City Hall
215 S. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Suite 500
South Bend, IN 46601
(574) 235-7627
www.southbendin.gov/zoning

City of South Bend
PLAN COMMISSION

AGENDA

Monday, February 16, 2026 - 4:00 P.M.
City Hall
Third-Floor Council Chambers
Meeting Link - https://www.southbendin.gov/sbpc
Meeting Recordings - https://tinyurl.com/PlanCommission2026

PUBLIC HEARING:

A. REZONINGS - None for consideration

B. MAJOR SUBDIVISIONS - None for consideration

C. MINOR SUBDIVISIONS w/ Waivers

1. **Name:** East Bank Minor Subdivision PC#0295-26
   Location: 403 E MADISON ST
   Waiver: from every lot shall abut on a public street (21-11.02(c)(2))

D. DEVELOPMENT PLANS

1. PC#0291-26 - A RESOLUTION OF THE PLAN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE DOWNTOWN 2045 PLAN

ITEMS NOT REQUIRING A PUBLIC HEARING:

E. DEVELOPMENT PLANS

1. PC#0290-26 - A RESOLUTION OF THE PLAN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE LASALLE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN (SUBSTITUTE)

F. FINDINGS OF FACT - None for consideration

G. MINUTES – January 26, 2026

H. UPDATES FROM STAFF

I. ADJOURNMENT

City of South Bend
PLAN COMMISSION

City Hall
215 S. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Suite 500
South Bend, IN 46601
(574) 235-7627
www.southbendin.gov/zoning

Commissioner	Appointing Agency	Term Start	Term End
Dr. Oliver Davis	Council Appointee		Until reappointed
John Martinez	Venues, Parks and Arts Appointee		Until reappointed
Rebecca Plantz	City Engineer Appointee		Until reappointed
Scott Ford	Board of Public Works Appointee		Until reappointed
Francisco Fotia	Mayoral Appointee	12/22/2025	12/31/2028
Caitlin Stevens	Mayoral Appointee	1/1/2024	12/31/2027
Tyler Gillean	Mayoral Appointee	7/25/2024	12/31/2027
Maureen Miller	Mayoral Appointee	11/4/2025	12/31/2028
Taylor Lewis	Mayoral Appointee	9/4/2025	12/31/2028

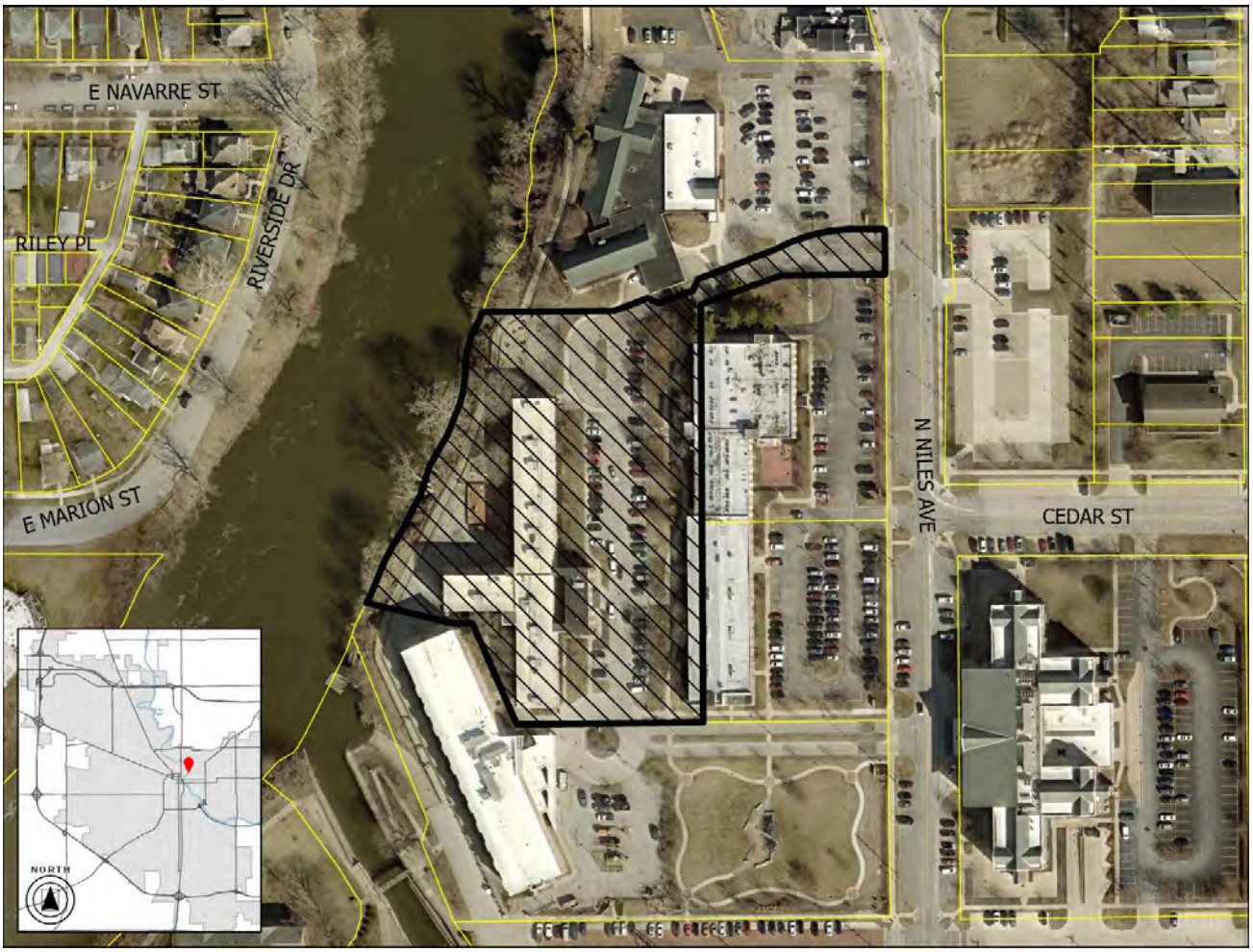
Property Information

Subdivision Name: **East Bank Minor Subdivision**
Location: 403 E MADISON ST

Requested Action

The total area of the subdivision is 2.92 acres and will consist of 2 building lots, with a waiver from the rule that every lot shall abut on a public street 21-11.02(c)(2).

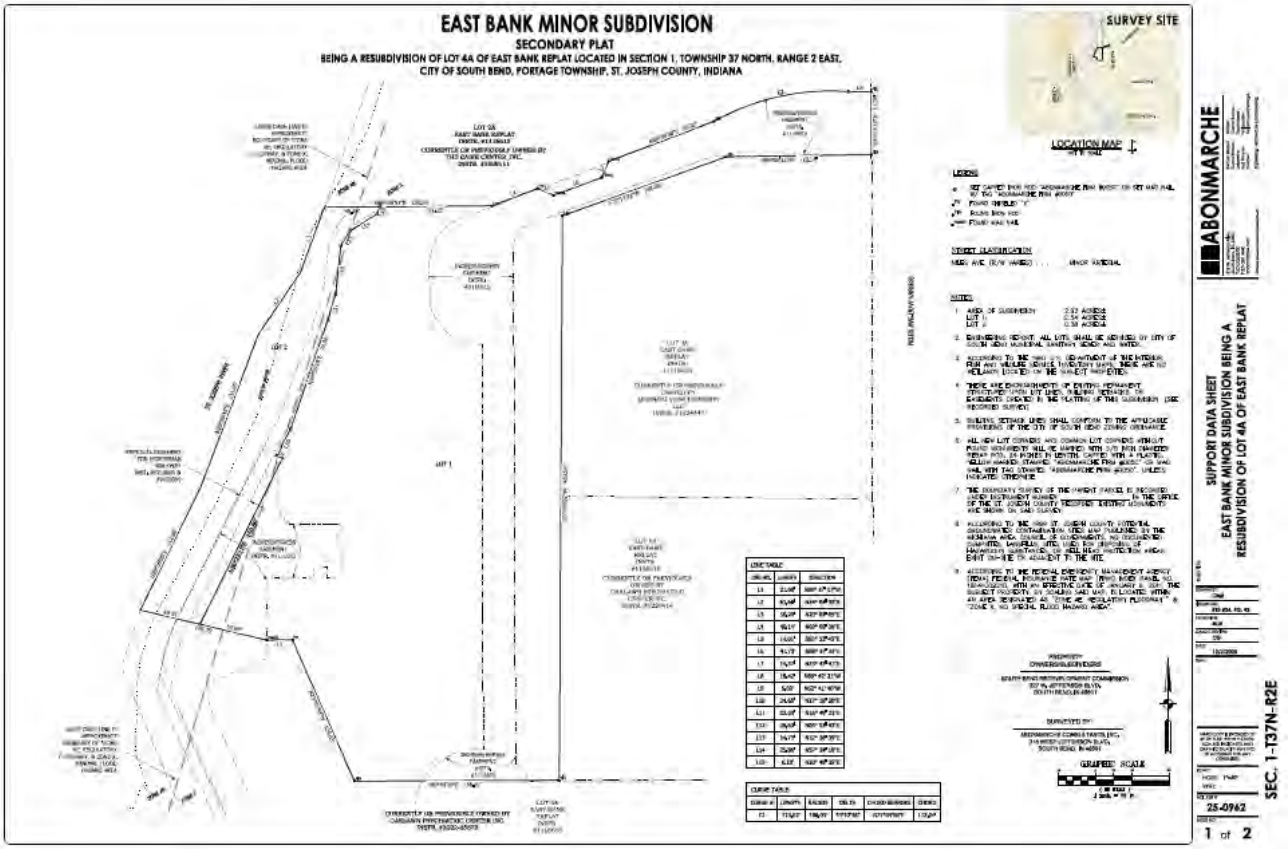
Location Map



Recommendation

Staff Recommendation: The staff has reviewed this subdivision and finds that with the granting of the proposed waiver, it complies with the requirements for approval as specified by the South Bend Subdivision Control Ordinance. The staff therefore recommends that the waiver and this subdivision be granted approval.

Proposed Plat



Project Details

Environmental Data:	A check of the Agency's maps indicates that no environmental hazard areas or wetlands are present.
Drainage:	No comments
Rights-Of-Way:	The rights-of-way are correct as shown.
Utilities:	The site will be served by Municipal Water and Municipal Sewer.
Agency Comments:	No comments

Recommendation

Staff Comments: Waiver from the rule that every lot shall abut on a public street 21-11.02(c)(2). A parcel along the riverbank is being subdivided for a public trail not needing conventional street access.

Staff Recommendation: The staff has reviewed this subdivision and finds that with the granting of the proposed waiver, it complies with the requirements for approval as specified by the South Bend Subdivision Control Ordinance. The staff therefore recommends that the waiver and this subdivision be granted approval.

Requested Action

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLAN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE DOWNTOWN 2045 PLAN

Project Summary

The planning area for the Downtown Plan represents the heart of the city and is generally bounded by the St. Joseph River to the north, the East Race and Niles Avenue to the east, and Sample Street to the south. The western boundary is varied but includes Leeper Park, the Kroc Center, and the Police Department ending at Chapin and Sample Streets.

The City of South Bend developed this plan through a process that engaged residents, businesses, institutions, government agencies, and other neighborhood stakeholders. The planning process included online surveys, key stakeholder interviews, and in-person workshops that gathered critical information about Downtown's existing conditions, needs, and opportunities. This engagement provided the basis for this plan.

The Downtown Plan contains a list of project ideas which may be pursued by the City, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector over the next 20 years. The timing and scale of each project will be subject to funding and additional community engagement. Projects may change as Downtown and the city evolve. The plan includes vision goals such as reinvigorating the heart of Downtown, attracting jobs and people to Downtown, adding housing diversity and infill neighborhoods within and around Downtown, and creating a world-class connected riverfront open space system. Lastly, the plan also recommends updates to the zoning map and provides an implementation matrix for proposed action items and projects.

Recommendation

Staff Recommendation: Based on the information available prior to the public hearing, the staff recommends the Commission adopt the Resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-2

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLAN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE DOWNTOWN 2045 PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of South Bend, Indiana, recognizes the need to improve and revitalize Downtown through strategic planning; and

WHEREAS, the South Bend Plan Commission is empowered to prepare, approve, and certify a Comprehensive Plan for its area of jurisdiction by the provisions of Indiana Code, Section 36-7-4-500 *et. seq.* entitled "500 Series – Comprehensive Plan"; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, City Plan, the Comprehensive Plan for South Bend, was adopted by the Area Plan Commission of South Bend-St. Joseph County and the Common Council of the City of South Bend pursuant to the provisions of Indiana Code 36-7-4-500 *et. seq.* as a statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Policy LU 1.1 of City Plan is to pursue the development of area-specific plans; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown 2045 Plan is a strategic revitalization plan that was created with input from a variety of stakeholders, including residents and property owners, and area businesses and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown 2045 Plan contains revitalization strategies, detailed land use and zoning plans for the development of the area, and a strategic implementation matrix, all with public and private sector investment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the South Bend Plan Commission and the legislative body in preparing and considering land use proposals are tasked under Indiana Code 36-7-4-603 to pay reasonable regard to: (1) the comprehensive plan; (2) current conditions and the character of current structures and uses in each district; (3) the most desirable use for which the land in each district is adapted; (4) the conservation of property values throughout the jurisdiction; and (5) responsible development and growth; and

WHEREAS, the South Bend Plan Commission has reviewed the land use development and potential future development of Downtown as defined by the Downtown 2045 Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the South Bend Plan Commission as follows:

1. That the Downtown 2045 Plan, which is attached to and made a part of this Resolution, is approved as the land use policy for the future land use development of the area considered and is submitted to the South Bend Common Council for their consideration and action.

2. That the Downtown 2045 Plan conforms to the plan of development for the City.

3. That the Downtown 2045 Plan is in all respects approved, certified, ratified and confirmed.

4. That the Secretary of the Plan Commission is hereby directed to file a copy of the Plan with the minutes of this public meeting.

5. That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its adoption by the South Bend Plan Commission.

Passed by the South Bend Plan Commission this 16th day of February, 2026.

_____
Francisco Fotia, President
South Bend Plan Commission

ATTEST:

_____
Brian Killen
Secretary
South Bend Plan Commission

DOWNTOWN SOUTH BEND

2045 PLAN

A COMMUNITY-LED VISION

February 2026

Acknowledgments

Prepared for:

The City of South Bend

James Mueller, Mayor of the City of South Bend

Canneth Lee, City Council Member, 1st District

Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers, City Council Member, 2nd District

Troy Warner, City Council Member, 4th District

A special thanks to all the residents, businesses, and organizations that shared their thoughts and vision for the future of Downtown South Bend.

Prepared by:

Department of Community Investment

Caleb Bauer, Executive Director of Community Investment

Tim Corcoran, Director of Planning & Community Resources

Michael Divita, Assistant Director of Planning

Angela Rose, Senior Planner

Chris Dressel, Senior Planner

Consultant Team

Urban Design Associates

Torti Gallas + Partners

RCLCO Real Estate Consulting

Walker Consultants

Indiana Landmarks

Table of **Contents**

Executive Summary 1

Creating a Vision for **Downtown South Bend** 2

Overview 7

What is a **Plan?** 8

History of **Downtown South Bend** 9

Downtown **Today** 12

Downtown **Tomorrow** 15

Planning **Context** 16

Engagement & **Design Process** 17

Vision **Workshops** 19

Development **Principles** 20

Design **Week** 21

February & March 2025 **Open House** 22

Analysis 23

Physical Form & **Patterns** 24

Market & **Economic Analysis** 27

Parking **Analysis** 29

The Vision 31

The **Vision for Downtown** 32

Vision **Projects** 34

The Heart of **Downtown** 35

- Retail Core along Michigan Street 37
- Jon Hunt Plaza 41
- The Town Square 42
- The Century Center & Jefferson 47
- A Big Idea for the Future 49

Arts & **Culture** 59

- Arts & Culture Assets 61

Innovation & Institutional **Catalysts** 65

- Tech & Talent District 67
- Beacon Health 71
- Health District 72
- Sports & Entertainment District 73
- Renaissance District 75

Neighborhoods 77

- Downtown North Neighborhoods 79
- Downtown Central 81
- Riverfront West 83
- Western Avenue Transformation 86

Public **Realm** 89

- Gateways to Downtown 91
- Riverfront & Gathering Spaces 92
- Public Art 94
- Lighting of Downtown Riverfront 95
- Curbless & Shared Streets 96
- Tree Canopy 97
- Streetscapes for People 98
- Multi-Modal Connectivity 100
- Transit 102

Built Form & Design Standards 103

Retail **Frontage** 105

Residential **Frontage** 107

Residential Frontage • **Apartment** 108

Residential Frontage • **Townhouse** 109

Street Frontage with **Grade Change** 110

Significant **Focal Points** 111

Alley & Mid-block **Connections** 107

Screening & Locating **Parking & Loading** 113

Zoning & **Building Types** 115

Building Types 117

Historic Preservation 119

Preservation Principles for Downtown 121

Historic Properties 123

Implementation 133

Implementation Strategies 134

Downtown **Tomorrow** 135

Plan **Implementation Matrix** 136

Appendix 143

Historic **Preservation** 145

Under Separate Cover

- Market Analysis Report
- Parking Analysis Report
- January-March 2024 Community Engagement Summary

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Executive Summary

Creating a Vision for **Downtown South Bend**

WHY NOW?

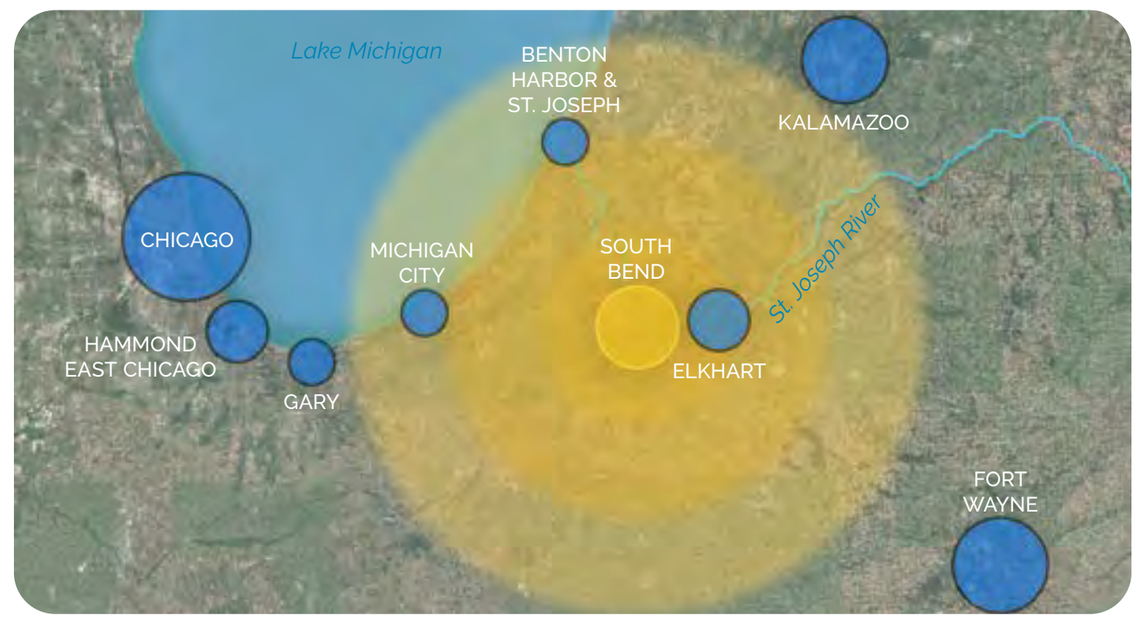
South Bend is at an exciting moment in its history. Over the coming years, public, private, and non-profit partners will invest over $1 billion in Downtown. With such a tremendous amount of investment in the City and the change that will result, it is appropriate to pause and ask essential questions about the future of Downtown and be strategic about the priorities and investments.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

This plan results from a year-long public engagement effort by the City of South Bend to create a vision for Downtown 20 years from today. In addition to engaging with the community and stakeholders, the City and design team analyzed and recorded existing physical and market conditions to ensure that any proposed idea remained grounded in what is physically and economically viable. The plan also built on the foundation of the surrounding neighborhood plans, weaving in the neighborhood initiatives to create a fabric that would more easily connect to Downtown amenities.

WHAT WILL THE PLAN DO?

This plan will guide and shape downtown's built environment and public realm. It outlines the needs and goals of Downtown, illustrates successful project implementation, and serves as a road map for future development and public initiatives. It is intended to be used by residents, developers and builders, public officials, community leaders, and city staff. This document is organized into six sections: Overview, Analysis, The Vision, Built Form and Design Standards, Historic Preservation, and Implementation.



Downtown South Bend is the largest urban environment between Fort Wayne, Kalamazoo, and the metropolitan Chicago area. With strategic investments, it could reemerge as the destination for experiences that aren't available in the suburbs and small towns of Northwest Indiana.

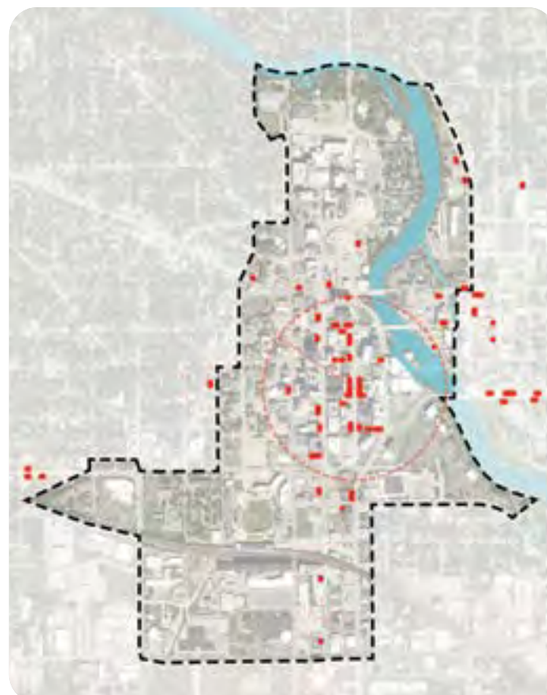
URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS

The project team listened to the community and stakeholders to understand the needs and challenges of Downtown while also analyzing its physical form. Community engagement took place through a series of surveys, workshops, and open houses, from which thousands of comments were collected. The project team analyzed patterns through mapping and diagramming, a parking study, and a market analysis..

The engagement and analysis steps were conducted simultaneously, with the findings supporting one another. The community expressed a desire for increased activation, improved destinations, and better access to the riverfront. In parallel, the analyses identified the lack of connections between Downtown and the river and the fragmented nature of retail in the area. These themes and insights from the analysis and stakeholder engagement form the foundation for a 20-year vision for Downtown.

The analysis drawing of existing parks and trails Downtown illustrates the lack of a connected open space network.



Existing retail in Downtown is spread out and not concentrated in any one location.

THE VISION

The vision for Downtown South Bend in 20 years is a regional destination where visitors can spend a day walking, eating, shopping, and enjoying cultural experiences. Four priorities will guide the transformation:

- **Reinvigorate the Heart of Downtown**
- **Attract jobs and people to Downtown**
- **Add housing diversity and infill neighborhoods within and around Downtown**
- **Create a world-class connected riverfront open space system**

The vision plan outlines a series of projects divided into four sections: **The Heart of Downtown**, **Innovation & Institutional Catalysts**, **Neighborhood Nodes**, and **Public Realm Enhancements**. Each project includes a description and an illustration depicting the site's potential in support of accomplishing the four priorities.

The Downtown of 2045 will function as a true center of the region, with new world-class destinations, neighborhoods, jobs, and unique cultural experiences.

VISION PROJECTS

The projects included in the plan emerged from stakeholders, the community, and the City, building on current initiatives and identified opportunities. The goal is for each project to strategically build on existing assets and past successes and engage both public and private partners.

The Heart of Downtown projects focus on reinvigorating Michigan Street and surrounding blocks, building on current initiatives, and responding to the community's desire for a central gathering space with active uses connected to the riverfront. The Innovation & Institutional Catalysts projects focus on attracting jobs and people, building upon the efforts of Beacon Health System, the University of Notre Dame, the Renaissance District, and others to enhance employment opportunities Downtown.

The Neighborhood Nodes category offers recommendations to expand housing close to jobs and support downtown retail. Finally, the Public Realm Enhancement projects build on the City's efforts to create a safe, comfortable and connected downtown for people on foot, on bicycles, using public transit, or driving.

The Heart of Downtown

- Retail Core at Michigan Street
- Jon Hunt Plaza
- The Town Square
- The Century Center & Jefferson Blvd Realignment
- A Big Idea for the Future — Signature Riverfront Park

Neighborhood Nodes

- Riverfront West
- Downtown North Neighborhoods
- Downtown Central
- Western Avenue Transformation

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts

- Tech & Talent Innovation District
- Beacon Health District
- Sports & Entertainment District
- Renaissance District

Public Realm Enhancements

- Gateways to Downtown
- Riverfront & Open Spaces
- Streetscapes for People
- Transit

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Eight principles emerged from the public engagement process. Every initiative and project should measure success against how well it accomplishes these principles.

- Activate the Riverfront
- Expand Housing Options
- Anchor Downtown with Jobs & People
- Create a Safe & Inclusive Place for Everyone
- Create Vibrant Public Places
- Building Comfortable & Accessible Connections
- Grow & Support Local Businesses
- Embrace Sustainable Practices
- Support & Leverage Arts & Culture

BUILT FORM & DESIGN STANDARDS

Downtown districts present specific design challenges unique to the character of Downtown. The Built Form & Design standards offer guidance and best practices for these unique Downtown design challenges. They include standards and guidance for retail and residential frontage, screening for back-of-house functions, preservation of visual focal points, and improvements to mid-block connectivity.

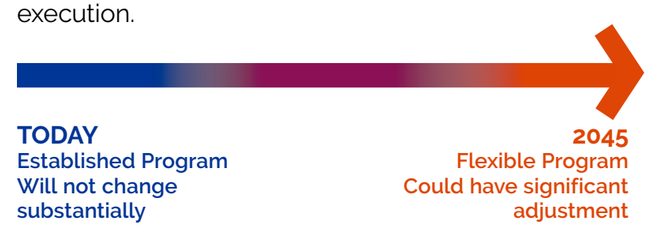
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

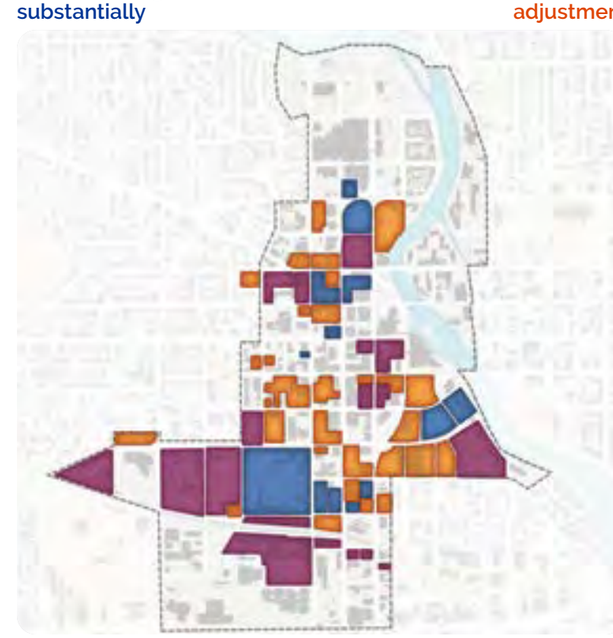
Historic preservation offers a chance to revitalize the heart of Downtown. Historic properties narrate the tale of South Bend's growth, from its industrial beginnings to its changing urban landscape. Revitalizing these properties will enhance the cultural vibrancy and economic sustainability of Downtown. Successfully rehabilitating a historic building stimulates further investment in the surrounding area. Amidst renewed interest in urban living, historic architecture enhances walkable downtowns. This document highlights downtown's historic buildings and provides recommendations for several at-risk properties.

The historic State Theater sits in an important location on Michigan Street. The restoration and reuse of this key building would help transform the 200 block of South Michigan Street.

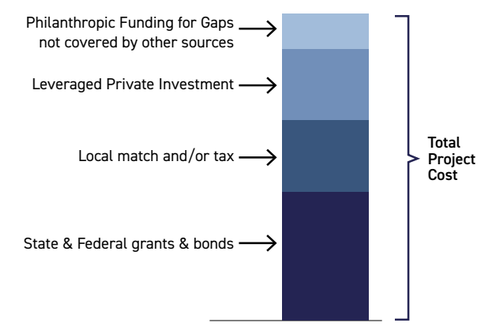
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

From the outset of the Downtown South Bend 2045 initiative, the City has prioritized implementability. This approach guided the selection criteria for interventions, the vetting and development of action steps, and the active involvement of partners from the beginning. The plan is grounded in market projections that reflect what is realistic and achievable within the 20-year timeframe. The implementation strategy outlined in this chapter details responsibilities and roles, partnerships, and specific timeframes for execution.

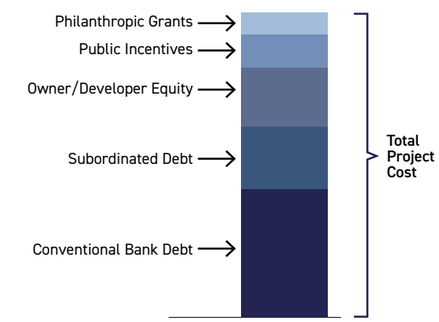




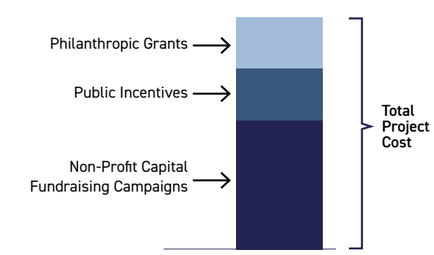
Example Funding Stack for a Public Project



Example Funding Stack for a Private Project



Example Funding Stack for a Non-Profit Project



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Overview

What is a **Plan?**

A neighborhood plan is a shared statement about the desired long-term future for that area and a strategy to reach those goals. Developed through a public engagement process, a plan is a guide for:

- Making decisions about what kind of development and services are appropriate,
- How resources should be allocated, and
- How issues residents, business and property owners, and others in the neighborhood are concerned about could be addressed.

Created in the context of the needs and priorities of the larger region, a neighborhood plan focuses on assets and challenges unique to that specific area. Neighborhood plans seek to create a more livable urban place that is attractive, healthy, equitable, and sustainable for current and future generations.

Once adopted, a neighborhood plan becomes official City policy as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

Neighborhood plans typically identify strategies to be implemented over the next 20+ years for the following topics:

- Public facilities and infrastructure (including parks, streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, lighting, and utilities),
- Housing (types, condition, and affordability),
- Zoning (building types and design, density, and locations for residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development), and
- Other matters important to the neighborhood.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Neighborhood Residents...

will use the plan to understand proposed initiatives in the short, medium, and long terms.

Developers, Builders, and Other Individuals...

will use the plan to help determine the type, scale, intensity, and location of projects.

Public Officials and Community Leaders...

will use the plan to direct funding and to make decisions on zoning issues.

City Staff...

will use the plan to understand key neighborhood issues and as a guide to implementing priority projects and initiatives.

HOW IS IT USED?

A neighborhood plan provides a broad framework for future initiatives, and it serves as a starting point for more detailed planning and public engagement as individual projects are pursued. A plan will continually evolve to meet the changing needs and context of the community.

The maps, diagrams, photographs, and other graphics presented within a neighborhood plan are illustrations of its key features. These images are not intended to represent the exact results expected from the implementation of the plan, but they provide a general representation of development principles, desired building types, land use, infrastructure, and other elements that the plan establishes.

The specific slope, final form, and timing of neighborhood plan initiatives will depend on market demand, the interest of private organizations and individuals, available resources, and direction from further public engagement.

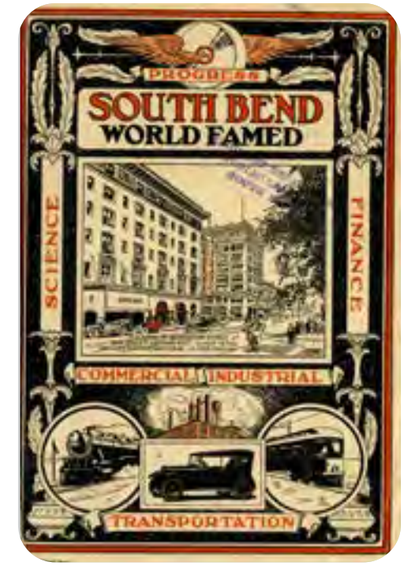
URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

History of **Downtown South Bend**

OVERVIEW

The story of Downtown South Bend is a history inextricably tied to the ups and downs of industrial development across the country. South Bend's downtown, bounded to the east by the southwesternmost bend of the St. Joseph River, was the economic powerhouse of the region throughout the 19th century, but it experienced the same decline in the mid-20th century suffered by many Rust Belt cities. But the last few decades have seen major improvements, with a growing population and renewed interest in urban living. From a culture centered on the river and the railroad to the education, tech, and healthcare driven economy of today, Downtown South Bend has experienced an incredible amount of change throughout its history – a history that will continue to define the future story of Downtown.

Map of South Bend, 1866



1922 Pamphlet

EARLY SETTLEMENTS & INDUSTRIES

A River-Based Economy

Geographically located at the southwesternmost bend of the St. Joseph River, this region was occupied for centuries by the Miami and Potawatomi tribes and used as a portage, or an overland route between waterways, between Lake Michigan and the Kankakee River which flows into the Illinois River and eventually the Mississippi River. French explorers and fur traders were the first European settlers of South Bend, building cabins and trading posts along known trails and routes, including Michigan Road, Indiana's first "super highway."

Two of the first fur trader settlers, Alexis Coquillard and Lathrop M. Taylor, plotted the town of South Bend, home to approximately 128 inhabitants in 1831. Within the next two decades, businesses and industries began to spring up in Downtown South Bend, particularly around the two man-made canals, the East Race and West Race. The waterpower was necessary for production before the development of electric power.

Institutions & Education

In 1842, Father Edward Sorin accepted 524 acres of land just to the north of Downtown South Bend with the intent to found a Catholic college amongst the small local population, which was majority Protestant. Sorin was successful, receiving the official college charter in 1844 for the University of Notre Dame du Lac. Buildings began to spring up to form a campus within the century. The economic influence and renown of Notre Dame continues to shape the City of South Bend today by attracting young talent and respected faculty to the region.

Railroad Connections & Industrialization

The first steam locomotive entered South Bend in 1851, shifting commerce from the river to the railroad. This shift spurred the establishment of some of South Bend's most famous industrial titans, including Henry Studebaker's first wagon shop in 1852, the Singer Sewing Company in the 1860s, and the Oliver Chilled Plow Company in the 1870s. With a booming local economy rooted in production, South Bend experienced a huge influx of Polish, Hungarian, Irish, German, Italian, and Swedish immigrants looking for steady, well-paid work in factories in the latter half of the century.

South Bend was incorporated as a City in 1865, and the industrial economy flourished following the end of the American Civil War. Downtowns were thriving economic hubs at this time, with factories mostly occupying riverfronts and small commercial storefronts lining busy, gridded streets filled with vendors, early automobiles, horses, streetcars, and people. With a population of more than 30,000 in 1880, South Bend boasted a local newspaper, an opera house, a large city park (Howard Park), hotels (including the original Oliver Hotel at Main & Washington Street and the Grand View Hotel where the Century Center stands today), a public library, courthouse, and more.

Historic photos of Downtown South Bend, circa 1920s

Downtown South Bend continued to thrive well into the early part of the 20th century. By 1900, the population of South Bend reached 35,999. Other industrial giants including Bendix Corporation later, following mergers South Bend Toy Company, South Bend Watch Company, O'Brien Paint Corp, and many more made South Bend their home, connected to Chicago by the South Shore interurban established in 1925 and regional electric rail transportation. A track elevation program was completed in 1929, creating bridges over Michigan, Bronson, Main, Lafayette, Prairie, Scott, and Chapin Streets for the New York Central railroad tracks to reach South Bend's Union Station, also opened that year.

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION & DECLINE

Post-War Downturn

By 1950, more than half of all employment in South Bend was in the manufacturing sector. But this prosperity did not last. The post-WWII decline in manufacturing as well as the US Federal Reserve's economic restructuring lowered the cost of imported manufactured goods, decimating industrial- and manufacturing-based economies across the country.

As factories closed, residents abandoned the Downtown – South Bend's population began to decline dramatically after peaking at 132,445 in 1960. The suburbs began to expand and many downtown buildings fell into disrepair.

Urban Renewal

The 1960s and 1970s saw a trend in urban renewal across the country. In 1970, the South Bend Redevelopment Commission was formed and called for removal of blighted areas and buildings. Many of the building demolitions were carried out throughout Downtown South Bend, including the 100 block of North Michigan Street that became known as "The Hole" because it sat empty for almost a decade. First Source Center opened on this site in 1980.

The Century Center was conceptualized as a convention center, sited between Downtown and the river, where the Oliver Chilled Plow Company once stood. Internationally-recognized architect Philip Johnson was commissioned to design the facility, which opened in 1977 and is an example of late-postmodernist architecture.

Paired with the First Source Center and Century Center redevelopments was a street realignment project. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (then St. Joseph Street) was constructed as a bypass of Michigan Street, from LaSalle Avenue to Monroe Street. This bypass was intended to help Michigan Street become a pedestrian mall lined with retail shops. Although a trendy concept at the time, this traffic shift allowed vehicles to easily pass through the downtown without any incentive to stop, walk, and shop. Many retailers on Michigan Street closed in the following decades.

REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN

Bringing People Back

A variety of revitalization strategies have been implemented in Downtown South Bend in the last few decades. In 1986, Stanley Coveleski Regional Stadium, now commonly referred to as Four Winds Field, was constructed to host a minor league affiliate team of the Chicago White Sox. In 2008, the 140-acre former site of the Studebaker manufacturing complex just south of Downtown was proposed as a technology park called Ignition Park. Paired with Innovation Park, built in 2009 at the University of Notre Dame campus, Ignition Park is intended to cluster "high-potential technologies and ventures" and attract technology start-ups and workers.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The largest employer in South Bend is Beacon Health System, which employs over 7,000 workers in the City and is headquartered in Downtown South Bend at Memorial Hospital. Healthcare systems often generate huge economic benefits and help attract healthcare professionals to the region.

Pete Buttigieg, South Bend's mayor from 2012 to 2020, was critical to South Bend's growth and progressive policies. During his tenure, he oversaw a variety of city-led initiatives focused on urban development specifically centered around Downtown South Bend. The Vacant and Abandoned Properties Initiative was initiated by the City in 2013 with the ambitious goal to renovate, repair, or demolish 1,000 of the 1,347 vacant or abandoned homes in the City. In 2013 the Smart Street Initiative, a Complete Streets plan to make the City safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, was created by the City. Many of the one-way streets that were established in the era of urban renewal were converted into two-way streets, including Main Street and Michigan Street. In the 2010's, the City's population began growing steadily again.

Moving Forward

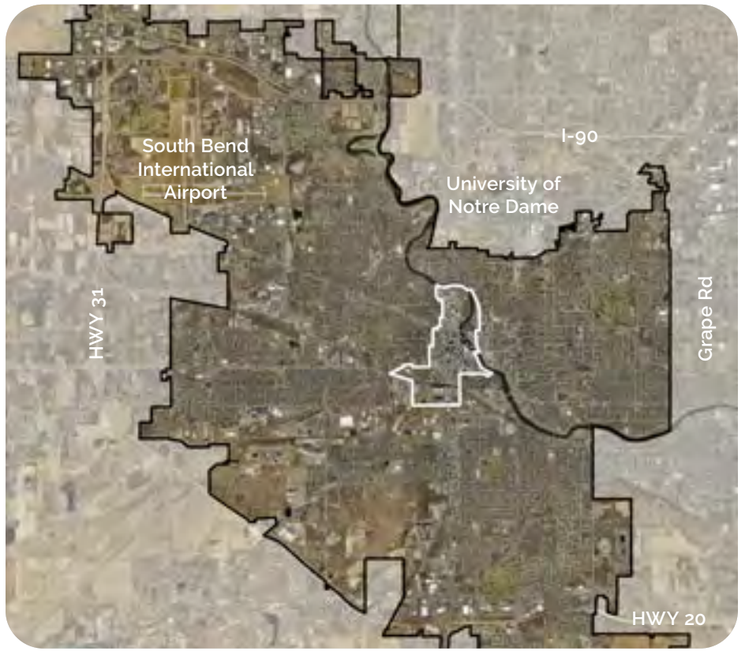
Today, Downtown South Bend continues to grow, with thriving institutions, beautiful parks, beloved restaurants and retailers, historic architecture, and remarkable riverfront views. A renewed interest in urban living sets the context for this plan, charting the way forward to a future that builds on the rich, illustrious history of Downtown South Bend.

Downtown South Bend Today

Downtown **Today**

Hey, Downtown....are you surviving or thriving?

During the early visioning workshops and survey, residents described Downtown South Bend's unique character as "friendly and welcoming", "big enough but small enough", and a place for "rust belt innovators". While Downtown is surviving, most people quickly identified that it is not thriving. Many places Downtown feel disconnected and less walkable due to a lack of density, retail, housing and an overabundance of surface parking lots. Residents and visitors see the potential of the St. Joseph River, but realize that Downtown South Bend isn't making the most of the opportunity to connect to and experience the river.



Location of Downtown South Bend within the broader City and region

Downtown South Bend's riverfront is one of its most valuable assets

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Michigan Street offers some pedestrian amenities and streetscape, but not continuously

These dedicated bicycle and walking paths make Downtown more attractive to a range of modes

Many areas of Downtown do not have active uses or feel welcoming to pedestrians

While many buildings have been lost, Downtown still has historic building assets

The island sits at in a prime location in the river, but it is challenging to get to and feels isolated and disconnected

The riverfront trail south of the Jefferson Street bridge lacks activated frontage

While adjacent neighborhoods offer single-family houses, there is little housing in Downtown

The Downtown riverfront trail is currently fragmented, with several sections along the West Bank closed for necessary maintenance

The Gridiron is a key location in Downtown, but with the inactive former College Football Hall of Fame, adjacent parking and challenged grade, lacks the draw of a town square

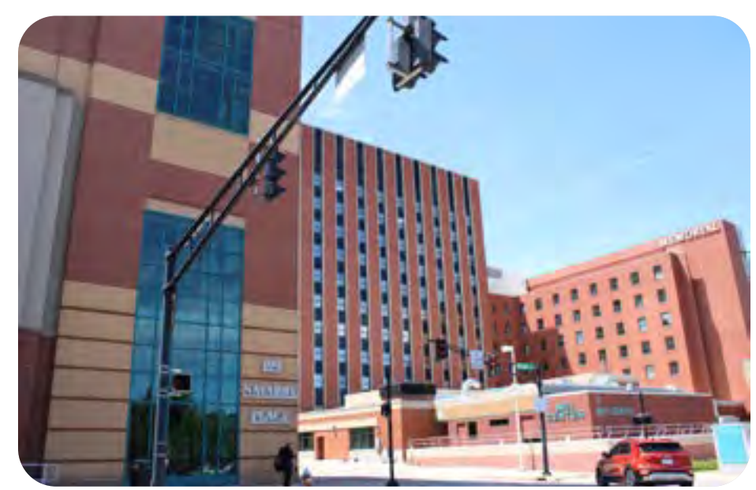
East Race

Many of the storefronts along the 200 block of Michigan Street are in disrepair, have opaque glazing, and storefronts in need of active tenants

Four Winds Field is a destination that brings visitors Downtown

Vacant and poorly maintained lots downtown can make walking between destinations feel uncomfortable

Studebaker Building is a historic landmark Downtown that could see new life with the Renaissance District

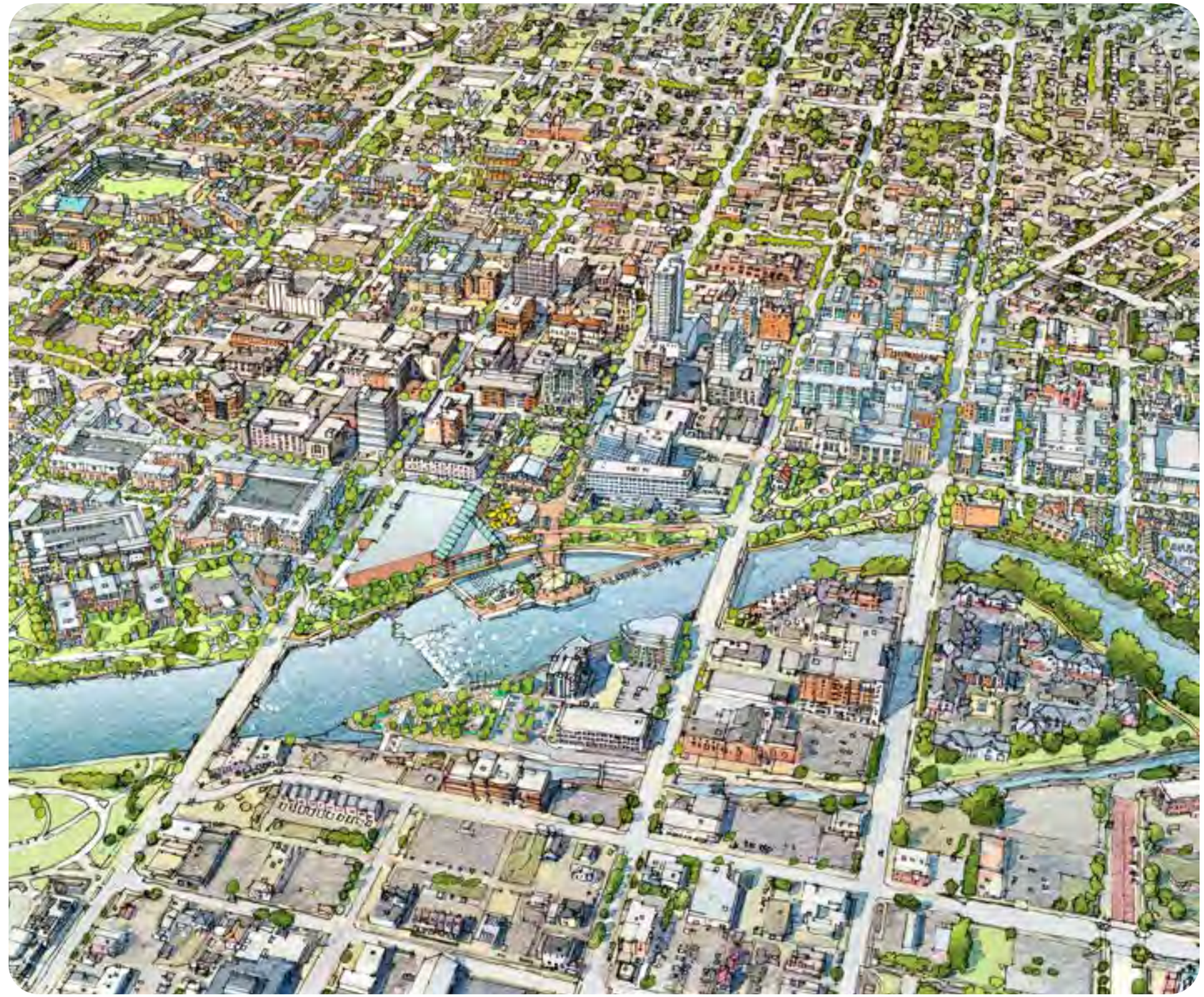


Beacon Health brings people and workers Downtown

Downtown **Tomorrow**

The Vision for Downtown South Bend is a River City with "something surprising and wonderful around every corner."

South Bend residents and partner organizations yearn for a vibrant, green downtown with riverfront restaurants, parks, and walkable trails. Residents dream about new housing, spaces for small businesses, new art and music experiences, and more third places that invite people to stay. Over the coming 20 years, Downtown must focus on adding activities and amenities that appeal to children and families, which will in turn attract all ages and abilities. The Downtown of tomorrow will build on the history and culture of South Bend and offer an experience that isn't available elsewhere in the region.

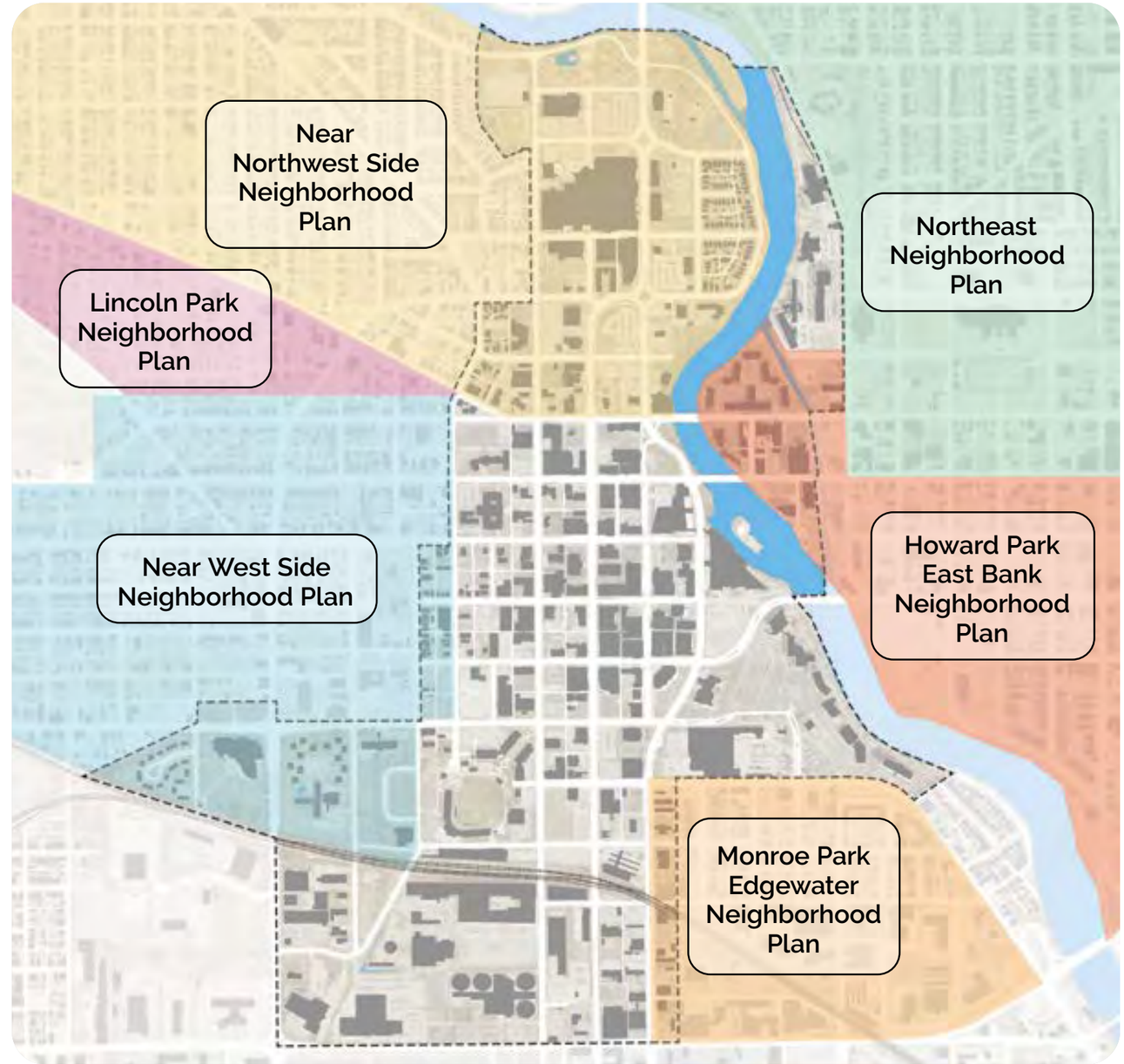


Planning **Context**

Creating a unified vision plan for Downtown

Downtown is surrounded by neighborhoods that have undergone extensive community engagement and planning processes led by the City of South Bend's Planning and Community Resources team. Each neighborhood touches Downtown, and their plans include thoughts and ideas on improvements to the perimeter of Downtown. While there are many great ideas, none of the plans have taken a coordinated approach to considering the entirety of the Downtown. In addition, there has not been a coordinated vision for Downtown since the 1960s urban renewal plan created under Mayor Lloyd Allen.

This Vision Plan took into consideration the foundational work done in the surrounding neighborhood plans and then asked the community and stakeholders to focus their ideas and input on a vision that centers on the heart of the City.



Neighborhood Adjacencies to Downtown Boundary

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Engagement & **Design Process**

The best way to create a successful, implementable vision for Downtown is to listen to the community and let their priorities shape the plan.

The City of South Bend developed this plan through a process that engaged residents, businesses, institutions, government agencies, and other neighborhood stakeholders. The planning process included online surveys, key stakeholder interviews, and workshops that gathered critical information about the Downtown South Bend planning area's existing conditions, needs, and opportunities. This engagement provided the basis for this plan.

Casey Steinbacher speaks to a packed auditorium about Durham's transformation

Hundreds of ideas were generated through the Visioning Workshops in early 2024

January 2024

Stakeholder Meetings

The City's planning staff conducted 23 virtual and in-person meetings with neighborhood stakeholders. Stakeholders included neighborhood associations, community and nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, and businesses, City departments, and City Council representatives. These conversations began to outline general themes and potential focus areas for the Downtown plan.

February - March 2024

Online Engagement

The Downtown South Bend 2045 survey was available online and on the City's online engagement platform: Together South Bend. This survey was available February through May and would be used to inform the design process during Design Week. Over 170 surveys were submitted and more than 2,400 ideas were generated.

Casey Steinbacher

The City of South Bend, in partnership with DTSB, invited the public to attend kick-off events for the Downtown South Bend 2045 Plan process. On February 20 at 6pm at the Leighton Auditorium in the St. Joseph County Public Library's Community Learning Center, guest speaker Casey Steinbacher presented "Hey Downtown... Are You Surviving or Thriving?" Steinbacher, Founder of Finding Next, is a national expert in urban innovation strategies and told the story of Durham, North Carolina's place-based Downtown revival. A question-and-answer period followed the presentation.

Visioning Workshop

On February 22 and March 5, the City of South Bend offered a visioning workshop of formal presentations and open house periods. Workshop exercises asked a series of questions to help guide constructive dialogue among residents about Downtown's future. Following are some of the major themes that emerged as result of that dialogue.

Residents helped make decisions about the location and type of retail in Downtown

A mid-week Open House allowed participants to give input while ideas were in-progress

Design Week culminated with a presentation of the ideas explored during the week

June

Design Week

Community members were invited to take part in Design Week to review preliminary design concepts and offer their ideas. Design Week included a series of open houses and presentations open to the public. The week began with an overview Overview of the week's activities, review of input received during the February/March visioning workshops and through the online survey, opportunity to comment on key themes that will help form the downtown plan. An open House followed to allow for comment on preliminary designs and offer direction. The week concluded with a presentation of the work completed during the week as well as a look at next steps moving forward. Over 250 people participated in Design Week.

Fall 2024

Draft Plan

During Fall 2024, the City and consultant team refined the ideas from Design Week, incorporating the public's input. Additional illustrations and drawings helped to further explain the visions and ideas.

Summer - Fall 2025

Open House & Plan Review

After a draft plan document was created, the City hosted a series of public open houses and invited the public and stakeholders to share their thoughts about the final vision.

Feedback from the open houses led to more detailed discussions, clarifications and additional content to strengthen and align the plan with broader stakeholder and regional objectives.

March 2026

Adoption

Following public hearings, the Plan Commission and Common Council will consider the Downtown Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. This Plan now serves as the City's official policy for the area.

Vision **Workshops**

On February 21th and March 5th, the City of South Bend offered a visioning workshop with formal presentations and an open house. Workshop exercises presented a series of questions to help guide constructive dialogue among residents about downtown's future. Following are some of the major themes that emerged as result of that presented sessions.

