

DOWNTOWN DSM:
FUTURE
FORWARD 



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THANK YOU!

On behalf of the Downtown DSM Future Forward Steering Committee and the Future Forward Council, we thank you for making Downtown DSM a special place in America.

Thousands of people contributed to this Plan and thousands more contributed to making Downtown what it is today.

Downtown will continue to change and this Plan intends to build on our strengths and stimulate future discussion for an even better tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Future Forward Steering Committee Chairs
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Greater Des Moines Partnership launched the Downtown DSM: Future Forward planning effort in 2021 in collaboration with Bravo Greater Des Moines, Catch Des Moines, Capital Crossroads, City of Des Moines, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART), Des Moines Downtown Chamber of Commerce, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), FusedSM, Operation Downtown and Polk County. This document provides a guide to these organizations as well as others in the community including business leaders, non-profits, the development community and many others, to better understand a unified approach for making Downtown's future a more complete district and to spur action. As final solutions move forward from the plan, additional research and voices invited into the process will further strengthen specific ideas.

The focus of the initiative was to formulate a community-driven plan, positioning Downtown for short-term economic recovery and long-term vibrancy and vitality while acknowledging important historical and ongoing related planning efforts. The plan and the associated Implementation Guide (separate document) envision actions that could be completed in the next several years as well as recommendations for five to 15-plus years.

The robust and inclusive public engagement process focused on relationship building and listening to historically excluded voices. Through in-person, virtual and online activities, over 2,600 people contributed to the plan, with another 5,200 individuals contributing to the related DSM Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study.

A Steering Committee met monthly to guide the consultant team of Bâton Global, Civitas Consultants and RDG Planning & Design. A Future Forward Council, representing a broad collection of voices in the community, met at key milestones in the process for input and feedback.



DOWNTOWN DSM VISION:

AN ASPIRATIONAL STATEMENT FOR THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN

Downtown DSM is the
destination
for **inclusive**
opportunities
and **welcome**
surprises.

DESTINATION

Downtown is a magnet of activity for events and daily life in the City, the State and MidWest region. It is one of the ways Iowa expresses its uniqueness to the world.

INCLUSIVE

People have a sense of belonging with intentional and equitable inclusion. All people can find their identity within Downtown DSM.

OPPORTUNITIES

A thriving environment exists with choices available for types of leisure, entertainment, living arrangements, jobs, recreation and movement.

WELCOME SURPRISES

People are encouraged to discover layers of Downtown DSM's distinct and fun experiences as they explore Downtown, then share their memories with others.



LENSES

During the public engagement process, several themes emerged. These themes began to cluster around guiding principles, or lenses, when considering strategies for improving Downtown DSM in the future.

These lenses braid into each other, the goals and Future Six Initiatives. They become the tests to ensure that Downtown DSM is a complete neighborhood for tomorrow.



GOALS & FUTURE 6 INITIATIVES

The primary recommendations of the Plan are represented in two categories:

- **Goals.** Goals represent content from previous planning initiatives and correspondence with community members:
 - Welcoming Urban Neighborhood
 - Inclusive Arts + Entertainment
 - Rewarding Market for Development
 - Vibrant Outdoor City
 - Connected + Sustainable Mobility
- **Future Six Initiatives.** Future Six represents leading initiatives emerging out of the planning process that lead to a stronger Downtown over the next 10 to 15 years.
 1. Green Ring
 2. Skywalks Reimagined
 3. Inner Circle
 4. Stadium District
 5. Connected Corridors
 6. Stronger Neighborhoods

GOAL #1: WELCOMING URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

Provide a welcoming and healthy “home” for a wide range of demographic and economic groups.

As a collection of complete neighborhoods in the future, Downtown will be a community for all – an equitable, diverse and sustainable place that supports the continued growth and diversity of its population. While the Downtown population grows and diversifies, continued success as a living environment will require a balanced mix of amenities, including:

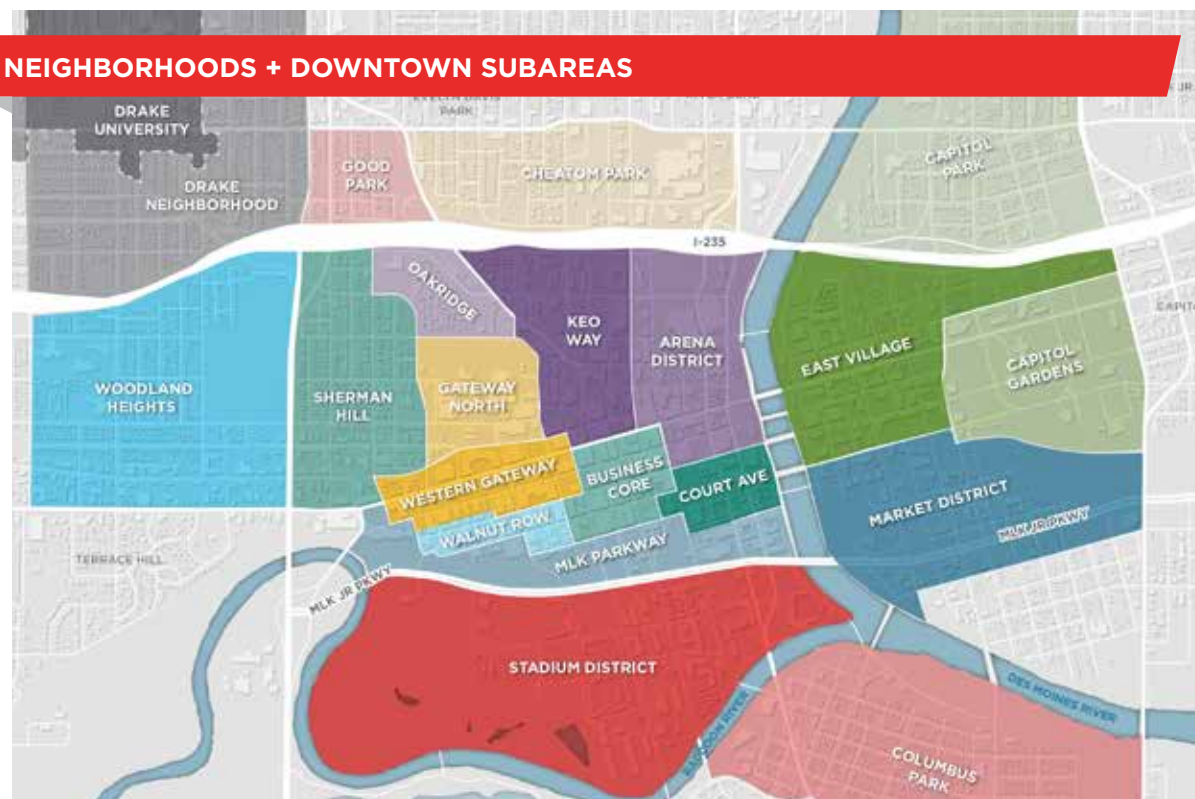
- Attainable and children-friendly housing, diversified beyond the multi-family blocks that have to date been the focus of the Downtown market
- Vibrant parks and neighborhood spaces
- A diverse distribution of commercial, retail and entertainment services
- Increased high-quality educational choices at all levels
- Access and connections to these amenities and services

The Future Forward Plan actively supports new investments in urban neighborhoods that align with overall planning goals and initiatives as summarized by the following strategies.

STRATEGIES

- Continue and expand strategies for neighborhood reinvestment through existing programs.
- Commit resources to the City’s Neighborhood Services Department.
- Involve multi-family housing owners and developers in maintenance operations in the Downtown Core.

NEIGHBORHOODS + DOWNTOWN SUBAREAS



Source: City of Des Moines, Connect Downtown, RDG Planning & Design

- Update neighborhood plans surrounding Downtown.
- Create a Community Core Neighborhood Alliance.
- Continue to address housing insecurity.
- Reactivate neighborhood nodes in Downtown neighborhoods as vital centers for neighborhood life.
- Proceed with priorities from the Regional Workforce Housing Strategy.

HOUSING OPTIONS

The area’s future housing stock should respond to and meet the needs of this growing and diverse population. Three core principles should guide the future of Downtown’s housing:

1. Children-friendly housing
2. Variety in price point
3. Variety in product type



GOAL #2: INCLUSIVE ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

Attract, retain and promote arts, culture, entertainment, festivals and events, and unique shopping and dining experiences.

Downtown has created a strong presence of physical and experiential art. Its festivals, weekly events, and cultural amenities attract people from all of Iowa and beyond.

The Future Forward Plan seeks to capitalize on these assets and their ability to help fulfill our vision as a place of inclusive opportunity and welcome surprises.

Recommendations are derived from community input; the Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment (commissioned by Bravo Greater Des Moines); the Catch Des Moines Destination Master Plan (in-progress); and the Report on Potential for Stronger Youth Connections to Arts, Culture and Heritage in Greater Des Moines (commissioned by Bravo Greater Des Moines).



STRATEGIES

- Complete the Market District Park and Market Street.
- Prepare a Cultural Development Plan.
- Complete the Pro Iowa Soccer Stadium and Global Plaza.
- Activate “Every Day, Everywhere Art” (Per Bravo Greater Des Moines goals).
- Engage communities when designing and enhancing specific areas.
- Identify corridors and streetscapes for placemaking.
- Practice “Skywalk Urbanism” with artist involvement.
- Maintain historic and cultural resources.
- Attract and support events in Downtown DSM.
- Strengthen the Creative Economy with space for artists and for the growing cultural ecosystem.
- Support arts, culture and heritage as diverse, accessible, inclusive and equitable.
- Continue to support youth connections to art education and programming.
- Address arts and entertainment gaps that were identified through community input.

GOAL #3: REWARDING MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

Create a climate for private investment that takes full advantage of public investments, maximizes activity, and advances the Future Forward vision for inclusive opportunity and welcome surprises.

Downtown will continue to be a premier location for development and growth in Iowa. Real estate is finite, and underused sites in Downtown are an important asset that we should use more effectively as outlined in more detail in chapter two.

Remote work arrangements do present new challenges. This dynamic and still unsettled environment demands new thinking, flexibility and openness. If community and business leaders and executives in Downtown DSM collaborate for the public good, invite and listen to new voices and base decisions on available data, we believe our shared vision of being the destination for inclusive opportunities and welcome surprises is both achievable and an answer to many of our questions.



Pop-up retail incubator in the Boston Seaport District.

STRATEGIES

- Continue to support private sector renovation, infill and redevelopment efforts that improve Downtown for future generations.
- Support continued district-level strategies that build on the momentum/opportunity of each district.
- Continue to strengthen resources for underrepresented entrepreneurs and small business owners, and create an awareness campaign for available resources for small business owners.
- Retain and recruit businesses to Downtown using targeted tax incentives; enhancing Downtown's cultural, recreational, quality of life and placemaking opportunities; maintaining a clean, safe, welcoming and beautiful Downtown; and supporting local sourcing of products/services.
- Support Downtown retail through placemaking, signage, promotion of retail districts and connectivity between districts/destinations.
- Create a coordinated pop-up retail program in the Central Business District.

POST-PANDEMIC RE-OCCUPANCY STRATEGIES

Addressing the post-pandemic challenges to office space use will require flexibility and new thinking on the part of employers and developers. While the ultimate impact to office space demands from the pandemic is still evolving, we offer a four-part strategy to address office vacancy:

1. *Minimize the amount of office space that has to be reoccupied by reconfiguring office space to meet employee expectations and best practices for work tasks.*
2. *Reuse vacated office space creatively.*
 - Complete an inventory of available office space.
 - Increase spaces for small occupancy tenants with shared amenities.
 - Incorporate unconventional but complementary uses on office floors.
 - Adapt suitable space to other uses including residential.
3. *Compensate for the flexibility factors that people like about working from home.*
 - Provide more flexibility during the workday.
 - Maintain an engaging external environment with events, attractions, pop-ups, street performances and amenities.
 - Create and tolerate outdoor work environments in good weather.
4. *Address the non-commute advantage of working from home.*
 - Develop sites with unnecessary parking lots into residential neighborhoods, providing more housing within walking distance of workplaces.
 - Provide infrastructure and aggressively promote active transportation as an enjoyable way to combine commuting with exercise and enjoyment.
5. *Amplify attention to business retention, expansion and attraction.*



GOAL #4: VIBRANT OUTDOOR CITY

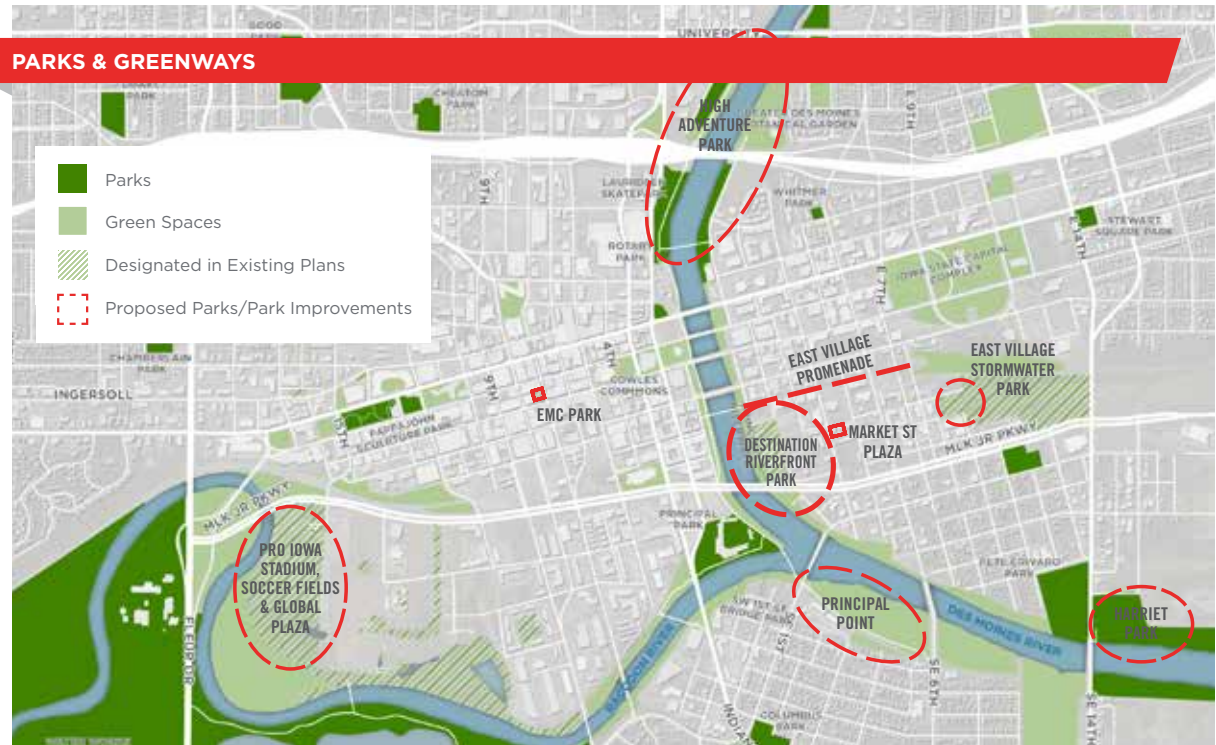
Make Downtown the recreational centerpiece of the Des Moines metropolitan area.

Downtown Des Moines' rivers, parks and gathering spaces are its signature attractions. Continued investment in our public realm is vital to sustaining a healthy, active and livable Downtown for ourselves and for future generations. This key resource should continue to evolve and sometimes reinvent itself as needs and recreational preferences change.

Parks and trails are proven catalysts for development, one of the engines behind Downtown's growth as a residential community. This Plan's related study of workforce behaviors showed that quality outdoor recreation was a major factor for choosing Downtown as a place to live and/or work.

STRATEGIES

- Extend the City's green network through the Core (through projects such as the EMC Park and the Skywalks Reimagined initiative).
- Complete the park conversion of the SW 1st Street Bridge.
- Complete planned development or enhancement of Downtown's major professional sports facilities (Pro Iowa Stadium and Global Plaza; Principal Park enhancements).
- Implement the Greater Des Moines ICON Water Trails and Greenways Plan. Enhance launch points as recreational assets.
- Develop planned open spaces in the emerging Market District.
- Implement East Village open space projects (Promenade and Stormwater Park).
- Ensure a welcoming atmosphere as well as accessibility & affordability of park and recreation destinations.



- Enhance trails with new amenities.
- Link trails and other pathways (e.g., sidewalks, bicycle lanes) to Downtown destinations and neighborhood features.
- Support and plan for events.
- Implement sustainable strategies that improve the environment for generations to come:
 - Continue to place a priority on building preservation.
 - Use sustainable practices with new construction.
 - Continue to balance land use, transportation, energy

efficiency, green building and waste diversion policies to adapt to changing conditions.

- Prepare and implement a Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP).
- Plant native vegetation.
- Designate recycling drop-offs.
- Add electric vehicle charging locations.
- Construct new habitat areas.
- Pursue stormwater best management practices.

GOAL #5: CONNECTED + SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Provide convenient, sustainable and enjoyable multi-modal choices that safely connect people and destinations.

World-class cities have walkable Downtowns that are easy to navigate. Moving throughout a vibrant, connected Downtown is part of the city experience that transforms the act of getting around and connected with the community.

The strategies of this goal are targeted to improve the following features of Downtown:

- Providing a balance of transportation modes — with particular improvements needed for walking, biking and transit (as desired by the community).
- Improving the experience and ease of local residents and visitors in finding their destination.
- Creating vibrant, welcoming streets.

STRATEGIES

- Implement Green Streets and design roadway improvements.
- Update Wayfinding System.
- Implement complete streets.
- Monitor trends in mobility technology.
- Provide well-located, space-efficient parking facilities for bicycles.
- Prepare a walkability plan by vicinity.
- Continue to enforce policy for sidewalk maintenance and repair.
- Explore rental scooters in Downtown or other micro-mobility options.
- Expand the BCycle system.
- Include pedestrian friendly street design elements in new or retrofit projects.

- Coordinate skywalk access points with bicycle parking and the sidewalk network.
- Increase the City's budget for multi-modal transportation.
- Prepare a Strategic Parking Plan.
- Host a conference among parking providers to look for shared opportunities.
- Redevelop surface parking lots, and redesign select parking lots.
- Continue exploration of two-way streets.
- Apply tactical urbanism for placemaking within on- and off-street parking.
- Create a marketing campaign for the ParkDSM mobile app.
- Study potential retrofits for existing parking structures and build new parking structures that permit future retrofits.
- Upgrade transit stops and improve the transit routes.
- Integrate DART into the design of street improvements.
- Implement transit priority treatments on 'Enhanced Corridors.'
- Improve bike access to Des Moines Area Regional Transit (DART) Central Station.
- Study the expansion of the D-Line.
- Work with DART to evolve transit services to better meet the needs of residents Downtown and in adjacent neighborhoods.
- Study how high-capacity transit such as BRT or light rail could serve as a catalyst to Downtown development.

Reference Future Six projects for additional connectivity recommendations.



FUTURE SIX: THE GREEN RING

VISION

Completing a **connected multi-purpose outdoor community commons** for all Greater Des Moines residents and visitors linking the natural and human environments that touches the entire City. The Green Ring provides opportunity, delight and accessibility. In many ways, the **Green Ring is a pillar of the Downtown vision**, a unique and invaluable resource that other details of the overall Future Forward program build on.



THE GREEN RING



WESTERN LINK



Create a multi-modal urban greenway along the 15th/16th Street corridor. This link connects together Northwest DSM, Downtown, the future Pro Iowa Stadium and Gray's Lake.

LOCUST/WALNUT PAIR



Continue implementation of cohesive urban design standards, pedestrian amenities and activations on Locust and Walnut.

EAST CONNECTIONS



Orient and market Locust Street as a component of the open space system, as well as an active, mixed use urban corridor.

NORTH LEVEE TRAIL



Complete the trail connection on the north Raccoon levee to link Principal Park, the Riverwalk, the SW 1st Street Bridge and the future Pro Iowa Stadium.

EAST SIDE LINK



Enhance East 6th Street as a multi-modal street with painted bicycle conflict zones, improved pedestrian zones and welcome surprises.

FUTURE SIX: SKYWALKS REIMAGINED

VISION

The inspiration for this new skywalk vision comes from New York City's famous High Line – an unloved and unused elevated railroad corridor in Manhattan that has become one of the city's leading destinations for both residents and visitors and is a powerful catalyst for development. Our skywalks are in a distinctively different context, but can adapt the High Line concept along key routes to create a destination that attracts people.



SKYWALKS REIMAGINED - ROUTE & POTENTIAL THEMES



The skywalks continue to help differentiate Downtown DSM to prospective employers and conventions/events. However, many of the skywalk routes do not reflect the current vibrancy of Downtown. Our skywalks can adopt an elevated, indoor park concept along key routes to create a destination that attracts people and complements rather than competes with Downtown's urban environment.

Precedents for this include Manhattan's High Line Park and the Chicago 606 — both facilities that were abandoned, elevated railways that are now linear parks full of people, surprises, gathering spaces, art, varied landscapes and ceremonial connections to the streets below.

Downtown DSM's "Skywalks Reimagined" key routes will complete the Green Ring by filling the gap between the Public Library/Western Gateway and the riverfront.

MANAGEMENT + MAINTENANCE

The Skywalks Reimagined vision requires clarifying the management structure; administering the design process, and maintaining, promoting, and managing the completed project. This may be achieved by expanding the capacity of the existing Skywalk Association.

WAYFINDING

A color-coded graphic and wayfinding system, built on the model of subway maps that identify endpoint-based "lines" will make the system far easier for its users to read the system and find their destinations.

OCCUPANCY OF SPACES & ENTRANCES

The Kaleidoscope and many skywalk bays are vacant. They are perfect spots for pop-up projects and convenience-oriented retail for Downtown workers and visitors. The skywalk vision also imagines strategically located, highly transparent and elegantly designed entrances.



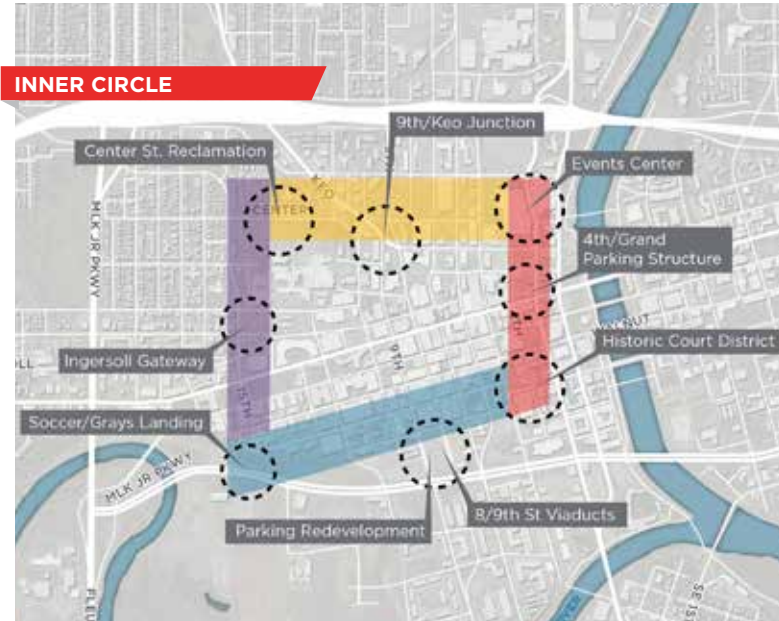
FUTURE SIX: INNER CIRCLE

VISION

A diverse and exciting mixed use circle around the core that integrates new intergenerational neighborhoods with 4 E's: entertainment, events, employment and education. It provides opportunities to take advantage of underused real estate (primarily surface parking lots), develop affordable housing as part of a community partnership, take advantage of unique existing resources and reinforce the Downtown core.



INNER CIRCLE



PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

Key streets in the Inner Circle should be enhanced with vegetation, lighting, street furnishings and “welcome surprises.” The route under the 4th & Grand Parking structure presents one such opportunity for a creative lighting/art installation. The future of the 8th/9th Viaducts should be explored for either long-term at-grade alternatives or enhancements to the current experience.

9TH AND KEOSAUQUA WAY INTERSECTION

The current design of the 9th and Keo Way intersection divides the potential neighborhood and provides a difficult environment for all users while also using a considerable amount of land. “Untying” the 9th and Keo knot can dramatically improve this environment. The concept converts 9th Street to two-way operation; terminates 8th Street at Park Street; and establishes a roundabout at 9th and Center, with a single leg continuing into 9th Street south of Keo.

CENTER STREET RECLAMATION

Center Street from 10th Street west to 15th Street was the main business street of Des Moines’ Black community. This area, with surrounding blocks, was acquired and demolished, and redeveloped under Urban Renewal during the 1950s. A Center Street interpretive experience along the street in this area could honor the history of the historic Black business street.

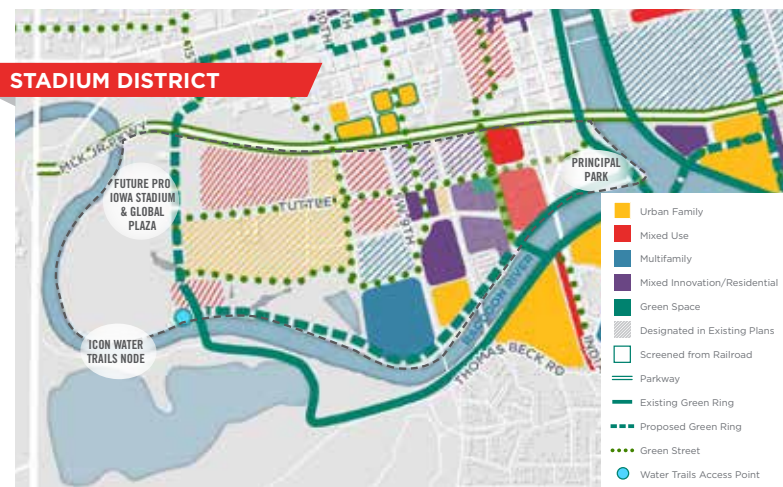
REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Workforce behavior shifts to more hybrid work arrangements have lessened the demand for parking on any given day. This has created an opportunity for underused surface parking lots throughout the Inner Circle — providing potential sites for residential, entertainment and mixed use development. Many of these sites represent a unique opportunity for mixed use and family housing development, large enough in scale to establish a neighborhood environment.

FUTURE SIX: STADIUM DISTRICT

VISION

A connected district anchored by three major signature centers for sports and outdoor activity, offering places for people to live, play, innovate and create new enterprises, with an emphasis on diversity and international character. While Gray's Station, Gray's Landing and the Pro IOWa areas are developing, other parts of this area have developed incrementally. This incrementalism is consistent with the spirit of an innovation district.



START-UP INCUBATOR

Public and private-sector incubators and co-working environments have proven to be effective at encouraging start-up businesses, increasing collaboration and providing affordable space and necessary business support services.

A project in the Stadium District that provides special encouragement for diverse and international businesses would advance the district's theme of leveraging economic opportunity.



TUTTLE STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Tuttle Street is developing as the main multi-modal east-west corridor of the area west of SW 9th Street and provides the most direct visual connection between the two major stadiums. The street currently ends at SW 5th Street with a long-term vision for extension based on the 2008 Downtown plan.

Dependent on a future traffic study, Tuttle between SW 11th and SW 5th should be redesigned as a complete street with a cycle track, consistent with the street section established at Gray's Station. This extension would open substantial redevelopment opportunities.

RIVERFRONT RESIDENTIAL

The area south of Murphy Street to the riverfront includes a variety of single-story buildings devoted to business and light industrial uses. Market forces will generally determine the future of this subarea, with new projects tending to capitalize on the riverfront location. New residential development should combine street orientation, private open space and play areas for children, trail linkages and connections to other projects to advance a neighborhood environment.

COLLABORATION SQUARE & NORTH-SOUTH GREENWAY

An incubator development should include a high amenity urban square for informal collaboration. This environment, complementing more conventional interior, would further distinguish the Stadium District as an innovation center.

A north-south greenway with pedestrian promenade and mobility track for bicycles and other micro-mobility modes would link the Stadium District to the Inner Circle on the north and the riverfront, trails, and neighborhoods to the south. A preferred route for such a greenway is SW 5th Street, that also leads directly to the Jackson Street pedestrian bridge to the south.



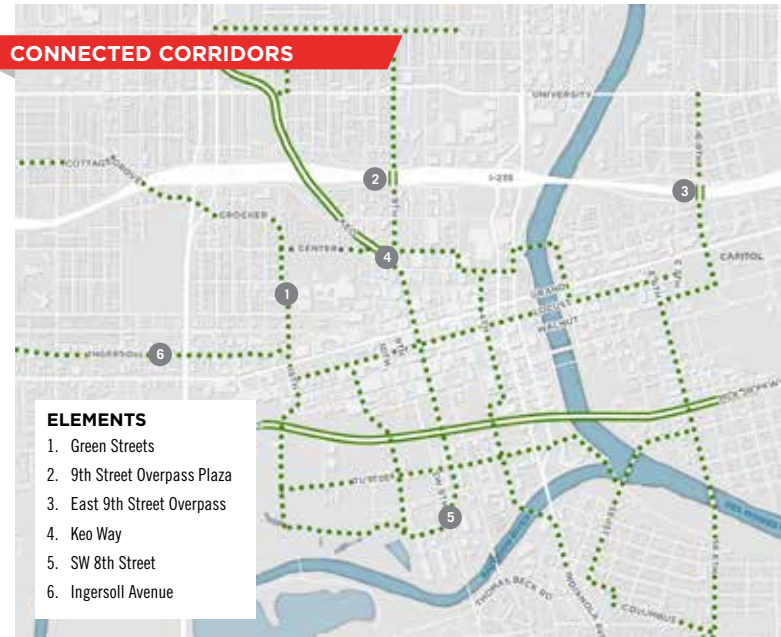
FUTURE SIX: CONNECTED CORRIDORS

VISION

Corridors that provide pleasant and comfortable linkages for all types of mobility — including driving, walking, biking and transit — from the Green Ring and Downtown core to surrounding neighborhoods. The streets that radiate from Downtown are the public environments that can help turn barriers into bridges and reinforce the positive connections into neighborhoods. In addition, they are the tendrils which connect the Green Ring in the center to the surrounding neighborhoods, the local parks and green spaces outside the Ring, and to the rest of the city.



CONNECTED CORRIDORS



9TH STREET & EAST 9TH STREET OVERPASSES

The 9th Street and East 9th Street overpasses provide local crossings over I-235 for the adjacent neighborhoods. Both bridges appear to have excess width. The Plan recommends reconfiguration of the overpasses to allow stronger bike and pedestrian connections to the adjacent neighborhoods — creating a welcoming relationship to and from the core of Downtown. A conceptual rendering of the 9th Street Overpass illustrates this concept.

INGERSOLL AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS

Ingersoll Avenue from High Street to MLK, while attracting greater private-sector investment, is still not fully developed. The streetscape installed on the north side from 17th Street to MLK should be continued east to High Street, with street oriented mixed use development lining these relatively underdeveloped blocks where opportunities exist.

GREEN STREETS

These streets constitute the major connections from the center outward into surrounding neighborhoods. Most should have a specific set of features, where appropriate, that include:

- Identification as green streets.
- Bike lanes, sidepaths, cycle tracks, or other comparable or hybrid micro-mobility infrastructure.
- High visibility crosswalk.
- Landscape and streetscape features.
- Green infrastructure techniques.
- Moderate traffic speeds (25-30 mph) and potential lane reductions.

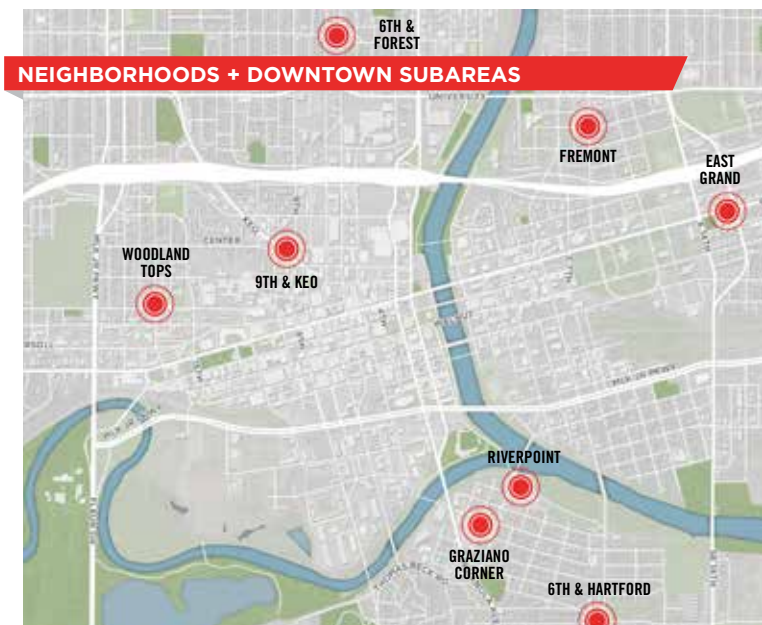
KEOSAQUA WAY IMPROVEMENTS

While Keo Way is a significant entrance into Downtown, it is not the only access from I-235. The City should study a potential conversion to a four-lane divided facility. This would permit converting the outer lanes to a wide greensward, fulfilling the original concept of a grand boulevard entrance to Downtown and connecting Downtown to destinations to the northwest such as Drake University.

FUTURE SIX: STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

VISION

Neighborhoods in and around Downtown DSM that offer attainable, quality housing to both owners and renters; unique characteristics that showcase each neighborhood; and the supportive life of strong urban communities. Desirable, measurable outcomes include increased value; neighborhood stability; stable or increasing owner occupancy; and additional economic activity.



INVEST DSM & COLUMBUS PARK

Invest DSM is a collaboration of the City of Des Moines and Polk County, designed to revitalize neighborhoods by focusing on home rehabilitation and commercial rehabilitation/reuse. Columbus Park is one of four current pilot districts. This area now has the opportunity to focus on new affordable, ownership development for families.

235 NORTH: INCLUSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD

Cheatom Park, Good Park, and Capitol Park require a long-term approach that includes a major infusion of effort and a long-term perspective. This neighborhood rehabilitation and investment effort will involve a partnership of residents, neighborhoods, community interests groups involved with community development and reinvestment, and city and county governments.

CHARACTER NODES

A strategy for reinforcing and developing the character nodes in Downtown area neighborhoods includes:

- A marketing program using graphics for identification and materials promoting these nodes as a collection of distinctive places.
- Public improvements including streetscape, lighting and pedestrian-oriented features.
- Connection to other parts of Downtown by green streets in the connected corridor system.
- Incentives and venture capitalization for desirable business types occupying vacant/underused buildings.
- Infill development on vacant sites.

STREET/INFRASTRUCTURE & NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood street/sidewalk rehabilitation improves both the visual and functional quality of neighborhoods and is a demonstrated catalyst for private home repairs and reinvestment. Similarly, local parks are key amenities that sustain neighborhood life and value to residents. The Downtown development program should support neighborhood revitalization efforts through resources directed to phased street/infrastructure rehabilitation programs and to park enhancements.





