

FINAL REPORT

CHAPTER 2. WILSON STREET CONTEXT PLAN

CITY OF
MADISON, WI

SOUTH CAPITOL TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) DISTRICT PLANNING STUDY

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Background

The 2012 Downtown Plan set forth a vision that Wilson Street should be enhanced as a cohesive and engaging commercial spine. A number of issues along Wilson Street—bicycling conflicts, garage access, parking, wayfinding, and streetscaping—have prompted a desire to explore its role and function, including the feasibility of a conversion to two-way. Today, the one-way designation and lack of bicycle facilities on Wilson Street result in bicyclists riding in the opposite direction of traffic on the street or in the sidewalk. This creates bicycle-vehicle and bicycle-pedestrian conflicts. In addition, residents and visitors face garage access and parking challenges, and a lack of streetscaping makes the corridor less inviting than envisioned. The corridor is absent wayfinding signage, which results in confusion amongst all modes. Redevelopment opportunities along Wilson Street have the potential to improve the vibrancy of the corridor.

The South Capitol TOD District Planning Study evaluated alternatives to improve the safety, function, and quality of the

Wilson Street corridor. Through a public process that engaged members of the South Capitol District Planning Committee, City Staff, and members of the general public, one-way and two-way alternatives, redevelopment opportunities, and various bicycle, pedestrian, wayfinding, and streetscape improvement strategies were proposed and evaluated.

This chapter includes an overview of the following.

- Existing Conditions
- Guiding Principles
- One-Way vs. Two-Way Design
- Recommendations
- Redevelopment Potential

Existing Conditions

Wilson Street runs southwest through Madison's Downtown on the south side of the State Capitol as shown in Figure 1. From Blair Street to King Street Wilson Street is a two-way

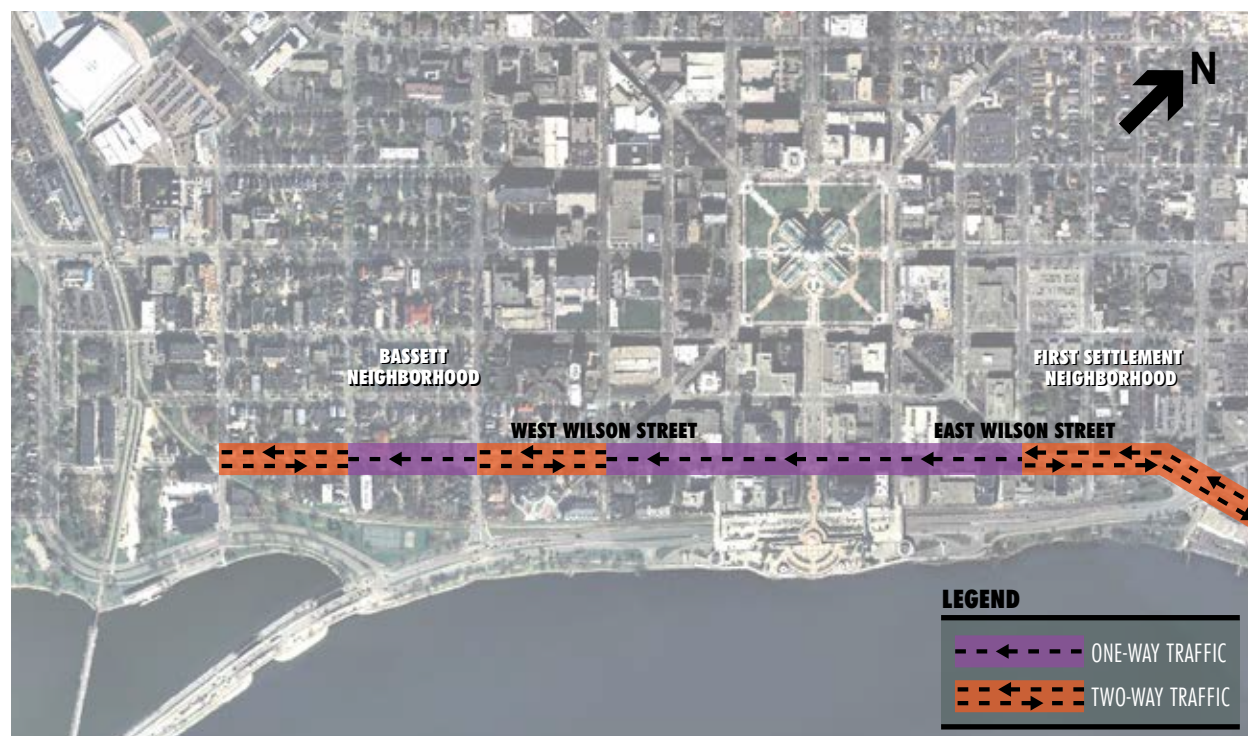


Figure 1. Wilson Street Corridor

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street through Madison's First Settlement neighborhood. In the Downtown Core, Wilson Street is one-way southwest bound. In the Bassett neighborhood between Hamilton Street and Broom Street, it is two-way. Beyond Broom, it is one-way northeast bound. The entire Wilson Street corridor is located in the nucleus of Downtown where a mix of business, government, residential, and other uses are densely concentrated.

