

An aerial, hand-drawn style illustration of downtown South Bend, Indiana. The image shows a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings of varying heights and colors (browns, greys, blues, and oranges). Green trees are scattered throughout the city blocks. A large body of water, likely Lake Michigan, is visible in the lower-left and bottom-center, with a bridge crossing it. The overall style is artistic and detailed, with visible line work and color washes.

DOWNTOWN SOUTH BEND

2045 PLAN

A COMMUNITY-LED VISION

DRAFT | February 27, 2025

Acknowledgments

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

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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 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.



History of Downtown South Bend

OVERVIEW

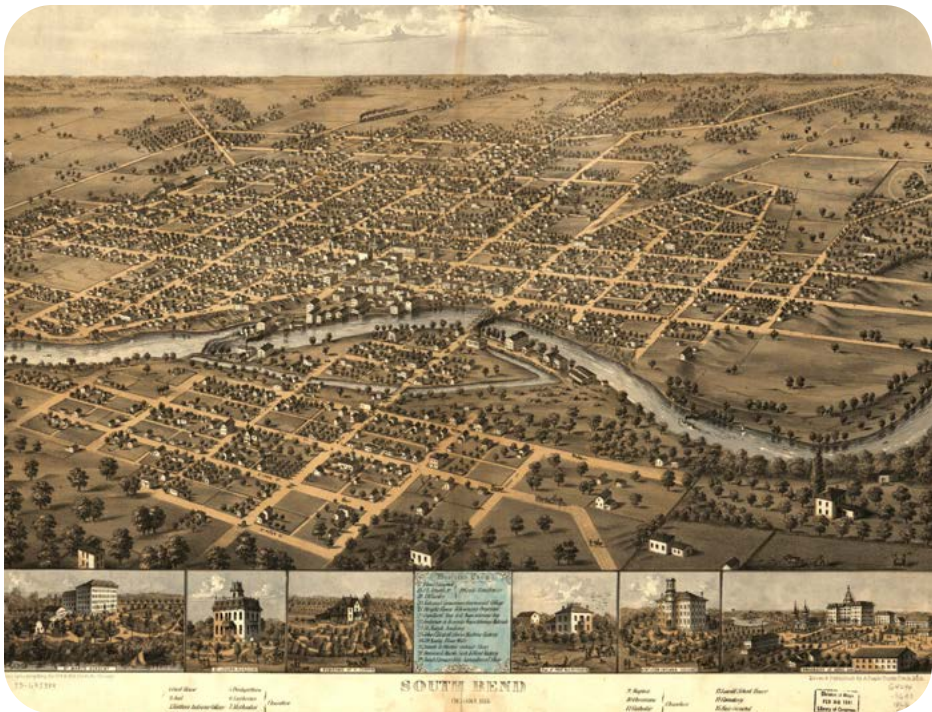
The story of Downtown South Bend is a history inextricably tied to the ups and downs of industrial development across the country. South Bend's downtown, bounded to the east by the southwesternmost bend of the St. Joseph River, was the economic powerhouse of the region throughout the 19th century, but 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.

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.



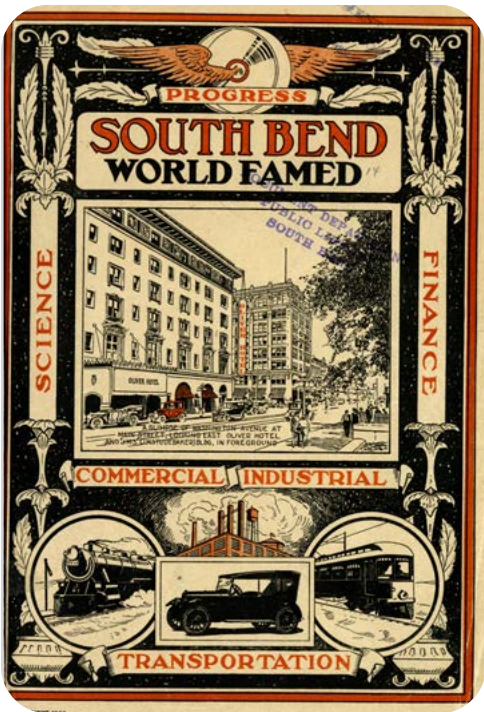
Map of South Bend, 1866

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



1922 Pamphlet

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 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 known as Four Winds Field, was constructed to host a minor league affiliate team of the Chicago Cubs. 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.

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 just 1,000 days. 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 2015, the city experienced the largest one-year population growth in over 20 years.

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.

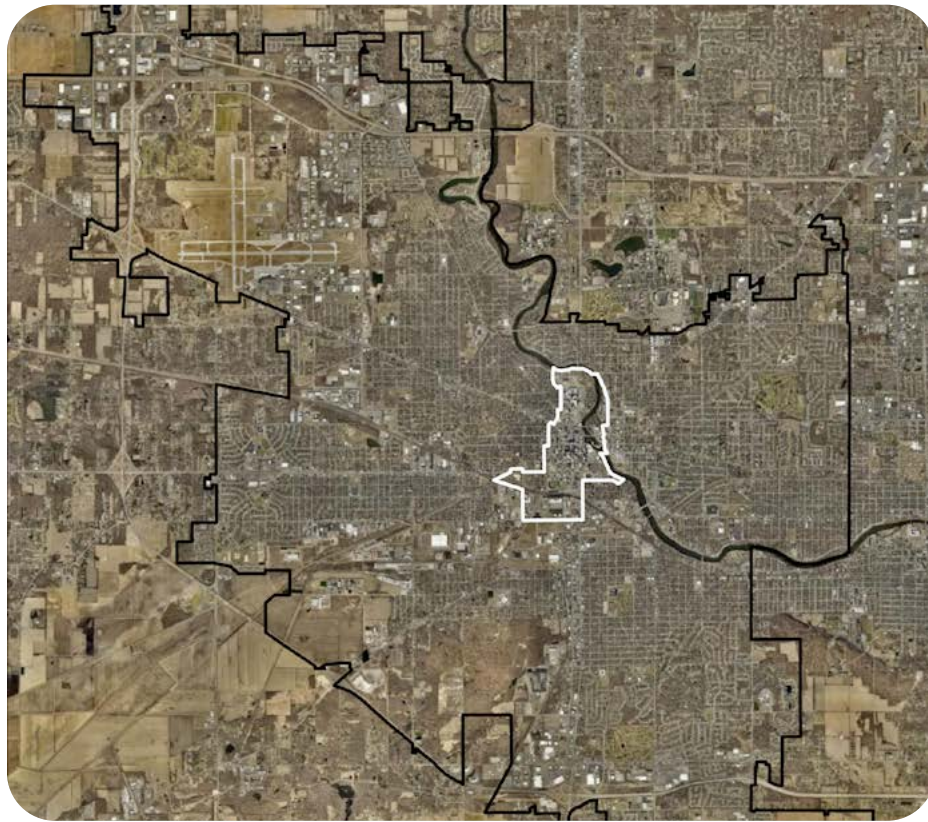


Downtown South Bend Today

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



East Race



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



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



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



Four Winds Field is a destination that brings visitors downtown

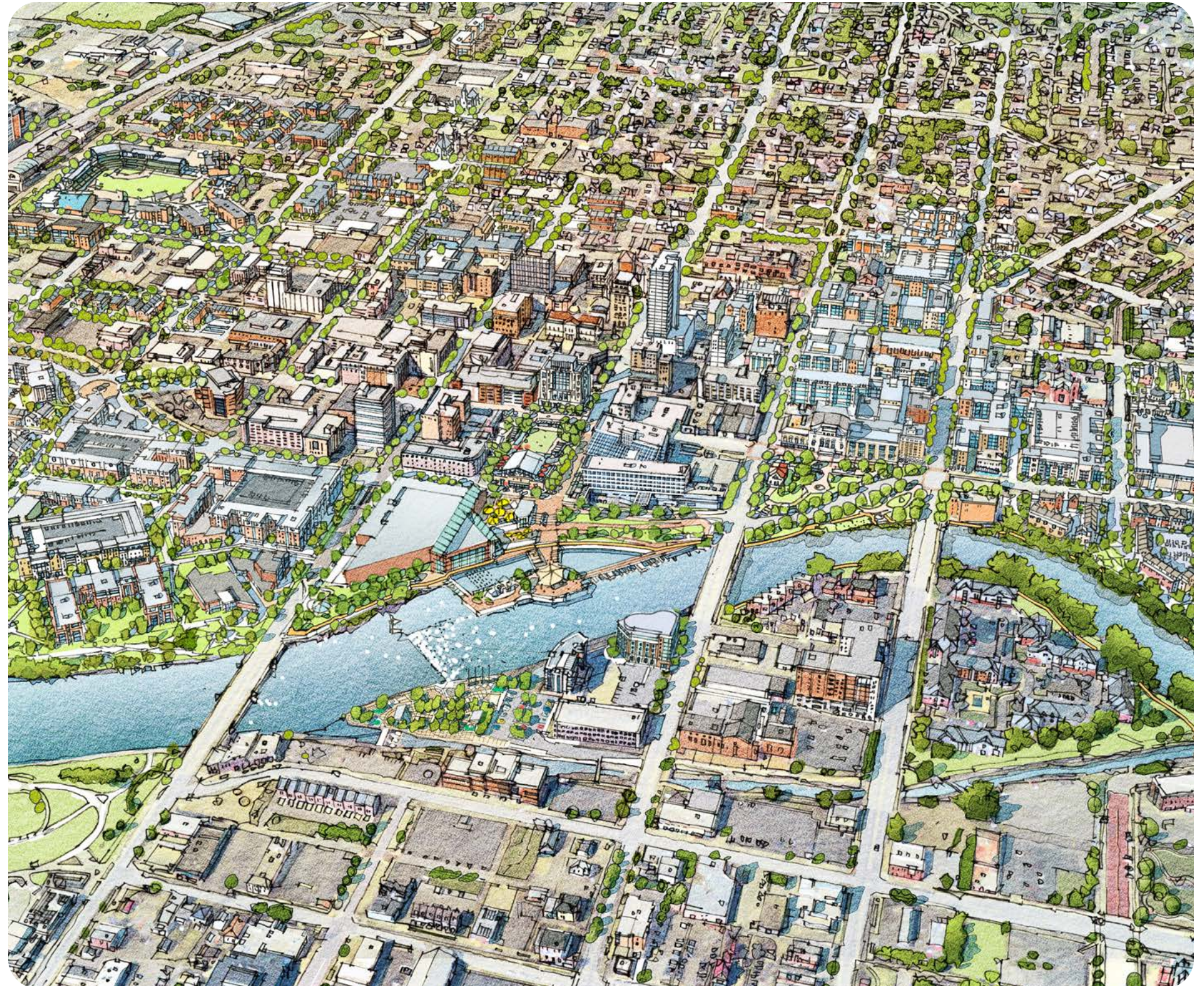


Beacon Health brings people and workers downtown

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.

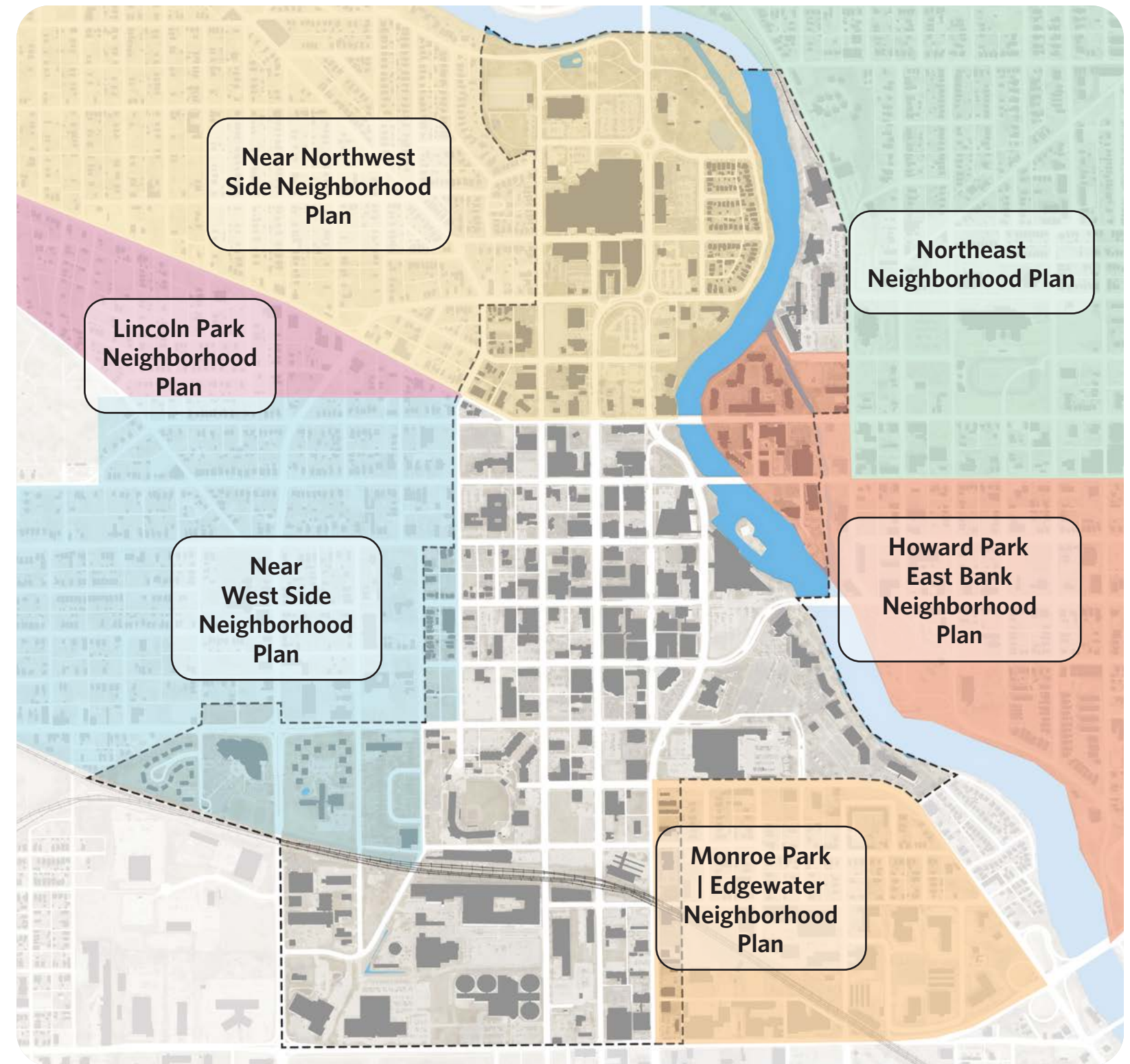
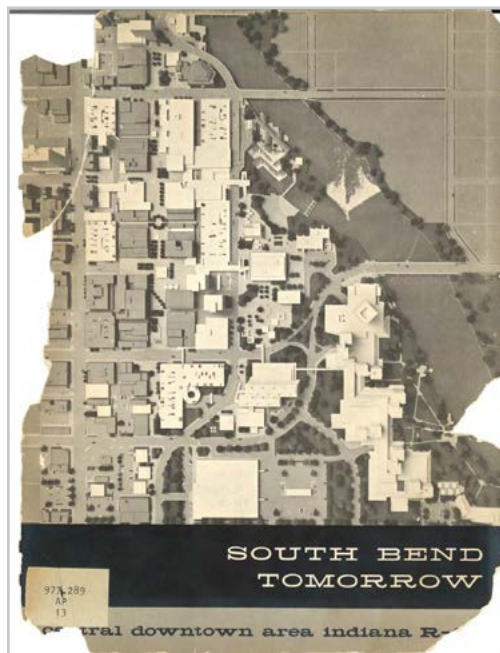


Planning Context

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 but 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

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

February - March 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.

Online Engagement

The Downtown South Bend 2045 survey was available online 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.

February 2025

Open House

After a draft plan document was created, the City hosted a presentation and open house and invited the public to share thoughts to guide the final vision.

Spring 2025

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 of formal presentations and 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

- Activated river
- Lively commercial and retail areas
- Connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Green open spaces and plazas
- Art and cultural elements
- Quality architecture and historic buildings
- A lot of people



Describe Downtown's Unique Vibe

- Sports Town
- Artists and Entrepreneurs
- Green City
- Friendly - Welcoming City
- Non-Traditional Innovator
- Foodie City
- River City
- Crossroads of Collisions for Entrepreneurs
- Big Enough, Small Enough
- Rust Belt Innovators
- University City



What Would Make Downtown Successful

- Train Station Downtown
- More Residents (+10,000) Downtown
- Farmers Market Downtown
- Formal Green Gathering Space
- Connected and Activated Alleyways
- Things for Children and Youth Downtown (Activities and Places)
- Night Life / More "Third" Places
- "Something WONDERFUL Around Every Corner"
- Trees, Green Spaces, Green Infrastructure
- New (Affordable) Housing
- Renovate Existing Historic Buildings and Get Small Businesses in Them
- Use River as an Asset: Restaurants, Parks, and Walkable Trails



Amenities Needed in Downtown

- Open Spaces and Parks
- Connectivity
- Business
- Livability
- Green Principles
- Activated Riverfront
- Entertainment
- Built Environment
- Art

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 Safe & Inclusive Place for Everyone. Highlights from the community comments are below:



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, amenitized
- 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



Recap Presentation

- Presented the eight design principles
- Presented high-level analysis diagrams
- Discussed what to expect during design week
- Free flow discussion at 8 stations to gather additional feedback and direction



Midweek Pinup

- React to preliminary design concepts to give direction
- Open format with stations for participants to circulate and provide additional direction



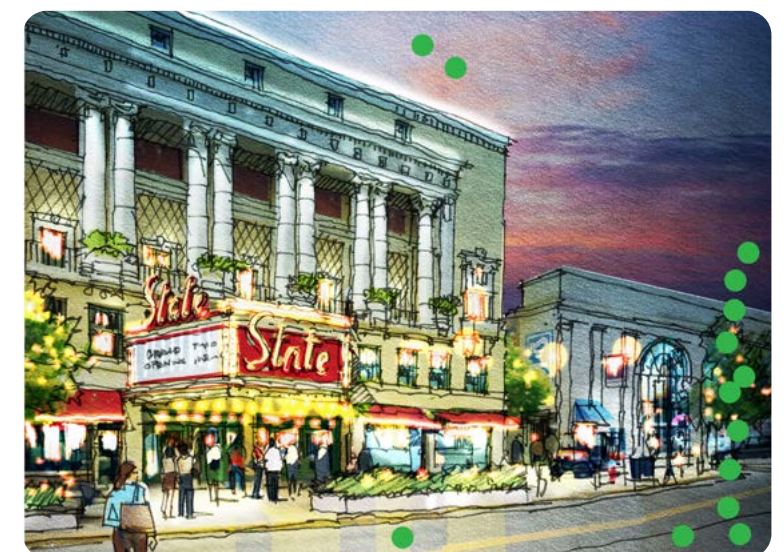
Final Presentation

- Presentation of eight design principles
- Discuss high level market analysis results
- Discuss high level parking study findings
- Talk through opportunity sites and connections between them
- Free flow open format open house after presentation to allow dialogue and additional direction and feedback on more polished designs



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



At the end of design week there was overwhelming support for many of the ideas presented

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 Design Week Workshop, 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

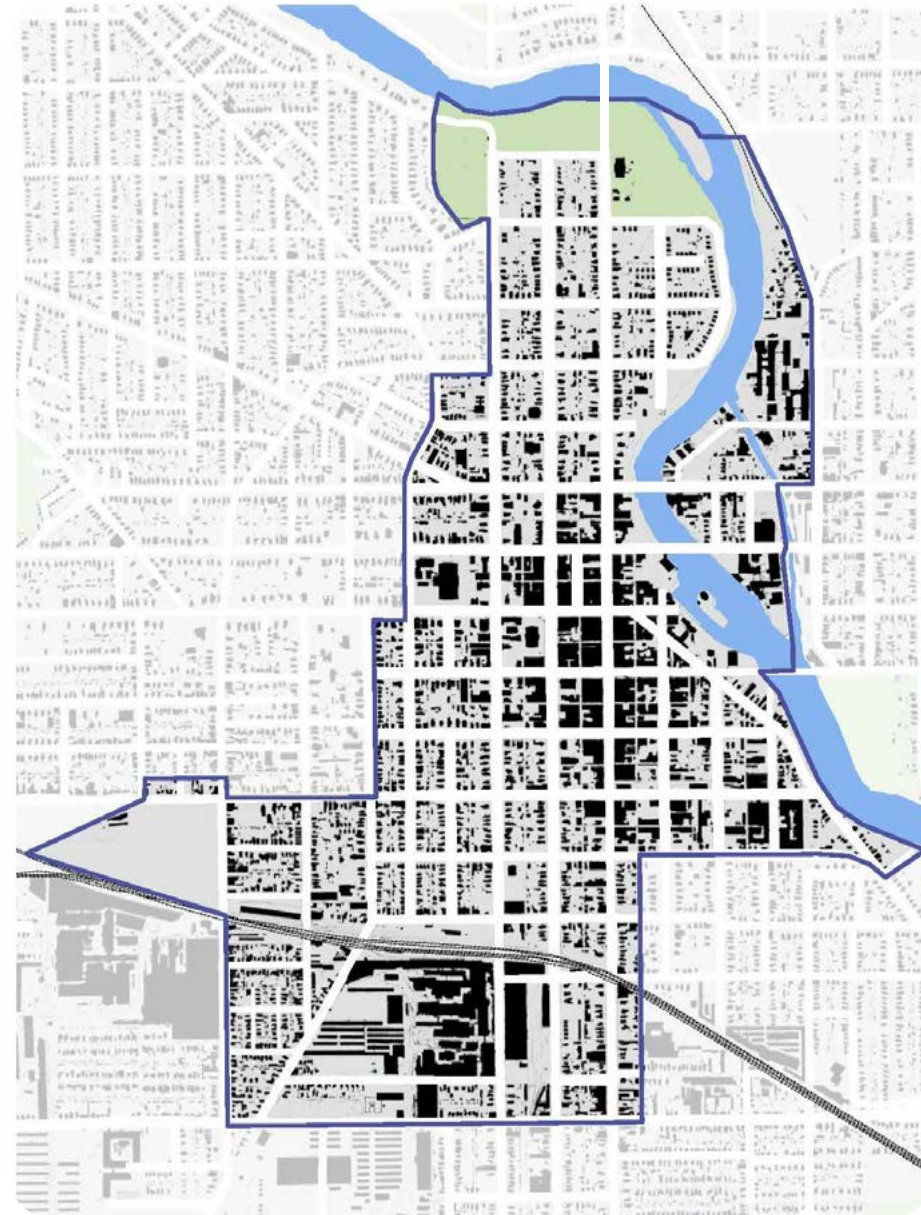
Analysis



Physical Form & Patterns

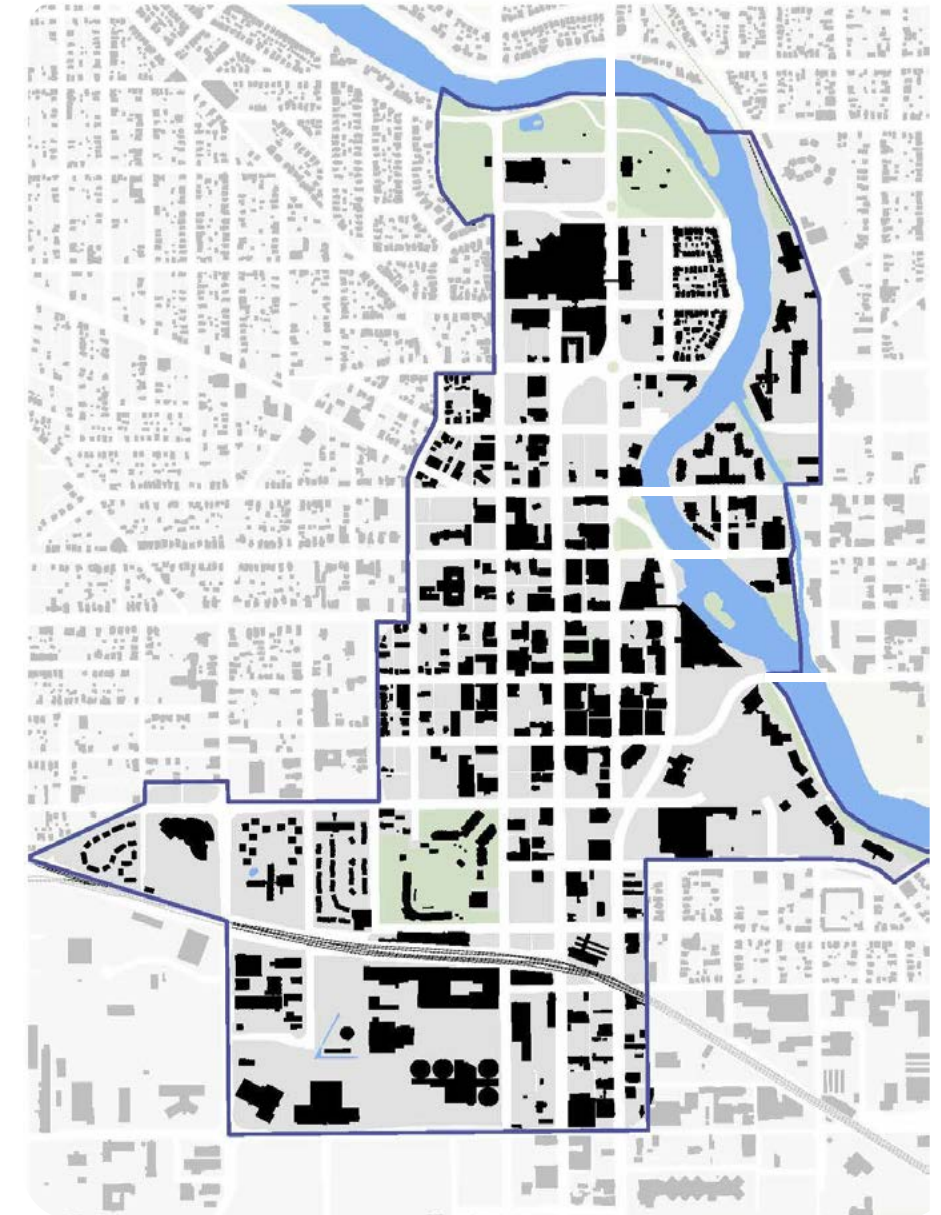
The physical form of South Bend has changed dramatically in its 160-year history.

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 fabric 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 Downtown, but also as opportunities for future infill and growth.



