

A New Paradigm for Downtown Louisville

The Louisville Downtown Development Strategy

March 2024



Foreword

Dear Downtown Stakeholders:



Craig Greenberg
Mayor
Louisville Metro



Ja Hillebrand
Chairman
Downtown Development Corporation

Downtown Louisville is the heart of Louisville, the center of the region, the economic engine of our state. While downtown has been hit hard by the pandemic and its aftermath – as have most downtowns across the country – downtown Louisville is resilient, and we can take comfort that we have built a strong base over the past few decades. That being said, we understand that downtown Louisville as we move forward needs to adapt to a new paradigm for downtown, and broaden its approach. We need more people coming downtown to live, to work, to play, to visit, to create and innovate.

We need to think of downtown as a neighborhood – a unique neighborhood – with all of the attributes of great neighborhoods: great parks, open spaces, places to eat and drink, and enjoy the company of others. A place with comfortable and active streets and public spaces where everyone feels safe and welcome; a place people choose to be, rather than where they have to be.

Downtown Louisville can be – and will be – such a place, if we act both boldly and strategically. This Downtown Louisville Development Strategy provides the blueprint for downtown over the next decade, not through a series of wish-list items and pretty pictures, but through a thoughtful strategy of activating downtown, investing in the quality of its public spaces, and creating a critical mass of downtown housing – with increased availability of housing styles and affordability. Quality of place is especially critical in the post-pandemic world; in fact, improving the quality of place is one of the four pillars in Louisville Metro’s recently released *Growing Louisville Together* economic development strategy.

This new approach to downtown Louisville demands that both the public and private sector work proactively to make things happen. Not merely to support and encourage projects and development, but to invest in downtown. We cannot expect others to invest in downtown if we don’t first do so ourselves. This Strategy lays out how such investments can be most impactful.

Downtown Louisville should be the most vibrant, authentic, unique, clean, green, safe, and creative neighborhood in our entire city. The public and private partners are committed to supporting and implementing this Strategy, in conjunction with our economic development plan, to ensure that downtown Louisville reaches its best potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Greenberg'.

Craig Greenberg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ja Hillebrand'.

Ja Hillebrand

Acknowledgements



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Contents

Introduction	7
A New Paradigm for Downtown	13
Stakeholder Input	17
Conclusions	19
A Place of Inclusion	21
Short Term Challenges	23
Guiding Principles	25
Strategic Initiatives	27



Activate Downtown

Highlight Downtown’s Unique District	31
Activate Underutilized and Vacant Parcels	37
Celebrate the Old Walnut Street Corridor	39
Support Existing Anchors	
University of Louisville	41
LOUMED	45
Education Corridor	49
Arts and Culture	51
Showcase Louisville’s Creativity	53
Expand Downtown’s Attractions	59
Improve Downtown Transit	63

Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood

The Market	67
Focus Areas	71
Vacant Lot Infill	71
Office-to-Residential Conversion	73
Downtown Residential Neighborhoods	75



/ Enhance the Public Realm

Prioritize Downtown Streets for Pedestrians	85
Transforming Barriers into Seams	91
The I-65 Barrier	92
Broadway	93
9 th Street	94
River Road	95
Downtown Open Space Network	103
4th and 5th Street Corridor	105
The Belvedere	109
Jefferson Square	111
Connecting Waterfront Park and Downtown	113
Encourage Outdoor Dining	119



/ Implementation Actions

Short-Term Actions	123
Activate Downtown	125
Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood	127
Enhance the Public Realm	129

Introduction

Over the last few decades, significant growth and development have transformed downtown Louisville into a far more vibrant and engaging place to live, work, and visit. Popular attractions like Whiskey Row and Waterfront Park, cultural destinations like Muhammad Ali Center and the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory, and entertainment venues like the KFC Yum! Center and Fourth Street Live! have all contributed to the vitality of downtown Louisville.

Many of these improvements emerged from previous strategic planning initiatives, where strategies focused on activating downtown Louisville on evenings and weekends in hopes of transforming the city from a 9-to-5, office-oriented workplace into a bustling center of activity 24/7. In recent years, the continued growth of bourbon-centric tourism has also fueled downtown's identity as the centerpoint of Louisville's Urban Bourbon experience.

These strategies were designed to complement downtown Louisville's primary focus as the region's most vital business hub, where a high percentage of daily office workers provide the core of downtown's strength. While that focus remains true today, significant changes in the workplace as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted downtown Louisville - just as it has many downtowns across the country. The role of today's office worker continues to evolve and, while fully remote work is tapering off, it is clear that **hybrid work patterns will continue** to a significant extent into the future.

The impact on downtown Louisville during "normal" work hours is clear and compelling - most evident by the significant downturn of street activity, especially during low tourism periods. Although this development may, in the long term, be less dire for Louisville than in many larger cities, it is clear that **downtown Louisville must adapt in order to thrive**. While strategies to encourage businesses to remain in or relocate to downtown and entice workers to return to regular in-office schedules are important, it is vital that Louisville create and provide a more diverse mix of uses and attractions throughout its downtown districts.

In short, prior initiatives to supplement downtown office space with other types of uses - especially residential - must evolve and expand if downtown Louisville is to remain active throughout the day and evenings.





Waterfront Park



West Main Street



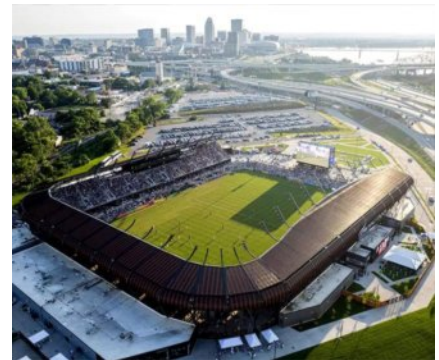
Whiskey Row



KFC Yum! Center



Louisville Slugger Field



Lynn Family Stadium



Muhammad Ali Center



Louisville Slugger Museum



Urban Bourbon

A Vibrant Work Environment

The present outlook should not diminish the importance of thriving businesses and workers to the economic vitality of the city. Downtown Louisville must remain the commercial heart of the region and the focus of public and private strategies to support existing downtown businesses, to promote their expansion, and to proactively encourage new businesses to set down roots in the city. Recently, Louisville Metro has launched invaluable initiatives to provide financial assistance to businesses and/or property owners, enabling them to adapt their workspaces to meet the needs of the post-pandemic work landscape.

However, the ability to influence businesses on their approach to hybrid work schedules remains much more limited. These issues are not industry or city-specific; they reflect current and emerging trends regarding employee work patterns in many sectors across the nation. Post-pandemic employees also largely decide their work habits by the environments in which employers are located. It is important to promote a vibrant downtown environment that is preferable to other options, such as working from home or remotely in a neighborhood coffee shop. Louisville Metro and entities such as the Louisville Downtown Partnership (LDP) and Greater Louisville Inc. (GLI) must prioritize close working relationships with downtown businesses in order to understand the needs/demands of their employees, and act accordingly to provide a quality of place downtown that supports their needs.

A Compelling Social Infrastructure

Downtown strategists have long understood that one of the most significant factors for those choosing to live in downtown Louisville was their ability to walk to work. With far fewer workers coming to the office on a daily basis, however, this advantage has become considerably less significant.

While this may reduce the attractiveness of downtown housing to some extent, other emerging trends offer new opportunities for Louisville. Today's more mobile workers - commonly called "knowledge workers" - are leaving larger coastal cities in significant numbers in favor of smaller cities offering a package of amenities and quality of life advantages, even as they may continue to work remotely in these larger cities. Because Louisville can provide more affordable housing, parks, easy access across the metropolitan area, etc., it is well positioned to attract such workers.

However, doing so depends greatly on the quality of its "social infrastructure." This term can be defined in myriad ways, but it is most commonly considered to be *the network of physical spaces and institutions that shape our interactions with each other, transforming mere collections of buildings and streets into a social gathering place that is comfortable, interactive, and engaging.* Downtown Louisville is uniquely equipped to offer such a strong social infrastructure to its existing citizens and those seeking to relocate from elsewhere.

courier journal

Louisville launches \$3M incentive program to draw businesses downtown. Here's what to know

Matthew Glowicki
Louisville Courier Journal

Published 7:08 p.m. ET Oct. 3, 2023 | Updated 9:09 a.m. ET Oct. 4, 2023



As downtown Louisville struggles with lower-than-typical office occupancy rates, city officials are offering a new incentive for businesses to relocate there.

The "downtown tenant improvement program" would attempt to woo office tenants by providing up to \$30 per square foot toward physical improvements, including construction materials and permanent fixtures.

Funding comes from the Louisville Metro Council's allocation of \$3 million in the fiscal year 2024 budget to a "downtown revitalization fund," down from \$8 million as originally proposed by Mayor Craig Greenberg.

"Whenever you come into a new space, you've got to do tenant improvements," Deputy Mayor Pat Mulloy said Tuesday at a council committee meeting. "You've got to move the drywall. You've got to paint. You've got to put down new carpet."

The incentive is one step city government is taking to try and attract businesses downtown, where office building vacancy rates hover around 25%.



Office and retail space are available inside the building that houses the LG&E administration offices in downtown Louisville, Ky. on Oct. 1, 2023. The company

"Social Infrastructure: A Key to the Vitality of our Cities" A Virtual Forum



As downtown Louisville prioritizes strategic actions over the next decade, those policies and initiatives that improve its social infrastructure are likely to catalyze downtown's economic development, investment, vitality, and activity more than others. As one of the speakers at our Community Conversation stated:

“Today’s new paradigm is: capital follows people... people follow place... place needs investment.” James Lima

The set of principles, initiatives, and actions that comprise this development strategy for downtown Louisville is designed to improve the public realm – *its quality of place* – and create places where people want to be, want to live, and want to invest in. The strategy strongly emphasizes investing – and reinvesting – in downtown's pedestrian environment, which has been somewhat neglected in recent years.

It is important to remember that the strategy outlined herein is a 10-year blueprint illustrating how downtown Louisville can position itself for continued – and accelerated – growth and vitality over the next decade. Many of these strategies, if implemented early, can achieve results in the first few years; in fact, some have already been initiated. There are, however, significant short-term issues that must be resolved to ensure long-term success. These primarily include issues of public safety, security, infrastructure maintenance, loss of confidence in downtown, and a shrinking downtown office workforce – but Louisville Metro, LDP, and others are working diligently to address these current challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought little positive impact to the city. Combined with lingering tensions from incidents of social protest and civil unrest, the challenges facing downtown Louisville may seem – at first glance – daunting. But an understanding of this “new paradigm for downtown Louisville” enables downtown Louisville's stakeholders to reconsider *right now* downtown's mix of uses, the quality of its space, and how it can best serve those who want to be here. These are issues that would have needed to be addressed at some point regardless of the pandemic. Even as the effects of the pandemic continue to evolve, a diverse and engaging downtown public realm is essential for ensuring that downtown Louisville is poised to embrace change and take advantage of emerging trends.

Looking Ahead

Downtown Louisville's long-term future is bright. Major improvements over the past quarter-century have established a solid foundation for growth and success, and many more are underway. A new and committed Louisville Metro administration is in place – one that understands the importance of building upon, strengthening, and expanding the city's downtown sector. By crafting a blueprint that recognizes – and actively embraces – this new paradigm, **downtown Louisville can position itself to become an even more dynamic, vibrant, and engaging place to live, work, visit, and create over the next decade.**



A New Paradigm for Downtown Louisville

Considerable discussion has taken place - both locally and nationally - about what downtowns will look like as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Which conditions are only temporary, and which will lead to permanent change? How should downtowns deal with this uncertainty? What trends are emerging that will affect downtowns most significantly? Can downtowns recover and thrive?

Downtown After COVID: Will Urban Centers be the Same?

Held on Wednesday, April 7, 2021. Watch a recording or read a recap below.

Opinion | Cities aren't facing up to their 'long covid' crisis: Downtown is in deep trouble



By Megan Nichole

Will workers come back? Downtown Louisville office vacancy surges in pandemic

Chris Otts and Katrina Helmer Feb 24, 2021 Updated Dec 30, 2021

How Life in Our Cities Will Look After the Coronavirus Pandemic

The pandemic is transforming urban life. We asked 12 leading global experts in urban planning, policy, history, and health for their predictions.

MAY 1, 2020, 6:51 PM

BROOKINGS

CLIMATE AI CITIES

SERIES: Brookings Metro's COVID-19 Analysis



To recover from COVID-19, downtowns must adapt

Tracy Hadden Loh and Joanne Kim Thursday, April 15, 2021

A new paradigm for cities: How can Milwaukee benefit from the changes brought by the pandemic and remote working? - Table of Experts

Career & Workplace Sponsored Content by RWMA, MKE Downtown, VISIT Milwaukee

6 post-pandemic predictions about how cities will be different going forward

FEATURE STORY: MAR 15, 2021 COVID-19 AND CITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, PLACEMAKING, TRANSPORTATION, URBAN PLANNING



The Downtown Louisville Development Strategy process included a number of “Community Conversations” with national experts to better understand the above issues and how other cities - both large and small - are coping with them. Although nothing is absolutely certain, it is nevertheless clear that certain trends have emerged in the months and years following the pandemic - all of which have implications for downtown Louisville:



“We know that activating and leveraging the public realm is the key to creating an active and vibrant downtown environment, which offers a truly special place experience.”

David Downey President, International Downtown Association



“The pandemic has accelerated the rapid desire to increase people-focused urban solutions.”

Mallory Baches President, Congress of New Urbanism



“Housing is the new economic engine for downtowns.”

Laurie Volk, Zimmerman Volk Associates



“Today’s new paradigm is: capital follows people...people follow place... place needs investment.”

James Lima President, JLP + D

A New Paradigm for Downtown Louisville

- Post-pandemic downtowns will no longer function as they did before the pandemic, particularly in the area of office work. To focus *primarily* on downtown office employment is now an outdated approach; cities that fail to realize this are guaranteed to fall behind. The goal of any downtown business strategy today must be the creation of a vibrant, mixed-use downtown community. To ensure their economic health and sustainability, post-pandemic downtowns must cultivate a strong mix of office workers, residents, and tourists.
- Downtown residents, as well as those living in neighborhoods at the edges of downtown, must become a more integrated part of the downtown experience. Housing is now a primary catalyst for any downtown's vitality and strength - not just in stand-alone residential buildings, but through the creation of residential clusters that offer the same amenities and "sense of neighborhood" as any desirable urban place to live.
- Following the COVID-19 pandemic, people are now empowered to *choose* where they want to live and where and how they want to work. Downtown must be a place where they want to be, and downtowns must make that choice as compelling as possible. If people perceive no added value of traveling downtown on a regular basis for work or play, they will not come. Even businesses that choose to locate downtown will only do so if they believe their employees want to be there.
- A safe, engaging, attractive downtown environment - its public realm - is now a driving economic development force. Downtown leaders can no longer focus their efforts only on cleanliness and aesthetics. Businesses, workers, tourists, and residents will decide to be part of downtown only if the **quality of place** is exemplary and a destination for positivity and social interaction. This is a major consideration, in particular, for workers with greater mobility who currently work remotely in larger coastal cities but can now choose to live in smaller cities offering a package of amenities more to their liking. Thanks to affordable housing and its reputation for being a good place to raise a family - among other attributes - Louisville can make a strong case in attracting these types of workers, but only if its downtown environment is equally attractive and engaging.

These takeaways provide the basis for a new way of thinking about - and planning for - a thriving downtown.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

Post-Pandemic Takeaways

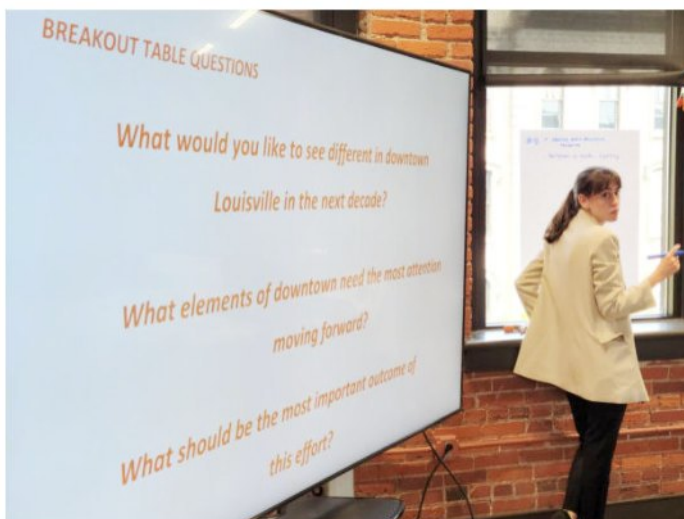
1. Office space is still important, but downtowns *must* become truly mixed-use areas; thinking of downtown as simply the “central business district” of a city is a losing strategy. **A vibrant mixed-use downtown must now be a major part of a business attraction strategy.**
2. **Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood** must be a major component of any thriving downtown now and in the future.
3. **Downtowns need to be attractive and desirable for those who choose to be downtown;** especially residents and visitors and *workers* who are empowered with *choice*.
4. The vibrant public realm is not merely a “nice amenity;” **it is a driving economic development force.**

Stakeholder Input

Despite concerns about some of the challenges currently facing downtown Louisville, a wide variety of stakeholders - individuals, businesses, and more - have demonstrated deep commitment and support of downtown. Many have expressed optimism and belief that taking a fresh view will ultimately lead to a more vibrant and flourishing downtown. Likewise, stakeholders have uniformly expressed the need to address today's challenges with strong, substantive action - prerequisites for downtown's longer-term economic health and sustainability.

Over the course of 70+ meetings with key stakeholders and the public, certain common themes emerged:

- Safety; homelessness; lack of office workers, deferred maintenance
- Streets focused on cars, not pedestrians
- Need more residential; wider range of housing types
- Too many vacant lots (surface parking)
- Downtown not well connected to adjacent districts and neighborhoods
- Inconsistency; some great streets/districts; others unpleasant or empty
- Not bike friendly
- Need better connectivity; transit and pedestrian
- Downtown doesn't connect well to waterfront
- Downtown public spaces forlorn and mostly empty
- Downtown vibrant primarily due to tourists
- Need more events/activities for locals



Stakeholder Input sessions

Stakeholder Input (cont.)

Some stakeholders also expressed concerns that downtown Louisville's growth and success in recent years has perhaps led many to become complacent about its development. While downtown Louisville is a far more active and vibrant place than it was, and certain parts of downtown have been thriving - partially driven by the surge in tourism - many believe that more could be done. While a common comment was ***"Downtown seemed to be thriving pre-pandemic, but now we've taken a big step backwards;"*** others responded by suggesting that ***"Maybe we weren't doing as well as we thought."***

Nevertheless, all agree that there now exists an opportunity to revisit the city's collective approach to downtown Louisville, and to begin the work of resetting its priorities.

List of Stakeholder Meetings (partial)

- Downtown Property Owners
- Major Employers
- Downtown Brokers
- Small Businesses and Restaurants
- Downtown Residents Association
- Downtown Developers
- Waterfront Development
- Louisville Tourism
- Minority Entrepreneurs
- Block By Block
- Coalition for the Homeless
- Louisville Central Community Center
- Vision Russell
- LOUMED
- Metro Public Art Coordinator
- Urban Design Center
- Muhammad Ali Center
- Roots 101
- Slugger Museum
- Mayor Greenberg
- University of Louisville
- UofL President Schatzel
- Envirome Institute
- Cabinet for Economic Development
- Metro Economic Development Strategy Team
- Louisville Public Works/Engineering
- Urban Design Studio
- Louisville Housing Authority
- Transit Authority of River City
- Parking Authority of River City
- Downtown Bourbon Attractions
- Spalding University
- Francis Parker School
- Jefferson Community & Technical College
- Simmons College of Kentucky
- Louisville Bar Association
- The Kentucky Center
- Bingham Fellows
- Churchill Downs
- Frazier Museum
- Louisville Orchestra
- Young Professionals Association of Louisville



Stakeholder Input sessions

Conclusions

Having identified which post-pandemic trends are likely to remain in place - and how downtowns must adapt to leverage those trends - stakeholders reached a fairly widespread and uniform consensus on the challenges and opportunities facing the city. From this consensus, a set of general conclusions about downtown Louisville and its blueprint for development over the next decade began to emerge:

- Downtown Louisville must be considered to be broader than the central business district. It needs to include - and connect seamlessly to - the surrounding neighborhoods and districts along its edge. Reducing barriers to this connectivity should be a priority.
- Downtown must offer a stronger and more diverse mix of uses, designed to encourage activity on a 24/7 basis.
- It is imperative to significantly increase the number of people who reside in (and adjacent to) downtown Louisville. This effort must include the creation of true residential neighborhood clusters, with public spaces and amenities that residents expect in any strong urban neighborhood. Housing options must offer a wider range of unit types and affordability than currently exist.
- Downtown Louisville is not homogeneous; it is composed of a series of districts, each with their own unique identities - some more distinctive than others. Efforts must be made to generate greater activity within each of these districts in order to highlight what makes each one unique, and strengthen the connections between them.
- To foster an engaging public realm requires more than just improving aesthetics. Strong social infrastructure is a key element of downtown Louisville's economic development strategy. It is also a major determinant of who ventures into downtown and - now more than ever - who chooses to live and work there.
- Office space and its users remain a vital element, but downtown Louisville must adapt to the new realities of a much broader downtown base that offers a diverse mix of uses and activity.
- Downtown streets must be prioritized for pedestrian use and redesigned to support a wider range of travel and mobility - not just as wide corridors for moving cars in and out of downtown as quickly as possible.
- Downtown Louisville's open spaces must function together as a coordinated network of engaging places for people to seek out and enjoy.
- Attracting new economic development and investment to downtown Louisville is critical, but the businesses and institutions anchoring downtown today must not be taken for granted. The city should prioritize support for the reinvestment and expansion of the University of Louisville's downtown campus, the Louisville Medical & Education District (LOUMED), and its many other cultural and educational institutions.
- Downtown Louisville must expand its offerings of attractions and activity generators to draw more diverse patrons throughout the week (days, evenings, and weekends). These attractions should also cater to the interests of patrons who might not otherwise be drawn to downtown.
- Downtown Louisville must be viewed as a welcoming place for all - a safe, inclusive destination that truly lives up to its reputation as "everyone's neighborhood."
- Public safety must be a high priority, with a greater police presence downtown (on foot, on bikes, on horseback), more downtown Ambassadors, and support for the creation of more transitional housing units for the unhoused population.



A Place of Inclusion

Underlying all recommended actions is the need to establish downtown Louisville as a welcoming place for everyone - citizens and visitors alike. This is not merely a statement of general hospitality; it represents downtown's commitment to celebrating diversity and inclusion.

Civil unrest at the height of the Breonna Taylor protests caused considerable damage to Louisville's reputation as an inclusive and compassionate city, as well as raised concerns - some of which remain - about safety and hospitality for people of color in downtown Louisville. The importance of establishing downtown Louisville as welcoming and inclusive for everyone cannot be overstated.

Some ways to do this are already self-evident: a sensitive and inclusive redesign of Jefferson Square, support of the Roots 101 Museum, celebrating the rich heritage of the Old Walnut Street Corridor, assistance for minority businesses and creating a stronger pedestrian connection among and between these sites, as well as the Muhammad Ali Center.





Short Term Challenges

The Downtown Louisville Development Strategy is designed to serve as a blueprint for guiding downtown Louisville's growth and economic vitality over the next decade through a set of principles, initiatives, and strategic actions. While many of its recommendations can be initiated in the short term - and the fruits of those efforts realized sooner rather than later - others will take longer.

Nevertheless, there are current challenges where actions need to be taken as soon as possible. Although these primarily lie outside the scope of this Strategy, the ability of downtown Louisville to regain and enhance its health and vitality in the long run is greatly impacted by resolution of these current challenges.

Public Safety

Currently, the reduction in a visible police presence in downtown Louisville adds to the public's perception - and, in some cases, reality - of safety concerns. Staff shortages in the Louisville Metro police department have understandably contributed to this reduced LMPD presence, as coverage must be managed across the entire Metro area. Downtown Louisville is also not covered by its own unique police division and it lacks highly visible police substations - a major shortcoming fueling the public perception that downtown safety is not a high priority.

Nonetheless, both the Mayor and the Police Chief have stated numerous times that public safety is the number one concern for the city and the number one concern for downtown. The relocation of the police headquarters to Sixth and Chestnut Streets should certainly improve visibility, but it is essential to provide a more physical operational presence downtown, preferably through the establishment of a full downtown division, but at the very least an increased presence of officers on foot, on bicycles, and on horses. Louisville Metro and the private sector have each funded an expansion of the LDP Downtown Ambassadors. This program provides a welcoming degree of comfort for Downtown. It is an important element for Downtown's safety and security and should continue at this level or at a higher level permanently.

Homelessness Population

Homelessness continues to have a significant impact on the public's perception of safety in downtown Louisville. Whether the homeless population is growing, as some assume, or its visibility is greater because there are fewer people downtown, it remains a serious concern.

Discussions with downtown Louisville's stakeholders, the homeless services community, and Louisville Metro have all converged on a similar conclusion: efforts to reduce the number of people on the streets needing shelter and eliminating homeless encampments will not succeed until and unless more transitional housing units can be produced that can provide - if not permanent housing - longer stays than overnight accommodations in shelters, *as well as* needed social services and assistance in finding permanent housing. **This is an initiative that downtown Louisville stakeholders should actively support.**

SHORT TERM CHALLENGES

- Public Safety
- Homelessness
- Fewer Downtown Office Workers
- Maintenance of the Public Realm
- Reduced restaurant patronage
- Downtown activation
(outdoor dining, temporary uses, pop-ups programming, CitySpots)

Infrastructure Maintenance

The maintenance needs of downtown's infrastructure - its streets, sidewalks, curbs, street lights, trash cans, etc. - are many. In recent years, deferred maintenance of this infrastructure has affected the overall quality of the downtown environment. A well maintained downtown infrastructure is crucial for many reasons: sidewalks need to accommodate accessibility, lighting is a major public safety determinant, etc. The conditions of a downtown's infrastructure provides the most evident sign of the condition of its health, safety, and well-being.