151
Workshop Participants

1,250+
Ideas Generated

Characteristics of Your Favorite Cities or Towns	Describe Downtown's Unique Vibe	What Would Make Downtown Successful	Amenities Needed in Downtown
Activated river	Sports Town	Train Station Downtown	Open Spaces and Parks
Lively commercial and retail areas	Artists and Entrepreneurs	More Residents (+10,000) Downtown	Connectivity
Connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists	Green City	Farmers Market Downtown	Business
Green open spaces and plazas	Friendly - Welcoming City	Formal Green Gathering Space	Livability
Art and cultural elements	Non-Traditional Innovator	Connected and Activated Alleyways	Green Principles
Quality architecture and historic buildings	Foodie City	Things for Children and Youth Downtown (Activities and Places)	Activated Riverfront
A lot of people	River City	Night Life / More "Third" Places	Entertainment
	Crossroads of Collisions for Entrepreneurs	"Something WONDERFUL Around Every Corner"	Built Environment
	Big Enough, Small Enough	Trees, Green Spaces, Green Infrastructure	More Public Art!
	Rust Belt Innovators	New (Affordable) Housing	
	University City	Renovate Existing Historic Buildings and Get Small Businesses in Them	
		Use River as an Asset: Restaurants, Parks, and Walkable Trails	

Development **Principles**

These key priorities emerged from the community input and feedback.

After compiling all the feedback provided by community members during the Visioning Workshop and the online survey, eight common themes emerged, which were formed into development principles. These Principles guided the work of the Master Plan, acting as the criteria that interventions must meet to advance the future of Downtown.

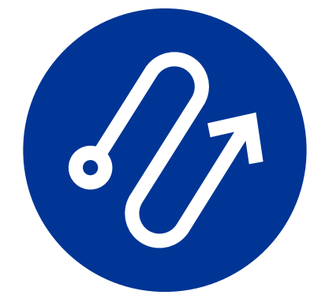
Activate the Riverfront

Expand Housing Options

Anchor Downtown with Jobs & People

Create a Safe & Inclusive Place for Everyone

Create Vibrant Public Places



Building Comfortable & Accessible Connections

Grow & Support Local Businesses

Embrace Sustainable Practices

Support & Leverage Arts & Culture

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Design **Week**

Held in the first week of June, Design Week provided another opportunity for the community to weigh in on the direction of the Vision plan. The three top priorities that emerged from the workshop were to Activate the Riverfront, Expand Housing Options and Create a Vibrant Public Places for Everyone. Highlights from the community comments are below:

At the end of design week there was overwhelming support for many of the ideas presented as indicated by the green dots

Recap Presentation

Midweek Pinup

Final Presentation

ACTIVATE THE RIVERFRONT

- Provide opportunities for riverfront dining
- Design a gathering space at the riverfront
- Improve the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along the river – wider, connected, more amenities
- Keep the riverfront feeling natural and green
- Improve the lighting and feeling of safety
- Build in more shade
- Connect closer to the water
- Bring residences closer to the riverfront
- Don't block views of the river

EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS

- Ensure affordability for all residents
- Incorporate green, private spaces for housing
- Build urban housing with ground-floor retail and amenity spaces
- Consider active-adult neighborhoods, with single-floor living for aging populations
- Refurbish vacant buildings for housing
- Preserve historic character where possible
- Don't block the views of the river

CREATE VIBRANT PUBLIC PLACES

- Build more, better green spaces around downtown in a connected network
- Build a public outdoor venue/gathering space for socializing, events, flexible use
- Pedestrianize streets
- Incorporate public art, murals, lighting, beautiful landscaping, into public places
- Preserve greenery & build in more shade
- Provide public space for use during the winter
- Include a dog park

February & March 2025 **Open Houses**

The City held presentations and open houses in February and March 2025 to give the public a final chance to contribute to the development of the Vision plan. Feedback from these meetings then informed the four themes of the plan: Public Realm Improvements, The Heart of Downtown, Neighborhood Nodes, and Innovation & Institutional Catalysts. Community input was essential in shaping the Downtown South Bend 2045 plan, influencing every stage from the initial meeting to the final round of engagement.

NEIGHBORHOOD NODES

General Housing Comments

- Develop affordable housing and mixed-use across from the former Hall of Fame
- Provide more low-income housing
- Do not upzone residential neighborhoods
- Provide a range of new housing options (affordable housing, high-density housing, etc.)

Downtown/River West Neighborhoods

- Redevelop the Karl King tower
- Integrate the housing along the riverfront into Downtown

INNOVATION & INSTITUTIONAL CATALYSTS

- Extend the South Shore into downtown South Bend
- Attract more arts uses to the Renaissance District

THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN

Town Square

- Create a public Town Square
- Incorporate new destinations and museums that could focus on South Bend history, such as the South Bend Blue Sox and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi
- Offer free experiences in public spaces

Michigan Street

- Develop continuous stretches of retail

Hunt Plaza/Morris Theater

- Provide dedicated spaces and electrical hookups for food trucks along former Michigan Street alignment.
- Connect Morris Theater and Jon Hunt Memorial Plaza to Colfax Avenue

Riverfront Park

- Eliminate the dam
- Increase the focus on the riverfront
- Connect to other riverfront parks, including Leeper Park, Seitz Park, and Howard Park

Century Center

- Renovate the building, but don't alter it
- Don't relocate the South Bend Museum of Art
- Relocate the South Bend Museum of Art to another existing or purpose built building

PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS

- Maintain and repair existing streets when possible, rather than rebuilding streets
- Improve the East Race area
- Provide cold-weather building connections, such as skyways and tunnels
- Improve wayfinding for cyclists and motorcyclists
- Use materials with distinct colors and designs for spaces that are intended for pedestrians
- Design buildings with large windows to connect the outdoors to activities on the ground floor and possibly explore reflective glass near the river
- Enhance street lighting and incorporate vibrant colors to brighten Downtown at night

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

- Make Downtown feel safe and comfortable for all
- Support people experiencing homelessness
- Encourage changes to landlord leasing periods
- Use environmentally-friendly materials and practices
- Connect with all colleges and universities
- Engage the Westside community
- Ensure parking is convenient for residents, employees and visitors

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Analysis

Physical Form & **Patterns**

The physical form of South Bend has changed dramatically in its 160-year history.

South Bend has undergone periods of dramatic growth, periods of urban renewal, and more recently periods of infill. Period-specific planning ideologies through the decades have left their mark on Downtown's urban form. Mid-century, monolithic and single-use projects consolidates multiple city blocks at a time, while street-facing buildings were demolished. Many of these vacant lots were converted into surface parking or remain as vacant lots. These gaps were identified by residents as a hindrance to walkability in Downtown, but also as opportunities for future infill and growth.

1917 Building Footprints

Early in the 20th century, Downtown South Bend had a legible and clear street and block network. The center was clear, with continuous mixed-use and retail frontage along Michigan Street. Buildings ranged in scale from residential neighborhoods at the periphery, to the heart of Downtown with more commercial building types.

2023 Building Footprints

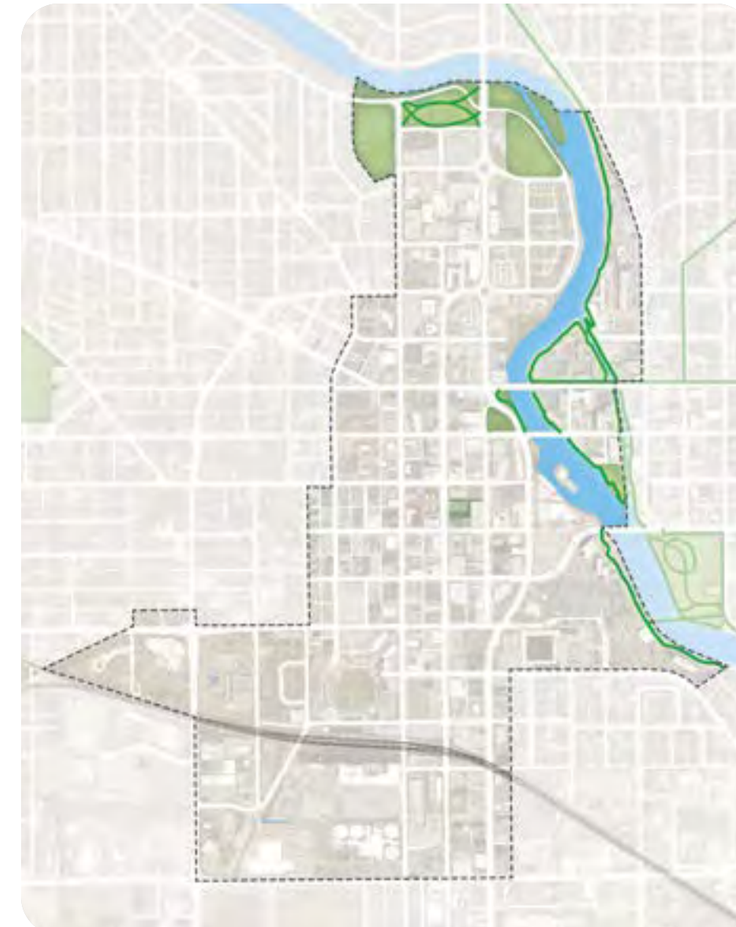
Urban Renewal in the 1960s and 1970s eroded the building pattern Downtown. Buildings were demolished, large interventions such as the First Source Center and Century Center were built, and streets were removed, rerouted, and converted to one-ways.

Existing Residential Uses

Downtown today has a limited number of housing units, which results in fewer people activating streets, shops, and restaurants around the clock and throughout the week. Existing housing tends to be multi-family, but there are pockets of single-family houses that exist within the Downtown boundary. The River Bend Historic District, founded in 1992, exemplifies architecture from just after World War I. Attracting more housing and more diverse options is an essential step in bolstering the economic vitality of downtown.

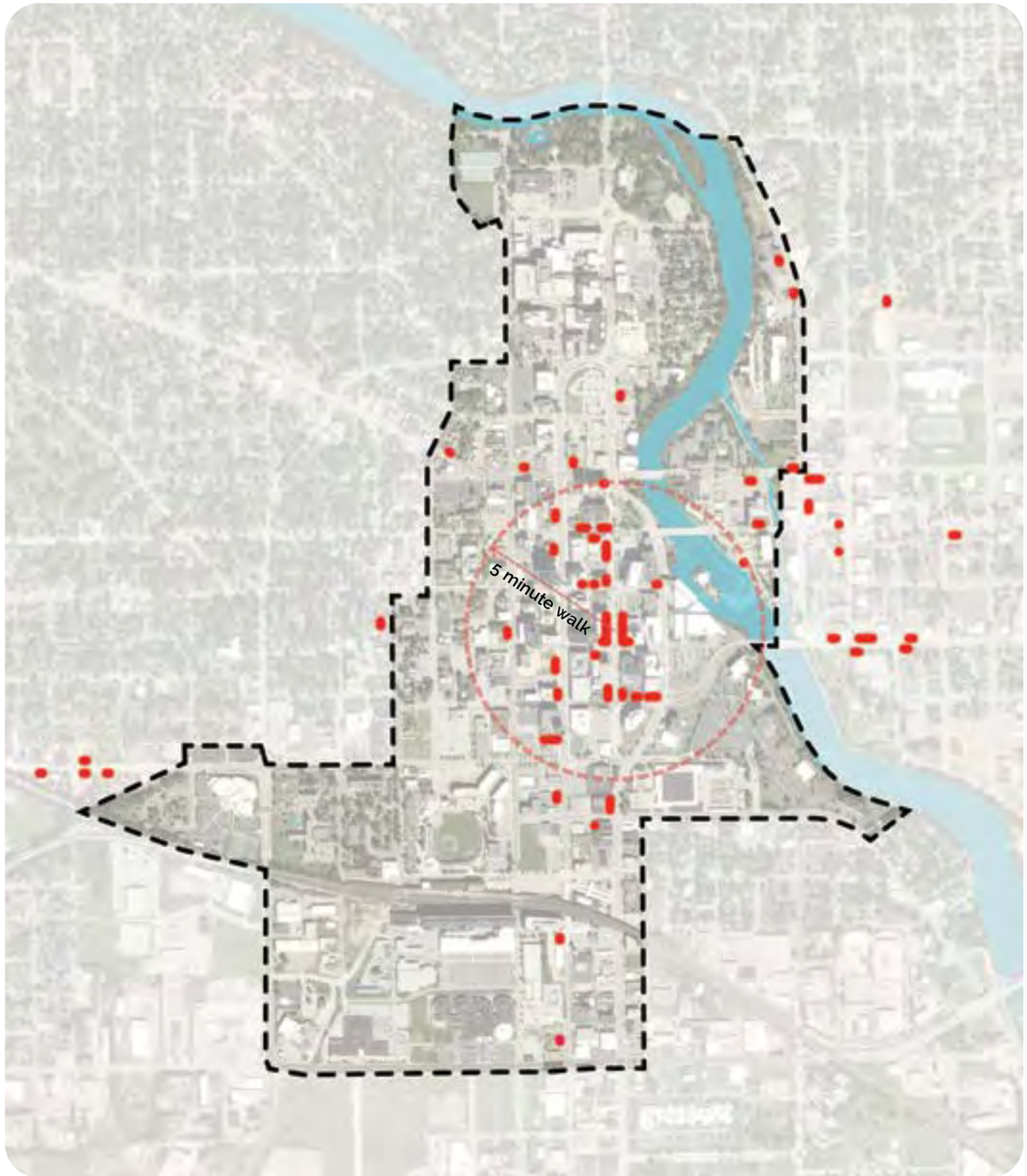
Existing Parking

A large portion of the land area in Downtown is occupied by surface parking lots and garages. These parking resources represent a surplus of parking, which can be allocated as incentive for future housing and commercial development. Surface parking lots offer opportunities for infill development.

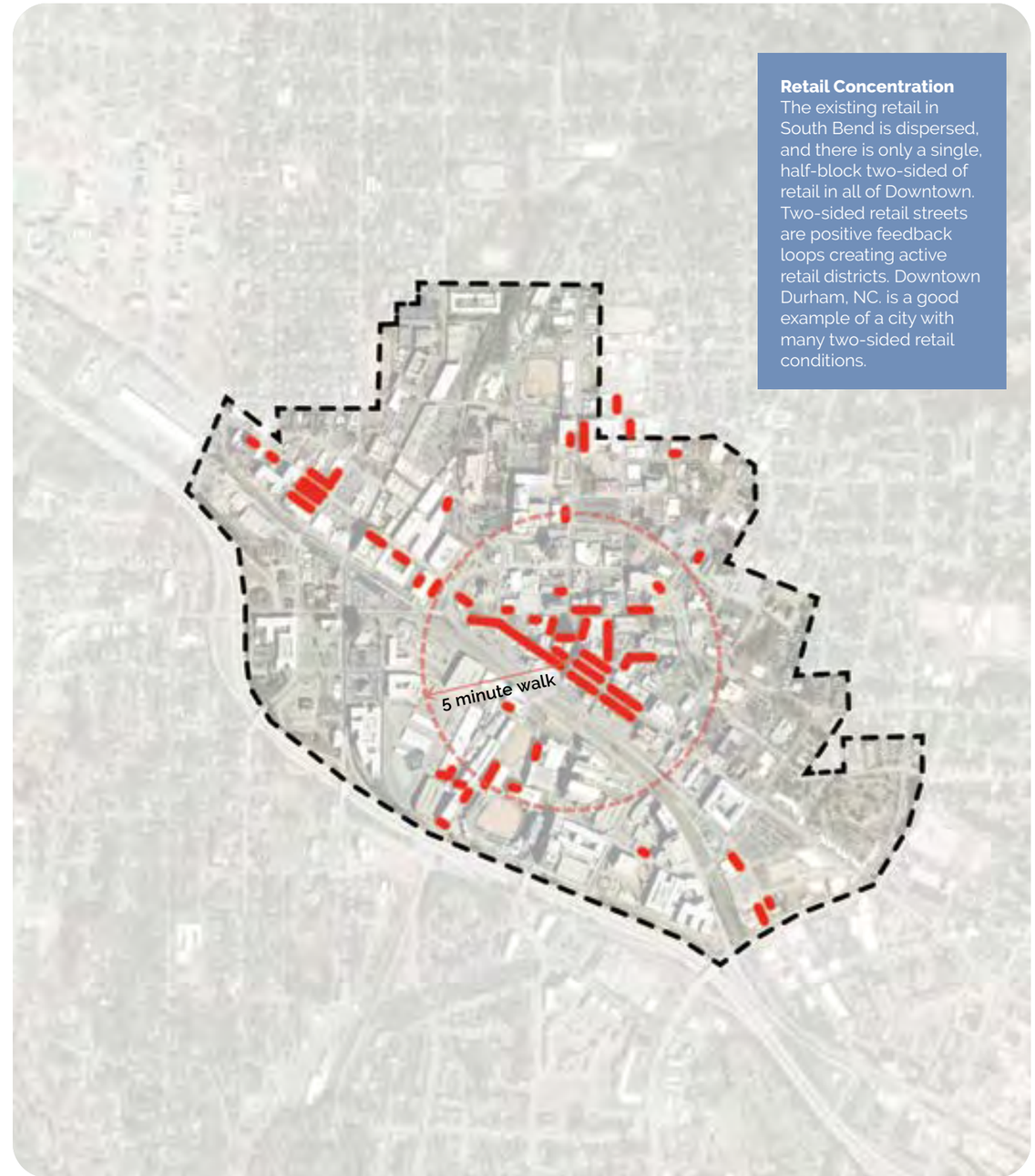


Existing Open Space and Trails

Recent City investments have greatly enhanced the quality of parks and the connectivity to and through Downtown from the neighborhoods. Dedicated pedestrians and bicycle paths make walking and biking comfortable and welcoming and reduce the need for vehicle parking. Howard Park and Seitz Park are world-class urban parks that have activated the east side of the river. However, gaps still exist in the open space and trail network along the river, adjacent to Downtown.



Retail locations, in red, show the lack of two-sided retail within South Bend's Downtown in the Downtown boundary of South Bend



Retail Concentration
The existing retail in South Bend is dispersed, and there is only a single, half-block two-sided of retail in all of Downtown. Two-sided retail streets are positive feedback loops creating active retail districts. Downtown Durham, NC. is a good example of a city with many two-sided retail conditions.

Retail locations, in Downtown Durham, North Carolina show clusters of two-sided retail in the Downtown boundary of Durham, North Carolina

Market & **Economic Analysis**

There is strong demand for growth on multiple fronts in Downtown South Bend.

Downtown South Bend stands at a critical turning point, with strong demand for mixed-use environments that cater to diverse audiences. However, the existing built environment faces challenges in fully meeting this demand in its current form. As a result, the City of South Bend has a rare opportunity to activate interest in the downtown market and shape its future growth.

The area already benefits from key differentiators that drive visitation and activity. Downtown South Bend serves as a hub for entertainment, arts, and culture, with venues like Four Winds Field and Morris Performing Arts Center drawing steady foot traffic that supports retail spending. Additionally, the presence of parks and public spaces enhances the appeal of the area. Downtown South Bend is also home to major employers, including Beacon Health, that contribute to a stable employment base. The challenge now is integrating these assets into a cohesive, compelling experience that attracts residents, employees, and visitors from across the region and beyond.

Several obstacles hinder this goal. Downtown South Bend lacks sufficient housing variety to sustain activity throughout the day. Retail spaces are misaligned with demand in terms of size and affordability, resulting in vacant storefronts even in prime locations. Moreover, entertainment, arts, and culture anchors attract visitors, but there is no seamless connection between experiences; for instance, families attending baseball games have limited nearby options to extend their outings.

Baseline demand shows support for rental and for-sale housing, institutional office, limited-service hotel, neighborhood-serving retail, including a grocery store

Four Winds Field drives visitation to downtown

The Challenge

Integrating South Bend's assets into a cohesive, compelling experience that attracts residents, employees, and visitors from across the region and beyond

Market & **Economic Analysis**

Progress is already underway, with Downtown South Bend poised to see an uptick in new housing development in the coming years. As part of a market analysis looking at the future growth trajectory of Downtown South Bend, RCLCO thus determined a favorable outlook of "baseline" demand, defined as the demand the area is likely to see if it continues on its current trajectory. In this outlook, Downtown South Bend is likely to see support for new real estate in a variety of segments, including rental housing, institutional office space, limited-service hotel, and neighborhood-serving retail, including a grocery store.

However, with strategic improvements and targeted investments, the City of South Bend has the potential to unlock even greater opportunities. In the same market analysis, RCLCO also developed a forecast of "upside" demand, which reflects the additional gains that could be realized in Downtown South Bend through thoughtful planning, enhanced connectivity, and curated development efforts. In this scenario, there is likely to be even greater support for new development, especially for commercial uses that would benefit from greater visitation and foot traffic across the urban core.

The analysis highlights the potential benefits that can be realized through improvements to the downtown built environment. Through these improvements, Downtown South Bend can bridge the gap between its current assets and future potential, ensuring the area becomes a vibrant, cohesive destination for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

DEMAND FOR NEW PRODUCT BY 2045

	Baseline Scenario	Upside Scenario
Rental Apartments	2,450 Units	2,960 Units
For-Sale Townhomes	400 Units	470 Units
"Missing Middle" Stacked Flats	40 Units	160 Units
High-End Condominiums	70 Units	90 Units
Grocery	45,000 SF	48,000 SF
Restaurant	22,000 SF	45,000 SF
Entertainment & Fitness	8,000 SF	18,000 SF
Services	9,000 SF	14,000 SF
Hard & Soft Goods	1,000 SF	7,000 SF
Limited-Service Hotel	400 Keys	670 Keys
Full-Service Hotel	400 Keys	670 Keys
Corporate Office	195,000 SF	503,000 SF
Institutional / Medical Office	195,000 SF	503,000 SF

Baseline Scenario

Opportunities Downtown South Bend is likely to see if it continues on its current trajectory

Upside Scenario

Opportunities Downtown South Bend is likely to see through improved planning, increased connectivity, and strategic public investment

Market Opportunity

- STRONG
- MODERATE / STRONG
- MODERATE
- MODERATE / WEAK
- WEAK

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Parking **Analysis**

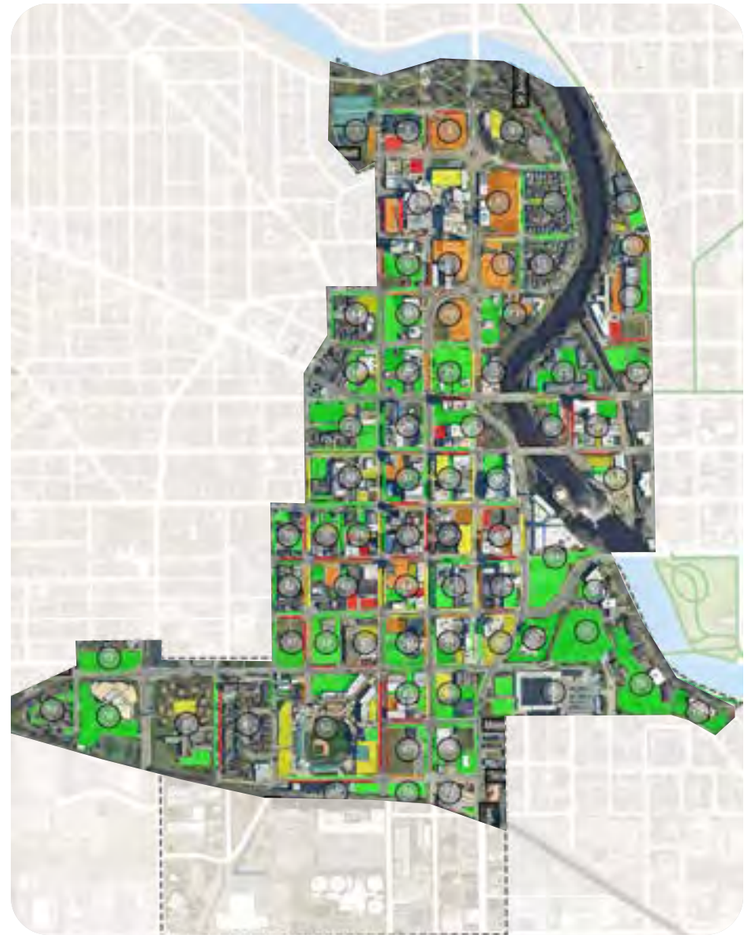
Downtown South Bend has an untapped resource in its available parking.

- At the peak at 10 a.m., downtown parking is only 46% occupied on average.
- Downtown has an asset of unused parking that can help drive development.
- Current city parking resources are well located to support future developments and activity downtown.
- Existing structured parking is clearly marked from the exterior, but improvements need to be made on the interior for ease of parking.
- Small adjustments to parking systems downtown can help to utilize the existing resources more efficiently.

PARKING OVERVIEW

Overall, 15,048 spaces, including public, private, and on-street spaces, were inventoried in Downtown South Bend. Weekday parking occupancy was observed with an overall peak occupancy of 44 percent at 10:00 a.m., gradually dropping throughout the day into the early evening observation period. The City is the primary provider of public parking, with 14% of the parking supply classified on-street, 19% public off-street, and 67% as private parking or parking reserved for a particular business and not public parking.

Overall, parking provided by the City is user-friendly and readily available with many free or low-cost offerings.



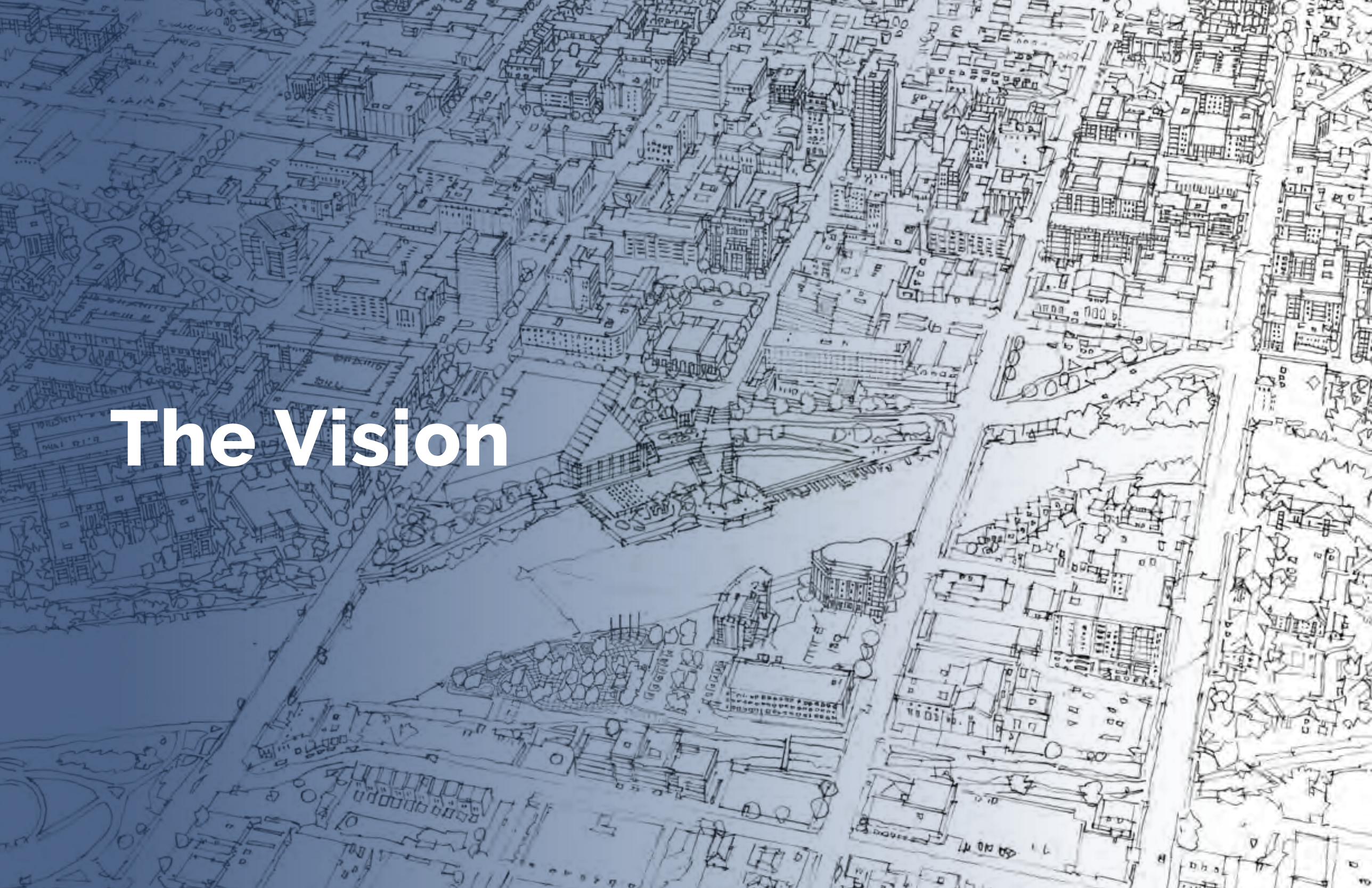
At peak demand at 10 a.m. on a weekday much of the parking Downtown is available (shown in green).

FUTURE CONDITIONS

Several future developments were considered for their impact on the parking system. The potential plans add structured parking, eliminate existing surface parking, and take advantage of underutilized parking. As planned, downtown parking will remain adequate as these developments come to fruition.

City owned parking decks are located at the blue stars which are in good proximity to activity and services downtown. Green rings illustrate ideal walking distances for services and visitors, yellow rings illustrate good walking distances and are more acceptable for employees.

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

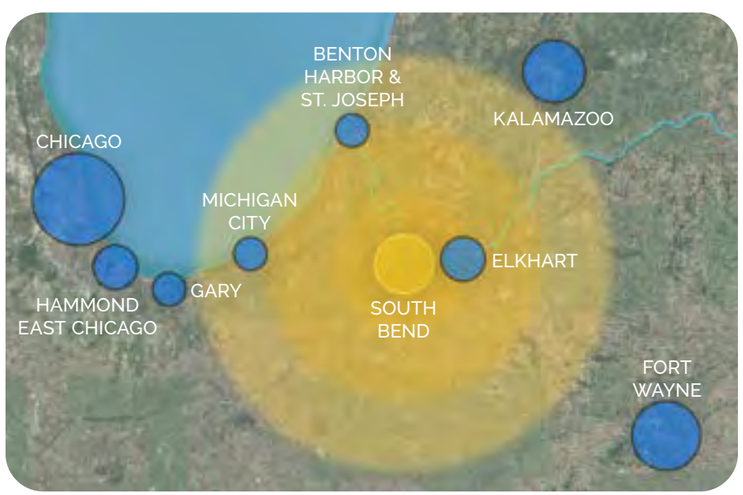


The Vision

The **Vision for Downtown**

Let's make Downtown South Bend a delightfully "wanderable" place — somewhere visitors can spend a day walking, eating, shopping, and enjoying cultural experiences.

The vision for the next 20 years recognizes that people value experiences — they are voting with their feet and dollars. Downtown South Bend is the largest urban environment between Fort Wayne, Kalamazoo, and the metropolitan Chicago area. With strategic investments, it could reemerge as the destination for experiences that aren't available in the suburbs and small towns of Northern Indiana. Achieving this long-term vision for Downtown will require catalytic investments and cross-sector cooperation. The vision will be executed by focusing on four priorities: reinvigorating the core, attracting jobs and people, adding housing diversity, and creating a world-class riverfront open space system.



1. Reinvigorate the heart of Downtown

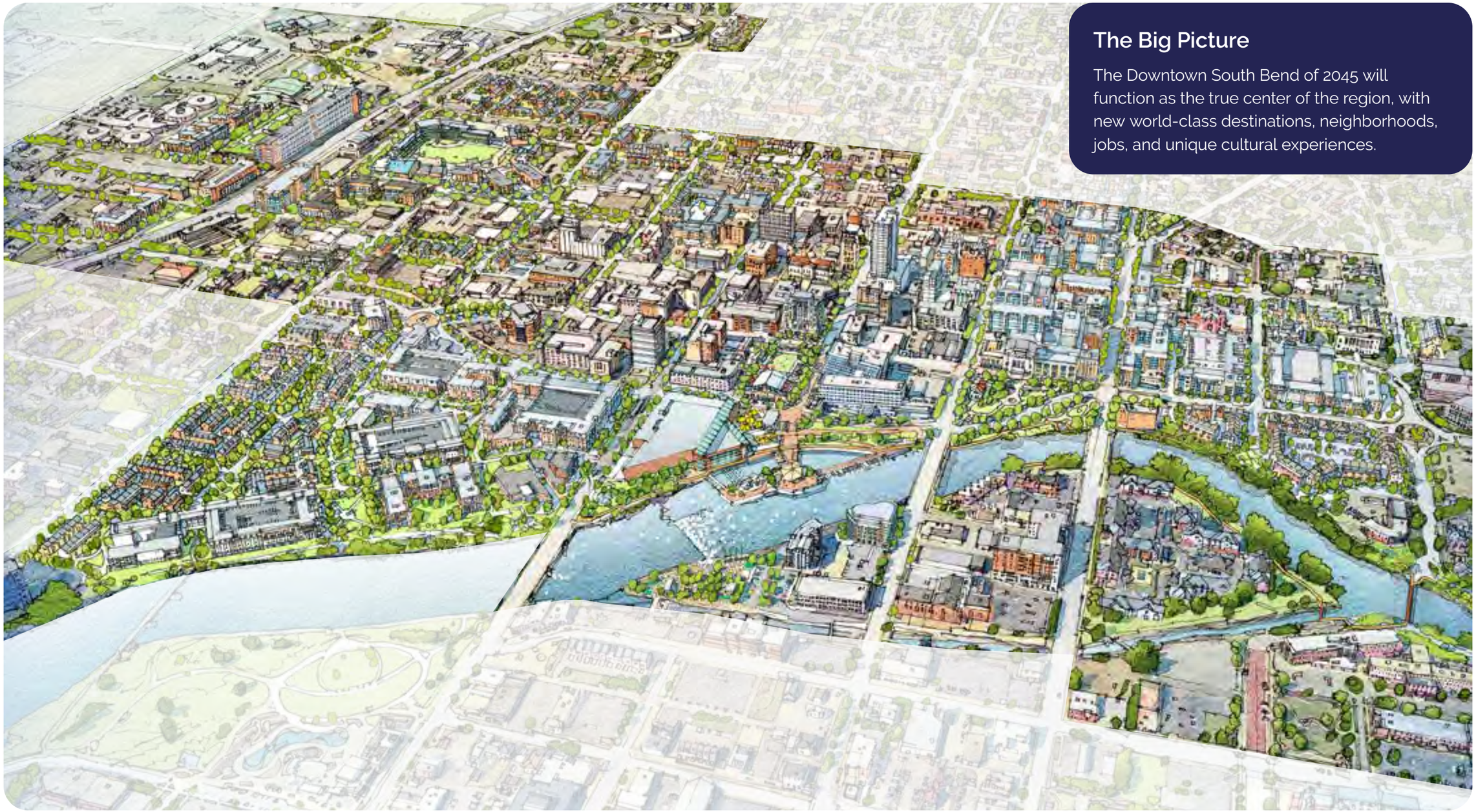
2. Attract jobs & people to Downtown

3. Add housing diversity and infill neighborhoods within and around Downtown

4. Create a world-class connected riverfront open space system

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The **Vision for Downtown**



The Big Picture

The Downtown South Bend of 2045 will function as the true center of the region, with new world-class destinations, neighborhoods, jobs, and unique cultural experiences.

Vision **Projects**

The four priorities for Downtown will be accomplished through a series of projects that will attract more people to live, work, dine and shop in Downtown.

Each project strategically builds on existing assets, past successes, and engages public and private partners poised to implement. For example, the creation of a signature urban waterfront continues the City's legacy of world-class riverfront parks, which has already begun with Howard Park and Seitz Park. The projects are identified on the map to the right and described in more detail on subsequent pages.

The Heart of Downtown

- A1 Retail Core at Michigan Street
- A2 Jon Hunt Memorial Plaza
- A3 The Town Square
- A4 The Century Center & Jefferson Blvd Realignment
- ★ A Big Idea for the Future — Signature Riverfront Park

Neighborhood Nodes

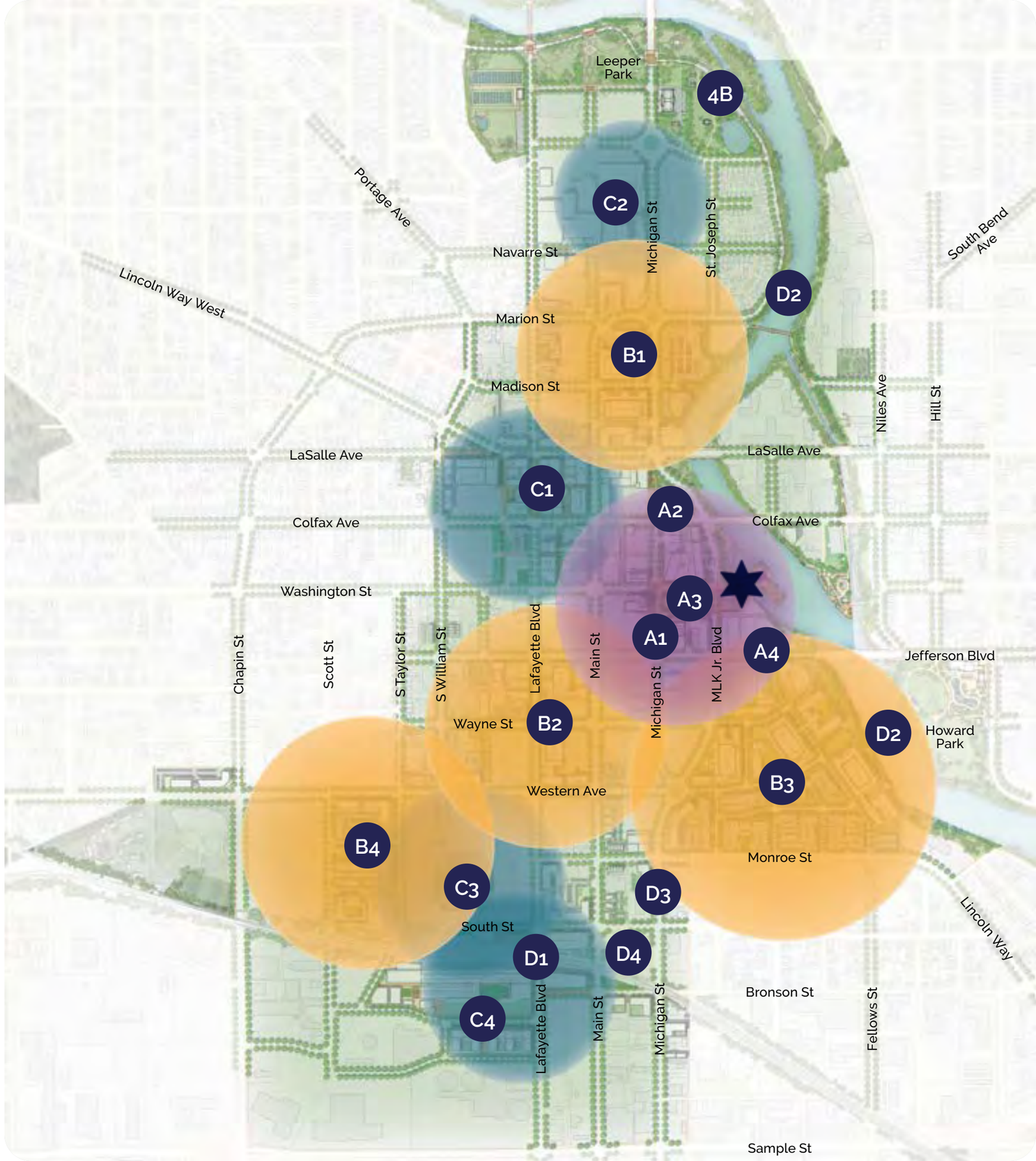
- B1 Downtown North Neighborhoods
- B2 Downtown Central
- B3 Riverfront West
- B4 Western Avenue Transformation

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts

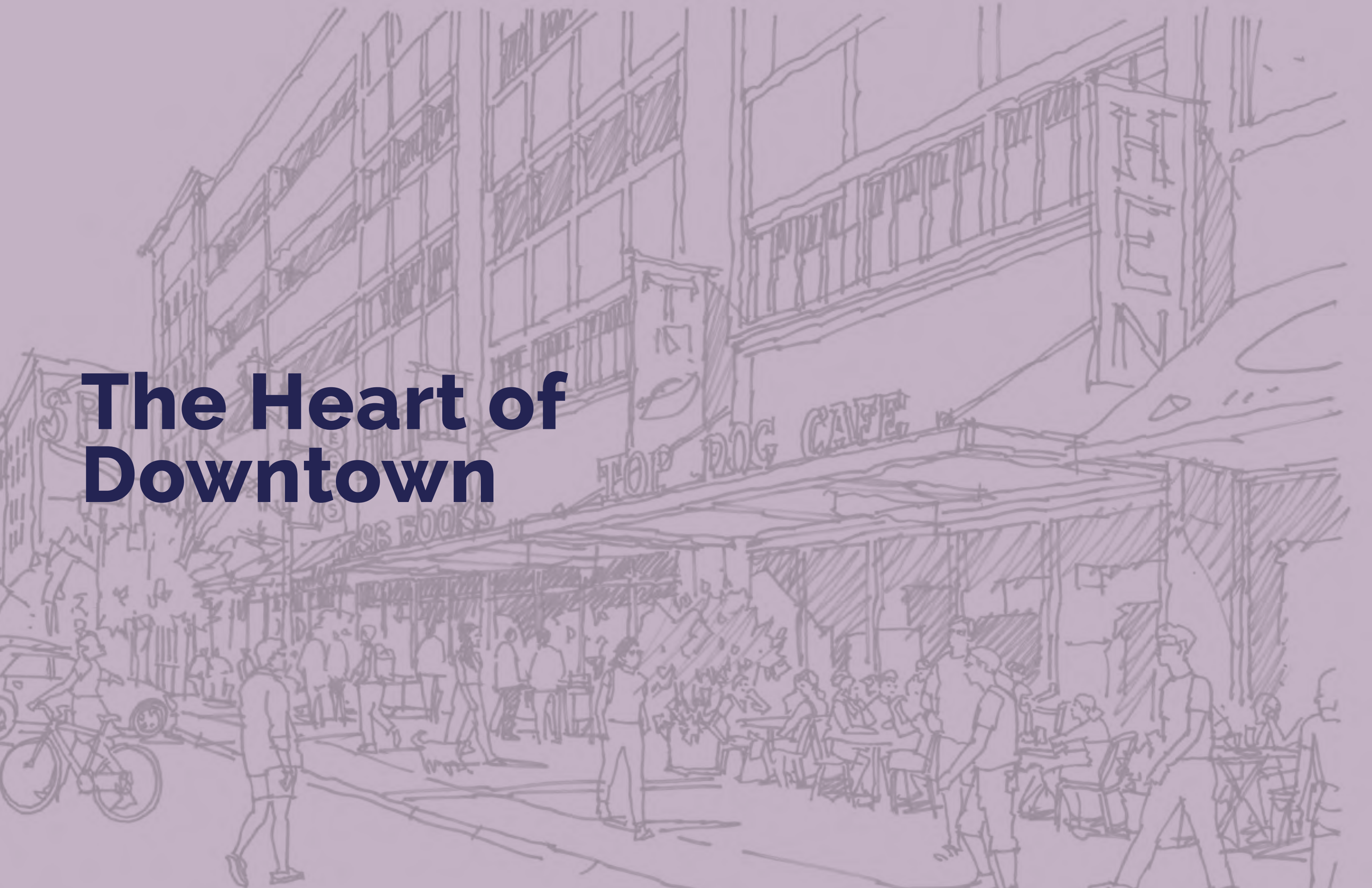
- C1 Tech & Talent Innovation District
- C2 Beacon Health District
- C3 Sports & Entertainment District
- C4 Renaissance District

Public Realm Enhancements

- D1 Gateways to Downtown
- D2 Riverfront & Open Spaces
- D3 Streetscapes for People
- D4 Transit



The Heart of Downtown



The Heart of **Downtown**

The historic main street of South Bend, Michigan Street, and the adjacent blocks, form the retail and cultural heart of Downtown.

Anchored by the Morris Performing Arts Center in the north and the St. Joe County Public Library to the south, Michigan Street is home to restaurants, hotels, entertainment, destinations, and iconic historic buildings like the State Theater. Gridiron Plaza in front of the former College Football Hall of Fame acts as South Bend's de facto town square, serving as the home for festivals and gatherings. The plans on the following pages illustrate visions for the Downtown core that build on these beloved places to activate the riverfront, enhance the public spaces, and grow local businesses.

Projects in the Heart of Downtown:

- Retail Core along Michigan Street
- Jon Hunt Memorial Plaza
- The Town Square
- The Century Center & Jefferson Blvd Realignment
- ★ A Big Idea for the Future — Signature Riverfront Park

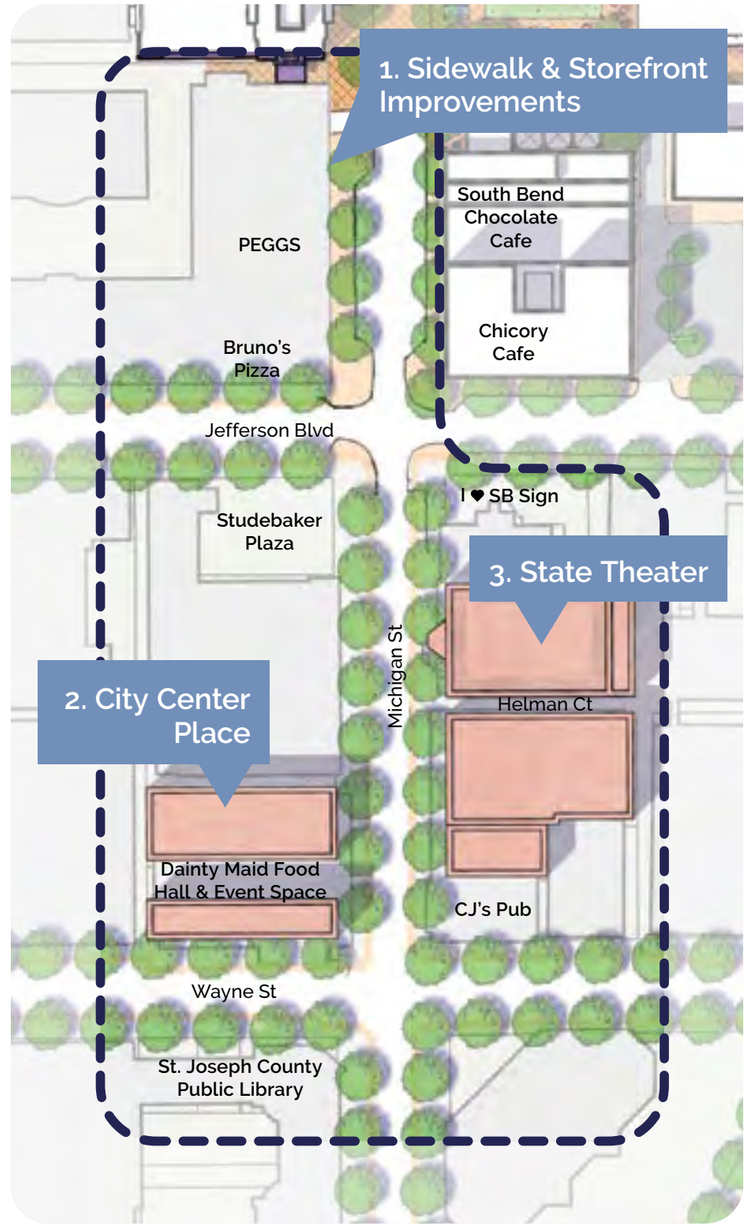
Reinvigorating the Heart of Downtown will require concentrating retail on Michigan Street and around the Square, restoring landmark buildings, and creating a connected open space experience around the St. Joseph River

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The Heart of Downtown • Retail Core along Michigan Street

Since its earliest days, Michigan Street has been Downtown South Bend's historic main retail street, anchored by retailers and storefronts, particularly between Lasalle Avenue and Western Avenue. Adding St. Joseph Street (now Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard) in the 1960s allowed traffic to bypass Michigan Street. Urban Renewal also led to the demolition of key pieces of the urban fabric, leading to discontinuous retail frontage. Much of the historic building stock has already been demolished, and many of the remaining buildings need repair. Some of the newer buildings on Michigan Street have storefronts with tinted windows, repetitive design, and a lack of engaging signage and building elements. The streetscaping along Michigan Street is inconsistent. In some areas, such as the 100 block, the streetscape has been upgraded with street trees, pedestrian-scaled streetlights, and street furniture. However, there are locations and times when the space for pedestrians is constrained, such as when restaurants locate outdoor dining patios within the right-of-way.

Improving the overall experience of a walkable retail environment on Michigan Street is a critical step to making Downtown South Bend a destination for dining, entertainment, and culture. Attracting pedestrians — and getting people out of their cars to walk and wander around Downtown — will help grow and support local businesses, create vibrant public places, and create a safe, inclusive environment for all.



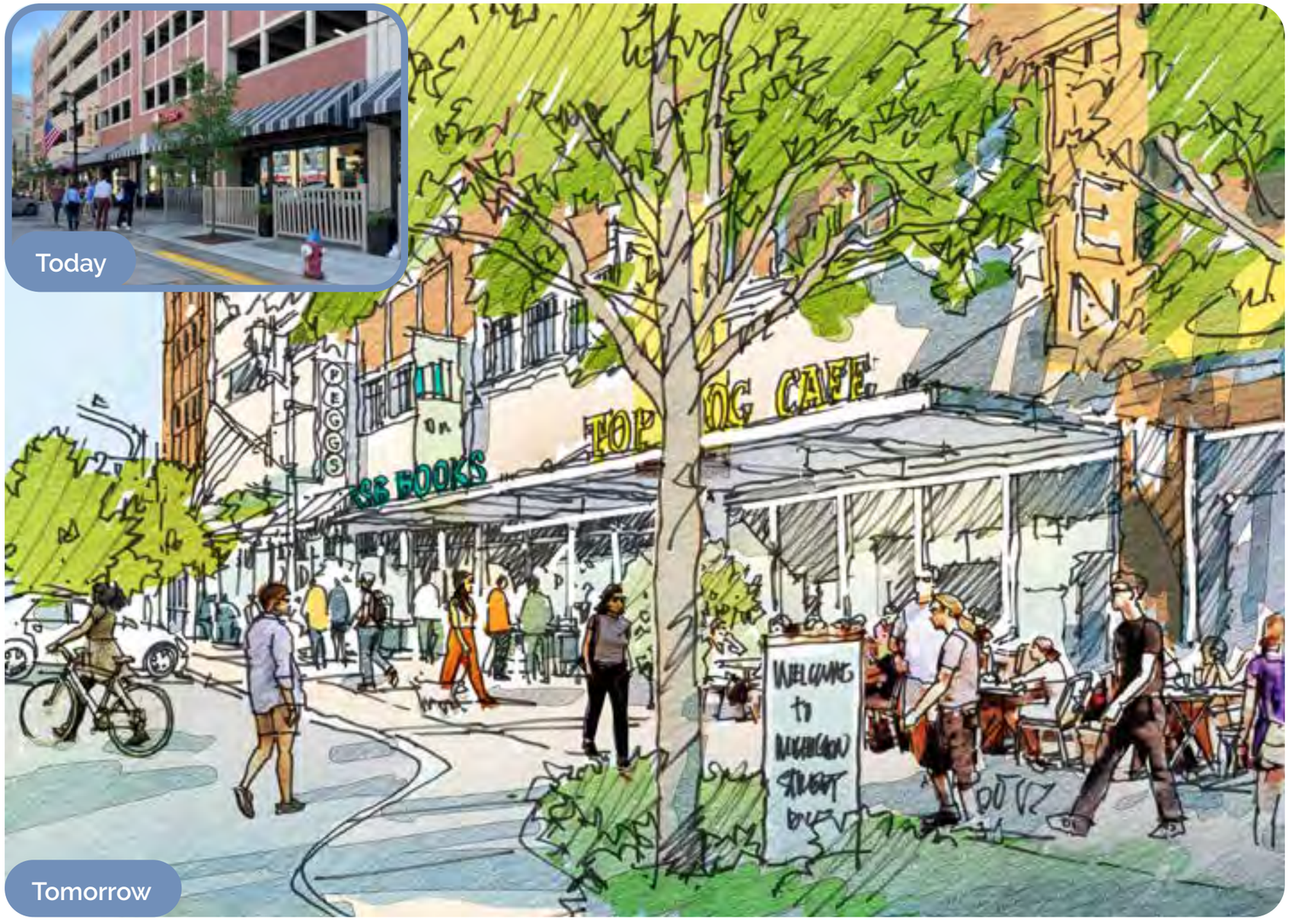
Study Area: Retail Core at Michigan Street

Outdoor seating and landscaping shouldn't compromise sidewalk accessibility

When storefronts lack signage, landscaping, benches, or even the ability to see inside of a shop, pedestrians could easily pass by without noticing – that's why it's important to create reasons for people to wander, linger, and stop in

Both newer and historic buildings line Michigan Street, providing plenty of opportunity to insert both small tweaks and big ideas to create a vibrant, lively retail environment

The Heart of Downtown • **Retail Core along Michigan Street**



Potential improvements may include additional signage, added diversity in storefront/awning design, open outdoor dining, transparent windows, and tree wells in curb bump-outs to clear the walking areas on sidewalks

1. SIDEWALK & STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements to storefronts could include:

- Improved signage for businesses that is colorful, clear, and engaging for pedestrians (including identity wall signs, canopy signs, awning signs, and projecting blade signs).
- Diversity in storefront design, awnings, and shade devices.
- Transparent windows with active uses on the interior.
- Outdoor dining, benches, and planters to activate the space immediately outside of storefronts.

Improvements to the pedestrian zone could include:

- Moving street trees and plantings into curb bump-outs to prevent obstructions within the walking path.

How To: Grow & Support Local Businesses

- Storefront activation grants
- Grants to incentivize businesses to work together
- Small three-season spaces for local businesses and shops
- Breaking retail spaces up into smaller spaces that match what business owners need
- Power and infrastructure in public spaces to support events

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The Heart of Downtown • **Retail Core along Michigan Street**

2. CENTER CITY PLACE BUILDING & FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

The Center City Place Building was originally built in the 1890s as the Grand Leader. The original facade was made of limestone, with large windows. In the 1960s, the building was renovated as a women's clothing store. The original facade was covered by a metal panel facade, obscuring the upper floor windows and creating a concrete canopy at the street. Indiana Landmarks analyzed the structure and determined that it is possible to remove the exterior metal facade to reveal and restore the original facade. The Center City Place Building was recently purchased with the intent to create more active uses on this key block of Michigan Street, such as retail, restaurants, and a boutique hotel.

This restored Center City Place facade would:

- Expose multiple levels of windows and uses that front Michigan Street.
- Create active ground floor retail that engages pedestrians with larger storefronts and updated signage.

The original building facade can be seen on the right side of this historic photo

Potential improvements may include a restoration of the original facade beneath the existing facade, improved signage, transparent ground floor storefronts, an awning at the hotel entry, and additional signage

The Heart of Downtown • **Retail Core along Michigan Street**

This postcard from the 1960s shows a bright, illuminated State Theater amongst a lively Michigan Street – bringing back the energy of this historic destination could help activate nearby restaurants and storefronts before or after performances and events

3. STATE THEATER

The Blackstone Theater opened in South in 1921 as a venue for silent motion pictures and vaudeville shows. Designed by Henry L. Newhouse, the building has a Neoclassical exterior and a Beaux-Arts interior. Reopened in 1929 as the State Theater, it has been home to a range of uses — burlesque shows, graduations, telecasts, beauty pageants, second-run movies, live music events, dance clubs, and a brief reuse as a performing arts and cultural center.

Renovation costs and complexity present a challenge to reusing the space. However, the State Theater is one of the most significant historic buildings Downtown. A public-private partnership will be needed with adequate incentives to gain site control, stabilize, and eventually renovate the building. Through the Downtown South Bend Master Plan process, citizens suggested potential future uses for the building: an art, music, and event venue, or reuse as a comedy or dance club.