Existing conditions along Wilson Street from King Street to Hamilton Street show potential for multimodal and placemaking improvements. As a one-way street with no existing bicycle facilities, Wilson Street is frequently used by bicyclists riding in the street in the direction opposite the one-way motor vehicles or on sidewalks to move in the northeast direction. This creates bicycle-

motorized vehicle and bicycle-pedestrian conflicts. In addition, Wilson Street is located on a hill. The corridor runs uphill and downhill such that the elevation generally peaks at Martin Luther King Boulevard. This leads to safety concerns associated with the speed of bicyclists moving downhill and the difficulty of bicyclists moving uphill. Existing sidewalks in the corridor have minimal streetscaping and aesthetic improvements, and the Downtown Plan identifies parcels for redevelopment along Wilson Street.

Motorized vehicles experience access and parking challenges along Wilson Street. Many of the residential towers and office buildings have parking garages that access onto Wilson Street. Many of the commercial buildings, including the Hilton hotel, have no rear loading area so deliveries are made from Wilson Street.



Figure 2. West Wilson Street looking West from Carol



Figure 3. East Wilson Street looking West at King

Transportation

A two-way Wilson Street scenario was analyzed. In general, converting Wilson to a two-way configuration would add delay to a number of low-volume side-street approaches, but network-wide delays would not increase significantly. Under this scenario, some parking would need to be removed on several approaches in order to accommodate turn lanes, including the southbound approach on Carroll Street, the southbound approach on Pinckney Street, the eastbound approach at King Street, and the westbound approach at Hamilton Street.

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Wilson Street Issues

The Wilson Street Corridor experiences the following existing issues:

- Bicycle/pedestrian sidewalk conflicts
- Residential parking garage access
- Street parking
- Lack of wayfinding
- Lack of streetscaping
- Loading

Furthermore, there is a desire for on-street parking for commercial patrons and visitors to the residential uses. Lack of signage for all modes within Wilson Street creates problems for wayfinding and proper use of designated facilities.

Guiding Principles

Prior to developing design concepts for Wilson Street, the following guiding principles were established for the corridor by the consultant team with input from the Project Management Team (PMT) and the Committee:

- Provide bicycle facilities in both directions
- Enhance streetscaping and urban design elements
- Maintain greenspace on curb terraces
- Improve wayfinding with directional signage
- Complement potential redevelopment opportunities

Options Evaluated

In order to determine whether a one-way or two-way configuration was right for Wilson Street between King Street and Hamilton Street, the consultant team conducted a thorough traffic analysis, engaged public input, and prepared conceptual designs for each alternative. Early in the project, traffic models confirmed that both one-way and two-way concepts are feasible along Wilson Street but the two-way option exhibited some additional delays created

by left turn queues. At the September 2013 Workshop, attendees used foam models to develop feasible concepts for Wilson Street (Figure 4). Nearly a dozen ideas were generated, to which the consultant team applied the guiding principles to develop concepts for three segments of the corridor.

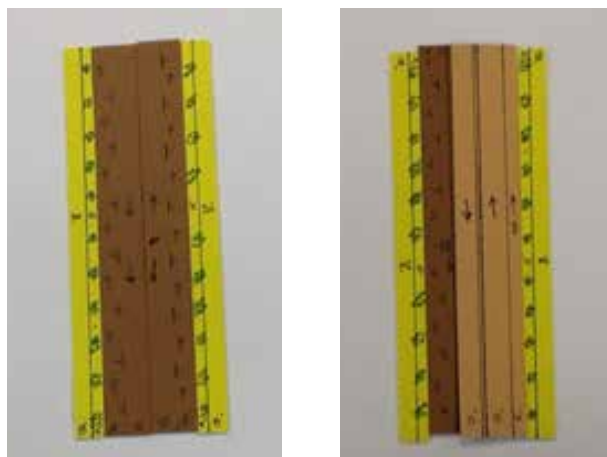


Figure 4. September 2013 Workshop Foam Models

Public Preferences

At the June 2013 Public Meeting, participants were asked to rank issues along Wilson Street by level of importance. Issues that rose to the top are shown below along with the percentage of survey participants who ranked the issues as “important” or “very important:”

- Pedestrian safety: 91%
- Bike safety: 90%
- Streetscape improvements: 73%
- Automobile traffic patterns: 60%
- Parking: 48%
- Loading to services: 39%

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The consultant team proposed three one-way and three two-way concepts for the Wilson Street Context Plan that include bicycle and parking recommendations. Bicycle recommendations include cycle tracks, bicycle lanes, and sharrows. As shown in the concept drawings (Figures 5-8), cycle tracks are lanes that are physically separated from pedestrians and other motor vehicle traffic, bicycle lanes are striped facilities on the roadway, and sharrows are shared-lane markings on the roadway. Where referenced, “contraflow” means traveling in the direction opposite of traffic. The proposed alternatives are shown below with their respective pros and cons.