VISION + PROCESS

INPUT PROCESS

The Greater Des Moines Partnership launched the Downtown DSM: Future Forward planning effort in 2021 in collaboration with Bravo Greater Des Moines, Catch Des Moines, Capital Crossroads, City of Des Moines, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART), Des Moines Downtown Chamber of Commerce, Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), FuseDSM, Operation Downtown and Polk County. This document provides a guide to these organizations as well as others in the community including business leaders, non-profits, the development community and many others, to better understand a unified approach for making Downtown's future a more complete district and to spur action. As final solutions move forward from the plan, additional research and voices invited into the process will further strengthen specific ideas.

The focus of the initiative was to formulate a community-driven plan, positioning Downtown for short-term economic recovery and long-term vibrancy and vitality while acknowledging important historical and ongoing related planning efforts. The plan envisions actions that can be completed in the next several years as well as recommendations for five to 15-plus years.

The robust and inclusive public engagement process focused on relationship building and listening to historically excluded voices. Through in-person, virtual and online activities, over 2,600 people contributed to the plan, with another 5,200 individuals contributing to the related DSM Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study.

A Steering Committee met monthly to guide the consultant team of Bâton Global, Civitas Consultants and RDG Planning & Design. A Future Forward Council, representing a broad collection of voices in the community, met at key milestones in the process for input and feedback.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee (SC) of 28 people met monthly from August 2021 to April 2022 to inform the content in this plan. Representatives included residents, business owners and employees, city staff, elected officials and leaders in the community. Leaders are identified in the acknowledgments.

FUTURE FORWARD COUNCIL

A Future Forward Council (FFC) of leaders from 39 organizations met at key milestones to identify ideas and concerns for the future. Representatives included a wide variety of people from around the city, community leaders and non-profit organizations. The FFC provided input early in the process that shaped priorities and provided feedback on the draft recommendations later in the process. Also, representatives from the FFC served on the Steering Committee as FFC Leaders/Liaisons to carry crucial ideas forward.

MANAGEMENT TEAM

The management team met at least weekly to tailor the process and content as necessary. Representatives included members of the consultant team, Capital Crossroads, and Greater Des Moines Partnership. The Chairs of the Steering Committee and the Future Forward Council Leaders participated at key milestones.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Altogether, over 7,800 people contributed first-hand to the planning process. Discussions covered broad topics including the influence of the pandemic, people and places, inclusivity, land use, housing, economy, mobility, infrastructure, parks and open spaces, community facilities and more. Public input guided the organization of the plan, resulting in a Vision Statement and Plan Lenses that grew into a Framework of Goals and Actions. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, activities in the community shifted from large events to

decentralized activities and incorporated a hybrid of online and in-person techniques throughout the project's duration. The idea was to remove barriers to participation whenever possible. The engagement included three pillars of outreach: open, targeted and online.

- **Open Outreach.** Open outreach activities were opportunities for anyone to attend. Open Houses, public focus groups and intercept interviews out in the community were examples of open outreach.
- **Targeted Outreach.** Targeted outreach activities were deliberate invitations to participants for them to share their thoughts about Downtown.
- **Online Outreach.** Online outreach activities invited people to complete surveys, engage with online mapping tools and interact via social media.

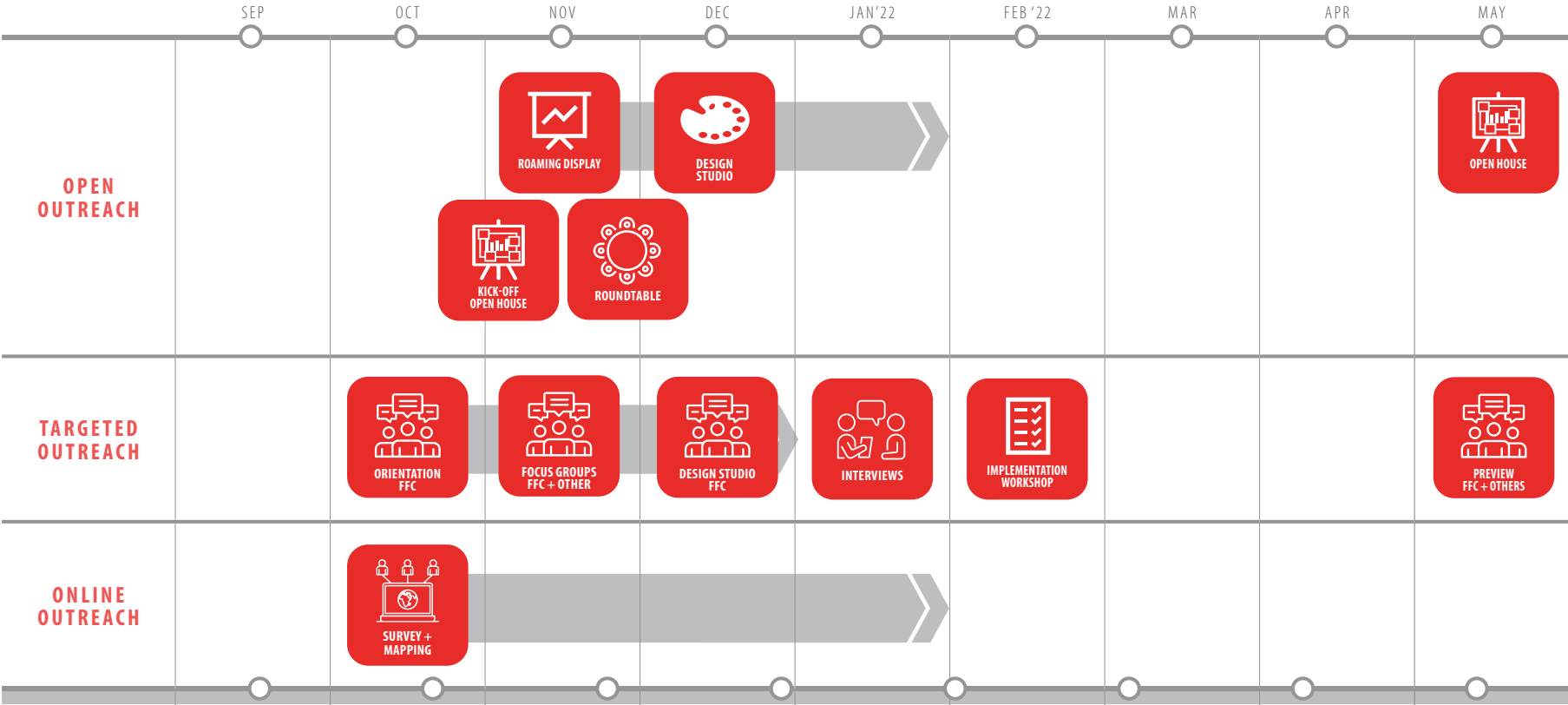
PARTICIPANTS

More information about the participants, organizations and activities that shaped the plan can be found in the Acknowledgments section at the beginning of this document as well as the Appendix Record of Meetings.

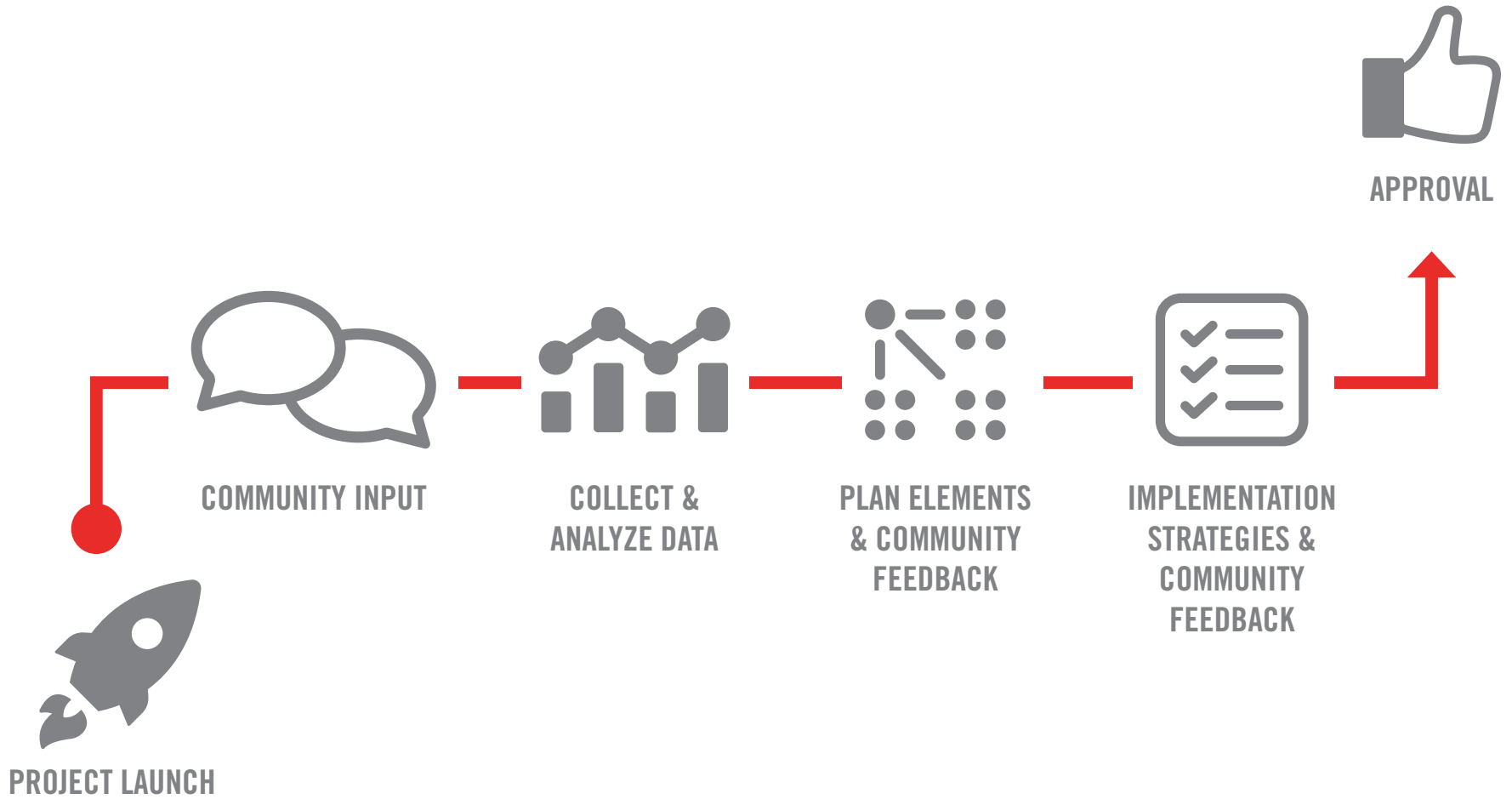
PAST PLANNING INITIATIVES

We gratefully acknowledge the thousands of people who contributed to historical planning efforts; PlanDSM, LiveDSM, Connect Downtown and many more projects. This plan recognizes these contributions by folding recommendations from those plans into one home - Future Forward.

OUTREACH PROCESS



PLAN PROCESS



100+ FOCUS GROUP
ATTENDEES

2000+
USERS OF INTERACTIVE WEBSITE



275+
OPEN HOUSE ATTENDEES



30+
POP-UPS & POP-INS

50+
EMAIL BLASTS



50+ SMALL GROUP
INTERVIEWS



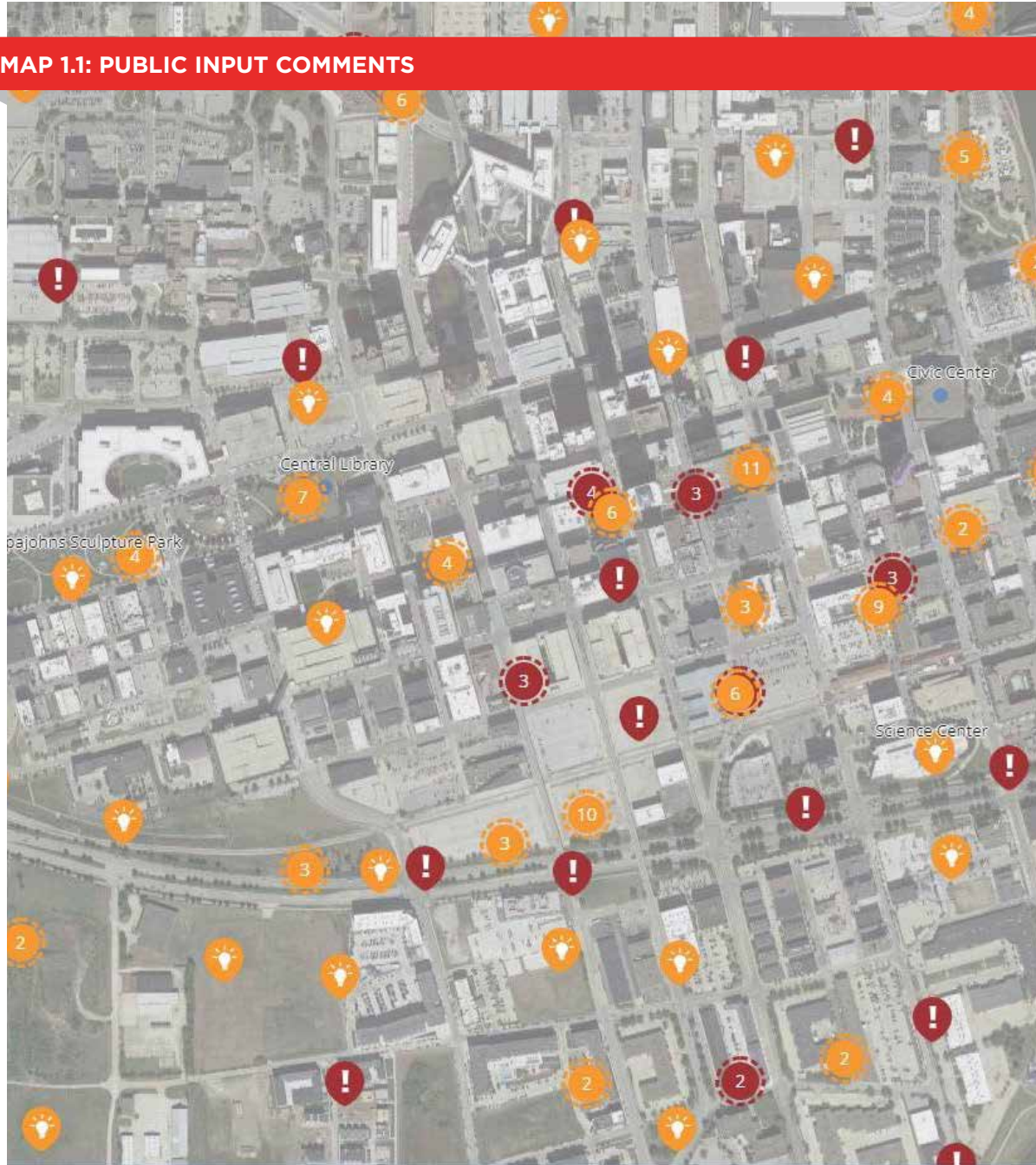
INPUT THEMES

The Downtown DSM Future Forward Plan sought to achieve an unprecedented level of inclusion through the planning process. This goal resulted in interactions with thousands of people and hundreds of discussions as well as outreach to historically underrepresented and/or excluded communities. While more opportunities to gain input and feedback on Downtown's future persist, this plan is all about the people who contributed to it, and what they want to see in their Downtown. Their input is crystallized in the following themes that directly influenced the plan goals and initiatives:

- **People.** Downtown hosts people from different nationalities, cultures, ages, gender identification, incomes and faiths, who live and work in Downtown. Opportunities include:
 - Achieving personal experiences that always feel welcoming and safe for all people.
 - Offering a spectrum of amenities and services to people that support today's reality and the ever-changing future.
 - Presenting activities for all ages, with special emphasis on youth, seniors and young professionals.
 - Celebrating the multitudes of languages and cultures that make up the Downtown community.
- **Neighborhoods.** Downtown has become a new neighborhood and is surrounded by established neighborhoods. Each has its own identity and unique attributes. Opportunities include:
 - Strengthening connections between neighborhoods.
 - Keeping Downtown beautiful and clean.
 - Improving brands for enhanced placemaking and creative wayfinding.
- Providing housing options, including different types of living arrangements and levels of affordability.
- Creating a safe, delightful, and rewarding place to live for people in all stages of life.
- **Arts and Entertainment.** Downtown hosts the region's signature performing arts venues and exhibitions of public art, while providing regular cultural events unique to Iowa. Opportunities include:
 - Celebrating food as a unifying theme.
 - Supporting and attracting artists and performers.
 - Strengthening the infrastructure that supports creation, presentation and participation in arts and cultural programs at venues of various sizes.
 - Adding public artwork to all spaces including artwork designed by local artists or artists of color.
 - Creating new, inclusive events and growing existing events.
 - Supporting the establishment of new venues, such as facilities for both participatory and spectator sports, visual and performing arts, and other activities.
- **Development.** Downtown's skyline of development continues to transform as the markets change to serve customer demands and employment trends. Opportunities include:
 - Repurposing property to better serve the community, strengthen the culture and maximize the tax base.
 - Preserving historical and cultural sites while pivoting toward future needs.
 - Continued use of public gap-financing assistance for development projects.
 - Creating complete neighborhoods that address the needs of residents.
 - Adapting to new employee preferences.
- **Outdoors.** The confluence of rivers creates a backbone of natural spaces for people to engage with. Tendrils of greenways and trails allow people to explore nature and new experiences. Opportunities include:
 - Celebrating the rivers and activity along and within them.
 - Ensuring that future open space plans, including the ICON Water Trails, become a reality.
 - Activating public spaces for routine and impromptu use.
 - Positioning the trail network to be the hub for the entire metro.
 - Protecting environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Retrofitting spaces for creative activation and enjoyment.
- **Mobility.** Downtown's scale enables people to move between places by their choice of transportation mode. Opportunities include:
 - Funding desired improvements to roadways, including their function and appearance.
 - Making Downtown more accessible for people of varied abilities.
 - Shifting the priority to active and lower-speed modes (walking, biking, and scooters) over motor vehicles.
 - Gaining greater acceptance and infrastructure to support bicycle and alternative transportation.
 - Adapting to changing mobility options (rideshare, transit, carpooling).
 - Moving an influx of traffic for special events.
 - Improving the skywalk's function and appearance.
 - Maximizing the function and character of curb spaces.



MAP 1.1: PUBLIC INPUT COMMENTS



Source: Social Pinpoint; Participants in public input process

Create an international district that includes the USU Pro Iowa Global Plaza. This could include the proposed Welcome Center, an international Trade Center similar to those that exist in other cities, a building that could house non-profits that focus on international engagement and perhaps some type of business incubator for immigrant owned businesses.

[Review](#)
 Like (1) | Dislike [f](#) [t](#)
 Zoom in 4 months ago

bike trail along this levee all from Jackson street bridge to the new soccer stadium

[Review](#)
 Like (16) | Dislike [f](#) [t](#)
 Zoom in 5 months ago

What's with all the huge, under-used parking lots south of the west downtown area? They're all opportunities for infill. Offer incentives to build on them – or disincentives to stay as parking lots. (Perhaps tax each parking lot as if it were completely developed with 3-story commercial buildings?)

[Review](#)
 Like (1) | Dislike [f](#) [t](#)
 Zoom in 3 months ago





Downtown DSM

is the **destination**

for **inclusive**

opportunities

and **welcome surprises.**

DESTINATION

Downtown is a magnet of activity for events and daily life in the City, the State and MidWest region. It is one of the ways Iowa expresses its uniqueness to the world.

INCLUSIVE

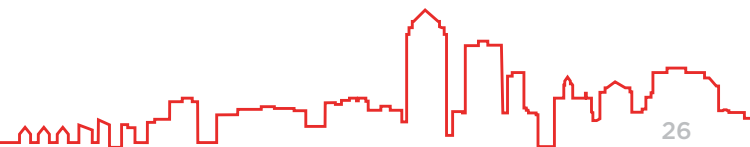
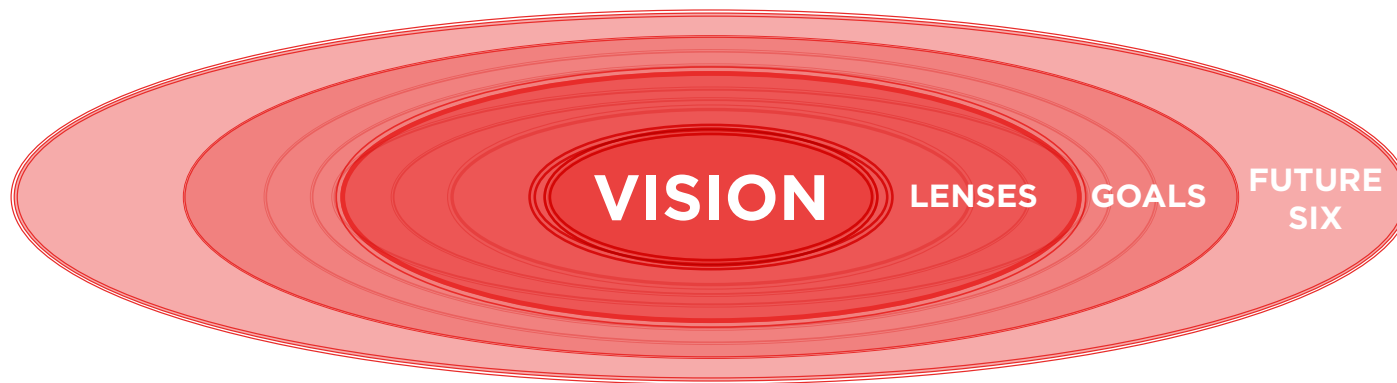
People have a sense of belonging with intentional and equitable inclusion. All people can find their identity within Downtown DSM.

OPPORTUNITIES

A thriving environment exists with choices available for types of leisure, entertainment, living arrangements, jobs, recreation and movement.

WELCOME SURPRISES

People are encouraged to discover layers of Downtown DSM's distinct and fun experiences as they explore Downtown, then share their memories with others.



COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION presents the approach to authoring the plan and its visuals.

VISION

LENSES

INPUT

GOALS

1

WELCOMING URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

2

INCLUSIVE ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

3

REWARDING MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

4

VIBRANT OUTDOOR CITY

5

CONNECTED + SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

GOALS represent content from previous planning initiatives and correspondence with community members.

FUTURE SIX: LEADING INITIATIVES

I

GREEN RING

II

SKYWALKS REIMAGINED

III

INNER CIRCLE

IV

STADIUM DISTRICT

V

CONNECTED CORRIDORS

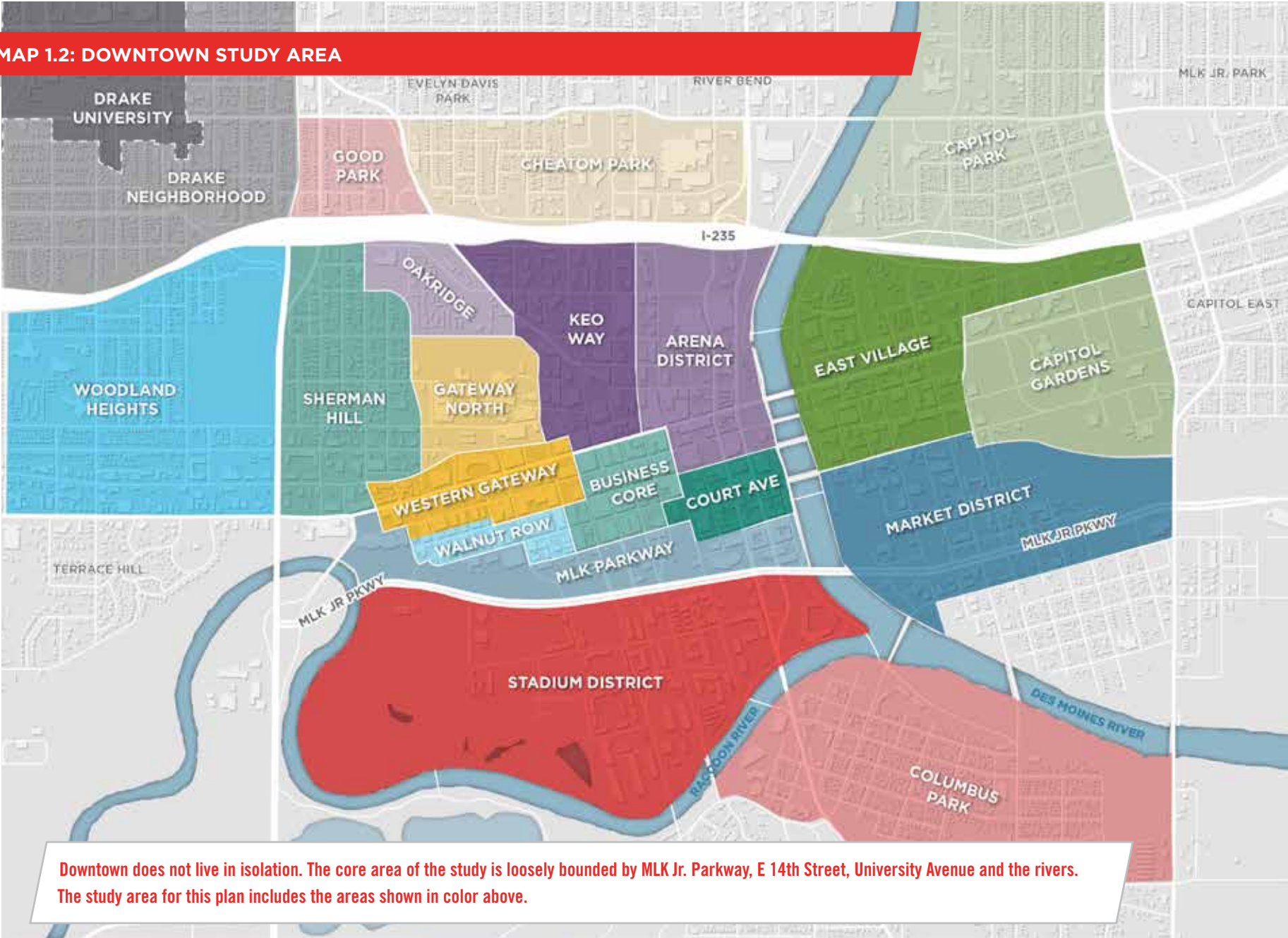
VI

STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

FUTURE SIX represents leading initiatives emerging out of the planning process that lead to a stronger Downtown over the next 10 to 15 years.



MAP 1.2: DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA



Downtown does not live in isolation. The core area of the study is loosely bounded by MLK Jr. Parkway, E 14th Street, University Avenue and the rivers. The study area for this plan includes the areas shown in color above.



VISION

DOWNTOWN DSM IS THE DESTINATION FOR INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND WELCOME SURPRISES.

LENSES

During the public engagement process, several themes emerged. These themes began to cluster around guiding principals, or lenses, when considering strategies for improving Downtown in the future.

These lenses weave into each other, the goals and Future Six Initiatives. They become the guiding principles to ensure that Downtown is a complete neighborhood for tomorrow.

SUSTAINABILITY

Downtown DSM continues to conserve, maintain and enhance existing assets and resources in Downtown. Strategic and sustainable practices will preserve the environment, as well as the social and economic viability of Downtown.

INCLUSIVITY

Downtown DSM strives for equitable access to opportunities and resources for all people, making the area welcoming and a comfortable place for everyone.

WELLNESS

Downtown DSM supports conditions for being a safe and healthy environment that provides ample opportunities for positive social interactions and an active lifestyle.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Downtown DSM wants to respond effectively to changes in the economy. Short-term economic recovery should be creative and collaborative, while long-term economic vitality comes from actions that are pragmatic and implementable.

CHOICE

Downtown DSM offers diverse options when it comes to living, working, playing, connecting and belonging. Year-round activities, cultural celebrations and access to daily needs are within walking distance.

VIBRANCY

Downtown DSM attracts business, visitors and locals alike, becoming a nexus of activities that draws people to Central Iowa for building memories.





SUSTAINABILITY	INCLUSIVITY	WELLNESS	ECONOMIC VITALITY	CHOICE	VIBRANCY
<p>Does the action increase the environmental, social and economic sustainability of Downtown?</p> <p>What actions are required to conserve, maintain or enhance our assets and natural resources?</p>	<p>Does the action provide equal and equitable access to opportunities and resources for all people?</p> <p>Does the potential action create a welcoming and comfortable place for all people?</p>	<p>Does the action contribute to an overall, well-rounded quality of life experience for the workforce, residents and visitors including, but not limited to, a safe and healthy environment; accessible daily needs; and opportunities for positive social interactions?</p>	<p>Does the action contribute to the near and long-term economic vitality of Downtown?</p> <p>Does the potential action consider the pragmatic viability of implementation?</p>	<p>Does the action improve or enhance the available choices for people to live, work, play, connect and belong?</p>	<p>Does the action contribute to a sense of place, fear of missing out, magnetism of Downtown or artistic encounters?</p> <p>Does the potential action enhance vibrancy to make Downtown more attractive to the workforce, visitors and residents?</p>





2

GOALS

INTRODUCTION

BEYOND SMART CITIES

The GOALS in this section complement the VISION and LENSES. The five GOALS organize the ideas of the plan into these key subject areas:

1. **Welcoming Urban Neighborhood**
2. **Inclusive Arts + Entertainment**
3. **Rewarding Market for Development**
4. **Vibrant Outdoor City**
5. **Connected + Sustainable Mobility**

Together, the five goals represent the themes articulated through the community input process and key strategies identified in past planning initiatives. Each goal section on the following pages begins with a reflection on the current state of the goal, acknowledgment of overlapping goals found in relevant plans and a presentation of future strategies by topic.

Many cities across the globe are also striving to be “Smart.” What does this mean? A Smart City is a place where traditional networks and services are made more flexible, efficient and sustainable with the use of information, digital and telecommunication technologies to improve the city’s operations for the benefit of its inhabitants.

However, we all know that using a “smart” phone or wearing a “smart” watch does not make a person smart. For the same reasons, the use of technology in any city is not sufficient to make it smart. For the past decade, ‘Smart City’ projects have emphasized measurement, data analytics and modeling—all which are critical new ways to optimize cities

and more importantly, offer new applications to make cities “better” for their inhabitants. Smart City applications are most likely to make a city “better” if the city’s residents and visitors are at the core of such services. Feedback from the community emphasized a need for Downtown to be growing in a manner that is environmentally and economically sustainable. As our community changes, we believe that investing in sustainability and resilience enables us to preserve, protect and enhance the economic health and vitality of Downtown.

Des Moines is focusing its priorities toward fostering a culture of sustainability throughout the community. The city understands that the built environment has a profound impact on natural resources, economy, health and productivity. Downtown’s commitment to the principles of sustainability will generate economic growth, create equitable access to health-improving services and enhancing quality of life for current and future generations. This plan also recommends full support in implementing the forthcoming City of Des Moines Climate Action and Adaptation Plan currently underway.

Downtown DSM must remain an open and welcoming location for people of all backgrounds and cultures to interact, engage and lead. In government, business, and social activities, Downtown DSM’s strength comes from the way in which people engage in dialogue and connect to each other. We will continue to break down barriers so that collaboration and partnerships will thrive and produce a prosperous future for us all.



THE FUTURE FORWARD PLAN IS A GUIDE FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND DECISION-MAKERS, HELPING ALL TO BETTER UNDERSTAND A MORE UNIFIED APPROACH FOR MAKING DOWNTOWN DSM’S FUTURE A MORE COMPLETE DISTRICT.



A RESILIENT DOWNTOWN

Having the tools and alternatives to satisfy basic needs for everyone, everywhere and at all times is about ensuring clean air, water quality, sustainable energy and affordable housing. These are the elements contributing to a healthier Downtown.

A PROSPEROUS DOWNTOWN

To establish a Downtown as an urban laboratory that uses innovation and creativity to generate prosperity and new solutions to urban challenges. We must take advantage of building the new strategic plan alongside the metropolitan urban plan, being fully prepared to welcome and develop mobility, economic activity, research and knowledge for the coming century.

A COHESIVE DOWNTOWN

A cohesive Downtown is one that is connected and networked; promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive progress, focused on improving the quality of life and generating opportunities for all. Education is the best way to achieve this and will be accompanied by the digital revolution, the transformation of traditional economic sectors, the promotion of a more diverse and varied economy and governance with the tools to achieve a greater economy.







GOAL 1

WELCOMING URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

FUTURE FORWARD GOAL

Provide a welcoming and healthy “home” for a wide range of demographic and economic groups.

Traditionally, Downtown DSM has served as a place to work and shop. But it has also emerged as a place to live, with special attraction for younger age groups. In the 2022 Downtown DSM Future Forward Survey, 24% of respondents said they were highly likely to live Downtown within the next ten years (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale), compared with only 7% in the 2013 Downtown Perception Assessment.

The Downtown DSM of the future will build on this momentum, growing as a collection of complete and connected neighborhoods. “Complete neighborhoods” serve the economic, social and personal needs of current and future residents. They provide access to employment, affordable housing, recreation, goods and services and education. They both preserve their history and evolve, contributing to a culture and sense of place that residents, workers and visitors understand and appreciate.

As a collection of complete neighborhoods, Downtown will be a community for all – an equitable, diverse and sustainable place that supports the continued growth and diversity of its population. With the Downtown population grows and diversifies, continued success as a living environment will require a balanced mix of amenities, including:

- Attainable and children-friendly housing, diversifying beyond the multi-family blocks that have to date been the focus of the Downtown market
- Vibrant parks and neighborhood spaces
- A diverse mix of commercial, retail and entertainment services
- Increased high-quality educational choices at all learning levels
- Access and connections to these amenities and services

The Future Forward Plan actively supports new investments that align with overall planning goals and initiatives, further integrating community feedback into recommendations and actions. **Concepts for the future are presented by:**

- **Neighborhood Strategies**
- **Housing Options for the Future**

RELEVANT PLANS/REPORTS

- 2019 Market District Plan
- 2019 Columbus Park Special Investment District
- 2019 Regional Workforce Housing Strategy
- 2019 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing
- 2018 Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Program Review
- 2017 Sherman Hill Neighborhood Plan
- 2017 One Economy: Building Opportunity for All
- 2016 Plan DSM
- 2015 Housing Tomorrow
- 2014 Capitol East Neighborhood Plan
- 2011 Tomorrow Plan
- 1991 Columbus Park Neighborhood Plan

PAST PLAN GOALS

PlanDSM and the Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Program Review (NRPP - 2018) are the principal resources for guiding neighborhood improvements in and around Downtown.

PlanDSM is the city's comprehensive plan, while the NRPP is the city's guide for neighborhood revitalization. This section summarizes the goals from these plans and lists their strategic directions, by area, in the following pages.

PLANDSM

Goal 1

Provide diverse housing options to accommodate residents of all ages, income levels, household sizes and cultural backgrounds.

Goal 2

Preserve, maintain and improve the existing inventory of single-family and multi-family housing.

Goal 3

Promote sustainable housing development that utilizes existing resources and supports compact, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods.

Goal 4

Support development of, and access to, quality housing affordable to all income level households.

PLANDSM COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS

- **Embrace the unique character** offered in each of Des Moines' neighborhoods.
- **Further Des Moines' revitalization efforts** to improve the strength, stability and vitality of all neighborhoods.
- **Promote the redevelopment and revitalization** of neighborhood nodes and corridors.
- **Protect Des Moines' historic and cultural assets** that contribute to neighborhood and community identity
- **Expand opportunities for healthy and active living.**

NRPP FINDINGS & DIRECTIONS

- **Policies that retain strong neighborhoods have proven successful and increase property values.** Examples are Salisbury Oaks and River Woods.
- **Development of corridors such as Ingersoll Avenue have significant benefits for surrounding neighborhoods.** These include improved maintenance standards and private reinvestment.
- **Central city neighborhoods have successfully attracted and retained professional and middle class households.** Examples include Beavertdale, Waveland Park, Sherman Hill, Douglas Acres, Fairmont Park, Gray's Woods, and Somerset.



