THE THIRD CENTER

Birmingham-Troy Transit Neighborhood

Team 1

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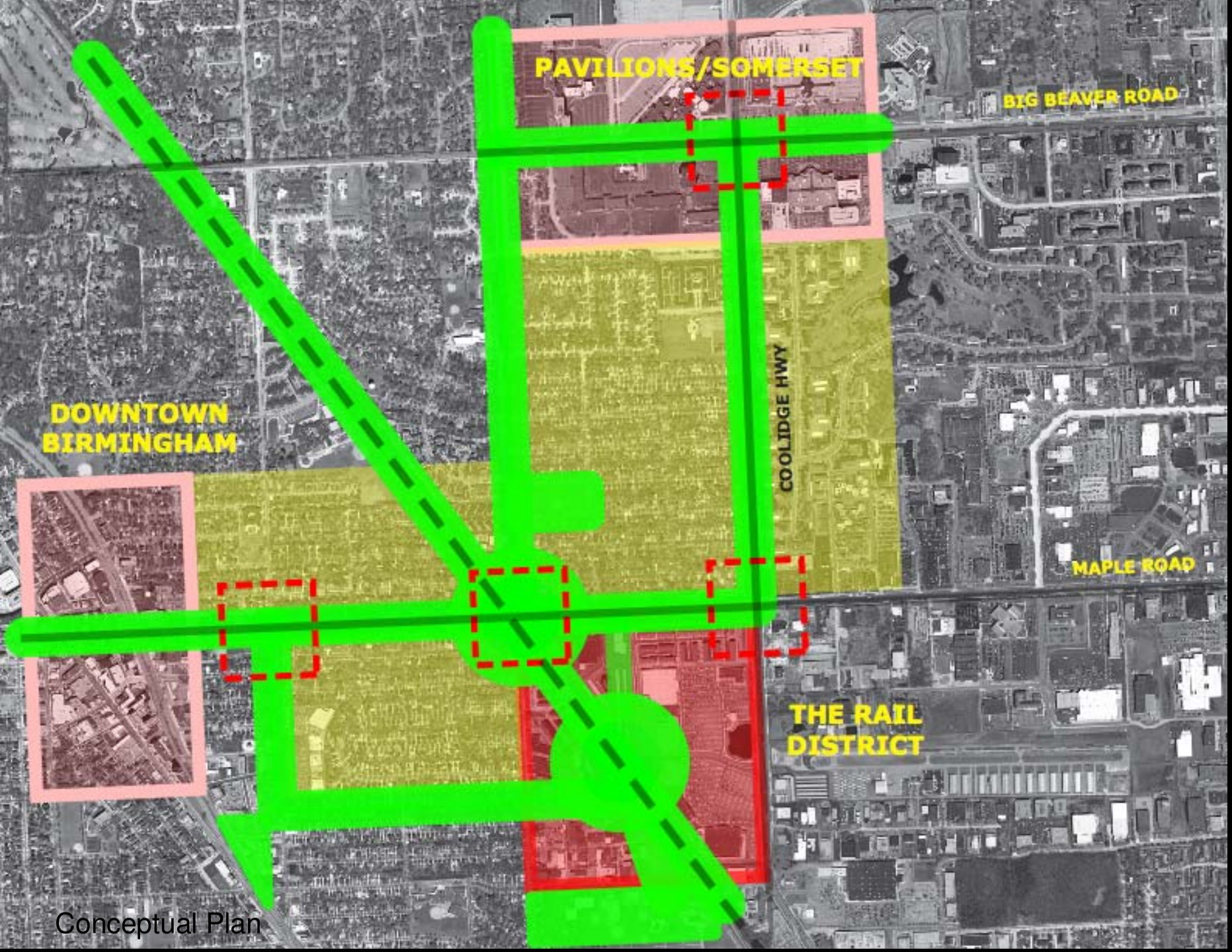
Research Background and Philosophical Stance of Project

Team One's proposal should be understood as a demonstration project that synthesizes contemporary research and formulates a proposal germane to the specific site but also applicable to similar suburban conditions in metro Detroit and nationally. The project offered potent opportunities for directed research and development of prototypes for **transit oriented development at suburban sites**.

The philosophical focus of our work was **sustainability, affordability and permeability**.

The Birmingham-Troy Transit Center is envisioned as a "Third Center" -- a definable place that is both a destination and a link to existing centers in Birmingham and Troy. The proposal recognizes the de-centered suburban condition of southeast Michigan and attempts to re-define this condition through consolidation and connection. Adopting concepts related to mixed-use, dense and walkable "urban villages," we propose a **transit-centered sub-urban village** for this strategic site in Birmingham and Troy.

