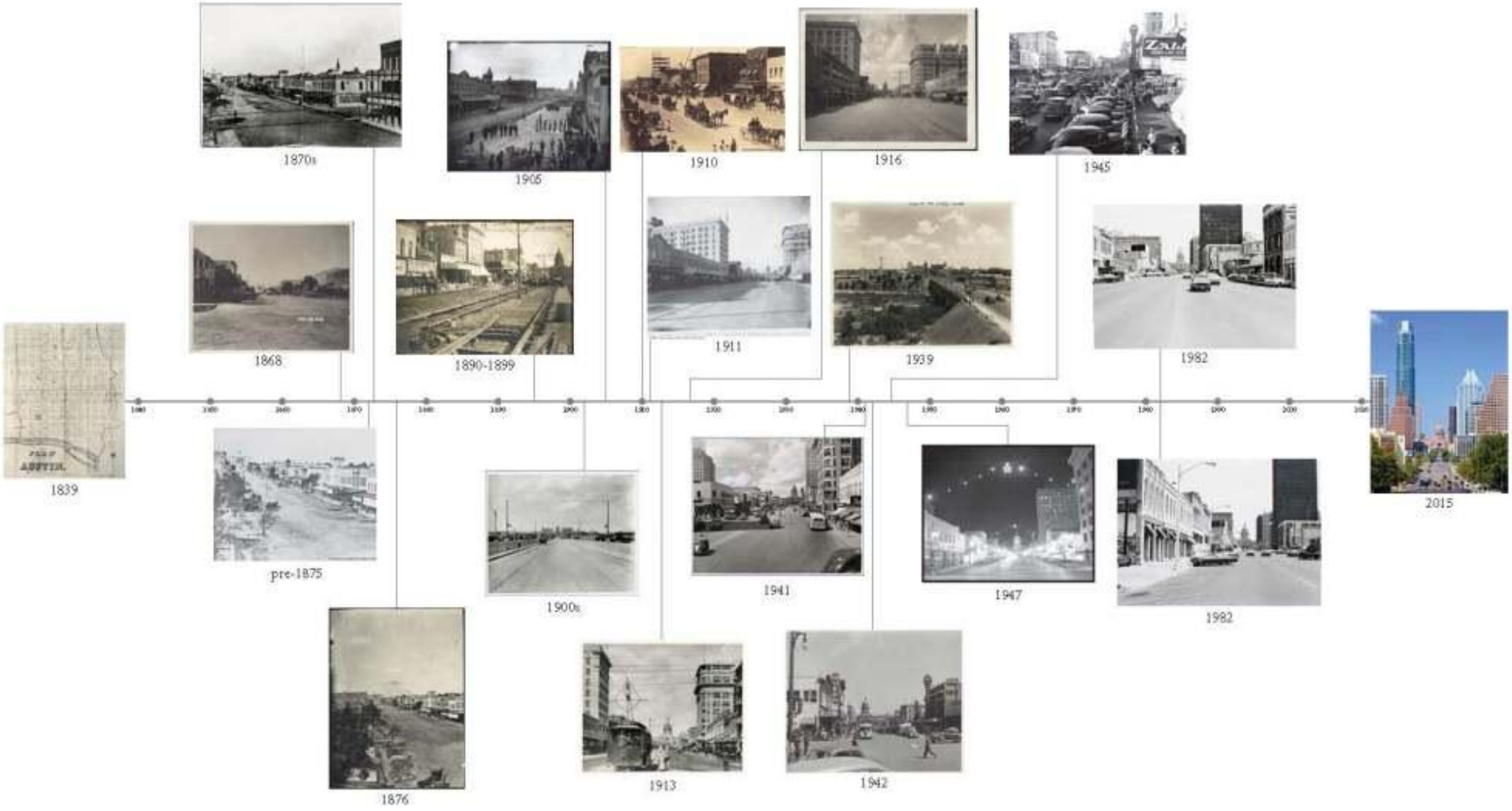
Congress Avenue Through the Years



Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative

Previous Planning related to Congress Avenue

"Downtown of Central Texas"

Congress Avenue is a landmark and the spine of downtown

2014 first floor use: almost as much parking (16%) as combined restaurant and retail (18%)

top priority for public improvement

Austin Alive

mark gateways into downtown on Congress Avenue

Congress Avenue "heart and soul of Austin"

high standard of maintenance

improved seating and viewing of bats

The Fiscal Impact of the Congress Avenue Bridge Bat Colony on the City of Austin

top opportunities
- outdoor dining
- art & cultural
- experiences shopping
- history & architecture
- street cars
- pedestrian experience

improved bike facilities

reducing six automobile lanes to five can be accomodated

greater variety of retail

pedestrian friendly urban boulevard with mixed use

look around the corner and take a systems approach, Congress Avenue is more than the sum of its parts

provide visual and physical access to Colorado River

move from 20% to 40% of right-of-way for pedestrians in downtown streets, except Congress Avenue, which was reserved for future planning

provide gateway experience with connections to new and existing trails

establish vision for Congress Avenue

Additional planning efforts were also reviewed.

Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative

2012
Bond program dedicates $2 million to Congress Avenue

2013-2014
LIDAR surveying

2014 - EARLY 2015
Review of previous planning efforts, Project Directions Group formulates draft vision

TODAY
Public feedback on draft vision for Request of Qualifications (RFQ)

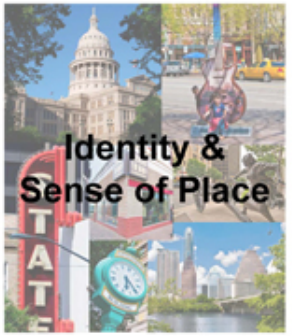
SUMMER 2015
Issue Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and select Urban Design team

FALL 2015
Contract negotiations and issue "Notice to Proceed."

