

DOWNTOWN

AKRON

VISION + REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

MARCH 12, 2018
AKRON, OHIO



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

STEERING COMMITTEE

Dan Horrigan

Mayor, City of Akron

Steve Abdenour

Vice President Operations,
Cleveland Clinic Akron General

Sarah Benn

Performing Artist, Shivering Timbers

Nicholas Browning

President-Akron Region, Huntington
Bank

Chris Burnham

President, Development Finance
Authority of Summit County

Robert DeJournet

Director Community Relations &
Diversity, Summa Health

Jason Dodson

Chief of Staff County Executive, County
of Summit

Richard Enty

Executive Director, METRO RTA

Jennifer Fox

VP Director of Client & Community
Relations, PNC Bank

John Garafalo

Vice President Community Investment,
Akron Community Foundation

Suzie Graham

President & CEO, Downtown Akron
Partnership

David James

Superintendent, Akron Public Schools

Halle Jones Capers

Sr. VP of Operations and Manager of
Transportation, G. Stephens Inc.

Patrick Kelly

Director of Economic Development,
FirstEnergy Utilities, FirstEnergy

Cory Kendrick

Director of Population Health, Summit
County Public Health

Kyle Kutuchief

Akron Program Director, John S. &
James L. Knight Foundation

Dave Lieberth

Principal, Lieberth Consulting Group

Christine Mayer

President, GAR Foundation

Annie McFadden

Deputy Chief of Staff, City of Akron

Marc Merklin

Managing Partner, Brouse McDowell

Gregg Mervis

President & CEO, Akron-Summit
Convention & Visitors Bureau

Brian Moore

Partner, Roetzel & Andress

Nicole Mullet

Executive Director, ArtsNow

Dick Norton

Greater Akron Chamber

Tony O'Leary

Executive Director, Akron Metropolitan
Housing Authority

Howard Parr

Executive Director, Akron Civic Theatre

Ryan Pritt

Co-Founder, Pritt Entertainment Group

Dan Rice

President & CEO, Ohio & Erie Canalway
Coalition

Gary Rickel

Vice President, CB Richard Ellis

Scott Riley

Akron RubberDucks

Heather Roszczyk

Akron Entrepreneurship Fellow, Fund
for Our Economic Future

Jason Segedy

Director of Planning & Urban
Development, City of Akron

Margo Sommerville

Vice President, Akron City Council

Don Taylor

Welty Building Company

Joel Testa

President, Testa Companies

Tony Troppe

Principal, Everett Group

Srini Venkatesh

Chief Science Officer, VP of Science &
Technology, GOJO Industries

Julie Wesel

CEO, Chemstress Consultant Company

Frank Williams, President, Akron

Fraternal Order of Police

Matthew Wilson

President, University of Akron

Katie Wright

Director, Cuyahoga Valley
Environmental Education Center

Tim Ziga

Associate General Counsel, Akron
Children's Hospital

DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP (DAP)

Suzie Graham
President & CEO

Kimberly Beckett
Director of Business Relations

Kelli Fetter
Director of Engagement and Events

Sharon Gillberg
Communications Director

PLANNING TEAM

MKSK

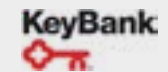
Chris Hermann, Principal
Andrew Overbeck, Principal
Luis Huber-Calvo, Planner
Tyler Clark, Planner
Haoran Wang, Designer

Development Strategies

Matt Wetli, Principal
Brian Licari, Associate
Megan Hinrichsen, Marketing Director

This plan was endorsed by Akron City Council on Monday, March 12, 2018.

THE DOWNTOWN AKRON VISION & REDEVELOPMENT PLAN IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY:





THE PRESENTED ROADMAP HAS MANY APPEALING ELEMENTS. IT'S ENERGIZING, AS A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL, TO SEE THIS TYPE OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT"

- PUBLIC MEETING 3 ATTENDEE



CONTENTS

ES	Executive Summary	PAGE 06
1	SECTION 1 Introduction	PAGE 08
2	SECTION 2 Existing Conditions	PAGE 36
3	SECTION 3 Market Analysis and Strategy	PAGE 58
4	SECTION 4 Focus Areas	PAGE 88
5	SECTION 5 Implementation	PAGE 114

WHAT WE HEARD

42
STEERING COMMITTEE
MEMBERS

150
STAKEHOLDERS
INTERVIEWED

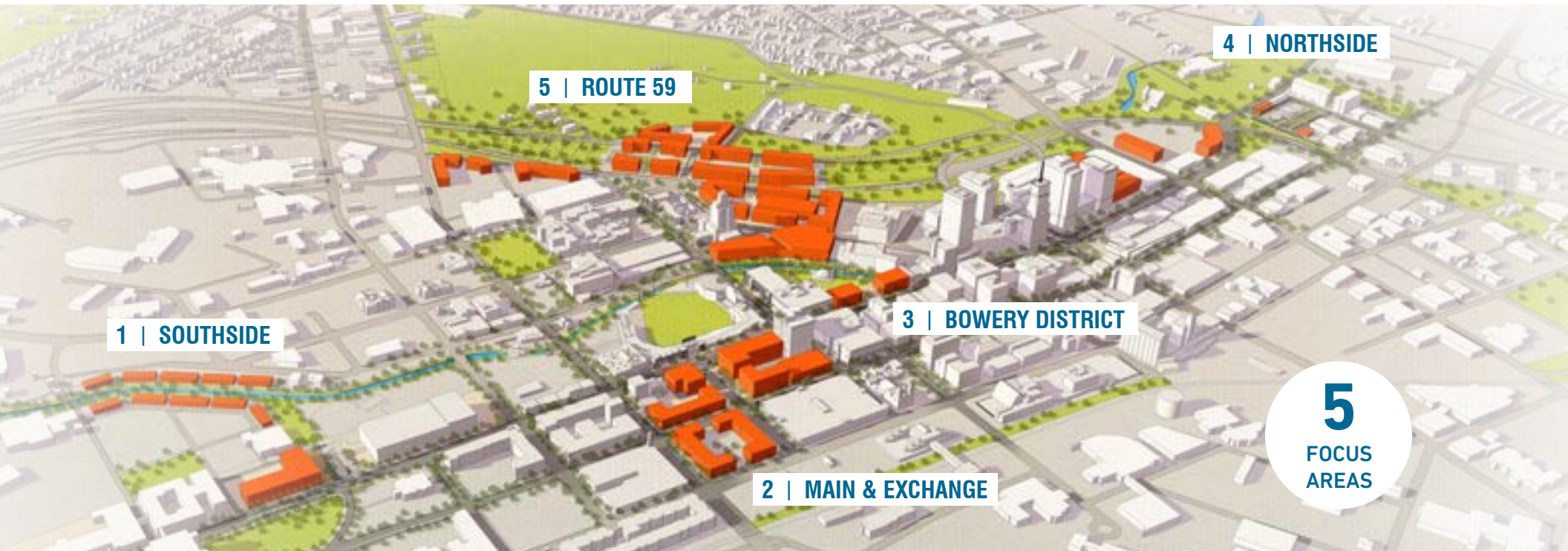
1,800
WEBSITE
VISITS

200
SURVEY
RESPONSES

505
PUBLIC MEETING
ATTENDEES

592
TOTAL COMMENTS
RECEIVED

58
WARD MEETING
ATTENDEES



1 | SOUTHSIDE

2 | MAIN & EXCHANGE

3 | BOWERY DISTRICT

4 | NORTHSIDE

5 | ROUTE 59



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BUILDING MOMENTUM

The Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan sets a 10-year action plan for the continued improvement of the city's urban core. Over the past 18 months, the planning team has worked with the City of Akron, Downtown Akron Partnership, and a Steering Committee to develop a shared vision for the future of downtown. Community input was critical to this vision. Through stakeholder interviews, three public meetings, ward meetings, online surveys, and a project website, nearly 600 individual comments and ideas were generated that shaped the planning process and helped to set priorities. This outreach revealed that Akronites want a downtown that is vibrant with more things to do; livable with neighborhoods for everyone; connected with better mobility; and proactive in reaching goals.

Momentum is already abundant in downtown Akron. Private and institutional investment is slated to take place with building expansions and renovations. Residential housing units and hotel rooms are in the pipeline. Streetscape and placemaking projects that will enliven and better connect downtown are in the final design and implementation phases. The city is investing in major above and below ground infrastructure that will change the face of the downtown. This plan seeks to both harness community energy and passion and leverage existing and planned investment to advance downtown Akron.

IT STARTS WITH MAIN STREET

Downtown already attracts millions of visitors a year to visit destinations such as the Akron Art Museum, Canal Park, the Towpath Trail, and the John S. Knight Center. The University of Akron, the City of Akron, and County of Summit draw students, employees and visitors to downtown. What is missing in downtown is the 24/7 activity that comes with a diverse mix of residents, employees, students and visitors. The market study conducted as part of this Plan identified the demand for 1,500 residential units and 500 to 600 hotel rooms over the next ten years in downtown Akron. Coupled with a continued focus from the City on developing a culture of entrepreneurship to create new jobs and attract talent, downtown Akron is well positioned for revitalization.

To illustrate the potential of downtown Akron, the planning team worked with the community to develop five focus areas that, when taken together, will help to reinvigorate downtown. From Canal Place at Southside to the decommissioning of Route 59, each focus area leverages a key asset to create a mixed-use node of activity. Perhaps the most important component of the plan is the emphasis on improving Main Street. Main Street is not only the primary commercial corridor of the city, it is the common thread that links each of the five focus areas together. The Main Street edge of each focus area is prioritized for initial investment. With a strong, cohesive and activated Main Street in place, redevelopment opportunities will begin to radiate to other parts of downtown.

A COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation will require additional partnerships, incentives, policy changes, and public sector improvements to enable and guide private sector investment. More detailed planning, design and community conversation will be needed to achieve each focus area plan. As downtown continues to evolve, the plan is designed to be flexible to take advantage of changing circumstances and opportunities. Facilitating the successful phasing and implementation of this plan will require dedicated time, attention and resources going forward. The City of Akron and Downtown Akron Partnership have committed to working together to increase capacity and funding and to identify a lead entity that will have a singular focus on revitalizing downtown Akron. This organization, which will act as the lead facilitator in implementing this plan, follows a model that has proven to be effective in the resurgence of urban cores across the Midwest.

The Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan has already made progress advancing downtown Akron. First, it has pulled the community together and built consensus for moving forward. Second, it has created a broad framework for various efforts to work together around a common vision. Third, it has established specific recommendations for where to focus energy and attention. Finally, it has generated excitement and support for making downtown Akron better for everyone. Now is the time for action.



SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Downtown Akron, like many downtown areas in the region, is experiencing a resurgence in activity and investment. New investment in streetscapes, public realm enhancements, and infrastructure improvements are under construction or being planned. Institutions are investing in new buildings and renovations. Residential and hospitality investment is in the planning stages. With this renewed focus on downtown, now is the time to plan for the future.

Prior downtown investments put an emphasis on developing cultural and entertainment attractions. As a result, downtown Akron draws millions of people a year downtown to take in ballgames at Canal Park, attend shows at Lock 3 and the Civic Theatre, visit the Akron Art Museum, attend conventions or meetings at the Knight Center, and take advantage of the Akron-Summit County Public Library. As this plan looks to the next ten years of development and redevelopment in downtown Akron, the opportunity now is how to leverage existing assets, new investments and market interest to create a more livable and enticing downtown. Doing so will not just bring visitors downtown, but it will also create an urban environment that is conducive to attracting additional residents and jobs.

In the following sections, the downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan creates a framework for focused investment in downtown:

1. Introduction

This section reviews the public planning process that formed the backbone of the Vision and Redevelopment Plan. It summarizes the input that the planning team received from the Steering Committee, stakeholders, and the community. This effort resulted in a cohesive vision for the future of downtown Akron and 10 Planning Principles to follow as investment and additional planning occur.

2. Existing Conditions

This section documents the physical and regulatory conditions that shape the present and future of downtown Akron. From transportation and connections to zoning and land use to employment centers and parks and public space, these building blocks of the city are examined to understand both opportunities and constraints.

3. Market Analysis and Strategy

This section blends together an understanding of both existing market conditions and the changing forces and trends that are reshaping urban areas across the region and the nation. For the Vision and Redevelopment Plan, the planning team took a detailed look at the housing market. By studying existing supply and demand and projected changes in the marketplace, the planning team arrived at the amount of housing units (both for-sale and rental) that could be supported over the next 10 years. Additionally, the planning team conducted a market scan for hospitality and business development.

4. Focus Areas

Five Focus Areas were identified through this planning process. Shaped by the public input, existing conditions analysis and the market study, the planning team developed concepts for each Focus Area that details opportunities, necessary improvements and catalytic projects. While they will need to be implemented over time, each Focus Area plan identifies early action items that will be the most impactful.

5. Implementation

This section provides a framework for the implementation of the Redevelopment and Vision Plan. The strategic recommendations, project phasing, additional organizational capacity and planning partners needed to implement the plan are outlined and explained.

INTRODUCTION

DOWNTOWN MOMENTUM

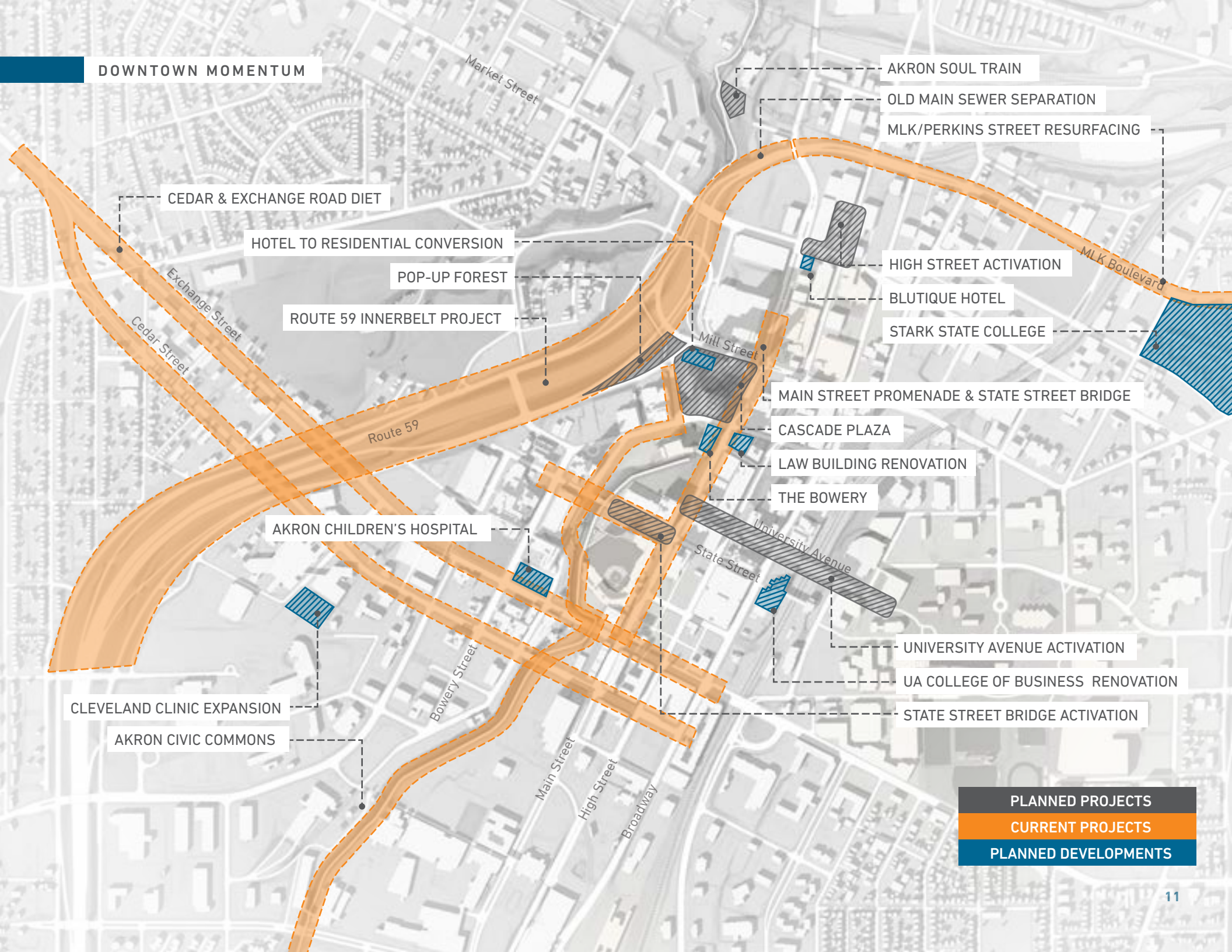
Downtown Akron is currently undergoing significant investment through various public and private projects that have the potential to be transformative. These projects, shown on the map on the following page, span much of downtown, but are concentrated along the stretch of Main Street between Exchange Street and Market Street.

The largest project by land area is the Innerbelt Project, which has removed a portion of Route 59 and created new development sites in the process. On Main Street, a TIGER Grant is funding a streetscape improvement project that will add enhanced sidewalks, a cycletrack, a new State Street bridge, and a roundabout at Mill Street. Other current street projects include the one-way to two-way conversions of Cedar and Exchange Streets, which will also add a new east-west bike connection through the addition of bike lanes. Improvements to the Towpath Trail are planned through the Akron Civic Commons Project, which will enhance gateways and improve trail connections. Also planned and scattered through downtown are temporary activation projects that will add pop-up activation to portions of State Street, Main Street, and High Street.

Private development downtown is planned around Lock 3 through The Bowery, which will result in the adaptive-reuse of buildings along Lock 4 and Main Street, and a more activated Lock 3. Other planned projects include the Law Building renovation, a hotel-to-residential conversion at Cascade Plaza, and expansions to Cleveland Clinic Akron General and Akron Children's Hospital.



DOWNTOWN MOMENTUM



AKRON SOUL TRAIN

OLD MAIN SEWER SEPARATION

MLK/PERKINS STREET RESURFACING

CEDAR & EXCHANGE ROAD DIET

HOTEL TO RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION

POP-UP FOREST

ROUTE 59 INNERBELT PROJECT

HIGH STREET ACTIVATION

BLUTIQUE HOTEL

STARK STATE COLLEGE

Exchange Street

Cedar Street

Route 59

Mill Street

MAIN STREET PROMENADE & STATE STREET BRIDGE

CASCADE PLAZA

LAW BUILDING RENOVATION

THE BOWERY

AKRON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

State Street

University Avenue

UNIVERSITY AVENUE ACTIVATION

UA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS RENOVATION

STATE STREET BRIDGE ACTIVATION

CLEVELAND CLINIC EXPANSION

AKRON CIVIC COMMONS

Bowery Street

Main Street

High Street

Broadway

PLANNED PROJECTS

CURRENT PROJECTS

PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS

INTRODUCTION

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Prior to this planning process, other planning efforts have sought to capitalize on downtown's strengths and identified opportunities. Listed below are other planning efforts studied by the planning team as research into Akron's existing conditions. A list of key findings for selected plans are shown on the following page and listed below. Plans to study in detail were chosen through discussions with stakeholders and other downtown experts engaged through this process,

2016 - Blue Ribbon Task Force Final Report and Recommendations

2016 - 62.4 Report: Profile On Urban Health and Competitiveness

2015 - Akron Northside Connections Study

2015 - Akron Downtown Connectivity Study

2015 - Health in All Policies- Community Engagement Plan

2015 - Summit County Community Health Improvement Plan Update

2014 - Retail Market Analysis for Downtown Akron

2014 - Arts and Culture Assessment for Summit County

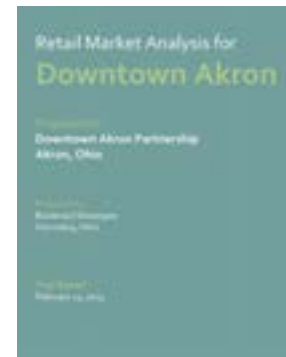
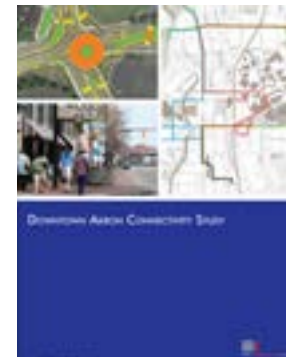
2012 - Analysis of Potential Rental Housing Development

2012 - Proposed Mayflower Hotel Market Study

2011 - Connecting Communities

2011 - UPA Akron Core City Vision Plan

2000 - Imagine Akron 2025



PREVIOUS PLANNING: KEY TAKEAWAYS

Blue Ribbon Task Force:

Cultivate an open, inclusive and transparent culture within the government of the City.

Reach out to the growing millennial demographic.

Maintain relationships with Business Community and Leadership.

Retail Study:

Found a total of 305,000 SF of retail space, of which 190,000 SF is occupied and 115,000 SF is vacant.

Create a retail brand for downtown Akron that is unique and reflective of Akron's heritage.

62.4 Report: Profile on Urban Health and Competitiveness

Develop, attract, and retain local leadership.

Increase coordination to maximize the benefits of public and private investments.

Focus on downtown and the City of Akron as the key sites for regional economic development.

Northside Connections Study



2012 Housing Study:

Found a total of 302 rental units in the downtown area, with a potential for 1,200 new units supported by the market.

Northside Connections Study:

Create an at-grade crossing for pedestrian and bicycle traffic over the railroad tracks.

Downtown Connectivity Study:

The Downtown pedestrian streetscape has significant portions that are unpleasant to walk along, including many segments of Main, Market, and Exchange Streets.

Redesign downtown streets to incorporate Complete Streets Principles.

INTRODUCTION

PHASE 1: SETTING THE COURSE

In the summer of 2016, prior to engaging the greater Akron community, the planning team met with more than 150 stakeholders representing a wide spectrum of Akron's business, arts, education and transportation sectors. The stakeholders, whose selection was coordinated by DAP staff, met with the planning team over two days of roundtable discussions centered around specific topics, such as Hospitality, Retail and Restaurants, and Young Professionals. A full list of stakeholders, their affiliations at the time of the interview, and the roundtable session that was attended is shown on the following page. The feedback gathered through these sessions was a comprehensive and all-encompassing introduction to Akronites' vision for downtown. The following pages summarize their comments, thoughts, and ideas in 12 categories, due to the significant overlap in themes emerging after these discussions.

From this feedback, the planning team developed initial design ideas for portions of downtown, and drafted 10 Planning Principles, listed at the end of this chapter, that set a course of action for Phase 2 of this process.



LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED BY PLANNING TEAM

Existing Plans & Studies

Gary Rickel (CBRE)
Tonya Block (Summit Co. Public Health)
Donae Ceja (Tactical & Practical LLC)
Phil Steinberg (Braun & Steidl)
Donna Skoda (Summit Co. Public Health)
Curtis Baker (AMATS)
Dave Lieberth (Lieberth Consulting)
Stephanie York (Cleveland Clinic Akron General)
Tonia Burford (Summit Co. Public Health)

Retail & Restaurants

Jeremiah Sonntag (Nuevo)
Mike Buzek (The Culinary Chameleon)
Mary Hospodarsky (Sweet Mary's)
Joel Testa (Testa Companies)
Carol Magazzeni (Hallrich)
Pam Mihalik (Brubaker's Pub)
Jennifer Fox (PNC)
Mark Graziani (Street Treats)
Gregg Mervis (Akron/Summit CVB)
Janet Morrison (Goodwill)
Nan McClenaghan (Goodwill)
Julie Pryseski (City of Akron)
John Weakland (Subway)

Tourism/Conventions

Pat Daickman (Akron Zoo)
Brittany Wigman (Akron Summit CVB)
Chris Griffith (City of Akron)
Lisa King (Summit Metro Parks)
Kelli Fetter (DAP)
Mary Tricaso (Akron Summit CVB)
Dan Rice (Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition)
Joe Mazur (Soap Box Derby)
Dave Lieberth (Lieberth Consulting)
Gregg Mervis (Akron Summit CVB)
Anne Bitong (Akron Marathon)

Transit

Lin Gentil (Akron Children's Hospital)
Frank Williams (FOP)
Curtis Baker (City of Akron)
Andy Davis (University of Akron)
Andrew Chermak (Cardinal Parking)
Logan Jennings (JRP Solutions Valet)
Gary Arman (City of Akron)
Dave Gasper (City of Akron)
Richard Enty (METRO RTA)

Arts/Culture

Bharat Adhia (Chemstress)
Heather Roszczyk (Akron Symphony)
Albert Macso (Akron Coffee Roasters)
Joanne Green (Summit ArtSpace)
Gregg Mervis (Akron Summit CVB)
Theron Brown (Rubber City Jazz and Blues Festival)
Jaron LeGrair
Christine Mayer (GAR)
Nicole Mullet (ArtsNow)
Kurtiss Hare (Nighlight Cinema)
Kelli Fetter (DAP)
Mary Jo Alexander (Actors Summit Theater)

Young Professionals

Srini Venkatesh (GOJO)
Cassie LaRosa (Testa Companies)
Allyson Boyd (Mobile Meals)
Pete Nischt (Summit Democratic Party)
Jaclyn Flossie (DAP Emerging Leaders)
Frank Williams (FOP)
Annie McFadden (City of Akron)
Kaley Foster (Urban Buzz)
Dina Younis (GAR)
Bronlynn Thurman (Knight + GAR)

City/County Departments

Catey Breck Colon (US Rep. Tim Ryan)
Heather Pierce (Summit Co. Public Health)
David Jennings (Akron Library)
Annie McFadden (City of Akron)
James Nice (City)
Jason Dodson (Summit County)
Frank Williams (FOP)
Richard Vober (Akron Fire)
Ilene Shapiro (Summit County Council)

Hospitals/Health Care

Grace Wakulchik (Akron Children's Hospital)
Benjamin Sutton (Summa Health)
Joseph Randazzo (BioInnovation Institute)
Stephanie York (Cleveland Clinic Akron General)

Developers/Real Estate

Leann Beavers (Summit Co. Public Health)
Susan Lines (CBRE)
Erin Myers (AMHA)
Tom Weise (The Schipper Group)
David Schipper (The Schipper Group)
Bharat Adia (Chemstress)
Rick Rebadow (Greater Akron Chamber)
Gary Richel (CBRE)
Dan Sarvis (Historic Arts District Management)
Katie Wright (Cuyahoga Valley Env. Ed. Center)
Paul Testa (Testa Companies)
Joel Testa (Testa Companies)
Kathy Cunningham (Cascade Plaza Associates)
Denise Armstrong (McKinley)
Beth Borda (DeHoff Development)
Frank Williams (FOP)
Dan DeHoff (DeHoff Development)
Tony Troppe (Historic Arts District Management)

Social Services

Traci Buckner (GAR)
Tony O'Leary (AMHA)
Richard Stahl (InfoLine)
Christina Hodgkinson (AMHA)
Dave Lieberth (Lieberth Consulting)
Stephanie York (Cleveland Clinic Akron General)
Sarah Benn (Local artist)
Kristy Hitesman (Summit Psychological Assoc.)
Jeff Kaiser (Haven of Rest Ministry)
Leanne Beavens (SCHD)

Philanthropy

Bronlynn Thurman (Knight Foundation and GAR Foundation)
Christine Mayer (GAR Foundation)
Nick Browning (FirstMerit Bank)

Employers

Ryan Pritt (Pritt Entertainment Group)
Marling Engle (Metisentry)
Bharat Adhia (Chemstress)
Anne Armao (SummaCare)
Brett Moses (Mota Design Group)
Joel Testa (Testa Companies)
Adele Dorfner Roth (City of Akron)
Jeff Kelbach (City of Akron)
Srini Venkatesh (GOJO)
Jeanne Gombeda (Brouse McDowell)

Education

Kristin Toth (GAR)
Katie Wright (Cuyahoga Valley Env. Ed. Center)
Derran Wimer (SEI)
James Hardy (City of Akron)
Terry Albanese (City of Akron)
John Petures (Akron Community Foundation)
Donna Barrett (Summit Co. Public Health)

Incubators/Start-ups

Katie Wright (Metis Construction)
Linda Hale (Akron Library)
Treye Johnson (Burton D. Morgan Foundation)
Dan O'Connell (SCORE)
Terry Martell (Akron Global Bus. Accelerator)
Brian Walters (SBDC)
Jim Griggy (SBDC)
Jessica Sublett (Akron Global Bus. Accelerator)
Anthony Margida (Akron Global Bus. Accelerator)
Rick Stockburger (Launch League)
Annal Vyas (University of Akron)
Jeff Hoffman (Color Jar)
Abigail Schafer (Pile Dynamics)
Terry Martell (Akron Accelerator)
Tobin Buckner (JumpStart)
Nicholas Petroski (OSC Tech Lab)
Joanna Wilson (Crafty Mart)
Ashley Young (Akron's Community Kitchen)
Cassie LaRosa (Testa Companies)

INTRODUCTION

PHASE 1: STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS



“ It is new and exciting to have a voice - there is a newfound permission to try some stuff”

Collaboration

In the past there has been a lack of collaboration and alignment, this is starting to change - there is a new sense of collaboration and openness to new ideas with the new administration.

Multiple developers are interested in working together to tackle priority development sites.

We need to know who is doing what, when, and where so that collaboration can happen.

There is a need for more collaboration among institutions.



Connections

Downtown is essentially an island cut off by highways, valleys, and railroads - to get into and out of downtown you must cross a bridge.

There are many entrances into downtown, there is no single gateway or highway access point.

The transition between downtown and the university is not seamless, though a well-executed example is the Mill Street Bridge.

There is a need for better connections to surrounding neighborhoods like Highland Square and others.



Connecting the Dots

Downtown has several disconnected nodes of activity, with no easy way to move between them.

Route 59 is a major physical barrier dividing downtown from the Northside District.

Lock 4 is a critical node, since many amenities converge at this location and it's at the geographic center of the district.

Main Street is downtown's most walkable street.

Historically, the north and south ends of downtown have operated as two separate downtowns that have not thrived at the same time.

STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS



Parking

There is no parking problem - there is a perception of a parking problem.

Parking needs to be convenient, but the focus of streets should not be on moving traffic quickly.

People who are not used to coming downtown do not know available parking options.

People are not used to walking a block or two to their destination after they park.

There is an opportunity for shared parking in downtown's south end due to entertainment uses in the evening and a large student population.



Transit

Transit is perceived as being difficult and time-consuming.

A potential solution to connect the dots is a transit option that connects major venues without people having to drive.

Most transit users downtown are employees moving through the area, not necessarily downtown workforce.

METRO RTA is currently undergoing a public process to restructure many of its routes and better serve the region.

METRO RTA added a downtown circulator to connect downtown assets and institutions.



Retail

Ground-level retail spaces are available, but generally not ready to move in and renovating a retail space from scratch is cost prohibitive for most new businesses.

There is a potential for collective marketing - no single business (except for franchised chains) can afford to move the needle on their own.

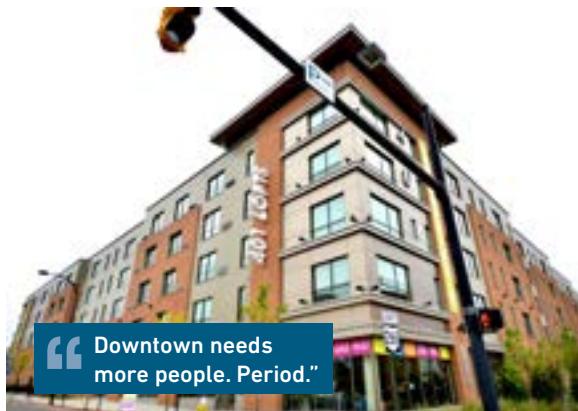
There is a strong difference between the daytime and nighttime economy.

Downtown lacks a destination retail cluster, there is nothing to bring in people before events or keep them afterwards.

Office vacancy greatly affects retail, since these customers support the daytime economy.

INTRODUCTION

PHASE 1: STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS



Housing

Downtown needs more people.

Attracting more downtown residents will improve many of downtown's issues, such as safety perception and lack of retail/restaurants.

Cleveland has proven that cities in the region can support downtown residential.

There is a need for mid-priced downtown residential that attracts young people as well as baby boomers and empty nesters.

Many who would like to live downtown end up in Highland Square or the west side - current options are student-centric.



Entertainment

Akron has great events, but it needs to get to a point where people who come to these events discover something else.

There is a need for more diversity in downtown events.

Events like "Cascade the Runway" are great and could be turned into a series.

People tend to come downtown for a specific event.

Lock 3 Park is very much programmed for families, it should also attract young professionals since they are most likely to relocate nearby.



Incentives & Financial Support

Historic tax credits are the only incentive Akron has used to bring people/businesses downtown, tax abatements have not been used.

If the city is lacking financial resources to provide incentives, then it should provide some of its land holdings.

It is expensive to run a retail business downtown due to taxes and regulations: "Everyone is making money here, except for businesses."

Some downtown restaurants have been aided by subsidized rent (for example, Sweet Mary's rent was subsidized for 6 months through a DAP program).

JEDDs had the unintended consequence of larger businesses using this tool to move out of downtown.

STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS



Parks & Trails

All previous planning efforts recognize the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail as the spine of downtown.

There needs to be a shift in thinking about how to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians - we need more bicycle infrastructure.

The Main Street Cycletrack is a good start.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park is the fifth most visited urban national park in the country, and has much better access to Akron than to Cleveland.

There is a need for more gathering spaces, especially to foster a sense of community.

Grace Park is a wonderful urban park but an underutilized amenity.



Safety

Safety is not an issue and crime statistics are low - there is the perception that downtown is unsafe.

The perception issue is mostly from suburbanites who haven't experienced downtown.

The few crimes that happen downtown are after midnight, well after most family-oriented entertainment has ended.

Street lights and better lighting would be a big help - this is partly a maintenance issue not an infrastructure one.



Streets

Main Street is downtown's most walkable street and its main pedestrian connector.

Years of additions to streetscape elements have cluttered sidewalks on Main Street.

One-way streets are confusing for drivers and encourage high speeds that are unsafe for pedestrians.

Downtown streets should not be designed with the sole purpose of moving traffic in and out of the district quickly.

Challenges to two-way conversions include Right-of-Way (ROW) acquisition and the overestimating of future traffic volumes.

INTRODUCTION

PHASE 2: PROJECT PROCESS

TASK 1

DOWNTOWN
OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

TASK 2

MARKET & PLACE-BASED
CATALYSTS

TASK 3

PLAN DOCUMENTATION &
IMPLEMENTATION

MAY - JUNE 2017

JULY - OCTOBER 2017

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2017

During **Task 1**, the planning team conducted an existing conditions analysis that looked at Akron's built environment, planned improvements, and housing market conditions. In tandem with the analysis, and in collaboration with DAP staff, a project website was launched along with other online engagement tools. The initial analysis collected through this stage of the project was presented to the community at Public Meeting 1, which was held at the Akron Civic Theatre on June 21, 2017.

The feedback gathered during Public Meeting 1 was summarized in the initial stages of **Task 2**, after which the planning team developed draft concepts for five Focus Areas in downtown. These concepts were developed in conjunction with a market analysis of Akron's housing market, hospitality market, and business development. The initial findings from this analysis informed Focus Area concepts, which were presented to the public at Public Meeting 2, held at the Akron Civic Theatre on September 19, 2017.

Following Public Meeting 2, in **Task 3** the planning team refined the five Focus Area concepts and developed illustrative renderings of how future development may take shape. The refined materials, in addition to an implementation strategy, were presented to the community in an open house format at Public Meeting 3, held at the Akron Civic Theatre on December 6, 2017. The plan was endorsed by Akron City Council through a resolution passed on Monday, March 12, 2018.

PUBLIC MEETING 1

Held at the Akron Civic Theatre on June 21, 2017, the first public meeting was attended by approximately 200 attendees. The planning team started the meeting with a presentation summarizing existing conditions and initial findings from a market analysis. The public was invited to participate in seven topic stations located at the Grand Lobby. The topic stations included:

- 1 - Draft Planning Principles
- 2 - Opportunity Areas
- 3 - Housing and Development
- 4 - Parking and Transportation
- 5 - Circulation and Connections
- 6 - Open Space, Parks, and Trails
- 7 - General Comments

At each station, the planning team set up activities and questions, such as map displays that asked meeting attendees to identify opportunity sites and pedestrian-friendly areas. Meeting attendees were also asked to write down their vision for downtown, after which they were invited to pose with their vision statement in a photobooth. The comments, vision statements, and exercise dots gathered at this meeting were compiled in several maps and key findings, summarized later in this chapter.



INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC MEETING 2

A second public meeting was held at the Akron Civic Theatre on September 19, 2017. With more than 130 attendees, the public was able to review progress to date, which included the introduction of five Focus Areas and their respective potential concepts for redevelopment. The meeting started with a presentation from the planning team reporting back on feedback gathered from Public Meeting 1 and introducing the five Focus Areas, each with draft concepts for redevelopment. Following the presentation, the public was encouraged to engage the planning team in one-on-one conversations at the Civic's Grand Lobby.

Each focus area was given a topic station, with the addition of a general comments station. Participants reviewed the draft diagrams and provided feedback on draft concepts. Participants expressed that mixed-use development should be encouraged through all of downtown, in addition to active ground-level uses and connected streets. Suggested connectivity improvements to downtown focus areas, such as Northside and Southside, were met with enthusiasm and a desire to better connect downtown destinations with each other. The feedback gathered at this meeting was used to further develop and refine the focus area concepts. These comments and feedback can be found in the Focus Area section of this report.



PUBLIC MEETING 3

The third and final public meeting took place on December 6, 2017, at the Akron Civic Theatre. Attended by more than 175 members of the community, the meeting started with a presentation by the planning team, which was followed by closing remarks by City of Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan. Following the presentation was an open house in the theater lobby, in which Akronites were able to share additional feedback and converse with the planning team.

At this meeting the planning team unveiled draft concept plans for the five downtown focus areas introduced at Public Meeting 2, as well as strategic recommendations for downtown, and an implementation strategy. Meeting attendees suggested improving connections to surrounding neighborhoods, reusing existing buildings, and for implementing this plan in a manner that continues to engage the community for feedback and ideas. Attendees expressed that they left this final meeting energized about the future of downtown, and committed to the plan's implementation and downtown's success.



175
TOTAL
ATTENDEES

42
WRITTEN
COMMENTS



INTRODUCTION

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT



In order to reach as many downtown residents, employers, and visitors as possible, the planning team made all meeting materials available through a project website hosted by Downtown Akron Partnership. The project website linked visitors to information about the project and opportunities to provide feedback. Web users were directed to two online surveys, which took place following public meetings. Additionally, this process included an interactive story map application that allowed the public to tag comments, images, and stories to a map of downtown. The resulting feedback from this engagement platform are shown in the map to the right, and provide a glimpse at how Akronites experience their downtown and what features they find unique and special.