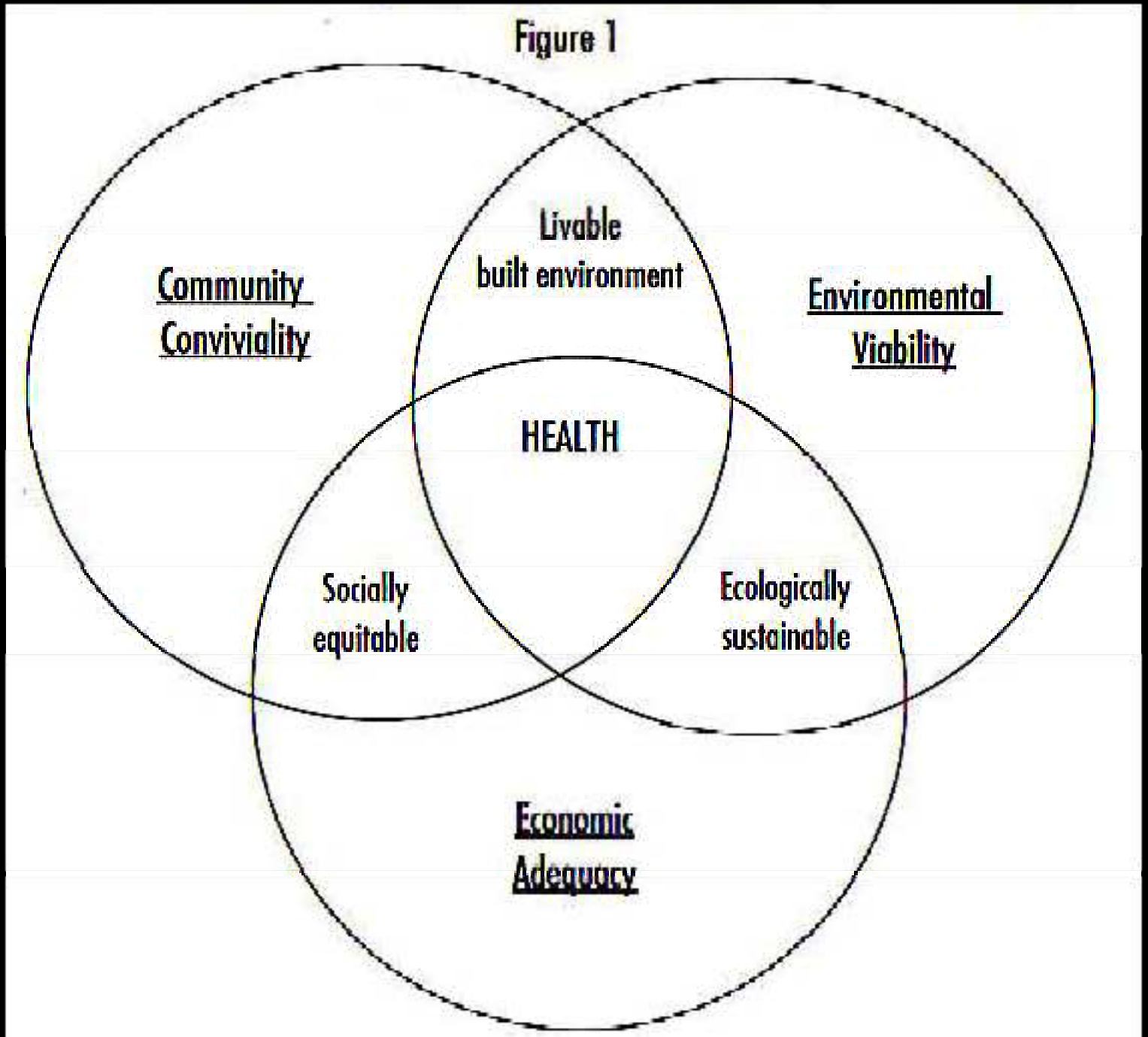


Conceptual Plan

The team adopted the integral model for sustainable urbanism documented in *Eco-City Dimensions – Healthy Communities, Healthy Planet,* by Mark Roseland, Ed. (New Society Publishers, 1997), which outlines three principal areas essential to sustainable urbanism – **Community Conviviality, Environmental Viability and Economic Adequacy**.

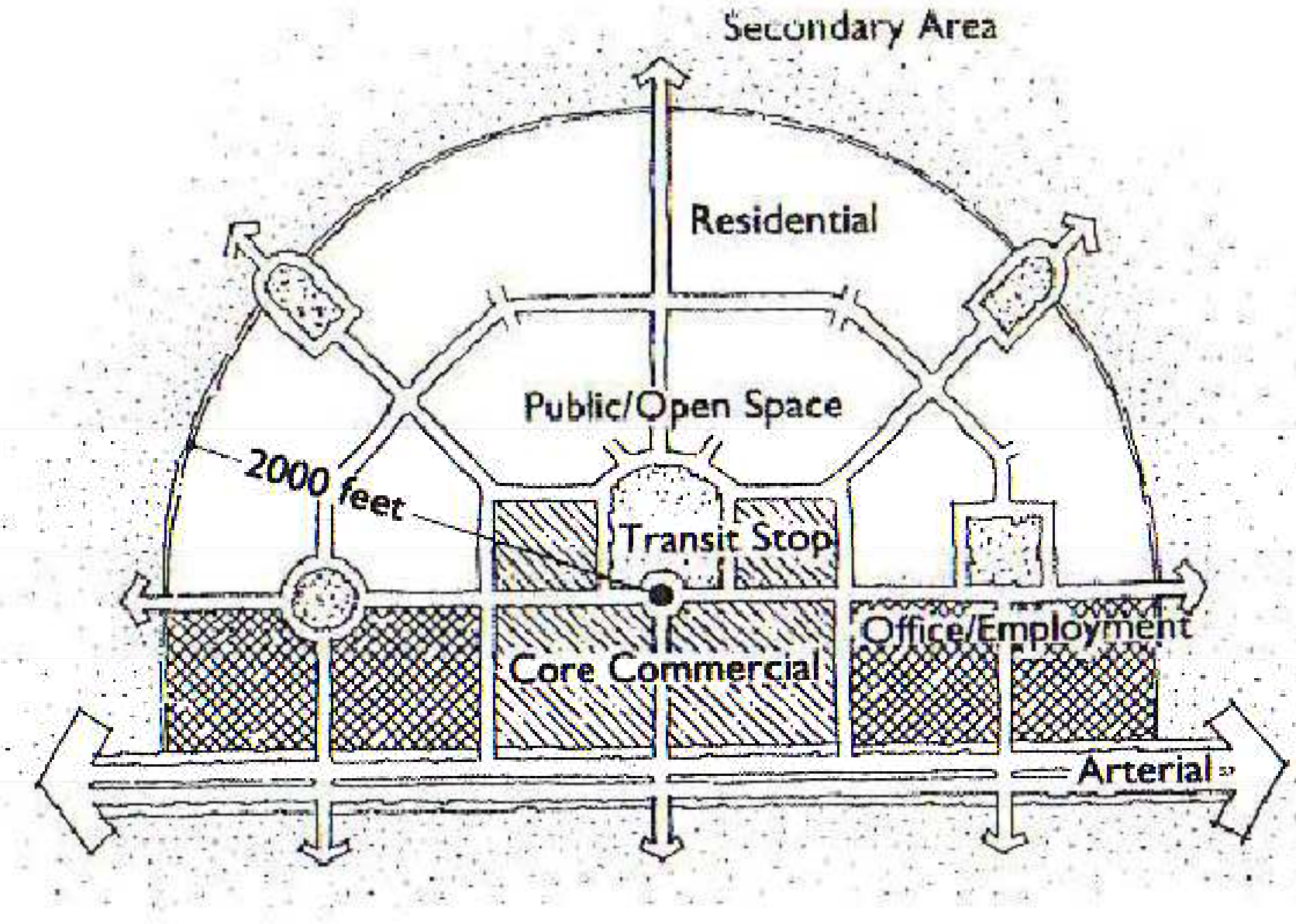
Community Conviviality focuses on the quality of life issues of walkable communities, connected by multi-modal transit choices, with close proximity of shopping, services, recreation and community events.

Environmental Viability includes sustainable building practices that aim for a minimal carbon footprint, substantial transit choices, and regeneration of the environment through parks, greenways, native plantings, recycled building materials and community gardens.



