



GREEKTOWN  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
PARTNERSHIP

# THE PLAZA

@ GRATIOT + RANDOLPH







Greektown Neighborhood Partnership is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to the long-term economic and cultural vibrancy of Greektown Detroit. Through partnerships, we advance the equitable development of the district through community and economic development programs, all while celebrating our cultural roots.

# RECLAIMING THE STREET FOR PEOPLE

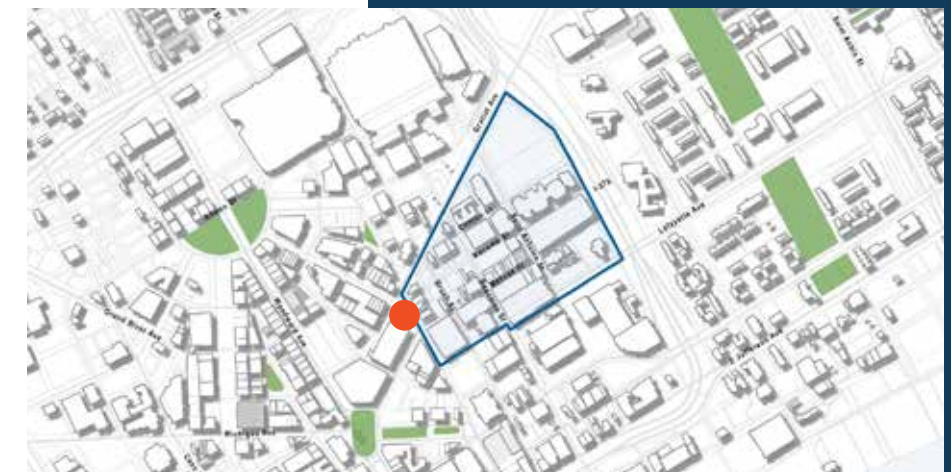
The vast intersection of Randolph and Gratiot has challenged pedestrians for decades. A new vision emerged in 2016 to reduce traffic lanes, shorten crossing distances, and streamline turning movements, resulting in this widened plaza. In 2019, the City of Detroit made simple improvements to the space, extending the curb into the street and bringing the space up to sidewalk grade. Adjacent bars and restaurants were able to secure outdoor dining permits, just in time for the COVID-19 pandemic to highlight the vital importance of outdoor space to community life.

**The Greektown Neighborhood Partnership, recognizing the potential for the space to serve as a critical gateway between downtown and Greektown, seized the opportunity to bring the community and stakeholders together to envision a future for the plaza.**

The goal moving forward is to transform a newly created, under-developed, and under-utilized public space into a multi-functional urban plaza where downtown residents and nearby workers, stadia-goers, visitors, nearby hotel guests, and students can socialize, relax, dine, learn, and participate in cultural activities. Centered on pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and mobility, critical elements of the project include universal access, safety, greening, public art, and economic development, all while celebrating the district's strong cultural roots.



Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library (above)







Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library (3 above)



# WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Greektown was first settled in the 1830s by German immigrants as a primarily residential neighborhood. In the early 1900s, many of the German residents began to move out of the neighborhood and Greek residents moved in and established businesses. Between 1905 and 1910 the ethnic makeup transitioned from Germans to Greeks seemingly overnight.

