

DESIGN  
DOWNTOWN  
STL

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DOWNTOWN  
STL

\* Adopted by the City of St. Louis Planning Commission as a Neighborhood Plan and an element of the Comprehensive Plan on December 2, 2020

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DESIGN  
DOWNTOWN  
**STL**

# FORWARD

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At the dawn of the new millennium, the civic and business leadership of St. Louis created a plan called **Downtown Now!** to reignite Downtown's vibrancy and residential population. The plan was a great success with the residential population increasing by 200 percent over the following two decades, and the redevelopment of assets like Washington Avenue, the Central Library, the Old Post Office, and the new park around the Gateway Arch connecting Downtown to the region's most famous asset.

Today, 20 years after the completion of **Downtown Now!**, Downtown St. Louis is ripe for a renewed vision and framework for its next chapter. In the words of the iconic Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), "When we deal with cities, we are dealing with life at its most complex and intense." That complexity and intensity are most visible in the heart of every city—its Downtown. A plan informed by the dreams and experiences of the St. Louis community can lead us to a future that honors our rich history and catalyzes innovation, business attraction, and a diverse residential population.



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That plan is **Design Downtown STL**. It was developed over the past year through a process led by a diverse, 30-member Advisory Committee that helped guide the plan based on the feedback of people throughout our community who attended in-person and online open houses, participated in focus groups and interviews, responded to a community survey or provided comments on our interactive online map, and who attended pop-up events across St. Louis. This plan represents their hopes, dreams, and vision. It also reflects their input and hard work.

Downtown St. Louis has experienced an incredible streak of momentum recently, including a Stanley Cup Championship; the 2020 NHL All-Star Game; the announcement of a new MLS franchise with a stadium under construction; the expansion of America's Center; and the opening of new attractions like the St. Louis Wheel and Aquarium, Ballpark Village Phase II, and the redeveloped museum at the Gateway Arch. Yet, like many cities across the globe, Downtown St. Louis is facing unforeseen challenges. Due to the concentration of sports, entertainment and hospitality venues, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted Downtown. The civil unrest that erupted in the St. Louis region following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, was concentrated in Downtown. This compounded the economic impact of the pandemic for Downtown residents and businesses.

St. Louis has faced and overcome other challenging times throughout our history. St. Louisans are fiercely loyal, gritty, and resilient; we will come back stronger. Design Downtown STL will set the stage for economic recovery, business and residential growth.

We are grateful to the St. Louis community, especially our Downtown residents and businesses, for their time, vision, and fortitude throughout the planning process. This plan aligns and empowers Downtown residents and businesses with a unified vision for change for our common future. We are proud to present to you Design Downtown STL.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This plan was the culmination of collaboration over the past year and would not have been possible without the **thousands of local voices that helped shape this plan** – those of Downtown neighbors, employees, businesses, artists, community organizations, institutions, students, visitors, activists, City staff and elected leaders, among others. Thank you to everyone who contributed to ***Design Downtown STL*** by taking a survey, participating in an interview, sharing your vision for the future at an open house, attending a public meeting, or otherwise giving your time and ideas. The plan—and Downtown itself—are richer for your commitment to ***Design Downtown STL***.

A special thanks to the ***Design Downtown STL Advisory Committee*** who committed time, knowledge, and energy throughout the process to help develop this comprehensive plan for Downtown's future.

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Chapter 01:  
INTRODUCTION

# 01



# INTRODUCTION

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Part 02

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## OVERVIEW

The ***Design Downtown STL Master Plan*** is the result of a year-long collaborative process to create a vision for the future of Downtown St. Louis. The planning process engaged people from all backgrounds in a conversation about the issues, opportunities, and potential of Downtown. Perspectives shared by local residents, business owners, community advocates, and elected officials about the future of Downtown were rich and often detailed, reflecting Downtown's importance as the economic, social, and cultural heart of the Region. The result is a roadmap for the next 10 years that will guide implementation of the community's vision for Downtown.







Future MLS Stadium

City Museum

Downtown Innovation District

on Station

Soldiers Memorial

Enterprise Center

America's Center

Lumiere Place Casino



City Hall

Citygarden / Gateway Mall

Old Courthouse



AMTRAK



Busch Stadium



Nestle Purina Campus

Gateway Arch National Park



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\$2.2 billion of private investment has been invested Downtown in recent years

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**Design Downtown STL** comes at a critical time, marked by both opportunities and challenges for Downtown. On one hand, since the end of the Great Recession, Downtown has real momentum, powered by a mix of public and private investments recently completed, planned, or under construction with a value of more than \$2.2 billion. Downtown’s residential population has nearly doubled in the past decade, adding about 5,000 new residents and becoming even more diverse, more educated, and younger, with growth in the 25-34 year old demographic. Downtown continues its role as the City’s most important economic anchor, hosting about a quarter of all private sector employment in the City.

However, the potential of Downtown’s strengths is hindered by significant challenges. Compared to peer cities, Downtown has a less concentrated resident and daytime population and experienced weak job growth compared to peer cities in the post-recession period. This lack of density in the daytime and evening population makes it difficult to fully support the range and types of retail and restaurants normally associated with active downtowns. Critically, this lack of street activity exacerbates existing concerns around crime and safety in Downtown. This plays into long-standing regional perceptions about Downtown that are not in sync with what many newcomers and advocates see - a place rich in history with unique amenities that

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rivals other major cities across the country. Vibrancy is the lifeblood of successful downtowns, and in St. Louis, Downtown improvements must strive to “connect the dots” with new uses and programming that reinforces recent investments, supports local businesses and residents, and inspires the necessary street life so important in creating a safe and welcoming environment.

The last plan for Downtown - **Downtown Now** - was completed over 20 years ago. New strategies are needed to meet long-standing and emerging opportunities and challenges. Nothing has made this more clear than the events of Spring 2020. Toward the end of this planning process, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all aspects of daily life, causing businesses to shut down, unemployment to skyrocket, and tragic loss of life, disproportionately affecting communities of color. Amidst the ongoing public health and economic crises caused by the pandemic, communities across the country - gripped by immeasurable grief and rage - mobilized in protest of the police brutality and systemic racism that resulted in the murders of George Floyd in Minneapolis, among many other Black lives stolen in recent weeks and months. Downtown has been the backdrop to many of these uprisings and has witnessed the powerful, peaceful, and community building actions of many in the name of racial justice.



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In that same timespan, Downtown has also weathered some destruction similar to what other cities have experienced.

As with other downtowns across the country, the physical realm, social network, and economy of Downtown St. Louis have undergone seismic shifts in mere months. With extremely low demand in the hospitality industry, hotels, stadiums and convention-related venues are closed or are operating at very low occupancy. Office workers stopped coming to the office, significantly altering the daytime population that supports local stores, coffee shops and lunch spots. Many small and local businesses who were grappling with how to reopen are now faced with rebuilding, intensifying the struggle to recover. At the time of writing this document, the pandemic continues to necessitate social distancing for some time to come. Downtown will need to work deliberately in the immediate stages of recovery to support and grow businesses and welcome back residents, workers, and visitors. *Design Downtown STL* includes specific actions to help in the COVID-19 short-term recovery but also puts forward strategies that serve to connect the recovery to our collective vision for Downtown. Despite the immediate and unforeseen challenges that have altered this process, it has never been more important to plan, coordinate resources and work together for a more resilient, just, and inclusive Downtown.

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Realizing the full potential of Downtown requires the continued collaboration that helped to build this vision. Civic economic development organizations are critical to Downtown's success, but they cannot drive implementation of this plan without the many individuals, organizations, stakeholders, and City leaders working as partners to take action. This is the playbook that helped St. Louis to achieve so much following the Downtown Now plan. Thanks to that effort and the partnerships formed to make it happen, Downtown now has: an entertainment district along Washington Avenue; reused historic buildings that previously were vacant eyesores; transformed Gateway Arch Grounds; a redeveloped Central Library that has received global architectural awards; redevelopment of the Old Post Office and creation of the Old Post Office Plaza; a new Busch Stadium; Citygarden; the Schnucks Culinaria grocery store; double the number of residents, and much more. St. Louis has always proven it can take on the big idea. Responding to today's extreme economic and health-related challenges, stepping up to meet the calls for a just and equitable Downtown community, keeping an eye on the big picture, and establishing the foundation for continued momentum are at the heart of this plan, *Design Downtown STL*.

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The last planning effort focused on Downtown was over 20 years ago.

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## BUILDING EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY IN DOWNTOWN

The COVID-19 pandemic has had catastrophic impacts, but it is a temporary phenomenon. The racial injustices that galvanized the protests against systemic racism are, in contrast, both historic and ongoing. Unintentional and intentional racial bias and persistent racial gaps in employment, income, education, and other opportunities too often limit the ability of African Americans and other people of color to thrive in to our City and region.

These gross discrepancies undermine our values of equity and justice, they hold families back generation after generation, and they also weaken our economy. In St. Louis, the racial wage gap is dramatic. According to the **Equitable Economic Development Framework** for St. Louis, Black/African Americans working in the City earn just 48% of what their White counterparts earn. The costs of inequity will only grow without intentional

action. Falling wages, decreased workforce skill, and reduced purchasing power to support local businesses represent just a few indicators that will only grow without intentional action.

Conventional economic recovery and growth is not sufficient to solve these persistent racial and ethnic inequities in our community. Toward this necessary end, *Design Downtown STL* recommends a series of strategies to simultaneously promote growth, equity of opportunity, and a Downtown that is safe and welcoming for all. These recommendations reflect what we heard from thousands of citizens and stakeholders who participated in *Design Downtown STL's* extensive engagement process.

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***Design Downtown STL*** envisions a Downtown where all people and communities come together and thrive – regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, language, income, ability and other identity markers. This collaborative planning effort has sought out new and better solutions to ensure that ALL St. Louisans have the opportunity to participate and benefit as Downtown and its residential and business communities grow stronger. This work is informed by, and aspires to complement, the ongoing work community groups and networks are already doing to champion diversity, equity and inclusion across the City and region.

The recommendations to set Downtown on the path of equity-driven growth are integrated throughout the strategy sets presented in each of the plan's five goal areas. Specifically, **Design Downtown STL** recommends

- » *A focus on inclusive entrepreneurship with an emphasis on expanding the range and type of small businesses Downtown and addressing the barriers that often prevent people of color from starting a business;*
- » *Expanding the types of economic activities in Downtown to provide opportunities for a broader set of St. Louisans;*
- » *Fostering racially and ethnically diverse business ownership through mentorship and partnerships that are working tirelessly in this area;*
- » *Supporting positive and effective youth development initiatives that provide opportunities for young people to explore their interests, build skills, develop their abilities, and learn through partnerships with Downtown businesses and Downtown STL, Inc.;*
- » *Expanding access to safe and efficient transportation and ensuring that streets are designed to safely encourage bicycling and walking;*
- » *Ensuring that Downtown remains an affordable place to call home by expanding housing types and price points for all income levels;*



- » Supporting and producing an expanded set of cultural and recreational events that attract diverse audiences and for existing events, integrating more inclusive programming and adopting more intentional marketing efforts designed to attract more communities of color;

Increasing diversity in civic governance by creating an Implementation Task Force with increased representation from African Americans and other people of color. The Task Force would guide implementation decisions and activities for *Design Downtown STL* and continue the work of bringing all voices into the decision-making process through creative public engagement;

These are important and necessary recommendations, but we recognize that Downtown alone cannot overcome the legacy of racism and resulting inequities. By design, the *Design Downtown STL* process focused rigorously on improving Downtown St. Louis, though the trends and patterns of development – housing, transportation, education, health and business – that create the conditions for people to flourish (or not) play out across a much broader geographic area.

Retooling Downtown with a commitment to racial and economic justice requires regional thinking, solutions and collaborative action. The strategies in this document reinforce those in the **Forward Through Ferguson** plan as well as the **Equitable Economic Development Framework for St. Louis** completed in 2020. There is much work to be done. The intent is for *Design Downtown STL* to reinforce the unified calls for a more equitable City and to take action to implement strategies that create a diverse, inclusive and vibrant Downtown.

## “Baseball is the one thing that unites the region and it happens in Downtown”

### STUDY AREA

The **Design Downtown STL** study area encompasses a 2.2 square mile area bordered by Cole St. to the north, Chouteau Ave. to the south, the Mississippi River to the east and Jefferson Ave. to the west. Downtown encompasses the historic center of St. Louis, as a City that was built along the mighty Mississippi River and served as the gateway to the west.

The study area boundaries for *Design Downtown STL* are different than those of the last adopted plan - Downtown Now in 1999. That plan included Downtown and Downtown West but also two neighborhoods to the north. These neighborhood areas north of Cole Street are now the subject of the Project Connect initiative. For this reason, *Design Downtown STL* is focused solely on Downtown and Downtown West.

The study area is home to numerous major employers and Fortune 500 companies, as well as a number of major attractions that bring visitors from throughout the region and nation to Downtown. The Gateway Arch Park, one of the most iconic national monuments in the nation, recently reopened with a \$400 million renovation to reconnect the park to Downtown. St. Louisans have long gathered Downtown for sports, and

for many, Cardinals games and the St. Louis Blues are a key part of the Downtown experience - a legacy that will expand with the new MLS Soccer Stadium. Unique attractions such as City Museum and the newly opened St. Louis Aquarium add to the draw of Downtown, while unique neighborhoods such as the Garment District/Washington Avenue, Laclede’s Landing, the Cupples District, and Downtown West offer a variety of experiences that draw on Downtown’s history.

Downtown’s potential also draws from its immediate surroundings including nearby neighborhoods and the existing and proposed transit and bicycle connections that expand Downtown’s geography. This includes the proposed Brickline Greenway that will connect Forest Park to the Gateway Arch, and Tower Grove Park to Fairgrounds Park and runs through the heart of Downtown. In addition, several major economic hubs, institutions, and destinations sit within a 1-2 mile radius of Downtown including the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency headquarters (NGA Headquarters) just to the north. For this reason, *Design Downtown STL* collected and analyzed data beyond the traditional boundaries to more effectively place Downtown in context.



Figure 1: Study Area



### STUDY AREA

- BOUNDARY
- METRO LINE
- HYDROLOGY
- PARKS/OPEN SPACE
- RAIL CORRIDOR

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 MILES

## WHY PLAN AND WHY NOW?

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Downtown begins the new decade with momentum, with the opportunity to build on recent investments and growth to create a Downtown that welcomes everyone. Downtown also faces long-standing challenges that are thrown into stark relief from the COVID-19 crisis and protests for racial justice.

Downtown remains the economic, cultural, and social heart of the St. Louis region, and has tremendous room to grow into a vibrant, walkable urban neighborhood. As St. Louis works to realize this vision, a coordinated and sustained effort is needed to align priorities with actions in order to accomplish the goals of this Downtown plan.

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There are two prior plans for the Downtown area which provide a foundation for the **Design Downtown STL** planning effort. The **1999 Downtown Now Plan** was officially adopted by the City of St. Louis and remains the official neighborhood plan for Downtown. A 10 year update - **Downtown Next** - was completed but not formally adopted by the City. *Design Downtown STL* creates an opportunity to build on the accomplishments of these efforts and develop updated strategies that reflect Downtown's current challenges and opportunities. The planning process grappled with the key issues and opportunities facing Downtown, determined a vision for the future, and developed a set of goals, strategies, and action steps for moving forward.

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Over the next 10 years, the ***Design Downtown STL Master Plan*** will help partners to:

- Align prior plans with new or ongoing efforts and investments in Downtown,
- Prioritize and make decisions about how to allocate organizational resources,
- Build consensus among neighbors, neighborhoods, and Downtown stakeholders,
- Garner local and regional political support for key Downtown initiatives,
- Attract and align continued private and public investment,
- Identify additional opportunities to raise funds for implementation, and
- Empower residents and partner organizations with a unified vision for change

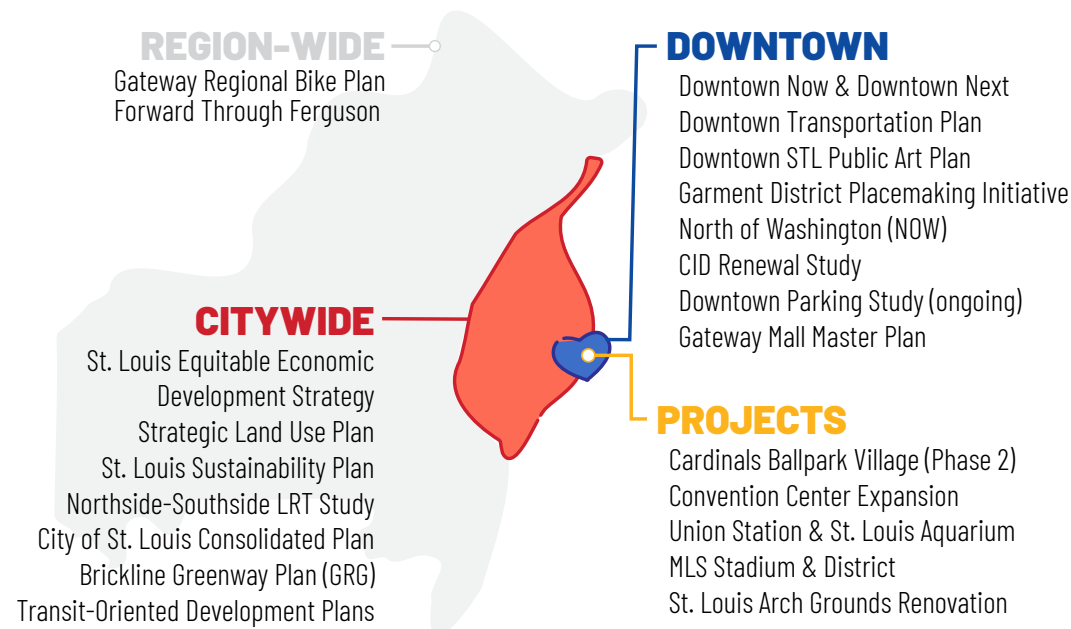
While this document contains many specific ideas, things can and will continue to change in real time, as they have while this plan was in progress. Going forward, it is critical to have a common vision, developed by the community and adopted for Downtown, to help evaluate new projects and guide change so it is compatible with what Downtown stakeholders want for its future. As a living document, some of the specifics in the plan may shift, but an effective plan will establish the vision and core ideas that reflect the values of the community over time.

# RELATE TO PREVIOUS PLANS AND ONGOING INITIATIVES?

Downtown St. Louis has been the subject of many plans over the past few decades. As previously mentioned, the Downtown Now and Downtown Next plans provided a grounding for historic challenges, opportunities, and drivers for the Downtown area as a whole.

Many of the districts and destinations that make up Downtown have been the subject of their own planning

efforts. One critical role of the **Design Downtown STL** plan is to bring together disparate plans under one umbrella to create a comprehensive strategy that makes Downtown greater than the sum of its parts. The **Design Downtown STL** planning process reviewed and analyzed preceding plans at many scales to understand where pre-established priorities or more detailed proposals could fit into the larger vision.



Through the review of existing plans, consistent themes and ideas surfaced again and again:

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## MAKE DOWNTOWN A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE FOR MORE PEOPLE

There is broad agreement that Downtown St. Louis needs more residents. Most plans are aligned that this growth should be inclusive, providing housing options and supportive services to families of different sizes and means. Residential growth is a central recommendation in the **Downtown Now (1999) Plan**, which reinforces the need to bring a critical mass of residents to four defined focus areas in Downtown. **Downtown Next (2010) Plan** builds on this by specifying a strategy to add 5,000 residential units Downtown in a range of housing types. The **Downtown Transportation Plan (2018)** considers transportation access and mobility

as critical to achieving equity and quality of life goals for people living or working Downtown. Even the **CoSTL Sustainability Plan (2013)** includes recommendations to create structures to improve access to affordable housing and encourage communities to improve their own neighborhood. At a city-wide scale, **2020 Vision: An Equitable Economic Development Framework for St. Louis (2020)**, seeks to envision St. Louis as the place that grows, both in population and jobs, and ultimately provides opportunities for all St. Louisians in the region.





## MARKET THE DOWNTOWN AREA AS AN EVOLVING EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Almost every plan reviewed acknowledges the opportunity for economic growth in Downtown by bringing new businesses in and growing the base of employees. The Downtown STL, Inc. **Garment District Placemaking Initiative (2019)** presents concepts to fill vacant commercial spaces and foster development of high-tech manufacturing and textile innovation. The **Downtown Now (1999)** plan recommends increasing employment in Downtown by leveraging it as a regional tech center. Though what is considered “high-tech” may have changed, there has long been agreement that St. Louis should be a leader in innovation and home to a landscape of creative businesses. **2020 Vision: An Equitable Economic Development Framework for St. Louis (2020)** recommends bringing in opportunities that are place-based, focused on entry-level and middle-wage jobs, which can expand entrepreneurship opportunities to all communities, especially those that have been marginalized in the past.



## ENSURE ST. LOUIS' ART AND CULTURE ARE VISIBLE AND INTEGRATED INTO PHYSICAL SPACES

**Downtown STL Public Art Plan (2018)** asserts that public art is a tool to further economic development because it can support recent investment and spur continued revitalization in the Downtown area. **The Gateway Mall Plan (2009)** and Downtown Art Plan identify strategies to enhance streets and crossings at key locations through creative lighting and public art. Kiener Plaza is identified as an opportunity for outdoor performances, and the **Sustainability Plan** encourages creation of a variety of cultural events and awareness programs that celebrate diversity in the City of St. Louis, an idea shared universally in plans that address the need for programming or public space. All plans also advocate for the preservation of historic buildings contributing to the character of Downtown, but many also acknowledge the need to address physical and financial barriers that exist for new tenants (residential and commercial) to occupy in older structures.





## OPEN SPACES SHOULD BE PLENTIFUL AND ACTIVE

The **Downtown Art Plan, Garment District Placemaking Initiative**, and the **Gateway Mall Plan (2009)** advocate for more public spaces of all sizes in Downtown. Recommendations range from better landscaping and quality edge conditions along existing destinations, to parklets and pocket parks, all the way up to activation along the Mississippi Riverfront and the (now complete) catalytic reconstruction of the Gateway Arch grounds. A central focus of many plans - not only in the **Gateway Mall Plan** - were improvements to the Gateway Mall, the "heart" of the region. The value of this linear greenspace and its need for more purposeful design and activation was a repeated theme. So too was the opportunity to integrate space for non-motorized modes and safer crossing conditions for people traversing this central corridor.



## INCREASE VIBRANCY OF STREETS THROUGH DESIGN AND LANDSCAPING

The **Downtown Transportation Plan (2018)** is the most recently adopted plan for Downtown, and presents a proposed network of transportation projects for all streets in Downtown to build a connected network for all modes. **Downtown Transportation Plan (2018)** views transportation as, "impacting every person, every day," and recommends transportation improvements to build a vibrant community for both residential and business communities alike. **CoSTL Sustainability Plan (2013)** proposes transit-oriented development around existing MetroLink stations and major bus nodes, and the expansion of cycling amenities and infrastructure which broadly align with the recommendations in the Transportation Plan.

There are also specific projects planned for Downtown that **Design Downtown STL** has integrated into the plan's strategies. These include active development projects in Downtown West around Jefferson Avenue, Laclede's Landing and for specific vacant buildings and parcels. A few of the major initiatives are summarized below:

TOP:  
Brickline Greenway  
Source:  
Great Rivers Greenway



BOTTOM:  
North-South Metrolink  
Source:  
northsidesouthsidestl.com

### **Brickline Greenway**

The Master Plan for the Brickline Greenway (formerly Chouteau Greenway) aims to connect Forest Park to the Gateway Arch, north to Fairground Park and south to Tower Grove Park. One of the first segments of the Brickline Greenway is proposed to run along Market Street in Downtown with connections to the north toward Fairground Park. In addition to Great Rivers Greenway, the project is led by a Steering Committee and Working Groups made up of residents, technical experts, City representatives and community leaders. The greenway connects people to the region's greenway network and other transportation options—it will become a part of St. Louisans' everyday experience, helping them reach their schools, workplaces, and many destinations throughout the City (GRG).

### **Northside-Southside Light Rail Transit (LRT) Study**

An 18-month project led by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG), the Northside-Southside Study analyzed a proposed light rail (LRT) investment in the corridor connecting Goodfellow and I-70 on the Northside of St. Louis to Bayless and I-55 on the Southside. The proposed LRT would operate in dedicated lanes in the middle of the street between Grand Boulevard on the Northside, along 9th and 10th Streets in Downtown, to Chippewa Street on the Southside. Two alignment options through the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) West Campus and North St. Louis area will be carried forward for additional analysis in later project phases: Cass Avenue (the preferred alternative and the northern boundary of the *Design Downtown STL* Plan Study Area) and North Florissant Avenue. Riders can transfer to the Red and Blue Lines along 9th and 10th Streets Downtown and at the Civic Center station. EWG conducts corridor-level transportation planning, an important part of the long-range transportation planning process.



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### **MLS Stadium**

St. Louis CITY SC recently announced plans to expand the footprint of the proposed stadium site to approximately 30 acres, almost all currently undeveloped, which will include the area north of Market Street between 20th and 22nd Streets. The seating capacity of the open-air stadium is 22,500 and will have the ability to expand to 25,000 seats. The main stadium entry will be less than 250 feet from Union Station and includes an open-air venue to be used for concerts, high school and collegiate sporting events, tournaments, soccer camps, family shows, and more. The project is envisioned to bring not only a stadium to Downtown West, but a multi-faceted development project that will transform the area into an urban activity hub open year-round and easily accessible via walking, bicycling and transit.



### **Ballpark Village - Phase 2**

The \$260 million second phase of the Ballpark Village development - "a world-class, mixed-use neighborhood next to Busch Stadium" - broke ground in 2017 and completes a full build-out of Clark Street. The 700,000 square foot project includes a Live! by Loews hotel (216 guest rooms and 17,000 square feet of meeting space; now open), One Cardinal Way (29-story high-rise luxury residential tower; complete and opening August 2020 for occupancy), a three-story retail pavilion that is anchored by Onelife Fitness, and a 10 story Class-A office building (anchored by PriceWaterhouseCoopers PWC). The office building will be the first Class-A office building in Downtown in nearly thirty years. A portion of the public subsidies on the project is contingent on the development's tenants creating net new jobs for the City. The second phase of Ballpark Village stands to create 1,500 construction jobs, more than 1,000 permanent new jobs and bring the team's total

*TOP:  
Ballpark Village Phase II  
Source:  
stlballparkvillage.com*

*BOTTOM:  
Proposed MLS Stadium  
Source:  
MLS4THELOU*



**Chapter 01:**  
**INTRODUCTION**

investment in new construction in Downtown to well over \$750 million since 2005.

**Union Station / Aquarium**

The St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station is the last major element in the most recent \$187 million transformation of the historic former train station. About \$20 million is covered by a tax-increment financing agreement and two preexisting special taxing districts that collect



*LEFT:*  
*STL Aquarium & Wheel*  
*Source:*  
*STL Magazine*

*RIGHT:*  
*Convention Center Expansion & Plaza*  
*Source:*  
*St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission*

a 1% tax on sales at Union Station. The rest of the development was privately funded. Now open to the public, the St. Louis Aquarium offers visitors 1.3 million gallons of tank space and is home to more than 13,000 animals representing 257 species. Other attractions at Union Station include a mirror maze, mini-golf, Ferris wheel, new restaurants, and more family-friendly activities.

**Downtown Innovation District**

The rehabilitation of the Post-Dispatch building into Square’s new headquarters is the first major investment in an innovation district focused in Downtown north of Washington. The Downtown Innovation District’s vision is to accelerate job creation in St Louis by recruiting and retaining diverse talent both inside the region and beyond. The goals are to attract established companies that have a business interest to be in St Louis, engage startups with follow-on resources once they expand beyond the startup stage and, provide resources for minority and ethnically diverse owned companies.

**St. Louis Convention Center Expansion**

In April of 2019, the St. Louis Board of Alderman voted to fund the AC Next Gen Project, which will add 92,000 square feet of exhibit space, a 65,000-square-foot multi-purpose ballroom and meeting area, a new outdoor pavilion, and 26 new loading docks, among other improvements to America’s Center Convention Complex in Downtown. Bonds were approved to support the project in August 2020.



**Downtown Parking Study**

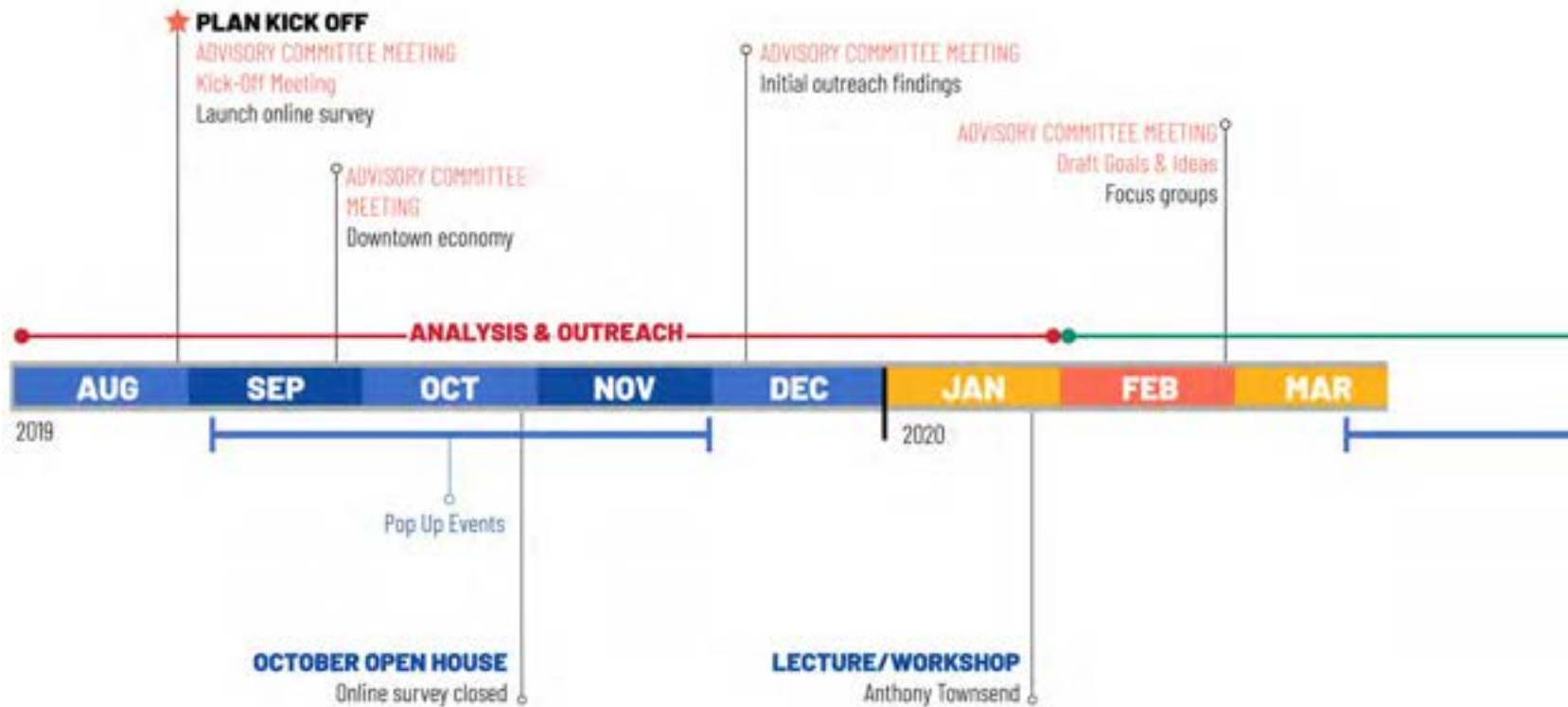
In 2019, the St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC) engaged Nelson Nygaard to complete a Downtown Parking Study for Downtown and Downtown West. In addition to updating the City’s data inventory on appropriately 100-125 lots in Downtown and more than 10,000 parking meters, the study is expected to propose measures that can be undertaken to plan for and manage various parking needs in support of future development. Various developments hinge on the availability of sufficient parking. These developments range from the former AT&T Tower on Chestnut, Jefferson Arms on Tucker, 1010 Market, Chemical Building, Railway Exchange Building, America’s Center Convention Complex, and more. The Study is expected to propose ways to better utilize excess capacity in existing parking facilities, expansion or refurbishment of existing parking facilities, and the potential construction of new parking facilities.





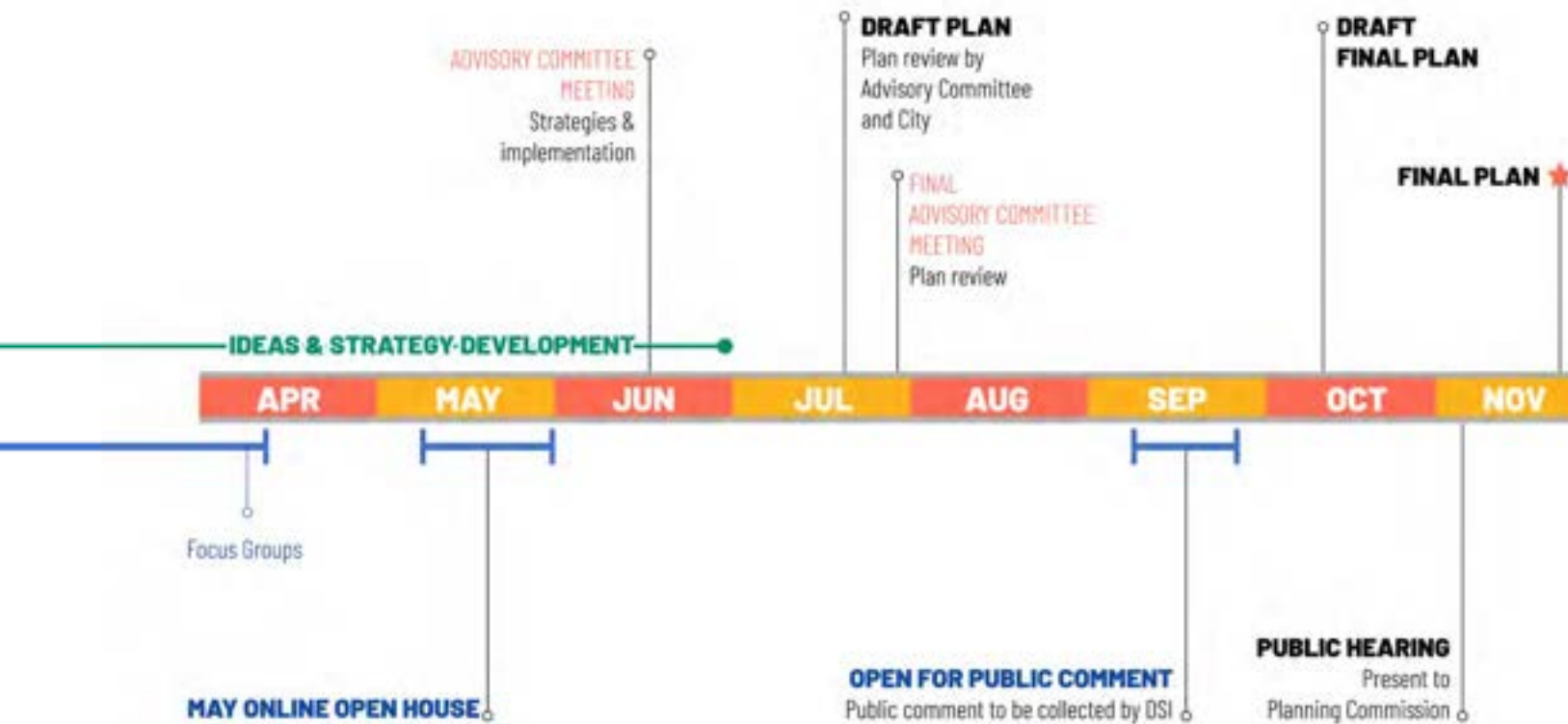


# THE DESIGN DOWNTOWN STL PROCESS



## SCHEDULE

**Design Downtown STL** reflects a year long planning process that began in August 2019 and concluded in the summer of 2020. The planning process involved a three-phase approach of analysis and outreach, ideas and strategy development, and drafting the Plan's vision, goals, and strategies.





Over 2,000 residents and stakeholders participated in the Design Downtown STL process.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The public engagement process was intended to reach a broad spectrum of community members who make Downtown the heart of the St. Louis region. Throughout the course of the planning process, we engaged with residents, workers, visitors, and stakeholders through multiple formats, including open houses, pop-up events, online activities, and one-on-one and small group conversations. The varied approaches to community outreach enabled us to reach many different audiences that reflect the diversity of the Downtown consumer.

**Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups** - The planning team held **96** one-on-one and small group discussions with a mix of residents, business owners, employees, local leaders, non-profits, City representatives, service providers, developers, designers, and advocates. The goal of these conversations was to get a better understanding of the issues and opportunities facing Downtown, and to test recommendations and proposals that emerged from the public outreach process with expert stakeholders working on-the-ground.

**Website** - The planning team created a dedicated website for the planning process - [www.designdowntownstl.com](http://www.designdowntownstl.com) - in order to provide a central hub for information about the Plan and public engagement opportunities. The website hosted meeting information, the collaborative map, the community survey, and was the home for the second open house which was conducted entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.







**130+**

October 2019 Open House Attendees



**1,151**

Community Survey Responses



**96**

Stakeholder Interviews & Focus Groups



**520 / 8**

Attendees Pop-Up Events\*

\*Includes "Futurist" Lecture and Workshop



**1,065**

Collaborative Map Comments



**604**

May 2020 Online Open House Participants



**Community Survey** - The survey received **1,151 responses** from residents, workers, and community members located throughout the greater St. Louis region. The survey, which was launched during the first phase of the planning process, sought to better understand the experiences and opinions of residents, workers, and visitors to Downtown. In total, 48% of which were respondents who said they come downtown occasionally, 32% were respondents who work downtown, and 10% of respondents, respectively, were residents, and residents who also work Downtown.

**Collaborative Map** - The planning team created a collaborative map that was available both online and as an oversized 6'x6' print at the first public open house hosted at Less Annoying CRM's offices in October 2019. Participants were asked to add ideas and comments to the map, creating a network of ideas overlaid over the Downtown study area. In total, the collaborative map received **1,065 comments**.



Take this version of the survey if you...  
**Live in Downtown STL** (This will be removed if you do not live in the study area.)

7. Who do you decide to live in this area? (Check all that apply)

8. What do you LOVE BEST about living here? (Select up to 5)

9. What do you DISLIKE most about living Downtown? (Select up to 5)

10. Where do you shop for your day-to-day (groceries, toiletries, housewares, etc.) items? (Select the 3 places you shop most frequently)

11. How frequently do you eat lunch at dinner and/or breakfast at get take-out from a Downtown business?

12. Where do you go for dinner, drinks or a night out? (Select the 3 places you visit most frequently)

13. Where do you go for dinner, drinks or a night out in Downtown ST. Louis? (Select the 3 places you visit most frequently)

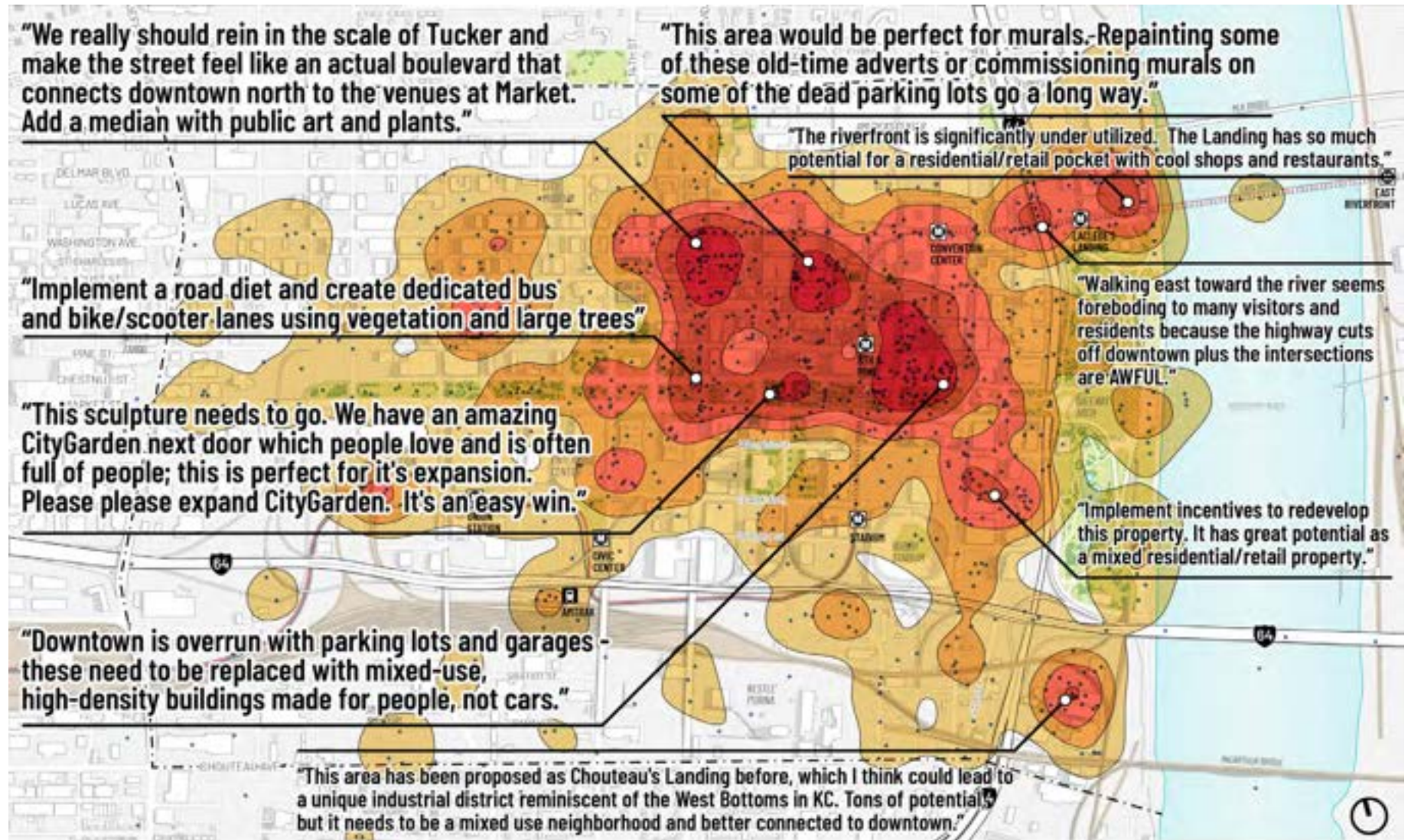
14. How satisfied are you with your experience living in Downtown ST. Louis?

15. How satisfied are you with your experience living in Downtown ST. Louis? (Why?)

SEE BACK FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS



Figure 2: Online Collaborative Map and Comments



**COLLABORATIVE MAP**

- COMMENT
- CONCENTRATION OF COMMENTS
- HIGHER
- LOWER





**October 2019 Open House** - The first open house was hosted at the office of Less Annoying CRM in October, with more than **130 attendees** participating. The open house included a series of interactive exhibits that invited the public to learn about the planning process, review the data and analysis, and share their ideas, priorities, and vision for the future of Downtown St. Louis.

**“Futurist” Lecture and Workshop** - Anthony Townsend, a noted futurist and author of the book *Smart Cities* conducted a public lecture at the Central Library with **95 attendees** from the Downtown community and facilitated a workshop with **40 regional business leaders** at Filament on Washington Avenue. The objective of the workshop and lecture was to help stakeholders think about the future in the context of trends impacting cities across the globe including changing demographics, online retail, autonomous delivery and new technologies.



Promotional material for the “Futurist” lecture.





You should see Downtown St. Louis today! You wouldn't believe how much it's changed.  
**Now it's...**

“ People actually want to live downtown now too, so there are people everywhere! ”

“ Booming! The streets are packed with people all throughout the day and night. A dog can be spotted on every sidewalk. I feel safe walking alone. ”

“ Much more populated with cultural activities, shopping, museums, and more. People are out all day and night. ”

“ Also, the streets are incredible. They have been paved and the street plates are gone. ”

“ Full of people and thriving businesses. I walked everywhere and even rode my bike without reservation of safety or hitting a pot hole. ”

“ Full of people! Hard to believe but people are out and about nearly 24/7 now! And the shopping options are amazing. ”

“ Walkable, transit-friendly to various multi-functional streetscapes and multi-oriented buildings. ”

“ So much safer, easier to get around, and a much better place to live. There are so many cool places to eat and so much to do. ”

“ Alive, bustling, green and clean! ”





**Pop-Up Meetings** - Staff from Downtown STL, Inc. (DSI) popped up at a series of existing meetings and events to engage the public about the future of Downtown through small group discussions, one-on-one conversations, and short post-card surveys. Pop-ups included several Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) meetings, Biz Dash 5K, Kiener Cocktails (2x), MetroQuest, a holiday shopping event hosted by Anders, and a T-REX happy hour. In total, staff engaged with approximately **385 participants** at these pop-ups.

**Online Open House** - The second open house, originally planned to be held in person in April 2020, was redesigned as an interactive online open house in May 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The online open house was designed to walk participants through the draft vision, goals, key recommendations, with a series of interactive activities to elicit public feedback. The open house also asked participants to rank their top 5 proposed strategies in order to help prioritize action items for implementation. Overall, **604 participants** signed in to participate providing the team with over 1,000 comments and suggestions about the draft strategies.





## HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

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In addition to the ideas and insights shared by the Downtown St. Louis community, ***Design Downtown STL*** is built upon a foundation of data and analysis. The planning team paired the public input with research about existing conditions, trends, and projections for growth and change. Together, the public engagement and the analysis inform a shared vision for the future as well as a set of goals and strategies that will help us work together to make the vision become reality over the next ten years. The remainder of the plan includes four main chapters:



## CHAPTER 02

**Downtown Today** - provides an overview of Downtown's history and present conditions, identifying key findings shaping Downtown's future and/or informing this plan's recommendations for change

## CHAPTER 03

**Vision & Goals** - details the community's shared vision for the future and presents five goals that organize the plan's strategies

## CHAPTER 04

**Strategies** - documents the plan's action-oriented recommendations, addressing a range of topics, including how to realize Downtown's potential as a diverse urban neighborhood, grow Downtown's economy and support local businesses, rethink our streets and improve mobility options, reimagine how we use and design Downtown's public realm, and uncover the arts and cultural life of the City. Each set of strategies includes a summary of the relevant analysis and outreach findings that make the case for why the strategies are critical for Downtown's future.

## CHAPTER 05

**Implementation** - describes how to transition from ideas to action now that the plan is complete

# 02



# DOWNTOWN TODAY

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Part 01

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
DOWNTOWN**

p38

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Part 02

**DOWNTOWN TODAY**

p42







# A BRIEF HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EARLY CITY

St. Louis was first established in Downtown due to its relationship with the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and grew to become a major port and hub of economic activity. Settled by Pierre Laclède Liguest and Auguste Chouteau, St. Louis began as a French settlement, before passing to Spanish control, then was sold to the United States as part of the Louisiana purchase in 1803. Though the Mississippi River continued to drive economic activity, persistent issues with flooding led to the development of flood walls to protect against rising waters. Today, these walls disconnect the City from the very amenity that is responsible for its founding and early growth.

St. Louis played an important role in the fur trade and continued to attract immigrants throughout the 1800s. In 1849, Downtown was decimated by the "Great Fire" which destroyed 430 buildings. As a result, the River District was rebuilt with brick (the "Brick City"), stone and steel instead of wood. Despite the setback, population growth continued apace. In 1876 the current City limits were established separate from St. Louis County's. This makes St. Louis one of the few independent cities in the country, which has brought about calls for City / County consolidation every few decades.

By the 1890s, St. Louis was the 4th largest City in the country and Downtown served as its economic hub. The 1904 World's Fair and Olympic Games were both held in St. Louis which elevated the City to the global stage. This is also when the City was recognized for its music and culture which carried through the 1900s with major contributions to this country's history of jazz and rhythm and blues music.

One of Downtown's primary industries was fashion centered along Washington Avenue, an area that today is still known as the Garment District. The fashion industry of the late 19th and early 20th century helped fuel growth Downtown and spurred the development of many of the historic buildings that have been converted to modern uses such as lofts, offices, and hotels. All of this history is visible today, with numerous historic buildings and twelve different historic districts providing a reminder of Downtown's past.





ABOVE LEFT:  
Waterfront before The Arch and I-70  
- 1933  
Source:  
stltoday.com



ABOVE RIGHT:  
Washington Ave. Street Life - 1906  
Source:  
Missouri Historical Society



BELOW LEFT:  
Ariel View of Courthouse Before  
Gateway Mall Construction  
Source:  
Missouri History Museum



BELOW RIGHT:  
Mill Creek Valley Post Demolition - 1965  
Source:  
Missouri Historical Society

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## A CITY NOT AFRAID TO DO BIG THINGS

St. Louis has never been afraid to do big things to spur revitalization, growth, and development. In 1923, in an effort to modernize the historic core, voters approved a bond to widen some streets and build new government buildings. This meant literally chopping off the frontage of some structures. The legacy today are some very wide streets in Downtown, including some that are wider than nearby highways. The Gateway Mall, a product of the City Beautiful movement, was an ambitious plan to add a linear park from the Mississippi River to the west, a vision that the City pursued for decades. In the 1930s, an idea for a major monument to revive the waterfront found support, leading to a major change to Downtown's built fabric and produced one of the nation's most iconic structures, the Gateway Arch. This past decade, City and private leaders doubled down on this iconic asset, raising funds to support a significant redesign of Gateway Arch National Park in order to better connect the Park to Downtown. These initiatives, plus the

construction of Busch Memorial Stadium, renovation of Union Station, creation of the convention center and later, development of the Civic Center and MetroLink light rail service, are indicative of St. Louis' ability to do big things in order to help Downtown grow and prosper.

Today, downtowns across the country are seeing new investment, fueled by demographic changes and a desire for walkable, mixed-use places. St. Louis is no different, with developers and residents rediscovering Downtown over the past decades. Continued growth and development is indeed necessary Downtown, but so too is a recognition that Downtown is important precisely because of the role it continues to play in shaping St. Louis's culture and identity. This is the intent of *Design Downtown STL*, to provide an opportunity for those who care about Downtown to work with us to help shape its future.

"All the people are here  
[in Downtown], they need to be  
stirred up for action.



ABOVE LEFT:  
Widening of 12th Street - 1921  
Source:  
St. Louis Post Dispatch



ABOVE RIGHT:  
Gateway Arch Under Construction -  
1965  
Source:  
National Park Service



BELOW LEFT:  
Luther Ely Smith Park Highway Cap -  
2018  
Source:  
Gateway Arch Park Foundation



BELOW RIGHT:  
Renovated Central Library Atrium -  
2018  
Source:  
St. Louis Magazine



## ↓ DOWNTOWN TODAY

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Downtown has long served as the place that brings everyone together. It is the economic, cultural, and civic core of the St. Louis region - a center for sports, celebrations, music & culture, as well as a center for civic demonstrations and protests.

Downtown is an employment center, with about 65,000 jobs and a **daytime population of approximately 75,000 people**, not including the many visitors from the region and across the world who come in for Cardinals games or to see world-class attractions like the Gateway Arch. Yet Downtown is not just a center of employment and tourism, but also a growing neighborhood. Downtown's residential population has grown significantly, nearly **doubling in the past decade to more than 11,000 residents**.

To understand the trends impacting Downtown, the *Design Downtown STL* planning process included extensive research into the people, places and businesses that shape Downtown. This includes an analysis of demographics, City and regional business trends, real estate data, the environment, housing development and, infrastructure and street conditions. In addition to data collected from the Census, City and local partners, the team conducted a parcel-by-parcel physical survey to document the condition and use of each and every building and parcel in Downtown. This enabled the team to provide a complete picture of Downtown today and the real, on-the-ground issues that need to be addressed.

From this work, 7 critical "needs" were identified that this plan must address:





Almost 20% of all  
Downtown parcels  
are made up of  
surface parking lots

“Other than  
arguably  
Washington  
Ave.,  
connectedness  
doesn’t exist  
here.”



## 01 DOWNTOWN IS DISCONNECTED

Downtowns across the country benefit from their connection to surrounding communities and the broader region. This is true, in part, for Downtown St. Louis as a network of highways and rail lines were designed to connect Downtown to the region and far beyond. Many employers note, in fact, that they are located in Downtown precisely because of its easy connectivity to employees that live in Illinois. However, what distinguishes Downtown St. Louis is how disconnected it is from the immediate surroundings. Many downtowns blend into nearby neighborhoods with housing and commercial uses that are relatively seamless. In St. Louis, the highways and major roads used to ensure easy commuting is part of what divides Downtown from not just adjacent neighborhoods but also from itself.

Underutilized land and major roads like Cole Street create a clear divide between Downtown and north St. Louis and the seven lanes of asphalt along Jefferson Avenue divides Downtown West from Midtown. Similarly, I-64, freight rail lines and finally Chouteau Avenue all form barriers between Downtown and south St. Louis. The barriers between the riverfront and



*LEFT: Extensive parking lots break up the urban fabric Downtown  
RIGHT: Major pieces of infrastructure make connections to and from Downtown difficult*

Downtown are also well documented but better with the improvements to the Gateway Arch grounds. These conditions require Downtown to work that much harder to make clear connections to Lafayette Square, the NGA West headquarters, the Old North and Jeff VanderLou neighborhoods, and to the west, development along Locust Street and in the Grand Center Arts District. There are just too many gaps that make Downtown feel emptier than it really is. Sometimes these gaps are major streets or highways - Tucker Boulevard has a wider right-of-way than Downtown’s highways - and sometimes, the gaps are undeveloped property or parking lots. Downtown has 221 acres of parking (surface area), which equals about 20% of all Downtown parcels. Opinions differ on how best to use this land. On one hand, some think that Downtown needs more parking to be competitive, but others argue that focusing on parking ends up creating problems of its own, resulting in dead spaces where garages and surface lots front the street. These conditions indicate that “Downtown” and “Downtown West” are too broad as labels. There are in fact many subdistricts, each with its own personality, that need specific strategies.



Figure 3: **Downtown Parking**



### **PARKING**

 PARKING LOT / GARAGE

There are **228 acres of parking** (surface area), equaling **20% of all Downtown parcels**

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Over \$2 billion  
has been invested  
Downtown in recent  
years



## 02

### **DOWNTOWN NEEDS TO CAPITALIZE ON ITS MOMENTUM**

Downtown has momentum, spurred by its fundamental strengths as an urban center, as well as its walkability and density which are frequently cited when asking residents or workers what they like best about Downtown (though there is room for improvement in both areas).

Downtown's recent momentum builds from a number of significant investments and projects that have already been completed or that are in the pipeline. New and popular public spaces such as Gateway Arch National Park, Kiener Plaza, and Citygarden have greatly improved the public realm of Downtown. Support for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and the City's tech sector are bolstered by T-Rex, the NGA development, the Arch Grants competition, Square's new headquarters and the proposed Downtown Innovation District. STL Made, a collaborative effort to improve how the City tells its story, is making inroads to changing perceptions by highlighting individuals and accomplishments that are moving St. Louis forward.

Downtown is also gaining ground by capitalizing on its core assets, such as the development of Ballpark



*LEFT: Ballpark Village is a major private mixed use development Downtown  
RIGHT: Recent Gateway Arch renovations better connect the park to Downtown across major pieces of infrastructure.*

Village and the St. Louis Aquarium, which build upon Downtown's role as a sports and entertainment hub. Projects underway including the MLS Stadium and Convention Center Expansion have the potential to further expand the economic impact of Downtown's sports and entertainment sector.

While these fundamental strengths and assets give Downtown momentum, a strategy is needed to ensure assets don't become islands unto themselves. Recent and proposed developments are geographically spread out across Downtown, providing multiple centers of gravity with little to connect these assets.

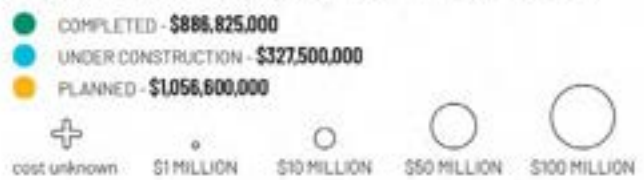
There must be a careful consideration on how to best connect these developments and amenities. Consider other peer downtowns including places such as Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Milwaukee and Nashville. Each boast vibrant downtown shopping districts in part because they have approximately half as much space to fill as Downtown St. Louis. The opportunity is to be strategic and focus new development and the location of outdoor events and activities to help fill the gaps that discourage visitors and employees from walking along Downtown streets.



Figure 4: Recent & Proposed Investments Downtown



**RECENT & PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**



**TOTAL INVESTMENT: \$2,270,925,000**

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Over 80% of street frontages qualify as “unfavorable”



LEFT: An example of an “excellent” street frontage condition  
RIGHT: An example of an “unfavorable” street frontage condition

## 03

### DOWNTOWN NEEDS MORE STREET ACTIVITY

Many of the expressed concerns about crime and the negative perceptions of Downtown stem from, and are reinforced by, how Downtown streets look and feel. The quality of the street experience can be quantified and mapped to better understand the challenges and fine-tune targeted solutions. The “street frontage” of every block and building Downtown was analyzed. An “excellent” frontage includes an active ground floor use, windows and a door. An “unfavorable” frontage is empty, a parking lot or blank wall.

