

RTC

RENO I-80 CROSSING ALTERNATIVE STUDY

Final Report

January 30, 2026



LMN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Interstate 80 is an essential asset for the City of Reno, providing critical regional mobility for people and freight, and intercity connectivity to Salt Lake City, Oakland, Sacramento and beyond. As the University of Nevada, Reno expands south and commercial and entertainment development in downtown Reno pushes north, the synergies between the campus and downtown, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and the resulting urban fabric remain hampered by the interstate.

BACKGROUND & EXISTING CONDITIONS

The University's historic quad and original structures align with and terminate Lake Street, now truncated by the interstate. The campus has expanded its presence in recent years to the south, developing a new Campus Gateway, initiated by the new John Tulloch Business Building, structured parking garage, and future plans for a new life sciences building and hotel. Extending south across the interstate to East 6th Street, the University Village properties and other campus-serving housing developments further increase the amount of people circulating within the vicinity of the interstate. Current access across I-80 is via Evans Avenue, University Way, or North Virginia Street, which do not provide adequate, safe, and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connections into downtown Reno.

PRIORITIZING SAFETY

This study builds on the goals and analysis of RTC Active transportation Plan and the University Area Transportation Study that demonstrates a need for an improved safe and accessible crossing due to concentration of injuries and fatal crashes in the immediate vicinity.

OPINION OF PROBABLE COST

Preliminary cost ranges were developed for each alternative to provide a high-level understanding of potential investment needs and relative differences between alternatives. These estimates support informed decision-making by helping to evaluate feasibility and trade-offs among the alternatives, and they will be used to guide refinement of preferred options and support future funding strategies.

NEXT STEPS

This alternative design package has been developed by LMN at the request of RTC in support of the City of Reno, and the University of Nevada, Reno. Next steps include further consideration and review with project stakeholders as well as public engagement to seek community input to further understand community interests. In addition, the identification and development of possible funding strategies is needed to support future phases and project goals.

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

A collaborative workshop with project stakeholders from RTC, the City of Reno, and the University of Nevada - Reno established shared vision, goals, and priorities that informed the development of initial crossing alternatives that explored a range of potential options. These alternatives were further refined with stakeholder feedback and developed along with an option of probable cost for further consideration.

ALTERNATIVE A - I-80 ADAPTATION

This alternative proposed the lightest level of intervention, enhancing the existing overpass infrastructure by providing enhancements for pedestrian and bicycles along both Evans Avenue and University Way. Proposed upgrades include revised channelization providing widened separated routes for pedestrians and bicycles along with intersection improvements. The inclusion of new planting, pathway lighting, and architectural guardrails help to buffer the impact of the interstate and create a visual book-ended gateway between the University and downtown Reno. This alternative can readily be combined with the other options and it is not mutually exclusive.



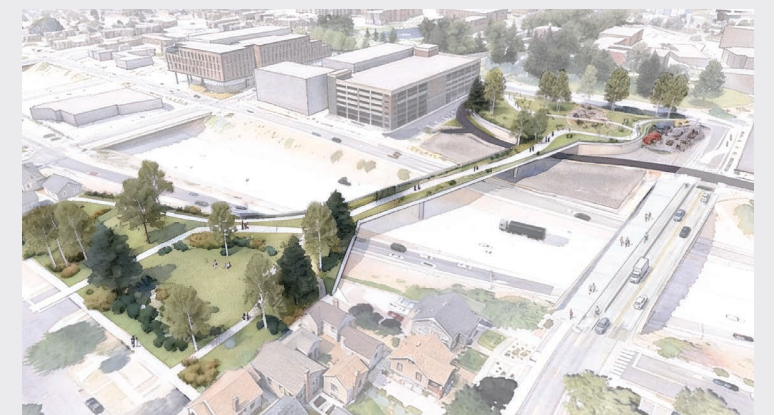
ALTERNATIVE B - EVANS AVE EXPANSION

This alternative both leverages and expands existing infrastructure, widening Evans Avenue and extending Evans Park at grade. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic is transitioned from the roadway into a new pathways that circulate through Evans Park connecting to campus at East 9th Street. In addition, the opportunity to connect to new green space across I-80 shortens the perceived distance of the crossing along with landscaping and pathway lighting that further buffers the impact of the interstate. This alternative does not provide the same level of direct visual connection or separation from the highway as does Alternative C.



ALTERNATIVE C - EVANS PARK RAMP

This alternative maintains existing infrastructure while creating a new connection by extending a re-imagined Evans Park across I-80 on a new land bridge. Pedestrian and slower moving bicycle traffic is elevated with dedicated pathways above the roadway, reducing potential traffic conflicts. Connection and views to Lake Street at both ends reflects the historic University connection. A new green space across I-80 shortens the perceived distance of the crossing along with landscaping and pathway lighting that buffers the impact of the interstate. This alternative also creates a new amenity for the developing neighborhood that anchors the crossing at the end of Lake Street.



VISION

Restore and enhance the connection between downtown Reno and the UNR campus through a **safe, inviting, and accessible pathway** for pedestrians and non-motorized users that bridges I-80, extending the university character while **strengthening partnerships for future development**, and setting up the **next phase of UNR growth**.



SITE CONNECTIONS

COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

The project vision and goals were developed through a collaborative on-site visioning workshop with stakeholders from RTC, the City of Reno, and the University of Nevada, Reno, and refined by the design team. The visioning workshop included a site tour of both sides of Interstate 80, Evans Avenue and University Way crossings, as well as the University's historic quad.

The shared vision, goals, and priorities that informed the development of initial crossing alternatives explored a range of potential options that were presented at second virtual alternative design workshop. These alternatives were further refined with stakeholder feedback and developed along with an option of probable cost for further consideration. A third and final virtual workshop with the stakeholder group reviewed the refined alternatives, cost, and development of this final report.

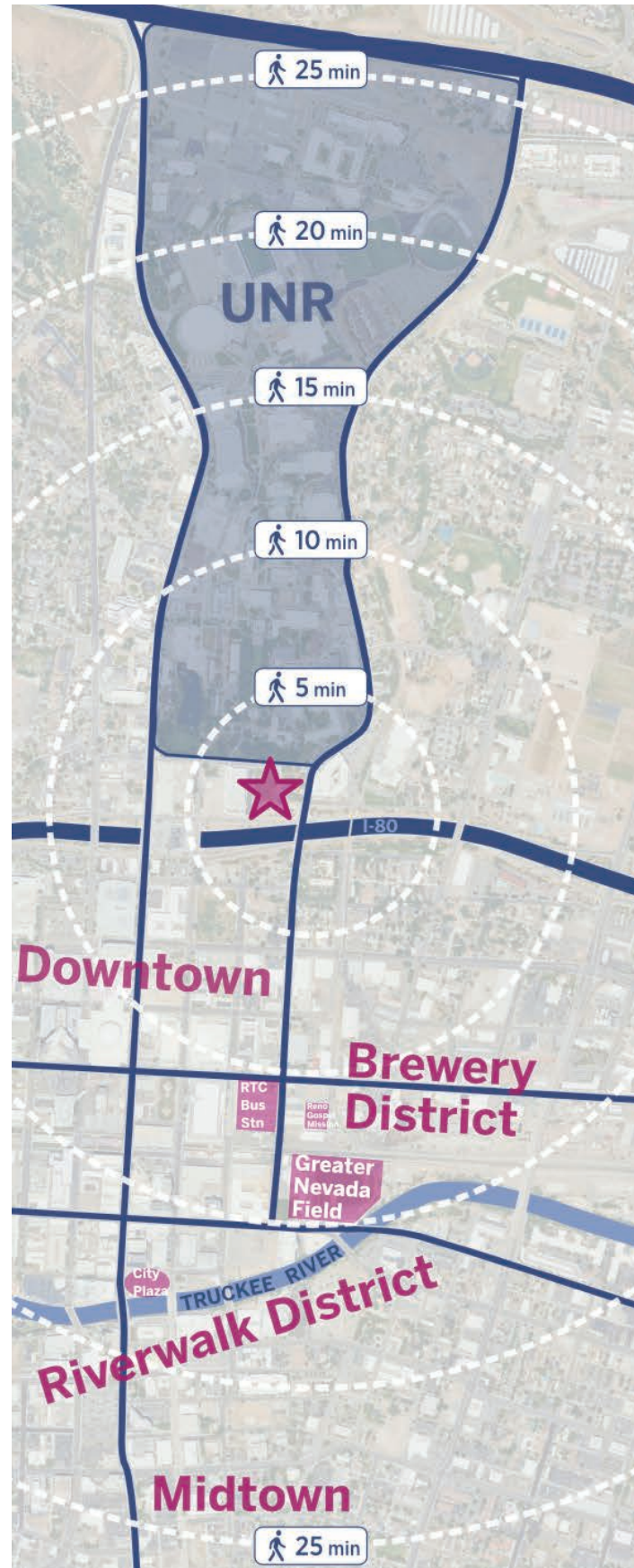
DEFINING SUCCESS

The ultimate outcome from a new or improved connection across I-80 will be evidenced by partnerships that increase safe active transportation, encouraging more of the community to utilize the crossing as a safer corridor to local amenities and destinations down to the Truckee River and beyond. The crossing becomes a local destination that breaks down barriers to make the University more accessible for the community with a clear sense of place that blends seamlessly into the university and adjacent communities. Over time, its gravity and momentum spurs economic development in the vicinity.

RESILIENT OUTCOMES

Nestled in the Truckee Meadows, with close proximity to significant natural features the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Lake Tahoe, and Pyramid Lake, the proposed connection has the opportunity to support Reno Resilience's goals by incorporating low impact development principles into any of the alternatives as the design progresses. Site strategies for further consideration include:

- Incorporate native vegetation to support habitat, increase tree canopy and extension of the UNR campus arboretum approach.
- Utilize permeable surfaces and xeriscape landscape design that reduces the need for irrigation supporting green storm water infrastructure - prioritizing 'green' over 'gray'.
- Selection of structural systems that reduce embodied carbon through the use of add-mixtures or recycled content.
- Selection of site lighting to support dark sky initiatives.
- Source materials locally to support local economy and reduce embodied project carbon.
- Mobility that promotes walkable neighborhood and reduced reliance on single occupancy vehicles



- Enhance **connectivity** between downtown Reno and the UNR campus.
- Prioritize a **safe accessible pathway** that accommodates all ages and abilities.
- Investigate landscape elements, lighting and other urban design elements to **visually screen the highway** from the pedestrian experience.
- Plan for a more effective use and **integration of Evans Park** into the campus open space network with the realignment of 9th Street.
- Create a **visual gateway** to the UNR campus and gateway district.
- **Extend the UNR campus** and character across the highway.
- Contribute to the **string of destinations** connecting Midtown and UNR campus.



