



sixthstreetstudy

Rapid City Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

# Sixth Street Corridor Plan



## **CORRIDOR PLAN**

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# INTRODUCTION

Rapid City's core is evolving – the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center is expanding, new developments are in the works, and the desire for walkable, bikeable, and livable streets is growing. A safe and connected multimodal transportation system is essential to supporting the continued vibrancy of the area through these changes; the streets and sidewalks must be functional and accessible to provide a positive experience for every resident and visitor, regardless of their mode of travel. Sixth Street is a particularly vital corridor for movement and activity, both in downtown and in Memorial Park.

The Sixth Street corridor plays many key roles in Rapid City – a cultural and entertainment destination for visitors throughout the Black Hills region and beyond, a connection to jobs, residences, and services, a recreational asset – and implementation of the recommendations outlined in this plan will support each of them. Pedestrian plazas, more locations to showcase local artists, and flexible streetspace for events and programming will enhance the sense of place along the corridor; enhanced lighting, crosswalk and sidewalk improvements, and bicycle intersection treatments will boost safety and comfort for all users; and a grade-separated connection across Omaha Street for bicyclists and pedestrians will truly unify downtown and Memorial Park. These and other elements, detailed in the **Corridor Recommendations** section of this plan, will all help to sustain the continued growth and vitality of Rapid City and solidify downtown's reputation as a regional destination for all.





## Corridor Context

The Sixth Street corridor connects many of Rapid City's most prominent and well-known destinations. Memorial Park on the north end is one of the City's key recreational assets; the downtown half is home to many local businesses and community destinations. Better tying these two distinct yet closely integrated portions of the corridor together with a cohesive character has long been a desire for the City. Sixth Street also provides access to jobs, residences, and critical city functions like the library and public transportation.



Pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists all rely on Sixth Street. The numerous adjacent destinations make it a particularly important corridor for pedestrian activity in downtown. Sixth Street also acts as the north-south spine of the bicycle network, providing connections to important east-west facilities like Kansas City Street and the Rapid Creek greenway path. For both bicyclists and pedestrians, Sixth Street is the optimal corridor for crossing Omaha Street given its direct connection to the Sixth Street promenade through Memorial Park. The corridor is also home to Rapid City's transit hub, the Milo Barber Transportation Center, where all fixed-route bus patterns in the City begin and end. Motorists use Sixth Street to access the adjacent destinations and parking; since the promenade through Memorial Park is only for active users, though, Sixth Street is not as important for through motor vehicle traffic. A corridor like Sixth Street that serves so many transportation needs must be safe, comfortable, and convenient for all users.

## PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Rapid City has done great work in recent years to establish a unified vision for downtown as a walkable, bikeable, and livable destination that embraces the rich cultural heritage of the region. Many previous planning efforts have focused in on Sixth Street as a key corridor for supporting this vision, and the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan* builds off the values, goals, and recommendations outlined in them to further define how the corridor can be transformed in a manner that enhances downtown's overall vibrancy, safety, and connectivity. The following pages provide a brief synopsis of each of these plans and their relevance to the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan*.

### Rapid City Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

The *Rapid City Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* (2011) established a vision for a comprehensive network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the region to enhance the active transportation experience. This plan is currently being updated, concurrent with the RapidTRIP update. The 2011 plan does not include any improvement recommendations specific to Sixth Street but does identify Omaha Street as a major barrier to biking and walking and emphasizes downtown Rapid City as a key attractor for active users in the region.

### Plan Rapid City

Rapid City's comprehensive plan, known as *Plan Rapid City* (2014), is the defining vision for the long-term growth and development of the community. The plan weaves together all aspects of community vitality – from transportation to housing to governance – in a coordinated manner and provides high-level recommendations on how to continue enhancing Rapid City. Goals most relevant to the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan* are:

- ▶ To reinforce the role of downtown as a regional activity center
- ▶ To promote increased synergy between the downtown core and nearby centers of activity
- ▶ To expand multi-modal connections and encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel
- ▶ To expand opportunities for fitness and active living
- ▶ To enhance connectivity and safety for pedestrians of all abilities

- ▶ To develop a connected network for bicycle travel and recreation
- ▶ To recognize and strengthen the role of arts and culture in contributing to Rapid City's sense of community

### RapidTRIP 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

*RapidTRIP 2040* (2015) is a comprehensive guiding document for transportation needs and investments in the region over a twenty-five year horizon period – an update looking forward to 2045 is currently being developed. The plan, which considers all modes of transportation, includes several recommended projects to enhance the downtown bicycle and pedestrian network. One recommended bike facility – shared lanes along Apolda Street – would connect directly with Sixth Street.

### Rapid City Cultural Plan

The *Rapid City Cultural Plan* (2016) provides six long-term goals for embracing the City's rich cultural heritage of Native American and western art, sculpture, and performing arts to enhance its sense of place. There is an emphasis on equitable representation of all cultures, with a particular focus on highlighting Native American artists and organizations as a strong regional asset. The plan also makes clear Rapid City's desire to further establish itself as a destination for cultural tourism. By demonstrating the importance Rapid City places on the arts and detailing the community's cultural values, the *Rapid City Cultural Plan* provided a valuable basis for the placemaking recommendations of the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan*.

### Downtown Area Master Plan

The *Downtown Area Master Plan* (2016) identifies priorities for improving downtown Rapid City as well as a series of five core values describing aspirations for downtown: prosperity, connectivity, activity, a welcoming atmosphere, and livability. Community outreach for the plan found considerable interest in making downtown more walkable and bikeable, and Sixth Street is identified as a street that should be bicycle and pedestrian oriented rather than automobile oriented. Other key themes and recommendations from the plan directly relevant to Sixth Street are the desire to make downtown a regional hub for arts and culture, the idea

of creating a gateway icon for the City at the intersection of Sixth & Omaha, and support for mixed-use development.

## Downtown Parking Study & Strategic Plan

The *Downtown Parking Study & Strategic Plan (2017)* evaluated the parking system in downtown Rapid City and its ability to accommodate both current and future demand; the applicability of various parking management strategies, technologies, and policies to downtown was also assessed in the study. The study found that the supply of downtown parking is largely sufficient, but that efforts to better manage that supply are needed to alleviate localized shortages and other issues. Key recommendations that have been implemented include smart meters with no time limits on core downtown streets and two-hour time limits (with some resident and employee permits available) on peripheral downtown streets. Sixth Street has a combination of smart meters and 2-hour parking spaces.

## Sixth Street Promenade Conceptual Plan

In 2019, Rapid City worked with community members to establish a future vision for Sixth Street as a purposeful pedestrian corridor that takes advantage of its unique blend of natural and urban features. Through a series of stakeholder and community visioning sessions, the City collaboratively developed a series of high-level recommendations for enhancing the vibrancy and connectedness of Sixth Street through infrastructure and amenity improvements, events and programming, and an emphasis on public art. The *Sixth Street Promenade Conceptual Plan* served as critical foundation for developing the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan*.



## Sixth and Omaha Crossing Feasibility Study

Omaha Street, a high-speed, high-volume state highway, is an imposing barrier dividing the Sixth Street corridor between the downtown and Memorial Park sides. A pedestrian crossing exists at the intersection of Sixth Street and Omaha Street today, but this is a temporary solution – it conflicts with planned intersection improvements at Fifth Street – and contributes to a disjointed experience for biking and walking between downtown and Memorial Park.



The *Sixth Street Corridor Plan* team also conducted the *Sixth and Omaha Crossing Feasibility Study* to assess the transportation-related feasibility of implementing a grade-separated crossing at the intersection of Sixth Street and Omaha Street for bicyclists and pedestrians to truly unify the entire corridor. This idea, conceptualized in the *Sixth Street Promenade Conceptual Plan*, would remove that intersection from the street network so users of all modes would have to adjust their movements along and across the corridor. Those components of Rapid City's transportation system most likely to be impacted – bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, traffic operations, and transit operations – were evaluated to determine what the safety and operations-related outcomes of implementing grade separation would be.



## Impacts of a Grade-Separated Crossing

The project team evaluated existing conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, and transit riders in the study area and likely impacts to each from reconfiguring Sixth and Omaha. Key findings were:

- ▶ Functionality of downtown’s transportation network would be maintained
- ▶ Safety at the intersection would be enhanced

The *Sixth and Omaha Crossing Feasibility Study* was a critical first step in reconfiguring the at-grade pedestrian crossing of Omaha Street to improve safety and mobility.

By demonstrating that, from a transportation perspective, closing the Sixth and Omaha intersection to motor vehicle traffic is feasible, this study sets the stage for funding pursuits, detailed engineering analysis and design, and, ultimately, construction of an enhanced crossing that unifies the corridor. The *Sixth Street Corridor Plan* embraces the recommendation of grade separation across Omaha Street and envisions how the rest of the corridor can be enhanced to provide a cohesive experience throughout. See **Appendix A** for the full study.



# COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

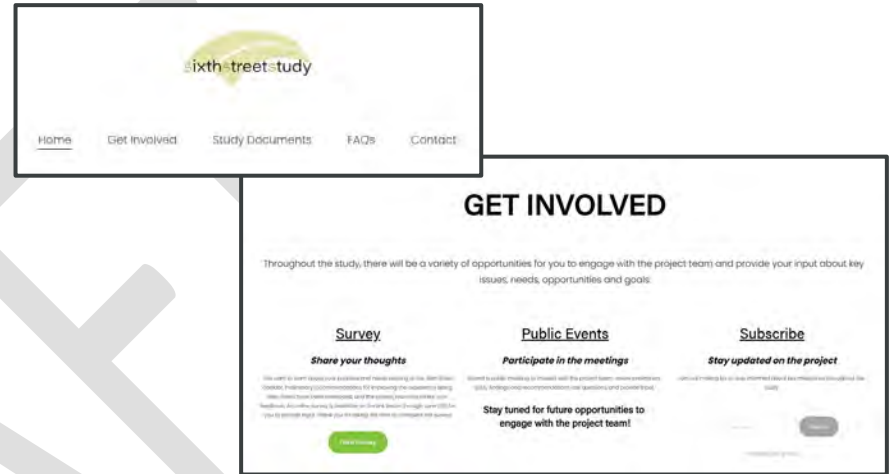
Public involvement is a cornerstone of every successful corridor planning process. Engaging with community members and other stakeholders from the outset helps to instill in them a sense of ownership over the final plan and recommendations, which is invaluable towards establishing consensus and building momentum towards implementation. The people who live, work, and play along Sixth Street also have direct knowledge of what is and is not working well with the corridor today; understanding their likes, dislikes, concerns, and ideas helps focus the development and evaluation of potential improvements. Throughout the planning process for the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan*, numerous in-person and online opportunities were available for community members and stakeholders to interact with the project team and provide their input. A full summary of engagement activities can be found in **Appendix B**.