Potential improvements may include a restoration of the facade, additional lighting and signage, added street furniture, and improved sidewalk plantings

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

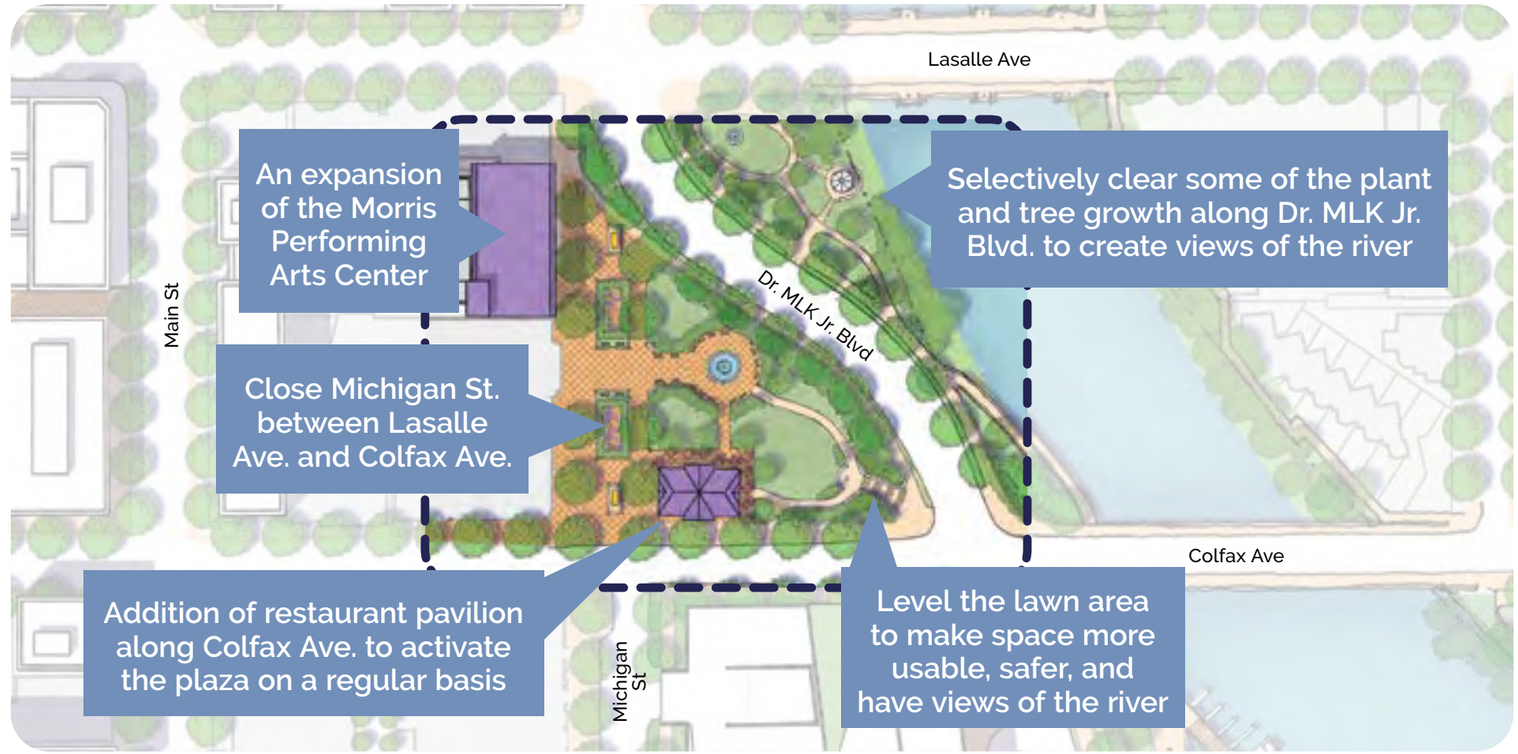
The Heart of Downtown • **Jon Hunt Plaza**

A CULTURAL GATEWAY AS THE FRONT DOOR TO DOWNTOWN

Jon Hunt Memorial Plaza serves as a gateway into Downtown. It is one of the few places Downtown that offers views of the river. The Morris Performing Arts Center anchors the northern end of Michigan Street, and the plaza acts as a forecourt to the theater, providing space for people to gather before and after cultural events. A new 20,000 square foot expansion of the Morris will improve the use and functionality of the space, adding event space, restrooms, circulation, and pre-function space.

There are a number of challenges with the current design of the plaza that prevent it from being a truly successful public space. With a few minor interventions, the park could better activate Downtown. Potential improvements include:

- Closing Michigan Street between Lasalle and Colfax Avenues.
- Raising the grade and adding a stair at the corner of Colfax Ave. and Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard to create a grade-separated green that is safer for families, more usable, and has views of the river.
- Add a small restaurant pavilion to along Colfax Avenue to activate the plaza on a regular basis.
- Selectively clear some of the plant and tree growth along Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard to create views of the river.
- Create a clear visual access from the new Jon Hunt stair to the updated river access to the southeast corner of the plaza.



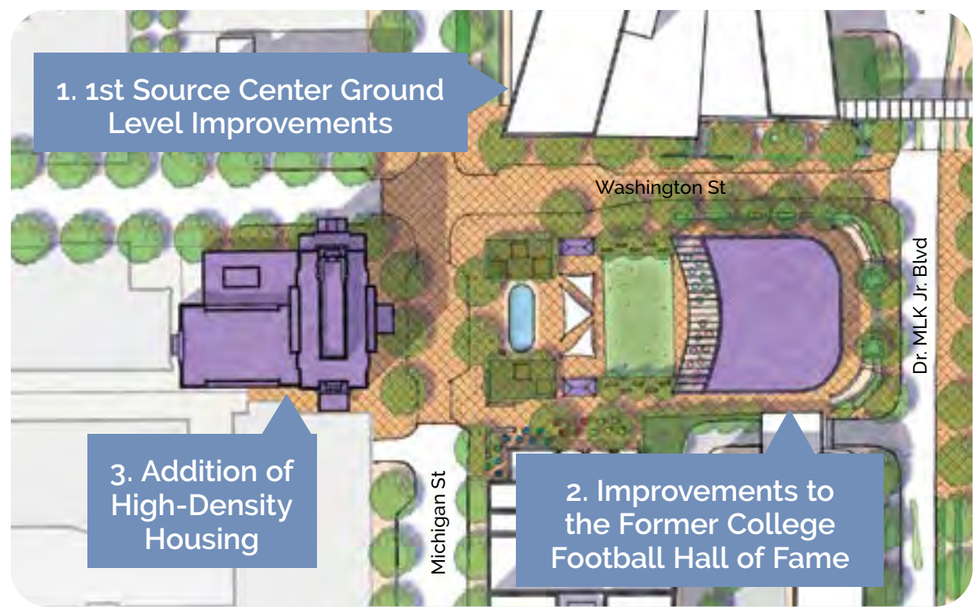
The Heart of Downtown • **The Town Square**

A GATHERING SPACE TO ANCHOR DOWNTOWN

Great Downtowns often have a signature gathering space, regularly programmed with events that activate and attract visitors and residents. Gridiron Plaza serves as the de facto gathering space Downtown, but it is surrounded by inactive uses, parking lots, and vacant buildings. The existing space is further challenged by the underground level of the College Football Hall of Fame building, limited power supply, and deterioration of the existing turf field.

The Gridiron is ideally located to act as South Bend's Town Square, but it requires a major redesign to transform the space, including the following elements:

- Benches and places to sit and gather.
- A combination of flexible hardscape, landscaped, and grass areas that support a variety of programming and informal gathering.
- Water feature — including water will draw families and create an active area and tie into the proximity to the riverfront.
- Art and sculpture — work with South Bend Museum of Art and other agencies to locate or commission local public art for the space.
- Shaded areas with plantings — create an oasis in Downtown with trees and gardens.
- Pop-up retail and three-season kiosks that offer small business opportunities and create a unique destination that draws visitors to Downtown.



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The Heart of Downtown • **The Town Square**

There are already many programs and events that occur at the Gridiron today. The proposed redesign would build on that momentum, improving the space to be a multi-use, multi-season public space that would draw for locals and visitors from the region.

Examples of recently completed successful town squares with a variety of programmatic elements that create nodes for activity and gathering

The Heart of Downtown • **The Town Square**

1. ADAPTIVELY REUSE OR REPLACE THE FORMER COLLEGE FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

The College Football Hall of Fame has sat vacant in Downtown South Bend for over 10 years. It currently looms over Gridiron Plaza without activating the space. The portion of the building underneath the Gridiron limits the future design and flexibility of the Town Square. There are two approaches to the existing building. It could be repurposed with active uses, or it could be demolished and replaced with a new building with active ground-floor uses. Below are three potential concepts for the College Football Hall of Fame Site.

Option 1: Adaptive Reuse of the existing building

- Locate an active, family-friendly retail use in the ground floor of the Hall of Fame that engages with the Town Square, such as a restaurant, brew pub, or interactive museum with a cafe.
- Add a two-story porch to the building to create a shaded outdoor dining area on the square.
- Replace dark tinted glazing at ground level with clear, transparent glass.
- Transform the brick egress stairs into transparent pavilions. The structures could be enlarged to add program elements.
- On the Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. side of the building, improve building access, signage, paving, and landscaping.

Option 2: Replace the existing building with a market hall

- Demolish the current building and replace it with a multi-tenant market building that allows for better connectivity between Michigan Street and Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. This building should encourage indoor-outdoor use and offer opportunities for food, beverage, and family-friendly entertainment.
- Enhance the pedestrian connection along Washington Street to encourage movement between the Town Square and Riverfront.
- Completely remove the above-ground portions of the building, and redesign the Town Square to be an activated gathering space — South Bend's living room.

Option 3: Replace the existing building with a mixed-use building

- Demolish the current building and replace it with a boutique hotel with a ground floor mix of uses. The ground floor uses should offer multi-tenant food, beverage, and entertainment.
- Enhance the pedestrian connection along Washington Street to encourage movement between the Town Square and Riverfront.
- Completely remove the above-ground portions of the building and redesign the Town Square to be an activated gathering space — South Bend's living room.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The Heart of Downtown • **The Town Square**

2. 1ST SOURCE & WASHINGTON STREET IMPROVEMENTS

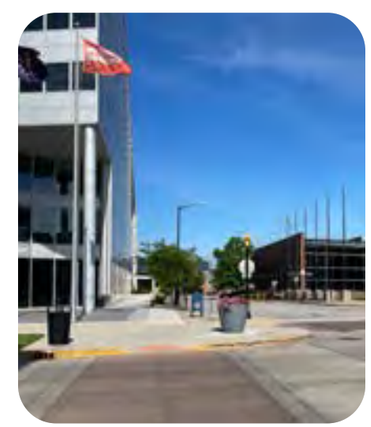
It is important for the buildings fronting the new Town Square to have active ground floor uses that engage the public realm. The 1st Source Center sits to the north of the Town Square, with an uninviting split-level sidewalk and dark glazing. Currently, the uses in the 1st Source Center must be accessed through the interior atrium.

The ground floor space west of the entry on E Washington Street could be reconfigured to open directly to the exterior of the building. If a restaurant or similar use was located in this space, outdoor dining could be located on the existing terrace, with additional steps and access to the street instead of the retaining wall. In partnership with the South Bend Museum of Art, the 1st Source Center incorporate an art theme, which would add to the unique character of the Town Square.

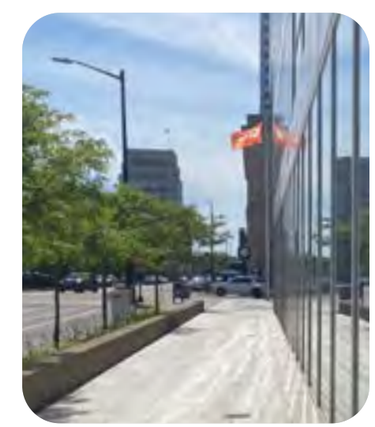
How To: Make Places Safe & Comfortable for All

- Well-activated, well used Downtowns feel safe.
- Spaces should be accessible to people of all abilities, lined by active uses, and well-lit.
- Include year-round activation and programming that is family-friendly.
- Design and program for the youngest and oldest citizens.
- Public spaces should feel welcoming to all ages, races, and abilities. Lighting design, amenities, and programming should encourage diverse groups to use public spaces.

The existing retaining wall is a barrier to an active ground floor use in the Century Center



There existing building is in an opportune location to have ground level uses that relate to the new Gridiron Square



The upper level sidewalk on the western side of the block across from Gridiron Square is a dead wall without entrances

The Heart of Downtown • **The Town Square**

3. BUILD HIGH-DENSITY HOUSING TO CREATE A MIX OF USES

Increasing the number of Downtown residents will ensure Downtown feels occupied and active around the clock and throughout the week. People living Downtown patronize restaurants, pharmacies, and grocery stores. They walk their pets and spend time in open spaces. The parking lot across Michigan Street from the Town Square should be developed with a high-density mixed-use building with ground floor community uses or retail and residential above.

How To: Create Vibrant Public Gathering Places

- Program year-round events that appeal to diverse audiences
- Create a series of outdoor rooms with different uses that draw people of different ages to Downtown
- Utilize small seasonal retail to activate the space
- Locate active uses on all sides of the space with restaurant uses and outdoor dining that spills into the public realm

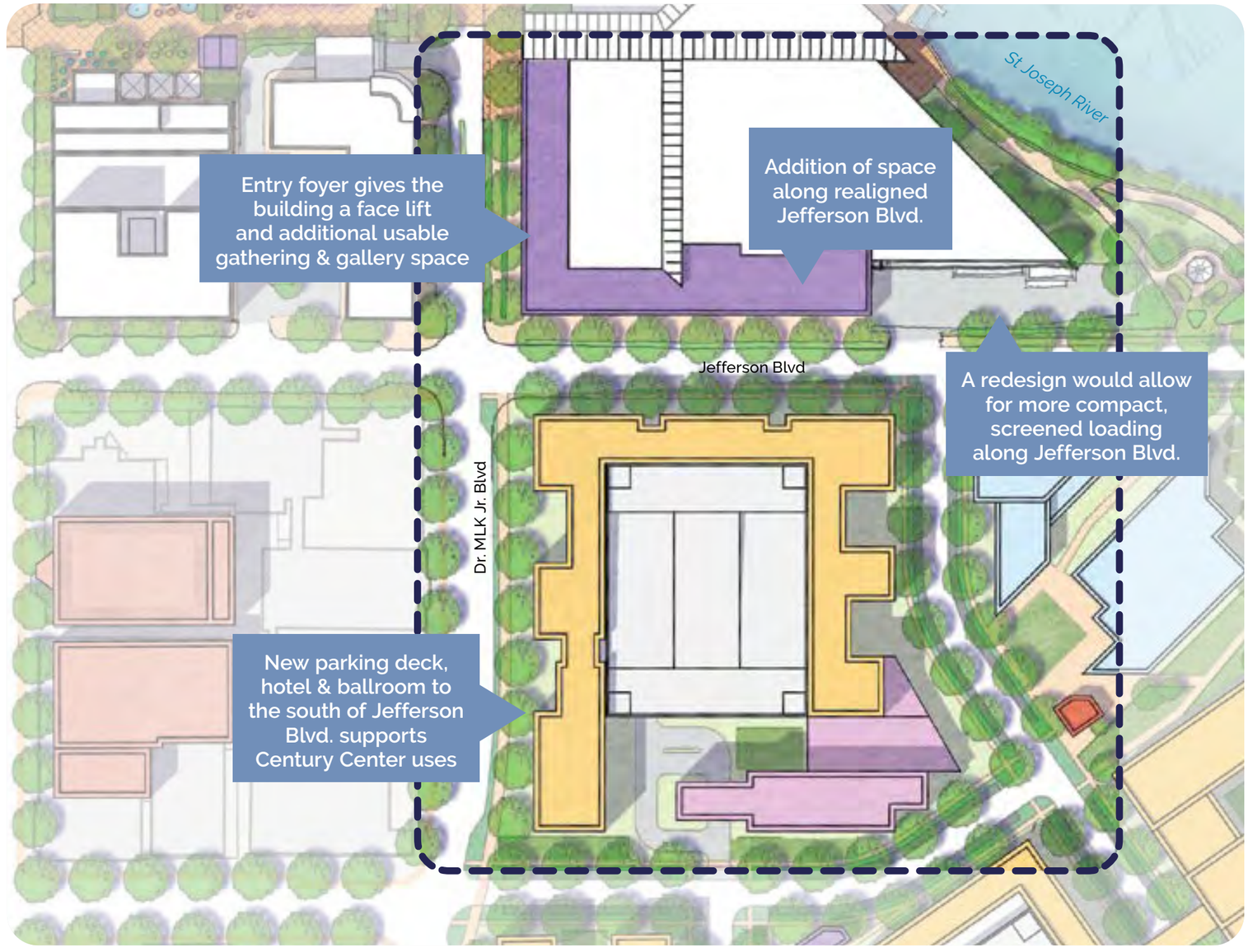
A new mid-rise residential building, built on the parking lot across from the Gridiron, would bring more residents to activate Downtown

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The Heart of Downtown • The Century Center & Jefferson Blvd.

CENTURY CENTER INTERVENTION

The Century Center has served as South Bend's convention and civic center anchor since the late 1970s. However, the facility has aged and it struggles to compete with newer, larger, less constrained regional convention centers. The City commissioned a study to explore alternatives to improve the Century Center and make it more regionally competitive. The study recommends an addition along Jefferson and Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. with a new exhibition hall and prefunction space. The addition would provide much needed space for events as well as a new, more transparent facade that would welcome visitors into the building from the street.



Courtesy of Ratio Architects

A rendering of a potential addition to the Century Center located at the corner of Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. and Jefferson Blvd.

The Heart of Downtown • The Century Center & Jefferson Blvd.

Straightening Jefferson Boulevard

Reconnecting Jefferson Street into Downtown would create new development blocks across from the improved Century Center. This location would be ideal for complementary uses, such as a hotel, ballroom, conference space, restaurants, and retail. The existing surface parking would be replaced in a parking deck and additional parking would be added to serve the new development. The Jefferson streetscape would be designed to be pedestrian friendly, ensuring visitors can easily move between the Century Center and the new development.

The newly realigned Jefferson Blvd. would tie together the east and west sides of the City, creating a more direct connection from Howard Park and the east side's retail and housing to Downtown's retail core.

Jefferson Blvd. is a wide road with a large sweeping curve, green median and adjacency to parking that feels very suburban today

The proposed Jefferson Blvd. realignment would reconnect the Downtown street grid to the east side of the river, making a shorter more direct connection between the two

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The Heart of Downtown • A Big Idea for the Future

A SIGNATURE RIVERFRONT PARK IN DOWNTOWN

South Bend's existence is a result of its relationship to the St. Joseph River. Early industries chose to locate on the East and West Races because they relied on the water to power their machinery. Polluted and industrial in nature, the river was not a quality-of-life resource. As a result, Downtown today has very little connection to the riverfront. When asked to rank the most important needs for Downtown's future, residents prioritized access and celebration of the riverfront.

The Century Center, in particular, disconnects Michigan Street, the future Town Square, and the rest of Downtown from the river. The building was designed to privatize views and access to the river — the Grand Hall has beautiful views of the river, but the building disrupts the riverfront trail and river views down Washington Street. In the future, making modifications to the Century Center could transform the experience Downtown by connecting people to the riverfront.

From the island, the current Century Center configuration does not allow for visual connection to Downtown

From Dr. M.L.K. Jr. Blvd it is difficult to see the river

1. CENTURY CENTER SIGNIFICANT INTERVENTION

In the short-term, additions should be made to the Century Center along Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. and Jefferson Blvd. to improve circulation and functionality. Long term, there is an opportunity to make larger interventions to the Century Center to reconnect Downtown to the river and create a destination riverfront park. The portion of the building that is the most problematic barrier is the northern wing of the building, which houses the Bendix Theater and the South Bend Museum of Art. The Bendix Theater has largely been replaced by the Leighton Auditorium at the St. Joe County Public Library's expanded Main Library. The South Bend Museum of Art would maintain its gallery and classroom spaces but would be relocated to a more visible location Downtown. With this approach, the Century Center would function as a smaller, riverfront civic center, supported by new conference facilities across Jefferson Blvd. The facility could continue to host much of its existing programming, and its new setting, directly connected to a destination riverfront park, may increase its desirability and ability to attract events.

Decision Making Process:

This idea would require a significant amount of coordination between all affected entities to achieve an outcome that addresses the needs of all parties. High level steps that would need to be resolved before major changes could take place include:

- Confirming the future Century Center programming.
- Working with the South Bend Museum of Art to consider alternative museum locations.
- Finalize appropriate level of intervention based on available funding and resources.

Today the view down Washington Street is terminated by the blank wall of the Century Center. Removing the Bendix Theater and relocating the South Bend Museum of Art would create an opportunity to physically and visually connect to the St. Joseph River.

The northern portion of the building has the biggest impact on disconnecting Downtown from the river

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

CENTURY CENTER ALTERNATIVES FOR CONNECTING TO THE RIVER

During the planning process, the team considered various options to improve the connection between Downtown and the riverfront. While each alternative affects the physical layout of the Century Center differently, all of them are complex and costly interventions that would significantly change the relationship between Downtown and the waterfront.

OPTION 1: MINOR INTERVENTION

- Remove the bridge connection to the First Source Center and relocate the northernmost Century Center loading dock
- Create an art plaza with seating and a riverfront overlook
- Upgrade the pedestrian access to the riverfront and create additional circulation around and to the island
- Bring a restaurant amenity to the east side of Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. to create active uses along the riverfront

OPTION 2: MEDIUM INTERVENTION

- Remove the loading dock and a portion of the South Bend Museum of Art
- Create a stepped and ramped access down to the Century Center island
- Bring restaurant and retail amenities to the east side of Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. to create active uses along the riverfront
- Open up a visual connection from Downtown to the riverfront

OPTION 3: SIGNIFICANT INTERVENTION

- Relocate the South Bend Museum of Art and remove the Bendix Theater
- Create a stepped and ramped access down to the Century Center Island
- Bring restaurant and retail amenities to the east side of Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. to create active uses along the riverfront
- Open up a visual connection from Downtown to the riverfront

OPTION 1:
MINOR INTERVENTION

Although this intervention has a minimal effect on the Century Center, it would moderately enhance the connection between Downtown and the riverfront. The proposal includes an at-grade park along MLK Blvd., featuring active areas that overlook the riverfront. Additionally, it improves pedestrian access and circulation to the Island and riverfront.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

OPTION 2:
MEDIUM INTERVENTION

In the second option, the Bendix Theater would be preserved and the northern portion of Century Center would be demolished to connect Washington Street to the river. In this alternative, the public plaza would need to mediate a significant amount of grade between the street level of MLK Blvd. and the terrace level at the river in a relatively small area. This would result in most of the new public space being occupied by steps and accessible ramps.

Lower Sproul Plaza combines steps and ramps to connect two levels of UC Berkeley's campus

The plaza between E Stetson Street and the Arizona Canal in Scottsdale features public art and a water feature as it mediates grade

Gene Leahy Mall along the Omaha Riverfront incorporates slides and play areas for children into the grade

A stepped water park features terraces down to the Missouri River in Omaha Riverfront Park

OPTION 3. SIGNATURE DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT PARK

Pursuing Option 3, a significant intervention, and removing the northern part of the Century Center would open an opportunity to create a signature Downtown riverfront park on the west side of the river. The new space would complement the City's catalytic investments in Howard Park and Seitz Park and complete an interconnected trail network around the river. Connecting Michigan Street to the river through a series of multi-level public spaces would activate the heart of Downtown, bringing programmable space, public art, and indoor and outdoor dining that would attract residents and visitors of all ages.

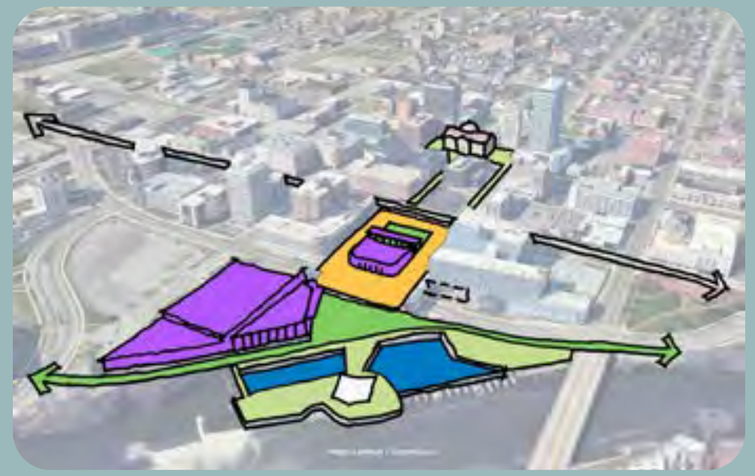
How To: Activate the Riverfront

- Add restaurants and active uses with outdoor dining with views out over the water
- Include creative seating opportunities adjacent to the water. For example, the swings at the Wharf in DC or Hammocks or ropes over the water in Spruce Street Harbor Park in Philadelphia.
- Have multiple routes and access points to get to the riverfront
- Include interactive water features that help people feel connected to the river

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Step 1: Remove the portion of the Century Center that houses the Bendix Theater and South Bend Museum of Art.

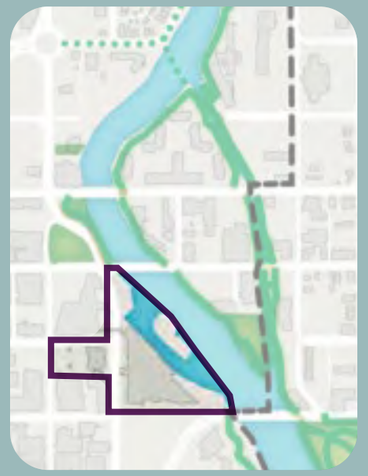
Step 2: Connect the courthouse building, Town Square, and the signature riverfront park with the river.



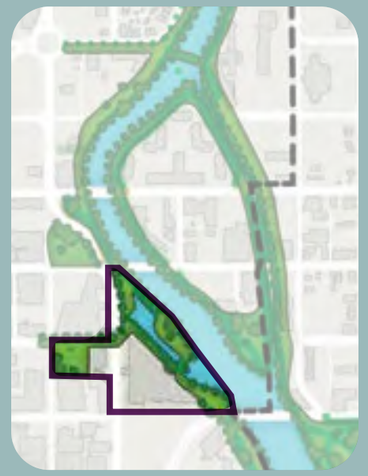
Pedestrian connectivity is currently poor along the west side of the river, between E Colfax Avenue and Jefferson Boulevard, interrupted largely by the Century Center

Step 3: Build higher-density mixed-use housing on the vacant parking lot across from the Town Square.

Step 4: Design the signature riverfront park as an integral part of the larger open space network ringing the river.



Today, the riverfront trail system is well connected on the East Bank, but there is a gap Downtown at the Century Center



The signature riverfront park would connect the heart of Downtown to the river, completing the network of trails

Signature Downtown Riverfront Park (Continued)

Today, the Island Park at Century Center is occasionally used for events and gatherings, but due to the challenging access and outdated utilities, it is not a successful amenity for Downtown. In the future Island Park could become an integral destination in the signature riverfront park, serving as an anchor for riverfront activation. Catalytic improvements would include:

- Building a new, wide public bridge that directly aligns with Washington Street.
- Improving the current bridge connection to Pier Park
- Building a cantilevered boardwalk outside of the Century Center Grand Hall to connect the trail from the southeast
- Activating the island with a small seasonal pop-up retail
- Incorporating local murals and art to activate the space
- Improving utility capabilities on Island Park to allow for larger events

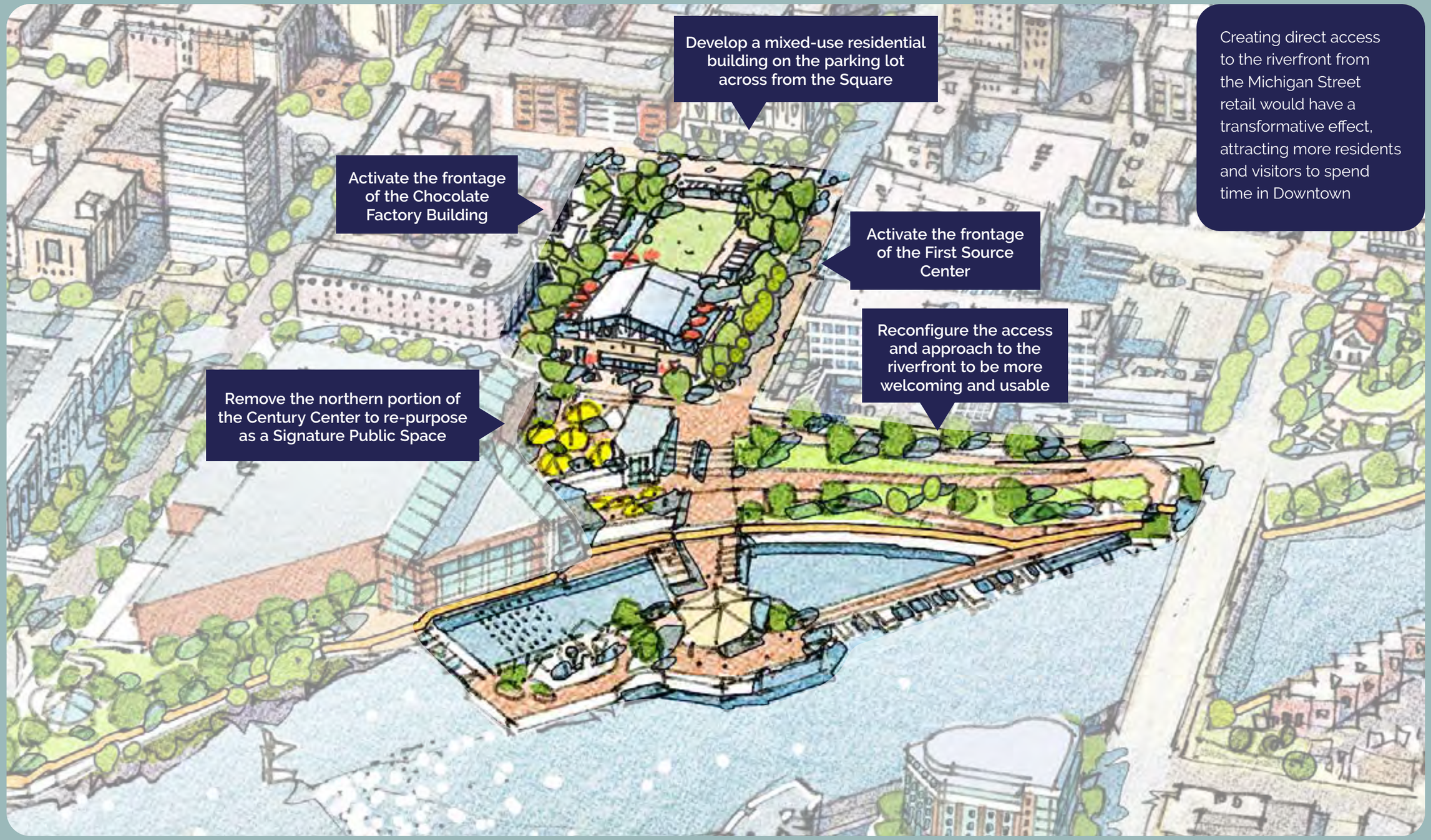
Access to Island Park is challenging and uninviting today

Interconnected trails systems with activated spaces attract visitors to Downtowns

Island Park would be the final destination at the bottom of the signature riverfront park

Visitors to the signature riverfront park would experience a series of spaces — an upper level adjacent to the Town Square and Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard, terraced indoor and outdoor dining, spaces for children and families, and trails and gathering spaces at the river level

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES



The signature riverfront park would complete the sequence of gathering spaces that connect to the Town Square. In addition to building the public spaces, the ground floors of adjacent buildings should be programmed with retail and restaurants to activate the spaces

Tomorrow

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

A series of public spaces would connect from Michigan Street, through the Town Square, down to the Riverfront Park, to Island Park, inviting people to dine, recreate, and enjoy Downtown

Arts & Culture

Arts & Culture

Over the next 20 years, downtown South Bend will serve as the region's civic and cultural heart — where arts and culture anchor identity, foster connection, and drive vitality. Downtown boasts the largest concentration of cultural institutions, public spaces, riverfront access, and arts and educational partners in the region.

Downtown's role will be both catalytic and connective. Advancing arts and culture is a critical component of the Downtown South Bend 2045 Plan, and investments should be made to expand the landscape and leverage the existing assets and partnerships. Downtown South Bend will:

- **Continue to serve as the region's cultural hub,** concentrating signature institutions, events, and public spaces that sustain the impact of investments in the arts.
- **Act as a physical and programmatic connector,** linking neighborhoods, the riverfront, and regional destinations with walkable streets, trails, bridges, public gathering spaces, and cultural corridors.
- **Support artists and creative enterprises** by providing spaces for creating, performing, entrepreneurship, and collaboration to support the creative economy.
- **Lead inclusive placemaking and access** through low-cost programming and opportunities to experience arts and culture in everyday public spaces that reflect community diversity
- **Serve as a testing ground for innovation,** piloting new partnerships and public-realm activation that can be a model for other downtowns in the region.

By embedding arts and culture into public space and life, Downtown South Bend will model how long-term cultural investment strengthens quality of life and sustains a vibrant, inclusive core.

Vision: Enhance Downtown as a hub for Arts & Culture

1. Enhance public art integration with a focus on placemaking

2. Establish comprehensive arts hubs and venues

3. Cultivate and support local artists and creative spaces

4. Support planning for arts and culture at the local level

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Downtown South Bend offers world-class arts and culture experiences that can act as a beacon for artistic expression and a place that inspires.

DOWNTOWN SOUTH BEND ARTS & CULTURE ASSETS

Arts Supporting Organizations	
1	The Community Foundation of St. Joseph County
Cultural Amenities	
2	Civil Rights Heritage Center
3	Century Center'
4	Colfax Cultural Center'
5	East Race Waterway
6	Four Winds Field'
7	Gridiron
8	Howard Park and Ice Skating Ribbon
9	Michigan & Monroe Arts District
10	St. Joseph County Public Library — Main Branch
11	Vested Interest
Higher Education Institutions	
12	University of Notre Dame

Museums	
13	South Bend Museum of Art
Performing Arts	
14	Merrimans' Playhouse, Inc.
15	Morris Performing Arts Center
16	Red Table Plaza
17	South Bend Civic Theater
18	South Bend Symphony Orchestra
19	State Theater
20	Stockroom East
21	The Drop Comedy Club
Visual Arts	
22	Circa Arts
23	Fire Arts
24	Bunbury Gallery
25	Highland Studio and Gallery

Investment in technology and education often helps spur development by bringing more people to live, work, and play in and around these centers of employment

SOUTH BEND-ELKHART REGIONAL ARTS & CULTURE PLAN

The Arts and Culture Plan lays out a collective vision for regional growth through arts and culture experiences and economic activity. The plan expresses four objectives.

Objectives from the Arts & Culture Plan:

- Foster nimble and **well-equipped arts and culture facilities** that meet community needs
- Amplify community identity through **celebration of historic places and investment in community spaces**
- Encourage and implement arts and culture **programming that is inviting and enriching to all**
- Cultivate **livability and community for creative professionals and artists**

Placemaking

Enhance public art integration with a focus on placemaking to amplify community identity

Self-identify local arts or creative districts.

- Apply for an official Cultural District designation through the State of Indiana to increase opportunity for funding sources.
- Formalize the Michigan and Monroe Arts Districts, integrating gathering spaces, signage, and destinations into Downtown.

Develop arts and cultural trails and corridors.

- Create a public art experience along the new 1.8-mile walking loop around the riverfront. Connect that loop to regional trails that connect to other arts and culture amenities.
- Create a cultural trail connecting the East Bank to Downtown to the MLK Dream Center through the Near West Side historic neighborhood.

Reclaim public spaces and enhance pedestrian areas.

- Use existing infrastructure as a canvas for public art (such as the retaining walls near the Century Center). Assess appropriate locations that could be repurposed and activated as public spaces or pedestrian connections, including underutilized road space, rail underpasses, and alleys. Use lighting, public art, and landscape the re-active the spaces.

Celebrate historic places and invest in community spaces.

- Collaborate with existing historic preservation partners to explore the long-term benefits of commissioning local historic preservation surveys.
- Conduct a historic preservation survey to support the understanding of local historic places.

Support mural programs.

- Explore matching mural grant programs through regional and community foundations.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Art Venues and Facilities

Support and **expand the existing art spaces and venues** and **explore the creation of new spaces.**

Foster different sized venues in Downtown to promote more performing arts.

- Develop an mid-sized theater (600-1,000 seats).
- Explore scenarios to revitalize historic buildings for performance spaces.

Develop intentional civic open spaces.

- Ensure that Downtown has a full range of spaces that support programing and events, including plazas, parks, outdoor amphitheaters, and band shells.
- Incorporate seating, public art, utilities (water and electrical connections), shade, and landscaping.

Artists

Cultivate and **support local artists and creative spaces.**

Expand the definition of affordable housing to include artist housing in Downtown and creative hubs.

- Support the creation of artist housing in Downtown by permitting and encouraging live-work and other building and unit types that include creative work space.
- Consider incentives to create affordable artist housing.

Enhance visual art spaces that can act as education spaces, studios, galleries, and community art spaces.

- Prioritize the rehabilitation of historic buildings for housing, artist studios, and collaborative spaces.

Planning for Art & Culture

Support planning for arts and culture at the local level.

- Create a South Bend Arts Commission to help promote public art throughout the City.

Encourage a thoughtful and individualized arts and culture planning process for Downtown South Bend

- Ensure that public art designed and built in Downtown authentically reflects its surroundings and the diversity of the South Bend community.
- Seek consulting services to develop a community art plan for Downtown.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts

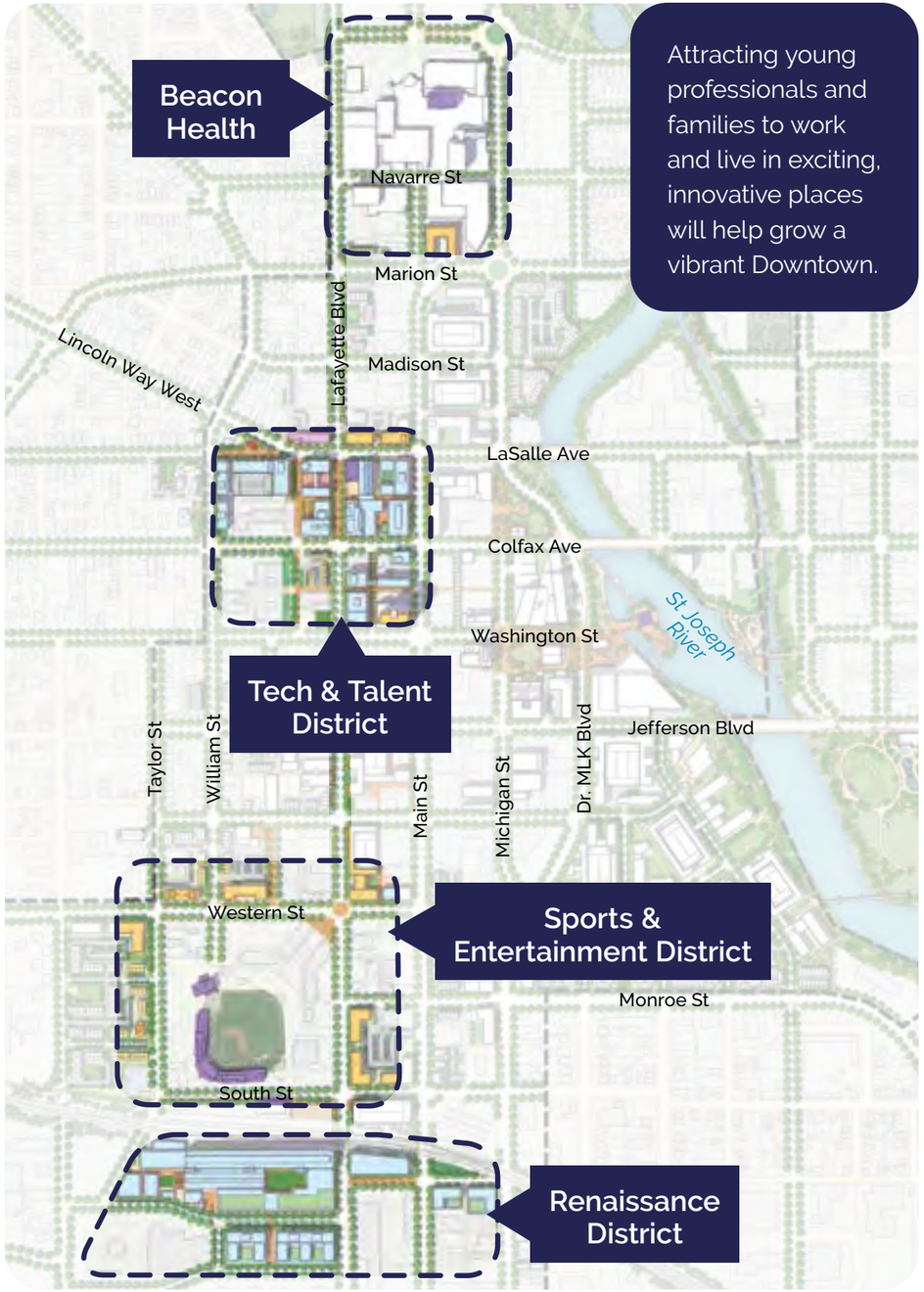
Innovation & Institutional **Catalysts**

Unique jobs, education experiences, and entertainment destinations attract people who live in other parts of the region to spend time Downtown on a regular basis, enlivening restaurants and public spaces.

With its roots in industrial production, South Bend knows the value of anchoring Downtown with innovation, jobs, and people. South Bend is fortunate to have trailblazing institutions located Downtown — Beacon Health System and Memorial Hospital, the South Bend Cubs, and a future Tech and Talent District that is envisioned to include innovative companies in the technology sector partnering with the University of Notre Dame, and the Renaissance District at the renovated Studebaker factory. Each of these institutions is investing in new facilities and amenities that will draw people and capital to Downtown South Bend and catalyze growth.

Innovation & Institutional Catalyst Projects:

- Tech & Talent Innovation District
- Beacon Health
- Sports & Entertainment District
- Renaissance District



Attracting young professionals and families to work and live in exciting, innovative places will help grow a vibrant Downtown.

Investment in technology and education often helps spur development by bringing more people to live, work, and play in and around these centers of employment

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Tech & Talent District**

BRINGING THE TECH WORKFORCE TO DOWNTOWN SOUTH BEND

The University of Notre Dame is partnering with developers and leaders in advanced technology sectors to define the opportunity to establish a new district for talent and technology in Downtown South Bend. The presence of innovative employers, university researchers, and students will act as a catalyst, attracting related businesses and people to Downtown. The resulting increase in the daytime population will support existing restaurants and services and increase the demand for new retail, dining and housing choices.

South Lafayette Boulevard and Lasalle Avenue, west of Lafayette, will likely experience infill development. The City should invest in transforming the public rights-of-way from car-oriented streets to pedestrian-friendly streets and gathering spaces. This transformation will create comfortable, walkable connections to the heart of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Tech & Talent District**

1. RENOVATION OF THE TRIBUNE BUILDING & BRINGING A UNIVERSITY PRESENCE TO DOWNTOWN

The renovation of the historic South Bend Tribune building will anchor the first phase of the proposed district. The oldest portion of the building dates to the 1920s, and the property has been vacant since 2019. Phase One will introduce active uses on the building's ground floor that feature science, technology, and innovation. These uses will be visible from the sidewalk, creating an engaging street-level environment at the corner of Colfax and Lafayette Blvd. In addition to attracting advanced jobs, university researchers, and students, the former Tribune building is envisioned to host a variety of community-facing programs with Notre Dame, Holy Cross College, and the South Bend City Church.

The Tribune Building today, looking south on Lafayette

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Durham as Case Study
Lessons from Casey Steinbacher

- Attracting talent is important for a community to succeed and thrive
- When talent has choices of where to go for jobs, the draw is people and places
- Downtown needs to have places that inspire collisions, where people can engage with one another and the place
- Downtown must act as the City's Living Room — A Place to Learn Work Live & Play
- The Universities need to play a big role in catalyzing Downtown's growth
- Be intentional with priorities and values. Make sure to define what success looks like
- Never lose site of local
- Plan for Success

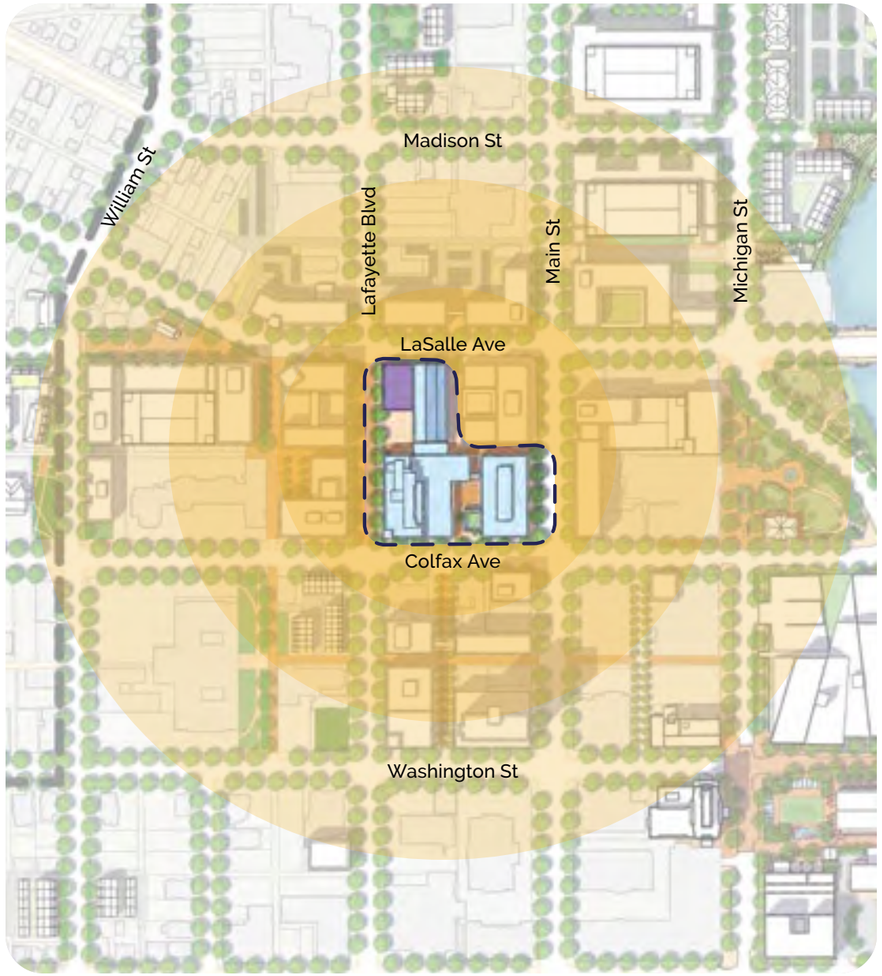
Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Tech & Talent District**

2. LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD INTO A SHARED-USE STREET

Today, Lafayette Boulevard lacks character — it moves traffic parallel to Main Street, but it doesn't invite people to stay and spend time. In the future, Lafayette will become an important connector between the Tech and Talent Innovation District and the Sports and Entertainment District around Four Winds Field. On the block between Colfax and Lasalle, Lafayette should be transformed into a street that prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists. Additional parking and turn lanes could be reallocated for wide sidewalks for outdoor dining and gathering. This block could be closed temporarily for festivals and events.

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Tech & Talent District**

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME'S PRESENCE WILL HAVE A CATALYTIC IMPACT ON DOWNTOWN



What does Success Look Like?

American Tobacco Campus (ATC), Durham, NC
The development of the ATC innovation district has revitalized Downtown Durham, attracted visitors, increased demand for housing, and created new community gathering spaces.

Courtesy of Hines Group

Cortex Innovation District, St. Louis, MO
In partnership with Washington University, the district has generated over $1 billion in direct economic impact, created 13,000 technology jobs, and revitalized the surrounding area.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Beacon Health**

HEALTH DISTRICTS BRING PEOPLE AND JOBS TO DOWNTOWN

Beacon Health System is investing over $230 million in a new tower at Memorial Hospital in Downtown. The 10-story tower will add seven floors dedicated to patient care with 50 new patient beds, a renovated and expanded Intensive Care Unit, and renovated department facilities. The project will bring hundreds of new jobs to Downtown South Bend. While hospitals of the past tended to be insular and contained, over the past decade, health districts have been growing around hospital anchors, attracting housing, services for employees and patients, and destinations for visitors and families. Hospitals around the U.S. are also facing recruiting challenges due to the difficulty that entry- and mid-level employees experience finding housing they can afford. While South Bend fares better than other cities on housing affordability, planning for success will require more diverse mixed-income and mixed-use housing. New housing types should offer both rental and home ownership options in Downtown.

Courtesy of Hines Group

Cook Children's hospital campus in Ft Worth Texas prioritizes outdoor community spaces throughout the campus district

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Health District**

Walkable, mixed-use health districts are becoming increasingly popular. Across the country, medical institutions are exploring how to design their campuses to promote healthy habits and lifestyles. Many of these districts integrate healthy design principles, including biophilic design practices, community gathering spaces, and a combination of services and housing near medical facilities that encourage walking.

Medstar Georgetown University Hospital created a walkable quad connecting the hospital to the neighborhood with a comfortable, inviting streetscape. It also includes outdoor seating and cafe use adjacent to the main hospital center.

Courtesy of SCAPE Landscape Architecture

Courtesy of SCAPE Landscape Architecture

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus transformed an uncomfortable, pavement-heavy streetscape to create a comfortable, shaded corridor that connects medical facilities within the campus.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Sports & Entertainment District**

ACTIVATING & ENHANCING A REGIONAL DESTINATION

Stadium districts are regional destinations that drive activity and the economy of Downtowns. With Four Winds Field investing in a major stadium renovation, it is positioned as a catalytic engine for the southern end of Downtown. The Western Avenue Transformation district to the west and the Stadium Flats and Diamond View projects to the east will substantially increase the housing offerings immediately adjacent to the stadium. Four Winds Field is poised to become an even bigger draw and more active destination in Downtown.

Four Winds Field Enhancements

- Home plate improvements
- New seating and F&B
- Improved Pepsi Club
- Party decks
- New suites
- New entrance and plaza to new office, event space, and club building
- Relocated splash zone and children's play area
- Restrooms

The plan illustrates the future potential of the district with the Stadium Flats and Diamond District housing to the east, the Western Ave Transformation District to the north and west. Bringing the Amtrak train back to Downtown across from the ballpark activates another side of the stadium.

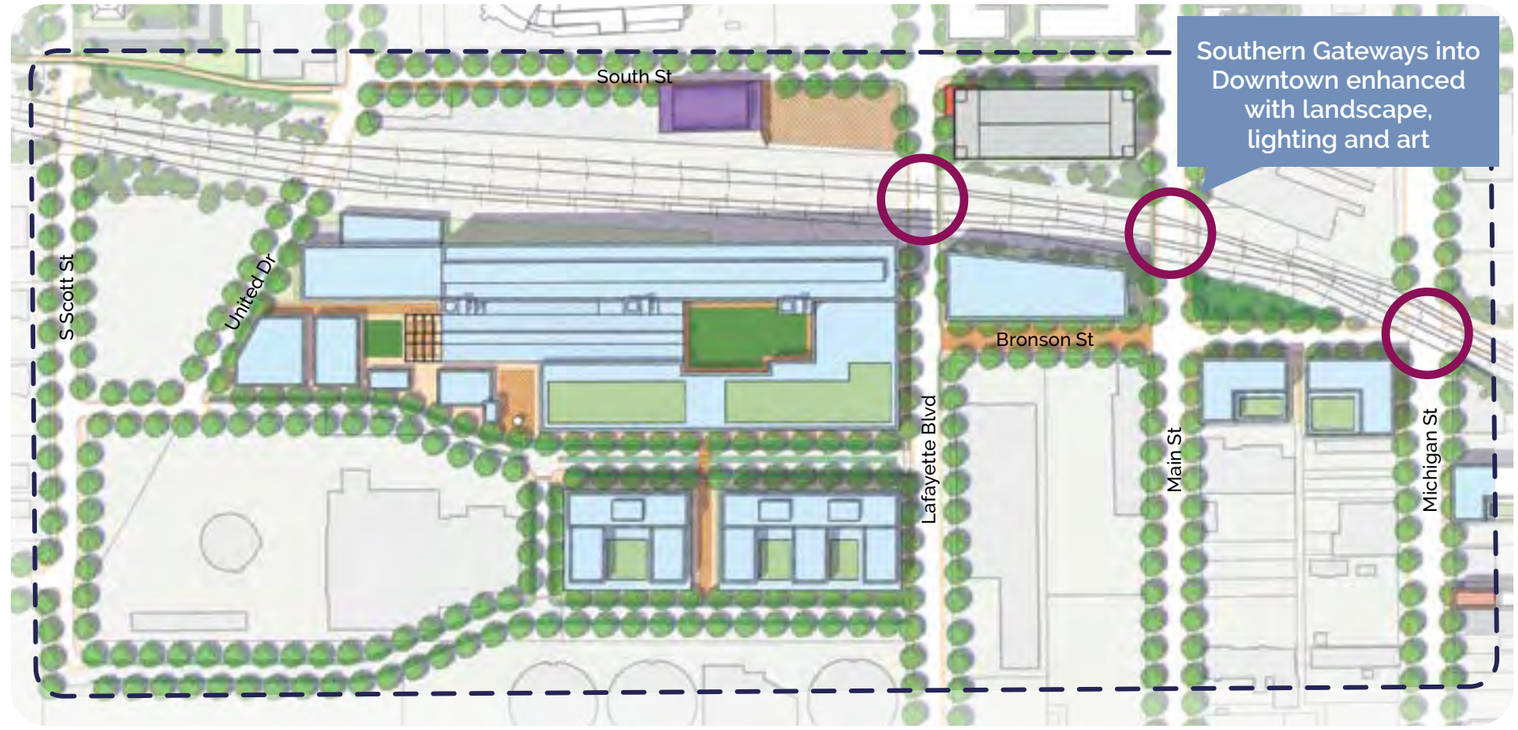
Looking south on William Street toward Four Wind Field shows the opportunity available to create a true sports destination district in Downtown that could have a mix of uses.

A curbless environment with residential and retail uses at the entrance to Nashville's First Horizon field creates an active, attractive destination Downtown.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Renaissance District**

The Renaissance District is a mixed-used technology campus that repurposes 1 million square feet of the historic Studebaker plant and anchors the southern end of Downtown. The district blends preservation with cutting-edge technology, offering space for high-tech manufacturing, digital infrastructure, retail, logistics, and education. The top floor of Building 84 could be transformed into loft apartments overlooking Downtown.



An historic image of the Studebaker campus where cars were manufactured from the early 1900s through the mid-60s

The Studebaker campus today, looking north toward Downtown

Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • **Renaissance District**

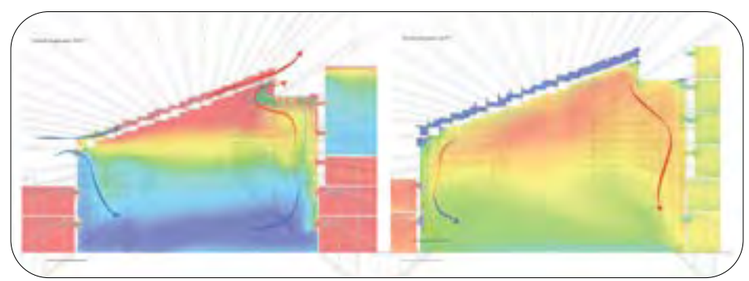
The Renaissance District is designed as a real-world testing ground where technological advancements can meet practical application. It serves as a bridge between institutions, industry, and community, allowing innovations to be implemented, tested, and refined in a live environment. This allows businesses, educators, and residents to see what works, adapt what fits, and shape their own future.