Eco-City Dimensions – Healthy Communities, Healthy Planet, by Mark Roseland, Ed. (New Society Publishers, 1997),

The team analyzed models and precedents of **Transit Oriented Development**, an international model for mixed-use development centered on a multi-modal transit hub. We also looked at **landscape interventions** that served to make connections across areas separated by transit infrastructure, such as the Seattle Olympic Sculpture Park (by Weiss/Manfredi).



Transit Oriented Development Diagram from Calthorpe, Peter. *The Next American Metropolis*, 1993



courtyard





front at day and night



facing south





Seattle Olympic Sculpture Park (Weiss/Manfredi)

The proposed **Third Center** is positioned one mile from both downtown Birmingham and Troy's retail center. It includes a range of parks, greenways, bikeways, greenstreets, public plazas and community gardens. As a means to maximize its visibility and accessibility the transit center is located at the corner of Maple and the train line. It accommodates multi-modal transit choices, including urban and inter-urban commuter rail and bus, local bus loop and trolley service, rental and zip-cars, taxies and bike rental.




Birmingham
Pavilion/
Somerset
The Third Center


Birmingham
Pavilion/
Somerset
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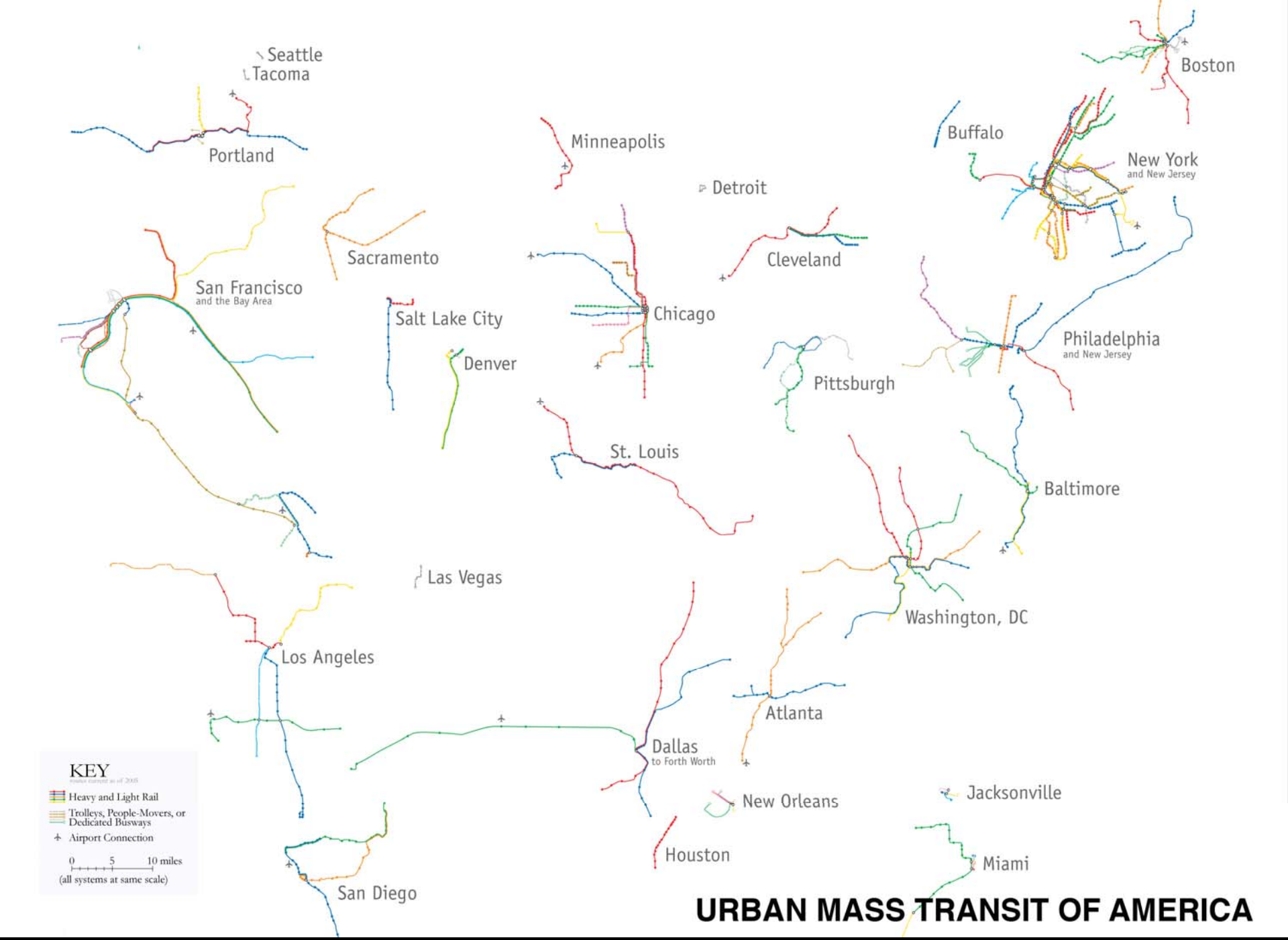
Birmingham
Grand Trunk
Railroad
Pavilion/
Somerset
Proposed
Trolly Line
The Third Center
Proposed
Bike Path


Birmingham
Pavilion/
Somerset
The Third Center
Residential
Mix-Used
Mix-Used
Residential
Retail
Retail