One-Way Concepts

Bike Lane, Cycle Track with No Parking

This Concept is shown in Figure 5.

- **Pros:** This concept separates bike travel from traffic, while preserving green space
- **Cons:** Parking is removed and no accommodations are provided for loading and buses

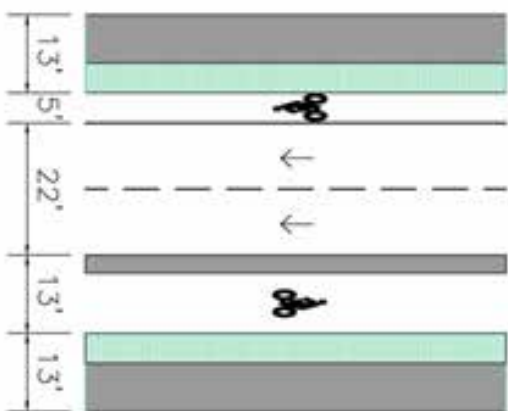


Figure 5. Bike Lane, Cycle Track with No Parking

Public Preferences

One-Way vs. Two-Way

Public opinion regarding converting Wilson Street to a two-way street was gauged at multiple stages of the study. Below are responses from different focus groups.

Public Survey

Are you in favor of considering converting Wilson Street into a two-way street even if it would result in a loss of parking?

- Yes – 41 percent
- No – 33 percent
- Undecided – 26 percent

Public Meeting #1

Do you support considering converting Wilson Street to two-way?

- Yes – 14
- No – 4

Focus Group

The majority of participants were against converting Wilson Street to two-way.

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Two-Way Cycle Track with Parking on One Side

This concept is shown in Figure 6.

- **Pros:** This concept provides dedicated bike travel with green space preserved on one side and parking included on one side
- **Cons:** Some parking is lost, a transition is needed into and out of the cycle track at each end, loading accommodations are only provided on one side, the curb line on the north side would need to be reconstructed, and there are potential conflicts at intersections
- **Note:** This option was also considered with the bike lane on the opposite side of the road, as shown in Figure 7

One-Way, Contra-Flow Cycle Track with Sharrow and Parking on One Side

This concept is shown in Figure 8.

- **Pros:** This concept provides defined bike travel in both directions and separated bike travel in one direction. Green space is preserved and parking is included on one side
- **Cons:** Some parking is lost and loading accommodations are made on one side only

Design Considerations

- Account for contraflow bicycle movements at intersections
- Appropriate location of loading zones with parking
- Separation type of cycle track
- Snow removal with separated cycle track

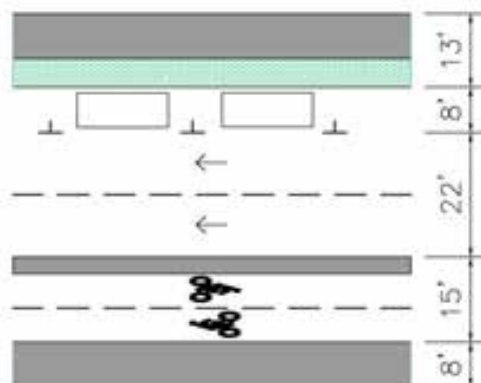


Figure 6. Two-Way Cycle Track with Parking on One Side

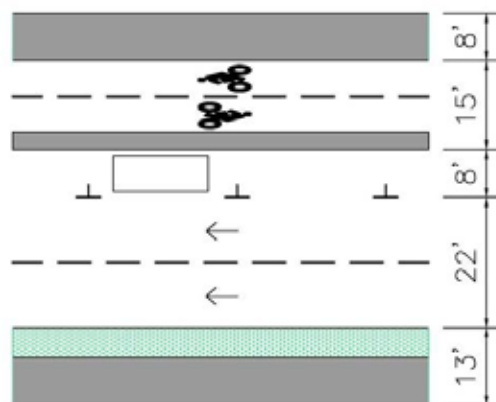


Figure 7. Two-Way Cycle Track with Parking on Opposite Side

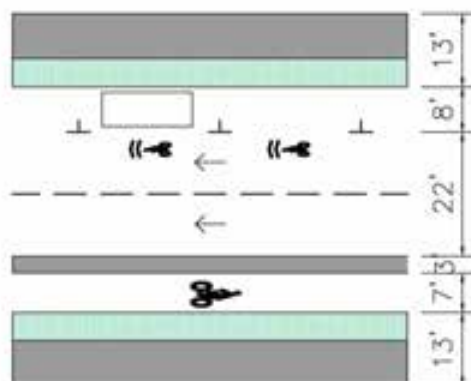


Figure 8. One-Way, Contra-Flow Cycle Track with Sharrow and Parking on One Side

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Public Process

Public opinions regarding potentially converting Wilson Street into a two-way street were divided. The majority of survey and first public meeting participants favored a two-way conversion, while the majority of focus group participants favored maintaining the street as one-way. In November 2013, the South Capitol District Planning Committee endorsed the one-way Wilson Street concept.