## Digital Engagement

Various online tools and platforms were utilized throughout the planning process so as to maximize public exposure to the project and to give as large and diverse a portion of the public as possible the opportunity to be involved. Tools developed and used included:

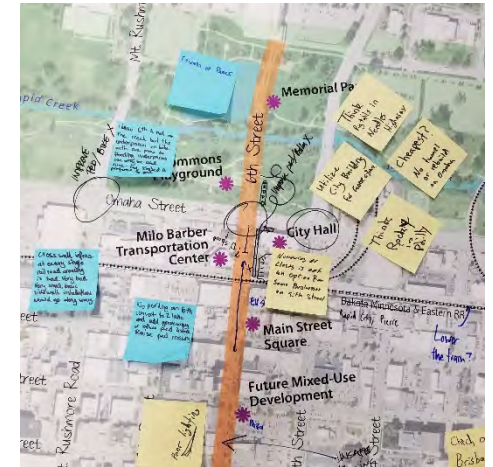
- Project website
- Agency website updates
- Social media and press releases
- Online commenting map
- Flyers
- Postcard mailings to property owners along and near the corridor
- Personal contact from Long Range Planning staff to businesses in the study area

The website – [sixthstreetstudy.com](http://sixthstreetstudy.com) – provided community members access to information about the project, including details on input opportunities, the project schedule, and a series of frequently asked questions. It also allowed those interested to sign up for a project mailing list.



## Public Meetings

Early on in the planning process, two public meetings were held to introduce the project and capture input on both opportunities and challenges along the corridor. The meetings – one at the Dahl Arts Center and one at the Rapid City Public Library – were selected to be in close proximity to the study area and to allow of both the north and south portions of the study area a convenient opportunity to attend.



At each meeting, a series of four boards detailing the study area and process, as well as specific information about the Sixth and Omaha

crossing, were presented. Community input was captured primarily through two large roll-plot maps of the study area, one asking ‘What do you like about Sixth Street today?’ and the other asking ‘What challenges do you have with Sixth Street today?’. Meeting attendees were asked to write their thoughts either on sticky notes or directly on the maps; general comment cards were also available. For interested members of the public who were not able to attend one of the public meetings, an online commenting map offered the same opportunity to provide location-specific feedback. Total attendance between the two meetings was approximately 30 members of the public. Journalists for the Rapid City Journal and KOTA TV were in attendance as well.

Prior to both public meetings, members of the project team also visited many local businesses along Sixth Street to discuss their thoughts, concerns, and ideas. As the owners and employees of these businesses have more direct experience with the corridor than almost anybody else, their input was critical towards understanding what is and is not working well with Sixth Street today.

## Online Survey

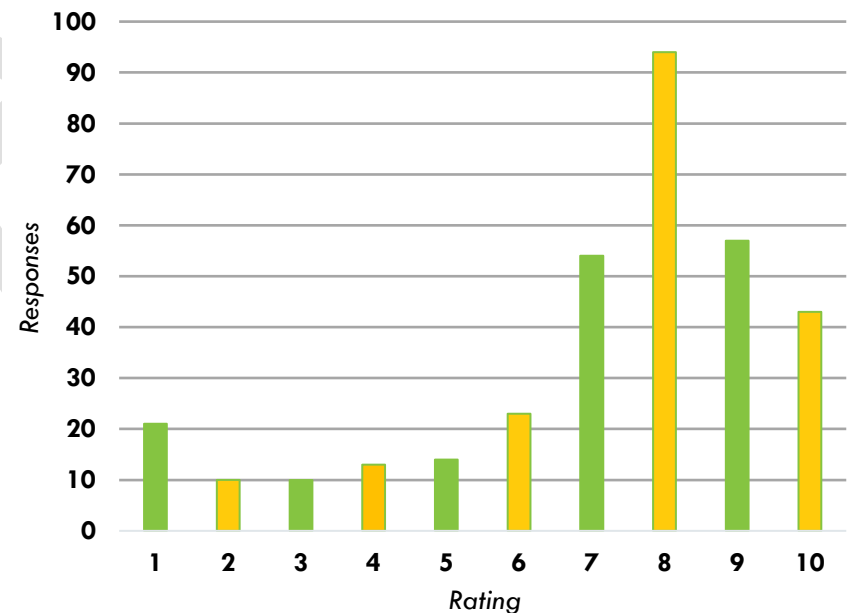
Once the project team developed a draft corridor concept based on initial public and stakeholder input and an assessment of existing conditions along Sixth Street, an online survey was conducted to get feedback on both the draft recommendations and community priorities for the corridor. Over 500 survey responses helped inform development of the plan.

Sixteen questions were asked in the survey, broken down into five categories: Vision & Goals, Corridor Uses, Corridor Elements, Draft Corridor Concept, and Sixth & Omaha Crossing. The questions were designed to help the project team understand how the Sixth Street corridor is used today, which amenities and transportation elements are most important to either retain or add, and how well the draft corridor concept aligns with the vision; input was also sought on two different ideas

for a grade-separated crossing at Omaha Street. The survey provided several opportunities for open-ended comments, many of which were positive reactions to the plan’s intent.

A key question near the end of the survey asked respondents to rate the draft corridor concept based on how well it achieves the plan vision and goals on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the worst and 10 being the best. As shown in the chart at right, the majority of respondents rated the draft concept highly – responses of 7, 8, 9, and 10 were the four most common and the average rating was approximately 7. While refinements and additions were made to the draft concept in response to community and stakeholder input and further evaluation, this result demonstrated that initial recommendations were on the right track.

Corridor Concept Rating



*“Everything I’ve seen so far has my support 100%. This project is exactly what Rapid City needs”*

*“It is projects like this that will make Rapid City even more enjoyable for residents and visitors”*



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

Sixth Street is a six-block corridor centrally located between Columbus Street and Omaha Street in downtown Rapid City, approximately a half-mile long. The corridor includes seven intersections; four are stop-controlled and three are signalized (St. Joseph Street, Main Street, and Omaha Street/SD 44). The transportation facilities vary by block but generally include one travel lane in each direction, on-street diagonal parking, shared lane markings, and sidewalks. Employees, students, residents, and visitors all rely on Sixth Street as pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists.

An assessment of existing facilities and adjacent uses was conducted to understand Sixth Street. Understanding the corridor's existing conditions, deficiencies, and opportunities related to transportation is an important first step to informing the development of near- and long-term recommendations. This section provides an overview of Sixth Street's existing conditions, emphasizing the transportation functionality and context. This information reflects available data from Spring 2020.



## Sixth Street and Columbus Street Intersection

As shown in **Figure 1**, Sixth Street terminates on the south end at the Performing Arts Center/Rapid City High School, previously used as Dakota Middle School. This intersection is an all-way stop controlled intersection with marked crosswalks on all three street approaches. The western and northern sidewalk approaches are ADA accessible and have truncated domes on the approaches. Off-street parking is available adjacent to the intersection.

## Sixth Street Between Columbus Street and Quincy Street

Sixth Street between Columbus Street and Quincy Street provides one travel lane in each direction, shared-lane markings for cyclists, and approximately 26 unmetered parking spots with a 2-hour limit unless the vehicle owner purchases a parking pass for this zone. The northbound lane is approximately 17' wide and the southbound lane is approximately 19' wide. Detached sidewalks are present on both sides of the street, approximately 6' wide on the west side and 5' wide on the east side. Alley access is provided mid-block. See **Figure 1** for more details.



## Sixth Street and Quincy Street Intersection

The Sixth Street and Quincy Street intersection is an all-way stop controlled intersection with marked crosswalks on all four street approaches. Quincy Street offers shared-lane markings for cyclists. All sidewalk approaches are ADA accessible and have truncated domes on the approaches. The Rapid Ride Jefferson Route and Coolidge Route travel on Quincy Street and crosses Sixth Street at this intersection.

## Sixth Street Between Quincy Street and Kansas City Street

Sixth Street between Quincy Street and Kansas City Street provides one travel lane in each direction, shared-lane markings for cyclists, and approximately 30 unmetered parking spots with a 2-hour limit unless the vehicle owner purchases a parking pass for this zone. The northbound and southbound travel lanes are both approximately 17' wide. Detached and attached sidewalks are present on both sides of the street and vary from approximately 5' wide to 18' wide. Alley access is provided mid-block. The Rapid City Public Library is one of the prominent community amenities on this block. See **Figure 1** for more details.



## Sixth Street and Kansas City Street Intersection

The Sixth Street and Kansas City intersection is an all-way stop controlled intersection with marked crosswalks on all four street approaches. These crosswalks are identified through paint and colored concrete. The intersection is enhanced with landscaped bulb-outs and amenities like benches and street lighting. Kansas City Street offers a wide shared use

path for pedestrian and cyclists on the south side. All sidewalk approaches are ADA accessible and have truncated domes on the approaches.

## Sixth Street Between Kansas City Street and St. Joseph Street

Sixth Street between Kansas City Street and St. Joseph Street provides one travel lane in each direction, shared-lane markings for cyclists, and approximately 33 metered parking spots. The northbound and southbound travel lanes are both approximately 13' wide. Detached and attached sidewalks are present on both sides of the street and vary from approximately 9' wide to 15' wide. Alley access is provided mid-block. Off-street parking is available on this block. The RapidRide Washington Route travels on this block of Sixth Street.

## Sixth Street and St. Joseph Street Intersection

The Sixth Street and St. Joseph Street intersection is a signalized intersection with marked crosswalks on all four street approaches. The intersection is enhanced with landscaped bulb-outs and amenities like benches, street lighting, and public art. St. Joseph Street is a one-way street headed eastbound. All sidewalk approaches are ADA accessible and have truncated domes on the approaches.

## Sixth Street Between St. Joseph Street and Main Street

Sixth Street between St. Joseph Street and Main Street provides one travel lane in each direction, a center turn-lane, shared-lane markings for cyclists, and approximately 22 metered parking spots. All lanes, including the center turn lane, are approximately 11' wide in this block. Attached sidewalks are present on both sides of the street and are approximately 9' wide. Alley access is provided mid-block. The historic Hotel Alex Johnson, the Elks theater and multiple restaurants and businesses are some of the prominent community destinations on this block. The RapidRide School Tripper Route travels on this block of Sixth Street. See **Figure 2** for more details.

## Sixth Street and Main Street Intersection

The Sixth Street and Main Street intersection is a signalized intersection with marked crosswalks on all four street approaches. The intersection is enhanced with landscaped bulb-outs and amenities such as benches, street lighting, and public art. Main Street is a one-way street headed westbound. All sidewalk approaches are ADA accessible and have truncated domes on the approaches. Main Street Square is one of the prominent community amenities adjacent to this block. See **Figure 2** for more details.

## Sixth Street Between Main Street and Apolda Street

Sixth Street between Main Street and Apolda Street provides one travel lane in each direction, shared-lane markings for cyclists, and approximately 9 metered parking spots. The northbound and southbound travel lanes are approximately 15' wide. Off-street parking at the Main Street garage is accessible on this block. Attached sidewalks are present on both sides of the street and vary from approximately 9' wide to 20' wide. Alley access is provided mid-block on the west side and access to the pedestrian plaza is available from the east side. Main Street Square is one of the prominent community amenities on this block. The railroad crosses Sixth Street in this block. RapidRide's Borglum Route, Roosevelt Route, and the School Tripper Route all use this block of Sixth Street when accessing the Milo Barber Transportation Center.