2016
Public and stakeholder engagement, project team work, draft report.

Your input today will help shape the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an urban design team for Congress Avenue. Once an urban design team is hired, there will be many opportunities to participate in shaping Congress Avenue for the future.

a place to **go to** rather than pass through



Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative

DRAFT Vision

Congress Avenue is one of Austin's and Texas's pre-eminent "don't miss" destinations, a distinctive place for people to "go to" rather than "pass through."

This Vision will be achieved and maintained through adherence to a set of **Values** relating to **Character**, **Function**, and **Management**.

Values

A street can perform only so many tasks well. A street asked to perform too many tasks is likely a street that performs none of them well. Our efforts to achieve the Congress Avenue Vision will adhere to a set of Values that will guide what we ask of the Avenue and how we direct our work.

Character: The paramount character of Congress Avenue will be about the human experience; the Avenue will be a "people-centric" place. As such, each physical element and each function of the Avenue will be evaluated through the primary lens of "How does this element or function contribute to a high-quality human experience?".

Function: The Avenue will perform a number of functions, but each function will be evaluated by its role in contributing to the human experience and the people-centric Character of the Avenue.

Management: The Avenue will be supported and sustained over the long run by a management structure that serves as guardian of the Character and overseer of the Functions.

Character Elements

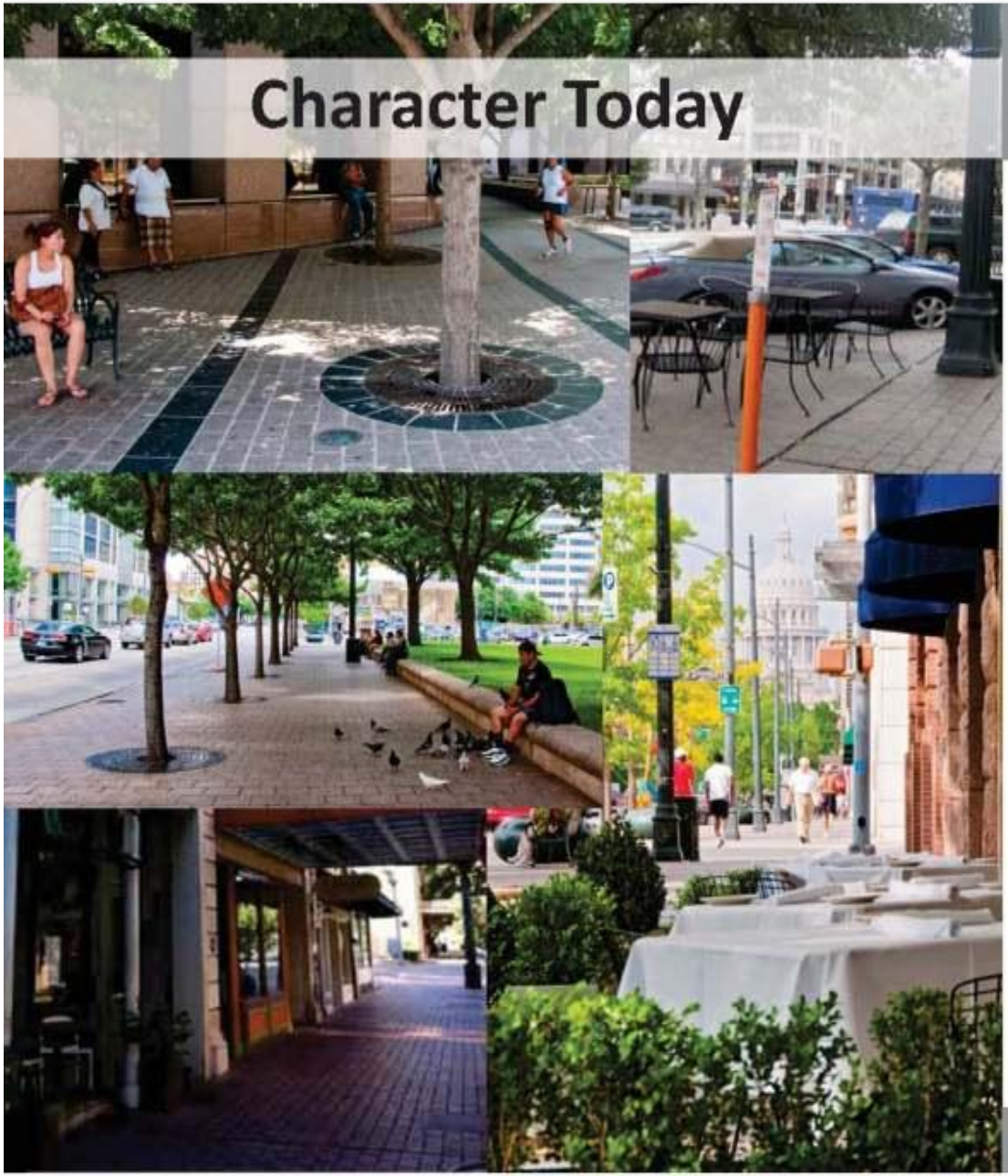
- Bustle with human interaction, diversity, and inclusion
- Create a literal and symbolic "gateway" to Austin
- Provide commodious connections to the Texas State Capitol, Lady Bird Lake, and adjacent Downtown districts
- Celebrate Austin's history, art, and culture