WELCOMING URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

Investment activity since the 2008 Great Recession has demonstrated the efficacy of the Downtown housing market and its importance to the future of the district. During this period, the growth rate of Downtown housing has far exceeded job growth. The income range of housing has also diversified from 2000, when 3/4 of the study area's 2,500 units were income-restricted. Development strategies for Downtown and surrounding areas should recognize the importance of serving a variety of household types (including families with children) and income groups. It should also provide a range of housing settings, price points and life cycle choices.

DOWNTOWN [SHOULD] CONTINUE TO PROVIDE HOUSING THAT MEETS THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF REGIONAL DEMANDS

– CAPITAL CROSSROADS

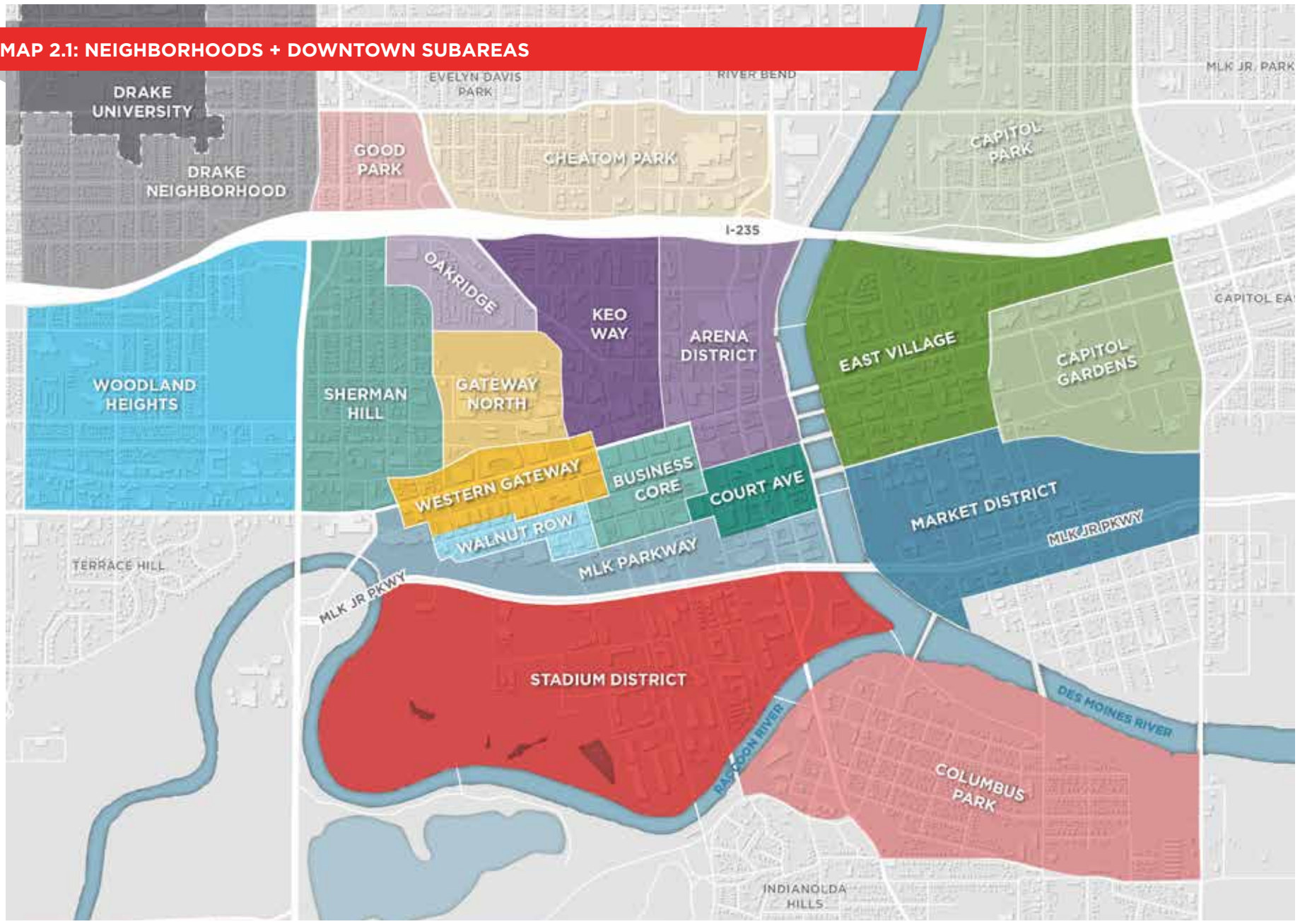
FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Continue and expand neighborhood reinvestment through existing programs.** Invest DSM and the Neighborhood Finance Corporation are successfully revitalizing and/or stabilizing neighborhoods by helping homeowners finance property improvements. Both have become models of best practices for neighborhood revitalization and could expand their current influence into neighborhoods within and surrounding Downtown to support revitalization or stabilization efforts.
- **Commit adequate resources to the City's Neighborhood Services Department.** The NRPP study identifies a need for more staff in the department. Revitalization in neighborhoods around Downtown will require additional staff.
- **Involve multi-family housing owners and developers in maintenance operations in the Downtown Core.** Residential building owners have a critical stake in maintaining a clean, safe, welcoming and vibrant city environment. To date, the business community has sustained district maintenance through Operation Downtown. With Downtown's evolution as a complete neighborhood, residential property owners should also participate in district maintenance.
- **Update neighborhood plans surrounding Downtown.** Neighborhood plans should be revised every ten years to evaluate current conditions and identify course corrections and new initiatives. Current plans affecting

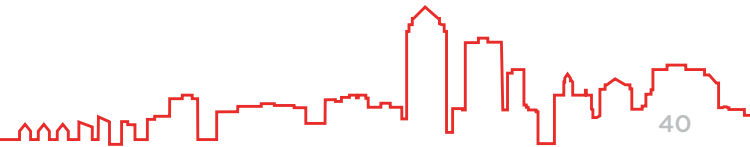
Downtown neighborhoods include

- Columbus Park Special Investment District, 2019
Columbus Park Neighborhood Plan, 1991
- Sherman Hill Neighborhood Plan, 2017
- Capitol East Neighborhood Plan, 2014
- Gray's Lake Neighborhood Plan, 2013
- **Create a Community Core Neighborhood Alliance.** An alliance of neighborhood associations promotes communication and collaboration on initiatives and issues of mutual interest. Active neighborhood associations (NA) in Downtown neighborhoods include Downtown, Sherman Hill NA, McKinley School/Columbus Park NA and Historic East Village NA. Business Associations and/or SSMID may also be included. An Alliance can also help start groups in Downtown neighborhoods that lack an association. The Midtown Neighborhood Alliance in Omaha, Nebraska, is a model for an effective alliance of neighborhood groups.
- **Continue to address housing insecurity.** This requires a comprehensive, community-wide approach that both minimizes the number of unhoused people, addresses the root causes of housing insecurity and provides stable housing for people and families experiencing housing insecurity. Downtown has an important but not exclusive role to play in meeting this important community responsibility. Directions include:
 - Collaboration between service providers and developers to provide assistance when development

MAP 2.1: NEIGHBORHOODS + DOWNTOWN SUBAREAS



Source: City of Des Moines, Connect Downtown, RDG Planning & Design



- projects displace unhoused or marginally housed people and families.
- Proper planning and management of social services to abate the concentration of unhoused individuals and other quality of life issues related to homelessness. This will provide better and more dignified service to unhoused people.
- Equitable distribution of social services in accessible, service-laden locations throughout the entire metropolitan area.
- **Reactivate neighborhood nodes.** Many of Downtown’s neighborhoods have clusters of buildings or features that were once (and still may be) centers of neighborhood activity. In many cases, these buildings are vacant or underused, but could again be reactivated as vital centers for neighborhood life and reinvestment. Their potential and a program for their revitalization is one of the Future Six strategic initiatives presented in Chapter Three.
- **Proceed with priorities from the Regional Workforce Housing Strategy.** The four recommended priorities for Downtown from this recent plan include:
 - **Preservation.** Working with Polk County Housing Trust Fund to inventory existing affordable units, plan for upcoming affordability expirations and allocate resource to work with owners to buy additional years of eligibility.
 - **Inclusionary Requirements in Incentives.** Formalizing and continuing the City’s emerging requirement for 10-20% of new units to be affordable.



- **Monitor and Adjust.** Monitoring the relationship between affordable housing supply and employment growth. Providing a market-based mechanism to respond to workforce housing demands.
- **Purchasing Additional Affordability.** Developing a specific workforce housing plan for Downtown.
- **Evaluate existing buildings for potential conversion for residential.** Many existing office and warehouse

buildings have been successfully converted to residential use in Downtown. Future conversions of suitable buildings provide a sustainable alternative to new buildings and an opportunity to incorporate affordable units.



HOUSING OPTIONS

THREE HOUSING PRINCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE

Downtown has experienced exponential population growth since the early 2000's. Between 2010 and 2020, Downtown's population in its primary Census Tracts (Census Tracts 51.01 and 51.02) has nearly doubled, with nearly 8,400 people living in this portion of Downtown today. An additional 7,000 people live in the growing populations of the Sherman Hill, Oakridge, Woodland Heights and Columbus Park areas (Census Tracts 27 and 42). The area's future housing stock should respond to and meet the needs of this growing and diverse population. Consistent with past planning initiatives, three core principles should guide the future of Downtown's housing:

1. Children-friendly housing
2. Variety in price point
3. Variety in product type

1. CHILDREN-FRIENDLY HOUSING

Young adults and empty nesters continue to move to the area, seeking an urban lifestyle close to work, a thriving entertainment and cultural scene, and nearby attractions. Construction of apartments has been robust throughout the Downtown in recent years, meeting the demands of this growing population. However, children-friendly units—with two to three bedrooms and at least two full bathrooms—are nearly absent in the Downtown, especially in central areas. Furthermore, additional children-friendly amenities such as ready access to secure and observable open space and play areas for children and child care services are crucial to Downtown's ability to attract and retain growing families.

Urban areas are becoming attractive options for seniors through increased access to public transportation, services, entertainment and a feeling of community. In order to accommodate aging in place, housing opportunities and options should be accessible to the elderly population wishing to remain in Downtown. Housing communities for seniors and elder care are important components when promoting diversity in Downtown DSM.

2. VARIETY IN PRICE POINT

To bring about more socio-economic diversity, housing should be made available to low- and moderate-income earners. Development pressures have affected long-time residents in some of the Downtown's most affordable neighborhoods, where concerns of potential displacement and gentrification continue to grow alongside rapid redevelopment. The inclusion of affordable units in new housing developments will foster a diverse, mixed-income neighborhood, providing workforce housing for public servants, service industry employees or others earning low- to moderate-wages. Diverse neighborhoods are often more economically sustainable, resilient and equitable.

Educational efforts reinforcing the benefits of mixed-income housing should be offered to the development community to promote greater inclusion of affordable units in new housing development projects. To help developers recoup initial development costs, financial incentives should be more readily accessible for developers to supply affordable units throughout the Downtown. Without incentives or subsidies, construction of new and affordable housing units becomes infeasible due to the high land and construction costs. In addition to civic leadership, a variety of tools including using public land, Tax Increment Financing (TIF) incentives, housing vouchers and other funding solutions are needed to fill this market gap and support the construction of housing units for low- to moderate-income households.

Alongside choice in price point, educational efforts on the relationship of wages to housing affordability should be undertaken.

3. VARIETY IN PRODUCT TYPE

Apartment construction throughout the Downtown has far surpassed that of other types of housing in recent years, limiting homeownership opportunities in most neighborhoods.

Where appropriate, affordable single-family housing options, such as small-lot single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes and cottage homes, may provide additional homeownership opportunities for low- or moderate-income residents in particular Downtown neighborhoods. New and existing neighborhoods around the Downtown core are the most appropriate locations for these housing types. Higher density housing configurations (which may include stacked flats and innovative multi-family design) also have a place in the Downtown center, but should include features that accommodate the needs of households with children, including observable open space and play areas and individual outdoor territory for each household unit. Alternative ownership regimes, such as cooperatives and condominiums, should also be considered as ways to make ownership more available and potentially affordable.

The City and other private entities should continue to offer incentives to increase variety in housing product type in addition to variety in price point. One such existing incentive offered by the City is the Missing Middle Residential Tax Abatement program. For the purposes of this program, "Missing Middle Housing" includes buildings with 2-12 units located in a walkable neighborhood.



GROWING UP

- Safe, nurturing homes for growing up
- Secure, nurturing, and stimulating environment



STARTING OUT

- Places to try and experiment
- Housing within one's means
- Economic opportunity
- Access to lifestyle features



SETTLING DOWN

- Places to put down roots and gain equity
- Urban environment to support a growing family: education, parks, art, culture, entertainment
- Affordable and responsive to changing finances
- Room to grow



PROSPERING

- Settings that adapt to stages in life and growing financial capacity
- Seeking options



AGING

- Settings that adapt to stages in life
- Downsizing/ places for continuing independence
- Seeking options
- Places for growing old in dignity
- Incorporation of smart technology that allows aging in place







GOAL 2

INCLUSIVE ARTS + ENTERTAINMENT

FUTURE FORWARD GOAL

Attract, retain and promote arts, culture, entertainment, festivals and events, and unique shopping and dining experiences.

Central Iowa [and Downtown] boasts an impressive arts and culture ecosystem, including a professional symphony and opera, a zoo that serves nearly 500,000 visitors a year, an internationally acclaimed art center and sculpture park, a 14-acre botanical garden and an industry-leading performing arts organization.

Additional assets enriching the vibrant cultural scene include unique entertainment venues, nationally-recognized individual artists, culturally diverse festivals, a growing live music scene and top-quality public art. All of this sustains an exciting arts sector supporting active community engagement and a strong creative economy.

- 2017 Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment

Downtown has created a strong presence of physical and experiential art. Its festivals, weekly events, and cultural amenities attract people from all of Iowa and beyond.

The Future Forward Plan seeks to capitalize on these assets and their ability to help fulfill our vision as a place of inclusive opportunity and welcome surprises. Concepts for the future, derived from past plans and community input during the planning process, fall under two categories: Locations and Activities + People.

RELEVANT PLANS/REPORTS

- 2020 Regional Cultural Assessment Progress Report & 2017 Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment
- 2019 Catch Des Moines Destination Master Plan
- 2019 Report on Potential for Stronger Youth Connections to Arts, Culture and Heritage in Greater Des Moines



PAST PLAN GOALS

The Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment (commissioned by Bravo Greater Des Moines); the Catch Des Moines Destination Master Plan; and the Report on Potential for Stronger Youth Connections to Arts, Culture and Heritage in Greater Des Moines (commissioned by Bravo Greater Des Moines) are the principal resources for guiding improvements to realize a vision for inclusive arts and entertainment in Downtown DSM. This section summarizes the goals from these plans. Their strategic directions are listed by feature in the following pages.

CENTRAL IOWA REGIONAL CULTURAL ASSESSMENT

Four Cultural Priorities

- **Every day, everywhere art.** Generate more spontaneous artistic and cultural connections in new and different places.
- **Strengthen the creative economy.** Develop the talent and skillsets of creative entrepreneurs and artists.
- **Cultural tapestry.** Support arts, culture and heritage as diverse, accessible, inclusive and equitable throughout Central Iowa.
- **Youth connections.** Ensure that all young people in the region have access to a rich array of creative and cultural experiences, both formal and informal, educational and recreational.

DESTINATION MASTER PLAN

- **Event Evaluation & Development.** Create and implement an event evaluation tool.
- **Using Data to Develop Travel.** Use visitor data to help develop marketing strategies, measure effectiveness and gain insights into marketing Greater Des Moines tourism.
- **Downtown Optimization.** Optimize Downtown DSM meetings and events through booking guidelines and an event booking strategy
- **Sports Marketing Venue Development.** Advocate for current and proposed sports facility development projects and potential future enhancements.
- **Destination Development.** Advocate and lead a strategy that supports investment in current assets, embraces planned projects and has a long-term vision to enhance the reputation/profile of Greater Des Moines.
- **Advocacy for Destination Sustainability & Growth.** Catch Des Moines will play an active role in advocating for destination enhancements in the areas of transportation, workforce development, economic development and diversity, equity and inclusion.

REPORT ON STRONGER YOUTH CONNECTIONS TO ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE

Short-term Objectives

- Learn how youth define arts, culture and heritage.
- Learn how to better connect youth to existing opportunities.
- Define opportunities for enhanced programming that engage youth and their perspectives across all four Regional Cultural Priorities (Every Day, Everywhere Art; Strengthen the Creative Economy; Cultural Tapestry).
- Identify pathways for Bravo and the community at-large to increase youth access to arts education and programs that meet them where they are physically, economically, developmentally, and culturally.



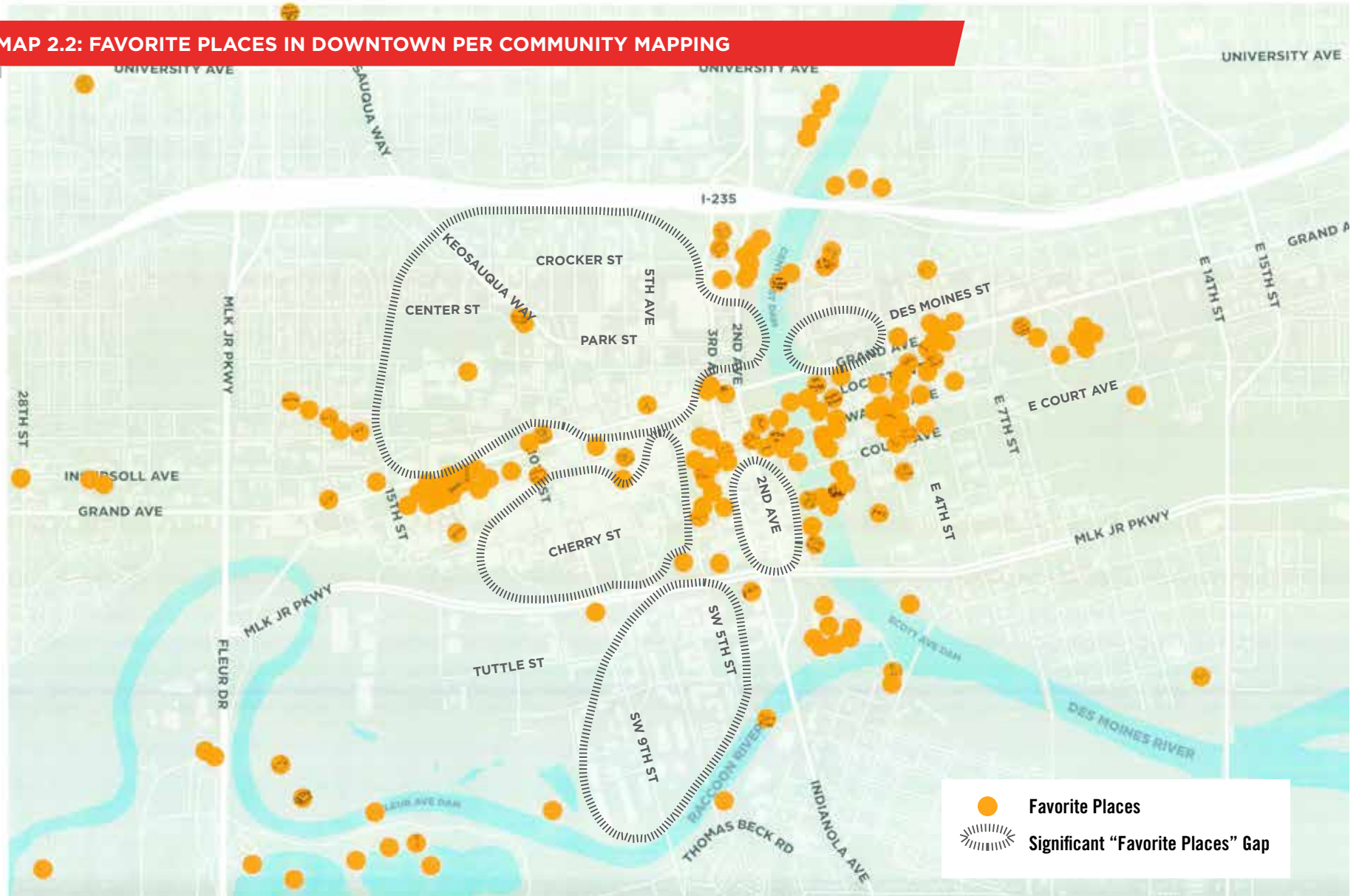
LOCATIONS

The continued infusion of spaces dedicated to the arts, cultural experiences and entertainment will build upon a strong legacy in Downtown. Future spaces should target the goals of the recent plans and address recent community input. The impact of purposeful expansion of inclusive arts and entertainment includes greater community conversation/cohesion, the celebration of diverse local identity and the corresponding economic development that creative placemaking can inspire.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Complete the Market District Park and Market Street.** Public spaces and parks in the future Market District will provide an environment for future arts, cultural and entertainment experiences east of the Des Moines River.
- **Prepare a Cultural Development Plan.** Preparing a Cultural Development Plan will guide a larger placemaking vision with a flexible framework and identification of support for artistic elements of all types: temporary and permanent, small to large scale, integrated art, experiential/participatory events, opportunities for Public Art commissions and art designed to create cultural connections. The planning process should ensure diverse representation. Components of the plan may include:
 - Locations and project types
 - Tools for creating public art
 - Engaging artists, organizations and audiences
 - Partnership strategies
- Administrative strategies and support for a pop-up culture of creativity
- Opportunities to artistically honor more complicated parts of our history such as the removal of the African-American Center Street business district
- **Complete the Pro Iowa Soccer Stadium and Global Plaza.** Completing the Pro Iowa Soccer Stadium satisfies an unmet entertainment need for fans of professional soccer in Iowa, which is one of the fastest growing sports in the country and the largest sport in the world.
- **Educate the community on “Every Day, Everywhere Art.”** The Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment (CIRCA) commissioned by Bravo Greater Des Moines provides actions to make Every Day, Everywhere Art a reality in Downtown. Strategies include:
 - Bringing artists and arts organizations together with civic agencies and other non-traditional arts partners to energize community hubs through “creative collision” pilot projects.
 - Hosting a workshop for artists, arts organizations, business and government leadership and educators to create shared understanding of creative placemaking based on national best practices.
 - Increasing collaboration to drive awareness of, and participation in, creative activities and the important role of “place” in those interactions.
 - Completing an asset mapping process to highlight existing creative connections, strengths and gaps across the region. As the cultural hub of Iowa, an initial focus on mapping assets of Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods could build momentum for future regional efforts.
- Providing an “artist-in-residence” training workshop for artists and businesses to learn how best to collaborate to achieve regional objectives.
- **Activate “Every Day, Everywhere Art.”** Continued implementation of CIRCA’s “Every Day, Everywhere Art” elements reinforces this Plan’s vision, lenses, and goals. Specifically, these include:
 - Create “welcome surprises” where they are missing.
 - Consider how the artistic and placemaking elements are located and designed to spur economic vitality, inspire conversations about sustainability, celebrate diversity, create vibrancy or FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and encourage wellness (e.g., encourage people to walk or bike another block).
 - Address gaps in places of pride for the community. Map 2.2 captures the favorite places of community participants with orange dots. Dashed areas highlight areas of significant gaps for “favorite places.” These gaps represent opportunities for placemaking and art.
- **Engage communities when designing and enhancing specific areas.** Markets, playgrounds and parks on sites that border differing communities are a proven way to increase the social diversity of public places. But good access and linkages are about much more than simply physical proximity. It is crucial to address social issues such as affordability, cultural representation, safety and understanding as these all play into whether people will choose to use the public space. Programs that offer educational experiences related to the history or the environment of a particular place have also been shown to be effective in bringing people together. People

MAP 2.2: FAVORITE PLACES IN DOWNTOWN PER COMMUNITY MAPPING



want to learn, and when they come together to share the experience of knowledge, social divisions often dissolve. When spaces are programmed to celebrate diverse cultures and histories, there is an even greater impact. The process of this placemaking cannot be overemphasized.

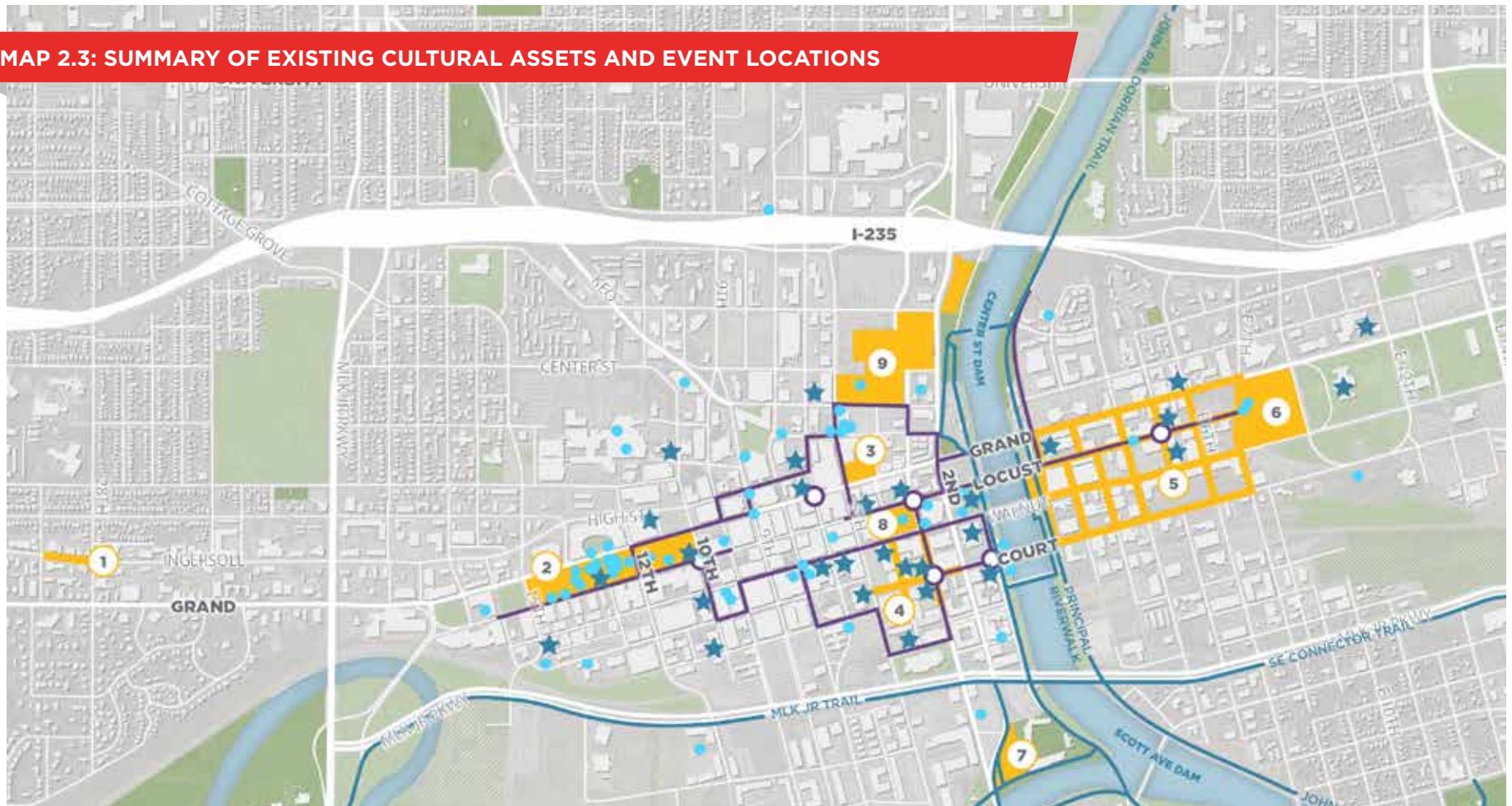
- **Strengthen the Creative Economy - space for artists and for the growing cultural ecosystem.** Initial actions identified by the 2017 Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment:
 - Developing and supporting physical and virtual artist hubs for networking, training, mentorship and support services including maker-spaces, independent gallery space as well as access to performance venues. Significant progress has been made on the physical space portion of this action item with the 2017 opening of the Mainframe Studios building, which now hosts over 130 studios.
 - Completing a needs assessment and viability study for a multi-purpose mid-level (400-1000 seat) exhibition venue.
- **Identify corridors and streetscapes for placemaking.** Improving the public's experience of traveling between Downtown destinations can be accomplished through streetscape design, which can include graphics, plantings, lighting, art and quality materials. Thoughtful and creative design can both reinforce community values and leave stronger memories of being in Downtown. Improvements can range from tactical enhancements to reconstruction. Priority locations for placemaking


















improvements are corridors that connect key Downtown destinations or neighborhood nodes include:

- Direct connections between major existing or developing features.
 - Important, high visibility civic corridors within the Downtown core or along connections between the core and surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Neighborhood character nodes.
 - Connections and places included in the Future Six initiatives described in Chapter Three.
- **Practice “Skywalk Urbanism”.** Downtown's extensive skywalk system provides a rich and largely blank canvas for a range of artistic expression. One of the Future Six initiatives, presented in Chapter Three, is a bold concept for turning a portion of the skywalks into a unique, elevated public space inspired by New York's High Line. The arts community is an indispensable part of bringing this concept to life.
 - **Maintain historic and cultural resources.** Preserving and adapting older buildings and public places to new uses invites design creativity and preserves the history, scale, community character and fabric of Downtown. This opportunity for reinvention can reinvigorate areas of Downtown with a spirit that may be harder to create with new buildings. Historic preservation and adaptive reuse of existing building stock is also a green solution. The City of Des Moines is currently conducting a Historic Preservation Plan including considerations for mid-century modern buildings, intangible historic resources and creating an equitable plan.



MAP 2.3: SUMMARY OF EXISTING CULTURAL ASSETS AND EVENT LOCATIONS



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
|  Parks |  Sample Event Locations | |
|  Green Spaces |  1 Ingersoll Live |  5 Holiday Promenade
Capital City Pride |
|  Designated in Existing Plans |  2 Des Moines Arts Festival
World Food & Music Festival
Latino Heritage Festival
CelebAsian |  6 Yankee Doodle Pops |
|  Art |  3 TYR Pro Swim Event |  7 Christkindlmarket |
|  Historical Sites |  4 Downtown Farmers' Market
DSM Marathon
Des Moines Ironman |  8 Winefest
Yoga
Touchdown Tailgate
Hoops and Hops
DSM Book Festival |
|  Painted Art Routes/Crosswalk | |  9 Iowa Events Center |
|  Trails | | |

The above summary of cultural resources provides a sampling of existing cultural and recreational opportunities in Downtown including parks, art installations and event locations. Though it is not exhaustive of all event locations and art installations, this is included as a baseline snapshot of these resources. The recommended preparation of a Downtown Cultural Development Plan and other related Future Forward initiatives (e.g., the Green Ring and Stronger Neighborhood initiatives) should use this baseline as an initial guide to identify opportunities to enhance existing experiences as well as address gaps in cultural assets.



ACTIVITIES + PEOPLE

Past plans and recent community engagement identified the need for future arts and entertainment features. But they also call for broadening opportunities for diverse creative professionals and community members to engage with artistic and cultural experiences. Community leaders and stakeholders further identified gaps in our current arts, entertainment and cultural activities.

STRATEGIES

- **Attract and support events in Downtown DSM.** Catch Des Moines intends to study an event's current and future potential to attract visitors and drive measurable overnight visitation. Additional overnight visitors will help bolster the local economy and entertainment/quality of life options Downtown.
 - Creating an action plan for a full range of business development learning.
 - Reviewing municipal codes (permitting, zoning, etc.) affecting creative businesses, independent artists
- **Support arts, culture and heritage as diverse, accessible, inclusive and equitable.** In the 2019 Report on Youth Connections, non-white students “overwhelmingly said they do not feel represented in the art, cultural and heritage opportunities currently available in Central Iowa.” Initial actions for improvement identified by the 2017 Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment:
 - Create a “diversity partnership” to build relationships and recommend an action plan that defines and improves how the arts and culture sector can better address issues of diversity, inclusion, accessibility and equity.
 - Review current policies and practices across the arts and culture sector to increase access and inclusion for the wide array of cultural offerings in our region.
 - Provide more professional development for individual artists and for arts, culture and heritage organizations with an emphasis on developing emerging leaders of color.
- **Youth Connections.** Initial actions identified by the 2017 Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment and the 2019 Report on Youth Connections:
 - Ensure that youth are authentically involved in the marketing, planning and implementation of art education and programs.

and sole proprietors and strategies to remove barriers that are inhibiting business.



- Complete an assessment of currently available in-school and out-of-school arts education experiences and programs in the region to determine areas of success and opportunity.
- Review existing school district arts education strategic plans and identify opportunities to support outlined objectives.
- Identify opportunities for youth to be engaged in the creation of art around the metro, particularly in spaces where youth already feel accepted and welcome. Downtown spaces that may be opportunities for youth involvement in the creation of art include the YMCA, Downtown area schools, the Lauridsen Skate Park and portions of the East Village.
- **Arts & Entertainment Gaps.** Through the public input process, community leaders and citizens identified potential gaps in, or ideas for, types of arts, entertainment, festivals/ events and shopping/dining experiences:
 - Allow street performers, and consider the creation of street performer support systems.
 - Revolving art installation location featuring local, diverse artists.
 - Collaborative kitchen for restaurant entrepreneurs.
 - Free entertainment options such as free outdoor concerts.
 - Host a ‘Club Fest’ event to let people know how to get involved in Downtown organizations.
 - Multi-lingual signage to welcome people to Downtown’s cultural opportunities.
- Gathering spaces and entertainment beyond restaurants/bars: Movie theater, bowling alley, arcade, senior center and Immigrant/Refugee Center.
- Mid-sized performance spaces/venues.
- Affordable access to rehearsal, performance and gallery space.
- Year-round public market.
- LGBTQIA+ Community Center.







GOAL 3

REWARDING MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

FUTURE FORWARD GOAL

Create a climate for private investment that takes full advantage of public investments, maximizes activity, and advances the Future Forward vision for inclusive opportunity and welcome surprises.

Downtown will continue to be a premier location for development and growth in Iowa. Real estate is finite, and the City should maximize site potential to ensure continued growth. Underused sites in Downtown are an important asset that we should use more effectively. Previous plans identified some of these sites, while others emerged through the Future Forward process.

Remote work arrangements, a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and made possible by technology, present new challenges for both employers and real estate markets. The DSM Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study (WTOS) suggests the preferences and behaviors of 80,000 daytime workers will continue to evolve. This study is a first step toward understanding and adapting to these changes in the work world. Important parts of this plan's vision depend on employers' willingness to take action to affect and improve the product that Downtown offers to its workforce.

