



CEDAR RAPIDS
DOWNTOWN
VISION PLAN
2023 UPDATE

Community Open House – August 2023

AGENDA

- Discovery
 - Community Outreach Findings
 - Market Assessment Findings
- Key Takeaways
- Physical Framework
- Goals, Strategies, & Catalytic Projects
- Next Steps





DISCOVERY – COMMUNITY OUTREACH FINDINGS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH - OVERVIEW

Over 1,600 inputs to-date:

- Downtown Stakeholder Engagement – **approx. 150 participants**
 - 3 Working Group meetings
 - Roundtable meetings and individual interviews
 - Approx. 150 participants
- Online Survey – **1,414 responses**
- Pop-up at Blues Night on 5/19/23 – **approx. 60 participants**



STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH – STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

DOWNTOWN STRENGTHS	DOWNTOWN CHALLENGES
Public investment (stormwater infrastructure, street conversions, public art, etc.)	Railway through heart of Downtown
Private investment, new development, and redevelopment	Slow return of office employees
Entertainment options	Lack of retail options (specialty and convenience)
Compact, walkable Downtown	Lack of amenities for residents (dog park, grocery, pharmacy, etc.)
Improving local, independent restaurant and bar scene	Limited hotel options Downtown
Community amenities (library, parks, riverfront, trails, events, etc.)	Underutilization of Mays Island, riverfront, other Downtown public spaces
Abundant parking supply	Lack of mobility options, management of parking supply
Agriculture and industrial heritage and employment base	Lack of things to do for families with children
Increasing housing options and residents	Increasingly visible unhoused population

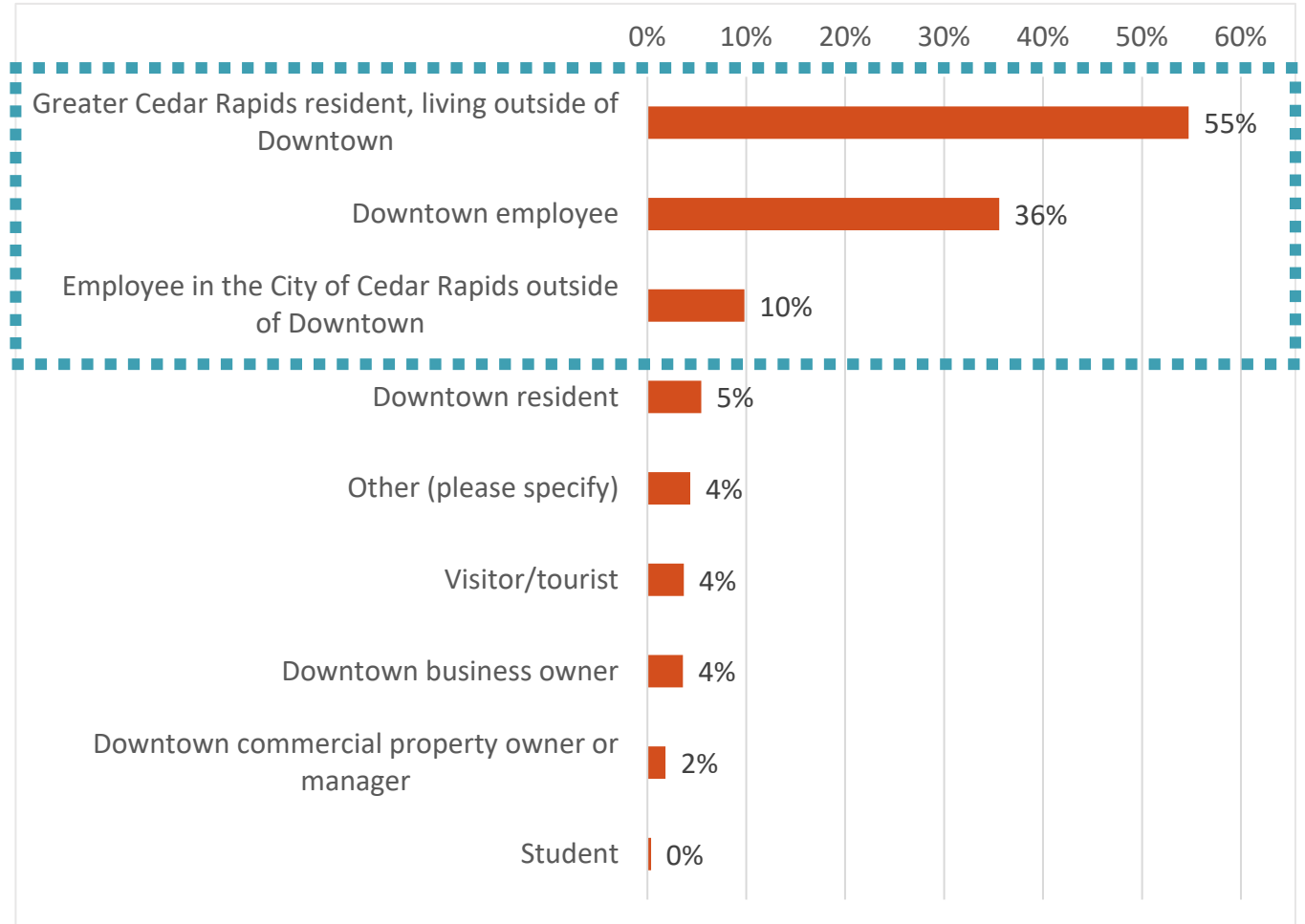
STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH – PRIORITIES

- Attract more retail
- Continue to diversify restaurant and bar offerings
- Embrace the Cedar River
- Encourage more public space programming and activation
- Create more activities and amenities for families and residents
- Continue place enhancements and beautification
- Expand mobility options
- Enhance multi-modal connections within Downtown and between adjacent districts
- Address safety concerns

COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

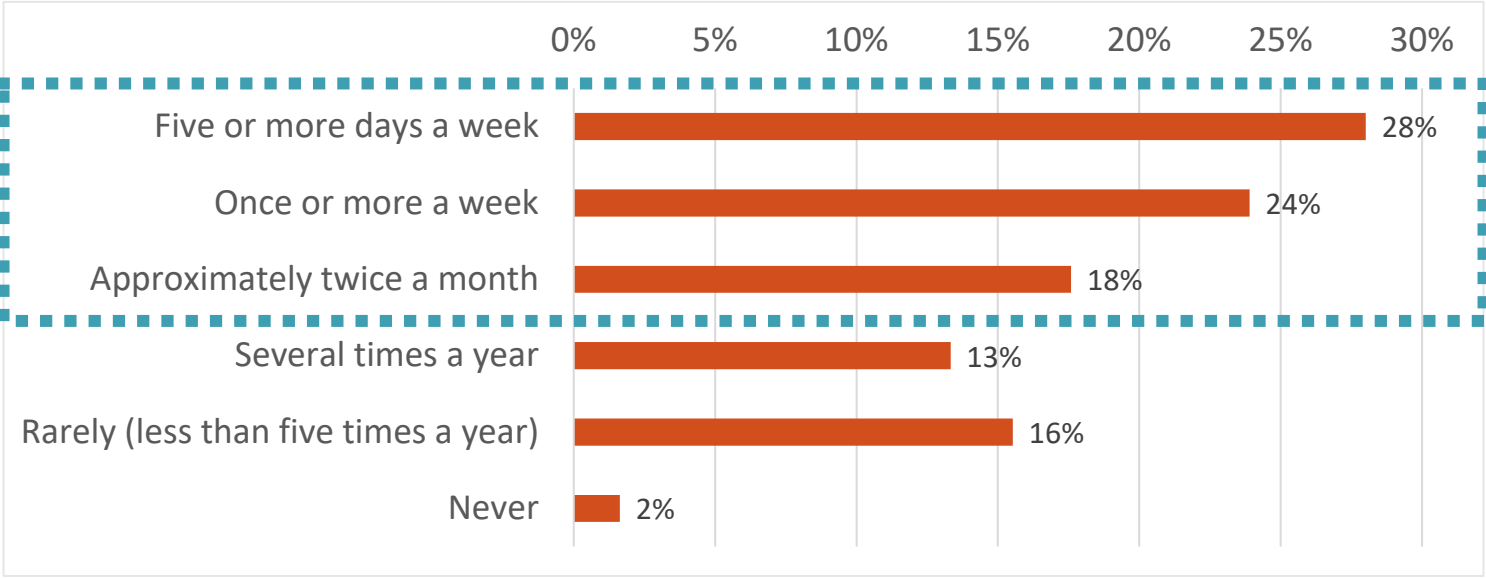
Participant demographic overview:

- 55% of respondents live in Greater Cedar Rapids outside of Downtown, 36% were Downtown employees
- Respondents were reasonably well-distributed by age and income, but skewed female (61%) and white (95%)

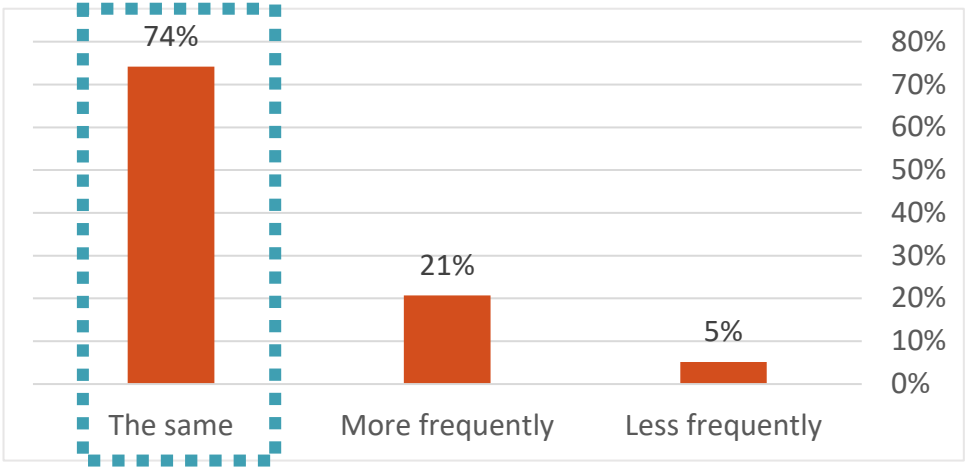


COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

Over the last year, approximately how often have you visited Downtown Cedar Rapids?