Function Elements

- Promote human comfort and interaction
- Support social and commercial activity
- Provide comfortable mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit-riders, and motorists
- Provide efficient yet unobtrusive infrastructure functions for utilities
- Host public events both large and small
- Support healthy natural systems including trees and other green infrastructure

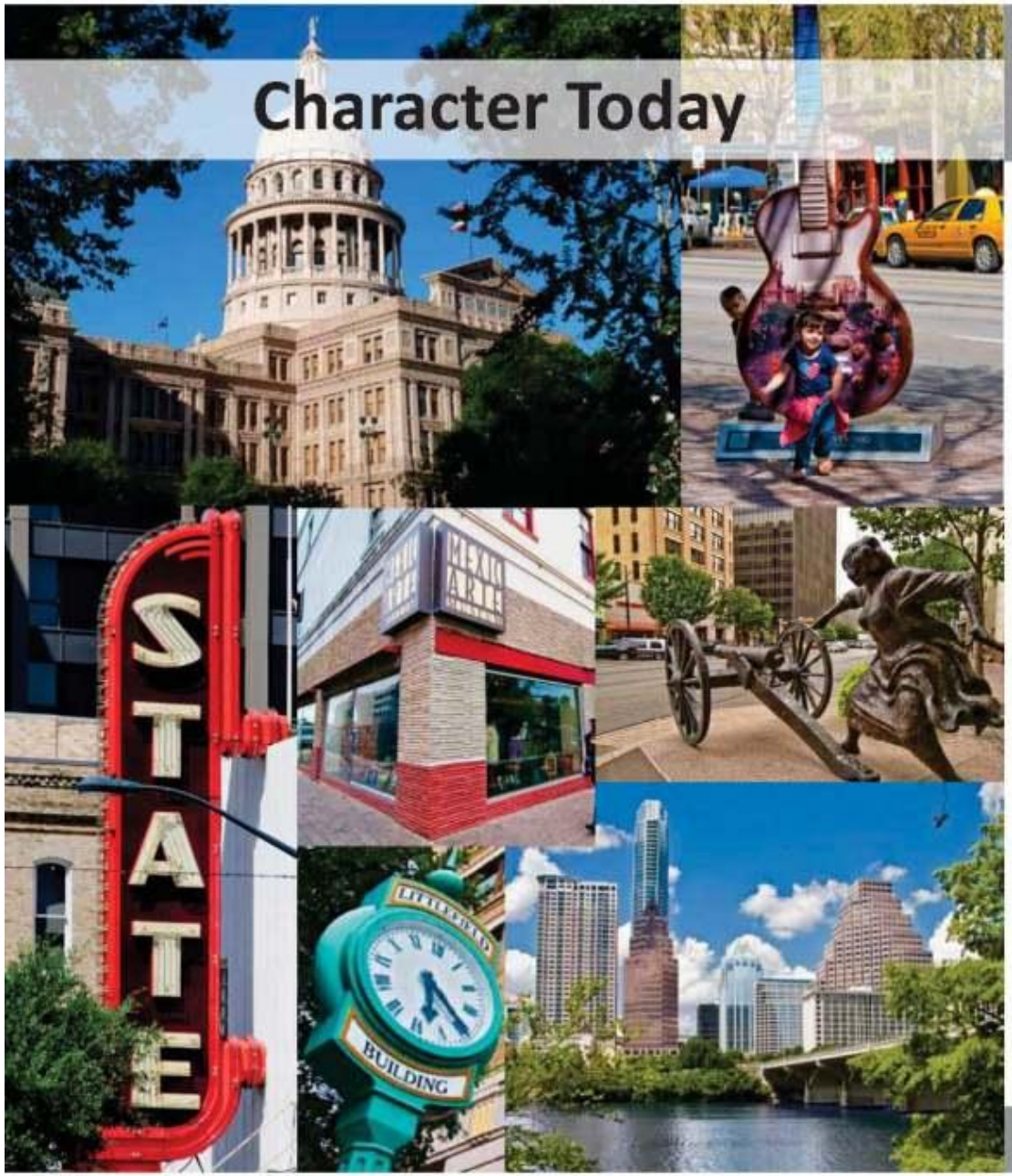
Management Elements

- Provide both logistical and directional leadership in pursuing the Vision
- Oversee operations and programming
- Embrace partnerships and coordination
- Secure adequate funding