## Sixth Street Between Apolda Street and Omaha Street

Sixth Street between Apolda Street and Omaha Street provides one travel lane in each direction, shared-lane markings for cyclists, and approximately 23 metered parking spots. The northbound and southbound travel lanes are both approximately 14' wide. Attached sidewalks are present on both sides of the street and are approximately 18' wide. The Milo Barber Transportation Center and Rapid City City Hall are some of the prominent community destinations on this block. A pedestrian plaza is located adjacent to City Hall. The RapidRide Lincoln Route, Roosevelt Route, Borglum Route, Coolidge Route and School Tripper Route all

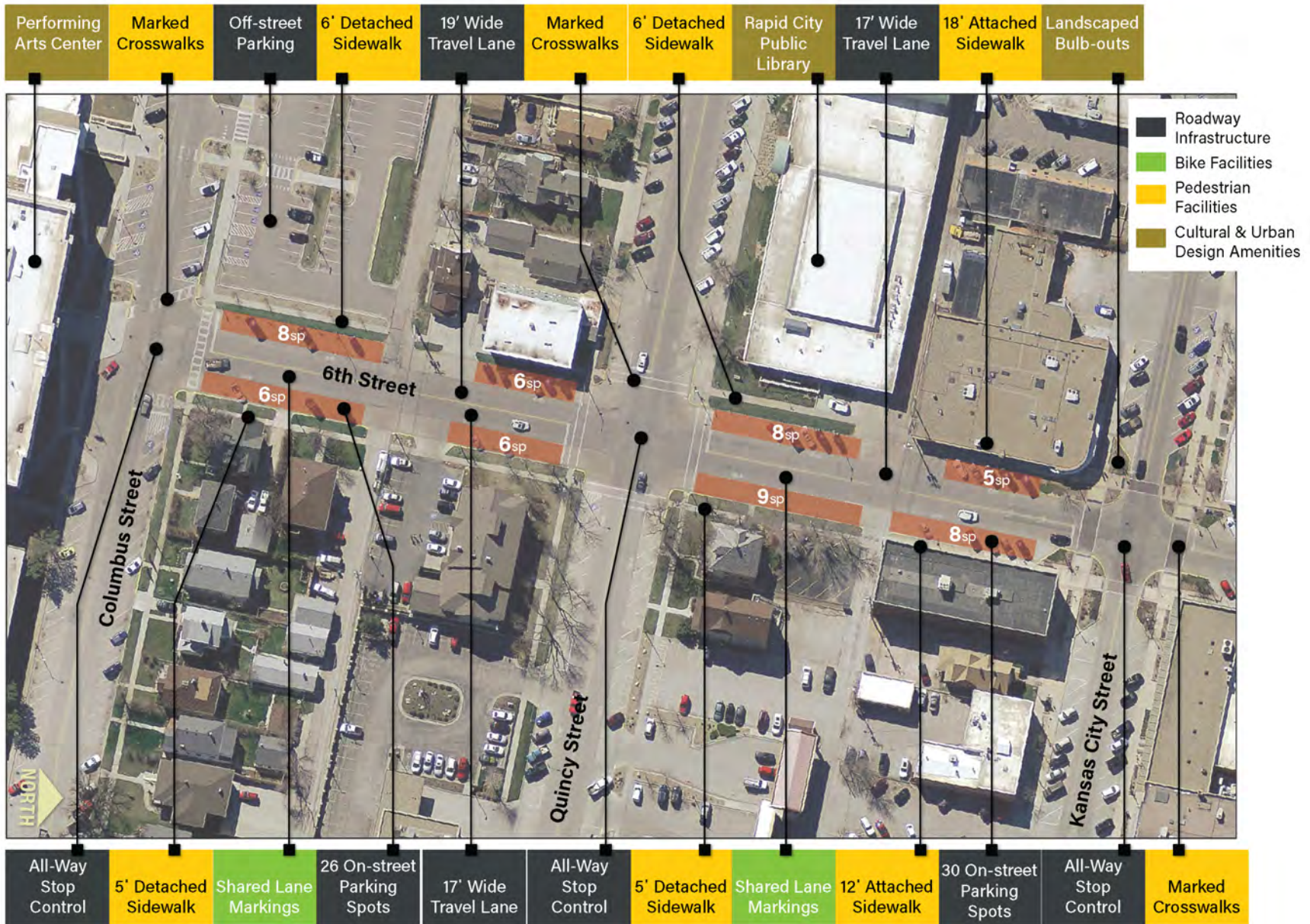
circulate on Sixth Street and Apolda Street when accessing the Milo Barber Transportation Center.



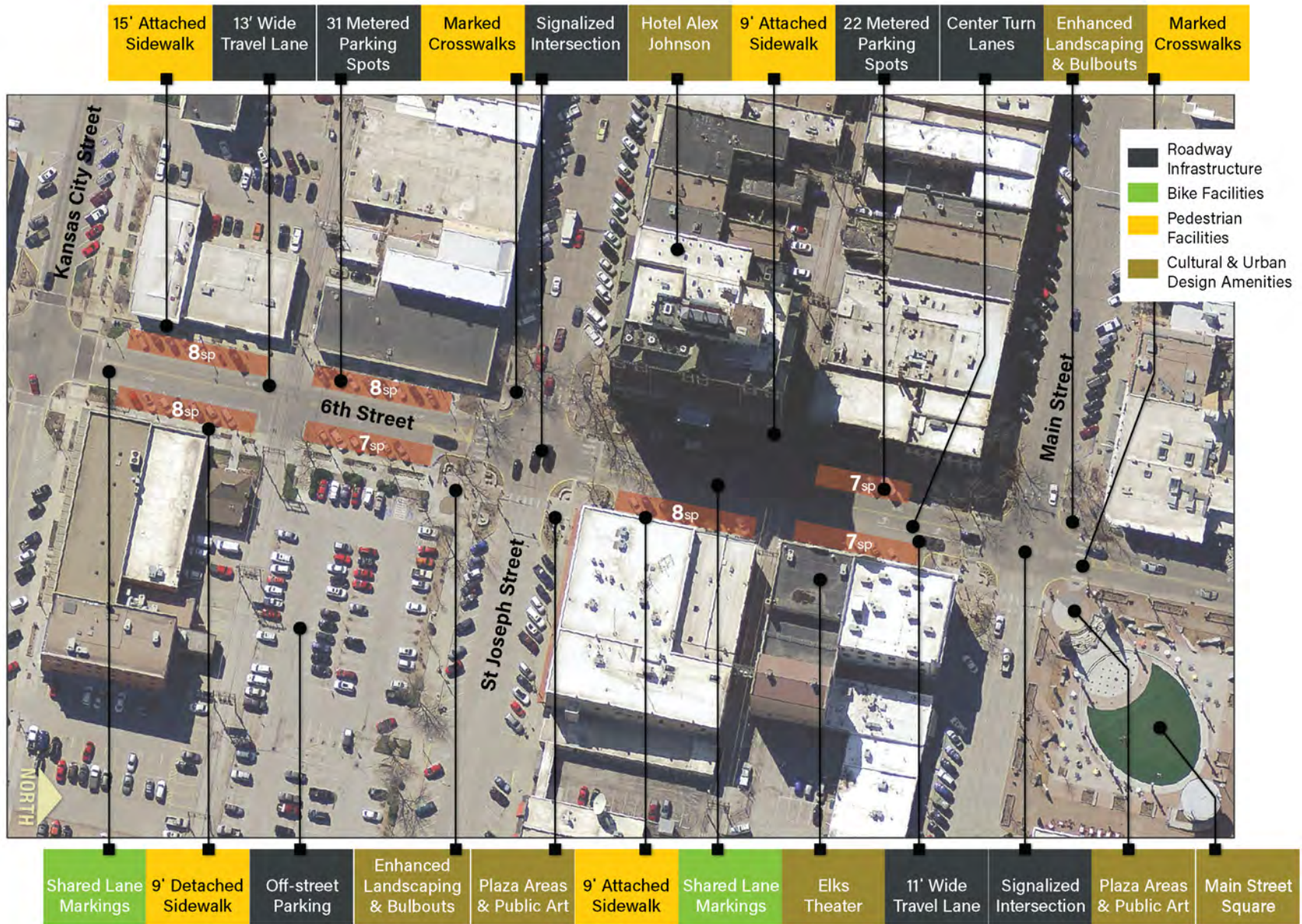
## Sixth Street and Omaha Street Intersection

The Sixth Street and Omaha Street intersection is a signalized intersection with marked crosswalks on all three street approaches. The crosswalks across Omaha Street break at the center median and require the pedestrian to cross the street in two phases. Omaha Street is wide, with three 12' travel lanes in each direction, making the pedestrian crossing approximately 110' wide. All sidewalk approaches are ADA accessible and have truncated domes on the approaches. The intersection is enhanced with landscaped bulb-outs and a center, landscaped median. Memorial Park is one of the prominent community amenities adjacent to this intersection. Many RapidRide routes circulate on Sixth Street and Omaha Street when accessing the Milo Barber Transportation Center. See **Figure 3** for more details.