The transit components of the project are primary. A survey of major cities in the US reveals that most major cities have, or are building, multi-modal transit systems, many utilizing light rail. Some of these cities have substantially lower population densities than Detroit and less need for public transportation. **Job sprawl in the Detroit metro area, as well as its poverty rates make it imperative that it plan for substantial transportation choices.** The 2030 Regional Transit Plan for SE Michigan proposes a light rail and commuter rail system that would make a substantial start. It is time to recognize that to remain competitive, Detroit and its metro area, need to move quickly on these and other transit plans.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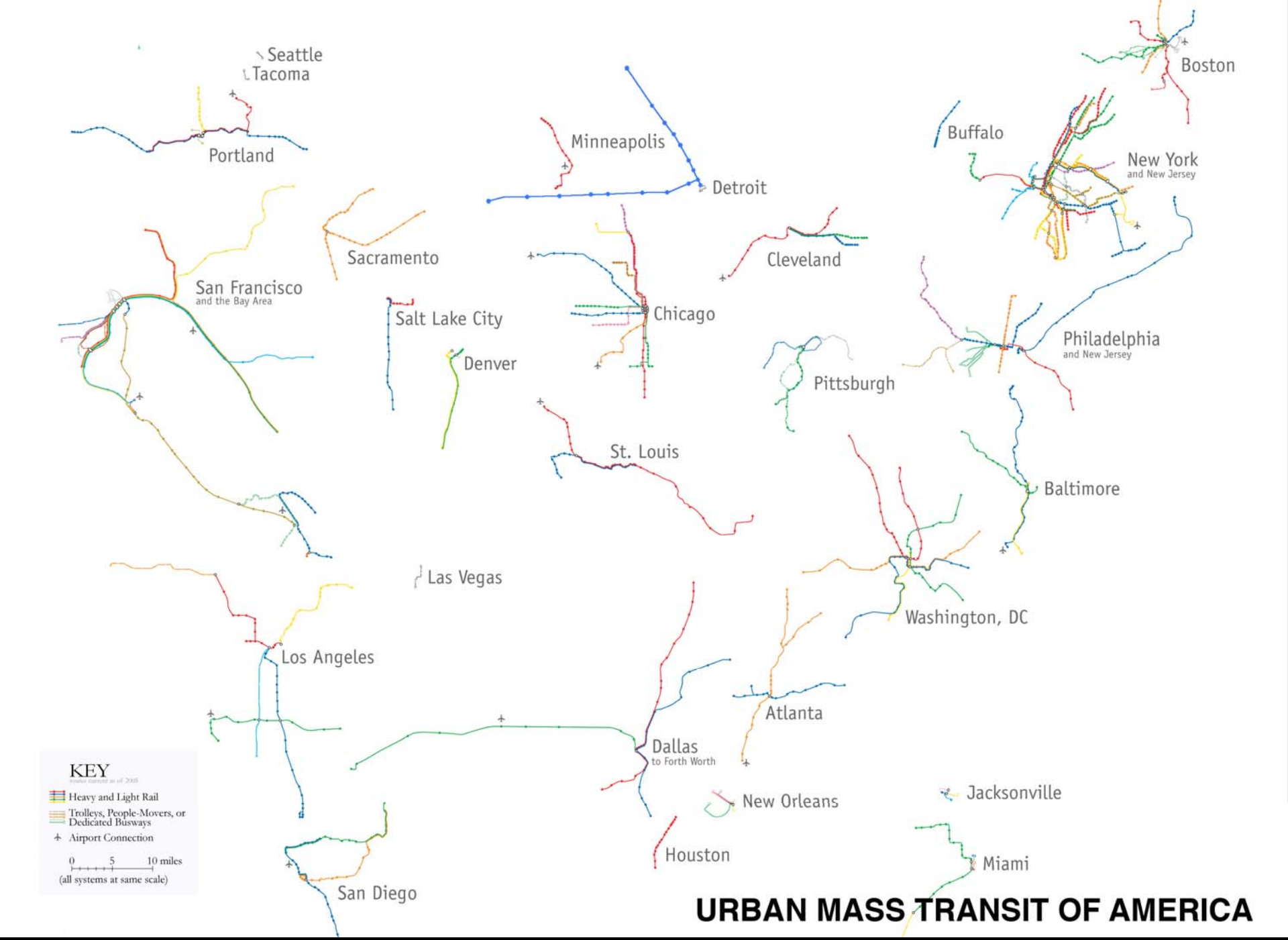
Minneapolis
Detroit
Buffalo
Boston
New York
and New Jersey
Sacramento
San Francisco
and the Bay Area
Salt Lake City
Denver
Chicago
Cleveland
Philadelphia
and New Jersey
Pittsburgh
St. Louis
Baltimore
Las Vegas
Washington, DC
Los Angeles
Atlanta
Dallas
to Forth Worth
New Orleans
Jacksonville
Houston
Miami
San Diego
KEY
Heavy and Light Rail
Trolleys, People-Movers, or Dedicated Busways
Airport Connection
0 5 10 miles
(all systems at same scale)
URBAN MASS TRANSIT OF AMERICA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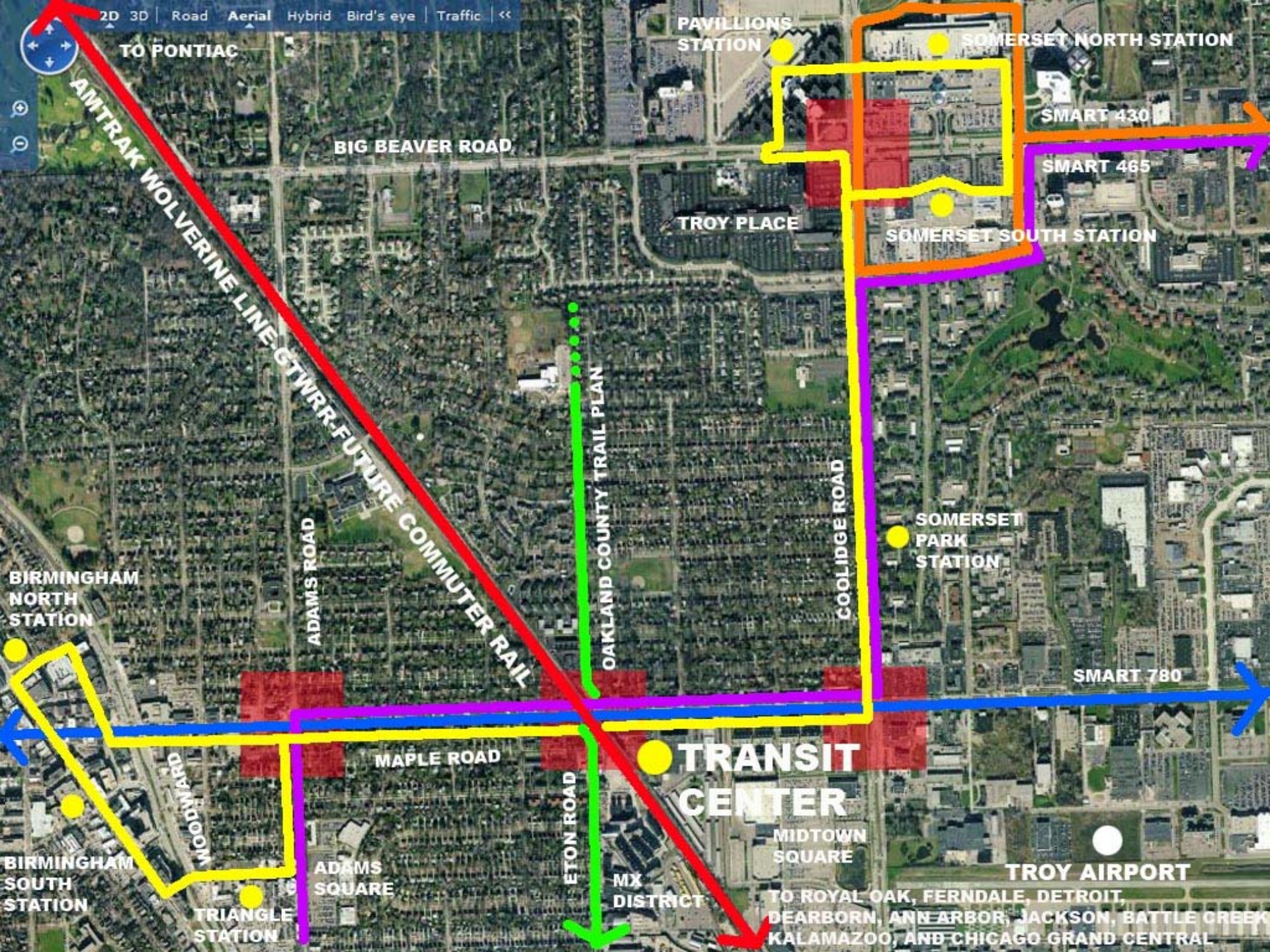
Transit in Southeast Michigan