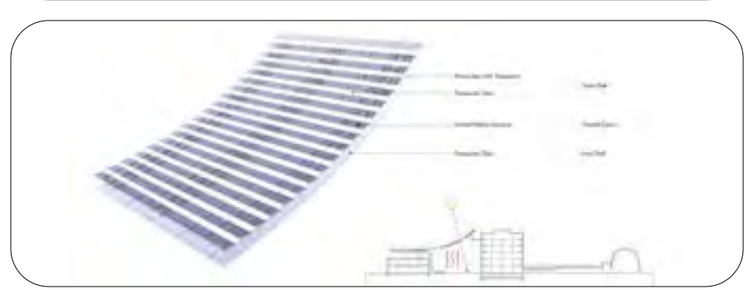
The district applies principles where resources, energy, and data flow seamlessly across industries to reduce waste and maximize efficiency. A key driver of this model is the integration of circular energy systems, where thermal and electrical energy are continuously captured, repurposed, and optimized—reducing reliance on traditional grids and pioneering next-generation energy solutions.

This convergence of historic infrastructure and emerging technology transforms the district into an institutional catalyst, bringing together Purdue's advanced programs, Notre Dame's research initiatives, enFocus' postgraduate talent, and private-sector innovation. By embedding these assets into a shared, low-cost innovation platform, the district lowers barriers for entrepreneurs, researchers, and industries to collaborate, test, and deploy cutting-edge solutions.

Creation of a new campus district with a green boulevard, spaces to gather, and state-of-the-art office and collaborative tech spaces

New streetscapes and public spaces will be places where workers can have informal collaboration





Energy innovation

Innovative reuse of historic structures

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

All images Courtesy of Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture

Neighborhoods

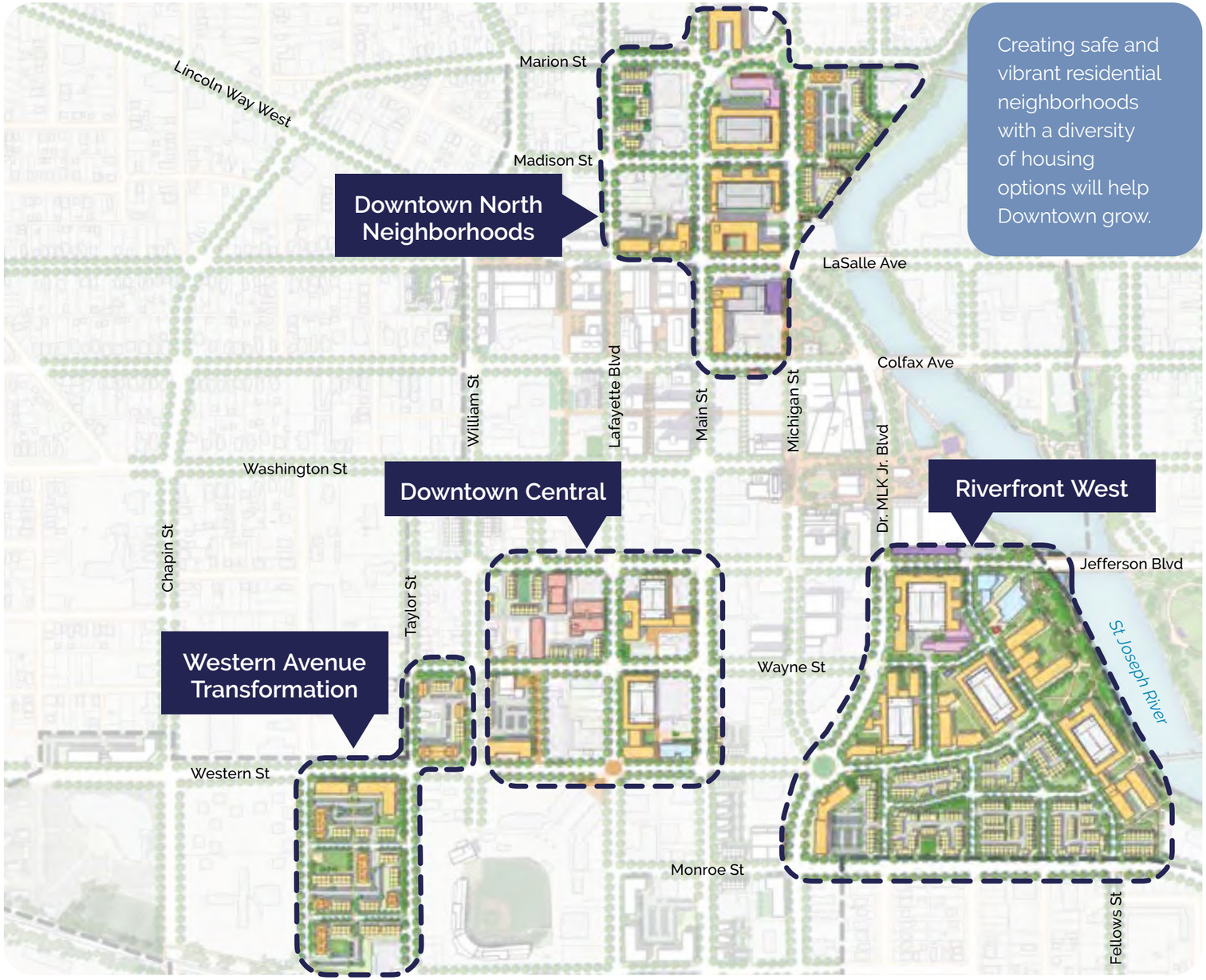
Neighborhoods

Downtown should function as a livable residential neighborhood that appeals to residents of all ages, incomes, and stages of life

South Bend has a population of over 100,000; however, just over 3,000 people live in Downtown. It is important that people live Downtown to create an activated, dynamic place. Residents walking and using public spaces on nights and weekends make Downtown feel safer and more comfortable for everyone. Increasing the population will support and sustain retail and new destinations. New housing should expand choices, offering building types that appeal to different household types, home ownership and rental options, and housing near growing employment centers that provide easy, walkable commutes. The following pages highlight several areas where it is possible to expand or create new neighborhoods. Filling in vacant lots throughout Downtown with appropriate housing types should remain a parallel priority.

Neighborhoods Projects:

- Downtown North Neighborhoods
- Downtown Central
- Riverfront West
- Western Avenue Transformation



Creating great neighborhoods with a variety of housing options brings more people Downtown, which can help support more local retailers, restaurants, and other businesses

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Neighborhoods • **Downtown North Neighborhoods**

INFILL AND HOUSING STABILIZATION

Additional and diverse housing offerings are needed to support the existing and new health and tech jobs Downtown. By moving surface parking into central garage locations, as proposed in the Madison Lifestyle District, existing surface lots can be redeveloped to provide higher-density, walkable housing for health and tech employees, increasing the number of people walking to work and supporting Downtown businesses.

Vacant and auto-oriented uses east of Michigan Street between Lasalle Avenue and East Marion Street could be redeveloped as infill housing adjacent to the river. Townhouses and lower- to moderate-density housing would be compatible with the adjacent River Bend Historic District neighborhood. The riverfront trail system should be extended along the bluff to connect to the new pedestrian bridge at Marion Street.

View looking north on Michigan Street today toward existing drive-thru retail and surface parking lots adjacent to Memorial Hospital.

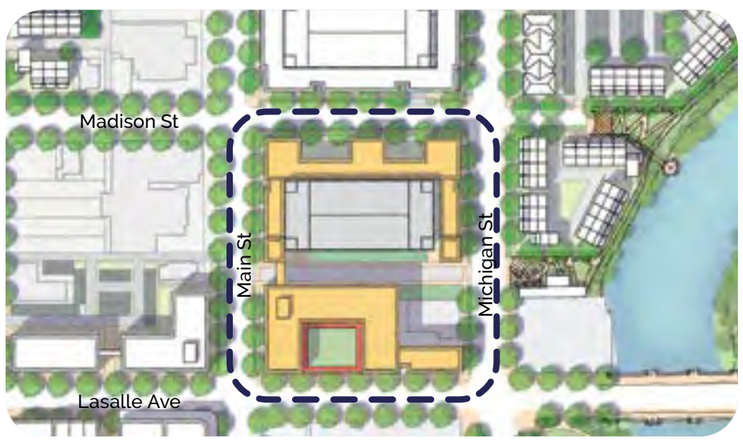
There are a series of opportunity sites north of Downtown, including the Madison Lifestyle District and various parking lots and infill sites. These could be developed with a wide range of housing options, from for-sale townhouses to walk-up or elevator apartment buildings.

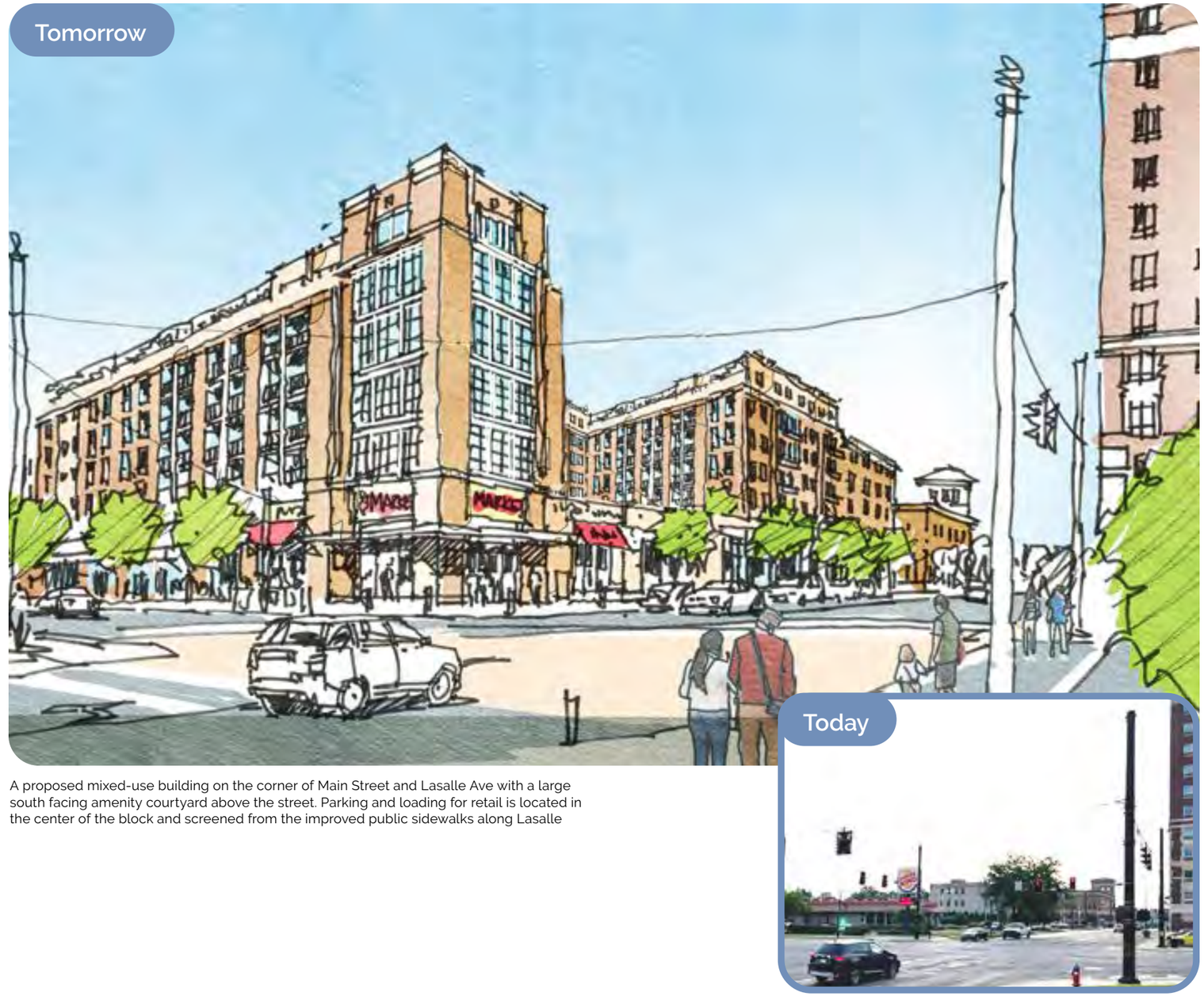
Neighborhoods • **Downtown North Neighborhoods**

BRINGING MIXED-USE HIGH DENSITY HOUSING TO KEY NORTH DOWNTOWN CORRIDORS

Bringing new residents Downtown will also necessitate additional services. These services should be located along visible corridors and in close proximity to residents and visitors. The market study has indicated a demand for a grocery store and a pharmacy in the Downtown area. The Downtown North Neighborhood, with its growing population of residents and workers, could be an ideal location for these services.

The LaSalle Avenue corridor, which connects visitors from the airport to Downtown via Lincoln Way, serves as a key entry point. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize development on vacant and underutilized lots along this route, as well as improve the streetscape to create a welcoming first impression of Downtown South Bend.





A proposed mixed-use building on the corner of Main Street and Lasalle Ave with a large south facing amenity courtyard above the street. Parking and loading for retail is located in the center of the block and screened from the improved public sidewalks along Lasalle

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Neighborhoods • **Downtown Central**

HOUSING & ADAPTIVE REUSE OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown Central has an outsized amount of vacant and underutilized land, along with a collection of valuable buildings and historic properties. Thoughtful renovations of key buildings in this neighborhood could pave the way for reinvestment in other properties and the development of new residential, retail, cultural, and office spaces.

Development parcels should be assembled and offered as shovel-ready sites. The varied sizes of the available land provide developers the chance to experiment with new housing and building types. Incorporating paseos and mid-block connections can enhance walkability and break up the scale of the street grid.

The historic properties in Downtown Central present a unique opportunity; investing in their rehabilitation could catalyze future development in this area. Creative reuse of these historic buildings will help preserve the neighborhood's character for future generations. Embracing the quirky nature of the existing architecture can establish this area as a vibrant part of Downtown, rather than the underutilized space it is today.

The site plan for Downtown central includes a mix of housing types. For sale townhomes are shown in yellow and rental apartments in orange.

Neighborhoods • **Downtown Central**

CASE STUDY:

How To: Leverage adaptive reuse projects to catalyze future growth

The Box Factory for the Arts
St Joseph, Michigan

In 1995, the Berrien Artist Guild purchased the former Williams Brothers Paper Box Manufacturing building to create a dedicated space for their work after 33 years of displaying it in coffee shops and small art galleries. The existing structure, which spans 55,000 square feet, has been preserved and repurposed for multiple uses.

Condominiums occupy a tower at the rear of the facility, while townhouses were added to the east wing of the complex. The main building on the western edge houses artist studios for 40 artists, office spaces, event venues for live performances, and a large, high-quality art exhibition space that is free to the public. The Box Factory for the Arts was originally inspired by the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia.

This illustration depicts a proposed mixed-use building located in the block bounded by Lafayette Boulevard, Jefferson Boulevard, Main Street, and Wayne Street. The design features a west-facing amenity courtyard at street level, which opens onto a new parklet at the southwest corner of the block. Walkways meander through the center of the block, fronted by units in the apartment building. Parking is situated in the center of the block and is screened from view by the building itself.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Neighborhoods • **Riverfront West**

CREATE NEW RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS DOWNTOWN

The new Riverfront West neighborhood will be developed between Jefferson Boulevard and Monroe Street on a series of underutilized buildings and parking lots. The realignment of Jefferson Boulevard opens up an additional opportunity to create a location for mixed-use development with housing, a hotel, office space, and a shared parking deck that complements the Century Center and creates a series of active uses from the river to Downtown. With the potential to create almost 1,000 units of new housing with a connected network of streets and open spaces that tie into the riverfront, Riverfront West will redefine Downtown living in South Bend.

The Future of Housing in Downtown

TODAY		FUTURE
1,900 units	→	+3,000 units by 2045
3,200 people	→	+5,000 people by 2045

The site plan for Riverfront West includes a mix of housing types. For sale townhomes are shown in yellow and rental apartments in orange.

Neighborhoods • **Riverfront West**

Currently, parking lots and underutilized office buildings dominate this part of Downtown, creating an inactive barrier to the riverfront. After 5 PM, the area becomes deserted, contributing to a sense of insecurity along a significant stretch of Downtown's riverfront. The proposed plan aims to build housing along the riverfront, fostering a 24-hour presence on the pedestrian walkway. Additionally, it includes multiple pedestrian connections to the river from the new neighborhood. The largest of these connections features a park at the end of Western Avenue, which will serve as a community gathering space for the new residential community.

How To: Embrace Sustainable Practices

- Riverfront West has been designed as a walkable, bikeable mixed-use development that follows the principles of LEED Neighborhood Development.
- Proximity to jobs, services, and amenities will reduce vehicle trips.
- Building designs should incorporate passive design and renewable energy strategies where possible.
- Sustainable stormwater management will be incorporated into parks and neighborhood streets to manage stormwater on-site.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

A view along the river looking south with the new River View Square between two four-story residential buildings

Large parking fields dominate the Riverfront West site today

Today you can walk along the riverfront but it is buried behind a series of underutilized office buildings.

Neighborhoods • **Riverfront West**

Today, the west bank of the river is dominated by underutilized office buildings and large surface parking lots

Looking toward Howard Park over the proposed River View park. The park terminates Western avenue and preserves public access and views of the riverfront, connecting into the riverfront trail system

Neighborhoods • **Western Avenue Transformation**

PRIORITIZING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO DOWNTOWN AMENITIES

The Housing Authority of South Bend owns a concentration of property in the Western Avenue corridor. Two properties, Monroe Circle and Rabbi Shulman were determined to be beyond their useful life. The ninety townhouses at Monroe Circle were demolished and the Rabbi Shulman Building will be demolished in the future. Western Avenue is an important gateway into Downtown from the west, and vacant land offers the opportunity to rebuild mixed-use housing with ground floor space for community-serving uses.

The proposed plan for the Housing Authority property aims to reintroduce affordable units at a variety of income levels, creating a new neighborhood with amenities within walking distance of Downtown. Furthermore, the Housing Authority will continue to explore options for improving the existing affordable units near the proposed mixed-income neighborhood.

Proposed Site Plan with a variety of housing types. Buildings in yellow represent townhouses and buildings orange represent walk-up and elevator apartment buildings

Rabbi Shulman Plaza Apartment Building currently sits vacant on Western Ave. The plan will demolish the building and replace it with a range of housing types.

The vacant block south of the Rabbi Shulman apartments is owned by the Housing Authority. The former Monroe Circle townhouses were demolished because they were old and had fallen into disrepair

Adjacent retail and institutional buildings to the site. A number of the storefronts are either vacant or under-utilized.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Neighborhoods • Western Avenue Transformation

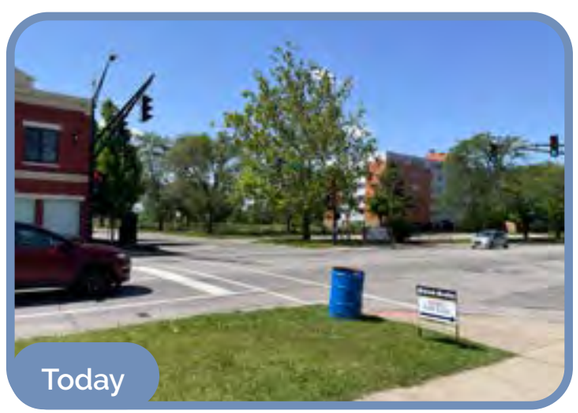
The design of the site was guided by the below principles:

- Re-establish the street grid with smaller blocks allowing for additional east-west connections through the new neighborhood
- Create pedestrians walking paths along streets and through green spaces and pocket parks
- Build a new community green at the heart of the new development to provide a space for gathering and programming
- Line Western Ave with taller, denser housing and locate the smaller housing types fronting Scott and Taylor Street or internal community spaces
- Build a mix of housing types that cater to different stages of life and family sizes
- Build housing types that have street facing primary entries
- Include porches and balconies so most units have private outdoor space available

Neighborhoods • **Western Avenue Transformation**

How To: Expand Housing Options

- Engage with development teams who have experience building mixed-income housing and a range of housing typologies
- Explore innovative financing options that facilitate mixed-income development
- Create pre-approved building plan sets for high-density townhouse designs



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

The view from the corner of Western Avenue and Taylor Street looking southwest. The ground floor of the proposed building could have a early learning center to serve the new neighborhood.

Public Realm

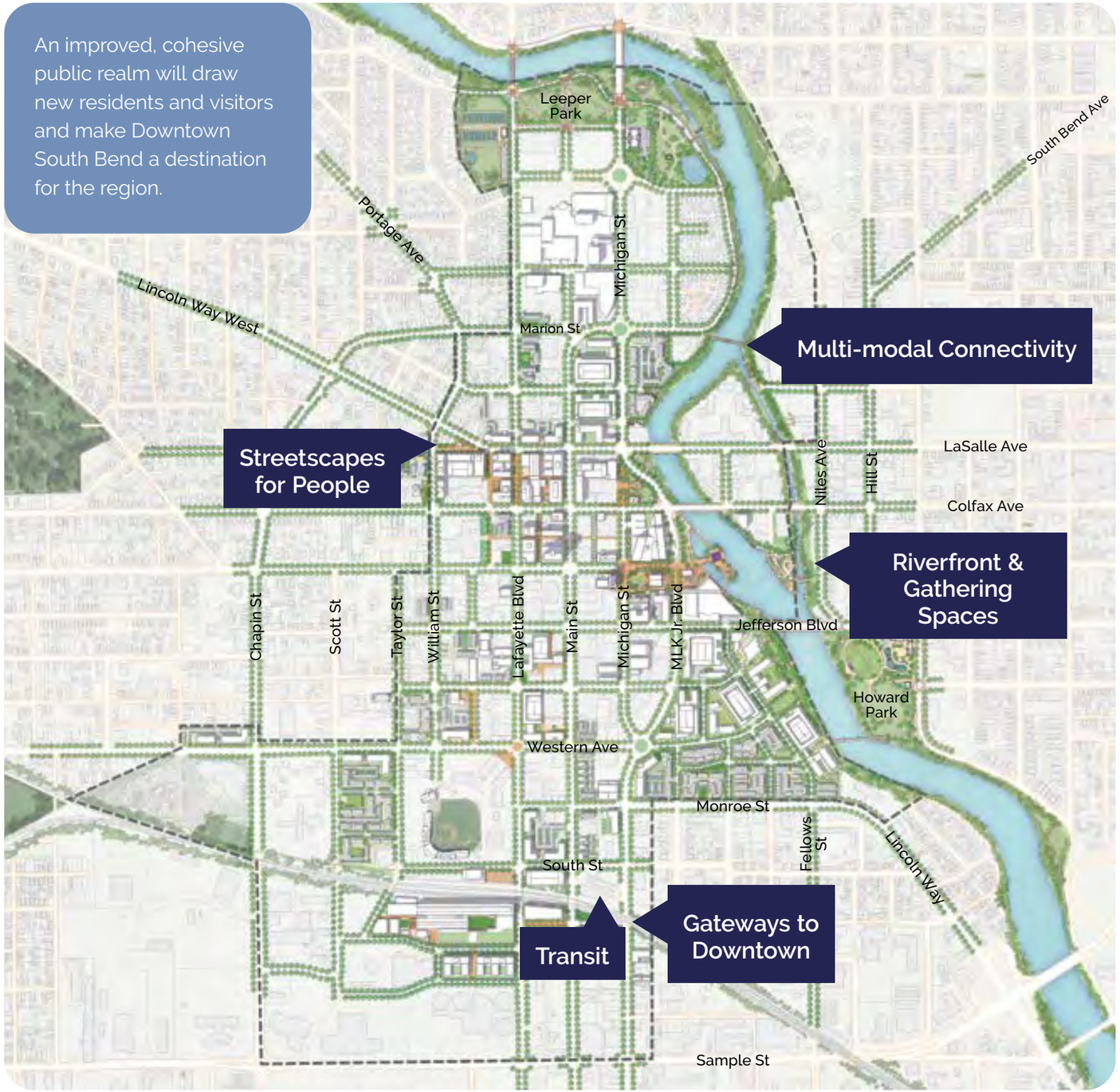
Public **Realm**

Downtown's public realm will act as the thread, tying together the districts, amenities, and destinations into an accessible, walkable, and wanderable place.

Today in Downtown, there is a sense that everything is far apart, nothing is connected, and it's not comfortable to walk for any distance. The river is right there, but it's difficult to get close enough to enjoy this incredible asset, especially on the western bank. The City has already begun investing in connecting Downtown with walking and biking trails. Residents and stakeholders enthusiastically support continuing that effort to realize the vision of exceptional connectivity, livability, open space, and parks in Downtown.

Public Realm Improvement Projects:

- Gateways to Downtown
- Riverfront & Gathering Spaces
- Streetscapes for People
- Multi-modal Connectivity
- Transit



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Public Realm • **Gateways to Downtown**

Most visitors enter Downtown through a limited number of routes from each direction. These entry points provide opportunities to welcome visitors and make a positive first impression. Signage, lighting, streetscape improvements, and public art are all tools that can be used to improve that experience. Dark railroad overpasses should be refurbished with artistic LED lighting and mural art to create a more comfortable gateway from the south. Additionally, targeting vacant lots for short-term streetscape and landscape improvements at these key gateway locations can help transform visitors' initial impressions of Downtown.

Key entry gateways to Downtown

Vertical Art Pieces, banners, signage and landscaping can also be used to mark the gateways into Downtown

Concept for what an improved railroad underpass next to Union Station could be with better station signage, city banners, improved street lighting, and an LED and mural art installation below the railroad trestle.

Public Realm • **Riverfront & Gathering Spaces**

The success of Downtown depends on attracting people to live, work, learn, and play Downtown. The riverfront is a crucial asset for achieving this success. Currently, while there are some wonderful spots along the waterfront, they are poorly connected, with most investments concentrated on the east bank. Visitors coming to the west side of the river, whether for an event at the Morris or a game at Four Winds Field, may not even realize that South Bend has a riverfront. An interconnected and active park experience on the west side of the river connecting Downtown and the East Bank would attract visitors and residents to Downtown, supporting restaurants, businesses, and cultural venues.

Trees along MLK Blvd. block views to the river. Today, the east side of Downtown does not engage with the riverfront.

Washed out and blocked pathways are barriers to a connected riverfront system

Build off of the great success of Howard Park, and connect it into a larger system of trails and parks

Future Riverfront trails and Downtown riverfront walking loops connecting a network of public open space

Seitz Park improvements are under construction along the East Race

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Public Realm • **Riverfront & Gathering Spaces**

The City's major investments in Seitz and Howard parks illustrate a commitment to reclaiming the riverfront for the public. To date, these efforts have focused on the east side of the river. With the creation of a signature riverfront park adjacent to the Century Center, the upgrade to Jon Hunt Plaza and adjacent Gwen Stiver Memorial Park, and the residential green spaces throughout Riverfront West, Downtown could have a continuous network of riverfront trails that provide activity and engagement for people of all ages.

The fully connected St. Joe riverfront public space network

Public Realm • **Public Art**

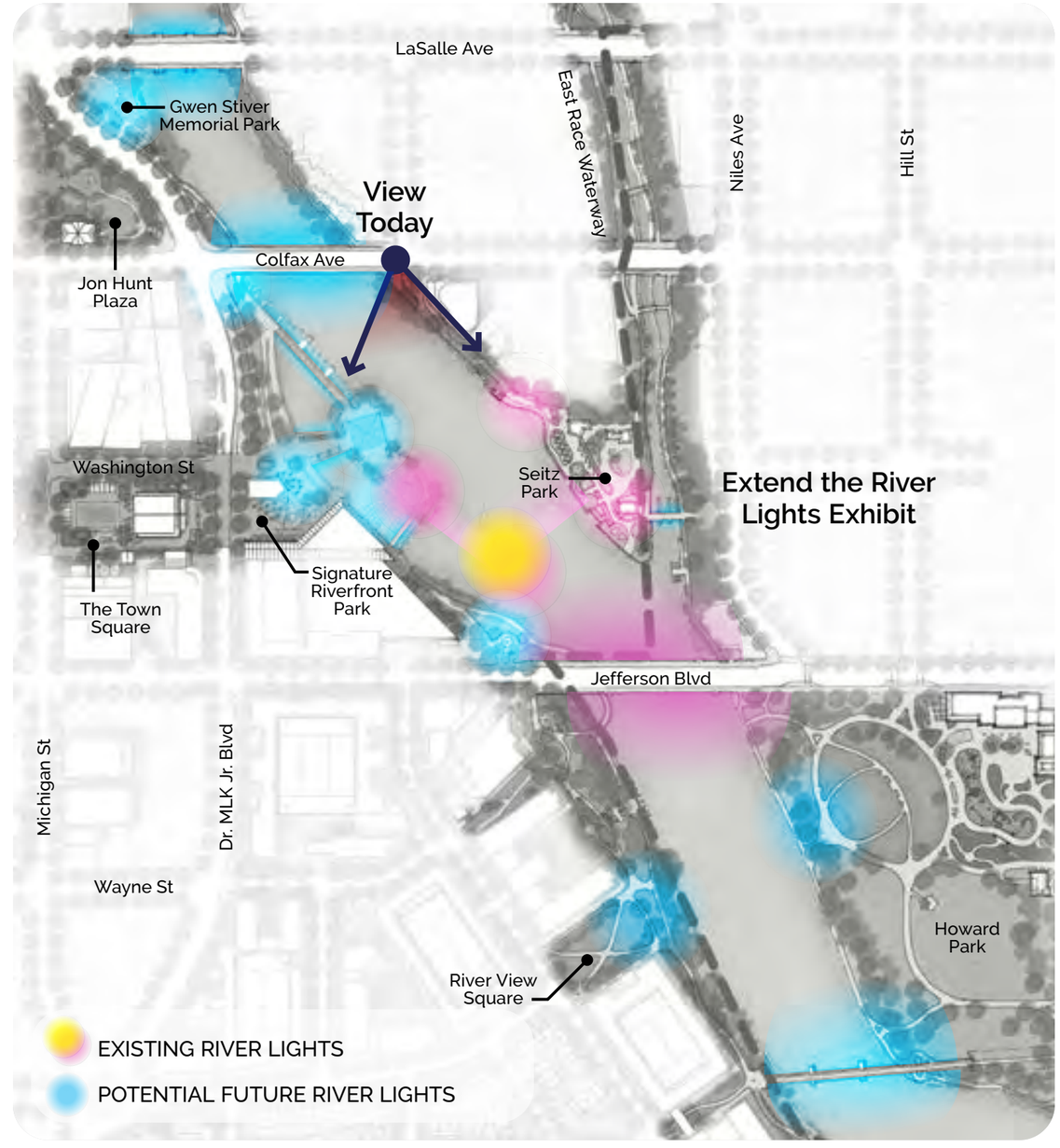
The community identified arts and cultural events as one of the most essential needs for Downtown. Adding art throughout the public realm will further enhance Downtown's role as the cultural center of South Bend. This improvement goes beyond murals and encompasses lighting, sound, sculpture, and interactive cultural experiences. These additions will attract visitors and create moments of discovery throughout Downtown.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Public Realm • **Lighting of Downtown Riverfront**

Today's River Lights exhibit highlights the core of the Downtown riverfront around Century Center Island, Seitz Park, the South Bend Dam, and the Jefferson Boulevard Bridge. The lights turn on before sunset and remain on until sunrise, and multiple motion-sensing interactive light displays run from sunset to midnight.

Since their installation in 2015, the river lights have been a successful economic, artistic, and recreational driver for Downtown - drawing people to enjoy the riverfront and nearby restaurants and cultural amenities long after the sun goes down. From the LaSalle Avenue Bridge to the Howard Park pedestrian bridge, a fully connected River Lights network would beautify the urban riverfront, increase visibility and safety, and encourage longer hours of activity along the St. Joseph River and its necklace of parks and open spaces.



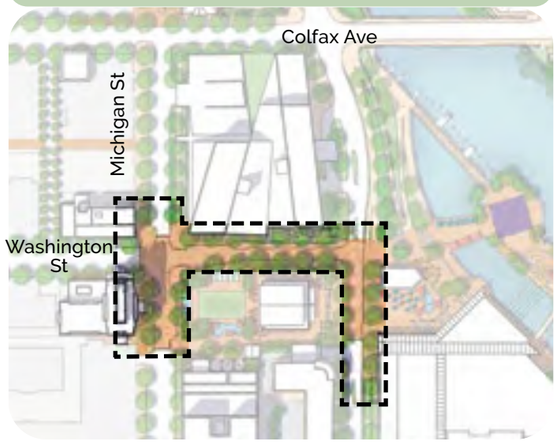
Fully lit walking loop core around the South Bend dam

Public Realm • **Curbless & Shared Streets**

Curbless streets are designed without the typical physical separation between sidewalks and roadways, encouraging a more seamless flow of movement for all users. These designs promote safety, enhance mobility, and contribute to environmental sustainability, offering an alternative to traditional car-centric infrastructure.

The vision plan proposes using shared, curbless streets in multiple locations. Each location emphasizes the activation of the pedestrian realm. The streets are all associated with the Downtown core or a Downtown institution, and they allow for closures for community events and activities.

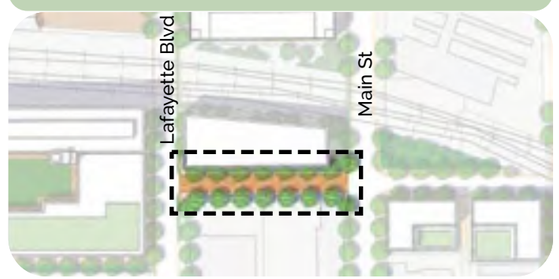
1. Downtown Core



2. Innovation District

3. Sports and Entertainment District

4. Renaissance District



A change in paving type helps denote car versus pedestrian zones

Linear, flush drains are utilized in this curbless condition to manage stormwater. Curbs used minimally for overflow stormwater basins where needed. Contemporary paving patterns denote the pedestrian-only zone.

Bollards can block vehicular access to certain areas in curbless environments.

Changes in pavement color and texture communicate the transition between the car and pedestrian zone.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Public Realm • **Tree Canopy**

The lack of substantial tree cover Downtown presents a significant challenge that impacts people's comfort, sense of safety, and walkability. Providing a regular treescape Downtown will offer shade and protection for pedestrians, creating a more enjoyable walking experience while decreasing the perceived distance between key Downtown destinations. Trees also offer environmental benefits, lowering temperatures by 10 degrees on hot days and creating habitat of connected greenway corridors for wildlife.

The 500 Block of South Michigan Street and along Wayne Street are just two examples where the tree canopy is absent Downtown. Adding street trees in both locations would provide a buffer between pedestrians and traffic, improve walkability, and enhance and increase the value of adjacent properties.

In certain locations where the sidewalk depth permits, a double allée of trees can provide comfortable gathering space

A healthy urban tree canopy can exist in places with tight setbacks.

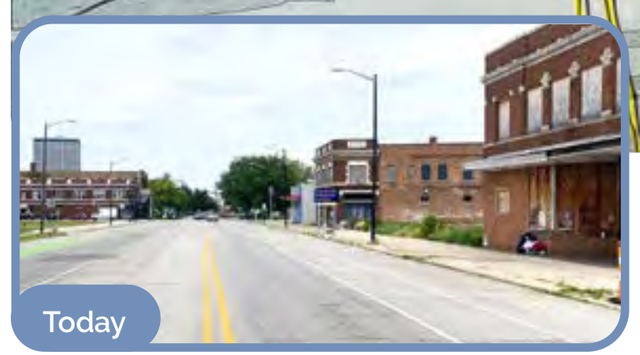
Public Realm • **Streetscapes for People**

One of the biggest challenges in Downtown South Bend is the lack of a comfortable walking experience. Pavement dominates the cityscape, and although many amenities are in close proximity, they often feel distant due to the discomfort of walking on Downtown streets.

Prioritizing street trees, adding trees to urban pocket parks, and creating planted bioswale bulb-outs in the parallel parking lane would improve the pedestrian experience. These initiatives will help green the streets, slow down traffic, and provide a buffer for pedestrians, resulting in streetscapes designed for people rather than just cars.

How To: Embrace Sustainable Practices

- Follow best practices for stormwater management to prevent run off into the St. Joseph River.
- Incorporate bioswales into street design and parklets.
- Protect and save large existing street trees
- Add permeable pavers to parallel parking areas to decrease runoff
- Increase tree canopy in Downtown to have 30% tree coverage by 2050



Looking north on Michigan Ave near the intersection with Monroe St, the streetscape is dominated by asphalt and concrete, creating an environment for cars, not people.

Wide sidewalks with outdoor dining, regular street trees, and landscaping make this an enjoyable urban sidewalk.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Public Realm • **Streetscapes for People**

Activating the ground floor of Downtown buildings invites people to walk and enjoy public streets. Small interventions at the street level can create a more engaging public realm. The example to the right on Jefferson Boulevard illustrates how a few minor adjustments can transform a streetscape. The key strategies here include:

- Adding canopies to provide shade and protection from the elements for the pedestrian
- Replacing dark tinted glass windows with larger transparent glazing to see the activity in the building
- Utilizing movable planters to soften the streetscape where the building meets the sidewalk
- Adding additional entrances where possible to increase activity
- Including lighting on the building facade for safety and security at night.

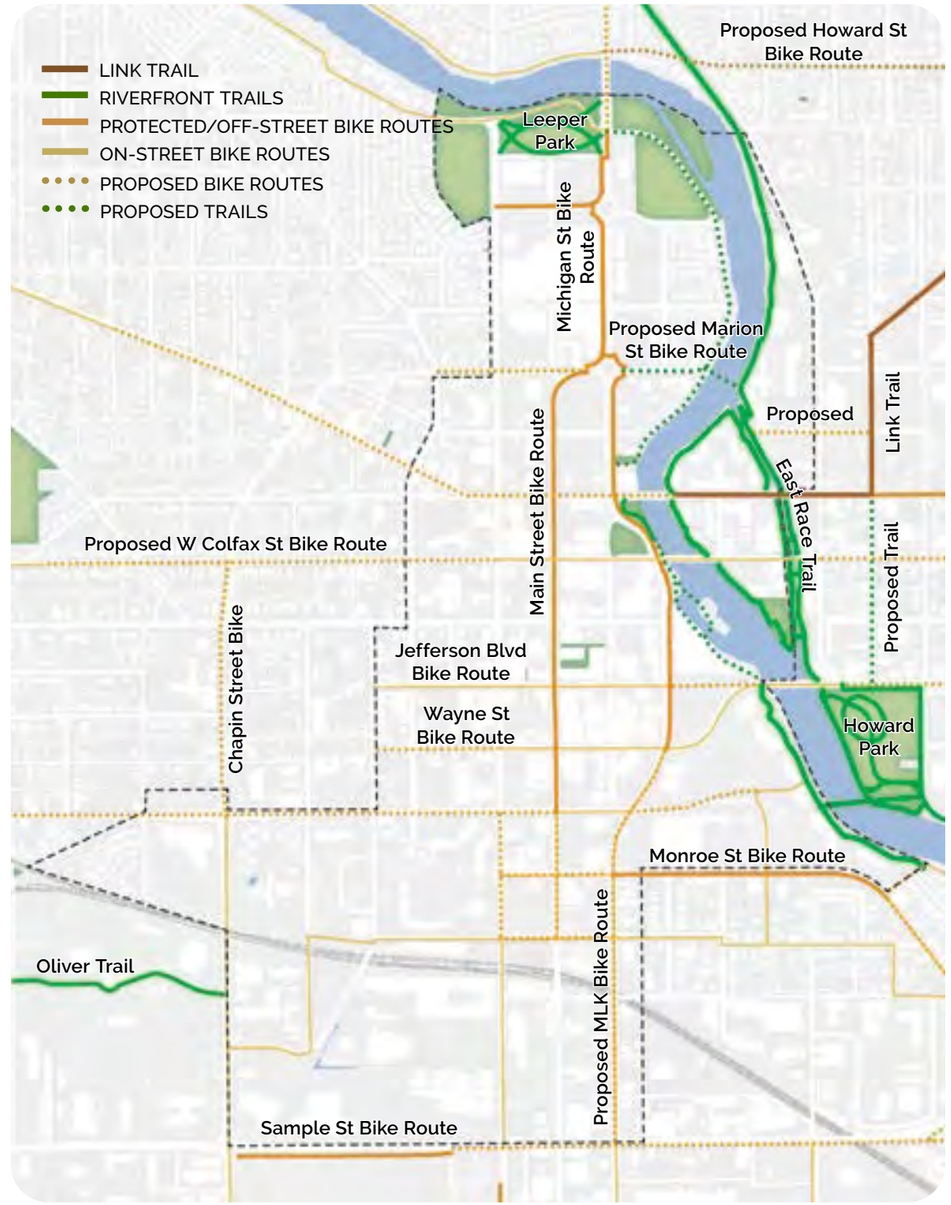
Looking west on Jefferson Boulevard, there is a generous pedestrian sidewalk and planting buffer, but the ground floor use of the building has opaque glass and does not engage with the pedestrian realm.

Public Realm • **Multi-Modal Connectivity**

Connecting Downtown involves more than just accommodating cars and pedestrians; it is also crucial to enhance connections among various modes of transportation, including bikes, scooters, buses, and trains.

The City has significantly invested in the pedestrian and bicycle network, including the new 1.5-mile Link Trail, connecting the University of Notre Dame to Downtown. However, the network is still incomplete and has opportunities to grow, especially to the west. Completing these connections, tying them to the riverfront trails, and ensuring they connect to all the different Downtown districts will create a comprehensive system, making it easier and more enjoyable for people to access and navigate Downtown.

Recently completed bike and pedestrian infrastructure increase the safety of this intersection where Niles Avenue crosses Lasalle Avenue



Bike and trail networks and proposed future connections

The new 1.5-mile Link Trail connects the University of Notre Dame to Downtown via a protected bike lane.

Recently updated bike and pedestrian infrastructure along Main Street waiting to be tied into a more comprehensive system

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Public Realm • **Multi-Modal Connectivity**

Today the Amtrak trains are directed to a small concrete block building on the western side of Downtown. It is surrounded by uninviting industrial uses. The City is pursuing rerouting the South Bend Amtrak stop from the remote corner of town to the historic train station that sits at a key location adjacent to Four Winds field at the corner of Lafayette Blvd and South Street.

Today, the historic union station building sits vacant and unused

The existing station today is located on West Washington Street, over 1.5 miles from Downtown.

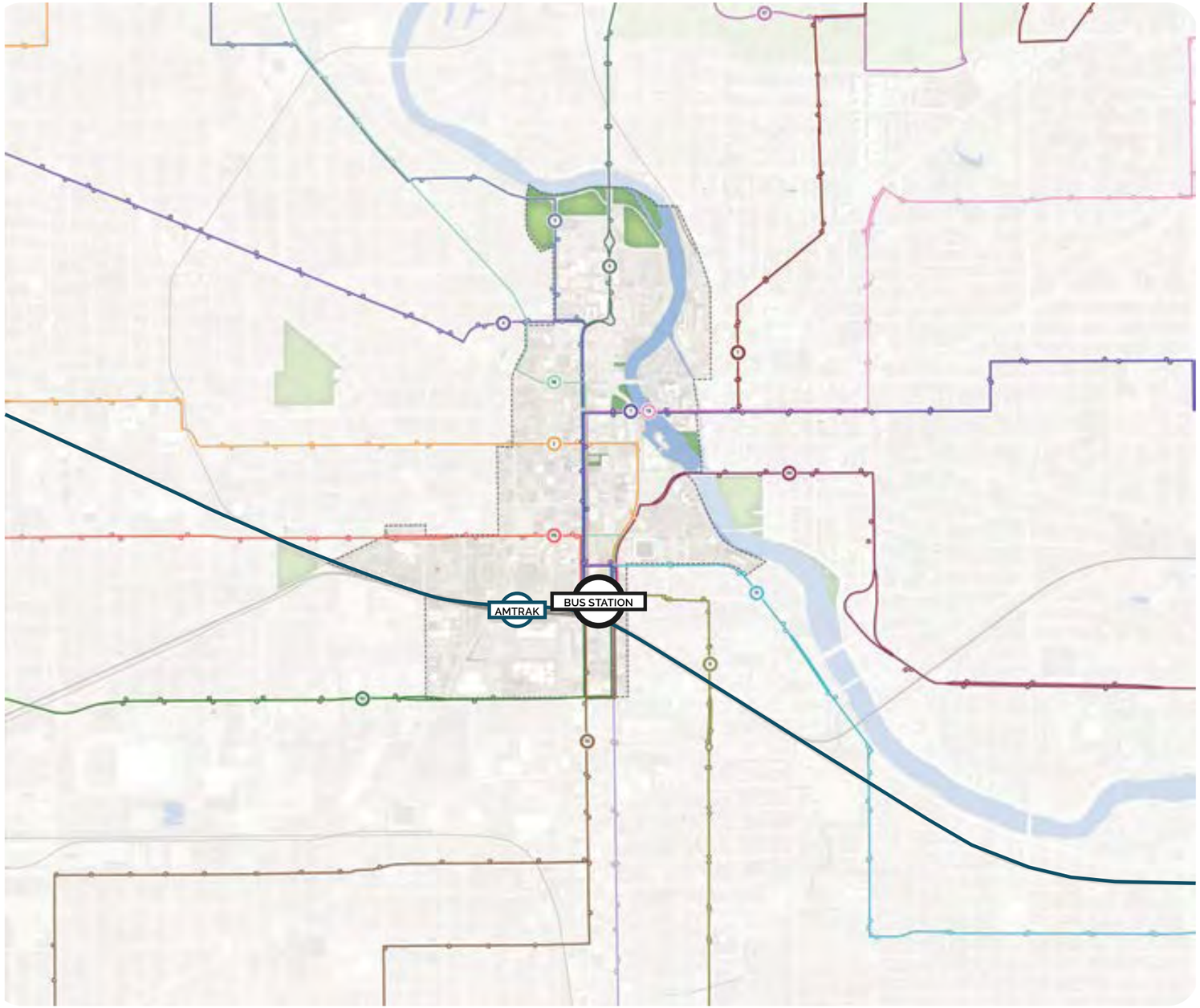
Bringing Amtrak trains back to the historic train station would provide an additional mode of transit Downtown while also preserving and activating an important cultural landmark

Public Realm • **Transit**

South Bend's public transit system, operated by Transpo, is a critical component of the regional transportation system, offering options for navigating the City without the use of a personal vehicle. The South Street Station, the central transfer station, is located in the southern portion of Downtown. It is co-located with the Greyhound Bus Station and across the street from Union Station, which may serve as the future Amtrak station. However, the funding for the transit system is limited and translates into long headways (low frequency) for most routes. Oftentimes, riding the bus takes much longer than driving. The University has a large population of potential riders who might ride the bus Downtown if it were more convenient. The City and Transpo should explore partnerships to fund an increase in the frequency on key routes to less than 15 minutes, allowing riders to confidently travel to and from Downtown without planning ahead.

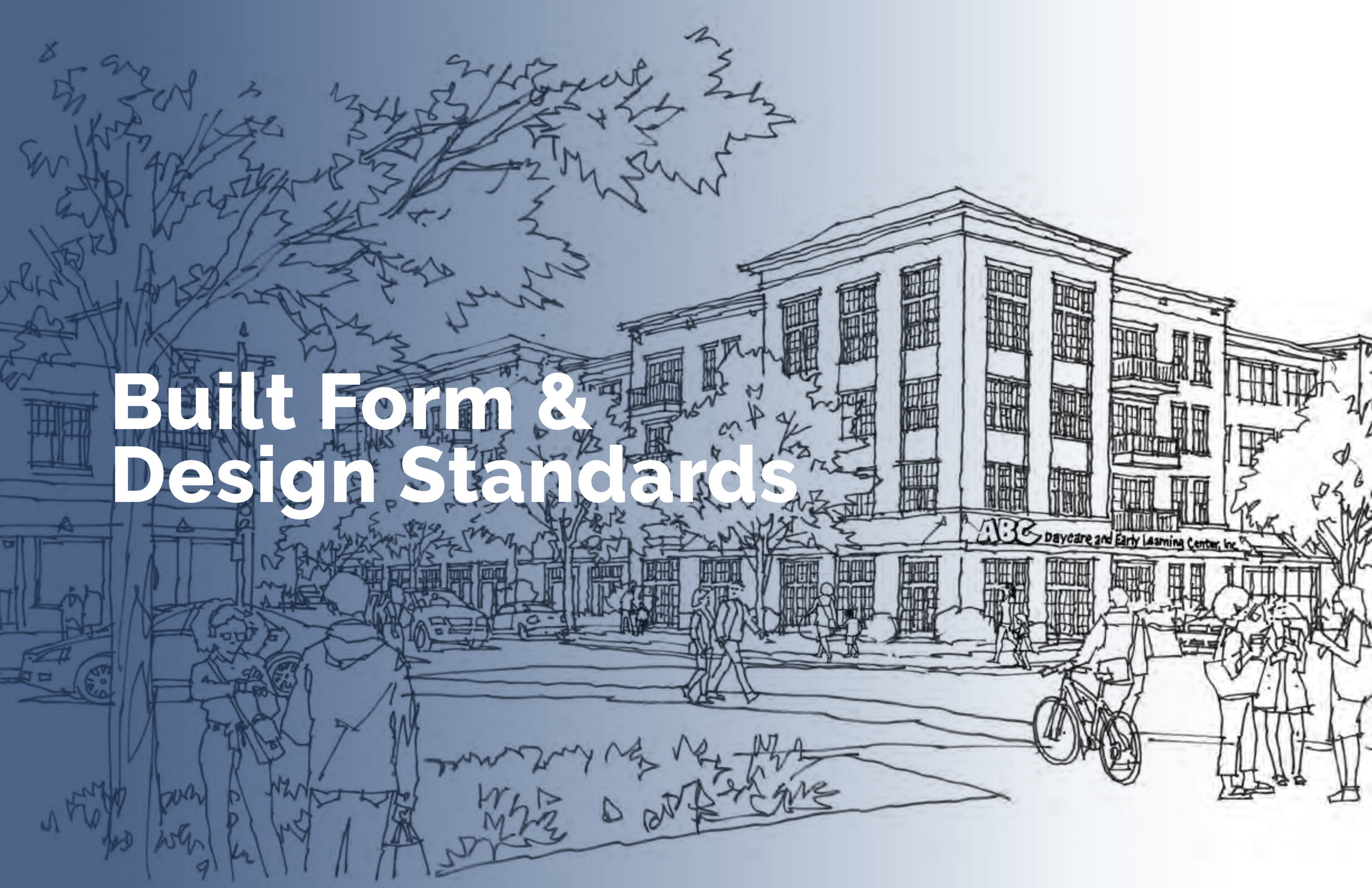
How To: Build Comfortable and Accessible Connections

- Refine bus transit to prioritize consistent, dependable service
- Prioritize frequently traveled routes
- Build comfortable, protected bus shelters
- Encourage cycling and micro-mobility
- Promote walkability by making routes safer and more comfortable



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Built Form & Design Standards



Built Form & **Design Standards**

A Regulating plan to guide future development in Downtown

As South Bend continues to evolve, it is crucial to guide the built environment and ensure that new developments have a positive impact on the public realm. These design standards offer guidance on best practices for Downtown.

Retail Incentive Zone

- Retail uses along Michigan Street should be incentivized in these locations to create an active retail destination Downtown

Residential District Overlay

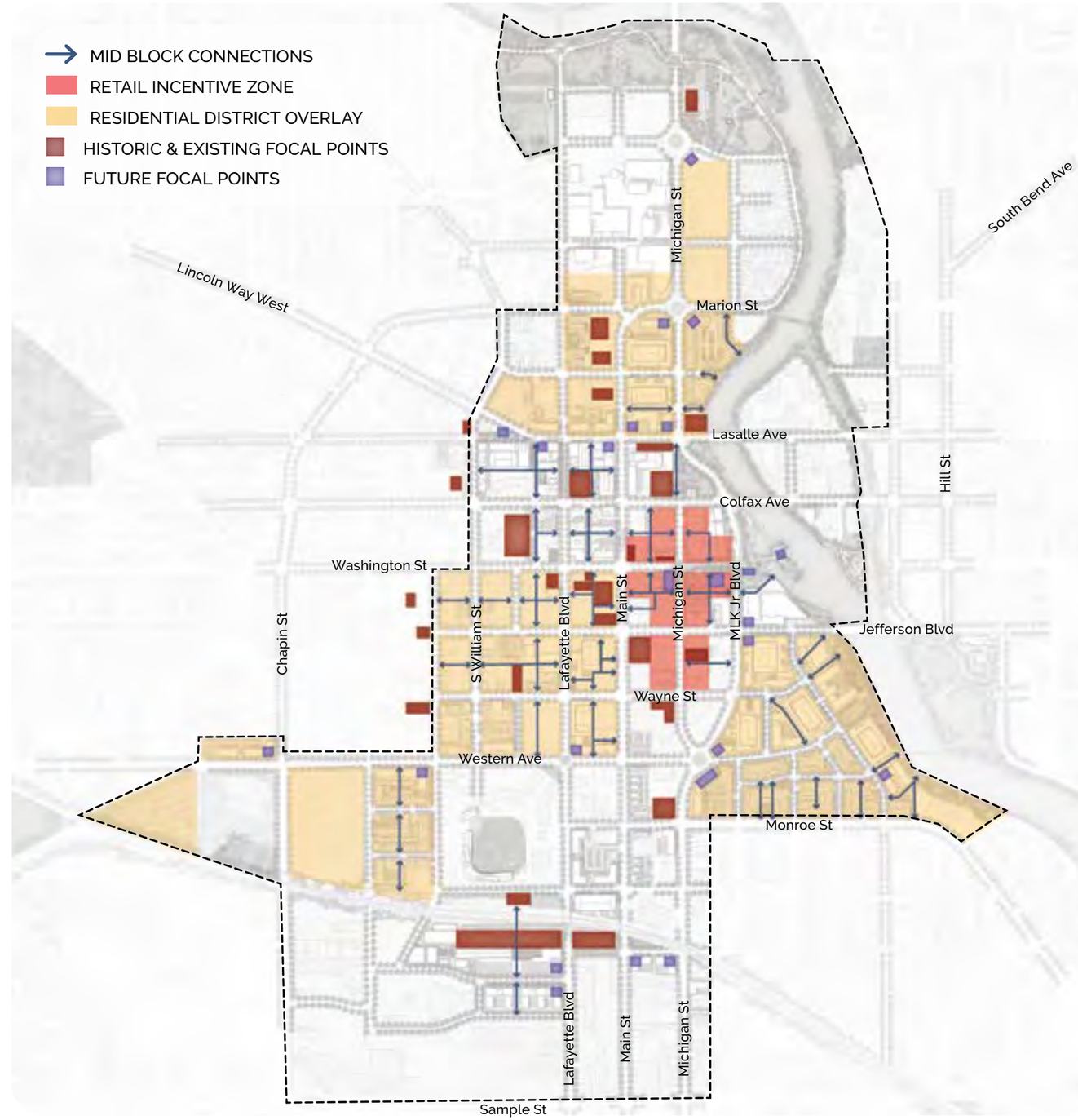
- Allow smaller lot sizes within this zone to encourage a variety of housing types downtown
- Provide flexibility on front yard setbacks to allow for a variety of street frontage conditions for residential units

Mid-Block Connections

- Important connections through the middle of blocks should be enhanced to improve the wanderability of downtown
- Existing alleyways should be preserved and designated for use as a pedestrian way, access for back-of-house operations, or a combination of both.

Focal Points

- Preserve important views to enhance place-making opportunities
- Loading docks, trash enclosures and parking access should be located away from significant corners and views.



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Retail **Frontage**

CREATING AN ACTIVE, ENGAGING RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

The streetscape offers an excellent opportunity for activation. The area immediately adjacent to the building face can be configured in a variety of ways depending on the uses inside the building. For retail and mixed-use buildings, seating, dining, and street furniture can be used to engage shoppers by extending the retail experience into the outdoors. Street furniture also includes bike infrastructure, such as bike racks and repair stations.