INTRODUCTION

A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

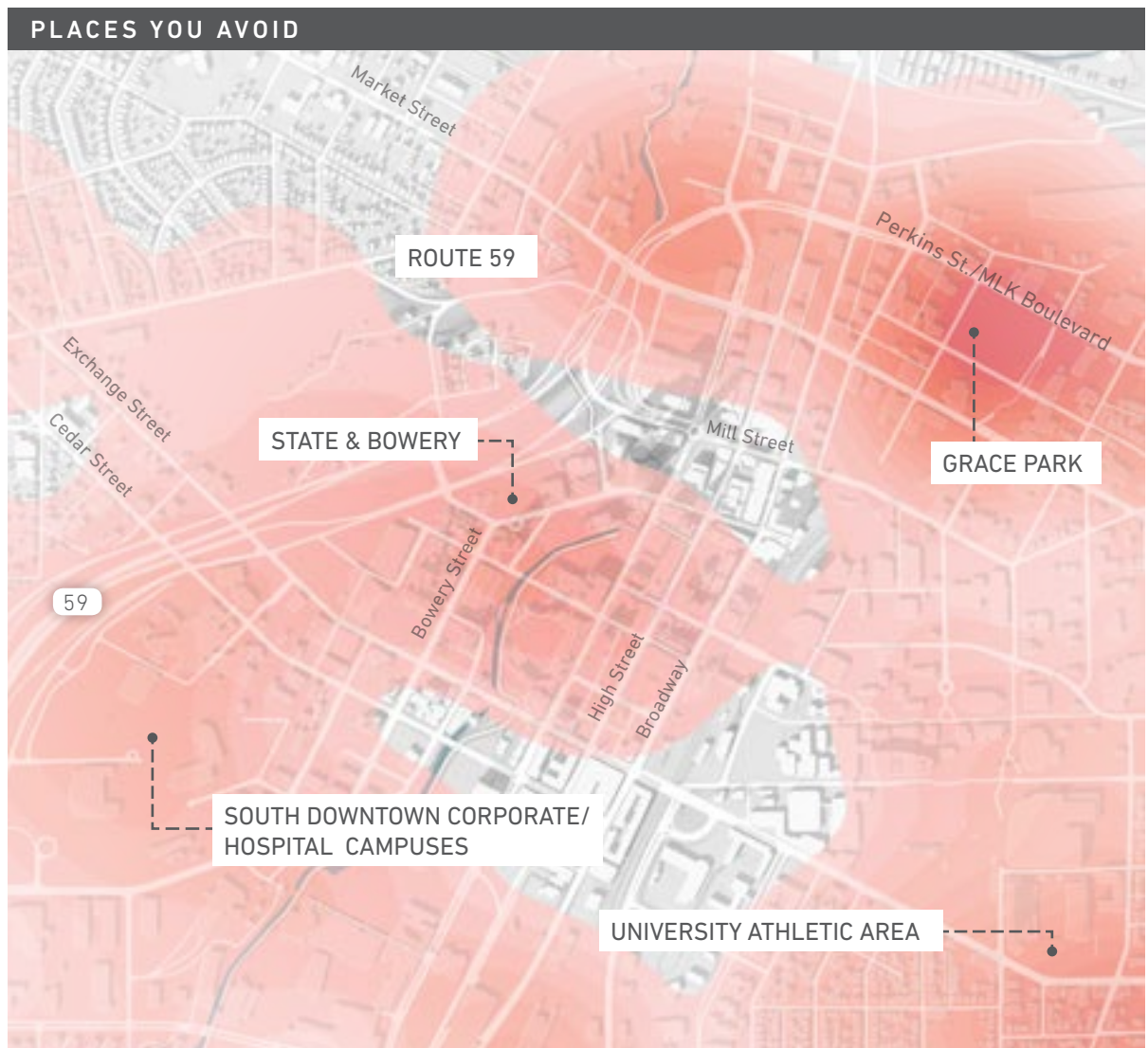
Though many Akronites already see downtown as a central hub for retail and entertainment, participants from this process overwhelmingly asked for more things to do and places to visit. Participants want more downtown retail, nightlife, dining, and groceries. Comments suggested that they would like to see downtown become a destination for the surrounding area, and would like to see it develop into a vibrant urban neighborhood that is active on both evenings and weekends. In order to achieve this, participants suggested additional green spaces for community gatherings, building on the energy established by Locks 3 and 4, in addition to showcasing Akron's history and building on its arts scene.

Public meeting participants were asked to place dots on maps of downtown, in areas that they visit and tend to avoid. The individual dots were tabulated and geo-located using Geographic Information System (GIS) software, which generated the heat maps seen in the following pages. Darker areas represent a higher density of dots placed on maps by participants.

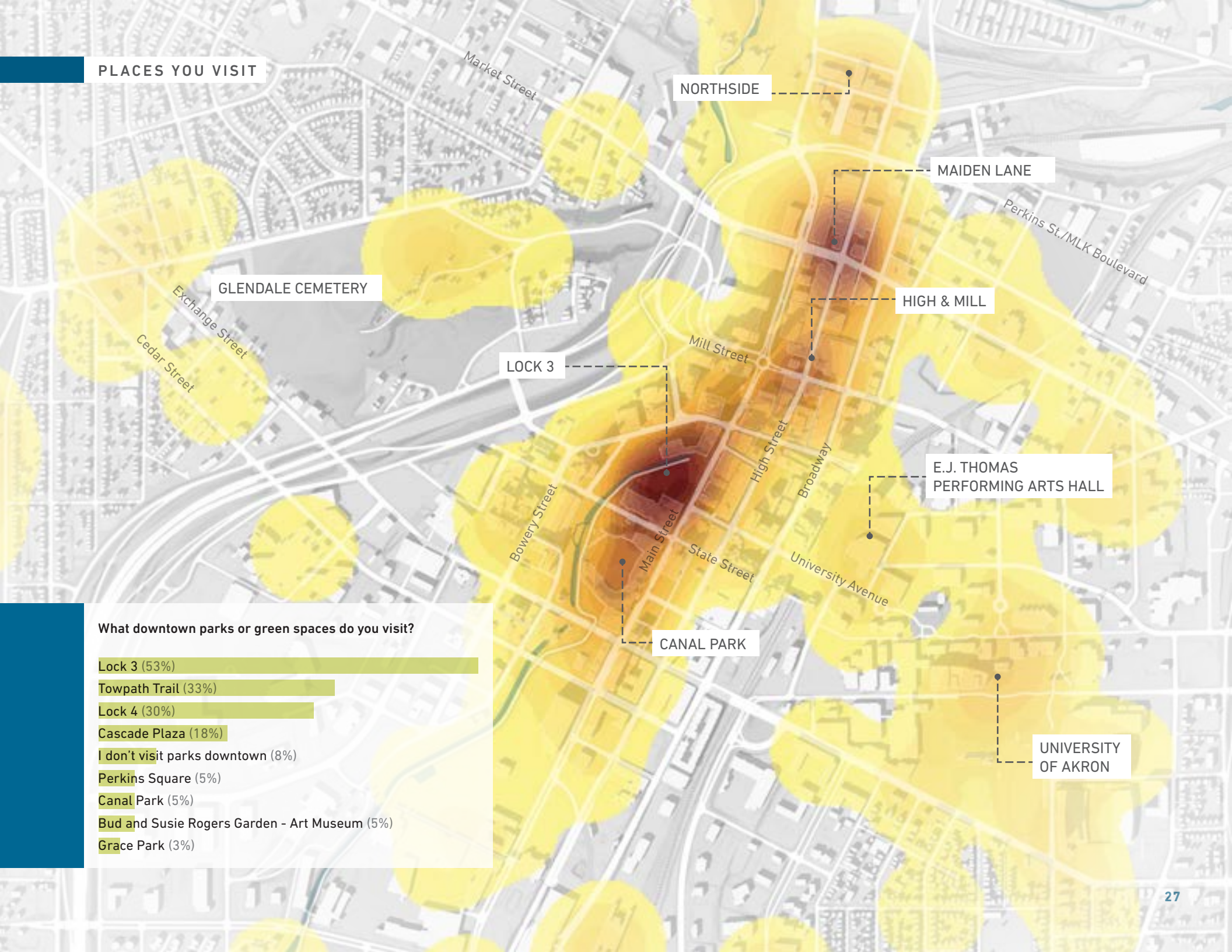
As seen in the map on the following page, participants tend to visit specific downtown destinations, such as Lock 3, Maiden Lane, Canal Park, and the area around the intersection of Mill Street and High Street. The map on the right shows places people tend to avoid, which tend to radiate around downtown's edges, encircling the places people visit.

"Lively and fun nightlife with the ability to work downtown, experience great food, with an easy way to transport"

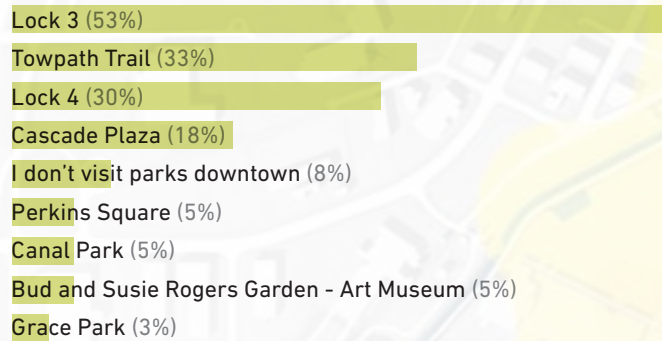
"More vibrant city with things to do 7 days a week"



PLACES YOU VISIT



What downtown parks or green spaces do you visit?



INTRODUCTION

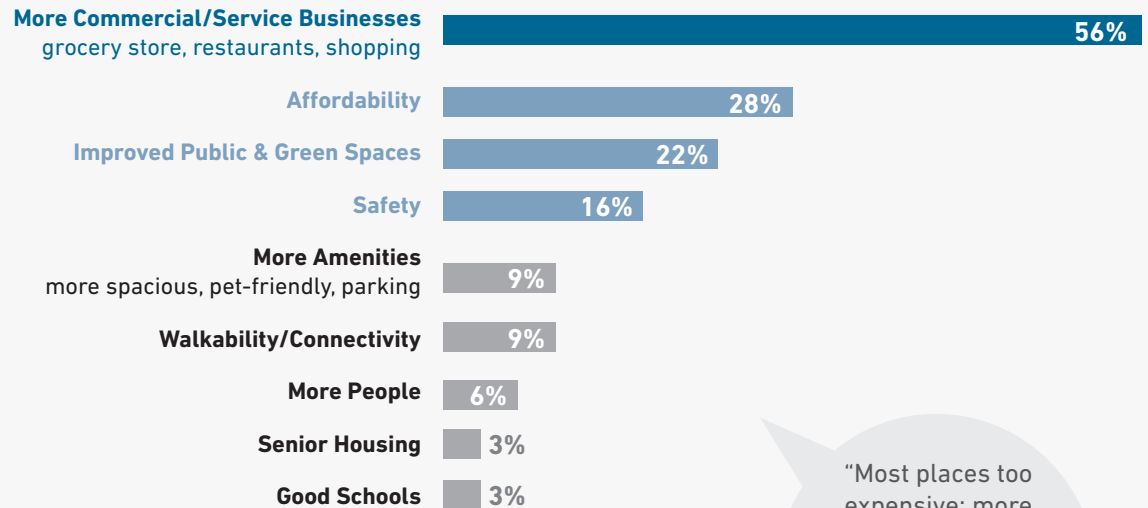
A LIVABLE DOWNTOWN

When asked about what made downtown special, many respondents noted its ability to bring the community together through its parks and open spaces. Downtown's inclusiveness and its ability to attract a wide spectrum of Akron's diverse population were widely lauded in comments. Nonetheless, downtown's livability is perceived as poor due to a lack of commercial businesses, such as shopping and daily needs, as well as a need for additional housing options. As such, participants expressed a vision for a downtown that is for everyone, one that showcases the region's diversity, and brings people together through its events, districts, businesses, and destinations.

For many participants, downtown's future residents were not just young professionals and singles, but families of all backgrounds and incomes. For this to work, many suggested that downtown should feel safe and be clean throughout, and not just on Main Street. As seen in the map on the following page, when asked which parts of downtown have opportunity for residential, participants concentrated on the parking lots surrounding Lock 3, and the new ground gained by the Innerbelt Project around Route 59. Other areas with residential opportunity include Canal Place, the Main Street corridor, and the area surrounding Grace Park.

"A place people can afford to live and work in"

WHAT WOULD MAKE IT MORE ATTRACTIVE TO LIVE DOWNTOWN?



"Most places too expensive; more affordable senior housing for those of us who are vibrant, active, and enthusiastic senior citizens"

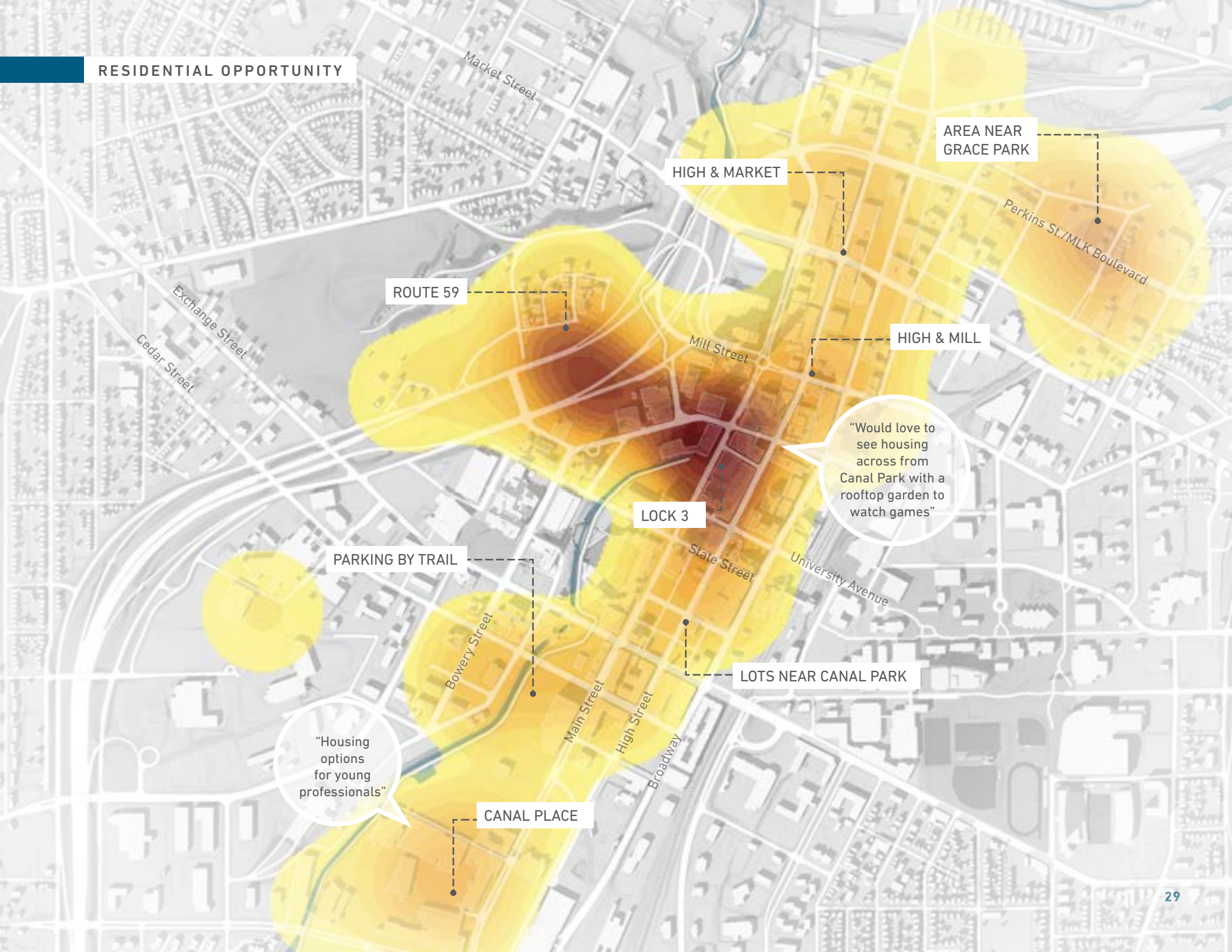
"More storefronts, like Cuyahoga Falls or Medina"

"A safe, bright, active, and diverse place that's easy to enjoy for residents from all over the city"

"I want to be close to water and nature, with easily accessible downtown action"



RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY



HIGH & MARKET

AREA NEAR GRACE PARK

ROUTE 59

HIGH & MILL

LOCK 3

"Would love to see housing across from Canal Park with a rooftop garden to watch games"

PARKING BY TRAIL

LOTS NEAR CANAL PARK

"Housing options for young professionals"

CANAL PLACE

INTRODUCTION

A CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

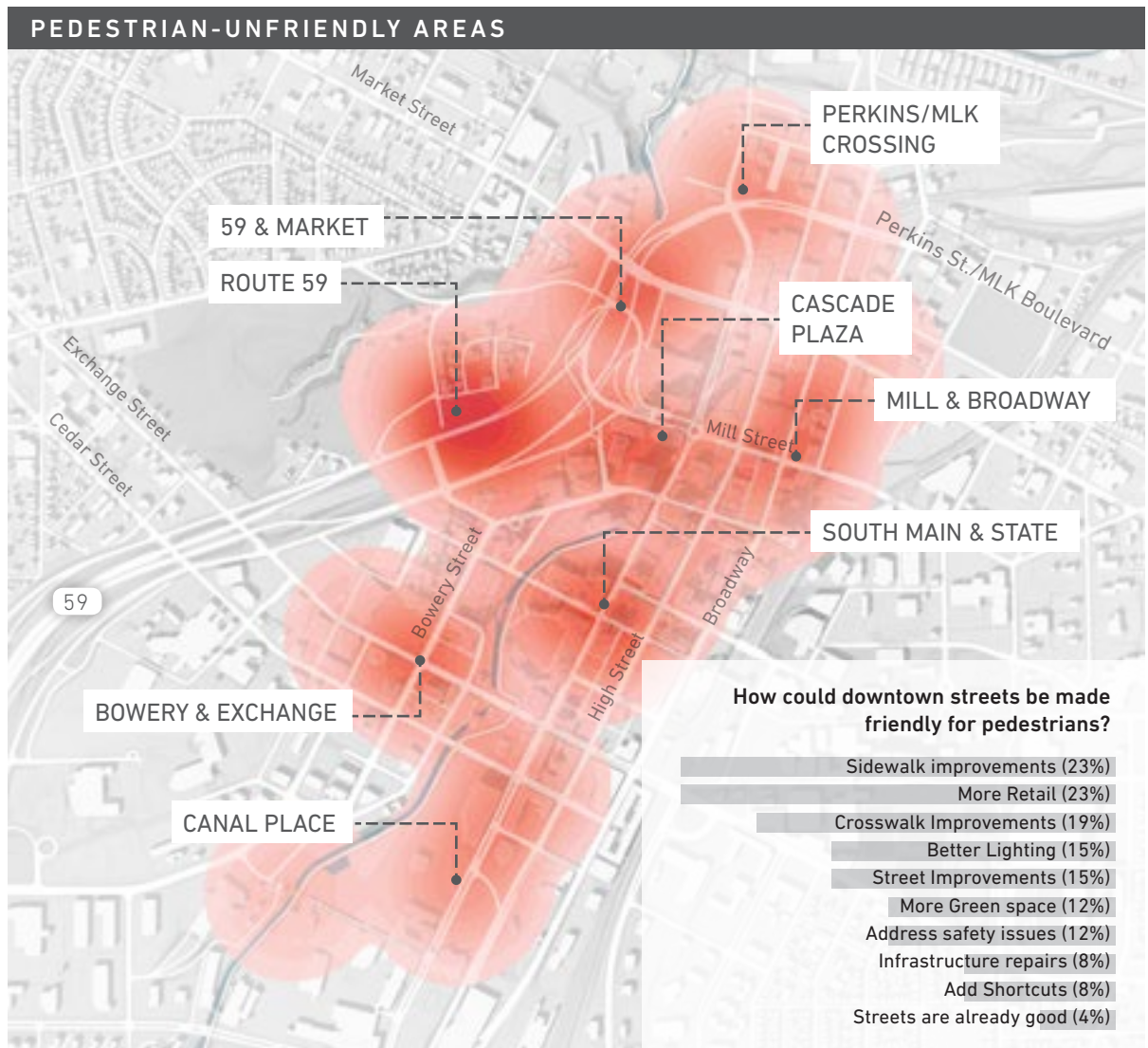
Through this process, downtown Akron was described as being friendlier to automobiles than to cyclists and pedestrians, with the exception of Main Street and parts of High Street. Participants envisioned a multi-modal downtown, in which all streets are complete streets and one-way streets are converted to two-way travel. As seen in the graphic to the right, participants suggested improved sidewalks and more ground-level retail to make streets friendlier to pedestrians. When asked about parking, 66% of respondents noted that parking downtown was either easy or not an issue. Participants also expressed a willingness to park over 2 blocks away from their destination, rather than expecting to park directly in front of their destination.

When asked what were the pedestrian friendly and unfriendly parts of downtown, the results closely mirrored the results of places they visit and avoid. As shown in the maps to the right and on the following page, downtown's pedestrian friendly parts closely follow Main Street from Canal Park toward Mill Street, after which participants noted that High Street between Mill Street and MLK Boulevard/Perkins Street is the most pedestrian-friendly area. Northside is shown as a disconnected island of walkability further north. The pedestrian-unfriendly areas are scattered around downtown's edges, and are often directly adjacent to walkable areas. In some cases, nodes of walkability are interrupted by pedestrian-unfriendly areas, as exhibited several times along Main Street.

"Make downtown for people, not cars"

"It starts with Main Street. Park the car and walk. Complete pedestrian areas"

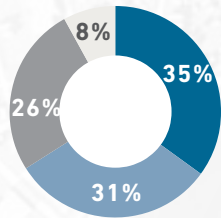
"Focus on pedestrian friendly city"



PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY AREAS

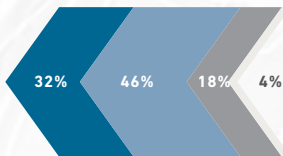
WE ASKED...

Parking downtown is...

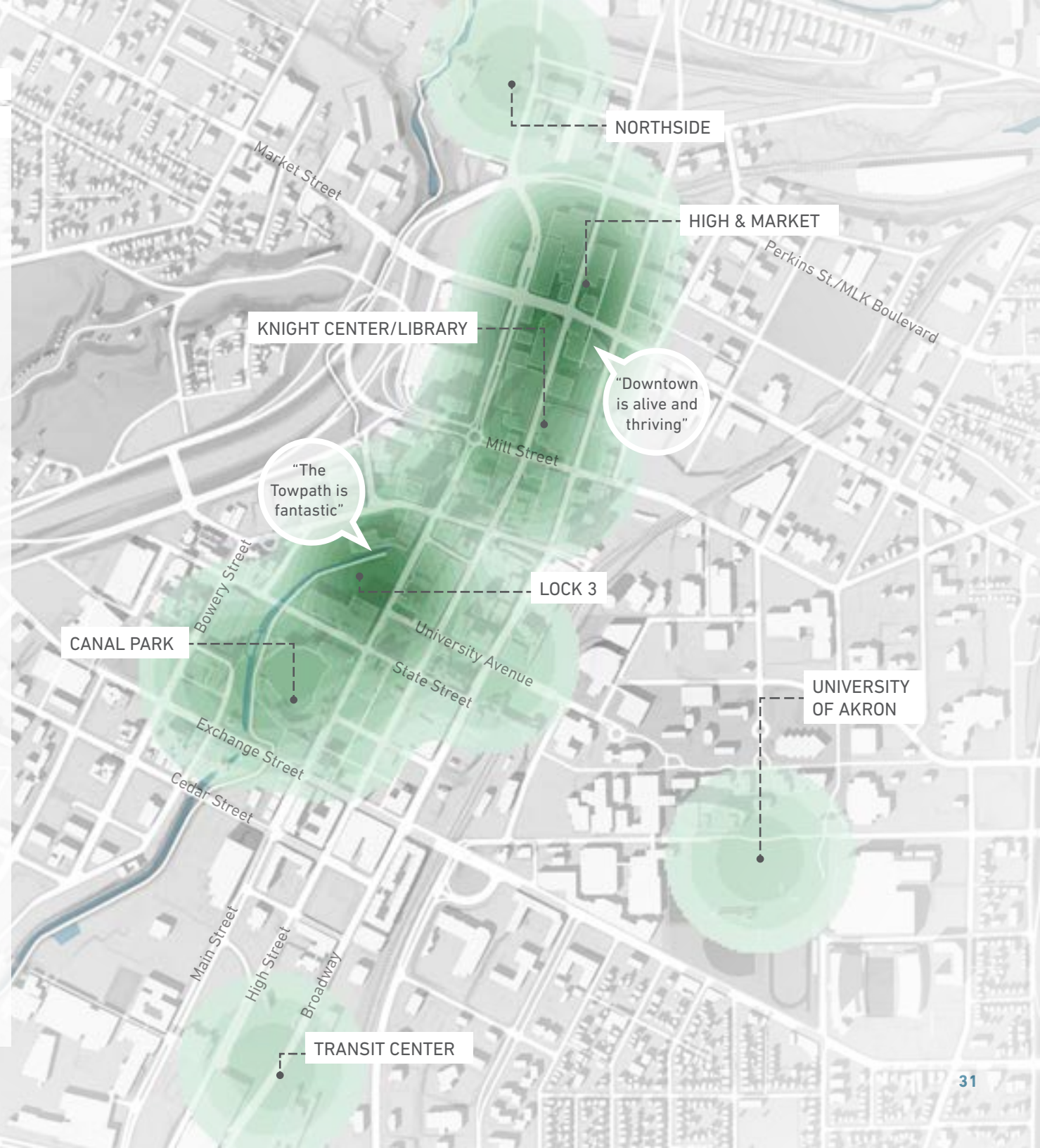


- 35% Not an issue
- 31% Easy
- 26% Difficult
- 8% So hard it makes me not want to come downtown

How many blocks are you willing to walk to your destination?



- 32% Over 3 blocks
- 46% 2 - 3 Blocks
- 18% 1 Block
- 4% Park directly at destination



INTRODUCTION

A PROACTIVE DOWNTOWN

Since the first public meeting and throughout the entire process, participants offered the planning team far more than complaints about the state of downtown. From stakeholder interviews to online comments, Akronites provided useful and insightful observations about their downtown through tangible and implementable ideas that seek to make their vision a reality.

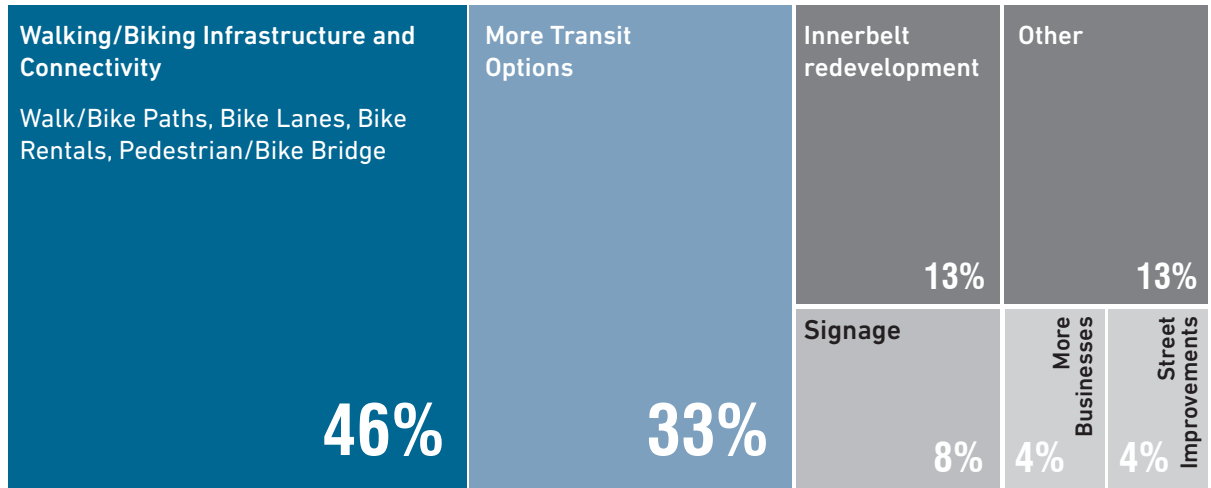
Comments focused on how to transform downtown into a vibrant neighborhood that is walkable to and from the surrounding area. In order to reach this goal, participants suggested strategies to improve existing events and programming offerings, promote mixed-use development, encourage adaptive-reuse of historic buildings, increase employment opportunities, and attract visitors and residents. Comments largely focused on a downtown revitalization unique to Akron and tailored to capitalize on the city's heritage, history, and culture.

As seen in the map on the following page, meeting attendees were asked to identify opportunity sites. Participants identified parts of downtown that they visit often, but also parts that they had previously described as unfriendly to pedestrians, or that they tend to avoid. As such, the resulting opportunity heat map shows concentrated interest in the Lock 3 area, and all along the Main Street Corridor. At the southern edge, Canal Place was identified as having opportunity for mixed use development, in addition to surface lots in front of Canal Park.

"Maintain the character of our history while encouraging the next chapter of our future"

"Rehab and re-use historic buildings instead of tear down"

HOW COULD DOWNTOWN BE BETTER CONNECTED TO SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS AND NEARBY ACTIVITY CENTERS?



"They should develop a huge park in the Rt 59 greenspace"

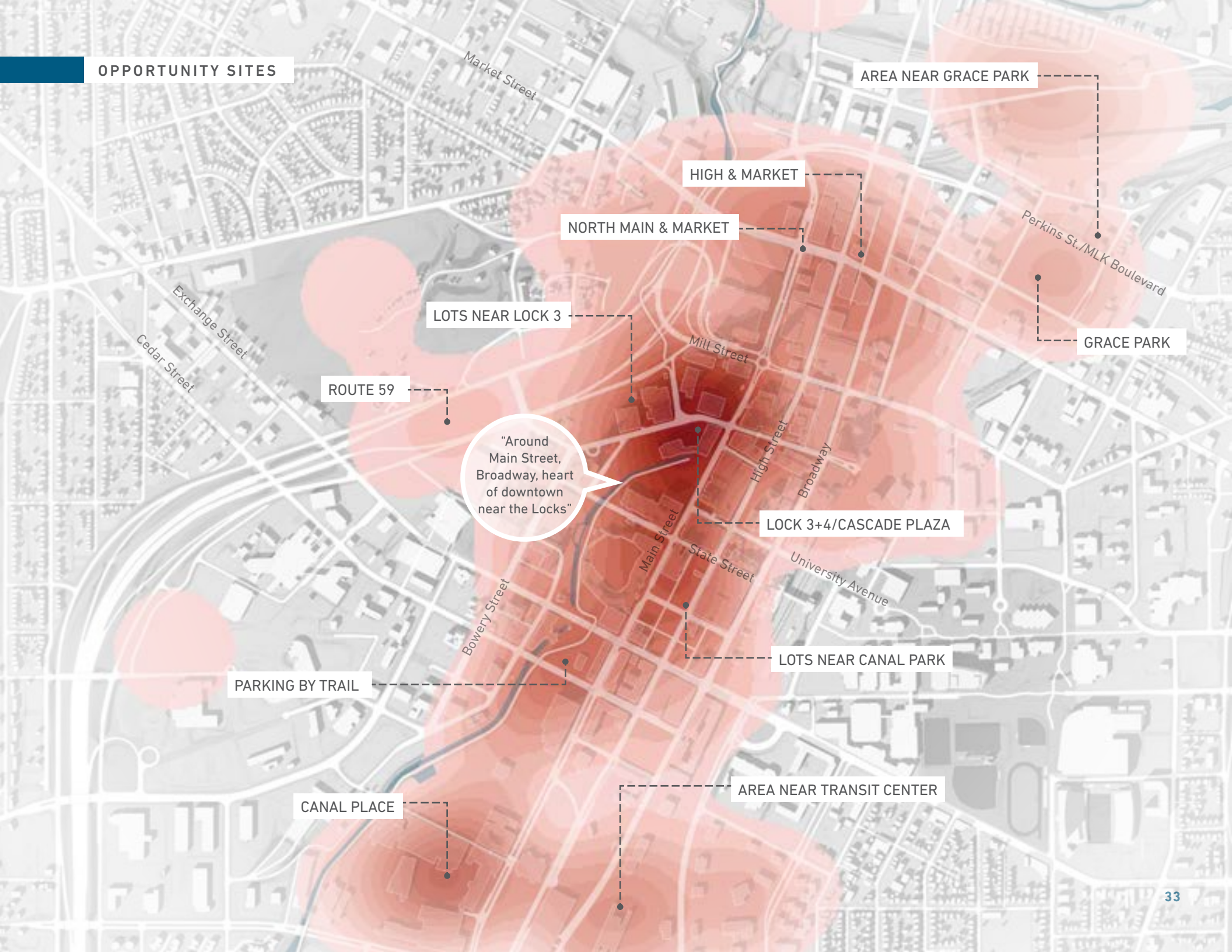
"The Canal and Towpath activated with fun activities"

"Physically connect its surrounding neighborhoods in safe and friendly ways!"

"Walkable & bikeable, creative, artsy, more green, more jobs - bring them back from the 'burbs"



OPPORTUNITY SITES



AREA NEAR GRACE PARK

HIGH & MARKET

NORTH MAIN & MARKET

Perkins St./MLK Boulevard

GRACE PARK

LOTS NEAR LOCK 3

ROUTE 59

"Around Main Street, Broadway, heart of downtown near the Locks"

LOCK 3+4/CASCADE PLAZA

LOTS NEAR CANAL PARK

AREA NEAR TRANSIT CENTER

CANAL PLACE

PARKING BY TRAIL

INTRODUCTION

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

10 PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The following 10 principles were developed following stakeholder interviews conducted in Phase 1 of this project and verified through public input in the Phase 2 public process. The 10 principles, listed below and on the following page, synthesize priorities, strengths, and opportunities for downtown. Throughout the remainder of the planning process, these principles were used as a guide in developing focus area concepts, analyzing community feedback, and drafting and refining strategic recommendations for implementation.



1 IT STARTS WITH **MAIN STREET**

Downtown should concentrate its resources, incentives, and attention on Main Street and the downtown core, through both temporary and long-term interventions.



2 VITALITY STARTS WITH **RESIDENTIAL**

Downtown's success hinges on attracting more residents to the area, and encouraging mixed-use development with ground-level retail.



3 ADDRESS BUSINESS **VACANCY**

Vacant downtown spaces create the perception of an unwelcoming and isolated downtown. Energy and people can be brought back to downtown with the adaptive-reuse of older buildings and the addition of new office, coordinated with recruitment/marketing efforts.



4 CREATE A COORDINATED **INCENTIVE PACKAGE**

Build on Akron's existing incentives to create tools that encourage new development and maximize downtown's potential. Review the success of current incentive programs, and consider unique financing tools for downtown.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES (CONTINUED)



5 MAKE GREAT PUBLIC SPACES

Design public spaces that embrace the nature of the city and serve all people. Ensure that new development (residential, commercial, retail, garages) creates public spaces and ground floor uses that activate streets and make downtown more livable.



6 CONTINUE TO PROGRAM DOWNTOWN

Continue to diversify programming to reach multiple groups, from students to families, while identifying partnerships to strengthen the reach of marketing efforts.



7 PRIORITIZE STREET DESIGN THAT ENHANCES HEALTH AND SAFETY

Implement complete streets, creating safer pedestrian, vehicular and cyclist connections. Encourage a compact downtown grid by breaking down existing superblocks into a walkable and connected development pattern. Find opportunities to reconnect a severed urban grid pattern with future developments.



8 EXPAND ON SUCCESSFUL NODES OF ACTIVITY

Create and advance plans for improving successful areas like Bowery District, Main and Exchange, Maiden Lane and Northside. Work to add mix of uses in these nodes to provide more consistent activity on a daily basis.



9 BUILD ON AKRON'S RICH HISTORY

Claim the brands and history that are fundamentally Akron and reflect them downtown, incorporating Akron's history into projects both formally and whimsically.



10 STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN CONNECTIONS WITH SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS AND INSTITUTIONS

Build on previous planning efforts to better connect downtown to surrounding neighborhoods and institutions. Identify potential connections, infill, and catalytic opportunities.