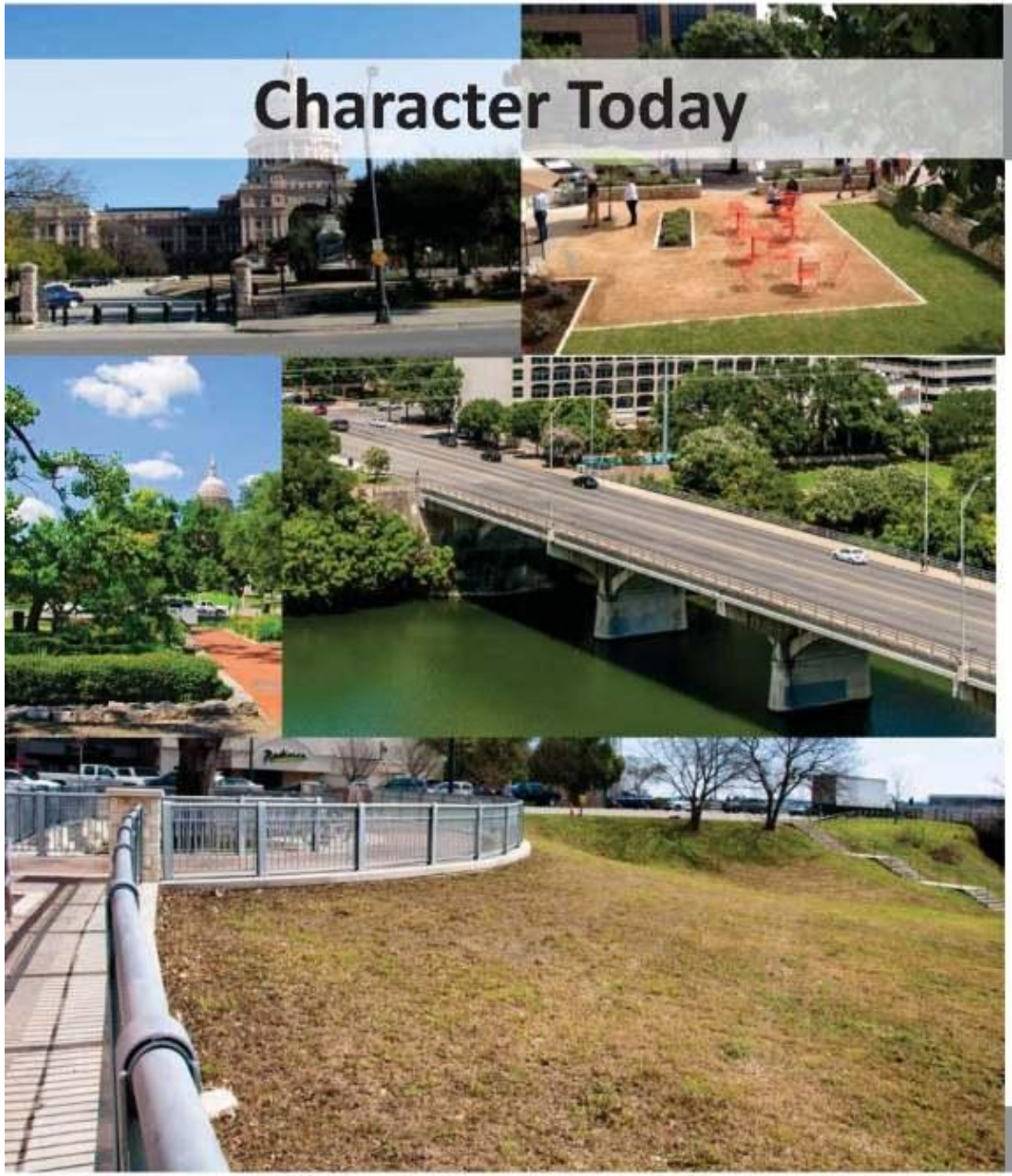
Pedestrian Experience
Opportunities

- Create a complete street/enhanced mobility
  - Remove angled parking as part of a comprehensive parking strategy
  - Expand pedestrian space
- Enhance pedestrian amenities (furniture, shade, etc.) and make better use of space
- Enhance existing public/quasi-public spaces
- Create new public spaces (micro)