Retail frontage guidelines

- In areas with retail on the ground floor, hardscape can accommodate benches, bike infrastructure, seating, signage, and merchandise displays. Movable pots or planters provide versatile landscaping that can be relocated as needed.
- In areas with ground-floor restaurants, design outdoor dining as private seating for retail tenants, ensuring clear access to buildings and visibility to open spaces. The dining area can include tables, seating, umbrellas, and movable pots, and planters.
- In curbless environments, bollards can separate pedestrians from vehicles. Consider other creative solutions such as planter pots, seat walls, and curbed planting beds along with other vehicular deterrents in curbless environments.
- Seasonal displays, pop-ups, and furnishings are encouraged to promote activity throughout the year.
- Sidewalk seating, planters, signage and awnings, and portable heaters make the sidewalk a lively and inviting place year-round

Sidewalk seating, additional planting, diverse mix of store signage, awnings, and portable heaters make the sidewalk a lively and inviting place year-round

Diverse sidewalk frontage with plantings, bike racks, potted plants, movable sidewalk seating, inviting storefronts, appropriately sized signage, and special paving

String lights, movable planters, and high quality paving materials make an attractive retail frontage. Wide, operable restaurant windows bring energy out to the sidewalk and make a more inviting public environment.

Clothing and goods displayed outside of retail stores attract shoppers and contribute to the streetscape

Retail **Frontage**

SIDEWALK ZONES FOR AN ACTIVE RETAIL FRONTAGE

The sidewalks in front of downtown retail can be broken into three parts: the marketing zone, the clear zone, and the landscape zone. The marketing zone offers space for retailers to display signage or merchandise or for restaurants to locate outdoor seating. The clear zone must remain clear of any furniture or advertisements to allow for a clear flow of pedestrian traffic. The landscape zone protects the pedestrian from the street and moving traffic. Grated trees, landscaping, bioswales, and bike racks are appropriate in the landscape zone.

Essential elements for a successful retail frontage

1. Canopies or awnings to provide shade and protection from the elements
2. Transparent glazing to allow visual connection into the ground floor spaces
3. Tasteful and appropriately sized signage
4. Seating for outdoor dining (Can be located in the Marketing zone or landscape zone)
5. Benches for seating
6. Street trees (Can be grated or in planter beds)
7. Individual storefront identity to break up the scale of the pedestrian experience
8. Movable planters

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Residential **Frontage**

ATTRACTING PEOPLE DOWNTOWN TO LIVE REQUIRES THOUGHTFUL PLANNING FOR RESIDENTIAL UNITS

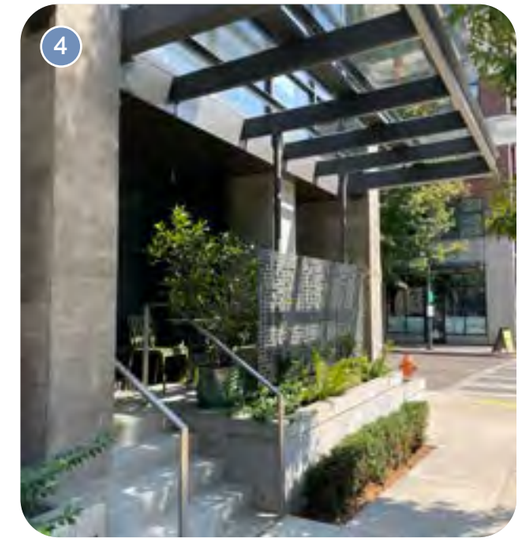
Two types of residential entries can be found in Downtown: multi-unit building entries and individual unit entries. Building entries for multi-unit buildings should direct residents and visitors to entrances through the use of canopies, signage, and transparent glazing. Individual unit entries should be separated from the street using a change in grade, screen walls, and plantings to create a sense of privacy in a busy urban district.

Residential Design Guidelines

1. Design primary residential building entries so that they are easily recognizable and accessible
2. Minimize door swings opening directly onto sidewalk areas. Recess entries where possible to create more space to accommodate door swings
3. Consider overhangs, canopies, and awnings above entrances to protect pedestrians
4. Create a sense of privacy for individual unit entries by elevating the ground floor above the sidewalk, using steps, low walls, plantings, or other elements
5. Consider porches or stoops for individual unit entries (see following pages for more details on the types of individual unit entries)

Large Multi-Unit Building Entry

Individual Unit Entry



The ground floor of apartments can have individual unit entries that activate a downtown street

Urban townhouses provide another housing option with individual entries to multi-level units

Residential Frontage • **Apartment**

SIDEWALK ZONES WITH NARROW RESIDENTIAL FRONT SETBACK

For residential frontage, the area between the building and the curb falls into three zones: the terrace zone, the clear zone, and the landscape zone. The terrace zone belongs to individual ground-floor residential units. Within this zone, plantings, low walls, stoops, steps, and terraces are associated with the individual units. The clear zone must remain clear to allow for a free flow of pedestrian traffic. Plantings and greenery in the landscape zone help to soften the residential address and provide a buffer to the street.

Essential elements for a successful residential frontage

1. Recessed entry to allow for semi-private terrace
2. Plantings to screen ground floor units
3. Street trees (Can be grated or in planter beds)
4. Individual unit entry canopies to provide shade and protection from the elements
5. Grade separation to create privacy for the ground floor occupants

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Residential Frontage • **Townhouse**

SIDEWALK ZONES WITH A DEEPER RESIDENTIAL FRONT SETBACK

Moving away from Downtown, toward the neighborhood, high density townhomes and duplexes with slightly more generous front yard setbacks provide an additional housing type for downtown. This frontage type is similar to that of the multi-family ground floor residential units, but has a slightly larger terrace zone and can potentially have more plantings and less paving in the landscape zone. This frontage type is ideally located at the edges of Downtown adjacent to surrounding neighborhood fabric. A sense of privacy for individual unit entries is created using steps, low walls, plantings, or other elements.

Important elements for a successful residential frontage

1. Recessed entry to allow for semi-private terrace
2. Plantings to screen ground floor units
3. Street trees - in planter beds or fully planted landscape zone
4. Individual unit entry canopies to provide shade and protection from the elements
5. Steps to separate unit from the public pedestrian realm
6. Fences or walls with gates to separate the public from the semi-private realm

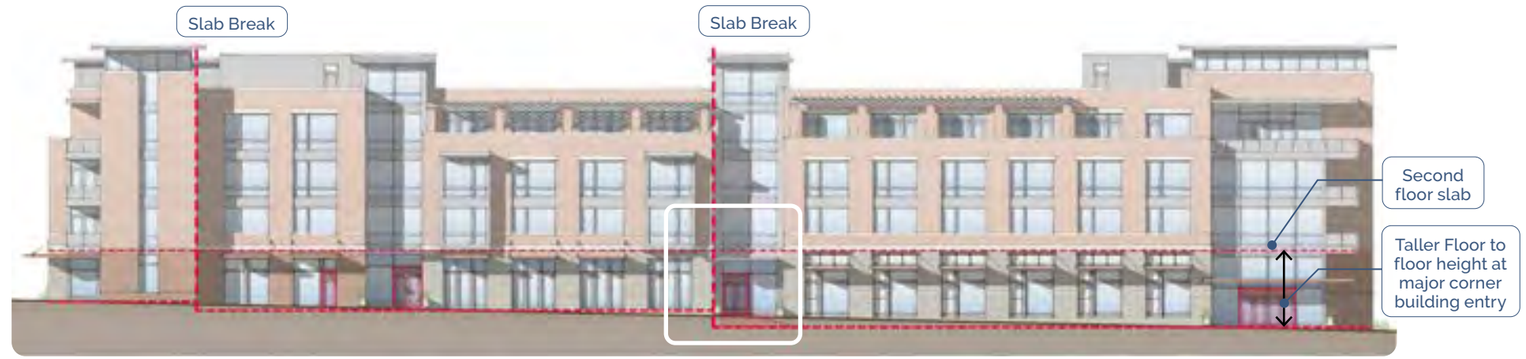
Street Frontage with **Grade Change**

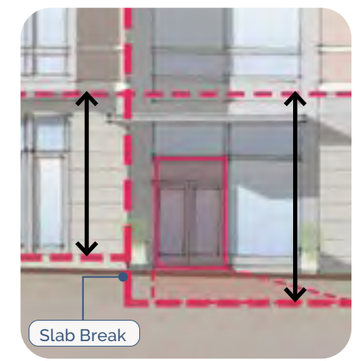
MANAGING SLOPING SITES TO ALLOW FOR A COMFORTABLE PUBLIC REALM

In a Downtown setting, where many buildings have zero lot setbacks, it can be challenging to resolve long building facades and ground floor access without having a adverse affect on the sidewalk and public realm. To encourage a positive outcome on a site with grade change, it is important to:

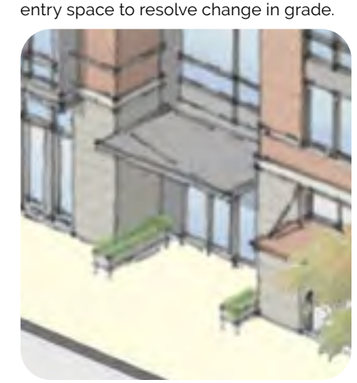
- Carefully understand the site grading during the early conceptual phases of design.
- Work with the grade rather than against it. Use terraces to help create useable space and mediate grade changes..
- Carefully consider loading and parking entry locations.
- Consider resolving the grade inside the first floor of the building with ramps and stairs. Allow for taller volumes in public spaces on the ground floor.
- Recess front entries to mitigate running slope grade challenges for ADA accessibility.

What to avoid: resolving grade change by splitting sidewalk to the detriment of the public realm





Utilize ramps and stairs in interior lobby & entry space to resolve change in grade.



Exterior entrance remains flush with sidewalk

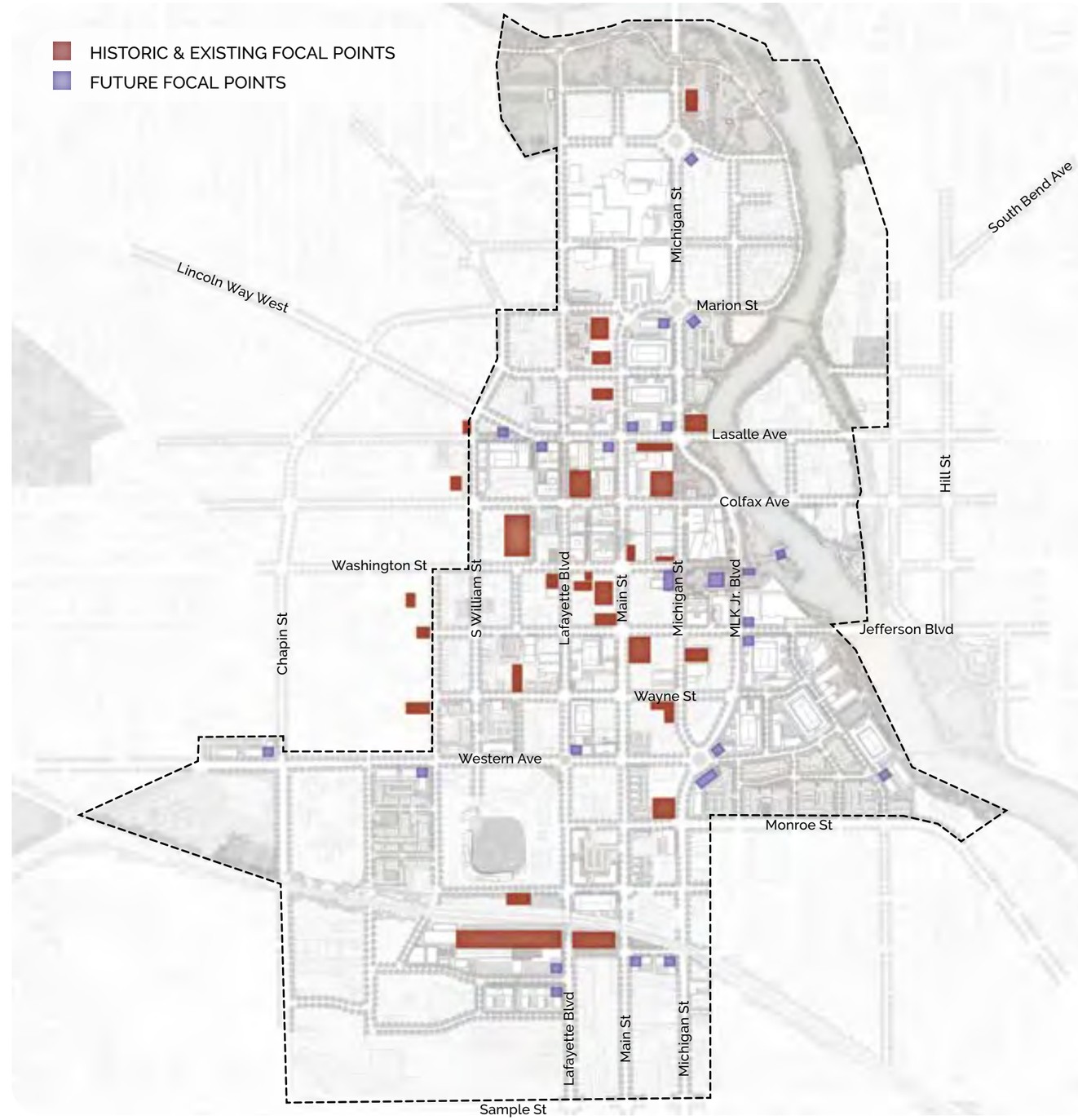
URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Significant **Focal Points**

WHERE THE IMPORTANT MOMENTS ARE IN DOWNTOWN TODAY

As the City grows and changes, it is important to preserve the recognizable corners and views that are iconic in downtown. This diagram highlights prominent existing buildings and their existing view corridors, as well as important key focal points to consider in future developments.

The All American Bank Building sits at a prominent location at the corner of Michigan and Washington Street



Significant **Focal Points**

HOW TO KEEP ICONIC MOMENTS DOWNTOWN AND CREATE NEW ONES

Historic & Existing Focal Points:

- Step and angle new buildings back from the street edge to create sight lines to existing historic architectural resources
- Restore and preserve existing buildings at focal point locations

Future Focal Points:

- Utilize higher quality building materials, attractive proportions, and creative massing to make character defining public spaces
- Locate front doors at these key locations
- Create an engaging ground floor environment
- Avoid placing loading, parking and other back-of-house uses within direct view of these significant downtown moments
- Plant and landscape appropriately to provide clear sight lines at the most prominent locations

The view-shed map showing the LaSalle Building and Morris Performing Arts Center important facades. The northwestern corner of the intersection of LaSalle Ave and Michigan Street will be an important corner for future development in that location.

The view-shed map of the area of St. Patrick's Church showing the proposed development set back to preserve the view of the church along Wayne Street

Setting development back from the edge of the sidewalk and inserting a new linear green along Wayne Street creates a long view of the historically significant St. Patrick's Church

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Alley & Mid-block **Connections**

ACTIVATION OPPORTUNITY

Alleys and pedestrian mid-block connections are useful tools for enhancing the wanderability of the City. When possible, try to preserve alleys that provide useful routes for pedestrians and make them fee safe and comfortable by using plantings, murals, lights, fixtures and special paving materials.

Add windows and balconies to buildings with sides along alleys to add life and eyes on the public realm. Townhouses and townhouse-like frontage could face alleys to create mews and pedestrian oriented, mid-block conditions. New larger mixed-use developments can bridge these connections, but preserve the pedestrian connectivity at the street level.

New construction can preserve access to air and light while preserving mid-block connections. Water features, landscaping, string lights, and a restaurant activate this space

Townhouses facing a pedestrian mews with entry stoops and landscape beds create a desirable address for these for-sale townhouses in New York City

Mixed-use alley with high quality paving, well lit retail storefronts, seating, and art

Restaurant seating, and connections to important buildings turned this alleyway into a pedestrian only connection.

Plantings, seating, well designed fixtures, attractive signage, and high quality paving materials make this alley a place people feel comfortable gathering

High quality paving materials delineate between the vehicle lane and the pedestrian zones. Newer buildings have windows, awnings,and entrances fronting the alley

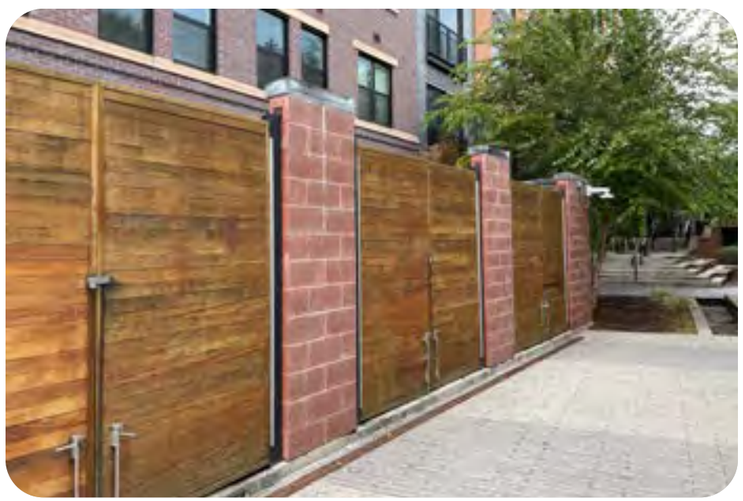
Screening & Locating **Parking & Loading**

PARKING, UTILITY & LOADING SCREENING

In an active, mixed-use district, parking, utilities, trash, and loading will be necessary features. Dumpsters, compactors, ganged meter service areas, and ground-mounted mechanical equipment areas such as condenser units for air conditioning must be screened from public view.

Utility Screening Guidelines/Screening Methods

- Landscaping may be used for screening if the appropriate height and density of the plantings are present.
- Architectural walls with gates can be utilized to screen the utilities adequately.
- Wood, composite, or metal fencing can be used, assuming fencing is tall enough to screen the utilities adequately.
- Interior locations can be utilized, including parking garages and interior trash rooms. Additional screening inside parking garages may be added as appropriate.



An example of dumpster screening utilizing high quality materials that add, instead of detract from the public realm.

Here the screening fencing aligns with the adjacent low wall, helping to create a consistent edge along the sidewalk and successfully masking the mechanical equipment

ON-STREET LOADING

On-street loading may be provided in locations with neighborhoods serving retail, mixed-use buildings, or apartment buildings. Such areas should be designated in each project site plan.

Parking entrances and loading docks should use the same materials as the main building to create a uniform architectural look. If possible, the building massing should ensure that they are slightly recessed from the main pedestrian path of travel.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Zoning & **Building Types**

OVERVIEW

The built form of Downtown is guided by the South Bend Zoning Ordinance, including its zoning map. The Ordinance is a local law that governs the physical development of property, both the form and scale of buildings and the specific use of land.

The future zoning map within this section proposes how each lot within Downtown should be zoned following adoption of this plan.

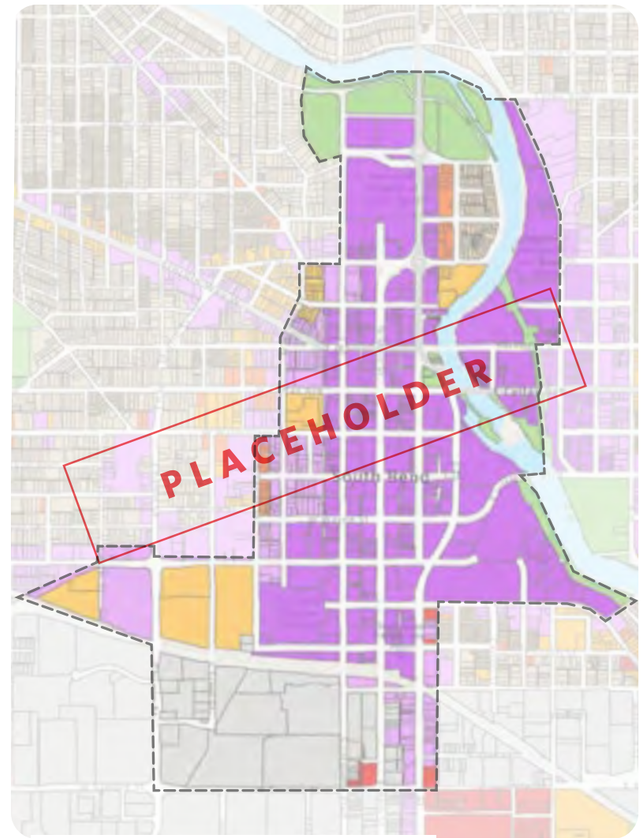
Combined with the regulations found within the South Bend Zoning Ordinance, the aim of the future zoning map is to maintain and enhance Downtown's pedestrian-oriented, urban environment. Automobile-focused development is discouraged. Parking areas should be hidden from view from streets when possible, and access should be carefully planned to minimize the potential for vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. Drive-throughs are discouraged, and if they are present, they should be designed not to be visible from the street. Billboards should not be located downtown; existing ones should be phased out.

As properties are developed or reused, nonconforming conditions should be brought into conformance with the proposed zoning district shown, including landscaping, parking, lighting, signage, and building standards.

This plan seeks to allow a greater quantity and diversity in housing units; doing so will permit people to find housing within downtown that meets their price and lifestyle needs.

The South Bend Zoning Map divides the City into twelve zoning districts. Seven of these districts – U1, U3, UF, NC, DT, OS, and I – are proposed for Downtown. While their use may be appropriate, the U2 and U districts are not currently proposed for Downtown. The S1, S2, and C districts should not be used Downtown because of their suburban nature.

FUTURE ZONING MAP



KEY

- URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD 1
- URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD 3
- URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD FLEX
- NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
- DOWNTOWN
- INDUSTRIAL
- OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN BOUNDARY

U1 Urban Neighborhood 1

Intent

The U1 Urban Neighborhood 1 District supports mostly single-unit detached dwellings, but well designed duplexes would also be appropriate. The U1 District features modest building setbacks and inviting frontages, such as porches and stoops.

Where It Is Appropriate

The U1 District is well suited for the residential areas in and adjacent to the River Bend and North St. Joseph Street Local Historic Districts. The plan would support rezoning properties within the U1 District to the U2 District for projects that augment the historic neighborhood character.

U3 Urban Neighborhood 3

The U3 Urban Neighborhood 3 District supports a full range of housing types, from single-unit dwellings to large multi-unit buildings, placed at small setbacks. Buildings in the U3 District may be built up to four stories in height.

The U3 District is appropriate for scattered areas on the fringe of Downtown, including areas where it provides a transition to lower-density neighborhoods.

UF Urban Neighborhood Flex

Intent

The UF Urban Flex District supports a full range of housing types, together with limited small-scale commercial uses. Buildings typically have small setbacks and are two to four stories.

Where It Is Appropriate

The UF District is proposed for areas outside the Downtown core, including the west side of St. Joseph Street and along Taylor Street. Properties zoned U3 District may be rezoned to the UF District to permit small-scale commercial and institutional uses complementary to their context.

NC Neighborhood Center

The NC Neighborhood Center District supports higher intensity, mixed-use urban centers, often near the intersection of major streets. Buildings usually have small or no setbacks and can be up to four stories.

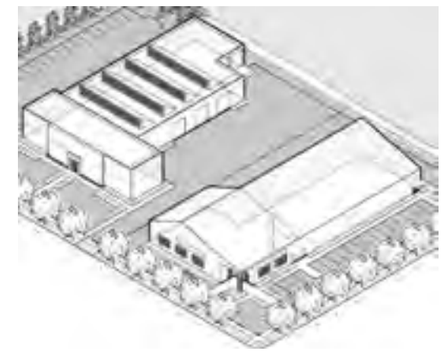
The NC District is well suited for blocks immediately outside the Downtown core, including along William Street and along Michigan Street near the Monroe Park neighborhood. As necessary, properties within the Renaissance District may be rezoned to the NC District to support mixed-use projects including a manufacturing component. Properties zoned U3 District may be rezoned to the NC District to permit small-scale commercial and institutional uses complementary to their context.

DT Downtown

The DT Downtown District supports the development of South Bend's core into a high-intensity, mixed use urban area.

The DT District is appropriate for the Downtown core, including areas on both sides of the St. Joseph River.

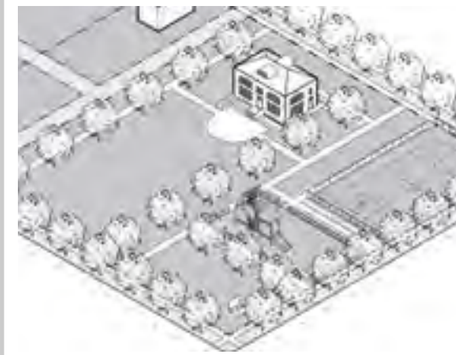
I Industrial



The I Industrial District supports medium- to high-intensity industrial uses, typically grouped along highways and major streets and separated from residential uses. Heavy industry, gas stations, and vehicle sales and service uses are discouraged on properties zoned I District within the Downtown planning area.

The I District is proposed for the southwest corner of the Downtown planning area, south of the railroad tracks.

OS Open Space



The OS Open Space District supports the development of public parks and other open spaces.

The OS District is appropriate for publicly owned park spaces, including Leeper, Gwen Stiver, Pier, Plaza, and Seitz Parks and Jon Hunt Plaza, and any new or expanded public parks in Downtown.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Building Types

The table on the following pages illustrates the character of different building types and shows in which zoning districts they are permitted. Building types do not apply to the OS or I zoning districts,

Zoning Districts

- U1 Urban Neighborhood 1
- U3 Urban Neighborhood 3
- UF Urban Neighborhood Flex
- NC Neighborhood Center
- DT Downtown

Mid-Rise / Tower

DT

Shop

UF NC DT

Stacked Flats

U3 UF NC DT

Apartment House

U3 UF NC DT

Townhouse

U3 UF NC DT

Duplex

U1 U3 UF

Cottage Court

U3 UF

Cottage court photos (top to bottom):
michaelwatkinsarchitect.com
kerneyhomes.com
cottagecourt.com

Detached House

U1 U3 UF

Carriage House

U1 U3 UF NC

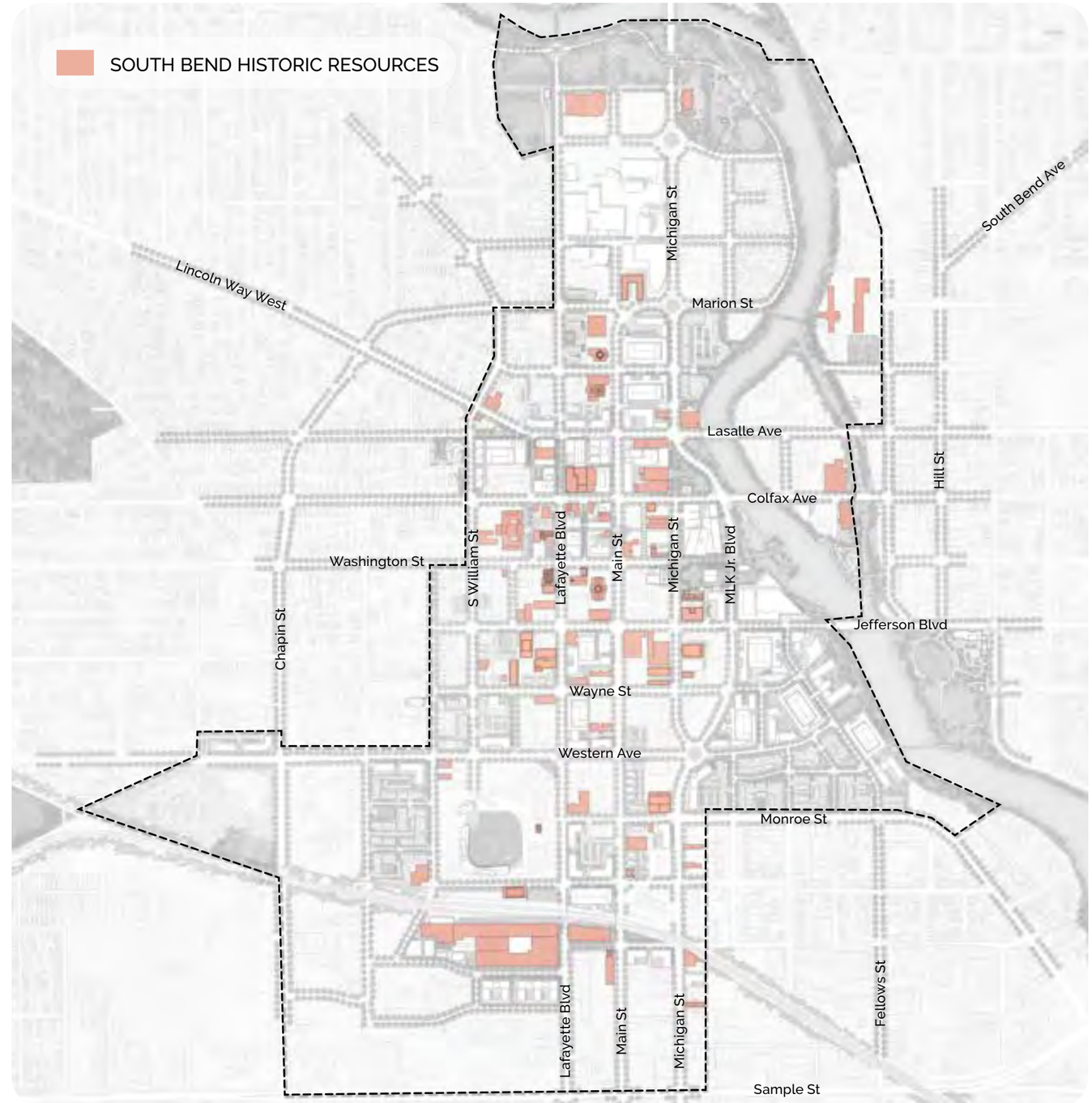
Historic Preservation

Historic **Preservation**

What remains needs to be preserved and reinvigorated to make Downtown a more welcoming place for living and working.

WHY HISTORIC PRESERVATION?

Historic preservation provides an opportunity to breathe new life into the heart of Downtown and reactivate South Bend's historic buildings. Historic properties tell the story of South Bend's development, from its industrial roots to its evolving urban landscape. The revitalization of these properties contributes to both cultural vibrancy and economic sustainability. Small businesses have been shown to favor and thrive in historic buildings, and well-maintained historic architecture is linked to increases in property values, foot traffic, and greater community engagement. Successful rehabilitation of a historic buildings often spurs additional investment nearby. In the context of renewed interest in urban living, historic architecture also serves as a desirable draw and feature of walkable downtowns.



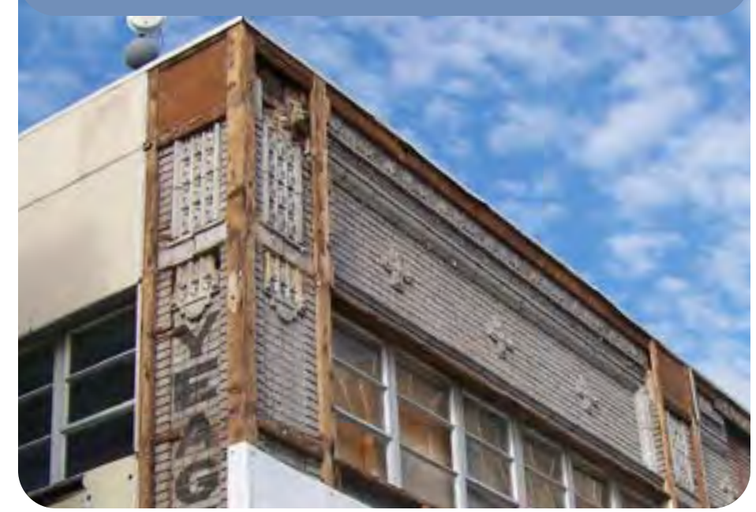
Preservation Principles for Downtown

These are four key guidelines for the restoration, reuse, and renovation of historic properties in Downtown. The level of intervention necessary on each property varies, but these guidelines are applicable to all historic structures, not just the specific buildings included in this section.

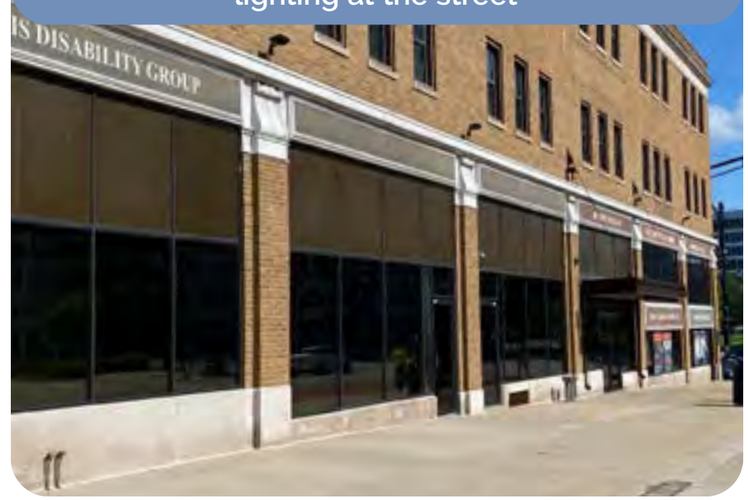
For additional guidance on best practices see the South Bend Historic Preservation Standards. It is a series of guidelines and best practices about the treatment of historic properties, building materials, and of alterations to existing structures and proposed new structures.

1. Bring active uses to historic structures

2. Preserve original building materials and repair damaged facades



3. Engage the public realm with active uses, transparent glazing, and improved signage and lighting at the street



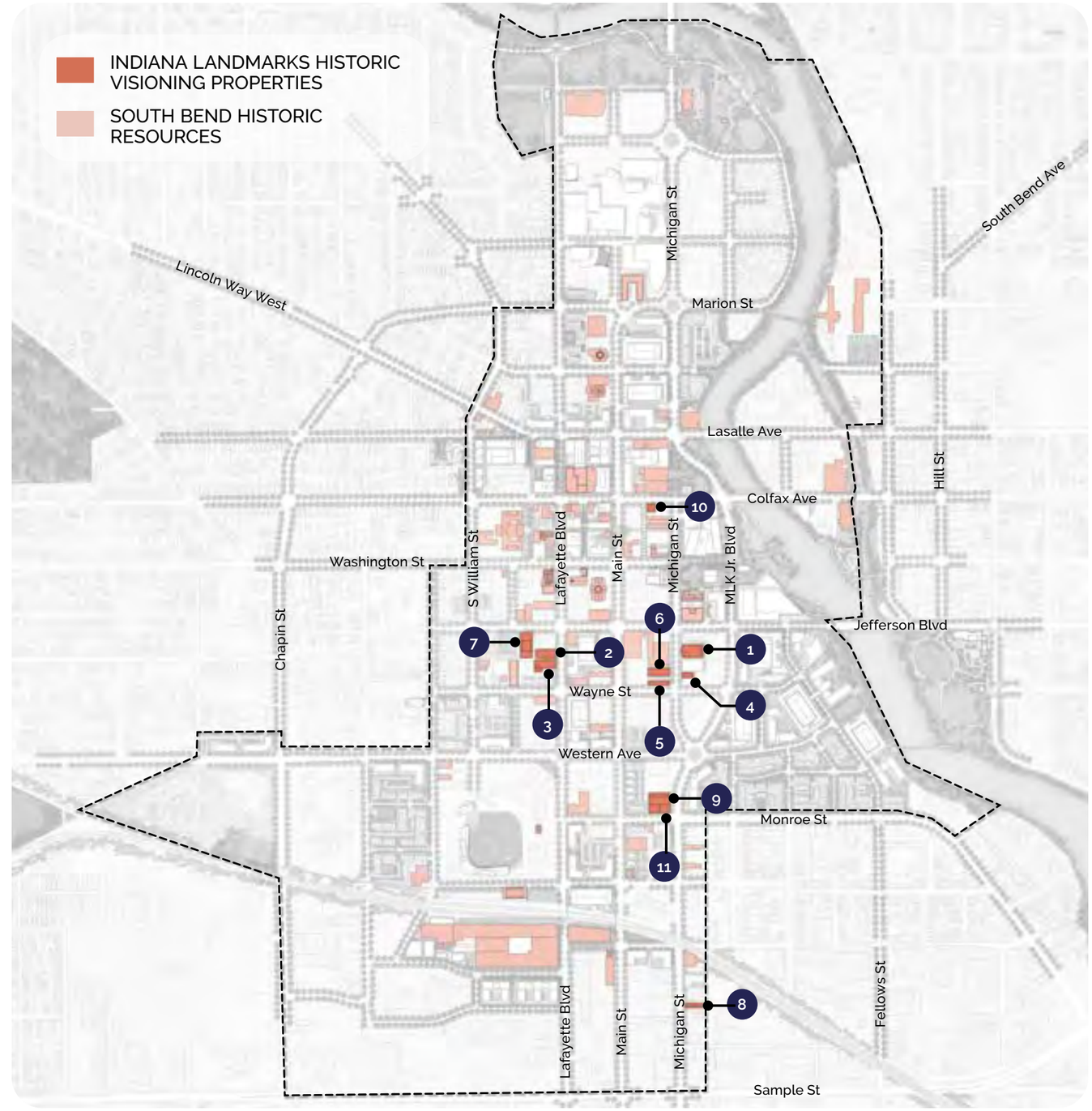
4. When adding to historic buildings, be sensitive to the historic structure and be mindful of setbacks, massing, character, and materiality

Historic **Preservation**

INDIANA LANDMARKS HISTORIC VISIONING PROPERTIES

This section highlights and creates a vision for eleven properties that are important, at risk, landmarks. Additional downtown historic resources are included on the map.

1. 212-216 S Michigan Street
2. 215-217 S Lafayette Boulevard
3. 219-225 S Lafayette Boulevard
4. 228 S Michigan Street
5. 235 S Michigan Street
6. 229 S Michigan Street
7. 316 W Jefferson Boulevard
8. 740 S Michigan Street
9. 425 S Michigan Street
10. 112 W Colfax Avenue
11. 435 S Michigan Street



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Historic Properties

1. STATE THEATER

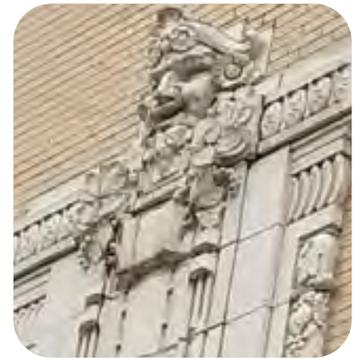
212-216 S Michigan Street

The National Register-listed State Theater ("Blackstone Theater") was completed in 1921 and was designed by Henry L. Newhouse, known for theaters in the Chicago area, The State Theater ceased operations as a theater in 1977 and again in 1996, after a three-year attempt to reopen. The theater has been vacant since 2016. The South Bend Redevelopment Commission holds a facade easement on the west-facing, main facade.

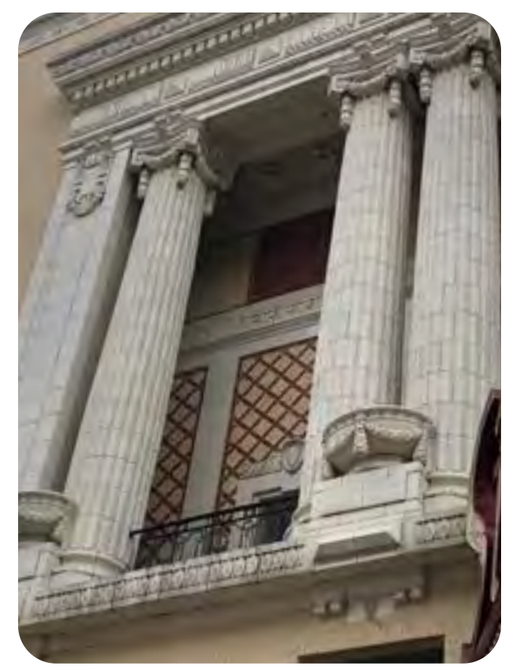
Ahead of its time, the State Theater remains an icon in the heart of Downtown.

As one of two Vaudeville era theaters left in South Bend, reactivation of this building would give new energy to the South Michigan corridor and retail heart of the City. The Classical revival style theater retains it's original facade complete with multistory terra cotta columns, urns, and heavy entablature. The later-added marquee has become a defining feature of the street.

- Ground floor retail/commercial space would establish the essential street-facing retail spaces on the 200 block of South Michigan
- Marquee could be used creatively, not only as business advertisement, but for community engagement, art and public encouragement
- The theater portion of the building could be reactivated to fill a gap in medium sized venues (seating 800-1000)
- Office spaces on the second floor can support the operations of a theater or be adapted for local business spaces



Original building facade above on right side of photo circa 19XX



Original building facade above on right side of photo circa 19XX

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

2. 215-217 S LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD

Built around 1917, this building housed the Cadillac Motor Sales Company and garage. Over the next half century, various auto dealers and one boat dealer occupied the building. In the late 1990s, Herrman & Goetz purchased the building and covered the original facade. Today the building sits vacant.

Historically, this site was a mixed use site featuring a sales floor, service garage and general office space.

- Reuse would provide multiple retail or commercial spaces
- Potential for residential units or on-site small scale manufacturing on the second floor or rear of ground floor

What's Underneath?

- Original brick construction with patterns and recessed areas that create interest and depth
- Decorative terra cotta inlays, cornice and window trim further enhance the facade
- Original window openings maximize the natural light and balance the overall facade

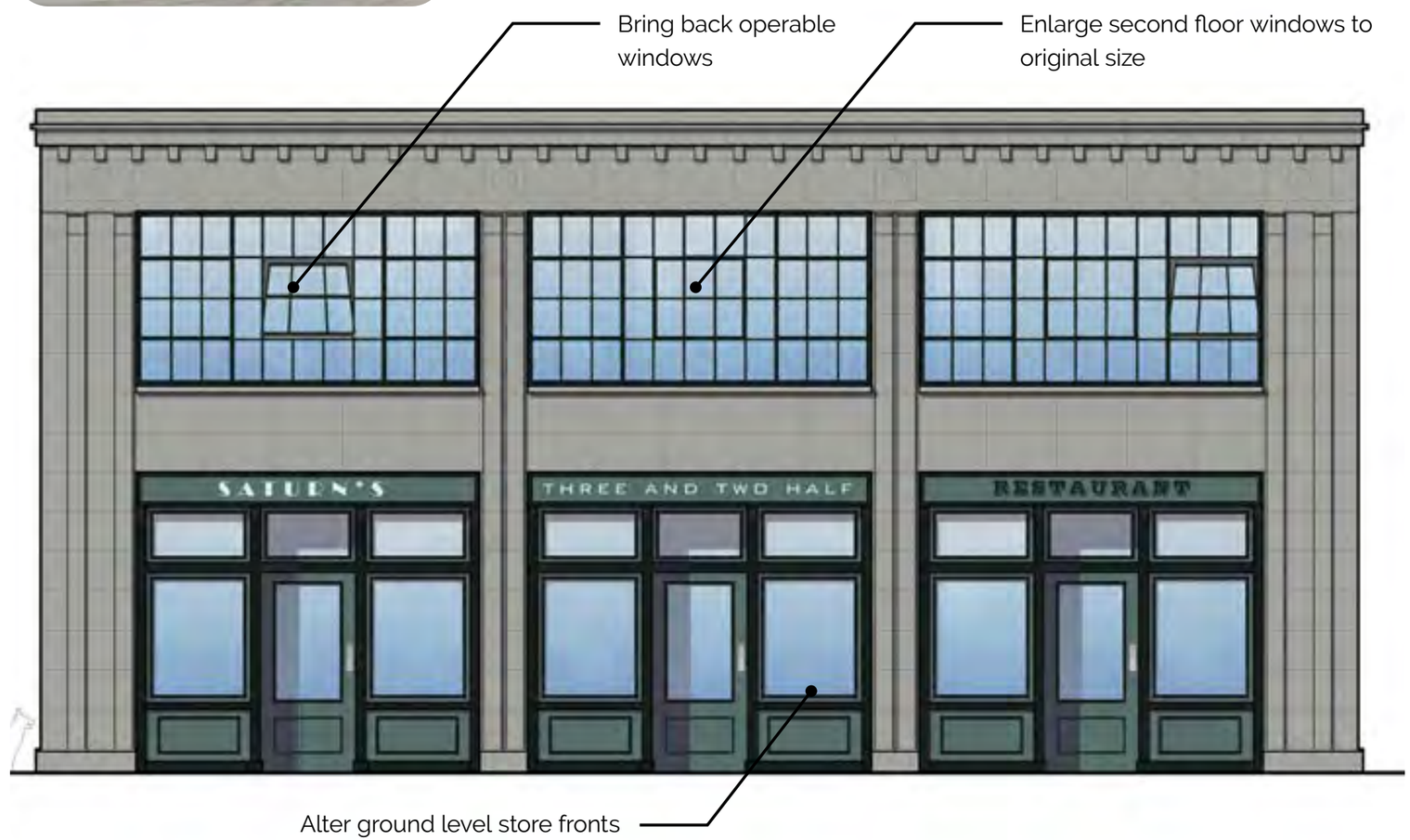
3. 219-225 S LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD

Built around 1927, the building was occupied by the Richard R. Kuehn Company auto dealer, one of many auto dealerships that would reside in this building. In 1932, the building was briefly used as a temporary post office while the new post office and federal building was being constructed.

Historically, this was a mixed use site featuring a sales floor, service garage and general office space.

- Introduce residential units on the second floor or possible use of the second floor as gallery or artists' spaces
- Create a ground floor retail environment with large storefronts and updated signage to engage with the pedestrian environment

Slightly altered original building facade circa 1980



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

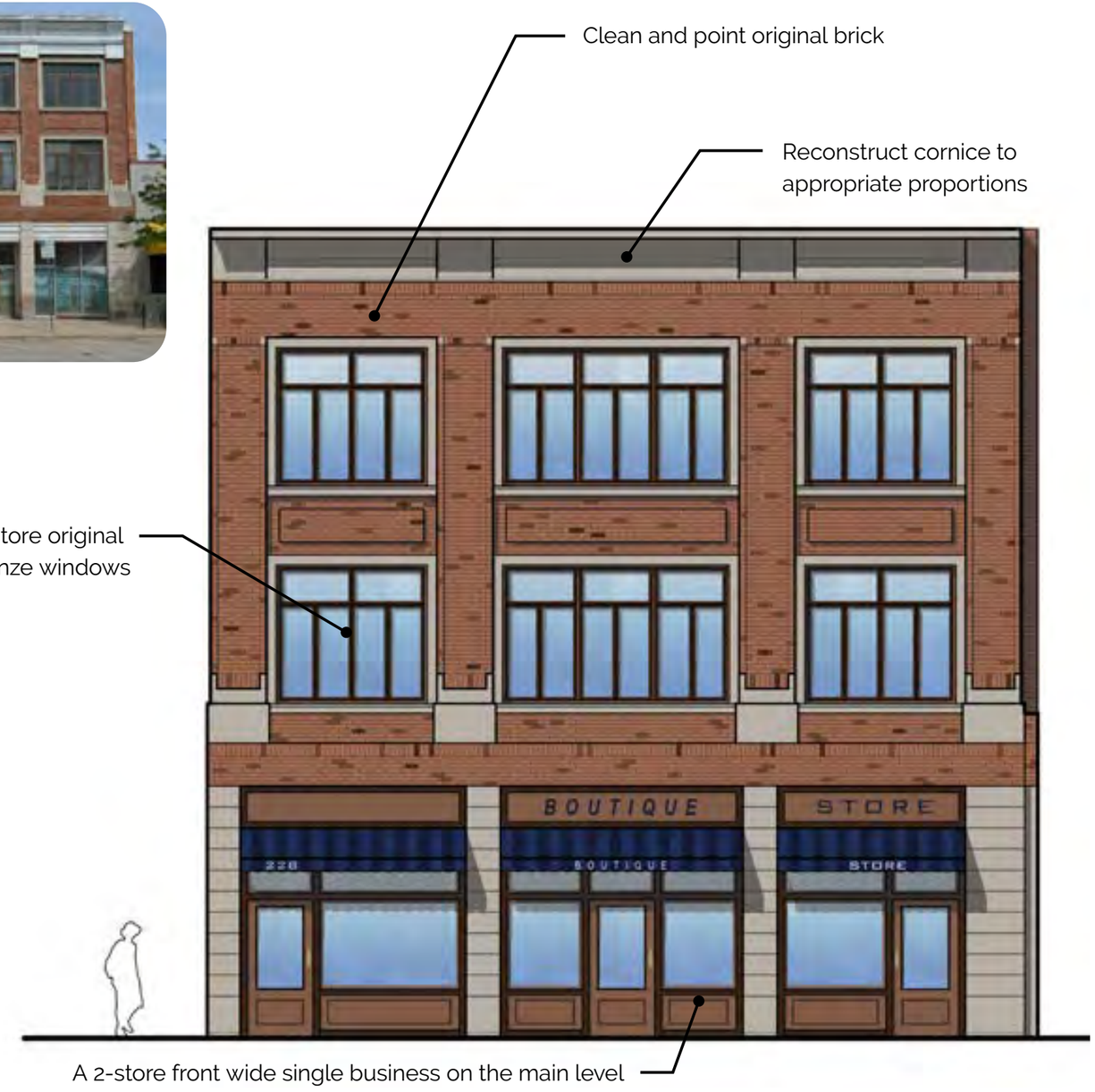
4. 228 S MICHIGAN STREET

Built in 1926 after a fire destroyed the previous building, Greenblatt's Fur Shop occupied the building, and used the first floor as a showroom and the upper floors as manufacturing space. In 1987, parts of the facade were restored and a false metal front that was added in 1949 was removed.

Historically, the goods sold here were manufactured on site.

- Reintroduce small scale manufacturing on-site with sales and showroom up front on the ground floor
- Potential to add upper floor residential units

Original building facade seen at the far right of the photo Circa late 1920s.



5. 235 S MICHIGAN STREET

The current building dates to 1924, when the previous 1890s building was extended and renovated. After the alteration, the building featured store space along both West Wayne and South Michigan Streets and office spaces on the upper floors. The first floor was converted to restaurant space in the 1980s.

Storefronts drew foot traffic from both W. Wayne and S. Michigan streets.

- Introduce residential or office units on the second, third and forth floors and possible use of the roof as an amenity space
- Create varied ground floor storefronts that engage the pedestrian walking from W. Wayne Street or along the Michigan Street Retail Core
- The Wayne street facade offers opportunity for multiple retail and commercial configurations

Remove sun room additions from south facade

Original building facade above on right side of photo circa 1920s

Restore cast iron cornice

Remove paint clean and point original brick

Reintroduce storefront to west facade

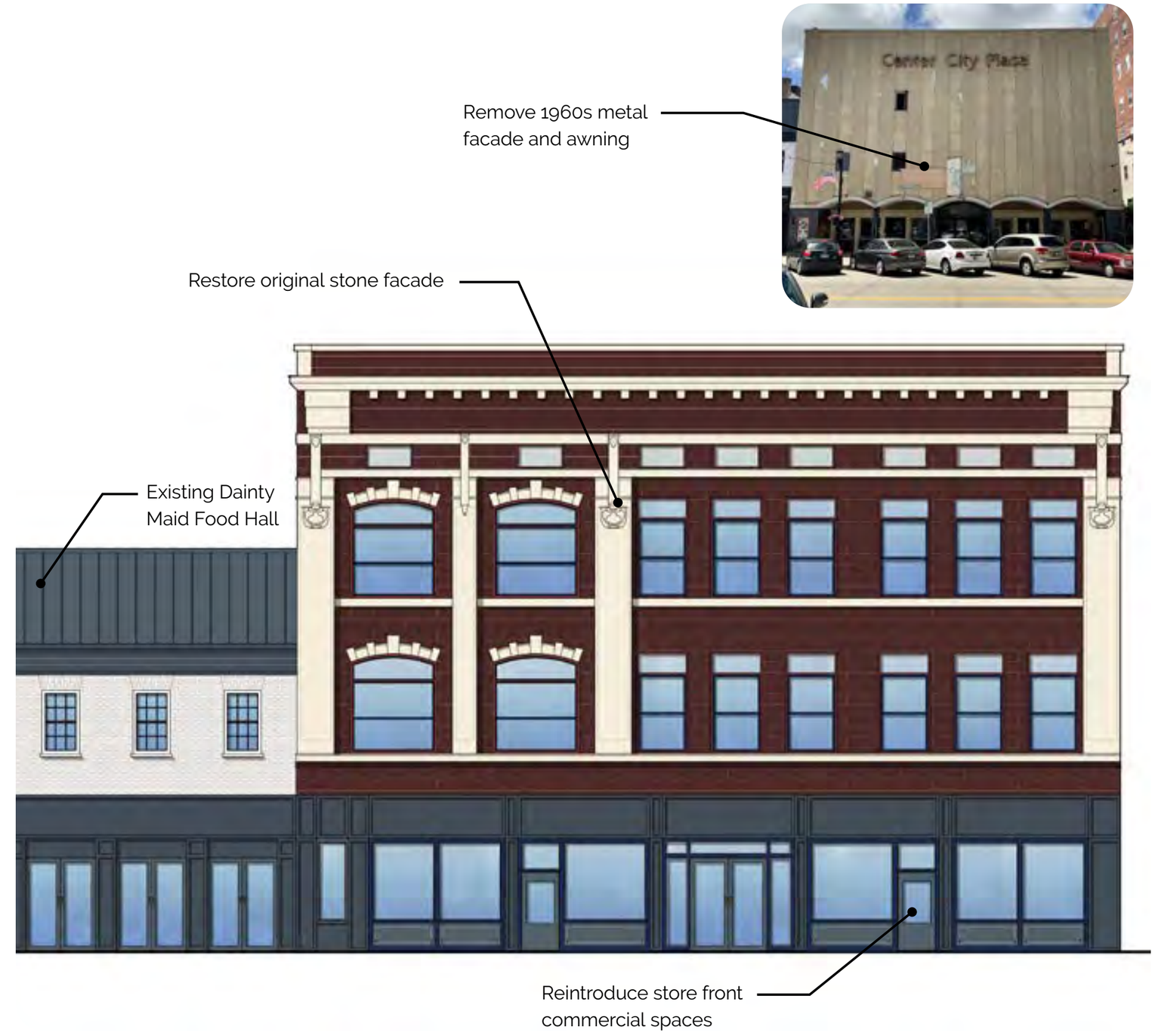
6. 229 S MICHIGAN STREET

The Center City Building as it stands today encompasses two early 20th century buildings. Until 1943, part of the current building was in use as Merchants National Bank. When the bank closed, the Grand Leader department store expanded, and in 1960 the building was extensively remodeled and the steel facade installed.

Original stone lies under the 1960s metal facade.

