

CEDAR RAPIDS DOWNTOWN

**VISION &
ACTION PLAN**

2023

VISION & ACTION PLAN - WHY NOW?

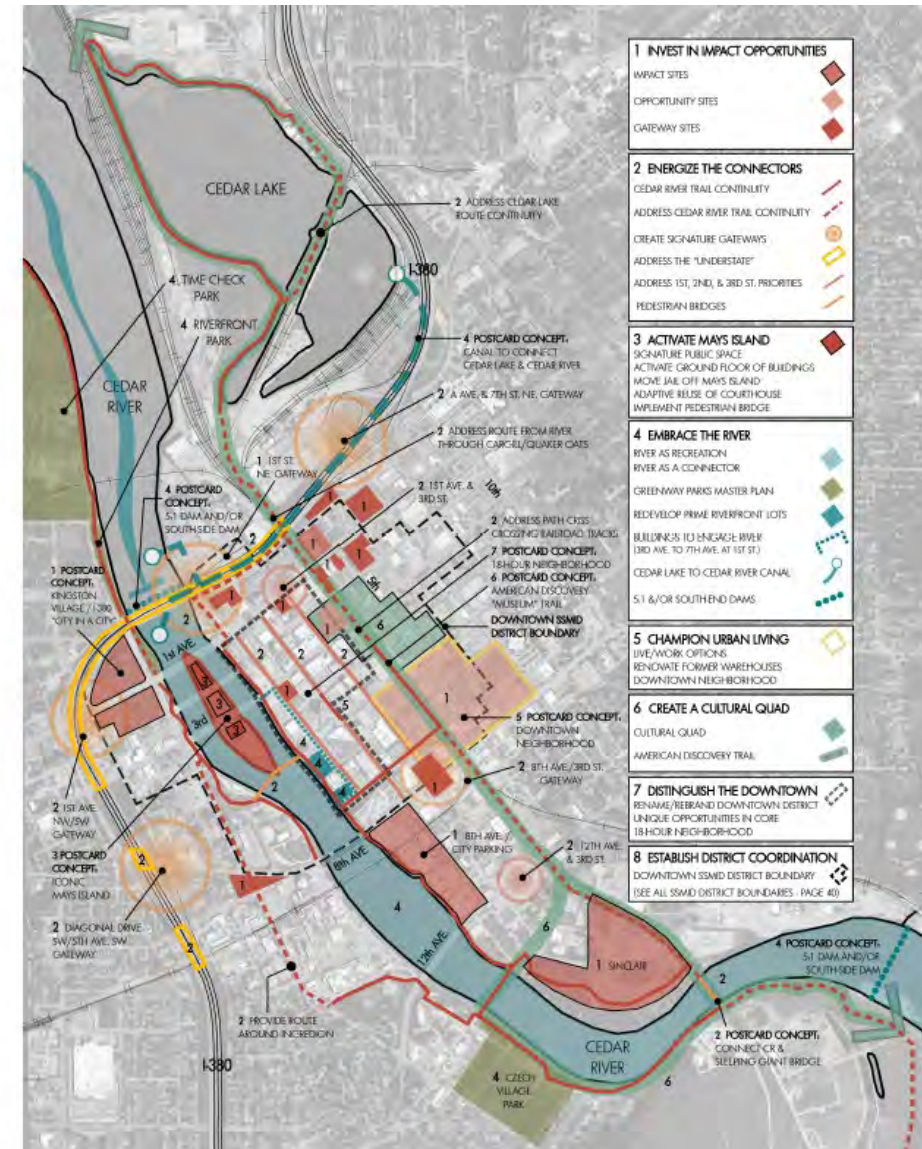
- First Downtown Vision Plan in 2007, updated every 5 years since
- Most recent update in 2017
- Building on past plan recommendations, flood control improvements, ongoing pandemic recovery
- Collaborative effort between the City, the Downtown SSMID, and the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

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



PROJECT WORKING GROUP

- **Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell**, City of Cedar Rapids
- **Doug Neumann**, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
- **Nikki Wilcox**, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
- **Jennifer Pratt**, City of Cedar Rapids
- **Caleb Mason**, City of Cedar Rapids
- **James Klein**, Downtown SSMID Commission
- **Jon Dusek**, Downtown SSMID Commission
- **Tom Aller**, 2001 Development Corporation
- **Louis Zumbach**, Linn County Supervisor
- **Brianne Cummins**, UFG Insurance



AGENDA

- Discovery – Community Outreach & Market Assessment Findings
- Key Takeaways
- Vision for Downtown
- Physical Framework
- Goals & Catalytic Projects
- Implementation
- Questions & Discussion



COMMUNITY OUTREACH - OVERVIEW

Over 1,600 inputs:

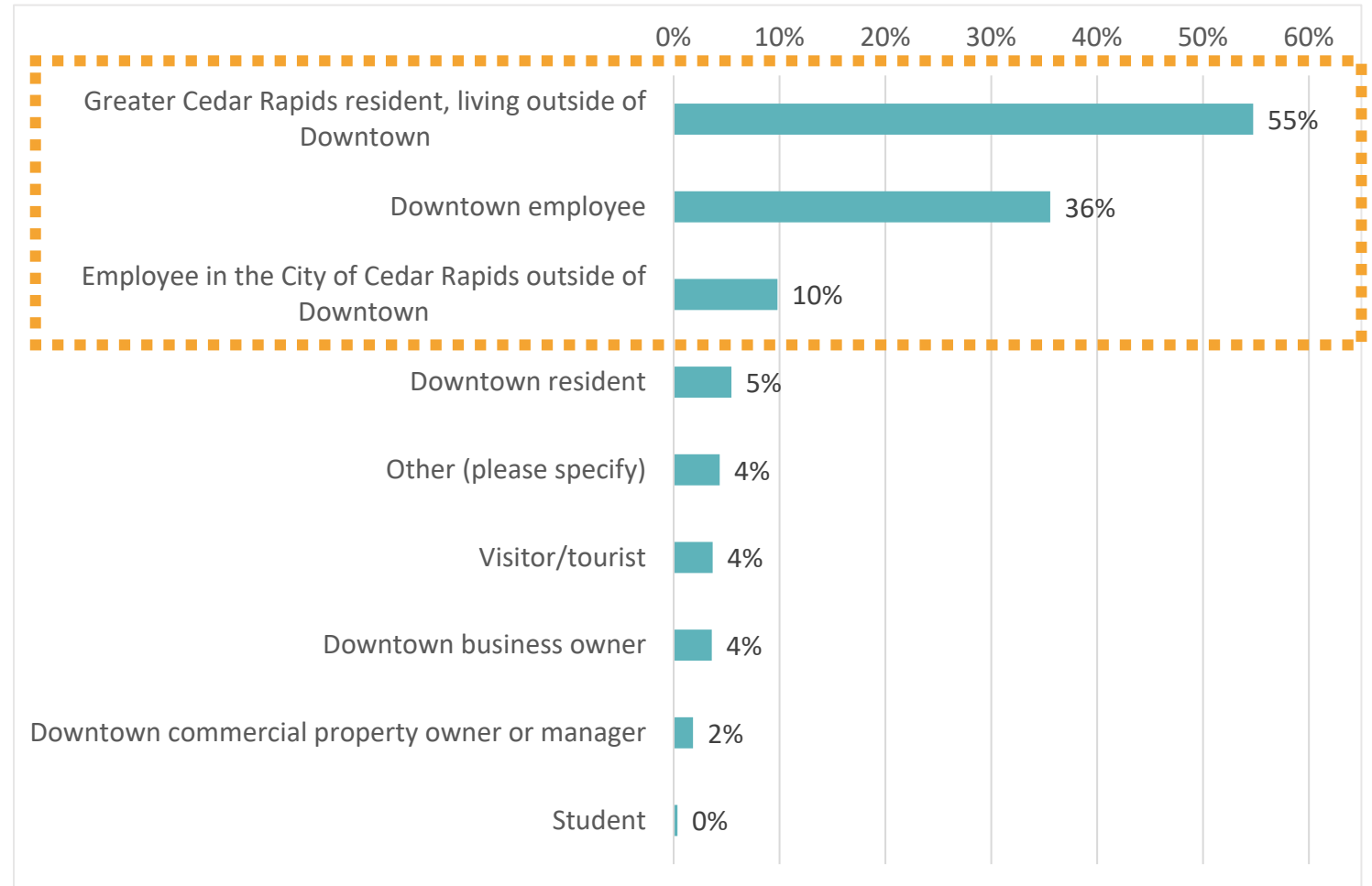
- Downtown Stakeholder Engagement – **approx. 150 participants**
 - 5 Working Group meetings
 - Roundtable meetings and individual interviews
 - Approx. 150 participants
- Online Survey – **1,414 responses**
- Pop-up at Blues Night on 5/19/23 – **approx. 60 participants**
- Open House Meetings – **approx. 50 participants**