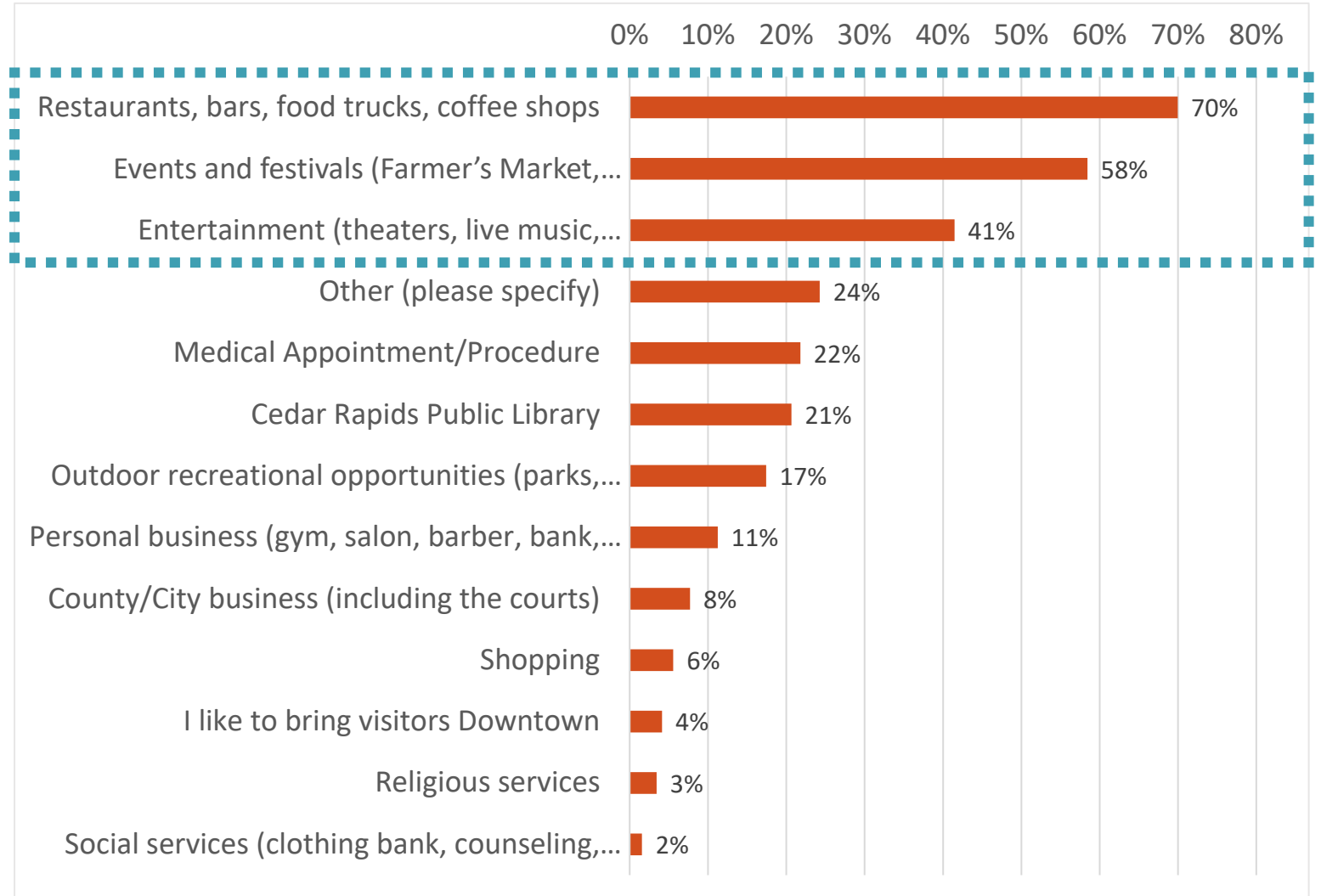
Over the next 12 months, do you think you'll visit Downtown Cedar Rapids more, the same, or less frequently than during the past year?



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

Please select the top three things that bring you to Downtown Cedar Rapids:

- Food/Beverage (70%)
- Events and festivals (58%)
- Entertainment (41%)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

Looking to the future, what three words best capture your desired vision for Downtown Cedar Rapids in the year 2032?

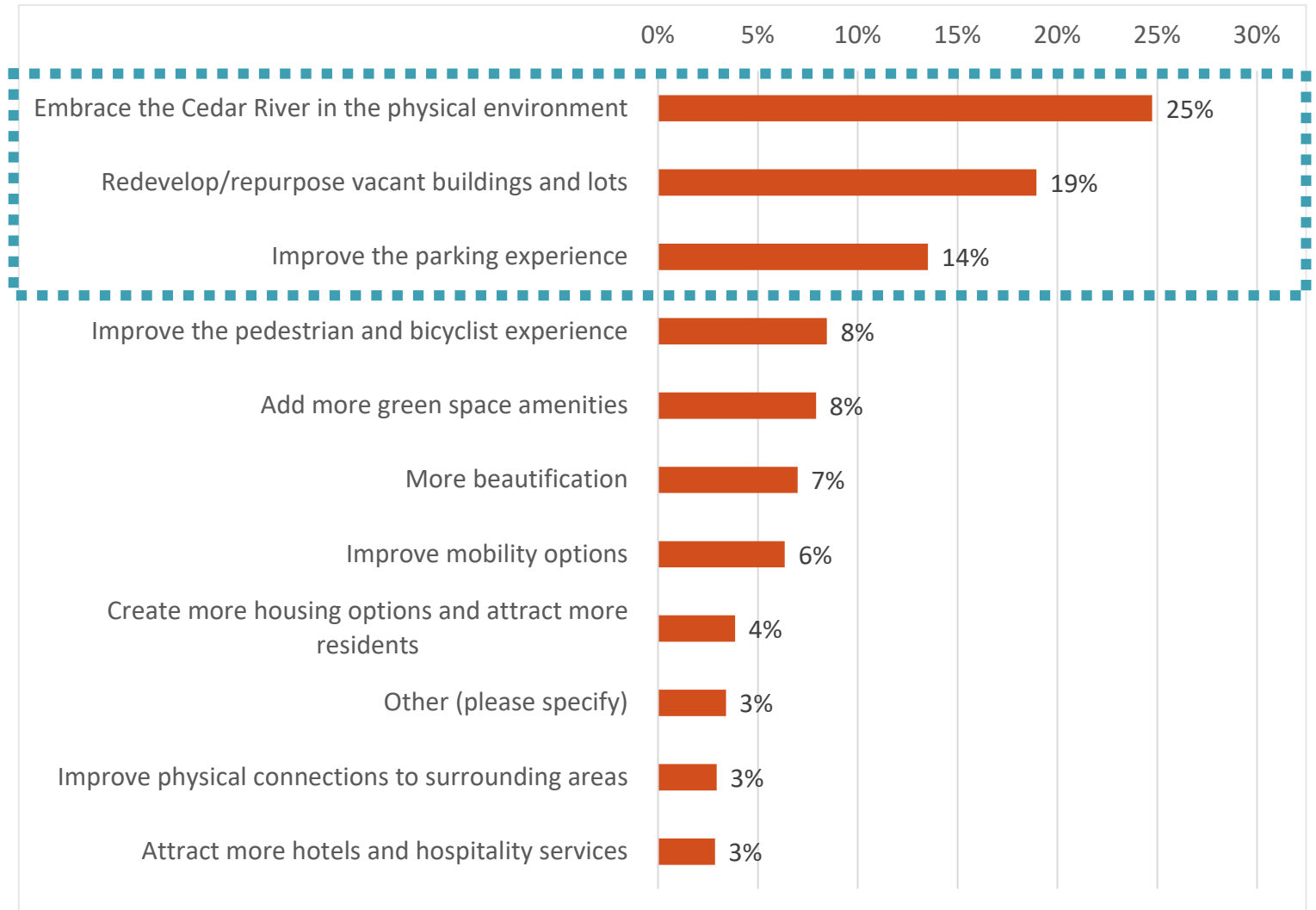
- Safe (230)
- Clean (164)
- Entertaining (137)
- Lively (132)
- Vibrant (129)
- Fun (128)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

To achieve your vision for Downtown Cedar Rapids, which physical improvement is MOST important?

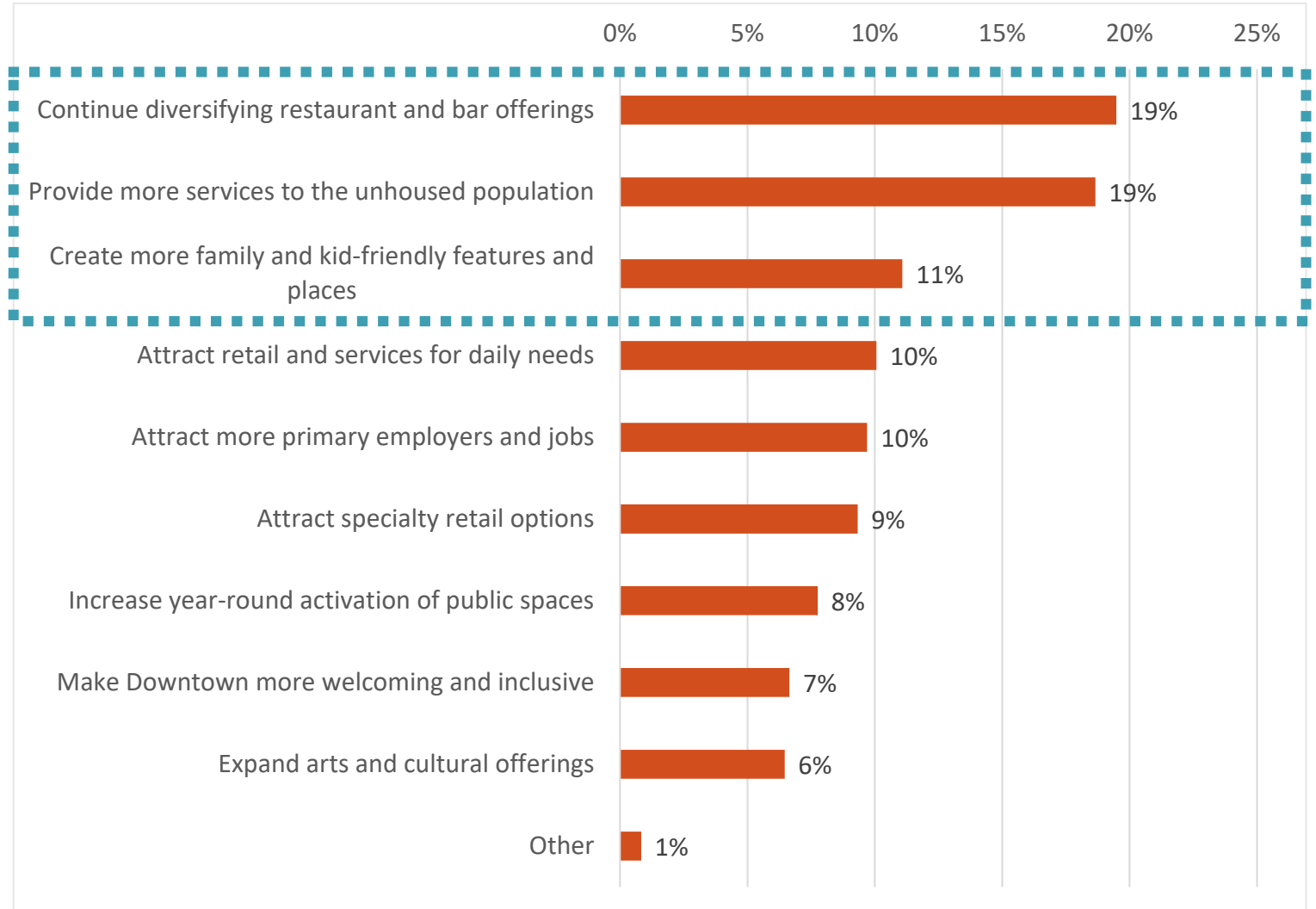
- Embrace the Cedar River (25%)
- Redevelop and repurpose underutilized surface parking lots and vacant buildings and lots (19%)
- Improve the parking experience (14%)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