PROPOSED PHASE ONE METRO DETROIT LIGHT RAIL




2D 3D | Road Aerial Hybrid Bird's eye | Traffic
TO PONTIAC
AMTRAK WOLVERINE LINE-GTWRR-FUTURE COMMUTER RAIL
PAVILLIONS STATION
SOMERSET NORTH STATION
SMART 430
BIG BEAVER ROAD
SMART 465
TROY PLACE
SOMERSET SOUTH STATION
OAKLAND COUNTY TRAIL PLAN
ADAMS ROAD
COOLIDGE ROAD
SOMERSET PARK STATION
BIRMINGHAM NORTH STATION
SMART 780
MAPLE ROAD
TRANSIT CENTER
WOODWARD
ETON ROAD
MIDTOWN SQUARE
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH STATION
ADAMS SQUARE
TROY AIRPORT
TRIANGLE STATION
MX DISTRICT
TO ROYAL OAK, FERNDALE, DETROIT, DEARBORN, ANN ARBOR, JACKSON, BATTLE CREEK, KALAMAZOO, AND CHICAGO GRAND CENTRAL

In addition to alternatives to the private automobile, part of these efforts may include **automobile alternatives**. Small, alternative fuel cars, such as the European Smart Car, should be developed utilizing the inventiveness and talent of the US auto industry. For the purposes of this project, we propose a research and development center, located at an upgraded Troy-Oakland County airport and connected to the project site.


LE REFLEXE PHOTO.
RÉPARATIONS MATÉRIEL PHOTO.
Gaulois
MAIRIE DE PARIS
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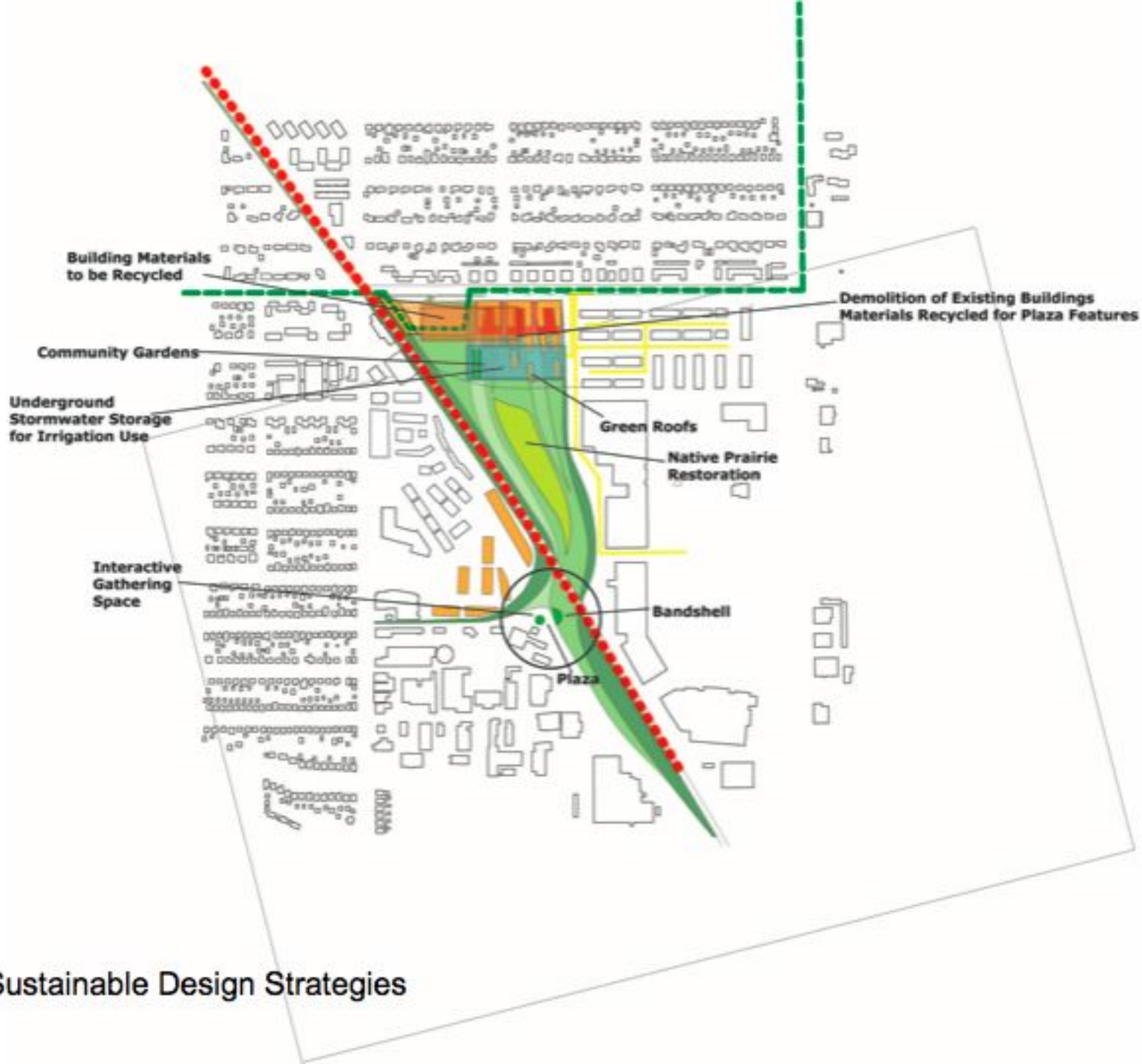
The site is organized around clustered development, which results in generous new greenspaces. A mixed-use building on Maple Street includes ground floor retail and a range of housing types **with a particular emphasis on work force and affordable housing**. The proposal recognizes that **neighborhood shopping is essential to walkable communities** and suggests that it may be possible that Whole Foods would relocate to the ground floor of this building The transit center building provides a number of services including banking, day care, business incubator spaces and retail.