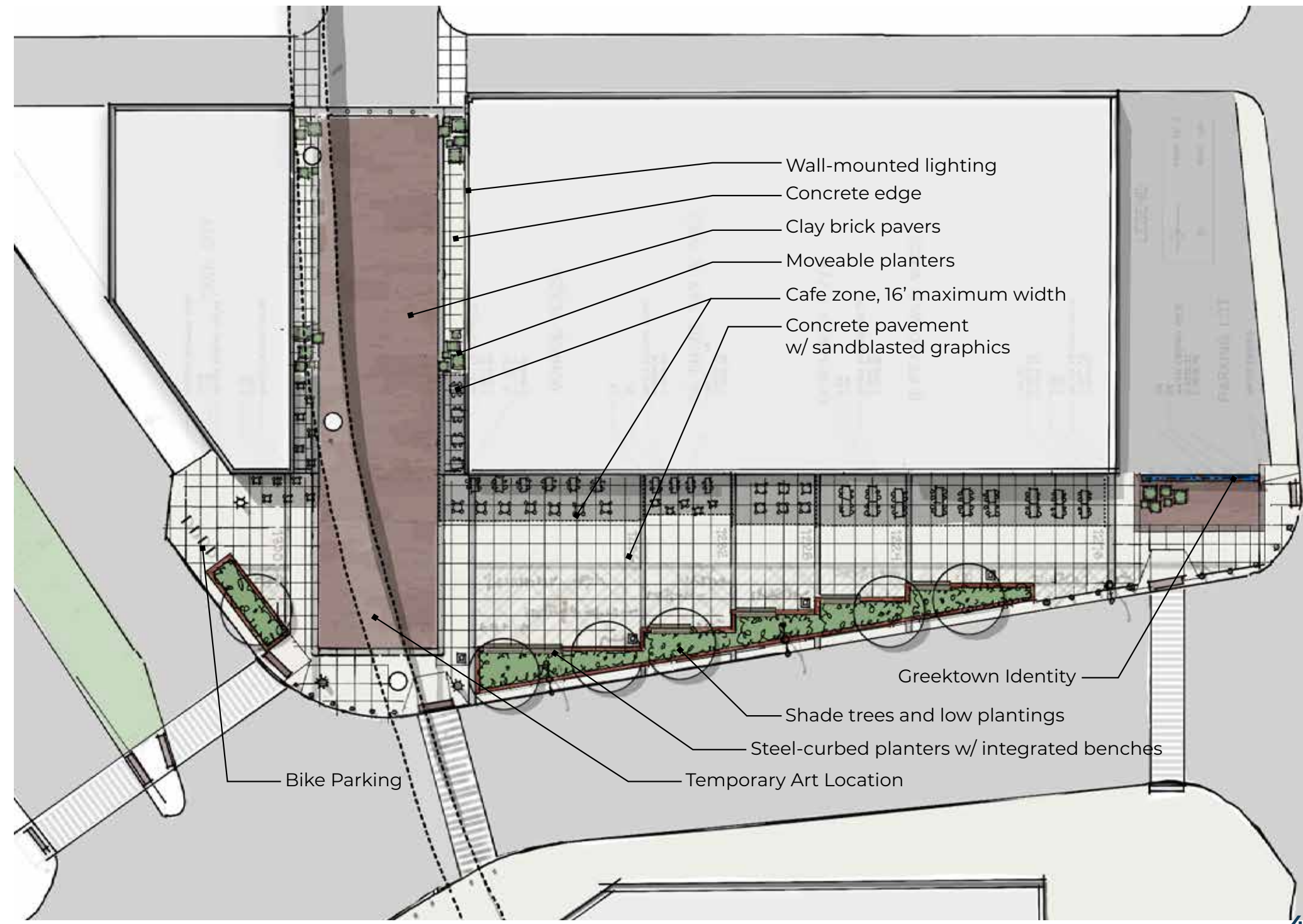
In the early years, Greektown was not only a business district, but a residential area as well. In fact, for many it represented a complete community where one could work, reside, shop, entertain, and pray.

During the urban renewal and reconstruction projects of the 1960s, many of Detroit's Greek leaders realized that if they did not intervene, the cultural integrity of the Greektown District could be lost forever. Leaders at this time made streetscape improvements and established the first Greek Festival in 1965, in essence saving Greektown's cultural heritage with a party. Today, this part of Greektown is a National Register Historic District.

This is the spirit that inspires the design and development of the Plaza at Gratiot and Randolph.

With burgeoning growth and planned public investments in Monroe Street and the removal of I-375, Greektown seeks to re-establish itself as the entertainment destination and open up possibilities for future residential and commercial development, some of which are already underway.

The 2019 Greektown Neighborhood Framework Vision outlined opportunities for new and renewed public spaces that would strengthen Greektown's identity as a primary downtown destination for regional visitors, downtown employees, and residents. Randolph Plaza is one of five new public spaces identified in the plan.





## A PLACE OF WELCOME

Driven by input from the community and stakeholders, the vision for the plaza sets the stage for a range of neighborhood uses, while prioritizing a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience. Key pathways are buffered from the hum of city traffic, plazas are scaled for daily use, and street cafes are maximized to support adjacent businesses and enliven the space with activity.