Simply put, it is difficult to entice private investment in downtown Louisville when public investment is visibly absent. The Mayor and City Council have recognized this and committed significant resources to the maintenance of downtown's infrastructure in the new administration's initial budget. Continued funding at an increased level needs to continue to bring the entire downtown infrastructure to working order.

Return to Work

Downtown Louisville must provide assistance in encouraging office workers to return to their workplaces on a daily basis. As previous sections have stated, these efforts are made difficult by the emergence of post-pandemic trends, but it is important to provide assistance to building owners and businesses who wish to relocate or remain downtown - especially considering the high costs needed to reconfigure existing workspaces to accommodate the type of environment that today's workplaces demand. To date, Louisville Metro has established an incentive fund designed to do just that. Such funding should remain in place as long as needs continue.

Guiding Principles

With a clearer understanding of how downtowns must reposition themselves and adapt for the future, and strong input from stakeholders regarding downtown Louisville's own priorities - both short term and long term - consensus emerged around this set of conclusions to drive the Downtown Louisville Development Strategy.

The first step in responding to these conclusions is to agree upon and establish guiding principles that will serve as the mechanism for evaluating efforts to move downtown Louisville forward. Any proposed project, development, or initiative requiring the participation of the public sector or a public/private partnership should align with - and advance - one or more of these principles.

Why is this important? The Downtown Louisville Development Strategy is not a "master plan" detailing specific locations for specific projects. Those plans tend to be proscriptive and ineffective because financing conditions, markets, and other determinants change over time - often quickly. But as investment and development proposals, site-specific plans, and actions are crystalized, it is critical that their support and advancement is predicated on an adherence to downtown's overriding principles. These principles provide the basis for such evaluation. The approach to maintaining the health and vitality of downtown Louisville should remain flexible and resilient as time goes on, but adherence to these principles should not, if downtown Louisville is to prosper.

In addition, these guiding principles should serve as a "report card" on how downtown Louisville is doing. If continued progress reflecting each of these principles can be demonstrated, confidence that downtown is moving in the right direction will build. If downtown begins to fall short, however, then appropriate corrections and adjustments can be made.

Guiding Principles for Downtown Louisville

 <p>ECONOMIC DRIVER</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>PEDESTRIAN - FOCUSED</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>A STRONG NEIGHBORHOOD</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>
 <p>A SERIES OF UNIQUE DISTRICTS</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>A GOOD NEIGHBOR</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>GREEN & HEALTHY</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>ACTIVE & VIBRANT</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>
 <p>ECONOMIC & CULTURAL ANCHORS</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>CENTER OF CULTURE, INNOVATION & CREATIVITY</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	 <p>PROACTIVE PUBLIC & PRIVATE SUPPORT</p> <p>GUIDING PRINCIPLES</p>	

Strategic Initiatives

The following sections detail the major initiatives that are recommended as action items over the next decade. Implementing these will ensure that downtown Louisville continues to thrive as the economic, cultural, and creative center of the region.

These 10 major initiatives of priorities, actions, and improvements are grouped in the following three categories:

Activate Downtown

Downtown Louisville has suffered a downturn in overall activity since 2020, for reasons described earlier. Certain sectors within the downtown economy - such as tourism - have rebounded and, in some cases, exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Some districts of downtown are thriving and growing, but this success is not evenly distributed throughout the entire downtown area. An increase in activity can be expected in downtown Louisville as time passes, but more proactive intervention is needed in order to spur development and catalyze a wider range of opportunities and uses *throughout* the greater downtown area.

Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood

The overall economic health of downtown Louisville over the next 10 years greatly depends on the establishment of a strong residential sector. This cannot be overstated. The residential population of downtown will become a major driver of its economy. Although that population has grown in past years, it still remains well below critical mass. To attract more residents, downtown Louisville must provide a sense of neighborhood and community that exemplifies the same quality of place as any other desirable residential neighborhood in the city.

Enhance the Public Realm

Just as the residential sector is a critical economic factor for downtown Louisville, a high-quality and socially engaging public realm is also essential to its overall health and sustainability. No longer simply a “nice” amenity, the public realm must rise to meet the increasing needs and choices that people have regarding where they wish to work, live, visit, and play. While most of the necessary infrastructure elements are already in place, downtown Louisville’s attention to cultivating a **quality of place** has waned in recent years. Following these strategic initiatives will jumpstart efforts to expand, enhance, and celebrate that quality of place and infuse throughout downtown the very best that Louisville has to offer its citizens and visitors.

Activate Downtown

- Reinforce, recognize and support downtown's districts and district anchors
- Celebrate the Old Walnut Street Corridor
- Support downtown anchors
- Expand downtown's attractions
- Showcase Louisville's creativity

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood

- Create a series of residential neighborhoods in and at the edges of downtown
- Incentivize conversion of Class B and Class C office buildings into residential use
- Encourage residential infill of vacant parcels

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Enhance the Public Realm

- Prioritize downtown's streets for pedestrians
- Transform barriers into seams (Broadway; 9th Street; I-65)
- Activate and connect underutilized spaces
- Reimagine downtown's open spaces
- Better connect Waterfront Park and downtown
- Encourage outdoor dining

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



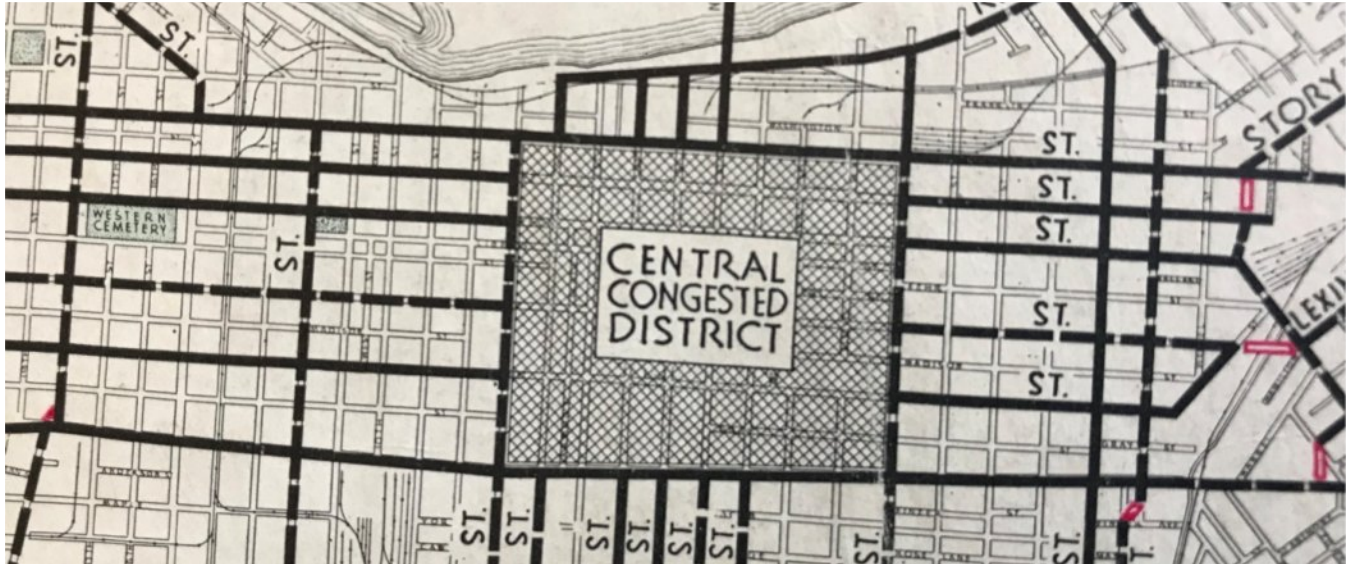


Activate Downtown

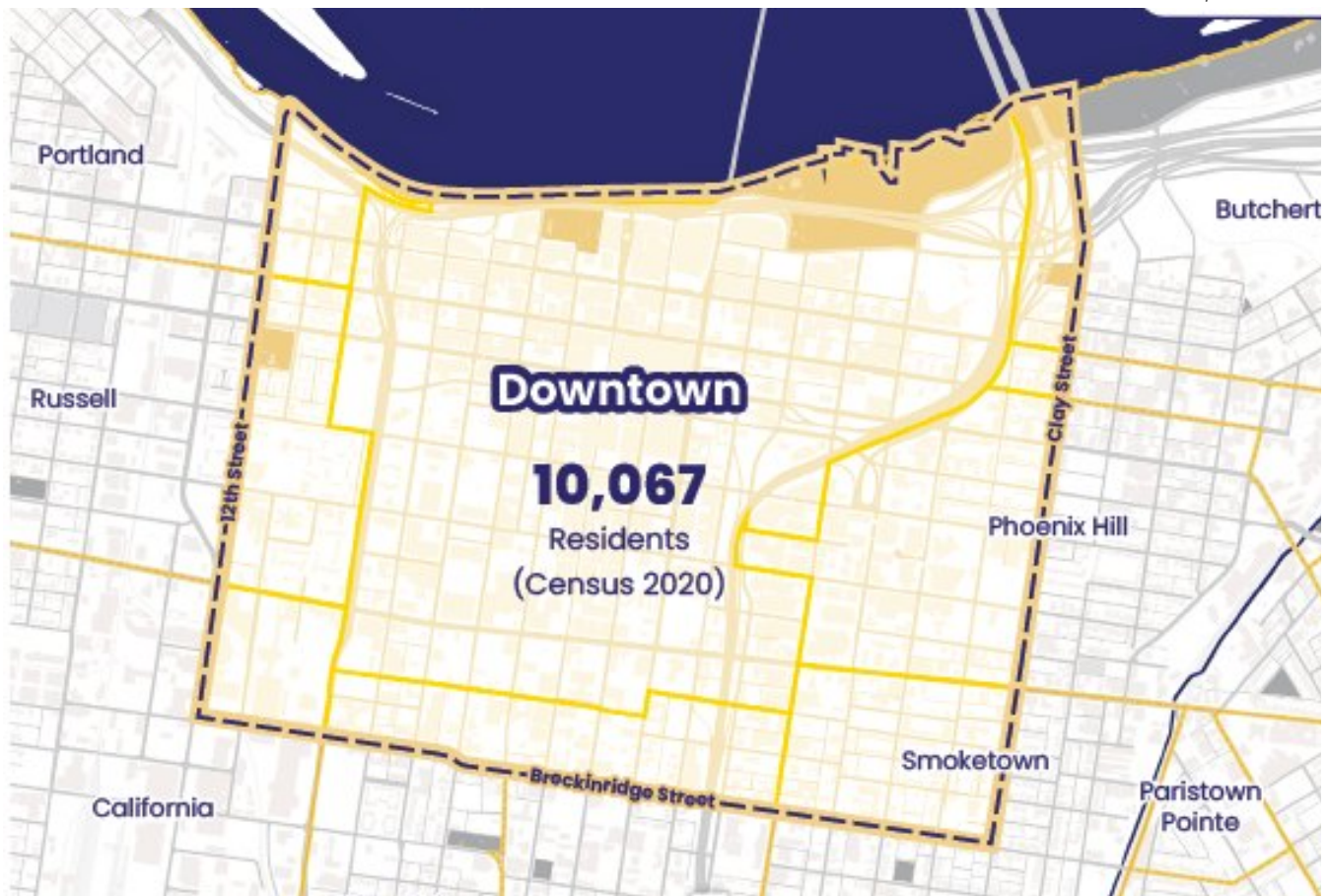
Downtown Louisville has suffered a downturn in overall activity since 2020, for reasons described earlier. Certain sectors within the downtown economy - such as tourism - have rebounded and, in some cases, exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Some districts of downtown are thriving and growing, but this success is not evenly distributed throughout the entire downtown area. An increase in activity can be expected in downtown Louisville as time passes, but more proactive intervention is needed in order to spur development and catalyze a wider range of opportunities and uses *throughout* the greater downtown area.

Highlight Downtown's Unique Districts

For over 100 years, downtown Louisville has been most commonly defined by its central business district (CBD) - the one-square mile area extending east to west from Hancock Street and 9th Street, and north to south from the Ohio River to York Street. But even under this narrow - and increasingly outdated - definition, it is clear that downtown Louisville is not homogenous in character, activity, and vitality.



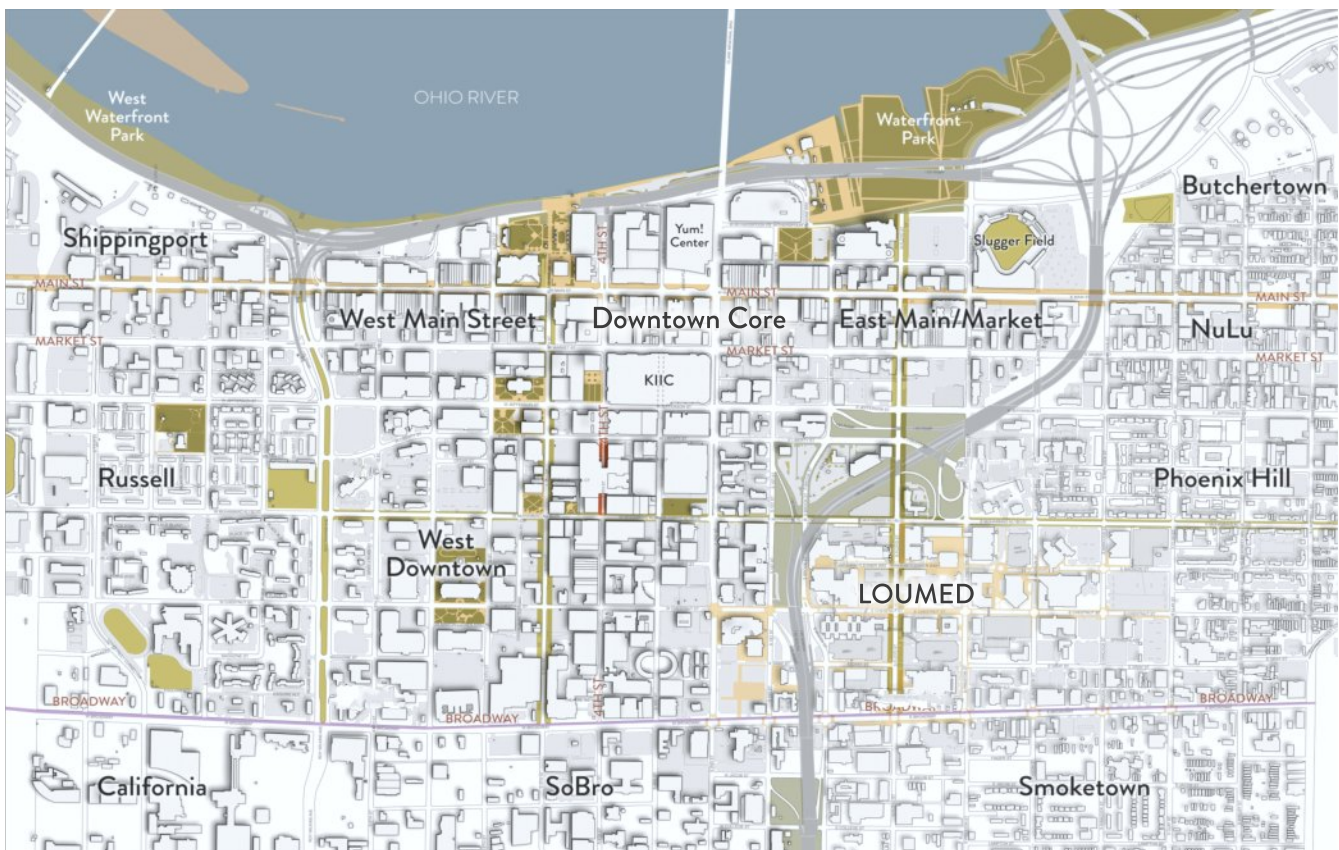
Downtown Map circa 1929



Current Downtown

Main Street, for example, has a much different sense of place than Broadway, or Fourth Street, or the government district. As downtown pivots from its primary focus on office space to a broader mix of uses and activities, it must be regarded as more than the central business district alone; rather, a series of unique districts each with their own distinctive personalities, activity, and branding. This definition would certainly include a central business district, but also extend out to districts and neighborhoods located along the edges of downtown.

Downtown Districts



Many of these districts were thriving before the COVID-19 pandemic and remain active and vibrant today - West Main Street, Whiskey Row, NuLu, Waterfront Park, Butchertown. Each one clearly possesses a distinct identity, as people identify them by their district names rather than simply calling them "downtown." These districts also are downtown's most walkable, comfortable, and pedestrian-friendly environments, easily attracting visitors, workers, residents, - and investors - alike.



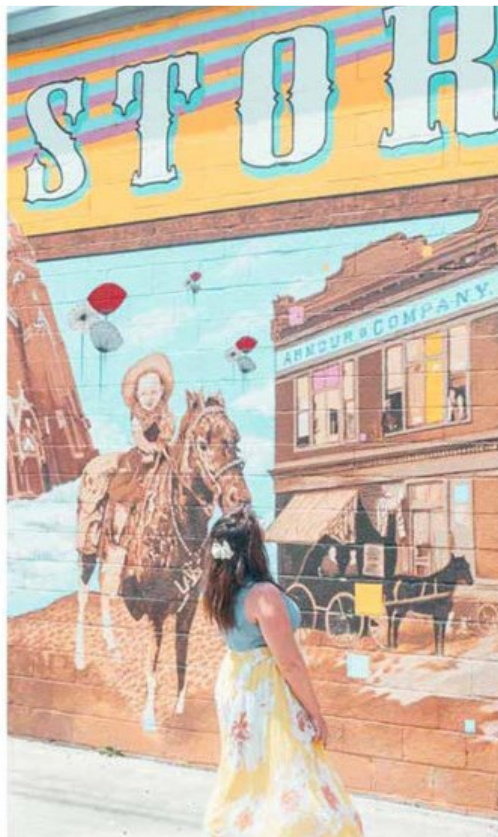
West Main Street



NuLu



Waterfront Park



Butchertown

Highlight Downtown's Unique Districts (cont.)

Other districts - especially those in the western portion of downtown - are far less robust, however, in part because they do not have the same **quality of place**. They instead must rely heavily on large numbers of internally-generated office workers to maintain activity levels.

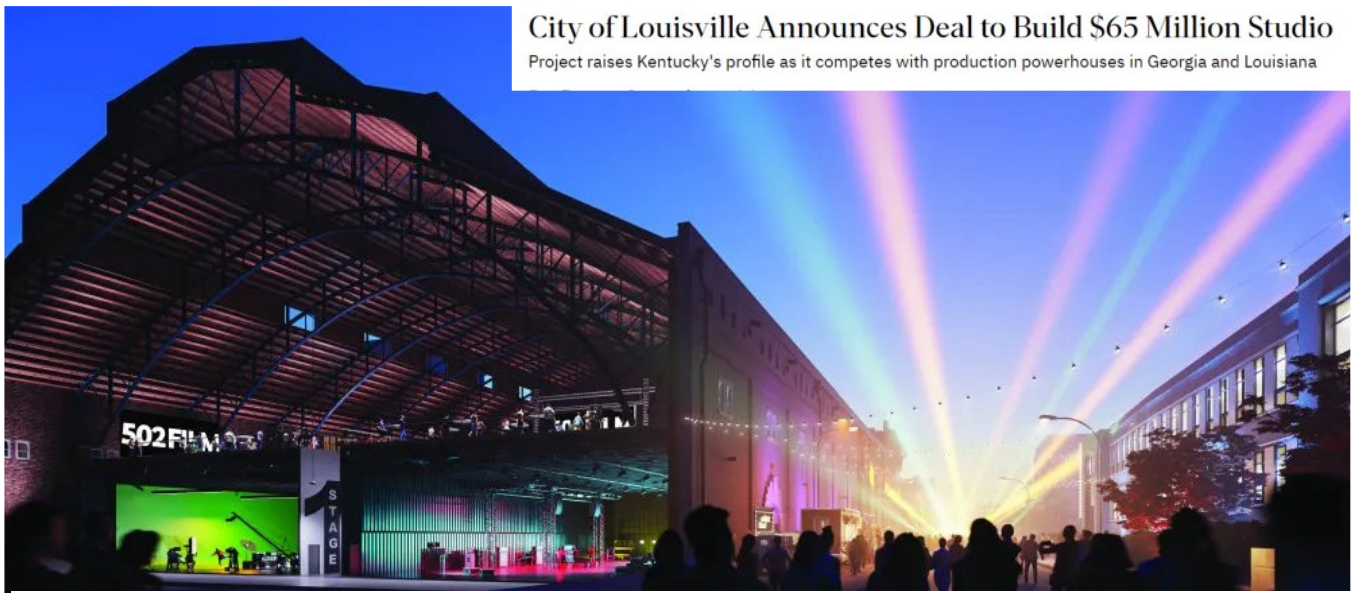
These numbers have fallen, and will likely continue to fall, unless downtown Louisville: (1) strengthens and develops their identities; (2) adds activity-generating anchors; and (3) creates pleasant and walkable connections between them. To achieve this, each district must also engage the public realm and inspire investment in these efforts.



West Downtown

Potential Activity Generators

- Development of a residential neighborhood along Broadway into SoBro;
- Redevelopment of the Louisville Gardens (either as a production studio or other going activity-generating concept) and UofL's Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute;
- Phase IV of Waterfront Park as an anchor for development in the Shippingport/Warehouse District;
- Activation of the Old Walnut Street Corridor;
- Relocation of LMPD Headquarters;
- Reuse of the Courier-Journal Building and its parking lots across Broadway;
- Development of East Broadway between Paristown and LOUMED.



City of Louisville Announces Deal to Build \$65 Million Studio

Project raises Kentucky's profile as it competes with production powerhouses in Georgia and Louisiana

Louisville Gardens



New LMPD Headquarters property

Activate Underutilized and Vacant Parcels

The most vibrant downtown districts - West Main Street, Whiskey Row, NuLu - are those with an active urban fabric and few “missing teeth,” such as surface parking lots and buildings with minimal first-floor activity or vacant upper floors used for storage. To help catalyze areas that are rife with such properties, Metro Louisville could encourage their development through revisions in the PVA assessment practices and provide incentives for the activation of surface lots and vacant structures, either temporarily or permanently. This is especially timely now that the demand for downtown parking has waned greatly, making them less likely to serve as the revenue generators they were before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Perhaps the most dramatic - and impactful - effort to activate underutilized properties is Louisville Metro’s recent initiative to seek development interest in the following areas:

1. Civic Center Properties

This assemblage sits adjacent to Metro Hall, City Hall, and the Judicial Center. Because the area is primarily used by local government operations, it goes dark at the end of a typical workday and on weekends. However, these properties are well positioned in close proximity to healthier corridors like West Main Street and Fourth Street. Activating them through residential, commercial, and cultural development would not only deliver much-needed vitality and social connection to the area, but it could also catalyze redevelopment in adjacent blocks. When paired with the transformation of Market Street, refreshment of the open space network along Fourth and Fifth Streets, and a reimagining of the Belvedere, this effort could reinvigorate a broad swath of the heart of downtown Louisville.

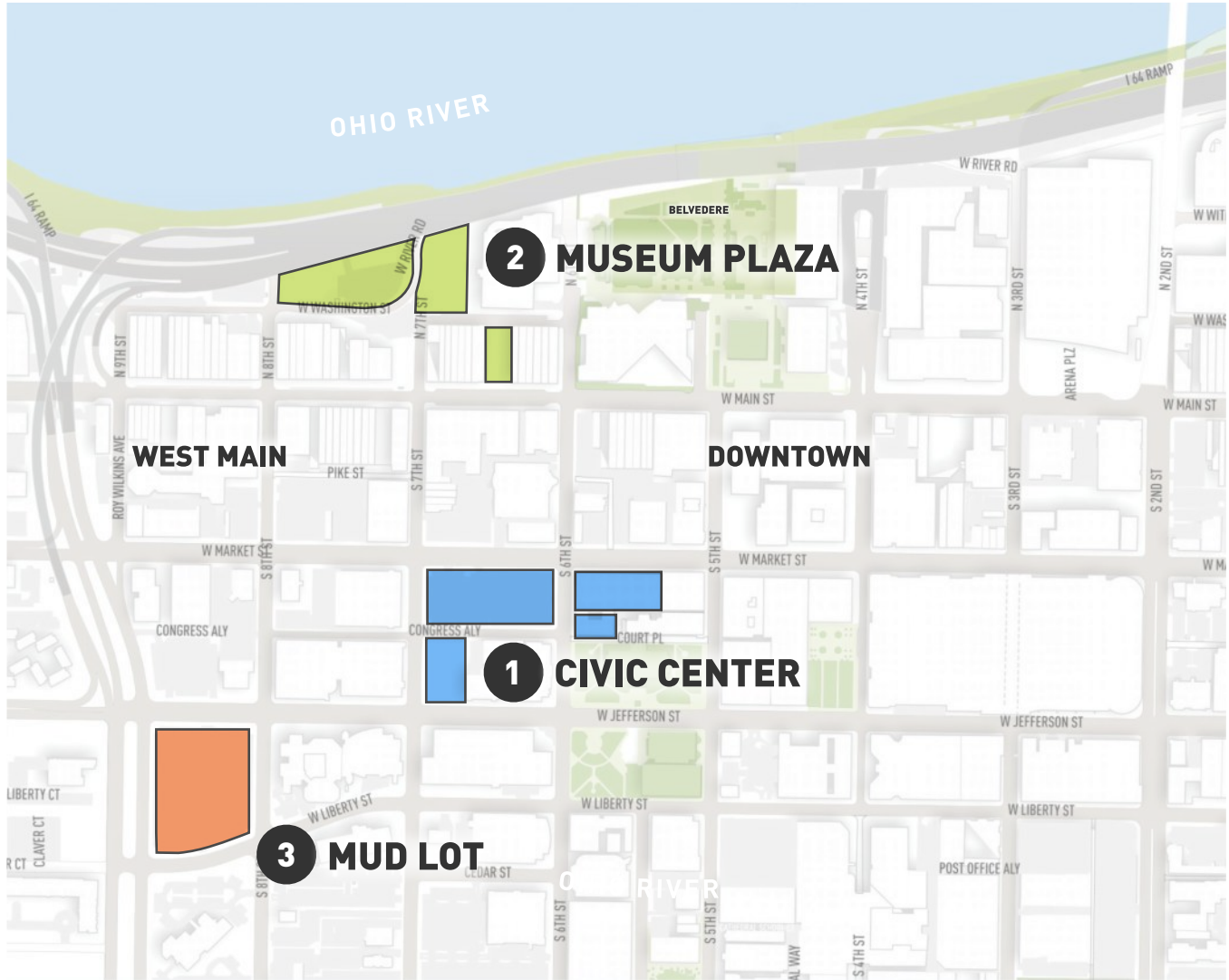
2. Museum Plaza/RePurposed Sites

These parcels comprise key locations that have long been considered essential to complete connections between Main Street and the Ohio River. Elevation changes between these two points, including the flood wall, present certain challenges to their redevelopment. However, the ability to coordinate their development with plans for the Belvedere, improved river access along Sixth and Seventh Streets, and the redesign of River Road and Washington Streets is a timely opportunity to significantly improve downtown’s direct connections to the Ohio River.