**Figure 1. Sixth Street, Columbus Street to Kansas City Street**

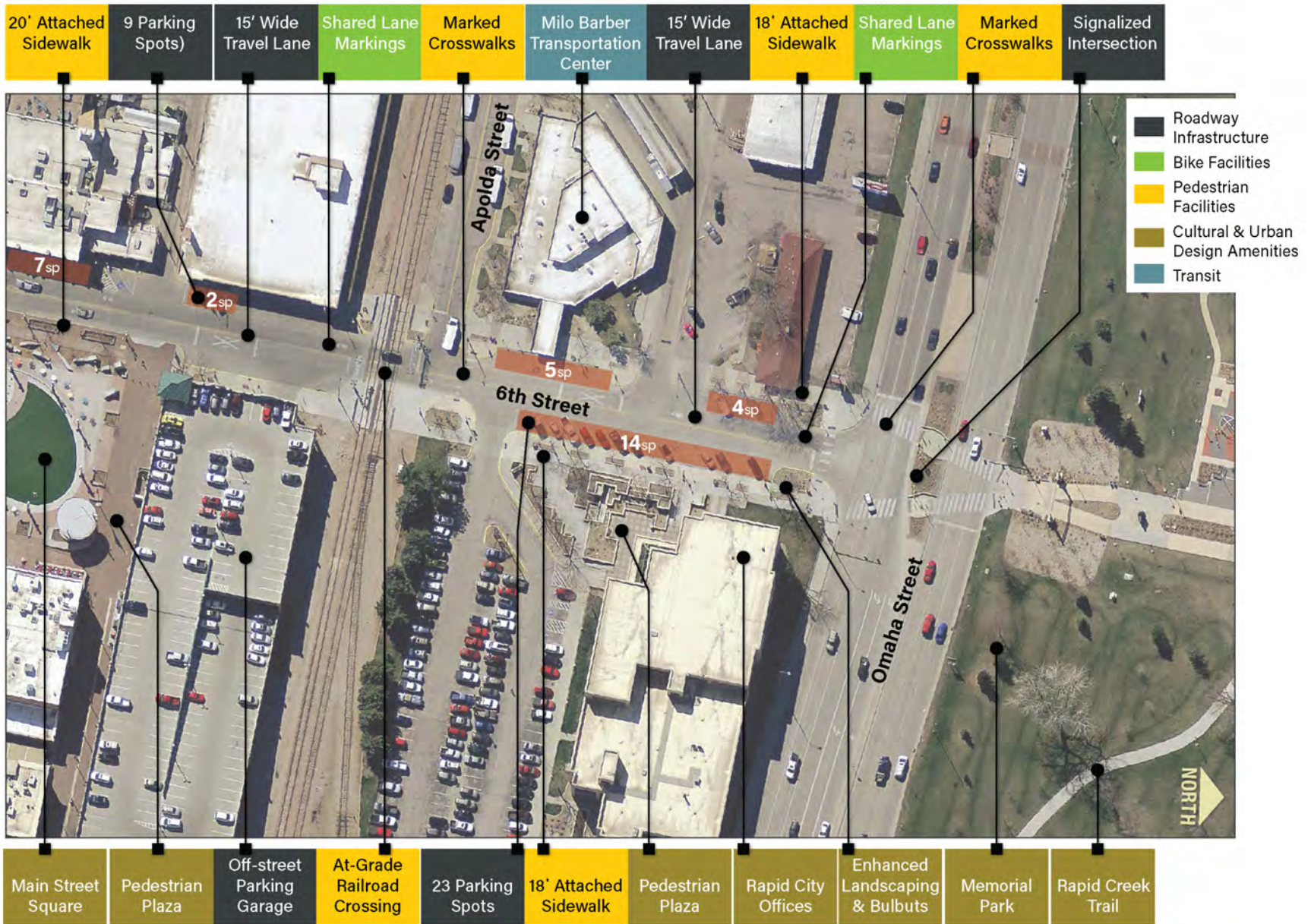


**Figure 2. Sixth Street, Kansas City Street to Main Street**





**Figure 3. Sixth Street, Main Street to Omaha Street**



## Corridor Lighting

Public outreach for the study revealed lighting to be a major concern along the corridor – numerous community members expressed that they did not always feel safe along Sixth Street at night because some of the blocks are poorly lit. To better understand the existing lighting deficiencies, the project team assessed the current amount of nighttime lighting at each intersection and alleyway along the corridor and compared to industry standards for recommended lighting levels.

Outdoor lighting levels are typically measured in units of foot-candles, which represent the degree of illuminance on a surface from a light source – one foot-candle is the equivalent of one lumen per square foot. Guidance from the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) recommends a lighting level of approximately 1 foot-candle for roads and walkways through commercial areas such as downtown Rapid City, with 5 foot-candles recommended in front of buildings that are active before dawn and/or after dusk.

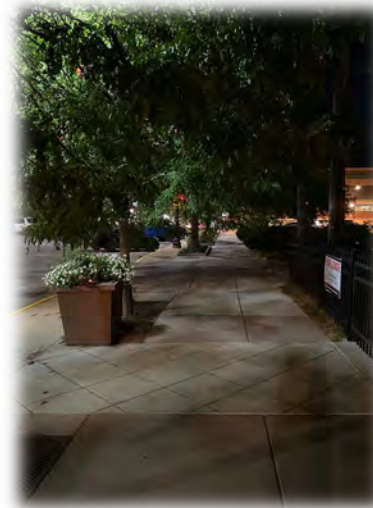
Foot-candle measurements were collected at each intersection and alleyway along Sixth Street with a light meter. **Table 1** presents the recorded measurements at each main intersection corner.

**Table 1. Corridor Foot-candle Measurements**

Intersection	SW Corner	SE Corner	NW Corner	NE Corner
<i>Columbus</i>	0.42	0.42	0.04	1.10
<i>Quincy</i>	0.10	1.25	0.25	0.40
<i>Kansas City</i>	0.46	1.75	0.10	0.16
<i>St. Joseph</i>	1.80	1.75	1.58	1.84
<i>Main</i>	1.32	0.20	2.19	0.28
<i>Omaha</i>	0.13	1.08	-	-

As shown, lighting levels along the corridor – especially south of St. Joseph Street – are largely below what is recommended by the IES. Only three corners of the Columbus Street, Quincy Street, and Kansas City Street intersections had foot-candle readings above 1; the St. Joseph Street and Main Street intersections are generally well lit though. Measurements at

mid-block alleyways were typically even lower than those recorded at the main intersections. These findings are consistent with the desire for better lighting expressed by the community.



# VISION AND GOALS

The project team collaboratively established a vision and four supporting goals to guide the development of the plan. A vision is an overarching statement of the corridor’s ideal future and provides a broad description of the primary outcome; goals are qualitative statements of desired direction towards the future conditions.

## Vision

The vision for the Sixth Street corridor is:

***“A safe, vibrant, and connected Sixth Street corridor with a unified character that supports mobility and community vitality.”***



## Goals

The four goals include:

- **Safety** – To establish an environment where users of all modes feel secure throughout the day
- **Accessibility** – To ensure safe, comfortable, and convenient access along the corridor for all modes of transportation
- **Connection** – To develop a thoroughfare that supports movement between the civic center and the Performing Arts Center
- **Character/Identity** – To develop a unifying theme that is consistent along the corridor

These four goals guided the development and evaluation of design elements and recommendations for the corridor. The goals will also inform prioritization and implementation.

## What We Heard

The project teams sought input from the public on the goals during the second phase of outreach in May 2020. When asked, ‘Which of the project goals resonates most with you?’, Safety was the top ranked goal following by Accessibility, Character/Identity, and then Connection.

*“Rapid City should be a community where everyone that visits and lives feels safe”*

Generally, survey respondents emphasized the following for each goal:

- **Safety** – desire for separation between active users (bicycles and pedestrians) and vehicles; desire for the City to address loitering and homelessness concerns along the corridor
- **Accessibility** – desire for a better crossing at Omaha Street
- **Character/Identity** – desire for a corridor that will draw people to downtown
- **Connection** – desire for a more consistent experience for traveling along both the downtown and Memorial Park sides of the corridor

*“Shortly after moving here, I was amazed to discover the very nice Memorial Park and associated Rapid Creek greenways. My wife and I also fell in love with downtown. But we were disappointed that these two great places did not have a better connection. Omaha Street is a barrier. Memorial Park and the Civic Center are great assets to Downtown and vice versa, but they could be so much more together if they were better connected.”*

# EVALUATION APPROACH & PROCESS

In developing a recommended concept for the transformation of Sixth Street into a vibrant, safe, and connected corridor for everyone, the project team drew on numerous resources to identify potential improvements for evaluation, including:

- Public and stakeholder input
- Advisory team collaboration
- Industry best practices

These resources, along with the assessment of existing conditions, proved valuable in establishing an understanding of the corridor’s needs. They also provided some initial ideas for consideration.

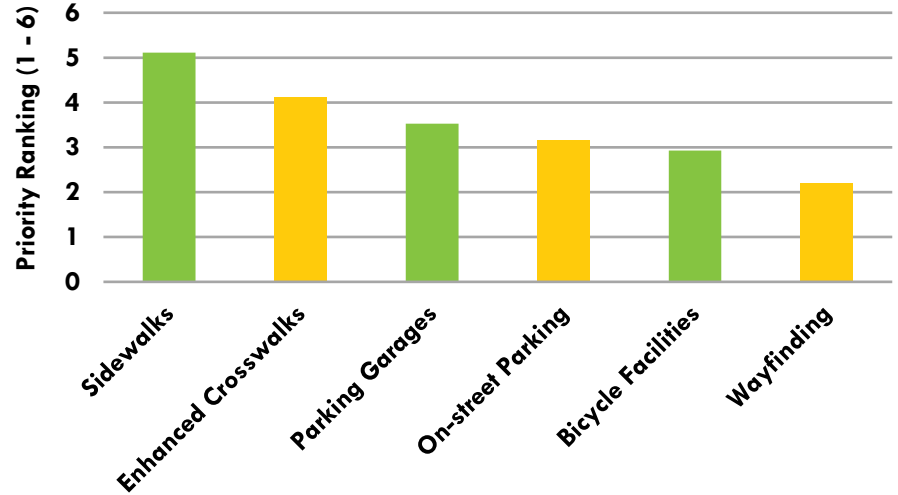
## Public and Stakeholder Input

The public meetings held early on in the project allowed the project team an opportunity to directly engage with community members and hear their thoughts regarding current conditions along Sixth Street. Meeting attendees were asked to identify both what they like about the corridor today and what they would like changed, and their responses helped formulate an initial list of elements that should either be retained or considered for improvement with the recommended concept.

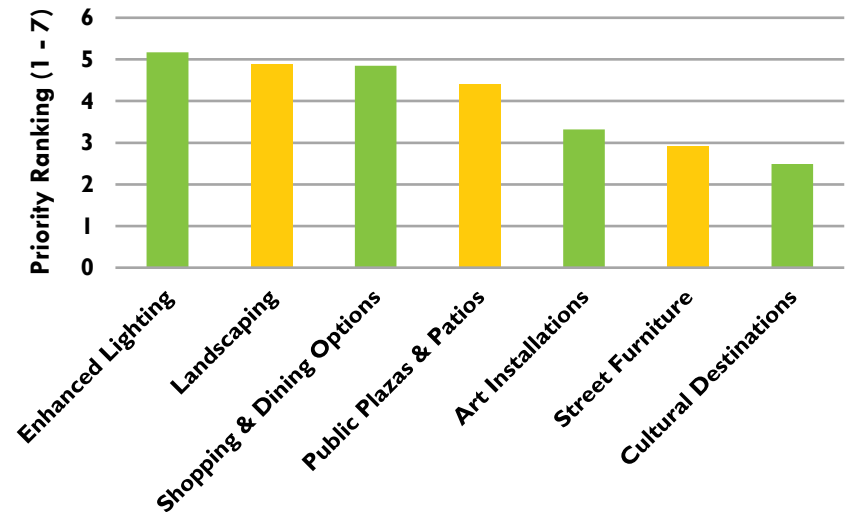
Common existing elements identified as being appreciated by the community included the supply of on-street parking, local artwork, and the numerous nearby amenities and destinations such as Main Street Square. Common existing elements identified as being concerns were the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations (or lack thereof), street lighting, and loitering.

The online survey conducted in June 2020 was designed to gather more detailed input from community members on what they would like to see Sixth Street become in the future, both in terms of transportation and community amenities. Two questions in particular shed light on priorities for the corridor.