SECTION 2

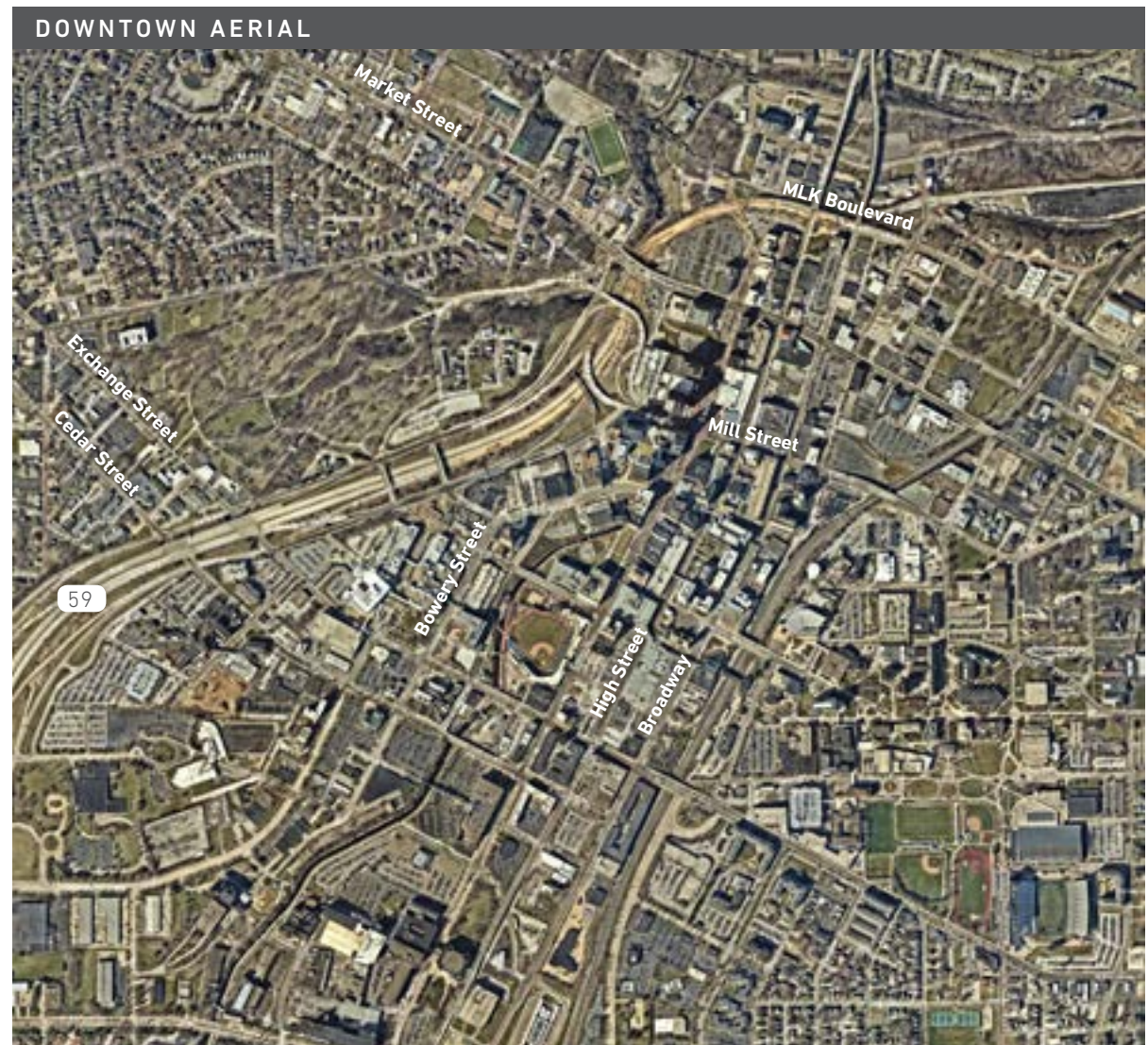
EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes an analysis of existing conditions performed by the planning team. The chapter is organized into the categories listed below, each supplemented with accompanying data and maps:

- > Study Area
- > Regional Context
- > Assets
- > Employment and Activity Centers
- > Parks and Open Space
- > Land Use and Zoning
- > Trails and Bike Connectivity
- > Development Patterns
- > Parking and Transit
- > Connectivity and Streets



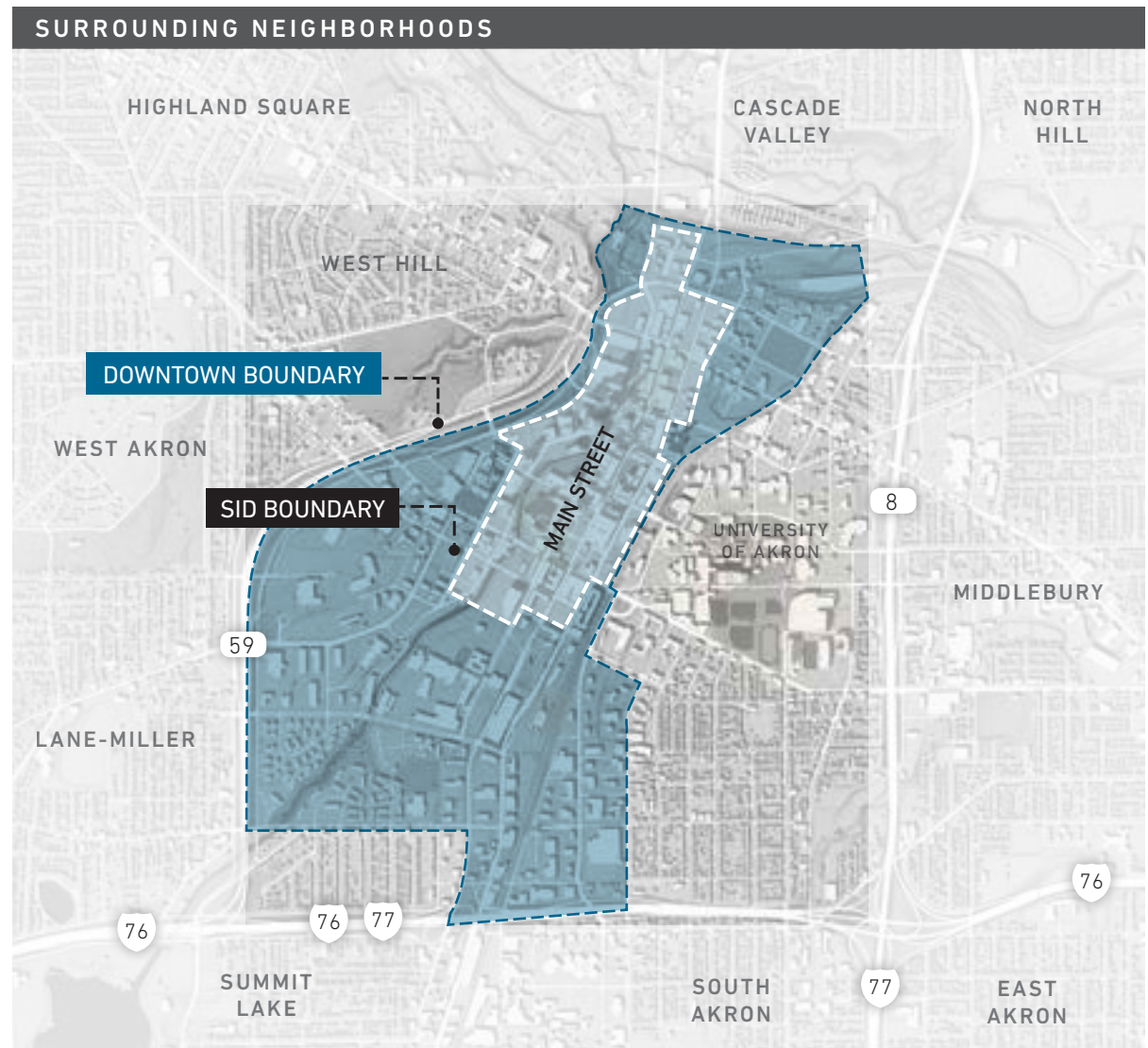
EXISTING CONDITIONS

STUDY AREA

Though focusing on the downtown boundary established by the City, this plan looks at both downtown as well as its edges with surrounding neighborhoods as part of its study area. As a neighborhood surrounded by valleys, highways, and railroad tracks, downtown's boundaries are often hard edges that separate it from surrounding neighborhoods and institutions. The official downtown boundary includes Route 59 to the west, Cascade Valley and railroad tracks to the north, railroad tracks to the east, and Bartges Street/Interstate 76 to the south.

Within this boundary, a Downtown Special Improvement District (SID) occupies a 42-block area in downtown's core, focused on the downtown blocks around Main Street from Furnace Street in the Northside District to the AES building in the Southside District. Established in 2000, and renewed in 5-year increments, the Downtown SID includes approximately 590 properties and is managed by DAP.

As seen in the map to the right, the planning team looked at downtown from the perspective of a district whose edges are strongly influenced by its surrounding neighborhoods. For many entering and leaving downtown from these neighborhoods, the experience is often confusing and uninviting. Through the ideas and concepts introduced in this plan, downtown's edges are treated as gateways into both downtown and each neighborhood. As such, the study area bleeds into nearby neighborhoods to address connectivity issues and identify development opportunities.



STUDY AREA

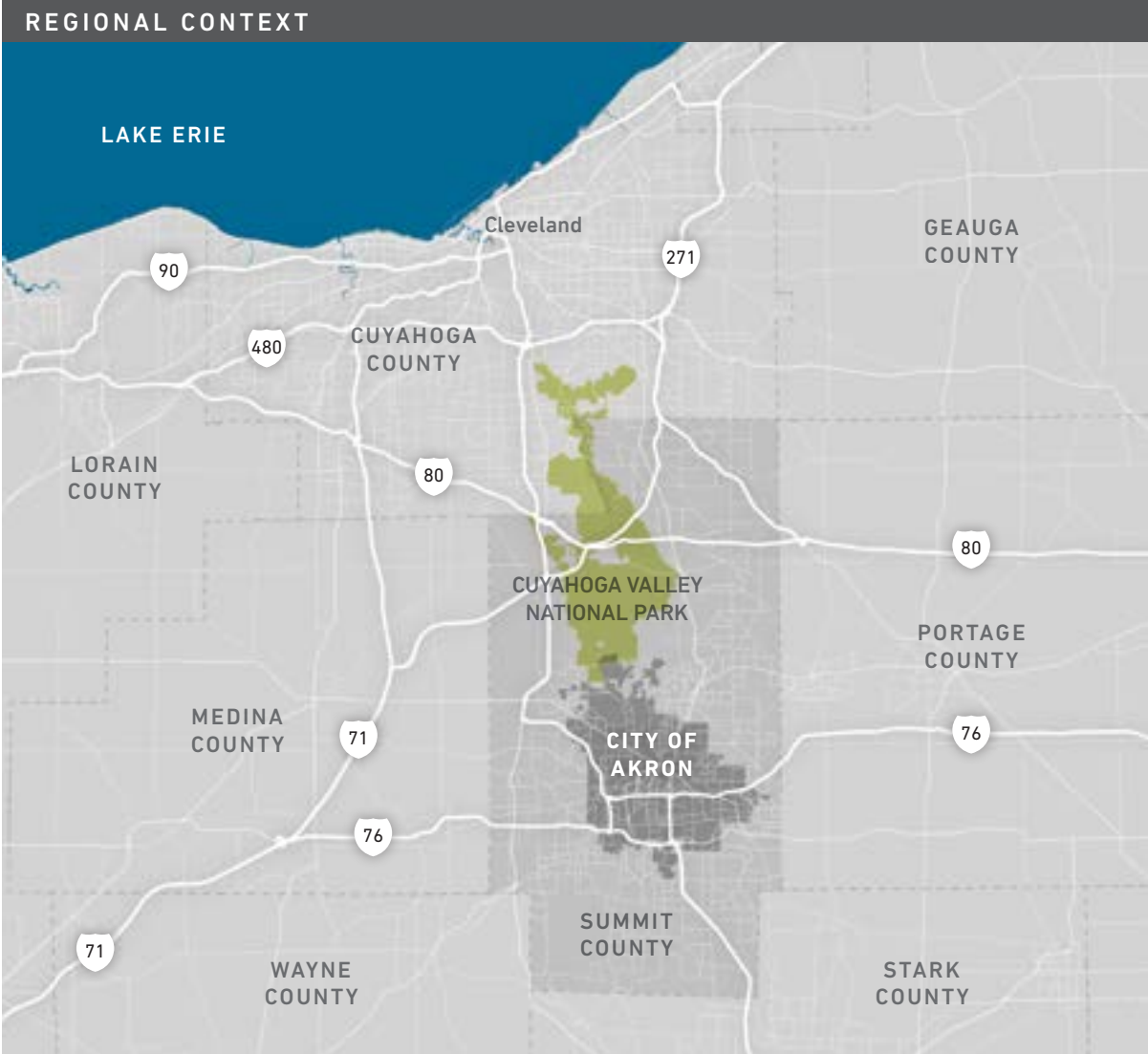


EXISTING CONDITIONS

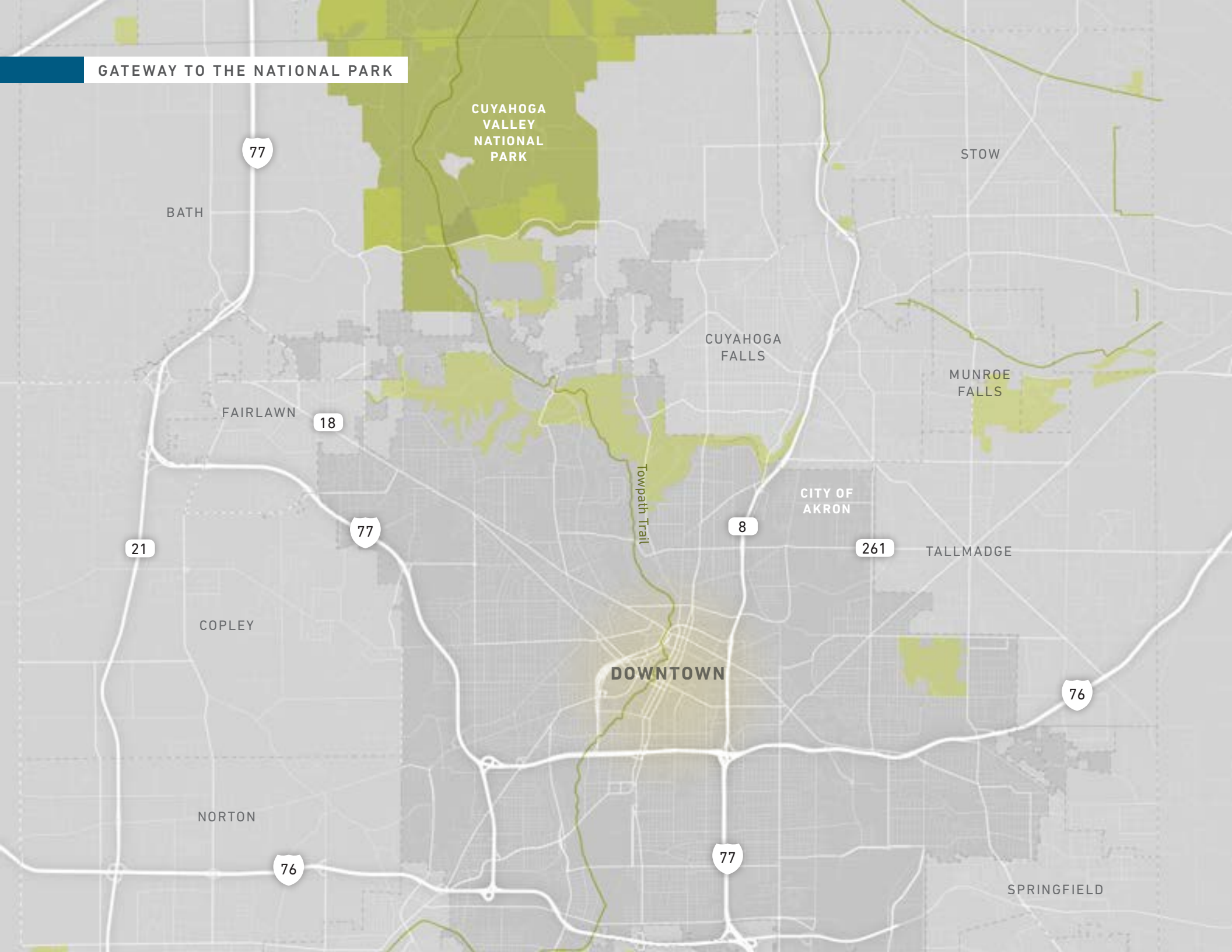
REGIONAL CONTEXT

Located in Summit County in Northeast Ohio, Akron's location is one that benefits from proximity to major highways, natural features and amenities. Within an hour drive, Akronites are able to reach downtown Cleveland, Lake Erie, Akron-Canton Airport, and Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, which serves over 9 million passengers and offers 156 daily nonstop departures to over 50 destinations. The surrounding 18-county region of Northeast Ohio is home to over 4.3 million people and includes six metropolitan areas.

Akron's most prominent geographical feature is its unique access to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio's only national park and home to 51 square miles of wildlife areas, preservation and conservation zones, water access and trails. Though also easily accessed by greater Cleveland, Akron is uniquely positioned as a gateway to the National Park with a downtown train station and convenient access to the Towpath Trail, a 101-mile multi-use recreational trail, with 87 miles completed, running through the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area. This regional amenity is used by more than 2.5 million users annually.



GATEWAY TO THE NATIONAL PARK



CUYAHOGA
VALLEY
NATIONAL
PARK

BATH

STOW

CUYAHOGA
FALLS

MUNROE
FALLS

FAIRLAWN

Towpath Trail

CITY OF
AKRON

TALLMADGE

DOWNTOWN

COPLEY

NORTON

SPRINGFIELD

77

18

77

21

8

261

76

76

77

EXISTING CONDITIONS

DOWNTOWN ASSETS

Home to museums, parks, and world-class institutions, downtown Akron is a regional hub for arts, entertainment and education. From Akron RubberDucks games at Canal Park to yearly events and daily visitors to Locks 3 and 4, the destinations and attractions concentrated in downtown bring in approximately 3.4 million visitors annually from the surrounding area and beyond. The result is a vibrant downtown core where visitors can experience the arts, enjoy sporting events, and access a national park – all within a one-mile radius.

Located at High and Market Streets, the Akron Art Museum displays cutting-edge architecture artfully integrated with a 19th Century Renaissance Revival building. Expanded in 2007 with an addition that tripled its size, the museum recently opened The Bud and Susie Rogers Garden, a public garden free to downtown visitors that includes contemplation areas, public art, and event spaces.

In addition to the arts, downtown Akron is a regional destination for research, education and learning. Located at Main and Mill Streets, the Main Library welcomes over a million visitors yearly and holds various facilities open to the community, such as a Patent and Trademark Resource Center, a Microbusiness Center, and a Maker Space. With an enrollment of over 22,000 students and located just east of downtown, the University of Akron is a regional research institution educating a highly equipped workforce

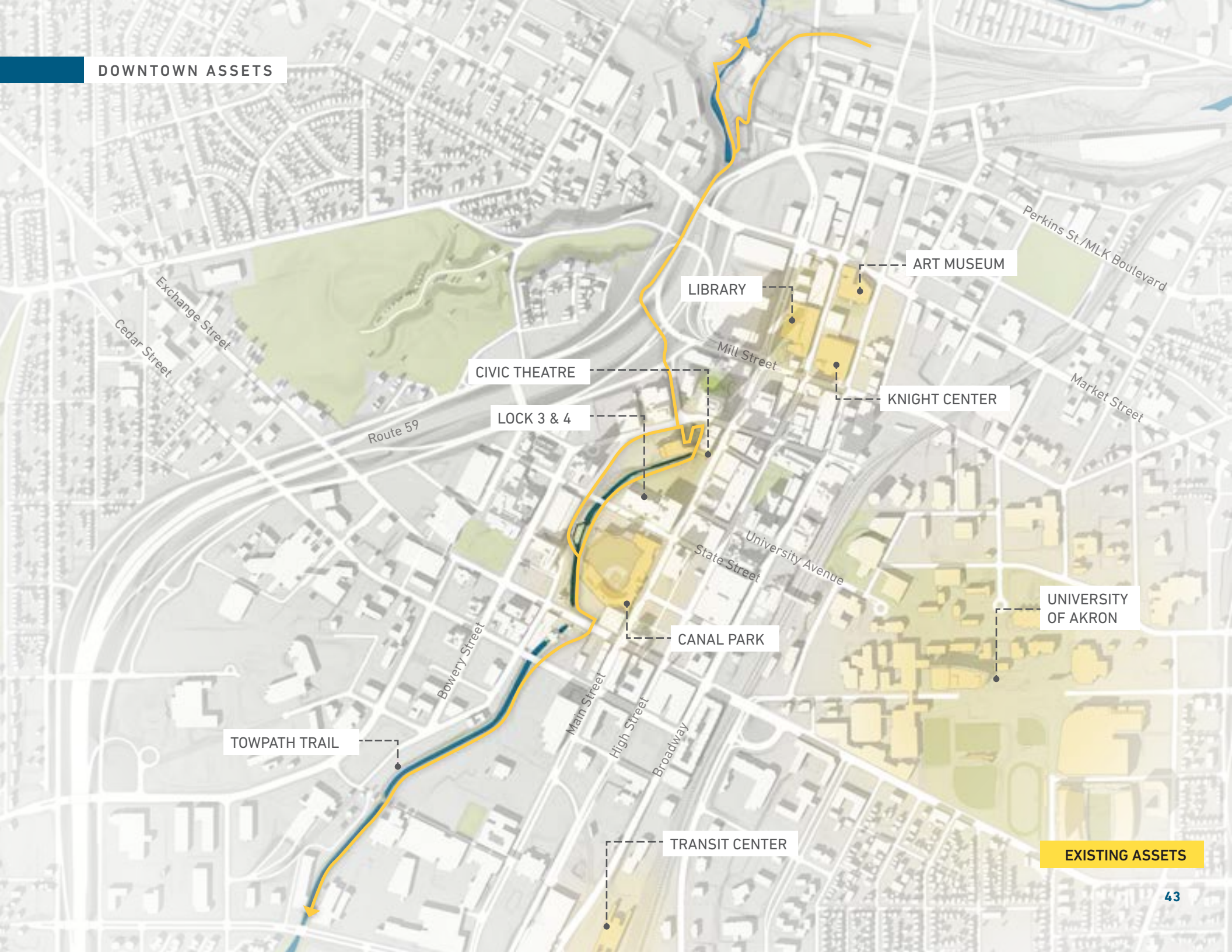


and talent pool for employers. With nationally recognized programs among its offerings, the University of Akron awards over 5,000 degrees yearly, including 1,400 graduate degrees.

Downtown is also a place where the entire region comes together, either to experience outdoor activities or to attend special events. With more than 70 home games at Canal Park, the Akron RubberDucks pay an homage to city's rubber heritage, and have been an Akron-based team

since 1997. Along Main Street, Locks 3 and 4 host events that attract people of all ages and backgrounds, from free yoga sessions to a summer concert series. Along the canal side of the park, the Towpath Trail moves its way through downtown, eventually connecting to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, making Akron an urban entry into a celebrated natural asset.

DOWNTOWN ASSETS



ART MUSEUM

LIBRARY

CIVIC THEATRE

KNIGHT CENTER

LOCK 3 & 4

UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

CANAL PARK

TOWPATH TRAIL

TRANSIT CENTER

EXISTING ASSETS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

EMPLOYMENT & ACTIVITY CENTERS

Activity Centers

Downtown Akron is a hub for activity in the region, having both a high concentration of jobs in addition to retail/entertainment destinations. For those who live, work, or visit downtown, proximity to major employers and to vibrant urban environments are one of many available amenities. As seen on the map in the following page, employment areas and activity centers are dispersed throughout downtown, yet remain isolated from each other.

Downtown's activity centers cater to various groups, incomes, and backgrounds. The identified activity centers are generally located along Main Street, and work as block-length nodes of retail, dining, and entertainment. For instance, at the intersection of Main and Exchange Streets one can find various restaurants, boutique shops, and residential catering to students.

These activity centers are lined on a north-south axis, with much of downtown's retail and entertainment located directly on Main Street. Nonetheless, these centers are disconnected by inactive stretches of Main Street, some of which feature vacant storefronts, surface parking lots, or nondescript facades. Consequently, someone attending an event around Locks 3 or 4 could be easily dissuaded to walk north along Main Street to a restaurant located along Maiden Lane. Though a short walk, the lack of ground-level activity between both nodes hinders walkability by creating the perception of longer distances.

Maiden Lane



Canal Place



Northside



In the case of the Northside activity center, the disconnect from the rest of downtown is accentuated by steep slopes and a railroad line. These impediments may prevent visitors attending a music venue on Maiden Lane from walking to a restaurant in Northside, instead, choosing to drive the otherwise 7-minute walk.

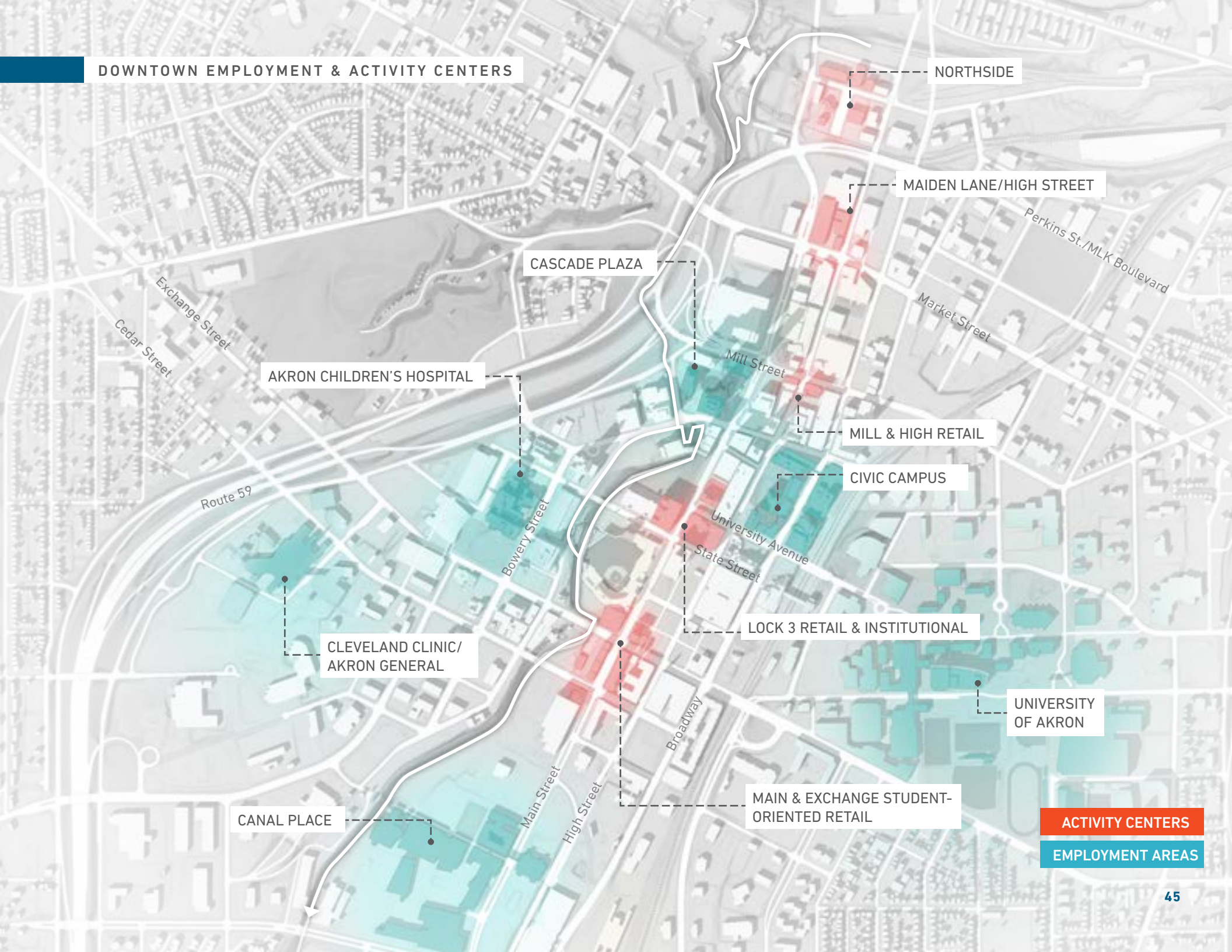
Employment Centers

In addition to retail and entertainment, the downtown area is home to a wide array of businesses and institutions employing just under 50,000 workers. Unlike activity centers, employment centers tend to be dominated by a single large employer, and are well distributed throughout downtown. Much like activity centers, walkability between employment centers is often

poor, and requires moving through isolated or uninviting parts of downtown to reach downtown destinations.

Employment centers featuring a single large institution include the University of Akron, Cleveland Clinic/Akron General Hospital, Akron Children's Hospital, FirstEnergy, and Summit County/City of Akron. These centers tend to work as isolated campuses in which buildings lack ground-level activity, a common trait for hospitals and universities in urban environments. Exceptions to this development pattern occur elsewhere in downtown, in both Cascade Plaza and Canal Place. The latter features adaptive-reuse of historic buildings and includes high-tech office, a business incubator, and access to the Towpath Trail.

DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT & ACTIVITY CENTERS



NORTHSIDE

MAIDEN LANE/HIGH STREET

CASCADE PLAZA

AKRON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

MILL & HIGH RETAIL

CIVIC CAMPUS

CLEVELAND CLINIC/
AKRON GENERAL

LOCK 3 RETAIL & INSTITUTIONAL

UNIVERSITY
OF AKRON

CANAL PLACE

MAIN & EXCHANGE STUDENT-
ORIENTED RETAIL

ACTIVITY CENTERS

EMPLOYMENT AREAS

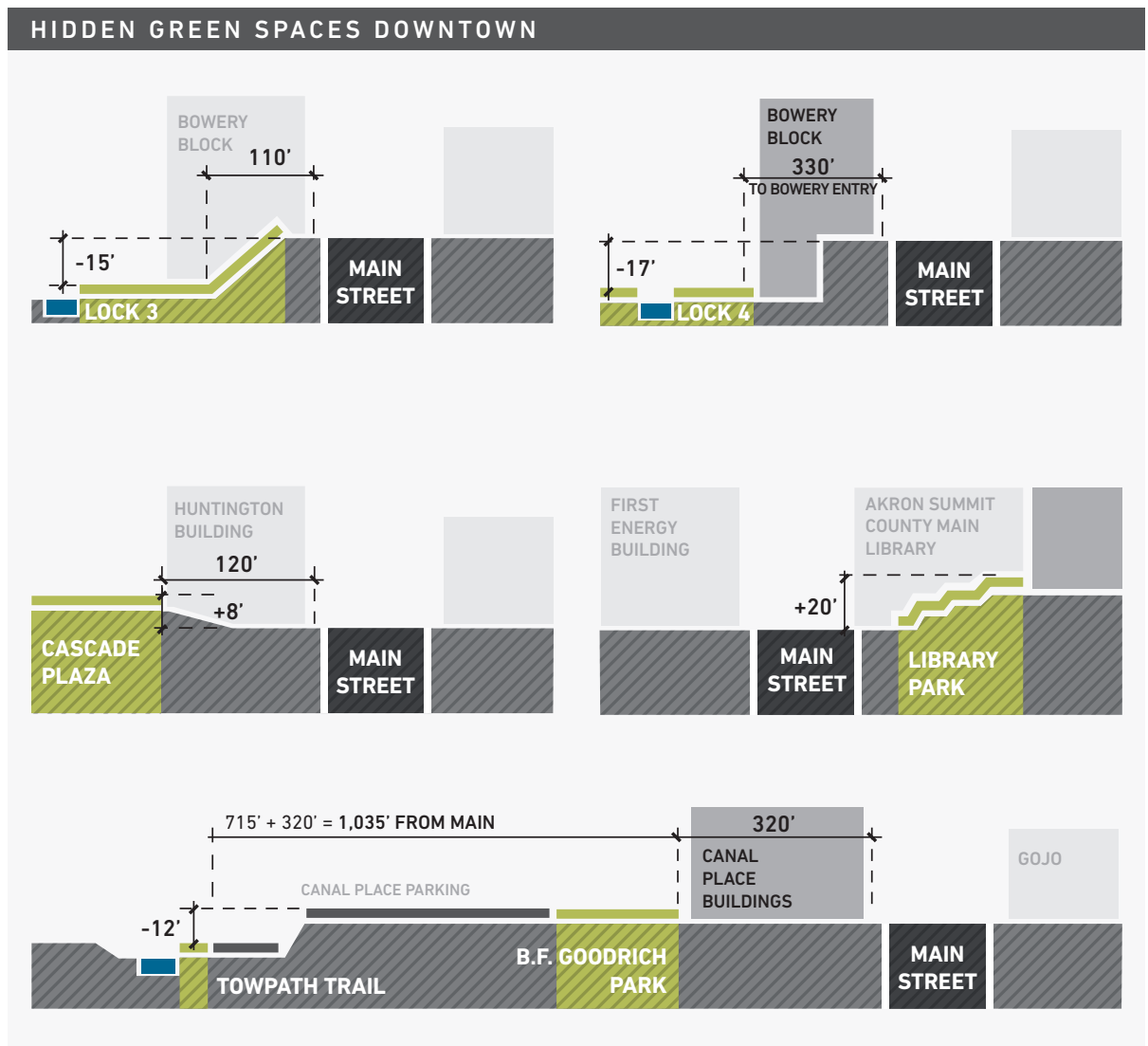
EXISTING CONDITIONS

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Downtown's parks and open spaces come in various sizes and respond to the urban environment in different ways. As a downtown that features steep slopes, open spaces are often designed to respond to topographical changes and move users from one elevation to another. The Towpath Trail, which moves its way through downtown along the canal, seamlessly connects many of these spaces. The result is green spaces that are interconnected and accessible from major streets, yet tend to be visually hidden from street grade.

As seen in the graphic to the right, changes in elevation have resulted in open spaces that are both located at a different elevation than that of Main Street, as well as set back from the street. To access a park or open space, users are often ramped up or down below grade. From a Main Street vantage point, open spaces such as Locks 3 and 4, Cascade Plaza, and most of the Towpath Trail, are nowhere to be seen and only accessed through specific locations. Consequently, even the most vibrant crowd within the open spaces may go unnoticed on Main Street, and vice versa.

Recent investments in open spaces include improvements to the Towpath Trail and the addition of the Bud and Susie Rogers Garden at the Akron Art Museum. In the case of the Towpath Trail, recent improvements strengthen wayfinding and gateway visibility at street grade,



PARKS & OPEN SPACE



SCENIC RAILWAY

GLENDALE PARK

COMMERCE PARK

GLENDALE CEMETERY

LIBRARY PARK

Perkins St./MLK Boulevard

GRACE PARK

Exchange Street
Cedar Street

Mill Street

Market Street

BUD & SUSIE ROGERS GARDEN

CASCADE PLAZA

CHARLES GOODYEAR PARK

LOCK 2

LOCK 3 & 4

PERKINS SQUARE PARK

Bowery Street

State Street

University Avenue

TOWPATH TRAIL

Main Street

High Street

Broadway

UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

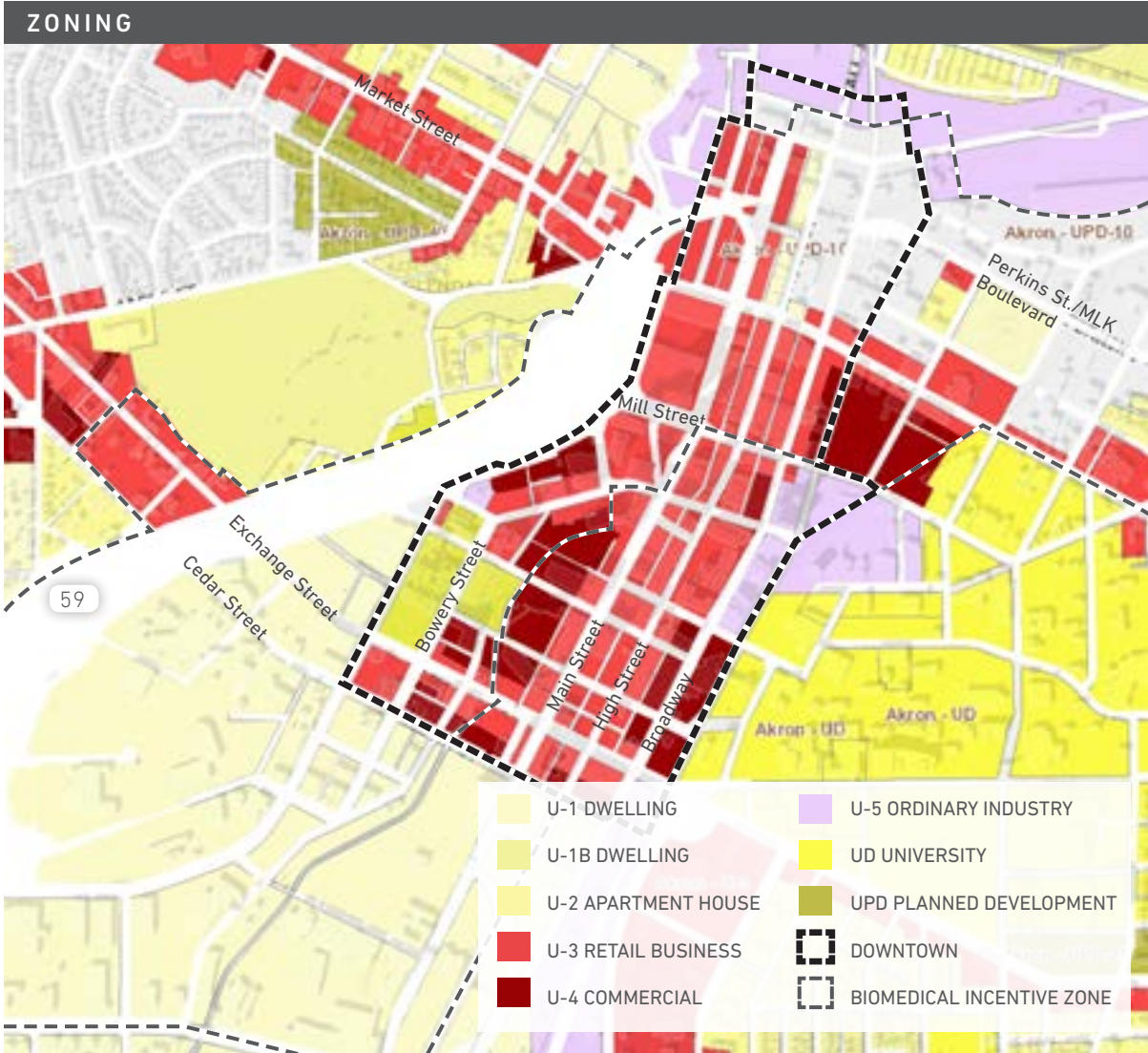
EXISTING CONDITIONS

LAND USE & ZONING

The City of Akron is divided into 13 classes of zoning districts, including flood plain, residential districts, business districts, industry districts, and a planned development district. This plan’s study area is mostly zoned as Retail Business (U-3) with some parcels zoned Commercial Business (U-4) along Cedar Street, and a large swath of Residential Dwelling (U-1) south of Cedar Street.

The Retail Business Zoning district (U-3) allows for offices, stores, restaurants and bars, hotels, gas stations, apartment buildings and other dwellings. The Commercial Business District (U-4) allows most U-3 allowable uses with the addition of wholesale businesses, warehouses, and auto-oriented businesses, but excluding residential. For zoning purposes, downtown is defined as a boundary generally following Route 59 to the west, Northside to the north, the railroad tracks to the east, and Cedar street to the south. This boundary is used to provide exceptions to certain development requirements, such as removing parking minimums for downtown residential and implementing a parking maximum. Portions of downtown , such as Southside, fall under the Biomedical Incentive Zone. This overlay adds additional allowable uses such as biomedical uses, laboratories, research, medical uses, and limited retail.

The land use map shown in the following page shows a mixed-use downtown dominated by commercial uses, institutional uses, and publicly owned land.