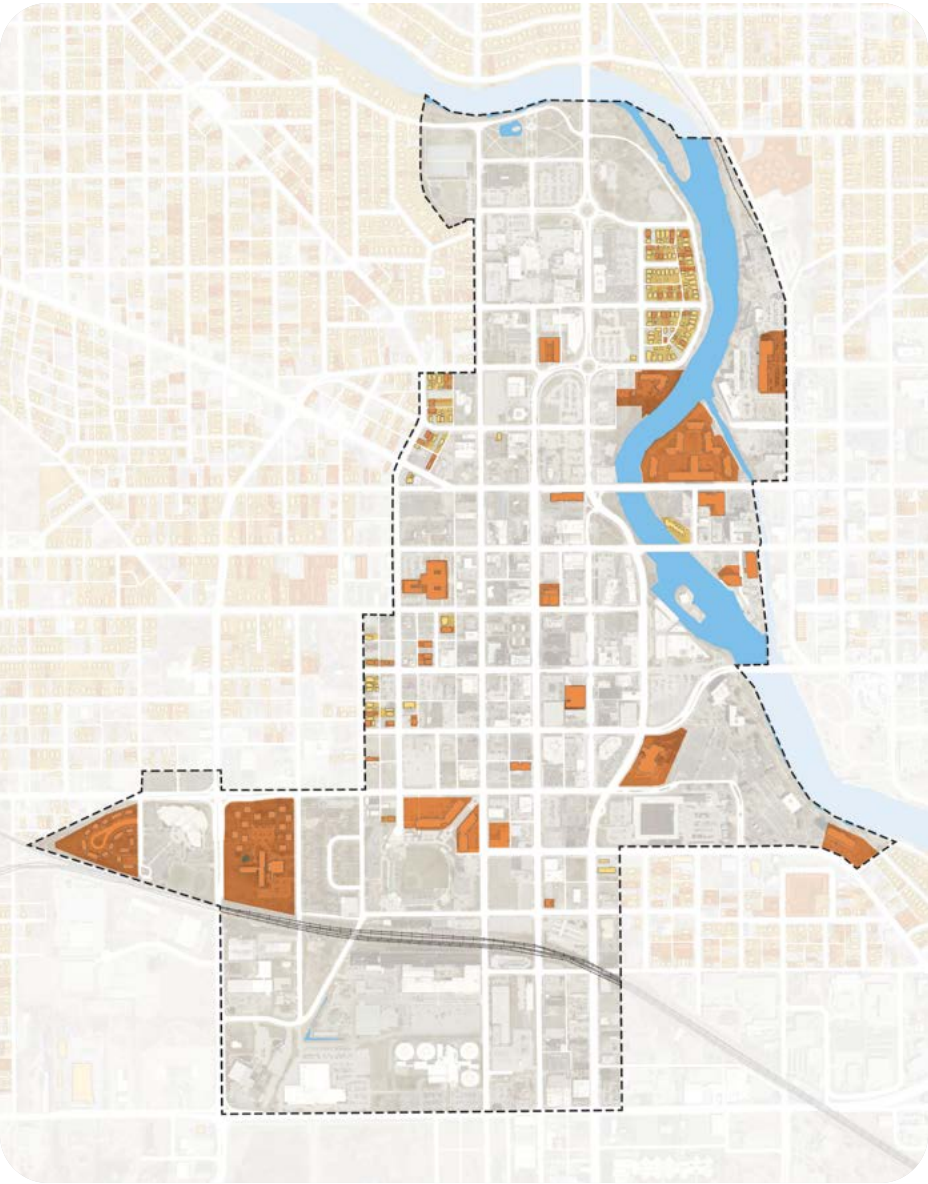
1917 Building Footprints

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.

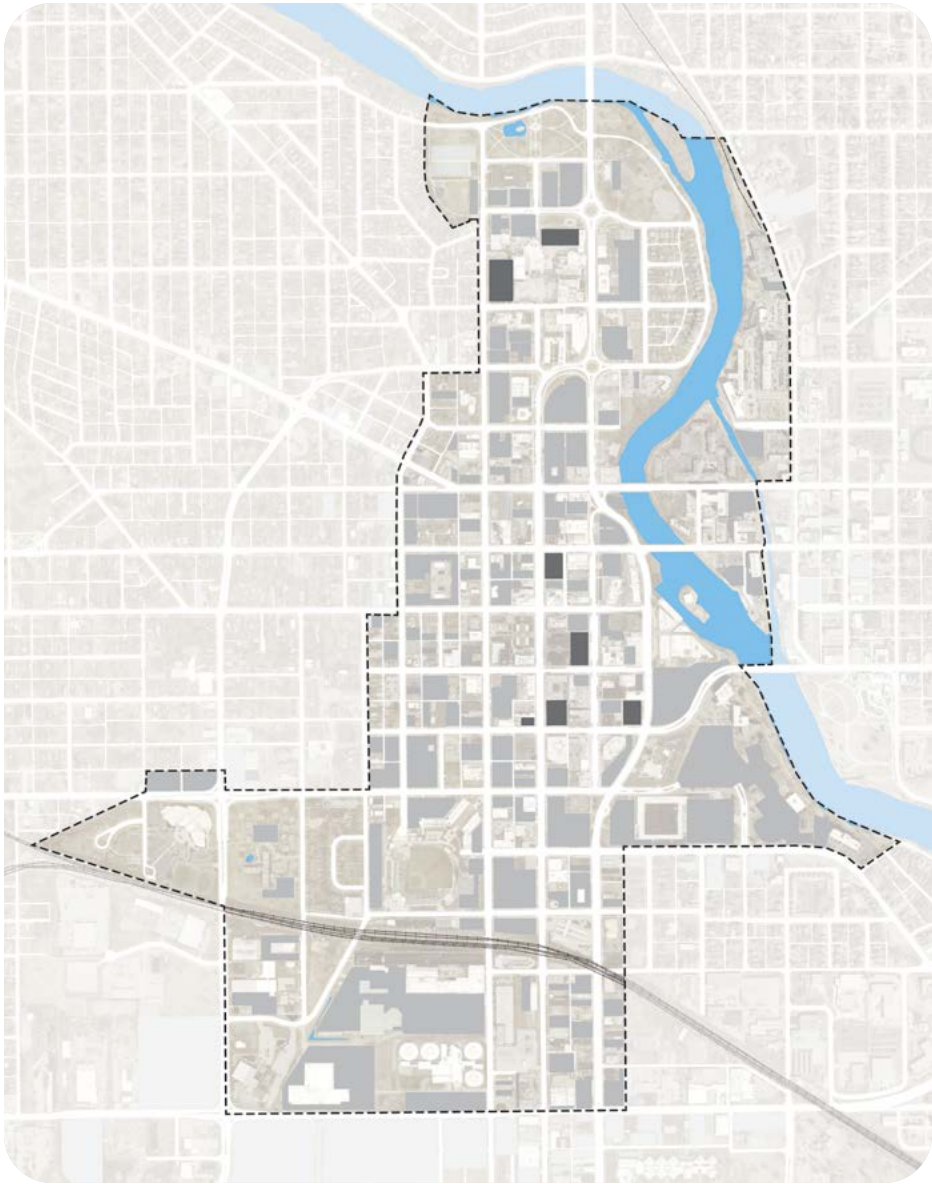


2023 Building Footprints

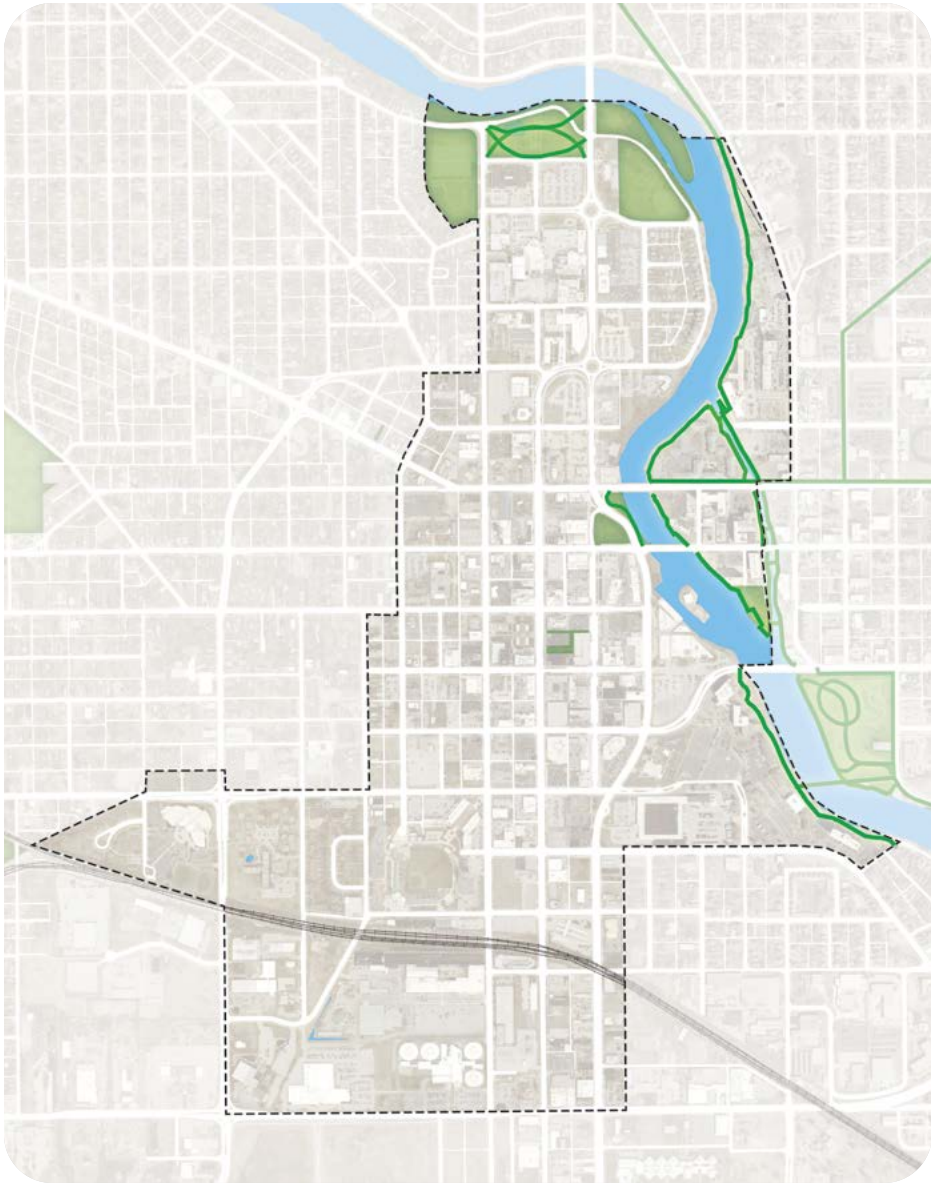
Urban Renewal in the 1960s and 1970s eroded the building pattern Downtown. Buildings were demolished, large interventions such as the First Source Center and Century Center were built, and streets were removed, rerouted, and converted to one-ways.



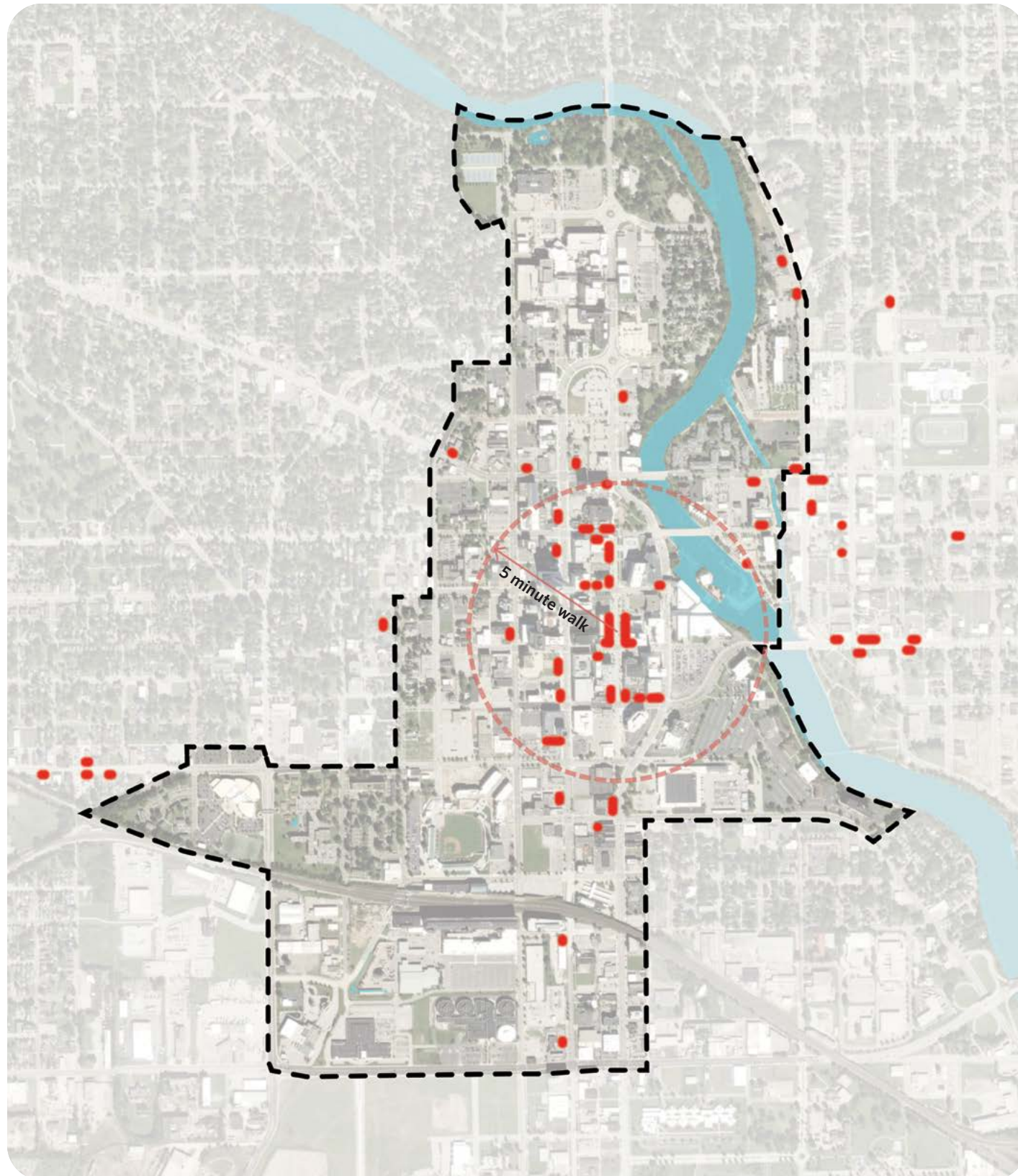
Existing Residential Uses
Downtown today has a limited number of housing units, which results in fewer people activating streets, shops, and restaurants around the clock and around the week. Existing housing tends to be multi-family, but there are pockets of single-family houses that existing within 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.



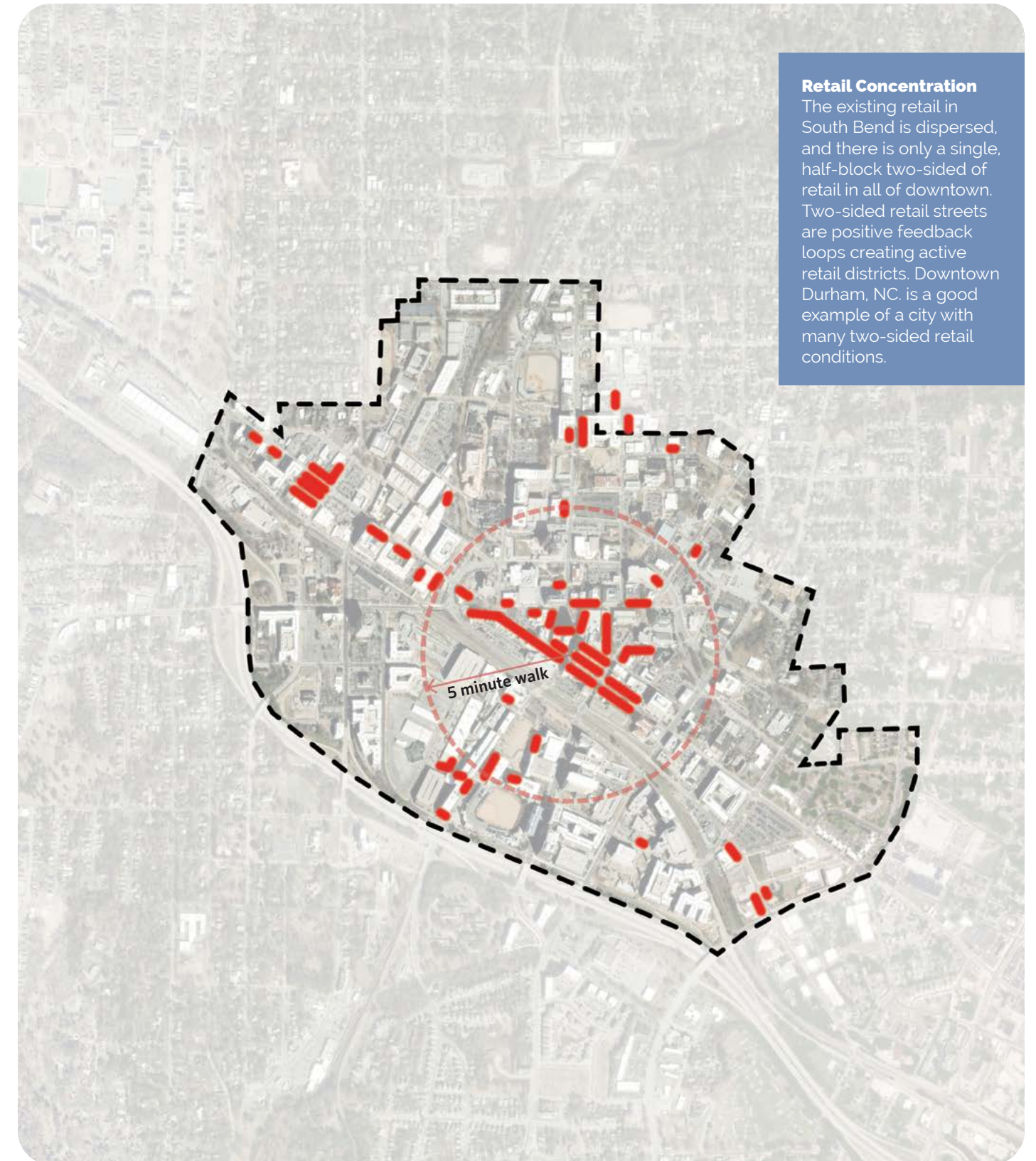
Existing Parking
A large portion of the land area in Downtown is occupied by surface parking lots and garages. These parking resources represent a surplus of parking, which can be allocated as incentive for future housing and commercial development. Surface parking lots offer opportunities for infill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

Parking Analysis

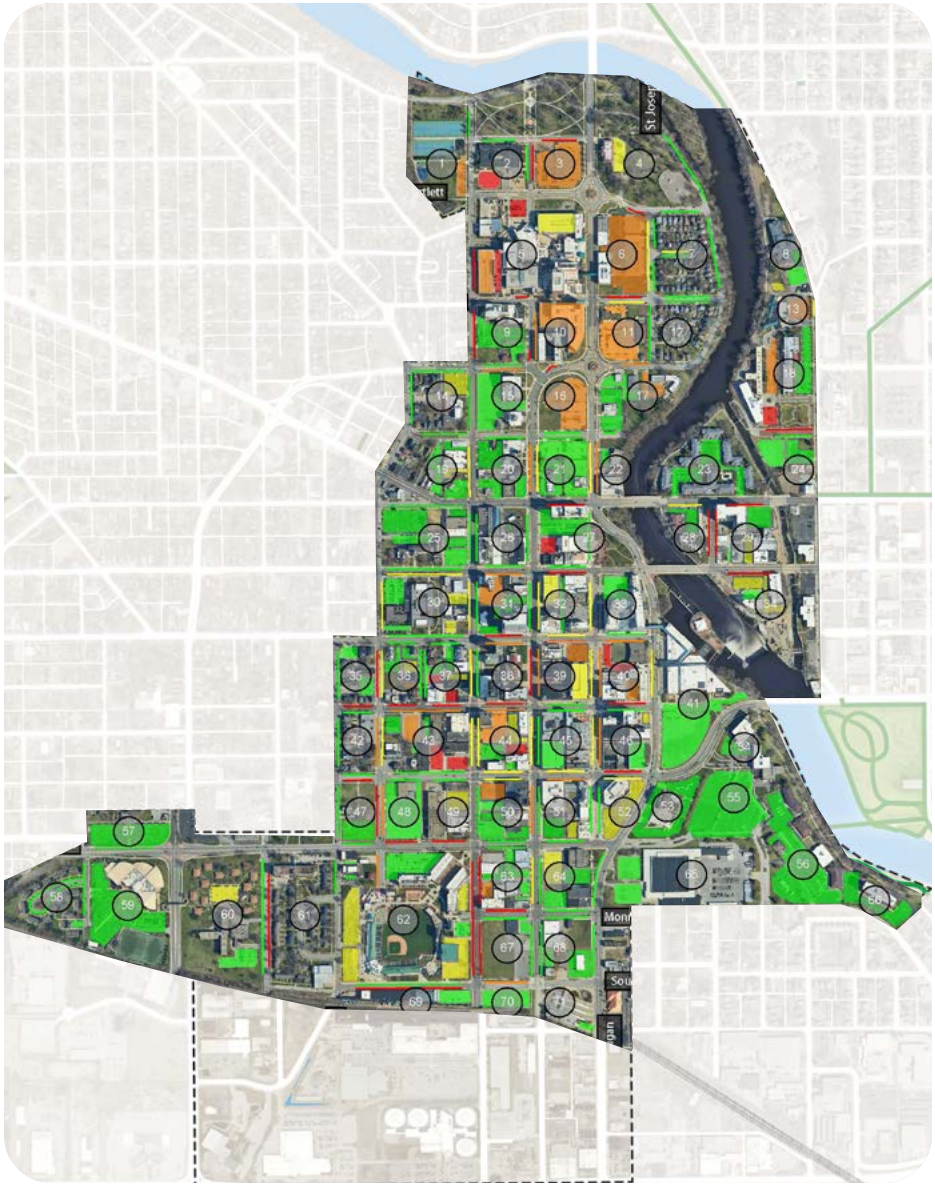
Downtown South Bend has an untapped resource in its available parking.

- At the peak at 10 am, 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 10am 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.

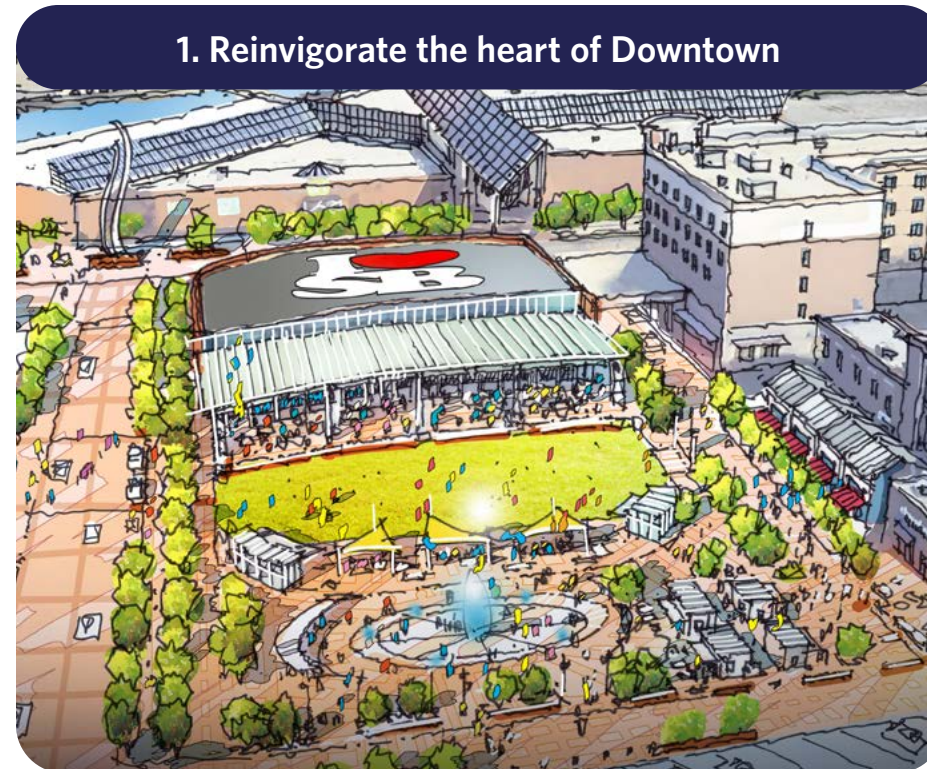
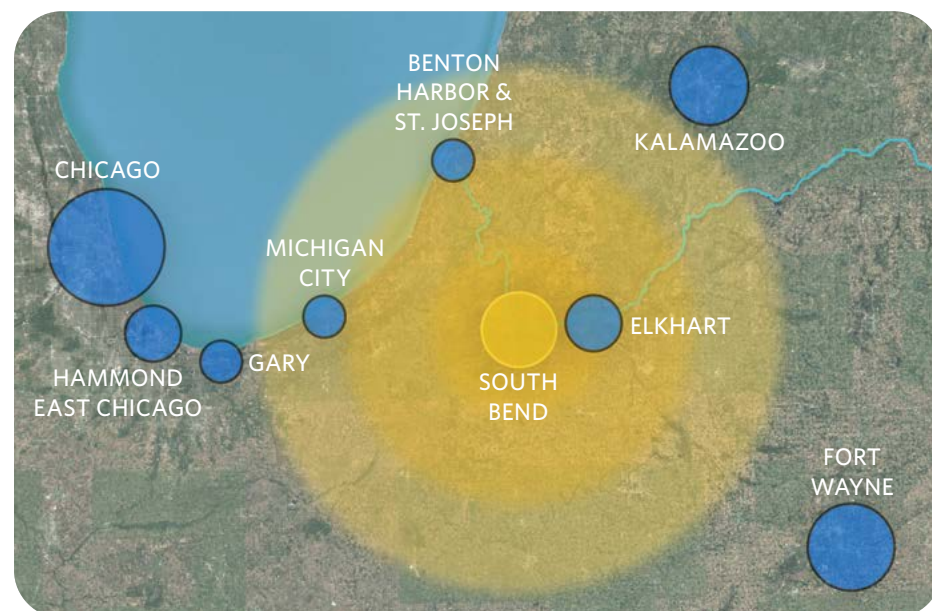


The Vision

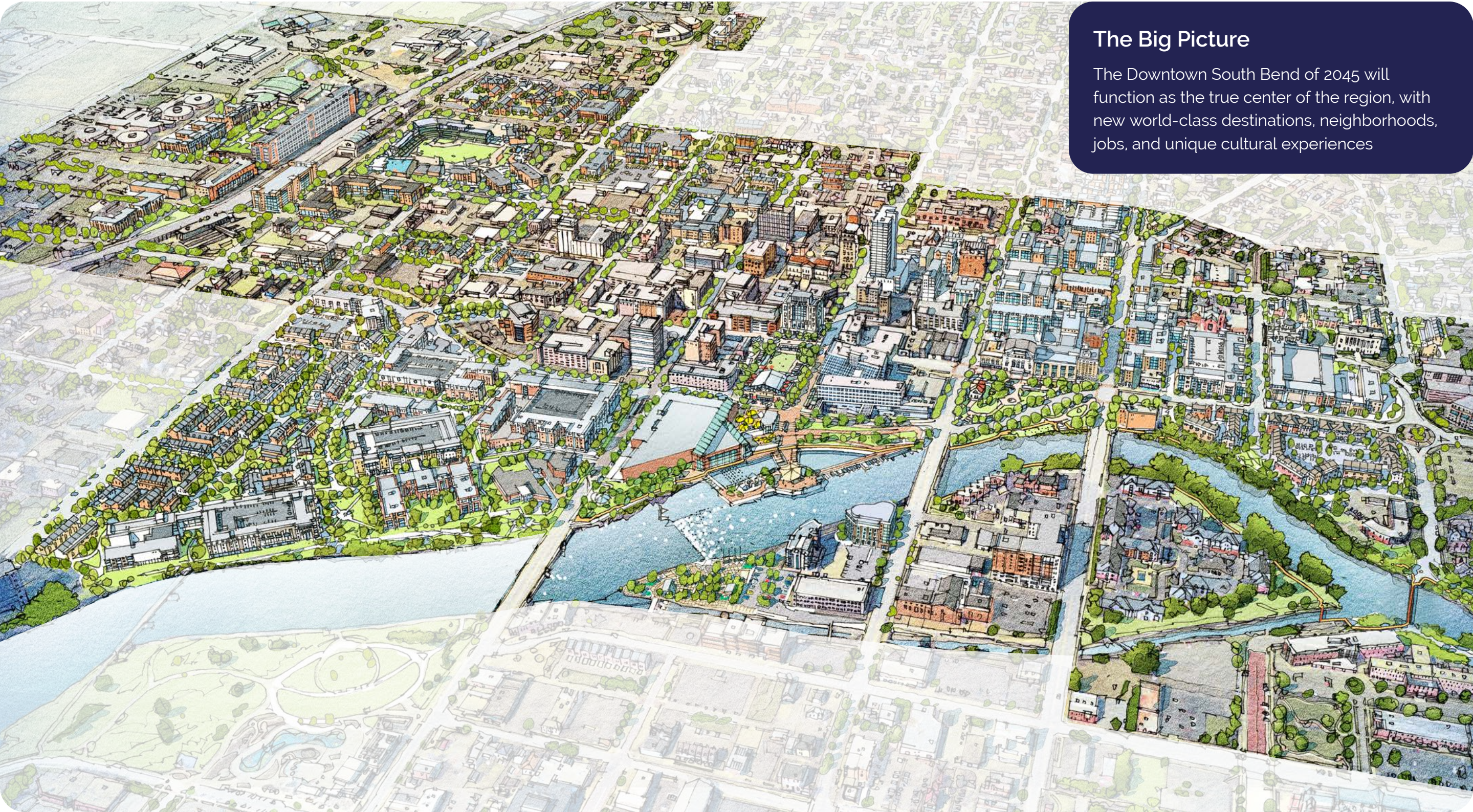
The Vision for Downtown

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 Northwest 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.