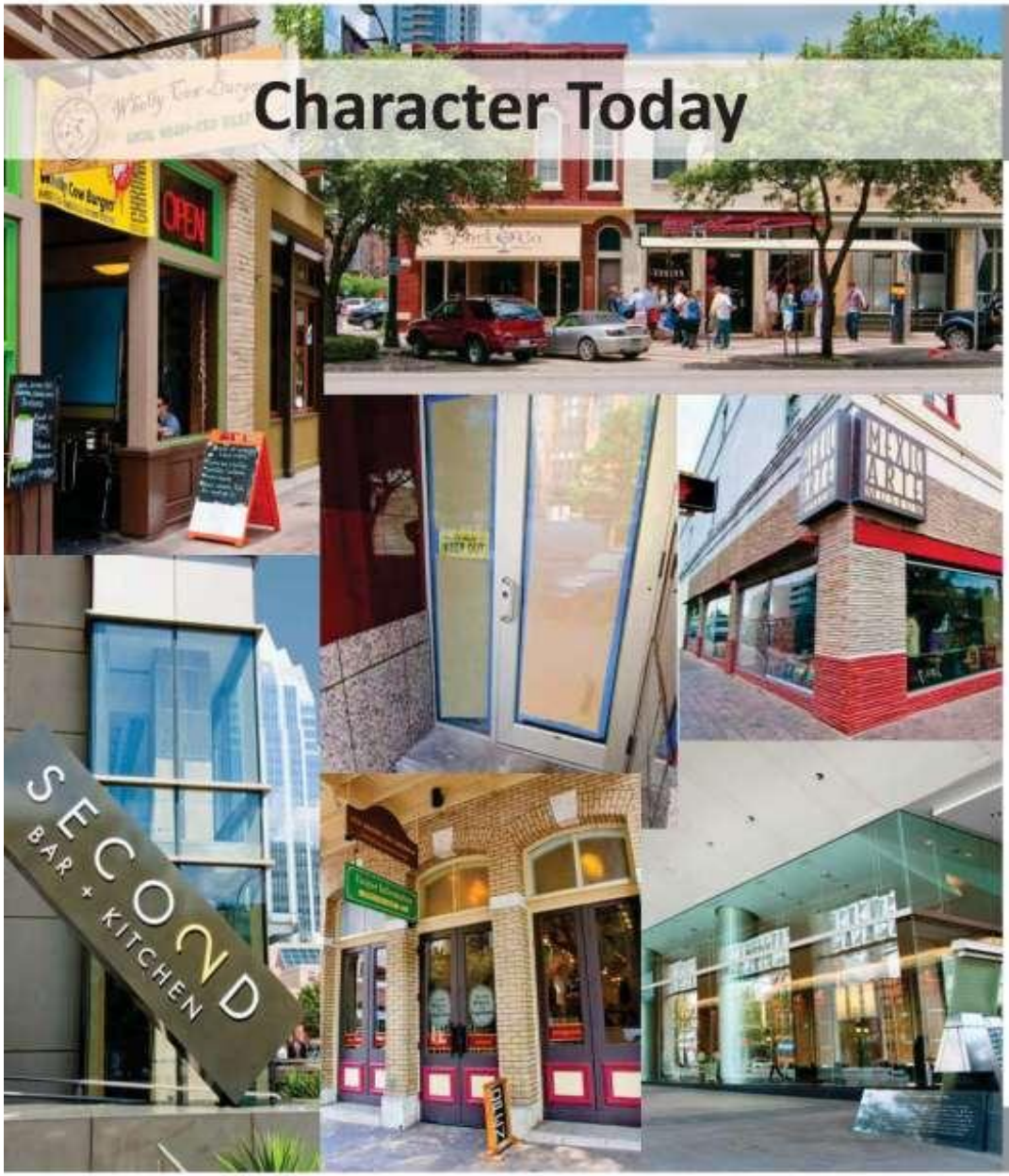
Identity & Sense of Place
Opportunities

- **Create Identity**
  - **Put Austin's best face forward**
  - **Celebrate Austin's art, culture, history (tell the story)**
  - **Grand entry**
- **Create urban design standards and tools to support consistent form, design, and preservation including:**
  - **Local historic district designation**
  - **Incentives for preservation**



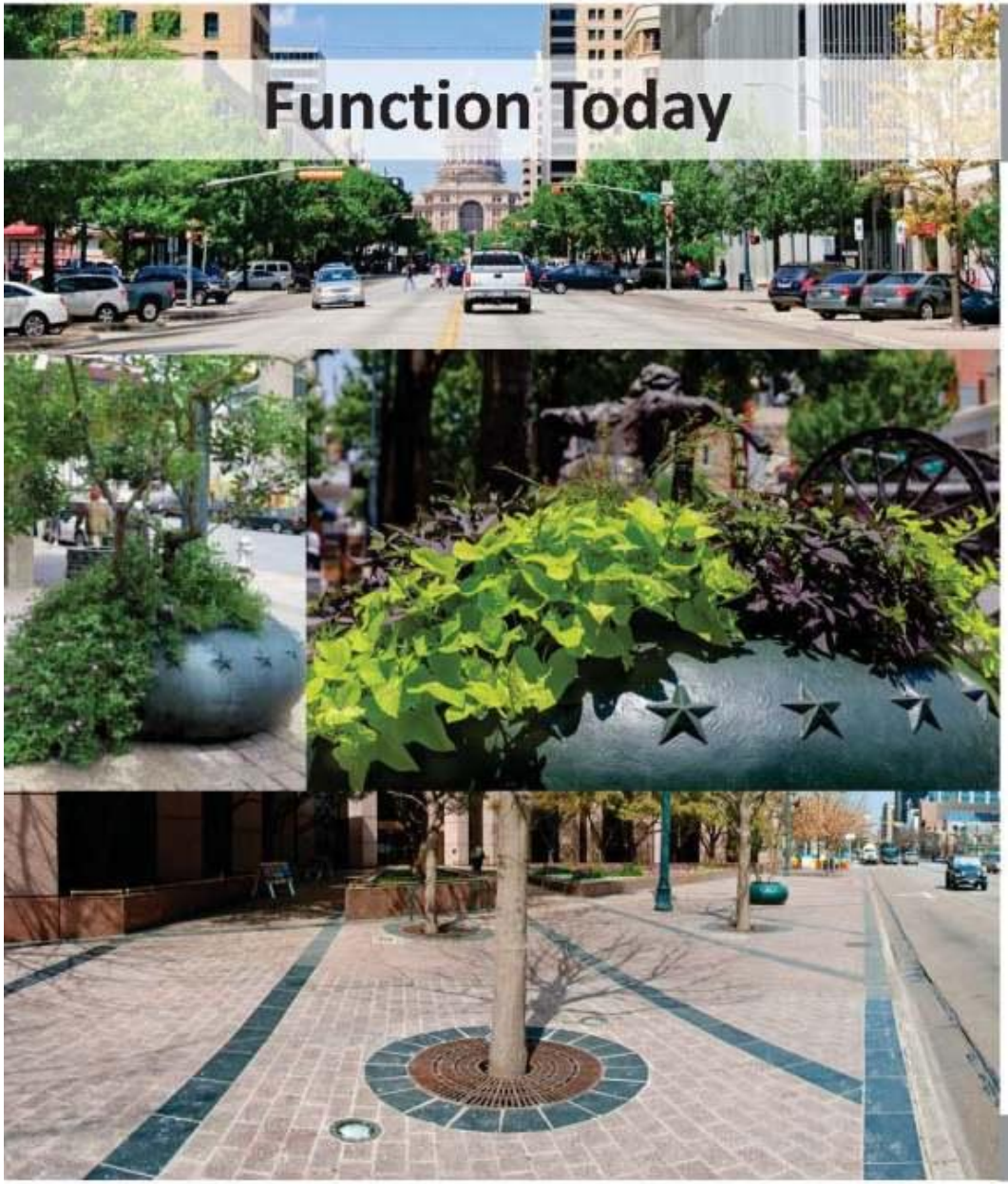
Connections & Gateways
Opportunities

- Consider corners and connections to other districts
- Improve connections to trails and transit
- Enhance gateways
  - Bridge
  - Old Bakery area
- Improve wayfinding
  - pedestrians
  - parking
  - transit