This analysis showed that while there are some concentrated areas of favorable streetscapes, the majority of Downtown’s streetscapes (83%) are unfavorable, a category that includes parking garages and lots, blank windowless walls, and long expanses of reflective glass without entrances. We cannot fix this issue with new retail alone due to the scale of the problem. A new parking study will soon be released for Downtown and it will be essential to ensure that the values of Design Downtown are reflected in this work which should seek to eliminate surface parking lots. How we activate streets is a product of how we design, program and regulate them.

Compounding this challenge is that Downtown must compete against several other options in the region for those who prefer a walkable urban setting (for play, work, or living). This means that any negative perceptions about Downtown including the design and character of the streets impact where people choose to go out, locate their businesses, and live. There is a need for a counter-narrative to showcase all the great things going on Downtown. STLMade was often cited by interviewees as a step in the right direction for pushing a positive narrative about St. Louis that should serve as inspiration for Downtown.

“We have a lot of national clients who come in to St. Louis. They say, ‘where is everybody?’”

Figure 5: **Street Frontage Quality**





Downtown's population density is lower than the overall City's

Approximately 15% of housing units are dedicated to those earning below 60% of Area Median Income



LEFT: Most of the housing Downtown consists of renovated loft buildings, with increasingly few vacant structures left to renovate

RIGHT: In addition to loft buildings there are limited units in high-rise buildings

## 04

### DOWNTOWN NEEDS MORE RESIDENTS

Much of Downtown residential growth has been accommodated through the conversion of older buildings into residential lofts, made possible through the use of historic tax credits. However, Downtown is running out of old buildings to reuse, and with little market for unsubsidized new construction, new approaches are needed to create more housing Downtown. **Very few people used to live Downtown. Now there are almost 7,700 housing units.**

Much of Downtown's residential density is clustered into distinct areas or buildings, and these clusters are physically isolated from one another. This results in an overall population density for Downtown that is actually lower than the rest of St. Louis (6.3 residents per acre vs 8.0 in the rest of the City), despite Downtown's primary housing stock of mid- to high-rise residential and mixed-used buildings.

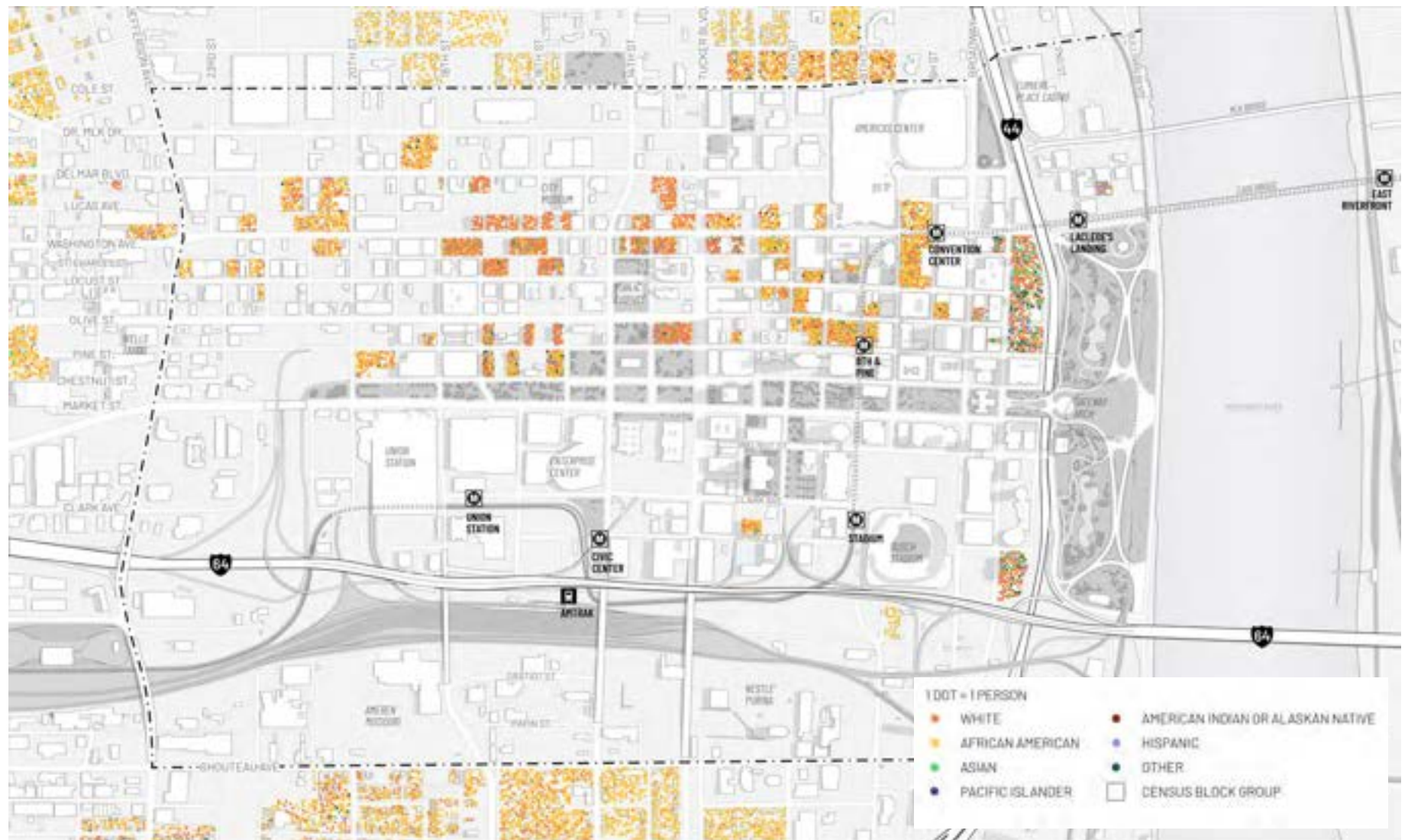
Compared to other parts of the City and the region as a whole, Downtown is younger, more diverse, and more educated. Since 2010, Downtown's population has maintained its diversity while seeing substantial residential growth. Share of White, non-Hispanic Downtown residents decreased from 48% to 40% while

the total population grew 80% between 2010 and 2017. The Downtown population has also grown younger. Fifteen percent of residents are between the ages of 18-24 years, many of which likely represent college students from surrounding universities. More than a third of Downtown's population is made up of 25-34 year olds, indicative of Downtown's role as a popular place to live for young professionals. The Downtown population is more likely to have a college degree than the rest of the City, with over 50% of residents over 25 holding a Bachelor's Degree or higher. Downtown's population is also less likely to be unemployed or live in poverty (about 16% versus 25% for the City).

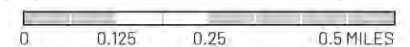
While younger and relatively more affluent, the availability of housing in Downtown is severely limited. Almost all of the units are "loft" style apartments with the majority only available at higher price points than many other communities in the City. On the other hand, approximately 15% of other housing units are dedicated to those earning below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI). Downtown is not serving the so-called "missing middle" with housing options at price points that working households who earn between 60% and 120% of AMI can afford.



Figure 6: Residential Population by Race



(Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-year est., Interface Studio field survey 2019)



**A key advantage for living Downtown is proximity to where you work** – many Downtown residents also work there, and the majority of residents who commute out of Downtown for work are going to employment

hubs elsewhere in the central core, including Cortex, the Central West End, SSM, and Clayton. Downtown employees come from all over the region, including a substantial portion of commuters from Illinois.

Business and  
Financial Services  
account for 15k jobs  
Downtown.

Downtown's office  
vacancy rate of  
19.7% is almost  
twice as high as the  
rest of the City.



LEFT: T-REX is a vital anchor for the tech industry Downtown

RIGHT: Square's new office (under construction) will be an important addition to the growing Downtown tech scene

## 05

### DOWNTOWN NEEDS TO EXPAND JOB GROWTH AROUND ITS ADVANTAGES

While Downtown is a strong economic hub, it has distinct advantages in 5 key employment clusters representing 80% of Downtown's workforce – Business and Financial Services; Local Commercial Services; Tourism; Local Utilities; and Marketing, Design, and Publishing. In each of these clusters, Downtown accounts for at least one-third of total St. Louis employment. The largest cluster, Business and Financial Services, accounts for almost 15,000 jobs. Downtown has strengths in each of the key sub-clusters: Financial Services, Banks/Insurance, and Business Services. While this is a large number, Clayton has proven to be a major competitor for these jobs, acting as a second regional hub of jobs in business and financial services, a dynamic most downtowns do not experience. Tourism, especially sports tourism, is very strong in Downtown and will expand further with the entrance of MLS into the market and post-COVID. The Marketing, Design, and Publishing cluster and creative economy in general are another important source of jobs in the Downtown economy. The growing tech presence in and around Downtown, centered on software and geospatial, is likely to grow rapidly with the completion of the NGA site and the implementation of citywide strategies to grow inclusive job opportunities in software tech.

Downtown St. Louis has less concentrated job activity and has had very weak private sector job growth compared to peer cities in the post-recession period. This issue is reflected in Downtown's relatively high office vacancy rate of 19.7%, more than twice as high as the rest of the City. In addition, lingering vacancy in two major structures that, combined, amount to over 2 million square feet of space – the AT&T building and the Railway Exchange – remain a major stain on Downtown's reputation.

Looking for new job growth to come from major corporate relocations will not work. The challenge is clear that Downtown needs a more diverse and inclusive economy that capitalizes on its advantages including its diversity, creativity, unparalleled sports and attractions, established infrastructure and, the range of different types of commercial spaces available suitable for a wide range of businesses. Building on efforts by organizations like GeoFutures, We Power, St. Louis Promise Zone, Arch Grants and the proposed Downtown Innovation District among others, the opportunity is to attract established companies and talent, help businesses to grow and stay Downtown and, actively support the needs of minority and ethnically diverse companies.



Figure 7: Major Business Clusters by Number of Employees



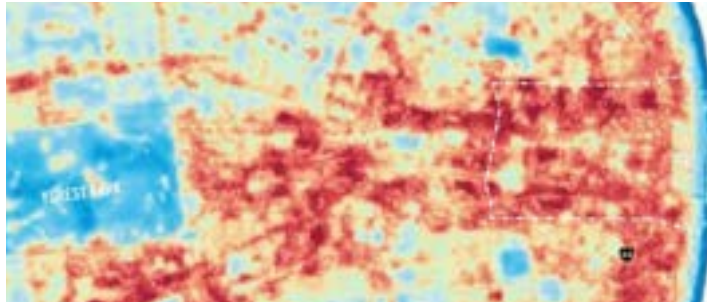
### MAJOR CLUSTERS BY EMPLOYEES

BOUNDARY	UNDER 20	100 - 500	BIOPHARMACEUTICALS AND MEDICAL DEVICES	PERFORMING ARTS	EDUCATION TRAINING	FOOD AND BEVERAGE MANUFACTURING, PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION
	20 - 100	OVER 500	BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL SERVICES	MARKETING, DESIGN, AND PUBLISHING	CHEMICALS AND METALS	
			TOURISM			

(Source: Q4eY13 data; PE, UDF/GDLW)

Downtown has a ratio of 11.5 acres per 1K residents, roughly half of the 20 acres per 1K residents recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association

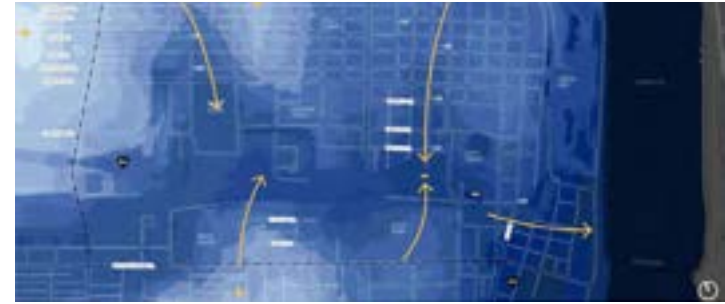
“More green/  
grass/trees.  
Less concrete.”



## 06 DOWNTOWN NEEDS TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE AND PROMOTE BETTER HEALTH

Downtown’s environmental conditions helped shape its development. Chief among these were the waterways of the Mississippi and the Mill Creek and Chouteau Pond at Downtown’s southern edge. Overtime, the Chouteau Pond and Mill Creek were filled in, and became a hub for transportation infrastructure, accommodating I-64, the rail lines, and passenger rail stations within their historic footprint. Water still drains towards the former site of the Creek and Pond, but is now conveyed through a complex system of pipes that collect water as it flows downhill to help drain excess stormwater away from the City. This underlying ecology is important to understand, as it relates to potential stress points that could impact Downtown and the City’s aging stormwater infrastructure.

The urban form of Downtown has resulted in an area that is largely devoid of trees, with the exception of Gateway Arch National Park and certain sections of the Gateway Mall. The impact of Downtown’s minimal tree canopy is reflected in a map of the urban heat island effect, where urbanized areas experience higher temperatures than less developed areas due to the fact that common



LEFT: The “Urban Heat Island Effect” and its impact on St. Louis  
RIGHT: The historic Mill Creek and Chouteau Pond still influences waterflow

elements of the urban environment – streets, sidewalks, parking lots roofs, tend to absorb and hold heat. A map of the City’s “urban heat island effect” shows highly elevated temperatures across nearly all of Downtown.

To get outside, exercise and enjoy the outdoors also requires adequate space to do so. Downtown’s open space is a mix of publicly- and privately- owned land, though Downtown St. Louis is unique in the share of its most prominent open spaces that are controlled by the federal government. Citywide, St. Louis has approximately 11.1 acres of open space per 1,000 inhabitants, with Downtown having a similar ratio of 11.5 acres per 1,000 inhabitants. This however, is roughly half of the 20 acres per 1,000 inhabitants recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association, and if the daytime population of Downtown is taken into account, the ratio drops to 1.7 acres per 1,000 daytime users. In total, the City of St. Louis has fewer acres per 1,000 inhabitants when compared to cities such as Dallas, Cincinnati, and Louisville, which have more than twice the number of acres per inhabitants as St. Louis.





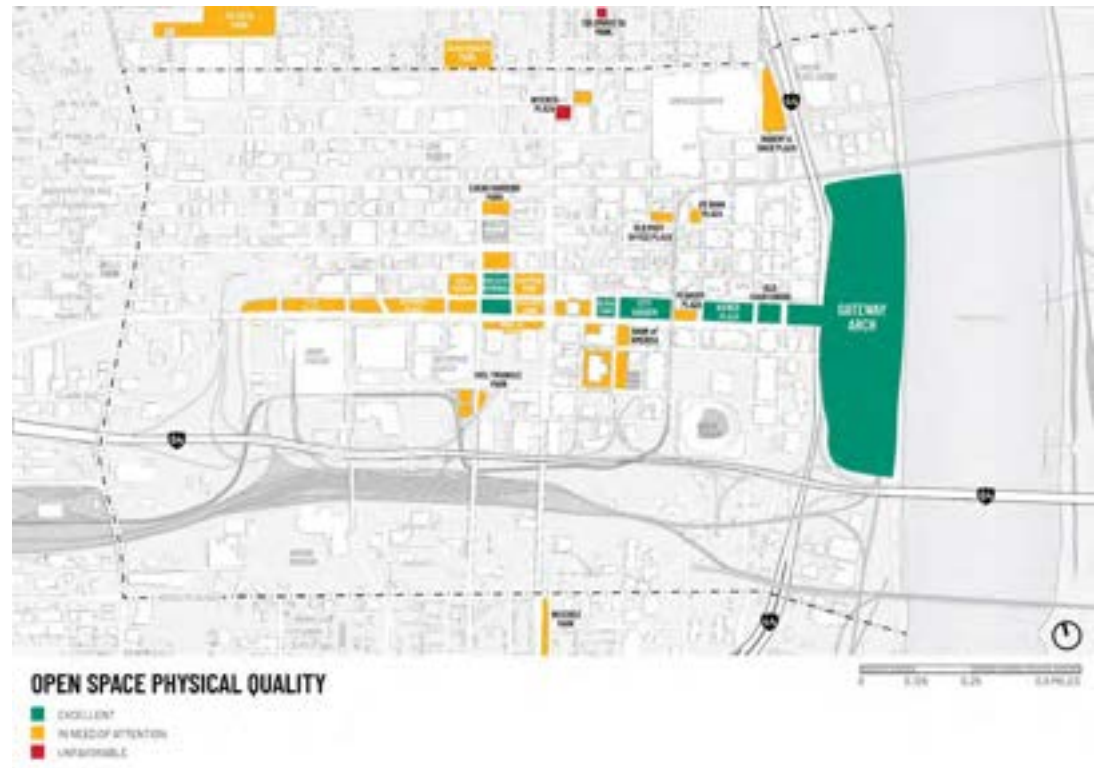
LEFT: Recent park investments have increase Downtown's vegetation



RIGHT: Historic flooding in the past year has exposed St. Louis' vulnerabilities as a riverfront city

There are parks Downtown cherished by St. Louisans but many others that do not adequately serve the needs of residents or businesses. The location and type of open spaces that would attract a wider diversity of populations could be deliberately programmed and designed to be welcoming and inclusive and create a more robust, well-rounded civic life. These spaces would serve more than just workers and visitors, but serve to knit together the various sports and entertainment destinations, and the various districts, with a richer array of landscape types—active, passive, and highly programmed. They could also include art, programming, and design strategies that are more deliberately representative of and welcoming to the City's diverse racial and ethnic populations. The continued redevelopment of existing buildings as well as new construction offer up further opportunities to lessen the urban heat island effect and capture additional stormwater through green roofs and other infrastructure improvements.

Figure 8: **Quality of Open Space**



36% of all reported  
crimed Downtown  
are auto-related



LEFT: Auto break-ins are a fear of Downtown visitors

RIGHT: Empty buildings like the former AT&T center create a negative perception

07

### CRIME AND THE NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY MUST BE ADDRESSED

Consistently cited during this process is the perception and reality of crime in Downtown. The view of Downtown as a dangerous place is one of the most serious impediments to Downtown's growth and development. This perception is reinforced by the media, which often conflates crime in other parts of the City with Downtown.

Downtown crime is overwhelmingly related to car break-ins (like other major downtowns across the country). and crime rates do not take into account the 65,000+ employees and millions of annual visitors at a baseball game, convention or other event. Thirty six percent of all crimes downtown are auto-related. Additionally, residents talk frequently about the issues associated with late-night drinking and cruising along Washington Avenue and others have cited concerns about the unhoused population. The pandemic and social unrest have only exacerbated crime and the negative perceptions about Downtown.

But frankly, even before the pandemic, one high profile incident can overwhelm any real statistics and instill a feeling in many that Downtown is unsafe. As noted above, so many of the negative perceptions are reinforced by how Downtown St. Louis looks and feels. Large vacancies, such as at the AT&T Building and Railway Exchange as well as the numerous vacant storefronts reinforce the narrative of a Downtown in decline, as do streets in various states of repair that lack pedestrian traffic and active ground-floor uses.

The Downtown St. Louis Community Improvement District (CID) is reworking its management plan to more effectively focus on keeping Downtown safe and clean. A recent strategic plan and onboarding of new CID board members will determine how best to utilize CID dollars to address this challenge.

The most important improvement to Downtown that will address the reality of crime and perception of

"Downtown is perceived as a high crime area. Unless the situation changes dramatically, no one would go there to 'hang out'."



LEFT: A lack of people in Downtown parks make people feel uncomfortable to visit



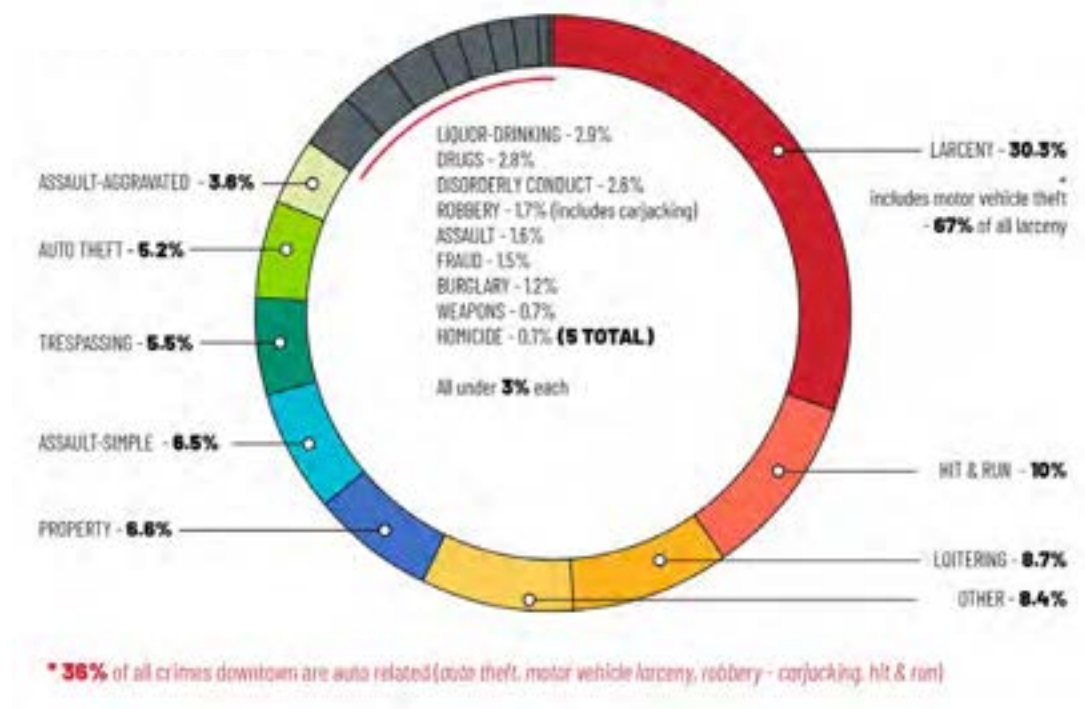
RIGHT: Negative perceptions of Metrolink make it a liability instead of an asset in many people's minds

Downtown safety, however, is more activity—more housing, more businesses and more programming. The more people we have on the street at all times of the day and night, the more welcoming Downtown will feel. For this reason, strategies to address Downtown crime are integrated throughout this report including proposals for a Downtown ambassador program, new housing, improvements to streets and lighting, temporary street closures for streets that suffer from weekend cruising and new Downtown programming. Downtown STL, Inc., now a separate organization from the CID, is dedicated to leading the implementation of this plan.

The issues around crime are often described as a “chicken and egg” issue. People will not come to Downtown unless it feels safe but Downtown will struggle to be perceived as safe without people. Other downtowns have succeeded in breaking this cycle of slow decline. With a plan, St. Louis can take steps to seeing real success in not only addressing crime but in creating a welcoming and safe environment that people want to live, work and visit.

Let's get started.

Figure 11: Downtown Crime - April 2018 - April 2019



“If people feel safe, they will come.”



# 03

# VISION & GOALS

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Part 01

**VISION FOR  
DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE**

p60

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Part 02

**INTRODUCTION TO THE  
GOALS TO HELP ACHIEVE  
THE VISION**

p62

# VISION FOR DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE

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During the public outreach process, we asked participants to tell us how they would define Downtown today, and what they hoped to see for Downtown's future. The result was a collection of the public's hopes and aspirations for the future of Downtown St. Louis, summarized in a vision statement that defines the type of community we hope to create Downtown and the range of experiences we hope to foster.



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**Downtown** is the home of entrepreneurs, business leaders, makers, and dreamers; an energetic, inclusive and bustling community that reflects a mix of cutting-edge thinking and bold design.

**Downtown St. Louis is a dynamic place to live** and stands out among the country's most diverse neighborhoods as the only place with great restaurants, three major league sports teams, world-class cultural destinations, public spaces, and a national park and landmark all within a short walk, bike, or metro trip.

**Downtown is a place to grow.** Downtown is the home to inclusive entrepreneurship and intentionally supports the needs of diverse and growing businesses. Jobs that start Downtown stay here, and so do the people who power the Downtown economy even as their careers and lifestyles evolve.

**Downtown is vibrant, ever-changing, and full of life.** Downtown's streets and public spaces are active places, full of people and activities, and the place where St. Louisans from across the City and region come together.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE GOALS TO HELP ACHIEVE VISION

Five goals respond to the overarching vision and organize the strategies presented in the next chapter of the *Design Downtown STL Master Plan*.

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## Goal 01

REALIZE DOWNTOWN'S POTENTIAL TO BE  
THE REGION'S PREMIER WALKABLE, DIVERSE  
URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD



## Goal 02

EXPAND THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMY TO  
SUPPORT STARTUPS, ENTREPRENEURS,  
EXISTING AND GROWING BUSINESSES



### Goal 03

REDESIGN AND ACTIVATE OUR STREETS FOR  
A DYNAMIC BIKE, PEDESTRIAN, & TRANSIT  
NETWORK



### GOAL 04

INVEST IN AN OPEN SPACE NETWORK TO  
PROVIDE VIBRANT PUBLIC SPACES AND  
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGHOUT  
DOWNTOWN



### GOAL 05

UNCOVER THE STORIES, PEOPLE, & PLACES  
THAT MAKE DOWNTOWN UNIQUE



04



# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Part 01

**GOAL 01 - HOUSING**

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Part 02

**GOAL 02 - ECONOMY**

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**GOAL 03 - MOBILITY**

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Part 04

**GOAL 04 - OPEN SPACE**

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Part 05

**GOAL 05 - THE ARTS**

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## Goal 01

# Realize Downtown's Potential to be the Region's Premiere Walkable, Diverse Urban Neighborhood

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Downtown is gaining momentum. Downtown has more racially/ethnically diverse group of residents and is attracting higher-educated millennials than the City overall. Strategies described in this section focus on providing housing options and availability to Downtown's current and prospective residents, from all backgrounds.

# WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Downtown is an economic center for the region but its prospects as a vibrant, walkable, and livable neighborhood should not be dismissed. Downtown is home to 11.2K residents. Most Downtown residents are under the age of 34, and half are Black/African American, and over one-third of Downtown residents have at least a Bachelor's degree.<sup>1</sup> Over one-fifth of employed Downtown residents also work Downtown, and one-quarter work elsewhere in the City.<sup>2</sup> Downtown is home to 8.4K total housing units, 78% of which are rental units.<sup>3</sup> Many of Downtown's housing units are located in loft-style buildings, of which there are 47 in Downtown.<sup>4</sup>

Downtown is less dense than the rest of the City, and it falls short of the population and employment density experienced by other cities such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Dallas, and Atlanta. However, its population

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 5-year release

<sup>2</sup> LEHD-OTM, 2017

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 5-year release

<sup>4</sup> <https://downtownstl.org/living/>

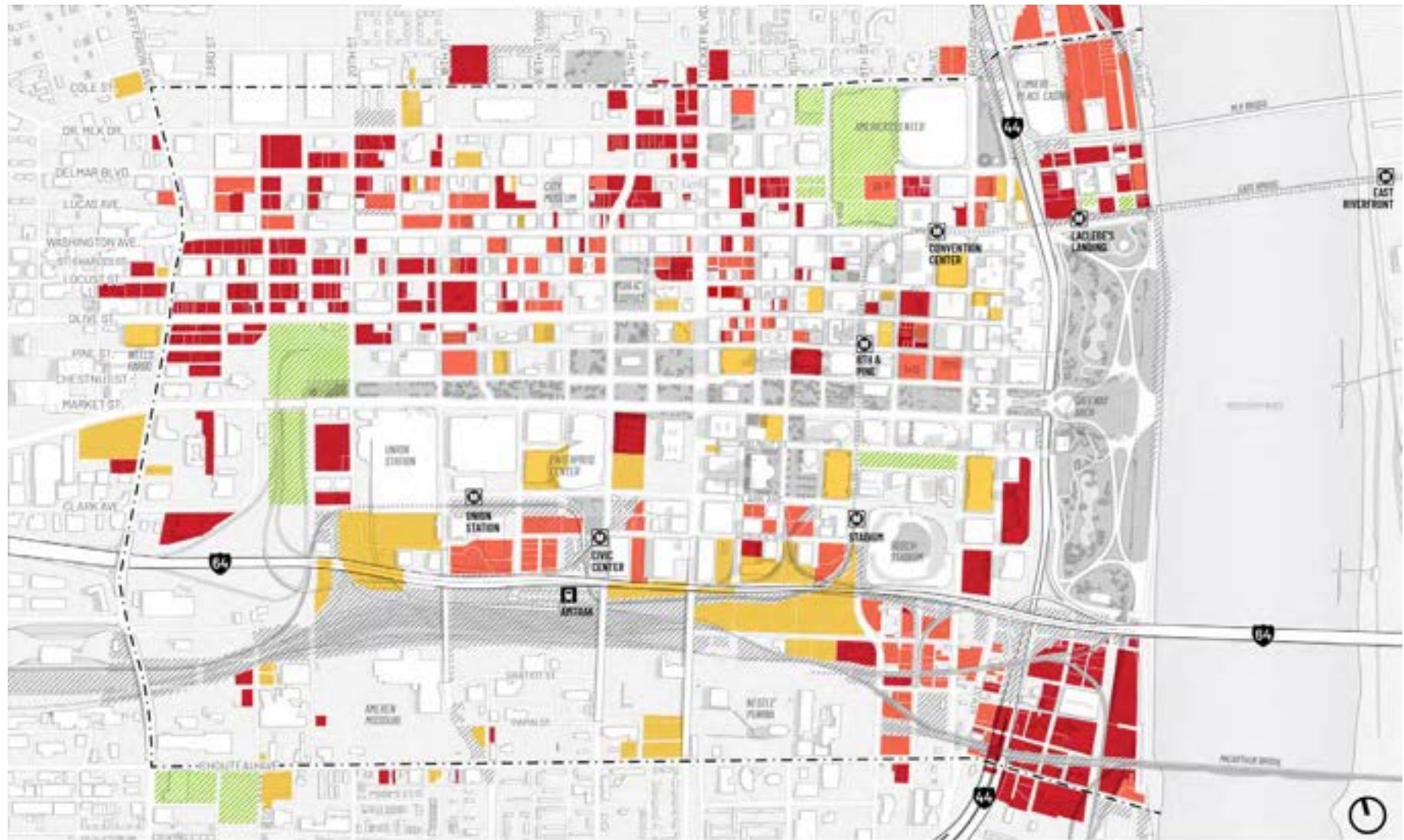
is growing at an astonishing rate (especially considering population trends in the City overall) and almost doubled from 2010 to 2018. Downtown is gaining higher-educated millennials and is more racially/ethnically diverse than the City overall. From 2013 to 2018, the number of housing units in Downtown grew by 11% while the rest of the City experienced no overall change.<sup>5</sup> Over 90% of Downtown housing is occupied with some locations nearly full at 95% occupancy.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 5-year release



*Loft building on Washington Ave.*

Figure 12: Susceptibility to Change



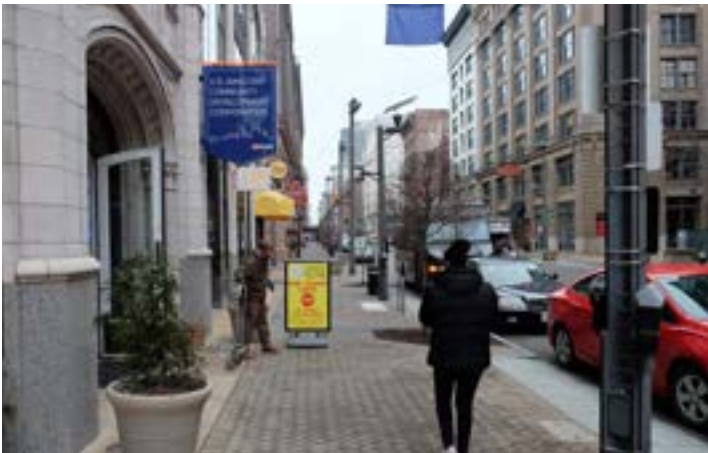
### SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

- PLANNED/UNDER DEVELOPMENT
- HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE (planned developments, vacant buildings & land, parking lots near major investments, 1 story industrial/commercial)
- MEDIUM SUSCEPTIBLE (parking lots/structures not near major investments or associated with specific use)
- LOW SUSCEPTIBLE (parking lots/structures associated with specific use or difficult to develop due to infrastructure)



## “More mixed-income housing, including for families with children.”

These trends are important preconditions for additional housing development. The good news is that Downtown has great bones from which to grow. The City is quite walkable, has an abundance of historic buildings, and land and real estate costs are low relative to other US downtowns. New types of real estate models that have been utilized elsewhere – microunits, co-living, and live-work spaces – can help diversify the housing stock and attract new residents to Downtown. When coupled by improved quality of life amenities like recreational facilities, retailers, grocers, etc. – Downtown can provide residents with an unmatched opportunity to live, work, and access first-rate destinations like a national park and professional sports games.



*An entrance to a loft building on Washington Ave.*

Furthermore, the cost of living is relatively low in Downtown as compared to other major US Cities which is a tremendous opportunity on multiple fronts. First, the cost of living is an opportunity to attract recent college graduates and entrepreneurs to a major city with all the bells and whistles. Secondly, St. Louis is in a better position to create a Downtown that remains affordable as it grows which is something most downtowns struggle to fully address due to higher prices and development pressure. Through the wise implementation of tools like land trusts and ground leases, and by tying taxpayer incentives for real estate development projects to the provision of affordable housing, Downtown can ensure that it remains a diverse place where people of all income levels will have an opportunity to call it home.

For the Downtown neighborhood to thrive, concerns expressed by residents about crime and the feeling of safety must be addressed. A reduction in cruising, robbery and vandalism is essential to building confidence in the Downtown neighborhood. But to address the perception of safety Downtown, efforts are needed by the CID, the City of St. Louis and local partners to remedy issues with trash, potholes, poor sidewalks, and poor lighting. Focusing on these maintenance issues and working to address the recent spike in Downtown crime along with other aspects of this plan focused on programming, events and the arts, will attract more residents and visitors which, in turn, improves the feeling of safety in Downtown.

# STRATEGIES

## 1.1 ENCOURAGE NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Characteristics of the ground floor largely affect Downtown experience. Empty lots and surface parking lots are detrimental to the Downtown experience and give an impression that Downtown is “empty” or “unsafe.” Yet these remain but could be sites for new housing that add residents and customers to Downtown to support local businesses.

Downtown’s population growth since the Downtown Now plan has largely been through the reuse of old buildings. Using a combination of tax credits, these once vacant spaces are now residential lofts. The success of this strategy, however, has left us with very few suitable undeveloped buildings for new housing. It is time to build new housing to further grow Downtown’s population. “Build new housing” was in fact the top ranked strategy in online open house and a constant refrain from Downtown stakeholders and residents from day one of this process.

### ★ A. PUSH FORWARD TO REHABILITATE REMAINING MAJOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

With all of the lofts created in the past decades, there remains a few major structures that are currently empty. Structures like Railway Exchange and Jefferson Arms represent a significant amount of unused space that

Figure 14: Online Open House Results on Strategy Prioritization

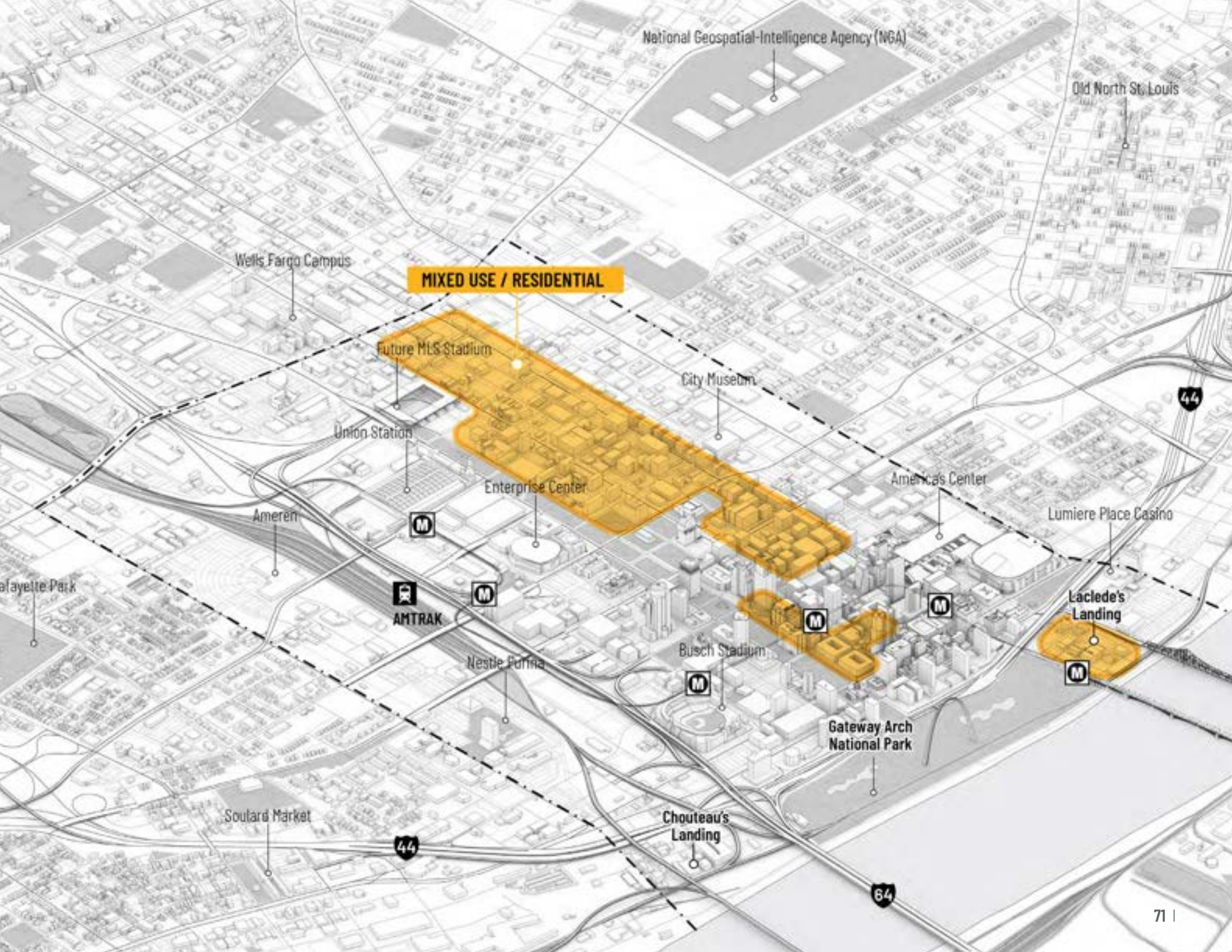


Participants were asked to choose 5 strategies out of 25 strategies and these were chosen as the favorites.

Figure 13: Targeted Housing Locations

could become additional Downtown lofts. Push forward with redevelopment proposals to reuse the Jefferson Arms and work to move Railway Exchange (described further under action C), the Chemical building and the Butler Brothers Building toward stabilization and redevelopment. Continue to work toward finding a reuse for the AT&T building that potentially includes housing to activate the northern edge of the Gateway Mall.





National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)

Old North St. Louis

Wells Fargo Campus

**MIXED USE / RESIDENTIAL**

Future MLS Stadium

City Museum

Union Station

Enterprise Center

Americas Center

Ameren

Lumiere Place Casino

Lafayette Park

AMTRAK

LaClede's Landing

Nestle Purina

Busch Stadium

Gateway Arch National Park

Soulard Market

Chouteau's Landing

## “We are running out of old buildings.”

Almost 70% of participants agreed with the statement, “if your preferred housing type were built, I would be more interested in moving to, or continuing to live Downtown.”

### **B. DIVERSIFY & EXPAND DOWNTOWN HOUSING OPTIONS**

During the final open house, almost 70% of participants agreed with the statement “if your preferred housing type were built, I would be more interested in moving to, or continuing to live, in Downtown.” This is part a recognition that one of the issues holding back the development of new housing Downtown is the type of unit available.

Several of Downtown’s residential properties are conversions of commercial buildings and industrial warehouses erected in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Although these properties retain a kind of cool, throwback charm, for some potential renters and buyers, they lack the modern appeal, comfort, and efficiencies of more contemporary housing. With some nearing 20 years old, the finishes may at this point need refreshing to compete with other loft / apartment products in the City and region. This is particularly true for millennials that have driven the growth of cities across the country. Millennials, however, are now in their 30s and seek different housing options than they did 10 years ago.

American cities are embracing townhomes, stacked townhomes and feature-rich smaller units in walkable neighborhoods and place a premium on access to nearby amenities. Striking a balance between the retention of older, historic lofts with newer, state-of-the-art housing is critical to Downtown’s future. Focus on attracting developers for new housing that expands the types of units available in Downtown including microunits, townhomes of different variations and co-housing in addition to a wider range of lofts / apartments.

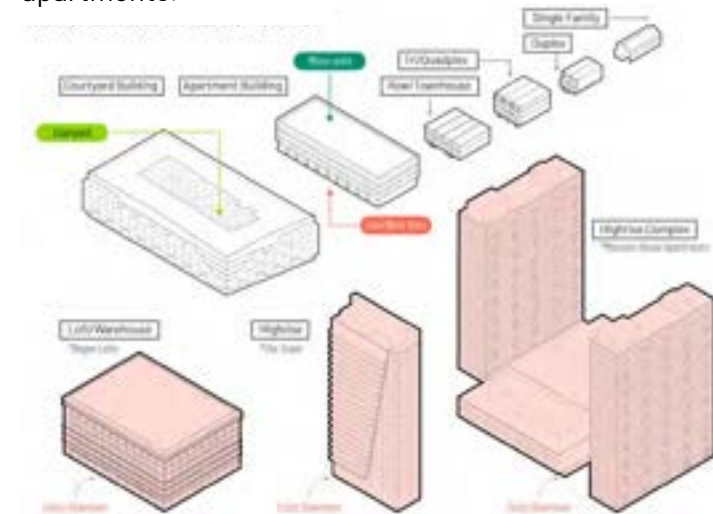
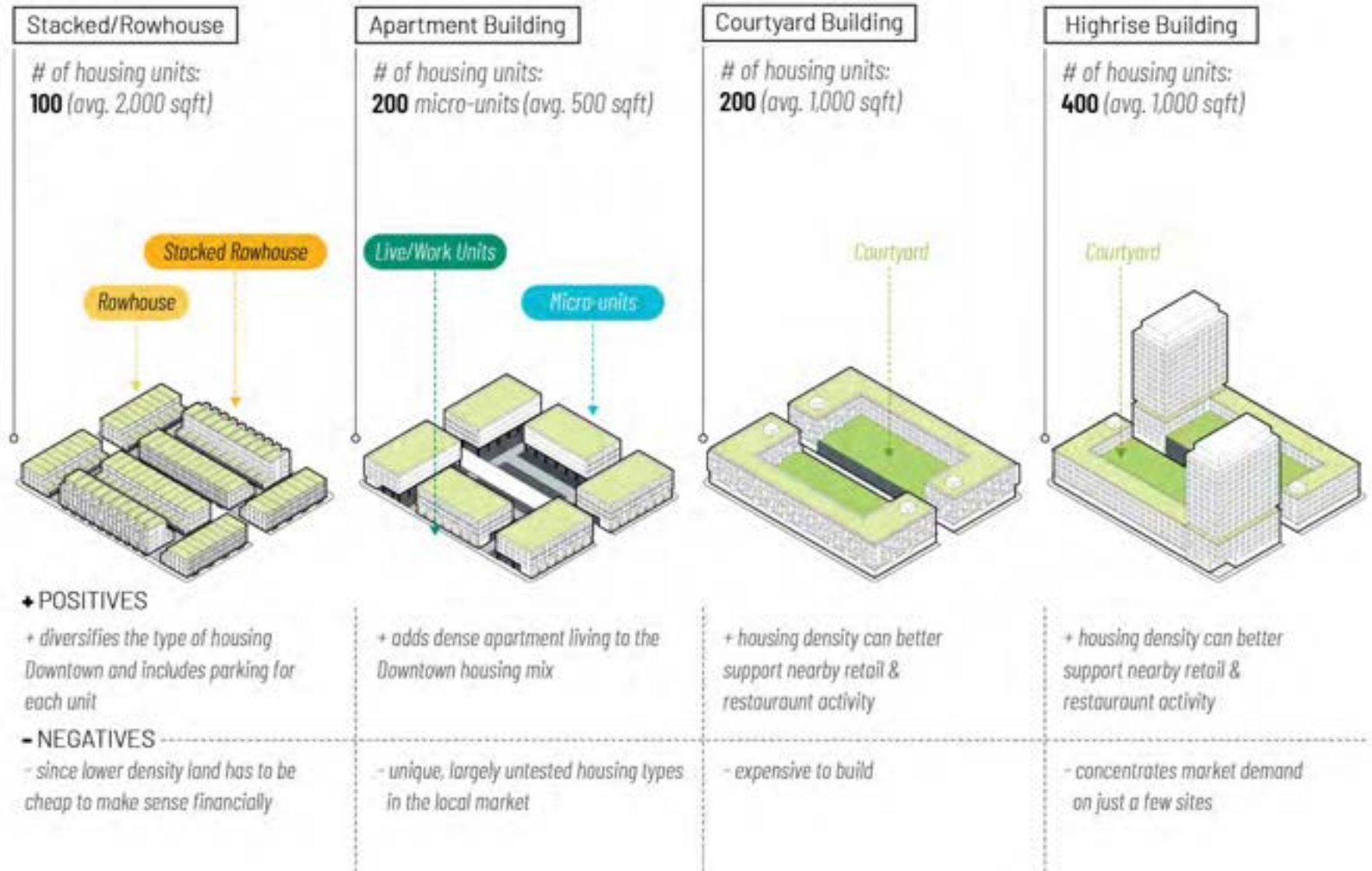


Figure 15: Residential Building Types



Figure 16: **Potential New Housing on a Typical Block**

★ *Green roofs and other sustainable building practices should be considered in all new construction*



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### **C. FOCUS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN TARGET AREAS**

Targeting strategic nodes for greater density and activation provides multiple common goods. First and foremost, increased activity – especially at night – will keep more eyes on the street, which typically brings an increased sense of safety in the area. Concentrations of rooftops is also a precursor to neighborhood retail and amenities. Targeted areas should also aim for a multi use approach – i.e., live, work, play – to generate 24-hour activity. When located within walking distances of a MetroLink station, new development would likely benefit from a reduction of parking demand from users and parking requirements from lenders as well. There are a number of critical target areas for new housing development:

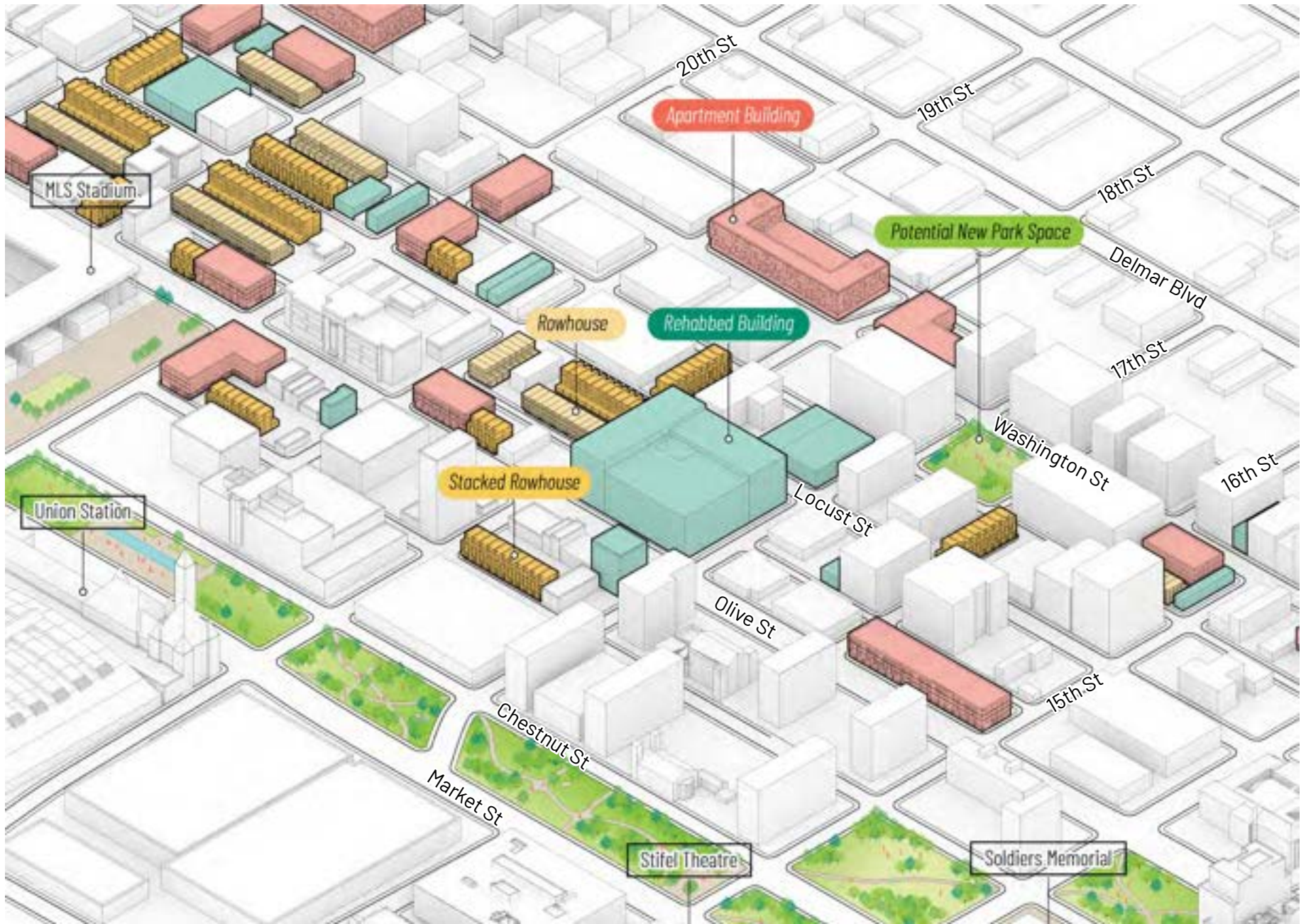
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**Downtown West** - to complement investment in the MLS stadium, underutilized property in Downtown West can serve as the ideal location to build a range of new townhomes, stacked townhomes and apartments of all sizes to build up Downtown’s population and create critical connections between the Stadium and Washington Avenue and, between Downtown West and Midtown.



*One of the many surface parking or vacant lots that litter Downtown West.*

Figure 17: Potential Housing Development in Downtown West



Note: the housing shown in the above illustration is a concept and encouraged. It is not prescriptive.



Chapter 04:  
RECOMMENDATIONS



*Existing intersection at Locust and 21st Street.*

The large empty lots in Downtown West offer up a new opportunity to diversify the housing types within Downtown.

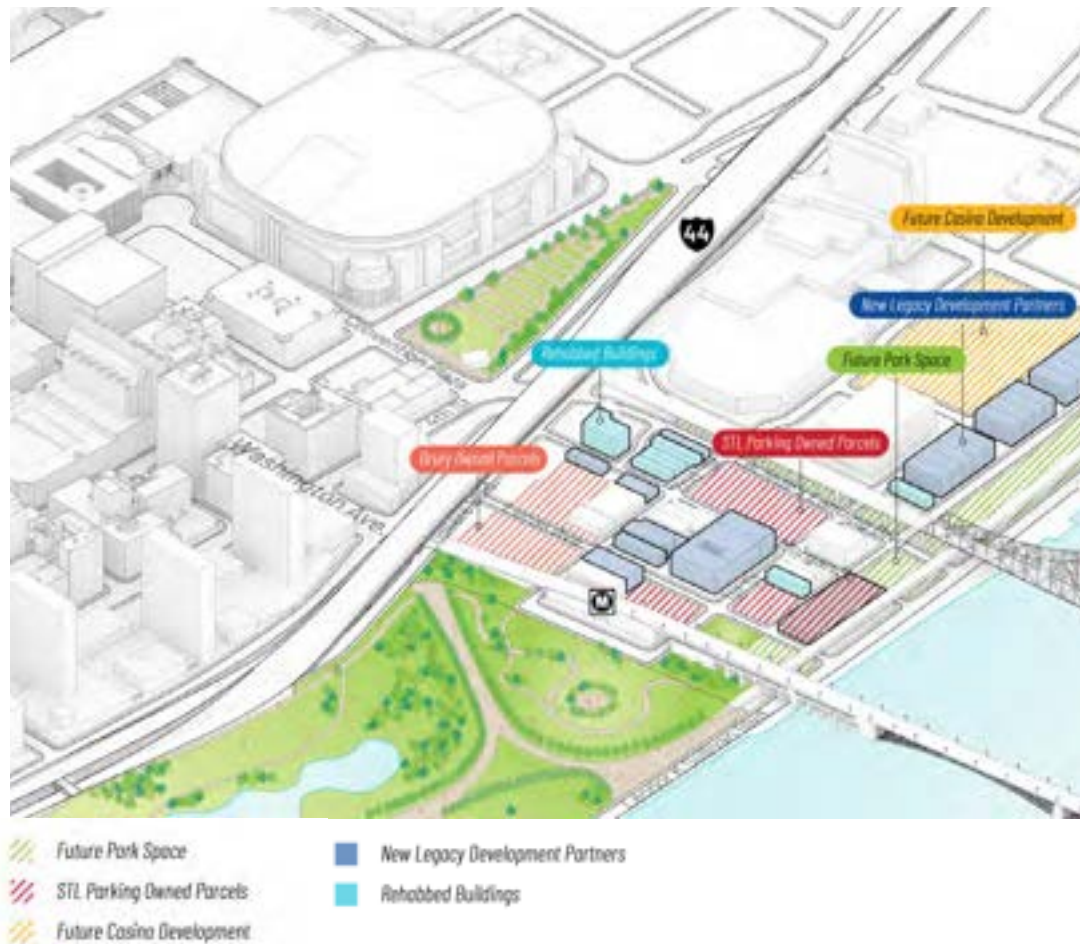








Figure 19: **Potential Housing Development in Laclede’s Landing**



**Laclede’s Landing** - Laclede’s Landing has long served as a destination and entertainment district for the City. It has a unique collection of historic buildings, the Lumiere Place Casino and one of the few locations in the City that is connected to the Mississippi River. Despite these assets, Laclede’s Landing has struggled in the past decade. As noted by many stakeholders, Laclede’s Landing continues to struggle with crime but also vacancies that take away from its draw as a destination. Laclede’s Landing needs more activity to support the businesses and residents that call the Landing home.

Developers are currently repurposing vacant structures for new housing and looking to build new housing east of the casino. These activities alone will add hundreds of new housing units to Downtown. To supplement these investments, new housing is necessary in the core of the Landing adjacent to Downtown. Too many properties are surface lots that create gaps in activity. According to the recent Downtown Parking Study led by SLDC, these parking lots are not operating near full capacity and should be targeted for new housing and mixed-use development. The opportunity is to consolidate these parking lots into one garage that serves multiple buildings and new developments. Public and private leaders must come together around land acquisition and financing for new development in the Landing.

**Gateway Mall** - One could not ask for a better front door and view if new housing were developed along the Gateway Mall. Currently, major vacant structures and older parking garages occupy blocks that could add a significant amount of new housing to Downtown and leverage ongoing development nearby in Ballpark Village.

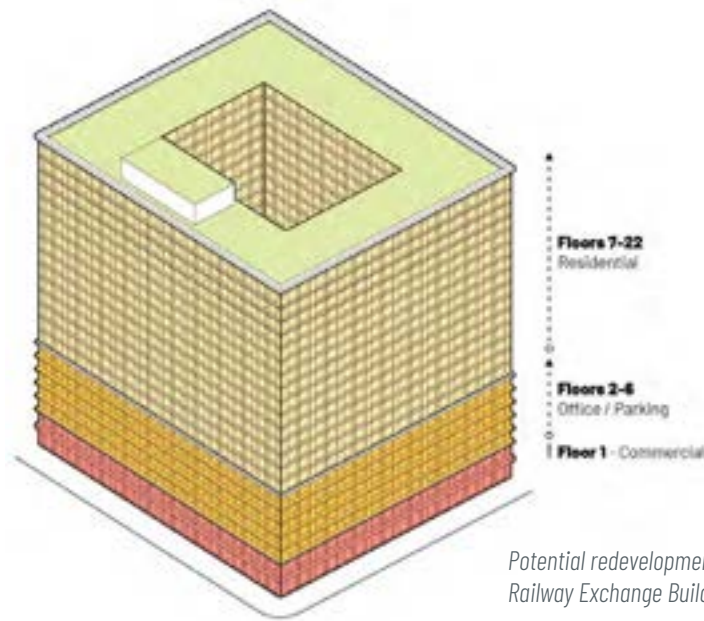
- The AT&T building has been out for RFP and developers have proposed a reuse for housing, office, hotel or some combination of all three.
- The Railway Exchange is a truly unique building and bringing this back into use would be a significant boon to Downtown. The building needs to be under the control of SLDC to stabilize and hopefully activate the first two floors while fundraising for a larger renovation. As a building, it offers the possibility to include 1-2 floors of office space, multiple floors of parking to help serve tenants and housing on floors seven and up where the building includes a cutout for natural light more suitable for housing.

