

4.1 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

4.1.1 BING THOM’S NINE BIG IDEAS

Bing Thom Architects proposed nine ‘big ideas’ through which the design of the Broadway and Commercial development would be tested to ensure that the project vision was fulfilled. These ‘big ideas’ remain relevant to the current scheme and form core principles through which design decisions have been indexed against.

At the heart of these principles is the term ‘community social’ which was used by Bing Thom Architects to capture ideas of the particular vitality of the neighborhood, the eclectic nature of the project and its transformative potential.

The nine ‘big ideas’ are summarized below;

4.1.1.1 DYNAMIC GATEWAY OPPORTUNITY

The Broadway and Commercial site (hereafter referred to as the Safeway site) is an important and recognizable node within the City. Development of the Safeway site has the potential to create positive activation and to act as symbolic gateway between the downtown urban core and the metropolitan areas beyond. The highly visible scheme will become precedent setting, and it is important that in architectural terms that it is bold and assured, even heroic.

4.1.1.2 A REASON TO BE HERE

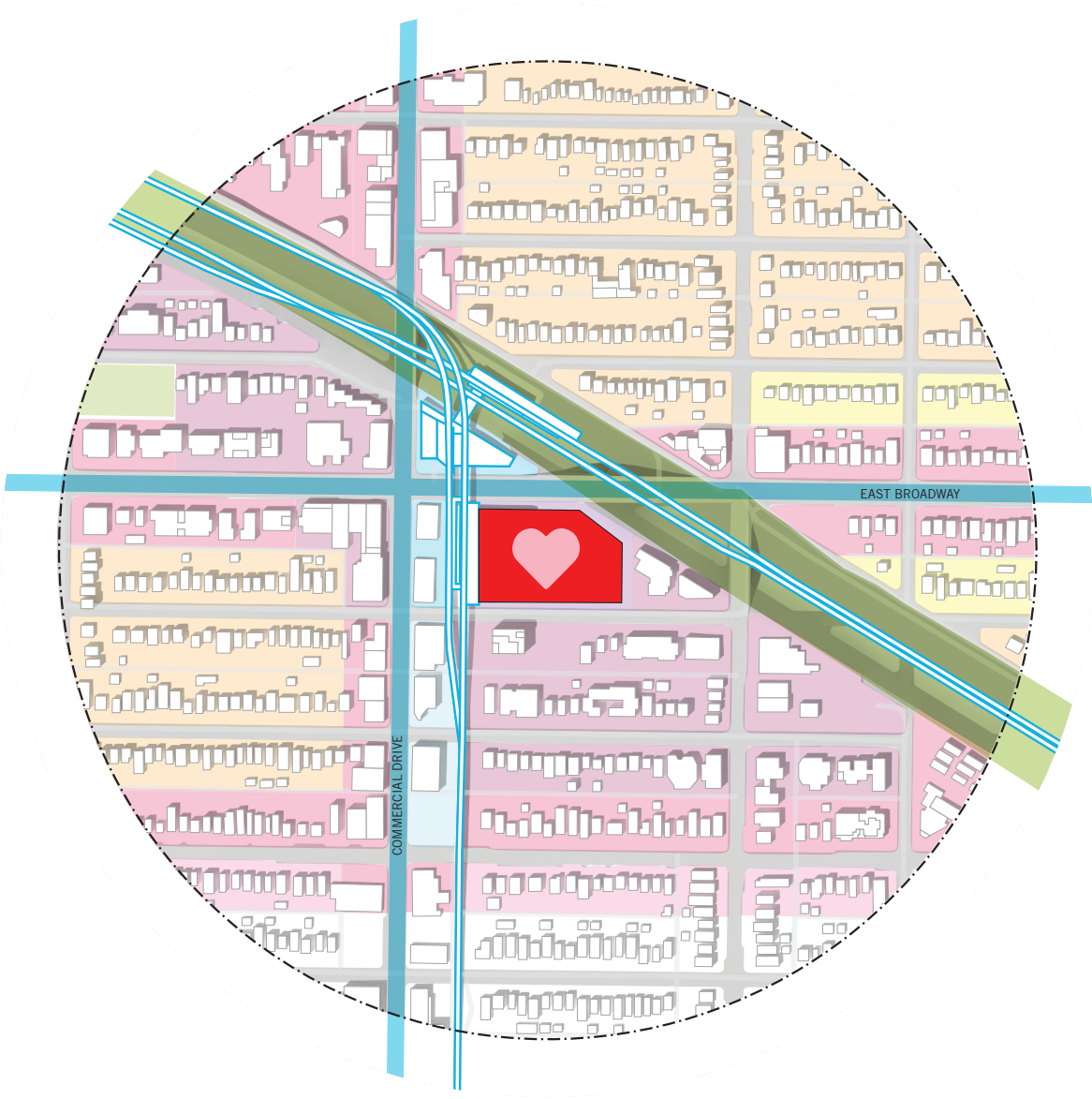
The Safeway site is a logical location for high density development. The scale of the development provides critical mass for enhancement and invigoration of the neighborhood. It is somewhere that suffers from being a point of transition, whereas it should become a destination. The site location is important as the busiest transit interchange within the city, and its elevation marks it as a powerful symbol of positive change.