To achieve your vision for Downtown Cedar Rapids, which service is MOST important?

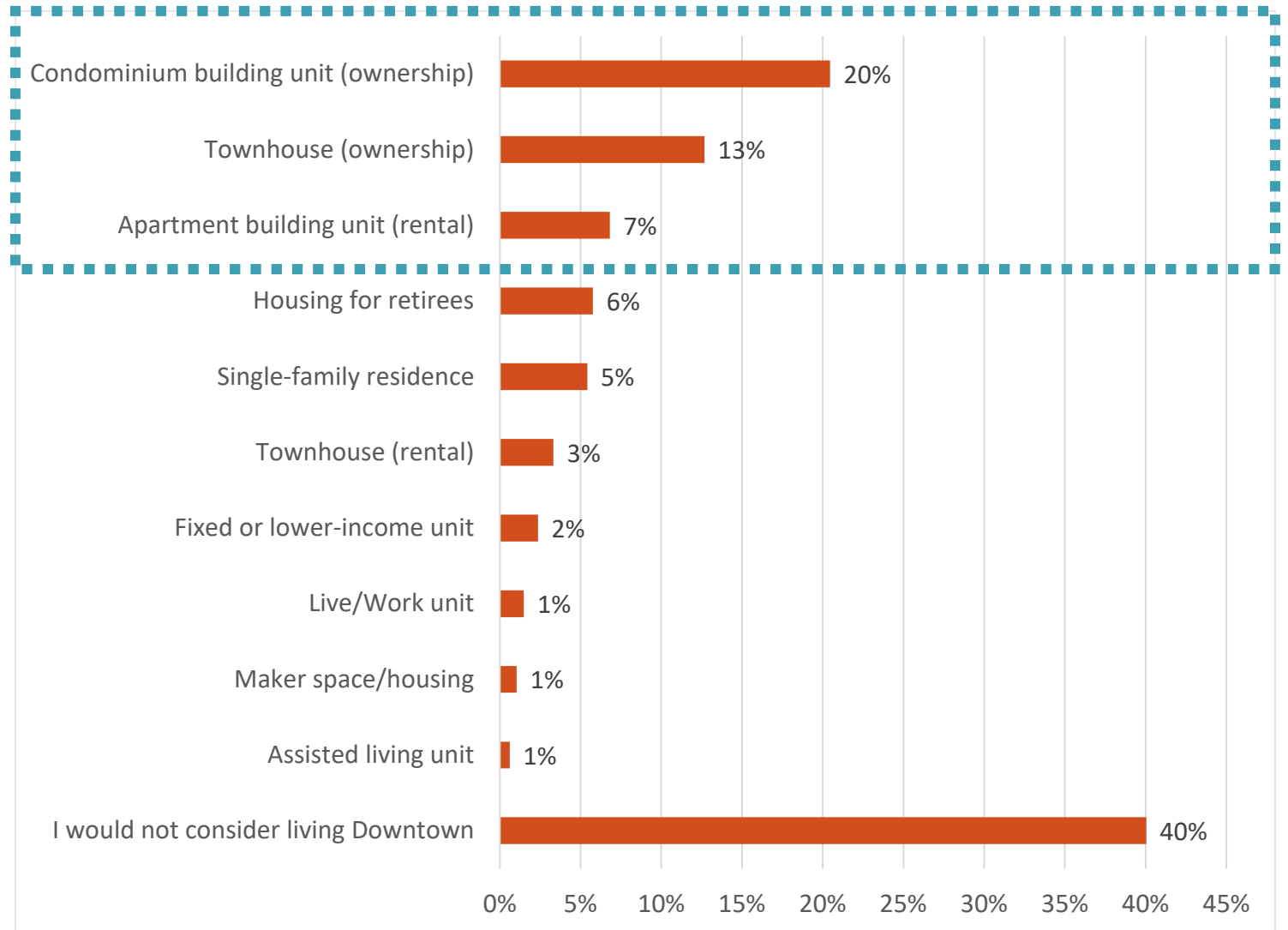
- Continue diversifying restaurant and bar offerings (19%)
- Provide more services to address the unhoused population (19%)
- Create more family and kid-friendly features and places (11%)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

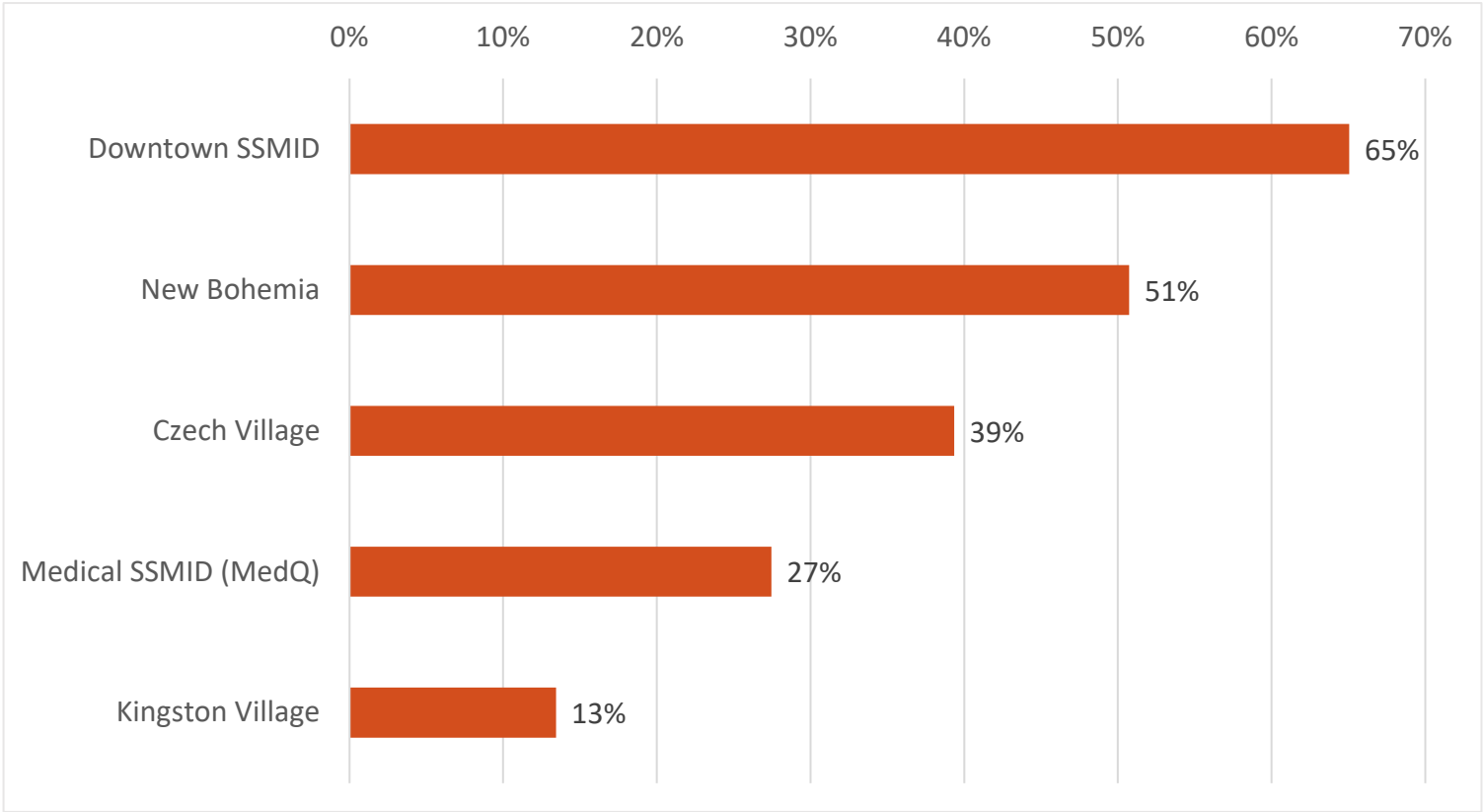
If you were to consider living Downtown, what type of housing would you most desire?