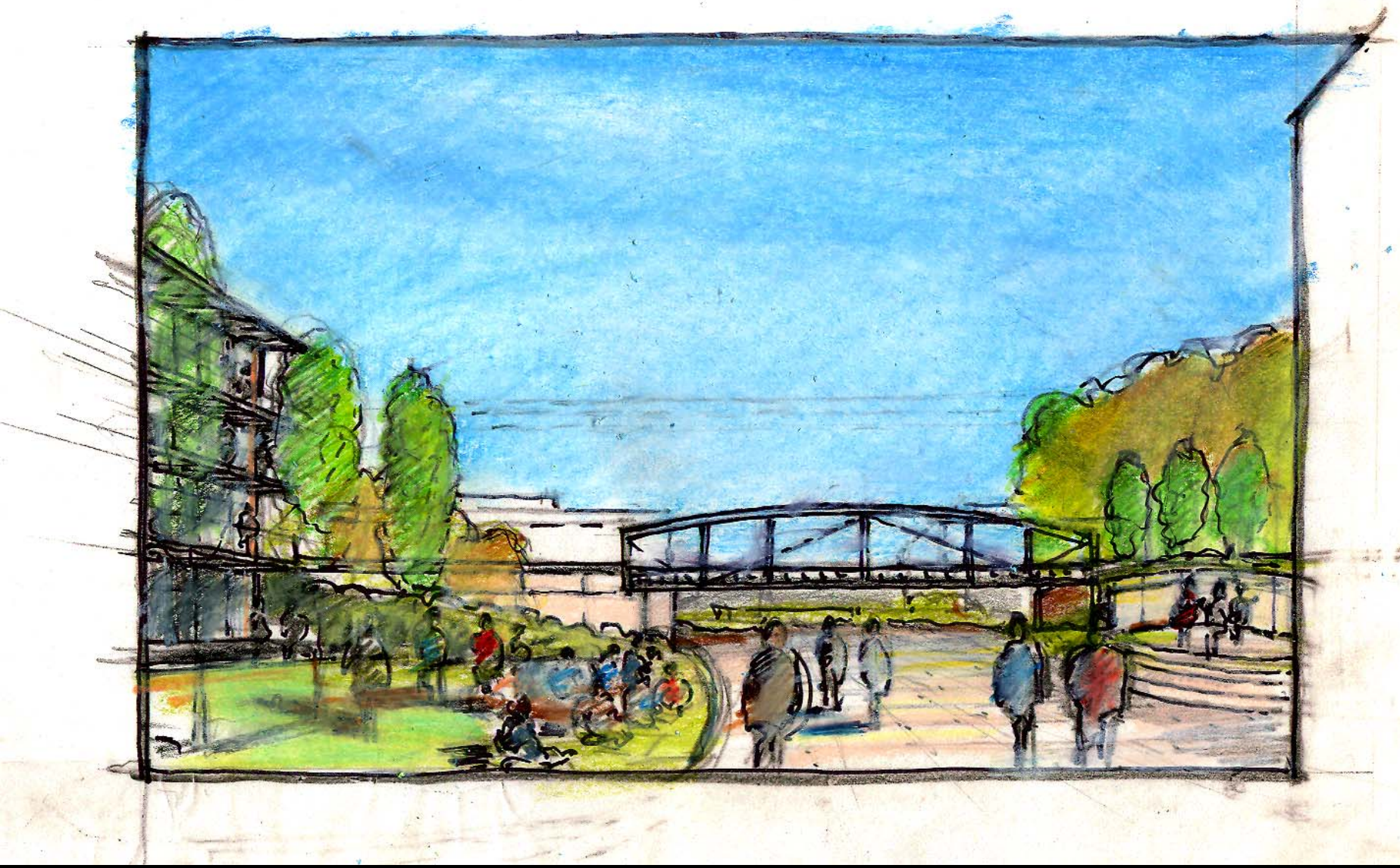


Site Plan Showing Green Spaces



Sustainable Design Strategies

The diversity of greenspaces includes bike and walkways that connect to new and existing networks. Community gardens located above the parking deck provide opportunities for residents to practice sustainable urban gardening and create an active public space. Here sustainable farming can serve as a demonstration project. A large opening under the railroad tracks is created to avoid a small dark tunnel and maximize the connection to the Birmingham side of the tracks where there is a large public space. **The Third Center establishes its center around this shared community space.**