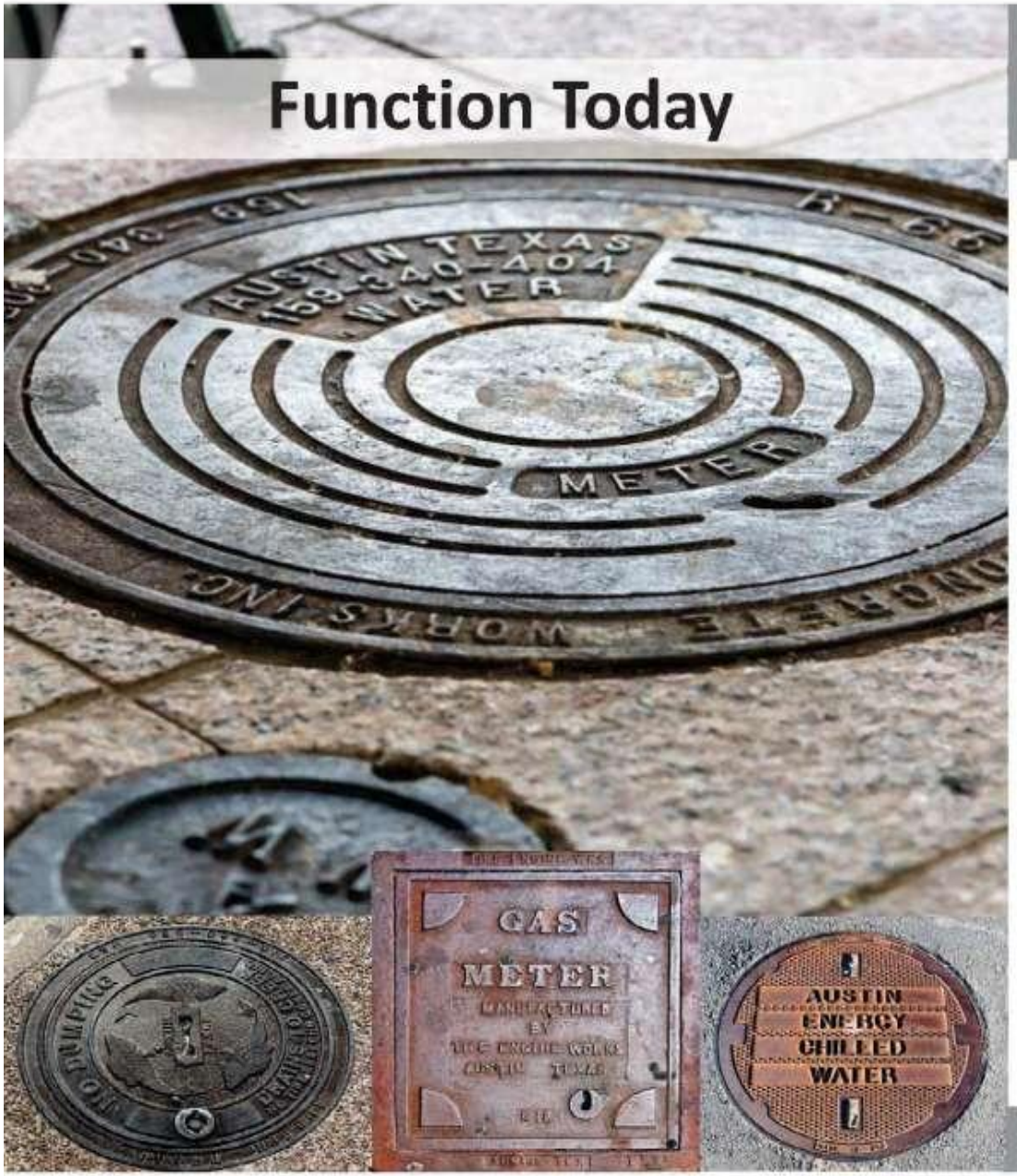
Land Use & Development
Opportunities

- **Enhance first floor use and design**
  - **regulatory and design tools**
- **Expand and encourage**
  - **retail and small businesses**
  - **residential**
  - **flexible office space**
  - **creative incubators**
- **Coordinate with/leverage other development areas**
- **Use project as a catalyst for private sector response**