- Condominium building unit (ownership) (20%)
- Townhouse (ownership) (13%)
- Apartment building unit (rental) (7%)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

*Which of the following
Downtown districts do you
live, work, regularly visit,
and/or own property in?*





DISCOVERY -

MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

MARKET ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY – OVERVIEW

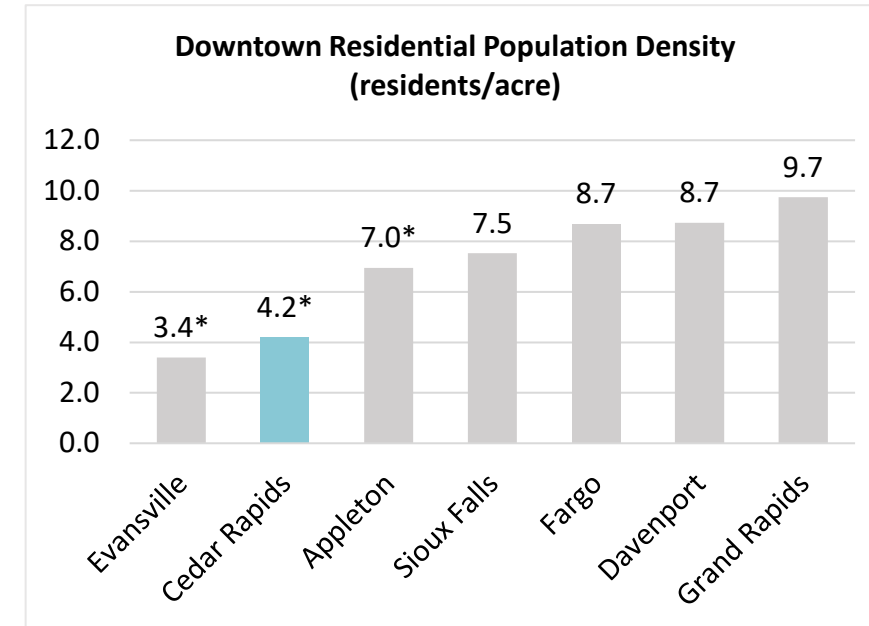
- 4 market areas:
 - ✓ Downtown SSMID
 - ✓ Primary Market Area (Downtown, NewBo, Czech Village, Med)
 - ✓ City of Cedar Rapids
 - ✓ Linn County
- Peer cities for comparison
- 4 topic areas
 - ✓ *Live*
 - ✓ *Work*
 - ✓ *Shop & Dine*
 - ✓ *Visit & Stay*

Peer Cities/Downtowns		
City	Regional Population*	Downtown Size
Cedar Rapids, IA	276,500	0.43 sq. mi.
Appleton, WI	239,100	0.29 sq. mi.
Davenport, IA	384,600	0.37 sq. mi.
Evansville, IN	358,600	0.48 sq. mi.
Fargo, ND	250,200	0.72 sq. mi.
Grand Rapids, MI	1,087,592	0.66 sq. mi.
Sioux Falls, SD	276,700	0.76 sq. mi.

MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS – LIVE

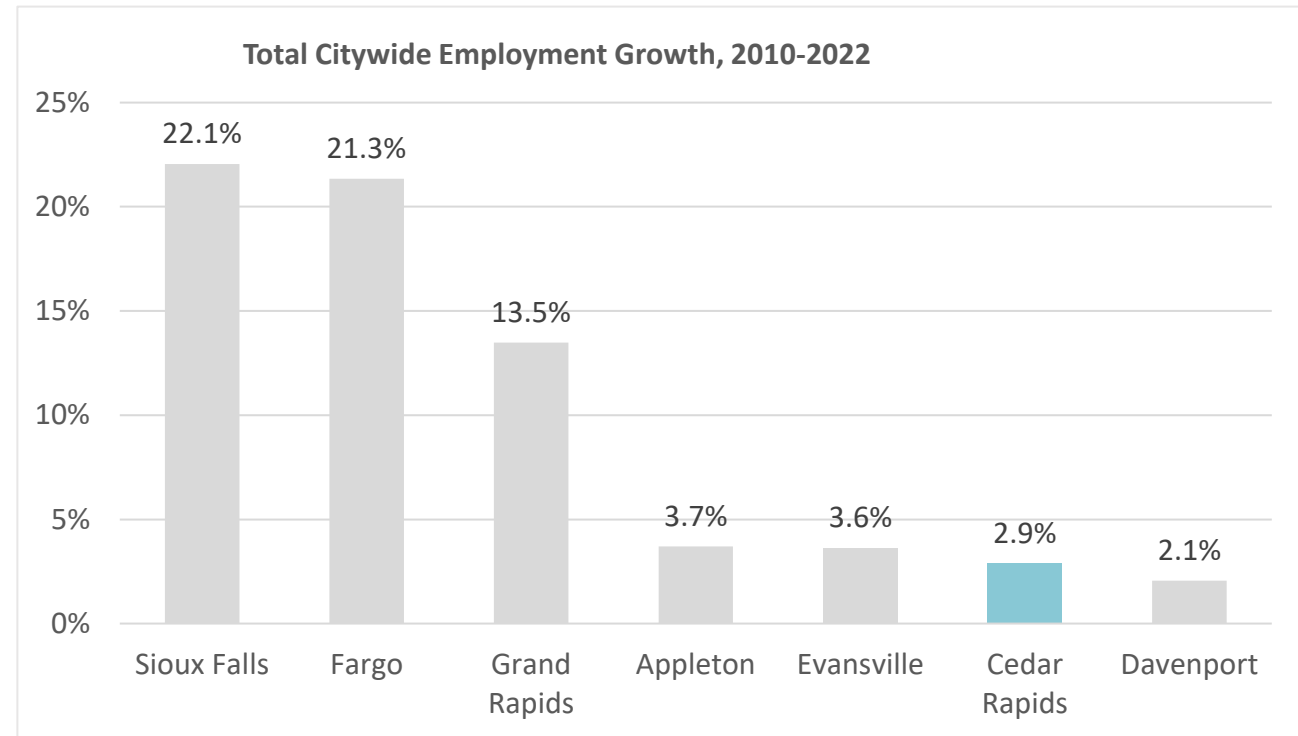
- Population growth in all market areas, highest in Downtown SSMID
- Increasingly diverse across all market areas
- Downtown median age in 2022 was 41.2, the second highest among peer downtowns
- Downtown residential density second lowest among peers
- Affordable housing market compared to peer cities

Downtown Median Age		
	2010	2022
Cedar Rapids	38.9	41.2
Davenport, IA	35.6	38.4
Evansville, IN	50.1	42.8
Fargo, ND	34.2	37.7
Grand Rapids, MI	31.6	33.3
Sioux Falls, SD	34.8	37.3
Appleton, WI	30.3	31.8



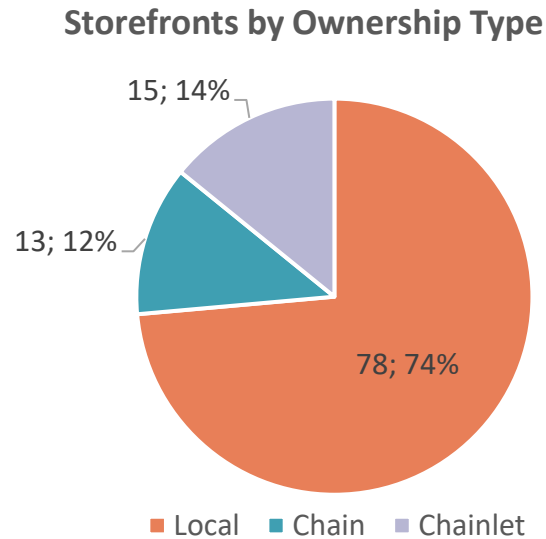
MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS – WORK

- Modest employment growth and educational attainment compared to peers
- High employment density Downtown, concentration of “knowledge sector” jobs (61.2% of total)
- Post-pandemic uncertainty in office sector, but 24-month lease renewal rate of 91.1% Downtown, outperforming non-Downtown
- 14% of the city’s total industrial real estate within 1-mile radius of Downtown, 0.2% vacancy rate and 98.4% lease renewal rate



MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS – SHOP & DINE

- 124 street-level businesses in Downtown, 36% service businesses, 30% restaurants, bars, or cafes
- 12% national chains, 74% local independents
- Retail gap
- Average storefront lease rates in 1-mile radius around Downtown lower than city

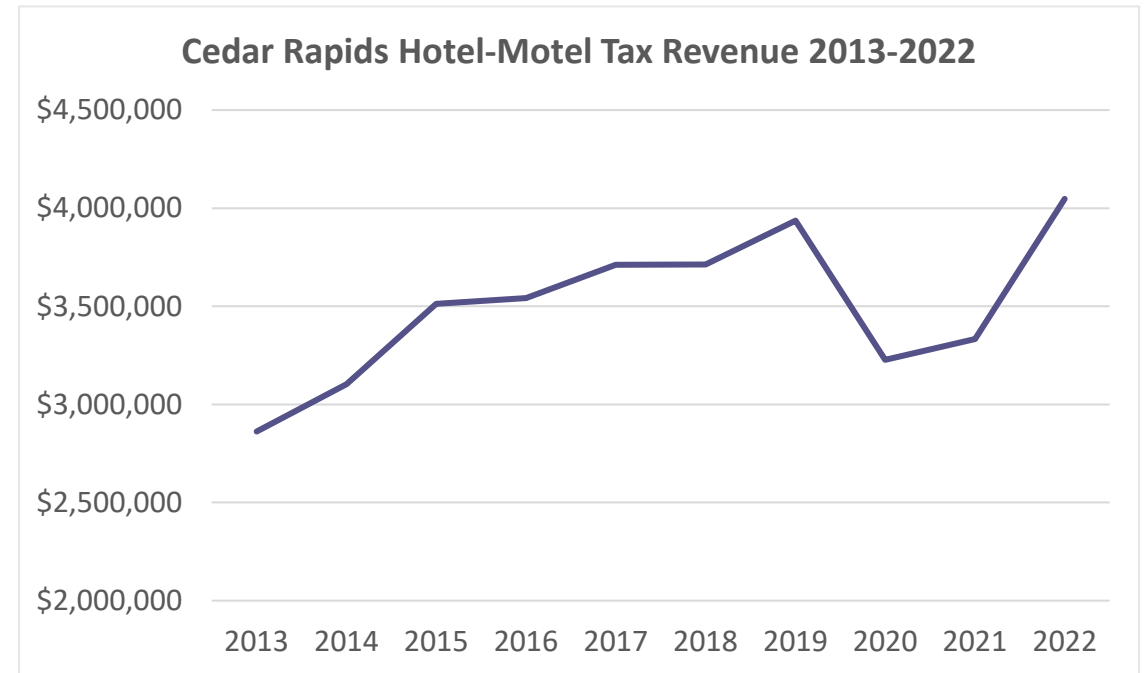


Downtown Street Level Business Inventory		
Type	Establishments	Share of Total
Restaurants, Bars, and Cafes	37	30%
Shopping	16	13%
Services (beauty, fitness, banking etc.)	45	36%
Other entertainment	8	6%
Civic, nonprofit, religious	18	15%
Total	124	