PRIORITIZING SAFETY

SUPPORTING ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION GOALS

The RTC Active transportation Plan establishes a vision for the future of active transportation in the region:

"We envision a connected network of comfortable, convenient, and consistent facilities for people of all ages and abilities walking, bicycling, and rolling on a mobility device which prioritizes accessibility to schools, jobs, shopping, neighborhoods, community facilities, parks, and regional trails within the Truckee Meadows."

The plan's first goal identified is to Improve Safety: "Create a safe environment for all users by reducing the risk of death or serious injury on the transportation network." RTC Active Transportation Plan indicates the need for safety focused improvements providing an analysis of available crash data from 2016-2020. This analysis along with the University Area Transportation Study which focuses specifically on the I-80 Crossing study area, illustrates the concentration of safety issues within the study area. In addition this data, recent reports further confirm the vulnerability of pedestrians and bicycles along of these routes, predominately at intersections.

HIGH INJURY NETWORK

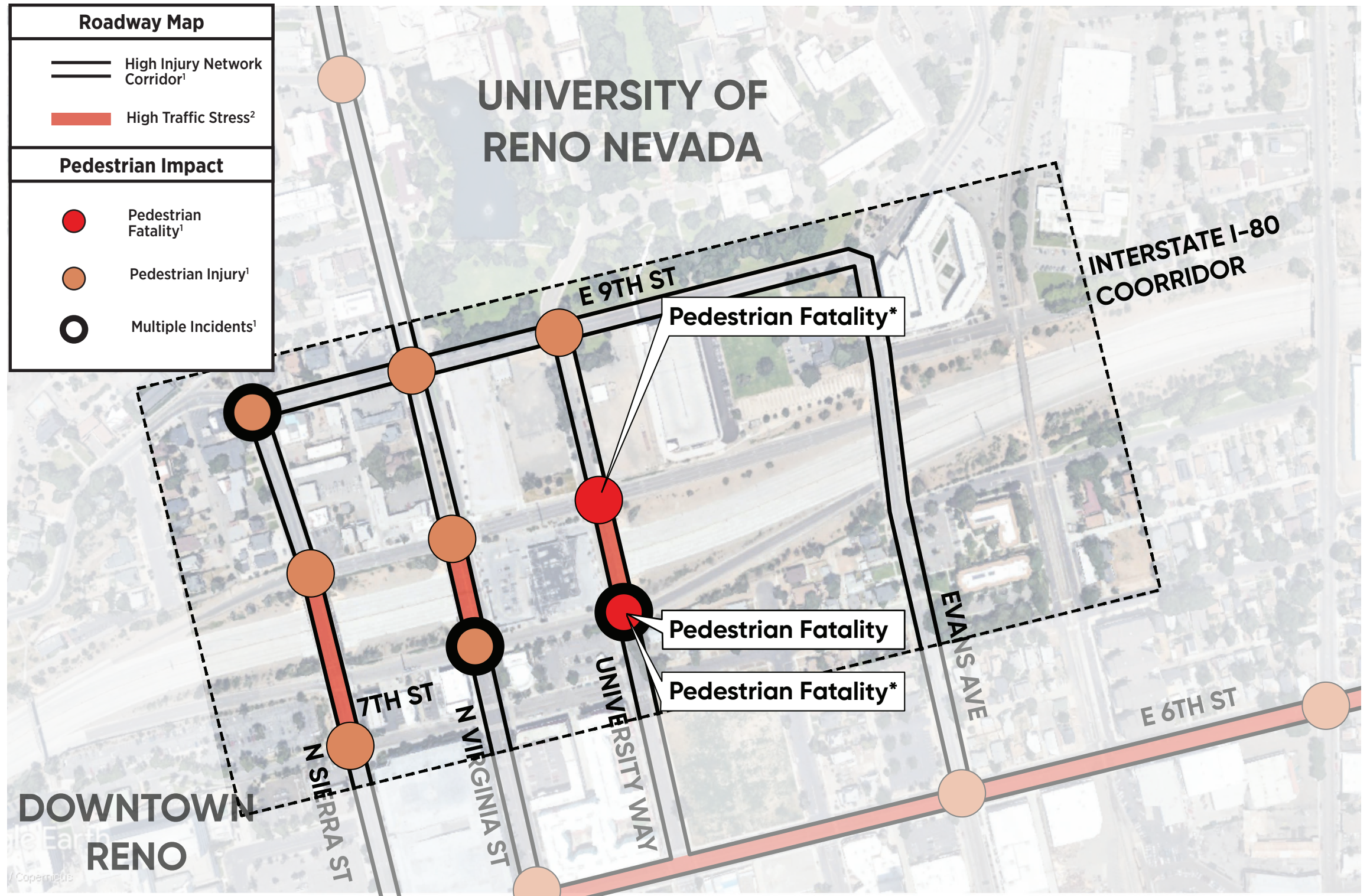
The RTC Active Transportation Plan establishes a designation of High Injury Network Corridors, that are present on all the connections across I-80 in this study area. Significant east-west connections designated include E 6th Ave and E 9th which provide access into campus and adjacent housing serving the university students and staff.

"The RTC has conducted substantial analysis to identify roadways and intersections across the Truckee Meadows with the greatest safety needs as part of the 2022 Vision Zero Action Plan. Through this effort, the RTC developed a High-Injury Network (HIN) which identifies the top 25% of roadway corridors and intersections which have the highest crash rate, level of frequency, and crash severity across the county."

RECOMMENDATIONS

This data demonstrates the urgent need of alternative pathways across I-80 for pedestrians and bicycles that address the need for a safe and comfortable route connecting UNR to Downtown Reno that meets Reno's active transportation goals. The alternatives studied in this study incorporate the following recommendations in different ways:

- Encourage the use of routes along roads designated as lower traffic stress, shifting pedestrian and bicycle traffic to the east, away from North Virginia and University Way.
- Provide an enhanced crossing near Lake Street and Evans Avenue
- Provide safety improvements to University Way that connect into campus at the new Manzanita Bowl accessibility project.
- Provide widened separated routes, with barriers from traffic
- Provide limited crossing points with clear decision making



¹ Data sourced from RTC Washoe Active transportation Plan
² Data sourced from University Area Transportation Study - Final Report
 *Confirmed reports not included in referenced studies

TOPOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS

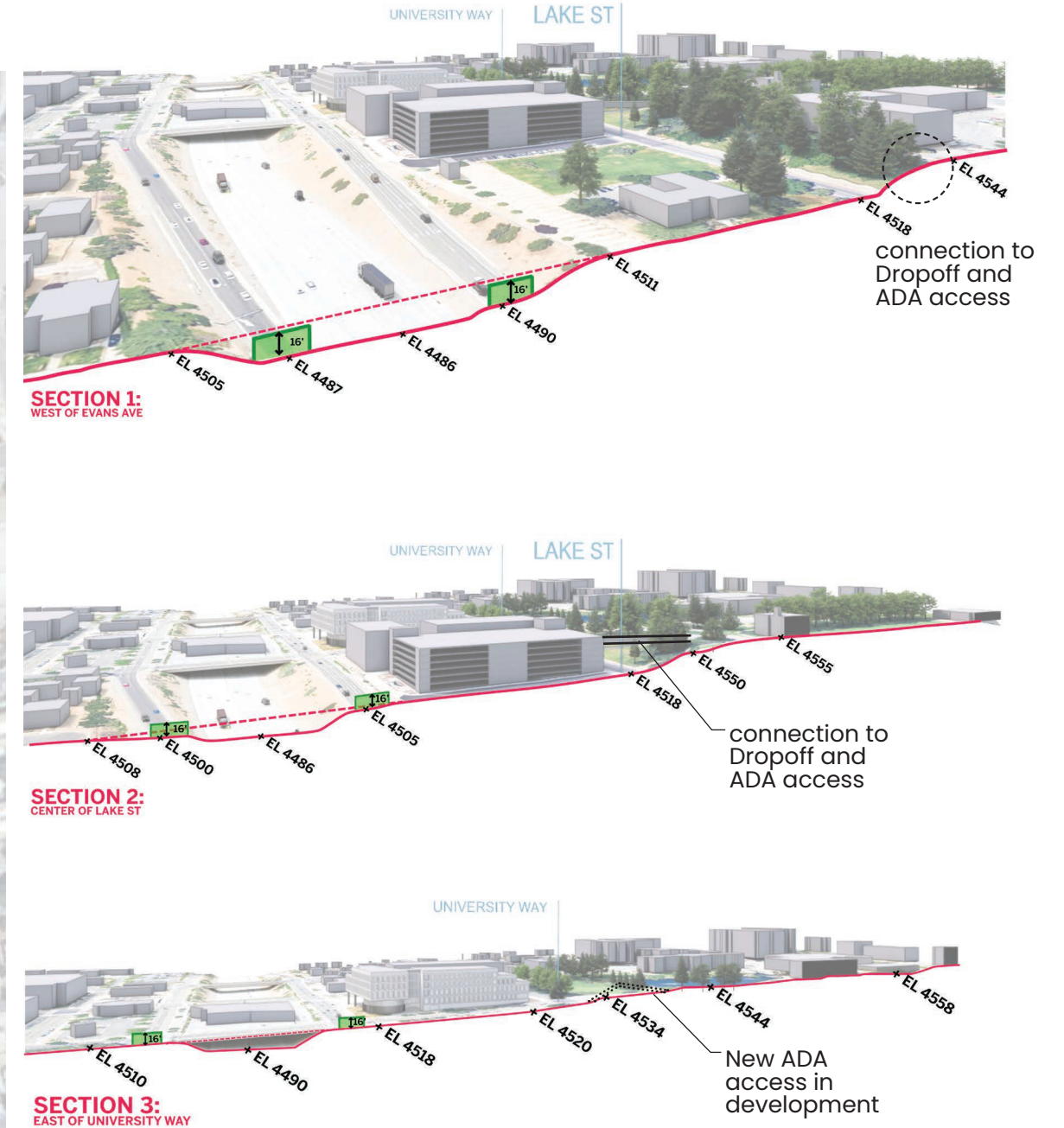
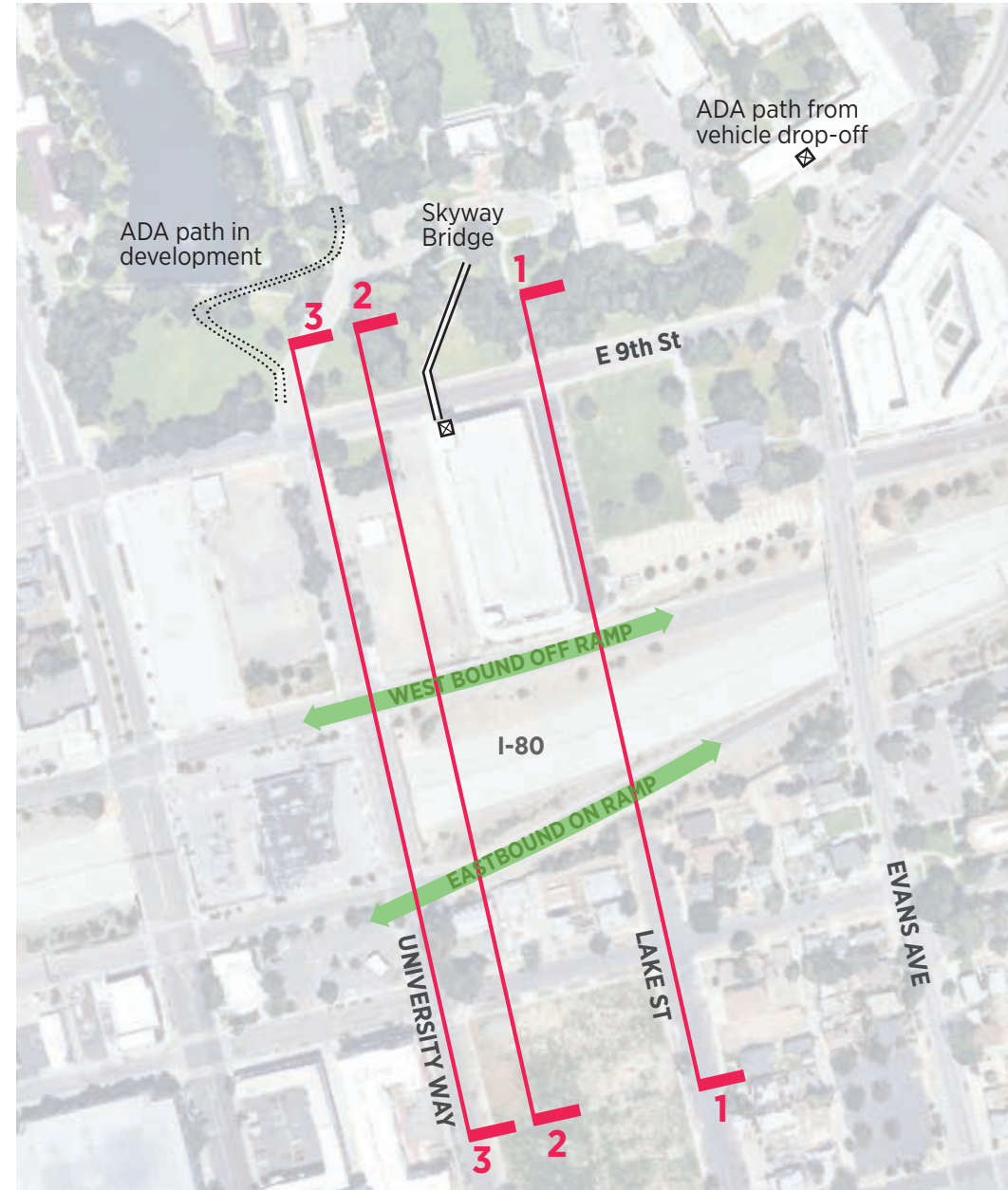
SITE CONSTRAINTS

The University of Nevada-Reno's historic campus was sited on top of a hill overlooking the City of Reno and the Truckee River. A staircase connects the historic campus quad to E 9th street at Lake Street. Accessible access points have been created over time to overcome the challenges of the topography via elevator or ramps, including the new Manzanita Bowl project and a bridge from the upper levels of the new Gateway Parking Complex.

Crossing I-80 as a pedestrian or cyclist today is limited to University Way or Evans Avenue, both of which are challenged with proximity to vehicle traffic with documented conflicts demonstrating safety concerns, noise, and lack of comfort and confidence of users. The bridges in this vicinity provide a visual (highway users) and linear (street users) gateway to the UNR campus and City, and the aesthetic conditions of the bridges do not currently meet the expectations of either.

Grades on both sides of I-80 drop minimally from E 9th Street to E 8th Street, providing a relatively symmetrical condition for spanning across the interstate. The primary site constraint is defined by the location of the on and off ramps on the north and south sides, which slope up from their lowest point at the Evans Avenue overpass to meet intersections at University Way. The clearances required to span above these interstate ramps necessitate either a significant amount of vertical grade change to get up and over, or an alignment near or adjacent to Evans Avenue.

ADA access is provided along the hillside, where longer paths, vertical circulation and raised bridges help ease the steep changes in elevation. As shown in black in the diagrams, these routes run parallel to the slope to make the grade manageable, connecting E 9th Street, Lake Street, and University Way where direct crossings would be too steep.



UNIVERSITY GROWTH

PROJECT CONTEXT

RTC is in the process of studying a reconfiguration of E 9th Street that would route traffic around the south end Evans Park, create dedicated bicycle lanes, and revise the channelization of Evans Avenue to remove parking, shifting traffic to the east edge creating separate pedestrian and bicycle pathways along the west edge. As an outcome of this study, LMN was asked to consider additional alternatives for a new I-80 crossing along with the reconsideration of Evans Park. The alternatives developed assume a realigned E 9th Street as an existing condition, but study different options for pedestrian and bicycle routes in conjunction with Evans Park.

AN EVOLVING CITY

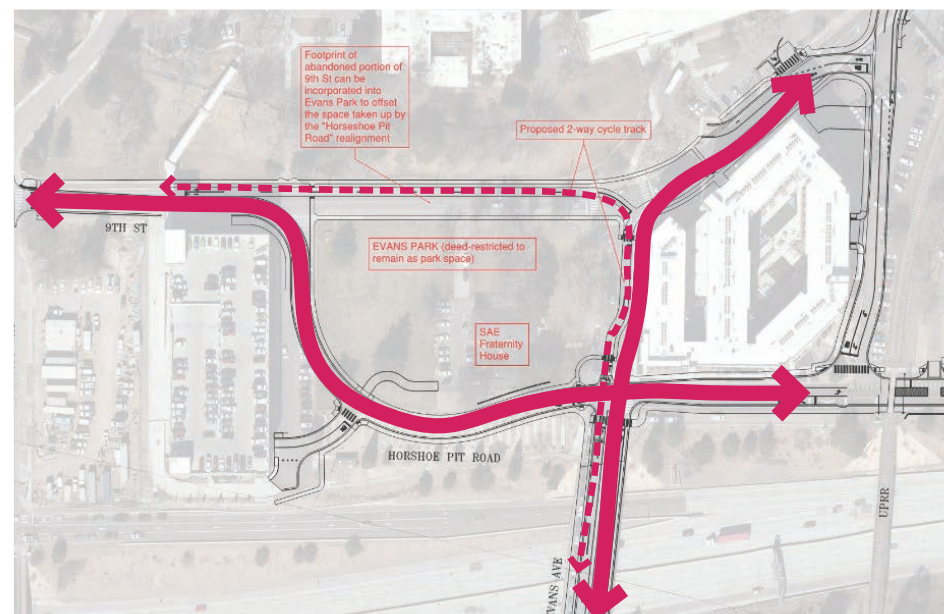
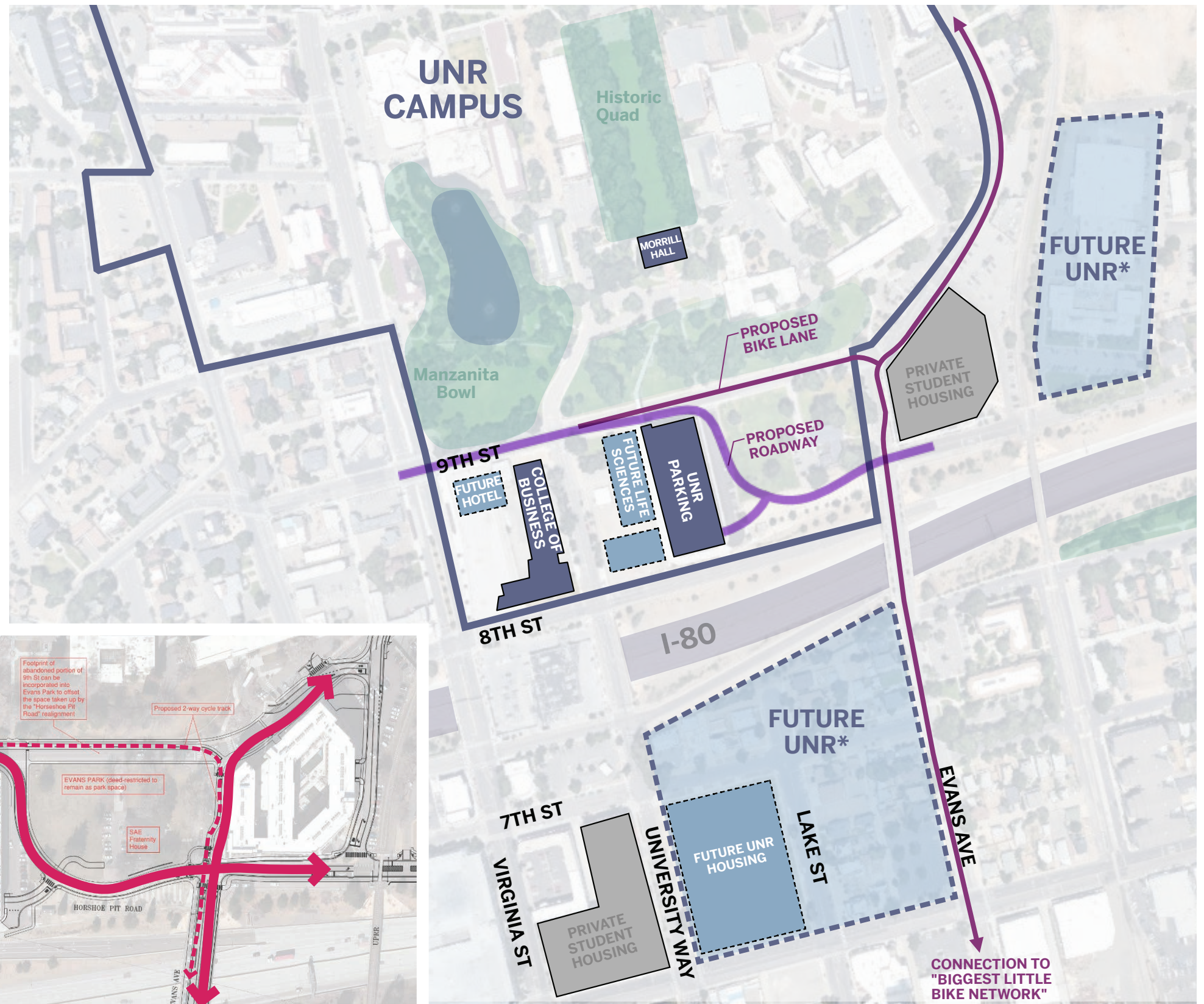
A gateway to Lake Tahoe and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the city of Reno has undergone many transformations since its inception as Lake's crossing point on the Truckee River, experiencing a boom brought on by the connection of the first transcontinental railroad, and followed by the new interstate expanding greater metropolitan Reno and furthering east-west connections, helping to establish Reno as destination for tourists. Proud of its history and entrepreneurial growth, the city looks forward with a deepening focus on the local community. The knowledge-based economy has grown bolstered by the resources of the University and local talent - expanding local business, civic and cultural spaces, retail and restaurant districts, and drawing investment of technology-based companies.