Priority of Transportation Elements



Priority of Community Amenities



As the first of the two bar charts show, elements that support pedestrians – both sidewalks and crosswalks – were the clear transportation priority among the over 500 survey responses. This is consistent with the overall vision of Sixth Street as a vibrant destination in itself that supports community gathering. Many respondents also identified parking as an important element for Sixth Street; the recommended concept retains the majority of existing on-street parking spaces along the corridor.

The identification of enhanced lighting as the top priority for community amenities along the corridor is consistent both with what was heard during the public meetings and with the identification of safety as the most important project goal in another survey question – ample lighting makes for a more secure, comfortable environment. Landscaping and options for shopping and dining emerged as other highly prioritized amenities for the community. The recommended concept for Sixth Street incorporates all of these - enhanced lighting and landscaping are proposed along the corridor's entirety, and numerous blocks are identified as having potential for mixed-use redevelopment.

Given the limited nature of both resources and physical space, these community priorities are critical to understand. Knowing which of these transportation elements and amenities the community sees as being critical to achieving this vision for Sixth Street helps the City focus on implementing those first; lower priorities elements and amenities can then be added as remaining space and additional resources allow.

## Study Advisory Team

A Study Advisory Team (SAT) composed of public and private sector representatives met monthly throughout the planning process and guided the evaluation and recommendation processes. Because Sixth Street – including both the downtown and Memorial Park sides – serves many important functions in Rapid City, close coordination among multiple City departments was critical to developing practical recommendations; Community Development, Parks, Public Works, Traffic, and Transit were all involved. Omaha Street is a state highway and any recommendations that would impact its operation require coordination with SDDOT and FHWA, so representatives from each were also part of the SAT. Representatives for Rapid City's downtown business community and bicycling community participated as well.

## Industry Best Practices

The past decade or so has brought about a wealth of new research and insight into how best to allocate street space in a way that is safe, comfortable, and convenient for all modes of transportation. Much of that research has been compiled into guidance documents from organizations like the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) that are widely recognized as industry standards for urban transportation design. Given a specific context, these resources can help identify appropriate bicycle and pedestrian treatments.

### Bicycle Facilities

While bicycle facilities were a lower transportation priority than pedestrian treatments and parking in the survey, dozens of open-ended comments from respondents expressed a desire for bike lanes and/or other bicycle-specific elements. The downtown side of the corridor currently has shared-lane markings, or sharrows, and limited bike parking adjacent to a few destinations.

The comfort of bicycling along any particular street can be assessed with a tool known as the Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) – developed by the Mineta Transportation Institute in 2012 – that considers characteristics such as traffic speeds and volumes, and number of lanes. Streets are graded on a scale of 1 to 4, with LTS 1 representing a facility most users would feel comfortable bicycling on and LTS 4 representing a facility only the most dedicated and confident bicyclists (approximately 4-7% of the general population) would use. LTS 1 and 2 facilities are considered low-stress; Sixth Street, based on its current characteristics, is an LTS 1 facility. For comparison, Fifth Street and Omaha Street are both LTS 4 facilities. Although the Sixth Street corridor is already a low-stress environment for bicycling, several other types of bicycle facilities – summarized in **Table 2** – were evaluated for potential implementation through the downtown portion.

**Table 2. Bicycle Facility Types**

Shared Roadway			
Description	Typical Context	Planning Level Cost	Sixth Street Considerations
 <p>Signed bike routes, often including shared lane markings</p>	Posted speed limits up to 25 miles per hour and traffic volumes up to 3,000 vehicles per day	\$	Shared lane markings currently exist along Sixth Street; spot intersection improvements could be implemented for a relatively low cost
Bike Lanes			
Description	Typical Context	Planning Level Cost	Sixth Street Considerations
 <p>Exclusive spaces for bicyclists indicated by using striping, symbols, and signage</p>	Posted speed limits up to 35 mph and traffic volumes up to 6,500 vpd	\$\$	The existing traveled way along Sixth Street are wide enough to implement bike lanes, but bike lanes behind pull-in angled parking spaces are not recommended; on-street parking would need to be configured to a parallel or reverse angled configuration to implement comfortable bike lanes
Buffered Bike Lanes			
Description	Typical Context	Planning Level Cost	Sixth Street Considerations
 <p>Exclusive spaces for bicyclists with an additional flush, painted buffer space</p>	Posted speed limits up to 30 mph and traffic volumes up to 6,500 vpd	\$\$\$	The existing traveled way along Sixth Street is not wide enough to implement buffered bike lanes; on-street parking would need to be reconfigured to a parallel or reverse angled configuration to provide sufficient space for buffers
Separated Bike Lanes			
Description	Typical Content	Planning Level Cost	Sixth Street Considerations
 <p>Exclusive spaces for bicyclists physically separated from motor vehicle traffic with a vertical element</p>	Posted speed limits above 30 mph and traffic volumes above 6,500 vpd	\$\$\$	The existing traveled way along Sixth Street is not wide enough to implement separated bike lanes and the angled parking would conflict with any physical elements; the street would require substantial reconfiguration – likely by converting to parallel parking and widening the raised sidewalk space – to implement separated bike lanes
Sidepaths			
Description	Typical Context	Planning Level Cost	Sixth Street Considerations
 <p>Paths physically separated from motor vehicle traffic and used by all non-motorized modes</p>	Posted speed limits above 30 mph and traffic volumes above 6,500 vpd	\$\$\$	Directing bicycle traffic off-street along Sixth Street would introduce the potential for conflicts with pedestrians, store fronts, street furniture, and landscaping

Sixth Street's traffic characteristics – a 25 mph speed limit, a few thousand vehicles per day – are typical of shared lane facilities, and the LTS 1 designation signifies that this is an appropriate treatment. Additionally, it is likely that traffic volumes along the corridor would decrease following implementation of the proposed grade-separated crossing at the Sixth and Omaha intersection (and the related closure of that intersection to motor vehicle traffic) since many survey respondents indicated accessing Omaha Street as their most frequent reason for driving on Sixth Street.

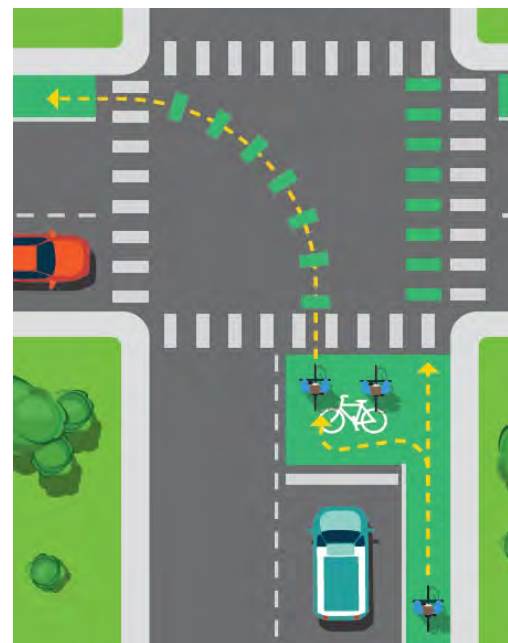
Implementation of dedicated bicycle facilities along Sixth Street would be challenging given the angled parking configuration and numerous existing bulb-outs – simply striping bike lanes behind the existing angled parking spaces would not be a comfortable treatment, so adjustments to the parking configuration and/or curb line would be required. Since the existing shared lane configuration is appropriate for current traffic characteristics, separation between bicycle and motor vehicle traffic is not included in the recommended corridor concept but could be revisited if unanticipated traffic growth along the corridor occurs in the future.

### Intersection Treatments

Intersections are often the most stressful part of a biking or walking trip because they introduce additional potential points of conflict between active users and motor vehicles. Bicycle and pedestrian-involved motor vehicle crashes are more common at intersections than along street segments as well. Given the considerable safety and comfort concerns, much effort has gone into innovating better intersection treatments for active transportation; these are generally intended to make the presence of bicyclists and pedestrians more prominent and to eliminate as many conflicting movements as possible.

Along Sixth Street, the most stressful intersection for active users is at Omaha Street, which is wide and heavily-traveled; the proposed grade-separation at this intersection would address the concerns with that crossing. The other intersections of concern along the corridor are those with Main Street and Saint Joseph Street, the two widest and busiest east-west streets through Rapid City's downtown core. At signalized intersections such as these, where there are no designated bike facilities and turning-movement conflicts are possible, bike boxes have become a popular treatment option.

Figure 4. Bike Box Diagram



Bike boxes, as shown in **Figure 4**, provide a space for bicyclists to wait ahead of motor vehicles during a red signal. This placement at the front enhances safety by mitigating the risks of both 'right-hook' crashes and left-turn conflicts. When – as on Sixth Street – bicyclists do not have a designated bike lane to continue on past the intersection, bike boxes also provide them a head start to get into receiving shared lanes before motor vehicles. The segment of Sixth Street between St. Joseph Street and Main Street has narrower travel lanes than the rest of the corridor due to the inclusion of a center turn lane; implementing bike boxes on either end of this segment would make it easier for bicyclists to pass through.

# CORRIDOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Many of the elements that make up a high-quality pedestrian-oriented environment – major community destinations, wide sidewalks, local artwork – are already in place along Sixth Street, but the corridor as a whole is lacking consistency. The blocks between Columbus Street and Kansas City Street feel very different from those between Kansas City Street and Omaha Street, and the downtown side is different from the Memorial Park side. The corridor concept, presented on **Figures 5 – 12**, recommends a consistent set of infrastructure and amenity improvements throughout to bring a sense of cohesion and vibrancy all the way from the Performing Arts Center to Rushmore Plaza Civic Center.

## Corridor Elements

### Enhanced Lighting

Ample lighting is vital to establishing a safe and comfortable environment for living, gathering, and traveling. Sixth Street is home to many local businesses – the Hotel Alex Johnson and Elks Theatre, to name a few – that have a lot of activity outside of daylight hours, so maintaining a high degree of visibility when natural light is limited or absent is critical to supporting them and their patrons.

New streetlights have been installed in recent years along Main Street that provide a greater amount of light, and the recommended corridor concept includes replacing existing Sixth Street streetlights with these same fixtures to provide more consistent lighting throughout downtown. A more detailed lighting study for the corridor could be considered to help understand where this enhanced lighting is most needed.



### Enhanced Crosswalks

Street crossings can detract from the cohesive feel and vibrancy of a corridor when through pedestrian movement is not prioritized. While many of the intersections along Sixth Street are not particularly busy or stressful, they all have basic striped crosswalks which represent visual breaks in the pedestrian realm. Replacing these crosswalks with paving treatments that mimic the existing sidewalks around Main Street Square would clearly signify to all users that pedestrian traffic is the priority throughout the corridor.