We know that uncertainty can produce indecision, and indecision can reverse positive momentum in city development. The Future Forward process with its robust public forums, organizational engagement and major employer support, can help clarify which changes will be welcomed by stakeholders and which investments will pay the most significant dividends. Des Moines' continuing tradition of private-public partnerships is indispensable, but does not by itself guarantee future success. This dynamic and still unsettled environment demands new thinking, flexibility and openness. If community and business leaders and executives in Downtown DSM collaborate for the public good, invite and listen to new voices and base decisions on available data, we believe our shared vision of being the destination for inclusive opportunities and welcome surprises is both achievable and the answer to many of our questions.

Strategies for the future real estate and development environments, driven by the overall plan vision and community and stakeholder input, fall into two categories:

- **Development Possibilities**
- **Policy Strategies**

RELEVANT PLANS/REPORTS

- 2021 Downtown Listening Tour
- 2020 One Economy Building Opportunity for All: Blueprint for Action
- Invest DSM Columbus Park Action Plan
- 2019 Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for Columbus Park Special Investment District
- 2019 Downtown Perception Assessment
- 2019 Downtown Annual Business Climate Report
- 2019 Market District of the East Village Plan
- 2017 Downtown Retail Assessment
- 2018 CAEL Preparing for Partnership: An Analysis of the Retail Industry in Central Iowa
- 2017 Regional Cultural Assessment
- 2017 One Economy Building Opportunity for All: The State of Black Polk County
- 2017 Sherman Hill Neighborhood Plan Update
- 2016 PlanDSM
- 2016 Tourism Master Plan/Destination NEXT
- Downtown Retail 2030
- 2006 Two Rivers District Plan
- 1997 Capitol Gateway East Urban Design Plan

PAST PLAN GOALS

PlanDSM, Downtown DSM Retail 2030, One Economy Building Opportunity for All (The State of Black Polk County, 2017, and The Blueprint for Action, 2020) and the Downtown Listening Tour (2021) are the principal resources for guiding people to return to Downtown. PlanDSM is the city's comprehensive plan. The Downtown DSM Retail 2030 plan identifies momentum for Downtown retail development and a need to strategically connect Downtown districts. This section summarizes the goals from these reports and their strategic directions are listed by feature in the following pages.

PLANDSM GOALS

- Foster economic prosperity and stability by retaining existing businesses and recruiting new businesses.
- Focus economic development efforts in strategic locations for continued vitality and growth.
- Recognize livability as a key aspect to economic development.
- Foster a sustainable economy.

DOWNTOWN DSM RETAIL 2030

- **Data to drive decisions.** An up-to-date data hub to attract and retain national and local retail. *(Goal completed)*
- **District identity and connectivity.** Bolster the unique identity of each district and build creative connections to link neighborhoods.
- **Support small businesses.** Provide resources to help small businesses succeed in Downtown.
- **Strategic Infrastructure.** Establish infrastructure that is supportive of retail efforts.

ONE ECONOMY (2017 & 2020)

- Eliminate the historical racial wealth divide between Whites and African Americans in Polk County.
- Provide greater focus on the broad issues of financial capacity in Polk County's African American Community.
- Provide support to Black small business owners and entrepreneurs.
- Expand nonprofit education and development for emerging and existing nonprofits serving low-income individuals and families.
- Use of the 4 Equity Tool to bring specific and conscious focus on assessing impact on minority populations of a particular action.

DOWNTOWN LISTENING TOUR (2021)

- Entice employees to come back to work in the office to enhance organizational culture, improve team collaboration and ensure remote workers aren't left behind unintentionally.
- Promote efforts to support local businesses and events.
- Retain existing small businesses and employers.
- Attract new businesses.



DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

Downtown will continue to experience a demand for new construction, preservation and renovation. This Plan should remain nimble to support projects that may emerge over time yet were not foreseen by this plan. Downtown's success emerged over forty years of initiatives and considerable change. We expect the next 40 years will be determined by market forces that we can only guess at today. But using the tools that we do have, we suggest the following to help guide us forward:

- **Sites Subject-to-change**
- **District Strategies**
- **Policy Strategies**
- **Post-Pandemic Re-occupancy Strategies**

SITES SUBJECT-TO-CHANGE

Map 2.4 identifies sites that are likely to change in use in the future. These sites that may experience redirection as a result of market influences and demands, land values, economic change, and other factors. For our purposes here, we have organized sites into two tiers, representing the possible sequence of change over time.

- **Tier 1 Sites: Under Review Sites.** Sites actively being discussed for redevelopment. Tier 1 sites are based on development applications submitted to the City or shared in the media.
- **Tier 2 Sites: Subject-to-Change.** Tier 2 sites may be redeveloped over time.

With regard to all properties, the private sector creates the market forces that influence owners to renovate or redevelop. The public sector guides development to optimize the project for future generations.

DISTRICT STRATEGIES

Downtown has many districts that have developed their identity and brand over time, such as the Historic Court District, Historic East Village and Western Gateway. Many districts are maturing and have effectively influenced people's perception of where Downtown begins.

Downtown Core District

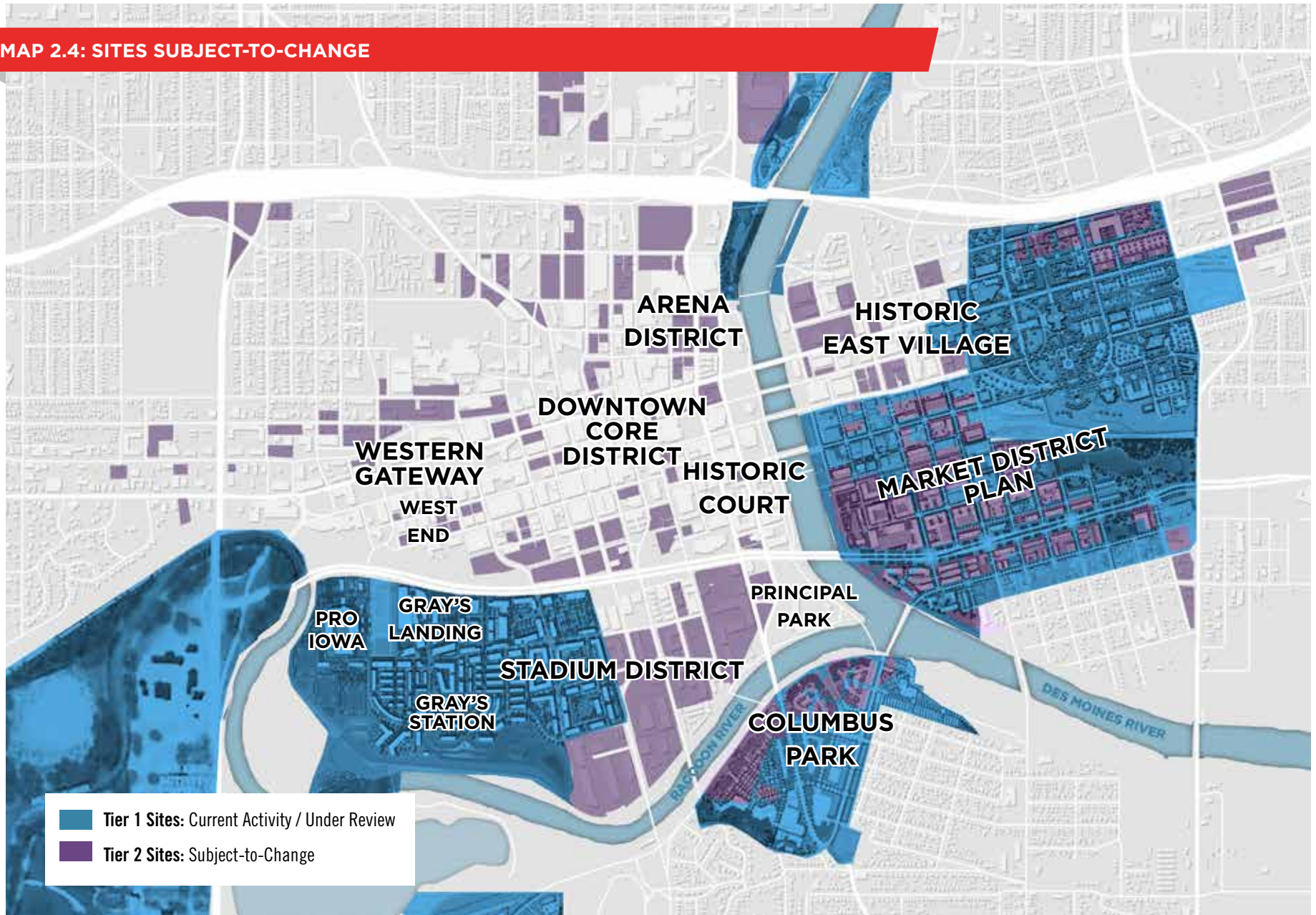
The Core District has faced significant challenges in recent years that include the Younkers Building fire, stalled plans for new development and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on office occupancy. The nature of hybrid work will probably reduce the daytime workforce population at any one time,

and one national model completed in spring, 2021 suggested a permanent 20% decrease. On the other hand, many employees are returning to offices and Des Moines observers report an uptick in demand for high-amenity office space. Nevertheless, the Core is the economic and civic nucleus of Downtown DSM, and its continued success and viability is essential to the entire metropolitan area.

We discuss post-pandemic re-occupancy strategies later and most of the Future Six initiatives either directly address Core issues or connect the Core to surrounding parts of the greater Downtown area. But priority issues for the Core include the following:

- **Resolving the future of the skywalk network.** Des Moines' skywalk system, one of America's most extensive networks, has been a source of both pride and controversy since its inception. It has provided a comfortable four-season, traffic-free pedestrian connection to almost every large office building, hotel, parking structure and civic facility in the Core. On the other hand, at its peak, it drained street life and retail activity from the street level.
- **Now, economics, changing preferences, unsuccessful development projects and the pandemic have reduced the system to a functional but largely lifeless elevated corridor.** The skywalk network represents an enormous public and private capital investment that workers, visitors and residents still find useful. The Future Forward Plan proposes a new vision for the skywalks, inspired by New York City's famed High Line. The Future Six section describes this concept in detail.

MAP 2.4: SITES SUBJECT-TO-CHANGE



- **Repurposing the Kaleidoscope.** This now largely vacant retail mall is the crossroads of the Core. Plans to replace it with a residential tower have not materialized and the building remains a significant physical asset. Its reuse would reinvigorate the Core and its design and linear atrium open exciting reuse possibilities. The Future Six section identifies ideas for reusing this strategic but largely unused resource.
- **Complete a Court Avenue Study on safety and security.** Historic Court is a primary entertainment destination and a center of Des Moines' nightlife. But safety and security concerns have grown here, as they have in similar districts of other great American cities. The Responsible Hospitality Institute has been engaged to study strategies to enhance safety and security in the Court District.
- **The Court District is an important component of the Inner Circle concept described later in the Future Six section.**

East Village and the Market District

The renaissance of the East Village over the last twenty years has brought an array of restaurants, retailers and multi-family housing to the east bank of the Des Moines River. More recently, the Market District on the east bank, south of the original East Village is becoming a sustainable, mixed-use area with new housing, retail, offices and community

activities. Imminent new development will include an 8-acre riverfront park and other plans include renewal energy production, a parking structure, green infrastructure and pedestrian improvements to Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.

Stadium District

The Stadium District, bounded by the two rivers and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, links Principal Park to the planned Pro Iowa Stadium and Global Plaza on the west. Both anchor sites are undergoing major development – improvements to Principal Park and the surrounding site and the soccer stadium, Global Plaza, and adjacent development at Pro Iowa. New neighborhoods at Gray's Station and Gray's Landing, innovation-oriented businesses, and other residential and commercial projects have grown in the area. The Stadium District is one of the Future Six initiatives discussed in the following section.

MLK Jr. Parkway and West End District - “Walnut Row”

This emerging subdistrict within the Western Gateway follows Walnut Street from approximately SW 16th Street to 13th Street. The area mixes newer residential uses with adaptive reuse of buildings for artistic shops and entertainment venues. A Master Redevelopment Plan would guide development on available sites, which could include new retailing, infill projects, connections and neighborhood open spaces.



Arena District

The Arena District, the metropolitan area's leading event venue, attracts thousands of users per event to venues such as the Community Choice Convention Center, Wells Fargo Arena, HyVee Hall and Community Choice Convention Center. Better connections to other assets would extend people's Downtown experience and take better advantage of the business generating potential of these major facilities. The Arena District is an important part of the Inner Circle, described later as one of the Future Six initiatives.

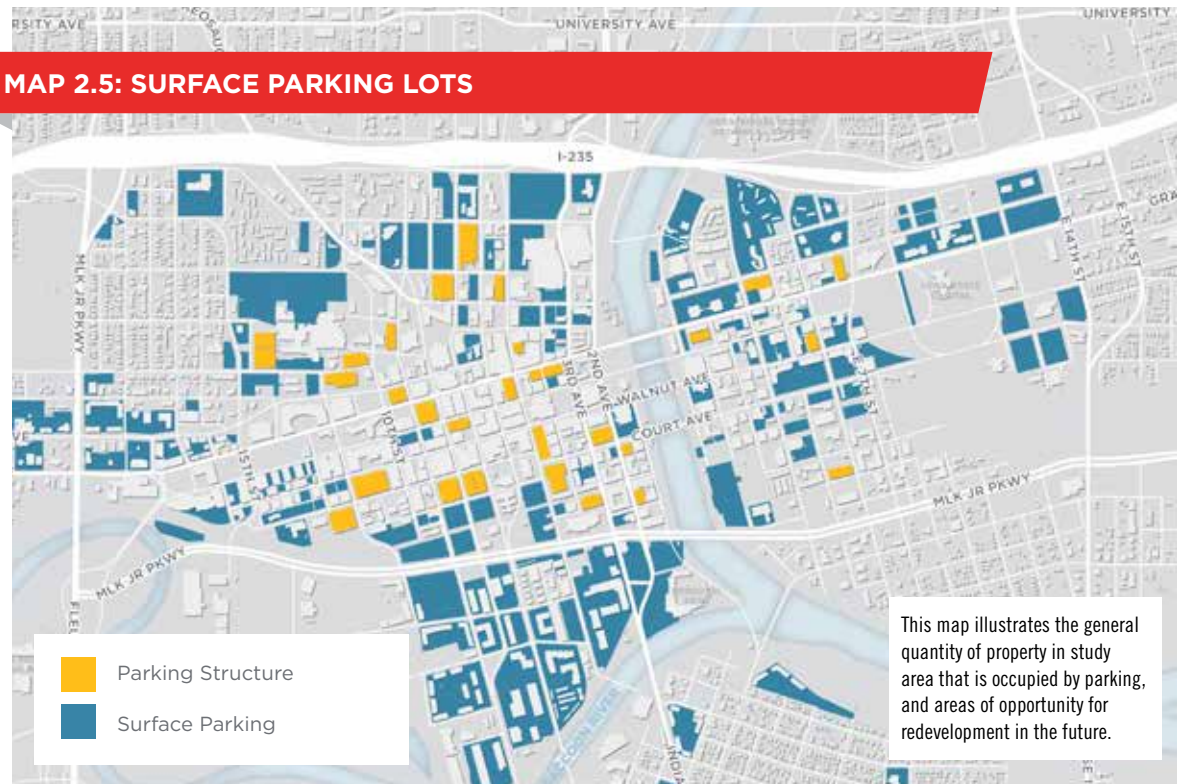
Columbus Park

Columbus Park's mosaic of homes, businesses, schools and parks creates a great opportunity for affordable living for larger households adjacent to the Downtown core. Recommendations of the Neighborhood Revitalization and Special Investment District Plans included homeownership incentives for existing and new homes, infrastructure and street rehabilitation, commercial district enhancements and park improvements.

Sherman Hill and the Oakridge Neighborhood

The Sherman Hill neighborhood features historic homes along its tree-lined streets. But small commercial pockets also enhance the residential experience and have become destinations for people outside of the neighborhood. Together, the Sherman Hill and Oakridge Neighborhoods have a richness of assets (e.g., diverse housing, arts, education, healthcare

MAP 2.5: SURFACE PARKING LOTS



and retail). As a result, they provide a natural opportunity to expand the Downtown footprint. The latest Sherman Hill Neighborhood Plan also addresses the adjacent Oakridge Neighborhood. Actions moving forward should implement existing plans.



POLICY STRATEGIES

Policy strategies address the “inclusive opportunities” dimension of the Future Forward vision. They describe programs that support entrepreneurs, recruit and retain businesses, and encourage retailing.

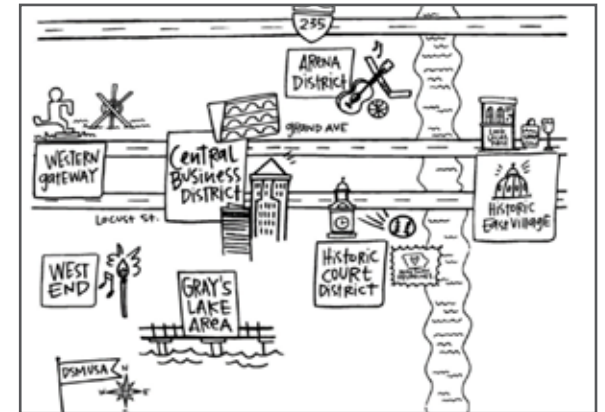
- **Start-Up Venues.** Organized venues that provide space for low-capital business starts can increase an entrepreneur’s chances for success and growth. These include retail incubators, defined areas for food trucks (with supportive food truck policies), outdoor areas designated for vendors and currently vacant spaces along the skywalk network. A paired financing program would provide financing to help businesses graduate from pop-up to permanent storefronts.
- **Resources and Technical Assistance.** These programs provide expert advice and resources to fledgling businesses and people with business ideas. They can make starting a business possible for a wider range of prospective entrepreneurs. Initiatives include:
 - Building on the strategies of the One Economy Blueprint for Action and the Des Moines Partnership’s small business resources to provide coaching, education, marketing and networking opportunities.
 - Creating an awareness campaign for available resources to small business owners. Ensure resources are available and advertised to underrepresented business owners of multiple backgrounds such as minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses and LGBTQIA+-owned businesses.
- **Targeted Incentives.** Tax-based incentives including tax increment financing and tax abatement can be used

on a targeted basis for specific public objectives. Some of these objectives include innovative design, specific business types, mixed uses, inclusionary employment, economic opportunity to disadvantaged groups, locally sourced production and sustainable practices.

- Identify mechanisms/resources/strategies to support innovative and technology-driven businesses. For example, consider creating rent/lease subsidy incentives or incentives per square foot for tenant improvements to address vacant space for innovative/tech driven businesses new to Downtown or relocating Downtown.
- When evaluating tax incentives, include a plan to mitigate the impact of the incentives on the ability to achieve other established goals for Downtown such as increased transit service to new neighborhoods.
- **Quality of Life.** An active, attractive, safe and secure environment is an effective tool for recruiting and retaining businesses. Environmental enhancements, quality maintenance, outdoor workspaces, programming and events and active street life are tools that can encourage businesses to locate and stay Downtown.
- **Retail Support.** Today’s retailing climate is especially challenging to brick and mortar retailers. Yet retailing is extremely important to the character and life of Downtown. The East Village has demonstrated that retail destinations can thrive in Downtown DSM and can add needed business diversification to an urban district. Supporting polices can include:
 - Coordinated marketing of retail clusters through websites and print materials.
 - Differentiating the roles and character of retail



Pop-up retail incubator in the Boston Seaport District.



The above illustrative map from the Downtown DSM Retail 2030 plan conveys a recommendation to promote the unique identity of each retail district of Downtown through websites as well as specially created artist maps and signage.

clusters to emphasize their individual quality and avoid duplication.

- Providing access to initial capital for desirable business types in specific character districts. An example is encouraging more retailing into the Historic Court District.
- Continuing to recruit destination retail into special Downtown districts.

POST-PANDEMIC RE-OCCUPANCY STRATEGIES

Changes in workplace preferences created by the Covid-19 pandemic are creating major challenges for Downtown's development and investment environment. Remote work options reduce the number of people in offices at any one time, in turn reducing the demand for office space and customers for Downtown businesses. We still do not know the pandemic's long-term impact on real estate occupancy. But most experts agree that hybrid working in some form will be permanent. Understanding the positive aspects of both at-home and in-office work can help formulate strategies as the pandemic recedes.

Working from home has two distinct advantages over office work. Arguably, the most important is the time, stress, and money saved by not commuting. The other is the flexibility during the workday offered by working from home.

While in-office work cannot easily match these advantages, a Downtown work environment has its own benefits—collaboration, human interaction, creating space between home and work, and being part of something important and distinctive. And hybrid working has some upsides—fewer commuters means less traffic and reduced parking demand, allowing reuse of some parking lots for other purposes.

Addressing these challenges will require flexibility and new thinking on the part of employers and developers. While the ultimate impact of the pandemic is still evolving, we offer a four-part strategy:

1. Minimize the amount of office space that has to be reoccupied. This can be accomplished by:

- Rethinking the standard space per employee calculation. Give people more space and, if necessary, price the space appropriately. Occupied office space is better than vacancy and more individual space and /or in-office amenities can increase worker satisfaction.
- Configuring offices to give employees individual territories for personal and “home-like” items — provide the opportunity to individualize their space.
- Enhancing the quality of office space to provide a vibrant and comfortable space for collaboration as well as the space for work that requires deep focus.
- Amplify attention to business retention, expansion and attraction.

2. Reuse vacated office space creatively.

- Completing an inventory of office space for areas or floors that are available and convertible for alternative uses.
- Increasing the number and amenity of co-working environments and floors for small occupancy tenants with supportive services and shared amenities.
- Incorporating unconventional but complementary uses on office floors. These uses may include child care, residential, and live/work environments.
- Adapt suitable space to other uses, including residential.

3. Compensate for the flexibility factors that people like about working from home.

- Provide more flexibility during the course of a workday to walk, wander, conduct personal business, go to the doctor, pick up children at school, and so forth.
- Maintain an engaging external environment with events, attractions, pop-ups, street performances and amenities that make being in Downtown a delight, and give people the time during the day to enjoy those features such as afternoon baseball games or soccer matches.
- Create an environment of greater life and festivity. Subsidize features like pop-ups, street performance, music as necessary.
- Create outdoor work environments in good weather.

4. Address the non-commute advantage of working from home.

- Develop sites with unnecessary parking lots into residential neighborhoods, providing more children-friendly housing within walking distance of workplaces.
- Provide infrastructure and aggressively promote active transportation as an enjoyable way to combine commuting with exercise and enjoyment.







GOAL 4

VIBRANT OUTDOOR CITY

FUTURE FORWARD GOAL

Make Downtown the recreational centerpiece of the Des Moines metropolitan area.

Great parks and outdoor spaces are the keys to great and livable communities. They can pulse with activity or provide places for individual contemplation. They can be familiar as home or create new experiences. Simply put, they are the places you can't wait to tell your friends about! And they belong to and are part of the lives of all citizens - there for everyone to enjoy and use.

Downtown Des Moines' rivers, parks and gathering spaces are its signature attractions—the places where events happen and people go. Continued investment in our public realm is vital to sustaining a healthy, active and livable Downtown for ourselves and for future generations. This key resource also should continue to evolve and sometimes reinvent itself as needs and recreational preferences change.

Parks are also a proven catalyst for development, one of the engines behind Downtown's growth as a residential community. This Plan's related study of workforce behaviors showed that quality outdoor recreation was a major factor for choosing Downtown as a place to live and work. About 86% of respondents said they would spend more time in Downtown

with improvements to outdoor spaces, cultural events and socializing and approximately 95% want multi-modal transportation options in Downtown (*2022 Workforce Trends & Occupancy Study*). The recent Covid-19 pandemic clearly drove home the value of outdoor space as resulting in individuals seeking the outdoors.

Strategies to maintain and enhance the city's green and blue open space network fall into four categories:

- **Beautiful Parks + Social Spaces**
- **Pathways**
- **Water Trails**
- **Resilient Natural Environment**

RELEVANT PLANS/REPORTS

- 2018 LiveDSM
- 2018 MoveDSM (Core Bicycle Network)
- 2018 Des Moines MPO Environmental Justice Report
- 2017 Connect Downtown
- 2016 Water Trails and Greenways Master Plan
- Healthy Polk 2020
- 2012 Waterworks Master Plan
- 2011 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan
- Trust for Public Land, Des Moines Park Score Report



Source: DSM Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study (2022)

PAST PLAN GOALS

PlanDSM, LiveDSM, Water Trails & Greenways Master Plan and MoveDSM are the principal resources for guiding improvements of Downtown's parks, trails, greenways, and the environment. PlanDSM is the City's comprehensive plan, while LiveDSM is the City's parks and recreation comprehensive plan. The Water Trails and Greenways Master plan focuses on Greater Des Moines area's waterways. This section summarizes the goals from these plans. Their strategic directions are listed by feature in the following pages.

PLANDSM GOALS

- Develop a parks and open space system that promotes a community-wide network of public spaces to provide recreational, transportation, health and environmental benefits to citizens of all abilities.
- Maintain and improve accessibility of parks for all residents.
- Design the City's trail system for all users including commuters and recreational users.
- Preserve, restore and enhance natural systems in identified natural areas.
- Preserve, restore and enhance access to the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers.
- Establish and fund a program for art in public places.
- Provide recreational programming as an intricate part of the social fabric of Des Moines and its park and open space system.

LIVEDSM GOALS

- Deliver equitable facilities and program.
- Support year-round programming that attracts people to parks.
- Make parks and trails the heart of the community.
- Improve natural systems.
- Launch new approaches to parks and recreation.

WATER TRAILS AND GREENWAYS MASTER PLAN GOALS

- Expand access and connections between diverse communities and the rivers, creeks and greenways.
- Conserve and enhance the environmental health of the rivers, creeks and greenways.
- Develop a network of water trails and greenways that emphasize coordination and collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries to develop and maintain the land and water-based trails.



BEAUTIFUL PARKS + SOCIAL SPACES

Downtown parks are common spaces for the entire community and should welcome people of all backgrounds. They are in Lawrence Halprin's words like musical scores that people bring to life with their individual, informal, and organized activities. They are also the place where people gather and where positive interaction is maximized. These strategies will help Downtown's parks maintain their indispensable role as centers of community life.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Extend the City's green network through the Core.** This includes completion of EMC Park and the skywalk network reimagined as an elevated, multifaceted interior park. The skywalk conversion is one of the Future Six initiatives described in the next section.
- **Complete the park conversion of the SW 1st Street Bridge.** This currently programmed project will connect the Columbus Park neighborhood and Meredith Trail to Principal Park. Complete planned development or enhancement of Downtown's major professional sports facilities. These include the Pro Iowa Stadium and Global Plaza as well as the Principal Park enhancement program. These projects will advance our city's status as a cultural/athletic destination.
- **Use water as a recreational asset.** The Iowa Confluence Water Trails (ICON Water Trails) make the rivers an integral part of the recreational system – something more than scenery. Launch points will become activity centers that tie water and land together.
- **Develop planned open spaces in the emerging Market District.** A new riverfront park will be the front lawn for new development on the east bank of the river while an interior plaza will provide public gathering space.
- **Implement East Village open space projects.** These include a major stormwater management facility that will also provide pathways and boardwalks through a natural environment; and an East Village Promenade, a greenway along railroad right-of-way between the Red Bridge and the stormwater park.
- **Public WIFI.** Provide public wifi internet access in parks.
- **Support and plan for events.** Downtown events create an attractive and memorable Downtown. The support of continued and additional events is critical, but also should be balanced in locations throughout Downtown. Consider also how future event needs (e.g., lighting, access to electricity, etc.) can be accommodated in future parks.
- **Maintain accessibility and affordability.** Maintain accessibility to parks for people of all abilities and affordability for people of different economic means. Design spaces that are welcoming to all.



Cowles Commons

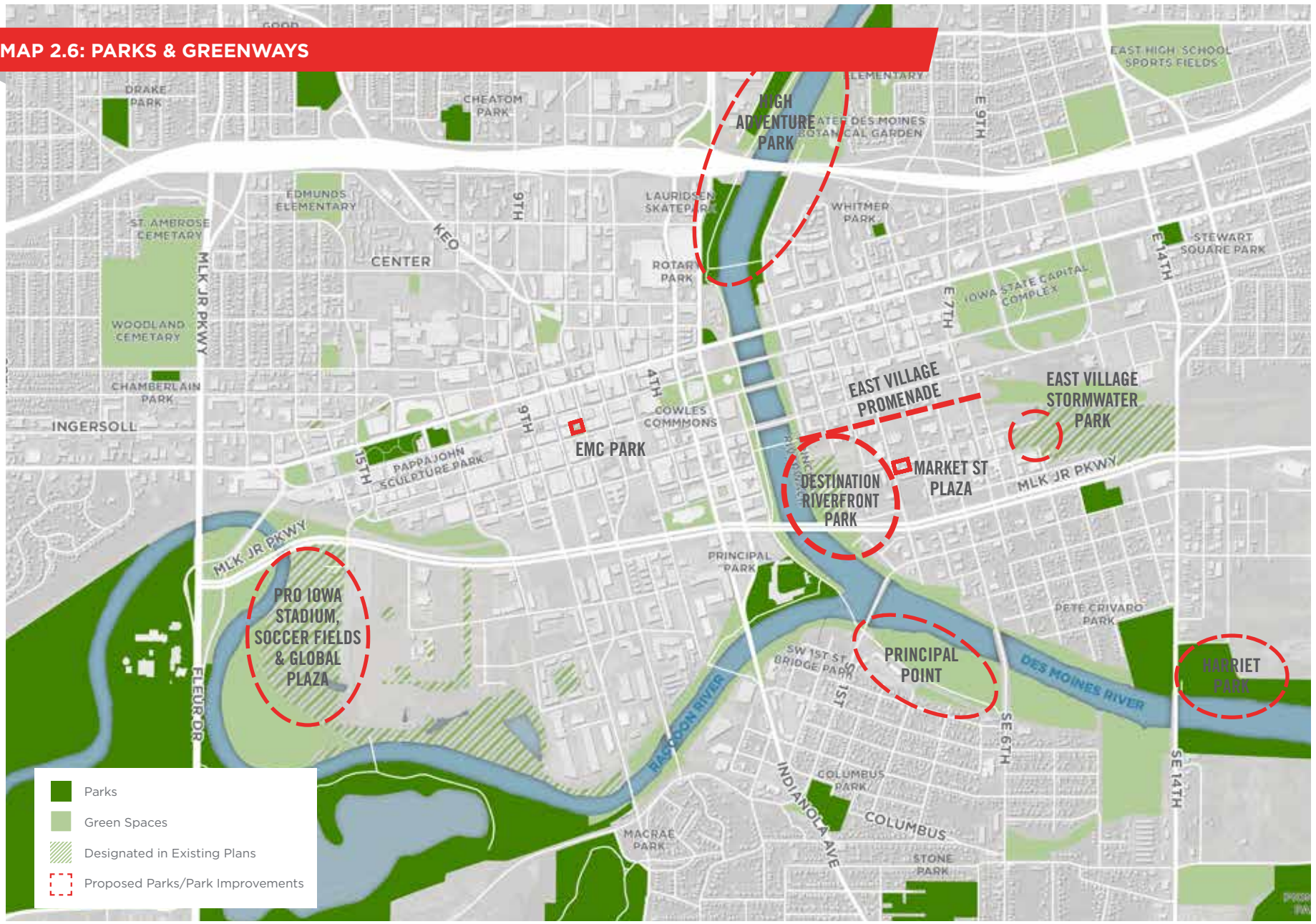


Gray's Station Greenway



Des Moines Botanical Gardens

MAP 2.6: PARKS & GREENWAYS



PATHWAYS

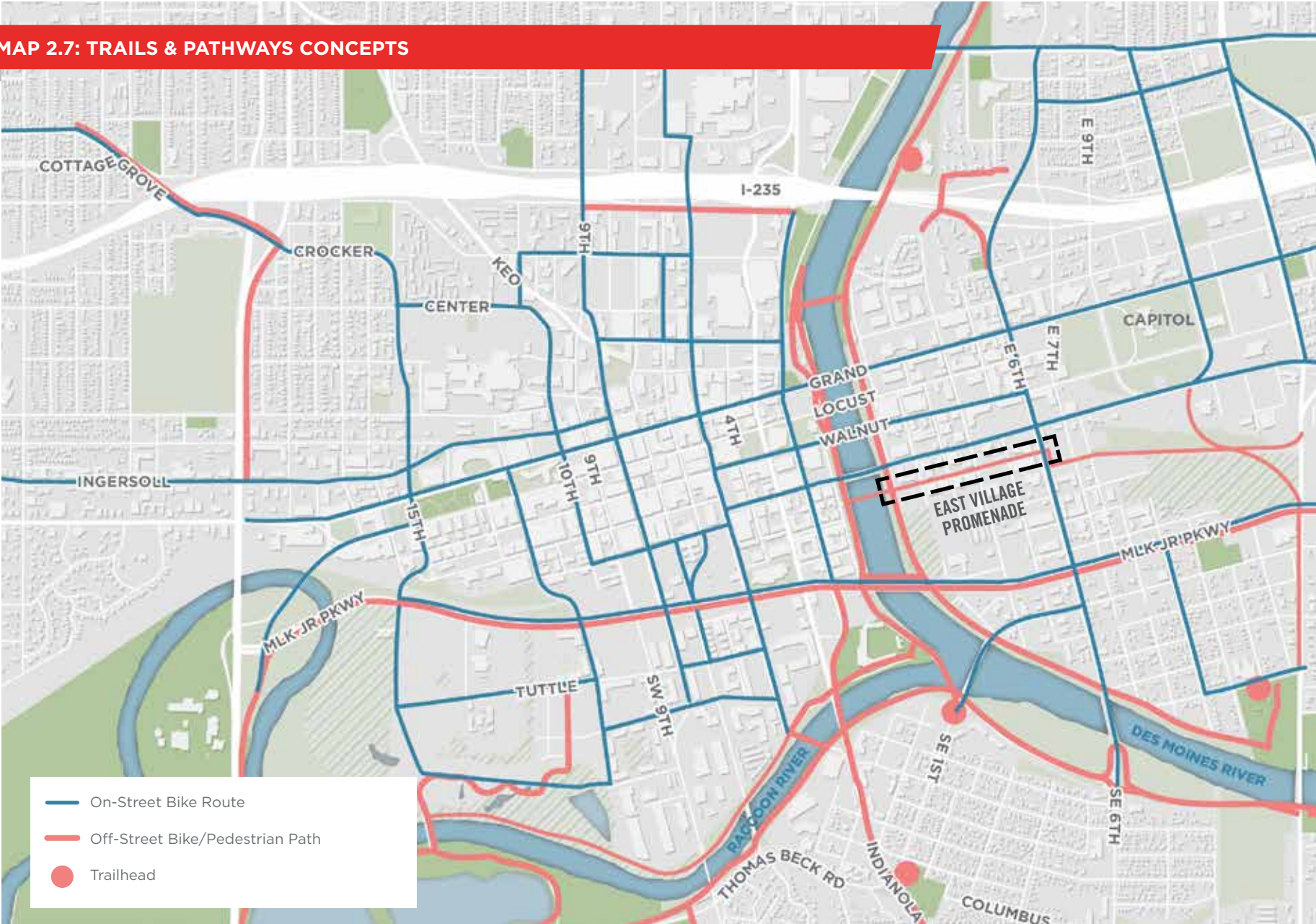
Downtown DSM is easily accessible by trails from most parts of the metropolitan area and is a critical focus of the Central Iowa Trails network. Downtown should continue to provide convenient, sustainable and enjoyable multi-modal transportation choices that safely connect people and destinations. Map 2.7 shows recommendations for future enhancements to the trail system from previous studies with further detail shown on Map 2.11.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Enhance trails with new amenities.** Trails can be more than linear strips of pavement and Des Moines' system is both functional and enjoyable. Methods to continue the quality experience include:
 - Creating refuges along amenities that give trail users a place to relax and watch people.
 - Introducing wildflowers along trails.
 - Updating the wayfinding system and informational kiosks to direct people to frequent destinations.
 - Adding lighting to Downtown trails to improve visibility and security.
 - Improving trailheads with wayfinding and orientation signage, resting places, and parking where possible.
- **Prepare a Cultural Development Plan.** Trailside art installations add interest and depth to the trail experience. Art-in-Trails should be a component of the future Cultural Development Plan.
- **Retrofit existing streets with bicycle facilities.** On-street bicycle infrastructure should complement the trail network. In the subsequent section on Connected & Sustainable Mobility, Maps 2.10/2.11 show details for retrofits.
- **Link trails and other pathways to Downtown destinations and neighborhood features.** An example is a pedestrian connection to Woodland Cemetery.