The open plaza, in former Macomb Street, will serve as an intermittent small event venue and a connector between downtown and the emerging residential developments to the east. Murals on either side of the plaza will celebrate culture, and both permanent and temporary art installations will be a key visitor attraction.

The park amenities, including bike parking, will improve safety, accessibility, and mobility, and serve as a future hub in a downtown-wide bicycle network. Expressive elements will mark the corner of Monroe Street and the Macomb Street entry, becoming destinations for downtown selfies and landmarks for the neighborhood. The People Mover will be lit and clad in temporary graphics to highlight its presence through the space.

Landscape areas provide respite from the urban street environment and will aid in stormwater infiltration, reduce heat island effect, sequester carbon to reduce greenhouse gases, and integrate species biodiversity.

While this park is currently named Gratiot-Randolph Plaza, Greektown is looking to improve upon the standard naming convention. Renaming a public park has many considerations including history, culture, environment, and organizations that provide monetary contributions to the development of the park.

**As Greektown's gateway, the plaza will strengthen physical and visual connections to the downtown core and its network of vibrant public spaces.**





# SHARING YOUR VOICE



Shared community authorship is vital to authentic public spaces. The plaza design process incorporated multiple touch points with diverse stakeholders, local business and building owners, regional visitors, and public entities.

An initial online survey drew 377 responses, framing the desired uses, outlining potential themes, and defining key areas of concern. The design team met with stakeholders in multiple small group sessions to better understand how the space can fit into the larger network of downtown's outdoor spaces.

With initial input in hand, the design team developed two initial concepts, integrating a balance of circulation, cafes, programmable space, and landscape. Opportunities for art and cultural expression were highlighted as important to the vitality and success of the space. Ultimately, the community selected a hybrid of both concepts, integrating the patterning of concept A, with the well-defined plaza of Concept B.

CONCEPT A



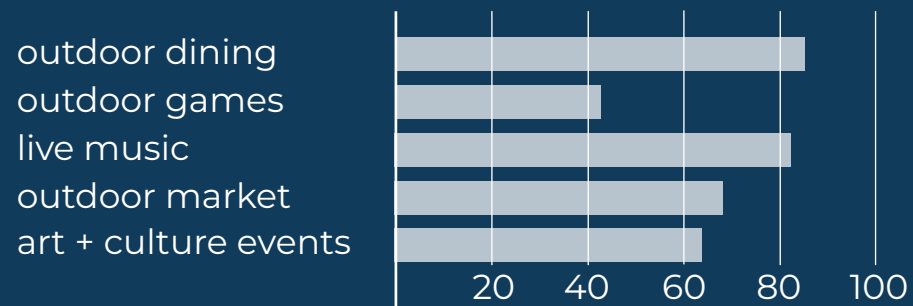
CONCEPT B



## ENGAGEMENT RESPONSES

Online survey: **377 total responses**  
 Stakeholder Meetings: **32 meetings**  
 Community Meetings: **38 participants**

**Q.** What programs or experiences would attract you to this new public plaza?



**Q.** List one word that describes what makes Greektown unique.



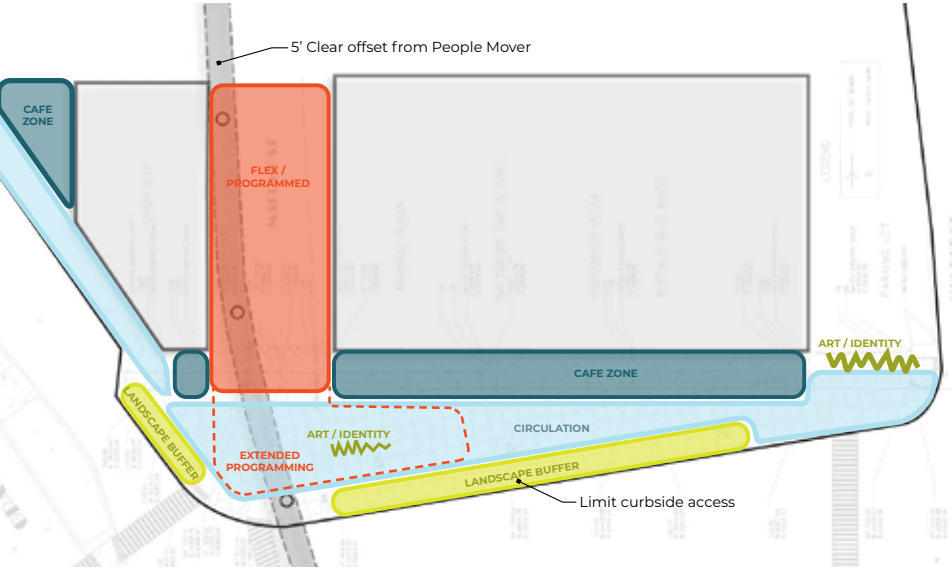
**Q.** Greektown has a rich legacy of diversity though its over 190-year history. What heritage is important to you in Greektown and why?