3. Mud Lot

This Louisville Metro-owned surface parking lot - occupying a full city block between Jefferson and Liberty Streets, and 8th and 9th Streets - presents an opportunity to further abate the “9th Street Divide” and reconnect downtown with the Russell neighborhood, particularly if the site’s redevelopment plan offers a wide range of housing styles and price points. Such a plan could be coordinated with the Reimagine 9th Street initiative and the activation of the Old Walnut Street Corridor to transform this larger nexus of residential redevelopment into a true mixed-income neighborhood.

Louisville Metro Parcels for Development



Celebrate the Old Walnut Street Corridor

Efforts to create a more vibrant and mixed-use Russell neighborhood frequently cite the historic role that the Old Walnut Street Corridor - now Muhammad Ali Boulevard - once served as the commercial and entertainment hub for Louisville's African-American community. From Fifth Street to Eighteenth Street, this corridor deserves to be reinvigorated so that its rich heritage can be recognized and celebrated. Such a focus could stimulate development of vacant and underutilized parcels, encourage much-needed commercial development in the area, and contribute to the long-term health and vibrancy of both the Russell neighborhood and this section of downtown Louisville.

Conceptual plans for an "Old Walnut Street Corridor" have been developed over the years, but none of these efforts have moved significantly forward. Creating a dynamic commercial and residential corridor with an emphasis on celebrating history - similar to the approach taken on West Main Street - will provide a strong connection between Russell and downtown. While the "9th Street Divide" may have limited the ability to successfully achieve this connection in the past, the current *Reimagine 9th Street* initiative and other related efforts now present a significant opportunity for this important connection to finally be realized.

Renewed focus on the Old Walnut Street Corridor is extremely timely for a number of reasons:

- The Reimagine 9th Street initiative - coupled with the redevelopment of Beecher Terrace, Louisville Gardens, and the Greyhound parcel - can positively impact, and benefit from, a stronger corridor.
- The University of Louisville's Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute at 5th Street and Muhammad Ali will serve as an anchor at that location, with programmatic outreach heavily oriented towards West Louisville.
- Redevelopment of the Mud Lot along 9th Street - between Liberty and Jefferson Streets - can prioritize the creation of another direct connection between Russell and this currently vacant block of downtown Louisville.





Old Walnut Street Corridor



Old Walnut Street Corridor (Credit: Gresham Smith)

Support Existing Downtown Anchors

Securing investment and development within the less active districts throughout downtown Louisville remains a high priority. However, it is equally important to continue supporting downtown's existing anchors, which generate significant activity in their respective locations. Often these anchors are overlooked or taken for granted, but their importance to downtown as both economic and activity-generating drivers must be recognized.

Downtown Louisville has a number of strong downtown anchors, most of which are currently expanding and reinvesting in their facilities, to the great benefit of downtown. If actively supported, these re-investments can serve as catalysts for additional adjacent investment and an increase in uses and activity under the new paradigm for downtown Louisville.

University of Louisville

Although its main campus is located a mile south, the University of Louisville (UofL) nevertheless commands a significant and growing presence in downtown Louisville.

This has traditionally been due to **UofL's integrated Health Sciences campus** within the heart of the medical center (now called LOUMED). Even with its medical school downtown, UofL has rarely been viewed as a major economic anchor of downtown Louisville, nor has it drawn attention to its downtown presence. However, the partnership between UofL and downtown Louisville is presently evolving for the better, to the mutual benefit of both. Its potential impact is equal or greater than most economic development initiatives at work in the city today.

UofL's Health Sciences campus of late is now an area of renewed focus, through a new campus master plan and its decision to construct a \$280 million Health Sciences and Simulation Center and Collaboration Hub (opening 2027) at the corner of East Chestnut and South Preston Streets. Characterized as a "game changer" by University of Louisville President Kim Schatzel, this facility - its top-priority capital project - will increase UofL's capacity to graduate nursing students by 50 percent.

The Health Sciences Campus is just one of what has now grown into four distinct downtown UofL locations. **The Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute** has the potential to be a much-needed anchor at Fifth Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard, and the Institute will soon transform the underutilized Founder's Square into the Trager Microforest. **The J.D. Nichols Innovation Campus** between East Market and Jefferson Streets, along with the recently acquired **515 West Market Street Building**, will also serve as strong anchors in their respective portions of downtown. This "four corner" approach represents a major downtown footprint for UofL and should be the focus of communication and strategic planning to ensure these anchors facilitate a constant flow of students, faculty and staff, and visitors throughout downtown Louisville.

University of Louisville's "Four Corners" Downtown Campus

OHIO RIVER

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

515 W MARKET ST

J.D. NICHOLS INNOVATION CAMPUS

CHRISTINA LEE BROWN ENVIROME INSTITUTE

HEALTH SCIENCES CAMPUS



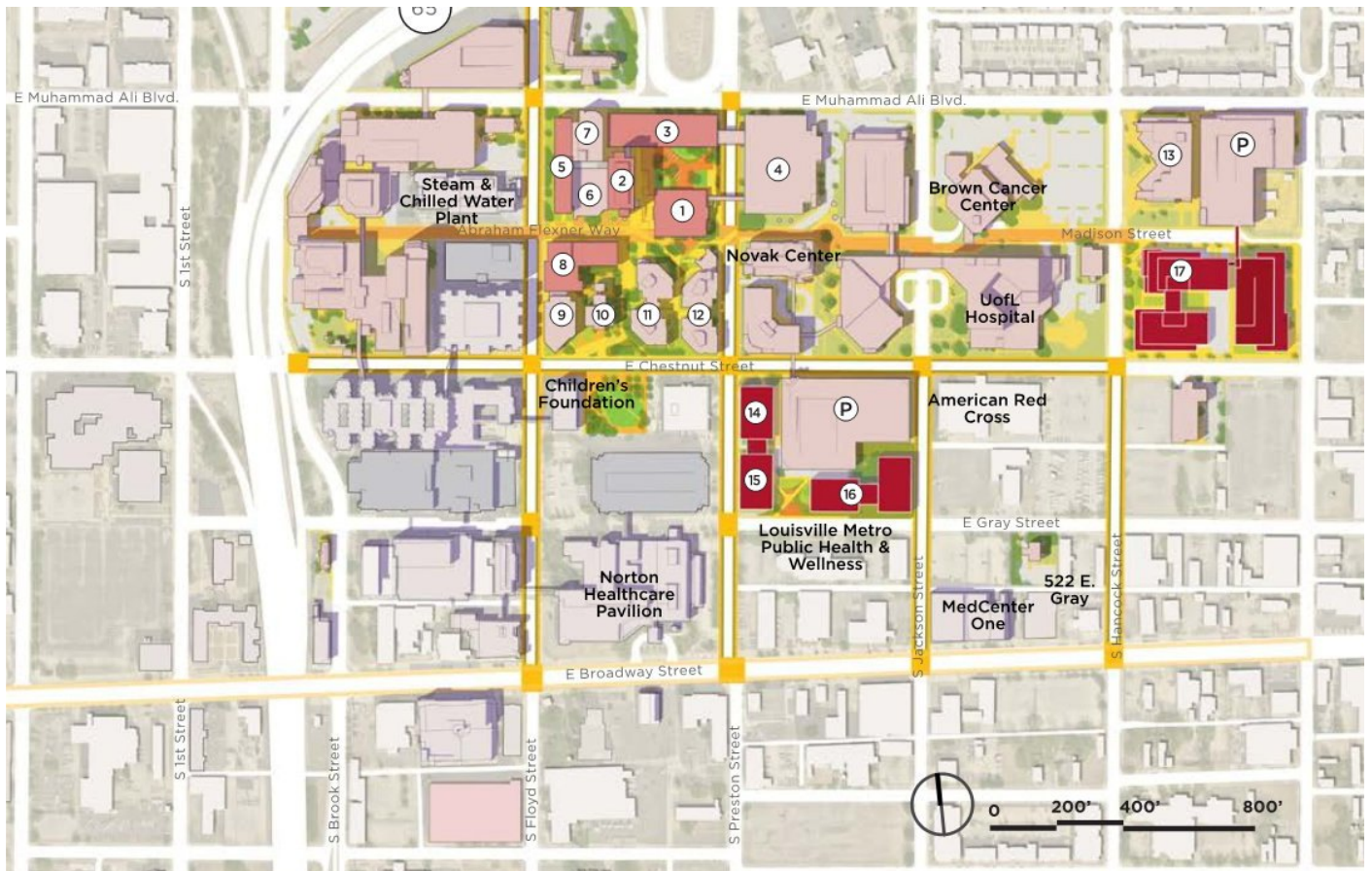
UofL Hospital Expansion (Credit: JRA Architects)



Proposed UofL Health Sciences Simulation Center & Collaboration Hub (Credit: EOP Architects)



UofL Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute (Credit: KNBA)



2023 UofL Health Sciences Campus Master Plan

Support Existing Downtown Anchors (cont.)

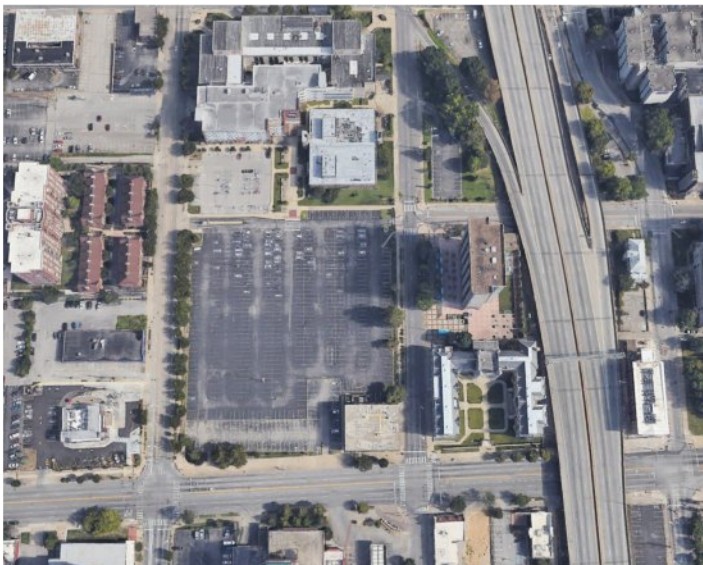
LOUMED

The Louisville Medical & Education District (LOUMED) continues to be the major economic driver for downtown Louisville. With 13,000 employees and over \$1 billion in payroll, the institutions of LOUMED dwarf any other entity or collective in economic impact. While high-quality medical services have expanded throughout the Louisville Metro area in recent years, the four major institutions located within LOUMED - Norton Healthcare, University of Louisville Health Sciences, UofL Health, and Jefferson Technical and Community College (JCTC) - have continued to reinvest in their downtown facilities. This includes more than \$500 million in recent years, with major expansions to University Hospital and JCTC currently underway, and the UofL Simulation Lab preparing to move forward.

Despite the high quality of services provided within LOUMED and the member institutions' continued investment in their respective campuses, the public realm had not received during this time similar investments from Louisville Metro. The campus institutions recently established a new partnership and development strategy for LOUMED with the goal of making the district safer, more welcoming, and easier to navigate for patients, medical staff, visitors, and students. To implement many of the proposed improvements - including connections to downtown and SoBro - Louisville Metro must lend its full support as LOUMED's "fifth partner" and prioritize this effort through improvements to the public realm, which for the most part is under its control.

This initiative has already yielded impressive results. Recently, the LOUMED entities jointly funded a new ambassador program designed to alleviate safety and security concerns and provide a more hospitable atmosphere for employees and patients. Louisville Metro has already funded the removal of the vacant former correctional facility on Chestnut Street, clearing the way for a new central green space within LOUMED. The city has also begun improvements to the public realm by providing funds for the transformation of Chestnut Street.

Finally, the continued growth and investment in LOUMED and its partners will encourage new residential development in surrounding neighborhoods - a major boon for downtown Louisville.

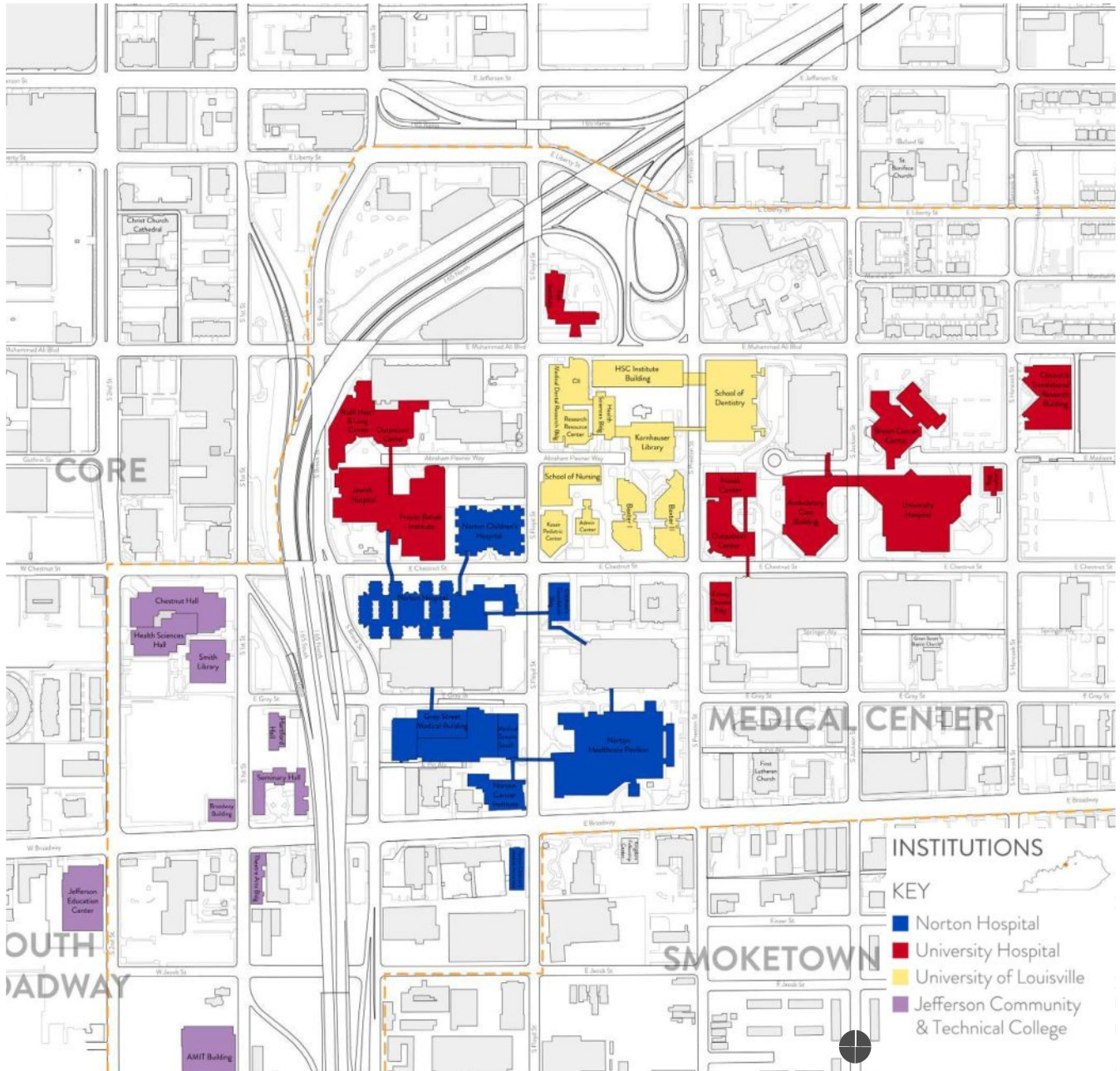


Existing JCTC Campus

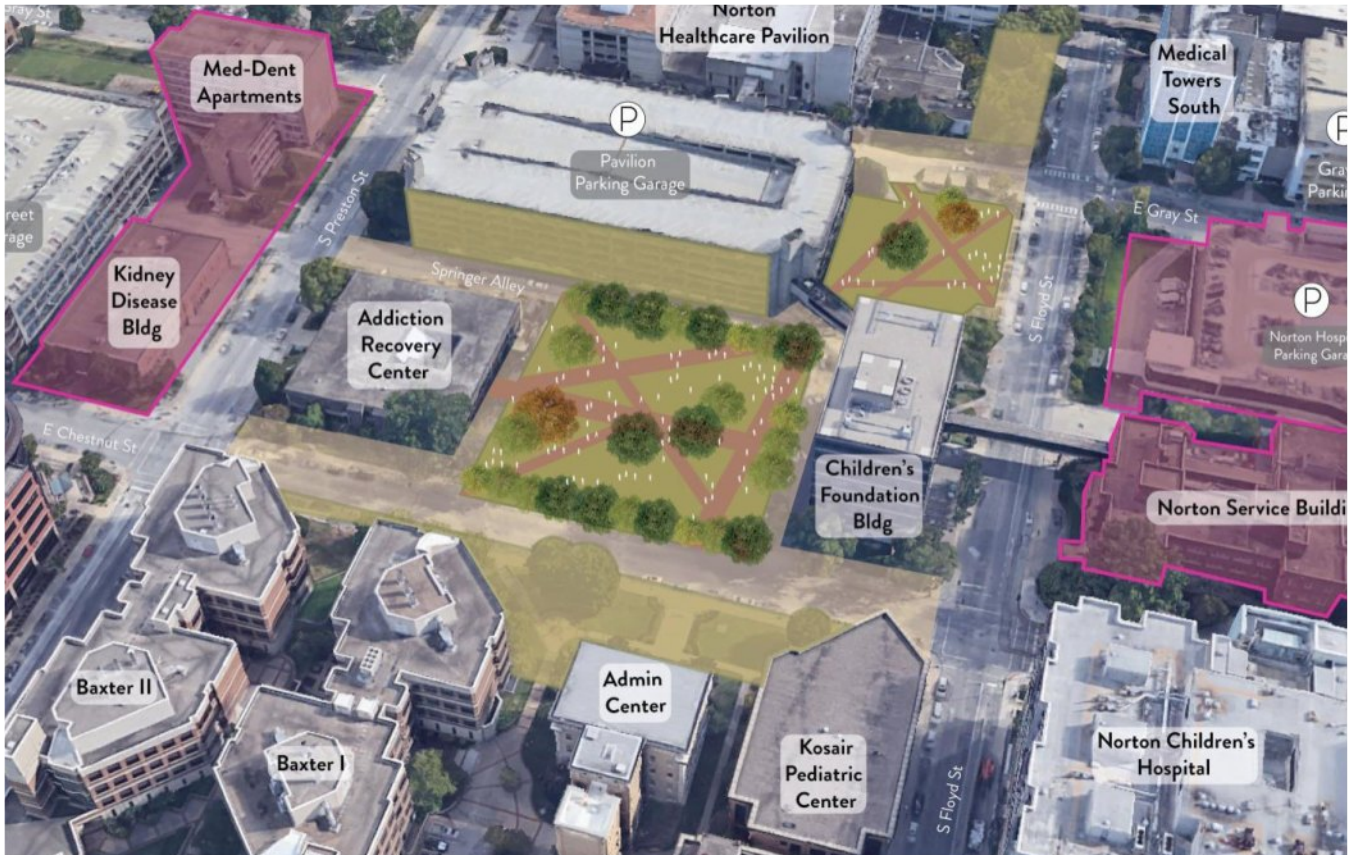


JCTC Campus Expansion (Credit: CARMAN)

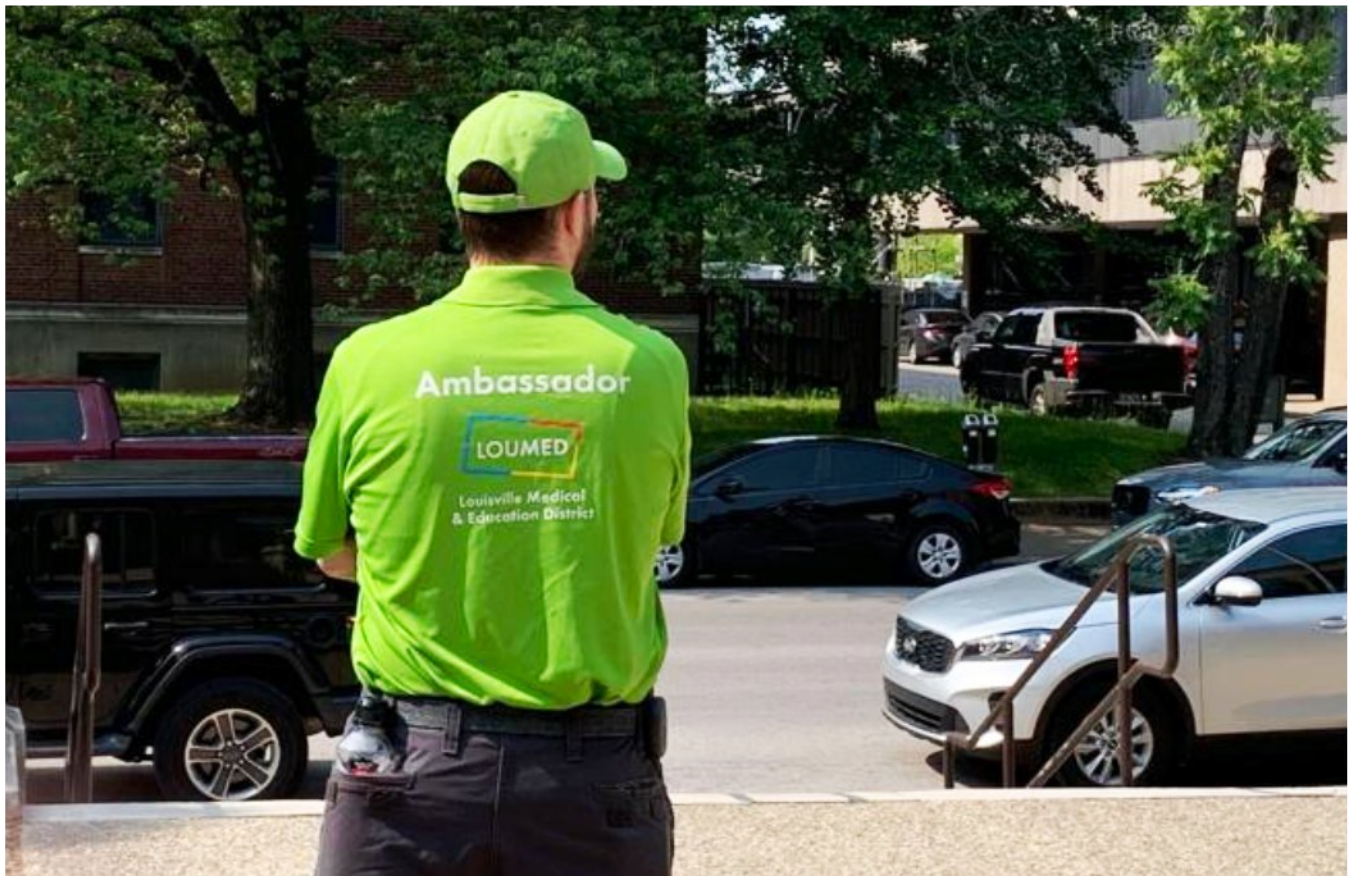
LOUMED



Health Sciences Campus 2023 Master Plan



Site of LOUMED Plaza



LOUMED Ambassadors



Abraham Flexner Way



Abraham Flexner Way

Education Corridor

Nearly every robust downtown across the country is served by one or more educational institutions with a significant presence of students and faculty utilizing its streets and plazas as outdoor laboratories. This educational community contributes greatly to the vitality of a place, infusing it with energy, creativity, and support for surrounding commercial and retail establishments.

The University of Louisville’s expanding “four-corner” downtown presence is an opportunity to impact downtown Louisville in a similar fashion. However, UofL is hardly the only educational institution with a major presence in and adjacent to downtown. A mile-long “education corridor” quietly stretches through the southern portions of downtown Louisville and SoBro, populated by numerous distinct places of learning - the J. Graham Brown School, UofL Health Sciences campus, Jefferson Technical and Community College (JCTC), the Francis Parker School, Presentation Academy, Spalding University, and Simmons College, which is expanding its footprint in SoBro.