LAND USES



Cedar Street
Exchange Street

Bowery Street
State Street

Main Street
High Street
Broadway

Mill Street

University Avenue

Market Street

Perkins St./MLK Boulevard

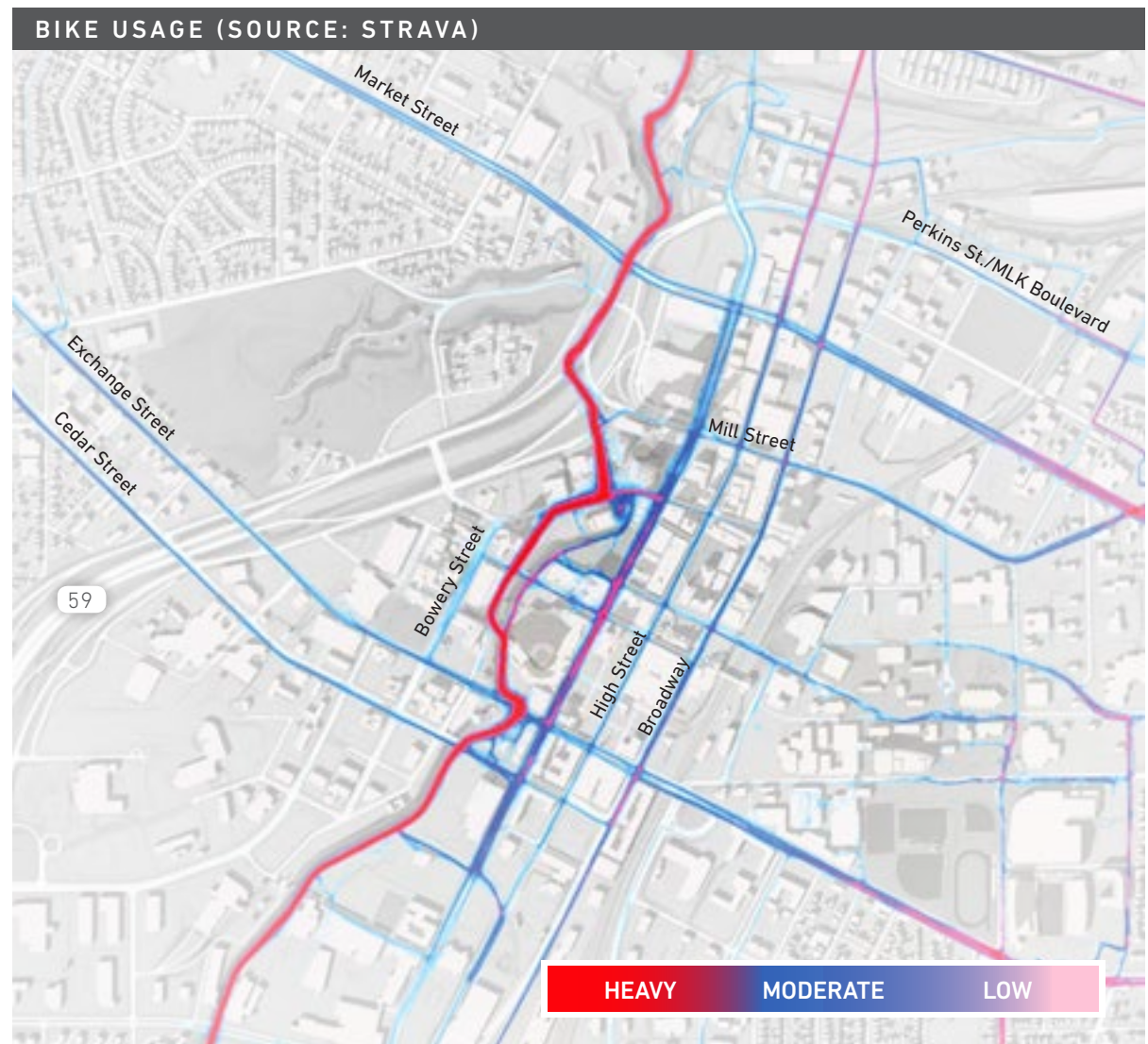
EXISTING CONDITIONS

TRAILS & BIKE CONNECTIVITY

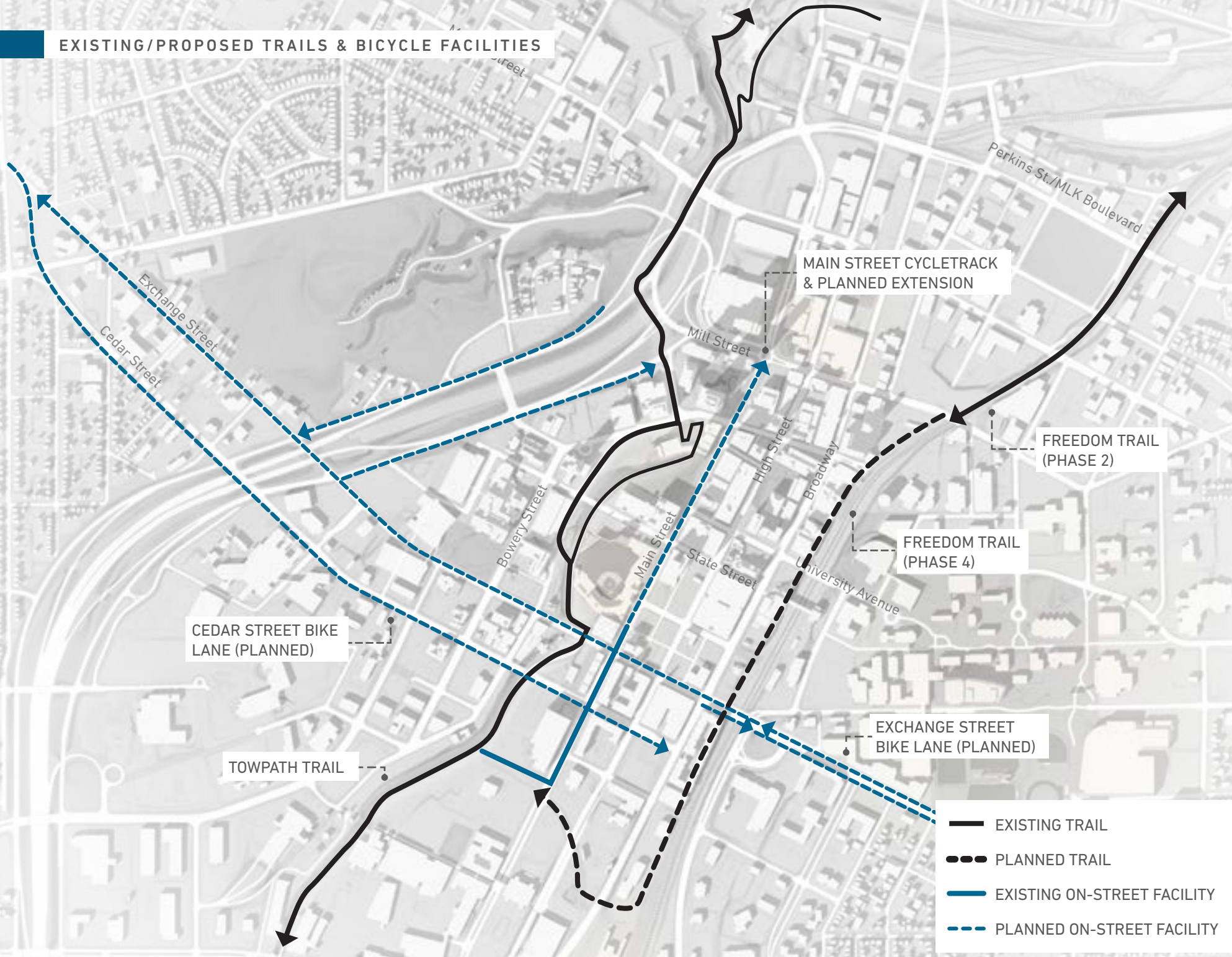
Downtown's bike and pedestrian system includes two north-south spines: the Towpath Trail, and Main Street. Both of these serve as vital arteries, and as seen in the map to the right, are the most heavily used bicycle facilities downtown. Nonetheless, while north-south pedestrian and bicycle movement downtown is convenient, safe, and accessible, east-west movement remains challenging.

The Towpath Trail's best feature is its continuity. Through all of downtown, the trail offers mostly seamless north-south travel that connects north to the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad Station and Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Similarly, the 1.5-mile stretch of Main Street between Canal Place and MLK Boulevard contains some of downtown's most prominent assets and destinations, and serves as the downtown core's most walkable spine. As seen in the map in the following page, recent improvements on Main Street include an on-street cycletrack, with a planned extension from Canal Park to Mill Street.

Planned improvements to downtown's bicycle network also include bike lanes to Cedar and Exchange Streets, which will add a needed crosstown east-west connection. Longer-term improvements will further strengthen downtown's bicycle network, with a planned future phase of the Freedom Trail that will connect downtown with northeast Akron neighborhoods.



EXISTING/PROPOSED TRAILS & BICYCLE FACILITIES



EXISTING CONDITIONS

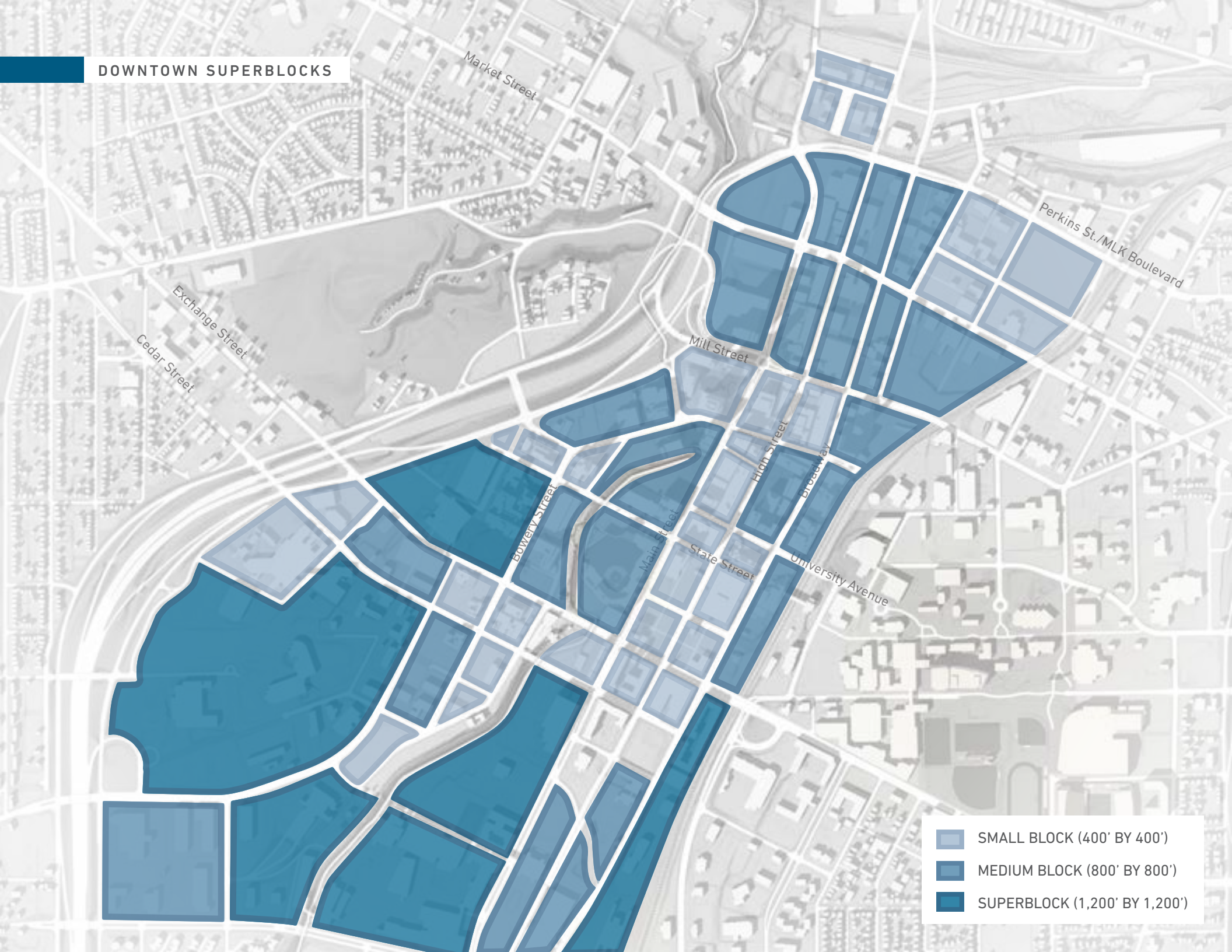
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Walkable streets begin with walkable blocks. Dense urban environments tend to exhibit a compact block pattern that encourages a high density of intersections allowing for multiple connections. These grid and block systems maximize walkability by encouraging active ground level uses in buildings that meet the street. Akron's urban core exhibits some of these development patterns in its smaller urban blocks, especially those south of Mill Street and north of Cedar Street, in the blocks between Main Street and the railroad tracks to the west and east, respectively. Pedestrians and vehicles moving through these blocks have multiple options to transverse their way through downtown, with east-west travel being as convenient as north-south travel. This part of downtown is its most walkable, and where reinvestment is happening first.

As downtown radiates out from its central core, block sizes increase as a response to geography, natural features, and the built environment. For instance, the canal creates a noticeable break in the street grid, as do the railroad tracks, valleys, and highways surrounding downtown. As a result, much of downtown's edges are characterized by superblock development patterns. This is particularly evident in downtown's south end, in which corporate and hospital campuses built in the late 20th Century showcase sprawling greens, ample surface parking, and disconnected streets. This section of downtown is uninviting to pedestrians, and excluding the Towpath Trail, is generally inaccessible to those without a car.



DOWNTOWN SUPERBLOCKS



- SMALL BLOCK (400' BY 400')
- MEDIUM BLOCK (800' BY 800')
- SUPERBLOCK (1,200' BY 1,200')

EXISTING CONDITIONS

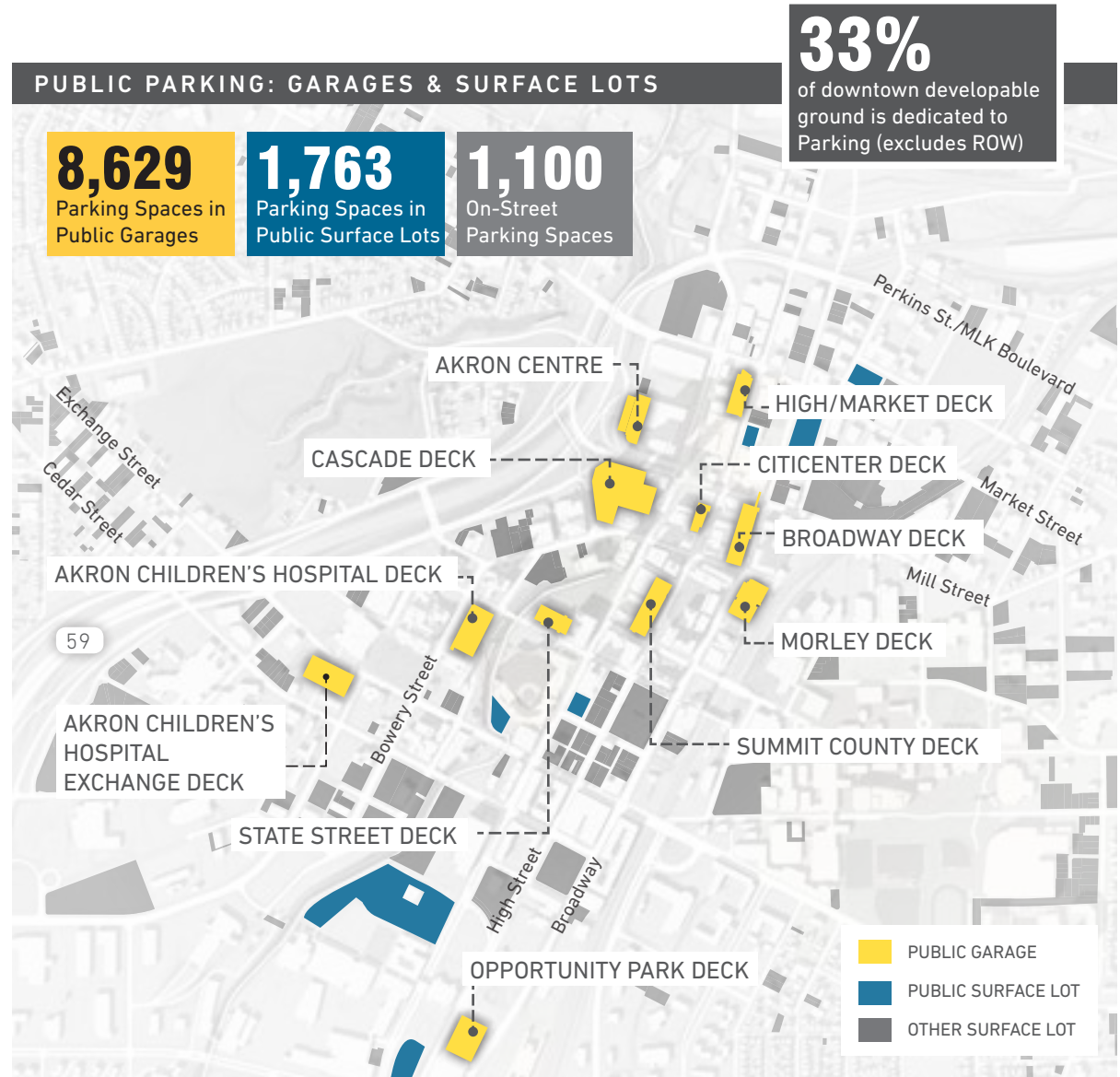
PARKING & TRANSIT

Downtown Parking

Parking in downtown Akron is in most cases convenient and readily available. As seen in the map to the right, publicly-owned garages are dispersed throughout the downtown core and supplemented by surface lots, both public and private. Surface lots dominate the landscape for wide swaths of downtown, sometimes occupying entire blocks and interrupting otherwise walkable areas. For instance, the surface parking lots located across from Canal Park fill four city blocks and separate shops and restaurants at Main and Exchange from Lock 3 further north on Main Street. The plethora of surface parking results in 33% of downtown's developable ground being consumed by surface parking lots. This percentage is typical for Midwestern downtowns, although many are lowering this number by encouraging infill development and shared parking.

Downtown Transit

Downtown transit is provided by METRO RTA's bus service, which includes various routes from the surrounding area that converge at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center on Broadway. METRO RTA offers a free downtown circulator, called DASH, which runs weekdays between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. in 10-15 minute intervals. In addition to connecting downtown destinations through a single transit route, DASH connects to the University of Akron campus. Since 2016, METRO RTA has been undergoing a planning process to redesign its routes, which may result in less routes connecting through downtown, but may increase the frequency of the remaining routes serving downtown.

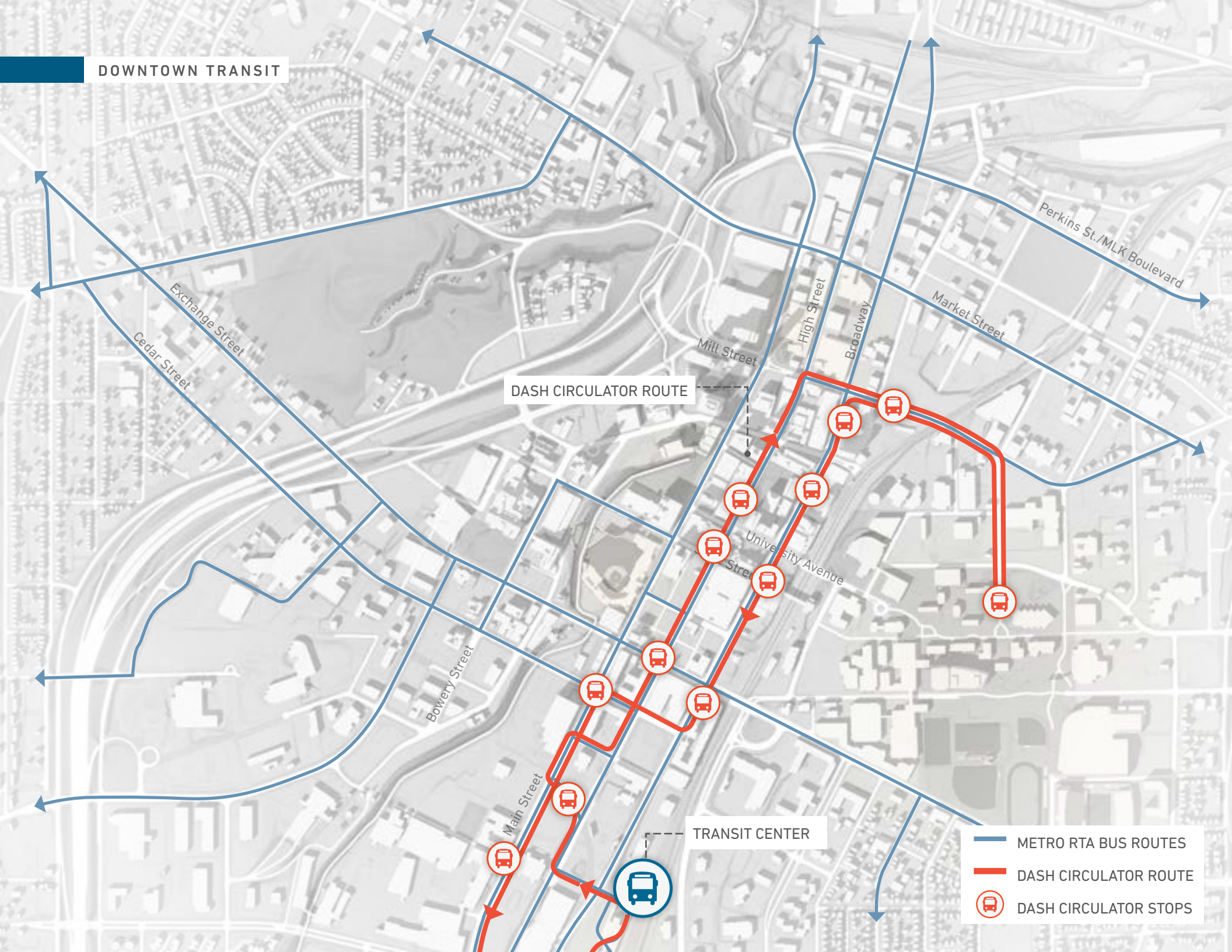


DOWNTOWN TRANSIT

DASH CIRCULATOR ROUTE

TRANSIT CENTER

- METRO RTA BUS ROUTES
- DASH CIRCULATOR ROUTE
- DASH CIRCULATOR STOPS



EXISTING CONDITIONS

CONNECTIVITY & STREETS

Connectivity

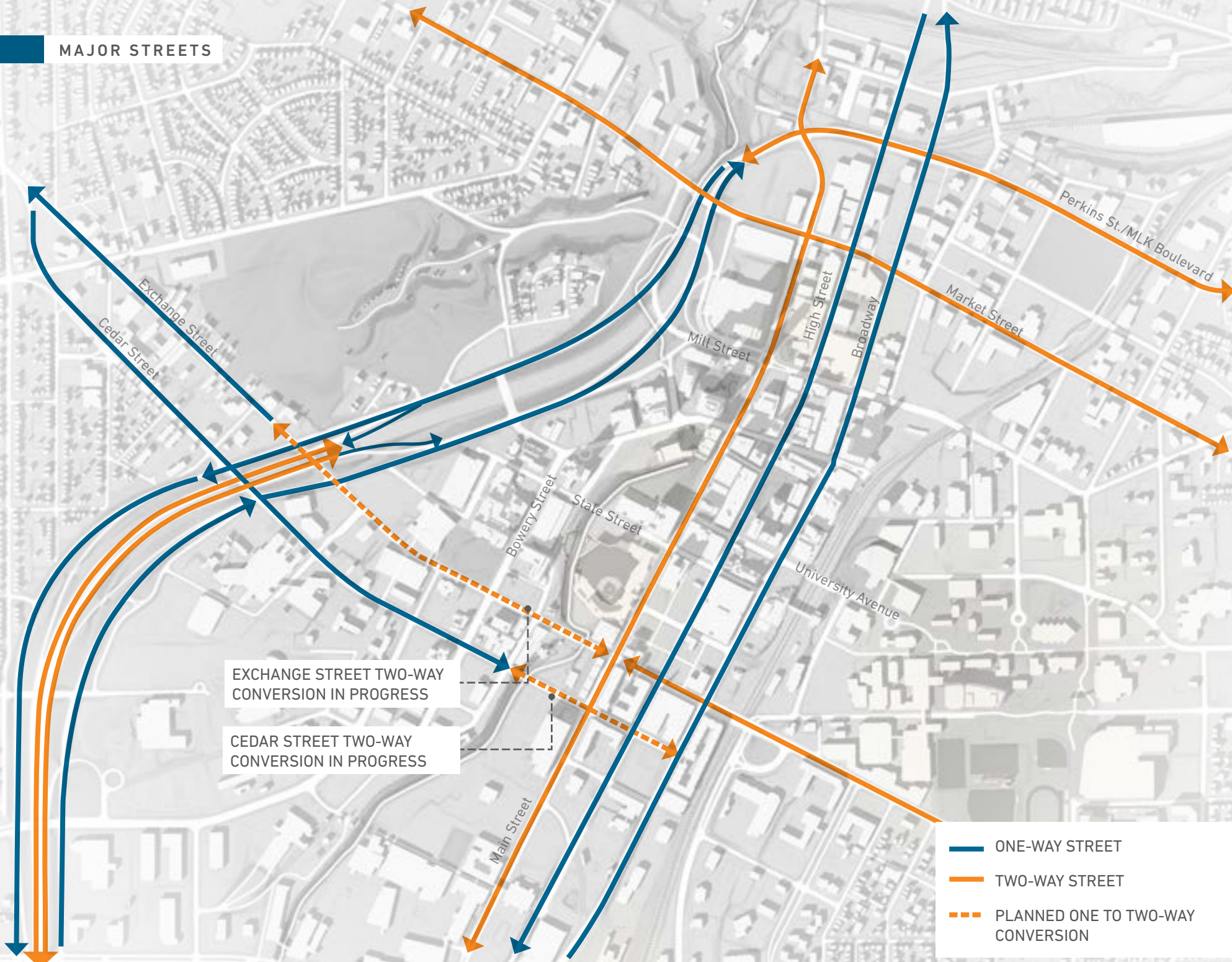
Downtown's connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods is challenged by a variety of factors, the first being geography. Due to its location along the Ohio and Erie Canal, downtown's edges are defined by steep slopes that have been accentuated by decades of transportation decisions. Along the north and east, railroad tracks separate downtown from Cascade Valley and the University of Akron. Along the west, Route 59 has added a separated-highway in the valley between downtown and the West Hill Neighborhood. This barrier is now being undone by the Innerbelt Project, and its completion will improve connectivity to western neighborhoods. Along the south edge, Interstate 76 separates the downtown area from South Akron neighborhoods. The result is a downtown isolated from its surrounding neighborhoods, operating as a virtual island.

Streets

In response to topography, railroad lines, and the canal, downtown streets are better connected when traveling north-south versus east-west. As seen in the map on the following page, major streets are configured as paired one-way streets designed to move commuters in and out of downtown at fast speeds. Nonetheless, portions of one-way streets, such as Exchange and Cedar Streets, are being converted to two-way travel. This will result in calmer traffic and easier wayfinding for pedestrians and vehicles alike.



MAJOR STREETS



EXCHANGE STREET TWO-WAY
CONVERSION IN PROGRESS

CEDAR STREET TWO-WAY
CONVERSION IN PROGRESS

- ONE-WAY STREET
- TWO-WAY STREET
- - - PLANNED ONE TO TWO-WAY CONVERSION



SECTION 3

MARKET ANALYSIS

MARKET ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Market analysis establishes a baseline of development potential and involves evaluating demographic trends, patterns in real estate supply and factors impacting future demand. This process of market analysis is equal parts art and science and is as much dependent on a market analyst’s experience, vision, and knowledge of the more qualitative influences on consumer behavior and preferences as it is on quantitative metrics such as absorption, occupancy, and lease rates. In this study, demand, supply, and site opportunities and constraints are evaluated separately before being reconciled to conclude a likely housing program for downtown Akron.

Though the purpose of the following report is to identify market opportunity for new residential development, understanding the dynamics of downtown’s broader economic, cultural, and institutional ecosystem is critical. In other words, different parts of downtown attract different types of people for a host of reasons. Students at the University of Akron have a different set of housing and retail needs than workers in the hospital district. Visitors to the Knight Center for a convention or concert at Lock 3 may not offer a market for housing, but they should also be considered when thinking about pedestrian activity and overall vibrancy. Finally, Akron’s regional context cannot be overlooked, especially as it relates to migration patterns to and from Cleveland, which has experienced a boom in downtown development over the last 10 to 15 years.



	City of Akron	Summit County	Akron MSA	Cleveland-Akron CSA
Population, 2016	199,000	545,000	710,000	3,849,000
Population Change 2010 - 2016	-0.2%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%
Median Household Income	\$35,000	\$51,000	\$51,500	\$49,000
Median Housing Value	\$86,000	\$145,000	\$149,000	\$146,000
Housing Units Added Annually 2010 - 2016	220	520	770	3,570

Source: ESRI, 2016

MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

RESIDENTIAL: TRENDS

Demographic shifts and changes in lifestyle preferences are impacting how people live, work, play, and interact within their communities. These shifts can be seen not only on a national scale, but regionally and locally as well. These factors have far-reaching and significant impacts on what types of new real estate development will be successful, including downtown Akron or other walkable neighborhoods in the region such as Highland Square, Cuyahoga Falls, or downtown Kent.

The demographics of America are changing—as are people’s preferences about where they want to live and what kinds of housing they want. The population is growing, household sizes are shrinking, and the number of seniors is increasing rapidly. Consumer preferences align with these demographic shifts, with a majority of households expressing a preference for walkable communities and a willingness to live in dense, walkable environments if it places them closer to jobs and amenities. This preference is particularly notable among young, educated professionals.



DEMOGRAPHICS



72%
Non-Family Households by 2025*

PREFERENCES



66%
Prefer attached or small lot housing**

INTERNET TRENDS



3,700%
Increase in web-based electronic sales***

Sources:

* Martha Farnsworth Riche

** If it puts them closer to work, mix of uses, etc. National Association of Realtors

***1999-2010 Census

Downtown Trends

Survey data from select cities that have experienced considerable downtown development in recent years, including Kansas City, St. Louis, and Nashville helps inform the types of households that would be interested in moving to downtown Akron, if the right housing products were available.

Roughly half of new downtown residents are young (under 35) and very few have children. This implies the greatest demand is for mid-priced housing with an emphasis on rental housing. However, mid-career professionals and empty nesters also comprise a sizable market and generally can afford higher-end housing, including for-sale housing.

Downtown residents are well-educated, with an impressive 84 percent holding college degrees. This not only informs housing development decisions, but illustrates how providing downtown housing is an important part of the city's business development strategy in attracting and retaining a talented workforce. This is further underscored by the fact that 33 percent of residents are from out-of-town.

Over half of downtown residents might not live downtown indicating that while living close to work is certainly a lifestyle decision that appeals to many, it is clearly not the only reason people move downtown. The fact that over half of new residents do not work downtown indicates that the appeal of living in a downtown neighborhood, regardless of place of employment, is important to many.

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS

ARE YOUNG	48%	Are between 18 and 34 years old
ARE IN MID-CAREER	35%	Are 35 to 54
ARE SINGLE	47%	Part of a one-person household
DON'T HAVE KIDS	92%	Have 0 children living in their household
ARE HIGHLY EDUCATED	84%	Have a Bachelor's degree or higher
MIGHT NOT WORK DOWNTOWN	53%	Work outside downtown
RECENTLY RELOCATED	33%	Moved from outside the MSA

Sources: Development Strategies based on data from Partnership for Downtown St. Louis, Nashville Downtown Partnership, and Downtown Council of Kansas City.

MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

PEER CITY DOWNTOWNS

Most larger regions in the Midwest have experienced some level of downtown reinvestment and housing development over the last 10 to 15 years, although comparably sized markets to Akron are in different phases in terms of new downtown investment. Cities like Grand Rapids have progressed considerably, while Dayton and Toledo are in the early stages of planning and redevelopment.

Observing development trends among Akron's peer cities can help identify opportunities and challenges, but also manage expectations for

realistic levels of future investment. Cities that are of a similar size as Akron in terms of city and MSA population and have similar industrial/manufacturing legacies include Dayton, Toledo, Rochester (NY), Grand Rapids, Fort Wayne, and Knoxville. In general, these regions have similar income and housing value levels; however, cities like Grand Rapids and Knoxville should be considered aspirational given their larger size and pace of growth and development over the last 10 to 15 years.

Compared to its peers, Akron has the lowest proportion of city population living downtown. If the City of Akron had the same proportion of its population living downtown as in Toledo, it would more than double its current downtown population, which in itself indicates untapped demand for downtown housing.

With the exception of Toledo, all of Akron's peer cities have experienced an increase in the proportion of the population with at least a bachelor's degree from 2009 to 2015, also emphasizing the need to position Akron's downtown to better attract and retain talent.

METROPOLITAN AREAS	POPULATION	DOWNTOWN POPULATION	PERCENT POPULATION DOWNTOWN	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	MEDIAN AGE	MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE	PERCENT CHANGE 25+ WITH AT LEAST A BACHELORS DEGREE
AKRON	713,000	1,500	0.2%	\$54,000	41	\$154,000	-10%
DAYTON	804,000	2,900	0.3%	\$51,000	40	\$135,000	4%
TOLEDO	610,000	3,000	0.5%	\$49,000	38	\$133,000	-24%
ROCHESTER	1,093,000	4,700	0.4%	\$55,000	41	\$141,000	8%
GRAND RAPIDS	1,058,000	4,300	0.4%	\$54,000	36	\$159,000	20%
FORT WAYNE	438,000	2,200	0.5%	\$52,000	37	\$126,000	4%
KNOXVILLE	882,000	1,900	0.2%	\$49,000	41	\$172,000	22%

SUPPLY

Competitive neighborhood analysis

An important benchmark for market rate housing in downtown Akron is the competitiveness of other urban neighborhoods in the region. Housing is generally affordable in these neighborhoods, which means new housing will need to be competitively priced, and close to amenities.

The neighborhoods stretching northwest of downtown along the West Market Street corridor, including Highland Square, Wallhaven, and Fairlawn, as well as Merriman Valley are the most competitive in the city for professional households. Consequently, these neighborhoods have also had the highest property value appreciation in the city, and according to Zillow, from 2015 to 2017, property value appreciation has exceeded the regional average in Fairlawn Heights, Merriman Valley, and Highland Square.

This has strong implications for downtown Akron. Since these competitive neighborhoods are more evolved in terms of amenities, new housing products downtown must be attractive enough to target markets in which they would be willing to spend more for a more unique housing product. Given the relative affordability of for-sale housing in these neighborhoods, the downtown rental market has more potential by offering higher-quality urban product that is otherwise unavailable in the region.

NEARBY NEIGHBORHOODS



	HIGHLAND SQUARE	FAIRLAWN	MERRIMAN VALLEY	CUYAHOGA FALLS	KENT
Median Sale Price 2B	\$110,000	\$135,000	NA	\$120,000	\$115,000
Median Sale Price 3B	\$170,000	\$180,000	\$162,000	\$149,000	\$157,000
Median Home Size 2B	1,300 SF	1,500 SF	1,600 SF	1,200 SF	900 SF
Median Home Size 3B	2,100 SF	1,600 SF	1,600 SF	1,500 SF	1,500 SF

Sources: Zillow, Development Strategies, 2017

MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

SUPPLY

Downtown Supply Trends

A broad range of housing products are possible throughout downtown Akron, but only a few product types have been offered to date. This study surveyed a number of products in the rental and for-sale arenas, but also identified numerous typologies that have yet to be offered, but could as the market matures. Approximately 850 residential units have been added to downtown Akron since the end of the recession. More than half of these—about 475 units—are located south of Exchange Street and target students at University of Akron. Uneven enrollment trends over the past several years have restricted the size of the market, and as newer student-focused properties have been completed occupancy rates at older properties have dipped. In the case of 401 Lofts, a decision to cross-market the property to young professionals has seen modest success.

Upscale Apartment Rehabs: The majority of non-student-oriented market-rate rental units added to downtown Akron and its periphery over the past decade have been contained within rehabbed historic buildings. Though none of these units are truly “luxury”, they generally include upscale finishes, materials, and details that are superior to older garden-style apartment communities commonly located just outside downtown. Unit layouts are spacious, and most include generous community amenity packages. Rents at these properties generally range from \$1.20 to \$1.30 per square foot, depending on unit size and layout.

Upscale High-density Apartments: Though not currently offered within the Akron market, these types of properties provide high-end rental housing, often in premium locations.

Midscale Apartments: The area immediately northwest of downtown has a number of large older properties with dated unit interiors and/or inferior locations. These primarily include older apartment towers that have received only modest renovations over the past few decades, as well as scattered garden apartment communities. Rents at these properties range from about \$0.80 to \$1.00 per square foot for one-bedroom units and about \$0.70 to \$0.90 per square foot for two-bedroom units.

Affordable Housing: Affordable properties are generally those that target households earning 30 to 60 percent of area median income. Apartment development is facilitated with tax credits from the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, and limits are set on household earnings for qualifying tenants, as well rents that can be charged.

Student Housing: The University of Akron’s proximity to downtown has given rise to a number of student-targeted apartment communities in recent years. These properties are heavily amenitized and often leased by the bedroom, generating average rents between \$1.75 and \$2.00 per square foot—well above comparable figures for non-student properties. Despite their premium rents, student-targeted communities generally include lower quality finishes and materials than contemporary rehabs or new construction.

Luxury Apartments: These property types include new construction apartment properties developed at medium to high densities with high-end finishes and amenities in prime downtown locations. Though some of the units at the Northside Lofts are being rented, which shows a level of interest from the high-end rental market, there is not a professionally-managed luxury apartment property in the market. Though this product type is absent from the Akron market, demand could grow in the future as market conditions improve.

SUPPLY: HIGHER-DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Historic Rehab Apartments

Historic apartment rehabs comprise the bulk of the newly-developed rental supply, which will likely require older high-rise and garden apartment communities that are outside downtown to improve in order to remain competitive.



RESIDENCES AT EAST END
 Rehabbed 2015
 107 units
 650 —1,100 SF
 \$1.05—\$1.30 PSF

AVG. RENT
1BR: \$1.30/SF
2BR: \$1.05/SF
3BR: \$1.25/SF



CANAL SQUARE LOFTS
 Rehabbed 1986/2016
 67 units
 880 —1,220 SF
 \$1.15-\$1.25 PSF

AVG. RENT
1BR: \$1.25/SF
2BR: \$1.15/SF

Student Housing

Student housing near the University of Akron constitutes nearly all newly-constructed multifamily properties developed over the past decade near downtown. A variety of new on-and-off-campus options offer students far greater latitude in housing choice compared to previous decades.



THE DEPOT
 Built 2014
 144 Units
 550—1,380 SF
 \$1.60—\$1.85 PSF

AVG. RENT
1BR: \$1.75/SF
2BR: \$1.60/SF
3BR: \$1.85/SF

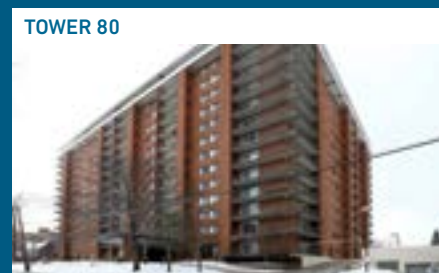


401 LOFTS
 Built 2013
 189 units
 420 SF—1,300 SF
 \$2.00—\$2.35 PSF

AVG. RENT
1BR: \$2.35/SF
2BR: \$2.00/SF
3BR: \$2.20/SF

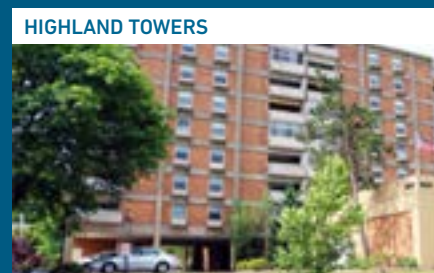
Older Mid-Rise Apartments

The flurry of development activity in the past decade has put some downward pressure on older Midscale apartment products located outside of downtown. Essentially all of these units were completed before the 1990s and the combination of age and poor location has resulted in average rents of \$0.70 to \$1.00 per square foot overall. Buildings include a mix of older high-rise and traditional garden apartment typologies.



TOWER 80
 Built 1975
 166 units
 900 —1,800 SF
 \$0.70—\$0.90 PSF

AVG. RENT
1BR: \$0.90/SF
2BR: \$0.80/SF
3BR: \$0.70/SF



HIGHLAND TOWERS
 Built 1962
 96 units
 950 —1,500 SF
 \$0.70—\$0.80 PSF

AVG. RENT
1BR: \$0.80/SF
2BR: \$0.70/SF
3BR: \$0.70/SF

For-Sale Housing

Downtown for-sale development has been virtually non-existent since 2008, and the existing supply is limited to a small number of condos and townhomes targeting a niche luxury market. Remaining options consist of older single-family homes and condos in close-in neighborhoods that require significant renovation to remain competitive.



NORTHSIDE LOFTS
 Built 2007-2008
 89 units
 1,400—2,500 SF
 \$385,000+



NORTHSIDE TOWNHOMES
 Built 2007-2008
 7 units
 1,800—2,000 SF
 \$250,000+

MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

MARKET AREAS

Definition of Residential Market Areas

In market analysis, a Primary Market Area (PMA) is typically defined as the smallest geographic area from which a high percentage (often 75 percent) of support for a project will be drawn. In some cases, particularly in large metropolitan regions, a Secondary Market Area (SMA) is identified as the origin for most of the remaining support, in order to focus the analysis on the most relevant geographies for a project.

Market boundaries are sometimes defined by hard boundaries, such as rivers, highways and other major thoroughfares, railroads, etc. Often, market areas are defined by soft boundaries—that is, marked changes in socioeconomic condition, such as income, density, ethnicity, and educational attainment. Additionally, this study relied partly on geo-demographic segmentation analysis, which considers not only conventional demographic variables like age and income, but also neighborhood preferences (i.e. geographic characteristics), culture, values, and buying habits (psychographic variables). As a result, the market boundaries are not only defined by hard and soft boundaries, but by clusters of households with similar lifestyle preferences.