### Art Installations



Artwork reflective of the community it is located in contributes significantly and meaningfully to placemaking efforts, and makes for a more engaging environment to live, play, and work in. Rapid City and the greater Black Hills region have a rich artistic and cultural history to build upon, as highlighted in the *Rapid City Cultural Plan*. Sixth Street is already home to many sculptures and other art installations but – particularly on the south end and through Memorial Park – there are opportunities to further enhance the cultural vibrancy of the corridor. The new bulb-outs at the Kansas City Street, Quincy Street, and Columbus Street intersections and widened

sidewalks throughout will provide space to display more work from local artists that highlights Native American heritage, Western themes, and other cultural benchmarks of the community; installations that recall other local landmarks like Dinosaur Park could also be considered to tie the corridor in with the rest of Rapid City. Larger open spaces on the grade-separated crossing and through Memorial Park offer opportunities for grand gateway-style installations that welcome people and signify the standing of Sixth Street as a key regional corridor for arts and culture.



## Sidewalk Planters

Similar to art installation, landscaping is fundamental to placemaking. Urban jungles of concrete and asphalt with little variation in color or texture do not make for an inviting environment; just a few trees and other plantings can go a long way towards livening it up. Shade trees also offer respite from the elements. And for Sixth Street in particular, landscaping offers an opportunity to replicate some of Memorial Park's natural feel along the downtown side of the corridor.



The blocks of Sixth Street between Kansas City Street and Main Street are already well-landscaped with large bulb-outs at every intersection corner and frequent sidewalk planters. South of Kansas City Street, however, the landscaping primarily consists of grass strips, with a few trees sparsely distributed. The sidewalk widening envisioned throughout this portion of the corridor will provide space for more inviting landscaping treatments around community destinations like the library and Performing Arts Center.

## Bike Boxes

The portion of Sixth Street between St. Joseph Street and Main Street has reduced travel lane widths in order to accommodate a center turn lane, so there is less room for both bicyclists and motor vehicles to maneuver. Bike boxes are recommended at the northbound approach from St. Joseph Street and the southbound approach from Main Street to allow bicyclists a head start through this constrained segment of the corridor; moving bicyclists ahead of motor vehicles at these two locations would reduce the risks of sideswipes or turning conflicts. Future repaving plans for Sixth Street would be an opportunity to apply these new roadway markings.

## Bicycle Parking

Sufficient bicycle parking is a critical component of any multimodal corridor – if people are not confident that they will have a safe and convenient place available to store their bicycle at their destination, it is unlikely that they will choose to bike there. The Sixth Street corridor, despite offering a comfortable environment for bicycling, does not currently have any bike racks on the downtown side (there are a few in Memorial Park).



Bike racks are often installed on sidewalks, but that can become an issue in dense urban settings with a lot of pedestrian activity and other street furniture. Conversion of select on-street parking spaces is a simple, cost-effective solution for adding bike parking without adding obstacles to the sidewalk. One angled parking space outfitted with bike racks can fit as many as 10 bicycles; the Sixth Street corridor concept recommends adding bike racks to about a dozen existing parking space throughout the downtown side.

## Flex Zones & Parklets

Local businesses and organizations can expand their presence into the public realm by finding creative ways to utilize the outdoor spaces around their buildings. On-street parking, which takes up a substantial amount of land in many cities, offers a particularly great opportunity for activation of space that usually just serves empty vehicles – temporary conversions to al fresco dining space, pop-up retail shops, and temporary parklets have been implemented throughout the world, and in many cases these conversions have ultimately been made permanent after positive community feedback.



Along Sixth Street, two strips of on-street parking are recommended for so-called ‘flex zones’: just north of the Performing Arts Center and adjacent to Hay Camp Brewing Company. These establishments and other nearby businesses could make use of these spaces for occasional events and programming, while keeping them available for parking at other times. New and existing bulb-outs along Sixth Street could also be configured to include permanent parklets with space for outdoor seating.

## Plaza Space

A step beyond temporary conversion of on-street parking to more active uses is the provision of permanent plaza spaces for year-round use. Any corridor that seeks to itself be a destination rather than just a means to accessing other destinations needs to have plentiful gathering spaces throughout for both residents and visitors to rest and interact. Lighting and art can both be integrated as components of a pedestrian plaza, as well as street furniture like benches and picnic-style tables.

The outdoor space in front of City Hall is underutilized today, with most employees and visitors just entering and exiting the building throughout the day rather than gathering out front. The proposed closure of the Omaha Street intersection would – as shown in the recommended concept – allow

for expansion into existing streetspace and development of a park-like environment that would serve as an entrance to downtown for people coming from Memorial Park.

This plaza could also be utilized by RapidRide patrons waiting for buses and by the local businesses west of City Hall.



Santa Fe Plaza – Santa Fe, New Mexico

Expanded building plazas are also recommended in front of the Rapid City Public Library and the mixed-use development planned for the southeast corner of Sixth Street and St. Joseph Street. The library fronts Quincy Street, a less pedestrian-oriented street, so plaza space along Sixth Street would give it the opportunity to conduct outdoor programming with greater exposure to the public.

## Building Frontage

Several of the buildings along Sixth Street do not currently have doors or windows that face the corridor, limiting the amount of interaction the businesses inside them have with people walking, biking, or driving by. A lack of frontage also makes it more difficult to activate those blocks. The corridor concept recommends that – as redevelopment and funding allow – the layout of these buildings be reconfigured to include doors opening on to Sixth Street in order to integrate them and their uses with the corridor. This is a recommended land-use change that would not be initiated or funded by the City.

## Memorial Park Improvements

The Sixth Street promenade through Memorial Park already provides a direct and high-quality connection for walking and biking between Omaha Street and the Civic Center, with ample width for people going to events, exercising, and enjoying nature to all safely and comfortably interact with each other. Recommendations for the Memorial Park side in the corridor concept are focused around extending many of the elements envisioned along the downtown side of Sixth Street – additional trees and landscaping, new art installations, and enhanced lighting – into the park as a means for better uniting the two sides. Additional interpretive signage – there is already some about the Flood of 1972 and the lives lost – is recommended along the promenade to acknowledge the important history of Memorial Park as a place of significance to Native American tribes.

In addition to the recommendations shown in the corridor concept, there are other opportunities for improvements throughout Memorial Park. The *Sixth Street Promenade Conceptual Plan* includes ideas for a variety of park enhancements that came from a series of community vision sessions. Pavilions, community gardens, outdoor fitness stations, and upgrades to the Civic Center entrance are among the potential elements highlighted in the plan; additional programs and activities, from musical performances to farmers markets, are also mentioned as possibilities.

## Sixth & Omaha Crossing

A grade-separated crossing at Omaha Street is the focal point of the envisioned concept for the Sixth Street corridor. Even with the existing at-grade pedestrian crossing, Omaha Street is a major barrier between downtown Rapid City and Memorial Park – the high volume of fast-moving traffic does not make for a comfortable environment for biking and walking. The existing crossing is also, through an agreement with SDDOT, a temporary treatment because it conflicts with future planned intersection improvements at Fifth Street. Grade separation offers a permanent solution for connecting the north and south sides of the corridor.

Full design of a grade-separated crossing requires extensive, in-depth analysis and coordination. The *Sixth and Omaha Crossing Feasibility Study (Appendix A)* assessed the transportation-related feasibility of grade separation at Sixth Street and Omaha Street; drainage, engineering, and vehicular circulation considerations will also need to be evaluated. To help

inform these further stages of evaluation and design, and to capture initial public feedback, the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan* conceptualizes two different configurations for grade separation at Omaha Street. Both would bring crossing bicyclists and pedestrians above Omaha Street – public and stakeholder input did not reveal much interest in an underpass, which comes with additional safety concerns – but the user experience would differ considerably in other ways.

## Park Cover

With the park cover concept, the elevation of Omaha Street would be lowered to provide a near-level crossing for bicyclists and pedestrians; Rapid City staff have worked with SDDOT to develop conceptual roadway profiles of how the required amount of separation could be achieved. The crossing would be a park-like environment with greenspace, multiple paths, and plentiful room for art and other amenities. Overlook spots could be provided on either side of the crossing. A City Hall plaza with room for outdoor seating would tie into the south end of the crossing. A ramp up from street grade would be provided for northbound bicyclists so that they do not need to dismount or maneuver through the plaza to access the crossing.



Klyde Warren Park – Dallas, Texas  
(©Thomas McConnell)

## Ribbon Walkway

With the ribbon walkway concept, an elevated walkway would be built over Omaha Street and accessible ramps would be provided down to ground-level on both ends; a connection to the second floor of City Hall may be possible as well. The walkway could act as a striking visual landmark for Rapid City, with opportunities for art installations, colored construction materials, and curved paths. Similar to the park cover concept, City Hall plaza – more park-like in this case – with greenspace and room for outdoor seating would tie into the south end of the crossing.



Ruyi Bridge – Chengdu, China (©Arch-Exist)

## Public Input

Although more than just these two designs will be evaluated for a permanent Omaha Street crossing, the online survey asked community members to identify which of the park cover and ribbon walkway concepts would be most appropriate as a feature of the Sixth Street corridor; an understanding of initial community preferences will help to guide future evaluation. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the over 500 survey respondents chose the park cover as their preferred crossing concept.

When asked why, respondents who chose the park cover concept provided responses including:

- The aesthetic appeal and ample greenspace
- The direct path it offers over Omaha Street
- The ample greenspace and room for local artwork

Respondents who chose the ribbon walkway concept as their preference most often cited the lesser impact to Omaha Street and an assumption that it would cost less to construct – more detailed design and evaluation is necessary to estimate costs – as their reasons.