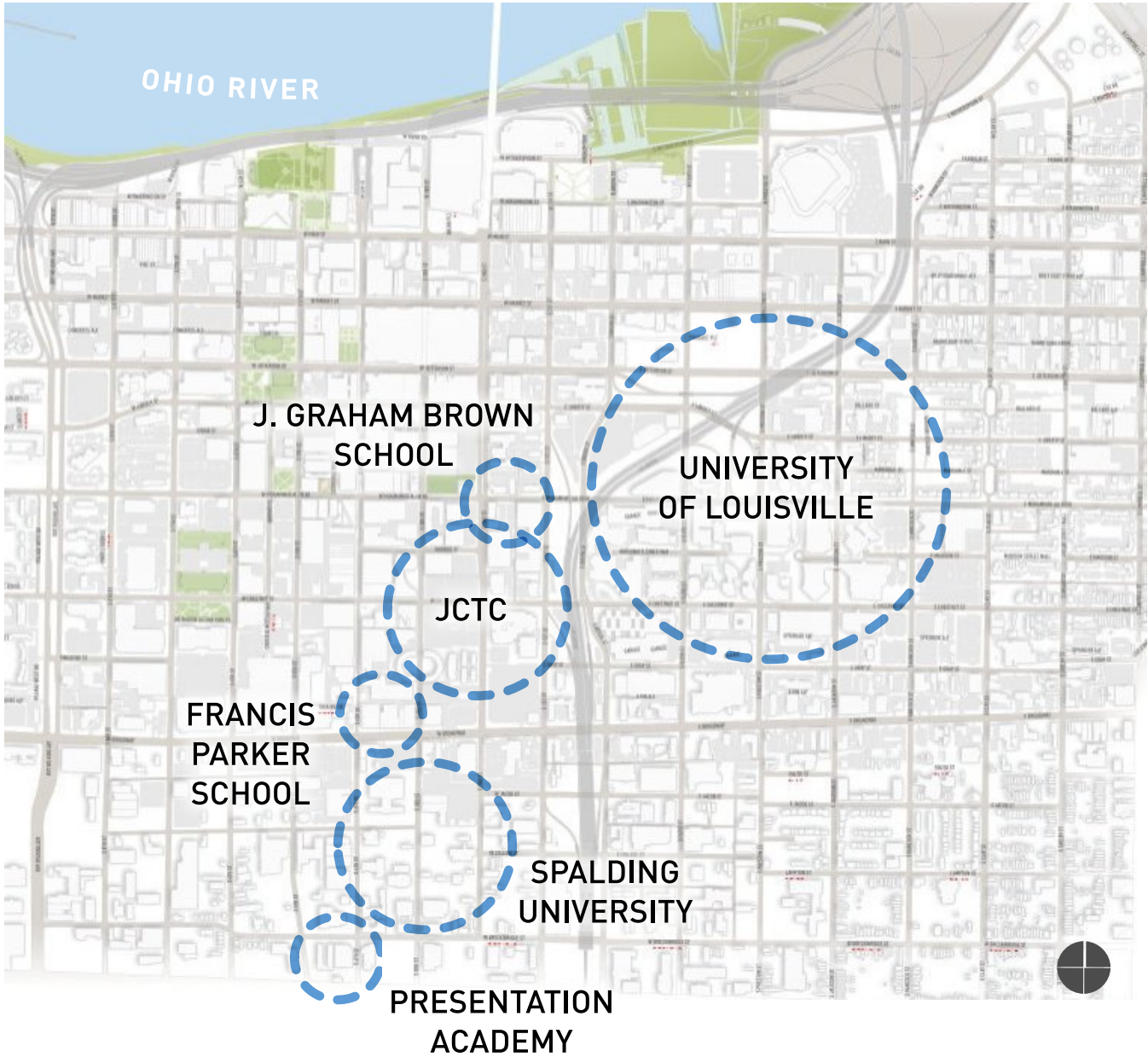
Surprisingly, this corridor of educational institutions is not well recognized - and certainly not well publicized - but its collective impact as a downtown anchor is nonetheless significant. Like UofL, most of these institutions have launched significant expansions to their facilities, including a \$90 million campus expansion at JCTC and a proposed facility expansion at Francis Parker School.

Assisting these institutions in their expansion plans, supplementing their investments with necessary improvements to the public realm, and reducing some of the challenges they face with their physical plant should be high priorities over the next decade. The **Broadway All the Way** initiative, for example, must address the series of confusing and unsafe traffic and pedestrian issues at intersections between Fourth and Brook Streets. Alleviating public safety concerns in the area would - in addition to providing a higher comfort level to students and their parents - also enable JCTC to resume offering evening classes to its students. Encouraging building conversions to residential uses in the adjacent area to accommodate student and international student housing, would address housing needs expressed by a number of these educational institutions.

All of these interventions can enable downtown’s Education Corridor and those institutions within it to thrive, increase activity levels of downtown Louisville, and enhance the desirability of these schools to students, faculty and staff.



Downtown Education Corridor



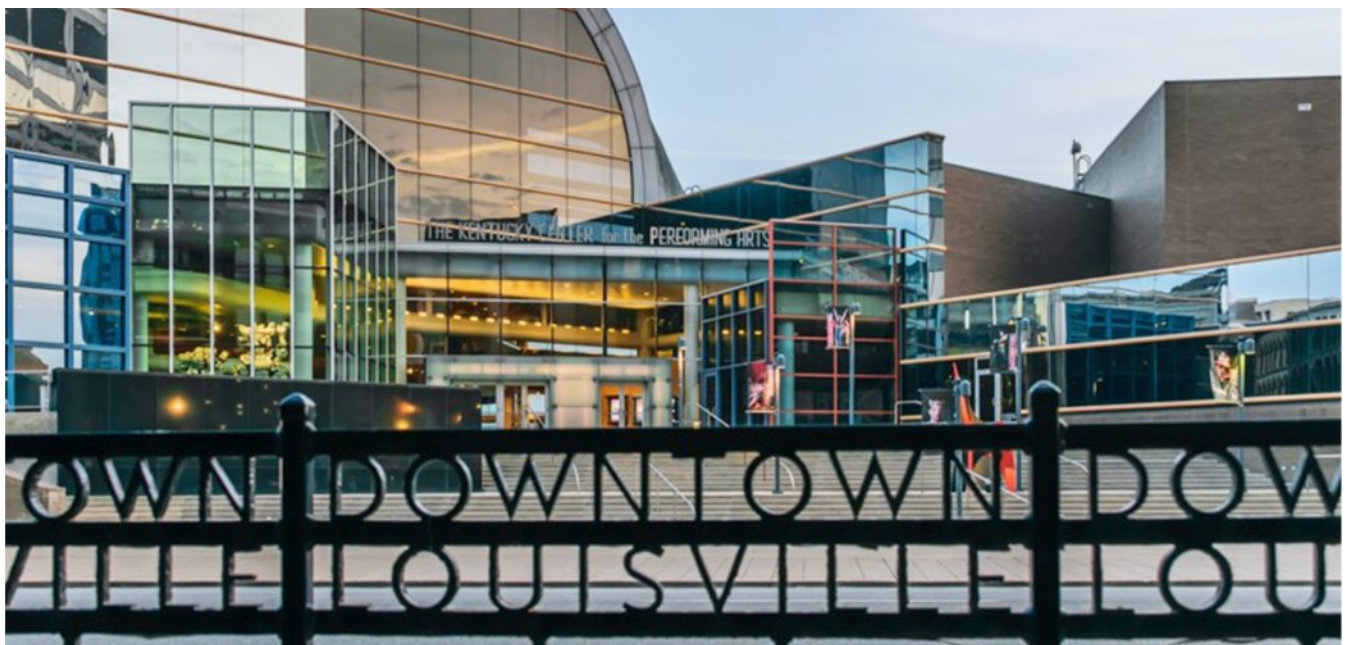
Arts & Culture

Louisville prides itself as a mid-sized city with a big city arts and culture scene - one that includes amenities like the Louisville Ballet, the Kentucky Opera, the Louisville Orchestra, Actors Theater, StageOne Louisville, KMAC Contemporary Art Museum, Louisville Glassworks, and more. Coupled with repertory theatre groups, art galleries, and the institutions along Museum Row, these downtown destinations serve as outstanding drivers for Louisville's cultural scene.

Although most are long-standing fixtures of downtown Louisville, their vitality and importance to the city should not be taken for granted. The arts have suffered tremendously during the COVID-19 pandemic, both in Louisville and across the country, and recovery has been slow. As such, downtown's cultural institutions must be recognized and supported in any plan to enhance downtown's overall health and sustainability.

One key approach is to increase the visibility of the arts and culture in downtown on a daily basis, through a coordinated effort between Louisville Metro, the LDP, and the arts and cultural community. Programming downtown's underutilized public spaces and outdoor plazas, where artists can engage with the public on a regular, more informal basis, can have mutual benefits. Efforts to highlight the local creativity of Louisville's artists, musicians, poets, etc. through programs akin to Lexington's Art on the Town, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, and the Louisville Orchestra's innovative Creative Corps, can all work to bring the arts scene alive on a daily basis. Working cooperatively with the Kentucky College of Art + Design to showcase student work downtown is also encouraged.

While much of Louisville's downtown arts scene is anchored by institutions and venues that provide space for performing arts and visual arts, increasing the visibility of elements of the arts can add to the vitality of downtown on a daily basis. Having music and arts students working or studying downtown, workshops about the creative process, coordinated thematic programs across multiple venues and institutions, and - as in the case of the Louisville Orchestra and KMAC - highlighting regional or statewide arts and music, in innovative ways throughout the public realm, would further enhance downtown's activity levels and help its arts institutions reach out to potential new audiences at the same time.





Showcase Louisville's Creativity

Downtown Louisville should serve as a unifying hub, welcoming residents, visitors, and tourists alike to experience the city's finest offerings. It should embody the essence of Louisville's uniqueness, getting a "taste" not only of its bourbon, but its other assets that make Louisville exceptional and special. Some of these assets are indeed evident and showcased downtown: the cast-iron historic district of West Main Street, Whiskey Row, the Muhammad Ali Center, the Louisville Slugger Museum, and of course the Bourbon Trail. While some nationally and internationally known attractions such as Churchill Downs may not be as prominent downtown, the recent opening of Derby City Gaming presents new opportunities to "celebrate" the iconic Kentucky Derby in the heart of downtown.

Louisville boasts several areas of creativity and innovation, from its longstanding bourbon heritage to newer developments like its emerging reputation as a "foodie city" and the innovative work of the Louisville Orchestra under conductor Teddy Abrams. Lesser-known initiatives include the Innovation Studio at GE Appliance Park and GE's FirstBuild design center, and the creative work in spirits being done at Moonshine University, the number one distilling school in the nation. These assets should be featured more prominently in downtown Louisville in order to stimulate activity and investment, much like the economic boost from bourbon tourism. Downtown can build on that foundation as well, by expanding the bourbon sector to elevate excitement and broaden the memorable experiences it brings. Likewise, downtown Louisville can capitalize on its growing national reputation for diverse food offerings, including farm-to-table, southern fusion, and international cuisine, not only tied to bourbon but embracing a wider spectrum. While innovation thrives across various neighborhoods, downtown lacks a centralized celebration of the city's rich culinary culture.

UNLEASH CREATIVITY, UNLOCK INNOVATION



SIP, STROLL, AND SAVOR THE BIRTHPLACE OF BOURBONISM®

We are a city of hot browns and Ali, riverfront parks and Slugger bats. We throw parties for horse races and pronounce Louisville like we've already had a taste of bourbon.

We are a place of unique offerings and world-class attractions – and our Bourbon District is no exception.

Located in Downtown Louisville, the Bourbon District is a walkable urban experience for anyone looking for a taste of Kentucky. In the Bourbon District, you're never more than 5 minutes away from the next attraction, so planning that group tour or birthday celebration just got a lot easier.



TRAVEL+ LEISURE

TRIP IDEAS

The Best Food Cities in the U.S.

From coast to coast, these are the best places to travel for foodies.

FOOD & DRINK

Louisville Is The Best Foodie City In The U.S., According To ApartmentAdvisor Study

BY CAROLYN BROWN

Foodie and Friendly Puts Louisville on the National List

City receives three Travel + Leisure accolades.



Eat & Drink

Welcome to the Culinary Capital of Bourbon Country.

A culinary adventure in Louisville takes you deep into the heart of the Bourbon Country lifestyle. But Bourbon isn't the only star of our menus. Our chefs are taking traditional regional Southern dishes and putting their own unique twists on them, making Louisville the epicenter for "New Southern Cuisine". And of course, you'll need to learn the local food language of treats like: Benedictine, Burgoo, Modjeskas and the Hot Brown. Don't be afraid to ask!



Sponsored by Walker's



Sponsored by Swizzle Dinner



Sponsored by Barn8



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Sponsored by Cumbria Hotel

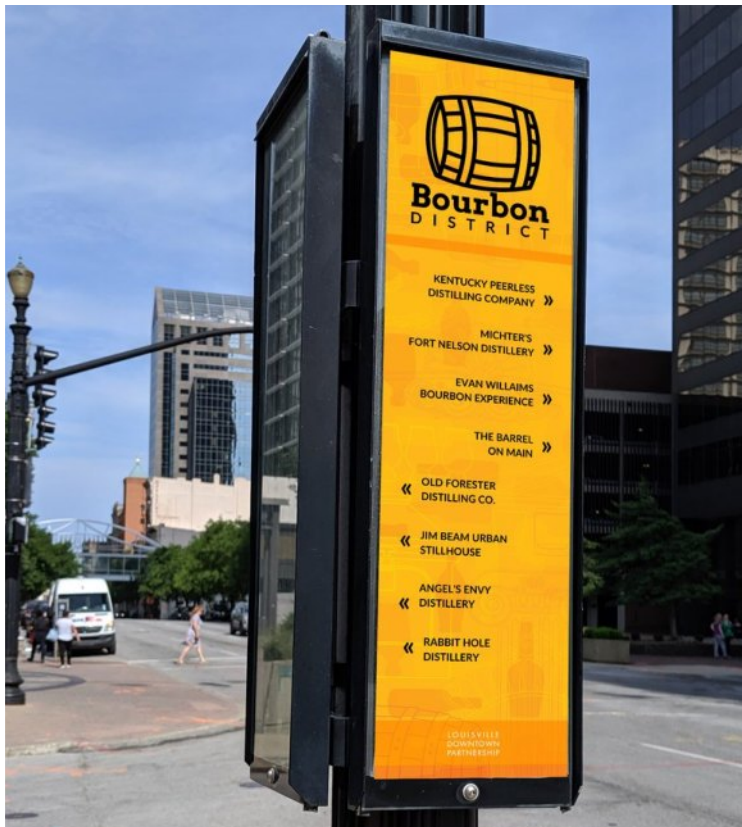


Sponsored by Blue Horse

Showcase Louisville's Creativity (cont.)

Despite high tourism levels, gaps exist in the downtown visitor experience. Louisville Tourism discussions revealed that some tourists are disappointed by the lack of bourbon-related activities beyond distillery tours due to advanced booking requirements. Additional attractions such as live music spots (which Louisville Tourism will begin sponsoring this spring) and diverse food options are needed. Introducing a performance kitchen for regular bourbon-inspired food demonstrations and showcasing other Louisville food creations, would significantly enhance downtown Louisville's tourism offerings, and generate local interest as well.

Currently, outdoor dining is sparse in downtown Louisville - particularly those visible from the street. Prioritizing the expansion of outdoor seating at existing restaurants is crucial. Utilizing vacant indoor and outdoor spaces creatively to introduce new food options is also important.





Showcase Louisville's Creativity (cont.)

To address these gaps and showcase the best of Louisville, the creation of a central “Louisville Creativity Center” is recommended. This activity generator could feature:

- A non-profit restaurant modeled loosely on the M. Francis concept in Washington, D.C., part of the LEE Initiative (Let's Empower Employment) created by Louisville chef Edward Lee
- A culinary arts training program, in conjunction with the above restaurant
- A performance kitchen - sponsored by General Electric - to showcase the company's new products, serve as the working kitchen for the training program, and offer bourbon-infused and other creative food performances
- An exhibition of GE Innovation Center products, such as an indoor vertical pizza oven, which could be utilized by the restaurant
- A presence of Moonshine University, highlighting the newest innovations in bourbon and spirits
- Outdoor space that includes restaurant seating, a small stage for outdoor bourbon-infused food demonstrations, and regular live music performances
- An enclosed glass pavilion near or adjacent to the restaurant, which could include a brew pub, spaces for bourbon tastings, kiosks to highlight local culinary favorites, house a farmer's market and more
- Outdoor casual seating with space for food trucks

While this may seem to be an ambitious program, the synergies would be high if a majority of these uses could be accommodated, and it would help highlight and brand Louisville as a “City of Creativity and Innovation.” A location in the heart of downtown, easily accessible to tourists, residents, and the convention center would be preferable, especially if the indoor space could utilize currently vacant retail space and the outdoor space could activate one of the Open Space Network spaces. A public/private partnership could be established to master lease the space.



Examples of central gathering places



Concept of the Louisville Creativity Center



Examples of visible outdoor activity

Expand Downtown's Attractions

The recent tourism boom - largely but not exclusively driven by bourbon - has served as a major catalyst for activity in downtown Louisville, renovating historic properties, bringing more hotel rooms to downtown, and providing activity levels otherwise diminished by the impacts of the pandemic. Thanks to many popular attractions on Whiskey Row and Museum Row, downtown Louisville's tourism sector has never been stronger and continued growth is expected, particularly as newly authorized tasting rooms begin to showcase even more signature bourbon brands.



While some of these attractions certainly appeal to local residents, a common perception is that most locals visit only when hosting out-of-town guests. Still, the foundation of attractions in downtown Louisville is strong and should be expanded even further to broaden the area's appeal for residents and tourists alike.

One such opportunity is the development of one or more **“family-friendly” attractions**. Although families regularly enjoy destinations like Waterfront Park and the Kentucky Science Center, there are limited options for families in search of activities downtown. The Science Center and the Portland Museum's proposed Adventure House serve as attractions for children, although a more comprehensive children's museum does not currently exist. An entity such as the highly acclaimed City Museum in St. Louis would complement these existing facilities and would do much to increase the attractiveness of downtown for families. In the past, efforts to develop such facilities as strictly public initiatives have not been successful; however, downtown Louisville could explore hybrid public/private initiatives.





Waterfront Park



Louisville Science Center



City Museum in St. Louis

Expand Downtown's Attractions

The city should also leverage the growing popularity of **recreational sports activities** that can be accessed downtown, especially if combined with the availability of food and beverage. The Baird Urban Sports Park on Main Street, though temporary, represents a good example of this. It is important to identify and develop more permanent spaces for informal activities, as well as engage new ventures into other emerging sports/entertainment concepts - axe-throwing and rock climbing (both already available in NuLu), pickleball, golf simulation, etc.

Likewise, a sports and recreational complex can provide yet another activity anchor for downtown Louisville, especially in buildings with prime locations but limited commercial leasing activity. Many of these venue types are already opening in locations outside of downtown. To cater to urban patrons, the city should prioritize finding appropriately-sized and underutilized spaces in the greater downtown area.

Even as Louisville's ability to attract large numbers of people through its variety of major outdoor multi-day music festivals continues to grow, one of the most under-represented attractions in downtown Louisville is a regular **live music scene**, which can attract both tourists and local residents. The positive national attention that these large events generate should result in more interest in Louisville as a "player" in the music industry. While the impact may be more modest than Nashville or Sixth Street in Austin, it would appear that more opportunities exist today than ever to bring more music and music-related production to downtown Louisville. In addition, the Louisville Orchestra has made remarkable strides in recent years to expand its reach throughout the Commonwealth and celebrate a wider range of musical styles. By promoting its musical heritage more prominently through formal and informal channels, Louisville can inspire visitors as programming outdoor spaces such as CitySpots for regular impromptu performances.





Improve Downtown Transit

Downtown Louisville has struggled in the past to provide reliable transit service and facilitate circulation in the downtown area. Some efforts have achieved modest success, such as the rubber-wheeled trolleys that formerly travelled along Main, Market, and Fourth Streets. Newer energy-efficient zero-bus circulators continue to operate downtown, but their visibility and presence as a downtown amenity is limited and current use remains low. Despite their shortcomings, the aesthetic value of the trolleys or a similarly “branded” transit vehicle would infuse downtown Louisville with visible recognition and appeal, and likely higher usage. This is especially important as a way to encourage movement between and among downtown’s districts.

Currently, the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) operates a “hub and spoke” system, which brings many routes into the downtown area. This provides much-needed transit service for those who work downtown but do not have the means or access to a car. It also results in frequent transit stops along many downtown streets, which some business owners and residents may consider a nuisance. However, transforming many of downtown Louisville’s streets into pedestrian-friendly zones with more attention to accommodating a wide range of mobility options - including transit and bicycles - within a reconfigured right-of-way will likely alleviate these issues to some extent. Defining certain streets as transit corridors - and providing appropriate waiting areas and facilities for transit users - is highly recommended.

Downtown Louisville should undergo a thorough review of current transit lines in order to create a more efficient and targeted downtown transit system overall. Recommended priorities include:

- An improved and more recognizable Main Street/Market Street circulator;
- A circulator from UofL’s Belknap campus to downtown Louisville, including Old Louisville and SoBro;
- A downtown Louisville/LOUMED circulator;
- A Fourth Street circulator;
- A more efficient system of transit stop locations in downtown Louisville.

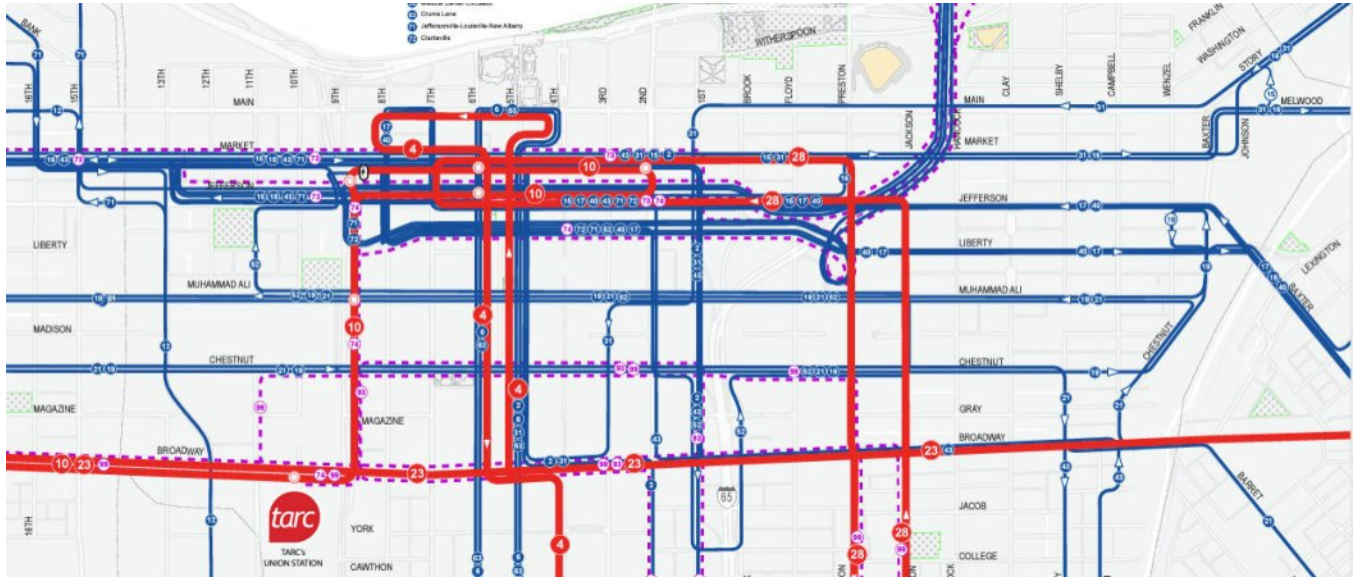
Additionally, improved connections from the south can significantly attract more people into downtown Louisville. Prospective patrons include students, faculty and staff from UofL, Simmons College, Spalding University, and Presentation Academy - many of whom depend on mass transit. For many years, this corridor - often imagined as light rail or rapid bus transit - has been considered the most feasible opportunity for higher density transit in Louisville, especially if emanating from Louisville International Airport and the Kentucky Exposition Center. Given the emergence of new leadership within TARC and the availability of enhanced federal funding, combined with expansions and investments within the institutions along this route - both planned and ongoing - it may be an appropriate time to revisit such rapid transit options.



Former Downtown Trolley



Current Zero-Bus circulator



Downtown TARC transit route



West Main Street transit shelter



Light Rail concept





Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood

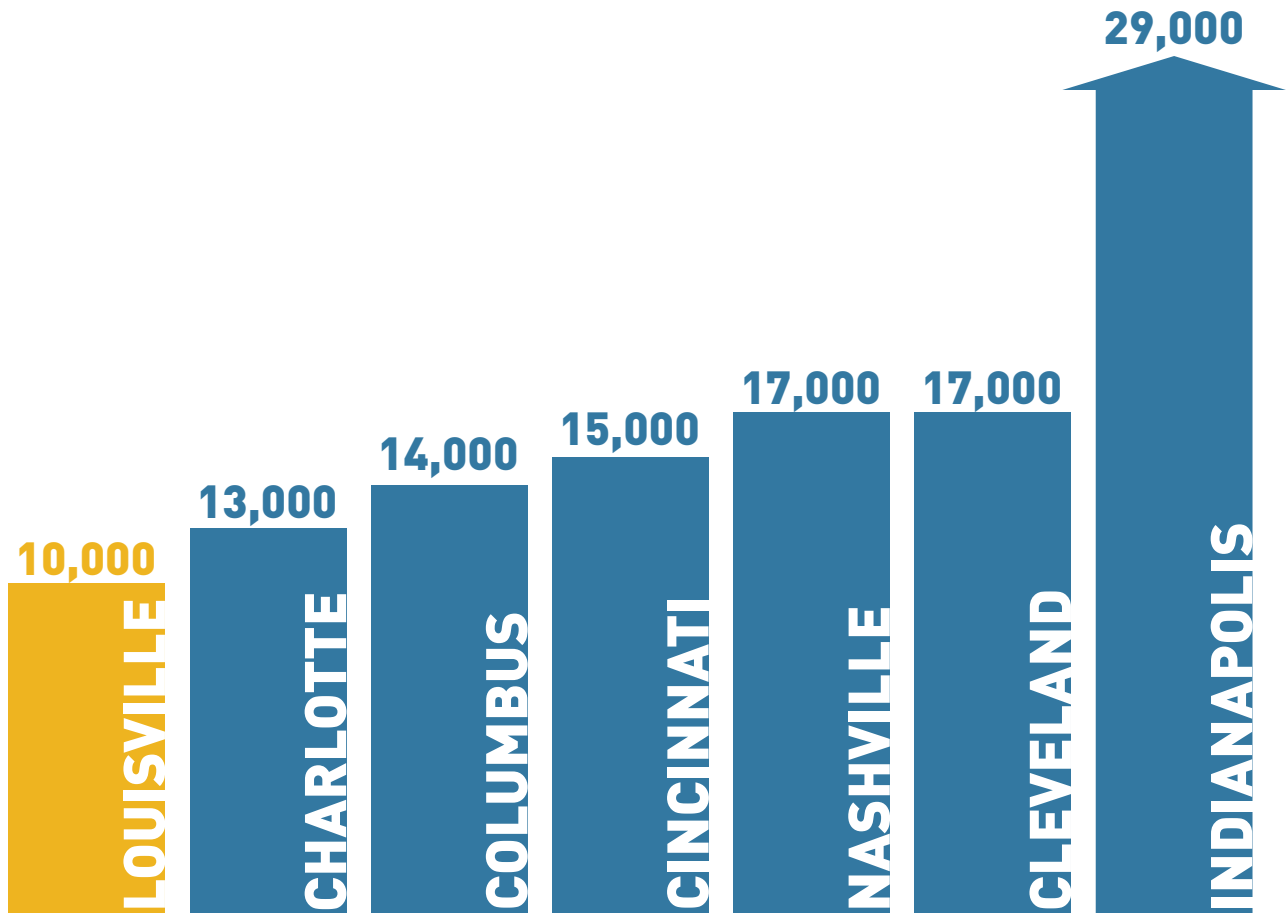
The overall economic health of downtown Louisville over the next 10 years greatly depends on the establishment of a strong residential sector. This cannot be overstated. The residential population of downtown will become a major driver of its economy. To attract more residents, downtown Louisville must provide a sense of neighborhood and community that exemplifies the same quality of place as any other desirable residential neighborhood in the city.