AN EXPANDING CAMPUS

The University's historic quad and original structures align with and terminate Lake Street, now truncated by the interstate. The campus has expanded its presence in recent years to the south, developing a new Campus Gateway, initiated by the new John Tulloch Business Building, structured parking garage, and future plans for a new life sciences building and hotel. Extending south across the interstate to East 6th Street, the University Village properties and other campus-serving housing developments further increase the amount of people circulating within the vicinity of the interstate and potential for vehicle conflicts. Current access across I-80 is via Evans Avenue, University Way, or North Virginia Street, which do not provide adequate, safe, and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connections into downtown Reno.

CONNECTED LANDSCAPES

The University campus is arranged along a meandering axis linking a series of gardens and open spaces from Rancho San Rafael Regional Park to the historic quad, though downtown Reno, to the Truckee River Walk and Midtown beyond. A new connection across I-80 has the opportunity to bridge the fissure created by the interstate and reconnect this historic axis with a public amenity that reinforces Reno's transitioning civic identity, further synergies between the campus and the city, and providing a new front door to UNR's expanding campus.



Bike lane and roadway changes that are being considered for Evans Park and have been incorporated into new crossing alternatives.

* UNR owns or is in negotiations for the majority of the property in this zone this zone

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

SHARED PRIORITIES

A collaborative workshop with project stakeholders established shared vision, goals, and priorities that informed the development of initial crossing alternatives that explored a range of potential options. The workshop concluded with several key takeaways.

1. SAFETY

Current access across I-80 is via Evans Avenue, University Way, or North Virginia Street, which do not provide adequate, safe, and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle connections into downtown Reno. These intersections and roadways are challenged with traffic conflicts resulting in injury and fatal crashes, which is compounded with new developments that further increase the amount of people circulating within the vicinity of the interstate. The proposed alternatives should prioritize intuitive and comfortable pathways that promote safe mobility and accessible connections for pedestrians and bicyclists.

2.

HEAL THE DIVIDE

The creation of the I-80 severed the historic connection between the University, the commercial core of downtown Reno and surrounding neighbors, and the Truckee River, which formed the foundation of Reno's early development. The proposed alternatives should aim to extend the campus and mitigate the freeway impacts by shortening the perceived distance and challenges of crossing the interstate.

3.

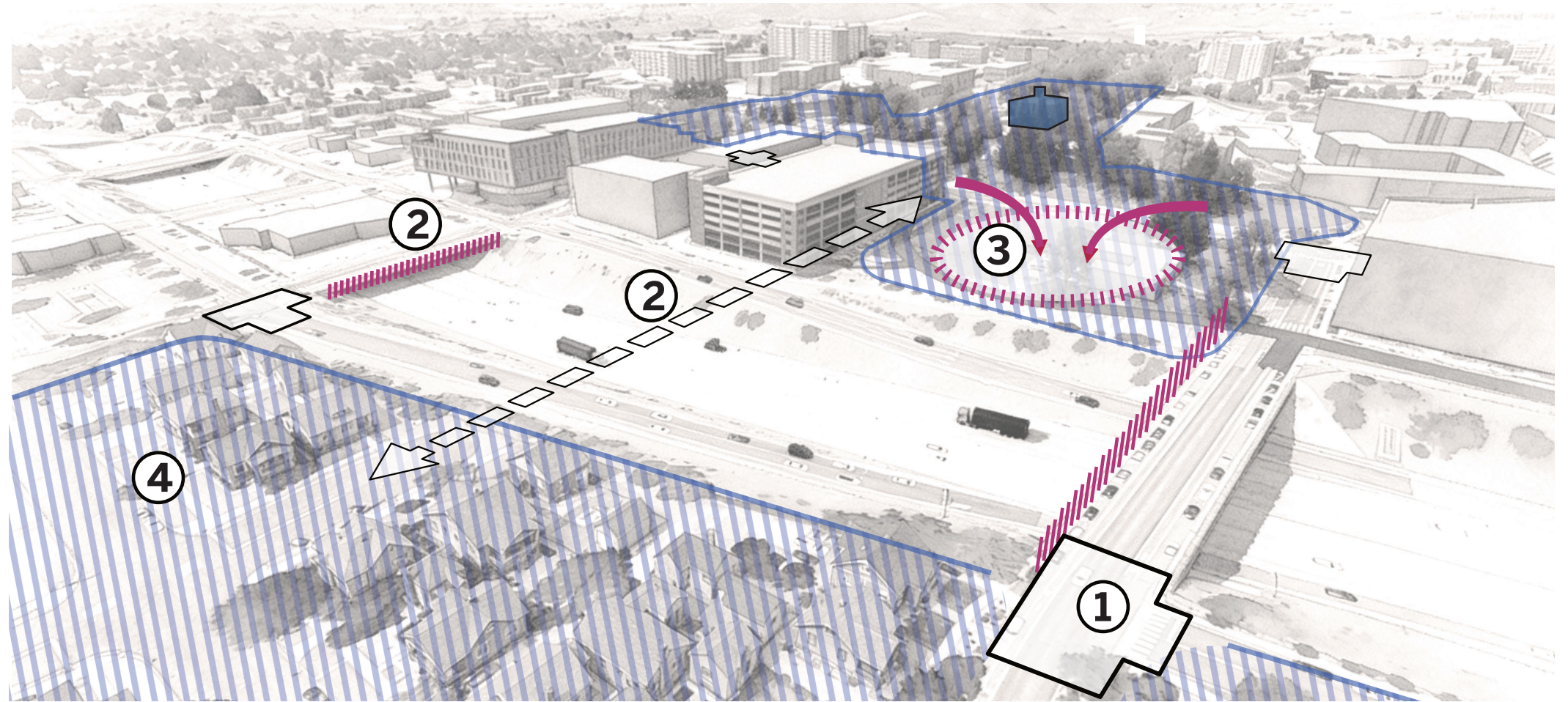
PRIDE OF PLACE

This section of I-80 lies at the heart of the historic connection between the University and the City of Reno, becoming the effective front door to the campus for locals and visitors alike. This prominent location features the existing Evan's Park with views to the historic campus, downtown Reno, and the surrounding Truckee Meadows basin nestled in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The proposed alternatives should be visible and inviting the community, utilizing landscape elements that extend the character and beauty of the University and local landscape.

4.

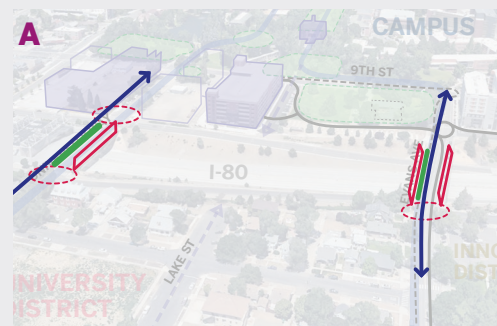
ECONOMIC DRIVER

As the City of Reno and the University plan for the future, development around the vicinity of the interstate is envisioned to be an economic driver and a catalyst for future entrepreneurial growth for the City and the University to grow together. An enhanced connection across I-80 and re-imagining of Evans Park will set up the next phase of campus expansion. The proposed alternatives should help to frame future development and anticipate greater activity on both sides of the crossing.