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

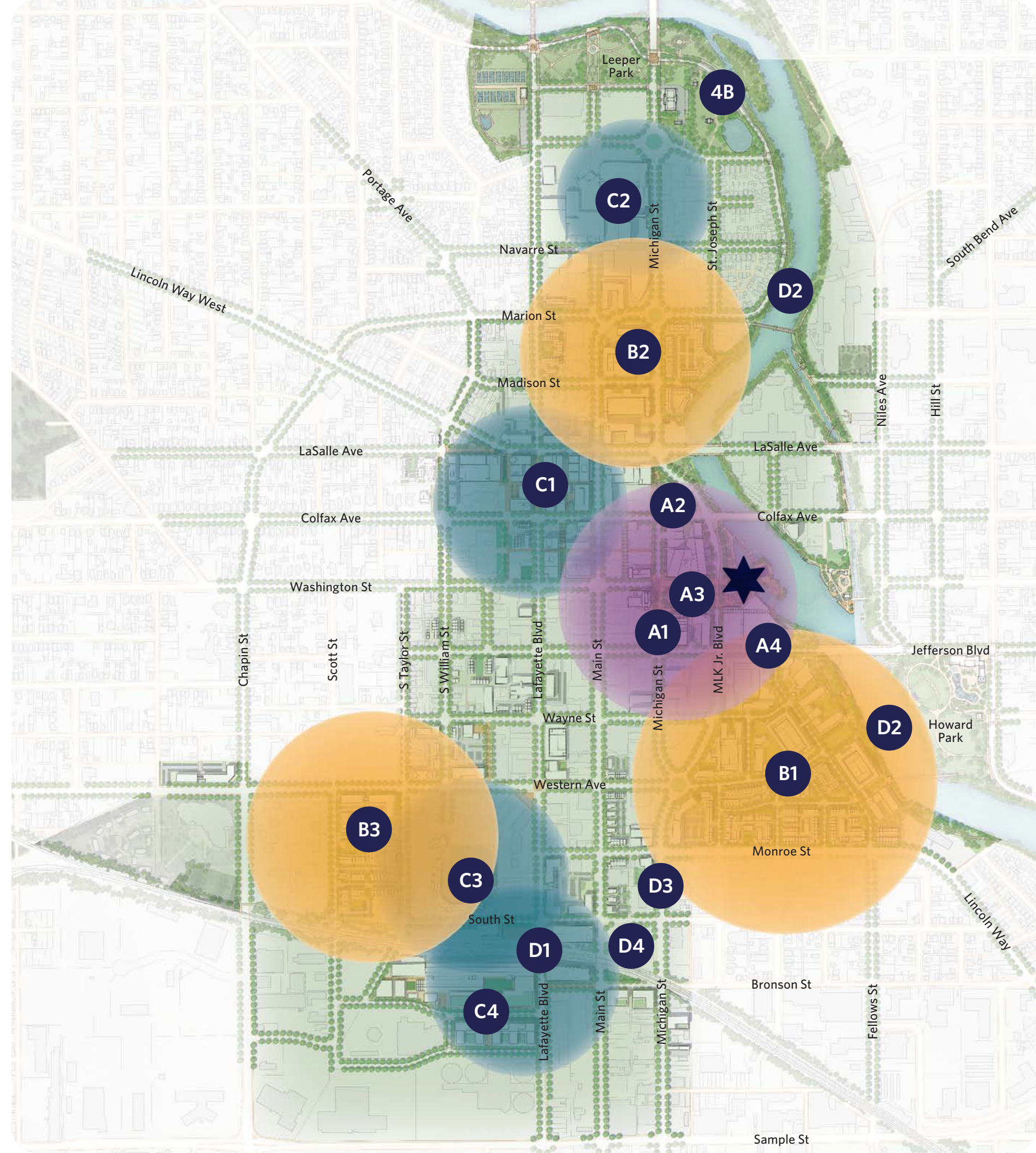
- B1** Riverfront West
- B2** Downtown North Neighborhoods
- B3** Western Avenue Transformation

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

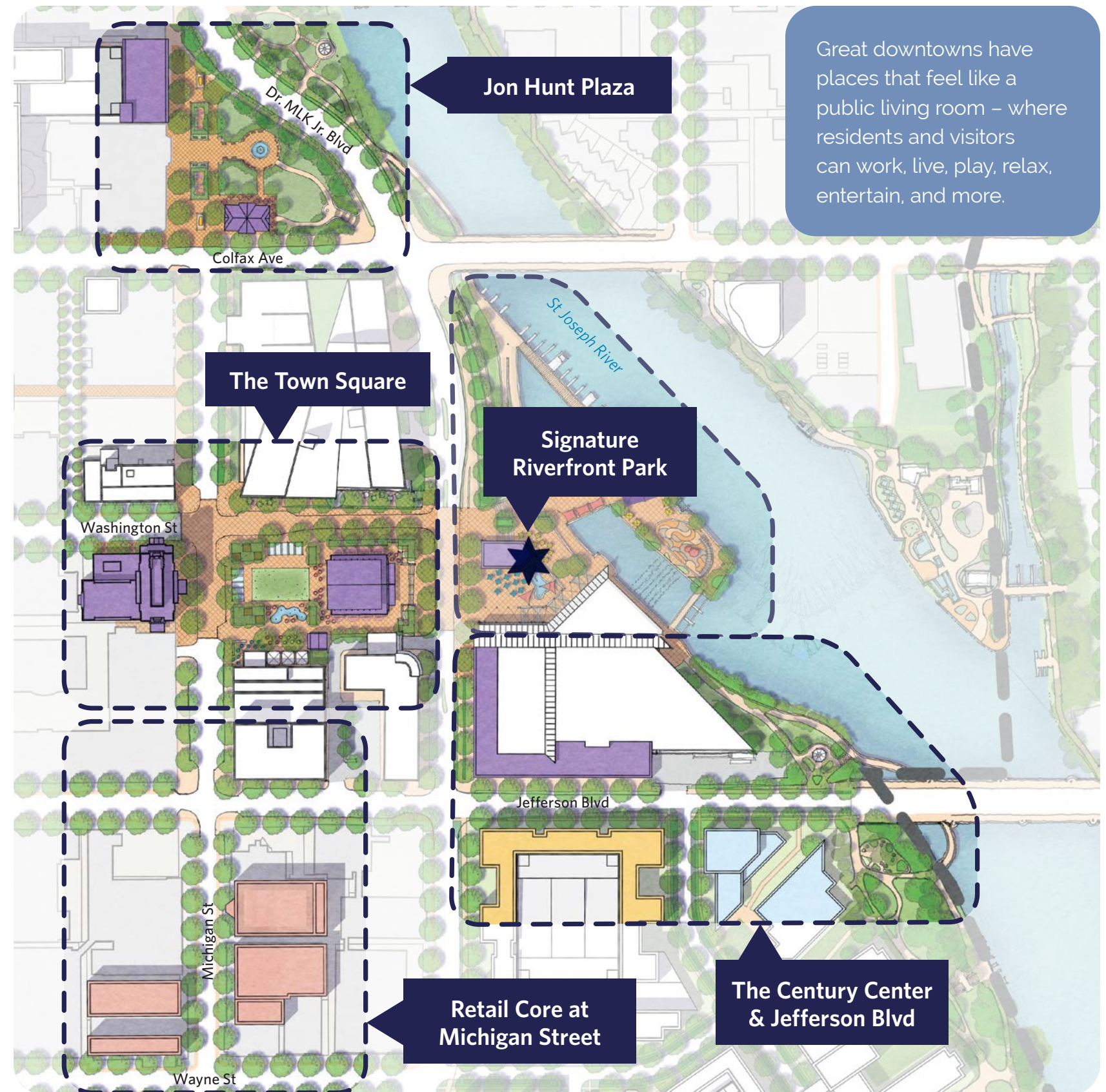
Anchored by the Morris Performing Arts Center in the north and the St. Joe County Public Library to the south, Michigan Street is home to restaurants, hotels, entertainment, destinations, and iconic historic buildings like the State Theater. Gridiron Plaza in front of the former College Football Hall 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



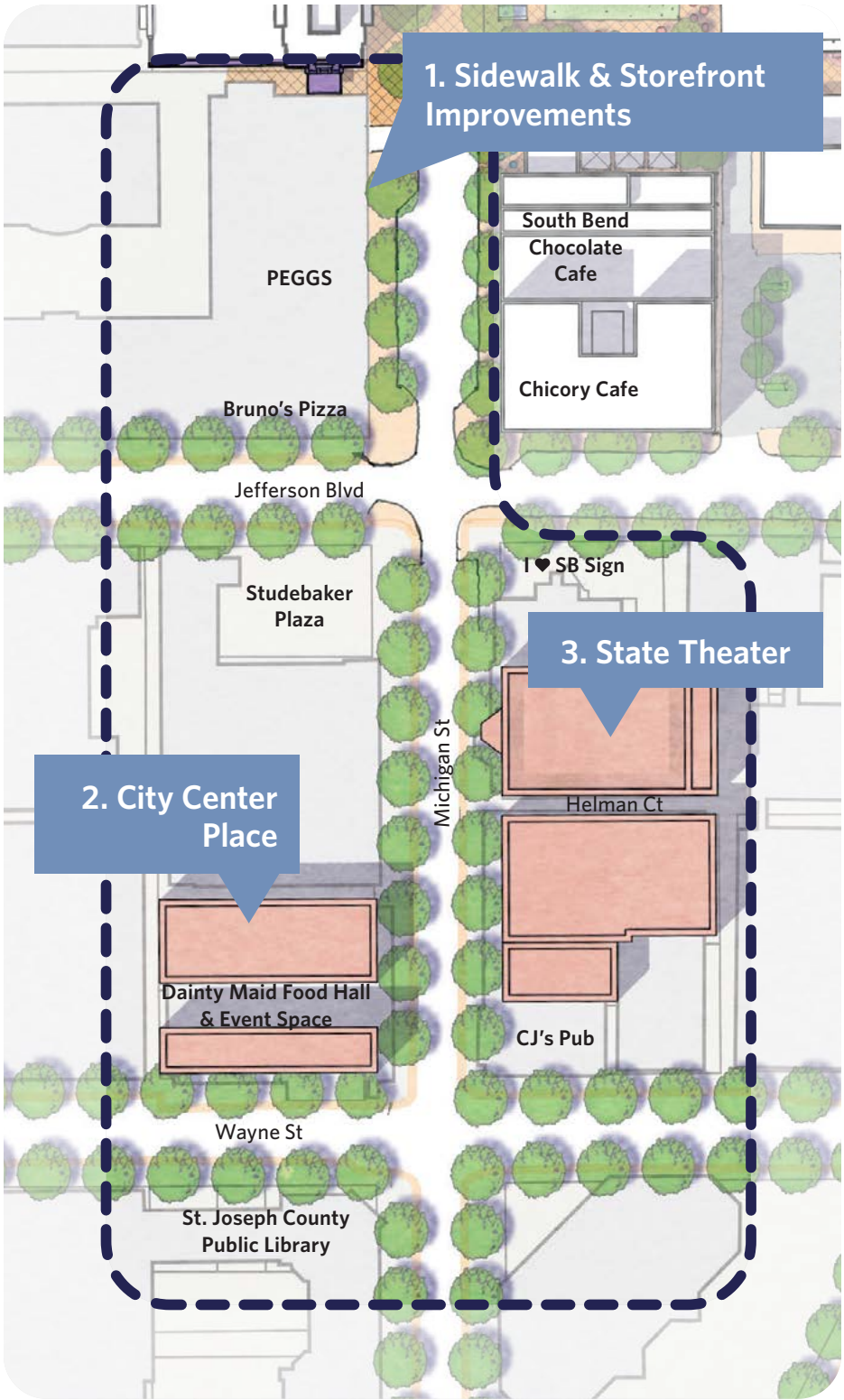
Great downtowns have places that feel like a public living room – where residents and visitors can work, live, play, relax, entertain, and more.

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

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 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



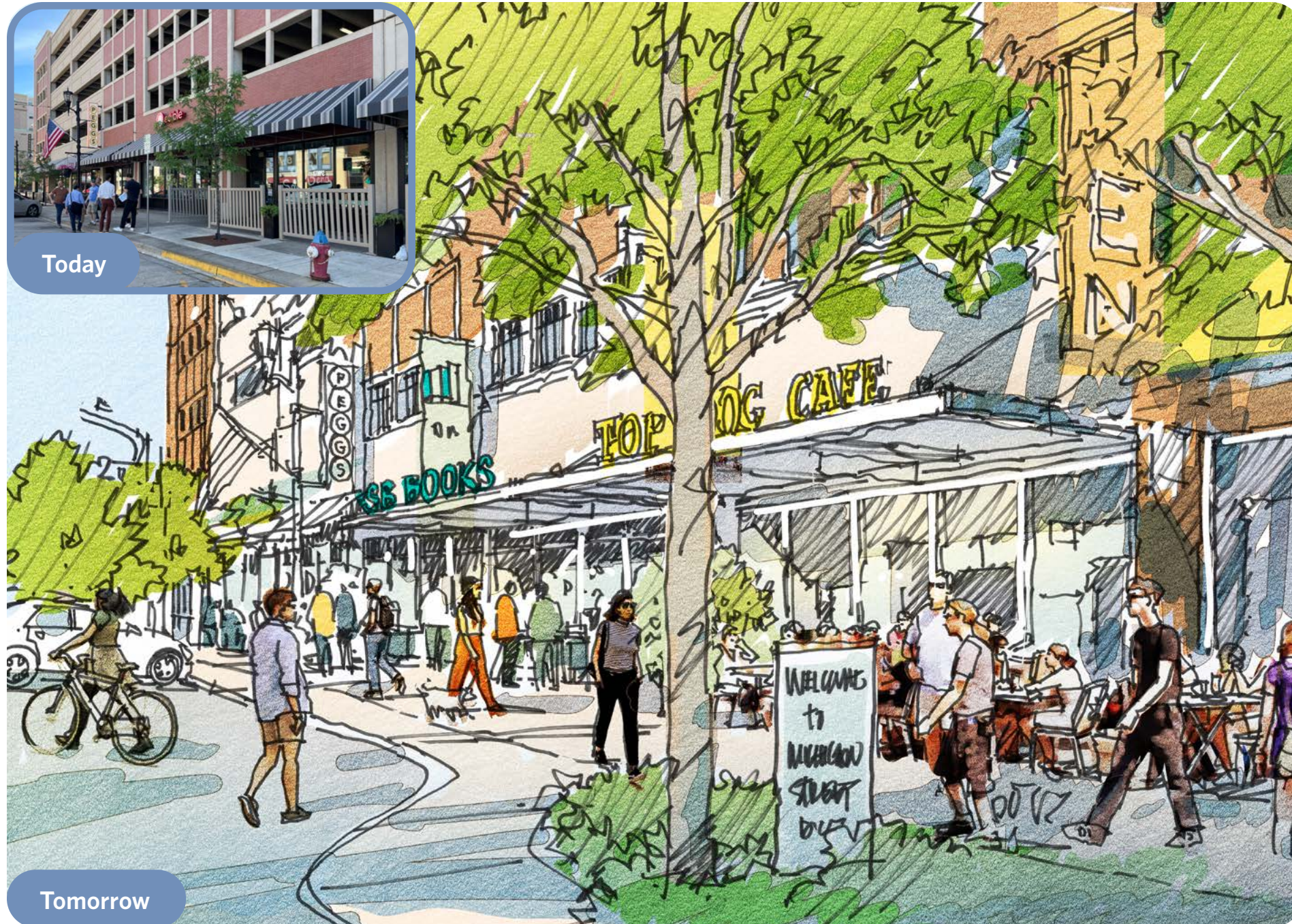
Outdoor seating and landscaping shouldn't compromise sidewalk accessibility



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



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
- Public art, placemaking, and activation



2. CITY CENTER PLACE BUILDING & FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

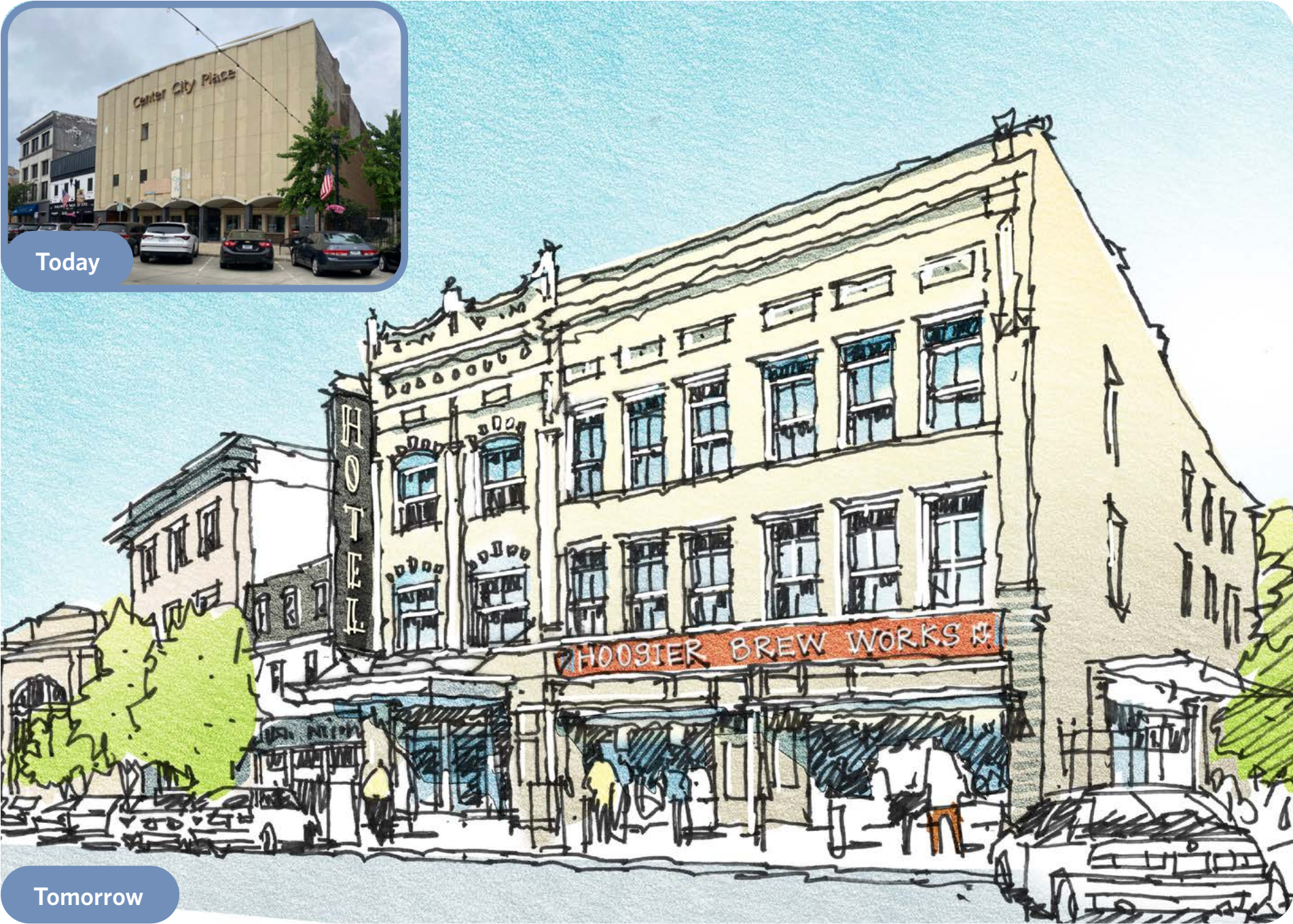
The City Center Place Building was originally built in the 1890s as the Grand Leader. The original facade was made of limestone, with large windows. In the 1960s, the building was renovated as a ladies clothing store. The original facade was covered by a metal panel facade, obscuring the upper floor 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 City Center 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 City Center 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