Green Infrastructure
Opportunities

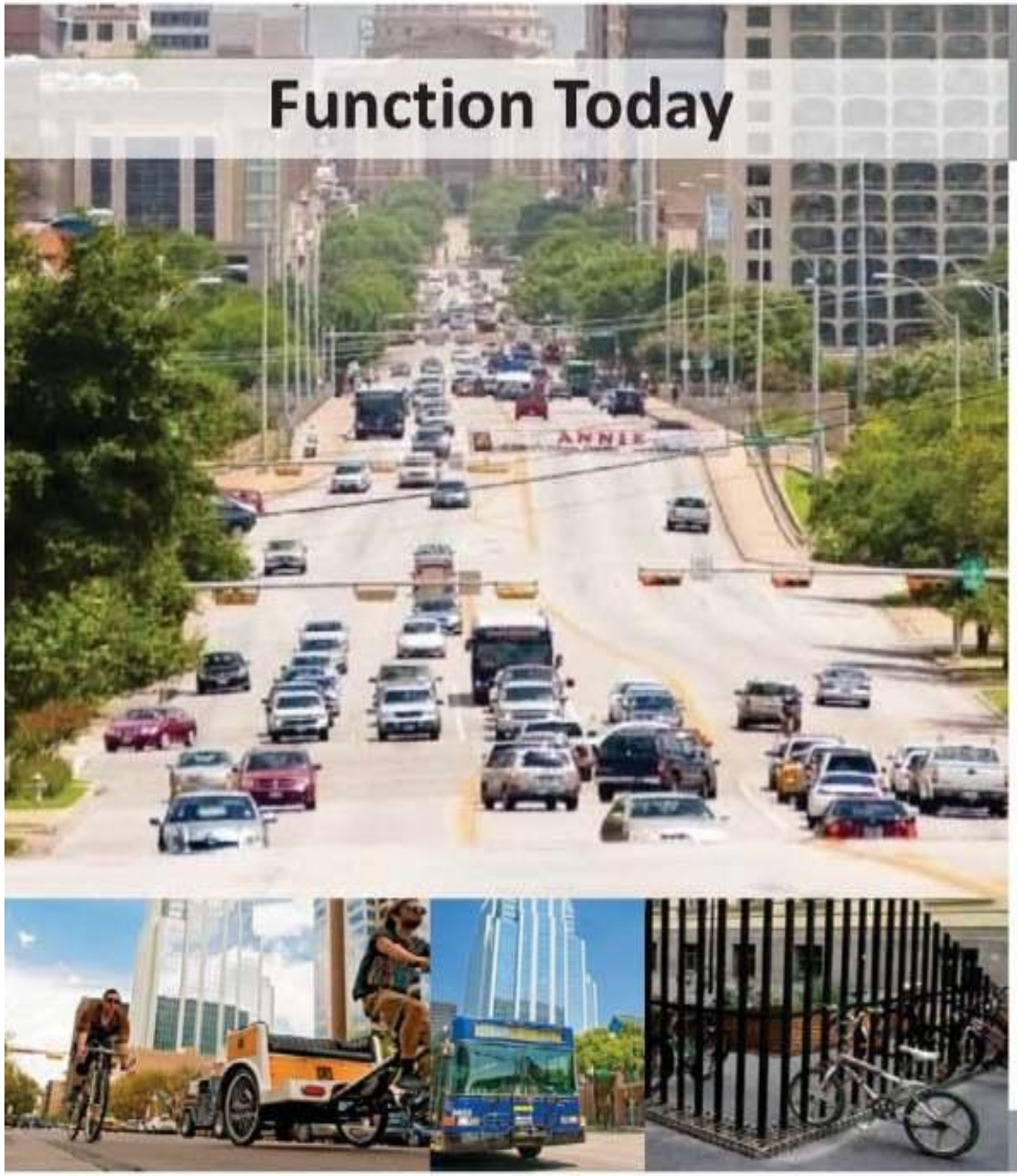
- Consider green stormwater infrastructure
- Create multi-purpose landscaping
- Consider canopy
  - placement with regard to buildings
  - increasing canopy
- Improve environmental performance
- Improve health and management of trees



Underground Infrastructure
Opportunities

- Coordinated replacement of aging infrastructure with new, green street design
- Consider drainage needs
- Consider water/wastewater needs
- Provide electrical connections/ servicing of tree lights