4.1.1.3 REUNITE THE DRIVE

Commercial Drive is interrupted at the intersection of Broadway by the east/west rail corridor ‘the Cut’. The nature of Commercial Drive to the north is quite different to that south of the cut. The location of the Safeway site to the south of the cut provides an opportunity for a development catalyst for reunification of south Commercial Drive to the more vibrant northern part of the street. The Safeway site can be considered as a ‘weld point’ where the strength of the connection is greater than the current adjacency.

4.1.1.4 A VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY

The immediate area around the Safeway site is quite ambiguous, and suffers from a lack of positive identity. The development has the potential to reinvigorate this area and to complement the dynamic qualities of north Commercial Drive. The scale of the development will provide a “critical mass” enhancement of the on-site commercial activities as well as support a vital and diverse local economy.



THE SITE SITS AT ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC NODES WITHIN THE CITY. IT IS A GATEWAY PROJECT AND A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

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4.1.1.5 NEW HOMES

The development is considered in terms of the creation of new homes, not units. Each home must be composed of livable spaces, supported by meaningful amenity and access to gardens and a range of safe outdoor spaces. Bing Thom Architects had characterized the potential of the site as the creation of a true vertical village.

4.1.1.6 FAMILY SPACE

At the heart of the project is the belief of the importance to create homes for families. This must inform the size and layout of the individual homes but also to extend beyond the threshold of the home. Spaces must be considered in respect to the family and the child, be safe and secure, but also stimulating and life enhancing. The Dutch architect, Aldo Van Eyck, proposed that the city be considered in respect to the house, and that the house be considered in respect to the city. This development must embrace the common values of both the intimate and the broader, societal family of Vancouver.