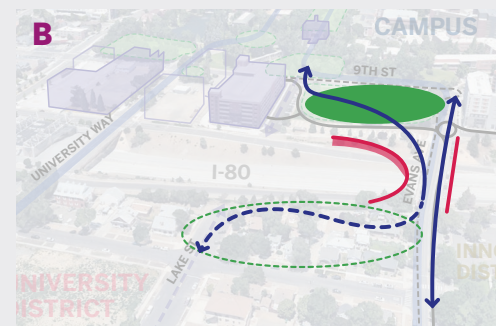


A series of early design alternatives were developed to respond to shared stakeholder priorities and explore potential strategies for improving the I-80 crossing. Following evaluation of site constraints, technical considerations, and feasibility, the alternatives were refined to focus on the most viable options.

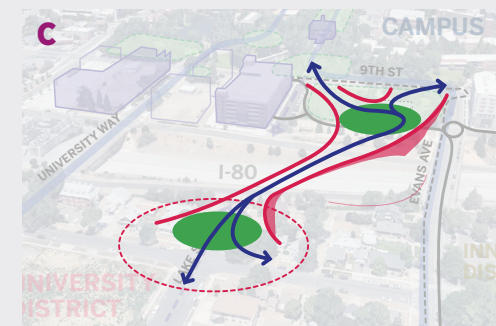
*See the appendix for supporting alternative imagery and additional information on the alternative that was not advanced.



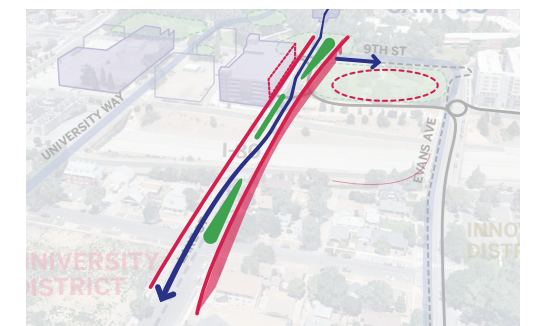
- Minimal intervention using existing infrastructure
- Improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and safety



- Expanded roadway and park infrastructure
- Park-based pedestrian and bicycle routes with enhanced green connections



- New Elevated park connection over I-80
- Separated pedestrian and bicycle movement with a new neighborhood amenity



- Direct elevated connection linking Lake Street to the University
- Significant length, complexity, and feasibility challenges*

ALTERNATIVE A - I-80 ADAPTATION

DESCRIPTION

This alternative proposed the lightest level of intervention, leveraging the existing overpass infrastructure while providing enhancements for pedestrian and bicycles along both Evans Avenue and University Way. Proposed upgrades include revised channelization providing widened separated routes for pedestrians and bicycles along with intersection improvements. This alternative can readily be combined with the other options and it not mutually exclusive.

The footprint of the proposed alternative is smaller, which has the potential to maintain more existing property while also connecting into existing or planned street improvements along Evans Avenue and University Way.

The inclusion of new planting, pathway lighting, and architectural guardrails help to buffer the impact of the interstate and create a visual book-ended gateway between the University and downtown Reno.

The architectural guardrail becomes the defining feature that frames the University's campus expansion on both sides. This feature has the potential to incorporate local or campus-specific storytelling leveraging the visibility of the guardrails from the adjacent interstate.

KEY FEATURES

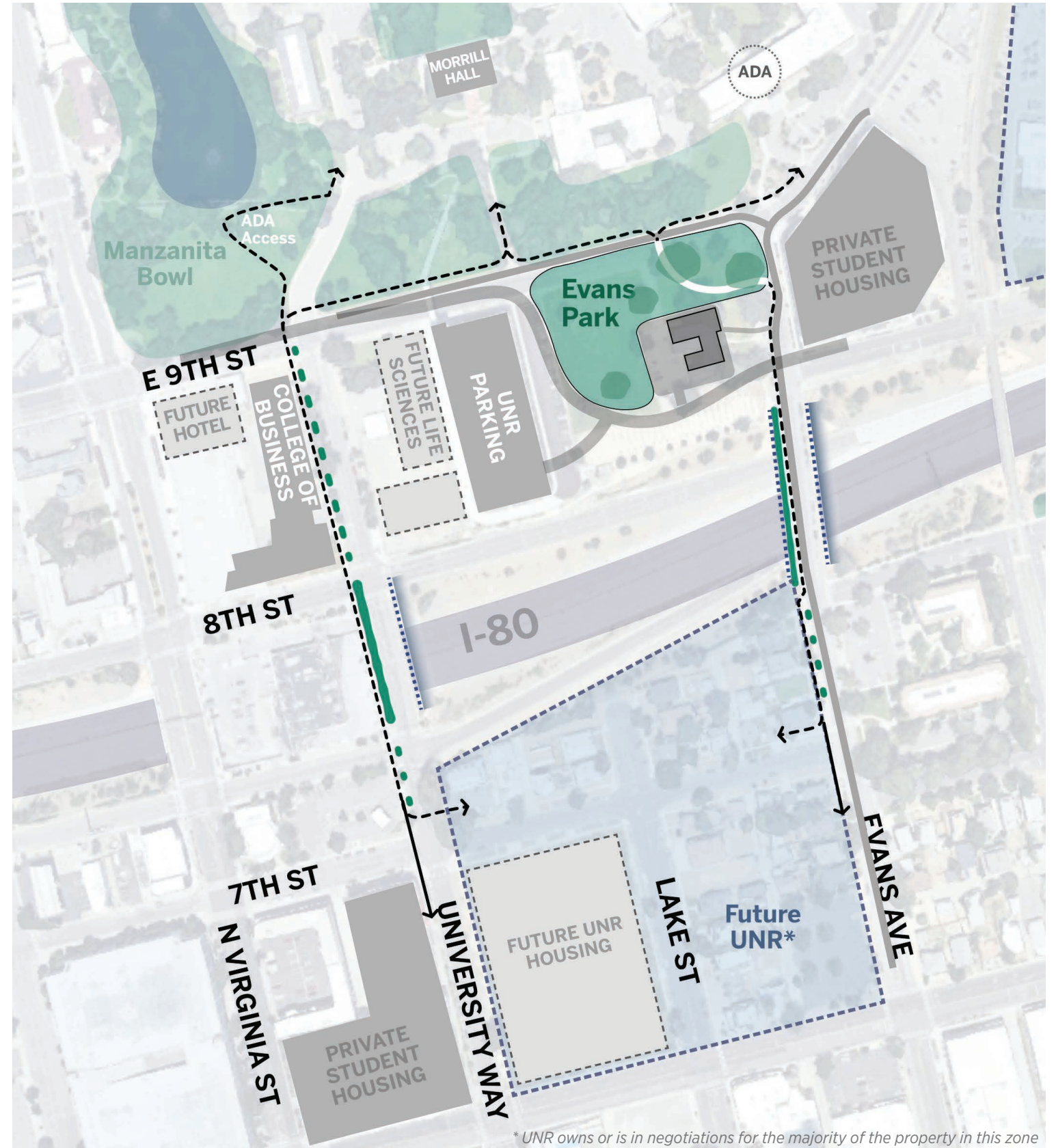
- Leverages existing infrastructure
- Enhances pedestrian and bicycle experience
- Upgrades channelization and intersections
- Incorporates a book-ended gateway with feature guardrails
- Can be combined with the other options



Seattle's Pike Street Bridge was re-channelized and the sidewalks widened to provide enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities.



Architectural throw barrier at Grand Avenue Bridge | Everett, WA



ALTERNATIVE A - I-80 ADAPTATION

MOBILITY






This alternative builds on the existing re-channelization plans of Evans Avenue and includes University Way. The existing roadway section is reconfigured to eliminate parking lanes on the overpasses and shift vehicle traffic east to allow for dedicated pedestrian and bicycle pathway along the west edge and clearer circulation at intersections.

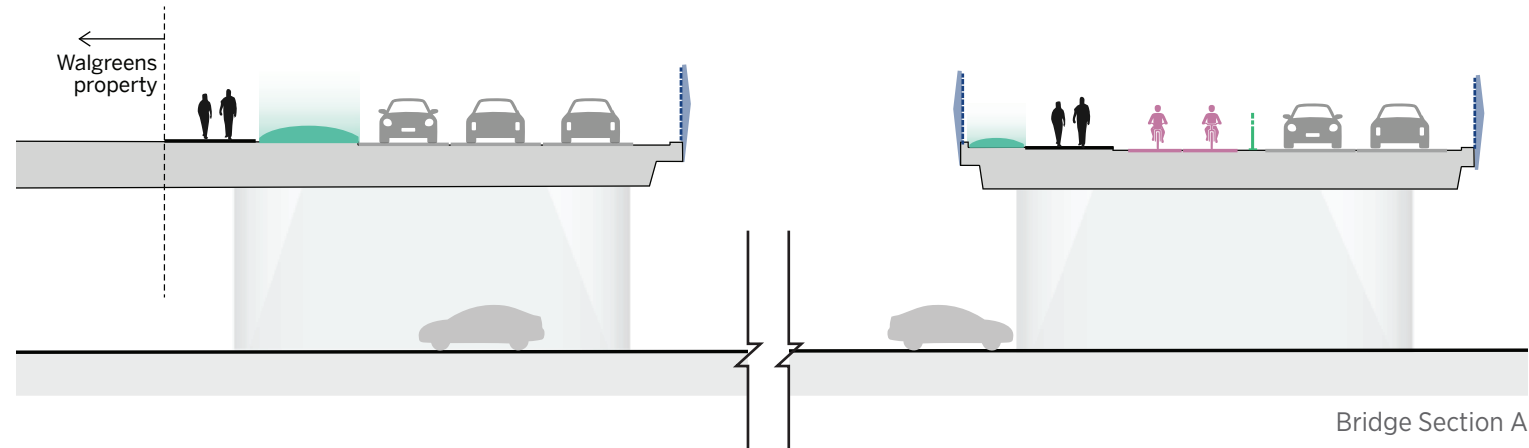
The University Way improvements tie into the recently developed UNR Gateway Precinct and Manzanita Bowl projects connecting into the historic campus at E 9th Street, addressing the increase in activity within the vicinity.

Evans Avenue connects to campus with a multi-modal crossing at the proposed realignment of E 9th Street, south of Evans Park. This alternative while also being able to be combined with others, sets up the opportunity to extend street improvements south to further expand the connectivity into downtown Reno.