Members of the public often expressed pedestrian safety and bicycle movement and safety as top priorities. Many members requested eastbound and westbound bicycle facilities and favored the contraflow bike lane concept; however, there was significant opposition to the contraflow bike lane, as it was indicated that it could potentially create a dangerous situation for move-ins/outs and other deliveries to Wilson Street businesses and residences.

With regard to vehicle accommodations, additional wayfinding to improve vehicle movement was a frequently requested. Additionally, there was significant desire to maintain the number of existing parking spaces, as the Marina Condos and the Madison Mark currently lack space for visitor parking.

The desire to improve streetscaping/aesthetics was often discussed. Many members of the public called for increased green space, improved landscaping, and seating as desirable urban design features.



Figure 9. Public Meeting #2

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Two-Way Concepts

Bike Lanes on Both Sides and Parking on One Side

This concept is shown in Figure 10.

- **Pros:** This concept provides separated bike travel with green space preserved and parking on one side
- **Cons:** Some parking is lost and loading accommodations are made on one side only

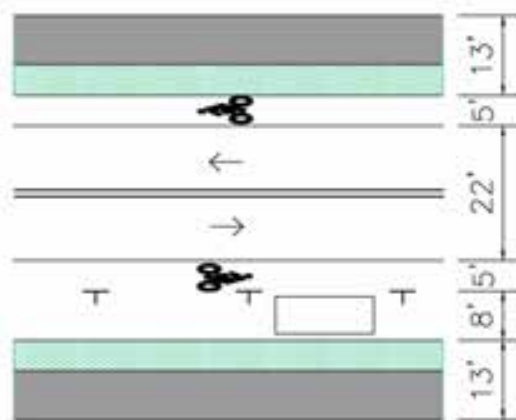


Figure 10. Bike Lanes on Both Sides and Parking on One Side

Bike Lanes with Parking on Both Sides and No Green Space

This concept is shown in Figure 11.

- **Pros:** This concept provides separated bike travel with parking on both sides of Wilson
- **Cons:** No green space is preserved and curb lines are moved

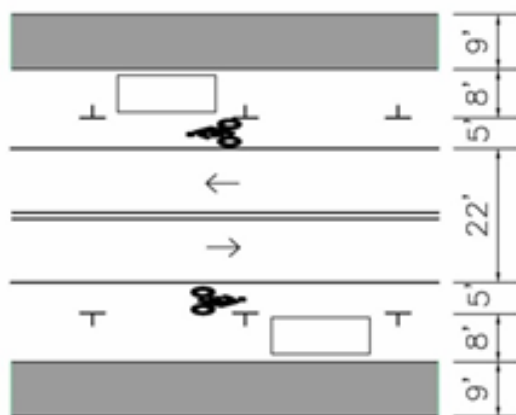


Figure 11. Bike Lanes with Parking on Both Sides and No Green Space

Sharrows

This concept is shown in Figure 12.

- **Pros:** This concept provides defined bike travel in both directions, preserving green space and parking on both sides
- **Cons:** Bikes travel in the lane with traffic without the benefit of separate lanes

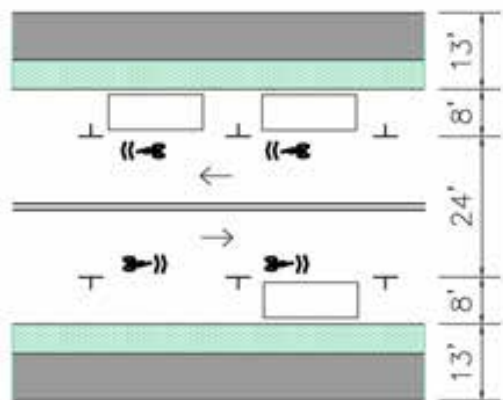


Figure 12. Sharrows

Preferred Concept

In October 2013, the Planning Committee advanced one one-way concept and one two-way concept for further development:

- **One-Way Concept:** One-way, contra-flow cycle track on one side with sharrows and parking on one side
- **Two-Way Concept:** Sharrows in both directions

In November 2013, the Planning Committee approved the further development of the one-way concept.