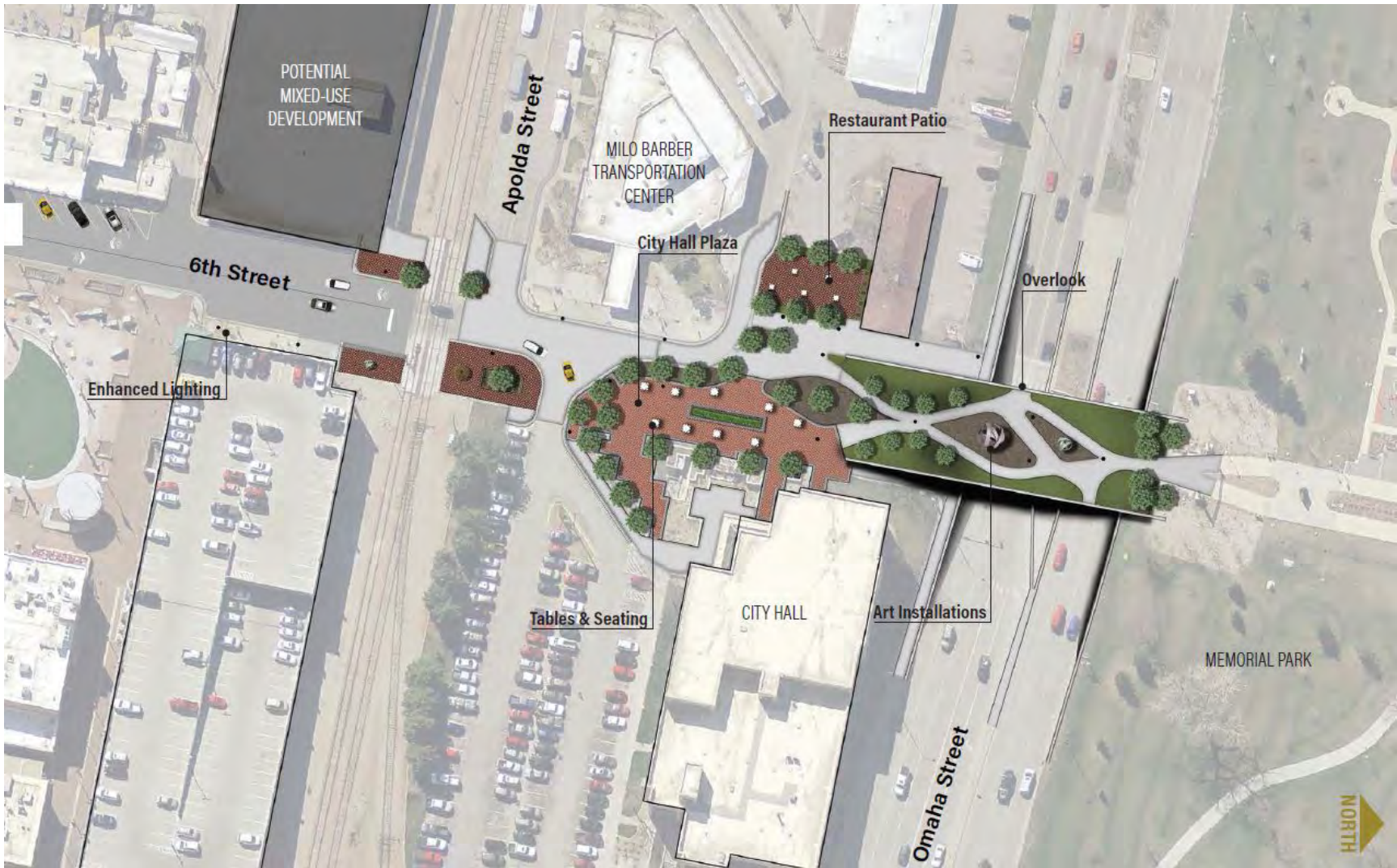
**Figure 5. Corridor Concept, Columbus Street to Kansas City Street**