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

Participant demographic overview:

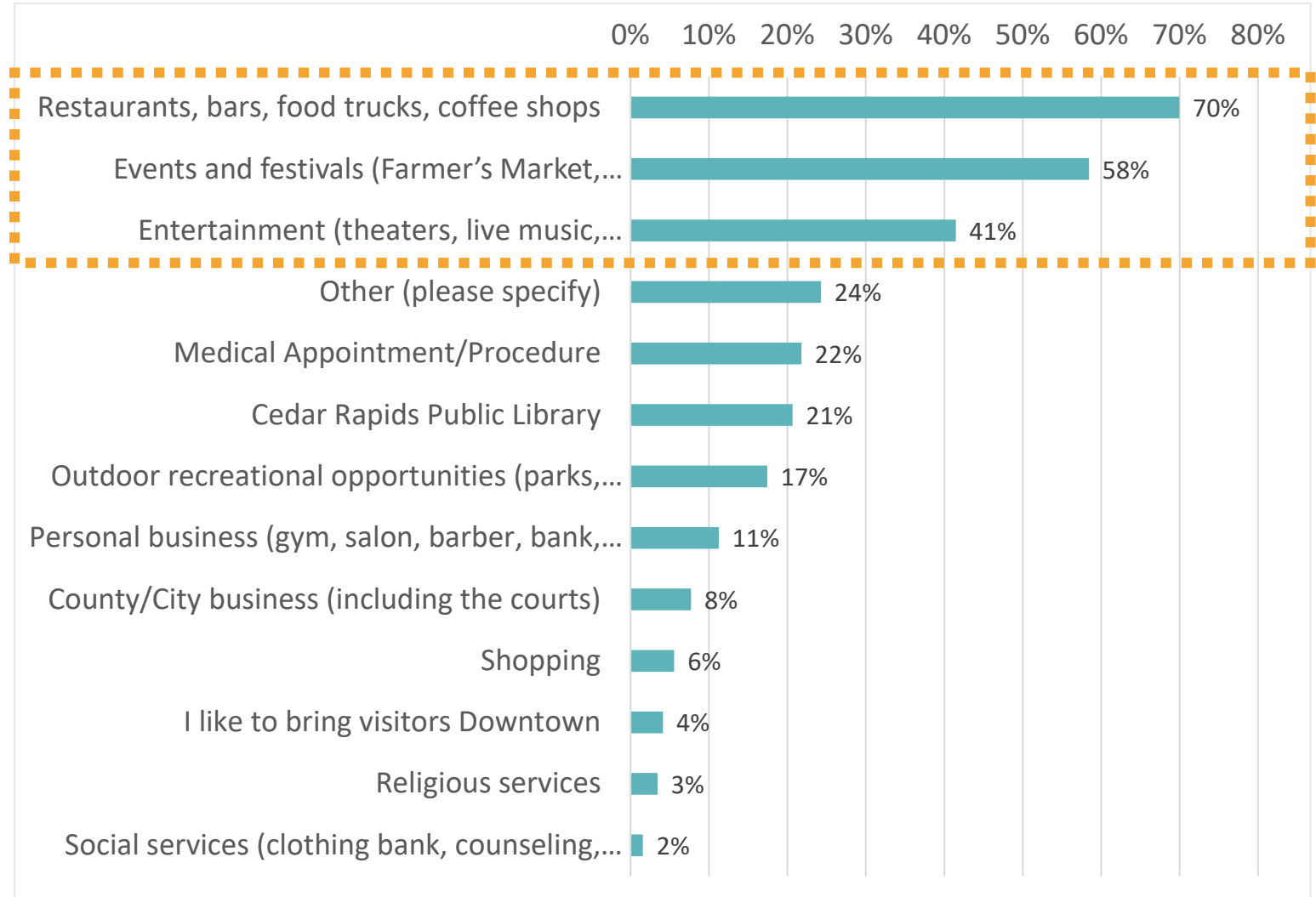
- 55% of respondents live in Greater Cedar Rapids outside of Downtown, 36% were Downtown employees
- Respondents were reasonably well-distributed by age and income, but skewed female (61%) and white (95%)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

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?

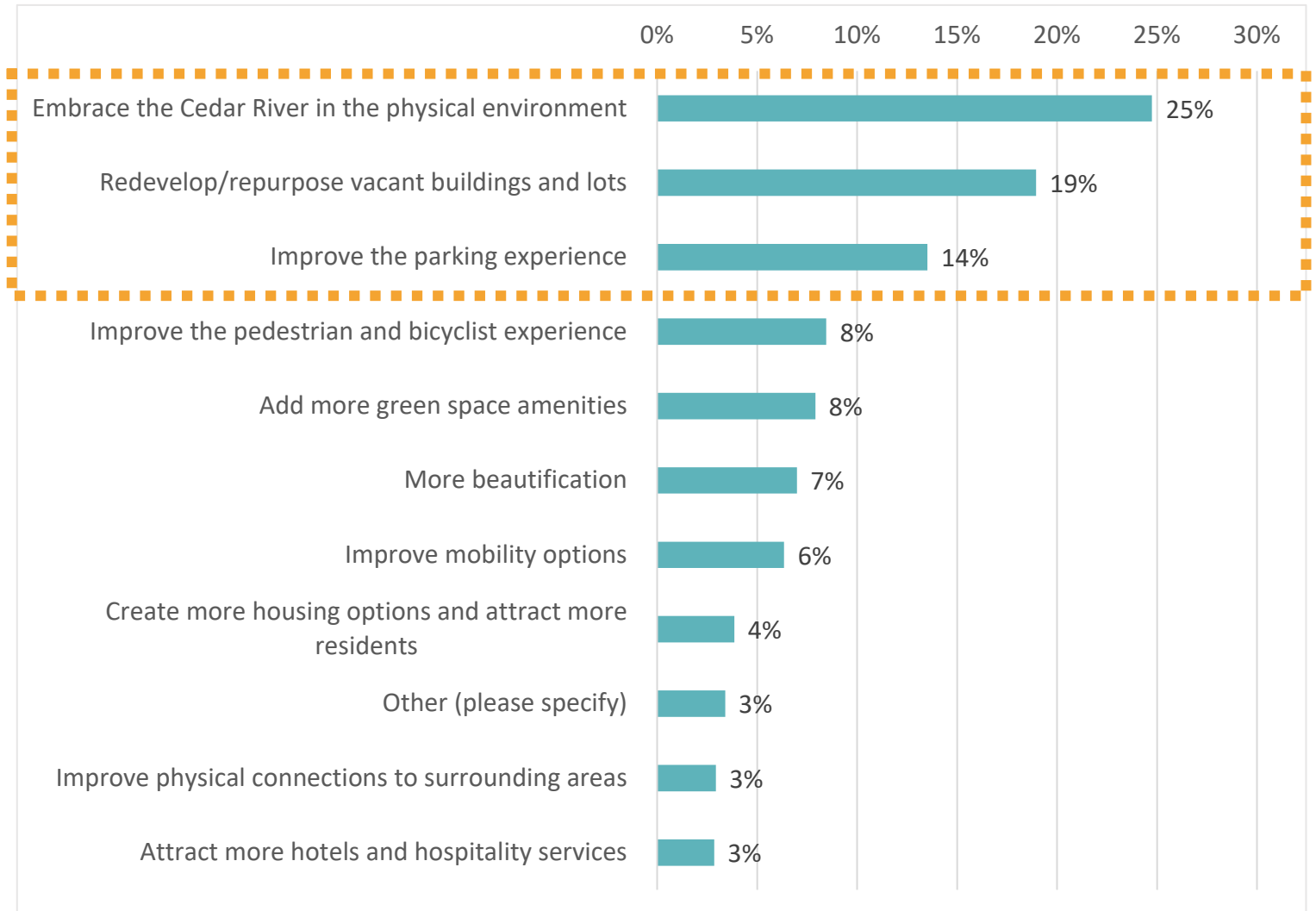
- Safe (230)
- Clean (164)
- Entertaining (137)
- Lively (132)
- Vibrant (129)
- Fun (128)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

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

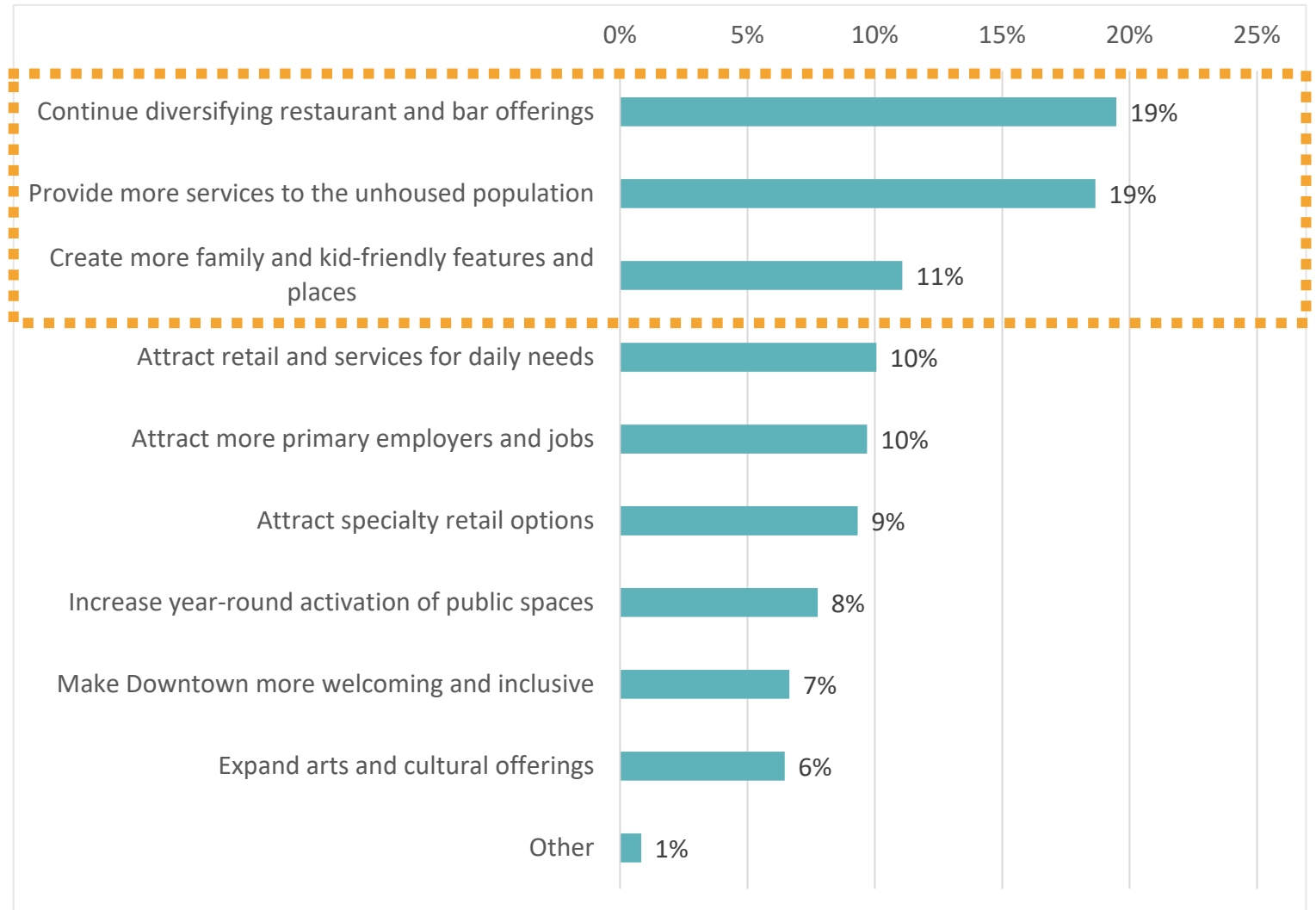
- Embrace the Cedar River (25%)
- Redevelop and repurpose underutilized surface parking lots and vacant buildings and lots (19%)
- Improve the parking experience (14%)



COMMUNITY OUTREACH – ONLINE SURVEY

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

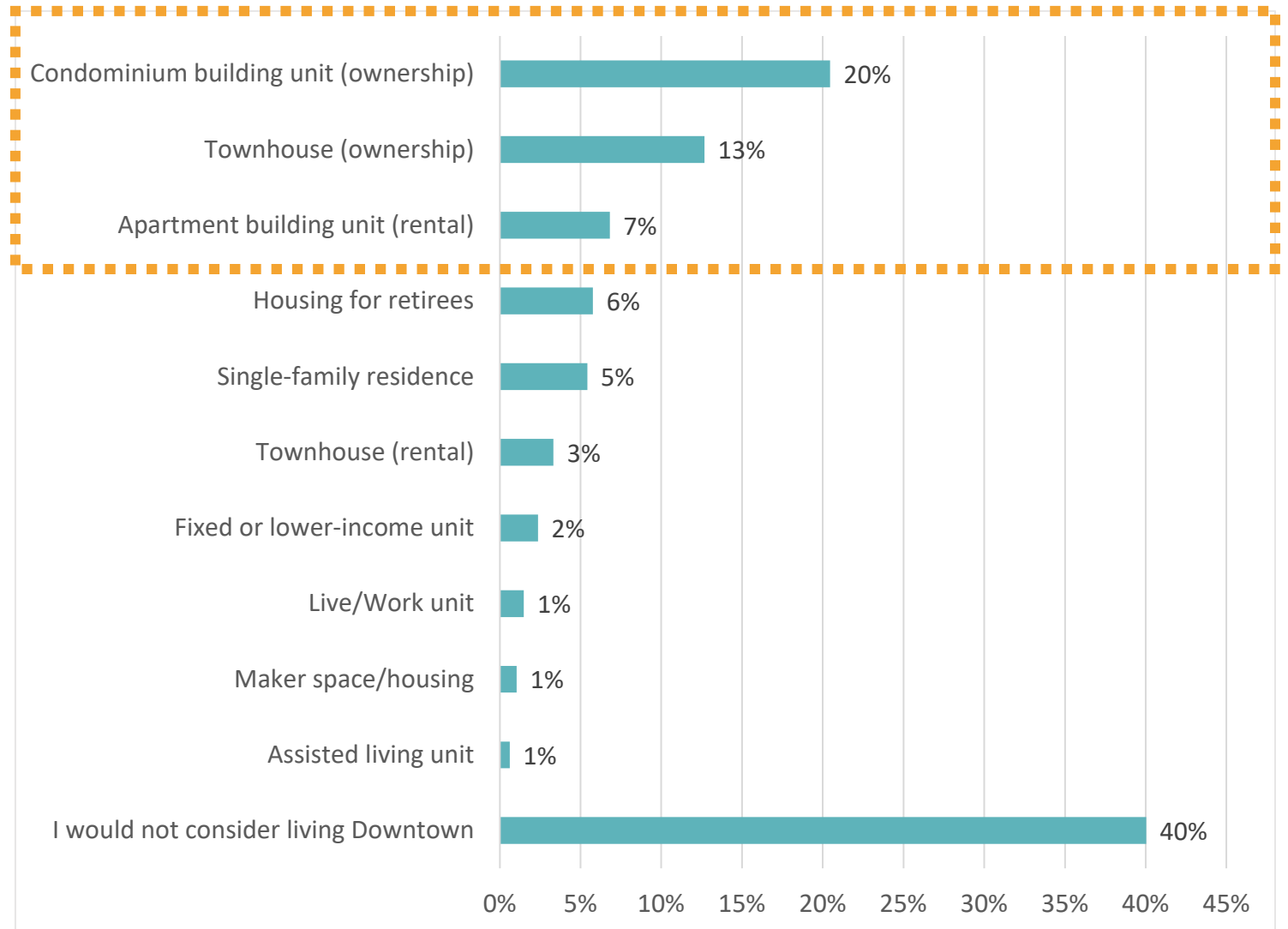
- Continue diversifying restaurant and bar offerings (19%)
- Provide more services to address the unhoused population (19%)
- Create more family and kid-friendly features and places (11%)



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%)



MARKET ASSESSMENT – OPPORTUNITIES

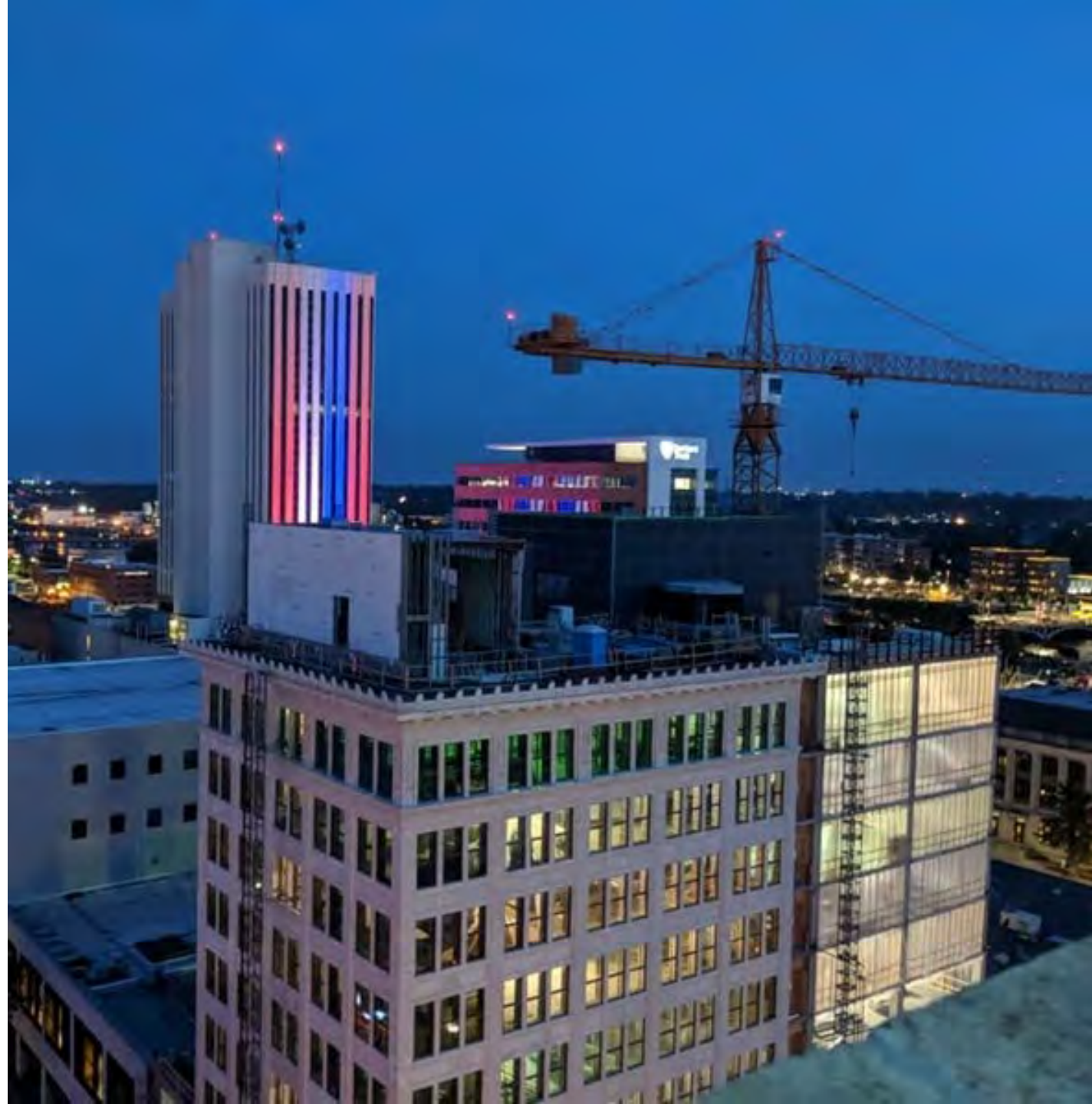
- **LIVE** – Capitalize on new housing development in and around Downtown and continue attracting additional housing
- **WORK** –
 - Anticipate short-term office uncertainty, explore opportunities for conversion of traditional office formats to flex space, coworking, and housing
 - Highlight and expand 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

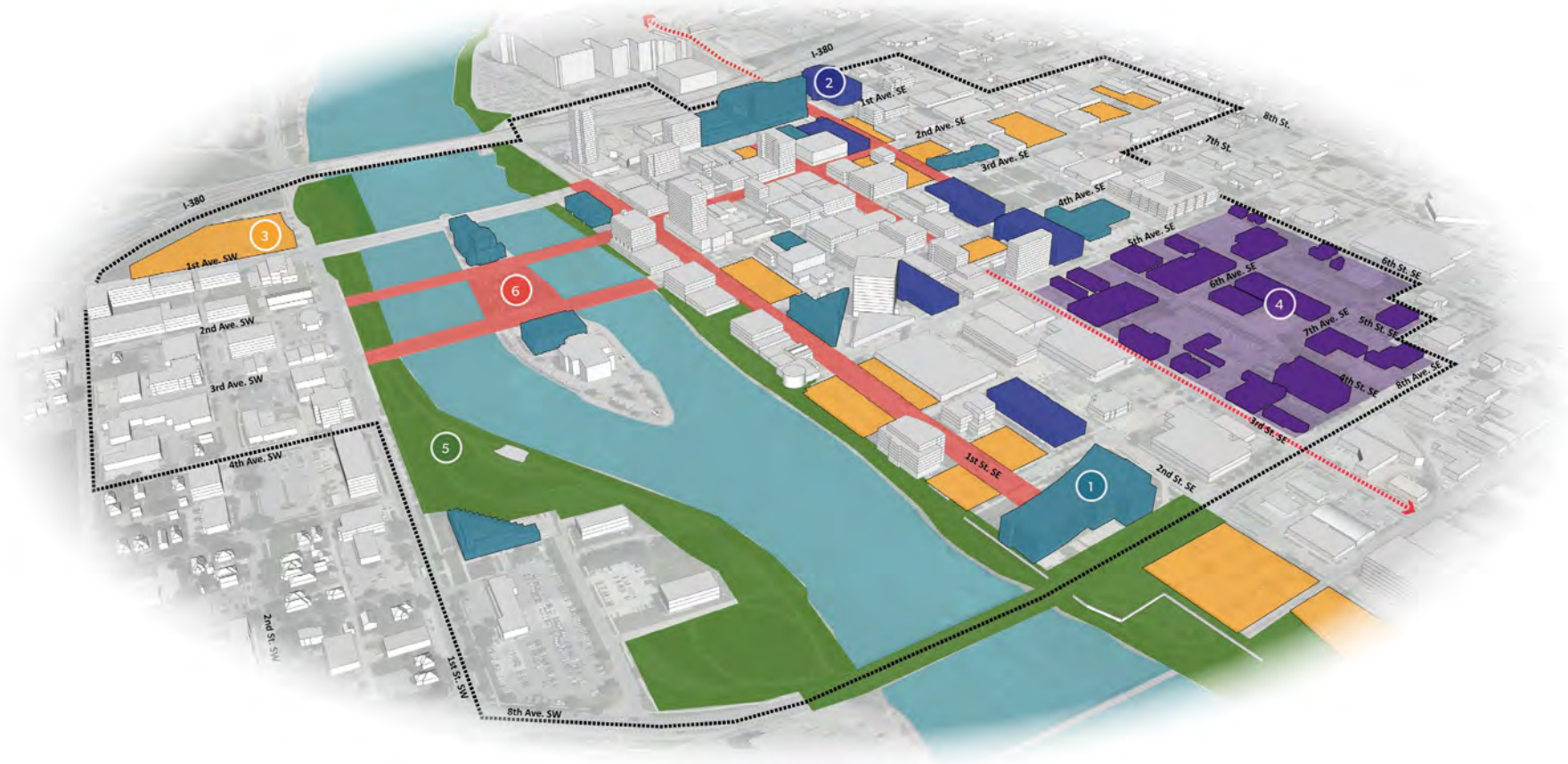
1. Downtown Cedar Rapids has proven to be resilient – rising from the flood and other challenges with an influx of private and public investment
2. Downtown has many assets, but needs more consistent activation and reasons to come Downtown for people of all ages
3. Embracing the Cedar River remains a 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

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN


Downtown Cedar Rapids is the vibrant hub of the Eastern Iowa region where the past meets the future, entrepreneurship flourishes, diversity is celebrated, and innovation is embraced.





PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK




 SSMID Boundary

 Opportunity Sites

 Flood Recovery Projects

 Public / Entertainment Destinations

 Manufacturing / Maker Hub

 Catalytic Projects

 Public Parking Ramps

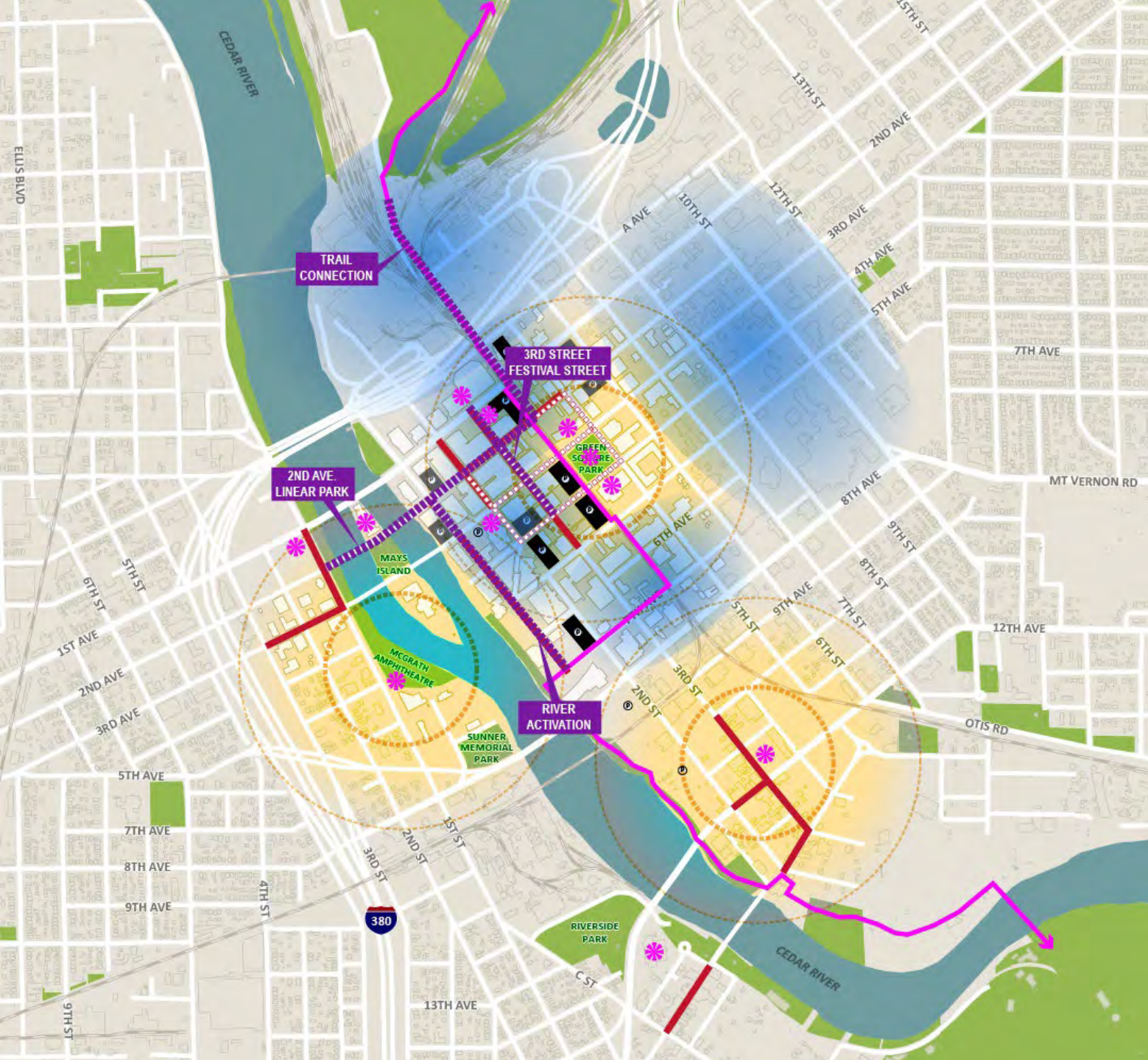
VISION PLAN GOALS

1. Embrace the Cedar River.
2. Ensure Downtown is activated and vibrant.
3. Improve connectivity within Downtown and to adjacent districts and neighborhoods.

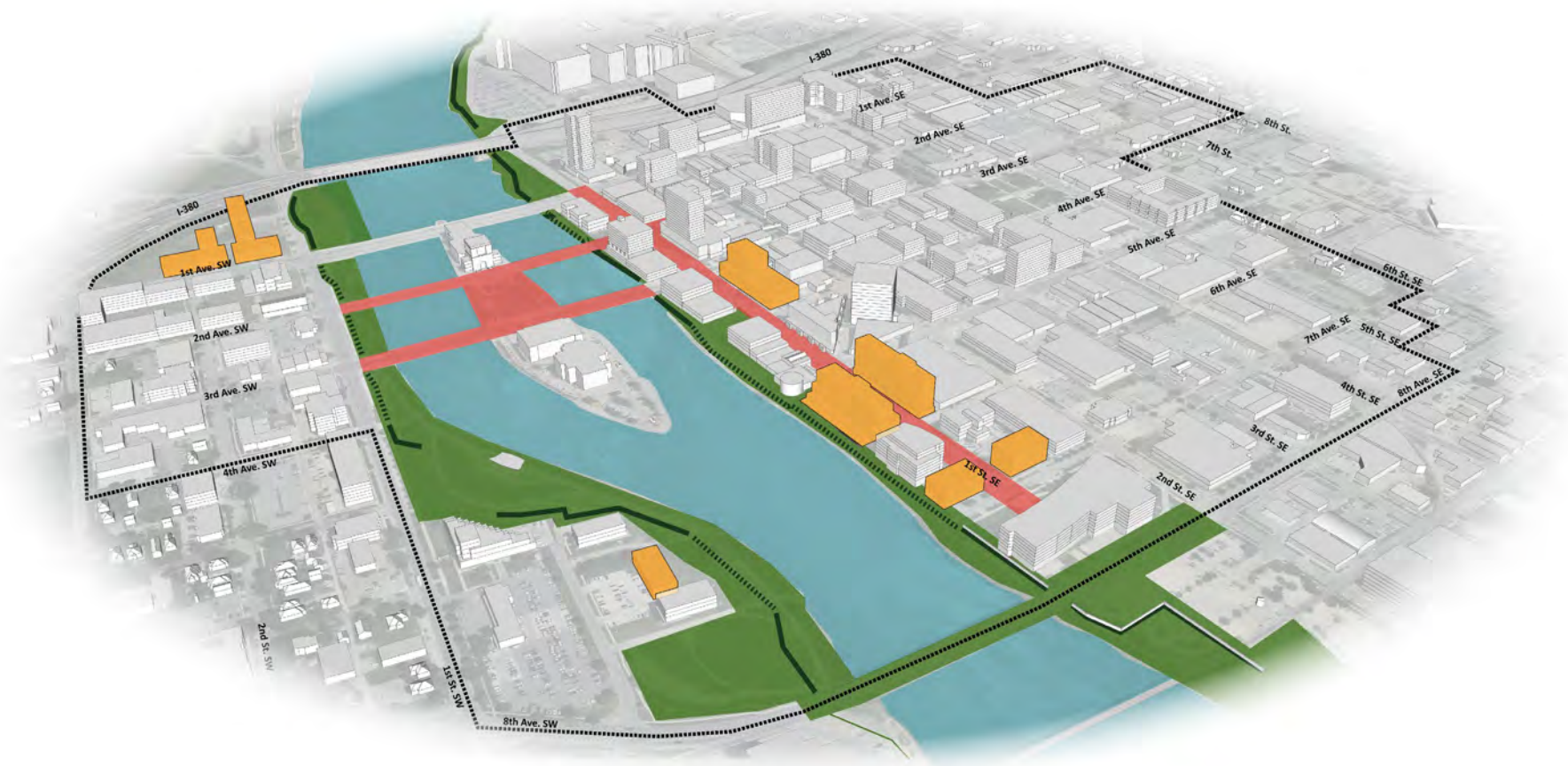


CATALYTIC PROJECTS

1. Embrace the River: 2nd Avenue Linear Park
2. Activate Downtown: 3rd Street Festival Street & Storefront Activation
3. Connect Downtown: Trail Connection



GOAL 1 CATALYTIC PROJECT– RIVER ACTIVATION OPPORTUNITY SITES



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

GOAL 1 CATALYTIC PROJECT– MAYS ISLAND ACTIVATION



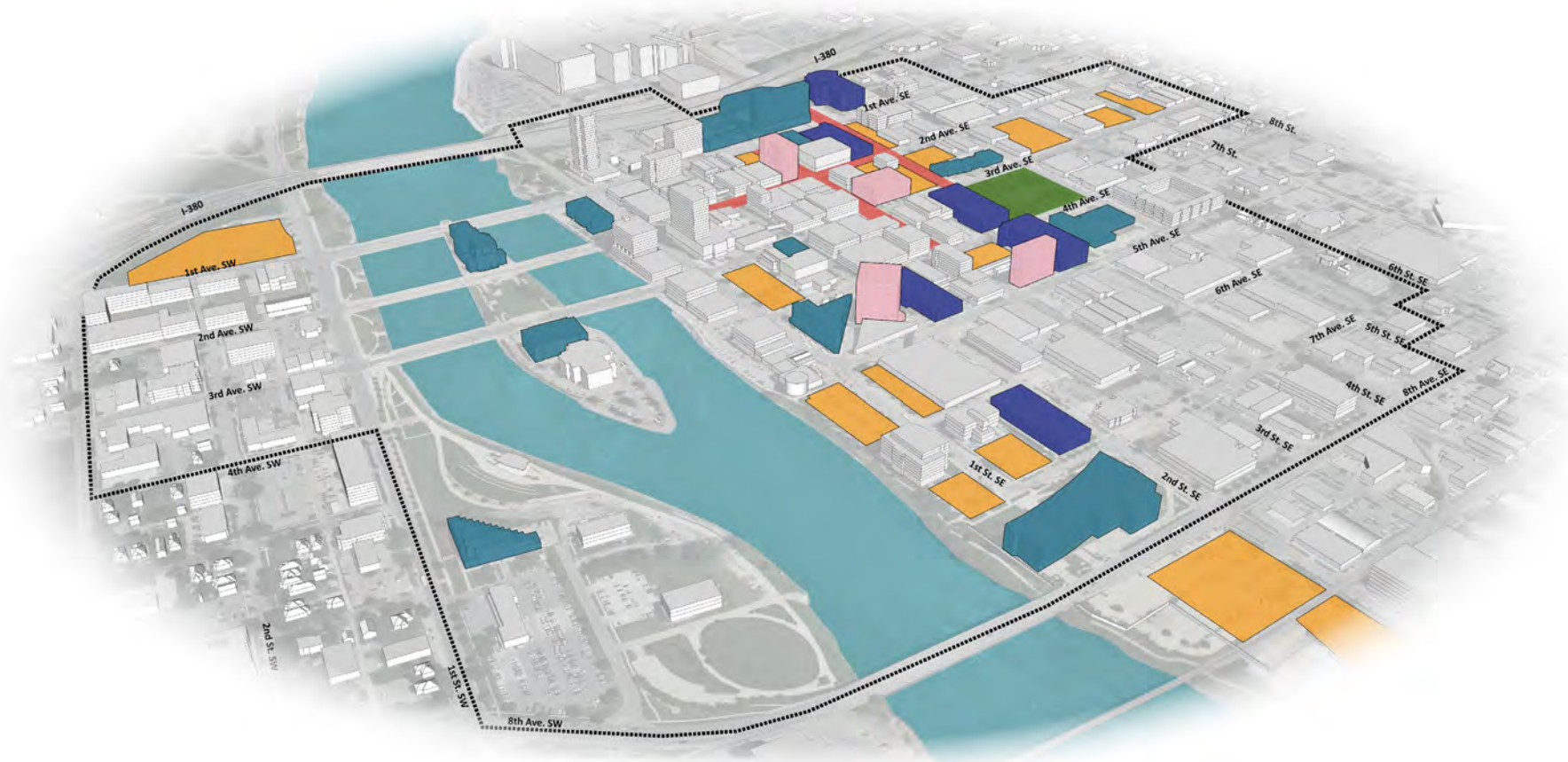
EXISTING/PLANNED PROJECTS

- ❶ Whitewater Course
- ❷ Tree of Five Seasons Park
- ❸ Kingston Village Redevelopment
- ❹ Flood Recovery Riverfront Trails


2023 PLAN: PROPOSED PROJECTS

- ❶ Veteran’s Memorial Building Reuse/Activation
- ❷ Boardwalk/Fishing Area
- ❷ Plaza/Gateway to Plaza Park
- ❸ 2nd Avenue Festival Bridge and Linear Park
- ❸ Iconic Public Art/Gateway
- ❹ Flower/Pollinator Garden
- ❹ Flexible Lawn Area
- ❹ Picnic/”Beach” Area
- ❹ 3rd Avenue Bridge Upgrade


GOAL 2 CATALYTIC PROJECT – STRATEGIC STOREFRONT ACTIVATION





 SSMID Boundary


 Public / Entertainment Destinations

 Public Parking Ramps

 Opportunity Sites

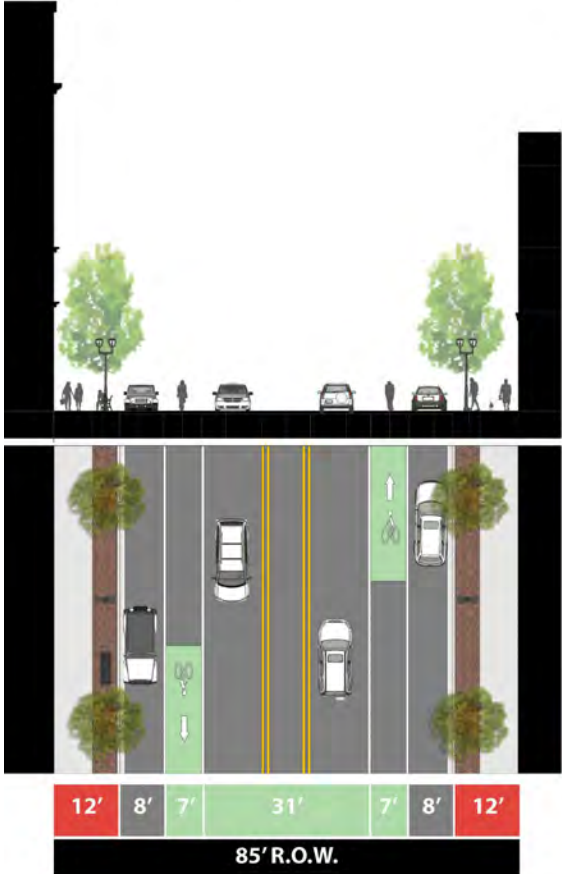
 Reuse or Reinvestment Opportunities

 Greene Square Activation

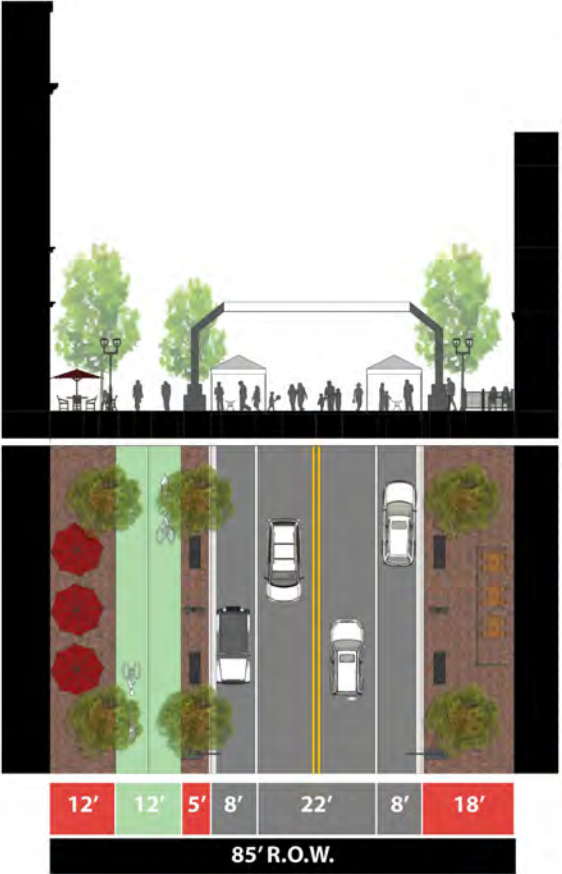
 Catalytic Downtown Activation Projects

GOAL 2 CATALYTIC PROJECT – 3RD ST. FESTIVAL STREET

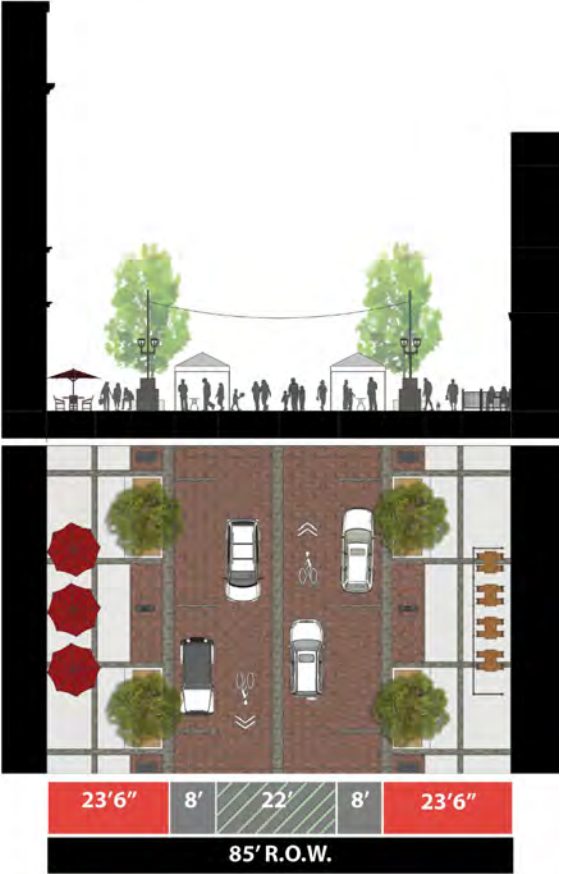
Existing Conditions



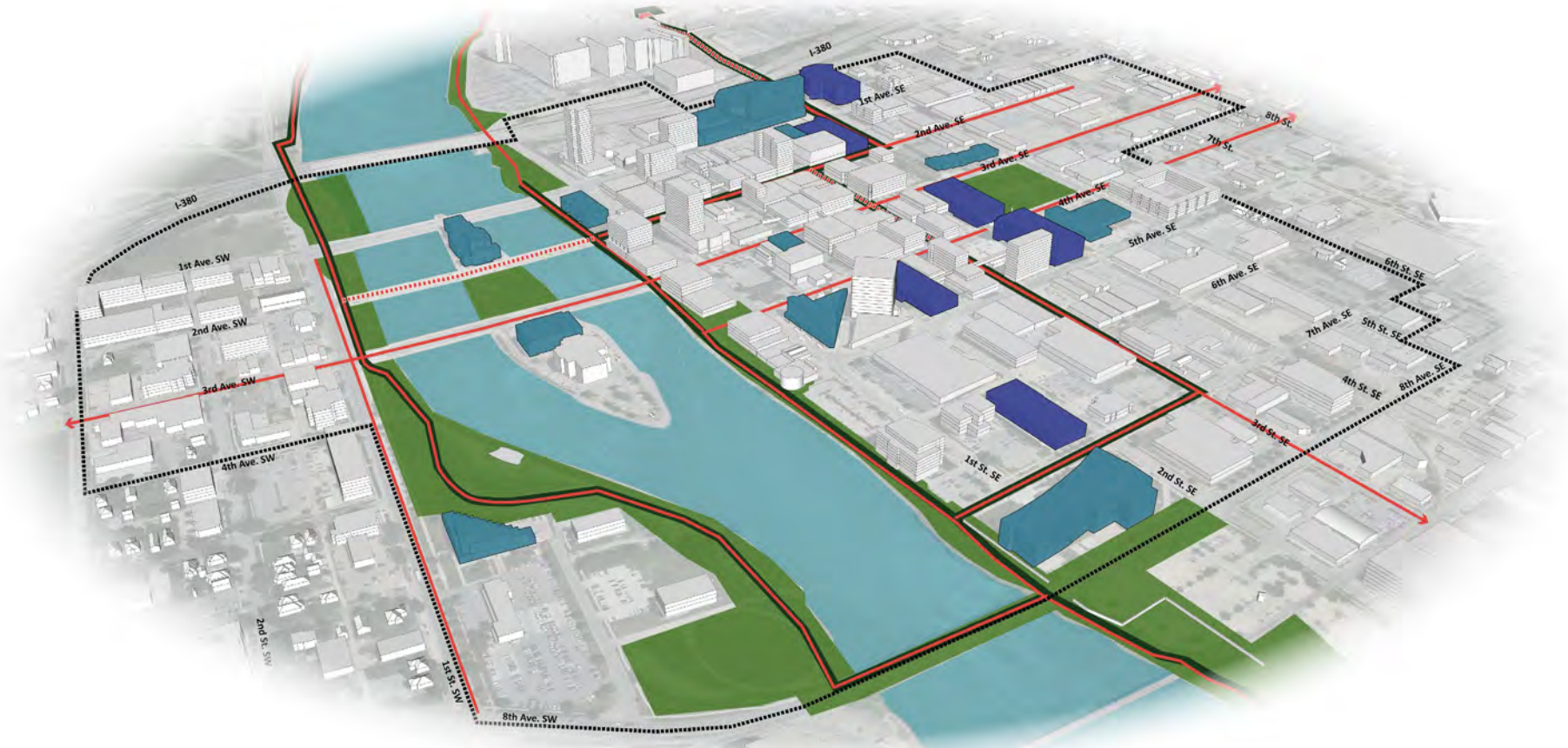
Option 1: Cycle Track



Option 2: Curbless Shared Street



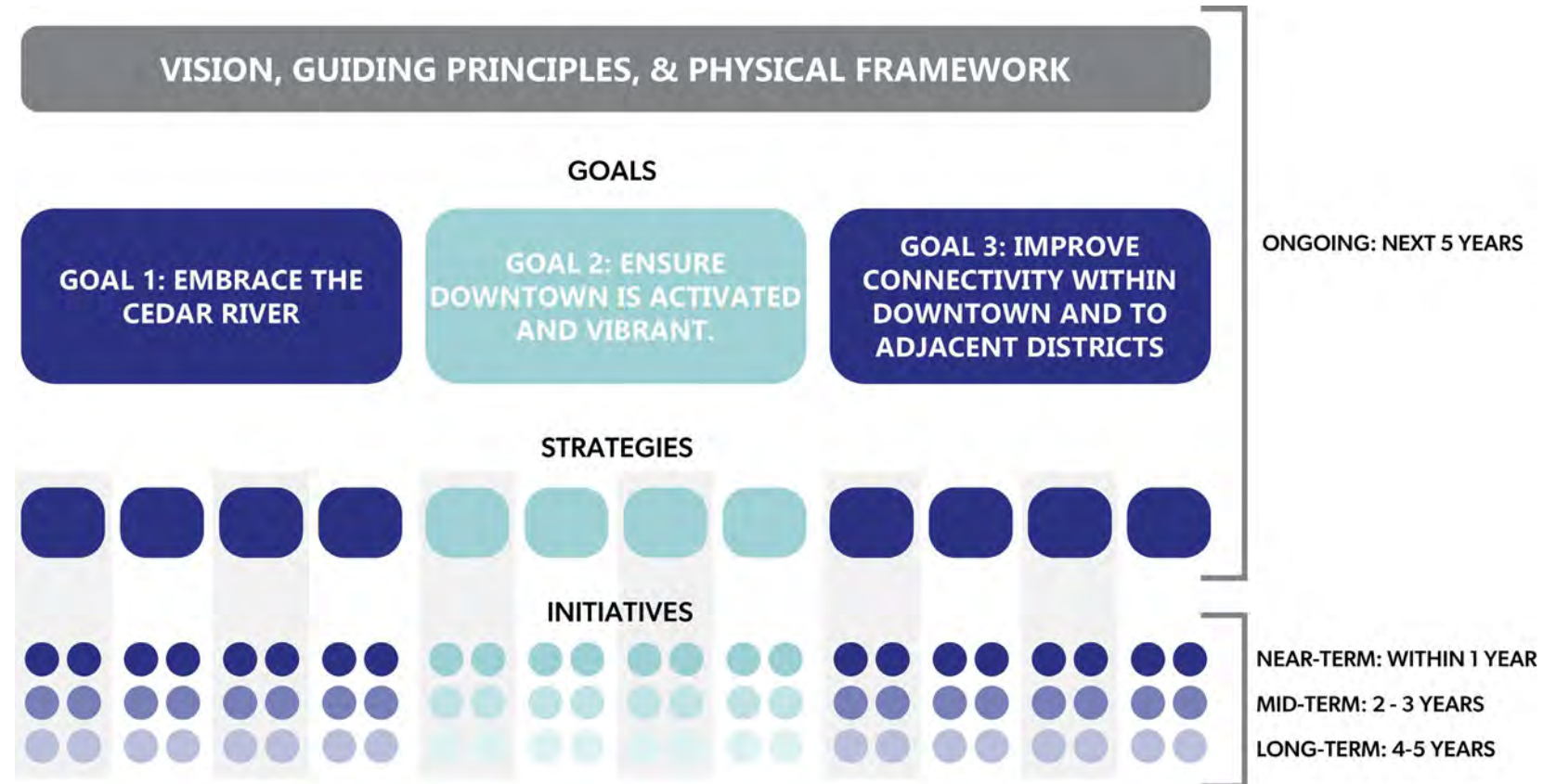
GOAL 3 CATALYTIC PROJECT – RAIL TO RIVER CONNECTIVITY



- SSMID Boundary
- Public / Entertainment Destinations
- Public Parking Ramps
- Existing Bike Lanes/Trails
- Catalytic Connectivity Projects
- Public Space
- Cedar Valley Nature Trail

IMPLEMENTATION

- Goals and strategies
- 70 initiatives
- For each initiative:
 - Responsible entity (City of Cedar Rapids, SSMID, EA, etc.)
 - Timeline



GOAL 1 STRATEGIES

1. Incorporate the Cedar River in the built environment.
2. Convert the 2nd Avenue Bridge to a flexible festival street in the short-term and a linear park in the long-term.
3. Activate Mays Island.
4. Continue to enhance public spaces adjacent to the Cedar River and support implementation of the Cedar River Flood Control System (FCS).



GOAL 2 STRATEGIES

1. Enliven the storefront economy and diversify ground floor offerings.
2. Ensure Downtown is clean, safe, and welcoming.
3. Attract and retain primary jobs in Downtown.
4. Add public art and other physical place enhancements.
5. Provide regular programming in Downtown public spaces.
6. Explore opportunities for infill development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse of existing spaces.



GOAL 3 STRATEGIES

1. Ensure Downtown is accessible and easy to navigate 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. Enhance 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.



ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

- Downtown improvements are coordinated by three lead agencies – City, SSMID, Economic Alliance
 - SSMID housed within Economic Alliance
- Opportunity to optimize resources moving forward
- Numerous organizational options for the SSMID, including:
 - More discrete business center within the Economic Alliance
 - Standalone, independent non-profit organization





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