City leaders have long recognized the importance of forging a strong residential component in downtown Louisville, beginning with the creation of the innovative Downtown Housing Fund in 2004. Today, the new paradigm for downtown Louisville’s continued vitality demands an even stronger focus on residential development - one that goes beyond simply bringing new housing units to the market.

Downtown Louisville must establish distinct residential *neighborhoods*, with amenities at comfortable walking distances and an atmosphere of community that make people want to live there. The reduced number of office workers will make this residential expansion a key economic driver for downtown Louisville, bringing much needed demand to commercial establishments such as restaurants and bars.

The Market

Downtown Louisville has made strides in expanding its residential population, which has increased in recent years. But it still lags behind its competitor cities. Today, there exists significant opportunity to attract more prospective residents to the downtown area and its surrounding neighborhoods. An updated market demand analysis conducted by Zimmerman Volk Associates (ZVA) indicates that downtown Louisville and surrounding neighborhoods could absorb between 413 and 554 new residential units annually over the next five years.



Downtown number of residents

Downtown Residential Market Analysis

Target Market Households

Young Singles & Couples:	58%
Empty Nesters & Retirees:	31%
Traditional & Non-Traditional Families:	11%

Their Housing Preferences

Rental apartments:	54%
Condominiums:	7%
Rowhouses/townhouses:	10%
Detached houses:	29%

Annual Absorption Forecasts Newly-Developed Units

Housing Type	Units Absorbed	Capture Rates
Apartments	307 to 409 du	10 to 12.5%
Condominiums	25 to 34 du	7.5 to 10%
Townhouses	24 to 38 du	5 to 7.5%
Houses	37 to 73 du	2.5 to 5%

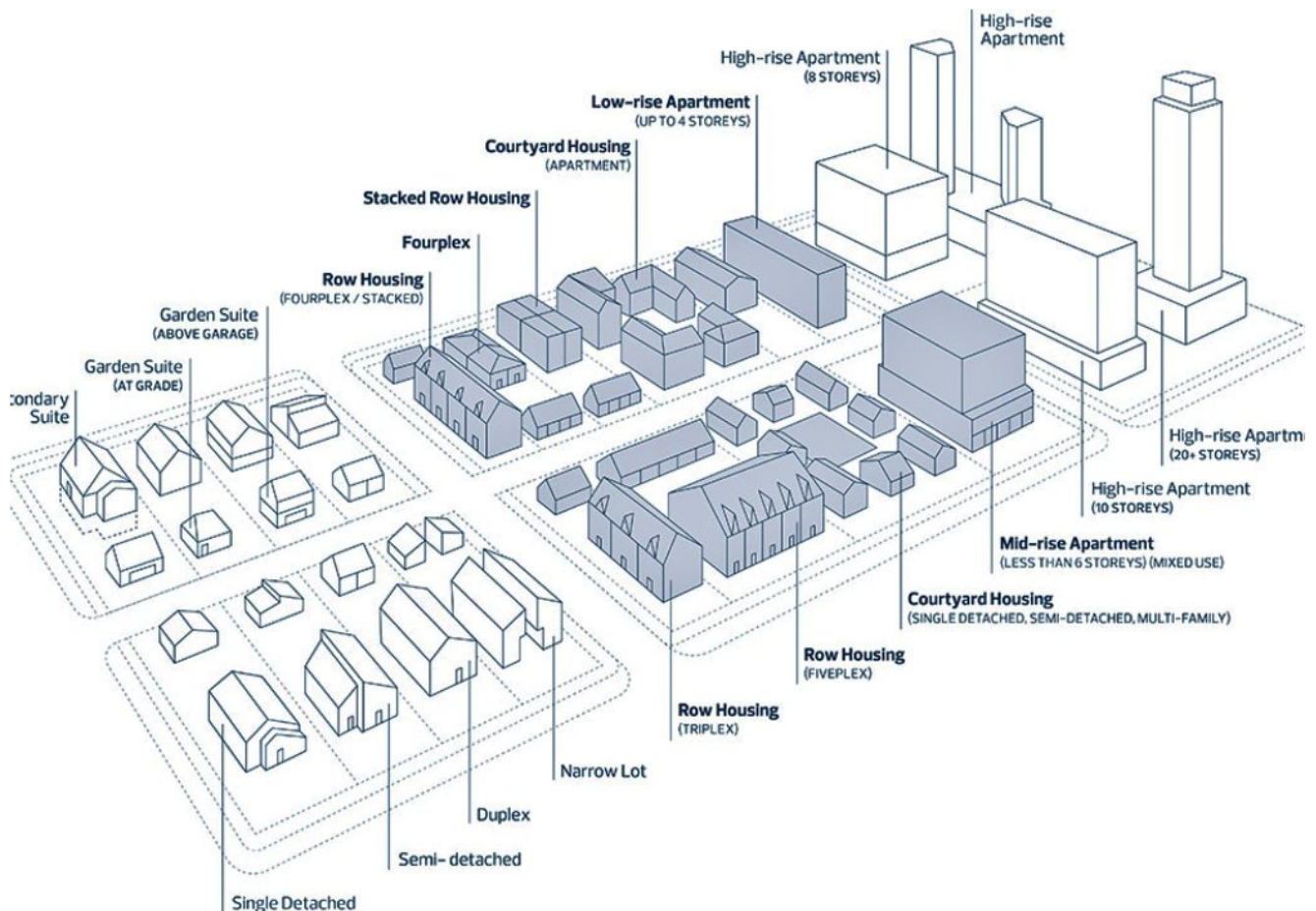
After Five Years Newly-Developed Study Area Units

1,635 to 2,045 new rental units
430 to 725 new ownership units

Currently, the demographics of downtown's residents converge around a combination of young professionals and empty nesters. These groups will continue to make up the majority of those seeking downtown living. However, there is significant unmet demand for families and those seeking a housing type other than the typical downtown apartment unit. What has come to be known as "missing middle" housing types - garden apartments, duplexes, townhouses, cottages, small single-family homes, etc. - are difficult to develop in the heart of a central business district. Land costs, property assembly, and fitting into the existing urban fabric all present challenges, and as a result these options are for the most part unavailable in the heart of downtown. These housing options are more feasible along the edges of downtown Louisville.

More diverse housing also demands a wider range of affordability. In terms of occupancy, the downtown residential market has largely rebounded following a drop-off during the COVID-19 pandemic, but typical rental rates remain fairly uniform. As such, those who wish to live downtown but possess more limited means are often unable to find units within their price range. A wider range of housing styles, developed in areas where land costs are lower, can offer a range of affordability as well. In addition, public incentives to encourage and accelerate the construction of downtown housing units can be structured to provide more affordable units as well.

Missing Middle Housing



Their Housing Preferences

Rental apartments: 54%

Condominiums: 7%

Rowhouses/townhouses: 10%

Detached houses: 29%

Gaps in downtown housing inventory



Missing Middle housing examples

Focus Areas

Given the need for more people living downtown, and the market demand that exists, downtown Louisville must prioritize an increase in the development of additional residential units throughout its various districts. This Strategy suggests three areas of attention: (1) infill on vacant property; (2) office-to-residential conversions; and (3) downtown edge neighborhoods.

3 Components to the Housing Strategy

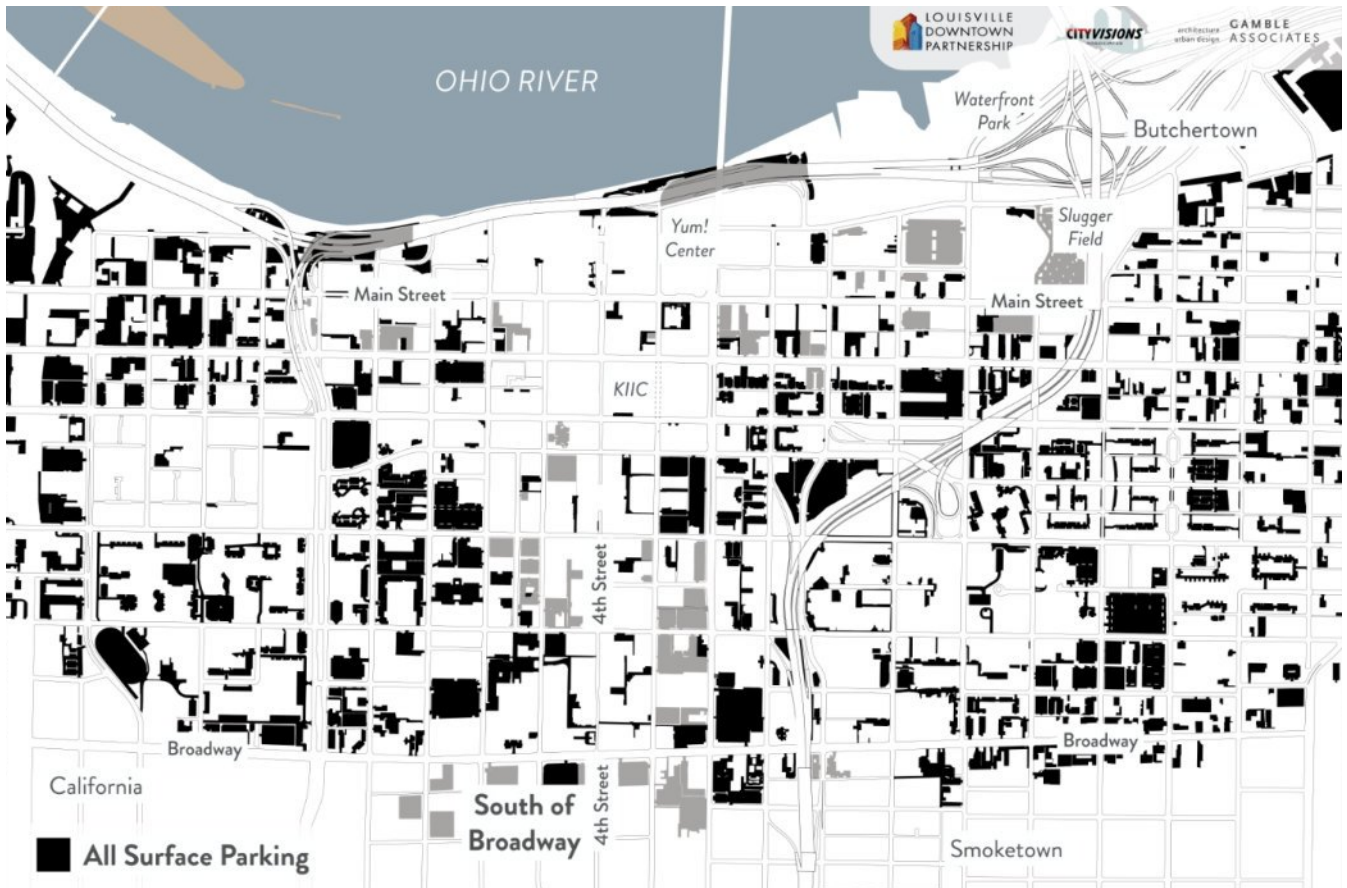
1. Vacant sites / Buildings
2. Office to Residential conversions
3. Downtown / Edge Neighborhoods

Vacant Lot Infill

There are a significant number of vacant properties in downtown Louisville, many of which have been utilized as surface parking lots for long periods of time. Over the years, property owners faced little pressure to develop these parcels, given the profitability of surface parking, tax assessment policies that do not reflect development valuation, and capital gains issues.

Today, these vacant lots not only act as “missing teeth” in the urban fabric - they also represent lost opportunities to further activate the downtown environment, especially for residential and/or mixed-use development. In recent years, the surge in hotels as a result of increased tourism has also resulted in higher land values for vacant parcels that have transferred ownership, which presents yet another hurdle to developing them as residential properties.

Nonetheless, the reduced need for parking downtown can serve as an opportunity to encourage more of these vacant lots to be considered for development, with residential use currently holding the highest demand. Downtown Louisville should consider providing incentives for surface parking conversions to their property owners through the Downtown Housing Fund and other mechanisms. Many of the same incentives for office-to-residential conversions can be offered for the conversion of surface parking lots to residential use.



Downtown surface parking

Office to Residential Conversion

The post-pandemic environment has accelerated interest in redeveloping vacant office space into residential use. This is a sound strategy that can help to reduce the inventory of excess office space and add to the residential inventory. Modern Class A-space office towers are difficult to adapt to residential use both physically and economically. Additionally, these structures remain the most desirable locations for many office tenants. As the office market recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important to retain downtown's most desirable office space for the retention and attraction of businesses interested in a downtown location.

What Would It Take to Turn More Offices Into Housing?

Vast amounts of empty real estate are a crisis for building owners. But some politicians and business leaders hope they can be



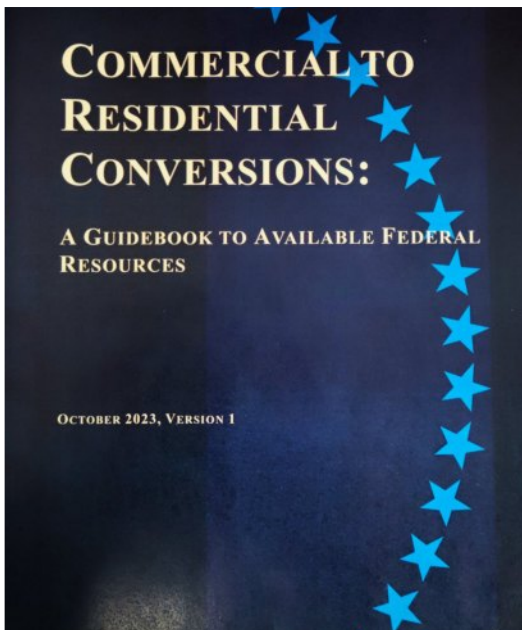
However, many Class-B and Class-C buildings are strong candidates for residential conversions. These buildings may no longer be desirable for office use, given the needs of today's and tomorrow's users, but the spatial configurations of these buildings often make them quite adaptable for conversion into residential units. A good number of these structures also qualify for historic and other tax credit programs, which offer significant financing assistance. Downtown Louisville contains numerous such properties, among them the Starks Building, the Kentucky Home Life Building, and the Heyburn Building. The Fiscal Court Building - part of Louisville Metro's property redevelopment initiative - is also a prime candidate for residential conversion. It is imperative to focus attention on the redevelopment of these buildings into residential use and/or a mixed-use development with a strong residential component.

Many cities are now in the process of incentivizing such conversions in a number of ways. The most impactful tool is property tax relief. This is difficult to offer in Louisville due to local restrictions on property tax incentives, which are imposed by the state. However, the urgency of the post-pandemic office market situation suggests that it may be worthwhile to promote such a program in Frankfort.

In addition to tax relief, both Louisville Metro and the Downtown Development Corporation can encourage residential conversions by providing property owners with technical assistance, local incentive funds, and investment partnership opportunities, and the provision of necessary ancillary infrastructure such as streetscape improvements and parking. The city can also catalyze office-to-residential conversions by streamlining the planning and building regulatory process to “fast track” projects at the local level, and by advocating for the State Historic Preservation Office to prioritize such conversions when reviewing and awarding historic tax credits.



Prime Downtown buildings for conversion from office to residential



Cleveland is, indeed, a national leader in office building conversions

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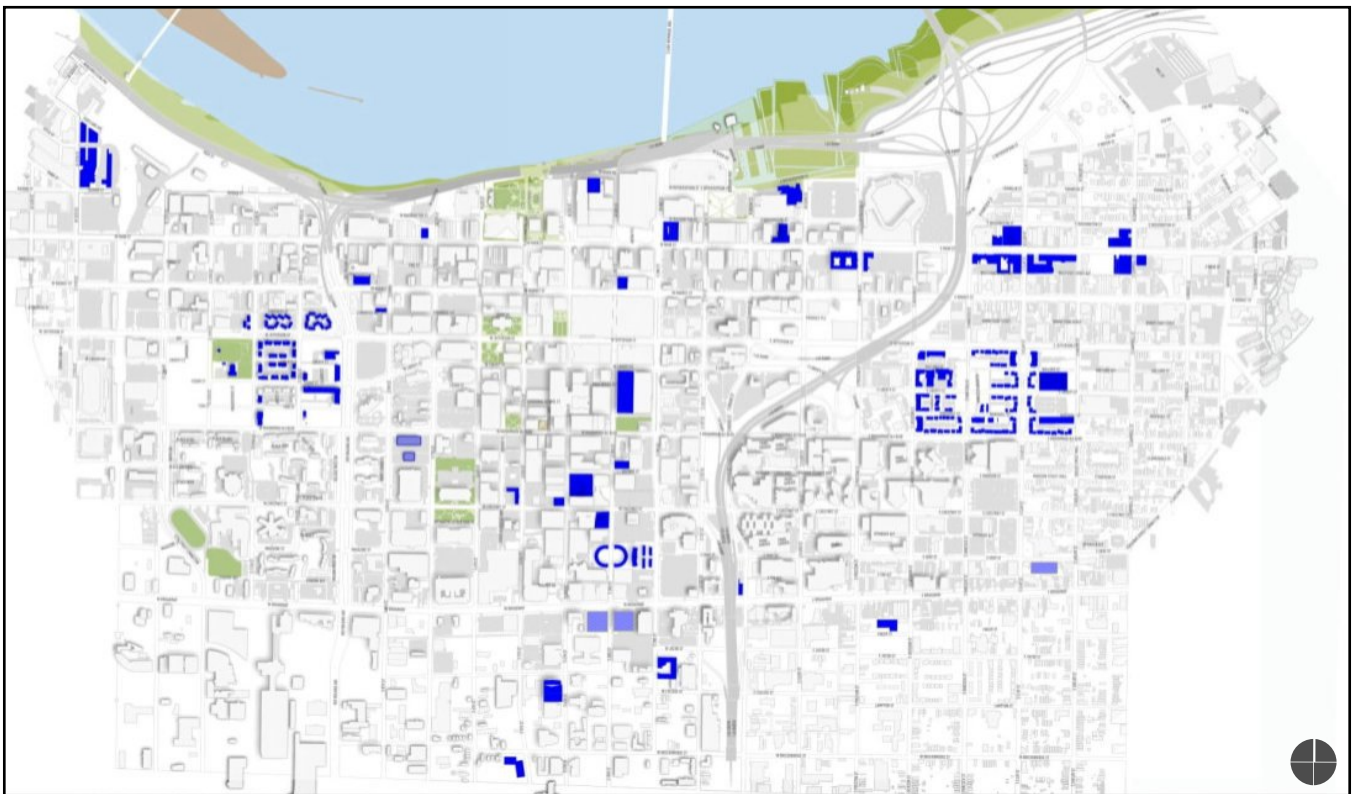
Downtown Residential Neighborhoods

Given the dynamics of the “new” post-pandemic downtown, more residential development is certainly warranted. However, rather than focusing only on encouraging new residential development amid a sea of existing buildings, downtown Louisville must also create residential *neighborhoods*; that is, clusters of residential properties and supporting amenities that evoke a vibrant and connected neighborhood feel. This includes parks, food and beverage establishments, cafes and coffee shops, places to walk – and walk dogs – and relax.

Although it is difficult to establish residential neighborhoods within downtown Louisville’s central business district, there are opportunities along downtown’s edges and in adjacent neighborhoods - not only to create a unique neighborhood feel, but also to offer a greater variety of housing styles, affordable price points, and densities not currently available in the downtown area.

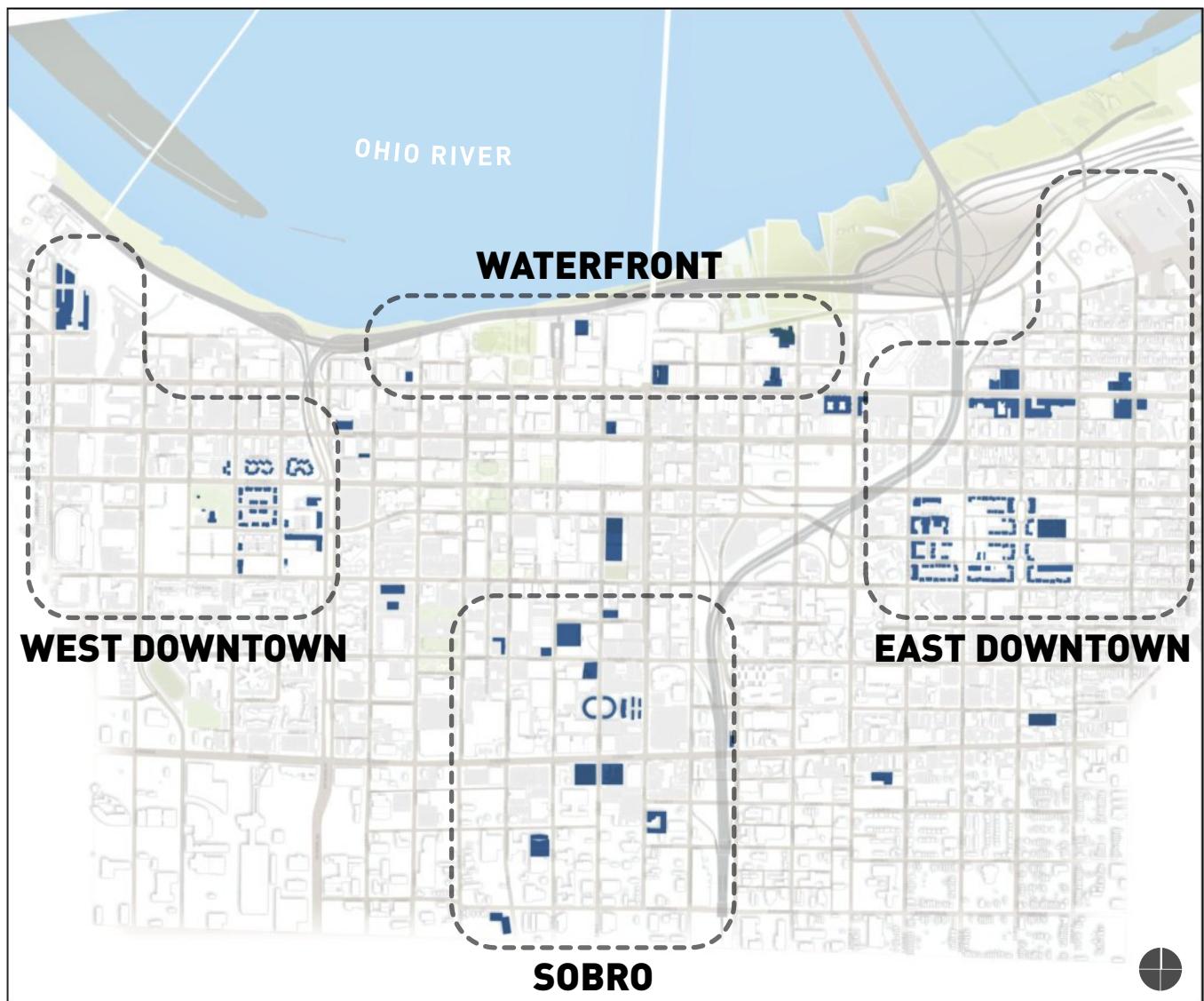
Downtown Louisville’s current inventory of residential properties is scattered throughout the downtown area. The densest concentrations are found east and west of the central business district - including the transformations of former public housing complexes at Liberty Green and Beecher Terrace - and in the East Main Street/Market Street corridor stretching from Interstate I-65 to Butchertown. Adjacent to Broadway and extending into the South of Broadway area (SoBro) is another concentration, which will further increase as recently announced developments come online.

Existing Downtown Residential Properties



The concept of “downtown” housing, however, needs to expand beyond simply placing a residential building somewhere between Nulu and the CBD. Areas on the edges of downtown that have been underdeveloped for decades, but remain highly accessible to downtown and all that it offers, provide opportunities to create not only more housing, but *residential neighborhood clusters*. A number of such areas exist.

Downtown Residential Neighborhoods



Downtown Residential Neighborhoods (cont.)

Primary among them, as cited above, is the area along Broadway and to its south – anchored by Francis Parker School, JCTC, LOUMED, and Spalding University – which can offer a variety of housing from higher density development along Broadway to a range of “missing middle” housing within SoBro. The existence of the Louisville Free Library as well as a number of city-owned parks (i.e. Memorial Park and Ben Washer Park) - with some design upgrades – add to the amenities available in the neighborhood and strengthen its potential as a desirable location for urban living.