4.1.1.7 GREEN URBANISM

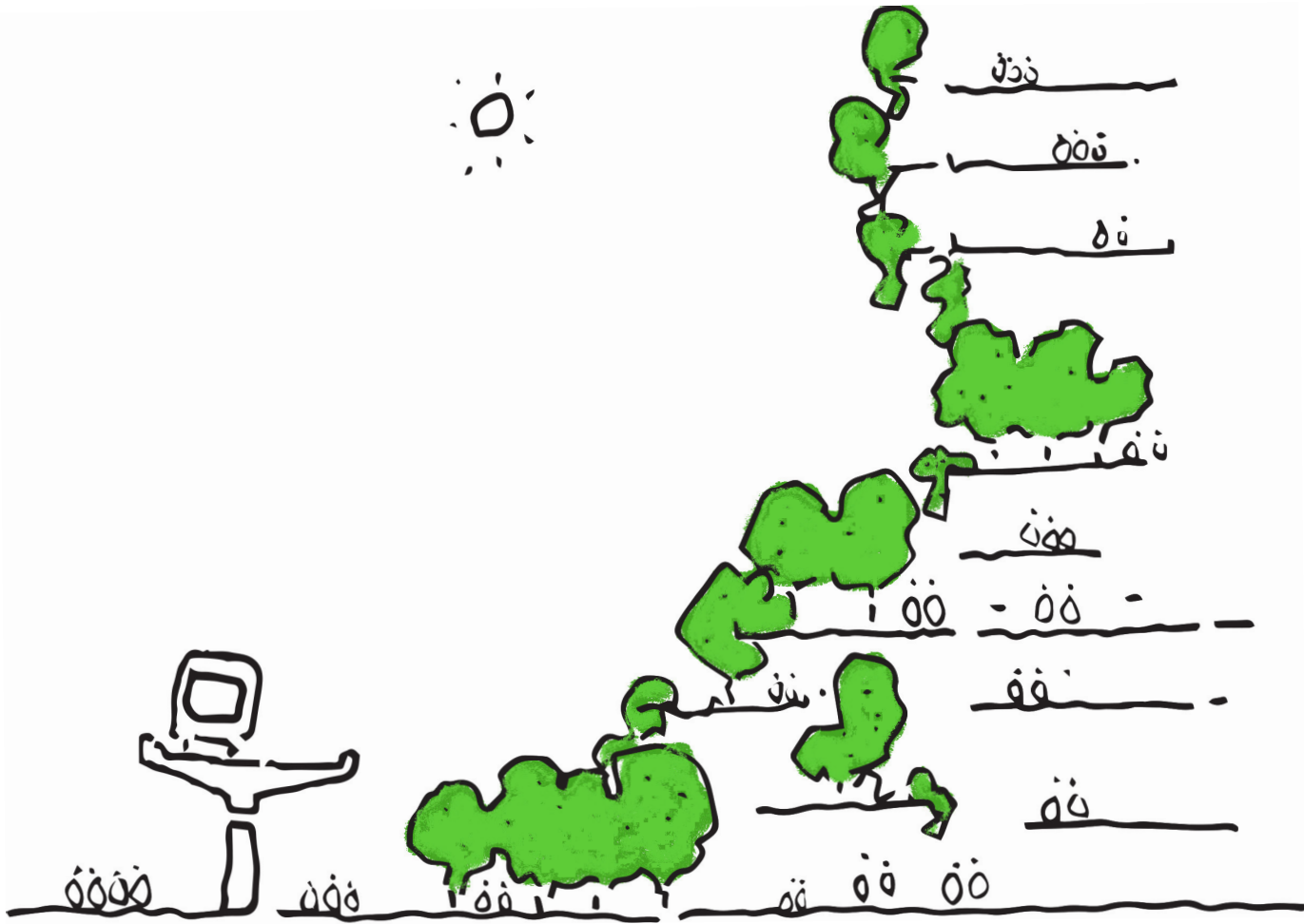
The development must consider landscape strategies as major generators of design. This is not landscape as a mediating edge but fully integrated into a cohesive and coherent structured approach to high density urban development. The architecture of the development must be responsive to the creation of meaningful green spaces but to do so in a manner that captures the idea of ‘green urbanism’, a microcosm of the garden city.

4.1.1.8 ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE

Not only is this development seen as a catalyst for change, but also as a reflection for the drive of our community for what is progressive and positive. The dynamic culture of Vancouver must inform the project which in turn must act as a symbol of optimism. Perhaps paradoxically the development must also embrace continuity, memories and evolution of forms of living that look forward, but that respect the essence of the ‘genius loci’ of both its immediate and City context.

4.1.1.9 PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE

Although the notion of what is progressive in terms of design often becomes confused with subjective notions of style and superficial concerns, the development has an important role in challenging narrow orthodoxies. Truly progressive, the project should embrace performance as well as formal based design criteria. The project should be environmentally responsive and fully committed to becoming an exemplar for future development within the city.