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

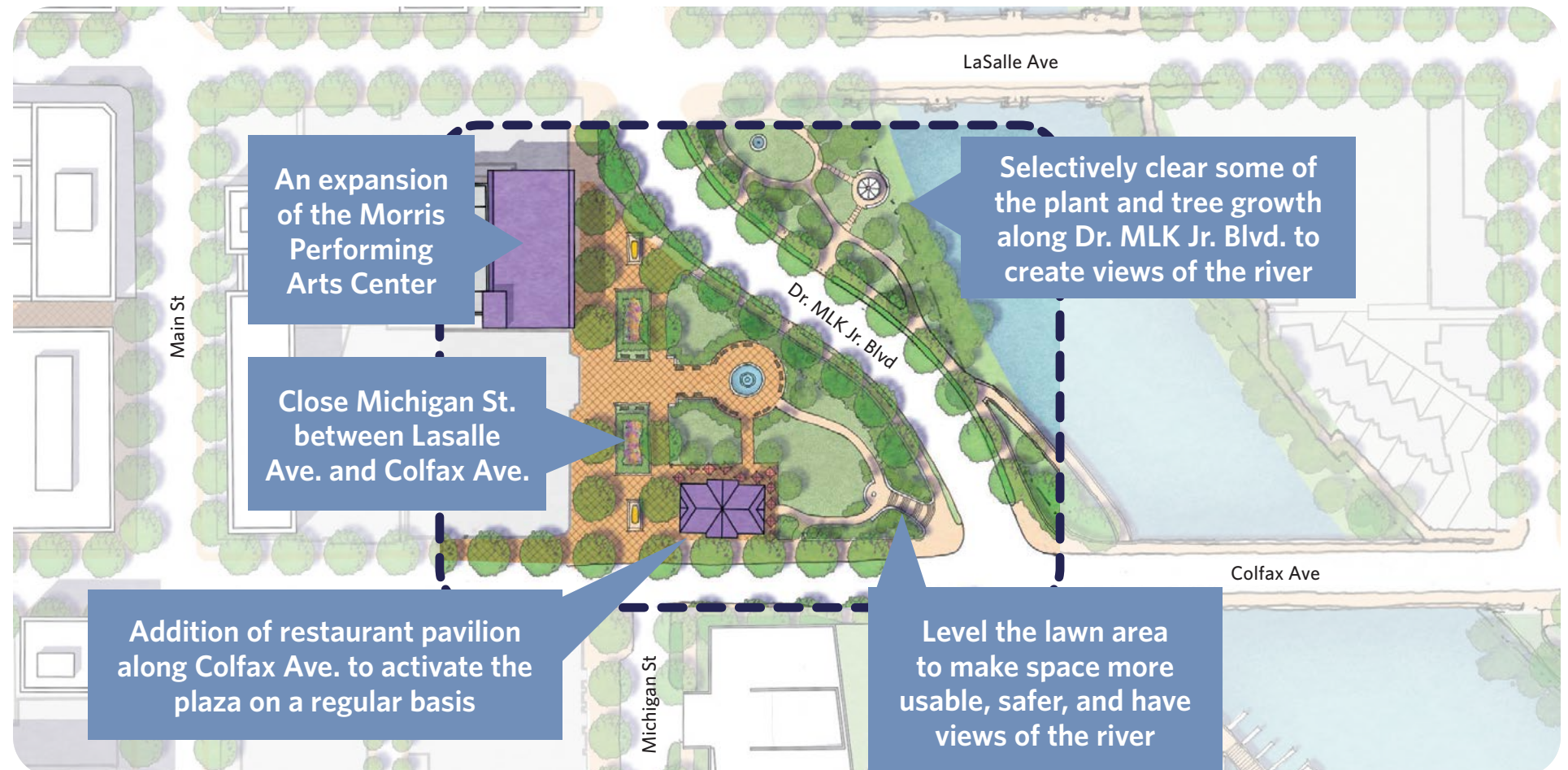
The Heart of Downtown • Jon Hunt Plaza

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



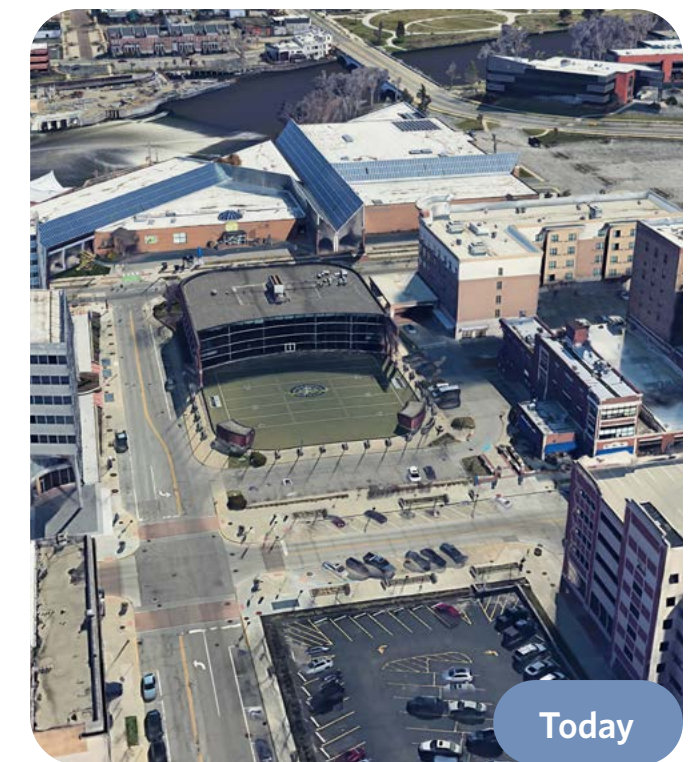
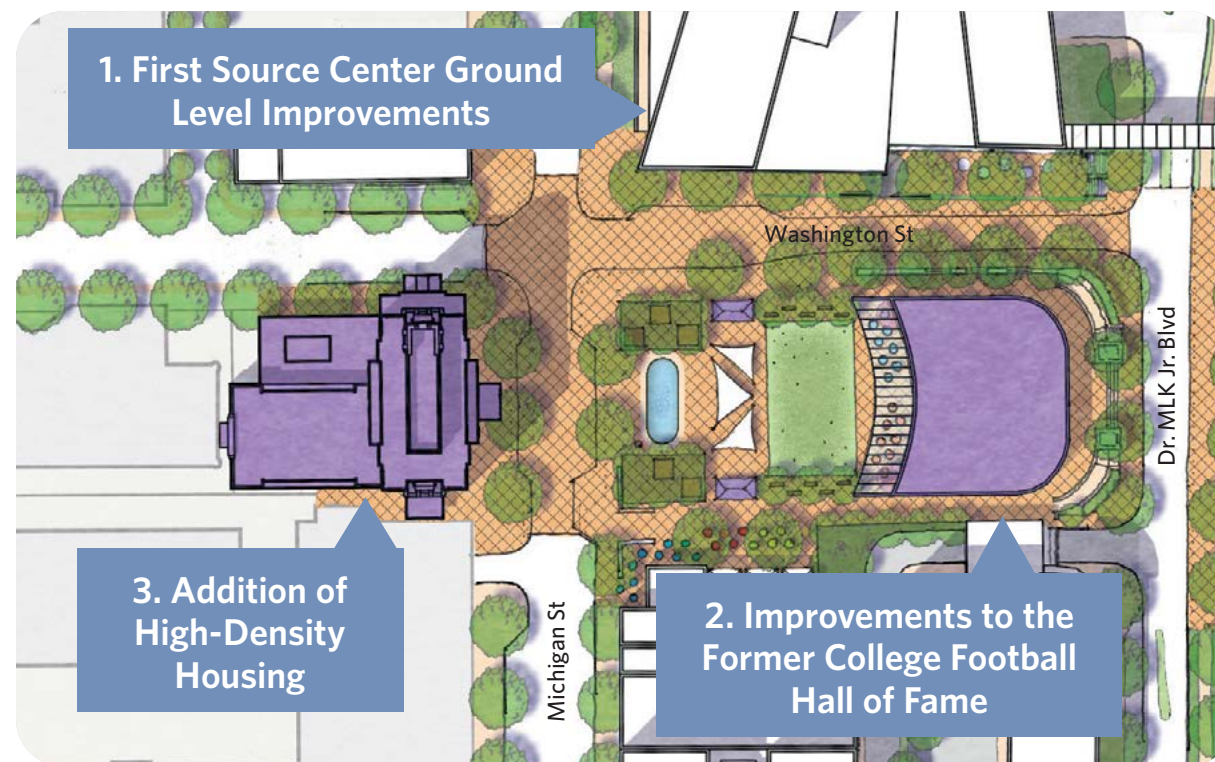
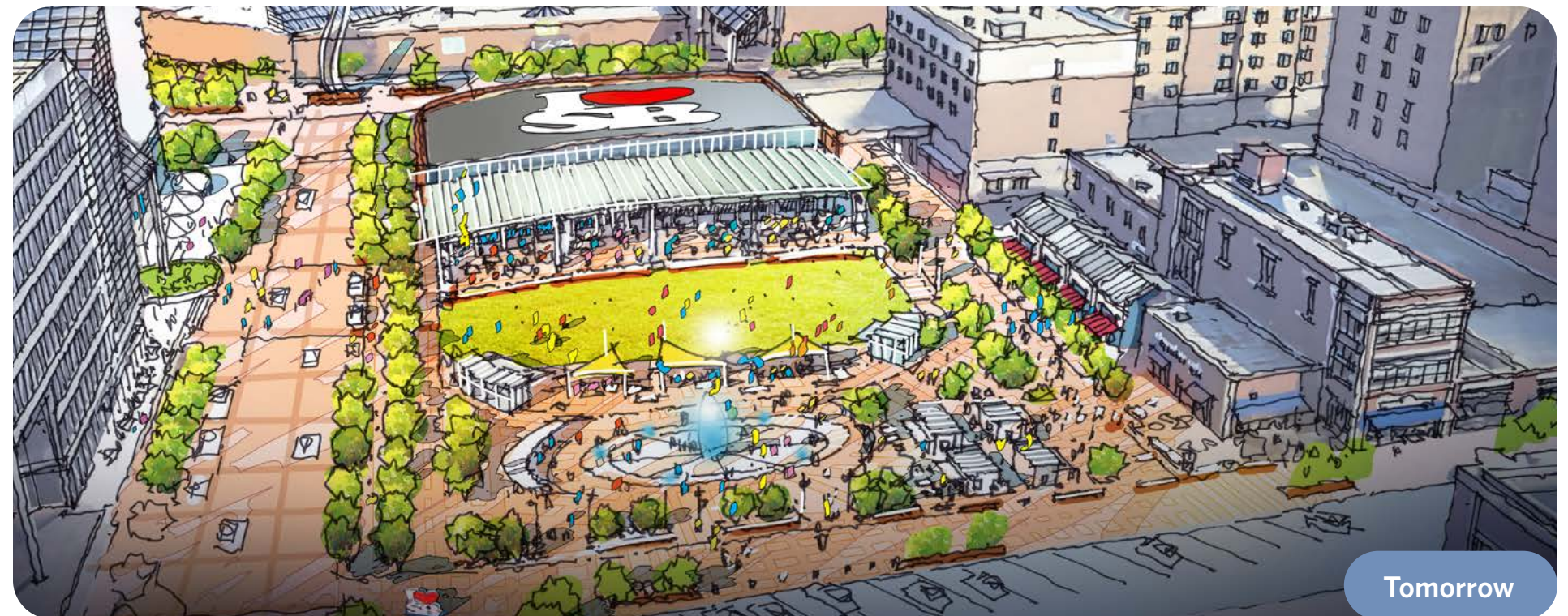
The Heart of Downtown • The Town Square

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 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



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.



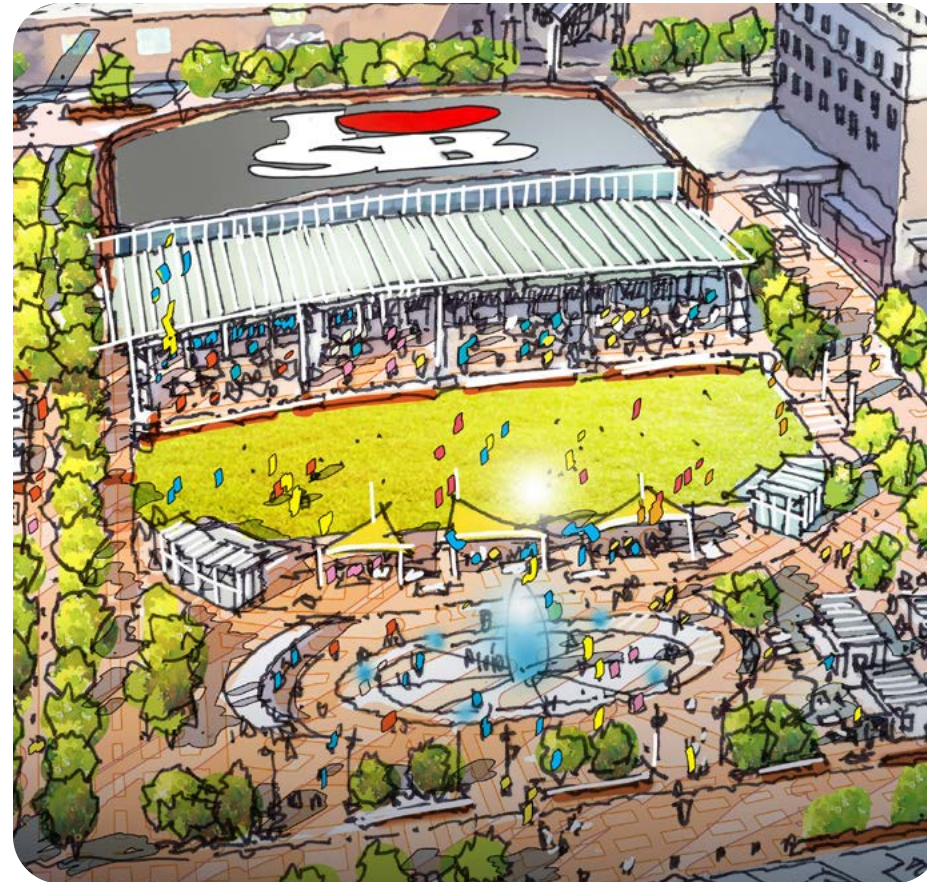
1. ADAPTIVELY REUSE OR REPLACE THE FORMER COLLEGE FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

The College Football Hall of Fame has sat vacant in downtown South Bend for over 10 years. It currently looms over the 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. The existing building could be re-purposed with active uses, or it could be demolished and replaced with a new building that has active ground floor uses.



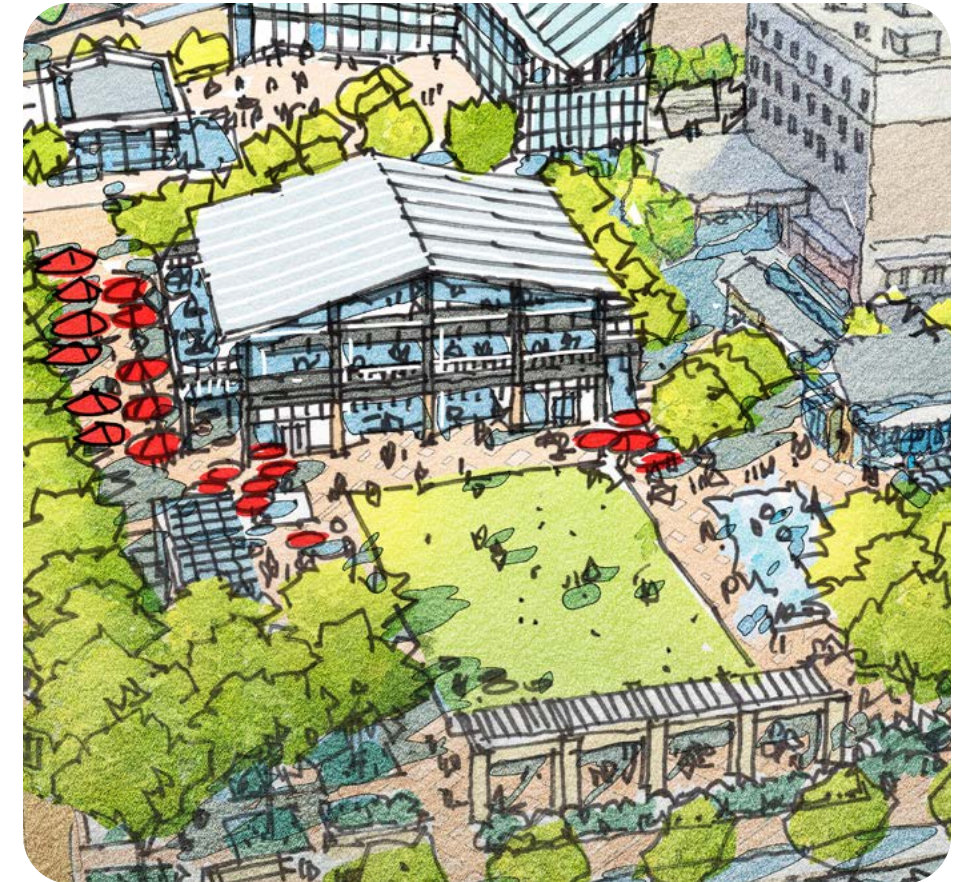
How To: Make Places Safe and Comfortable for All

- Well-activated, well used downtowns feel like safe places.
- Spaces should be accessible to people of all abilities, highly visible, lined by active uses, and well-lit.
- Year-round activation and programming, especially family-friendly programming, ensures that places feel welcoming.
- Designing and programming for the youngest and oldest citizens means that spaces will be accessible to everyone.
- Public spaces should feel welcoming to all ages, races, and abilities. Lighting design, amenities, and programming should encourage diverse groups to use public spaces.



Option 1: Adaptive Reuse of the 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 to allow people to see what's happening inside the building.
- Transform the brick egress stairs in Gridiron Plaza 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 building

- Demolish the current building and replace it with a multi-purpose 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 multi-tenant food, beverage, and family-friendly entertainment.
- The pedestrian connection along Washington Street should be enhanced, encouraging people to move between the Town Square and the 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.



Tomorrow

2. FIRST 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 First Source Center sits to the north of the Town Square, with an uninviting split-level sidewalk and dark glazing. Currently, the uses in the First 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 breaking through the brick retaining wall. In partnership with the South Bend Museum of Art, the First Source Center incorporate an art theme, which would add to the unique character of the Town Square.



Today

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



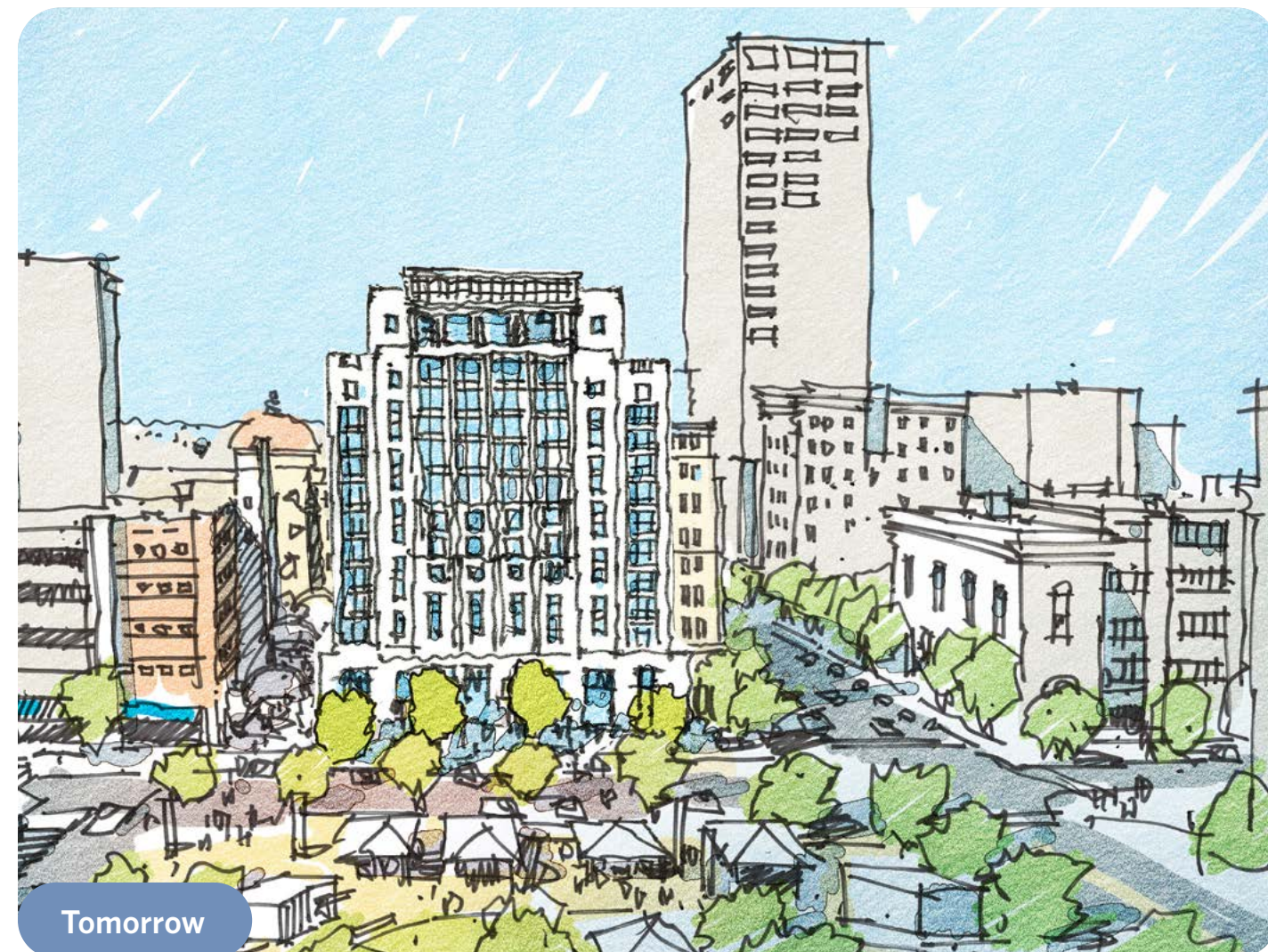
There existing building is in an opportune location to have ground level uses that relate to the new Gridiron Square.



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

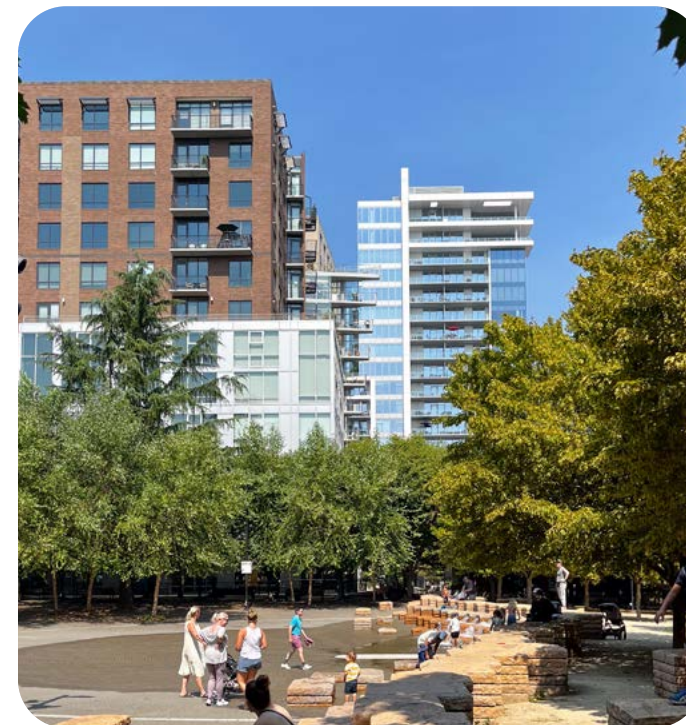
3. BUILD HIGH-DENSITY HOUSING TO CREATE A MIX OF USES

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

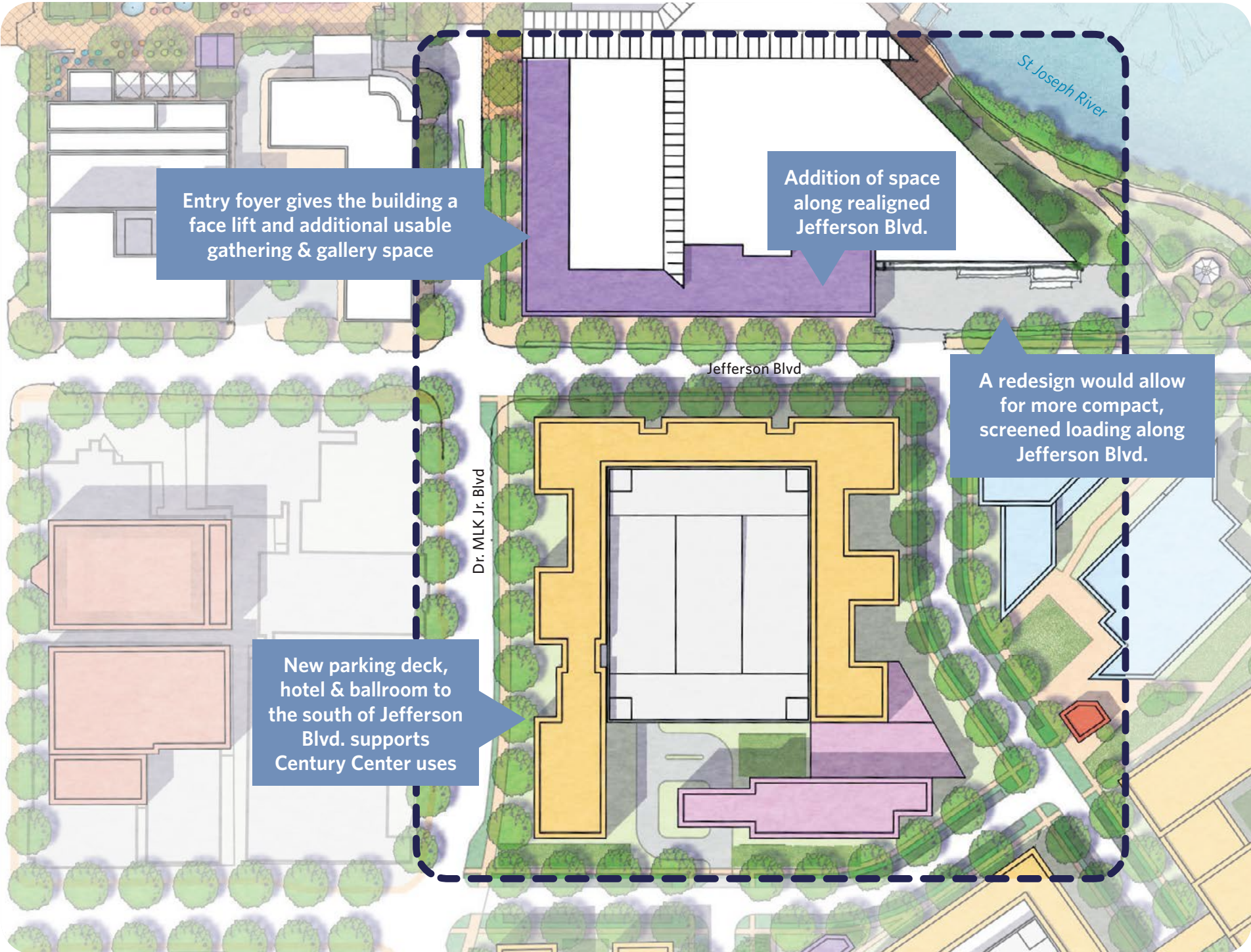
The Heart of Downtown • The Century Center & Jefferson

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.



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

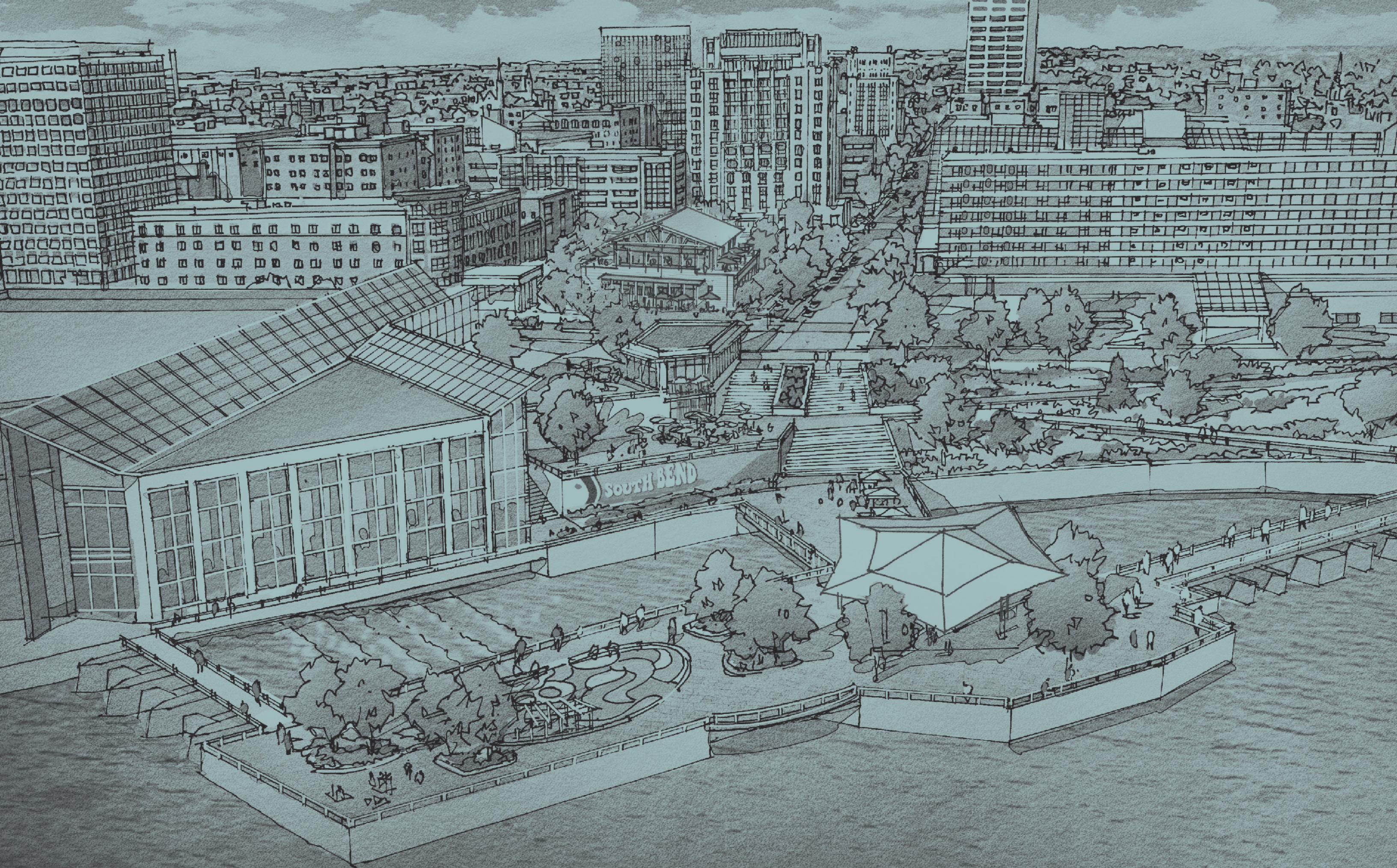
The newly realigned Jefferson Blvd. would tie together the east and west sides of the city, creating a more direct connection from Howard Park and the east side's retail and housing to downtown's retail core.



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



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 were located on the East and West race, and the river was an energy resource, but it was not treated as a quality-of-life amenity. 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.