- Reestablish storefronts that encourage double facing retail
- Large square footage offers opportunities for mixed use including retail, small scale manufacturing, a boutique hotel, studios and office space
- Original facade brings interest and connects the future to the historic walkable retail corridor of South Michigan

Original building facade above on right side of photo circa 19XX

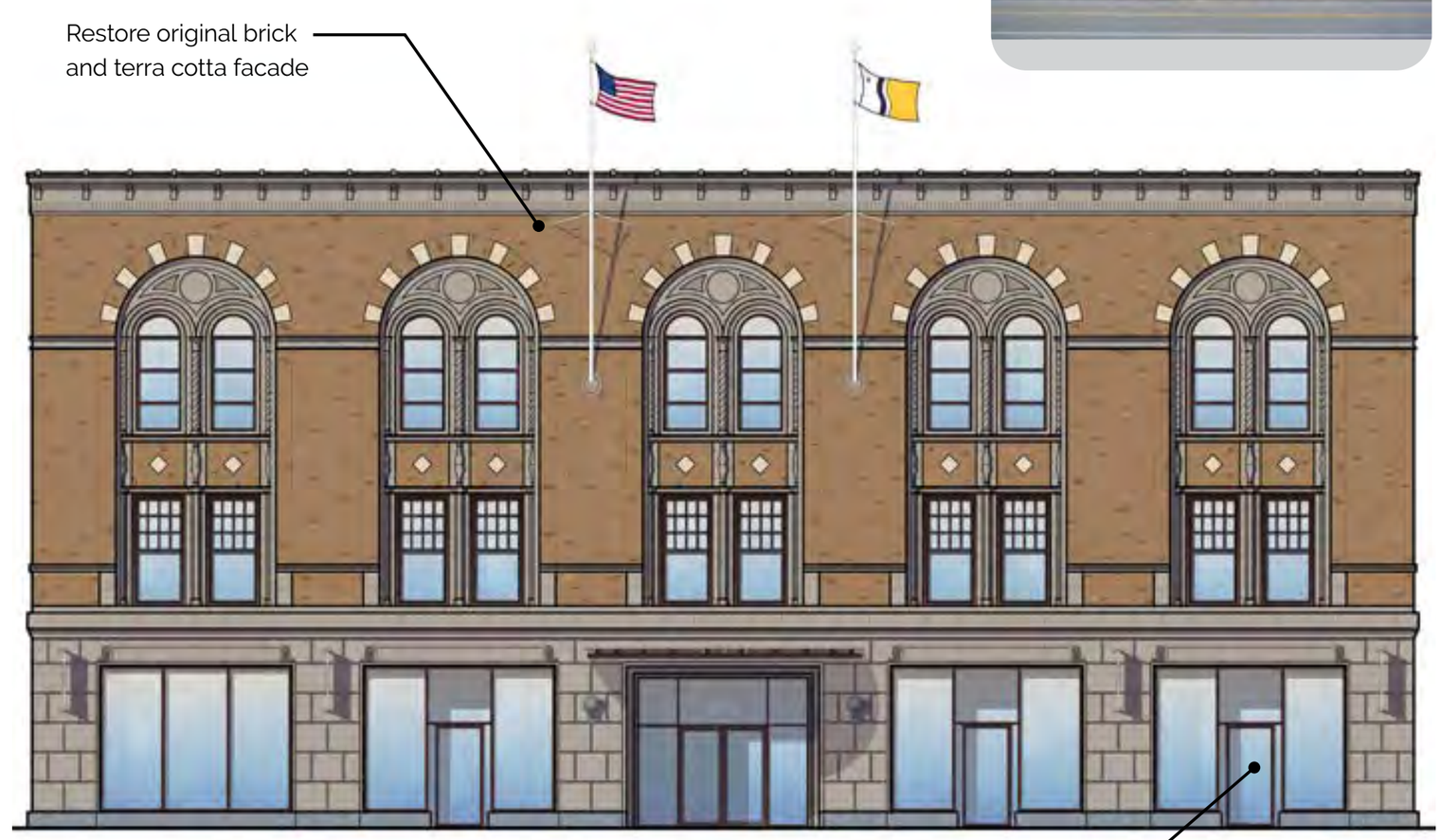


7. 316 W JEFFERSON BOULEVARD

This stone and brick building was completed in 1924 for the Knights of Columbus and was designed by Nicol, Sholer, and Hoffman of Lafayette, Indiana. The building was purchased by the Indiana Club in 1936, though it is now vacant.

The building was a pillar of early 20th century social life.

- Create multiple retail or art spaces on the ground floor, showcasing activity inside with transparent glass
- Make use of the upper floor ballroom as a mid-size venue space or high-ceilinged lofts
- Flexible 1-4 retail spaces, commercial, event and office opportunities
- Should not be residential on ground floor



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

8. 740 S MICHIGAN STREET

This brick and terra cotta building was built in 1928 by the Indiana Lumber and Manufacturing Company to act as a showroom for their lumber. The building originally stood in front of the company's sprawling lumber yard. In 1940, Bendix Local 9 bought the building for use as its union hall, linking it to South Bend's rich labor history.

9. 425 S MICHIGAN STREET

This brick building was built in 1929, and Sears, Roebuck and Co. moved in shortly after its completion. Sears left the building in 1949, and the locally-known Inwood's Store moved in. Inwood's remained in the building until the store's final years in 1989,

10. 112 W COLFAX AVENUE

This building was built in 1901, with a new and secondhand store on the first floor and residences on the second floor. In 1914, a saloon opened in the building, but it was almost immediately placed into receivership. The Colfax Restaurant opened in part of the building in 1921, and by 1969, the Colfax Restaurant ("The Loft") had expanded to the rest of the building, which has held restaurants since.

11. 435 S MICHIGAN STREET

Henry Greenblatt and Phillip Smith built this commercial building in 1922. The space originally offered eight separate store spaces along with offices. Throughout its history, the building has hosted a variety of businesses, the most notable being the Whitmer-McNease Music Company.

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Implementation

Implementation Strategies

From the beginning of the process, the City of South Bend approached the Downtown South Bend 2045 plan through the lens of implementability. This informed the selection criteria for the interventions, the vetting and development of action steps, and the intentional involvement of partners early in the process. The plan is based in market projections of what is realistic and achievable in the 20-year timeframe. The implementation strategy laid out in this chapter addresses lead responsibilities and roles, partnerships, and timeframes.

FUNDING SOURCES

Public Funding Sources

Public funding sources form the base of the capital stack for projects with public benefit. Public funding sources are appropriate for projects such as:

- Creation of public gathering space and parks
- Street transformations and public right-of-way projects
- Improvements to walking and bicycling networks
- Utility improvements
- Green infrastructure and drainage improvements
- Public-use buildings (community centers, museums, schools, libraries, government facilities, etc.)
- Financial incentives for private development projects that are not yet market feasible (such as low- or no-interest financing, bonds, 99-year land leases on public land, tax credits, small grants, etc.)

Private Funding Sources

Private funding sources typically fund the majority of private development (for-profit buildings and uses on privately owned land). Private funding sources typically include:

- Conventional bank debt
- Subordinated debt
- Private capital and equity

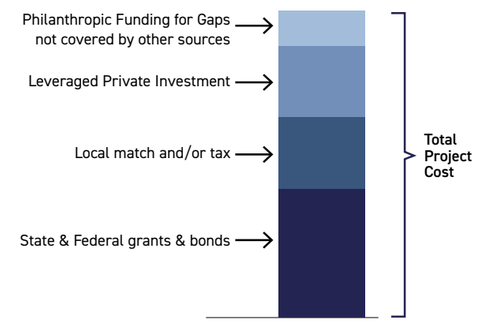
Philanthropic Funding Sources

Philanthropic grants should act primarily as the gap equity for both public and private projects. The intent is to ensure that grants from donors and foundations are leveraging the maximum public and private sources first. Grant requirements will be defined to ensure the desired impact.

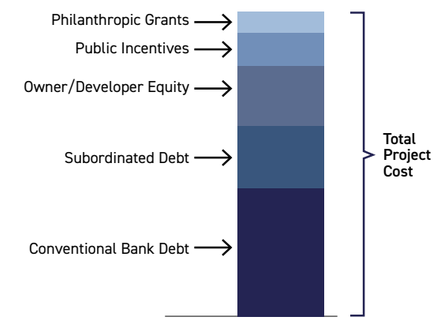
How will projects be implemented?

- Public-private partnerships (PPPs)
- Publicly-funded and publicly-led projects within rights-of-way and on publicly-owned land
- Incentives and improved economic environment for private investment
- Ordinance and policy updates
- Public support for taxes and millages
- Rezoning and entitlement of strategic parcels
- Leveraging state and philanthropic grants
- Incremental improvements to quality-of-life

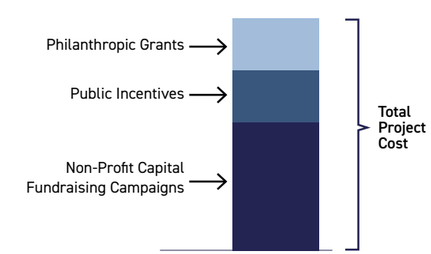
Example Funding Stack for a Public Project



Example Funding Stack for a Private Project



Example Funding Stack for a Non-Profit Project



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

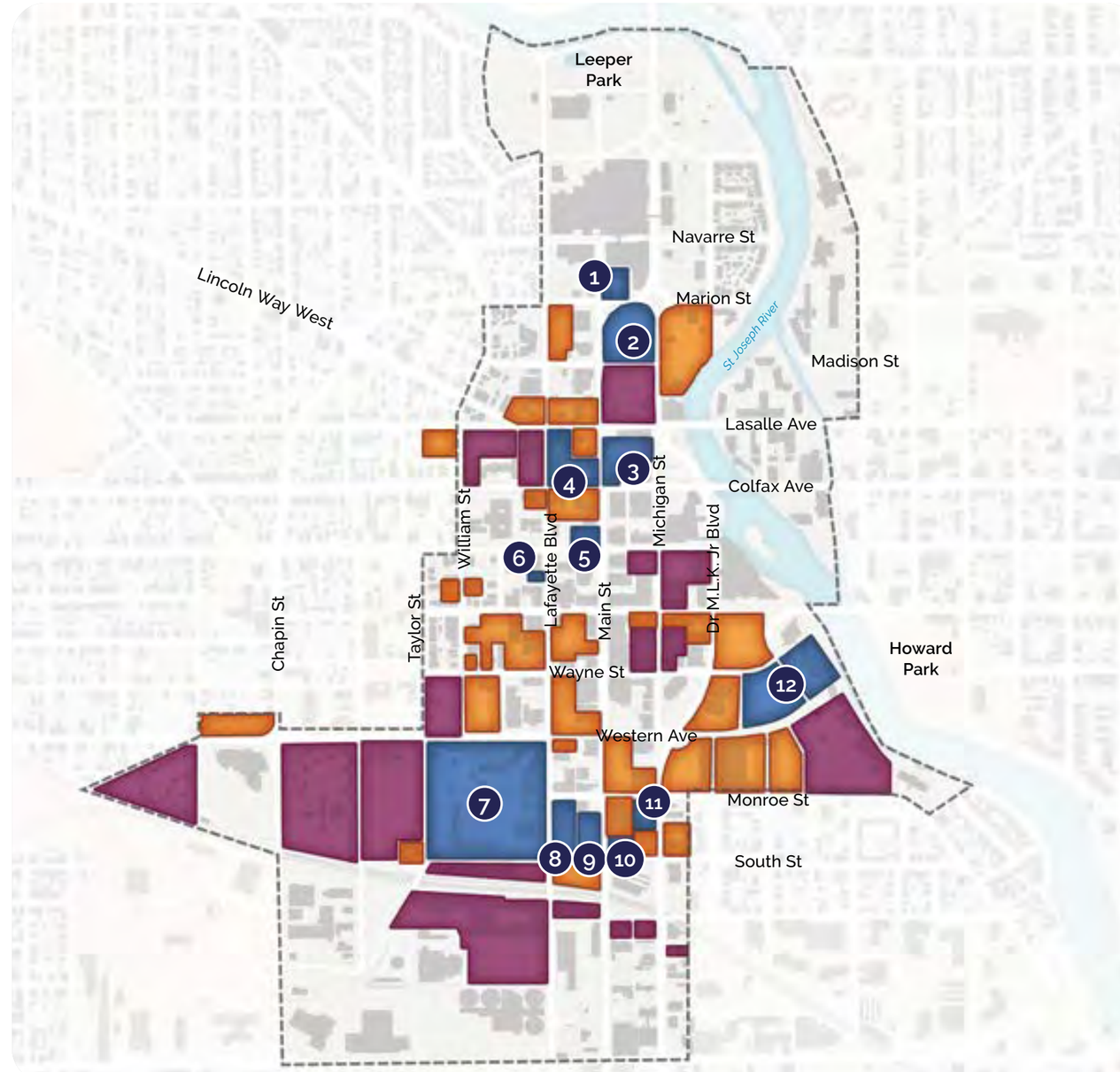
Downtown **Tomorrow**

TODAY
Established Program
Will not change substantially

2045
Flexible Program
Could have significant adjustment

DEVELOPMENT IN PROCESS | PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT | OPPORTUNITY SITES

1. MarMain
2. Madison Lifestyle District (North Block)
3. Morris Development Residential
4. Development in Process Phase 1
5. Liberty Tower Phase IV
6. Lafayette Building
7. Four Winds Field
8. Stadium Flats
9. Diamond View
10. SoMa Lofts
11. The Monreaux
12. Riverfront West Crowe Building



Plan **Implementation Matrix**

This matrix highlights the short- medium- and long-term action items, and potential partners that will move this community vision forward.

FOCUS AREA 1: THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
1.1	**Retail Core along Michigan Street**						
1.11	**Sidewalk and Storefront Improvements** — enhancements to outdoor dining districts, facade improvements	■		City of South Bend, business and building owners in the Michigan Street core	■		
1.12	**City Center Place Building & Facade Improvements** — Adaptive reuse with ground floor retail uses, restoration of the historic terracotta facade		■	Private owners, City of South Bend	■		
1.13	**State Theater Adaptive Reuse** — adaptive reuse of the building for an arts or entertaining use, restoration of the historic facade		■	Private owners, City of South Bend, arts organizations	■	■	■
1.2	**Jon Hunt Memorial Plaza**						
1.21	**Morris Performing Arts Center Addition** — expansion of the building to add event space, restrooms, and circulation	■	■	The Morris Performing Arts Center	■		
1.22	**Close Michigan Street & Update Plaza** — enhancements to the public space and addition of active retail	■		City of South Bend, arts organizations and food & beverage operator		■	
1.3	**The Town Square**						
1.31	**Former College Football Hall of Fame** — Adaptive reuse of the building or demolition and construction of a new family-friendly destination use	■	■	City of South Bend, food & beverage operator	■	■	■
1.32	**1st Source Center** — Ground floor activation west of the atrium entrance		■	Private owner, City of South Bend (incentives)	■	■	
1.33	**High-Density Housing** — Development of high-density housing on vacant or underutilized lots along Michigan Street		■	Private owner, City of South Bend (incentives)		■	■

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

FOCUS AREA 1: THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
1.4	**The Century Center & Jefferson Blvd.**						
1.41	**Century Center Intervention** — Renovation and reconfiguration of the Century Center to add additional exhibition & prefunction space at the corner of M.L.K. Blvd. and Jefferson Blvd.	■		City of South Bend	■	■	
1.42	**Jefferson Blvd. Realignment** — Reconnect Jefferson Blvd. more directly to Downtown retail district	■		City of South Bend	■	■	
1.5	**A Big Idea For the Future: A Signature Riverfront Park**						
1.51	**Century Center Intervention** — Major renovation and reconfiguration of the Century Center to remove the portion of the building north of the Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd. entrance	■		City of South Bend		■	■
1.52	**Signature Downtown Riverfront Park** — Creation of a downtown riverfront park in the location of the northern portion of the Century Center; improved connections to the island and riverfront trail system	■		City of South Bend, food & beverage operator		■	■

FOCUS AREA 2: INNOVATION & INSTITUTIONAL CATALYSTS

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
2.1	**Tech & Talent Innovation District**						
2.11	**Phase 1 Renovation of the Tribune Building** — Major renovation of the Tribune Building and building of additional tech office space		■	University of Notre Dame Development Partner	■		
2.12	**Tech & Talent District Future Phases** — Building on the catalytic effect of Phase 1, future phases will add new additional office, rehab historic buildings that fill in many of the vacant lots adjacent to the Tribune building		■	University of Notre Dame, Additional Tech business partners Development Partner		■	■
2.13	**Transformation of Lafayette Street** — narrow existing pavement, widen sidewalks, utilize pavers & street plantings to improve the pedestrian quality of Lafayette to create a unified streetscape experience for the Tech and Talent District	■		City of South Bend	■		
2.2	**Beacon Health**						
2.21	**Hospital Expansion** — $230 million expansion for additional hospital beds and patient care facilities		■	Beacon Health	■		
2.22	**Improved Pedestrian Connections & Public Space** — Promote walkable connections from Beacon Health into adjacent park & neighborhoods, add attractive gathering spaces	■	■	Beacon Health, City of South Bend	■	■	
2.3	**Sports & Entertainment District**						
2.31	**Stadium Enhancements** — Improvements, additional seating, new club building, party decks, and suites		■	Four Winds Field	■		
2.32	**Parking Deck** — Parking deck to serve the Sports & Entertainment District, Transit hubs, and Renaissance District, opening up current parking fields for development	■		City of South Bend		■	■
2.33	**Mixed-Use Buildings in Vacant Lots** — Development of high-density housing and retail in adjacent vacant lots				■	■	

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

FOCUS AREA 2: INNOVATION & INSTITUTIONAL CATALYSTS

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
2.4	**Renaissance District**						
2.41	**Transformation of Building 84 & Studebaker Administration Building** — Renovating and adaptively reusing the existing Studebaker Campus buildings to create a tech campus		■	Studebaker Building 84 LLC, Additional tech & educational partners	■	■	■
2.42	**Mixed-Use Development** — Bring additional uses and infill adjacent vacant lots		■	Studebaker Building 84 LLC, Additional tech & development partners		■	■

FOCUS AREA 3: NEIGHBORHOODS

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
3.1	**Riverfront West**						
3.11	**High-density Rental Developments** — Development of multifamily buildings along the riverfront within a well connected new neighborhood that integrates into the existing street network		■	Private owner, City of South Bend (incentives)	■	■	
3.12	**Mixed-Use and Commercial Uses** — Development of hotel, ballroom, retail and parking deck to support Century Center activities		■	Private owner, City of South Bend (incentives)		■	■
3.13	**For-sale Residential Development** — Development of fee-simple, for sale housing on the southern half of the neighborhood, in close proximity to other single-family housing		■	Homebuilder or Development Partner, City of South Bend (incentives)	■	■	■
3.14	**Public Space Network** — Coordination of residential developments to improve public space connectivity to the riverfront trail system	■		City of South Bend	■	■	
3.2	**Downtown North Neighborhoods**						
3.21	**Mix of Housing Developments** — Incentivize development of a range of housing types in close proximity to new jobs, infilling vacant and underutilized lots		■	Private owner, City of South Bend (incentives)	■	■	■
3.22	**Madison Lifestyle District**— Bring high density housing & additional services to support new housing		■	Development Partner, City of South Bend	■		
3.3	**Western Avenue Transformation**						
3.31	**Phase 1 Mixed-Income Housing** — Replace the Rabbi Shulman building and Monroe Circle townhouses with mixed-income housing and community amenities and gathering space	■	■	City of South Bend, Housing Authority of South Bend, Community Foundation of St. Joseph County	■		
3.32	**Future Redevelopment of Housing Authority Western Avenue Properties** — Improve current housing, add new housing, and connect to and build on Phase 1 initiative	■	■	City of South Bend, Housing Authority of South Bend, Community Foundation of St. Joseph County, KROC Center		■	

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

FOCUS AREA 4: PUBLIC REALM

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
4.1	**Gateways to Downtown** — Improve entrances to downtown with landscaping, art, lighting, and signage	■		City of South Bend	■	■	
4.2	**Riverfront and Gathering Spaces** — Ensure public access to the riverfront with all private development and rehabilitate closed riverfront trails to create a comprehensive system	■		City of South Bend, Private Partners	■	■	
4.3	**Streetscapes for People** — Plant street trees, include planting buffers and bioswales between cars and pedestrian walkways, improve street crossings	■		City of South Bend	■	■	■
4.4	**Multi-modal Connectivity** — Implement proposed bike trails, and complete connections between trails and bike lanes to have a complete connected network	■		City of South Bend	■	■	■
4.5	**Transit** — Increase frequency of key bus routes to 15 minutes or less	■	■	City of South Bend, Transpo	■		
4.6	**Union Station** — Relocate the Amtrak Station to Union Station and work with NICTD to implement their 20 year plan for a downtown South Shore station	■	■	City of South Bend, Amtrak, NICTD	■		■

PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Appendix

Table of **Contents**

Appendix 137

Historic **Preservation** 139

Under Separate Cover

Market Analysis **Report**

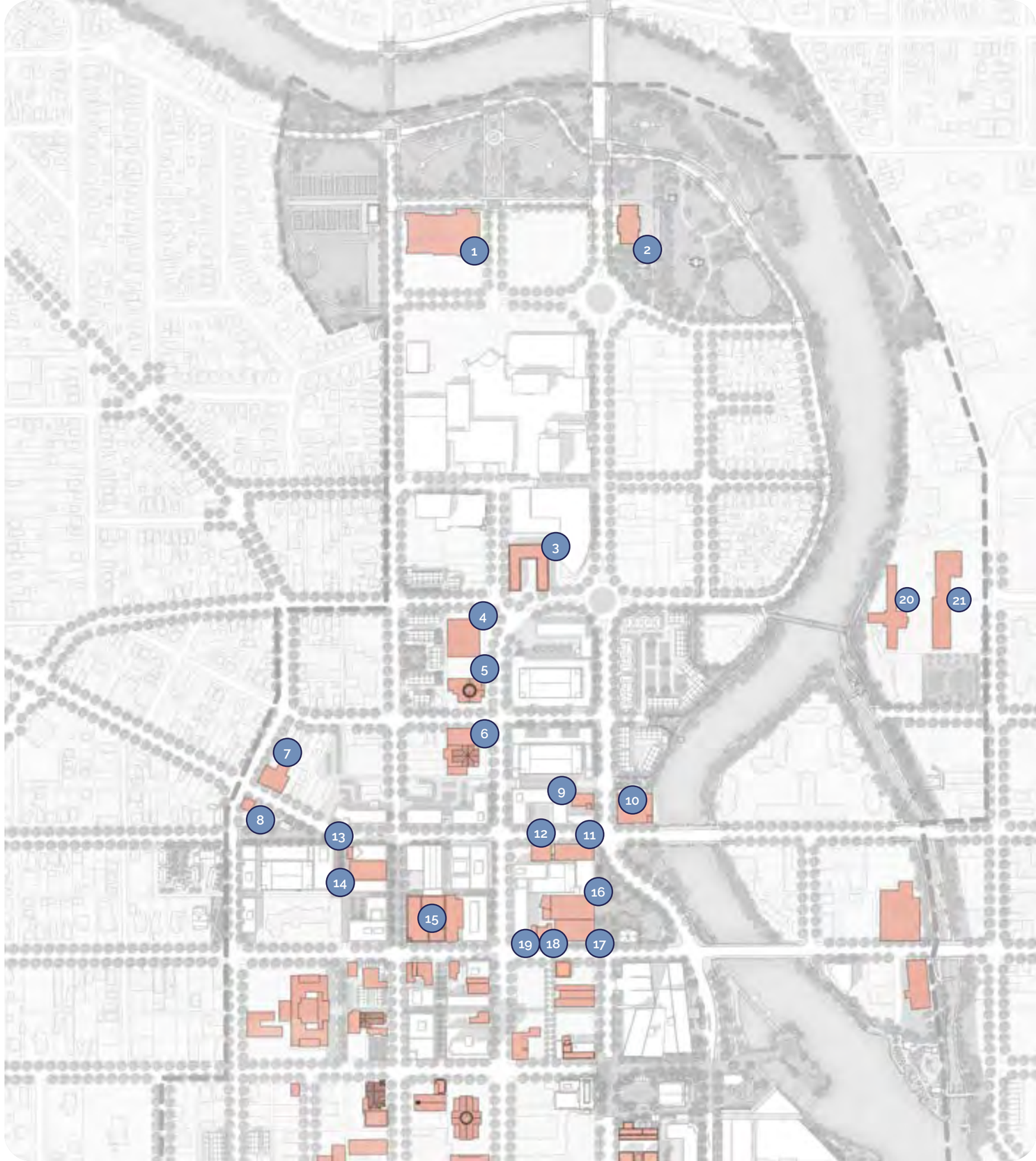
Parking Analysis **Report**

January-March 2024 Community Engagement **Summary**

Historic **Preservation**

South Bend Historic Resources

1. James Madison School 832 North Lafayette Blvd
2. North Pumping Station 820 North Michigan St.
3. MarMain Apartments 125 West Marion St.
4. Scottish Rite 427 North Main St.
5. South Bend Civic Theatre 403 North Main St
6. United Methodist Church 333 North Main St.
7. Geyer Building, 341,343,345 Lincoln Way West
8. 340 Lincoln Way West
9. NIPSCO Building, 307 North Michigan St (N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd)
10. St. Joseph Station, 109 East LaSalle Ave
11. LaSalle Hotel, 237 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
12. Hoffman Hotel, 120 West LaSalle Ave
13. Frederickson Candy Store, 314 West LaSalle Street
14. W.R. Hinkle Building, 223-225 North Lafayette
15. South Bend Tribune Building, 225 West Colfax Ave
16. Morris Performing Arts Building, Palace Theatre, 211 North Michigan St
17. Palais Royale, 105 West Colfax Ave
18. LaSalle Grill, Historic St. Jospeh Hotel, 115 West Colfax
19. Griffon Bookstore, Kerr & Co Building, 121 West Colfax Ave
20. Singer Sewing Machine Factory, 403 East Madison St
21. Singer Sewing Machine Factory, 425 East Madison St



South Bend Historic Resources

22 South Bend Home Telephone Company Building, 212 West Colfax Ave

23 I&M Electric Company Building, 220 West Colfax Ave

24 Brown Building 226 West Colfax Ave

25 Berteling Building, 228 West Colfax Ave

26 Central Automotive, 135 North Lafayette Blvd

27 Grace Building, 312/314 West Colfax Ave

28 Central High, 330 West Colfax Ave

29 St. James Episcopal Church, 117 North Lafayette Blvd

30 113-117 North Main Street

31 Madison Oyster Bar, 133 North Main St.

32 127 North Michigan Street

33 125 North Michigan Street

34 123 North Michigan Street

35 American Trust Company Building, 111 West Washington St

36 JMS Building, 108 North Main St

37 Remedy Building, 402 West Washington

38 First Presbyterian Church, 101 South Lafayette Blvd

39 The Tower Building, 216/218 West Washington St

40 Lafayette/Dean Building, 115 South Lafayette Blvd

41 2nd County Courthouse, 112 South Lafayette Blvd

42 3rd County Courthouse, 101 South Main St

43 122 South Michigan

44 Jefferson Building, Sherland Building, 105 East Jefferson Blvd

45 Farmers Security Building, 133 South Main St

46 125 South Lafayette

47 315-319 West Jefferson Boulevard

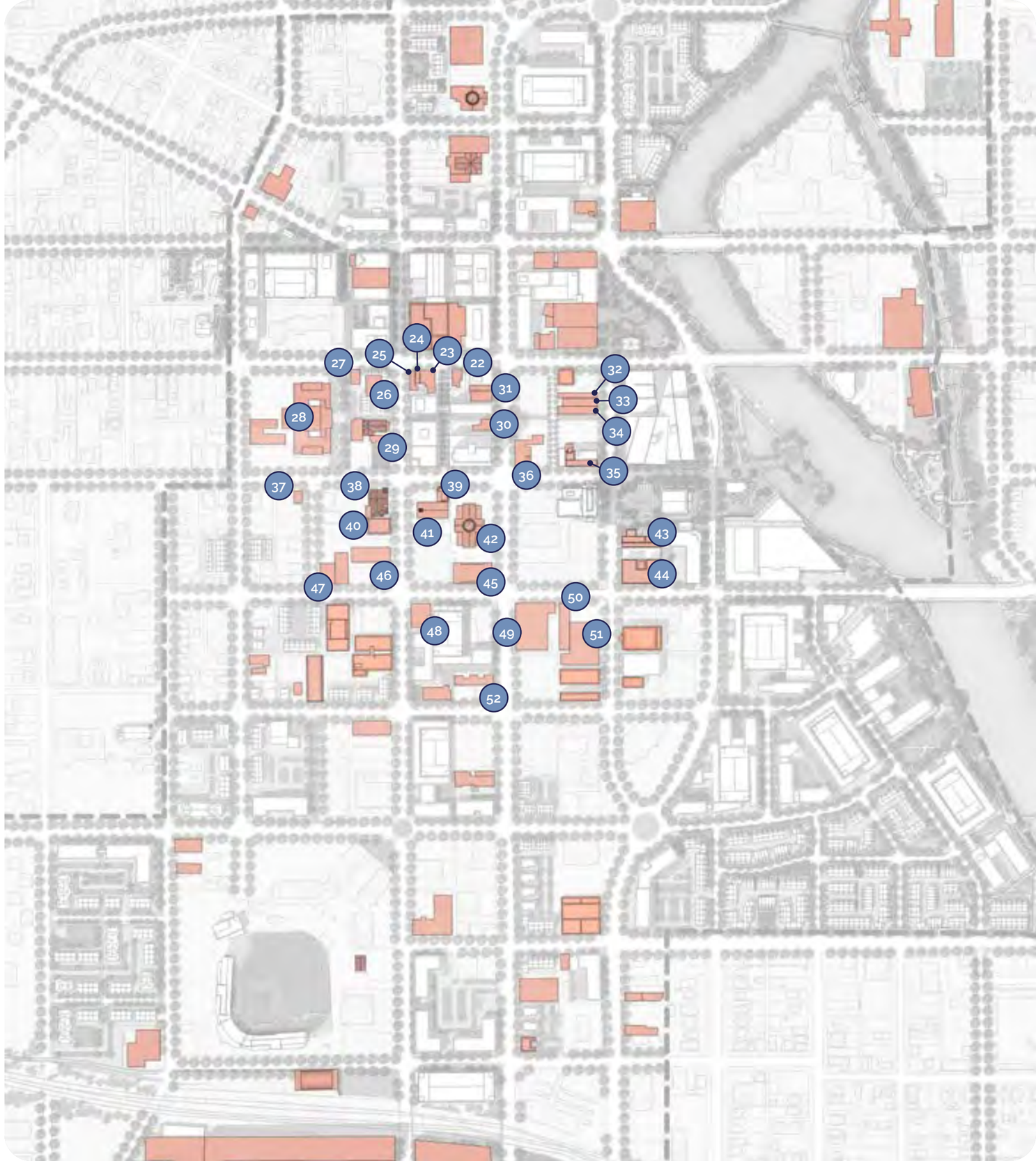
48 Trigon Building, Knights of Pythias Building, 224 West Jefferson Blvd

49 Federal Building Courthouse, 204 South Main St

50 Citizen's National Bank, 112 West Jefferson Blvd

51 Robertson's Department Store,

52 Central Union Telephone Company Building, 227 South Main Street



South Bend Historic Resources

53 Paragon Building, Standard Oil Building, 221 West Wayne St

54 Spenner Garage, 321 West Wayne Street

55 Diamond and Diamond Law, 405 West Wayne Street

56 Hager Company Building, 220 South William Street

57 222 South William Street

58 301 South Lafayette Boulevard

59 Franklin Trust Building, 319 South Main St

60 Hibberd Building, 321 South Main St

61 Wolter Building, 526 West Western Avenue

62 Old Synagogue, 410 South Taylor Street

63 Hope Mission, Ries Furniture Company, Lafayette Furniture, 432 South Lafayette Boulevard

64 Olivet A.M.E. Church, 310 West Monroe Street

65 Shafstall Battery Company, 112 West Monroe Street

66 510 South Main Street

67 Monarch Printing Company, 516 South Michigan Street

68 Breskin Building, 530 South Michigan Street

69 536 South Main Street

70 Claeys Candy, 525 South Taylor St

71 Union Station, 506 West South St

72 Building 84/Building 113, 635 South Lafayette Blvd

73 Studebaker Administration Building, 635 South Main St

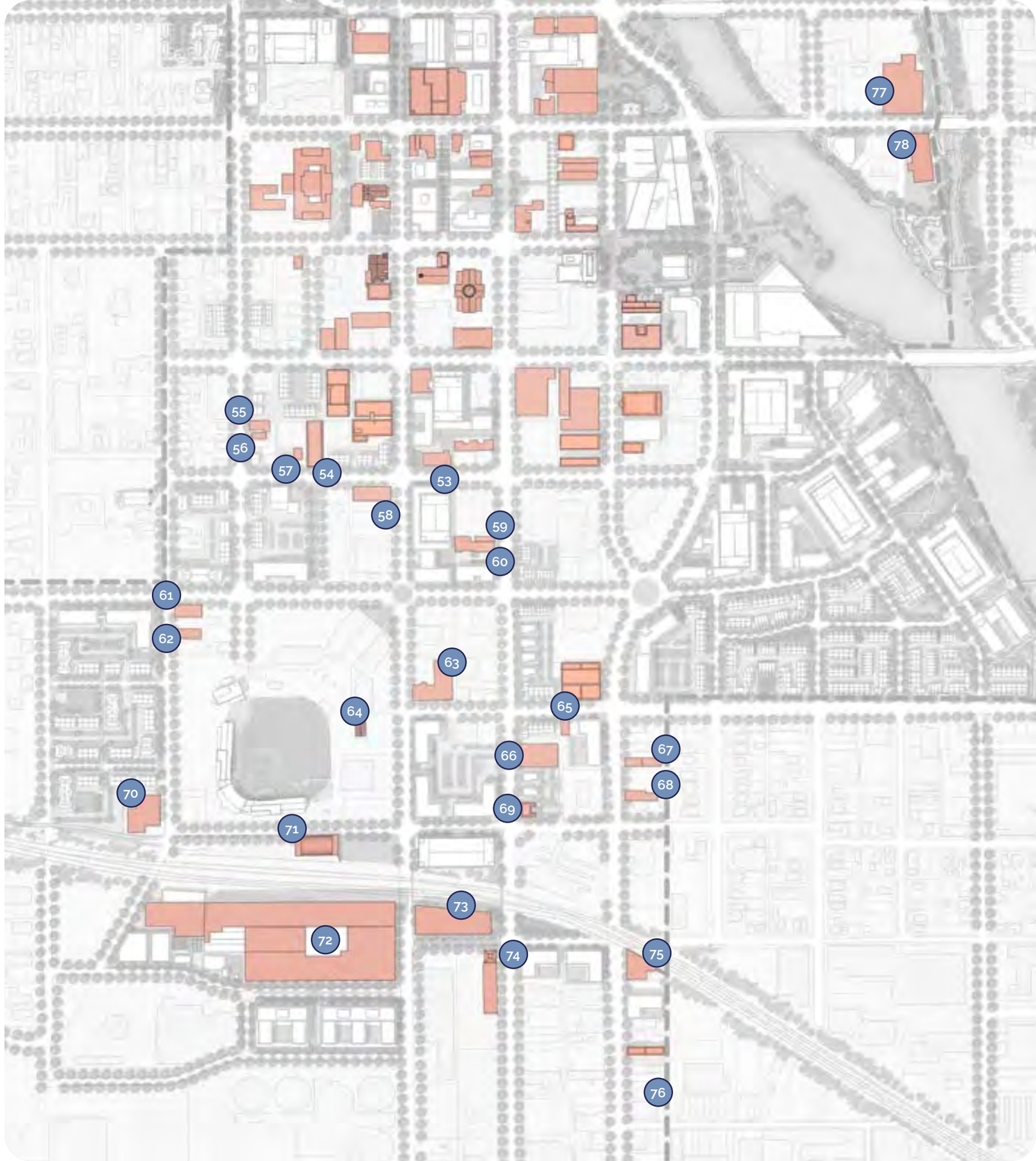
74 Vandalia Station, 711 South Main St

75 Whiteman Brothers Building, 702 South Michigan Street

76 Grace Methodist Church, St. Andrews Greek Orthodox Church, 760 South Michigan St

77 Commerce Center, I&M Power Plant, 401 East Colfax Ave

78 Stephenson Mills, 322 East Colfax Ave



PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Requested Action

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLAN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE LASALLE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN (Substitute)

Project Summary

The planning area for the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan is generally bounded by the Railroad Tracks to the north, Meade Street to the east, Sheridan Street to the west, and Western Street to the south. The City of South Bend developed this plan through a process that engaged residents, businesses, institutions, government agencies, and other neighborhood stakeholders. The planning process included online surveys, key stakeholder interviews, and in-person workshops that gathered critical information about the LaSalle Park Neighborhood's existing conditions, needs, and opportunities. This engagement provided the basis for this plan.

The Neighborhood Plan contains a list of LaSalle Park Neighborhood project ideas which may be pursued by the City, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector over the next 20 years. The timing and scale of each project will be subject to funding and additional community engagement. Projects may change as the neighborhood and city evolves. The plan includes proposed streetscape improvements, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, redevelopment of vacant lots for housing, added amenities to the neighborhood's park, and updates to the zoning map and an implementation matrix for proposed action items and projects.

The Plan Commission adopted the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan on December 15, 2025. Content updates were subsequently made to the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan document which included text additions, visual enhancements, and other clarifications meant to aid understanding of project concepts and other proposed improvements. The core planning projects presented publicly through the plan draft during the November 2025 open house phase are unchanged.

The Common Council adopted the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan substitute resolution on January 26, 2026.

Recommendation

Staff Recommendation: Based on the information available prior to the meeting, the staff recommends the Commission approve the Resolution as amended by Council.

RESOLUTION NO. 26-3

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLAN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE LASALLE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of South Bend, Indiana, recognizes the need to improve and revitalize the LaSalle Park neighborhood through strategic planning; and

WHEREAS, the South Bend Plan Commission is empowered to prepare, approve, and certify a Comprehensive Plan for its area of jurisdiction by the provisions of Indiana Code, Section 36-7-4-500 *et. seq.* entitled "500 Series – Comprehensive Plan"; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, City Plan, the Comprehensive Plan for South Bend, was adopted by the Area Plan Commission of South Bend-St. Joseph County and the Common Council of the City of South Bend pursuant to the provisions of Indiana Code 36-7-4-500 *et. seq.* as a statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, Policy LU 1.1 of City Plan is to pursue the development of area-specific plans; and

WHEREAS, the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan is a strategic revitalization plan that was created with input from a variety of stakeholders, including residents and property owners, and area businesses and other organizations; and

WHEREAS, the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan contains revitalization strategies, detailed land use and zoning plans for the development of the area, and a strategic implementation matrix, all with public and private sector investment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the South Bend Plan Commission and the legislative body in preparing and considering land use proposals are tasked under Indiana Code 36-7-4-603 to pay reasonable regard to: (1) the comprehensive plan; (2) current conditions and the character of current structures and uses in each district; (3) the most desirable use for which the land in each district is adapted; (4) the conservation of property values throughout the jurisdiction; and (5) responsible development and growth; and

WHEREAS, the South Bend Plan Commission has reviewed the land use development and potential future development of the LaSalle Park Neighborhood as defined by the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the South Bend Plan Commission as follows:

1. That the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan, which is attached to and made a part of this Resolution, is approved as the land use policy for the future land use development of the area considered and is submitted to the South Bend Common Council for their consideration and action.

2. That the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan conforms to the plan of development for the City.

3. That the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan is in all respects approved, certified, ratified and confirmed.

4. That the Secretary of the Plan Commission is hereby directed to file a copy of the Plan with the minutes of this public meeting.

5. That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its adoption by the South Bend Plan Commission.

Passed by the South Bend Plan Commission this 16th day of February, 2026.

_____
Francisco Fotia, President
South Bend Plan Commission

ATTEST:

_____
Brian Killen
Secretary
South Bend Plan Commission

LASALLE PARK
Neighborhood Plan

Adopted January 2026

Acknowledgments

James Mueller, Mayor of the City of South Bend
Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers, City Council Member, 2nd District

A special thanks to all the residents and area organizations that shared their thoughts and vision for the future of the LaSalle Park Neighborhood.

Department of Community Investment

Caleb Bauer, Executive Director of Community Investment
Tim Corcoran, Director of Planning & Community Resources
Michael Divita, Principal Planner
Chris Dressel, Senior Planner
Hannah Sherinian, Planner
Angela Rose, Senior Planner
Chaise Cope, Senior Planner

Planning Consultant

Torti Gallas + Partners
Fabrick Design

TORTI GALLAS + PARTNERS

FABRICK DESIGN CONTEXTUAL . SUSTAINABLE . PEOPLE-CENTRIC ARCHITECTURE

Table of Contents

What is a Plan?

03 What is a Plan?

04 Neighborhood Planning Principles

Neighborhood Background

08 Neighborhood Land Use Timeline

14 Planning Area

15 Existing Conditions

16 Neighborhood Topography

18 Lot Vacancy

20 Neighborhood Data

22 Neighborhood Character

Plan Process & Engagement

26 Planning Process & Engagement

28 What We Heard

Neighborhood Plan

32 Neighborhood Plan Graphic & Focus Areas

34 Planning Project Areas

46 Housing Strategies & Housing Study

48 Parks & Trails

49 Sustainability

50 Greening the Neighborhood

Streets & Transportation

54 Streetscape Improvements & Traffic Calming

56 Bicycle Improvements

Built Form & Zoning

60 Built Form & Zoning

63 Proposed Zoning Map

64 Building Types

Implementation Matrix

68 Implementation Strategies

What is a **Plan?**

A neighborhood plan is a shared statement about the desired long-term future for an area and a strategy to reach those goals. Developed through a public engagement process, a plan is a guide for:

- Making decisions about what kind of development and services are appropriate,
- How resources should be allocated, and
- How issues residents, business and property owners, and others in the neighborhood are concerned about could be addressed.

Created in the context of the needs and priorities of the larger region, a neighborhood plan focuses on assets and challenges unique to that specific area. Neighborhood plans seek to create a more livable place that is attractive, healthy, equitable, and sustainable for current and future generations.

Once adopted, a neighborhood plan becomes official city policy as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

What does a plan include?

Neighborhood plans typically identify strategies to be implemented over the next 20+ years within the following categories:

- **Public Facilities & Infrastructure:** Improving streets, sidewalks, lighting, parks, bike paths, and essential utilities to create accessible and safe spaces.
- **Housing:** Addressing housing stock, condition, diversity, and affordability to ensure options for all economic levels
- **Zoning & Land Use:** Guiding development by specifying building types, design standards, density, and appropriate locations for residential, commercial, and mixed-use areas.
- **Other Matters:** Incorporating community-specific needs, such as environmental sustainability, historic preservation, economic development, and public safety.

Who is a plan for?

Neighborhood Residents

can use the plan to understand proposed initiatives in the short, medium, and long terms.

Developers, Builders, and Other Individuals

will use the plan to help determine the type, scale, intensity, and location of projects.

Public Officials and Community Leaders

can use the plan to direct funding and to make decisions on zoning and development issues.

City Staff

will use the plan to understand key neighborhood issues and as a guide to implementing priority projects and initiatives.

How is a plan used?

A neighborhood plan provides a broad framework for future initiatives, and it serves as a starting point for more detailed planning and public engagement as individual projects are pursued. A plan will continually evolve to meet the changing needs of the community.

The maps, diagrams, photographs, and other graphics presented within a neighborhood plan are for illustrative purples only. The images are not intended to represent the exact results expected from the implementation of the plan, but they provide a general representation of development principles, desired building types, land use, infrastructure, and other elements that the plan establishes.

The specific scope, final form, and timing of neighborhood plan initiatives will depend on market demand, the interest of private organizations and individuals, available resources, and direction from further public engagement.

Private Sector
The private sector is reponsible for building housing, opening and operating businesses, and making the investments shown on private property.

Public Sector
The city is responsible for all things in the public domain. This includes building and maintaining streets, parks, public utilities, and public safety.

PARTNERSHIP
Working together, we can make a great neighborhood

Neighborhood Planning **Principles**

The characteristics described below serve as the guiding principles for the development of the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan.

1 Urban

The neighborhood is walkable, has a network of well-connected streets and blocks, and a variety of public spaces. It contains a range of housing types that draws people from all economic levels. Amenities such as stores, schools, healthcare, entertainment, parks, cultural institutions, and places of worship are within a convenient distance.

2 Attractive

The neighborhood's physical environment is thoughtfully managed to make it desirable, competitive, and vibrant. The neighborhood features well maintained buildings and properties, safe streets for all users, quality public spaces, and a memorable, unique identity.

3 Healthy

The neighborhood encourages an active lifestyle for residents and visitors, regardless of age or ability, through engaging open spaces and comfortable transportation options. Nutritious, fresh, and affordable food is accessible. The neighborhood is free of pollution that would notably impact its residents.

4 Equitable

The neighborhood's housing accommodates the unique needs, desires, and income levels of all households. Historic disinvestment is addressed through zoning reform and increased private and public investment promoting recovery.

5 Sustainable

The neighborhood fully uses its existing infrastructure, preserves and reuses structures of historical and/or architectural significance, implements sensible environmental policies, and is committed to reducing its carbon footprint. The neighborhood is resilient, including by being prepared for the effects of climate change.

Western Avenue.

Sheridan Street.

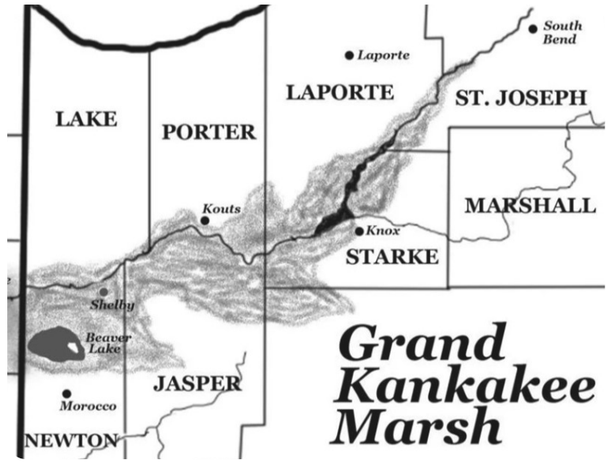
NEIGHBORHOOD **BACKGROUND**

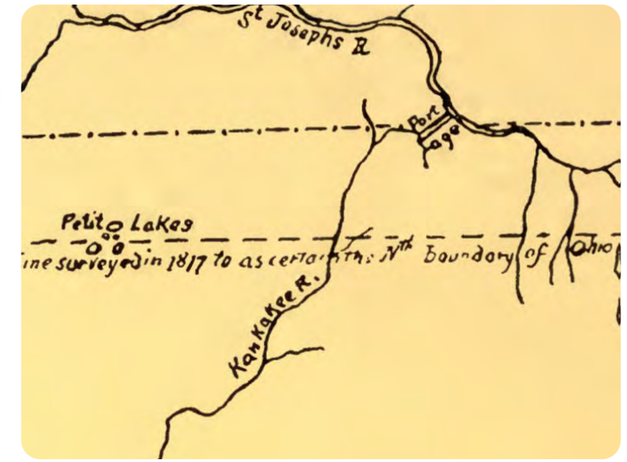
Neighborhood Land Use Timeline • Planning Area • Existing Conditions • Neighborhood Data • Neighborhood Character

Neighborhood **Landuse Timeline**

Overview

The following timeline highlights the multi-century evolution of the LaSalle Park Neighborhood. Focusing on the geological, cultural, and land use history allows for a deeper understanding of the current conditions of the neighborhood.





1000 BC

Grand Kankakee Marsh

The Great North-South Continental Divide (aka the "Midwest continental divide") that separates the Great Lakes watershed from the south Atlantic Ocean watershed also runs through South Bend and LaSalle Park. To the north of the divide, the St. Joseph River empties into Lake Michigan, and to the south, the Kankakee River flows towards the Mississippi River. The Kankakee had a meandering course, nearly 240 miles long, through surrounding wetlands known as the Grand Kankakee Marsh. With headwaters at South Bend, the "Everglades of the North" covered over 5,300 square miles from current day South Bend westward into Illinois; perhaps the largest inland marsh wetland in the US.

1600

Native Tribes

By the 1600's. Native American groups, primarily the Miami and later the Potawatomi, had been living in the St. Joseph River Valley for centuries before European settlement began. The Miami tribe was an indigenous group near southern Lake Michigan, settling in a village along the St. Joseph River. Later, the St. Joseph Potawatomi became the primary inhabitants, occupying the region along the St. Joseph River for a significant period, drawn to its rich resources.

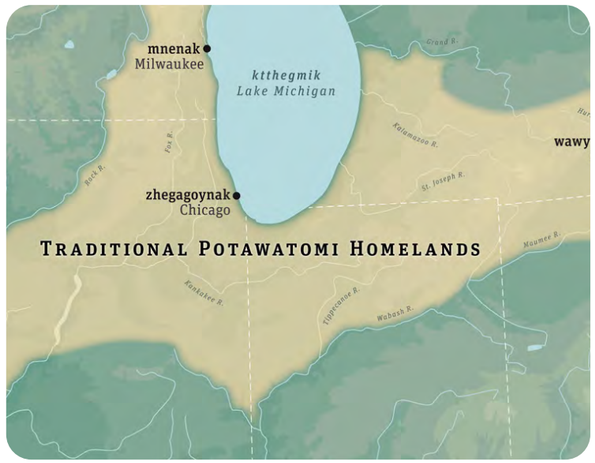
1679

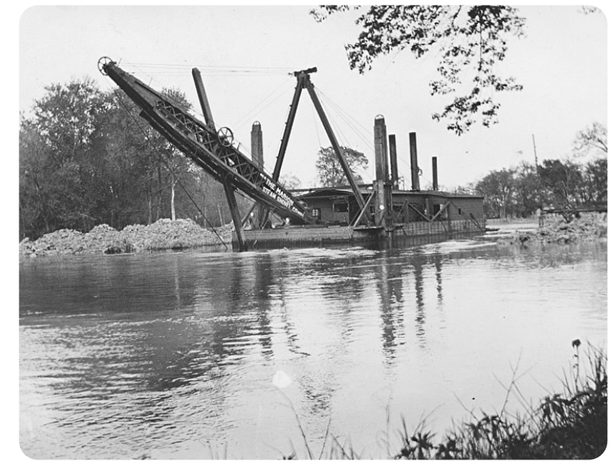
Fur Trade & French Settlement

The Kankakee River served as major route for Native Americans and early settlers, notably French fur trappers. South Bend and Lasalle Park were once part of a major route used by Native Americans and French explorers to connect the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico via an overland canoe portage between the Kankakee and St. Joseph rivers. On December 3, 1679, with a group of 40, French explorer LaSalle headed south from Fort Miami (St. Joseph, Michigan), canoeing up the St. Joseph River to a portage at present-day South Bend.

They crossed through the LaSalle Park area to the Kankakee River and followed it to the Illinois River eventually reaching Peoria, Illinois. Broader European settlement followed, led by the English and French. Lasalle's Landing is commemorated on the west bank of the St. Joseph River, just east of where Pinhook Park is today.

Neighborhood **Landuse Timeline**





1628-1830s

Colonial & Intertribal Wars

Fueled by the fur trade competition and occupation by the Iroquois, the Miami tribe fled to northern Indiana. The Miami asked for aid from others and a large force gathered to track down and ambush the Iroquois near South Bend, leaving a large part of the region depopulated.

After the retreat of the Iroquois, the Potawatomi became the largest tribal population in the area. In 1681 La Salle negotiated a treaty with the Miami and Illinois tribes. The French and 39 Indian chiefs signed the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. The Miami tribe returned to take control of Indiana and northwest Ohio. The Potawatomi went to Michigan. Peace lasted into the 1720s.

1838

Indian Removal Act

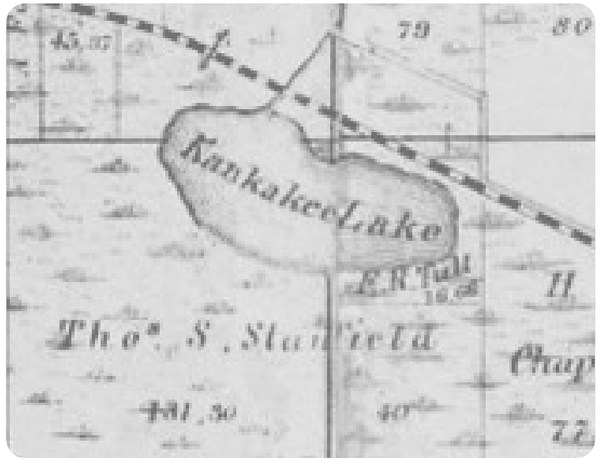
A series of land cession treaties made between 1795 and 1846 led to the removal of most of the native tribes from Indiana. The Potawatomi and Miami removals in the 1830s and 1840s were more gradual and incomplete, and not all of Indiana's Native Americans voluntarily left the state. In 1838 nearly a thousand Potawatomi people were forcibly removed from South Bend, pushed to reservations in Kansas on the Potawatomi Trail of Death. The Pokagon band was not forcibly removed because of affiliation with the Catholic Church. The Miami were the last to be removed from Indiana in 1846, but many were permitted to remain under land treaties.

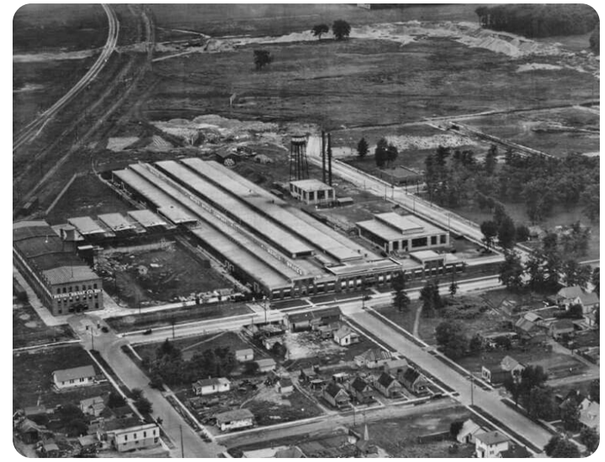
1860-1900

Kankakee Marsh Drained

Soon after the Civil War ended, a 50-plus year ditching effort cut 250 meandering river miles, waterways, and small tributaries down to 90 straightened miles destroying 95% of the habitat. In 1884, meetings were held by landowners in South Bend to discuss the drainage of the marsh. The upper river was also highly channelized with levees to allow easier transport of cut timber from the wetlands to sawmills downstream. Following increased settlement and agricultural development, the Marsh was eventually reduced to roughly 10% of its original size.

Neighborhood **Landuse Timeline**





1880

Beck's Lake Emerged

As the former marsh waterways dried, some small lakes appeared in the late 19th century amidst the former marsh bottom. Formerly known as LaSalle Lake, Kankakee Lake then Stanfield Lake, Beck's Lake first appeared on a 1863 land survey. It was soon identified as one of the clearest ice sources in the region and became a key source for ice harvesting into the early 20th century. This led to it being named after George Beck of the George Beck and Sons Ice Harvesting Company.

1900-1930

Industrialization & Growth

By 1900, South Bend, Indiana, was a thriving industrial hub thanks to its strategic location, waterpower from the St. Joseph River, and the presence of prominent manufacturers like Studebaker and the Oliver Chilled Plow Works. Many key industries that started or relocated to the broader LaSalle Park area included Bendix Corporation, Singer Company, and the Malleable Steel Range Manufacturing Company. To accommodate the surrounding industrial growth with a new sewer installation in 1927, Beck's Lake was drained to a depth of 18 inches.

1943-1952

Housing Development

As South Bend's industries converted their production during wartime era, much of the labor inside these factories came from Eastern Europeans and US southerners fleeing violence and poverty.

Driven in part by protests in other parts of the city and despite petitions against additional segregated housing in the area, LaSalle Park was designated as the site for temporary federal housing for African Americans to house the increased workforce. In 1944, construction began on 3100 and 3200 blocks of West Washington Street (present day LaSalle Park) resulting in twenty white cinder block duplexes that came to be known as "the barracks". The neighborhood strengthened as a major settlement area for African Americans over the next decade.

Neighborhood **Landuse Timeline**

1947-1953

Unregulated Trash Dumping

From the 1930s until the 1950s, part of LaSalle Park was occupied by Beck's Lake Dump. The dump was suspected to contain industrial waste including asbestos, plating and paint waste, solvents and oils, and arsenic-contaminated foundry sand from Bendix Corporation and others. The city acquired the site in 1947 and it closed in 1953 but Illegal dumping continued for many years following. The area would be transitioned into a city park property over the next decade, but any environmental site assessment was probably nonexistent given the regulations and requirements of the era.

1961-1966

Urban Renewal Plan Debated

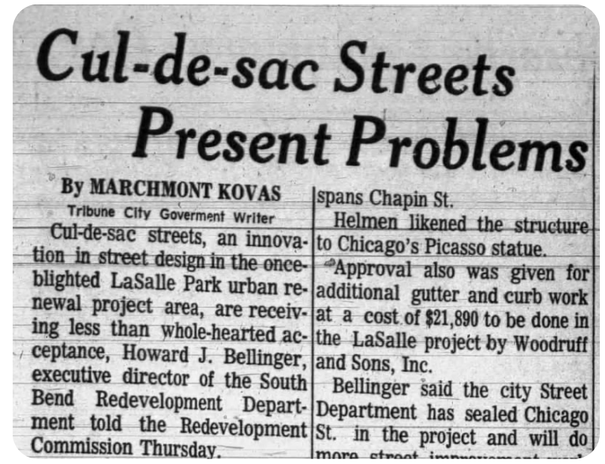
In 1961 the South Bend Urban Redevelopment Commission initially unveils a 200-acre urban renewal plan impacting 800 homes, with 150 to be demolished. Community opposition leads to a revised plan in 1964 with fewer demolitions and a new community center facility (the future Charles Black Center). The 1.1 million budget includes relocation of 133 families that would still temporarily lose their homes.

1967

Blighted Conditions Exposed

Residents first organized their response to worsening conditions in 1959 by delivering a petition to the City's Board of Public Works asking for paved streets, sidewalks, and sewer improvements. By 1963, dilapidated housing conditions were gaining wider community awareness. Prompted by an invitation from local neighborhood leaders, the South Bend Tribune's publishes a front-page story exposing the squalid living conditions noting, "World War II worker housing carved up into duplexes and overrun with families, filth and vermin long overdue for any type of clearance". The "barracks" housing that were constructed 20 years prior had fallen into disrepair and the City of South Bend was the landlord.

Neighborhood **Landuse Timeline**



Cul-de-sac Streets Present Problems

By MARCHMONT KOVAS
Tribune City Goverment Writer

Cul-de-sac streets, an innovation in street design in the once-blighted LaSalle Park urban renewal project area, are receiving less than whole-hearted acceptance, Howard J. Bellinger, executive director of the South Bend Redevelopment Department told the Redevelopment Commission Thursday.

spans Chapin St.

Helmen likened the structure to Chicago's Picasso statue.

Approval also was given for additional gutter and curb work at a cost of $21,890 to be done in the LaSalle project by Woodruff and Sons, Inc.

Bellinger said the city Street Department has sealed Chicago St. in the project and will do

1967

Civil Unrest & Street Alteration

Fueled by years of tension from a lack of investment and unfulfilled promises by city leaders in an atmosphere reflecting the national civil unrest, violence arose on July 25 and 26 1967. Roving gangs taunting residents were met by rock throwing. Altercations between police and African American youths at a neighborhood center in the 2900 Block of Western Avenue, led to police firing into the building striking one youth. A second youth struck by police gunfire later suffered an amputated leg. The violence also resulted in property damage and numerous arrests.

1968-1977

Urban Renewal Disconnection & Demolition

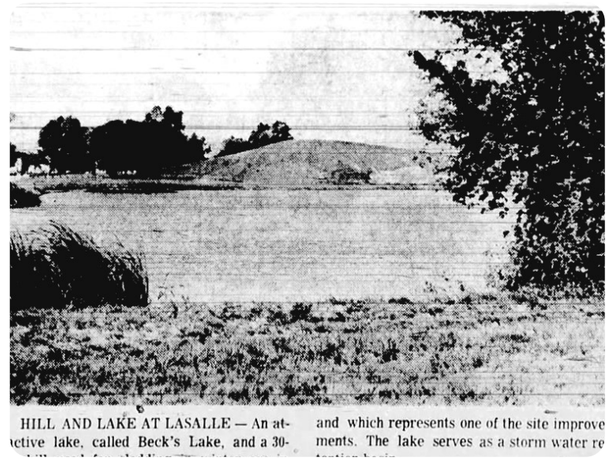
The Urban Renewal Plan for the neighborhood included an alteration of the neighborhood street grid and reduce vehicle access. The addition of cul-de-sacs would permanently disconnect four north south streets (Bendix, Kentucky, Lake and Chicago) from Western Avenue. The logic of the plan was to increase public safety by preventing access at non signalized intersections within the neighborhood but was also viewed as a way to improve police surveillance of the area. These changes reportedly weren't supported by all as the cul-de-sac proposed for Wellington Street was cancelled following opposition.

1968 - 1974

LaSalle Park Homes

The Greater South Bend Housing Corp began construction of LaSalle Park Homes in 1968 by Corp added 150 units of housing by 1974. Originally a non-profit organization providing affordable rental housing to low-income families and the elderly, the development provided new housing for some of those displaced by the ongoing renewal program.

Neighborhood **Landuse Timeline**


HILL AND LAKE AT LASALLE — An at-
tractive lake, called Beck's Lake, and a 30-
and which represents one of the site improve
ments. The lake serves as a storm water re

1961- 1969

Beginning of LaSalle Park and Restoration of Beck's Lake

Transformed from a one-time dump site with addition of 10,000 cubic yards of fill and soil the 32-acre LaSalle Park is established in 1961. The park included athletic fields, a playground area, shelter house, and a wooded picnic area to the east.

The LaSalle Recreation Center opened in 1967 providing spaces for a variety of recreation plus locker rooms, lounges, storage, activity and other meeting spaces. The center was re-named in honor of former center director Charles Black in 1999.

At the urging of residents, Beck's Lake is restored in 1969. The 8-acre excavated site would serve as storm/surface water retention pond. A sledding hill is also constructed on the western edge of Beck's Lake constructed either of fill dirt, demolition debris, or both.

1980-2000

EPA Clean-up

In 1984 the Bendix Corporation informed the EPA of past dumping activities, and it begins testing activities making periodic assessments initially concluding that no further action is warranted. In 2009, the EPA conducted an expanded site inspection, finding elevated levels of arsenic and other known contaminants which results in the EPA adding Beck's Lake to its national list of "Superfund" sites in 2013 leading to a remediation strategy. The City and Honeywell (the corporate descendant of Bendix) entered into an agreement to study and determine the extent of contamination and identify plans for remediation. The EPA announced an agreement with Honeywell and the City for short-term clean-up. In 2022, the top two feet of soil was removed and refilled with new soil within designated areas.

2000-Current

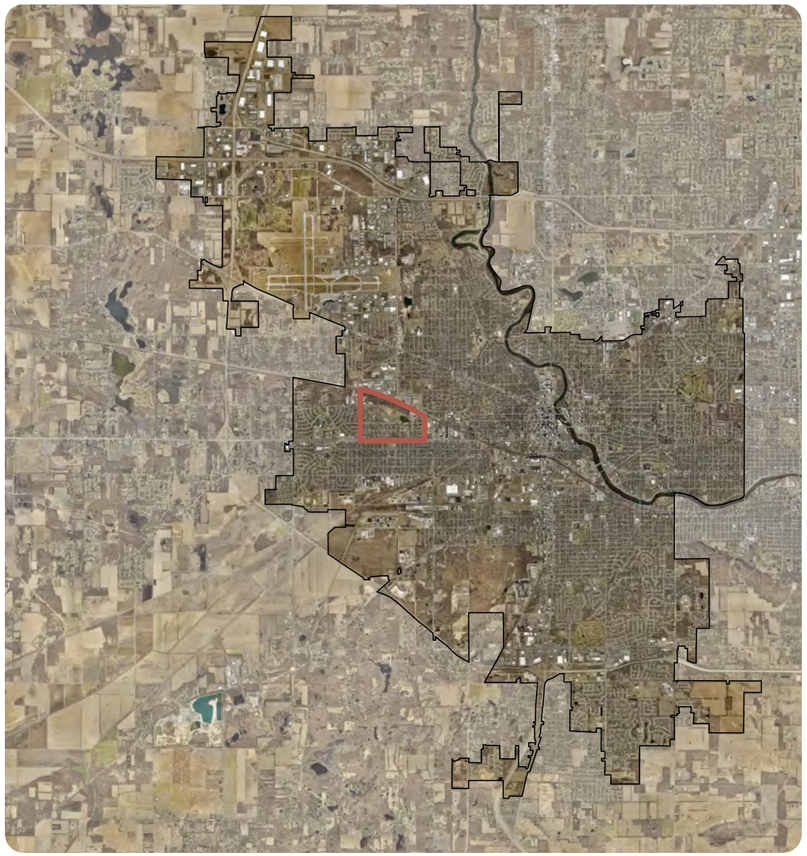
Investing into the Future

In 2002, the Weed and Seed plan articulated a vision for the future, goals to make the vision a reality, and addressed key restoration needs of the neighborhood over the next ten years. Recommendations included supporting new owner-occupied housing and improving the park. Additionally, the 2014 West Side Main Streets plan, which was focused on mainly corridors and public spaces, outlined a vision for an expanded LaSalle Park. The plan also looked for opportunities to stabilize the neighborhood with additional new residential and/or rehabilitated residential. A series of streetscape improvements along the Western Avenue commercial corridor were completed in 2015, 2017, and in 2019.

Charles Black Center improvements were completed in 2018 to accommodate a wide range of programing activities followed by a 2-million-dollar renovation to LaSalle Park adding several new outdoor features including new paths, a roller-skating loop, new shaded seating areas, a second pavilion and picnic area.

Planning **Area**

The planning area for the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan is generally bounded by railroad tracks to the north, Meade Street to the east, Sheridan Street to the west, and Western Avenue to the south.



Neighborhood Context Map.

Neighborhood Boundary Map.

Existing **Conditions**

Below 710' Elevation: Higher frequency of vacant lots in this area

Linden Avenue: High-speed street with missing sidewalks

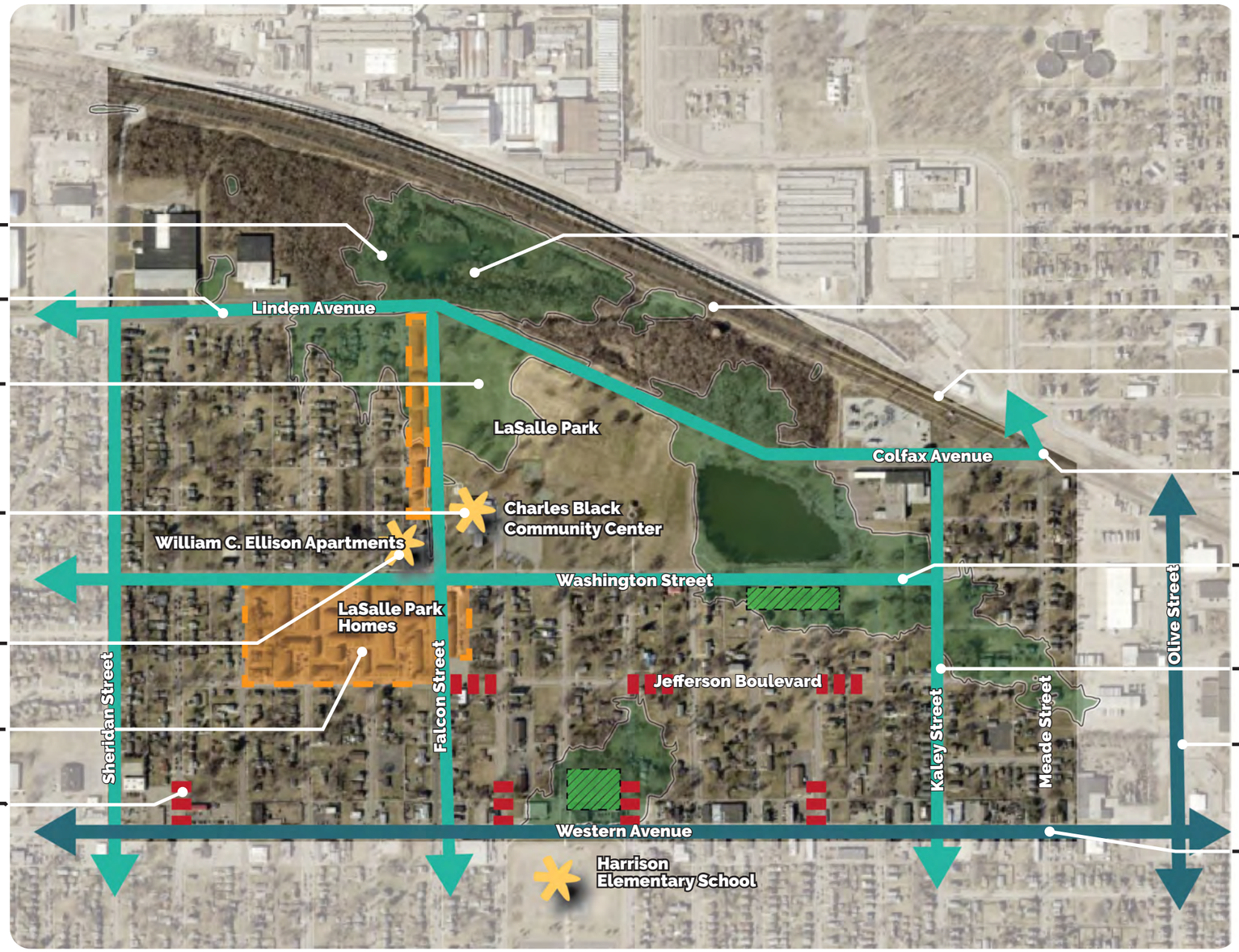
LaSalle Park: Large city park with recent improvements: paths, roller skating loop, pavilions, soccer fields, basketball courts, and Beck's Lake

Charles Black Community Center: Neighborhood hub offering daily programs, gymnasium, community rooms, computer lab, music room, weight room, and game room

William C. Ellison Apartments: 42-unit senior apartment building

LaSalle Park Homes: 150-unit multi family affordable housing development

Cul-de-sac Streets: Chicago, Lake, Kentucky, and Bendix have no vehicle access to Western Avenue



Wooded Area: Industrial buildings and undeveloped land

Railroad Tracks: Busy rail line with limited crossings

Amtrak Station: The train station for South Bend, offering four daily departures

Confusing Intersection: Unclear traffic control at Colfax, Meade, and Kaley

Washington Street: Primary east-west street in neighborhood. Subject to flooding near Beck's Lake. Key bike route through the neighborhood

Disconnected Street: Jefferson Boulevard is split into four sections

Olive Street: Major north-south street with no direct connection to LaSalle Park Neighborhood

Western Avenue: Major east-west street. Mixed-use neighborhood center with recent streetscape improvements

Neighborhood **Topography**

The historic headwaters of the Grand Kankakee Marsh was located in LaSalle Park. The ricer flowed southwest in a natural, meandering course until approximately 1860. Although the Kankakee Marsh was drained to better accommodate development, much of the soil composition, water table depth, and low elevation of land is still seen and presents challenges for housing development.

Possible solutions to the challenges in LaSalle Park's geological composition include developing in defined areas with a lower water table, higher elevation, and better draining soil. Modern technologies in building construction can help provide better stability for mucky soil including water mitigation systems for basements and crawl spaces.

The following is a map showing elevations and soil composition areas based on the most recent USDA soil survey.

Soil Classifications

HplrA—Houghton muck, very poorly drained, frequent ponding, water table depth of about 0 inches

MgdAN—Martisco muck, very poorly drained, frequent ponding, water table depth of about 0 to 6 inches

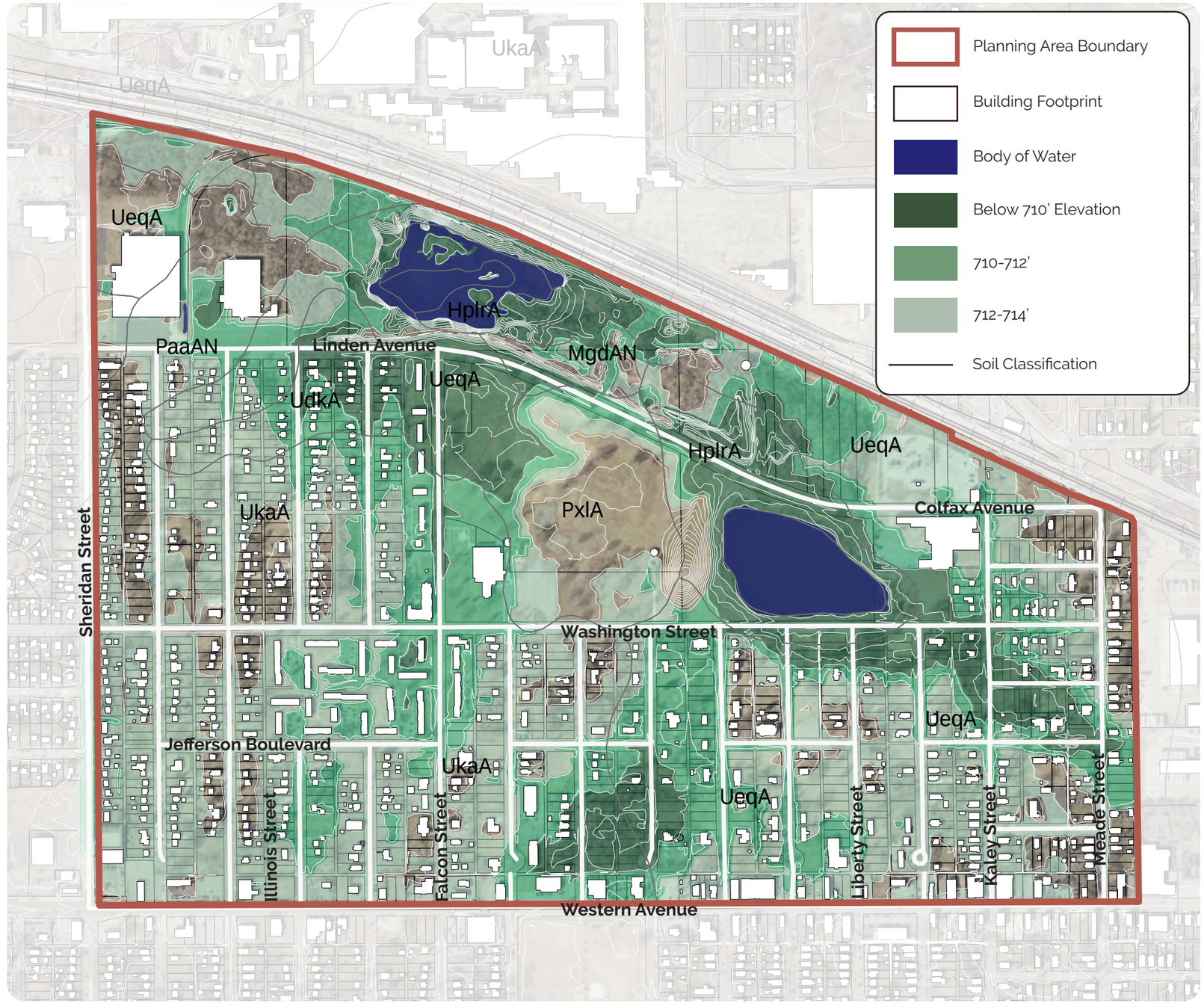
PaaAN—Palms muck, very poorly drained, frequent ponding, water table depth of about 0 inches

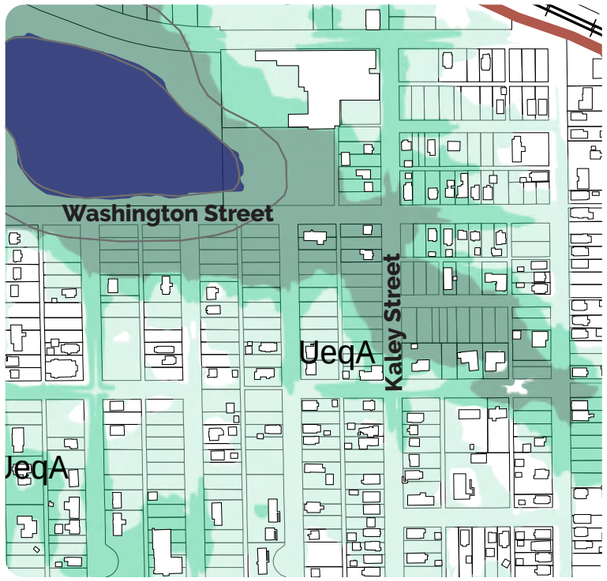
PxlA—Psammaquents, somewhat poorly drained, water table depth of about 6 to 18 inches

UdkA—Urban land-Brady complex, somewhat poorly drained, water table depth of about 6 to 18 inches

UeqA—Urban land-Gilford complex, poorly drained, frequent ponding, water table depth of about 0 to 12 inches

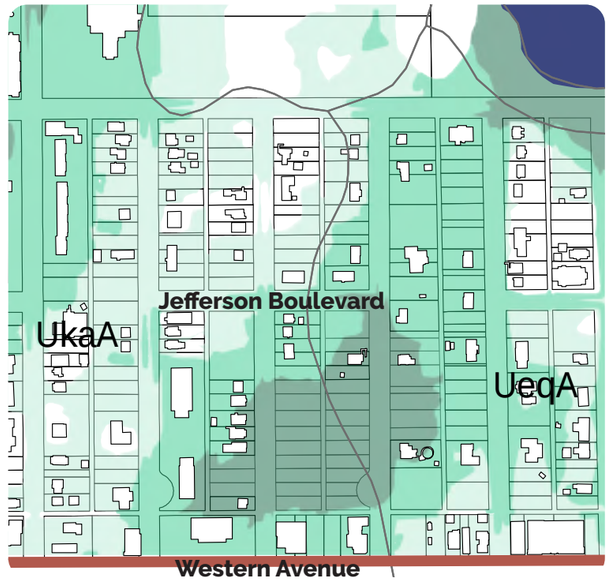
UkaA—Urban land-Maumee complex, poorly drained, frequent ponding, water table depth of about 6 to 12 inches





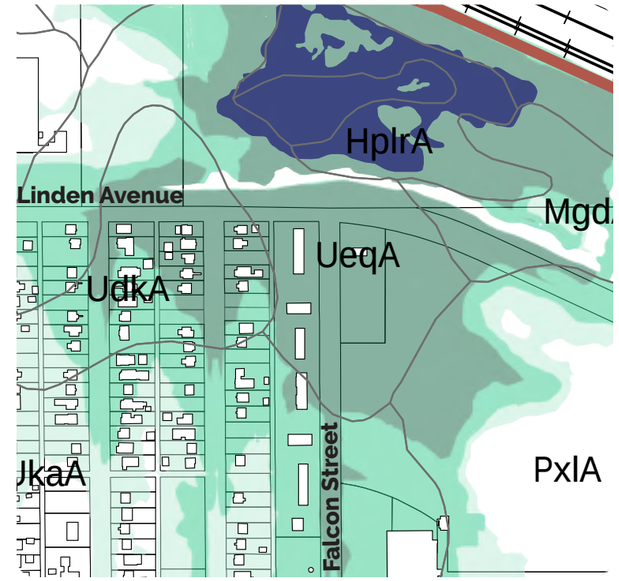
Kaley Street - Washington Street Area

The lower lying area along Washington Street moving southeast, are shown in the graphic as mostly undeveloped. This land being less than 710 feet above sea level and the soil being characterized as being poorly drained, mucky, and having frequent ponding of water. With the water depth ranging between 0 to 12 inches and the poor quality soil, development of housing on these lots would be more difficult than other areas within the neighborhood with better draining soil and a lower water table.



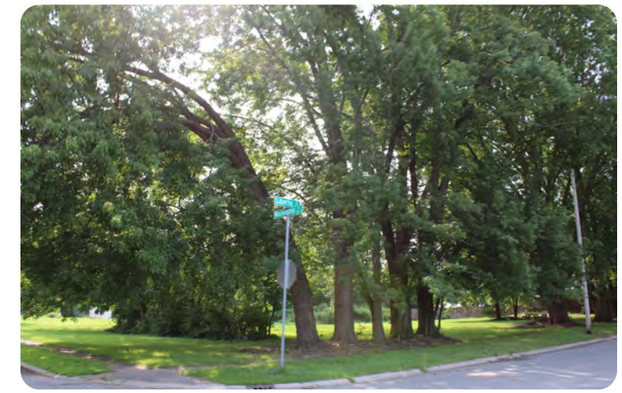
Jefferson Boulevard - Western Avenue Area

The lower lying area just north of Western Avenue between Lake and Dundee Streets, are shown in the graphic as mostly undeveloped. This land being less than 710 feet above sea level and the soil being characterized as being poorly drained, mucky, and having frequent ponding of water. With the water depth ranging between 0 to 12 inches and the poor quality soil, development of housing on these lots would be more difficult than other areas within the neighborhood with better draining soil and a lower water table.



Sheridan Avenue - Falcon Street Area

The lower lying area along Sheridan Avenue and Falcon Street, are shown in the graphic as partly developed. This land being less than 710 feet above sea level and the soil being characterized as being poorly drained, mucky, and having frequent ponding of water. With the water depth ranging between 0 to 18 inches and the poor quality soil, development could be more difficult than other areas within the neighborhood with better draining soil and a lower water table. The lower lying land in this focus are drains slightly better than other areas in the neighborhood which may be why homes still exist in this area. Housing development should focus further south and west of this area which is a higher elevation to allow for better drainage and less flooding risk.



South East corner of Liberty and Washington

View looking East on Linden Street

View looking East on Iowa Street above Western Avenue

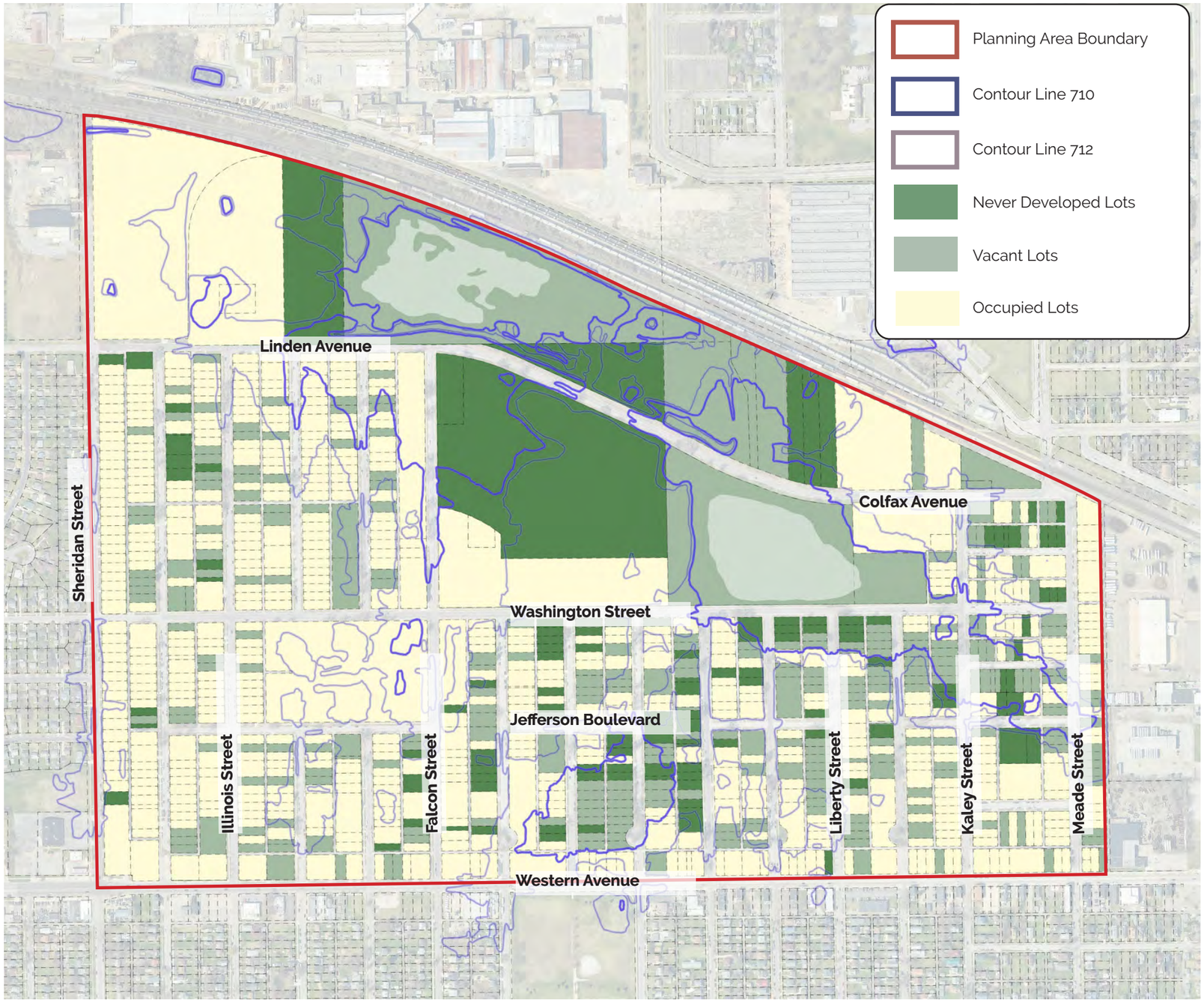
Lot **Vacancy**

A history of LaSalle Park Neighborhood lot vacancy shows how underlying geological and physical conditions and housing restrictions placed on African Americans have had a significant influence on development patterns.

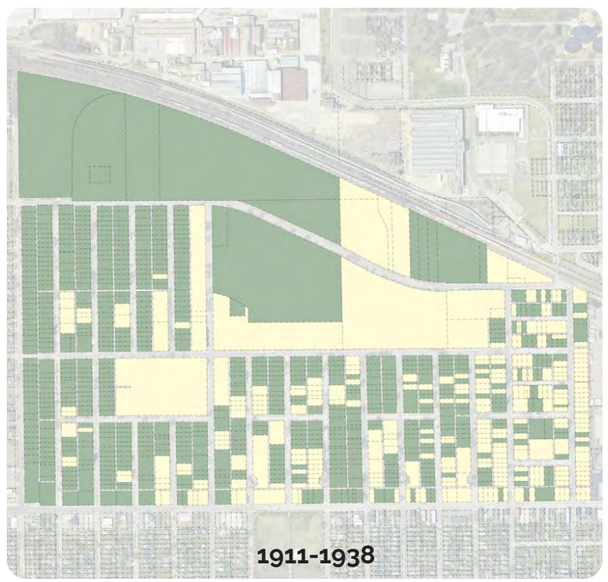
Less than 200 years ago, the area was located within the historic headwaters of the Grand Kankakee Marsh. Once drained, the poor soil conditions and high-water table left behind have continued to impact portions of the neighborhood, particularly those south and east of Becks Lake where some properties have never been developed. The map to the right depicts current occupancy of LaSalle Park neighborhood parcels. Lighter green colors represent those parcels once developed but now vacant, while dark green parcels represent parcels never developed. The blue contour line represents the 710' elevation. When aligned with property lines, this elevation appears to represent a dividing line: properties at or above 710 feet have been developed, and properties below have not.

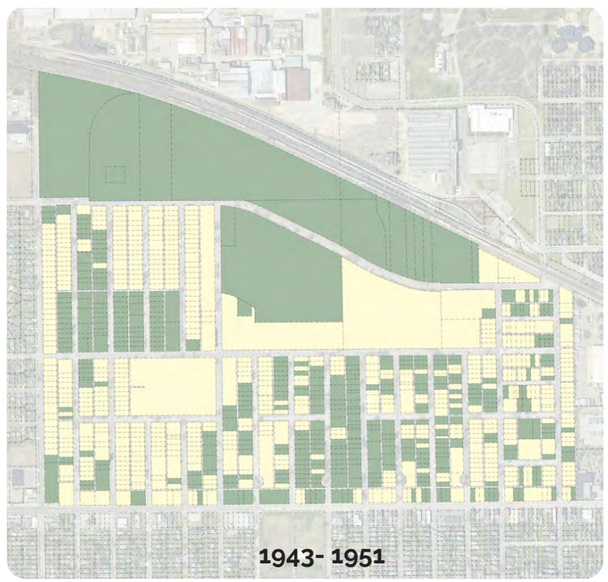
The other major development pattern are restrictions that impacted historical settlement by African American population within South Bend. First drawn by economic opportunities brought by rapid industrialization, families were often confined to specific neighborhoods due to racial segregation and restrictive housing practices. Given the lack of other options throughout the city, areas like LaSalle Park became a primary residential area for the African American community.

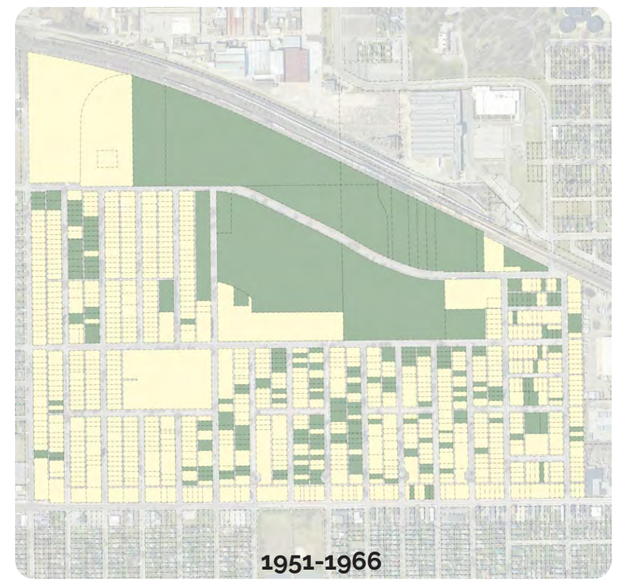
Early residential development included the first attempts at dedicated public housing. Later, poor infrastructure and other challenged conditions, including a public dump, led to a period of urban renewal where substandard housing was removed accompanied by relocation of families – some finding new homes in the resulting development of modern public housing.

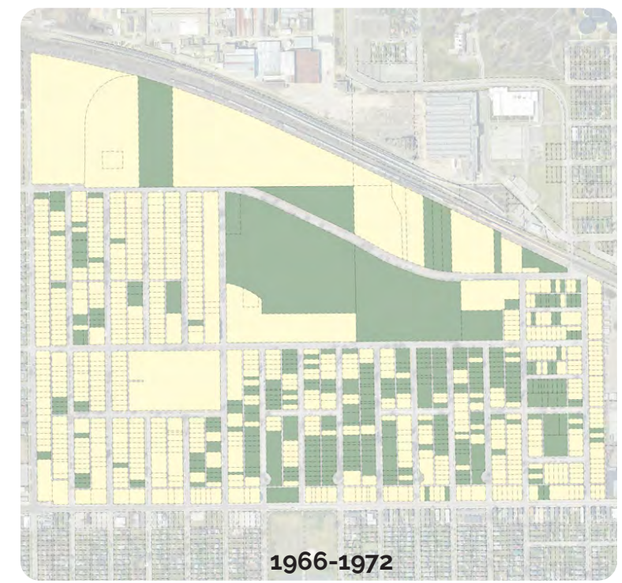


Development **Pattern**









Industrialization Growth

In the early part of the 20th century at a time when the Grand Kankakee Marsh was still being drained, the area was mainly unsettled. In the few homes nearby, there were mostly Polish American or other eastern Europeans working in one of the many area factories. The emergence of Beck's Lake had generated the first industry of the neighborhood - ice harvesting.

The coming decades saw significant changes to the area. As more factories opened nearby, migration to the neighborhood by African Americans from the US South increased and in 1911, South Bend annexed LaSalle Park Neighborhood area into the city. In 1927, the city planned a sewer to accommodate industrial growth and Beck's Lake was drained. Work was complete despite poor conditions in the former lakebed.

Public Housing Construction Begins

In 1943, 150 units of "war housing" were approved for construction in the neighborhood. These public housing units were constructed for African American families in an area bounded by Kenmore Street, Washington Street, Chicago Street, and Jefferson Blvd. Additional units were built in 1944 as a series of 20 two family cinder block dwellings north of W. Washington St. located in an area now occupied by LaSalle Park property. The quickly built structures came to be known as "the barracks".

Urban Growth

The LaSalle Park Neighborhood remained a major settlement area for African Americans, but neighborhood infrastructure lagged behind with narrow, unpaved streets without curbs and sidewalks, and some areas were lacking a proper sewer system.

Starting in the 1930's, the former Beck's Lake Area became a dumping ground for industrial waste and household refuse further filling in the marshy muddy area surrounding Beck's Lake. Eventually, the city acquired the property and closed the dump site though informal dumping continued in the 1950's.

Urban Renewal Demolition

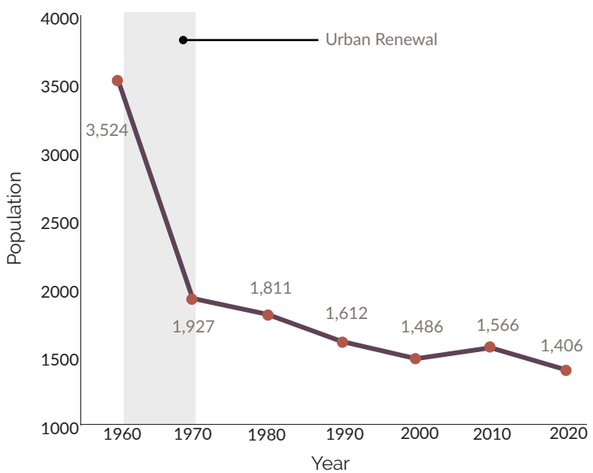
In 1959, residents delivered a petition to the City asking for street, sidewalk, and sewer improvements. The initial response was the first urban renewal housing plan impacting 240 acres and hundreds of homes. In 1964 a plan was finalized to deliver infrastructure, a 40 acre park and new community center. One hundred and thirty homes would be demolished including the cinder block "barracks", a symbol of substandard housing conditions.

By the mid 1960's, LaSalle Park was opened within the former dump/Beck's Lake Area with new athletic fields and a wooded picnic area. The LaSalle Park Recreation Center was opened in 1967. By the end of the decade, LaSalle Park was complete with two new features: a sledding hill and Beck's Lake – now restored to 8 acres. By 1969, LaSalle Park Homes were under construction on the southwest corner of Washington and Falcon Streets. When completed 5 years later it would include 150 rental units.

Neighborhood **Data**

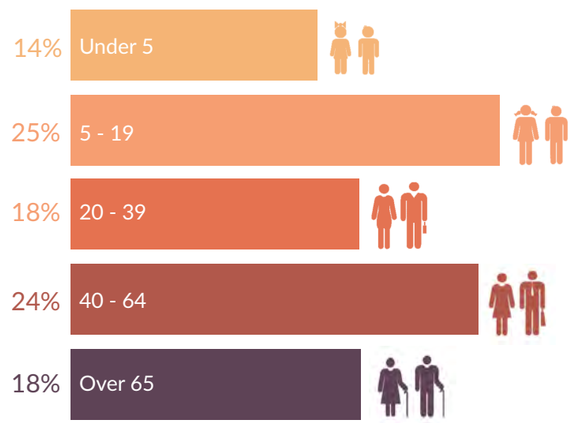
All figures are based on Census Tract 23, which approximates the LaSalle Park Neighborhood plan area.

Population



Source: Decennial Census

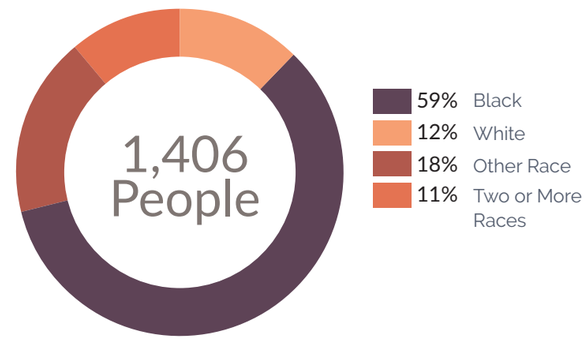
Age



Median Age: 37.1 Years Old

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

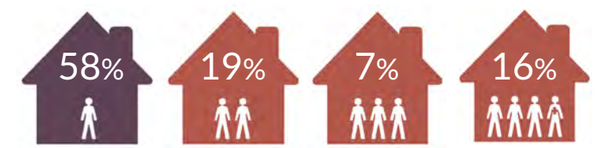
Race and Hispanic Origin



Source: 2020 Census

Household Size

Number of Households: 592



Average Household Size: 1.99 people

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

LaSalle

Population: The neighborhood's population declined from 3,524 people in 1960 to 1,927 in 1970, before continuing to fall to 1,406 people in 2020.

Age: Nearly forty percent of the population is children under 19 years old, while almost twenty percent of the population is comprised of individuals aged 65+.

Racial Composition: The majority of the neighborhood is Black, while nearly 30% of the population identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

Household Size: Nearly sixty percent of households consist of a single person.

South Bend Population: South Bend's population declined from 132.4k people in 1960 to 109.7k in 1980s, before continuing to fall to 103.1k in 2020.

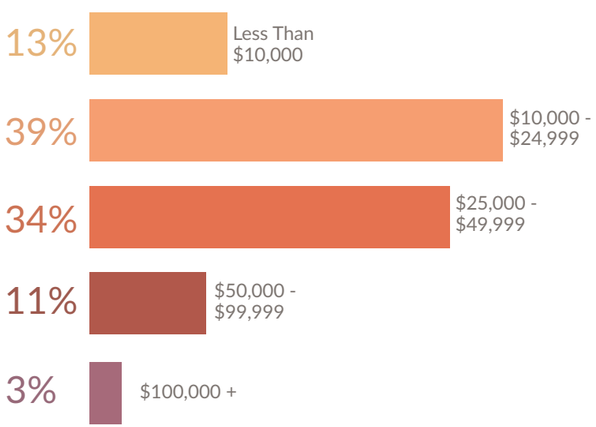
South Bend Age: Nearly thirty percent of the population is under 19 years old, while nearly fourteen percent of the population is comprised of individuals aged 65+.

South Bend Racial Composition: The majority of the city is White, while nearly 17% of the population identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

South Bend Household Size: Nearly fourty percent of households consist of a single person.

Household Income

Percentage of households within each household income range

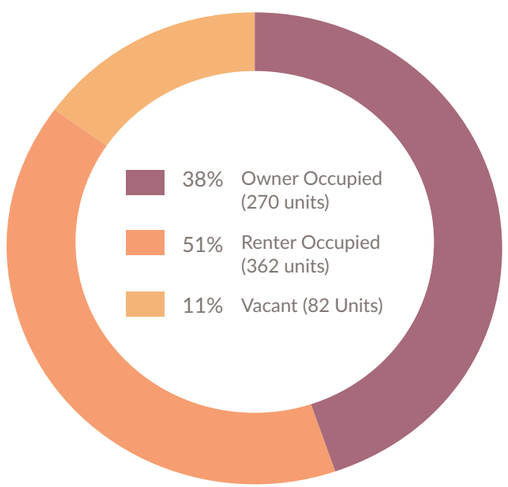


Median Household Income: $22,125

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

Housing

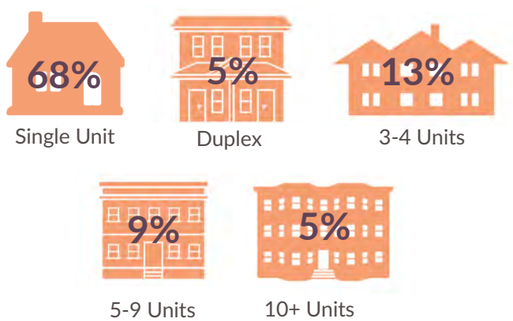
Total Housing Units: 714



Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

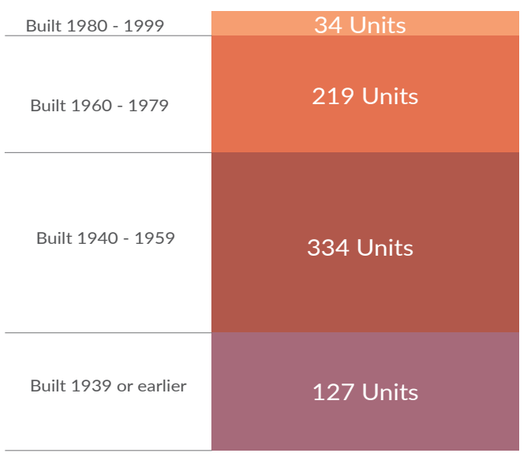
Units in Structure

Number of Residential Structures: 714



Source: 2020 Census

Year Housing Built



Median Year Structure Built: 1955

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

Household Income: Most households have a total income of less than $35,000.

Housing Ownership: A little more than half of the housing units in the neighborhood are renter occupied.

Type of Housing: The majority of the neighborhood's housing units are single unit structures (72%). Twenty-seven percent of homes are found in missing middle buildings of 2 to 10 units.

Housing Age: Almost 95% of the housing stock is over 45 years old. About 1 in 6 homes in the neighborhood were built prior to 1940.

South Bend Household Income: The median household income is $49,056.

South Bend Housing Ownership: A little more than half of the housing units in the city are owner-occupied

Type of Housing: The majority of the city's housing units are single unit structures (74%). Twenty-five percent of homes are found in missing middle buildings of 2 to 10 units.

Housing Age: Almost 87% of the housing stock is over 45 years old. About 1 in 4 homes in the city were built prior to 1940.

Neighborhood **Character**

Overview

Located on the west side of South Bend, the LaSalle Park Neighborhood features a range of housing choices, important community institutions, unique small businesses, and industrial uses. The following is a sampling of the neighborhood's character.

Residential Buildings

The planning area has a mixture of homes, including detached dwellings, duplexes, townhouses, and small- to medium-scale apartment buildings. Styles of architecture include ranch, bungalow, and American foursquare.

Commercial Buildings

Western Avenue is a major east-west street that features the neighborhood's primary commercial district. Mixed-use buildings can be found along its length.

Industrial

Light industrial buildings comprise the area north of Linden Avenue and along Olive Street, east of the neighborhood.

Faith-based Institutions

LaSalle Park hosts many faith-based institutions.

Parks and Open Spaces

LaSalle Park is home to a signature park of the same name. It features prominent public spaces including the Charles Black Community Center, Beck's Lake, recreational trails, and other athletic amenities.

Vacant Lots

The neighborhood has several vacant lots where buildings once stood, some lots have never been developed.

PLANNING PROCESS & **ENGAGEMENT**

Timeline • What We Heard

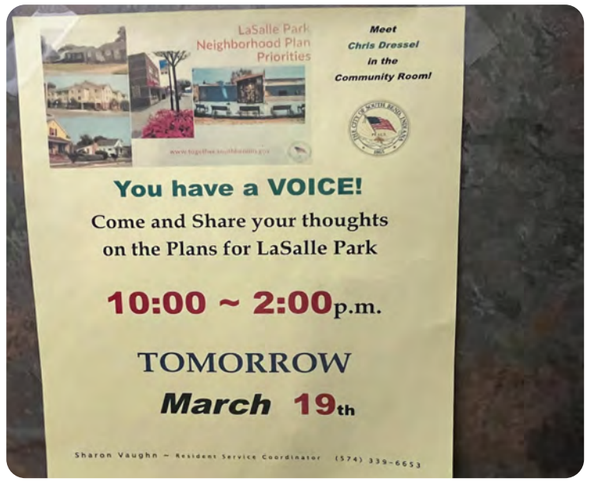
Planning Process & **Engagement**

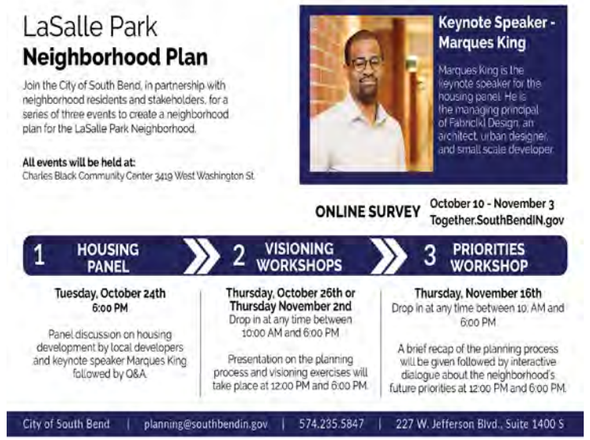
Overview

The City of South Bend developed this plan through a process that engaged residents, businesses, institutions, government agencies, and other neighborhood stakeholders. The planning process included online surveys, key stakeholder interviews, and workshops that gathered critical information about the LaSalle Park Planning Area's existing conditions, needs, and opportunities. This engagement provided the basis for this plan. During the planning process, the City provided updates to the neighborhood organization and Common Council.

September 2023

October 2023





Stakeholder Meetings

The City's planning staff conducted 14 virtual and in-person meetings with neighborhood stakeholders. Stakeholders included the neighborhood association, community and nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, businesses, developers, City departments, and City Council representatives. These conversations began to outline general themes and potential focus areas for the neighborhood plan.

Outreach Methods

The City used a series of outreach methods throughout the planning process to encourage participation. These methods included mailings to over 980 resident and property owner addresses, e-mail lists, and presentations to the neighborhood association.

Housing Panel

The City held a panel discussion on housing development by local community developers. Marques King, an expert on incremental housing development, served as the keynote speaker.

November 2023

Visioning Workshop

An all-day visioning workshop focused on understanding the neighborhood and its vision for the future. Participants were asked big-picture questions and completed exercises on topics such as housing, infrastructure, land use and building form, neighborhood amenities, and neighborhood-specific issues.

Priorities Workshop

At the neighborhood priorities workshop, participants confirmed that the data gathered online and from the visioning workshops were complete and represented their ideas. The community was then asked to prioritize potential neighborhood initiatives. This helped prepare the framework and priorities outlined in this plan.

November 2025

Open House

Two open house events were held by the City of South Bend presenting key plan projects and concepts for public review and input. Attendees watched a presentation, viewed boards highlighting the plan, and met with staff. A draft of the full plan document was made available for review at the open house, online, and at the Charles Black Center.

January 2026

Adoption

Following public hearings, the South Bend Plan Commission and Common Council adopted the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. This Plan now serves as the City's official policy for the area.

What **We Heard**

Following are the main ideas expressed during the public engagement process for the LaSalle Park planning area. The items in **bold** were identified as priority projects at the public workshops.

Streets & Transportation

Improve streetscape along the following streets:
- **Washington Street**
- **Linden Avenue**

Calm traffic along the following streets:
- **Sheridan Street**
- **Falcon Street**

Improve lighting:
- **Along walking path in LaSalle Park**
- **Washington Street**

Incorporate street trees in the tree lawn where possible.

Improve condition of sidewalks.

Add more protected bike lanes and shared use trails.

Housing

Support development of additional affordable housing units.

Repair existing housing stock and provide home repair workshops and training.

Maintain affordability of neighborhood housing.

Increase homeownership in the neighborhood.

Built Form & Zoning

Strengthen urban mixed-use character along Western Avenue.

Reintroduce neighborhood-scale retail.

Promote construction of missing middle homes.

Other Amenities

Facilitate Development of a neighborhood-scale grocery store.

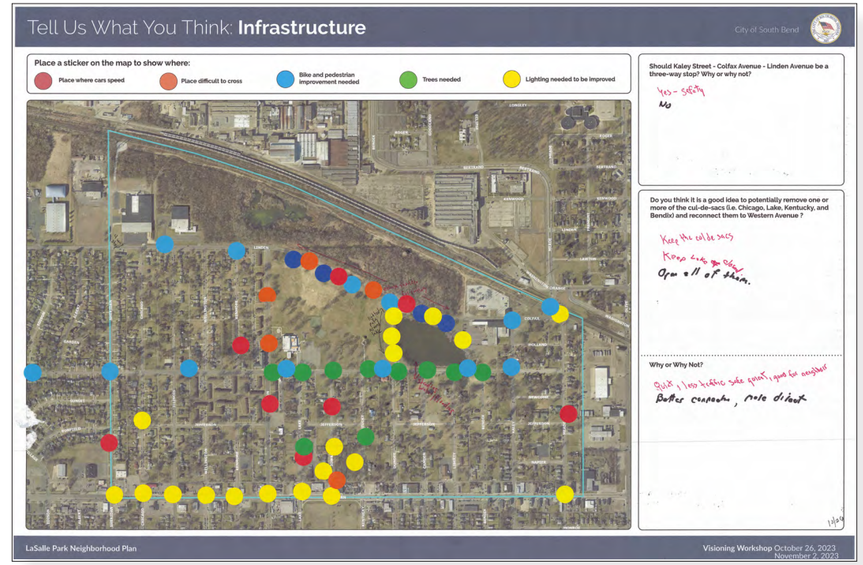
Expand youth and senior programs at the Charles Black Center.

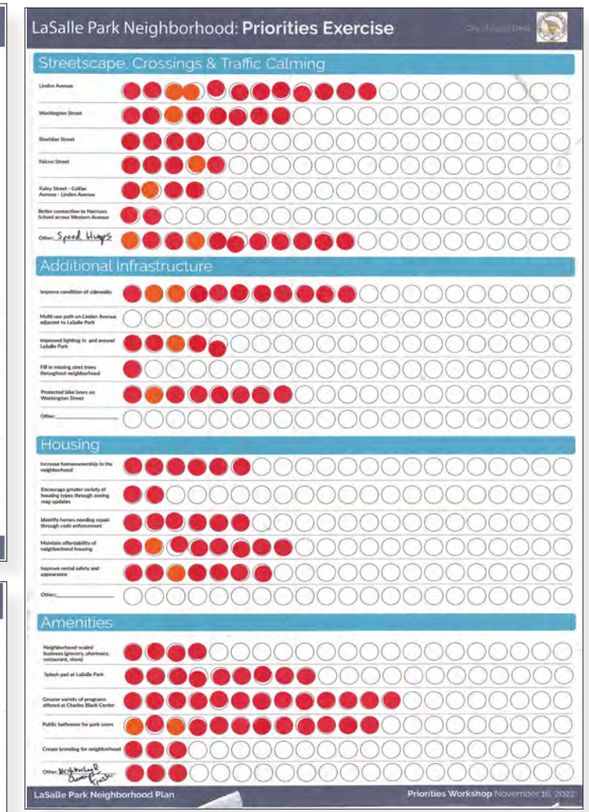
Continue to make improvements to LaSalle Park.

Facilitate development of a Neighborhood pharmacy.

Individuals complete planning exercises at the Neighborhood Plan Priorities Workshop.

Discussions after the Open House at Charles Black Center.





Some of the input provided at the workshops.

NEIGHBORHOOD **PLAN**

LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan • Parks & Trails • Housing Strategies • Sustainability Principles • Greening the Neighborhood

LaSalle Park **Neighborhood Plan**

The following is a list of LaSalle Park Neighborhood project ideas which may be pursued by the City, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector over the next 20 years. More information on the concepts listed below can be found on the following pages.

1. **Priority Housing Area**
   Focus new infill housing development in the western third of the neighborhood in order to provide a larger positive impact on the neighborhoods housing stock.

2. **Medium-Density Residential Infill**
   Explore denser housing options on the vacant lots along Washington and Kenmore to provide for a variety of housing types. This could include cottage courts, duplexes, townhouses, or small-scale apartment buildings of 4-8 units.

3. **LaSalle Park Homes Renovation**
   Create new connections to define public and private spaces to make the development more walkable as well as renovate existing housing units

4. **Washington Street Pavilion**
   Create a focal point at the corner of falcon and Washington that utilizes the space between the Charles black center and the street.

5. **Natural Habitat Preservation**
   Work with property owners to conserve remnent woodend area.

6. **Linden Avenue**
   Provide sidewalks and curbs, utilizing decorative fencing to protect the wooded areas and to discourage access and dumping.

7. **LaSalle Park Walking Trail**
   Complete multi-use path that surrounds the park and allow for better connections into the park.

8. **Beck's Lake Improvements**
   Consider ways to improve access to the lake and provide additional water-related amenities and beautification.

9. **The Grove**
   Utilize vacant and hard to build on lots with tree nursery.

10. **Iowa Street Park**
    Utilize hard to build vacant lots for a new open space with the potential for new development.

11. **Street connections**
    Explore options to reconnect neighborhood streets that were disconnected during urban renewal in the 1960s.

12. **Western Avenue Mixed-use**
    Continue to build upon the West Side Main Street plan to promote new commercial and residential infill and the renovation of existing buildings.

Infrastructure Improvements

Streetscape Improvements & Traffic Calming
- Linden Avenue
- Washington Street
- Sheridan Street
- Falcon Street

Street Connections
- Chicago Street
- Kentucky Street
- Bendix Drive
- Jefferson Boulevard

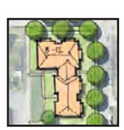
Intersection Improvements
- Washington Street - Falcon Street
- Washington Street - Kaley Street
- Washington Street - Sheridan Street
- Iowa Street - Western Avenue
- Linden Avenue - Colfax Street - Kaley Street

Proposed Bike Trails
- LaSalle Park Perimeter Path
- Washington Street
- Falcon Street

Legend

Elevation Below 710'

Single Famly


Proposed Multi-Family

Western Ave Infill

Linden Avenue
Sheridan Street
Colfax Avenue
Washington Street
Jefferson Boulevard
Falcon Street
Kaley Street
Meade Street
Olive Street
Western Avenue
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Priority Housing Area | Site 1

While new housing can be constructed throughout the neighborhood, focusing on a targeted geography can maximize the impact of new construction.

Prioritizing infill housing development within the western third of the plan area (west of Falcon Street) presents a greater positive impact on the neighborhood's housing stock on streets that contain the fewest vacant lots.

This area is also least impacted by physical conditions, including unsuitable soils that make homebuilding more challenging and expensive, a particular issue in a South Bend housing market already strangled by elevated home building costs.

Vacant lots on Kenmore and Washington

Priority Infill Housing Plan

Medium Density Infill | Sites 2

Explore denser housing options on the vacant lots along Washington and Kenmore to provide a variety of housing types. This could include cottage courts, duplexes, townhouses, or small-scale apartment buildings of 4-8 units.

Adding medium density housing along Washington presents a compliment to other existing long standing multifamily properties and adds value to the street as a priority corridor within the neighborhood. The vacant lots on the northwest corner of Washington and Falcon present an immediate opportunity for a sizable development in a highly visible location in the neighborhood.

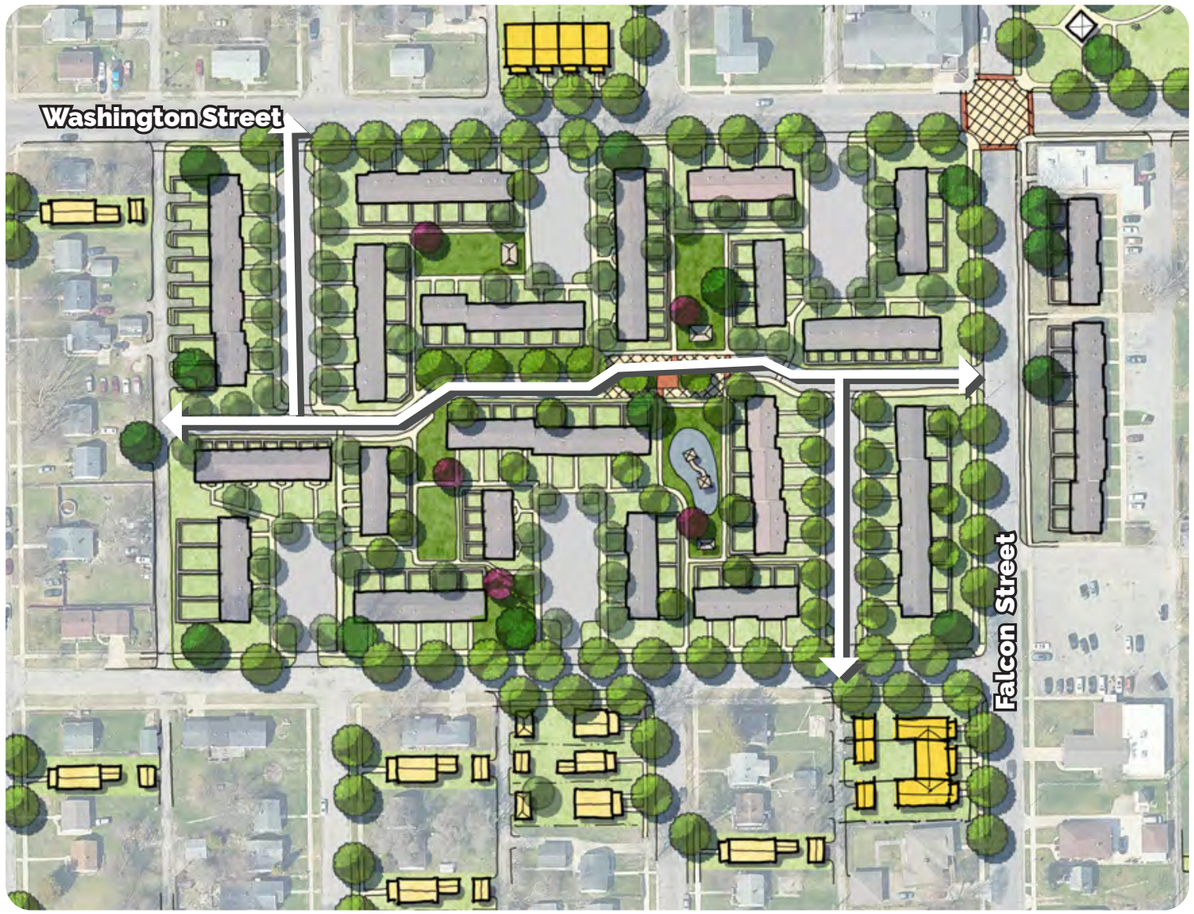
Views Shown in Rendering

Washington Street Medium Density Infill Housing Rendering

LaSalle Park Renovations | Site 3

Current layout of LaSalle Park Homes has an inward focus that doesn't utilize public greenspace or engage with broader neighborhood. An improved engagement and definition between private units and public spaces through enhanced site design, better walkability, and heightened connections will shift the layout to have a more outward focus

- Consider renovation of property exteriors to activate frontages,
- Connect interior access roads into a walkable network and support street access
- Introduce low fence or wall to differentiate between private patio space and public open space.



LaSalle Park Homes Rennovations

New internal street connections

Activate frontages

Formalize open space

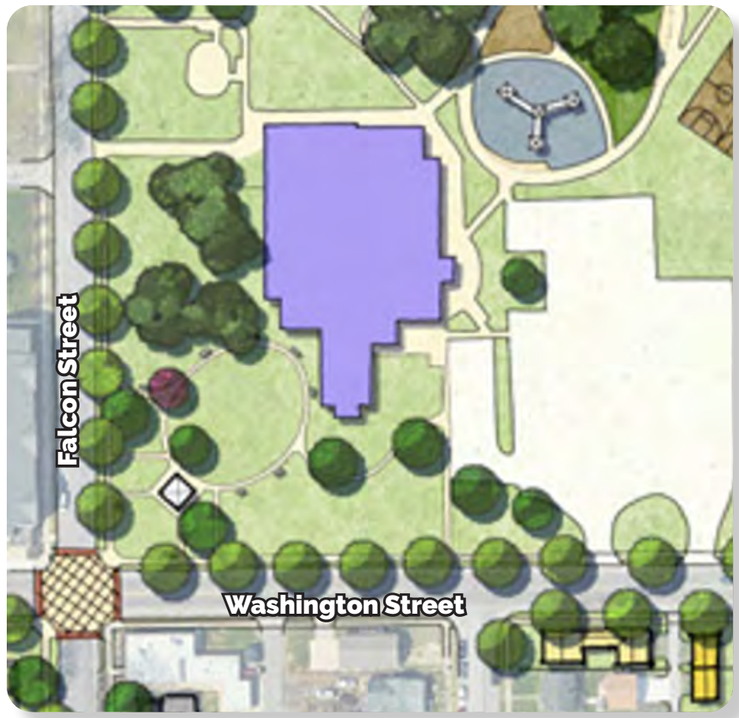
Activiate space with play equipment

Washington Street Pavilion | Site 4

The southwest corner of LaSalle Park offers a valuable vantage point of the Washington/Falcon Intersection. Despite its prominence as a neighborhood location, the site is an underdeveloped part of the park with no particular purpose. The empty space disconnects residents from the center, and especially from its main and only entrance on the east side of the building.

Transforming the space with a multiuse pavilion completes this key neighborhood intersection. A variety of programing could be adapted here, including resumption of the successful neighborhood market. The proximity of the pavilion becomes a more direct access to the Charles Black Center from the west by connecting residents and encouraging more walking trips.

Other improvements complementing the pavilion may include the addition of benches, trees, pathways, and the beautification of the blank west walls of the Charles Black Center for murals.



Charles Black Center Pavilion

Natural Preservation | Site 5

Privately held undeveloped property north of LaSalle Park, between the Norfolk Southern Railroad Tracks and Linden Avenue, passively exists as a natural habitat today.

Linden Avenue | Site 6

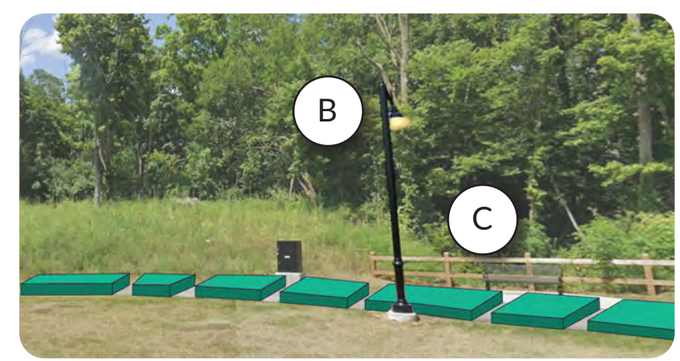
The plan recommends improvements that bring better definition to the public/private edge of Linden Avenue including a tree lined walking trail complete with pedestrian oriented lights and benches. The trail provides a new park vantage point and enhances a natural area already framed by trees. Reconstructing the street with a proper curb, combined with a fenceline separating the privately owned property to the north, deters vehicle access and trespassing.

Linden Avenue Trail

A Shared use path

B Street lamps

C Fence to deter trespassing



Example: Boland trail

Linden Avenue Trail

LaSalle Park Map

Views shown in rendering

Proposed Trail

Exisiting Trail

A New walking trail along perimeter

B Extra parking along Linden

C Beck's Lake fountain

D Tree nursery

LaSalle Park | Sites 7, 8

Construct a path that surrounds the park to build connections and improve recreation. Adding a 10–12-foot shared perimeter path with trees and lighting better connects recreational opportunities within the park and to other destinations outside the park all while being a unified amenity of its own for walkers, cyclists, and other users.

Seek improved access to the water's edge and beautify the lake. Projects within the plan are meant to improve access and enhance beautification including addition of a fountain/bubbler as a focal point and means to increase oxygen/aeration plus adding a viewing dock to the west side of the lake.

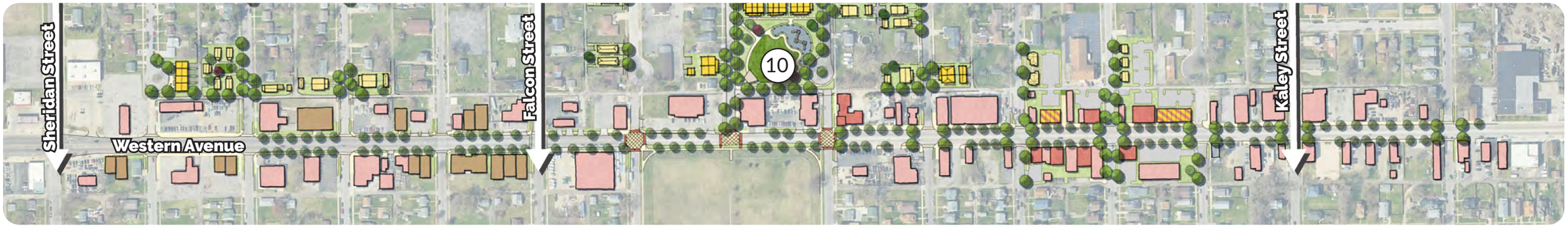
Expanding LaSalle Park represents a long-term opportunity to grow and strengthen one of the area's most important community assets. As surrounding properties become available over time for passive acquisition, the park has the potential to expand organically, increasing the amount of accessible green space within the neighborhood. An enlarged LaSalle Park would provide numerous benefits, including improved recreational opportunities, enhanced environmental quality, increased tree canopy, and better stormwater management. Additional green space can also support public health, neighborhood connectivity, and overall quality of life for residents.

The Grove | Site 9

LaSalle Park was once at the headwaters of the Grand Kankakee Marsh. In LaSalle Park, some parcels have gone undeveloped due to underlying soil conditions making construction difficult and/or costs prohibitive.

Many of the parcels have remained undeveloped to this day as unintentional green spaces like the area south of Washington St and across Beck's Lake. Undeveloped lots could be repurposed as temporary tree nurseries to add coverage to the neighborhood tree canopy, provide trees for park and streetscape projects and to beautify the neighborhood.

Beck's Lake



Iowa Street Park Concept

Iowa Street Park | Site 10

Situated between Iowa and Kentucky Streets and just north of Western Avenue is another group of parcels with poor soil conditions that have never seen development. The property ownership is a combination of the City of South Bend and an additional private owner.

Dedicating the area as a small, second neighborhood park brings purpose to this greenspace with an opportunity for passive recreation (seating areas, walking paths, outdoor fitness, and organized events). Further development of the area as a site for new residential units can widen the variety of housing types, all within this new park setting.

Western Avenue Green Map Views shown in rendering

Iowa Street Park

Street Reconnections | Site 11

As part of Urban Renewal activities within the neighborhood, four north-south streets (Bendix, Lake, Chicago, and Kentucky) were closed with cul-de-sacs to the north of Western Avenue serving to cut off vehicular traffic. This was reportedly for public safety reasons preventing vehicle traffic from entering/exiting the neighborhood at non-signalized intersections.

The plan does not suggest direct changes but instead explores options that might replace one or more of these cul-de-sacs improving connectivity to Western Avenue for all users. Potential changes do not necessarily need to open the street for vehicle traffic but could focus solely on making access safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

Four Ways to Improve Connections on Cul-de-sacs

1. Add a neighborhood gateway
2. Micro roundabout
3. Bike and ped connection
4. Woonerf street- shared streed giving equal priority to cars, bikes, and people

Existing Cul-de-sac

1. Neighborhood Gateway

2. Micro Roundabout

3. Chicane Street

4. Woonerf Street

Western Avenue Infill Concept

Western Avenue Infill | Site 12

The Western Avenue Corridor has witnessed significant infrastructure investment and business development in the wake of the 2014 West Side Main Streets Corridor Plan. Vacant and other underutilized properties however have persisted as well as auto oriented uses that can prevent a more continuous, walkable environment.

Additional residential development along Western in the form of mixed use or multifamily would be a compliment to continued retail growth and encourage more pedestrian trips on the corridor by making walking more comfortable.

Western Avenue Infill Map

Views shown in rendering

Western Avenue Infill

Housing **Strategies**

A range of housing strategies will help ensure the LaSalle Park Neighborhood is a successful, diverse, mixed-income area.

Market Challenges

For the LaSalle Park neighborhood, the current cost of constructing new housing is greater than the appraised value of the property once it is completed. This financial gap is a barrier to the financing and construction of new housing, especially market-rate units, in the area. Additionally the high water table and soil conditions also impose higher construction costs in some areas of the neighborhood.

A Residential Market Potential study completed for the LaSalle Park area concludes that there could be the potential to add 29 new for-rent units and 8 new for-sale units, in any mix of detached houses, duplex houses, and/or townhouses annually. Housing formats were noted as a determining factor on values for both for sale and for rent options, with attached and/or larger multifamily buildings commanding a lower price point. The study also advised concentrating on infill sites at a few important neighborhood nodes instead of a scattered approach.

Assuming that local developers are successful in building for-sale units that appeal to movers they can capture some households that otherwise would have bypassed LaSalle Park as a potential place to live.

The study indicates that new-build for-sale units could have values in the range of $155,000 to $250,000, again depending on the building format. Duplex houses or attached cottages could be at the lower end of the price spectrum, while detached single-family houses are more likely to be at the higher end of the range.

The study further suggests that all of the new for-lease units would be in multi-family structures, mainly apartments or lofts. Some of the smaller units could also include a mix of accessory dwellings and small cottages, which tend to be detached formats.

The study recommends that the City and developers focus on parcels that provide the best visibility to traffic for marketing and advertising exposures; and locations that can help serve as catalysts for additional reinvestment. New housing placed in the right spots can generate positive momentum for additional projects.

Home Ownership

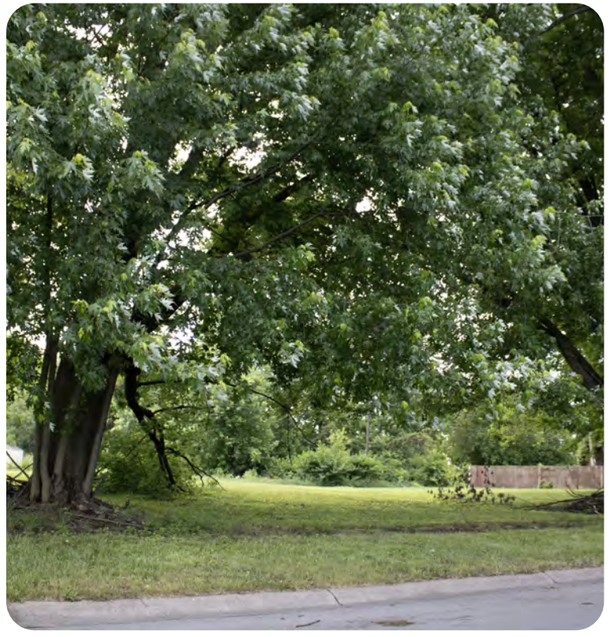
The City of South Bend has several programs to assist first time homebuyers and current homeowners:

- Certified First Time Home Buyer Education which is typically required for most federal and state housing assistance programs such as Habitat for Humanity and Community Homebuyers Corporation for home buyers whose income does not exceed 80% of the Area Median Income.
- South Bend's Housing Counseling Agency offers housing counseling and is open to all individuals in need regardless of whether they are participating in an assistance program. This includes both foreclosure prevention counseling and credit / budget counseling.

Housing Repair and Quality

Housing repair assistance can allow neighborhood residents to stay in their homes. Code Enforcement can ensure that houses and their yards are kept in acceptable condition; in particular, the City's Rental Safety Verification Program Code can assure a level of quality for rental housing units.

House on Sheridan Street.



Liberty Street vacant lot.

During the planning process, participants were asked a series of questions about housing. Of those that responded...

80% stated that the need for repair of existing homes was an issue in the neighborhood

53% stated that absentee or poor quality landlords were an issue in the neighborhood

53% stated the need for more homeownership was an issue in the neighborhood

Housing **Study**

Housing Demographics

Based on LandUseUSA's study of 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data,

- **Median Income:** the study area's median household income is about $20,000, which is significantly lower than the city's median of about $50,000
- **Rental vs. Owner Occupied:** 56 percent of occupied housing units are rented and 44 percent are owned
- **Owner Median Income:** the study area's owners have a median household income of about $25,000, which is significantly lower than the city's median of about $70,000
- **Rental Median Income:** renters have a median household income of about $15,000, which also is significantly lower than the city's median of about $40,000
- **Median Home Value:** the median home value is closer to $95,000 in the Study Area and $145,000 in the City of South Bend

Addressing High Vacancy

This study estimates that the current vacancy rate for the Study Area and the City of South Bend is close to 15 percent. Ideally, vacancies should be at or below 6 percent, Some ways to accomplish this are:

- **Provide additional programs** incentivizing property owners to reinvest into rehabs, renovations, remodels, and perhaps even expansions to add accessory studios or suites.
- **One-to-one:** At least one existing unit in the study area should be rehabbed for every new unit that is built.

For Sale and Rental Opportunities

The market can support the construction of the following new units:

- up to **twenty-nine** new for-lease rental units;
- up to **eight** new attached for-sale units, including condominiums and townhouses; and
- up to **eight** new detached for sale houses.

This approach implies that all low-income households earning less than 60% of AMI will not be able to afford new-builds, and instead will need to settle for units that had been previously leased or previously owned by prior tenants. However, this approach might overlook the potential absorption of tiny homes, accessory dwelling, small cottages, and micro lofts that could be built to address affordability.

The initial study indicates that new-build **for-sale units could have values in the range of $155,000 to $250,000**, again depending on the building format. Duplex houses or attached cottages could be at the lower end of the price spectrum, whereas detached single-family houses are more likely to be at the higher end of the range. Developers could cautiously test the upper threshold of the price spectrum for a few houses in 2024 and 2025, nudging their prices upward to $275,000 and perhaps even $299,900.

New-build construction could have contract **rents in the range of $950 to $1,750 per month**. The study suggests that all of the new for-lease units would be in multi-family structures, which implies apartments or lofts. However, some of the smaller units could also include a mix of accessory dwellings and small cottages, which tend to be detached formats.

We consider the possibility that even low-income households might be able to afford a new-build construction like an accessory dwelling, small cottage, or micro-loft.

Site Selection

Rather than scattering the Annual Forecast Absorption to infill sites throughout the Study Area, it would be better to identify a few important neighborhood nodes where reinvestment is most likely to generate trickle-through benefits for additional projects. Areas to consider include areas with best visibility to traffic (for marketing and advertising exposures); and locations that can help serve as catalysts for additional reinvestment.

Street Connections

Following modern principles of urbanism, it is apparent that some improvements may be necessary to address local street connectivity. This could include extending four connectors (Chicago, Lake, Kentucky, and Bendix streets) south to Western Avenue – even if it means undoing the expensive infrastructure that created those dead-ends in the first place. As much as possible, the city also should strive to purchase parcels needed to complete the east-west Jefferson Boulevard through the Study Area.

8

New for sale units (townhomes or condominiums)

Price Range: Lower end of $155,000 - $299,000

8

New For-Sale Single-Family Home

Price Range: $155,000 - $299,000

29

New rental units

Price Range: $950 - $1,750 monthly

Parks & **Trails**

Map showing Parks and Trails.

LaSalle Park playground.

LaSalle Park Pavilion.

Parks and Trails Key

- Existing Parks
- Proposed Parks and Open Spaces
- Proposed Trails (See Page 40 of LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan)

Parks

There have been many recent improvements to LaSalle Park including new walking trails, play equipment, improved Charles Black Center ammenities, and additional sports courts. In an effort to continue to improve LaSalle Park, additional amenities and improvements can be made.

The LaSalle Park Neighborhood can feature a series of formal and informal open spaces. Vacant lots along Washington Street south of the lake can feature a tree nursery to increase availability of trees to plant within the neighborhood. The wetland area north of LaSalle Park could be preserved as a natural area. If property could be aquired the area between Iowa Street and Kentucky Street could become a formal open space.

Recreation Trails

The existing path around The Lake can be enhanced with better lighting and connected to a new trail placed along the perimeter of the park.

Sustainability **Principles**

South Bend is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050, and each neighborhood has a role to play in reducing the community's emissions. The projects put forward in the LaSalle Park Neighborhood Plan can support the City's sustainability goals related to green infrastructure, built environment, and clean transportation.

Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure plays a central role in improving air, soil, and water quality by reducing energy use in buildings, supporting the capturing and use of carbon, and improving stormwater filtration.

- Increase the number of trees planted to improve the energy efficiency of buildings by lowering the energy needed to heat or cool a building.
- Plant street trees to help extend the useful life of street pavement due to increased shading of pavement.
- Reduce paved surfaces in the neighborhood to help lower stormwater run off, improve water quality, and reduce vulnerability to the urban heat island effect.
- Seek to have water be absorbed where it falls instead of transferred off site for processing.

Built Environment

Reducing energy use in South Bend will significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions.

- Rehabilitate existing structures to reduce carbon emissions and construction waste.
- Reuse materials or select lower-carbon building materials when constructing new housing.
- Promote the use of solar panels for energy generation.
- Encourage urban residential infill and the use of existing public utilities and infrastructure to reduce the need to extend services into rural areas.

Transportation

Transportation represents one of the largest sources of emissions in our community, so making biking, walking, transit, and other forms of shared mobility more accessible to residents is critical.

- Allow an appropriate mixing of land uses to reduce the amount of travel required.
- Add new bike lanes and improve walkability to allow more people to safely bike and walk, reducing vehicle-related emissions.
- Construct shared use paths, which put less stress on the existing street infrastructure, ultimately reducing the frequency of street repair.
- Promote public transportation, which compared to driving alone, reduces emissions and improves air quality.

Greening **The Neighborhood**

Greening neighborhoods creates healthier, more energy efficient, and attractive neighborhoods where residents and natural ecosystems can thrive.

What is a Healthy Tree Canopy?

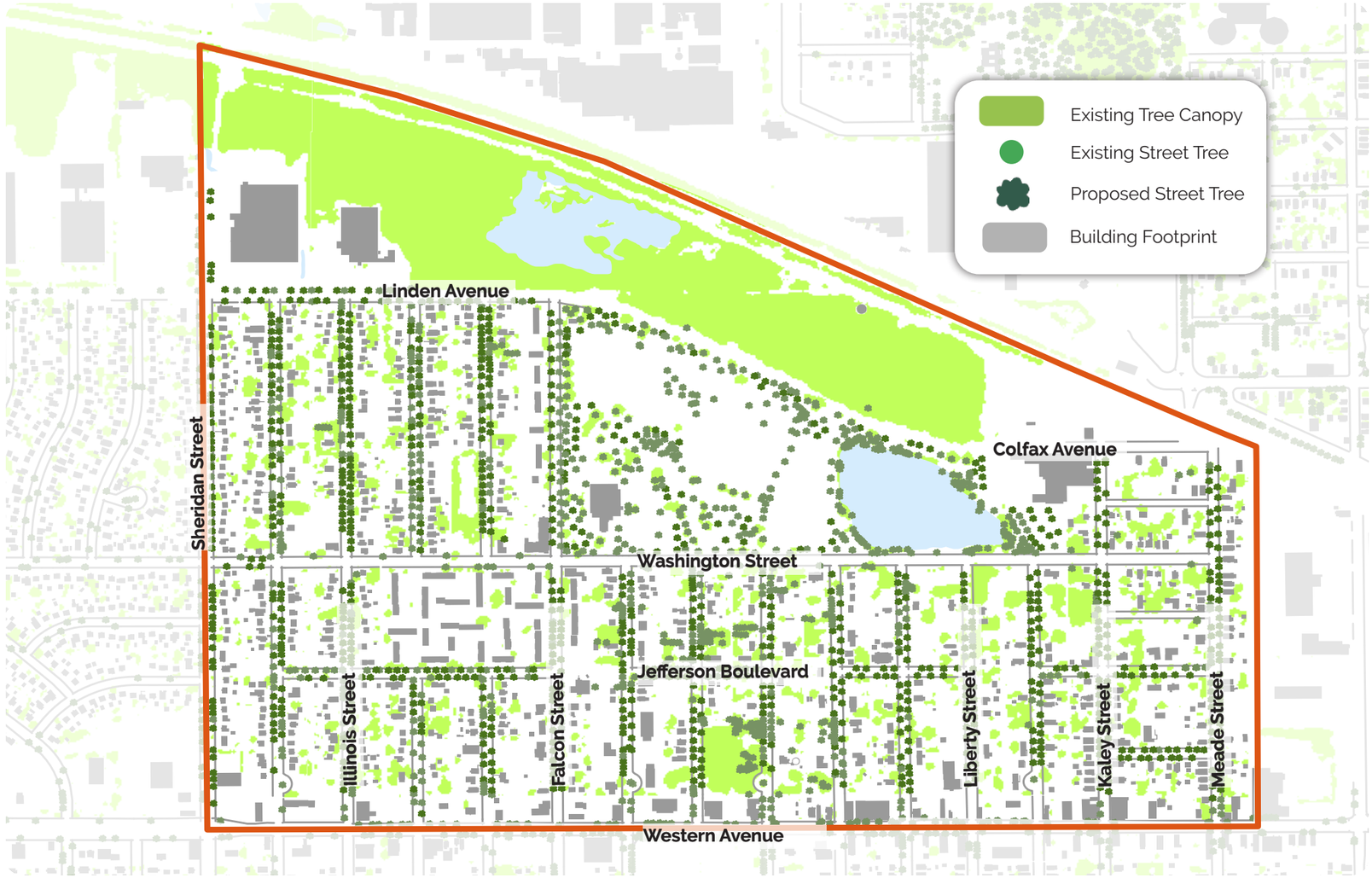
The City's goal for urban neighborhoods is to have **40% tree canopy coverage by 2050**. The urban tree canopy is measured as a percentage of the overall land area that is sheltered from above by tree branches and leaves. Smaller green areas on the following map indicate trees that have not yet reached full maturity.

Tree canopy in LaSalle Park.

Current Tree Coverage

Map showing existing tree canopy.

Potential Canopy: Additional Street Trees



Map showing potential tree canopy.

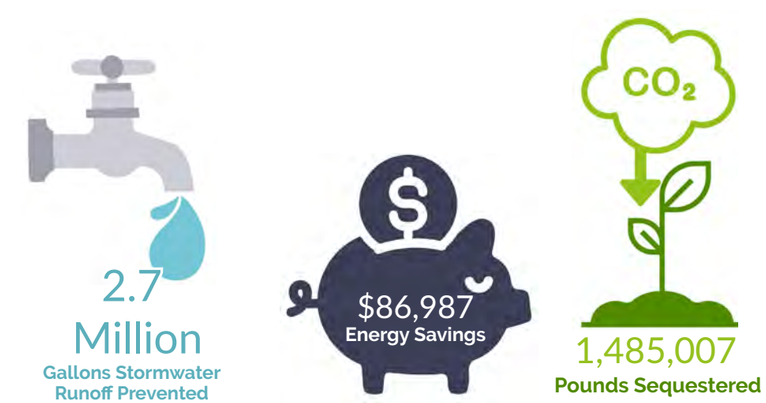
Why is it important?

Trees are essential to healthy neighborhoods by providing the following benefits:

- removing street-level air pollution,
- cooling down neighborhoods (heat island effect),
- slowing traffic and helping to create safer, walkable streets,
- improving community health and wellness,
- reducing flooding, erosion, and water pollution from runoff,
- creating stronger and more attractive places,
- reducing urban noise (cars, trains),
- increasing energy savings for heating and cooling buildings, and
- increasing property values.

How does this plan support it?

The LaSalle Park Neighborhood has a **current tree canopy of 27%**. This plan proposes installing a tree every 30 feet along streets where possible and in public spaces as shown in the concept designs. This effort would yield approximately an additional 912 trees, **raising the tree canopy to 33%** within the planning area. Additional trees must be planted on private property to **achieve the citywide goal of 40% tree canopy.**



Planting 912 additional trees results in carbon sequestered, water runoff saved, and energy costs reduced. Calculated on design.itreetools.org based on 30-year time frame.

Streets & **Transportation**

Streetscape Improvements & Traffic Calming • Bike Infrastructure

Streetscape Improvements & **Traffic Calming**

Throughout the planning process, participants frequently noted the need to address the condition of streets, alleys, sidewalks, and lighting within the LaSalle Park Neighborhood. As these types of infrastructure improvements are important to every neighborhood in South Bend, they should be addressed on a citywide scale according to condition, funding, and current priorities. Yet, this plan does identify places to receive improvements beyond general maintenance.

The project list that follows was developed based on input gathered at neighborhood workshops, from 311 calls to the City of South Bend, and planning and engineering considerations. Changes to streets in the LaSalle Park Neighborhood should be improved in accordance with South Bend's Complete Streets policy. The use of streets by people on foot and bicycle is prioritized over high-speed vehicle travel. Street improvements should support the use of the Transpo bus system, including by improving the comfort of bus stops.

Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape improvements are large-scale projects that may:

- have significant traffic and aesthetic impacts;
- include changes to street pavement width, the full replacement of driveway approaches, curbs, and sidewalks;
- upgrade street trees and lighting; and
- include traffic calming elements.

Priority Areas

- Washington Street
- Linden Avenue

Intersection Improvements

Intersection improvements are projects to improve safety, often by reducing excessive pavement widths and enhancing pedestrian crossings.

Priority Areas

- Western Avenue - Iowa Street
- Washington Street - Kaley Street
- Washington Street - Falcon Street
- Washington Street - Sheridan Street

Rail Road Crossing

Explore grade separation of the Meade and/or Olive Street crossings of the Norfolk Southern Railroad Rail Line through use of an underpass that would allow for safer passage for all users. The scope and complexity of the project would require significant external funding from State and Federal government sources.

Priority Areas

- Meade Street
- Olive Street

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming involves small-scale interventions to alter the physical design of a street to improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

Priority Areas

- Kaley Street
- Falcon Street
- Sheridan Street

During the planning process, participants were asked a series of questions about streets, bicycle infrastructure, and other infrastructure topics.

53% stated they walk in the neighborhood.

3 out of 3 stated improved sidewalks would encourage them to walk more.

50% stated they walk to LaSalle Park or the Charles Black Center.

Map showing infrastructure improvements.

Streets Map Key

- Streetscape Improvements
- Traffic Calming
- Intersection Improvements
- Rail Road Crossings

Bike **Infrastructure**

Following is a list of bicycle-related projects proposed for the LaSalle Park Neighborhood.

Protected Bike Lane

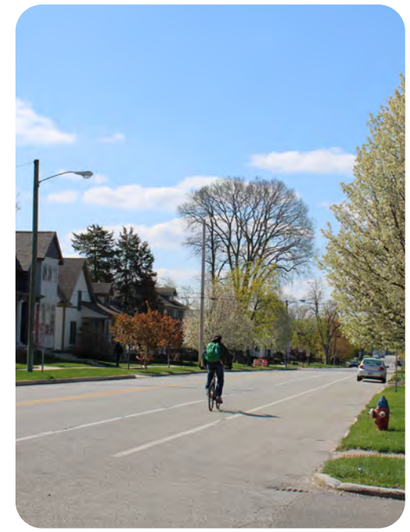
Facility separated from motor vehicle traffic by a curb, planter, or other physical barriers for the exclusive use of people on bicycles

Route	Extent
None	

Shared Use Path

Off-street facility shared by people on foot and bicycles

Route	Extent
LaSalle Park	Washington Street - Falcon Street - Linden Avenue
Linden Avenue	Kaley Street - Falcon Street
Washington Street	Sheridan Street - Kaley Street
Falcon Street	Washington Street - Western Avenue



Bike Lane

Designated lane for bicyclists within the street normally marked with a painted line and cyclist symbol.

Route
None

Shared On-Street

On-Street facility shared by both vehicles and bicycles without designated space for each.

Route
None

During the planning process, participants were asked a series of questions about bicycle infrastructure.

60% stated better lighting would encourage them to bike more.

60% stated designated bicycle infrastructure would encourage them to bike more.

Map showing bicycle infrastructure improvements.

Streets Map Key

Existing

- Protected Bike Lane
- Shared Use Path (Trail)
- Bike Lane
- Shared On-Street

Proposed

- Protected Bike Lane
- Shared Use Path (Trail)
- Bike Lane
- Shared On-Street

Built Form & **Zoning**

Zoning Districts • Zoning Map • Building Types

Built Form & **Zoning**

Overview

The built form of the LaSalle Park Neighborhood is guided by the South Bend Zoning Ordinance and its zoning map. The zoning ordinance is a local law that governs the physical development of property, both the form and scale of buildings and the specific use of land.

The future zoning map within this section proposes how each lot within the LaSalle Park Neighborhood should be zoned following adoption of this plan. Over time, property within the neighborhood should be allowed to redevelop gradually to the next increment of development.

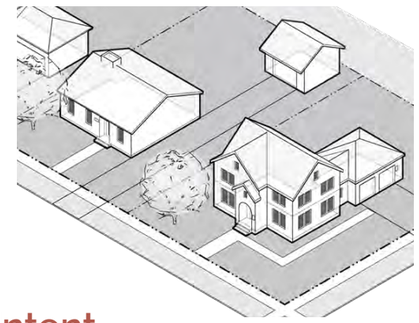
Combined with the regulations found within the South Bend Zoning Ordinance, the aim of the future zoning map is to maintain and enhance the LaSalle Park Neighborhood's pedestrian-oriented, urban environment. Generally vehicle access, parking, and garages should be from alleys when present. Vacating of alleys is discouraged as it hinders redevelopment of vacant lots. Drive-throughs are discouraged, and if they are present, they should be designed not to be visible from the street. New commercial development should occur according to the standards of the NC Neighborhood Center District.

As properties are developed or reused, nonconforming conditions should be brought into conformance with the proposed zoning district in the plan. This includes landscaping, parking, lighting, and building standards.

This plan seeks to allow a greater quantity and diversity in housing units; doing so will permit people to find housing within the neighborhood that meets their price and lifestyle needs. Ancillary dwelling units, such as garage apartments or backyard cottages, are encouraged for the LaSalle Park Neighborhood.

The South Bend zoning map divides the city into twelve zoning districts. Seven of these districts are proposed for the LaSalle Park Neighborhood: U1, U2, U3, UF, NC, OS, and I.

S1 Suburban Neighborhood 1



Intent

The S1, Suburban Neighborhood 1, District primarily supports single-unit residential development on larger lots with large setbacks.

Where It Is Appropriate

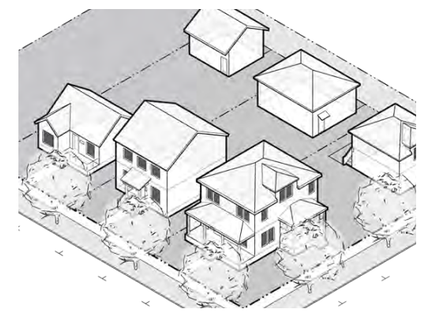
Due to its suburban nature, the S1 District is not appropriate in the LaSalle Park Neighborhood.

S2 Suburban Neighborhood 2

The S2, Suburban Neighborhood 2, District supports a full range of housing types including apartment buildings placed on large lots with large setbacks.

Due to its suburban nature, the S2 District is not appropriate in the LaSalle Park Neighborhood.

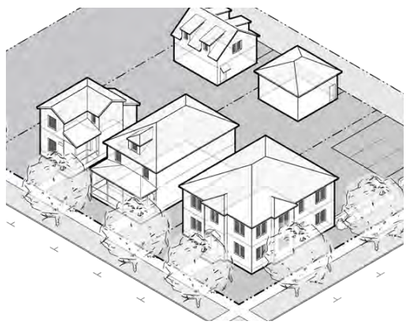
U1 Urban Neighborhood 1



The U1, Urban Neighborhood 1, District supports mostly single-unit detached dwellings, but well designed duplexes would also be appropriate. The U1 District features modest building setbacks and inviting frontages, such as porches and stoops.

The U1 District is well suited for most of the LaSalle Park Neighborhood. This plan would support special exceptions for newly constructed duplexes.

U2 Urban Neighborhood 2



The U2, Urban Neighborhood 2, District provides for primarily detached houses and duplexes, but it allows for neighborhood-scale buildings of up to four units. Buildings have modest setbacks and inviting frontages, such as porches and stoops.

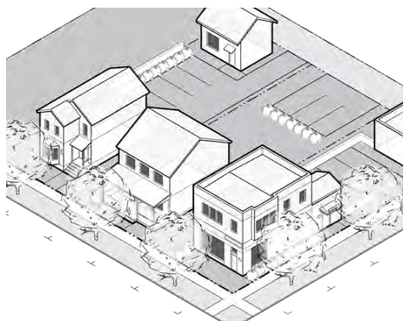
Areas south of LaSalle Park are appropriate for the U2 District. The plan would support rezoning properties within the U1 District south of Washington Street to the U2 District for sensitively designed buildings of up to four units built at a scale compatible with surrounding residential properties. See proposed zoning map for more details.

U3 Urban Neighborhood 3

The U3, Urban Neighborhood 3, District supports a full range of housing types, from single-unit dwellings to large multi-unit buildings, placed at small setbacks. Buildings in the U3 District may be built up to four stories in height.

Properties along Falcon Street are well suited for the U3 district may be appropriate for the U3 District if limited to 6 units and 2.5 stories.

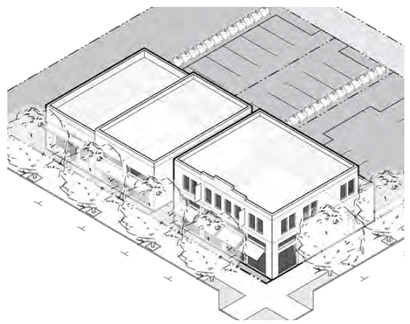
UF Urban Neighborhood Flex



The UF Urban Flex District supports a full range of housing types, together with limited small-scale commercial uses. Buildings typically have small setbacks and are two to four stories.

The UF District is appropriate for scattered locations to support small-scale services and retail, especially at intersections.

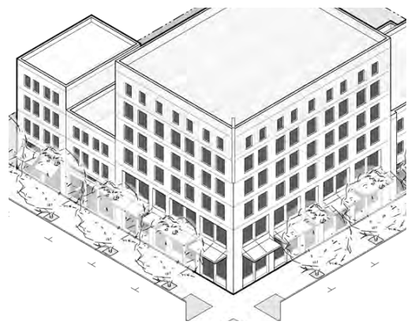
NC Neighborhood Center



The NC Neighborhood Center District supports higher density, mixed-use urban centers, often near the intersection of major streets or major corridor. Buildings usually have small or no setbacks and can be up to four stories. In addition to having higher concentrations of housing units, these areas typically serve as the commercial centers for their neighborhood.

Areas along Western Avenue are well suited for the NC District.

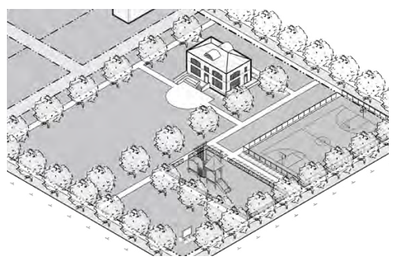
DT Downtown



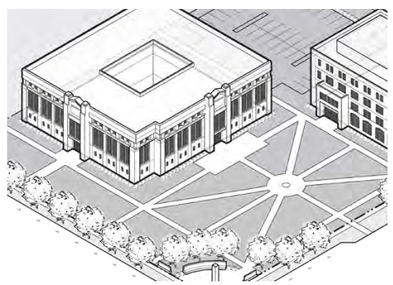
The DT Downtown District supports the development of South Bend's core into a high-intensity, mixed use urban area.

The DT District would not apply to properties in the area of LaSalle Park.

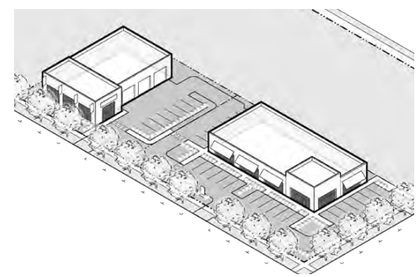
OS Open Space



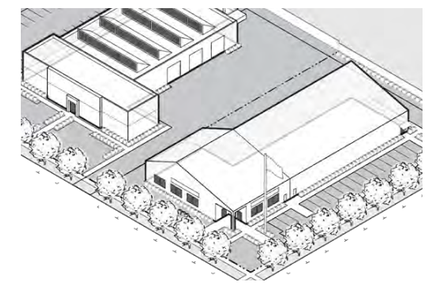
U University



C Commercial



I Industrial



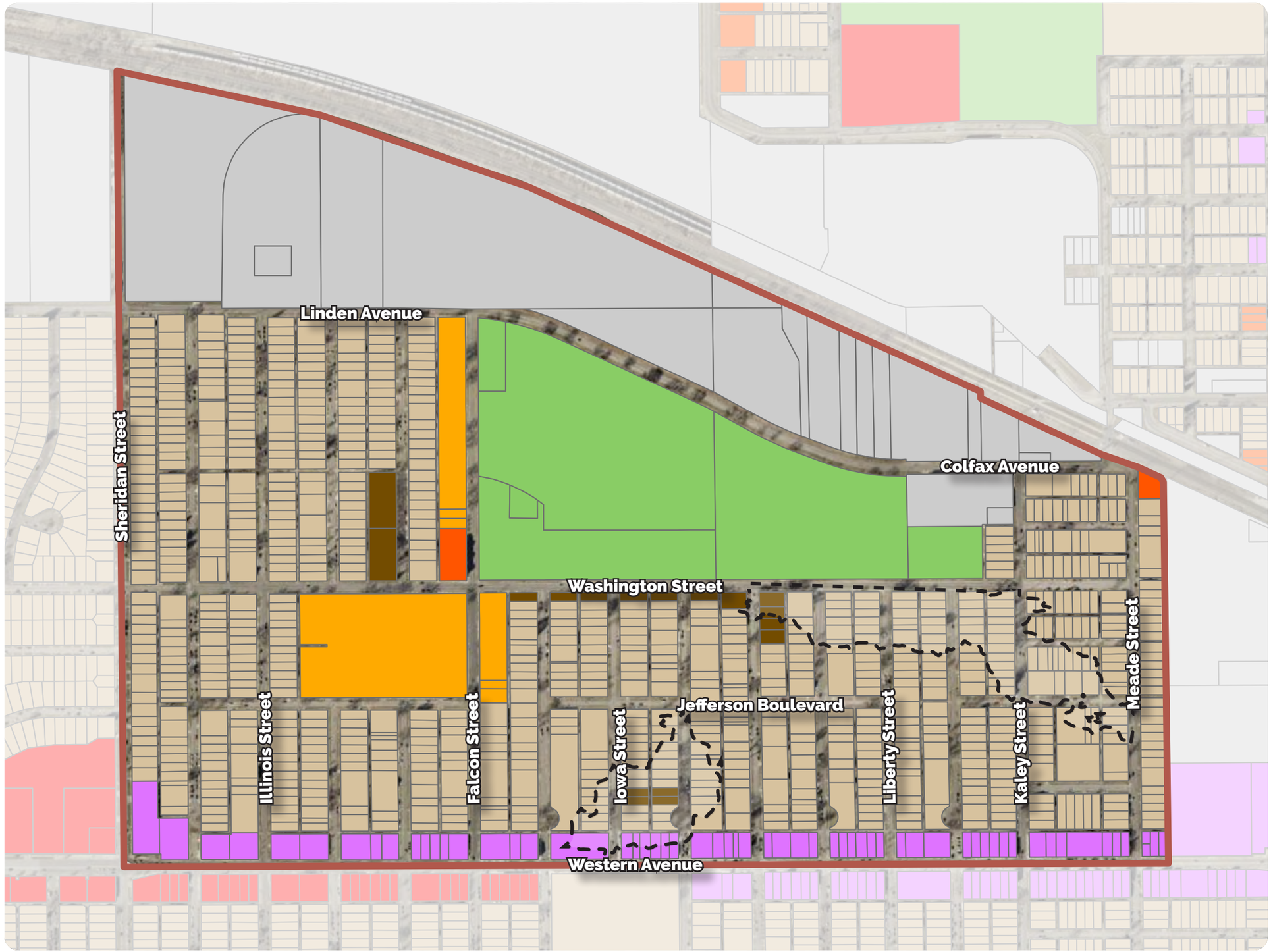
HP Historic Preservation

Intent

OS	U	C	I	HP
The OS, Open Space, District supports the development of public parks and other open spaces.	The U, University District, supports the development of university campuses.	The C, Commercial District, supports medium- to high-intensity commercial uses that are auto-oriented and found in suburban locations.	The I, Industrial District, supports medium- to high-intensity industrial uses, typically grouped along highways and major streets and separated from residential uses.	The HP, Historic Preservation, Overlay District is established to preserve historically significant buildings and sites of historical, architectural, engineering, and cultural significance in South Bend.

Where It Is Appropriate

OS	U	C	I	HP
The OS District includes LaSalle Park and Beck's Lake. Proposed future open spaces like the Iowa Street park or the tree nurseries should be OS if implemented.	The U District is not currently proposed for the LaSalle Park Neighborhood.	Because of its suburban, auto-oriented nature, the C Commercial District is not appropriate in this urban neighborhood.	The I District is appropriate for existing industrial areas located in the northern tier of the neighborhood. Any development in the I District should be sensitive to surrounding land uses. Expanded industrial uses should not be considered beyond what currently exists in the neighborhood.	The planning area does not currently include any local historic districts or local landmarks.



Proposed Zoning Map for LaSalle Park Neighborhood Area.

Zoning Districts

- U1: Urban Neighborhood 1
- U2: Urban Neighborhood 2
- U3: Urban Neighborhood 3
- UF: Urban Flex
- NC: Neighborhood Center
- OS: Open Space
- I: Industrial
- C: Commercial
- Potential Future Tree Nursery Area

Building **Types**

The table on the following pages illustrates the character of different building types and shows in which zoning districts they are permitted. Building types do not apply to the OS, U, C, or I zoning districts,

Zoning Districts

- S1 Suburban Neighborhood 1
- S2 Suburban Neighborhood 2
- U1 Urban Neighborhood 1
- U2 Urban Neighborhood 2
- U3 Urban Neighborhood 3
- UF Urban Neighborhood Flex
- NC Neighborhood Center
- DT Downtown

Carriage House

S1 S2 U1 U2 U3 UF NC

Detached House

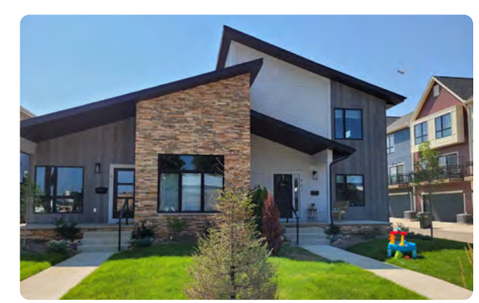
S1 S2 U1 U2 U3 UF

Cottage Court

S2 U2 U3 UF

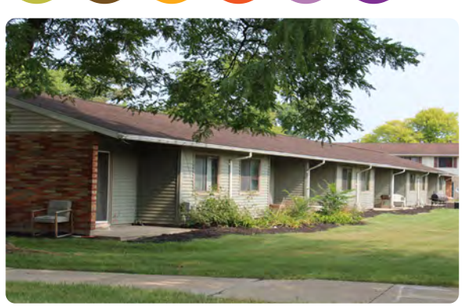
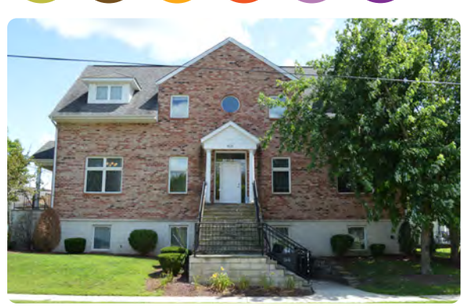
Duplex

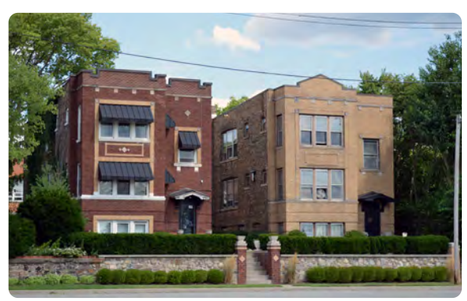
S1 S2 U1 U2 U3 UF

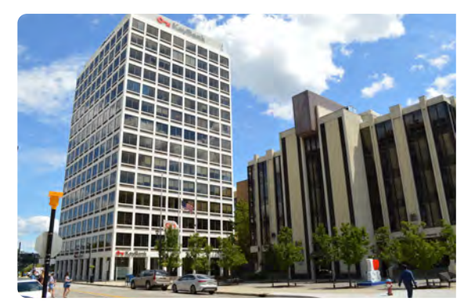


Cottage court photos (top to bottom):
michaelwatkinsarchitect.com
kerneyhomes.com
cottagecourt.com

Townhouse	Apartment House	Stacked Flats	Shop	Mid-Rise / Tower
S2 U2 U3 UF NC DT	S2 U2 U3 UF NC DT	S2 U3 UF NC DT	UF NC DT	DT





Implementation **Matrix**

Infrastructure • Parks • Housing • Underutilized Properties • Sense of Community

Implementation **Matrix**

This plan outlines potential projects and activities to occur in the neighborhood over the next 20 years. Major projects, especially those to be undertaken in the next 10 years, are highlighted in the implementation matrix below.

Strategy 1: Create a safe and attractive neighborhood through infrastructure improvements.

	Action	Lead Responsibility		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	10+ Years
1.01	**Linden Avenue:** Complete streetscape improvements, improved intersections, pedestrian crossings, and shared use paths near LaSalle Park.	■			■		
1.02	**Washington Street:** Complete streetscape improvements, improved intersections, pedestrian crossings, and shared use paths connecting to LaSalle Park.	■				■	
1.03	**Streetscape Improvements and Traffic Calming:** Complete high priority traffic calming on neighborhood streets especially along Sheridan, Falcon, and Kaley.	■			■	■	
1.04	**Falcon Street Path:** Improve access and safety of pedestrians and cyclists through shared-use path connecting Harrison Elementary School to the Neighborhood.	■				■	■
1.05	**Trees:** Plant trees where possible, especially in the city right-of-way, to increase the urban tree canopy.	■	■	LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association, Property Owners	■	■	■
1.06	**Promote Curb and Sidewalk Program:** Promote existing curb & sidewalk replacement program to assist with costs.	■		LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■
1.07	**Street Connections:** Improve connectivity along Bendix, Chicago, Kentucky, and Lake Street.	■			■	■	■
1.08	**Intersection Improvements:** Improve instersections along Washington and Falcon, Washington and Kaley, Washington and Sheridan, Iowa and Western, and the intersection between Linden, Coflax and Kaley.	■			■	■	■

Strategy 2: Improve park spaces and access.

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
2.1	**The Grove:** utilize never developed lots for potential tree nursery in teh short to medium term.	■		Property Owners	■	■	■
2.2	**LaSalle Park Updates:** Improve access and safety of pedestrians and cyclists through shared-use paths along the park.	■			■	■	
2.3	**Beck's Lake Improvements:** Improve engagement to waters edge by adding a pier and fountain.	■		LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	
2.4	**Iowa Street Park:** Develop a passive recreation area on never developed lots above Western Avenue along Iowa Street.	■		LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association			■
2.5	**Charles Black Center Pavilion:** re-engage space on coner of Washington Street and Falcon Street by building a pavilion to host gatherings.	■			■	■	

Strategy 3: Develop and preserve housing in the neighborhood.

	Action	Lead Responsibility: City	Lead Responsibility: Partner	Potential Partners	Timeline: 1-5 Years	Timeline: 5-10 Years	Timeline: 10+ Years
3.1	**Develop Housing:** Support the production of a range of housing types including new construction and rehabilitation of market rate and affordable units for owner and rental housing. Prioritize housing development in the Western third of neighborhood (West of Falcon) Consider Medium density housing along Washington and Kenmore vacant lots.	■		Community Development Corporations, Developers, Builders, Financial Istitutions	■	■	■
3.2	**Home Repair:** Ensure housing is well maintained by offering owner-occupied housing repair assistance and using code enforcement tools as necessary.	■		Nonprofit Organizations, Property Owners, Financial Institutions	■	■	■
3.3	**Home Ownership:** Explore mechanisms that can promote and transition renters into homeowners in the neighborhood.	■	■	Nonprofit Organizations	■	■	■
3.4	**Residential TIF Area:** Investigate creation of residential TIF area within the neighborhood.	■			■		
3.5	**LaSalle Park Home Renovations:** Support project with design considerations that create more intentional public and private space		■	Nonprofit Organizations	■		
3.6	**Iowa Street Park Housing:** Develop higher density housing that integrates with the new park space.	■		Community Development Corporations, Developers, Builders, Financial Istitutions			■
3.7	**Western Avenue Mixed Use:** Promote additional residential infill development on targeted blocks.	■	■	Property Owners, Developers	■	■	■
3.8	**Zoning:** Update the zoning map for the plan area.	■			■		

Strategy 4: Address underutilized and problem properties in the neighborhood.

	Action	Lead Responsibility		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	10+ Years
4.1	**Problem Properties:** Utilize the Chronic Problem Properties regulations to reduce the negative impact of problem properties on the neighborhood.	■		LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■

Strategy 5: Develop sense of community through neighborhood engagement.

	Action	Lead Responsibility		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	10+ Years
5.1	**Capacity Building:** Build neighborhood capacity through engagement of all neighborhood residents.	■	■	LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■
5.2	**Neighborhood Events:** Hold neighborhood events which celebrate the neighborhood.		■	LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■
5.3	**Communication:** Develop and maintain communication with neighbors including residents of rental housing.		■	LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■
5.4	**Youth Programming:** Continue to support additional youth programming through city and other community facilities	■	■	LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■
5.5	**Relationships:** Foster relationships among the City, neighborhood institutions, and the neighborhood organization.	■	■	LaSalle Park Neighborhood Association	■	■	■