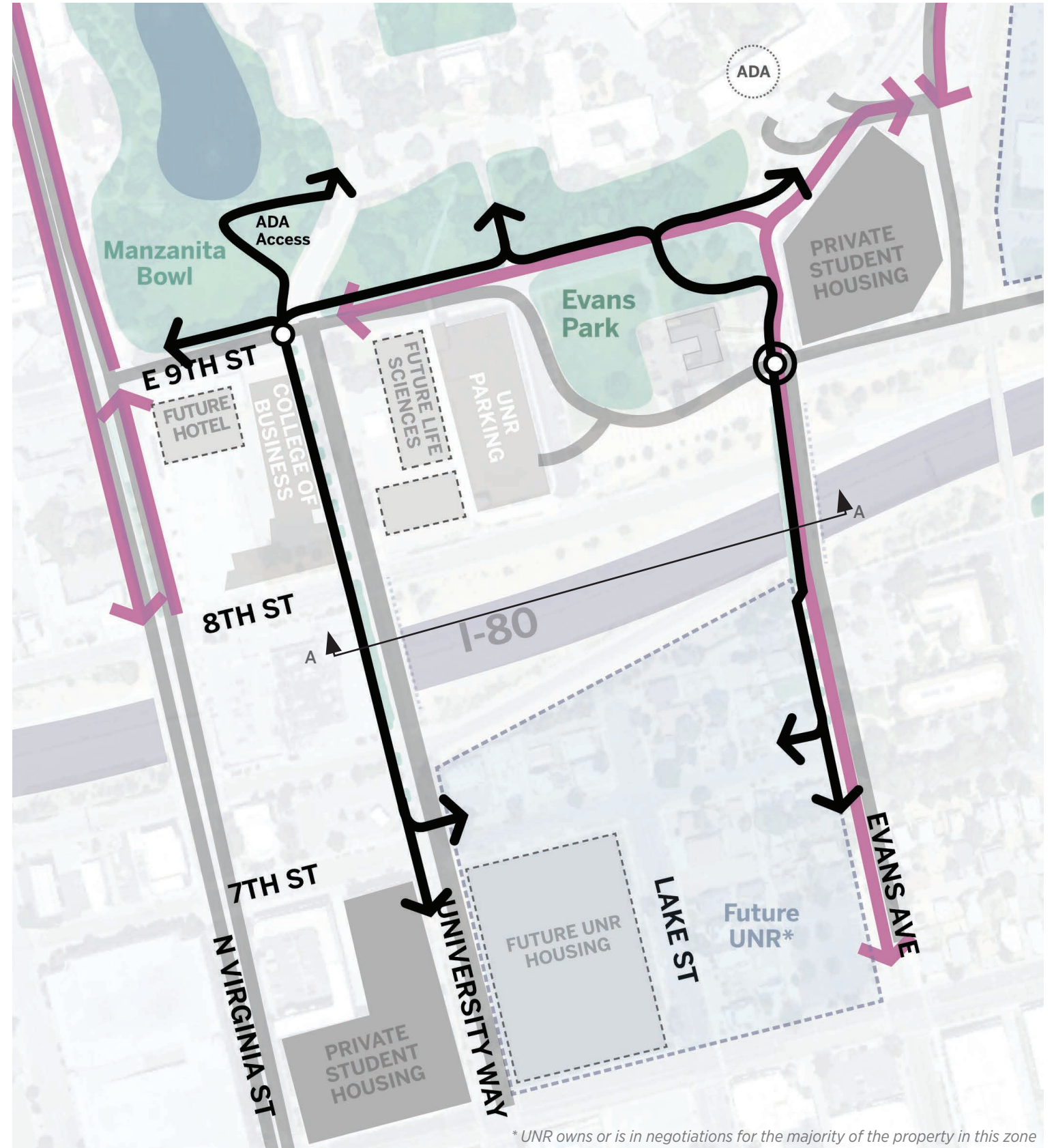
KEY FEATURES

- Utilizes both bridges to expand the network for campus access
- Ties into existing ADA access routes
- Prioritizes and enhances a single pedestrian zone to enhance safety and comfort on the existing crossings

Transportation Pathways	
	Pedestrian
	Bicycle
	Automobile
Roadway Crossings	
	Singular Modal Crossing
	Multi-Modal Crossing



Bridge Section A



* UNR owns or is in negotiations for the majority of the property in this zone

ALTERNATIVE A - 1-80 ADAPTATION



ALTERNATIVE B - EVANS AVE EXPANSION

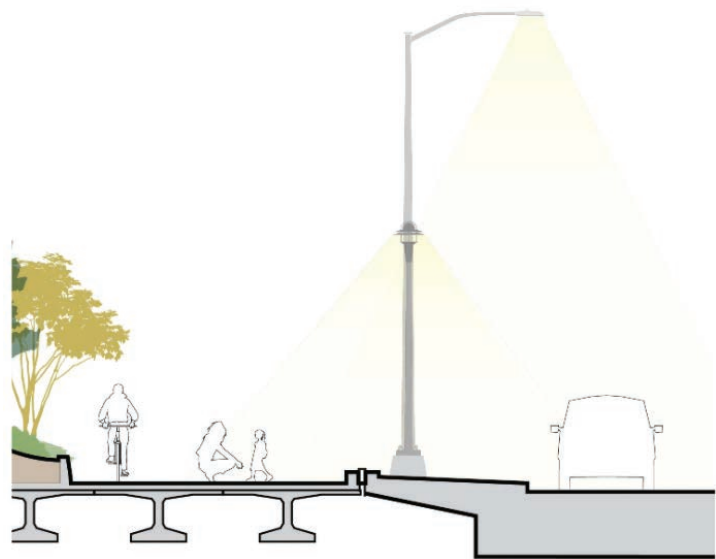
DESCRIPTION

This alternative both leverages and expands existing infrastructure, widening Evans Avenue and extending Evans Park at grade. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic is transitioned from the roadway into new pathways that circulate through Evans Park connecting to campus at East 9th Street. Evans Park size and impact is maximized “pulling” the green space across Evans Ave and centrally locating most routes through the center. This allows the potential for several diverse experience in one space.

In addition, the opportunity to connect to new green space across I-80 shortens the perceived distance of the crossing along with landscaping and pathway lighting that further buffers the impact of the interstate. This connection directly ties the new campus development with the Evans Park expansion across I-80, enhancing the property frontage as a buffer from the highway. The pathways connect to Lake Street as well as Evans Avenue, providing connectivity further west into the neighborhood while also preserving the Lake Street views back to the historic campus.

KEY FEATURES

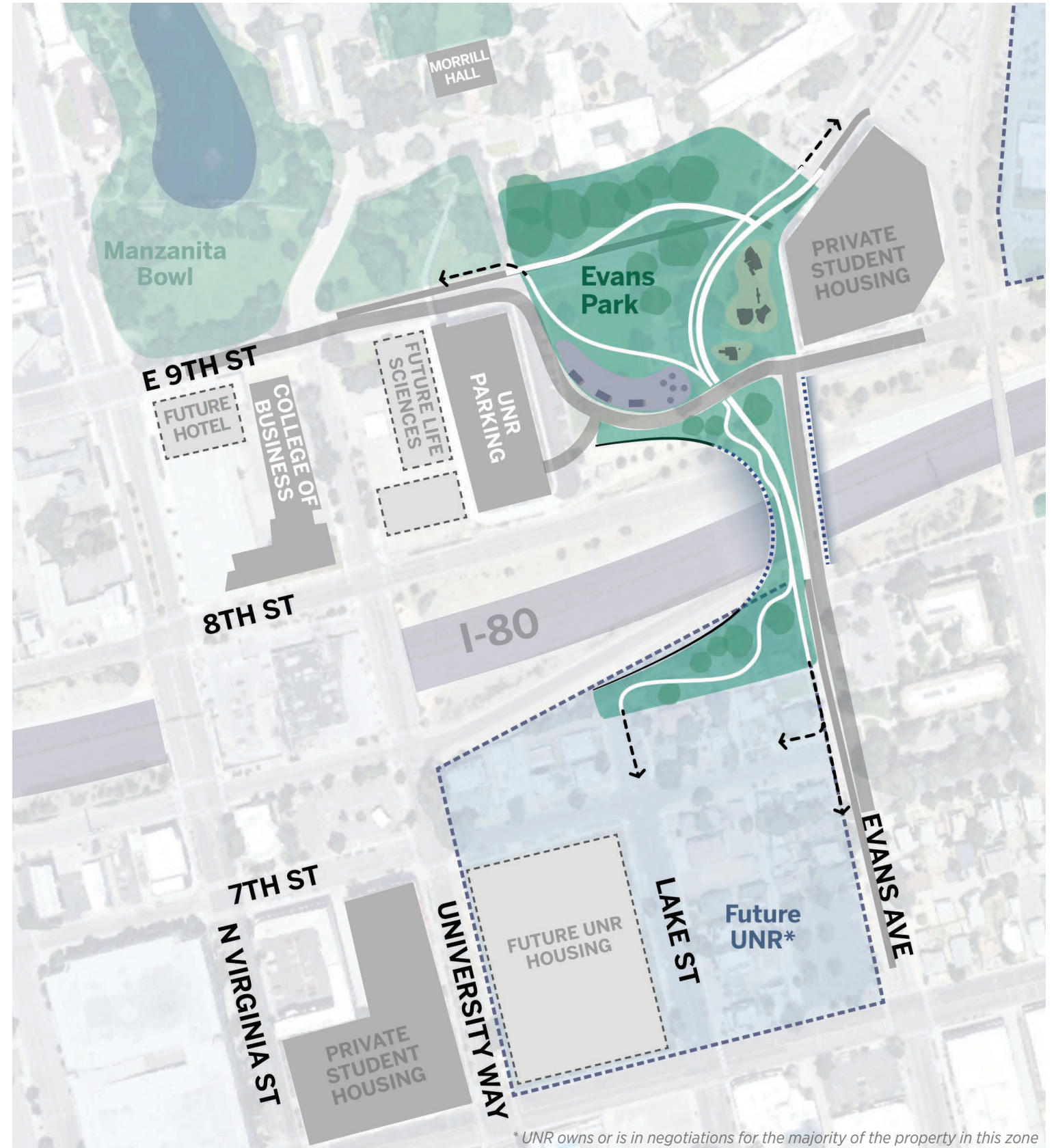
- Expands existing infrastructure
- Expands Evans Park at grade
- Shifts pedestrian and bicycle traffic from the roadway
- Connects to new green space
- Souther green space can be phased



Seattle's Roanoke Street Bridge had a new bicycle and pedestrian structure appended to it's south side to provide multi-modal connectivity.