Figure 20: Potential Housing Development in Gateway Mall



Shared parking facilities could reduce the parking burden per project, and subsequently contribute to increased density and more affordable housing options in the City.

- In between the Railway Exchange and the Gateway Mall are three parking garages including those facing Kiener Plaza that, over time, should be considered for major new housing development which will help to activate the Gateway Mall. These properties are all immediately served by a MetroLink Station at 8th and Pine.



Potential redevelopment opportunity of the Railway Exchange Building.

**D. CAPITALIZE A DOWNTOWN HOUSING FUND TO FILL THE FINANCING GAP FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION**

Gap financing is needed to offset prohibitive development costs that exceed the projected rents that can be recouped on new projects in Downtown. Recently, state and federal historic preservation tax credits and Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) have been used to help finance the redevelopment of Downtown's historic buildings. However, very few of these buildings remain. Buttressing the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) could provide gap financing capital necessary not only to create more units but to increase affordable housing options for residents making at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI). Annually, the Affordable Housing Commission awards an average of \$5-6M from the AHTF to support the creation of affordable units, as well as programs serving affordable housing residents. These funds are raised from the Use Tax and public and philanthropic sources. By further supporting the public and philanthropic investment in the AHTF, Downtown could produce a larger and more diverse residential stock.



“We have not had a major building project. Ballpark Village is hopefully a great success.”

#### **E. CREATE SHARED PARKING FACILITIES WHERE POSSIBLE TO LOWER DEVELOPMENT COSTS**

The cost of parking structures often makes new housing developments infeasible. Shared parking facilities could reduce the parking burden per project, and subsequently contribute to increased density and more affordable housing options in the City. Many of Downtown’s parking decks (e.g., St. Louis Centre East Parking, 9th Street Garage, 7th Street Garage, iParkit, etc.) are connected to corporate office buildings and are heavily used only during the workday, typically 9am-5pm. As a result, there may be an opportunity to use the spaces within these parking structures for residential purposes (before/after the workday, on weekends, etc.). New parking structures associated with the new MLS Stadium in the less dense Downtown West area could potentially support the parking demands for new housing developments. The results of the ongoing Downtown Parking Study should help to identify other locations where new parking garages could serve multiple purposes including those of nearby residential development in a similar way that the RFP for development of a parking garage at 10th and Lucas Avenue will support growth of the innovation district north of Washington Avenue.

In addition, Downtown needs flexible sources of capital to stimulate market-rate development. The cost to build a townhome, for instance, compared to the sales prices would require a subsidy to help fill the financing gap. This is a necessary step in every successful downtown including Grand Rapids where TIF dollars are redeveloped into a development fund and in Louisville that operates a Downtown Housing Assistance Fund that is a loan pool to finance new market-rate housing. Subsidies are not intended to be a permanent form of assistance; they help resolve financing gaps for short periods until market rents can cover construction costs. Leadership must come together to create a sound financing approach to stimulate new housing development as described in *Design Downtown STL*.

#### **PRECEDENT: DOWNTOWN HOUSING ASSISTANCE FUND**



LOUISVILLE, KY  
The Downtown Housing Assistance Fund, LLC (DHA) is a revolving loan fund designed to assist urban developers in financing their Downtown housing projects. Structured as a gap financing program, DHA assumes a secondary position to primary financing and offers below-market lending terms. The \$6.8 million fund is enhanced by available New Markets Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits.

Source: <https://louisvilledowntown.org/assets/housingasst2015.pdf>

“Downtown doesn’t feel safe. It needs more density and safer streets. [It needs] new housing types. Connect it to the surrounding neighborhoods. Otherwise, it will remain a sad island.”

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**F. CAPITALIZE A STRATEGIC ACQUISITION FUND TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF KEY NODES OVER NEXT 20-25 YEARS**

Strategic land acquisition is necessary to undertake catalytic future projects in Downtown at key nodes and along major corridors. The assembly of parcels needed to complete such projects will take time and a coordinated effort with public entities, such as LRA, that acquire and hold land but also identification of and partnership with private and philanthropic owners that have the capacity to acquire and hold property as stewards for an extended period of time. A similar fund is proposed in the Equitable Economic Development Citywide Framework to support land preparation efforts for development. This work should tie into that effort to streamline activities.

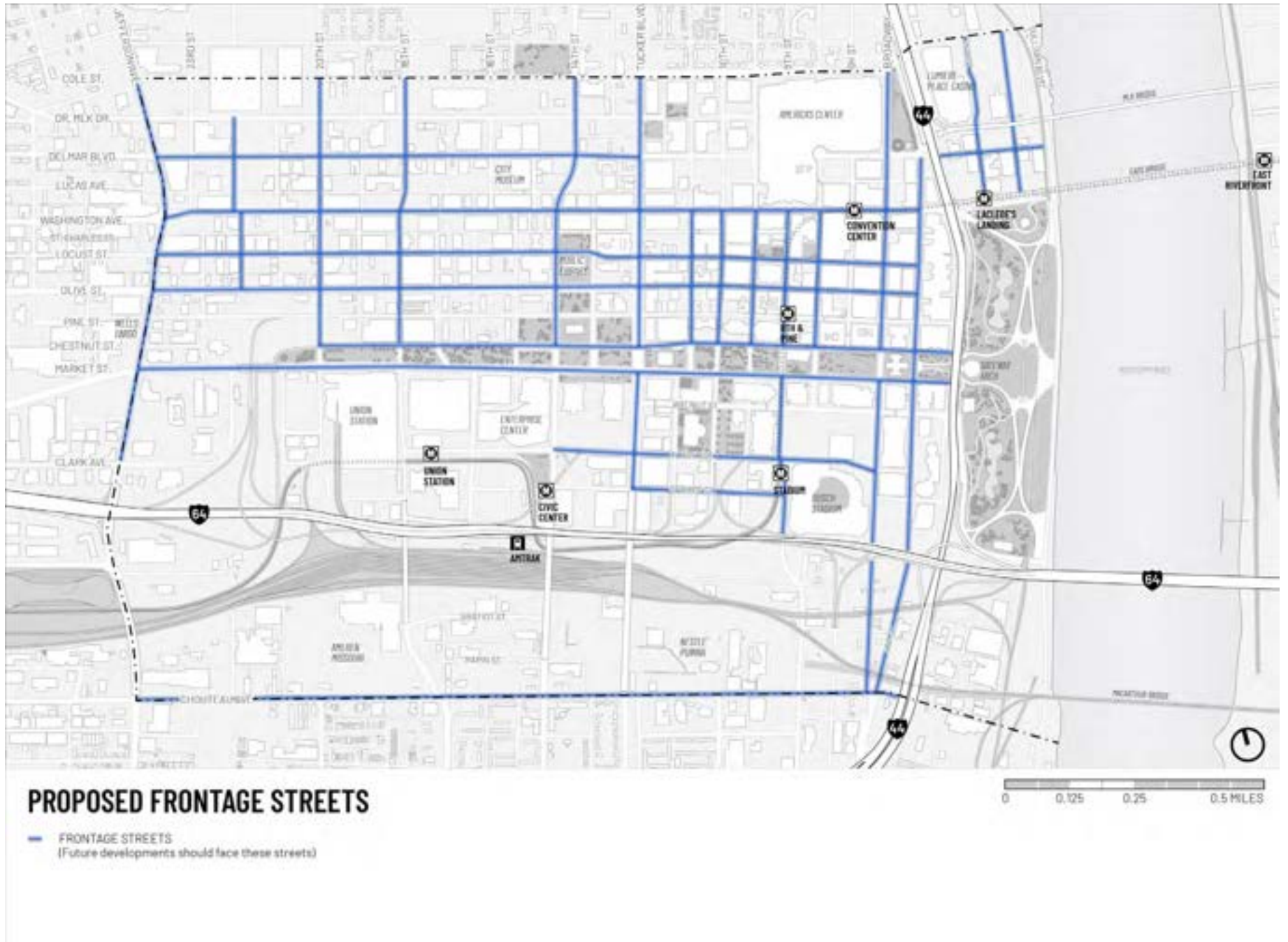
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**G. UPDATE THE ZONING TO INCLUDE SOME FORM-BASED MEASURES**

To enhance vibrancy of Downtown streets, the following four zoning recommendations to new housing development must be considered.

- First, require new developments to face the proposed active frontage streets. Major streets that connect Downtown with adjacent neighborhoods and destinations, for example, Washington Avenue and 20th Street, should serve as the main frontage streets. Alleys and small streets, which connect just a few handful of blocks, should be functional for loading and/or parking vehicles.
- Second, consider a zoning requirement that mandates collaboration with the St. Louis Streets Department to regulate curb cuts. If regulated in advance, strategic location and minimized number of curb cuts will serve the loading and vehicle entry while not interfere with pedestrian experience.
- Third, set back dimensions of the new housing developments should be controlled to provide active ground floor experience in all the frontage streets.
- Fourth, consider eliminating non-accessory parking lots as an allowable use and work with the Downtown Parking Study to consider imposing additional costs on surface lots if possible.

Figure 21: Proposed Active Frontage Streets





**Chapter 04:**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

These four measures will help to improve Downtown residents' quality of life and safety. Additional measures should require sustainable building practices in new construction to help improve the urban heat island effect, reduce stormwater impacts, and lessen the energy demands of the built environment. Lastly, consider establishing a Special Use District (SUD) over Downtown to regulate and concentrate residential development. Current zoning designations loosely control residential developments Downtown. Existing Downtown residents primarily live south of Washington Avenue and north of Chestnut Street. It would make sense to use a SUD to focus future residential development in this area to increase density where people already are and align zoning with street designs to create walkable neighborhoods.

**1.2 MARKET DOWNTOWN AS ONE OF THE CITY'S MOST DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS**

Downtown is already unique among St. Louis neighborhoods with a mix of races and ethnicities calling it home. For those that live Downtown, over 60% are satisfied or very satisfied. Others have mixed-feeling but less than 5% dislike Downtown living. For those not currently living Downtown, a mix of negative perceptions about safety as well as concerns about the housing available, prevents many from making the move. However, there is a visible market for urban living as seen by the growth in other walkable, dense neighborhoods like the Central West End, Delmar Loop and the Grove. Downtown can and should benefit from this growth in younger, more urban-minded residents and particularly for those looking for diversity and access to major amenities.





“More diversity and minority inclusion in ALL areas are needed in our region. I’m a person of color and I can honestly say Downtown has never appealed to me due to absence of inclusion and mostly “white” festivals, clubs, concerts, shopping, programing, etc.”

*Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) Holiday Party, 2018*



**PRECEDENT:**  
EXPLORE DOWNTOWN LIVING



MINNEAPOLIS, MN  
Explore Downtown Living event gives prospective residents an opportunity to explore residential communities in five downtown neighborhoods during a two-day, open-door event. This unique tour allows you the ability to explore and compare multiple downtown properties.

Source: <https://www.exploredtliving.com>

**A. DEVELOP A MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE DOWNTOWN LIVING WITHIN METRO-STL REGION**

DSI's website should further market Downtown living with an emphasis on Downtown's accessibility to professional sports, restaurants, theaters, offices and festivals, etc. Additional efforts to make the Downtown living experience come alive could include the production of short video clips or "webisodes," each highlighting particular themes, including the many different household types and people young and old who call Downtown home. Bringing a first-person perspective through short resident testimonial video clips—from both long-time residents and newcomers—could be worthwhile in representing the diversity of Downtown neighborhoods and presenting a range of perspectives on why it is great to live Downtown. Some downtown living marketing strategies, such as Minneapolis's Explore Downtown Living campaign, have created tours specifically for those who may be considering relocating Downtown—a chance to learn about what Downtown has to offer, get some orientation on the lay of the land, meet other potential newcomers, and take a peek inside various housing options to get a sense of what is on the market.



*Explore Downtown Living's marketing videos of five neighborhoods in Downtown Minneapolis*



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**B. SPOTLIGHT LOCAL SCHOOLS AND HIGHLIGHT THEIR SUCCESS STORIES AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

Families with young children make up only a small proportion of Downtown households. It is predominantly smaller households comprised of younger professionals and empty nesters. Until a greater diversity of housing choices are available, it will be difficult to attract more families Downtown. However, one issue that is raised frequently relates to schools and the perception of a lack of Downtown school options. However, Downtown is in the unique position with two charter schools - the KIPP Academy and Confluence Academy - both of which offer unique programs and opportunities to partner with local organizations to improve and grow Downtown. These schools need to be visibly integrated into marketing efforts with highlights of academic achievements, student programs and community partnerships.



*KIPP St. Louis High School located on Jefferson Ave.*



*Students at Confluence Academy on 15th Street*

**PRECEDENT:**  
THE DOWNTOWN CHALLENGE  
MACON, GA



**PRECEDENT:**  
THE NEIGHBORHOOD MATCHING  
FUND  
SEATTLE, WA



Both microgrant programs offer opportunities for people to implement their small-scale projects.

Source: <https://cfcga.org/grant/downtown-challenge/> and <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/neighborhood-matching-fund>

*Downtown Neighborhood Association during a new members event*



### **1.3 BROADEN DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (DNA) AND NEIGHBORHOOD CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES**

The Downtown Neighborhood Association is the lead organizer for Downtown residents. It plays an important role in advocacy, information sharing and targeted initiatives. For Downtown to strengthen as a neighborhood, DNA needs to continue to play a very active role. The most successful downtowns are shaped not just by a downtown organization but by the actions of their many residents who roll up their sleeves and pitch in to make the neighborhood a better place to live. Simply put, *Design Downtown STL* needs active civic participation from Downtown residents to bring the vision to reality.



*Downtown Neighborhood Association logo*

### **A. CREATE DOWNTOWN TASK FORCES TO ENSURE DIVERSE REPRESENTATION THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION**

*Design Downtown STL* was built upon a wide-ranging engagement process to help identify partners for the future of Downtown. Though the planning process may be complete, there is a need for engagement more than ever. *Design Downtown STL* establishes a set of 5 goals. Create a task force of between 10-15 people for each goal to drive implementation activities. The task forces must reflect the diversity in backgrounds and race of Downtown residents and meet quarterly to check in on progress.



*Downtown Neighborhood Association members and leaders*

“Think of ways to make Downtown feel more welcoming to people of various ethnic backgrounds. Also celebrate the history and heritage of diversity in Downtown St. Louis.”

**B. OFFER MINI-GRANTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL RESIDENTS TAKING ACTION**

An incentive for residents to work toward a better Downtown is to offer a competitive mini-grant for any idea and action that helps to implement one the strategies in *Design Downtown STL*. Residents with winning project ideas could receive micro-grants for implementation. Empowering citizens to take on smaller-scale projects through a microgranting process can accelerate implementation efforts and maintain momentum and excitement built during the planning process. Examples in Macon, GA (the College Hill Corridor Neighborhood Challenge and, most recently, the Downtown Challenge) and Seattle (The Neighborhood Matching Fund) speak to the long-term value of this initiative.



**PRECEDENT:**  
EXPLORE DOWNTOWN LIVING



GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
A planning process, ‘GR Forward’, reorganized in 2017 around the plan’s diversity goals. Their Citizen Leadership Alliance now nearly reflects the racial diversity of the population living in the City of Grand Rapids, with 65% White, 16% Black, 10% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Mixed race and 4% Asian. They are also broadly representative of the community’s diversity across professional expertise, geographic residence, and age.

Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



## Chapter 04: RECOMMENDATIONS

*St. Patrick Center on Tucker Blvd.*



There are approximately 1,100 unsheltered population in St. Louis.

### **1.4 SUPPORT THE UNHOUSED POPULATION**

Downtown plays a critical role in providing services to people in need. As with small and large downtowns across the country, Downtown St. Louis is the center of supportive services and the hub of the regional transit system. On any given night, the unsheltered population is approximately 1,100 people in St. Louis City, of which about 20% are chronically unsheltered. This means the vast majority are temporarily unsheltered and, with assistance, can find shelter and/or employment to help them address their situation. St. Patrick Center, the City and other partners are actively working on a housing first policy to move those that are unsheltered into housing. But these organizations also provide other necessary services to help people meet other critical daily needs including access to food, medical care, mental health support and addiction counseling. These services and activities must be supported and integrated into the further growth and development of Downtown.

#### **A. CONSIDER EXPANDING DAY SERVICES**

Most shelters that serve the local unsheltered population close to guests sometime between 8 and 10 am; the shelters do not reopen for guests until 5 pm. St. Louis once had a day center to complement the coverage provided by overnight shelters but this space was closed due to financial constraints. Day centers offer needed services and amenities, including showers, laundry, internet, telephones, health care and counseling (or referrals), and classes. Additionally, they provide a place to get out of the elements, a place to rest, a sense of community, and a safe space to simply be. The City, St. Patrick Center and local partners should work to identify possible locations for a new day center in Downtown.

“Ongoing work is needed to come up with a true solution for the [unhoused population]. They need to be viewed as people who need help, not as a threat.”

#### **B. REDESIGN INTERCO PLAZA TO PROVIDE AN ATTRACTIVE AMENITY**

Interco Plaza is an existing park between St. Patrick Center and the Post-Dispatch building. Next to the St. Louis Public Schools headquarters, this park is an awkward space that serves no one particularly well. Clients to the St. Patrick Center enter from Interco Plaza in an uninviting space surrounded by a fence. The rest of the plaza is largely unused and overlooked. An effort should be made to redesign this space to both provide an attractive front door to the Post-Dispatch building and St. Louis Public schools but critically to also provide a welcoming space for those seeking to access the St. Patrick Center’s valuable services.

#### **C. BUILD PUBLIC SPACES THAT ARE HOSPITABLE TO ALL**

The improvements to parks and plazas described in Goal 4 are not intended solely for people with means; Downtown’s public spaces should be improved as places for all people to rest and relax, comfortably. Seek to integrate water fountains, coin-operated lockers, public toilets and water bottle filling stations in public parks where possible. These amenities, if well maintained, will serve families and students who are in Downtown on a budget, as well as people exercising or just exploring Downtown.

#### **D. DEVELOP A PROGRAM TO OFFER WORK OPPORTUNITIES TO UNHOUSED POPULATION**

There are opportunities to marry the needs of Downtown growth and improvement with skills training and job opportunities for unhoused population. This includes park and street maintenance as well as with working with landscaping contractors to maintain plantings and trees Downtown. Look for new opportunities to partner with wrap-around service providers to develop a training and employment track for individuals working to break the cycles of being unhoused, addiction, and recidivism. Connect with the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico, to learn about its panhandling diversion program, There’s a Better Way, which offers day jobs to panhandlers. Consider raising funds to pilot a similar program in Downtown St. Louis.

**PRECEDENT:**  
THERE’S A BETTER WAY FOR  
THE UNHOUSED POPULATION



ALBUQUERQUE, NM  
There’s a Better Way program  
confronts unhoused population  
through offering day jobs to  
panhandlers.

Source: [abqjournal.com](http://abqjournal.com)

**1.5 PROTECT DOWNTOWN AFFORDABILITY AND  
ENCOURAGE NEW WORKFORCE HOUSING**

Today, 18% of Downtown housing units are income restricted (dedicated for low income individuals). This lags the rates in other major cities, however, there is a significant amount of income restricted affordable housing on the immediate edges of Downtown along Chouteau Avenue and Cole Street.

18% of Downtown housing units are income restricted. Establish a goal of 25% of housing units priced below market rates, to accommodate the “missing middle” households.

The primary issue is the distribution of available housing at different income levels. The overwhelming majority of Downtown housing units (82%) are market rate rentals or condos. As noted, the remainder is reserved for households earning less than 60% of the area median income (AMI). There are almost no housing options for households earning between 60% and 120% of AMI. This “missing middle” refers to teachers, restaurant workers and many small business owners to name just a few. Housing that serves all households including these middle-income households is necessary to support an inclusive Downtown workforce.

Cities across the country struggle to retain affordability in their downtowns. With proactive planning and policy, Downtown can grow in population but also retain its diversity and affordability.

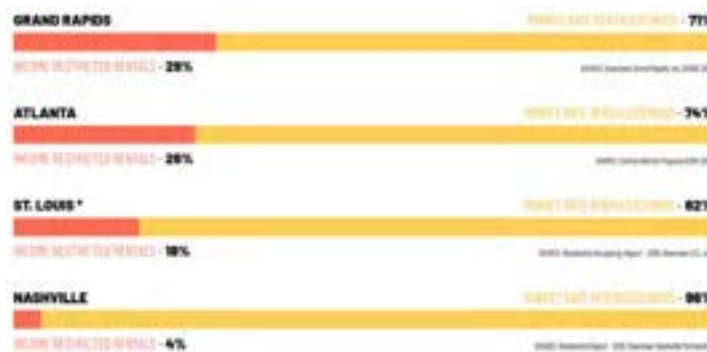


Figure 22:  
**Downtown Housing Breakdown**







## “Protecting affordable housing is a start and diverse, equity-focused programming is a start.”

Cities across the country struggle to retain affordability in their downtowns. With proactive planning and policy, Downtown can grow in population but also retain its diversity and affordability.

### **★ A. CONSIDER A GOAL OF 25% OF HOUSING UNITS PRICED BELOW MARKET RATES**

Downtown needs to provide a mix of housing types at a range of prices to offer true housing choice for families and individuals of all backgrounds and people of ages, aiming to meet the needs of low-income and working households. Already, the Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) protect the 18% of income restricted units in Downtown, ensuring that these units remain available to households earning at or below 60% AMI. (Units funded with LIHTC subsidies are only income restricted for a set period of time and require a reapplication process to protect affordability.) In addition to these units that are reserved for low-income households, Downtown St. Louis should protect an additional portion of its inventory for working class households (e.g., teachers, civil servants, health care professionals, etc.), or those earning 60-120% AMI, aiming to reserve at least 25% of its total housing stock for households at or below 120% AMI through low-income and workforce housing.

### **B. WORK TO ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK TO CREATE PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS IN DOWNTOWN STL VIA LAND TRUST AND/OR LAND BANK MODELS**

Permanently affordable housing ensures that desirable residential units are available at affordable rates (for purchase or lease) in perpetuity. One option is to place deed restrictions and covenants on the property so that the property will be affordable even if the tenant or owner changes. Another option is to establish long-term ground leases, whereby the land value is separated from the improvement value of a piece of real estate, and ground leases are typically executed by land trusts. A land trust could be structured to operate in key areas of Downtown that are expected to be vulnerable to gentrification. In Austin, Texas, the Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation (GNDC) has been using land trusts to prevent displacement in downtown-adjacent areas.

### **C. CONSIDER ESTABLISHING WORKFORCE HOUSING REQUIREMENTS TO ACCESS DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES**

If accessing SLDC incentives or land at a reduced cost from SLDC or the City, 25% of housing created should be reserved for residents earning below 120% of AMI. Particularly for developers requesting TIF funds – and its 23-year benefit – stipulations are necessary to

“More people need to be living Downtown if any of these other proposed changes are going to be successful in the long term.”

ensure that future projects receiving public proceeds are intentionally designed and programmed to serve as broad of the taxpayer base as possible.

Similarly, SLDC should prioritize affordable housing for projects seeking New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC). NMTC attracts private capital to low-income areas and is intended to further community development projects, stimulate economic opportunity and create jobs. Long-term availability of housing for a range of income levels can help protect against gentrification and displacement.

#### **D. ENCOURAGE EXPANSION OF LIVE-WORK UNITS IN DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS**

Live-work units with “maker space” accommodations support both residential and entrepreneurial activities. These spaces will allow residents to produce marketable goods within the same structural unit that they live in. The “making” could include artisanal production activities that do not require increased electrical requirements or produce unpleasant smells or loud noises, or include shared workspaces with high-speed internet. This product type could prove to be especially valuable in the wake of COVID-19 where many Americans were forced to work from home, making new residential

products that could accommodate workspace and maker-space very attractive.

#### **E. ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVE RESIDENTIAL MODELS INCLUDING MICRO-UNITS AND CO-LIVING**

Smaller units are increasingly popular for new graduates, and co-living, cohabitation, and “Golden Girl” arrangements are becoming more popular in Gen-Zers, Millennials, and AARPers. Co-living models are living arrangements that typically provide occupants with a bedroom and bathroom but shared accommodations living quarters (i.e., kitchens, living room, etc.). Co-living models generate rents on a per-bed basis, which spreads the cost and risk associated per project.

Microunits are an emerging, naturally affordable option and have recently gained national traction. Microunits can range in size (e.g., from 220SF in San Francisco to 500SF in Dallas, TX) and are typically equipped with a functioning kitchen and bathrooms. These product types can help address long-term affordable housing in Downtown by increasing the density and by reducing rents for those seeking inexpensive space in Downtown. Microunit housing developments need to be located near civic places and public transportation to accommodate for a relative lack of amenities within the unit or development.

**PRECEDENT:**  
GUADALUPE NEIGHBORHOOD  
CORPORATION'S LAND TRUST



AUSTIN, TX  
Guadalupe Neighborhood Corporation provides affordable housing through a land trust program to Downtown residents, who would otherwise be displaced due to the increase in housing values.

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/affordable-housing-always/397637/>



## “More lights, more lights, and more lights.”

Survey participants and those attending the October open house indicated that “concerns about public safety” were their greatest concern whether they were a resident, employee or visitor.

### **1.6 CREATE A DYNAMIC AND SAFE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD DAY AND NIGHT**

The public realm needs to be clean, safe, and attractive so that it invites people to venture outside. Investing in the basic components of an excellent urban experience creates a virtuous circle that attracts more people and generates a liveliness that builds a sense that Downtown is a safe and exciting place to be. The Downtown CID currently allocates 61% of its budget toward cleaning and safety measures. This includes 460 activity reports recorded by secondary officers and 950 safety and security discussions with Downtown businesses and patrons so far this year. However, crime and the perceptions of Downtown safety come up time and time again as an issue substantially impacting Downtown’s future. Survey participants and those attending the first open house indicated that “concerns about public safety” were their greatest concern whether they were a resident, employee or visitor.

Recently, DSI at the urging of concerned stakeholders, moved to change the relationship between the CID and DSI. A full vote to reauthorize the CID is not until 2021 but the proposed changes include reducing the overall assessment for the CID but utilizing a higher

percentage of the budget to keep Downtown clean and safe. DSI will be funded separately and tasked with the implementation of *Design Downtown STL*. A feeling of safety in downtowns is largely a measure of street activity - an issue *Design Downtown STL* emphasizes through each goal area. However, there are specific actions that can help to address crime and create a safer and more welcoming environment.

#### **★ A. BRING BACK AN AMBASSADOR PROGRAM**

Ambassadors would wear highly visible uniforms and be visible in Downtown on foot or by bike. Although Ambassadors are not police officers, they play a key role in deterring crime. Ambassadors would be unarmed, trained in de-escalation and anti-bias practices and equipped with radios to report safety and security concerns to the police if a situation they encounter escalates. Years ago, an Ambassador Program was phased out in Downtown with the dollars available for safety going toward the Downtown STL, Inc. Safety Program. The program is a free service offered to residents and visitors of the Downtown area funded through a contract with a private security firm to deploy off-duty police officers to work secondary assignments patrolling the Downtown CID. This approach to staffing this type of program should be reconsidered.



LEFT:  
Night view of Washington Ave.



RIGHT:  
Night view of the ST. Louis Central Library

Providing service beyond the existing Safety Program, Ambassadors would also be a valuable resource for visitors to Downtown. They would be trained to offer directions and help visitors navigate public transit service and payment kiosks, including bike share stations or scooter share, and could be dedicated to transit stations or stationed on Metrolink trains. With the CID dedicating more of its budget to clean and safe initiatives, this is an opportunity to fund this critical service.

With the upcoming change coming to the CID, this is an opportune time to discuss changing the ways in which dollars are spent and supporting, instead, uniformed ambassadors. Ambassadors provide more visibility which helps to build awareness and confidence that Downtown is safer. The new CID board should seriously consider this change in their first budget

### **B. IMPLEMENT STREET LIGHT LED REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

Walking Downtown in the evening can be desolate, with businesses closing in the early evening and limited evening activity. Better street lighting sets the stage for nighttime activity by creating a comfortable and welcoming environment for people. This is a recognized priority for DSI and they created the Light MySTL

program to integrate SMART city technologies through state-of-the-art wireless lights that will brighten streets and sidewalks. The new light poles can be remotely adjusted for brightness and color to augment special events such as Cardinals/Blues games, St. Patrick's Day or July 4th. This is a part of an effort to replace 2,300 lights Downtown and make St. Louis one of the largest SMART City grids in the U.S. The implementation is ongoing as funds are available. This initiative is important to continue. Additionally, the same technology should be used to help light up the underpasses that act as gateways to Downtown and within park redesigns where applicable.

### **C. OFFER A DOWNTOWN BUSINESS LIGHTING PROGRAM**

The sidewalk is critically important to the look and feel of Downtown at night. While the new SMART City lights will help to brighten the sidewalk, individual store lighting can augment this investment and provide additional marketing and visibility for businesses. A business lighting program would provide matching dollars up to a maximum amount to select and install a storefront light. These can be inexpensive investments that go a long way toward lighting up storefronts and supporting the needs of small businesses.

**PRECEDENT:**  
AVENUE OF THE ARTS



PHILADELPHIA, PA  
A series of historic buildings along Broad Street have been lit with LED fixtures. For seasonal events, these lights are coordinated to celebrate and add a visual excitement to the City.

Source: Philadelphia Center City District

“Overall, improved safety is a must.”

**D. HIGHLIGHT HISTORIC STRUCTURES WITH FACADE LED LIGHTING**

Facade lighting adds both illumination and interest to the public realm. At the October Open House, we asked participants to choose which ideas from other cities could make Downtown more vibrant, and “uplit buildings” ranked as the second most popular idea. Downtown has an abundance of architecturally interesting and historic buildings that could be accented through lighting, while also fostering a strengthened sense of safety after hours. This is already happening along portions of Washington Avenue where a few property owners have taken steps to light up the street and their buildings in the evening. Work with multiple building owners to identify and implement coordinated facade lighting. Philadelphia’s Avenue of the Arts is the first example from an American city of lighting coordinated in this way. A dozen historic buildings have been lit with LED fixtures that also provide a platform for programmed lighting effects and special event light shows that add visual excitement and support the cultural uses along the avenue.

**E. IMPLEMENT LIGHT ART ON KIENER GARAGE SURFACES**

The Kiener garages serve as the backdrop to what is often called the “living room to the City” - Kiener Plaza. As such, they may be some of the most visible buildings in the City. Their age and use, however, do not offer the best backdrop for what is an important Downtown civic gathering space. Work with the property owners to design and install large-scale light art on the surfaces. This activity will enliven Kiener Plaza at night, provide another Downtown attraction and, likely reduce cruising activities that sometimes take place on Chestnut Street.



*Kiener Plaza Park*



“I don’t walk through half of those parks because I don’t feel safe doing so, possibly due to poor lighting and narrow sidewalks. People aren’t going to flock Downtown until you fix those issues, real or perceived.”

**F. COORDINATE STREET CLOSURE DURING WEEKENDS AND LARGE EVENTS**

Many downtowns are experimenting with closing streets to better manage traffic at different times of the day and week. Temporary street closures should be tested to address specific opportunities and concerns in Downtown. For instance, portions of 20th Street should be closed during MLS events to provide increased safety for pedestrians to access the stadium, similar to how Clark Street in front of Busch Stadium is closed during Cardinal games - allowing for additional plaza space that strongly connects the developments in Ballpark Village with the stadium.



Washington Avenue as well as Leonor K Sullivan Boulevard and other streets in Laclede’s Landing offer additional opportunities. Many residents have expressed concern about late night traffic, cruising and criminal activity on weekend evenings. One way to address these concerns is to temporarily close specific blocks of Washington Avenue and/or streets in the Landing on Friday and Saturday evenings. This move would prevent thru traffic and limit cruising but also create a unique night time environment for pedestrians. Edgewood Avenue in downtown Atlanta faced similar challenges and after closing the street to cars on weekends, crime has dropped significantly and restaurant and bar owners have seen a positive impact to their sales. For this to work in Downtown, the ultimate solution needs to be based on a traffic study to relocate rideshare and valet activities and; designed with property and business owners.

*Edgewood Avenue in Atlanta, GA  
Source: Atlanta.net*

<b>01 Realize Downtown's potential to be the region's premiere walkable, diverse urban neighborhood</b>	
Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>1.1 Encourage new housing development</b>	
<i>Push forward to rehabilitate remaining major historic buildings</i> ★	Ongoing
<i>Diversify and expand Downtown housing options</i>	Long
<i>Focus housing development in target areas</i>	Long
<i>Capitalize a Downtown housing fund to fill the financing gap for new construction</i> ★	Short
<i>Create shared parking facilities where possible to lower development costs</i>	Medium
<i>Capitalize a strategic acquisition fund to support development of key nodes over next 20-25 years</i>	Medium
<i>Update the zoning to include some form-based measures</i>	Short
<b>1.2 Market Downtown as one of the City's most diverse neighborhoods</b>	
<i>Develop a marketing campaign to promote Downtown living within Metro-STL region</i>	Short
<i>Spotlight local schools and highlight their success stories and community programs</i>	Short
<b>1.3 Broaden Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) and neighborhood civic participation in Downtown activities</b>	
<i>Create Downtown task forces to ensure diverse representation through implementation</i>	Now
<i>Offer mini-grants to support local residents taking action</i>	Medium
<b>1.4 Support the unhoused population</b>	
<i>Consider expanding day services</i>	Long
<i>Redesign Interco Plaza to provide an attractive amenity</i>	Short
<i>Build public spaces that are hospitable to all</i>	Medium
<i>Develop a program to offer work opportunities to unhoused population</i>	Long

Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>1.5 Protect Downtown affordability and encourage new workforce housing</b>	
<i>Consider a goal of 25% of housing units priced below market rates ★</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Work to establish a framework to create permanently affordable housing units in Downtown STL via Land Trust and/or Land Bank models</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Consider establishing workforce housing requirements to access development incentives</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Encourage expansion of Live-Work units in Downtown St. Louis</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Encourage alternative residential models including micro-units and co-living</i>	<i>Long</i>
<b>1.6 Create a dynamic and safe Downtown neighborhood day and night</b>	
<i>Bring back an Ambassador program ★</i>	<i>Now</i>
<i>Implement street light LED replacement project</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Offer a Downtown business lighting program</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Highlight historic structures with facade LED lighting</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Implement light art on Kiener Garage surfaces</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Coordinate street closure during weekends and large events</i>	<i>Now</i>



## Goal 02

# EXPAND THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMY TO SUPPORT STARTUPS, ENTREPRENEURS, EXISTING AND GROWING BUSINESSES

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Downtown St. Louis offers a density of major destinations that rival most mid-sized American cities, but the Downtown area is far more affordable than many of these peers. Commercial real estate in Downtown is cheaper than key office locations in suburban St. Louis. This highly unusual trend presents a huge opportunity to capitalize on Downtown's affordability to help solidify Downtown as a center for innovative tech and creative firms but also as a living laboratory to support small and growing business of all kinds that allow the economy to grow and diversify.

# WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

A wide range of companies – from young startups to older legacy businesses and Fortune 1000 companies – call Downtown home. The Downtown area, alone, supports 52,600 private sector jobs which is over one-quarter of the total private sector jobs in the City. When the total number of public sector jobs, coworking spaces with entrepreneurs, and the self-employed are factored in, the total estimated jobs in Downtown is over 65,000.

Today, Downtown's economic strengths include business and financial services; tourism; marketing, design, and publishing; and local entertainment and media. At least one-third of the total employment across the City in these jobs is located Downtown. Compared to national peers, however, Downtown has a lesser concentration of jobs and residents and has experienced slow job growth since the recession.

These trends impact the health of local businesses – out of 511 total storefronts in Downtown, 183 are empty. This high rate of vacancy indicates that there is simply too much space to fill with retail which adds to the negative perceptions around Downtown crime. Compared to cities including Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Nashville and Milwaukee, St. Louis has about double the amount of retail space to fill as downtowns in those locations measured by frontage. This is due in part to the fact that retail within Downtown St. Louis is spread across its 2.2 square miles. There are some concentrations along Washington Avenue for instance, but there are currently too many gaps to foster the kind of active environment seen in these other cities. Downtown additionally suffers from the fact that only 20% of spending on retail and restaurants comes from Downtown residents. 80% of the dollars that support Downtown retailers and restaurants comes from visitors and office workers

80% of the dollars that support Downtown retailers and restaurants comes from visitors and office workers.

Figure 23: Downtown Comparison



Figure 24: **Downtown Spending Comparison**



who are more prone to believe that Downtown is unsafe. Nationally, retail was struggling before the pandemic and now we face the prospect of supporting businesses in Downtown St. Louis in an extremely challenging context. Downtown needs to acknowledge that retail and restaurants should not and cannot go everywhere. New ideas and new businesses are needed to occupy vacant space and activate Downtown streets.

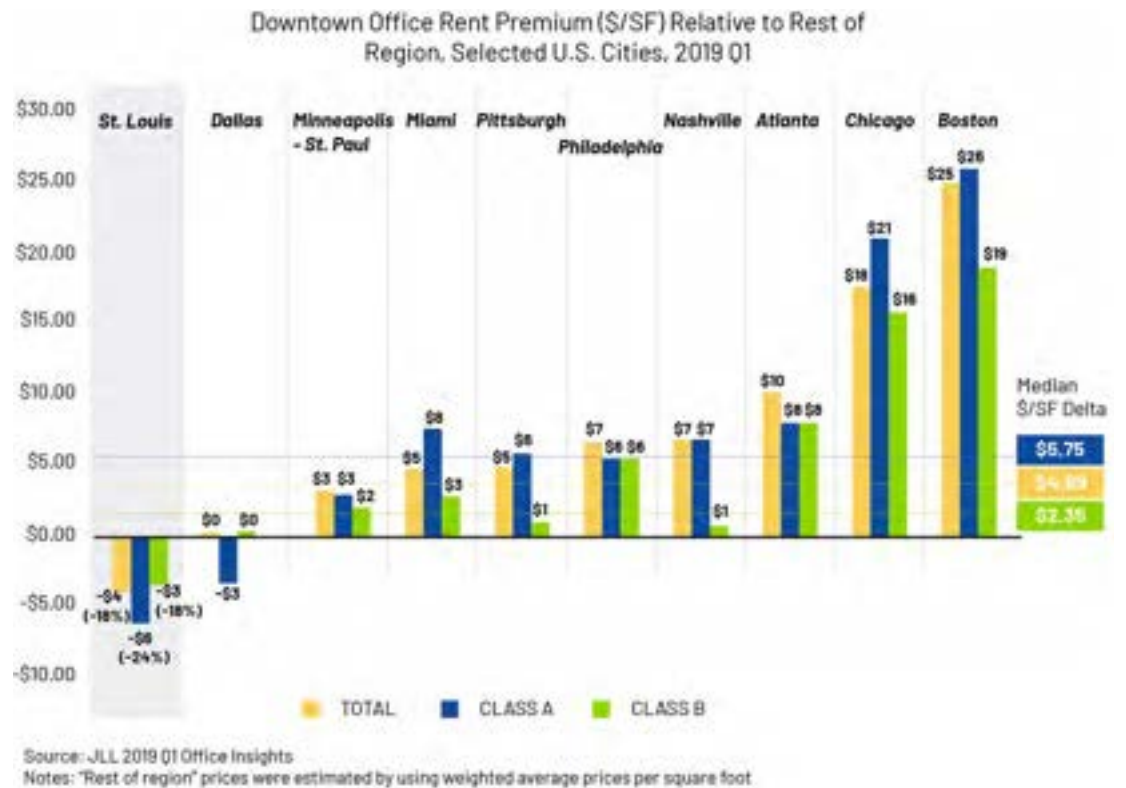
The lower costs and available commercial space Downtown means that non-traditional users and businesses can potentially find a home in Downtown. Space-intensive businesses like artisanal production and prototyping could completely transform how commercial space is used, making outdated office space a desirable hub for small-scale manufacturing. Empty storefronts could be used to showcase eye-catching production methods.



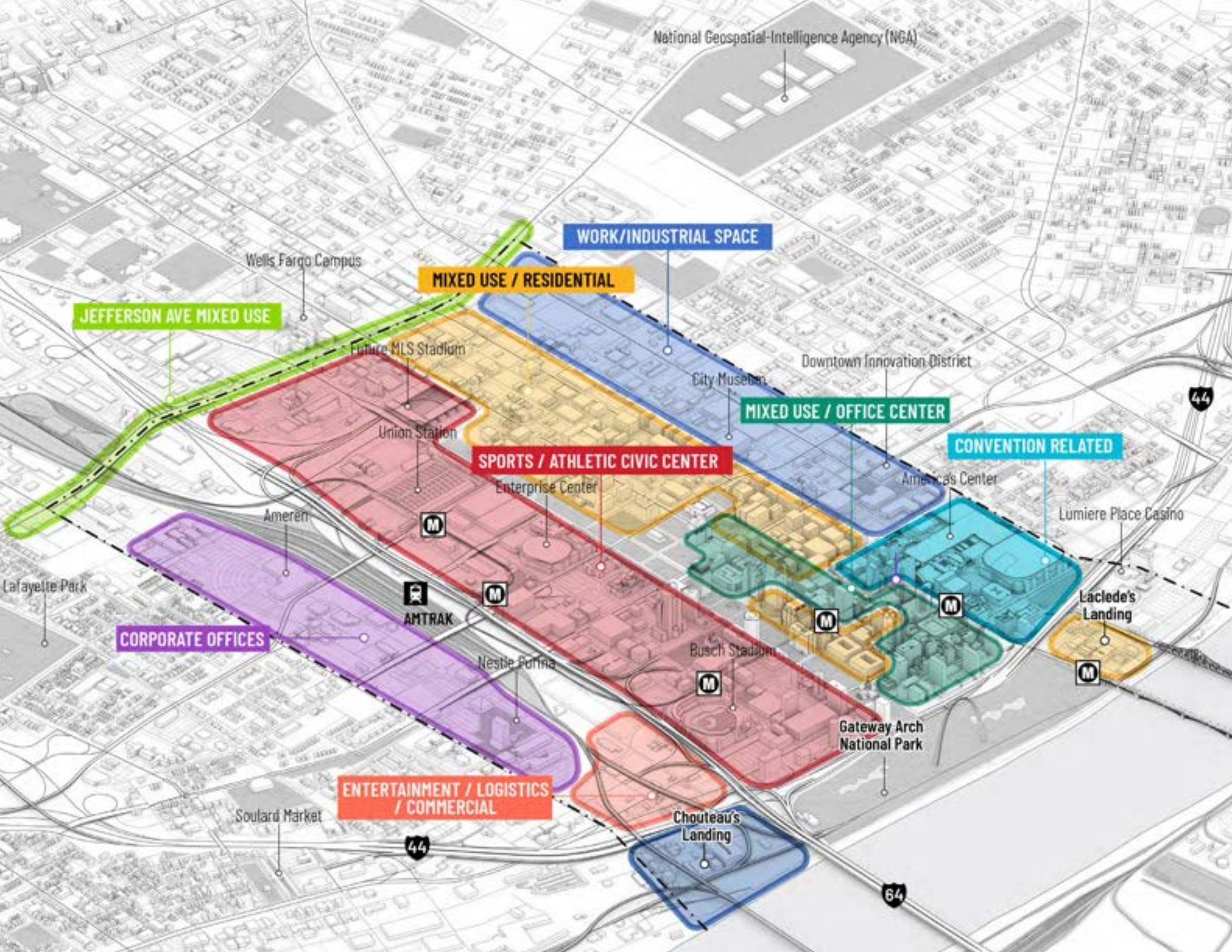
Downtown contains five shared office spaces and coworking spaces. Their presence speaks to the demand for flexible space with flexible lease arrangements. This type of diversification of the economy can complement Downtown's traditional strengths in finance, business services and law but also support emerging geospatial activity tied to NGA West and T-REX. This is especially important as T-REX, continues to position itself as a secure site for geospatial firms looking to establish a presence in St. Louis.

Focusing on the needs of new businesses of all types brings unparalleled opportunities for inclusive entrepreneurship Downtown. Given Downtown's employment density and ability to attract millions of tourists annually, food and retail are two key "testbed" areas for new business models, such as ghost kitchens, food truck commissaries, restaurant incubators, and broader food production and distribution last-mile solutions for delivery.

Figure 25: **Downtown Office Rent Premium Comparison**







National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)

**WORK/INDUSTRIAL SPACE**

**MIXED USE / RESIDENTIAL**

**JEFFERSON AVE MIXED USE**

Wells Fargo Campus

Future MLS Stadium

Union Station

City Museum

Downtown Innovation District

**MIXED USE / OFFICE CENTER**

**SPORTS / ATHLETIC CIVIC CENTER**

**CONVENTION RELATED**

America's Center

Ameren



Enterprise Center

Lumiere Place Casino

Lafayette Park

**CORPORATE OFFICES**



AMTRAK



Nestle Purina

Busch Stadium



Laclede's Landing



Soulard Market

**ENTERTAINMENT / LOGISTICS / COMMERCIAL**

Chouteau's Landing

Gateway Arch National Park



Figure 26: **Overall Land Use Diagram**

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These types of opportunities can foster a new generation of diverse business owners and small businesses, and allow Downtown to grow and diversify its economic base. St. Louis already has a national reputation in supports for innovation and entrepreneurship (e.g., BioSTL, Cortex Innovation District, T-REX, and many others); these strengths can be instrumental and needle-moving when applied to “Main Street” businesses and diverse entrepreneurs. New programs are needed to tailor incentives for retail where possible and to ensure inclusive business opportunities within Downtown.

Alongside these opportunities to innovate, there are opportunities for Downtown to support its existing strengths. Existing and legacy businesses are the backbone of Downtown and need support to ensure they remain a lasting presence. As noted, T-REX offers

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space to startups, with a special focus on tech firms. Upcoming anticipated City growth in tech-related occupations for software and geospatial activity could be captured by Downtown. Additionally, the creative economy, which consists of strengths like marketing, design, and publishing, and entertainment and media, has a long history in Downtown. Thriving on density and proximity, St. Louis creatives have gravitated toward Downtown and Midtown; the so-called “Midtown Alley” enables proximity to both peers and potential clients, and maximizes opportunities for collaboration amidst (friendly) competition. The creative economy can be strengthened by greater collaboration around common needs and interests.

The strategies in this section focus on supporting retail, as well as alternative retail and restaurant models; diversifying the Downtown economy, and supporting inclusive entrepreneurship and small businesses; and leveraging the region’s academic institutions and their Downtown outposts to support industry and academic needs, as well as overall vibrancy Downtown.

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There are opportunities for Downtown to support its existing and burgeoning strengths.



# STRATEGIES

## 2.1 TARGET RETAIL ACTIVITY IN KEY DISTRICTS

As Downtown is physically large, it is imperative to create vibrancy by focusing activity in designated areas where retail and restaurants can best succeed. There is simply too much space to make every ground floor in Downtown a store or restaurant. There are six locations within Downtown that, based upon the current mix of ground floor activity and adjacent uses, should be focused on to support existing retailers and fill the storefront gaps. These include:

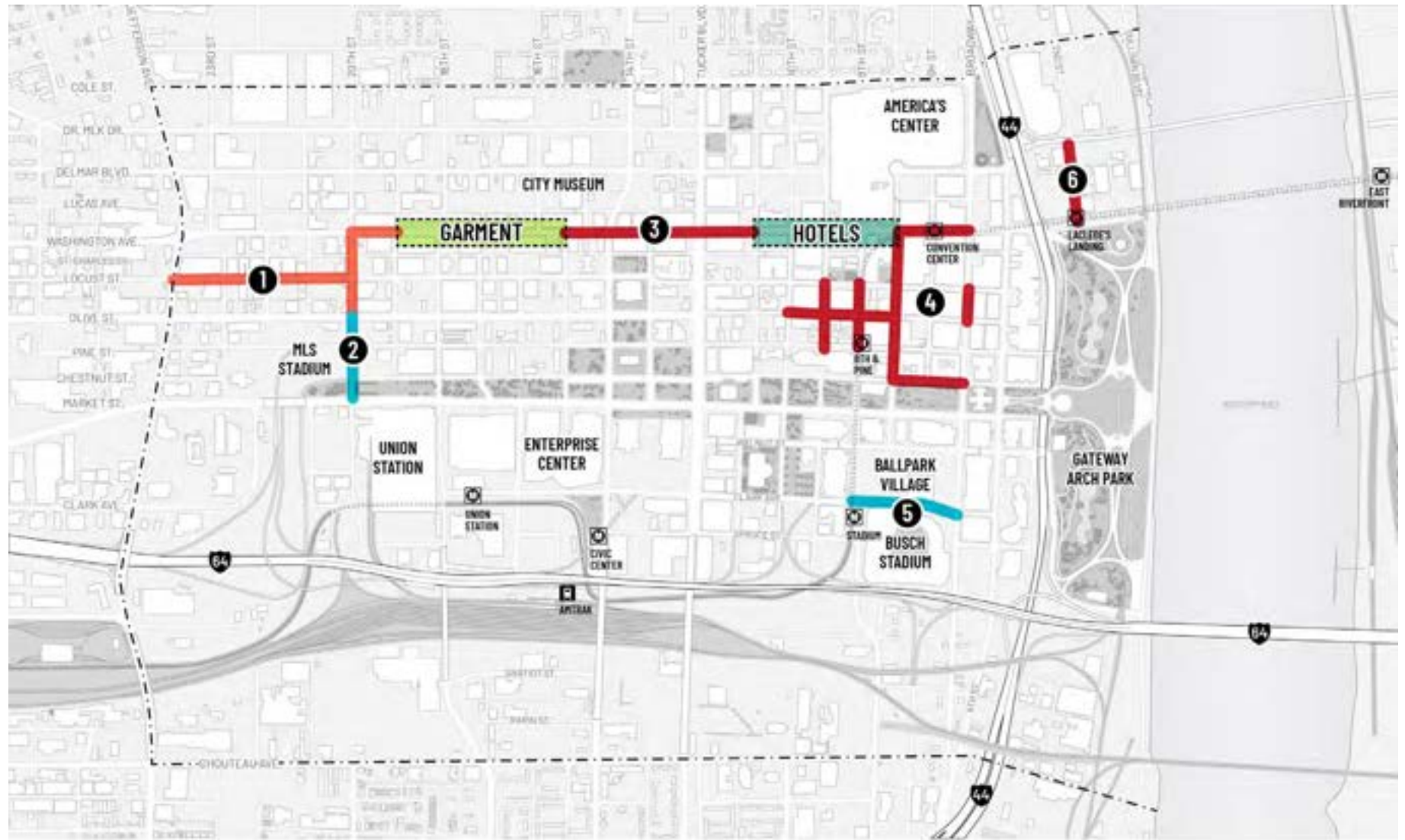


*Near 9th and Pine*

“More theater, restaurants,  
sports bars, retail.”



Figure 27: Core Retail Streets



## CORE RETAIL STREETS

### CORRIDOR TYPES

- Mix of ground-level offices, design studios, and retail/restaurants
- Sports/event related services and attractions
- Primary retail/restaurant corridors

### CORE RETAIL AREAS

- ① LOCUST/WASH, WEST CORRIDOR
- ② MLS STADIUM CORRIDOR
- ③ WASHINGTON AVE CORRIDOR

- ④ DOWNTOWN CORE
- ⑤ BALLPARK VILLAGE CORRIDOR
- ⑥ LACLEDE'S LANDING

### NON-RETAIL CORRIDOR LINKAGES

- GARMENT FASHION / DESIGN RELATED BUSINESSES
- HOTEL HOTEL, VISITOR, CONVENTION RELATED BUSINESSES

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These are six locations within Downtown that should be focused on to support existing retailers and fill the storefront gaps.

1  
**Locust / Washington Corridors** in Downtown West: with a mix of ground-level offices, design studios and shops and restaurants.



2  
**MLS Stadium** along 20th Street (in planning) to serve soccer fans and visitors to the Union Station, the Wheel, and St. Louis Aquarium.



3  
**Washington Avenue Corridor** stretching from 15th Street east toward the Convention Center with an emphasis on restaurants and retail.



4  
**Downtown Core** focused on portions of 7th, 8th, 9th and Olive Streets with a mix of retail and restaurants serving Downtown employees.



5

**Ballpark Village** serving baseball games and major events.



6

**Laclede's Landing** restaurant district serving Downtown visitors and residents.



"Density is critical. There are too many disconnected 'islands' of activity Downtown."

---

**A. TARGET RETAIL INCENTIVES TO DESIGNATED RETAIL CORRIDORS**

Work with SLDC to encourage the use of tax abatements and other incentives to steer retail toward these designated corridors Downtown. Downtown STL, Inc. should meet with SLDC annually to discuss corridor targets and review recent abatements and other incentives targeted for Downtown. Coordinate strategies around crime prevention and enhancing the feeling of safety on these corridors to further support existing and new businesses.

**★ B. CREATE “WHITE-BOX” SPACE ON TARGETED BLOCKS**

A deterrent for new or small businesses is the type and quality of space available. With limited capital, it is hard for small businesses to invest in major property upgrades just to set up shop. Based upon the inventory of retail spaces, work with property owners to create ready-to-go or “white-box” space suitable for a range of new businesses. Target this work to the designated retail corridors.

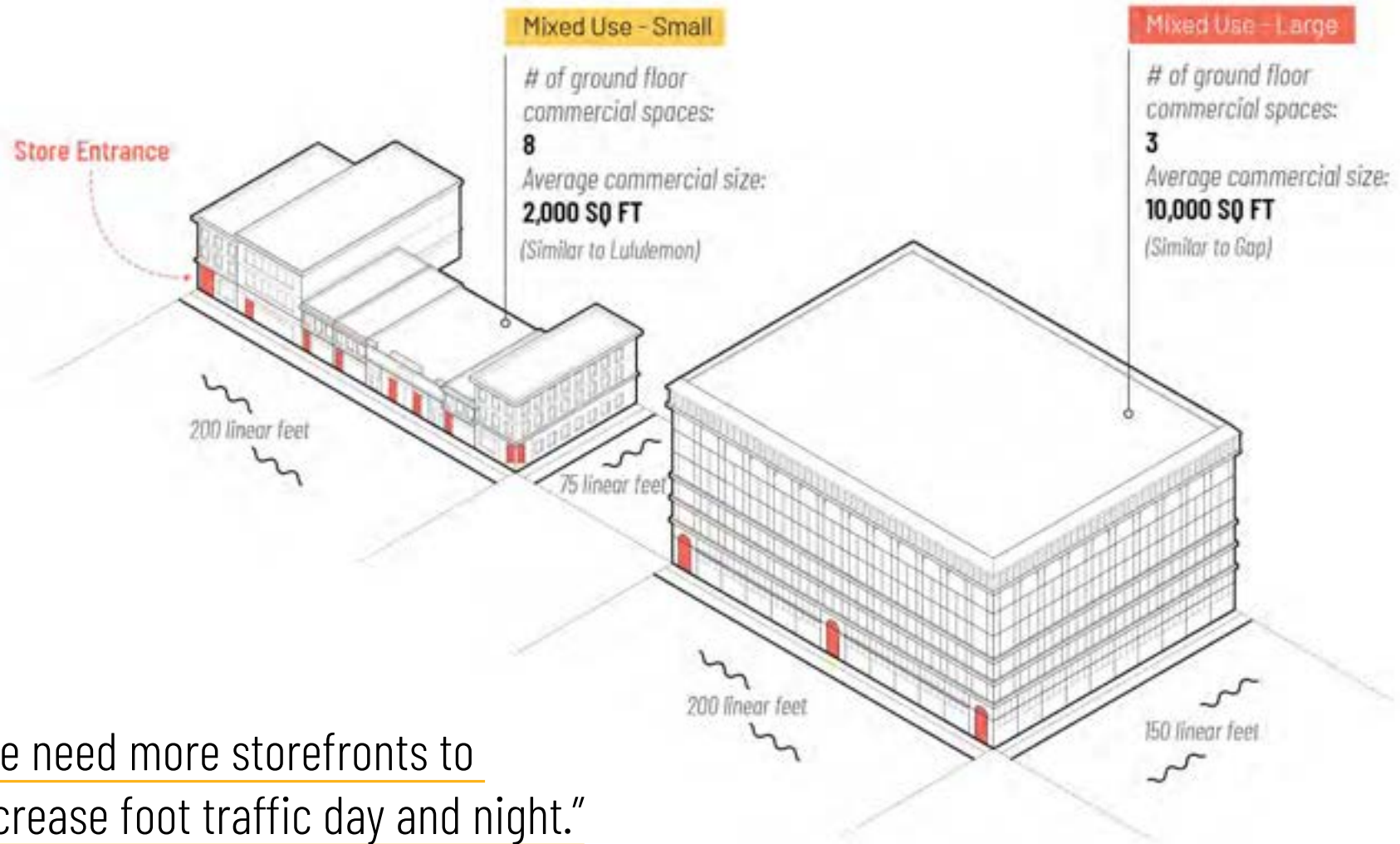
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**C. SUPPORT INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AT RETAIL NODES**

An inclusive entrepreneurship lens should accompany a broader retail strategy. Downtown STL, Inc. should develop typologies of retail nodes (by business types and products offered) and assess and track the locally-owned and MWBE composition of businesses within these nodes over time. Working with the City, SLDC, and its other partners, Downtown STL, Inc. should provide a suite of services to support local, small MWBE business including: tenant-landlord matchmaking, a MWBE-specific (or MWBE-prioritized) loan fund, free advertisements on websites and published marketing collateral, matching to established business mentors, and referrals to existing entrepreneurship support organizations and capital providers.