Source: P.U.M.A. inventory via Google, building from a Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance business database

MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS – VISIT & STAY

- Cedar Rapids has 23 hotels, totaling 1,600 rooms, but only one is in Downtown.
- Visitation to Cedar Rapids declined sharply during the pandemic in 2020 but has since made a full recovery
- Hotel-motel tax revenues in 2022 were at a 9-year high
- Cultural amenities (theaters, venues), events, and outdoor recreation are draws



MARKET ASSESSMENT – OPPORTUNITIES

- **LIVE** – Capitalize on new housing development in and around Downtown and continue attracting additional housing
- **WORK** –
 - Anticipate short-term office uncertainty, explore opportunities for conversion of traditional office formats to flex space, coworking, and housing
 - Highlight and expand small-scale and ag manufacturing niches
- **SHOP & DINE** - Continue diversifying ground floor offerings with local independent and unique businesses, including restaurants, niche and resident-serving retail, and other creative uses
- **VISIT & STAY**
 - Attract additional hotel rooms in Downtown
 - Build on live music and outdoor recreation niches



KEY TAKEAWAYS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Downtown Cedar Rapids has proven to be resilient – rising from the flood and other challenges with an influx of private and public investment
2. Downtown has many assets, but needs more consistent activation and reasons to come Downtown for people of all ages
3. Embracing the Cedar River remains a clear community priority
4. Moving forward, Downtown should continue to evolve into a mixed-use neighborhood
5. Key catalytic initiatives focused on the public realm are recommended to attract additional private investment, connect key activity areas, and help make downtown a stronger regional destination
6. To optimize services and support plan implementation, and to be in line with national best practices, a strengthened public/private downtown management approach is needed



PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK

2017 PLAN

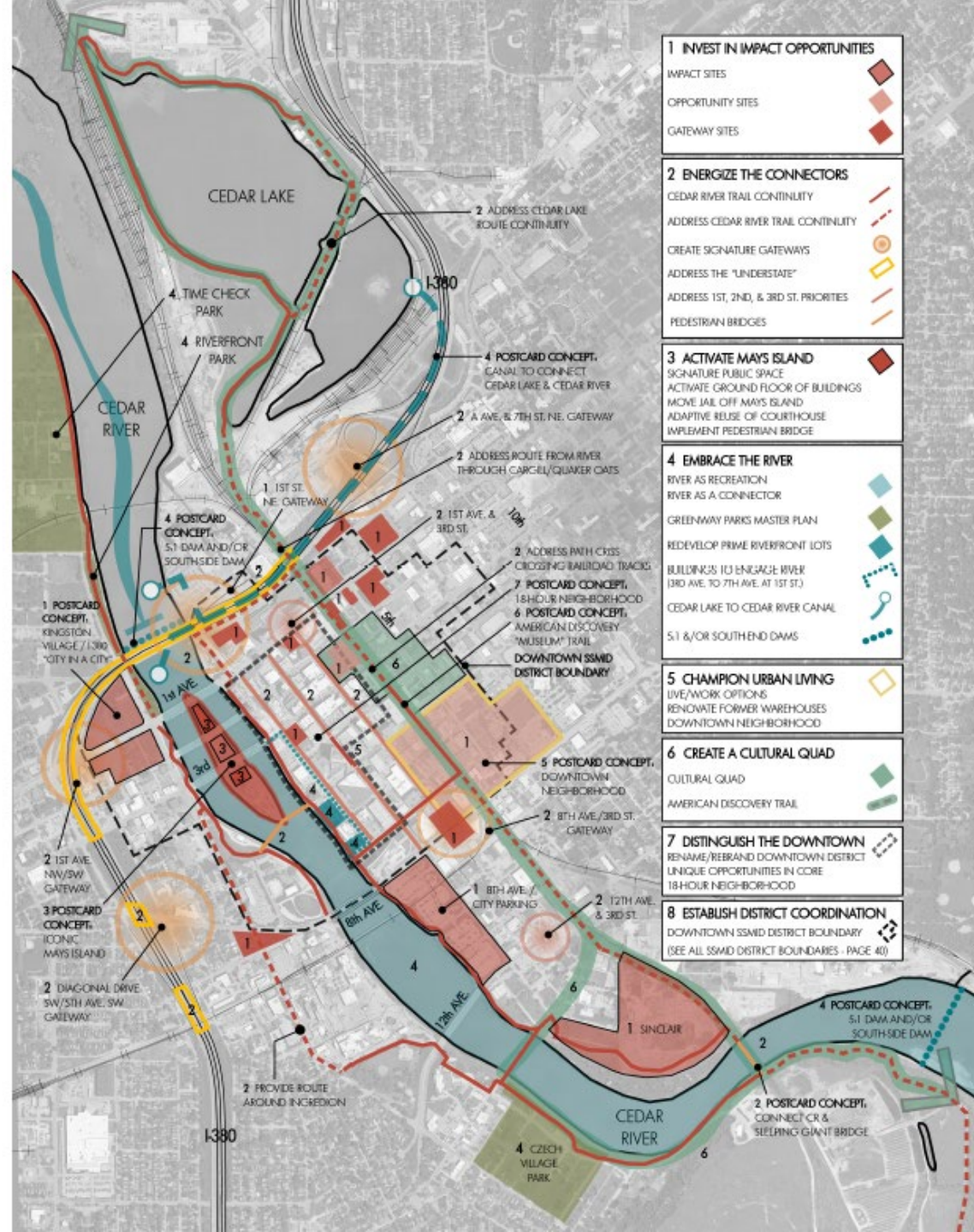
- Continue to foster/invest in these opportunities
- Many are already happening!
- We want to build on this, but also focus on shorter-term public investments that can CATALYZE these projects

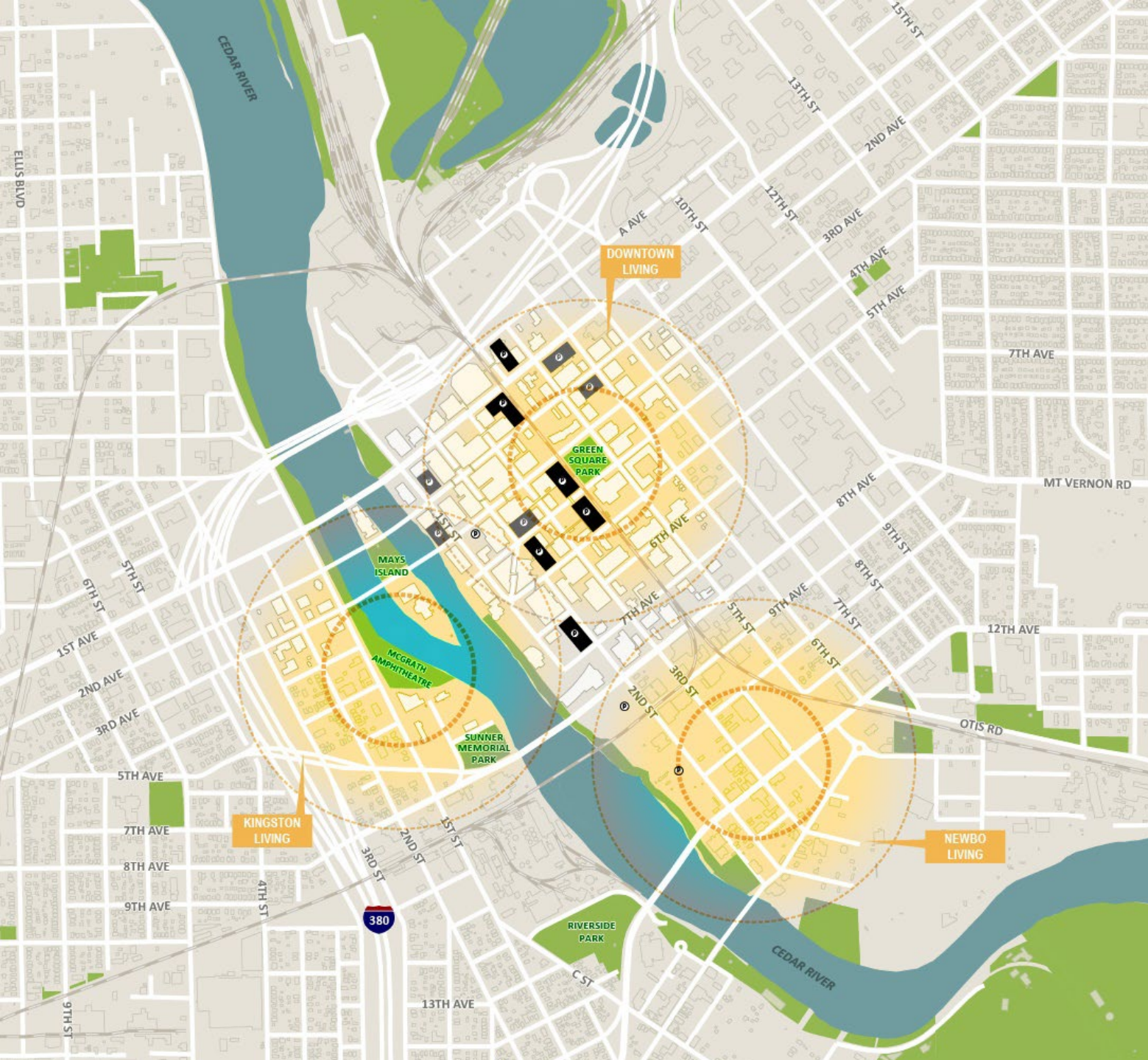
COMMON THEMES

Connections
Opportunity Investments
Culture
Big Ideas

PRIORITIES

1. **Invest** in Impact Opportunities
2. **Energize** the Connectors
3. **Activate** Mays Island
4. **Embrace** the River
5. **Champion** Urban Living
6. **Create** a Cultural Quad
7. **Distinguish** the Downtown
8. **Establish** District Coordination