MAP 2.7: TRAILS & PATHWAYS CONCEPTS



WATER TRAILS

Beginning in the early 2000's, Des Moines has launched several initiatives to make the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers part of a premier urban attraction. These urban waterways draw people to Downtown and connects us with the culture and legacy of the region. Their preservation and potential for active use can expand Downtown's enviable role as an urban outdoor oasis. The implementation of the Water Trails should be paired with continued water quality through City- and State-wide policies to support public health.

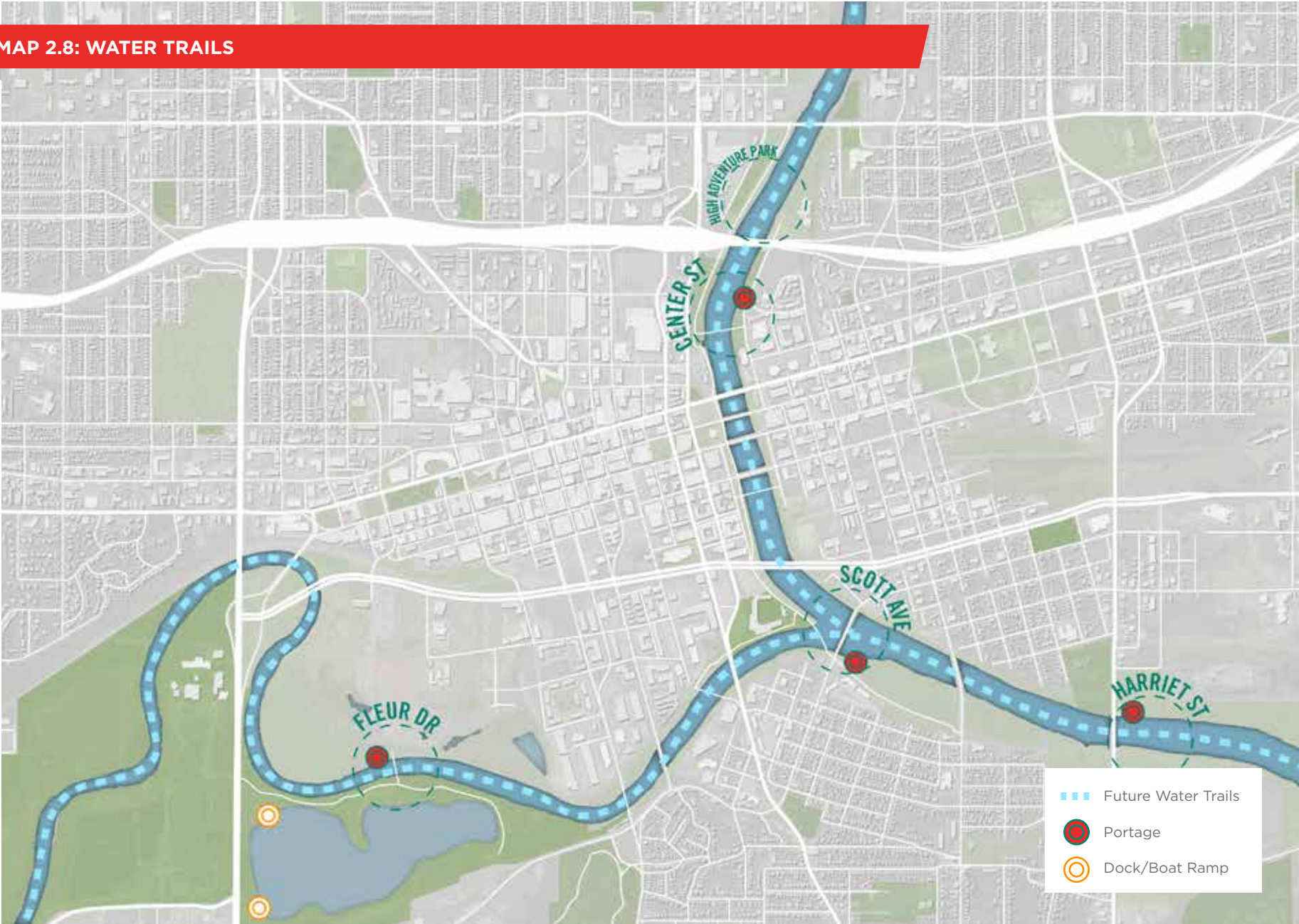
FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Implement the Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan.** ICON Water Trails, an independent 501(c)(3) organization, is realizing the long-held vision of active river use for more people. This organization should remain as a leader for implementing Downtown's share of the plan.

- The project in Downtown will add access points to the river and retrofit three dams. It will create three river recreation sites at Scott Avenue, adjacent to the Columbus Park neighborhood; Fleur Drive Dam, near Gray's Station; and Center Street. Prospect Park, Birdland Marina and Harriet Park will add nearby access to the river. The individual whitewater sites provide portages for takeout and trips.
- **Develop the Center Street site as a national whitewater destination.** Center Street will be a future national destination for whitewater enthusiasts. The in-river whitewater experience will provide unique recreational opportunities for surfers, kayakers and rafters. The adjacent upland park will be a truly unique adventure park with ziplines, climbing walls and other destination recreation amenities.



MAP 2.8: WATER TRAILS



RESILIENT NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Downtown can do its part to moderate its climate impact by reducing its carbon footprint and heat effects. Most of Downtown's land area is covered by paving or buildings, creating a heat island effect and increasing stormwater runoff. Choosing sustainability creates cleaner, healthier, safer and more vibrant neighborhoods where people thrive.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

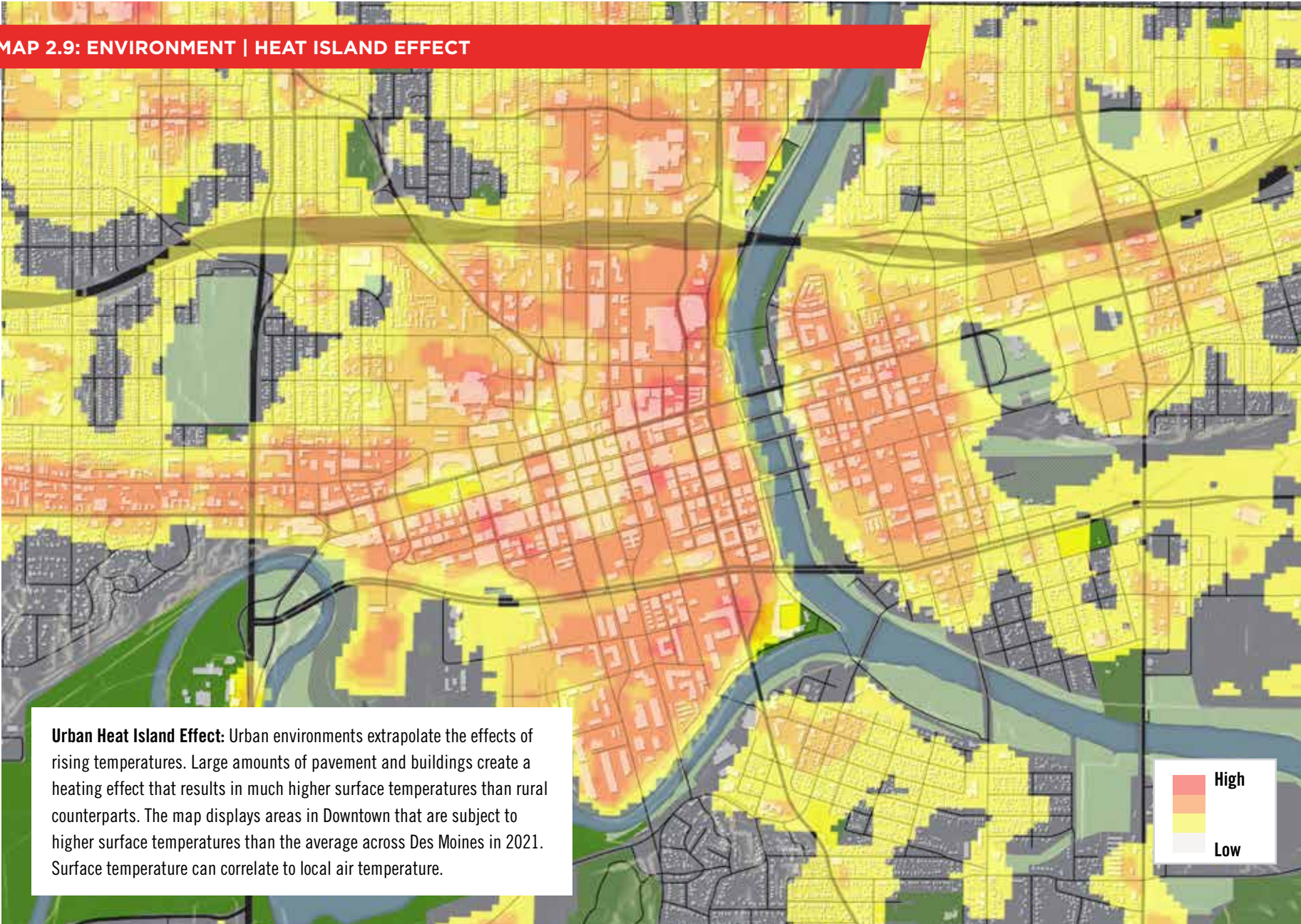
- **Continue to place a priority on preservation.** The greenest building is the one already standing. The community's continued commitment to preservation where feasible uses existing resources efficiently. Use of green technology should be maximized wherever possible in Downtown DSM.
- **Use sustainable practices with new construction.** Examples of technologies and practices to increase energy efficiency include using established energy standards like LEED, performing energy modeling and tracking use, and using sustainable materials.
- **Continue to balance land use planning.** The City's proactive land use, transportation, energy efficiency, green building and waste diversion policies should continue to adapt to changing conditions.
- **Prepare and implement a Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP).** The City is launching its first climate action plan in 2022. When complete, the city should use the CAAP as a tool to monitor key variables and evaluate progress and policy effectiveness.
- **Plant native vegetation.** This includes planting trees in empty tree wells and requiring new tree planting in new construction projects.
- **Designate recycling drop-offs.** We recommend Operation Downtown should continue providing recycling receptacles to reduce waste to the landfills. Additionally, prepare a study to identify recycling drop-off locations.
- **Add electric vehicle charging locations.** Continue to install charging stations on the first level of select parking structures will increase ease of EV use.
- **Construct new habitat areas.**
- **Pursue stormwater best management practices.** Pursue opportunities to incorporate stormwater best management practices (BMPs) in right-of-way improvements, private site redevelopment and other retrofit applications to address the Iowa Stormwater Management Manual's (ISWMM) Unified Sizing Criteria (USC) as adapted and codified by City ordinance. Where feasible, stormwater BMPs that provide other aesthetic or habitat improvements are preferred. One example of this approach is the recently constructed regional stormwater wetland within the Gray's Station neighborhood.



Above (top): The reuse of historic buildings is a sustainable strategy for Downtown.

Above (bottom): Stormwater best management practices can improve water quality and add character to our outdoor environment.

MAP 2.9: ENVIRONMENT | HEAT ISLAND EFFECT



Urban Heat Island Effect: Urban environments extrapolate the effects of rising temperatures. Large amounts of pavement and buildings create a heating effect that results in much higher surface temperatures than rural counterparts. The map displays areas in Downtown that are subject to higher surface temperatures than the average across Des Moines in 2021. Surface temperature can correlate to local air temperature.

Source: RDG Planning & Design; Urban Footprint, 2022







GOAL 5

CONNECTED + SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

FUTURE FORWARD GOAL

Provide convenient, sustainable and enjoyable multi-modal choices that safely connect people and destinations.

World-class cities have walkable Downtowns that are easy to navigate. Moving throughout a vibrant, connected Downtown is part of the City experience and transforms the act of getting around to getting connected with the community.

Downtown DSM has a sequence of distinctive districts and historic neighborhoods that add to the character and delight that the City offers. Preserving this character requires putting people first and placing all modes of travel on an equal footing. Moreover, good connections make it easier for both local residents and visitors to find their way through a great Downtown.

Transportation is also highly linked to good urban design. Places and streets solely designed for motor vehicles are rarely pleasant and tend to create edges and barriers. But places that exclude motorized travel are also unrealistic in



this country. The key is striking a balance among modes that provide safe, smooth, and pleasant mobility for all.

This balance can involve significant change. For example, one-way streets were instituted during periods when the sole imperative was moving as many cars as possible as quickly as possible. Re-evaluating these patterns can create controversies but our standards of performance for Downtown facilities should meet our aspirations for a walkable, bikeable connected environment.

Mobility planning in Downtown should also consider new trends - curb management practices, an expanding range of micro-mobility conveyances like e-bikes and scooters and modernization of public transit. Taken together, all of these strategies will contribute to a Downtown that is more sustainable, healthy, safe and delightful.

RELEVANT PLANS/REPORTS

- 2022 Transit Optimization Study (DART)
- 2019 Mobilizing Tomorrow (MPO)
- 2018 MoveDSM Transportation Master Plan
- 2017 Connect Downtown
- 2016 DART Forward 2035
- 2011 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan
- 2008 Streetcar Feasibility Assessment

DOWNTOWN NEEDS TO CONTINUE RECALIBRATING THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK TO PUT PEOPLE FIRST.

PAST PLAN GOALS

PlanDSM, MoveDSM, and Connect Downtown are the principle resources for guiding mobility improvements for Downtown.

PlanDSM is the city's comprehensive plan, while MoveDSM is the city's transportation master plan. Connect Downtown focuses on transportation enhancements in Downtown. This section summarizes the goals from these plans and their strategic directions are listed by transportation mode in the following pages.

PLANDSM

- Develop a complete multi-modal transportation network for pedestrians, bikes, transit and automobiles.
- Develop updated street design standards.
- Enhance bicycle network.
- Provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles.
- Make transit more attractive.
- Ensure freight facilities meet needs of local economy.

MOVEDSM

- Prioritizing safety for people walking and biking will create safer streets for everyone in Des Moines and help to strengthen neighborhoods.
- Investing in connected, safe networks for people walking, biking and using transit (with special focus given to filling in existing sidewalk gaps) will expand access to opportunities for all the City's residents.
- Creating a more logical system for classifying Des Moines' streets will better align the form, function and feel of the City's streets with the way people use them and respond to the nodes and activity centers introduced in PlanDSM.
- Excess road space can be reallocated to other uses to improve safety, catalyze economic development and create space for physical activity and healthy transportation.

CONNECT DOWNTOWN

- **Safety and Health.** Promote safety, health and welfare throughout the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Transportation Choice.** People should have the option to comfortably walk, bike, drive and/or take transit.
- **Economically Successful.** Downtown should create an environment that attracts workers and supports retail.
- **Character/Placemaking.** Transportation decisions should be consistent with the land use vision of Downtown.
- **Connected.** Downtown is the heart of the region and as such needs to be connected to it; Downtown should be connected to the rest of the city, to the regional trail system, and overcome barriers at its edges (e.g., I-235).



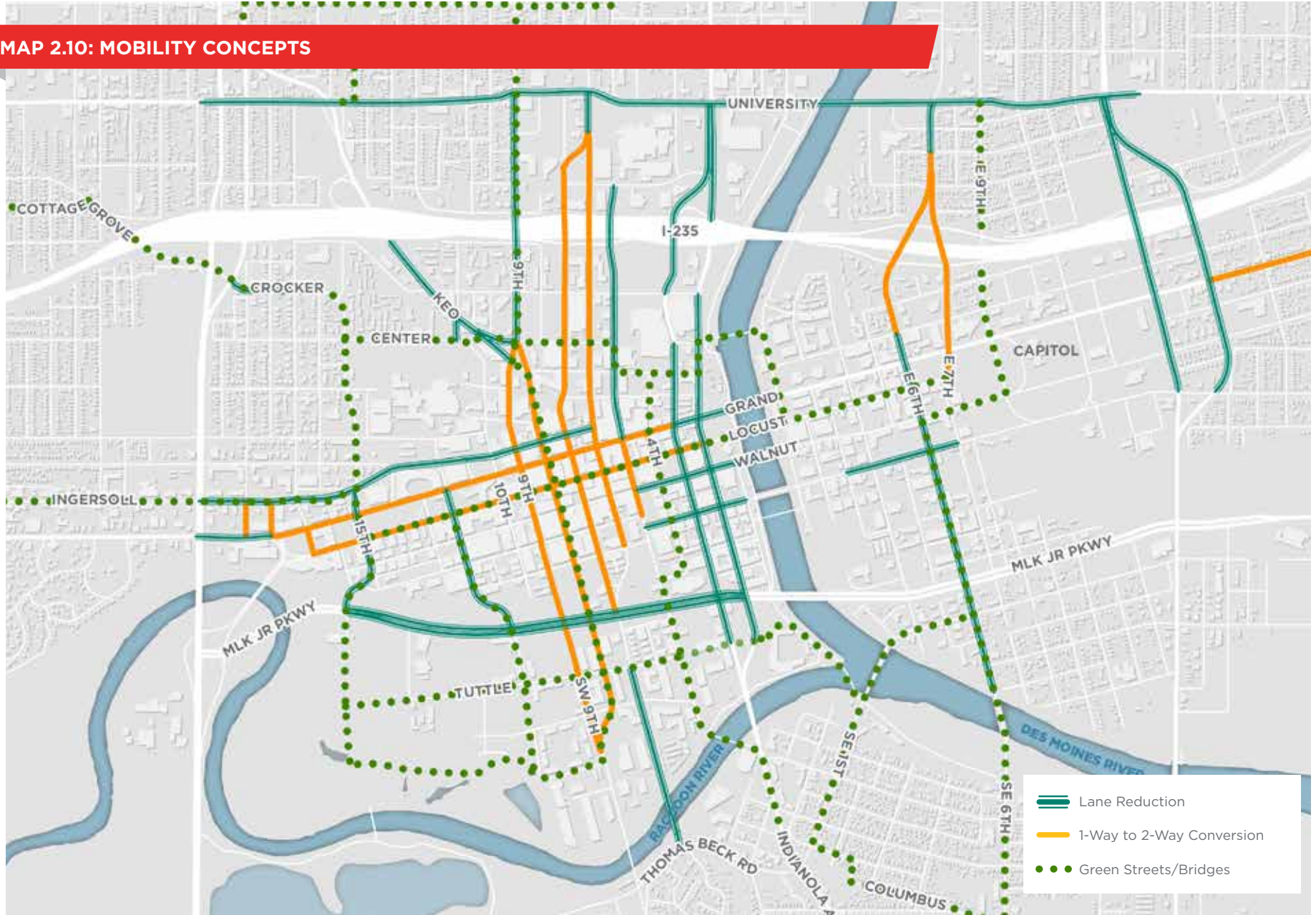
STREET NETWORK

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Continue exploration of two-way streets and pedestrian/bicycle improvements.** Concepts for improving Downtown's street network rely on current planning efforts from the Connect Downtown Plan with an intent to treat all transportation modes equitably. The plan identifies streets for lane reductions, conversions from one-way to two-way circulation and bicycle facilities.
 - Lane Reduction. Reducing lane width manages traffic speed, shortens distance at pedestrian crossings, and provides space for bicycle facilities.
 - One-way to Two-way Conversion. Convert Downtown streets to two-way travel, with required changes to traffic control devices and signage.
 - Bicycle Facilities. Upgrade and increase visibility of many of the existing bicycle routes, which may include restriping for bicycle lanes or other facility type.
- **Implement Green Streets.** All streets should have space for plantings, which could include turf, trees, in-ground planters, above ground planters and hanging baskets. Stormwater BMPs such as tree trenches or bioretention cells could also be incorporated where feasible, sized to treat all or a portion of the Water Quality volume (WQv), which is runoff expected to be generated by a 1.25" rainfall event. More information about Green Streets can be found in the Connected Corridors chapter.
- **Monitor trends in mobility technology.** Consider how emerging technologies such as automated vehicle counts and autonomous personal delivery devices (PDDs) should be incorporated into Downtown.
- **Update Wayfinding System.** The existing wayfinding system is about 20 years old and should be updated where necessary. Updates should consider the needs of different people, including people with vision/hearing impairments and non-English speakers.
- **Proceed with Future Six projects.** The Future Six section of this plan establishes a strategic program of projects and policies that are designed to achieve the Future Forward vision for Downtown DSM. During the community input process, the one word or priority most frequently mentioned by participants was "connectedness." Therefore, many of the specific ideas and projects involve the transportation system. The following section describes these various projects in detail.



MAP 2.10: MOBILITY CONCEPTS



Source: Adapted from Connect Downtown



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

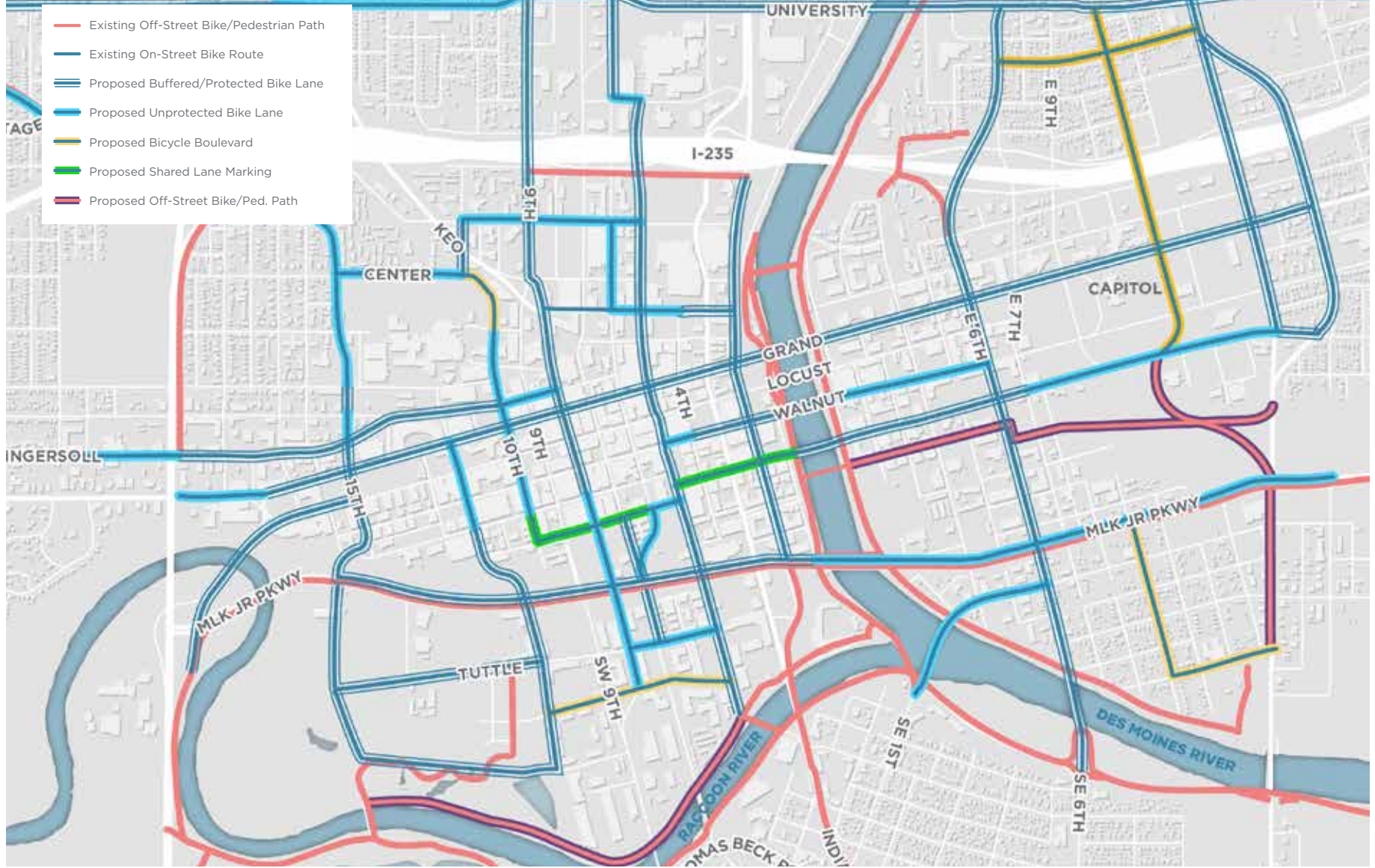
Active transportation includes modes of travel that involve some form of human-powered movement - typically focused on transit, walking, biking, and micro-mobility. Active transportation is healthy, saves money, is generally quiet and non-polluting, and uses space efficiently. These modes also have recreational and wellness benefits. The Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study (2022) indicated that the majority of Greater Des Moines' population would prefer walking to driving to Downtown destinations.

PlanDSM's transportation chapter recommends developing a complete multi-modal transportation network for pedestrians, bikes, transit, and automobiles. A complete, comfortable, and connected bike network will help make cycling a more viable option for getting around Des Moines. The introduction of e-bikes expands the number of people capable or willing to use a bicycle for transportation.

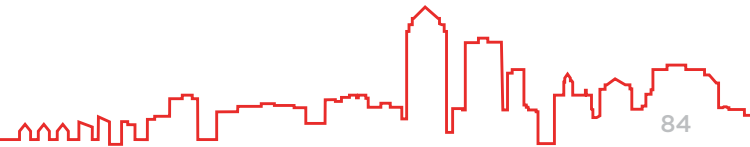
FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Implement complete streets with bicycle facilities.** Reference the portions of the Connect Downtown Plan which provides specific guidance regarding bicycle facilities. It identifies a hierarchy of facilities, but recognizes that different bicyclists have different capabilities and levels of comfort.
- **Provide well-located, space-efficient parking facilities for bicycles.**
- **Prepare a walkability plan by vicinity.** The plan should consider detailed improvements to universal design and should resolve ADA conflicts. Walkability plans should be completed as part of any subarea plan.
- **Establish policies that maintain access in construction zones.** City policy should require contractors to maintain access for active users. When sidewalks or bike lanes are closed for extended periods, barriers are created, especially for people with limited mobility.
- **Include pedestrian friendly street design elements in new or retrofit projects.** These include high-visibility crosswalk markings (Continental striping), pedestrian signals, refuge medians and street trees.
- **Continue to enforce policy for sidewalk maintenance and repair.** City Code requires property owner maintenance of abutting sidewalks.
- **Explore rental scooters in Downtown or other micro-mobility options.** Scooters can provide an alternative to cars for short trips within a district. Good planning is needed to avoid enforcement difficulties and “scooter clutter” when scooters are left in inappropriate locations.
- **Expand the BCycle system.** As the program becomes more popular, the City should welcome additional docking stations located around Downtown.
- **Coordinate skywalk access points with bicycle parking and the sidewalk network.** Important access points may be enhanced by placemaking features.
- **Increase the City's budget for multi-modal transportation.** MoveDSM recommends increasing staffing and operating budget to implement and maintain recommendations for multi-modal improvements.

MAP 2.11: ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



Source: Adapted from City of Des Moines & Connect Downtown with Modifications



PARKING

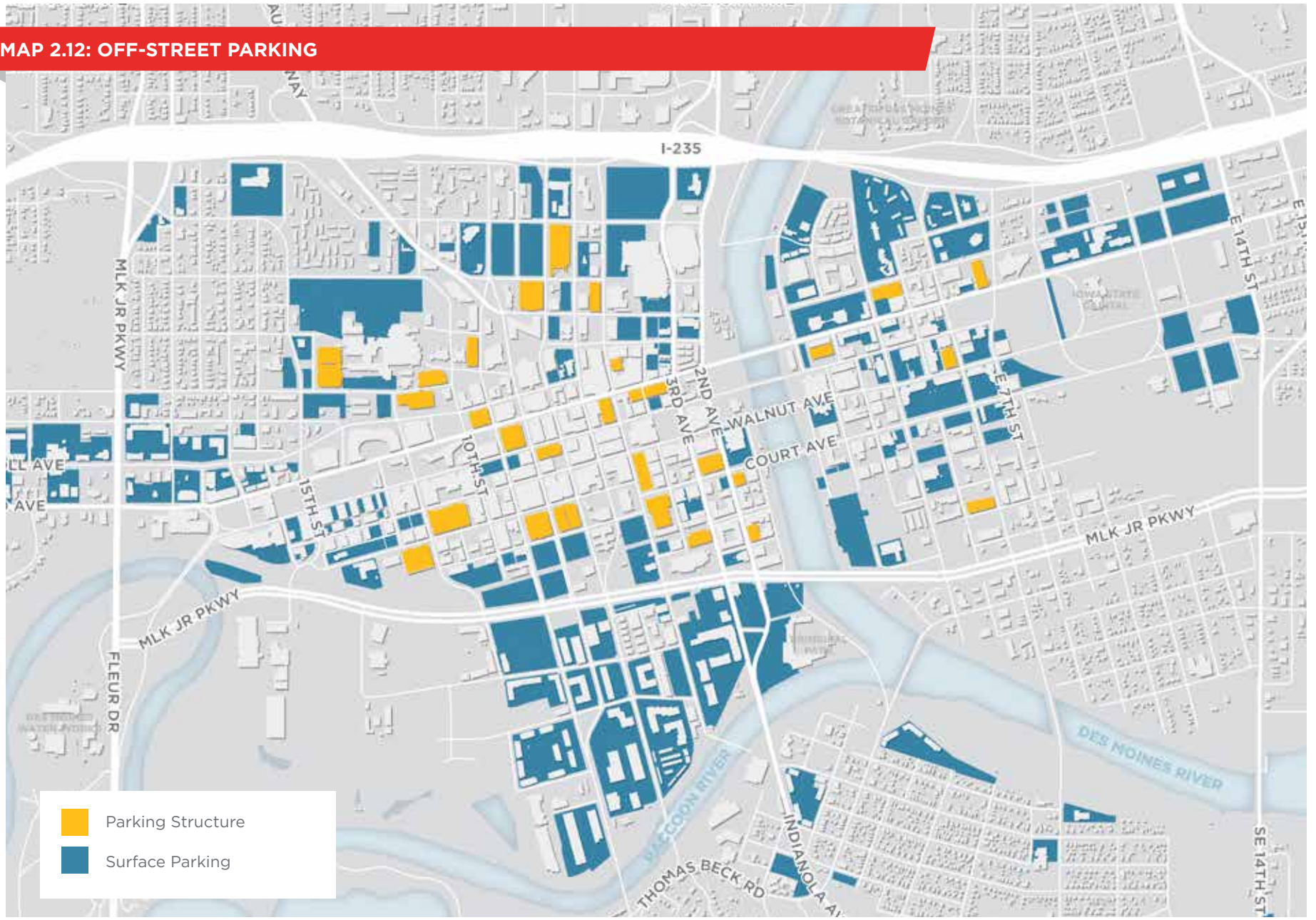
“Management of Downtown parking influences the character, vitality and safety of Downtown. Downtown parking is a mix of ramps primarily used by Downtown employees, metered and unmetered on-street spaces and peak hour restricted spaces.” - *Connect Downtown, 2017*

Parking is a system that we often do not like but find absolutely essential in most American cities. Parking facilities inherently create dead spaces on a street and detract from the urbanism and connectivity of a Downtown. Good parking design is to minimize these negative effects through design, siting, or detail at eye level. Good parking system planning similarly uses existing spaces efficiently and follows the Goldilocks principle of not too much and not too little.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Prepare a Strategic Parking Plan.** A Strategic Parking Plan can increase the efficiency of the current parking supply, support reuse of unnecessary facilities and establish pricing concepts that encourage desirable outcomes. These are especially true with the increasing popularity of hybrid work situations, which may permanently reduce peak weekday parking demand. The plan will require strong engagement and partnership with all public/private owners of large Downtown parking facilities and should encompass:
 - **Supply inventory and utilization**
 - Pricing and enforcement
 - Partnerships and shared parking, including incentives for shared parking
 - Evaluation of workforce shifts impacting parking demand (based on pandemic influences)
 - Features such as EV-charging stations, accessible parking, wayfinding, pathways, and integrated technology software
 - Parking supply relationship to other mobility options (e.g., park and ride, park and scoot, park and bike, park and walk)
 - Evaluation of areas that have current parking challenges such as the area around Mainframe Studios, Principal Park and transitions to lower density residential areas
 - Prepare a developer/investor education program that communicates how to develop with shared parking strategies that optimizes the use of parking throughout the day/week and that reduces extensive on-site parking
 - Review parking management and fees, including variable curb pricing, and commuter programs
 - **Host a conference among parking providers.** Convene private and public organizations to optimize use of both private and public parking structures and lots. This may be coordinated with the strategic parking plan.
 - **Redevelop surface lots.** Many of Downtown’s large surface lots are relatively distant from destinations, are receiving light use and are potential sites for residential development, including housing for Downtown workers.
- **Redesign select parking lots.** Improved design can increase efficiency and reduce environmental impact.
- **Apply tactical urbanism.** Parking spaces, on-street and off-street, can be temporarily retrofitted for pilot projects. These pilot projects may become permanent if the experiment proves to be a desired alternative use. Examples include:
 - Parklet / Streeteries. Converting an on-street stall into a seating refuge or dining area.
 - Parklot. Converting a surface parking lot into a park. Spaces can be reprogrammed to imitate a recess playground or venue for food trucks/containers.
 - ParkArt. Introducing artwork into parking lots improves their appearance and can screen the parking. An example is located at W 5th Street and Park Street.
- **Study potential retrofits for existing parking structures and build new structures that permit future retrofit.** Open top decks can accommodate green roofs, solar arrays or rooftop parks. Some cities have converted all or parts of parking structures to other uses.
- **Create a marketing campaign of the ParkDSM mobile app.** Future updates may include a rewards feature to encourage use and repeat customers.