The proposed structure over the Deschutes Estuary splits bicycle and pedestrian traffic away from the vehicles.



* UNR owns or is in negotiations for the majority of the property in this zone

ALTERNATIVE B - EVANS AVE EXPANSION






MOBILITY

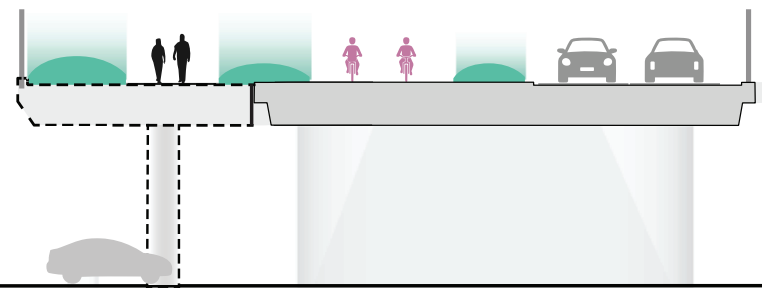
This alternative expands the re-channelization plans of Evans Avenue through a widened roadway section that is reconfigured to eliminate parking lanes and shift vehicle traffic east. Dedicated pedestrian and bicycle pathway along the west edge transition off the roadway and are routed through new and reconfigured green spaces. A single multi-modal crossing is pulled off the intersection with Evans with a new pedestrian focused crossing with signal.

Circulation paths at the south end of the crossing have the opportunity to tie into the street grid to the west directing activity from Lake Street to the expanded Evans Ave crossing. This alternative sets up the opportunity to extend street improvements south to further expand the connectivity into downtown Reno.

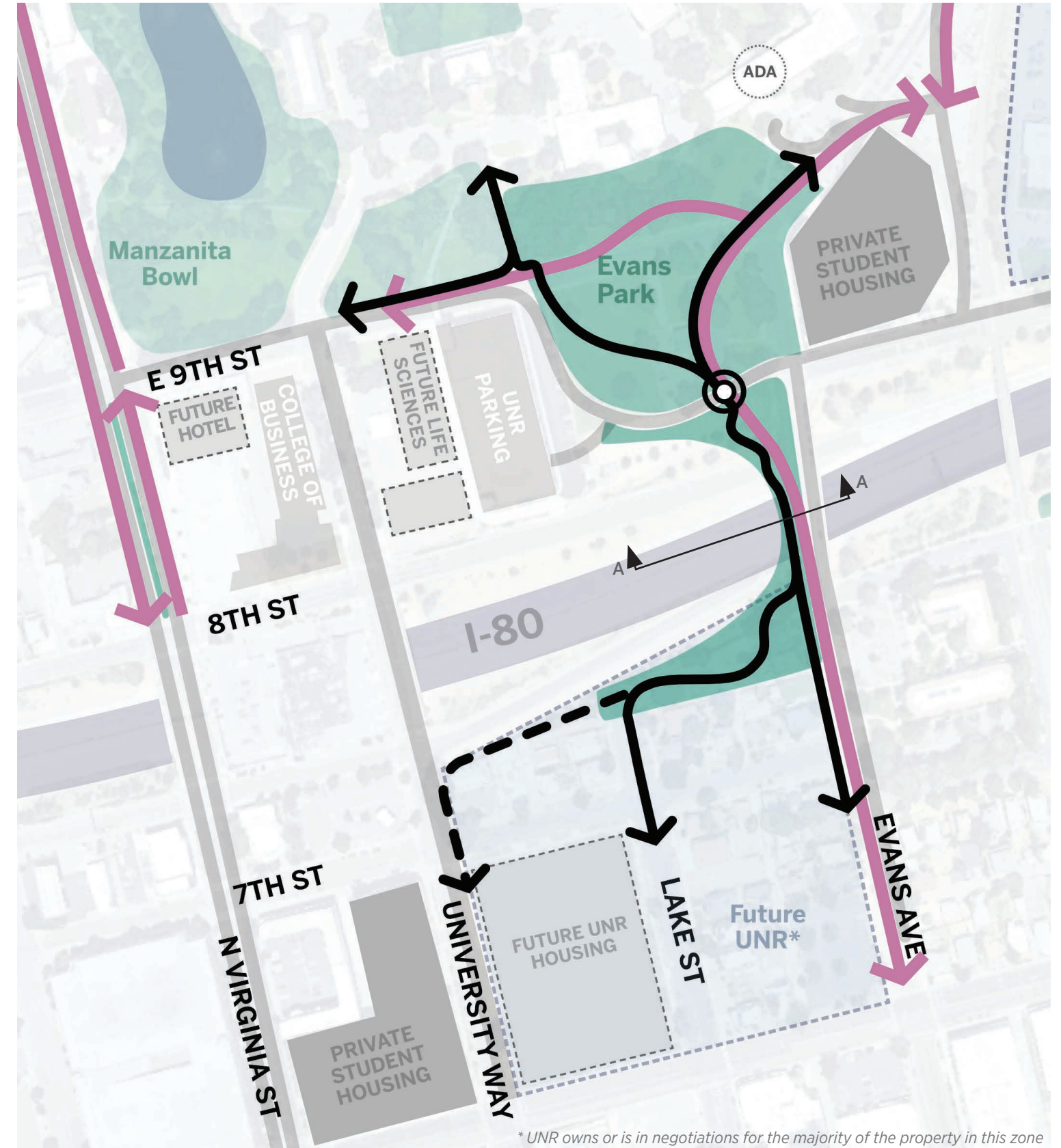
KEY FEATURES

- Single roadway crossing for both cyclists and pedestrians
- Pedestrian pathways tie into drop off location to the east
- Balances efficient paths with a pleasant atmosphere
- Ties into Existing 8th Street park to improve east to west access.
- Fully integrates park experience with pedestrian and bike paths along of Evans Ave

Transportation Pathways	
	Pedestrian
	Bicycle
	Automobile
Roadway Crossings	
	Singular Modal Crossing
	Multi-Modal Crossing



Bridge Section A



ALTERNATIVE B - EVANS AVE EXPANSION



ALTERNATIVE C - EVANS PARK RAMP

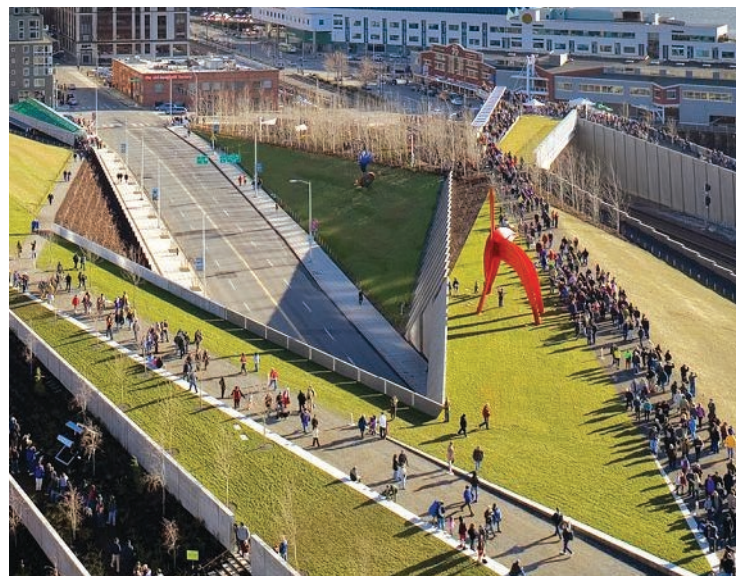
DESCRIPTION

This alternative maintains existing infrastructure while creating a new connection extending a re-imagined Evans Park across I-80. Pedestrian and slower moving bicycle traffic is elevated with dedicated pathways above the roadway, reducing potential traffic conflicts. Circulation is extended through a gently ramping landscape that shortens the perceived distance of the crossing along with landscaping and pathway lighting that buffers the impact of the interstate.

Access and views to Lake Street at both ends reflects the historic University connection. This alternative also creates a new amenity for the developing neighborhood that anchors the crossing on the south end of Lake Street