"The immigrant story is important to me in this district, as it has served as a landing ground for many groups since its development in the 1800s."

"I can't single one heritage as most important to me as what I enjoy most about Greektown's unique feel is the mix of all of the cultures that created what we now know as Greektown."



# DAILY EXPERIENCES

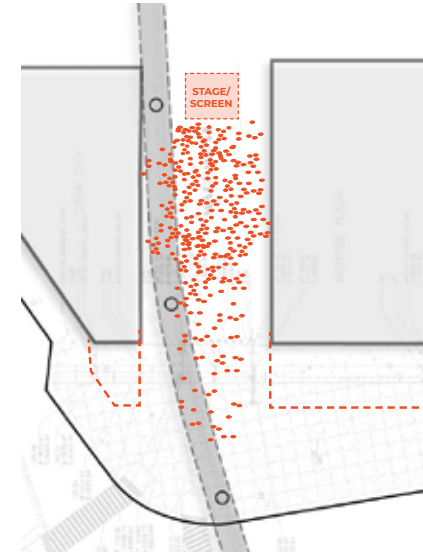


Inspired by the vibrant, art-filled streets of the Monastiraki and Psyri neighborhoods in Athens, Greece, the plaza is envisioned as a canvas for life to unfold. Street cafes spill out from beautiful historic buildings, murals frame intimate spaces, and lush landscape softens edges.

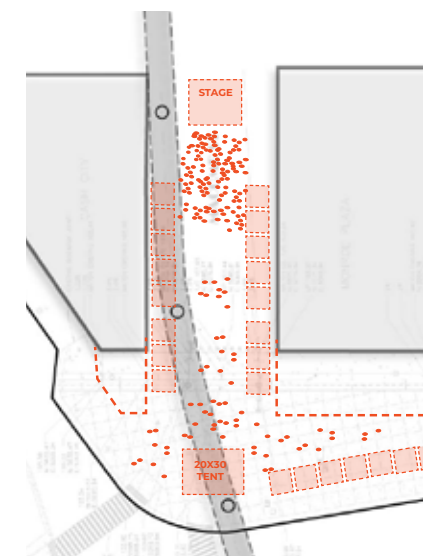
While serving as a primary circulation nexus for pedestrians and cyclists, the space can come to life for small events, cultural celebrations, casual concerts, and performances. Activity will attract visitors of all ages, and lively art will excite and engage children.

The spirit of the space embodies the spirit of Greektown: expressive, celebratory, proud, and generous.

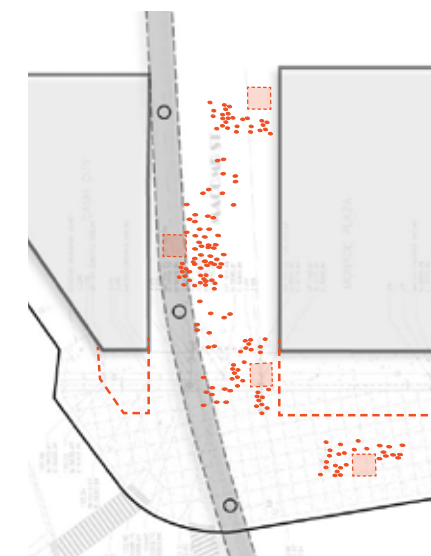
**CONCERT/MOVIE NIGHT**  
Seating for 150 or standing room for 200. 16x20 Stage or Screen