MAP 2.12: OFF-STREET PARKING



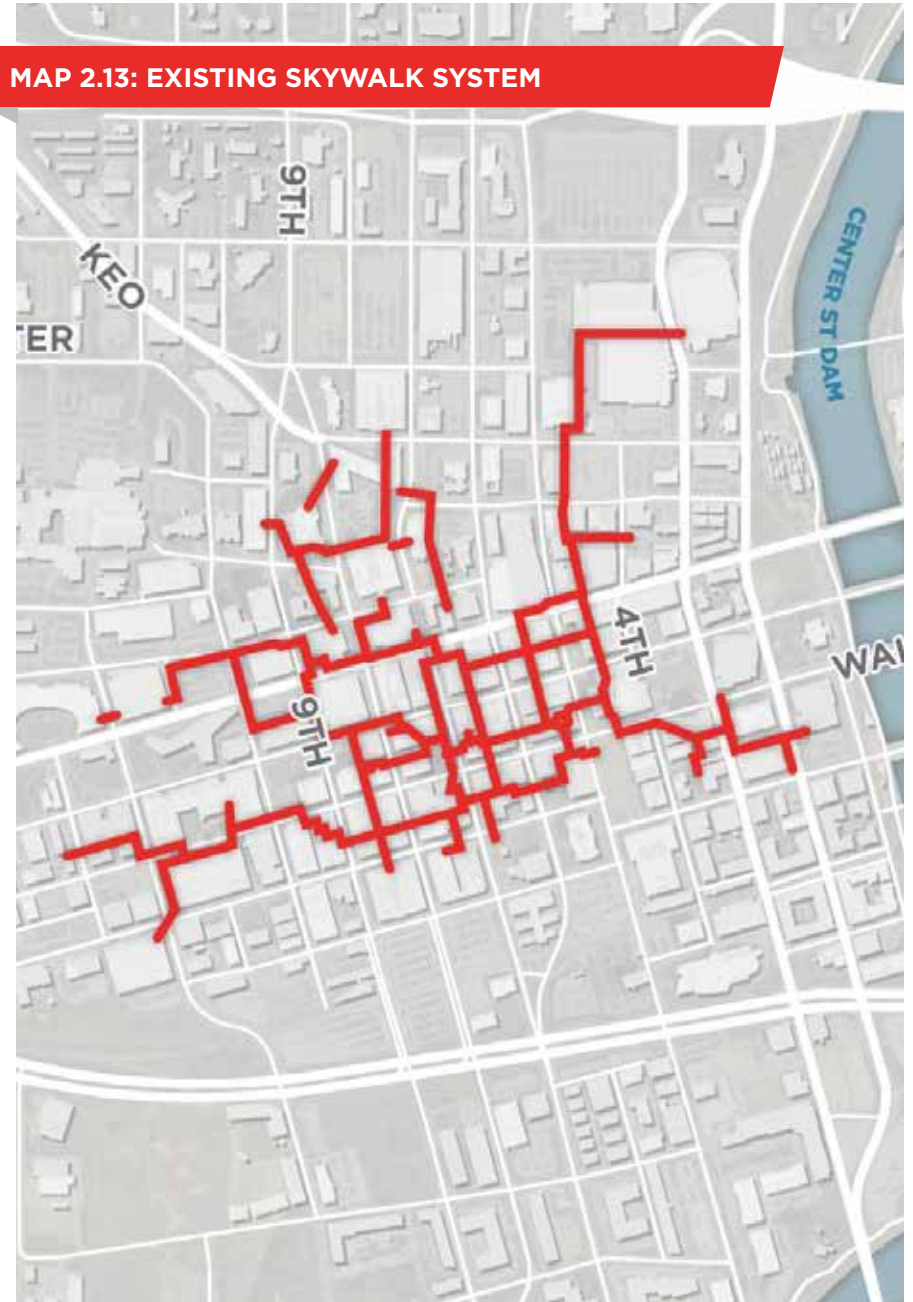
SKYWALK SYSTEM

Throughout the Future Forward process, the skywalks and their future were subjects of great public interest and significant debate. The idea presented in the Future Six section to follow grew out of that discussion. But the skywalks are also an elevated pedestrian transportation facility and are an integral part of Downtown's pedestrian network.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES

- **Revisit organizational management of the skywalk system.** Review and refine the management structure to ensure that the skywalk system becomes and remains an attractive amenity that serves the Downtown community.
- **Prepare an updated Skywalk Master Plan.** Executing a new vision for the skywalks will require a master plan to guide the process. The plan, also discussed in the Future Six section, should use a previous improvement study but move into a number of other areas relevant to the overall vision. The transformed system should be complete by 2031 to celebrate the system's sixtieth anniversary.
- **Design and implement a new wayfinding system based on a transit model.** The current wayfinding system requires a knowledge of specific buildings and is disorienting to visitors and even experienced users. The Future Six section proposes a color-coded "terminal and station" concept, similar to a rapid transit map. This significantly clarifies the network and would be an easily attainable first step toward realizing the overall concept.

MAP 2.13: EXISTING SKYWALK SYSTEM



TRANSIT SYSTEM

Most of Des Moines Area Regional Transit's (DART) bus lines converge on Downtown DSM at DART Central Station. DART also has Downtown shuttle services that operate into its park and ride facility at 7th and Center Streets. DART's long range service plan, the Transit Optimization Study, identifies strategies to improve the efficiency, connectivity, reliability and convenience of public transit in the region. The following summary outline DART's proposed strategies that are most relevant to Downtown.

FUTURE FORWARD STRATEGIES:

- **Upgrade stops.** Upgraded amenities at stops would include additional shelters, benches, art elements, pedestrian access, pedestrian street crossings and signage.
- **Improve service between DART Central Station and intercity transportation facilities.** These destinations include the airport and the intercity bus station.
- **Upgrade services between Downtown and surrounding suburbs.** Potential destinations include West Des Moines, Norwalk, Waukee and Carlisle.
- **Establish 6th and 7th Streets as transit priority corridors.** Elements might include signal priority controllers, bus bulbs that avoid weaving movements to the curb, queue bypasses and two-way travel on both streets.
- **Integrate DART into the design of street improvements.** Street design should expedite passenger boardings and bus operations, as presented in the DART Forward 2035 Plan.
- **Improve bike access to DART Central Station.** This should include dedicated bike lanes, and defined routes, including direct connections from regional trails. Central Station may also accommodate a Bike Station that



includes protected daytime storage, tools for light repairs and other features.

- **Study the expansion of the D-Line.** Explore the addition of transit service to surrounding districts, like the Avenues (Grand and Ingersoll), the Market District, Stadium District and Drake University.
- **Study enhanced transit.**
 - Work with DART to evolve transit services to better meet the needs of residents Downtown and in adjacent neighborhoods.
 - Study how high-capacity transit such as BRT or light rail could serve as a catalyst to Downtown development.





3

FUTURE SIX

INTRODUCTION

The vision for Downtown DSM – creating a destination of inclusive opportunities and welcome surprises – points the way to an exciting and rewarding future ahead for all people.

The five goals provide further depth and definition of how Downtown will achieve this vision. But visions and goals without actions are just words. Future Forward is designed to be a vision and action plan. This chapter spotlights the action part of the equation.

Today in 2022, Downtown already has many projects underway that are fulfilling different parts of the vision. The ICON Water Trails vision and project will bring Downtown's two rivers, so important to Downtown's visual and environmental quality, to life. The Pro IOWA Stadium and Global Plaza will fill a long disused industrial site with activity. New neighborhoods are springing up at Gray's Station and the Market District. The continuation and completion of these and other exciting projects is very much a part of the Downtown vision and will provide a solid foundation for the Downtown of tomorrow. But even with these initiatives, there is more to be done if Downtown is to realize its vision and fulfill its goals. As we approach what may be the light of the end of the Covid-19 tunnel, Downtown faces new challenges – how to restore Downtown office occupancy, reinvigorate Downtown businesses and use the lessons and insights of the last two years to our advantage. And to understand Downtown's role in re-establishing a sense of common purpose, unity and delight in one another.

To translate these goals and ideals into action, the Plan identifies six ambitious initiatives, each is built on a group of actions to consider over the coming years. The Future Six integrate the extensive input from surveys, group discussions, individual interviews, and conversations between and within committees and consultant team. This is not a linear process, but throughout the Future Forward process common ideas and perspectives have emerged that provided the framework for these overall ideas. The Future Six are:

THE GREEN RING, completing the gaps and capitalizing fully on the unique open space system defined by the two rivers and visionary public and private investments.

THE SKYWALKS REIMAGINED, reimagining the skywalk network as a multiple use, multi-dimensional destination and experience of discovery, color, light, art, history, fun and landscape as an experiential connector path.

THE INNER CIRCLE, creating a connected loop around the core that reclaims historic Center Street and creates new children-friendly residential neighborhoods that are linked to our event and entertainment districts.

THE STADIUM DISTRICT, connecting our two major outdoor Downtown sports venues along a corridor of new neighborhoods and new opportunities for growth and innovation.

CONNECTED CORRIDORS, improving the quality, appeal and experience of the tendrils that tie Downtown to neighborhoods.

STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS, preserving and enhancing affordable housing, strengthening natural activity centers and enhancing parks and streets in neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown.

CREATING A DESTINATION OF INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND WELCOME SURPRISES

If there is an outstanding common theme among the Forward Six, it is **connectedness**. Throughout the planning process, discussions frequently circled back to this word and its variations. Consider the words used in the short descriptions above: ring, network, experience, fun, circle, loop, link, tendrils, tie, centers and of course connect. Ultimately, connecting places will also connect people in positive ways. There is perhaps no greater mission for any urban district and no greater response to the challenges that we now must face together with faith in ourselves and good will to others.

The interdependence of many of these initiatives also draws on this theme of connectedness. For example, the preservation and enhancement of strong neighborhoods in and around Downtown could benefit from a welcoming transportation network in and out of Downtown through Connected Corridors as well as the thoughtful redevelopment of the Inner Circle.

As each initiative takes greater shape during implementation, the Vision and Lenses of this plan should continue to guide the details that make a place — a place that is inclusive, sustainable, vibrant, healthy, economically vital, and filled with welcome surprises.

THE GREEN RING



THE SKYWALKS REIMAGINED



THE INNER CIRCLE



THE STADIUM DISTRICT



CONNECTED CORRIDORS



STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS





THE
**GREEN
RING**



ABOUT THE GREEN RING

DOWNTOWN DSM IS BLESSED BY ITS LOCATION AT THE CONFLUENCE OF ITS TWO RIVERS, THE RACCOON AND THE DES MOINES.

Throughout its history, the city has taken great advantage of this prime location. Projects like the Principal Riverwalk, Meredith Trail, other elements of the Central Iowa Trails Network, Gray's Lake and Water Works Park form a connected greenway that touches nearly every part of Downtown with amenities, gathering places, art and other special features. The ICON Water Trails initiative will enhance this superb network by putting the rivers to active recreational use.

For most cities, completing this open space network would be vision enough. But Des Moines has developed major resources that bring the riverfront greenway into the core of Downtown. These include the Western Gateway Park, Pappajohn Sculpture Park and the Des Moines Public Library, with a long view that culminates at the historic Iowa State Capitol and its surrounding grounds. Together, these features create a “green ring” — an open space belt that links the built and natural environments and defines the fundamental structure of Downtown. Most of the district’s major destinations are located along or relate to the Ring, with potential tendrils that reach out to surrounding neighborhoods and their individual parks.



But the Green Ring has gaps in its continuity. These include the western leg between Gray's Lake and Western Gateway; the Downtown core between the Public Library and the river; the trail gap on the north bank of the Raccoon River between Gray's Station and Jackson Street Bridge; the East Village corridor; and the eastern leg south of the Capitol grounds.

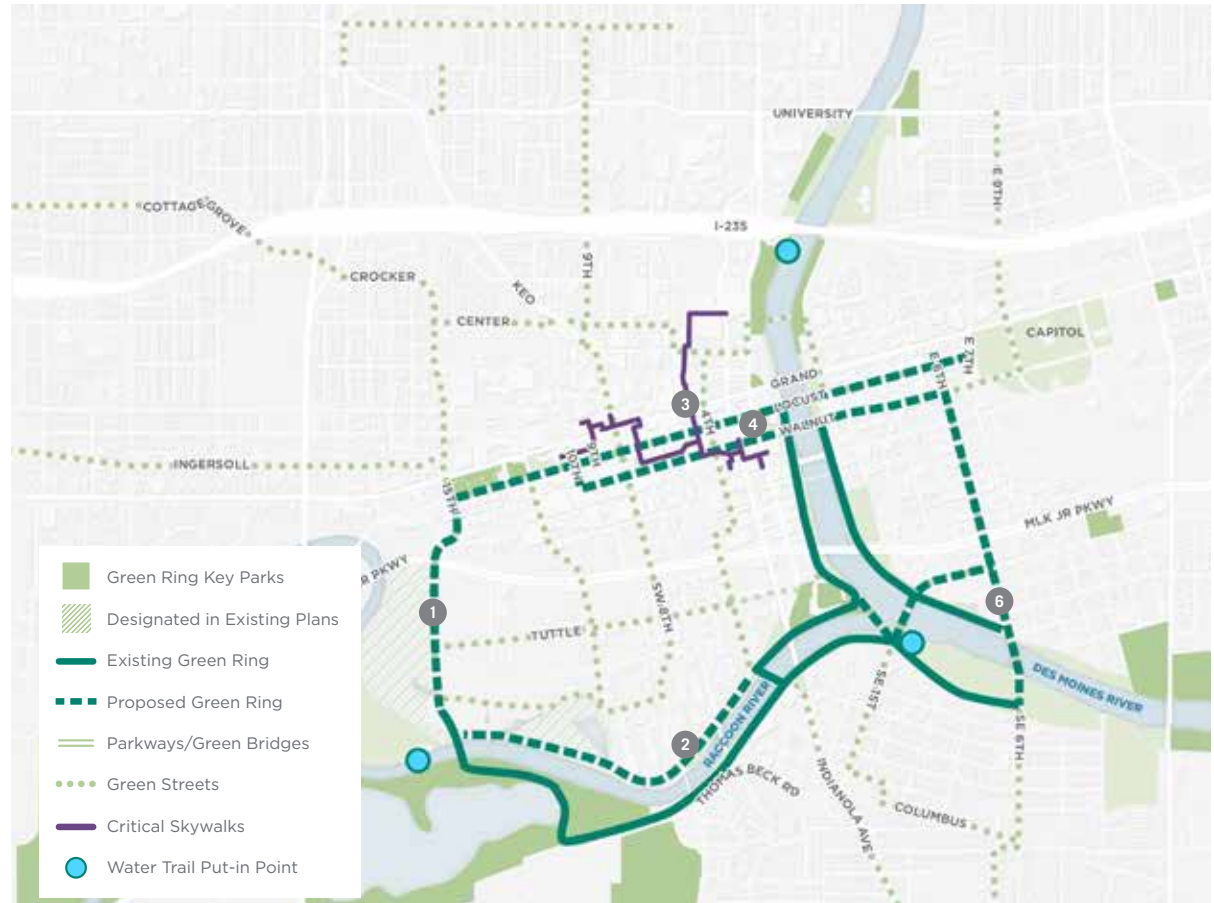
VISION

THE GREEN RING

A fully connected multi-purpose outdoor community commons for all Des Moines residents linking the natural and human environments that touches the entire City and provides opportunity, delight and accessibility. In many ways, the Green Ring is a pillar of the Downtown vision, the unique and invaluable resource that other details of the overall Future Forward program build on.

ELEMENTS

- 1 The Western Link
- 2 North Levee Trail
- 3 The Skywalks Reimagined
- 4 The Locust/Walnut Pair
- 5 East Locust Connection
- 6 East Side Link



ELEMENTS

THE GREEN RING

THE WESTERN LINK

While the large parks on the south side of the Raccoon River and the edge of the Western Gateway appear close together, the combination of the river, the Water Works, major roadways and railroad trackage make a direct connection very difficult. But connections do exist, notably the new Gray's Lake Park to Gray's Station pedestrian bridge, the tunnel under Fleur to Waterworks Park and the shared use path on the MLK Jr. Parkway bridge, connecting Gray's Lake Park to 15th Street. The Pro Iowa Stadium and Global Plaza, planned for the former DICO site west of 16th Street, will add a new destination on the east side of the river bend.

These projects focus attention on the 15th/16th Street corridor as the most logical and attainable way to close the gap at the western leg. The street is especially attractive as it continues north, connecting the Ring to Sherman Hill, the Iowa Methodist Medical Center, and the Drake neighborhood. Between MLK Jr. Parkway and Ingersoll Avenue, this currently four-lane street would be remade as a multi-modal urban street, part transportation facility and part greenway, appropriate to its new role as a key element of the Green Ring.



NORTH LEVEE TRAIL

The trail on the north side of the Raccoon River currently terminates at the Jackson Avenue Bridge, but should be continued to the west along the river to the Chris & Marcie Coleman Pedestrian Bridge (North of Gray's Lake). This will complete the connection to Principal Park, the Riverwalk the SW 1st Street Bridge and the future Pro Iowa Stadium.

SKYWALKS REIMAGINED

A new vision for the skywalk system would reimagine it as an elevated urban park and destination, connecting Pappajohn Sculpture Park and the Library to the river as the indoor link of the Green Ring. This concept, one of the Future Forward Six, is considered in the following section.

THE LOCUST/WALNUT PAIR

Locust and Walnut Streets, together with the blocks they define, create the “Green Ring” connection east of 10th Street to the river. Rather than an individual corridor, the Locust/Walnut pair should be seen as the edges of the traditional linear commercial corridor of Downtown - an appropriate way to link the greensward on the west to the river on the east. This maintains the block-wide pattern established by the Western Gateway and Pappajohn Sculpture Park, shifted one block to the south to reflect land use patterns and the framing of Capitol Square, Cowles Commons, Des Moines Civic Center, and the World Food Prize. It also contains the Kaleidoscope and other potential development sites, along with major existing development, and connects to EMC Park and the Court Avenue District.

The streets themselves also provide the surface complement to the skywalk network, with which they should be linked at highly visible and accessible locations. Both streets should have a unified vocabulary of streetscape elements, paving surfaces, pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and public art.

EAST LOCUST CONNECTION

From a development perspective, Locust Street continues as the ‘main street’ of the East Village and provides the direct visual axis to the iconic Iowa State Capitol. As such, it is a worthy and vital urban continuation of the Green Ring. Appropriate treatment should orient and market the street as a component of the open space system, as well as an active, mixed use urban corridor.



EAST SIDE LINK

East 6th is an emerging corridor with major residential growth and new status as the main street through the Market District. New development along the street is establishing a streetscape design pattern that should continue with new projects. The street also provides bicycle accommodations.

Current standard (unprotected) bike lanes should be enhanced by painted conflict zones to increase their visibility. The east side connection continues over the 6th Street Bridge to the Des Moines River Trail and back west to complete the loop.





CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF IMPROVEMENTS TO A SECTION OF THE GREEN RING. FINAL DESIGN TO BE DEVELOPED WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND ASSOCIATED PARTNERS/AGENCIES INCLUDING DETAILS OF BIKE/PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES, PARKING, PLANT MATERIAL AND ARTISTIC FEATURES.

HOW WILL THE GREEN RING ADVANCE THE FUTURE FORWARD GOALS?

Welcoming Urban Neighborhood



- Provides new residential development opportunities in adjacent areas, notably the Market District and Columbus Park neighborhood
- Increases access to major features attractive to urban families
- Forms the foundation for connections to surrounding residential neighborhoods and neighborhood parks

Inclusive Arts + Entertainment



- Reinforces major existing cultural and entertainment resources
- Provides opportunities for outdoor art exhibitions
- Becomes a canvas that can be embellished by artists and local performers
- Creates a variety of no- or low-cost activities that are accessible to all people of all incomes

Rewarding Market for Investment



- Enhances major streets in the Downtown core, including 15th, Locust and Walnut
- Establishes connections and marketing opportunities
- Increases the availability and variety of key Downtown assets, making the district increasingly desirable for workers and residents
- Strengthens the water trails concept and provides potential markets for mixed use nodes at access points
- Serves major development areas and reinforces existing commercial areas by connecting them into the signature recreational system

Vibrant Outdoor City



- Advances and packages an outdoor environment that is already one of the City's great assets
- Creates connections that add reasons to bring people outside
- Incorporates major recreational attractions and neighborhood parks into the Downtown open space system
- Completes gaps in the trail network

Connected + Sustainable Mobility



- Substantially improves existing facilities for active transportation
- Provides greater continuity for the trail and bikeway networks
- Increases visibility and safety of existing bicycle infrastructure



A vibrant, colorful hallway with geometric shapes and people. The walls and ceiling are composed of various colored rectangular blocks in shades of purple, blue, green, yellow, and orange. Some blocks have small framed pictures or screens. A man in a light blue shirt is pushing a woman in a wheelchair. The woman is wearing a black and white striped shirt. The hallway recedes into the distance, creating a sense of depth.

SKYWALKS REIMAGINED



ABOUT SKYWALKS REIMAGINED

DES MOINES HAS HAD A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS SIGNATURE SKYWALK SYSTEM SINCE ITS BEGINNING IN 1969.

The skywalks had two primary functions – to compete with regional malls by providing convenient, all-weather access to most Downtown destinations and to open marketable second level space for additional commercial occupancy. The network's scope and length was rivaled only by the Minneapolis skywalks, and skywalk access has been a must for any existing building or nearby development project. At its peak during the 1980s and 1990s, the system, anchored by the Kaleidoscope mall, accomplished its purpose, but that success also sparked controversy. Many people believed that the success of the skywalks came at the expense of business and life at street level so fundamental to a successful Downtown. But their convenience remained compelling and the system continued to expand beyond its original core, reaching out to the Iowa Events Center, the Court Avenue Historic District and the Principal and Nationwide office centers.

But changes in Downtown's retail and office environment and growing appreciation for the importance of outdoor space and the public realm also changed the use of the skywalks. The department stores that anchored the original core network



are no more and the Kaleidoscope, once the hub of the system, is now vacant. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on daily office occupancy further reduced use, and many Downtown workers and the district's growing residential population prefer the clarity and character of the street to the labyrinthine and occasionally disorienting upper-level network. Some cities, faced with similar trends, are removing



their skywalk bridges. But the investment is too large and the network remains too useful to abandon. The skywalks continue to help differentiate Downtown DSM to prospective employers and conventions/events. However, today, many of the skywalk routes do not reflect the vibrancy of Downtown. We need to re-envision our skywalks, giving them a new role in the Downtown of the future.

VISION

ENHANCED WAYFINDING & A SKYWALK REIMAGINED

The inspiration for this new skywalk vision comes from New York City's famous High Line – an unloved and unused elevated railroad corridor in Manhattan that has become both one of the city's leading destinations for both residents and visitors and a powerful catalyst for development. This once deteriorating structure is now a 1.45 mile long elevated linear park full of people, surprises, gathering spaces, art, varied landscapes and ceremonial connections to the street below as it winds its way through Manhattan's west side. Chicago's 606 linear park is a similar precedent closer to home that transformed an abandoned elevated railway in a similar effort. Our skywalks are in a distinctively different context, but can adapt the High Line concept along key routes to create a destination that attracts people and complements rather than competes with Downtown's urban environment. The "Skywalks Reimagined" will also complete the Green Ring by filling the gap between the Public Library and Western Gateway and the riverfront. Finally, a wayfinding system inspired by color-coded subway lines will give more intuitive orientation to skywalk users.



ELEMENTS

- Unified Management
- Improved Wayfinding
- Reimagined Spine
- Theming Pathways
- Experiential Connector



ELEMENTS

SKYWALKS REIMAGINED

UNIFIED MANAGEMENT

The Skywalks Reimagined vision requires unified management structure for planning; administering the design process, and maintaining, promoting, and managing the completed project. This may be achieved by strengthening the capacity of the existing Skywalk Association. Altogether, the stakeholders involved in the skywalk system should update the Skywalk Master Plan that addresses governance and other elements in this Plan.

IMPROVE MAINTENANCE

Some sections of the skywalk need more immediate improvement than others. Establishing a unified management system will help identify deficiencies and priorities for improvements, like cleaning and carpet replacement.

IMPROVE WAYFINDING

Visitors and occasionally even experienced skywalk users find the network confusing and hard to use. A color-coded graphic and wayfinding system, built on the model of subway maps that identify endpoint-based “lines” will make the system far easier for its users to read the system and find their destinations. One concept, illustrated here, organizes the system into five interconnected lines.



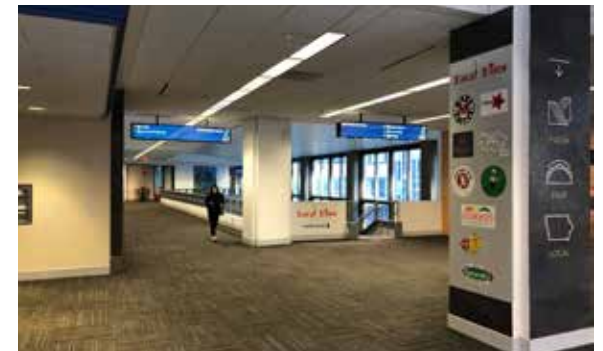
RED LINE from the Library to the riverfront through Ruan Center, a revitalized Kaleidoscope, and Capital Square.



GREEN LINE from Capital Square to the Arena District.



BLUE LINE from the Nationwide complex at 12th and Mulberry to Ruan Center.

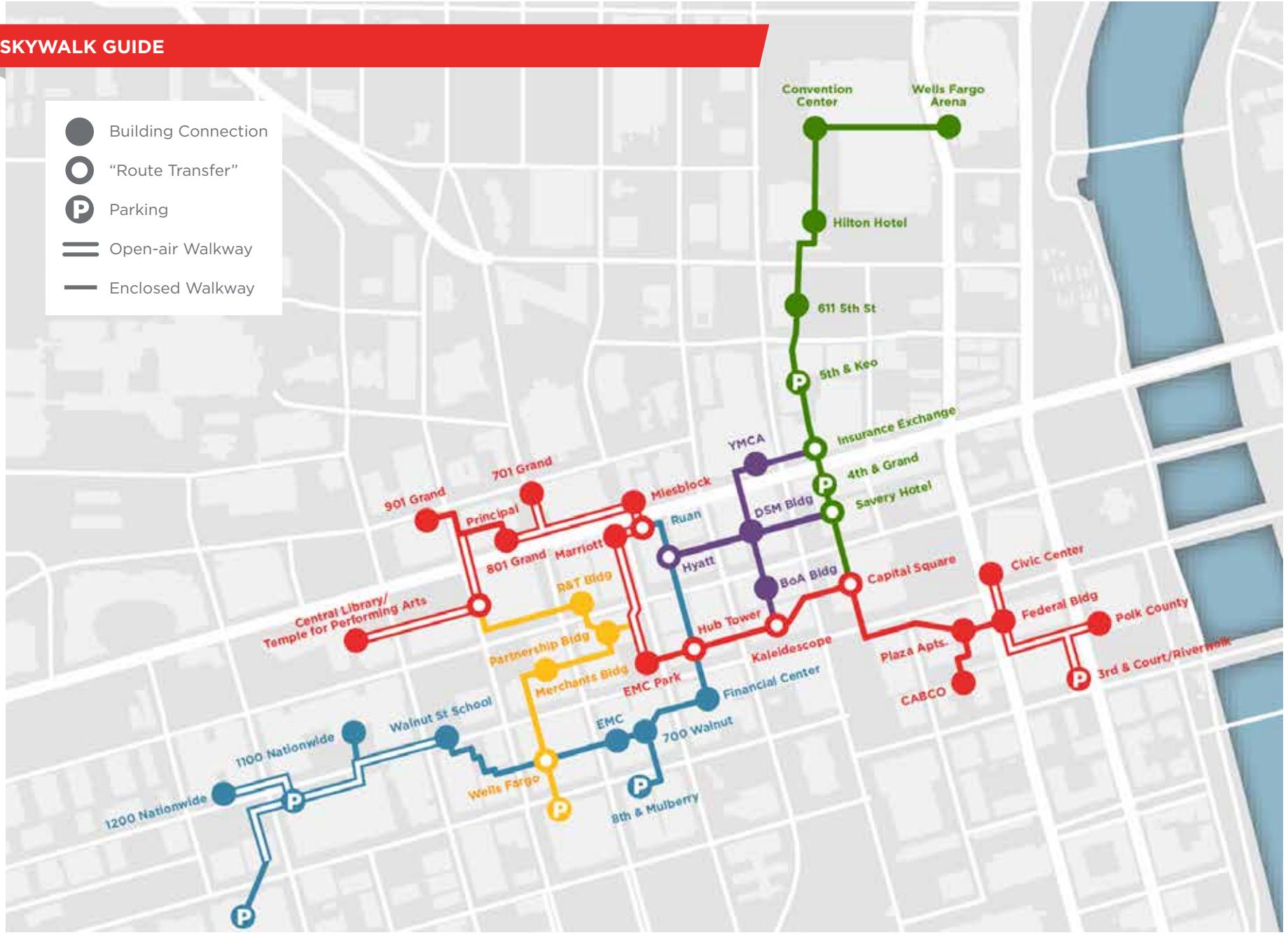


ORANGE & PURPLE LINES short connections that link the primary Red, Green, and Blue Lines.



SKYWALK GUIDE

- Building Connection
- "Route Transfer"
- P Parking
- == Open-air Walkway
- Enclosed Walkway

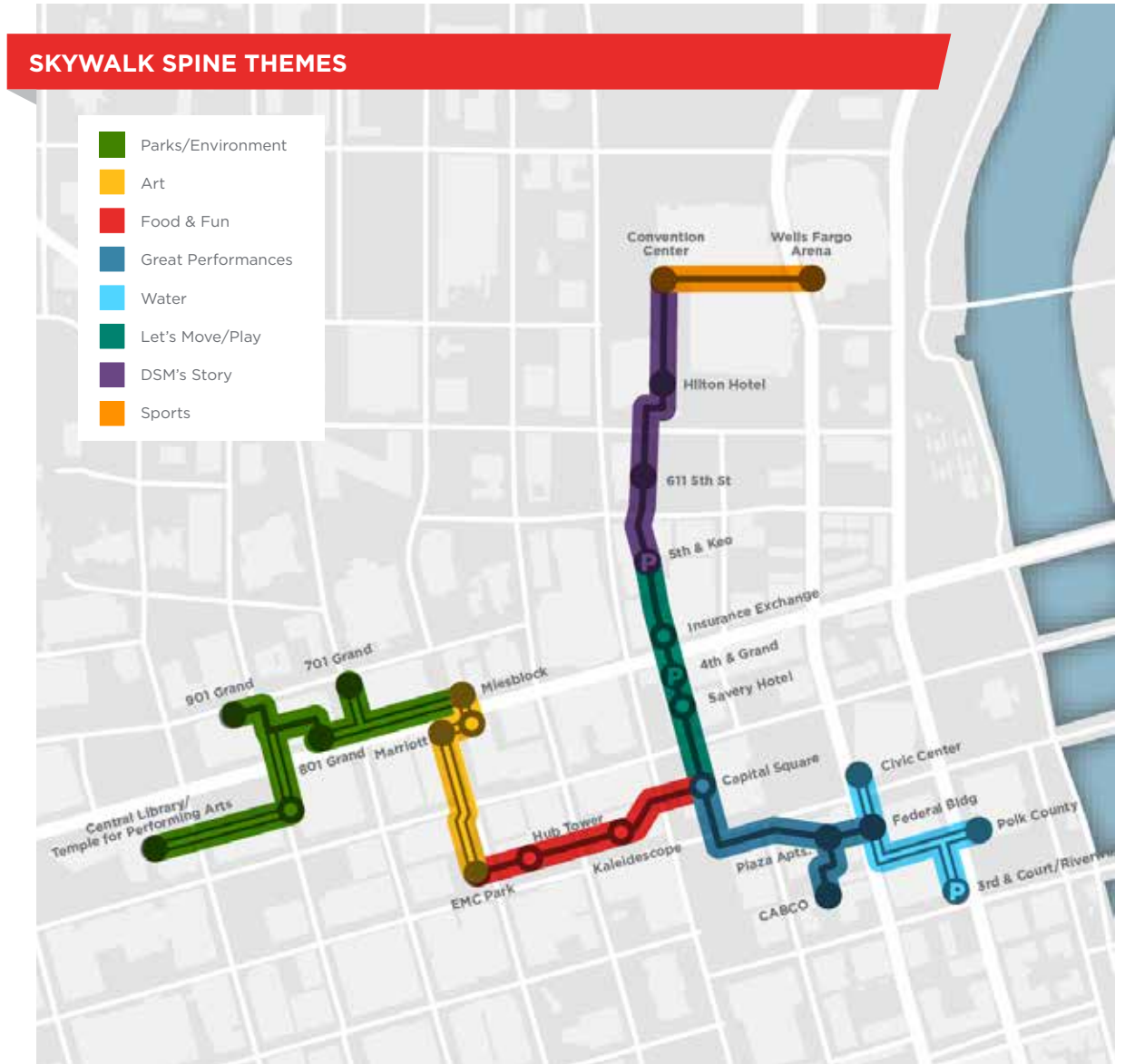


REIMAGINED SPINE THEMES

The vision for the Red and Green Lines is to transform them into a multi-dimensional, multiple use destination that both moves people through and brings people to.

In the vision, these lines would be divided into thematic and specialized sections, offering different experiences and attractions, and possibly sponsored and developed by important community institutions.

Potential themes could include art on both surfaces and light; a greenhouse and park environment in segments with outdoor exposures; intergenerational play spaces; food; community orientation and storytelling; sports; district businesses; and technology and interactive attractions.



HIGHLY VISIBLE STREET CONNECTIONS

Difficulty in finding entrances/exits and often uncomfortable paths from street to skywalk have reinforced the separation of these two public domains. The skywalk vision imagines strategically located, highly transparent and elegantly designed entrances that could be either freestanding features or incorporated into new development projects. Potential locations are the endpoints near the Public Library and the Principal Riverwalk and as part of a reimagining of the Kaleidoscope building.

THE KALEIDOSCOPE

This vacant mall, developed during the 1980s, was once the hub of the system and can be again. The high, naturally lit linear atrium can accommodate a three-dimensional recreational attraction, while the former retail wings are appropriate for pop-up and start-up businesses, workshop and gallery space, rotating exhibits and food innovations. A renewed Kaleidoscope will open up and reinvigorate adjacent Walnut Street with street facing windows, entrances and design articulation.

Alternatively, should the site be redeveloped fully in the future (replacing the existing building), redevelopment should emphasize similar opportunities to connect the skywalk and street level with a mix of recreational and retail destinations as well as street facing building design.

FILLING VACANCIES

Many bays and buildings are vacant in the skywalk and are perfect spots for pop-up projects and convenience-oriented retail for Downtown workers and visitors. Completing catalyst projects, like the Kaleidoscope, and improving connections from the street may bring a renewed interest in the vacant spaces.



Top left: An artist rendering of a street to skywalk connection from the 2010 Downtown Des Moines Skywalk System Improvement Study Report.

Above and left: As an inspiration for the Kaleidoscope location, the multi-level reuse of Union Station has created a new entertainment destination for St. Louis.





CONCEPTUAL RENDERING
OF A SECTION OF THE
SKYWALKS REIMAGINED.

HOW WILL THE SKYWALKS REIMAGINED ADVANCE THE FUTURE FORWARD GOALS?