SoBro Residential Opportunities



Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood



Existing Brown Brothers property @ 4th/Broadway



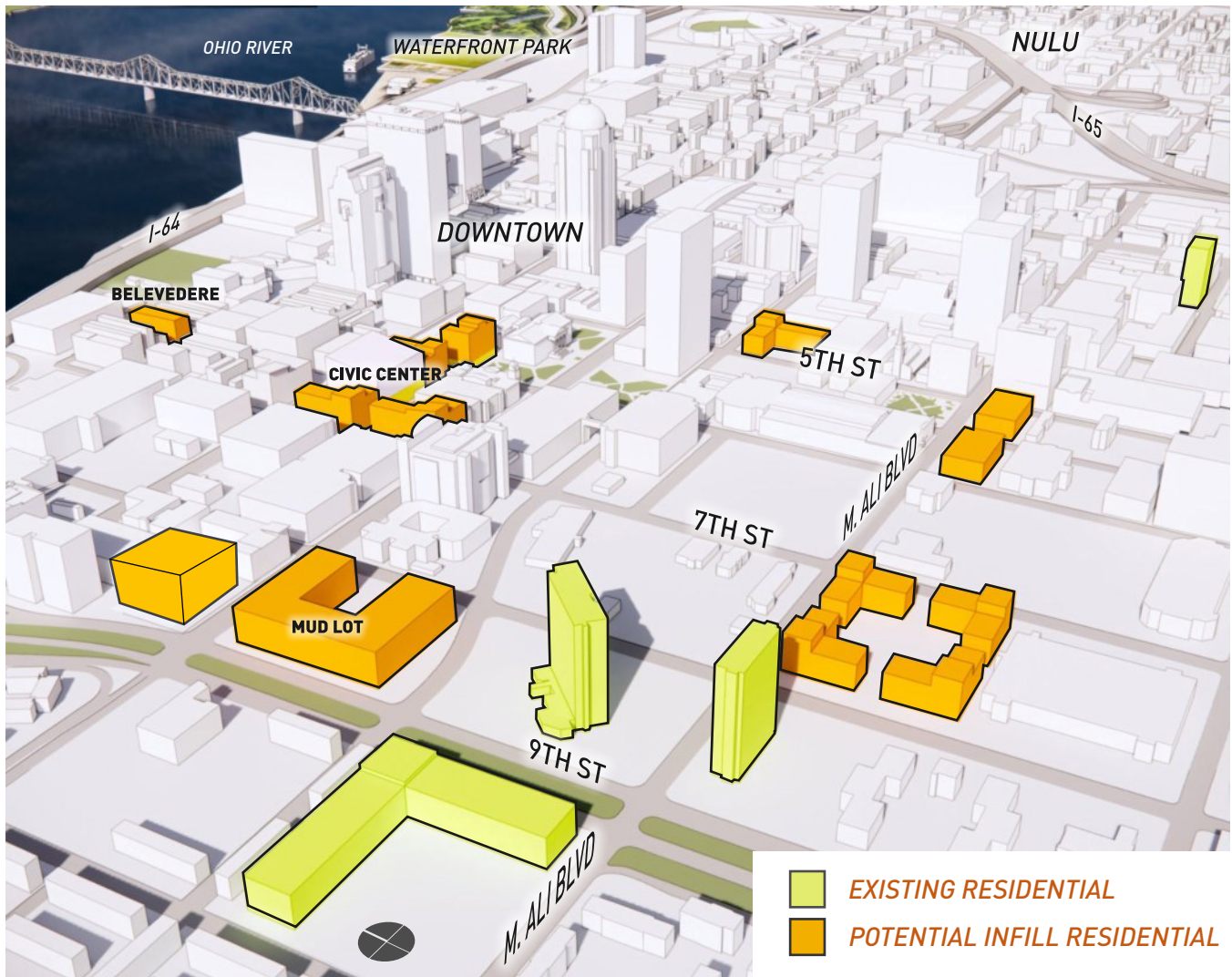
Proposed residential development (Credit: LDG Development)

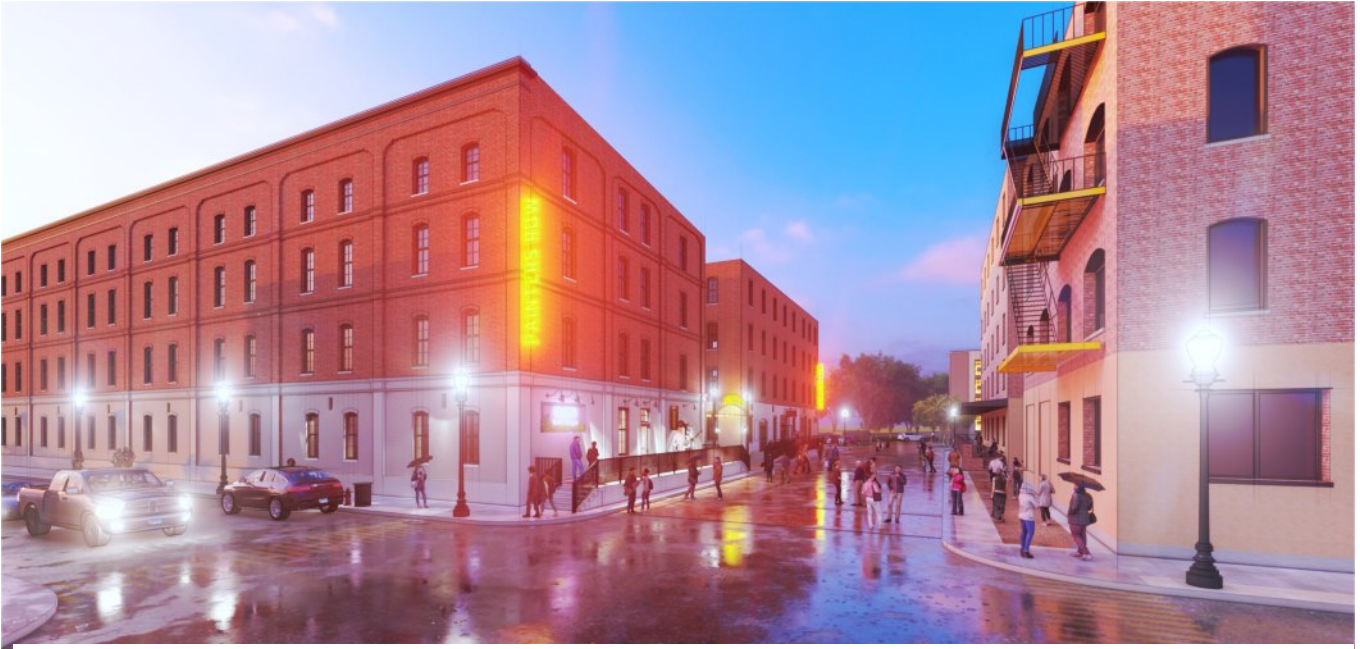


Missing Middle Housing Examples

The west edge of downtown - including the area north of Main Street known either as Shippingport or the Warehouse District or East Portland - also presents significant opportunities for additional downtown edge residential development, as exemplified by the recent opening of Painters Row at 15th and Lytle Streets. The impending development of Phase IV of the Waterfront Park will like spur more interest in this as an interesting place to live...and play.

West Downtown Residential Opportunities





Painters Row @ 15th/Lytle Streets (Credit: Weyland Ventures, LLC)



Conceptual proposed residential on Greyhound site (Credit: LDG Development)

The areas of east downtown, including the waterfront, has already seen significant residential development, with more in various pre-development stages. In addition, three large parcels of property on the edges of Butchertown exist, and these can provide a significant number, housing styles, and price points of residential units within them.

These edge districts represent the greatest opportunities for the creation of true downtown neighborhoods. Property values tend to be lower, parcels are larger, and there is a proximity of available property enabling larger development. Such advantages offer a much more fertile ground for the introduction and expansion of diverse housing styles and pricing, which - according to the ZVA analysis - makes up almost 40 percent of the demand for downtown living. Fortunately, most of these areas already possess a nucleus of residential development that can be expanded upon.

For this potential to be realized, advanced actions - including assembling of properties as they become available - should be undertaken in order that opportunities are not lost or diminished. The inclusion of a strong residential component of the Louisville Metro development properties should be prioritized, New Land Development Code revisions and regulations that specifically permit and *encourage* a range of missing middle housing are essential. The creation of new public/private development partnerships that *invest* in efforts to advance these residential neighborhood clusters, as pilot projects that demonstrate their market acceptance, can act as strong catalysts for increasing the residential component of downtown's vitality.



East Downtown residential developments

Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood



Butchertown development



East Downtown residential developments





Enhance the Public Realm

A high-quality and socially engaging public realm is essential to the overall health and sustainability of downtown Louisville. No longer simply a “nice” amenity, the public realm must rise to meet the increasing needs and choices that people have regarding where they wish to work, live, visit, and play. While most of the necessary infrastructure elements are already in place, downtown Louisville’s attention to cultivating a **quality of place** has waned in recent years. Following these strategic initiatives will jumpstart efforts to expand, Enhance, and celebrate that quality of place and infuse throughout downtown the very best that Louisville has to offer its citizens and visitors.

Prioritize Downtown's Streets for Pedestrians

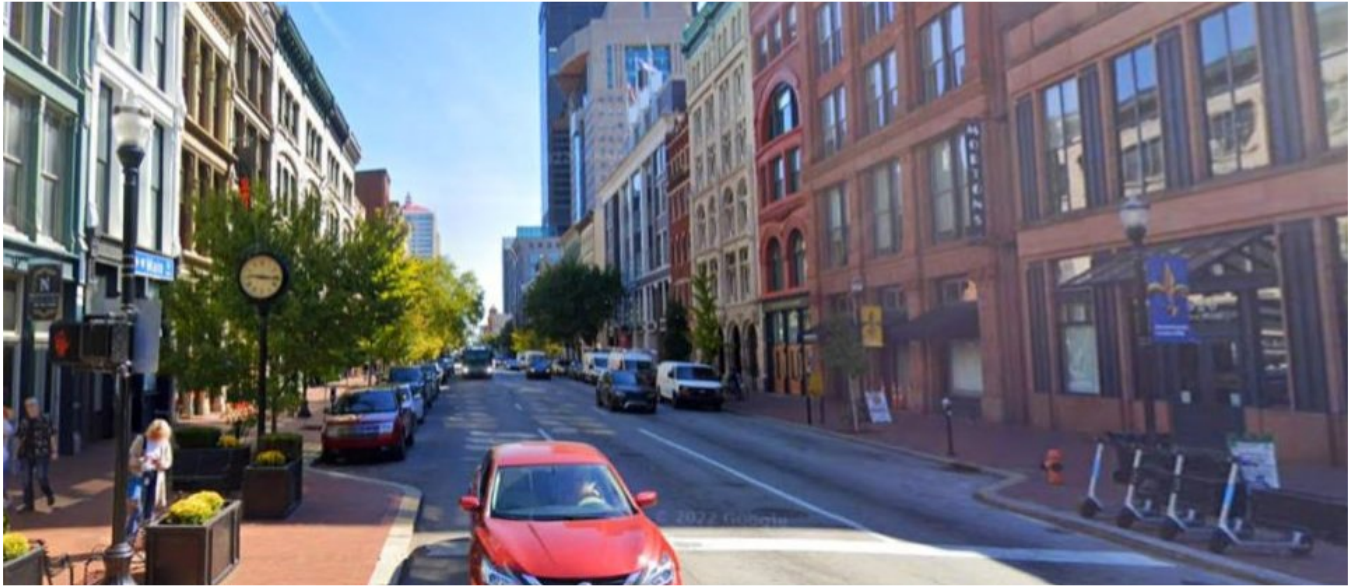
The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a trend previously seen across downtowns nationwide, though less so in Louisville: the transformation of downtown streets into more comfortable places for people rather than prioritizing commuters. Measures to reduce excess capacity, convert one-way traffic to two-way, enhance tree canopies and landscaping, and minimize impervious pavement and heat-island effects have been implemented in many downtowns. While “road diets” to reduce vehicular speeds and improve pedestrian and cyclist environments have been implemented in various locations throughout Louisville, they remain more the exception than the rule in its downtown.

Some years ago, West Main Street underwent significant improvements, becoming a focal point in downtown Louisville as an interesting and pedestrian-friendly street. While it reflects the district's unique character and offers a comfortable, engaging atmosphere for pedestrians, many other downtown streets remain confusing, intimidating, and unsafe. Factors such as excessive road capacity, high speeds, and minimal pedestrian amenities contribute to this condition. For instance, Market Street - just a block south of West Main Street - offers an altogether different, less cherished experience. Similarly, River Road - only a block north - presents a dark and hostile environment for pedestrians seeking access to the waterfront, contrary to its potential as a welcoming connection point between downtown and the River.

Plans to revamp streets and corridors surrounding downtown neglect to extend improvements and conversions from one-way to two-way traffic into the heart of downtown itself. This largely stems from prioritizing commuter routes, particularly for accessing bridges across the Ohio River (more recently, the toll-free Second Street Bridge). However, downtown streets, which comprise a large portion of its public space, should not be solely dedicated to accommodating commuter patterns that prioritize the movement of cars during peak hours, but should instead prioritize the needs of downtown's stakeholders throughout the day and night. In downtown Louisville, excessive space is allocated to automobiles through wide streets, surface lots, and parking structures. Many cities nationwide are rebalancing priorities in their downtown street rights-of-ways, often with positive outcomes. This presents an opportune moment for Louisville, especially given reduced rush-hour traffic in the post-pandemic era. Louisville's policies regarding its streets should reflect the needs of downtown's users *throughout* the day as it seeks to create pedestrian-friendly and inviting streetscapes.

Downtown Louisville Street System





West Main Street



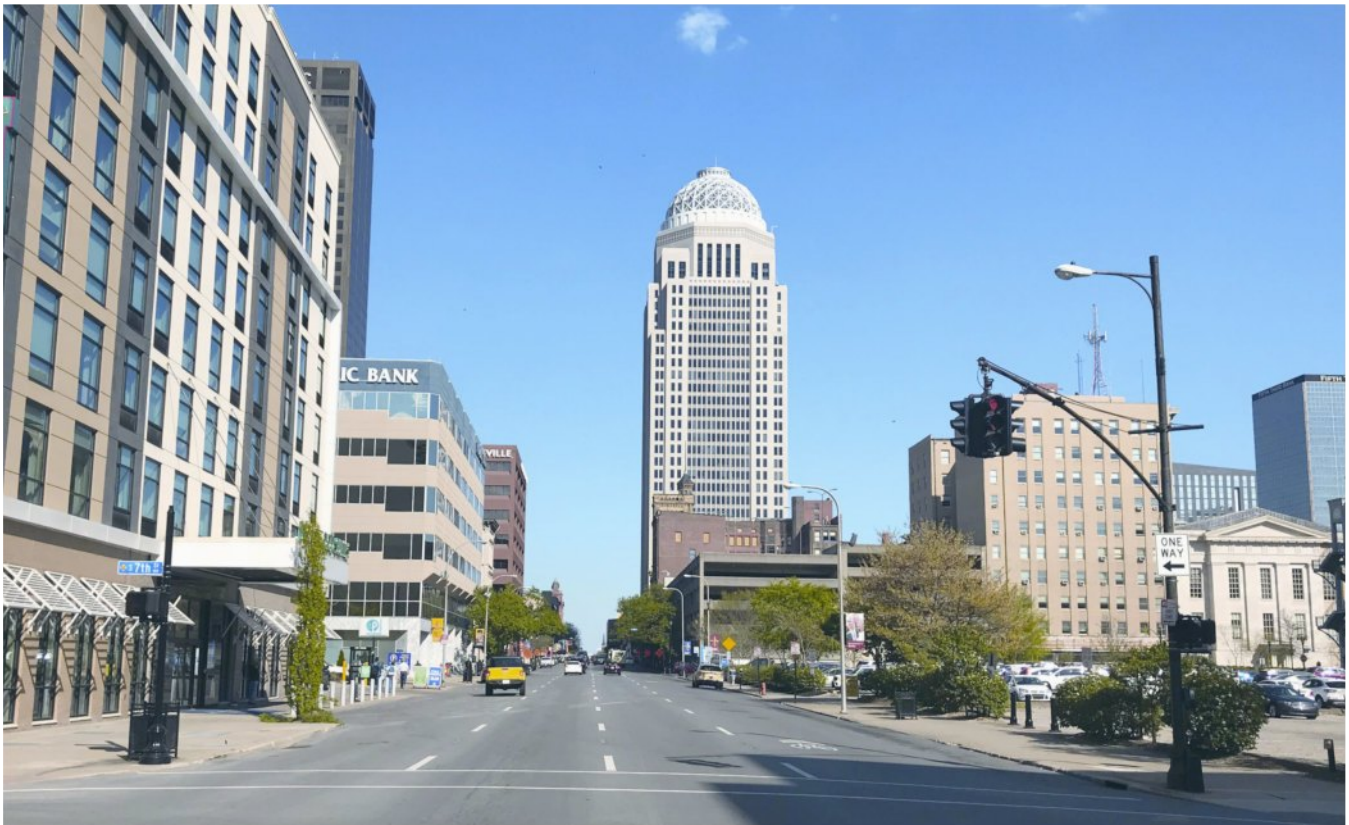
West Market Street



West River Road

Prioritize Downtown's Streets for Pedestrians (cont.)

A primary opportunity for enhancing the pedestrian experience in downtown lies with Market Street, a key east-west arterial. Converting it into a two-way street with significant pedestrian upgrades will be transformative. The proposed Civic Center redevelopment offers an opportunity to design and integrate a re-imagined Market Street, as well as an improved open space network along Fourth and Fifth Streets extending to River Road.



Existing street view of W Market & 7th looking east

The transformation shown for West Market Street can be used as a prototype for other streets in Downtown where significantly more right-of-way can be dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists. Over time, this will have a major impact on downtown's public realm.



Reimagined West Market Street

Prioritize Downtown’s Streets for Pedestrians (cont.)

Plans do exist for converting 7th and 8th Streets and Jefferson Street from one-way to two-way traffic. Funds have recently been allocated for redesigning Chestnut Street, providing a blueprint for downtown streets to be pedestrianized and made greener as they undergo reconfiguration. These improvements should move forward expeditiously.

Not all streets require conversion from one-way to two-way, but every street should focus on its pedestrian environment. On Fifth Street, for example, converting a travel lane into a wider sidewalk would encourage restaurants to extend their seating areas and enhance the pedestrian experience along downtown’s proposed Open Space Network (see page 102).

Previous downtown plans have urged such reconsiderations of its street network; now there is renewed urgency to implement them. Over the next decade, a commitment to this approach will have a dramatic and cumulative impact on the vibrancy and vitality of downtown Louisville, benefiting those who populate downtown every day as well as those visiting the City.

In addition to rethinking the role and environment of downtown’s major streets, it is important to create wherever possible opportunities for pedestrian-oriented places that can “take back” right-of-way that is now less necessary for automobile movement. These include dropping lanes in order to increase sidewalk and outdoor dining space as well as alleys and some of downtown’s minor streets. One such opportunity is the 100 Block of Washington Street. The proposal to transform this “back street” as **Whiskey Alley**, with its connections to Whiskey Row’s restaurants, bars, and hotels; the YUM Center; Waterfront Park; and ultimately to Slugger Field, is a prime example of creating value and vibrancy to otherwise dreary underutilized public spaces. Assigning the same creativity to re-imagining spaces like these throughout downtown to that suggested for downtown’s open spaces will together add to downtown’s vibrancy and enhanced sense of place.



100 Block Washington Street



Proposed Whiskey Alley transformation



Current conditions at South 5th Street



Reimagined corridor for pedestrians

Transforming Barriers Into Seams

Downtown Louisville's expansiveness is largely constrained by physical and psychological barriers. These include Interstate I-65 to the east, Broadway to the south, 9th Street to the west, and River Road to the north. These areas generally lack pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, exacerbate safety concerns, impede movement between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, and hinder connectivity between different districts and activity zones.

Downtown Barriers



The I-65 Barrier

NuLu, Butchertown, and LOUMED are among the most active districts in downtown Louisville. However, extending this activity westward into the heart of downtown faces significant limitations presented by the barrier of I-65. These connections suffer from inadequate lighting and pedestrian amenities, recent homeless encampments, and an unpleasant pedestrian environment abutting each highway underpass.

Strategic improvements such as enhanced lighting programs, providing more housing options for the unhoused population, coordination with the State Transportation Cabinet, safer crosswalks, and landscaping can help mitigate these barriers. Activity in these districts should complement, not compete with, those on the west side of I-65. Implementing robust lighting and pedestrian enhancements around overpasses should be prioritized. Additionally, establishing a reliable transit circulator is essential to encourage movement across I-65. While the popular rubber-wheeled “Trolley Hop” brand is no longer available, a similar initiative aimed at making movement between eastern and western downtown districts easy and enjoyable would be valuable to help reduce I-65 as a barrier.



I-65 Underpass Lighting program

Transforming Barriers Into Seams (cont.)

Broadway

Broadway serves as a vital six-mile artery connecting the Highlands to Shawnee Park, passing through downtown Louisville and LOUMED. The downtown stretch poses significant challenges, including difficult turning movements, wide and unsafe pedestrian crossings, and auto-oriented uses that detract from its role as a welcoming entry point into downtown from the east. Neglect of the right-of-way and adjoining properties have exacerbated homelessness along the corridor. Louisville Metro's **Broadway All the Way** initiative presents an opportunity to transform this corridor into a much-needed gateway that is easy to navigate and cross, benefiting both east and west downtown access. While the initiative initially focused on transit, the next stage should address more downtown-specific challenges in addition to transit improvements. Furthermore, Broadway and the underdeveloped SoBro area hold the greatest potential for a vibrant downtown residential neighborhood, necessitating safer and more pleasant connections *across* Broadway to support such development and help the residential community to flourish.



Broadway All the Way improvements (Credit: Gresham Smith)

Transforming Barriers Into Seams (cont.)

9th Street

The "9th Street Divide" is, unfortunately, a commonly used term that references the lack of connection between downtown Louisville and the West End. While some of this disconnect is psychological, the physical design and environment of 9th Street contributes significantly to - and reinforces - this divide. Its emphasis on the north/south flow of automobile traffic and the presence of an expansive yet unused green median create more of a barrier than a gateway between downtown and the West End.

Fortunately, Louisville Metro has secured federal funding for a significant transformation of 9th Street through its **Reimagine 9th Street** initiative. Similar to Broadway, a well-designed program to reduce its divisive nature and reconnect Russell and Downtown Louisville can yield significant benefits for both areas. This is particularly timely given the redevelopment of Beecher Terrace, new development on the Mud Lot adjacent to 9th Street, and the resurgence of the Old Walnut Street Corridor across Muhammad Ali Boulevard. Prioritizing connections *across* 9th Street in the redesign effort can catalyze the development of a thriving mixed-income neighborhood spanning both sides of the street.



West 9th Street



Reimagine 9th Street

Transforming Barriers Into Seams (cont.)

River Road

River Road serves as a major gateway into downtown Louisville from Interstate 64 and points east, yet it currently presents one of downtown's most hostile and unattractive environments. Issues include inadequate lighting, high automobile speeds, limited and unwelcoming pedestrian connections to the river, inconvenient access routes to river cruise boats, and an overly circuitous connection to the Belvedere. The "excuse" often cited for these conditions is the presence of I-64. However, many cities have successfully transformed spaces under expressways - especially along riverfronts - into pleasant areas with excellent connections. The current improvement plan for River Road will address some of these issues, including vehicle speeds and one fewer lane of traffic, along with an enhanced pedestrian and bike path along the Riverwalk between Waterfront Park and the planned Phase IV section to the west. While these improvements are a long-overdue step forward, they only tackle some of the problems and should be viewed as a starting point rather than a final solution. The need to add lighting, color and elements that signify this as one of downtown's major "gateways," remains.



River Road



River Road: 2012 Downtown Louisville Master Plan (Credit: MKSK)

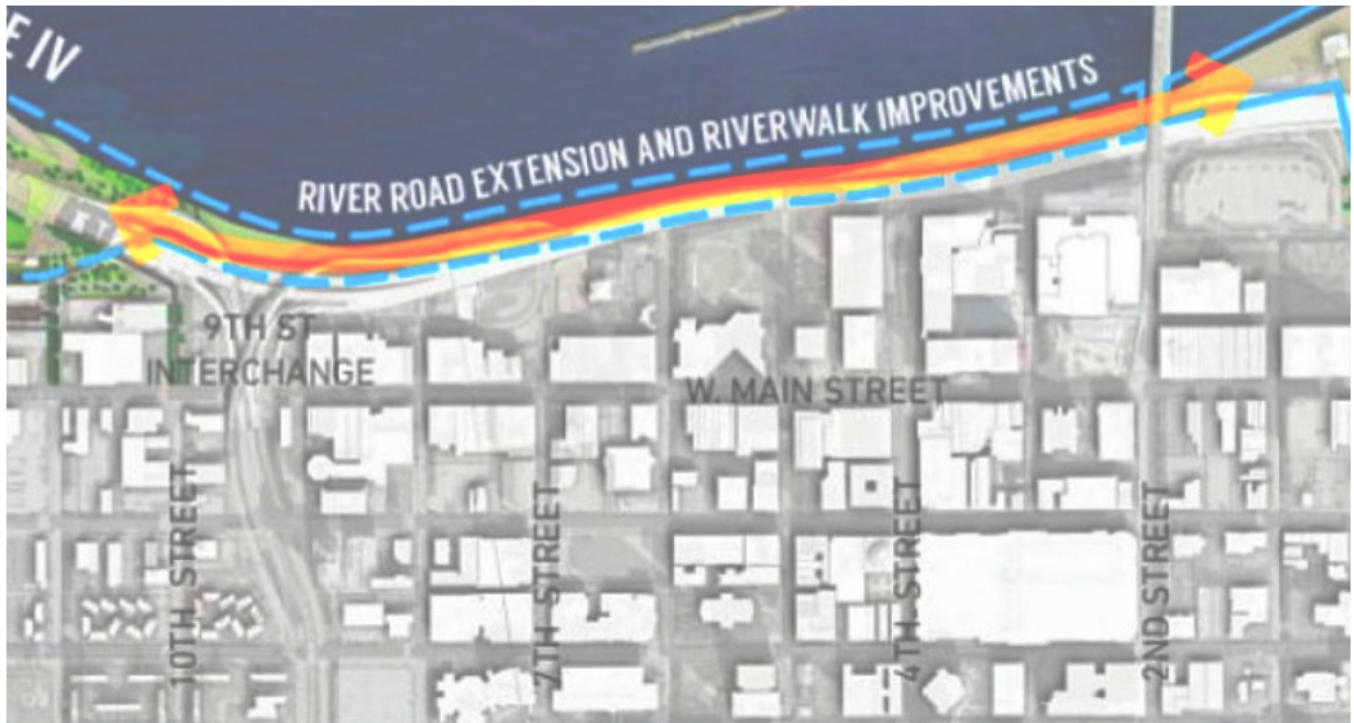


Precedent for an improved Riverwalk

Transforming Barriers Into Seams (cont.)