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Recommendations

The one-way Wilson Street context plan includes an eastbound contraflow bike lane, westbound bike sharrows, and improved streetscaping. Parking remains on one side, but there is a loss of 32 parking spaces and five loading zones on the other side. A new detailed parking plan needs to be developed for the north side of the street to accommodate on-street parking and adequate loading zones. The developed concept was presented to the Planning Committee in February 2014.

It is further recommended by the Consultant Team that additional signage be installed along Wilson Street to improve wayfinding and etiquette. Signage that directs bicyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicles on designated areas for each mode within the intersections would help create an environment in which users feel empowered to navigate the intersection safely themselves and help others do the same.

These recommendations have been made by the Consultant Team after careful consideration of stakeholder feedback, as well as weighing the tradeoffs of the proposed design concepts. These tradeoffs include:

- Bicycle facilities are provided in both directions
- Streetscaping and urban design elements are enhanced
- Greenspace is maintained on curb terraces
- Wayfinding will be improved with directional signage to guide bicyclists and pedestrians through the one-way concept

The plan will complement potential redevelopment opportunities

Redevelopment Potential

The consultant team looked at whether a one-way or two-way configuration could have an effect on redevelopment potential within the Wilson Street corridor. Usually it is believed that the full

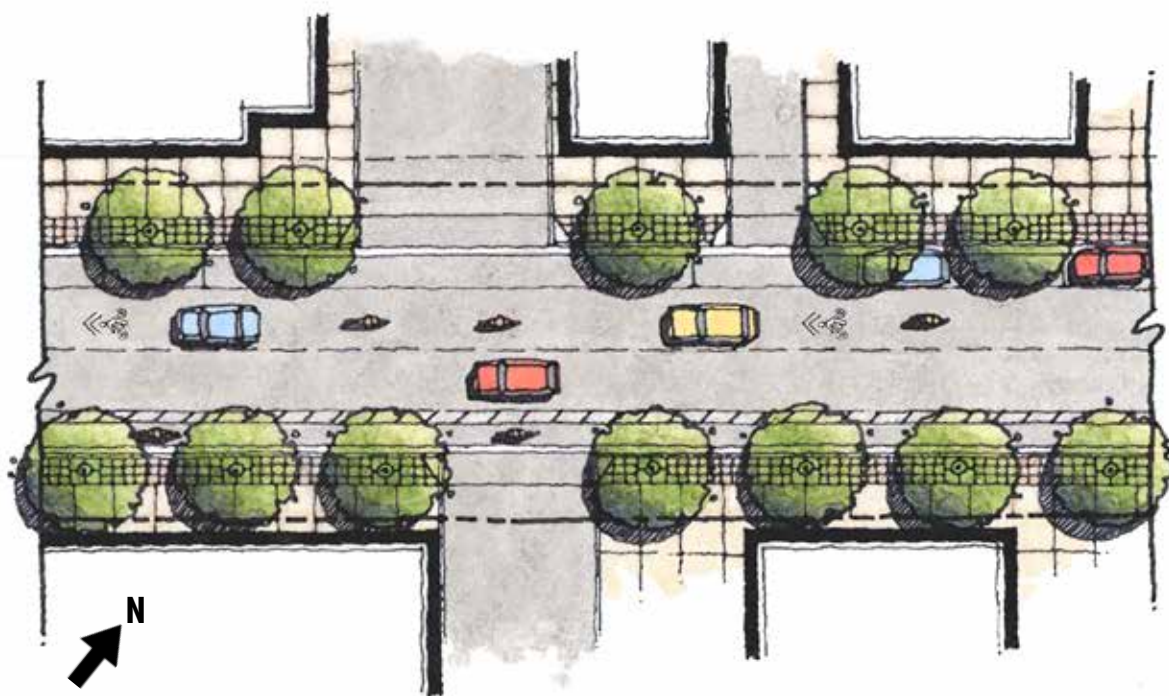


Figure 13. Wilson Street Concept with One-Way Vehicular Traffic Westbound, Westbound Sharrows, Eastbound Cycle Track, and Parking on Street's North Side

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access and circulation of two-way operation has a more favorable effect than the sometimes circuitous circulation required by one-way operations; however, it was determined that on Wilson Street this advantage was not a significant one to redevelopment. This was taken into consideration by the Planning Committee when voting to endorse the one-way Wilson Street concept. Redevelopment concepts were developed in coordination with proposed bridge improvements. As discussed in Chapter 4, the consultant team explored a wide plaza bridge concept that would

tie into new development on the south side of Wilson Street. This concept would create an inviting destination for travelers along Wilson Street to enjoy views of Lake Monona, while providing a connection between Downtown and the waterfront. The concept has not been endorsed by private property owners, and the location can vary.

Other redevelopment opportunities will be enhanced by a reconstructed Wilson Street.