Community Space

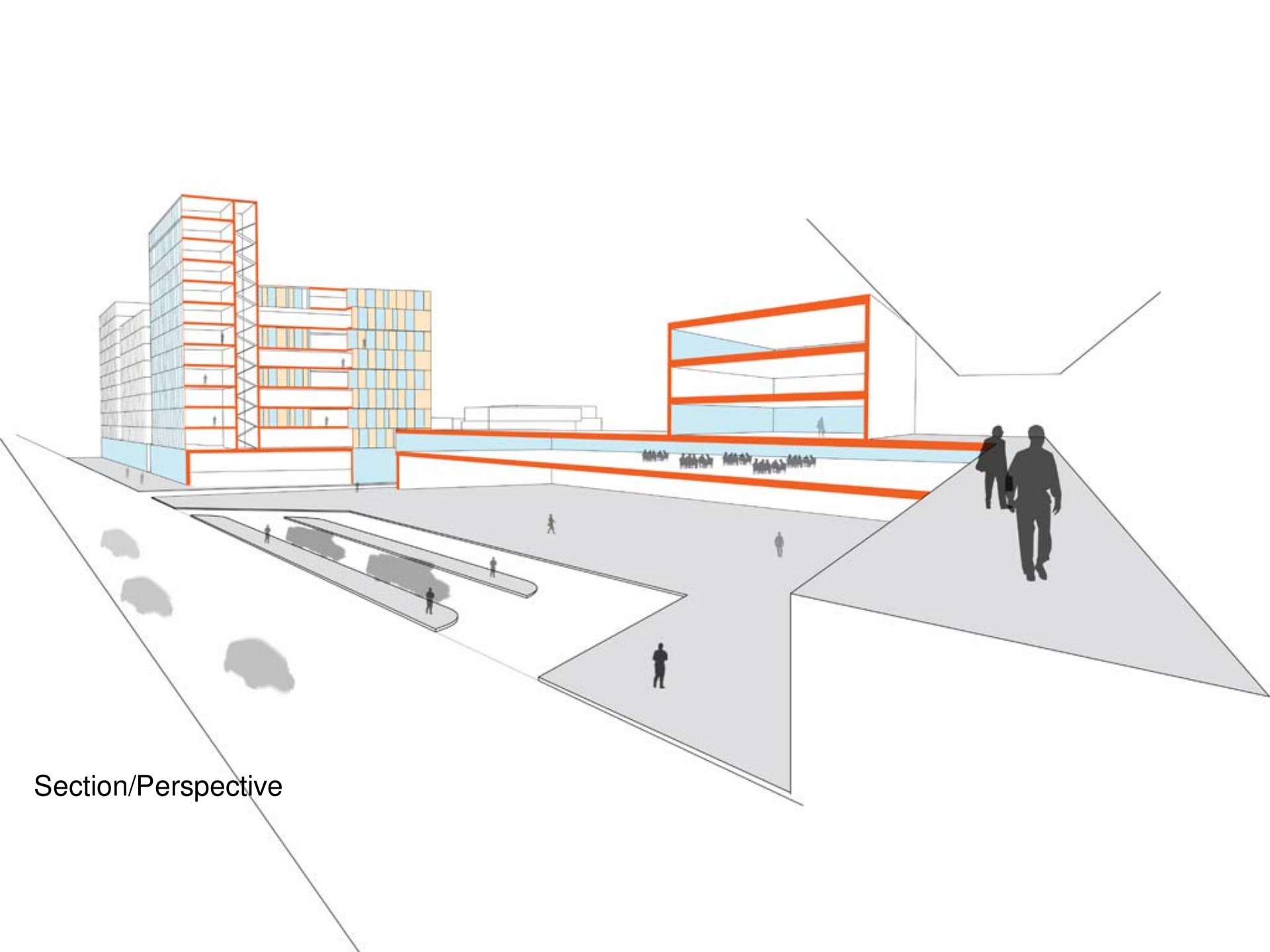

Site Plan



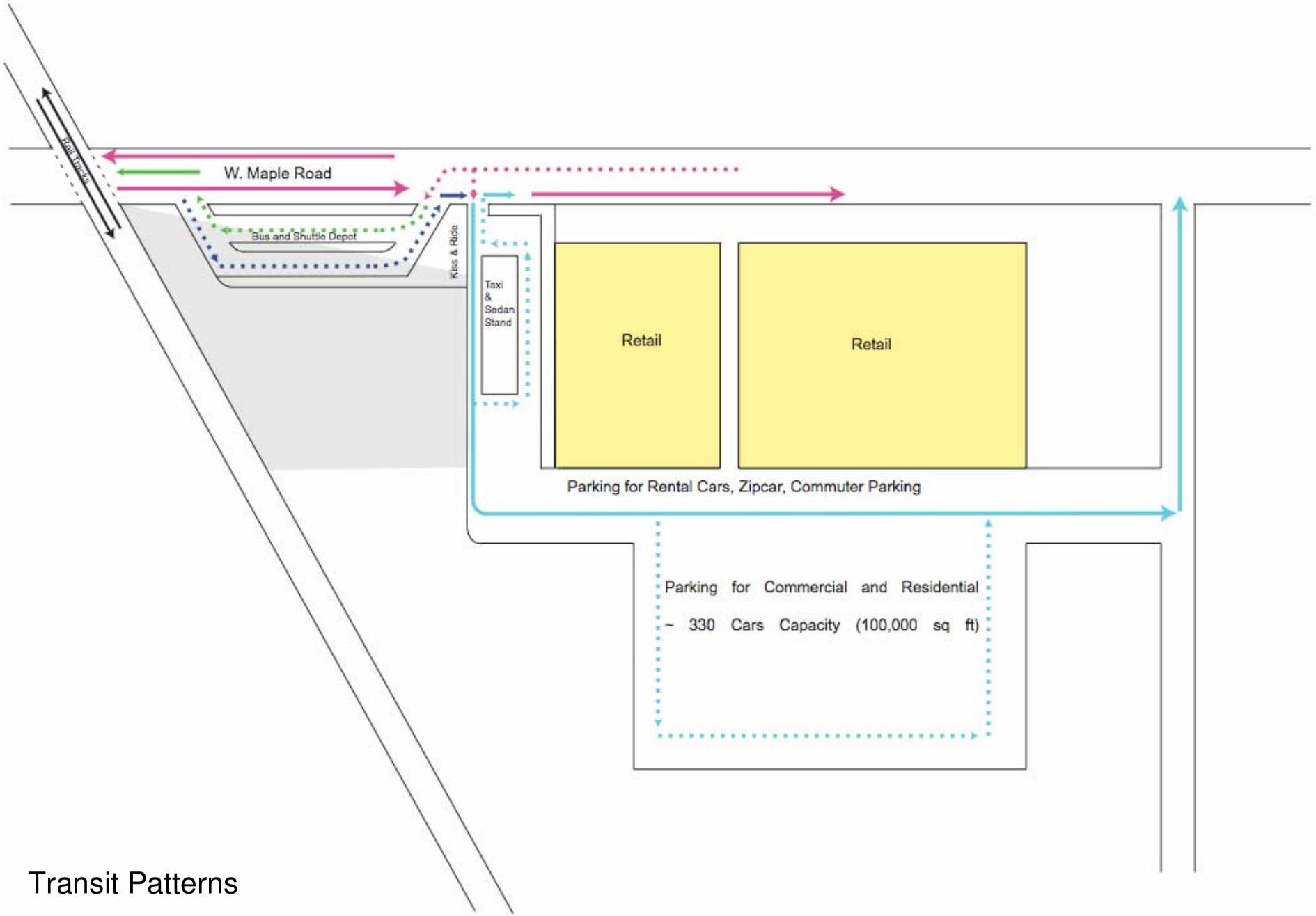
View from Rail Line Looking South Showing Transit Station and Platform



