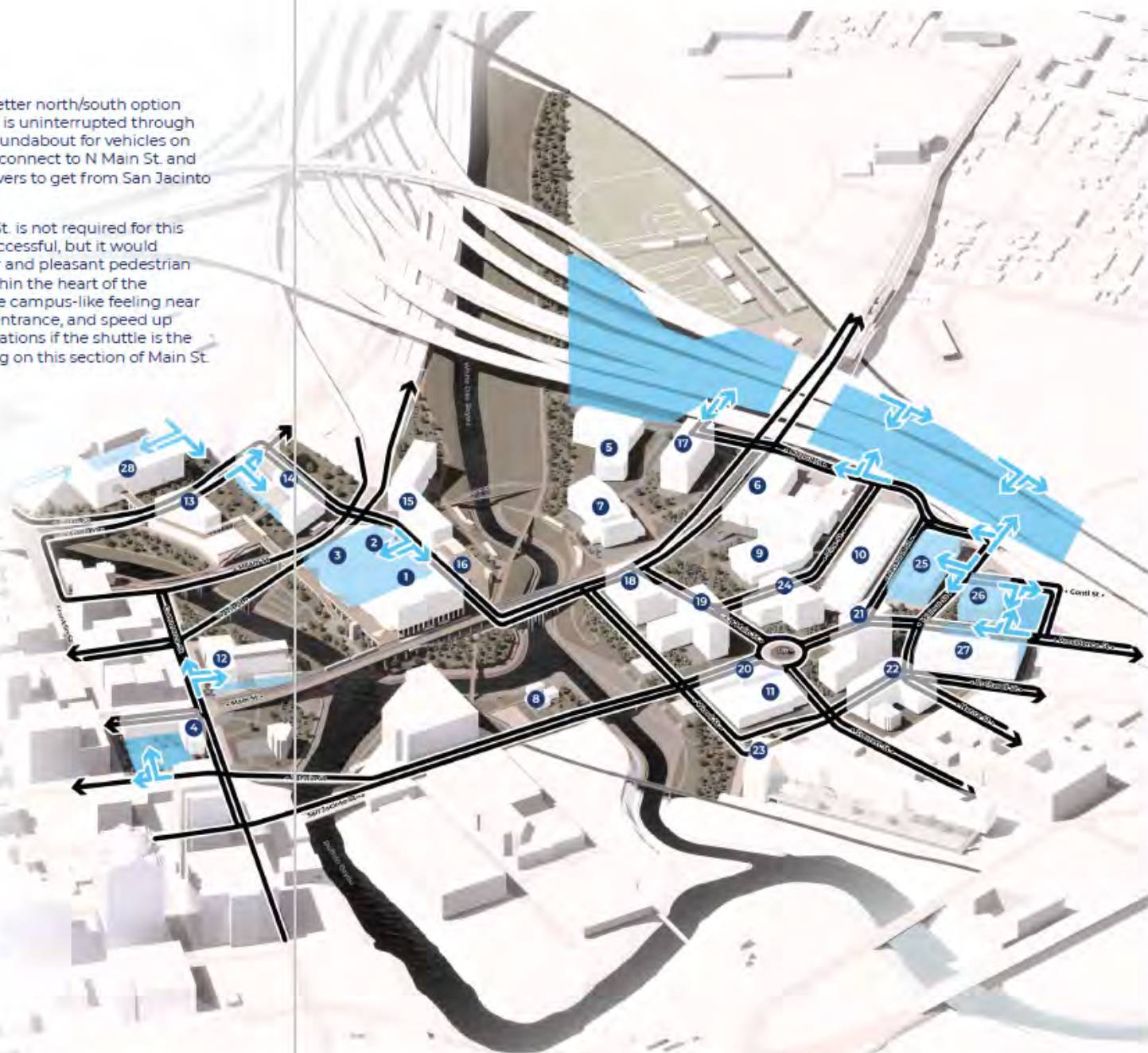
The biggest change to vehicular access within the UHD campus is the closure of Main St. to cars between Wood St. and Commerce St. The Downtown District is already considering closing Main St. south of Commerce St., so this closure would be a continuation of that closure. Traffic between Downtown and Wood St. would be diverted to San Jacinto St.

When the North Canal project is constructed, there is a great opportunity to reconstruct San Jacinto St. to bridge over the railroad tracks as well as the new canal. This would make San

Jacinto St. a much better north/south option than Main St. since it is uninterrupted through Downtown. A new roundabout for vehicles on San Jacinto can also connect to N Main St. and make it easier for drivers to get from San Jacinto to Main St.

The closure of Main St. is not required for this master plan to be successful, but it would provide a much safer and pleasant pedestrian and bike corridor within the heart of the campus, enhance the campus-like feeling near the One Main front entrance, and speed up campus shuttle operations if the shuttle is the only vehicle operating on this section of Main St.

- Legend**
- Street Access
 - Parking Access
 - Parking Lot
 - Parking Garage



UHD MASTER PLAN 2050

Existing

- 1 One Main Building
- 2 Girard Street Building
- 3 Academic & Student Service Building
- 4 Commerce Street Building
- 5 Wellness & Success Building
- 6 Shea Street Building
- 7 Science & Technology Building
- 8 Willow Street Pump Station

Renovation

- 9 1113 Vine Street
- 10 1105 Providence Street
- 11 707 & 717 Walnut Street

New / Partnership

- 12 921 Commerce Street
- 13 308 Washington Ave
- 14 Building 14
- 15 Building 15
- 16 Building 16
- 17 315 N Main Street
- 18 1112 Wood Street
- 19 1020 Wood Street
- 20 1002 San Jacinto Street
- 21 1140 Rothwell Street
- 22 1200 Rothwell Street
- 23 810 N San Jacinto Street
- 24 Building 24
- 25 800 Walnut St
- 26 Building 26
- 27 Building 27
- 28 Building 28

For more building information, refer to the building matrix on page 92.

Legend

- Existing Buildings
- Renovation
- New / Proposed
- Partnership / Co-op