Figure 28: **Downtown Ground Floor Use**



"We need more storefronts to increase foot traffic day and night."

Figure 29: October 2019 Open House Results From Postcard From The Future Activity



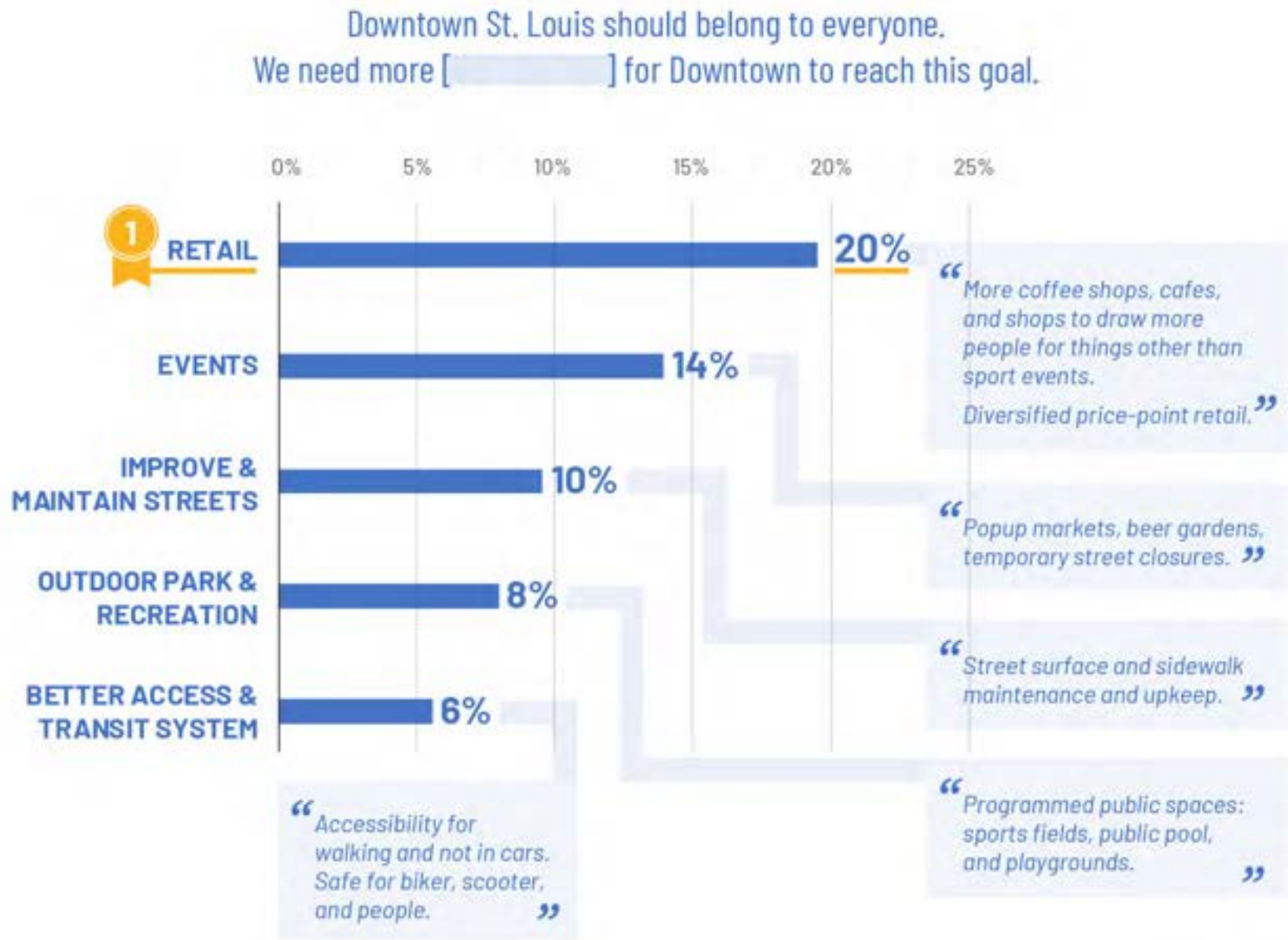
You should see Downtown St. Louis today! You wouldn't believe how much it's changed.  
**Now it's...**

---

EASY TO GET AROUND DIVERSE  
**VIBRANT** STOREFRONTS  
FULL OF PEOPLE  
WALKABLE **SAFE** BUSTLING  
NO VACANCY ACTIVE DESTINATION  
ART **LOTS OF RETAIL** CONNECTED  
THRIVING  
PEOPLE ARE OUT AND ABOUT CLEAN

Love,   
October, 2030

Figure 30: October 2019 Open House Results From Brainstorm Activity



## “More coffee shops/cafes/shops to draw more people for things other than sport events.”

### **2.2 PURSUE ALTERNATIVE RETAIL/RESTAURANT MODELS & SUPPORT RESILIENT FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION**

Despite its density of employment and growing population, even pre-COVID Downtown could be a difficult market for retail and restaurants. About 70% of non-visitor retail spending is from workers rather than residents. In the rest of St. Louis, only about 15% of non-visitor spending is from workers and 85% from residents. This means that more of the Downtown spending is compressed into a small number of hours during the work week. Retail and restaurant demand in Downtown is bolstered by tourism but much of this demand is seasonal (concentrated in the summer) or event-driven (sports, concerts), which adds to the volatility of activity that retailers and restaurateurs must serve. And today, the current Downtown resident population is too small and dispersed to support most businesses on their own.

The result is that in Downtown, retail options are limited. While the food scene is strong, it will take new approaches, including greater use of mobile retail like food trucks, to meet demand that shifts over time, as with for example, professional sports events. At the level

of individual restaurants, it can be very difficult to make a profit given the high variability of Downtown activity and demand. Going forward, technical assistance to meet financial and operational challenges associated with Downtown demand can increase the number and diversity of offerings, and in the process, capture a greater portion of potential resident/worker/visitor spending.

The COVID pandemic has permanently changed the nature of food distribution and retail by accelerating ongoing changes and exposing the need for more flexible and resilient models. A healthy and vibrant post-COVID Downtown will require the rebuilding of the base of food-related businesses that serve residents, workers, and visitors. Small business supports for Downtown must be creative to reduce the costs and risks of starting and scaling small food-related businesses to support new entrepreneurs and help restart existing restaurants using capital, organizational supports and physical infrastructure. Because of the high density of food-related businesses Downtown which accounts for about 16% of food-related spending in the City, it is the natural area to test new ideas for food-related businesses and restaurant models.



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★ **A. PROGRAM MOBILE RETAIL / RESTAURANT MODELS ON KEY CORRIDORS**

Event-driven retail and restaurant demand is difficult to serve with bricks and mortar because it is compressed over a few hours but distributed geographically across the Downtown around the stadiums, the convention center, the Arch, and other key sites. One way to serve this efficiently is with programmed mobile retail and food service offerings in the form of pop-up retail and trucks. Because of relatively low barriers to entry and the potential to curate and limit offerings, mobile retail offers good opportunities to support a diverse group of entrepreneurs.

**B. DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE FOR FOOD TRUCK COMMISSARY/-IES AND LAST MILE DELIVERY**

To reduce the cost of mobile retail and limit negative impacts of mobile operations on residents and businesses, Downtown STL Inc., SLDC, and other economic development leaders should support the creation of food truck commissaries that provide access to key assets: shared kitchen and prep stations, storage units, dishwasher, and potable water and gray water dump station.

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The emerging models of food distribution will accelerate the demand for last-mile distribution capacity including transfer points with refrigeration capacity, self-service delivery hubs, etc. Given its centrality to population hubs and access to multiple transportation nodes, Downtown would be a good location for pilot investments for these types of infrastructure.

**C. RECRUIT RESTAURANT INCUBATOR DOWNTOWN**

A Restaurant Concept Incubator could create a much-needed multiple-restaurant destination for tourists and help close inevitable financing gaps that new restaurants will face in a post-COVID world. The City has a long history and success in creating national consumer product brands (eg. Anheuser-Busch, Panera) and offers local venture capital expertise. Along with Downtown's annual foot traffic - the highest in the region - and the availability of larger commercial spaces, Downtown is a strong candidate an incubator and could build on a similar model (STL Foodworks) in the Central West End. Trinity Groves just outside of Downtown Dallas and in operation since 2012, offers 15 restaurants and retail shops and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.trinitygroves.com/trinity-groves-the-sky-is-the-limit/>

**PRECEDENT:**  
TRINITY GROVE



DALLAS, TX  
Trinity Groves attracts hundreds of visitors with its restaurants and retail shops. This restaurant incubator program supports a diverse group of chefs and restaurateurs to experiment many ideas and host exciting events, including art and theater.

---

Given the destruction of food-related businesses, a healthy and vibrant post-COVID Downtown will require the rebuilding of the base of food-related businesses that serve residents, workers, and visitors.

---

**D. TEST GHOST KITCHENS/INCUBATORS IN LARGE WAREHOUSE COMMERCIAL SPACE**

With the likely permanent shift to more take-out and mobile delivery in food service, develop so-called “ghost kitchens” which include food prep and cooking facilities for delivery-only restaurants and food service. These can also be used to supplement existing restaurant capacity, or provide gap capacity for catering companies. These kitchens will provide flexible capacity that can be extended in terms of high demand, such as the early months of COVID-19, and can be coordinated on a 24/7 basis as needed. Like other shared assets that lower the startup costs for new businesses, ghost kitchens can be a critical piece in ensuring that the future of food entrepreneurship in St. Louis is racially and economically diverse and provides opportunities for talented St. Louisans without access to personal or friends and family wealth.

---

**E. CREATED SHARED DIGITAL (PLATFORMS) AND OFFICE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NEW MODELS**

The emerging hybrid retail/restaurant models will require new skills sets and operating models including potentially new digital platforms to help link retailers with customers and suppliers. By creating a shared digital platform that can be utilized by small businesses across Downtown and the City, startup and operating costs can be significantly reduced. This will encourage entrepreneurship in the space, increase offerings and the survival rates of firms, and support a broad set of diverse (race, ethnicity, gender) entrepreneurs. Opportunities exist to partner with the Small Business Development Corporation and other organizations that are already doing similar work.

**F. OFFER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SMALL BUSINESS TO TRANSITION TO DIGITAL SALES, HYBRID BUSINESS MODELS, MANAGING SHIFTS IN DEMAND**

The City of St. Louis and the broader region are known nationally for the strength to support specific businesses. It is imperative that capacity be developed to support Main St. businesses that are critical to inclusive growth, quality of life for City residents, and entrepreneurial diversity. Downtown stakeholders need to collaborate with key partners (SLDC, Missouri DED, Justine Petersen) to help existing businesses transition to new models and provide technical assistance for businesses that will be born hybrid.

“I want to see an emphasis on attracting businesses that may not be sexy, but they are essential to any lifestyle: pharmacies, dry cleaners, corner stores (with fresh produce outside), flea markets, and etc.”

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**G. COORDINATE STAKEHOLDERS AROUND A RESILIENT URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION CLUSTER**

Like places around the country, post-COVID, St. Louis will need models of urban food distribution that are safe, efficient, equitable, and resilient. As a first step, stakeholders must be coordinated around a clearly defined Resilient Urban Food Production and Distribution Cluster with a mission to create and develop new comprehensive models of food distribution.

**H. COORDINATE WITH FOOD SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE CITY AND REGION TO CREATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RESPONSIVE AND RESILIENT FOOD SUPPLY CAPACITY**

Food security has emerged as a key issue in St. Louis but also nationally: demand for food supports (e.g., food pantries) is up 30% and local systems across the US are struggling to meet demand. These types of spikes may be the new normal and a resilient food system must take them into account. It's imperative that St. Louis lay the foundation for food supply capacity for the City and region and, over time, St. Louis could emerge as a critical node in a national food security strategy. Infrastructure (including transportation), but also potentially a food reserve with capacity to aggregate fresh fruits and produce for market and non-market consumption as well as highly nutritious, shelf-stable foods that can be used in times of peak demand.

---

**I. EXPAND ARCH GRANTS TO SUPPORT INNOVATION**

Solving food production and distribution issues in the post-COVID world will require localized strategies to respond to conditions in specific cities and regions as well as innovation in organizational and financial models and practices. An Arch Grants-type model for local firms and entrepreneurs could be the best approach for getting scaled solutions rapidly in Downtown and the City.

## 2.3 ENCOURAGE A BROADER SET OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES DOWNTOWN

Like many central business districts (CBDs), Downtown is currently comprised mainly of white collar office and tourism-related activity, which account for approximately two-thirds of Downtown jobs. The rationale for this pattern of jobs across CBDs and downtowns nationally are the high real estate costs that discourage space-intensive uses with the exception of tourist attractions. This factor, however, does not hold true in Downtown St. Louis where real estate costs are lower relative to the regional average than in any other US market. Combined with abundant empty space, reasonable real estate costs provide an opportunity to democratize the Downtown economy across entrepreneurs and activities. This approach can support new growth especially in things like landscape architecture, product design, drone prototyping and scaling, and environmental services, all of which have both space-intensive physical and space-efficient digital activities.

A diversification approach is critical for promoting job growth in Downtown. Existing strengths within finance and corporate headquarters activities are seeing slower growth nationally (e.g., legal services), consolidating

into a small number of cities (e.g., some segments of financial services), or generating far fewer jobs per new investment (e.g., headquarters). In short, many of the traditional Downtown industries are unlikely to deliver the employment growth that Downtown needs but the unique Downtown characteristics including its density, diversity and, untapped and reasonably-priced real estate assets, can support new types of growth.

To date, two factors limit the diversification of the Downtown economy in response to relatively low real estate costs. The first is the absence of specialized real estate to support things like prototyping activity, artisanal production, light manufacturing, or shared creative spaces. The second is the perception of Downtown; in the words of one stakeholder, ***“When I talk to people, unless they want to build a loft, they tell me that they think Downtown property owners won’t be interested.”***

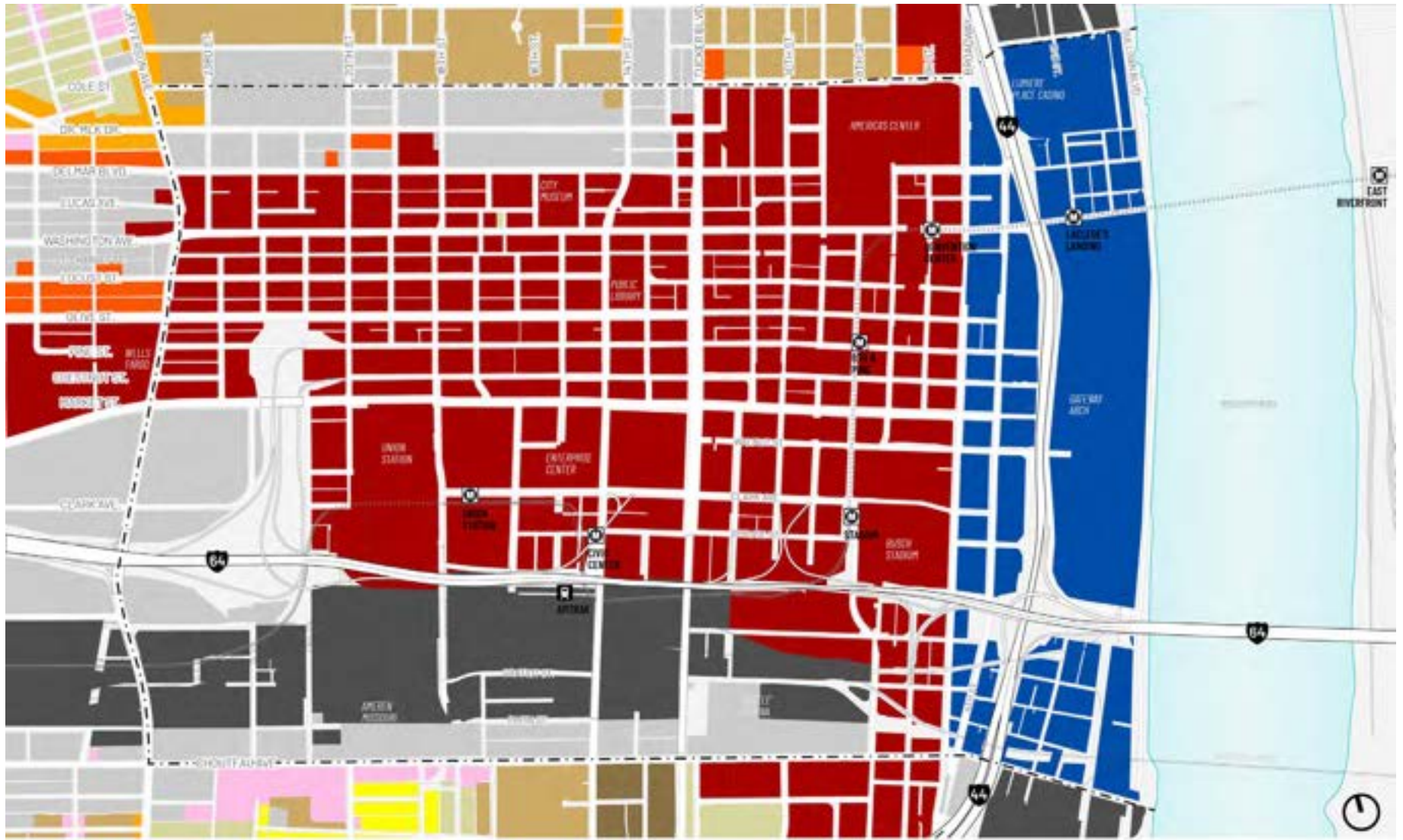
### ★ A. CHANGE DOWNTOWN ZONING TO ALLOW FOR A WIDER RANGE OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY

City’s zoning districts and ordinances were established in the early 1920s<sup>2</sup> and most of the regulated uses do not apply to today’s business and industry types. To better reflect the changes in job types especially in the manufacturing industry, the City’s zoning ordinance

<sup>2</sup> City of St. Louis Zoning Code via Municode Library, [https://library.municode.com/mo/st.\\_louis/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT26ZO\\_CH26\\_04CIPU\\_26.04.020ACAC](https://library.municode.com/mo/st._louis/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT26ZO_CH26_04CIPU_26.04.020ACAC).



Figure 31: Existing Zoning



**ZONING**

- |                                                                       |                                                                |                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> B. TWO FAMILY RESIDENTIAL       | <span style="color: pink;">■</span> F. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL | <span style="color: gray;">■</span> J. INDUSTRIAL                  |
| <span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> C. MULTI FAMILY RESIDENTIAL | <span style="color: orange;">■</span> G. LOCAL COMMERCIAL      | <span style="color: black;">■</span> K. UNRESTRICTED               |
| <span style="color: brown;">■</span> D. MULTI FAMILY RESIDENTIAL      | <span style="color: darkorange;">■</span> H. AREA COMMERCIAL   | <span style="color: blue;">■</span> L. JEFFERSON NATIONAL MEMORIAL |
| <span style="color: darkbrown;">■</span> E. MULTI FAMILY RESIDENTIAL  | <span style="color: red;">■</span> I. CENTRAL BUSINESS         |                                                                    |

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 MILES

**PRECEDENT:**  
 NYC MANUFACTURING DISTRICT  
 ZONING & PERFORMANCE  
 STANDARD



NEW YORK, NY  
 NYC Manufacturing Districts  
 zoning enables most of  
 industrial activities and also  
 many commercial uses,  
 including film production  
 studios, ferry terminals,  
 and more. The detailed  
 uses are regulated through  
 Performance Standard, which  
 sets a minimum requirement  
 on noise, vibration, smoke,  
 odor, and other effects of  
 industrial uses.

Source NYC Planning

Figure 32: Zoning Uses

	I CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT	L JEFFERSON NATIONAL MEMORIAL	J INDUSTRIAL	K UNRESTRICTED
<b>NOT ALLOWED</b>	<b>Auto-related</b> (auto part shops, drive-thru, salvage yard, gas stations, surface lots for used/rental cars.)  <b>Manufacturing</b> that includes explosive products and materials (*Including acid, asphalt, brick, dye, fertilizer, iron, rubber, tobacco, and more.)  <b>Wholesale/Warehouse</b> that includes explosive products and materials (*Including curing, fat rendering, fireworks or explosives, meat packing, and more.)		<b>Manufacturing</b> that includes explosive products and materials  <b>Wholesale/Warehouse</b> that includes explosive products and materials	<b>Housing</b>
<b>ALLOWED</b>	<b>Housing,            Commercial/Mixed-use, and            some industrial uses</b> that only include non-explosive materials and products		<b>Auto-related</b>  <b>Some housing</b> (Residential use is allowed only when 40% or more of the frontage is occupied by dwellings.)  <b>Commercial            mixed-use, and some            industrial uses</b> (that include non-explosive materials and products)	<b>Everything else</b>

(SOURCE: CITY OF ST. LOUIS ZONING CODE, APRIL 2016 VIA MUNICODE LIBRARY)  
 \* FOR MORE SPECIFIC LIST OF USES, PLEASE REFER TO THE SOURCE

must acknowledge that yesterday's allowed uses do not fully represent today's employers, developers, and business owners. One way to resolve this issue is to establish a Special Use District (SUD) for Downtown. Manufacturing uses, defined by the current zoning regulation, strictly limits what is allowed to be made Downtown. Some of the examples include glass, candle, and yeast manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> These uses had been rightfully prohibited due to air pollution that could have been caused by the airborne toxic chemicals. However,

with the right amount of regulation that is sensitive to how the manufacturing businesses operate today, specifically to noise, pollution, vibration, and other potentially disruptive factors, businesses interested in opening a small batch candle shop, skincare product, or a glass artist studio can be new additions to the Downtown economy. The established SUD seeks to improve the business quality of life, attract small local business owners, and provide diverse storefront activities that benefit not just Downtown but the City as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> City of St. Louis Zoning Code via Municode Library, [https://library.municode.com/mo/st.\\_louis/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT26ZO\\_CH26.52ICEBUDI\\_26.52.020USRE](https://library.municode.com/mo/st._louis/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT26ZO_CH26.52ICEBUDI_26.52.020USRE)

## **B. REQUIRE SET-ASIDES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES**

Given the density of business activity, entrepreneurial supports, and foot traffic generated by workers, residents, and visitors, Downtown already attracts a significant number of entrepreneurs and new firms, including at shared spaces like T-REX, Covo and STL Fusion. To support stand-alone space for entrepreneurial firms, projects with public financial support should be required to set aside a minimum amount of square footage that is rented in small increments (<=200 sq ft) on a month-to-month lease.

## **C. OFFER PRE-DEVELOPMENT GRANTS OR LOW/NO INTEREST LOANS FOR SPECIFIC NEW USES**

To support a broader set of activities in Downtown, stakeholders should work with key economic development partners like SLDC to support specific identified uses—e.g., prototyping space, artisanal production, light manufacturing, shared creative—that will contribute to vitality and growth in the Downtown economy. Creation of spaces for these activities can then be supported through targeted pre-development grants and/or low or no interest loans that cannot be used to create real estate products that are already in surplus in Downtown.

## **D. SUPPORT “DOWNTOWN FOR ALL” MARKETING THAT MAKES KNOWN THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A BROAD RANGE OF BUSINESS TYPES TO SUCCEED IN DOWNTOWN**

It is important for entrepreneurs and businesses of all types—small and large, white collar and blue collar, St. Louis-based or national—to see Downtown as a potential site for investment and operations. To promote this understanding, stakeholders should develop “Downtown for all” marketing that provides information

on Downtown as a physical and economic space that can support thriving businesses across a diversity of economic activities.

## **E. WORK WITH REAL ESTATE COMMUNITY TO ADVERTISE THE RANGE OF BUILDING TYPES AVAILABLE IN DOWNTOWN**

Throughout project interviews, the issue of real estate agents steering potential residents and firms away from Downtown was a common theme. Specific examples included agents working with foreign-born and immigrant communities, some of whom would certainly be attracted to the density and diversity of Downtown, as well as opportunities for entrepreneurship to fill the myriad retail gaps; who in the words of one, normally **“show clients space in Clayton and further west.”**<sup>4</sup> Tactics include closer collaboration with the influential St. Louis chapter of SIOR (Society of Industrial and Office Realtors), which now recognizes the core role of a healthy CBD in city and regional prosperity, and creation and dissemination of timely information on the Downtown real estate market.<sup>5</sup>

Part of this effort could involve on-the-ground exposure to available properties. Conduct guided tours throughout the neighborhood for potential buyers, tenants, lenders and brokers alike. Doing so on an annual basis at a minimum will help re-introduce people – especially the CRE brokers – to new opportunities available in areas that were once desolate. Depending on its length and the weather conditions, these tours could be taken on foot, bike, or bus and should be accompanied by a document highlighting available properties, favorable demographics, enjoyable amenities, and fun facts. Aerotropolis Atlanta conducts bus tours for brokers and investors, visiting different sites around metropolitan Atlanta.

<sup>4</sup> Project roundtables and interviews

<sup>5</sup> [https://siorstlouis.starchapter.com/downloads/2020\\_mmf\\_\\_\\_tripp\\_hardin\\_\\_\\_office\\_.pdf](https://siorstlouis.starchapter.com/downloads/2020_mmf___tripp_hardin___office_.pdf)



**PRECEDENT:**  
SABBATICAL BEAUTY



PHILADELPHIA, PA  
Located in a makerspace, which used to be a vocational school that closed, Sabbatical Beauty is a skincare store that produces and sells organic skincare products, which are produced in small batches within its store. Sabbatical Beauty is a good example of a retail/manufacturing business that could be allowed Downtown through the recommended zoning changes.

**2.4 INCREASE THE UTILIZATION OF CURRENTLY VACANT COMMERCIAL SPACE**

Data on Downtown real estate paint a stark picture. Pre-COVID commercial vacancy rates were about 20%—accounting for almost 2M square feet—not including the Railway Exchange and AT&T buildings, which represent another 3.5M square feet of potential commercial space. Because of relatively low demand, net rental rate growth at Downtown properties over the last ten years has been one-quarter to one-half of higher demand areas in the broader region.<sup>6</sup> Part of this performance can be addressed through better identifying, creating, and marketing of the types of spaces in demand regionally and nationally. These approaches help market existing spaces and create the types of real estate products in high demand. In more vibrant

<sup>6</sup> SIOR

central business districts, these functions are filled by developers willing to absorb risk to bring new product types on-line and real estate supports that promote downtown opportunities to potential regional and national tenants.

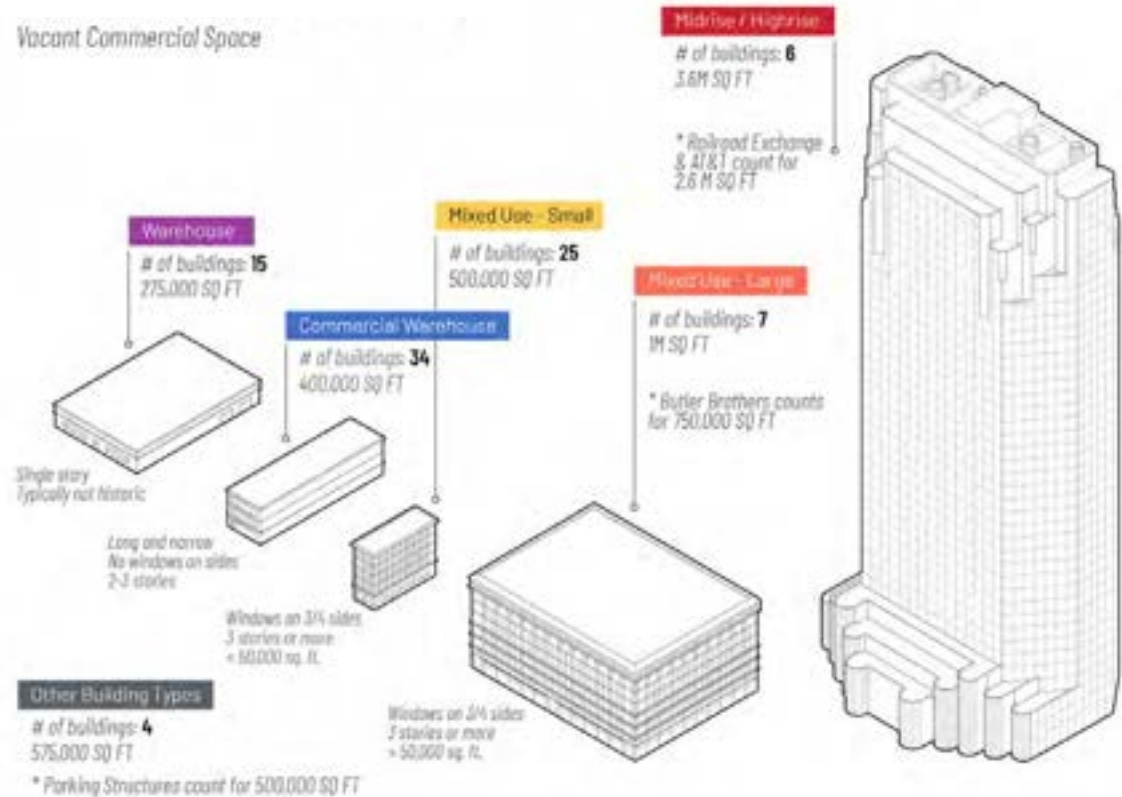
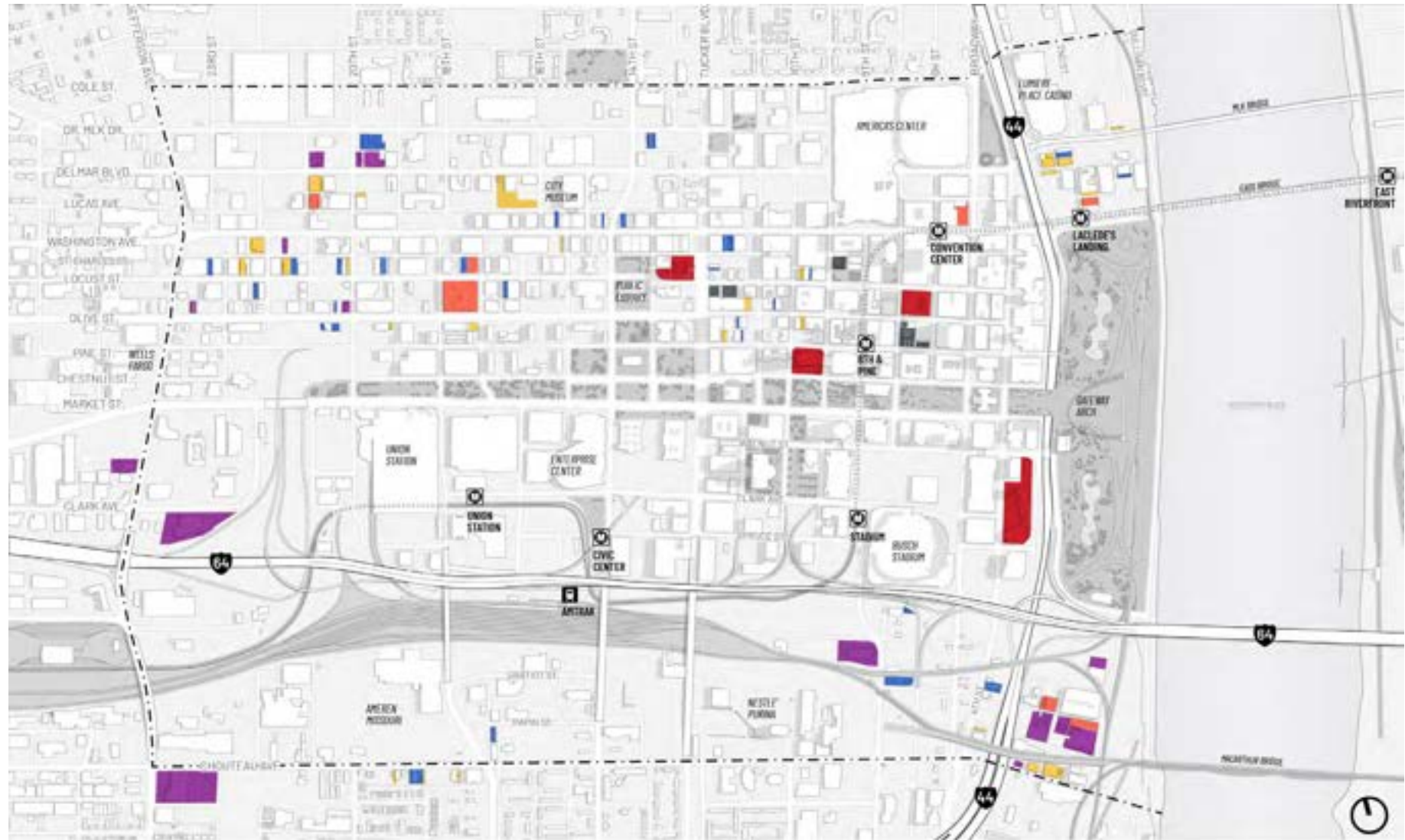


Figure 33: Vacant Commercial Space



Figure 34: Vacancy By Building Type



**VACANCY**

- |                                                          |                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <span style="color: purple;">■</span> WAREHOUSE          | <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> MIXED USE - SMALL |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> COMMERCIAL WAREHOUSE | <span style="color: orange;">■</span> MIXED USE - LARGE |
| <span style="color: gray;">■</span> OTHER                | <span style="color: red;">■</span> MIDRISE/HIGHRISE     |

**TOTAL VACANCY: 6.5M SQ FT**  
*Ground Floor: 1M SQ FT*

Figure 35: **Storefront Occupancy**



**A. ESTABLISH A TOOL TO TRACK AVAILABLE COMMERCIAL SPACES**

Currently, there is too little information about availability of space—standard inventories often miss sub-Class A space and smaller property owners. This is a barrier for recruiting entrepreneurs and firms from the region and across the U.S. Similarly, with the upheaval in retail-related activity, which will create significant vacancy as well as shift demand for different types of spaces, it is imperative that the inventory of retail and commercial spaces completed for *Design Downtown STL* be updated in the coming months to assess the pandemic impact.

Downtown STL, Inc. should seek partnerships with the St. Louis REALTORS® Commercial Division and the local chapters of CCIM, SIOR, ICSC, ULI, the American Planning Association, and similar commercial real estate groups to determine more creative ways to promote, activate, and trade Downtown spaces – in both the near- and long-term – to potential investors and end users. Similarly, Downtown STL, Inc. should aggressively

target hosting regional and national conferences to attract the industries and employees desired to fill Downtown’s vacant commercial spaces.

**B. CREATE A CLEARINGHOUSE FOR SPACE NEEDS AND REQUESTS FOR LANDLORDS LOOKING FOR TENANTS**

The creation of a comprehensive and timely inventory of Downtown commercial spaces can be the foundation for a clearinghouse that matches properties with potential tenants. Downtown STL, Inc. can help market available properties by creating a dynamic, online repository of every commercial listing available within the neighborhood. Basic information regarding location, size, zoning, and immediate amenities will help facilitate the spread of information to potential tenants. A potential model is Invest Atlanta’s Opportunity Zone website, which features an online marketplace to connect Opportunity Zone investors with project opportunities.

**★ C. CREATE HIGHLY FLEXIBLE SPACE FOR GROWTH-STAGE FIRMS  
UTILIZING “MASTER LEASE” MODEL**

The availability of large, relatively low-cost spaces in Downtown combined with advancements in office design that allow the size of individual spaces to be adjusted at low cost provides an opportunity for Downtown to create real estate models that appeal to growing firms in tech and other verticals. Implementing this model will likely have to occur under a master lease arrangement in which one property manager programs buildings to support specific uses, curates tenants to create community, and most importantly, reallocates space across a large set of tenants on a quarterly basis to meet the evolving needs of growing firms. By pooling evolving space requirements of individual firms, the master lease holder can provide flexibility with minimum waste and cost by reallocating offices and where necessary, adjusting the inventory of available space sizes across a building to meet the evolving demands of tenants. This approach will require flexibility in use and design of the property and a long-term vision on the asset’s appreciable value from the owners.

**D. CREATE A LEGACY BUSINESS HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND**

Downtown stakeholders, including philanthropy, high net worth individuals, and property owners should capitalize a fund to assist long-time, local businesses with increases in rent. Rent support could be provided for a fixed period of time to provide businesses an opportunity to adjust operating and financial models to meet rent increases and in some cases, on a longer-term basis if a business is deemed critical to the quality of life in Downtown.

**E. RECRUIT “NEW” BUSINESS TYPES THAT LINK TO CITY CLUSTER STRATEGIES**

As Downtown and citywide economic development efforts begin to coalesce around a broad set of growth clusters—urban manufacturing, business-to-business (B2B) services, creative economy, software tech, etc.—the vision for the Downtown economy also needs to expand. As part of this diversification and growth, Downtown STL, Inc. and other stakeholders should explicitly recruit business types, like software tech, that are under-represented but could take advantage of Downtown’s unique set of assets (real estate options, employment density, broad range of skilled workers, presence of nationally-known firms, and an impressive array of residential and worker amenities). To implement this approach, Downtown STL, Inc. and partners should create cluster-specific fact sheets that make the case for a Downtown location.



*Storefronts along Washington Ave.*

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## **2.5 EXPAND BUSINESS ASSISTANCE TO SMALL- AND MID-SIZED FIRMS**

Although Downtown is home to a significant number of large firms—e.g., Nestle Purina, Lumiere Place, Ameren, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, and many more—small- and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs) are critical to Downtown living as well as the continued evolution of the economy. In Downtown, there are approximately 2.1K establishments with fewer than 50 employees and in some key clusters—e.g., the creative economy, local hospitality, and B2B—SMEs account for over one-third of cluster employment.<sup>7</sup> In all, approximately 15.1K workers are employed at establishments with fewer than 50 employees and 36.2K are employed at ones with fewer than 500 employees, the SBA definition of small business.

Post-COVID, many SMEs across the City, region, and country will struggle to reopen and survive, and will require significant support, including capital and other assistance. Given the importance of these enterprises to the future of Downtown, strategies to strengthen these firms need to be implemented. Over time, with consistent and high-quality programming and supports, Downtown could become a preferred destination for SMEs.

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<sup>7</sup> BDRC-YTS, 2018.

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### **★ A. OFFER WORKING CAPITAL LOANS AND GRANTS FOR POST-COVID RESTARTS**

As businesses re-open and then look to return to scale (hopefully in late 2020 or 2021), small (\$3-\$10K) loans or grants could be critical to providing working capital needed to re-start or scale operations. Downtown STL, Inc., SLDC, the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, and other local partners should continue to develop tools to support small businesses Downtown.

### **B. OFFER LOW/NO INTEREST LOANS OR PRE-DEVELOPMENT GRANTS TO QUALIFYING SMALL BUSINESSES**

Attracting SMEs from a broad range of industry segments can help diversify the Downtown economy and its activities and offerings. Subsidizing pre-development costs through grants and/or low-/no-interest loans will encourage this.



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**C. PROVIDE TIMELY DATA AND MARKET INTELLIGENCE ABOUT DOWNTOWN POPULATION, BUSINESS, AND REAL ESTATE TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Currently, there is too little information about retail opportunities in Downtown. Addressing this gap by providing data on population, income, business trends, and retail gaps, as well as qualitative information on goods and services needs of Downtown residents and businesses can help make the business case for investment in Downtown.

**D. WORK WITH LOCAL BANKS TO ADDRESS GAPS IN LOANS AND WORKING CAPITAL ESPECIALLY FOR MWBE**

Capital availability is an issue across the City. One approach for addressing it in the Downtown market is to identify and educate one or two banks about existing Downtown firms and their capital needs.

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**E. CREATE SMALL BUSINESS “NAVIGATOR” HELP DESK WITHIN DNA AND DOWNTOWN STL, INC.**

Across Downtown entities—from Downtown Neighborhood Association leadership to banking and construction firms—there is deep business expertise and experience with city permitting processes, operational requirements, etc. By harnessing this expertise—with e.g., direct financial support for DNA or Downtown STL, Inc. staff—into a business navigator function, Downtown can defray the costs of starting or growing a business, creating incentives for potential and existing to choose Downtown for investment and growth.

“Encourage  
local tenants  
and first time  
businesses.”

**2.6 PROVIDE COORDINATED MARKETING FOR SMALL  
BUSINESSES**

Small businesses, particularly the local retailers and restaurants, are an attraction for downtowns across the country. These businesses, however, often lack the experience, connections and capital to properly market to attract new customers (or to keep existing customers coming back time and time again). Downtown STL, Inc. can play a central role in supporting these businesses by executing coordinated marketing campaigns that highlight their role and importance to Downtown.

**A. MARKET SMALL BUSINESSES THROUGH ONLINE MEDIA**

Step in and spotlight specific businesses throughout the year online and through Downtown STL Inc.’s social media channels. Organize a local web designer to help specific businesses have an online presence or to simply improve their existing website.

The holidays are an opportune time for Downtown businesses to help boost sales and ride what are often a slower Winter months barring a major convention or event. Downtown Cincinnati has had success in working with downtown businesses to participate in a gift card program that makes for great holiday gifts. St. Louis has the same opportunity to support businesses in this way.

**B. DEVELOP A WEB PAGE PROMOTING EACH DOWNTOWN RETAIL  
“DISTRICT”**

Design retail district pages that concentrate information on key businesses, access and parking information. These can live on DSI website but should also be promoted via the Convention & Visitors Commission.

**★ C. PROGRAM EVENTS AND TOURS THAT BRING PEOPLE TO SMALL  
BUSINESSES**

Develop new programming and events with an eye toward highlighting and supporting Downtown businesses. Scavenger hunts, new Downtown tours and arts crawls for instance can help to drive customers to businesses.

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## 2.7 CREATE SPACE FOR GROWTH-STAGE TECH FIRMS

Tech enterprises—including those related to geospatial, fintech, agtech, and software tech more broadly—are a significant growth opportunity for Downtown. Taken together, there is substantial demand for step-up, non-traditional office and work space in which to grow. It is critical for the City of St. Louis, but also the broader region, that tech firms have options to continue to grow in the City. One important way to promote this is to create real estate products specifically for these firms and work closely with the City’s co-working spaces to educate growing firms about real estate options that will allow them to remain in the City as they grow. Downtown is the ideal location for that.

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### A. DESIGN FLEX SPACE MODELS WITH LOCAL WORK SPACE AND REAL ESTATE EXPERTS

Downtown’s real estate conditions offer a unique testbed for innovative space models, extending to flexible office space as well as light industrial that supports small-scale manufacturing. These models should be developed jointly with real estate experts who are familiar with the changing needs of tenants and the current space offerings, and the area north of Washington should be considered for flex office and light industrial to support the North of Washington Innovation District. This type of arrangement could utilize the master leasing model proposed earlier. As a first step, Downtown stakeholders should sponsor a weekend hack-a-thon to create a blueprint for a model that would work financially, organizationally, and architecturally.



*Inside of T-REX's shared space*

“We are not importing ideas and new perspectives.”

## “Connect Downtown to Midtown and Central West End/Forest Park.”

### **B. CREATE BETTER PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS WITH CORTEX**

Downtown is one of the City’s and region’s key technology nodes and would benefit from better physical connectivity and transit options with other key nodes, especially Cortex and NGA. Downtown stakeholders should propose that these connections be among the first segments of the Brickline Greenway build-out. In addition, the three nodes can develop shared bike systems or even a Zipcar-like options that allow fast and easy transit between nodes.

### **C. CREATE NON-TRADITIONAL SPACE FOR GROWING FIRMS**

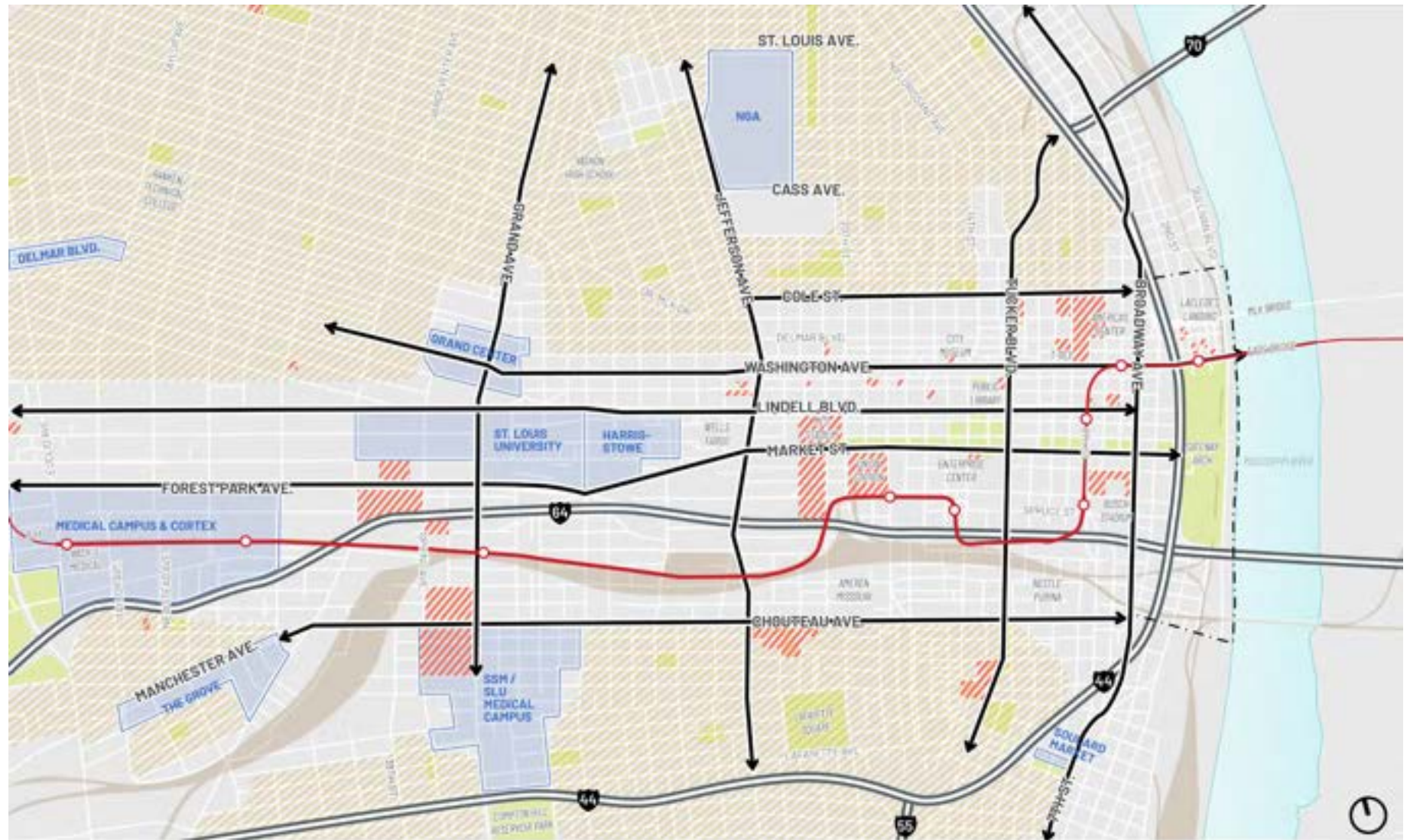
To keep tech firms in St. Louis, ecosystem supports need to understand the importance of meeting the real estate and space needs of firms at different stages of growth. Flex-space real estate products should be developed north of Washington Avenue and the key actors should coordinate to ensure that there are a pipeline of companies ready to occupy new space. This type of investment will strengthen the overall tech sector and with it, demand for all types of spaces across the City.

### **D. RECRUIT LARGE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL CORPORATES TO LOCATE TECHNOLOGY FUNCTIONS IN DOWNTOWN**

As Downtown continues to increase its importance as a regional technology node, technology-based corporate entities located in the region—which includes companies from Worldwide Technologies to Mastercard to Enterprise—would likely benefit from shifting a portion of technology operations into Downtown, where the density, walkability, and proximity to key amenities like professional soccer and baseball will make it easier to recruit the types of young tech talent upon which their growth will depend. Recruitment of five to ten technology divisions could add thousands of jobs to Downtown and add to its national reputation as a technology center. SLDC and other stakeholders could consider repurposing a building to meet the security and data needs of these divisions.



Figure 36: Key Downtown Connections



### DOWNTOWN'S KEY CONNECTIONS

- BOUNDARY
- KEY SURROUNDINGS
- PARKS/OPEN SPACE
- RAIL CORRIDOR
- METROLINK
- RECENT INVESTMENTS/ PROPOSED PROJECTS
- RESIDENTIAL AREA



Downtown is home to about half of the City's creative cluster employment.

## 2.8 SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF THE CREATIVE ECONOMY DOWNTOWN

Between Midtown and Downtown lies a long stretch of highly concentrated creative industries. The City's creative cluster – which consists of architecture and design; digital arts; marketing, media, and communications; and others (e.g., art, theater, museums, libraries, and book stores) – has been around for about a century, capturing national attention and acclaim as the cluster grew to serve the needs of major St. Louis establishments, like Anheuser-Busch (while also developing their own internal creative capacity).<sup>8</sup>

The creative cluster is concentrated in Downtown, which is home to about half of the City's creative cluster employment (compared to about 27% of private sector employment). Specific strengths include marketing, media, and communications; architecture and design; and digital arts. As the graphic shows, the St. Louis creative economy shows a strong geographic concentration, creating a virtuous cycle of cluster density and neighborhood energy and vibrancy in Downtown and Midtown. Although creative firms may

<sup>8</sup> Cooperman, J. (2018, July 19). More and more creative firms are locating downtown. Can they recreate St. Louis? St. Louis Magazine. <https://www.stlmag.com/longform/as-more-and-more-creative-firm-are-locating-downtown-some-wo/>

	DOWNTOWN	% OF CITY	LOCATION QUOTIENT(LQ)
CREATIVE CLUSTER	6,200	48%	2.2
ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN	800	39%	2.2
DIGITAL ARTS	1,400	55%	1.7
MARKETING, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATIONS	3,700	60%	4.0
OTHER CREATIVE FIRMS	400	16%	0.5
REST OF PRIVATE SECTOR	47,300	25%	N/A
TOTAL PRIVATE SECTOR	53,500	27%	N/A

Source: (CEW-UDP); YTS; Mass Economics analysis

operate individually, these firms could benefit from strategies that support their shared activities (e.g., common resources, human capital) and collaboration (e.g., proximity and access to one another).



Figure 37: Creative Clusters By Employees



### CREATIVE CLUSTERS BY EMPLOYEES

- |              |           |           |                         |                                      |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| BOUNDARY     | EMPLOYEES | 100 - 500 | ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN | MARKETING, MEDIA, AND COMMUNICATIONS |
| GRAND CENTER | 20 - 100  | OVER 500  | DIGITAL ARTS            | OTHER CREATIVE FIRMS                 |





**A. CREATE A CLUSTER GROUP TO OVERSEE CREATIVE ECONOMIC INITIATIVES IN DOWNTOWN AND THE CITY**

Leaders in the Downtown/Midtown creative economy are in the early phases of collaborating to address needs of the local creative economy. The opportunity is to organize leadership into a new local entity tentatively called the St. Louis Design Alliance. This group will emphasize the multi-disciplinary future of the creative economy and organize programming around specific St. Louis strengths in advertising, architectural, design/fashion, marketing, and digital platforms that support these industries.

The group should be founded in 2020 and have a medium-sized board from across large corporates, smaller firms, universities, and key economic development groups (Downtown STL, Inc., SLDC). As an early action, the board should secure funds for one-half to one full-time employee to coordinate and implement activities.

Topic areas that St. Louis Design Alliance could potentially cover include year-round programming around the creative economy, with a focus on sharing

work of St. Louis creators and firms; design strategies for a post-COVID Downtown/Midtown; shared professional development; development of future practice models; encouraging specialization and collaboration of creatives firms in the City and region; and university-industry collaboration. A core design principle of any of these initiatives will be to increase diversity of participants and viewpoints, with a special focus on racial inclusion.

**B. WORK WITH SLDC TO HIRE A CREATIVE ECONOMY SPECIALIST FOR THE CITY**

As part of the citywide economic development strategy, it is recommended that SLDC hire cluster specialists. Downtown and Midtown stakeholders should work with SLDC to identify and hire a strong creative economy specialist who can support cluster growth.

**C. EVALUATE OPTIONS FOR COWORKING SPACES FOR SPACE-INTENSIVE CREATIVE ACTIVITY**

The density of creative economy activity combined with the abundance of lower-cost space in Downtown make it a good site for space-intensive creative uses such as physical prototyping and design, artisanal production, architectural interiors, etc.





*Numerous creative businesses already exist Downtown, many of which are clustered on Washington Avenue.*

#### **D. HELP TO ESTABLISH A PIPELINE OF YOUNG CREATIVE TALENT IN DOWNTOWN**

There are already strong connections between creative economy firms in Downtown and individual universities (e.g., Webster, Fox School at WashU), as well as programs to connect St. Louis youth with creative economy education and training. These worthwhile relationships and initiatives could be strengthened and expanded with more centralized organization and collaboration, helping to build a consistent pipeline of diverse talent from St. Louis high schools and colleges for creative economy firms. Such an initiative could be an early project for the St. Louis Design Alliance with local Downtown schools notably the KIPP Academy and Confluence Academy.

As laid out in the citywide plan, many commercial corridors in St. Louis are in need of revitalization. The need to redesign these corridors will continue to grow as new retail models with different access and space demands continue to emerge. The creative community, perhaps under the auspices of the St. Louis Design Alliance, should organize charrettes that bring together students locally and from across the U.S. with community talent and leadership to create new visions for neighborhood commercial corridors. This could

be an annual or bi-annual event that helps address community needs while exposing students from across the country to St. Louis' creative economy.

#### **E. CREATE BETTER PHYSICAL AND PROGRAMMATIC CONNECTIONS WITH KEY NODES ACROSS THE CITY**

To foster stronger and more inclusive growth in the creative economy, the Downtown creative economy needs better physical connections to Grand Center and strong programmatic connections to Grand Center as well as the emerging creative node on Delmar between Clarendon and Academy, where MADE (makerspace) and Third Glass Factory (gallery and studio) are located.

## “Downtown is all income properties. We don’t have an anchor institution.”

### **2.9 INCREASE THE PRESENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN DOWNTOWN**

Within the City, over 90% of college and university students attend classes west of Jefferson Ave, outside of Downtown. On the western edge of Downtown and in Midtown, St. Louis University (SLU) and Harris-Stowe facilities and students add vitality and their presence has been an important part of the revitalization. However, east of Jefferson, the only higher education outposts are SLU Law (with about 500 students<sup>9</sup>), Stevens – The Institute of Business and Arts (with about 100 students<sup>10</sup>) and a modest presence by Lindenwood (with a ~32K sq. ft. learning center in the Old Post Office Building<sup>11</sup>), and Webster University (with a ~50K sq. ft. satellite campus in the renovated Arcade Building<sup>12</sup>). The Des Lee Gallery, part of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University, is also located Downtown on Washington Ave. Many of the challenges facing Downtown—highly variable consumer demand because of seasonal (mostly summer) tourism and

9 <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/st-louis-university-03089>

10 <https://www.siba.edu/program-overview>; NCES-IPEDS, 2018

11 <https://www.lindenwood.edu/about/news/details/lindenwood-increases-downtown-footprint-at-old-post-office/>; <https://www.lindenwood.edu/about/our-campus/learning-centers/st-louis-city-old-post-office/>

12 <http://www.webster.edu/gateway/>; <http://news.webster.edu/global/2015/arcade-grand-opening.html>; <http://www.webster.edu/gateway/arcade-building/gateway-campus-fact-sheet.html>

convention activity and, inconsistent foot traffic that adds to concerns about safety, could be substantially addressed with an increase in the number of students Downtown.

There are multiple ways—all complementary—to achieve this goal: establishment of a global research center that aligns with St. Louis’ and the broader region’s unique academic and industry assets; collaboration of regional universities on specific supports for the creative economy; creation of certificate and two-year degree programs to support the demands of software tech; and specialized housing for college and post-college students looking for low-cost living in a vibrant urban setting.

#### **A. INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR A NATIONAL MULTI-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTER ON FUTURE AGRICULTURE**

With the region’s global leadership in AgTech and increased private sector engagement of NGA (which closely monitors food production and security issues globally), Downtown could be positioned to serve as a productive outpost for non-urban schools with agriculture-related strengths in the broader region, e.g., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The center could serve as a national research institute

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that examines best practices in plant science; digital agriculture; development of a sentinel system for pathogens; and regional transitions to specialty crops.

**B. ORGANIZE REGIONAL MULTI-UNIVERSITY CREATIVE ECONOMY INVESTMENT**

The region's creative economy has its largest node in Downtown and as such, is a natural site for technology development and applied learning. Potential focus areas include a digital technology lab or a center for design innovation that works on developing tools used by creative economy firms. Potential funding could come from the R&D budgets of local creative firms, local and regional universities and philanthropy, and the venture community. As part of the initiative, the St. Louis Design Alliance should reach out to local venture capitalists about the potential for some version of a dedicated venture fund for design innovation.

**C. WORK WITH SOFTWARE TECH CLUSTER LEADERS TO INCREASE CERTIFICATE AND TWO-YEAR DEGREE OPTIONS IN DOWNTOWN**

The creation of a strong software tech cluster is a focus of the City and emerging regional strategies. As a cluster that cuts across both industries and occupations, software tech naturally decentralizes into specialized nodes to serve specific economic clusters.