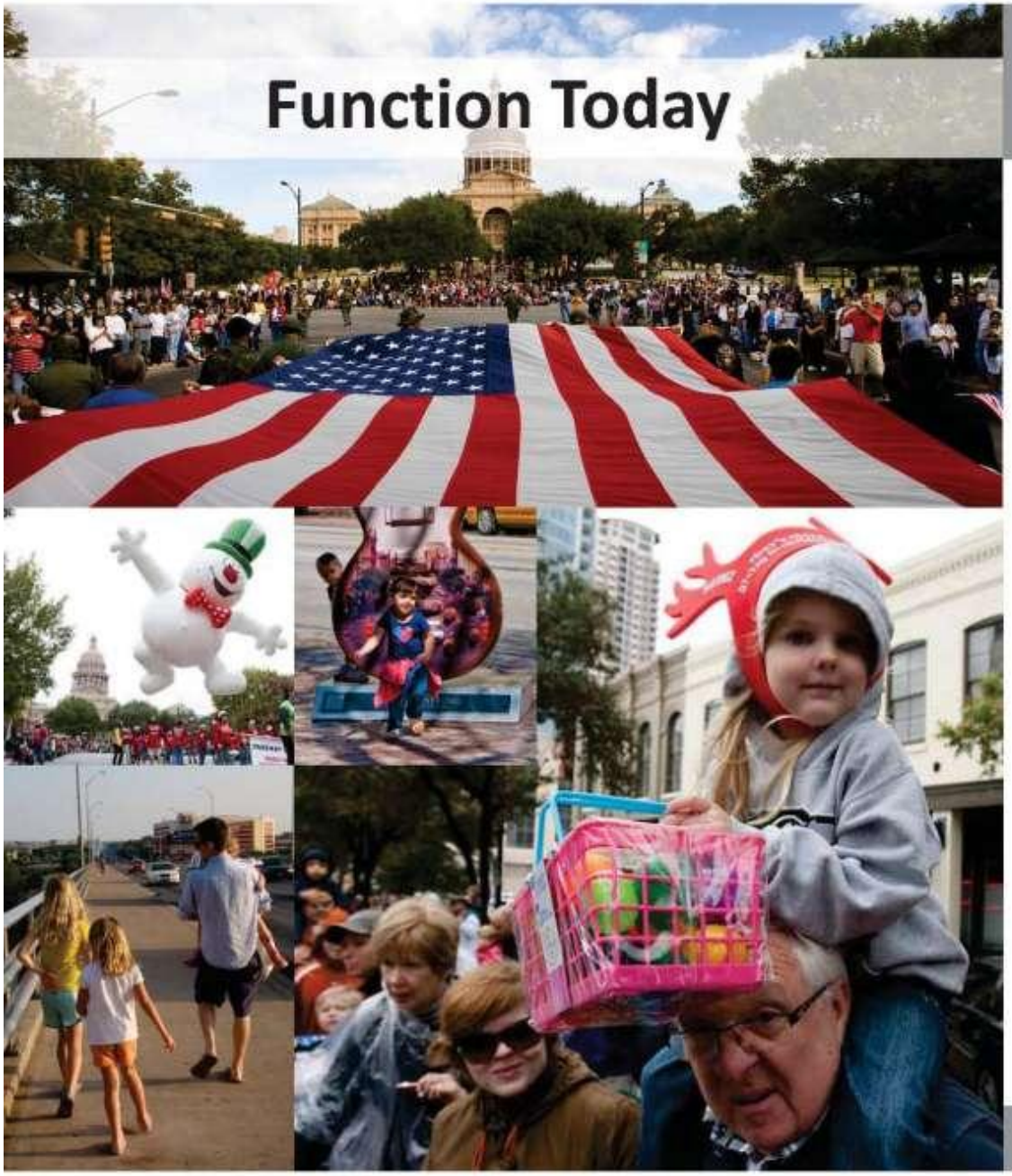
Function Today



Bicycle, Auto, & Transit
Opportunities

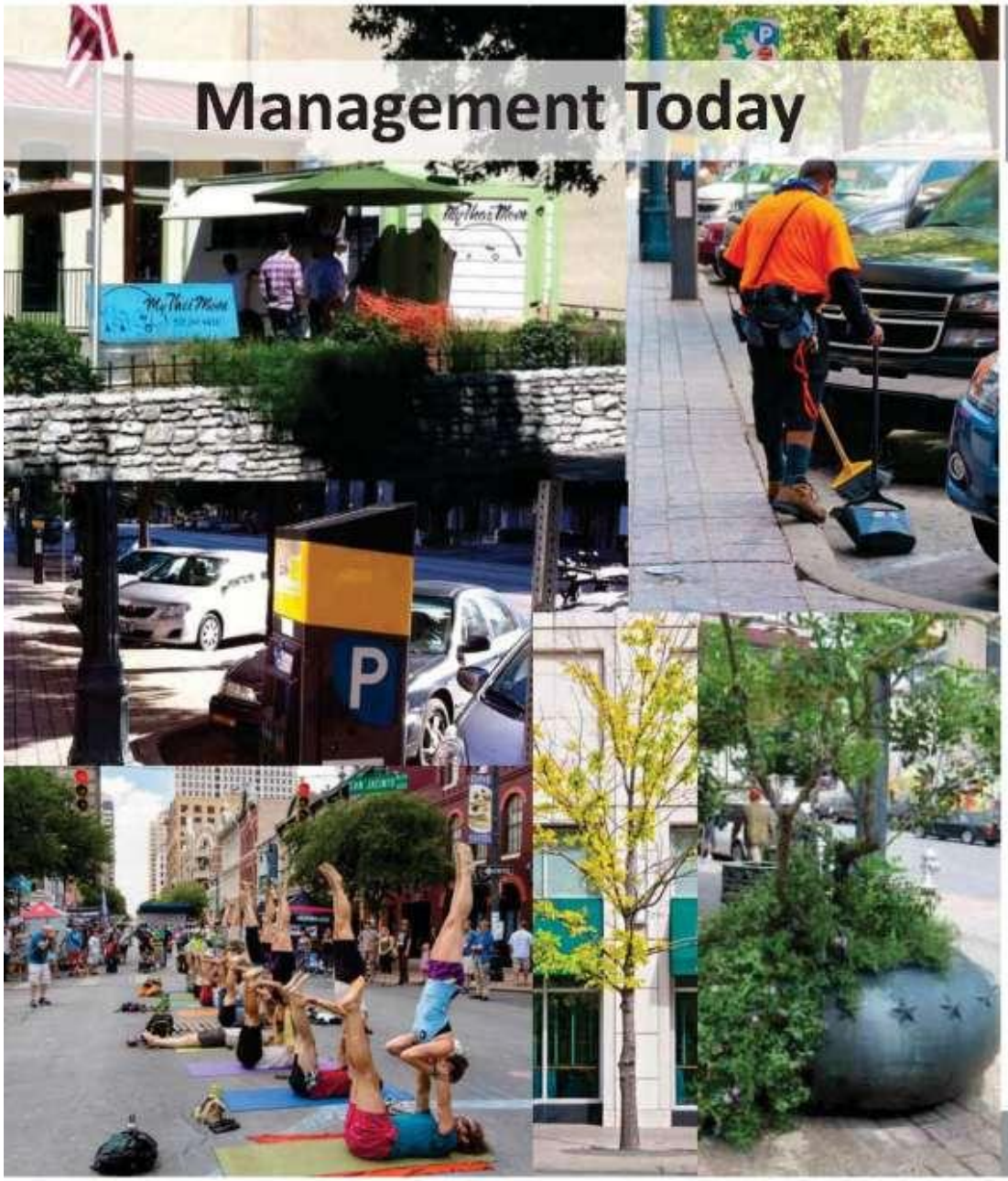
- Create a complete street with bicycle facilities
- Maintain traffic flow
- Comprehensive parking strategy
- Future local transit (circulator system, connections to UT, etc.)

Function Today



Other
Opportunities

- **Consider event needs**
- **Consider family-friendly design**



Management & Partnerships
Opportunities

- **Coordinate management functions to support a cohesive experience**
  - **parking meters**
  - **trees, etc.**
- **Explore partnerships for:**
  - **operations**
  - **maintenance**
  - **programming**
- **Incentivize/encourage private sector participation**