River Road

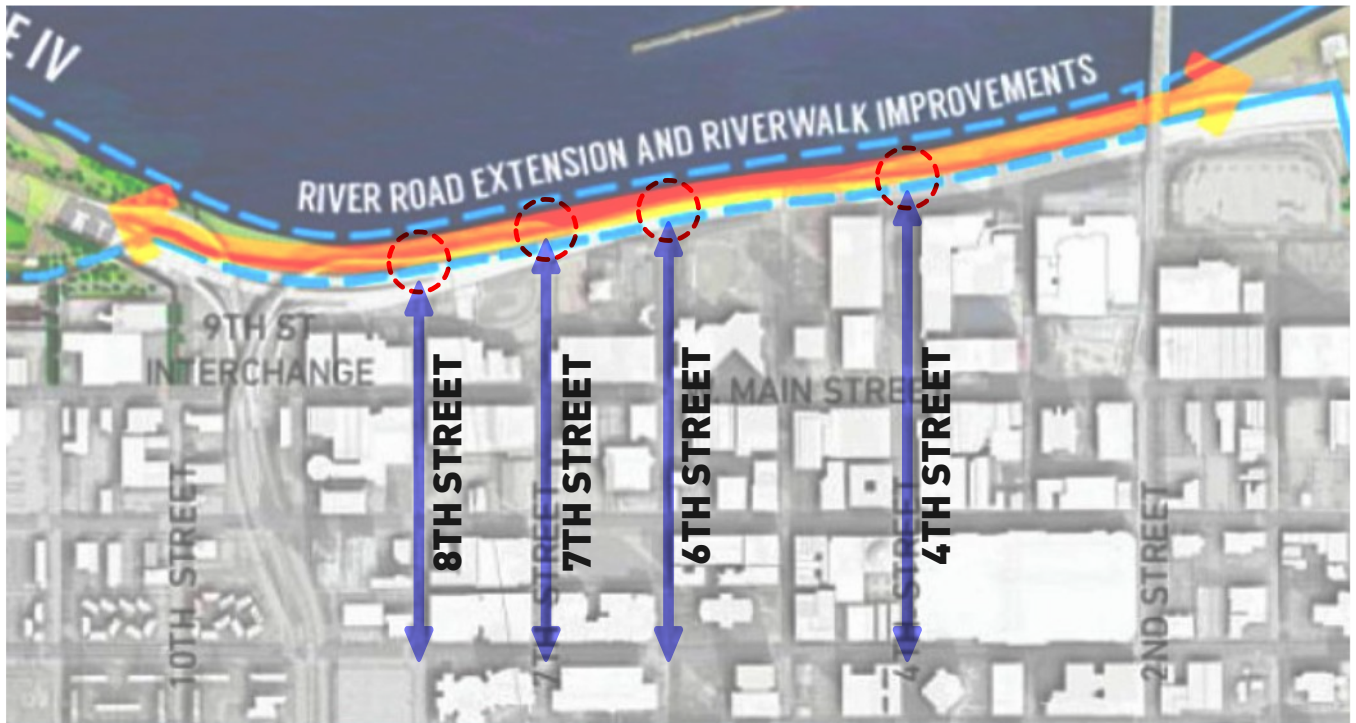
Improving River Road's entrance into downtown must also include enhancing connections across it. Direct pathways from Fourth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Streets to the riverfront are crucial, yet current access points are limited, unpleasant, and often hazardous due to the absence of signals or stop signs. Waterfront Park has quite successfully re-established the City's relationship to the River; yet the reluctance to encourage and embrace access to the River *directly from the heart of downtown* is puzzling and counterintuitive. While reducing travel lanes under the proposed River Road design will decrease the crossing distance, it will not make the current crossings inherently more welcome. Ensuring easy and comfortable access to the Ohio River from downtown is vital, and can serve to improve its connectivity to Waterfront Park as well.



River Road Extension and Riverwalk Improvements



Existing River Road access to River



Improved Downtown/River connection locations

Transforming Barriers Into Seams (cont.)

River Road

The proposed Phase IV of Waterfront Park situated at the west edge of downtown should offer welcoming access from its adjacent neighborhoods Russell, Portland, Shippingport, and downtown, in addition to River Road. As the Park begins its initial construction, emphasis needs to be placed on access to it. Developing improved connections between 9th and 13th Streets alongside the new park's development is essential. Even minor sidewalk enhancements and extending the green median on 13th Street can yield significant benefits. Mercer Transportation has enhanced the aesthetics of its parking facilities along these streets; prioritizing additional streetscape improvements in tandem with the park's opening would be mutually beneficial. Connecting Portland to the new Waterfront Park requires a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks at 15th Street, a crucial connection for the area's ongoing revitalization, especially as its desirability as a west edge residential neighborhood – fueled in part by Phase IV – continues to grow stronger.



Waterfront Park Phase IV (Credit: MKSK)



Existing connections 12th/13th Street



Waterfront Park Phase IV needed pedestrian connections

Transforming Barriers Into Seams (cont.)

River Road

The flood wall along Rowan Street – the longest continuous stretch of flood wall in the downtown area – spanning 11th to 13th Street, poses a barrier to connecting to Waterfront Park. However, utilizing flood walls as public art canvases – as seen in other cities – can effectively diminish their visual impact, while at the same time serving as a palette to reinforce and celebrate the heritage of the neighborhood.



Existing conditions at the Rowan Street flood wall



City of Paducah's "Wall to Wall" flood wall mural

Connections between Phase IV and downtown can also be enhanced by providing a short pedestrian connection between Washington Street and Tenth Street through a portion of the existing parking lots under the expressway ramp. Such a connection would provide a direct link to Peerless Distillery and the main entry into the new Park with relatively low costs and disruptions.



Existing conditions at 9th/Washington Street parking lot



Proposed pedestrian connector



Waterfront Park Phase IV (Credit: MKSK)

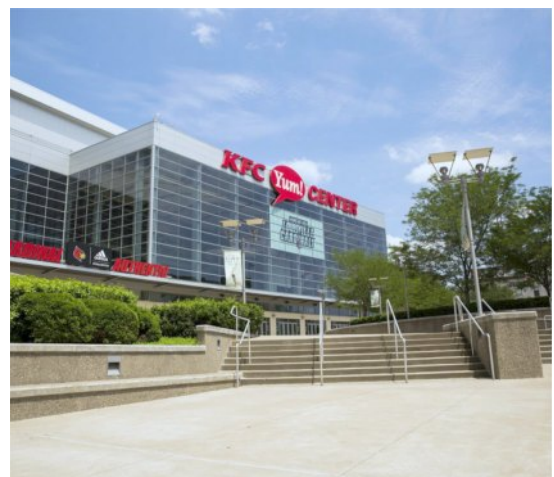
Downtown Open Space Network

Downtown Louisville's streets and sidewalks are vital components of its public realm and emphasizing a pedestrian-friendly environment is crucial, especially in areas previously overlooked. Similarly, downtown's public spaces - its parks, plazas, courtyards - play a pivotal role as social hubs where people relax, socialize, and, more and more post-pandemic, work outdoors. Creating enjoyable and inviting spaces significantly enhances downtown's desirability as a place to be. Conversely, unwelcoming or neglected areas deter people from engaging with downtown Louisville, presenting significant challenges to its appeal. Just a few vacant storefronts or neglected spaces can discourage pedestrian activity.

Unlike some cities, downtown Louisville lacks a central open space or large public gathering focal point akin to Fountain Square in Cincinnati, or Monument Circle in Indianapolis. While Waterfront Park is beloved and much-used, it is not well-integrated with the downtown area. The Belvedere, overlooking the river, remains underutilized and to a large extent undervalued. Instead of a central square, downtown Louisville features smaller, well-located open spaces, parks, and plazas, particularly from Muhammad Ali Boulevard north to the Ohio River. However, these spaces are isolated from each other and lack necessary design upgrades to meet the needs of those most likely to use them. Additionally, some of these - like the steps at the Kentucky Center for the Arts and the YUM! Center Plaza - are generally unused except during events.



YUM! Center plaza during event



YUM! Center Plaza non-event usage



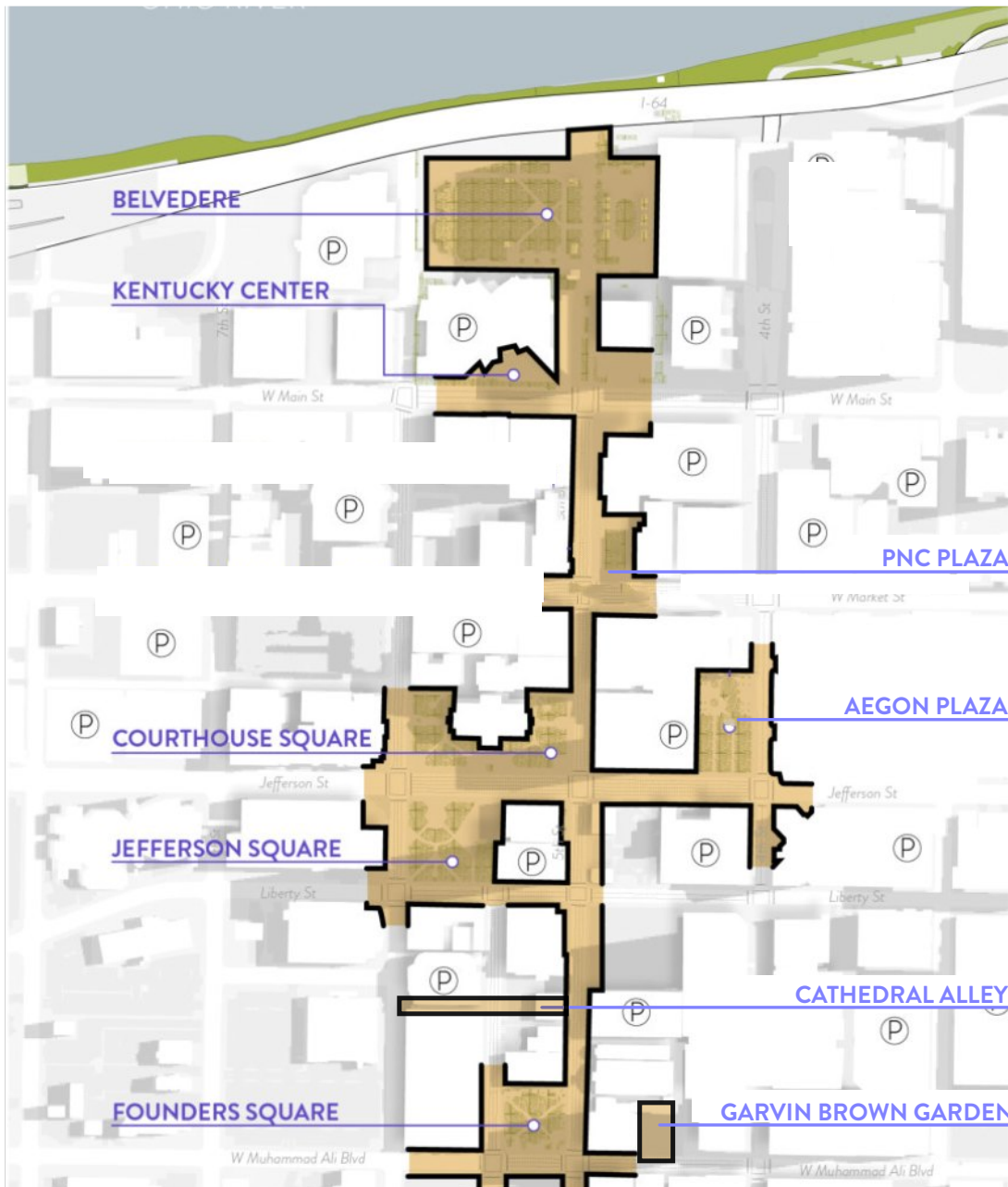
KCA entrance: programmed event



KCA steps: non-event usage

Refreshing and reprogramming this series of spaces into a coordinated "Open Space Network" could significantly enhance the vibrancy of downtown Louisville. This effort should coincide with complementary initiatives to reimagine the Belvedere and improve connectivity to Waterfront Park. While Louisville takes pride in its renowned Olmsted Parks System, and both understands and values its concept as a *network* of parks and parkways, that approach similarly needs to infuse downtown's open space network.

Downtown Open Space Network



Downtown Open Space Network (cont.)

4th and 5th Street Corridor

Starting at Muhammad Ali Boulevard - home to the Garvin Brown Garden and Founders Square - and proceeding north along 4th and 5th Streets, there are no less than 10 open spaces within five blocks. Some are Metro-owned, like Founder's Square, the Belvedere, and Jefferson Square. Others are owned by different governmental entities (e.g. the steps of the Kentucky Center for the Arts), privately owned (e.g. PNC Plaza), or operate under public/private partnerships (e.g. Aegon Plaza). Each space is appropriately scaled to its surroundings, easily accessible from the street and sidewalk, free from incompatible uses, and can be activated relatively easily. Some are already undergoing much-needed improvements, such as Founder's Square's transformation into an Urban MicroForest led by UofL's Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute, and the Metro Hall 5th Street Plaza under the CitySpots initiative.

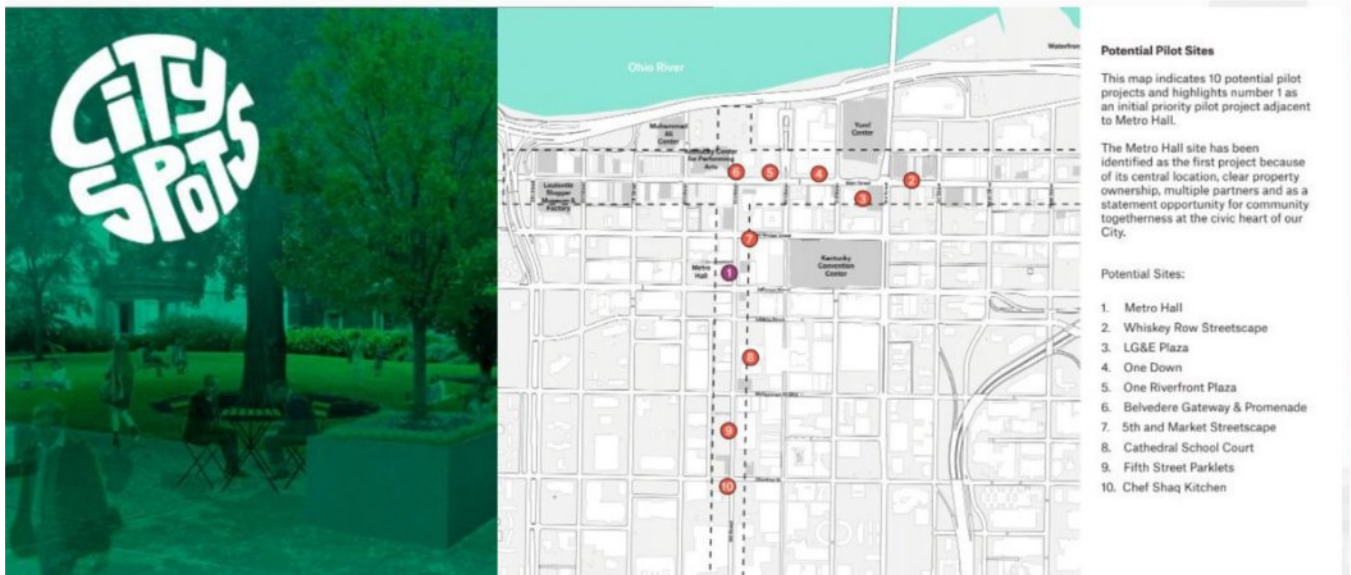


Founders Square transformation to Trager Microforest (Credit: Gresham Smith)



Metro Hall CitySpot

The Bingham Fellows' CitySpots initiative has identified many of these spaces and proposed activation strategies. Simple enhancements like adding movable tables and chairs, umbrellas for shade, and food service can significantly improve utilization. Some spaces may require additional investment in features like tree canopies, landscaping, and electrical power for events, but - apart from the Belvedere and Jefferson Square - none demand large public or private investments. As such, focusing attention on these spaces as a coordinated network of great downtown spaces presents opportunities for a broad public/private partnership program, with Louisville Metro activating spaces under its control and others improving their properties. Some of this is already underway - as cited, and potential interest exists by foundations, corporations and civic entities to help advance such an initiative.



Bingham Fellows CitySpots (Credit: Gresham Smith)



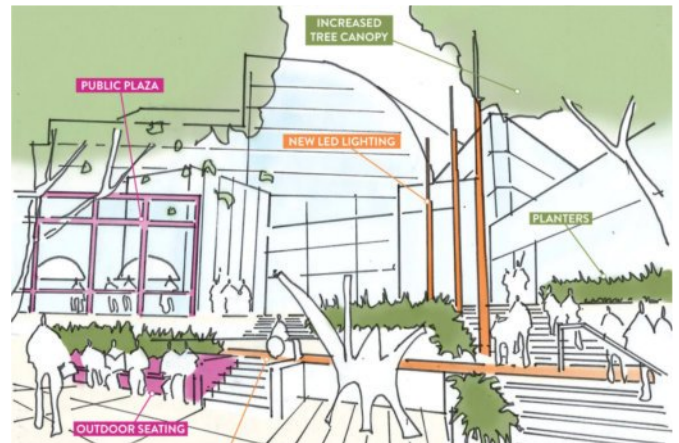
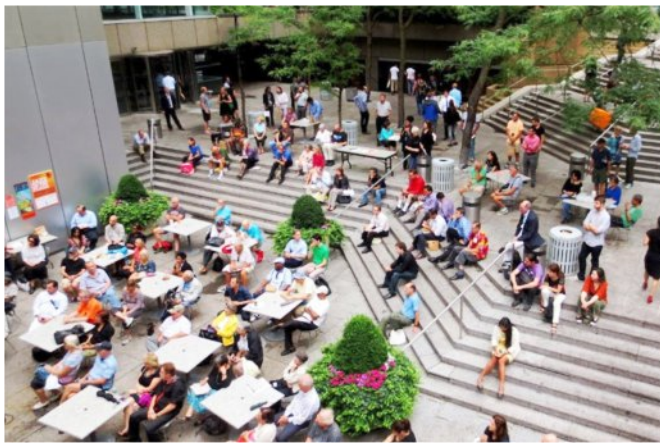
Examples of activated public spaces

Downtown Open Space Network (cont.)

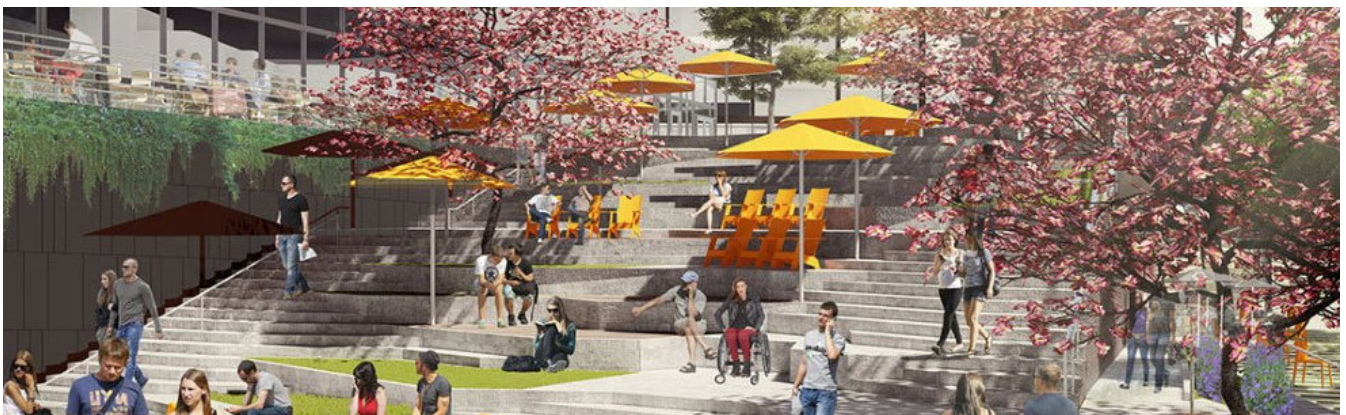
Taking advantage of opportunities when they arise can further enhance the Open Space Network. For example, The Kentucky Center for the Arts (KCA) will soon be reconstructing the entrance steps at its front plaza. Adding elements that encourage public use throughout the day is being considered. Lighting, landscaping and places to sit can make it a much more useable outdoor space.



Existing KCA steps



Potential improvements to the steps

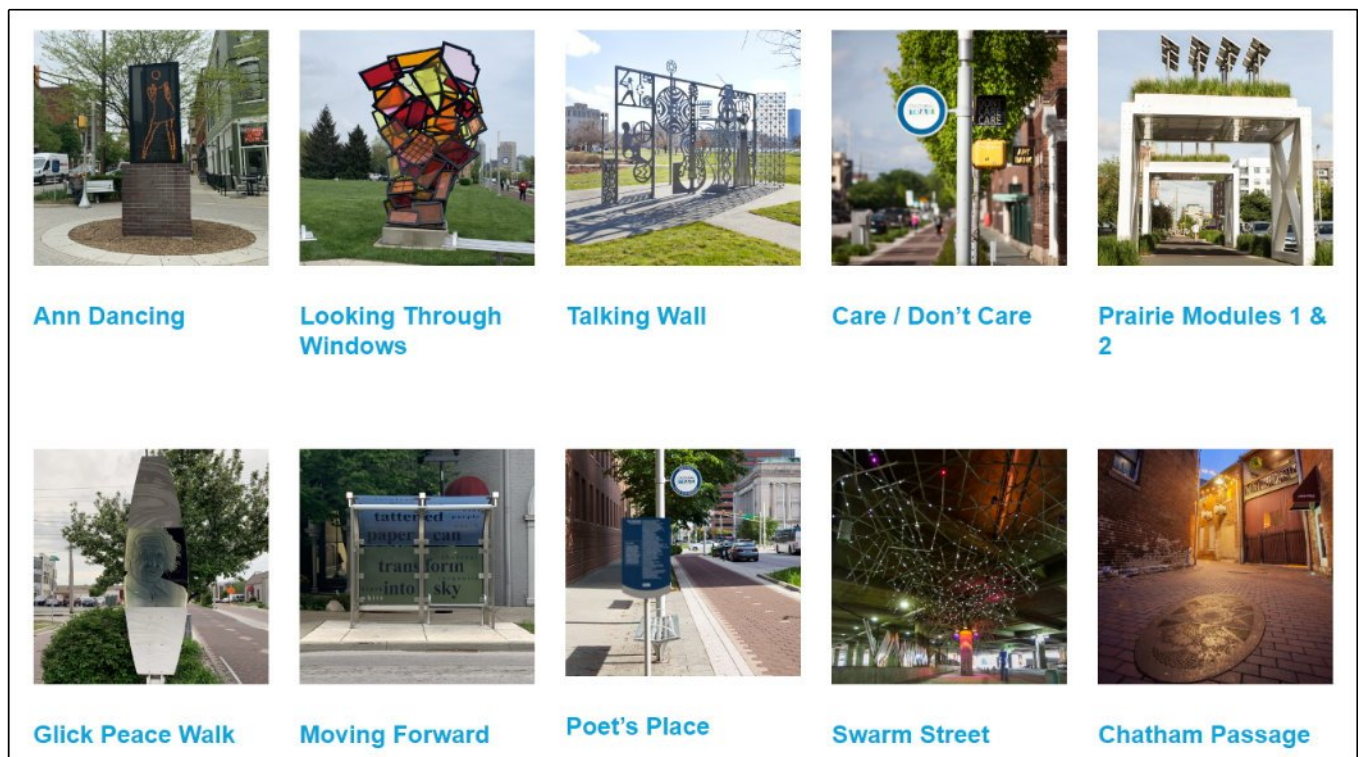


Example of similarly activated front steps

While these open spaces are well-located along each block of Fourth and Fifth Streets, it is crucial to enhance and complement the pedestrian environment connecting them as well. Fifth Street's current streetscape lacks connection to its surroundings, while Fourth Street has seen various changes over the years without establishing a strong sense of place. Despite numerous restaurants, neither street offers comfortable outdoor dining. Therefore, a revised pedestrian-oriented street transformation and streetscape improvement program for this section of Fourth and Fifth Streets is strongly recommended, in conjunction with the Open Space Network initiative.

The Open Space Network initiative also aims to incorporate a public art program tied to these spaces, a widely embraced approach to refreshing public areas. However, public art sometimes feels disjointed when placed without cohesion - multiple pieces may not connect well to each other. Rather, the initiative should commission a significant public art component for each space, similar to Indianapolis's Cultural Trail. Modeled after the Louisville Orchestra's Creative Corps, artists could reside in Louisville over several months, evolving their work in each open space while creating an active and dynamic public art element that adds interest and reinforces Louisville as a hub of creativity and innovation in the arts.

Indianapolis Cultural Trail public art elements



Downtown Open Space Network (cont.)