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If cultivated, Downtown could create software tech employment to serve digital arts and other tech-related creative economy activities, as well as geospatial. Given the scale of the potential software tech opportunity and Downtown's role as the region's transit hub, expanding education and training opportunities in Downtown can both grow the economy and provide broad-based opportunity, including to those St. Louisans who live east of Jefferson (about 13% of the City and 16% of those who live in poverty).

**D. CREATE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR COLLEGE AND POST-COLLEGE STUDENTS**

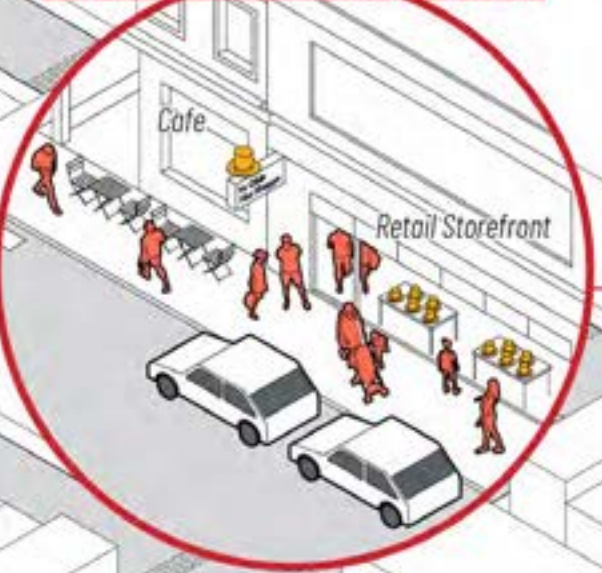
As part of the creation of a new so-called "naturally affordable" housing stock in Downtown, creative concepts around high-density housing with relatively small units and modest parking amenities should be examined. Although local banks have been reluctant to finance housing concepts with reduced parking amenities, national and global banks and foundations could take interest in providing capital to support these types of innovative models.

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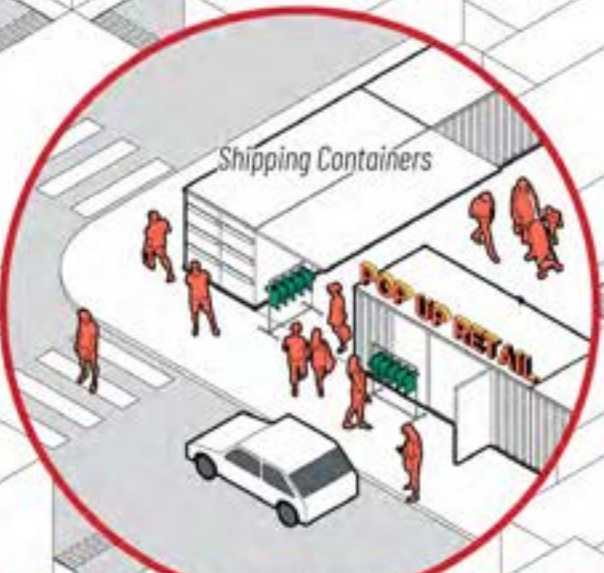
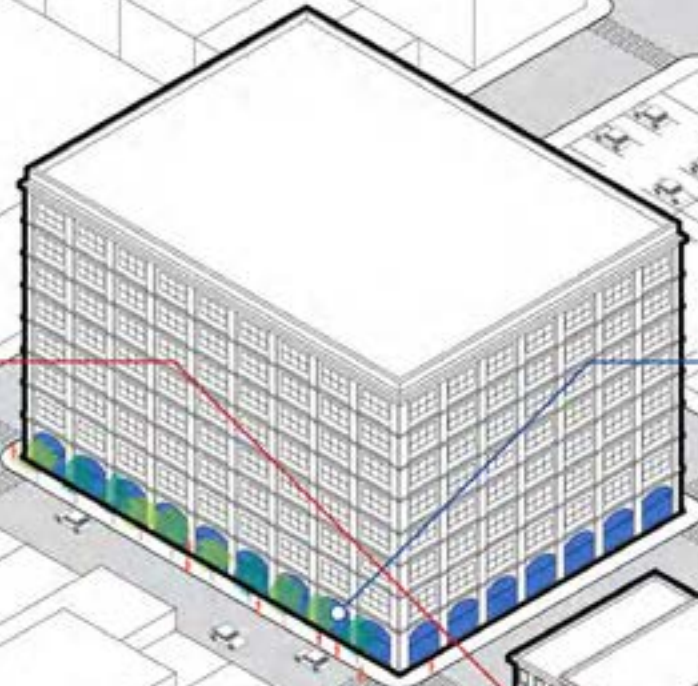
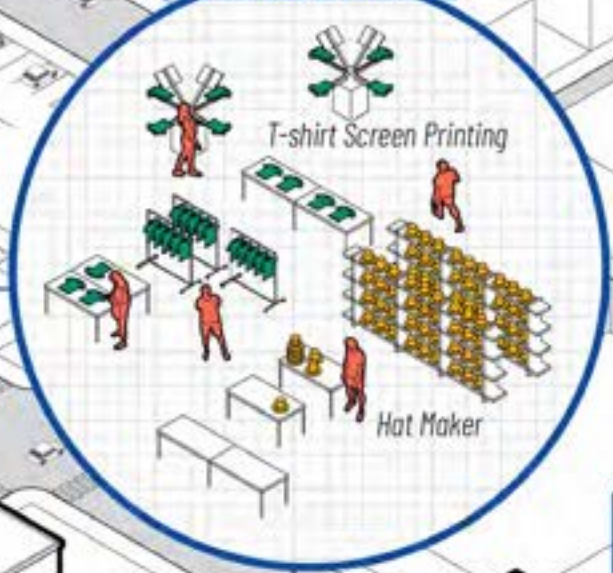
Within the City, over 90% of college and university students attend classes west of Jefferson Ave.



**TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT RETAIL**



**PRODUCTION SPACE**



**POP UP MARKET**

**POP UP RETAIL ON WASHINGTON AVENUE**





DOWNTOWN HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CREATE A HIGHLY FLEXIBLE AND ACTIVE BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM THROUGH TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING AND NEW MODELS FOR EXISTING COMMERCIAL SPACES.

Figure 38: **Downtown Business Ecosystem**

<b>02 Expand the Downtown economy to support startups, entrepreneurs, existing &amp; growing businesses</b>	
Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>2.1 Target retail activity in key districts</b>	
<i>Target retail incentives to designated retail corridors</i>	Medium
<i>Create "white-box" space on targeted blocks ★</i>	Medium
<i>Support inclusive entrepreneurship opportunities at retail nodes</i>	Medium
<b>2.2 Pursue alternative retail / restaurant models and support resilient food production and distribution</b>	
<i>Program mobile retail / restaurant models on key corridors ★</i>	Short
<i>Develop infrastructure for food truck commissary/-ies and last mile delivery</i>	Medium
<i>Recruit restaurant incubator Downtown</i>	Short
<i>Test ghost kitchens/incubators in large warehouse commercial space</i>	Medium
<i>Created shared digital (platforms) and office infrastructure for new models</i>	Short
<i>Offer technical assistance to small business to transition to digital sales, hybrid business models, managing shifts in demand</i>	Short
<i>Coordinate stakeholders around a Resilient Urban Food Production and Distribution Cluster</i>	Medium
<i>Coordinate with food security organizations across the city and region to create infrastructure for responsive and resilient food supply capacity</i>	Medium
<i>Expand Arch Grants to support innovation</i>	Long

Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>2.3 Encourage a broader set of economic activities Downtown</b>	
<i>Change Downtown zoning to allow for a wider range of business activity ★</i>	Short
<i>Require set-asides for small businesses</i>	Medium
<i>Offer pre-development grants or low/no interest loans for specific new uses</i>	Medium
<i>Support "Downtown for all" marketing that makes known the opportunity for a broad range of business types to succeed in Downtown</i>	Medium
<i>Work with real estate community to advertise range of building types available in Downtown</i>	Medium
<b>2.4 Increase the utilization of currently vacant commercial space</b>	
<i>Establish a tool to track available commercial spaces</i>	Short
<i>Create a clearinghouse for space needs and requests for landlords looking for tenants</i>	Short
<i>Create highly flexible space for growth-stage firms utilizing "master lease" model ★</i>	Medium
<i>Create a legacy business historic preservation fund</i>	Medium
<i>Recruit "new" business types that link to city cluster strategies</i>	Medium

Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>2.5 Expand business assistance to small- and mid-sized firms</b>	
<i>Offer working capital loans and grants for post-COVID restarts ★</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Offer low/no interest loans or pre-development grants to qualifying small businesses</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Provide timely data and market intelligence about Downtown population, business, and real estate trends and opportunities</i>	<i>Now</i>
<i>Work with local banks to address gaps in loans and working capital especially for MWBE</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Create small business "navigator" help desk within DNA and Downtown STL, Inc.</i>	<i>Short</i>
<b>2.6 Provide coordinated marketing for small businesses</b>	
<i>Market small businesses through online media</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Develop a web page promoting each Downtown retail "district"</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Program events and tours that bring people to small businesses ★</i>	<i>Short</i>
<b>2.7 Create space for growth-stage tech firms</b>	
<i>Design flex space models with local work space and real estate experts</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Create better physical connections with Cortex</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Create non-traditional space for growing firms</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Recruit large regional and national corporates to locate technology functions in Downtown</i>	<i>Short</i>



Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>2.8 Support the growth of the creative economy Downtown</b>	
<i>Create a cluster group to oversee creative economic initiatives in Downtown and the City</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Work with SLDC to hire a creative economy specialist for the City</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Evaluate options for coworking spaces for space-intensive creative activity</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Help to establish a pipeline of young talent in Downtown</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Create better physical and programmatic connections with key nodes across the City</i>	<i>Long</i>
<b>2.9 Increase the presence of higher education institutions in Downtown</b>	
<i>Investigate the possibilities for a national multi-university research center on future agriculture</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Organize regional multi-university creative economy investment</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Work with software tech cluster leaders to increase certificate and two-year degree options in Downtown</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Create housing options for college and post-college students</i>	<i>Long</i>

## Goal 03

# REDESIGN AND ACTIVATE OUR STREETS FOR A DYNAMIC BIKE, PEDESTRIAN, & TRANSIT NETWORK

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The strategies described in this section focus on physical and programmatic improvements to increase access and mobility for everyone Downtown. The strategies reflect the creative and visionary thinking that has gone into projects like the Brickline Greenway and have the potential for catalytic returns.

# WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The streets in Downtown St. Louis are **wide**. But, they weren't always as wide as they are today. In 1923, voters approved a bond to widen some streets and build new government buildings. This meant that along some streets, building frontages were quite literally chopped off of some structures. Today, some stand-out streetscape improvements have been made along segments of Washington Avenue for instance, but most of the streets have more space than is needed to support cars in Downtown. This extra width presents a great opportunity for Downtown. Excess driving lanes can be re-allocated to expand space for people, non-motorized vehicles, landscaping, and trees that will contribute to the vibrancy of Downtown. This space also creates opportunities for creative use and flexibility of curbside space to support rideshare pick-up and last-mile delivery zones supporting Downtown businesses.

**“Downtown’s walkability is its main asset.”** This idea was echoed by many throughout the public engagement process. The focus of *Design Downtown STL* is 2.2 square miles. Out of town visitors could have lunch on Washington Avenue and walk to Busch Stadium for a Cardinals game in 15 minutes. Or, a family could take a photo in front of the Gateway Arch and walk to the City Museum in 25 minutes, passing through Citygarden along the way. Today, those relatively short walks feel

much longer because the quality of the environment along most Downtown streets is lacking. These issues are exacerbated in the evening, when the lack of activity, street lighting, empty parking lots and vacant storefronts is most dramatic. Based on 2019 Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts collected by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWGCOG), counts taken at two central intersections in Downtown (intersections of 10th and Locust and 10th and Chestnut along the Gateway Mall) documented approximately half as many bikes and pedestrians at each location over a two day period than in the Central West End at West Pine and Euclid.<sup>1</sup>

The public outreach process clearly expressed a need for street improvements. Many believe that the negative perceptions of Downtown come from how the streets look and feel. When asked to identify the biggest transportation challenge facing Downtown, 30% of respondents identified “safety,” as their primary concerns, and another 12% indicated the desire to make it “easier and safer to walk to destinations.” Only 7% of participants identified traffic or congestion as the biggest challenge. Later in the public engagement process, participants were asked to identify their favorite design elements which could enhance a “boulevard” in Downtown. Trees were the clear favorite

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=66aa9c9b94994ed6870034c4bd-f16e4d>

“I cannot stress enough how crucial it will be to reduce the (personal) motor vehicle Downtown and strengthen walkability and cycling opportunities.”

with 21% of the votes, and Public Art, Safe Crosswalks, Bike Lanes, and Lighting each received over 12% of the remaining votes. Trees and lighting improve the quality of streets for all users, and are central to streetscape improvements recommended by this plan.

Today, Downtown St. Louis has a daytime population of approximately 75,000 people, a figure significantly greater than the Downtown resident population alone. Major sports teams, conventions, and concerts bring huge crowds into Downtown, particularly during summer months. Day-to-day traffic wasn't identified as a major issue in the planning process beyond a few complaints about specific intersections at rush hour or after major sporting events. But as Downtown's economy strengthens, Downtown will face greater challenges to manage traffic and parking. A Downtown Parking Study is ongoing at the time of writing *Design Downtown STL* with a goal of understanding and planning for a more efficient parking system. This is one part of a number of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies that can enable the City to better manage the flow of people into and out of Downtown, and reduce the prevalence of surface parking lots in Downtown.

One of Downtown's biggest assets is the MetroLink light rail system. Many cities dream of bringing underground or light rail to their downtown areas, but the financial and political burden make this type of major infrastructure project difficult, if not impossible. The system already connects the Lambert-St. Louis International Airport and western City and County with the Convention Center, Gateway Arch National Park, Enterprise Center, and Union Station and Aquarium within Downtown. What's more, St. Louis' system already has characteristics that make it uniquely valuable among transit systems: a shared fare system with buses, level-boarding platforms, and its own dedicated right-of-way. These design features make MetroLink trains faster and more efficient for riders.

Despite the availability and design of this amenity, MetroLink ridership is low. As part of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy for Downtown, increasing ridership on MetroLink is essential. When asked to weigh in on what would make Metrolink their mode of choice for getting to and from Downtown, 28% of public participants indicated that safety measures and ambassadors in the train stations would make a difference. 26% expressed a desire for improvements to the design of stations including new lighting, trees and signage.



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Creating more transportation options available to people in Downtown and making it easier to link trips between modes, will encourage more of those that can to walk, bike or use transit. LimeBikes, one of St. Louis' dockless bike and scooter share operators, published survey data collected from riders in cities across the world. Based on this rider survey, 20% of Lime riders report traveling to/from public transit during their most recent trip and 40% reported commuting to/from work or school<sup>2</sup>. A well designed bike share system can help to encourage transit ridership by providing an easy "last mile" trip from the station to the office. This decision is made even easier with a robust network of protected bike lanes that make that last mile feel safe and enjoyable.

Ultimately, providing more transportation options ensures more equitable access to jobs and housing in and around Downtown. The existing transit service and recent policy around bike share operations are critical to ensuring Downtown's growth is inclusive. As of 2018, the St. Louis bike share system was used by more than 60,000 unique users accounting for more than 130,000 trips, and 20% of bikes are deployed in St. Louis Equity and Inclusion Neighborhoods<sup>3</sup>. To ensure

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.li.me/hubfs/Lime\\_Official\\_One\\_Year\\_Report.pdf](https://www.li.me/hubfs/Lime_Official_One_Year_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Bike Share Permit - City of STL

<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/street/documents/upload/STLBikeSharePermitBPS7-16-18.pdf>

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that any company offering shared bikes or scooters in the City of St. Louis provides equitable access for all, permits to operate companies are required to: Have non-smart phone and non-credit card payment options; demonstrate a plan for providing equitable service and; maintain 20% of the fleet in the social Equity and Inclusion Target Neighborhoods (at least 1.5% in each area). When paired with improvements to critical infrastructure and the design of streets, St. Louis can empower residents to take advantage of the many transportation options already available in Downtown.

The Downtown Transportation Plan (approved, 2018) was designed to improve multimodal connections Downtown and address many of these challenges. This document provides recommendations for every street in the Study Area including the identification of a comprehensive network of Downtown bike lanes. On most streets, *Design Downtown STL* recommends to follow the guidance presented in the Downtown Transportation Plan. In some locations, modifications are recommended to better align the design of the street with proposed land use and development activity.

The strategies described in this section focus on physical and programmatic improvements to increase access and mobility for everyone Downtown. The strategies reflect the creative and visionary thinking that has gone into projects like the Brickline Greenway and have the potential for catalytic returns.

# STRATEGIES

## 3.1 CREATE A NETWORK OF DOWNTOWN “BOULEVARDS”

The historic network of parks and boulevards in cities like Chicago and Boston are treasured amenities which remind us that, throughout history, a connection to nature was seen as fundamental to improving health outcomes for people in urban areas and central to city planning. Boulevard designs typically describe larger, tree-lined streets, often with a central median. Historically, boulevards were designed to be a recreational amenity that also supported cars. Though they were designed with vehicle lanes, their design served drivers’ enjoyment, not efficiency. These boulevards and parks were the “lungs of the City”, connected parks and waterways, and helped to focus development along key corridors.

Today, cities like Seattle, Milwaukee, and Kansas City are reinvesting in their boulevards creating park-like qualities that blend into their streets and native landscapes which provide the benefits of an attractive softscape along with more sustainable maintenance requirements over time. Historic boulevards in these places still anchor districts within the City around a unifying characteristic and natural amenity that offers universal benefits.

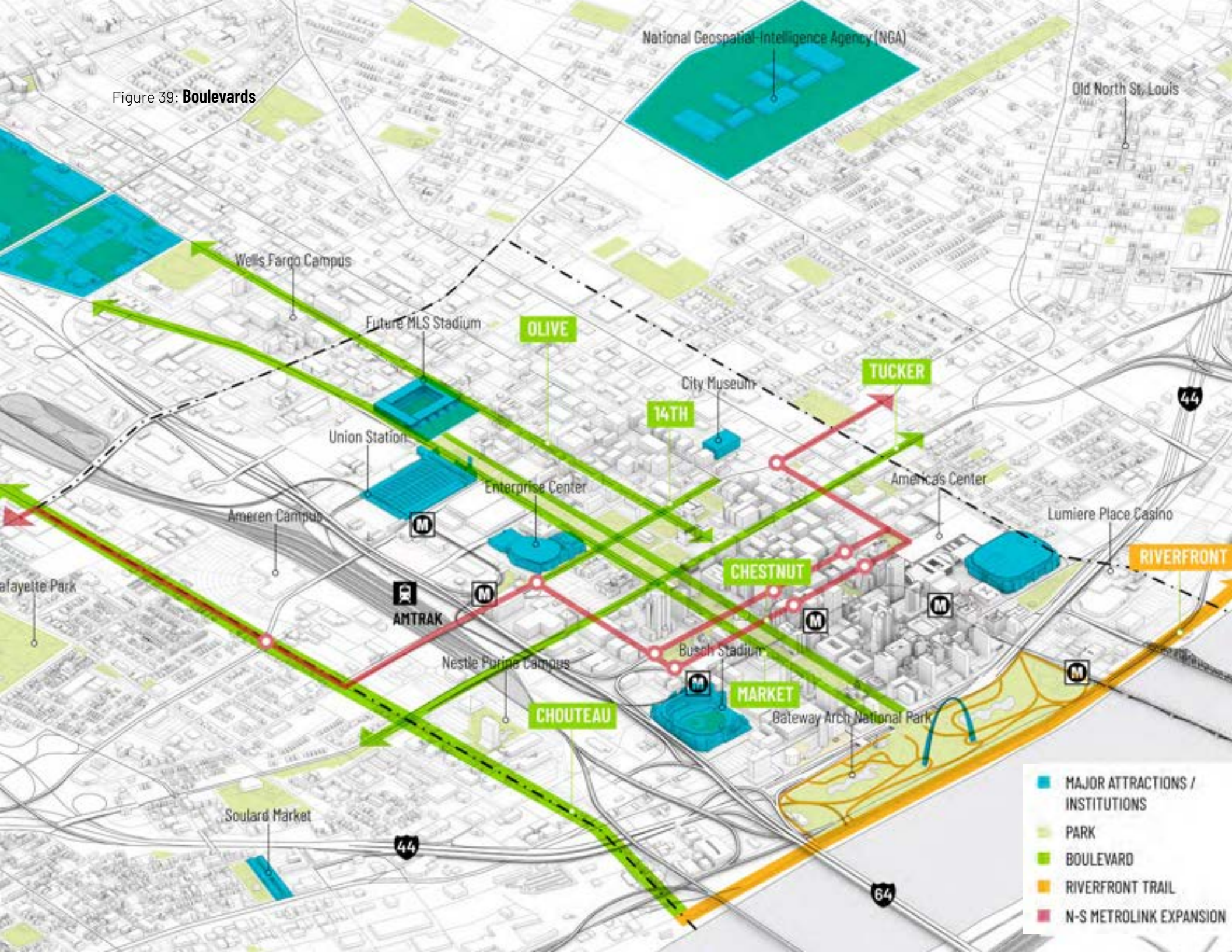
*Design Downtown STL* proposes a network of Downtown boulevards to elevate some of the most visible and important Downtown streets and gateways – Tucker Boulevard, Olive Street, Market Street and 14th Street. These oversized streets present an opportunity to build a connected network of linear parks where central medians and sidewalks can be extended to function as both parks and transportation for all. Critically important, this move provides more space for Downtown residents and employees to get outside and enjoy Downtown with enough space to socially distance if necessary. Temporary, extended walking paths along the sidewalks of these streets can help to meet pandemic-related needs for outdoor space in the short term while design and fundraising for permanent improvements are in process.

Introducing trees along these streets provides shade and a more attractive softscape for pedestrians, but studies have shown that tree overhang reduces vehicle speeds improving safety for all modes<sup>1</sup>. Broad central medians break long crosswalks at intersections into segments, limiting the time pedestrians are exposed to vehicle traffic and providing safe, comfortable refuge in the center of the roadway.

<sup>1</sup> Naderi, Jody & Kweon, Byoung-Suk & Maghelal, Praveen. (2008). The street tree effect and driver safety. ITE Journal on the Web. 78. 69-73. <https://www.naturewithin.info/Roadside/Tree&Driver ITE.pdf>



Figure 39: **Boulevards**



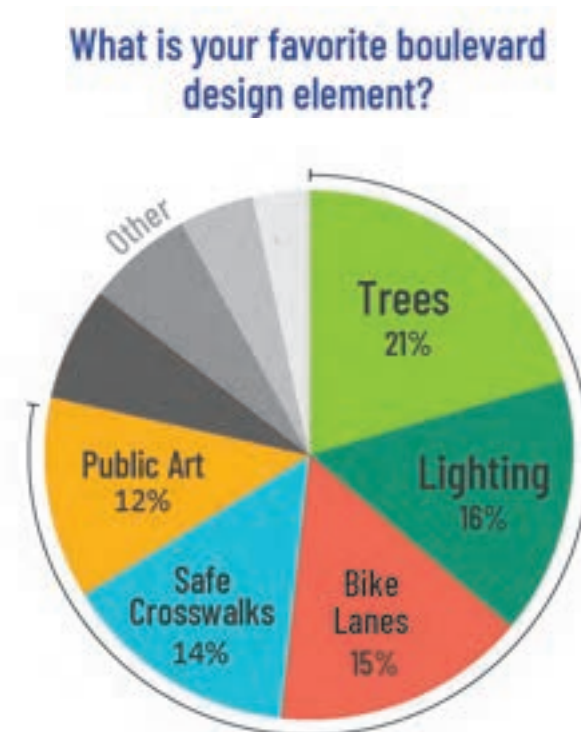


“...the roads today are a way out of Downtown rather than a way of getting around Downtown.”

The significant roadway width of Tucker and Olive in particular present an opportunity to not only green, but activate a central greenspace with outdoor seating, public art or lighting or other programmable space feeling more park-scape than streetscape. Doubling-down on landscape enhancements along these strategic Boulevards also helps to focus the effort required to maintain landscape elements into the public way along fewer, high-impact blocks.

★ **A. COORDINATE WITH BRICKLINE GREENWAY TO CREATE MARKET-CHESTNUT LOOP**

As part of the integration of the Brickline Greenway Downtown, a cycle track is proposed along the south side of the Gateway Mall (northern curb along Market Street), at sidewalk level. Today, there is a bike facility on Chestnut Street, the northern edge of the Gateway Mall. These bike facilities could be reimagined to create a loop of multi-use pathways that connect around the Gateway Mall and turn the entire central corridor into a recreational urban trail.



*The public made their opinion known regarding how they would like streets redesigned.*



Figure 41: **Market Street Existing**

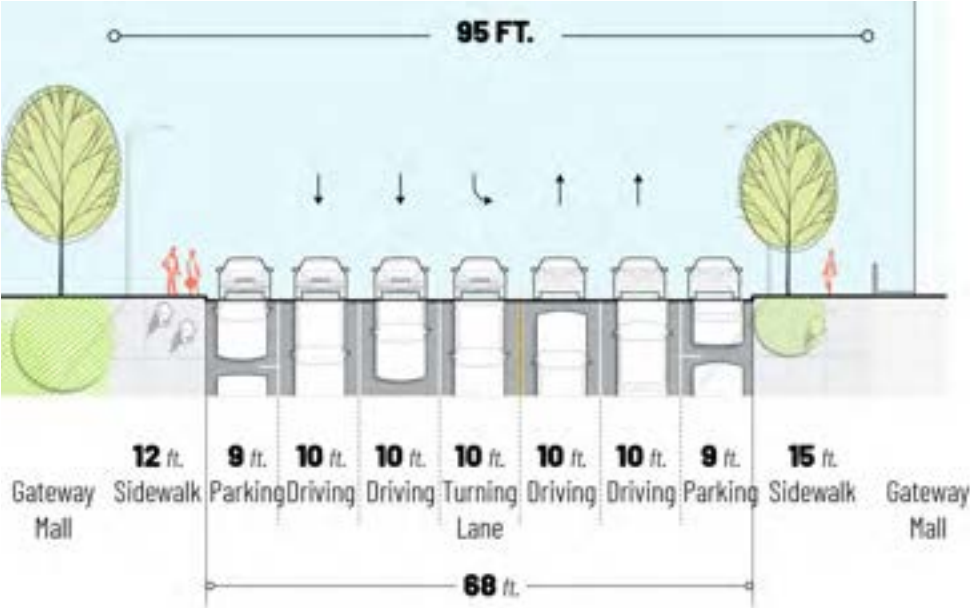


Figure 42: **Market Street Proposed**

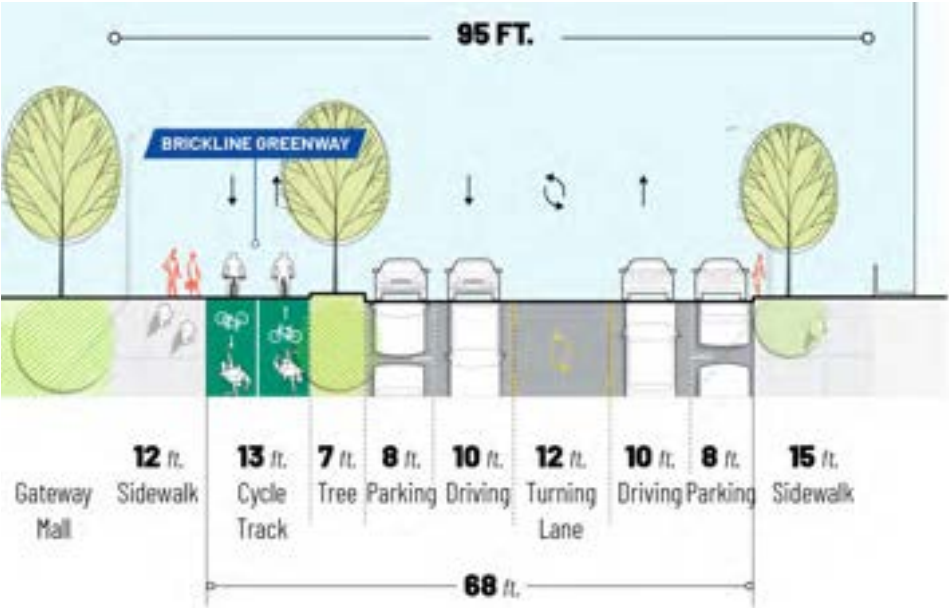


Figure 43: **Chestnut Street Existing**

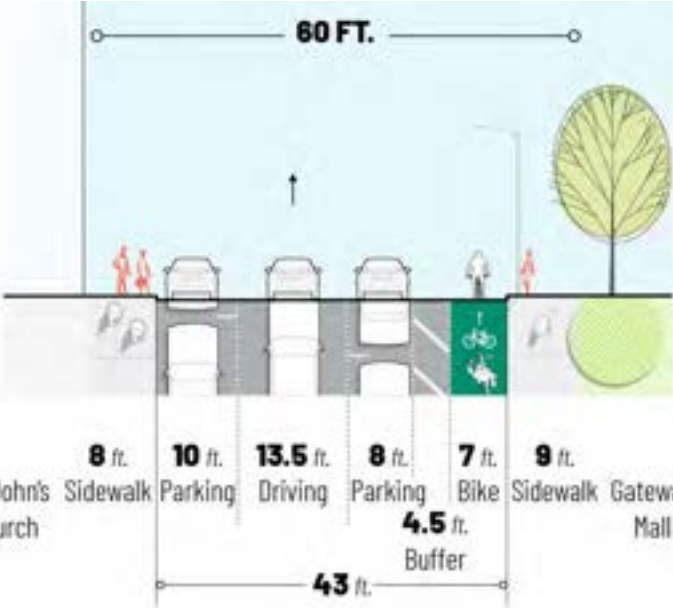
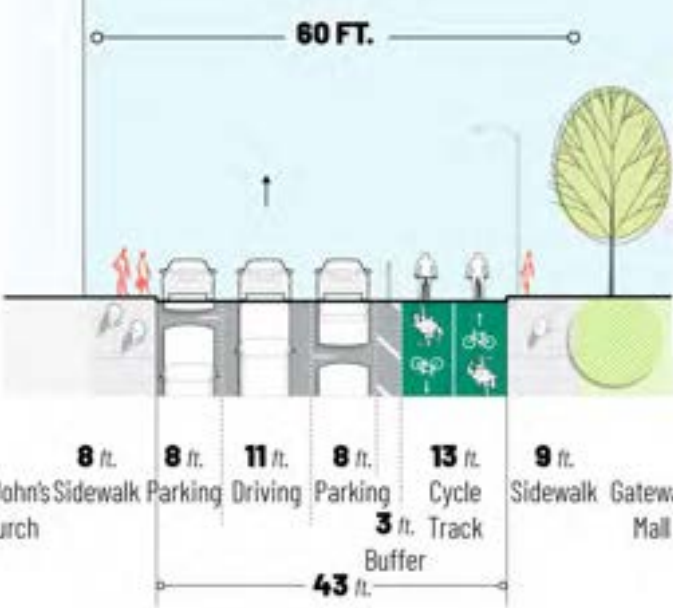


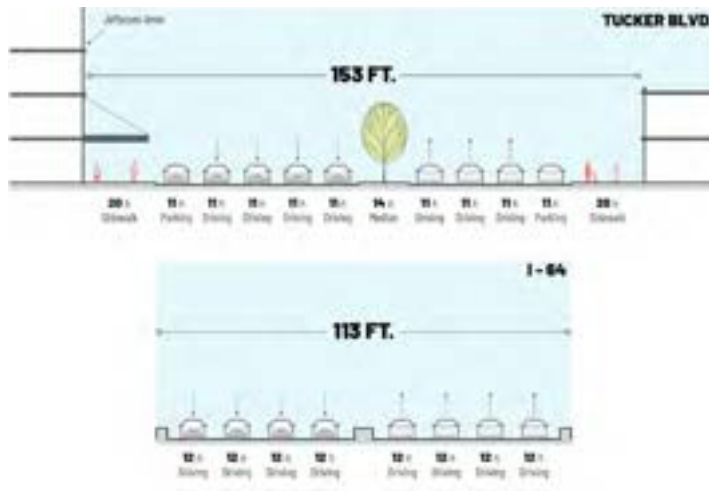
Figure 44: **Chestnut Street Proposed**



Tucker Boulevard  
is as wide as I-64  
through Downtown.



Figure 45: **Tucker and I-64 Comparison**



★ **B. REDESIGN TUCKER BOULEVARD**

Tucker Boulevard has been the subject of much discussion throughout the *Design Downtown STL* process. Today, Tucker is over 110 feet curb to curb, with 7 driving lanes and two parking lanes. Given the level of current traffic, this width offers flexibility.

The Downtown Transportation Plan proposes a cycle track along the west side of Tucker, with curb and parking protection from traffic. Even adding a high-quality bike facility leaves a significant amount of space for improvement. Although ideas differ on how to use the space, there was general agreement that improvements should be made to make Tucker true to its name, a boulevard. This includes a significant expansion of the central median to accommodate a landscaped greenspace with integrated art, lighting, and places for people, in addition to an extended sidewalk along the east sidewalk to create space for additional trees. On-street parking is preserved and vehicle lanes are narrowed as a measure to calm traffic along these important retail blocks.

Figure 46: Tucker Boulevard Existing

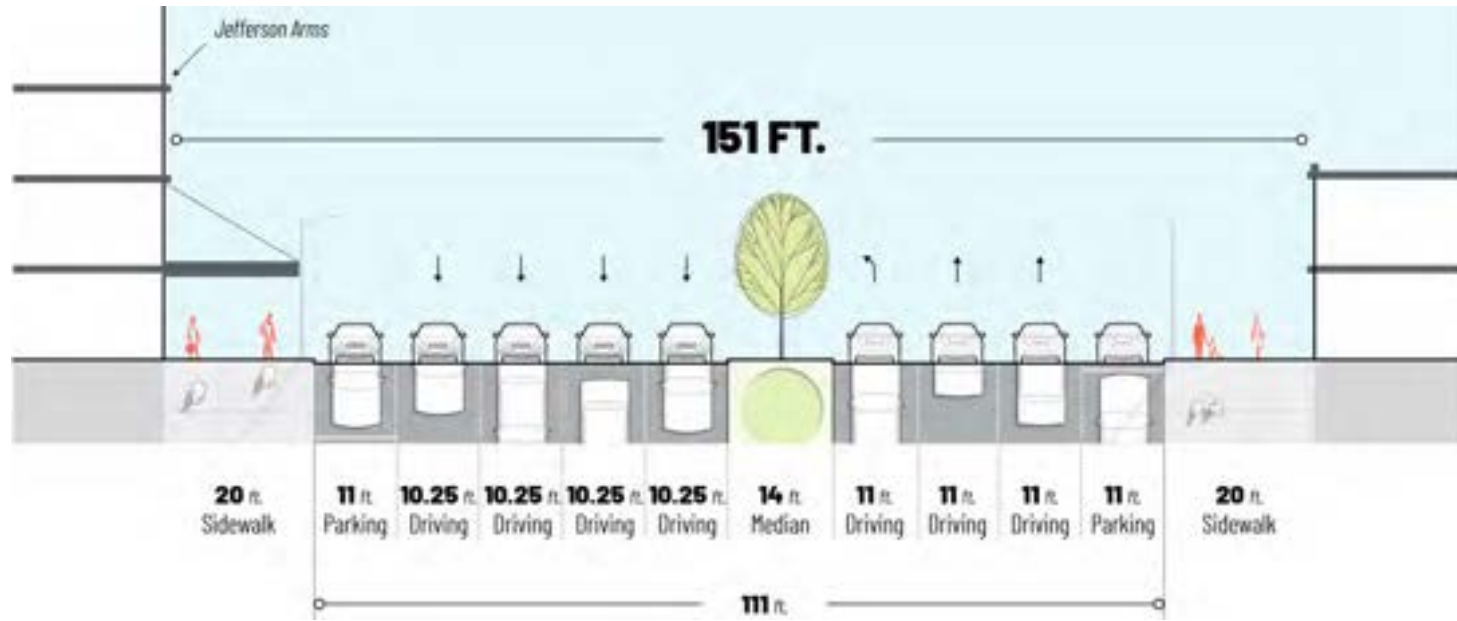
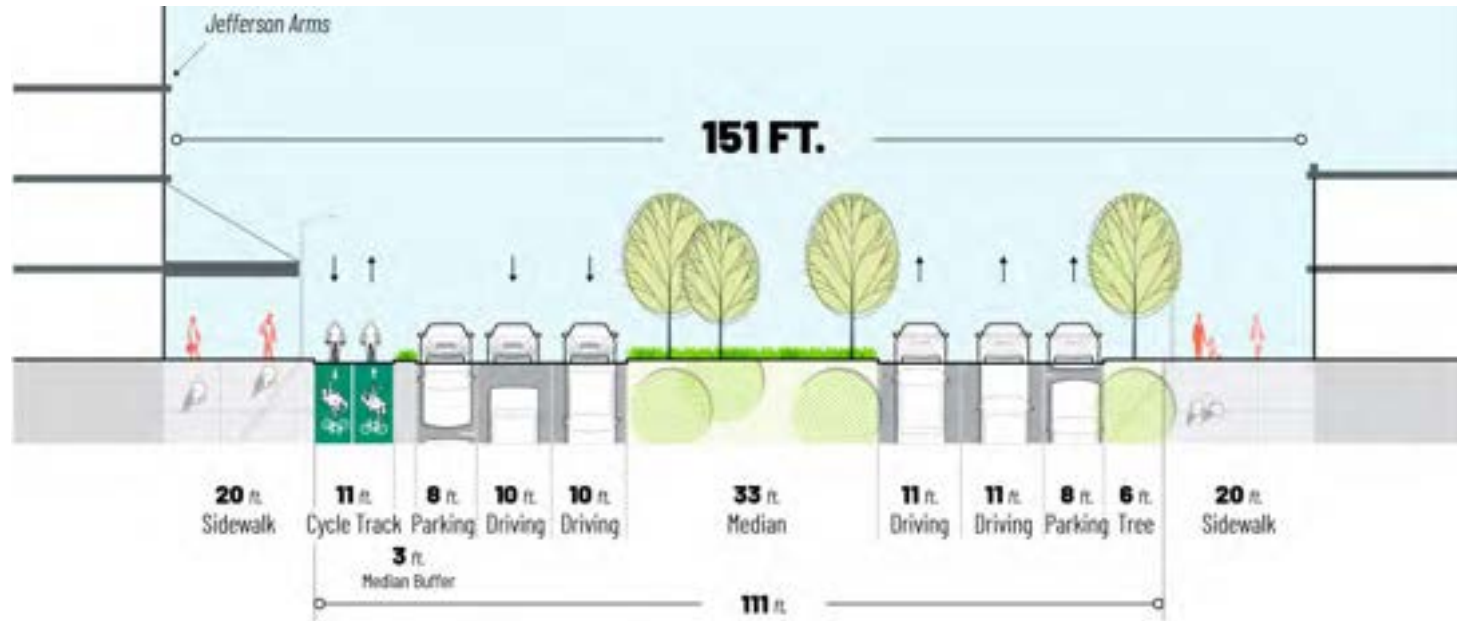


Figure 47: Tucker Boulevard Proposed





Chapter 04:  
RECOMMENDATIONS



Existing Tucker Boulevard looking North

There was no shortage of ideas for Tucker Boulevard from the Online Open House.

**"Make the median the focus!"**

"The center median on Tucker should be made into usable & pedestrian-friendly space"

"... a giant median doesn't seem like the best use of space."

What if there was a bike trail in the central median instead?

Consider protected bike lanes on both sides, instead of a cycle track.

**Tucker needs a bus lane.**

"Be sure to include investment in maintenance for plantings — we have an amazing spring, let's show it off!"

"...the roads today are] a way out of downtown rather than a way of getting around downtown."

Could transit run down the center of Tucker?

"A well developed more elaborate median could become a trademark of the city!"

"Right idea, wrong proportions"

**Extend the sidewalk instead of the median. Use the space for trees.**

"There used to be market in the middle of Tucker — that space can again be used for downtown farmers market..."









“There needs to be places where community can develop, human-scale areas where it’s actually pleasant and safe to walk around.”

Olive Street goes from 7 lanes wide to 3 lanes wide at Tucker Boulevard.

### **C. REDESIGN CHOUTEAU AVENUE**

Chouteau Avenue, formerly Route 66, serves as Downtown’s southernmost boundary. Work with MoDOT and area companies to integrate median plantings where appropriate and integrate trees along the adjacent properties to shade the sidewalks.

### **D. REDESIGN OLIVE STREET**

Olive Street is the front door to St. Louis Public Library and a critical direct connection to Downtown West and Midtown. Olive, like Tucker, is very wide. The proposed section for Olive shows an expanded central median with enhanced landscaping. In alignment with the Downtown Transportation Plan, protected bike lanes are recommended for Olive Boulevard. The vision for Olive is for a comfortable, multi-modal street.



*Olive Street west of Tucker.*



*Olive Street east of Tucker.*

### **E. REDESIGN 14TH STREET**

North of Delmar, 14th Street will be reconstructed with two transformational projects. Sharing space on 14th will be a dedicated fixed guideway high capacity transit corridor (the Northside - Southside transit expansion) and potentially the Brickline Greenway. Both these projects are already in design phases and moving towards funding and construction. The configuration of the street will be coordinated between these projects, the result being a completely reimagined multimodal corridor with high quality transit and active transportation amenities. South of Delmar, the Brickline Greenway will continue into the heart of Downtown.

### **F. CREATE REGULAR “OPEN STREET” EVENTS**

Open Streets are streets that are temporarily closed to vehicular traffic in order to open the space to people on foot, bike, skateboard, rollerblades, or even unicycle to experience the City in a new way. These events are often coordinated with street markets or other programming. Many successful examples of Open Streets events occur on a regular schedule (weekly or monthly) across the world, weather permitting.

Figure 49: Olive Street Existing

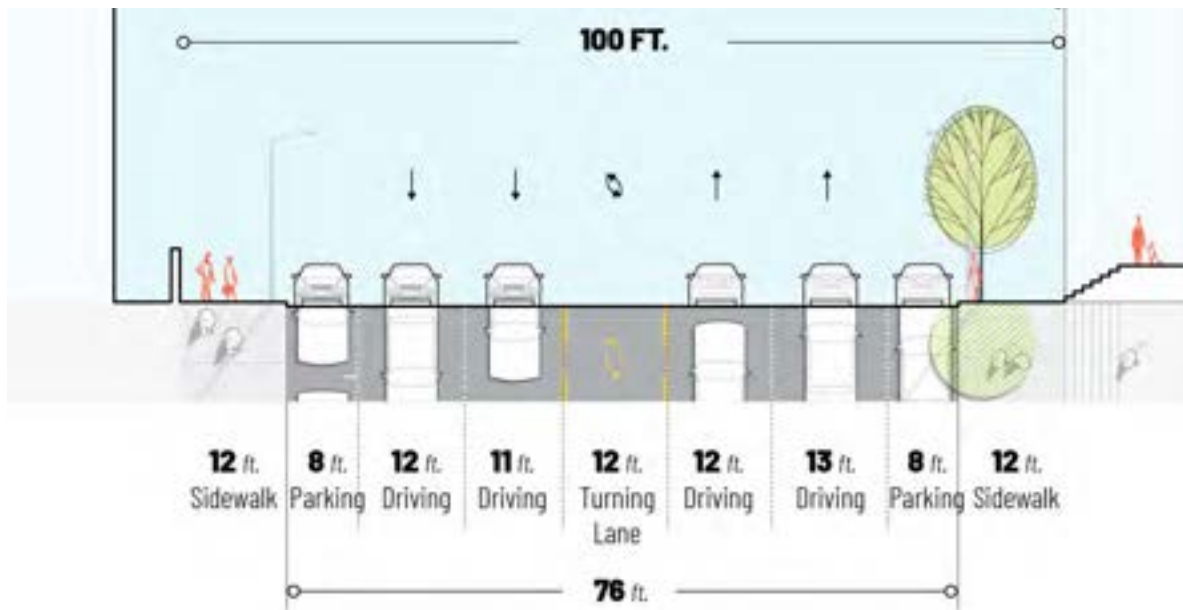
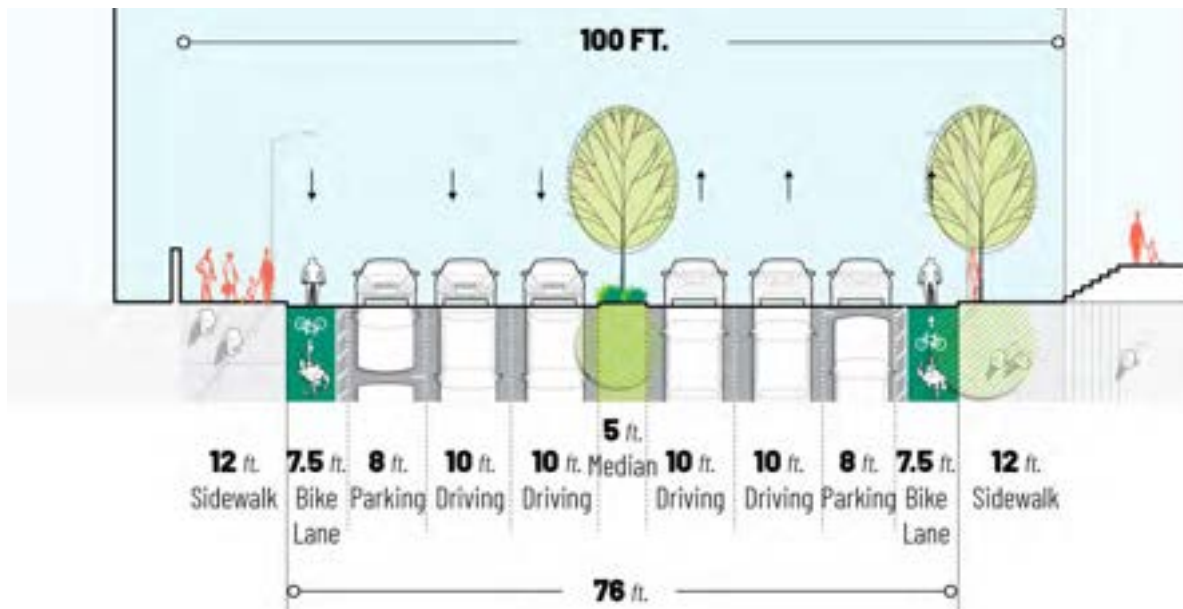


Figure 50: Olive Street Proposed



*Downtown Transportation Study shows no bike facility on Olive. However, Design Downtown STL proposes protected bike lanes to connect with the existing bike facility west of 20th Street.*

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### 3.2 REDESIGN CRITICAL STREETS

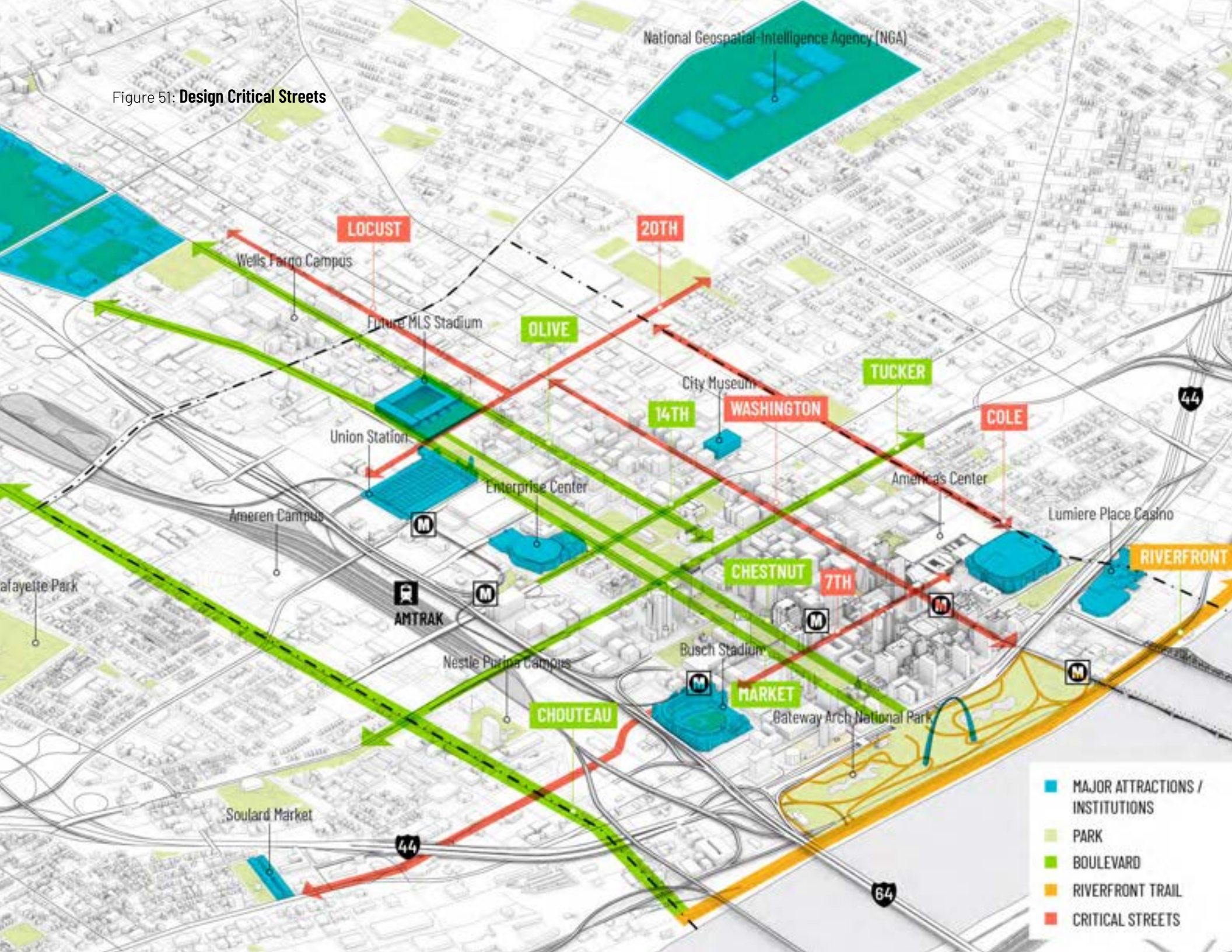
A hierarchy of streets was developed to design safe streets for all users, prioritize the movement of compatible modes along corridors, and separate conflicting modes. The Downtown Transportation Plan proposes a network of pedestrian improvements, bike facilities, and transit enhancements which are identified by Tiers (Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3). Each Tier identifies the type of improvements recommended for each street segment. Tier 1 improvements describe the highest level of improvement. For example, a Tier 1 Bike facility would be physically protected by permanent infrastructure, a raised bicycle facility, or a 2-way protected bike facility (e.g. Indianapolis Cultural Trail). Whereas, a Tier 3 describes streets where shared lane markings used in conjunction with traffic calming measures that slow motorists to around 20mph are appropriate. The idea of the Tier 1 and 2 pedestrian routes is to create a stronger sense of place along streets that offer logical and easy connections for pedestrians traveling in Downtown St. Louis.

The work in this previously adopted plan provides the foundation for prioritizing street improvements Downtown. In addition to the proposed boulevards identified previously, there are a number of critical streets that need design attention Downtown. These streets are not wide enough to become “boulevards” as defined in *Design Downtown STL* but offer unique design opportunities. Locust Street, 20th Street, 7th/8th Street and Cole Street are all important corridors that can help to better connect Downtown with neighborhoods to the north, south and west. In addition, Washington Avenue needs attention to restore and improve the streetscape design implemented previously.

The Downtown Transportation Plan proposed a street section illustrating the recommended design for every street in Downtown. This plan supports the concepts presented in the Downtown Transportation Plan for most streets in Downtown. Where modifications to the Downtown Transportation Plan are recommended, these variations are noted in the sections illustrated on the following pages.



Figure 51: Design Critical Streets



- MAJOR ATTRACTIONS / INSTITUTIONS
- PARK
- BOULEVARD
- RIVERFRONT TRAIL
- CRITICAL STREETS





ABOVE:  
*7th Street north of Chestnut Street.*

#### **A. COORDINATE WITH 7TH STREET REDESIGN**

**Existing:** Today, 7th Street (northbound) and 8th Street (southbound) create a one-way pair. 7th Street has two northbound driving lanes and a parallel parking lane on both sides of the street.

**Proposed:** The proposed section for 7th Street shows a curb-protected cycle track along the west side of the street and two driving lanes, extending the eastern sidewalk by 4 feet.

#### **B. CONNECT 8TH STREET TO SOULARD**

**Proposed:** The Downtown Transportation Plan proposes a cycle track and two southbound driving lanes with no parking along 8th Street from Washington to the point 8th and 7th Streets meets at Cerre Street. Currently in design is a parallel cycle track on 7th Street, from Washington to Walnut. While in the future, the preferred vision for 8th Street in the Downtown Transportation Plan north of Walnut may be re-assessed, in the short term, it should remain unchanged until the 7th Street project has completed design and is constructed. From Walnut Street south, the 8th Street cycle track proposed in the Downtown Transportation Plan should remain unchanged. When 8th Street is revisited, the configuration should be informed by the final design and implementation of 7th Street, to ensure these closely spaced blocks complement one another.

Figure 52: **7th Street Existing**

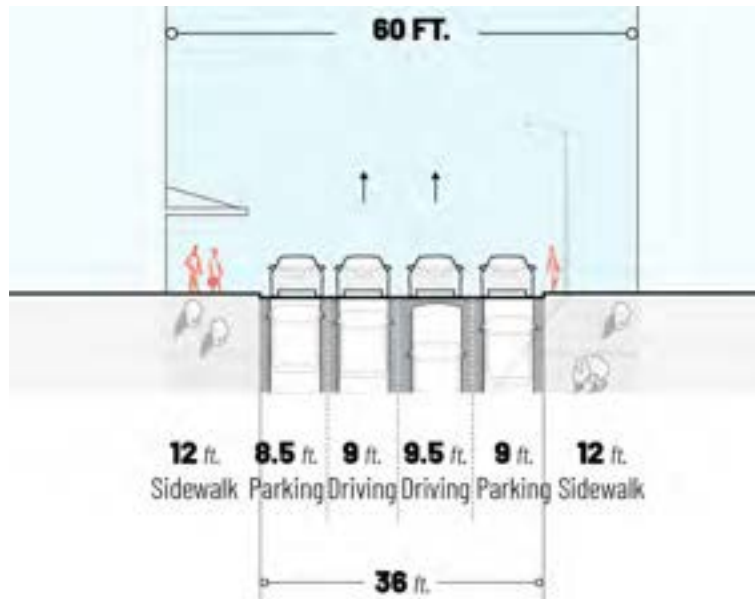
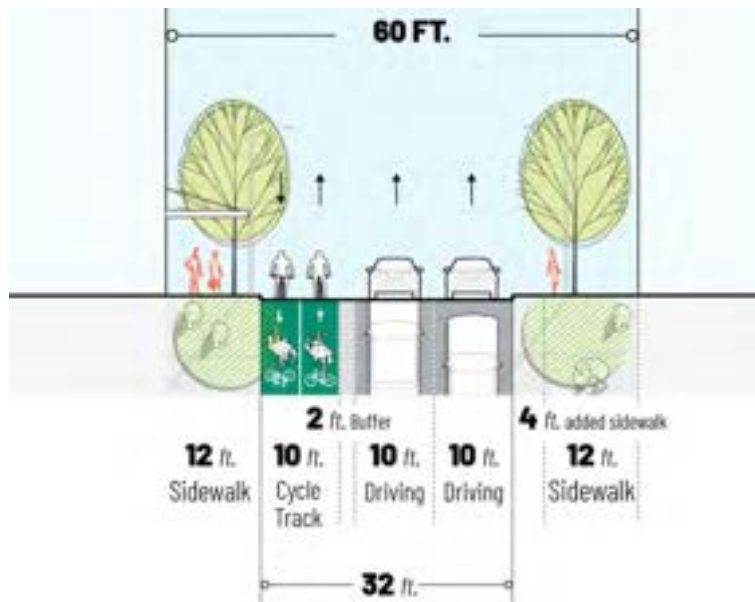


Figure 53: **7th Street Proposed**



*Downtown Transportation Study shows no bike facility on 7th Street. However, this proposal reflects the City's latest proposal which includes a cycle track.*

“Whenever we go to lunch, we’ll go to Washington Avenue and I’m sure there are places we don’t know about and think about. Anything on 4th or Broadway, I just don’t think about that area. Even Downtown is cut up. Seems like we all stay within 2 or 3 blocks of where we are”

## Chapter 04: RECOMMENDATIONS

ABOVE LEFT:  
20th Street on the right with the future  
MLS Stadium site on the left.

ABOVE RIGHT:  
Locust Street west of 21st Street.



### C. COORDINATE WITH 20TH STREET CYCLE TRACK AND MLS

**Existing:** 20th Street today has driving lanes with sharrow markings for cyclists in both directions, and a parking lane on the west side of the street.

