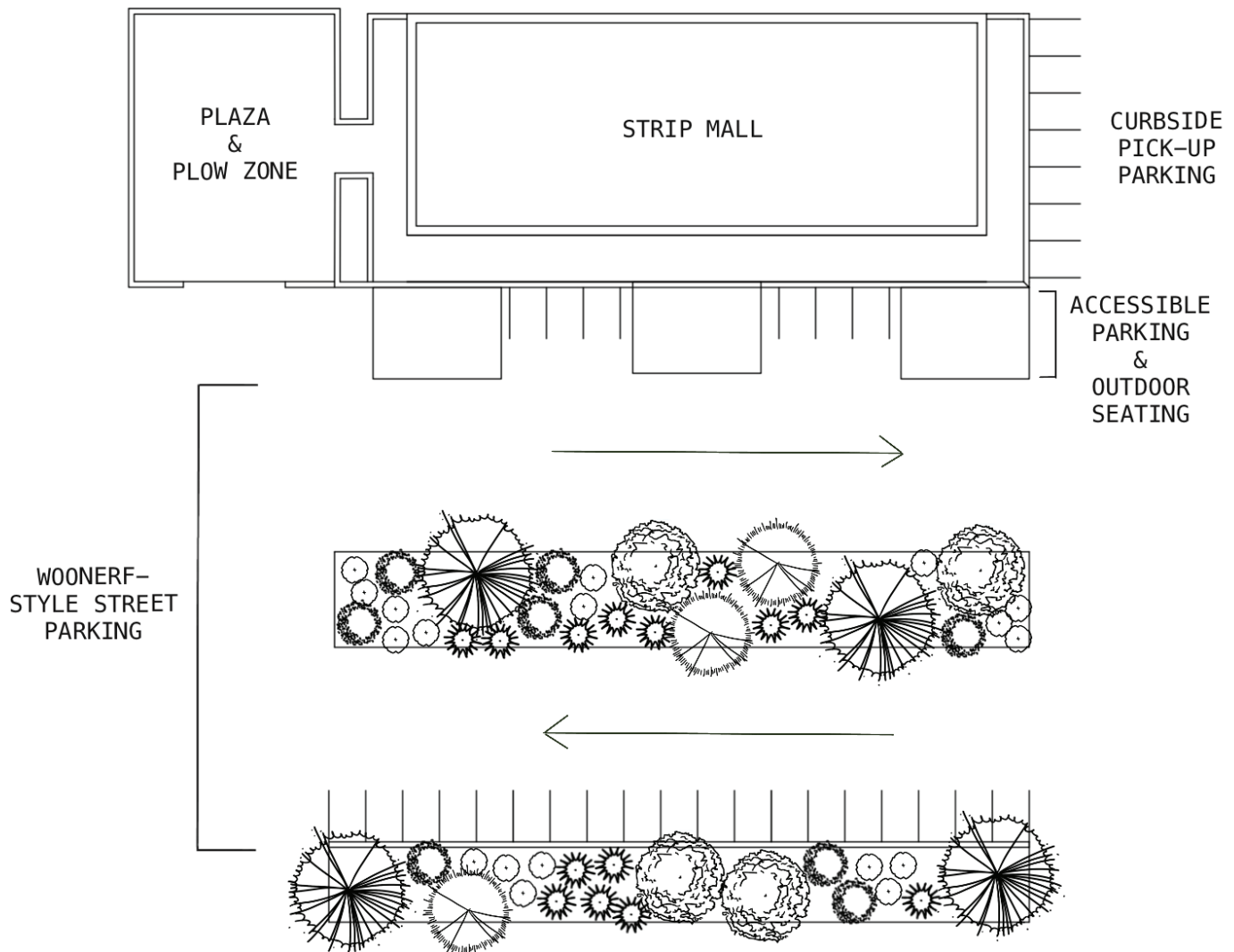


REINVENTING THE STRIP

BELLE MILLER

Commercial strip malls can oftentimes be seen as an eye sore with irrelevant stores in the middle of a city; as in-person shopping becomes more available, now is the time to rewrite the narrative behind strip malls.



When people go shopping, the intention for the trip is to get what they need and go home, but there are several innovations that can be implemented to create an experiential component to the typical shopping spree:

Woonerf-style street parking:

This street design will allow traffic to slow down for the safety of pedestrians, as well as provide a nature-immersive approach to the strip mall. Because of the lush planting beds in between lanes and lining the parking stalls, this will provide additional mitigation of the urban heat island effect that parking lots contribute. Essentially, the increased shading over the cars and asphalt will dramatically decrease the amount of carbon emissions produced by the cars while simultaneously reducing heat.

Accessible parking and outdoor seating:

Continuing the theme of a well-rounded, experiential shopping trip, outdoor seating will offer customers an opportunity to linger longer after their purchases have been made. Establishing a sense of community and gathering is more important now than it ever has because of the global pandemic isolating everyone from each other. Coupled with the accessible parking, the diversity, equity, and inclusion of all customers is encouraged and welcomed.

Plaza and plow zone:

A common caution during the winter months is the build-up of snow banks due to the parking lot being plowed. Not only does this decrease the amount of available parking spots, but it also decreases visibility for passing cars and pedestrians. Having a designated area designed for the snow piling will increase the safety of potential patrons. In the non-winter months, the area can be converted to a plaza for gathering, sitting, and spending time outside in the sun. Encouraging visitors to stay longer will give everyone the feeling of comfortability and belonging.

Curbside pick-up parking:

For those who are still preferring to do their shopping online and picking up at the store, it is imperative to implement a specific curbside pick-up zone to mitigate traffic and make space for customers who are walking into the stores, as well as remove any idling cars around the sitting areas.

These simple innovations can make in-person shopping significantly more incentivized and inviting for patrons out and about shopping. Allowing everyone to feel as if they belong and are welcomed will bring in more customers and make their experience well-rounded and enjoyable.