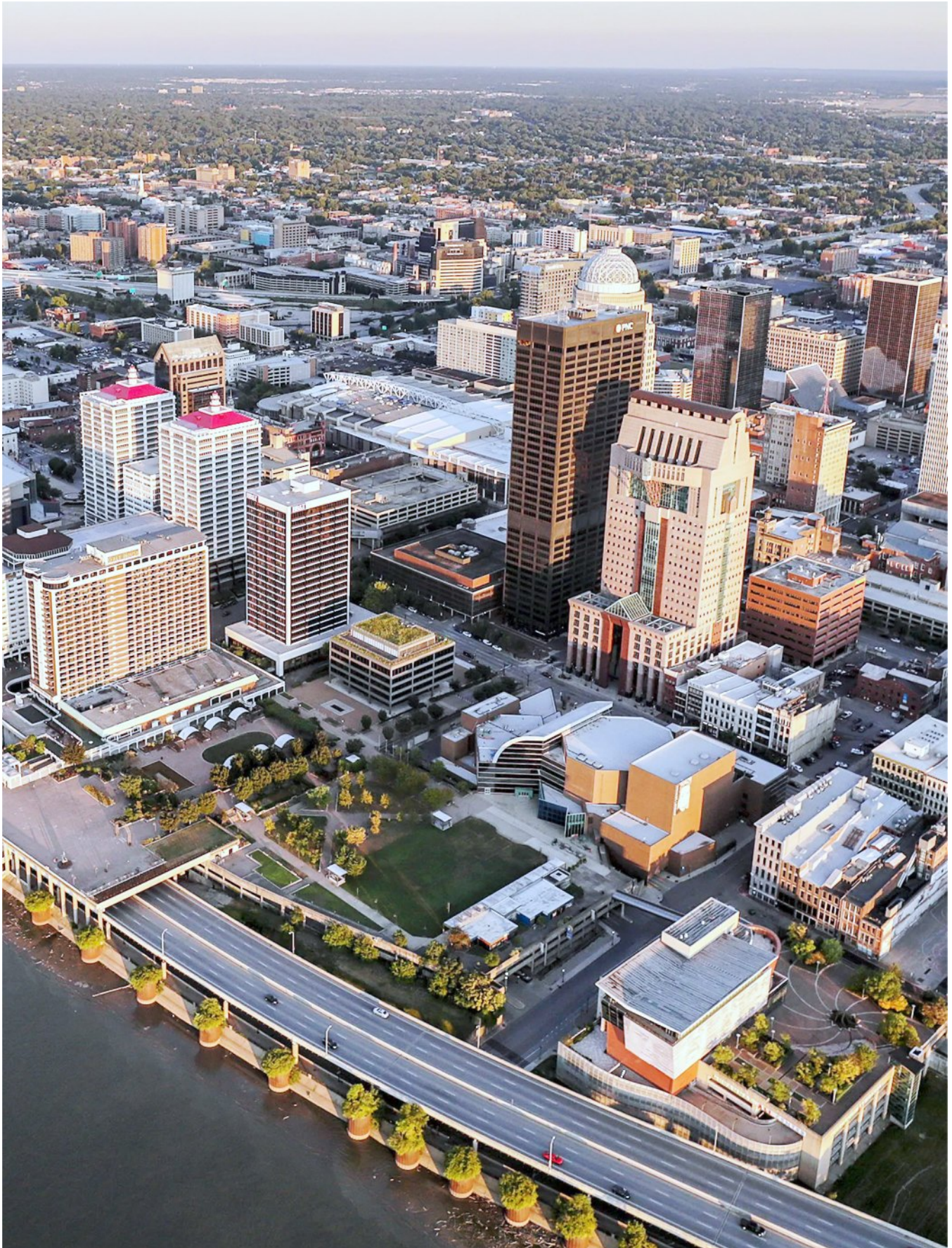
The Belvedere

Originally conceived over half a century ago, the Belvedere was a symbol of forward thinking in Louisville - a downtown open space linked to a performing arts facility, spanning over an interstate highway and leading down to the Ohio River, with the city's largest public parking garage supporting it. Its potential appeared limitless. Today, however, the Belvedere falls short of its expectations. While still hosting major events and offering unparalleled views of the Ohio River, it often lacks daily users, leaving the vast space underutilized. Previous attempts to reprogram and redesign the space have not yielded great success.

Nonetheless, the presence and location of the Belvedere still represents a significant opportunity for downtown Louisville, particularly within the new downtown paradigm that places more emphasis on its public realm. Positioned as the *“crown jewel”* in a revitalized downtown open space network, the Belvedere's size allows for large-scale activation unlike any other downtown space. Its proximity to key areas like the Fourth/Fifth Street Corridor, Riverwalk, Main Street, the Kentucky Center for the Arts, the Muhammad Ali Center, and major downtown buildings ensures a substantial base of users. The challenge lies in optimizing these proximities to infuse the Belvedere with daily activity, not just for occasional special events. Commendably, Mayor Greenberg has recognized this opportunity and a program to boldly reimagine the Belvedere is currently in process.

Mayor Greenberg announces bold effort to reimagine The Belvedere





The Belvedere / Riverfront Plaza

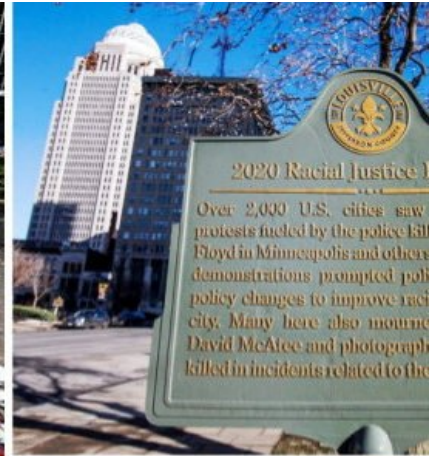
Jefferson Square

Jefferson Square was already a significant downtown open space before 2020, given its proximity to the government complex, the site of public safety and first responder memorials, and its role as host location for Louisville's Light Up Louisville holiday program. In 2020, it became a central gathering point for protests related to the death of Breonna Taylor and social and racial inequities in the community, and the space retains its legacy due to the centrality it played in those events.

While Jefferson Square as a location remains significant, the square is currently underutilized and lacks a design that highlights its significance or provides the necessary amenities for it to serve as an active public space. Given its memorial features, any redesign must carefully balance these legacies in a sensitive manner. Rather than engaging in a traditional redesign process that "reaches out" to these constituencies for input, the importance of this as a place of legacy and memorial cries out for a collaboration of the constituents *in the design itself*. Collaboration between the first responder and African-American communities in such a joint design process may be difficult at first and encounter conflicts along the way, but to some extent this is exactly why it needs to occur. Activating the space to reflect its importance requires extreme sensitivity and should be a high priority, serving as a beacon for diversity and social equity in downtown...and across the community.



Jefferson Square



Jefferson Square

Connecting Waterfront Park and Downtown

Waterfront Park has become a beloved and well-used feature of downtown Louisville, successfully reconnecting the city to the Ohio River after decades without access. The proposed westward expansion, Phase IV, offers another opportunity to positively impact the community - particularly the West End neighborhoods and the western edge of downtown. However, the current Park's connection to downtown has seen more modest success due to its distance from the core and the inhospitable environment of River Road at the western edge of the Park closest to downtown. Limited commercial and residential development has occurred immediately around the park and between the Park and downtown. Nevertheless, Waterfront Park's proximity to East Main Street and Butchertown has unquestionably catalyzed additional investment and residential demand in those neighborhoods.



River Road looking west



Festival Plaza at Waterfront Park



Waterfront Park - Downtown Connection

Connecting Waterfront Park and Downtown (cont.)

Clearly a major asset to downtown Louisville and the broader metro area, Waterfront Park is now in its third decade of operation, prompting considerations for improvements and adjustments to reflect current circumstances and new opportunities. As cited previously, the development of Phase IV, located immediately west of 10th Street, stands out as a priority. This phase has the potential to catalyze development in the Shippingport/Warehouse District and East Portland, as well as anchor the revitalization of Russell with a much-needed connection to the Ohio River. While not directly in the downtown core, Shippingport, Portland, and Russell offer opportunities for additional housing across various styles and price points on the western edge of downtown. Establishing pleasant, walkable pedestrian connections from West Waterfront Park south to Russell, east to downtown, and west to Portland should be a high priority before park construction begins.

Discussions with Park staff confirm that the section of Waterfront Park closest to downtown - including the water feature and Festival Plaza area - has not met anticipated usage levels, necessitating a re-evaluation of its use and design. While the connections from this portion of the Park westward toward Third Street and the Wharf are challenging due to the unwelcoming pedestrian environment under I-64, connections directly south across Witherspoon Street via First, Brook, and Floyd Streets are more direct and would better link to the bustling activity along Whiskey Row and the proposed Whiskey Alley improvements. Redesigning this section of Waterfront Park with this objective in mind could enhance this connection and benefit park users by providing access to food and commercial establishments, benefiting downtown residents adjacent to the park as well.





Waterfront Park - West Main Street Connection

Connecting Waterfront Park and Downtown (cont.)

This portion of the Park could be further activated by the relocation of the riverboats from the Fourth Street Wharf to a dock adjacent to this space. The current wharf area poses navigation challenges for guests, while the relocated space would offer a more pleasant connection. Additionally, redesigning the Festival Plaza area as a "Tuileries"-style space could provide light food and drink for boat passengers as they embark (in addition to Joe's Crab Shack), as well as Humana employees and downtown residents - filling a gap in amenities currently lacking at the wharf location.

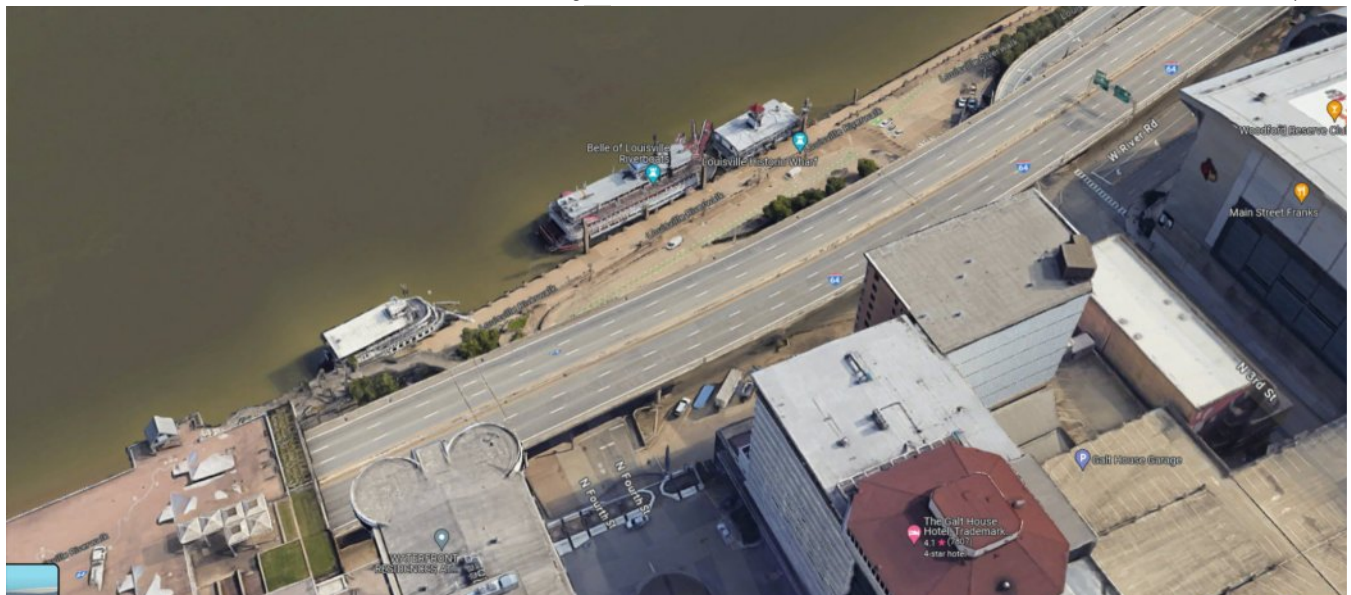
Promoting new development on vacant lots and/or surface parking areas near the edge of Waterfront Park - including parcels owned by the Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) - could catalyze the creation of a "waterfront neighborhood," a long-envisioned but still unrealized concept. This development could extend along River Road with additional commercial developments on its south side, such as the highly anticipated Brough Brothers distillery.



Existing



Activated Waterfront Park spaces



Existing 4th Street Wharf



Relocated Riverboats

Encourage Outdoor Dining

The loss of a significant portion of the daily office workforce has severely impacted downtown restaurants relying on lunchtime business, leading to closures and other ongoing struggles. These businesses are vital to downtown and contribute to its attractiveness for current and prospective residents. Unlike many cities that experimented with expanded outdoor dining during the COVID-19 pandemic, Louisville generally did not, resulting in limited visible outdoor dining options in the downtown. Whiskey Row stands out as perhaps the best example of successful outdoor dining, bringing ambiance and vibrancy - and patrons - to the area.



Whiskey Row



Whiskey Row outdoor dining



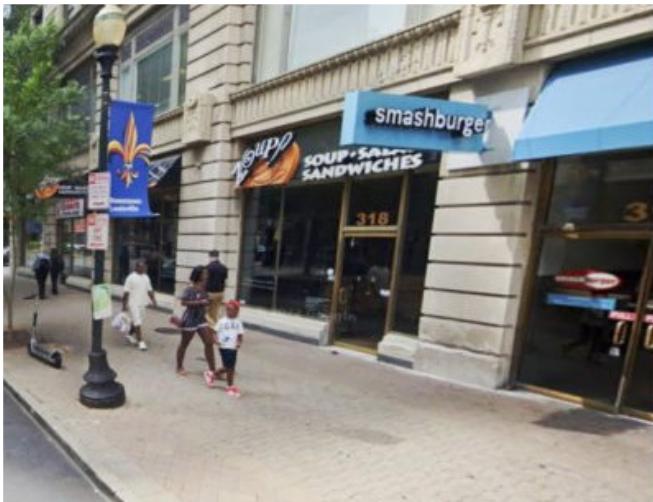
Downtown outdoor dining

Encourage Outdoor Dining (cont.)

Downtown Louisville's outdoor dining scene faces a number of challenges, including limited sidewalk widths along many streets, tree placements, light posts, and utilities. The West Main Street streetscape program was specifically designed to accommodate and encourage outdoor dining and had a more active usage pre-pandemic. But many other downtown streets - even those with multiple restaurants such as Fourth and Fifth Streets - lack sufficient or hospitable outdoor seating options. The proposed transformation of downtown streets to be more pedestrian-friendly should prioritize redesigns to accommodate - and encourage - outdoor dining. Repurposing unnecessary travel lanes for widened sidewalks would optimize valuable right-of-way, particularly on streets like Fifth Street and similar downtown locations.

Secondly, some perceive downtown permitting regulations for outdoor seating as discouraging - rather than encouraging - sidewalk use. Proactively streamlining regulations and reducing or eliminating associated permitting cost burdens is a warranted approach.

Finally, it is crucial to address costs. While financial programs incentivize new first-floor food/retail tenants, it is equally important - if not more so - to allocate funds to help existing restaurants remain viable and support the cost to create appealing outdoor dining spaces. Seeing more people out on the streets eating and relaxing is as strong a sign of vibrancy as any other streetscape "amenity" and should thus be viewed as an integral component of downtown's public realm infrastructure... and be supported accordingly.



4th Street



5th Street



West Main Street



NuLu

Implementation Actions

The Downtown Louisville Development Strategy outlined herein aims to reposition downtown Louisville over the next decade, addressing current deficiencies and adapting to the post-pandemic "new paradigm." It seeks to regain momentum and ensure continued economic health and vitality through coordinated efforts by the public and private sectors. These complementary actions will create a more diverse and sustainable downtown environment and economy, appealing to locals, tourists, and those currently living elsewhere but now intrigued by Louisville due to its affordable urban lifestyle and socially engaging quality of life.

Despite having fewer financial mechanisms than comparable cities, both the public and private sectors in Louisville have historically employed creative and highly successful strategies to support civic projects (e.g. Waterfront Park) and programs designed to catalyze the market (e.g. Downtown Housing Fund). To address downtown's needs and capitalize on its opportunities, it is imperative to optimize both public and private actions with a comparable degree of commitment, innovation and - most of all - demand for excellence.

Some of these necessary actions and interventions are already underway; the impacts of the pandemic and other challenges facing downtown require such immediate attention. Louisville Metro's new Mayor and Metro Council have understood this and acted both expeditiously and judiciously to address downtown's current needs and new opportunities to reposition it for a brighter future. The private and civic sectors appear ready to take a more proactive role as well. All of this reflects an understanding of the role that a vibrant and economically healthy downtown Louisville must continue to play, both as the region's most significant economic driver and as the center of a creative and innovative city.

Other critical actions and interventions required to catalyze continued downtown growth will necessitate new programs, funding and incentives, and/or adjusting and resetting priorities of existing mechanisms. Some high-profile initiatives will also require more than just support, but investment as well; and perhaps more risk-taking than in the past. However, none of these actions, whether individually or collectively, are beyond the means of either Louisville Metro or the private sector.

This Downtown Strategy outlines initiatives in three categories: Activating Downtown, Creating Residential Neighborhoods, and Enhancing the Public Realm. Short-term actions are recognized as crucial to addressing immediate challenges and deficiencies. The following summarizes recommended actions in these areas. Actions primarily the responsibility of the public sector are marked with (PUB), while those primarily the responsibility of the private sector are denoted as (PRI). Initiatives requiring a balanced public/private partnership are indicated as (PPP).



Implementation Actions (cont.)

Short-Term Actions

- Establish a dedicated LMPD district for downtown with visible foot, bicycle, and horseback patrols. (PUB)
- Maintain the enhanced Downtown Ambassador team permanently. (PRI)
- Create a Transitional Housing Investment Fund, led by the private sector and matched by Metro Louisville, to fund the construction and operations of 200-300 transitional housing units. (PPP)
- Continue annual Metro fund allocations to address downtown infrastructure repair and maintenance backlog. (PUB)
- Provide assistance to property owners and tenants to reconfigure Class-A office space based on the spatial needs of today's office users.. (PUB)



↑
ONLY

w Main St



Oliver

TP
AMBASSADOR

Implementation Actions (cont.)

Activate Downtown

- Establish a Downtown Investment Fund to catalyze high-priority development initiatives with a greater degree of flexibility than traditional incentive programs, and to invest in “pilot” projects. Privately raised equity investment augmented by public funds. (PRI)
- Catalyze the development of underutilized Metro Louisville properties in downtown districts lacking activity-generating anchors (PUB)
- Prioritize new activity-generating anchors in downtown’s less robust districts. (PPP)
- Recognize a “Greater Downtown” approach – broader than a Central Business District; highlight the character of each downtown district and prioritize connectivity between them through pedestrian, bicycle and transit enhancements; and establish a common nomenclature for downtown identity and promotional efforts. (PPP)
- Strengthen LOUMED as downtown's major economic development driver. (PPP)
- Highlight and support the University of Louisville’s “Four Corners” expanding downtown presence; enhance pedestrian connections between and among these nodes; develop the 515 West Market Building as the downtown campus anchor; strengthen transit connections between the Belknap and downtown campuses. (PUB)
- Promote and support the emerging downtown Education Corridor, with emphasis on improved safety and security. (PPP)
- Activate Muhammad Ali Boulevard from Fifth Street west to 18th Street through the Old Walnut Street Corridor Plan, celebrating its rich heritage as the African-American community’s music and entertainment hub. (PPP)
- Establish a “Louisville Creativity Center” downtown that highlights and celebrates the “buzz” around local innovations in bourbon, food, music, and design. (PPP)
- Highlight downtown arts and entertainment anchors, and incentivize bringing arts and music into the public realm on a regular basis. (PPP)
- Support the redevelopment of Louisville Gardens. (PUB) as a hub for new, creative uses.
- Encourage and incentivize non-traditional indoor/outdoor uses in downtown, including film venues, music, family entertainment, and recreation. (PPP)
- Revise the Arena TIF to provide additional incentives to downtown projects that are within the Arena TIF boundaries but currently excluded from its benefits. (PUB)
- Revisit long-term transit from the south (Airport, KFEC, U of L, Spalding, Simmons, etc.) to downtown Louisville, including light rail/bus rapid transit. (PUB)



Implementation Actions (cont.)

Reinforce Downtown as a Residential Neighborhood

- Support and incentivize the conversion of appropriate Class-B and Class-C office buildings to residential use in the following ways:
 - Invest in high-priority residential conversions, utilizing local or state capital infusions, the Downtown Investment Fund, and a recapitalized Downtown Housing Fund—particularly those offering a range of affordability. (PPP)
 - Assist with needed ancillary improvements such as parking, streetscape enhancements, and alley closures. (PUB)
 - Secure special property tax relief legislation for office-to-residential conversions, including reduced assessments and/or property tax moratoria. (PUB)
 - Provide grants and technical assistance to property owners who wish to investigate potential conversions. (PPP)
 - Advocate for prioritization—and streamlining of the regulatory review process—of the State Historic Tax Credit Program for office-to-residential conversions. (PUB)
- Encourage development of residential clusters at the edges of downtown Louisville:
 - Proactively assemble properties for “missing middle” neighborhood housing developments. (PPP)
 - Invest in pilot residential developments in targeted areas: SoBro, Russell/Shippingport, and east downtown. (PPP)
 - Ensure Louisville Metro property redevelopment plans include residential components. (PPP)
 - Streamline zoning and land use regulations to prioritize and expedite residential development, including revisions to the Land Development Code that specifically *encourage* the development of “missing middle housing.” (PUB)
 - Collaborate with property owners in the Butchertown/East Main Street area on redevelopment programs to create new residential clusters on undeveloped properties. (PPP)
- Expand assistance offered for office-to-residential conversions to include the development of surface parking with a strong residential component. (PUB)
- Investigate property valuation assessment policy changes to catalyze vacant property redevelopment. (PUB)



Implementation Actions (cont.)

Enhance the Public Realm

- Accelerate repair and maintenance of downtown infrastructure, including sidewalks, streetlights, benches, and trash receptacles. (PUB)
- Refocus downtown streets with a pedestrian-friendly orientation:
 - Prioritize the redesign of West Market Street in conjunction with Metro property redevelopment and Open Space Network program. (PUB)
 - Establish as Louisville Metro policy a commitment to the transformation of downtown's streets prioritized for pedestrians (PUB)
 - Implement a 10-year funding program for major street improvements and pedestrian enhancements, including a continuous bicycle network through downtown. (PUB)
 - Reduce vehicular travel lanes on major east-west streets like Market, Main, Jefferson, and Chestnut. (PUB)
 - Convert Market and Jefferson Streets from one-way to two-way traffic. (PUB)
 - Accelerate two-way conversions of north-south streets. (PUB)
 - Reduce travel lanes/expand sidewalks on Fifth and Sixth Streets. (PUB)
 - Implement transformation of the 100 block of Washington Street into the pedestrian and entertainment-focused "Whiskey Alley." (PPP)



Implementation Actions (cont.)

Enhance the Public Realm

- Enhance the pedestrian environment of River Road:
 - Add pedestrian-oriented lighting, colors, banners, and “gateway” visual elements from Third to Ninth Streets. (PUB)
 - Install enhanced and welcoming pedestrian crossings at Fourth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Streets. (PUB)
- Improve the pedestrian environment under and through the I-65 overpasses:
 - Add bright and decorative lighting. (PRI)
 - Improve sidewalks and streetscape elements on both sides of the underpass. (PPP)
 - Install wayfinding signage. (PPP)
- Re-Imagine the downtown Open Space Network:
 - Develop a coordinated improvement program for public and private open spaces between Fourth and Sixth Streets, including Founders Square, Garvin Brown Garden, Cathedral Alley, Courthouse Square, the KCA steps, Muhammad Ali Plaza, PNC Park, and Aegon Plaza. (PPP)
 - Undertake a bold redesign and reprogramming of the Belvedere, in coordination with and as the “crown jewel” of the Open Space Network. (PUB)
 - Develop and implement a unique signature streetscape program along Fourth and Fifth Streets, connecting nodes of the Open Space network. (PPP)
 - Convene a group of key stakeholders—including those involved in the Breonna Taylor protests and the public safety community—to collaboratively discuss and determine the most appropriate redesign of Jefferson Square, given the significance of the space for both groups. (PUB)
 - Capitalize on and continue progress made under the CitySpots initiative. (PPP)
 - Create a Public Art Trail within the network of open spaces and consider a public artist Creative Corps program, similar to the Louisville Orchestra program for music. (PPP)
 - Encourage more food, drink, and music opportunities in open spaces, including pop-ups and food trucks (PPP)
 - Complement the police relocation program by redesigning the park fronting the new police headquarters on Chestnut Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. (PUB)



Implementation Actions (cont.)

Enhance the Public Realm

- Improve the LOUMED Environment:
 - Transform the former Metro correctional facility on Chestnut Street into LOUMED Park. (PPP)
 - Implement the proposed public realm network enhancement program within LOUMED, including Chestnut Street, Brook Street, and Abraham Flexner Way. (PUB)
 - Provide signature entranceways at Brook/Chestnut Street and at Preston Street/Muhammad Ali Boulevard. (PUB)
- Improve connectivity between Waterfront Park and Downtown Louisville:
 - Refresh the western portion of Waterfront Park—including Festival Plaza and the water feature—and improve connections south via First, Brook, and Floyd Streets; consider relocating riverboats to this area. (PUB)
 - Activate Waterfront Development Corporation properties south of Witherspoon Street (PUB)
 - Encourage more commercial development adjacent to Waterfront Park along River Road. (PPP)
 - Prioritize improved connectivity between downtown and the Ohio River in the River Road extension and Belvedere redesign plans. (PUB)
 - Enhance connections to both downtown and the Russell/Portland neighborhoods as part of the West Waterfront Park expansion, including improvements from Market to Park Streets along 10th through 13th Streets. Consider implementing a mural program along the Rowan Street flood wall. (PUB)
 - Prioritize a pedestrian bridge over the rail tracks at 15th Street to facilitate a neighborhood connection and spur residential development in Portland and Shippingport. (PUB)
 - Provide a pedestrian connection between Washington Street and Tenth Street. (PUB)



Implementation Actions (cont.)

Enhance the Public Realm

- Develop more neighborhood-oriented open spaces in the SoBro area, including the redesign of Library Plaza, Memorial Park, and Ben Washer Park. (PUB)
- Streamline downtown outdoor dining regulations to encourage more outdoor dining opportunities; utilize the Downtown Commercial Loan Fund to subsidize new or improved outdoor dining facilities. (PPP)



A New Paradigm for Downtown Louisville

The Louisville Downtown
Development Strategy

March 2024

Acknowledgements



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