**Proposed:** Construction of the MLS Stadium and associated developments underscore the need to provide multimodal connections along 20th Street. There is a proposed design for 20th through the City's Jefferson and 20th Street Revitalization corridor plan. The design retains driving lanes in both directions for cars, and a parking lane along the striped buffer of the cycle track.



### D. REDESIGN LOCUST STREET WEST OF 20TH

**Existing:** Locust Street today (between 21st and 22nd Streets) is a typical two lane street with parking on both sides.

**Proposed:** Re-allocate 1 ft of width from the parking lane to the driving lanes, and add "enhanced sharrow" bike lane markings in both directions. This proposed section differs from guidance in the Downtown Transportation Plan. Locust is home to many small offices and retail, and the design for Olive (one block south) includes a protected bike facility. Maintaining parking along these blocks will provide better support for the businesses.



Figure 54: 20th Street Existing

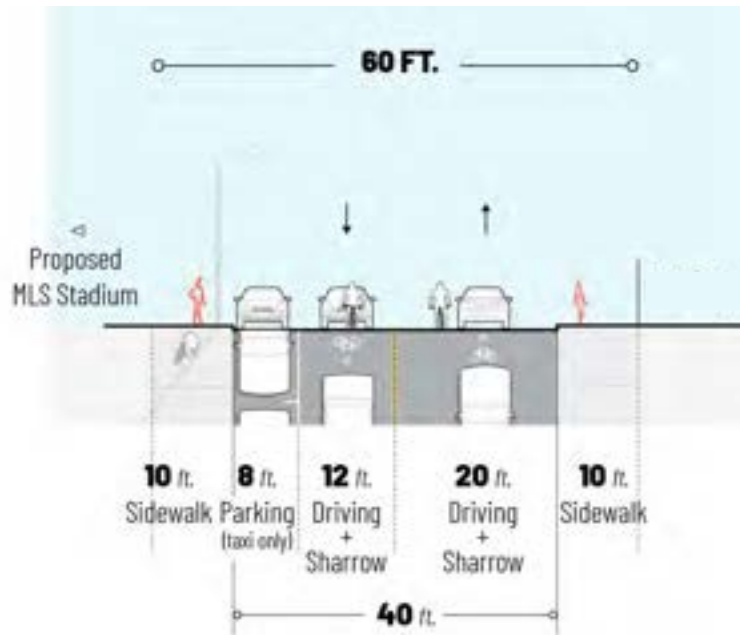


Figure 55: 20th Street Proposed

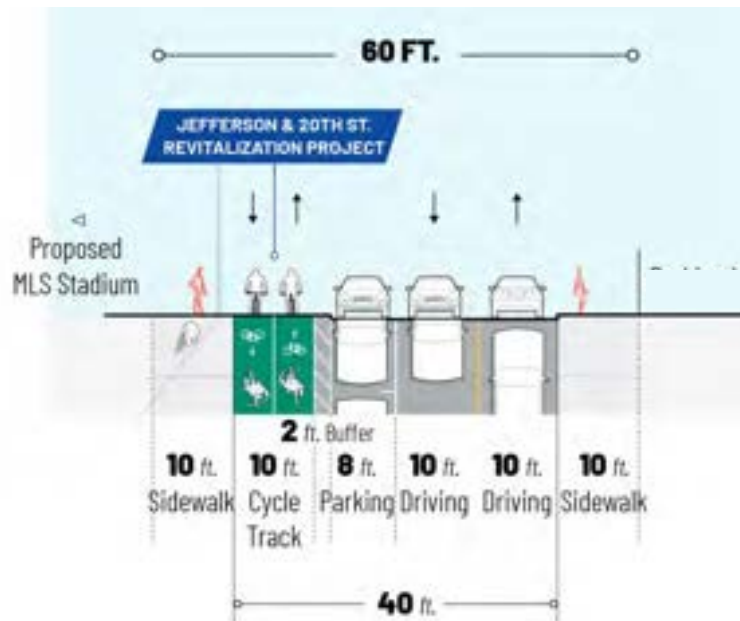


Figure 56: Locust Street Existing

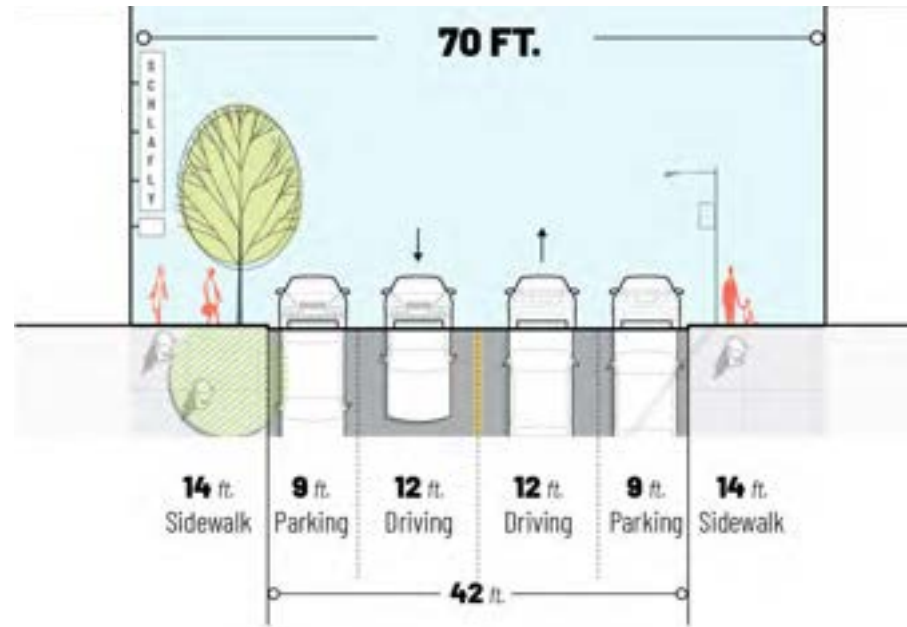
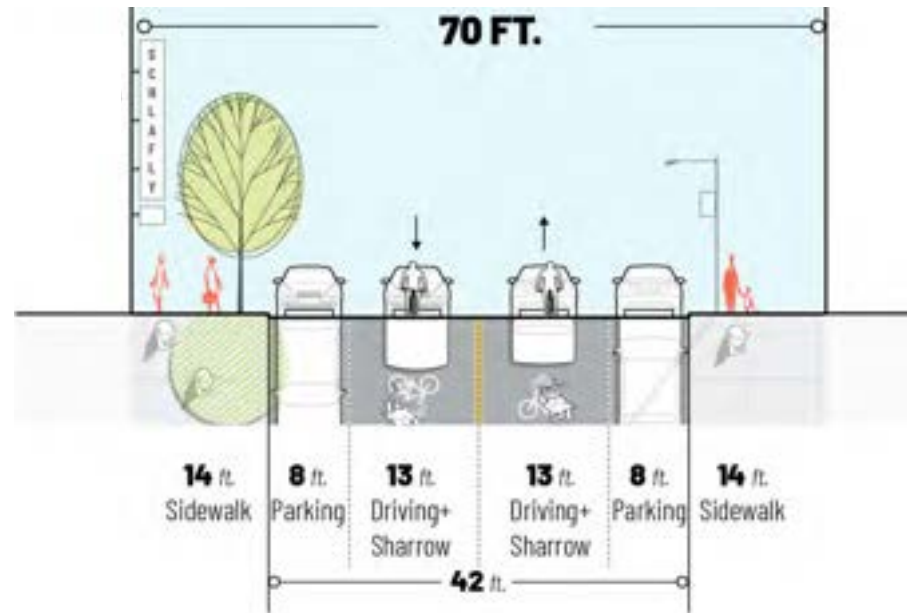


Figure 57: Locust Street Proposed



Downtown Transportation Study shows two-way cycle track with parking on north side. This proposal shows an enhanced sharrow with curbside parking to better support existing and new businesses. In addition, new bike lanes are proposed for Olive Street 1-block away

### E. UNDERTAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO WASHINGTON AVENUE

An innovative streetscape was completed for Washington Avenue in the 2000s that echoed the corridor’s history of garment making. The design included a curbless streetscape with unique lighting and paving that create a “zipper” effect on the street. While distinctive in its design, issues have surfaced with respect to maintenance. Some of the original features are in poor condition and it is clear that some re-thinking of the design, including how it will be maintained going forward, is warranted. Where possible, maintain the original design intent and features but replace other elements to ensure a more durable streetscape.

*Washington Avenue’s distinctive zipper pattern suffers from maintenance issues*



### F. REDESIGN COLE STREET TO BETTER CONNECT WITH LOCATIONS NORTH AND EAST OF DOWNTOWN

Cole Street currently forms a physical and psychological barrier between downtown and neighborhoods to the north. It also serves as an access point to the Lumiere Casino and Lacelde’s Landing. Cole should be rethought to better connect adjacent destinations.

**Existing:** Cole Street today (between 9th and 10th) has five driving lanes, a turning lane that extends midblock from the nearest intersections, and one parking lane. On the north side of the street, lack of striping makes it tough to distinguish between the driving and parking lane, giving the street the appearance of having a 22 foot parallel parking lane.

**Proposed:** Convert one of the driving lanes into a parking lane. Shorten pedestrian crossings on Cole to better connect to Downtown by improving intersections with corner bumpouts, pedestrian refuge islands at both Tucker and 10th Street, and pedestrian signals. Assess possible pedestrian improvements across Broadway to connect to Lumiere Casino. Improve wayfinding to indicate access to Laclede’s Landing and the Mississippi River. Assess interim angled parking to increase parking supply during the Convention Center Expansion, which may be repurposed in the future for bike facilities. Consider that the Cole streetscape east of 7th Street can be a key factor in supporting productive use of the currently vacant “Bottle District” parcels. While the Downtown Transportation Plan calls for a cycle track on Cole, in the shorter term improved pedestrian conditions, wayfinding, and traffic calming will provide immediately improved connectivity north and south.

Figure 58: Cole Street Existing

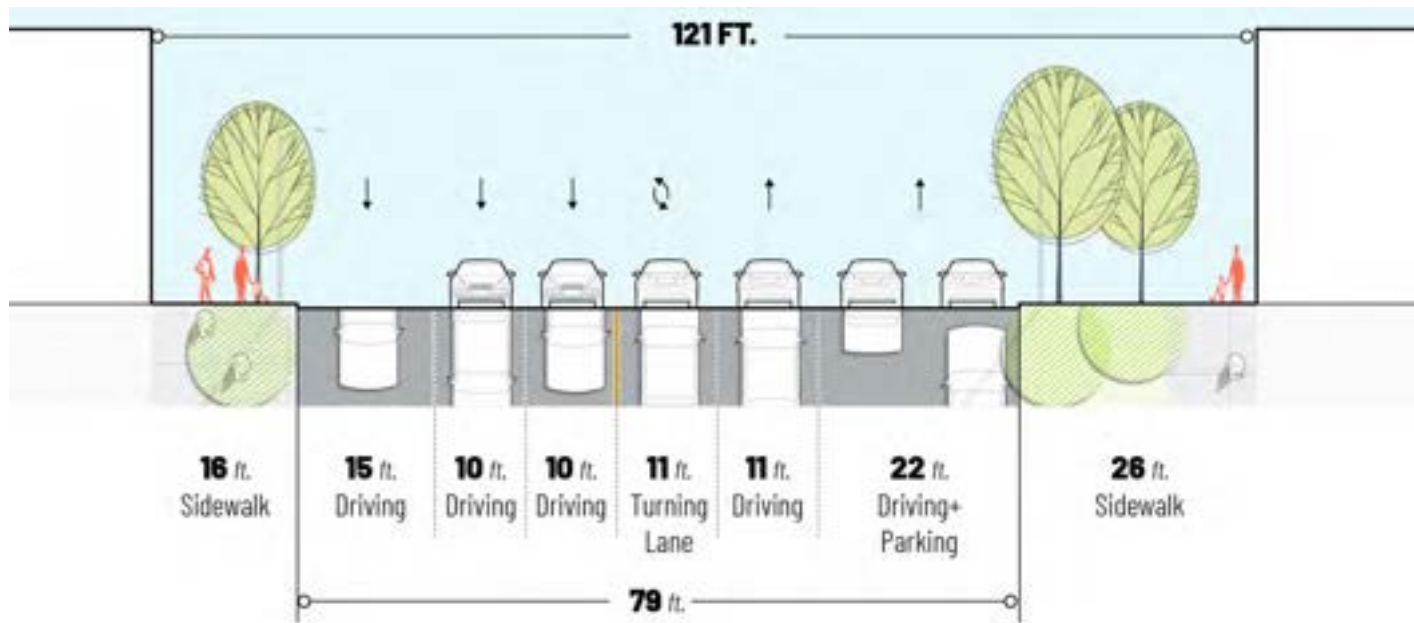
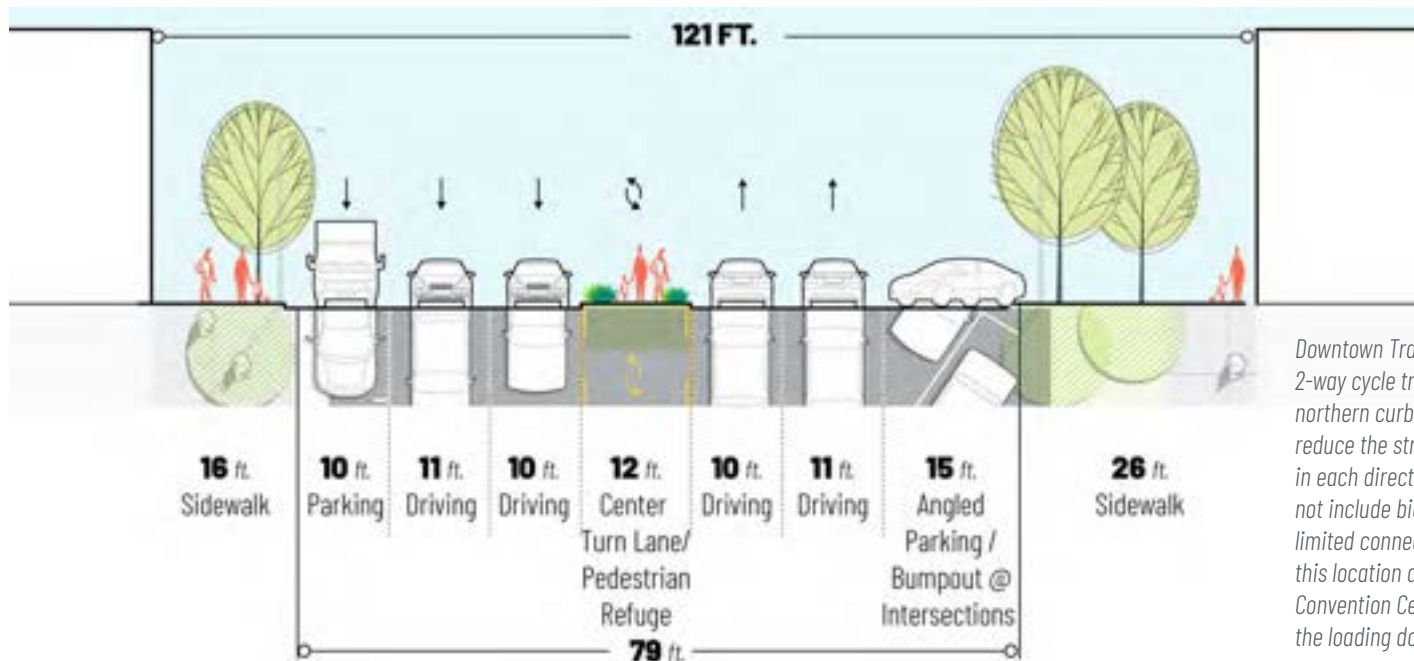


Figure 59: Cole Street Proposed



*Downtown Transportation Study shows 2-way cycle track and parking along northern curb. It also proposes to reduce the street to 2 vehicle lanes in each direction. This proposal does not include bicycle lanes due to the limited connections they would offer in this location as well as concerns with Convention Center truck traffic using the loading docks on Cole.*

**PRECEDENT:**  
AN EXTENDED SONG OF OUR  
PEOPLE (AESOP)



**CHICAGO, IL**

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) commissioned multi-disciplinary artist Theaster Gates to create a signature art piece for the recently renovated 95th Street Station on the South Side of Chicago. The result was a DJ booth that plays music for passengers waiting for their train, and that broadcasts a radio signal over the internet. The installation honors the South Side's prominent role as one of the epicenters of 20th century African-American music, and as the birthplace of Chicago house music.

“Make the stops real amenities, smart and connected, and providing multiple uses – wifi, charging, how about a mobile library or health care center?”

### **3.3 CREATE “MOBILITY HUBS”**

A Mobility Hub brings together all modes of transportation – walking, biking, transit and shared mobility (like bikeshare), in an area where people can seamlessly transition from one mode to another to complete their trip. In planning for the future of Downtown, the positioning of Mobility Hubs is a key consideration in moving people.

In addition to providing additional benefits for transportation options and information, mobility hubs are centered around people, and are used to enhance placemaking in the public right of way. By transforming a more traditional transit stop with added pedestrian elements, people will feel safe and comfortable as they wait for their next bus or Metrolink train. These hubs can also give tourists and visitors to Downtown more information about destinations within walking or biking distance to enhance their stay and experience in the neighborhood. For residents, these hubs can provide public services such as the internet or information about health screenings, job opportunities, and much more. Key steps that should be included in the design and placement of these mobility hubs are included here.

#### **A. CONSIDER PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS TO METRO STATIONS**

When asked what type of improvements to Metrolink would make riding the best choice for getting to and from Downtown, 26% of participants indicated a desire for station designs with lighting, trees, and signage. Existing Metrobus and Metrolink stations currently provide minimal pedestrian amenities. A typical bus stop includes a sign, and some may have a shelter with a bench and a trash can. Metrolink stations provide amenities for waiting but nothing that enhances pedestrian comfort at the stop. Stops should be ADA compliant and have ADA compliant pedestrian features navigating passengers safely to each stop. New shelters at major stop locations and enhanced pedestrian and bike scale wayfinding at transit stops are potential improvements for consideration. Mobility Hubs may also include additional amenities to activate the space while people wait. An example of this is an opportunity to work with Kaboom! and their play everywhere program that specializes in activating the public ROW for families and their caregivers.



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**B. PROVIDE AMBASSADORS FOR ENHANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE & SECURITY**

Metro transit already provides security staff at Metrolink stations but should consider the addition of transit ambassadors throughout Downtown. These transit ambassadors can be stationed at Mobility Hubs to help answer questions about routes, schedules, and timing. These individuals should also be well-versed in the shared mobility options to encourage greater use of amenities like bikeshare. For this program Metro can reach out to existing transit users to build a local workforce that is intimately familiar with the Metro system but also coordinate with Downtown STL, Inc. if a Downtown Ambassadors program returns (see Goal 1).

**C. WORK TO CREATE A SUBWAY ART PROGRAM AND ENHANCED SEATING AREAS**

In addition to providing enhanced services and information at Mobility Hubs, these locations have a unique opportunity to improve the perception of Downtown for employees and visitors. By designing these environments as friendly places for people, these hubs have the power to be major community assets for civic engagement. Consider working with the Metro Arts in Transit group to develop programming and public art for these stations. Target locations with higher passenger boardings and alightings and seek ways to involve the community in the design and installation of the art.

---

**D. EXPAND ACCESS TO REAL-TIME ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE INFO**

Metro transit currently has the ability to send real-time arrival and departure information to transit users when it is requested (via text messaging by stop ID or through the Transit App). However, there is very minimal real-time signage. Metrolink stations have scrolling marquee that display the next arrival time and train direction, but bus stops and transit centers (unless on a Metrolink platform) do not offer any real time information. Metro has the ability to share real-time arrival/departure information to aid passengers by installing digital signage at bus stations and transit centers (in a fare free zone).

Riding MetroLink would be the best choice for getting to and from Downtown if....

28%

There were safety measures / ambassadors in the stations and/or on the train cars

26%

The stations were well designed with lighting, trees, signage

# PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS



**1** Station "daylighting" & enhanced LED lighting



**2** Bikeshare docking station or dedicated bike parking



**3** Scooter docking / charging station



**4** Additional decorative plaza lighting



**5** Real-time arrival/departure & mode transfer sign



**6** Neighborhood map of surrounding destinations



**7** Lighting installation opportunity on building facade



**8** Enhanced crosswalk / pedestrian scramble



**9** Rideshare pick-up / drop-off lanes (west & southbound)

# OPERATIONAL / PROGRAMMATIC IMPROVEMENTS



**A** Ambassadors for enhanced customer service & security



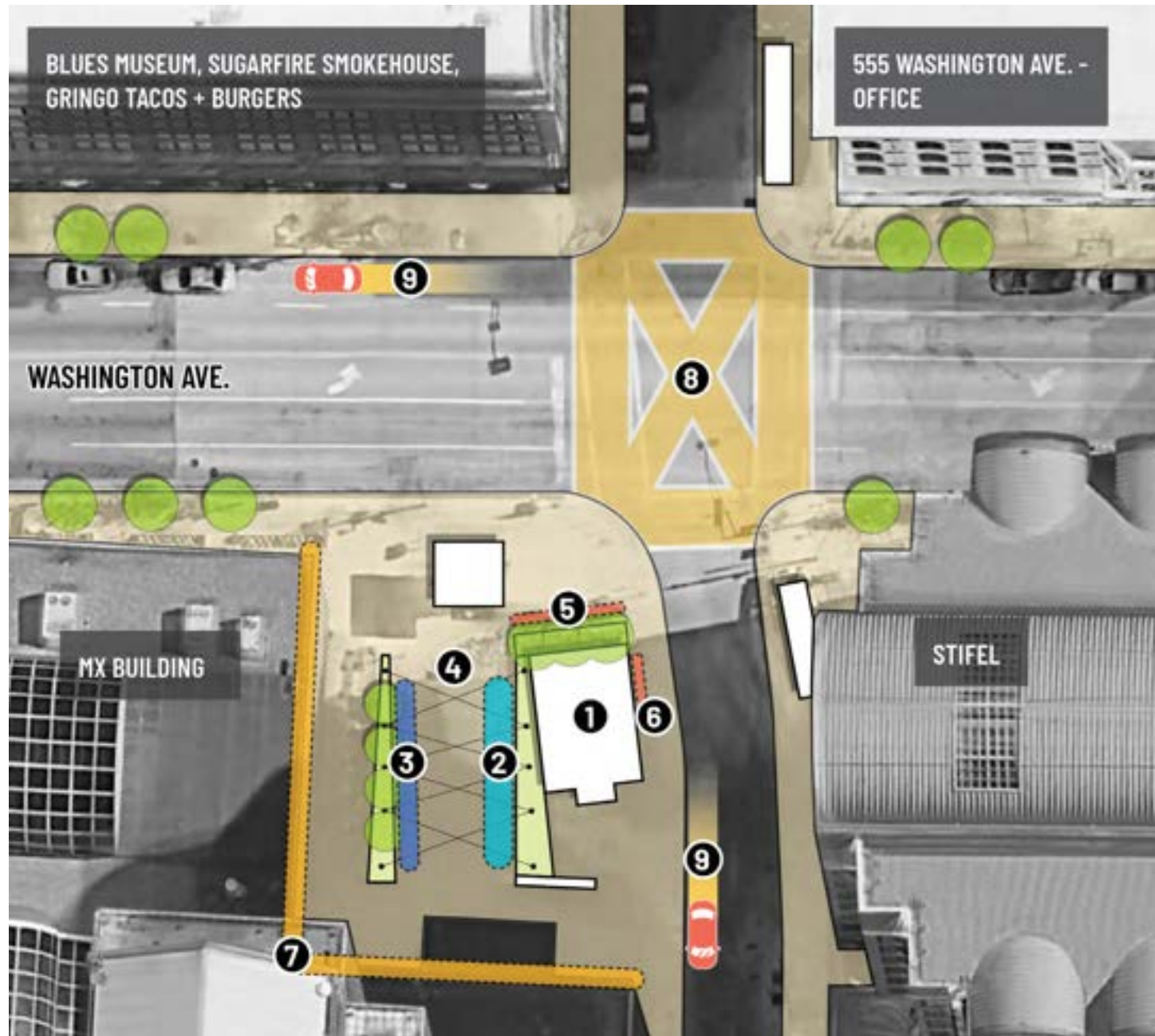
**B** Subway art program & enhanced seating areas



**C** Direct people to the app with real-time arrival & departure information

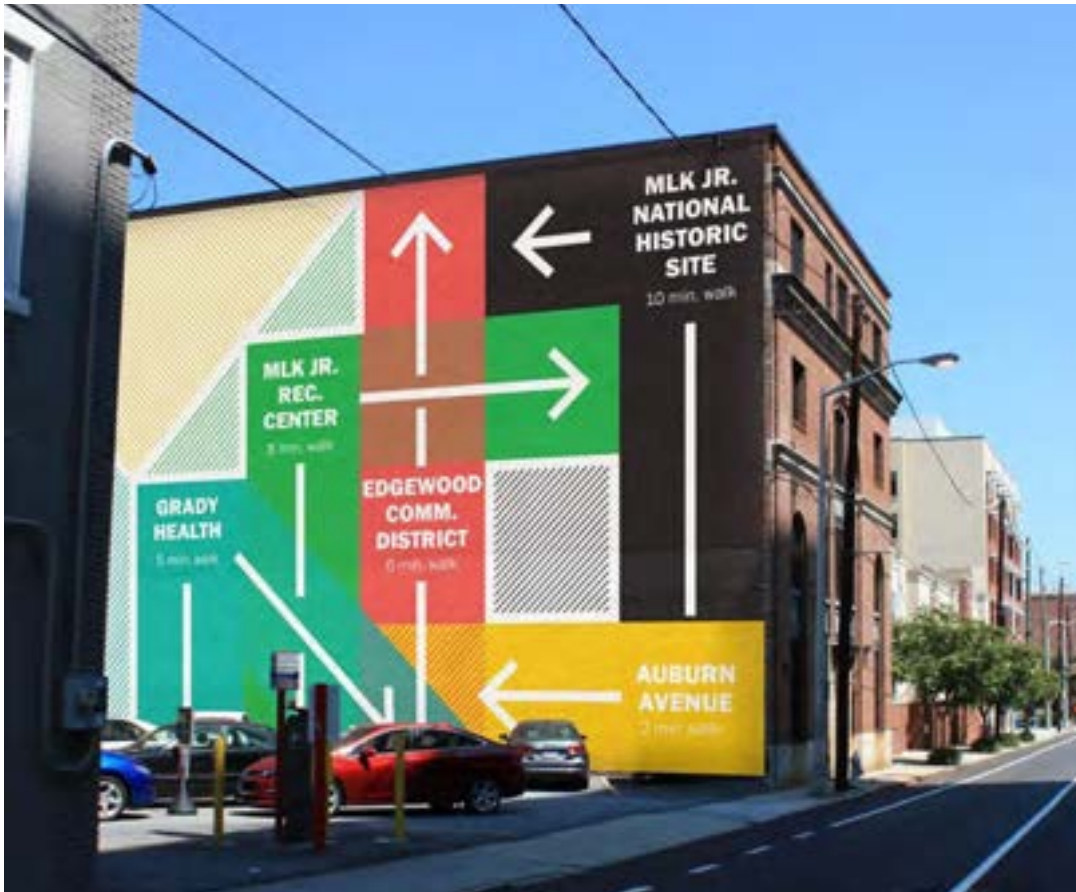


Figure 60: Potential Station Enhancements to Convention Center MetroLink Station



**STATION ENHANCEMENTS:  
CONVENTION CENTER  
METROLINK STATION**

- 1 Station "daylighting" & enhanced LED lighting
- 2 Bikeshare docking station or dedicated bike parking
- 3 Scooter docking / charging station
- 4 Additional decorative plaza lighting
- 5 Real-time arrival/departure & mode transfer sign
- 6 Neighborhood map of surrounding destinations
- 7 Lighting installation opportunity on building facade
- 8 Enhanced crosswalk / pedestrian scramble
- 9 Rideshare pick-up / drop-off lanes (west & southbound)



Rendering of large scale graphic wayfinding mural in Downtown Atlanta  
Credit: Interface Studio

### 3.4 INSTALL NEW PUBLIC SPACE AMENITIES

One of the most remarkable features of Downtown St. Louis is the density of tourist destinations within a small area. Without adequate signage, wayfinding, and lighting, the accessibility of and breadth of offerings in Downtown will continue to be St. Louis' best kept secret. Investments by the National Park Service around the Gateway Arch ground, unified development connecting the Cardinal Stadium and Ballpark Village, and streetscape enhancements along Washington Avenue make discrete areas in Downtown identifiable upon arrival, unified as districts, and navigable to newcomers. Similarly, the SMART City kiosks installed by Downtown STL, Inc. help to provide local information to visitors and residents.

The Gateway Mall Plan and Public Art Plan for Downtown St. Louis provide a strategy for implementation of public space enhancements and public art programming around Downtown. Significant locations and ideas presented in these preceding plans are echoed in *Design Downtown STL*.



**PRECEDENT:**  
PLAY EVERYWHERE



Based around the idea that play doesn't always have to revolve around a playground, the "Play Everywhere" concept by KABOOM! encourages communities to creatively integrate play into everyday structures and experiences, such as a trip to the grocery store, sidewalk, or while waiting for a bus or train. Through design interventions, these everyday spaces can become stimulating outlets for creative play and learning.

Source: <https://kaboom.org/>

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**A. CREATE LARGE SCALE GRAPHIC WAYFINDING SIGNAGE AT KEY LOCATIONS**

Investment has been made in wayfinding signage in Downtown that help point the way, but there is an opportunity to expand upon this system with graphic and artistic wayfinding that does double duty to enliven the public realm. The large scale of Downtown's streets and buildings calls for big interventions. Unused blank walls and excess pavement can be repurposed with bold graphics that aggressively, but artistically, promote Downtown assets, and shrink the perceived distances between them by underscoring the short walking and biking distances within Downtown. Key locations include large facades near Ballpark Village, the Enterprise Center, Union Station and the proposed MLS Stadium as well as Tucker Boulevard and Washington Avenue.

**B. DEVELOP COORDINATED PEDESTRIAN & BIKE SCALE WAYFINDING SIGNAGE ACROSS DOWNTOWN**

Design signage specifically for walking and bicycling to help orient visitors and employees. Key locations include signage integrated into lighting and banners along Olive, 14th Street, 7th and 8th Streets, Market Street and Broadway. Include a plan for routine maintenance and updates to ensure wayfinding accurately reflects Downtown as it changes.

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**C. INSTALL PARKLETS TO CREATE MORE PUBLIC PLAZAS**

Even small public plazas and parks can make a big impact. Parklets are spaces created along or beside, or as an extension to a sidewalk that provides a new amenity or more space for people using the street. Parklets are often designed to extend out from the sidewalk at the level of the sidewalk to occupy the width of curbside parking spaces. These small spaces can make a big impact by offering more opportunities to sit, shade, potted plants or landscaping, and even activities (checkerboard tables, ping-pong tables, exercise equipment, etc.). Revise the current policy by the Treasurer's Office around removing metered parking which currently discourages parklets Downtown.

**D. ENCOURAGE MORE WALKING DOWNTOWN WITH "PLAY EVERYWHERE" INSTALLATIONS**

"Play Everywhere" installations take everyday places and turn them into opportunities for creative play. These interactive installations are best located along routes that people regularly travel, and that are accessible on foot, by public transit, or by bike. These spaces should also be clearly marked for kids, and provide a safe and comfortable environment for all visitors. The design of "Play Everywhere" spaces should respond to gaps in amenities in the surrounding area. For example, a space designed for teens rather than toddlers if a playground already exists, or a structure that provides shade or shelter in an area that lacks tree canopy to make outdoor play more bearable in the hot summer months.

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### 3.5 PURSUE DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The City of St. Louis and the St. Louis region remains very auto-centric. The majority of residents are used to getting in their car at their house, driving to their destination and parking near the front door of the final destination, or at least in a parking lot within close proximity. While we do have a strong east/west metrolink system connecting St. Louis County, the City of St. Louis and the Metro East along the central corridor, the lack of north/south Metrolink alignments makes using the light rail transit for a lot of the regional population inconvenient. However, the location of large park and ride lots at key destinations in good proximity to major interstates, makes using transit to get Downtown a viable option for some. With station locations in Brentwood (near Interstate 64 and Interstate 170), UMSL (near Interstate 270) and Shrewsbury (Interstate 44), all having large park and ride lots, residents from all over the region can access Metrolink to get Downtown.

Downtown STL, Inc. should work to encourage transit use when coming to the Downtown core. By getting people out of their cars, more foot traffic in Downtown

will help boost the economic vibrancy of Downtown, as well as the feeling of safety when surrounded by other people. While there is currently no shortage of parking in Downtown, the transition of trips from single occupancy vehicular trips to mass transit trips will alleviate the need for any additional parking to be added.

In addition to encouraging transit for major events in Downtown, Downtown STL, Inc. should consider partnering with economic development agencies (St. Louis Development Corporation or the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership) to encourage transportation demand management strategies that get employees out of cars and on to transit. This might look like a major employee in Downtown incentivizing purchasing a transit pass with an additional monthly stipend versus purchasing a parking pass. Specific things for consideration when looking at enhancing transit in Downtown are included here.

#### **A. COORDINATE WITH MAJOR DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT CENTERS TO PROVIDE TRANSIT USE INCENTIVES**

Downtown STL, Inc. can work with major employment centers to provide incentives for their employees to use transit when coming to and from work. A collaborative effort with Metro Transit and various economic development agencies can develop a robust

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Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy. Similar strategies are in place in cities all over the US, and even in other parts of St. Louis. For example, employees at Washington University Medical Center can opt for transit passes over parking passes to access the campus just at the Central West End Metrolink station. This shift will help enhance foot traffic in Downtown and alleviate additional congestion during AM and PM peak period times.

**B. COORDINATE WITH MAJOR SPORTS FRANCHISES TO PROVIDE TRANSIT INCENTIVES**

In addition to TDM strategies developed with employers, the City has a great opportunity to leverage transit use to major sporting events. Both Busch Stadium (Stadium station) and Enterprise Center (Civic Center station) are located in very close proximity to existing Metrolink stops. Both stops are serviced by the Red and the Blue line, expanding reach for customers in both St. Louis County and the Metro East. A partnership here could include a reduced ticket fare when purchased with your transit pass, or a reduced transit pass when showing a ticket to the game. A program like this will alleviate vehicular congestion during major sporting events and reduce the need for game-day parking facilities over time.



### 3.6 EXPAND CURBSIDE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

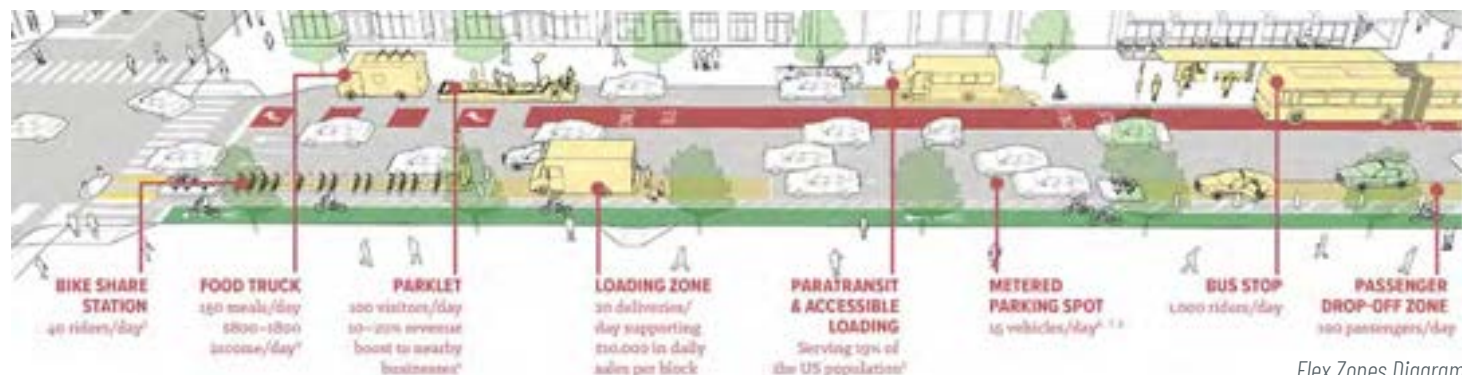
Cities across the US are taking back control of their curb. Curb space should be considered some of the most valuable real estate and it needs to be planned for. To that end, consider this question, is the highest and best use of curb space always a spot for a parked car?

According to the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), typical curb uses have always assumed the primary mode of travel was by car. For example, metered spots use up curb space in front of shops, loading zones near supermarkets, unmetered spots near residential homes. Yet, as the desire to leave the car behind is growing due to shifting demographics and the increased use of Uber/Lyft, a plan for all modes of transportation must include varying the ways curbs are managed.

NACTO has specific guidance on how best to use our curb space and a few recommendations for Downtown include:

#### A. DESIGNATE FLEX ZONES AT KEY LOCATIONS

Flex zones provide flexibility for how the curb is used during different parts of the day. An example of a flex zone includes short-term parking near a store in the morning, food trucks at lunch, parking in the afternoon, shared mobility (Uber and Lyft) in the evening and, loading overnight/early morning. The exact timing and range of uses depends on the mix of uses adjacent to the curb.



Flex Zones Diagram  
Credit: NACTO



## **B. INTEGRATE BIKE & SCOOTER CORRALS AT KEY LOCATIONS**

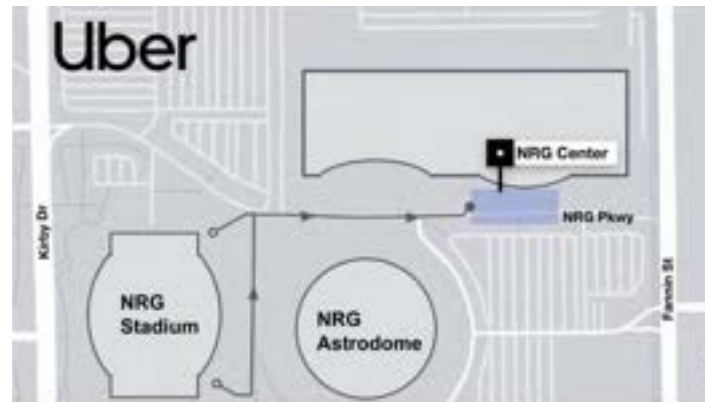
One of the most cited reasons that individuals will not commute by bike is the lack of secure end-of-trip facilities - bike racks. Help to encourage more trips by bicycle by placing more secure bike parking locations throughout Downtown.



*Bike racks in Seattle, WA  
Source: MyNorthwest.com*

## **C. CREATE SHARED VEHICLE DESIGNATED ZONES**

With Uber, Lyft and other shared vehicle programs growing in popularity, it is important to accommodate these services within Downtown. Specifically, with large crowds of people using these services to get to major events and destinations, spots in close proximity to these locations should be examined for designated drop-off and pick-up zone.



### **Get there**

Just enter NRG Stadium as your destination and your driver will drop you off near the stadium.

### **Heading Home**

After the final play, exit NRG Stadium through the BHP Billiton gate to request your ride. Open your app and follow the prompts to head to our designated pickup area in front of the NRG Center.

*Designated rideshare zones at NRG Stadiums in Houston, TX  
Credit: Uber*

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

★ Priority Implementation

<b>03 Redesign and activate our streets for a dynamic bike, ped, &amp; transit network</b>	
Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>3.1 Create a network of Downtown "boulevards"</b>	
<i>Coordinate with Brickline Greenway to create Market-Chestnut loop</i> ★	Short
<i>Redesign Tucker Boulevard</i> ★	Medium
<i>Redesign Chouteau Avenue</i>	Long
<i>Redesign Olive Street</i>	Medium
<i>Redesign 14th Street</i>	Long
<i>Create regular "Open Street" events</i> ★	Short
<b>3.2 Redesign critical streets</b>	
<i>Coordinate with 7th Street redesign</i>	Short
<i>Connect 8th Street to Soulard</i>	Medium
<i>Coordinate with 20th Street cycle track and MLS</i>	Short
<i>Redesign Locust Street west of 20th Street</i>	Long
<i>Undertake improvements to Washington Ave. &amp; including underpass connection to Gateway Arch</i>	Long
<i>Redesign Cole Street to better connect with locations north and east of Downtown</i>	Long
<b>3.3 Create "mobility hubs"</b>	
<i>Consider physical improvements to METRO stations</i>	Long
<i>Provide ambassadors for enhanced customer service &amp; security</i>	Short
<i>Work to create a subway art program and enhanced seating areas</i>	Medium
<i>Expand access to real-time arrival/departure info</i>	Medium

Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>3.4 Install new public space amenities</b>	
<i>Create large scale graphic wayfinding signage at key locations</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Develop coordinated pedestrian &amp; bike scale wayfinding signage across Downtown</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Install parklets to create more public plazas</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Encourage more walking Downtown with "Play Everywhere" installations</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<b>3.5 Pursue Downtown Transportation Demand Management strategies</b>	
<i>Coordinate with major Downtown employment centers to provide transit use incentives</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Coordinate with major sports franchises to provide transit incentives</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<b>3.6 Expand curbside management practices</b>	
<i>Designate flex zones at key locations</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Integrate bike &amp; scooter corrals at key locations</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Create shared vehicle designated zones</i>	<i>Medium</i>

## Goal 04

# INVEST IN AN OPEN SPACE NETWORK TO PROVIDE VIBRANT PUBLIC SPACES AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN

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The strategies described in this section focus on improving and creating new open spaces for Downtown. Reactivating the Gateway Mall, creating new plazas and opportunities to gather and, integrating new landscaping and trees will have a cumulative effect of boosting Downtown's image, supporting Downtown jobs and small businesses and, bring a renewed vibrancy to Downtown streets and public spaces.



# WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Downtown St. Louis, as the civic, symbolic and commercial center of the City, has long been defined by its parks and open spaces. Originally, as a site for the fur trade by the Osage people who built a series of mounds along the Mississippi River, the settlement that became St. Louis grew from its relationship with the river and the land. This strategic importance was celebrated by the construction of the Gateway Arch that is now, after a major investment, reconnected with Downtown after the mid-19th century construction of highways physically severed this National Park from the City.

The Gateway Mall, another central feature of Downtown designed to create a vista to the Gateway Arch, has its own long and varied history. It is a civic asset and a place of celebration and gathering that is effectively a front door to the region, and a central open space spine for Downtown. It is the location of some of the City's most cherished spaces in Kiener Plaza and Citygarden where relatively recent improvements have successfully reactivated the east end of the Gateway Mall, attracting visitors and residents alike. However, the Gateway Mall also reflects a troubled history of race and inequitable practices, through the presence of the Courthouse where the Dred Scott case was adjudicated to the condemnation and relocation of previous residents and businesses. In addition, many spaces along the Gateway Mall today are unprogrammed and underutilized.

The Gateway Arch Grounds and Gateway Mall are central to Downtown's identity but Downtown cannot and should not stand on the fate of these spaces alone. There are smaller parks including Lucas Park, Interco Plaza, Baer Plaza and other smaller plazas that have the potential to provide new activities and programming across Downtown. Further, the area under and around I-64 south of Busch Stadium that was once Chouteau's Pond and Mill Creek could be improved over time to help manage stormwater and improve the environment in Downtown.

Downtown has seen increasing momentum for years. Beyond the investments mentioned above, Downtown has a new aquarium, the development of Ballpark Village around Busch Stadium, the redevelopment of Enterprise Center, a new headquarters for Square in the old Post-Dispatch building, a planned expansion of the convention center, the Brickline Greenway to connect Downtown to neighborhoods to the north and, a new MLS stadium among other planned improvements. As Downtown continues to evolve, open spaces must adapt to serve the needs of diverse users, residents and the broader City and region. This means improving existing spaces as well as experimenting with new open spaces in a manner that responds to the needs of local residents and businesses. Moreover, in an era

As Downtown continues to evolve, open spaces must adapt to serve the needs of diverse users, residents and the broader City and region.

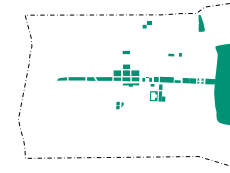


OPEN SPACE  
(PER 1,000 INHABITANTS)

CITY OF ST. LOUIS

11.1

ACRES



OPEN SPACE  
(PER 1,000 INHABITANTS)

STUDY AREA  
(RESIDENTS)

11.5

ACRES

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## Today, Downtown St. Louis falls below national benchmarks for open space provision.

of climate change and to fulfill the City’s sustainability and resiliency goals, open space in Downtown must also perform a number of additional functions that can help to improve water quality and the local environment. Successful downtowns across the country including Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Grand Rapids, Denver and Cincinnati have all heavily invested in open spaces to both guide private investment and provide inclusive spaces for gathering.

Today, Downtown St. Louis doesn’t meet national benchmarks for acres of open space available to residents. While the study area has 11.5 acres per 1,000 inhabitants (compared to 11.1 acres for the City as a whole) this falls short of the 20 acres per 1,000 inhabitants recommended by the National Recreation and Parks Association guidelines. When the daytime population of Downtown workers and visitors is included in the calculation, the figure falls to 1.7 acres per 1,000 inhabitants, dramatically lower than the recommended standard. An additional 50,000 sq. ft. of rooftop open space helps to provide Downtown amenities but these spaces are privately controlled and often not open to the public.

These overall measures, however, do not paint a complete picture. Given the regional and national character of many of the open spaces Downtown, especially those along the Gateway Mall and the Mississippi River, by and large residents and workers feel there is a lack of parks to provide space for a wider variety of activities. The majority of Downtown is within a 5-minute walk (0.25 mile walk-shed) of open space but some important pockets have limited spaces to play and gather. In particular, the NW corner of Downtown (roughly east of 16th Street and north of Washington Avenue) is one of Downtown’s more populated areas. There are also questions about which populations are served and not served by the existing parks with spaces like the Gateway Arch largely regarded as parks for visitors, not residents.

Environmental challenges also feature prominently in Downtown. The natural topography shapes the existing stormwater and drainage system of Downtown and although historic Chouteau Pond and Mill Creek have been replaced with engineered systems, hydrological flows continue to move towards the Mississippi River and ‘downstream’ towards low points along the railyards along the southern part of the study area. Clusters of stormwater issues exist throughout Downtown, but there is a concentration of problem areas around the Gateway Mall.

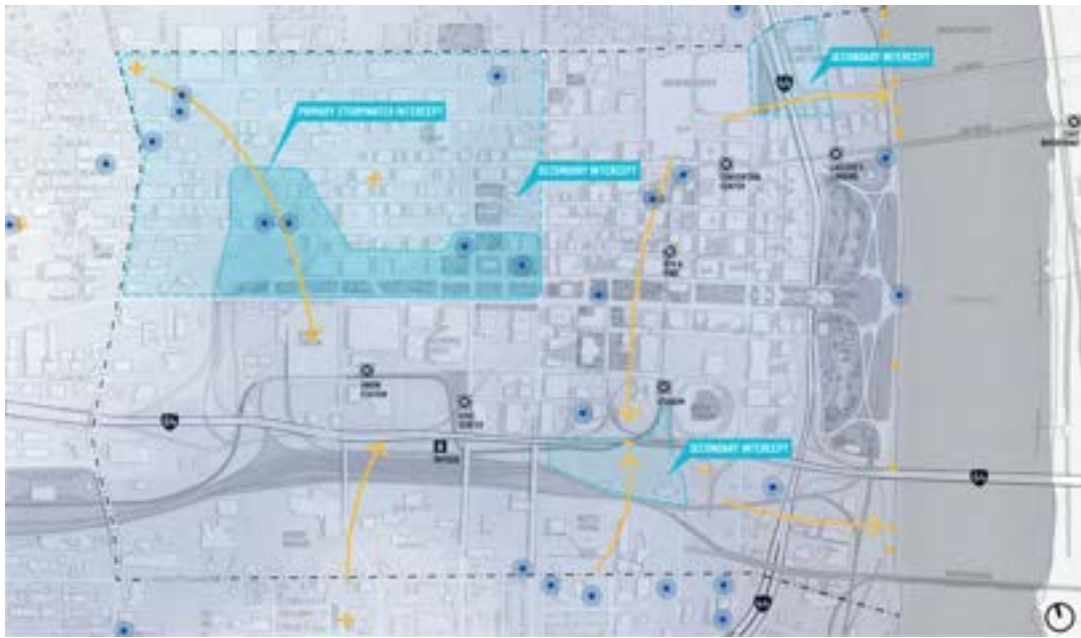


Figure 63: **Hydrology Map**

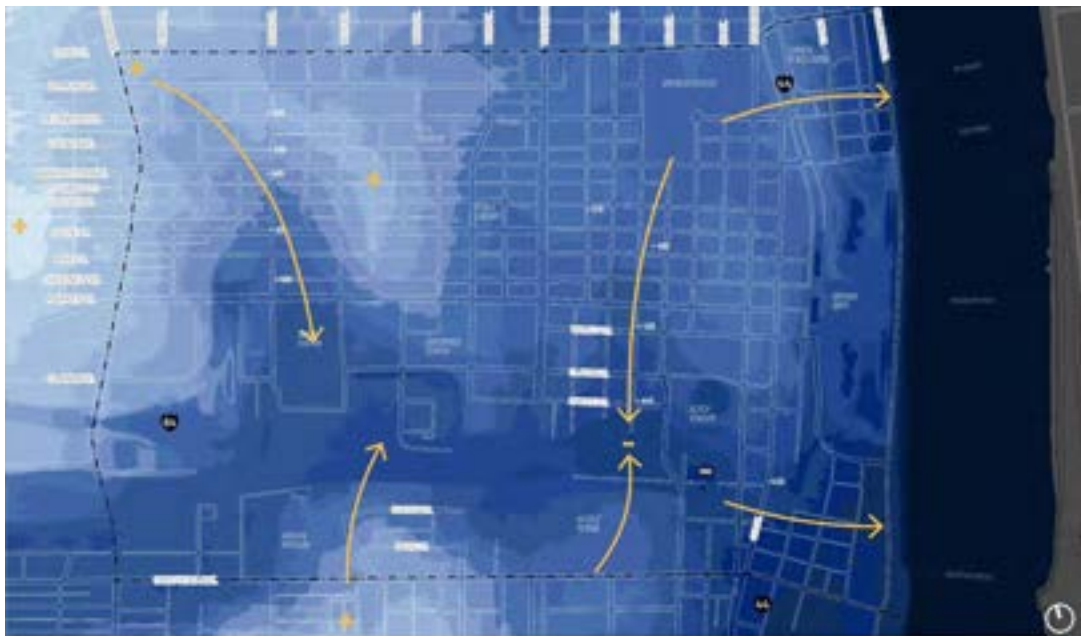


Figure 64: **Topography and Hydrology Map**

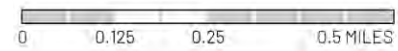
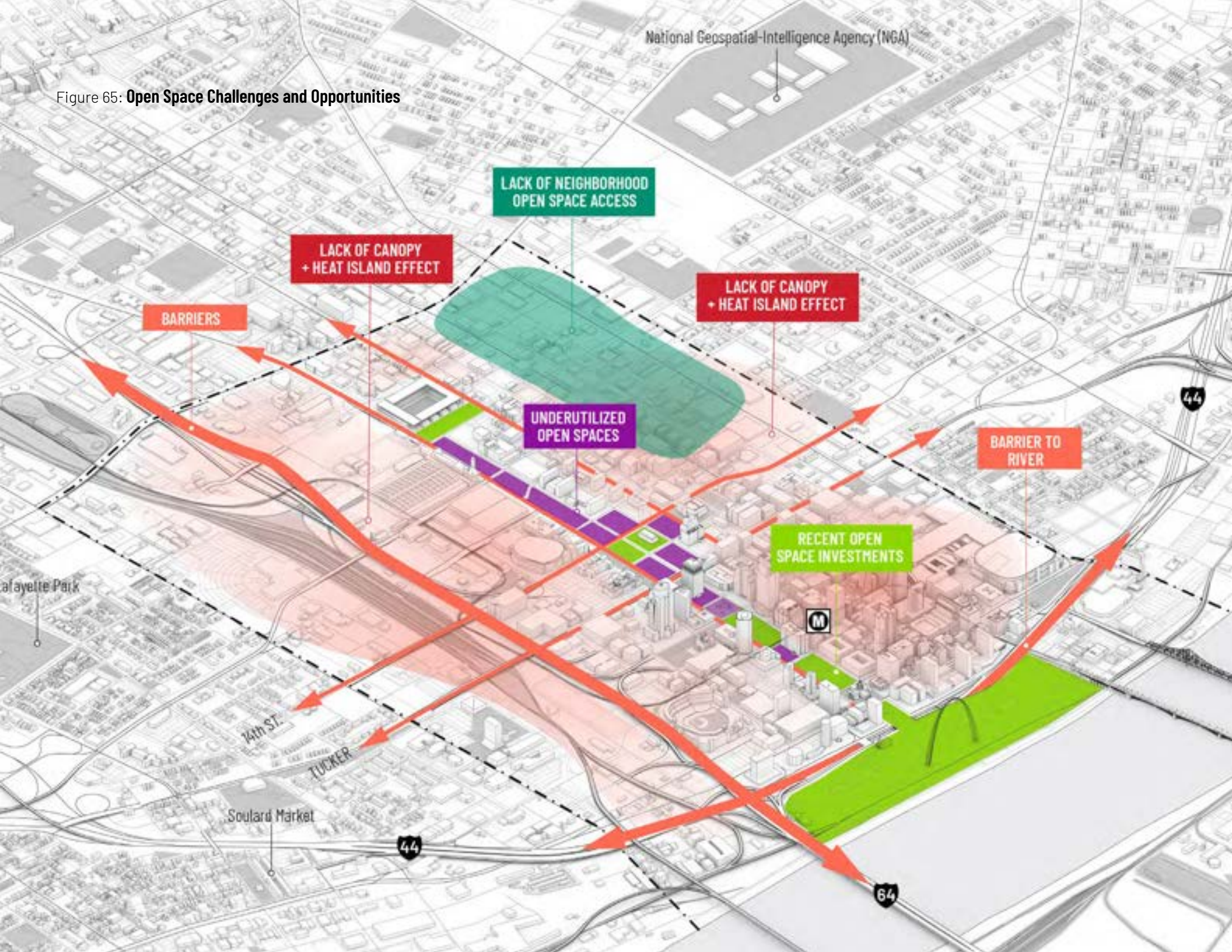




Figure 65: Open Space Challenges and Opportunities





“[My vision is to have] sidewalks and streets in good repair. People are out and about. There are plants and trees everywhere you look.”

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Current hydrological dynamics suggest capturing and retaining stormwater ‘upstream’ (the northern parts of the study area, within the Biddle, Downtown, 7th Street, 13th Street and Camp Springs city-watersheds) is critical to reduce flooding and other nuisance events. Additional opportunities exist through the construction of green roofs on new or rehabbed buildings to further reduce stormwater demands on strained infrastructure. Both measures work towards addressing the City’s overall resiliency and sustainability goals (i.e. ‘Objective E - Manage Stormwater and Wastewater to Protect and Enhance Property and Natural Systems’ as laid out in the City’s 2013 Sustainability Plan).

In addition, the urban canopy in Downtown is a key area in need of improvement. Compared to other parts of the City, Downtown lacks adequate tree canopy cover, especially outside of its parks. This has a number of environmental and health implications, perhaps most importantly in contributing to the urban heat island effect.

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The strategies described in this section focus on improving and creating new open spaces for Downtown. Reactivating the Gateway Mall, creating new plazas and opportunities to gather and, integrating new landscaping and trees will have a cumulative effect of boosting Downtown’s image, supporting Downtown jobs and small businesses and, bring a renewed vibrancy to Downtown streets and public spaces.

# STRATEGIES

## 4.1 RE-IMAGINE THE GATEWAY MALL TO CONNECT KEY DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS

The Gateway Mall has long been a vital symbolic and physical place for St. Louis. Its scale and centrality to Downtown, as well as proximity to core civic institutions make it key to future plans and connecting to the City's history.

A number of recent investments have improved the physical condition and activated key stretches of the Gateway Mall. The improvements to the Arch Grounds, Kiener Plaza, Soldier's Memorial, and City Garden all reflect critical steps towards strategic goals laid out in the Downtown Next and Gateway Mall Plans. The forthcoming addition of the MLS stadium and implementation of the Brickline Gateway stand to build on this momentum.