For downtown Akron, the PMA covers the urban core and University of Akron areas to the east, as well as the neighborhoods stretching westward, including Highland Square, West Akron, and Wallhaven. This market area incorporates a mix of demographics, affordability levels, and housing typologies, but given urban conditions and proximity, households living in this area would be the most likely to support new downtown housing. The SMA pulls from the areas primarily stretching further to the north, south, and west. Though socioeconomic conditions vary considerably throughout and housing density is lower, downtown could also have appeal to renter households living in garden-style apartments or smaller rental units seeking more walkability.

Demand Analysis

Determining market demand is complicated. For instance, conventional market analysis looks specifically at income variables in the market area, without consideration of consumer preferences, while target market analysis utilizes consumer preferences, but relies on national averages. Other types of analyses measure demand from very specific populations. Ultimately, a number of methods have been used in this study, and are then reconciled at the end of this chapter.

DEMAND ANALYSIS



TARGET MARKET

Considers consumer profiles of residents within the Akron market to determine desirable housing products.



CONVENTIONAL

Assesses income variables within the defined market areas to determine the amount and types of units that are affordable to existing residents in the region.



IN-MIGRATION

Using data from the American Community survey and target market analysis, estimates the number of residents moving to Akron annually that would be attracted to new development near downtown.



AFFORDABLE

Affordable housing analysis uses conventional market demand methodology to validate a hypothetical new affordable housing development.



STUDENT

Considers enrollment trends and housing supply at the University of Akron to determine future student housing demand.



PEER CITIES

Understand the capture rates of downtown housing compared to citywide and regional housing development in Akron's peer cities can help inform realistic development goals for downtown Akron.



MARKET AREAS



MARKET AREAS ARE DEFINED BY HARD AND SOFT BOUNDARIES, AS WELL AS CONSUMER PREFERENCES. ANALYSIS OF THESE MARKET AREAS PROVIDES USEFUL INSIGHT INTO THE TYPES OF DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS THAT WOULD BE ATTRACTED TO LIVING IN A WALKABLE, MIXED-USE ENVIRONMENT.

PRIMARY MARKET AREA

SECONDARY MARKET AREA

Population Growth 2010 - 2017	1.4%	-0.9%
Population Growth 2017 - 2022	0.6%	-0.3%
Median Household Income	\$30,000	\$35,000
Median Housing Value	\$85,000	\$86,000
Housing Units Added 2010 - 2017	440	420

MARKET ANALYSIS

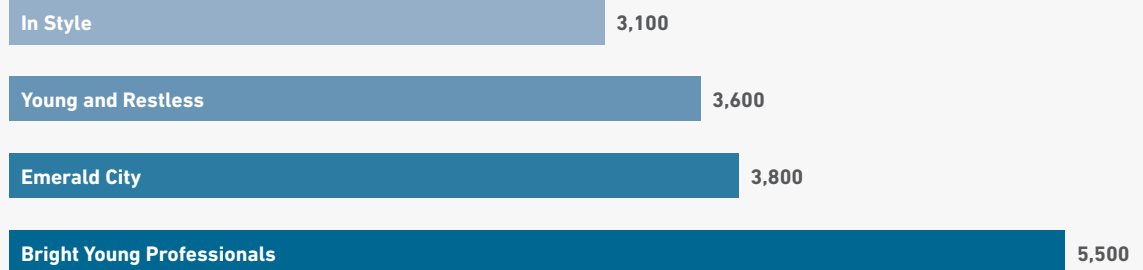
RESIDENTIAL

TARGET MARKET

Target market analysis is used to determine demand based not only on geography and demographic traits, but also on consumer preferences. As a result, desired product types can be determined, in addition to affordability. The segments present in Akron and the surrounding area are identified using ESRI's Community Tapestry™ data, which uses algorithms to link demographic, geographic, and psychographic data to create 65 unique geo-demographic segments. In other words, these “segments” are essentially 65 household groupings, each with their own unique combination of demographic (income, age, etc.), geographic, and psychographic (values, culture, etc.) characteristics.

This study identified two target segments that have the preferences for and income levels to support market rate housing in downtown Akron: Urban Professionals and Displaced Urbanites, although these groups are currently not living downtown given the lack of supply. The most affluent of these households can afford the most expensive for-sale housing products, whereas the least affluent are likely to rent the least-expensive rental units. Based on demand modeling, in total, these groups could support 1,550 housing units downtown.

CURRENT MARKET FOR URBAN WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS | AKRON MSA



Urban Professionals

Urban Professionals tend to be highly educated, earn high incomes, and have a strong preference toward urban living. The group includes a mix of young professional singles and couples. They prefer living in downtown areas with multifamily housing and walkable amenities. The two primary Urban Professionals groups in the Akron region include Emerald City and Bright Young Professionals, which each have slightly different household competitions and housing preferences.

The Emerald City segment is highly educated and tends to favor historic, urban neighborhoods. In Akron region, this segment has been drawn to Highland Square and Wallhaven in the city of Akron, as well as parts of Kent. This group is more likely to own their home rather than rent. Bright Young Professionals are slightly younger than Emerald City with more single households and are more likely to rent, mostly given their age.

Displaced Urbanites

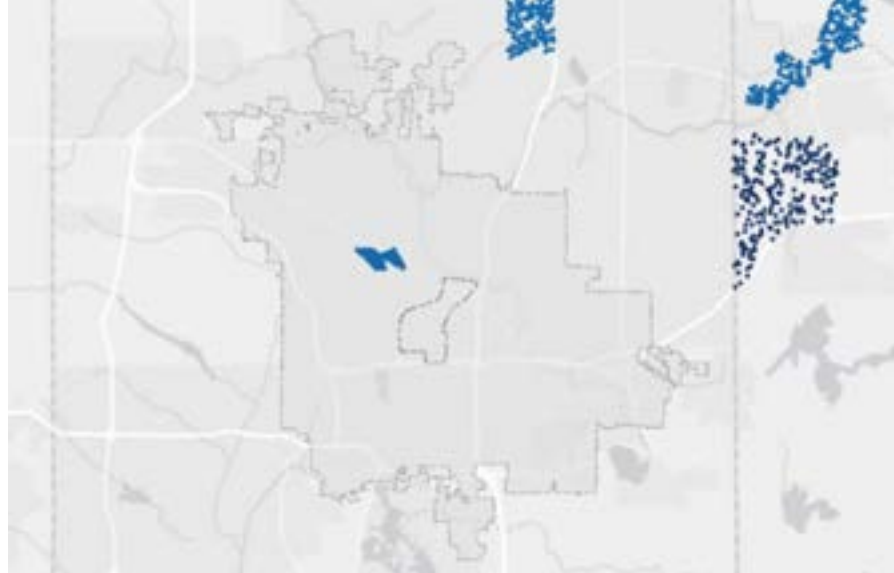
The Displaced Urbanites group consists of a wide variety of households that, for reasons cultural or practical, are strong candidates for urban or—even more likely—urbane living, but currently live in suburban locations.

The Young and Restless group is young, transient, single, and well-educated—an ideal market for downtown Akron; however, given the lack of supply, this group has been living in garden-style properties outside of the urban core primarily in the Merriman Valley. The In Style group is older and more likely to have children, but are culturally very similar to Urban Professionals. These households tend to live in portions of Wallhaven and Fairlawn and would be attracted by a larger, higher-quality (and higher-priced) rental product than the Urban Professionals group, as well as for-sale condo or attached townhome products.



DEMAND ANALYSIS

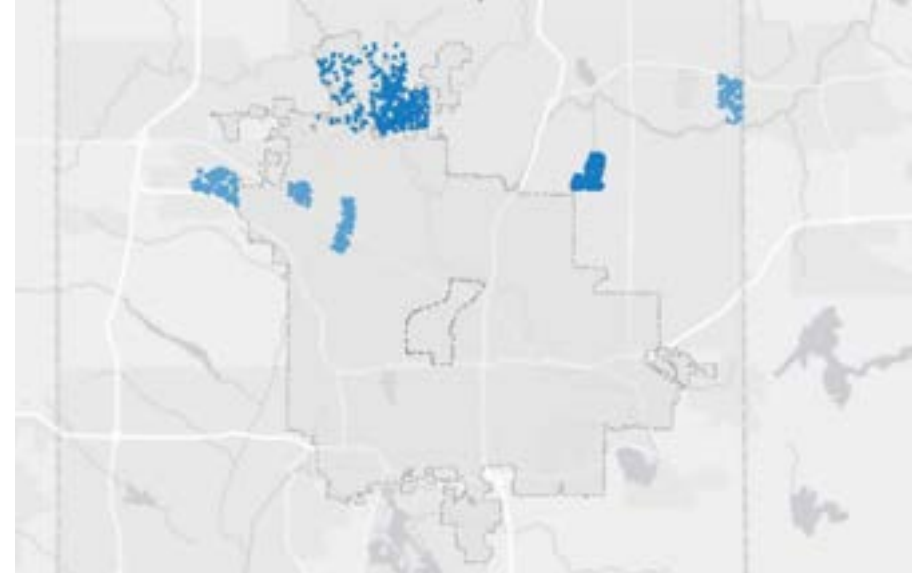
URBAN PROFESSIONALS



BRIGHT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS	EMERALD CITY
MEDIAN HH INCOME \$50,000	MEDIAN HH INCOME \$52,000
MEDIAN AGE 32	MEDIAN AGE 37
PERCENTAGE OF OWNERSHIP 44%	PERCENTAGE OF OWNERSHIP 50%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE 2.4	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE 2.1
PREDOMINANT HH TYPE Singles/Roommates	PREDOMINANT HH TYPE Singles/Couples

Source: ESRI, 2017

DISPLACED URBANITES



IN STYLE	YOUNG & RESTLESS
MEDIAN HH INCOME \$66,000	MEDIAN HH INCOME \$36,000
AVERAGE AGE 41	AVERAGE AGE 29
PERCENTAGE OF OWNERSHIP 69%	PERCENTAGE OF OWNERSHIP 14%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE 2.3	AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE 2.0
PREDOMINANT HH TYPE Singles/Couples	PREDOMINANT HH TYPE Singles/Roommates

Source: ESRI, 2017

MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

CONVENTIONAL

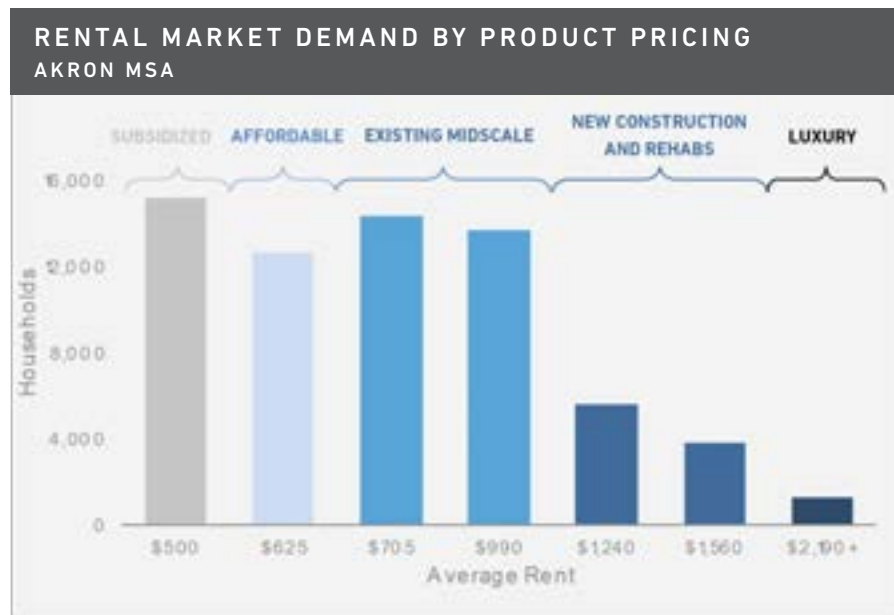
Conventional market analysis yields insight into key price points that are affordable to portions of the market. Homes priced at \$200,000 to \$300,000 have significant support, as do apartments with monthly rents ranging from roughly \$875 to \$1,300. Conventional market demand analysis utilizes household income data to determine for-sale and rental housing price points that will be in highest demand in the primary and secondary market areas. While target market analysis provides a nuanced look at how consumer preferences in the market align with specific housing products, conventional analysis offers an additional level

of understanding of local market conditions and depth of demand. The conventional analysis of the Akron market areas is illustrated in the charts below.

Given the relative strength of the Akron regional market, it is informative to look at affordability more broadly, at the metro level. In the Akron MSA, overall, there are approximately 48,000 owner households who could afford a modest condo unit priced between \$240,000 and \$330,000, while there are about 12,000 households who could afford higher-end products priced above \$350,000. For rental units, there

would be demand from just over 19,000 renter households for rents of approximately \$990 to \$1,240 per month, as well as approximately 5,000 renter households who could afford rents of \$1,560 and above.

While a relatively higher proportion of households in the market areas could be captured by housing in the downtown Akron—as much as 20 percent—a realistic capture rate of households throughout the MSA would likely be about one to two percent, representing approximately 100 to 200 high-end rental units and 250 to 500 high-end for-sale homes.





IMMIGRATION

Recent relocations compose a key segment of any downtown housing market, especially those coming from urban counties. Data from the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data indicates that Summit County has a particularly strong pull from Cuyahoga County and other parts of the Cleveland region with more than 4,000 people moving from Cuyahoga County annually. Of all people that moved to Summit County, approximately 70 percent came from other parts of Ohio. More than 5,900 people moved to Summit County from other urban counties, although Cuyahoga County represented nearly 70 percent of these immigrants.

The primary urban professional renter segment is Metro Renters, which are currently not represented in the Akron region. This group is highly-educated and highly-mobile and prefer renting in urban environments for lifestyle and flexibility. This is the primary segment living in downtown Cleveland representing more than 50 percent of existing households. Given the relative proximity of downtown Akron and synergies between the two cities, Cleveland presents a potential market for attracting this type of household—if downtown Akron can provide the desired types of housing. Though historical tapestry data is unavailable, it can be assumed that the Metro Renter group was not in the Cleveland region prior to the revitalization of its downtown over the last two decades.

MORE THAN 5,900 PEOPLE MOVED TO SUMMIT COUNTY FROM OTHER URBAN COUNTIES, ALTHOUGH CUYAHOGA COUNTY REPRESENTED NEARLY 70 PERCENT OF THESE IMMIGRANTS.



Source: ACS, 2015



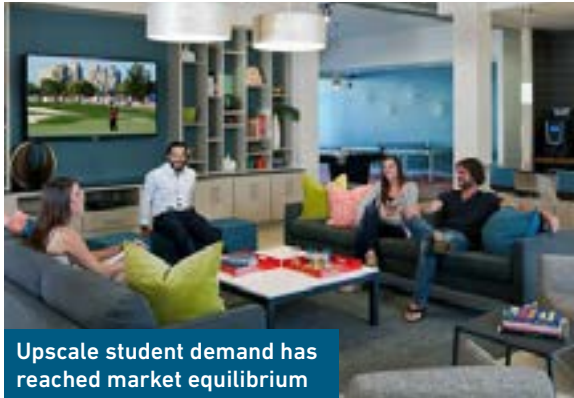
Source: ESRI, 2017



MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

STUDENT



Upscale student demand has reached market equilibrium

The current supply of off-campus housing meets the demand of students at the University of Akron, indicating a market equilibrium. While the steady stream of students provides some stability for the downtown market, total enrollment at the University of Akron has declined slightly since 2011. The intersection of this decline with the surplus of student-targeted units has softened the market considerably. Rent growth has been relatively flat over the past several years, while current occupancy rates range remain above 90 percent. The student-oriented properties in the market serve only a portion of the overall student pool, as a significant number of price-sensitive students opt for older, more affordable rentals, or simply commute. Overall, the flurry of new student-targeted construction has met existing demand for upscale units. Remaining student demand is met by more affordable, older, midscale properties further from downtown.

AFFORDABLE



The spectrum of affordable housing development can address the needs of a broad group of households types including singles, families, and seniors across a number of income levels ranging from working families to those requiring deeper subsidy. Based on maximum allowable income levels and minimum income requirement based on achievable rents (households earning between \$24,000 and \$41,000), the analysis found that just under 3,600 households in the PMA that would qualify to live at a LIHTC affordable property. Accounting for household size and housing tenure, when applying a reasonable capture rate of 10 to 15 percent, any single project could support approximately 75 to 125 units. Using the same household criteria, an additional 5,500 households in the SMA would similarly qualify for these units, should the goal be to provide affordable housing for a larger population in the city.

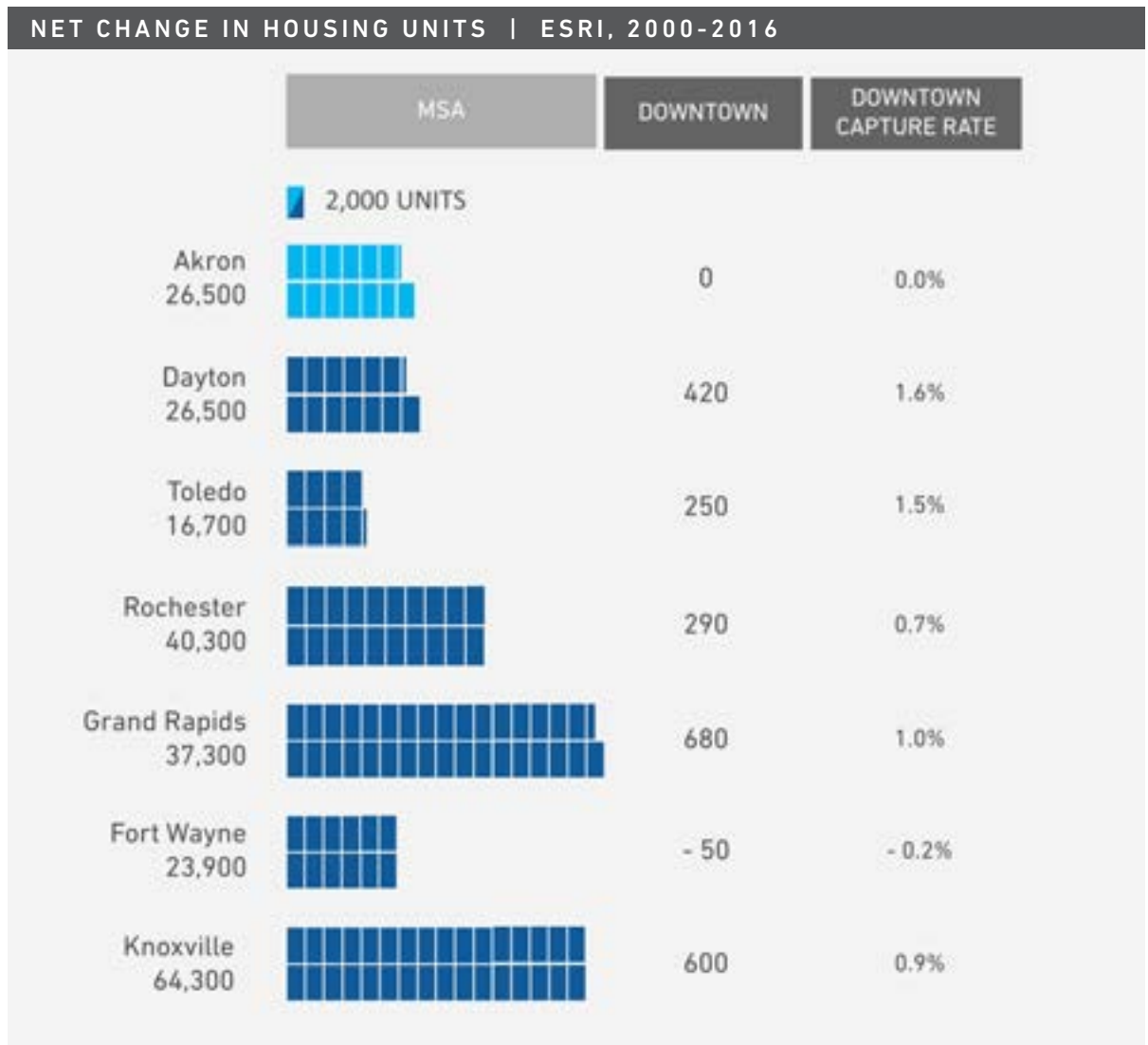




PEER CITIES

From 2000 to 2016, Akron’s peer cities had net growth in downtown housing units of roughly 0.5 to 1.5 percent of regional growth. During this time period, Akron’s regional housing supply had a net increase of nearly 26,500 units; however, downtown housing units experience no net gain.

If housing development in downtown Akron followed the same pace of development as its peers with an average of 1.25 percent of net regional housing growth, the downtown Akron housing supply would have increased by around 350 housing units since 2000. Since this data represents net change, the pace of new construction must not only add to the housing supply, but replace vacant and/or obsolete housing units. Therefore, despite downtown Akron adding nearly 500 units of student housing since 2007, this building activity has only kept pace with replacement. Moving forward, downtown should be positioned to develop more than 1,000 units over the next 10 years.



MARKET ANALYSIS

RESIDENTIAL

HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

Aligning the appropriate products, or typologies, with target market demand is an essential component of a market strategy. While there are many different products that are needed to meet the full range of demand in a downtown housing market, the adjacent images show the five products that will be needed in the greatest number to meet the needs of the target consumer demographics that were identified in this study.



REHABBED APARTMENTS




Average Unit Sq. Ft. & Rent/Month	Average Rent Per Sq. Ft.
550 sf \$750 – Studio	\$1.35
750 sf \$1,000 – 1 BR	\$1.35
1,200 sf \$1,350 – 2 BR	\$1.15
1,400 sf \$1,500 – 3 BR	\$1.10

Target Market	Demand Pool
Young Professionals Couples Roommates	Deep

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Average Unit Sq. Ft. & Rent/Month	Average Rent Per Sq. Ft.
550 sf \$850 – Studio	\$1.55
700 sf \$1,050 – 1 BR	\$1.50
1,000 sf \$1,450 – 2BR	\$1.45

Target Market	Demand Pool
Young Professionals Couples Roommates	Moderate

RECONCILIATION OF METHODS

1,200 Apartments | **200 - 300** For-sale condos and townhomes

Over the next 10 years

Based on the demand analyses described on the previous pages, a mix of residential products in downtown Akron would be successful and could fit the needs of a variety of demographic groups in the metro area. Using reasonable capture rates for the existing market, there is likely support for up to 300 for-sale housing products over the next ten years, split between attached townhomes and condominiums. Additionally, there is support for approximately 1,200 upscale rental apartments. Market conditions suggest that these products would be absorbed over approximately ten years.

AFFORDABLE



Average Unit Sq. Ft. & Rent/Month	Average Rent Per Sq. Ft.
750 sf \$615 - 1 BR	\$0.80
1,200 sf \$725 - 2 BR	\$0.60
1,400 sf \$850 - 3 BR	\$0.60
Target Market	Demand Pool
Families Seniors	Deep

TOWNHOMES



Average Unit Sq. Ft. & Rent/Month	Average Sale Per Sq. Ft.
1,800 sf \$300,000 - 2 BR	\$170
2,400 sf \$375,000 - 3 BR	\$160
Target Market	Demand Pool
Young Families Empty Nesters	Limited

REHABBED CONDOS



Average Unit Sq. Ft. & Rent/Month	Average Sale Per Sq. Ft.
1,200 sf \$225,000 - 2 BR	\$190
1,500 sf \$275,000 - 3 BR	\$185
Target Market	Demand Pool
Mid-career Professionals, Young Families, Empty Nesters	Limited

MARKET ANALYSIS

HOSPITALITY

HOTEL MARKET OVERVIEW

The overall marketability of downtown Akron is very much dependent on creating a better “gateway” for overnight visitors. A number of visitors to a city, whether they are coming for business or leisure travel, want to stay in a downtown area to experience the most vibrant, walkable, and dynamic areas that the city has to offer. Though the Akron region might have an ample supply of hotel rooms in commercial clusters near highway interchanges and throughout suburban areas, there is a missed opportunity to better co-locate hotels with downtown’s higher-density employment clusters and cultural amenities as well as other key regional economic drivers, including downtown hospitals, University of Akron, and John S. Knight Center.

Even with the addition of 65 new hotel rooms anticipated to come online in 2018, downtown Akron will still only capture less than four percent of the regional hotel supply.

5,500

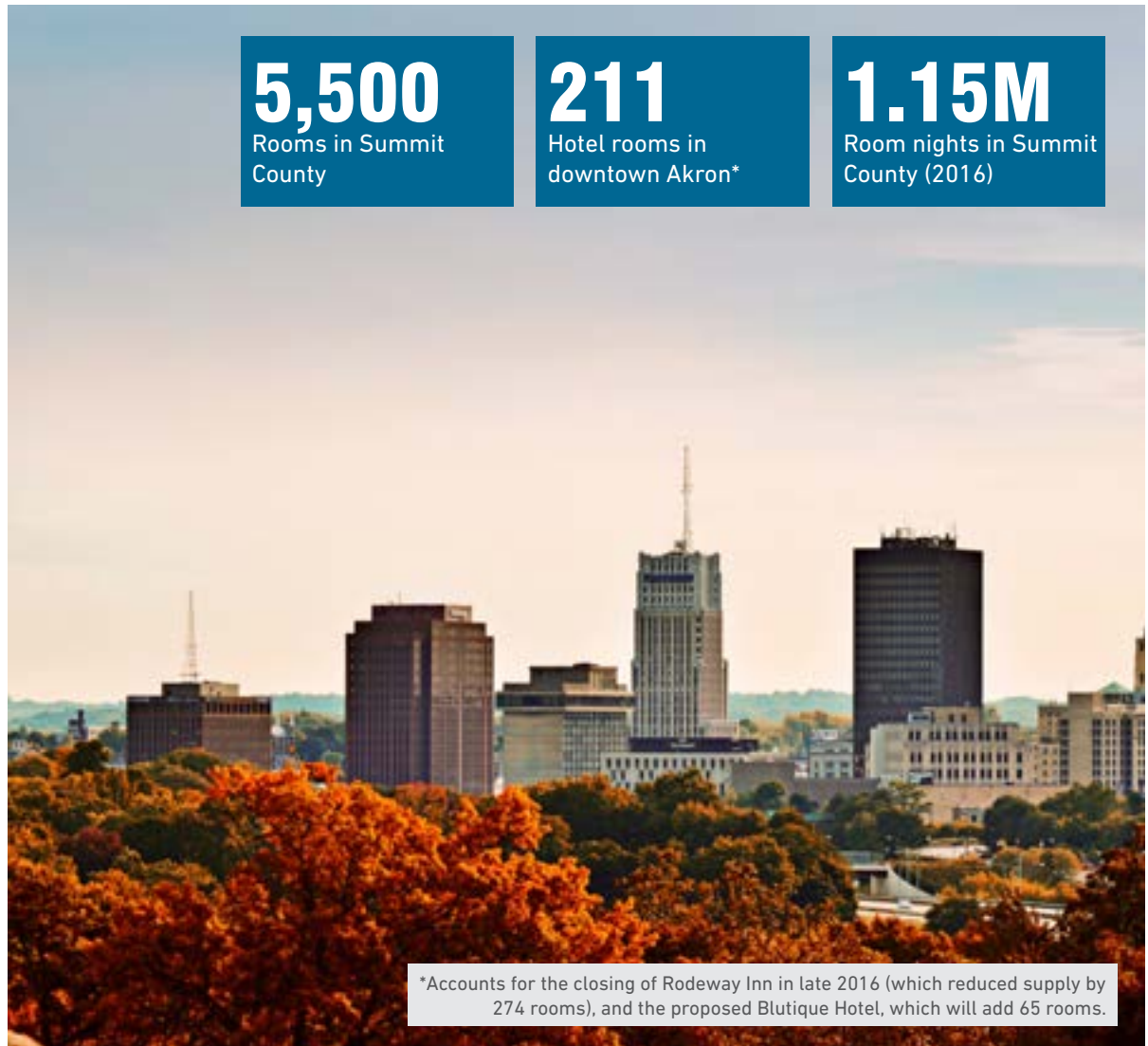
Rooms in Summit County

211

Hotel rooms in downtown Akron*

1.15M

Room nights in Summit County (2016)



*Accounts for the closing of Rodeway Inn in late 2016 (which reduced supply by 274 rooms), and the proposed Blutique Hotel, which will add 65 rooms.

SEGMENTS OF DEMAND

Downtown Akron offers a diverse range of market support for the hospitality industry covering four distinct segments of demand: 1) University of Akron, 2) Healthcare Anchors, 3) Business Travelers, and 4) Cultural and Entertainment Anchors, which are all “magnets” of economic activity in the region.

The **University of Akron** has a total enrollment of around 22,000 students and just under 4,500 full and part-time staff, which attract out-of-town visitors related to university operations, academics, speakers and performances, and visiting students and parents. Downtown Akron’s **Healthcare Anchors** of Summa Health, Cleveland Clinic Akron General, and Akron Children’s Hospital are three of the top employers in the region with more than 18,000 employees. Business activities at the hospitals attract visitors, not to mention the thousands of patients annually who are drawn from a much broader regional market. There is a considerable market for **Business Travelers** given the 14 percent of total regional jobs and 5,400 business and professional services jobs located downtown. Finally, **Cultural and Entertainment Anchors** located downtown, such as Akron Art Museum, Akron Civic Theatre, Locks 3 & 4, and Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, attract more than 1.2 million attendees annually, which also offer hotel market support.

Without conducting an in-depth market analysis and survey of hotel demand within these groups, it is reasonable to assume that downtown Akron could capture 10 percent of regional hotel demand representing 450 supportable hotel rooms.

University of Akron

Healthcare Anchors

Business Travelers

Cultural & Entertainment Anchors

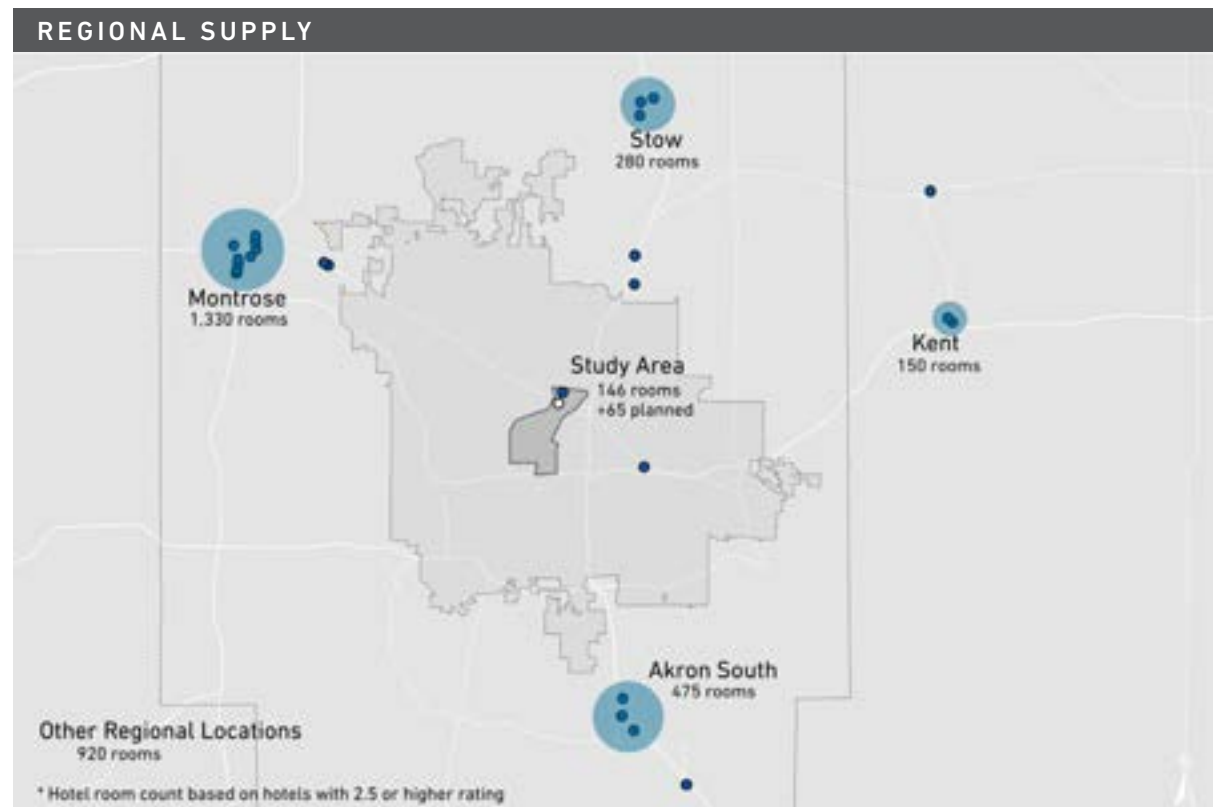


MARKET ANALYSIS

HOSPITALITY

SUPPLY: REGIONAL SUPPLY

The Akron region has a total hotel room supply of approximately 5,500 hotel rooms; however, downtown Akron currently only has one hotel with 146 rooms (Courtyard by Marriott) and the city of Akron only has one other hotel with a star rating over 2.5 (Hilton Garden Inn). The vast majority of the regional hotel supply is located outside of the city in clusters in and around Montrose (1,330 rooms), Stow (280 rooms), Akron South (475 rooms), and Kent (150 rooms). Note that these room counts only represent hotels with a 2.5 star rating or higher.



SUPPLY: PEER CITIES

Compared to its peer downtowns, downtown Akron has the lowest existing and future supply of hotel rooms. Based on a survey of market data and downtown development trends in each of the peer cities, Grand Rapids, Rochester, and Knoxville have the most robust downtown hospitality markets with close to 1,000 or more existing hotel rooms. Even amongst Akron’s most comparable peers of Fort Wayne, Toledo, and Dayton, their downtown’s also have strong hotel markets each with at least one larger scale hotel development proposed in the next few years.



	Total Existing Downtown Hotel Rooms	Planned or Under Construction	Future Hotel Supply
Akron	146	65	65
Dayton	287	96	96
Toledo	534	150	150
Fort Wayne	509	280	280
Rochester	1,200	0	0
Grand Rapids	1,546	690	690

MARKET ANALYSIS

HOSPITALITY

CONVENTION CENTER

Compared to its peer cities, Akron has one of the most successful convention centers in terms of total annual attendance, despite downtown’s limited hotel supply.

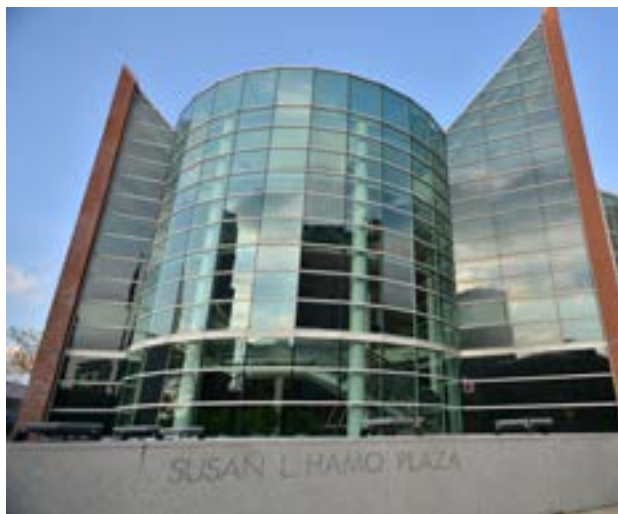
Addressing the downtown hotel supply is critical not only for the convention center, but the region as a whole. In this very competitive industry, the John S. Knight Center is limited in its ability to attract larger-scale conventions that draw overnight visitors. Convention centers tend to have the largest economic impacts on a local community when they can attract out-of-town visitors who tend to spend more money at

local hotels, restaurants, retailers, and other amenities. Without an ample supply of quality hotel rooms, there is a risk that the John S. Knight Center could lose its competitive positioning to other comparably sized markets in the Midwest, including Toledo, Dayton, and Fort Wayne.

Based on interviews with Akron/Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau staff, approximately 10 percent of visitors to the John S. Knight Center are overnight visitors, which supports roughly 150 hotel rooms annually. With more hotel offerings downtown, it could increase attendance, but more importantly, increase the proportion

of overnight visitors, which could support approximately 150 more rooms.

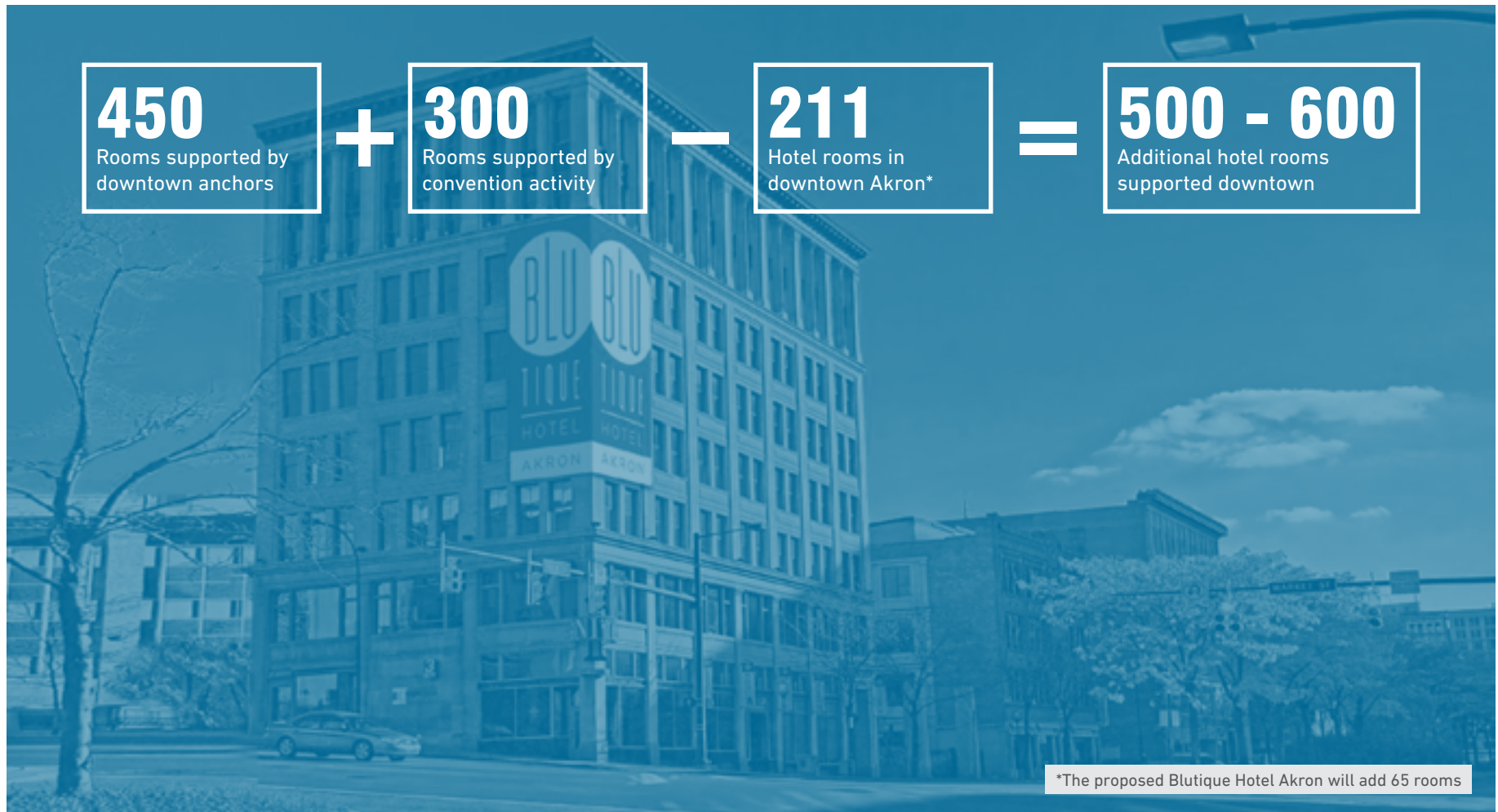
In total, the convention center could support 300 rooms. These estimates assume an average annual occupancy of 70 percent. During larger conventions, there is usually demand for more rooms, emphasizing the need to leverage other tiers of market support given the temporal nature of convention activity.