BING THOM ARCHITECTS BIG IDEAS INCLUDE GREEN URBANISM TO INFORM DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESIGN CONCEPTS

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4.1.2 HEALTHY CITY GOALS

In addition to the nine ‘big ideas’ the set of pre-planning guidelines prepared by Happy City to address the goals of the Healthy City form sets of principles through which the design has been critically reviewed and developed.

The current proposal has addressed the headline issues raised by Happy City following the earlier Bing Thom scheme.

These include the size and location of the grocery store, ground level parking, and the status of the public plaza.

The recommendations which are reflected in the design proposal are summarized below;

- Housing
- Shared Space
- Mobility
- Green Space and Nature
- Building Construction and Design

4.1.2.1 HOUSING

Offer collective housing options that nurture social support and relationships

Amenities which offer opportunities for community models such as Co-housing and household clustering should be safeguarded. These amenities should be meaningful and be supported by a range of spaces of different scales to promote social interaction within proximity of smaller groups of homes within the overall development.

Help people stay longer / support longer tenure

A modular approach to the planning of homes may facilitate longer term flexibility in internal plan arrangement. A variety of home types should be provided, but where the type plans are regular and accommodate a degree of modification without the challenge of irregular geometry. Homes should be designed to support a range of tenure options which are spatially non-discriminatory and which support broad social integration.

4.1.2.2 SHARED SPACE

Build a generous and inclusive public realm

Public open space should be provided that supports regular, casual and satisfying social encounters not just for the residents of the development but for the whole neighborhood. Creation of a beloved and significant public plaza; it was recognized that an elevated plaza would be unworkable as a truly public space and that such a space should have active commercial edges.

A bicycle hub on 10th Avenue was identified as a distinctive community mobility hub, adjacent to a busy cycle route.

Ideas for a public market under the skytrain guideway between 10th Avenue and 12th Avenue would be supported by on-site continuity of public space.

Public art on the site should offer a strong sense of meaning for residents, businesses, visitors and transit users. Public art should reflect the diverse cultural aspects of this part of the City.

Create semi-private and shared spaces that enrich village life

The Podium green space (hereafter referred to as the courtyard garden) should provide an active front yard for residents. Main entrances to the residential blocks should be located off the courtyard. The concierge facility should serve both a social and security function. The design should embrace all-season use of the courtyard with a range of ‘social magnets’ integrated into the design. Communal amenities at this level should be designed to boost foot traffic, with integration of daycare outdoor play space. Arrange homes to overlook the courtyard and so convey a sense of passive security.

4.1.2.3 MOBILITY

Make walking wonderful

Support the public realm along the edge on Broadway. Although previous recommendations called for an active commercial edge on Broadway, this has been determined as being unrealistic. However the design of the grocery store frontage along Broadway should provide visual permeability and avoid the perception of a blank façade.

Provide a safe well lit pedestrian link between Broadway and East 10th Avenue to provide permeability and address concerns of the site becoming a barrier to active mobility.

Reduce car dependence

Bike share stations and great bike services should be provided and be easily accessible, within close proximity to the Skytrain station, both at grade and as dedicated resident bike parking within the parkade. Designated car parking for pool car share vehicles should be considered.

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4.1.2.4 GREEN SPACE AND NATURE

Ensure diverse nature and green space is accessible to residents, visitors and transit users

A shared garden within the courtyard garden should enable residents to grow fruit and vegetables that are too large for patio and balcony spaces. Shared spaces will also strengthen social networks and resident’s sense of belonging.

Shared gardens throughout the residential development should be considered and provided in a variety of forms and scales.



4.1.2.5 BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

Become a city of Vancouver best practice in environmental sustainability and human wellbeing

The location of the Safeway site demands that noise mitigation is considered in both the design and the selection of building materials. These considerations will also inform landscape strategies throughout the development and the creation of well insulated internal and social spaces which are conducive to prosocial activities.

The development should showcase best practices in respect to the new standard for sustainable building, and be an exemplar of the Renewable City Strategy.

Support small business and local entrepreneurship

Small retail destinations should provide a range of commercial experiences within the public realm at ground level. The retail nature should be complementary to that of Commercial Drive, and have a strong local ambience.