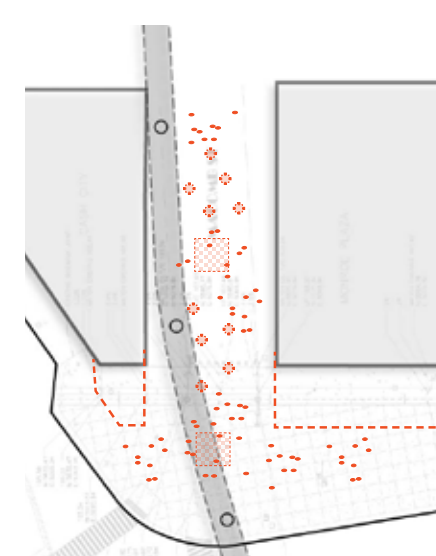
**ARTISAN MARKET**  
23-10x10 Tents, 20x30 Sponsor Tent, 16x20 Stage



**STREET ART FAIR**  
Four interactive art stations



**GAME NIGHT**  
Two giant games and ten game tables



The plaza will be equipped with the infrastructure to host a range of small event types, including power, water, adjustable lighting, and the potential for a temporary or seasonal stage structure.

Everyday Hang-Out



Outdoor Cafe



Mural Crawl



Mini Market



Social Games



Art Rotation Display



Outdoor Performance



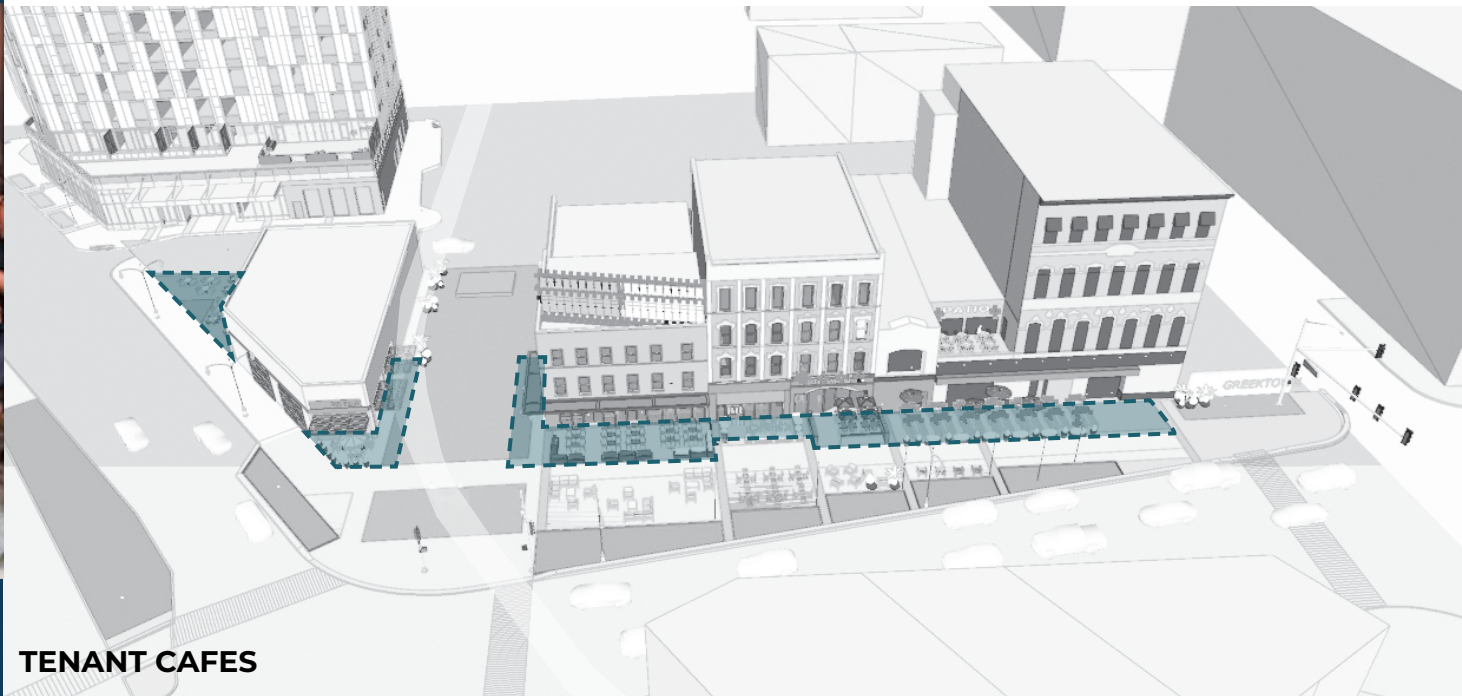
Movie Night



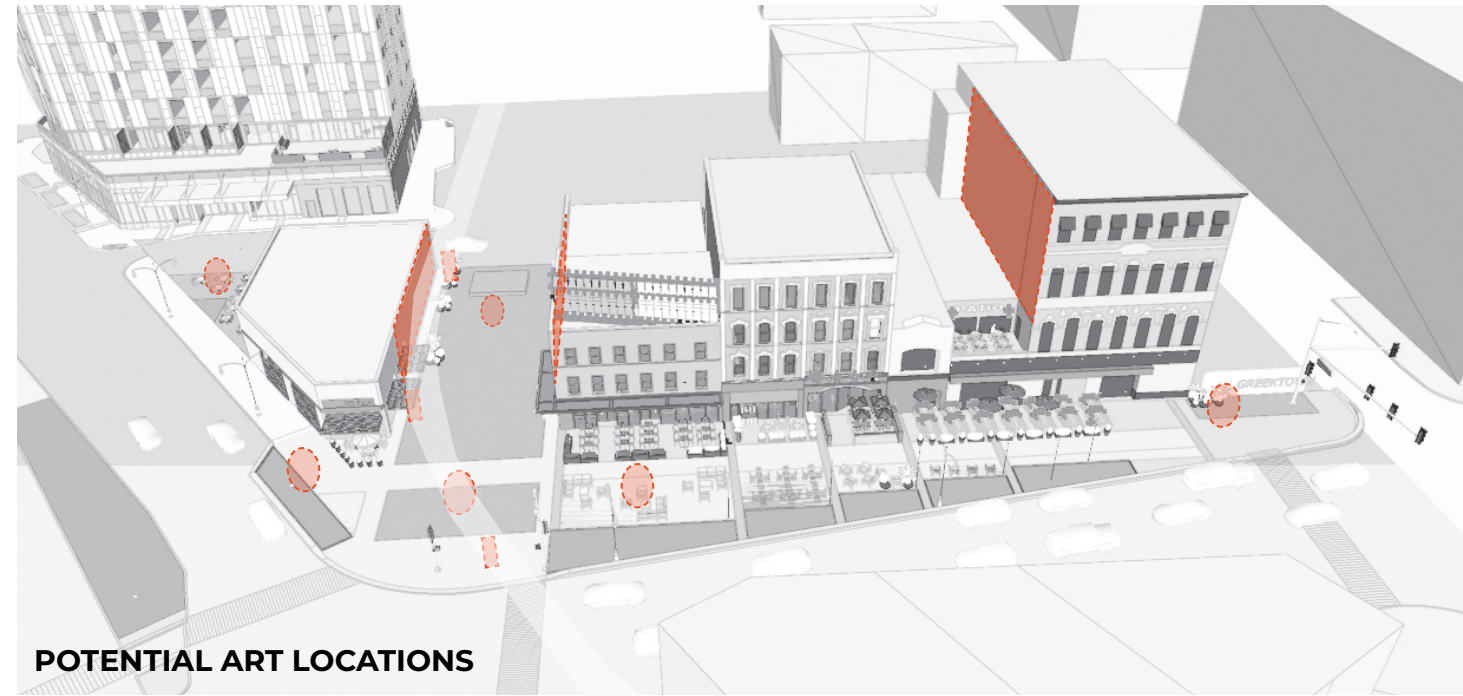