	Total Square Footage	Exhibition Hall Space	Banquet Hall/ Ballroom Space	Annual Attendance
John S. Knight Center Akron, OH	123,000	29,000	12,000	390,000
Dayton Convention Center Dayton, OH	150,000	29,000	-	170,000
Grand Wayne Convention Center Fort Wayne, IN	225,000	48,500	16,000	220,000
Joseph A. Floreano Riverside Convention Center Rochester, NY	100,000	49,000	10,000	300,000
Knoxville Convention Center Knoxville, TN	500,000	120,000	27,000	300,000
Devos Place Convention Center Grand Rapids, MI	234,000	162,000	40,000	590,000

CONCLUSIONS

Downtown anchors could support 450 rooms, along with 300 additional rooms supported by convention activity. Deducting the existing supply of 146 rooms and future supply of 65 rooms with the development of Blutique Hotel Akron, downtown Akron could support between 500 and 600 additional rooms.

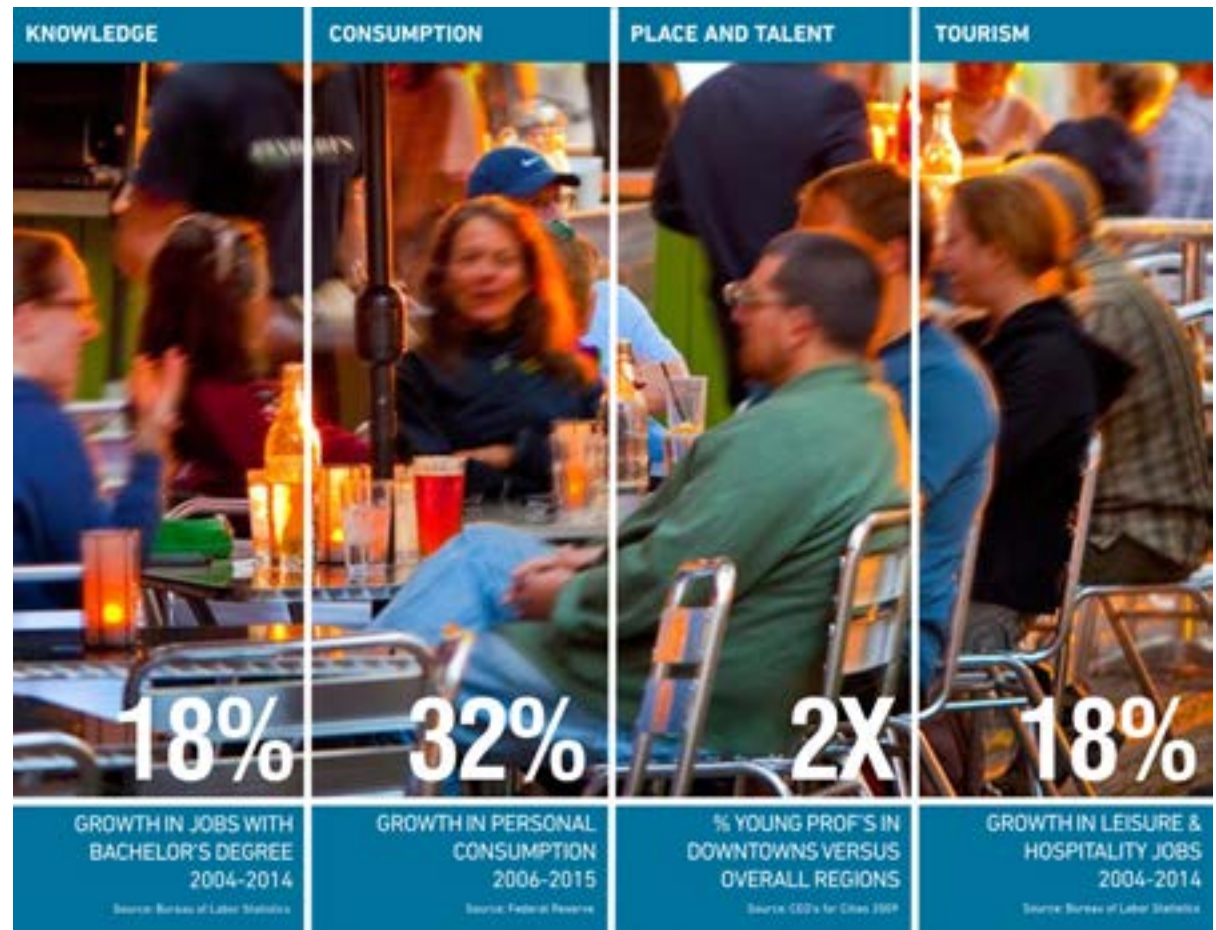


MARKET ANALYSIS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC & CULTURAL SHIFT

It's time to adapt and think differently about what grows an economy. Cities with strong legacies in manufacturing, such as Akron, need to continually adapt and diversify in order to remain competitive in a talent-driven global marketplace. Successful local and regional economies today are increasingly more reliant on consumption, on the attraction of talent, on the free exchange of knowledge and ideas, and on tourism. The commonality between all of these elements is the need for place—or places, to be more precise. The only place in which all these elements can come together is downtown, but it will need to revitalize in order to address many of its structural issues, such as a shortage of business startups, entrepreneurial activity and low retention of highly educated residents. Addressing these will help create a more diversified economy with better paying jobs for people with and without college degrees. With growing demand nationally for urban places to live, work, shop, and recreate, the best opportunity in two generations exists today to revitalize downtown and, in doing so, reinvent the Akron economy.



INDUSTRY SECTOR ANALYSIS & TRENDS

The Akron region in many ways has been adapting to national and global economic trends and continues to shift towards a highly-talented service-based economy based on employment patterns by industry sector. This has strong implications for downtown, since the workforce in these growing industry sectors tend to be attracted to walkable, urban environments.

According to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Healthcare employment in the Akron MSA grew by 36 percent from 2001 to 2015, outpacing national growth of 32 percent. Employment in professional office-oriented industries, including Business and Finance, Professional/Technical/Scientific Services, Management, Real Estate, and Administrative Support increased by 28 percent in the Akron MSA during this time period, slightly below the national average of 43 percent. The Akron MSA has not kept pace with national trends related to food and hospitality, although these industries often coincide with regional population growth.

The decline of Blue Collar industries, including manufacturing, construction, and wholesale trade employment is a national concern, but it is also a telling sign of the critical importance of economic diversity, education, and skills training within the Akron region in order to remain competitive. This again is a signal for downtown Akron to be the cornerstone of this evolution.

	SECTOR	AKRON MSA	NATIONAL MSA AVERAGE
	HEALTHCARE	+36%	+32%
	PROFESSIONAL	+28%	+43%
	RETAIL, HOTELS, & RESTAURANTS	+1%	+16%
	BLUE COLLAR	-11%	-9%
	TOTAL	8%	17%

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2015

MARKET ANALYSIS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Business attraction should be part of any regional economic development strategy, but the magnitude of entrepreneurship and small business growth should not be overlooked as many communities have begun shifting their economic development resources towards a growth-from-within approach. Numerous studies show that cities and regions with more smaller-sized employers have had greater overall employment growth than cities that rely upon larger firms for employment growth. Compared to the top 130 metro areas in the United States, Akron has had limited success related to select small business activity metrics. It ranks 111th in terms of percent self-employed population (seven percent) and 74th in terms of proportion of firms with 20 or fewer employees (20 percent).

In addition to expanding existing firms, startup businesses have accounted for one-third of jobs created in the United States since 2010 (defined as businesses created within a given year). This emphasizes the importance of creating, investing in, and maintaining an ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship.



Source: City Vitals 3.0, CEO's for Cities



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



HARNESS LOCAL ASSETS & TALENT

Economic Assets

Fortunately, Akron has a foundation of startup and entrepreneurial startup resources, but success hinges on creating a interconnected ecosystem with downtown Akron as the convergence of this activity. There is a need to develop a strategy that leverages local resources, assets, and talent. Essentially, the entrepreneurial ecosystem is comprised of three distinct types of assets: Economic, Physical, and Networking.

First and foremost, economic growth needs Drivers, which include large companies, universities, and entrepreneurs. Essentially, people and organizations that have ideas, ways to commercialize these ideas, and more importantly, the ability to create jobs in the local economy. In many cases, additional resources are needed to push this activity forward through Cultivators, which are startup-focused resources including business incubators, accelerators, entrepreneurial support organizations and even co-working spaces. Finally, when it comes to

creating a culture of entrepreneurship, place matters, which means providing neighborhood Amenities such as restaurants, cafes, grocery stores, retail and housing is critical. There is a reason why thriving innovation districts throughout the United States in cities like Boston, Philadelphia, and Seattle are also dynamic mixed-use neighborhoods, because Drivers are also attracted to vibrant, walkable districts. The success of downtown Akron will be dependent on creating better synergies between housing, retail, amenities, and economic opportunity.



DRIVERS

Large firms, Startups,
Entrepreneurs, Universities

Creatives, Tech, Design, Media,
PR, Architecture



CULTIVATORS

Incubators, Co-Working

Accelerators, Support Orgs



AMENITIES

NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDERS

Restaurants, Coffee Shops,
Grocery Store, Retail Services

Housing, Hotels

Adapted from materials created by Joseph Cortright for The Brookings Institution

MARKET ANALYSIS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

PHYSICAL ASSETS



HARNESS LOCAL ASSETS & TALENT

Physical Assets

Downtown Akron as a place must create an opportunity for its economic assets to thrive through its physical assets. Essentially, physical structures, places, and networks need to be positioned to attract and retain talent.

The Public Realm should be considered a component of economic development. Placemaking, including streetscaping, parks, public spaces, and public art, is a key element to talent attraction and retention. Businesses need work space to thrive, whether this is

through office space, studios, or flex industrial space, which comprise the Private Realm. In the case of downtown Akron, small businesses, and especially startups, often have greater preferences for affordable space as opposed to more expensive, amenity-rich Class A Office space. Therefore, maintaining a healthy balance of Class A, B, and C office space is needed to ensure that startup companies can begin, operate, thrive, and expand downtown. Often overlooked when developing a strong business environment is the need to maintain affordable housing. Since

startups and risk-taking entrepreneurs typically must devote their scarce financial resources to their businesses and minimize costs of living, this increases the importance of access to quality affordable housing options. Finally, there is a need for Connectors between the public and private realms. These connectors move people to and from work via public transportation and road networks, but also virtually with fiber and high-tech communications networks.



Adapted from materials created by Joseph Cortright for The Brookings Institution



Networking Assets

Bringing it all together are the organizational networks that link the public, private, non-profit, and academic sectors. Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship is not just about business partnerships, but the creation of a collaborative culture that thrives on the acceptance of new ideas and the cross-pollination of disciplines, including arts, science, education, business, and technology. Creating this ecosystem is somewhat nuanced, but requires leadership and an openness and willingness for collaboration throughout the community.

This can be accomplished through formal or informal Partnerships that can link government agencies, professional businesses, universities, and other stakeholders. Also, a key component to networking assets is creating opportunities for more Collision Points for improving communications and personal interactions that could lead to serendipitous opportunities. This can occur through informal or unplanned interactions in public spaces, but also through planned events, networking lunches, lectures, and happy hours.

PARTNERSHIPS

Government Agencies

Professional Businesses

Universities

COLLISION POINTS

Events

Lunch and Learns

Happy Hours

Adapted from materials created by Joseph Cortright for The Brookings Institution



SECTION 4

FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREAS

INTRODUCTION

Through the hundreds of public comments and ideas gained during the stakeholder and community input process and the existing conditions and market analysis, the planning team has developed a thorough understanding of the opportunities present in downtown Akron. These community discussions and market investigations led the planning team to select five Focus Areas. Each Focus Area has one or more assets that can be leveraged into greater possibilities. Each is also located along or adjacent to Main Street. All recommended improvements feature mixed-use development, high-quality open space and connections and active first floor facades and streetscapes.

Pictured at right (top) is a view of Main Street nearly 100 years ago. In addition to multiple transportation options, Main Street had a mix of residential, retail and office uses and active first floor storefronts that engage the street. It also had an intact street wall, with no gaps, vacant lots or surface parking lots. Compared to today (bottom), Main Street has buildings pulled back from the street, inactive first floor facades and vacant storefronts and parking lots. As a result, there is a decided lack of consistent activity along Main Street.

While these Focus Area improvements will need to be phased in over time, the eventual goal is to infill Main Street to bring it back to the commercial viability that it had in the 1920s. Taken together, current and planned investments in these Focus Areas and elsewhere in downtown will help to bring jobs, residents and visitors back downtown.



FOCUS AREAS

FIVE FOCUS AREAS

Each of the five Focus Areas are detailed in this section, beginning with a summary of existing conditions and issues and opportunities that were identified during the community input process. Each plan component is explained, along with the feedback that the planning team received from the public on the draft concepts. The catalytic improvements and market supported uses are also outlined. Potential phasing of each Focus Area and the partners that need to be involved are covered in the Implementation section of this report (see page 112).

1 SOUTHSIDE



2 MAIN & EXCHANGE



3 BOWERY DISTRICT



4 NORTHSIDE

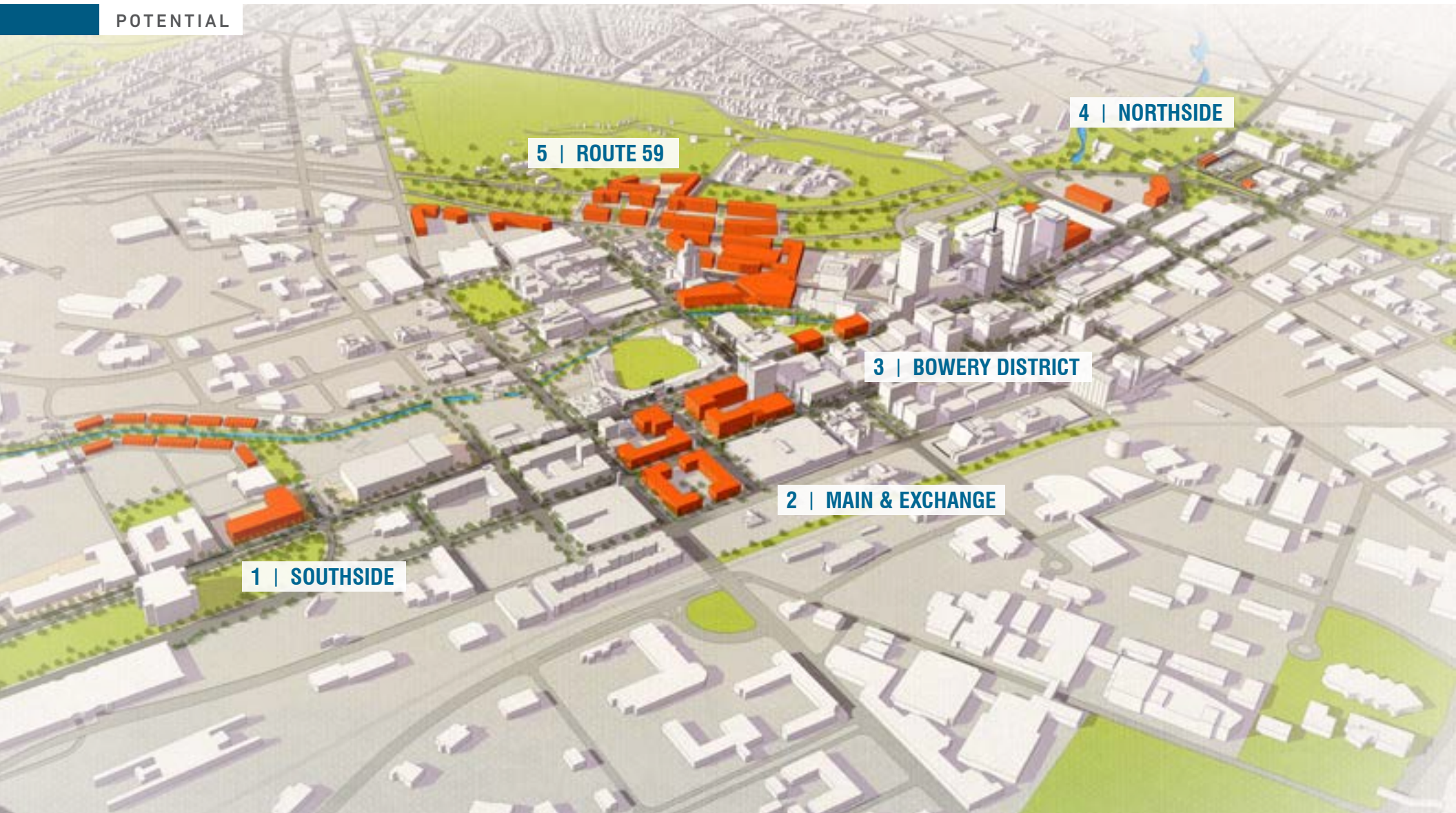


5 ROUTE 59





POTENTIAL



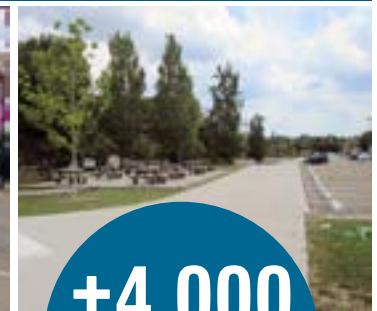
FOCUS AREAS

1 | SOUTHSIDE

What We Heard

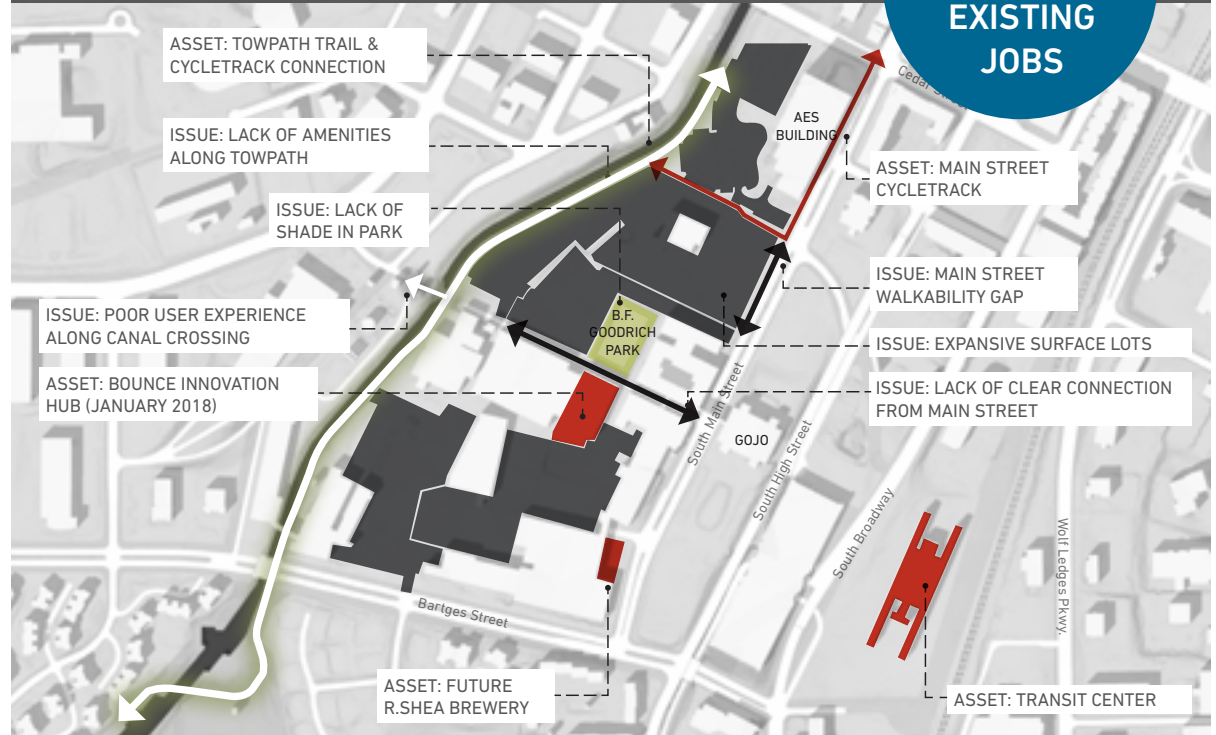
With more than 4,000 jobs located in and around Canal Place, Southside plays an important role in the economic health of downtown Akron. This former industrial area has been transformed over the years into an innovative, professional office environment. Despite this investment, there is more opportunity to continue to improve this part of downtown. Many planning participants noted that this part of Main Street was one of the most pedestrian unfriendly in downtown. Others noted that this section of the Towpath Trail felt disconnected and hidden from Main Street. The preponderance of surface parking lots, especially along the Towpath Trail and Main Street contributes to this feeling.

However, many identified Southside as an area of opportunity, especially for residential development. There are also numerous ongoing efforts to build on, including the announcement of the Bounce Innovation Hub and the planned R. Shea Brewery. Creating a true, connected, mixed-use district with infill development, a strong presence on both Main Street and the Towpath Trail will help this part of downtown continue to attract creative and innovative employers and employees. These enhancements, with the inclusion of restaurant, entertainment and residential uses, will allow for Southside to eventually become a vibrant mixed-use district.



±4,000
EXISTING
JOBS

EXISTING CONDITIONS: ASSETS & ISSUES



WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETING 1

The south end of Main Street was identified as one of the **“unfriendliest” to pedestrians**

People noted that they tend to both **visit and avoid** this part of downtown

Canal Place and its surrounding area was **one of the top “Opportunity Sites”** and “Residential Opportunity Sites”

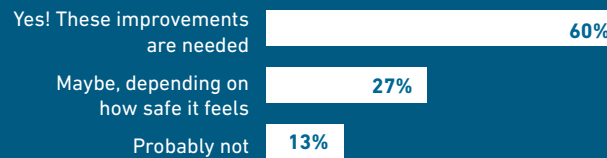
The **Towpath Trail** runs behind this area, yet feels hidden and disconnected from Main Street

The south end of downtown is an **employment center**

Main Street is characterized by **surface lots and gaps in the urban fabric** between Canal Place and the shops/restaurants at Main and Cedar Streets

WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETINGS 2 & 3

Would these improvements make you feel more comfortable using this portion of the Towpath Trail?



“More restaurants/shops in that area so riding my bike or walking has more of a purpose”

“Canal Place could reflect multi-uses: store, food, events”

Connections

To better embrace Main Street and the Towpath Trail, current connections should be enhanced and improved. This includes extending the Main Street cycletrack south to Falor Street. By adding lighting, landscaping, and wayfinding, Falor Street itself will become more welcoming and help to reinforce the entry into Canal Place and across the canal. The planned Freedom Trail should also be prioritized as it will enable greater connectivity between the Towpath Trail and Canal Place and the Transit Center and the east side of Akron. A direct connection from the Transit Center to Wolf Ledges Parkway should also be studied to improve access to the University of Akron and surrounding neighborhoods.

The Towpath Trail should also be improved with better linear plantings and trees, seating areas, and wayfinding. A strong landscaped edge will make the trail in this area, which is adjacent to surface parking lots, more comfortable for users. The existing pathway connection from the Towpath Trail to Main Street is also currently surrounded by parking and cars. A new green space and plaza in front of the Spaghetti Warehouse would not only allow for outdoor dining, but would also soften the edges of this important bicycle and pedestrian connection.

ENHANCE CONNECTIONS



Enhanced alley



Enhanced Towpath Trail



FOCUS AREAS

1 | SOUTHSIDE

Catalytic Change

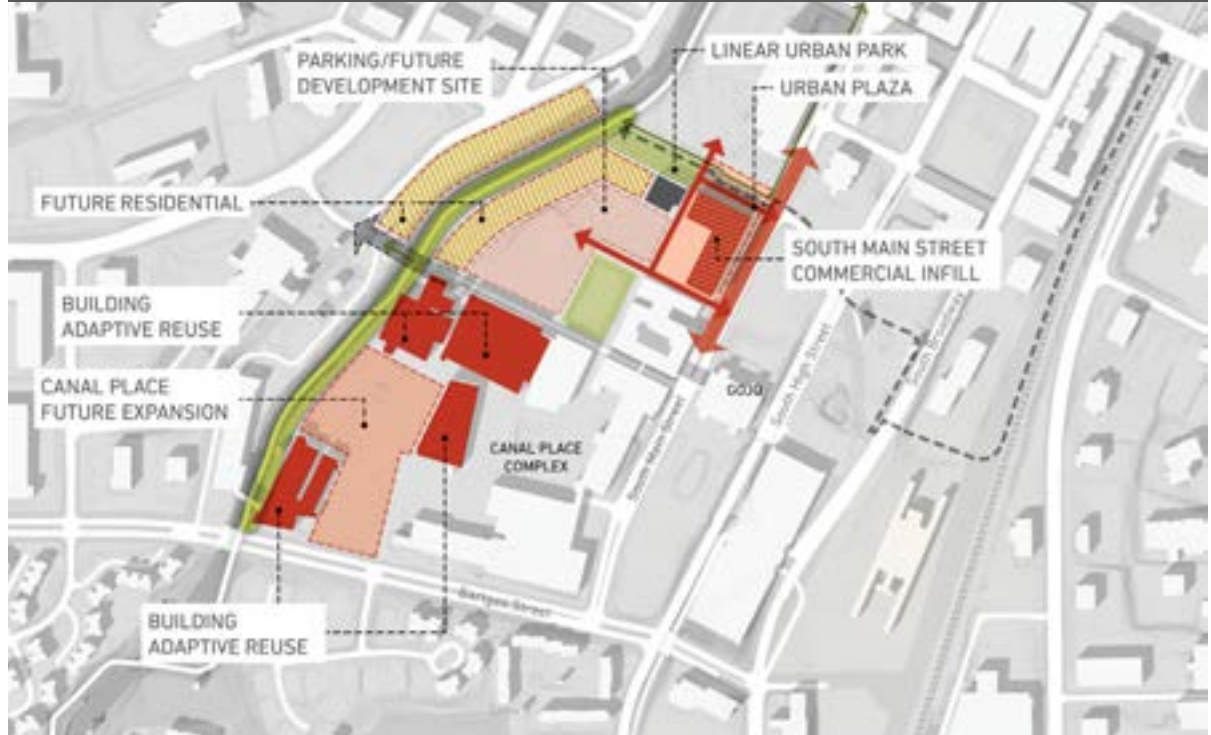
Improved connections will support the continued evolution of Canal Place into a dynamic, innovative district. These phased improvements should begin on Main Street, with a new commercial building that fills a large gap in the fabric of the corridor. This new building not only allows for new, flexible space to compliment the older structures in Canal Place, it also completes the Main Street edge of the site, making it more walkable and attractive. The character of the green and plaza in front of the Spaghetti Warehouse should also be extended to Main Street, blending together indoor and outdoor spaces while still allowing for vehicular access to Canal Place and the AES Building.

Over time, the remaining buildings on the site could be adaptively reused and surface parking lots could also be developed. Residential development along the canal and Towpath Trail would add a missing component to this part of downtown and offer the ability to have a live/work environment that extended activity beyond nine-to-five. As new development is phased in, structured parking will likely be required to accommodate new users and uses.

MARKET ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

	HOUSING	HOSPITALITY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Product Types	Townhomes, condominiums, New and Rehabbed Apartments	NA	Startup Space

STRATEGIC INFILL DEVELOPMENT



Adaptive-reuse



Main Street office



Linear plaza

EXISTING



MAIN STREET LOOKING SOUTH: POTENTIAL



MIXED USE INFILL

EXTEND MAIN STREET PROMENADE

ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

ACTIVATE MAIN STREET

TOWPATH CONNECTION

FOCUS AREAS

2 | MAIN & EXCHANGE

What We Heard

The unimproved surface parking lots along Main and Exchange Streets are recognized as one of the most impactful potential redevelopment sites in downtown Akron. These largely vacant blocks represent an opportunity to fill in a large gap in the walkable fabric of downtown. Already served by the cycletrack along Main Street, infill development here would connect the retail node of activity across from Lock 3 with the student-oriented retail node at the intersection of Main and Exchange Streets. It is also an opportunity to reactivate underutilized buildings on the north and southern edges of these blocks.

In addition to being across the street from Canal Park, these blocks are also adjacent to the University of Akron's Polsky Building and parking garage. Development here should take advantage of these assets. While the ballpark and university presence are attractors of activity, this area is still seen as a place downtown to avoid because activity is sporadic and seasonal in nature, failing to activate this part of downtown on a day-to-day basis.



EXISTING CONDITIONS: ASSETS AND ISSUES



WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETING 1

The surface lots across from Canal Park were identified as one of the **top "Opportunity Sites" and "Residential Opportunity Sites"**

Canal Park is one of downtown Akron's most high-profile assets

There is a **gap in walkability along Main Street**, between the shops/restaurants at Main & Exchange

and the retail around Lock 3 at Main & State

Public engagement participants reported that the **block between State Street and Exchange Street** is a place they tend to avoid

The **redevelopment** of these surface lots has stalled as plans did not materialize for an arena

WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETINGS 2 & 3

What type of development would you like to see happen in the Main & Exchange area?

Mixed-Use	Improved Buchtel Ave and Linear Green	Residential	Parking Structure	Other
73%	54%	40%	38%	25%
				Office 19%

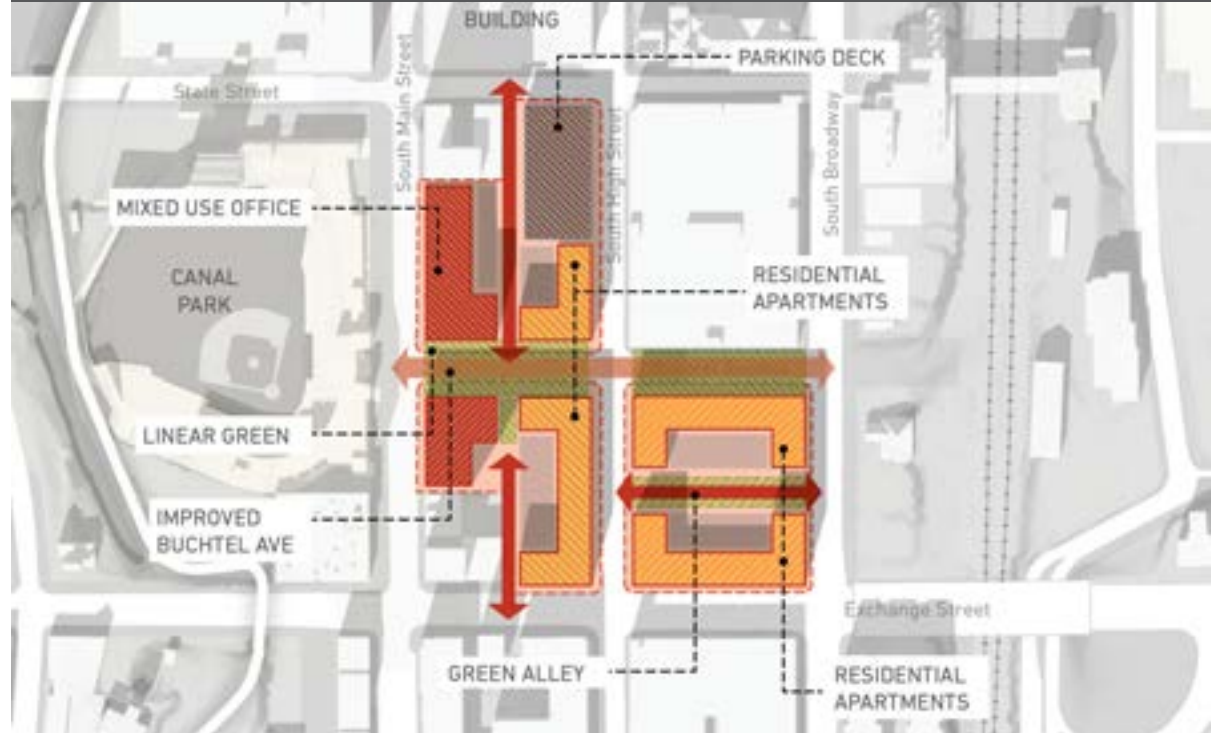
“Amenities should be brought to downtown to attract people & residents. This should be a main focus”

Option 1

The mixed-use redevelopment of Main & Exchange should focus first on the Main Street edge, with two new buildings across from Canal Park. This is a prime location for new office development that has the footprint and amenities that are desired for new 21st century office space. This new development is centered around Buchtel Avenue that terminates into the main entry of Canal Park and features a linear green that provides a comfortable pedestrian environment. These green spaces permeate the interior building blocks between State Street and Exchange Street, blurring the edges between building and streetscape and offering unique urban spaces to gather and interact.

East of this green alley, there is an opportunity to add market-rate residential buildings and parking structures to support this new development. At the south end of the site, the existing buildings could be folded into the development program and made to be part of this new district.

FULL BUILDOUT OPTION 1



Mixed-use office



Linear plaza



Residential apartments



FOCUS AREAS

2 | MAIN & EXCHANGE

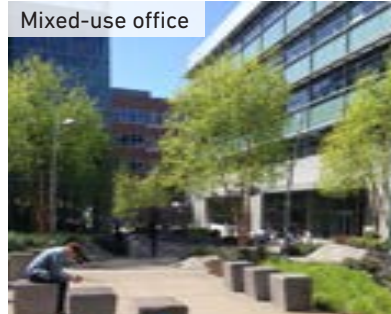
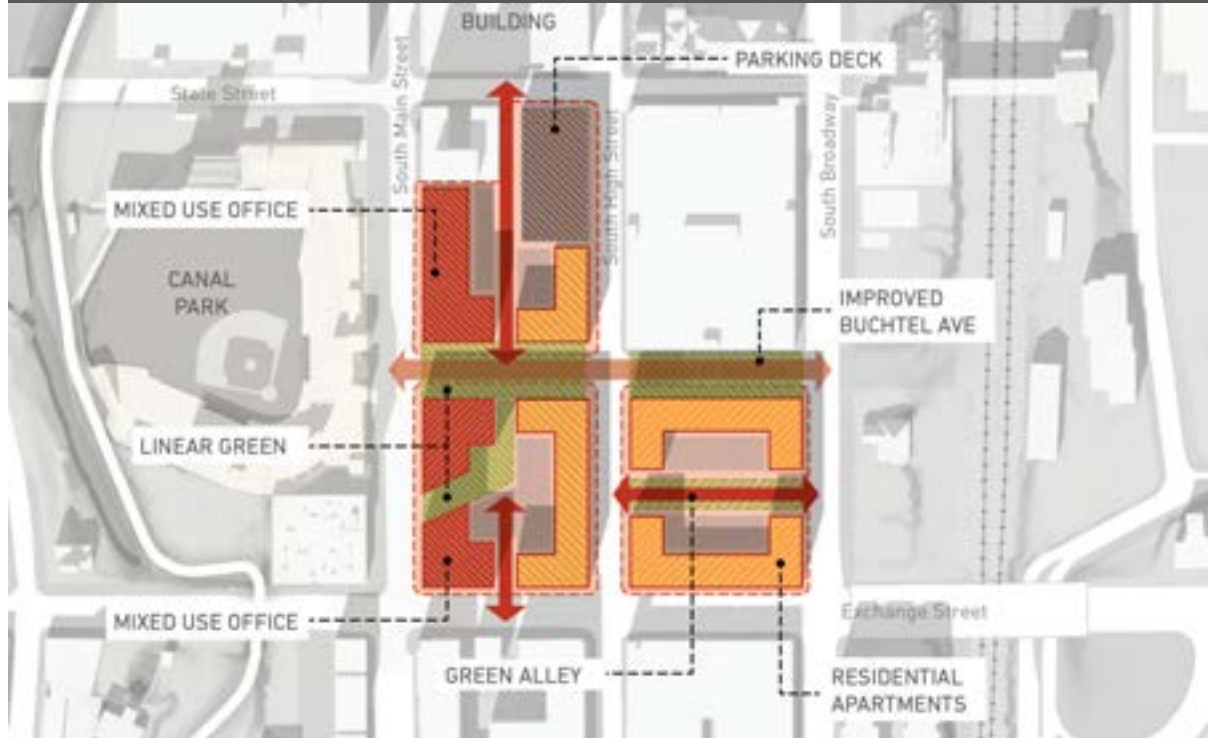
Option 2

If it is not desirable to retain the existing buildings at the south end of the site, it would be possible to expand the building and landscape program. This would extend the system of green plaza spaces between buildings drawing people in from Main Street. In either case, it will be critical to activate the ground floors of these new Main Street buildings. Along with a high-quality streetscape with street trees, lighting, furnishing and specialty pavement, these transparent storefronts will enliven this corridor.

MARKET ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

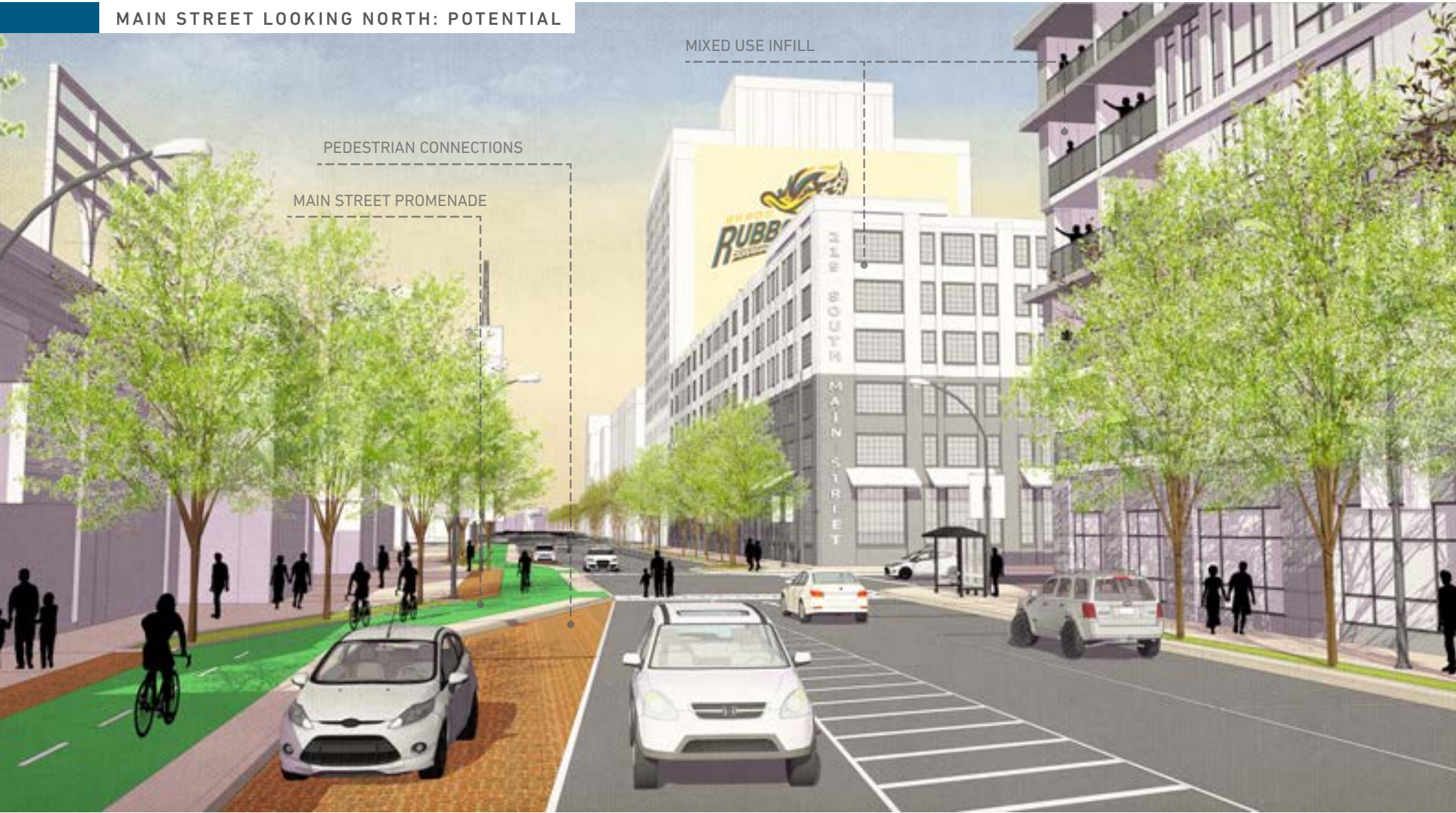
	HOUSING	HOSPITALITY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Product Types	New and Rehabbed Apartments	NA	Class A/B+ Office

FULL BUILDOUT OPTION 2





MAIN STREET LOOKING NORTH: POTENTIAL



FOCUS AREAS

3 | BOWERY DISTRICT

What We Heard

The area around Lock 3 between Bowery Street and Main Street was identified by plan participants as one of the top opportunity sites and residential sites in downtown Akron. There are numerous recent and planned projects that are focused on this area that will continue to make it attractive for reinvestment. The new Main Street promenade will connect this area to the Towpath Trail and activate the Main Street streetscape. New lighting has enlivened the Towpath Trail entry into downtown and made Lock 4 more attractive. Plans are also underway to revitalize and activate Cascade Plaza.