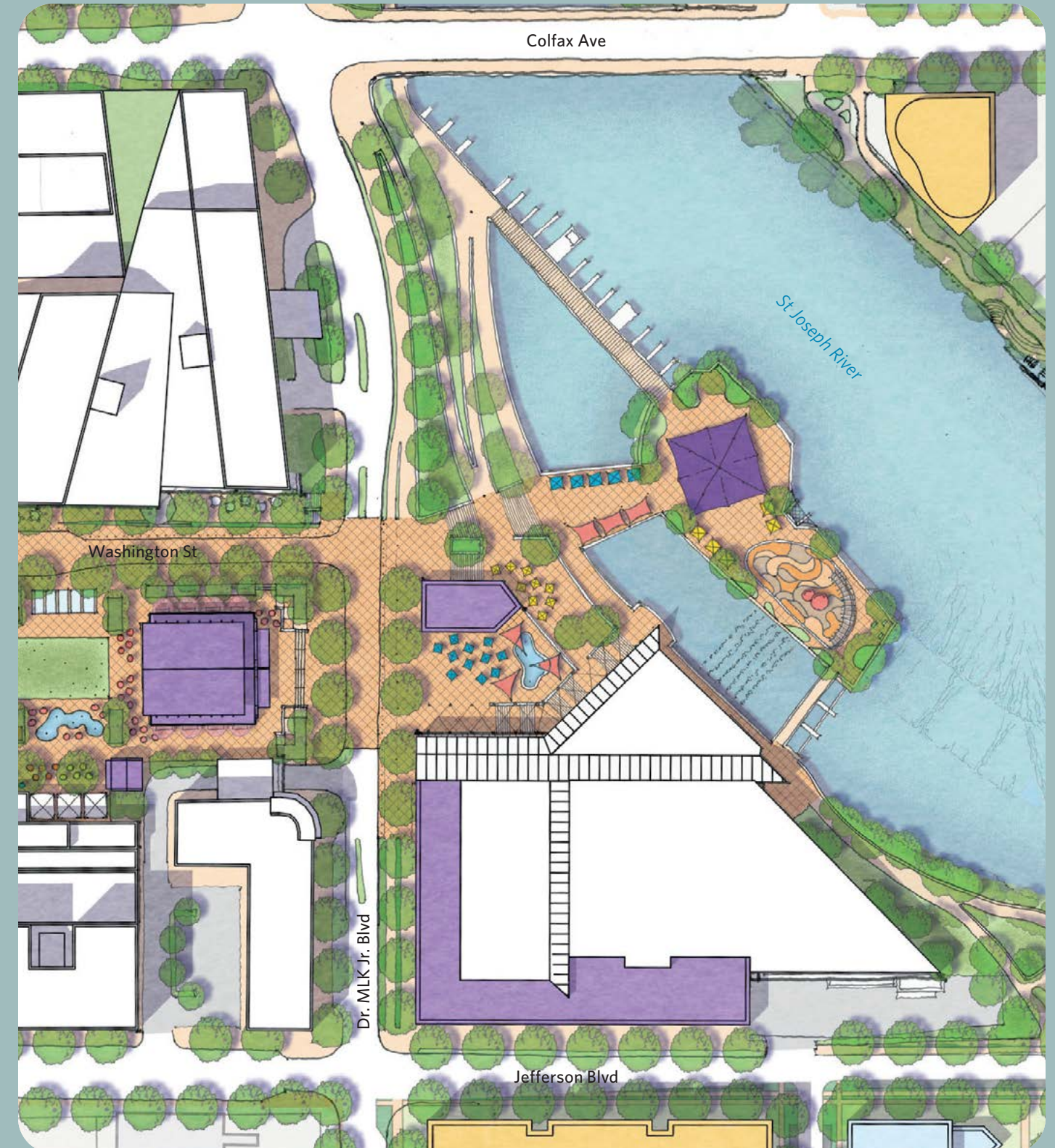
The Century Center, in particular, disconnects Michigan Street, the future Town Square, and the rest of Downtown from the river. The building was designed to privatize views and access to the river — the Grand Hall has beautiful views of the river, but the building disrupts the riverfront trail and river 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

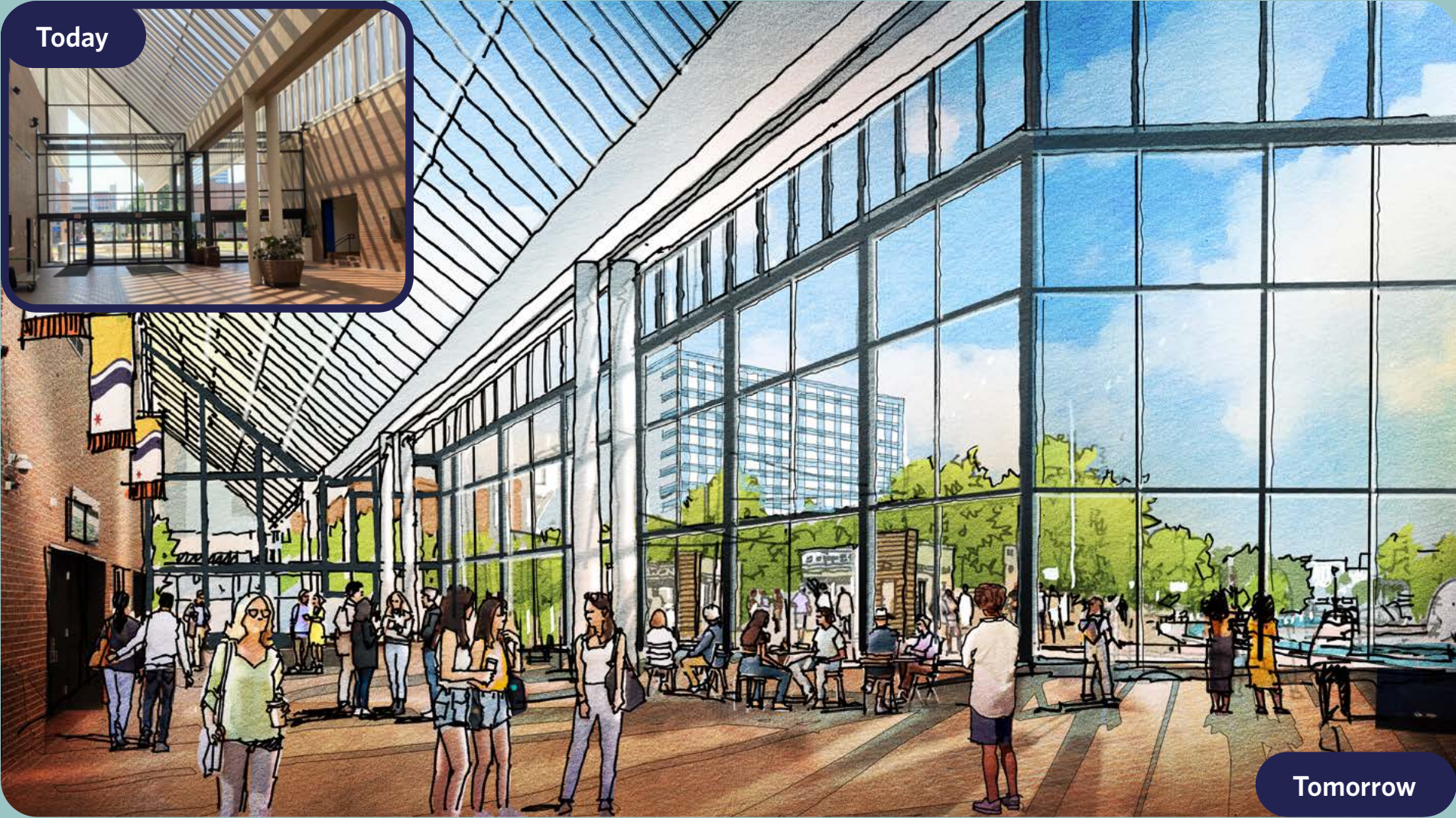


From Dr. M.L.K. Jr. Blvd it is difficult to see the river

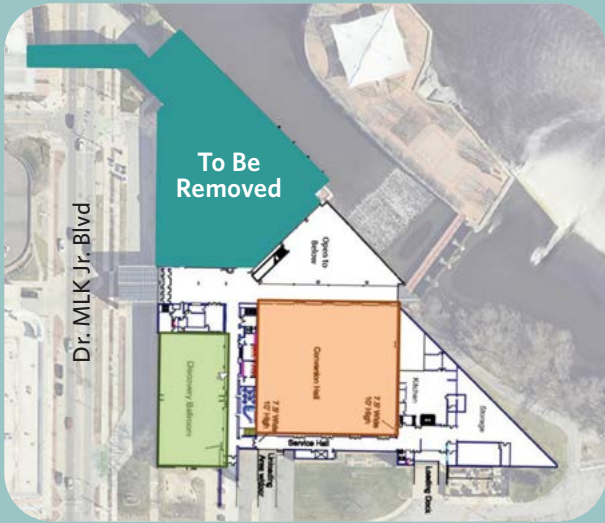


1. CENTURY CENTER INTERVENTION

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 expanded St. Joe County Library. The South Bend Museum of Art could be relocated to a more visible location downtown. With this approach, the Century Center would function as a smaller, riverfront civic center, supported by the 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.



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 Art Museum would open 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

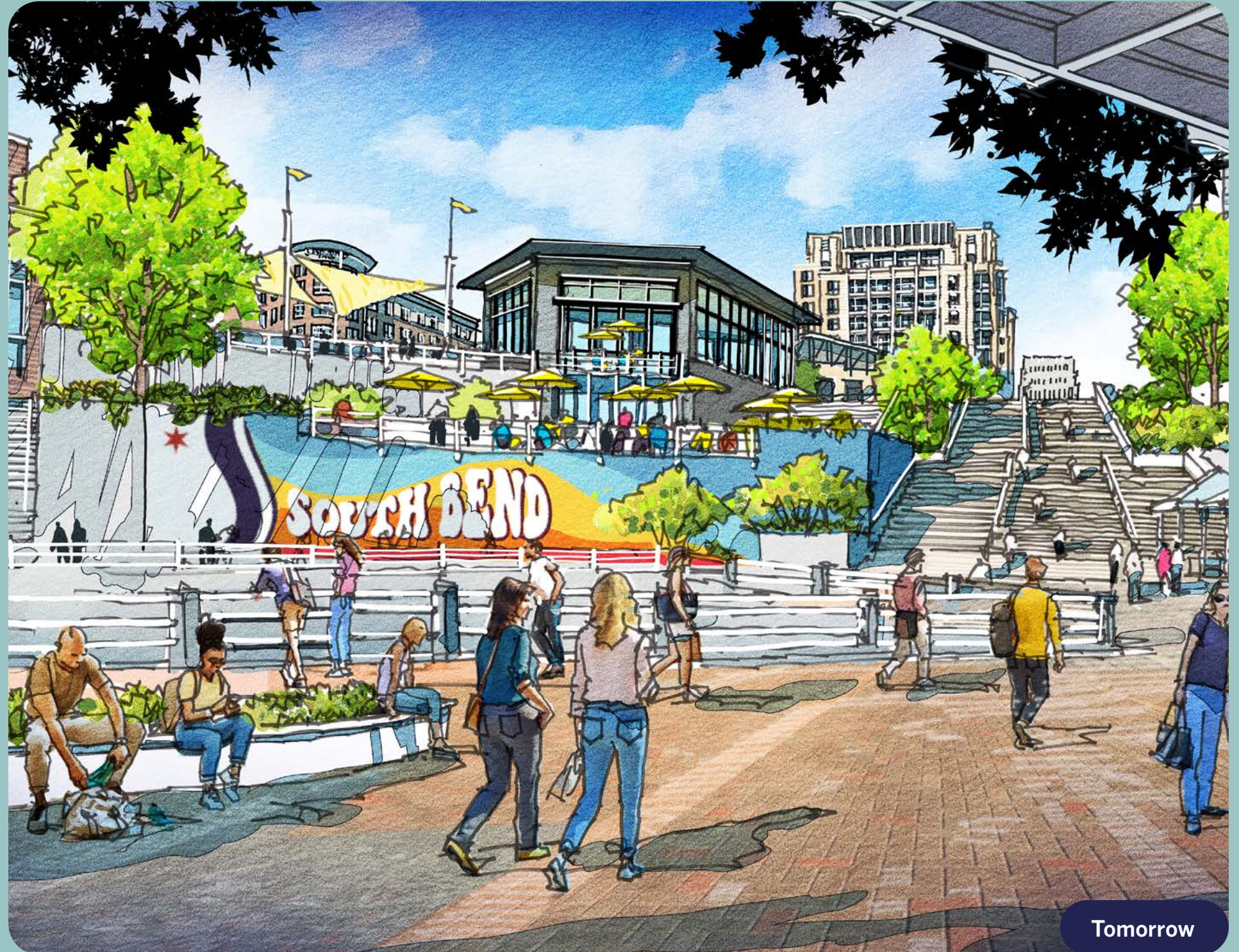
2. SIGNATURE DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT PARK

Removing the northern portion 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

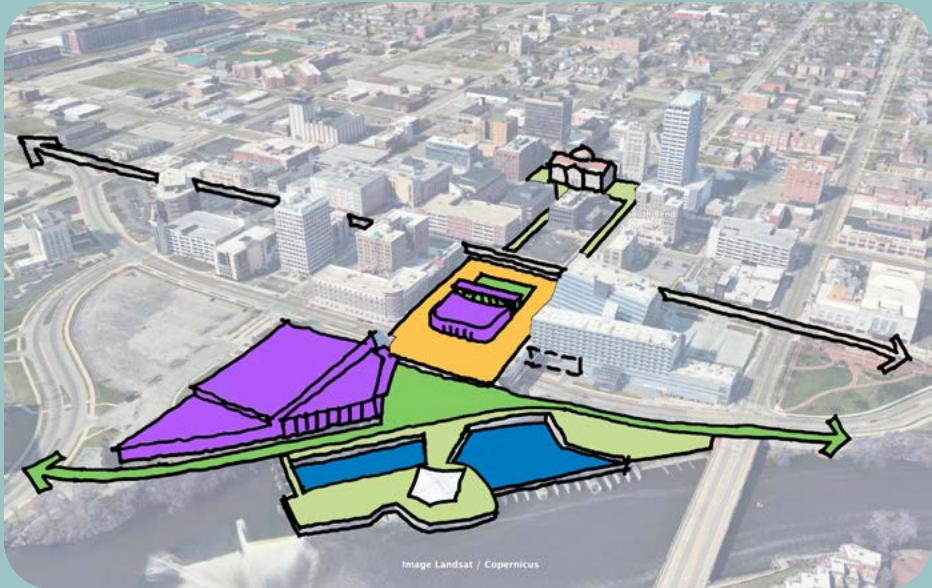
- Add restaurants and active uses with outdoor dining with views out over the water
- Include creative seating opportunities adjacent to the water. For example, the swings at the Wharf in DC or Hammocks or ropes over the water in Spruce Street Harbor Park in Philadelphia.
- Have multiple routes and access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



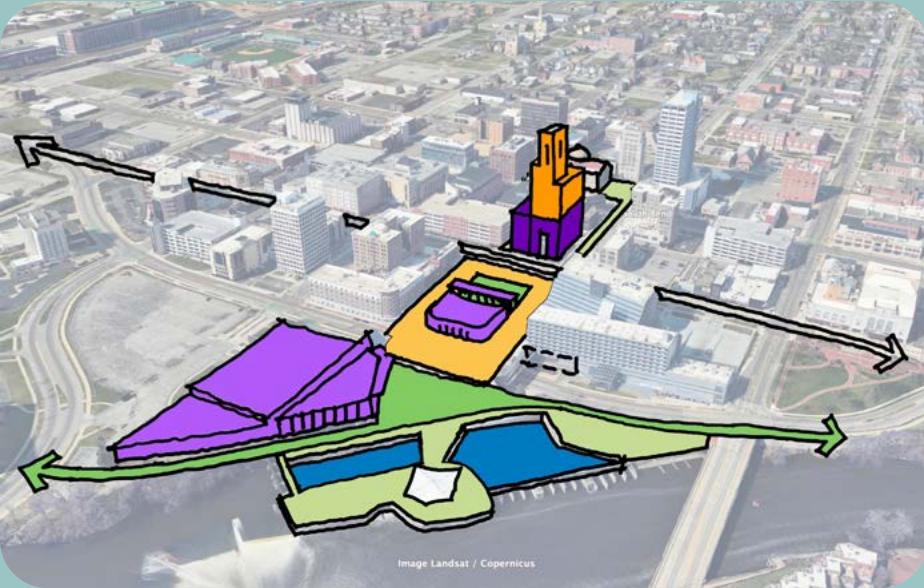
Step 1: Remove the portion of the Century Center that houses the Bendix Theater and South Bend Museum of Art.



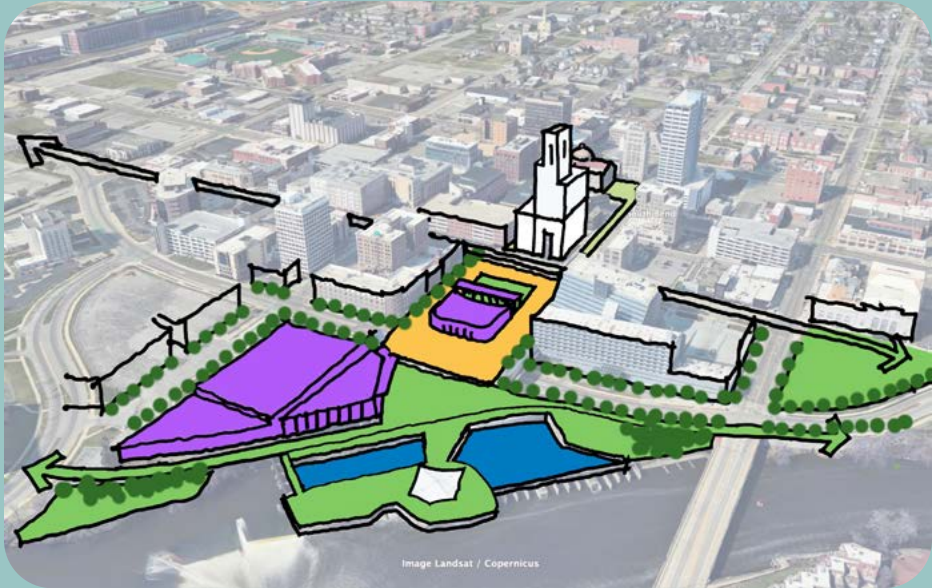
Step 2: Connect the courthouse building, Town Square, and the signature riverfront park with the river.



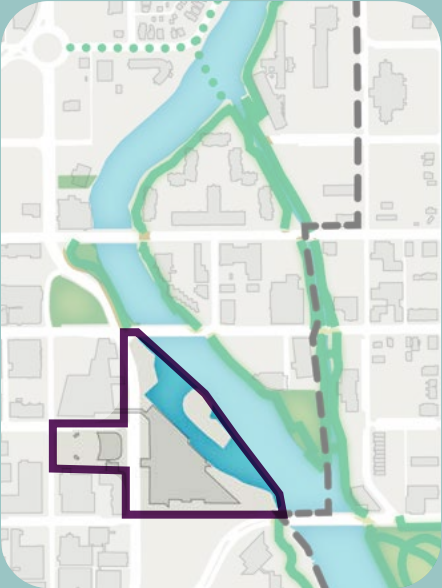
Step 3: Build higher-density mixed-use housing on the vacant parking lot across from the Town Square.



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



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



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:

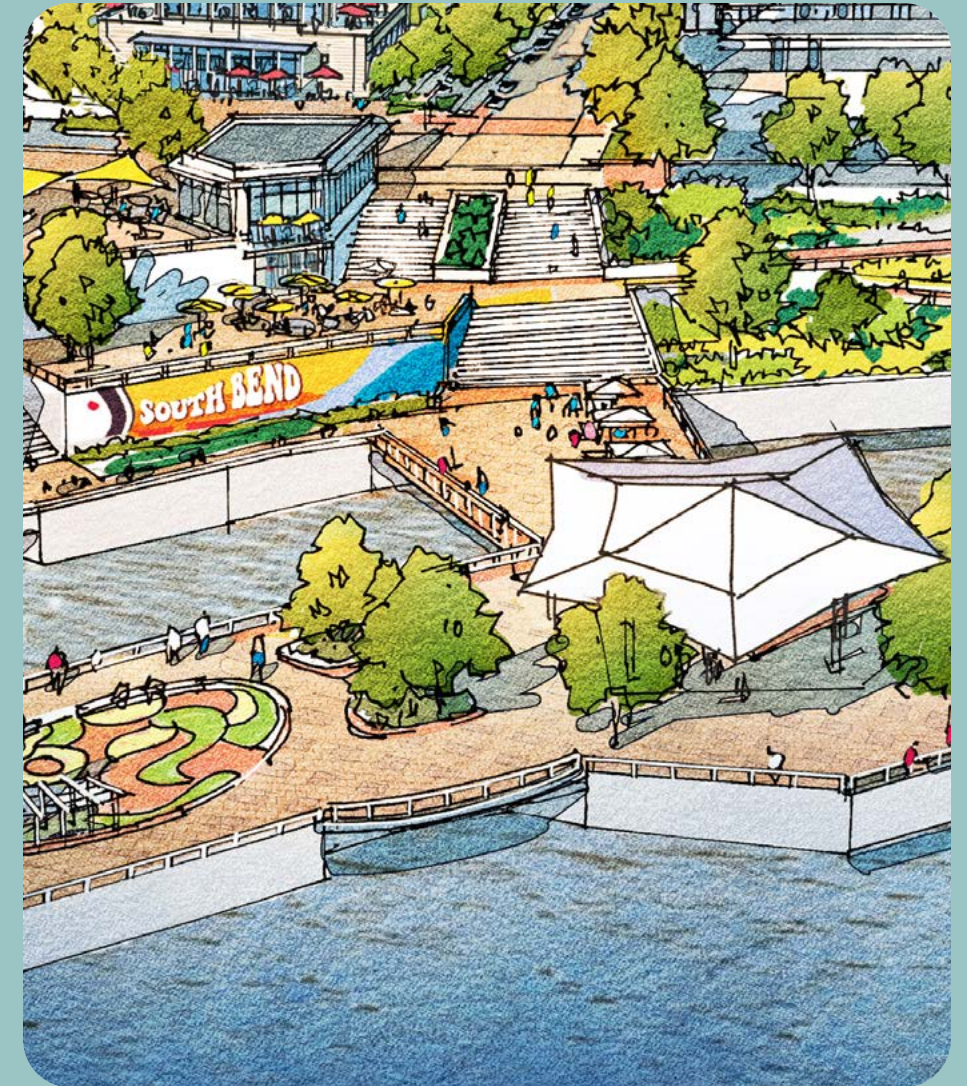
- Building a new, wide public bridge that directly aligns with Washington Street.
- Improving the current bridge connection to Pier Park
- Building a cantilevered boardwalk outside of the Century Center Grand Hall to connect the trail from the southeast
- Activating the island with a small seasonal pop-up 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



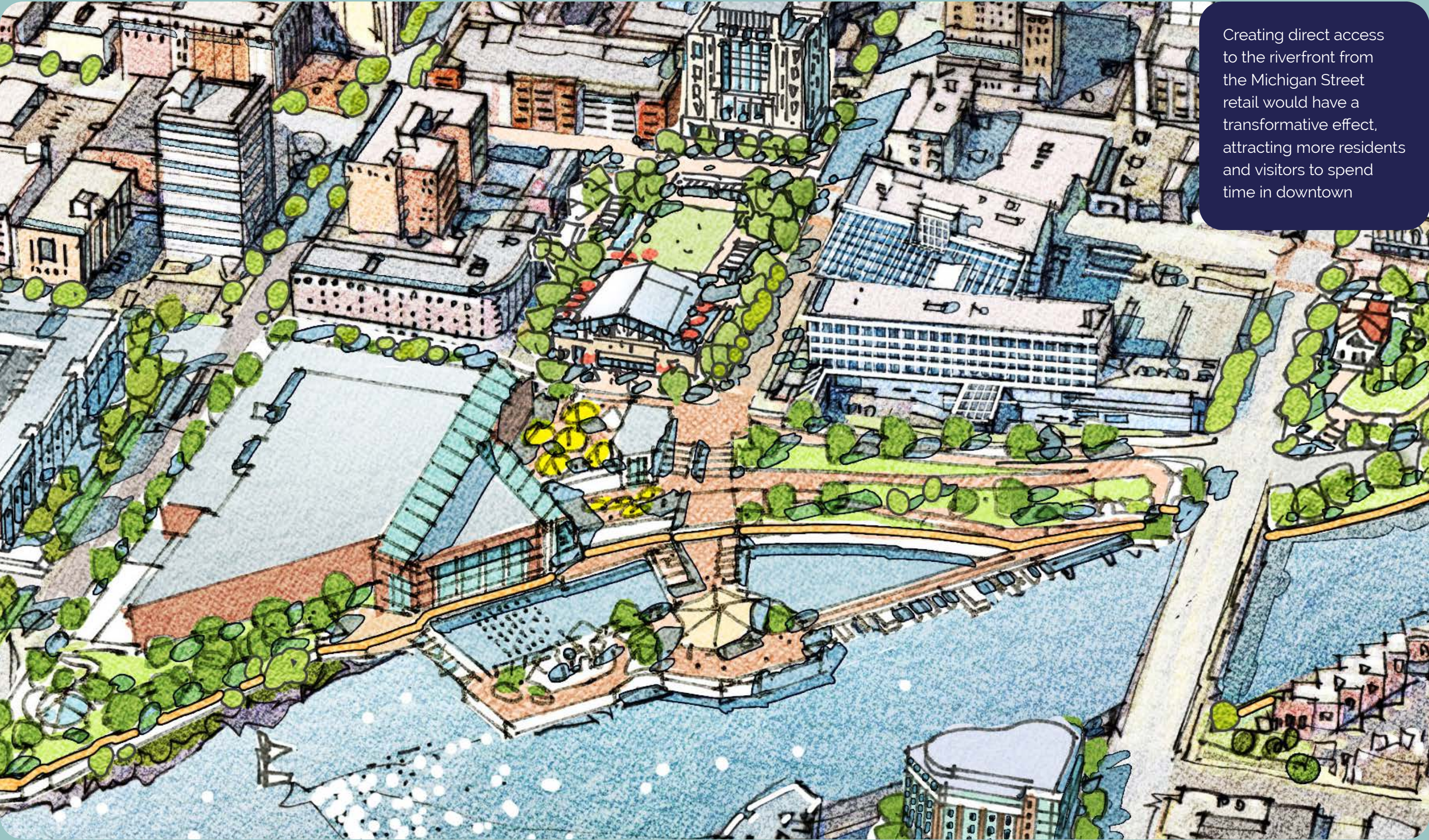
Interconnected trails systems with activated spaces attract visitors to downtowns



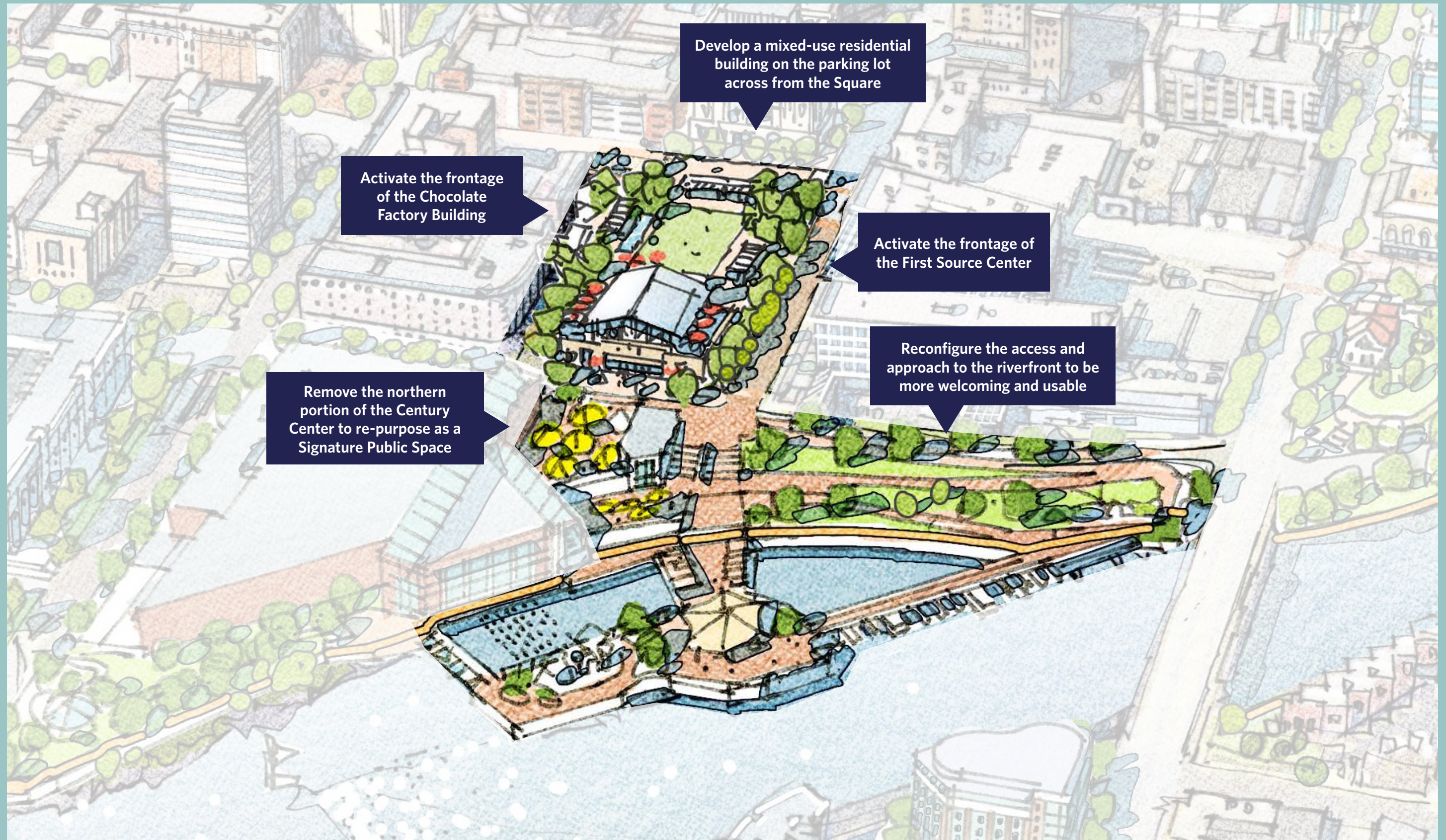
Island Park would be the final destination at the bottom of the signature riverfront park