Welcoming Urban Neighborhood



- Adds desirable and all ages activity and delight to the Downtown environment
- Populates a feature that is now perceived as a security challenge
- Creates space for small business that helps reinforce residential markets

Inclusive Arts + Entertainment



- Creates new venues and opportunities for art exhibition
- Provides workshop space for artists and artisans
- Establishes venues and gathering spaces for impromptu music and performance
- Increases the usefulness of the skywalks for visitors to the city attending events
- Increase the attractiveness of Downtown DSM for conventions, sporting events and entertainment

Rewarding Market for Investment



- Restores the skywalk system as a positive asset for adjacent properties
- Based on the experience of analogous projects, can catalyze adjacent new development
- Creates an incentive for workers to return to Downtown workplaces
- Improves the environment for Downtown residential development, particularly for families
- Creates a unique attraction without precedent
- Increase the attractiveness of Downtown DSM to prospective employers and employees

Vibrant Outdoor City



- Completes the Green Ring through the core of Downtown, linking the Western Gateway to the Des Moines River and Arena District
- Reinforces connections between the skywalks and street level activity
- Potentially stronger exposure and physical connection of the Kaleidoscope to Walnut Street

Connected + Sustainable Mobility



- Strengthens the year-round environment for pedestrians
- Provides clearer wayfinding for users of the network





THE

INNER CIRCLE



ABOUT INNER CIRCLE

In many Downtown districts, the areas immediately adjacent to the high density core present some of the greatest opportunities for productive change. This is certainly true in Downtown DSM. An approximate circle around the core incorporates major activity centers such as the Iowa Events Center, Wells Fargo Arena, Mainframe Studios and the Historic Court Avenue District. But it also incorporates areas that were once dense traditional neighborhoods, including the historic center of the City's Black community along Center Street. On some sites, neighborhoods were replaced by parking lots as the office employment base expanded and transportation modes shifted toward automobiles. Urban renewal during the 1950s also had a profound influence, redeveloping most of the Center Street district for other uses.

Continued change also opens new possibilities that require a new vision. During the Covid-19 pandemic, on-site occupancy declined precipitously as people worked at home. Even as office occupancy recovers, many workers prefer working at home for at least part of the week, reducing parking demand. This suggests that parking can be consolidated in existing structures and that real estate occupied by surface lots can have a more productive use than the daytime storage of cars.

The “Inner Circle” then envisions a loop of new neighborhoods, major event destinations, public space, and special districts around the Downtown Core. It would take full advantage of open sites along its way, many of which are now underused surface

parking lots to build a more diverse Downtown residential population and a greater variety of activities. It benefits from its sequence – a distinctive continuity that moves from neighborhood to urban activity focus to entertainment district to neighborhood, with a consistent identity. This concept of development focused around a looped sequence is reminiscent of precedents also defined by movement and mobility. These include the Chicago Loop, originally deriving its name from a streetcar loop but now famous for the much more visible elevated loop; and Oklahoma City, where its new modern streetcar circulator downtown has produced a “Love the Loops” slogan and significant linear development corridors.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Residential development has been incredibly important to recent Downtown development in Des Moines, and our city has been especially effective at building for people who want to live in the city center. Part of the reason is the character of our Downtown – its visual quality, open spaces, trails, cultural features, convenience and large employment base. The majority of our housing production has been in large contemporary multi-family buildings. Several recent Downtown developments and neighborhoods have included a greater mix of housing options including rowhomes and condominiums. Emerging trends suggest the importance of this type of residential development in central cities:

- Changing demographics and housing demands.
- Housing preferences.

- The impact of a reduced local workforce in Downtown districts.
- Working from home and commuting.

For these and other reasons, it is important for Downtown DSM not only to maintain a high level of housing production but also to diversify the types of housing it builds. The Inner Circle provides the opportunity to achieve the first of Future Forward's goals – building a welcoming urban neighborhood.



THE IMPORTANCE OF DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS + HOUSING DEMAND

The two largest age cohorts that have driven housing markets have been Baby Boomers and their children, the millennial generation. The demands of these groups are changing: Baby Boomers are aging and Millennials are starting families. This is likely to generate a higher demand for housing settings that work well for children and dogs as well as provide for attainable homeownership. In 2022, we are seeing evidence of this trend in the high demand for homes.

HOUSING PREFERENCES

People have a wide variety of housing preferences, but studies have repeatedly shown that a substantial segment of the contemporary market prefers walkable communities with commercial conveniences, restaurants, parks, cultural and art opportunities and (if they have children) schools nearby. Central cities and certainly Downtown DSM offer these settings. But when we don't build children-friendly housing in-town, potential buyers go to suburban locations by default. Our Downtowns miss out on this growing part of the market.

WORKFORCE AVAILABILITY

It is too soon to draw conclusions about the permanent impact of the pandemic on office employment. However, the workforce survey conducted by Bâton Global and Rework in early 2022 indicates a strong preference by workers to work from home at least part of the week. A 2021 study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) concluded that 20% of full workdays will be supplied from home after the pandemic ends, compared with 5% before. The same study projects a reduction in major city centers by at least 5 to 10% from pre-pandemic levels. This will affect the eating and drinking places, service providers, and retailers who depend to some degree on the Downtown market. Children-friendly residential development and their household spending can be critical to compensating for this potential reduction.

REMOTE WORKING + COMMUTING

While people have a number of reasons for preferring working from home, one of the leading advantages is eliminating the time and stress of commuting. While Des Moines is not among the nation's worst commuting environments, Downtown is a relatively dense employment concentration and I-235 during non-pandemic times can be a slow commute. Residential environments near major job concentrations reduce commuter times and reduce the impact of a key disincentive to returning to offices.



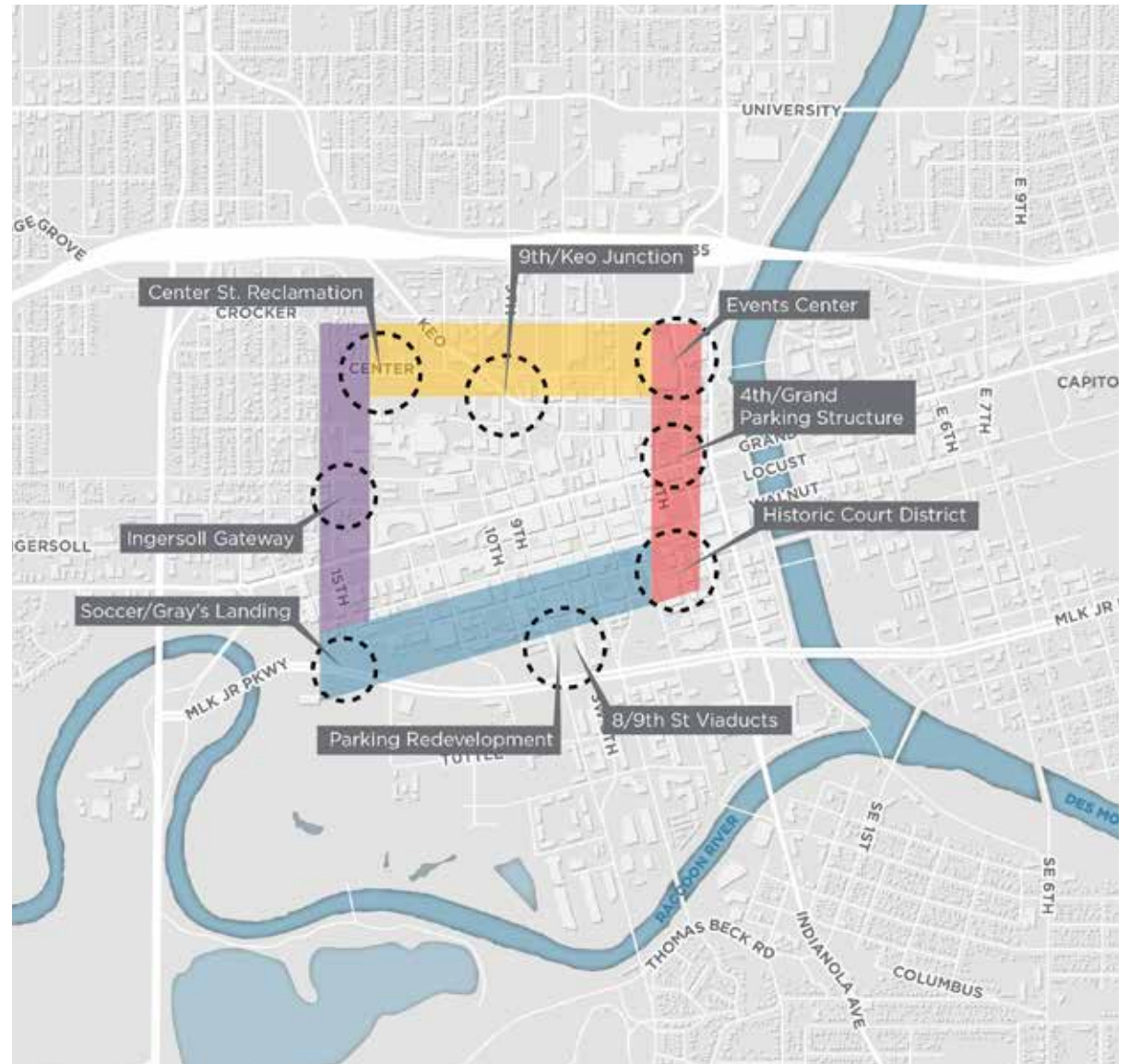
VISION

INNER CIRCLE

A diverse and exciting mixed use circle around the core that integrates new intergenerational neighborhoods with 4 E's: entertainment, events, employment and education. This circle is generally defined by Center Street, 4th Street, Cherry Street and 15th Street, along with surrounding blocks. It provides opportunities to take advantage of underused real estate, develop affordable housing as part of a community partnership, take advantage of unique existing resources and reinforce the Downtown core. The partial reclamation of Center Street proposed below can also help restore an urban neighborhood lost by past actions while honoring the history of the city's Black community.

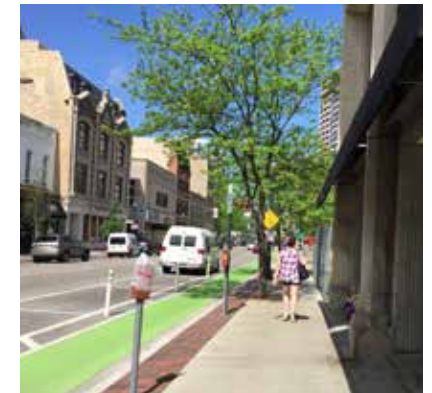
ELEMENTS

- Consistent Graphics and Streetscape Features
- 9th and Keo Junction
- Center Street Reclamation
- East Leg Redevelopment
- 4th and Grand Parking Structure
- South Parking Lot Redevelopment
- 8th and 9th Street Viaducts Evaluation and Futures



CONSISTENT GRAPHICS AND STREETScape FEATURES

The Inner Circle includes varied environments and features along its way but should include some commonalities that identify its special connection around the Downtown core. A proposed Inner Circle Conceptual Urban Design and Development Plan can identify aligned graphics, lighting, thematically consistent street furnishings and small features or common materials or trademark incorporated into its sidewalks. This does not mean a uniform design, rather the areas should have rhythm that be can created through shared features.



ELEMENTS

INNER CIRCLE

CENTER STREET RECLAMATION

Center Street from 10th Street west was the main business street of Des Moines' Black community. This area, with surrounding blocks, was acquired and demolished, and redeveloped under Urban Renewal during the 1950s. The street is lined by UnityPoint Health - Iowa Methodist Medical Center on the south, and the Oakridge Neighborhood with 300 units of affordable housing on the north. The site immediately east of Oakridge, bounded by Center, Crocker and Keo Way, provides potential sites for residential and mixed use development. A Center Street interpretive experience along the street in this area could honor the history of the historic Black business street. This experience may consider both symbolic interpretations of the neighborhood history and physical transformations of nearby properties. At the time of this plan, the Center Street Historical Committee is working with UnityPoint Health on a historical marker for the Medical Center grounds. The ultimate expression of this experience beyond the currently planned marker should include more voices and community stakeholders.

The continuation of Center Street east connects the 9th and Keo node to the Iowa Events Center and completes the north leg of the Inner Circle. The two full-block surface parking lots between Center and Crocker between 7th and

9th represent a unique opportunity for children-friendly housing development, large enough in scale to establish a neighborhood environment. This is reinforced by adjacency to two child care centers and the DART park and ride station with frequent shuttle service to the Downtown core. A write down of land costs could help make owner-occupied units more affordable to the target market.

9TH AND KEO JUNCTION

The current design of the 9th and Keo (Keosaqua) Way intersection divides the potential neighborhood and provides a difficult environment for all users – difficult for vehicles to negotiate and for pedestrians, while also using a considerable amount of land. It also breaks the east-west continuity of Center Street. While development patterns, good traffic design, and intersecting streets make it hard to restore the Center Street connection, “untying” the 9th and Keo knot can dramatically improve this environment and relink some of the circulation patterns lost when this intersection was modified in the past. Various approaches to solving this traffic issue exist. The concept illustrated here suggests simplifying the intersection by establishing a roundabout at 9th and Center, away from Keo Way. Another solution to consider is a multi-lane roundabout at 9th and Keo. In any case, in addition to moving traffic, the best design should:

- Use land efficiently
- Reduce the barrier effect of the intersection
- Produce good pedestrian and bicycle access through the intersection
- Increase east-west continuity of Center Street

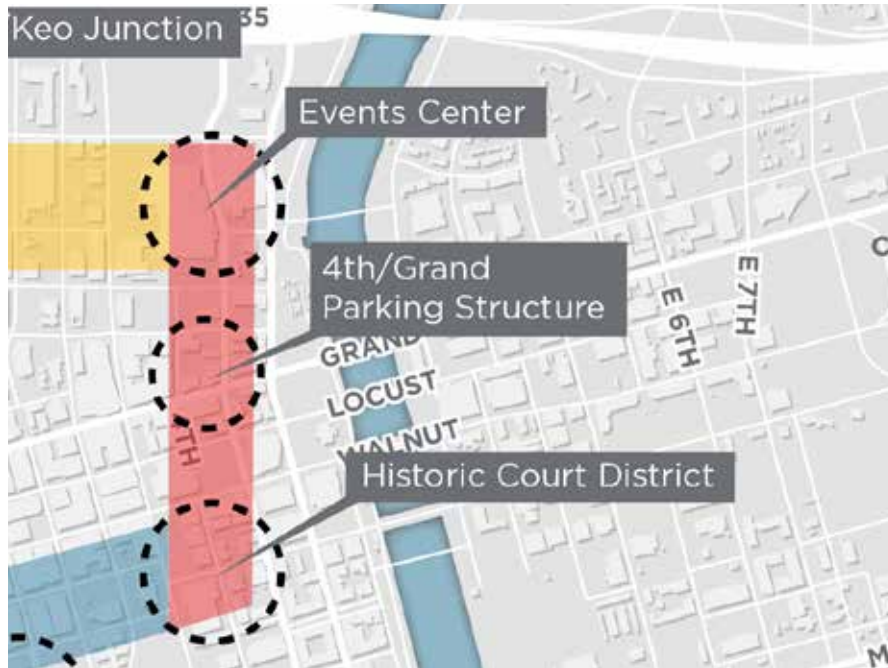


- Create a positive and attractive public environment with useful open space and an attractive gateway to the core
- Help tell the stories of this important place in Downtown DSM

NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

The blocks between Crocker and I-235 have extensive residential development, including the Cityview 34 townhomes, Royal View Manor, Town Square Apartments, and VUE apartments. However, these residential blocks do not coalesce into a neighborhood, instead remaining as separate blocks. Walkway connections, common streetscape and lighting themes and protected pedestrian crossings of 9th and 12th Streets could help knit these separate projects together into a neighborhood environment.





EAST LEG REDEVELOPMENT

The Inner Circle continues around the Events Center and Des Moines Hilton Hotel and the streetscape should cue this continuity along 5th, Park and 4th Street. The surface lots on both sides of 4th Street between Park Street and Watson Powell Jr. Way provide excellent opportunities for mixed use development, with street level services and commercial uses attractive to people attending events in the Arena District. This area may have an entertainment-focus area and should consider how outdoor plazas and event areas can be incorporated into the experience. A row of existing buildings between Watson Powell and Grand lend themselves to innovative adaptive reuse. Precedent projects for this area include the Milwaukee Deer District, the Cleveland Gateway Plaza, the Portland Rose Quarter District and the Seattle Lumen Field/T-Mobile Park area.



4TH AND GRAND PARKING STRUCTURE

This large parking structure bridges 4th Street and is a looming presence over the street. Creative lighting and an art installation, could convert this structure into an attractive transition to the open public square of Cowles Commons. The Inner Circle continues south into the Court Avenue district, anchored by the main entrance of the Science Center of Iowa, another major asset for people of all ages.





SOUTH PARKING LOT REDEVELOPMENT

The south leg of the Inner Circle presents another enormous opportunity for urban family housing development on all or part of about five square blocks of surface parking between Cherry Street and MLK Jr. Parkway. Some parking is necessary to support the Historic Court District, but these lots are lightly used and are made relatively less necessary by the area's four large parking structures serving Nationwide and other employee needs.



8TH AND 9TH STREET EVALUATION AND FUTURES

While the future role and continued need in the Des Moines street network for the twin 8th and 9th Street viaducts should be reviewed in the long-term, current plans will rehabilitate these structures to extend their service life. However, the area under the viaducts can become attractive, useful spaces, using art, lighting, and landscaping that can add value to development on surrounding sites. Lighting, graphics, and artistic elements could enhance the traveler's experience at the roadway level.





CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF IMPROVEMENTS TO KEOSAUQUA WAY/9TH STREET AND A VISION FOR LAND USE REDEVELOPMENT. FINAL DESIGN TO BE DEVELOPED WITH COMMUNITY, STAKEHOLDERS AND ASSOCIATED PARTNERS/AGENCIES.



HOW WILL THE **INNER CIRCLE** ADVANCE THE FUTURE FORWARD GOALS?

Welcoming Urban Neighborhood



- Includes major opportunities for medium to high density residential development, appropriate for families
- Recognizes neighborhoods that were lost through urban renewal
- Connects separated residential projects to create a more unified northside neighborhood
- Presents a real focus for continued residential development for diverse groups

Inclusive Arts + Entertainment



- Positions Mainframe Studios as a keystone feature
- Strengthens the connections between the Arena District, Civic Center, Court Avenue entertainment district and potential residential areas
- Can provide venues for both major events and niches for informal performance
- Restores the centrality of the Black community to the area and provides possibilities for artistic interpretation

Rewarding Market for Investment



- Identifies major sites for new residential markets and strategically located mixed use development
- Emphasizes unique Downtown assets
- Connects large pedestrian/visitor volumes to potential food and entertainment destinations

Vibrant Outdoor City



- Creates an outdoor environment and area brand that reinforces major outdoor features
- Connects to the Green Ring and extends its influence and amenity into neighborhoods

Connected + Sustainable Mobility



- Strengthens the year-round environment for pedestrians
- Provides clearer wayfinding for users of the network





THE

STADIUM DISTRICT



ABOUT STADIUM DISTRICT

THE ONCE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH EDGE OF DOWNTOWN DSM IS TRANSFORMING INTO A DISTINCTIVE URBAN DISTRICT THAT COMBINES LIVING, PLAYING, WORKING AND INNOVATING.

There was a time when Downtown DSM proper extended to the railroad and the region south of the tracks to the river was the “Downtown frame,” a combination of lower-intensity office, industrial, warehousing, wholesaling and services – businesses that benefit from a central location but are different in scale and intensity of use. This array of enterprises continues, but new uses and expanded investment have made what was once the “frame” now an extremely vital and important development area. Community initiatives like the Principal Riverwalk, Principal Park, the construction of MLK Jr. Parkway and the continued improvement of the Central Iowa Trail network all contributed to this evolution. Today, the various Gray’s Landing/Gray’s Station projects are transforming the area between SW 9th and SW 15th Streets into the kind of urban, walkable mixed density neighborhood that is critically needed in and around city centers across the country. The residential focus of these neighborhoods support the additional mixed-use elements throughout Downtown. The area east of SW 9th has seen growth of innovative businesses and creative enterprises, townhouses and apartments, major private investment at MLK River Park, and continued high



occupancy of its single-story mixed commercial and light industrial building stock.

Additional projects at the “bookends” of the area are emerging that will reinforce and potentially accelerate the continued transformation of the area south of MLK and north of the river. At its east end, already planned enhancements at and around Principal Park will increase walkability, improve the relationship of the ballpark to the adjacent riverfront and surrounding neighborhoods, and reduce the dominance of surface parking lots in the stadium vicinity east of SW 3rd



Street. On the west end, the Pro Iowa Stadium will create a major attraction at a former heavy industrial site west of SW 16th Street. In addition to a major soccer stadium and separate pitches, the project envisions supporting retailing, a hotel and a Global Plaza, capitalizing on the worldwide appeal of soccer. Finally, the ICON Water Trails project includes a put-in site at the Fleur site that introduces another potential activity node. These projects introduce new themes and focuses that will provide the foundation of a coherent vision for this growing area.

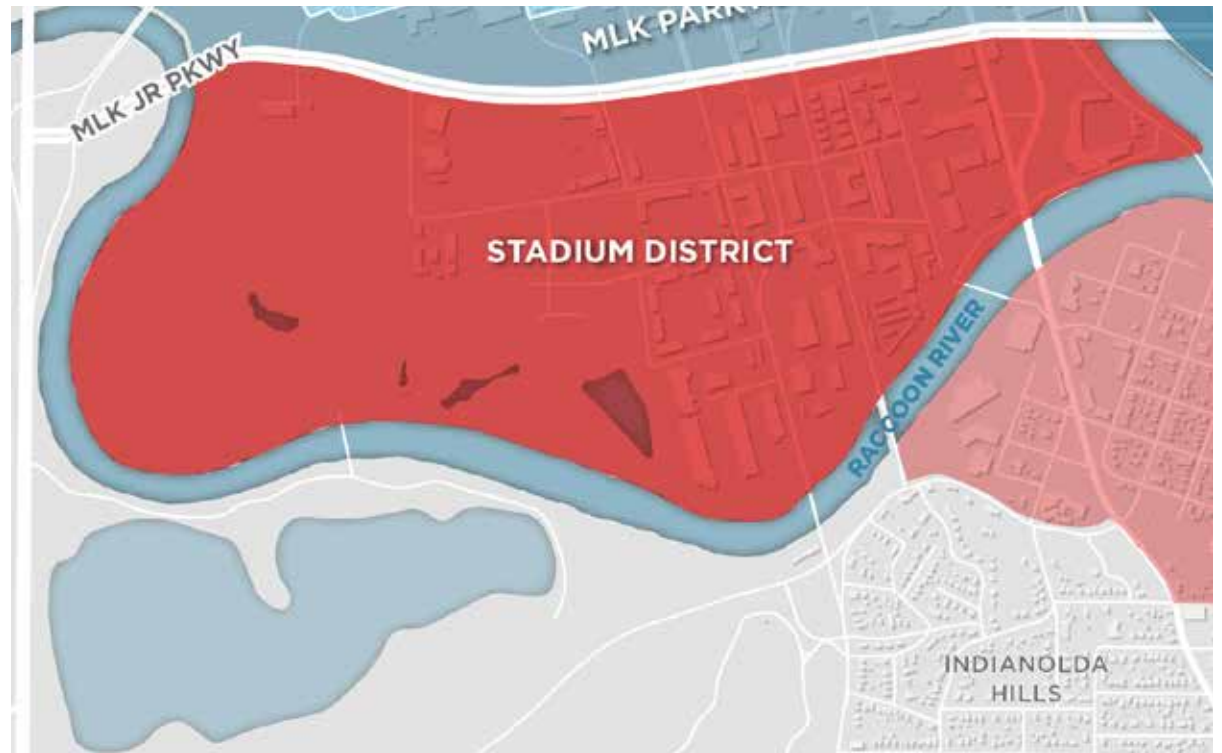
VISION

STADIUM DISTRICT

The Stadium District. . . a connected district anchored by major signature centers for sports and outdoor activity, that offers places for people to live, play, innovate and create new enterprises, with an emphasis on diversity and international character. While Gray’s Station, Gray’s Landing, Principal Park and the Pro Iowa areas are developing (or redeveloping) according to a detailed master plan, other parts of this area have developed incrementally. This incrementalism is consistent with the spirit of an innovation district, but some specific initiatives can help guide development in a way that maximizes opportunity.

ELEMENTS

- Start-up Incubator
- Tuttle Street Extension
- Collaboration Square
- North-South Greenway
- SW 9th Street Pedestrian Improvements
- Riverfront Residential and Mixed Use



ELEMENTS

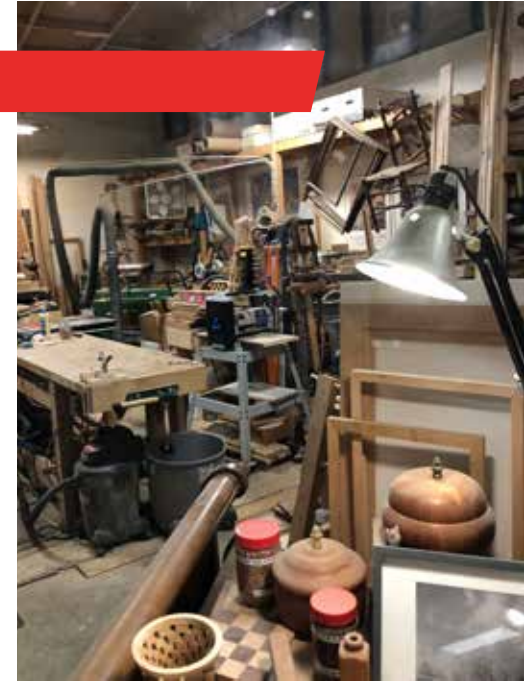
STADIUM DISTRICT

START-UP INCUBATOR

Public and private-sector incubators and co-working environments can encourage start-up businesses by increasing collaboration and providing affordable space and necessary business support services. As the office market is being redefined as well, a creative incubator in a walkable district can differentiate itself and the surrounding area.

An incubator project in the Stadium District that can grow diverse and international businesses would advance the district's power to create economic opportunities. An incubator could repurpose available space in existing enterprise buildings, or be housed in new space. For example, some of the district's long, single-level existing buildings along or near Tuttle Street could adapt well to the open, flexible space appropriate for business and workshop incubators.

START-UP INCUBATOR



Clockwise from top left: Example of reuse of available space in existing buildings at CFC Business Plaza in Bloomington, IN, and at Banbury Place in Eau Claire, WI; potential sites in the Stadium District.

STADIUM DISTRICT

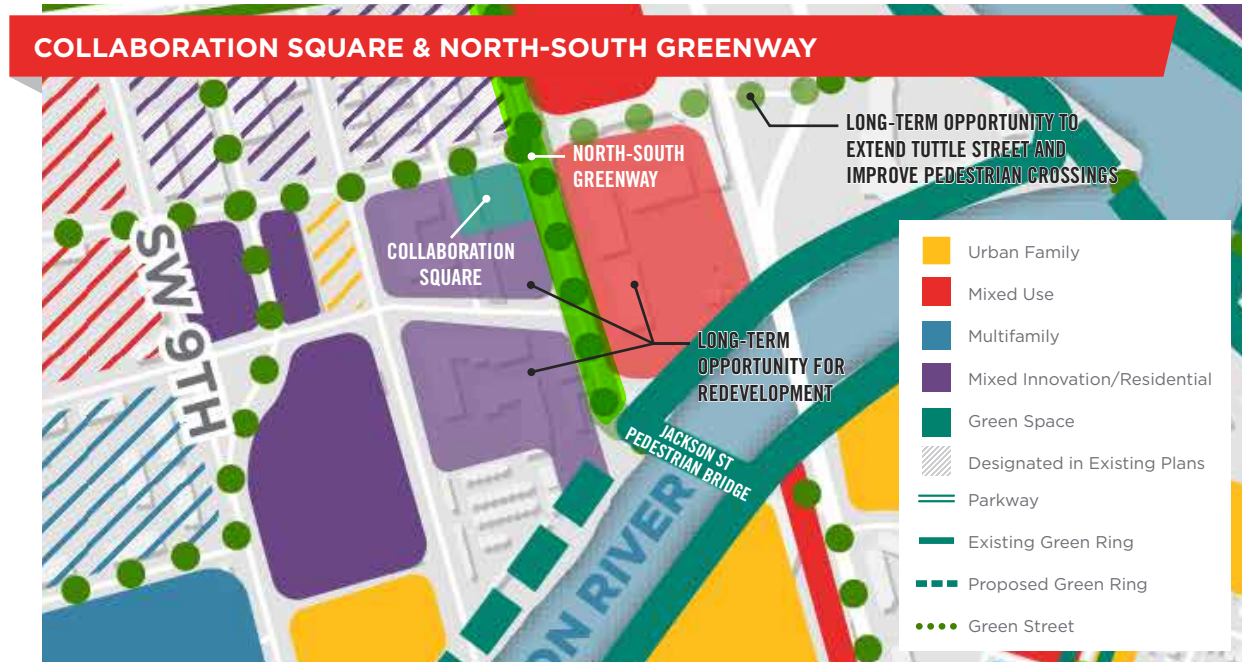


TUTTLE STREET EXTENSION

Tuttle Street can develop as a unifying corridor in the Stadium District, linking the two sports-oriented anchors and lined by a variety of business, creative, residential, and hospitality uses. The cycle track (west of SW 11th Street) and pedestrian orientation of Tuttle west of SW 9th Street through the Gray's Landing/Gray's Station development areas establishes this multi-modal character – emphasizing active transportation modes and calming local traffic. Extension of this cycle track east of 11th Street should be considered with a traffic study to determine the viability. Improvements to this street would complement the attractive thoroughfare environment of MLK Parkway one block to the north.

However, Tuttle Street currently ends as a public street at SW 5th Street, interrupting its continuity across the district. Per the 2008 Downtown Plan (What's Next, Downtown), the long-range vision for this area is to extend Tuttle Street from SW 5th Street to SW 3rd Street. This extension is currently prevented by a single-story office building. Should the market shift for this building/area, the Tuttle Street extension opens up opportunities for cohesive redevelopment in this area and a more direct pedestrian/vehicle/bicycle connection from stadium to stadium.

The Tuttle Street connection would continue to the entrance to Principal Park and to the Meredith Trail and riverfront. The intersection of this route with 3rd Street should be bolstered with strong pedestrian crossing.



Above: Existing Tuttle Street with cycle track west of 11th Street at Gray's Station.

COLLABORATION SQUARE

The Covid-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of outdoor space, even in work environments. A small but high amenity urban open space with space for informal collaboration, meeting space, and individual workspaces would both strengthen the competitive position of existing business space and further distinguish the Stadium District as a unique innovation center. It should be highly accessible by all forms of transportation, ideally located along the Tuttle complete street corridor.

NORTH-SOUTH GREENWAY

A north-south greenway with pedestrian promenade and mobility track for bicycles and other micro-mobility modes would link the Stadium District to the Inner Circle on the north and the riverfront, trails, and neighborhoods to the south. A preferred route for such a greenway is SW 5th Street, using street right-of-way, parkway strips and the edges of existing surface parking lots to accommodate both local vehicular circulation and active modes. This street has a signalized crossing of MLK Jr. Parkway and leads directly to the Jackson Street pedestrian bridge.



SW 9TH STREET PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

While the future role and continued need for the twin 8th and 9th Street viaducts should be reviewed in the long-term, current plans will rehabilitate these structures to extend their service life. However, the area under the viaducts can become attractive, useful spaces, using art, lighting, and landscaping that can add value to development on surrounding sites. In addition, 9th Street is a key corridor throughout the Downtown study area, widening to a five-lane section south of Murphy Street where the current one-way pair of 8th and 9th converge. As residential development south of Murphy continues, street design features including streetscape and pedestrian refuge medians may be necessary to minimize the barrier effect of the street.



RIVERFRONT RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED USE

The area south of Murphy Street to the riverfront includes a variety of single-story buildings devoted to business, distribution and light industrial uses. Residential projects, including the Cityville and 5Fifty5, are beginning to appear in this previously mixed industrial and trade commercial area and this trend is likely to continue. Market forces will generally determine the future of this subarea as new projects capitalize on the riverfront location. New residential development should combine street orientation, private/semi-private open space and play areas for children, trail linkages and connections to other projects to advance a neighborhood environment. Areas identified conceptually as “Urban Family” suggest an opportunity to create future development that is adaptable and attractive to households with children and pets.





CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK AND A POTENTIAL LONG-TERM VISION FOR LAND USE REDEVELOPMENT. FINAL DESIGN TO BE DEVELOPED WITH COMMUNITY, STAKEHOLDERS AND ASSOCIATED PARTNERS/AGENCIES.

HOW WILL THE **STADIUM DISTRICT** ADVANCE THE FUTURE FORWARD GOALS?

Welcoming Urban Neighborhood



- Encourages the continued development of a new type of urban walkable neighborhood to expand the regional housing options. Provides important support for continued growth and expansion of the wide variety of new residential housing options in the district to draw new residents to the region
- Identifies opportunities for continued new residential development for a variety of markets
- Links amenities such as the Science Center, the riverfront and major sports-related projects to residential development areas

Inclusive Arts + Entertainment



- Connection between the Inner Circle and Court Avenue District
- Provides potential workshop and creative space for artists and artisans
- Emphasizes diversity in its programming and business start-up strategies
- Global plaza as an intentional stage for inclusionary, welcoming events

Rewarding Market for Investment



- Respects both existing investments and uses of property while encouraging higher intensity development as demand and land values continue to evolve
- Proposes strategic public improvements that improve the investment environment
- Capitalizes on the Pro IOWA Stadium/Global Plaza and Principal Park projects as economic development tools
- Establishes contemporary incubator space and business support services for new and creative enterprises

Vibrant Outdoor City



- Incorporates major outdoor recreation initiatives as key amenities
- Provides additional active transportation facilities
- Provides critical linkages between community amenities such as Gray's Lake, the riverfront and major sports venues to surrounding walkable urban neighborhoods

Connected + Sustainable Mobility



- Provides east-west multi-modal access across the district with the Tuttle Street extension
- Includes direct greenway connections to the Jackson Street pedestrian bridge
- Reduces barrier effects of major streets





CONNECTED CORRIDORS



ABOUT CONNECTED CORRIDORS

Downtown districts and neighborhoods have a symbiotic relationship. Downtowns benefit from strong surrounding neighborhoods that provide workers, customers and visitors a positive transition to the rest of a city. On the other hand, strong Downtowns make surrounding neighborhoods more desirable and marketable, sustain both property values and quality of life. But frequently and for various reasons, American cities have built fences around their Downtowns. Some of these fences are natural, and when they are attractive features like streams can be converted to assets and bridges, in other cases, they are man-made. These fences typically include railroads in an earlier period and freeways, expressways and major arterial streets in more contemporary times. These fences in many cities have decoupled the shared stake of neighborhoods and city centers, to the ultimate disadvantage of both. The other side of the barrier – the adjacent neighborhood – risks becoming “the wrong side of the tracks.”

Des Moines displays variations on the fence effect. The natural barriers of the two rivers have literally been converted into bridges. Six vehicular bridges (all with pedestrian accommodations) and two auto-free bridges cross the Des



Moines River and do a generally good job of connecting the core, East Village to the east and the Columbus Park neighborhood to the south. With the exception of the MLK Jr. Parkway bridge, the six Raccoon River crossings are less pedestrian and bicycle friendly, but three auto-free bridges fill that gap. Trail and park development along the rivers along with the planned ICON Water Trails also have transformed the rivers into unifiers. To the west, the six-lane MLK Jr. Parkway presents a potentially significant barrier, although the fence effect has been moderated by street design amenities, aesthetic treatments and grade crossings of intersecting streets.

Interstate 235 in Des Moines, as elsewhere, presents a more difficult barrier. The corridor is about 460 feet wide, mostly separated from adjacent grades. It includes 15 crossings between East 14th Street and MLK Jr. Parkway, a high degree of permeability – but only three of these crossings are free



of traffic conflicts from interchanges and frontage roads and only one is a pedestrian-only crossing. The width, external effects like noise, and complex traffic patterns at crossings all tend to make I-235 far more barrier than bridge, despite the large number of actual crossings.