This area is also surrounded by active users. Akron Children's Hospital and the office buildings around Cascade Plaza serve as strong employment centers. Lock 3 and Akron Civic Theatre attract 400,000 visitors a year and are the cultural anchors in downtown. Restaurants and retail have come back across the street from Lock 3, making this one of the most active parts of downtown. Reuse of the Bowery Block buildings at the corner of Bowery and Main Streets are in the planning stages.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETING 1

Locks 3 and 4 were identified as the **most visited part of downtown**, as well as the most visited parks

This area was noted as the **top "Opportunity Site" and "Residential Opportunity Site"**

Though people thought of Lock 3 as friendly to pedestrians, it is **surrounded by places that are unfriendly to pedestrians**, such as Route 59 and Cascade Plaza

Bike usage suggests that Lock 3 is a **hub for cyclists** along the Towpath

Several **redevelopment projects** are already occurring in this area, suggesting high interest from the development community

Nearby current/planned projects, such as the State Street Bridge and the Main Street Promenade, have the potential to **transform the perimeter of the park**

WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETINGS 2 & 3

What improvements would you like to see happen in the Bowery District?

Mixed-Use Development along Main Street	Park Connections/Overlook	Infill Development along Bowery Street	More Events in and around Locks 3 & 4
70%	66%	52%	52%
			Other
			28%

“Enhancing Towpath experience and extending connectivity to the planned residential spaces in the area are critical”

“I like the riverwalk feel of Bowery District plan”

Connections

The Main Street promenade will transform this edge of the Bowery District, but more needs to be done to strengthen connections to surrounding streets, public spaces, and the Towpath Trail. While the bridge lighting has improved the visibility and attractiveness of the Towpath Trail, the off-street bicycle infrastructure needs to be enhanced along Quaker Street and Bowery Street to complete the linkage to the Main Street Promenade. Bowery Street is overly-wide, allowing for a reallocation of space to pedestrian and bicyclists. A more pedestrian and bicycle friendly street will support the redevelopment of adjacent surface parking lots and underutilized buildings along Bowery Street. Additional connections and clarity of access is also needed at Cascade Plaza. The stairs at the back of the plaza space along Quaker Street and Rand Street should be rebuilt. Likewise, the new Main Street streetscape should be integrated into Cascade Plaza, allowing the two spaces to blend together seamlessly. Instead of stairs and ramps into and out of Cascade Plaza, these should be transformed into usable public space that spills out onto Main Street and draws people into the elevated plaza. Similarly, improvements to Lock 3 should focus on activating the park through improved public spaces both within the park and along the trail. Potential enhancements to Lock 3 could include adult playgrounds, interactive elements doubling as public art, expanded seating and amenities along the Towpath Trail, outdoor seating near the Akron Children’s Museum, and additional outdoor dining and informal gathering areas along the Main Street edge.

ENHANCE CONNECTIONS



FOCUS AREAS

3 | BOWERY DISTRICT

Catalytic Change

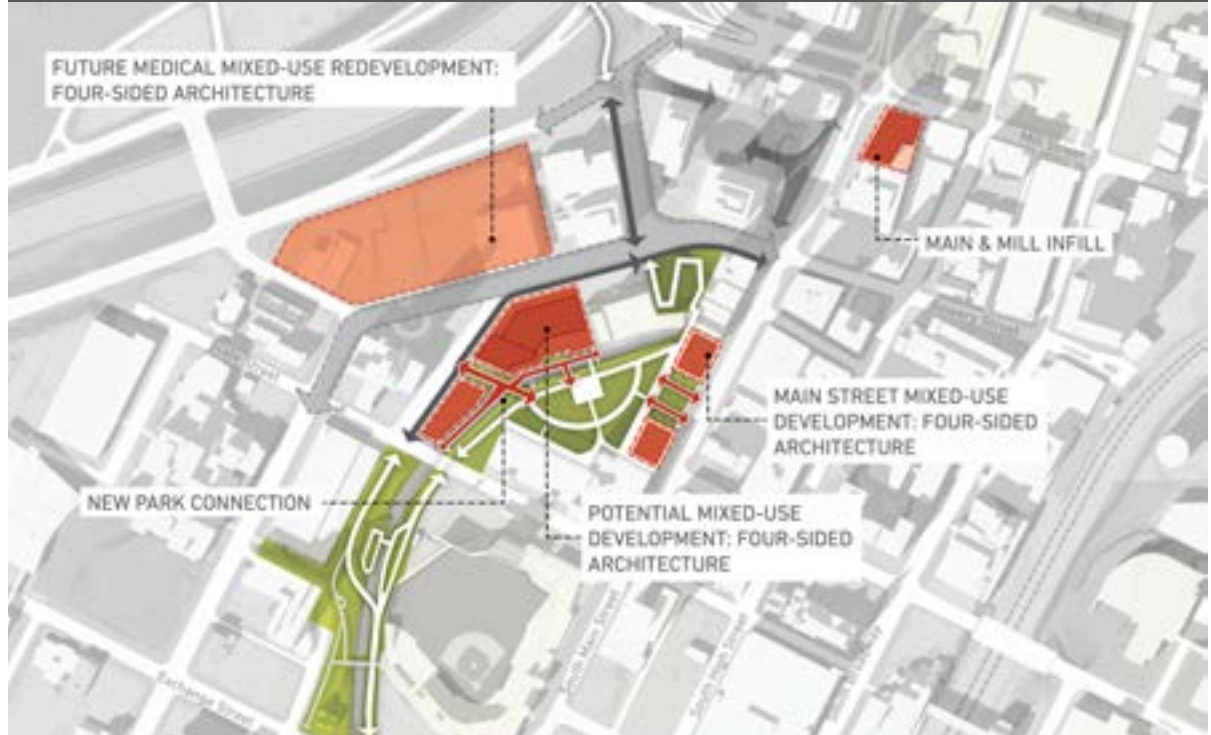
Even with the improvements and development planned in the Bowery District, there is more work to be done to connect Main Street to Bowery Street and begin to extend the energy of downtown toward the redevelopment opportunities present along S.R. 59. There are two major mixed-use redevelopment opportunities along Bowery Street. On the west side of Bowery Street, the underutilized buildings and surface parking lot represent an opportunity for medical, mixed-use redevelopment that could serve the Akron Children’s Hospital campus. With the removal of S.R. 59, this site should feature double-sided architecture that fronts both Bowery Street and Rand Street. On the other side of Bowery Street, the city—owned parking lot also represents a mixed-use residential redevelopment opportunity.

To maximize the development potential along Bowery Street, Lock 3 needs to be properly integrated and connected east to west and both sides of the canal must be activated with public spaces and pathways. This should include new bridges across the canal with walkways between new buildings to link Bowery Street to Lock 3 and a new pathway should be created on the west side of the canal to connect State Street north toward Lock 4. Along Main Street, there are two sites adjacent to Lock 3 that have long been planned to be developed. While these should be mixed-use in nature, the one adjacent to the Civic Theatre could potentially have an arts and performance use that allows cultural activity to spill out onto both Main Street and Lock 3.

MARKET ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

	HOUSING	HOSPITALITY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Product Types	Townhomes, condominiums, New and Rehabbed Apartments	NA	NA

STRATEGIC INFILL DEVELOPMENT



Park Expansion



Mixed-use



Arts and performance uses



STATE STREET LOOKING NORTH: POTENTIAL



FOCUS AREAS

4 | NORTHSIDE

What We Heard

Already one of the most visited places in downtown Akron, the Northside District has injected new vitality into a previously underutilized area of the city. Long home to institutions such as Luigi's and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad station, Northside has seen tremendous economic activity in the past few years with the addition of hotel, residential, and restaurant development. The addition of the Northside Marketplace, which features 35 local vendors, has solidified this district as an authentic Akron destination.

This success has occurred even though many feel that Northside is disconnected from downtown and is difficult to get to. While intersection improvements have been made with the deconstruction of State Route 59, it is still unpleasant to walk to and from Northside. For those walking from Maiden Lane to Northside, it is between a 9- and 11-minute walk, requiring pedestrians to cross busy intersections, walk along vacant street edges, and up and down hills. For these reasons many people walk across the railroad tracks because it is shorter—despite the fact that no actual safe crossing exists.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETING 1

The Northside District was identified as being **one of the 5 most visited parts of downtown**

The **intersection of Route 59 and North Main** – a major gateway – was identified as one the least friendly to pedestrians

Online survey respondents noted that northside **feels disconnected from downtown**, and suggested that this

activity center be better connected for pedestrians

Recent housing and hospitality developments have capitalized on the area's assets, making it a **destination for dining** and entertainment

Convenience to the Towpath Trail and the Scenic Railroad Station make this **Akron's front door to Cuyahoga Valley National Park**

“ This neighborhood should be an easy and obvious “rest stop” for cyclists and Towpathers”

MARKET ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

HOUSING

HOSPITALITY

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Product Types	Townhomes, condominiums, New and Rehabbed Apartments	Upper Midscale Limited and Full Service Hotels; Boutique Hotel	Class A/B+ Office
---------------	--	--	-------------------

Extend the Energy of Main and High Streets

One of the other reasons that the linkage between Maiden Lane and Northside feels unpleasant is because of the surface parking lots that dominate Main Street north of Market Street. To fill this gap in walkability, efforts should be made to activate this block of Main Street. The block at the northwestern corner of Market Street and Main Street has the long-term potential to add additional office buildings or mixed-use development that would enliven the street edge.

On the east side of the street, the surface parking lot could be transformed into a plaza space that both engages existing buildings and the Main Street. This oddly shaped lot, created when Main Street was shifted to the west, could be a new community gathering place that serves to draw the energy of downtown toward Northside. This space could be activated temporarily to test the concept and allow for prototyping of solutions. As we get to Northside itself, the townhome block along Howard Street should be extended to create a consistent built street edge.

Similarly, the energy and walkability of North High Street should be extended into Northside, through both streetscape improvements and infill or adaptive-reuse of existing sites and buildings. Taken together, these short and long-term improvements will make what is now an unpleasant walk more comfortable and serve to better integrate Northside with the rest of downtown.

ACTIVATE & INFILL NORTH MAIN AND NORTH HIGH STREETS



MIXED USE OFFICE



ADAPTIVE-REUSE



FOCUS AREAS

4 | NORTHSIDE

Catalytic Change

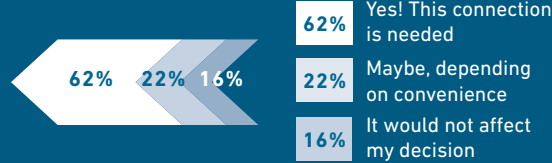
Even with a better built environment along Main Street, it is entirely likely that pedestrians will still choose to take the shorter route across the railroad tracks. Instead of treating this as a liability, the greenspace east of Main Street should be used to create a walkway to a formalized at-grade railroad crossing. This has been done in many urban neighborhoods and districts, including in the busy mixed-use office and entertainment Arena District in Columbus, where pedestrians use an at-grade crossing daily. This would not only better utilize this left-over greenspace, but it would create a shorter, safer connection.

This new walkway would connect Main Street to the parking area at the heart of Northside. This surface parking lot features overly-wide drive aisle circulation that is roughly double the required width. By using standard drive aisle widths and losing no parking spaces, there is an opportunity to create a significant linear green that will enhance the pedestrian experience of Northside for those who arrive on-foot or by automobiles.

In addition to the continued build-out of the condominium block to the west side of Northside, there is also an opportunity to add infill buildings over time. Likewise, if it is still desired following the initial improvements, it may also be possible to add a ramp down from Main Street on the north side of the railroad tracks to further facilitate connections from High Street and other areas of downtown.

WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETINGS 2 & 3

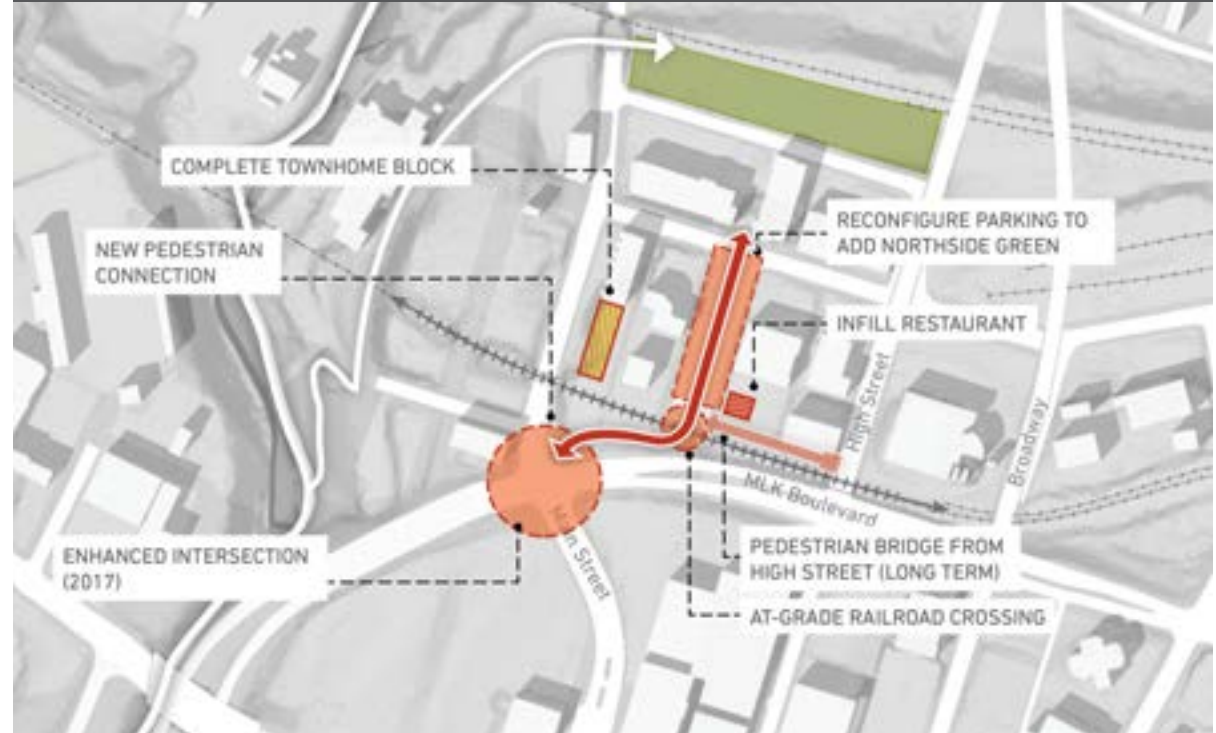
Would an improved ground-level connection between Maiden Lane and Northside improve this walk?



MARKET ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	NA
HOSPITALITY	Upper Midscale Limited and Full Service Hotels; Boutique Hotel
HOUSING	Townhomes, condominiums, New and Rehabbed Apartments

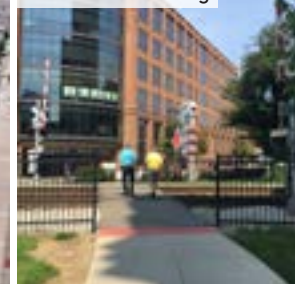
RECONFIGURE NORTH MAIN STREET PARKING



Pedestrian connection



Railroad crossing



Pedestrian walk





POTENTIAL

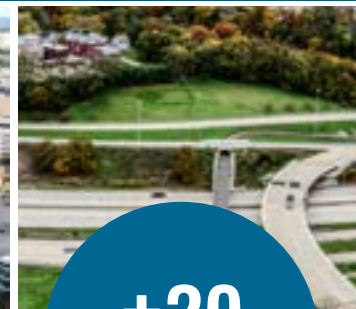


FOCUS AREAS

5 | ROUTE 59

What We Heard

The deconstruction of State Route 59 is a bold move by the City of Akron to untangle the unnecessary system of roadway infrastructure that severed the downtown from its near neighborhoods. Already challenged by natural topography, State Route 59 removed even more earth and separated the street grid to go underneath previously at-grade streets. This first phase of work creates a system of parallel streets along the city edges of the highway trench that will no longer be used as a roadway. This creates approximately 20 acres of ground that can be used for infill development, green space, or other uses. What was recognized at the beginning of this planning process as one of the most pedestrian unfriendly areas of downtown, can now be transformed into space that connects these severed neighborhoods back to downtown.



±20
ACRES

EXISTING CONDITIONS



WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETING 1

Route 59 was identified as the area **least friendly to pedestrians** in downtown

The portion of Route 59 west of Lock 3 and Cascade Plaza was the second most popular for having **opportunity for residential development**

The Innerbelt Project will significantly transform this part of downtown, potentially creating at least **±20 acres of developable ground**

Survey respondents identified Route 59 as a contributing factor of downtown being “boxed-in by **valleys of separated highways**”

When asked how to better connect downtown to nearby neighborhoods and destinations, respondents suggested re-imagining Route 59 as an **at-grade pedestrian connection** with open space and redevelopment

“Keep green space a priority, don’t forget about the neighborhoods around downtown, I want an Akron for all people”

Previous Studies

For over 10 years, the City of Akron, stakeholders and various design teams have studied the re-imagining of Route 59 and its connection to downtown. Though the concepts have varied in scale, density and types of connections, they are consistent in their creation of a mixed-use district connected by open space. As seen on the graphic to the right, the Innerbelt Reconfiguration Project, which is nearing completion, reshapes the western edge of downtown by creating new developable ground for a potential large-scale redevelopment.

Previous studies for the innerbelt have focused on infill and open space. In 2006, the urban design practice of Chan Krieger & Associates created a master plan in which Route 59 was transformed into a mixed-use district, which included a large central open space with a daylit canal north of Mill Street. In March of 2016, a master planning effort for Route 59, named Oak Place, was undertaken by Dimit Architects. This study also re-thought Route 59 as a mixed-use district, anchored by a large park at its southern edge, and a pedestrian promenade to the north. Lastly, in October of 2016 a group of 25 students from Kent State University’s Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC) held a two-day charrette for Route 59, sponsored by the Knight Foundation. The resulting design, envisioned to be phased in over five years, reserves much of the area once held by Route 59 for parks and open spaces with a central promenade connecting a mixed-use development in the center.

PREVIOUS STUDIES



CHAN KRIEGER INNERBELT STUDY (APRIL 2006)



OAK PLACE MASTER PLAN (MARCH 2016)



KENT STATE & CUDC CHARRETTE (OCTOBER 2016)



INNERBELT RECONFIGURATION PROJECT (NEAR COMPLETION)

FOCUS AREAS

5 | ROUTE 59

Gateway to the National Park

Studying the opportunity to reintegrate this area into downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods has already been a source of significant attention. The CUDC charrette in October 2016 looked at ways to fold into development of green space at the edges of the roadway removal project and focus on at-grade development at the center. This sentiment was echoed by planning participants that recognized that this green space could be an opportunity to create a gateway to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, as well as to Summit Metro Parks. While the park is located close by and the Towpath Trail and scenic railway provide connections, there is no visual representation of just how proximate the National Park is to downtown Akron. This greenspace could be used to create that strong physical connection and take advantage of the fact that no other major American city is the front door to a National Park.

These green spaces also provide the opportunity to create a new system of pedestrian pathways that connect the Towpath Trail and downtown trails to the historic Glendale Steps and Bates Hill. Work should be done to continue to restore these neighborhood linkages to allow for multiple points of connection.

While work is continuing on the separation of sanitary and storm sewers, this greenspace should feature green stormwater infrastructure to demonstrate at the city level how new development can be environmentally friendly.

WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC MEETINGS 2 & 3

What type of development would you like to see happen within and around Route 59?

Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces	Naturalized Areas	Mixed-Use	Residential	Other
82%	69%	49%	41%	35%
			Office	22%

“Let the green space be a conduit to the developments around it, think of it as the future center of gravity in Akron”

ENHANCE CONNECTIONS



MARKET ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

HOUSING

HOSPITALITY

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Product Types	HOUSING	HOSPITALITY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
	Townhomes, condominiums, New and Rehabbed Apartments	NA	NA

Catalytic Change

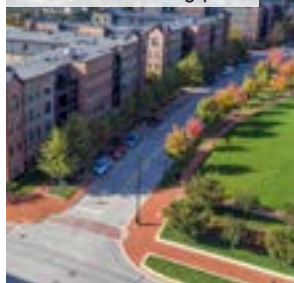
Given the topographical challenges of this site, development in this area will require significant infrastructural investment to bring the built environment back to the city street level. Other developments in other cities have solved this problem by building parking decks below-grade to support development at grade. Another option will be to use fill to step these development sites back up to grade. Either way, this will mean that development in this part of downtown is more difficult to achieve than elsewhere. For that reason, and to ensure that development in this location is not isolated from the rest of downtown, the planning team recommends that work to bring back this part of downtown begin at the existing edges of Route 59. The sites identified in a darker red hatch represent blocks at street grade that are primed for development now. These include sites along Main Street, Bowery Street and north of Exchange Street on the downtown side of Route 59, and the Wills Lot on the west side of Route 59. Development in these locations should feature four-sided architecture that fronts each street and embraces the open space improvements that could occur in the short term as part of the recapturing of ground from Route 59.

Once these sites begin to infill, work can be focused on development inside the Route 59 trench. This mixed-use development should consider additional east-west street connections and integrate the green spaces at either end into the new development pattern, making this a unique green and sustainable urban district.

STRATEGIC INFILL DEVELOPMENT



Residential along park



Development at grade



Pedestrian connection



Mixed-use



FOCUS AREAS

5 | ROUTE 59

Next Steps

The redevelopment of Route 59 and its surrounding edges will be an on-going effort that merits additional study by the city, relevant stakeholders, and the Akron community. The complex project, which is likely to continue to be subject to design and feasibility analysis, should incorporate the design lessons and feedback collected both through this plan and in previous studies. Due to its location, topography and history, studies following the completion of the Innerbelt Reconfiguration Project should address numerous issues, such as:

- > **Connecting the street grid** to ensure downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods are well connected for pedestrians, vehicles, and trail users alike. Further study should also be conducted to examine the removal of the remaining ramps north of Mill Street to enable maximum connectivity.
- > **Connecting utilities** so new development addresses stormwater issues and incorporates sustainable technologies.
- > **Addressing parking** in a creative way so new development is adequately parked, but parking structures or surface lots are hidden and do not negatively impact the urban experience of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

- > **Addressing regrading** of the site to support four-faced architecture and place development at street grade, while creating meaningful open space connections.

The city is currently participating in the Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD), an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors. This initiative is uniquely tailored to address the issues faced by Route 59 as it may provide workshops in which mayors engage with design professionals to find innovative solutions to complex urban topics.

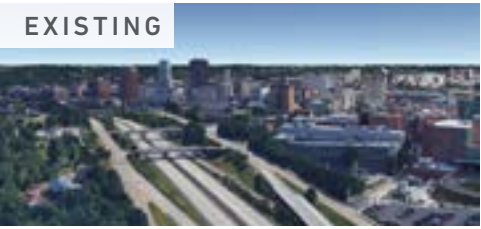
Any future redevelopment of Route 59, as well as future design explorations, should involve community participation and feedback as a core component. This was a key desire expressed by members of the community at the three public meetings. The project is especially significant to Akronites due to its potential transformational effect on both downtown and western neighborhoods.

THE REDEVELOPMENT OF ROUTE 59 IS A COMPLEX PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE ADDITIONAL, DETAILED STUDY DUE TO NUMEROUS ISSUES SUCH AS:

- ▶ **CONNECTING THE STREET GRID**
- ▶ **CONNECTING UTILITIES**
- ▶ **ADDRESSING PARKING**
- ▶ **ADDRESSING REGRADING OF THE SITE**

"CONTINUE TO EXPAND PARTICIPATORY FEATURES OF THE PLANNING PROCESS. SHOW THAT **THIS IS SOMETHING WE ARE GOING TO DO**"

- PUBLIC MEETING 3 ATTENDANT



POTENTIAL



A photograph of a red brick building with a hanging clock and classical architectural details. The clock is ornate, with a white face and black numbers, and is mounted on a green metal frame. The building features several windows with decorative stone surrounds and a classical pediment above the entrance. The sky is clear and blue.

SECTION 5

IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

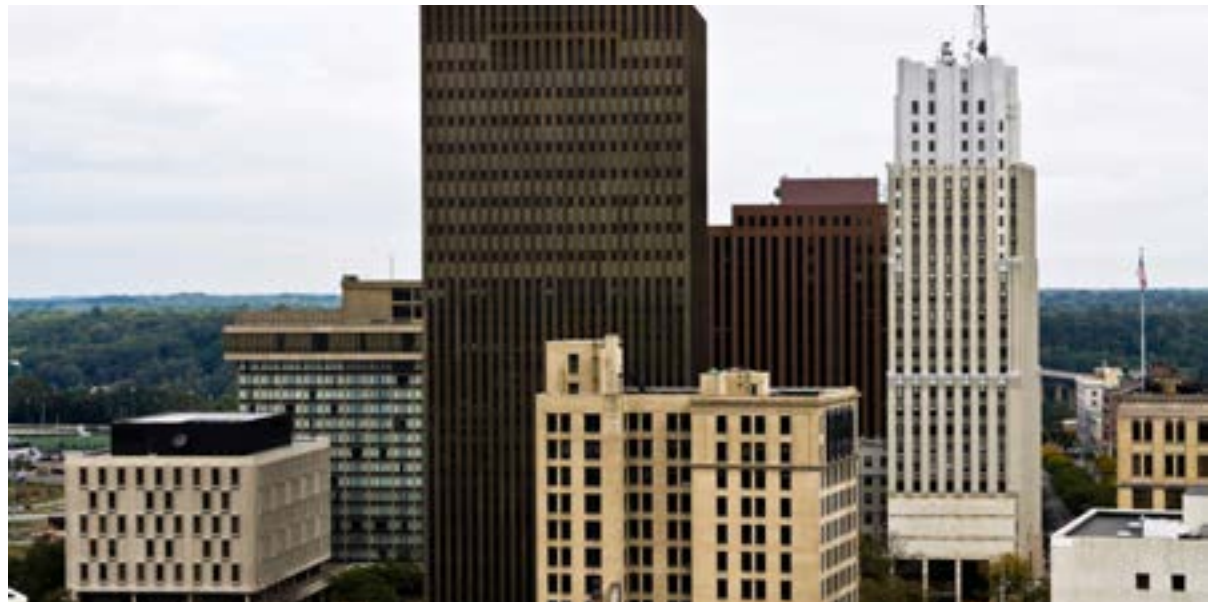
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Successful implementation of the Vision and Redevelopment Plan will require diligent focus from the City of Akron, Downtown Akron Partnership, and other strategic partners. There are three important steps in this implementation process. One, is to achieve and adhere to a set of **Strategic Recommendations**. These recommendations are the foundation of the plan and suggest the various incentives, policy changes, improvements and other actions that can be taken to enable and support Focus Area development and other revitalization efforts. The five **Focus Areas** detailed in the previous section of the report are broken down into three potential phases to both identify initial priorities and provide a guide to the long-term build out. For each of these first two steps, these recommendations and plan components are summarized in a matrix that identifies necessary partners and timelines. This is meant to be a flexible tool to monitor success and to reorder priorities should some opportunities arise before others.

The third, and most important, step of this implementation process is empowering an **Implementation Entity**. Successful examples of such organizations exist in downtowns throughout the region. Based on this best practice knowledge, the planning team details the functions and capacity that this organization would need to have in order to guide the implementation of the Vision and Redevelopment Plan.

SECTION 1: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



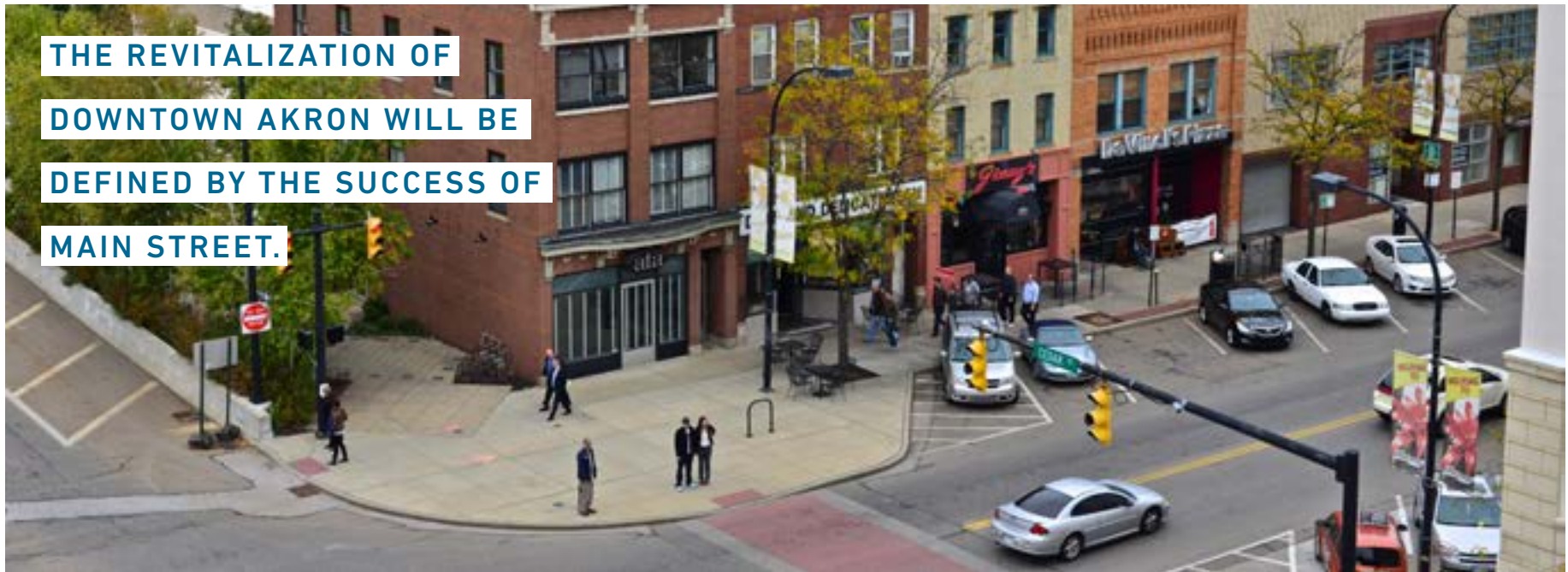
Building from the ten Planning Principles established at the beginning of the planning process, the following strategic recommendations provide a framework for the continued revitalization of downtown Akron.

- 1 CONCENTRATE ON THE CORE
- 2 CREATE A RESIDENTIAL DOWNTOWN
- 3 FOSTER AN ENTREPRENEURIAL DOWNTOWN
- 4 FACILITATE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN DOWNTOWN
- 5 INVEST IN A WELCOMING, MULTIMODAL AND CONNECTED DOWNTOWN
- 6 ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN

IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1 CONCENTRATE ON THE CORE



The revitalization of downtown Akron will be defined by the success of Main Street. While this does not preclude opportunities elsewhere as they arise, resources, incentives and attention should be concentrated on Main Street. Today, more than half of the 1.5 mile stretch of Main Street from Northside to Southside has gaps in the street wall defined by surface parking lots, vacant lots, inactive first floor facades, or empty storefronts. Each of the five Focus Areas identified in this Vision and Redevelopment Plan touch Main Street and will help to enliven the central spine

of the city. As the implementation process begins on each of these Focus Areas, priority should be given to projects and improvements that activate Main Street and start the work of filling in the inactive spaces along the most critical spine of the city.

As adaptive building reuse, infill development and streetscape and public realm improvements enliven Main Street, further revitalization work can build from this strengthened corridor. Working back from the visible Main Street edge, improvements can radiate out to secondary

downtown corridors (Bowery Street, High Street, Broadway Street, Route 59) to create a more cohesive downtown that is closely tied to its surrounding urban neighborhoods and institutions. By applying this discipline to Main Street, the rest of downtown and the City of Akron will benefit.

2 CREATE A RESIDENTIAL DOWNTOWN

Housing is a key focus of the Vision and Redevelopment Plan because of the success other Midwestern downtowns have had in targeting residential development as a first step in their revitalization. Additional downtown housing not only brings more people downtown, it also serves as the support for the retail and employment growth that is desired. Housing serves residents and they in turn infuse life and vibrancy at the street level to a downtown regardless of whether it is after five o'clock or there is a sporting event taking place on a particular day. They provide the culture and character that make a place truly authentic and distinctive. Increasingly, businesses are finding it is this vibrancy that has become vital to efforts to recruit and retain talented workers. Thus, an economic rationale exists for strategic use of incentives and other tools to encourage downtown housing.

Repurpose/renovate older buildings for residential as an appropriate early strategy

Reuse of historic buildings makes excellent sense from a place, cultural, and economic perspective. Historic buildings provide Akron its distinctiveness and potential competitive edge relative to newer cities. They link people to the past. Equally important, state and federal tax credits often make building rehabilitation less cost-prohibitive than new construction.

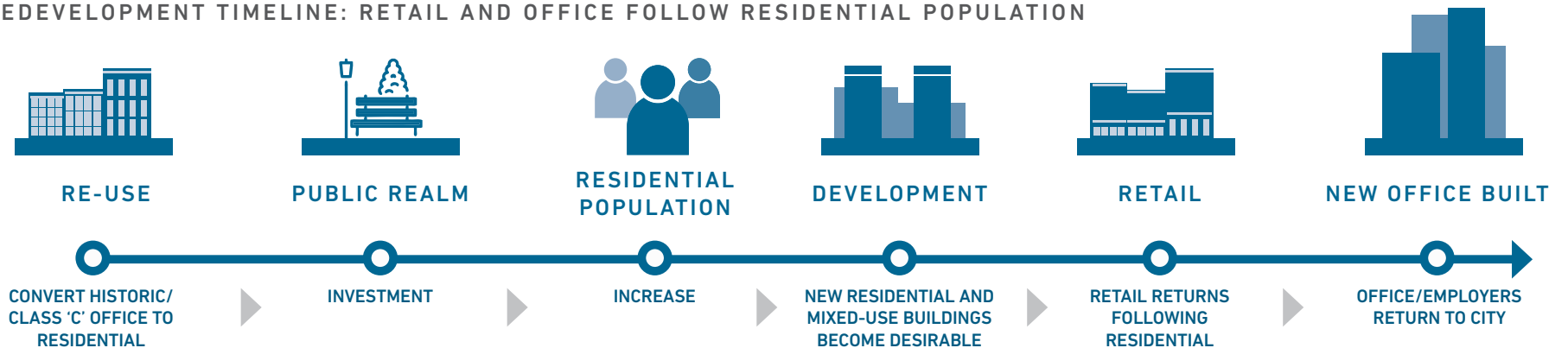
Encourage mixed use development and preserve first floor/corners for retail uses

Ground floor retail uses provide vitality to downtowns, offering inviting storefronts at the intersection of commerce and public realm. Encourage ground floor retail, particularly on key commercial corridors, such as Main Street. Enable shared parking strategies and relaxed parking standards to further enhance development feasibility.

Make downtown more marketable for housing

The quality of the street environment—it's walkability and livability—is essential for the marketability of housing. Traffic calming, appealing sidewalk environments with street trees and streetscape elements, all contribute to the leasing and selling of housing units in an urban environment. Similarly, livability elements such as urban grocers and neighborhood parks contribute to housing marketability.

REDEVELOPMENT TIMELINE: RETAIL AND OFFICE FOLLOW RESIDENTIAL POPULATION



IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

3 FOSTER AN ENTREPRENEURIAL DOWNTOWN



Implementation of a business development strategy involves building on existing employment strengths while establishing forward-thinking programs to foster entrepreneurship, job, and office growth in knowledge industries that are likely to grow in the future and have natural synergies with a downtown environment.

Convert older office buildings into residential, mixed use opportunities

As is true in many Midwestern downtowns, there are several buildings operating at unacceptably low occupancy rates, due to declining demand. Usually these are older office buildings with historic architectural character, but floorplates and infrastructure that no longer meets the needs of 21st century office tenants. At the same time, residential demand has increased. Opportunities for adaptive reuse of select office properties into housing should be explored and encouraged. This preserves and restores great building stock, reduces the inventory of underperforming office space, and drives demand for new office construction in floorplates that attract today's companies.

Reserve developable areas for future new office development as market demand evolves

While office demand has declined, in many instances, latent demand for new office may be present, and future trends could evolve. In particular, a few sites should be reserved, set aside, or at least considered for future new office development, perhaps in a more mixed-use environment that is differentiated from the convention and central business district environment.

3 FOSTER AN ENTREPRENEURIAL DOWNTOWN

Continue supporting an entrepreneurial ecosystem downtown

Creating a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem is as much about resources as it is about networks, but more importantly, there is a need to create a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that becomes part of Akron's identity. While the public sector has a role to play in terms of resources, linking and aligning the public, private, non-profit, and institutional communities is essential.

- > **Forge Partnerships:** continue collaborating with local entrepreneurial support organizations, including Bounce, OSC Tech Lab, TinyCircuits, Fund for our Economic Future, and Launch League.
- > **Akron Growth Council:** leverage recently formed Akron Growth Council to elevate dialogue about expanding and concentrating regional entrepreneurial resources in downtown Akron.
- > **Start-up Capital:** create a competitive grant fund to be awarded to promising start-up firms in select industries (such as tech and life sciences) in order to spur job growth and investment opportunities. Start-up grant funds can require that businesses operate in downtown Akron for a set period of time.
- > **Business Incubation:** continue to encourage the development and concentration of business incubators in the tech, creative, and life science industries.
- > **Phase Two Venture Capital:** encourage partnerships between the investment community and incubators to ensure promising ventures are adequately capitalized.