# A PLACE OF ACTIVITY



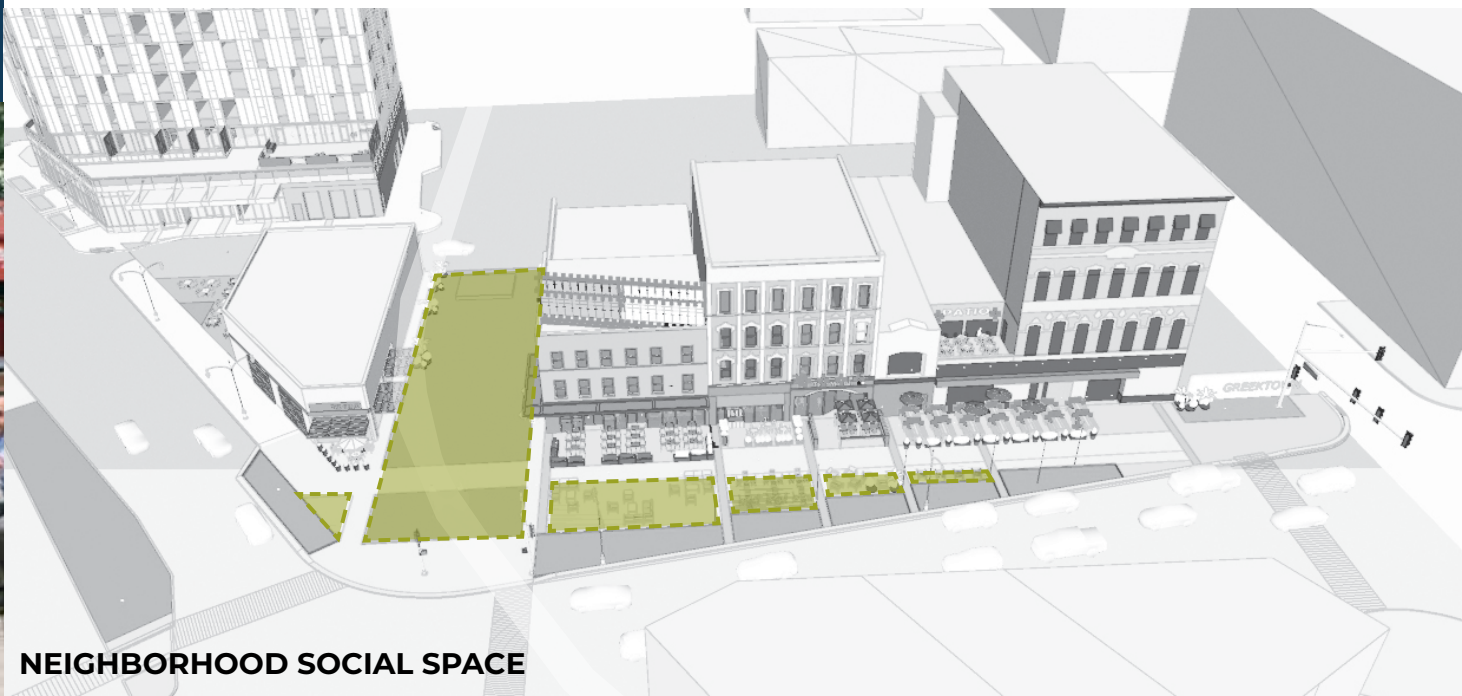
TENANT CAFES



POTENTIAL ART LOCATIONS



# A CULTURAL DESTINATION



NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL SPACE



SMALL PERFORMANCES AND MOVIES





# BOTH LIVELY AND INTIMATE

The Plaza at Gratiot and Randolph is a series of intimate neighborhood spaces. Along Randolph, cafe-lined sidewalks are framed by a lush landscape, enclosing the space from the street. Conversational seating areas line the public walk, and lighting animates the space at night.

A courtyard-like plaza extends toward Macomb Street. Murals bring vitality to the adjacent building walls, and dining spills out along its edges. Informal seating and soft landscape edges create a neighborhood retreat for the emerging contingent of area residents.

Throughout the year, the plaza transforms into an intimate event venue, equipped to support small concerts, performances, markets, and art displays.

Materials add texture, pattern, and richness to express the neighborhood culture with a modern interpretation. Forms are crisp, bold, and energetic, evoking a sense of movement and energy.

Layered lighting systems will highlight artwork, illuminate the People Mover, and create a dynamic ceiling that ties the spaces together.