Figure 14. Wilson Street Potential Redevelopment Site



Figure 15. Wilson Street Potential Redevelopment Site

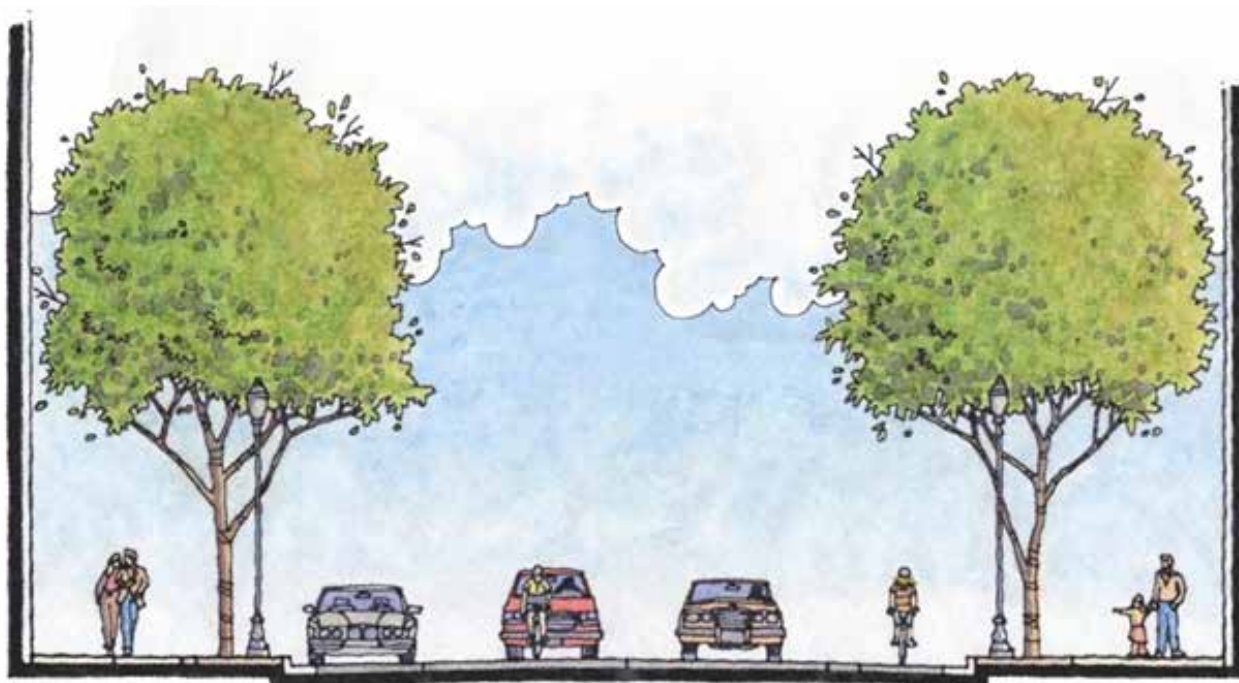


Figure 16. Wilson Street Cross Section with Parking on Street's North Side, Westbound Sharrows, and Eastbound Cycle Track