Create an Innovation District Strategy

By their nature, downtown's serve as innovation districts since they can bring together a diverse range of industries, services, and amenities in thriving mixed-use environment ideal for talent attraction, innovation and collaboration. In 2016, the State of Ohio passed legislation to assist in the development of resources for a formalized innovation district. The addition of this designation can complement local entrepreneurial support organizations, and build on their success and talented work force.

- > **Concentrate Entrepreneurial Resources:** develop a designated innovation district or hub downtown that leverages existing organizations and resources and supports a broader regional marketing and branding initiative.
- > **Downtown Redevelopment Districts (DRDs):** explore the creation of a DRD to support a formalized innovation district in downtown Akron.
- > **High-Speed Broadband:** as part of the requirements for a DRD, implement necessary infrastructure to support high-tech industries, including high-speed broadband.

IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

4 FACILITATE PUBLIC & PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN DOWNTOWN



Supporting redevelopment in downtown Akron requires a robust tool kit of many disparate components. Attracting private investment requires regular public investment to “set the table” making the area attractive to investment and signaling to the development community that the city is serious about improving downtown. This includes modernizing infrastructure and creating complete street retrofits designed with facilities, levels of service, safety, and attractiveness for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. It means creating public spaces that are flexible, inviting, programmed, and maintained. It also means reviewing and regularly updating zoning codes, development

review process, and incentive programs to ensure that the community is getting the type of development it desires and that contributes to future improvement. This public investment in infrastructure, services, amenities, and programs is critical. Once private investment is interested in renovation and redevelopment in downtown, incentives will be required, particularly early in downtown’s rebirth, to help make urban investment economically feasible. By working collaboratively, the public, non-profit, and private sectors can make transformations to downtown.

Continue and package incentives for additive residential development downtown

The recently-approved tax abatement program is an excellent tool to help reduce developer costs, increasingly the likelihood of greater and better housing delivery to the downtown market. Other potential incentives and related services include:

- > **Bundling:** Additional assistance could be provided to developers to layer or bundle other incentives, such as state and federal historic tax credits. Awarded competitively, Historic Tax Credits can increase the amount and quality of development and building rehabilitation.
- > **Continue to foster the Akron Revitalization Fund:** A revolving or targeted loan fund is an excellent, complementary tool that can provide below-market interest rates and increase project viability.



Invest in Place

Incorporate placemaking elements, including public spaces, streetscaping and amenities throughout downtown. In addition to continuing to pursue State and Federal (such as TIGER Grant) funding sources for place-based improvements, other potential programs and supportive investments include:

- > **Infrastructure Grants:** An infrastructure fund could be made available for sidewalk improvements, curb cuts, signage, art, utility connections, and/or lighting. The fund, distributed through an application process, can be created by the City by appropriating funds from existing revenue streams (income tax, parking meter fees, etc.) and can target specific parts of downtown.
- > **Amenities:** Work to attract and develop amenities downtown, including: urban grocers dog park, storefront retail, enhanced parks and public space, human-scaled streets.
- > **METRO DASH:** Service should remain/be expanded to travel more frequently during peak/non-peak hours, and improve the north-south connection between Northside and Southside.

Focus on partnerships to kick-start projects

In some instances, public-private partnerships are needed to make needed commercial/retail uses economically feasible. In those cases, use of state and federal tools and/or existing and newly created local tools is necessary.

- > **New Markets Tax Credits:** Work with developers to acquire and apply tax credits to targeted projects.
- > **Commercial Loan Fund:** Support a private or public/privately funded, commercial loan fund which helps provide financing for targeted office and retail projects.

IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

5 INVEST IN A WELCOMING, MULTIMODAL AND CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

The planned Main Street Promenade, recent lighting and placemaking improvements to the Towpath Trail and Lock 4, and the activation strategies for State Street, Exchange Street, High Street and Cascade Plaza are all examples of recent efforts to improve the appearance and usability of the downtown environment. This plan puts forth a more comprehensive strategy that encourages and enables better urban design, infill development, high-quality public spaces and streets that serve all modes of transportation.



Improve the Built Environment

Walkable streets begin by creating a built environment that is engaging from building face to building face. This requires creating design guidelines that encourage a mixed-use environment, with pedestrian-scale and transparent ground-level uses. It means providing a multitude of connections by preserving the walkable grid of streets and alleys and removing overhead pedestrian walkways as they outlive their useful life. Larger blocks should be broken down to enable this traditional pattern of development to return and to bring activity back down to the street level. Parking should be provided behind buildings or within blocks to minimize their impact on streets and the pedestrian experience. Existing surface parking lots should be prioritized for redevelopment. Doing so will rebuild the street wall that makes the downtown environment engaging, interesting and pleasant to be in.



Complete the Streets

Streets themselves should be right-sized and designed to accommodate all modes of transportation, enhancing access for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users. Where possible, two-way operation should be provided to calm traffic and simplify access and wayfinding. Efforts should begin on Main Street, where a portion of the corridor is being rebuilt with an improved pedestrian environment and landscaping, a cycletrack that connects to the Towpath Trail and on-street parking. This character should be provided along the length of downtown along Main Street. As implementation continues further attention should be paid to calming traffic on Market, High and Broadway Streets to enable a more pedestrian friendly environment and encourage redevelopment activity.



Strengthen Downtown Connections

Existing natural topography and man-made infrastructure have created barriers between downtown Akron and its surrounding neighborhoods and institutions. Two-way connections should be prioritized between the University of Akron and downtown. As improvements are planned along Route 59, greater connections between downtown and west side neighborhoods should be created. Likewise, attention should be paid to ensure that the Towpath Trail connections to downtown are implemented in addition to the Freedom Trail to maximize regional bicycle connectivity into and through downtown Akron. The latter investment could also be leveraged to better interconnect the Transit Center with both downtown and the University of Akron.



Make Open Spaces More Inviting

Existing open space in downtown Akron are either above, below or hidden from Main Street. Making these spaces, such as Lock 3 and Cascade Plaza more evident, welcoming and active will require additional investment in connections, amenities and programming. More meaningful and inviting open spaces will help anchor existing buildings and encourage additional redevelopment and reinvestment.

In addition to improving existing public spaces and creating new connections, additional green spaces should be added to downtown, especially along Route 59. This seamless green linkage between downtown, neighborhoods and the national park represents an unprecedented opportunity embrace the natural environment that surrounds the City of Akron. These improved and new green spaces will support and catalyze redevelopment. As new development takes place, open spaces and plazas around buildings should be created to provide connected and comfortable



gathering areas for workers, residents and visitors. Public-private partnerships should be formed to leverage existing park resources (city, county, regional and national) with corporate and foundation support, and other funding sources to develop a plan to improve and add public spaces in downtown.

Taken together, these great public spaces will not only provide a natural respite in the middle of the urban environment, but they will also provide environments where everything from chance interactions and collaborations to community events and programs can take place.

Expand on Akron's Rich History

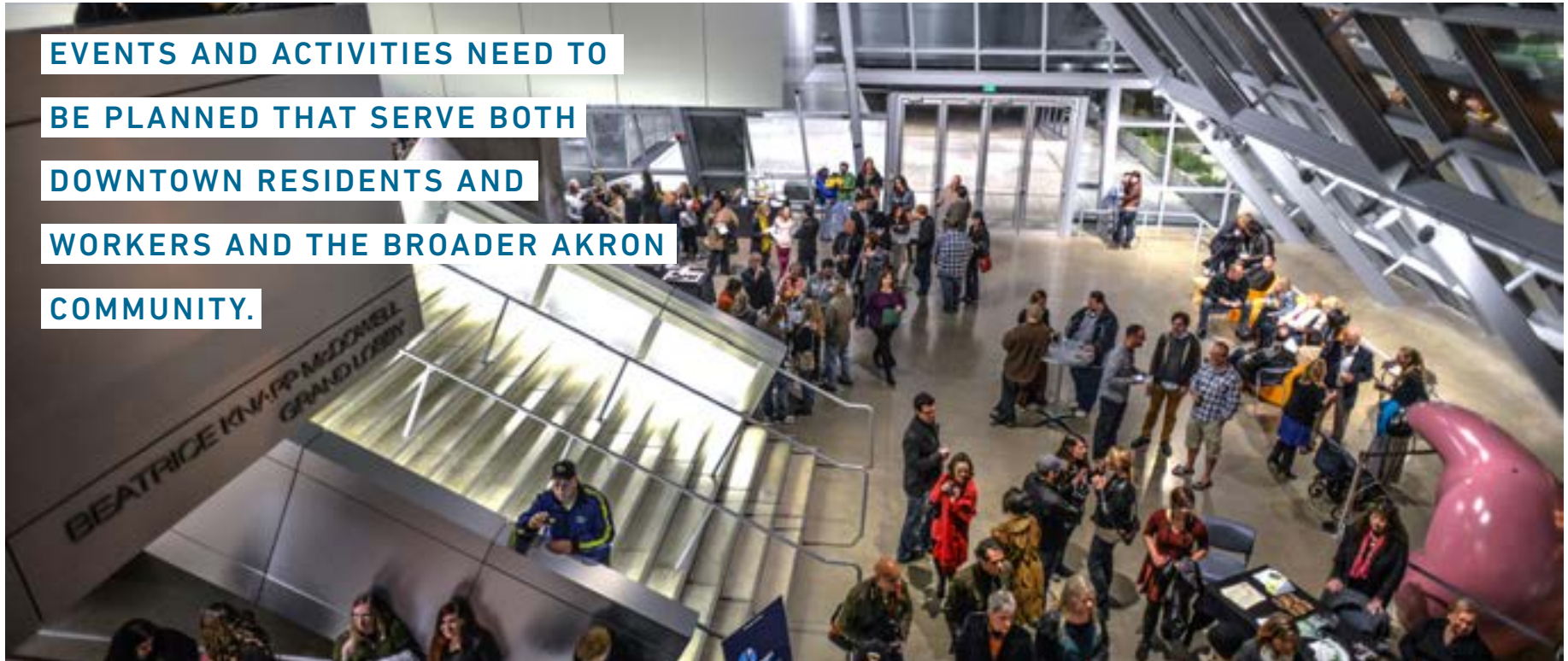
Improvements, whether infill development, the reuse of existing buildings, or enhancements to the public realm should take be authentic to Akron. Akron's history should be incorporated into projects both formally and whimsically ensuring that the culture of the place is evident to future generations.

IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

6 ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES NEED TO BE PLANNED THAT SERVE BOTH DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS AND WORKERS AND THE BROADER AKRON COMMUNITY.



Designing great public space is not enough by itself to make downtown successful. Events and activities need to be planned that serve both downtown residents and workers and the broader Akron community. The Downtown Akron Partnership, the City and other cultural and entertainment partners should continue

their efforts to program downtown and hold community events. Working together, these groups should continue to diversify programming to reach multiple audiences. This can be done by identifying partnerships to strengthen communication of events to target audiences, whether the workforce, students, residents

or the greater community. Regardless of the organization planning the event or program, marketing should be coordinated and planned to promote the overall brand and experience of downtown Akron. Doing so will encourage community participation in the downtown environment.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX

	STRATEGIC & RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
			SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
1	Concentrate on the Core				
	Conduct adaptive-reuse of existing buildings	Property Owners, Developers, City, County, DAP, DFA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Identify potential infill redevelopment sites, and encourage their private redevelopment	Property Owners, Developers, City, County, DAP, DFA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Focus on streetscape and other public realm improvements	City, AMATS, DAP, METRO RTA, Philanthropic Sector, Property Owners, Developers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2	Create a Residential Downtown				
	Repurpose/renovate older commercial buildings for residential as an appropriate early strategy	Property Owners, Developers, City, County, DAP, DFA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Encourage mixed use development and preserve first floor/corners for retail uses	City, DAP, Developers, Property Owners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Make downtown more marketable for housing (streetscapes, public realm, open space, retail recruitment, etc.)	City, DAP, Philanthropic Sector, Property Owners, Developers, AMATS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

DAP - Downtown Akron Partnership
 DFA - Development Finance Authority
 AMATS - Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
 ASCVB - Akron Summit Convention and Visitors Bureau

IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX

	STRATEGIC & RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
			SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
3	Foster an Entrepreneurial Downtown				
	Convert older office buildings into residential, mixed use opportunities	Property Owners, Developers, City, County, DAP, DFA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Reserve developable areas for future new office development as market demand evolves	City, County, DFA, Property Owners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Continue supporting an entrepreneurial ecosystem downtown	DAP, City, County, DFA, Property Owners, Developers, Bounce, Fund for our Economic Future, Philanthropic Sector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Create an Innovation District Strategy	City, DAP, County, State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
4	Facilitate Public and Private Investment in Downtown				
	Continue and package incentives for additive residential development downtown	City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Invest in Place	DAP, City, ArtsNow, Philanthropic Sector, Destination venues (Civic Theatre, Akron Art Museum, RubberDucks), Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Focus on partnerships to kick-start commercial and retail projects	DAP, City, County, DFA, State, Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX

	STRATEGIC & RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
			SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
5	Invest in a Welcoming, Multimodal and Connected Downtown				
	Improve the built environment by establishing design guidelines	City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Complete the streets by right-sizing and designing to accommodate all modes of transportation	City, AMATS, METRO RTA, DAP, Metroparks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Strengthen downtown connections to surrounding neighborhoods and institutions	City, Neighborhood Groups, University of Akron, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition, Philanthropic Sector, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Make open spaces more inviting by making their visibility from street grade evident, welcoming and active	DAP, City, Philanthropic Sector, Property Owners, Developers, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Expand on Akron’s rich history by incorporating into projects both formally and whimsically	DAP, City, Philanthropic Sector, Property Owners, Developers, Historical Society	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	Activate Downtown				
	Continue to diversify programming to reach multiple audiences	DAP, City, event partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Coordinate marketing efforts across event planning organizations to promote the overall brand and experience of downtown Akron	DAP, City, event partners, ASCVB, downtown destinations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

IMPLEMENTATION

FOCUS AREAS

SECTION 2: FOCUS AREAS

Southside Focus Area

1 SHORT TERM

Enhance Towpath Trail experience

Extend Main Street cycletrack

Implement Freedom Trail Phase 4

Main Street mixed use: commercial infill + linear plaza

2 MEDIUM TERM

Enhance existing alley

Connect Transit Center to Wolf Ledges Parkway

Activate historic buildings: Building adaptive-reuse

3 LONG TERM

Towpath Trail Residential: Future townhomes along both sides of canal

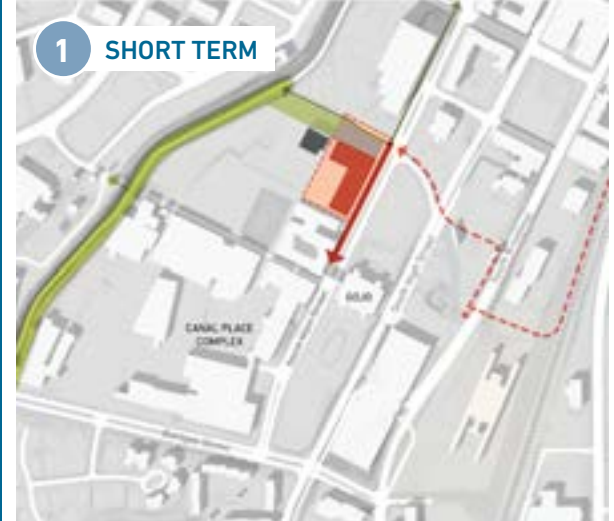
Canal Park Expansion: Use existing surface parking as development site

SOUTHSIDE FOCUS AREA: PHASING

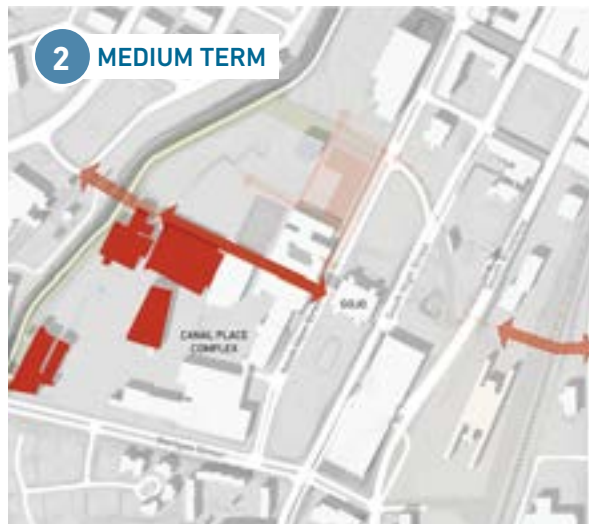
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- > Enhance existing, planned and potential connections
- > Activate historic buildings
- > Strategic Infill Development: Main Street Mixed-Use
- > Strategic Infill Development: Towpath Trail Residential
- > Strategic Infill Development: Canal Park Expansion

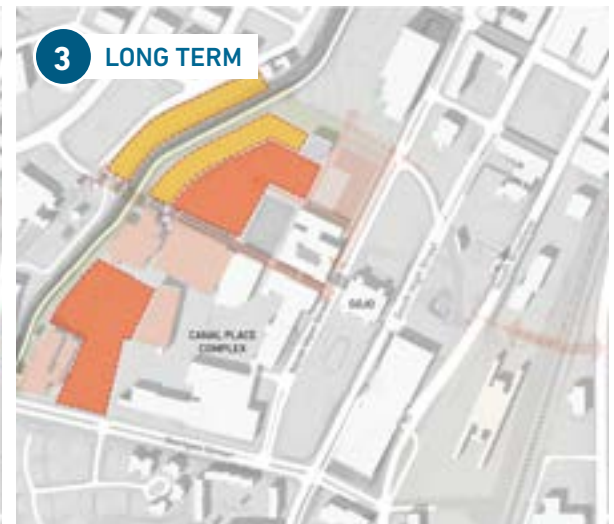
1 SHORT TERM



2 MEDIUM TERM



3 LONG TERM



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
				SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
1	Southside Focus Area					
	Enhance existing, planned and potential connections	Enhance Towpath Trail experience	Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition, City, DAP, Property Owners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Enhance existing alley	Property Owner, City	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Extend Main Street cycletrack	City, DAP, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Implement Freedom Trail Phase 4	Summit MetroParks, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition, City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Connect Transit Center to Wolf Ledges Parkway	METRO RTA, City, Railroad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Activate historic buildings	Building adaptive-reuse	City, County, DFA, Property Owner, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Strategic Infill Development: Main Street Mixed-Use	Commercial infill + linear park	Property Owner, City, DAP, County, DFA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Strategic Infill Development: Towpath Trail Residential	Future townhomes along both sides of canal	Developers, Property Owner, DAP, City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Strategic Infill Development: Canal Park Expansion	Use existing surface parking as development site	Property Owner, Developers, DAP, City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IMPLEMENTATION

FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREAS

Main & Exchange Focus Area

1 SHORT TERM

Redevelopment Phase 1: Main Street mixed-use, improved Buchtel Avenue

2 MEDIUM TERM

Redevelopment Phase 2: Main Street mixed-use, High Street Residential, linear green along Buchtel Avenue

3 LONG TERM

Redevelopment Phase 3: High Street and Broadway residential, improved Buchtel Avenue

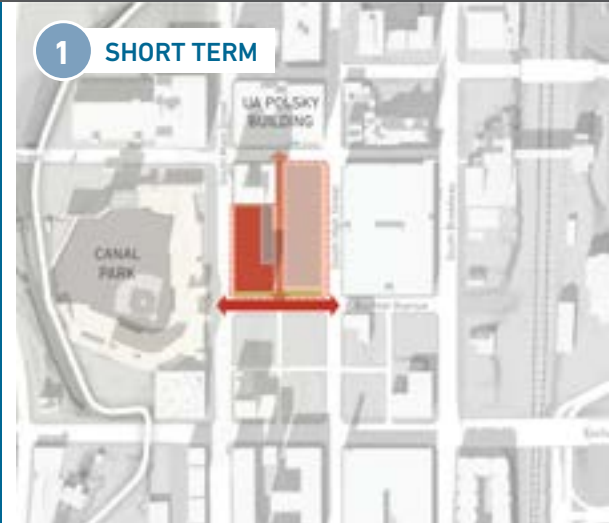
Redevelopment Option 2: Redevelopment of northeast corner of Main and Exchange

MAIN & EXCHANGE FOCUS AREA: PHASING

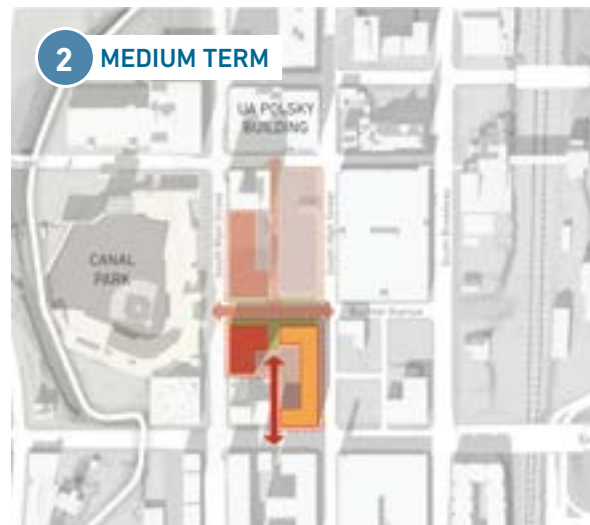
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- > Redevelopment Phase 1
- > Redevelopment Phase 2
- > Redevelopment Phase 3
- > Redevelopment Option 2

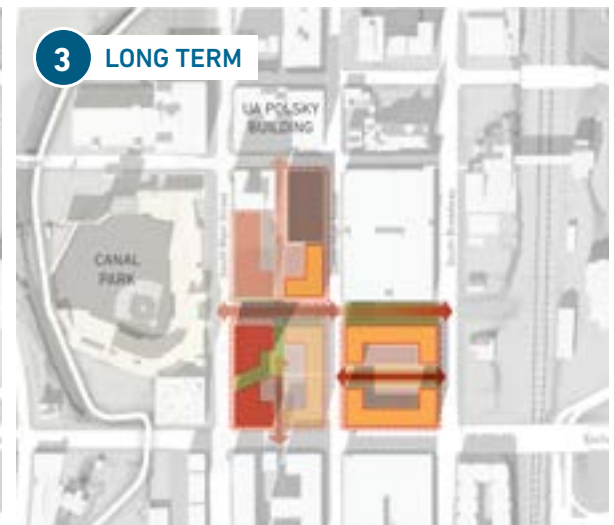
1 SHORT TERM



2 MEDIUM TERM



3 LONG TERM



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
				SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
2	Main & Exchange Focus Area					
	Redevelopment Phase 1	Main Street mixed-use, improved Buchtel Avenue	City, DAP, Property Owners, Developers, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Redevelopment Phase 2	Main Street mixed-use, High Street Residential, linear green along Buchtel Avenue	City, DAP, Property Owners, Developers, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Redevelopment Phase 3	High Street and Broadway residential	City, DAP, Property Owners, Developers, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Redevelopment Option 2	Redevelopment of northeast corner of Main and Exchange	City, DAP, Property Owners, Developers, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IMPLEMENTATION

FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREAS

Bowery District Focus Area

1 SHORT TERM

Leverage planned public realm/placemaking projects: Pop-up forest, Towpath bridge lighting, State Street activation, Main Street Promenade and Cycletrack

Enhance Towpath Trail experience and extend to Main Street

Fix access to Cascade Plaza

Opportunity Site: Bowery Street mixed-use

2 MEDIUM TERM

Make Bowery a Complete Street

New connection to Lock 3 from Water Street

Expanded Lock 3 Park

Opportunity Site: Future medical mixed-use

Opportunity site: Main Street mixed-use

3 LONG TERM

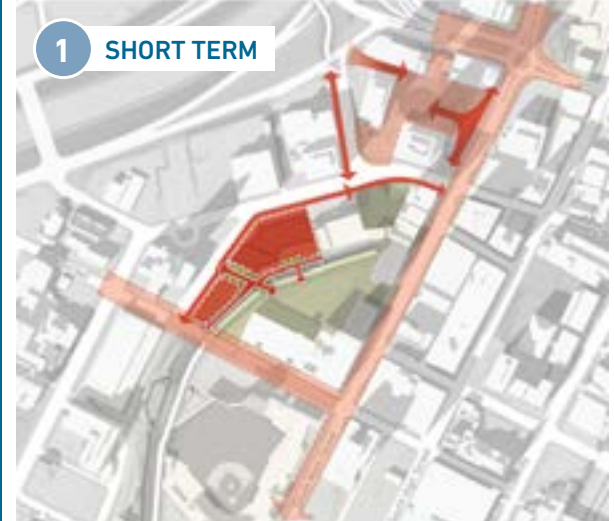
Opportunity site: Main & Mill Infill

BOWERY DISTRICT FOCUS AREA: PHASING

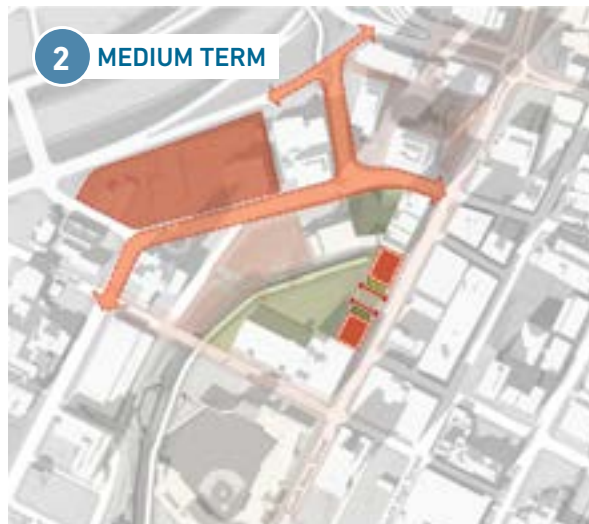
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- > Leverage planned public realm/placemaking projects
- > Activate edges and streets
- > Redevelop opportunity sites

1 SHORT TERM



2 MEDIUM TERM



3 LONG TERM



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
				SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
3	Bowery District Focus Area					
Leverage planned public realm/placemaking projects	Pop-up forest	Knights Foundation, City	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	Towpath bridge lighting	Knights Foundation, City, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	State Street activation	DAP, Knights Foundation, City	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	Main Street Promenade and Cycletrack	City, DAP, Philanthropic Sector, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Activate edges and streets	Enhance Towpath Trail experience and extend to Main Street	Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition, City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	Fix access to Cascade Plaza	Property Owners, City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	Make Bowery a Complete Street	City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	New connection to Lock 3 from Water Street	City, DAP, Developers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Redevelop opportunity sites	Future medical mixed-use	Akron Children's Hospital, City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Bowery Street mixed-use	City, Developers, DFA, County, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	Main Street mixed-use	City, Developers, DFA, County, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Main & Mill Infill	Property Owner, Developers, City, DAP, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

IMPLEMENTATION

FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREAS

Northside Focus Area

1 SHORT TERM

New pedestrian connection at 59/MLK/Main Street interchange, adding new at-grade railroad crossing into Northside

Reconfigure parking and drive lanes along right-of-way on N. Main Street

Complete townhome block

Enhance Market Street and MLK intersections with Main/High Streets

2 MEDIUM TERM

New office with ground-level retail in SummaCare site on Main Street

Urban plaza near MLK/Main Street intersection

Pedestrian bridge to Northside

3 LONG TERM

New office with ground-level retail in SummaCare site on Market Street

Potential Adaptive-reuse of historic trolley barn

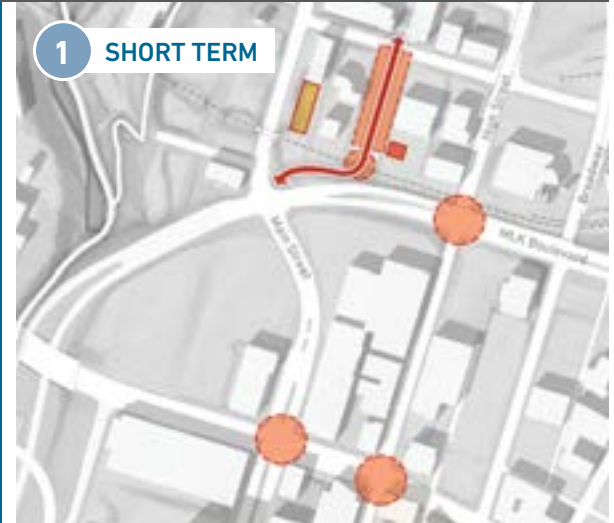
Opportunity site: Akron Public Schools Administration Building

NORTHSIDE FOCUS AREA: PHASING

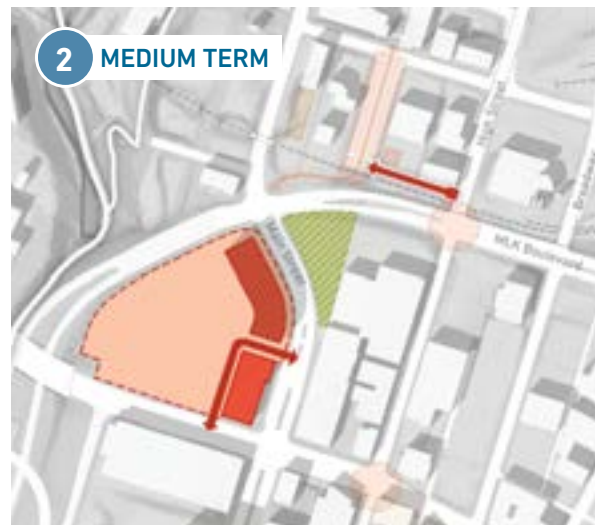
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- > Connect Northside to Downtown
- > Activate and Infill North Main Street
- > Activate and Infill North High Street

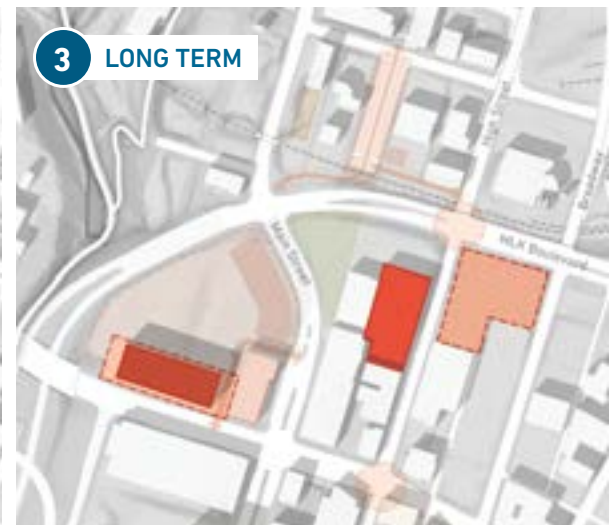
1 SHORT TERM



2 MEDIUM TERM



3 LONG TERM



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
				SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
4	Northside Focus Area					
	Connect Northside to Downtown	New pedestrian connection at 59/MLK/Main Street interchange, adding new at-grade railroad crossing into Northside	Property Owners, City, DAP, AMATS, Railroad, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Reconfigure parking and drive lanes along right-of-way on North Main Street	Property Owners, City, DAP, AMATS, Philanthropic Sector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Activate and Infill North Main Street	Complete townhome block	Developer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		New office with ground-level retail in SummaCare site on Main Street	Property Owner, Developers, City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		New office with ground-level retail in SummaCare site on Market Street	Property Owner, Developers, City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Urban plaza near MLK/Main Street intersection	Property Owners, DAP, City	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Activate and Infill North High Street	Enhance Market Street and MLK intersections with Main and High Streets	City, DAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Pedestrian bridge to Northside	Property Owners, City, DAP, State, Railroad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Potential Adaptive-reuse of historic trolley barn	Property Owners, City, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Opportunity site: Akron Public Schools Administration Building	Akron Public Schools, City, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IMPLEMENTATION

FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREAS

Route 59 Focus Area

1 SHORT TERM

Develop north section of park

2 MEDIUM TERM

Opportunity Site: Wills Lot

Opportunity Site: SummaCare Site

Opportunity Site: Glendale Site

Opportunity Site: Bowery Street medical mixed-use

Opportunity Sites: Surface lots along Dart/Rand Streets

3 LONG TERM

LONG TERM

Opportunity site: Mixed-use development along Center Street

Enhance existing and create new pedestrian/vehicular connections

ROUTE 59 FOCUS AREA: PHASING

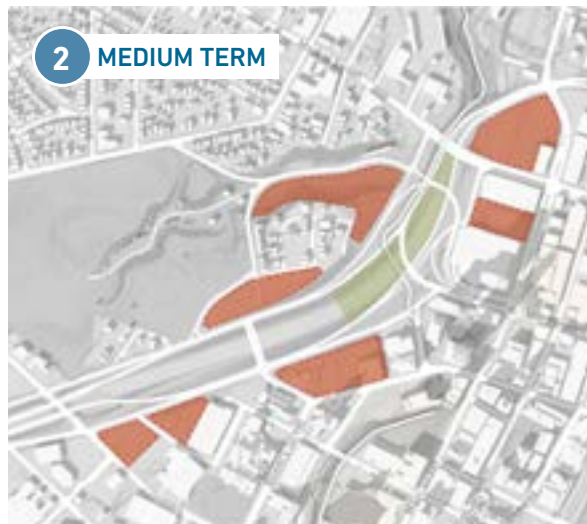
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- > Celebrate gateway to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park
- > Develop site edges to take advantage of amenities created
- > Develop site core to take advantage of amenities created

1 SHORT TERM



2 MEDIUM TERM



3 LONG TERM



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

	STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME		
				SHORT (1-3 Years)	MEDIUM (3-5 Years)	LONG (5-10 Years)
5	Route 59 Focus Area					
	Celebrate gateway to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park	Develop north section of park	City, AMATS, County, State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Develop south section of park	City, AMATS, County, State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Develop site edges to take advantage of amenities created	Wills Lot	Developer, City	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		SummaCare Site	Property Owner, Developers, City, DAP, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Bowery Street medical mixed-use	Akron Children's Hospital, City, DAP, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Glendale Site	Property Owner, Developers, City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Surface lots along Dart/Rand Streets	Property Owner, Developers, City, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Develop site core to take advantage of amenities created	Mixed-use development along Center Street	Property Owner, Developers, City, DAP, DFA, County	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		Enhance existing and create new pedestrian/vehicular connections	City, DAP, AMATS, Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IMPLEMENTATION

EMPOWERING IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION 3: EMPOWERING IMPLEMENTATION

Given the complex nature of downtowns—and the different constituents necessary to develop and implement a shared vision—an implementation entity that is completely focused on downtown is often needed to effect change. Today, Downtown Akron Partnership (DAP) provides many resources to downtown from programming, to clean and safe services, to retail recruitment, to the facilitation of redevelopment and public realm enhancements. It already works together with the City of Akron, Summit County, foundations, developers, institutions, and businesses to advocate for and achieve success in downtown Akron. By collaborating with public and private partners, DAP—or a public-private organization like it—should work alongside the City of Akron, Summit County and the Development Finance Authority of Summit County (DFA) to be the lead facilitator in implementing the Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan.

Across the region, this has proven to be an effective model, with development corporations or partnerships that have a singular focus on downtown being behind the resurgence taking place in the urban cores of Louisville, Cincinnati, Toledo, and Columbus. Development corporations or partnerships are critical entities that bring the public and private sectors in a community together to forge change and guide improvements in downtowns.

EXAMPLE ORGANIZATIONS



Cincinnati Center City Development Corp (3CDC)
Private non-profit led by Board of Directors of 30+ corporate leaders. Funded mostly by corporate contributions.

Strengthen core assets of downtown - Fountain Square, CBD, Over-the-Rhine. Acts as Developer, Master Developer, Asset Manager, Lender, & Programmer.

Roles: Identify Opportunities, Land Bank, Create Viable Projects, Structure Financing, Manage Project.



Columbus Downtown Development Corp / Capital Crossroads SID

CDDC: Private non-profit led by Board of Directors of 15 senior business & institutional leaders.

Created to implement the Downtown Strategic Plan. Acts as Developer, Master Developer, Asset Manager, & Event Operator.

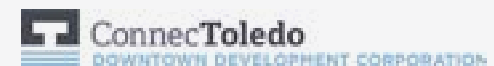
Roles: Identify Opportunities, Land Bank, Create Viable Projects, Structure Financing, Manage Project.



Louisville Downtown Partnership
Private non-profit led by Board of Directors of senior business & institutional leaders.

Created to implement the Downtown Master Plan. Acts as Developer, Master Developer, Asset Manager.

Roles: Identify Opportunities, Create Viable Projects, Develop Public/Private Partnerships, Structure Financing, Manage Project



ConnecToledo
CDDC and SID: Private non-profit lead by Board of Directors of senior business & institutional leaders

Created to implement the Downtown Master Plan. Facilitates public-private partnerships, promotes events and attractions, identifies investment opportunities and advocates for businesses.

Roles: Identify Opportunities, Create Viable Projects, Develop Public/Private Partnerships, Structure Financing, Manage Project

CASE STUDIES

SCIOTO GREENWAYS | Columbus, Ohio



CDDC Role: Master planning, project feasibility, fundraising, construction

FOURTH STREET | Louisville, Kentucky



LDP Role: Master planning, corridor planning, streetscape improvements

MARINA DISTRICT | Toledo, Ohio



CT Role: Acquisition, public engagement facilitation, coordination with developer and MetroParks

Doing so would require a significant increase in the capacity of DAP or a new organization to collaborate in the facilitation and implementation of both public and private sector reinvestment in downtown Akron. The organization would need real-estate savvy professionals on staff to help implement a physical transformation. Equally important, staff dedicated to outreach is essential to ensuring that the organization is proceeding toward a vision that is understood, and supported by, constituent groups. The funding and oversight of a more resourced and active implementation entity cannot come solely from the private or public sectors, but from both.

In addition to tackling the transformative projects within the Vision and Redevelopment Plan, this organization would need to provide leadership and help to create the programs and policy changes that will make the vision possible. This includes assisting the City, County and DFA with bringing together a suite of incentives and services, low interest loans, land assembly assistance and approval process facilitation. This organization would also work together with the City, County and DFA to facilitate development by helping developers work through the approval process, identify funding sources, apply for grants, and develop partnerships with other state and governmental agencies. In addition, this organization would facilitate the design process of public realm enhancements to ensure that public amenities and improvements are appropriate and of great quality. It is the setting up of attractive development opportunities that in the end will entice the necessary interest and investment in downtown.

Finally, this organization would work together with its partners to play an active role in public relations and continuously marketing the rebirth of downtown Akron. Part of this marketing involves telling the story of downtown and sharing its successes. To do so, this organization would need to gather, track, and benchmark critical downtown metrics and statistics in an ongoing basis.

A critical component of empowering implementation is a greater level of involvement and partnership from the private sector. In many cities, the business and corporate communities are significant funders of downtown organizations, as well as active board members. The private sector can play an important role in identifying and funding new staffing needs, especially people with real estate and economic expertise. Additionally, they can provide important oversight on key programs and initiatives. Programs, such as a commercial revolving loan fund, for example, are funded in many cities by the private sector, which also helps vet proposals for businesses and developments. As a result, some of the funding burden can be lifted from the public sector, and governmental strengths, such as policy and outreach, can be augmented with private sector strengths, such as market and economic expertise.

With this new capacity in place, DAP or other implementation entity can begin to facilitate the implementation of this Plan and assist the City, County, DFA, developers, property owners, and institutions with transformative downtown projects.