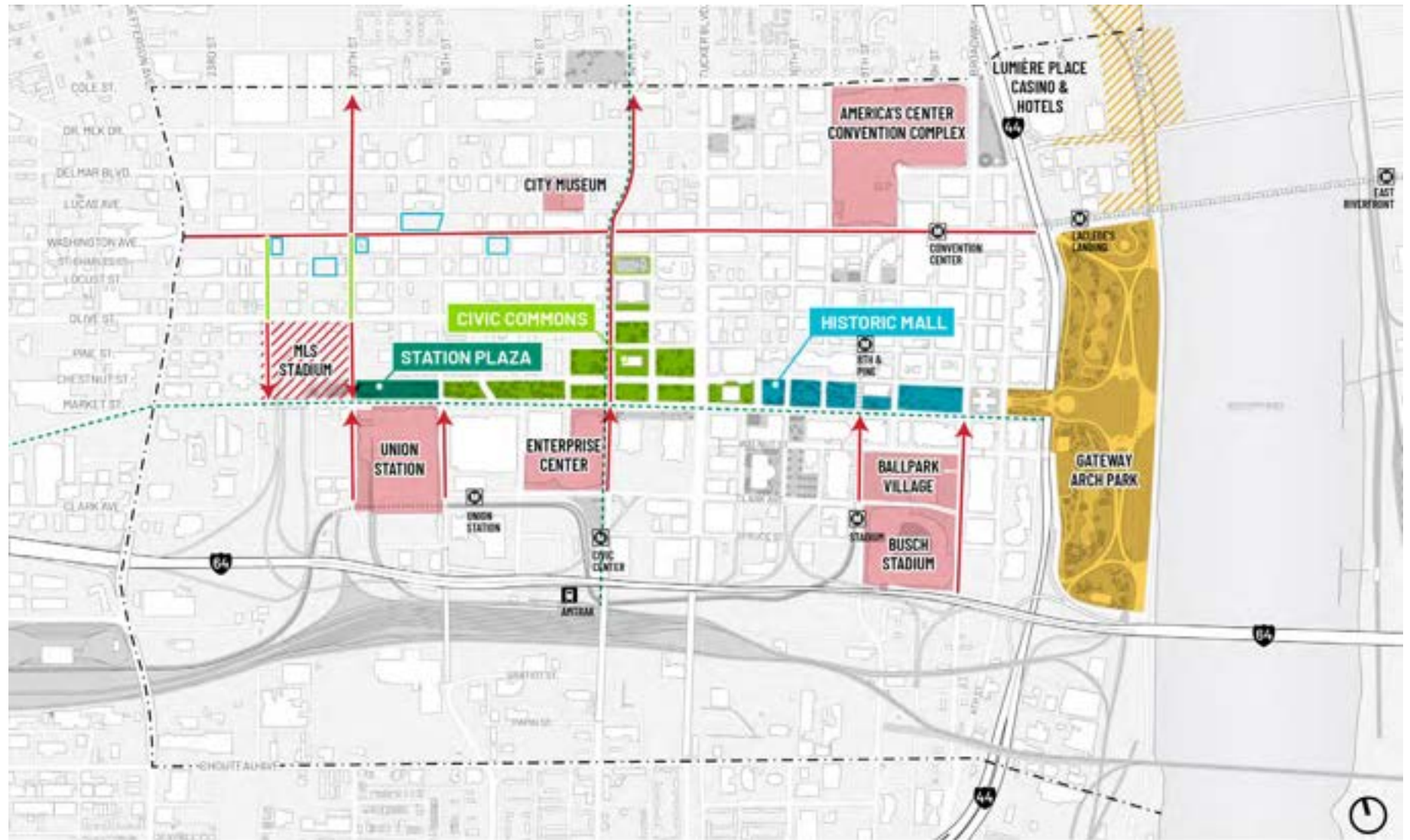
Yet despite these welcome improvements, a number of challenges remain. The Mall, in a number of areas acts as a divider, disconnecting adjoining areas of Downtown with wide streets, poor adjacent facades and expansive empty open space. Too frequently the open spaces along the Mall are underutilized with large empty lawns contributing to a feeling of insecurity and that there is a lack of 'eyes on the street'.

In these spaces, the model recent improvements (Kiener Plaza and Citygarden) do not necessarily point the way forward as there are limits to the number of highly programmed and activated spaces that can successfully coexist in close proximity. As acknowledged in the Gateway Mall Plan, the challenge becomes not only how to improve the Mall as a linear east-west space, but also how to stitch Downtown into the Mall with numerous north-south connections.

This plan proposes using the existing assets along the Mall (open spaces, sports and entertainment attractions and civic institutions) as a way of tying together these varied Downtown anchors into a critical mass of engaged and activated open spaces. This includes doubling down on two key strategies identified in the Gateway Mall Plan: first, transforming Downtown into a year-round destination; and second, reinforcing a series of distinct identities and functions (identified as 'rooms' in the Gateway Mall Plan) along the length of the mall.

This strategy needs to be responsive to adjacent uses and existing assets as well as acknowledging that the Mall must accommodate varied levels of activation and uses. Open spaces that perform a range of functions and accommodate varied uses, ranging from passive

Figure 66: Open Space Strategies



### OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

- MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT
- PROPOSED MLS STADIUM
- POTENTIAL PARK SPACE ON EXISTING PARKING LOT
- STATION PLAZA: KID-FRIENDLY
- CIVIC COMMONS: PLAY, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
- HISTORIC MALL: ART, EVENT
- THE ARCH
- NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- PROPOSED PARK
- PROPOSED CHOUTEAU GREENWAY



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Building on the recent investments, there is an opportunity for a new “Civic Commons” that prioritizes the role of healthy lifestyles and environmental resiliency.

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spaces with adequate seating and shade, to essential infrastructural functions such as stormwater retention, to adding active recreational spaces will provide amenities and bring activation without the need for hands-on event programming. The approach is to design and integrate new programs onto existing open spaces.

The open spaces that surround Soldiers Memorial and the Public Library (from Tucker Boulevard to 15th Street and Market Street to St. Charles Street) offer a particular opportunity to intensify the range of functions and activities along the mall. Building on the recent investment in Soldiers Memorial and the adjoining plaza, new recreational amenities, play spaces and stormwater infrastructure can be connected and, with the open spaces surrounding City Hall, imagined together as a new ‘Civic Commons’ that prioritizes the role of healthy lifestyles and environmental resiliency.

As each “room” of the Gateway Mall has a different personality, there are a number of distinct action steps.

*Parking garage north of Kiener Plaza*



#### **A. CONTINUE PROGRAMMING ON KIENER PLAZA**

The existing programming aimed at attracting visitors and providing amenities for surrounding office workers and residents has been a success but also a challenge to plan, fund, operate and maintain. Downtown STL, Inc. needs to work with Great Rivers Greenway and the Gateway Arch Park Foundation to continue programming at all times of the year and reinforce a calendar of yearly activities.





### **B. ACTIVATE GARAGE FACADE NORTH OF KIENER PLAZA**

The parking garages are an extremely visible backdrop to one of Downtown's most important spaces. Enlivening these facades through lighting projections and/or artful cladding would help to transform the look and feel of Kiener Plaza.



### **C. WORK WITH LOCAL PARTNERS TO DESIGN A STRONGER CONNECTION BETWEEN KIENER PLAZA, CITYGARDEN AND SERRA/PEABODY PLAZA**

The Serra Block was widely ridiculed in the public engagement feedback early on in this process. Comments indicated that it did not feel connected with Citygarden or the rest of the Gateway Mall. In addition, Peabody Plaza physically and visibly interrupts the Gateway Mall. A range of interventions could re-establish connectivity and add amenities including improved seating and planting. Move forward with designs including a planting and maintenance plan to better integrate these spaces with adjacent uses and complement this important work of public art.

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Throughout the public engagement process participants repeatedly called out the Serra block and the parking garages facing Kiener as specific areas for improvement.

**PRECEDENT:  
GRAND PARK**



LOS ANGELES, LA  
Rios Clementi Hale’s renovation of the historic Grand Park, sited in front of Los Angeles’ City Hall, has layered in a range of new uses and programmable space. From splash pads to cafes, creative seating design and spaces for casual use and shade, the new park has brought activation and new life to the City’s administrative center.

**★ D. ACTIVATE CIVIC COMMONS WITH RECREATION SPACES AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The middle of the Gateway Mall between Tucker Boulevard and 18th Street is an unrealized opportunity. Given its proximity to housing and nearby institutions, it could be a resource for those that live and work Downtown. Design new gathering and recreational spaces currently not available in or near Downtown on underutilized blocks including multi-use sports fields, green infrastructure and public games. Given the need to address some underlying stormwater challenges that impact the Mall and Public Library, design with a focus on green infrastructure to create spaces that absorb rainwater. The collection of these new programs would attract new users to the Gateway Mall and help address the expressed concerns around safety in the area.

**E. REDESIGN CHESTNUT STREET BETWEEN TUCKER BLVD. & 15TH ST. TO ENLARGE CIVIC COMMONS**

Redesigning Chestnut (between Tucker and 15th) should allow for additional space for recreational green infrastructure proposed on the surrounding blocks. Narrowing the roadway, elevating the bikeway to sidewalk level, and introducing different materials and a plaza aesthetic to the street would indicate these blocks are a calm street, and could be designed to facilitate event-based closures that utilize multiple adjacent blocks.

**F. BUILD A HEALTH LOOP ON MARKET AND CHESTNUT STREET**

There is already a separated bicycle lane on Chestnut Street. With the addition of the planned Brickline Greenway along Market Street there is an opportunity to treat these two amenities as one “health” loop around the Mall. This 2-mile (from the proposed MLS stadium to the Gateway Arch Grounds) running/walking loop would be a center for active lifestyle and fitness in Downtown.

Figure 67: **Market & Chestnut Health Loop**



Figure 68: **Activate Civic Commons**





Figure 69: Aloe Plaza on Analysis



Figure 70: Aloe Plaza on Typical Day



## 4.2 UPGRADE ALOE PLAZA AS A FRONT DOOR FOR DOWNTOWN WEST

The addition of the MLS stadium presents an opportunity to re-imagine the terminus for the Gateway Mall as a new front door to Downtown West. Improving what is currently called Aloe Plaza will complement the open spaces planned as a part of the MLS development and provide a robust amenity for the surrounding neighborhood. The approach is to re-imagine Aloe Plaza as a year-round space flexible enough to be activated by large crowds during events while also providing attractions like a splash pad and cafe on non-event days building off foot traffic from nearby offices and Union Station.

### ★ A. REDESIGN ALOE PLAZA

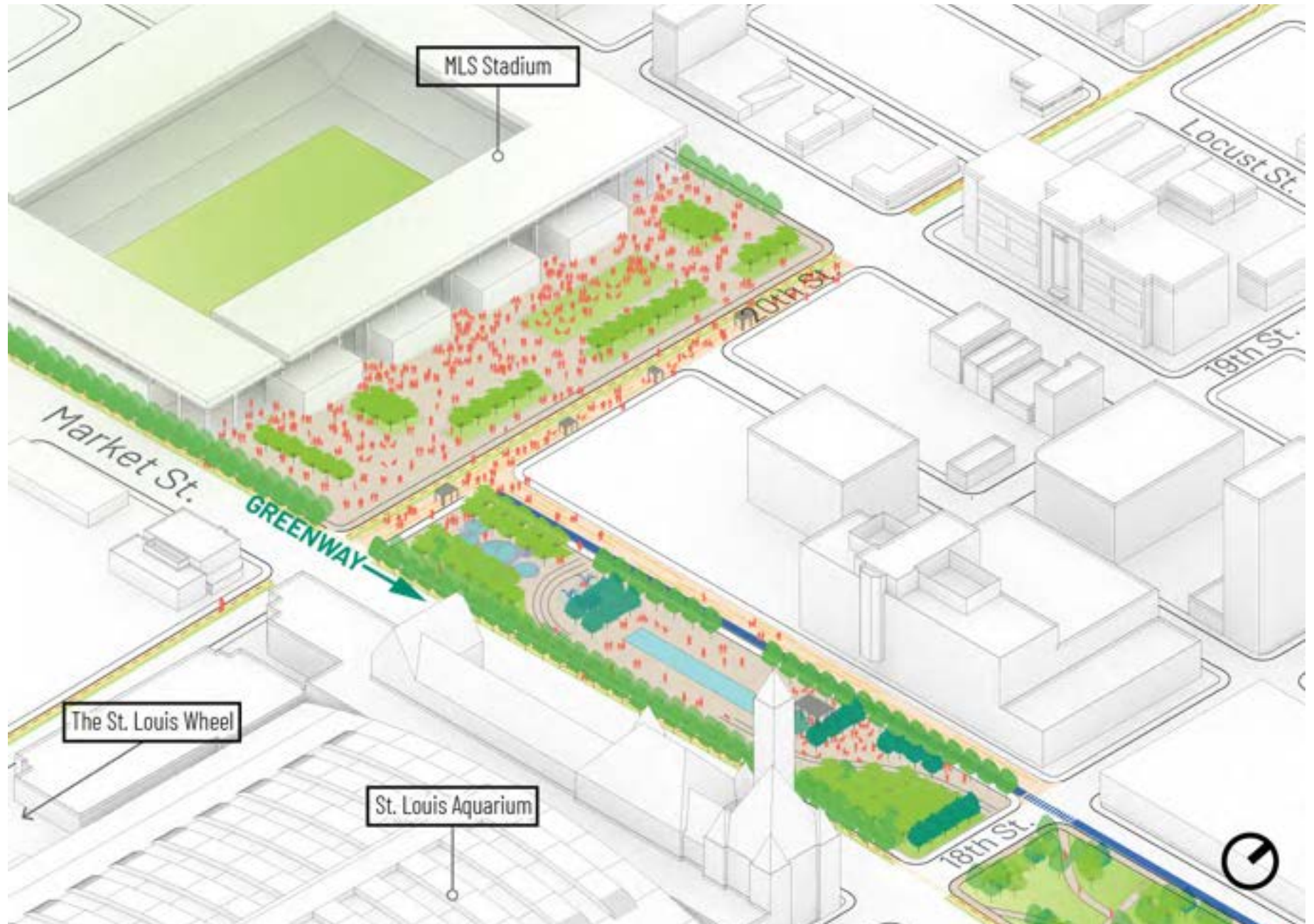
Integrate new gathering spaces in a redesigned Aloe Plaza that serves community needs both during events and non-events with attractions including a cafe/beer garden and water play/splash pad. This action step is in line with the Gateway Mall Plan's 'Structures in the Mall' and 'Water in the Mall' recommendations.

### B. COORDINATE PROGRAMMING BETWEEN ALOE PLAZA AND MLS

The MLS franchise will put on events and programming surrounding open spaces during game days. Coordination with the City and other local institutions can maximize activation and use of both spaces.



Figure 71: Aloe Plaza on Game Days



**PRECEDENT:**  
**WORCESTER FOOD TRUCK +  
 CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL**



WORCESTER, MA  
 Food trucks are great ways to activate a plaza or an open space. Worcester hosts annual food truck and craft beer festival to bring people and various cuisines together.

**4.3 INFILL VACANT LOTS WITH POP-UP PARKS TO SERVE EXISTING RESIDENTS & NEW USES**

The Northwest corner of the study area (roughly North of Olive and West of 16th street) lacks access to adequate open space, due in part to an overall lack of park space and to the existing barriers like wide streets that serve to separate many from the Gateway Mall.

The northwest corner of Downtown also includes vacant lots and surface parking making it a prime location for future development but also the potential addition of new open spaces to serve existing and future residents. These conditions make this area well suited for a flexible approach to providing additional open space, one that tests out possible spaces through temporary activation that can then build and learn from successes as well as respond to shifting conditions. These interventions can range from short-term street closures and food truck activation, to medium-term installation and seasonal gardens, to permanent community-oriented gardens and parks to serve residents. Providing a range of possibilities will enable the ability to tailor open spaces to evolving needs.

**A. TEST POP UP PROGRAMMING ON CITY-OWNED LOTS**

City-owned lots are ideal grounds to test a range of new programming options. These should be done at all times but certainly in concert with MLS, Blues and Cardinals games as well as other Downtown events.

Figure 72: **October Open House open space activity results**



“I would love to see Downtown St. Louis make a concerted effort to eliminate most surface parking lots within the core. They are dead zones that suck the life out of any urban streetscape.”

**B. PROGRAM “TAILGATING” ON SELECT PARKING LOTS DURING EVENTS**

For before and after CITY SC, Cardinals, or Blues game days as a way to encourage fans to stay in the area.

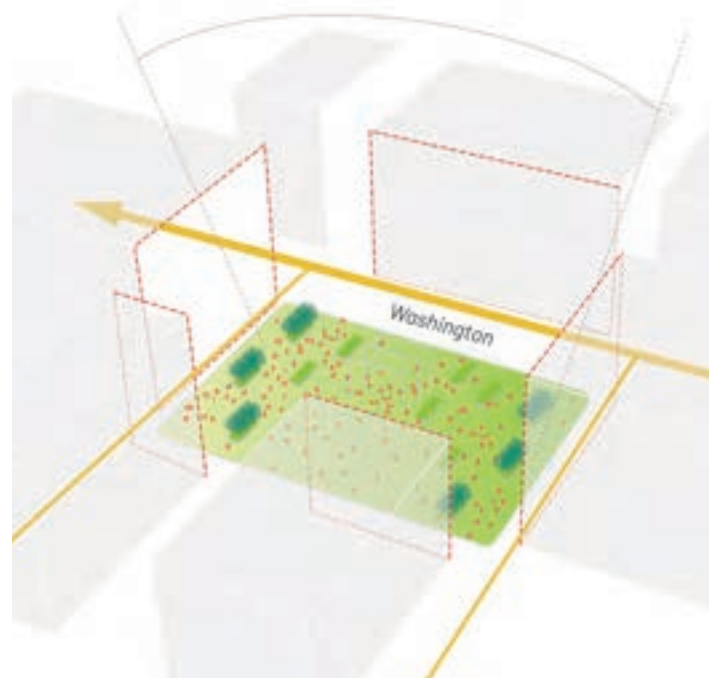
**C. COORDINATE WITH PROPERTY OWNER AND LOCAL PARTNERS TO EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL FOR A PERMANENT PUBLIC SPACE AT WASHINGTON AVENUE & 17TH STREET**

Given the proximity of nearby lofts, there is a potential to create a new “neighborhood” park to serve Downtown residents and catalyze additional investment nearby in this location.



*Example of a parking lot that can be used during events*

Figure 73: **Design Proposal for 17th and Washington**



**PRECEDENT:**  
103RD STREET COMMUNITY  
GARDENS



NEW YORK, NY  
Scape’s 103rd Street Community Garden and Park in East Harlem is an excellent example of a park built on a small infill lot, in a dense urban context, that provides numerous neighborhood-oriented amenities and programs.





Riverfront looking over East Illinois

“We have  
an amazing  
riverfront. Yet  
you’d hardly  
know it.”

#### 4.4 CONTINUE TO CONNECT AND CELEBRATE THE RIVER

The investments in the Gateway Arch Grounds represent a pivotal step in reconnecting Downtown to the Mississippi. In the short term, additional improvements including Great Rivers Greenway’s Katherine Ward Burg Memorial Garden and key bicycle connections will only add to the use of the river as an amenity for Downtown.

Long term, development of Laclede’s Landing and Chouteau’s Landing will bring residents, workers and visitors to engage with the river in myriad new ways. This plan calls for the continued efforts to connect and celebrate the river. As outlined in the North Riverfront Open Space Plan, specific recommendations to create a network of safe, well linked open spaces that connect to the river and extend the greenway network, and elements that more visibly integrate the waterfront edge into the central Downtown area are supported by strategies included in *Design Downtown STL*.

“We need to expose/interact  
with our river.”

#### A. COORDINATE WITH RIVERFRONT PROPERTY OWNERS TO CREATE WATERFRONT PARK

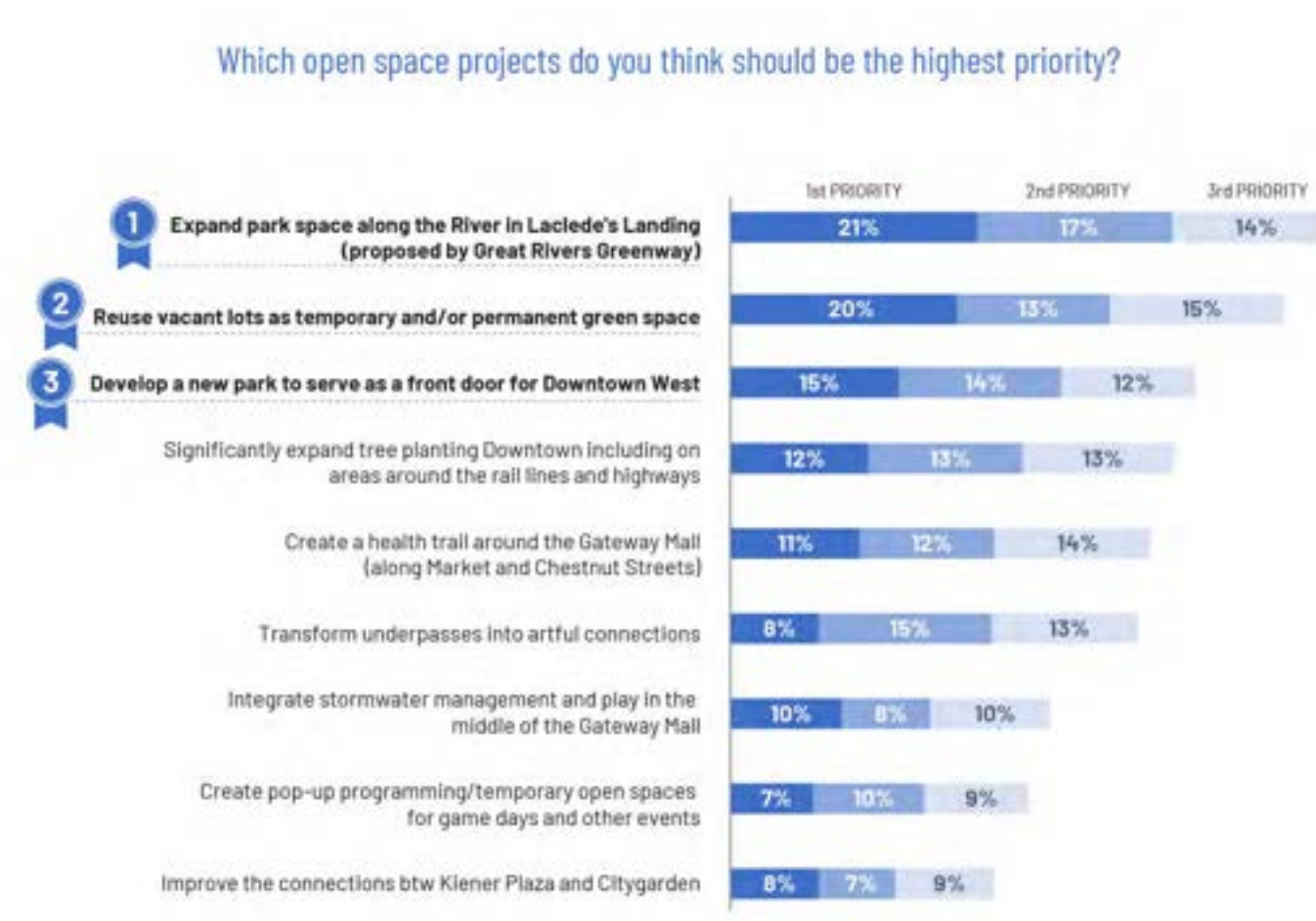
Implement the GRG open space plan for Laclede’s Landing through close partnership with nearby developers, property owners, Laclede’s Landing businesses and Lumiere Place.



Underutilized riverfront that suffers from an occasional flooding



Figure 74: **Open Space Activity Results from Online Open House**



Participants from the Online Open House chose expanding the park space along the River in Laclede's Landing as the highest priority.

## “Fix the south side of Downtown –the rail yards.”

### 4.5 TRANSFORM INFRASTRUCTURAL BARRIERS INTO ARTFUL GATEWAYS

Freeways and rail lines disconnect Downtown from the river, as well as from adjacent neighborhoods. The underpasses of I-64 and I-44 are major deterrents to better integrating Downtown with nearby communities. Critically, these barriers are also often the first impression of Downtown for visitors.

A strategy to transform these barriers into gateways that provide artful illumination and activation would both improve this symbolic entrance and improve feelings of safety. These strategies should aim to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections as well as vehicular traffic. These installations could celebrate and engage the City’s rich array of artists of color, who work in multiple media—including visual art and spoken word art.

### A. IMPROVE WASHINGTON AVE. UNDERPASS TO LACLEDE’S LANDING

Much has been done as part of the CityArchRiver project to untangle this challenging and unwelcoming intersection of streets and highway on-ramps below the highway. Building on that foundation, integrate public art and lighting to ensure safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from Laclede’s Landing.



*Highway underpass near Chouteau’s Landing*

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## **B. IMPROVE RAILYARD BRIDGE CONNECTIONS**

Underpasses and overpasses to manage the transition from south St. Louis to Downtown feel more like highway on-ramps than extensions of Downtown streets. Target key gateways into Downtown such as 7th Street and integrate new lighting, visible signage and art where possible.



*Highway underpass near Laclede's Landing*

Figure 75: **Highway Underpass Locations**



**PRECEDENT:**  
**THE BENTWAY**



TORONTO, CANADA  
This project, by Public Work, interlays a range of programmatic elements and activations through the length of the Gardner Expressway in Toronto, creating both spaces that improve passage across the elevated roadway and continuous open spaces along its length.

Figure 76: **Potential Tree Nursery and Underpass Improvement**





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### **C. IMPROVE GATEWAYS**

There are several important entrances/exits to Downtown that do not provide a positive impression or sense of arrival. Improving the look and feel of these locations with public art would help reinforce a positive image of a vibrant downtown. The following are a list of priority gateway locations for improvement:

- The I-64 / 11th Street Exit
- Tucker Boulevard Entrance North (potentially at Interco Plaza or on prominent building facades)
- The I-64 / 6th Street Exit
- The I-44 / Convention Plaza Exit
- 7th Street at the I-64 overpass
- Tucker Blvd. at the I-64 overpass

Figure 77: **Gateway Improvement Opportunities**



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The lack of tree canopy contributes to a number of detrimental health and environmental outcomes.

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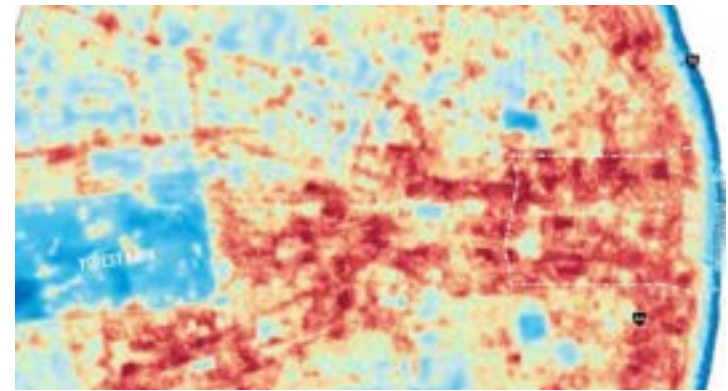
#### 4.6 GROW THE DOWNTOWN TREE CANOPY

Downtown suffers from a diminished urban tree canopy. The lack of canopy contributes to a number of detrimental health and environmental outcomes. Trees and the urban canopy provides shade, reduces the urban heat island effect, captures stormwater, reduces the need for cooling, captures carbon dioxide and reduces air pollutants. Growing the Downtown canopy will begin to improve these factors. Increasing trees in Downtown will also contribute to better walkability and improve quality of life and retail activity along Downtown streets.

A robust planting program can help grow the Downtown tree canopy. Through partnerships between nonprofits, local residents, government and volunteers such a program can grow and plant trees on streets, medians, underutilized lots and surface parking. This includes replacing the trees that have been lost on key Downtown streets. Such a program could use vacant and parking lots as tree nurseries, before replanting elsewhere in Downtown. A volunteer corps could help with tree maintenance and upkeep and would reduce ongoing maintenance costs while actively involving the community.

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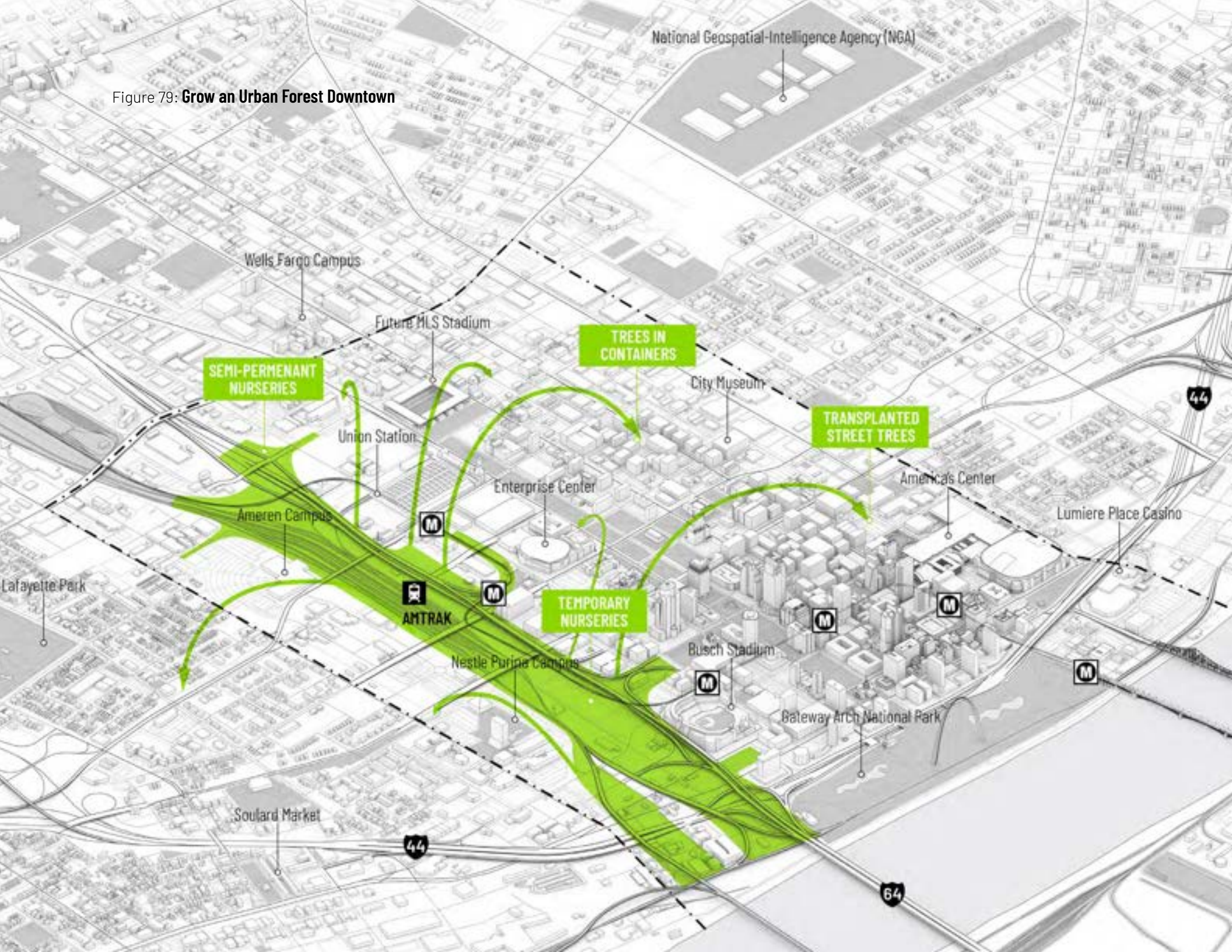
Figure 78: **Urban Heat Island Effects**



*An example of a major street (Tucker near Washington) without street trees*



Figure 79: **Grow an Urban Forest Downtown**



**PRECEDENT:**  
ORANGE COUNTY GREAT PARK



ORANGE COUNTY, CA  
Ken Smith Studio's park on the grounds of a former airfield in Southern California, uses the sites' extensive paved surfaces (formerly runways and parking lots) as the grounds for leisure space, shaded by trees in large nursery-style containers. These modules and groupings can then be flexibly repositioned to accommodate various event configurations.

★ **A. COORDINATE PLANTING GUIDELINES**

Support the evolution of a diverse and healthy urban canopy with guidelines that include species lists to allow for genetic diversity within the canopy while being tuned to current and potential future climate and soil conditions in Downtown. Work with the City's Forestry Division to assist in the evaluation of tree health and life expectancy in order to promote planting of trees timed to replace aging trees and build a canopy in the specific context of Downtown's unique environment.

★ **B. PILOT A TREE NURSERY INSTALLATION ON 2 KEY LOTS**

Temporarily transform two test lots into demonstration nurseries as pilots for larger planting initiatives.

**C. CREATE A TREE NURSERY ALONG HIGHWAY/RAIL/PARKING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Target underutilized space alongside rail and highways as well as parking lots where appropriate for use as nurseries. These nurseries would be used to grow trees that would be replanted to improve the overall Downtown tree canopy. Nursery designs should allow for continued use of the space if located on a parking lot as well as the ability to scale up should initial efforts prove to be successful.



*Orange County Great Park*





**PRECEDENT:**

ZOLLVEREIN PARK



**ESSEN, GERMANY**

Built on the grounds of a former mining operation in Germany, this park uses a massive new planting effort as a means of highlighting and softening the industrial heritage and landmarks, as well as creating comfortable conditions for active and passive recreation in an otherwise often inhospitable and unwelcoming landscape.

Figure 80: **Proposed Park and Orchard at Chouteau Landing**



**PRECEDENT:**  
LINCOLN CENTER PAVILION



NEW YORK, NY  
The tilted plane at Lincoln Center demonstrates the possibilities of programmable green spaces atop structure. Diller Scofidio + Renfro's design for the sloping lawn allows for pleasant views and creates a welcome respite from the surrounding hardscape.

## "Reduce surface parking lots."

### **★ D. ESTABLISH A VOLUNTEER CORPS TO HELP PLANT AND MAINTAIN TREES**

Partner with a range of existing local institutions and programs that either manage volunteers or train Master Gardeners. These partnering institutions and volunteers can help with care for nursery trees and replanting Downtown along with efforts by the Downtown CID and the City for regular maintenance.

### **E. DISPERSE GROWN TREES THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN**

Target vacant lots, willing residents/property owners, underutilized parking lots, medians and other city-owned sites for planting and canopy improvement.

### **F. COORDINATE TO CREATE A FUTURE PARK AND ORCHARD ON AN EXISTING PARKING LOT**

Where large lots are directly adjacent to major sports and entertainment destinations (like near Busch Stadium), reinvest with property owners and partners in new destination open spaces with programmable areas that work both for game days and non-game days, with integrated parking. These can serve public programming, environmental and physical health, and parking agendas simultaneously. Target large parking lots for investment into a Downtown orchard that includes public space and parking as needed.

Figure 81: **Potential Tree Orchard**





Figure 82: Potential new park space on top of existing surface parking lots





**DEVELOP A NEW FRONT DOOR FOR DOWNTOWN WEST**

**INFILL VACANT LOTS**

**REIMAGINE GATEWAY MALL**



Future MLS Stadium

Union Station

City Museum

Ameren Campus

Enterprise Center

**GROW THE DOWNTOWN TREE CANOPY**

Busch Stadium

Nestle Purina Campus

**TRANSFORM INFRASTRUCTURAL BARRIERS**

Gatewa





Figure 84: **Potential Open Space Network Downtown**

<b>04 Invest in an open space network to provide vibrant public spaces and green infrastructure throughout Downtown</b>	
Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>4.1 Re-imagine the Gateway Mall to connect key Downtown attractions</b>	
<i>Continue programming on Kiener Plaza</i>	<i>Now</i>
<i>Activate garage façade north of Kiener Plaza</i>	<i>Now</i>
<i>Work with local partners to design a stronger connection between Kiener Plaza, Citygarden and Serra/Peabody Plaza</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Activate Civic Commons with recreation spaces and green infrastructure</i> ★	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Close Chestnut Street to traffic between Tucker Blvd. &amp; 15th St. to enlarge civic commons</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Build a Health Loop on Market and Chestnut Street</i>	<i>Short</i>
<b>4.2 Upgrade Aloe Plaza as a front door for Downtown West</b>	
<i>Redesign Aloe Plaza</i> ★	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Coordinate programming between Aloe Plaza and MLS</i>	<i>Now</i>
<b>4.3 Infill vacant lots with pop-up parks to serve existing residents &amp; new uses</b>	
<i>Test pop up programming on city-owned lots</i>	<i>Medium (as soon as MLS stadium opens)</i>
<i>Program "tailgating" on select parking lots during events</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Coordinate with property owner and local partners to examine the potential for a permanent public space at Washington Avenue &amp; 17th Street</i>	<i>Long</i>
<b>4.4 Continue to connect and celebrate the River</b>	
<i>Coordinate with riverfront property owners to create waterfront park</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>

Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>4.5 Transform infrastructural barriers into artful gateways</b>	
<i>Improve Washington Ave. underpass to Laclede's Landing</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Improve rail yard bridge connections</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Improve gateways</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<b>4.6 Grow the Downtown tree canopy</b>	
<i>Coordinate planting guidelines ★</i>	<i>Now</i>
<i>Pilot a tree nursery installation on 2 key lots ★</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Create tree nursery along highway/rail/parking infrastructure</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Establish a volunteer corp to plant and maintain trees ★</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Disperse grown trees throughout Downtown</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Coordinate to create future park and orchard</i>	<i>Long</i>



## Goal 05

# UNCOVER THE STORIES, PEOPLE, & PLACES THAT MAKE DOWNTOWN UNIQUE

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Downtown needs to celebrate its history and local culture but Downtown also needs more street activity. There must be more to do and careful programming to help connect the dots between Downtown's many destinations and amenities. Creating vibrant streets is critical in helping to attract more Downtown residents and in supporting local businesses.

# WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

One of Downtown St. Louis' key challenges is the lack of foot traffic and street life along Downtown's streets and public spaces. In describing Downtown's key challenges, many public outreach participants used words like "empty", "underutilized", and "undiscovered" to describe Downtown today. Interview participants also noted that the lack of street life contributes to a host of perception problems when visitors, potential employees, or clients come Downtown, most critically, it feels unsafe and that it doesn't have the population density necessary to support local businesses. And while other sections of this plan touch on strategies for increasing density - how to add more housing, create broader opportunities for ground-floor businesses, etc. - there is a need for more immediate actions to activate Downtown in the short-term, especially coming out of the impacts of COVID-19.

Activating Downtown in the short-term is critical to local economic development in that it can increase the amount of time and money that residents, visitors, and workers spend Downtown. Survey results during the public outreach process showed that "arts, cultural performances, and special events" ranked among the top three types of activities that residents, workers, and visitors like to patronize, both during the week and after work in the evenings and weekends. Similarly, a "lack

of access to amenities" was cited among the top three things that employees dislike about working Downtown, and "entertainment venues" and "arts / performance spaces" ranked as the top third and fourth type of activity respondents would most like to see more of Downtown.

Public outreach participants also noted programming's potential to foster a more diverse and inclusive Downtown. When asked what interventions would help to create an inclusive Downtown, 14% of participants said that Downtown should host more events such as pop-up markets and temporary street closures. Additionally, 8% of respondents said that a focus on passive and actively programmed public spaces, such as sports fields, public pools, and playgrounds, would help Downtown become more inclusive.

Downtown's existing programming / activation landscape needs recalibrating in several areas in order to reach its full potential. Cities that have successfully used programming as a downtown activation strategy have often centralized responsibility for programming into a single entity or position that focuses solely on activation. In Detroit for example, nearly 10 times as many events are held each year in Downtown Detroit (1,900+) compared to Downtown St. Louis (200+).





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Currently in Downtown St. Louis, programming is dispersed between a number of different non-profit partners and organized on a somewhat ad-hoc basis. Existing programming leans heavily towards ticketed major events that attract large crowds, but lacks the small to medium scale regular events that occur throughout the week and year in public spaces. In terms of the locations programming is held, there is also a disconnect between the spaces that host programs and the places that could most benefit from the spillover effect of increased foot traffic. Events at Gateway Arch National Park, for example, are less likely to have a measurable benefit to important retail corridors that are physically disconnected and distant from the park, such as Washington Avenue. Lastly, Downtown lacks a coordinated activation strategy that engages people throughout the year as the majority of events that bring people Downtown occur in the late spring, summer, and early fall, with little to do in the colder months.

A reimagined Downtown activation strategy presents several distinct opportunities. First, programming and activation is a relatively low-cost improvement in relation to other interventions and, because these activities are inherently mobile, they enable us to test different ideas in different locations to see what works best. Activations that attract residents, workers, and

visitors could also have an immediate economic benefit for small businesses and retail corridors, especially given the economic downturn many businesses have suffered as a result of the pandemic. Mural installations, music performances, beer gardens, and winter holiday markets lend themselves to photographs that can spread widely and organically on social media, which in turn helps perpetuate a new narrative of Downtown as an active and edgy place with lots to offer. And by providing more year-round activity, the increased vibrancy in Downtown would help attract and retain residents, give workers at Downtown businesses more reasons to patronize Downtown at lunch, after work, and on weekends, and help to capitalize on the economic potential of Downtown's visitors by giving conventioners, tourists, and game day crowds more options to explore and experience all that Downtown has to offer.

The strategies described in this section focus on four opportunities for activating Downtown. Celebrating public art Downtown and implementing the 2018 Public Art Plan, expanding temporary programming Downtown with a focus on equity and inclusion, using programming to activate Washington Avenue and implement the Garment District Placemaking Initiative, and "daylighting" St. Louis' unique music and cultural heritage.

# STRATEGIES

## 5.1 CELEBRATE PUBLIC ART DOWNTOWN

Public art has the ability to beautify and enliven a neighborhood, create a sense of place, and provide avenues for a diverse array of creatives to contribute to the community. Public art comes in many forms - visual, performance, light, etc. - and can employ various structural elements of a city as their canvas. Underpasses can become illuminated gateways, old brick walls can become an artists' canvas, and the cultural history of an area, past and present, can be told through an array of artistic mediums.

With the exception of the Mural Mile, located along the floodwall south of Gateway Arch National Park, there is a lack of significant street art within the Downtown study area, yet there is no shortage of walls, public spaces, and infrastructure that would be ideal for strategic public art interventions. The first initiative - InSite 2020 - was scheduled for the Spring of 2020 but postponed due to the pandemic. The program brings together 5 artists to create temporary but significant art works Downtown to highlight its unique assets. This is an important first step in establishing a culture around public art in Downtown.

The following public art strategies build on the recommendations of the 2018 Public Art Plan.

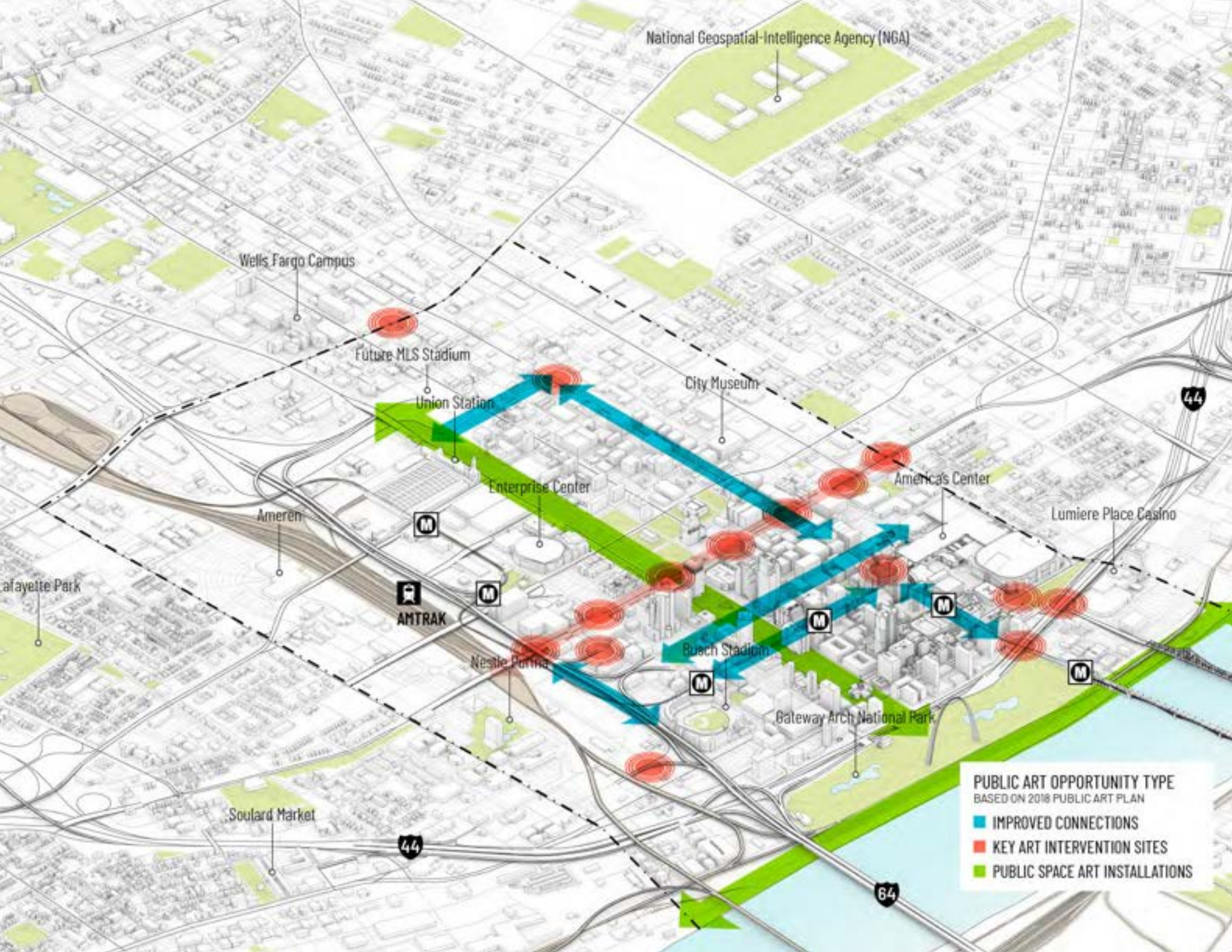
### A. INCLUDE PUBLIC ART ON REDESIGNED STREETS

There are several key streets Downtown that, if redesigned, have the potential to build stronger connections between Downtown's assets and surrounding neighborhoods. Temporary or permanent public art should be incorporated into the redesign of streets, pedestrian crossings, and transit stations, including on the following streets:

- Tucker Boulevard
- Market Street
- Washington Avenue
- 20th Street
- Downtown Core streets connecting the America's Center Convention Complex with Ballpark Village and the Cupples District (including 7th, 8th, & 9th Streets)

Figure 85: **Public Art Opportunities**





**PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY TYPE**  
BASED ON 2018 PUBLIC ART PLAN

- IMPROVED CONNECTIONS
- KEY ART INTERVENTION SITES
- PUBLIC SPACE ART INSTALLATIONS



“An area designed for artistic expression. Live music, live painting, live chalk drawing, live performances.”

#### **B. INCLUDE PUBLIC ART IN GATEWAY MALL REDESIGN**

The popularity of Citygarden, with its variety of public art installations all within a lush and well-maintained green space, shows the potential for incorporating public art into the redesign of the rest of the Gateway Mall as a strategy for increasing the public’s use and enjoyment of these spaces. As the western Gateway Mall is redesigned and updated, temporary and permanent public art should be incorporated into these spaces’ redesign and programming.



*Crown Fountain at Millennium Park in Chicago, IL*

#### **C. USE ART TO IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES**

The I-44 and I-64 highway overpasses separate Downtown from the riverfront and the Cupples Station/ Ballpark Village area from neighborhoods to the south. Overpasses create dark and uninviting spaces that discourage pedestrian traffic. Public art, such as murals, light installations, and interactive elements can be used to make these challenging spaces more inviting to pedestrians, and to create visible thematic connections to nearby destinations.



*Interactive art, “Sensing YOU” in San Jose, CA*

# “Is there a way for local artists to create murals that tell the story of Saint Louis & its history?”

## D. HOLD AN ANNUAL PUBLIC ARTS FESTIVAL

Host an annual public arts festival Downtown to provide a signature event that appeals to visitors and residents alike, and present a unique opportunity to engage local, national, and world-renowned artists in the mass creation of high-quality public art that would continue to enhance Downtown long after the festival closes. The Bright Walls mural festival in Jackson, MI, for example, founded in 2018, has already brought 36 new murals by artists from around the world to their Downtown.



*Bright Walls Mural in Jackson, MI*

## E. ACTIVATE RIVERFRONT WITH PUBLIC ART

The St. Louis Riverfront is a unique asset with historical and ecological significance, and was recently enhanced by a \$400 million renovation to improve the grounds, update the Arch and museum, and create better connections between the park and Downtown. However, public outreach revealed that residents and workers visit the Arch infrequently (on average, between 1-3 times a month and less than once a month), and revealed the need to provide additional elements to draw users to the waterfront, aside from tourists. Engaging artists to create temporary art along the riverfront to bring local visitors more frequently to the river, and enhance connections north to Laclede’s Landing and south to the Chouteau’s Landing.



*Giant Duck in Hong Kong*

**PRECEDENT:**  
THE BRIGHT WALLS MURAL  
FESTIVAL



JACKSON, MI  
The Bright Walls mural festival was founded in 2018 and has already brought 36 new murals to Downtown, created by artists from around the world.

## “Turn some of those hulking, atrocious parking garages into works of art.”

### ★ F. DEVELOP MURALS AT KEY SITES TO SUPPORT BEAUTIFICATION AND WAYFINDING

There are a few strategic locations Downtown where a large mural installation has the potential to dramatically improve the public realm. These locations include:

- The Kiener Plaza garages
- The parking garage at Washington between 8th and 9th Streets
- Blank walls at Washington Ave. and Tucker Blvd. and Cole St. and Tucker Blvd.
- In opportunity areas identified in the Garment District Placemaking Initiative.



*Murals on a parking garage and a blank wall from Mural Arts Philadelphia*





ST. LOUIS, MO  
Un(HEARD)Of STL raises awareness about hidden history, stories, and individuals who have made St. Louis unique. The program functions as a free interactive audio map that provides free geo-located audio vignettes of historical events, with ten locations currently in Downtown.

“Montreal has a fantastic annual mural festival. It encourages tourists and locals to explore the City and brightens an otherwise bland city buildings.”

### **G. EXPAND WALKING TOURS AND MAKE THEM VISIBLE - COORDINATE WITH UN(HEARD) OF STL ON DOWNTOWN WALKING TOURS**

As the historic core of the City of St. Louis, Downtown has a rich and varied history that many outreach participants remarked is not visible or well-known to the general public. Downtown can build on its unique and varied history by developing a series of walking tours aimed at uncovering the many stories that have enriched Downtown St. Louis since its founding. Integrate physical markers as a part of these walking tours to create visibility for this history and an

opportunity to integrate public art. Complete this in coordination with Un(HEARD)Of STL, a non-profit that offers free self-guided tours of Downtown via a geo-located map of audio clips that tell the stories behind the people and places that make Downtown unique. As an example, the Detroit Experience Factory, a project of the Downtown Detroit Partnership, offers tours for visitors and residents that provide an inclusive, fun, and engaging experience for those new to, or wanting to learn more about, Downtown Detroit's past and present.



Audio clip stories provided through Un(HEARD)Of STL

**PRECEDENT:**  
DETROIT EXPERIENCE FACTORY  
(DXF)



DETROIT, MI  
Detroit Experience Factory (DXF) was born from the idea that “all you needed in Detroit was a friend to show you what you didn’t know what you were looking for”. DXF offers public and custom private tours for groups and individuals visiting the City who want to learn more about Detroit, and includes tours on a variety of subjects, including art & architecture, social history of the City, and tours of a variety of neighborhoods and assets (Eastern Market, the Riverfront, etc.). DXF also runs the Detroit Concierge Program which staffs Pop-Up Welcome Centers throughout Downtown.



*Detroit Experience Factory (DXF) public tour*

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#### **H. DEVELOP A SIGNATURE ART PROJECT WITH AMERICA'S CENTER EXPANSION**

Conventions draw hundreds of thousands of visitors per year to Downtown St. Louis. The America's Center Convention Complex, which is planned to undergo a significant expansion to improve its facilities, should incorporate a significant public art component as part of the renovation. The Raleigh Convention Center includes a massive "Cree Shimmer Wall" of the City's symbol the oak tree. The art "reflects sunlight and drifts in the wind" to welcome visitors and commuters to Downtown.



*Cree Shimmer Wall in Raleigh, NC*



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## 5.2 EXPAND DOWNTOWN TEMPORARY PROGRAMMING

Throughout the outreach process participants expressed the desire to see more activity that brought people to Downtown throughout the year. Participants also noted that Downtown's streets and public spaces often feel empty, which contributes to negative perceptions of safety. Programming Downtown's streets and public spaces would provide an immediate and relatively low-cost method for creating vibrancy and testing out new ideas that add life and vibrancy Downtown. Programming aimed to appeal to different audiences and demographics has the power to increase the time spent Downtown by visitors, entice office workers to spend an evening Downtown, bring people of different backgrounds together through common interests, and help reinforce a positive message about Downtown through program participants' use of social media.







KNICKERBOCKER

MACAD'S

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★ **A. DEVELOP A TARGETED LIST OF MOBILE PROGRAMS TO REINFORCE DOWNTOWN AMENITIES AND EVENTS**

In the near term, launch a programming series that tests several of the most popular/promising ideas that emerged from the outreach process. Programming within the first year should be viewed as an opportunity to experiment and learn from what types of programs, spaces, and audiences are most successful at attracting a wide range of audiences throughout the year. Several of the most popular ideas included street festivals, beer gardens, outdoor concerts, food trucks, and open streets events. Commenters also suggested several new ideas that were upvoted in the online open house, including:

- An expanded winter holiday market and ice skating rink
- A regularly scheduled mid-week farmer's market and street fair
- A kinetic sculpture / light art series, potentially in coordination with an arts festival
- A summertime pop-up, possibly including a flea market, skating rink, and hammock lounge
- Organized sports and recreation leagues
- Volunteer events and projects



*Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest in Philadelphia, PA*



*Outdoor dance party*





**★ B. CREATE A DESIGN COMPETITION WITH IMPLEMENTATION DOLLARS**

An annual open-call competition supported by implementation dollars, framed around a simple prompt (e.g. What's your idea to make Downtown STL a better place to live, work, and play?) is an excellent way of sourcing new ideas, building buzz, and creating new networks of engaged citizens. Implementation dollars and support services (technical assistance, PR, networking) would help ensure that the ideas competition was open to all, regardless of one's financial resources or background.

**★ C. PROGRAM INTENTIONALLY FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

As activities grow and expand, it is essential that programming is intentionally inclusive, appealing and welcoming to individuals and families of all backgrounds. Ensure that diverse perspectives go into the planning and selection of activities, that programs have universal appeal and do not skew consistently towards one demographic, that participation and enjoyment of activities requires little to no cost, and that diverse local vendors and performers are hired wherever possible.

The Knight Cities Challenge was a nationwide open call for new and innovative ideas to transform cities into more vibrant places. Open to innovators, designers, and individuals from any field, the challenge requested ideas to help cities attract and retain talent, foster shared economic opportunity, spur greater civic involvement. The competition attracted over 7,000 applicants in its first-year, ultimately awarding 32 projects an 18-month implementation grant from a \$5 million fund.



*Knight Cities Challenge*



*Examples from Grand Rapids, MI*



*Washington Avenue*

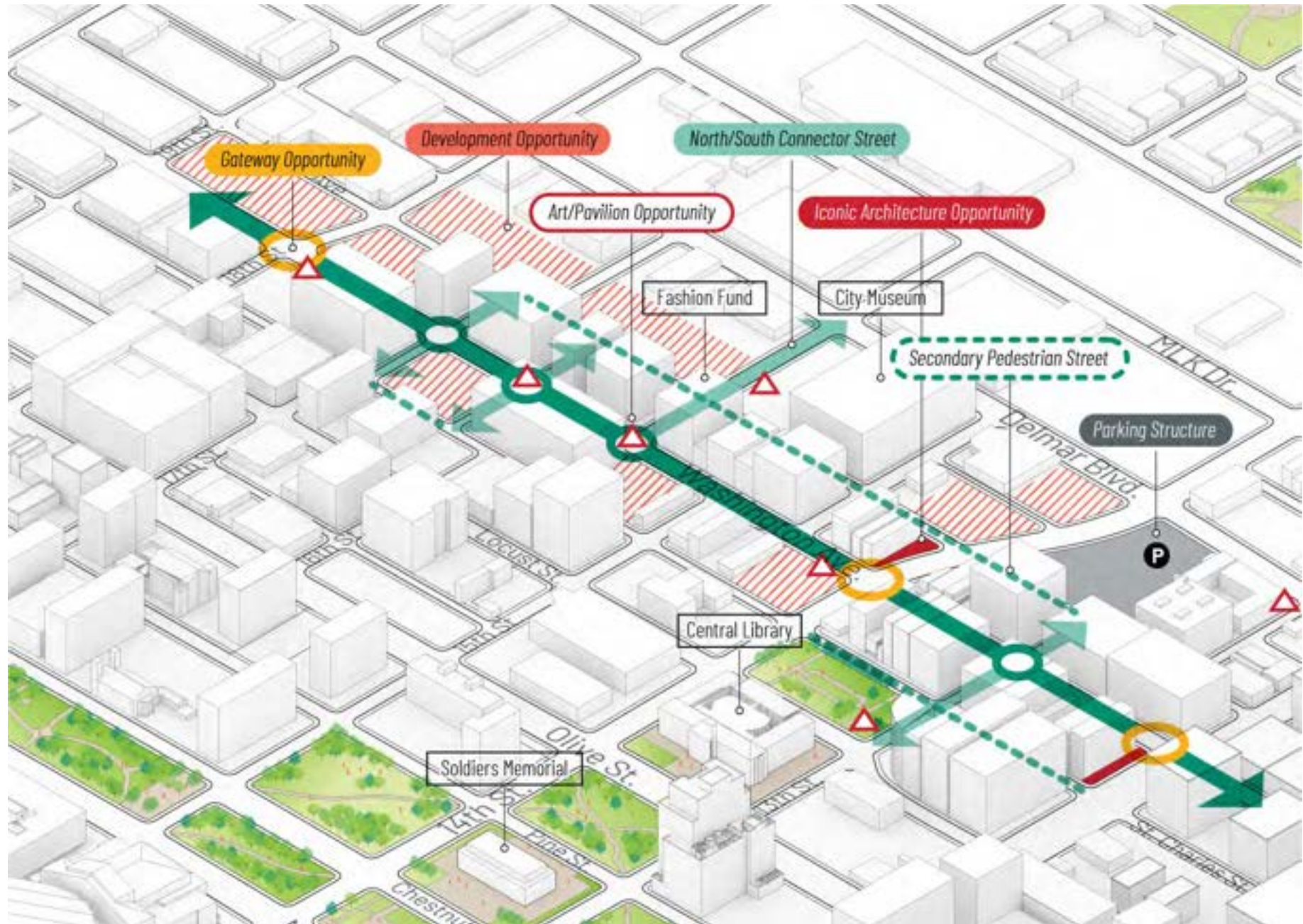
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### 5.3 ACTIVATE WASHINGTON AVENUE

Washington Avenue is synonymous with Downtown. It was the focus of the Downtown Now plan from 1999 which resulted in a streetscape design that reflects the history of the garment industries that concentrated along the Avenue. The beautiful architecture, once largely vacant, is now home to lofts and restaurants. It is both an entertainment district and a residential spine that comprises a majority of Downtown residents. It has also faced some challenges including the turnover of restaurants and retailers and spaces that remain undeveloped. In 2018, DSI launched an initiative to capitalize on Washington Avenue's history of garment making through planning for a Garment District with the St. Louis Fashion Fund. Washington Avenue remains so central to the success of Downtown and needs more programming to attract more customers and reinforce the benefits of Downtown living.