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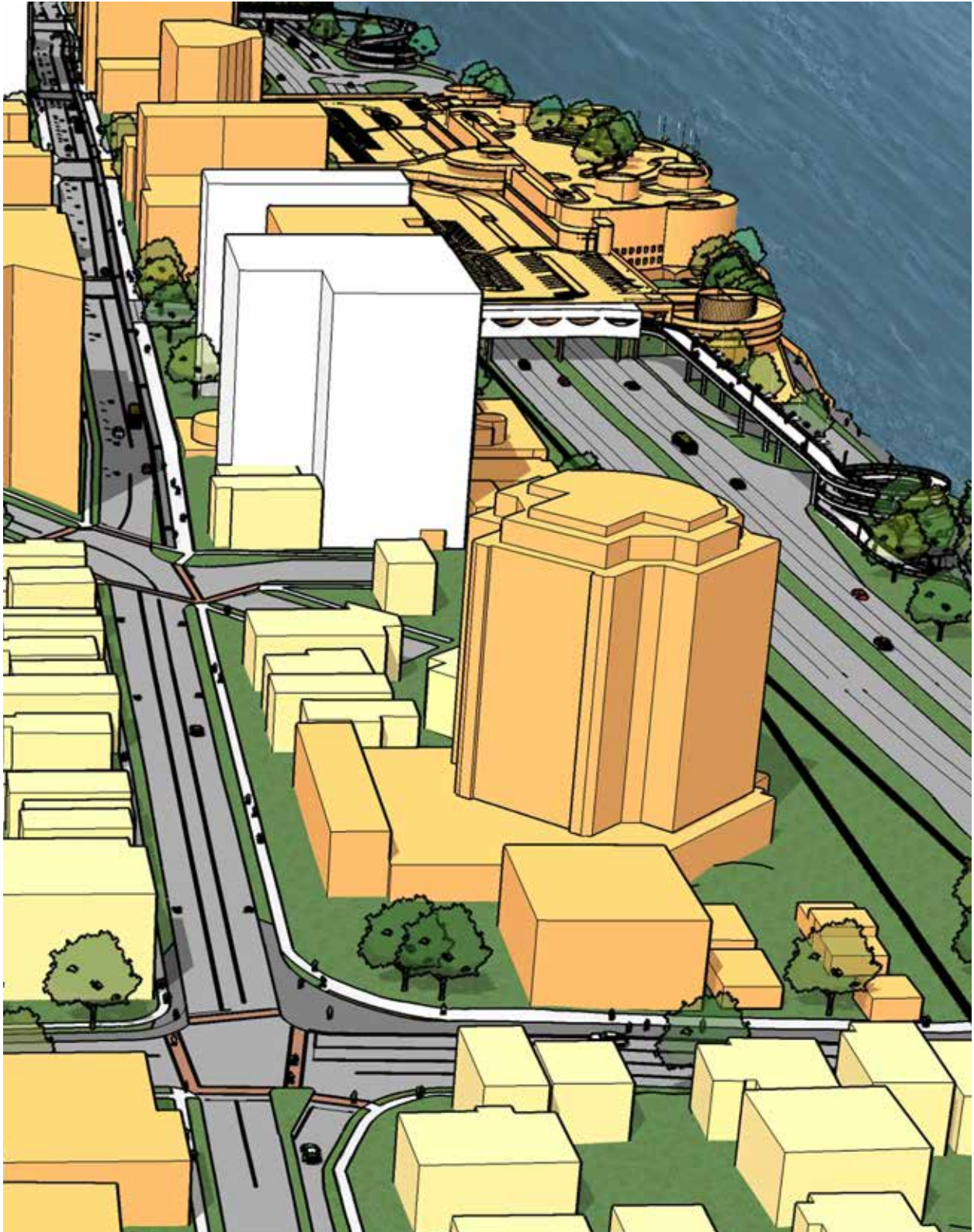


Figure 17. Wilson Street Context Plan Looking Northeast

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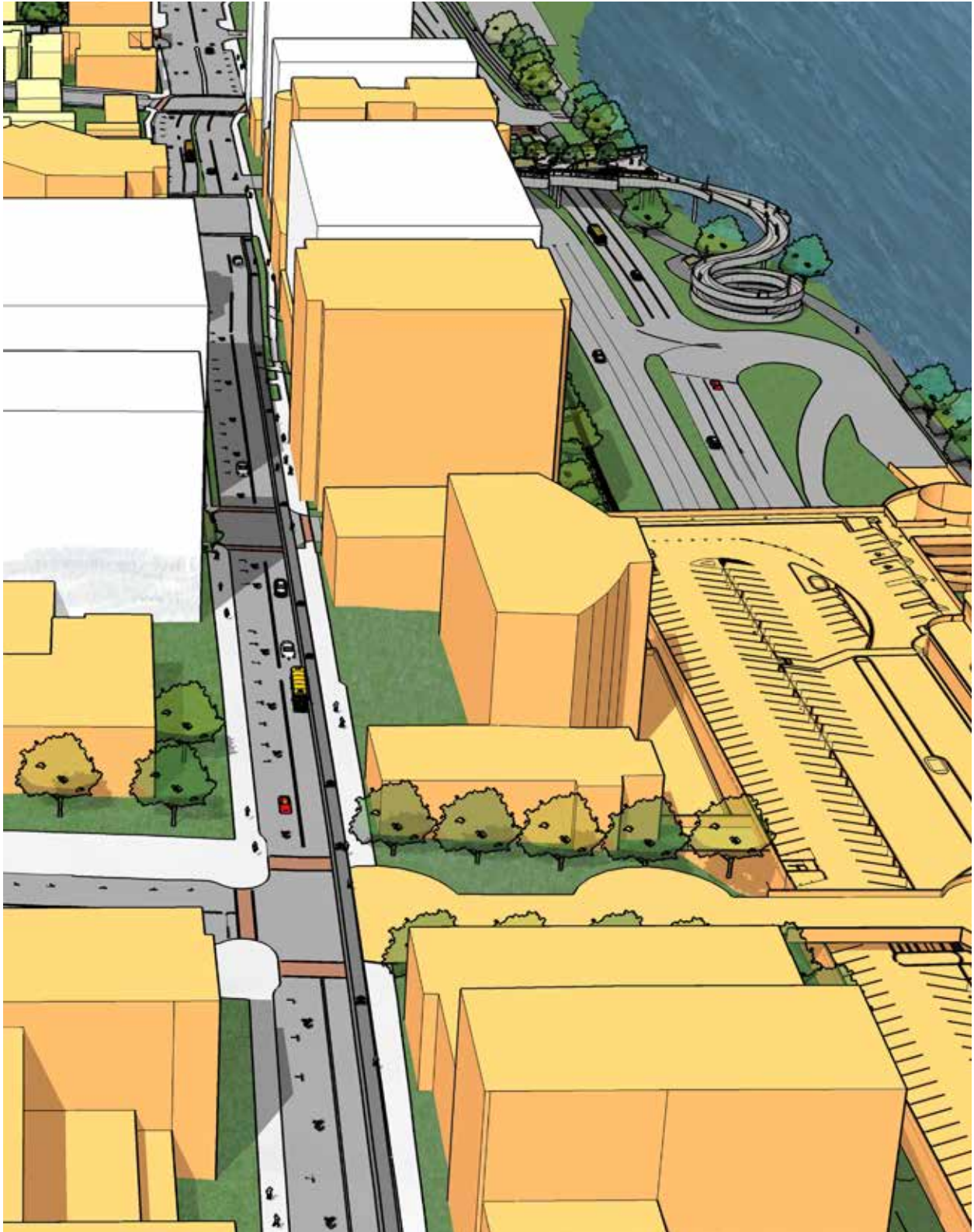