Keo Way presents a significant internal barrier. It dates from the 1920s when walkability was not part of the philosophical mindset of planners and engineers, and designed as a grand vehicular entrance into the city center that broke the older city grid. Early plans show it turning eastward and crossing the river approximately on the Center Street alignment. But now the six lane configuration north of Center splits adjacent development apart and this division continues north of I-235, where topography also has an influence.

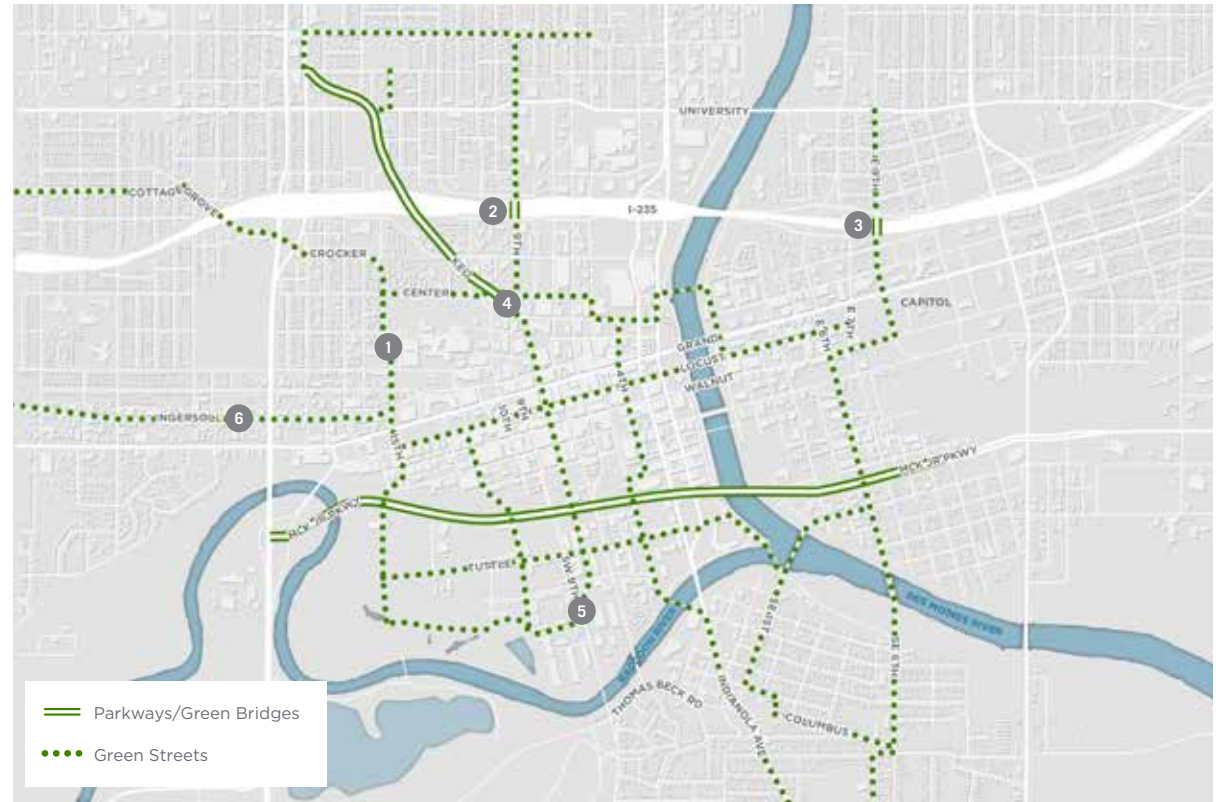
VISION

CONNECTED CORRIDORS

Corridors that provide pleasant and comfortable linkages for all types of mobility from the Green Ring and Downtown core to surrounding neighborhoods. The streets that radiate from Downtown are the public environments that can help turn barriers into bridges and reinforce the positive connections into neighborhoods. In addition, they are the tendrils which connect the Green Ring in the center to the surrounding neighborhoods, the local parks and green spaces outside the Ring, and to the rest of the city.

ELEMENTS

- ① Green Streets
- ② 9th Street Overpass Plaza
- ③ East 9th Street Overpass
- ④ Keo Way
- ⑤ SW 8th Street
- ⑥ Ingersoll Avenue



ELEMENTS

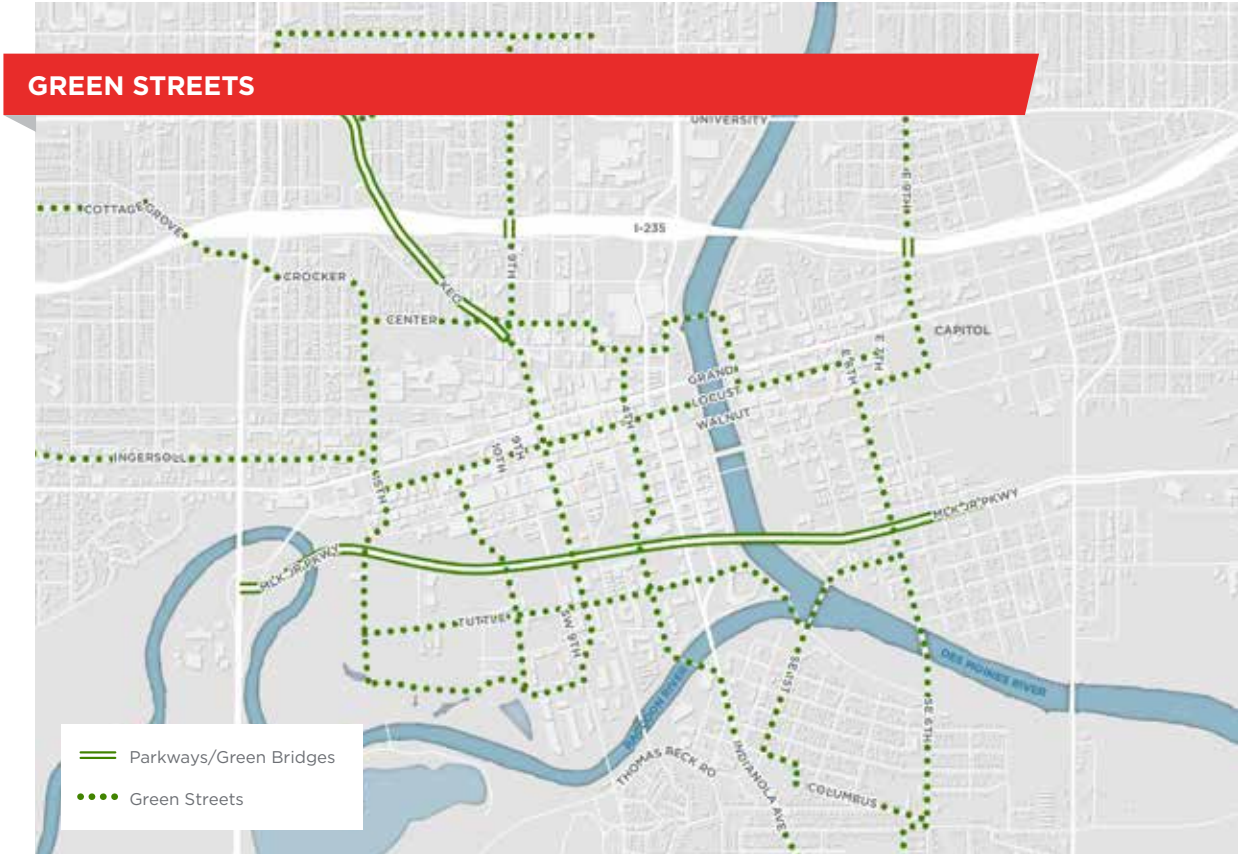
CONNECTED CORRIDORS

GREEN STREETS

These streets constitute the major connections from the center outward into surrounding neighborhoods. Except in special cases noted below, they should have a specific set of features that may include:

- Identification as green streets using banners, panels, signage or other agreed upon street graphics.
- Unless provided on a nearby parallel route, these streets should consider bike lanes, sidepaths, cycle tracks, or other comparable or hybrid micro-mobility infrastructure. Buffered bike lanes should be used when possible. All bike lanes should use visibility enhancements such as green conflict zones and backing for bike lane pavement markings. Bicycle-actuated detectors at signalized intersections.
- High visibility crosswalks at major street crossings.
- Landscape and streetscape features at strategic locations.
- Where appropriate, green infrastructure techniques such as rain gardens.
- Moderate traffic speeds (20-25 mph) and evaluate current traffic loads and reduce the number of lanes on streets with excess capacity.

Recent streets built in the emerging Market District represent good examples of Green Streets that incorporate sustainable design with a higher bicycle/pedestrian focus.



This program would be implemented on a staged basis over time and includes the following streets:

- 15th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue connecting to the Drake neighborhood and Drake University
- 9th Street, north of Keo Way; 8th Street, south of Keo Way
- Southeast 1st Street and Southeast 6th Street south of

MLK Jr. Parkway

- Columbus Ave from East 6th to Columbus Park
- East 9th Street from the Capitol to University Avenue
- Streets included in the Green Ring and Inner Circle initiatives

9TH STREET OVERPASS PLAZA

Ninth Street provides the only local crossing over I-235 unencumbered by access ramps or roads between the river and Cottage Grove. It is especially important for its access to the Cheatom Park neighborhood, DMACC and the commercial services along University Avenue. The bridge is 70 feet wide and striped for four lanes, providing excess capacity for its average daily traffic. Converting this overpass to two travel lanes, bike facilities and public open space would provide an unusual amenity for the neighborhood and a strengthened neighborhood link to Inner Circle neighborhoods and the 9th and Keo node.

EAST 9TH STREET OVERPASS

Similar to its counterpart to the west, this overpass provides local access without ramp or frontage road conflicts. However, at 48 feet, it is a significantly narrower structure and includes just two travel lanes only. Options for enhancement would include narrowing travel lanes to 10 feet and installing enhanced standard bike lanes; reconfiguring travel lanes to one side without sidewalks to provide a larger plaza area on the opposite side; or converting the entire bridge to a public open space. The presence of a similar local overpass at 12th Street to the east and the 7th and 8th Street pair immediately to the west make this modification possible and would strengthen the pedestrian connection to the Capitol Park neighborhood.

KEO WAY

While Keo Way is a significant entrance into Downtown, it is not the only access from I-235. Its full six lane divided width may not be necessary, especially since it leads to lower capacity streets in the city center. The City should study a potential conversion to a four-lane divided facility. Pending traffic data, this may permit converting the outer lanes to on-street parking and additional pedestrian/green space, fulfilling the original concept of a grand boulevarded entrance to Downtown. This would also dramatically decrease the dividing effect of the street on this neighborhood and would successfully manage traffic speeds. This project would be consistent with revision and simplification of the 9th and Keo intersection.

INGERSOLL AVENUE

Ingersoll Avenue west of MLK Jr. Parkway is a unique mixed use, multi-modal corridor with its combination of neighborhood scaled commercial and residential development. However, the segment from High Street to MLK, while attracting greater private-sector investment, is still not fully developed. The streetscape installed on the north side from 17th Street to MLK should be continued east to High Street, with street oriented mixed use development lining these relatively underdeveloped blocks where opportunities exist.



Above: The existing 9th Street Overpass can be redesigned as a welcoming multi-modal entry to Downtown as shown by the rendering on the subsequent page.



Above: Bridge overpass designs can incorporate vertical screening as was completed at the Atlanta Interstate Bridge.



CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF IMPROVEMENTS AT THE 9TH STREET BRIDGE OVER I-235.

HOW WILL **CONNECTED CORRIDORS** ADVANCE THE FUTURE FORWARD GOALS?

Welcoming Urban Neighborhood



- Reduces internal street barriers within neighborhoods and in the city center
- Tightens the connection between Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods
- Slows traffic and creates better low-speed access

Inclusive Arts + Entertainment



- Provides opportunities for environmental art on major streets and overpass plazas

Rewarding Market for Investment



- Increases connections to Downtown, stabilizing property values and improving resident and affordable homeownership potential in adjacent neighborhoods
- Provides a better street environment to catalyze investment along several corridors, including Keo Way, East 1st St and East 6th St

Vibrant Outdoor City



- Provides new open spaces and areas of outdoor life by reconfiguring two freeway overpasses
- Improves the street environment for walking and bicycling
- Improves connections to significant neighborhood parks in surrounding areas

Connected + Sustainable Mobility



- Encourages better environmental and stormwater performance along specific streets
- Substantially enhances the pedestrian and bicycle transportation environments along streets that connect to neighborhoods
- Enhances access to major assets like the DMACC campus and makes DMACC a greater and more visible part of the Downtown environment





STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS



ABOUT STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

The “greater” Downtown area incorporates neighborhoods whose health is fundamental to the success of the Downtown core itself. In addition to historic Sherman Hill, the neighborhood most closely identified with the city’s center, new neighborhoods like Gray’s Station, the Bridge District and the Market District are emerging. Other residential areas are long established and surround the city core. They include Columbus Park, Capitol Park, Cheatom Park and Good Park, and offer features that the core cannot reasonably offer: affordable single-family housing and small nodes with low cost space, individual character, opportunities for small business and convenient access to all the assets of the City. They also express the diverse histories and character of the people who sustain them.

But these neighborhoods also present challenges. Average household income falls well below citywide medians. Most housing was built before 1930 and many homes need substantial rehabilitation. Deterioration of some structures and poorly maintained vacant lots hurt overall neighborhood quality.

The 2018 Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Program Review found that a majority of the housing in the Cheatom Park and Capitol Park neighborhoods and about 1/3 of housing in the Drake/Good Park and Columbus Park neighborhoods were in declining condition. The study placed these neighborhoods in its “Revitalize/Stabilize” policy category.



Columbus Park, south of the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers, has seen major housing development along its riverfront and has been designated a Special Investment District to build homeownership through the Invest DSM. But the Capitol Park, Good Park, and Cheatom Park, and Capitol Park neighborhoods north of I-235 require more intensive stabilization approaches to continue as stable, safe, and rewarding places for people to live.

The Connected Corridors initiative connects these neighborhoods to Downtown, and this linkage is in itself a great benefit. A strong Downtown clearly benefits adjacent



neighborhoods. But a neighborhood vision must also look inward, at the resources that neighborhoods can offer to benefit the entire city. Thus, internal reinvestment and neighborhood conservation policies are very important parts of the Downtown development process.

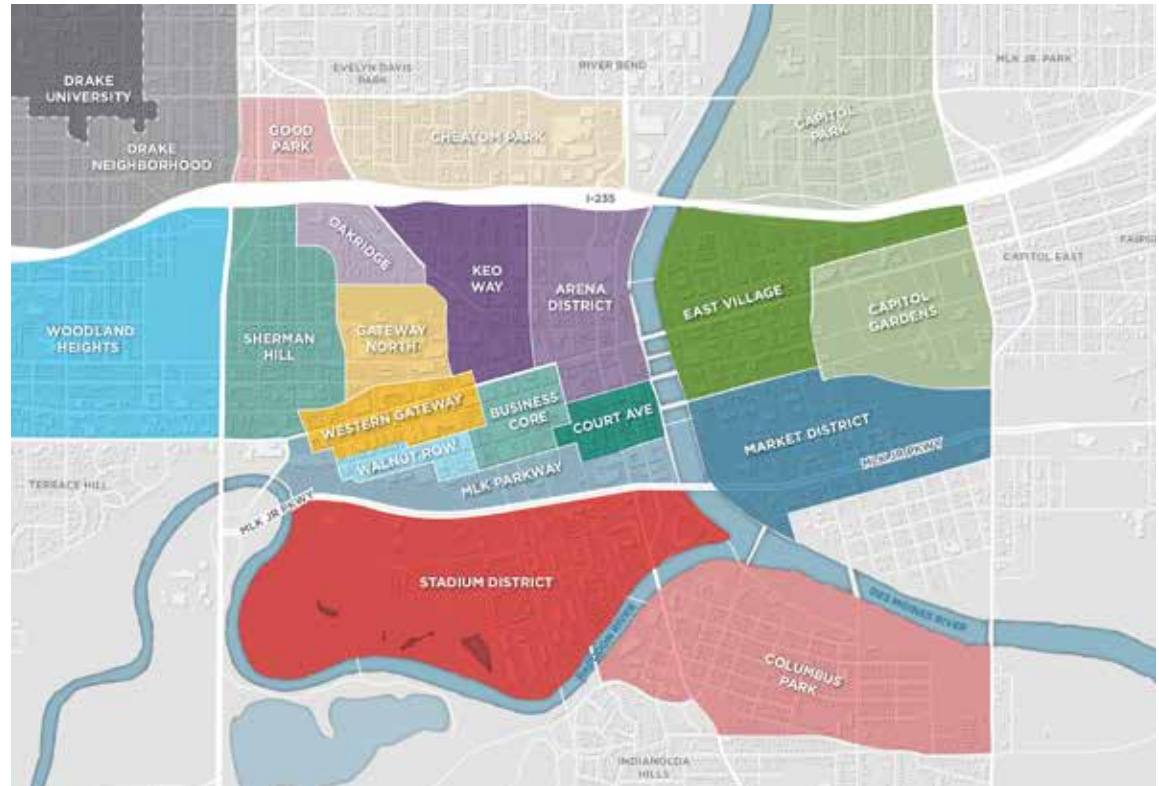
VISION

STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods in and around Downtown that offer attainable, quality housing to both owners and renters, unique characteristics and the supportive life of strong urban communities. Desirable, measurable outcomes include increased value, neighborhood stability, stable or increasing owner occupancy and additional economic activity.

ELEMENTS

- Character Nodes
- Invest DSM and Columbus Park
- 235 North: Inclusive Neighborhood Redirection
- Street and Infrastructure Rehabilitation
- Neighborhood Parks



ELEMENTS

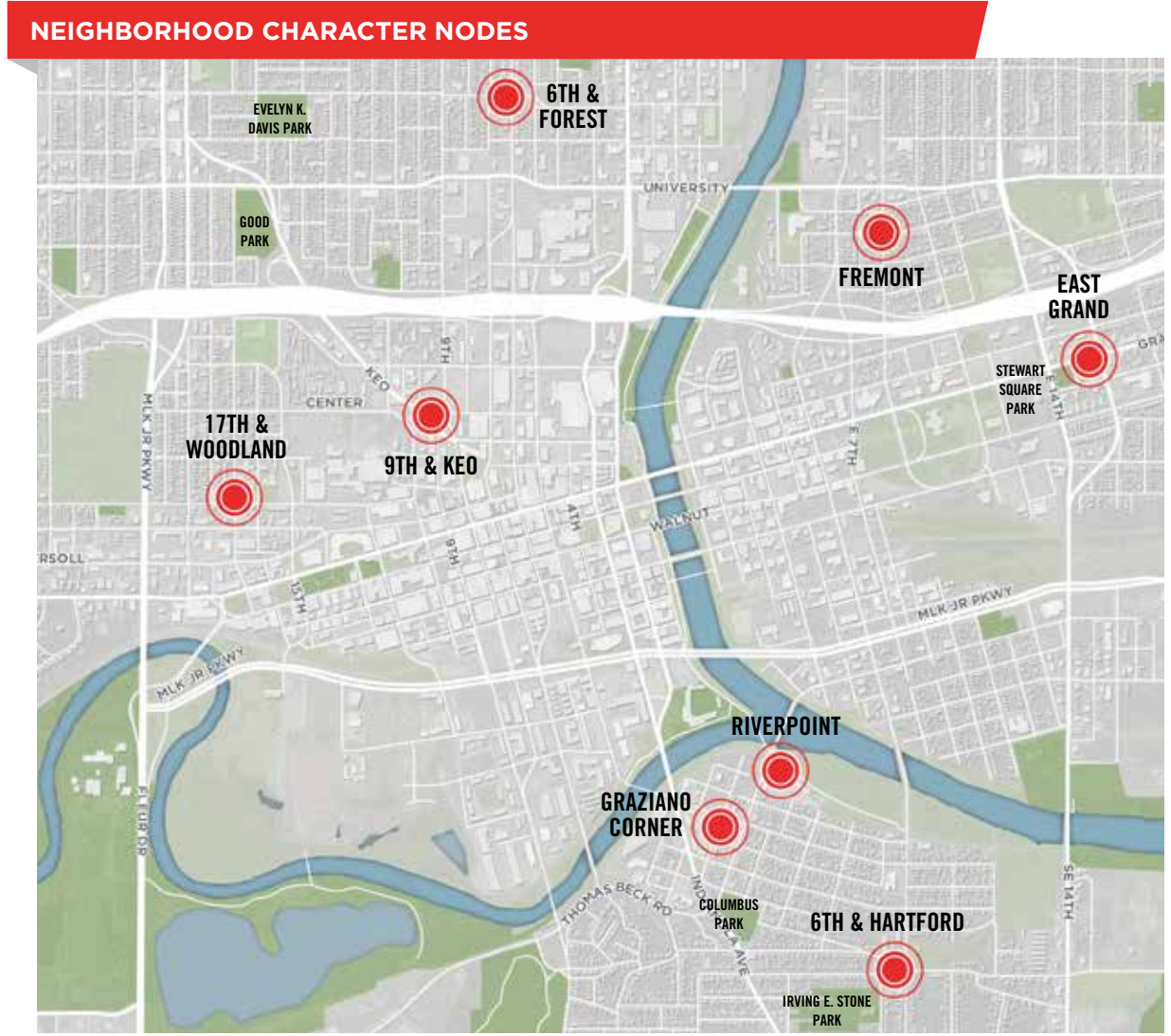
STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

CHARACTER NODES

Several of the neighborhoods have an intersection or block with commercial buildings, often with special design character. These nodes can become neighborhood centers – anchors that catalyze investment and improvement in the surrounding neighborhood.

In some cases, these nodes remain icons and major centers of economic activity for their surrounding communities. In others, their buildings are vacant or used primarily for storage, but they still retain their potential as important places. Several of them also have adjacent lots that can develop with new small-scale multiple use buildings such as live/work settings. These nodes include SE 1st and Jackson and SE 6th and Hartford in Columbus Park; East 9th and Fremont in Capitol Park; 17th and Woodland in Sherman Hill; and University Avenue from 6th to 9th in Cheatom Park. A strategy for reinforcing and developing these nodes includes:

- A marketing program using consistent environmental graphics for identification and materials promoting these nodes as a collection of distinctive places.



- Public improvements including streetscape, lighting and pedestrian-oriented features.
- Connection to other parts of Downtown by green streets in the connected corridor system.
- Incentives and venture capitalization for desirable business types occupying vacant/underused buildings.
- Infill development on vacant sites.
- Commercial revitalization through the Invest DSM program.

INVEST DSM AND COLUMBUS PARK

Invest DSM is a collaboration of the City of Des Moines and Polk County, designed to revitalize neighborhoods by focusing on homeownership, rental rehabilitation and commercial rehabilitation and reuse. The organization has established four pilot Special Investment Districts, including Columbus Park and Drake. Invest DSM's programs focus on revitalizing neighborhoods and providing financial incentives to encourage homeownership, single-family development, and maintenance of small rental properties. The Invest DSM approach is designed for basically sound neighborhoods that could begin to experience decline without strategic reinvestment. It does not work well in neighborhoods where conditions require a more comprehensive approach, including deeper levels of reinvestment and development assistance.

Invest DSM's recent experience in Columbus Park has been useful in formulating future policy and programs. It has proven difficult to interest neighborhood homeowners in the moderate levels of assistance offered by the Invest DSM program. Reasons for this reluctance include the level of rehabilitation needed in some homes, homeowner income and priorities, or lack of confidence that improvements would be a good financial investment.

Relative to Downtown development, Columbus Park provides an attractive and rich place for urban family living. It combines affordability, single-family houses with yards, character, walkability and trail access, and Downtown adjacency. Jackson Crossing, River View, and Madison Flats (a Neighborhood Development Corporation project completed and sold to a private investor in 2015), have demonstrated the market for new rental development. An analogous focus on new ownership development for families could both meet a significant market opportunity and create a condition where existing owners would find an investment in their own homes increasingly attractive. Sites north of Jackson Avenue and east of SE 1st Street and along Livingston Avenue are especially appealing for their trail and river access and ability to establish a critical mass of highly marketable new units. Assistance may be necessary for land assembly and infrastructure development to make this enterprise feasible.





235 NORTH: INCLUSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD REDIRECTION

Cheatom Park, Good Park, and Capitol Park require a long-term approach that includes a major infusion of effort and a long-term perspective. To some degree, they lack the physical and economic assets of other Downtown vicinity neighborhoods – the river, trail access, neighborhood commercial, and development precedents of Columbus Park, the university campus and economy of Drake, or the historic character of civic assets of Sherman Hill. They were also cut off from Downtown and their neighborhood character compromised by the construction of I-235, and experienced the added burden of historic redlining. Some recent activity involving private investor acquisition of homes at low prices which are then rented out at high rents also seems to be occurring.

The redirection of these neighborhoods will involve a partnership of residents, neighborhoods, community interests groups involved with community development and reinvestment, and city and county governments. True to its tradition, Des Moines has a number of groups whose programs are relevant to this partnership, including the Neighborhood Development Corporation, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, and Invest DSM. Significant American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for neighborhood rehabilitation and investment may be available through 2026. A redirection effort begins with a strategy and planning effort that involves these key agencies and stakeholders in developing a specific, multi-year stabilization program for these neighborhoods.

PROGRAM APPROACHES

Planning an inclusive program for these “235 North” neighborhoods may incorporate a variety of different initiatives. Some directions to consider that have significant application to these neighborhoods include:

A community development corporation (CDC). The Neighborhood Development Corporation’s focus has been on individual project development in neighborhoods, and it has been extraordinarily effective at this during its 23-year history. However, Des Moines lacks a CDC that is involved on a long-term basis in new housing development focused on homeownership. A CDC can do some projects, such as home construction on vacant lots, acquisition/rehabilitation/resale of individual properties, and other small-scale actions that over the long-term can change a neighborhood’s dynamics. The City could find a CDC an extremely useful partner in carrying out programs that require the hands-on attention and continuity that a city department simply cannot provide.

Property assembly. Initiatives here include creating an efficient program to acquire and convey property in tax foreclosure; combining demolition of vacant, deteriorated structures with control of the resulting lot, or other acquisition of vacant sites through redevelopment.

Targeted rehabilitation. In areas with relatively low values, establishing a critical mass of new or rehabilitated homes is important in establishing home-buyer’s confidence in the security of their investment. The three 235 North neighborhoods

do not have large aggregations of vacant land, and open sites tend to be scattered. Creating stabilized streets or investment clusters, then, will involve both groupings of sites and rehabilitation of surrounding properties.

Acquisition/Rehab/Resale. This activity, in which a nonprofit development corporation buys available, relatively low-cost units and rehabilitates and resells them to a new homeowner, has proven to be a very effective strategy in neighborhoods similar to the 235 North areas.

Rent to Own. Another mechanism that CDCs have used effectively are rent to own programs, allowing a prospective owner to build equity in an existing, rehabilitated or new house. Rent to Own options can be combined with low-income housing tax credits and homeowner training programs.

Combined purchase/acquisition mortgages. Combined loans can provide an additional path to ownership of a sound unit. This program would combine financing for purchase and rehabilitation in a single package can help preserve this inventory in ownership and provide a realistic option for moderate income households.

Capitalization. Clearly all of these programs require capital, both for production and permanent financing. City and county governments have historically played a major role in financing development and rehabilitation. This should be broadened to include financial institutions and other Downtown stakeholders. Creating a permanent financing framework for these neighborhoods surrounding Downtown should be

a major focus of the redirection planning process for these surrounding neighborhoods.

STREET AND INFRASTRUCTURE REHABILITATION

Neighborhood street and sidewalk rehabilitation improves both the visual and functional quality of neighborhoods and is a demonstrated catalyst for private home repairs and reinvestment. Residents of neighborhoods also expect that basic infrastructure works seamlessly and effectively. The City's capital budget should support neighborhood revitalization and stabilization efforts through phased street and infrastructure rehabilitation programs.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Local parks, including Cheatom, Good, Columbus and Pete Crivaro Parks are key amenities that sustain neighborhood life and value to residents. The overall Downtown development program should also direct resources for park enhancements and, when necessary, master development plans. In addition, these parks are connected to the Green Ring by the proposed Connected Corridor system.





CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF IMPROVEMENTS AT A CHARACTER NODE (E. 9TH ST. & FREMONT ST.). FINAL DESIGN TO BE DEVELOPED WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND ASSOCIATED PARTNERS/AGENCIES INCLUDING LOCATION/DETAILS OF CHARACTER NODE, PARKING, LIGHTING, PLANT MATERIAL AND ARTISTIC FEATURES.

HOW WILL **STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS** ADVANCE THE FUTURE FORWARD GOALS?

Welcoming Urban Neighborhood



- Improves the quality of adjacent neighborhoods through reinvestment in basic systems and amenities
- Preserves housing through rehabilitation, infill and home ownership support programs
- Provides additional resources to the Invest DSM program
- Rehabilitates and enhances neighborhood parks, complementing the Green Ring concept

Inclusive Arts + Entertainment



- May create places for arts and performance in neighborhood settings
- Supports organizations already working in neighborhoods

Rewarding Market for Investment



- Provides gap financing for housing investments
- Identifies and develops clusters of vacant lots, stabilizing the values of property for existing residents and providing security for buyers of new homes
- Eases the process of first time homeownership
- Helps capitalize and develop new business in character nodes

Vibrant Outdoor City



- Plans for and executes enhancement of neighborhood parks
- Connects parks to the rivers and the Downtown open space system

Connected + Sustainable Mobility



- Rehabilitates streets and sidewalks to increase accessibility



4



APPENDIX

RECORD OF RELEVANT PLANS/ REPORTS

The following plans and reports informed the recommendations of the Future Forward Plan.

- 2022 Catch Des Moines Destination Master Plan (in progress)
- 2022 DSM Workforce Trends and Occupancy Study - Initial Summary
- 2021 Downtown Listening Tour
- 2021 Neighborhood Toolkit
- 2021 Market District Design Review Presentation
- 2020 One Economy Building Opportunity for All: Blueprint for Action
- 2020 Regional Cultural Assessment Progress Report & 2017 Central Iowa Regional Cultural Assessment
- 2020 City of Des Moines Resident Survey
- Downtown Retail 2030
- 2019 Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for Columbus Park Special Investment District
- 2019 Des Moines Area MPO Mobilizing Tomorrow
- 2019 Report on Potential for Stronger Youth Connections to Arts, Culture and Heritage in Greater Des Moines
- 2019 Downtown Perception Assessment
- 2019 Downtown Annual Business Climate Report
- 2019 Market District of the East Village Plan
- 2019 Regional Workforce Housing Strategy
- 2019 Downtown Annual Business Climate Report
- 2018 Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Program Review
- 2018 CAEL Preparing for Partnership: An Analysis of the Retail Industry in Central Iowa
- 2018 LiveDSM
- 2018 MoveDSM (Core Bicycle Network)
- 2018 Des Moines MPO Environmental Justice Report
- 2017 One Economy Building Opportunity for All: The State of Black Polk County
- 2017 Sherman Hill Neighborhood Plan
- 2017 Downtown Retail Assessment
- 2017 Sherman Hill Neighborhood Plan Update
- 2017 Connect Downtown
- 2016 PlanDSM
- 2016 DART Forward 2035
- 2016 Tourism Master Plan/Destination NEXT
- 2016 Water Trails and Greenways Master Plan
- Trust for Public Land, Des Moines Park Score Report
- 2016 Plan DSM
- 2015 Polk County Housing Trust Fund Housing Tomorrow
- 2014 Capitol East Neighborhood Plan
- 2012 Waterworks Master Plan
- 2011 Bicycle and Trails Master Plan
- 2011 Tomorrow Plan
- 2010 Downtown Des Moines Skywalk System Improvement Study Report
- 2008 Streetcar Feasibility Assessment
- 2006 Two Rivers District Plan
- 1997 Capitol Gateway East Urban Design Plan
- 1991 Columbus Park Neighborhood Plan

RECORD OF MEETINGS

The following meetings and events were conducted to gather input about plan priorities and recommendations.

- August 2021, Steering Committee (SC) Chairs Meeting
- August 2021, SC Meeting
- September 2021, Future Forward Council (FFC) Leader and SC Member Interviews
- September 2021, FFC Leader and SC Member Walking Tour
- September 2021, SC Chairs Meeting
- September 2021, SC Meeting
- October 2021, SC Chairs Meeting
- October 2021, SC Meeting
- October 2021, FFC Meeting
- October 2021, Operation Downtown Focus Group
- October 2021, Downtown Economic Development Council Focus Group
- Fall 2021, City of Des Moines Development Services Meetings, Multiple
- Fall 2021, Winter 2022, Online Survey & Interactive Mapping
- Fall/Winter 2021, Pop up events at Forest Avenue Library, Wellmark YMCA, Oakridge Neighborhood, East Village Promenade; “Pop-ins” to 27 small businesses
- Winter 2022, Workforce Trends & Occupancy Study with survey of over 5,200 Downtown employees
- November 2021, Public Open House
- November 2021, FFC Focus Group Meetings (Multiple)
- November 2021, Public Focus Group Meetings (Multiple)
- November 2021, SC Chairs Meeting
- November 2021, SC Meeting
- November 2021, Inclusion Council Focus Group
- November 2021, Capital Crossroads Chairs Focus Group
- December 2021, Central Iowa Funders Forum Focus Group
- December 2021, Downtown Events Focus Group
- December 2021, High School Student Focus Group
- December 2021, Downtown Developer Interviews
- December 2021, Downtown DSM Board
- December 2021, SC Chairs & FFC Leaders Meeting
- December 2021, Public Planning Studio Open House, FFC Meeting and SC Meeting
- January 2022, FFC Meeting
- January 2022, SC Chairs & FFC Leaders Meeting
- January 2022, SC Meeting
- February 2022, SC Chairs & FFC Leaders Meeting
- February 2022, SC Meeting
- February 2022, Economic Development Council Meeting
- March 2022, Downtown DSM Board Meeting
- March 2022, SC Chairs & FFC Leaders Meeting
- March 2022, SC Meeting
- April 2022, SC Chairs & FFC Leaders Meeting
- April 2022, SC Meeting
- April 2022, Partnership Executive Committee Board
- May 2022, Major Employers Roundtable
- May 2022, Initial Summary Meeting (FFC, Downtown stakeholders)
- May 2022, Initial Summary Public Reception
- June 2022, City Council Workshop
- June 2022, Downtown DSM Board Meeting
- June 2022, Partnership Board Meeting
- June 2022, Economic Development Board of Directors Meeting
- Management Team Meetings (weekly for the course of the project)



Des Moines over the years has built one of America's distinctive downtowns — a place that successfully mixes working, living, learning, playing, creating and participating in the best of being in a city. Most importantly, it eloquently expresses the values and aspirations of our community. In a way, the path forward to the future is informed by the road we have taken to this point — appreciating and using what we have, understanding the subtlety and character of our city, and connecting our assets in new ways and in new combinations. Our history confirms our ability to mold challenges and change to our civic benefit. The Future Forward Plan is a call to action and a challenge to create an exciting future for the heart of our city.

**DOWNTOWN DSM:
FUTURE
FORWARD >>>**