Figure 86: Recommendations from the Garment District Plan





“A place where  
you cannot  
find an empty  
storefront or  
office space to  
last.”

#### **A. IMPLEMENT GARMENT DISTRICT PLACEMAKING INITIATIVE**

The 2019 Garment District Placemaking Initiative lays out a series of goals, strategies, and tactics for establishing an improved identity and sense of place for the Garment District, generally bounded by Delmar Blvd. to the north, Olive St. to the south, Tucker Blvd. to the east and 18th St. to the west. Implementation of the Initiative’s recommendations would help spur the continued growth and development of Washington Avenue.

The initiative outlines a number of specific improvements for cross streets around Washington Avenue. This includes creating a more welcoming pedestrian environment on the smaller streets like Lucas Avenue and St. Charles Street. In addition, 16th and 17th Streets were all identified for targeted improvements in the spirit of the environment that exists along 13th Street adjacent to Washington Avenue.

#### **B. ENHANCE GATEWAYS AT KEY LOCATIONS**

Strategic gateways, as identified by the Garment District Placemaking Initiative, should be enhanced to create a sense of arrival for Washington Avenue. These gateways should reinforce the graphic brand of Washington Avenue and be prioritized for the intersections of Washington and 18th, Washington and 14th, and Washington and Tucker.



*St. Charles between Tucker and 11th*

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### **C. CONSIDER “DESIGN REVIEW” FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT ALONG WASHINGTON AVENUE**

Due to the abundance of historic architecture along Washington Avenue, from the lofts of the Garment District to the tudor buildings in Downtown West, it is imperative that new construction along this corridor complement the architectural character of the district and contribute to the walkable, pedestrian-scaled nature of Washington Avenue. This includes ensuring that no new surface parking is allowed along this important corridor. Design review adds an additional eye to the development of new projects that evaluates the character of the building in addition to their adherence to the zoning code. This can be done in two ways:

- a formal procedure organized by the City but with outside design professionals volunteering time to make recommendations to development proposals or;
- through the DNA as a part of a review of new Downtown development projects



*15th between Washington and St. Charles*

“Full of people  
and thriving  
businesses.”

“BBs Jazz/Blues Bar, Broadway Oyster bar and other music venues. There should be signs/pictures of famous musicians from St. Louis or who have played in these Downtown venues.”

#### 5.4 BRING MUSIC TO THE FOREGROUND

St. Louis has a rich musical history that produced many of the country’s most influential artists and styles. It is the birthplace of many of the genres unique to American music, from blues, to ragtime, to rock and roll, alternative, and mid-western rap. Some of the most famous artists in the country, including Albert King, Miles Davis, Tina Turner, and Nelly, among many others, got their start in St. Louis. St. Louis served as a critical launching pad where many of the most famous blues musicians got their start in the saloons and clubs that hug the course of the riverfront.

However, St. Louis’s important role in music history is overshadowed by cities like Chicago, New Orleans, Nashville, and Memphis - places that have been successful at highlighting their musical legacies. And while these cities all deserve their seat at the musical table, St. Louis is unique in that it was often the creative birthplace for famous artists and styles that would later move to bigger cities, and was often one of the first places where styles associated with other cities, like the blues, first emerged.

Music is part of St. Louis, and particularly Downtown’s history - reflected in the National Blues Museum on Washington Avenue, the bars and clubs along Broadway, and a series of outdoor concerts such as Blues at the Arch and the Big Muddy Blues Festival. However, there are many ways that creative programming can bring St. Louis’s music, past and present, to the foreground through new experiences that engage diverse artists and provide opportunities for regular, interactive performances.







*Let's Make Sweet Music Together, Philadelphia, PA*

**PRECEDENT:**  
ARTS AT THE AIRPORT



**NASHVILLE, TN**  
Nashville's Arts at the Airport program brings the City's musicians into the airport, with musical stages and performance areas located throughout airport terminals. Performances span a range of styles important to Nashville's cultural legacy, including blues, jazz, R&B, pop, gospel, and bluegrass.

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★ **A. CREATE A MINI-OUTDOOR MUSIC STUDIO FOR OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE**

The creativity and energy of working musicians in St. Louis is already evident in locations like the National Blues Museum, but there is an opportunity to bring the talents of these artists further into public view, in effect, "daylighting" the talent that exists in and around Downtown. Downtown should be host to a "Music at the Confluence" initiative that brings musicians and music lovers together around the universal language of music. This place-based initiative, which could be housed in a custom-fabricated pop-up space, is a place for musicians to record and write music, collaborate, and host interactive workshop sessions with the public on a regular basis. Use a similar operating model to an artist-in-residency program, where artists are provided time, space, and a stipend for creative work in exchange for hosting open studio hours and providing a rich menu of interactive music programs catering to diverse audiences.

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**B. INTEGRATE LIVE MUSIC AT TOURISM HUBS**

Tourism is an important piece of Downtown's economy, and will continue to grow in significance with the America's Center Convention Complex expansion, growth of Ballpark Village, and construction of the MLS Stadium, in addition to other long-standing attractions such as the Gateway Arch, City Museum, and the National Blues Museum. Highlight the City's diverse music heritage by creating an initiative to bring live music to areas frequented by tourists and visitors from the region. Other cities have similar programs operating in their major airports, such as Seattle's Music at SEA initiative. Given the abundance of visitor hubs, Downtown has the opportunity to employ live musicians to activate public and semi-public spaces throughout Downtown, bringing vibrancy to these spaces and leaving a lasting impression on visitors.



## “Multiple destinations connected in a ‘jazz, blues, and ragtime’ walking tour.”

### **C. HOST FREE DOWNTOWN MUSIC FEST ON WASHINGTON AVENUE**

Organize a music festival on Washington Avenue in collaboration with local businesses to create a resident / family-friendly event that encourages people to explore the corridor and its various businesses. Have businesses sign up to “host” different small-scale musicians throughout the day (either in front of their business, or inside) while allowing the public to wander in and out throughout the festival. Consider closing the street as part of this festival to accommodate significantly more pedestrians and performers.

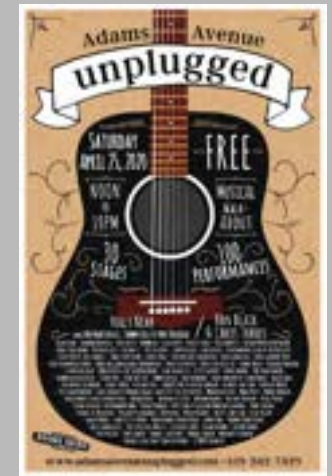
### **D. HOST WEEKLY MUSIC PERFORMANCES IN DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SPACES**

Downtown St. Louis has the ideal mix of programming partners and public spaces to host weekly small-scale music performances with a diverse array of local artists. This could potentially build on the Howlin’ Fridays and Soulful Sundays series offered by the National Blues Museum by adding a series of performances during the week, perhaps at lunchtime and/or for happy hour, in order to provide an amenity for residents and workers throughout the week.

### **E. RECRUIT A SMALL SCALE MUSIC VENUE TO DOWNTOWN**

A small scale music venue, appealing to a diverse audience and with a focus on small-medium sized acts, could add vibrancy to key commercial streets Downtown and appeal to residents, workers, and visitors alike. A venue committed to building community through a focus on diverse local and national acts, and a commitment to focusing on a high-quality concert experience, would help ensure the venue contributes positively to Downtown and complements residential uses and businesses. Currently, the majority of music venues Downtown are located south of I-64, which is not within a walkable distance of most residents or workers and doesn’t create the spillover effect to benefit neighboring restaurants or hotels. Additionally, a location near Washington or Locust Avenues, potentially in Downtown West, would tie into the creative energy of the growing community of residents and businesses in Midtown across Jefferson Avenue.

### **PRECEDENT: ADAMS AVENUE UNPLUGGED**



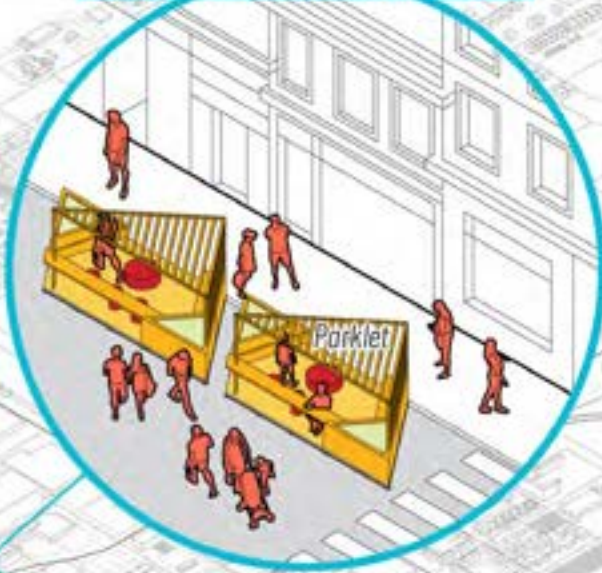
SAN DIEGO, CA  
Adams Avenue Unplugged is a program of the Adams Avenue Business Association in San Diego, and hosts a free annual “musical walkabout” along a two-mile stretch of the business corridor. The event features live musical performances staged throughout the neighborhood. By linking the Avenue’s dining and drinking establishments with free music performances, the event encourages patrons to explore the many businesses that make the corridor unique.



**20TH STREET CLOSURE DURING MLS GAMEDAY**



**PARKLETS ON WASHINGTON AVE.**



20TH ST.

20TH & MARKET

WASHINGTON AVE.

14TH & WASHINGTON

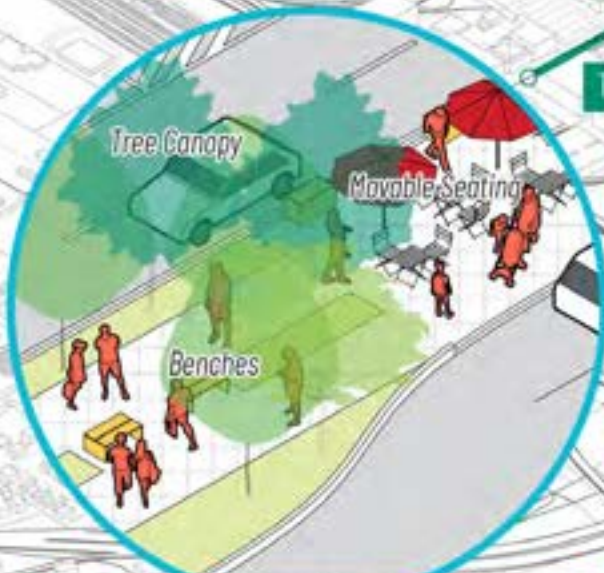
TUCKER MEDIAN

10TH & WASHINGTON

POELKER PARK

TUCKER BLVD.

KIENER PLAZA



**POP UP BEER GARDEN**

**PASSIVE RECREATION IN TUCKER MEDIAN**



**BLUES MUSIC ON WASHINGTON AVE.**

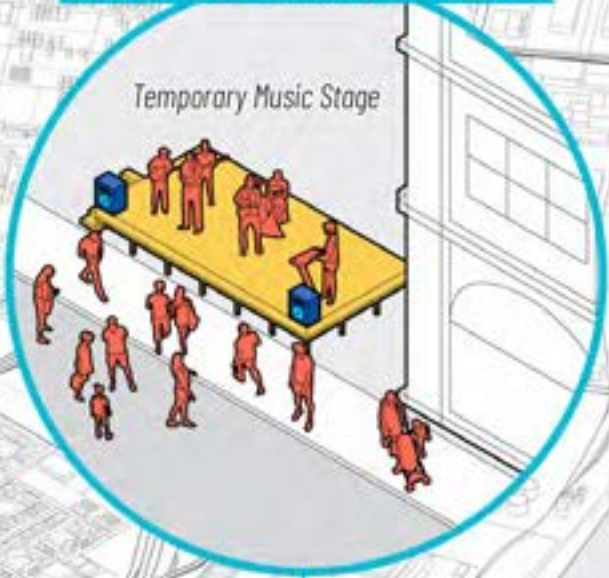
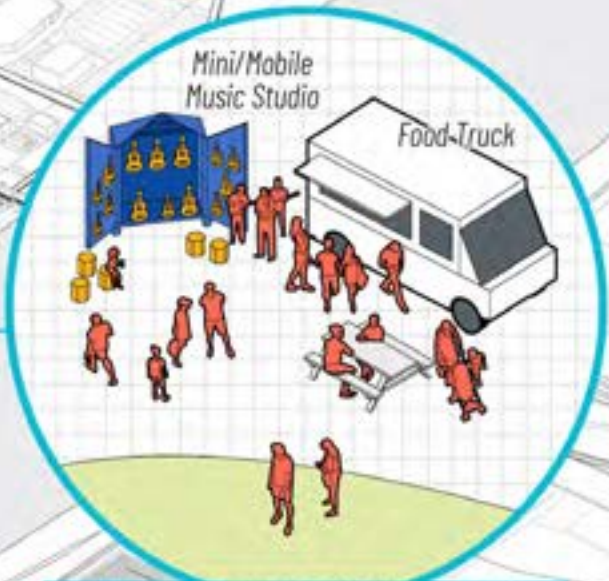


Figure 87: **Potential Programming Opportunities for Downtown**

*Mini/Mobile  
Music Studio*



**MINI MUSIC STUDIO ON KIENER PLAZA**

<b>05 Uncover the stories, people, &amp; places that make Downtown unique</b>	
Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>5.1 Celebrate public art Downtown</b>	
<i>Include public art on redesigned streets</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Include public art in gateway mall redesign</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Use art to improve infrastructure challenges</i>	<i>Long</i>
<i>Hold an annual public arts festival</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Activate riverfront with public art</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Develop murals at key sites to support beautification and wayfinding</i> ★	<i>Short</i>
<i>Expand walking tours and make them visible - coordinate with Un(HEARD) of STL on Downtown walking tours</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Develop a signature art project with America's Center expansion</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<b>5.2 Expand Downtown temporary programming</b>	
<i>Develop a targeted list of mobile programs to reinforce Downtown amenities and events</i> ★	<i>Now</i>
<i>Create a design competition with implementation dollars</i> ★	<i>Short</i>
<i>Program intentionally for equity and inclusion</i> ★	<i>Now</i>



Recommendation	Timeframe
<b>5.3 Activate Washington Avenue</b>	
<i>Implement Garment District Placemaking Initiative</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<i>Enhance gateways at key locations</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Consider "Design Review" for new development along Washington Avenue</i>	<i>Long</i>
<b>5.4 Bring music to the foreground</b>	
<i>Create a mini-outdoor music studio for outdoor performance</i> ★	<i>Short</i>
<i>Integrate live music at tourism hubs</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Host free Downtown Music Fest on Washington Avenue</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Host weekly music performances in Downtown public spaces</i>	<i>Short</i>
<i>Recruit a small scale music venue to Downtown</i>	<i>Long</i>

# 05

# IMPLEMENTATION

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Part 01

## **APPROACH**

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Part 02

## **IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE**

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Part 03

## **TRACK AND SHARE THE PROGRESS**

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Part 04

## **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

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Part 05

## **MOVING FORWARD AND RECOVERY**

p264



## APPROACH

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*Design Downtown STL* presents an ambitious but pragmatic vision for the future of Downtown. Various Downtown entities and stakeholders will be required to maintain focus on the plan and work toward implementing its recommendations over the coming years. There is no one agency, project, or funding source that can do it alone – coordination will be critical to achieve the long term goals described in this plan.

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To help *Design Downtown STL* become reality, we must acknowledge the constraints including limited resources – in terms of both money and time. While a large amount of investment will be necessary, anticipated social, economic, and environmental benefits greatly outweigh the costs. To truly guide investment, the work must be managed by a group of individuals, key organizations, and agencies that are committed to the Downtown vision, and to maintain momentum, progress must be tracked, communicated, and celebrated.

# IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

There are a number of very active Downtown organizations and individuals, each of which has a direct stake in Downtown's future and already contributes to activities that make Downtown what it is today.

Central to success in bringing the plan's ideas to reality is harnessing the capacity and expertise of varied Downtown partners and establishing a clear management structure charged with coordinating different initiatives, bringing key stakeholders together, fundraising, and taking on the task of driving different strategies forward.

Critical planning partners that have a clear role to play in shepherding implementation activities include (but are not limited to):

## Key Organizations ◀

### DOWNTOWN STL, INC.

**Key roles:** Overall convener for Downtown activity with specific programs dedicated to programming, marketing, planning, economic development, and the design and implementation of public realm and street improvements.

### DOWNTOWN CID

**Key roles:** Special assessment to fund clean and safe activities and beautification within the CID boundary.

### ARCH TO PARK

**Key roles:** Planning, economic development and strategic investment through St. Louis' central core.

### DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (DNA)

**Key roles:** Downtown advocacy, marketing, neighborhood coordination, and public safety. To expand the number of residents living Downtown, DNA will play a key role in connecting residents to one another, building pride and a broader sense of community, and tackling the shared challenges of living Downtown.

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### EXPLORE ST. LOUIS

**Key roles:** Downtown advocacy, marketing, and promotion. Explore St. Louis is already leading the charge in promoting Downtown for events and major conferences. They will be essential in realizing some of the strategies around further promoting Downtown and connecting Downtown's unique assets.

### GREAT RIVERS GREENWAY (GRG)

**Key roles:** Design, programming and maintenance for parks and trails including the Brickline Greenway that crosses Downtown. GRG's capacity and knowledge is critical in executing, programming and maintaining open spaces and, the Brickline Greenway promises to be a transformative amenity for Downtown.

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### MAJOR DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS

**Key roles:** Busch Stadium, the Enterprise Center, Stifel Theater and attractions at Union Station represent a collection of major entertainment venues and activities that few cities can offer. These key stakeholders will play a central role in implementing the Brickline Greenway, improving the Gateway Mall and in supporting other Downtown improvements as recently reflected in the LightMySTL initiative. Their investments and actions can also impact how people get around Downtown and how game day and event traffic is managed.

### ST. LOUIS CITY SC

**Key roles:** Planning, implementation and programming for the new MLS Stadium under construction for 20th and Market Streets. Including a new outdoor plaza along 20th Street, St. Louis City SC is a key partner in coordinating programming with the Gateway Mall and creating a unique game day experience Downtown.



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### GATEWAY ARCH PARK FOUNDATION

**Key roles:** Programming and maintenance for the Gateway Arch grounds and Kiener Plaza. Their role is central to Downtown tourism and hospitality activities.

### DOWNTOWN SCHOOLS

**Key roles:** Community partnerships to help design and implement improvements Downtown and mentorships to provide students with opportunities at local businesses. The KIPP Academy and Confluence Academy represent opportunities to align their curriculum and talents with Downtown investment and growth.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

**Key roles:** To help achieve a Downtown focused on inclusive entrepreneurship and support small and growing businesses, T-REX, NGA West, Arch Grants, Alliance STL, the Equity Collaborative, Justine Petersen, the African Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of St. Louis and the Asian American Chamber of Commerce, Invest STL, and SLDC among others need to be active partners in shaping specific programs and services.

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### ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

**Key roles:** Advocacy and implementation activities for specific Downtown improvements. Local groups like Trailnet and Forest Relief bring specific expertise that is needed to implement portions of *Design Downtown STL*.

### SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

**Key roles:** Service provision, education, outreach, and coordination with local police. Much work has been done to align existing services and help those most in need Downtown. The work of St. Patrick Center, among others, must continue to be integrated into the overall vision for Downtown.

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## Key Government Departments / Agencies ◀

### THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS

**Key roles:** Core partner with Downtown STL, Inc. to undertake planning, street improvements, infrastructure upgrades, building preservation, and policy changes that support *Design Downtown STL*. The Board of Public Service, Mayor’s office, Parks Division, Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, Planning and Urban Design Agency, Street Department and the Zoning Section have all been involved in shaping this plan and will remain critical partners in the implementation of specific strategies.

### ST. LOUIS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (SLDC)

**Key roles:** Economic development Downtown with a focus on business attraction, development assistance and incentives. SLDC sponsored the Downtown Parking Study to examine parking needs and evaluate potential parking investments.

### METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS SEWER DISTRICT (MSD)

**Key roles:** Planning and funding for strategic improvements to the City’s sewer system and for green infrastructure.

### METROLINK / BI-STATE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

**Key roles:** Boosting transit ridership, the reconfiguration of bus routes and stations and development of a new north-south MetroLink service. There are more MetroLink stations and riders Downtown than anywhere else in the region. Work closely with them to improve their stations and thus the transit experience, and to tackle key transportation policies that will encourage greater transit ridership.

### EAST-WEST GATEWAY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (EWG)

**Key roles:** Planning, funding, advocacy, and implementation assistance. EWG is a partner for realizing Downtown’s goals and supports Downtown investment through grants and technical assistance around transportation planning and sustainability.

### REGIONAL ARTS COMMISSION (RAC)

**Key roles:** Implementing the Downtown Public Art Plan. With Downtown STL, Inc. and Explore St. Louis, RAC is a key agency to push forward public art initiatives.

### MODOT

**Key roles:** Coordination on street design and improvements on those streets controlled by MoDOT (Chouteau Avenue for instance).

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## Key Individuals / Audiences ◀

### RESIDENTS

**Key roles:** Downtown advocacy, marketing, neighborhood coordination, and public safety. Beyond the Downtown Neighborhood Association, involved residents continue to play a role in shaping Downtown. Some will volunteer and serve to help implement specific small-scale actions that will improve Downtown as a place to live.

### PROPERTY OWNERS

**Key roles:** Investment and Downtown advocacy. Property owners Downtown are critical partners to help support efforts to reuse empty commercial space and integrate new programming that attracts residents and visitors to Downtown.

### RETAILERS

**Key roles:** Marketing, coordination, customer data collection, and parking. To help encourage more retail in the right locations, work with existing retailers around their core needs, but also tap their knowledge and sales data where possible. Their insights can help target Downtown marketing and identify specific improvements to support existing retail.

### EMPLOYERS

**Key roles:** Downtown advocacy, talent attraction and retention, commuter patterns and parking. The major employers are one of the key engines of Downtown growth. To fuel Downtown's continued growth, partnerships with employers are required to help implement transportation policies designed to encourage transit and active transportation but also to encourage their employees to spend more time Downtown.

### HOTELS

**Key roles:** Downtown advocacy and marketing. The hotels represent a lot of economic activity for Downtown. Continue to engage them in further marketing Downtown and in the design of Downtown streets and wayfinding.

### DEVELOPERS

**Key roles:** Investment, ground floor activation, retail attraction. The developers are critical partners in activating ground floor spaces and in advancing conversations about financing tools to encourage more investment.



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The long to-do list that results from this plan must be guided by a diverse Task Force that reflects the varied backgrounds and racial and cultural diversity that exists Downtown.

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Many organizations and groups share some “key roles” owing to the fact that many ongoing efforts already occur through effective local partnerships between those with similar missions in Downtown. To implement this plan, local partnerships must be expanded to ensure that a diversity of voices are at the table.

To help transition this planning effort into a sustainable management structure for implementation, local partners should work toward transitioning and expanding the Advisory Committee into a *Design Downtown STL Task Force*. The long to-do list that results from this plan must be guided by a diverse Task Force that reflects the varied backgrounds and racial and cultural diversity that exists Downtown.

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The Task Force should meet quarterly to bring these and other partners together to coordinate and track the progress toward implementation around key initiatives. Subcommittees should be established as necessary to address specific action items. At this time, we recommend creating subcommittees around the following topics:

- **Housing Development**- to help grow Downtown’s population and retain and expand affordable housing for a range of income levels and needs Downtown. Possible members include the Planning and Urban Design Agency, Affordable Housing Commission, SLDC, Downtown STL, Inc., DNA, developers, bankers and local Aldermen.
- **The Downtown Economy**-to help fill vacant commercial space, promote and sustain small and growing businesses, focus on diversity and inclusion initiatives, and grow Downtown jobs. Possible members include Downtown STL, Inc., SLDC, African Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Asian American Chamber of Commerce, T-REX, Arch Grants, Alliance STL, Invest STL, the Equity Collaborative, Justine Petersen, property owners and Downtown businesses.

- 
- **Street Design and Implementation**—to further the goal of improving streets throughout Downtown. Possible members include the Board of Public Service, Streets Department, Planning and Design Agency, GRG, Trailnet, and major employers and attractions. Coordination will be necessary with the work of SLDC through the Downtown Parking Study.
  - **Greening and Sustainability**—to further the plan's goals towards tree plantings, open space, green infrastructure, green gateways, and creating a healthier environment. Possible members include Parks Division, Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, Forest Relief, GRG, Gateway Arch Park Foundation, EWG, Downtown STL, DNA and local property owners and attractions.

- 
- **Arts & Culture**—to push forward strategies that promote the local arts, culture, and the preservation of historic buildings as well as work space for artists and small businesses. Possible members include Explore St. Louis, Gateway Arch Park Foundation, Regional Arts Commission, DNA, Hidden St. Louis, MetroLink, National Blues Museum, and the Stifel Theater.
  - **Safety and Management**—to assist, where appropriate, the efforts of the Downtown CID around crime and the perceptions of safety. Note that the Downtown CID will be devoting the majority of their new budget to crime and public safety. Those activities are guided by a new CID Board. However, there are times where the work to implement *Design Downtown STL* will reinforce the work of the CID if properly coordinated. Members would identify issues and opportunities around Downtown quality of life and relay them to the CID Board on a regular basis. Possible members include DNA and local business and property owners.

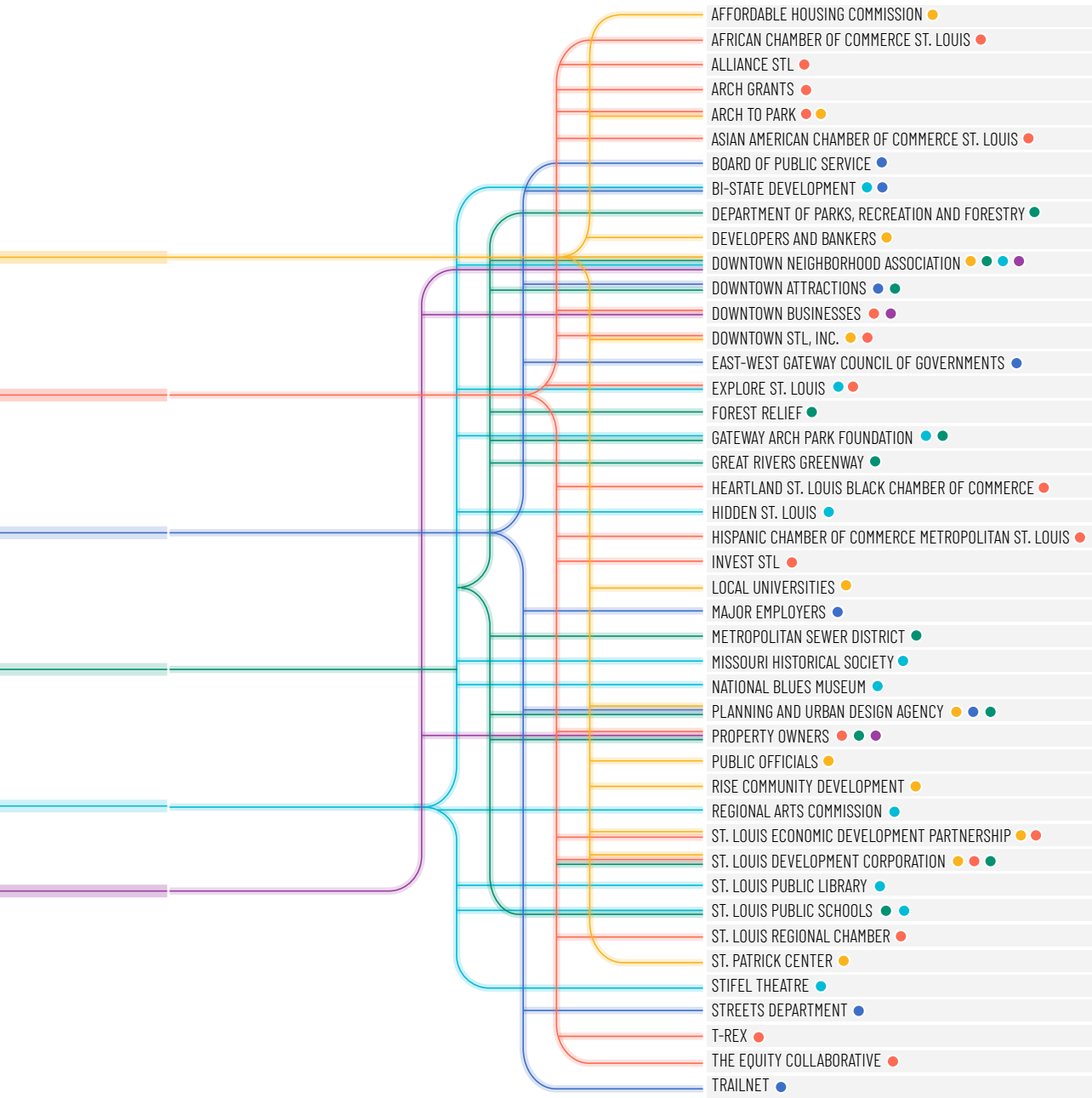
Figure 88: Downtown Task Force Subcommittees

To help transition this planning effort into a sustainable management structure for implementation, local partners should work toward transitioning and expanding the Advisory Committee into a *Design Downtown STL Task Force*.



Illustrative examples of potential partners, not an exhaustive list.





## TRACK AND SHARE THE PROGRESS

To help hold implementation partners accountable, maintain momentum and morale, and measure the impact of implementation efforts, it is critical to diligently track all progress and share updates with the full Downtown community. An important early action will be to set up data entry systems that are fast, easy to use, and accessible to multiple partners poised to assist with regularly scheduled tracking reports. Sharing the progress reports with the public will keep them engaged and build confidence and momentum in the plan's implementation.

### **BRING DATA MAPPING AND MANAGEMENT IN HOUSE AT DOWNTOWN STL, INC.**

Downtown STL, Inc. collects and maintains statistics around their activities and spending in Downtown. In that spirit, *Design Downtown STL* brought together a lot of data about the state of Downtown including a map of all storefronts and active and vacant ground floor uses. Bring this mapping expertise in house and maintain Downtown data to share with partners, market Downtown activity and attract new businesses.

### **SHARE THE DATA AND PROGRESS UPDATES**

With data from the planning process serving as a baseline, Downtown STL, Inc. can track trends and measure progress on implementation and integrate it into reports such as its Annual Report to keep people interested and invested in the plan's progress. Additionally, quarterly updates can be shared with internal communications staff at Downtown employers to keep them abreast of improvements and let them see visible examples of change.

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### **DEVELOP BRANDING AND MESSAGING TO MARKET PLAN INITIATIVES AND PROGRESS**

As implementation gets underway, it will be important to make sure all activities are clearly tied to the plan. As a first step, Downtown STL, Inc. should create a one-pager with the vision, key goals and projects to spread the message about the plan and drum up excitement with existing and future partners so they know what to watch out for in the years ahead and prime them for involvement. As projects and activities are implemented all materials, such as press releases, the website, and social media updates, should be acknowledged and communicated widely, with branding associated with the plan. Develop an online scorecard or report card to depict progress. Design signage for physical projects to let the public know they are a result of *Design Downtown STL*.

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### **RELEASE DATA FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS TO USE**

Many cities have an open data policy that provides citizens with the data and tools to truly engage and collaborate in improving their communities. Over time, develop an interactive mapping platform to make Downtown-specific data available for engaged citizens and businesses to use in making local decisions. Depending upon the platform, these stakeholders could also contribute and crowdsource information for use by Downtown STL, Inc. and its partners.

By supporting a wide range of businesses, particularly those that are locally-owned and minority-owned, Downtown can offer real opportunities for inclusive entrepreneurship.

## PRIORITY ACTIONS

To jumpstart implementation on new catalyst projects, a series of initiatives from the recommended strategies were identified as early actions. These represent new initiatives that, together, can have an enormous impact on the character of Downtown.

### 01 ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN AS A HOME FOR INCLUSIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This key initiative is targeted toward expanding and diversifying the Downtown economy. Two thirds of Downtown jobs are related to white collar office jobs and tourism. Many of the traditional office jobs like legal services, financial services and corporate headquarters are facing increased competition from other cities and from other locations in the region. Without question, the move of 1,000 USDA jobs from the Mark Twain industrial area to Downtown is a huge benefit for local businesses. Expansion of America's Center, Square's new headquarters in the Downtown Innovation District and finding a new tenant for the AT&T building are essential projects to improve the Downtown economy. To supplement these initiatives, broad-based growth is essential across a wide number of businesses. By supporting food businesses, creative offices and even some light manufacturing Downtown, we can continue to add jobs and people. Most importantly, by supporting a wide range of businesses, particularly those that are locally-owned and minority-owned, Downtown can offer real opportunities for inclusive entrepreneurship. This is a competitive advantage for St. Louis and something many other cities cannot offer due to high costs or limited available commercial space.

An inclusive entrepreneurship program should marshal the resources and business services to support existing businesses and help new ones to start, find space and grow Downtown. To enable this to occur, this program could include a number of interlocking actions:

**> CREATE "WHITE BOX" SPACE ON TARGETED BLOCKS:** Work with realtors and property owners to market and improve unused spaces. These "white box" or ready-to-go spaces should be targeted in designated areas to help fill vacancies and add vibrancy to existing businesses. A little later, consider a "match.com" service for ground floor space that connects businesses and organizations or individuals seeking work space with property managers.

**> CREATE HIGHLY FLEXIBLE SPACE FOR GROWTH-STAGE FIRMS UTILIZING "MASTER LEASE" MODEL:** To encourage the activation of commercial space by local retailers or small businesses, a developer or property owner often needs some assurance that their ground floor tenant is "credit-worthy." Explore an option of master leases where one, credit-worthy organization leases the space and then subleases it to businesses that meet the objectives of this program. This role is typically taken on by a non-profit, like Downtown STL, Inc., or a business improvement district that has financial standing to obtain credit as well as the on-the-ground connections with local businesses and property owners.



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> **PROGRAM MOBILE RETAIL / RESTAURANT MODELS ON KEY CORRIDORS:** Test new retailers and expand the reach of existing ones with pop-up and mobile retail and food trucks. Organize and market pop-up events for these businesses in different locations Downtown to support other events and activities.

> **PROGRAM EVENTS AND TOURS THAT BRING PEOPLE TO SMALL BUSINESSES:** Marketing is not something a lot of small businesses have the resources to do. Begin marketing specific Downtown businesses and coordinate campaigns like events and gift cards to attract more customers.

> **CHANGE DOWNTOWN ZONING TO ALLOW FOR A WIDER RANGE OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY:** Make sure zoning isn't holding back the economy by establishing a special use district for Downtown that clearly stipulates the range of allowable activity. Use other best practice models for managing light manufacturing activity in mixed-use districts.



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Many Advisory Committee members and other community members expressed that events and programming is perhaps the most important improvement needed in Downtown today.

## 02 ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN STREETS AND PARKS

Much of this plan is about improving the Downtown experience in ways that make residents, employees, students, and visitors fall in love with Downtown St. Louis. Part of this calls for creating new spaces and new programs that give people reason to be Downtown, and part of this calls for finding new ways to help expand and/or deepen people's connections with Downtown. An early action priority is to support a series of smaller projects that help people see Downtown in a new light, encouraging more people to walk, explore, and observe, to bring guests to favorite Downtown spots, and to learn to see and appreciate Downtown's many unique features, histories, and present day stories. Many Advisory Committee members and other community members expressed that events and programming is perhaps the most important improvement needed in Downtown today. Examples of such projects that could function as initial implementation efforts that help make Downtown's stories more visible and accessible include:

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**> DEVELOP A TARGETED LIST OF TEMPORARY PROGRAMS TO REINFORCE DOWNTOWN AMENITIES:** Develop a targeted list of mobile programs to reinforce Downtown amenities and events. This requires dedicated staff to design and acquire the materials necessary, establish a calendar of activities, install the programming and evaluate its impact to determine what programs work best in different Downtown locations. This needs to be an iterative process where a number of activities are tested and refined. Popular programs from the open house feedback include street festivals and open street events, beer gardens, outdoor concerts, food trucks, games, art events and outdoor movies. Passive programming should also be considered including parklets and hammock pop-ups to provide unique places to gather. Opportunity areas include Washington Avenue, Laclede's Landing, Kiener Plaza and along the Gateway Mall near Tucker Boulevard and to the west in Aloe Plaza.

**> CREATE A DOWNTOWN DESIGN COMPETITION WITH IMPLEMENTATION DOLLARS:** Consider storytelling as a theme for the proposed Downtown Design Competition. Proposals might include podcasts, web apps that help people tour Downtown, or interpretive art, among other ideas, all geared to highlighting stories of Downtown St. Louis, yesterday and today.

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**> DEVELOP MURALS AT KEY SITES TO SUPPORT BEAUTIFICATION**

**AND WAYFINDING:** Make a splash with several large-scale murals that beautify and provide wayfinding between Downtown destinations. First steps include: scouting locations, seeking permission from property owners, working with destinations who might be featured on the wayfinding to determine if a portion of their marketing dollars could go towards funding the art and signage, and drafting an artists' call that allows for flexibility and creativity while also accomplishing stated goals of improved navigability. This work builds upon the InSITE 2020 public art program that was set to launch in the Spring of 2020 but postponed temporarily due to the pandemic.

**> CREATE A MINI-OUTDOOR MUSIC STUDIO FOR OUTDOOR**

**PERFORMANCE:** Musical instruments packaged in a mobile pop-up can bring people together from all backgrounds with an interest in music. This is an opportunity to showcase local talent and bring music more directly to the sound of Downtown. Work with MADE St. Louis or another local maker space to design and manufacture a small pop-up space that is easy to transport. Work with local music stores to purchase a range of instruments for use and test the concept in Kiener Plaza, along Washington Avenue near the National Blues Museum, in Laclede's Landing and later, near the new MLS Stadium.

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**> CREATE REGULAR "OPEN STREET" EVENTS:** Streets are an opportunity to create more open space and more programming. Host "open street" events where the street is temporarily closed to make space for programming, food trucks and other activities. Choose different locations Downtown at different times of the week to support a range of businesses. Take advantage of temporary street closures by coordinating open street events on 20th Street with MLS game days once the stadium is complete.

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There is very little choice in the types of housing available Downtown which is comprised almost entirely of lofts and apartments.

## 03 INVEST IN HOUSING AND GROW THE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

Downtown has grown over the past 2 decades due to the creative financing for adaptive reuse of older, historic buildings. Many of what were once empty structures are now lofts serving the Downtown population of just over 11,000 residents. Occupancy is high but there are limited buildings suitable for conversion to lofts – a reflection of how much has changed Downtown. For Downtown to continue to grow as a neighborhood, new housing construction is needed. Ballpark Village is the first development in over a decade to bring new apartments (and not just historic lofts) to Downtown.

Analysis and engagement with residents and developers indicate a series of issues that need to be addressed. The majority of the housing is currently priced on the upper end of the market with 18% reserved for those with incomes below 60% of the area median income. There is very little, if any, housing available for middle-income residents and households. The current housing environment is extremely narrow, consisting of either a “loft” or a high-rise apartment, with very little diversity in terms of size or design. Results from the last open house indicated that “new housing development” and “diversifying Downtown housing options” to include

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townhomes, micro-units, co-living and other models, ranked as the 1st and 5th choice among all strategies. These other models of housing can help to provide a base of naturally affordable housing for residents. During the **Design Downtown STL** process, the importance of more housing for a variety of household types with a greater range of incomes was consistently stressed.

To address these trends, there are a few intertwined actions that need to be pursued quickly.

**> PUSH FORWARD TO REHABILITATE REMAINING MAJOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS:** With all of the lofts created in the past decades, there remains a few major structures that are currently empty. Railway Exchange, Jefferson Arms, the Chemical Building and the Butler Building represent a significant amount of unused space that could become additional Downtown lofts. At the time of this plan, there is a redevelopment proposal on the table for Jefferson Arms. Railway Exchange needs to be stabilized and requires significant fundraising for a full renovation that could include a mix of commercial space and housing.

**> CAPITALIZE A DOWNTOWN HOUSING FUND TO FILL THE FINANCING GAP FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION:** Financing remains a significant challenge due in part to high land costs, but largely to the cost of construction when compared to the rental



## 04 ADDRESS CRIME, PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND STRENGTHEN THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY

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and sales rates. To create new housing at a range of price points, financial resources are essential to help close the financing gap. Bring together SLDC, local and national financial institutions, major Downtown employers, and philanthropic organizations to create a Downtown housing fund or loan pool. The fund or loan pool would bring together public and private dollars to help fill financing gaps, leverage other funding sources like New Market Tax Credits and leverage the use of funds that typically go underutilized like 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credits.

> **ESTABLISH A GOAL OF 25% OF HOUSING UNITS PRICED BELOW MARKET RATES:** *Design Downtown STL* recommends that 25% of all housing Downtown be available at prices for those making below 120% of the area median income (AMI). To help achieve the goals of maintaining housing for a wide range of residents, tie local incentives toward this goal.

For the Downtown neighborhood to thrive, concerns expressed by residents about crime and the feeling of safety must be addressed. A reduction in cruising, robbery and vandalism is essential to building confidence in the Downtown neighborhood. But to address the perception of safety Downtown, efforts are needed by the CID, the City of St. Louis and local partners to remedy issues with trash, potholes, poor sidewalks, and poor lighting. Focusing on these maintenance issues and working to address the recent spike in Downtown crime along with other aspects of this plan focused on programming, events and the arts, will attract more residents and visitors which, in turn, improves the feeling of safety in Downtown.

The most successful downtowns are shaped not just by a downtown organization but by the actions of their many residents who roll up their sleeves and pitch in to make the neighborhood a better place to live. To address quality of life concerns and crime *Design Downtown STL* needs active civic participation from Downtown residents to bring the vision to reality.

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“Think of ways to make Downtown feel more welcoming to people of various ethnic backgrounds. Also celebrate the history and heritage of diversity in Downtown St. Louis.”

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> **BRING BACK AN AMBASSADOR PROGRAM:** Bring back “Ambassadors” to make the efforts to create a safer Downtown more visible to everyone. Ambassadors provide valuable services to residents and visitors alike. These individuals would wear highly visible uniforms and be visible in Downtown on foot or by bike. Ambassadors would be unarmed, trained in de-escalation and anti-bias practices, and equipped with radios to report safety and security concerns to the police if a situation they encounter escalates.

> **CREATE DOWNTOWN TASK FORCES TO ENSURE DIVERSE REPRESENTATION THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION:** *Design Downtown STL* was built upon a wide-ranging engagement process to help identify partners for the future of Downtown. Though the planning process may be complete, there is a need for engagement more than ever. Create a task force of between 10-15 people for each goal in this plan to drive implementation activities. The task forces must reflect the diversity in backgrounds and race of Downtown residents and stakeholders.

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> **OFFER MINI-GRANTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL RESIDENTS TAKING ACTION:** An incentive for residents to work toward a better Downtown is to offer a competitive mini-grant for any idea and action that helps to implement one of the strategies in *Design Downtown STL*. Residents with winning project ideas could receive micro-grants for implementation.

> **PROGRAM INTENTIONALLY FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION:** As activities grow and expand, it is essential that programming is intentionally inclusive, appealing and welcoming to individuals and families of all backgrounds. Ensure that diverse perspectives go into the planning and selection of activities, that programs have universal appeal and do not skew consistently towards one demographic, that participation and enjoyment of activities requires little to no cost, and that diverse local vendors and performers are hired wherever possible.

## 05 CONNECT TO THE RIVER

St. Louis was first established in Downtown due to its relationship with the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and grew to become a major port and hub of economic activity. Though the Mississippi River continued to drive economic activity, persistent issues with flooding led to the development of flood walls to protect against rising waters. Today, these walls disconnect the City from the very amenity responsible for its early growth. Relatively recent renovations at the Gateway Arch grounds now provides a seamless connection from Downtown to the Arch and the River with space maintained by the Gateway Arch Park Foundation.

Laclede's Landing, offers the other primary location to see and connect to the water. Laclede's Landing has long served as a destination and entertainment district but the area has struggled in the past decade. As noted by many stakeholders, issues with crime and empty buildings take away from its draw as a destination. Laclede's Landing needs more activity to support the businesses and residents that call the Landing home and represents one of the best opportunities to connect Downtown with the River.

### > TRANSITION SURFACE PARKING LOTS TO NEW DEVELOPMENT:

According to the recent Downtown Parking Study led by SLDC, the existing surface parking lots in Laclede's Landing are not operating near full capacity and should be targeted for new housing and mixed-use

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development. Public and private leaders must come together around land acquisition, financing for new development and a district approach to parking.

> **COORDINATE WITH RIVERFRONT PROPERTY OWNERS TO CREATE WATERFRONT PARK:** Implement the GRG open space plan for Laclede's Landing through close partnership with nearby developers, property owners, Laclede's Landing businesses and Lumiere Place.

> **IMPROVE WASHINGTON AVE. UNDERPASS TO LACLEDE'S LANDING:** Much has been done over the years to untangle this challenging and unwelcoming intersection of streets and highway on-ramps below the highway. Building on that foundation, integrate public art and lighting to ensure safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle connections to and from Laclede's Landing that are clearly marked.

> **CONSIDER STREET CLOSURES:** Help address concerns around cruising and elevate the experience of the Landing by temporarily closing streets east of Commercial Street. Consider permanent closings where possible to improve pedestrian access to the River.

> **COORDINATE AND EXPAND RIVERFRONT PROGRAMMING:** Work with the Gateway Arch Park Foundation to coordinate and expand programming and events across the Arch Park, Kiener Plaza and Laclede's Landing.

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Downtown is a place with very specific needs and opportunities.

Compared to other parts of the City, Downtown lacks adequate tree canopy cover, especially outside of city parks.

## 06 CREATE A GREENER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE DOWNTOWN

Downtown offers 11.5 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, far short of the 20 acres recommended by the National Parks and Recreation Association. Most of this space is comprised of the Gateway Mall which feels remote for many Downtown residents. Many residents expressed a need for both more green space and an improved Mall. Coupled with these challenges are stormwater issues and a lack of trees that raises the heat index in Downtown.

Trees, in particular, can be a powerful amenity that drives residential growth and economic development in downtowns. Implementing a tree planting campaign within the Downtown study area will expand the City's urban canopy, help reduce the impact of urban heat island effect, filter pollution, dampen the noise of city streets, and create a more attractive and welcoming location to live and work. This includes replacing the trees that have been lost on key Downtown streets and planting trees in new and upgraded parks, along key streets and at Downtown gateways. To do this right, there must be resources to not only plant trees, but also to maintain them.

**> COORDINATE PLANTING GUIDELINES:** Support the evolution of a diverse and healthy urban canopy with guidelines that include species lists to allow for genetic diversity within the canopy while being tuned to current and potential future climate and soil conditions in Downtown. Work with the City's Forestry Division to assist in the evaluation of tree health and life expectancy in order to promote planting of trees timed to replace aging trees and build a Downtown canopy.

**> PILOT A TREE NURSERY INSTALLATION ON 2 KEY LOTS:** There is unused space on both publicly- and privately-owned

property Downtown particularly close to rail lines and highways. Seek a collaboration with a university design studio that evaluates all potential usable space for tree plantings in Downtown.

**> ESTABLISH A VOLUNTEER CORP TO PLANT AND MAINTAIN**

**TREES:** Improperly planted trees or those that are poorly maintained will not flourish. Maintenance is critically important to ensure a healthy tree canopy. Organizations exist to train and monitor volunteers to assist in this effort. Downtown residents, businesses and other stakeholders can volunteer where they live and work with the assistance of a volunteer leader at Downtown STL, Inc.

**> ACTIVATE CIVIC COMMONS WITH RECREATION SPACES AND GREEN**

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** The Gateway Mall has been the subject of a previous study recognizing that it largely has not lived up to its potential. More recent investments in Kiener Plaza, Soldiers Memorial, and Citygarden have demonstrated what a great destination the Gateway Mall can be. As a front door for the City for visitors, it is also a potential amenity for residents if programmed differently. In concert with the Brickline Greenway, the central part of the Gateway Mall referred to as the "civic commons" in this document should be designed to support more active programming including temporary events, games and sports.

**> REDESIGN ALOE PLAZA:** Aloe Plaza, or the westernmost edge of the Gateway Mall, presents a singular opportunity - to serve as the linchpin that connects the attractions at Union Station with a new MLS stadium. The plaza needs to be designed to not only enhance game day events but serve as a day-to-day amenity for all Downtown residents and workers.



## 07 REIMAGINE DOWNTOWN STREETS

The streets in Downtown St. Louis are **wide**. Some streetscape improvements have been made along segments of Washington Avenue for instance, but most of the streets have more space than is needed to support cars in Downtown. This extra width presents a great opportunity for Downtown. Non-critical driving lanes can be re-allocated to expand space for people, non-motorized vehicles, landscaping, and trees that will contribute to the vibrancy of Downtown. This space also creates opportunities for creative use and flexibility of curbside space to support rideshare pick-up and last-mile delivery zones supporting Downtown businesses.

**“Downtown’s walkability is its main asset.”** This idea was echoed by many throughout the public engagement process. Many believe that the negative perceptions of Downtown come from how the streets look and feel. The Downtown Transportation Plan (approved by the City in 2018) was designed to improve multimodal connections Downtown and address many of these challenges. **Design Downtown STL** provides recommendations for every street in Downtown with an emphasis on creating a network of boulevards to elevate some of the most visible and important Downtown streets and gateways. Oversized streets present an opportunity to build a connected network of linear parks where central medians and sidewalks can be extended to function as both parks and transportation or all.

An investment in the hardscape of Downtown including its streets and infrastructure is critical but difficult to do all at once. Budget limitations, competing ideas for available grants and the need for private investment and support often slow the pace of physical improvements. There are a few initial capital projects that have the potential to help transform Downtown including:

> **COORDINATE WITH BRICKLINE GREENWAY TO CREATE MARKET-CHESTNUT LOOP:** Great Rivers Greenway has identified multiple opportunities to create a greenway through Downtown to connect with neighborhoods to the north and south. The current alignment Downtown is along Market Street and 20th Street. Consider working with local institutions and employers to augment the Brickline Greenway with a Gateway Mall “health loop” by clearly marking Chestnut and Market Streets as a continuous 2-mile walking and recreational path.

> **REDESIGN TUCKER BOULEVARD:** Tucker Boulevard represents the location that generated the most comments from the public during this process. Tucker Boulevard already includes a fully designed 2-way cycle track which needs matching dollars to implement. **Design Downtown STL** proposes building on this initial design, while also including a wide median and other amenities deemed important by the public.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc on Downtown businesses. A first step is to understand which businesses are in fact returning and at what capacity.

## MOVING FORWARD: THE FIRST 100 DAYS

This planning process was nearing completion when Covid-19 came to the United States. This pandemic continues to change Downtown and St. Louis - at once creating unforeseen setbacks and hardships as well as powerful expressions of community members working to support one another. Businesses have closed, thousands of St. Louisans lost their jobs temporarily or for much longer, and the distancing measures are affecting the very fabric of our community. St. Louis elected officials, Downtown advocates and partners, and local businesses, residents, and service providers are in crisis-response mode, tending to immediate needs.

The coronavirus pandemic and the following community protests against systemic racism and the taking of Black lives underscores the importance of the values of **Design Downtown STL**: a healthy urban environment, physical and social connectivity, a strong local economy, and an equitable approach that serves all community members. Our streets, sidewalks and local parks have become our only source of refuge, yet many are lacking critical and safe walkable connections. These spaces are particularly important for residents in and around Downtown, who often lack private outdoor space.

Closures have exposed the fragility of our small businesses; the losses experienced directly by employers and employees are also felt by patrons who rely on these local goods and services and municipal governments as tax bases shrink. Local supply chains,

manufacturers, makers and producers are more important than ever, and our community is rallying behind small businesses. Cities that invest in their small businesses will be well-positioned in the recovery process; 67% of net new jobs after the Great Recession were created by small businesses. While St. Louis's top-notch medical professionals work non-stop to keep people healthy, we will do everything we can to support the health of our local businesses as they adapt to a new "business as usual."

The strategies outlined in this document are tailored to reinforce and grow the things that make Downtown unique - the people, places, and spaces that will bring us together again, in time. Sustained efforts to implement *Design Downtown STL* will yield a healthier, greener, more resilient and more equitable Downtown. Should additional stimulus or other such funds become available, the ideas in this document will guide investment strategically and position St. Louis to respond to these opportunities quickly. *Design Downtown STL* has done the homework and we are well positioned to take action together.

In this context, it is critical to transition from planning to implementation. There are strategies contained in *Design Downtown STL* targeted toward recovery that must chart the course of the first hundred days of implementation activity after plan adoption. These initial actions include:

> **ESTABLISH A CLEAR BASELINE:** A first step is to understand at what capacity businesses are returning.. The benefit is that *Design Downtown STL* collected detailed data less than one year ago which can serve as a starting point. Update and share this data to understand where we are starting in the recovery and what kinds of spaces are available for new businesses.

> **MAP OUT RECOVERY ACTIVITIES:** Develop a block by block plan for recovery focused on the needs of the businesses that remain and are returning. Match investment and support to the specific needs in different locations across Downtown.

> **PROVIDE DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO BUSINESSES:** Downtown STL, Inc., SLDC, the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, and other local partners should continue to develop low and no interest loans for businesses, work with banks to address financing gaps for minority businesses, establish a small business navigator desk and provide assistance to Downtown retail and food businesses in transitioning to online sales and services. This is an ideal time to plan for events that drive customers to businesses and work towards creating a fund to support legacy businesses in Downtown.

> **ORGANIZE TO MANAGE IMPLEMENTATION:** Downtown STL, Inc. and Arch to Park will play key roles in driving investment. Form key partnerships and expand capacity to take on specific actions including programming and supporting local businesses. Organize the Task Forces of local stakeholders to oversee activities in each goal of *Design Downtown STL*. Work to create a mini-grant program for Downtown residents to take action.

> **CONTINUE TO ADDRESS THE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS AROUND CRIME:** Frustrations around crime are dominating current conversations about Downtown. The proposal to bring back Ambassadors and improve Downtown lighting will make a substantial difference. In the meantime, close streets where necessary to better manage access and bring together partners to program and bring more positive activities to Downtown.

> **BEGIN TESTING NEW PROGRAMMING:** Develop a short-list of new activities and design and install them in different locations Downtown. Focus on music and other activities that offer new ways to experience Downtown. Coordinate closely with the Gateway Arch Park Foundation, Great Rivers Greenway and America's Center. Implement the InSITE 2020 public art initiative slated for Spring but postponed due to COVID-19.

> **WORK TO UPDATE DOWNTOWN ZONING:** Work with the City to refine and translate the concepts in *Design Downtown STL* to establish clear rules around allowable uses and development expectations.

> **SUPPORT EXISTING INVESTMENTS:** Help to push forward major projects already in planning and development including the MLS Stadium, Ballpark Village, development in Laclede's Landing and the Downtown Innovation District north of Washington and, the rehabilitation of major structures like Jefferson Arms. Keep working to secure Railway Exchange and support current grant applications to redesign Tucker Boulevard and 7th Street.

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The strategies outlined in this document are tailored to reinforce and grow the things that make Downtown unique - the people, places, and spaces that will bring us together again.