Opportunities to work within the site should be considered and ideas such as an innovation hub have been suggested.



4.2 KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

4.2.1 AT GRADE PUBLIC OPEN PLAZA

The Grandview Woodland Community Plan requires that the site provides a generous public plaza at grade. Previous iterations of the development scheme proposed that this be translated as an elevated ‘breezeway’ on multiple levels spanning from East 10th Avenue to Broadway with sets of monumental stairs at either end.

To support this strategy it had been also proposed that a more suitable location for a grade level public plaza be considered at the intersection of Commercial Drive north and the cut.

It is recognized that the conception of the breezeway, although architecturally arresting, did not satisfy the intention of the requirement and that an at-grade public plaza of approximately 20,000 sft (open to the air) is required to be satisfactorily integrated into the proposal.

The plaza should be legible in urban terms; functional and a meaningful public space providing connectivity between Broadway and East 10th Avenue.

4.2.2 ANIMATION OF EDGES

It has been recognized that the planning of a large format grocery store on the site poses a number of challenges in terms of animation and avoidance of ‘sterile edges’.

The design must reconcile the functional demands of this type of retail with measures to provide activation of the public plaza and generosity to its address on Broadway and East 10th Avenue.

4.2.3 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO GROCERY STORE FROM BROADWAY AND EAST 10TH AVENUE

The Grandview Woodland Community Plan suggests two alternative conceptual strategies for the location of the grocery store, the configuration of the public plaza and the route through the site. Convenient access from both Broadway and East 10th Avenue to the single entry point for the grocery store needs to be provided.

Where the grocery store is elevated to the second floor, as in previous iterations of the scheme this has proved problematic to fulfill the intention of these criteria, and the design must integrate the grocery store location, elevation and entrance with the public plaza and direct connection between Broadway and East 10th Avenue.

4.2.4 CHILDCARE FACILITY

A 9,000 sf daycare facility and associated safe outdoor play area has been integrated into the scheme. The daycare is to be linked to the public realm and associated with the garden spaces in a manner that is visually ‘open’ but secure. The daycare’s location above the office provides privileged access to light, security, enhanced secure outdoor playspace, all with inspiring mountain views.