KEY FEATURES

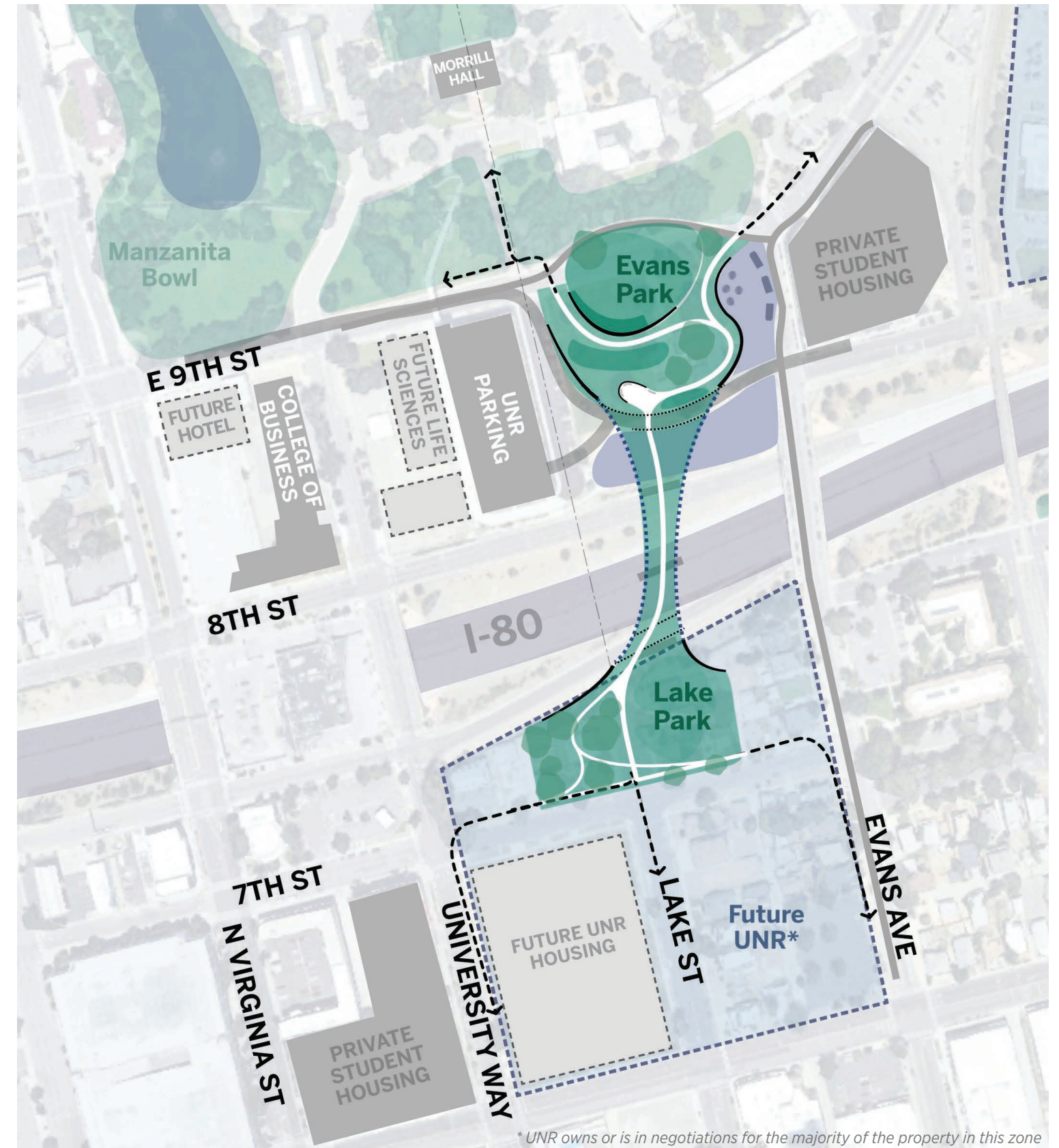
- Maintains existing infrastructure
- Extends Evans Park across I-80
- Elevates pedestrian and slower moving bicycle traffic from roadway
- Connection and views to Lake Street



Seattle's Sculpture Park uses natural features and art to bridge over a series of railroad tracks.



This landbridge over SR 520 makes a immersive landscape connection from the University of Washington to an Arboretum and neighborhoods to the south that effectively hides the freeway from view.



* UNR owns or is in negotiations for the majority of the property in this zone

ALTERNATIVE C - EVANS PARK RAMP






MOBILITY

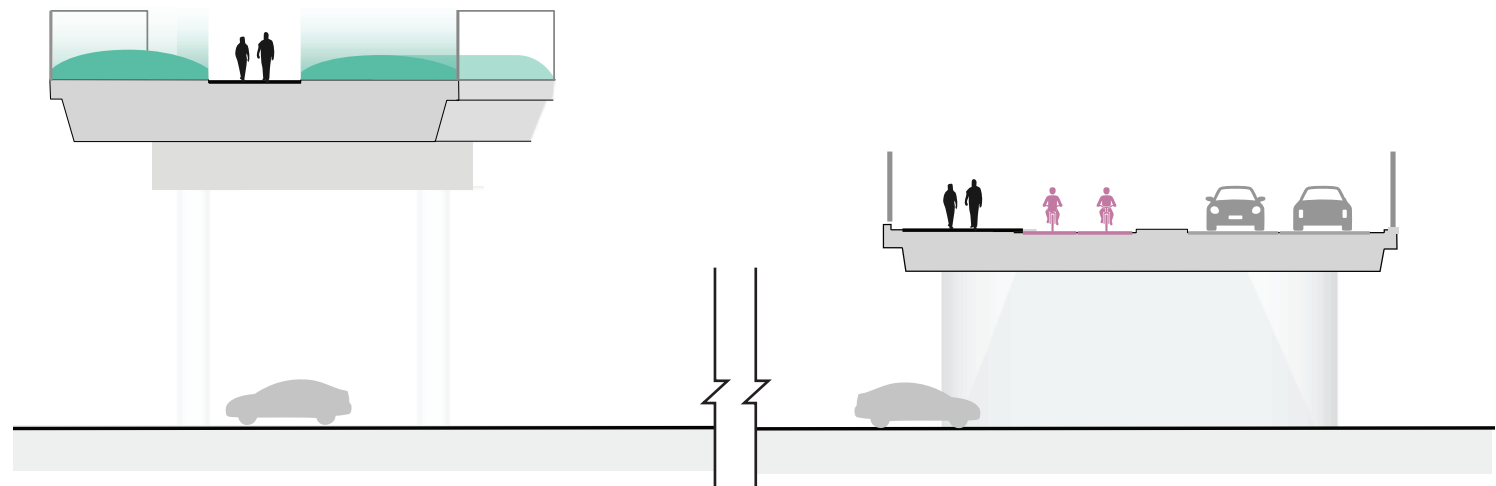
This alternative creates grade-separated crossings for pedestrians and slower-moving bicycles from E 7th Street directly into Evans Park with a gentle ramp over re-routed E 9th Street. The proposed re-channelization of Evans Avenue provides the more direct commuter focused bicycle route connecting into campus with at-grade crossings.

Circulation paths at the south end of the crossing have the opportunity to tie into the street grid further west directing activity from University Way and Lake Street to the expanded Evans Ave crossing. This alternative sets up the opportunity to extend street improvements south to further expand the connectivity into downtown Reno.

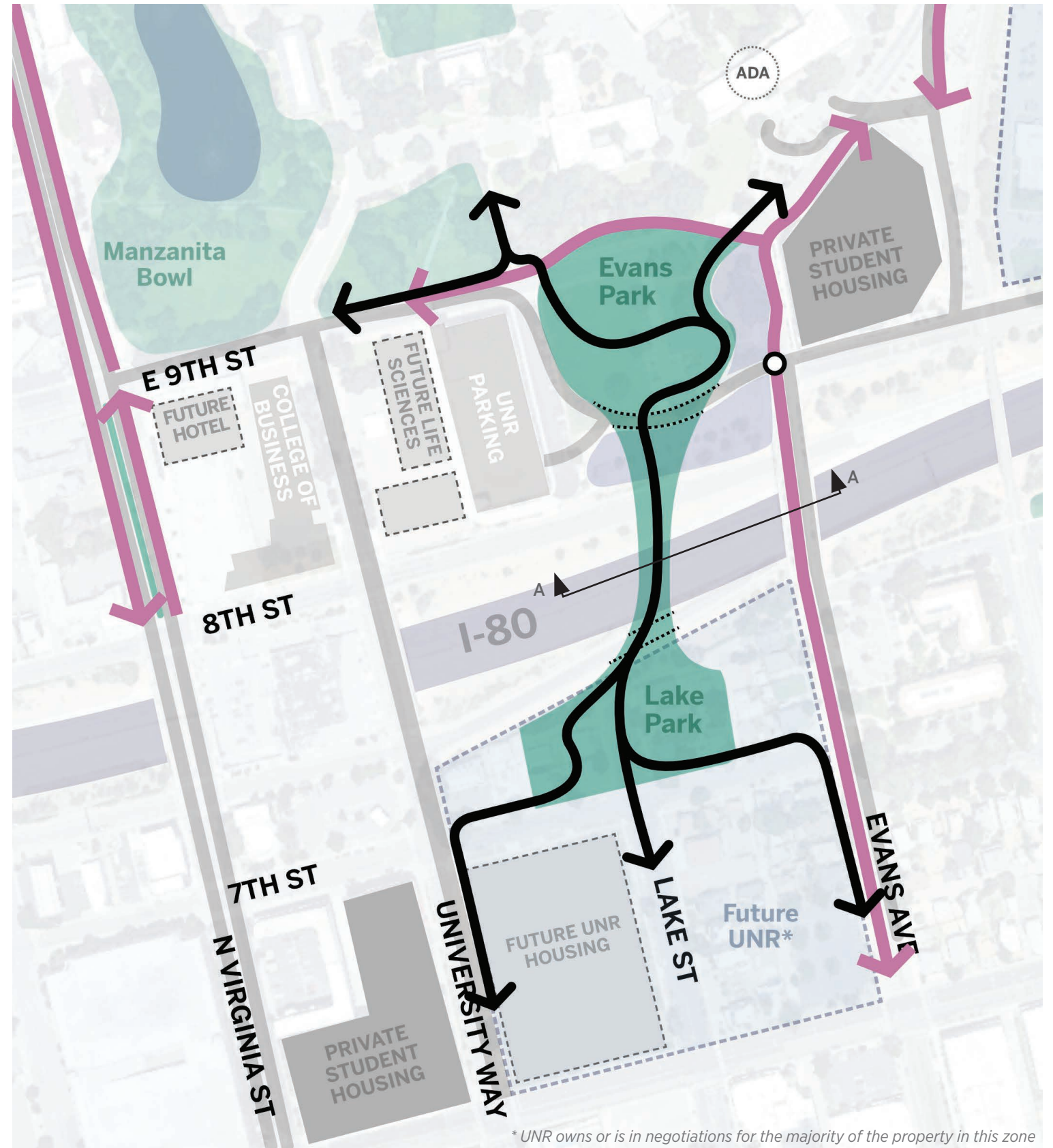
KEY FEATURES

- Reduces challenging roadway crossings for pedestrians connecting to Lake St

Transportation Pathways	
	Pedestrian
	Bicycle
	Automobile
Roadway Crossings	
	Singular Modal Crossing
	Multi-Modal Crossing



Bridge Section A



ALTERNATIVE C - EVANS PARK RAMP





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