ALIVE AT NIGHT



DETAIL-RICH CAFES



DYNAMIC FACADES



INFORMAL PUBLIC REALM





# ART MAKES PLACE

Key characteristics define both Greektown and Detroit: qualities of pride, hard work, and kindness. Art is a tool to visually connect those lines with experiences that inspire meaningful relationships with places. Art transforms them, creating a rich backdrop to people's lives.

Subject themes and visual look and feel utilized in the artwork help the space accomplish long-term strategic neighborhood goals (As referenced from the Greektown Neighborhood Framework Vision) such as:

- Preserve/celebrate the history of the neighborhood to strengthen identity and Greektown as a destination
- Create a family-friendly destination and environment with multiple uses (outside of nightlife/entertainment district)
- Activate the neighborhood during daytime hours
- Create a welcoming and evocative introduction to the neighborhood at key gateways to encourage more foot traffic and establish a strong identity for Greektown that can help orient visitors

To make art in the plaza successful, collaboration with the People Mover and adjacent building owners will be critical. With this in mind, the following criteria will guide the process moving forward to align art and artist selection with the goals for the plaza:

- Focus on local artists
- Express themes of both Greektown and Detroit
- Blend figurative and pattern-based art for visual relief
- Identify themes and stories that the art can express
- Incorporate art in ways that celebrate Greektown's history, heritage, and culture
- Include interactive art that serves as a destination
- Follow a look and feel for the space that feels both connected to modern downtown spaces, while also celebrating Greek heritage
- Utilize joyous art that attract families and daytime foot traffic to the plaza, as well as Greektown

## KEY THEMES

### 21ST CENTURY GREEK

Honor Hellenic culture in this modern urban landscape.

### ABUNDANT JOY

Encourage multi-generational use and integrate themes that attract and entertain kids through art.

### THE MORE, THE MERRIER

Create a welcome introduction to Greektown that is authentic and inclusive.

### CLAY PAVERS



Darker blend/ironspot to compliment, but not match, building brick



### SANDBLASTED CONCRETE



Graphic pattern over existing or new concrete



Stenciled text or numbers

### STEEL CURBS



Steel angle harkens back to historic curb guards



### LIGHTING



Robust-styled wall-mount



## TEXTURED AND RICH MATERIALS

### FURNISHINGS

A blend of rugged, traditional, and modern







# PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

The renewed activity in the Plaza at Gratiot and Randolph will catalyze investment, leading to the activation of vacant adjacent buildings and invigorating the streets with life and activity throughout the year.

The property that is part of the Randolph Street right-of-way currently falls within the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), but it is recommended that it either be transferred to City of Detroit Right-of-Way or to City of Detroit permitting through agreement. This change will facilitate the permitting of events and seasonal outdoor cafes that will be integral to the vibrancy of the space, as well as construction permitting and long-term maintenance.

The right-of-way within Macomb Street falls within the jurisdiction of the City of Detroit. The decision to close a portion of the roadway to add an extension onto the pedestrian plaza would need to be coordinated with and approved by the City of Detroit.

To be successful and sustain the plaza over time, it is important to plan for maintenance, security, and event programming. Partnerships such as the Detroit Police Department, Downtown Detroit Partnership, adjacent property and business owners, and others active in the downtown open space activation will be critical to this coordination.

**With the Greektown Neighborhood Partnership's leadership and committed partners, the plaza will become a rich cultural destination and an impactful gateway to the Greektown neighborhood.**

## 2019

### FRAMEWORK VISION

This site was identified within the GREEKTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD FRAMEWORK VISION as a new strategic intervention highlighting this as the western-most gateway and an active front door into Greektown.

## 2020

### CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

The Greektown Neighborhood Partnership and partners seek to transform a newly created public space into a multi-functional urban park plaza and gateway to Greektown where Detroiters can socialize, relax, dine, learn, and participate in cultural activities.

## 2021

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Community survey (+375 participants)
- Local business owner engagement
- Virtual community meeting (+30 participants)
- Public agency engagement
- Virtual community meeting

## 2022 + BEYOND

### SCHEDULE

12 Month Fundraising : 6 Month Documentation : 3 Month Reviews + Bid : 8 Month Construction (Potential Completion Fall 2024)

### ACCELERATED SCHEDULE

6 Month Fundraising + Documentation : 3 Month Reviews + Bid : 8 Month Construction (Potential Completion Fall 2023)





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