Figure 18. Wilson Street Context Plan from Broom Street Intersection

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Figure 19. Wilson Street Potential Redevelopment Into Plaza Bridge Concept

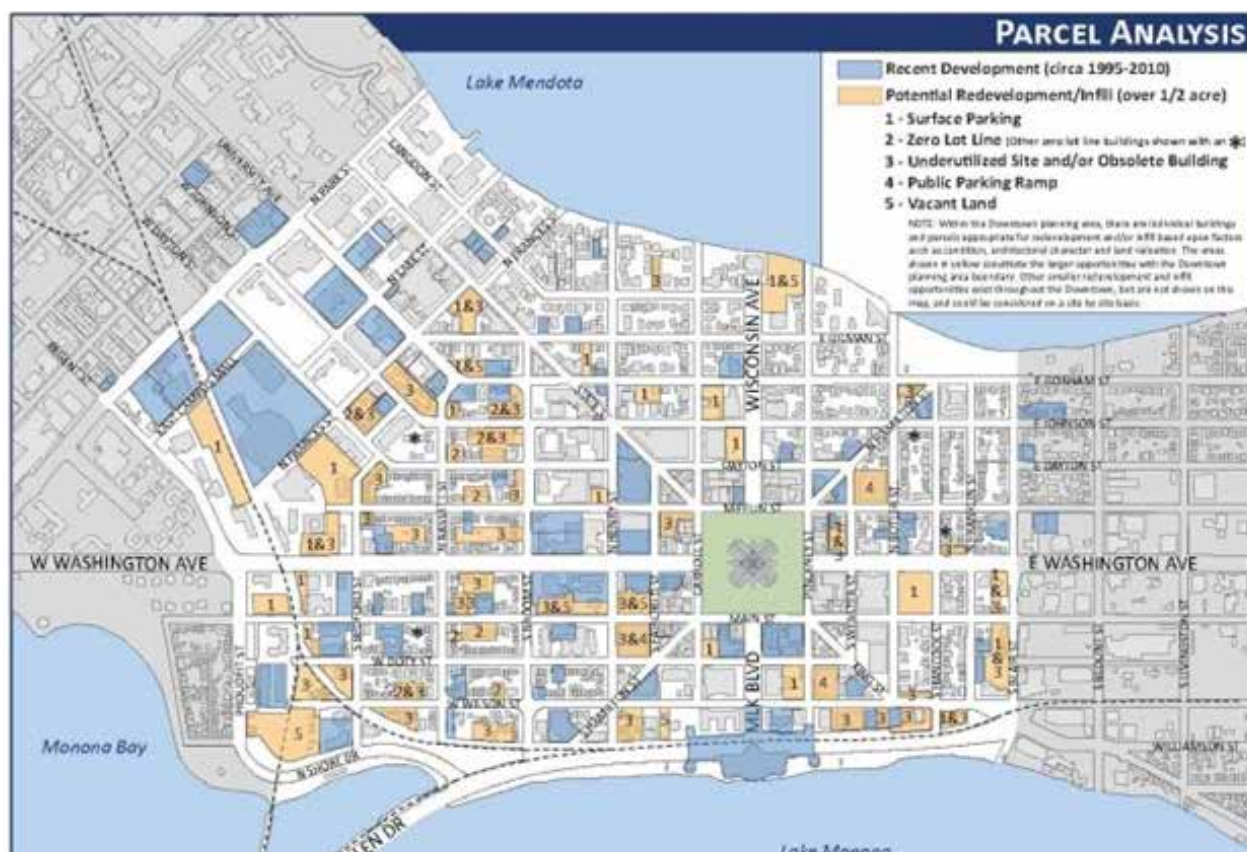


Figure 20. Parcel Analysis From the City of Madison Downtown Plan, Adopted July 2012