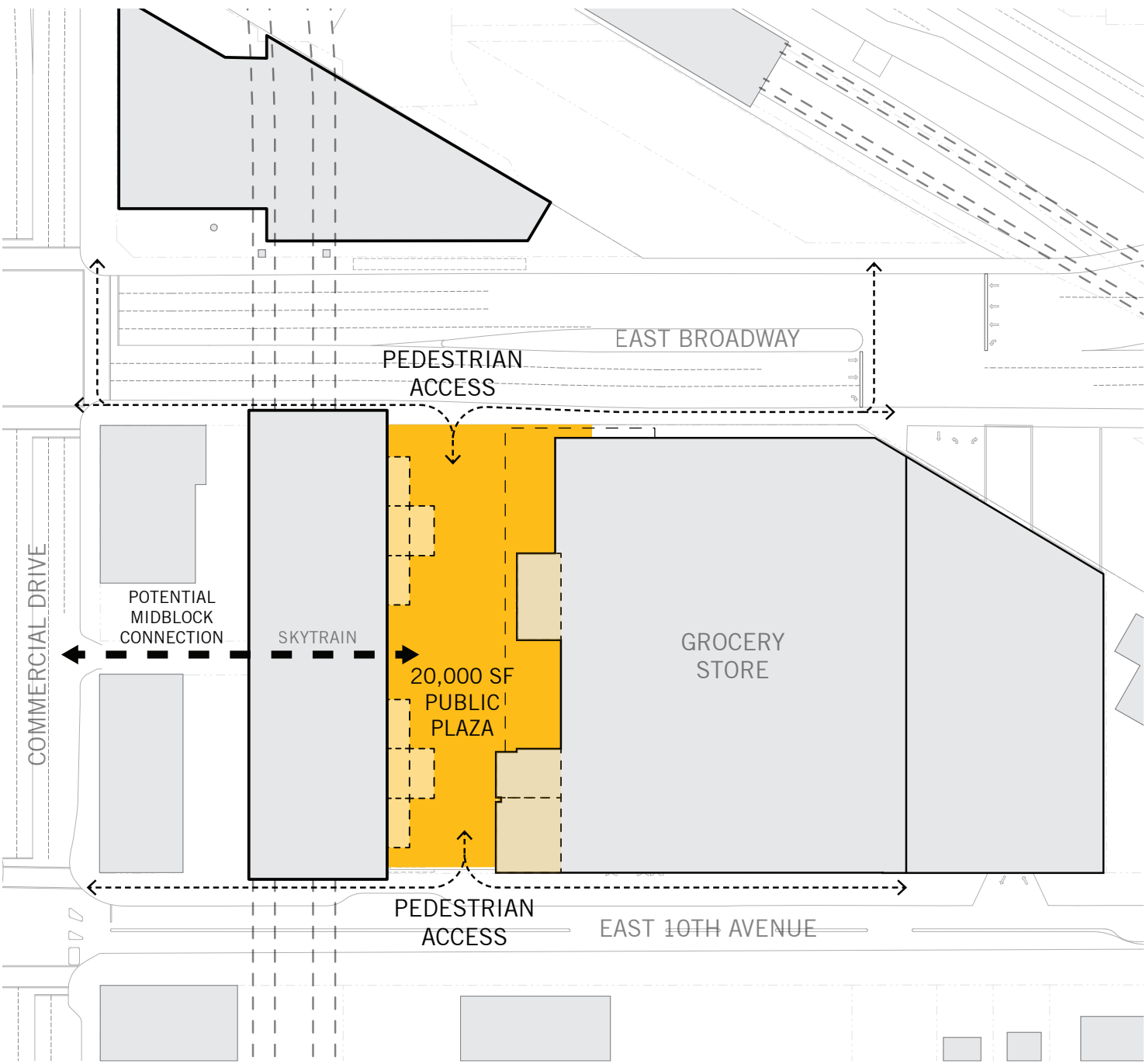


DIAGRAM AT COMMERCIAL-BROADWAY ILLUSTRATING PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED PUBLIC PLAZA AND SAFEGUARDING OF MIDBLOCK CONNECTION



4.2 KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

4.2.5 SMALL SCALE RETAIL

The relationship of the scheme to its immediate context, and particularly to the character of Commercial Drive North is seen as being of fundamental importance to its success. The large format grocery store should be complimented by small and micro retail opportunities which contrast in scale and use and which may offer non-conventional formats for retail.

The location of such retail units has been considered in the past and it has been suggested that the elevation of the development along Broadway would benefit from active retail frontage.

The proposal presents an alternative recommendation, where the smaller scale retail is clustered along the public plaza with the Broadway elevation at grade being dominated by a glazed elevation for the grocery store.

4.2.6 CONTEXT AND GENIUS LOCI

As discussed elsewhere in this report the character of this part of the city is unique and specific. This development will, by its scale and density, alter the nature of the neighborhood and how the Broadway / Commercial Drive intersection is perceived throughout the city.