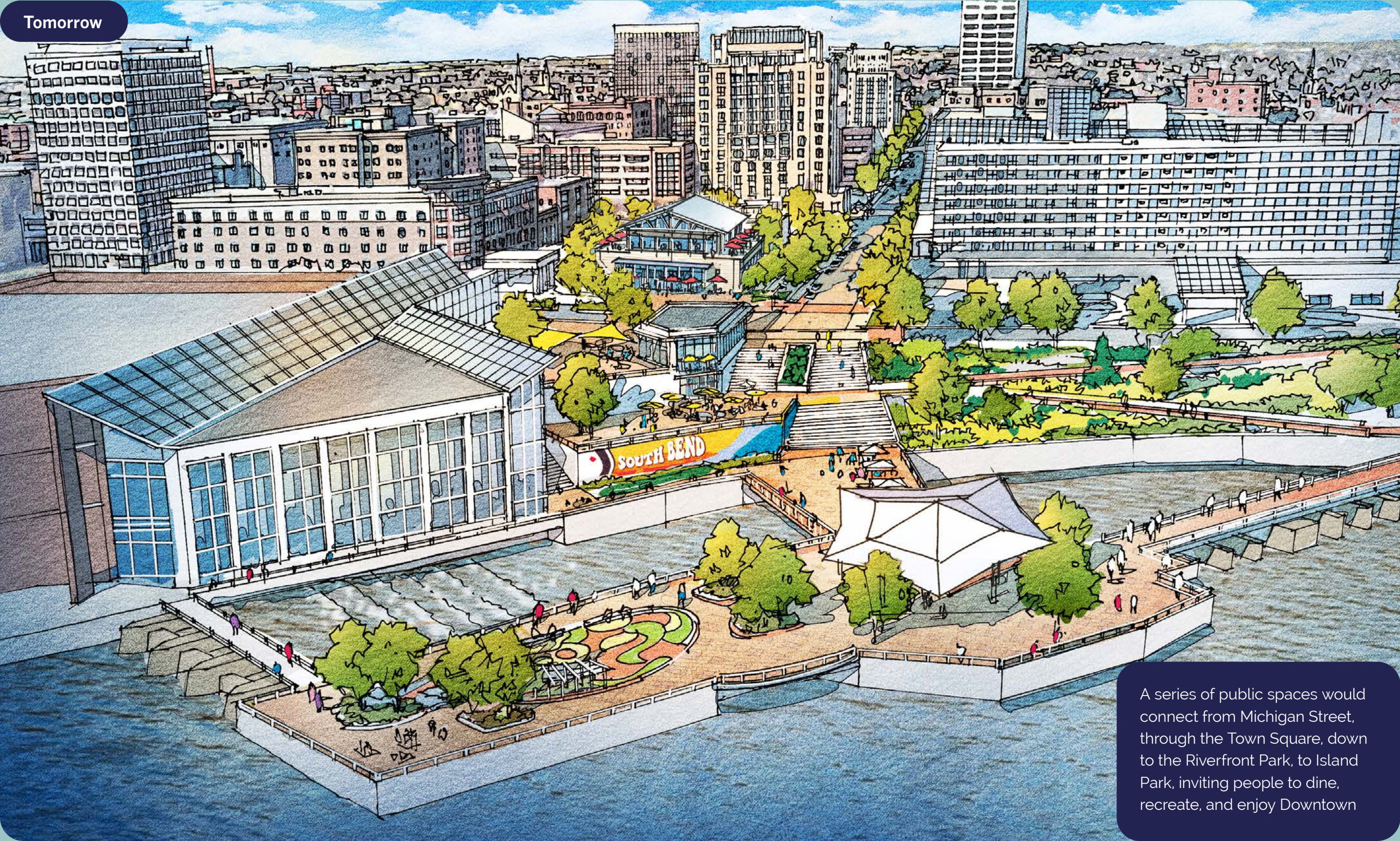
Visitors to the signature riverfront park would experience a series of spaces — an upper level adjacent to the Town Square and Dr. MLK Jr. Boulevard, terraced indoor and outdoor dining, spaces for children and families, and trails and gathering spaces at the river level



Creating direct access to the riverfront from the Michigan Street retail would have a transformative effect, attracting more residents and visitors to spend time in downtown



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



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

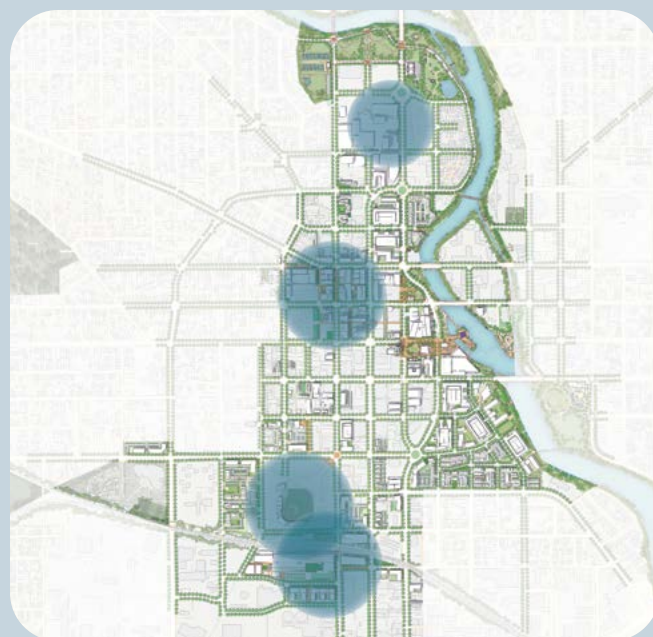


Innovative & Institutional Catalysts



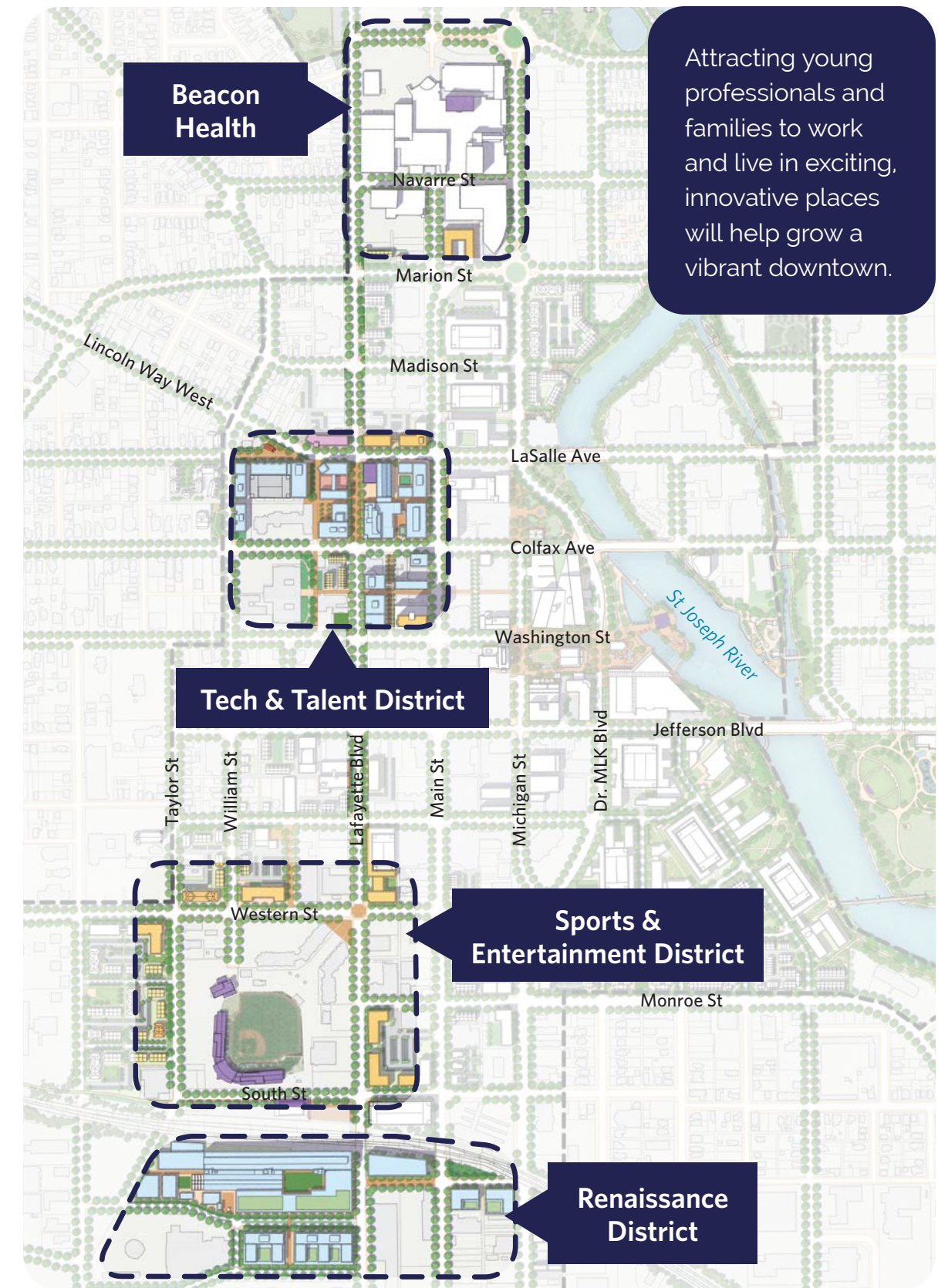
Unique jobs, education experiences, and entertainment destinations attract people who live in other parts of the region to spend time downtown on a regular basis, enlivening restaurants and public spaces.

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 millions of dollars 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

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

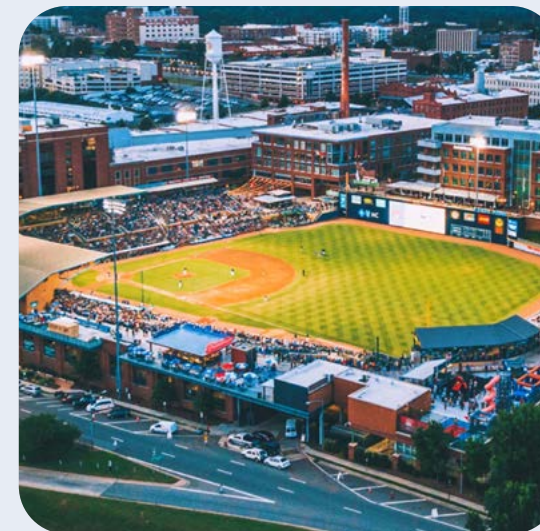
The renovation of the historic South Bend Tribune building will anchor the first phase of the proposed district. The oldest portion of the building dates to the 1920s, and the property has been vacant since 2019. Phase One will introduce active uses on the building's ground floor that feature science, 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

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.



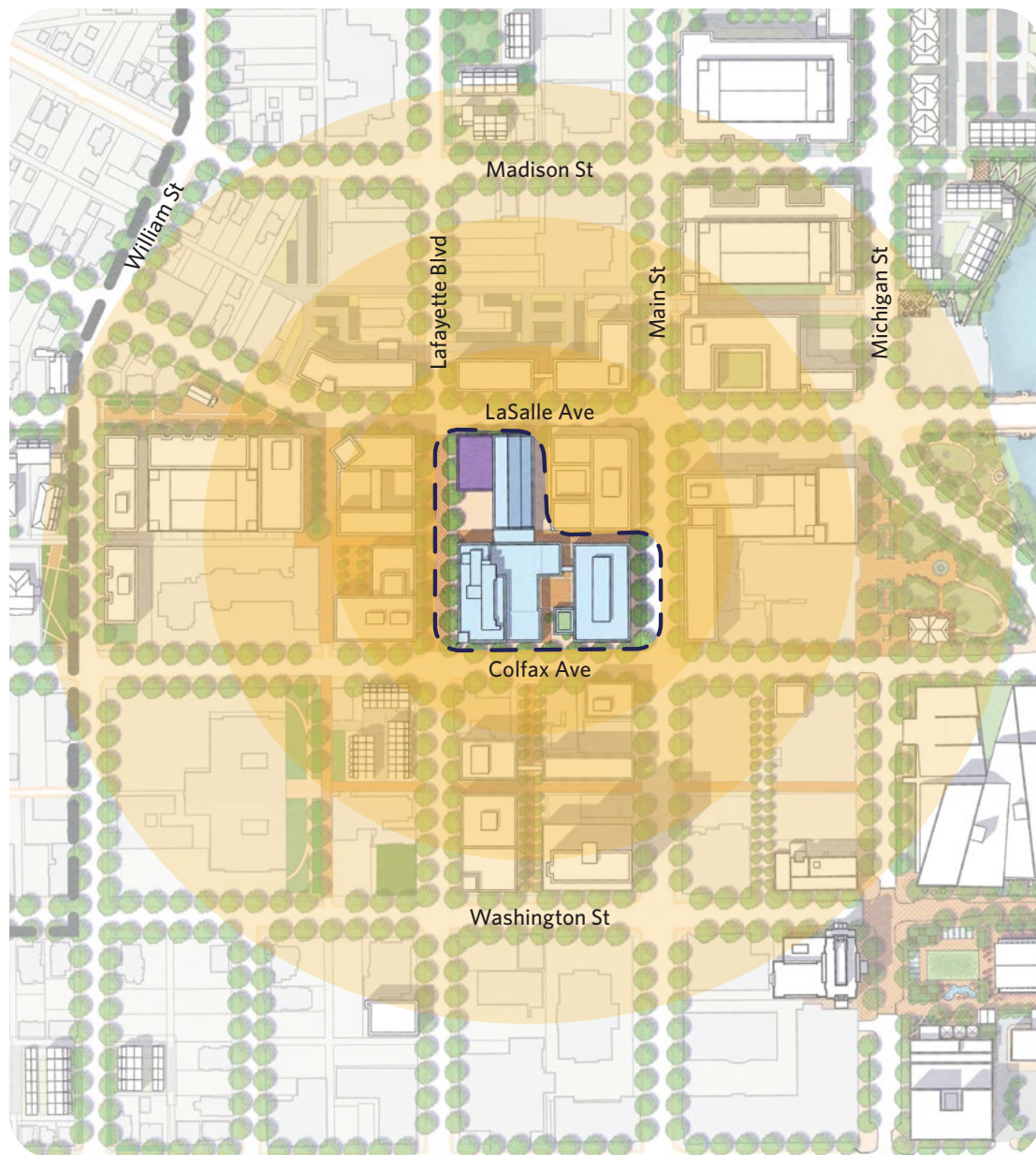
Tomorrow



Today

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.



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.



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 500 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.



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



MedStar Georgetown Hospital's new medical building sits adjacent to a walkable neighborhood. The design prioritized pedestrian connectivity from the University campus to the neighborhood.



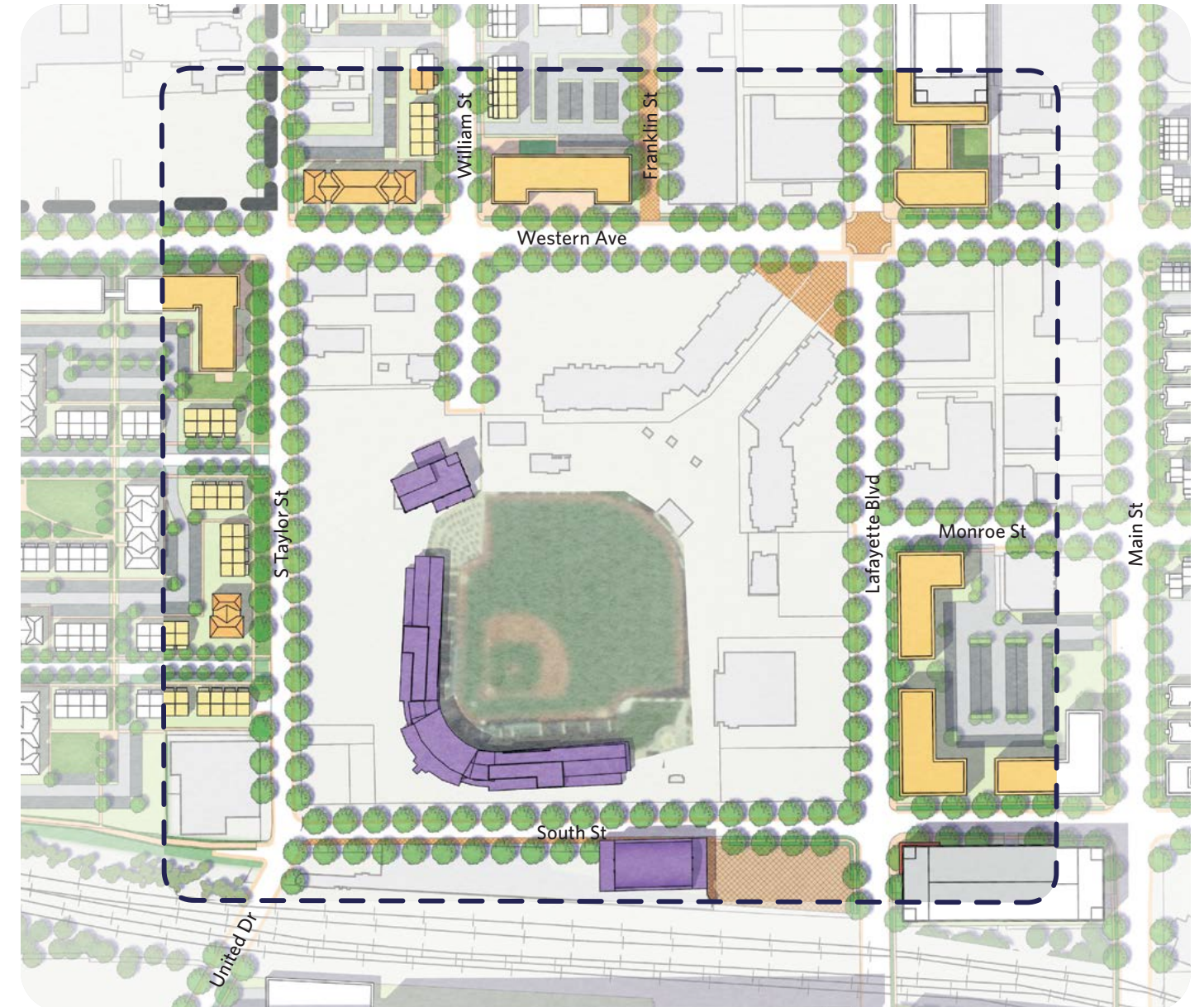
Innovation & Institutional Catalysts • Sports & Entertainment District

ACTIVATING & ENHANCING A REGIONAL DESTINATION

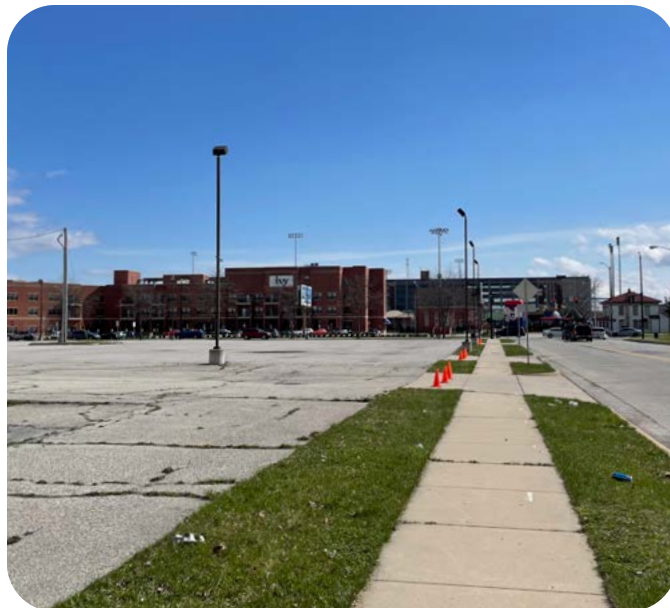
Stadium districts are regional destinations that drive activity and the economy of downtowns. With Four Winds Field investing in a major stadium renovation, it is positioned as a catalytic engine for the southern end of downtown. The Western Avenue Transformation district to the west and the Stadium 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.



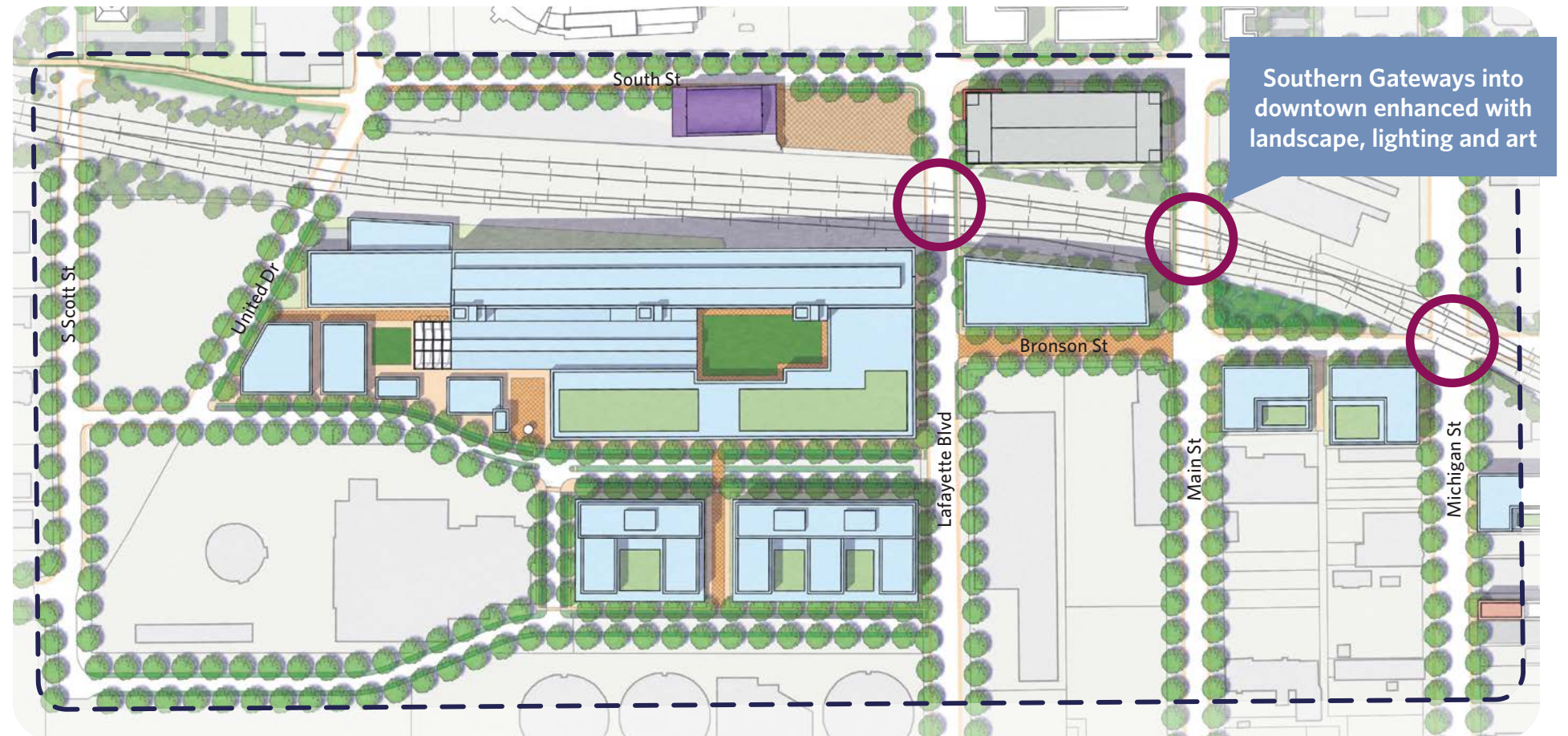
A curbless environment with residential and retail uses at the entrance to Nashville's First Horizon field creates an active, attractive destination downtown.



Tomorrow

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 will be transformed into loft apartments overlooking downtown.



URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES



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.

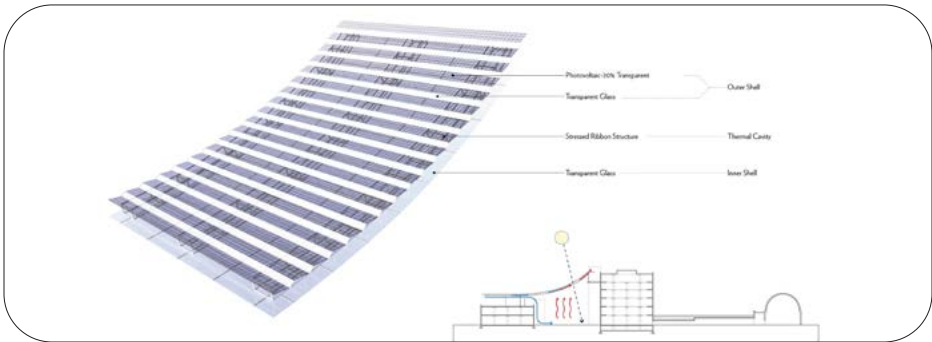
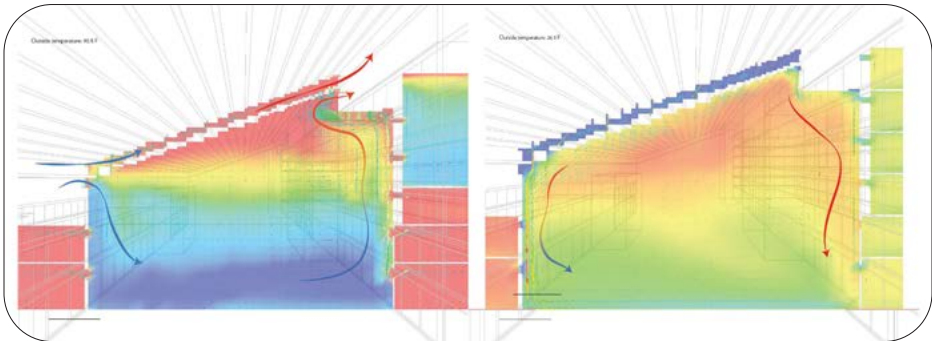
This convergence of historic infrastructure and emerging technology transforms the district into an institutional catalyst, bringing together Purdue's advanced programs, Notre Dame's research initiatives, enFocus' postgraduate talent, and private-sector innovation. By embedding these assets into a shared, 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



Neighborhoods



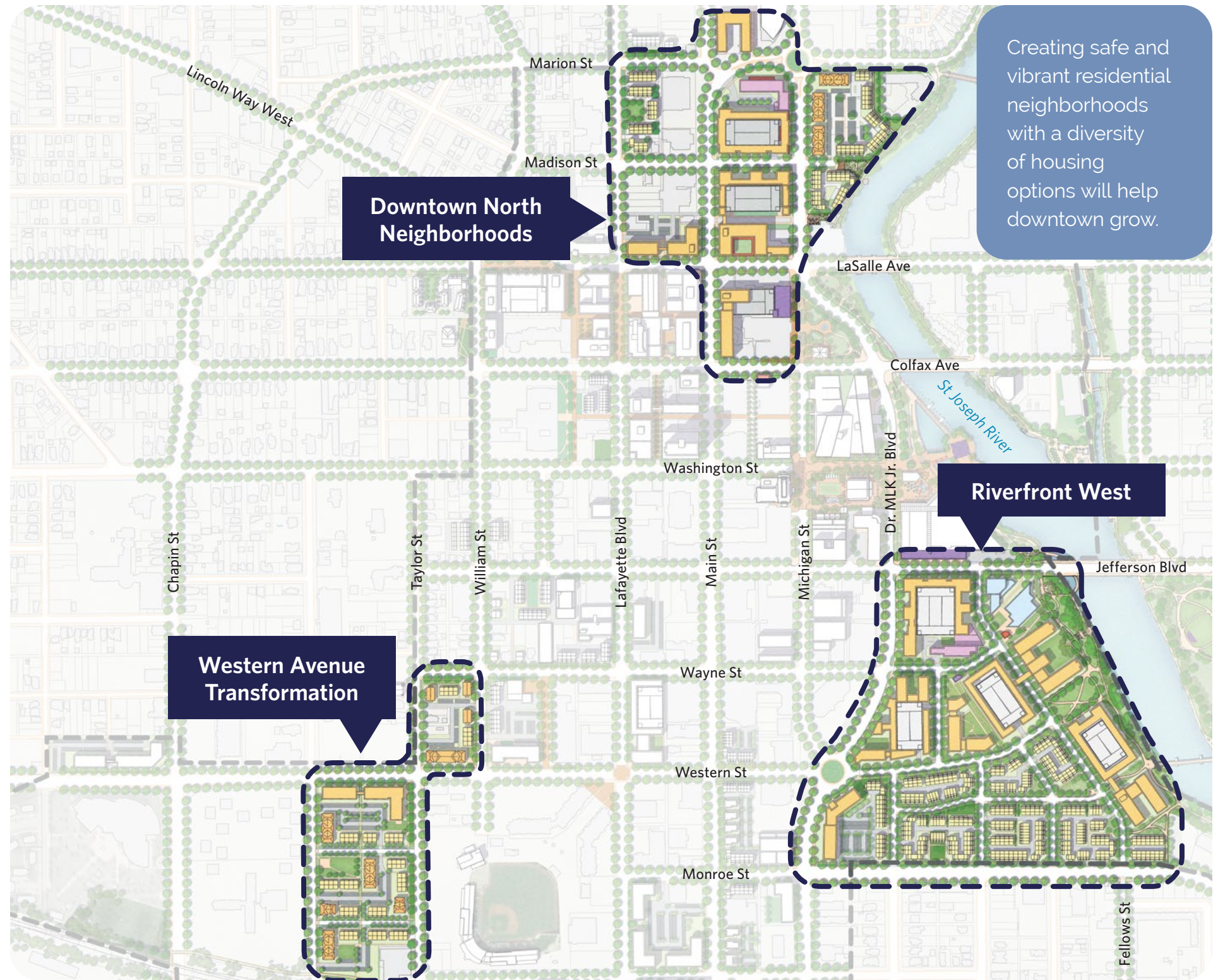
Downtown should function as a livable residential neighborhood that appeals to residents of all ages, incomes, and stages of life