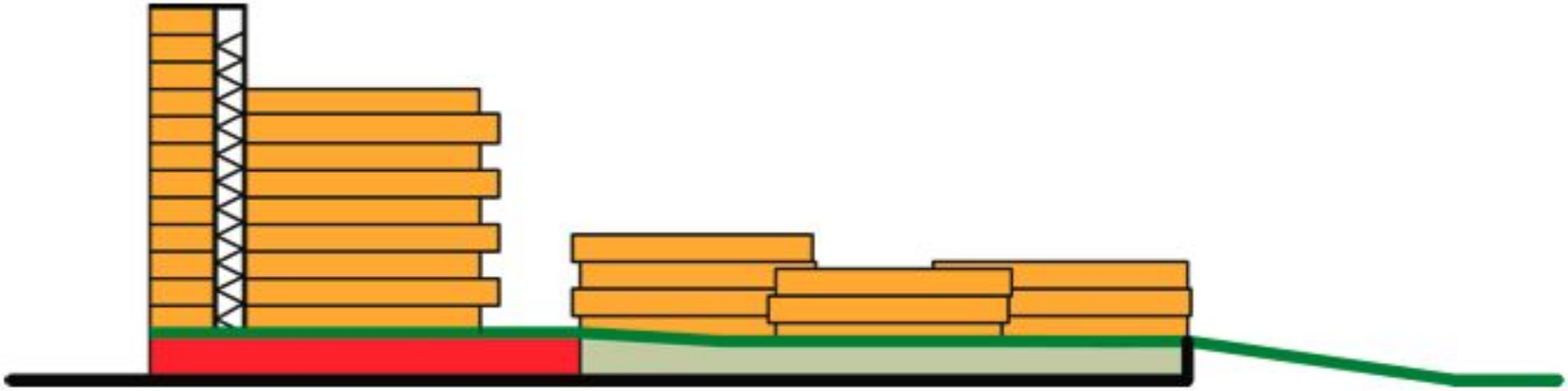
View from Maple Looking West



Section/Perspective



Transit Patterns



RESIDENTIAL RESIDENT
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MAPLE RD.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

RETAIL

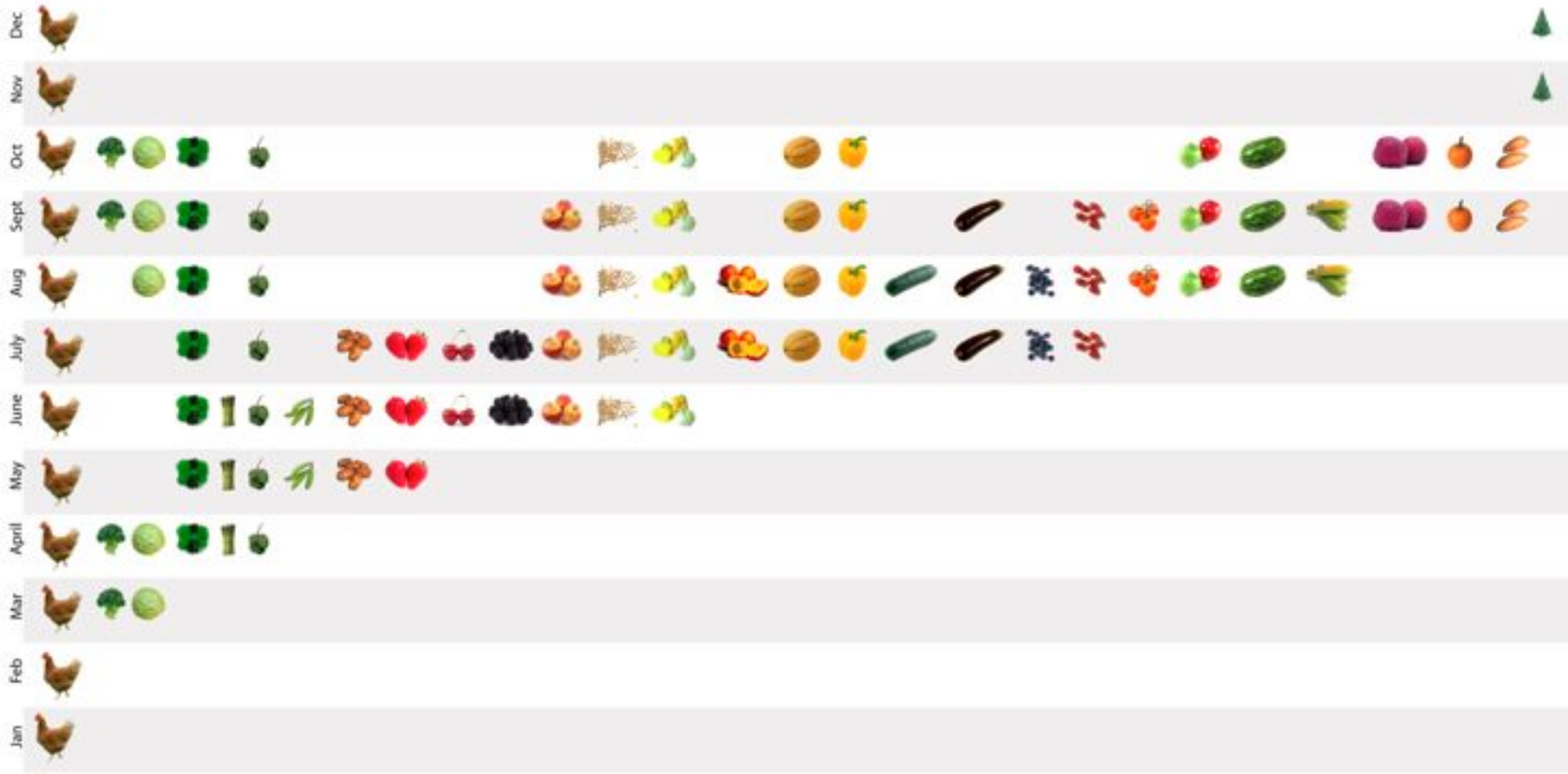
S

PARKING

North-South Section



View of Community Gardens Looking North



Community Garden Planting Schedule

In *The Rise of the Creative Class*, (1994) Richard Florida established connections between **quality of life issues, the built environment and the economic competitiveness** of cities. His work recognizes that talented, well-educated and motivated members of the work force have choices as to where they live, and tend to choose cities that have diverse cultural, environmental, recreational and social amenities. The short remaining time frame for the development of a transit center has created an urgency to this project. This is paired with the **urgency regarding the creation of a sustainable future** and the need for the Detroit metro area to recapture is attractiveness for the new, nimble workforce.

The Third Center provides a Destination, a Connection and a Departure Point.

Birmingham is a successful downtown that has an early 20th century density, building character and street fabric. Troy is a successful late-twentieth century retail center defined by large-footprint retail organized around a de-centered, auto-accessible plan. **The Third Center envisions an early 21st century center – sustainable, accessible and permeable**.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