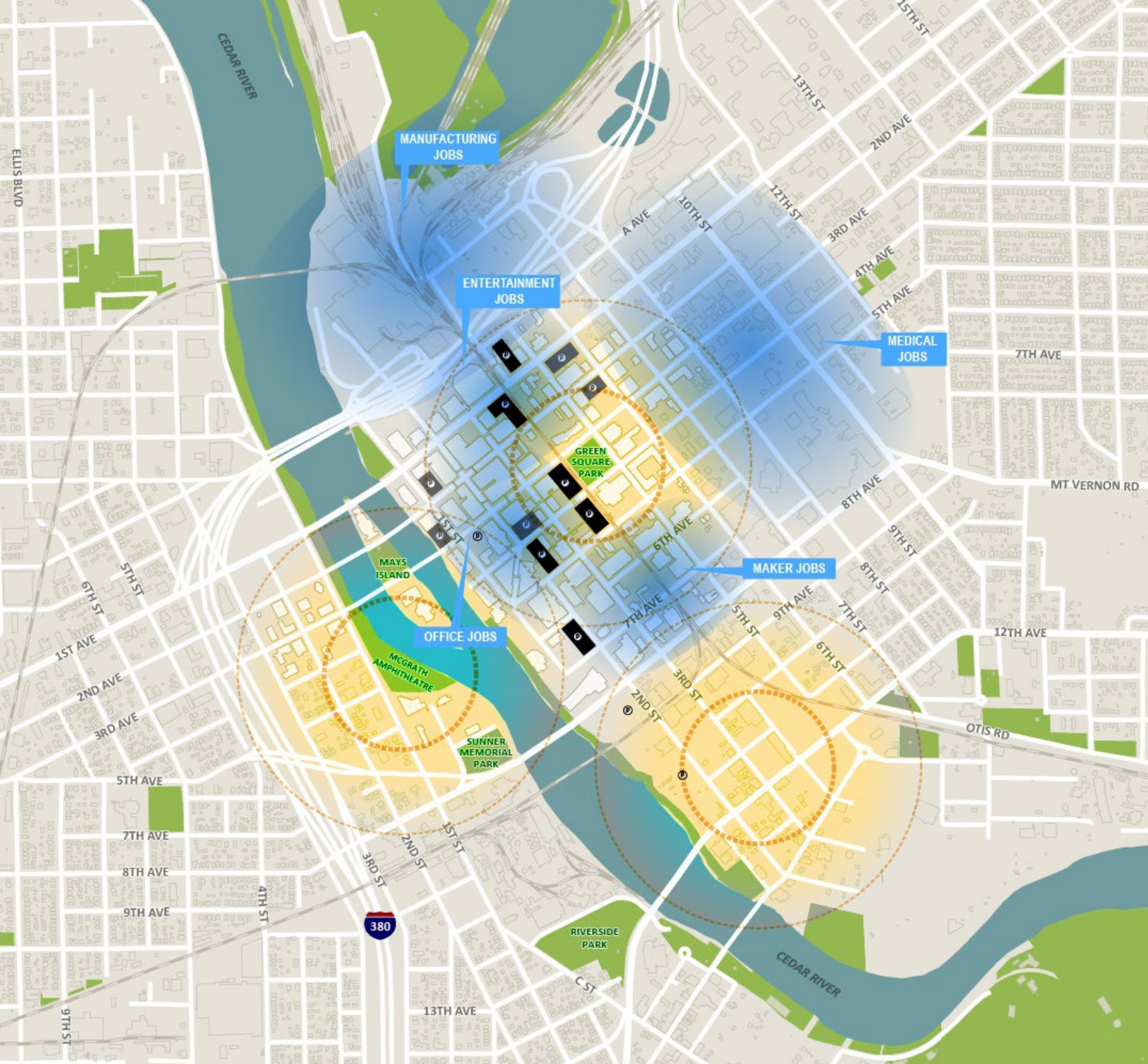


PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK – LIVE

- Continue to **grow urban residential living** types in and around downtown
- **Adaptive Reuse** projects (office conversion opportunities)
- **New Mixed Use** development
- **Apartment/Condos**
- **Townhomes**

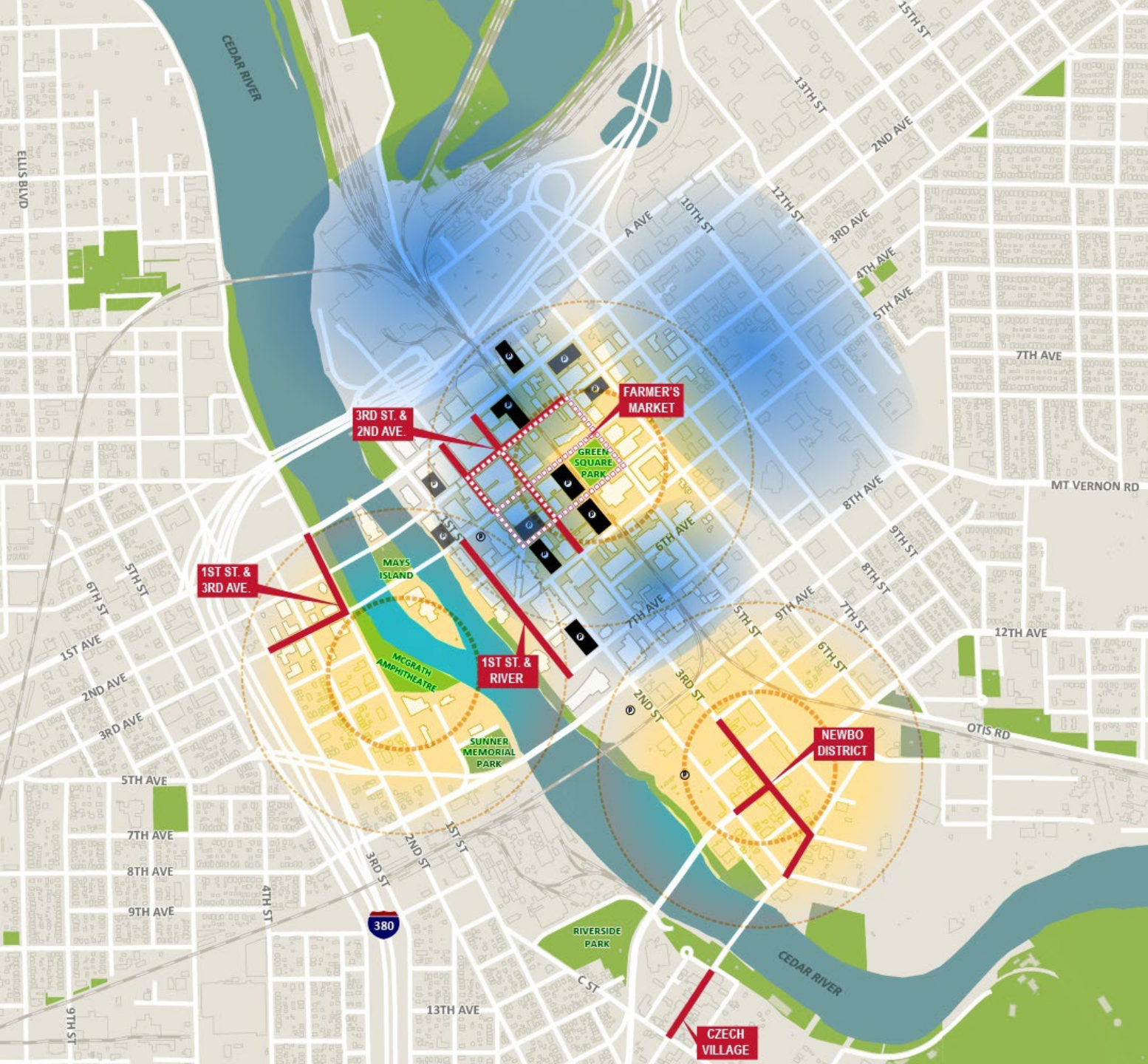
PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK – WORK

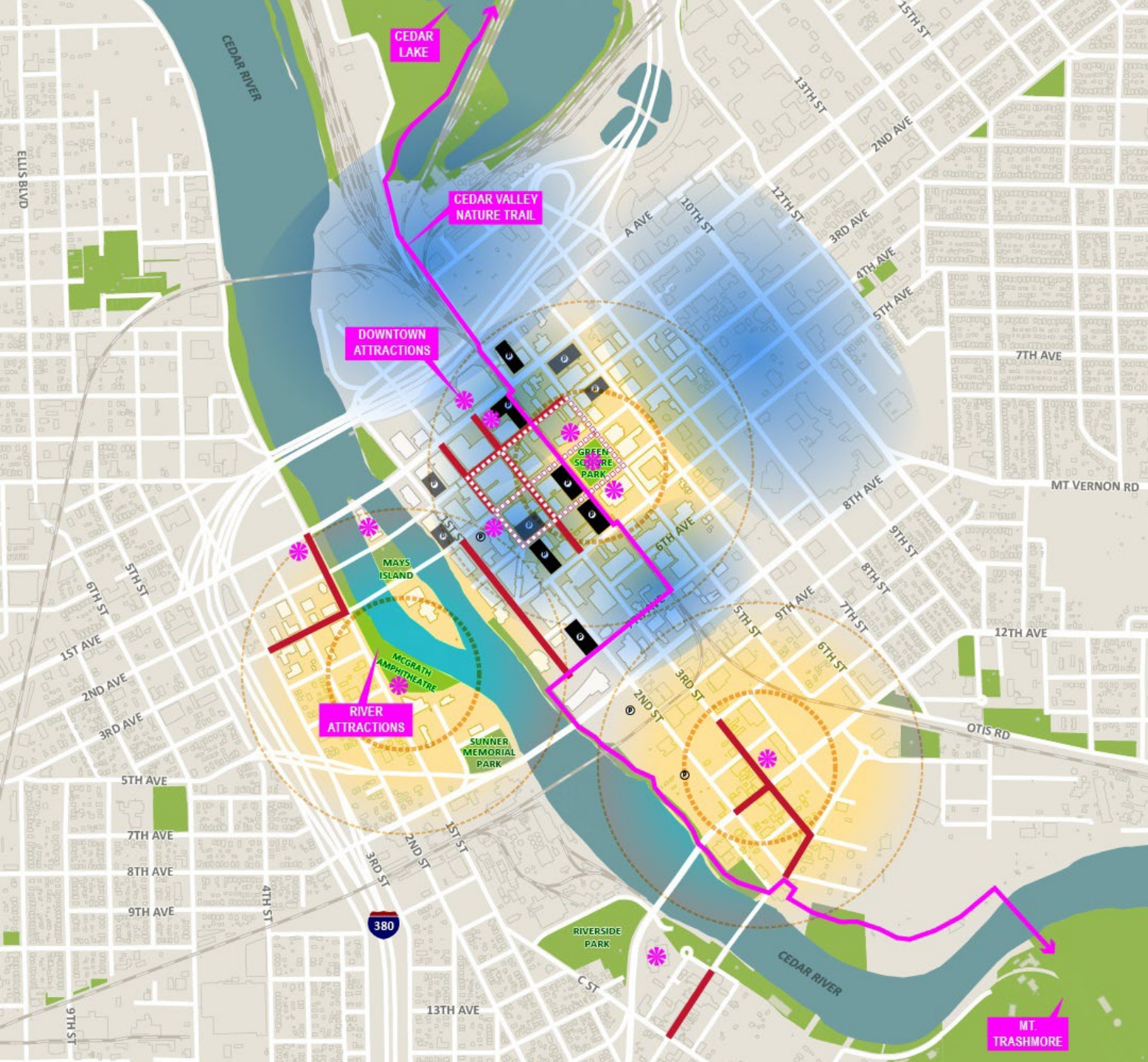
- Support **existing jobs**
- Foster **new jobs and markets**
- **Daytime activity** is key!



PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK – SHOP & DINE

- Recruit new shopping and dining activity to downtown core
 - 3rd Street
 - 2nd Street
 - 1st Street
 - 2nd Avenue
 - Kingston (1st/3rd)
- Connect to and support ongoing shopping/dining activity in:
 - NewBo
 - Czech Village





PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK – VISIT & STAY

- Promote and market **existing attractions**
- Build on **biking culture**
- Actively recruit more “**stay**” options
 - **Adaptive Reuse** of office to hotel (ex. US Bank)
 - **New hotel** in redevelopment projects
 - **Short-term stays** in/around downtown

- 1. Embrace the River: 2nd Avenue Linear Park & Mays Island Activation** – design 2nd Ave. as a “linear park” connecting Kingston to Downtown. Allow bridge to be shut down to cars during special events to expand activation and river engagement.
- 2. Activate Downtown: 3rd Street Festival Street & Storefront Activation** – design street to be flexible and able to be shut down to cars during unique times (weekends, Farmer’s Market, special events, etc.) and encourage storefront activation in strategic locations.
- 3. Connect Downtown: Trail Connection** – short and long-term improvements to trail connection from Downtown across rail tracks.



GOALS, STRATEGIES, & CATALYTIC PROJECTS

PLAN STRUCTURE

- Executive Summary
- Introduction & Background
- Discovery Phase
 - Community Engagement Summary
 - Market Assessment Findings
- Key Takeaways
- Vision Plan Framework
 - Guiding Principles (from EnvisionCR)
 - Physical Framework
 - Goals
 - Strategies, Catalytic Projects
- Implementation
 - Initiatives (timeline, lead/support entities)



GOAL 1 – EMBRACE THE CEDAR RIVER

Strategies:

1. Incorporate the Cedar River in the built environment.
2. Continue to enhance public spaces adjacent to the Cedar River.
3. Leverage planned stormwater management improvements to increase activation and improve infrastructure around the River.
4. Activate Mays Island.

CATALYTIC PROJECT – RIVER ACTIVATION



- SSMID Boundary
- Flood Recovery Projects
- Permanent Wall
- Removable Wall
- River Activation Opportunity Sites
- Catalytic River Activation Projects

EMBRACE THE RIVER

CATALYTIC PROJECT— 2ND AVE. LINEAR PARK



EMBRACE THE RIVER - CATALYTIC PROJECT MAYS ISLAND PLAZA PARK AND BRIDGES

EXISTING/PLANNED PROJECTS

- ① Whitewater Course
- ② Tree of Five Seasons Park
- ③ Kingston Village Redevelopment
- ④ Flood Recovery Riverfront Trails

2023 PLAN: PROPOSED PROJECTS

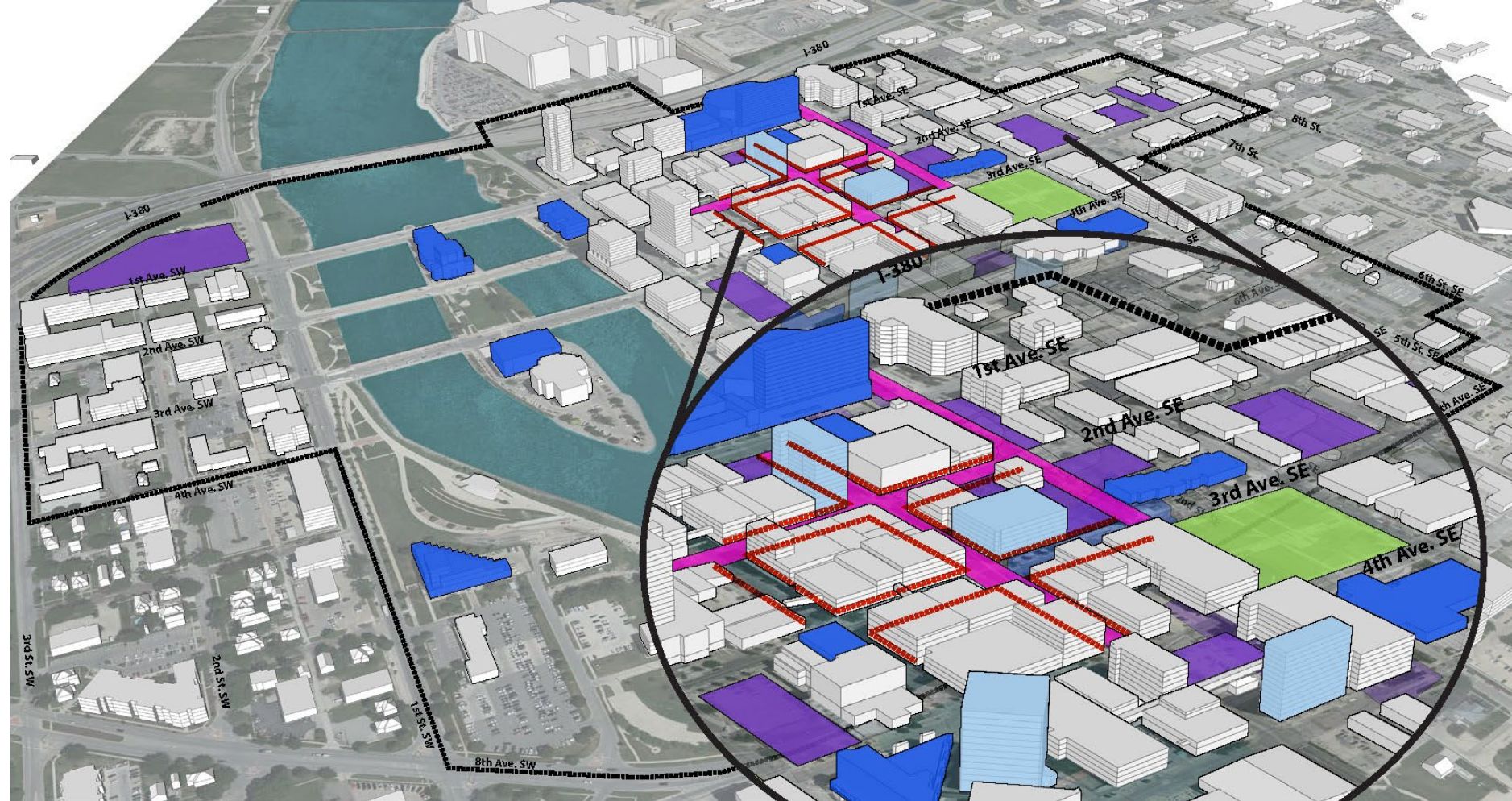
- ① Veteran's Memorial Building Reuse/Activation
- ② Plaza/Gateway to Plaza Park
- ③ 2nd Avenue Festival Bridge and Linear Park
- ④ Flower/Pollinator Garden
- ⑤ Flexible Lawn Area
- ⑥ Picnic/"Beach" Area
- ⑦ Boardwalk/Fishing Area
- ⑧ Iconic Public Art/Gateway
- ⑨ 3rd Avenue Bridge Upgrade

GOAL 2 – ENSURE DOWNTOWN IS ACTIVATED AND VIBRANT

Strategies:

1. Provide regular programming in Downtown public spaces.
2. Enliven the storefront economy and diversify ground floor offerings.
3. Add public art and other physical place enhancements.
4. Ensure Downtown is clean and safe.
5. Explore opportunities for infill development and redevelopment, more housing, and office building conversions.

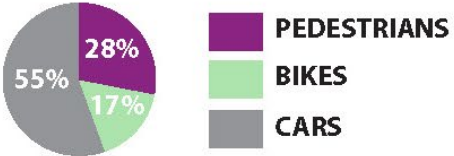
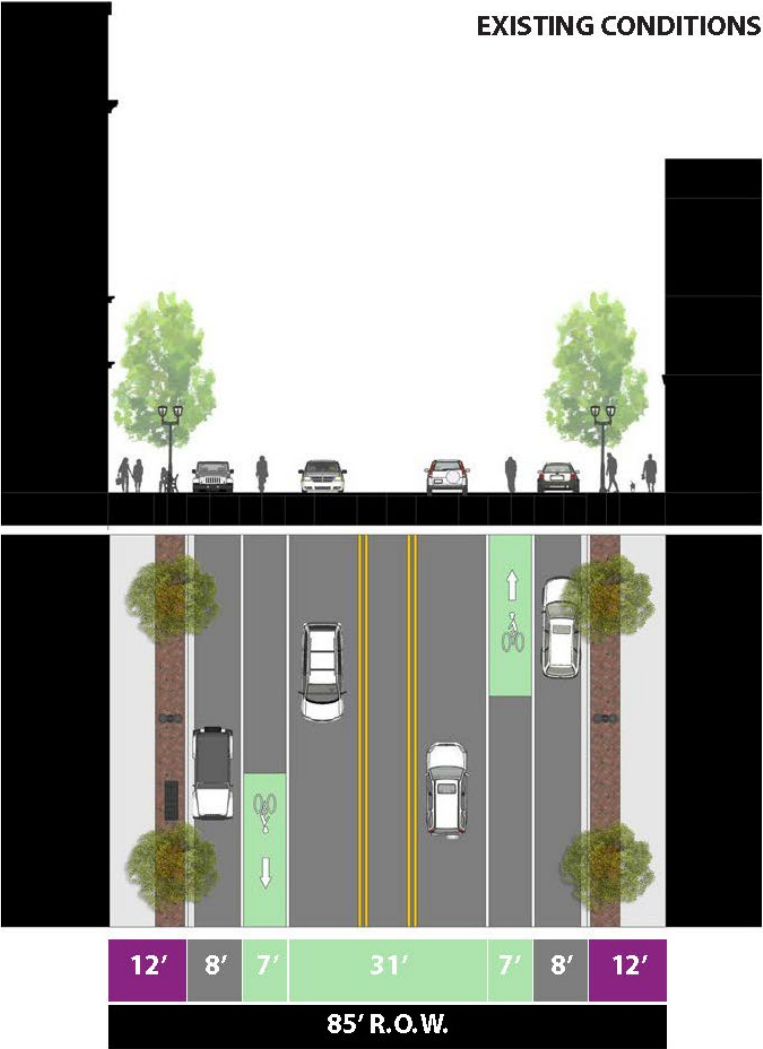
CATALYTIC PROJECT – STRATEGIC STOREFRONT ACTIVATION



- SSMID Boundary
- Public & Entertainment Destinations
- Opportunity Sites
- Greene Square Activation
- Adaptive Reuse Opportunities - Lodging & Housing
- Storefront Activation Priority Areas
- Catalytic Downtown Activation Projects

ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN

CATALYTIC PROJECT – 3RD ST. FESTIVAL STREET (EXISTING)

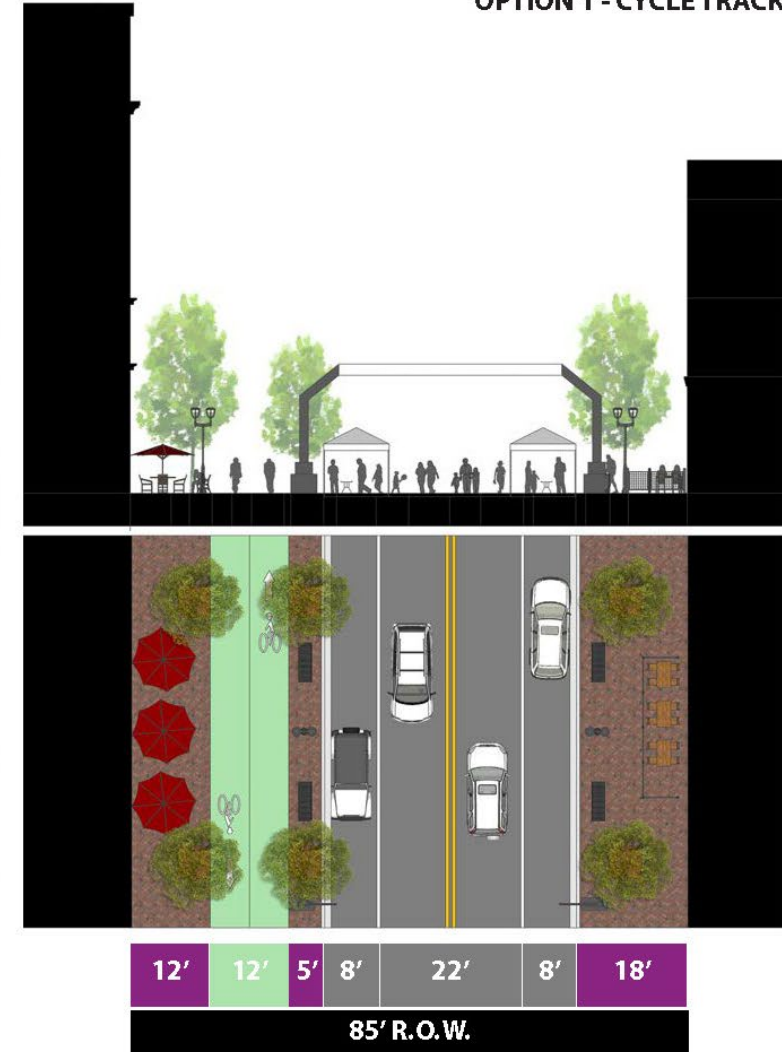


ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN - CATALYTIC PROJECT
3RD STREET FESTIVAL STREET (1ST - 4TH AVE.)

CATALYTIC PROJECT – 3RD ST. FESTIVAL STREET (FUTURE)



OPTION 1 - CYCLE TRACK

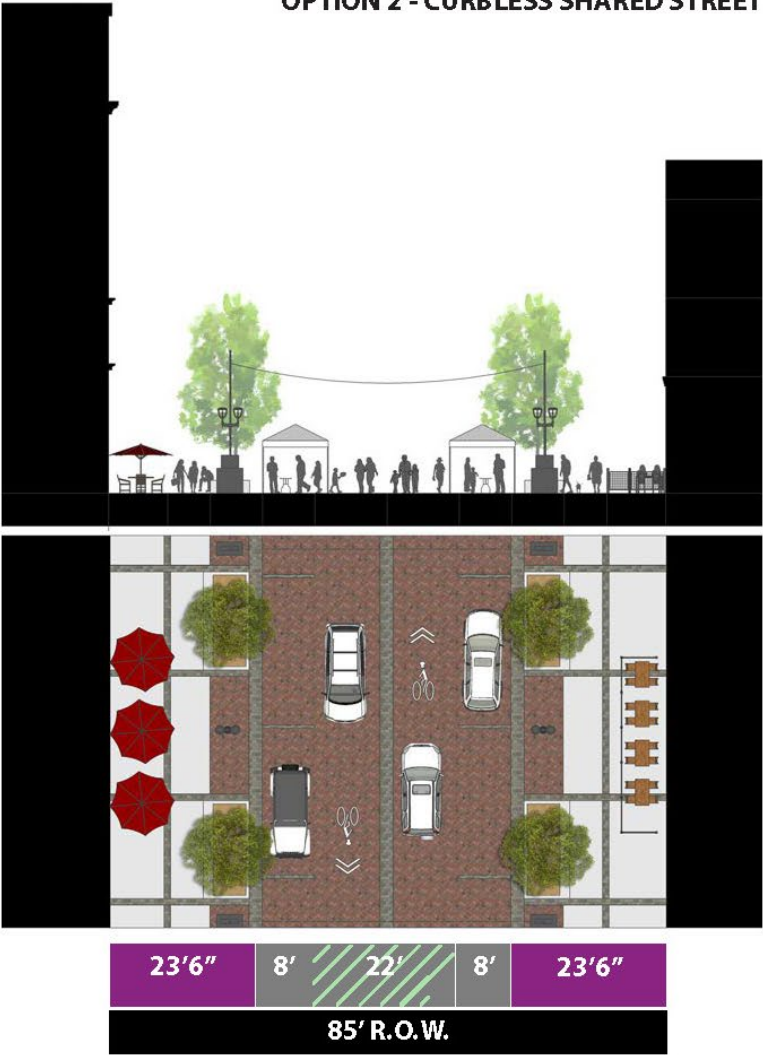


ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN - CATALYTIC PROJECT
3RD STREET FESTIVAL STREET (1ST - 4TH AVE.)

CATALYTIC PROJECT – 3RD ST. FESTIVAL STREET (FUTURE)



OPTION 2 - CURBLESS SHARED STREET



ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN - CATALYTIC PROJECT
3RD STREET FESTIVAL STREET (1ST - 4TH AVE.)

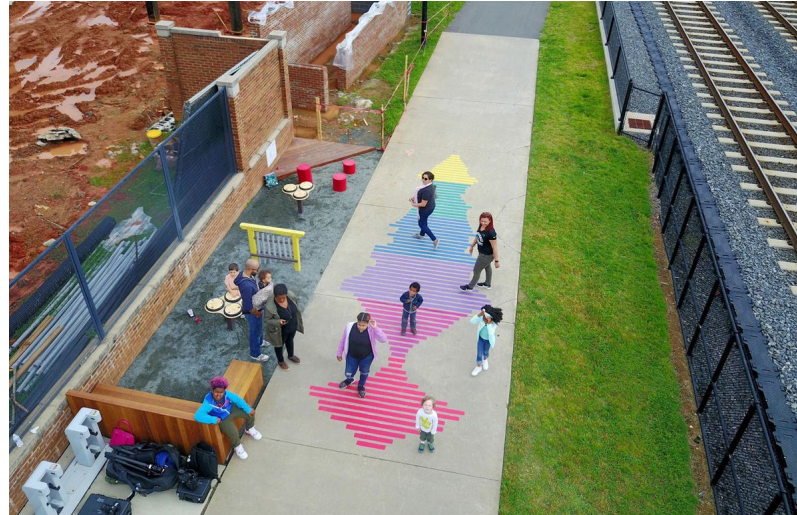
GOAL 3 – IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY WITHIN DOWNTOWN AND TO ADJACENT DISTRICTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS.

Strategies:

1. Ensure Downtown is accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including transit and/or a trolley or circulator, walking/rolling, biking, and driving.
2. Improve physical and economic connections to and synergy with adjacent districts.
3. Improve the parking experience in Downtown.
4. Build on regional trail network and outdoor recreation scene.
5. Improve wayfinding signage and gateways leading into and out of Downtown.

- ## CONNECT DOWNTOWN

CATALYTIC PROJECT - TRAIL CONNECTION (SHORT-TERM)



Trail markings/art & activation

Landscaping and clearly identified travel paths



Lighting and signage

Signage and fencing

Public art

CATALYTIC PROJECT - TRAIL CONNECTION (LONG-TERM)





QUESTIONS?

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Green Light: I like most of it; it is on the right track

Yellow Light: I like some of it but I have some reservations

Red Light: I have major concerns; it is not on the right track