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:

- Riverfront West
- Downtown North Neighborhoods
- 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

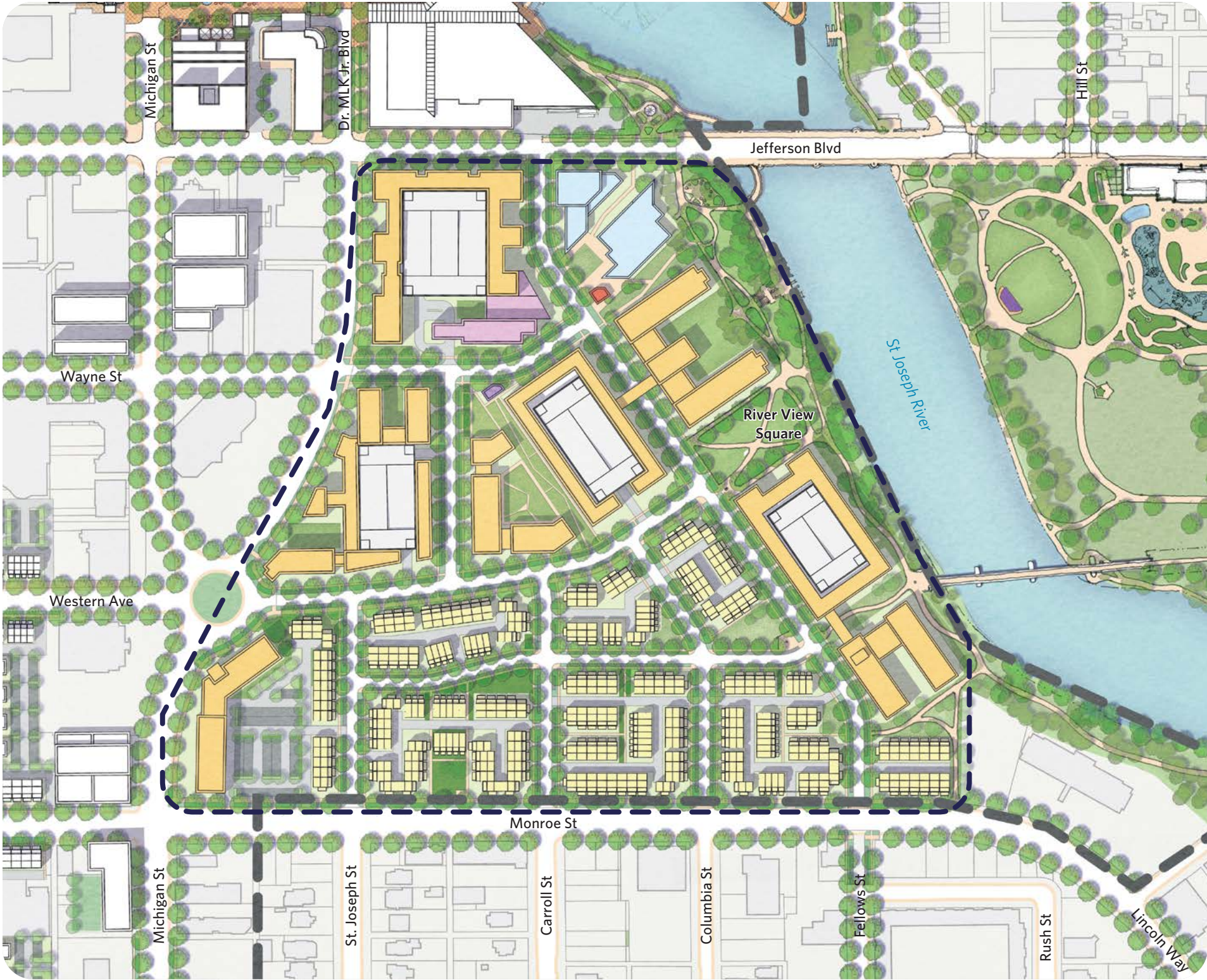
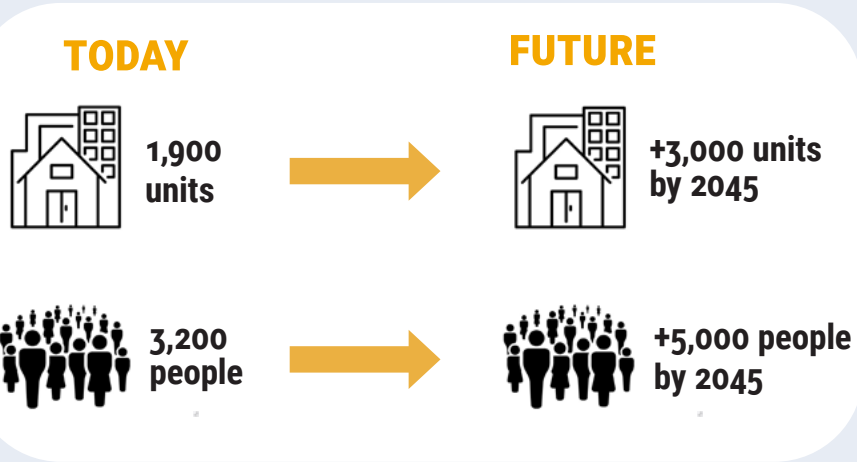
Neighborhoods • Riverfront West

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



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

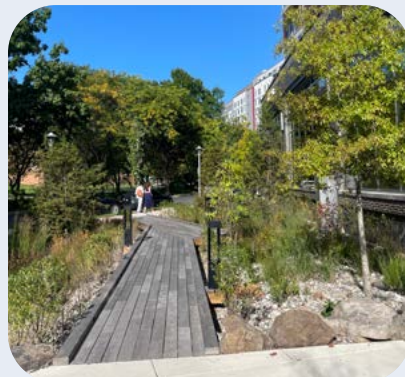
Neighborhoods • Riverfront West

Currently, parking lots and 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.



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

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



Tomorrow

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 • 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.



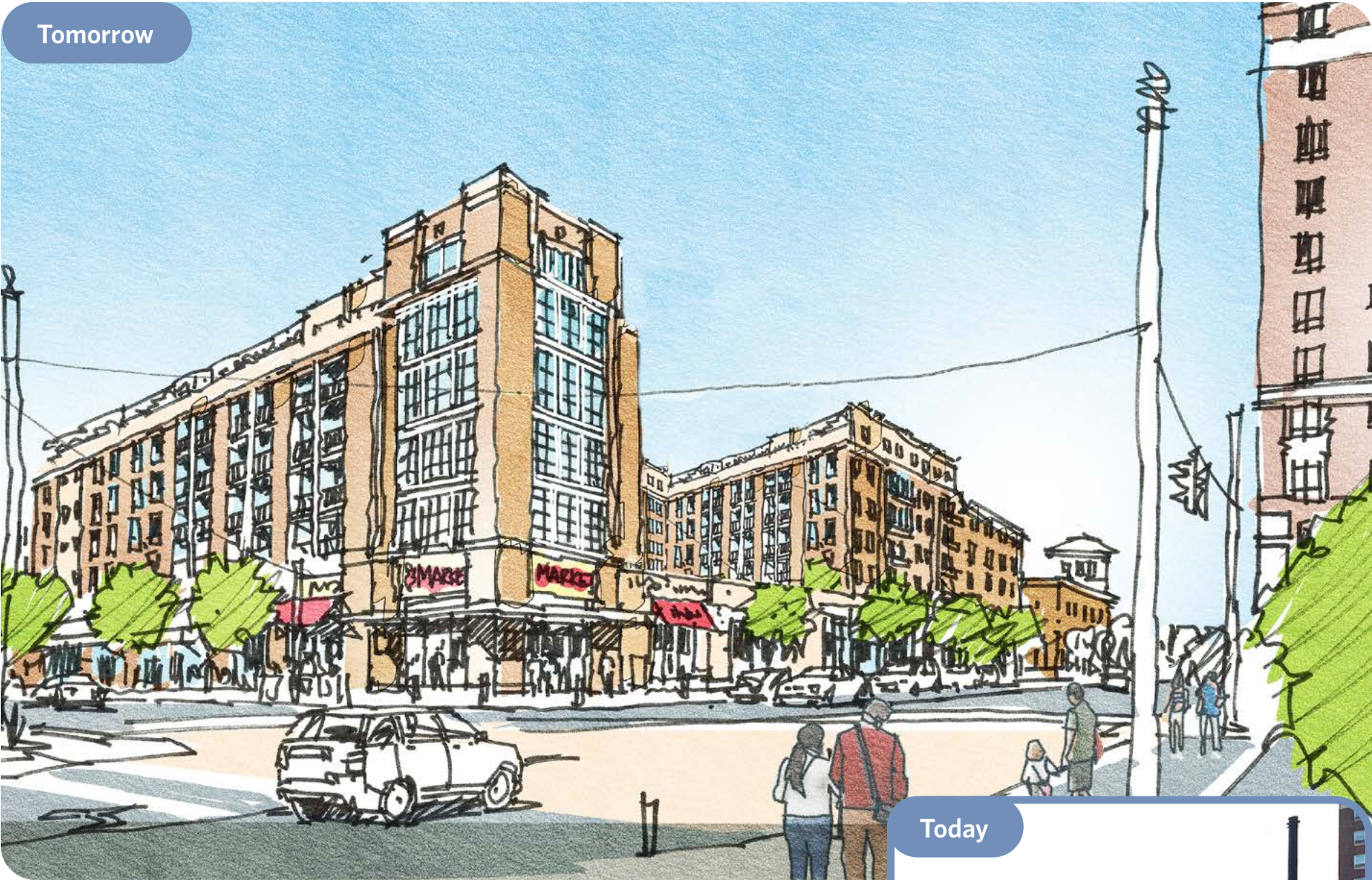
There are a series of opportunity sites north of downtown, including the Madison Lifestyle District and various parking lots and infill sites. These could be developed with a wide range of housing options, from for-sale townhouses to walk-up or elevator apartment buildings.

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



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.

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



Tomorrow



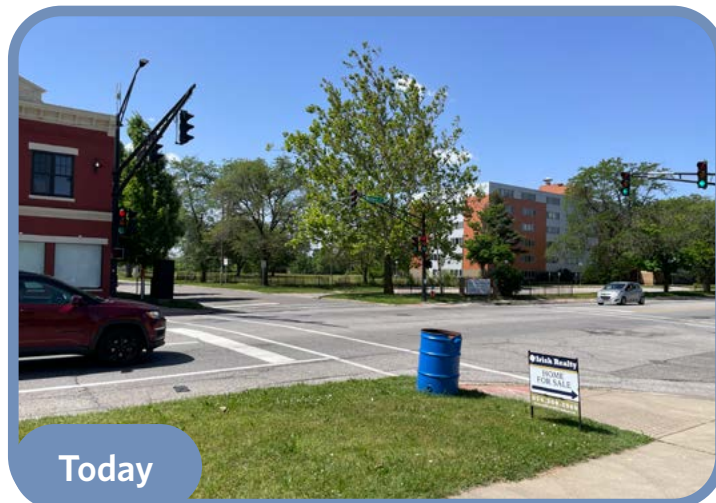
Today

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



Today



Tomorrow

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.

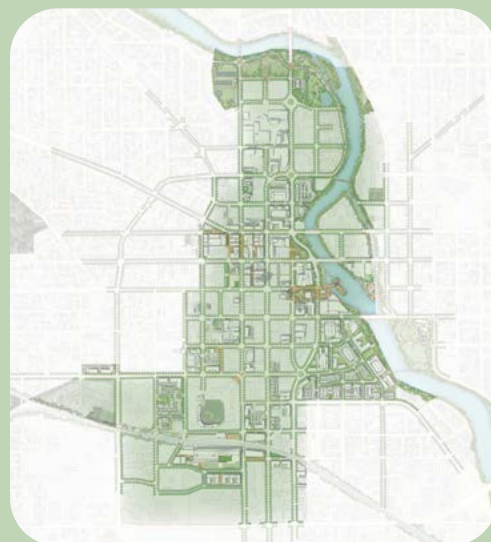


Public Realm



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.



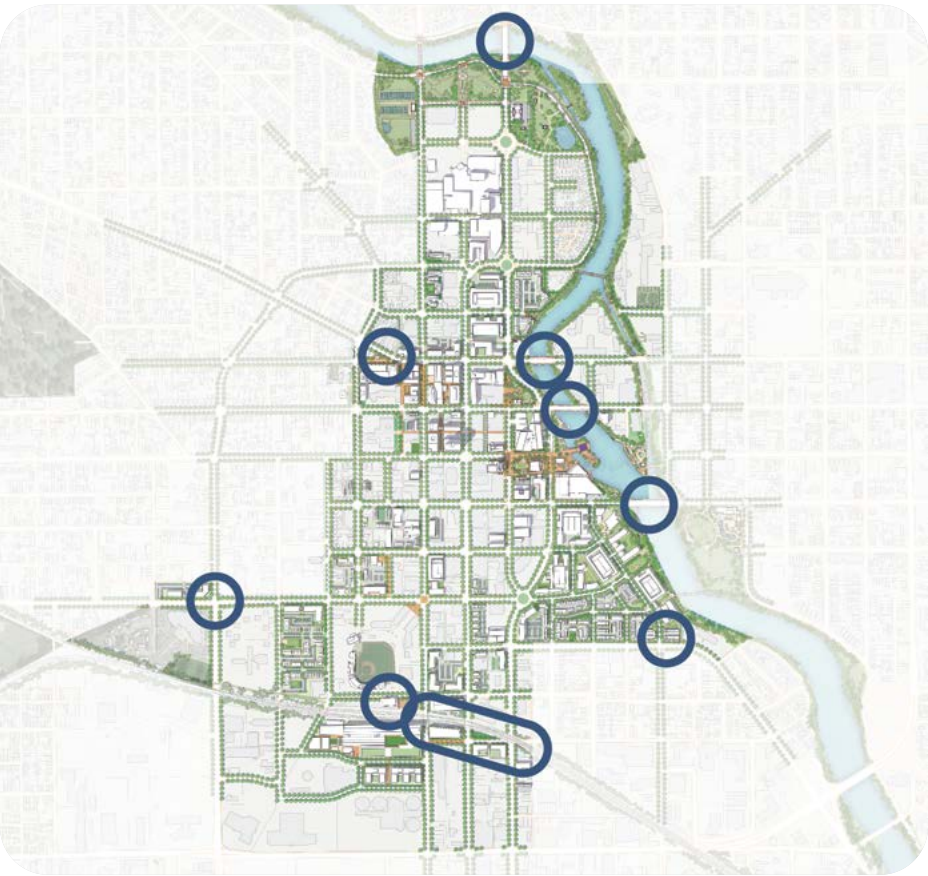
Public Realm Improvement Projects:

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



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.



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



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



Seitz Park improvements are under construction along the East Race

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 • 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.

To improve the walking experience, it's important to prioritize the planting of street trees, adding trees to urban pocket parks, and creating planted bioswale bulb-outs in the parallel parking lane. 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

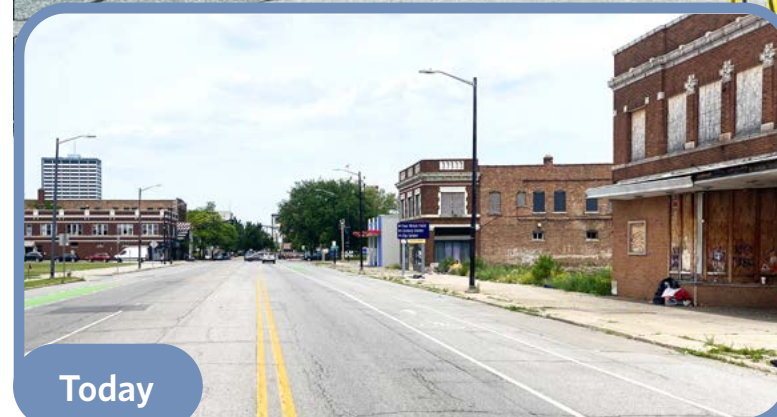
- Follow best practices for stormwater management to prevent run off into the St. Joseph River.
- Incorporate bioswales into street design and parklets.
- Protect and save large existing street trees
- Add permeable pavers to parallel parking areas to decrease runoff
- Increase tree canopy in downtown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



Tomorrow



Today



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

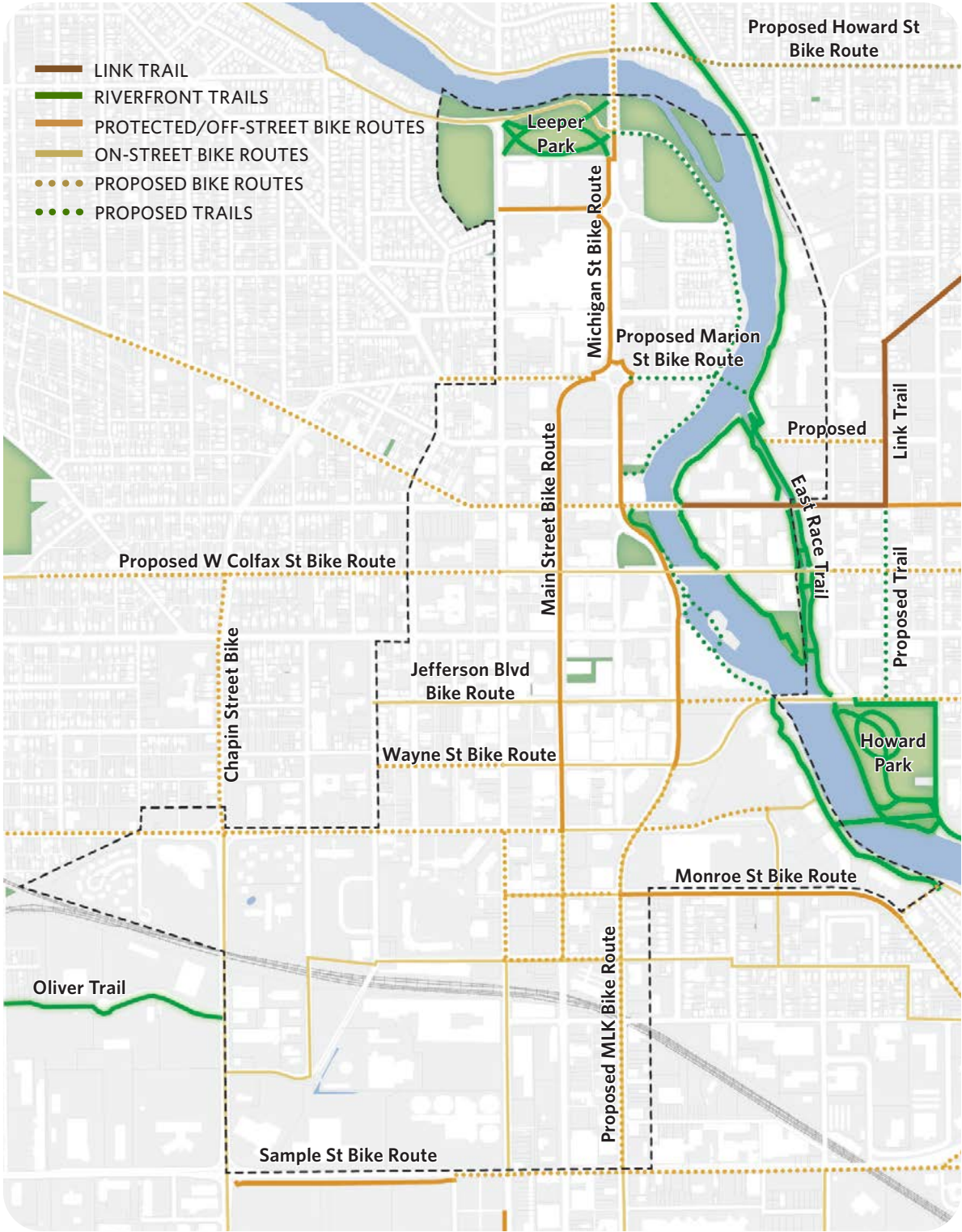
Public Realm • Multi-Modal Connectivity

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

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 single-family and residential 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

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

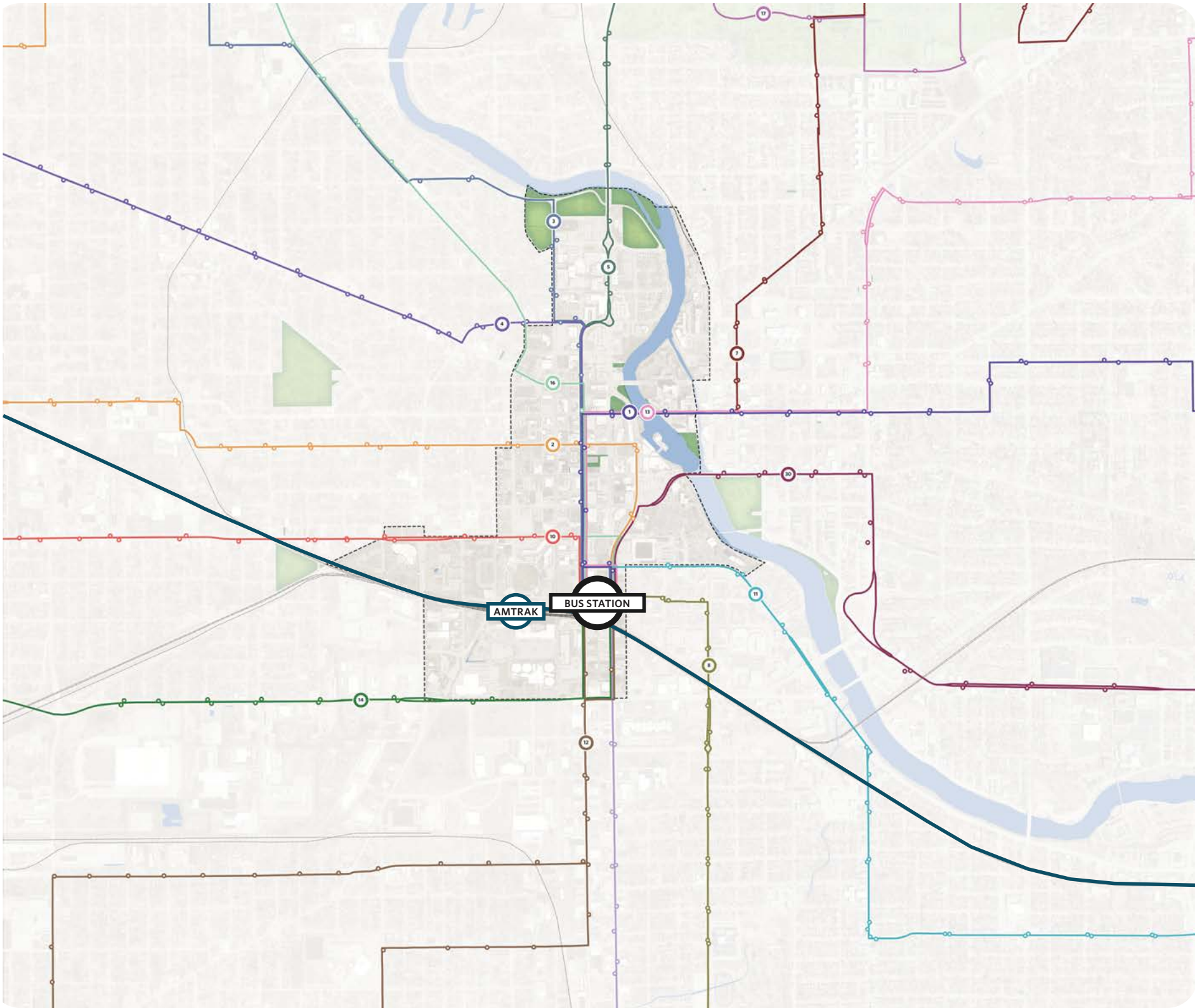
Public Realm • Transit

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



Built Form & Design Standards



Built Form & Design Standards

A Regulating plan to guide future development 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

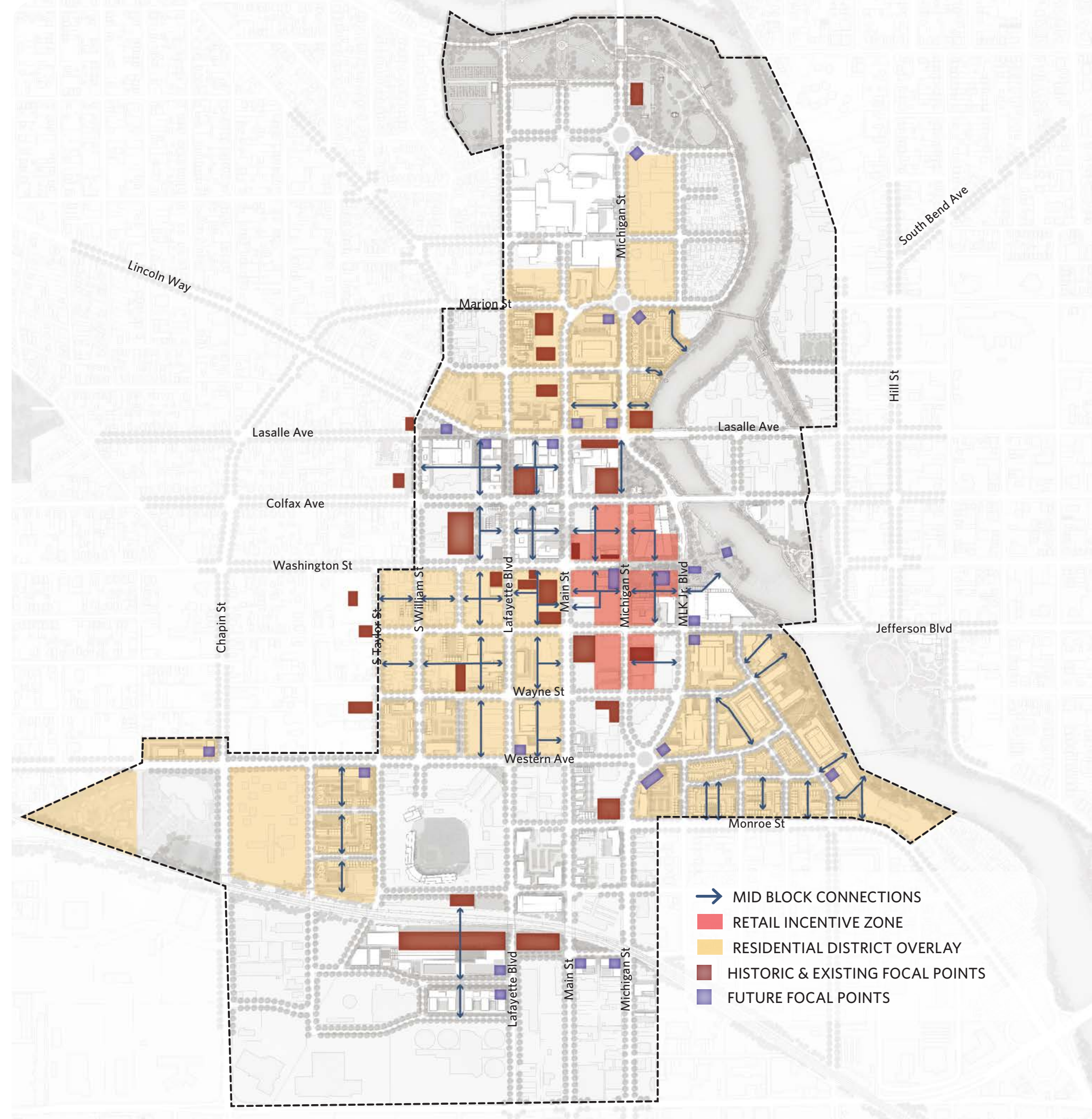
- Allow smaller lot sizes within this zone to encourage a variety of housing types downtown
- Provide flexibility on front yard setbacks to allow for a variety of street frontage conditions for residential units

Mid-Block Connections

- Important connections through the middle of blocks should be enhanced to improve the wanderability 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.