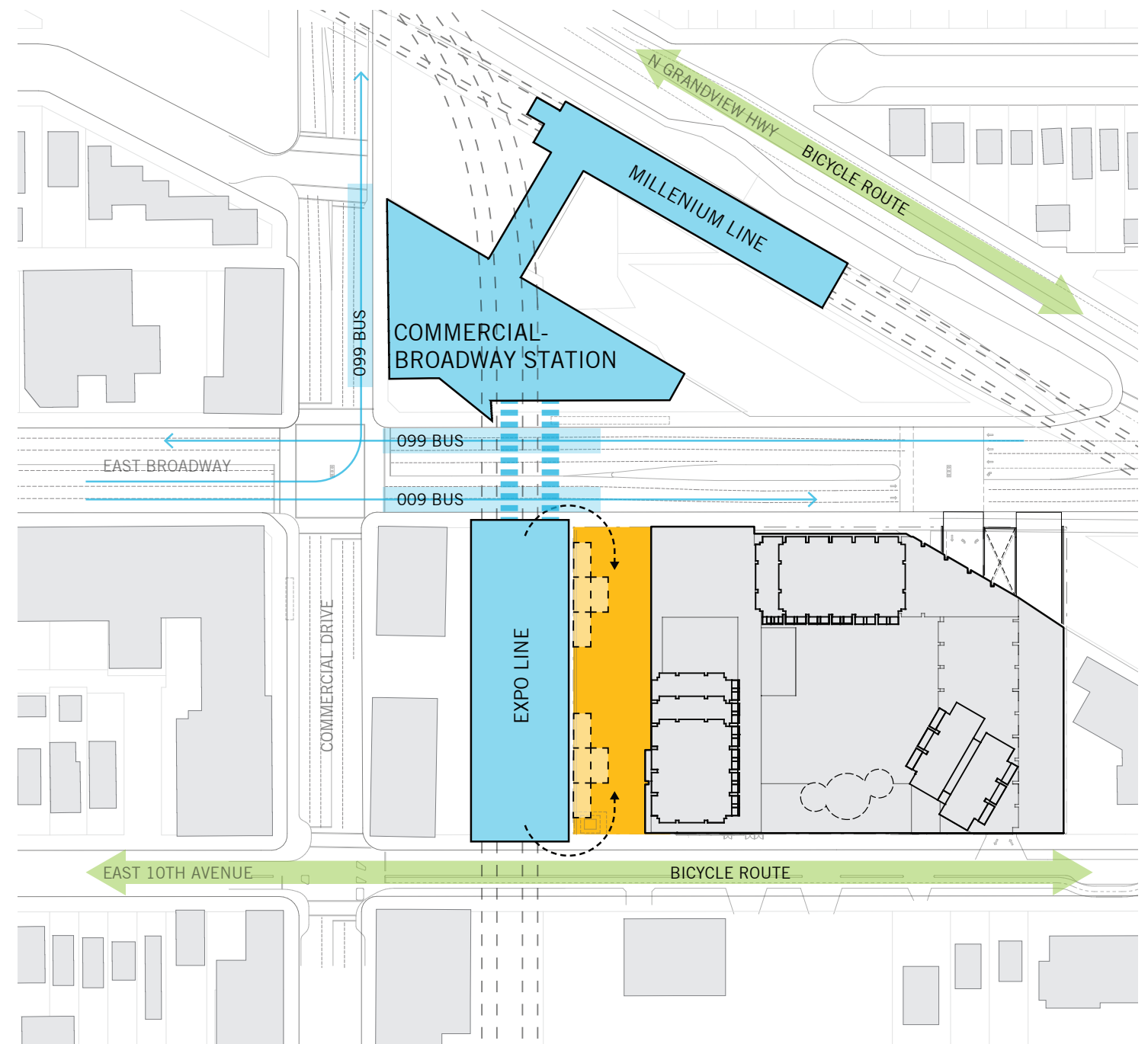
The valued historic fabric of the area must be considered alongside the zones of ambiguity and transition – particularly the immediate area around the Safeway site. The scheme must aim to be responsive to the spirit of the place whilst at the same time offering an optimistic forward looking image for the demands of the 21st century city.

4.2.7 TRANSIT

The relationship of the adjacent Skytrain station is an important design consideration. The main entrance to the station is at grade from Broadway with a secondary at grade entrance from east 10th Avenue.

The Grandview Woodland Community Plan illustrates a potential mid-block connection between the station and the development site which should be safeguarded, although the current design for the expansion of the station makes no such concession.

The transit hub of Broadway and Commercial should be enhanced by the scheme, with the plaza connecting the two ends of the station and providing a vibrant active public open space providing spatial amenity at the point of modal interchange.



INTERMODAL TRANSIT INTERCHANGE ELEMENTS AT COMMERCIAL/BROADWAY