Figure 6. Corridor Concept, Kansas City Street to Main Street



**Figure 7. Corridor Concept, Main Street to Omaha Street – Park Cover Crossing**



**Figure 8. Corridor Concept, Main Street to Omaha Street – Ribbon Walkway Crossing**

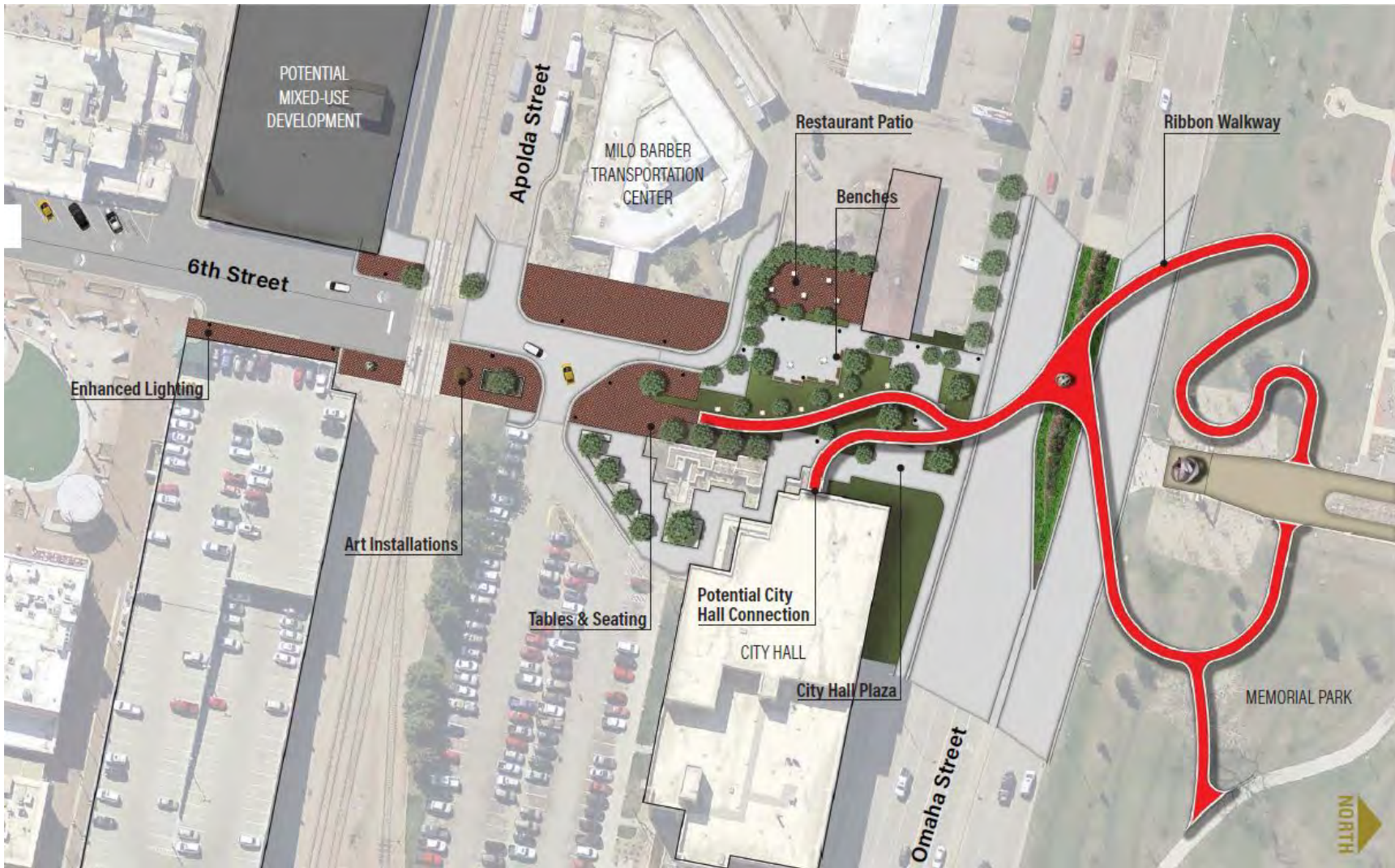




Figure 9. Corridor Concept, Memorial Park South – Park Cover Crossing

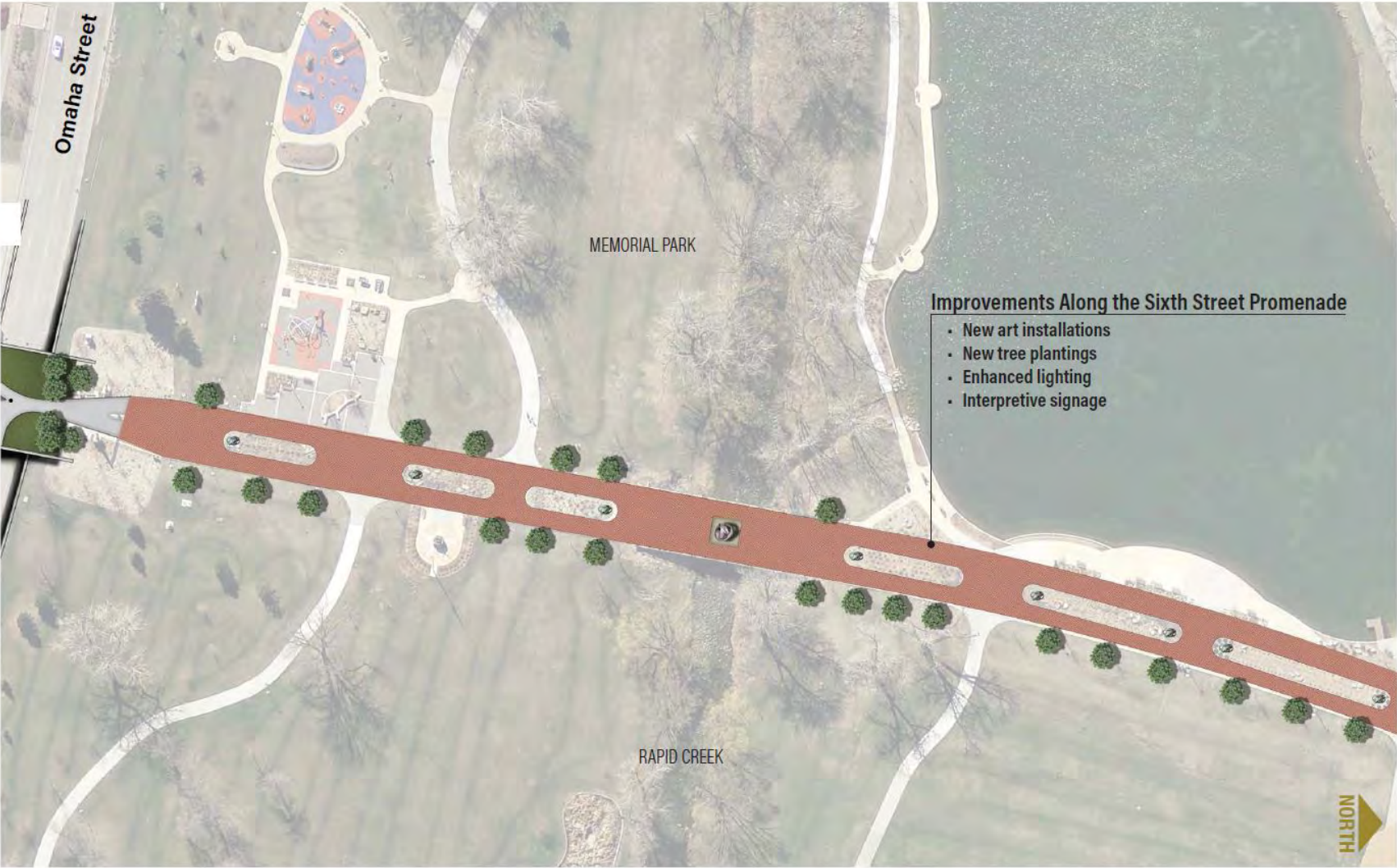


Figure 10. Corridor Concept, Memorial Park South – Ribbon Walkway Crossing

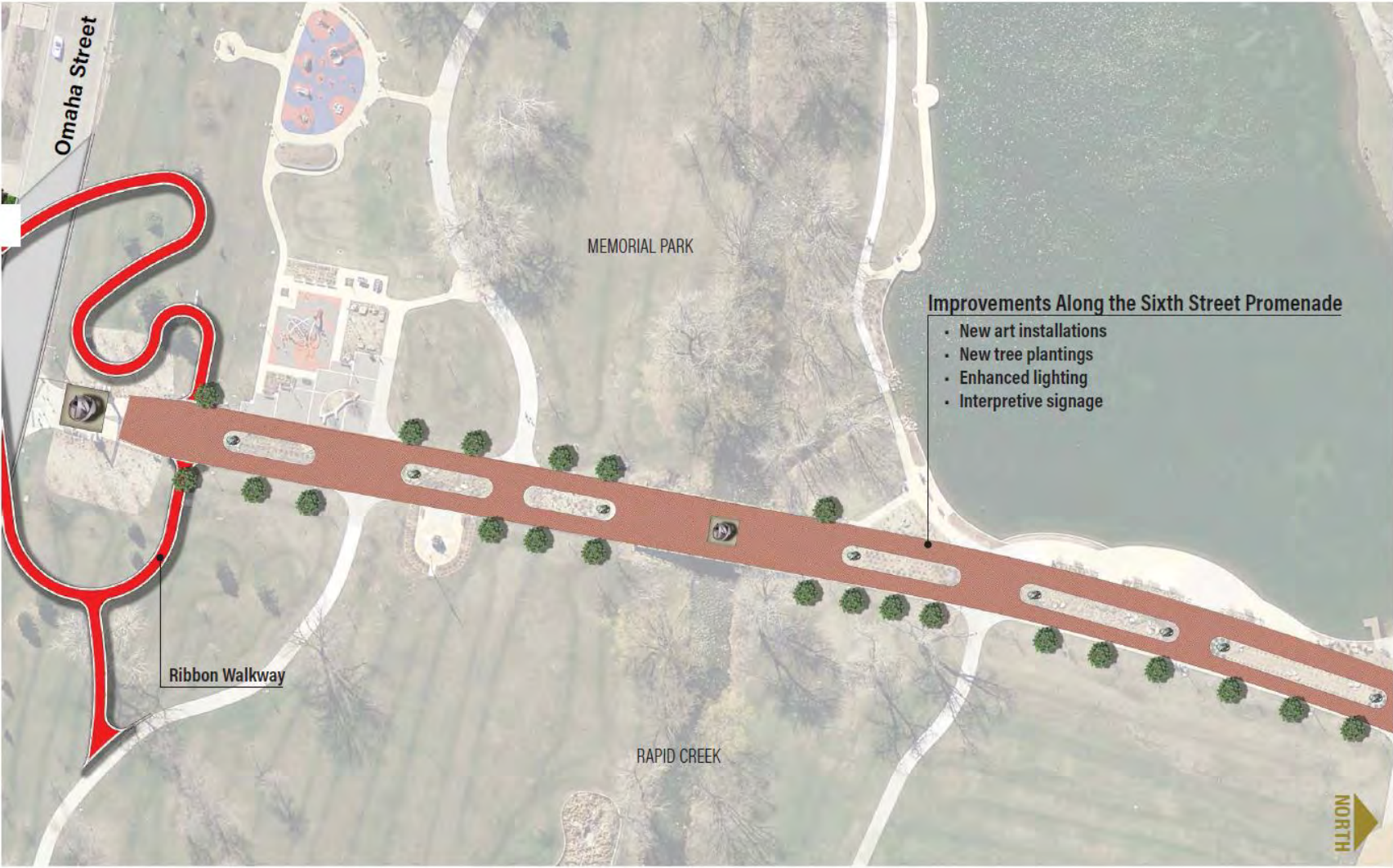
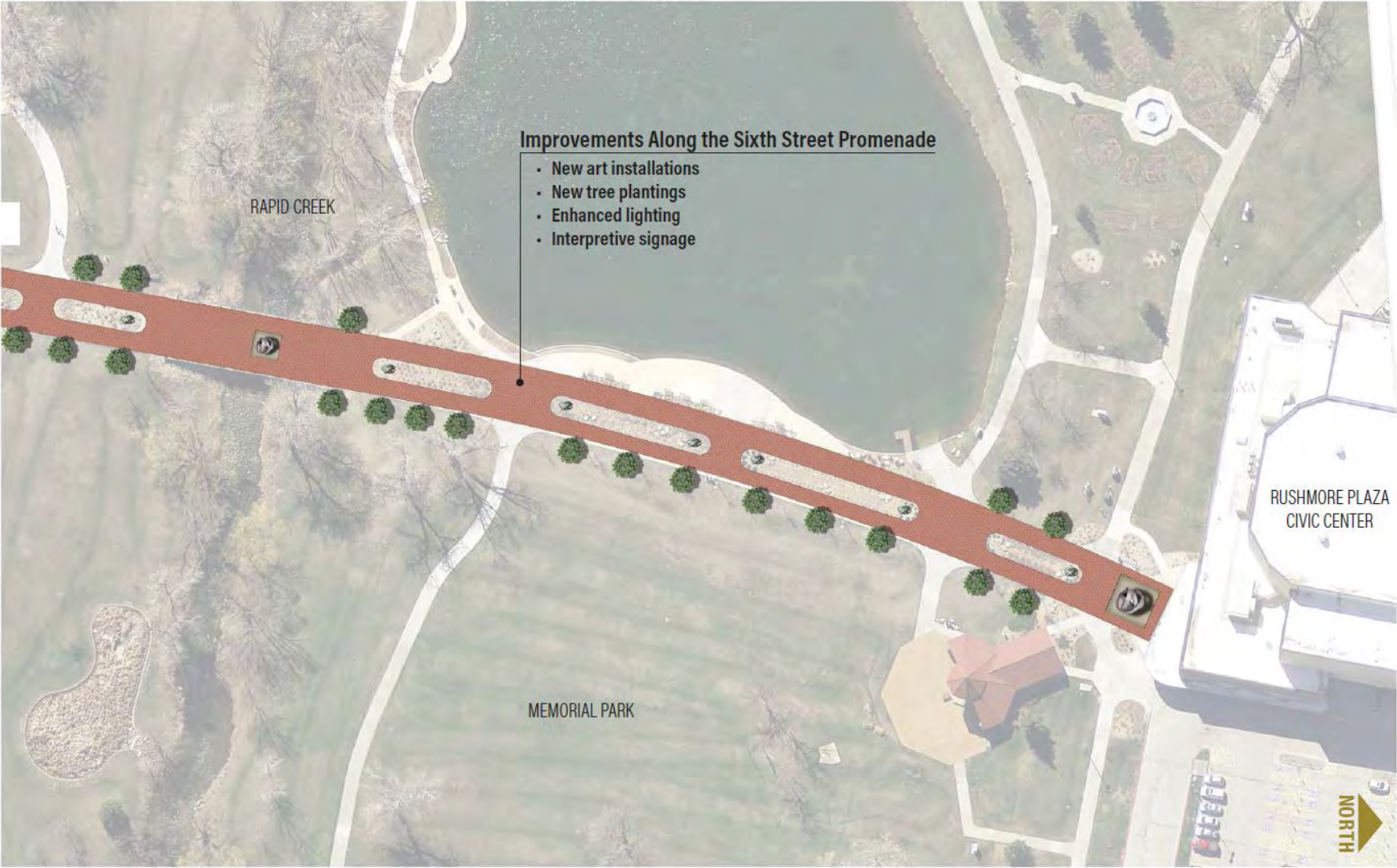


Figure 11. Corridor Concept, Memorial Park North



## NEXT STEPS

The recommended corridor concept laid out in the *Sixth Street Corridor Plan*, following several previous planning efforts and improvements already made to the corridor in recent years, represents a critical next step in bringing to fruition the vision of Sixth Street as a vibrant, safe, and connected regional destination. The efforts throughout the planning process to establish community and stakeholder consensus around the corridor concept are also valuable for building momentum towards implementation.

To continue progress towards implementing the recommendations for Sixth Street, there are a number of important next steps for Rapid City and key stakeholders to take. This plan is also intended as a living concept, with the flexibility to evolve over time as opportunities to further enhance active transportation and placemaking along the corridor arise.

## Considerations for Implementation

Rapid City does not have funding to implement all of the corridor recommendations immediately. Breaking up the corridor concept into a series of discrete elements will allow for improvements to be made gradually as different funding and partnership opportunities arise. The recommendations along Sixth Street can be grouped into several subsets to pursue separately based on the relative level of complexity, location along the corridor, and involved departments/stakeholders:

- Bicycle elements (bike boxes, bike racks)
- Streetscape (sidewalks, crosswalks, bulb-outs, landscaping)
- Sidewalk amenities (lighting, street furniture)
- Public art and placemaking projects
- Grade-separated crossing
- Memorial Park improvements

The timeline for recommendations of mixed-use development and reconfiguration of buildings to front Sixth Street will be dictated largely by economic forces outside of local agency control; implementation of the infrastructure improvements that make Sixth Street a more livable corridor are likely to spur this type of development.

## Funding & Partnership Opportunities

Funding for the array of improvements envisioned along the Sixth Street corridor is likely to come from a variety of sources. A clear phasing strategy, breaking the full concept into components like those just mentioned, will help leverage partnerships with other agencies and organizations. It may also increase the likelihood of being awarded outside funding by appealing to different groups' specific interests.

### Agency Collaboration

Close collaboration among different departments and agencies will be crucial towards advancing the design and implementation processes in the coming years. Because the corridor vision encompasses such a broad range of municipal functions – from parks to transit to economic development – the MPO and many City departments will play a role in furthering various elements of the vision. The support of partner agencies and organizations will be vital as well.

#### Rapid City Departments

- ▶ Civic Center
- ▶ Community Development
- ▶ Parks & Recreation
- ▶ Public Works
- ▶ Rapid Transit

#### Potential Partners

- ▶ Bicycle & Pedestrian Organizations
- ▶ Destination Rapid City
- ▶ FHWA
- ▶ Private Sector (business owners, local artists, etc.)
- ▶ Rapid City Arts Council
- ▶ SDDOT
- ▶ Visit Rapid City

## Potential Funding Sources

Rapid City can leverage many sources of funding to implement the corridor recommendations. Some are well-suited to support large-scale infrastructure improvements, while others are more appropriate to help fund arts and amenities along the corridor. Potential sources to consider include:

**Business Improvement District Funds** – Money allocated towards downtown Rapid City funding priorities by the Downtown Business Improvement District Board, a group of five downtown property owners; most appropriate for implementing amenities along the corridor

**Capital Improvements Plan** – 5-year plan of budgeted capital expenditures in Rapid City; the Capital Improvements Committee reviews proposed street, building, infrastructure, and other capital improvement projects and makes recommendations to City Council for which ones to incorporate into the plan

**Foundations & Grants** – Regularly made available from a variety of institutions for both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects; examples that could apply to Sixth Street improvements include federal BUILD grants (infrastructure), the National Endowment for the Arts (arts and placemaking), and the Gwendolyn L. Stearns Foundation (landscaping)

**General Funds** – A large portion of the City’s annual budget that is used to support a variety of municipal services and activities; allocated annually by elected officials based on City needs and priorities

**Transportation Alternatives Program** – Competitive grant program administered by SDDOT focused on supporting projects that enhance non-motorized travel

**Vision Fund** – A half-cent sales tax that helps fund capital projects in Rapid City; funding requests and reviewed and recommended by a citizen-led committee and approved by City Council



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