Downtown 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 Design 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 restaurants on the ground floor, allow for outdoor dining to be designed as private seating for retail tenant use, while maintaining clear access to buildings and visibility to open space. The dining area can include tables, seating, umbrellas, and movable pots and planters.
- Bollards can be utilized in a curbless environment to separate the pedestrian from the vehicular realm. Consider other creative solutions such as planter pots, seat walls and curbed planting beds along with other vehicular deterrents in a curbless environment.
- Seasonal displays, pop-ups, and furnishings are encouraged to promote activity throughout the year.



Sidewalk seating, additional planting, diverse mix of store signage and 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

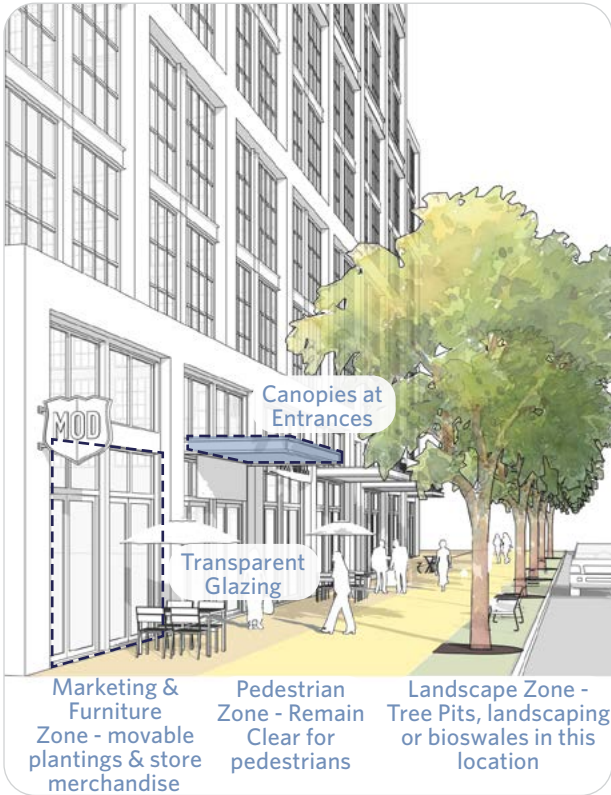


Diagram of ideal retail frontage configuration



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.



Seating areas along storefronts and between street trees. Umbrellas and awnings protect customers and pedestrians from rain or sun. Signage

Downtown Residential Frontage

ATTRACTING PEOPLE DOWNTOWN TO LIVE REQUIRES THOUGHTFUL PLANNING FOR RESIDENTIAL UNITS

There are two types of residential entries that can be found in downtown: multi-unit building entries and individual unit entries. Building entries for multi-unit buildings should be designed to clearly direct residents and visitors to building 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

- Design primary residential building entries so that they are easily recognizable and accessible
- Create a sense of privacy for individual unit entries using steps, low walls, plantings, or other elements
- Minimize door swings opening directly onto sidewalk areas. Recess entries where possible to create more space to accommodate door swings
- Consider overhangs, canopies, and awnings above entrances to provide protection for pedestrians
- Consider porches or stoops for individual unit entries



Planters, gates for individual homes and elevated entries from the sidewalk level provide these townhouses a sense of privacy in a busy downtown urban core



A recessed, elevated terrace, decorative privacy screening, and plantings, give this ground floor unit privacy despite its small setback from the sidewalk



Plantings and site walls create semi-private entrances to ground floor units on a large multifamily apartment building



Diagram for Residential Frontage



Attractive signage, plantings, depth in the facade and an appropriately sized awning clearly signal a multi-unit residential entrance to this building



Pedestrian only mews can create residential addresses off of the major thoroughfares in downtown

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 feel 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

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

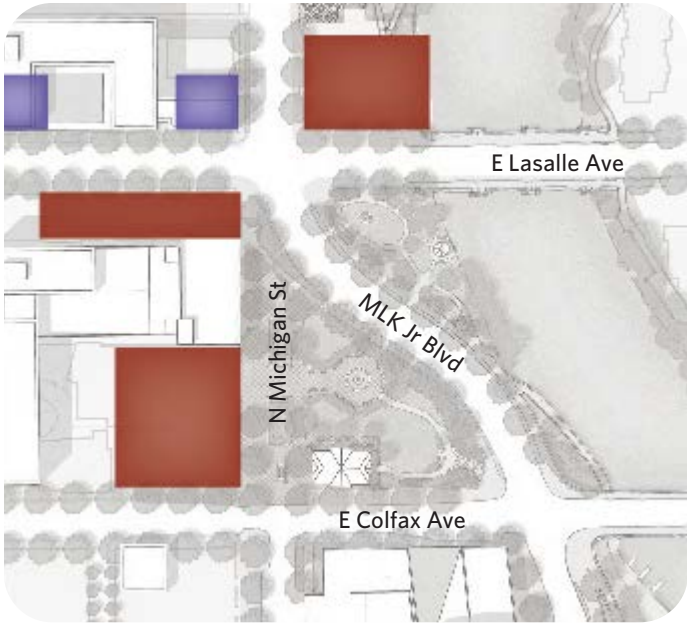
HOW TO KEEP ICONIC MOMENTS DOWNTOWN AND CREATE NEW ONES

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

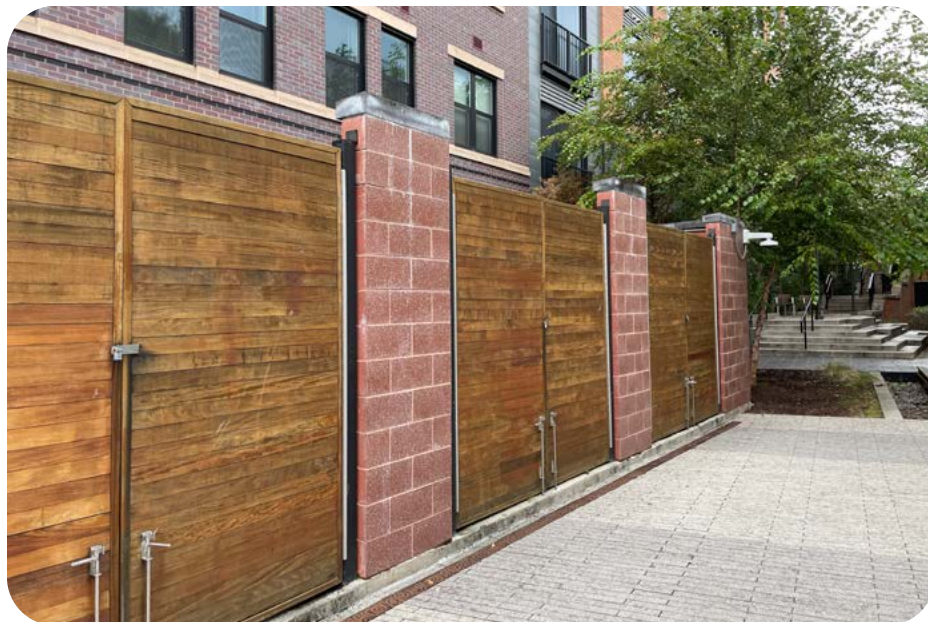
Screening & Locating Parking & Loading

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.

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 hubs. Historic properties tell the story of South Bend's development, from its industrial roots to its evolving urban landscape, and 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 building 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.

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

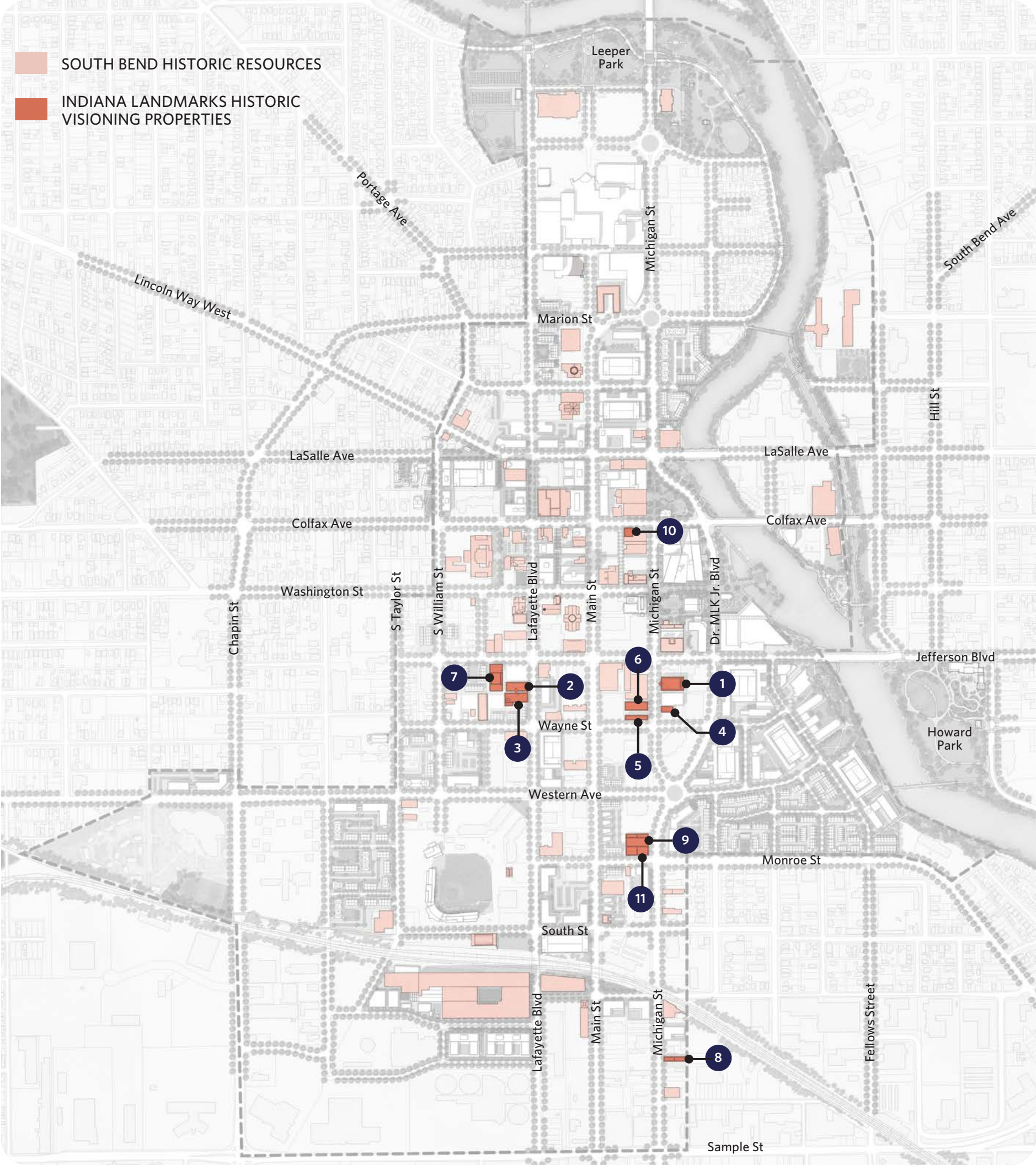
316 W Jefferson Boulevard
- 8

740 S Michigan Street
- 9

425 S Michigan Street
- 10

112 W Colfax Avenue
- 11

435 S Michigan Street



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, architectural character, and materiality



Historic Properties

1. STATE THEATER

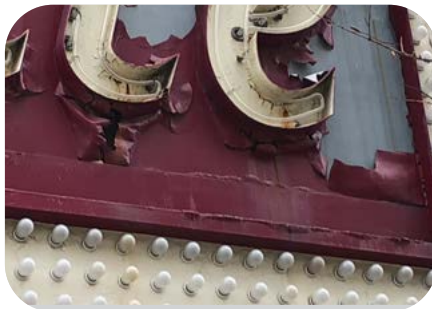
212-216 S Michigan Street

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 into 1-5 business off spaces



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



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



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2. 215-217 S LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD

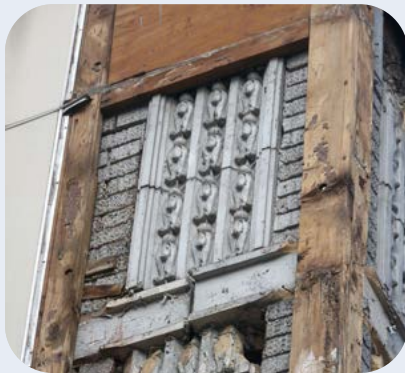
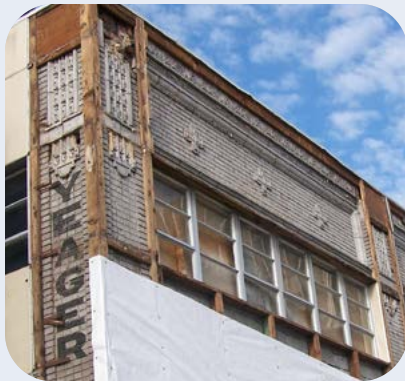
Built around 1917, this building housed the Cadillac Motor Sales Company and garage. Over the next half a century, various auto dealers and one boat dealer occupied the building. In the late 1990s, Herrman & Goetz purchased the building, though it now sits vacant.

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



Remove metal facade



3. 219-225 S LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD

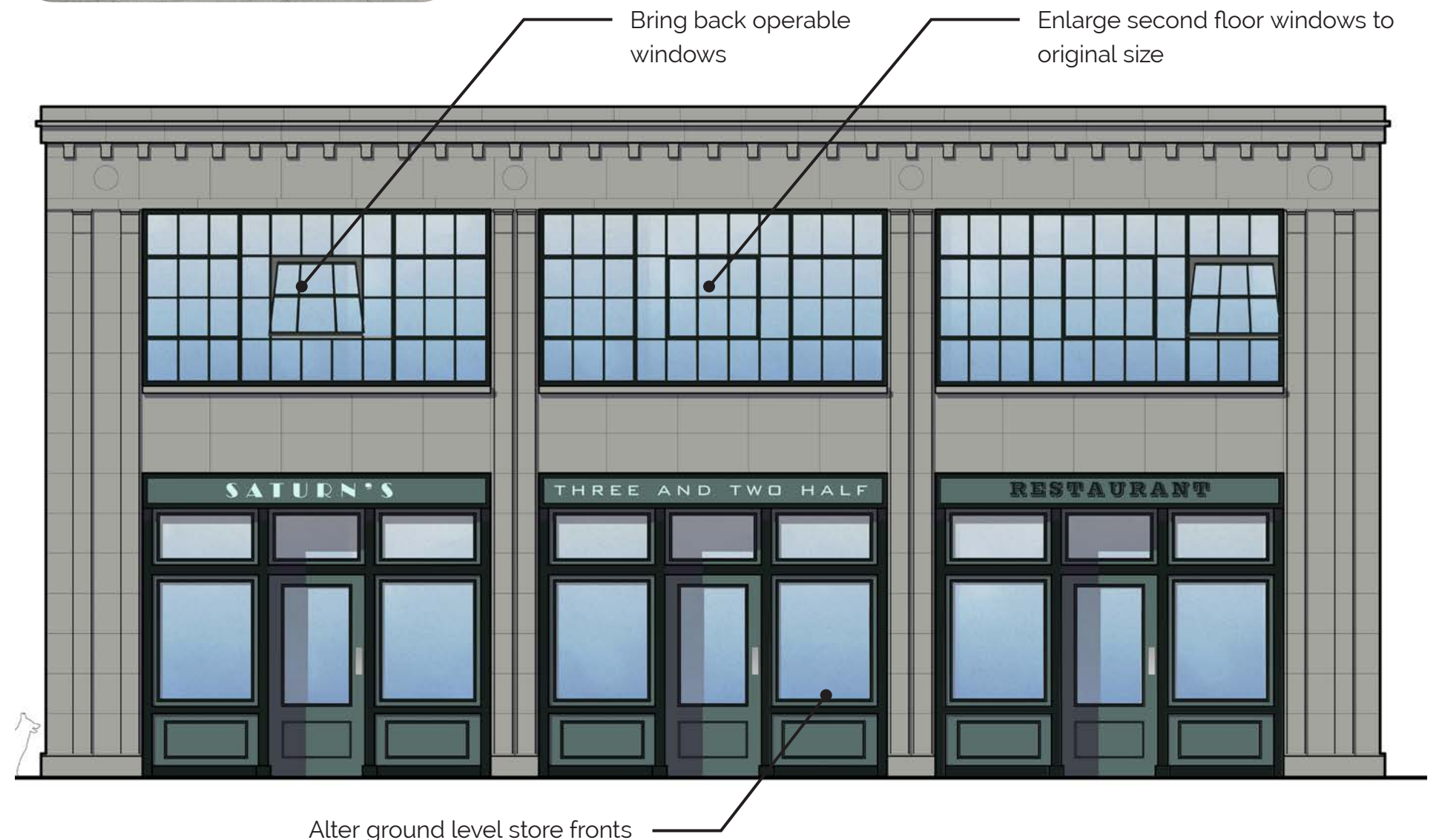
Built around 1927, the building was occupied by the Richard R. Kuehn Company auto dealer, one of many auto dealerships that would reside there. In 1932, the building was briefly used as a temporary post office while the new post office and federal building was being constructed. In 1991, the building became headquarters for Herman & Goetz Inc, though the building now sits vacant. .

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



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.



Restore original bronze windows

Clean and point original brick

Reconstruct cornice to appropriate proportions



A 2-store front wide single business on the main level

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 and third floors and possible use of the roof
- 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 sunroom 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

Remove 1960s metal facade and awning

Restore original stone facade

Existing Dainty Maid Food Hall

Reintroduce store front commercial spaces

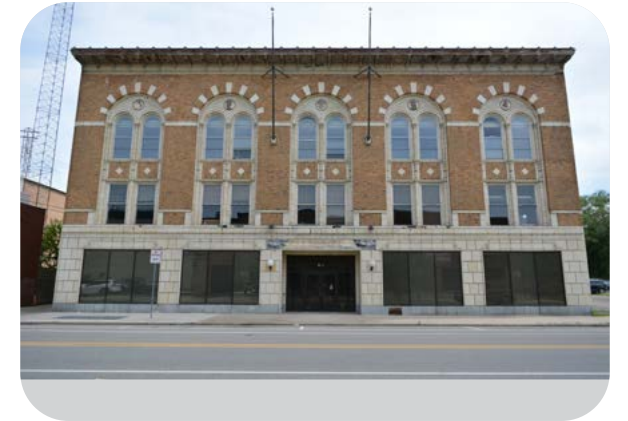


7. 316 W JEFFERSON BOULEVARD

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





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 plethora of businesses, the most notable being the Whitmer-McNease Music Company.



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

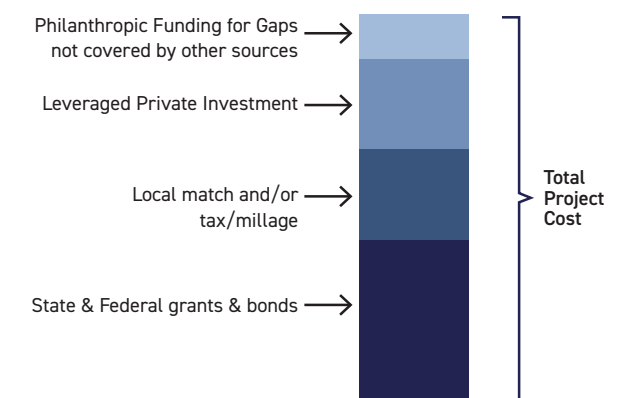
Philanthropic Funding Sources

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.

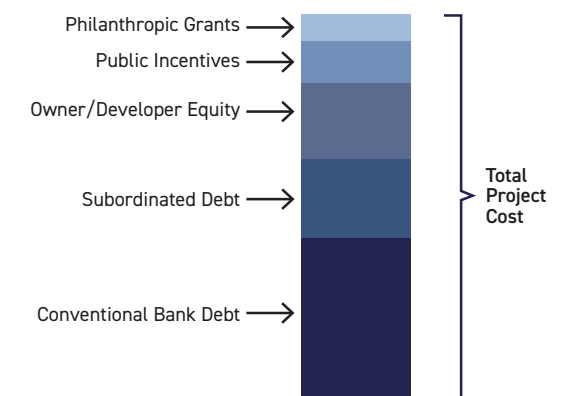
How will projects be implemented?

- 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

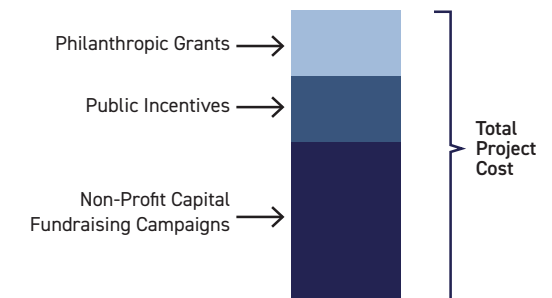
Example Funding Stack for a Public Project



Example Funding Stack for a Private Project



Example Funding Stack for a Non-Profit Project



Downtown Tomorrow

TODAY

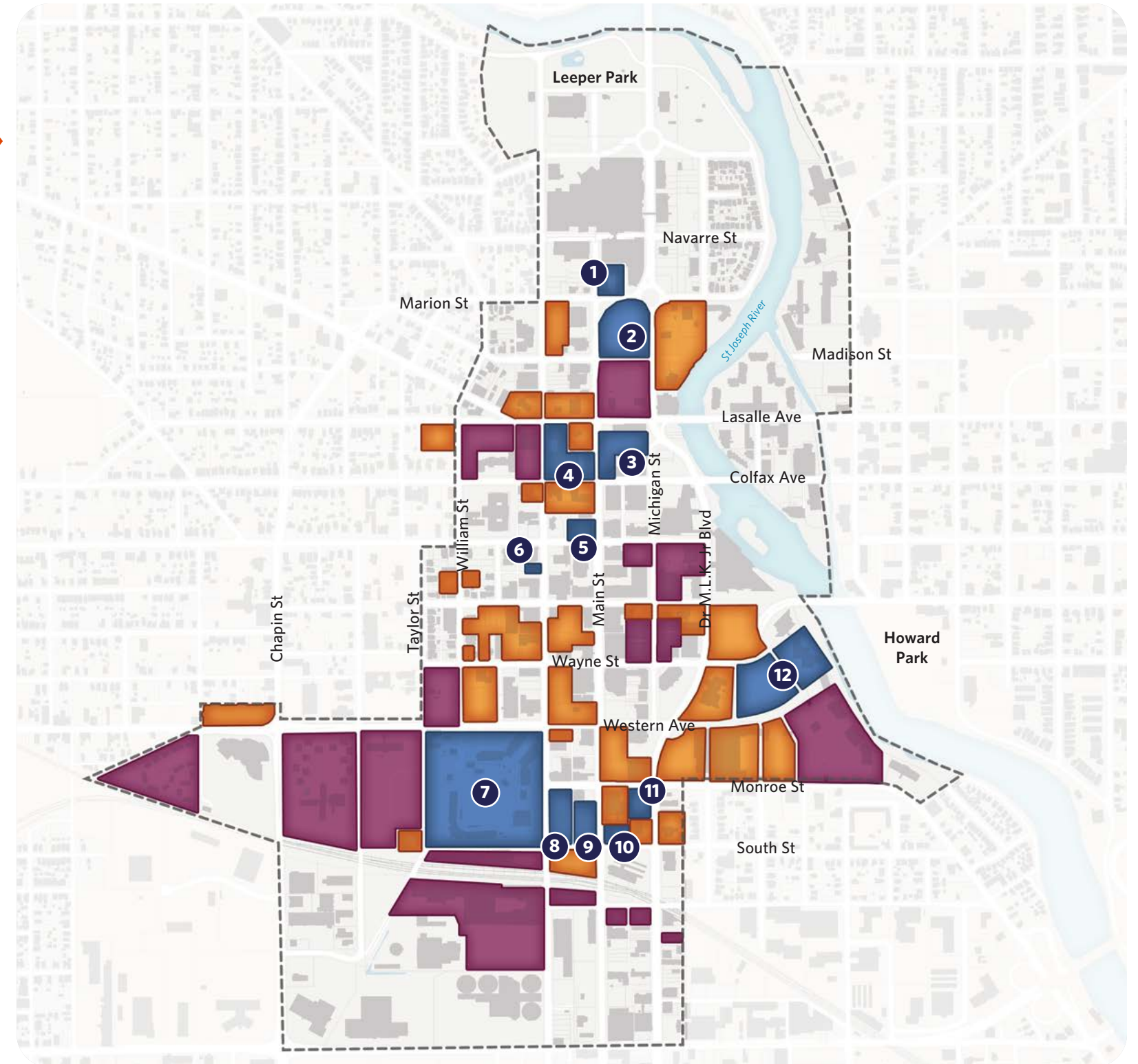
Established Program
Will not change substantially

2045

Flexible Program
Could have significant adjustment



- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 MarMain | 7 Four Winds Fields |
| 2 Madison Lifestyle District (North Block) | 8 Stadium Flats |
| 3 Morris Development Residential | 9 Diamond View |
| 4 Development in Process Phase 1 | 10 SoMa Lofts |
| 5 Liberty Tower Phase IV | 11 Monreaux |
| 6 Lafayette Building | 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		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	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	First 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)		■	■

FOCUS AREA 1: THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN



Action		Lead Responsibility	Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	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 and additions along MLK and Jefferson Blvds.	■	City of South Bend		■	■
1.52	Signature Downtown Riverfront Park — Creation of a downtown riverfront 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		■	■

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FOCUS AREA 2: INNOVATION & INSTITUTIONAL CATALYSTS



Action		Lead Responsibility		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	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		■	Ancora Development University of Notre Dame	■		
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		■	Ancora Development University of Notre Dame, Additional Tech business partners		■	■
2.13	Transformation of Lafayette Street into a Shared-Use Street — narrow existing pavement, widen sidewalks, utilize pavers & street plantings to improve the pedestrian quality of Lafayette	■		City of South Bend	■		
2.2	Beacon Health						
2.21	Hospital Expansion — \$230 million expansion for additional hospital bends 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				■	■	

FOCUS AREA 2: INNOVATION & INSTITUTIONAL CATALYSTS



Action		Lead Responsibility		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	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		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	10+ Years
3.1	Riverfront West						
3.11	High-density Rental Developments — Development of multi-family buildings along the riverfront		■	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		■	

FOCUS AREA 4: PUBLIC REALM



Action		Lead Responsibility		Potential Partners	Timeline		
		City	Partner		1-5 Years	5-10 Years	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 lands to have a complete connected network	■		City of South Bend	■	■	■
4.5	Transit — Increase frequency of key routes to 15 minutes or less	■	■	City of South Bend, Transpo, Amtrak	■		

URBAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES