



# Birmingham City Center Master Plan

DRAFT November 27, 2019

INNOVATION DEPOT

1931

ROTARY TRAIL  
*in the*  
MAGIC CITY

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**This plan was prepared for the people of the City of Birmingham with the input of more than a thousand participants and the support of many dedicated individuals and organizations. We want to thank them for their hard work, expertise, and encouragement throughout the planning process.**

## **Project Management Team**

Lindsay S. Puckett, AICP (RPCGB) |  
Project Manager  
Timothy Gambrel (City of Birmingham)  
David Fleming (REV Birmingham)

## **City of Birmingham**

### **Mayor and City Council**

Mayor Randall L. Woodfin  
Clinton P. Woods, District 1  
Hunter Williams, District 2  
Valerie A. Abbott, Council President,  
District 3  
William Parker, President Pro Tempore,  
District 4  
Darrell O'Quinn, District 5  
Crystal N. Smitherman, District 6  
Wardine T. Alexander, District 7  
Steven W. Hoyt, District 8  
John R. Hilliard, District 9

## **City of Birmingham Planning**

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Dr. Nyasha Black  
Haley Colson-Lewis  
Ronald Crenshaw  
Dr. Kathryn Doombos  
Brian Gunn  
Dr. Victoria Hollis  
Patty Pilkerton  
Devon Sims  
L'Tryce Slade  
Mashonda Taylor

## **Regional Planning Commission of**

### **Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)**

Charles Ball, AICP, Executive Director  
Dr. Ray Morris, Deputy Executive  
Director  
Scott Tillman, Director of Planning and  
Operations  
Lindsay S. Puckett, AICP, Principal  
Planner  
Maria Hines, AICP, Senior Planner  
Hunter Garrison, AICP, Community  
Planner  
Samuel Parsons, AICP, Transportation  
Planner

## **City of Birmingham Staff**

Edwin Revell, Director of Planning,  
Engineering and Permits,  
Chris Hatcher, Interim Director of  
Community Development  
Timothy Gambrel, Chief Planner  
Michael Ward, Principal Planner  
Christina Argo, Senior Planner  
Jason Hjetland, Senior Planner  
Kimberly Speorl, Senior Planner  
Donald Wilborn, Senior Planner  
James Fowler, P.E., Director of  
Department of Transportation  
Lakey Boyd, AICP, CECD, Deputy Director  
of Department of Transportation  
Denise E. Gilmore, Senior Director -  
Office of Social Justice and Racial  
Equity

## **REV Birmingham**

David Fleming, President & CEO  
Ben Wieseman, Director of Catalytic  
Development  
Julie Clark McKinney, Director of  
Communications

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## Project Team

### Master Plan Steering Committee

Valerie Abbott, Councilor	Hope May
Leroy Abrahams	Ross McCain
Jim Adams	Mike McDevitt
Steve Alexander	Darrell O'Quinn, Councilor
Reynolds Anderson	John Oros
Nan Baldwin	Buddy Palmer
Charles Ball	Ryan Parker
Brant Beene	Rev. Arthur Price
Graham Boettcher	Ann Rygiel
Tom Creger	Robert Simon
Don Erwin	Andrea Smith
Michelle Farley	Garland Smith
David Fleming	Tad Snider
Kay French	Camille Spratling
Deon Gordon	Merrill Stewart
Greg Gratton	Jeff Stone
Gus Heard-Hughes	Tony Summerville
Ivan Holloway	Britney Summerville
Anthony Hood	Barbara Tagger
Percy Hornbuckle	Andrea Taylor
Sue Johnson	Tom Walker
Irene Johnson	Chip Watts
Josh Johnson	Brian Wolfe
Shane Kearney	Dontrelle Young-Foster
Devon Laney	Thomas Yuill
Dennis Leonard	

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# 1 | Our Vision for Success

## Contents

- Why this Plan...Why Now?
- Our Vision
- What We Value
- Our Vision for the City Center
- Our Goals and Principles
- Our Strategies for Success
- Priority Initiatives

## Why this Plan...Why Now?

Birmingham's City Center sits at the precipice of greatness once again. Since the last City Center Master Plan more than 4,500 new housing units were constructed in new and historic buildings to complement new and revitalized regional destinations, a rapidly emerging innovation economy, and a lively restaurant and entertainment scene. This period also saw the rise of Railroad Park, a nationally-recognized urban park that reclaimed the negative space of a railyard and created a green living room for the entire community - a place where the full diversity of the city's residents, regional workforce, and visitors from across the globe come together to celebrate Birmingham. With this momentum, coupled with an increased demand in Birmingham for urban living and amenities to support a knowledge economy workforce, the City Center is poised to leap forward onto the national stage and serve as a model of urban vitality, livability and revitalization for everyone in the community.

Today, Birmingham's City Center is a city full of architectural gems, cultural assets, and historical lessons. Its gorgeous turn of the century buildings have a long history of being filled with thriving businesses, lively residences, and bustling retail and its theaters, museums, sporting events and university make the City Center the major destination and urban center for the entire region. In addition, the Civil Rights District, with its physical and emotional history steeped in the civil rights movement, provides worldwide visitors an opportunity to reflect on the city's past, and be hopeful for the future.

This plan is our vision for building on our strengths and assets with public and private investment that will shape how we leverage the compact, critical mass that comes from 5,000 mixed-income homes coming in the next decade and how we continue to attract a diverse and dynamic workforce to the four-square-mile City Center. This plan is our playbook for how we will manage incremental decisions to re-inhabit, revitalize, and energize the next layer of parking lots, vacant lands, and underutilized buildings as well as how we prioritize important infrastructure projects to build a 21st century city.

**This plan was ignited by the 2013 Comprehensive Plan which placed a renewed focus on the city's neighborhoods & a greater attention to the City Center as its economic and social core.**

**This plan covers...**



**...comprised of...**



**11,795**  
**residents**

**117,717**  
**employees**



**...and led by a partnership of**  
**The Regional Planning Commission**  
**of Greater Birmingham | The City**  
**of Birmingham | REV Birmingham**

## Our Vision

# Birmingham's City Center is the region's heart and soul.

All are welcome in Birmingham's City Center where opportunity is cast in the foundry of innovation and creativity. Steeped in the history of the industrial south and the Civil Rights Movement, we are a place full of beautiful streets and parks, successful businesses, a world-class university and health system, diverse neighborhoods, and vibrant cultural and entertainment institutions.



## What We Value



**Inclusivity**  
Encourage diversity and welcome everyone to share in the opportunity.



**Innovation**  
Create opportunities for entrepreneurs and innovators to grow their ideas, products, and services.



**Beauty**  
Buildings, infrastructure, and public spaces should contribute to a sense of joy and admiration.



**History**  
Respect the history of Birmingham and understand how it guides future growth and change.



**Diversity**  
Celebrate the many cultures present in the City Center and in the greater Birmingham area.



**Vibrancy**  
Incorporate events, tactical urbanism, programming, and art to create a lively and active environment.



**Safety**  
Generate a lighting and safety plan for City Center that makes people feel secure after dark.



**Equity**  
Approach all situations with fair-mindedness, providing the tools needed for everyone's success.



**Success**  
Build an attitude of opportunity and achievement that advances the prosperity of the entire City.



**Creativity**  
Find ways to be uniquely Birmingham that are individualized to the City's distinct anatomy.

## Our Vision for the City Center

Birmingham's City Center is having its day in the sun. After seeing disinvestment and population loss for decades, the core of the region is enjoying a period of growth and change that took off with the catalytic development of Railroad Park in 2010, the erection of Regions Park, the continued expansion of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the renovation and adaptive reuse of numerous historic buildings and theaters, and the construction of thousands of new housing units. It is on a trajectory, like many downtowns throughout the country, to restore its role as the pre-eminent location to live, work and play not just for the City, but for the entire region.

Today, the City Center is 3% of the city's total land area but 29% of its total value. The Business Improvement District (BID) covering the central core is 25% more valuable per acre than the rest of the city, on average, and represents the largest office sub-market in the region. In other words, the City Center is the economic engine of the city. It is because of this current strength that the City Center has the potential to absorb another 5,000 mixed-income housing units, 300,000 - 500,000 square feet of office space, and 420 new hotel rooms over the next decade.

And yet, economic strength alone is not why we value the City Center so much. It is also the emotional and social center of the city - a place where people from all of Birmingham's neighborhoods can gather to celebrate, reflect, and relax - from Railroad Park to Regions Field; in restaurants from Five Points South to 20th Street North to Uptown; in the Theater District; and in the Civil Rights District.

The City Center attracts visitors from around the globe to share in our unique physical and cultural history. The historic buildings and streetscapes provide a certain character, which should be preserved and enhanced as it continues to grow and develop. It is also the region's sales center - a place where potential employers and investors visit first and the hub for hospitality - a place where first impressions are made.

The City Center offers exceptional education and advanced medicine, anchored by the University of Alabama at

Birmingham and our area hospitals. These institutions serve the region as well as nurture and support an extended ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship.

A dollar invested into the City Center yields benefits that are disproportionately greater than everywhere else in the city. Money invested generates revenues for every neighborhood and creates a stronger core from which to market and celebrate all of Birmingham.

The City Center is also one of the largest and the fastest growing neighborhoods. It provides a range of housing options to households of all incomes - a level of diversity that is second to none in the city.

This Plan intends to leverage all of the past successes to sustain continued investment for decades to come. It yields city and county tax revenues, it creates a concentrated focus from which other economic activity can be derived, it delivers a program of art and entertainment that unites us, it attracts national and international visitors, and it is a neighborhood that celebrates and embraces diversity.

All are welcome. Let's get started.



*View looking east along 3rd Avenue North of the Alabama and Lyric Theaters ca. 1940 (Image Source: Birmingham Public Library Archives)*

## Our Goals and Principles

This plan uses six guiding principles that are intended to guide and focus attention and investment going forward: (see Chapter 3 for detailed descriptions)

### Equity is essential to Birmingham's future and Downtown will be its beacon

- » The City Center is a shared place for the entire city to gather, celebrate, and prosper. Investments made in the City Center should benefit everyone in the city and people of all backgrounds should be able to live and find opportunities here that facilitate economic mobility. Housing for a wide diversity of incomes is critical and programming and public art should be reflective of the city's population as a whole.

### Focus investments and energy into key nodes to create compact critical mass

- » More employees to eat and shop during the day, more brain power to incubate new ideas, more residents to eat, shop, and play on nights and weekends, and more amenities to attract visitors and new investment add vibrancy when concentrated into key nodes. It is important that density be concentrated to leverage the walkable urbanism that flows from this compact arrangement. Spreading development around only furthers car dependency and fails to attract secondary opportunities and benefits.

### Build for people

- » The City Center must have streets and public spaces that are intentionally designed and maintained to be clean, safe, and attractive for people. The great benefit of density to provide a concentration of people in one location. But, density is enough to create a great place. It much be combined with a high-quality human experience — one with beautiful sidewalks and parks, curated experiences in the ground floor of buildings, and the preservation of historic structures that provide both the character and the unique narrative that attracts people and investment.

### We are Birmingham - Respect, maintain, and celebrate our living history

- » Preservation, interpretation, and celebration must be a critical part of every decision. Birmingham's City Center is flush with intrinsic beauty and historic character, but these assets must be carefully maintained and preserved to allow them to continue to tell their story. This is true of the tangible architectural assets found throughout the City Center, but also with Birmingham's history and culture. We affirm the significance of the Civil Rights National Monument and the Historic Civil Rights District as globally important, sacred spaces that are uniquely Birmingham.

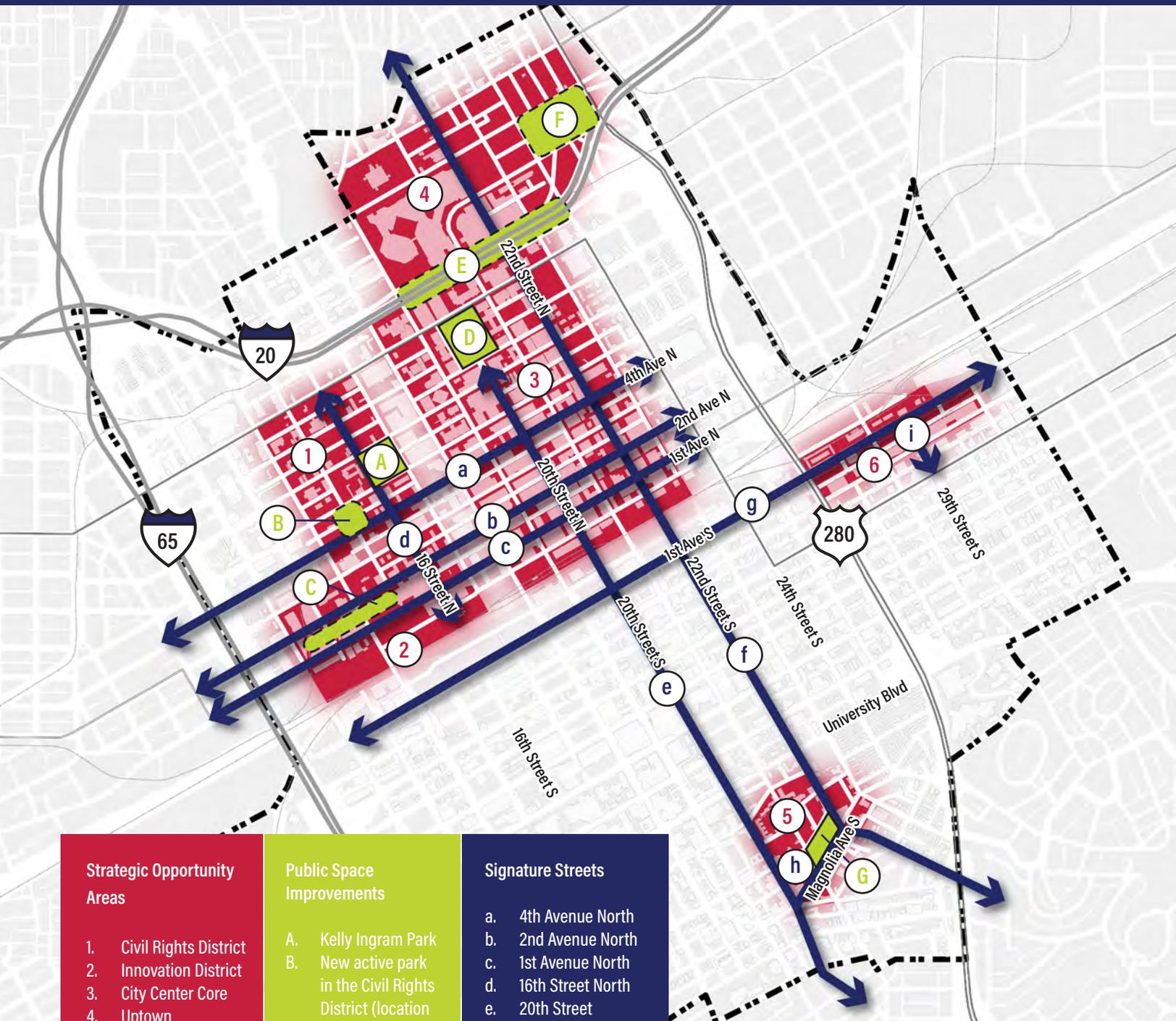
### Jobs drive growth and housing drives vibrancy

- » The City Center must continue to maintain its prominent role as a center of employment. Jobs bring life to the city center during the day and fill hotel rooms in the evening. Housing drives demand for public spaces, services, and other amenities. Combined, they sustain restaurants and shops — bringing a vibrancy that attracts new jobs and new investment. One thing is for certain — Birmingham understands that diversity is key — from startups to corporate office and from apartments for rent to housing for sale — the mix is the key to long term sustainability.

### Mobility is much more than moving cars

- » The City Center should be a place where owning a car is an option, not a requirement. The greatest value of City Center living is delivered when moving around on foot is a more attractive solution than driving from place to place. The notion of the previous century was to configure the grid as a series of on- and off-ramps in service to cars accessing the Interstate. Cars will continue to be with us, but the City Center is a people-friendly place where moving slower means moving safer. It is a place that gracefully accommodates commuter traffic by car and by bus while also providing the most diverse options for moving around at slower speeds once you arrive.

# Strategy Framework Diagram



Strategic Opportunity Areas	Public Space Improvements	Signature Streets
1. Civil Rights District	A. Kelly Ingram Park	a. 4th Avenue North
2. Innovation District	B. New active park in the Civil Rights District (location TBD)	b. 2nd Avenue North
3. City Center Core	C. Switch Trail along rail spur park in the Innovation District	c. 1st Avenue North
4. Uptown	D. Linn Park	d. 16th Street North
5. Five Points	E. Citywalk BHAM	e. 20th Street
6. Lakeview/Pepper Place	F. New park around the I-20/Hwy-280 interchange	f. 22nd Street
	G. Brother Bryan Park	g. 1st Avenue South
		h. Magnolia Avenue South
		i. 29th Street South

**Map Legend:**

- Strategic Opportunity Areas
- Existing Public Spaces to Improve
- Proposed Public Spaces
- Signature Streets (within Strategic Opportunity Areas)



## Our Strategies for Success

### Public Realm and Streetscape Strategies

To achieve these goals, several key investments are needed in the public realm and in streetscapes. These investments begin with addressing deferred maintenance in public spaces around the City Center including Linn Park, Kelly Ingram Park, and Brother Bryan Park. Because of their prominence in location and/or history, they must be maintained to the same level as Railroad Park, the crown jewel of the region.

The same is true for investments that beautify streets that support a high volume of current or expected pedestrian traffic. While every street should have a minimum standard that accommodates pedestrians, there are certain streets that are so important that they are considered “Signature Streets” for the City Center. These Signature Streets have been prioritized because they support compact critical mass and/or connect important places including 20th Street (North and South), 16th Street North, 4th Avenue North, 1st Avenue South, 7th Avenue South, 32nd Street South, and Magnolia Avenue South.

### Mobility & Parking Strategies

The City Center has been blessed with a nearly perfect grid of streets. With its straight streets and regular blocks, the grid is perhaps the most flexible and resilient in operation and the delivery of mobility solutions regardless of speed and technology. The City Center’s network has a tremendous capacity to not only move cars and trucks efficiently, but also transit, bicyclists, scooters, pedestrians, and whatever other technology is on the horizon. Streets should be improved to better balance vehicular movements with walkable vitality and lower speed mobility choices. This plan identifies the repurposing of some streets, subject to resources, to accommodate bicycles, scooters, enhanced transit operations, micro-transit, and high-quality pedestrian environments.

The plan also addresses the management of parked cars because while parking demand has dropped significantly over the past decade, there will continue to be a need, particularly as new investment seeks to occupy former surface parking lots and existing buildings.

Lastly, these changes should acknowledge that mobility is a much more diverse platform than simply driving and walking. The City’s planned Bus Rapid Transit system will help to improve transit circulation throughout the city, and biking and scooters will provide shorter length trip options. And, in the coming years, the city needs to be ready to accommodate newer technologies to the mobility network including autonomous cars, shuttles, and delivery vehicles of all sizes.

### Strategic Opportunity Areas

At four square miles, the City Center is a complex geography that includes varying levels of success and prosperity. In the past decade, the greatest level of investment has been attracted to the area on the south side around Railroad Park, Regions Field, and near UAB. This plan has been prepared to focus on those areas that are struggling or under-performing and identifies catalyst projects and investments to help attract market-rate initiatives and concentrate density in certain nodes to create a critical mass of activity and vibrancy. After sifting through thousands of public comments and receiving direction from a large steering committee, six key areas were identified to receive heightened attention.

#### Civil Rights District

There is perhaps no area in Birmingham that has so much history and so little investment. As the heart of the Civil Rights movement not just in Birmingham but for the nation, this area is the site of a historic legacy. It attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, but remains a pass-through for commuters and a place where little private

*Civil Rights District**Innovation District**City Center Core*

investment has occurred in decades. Streets should be upgraded and repurposed to promote economic activity and its dignity of place – particularly 16th Street North, and 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues North. Housing and commercial infill and investment is encouraged along 4th Avenue North to restore its vibrancy. New housing enlivens the edges of Kelly Ingram Park compatible with nearby historic structures and promotes a complete restoration of the park that maintains its contemplative nature and historical importance while updating its amenities.

### **Innovation District**

The Innovation Depot has been an enormously successful incubator of technology, startups, and entrepreneurs, but its success has not spread as fast as desired. The key to leveraging this asset is to reclaim the dead spaces that surround the building with new housing to create 18-hour environments where people can truly live and work. New housing also attracts other amenities such as restaurants, bars, and stores which in turn become amenities for attracting more investment. With so many surface lots in the area and a short walk to Railroad Park, it is ripe for new investment. In addition to new construction, there is a significant opportunity for the adaptive reuse of the existing buildings as well as the creation of interesting and unique public spaces.

### **City Center Core**

Centered on 20th Street, the goal is to continue to maintain the density of activity in the core through diversifying jobs and housing in existing and new buildings. The most critical moves in this area are the updating of the public realm – namely the Birmingham Green (20th Street North) and Linn Park. Both are aging and showing signs of deferred maintenance and are in need of investment to attract more people throughout the day and evening. The attractive, people-first design of 20th Street North needs to extend all the way to Five Points South allowing it to also serve as a major spine in a future circulator service connecting Linn Park to UAB and other key places in between. A key to success in the core is a strategic leveraging of the current parking resources to maximize their use on a 24-hour basis.

### Uptown

Uptown will soon be home to a new football stadium as well as a realigned interstate that may make pedestrian connections to the core more attractive, as well as open up land that was previously unusable. Like the other catalyst areas, one of the keys to success is the construction of new housing to help diversify a district that is largely devoid of non-visitor activity. Over time, housing in Uptown will help to reknit the City Center to the Druid Hills neighborhood and a new passive park space along 11th Avenue North will bring some much-needed natural area.



Uptown

### Five Points South

Five Points South has long been a vibrant center serving the nearby neighborhoods and UAB. However, this success stops one block to the east. With the planned redevelopment of the Southtown housing project as a mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood, Magnolia Avenue South will play a critical role in moving new residents three blocks into the core of Five Points South. In the center is Brother Bryan Park - an important public space whose renovation catalyzes housing and shopping along its edges. It enlivens Magnolia Avenue South as a Signature Street - providing a highly walkable and vibrant "main street" experience from Southtown to Five Points South.



Five Points South

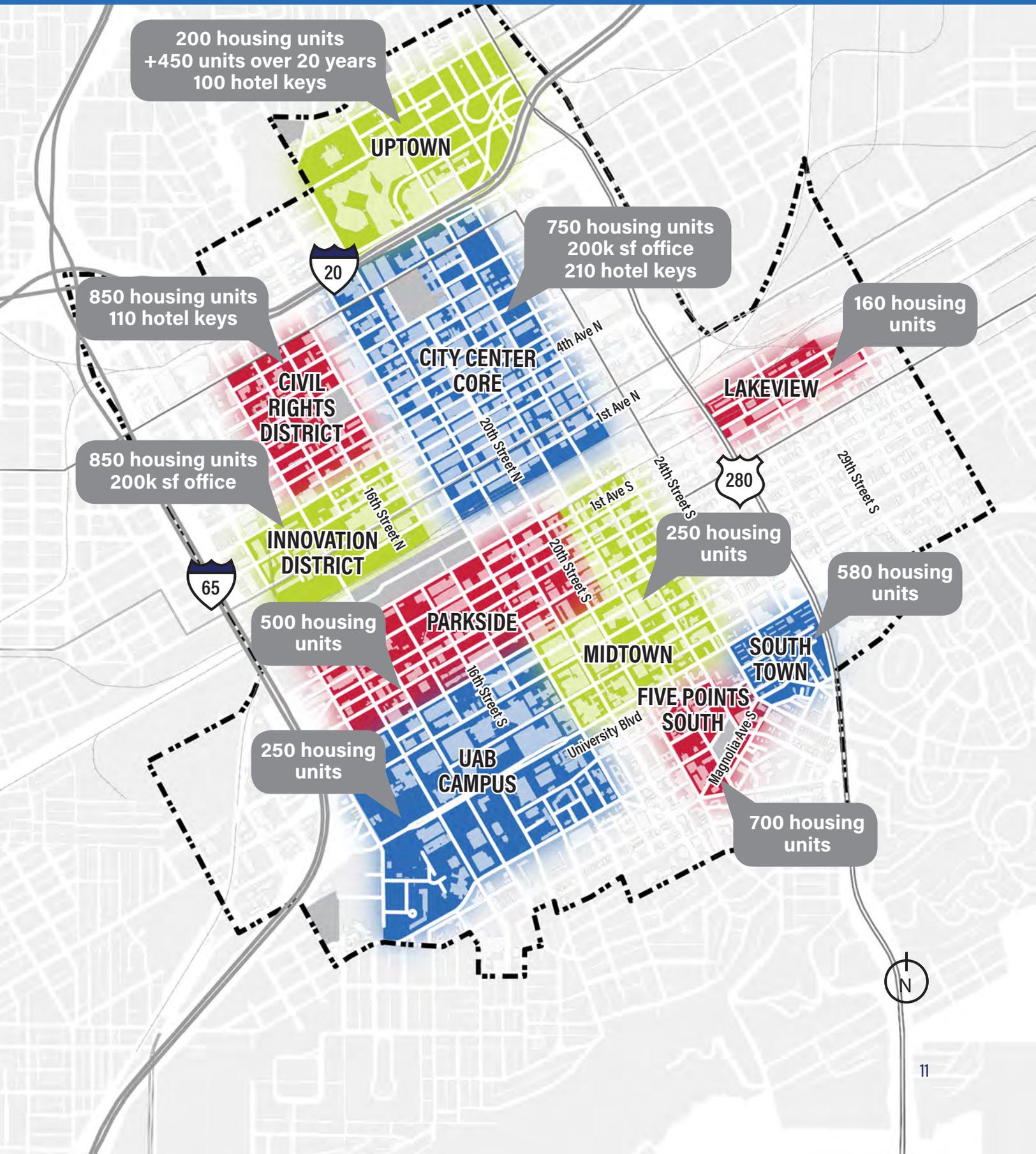
### Lakeview

Beginning with Pepper Place, this neighborhood continues to see an evolution from its industrial past into a mixed-use future. The Rotary Trail along 1st Avenue South is an important anchor with planned extensions but is in need of housing to help further activate it day and evening. The plan suggests opportunities for new infill housing on open yards adjacent to light manufacturing and warehouses.



Lakeview

# Combined 10 Year Market Potential for the City Center - Housing, Office and Hotel Location Strategy to Create Compact Critical Mass



## Priority Initiatives

1  
Create a master public realm plan for the Civil Rights District that includes the restoration of Kelly Ingram Park

2  
Convert streets back to two-way operations - prioritize 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues North

3  
Renovate/modernize the Birmingham Green/20th Street North

4  
Build 600 units of workforce housing (80% of Average Median Income (AMI) and below) over 10 years

5  
Activate empty/underutilized storefronts along 20th Street North, 4th Avenue North (west of 20th Street North), and 2nd Avenue North (east of 20th Street North)

6  
Utilize excess road capacity for mobility that prioritizes, walking, biking (and other slow-speed vehicles), and enhanced transit

7  
Renovate Brother Bryan Park and install a new streetscape along Magnolia Avenue South

8  
Establish a creative placemaking program to spread temporary and permanent art throughout the City Center

Consider an RFP for the redevelopment of Boutwell Auditorium and the City Hall Parking Garage

9

10

Install a new streetscape along 16th Street North to connect the Civil Rights District and the innovation District

Expand the success of Innovation Depot throughout the district to create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood

11

Expand the Business Improvement District services and its boundary

12

13

Focus incentives and leadership to encourage new housing and mixed-use development in the City Center Core, the Civil Rights District, the Innovation District, and in Five Points South

Complete the Rotary Trail connection to Railroad Park and the Switch Trail in the Innovation District

14

Implement the Character Code to set best practices for new development

15

Eliminate aggressive panhandling

16





# 2 | Introduction & Context

## Contents

- Our History
- Strengths Unique to Birmingham's City Center
- Strengths Shared with Other Urban Cores
- What is the City Center worth to the City?
- Challenges to Unlock Opportunities
- Market Opportunities
- Public Engagement

## Our History

The City of Birmingham was originally incorporated as Elyton, named after one of the city's earliest entrepreneurs, in 1820. A little over 50 years later, on June 1, 1871, the city was re-incorporated and re-named after Birmingham, England—a city also known for iron manufacturing. The city was founded on the vibrant mineral resources in and around the area such as iron, limestone, and coal. The additional asset of being a central railroad intersection, providing transportation of the materials mined, aided in the growth of the city. Because of its industry, Birmingham chose a 55-foot cast-iron statue called “The Vulcan” to represent the City's steel industry at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. The statue was brought back to Birmingham and installed in 1905 and has been a symbol of the city since.

With the industrial boom in the early 1900s, Birmingham went from a small town to the biggest city in Alabama and home to four of the south's tallest buildings. The Woodward Building (1902), the Brown Marx Building (1906), the Empire Building (1909), and the John A. Hand Building (1912) and were built on 20th Street North and First Avenue North. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in 1985, this group of buildings are a vital part of the city's skyline today and are known as the “Heaviest Corner on Earth”.

The city's population grew by over 200,000 in the first 50 years before development slowed due to the Great Depression of the 1920s and '30s. Due to the initial rapid growth, the city gained the nickname “Magic City”. The City was later given the nickname “Pittsburgh of the South” after Birmingham's iron industry started thriving.

As demand for heavy metal industries declined, the city transformed into a hub for medical research, banking, and car manufacturing. The University of Alabama opened an extension of the University's School of Medicine in 1945. Increasing demand for university offerings, this new extension helped fuel the growth of the city. The university is the city's largest employer today. In 2018, the university had 21,000 students and offered a total of 161 degrees and had 12,676 university employees and 10,028 hospital employees in 2018.

During the 1960s, the Civil Rights movement forever changed the City of Birmingham. Civil rights leaders and activists all over the South, but especially in Birmingham, endured injustice and bloodshed. The Birmingham campaign for civil rights in 1963 and the Ku Klux Klan bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in September of 1963 where four little girls were murdered brought the attention of the nation upon Birmingham. The struggle for freedom and civil rights led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Black citizens continued the struggle for equality in Birmingham and elected Mayor Richard Arrington as its first African-American mayor in 1979, serving the city for twenty years.

The first 25 miles of what is now known as Interstate 65 (I-65) was completed in 1960, just in time for the Iron Bowl in Birmingham. The portion of Interstates 20/59 (I-20/59) that traverse Birmingham were completed in 1973. In January, 2019, I-20/59 was closed down for complete reconstruction of the aging interstate.

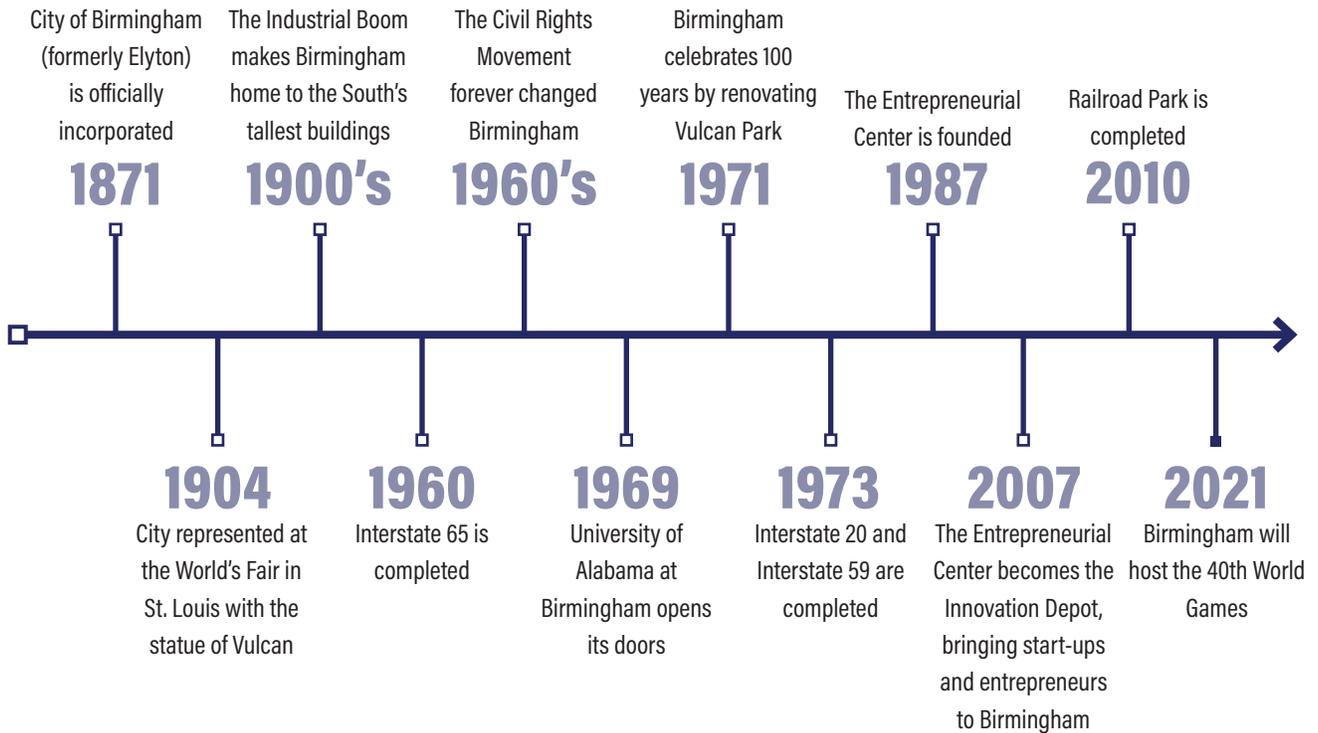
The Innovation Depot, founded in 1987 as the “Entrepreneurial Center” partnered with UAB in 2007, raising \$15 million to renovate the Sears department store that had been vacant since the early 1990's. The nonprofit is the largest entrepreneurial support organization in the Southeast, bringing start-ups and other business to Birmingham in its building on 1st Avenue North between 14th and 16th Streets North, and has become a catalyst for activity in the city's Innovation District.

In September 2010, the 19-acre Railroad Park opened to the public on former Railroad Reservation land that was acquired and improved by the City of Birmingham and the Railroad Park Foundation, who worked together to create a space to celebrate the industrial and artistic heritage of the city. The park has been hailed as “Birmingham's Living Room” and provides a historically rich space for the public to come together.

In 2013, the Birmingham Barons Baseball Club moved from Metropolitan Stadium outside of Birmingham to their new home at Regions Field, in the heart of downtown. Looking forward, the City will host the World Games in July 2021, welcoming 3,600 athletes competing in 34 unique, multidisciplinary sports and providing an estimated \$256 million economic impact.



Image Source: Wellge, H, Beck & Pauli, and Wellge & Co Norris. Birmingham, Alabama. Milwaukee, Norris, Wellge, & Co, 1885. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/76693074/>





**Civil Rights History**  
 Birmingham remains one of the highest regarded Civil Rights sites with its both unjust and inspiring history. The Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument features the A. G. Gaston Motel and Kelly Ingram Park. Birmingham boasts two Civil Rights sites designated as National Landmarks by the National Park Service, 16th Street Baptist Church and Bethel Baptist Church. The Civil Rights Heritage Trail invites visitors to experience the civil rights history throughout the City.

**UAB Campus**  
 Founded in 1969, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) is one of the cornerstone foundations of the city. The campus consists of almost 22,000 students (Fall 2018) and over 23,000 employees. The campus creates a bustling and collaborative education and work environment in the southern half of Birmingham's City Center.



**Arts & Culture**  
 Birmingham is alive with a robust arts and cultural heritage that celebrates the history of significant places for performance art, such as the Carver Theater and Boutwell Auditorium, as well as the history of movements, such as jazz at the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame. The city welcomes current performing artists at the BJCC, Alabama Theatre, and other intimate venues. The city is also home to visual art housed in the Birmingham Museum of Art, as well as galleries and other places for emerging artists, such as Abrams-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts at UAB.



## Regions Field & Railroad Park

Regions Field, completed in 2013, and Railroad Park, completed in 2010, stand firm as catalysts for the still developing area that surrounds the two landmarks. The 8,500 seat baseball facility is wrapped with residential development and small-scale commercial, including the Negro Southern League Museum. The 19-acre park proudly boasts the title of “Birmingham’s Living Room”, which is backed by the large number of daily visitors, many of whom live in the nearby mixed-use buildings and neighborhoods.

## Architectural Heritage & Resources

Birmingham is truly unique in the quality and quantity of architectural heritage still standing in the city: churches from the late 1800s, Chicago-style steel skyscrapers from the early 1900s, and eclectic streetcar suburb neighborhoods with Queen Anne, Revival and Craftsman style homes.



## Strengths Unique to Birmingham’s City Center



## 20th Street/Birmingham Green

20th Street is the north-south ‘main’ street connecting the two parts of the city center that are bisected by the railroad tracks. Much of the vibrancy in the City Center begins and emanates from this spine. The street was nicknamed “Birmingham Green” after the streetscape improvements were made in the 1970s and remains the greenest street in the City Center today.



## Walkability

Creating walkable urban cores has become a best practice in recent decades, beginning with the New Urbanism movement in the early 1990s. Many cities, including Birmingham, have wide sidewalks with space for outdoor dining, street trees, other vegetation, benches, street lights, and most importantly - pedestrians. The City Center's rigid grid and short blocks create a highly walkable street network.

## Presence of Large Employers

Larger employers can develop an identity in a city and chose to invest in the local culture through branding and sponsorship (e.g., naming a stadium or arena after a local employer, sponsoring a festival or marathon).



## Emerging "Cool" Urban Neighborhoods

As City Centers grow, "cool" urban neighborhoods emerge in response to housing demands and the lack of growth potential in the core itself. These nearby neighborhoods are compact, walkable, and provide a mix of uses where people can live, work, and play in one place (e.g., Pepper Place/Lakeview, Parkside).



## Established City Center Neighborhoods

Cities benefit from a historic urban fabric and architecture. Birmingham has historic districts in the City Center with old buildings converting to lofts, renovated for ground floor commercial, or adaptively re-used, as well as streetcar suburbs where the quality of life and property values still remain high (e.g., Highland Park, Avondale, Norwood).





### Cultural Assets

Birmingham's City Center is home to many of the City's and region's cultural assets. They are where everyone in the area can come together to: enjoy performing and visual arts at theatres, museums and galleries, honor and celebrate the past through memorials, public art, and public institutions, or gather for social events in the streets and public spaces.

### Emerging Entrepreneurs & Knowledge Economy

The economy is not only about the existing employers, but also fostering the next generation of employers as entrepreneurs and those seeking higher education. Birmingham has the presence of both through the Innovation Depot and UAB. Many cities also attempt to attract the newest generation of the knowledge economy in addition to traditional finance, insurance, and other corporate office users.



### Strengths Shared with Other Urban Cores



### Strong Urban Housing Market

Millennials are moving to cities for job opportunities where they can live and play within a walkable distance from their work. Similarly, Baby Boomers are looking for urban areas to retire. A strong urban housing market exists in Birmingham, but is currently unmet by the housing options offered in the City Center or additional options coming down the development pipeline.

## What is the City Center worth to the City?

The 2018 report by the International Downtown Association (IDA) found that downtowns and urban business districts return an outsized amount of value to their communities. The value is certainly measurable in economic terms where the IDA estimated that downtowns “deliver an average of 16% of the citywide property tax revenue, 42% of the hotel tax revenue, and 12% of the sales tax revenue. Downtowns contain 11% of the city’s assessed land value, 28% of total employment, and 36% of the city’s office space.” In addition, downtowns deliver in a big way on the intangibles of a community - leading a city’s inclusion, vibrancy, identity, and resiliency targets across a range of more than 100 key data points.

The performance for Birmingham’s City Center, at least in economic terms, far exceeds the norms for downtowns across the United States, returning a huge value back to the city in direct revenue on a per acre basis.

For each dollar of investment in the City Center, the city’s neighborhoods benefit not only through this transfer of taxes to pay for city services, but also for the value that the City Center offers to everyone through its high quality jobs and world-class amenities.

### ACREAGE STATS

**2.68%**

of the City of  
Birmingham is in the  
City Center Study Area

**0.47%**

of the City of  
Birmingham is in the  
Business Improvement  
District (BID)

### VALUE STATS

**29%**

of the City of  
Birmingham’s property  
value is in the City  
Center

**12%**

of the City of  
Birmingham’s property  
value is in the BID

HOW DOES THE CITY CENTER COMPARE?

**\$29,879**

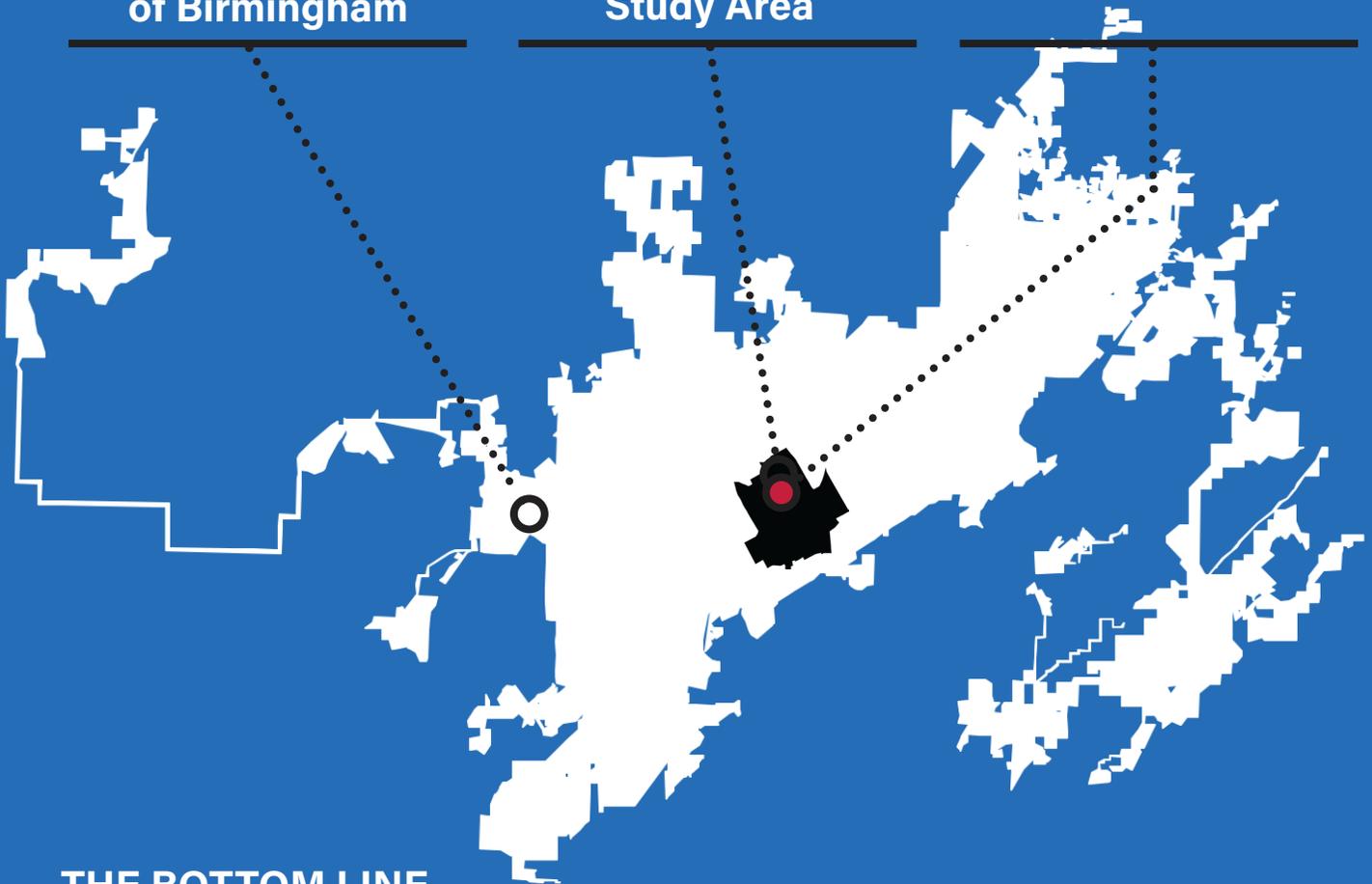
Average Value per Acre for the City of Birmingham

**\$321,950**

Value per Acre for the City Center Study Area

**\$763,832**

Value per Acre for the BID District



THE BOTTOM LINE

**All of Birmingham needs the City Center to stay strong**

## Challenges to Unlock Opportunities

### Region and the City

Over the last five decades the US population growth has slowed and has seen a steep decline in manufacturing jobs. Even though Birmingham's economy was originally based on manufacturing, the concentration of jobs in the city has not dropped much over time. The Birmingham-Hoover MSA encompasses seven counties, with Jefferson County holding 71% of the jobs in the region. Of that percentage, 52% are in the City of Birmingham, therefore, investing in the city also means investing in the majority of the employment centers in the region. Ways to support the city inside the region are:

- Centralization — ability to focus development where it will produce the greatest Return on investment (ROI)
- Create a real presence for the city in the region

### City Center

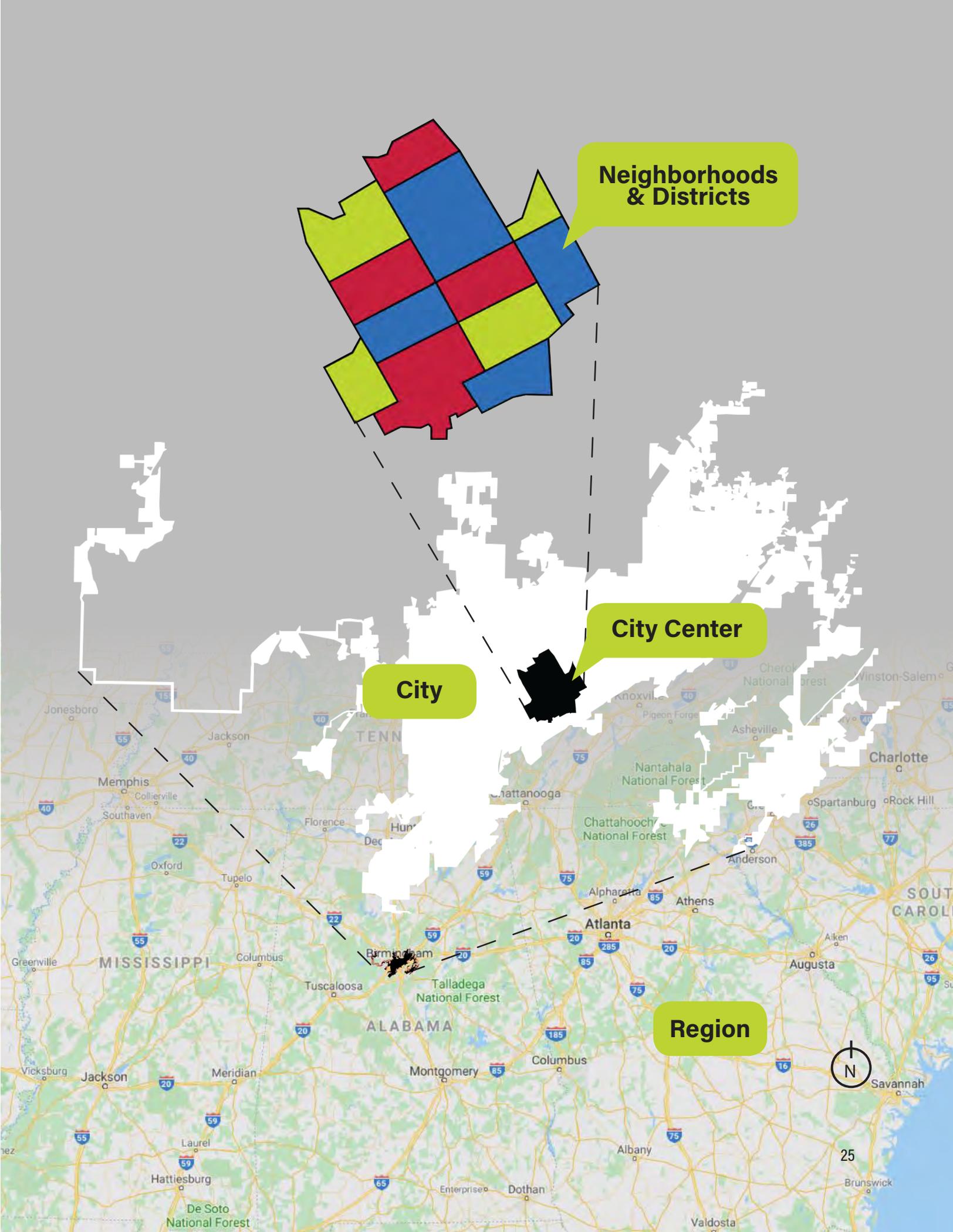
The City Center is a strong asset to the City of Birmingham and the surrounding region; however, there are some factors to address in order to help the city reach its greatest potential. These factors include:

- Large geography — spreading resources thin across a large area
- Lack of critical mass — locating employers, businesses, housing, and other uses in one compact location
- Competition with other regional centers — the southeast is constantly growing and competing for national or regional resources
- Lack of visual connections between districts — the City Center has many interesting districts and activity hubs that are walkable themselves, but the connections between each will improve vibrancy and likely increase investment
- Perception of crime, safety, and security — shed the stigma of violence and address aggressive panhandling

### Neighborhood and Districts

Having established neighborhoods and “cool” urban districts in the City Center are strengths themselves; however, enhancements could be made to better integrate them together and create a comprehensively strong community. Some areas of improvement for individual neighborhoods or to help create a stronger environment together include addressing:

- Lack of density in the City Center Core and mixed-use nodes within each City Center District
- Incomplete social networks — lacking essential amenities, mixed-use nodes, vibrant cores
- Incomplete physical connections — disconnected by the railroad, vacant, and unsafe streets
- Lack of sustained investment



**Neighborhoods & Districts**

**City Center**

**City**

**Region**





**4**

**Square miles in  
the City Center**

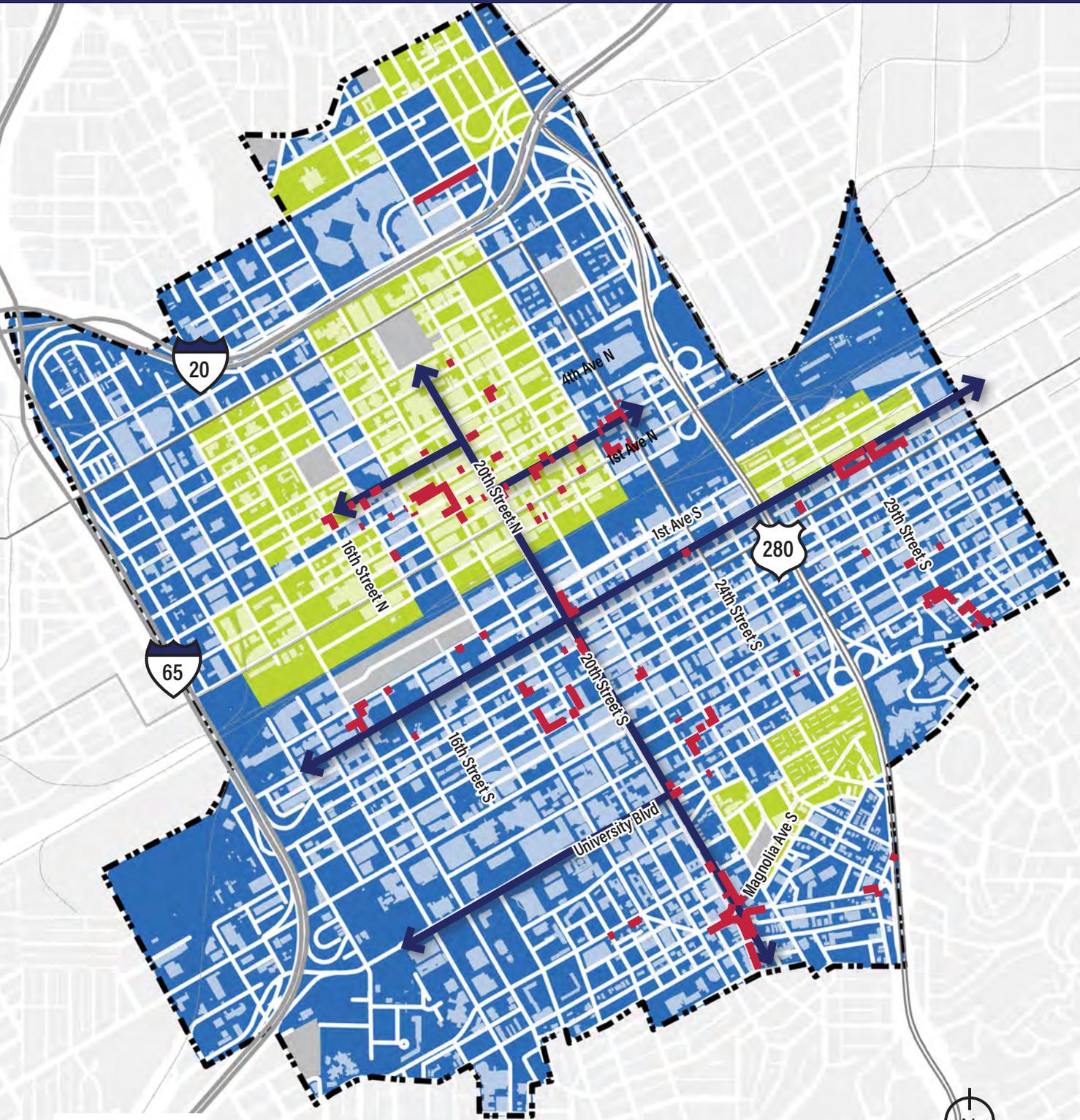
**6**

**Areas requiring  
greater  
intervention to  
spur activity**

**5**

**Significant  
connectors and  
activity spines**

# Existing Conditions Summary Map



## Map Legend

- Areas requiring greater intervention to spur activity
- Areas requiring little to no intervention (stable)
- Active frontages
- Significant connectors and activity spines



## Market Opportunities

### Housing Market Analysis (by Zimmerman/Volk Associates Inc. - Appendix A)

#### Introduction

The study determined the market potential and optimum market position for newly-introduced rental and for-sale housing units that could be developed within the study area over the next five years. The final number of housing unit projections were made based off assumptions on a ten year horizon.

The optimum market position for new housing units in the City Center has been derived from: the housing preferences, financial capacities, and lifestyle characteristics of the target households; the City Center's location, visibility and physical attributes; the rental and for-sale housing market context in the City Center market area; and Zimmerman/Volk Associates' extensive experience with downtown development and redevelopment.

#### Target Market Methodology & Statistics

##### Where do the potential renters/buyers for the City Center market live now?

- » 57% live in the City of Birmingham, 14% in Jefferson County, 4% in other regional counties, 25% in the rest of the nation

##### How many households have the potential to move to the City Center over the next ten years?

- » 4,105 households of empty nesters/retirees (17%), traditional/non-traditional families (9%), and young singles/couples (74%)
- » Most household incomes are over \$35,000/year
- » 49% renters and 51% owners

##### Who are they and what are they like?

- » Younger Singles and Couples (largest cohort moving to the area): head-of-household usually between the age of 20-35
  - White-collar professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, knowledge workers, entry-level office employees, servers, and other retail workers
  - Prefer to live in downtowns for diversity, employment availability, entertainment, and cultural opportunities within walking distance of their residences
  - Move more often than older people
  - Prefer rental apartments
- » Empty Nesters and Retires (second largest cohort): head-of-household usually over 50 years old
  - Adult children no longer live at home, participate in community life, many still working in well-paying careers
- » Traditional and Non-Traditional Families (smallest cohort): head-of-household usually 30s to 40s
  - Young children living at home, head-of-household potentially a single parent, grandparent or adoptive parent, increasingly diverse

##### What are their current housing alternatives?

- » 23 rental properties surveyed in the City Center: 21 were "very walkable" (Walk Score) or higher
- » Over 3,000 dwelling units surveyed in the 23 properties:
  - Rentals: Studios range from \$555 to \$1,250/month and 330 to 672 square feet (sf); one-bedrooms range from \$750 to \$2,260/month and 400 to 1,480 sf; two-bedrooms range from \$820 to \$2,700/month and 805 to 2,246 sf; three-bedrooms range from \$955 to \$2,915/month and 1,146 to 1,781 sf
  - Sales (snapshot of for-sale listings in November 2018): Condos ranging from one-bedroom/one-bath at 451 sf for \$154,900 to three-bedroom/two-bath at 1,634 sf for \$439,900

### What are the potential rents/cost of a new home?

- » Multi-family rentals are mainly in the \$750-\$1,500 range
  - \$750-\$1,000 = 26%
  - \$1,000-\$1,250 = 22%
  - \$1,250-\$1,500 = 20%
- » Multi-family sales are mainly \$200,000-\$300,000 range
  - \$200k-\$250k = 23%
  - \$250k-\$300k = 24%
- » Single-family attached sales are mainly in the \$200,000-\$300,000 range
  - \$200k-\$250k = 20%
  - \$250k-\$300k = 25%

### Housing Market Conclusions

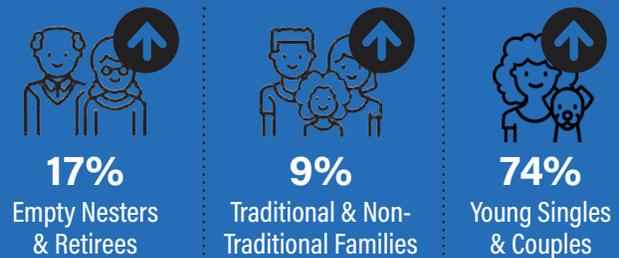
- » Optimum Market Positions (weighted):
  - Multi-family rental (lofts) = \$1,155 for 513 sf
  - Multi-family rental (apartments) = \$1,473 for 698 sf
  - Multi-family for-sale (condos) = \$306,750 for 1,093 sf
  - Single-family for-sale (townhomes) = \$387,500 for 1,498 sf
- » Annual Forecast Absorption:
  - Multi-family rental (apartments) = 323-372 units
  - Multi-family for-sale (condos) = 20-24 units
  - Single-family for-sale (townhomes) = 20-24 units
- » Total Number of Households: 4,105

## HOUSING STATS

### Share of Households in the City Center by Market Group



### Who is Most Likely to Move to the City Center Over the Next Ten Years



### Annual Housing Growth Forecast for City Center Over the Next Ten Years



## HOUSING MARKET POTENTIAL

**4,105** Total market-rate housing growth in 10 years

## Office and Hotel Market Analysis (by W-ZHA, LLC - Appendix B)

### Introduction

The purpose of this office and hotel market analysis was to analyze the job trends in the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Metro area compared to other Peer MSA and Metros of similar sizes and geographies. These trends, along with demographic data specific to Birmingham, will help determine the future office market growth prospects. This analysis analyzes the hotel market's trends, current supply in Birmingham, and determines future hotel market growth prospects.

### Job Trends and Office Market Statistics

(2000-2018; Source: Moody's Analytics, ESRI, US Bureau of Labor Statistics)

- » 1% job growth per annum in the MSA, despite the recession; slower than Peer MSAs; Jefferson County still has not recovered the amount of jobs lost during the recession
- » Metro's unemployment rate = 3%; lower than the national average of 4%
- » White collar jobs losses have been significant in Jefferson County, but many due to mergers
- » Office-inclined and Technology, Advertising, Media, and Information (TAMI) jobs are lacking in Jefferson County (69%) and the Metro (59%), especially when compared to Peer Metros (e.g., Shelby County=91%/Memphis MSA=85%)

### Birmingham's Market Reflects National Office-Market Trends

- » Space efficiency: challenge of businesses requiring less square feet per employee
- » Make the office a place employees want to be - dissolving boundaries between live, work, and play

- » "Coolspace" and company brand: unique and authentic, usually located in an older building that is architecturally distinct or in a cool neighborhood
- » Conversion of office to higher and better use - converting office to other land uses, particularly housing
- » Technology, Advertising, Media, and Information (TAMI) industry-driving office demand - trends are going away from finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) industry to TAMI

### Birmingham's Multi-Tenant Office Market (Graham & Company, CBRE)

- » 272 million square feet of single- and multi-tenant office space in Birmingham market (2018); 18 million of the supply is multi-tenant which is a smaller supply when compared to Peer Metros (all over 20 million square feet); almost 8 million square feet in the Central Business District (CBD); vacancy rate is 18% in Birmingham which is higher than Peer Metros (Louisville=12%, Oklahoma City=17%, Memphis=12%)
- » Occupied office space: stable over last 5 years and increasing (2012=27% and 2018=29%)
- » Submarkets: Midtown is strongest submarket with low vacancy and high rents; parking expenses causes increase in cost to occupy in the CBD
- » Rent: low (\$20.61) and comparable to Peer Metros (ranging from \$17.19 to \$32.81)

### Office Market Prospects

- » City Center is a competitive office location for growing white-collar and TAMI industries
- » Office potential will be a function of growth, as well as re-locations within the market - so challenging to project. 300,000 to 500,000 square feet is defensible and may be conservative over the next 10 years.
- » Small-scale absorption to continue in "Coolspace" office
- » Large-scale occupancies in City Center towers and

conventional office space may be more challenging

### Office Market Conclusion

- » The Metro area will have a demand for 850,000-1,100,000 square feet of office space over the next 10 years
- » The Metro area can reasonably support 300,000-500,000 square feet of the demand over the next 10 years

### Hotel Market (Source: Smith Travel Research)

- » Supply: over 2,700 rooms; 28% of Jefferson County's supply of mid- to up-scale chain hotel rooms
- » Trends: 5 hotels/726 rooms built since 2012; 70% of new mid- to up-scale hotel rooms in the county between 2012-2018; hotel room revenue doubled between 2012-2018; increased revenue in Jefferson County from 20% in 2012 to 30% in 2018; City Center is both a business and leisure destination
- » Prospects: today there are 216 rooms under construction; movement in revenue per room and shifts within the market may support additional rooms

### Hotel Market Conclusion

- » The market can support 420 additional rooms over the next 10 years

## OFFICE & HOTEL STATS

### The Birmingham Metro's Dominant Private Industries for Jobs



**14.7%**

Professional & Business Services



**13.2%**

Health Care & Social Assistance



**11.3%**

Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities

### The Projected US Workforce in 2022



**55%**

Millennials & Generation Z



**19%**

Generation X



**26%**

Baby Boomers & Traditionalists

### Birmingham Hotel Projection



**42%**

Increase in available City Center hotel rooms (2012-2018)



**216**

Hotel rooms under construction in City Center



**420**

Additional rooms in City Center over the next 10 years

## OFFICE/HOTEL POTENTIAL

**300-500K**  
sq. ft. of office in 10 years

**420** Hotel Rooms  
in 10 years



## Public Engagement

The stakeholder and community outreach process for the Center City Birmingham Master Plan consisted of key stakeholder interviews, for both the residents, businesses and visitors, a community workshop and a final presentation of the draft Master Plan to the community. Through these meetings and events participants shared their thoughts on the current conditions as well as their vision for the future. In addition, a survey was available online, which allowed participants from the events, as well as those who could not attend, to provide input. The survey received a large amount of responses, providing valuable feedback throughout the public engagement process.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the public outreach efforts conducted to date and the key findings that emerged from the process.

## Summary of Findings

- Need to fill in the gaps and connect pockets
- There is a desire to rehabilitate buildings in the City Center
- Open communication needs to be one of the core values
- Transit connectivity to various districts is weak, need to improve transit connections

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

**4**

**Public engagement events attended by 275 people**

**1,118**

**Online survey responses**

**51**

**Steering committee members**

**120+**

**Participants in stakeholder interviews**

### Event Results

#### Top 3 Things Participants Love about the City Center

1. Railroad Park
2. History
3. Food

#### Top 3 Things Participants Want More of in the City Center

1. Affordability
2. Transit
3. Retail

#### Top 3 Things Participants Want Less of in the City Center

1. Cars
2. Blight
3. Parking

#### Top 5 Priorities for Event and Survey Participants

### Survey Results



**Strengths:**  
Revitalization of vacant & underutilized buildings



**Existing Attractions:**  
Food, breweries, & bars



**Challenges:**  
Safety & security



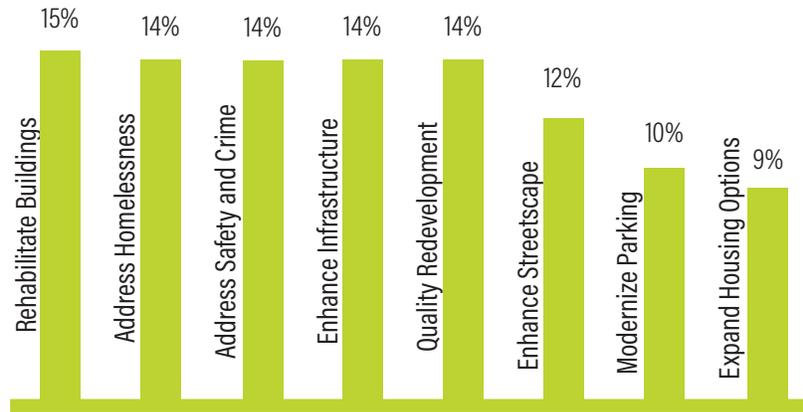
**New Attractions:**  
Retail & shopping

1. Rehabilitate buildings
2. Address safety & crime
3. Enhance infrastructure
4. Address homelessness

5. Quality redevelopment



What are the most important issues facing City Center?



Survey Results

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions about strengths, weaknesses, and other characteristics of Birmingham as it is today. They were also asked about how they see City Center growing in the future.

Survey respondents varied in age, occupation and relationship to the area, garnering a diverse set of answers within a large sample size of over 1,100 people.

In addition to ranking questions regarding strengths, weaknesses, etc., another piece of the survey was an interactive map. Respondents were asked to locate areas of City Center that they viewed as assets and issues, areas in which they had ideas, and areas they believed suffered from issues with parking.

On the next page are the two maps that received the most map markers and comments, and provided the most information regarding overall potential strategies for the area.

Top Challenges Facing the City Center

**24%** Safety and security

**21%** Lack of housing variety and prices

Top Attractions

**37%** Food, brewery, and bar scene

**34%** Railroad Park / Regions Field

Most Requested New Businesses

**33%** Retail and general shopping

**24%** Grocery / specialty food store option

Top Strengths

**34%** Historic buildings

**22%** Demographic diversity 35

Assets Map Responses

1,387

Map Markers

723

Comments

Issues Map Responses

735

Map Markers

285

Comments

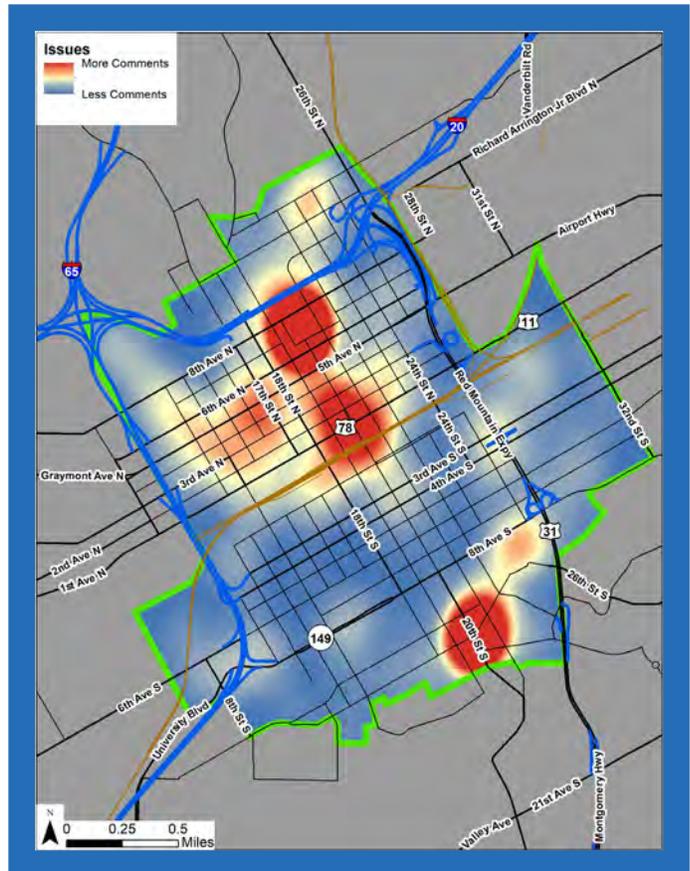
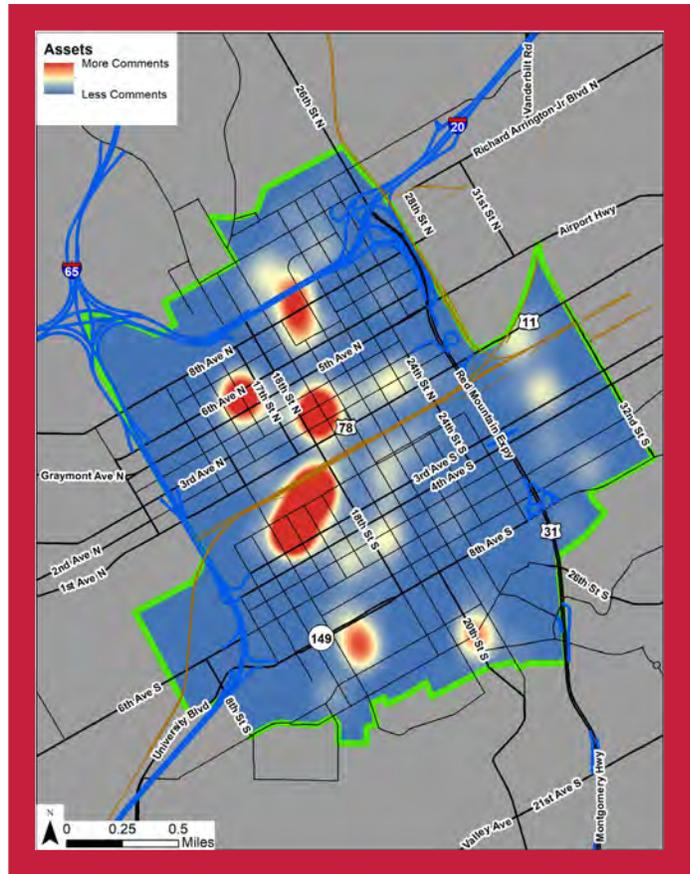
Total Responses

3,166

Map Markers

1,934

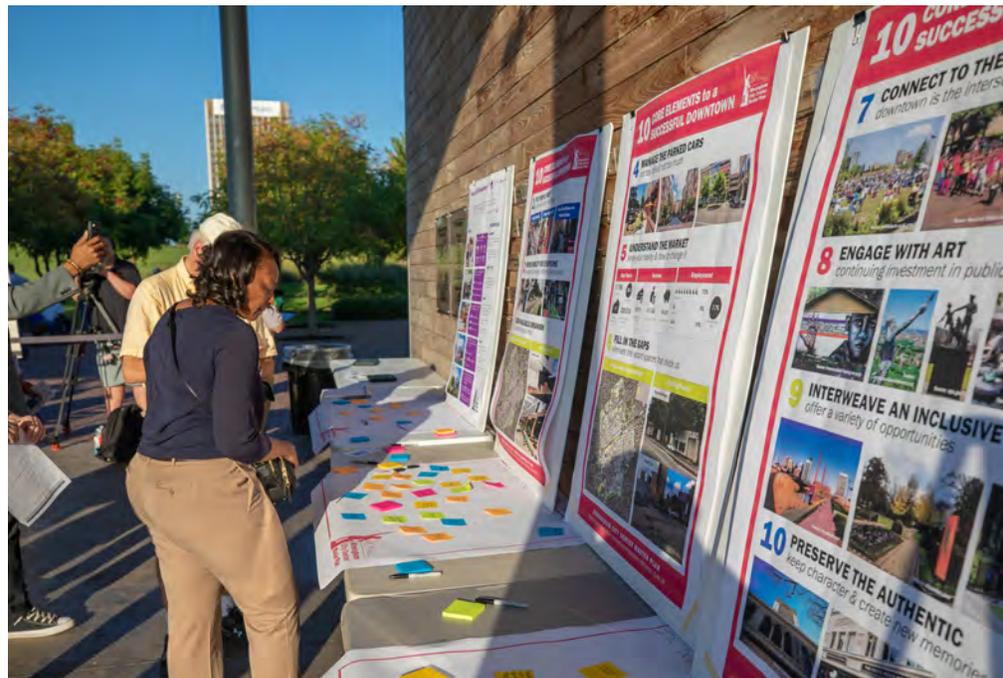
Comments





**Steering Committee  
Kickoff Meeting  
August 2018**

**Public Kickoff  
Open Houses at  
Railroad Park  
(right) and Good  
People Brewing  
September 2018**



**Preliminary  
Plan Public  
Presentations  
May 2019  
&  
Final Plan Public  
Presentation  
December 2019**





# 3 | Guiding Principles & Core Strategy

## Contents

- Guiding Principles
- Strategy for Creating Compact Critical Mass

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1

# Equity is essential to Birmingham's future and Downtown will be its beacon

### The Challenge

Though great strides have been made in recent decades, Birmingham, like many southern cities, has a history that is shaped by segregation – first by race and more recently by income. The City has made great strides in mitigating these impacts as well pursuing continued economic investment within the City. The City Center has had a disproportionate share of new investment over the last decade. This investment, aside from its contribution to the larger tax base of the city, has not always been viewed as benefiting the broader community. Many neighborhoods immediately surrounding the City Center still suffer from aging infrastructure and disinvestment and with a few notable exceptions, the investment has targeted market rate housing and white-collar employment. This is consistent with what other downtowns are seeing across the US as the market re-discovers the benefits of locating capital in urban cores. How do we ensure that the success of the City Center can be shared by everyone in Birmingham?

### The Opportunity

Unquestionably, the success of Birmingham's core is vital to the long-term success of its neighborhoods as well. The key is to ensure that continued investment in the City Center is more reflective of the broader community demographics – African-American and white, wealthy and poor, young and old. Generally, the solution to ensuring more equitable success throughout the City is through continued, focused attention on providing a pathway of upward economic mobility where everyone in Birmingham, regardless of which neighborhood you grew up in or which school you attended can ascend the ladder. The City Center, the economic hub of the entire region, continues to play a critical role in providing opportunity for everyone to succeed. The first rung on the ladder of opportunity is the provision of affordable and dignified housing, followed closely by entry level jobs and affordable workspaces for entrepreneurs. Lastly, equity should be reflected in the City Center's public art, cultural amenities, and event programming so that everyone in Birmingham sees a reason to come to the City Center to live, to work, and to play. Nowhere in the City Center has this been more evident than in the much-beloved, Railroad Park – a place where all of Birmingham gathers to enjoy a shared outdoor room.



## 1.1 Provide a diverse range of housing throughout the City Center

- 1.1.1 Implement a target of 20% affordable/workforce housing with each new housing project and create a strategy to expand housing opportunities for those under 80% Average Median Income (AMI)
- 1.1.2 Preserve and maintain the naturally occurring affordable housing
- 1.1.3 Encourage a diversity of product types (e.g., urban homes, townhomes, duplexes, quadruplexes, and apartments/condos)
- 1.1.4 Meet the housing needs of artists, musicians, and other cultural workers who embody Birmingham's living culture

## 1.2 Encourage small businesses and entrepreneurs

- 1.2.1 Preserve and protect small shop and office spaces in older structures as lower cost places for new business
- 1.2.2 Consider master development leases for key storefronts as a means to encourage short-term pop-ups to help fill space in key corridors
- 1.2.3 Continue to work with area employers to promote and advertise opportunities for entry level positions, particularly to disadvantaged populations

- 1.2.4 Expand minority business development programs to promote more minority-owned, culturally diverse retail, food, and other businesses

## 1.3 Expand programming and public art to reflect the diversity of the community everywhere in the City Center

- 1.3.1 Continue to implement permanent and temporary public art installations and murals that reflect the entire city
- 1.3.2 Improve event and activity programming to better reflect the entire city population across the City Center

## 1.4 Expand access to the City Center's jobs, resources, and amenities from all surrounding neighborhoods, especially those currently more disadvantaged and disconnected

- 1.4.1 Improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access to the City Center from immediately adjacent neighborhoods
- 1.4.2 Provide skills training and workforce readiness
- 1.4.3 Support human, health, and social services that unlock the ability for people to participate in the workforce
- 1.4.4 Partner with adjacent neighborhoods so that they can also see the benefits of a vibrant and successful City Center

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE #2

# Focus investments and energy into key nodes to create compact critical mass

### The Challenge

How do we focus our toolkit of resources to maximize the greatest benefit of new development – the amenity garnered from density? At four square miles in total area, there isn't enough market demand to build up all of City Center at once. The City Center was once a thriving area across a much vaster geography, but due to poorly conceived public policies in the past from every level of government, resulting in disinvestment, there are wide swaths of real estate that contain underutilized or vacant buildings, and surface parking lots. The City Center has a lot of corridors and nodes that at times compete with one another for investment and attention. When density of housing or jobs are proximate, they create a demand for street life and amenities that is sustainable and attracts additional development. When spread out, they simply create demands on parking and additional traffic. Because there is clearly a finite well of resources for public incentives and investments, there is by necessity a limiting factor to continuing this practice.

### The Opportunity

Concentrating investment and development in strategic locations, beginning in the City Center and in other nodes and corridors, will deliver the biggest bang for the buck and attract more investment over time. Success begets success. A thousand new housing units within a five-minute walk can support a block of main street retail. Coupled with a concentration of jobs, cultural amenities, hotels, actively programmed parks, sporting venues, and other public amenities, these areas can create internal momentum from the proximity of activity. It is also critical to preserve existing structures, particularly those with historic character, as they are the great fabric of the city and can often accommodate smaller scale uses in more dense environments. There are a number of key strategies that can be bundled into a powerful toolkit including zoning, infrastructure, cultural facilities, existing building rehabilitation, public space amenities, and financial incentives. The temptation will always be there to ease the permitting or subsidize any project in the City Center, but care must be taken to make sure that it is the right project in the right location.

## 2.1 Prioritize compact critical mass in development/redevelopment

- 2.1.1 Encourage density through zoning in strategic nodes and corridors
- 2.1.2 Prioritize incentives using a point system (e.g., projects in the core, projects in preferred retail corridors, housing affordability)
- 2.1.3 Focus housing investments to achieve compact critical mass
- 2.1.4 Leverage the hospitals and the University of Alabama at Birmingham to attract complimentary development
- 2.1.5 Consider an RFP for the redevelopment of Boutwell Auditorium and the City Hall Parking Garage

## 2.2 Invest in public space to attract new investment around its perimeter

- 2.2.1 Use a network of green streets and public spaces to unite the City Center
- 2.2.2 Set a high bar for dense development along the edges of public spaces to increase activity along its edges
- 2.2.3 Create conservancy organizations or similar groups to ensure the long-term operations and maintenance of these spaces
- 2.2.4 Provide regular programming that is complimentary of the area and supportive of its vibrancy



## 2.3 Encourage small-scale infill development to eliminate the gaps

- 2.3.1 Incentivize small scale development as affordable strategies to infill existing blocks
- 2.3.2 Use public realm improvements to lessen the visual distance between buildings and activities
- 2.3.3 Fill empty storefronts and buildings first before considering demolition

# Build for people

## The Challenge

How do we focus our design attention to maximize the pedestrian experience for residents and visitors alike? One of the critical challenges, to downtowns everywhere, was the adaptation of the urban form to satisfy the needs of moving and parking cars. The introduction of the interstate system to Birmingham's grid and the conversion of many of the streets to one-way operations effectively created a series of mile-long on and off ramps to serve visitors and commuters creating a barrier around its perimeter. When the geometrics of traffic changed, so too did the design of many buildings. They recessed from the urban hustle and bustle of the sidewalk to adapt to an increased hostility of the streets. Modern architectural trends of "form-follows-function" have also delivered a built environment around the City Center that disregards the pedestrian on the street in favor of the operational efficiency of the interior. In addition, the loss of many buildings to surface parking lots created large gaps in the urban landscape. Coupled with a decrease in resources to maintain the basic infrastructure of the city, people in the downtown became regarded as second-class citizens. Pedestrian activity is on the rise throughout the City Center due to the building of the past decade, but improvements are needed to ensure that streets are clean, well-maintained, safe, inviting, and green.

## The Opportunity

The strategic advantage of every downtown is its walkability. Suburban environments can only offer separated activities connected by car. What Birmingham's City Center delivers is the opportunity to have a wonderfully memorable experience walking along a street, finding respite (or activity) in a park, or sharing a dining experience outside with friends. Because pedestrians judge every detail of every step, intentional human scale design standards are critical for new buildings that form the "walls" and for the public realm of the sidewalk that serves as the "floor" of the "outdoor room" that is the street. Also critical are places for socializing near where people live and work - restaurants, theaters, parks, and shops. Set between these journeys and destinations should be a comprehensive strategy for keeping people walking one more block - filling vacant spaces and lots, repairing sidewalks, improving lighting, and adding elements that provide shade relief from the hot summers of Alabama. And finally, traffic in the downtown needs to move at the speed of the pedestrian to provide a level of safety and comfort both walking along and crossing streets. Every trip begins and ends as a pedestrian so it's an experience shared by everyone who comes to the City Center.

### 3.1 Adopt and implement urban design and architectural guidelines that are human-scaled

- 3.1.1 Implement the Character Code
- 3.1.2 Celebrate the rhythm, variety, and scale of the City Center's traditional building stock—including for buildings setback from the sidewalk line by infilling retail and similar uses that animate the pedestrian realm

- 3.1.3 For buildings of every size and use, emphasize massing and design that celebrate human scale and respects the City Center’s character and defining qualities
- 3.1.4 Preserve and protect historic buildings as fundamental models of human-focused design
- 3.1.5 Emphasize design and programming that animates streets and contributes to walkability along signature streets (in particular, avoid facing parking or blank walls directly onto public streets)
- 3.1.6 Large development tracts should be broken up into smaller blocks, using small-scale streets or alleys, mid-block pedestrian passageways, and small public spaces
- 3.1.7 The ground floor of buildings should be designed to be flexible in use
- 3.1.8 In general, only occupiable building space should be visible from public streets - not parking
- 3.1.9 Signage, lighting, entrances and windows, and façade materials and colors all contribute to the quality of the human experience

### 3.2 Focus on the basics – clean, safe, and attractive

- 3.2.1 Expand anti-blight efforts
- 3.2.2 Plant trees everywhere - consider tree selection and maintenance
- 3.2.3 Consistently maintain sidewalk infrastructure and lighting
- 3.2.4 Secure or clean up and light alleys and small spaces



- 3.2.5 Continue efforts to eliminate aggressive panhandling
- 3.2.6 Assist those experiencing homelessness to find the services they need

### 3.3 Create and maintain active streets and well-programmed open spaces

- 3.3.1 Prioritize filling empty storefronts in key focus areas and corridors
- 3.3.2 Expand public art throughout the City Center
- 3.3.3 Curate exhibitions and performances and encourage spontaneous creativity through “tactical urbanism” and similar events through a micro-grants program and other similar programs
- 3.3.4 Adopt a master plan for public space renovations, management, and programming for all City Center public spaces

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE #4

# We are Birmingham: Respect, maintain and celebrate our living history

### The Challenge

How do we preserve our history and promote our living legacy? Birmingham has a historical, cultural, and architectural character that is beginning once again to reclaim its place in the City Center. Like many other downtowns, after integration, much of this legacy was lost due to urban renewal and the lack of appreciation of the future significance of Birmingham's civil rights history by the city. Housing was removed, communities were relocated, businesses were razed, and the civic and cultural institutions that once anchored the City Center – both white and black – were hollowed out. Yet, there remains a proud and robust living history with notable contributions to the City's culture through art, music, theater, sports, and leadership. The City Center is once again seeing investment, but the cultural expression of the new inhabitants has not always been balanced. Many of these accomplishments particularly those chronicling the civil rights story have been interpreted in our public art, music, and in our museums, including most importantly the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Kelly Ingram Park, and the larger Civil Rights District, but other investment has not followed. Disinvestment and deferred maintenance have plagued parks and civic buildings including Kelly Ingram Park, Linn Park, and Boutwell Auditorium.

### The Opportunity

Our existing buildings, cultural heritage, and urban character represent competitive advantages. They strengthen our appeal to the kinds of development, investment, and jobs that thrive in an urban environment. The success of Railroad Park and Regions Park and their ability to attract complementary development have been remarkable but not unprecedented. Urban parks around the country have become the cornerstones for private investment. The same is true of historic buildings. The character of historic architecture, combined with an array of financial incentives, have made preservation good business. This is very much true in Birmingham where a wide array of success stories - from the adaptive reuse of the old Sears Building into the Innovation Depot, to the conversion of a number of older office buildings into housing and hotels, and the re-opening of the Lyric Theater – have proven enormously successful. Now is the time to focus on areas of the City Center that have been neglected by the market-based development through investment, preservation, and celebration. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Birmingham's global role in the Civil Rights movement is a defining asset of the community that must be more well defined through the acknowledgment and celebration of the historic fabric (both present and lost) and the continued interpretative storytelling in contributing buildings and the public realm.



#### 4.1 Prioritize Preservation

- 4.1.1 Focus policies and financial incentives to encourage re-use and repurposing of existing buildings that contribute to the City Center's unique character and quality and/or embody its history
- 4.1.2 Actively encourage the use of the state historic tax credit and other development incentives to continuing the regeneration of Birmingham's architectural legacy
- 4.1.3 Energize/renew/re-use abandoned and underutilized buildings in prominent locations, such as buildings along 4th Ave North in the Civil Rights District (i.e., the A.G. Gaston office building), the AT&T building, the Brown Marx building, buildings in the Wholesale Warehouse Loop in the Innovation District, and the former Social Security building in the Uptown District
- 4.1.4 Use the recently completed 2019 Birmingham City Center Reconnaissance Level Historic Resource Survey to guide redevelopment opportunities, particularly in the identified focus areas

#### 4.2 Emphasize and honor Birmingham's globally significant civil rights history

- 4.2.1 Continue the preservation of key buildings in the Civil Rights District

- 4.2.2 Retrofit the Civil Rights District's public realm including Kelly Ingram Park to invoke its historic and cultural significance while supporting modern usage and needs

#### 4.3 Support and Expand Cultural Facilities

- 4.3.1 Retain, preserve, and expand cultural offerings (e.g., museums, music venues) in the City Center in key focus areas where they can be a part of an 18-hour environment

#### 4.4 Showcase the full spectrum of Birmingham's authentic living culture

- 4.4.1 Provide a full range of venues for music, food, and arts throughout the City Center
- 4.4.2 Continue to encourage art throughout the City Center with a focus on those that tell a story about the people and history of Birmingham
- 4.4.3 Support a wide range of tactical interventions including pop-ups, street programming, and special events that highlight Birmingham's living culture
- 4.4.4 Expand the nighttime economy while protecting quality of life

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE #5

# Jobs drive growth and housing provides vibrancy

### The Challenge

Which comes first, housing or jobs? Birmingham has a proud history as a regional center of commerce beginning with its industrial roots, then transitioning to a southern financial center, and more recently seeing a third evolution to a knowledge-based economy anchored by higher education, health care, and technology-based creative services. For many years, like many other downtowns around the country, the economic development strategy in Downtown Birmingham was to attract large corporate employers to large floor-plate office buildings and provide them with heavily subsidized or free parking. We now know that if free and convenient parking are the key selling points, it will be rare for a downtown site to be competitive. And even if the jobs come, other amenities don't necessarily follow. There simply isn't enough business for a good restaurant to survive on a business-week, lunchtime crowd only (where meals are smaller and very little alcohol is consumed). Such is the case for much of the 20th Street North core that largely empties out each evening at 5 pm. Shops and restaurants require an 18-hour, seven-day-a-week environment to support their operations and programming that can only be delivered where there is a density of housing and hotels, in addition to jobs.

### The Opportunity

While yesterday's jobs followed corporate incentives and CEO housing, today's jobs follow places where knowledge workers are already living (or will want to) - places that offer quality of life amenities including a lively nightlife, multi-cultural activities and facilities, and sports and entertainment venues - making the City Center a hot location. Downtown Birmingham also offers three additional defining advantages - first, it is considered one of the best values for living expenses in the country with a high amenity to low cost of housing ratio; second, it is still very much the core of jobs for the region; and third, it includes a major research university within its boundary. The housing development south of the railroad has proven to be an enormous boom to the vibrancy of the City Center and jobs have followed. Enormous opportunity now exists to populate other key areas to help boost their local micro-economies and their vibrancy, doing so in parallel to job creation through investment in homegrown innovation. The City Center's local economy and its economic impact on the region is substantial and growing. Emphasis should be placed on retaining and expanding the workforce of today while attracting the workforce of tomorrow, all while rebuilding the City Center as a true mixed-use neighborhood.



**5.1 Leverage the City Center’s unique ability to attract a skilled and educated workforce**

- 5.1.1 Focus recruitment efforts on Technology, Advertising, Marketing, and Information (TAMI) jobs to leverage the current cluster of knowledge-economy jobs around the University and in the Innovation District
- 5.1.2 Reinforce the City Center as the prime location in the region for corporate offices because of its central location and access to a vibrant City Center
- 5.1.3 Encourage entrepreneurial opportunities that reflect the diversity of the City

**5.2 Nurture innovation**

- 5.2.1 Protect and maintain buildings and spaces that are affordable to artists and other creative professionals (e.g., subsidies, artist-in-residence programs, and partnerships with academic, private, and non-profit institutions) in the City Center, and particularly in the Innovation District
- 5.2.2 Support creation of a variety of workspaces that invite start-ups, makers, designers, and other innovators to locate in the City Center and the Innovation District
- 5.2.3 Create flexible, innovation-friendly employment spaces

**5.3 Leverage housing for expanding vibrancy**

- 5.3.1 Fund housing affordability that ensures that artists, makers, creative entrepreneurs, and others who help build an innovation economy can make the City Center home
- 5.3.2 Cluster housing near innovation economy jobs and in highly amenitized areas
- 5.3.3 Encourage mixed-use building with adaptable ground floors for a range of supportive tenants rather than single use buildings

# Mobility is much more than just moving cars

## The Challenge

How do we leverage the elegance of the Center City's grid to prepare for the future of urban mobility? As a nearly perfect grid, the City Center's network of streets has served the city well in providing superior vehicular capacity. The conversion of many of the streets to one-way operation decades ago was a response to the Interstate system's series of on-and-off-ramps and the desire to quickly move commuters in and out of the City Center with convenience and ease to their designated parking spaces to compete with suburban locations. Like many downtowns that made similar decisions at the time, the volume of traffic suggested by the traffic engineers never came. As a result, there is excess capacity along nearly every roadway in the City Center. Excess capacity, directional traffic movements during peak hours, and higher speeds are also not supportive of high-quality pedestrian-oriented, retailing environments.

Perhaps most importantly, the grid, with its current orientation to moving cars ignores a much more multi-modal network that is critical to the success of a truly urban experience – one that begins with putting pedestrian experience first in every decision – and includes a much more robust menu of mobility choices. The planned Bus Rapid Transit network, incremental enhancements to the urban trail and bike network, microtransit, and the bike share program are key steps to a truly urban mobility future.

## The Opportunity

Great downtowns are slow speed and offer an array of choices that are generally centered around a philosophy of “park-once-and-walk.” High quality transit; people-friendly streets, sidewalks, and intersections; expanded urban trail networks; dedicated pathways for bikes, scooters, and other lower speed vehicles; and autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicles are critical to consider on balance with the movement and storage of cars. The City's meaningful steps towards a more robust mobility network are setting the framework for the future. In addition to the need to convert one-way streets to two-way operations over time, there are a number of current street segments that can be repurposed to reduce excess travel lanes and accommodate dedicated lanes for bikes and scooters and additional on-street parking. The City Center should also be a place to experiment with new mobility technologies, leveraging the University and the technology sectors to begin learning and leading with mobility that serves the entire community – for access to jobs, shopping, and entertainment, as well as for the delivery of goods both within the City Center and from the greater Birmingham community.

### 6.1 Put pedestrians first

- 6.1.1 Maintain sidewalks and improve crosswalks to prioritize pedestrian movement
- 6.1.2 Lower speeds to 25 MPH where possible
- 6.1.3 Consider “no-right-turn-on-red” at major pedestrian intersections
- 6.1.4 Use 10-foot travel lanes to reduce crossing time and lower speeds

## 6.2 Adapt the street grid for modern, urban needs

- 6.2.1 Repurpose existing streets to accommodate a more robust bicycle and scooter network throughout the City Center and connect to surrounding neighborhoods
- 6.2.2 As funding and other resources permit, strategically convert one-way streets to two-way operations
- 6.2.3 Replace traffic signals at low volume intersections with four way stops or other, non-automated traffic control devices

## 6.3 Expand the number and type of mobility options

- 6.3.1 Implement the planned Birmingham Xpress Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network
- 6.3.2 Explore using autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicles to expand the transit within the City Center – particularly connecting Linn Park to Five Points South and other key points in between
- 6.3.3 Experiment with new mobility technologies for moving people around as well as for package deliveries



## Strategy for Creating Compact Critical Mass

The housing market analysis associated with this Plan, which is summarized in Chapter 1 and included in Appendix B, identified potential demand for approximately 4,960 new housing units over 10 years.

Left to today's market, the City Center's housing capacity might be limited to select subareas where demand is currently strong and development readily feasible such as in the Midtown and Parkside areas. With the right proactive policy tools and design strategies, housing development could spread to other parts of the City Center, supporting broader neighborhood revitalization and sparking innovative economic development. However, the City Center's housing distribution should be strategically concentrated to establish critical masses of activity, focus on areas where transformation is most feasible and benefiting to the community, and avoid diluting positive impacts by spreading too thin.

Office and hotel markets will yield a modest 300-500,000 square feet (mostly occupying existing structures) while demand for hotel rooms will remain strong (420 keys/rooms over the next 10 years). This new office space and hotel rooms should be located where they will have the greatest impact to the City Center's economic revitalization and strongest synergies with new housing development.

The map to the right illustrates how the plan recommends focusing potential housing, office, and hotel development over the next 10 years across the City Center to reinforce existing momentum and create new concentrations of activity and value. Detailed plans for each focus area can be found in Chapter 5 of this Plan. Depending on localized factors such as market strength, urban structure, and proximity to activity centers and amenities, potential new real estate development in each catalyst area should be managed in one of three ways:

### 1. Design oversight: Midtown and Parkside

These areas include some of the region's strongest housing markets and most recent high-value development projects. These trends are likely to continue, requiring diminishing financial support as the local market continues to stabilize.

However, as these units deploy, their designs should be managed using tools such as design guidelines and architectural review committees to help these districts grow cohesively across projects and avoid design and placemaking discord that can undermine long-term value creation.

### 2. Proactive concentration: Five Points South, Southtown, & Lakeview

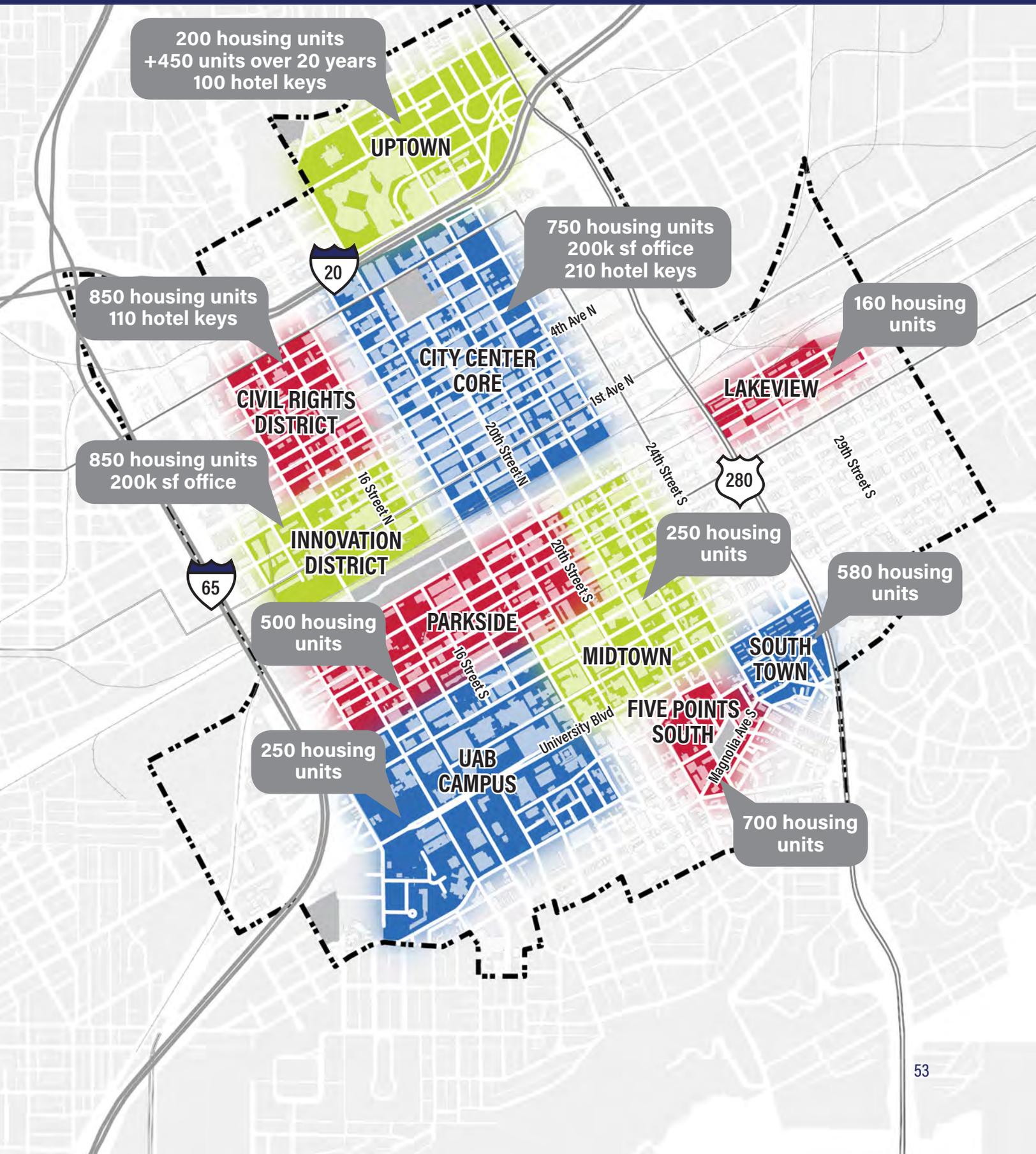
These areas possess relatively strong local housing markets such that housing development may gradually accrue with current trends extended and interventions minimized. However, urban form and density could be deliberately shaped to maximize value by creating or reinforcing nodes and corridors of activity and amenities where they might not otherwise necessarily emerge. If properly fostered, networks of nodes and corridors could amplify local real estate, placemaking, and community value.

### 3. Catalytic intervention: Innovation District, Civil Rights District, City Center Core, & Uptown

The northern half of the City Center includes some of the City's most historic neighborhoods and most promising areas for transformation but also faces more market and feasibility challenges than areas to the south. As such, strategic interventions will be required to unlock local development potential including the early construction of below-market-rate housing.

For example, building on the Innovation Depot's success, this Strategic Opportunity Area could become the city's next great cluster for entrepreneurship and economic development. Based on other successful innovation districts across the country, the formula for success in this regard requires a fully mixed-use environment with concentrations of "cool office" space and dense housing. However, the cost of parking needed to support such uses at adequate density undermines the feasibility of its development (not to mention unduly straining area spatial constraints). Therefore, catalytic interventions such as a modernized shared parking strategy and alternative mobility connections to the City Center and beyond that significantly reduce needed parking supply are required to enable the formation of a full-fledged innovation district here.

**Combined 10 Year Market Potential for the City Center - Housing, Office and Hotel Location Strategy to Create Compact Critical Mass**







# 4 | Public Realm & Streetscape Strategies

## Contents

- Public Realm Strategies
- Streetscape Strategies
- City Center Core Connector (20th Street) Toolkit
- Civil Rights - Innovation Connector (16th Street North) Toolkit
- Placemaking

## Public Realm Strategies

Birmingham has more green space per capita than any other city its size in the country, so it comes as no surprise that the City Center is suitably blessed with park spaces. While ample in size, they are nearly all challenged with deferred maintenance and under-investment. The goal is to connect and improve existing spaces, as well as introduce new public spaces that will make Birmingham's City Center vibrant and enjoyable by visitors and residents alike for decades to come.

## Existing Public Realm Conditions

Birmingham has many cultural and open space destinations throughout its City Center. Some are entire cultural districts, such as the Civil Rights District or other public entities, such as the UAB Campus. Others are a specific place or public space, like Regions Field or the Birmingham Museum of Art. The current connectivity between these destinations in the public realm is lacking, with two exceptions: the Birmingham Green along 20th Street North, which acts as a north-south spine for the City Center, and the Rotary Trail along 1st Avenue South, west of 20th Street North.

### KEY STRATEGIES:

- » Improve public destinations (e.g., parks, plazas, trails)
- » Connect as many public destinations as possible to improve the user experience

**12**

**Parks and Open Spaces within the City Center**

**1.7**

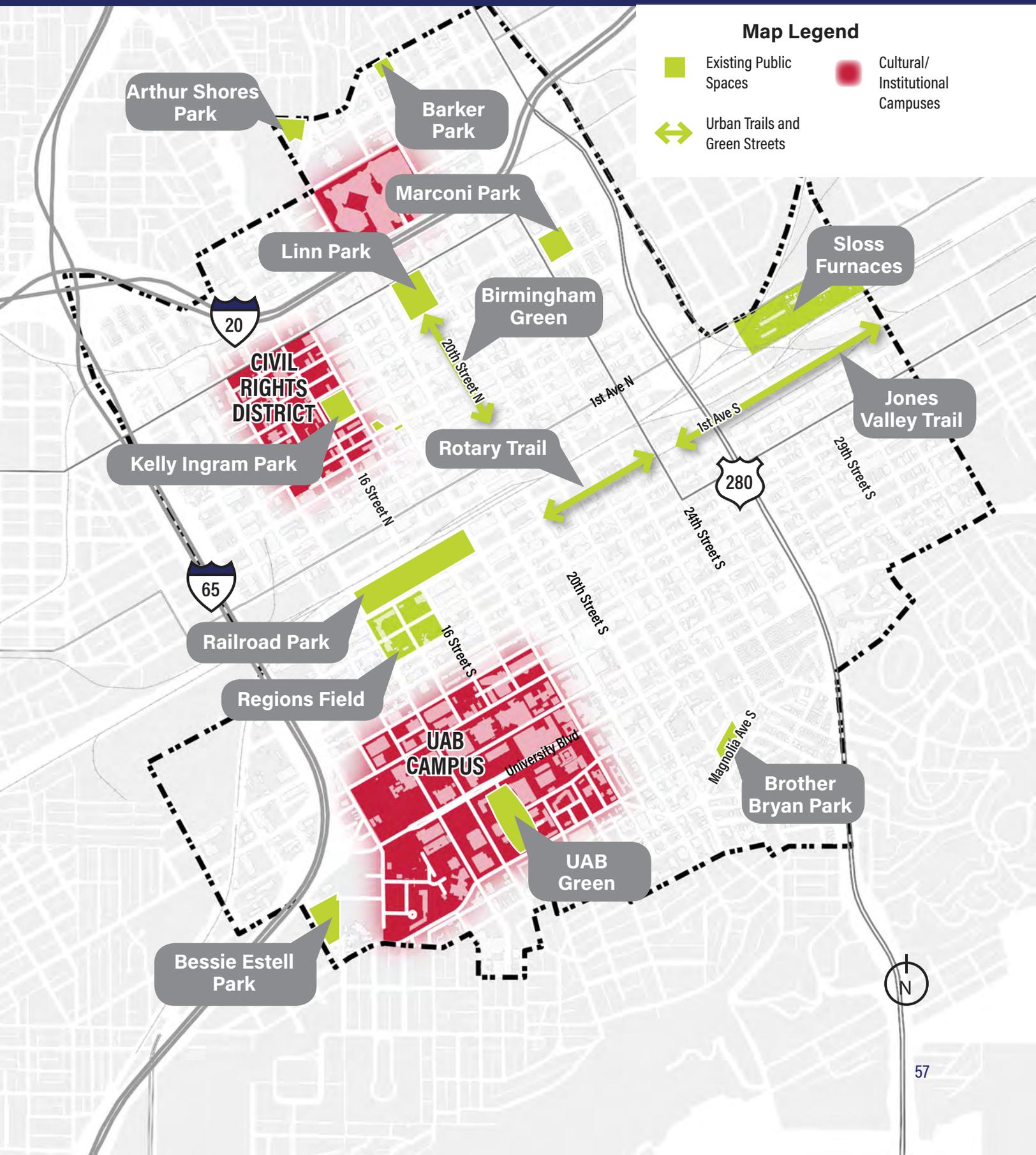
**Miles to walk from Linn Park to Five Points South**

**56/100**

**Bike Score in the City Center**

*Source: WalkScore.com*

Existing Cultural/Institutional Districts and Public Spaces



Map Legend

- Existing Public Spaces
- Cultural/Institutional Campuses
- Urban Trails and Green Streets

Arthur Shores Park

Barker Park

Marconi Park

Linn Park

Birmingham Green

Sloss Furnaces

CIVIL RIGHTS DISTRICT

Rotary Trail

Jones Valley Trail

Kelly Ingram Park

65

Railroad Park

Regions Field

UAB CAMPUS

UAB Green

Bessie Estell Park

Brother Bryan Park



## Future Civil Rights District Public Space Options

The Civil Rights District has cultural assets that draws people from across the globe to experience the Civil Rights movement through the lens of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI), historic churches, and Kelly Ingram Park. Because Kelly Ingram Park is a reverent, thoughtful space that features memorials and a peaceful environment for contemplation, it is not considered by many to be appropriate for a wider variety of active uses and programming. With new housing and opportunities planned for this area, a space for children (and adults!) to play would serve the community in a way that it is not currently being served. The potential location for an active park space include:



- ① **Existing play area next to the BCRI:** this space is already being used for active play, so it could easily be updated and improved
- ② **Corner of 4th and 16th:** both cross streets are identified as Signature Streets later in this chapter, so the corner could be a great spot for active park space
- ③ **Corner of 4th and 17th:** this is currently the History Park, but is also a passive use. This corner could be activated as a part of 4th Avenue North's street improvements
- ④ **Eddie Kendrick's Memorial Park:** this passive park along 4th Avenue could be activated in a way that celebrates Eddie Kendrick's life and art

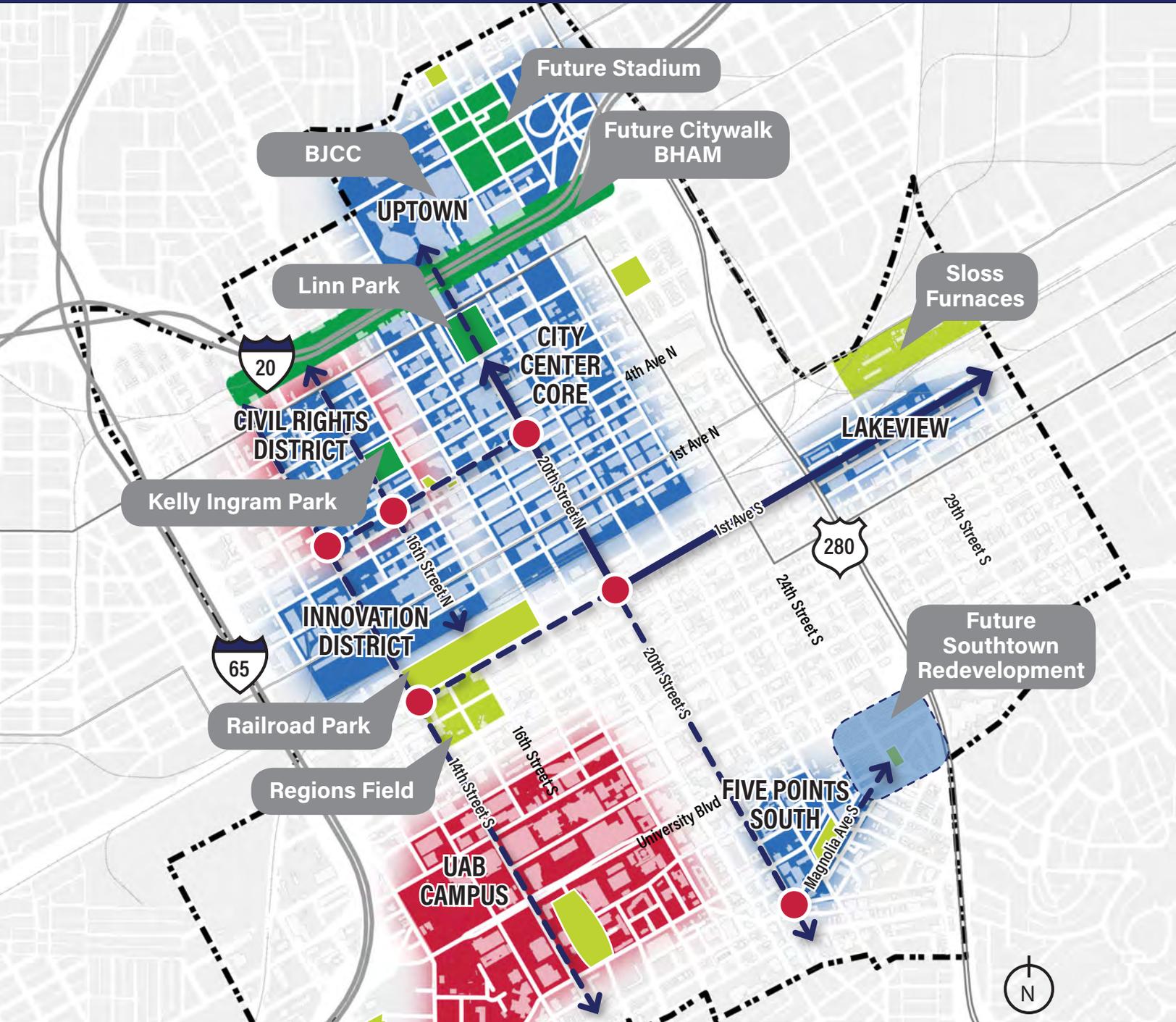
## Proposed Public Realm Improvements

By improving the streetscape on key corridors, the user experience will improve, while the retail, office, and housing proposed in the focus areas are more likely to thrive. Extending the Rotary Trail a few blocks will allow cyclists and pedestrians to safely access Railroad Park. Continuing the trail down 14th Street South will provide safe mobility options to the UAB campus. Improving 4th Avenue North will allow pedestrians to have an enjoyable walk from 20th Street North to the Civil Rights District, while experiencing the future thriving retail along that corridor. Extending the Birmingham Green south also creates greater synergy between the City Center Core and Five Points South, as well as physically connecting Linn Park to Brother Bryan Park and reinforcing it as the north-south spine for all of the City Center.

### KEY STRATEGIES:

- Improve Linn Park and Kelly Ingram Park and/or provide an additional active public space in the Civil Rights District
- Extend the Rotary Trail to the west, accessing Railroad Park, and to the south, accessing UAB Campus
- Improve connectivity between the following key destinations or catalyst areas:
  - ♦ Civil Rights District to Innovation District: 16th Street North
  - ♦ Civil Rights and Innovation Districts to the Rotary Trail and UAB Campus: 14th Street North and South
  - ♦ Civil Rights District to the City Center Core: 4th Avenue North
  - ♦ The City Center Core to Five Points South: 20th Street
  - ♦ Five Points South to future Southtown development: Magnolia Avenue South
- Use the Citywalk BHAM project to determine the best way to connect the City Center Core to Uptown (20th Street is a strong candidate!)
- Enhance intersections where key connections meet

Proposed Public Realm Improvements



Map Legend					
	Existing Public Spaces		Key Intersections		Existing Public Destinations
	Future Public Spaces or Existing Public Spaces to Improve		Existing Key Connections		Focus Areas
			Proposed Key Connections		Key Future Development



# Streetscape Strategies

## Signature Streets

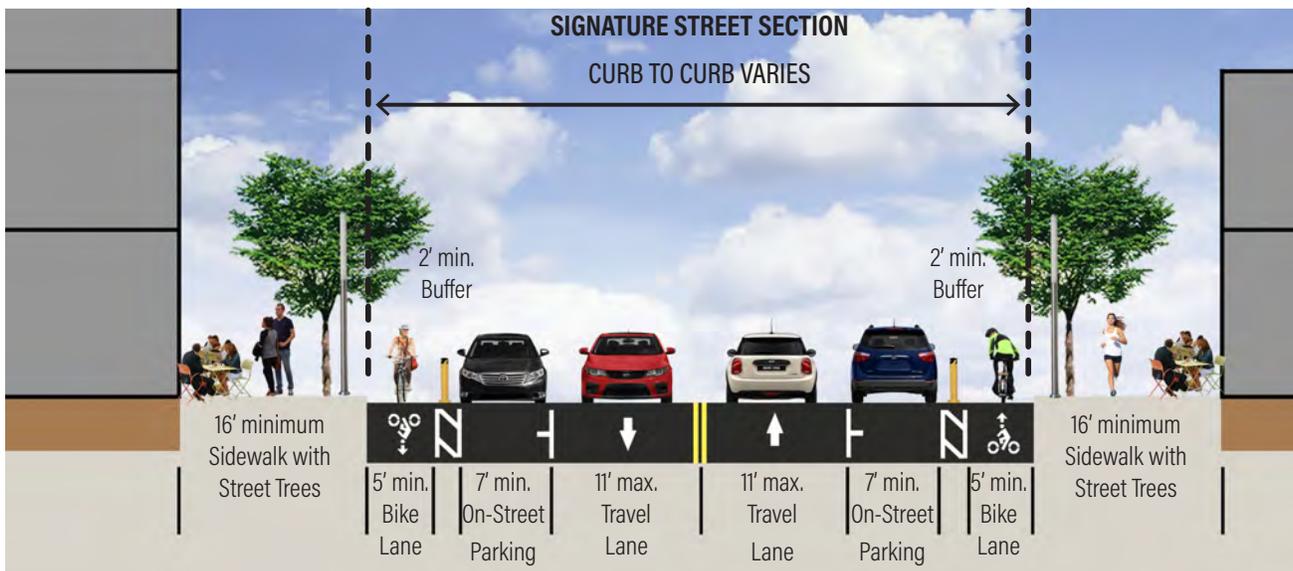
A Signature Street is a corridor that is safe, green, well-lit, attractive, and full of activity. They are the primary pedestrian corridors around the City Center. Many of the connections between open spaces and other destinations occur along these streets. In short, they are the “A” streets for Birmingham. The closest street to this condition is a portion of 20th Street North around 2nd Avenue North, though this condition worsens the further north you walk. The hope is that these streets act as a catalyst, and that over time, public and private investment will spur development and other enhancements in the City Center. The highest priority Signature Streets for future investment are the main connections between Catalyst Areas:

- 20th Street North and South
- 16th Street North
- 4th Avenue North
- 1st Avenue South
- 32nd Street South
- 7th Avenue South
- Magnolia Avenue South

## KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS

There are a few key components to consider in all streetscapes, especially in Signature Streets, that contribute to the success of a vibrant, walkable environment, including:

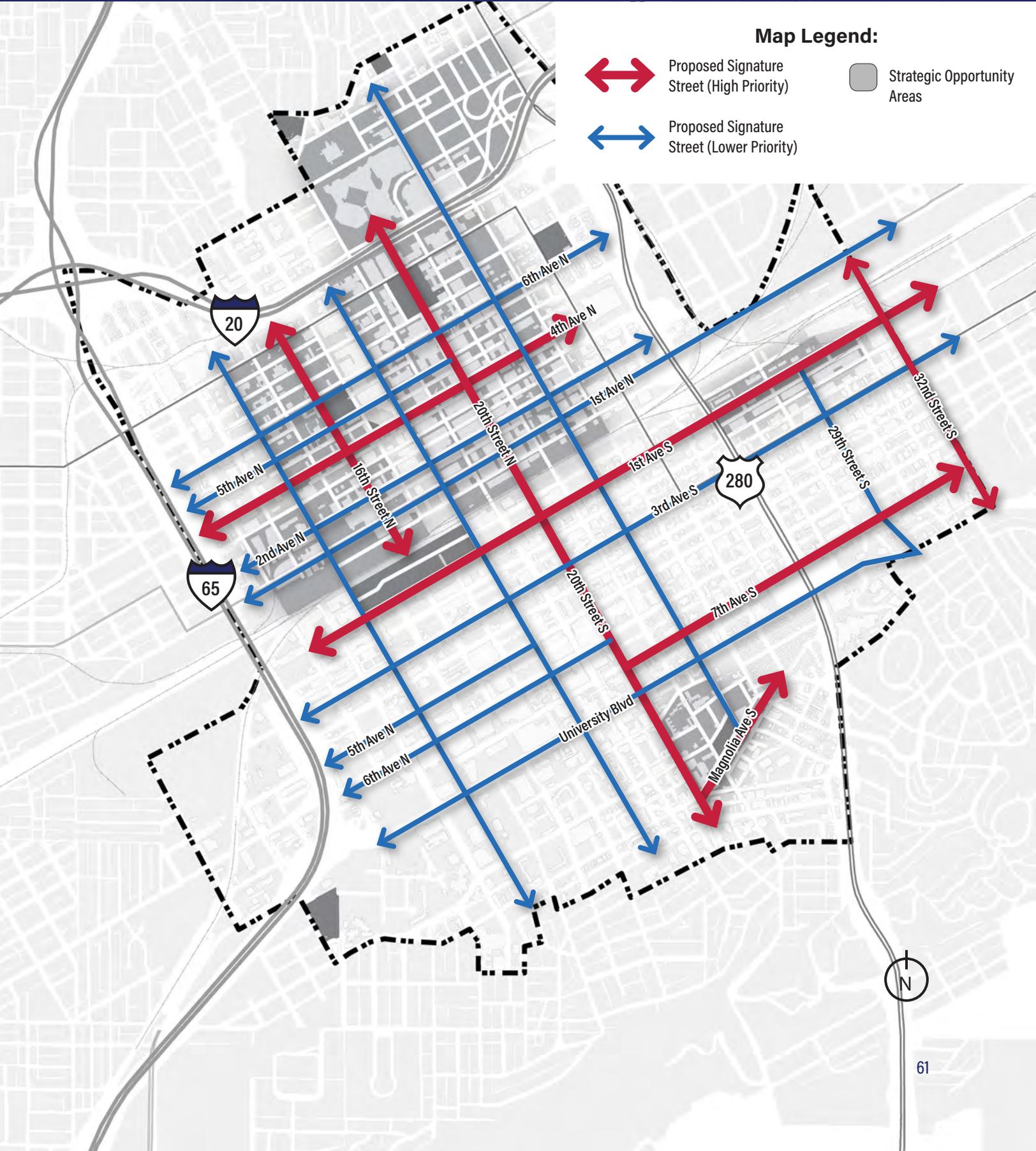
- » A wide sidewalk with space for business activities to spill out into the public realm (e.g., outdoor dining from a restaurant or clothing racks from a local boutique)
- » Street trees to provide shade, pops of color, and dappled light
- » On-street parking to allow easy access to businesses and create a sense of arrival at a destination
- » Multi-use lanes for other slower-moving mobility options (e.g., bikes, scooters), preferably with buffers from faster-moving mobility options
- » Two-way operations to encourage all day business activity. Studies show that businesses on one-way streets may see a lack of activity depending on time of day. If traffic is flowing into the City Center, morning rush business may be more successful (e.g., coffee shops, cafes) than night-time establishments (e.g., bars, restaurants), which may do better on a street with traffic flowing out of the City Center to capture the evening rush.



# Proposed Signature Streets

## Map Legend:

-  Proposed Signature Street (High Priority)
-  Proposed Signature Street (Lower Priority)
-  Strategic Opportunity Areas



## 20th Street North Existing Inventory

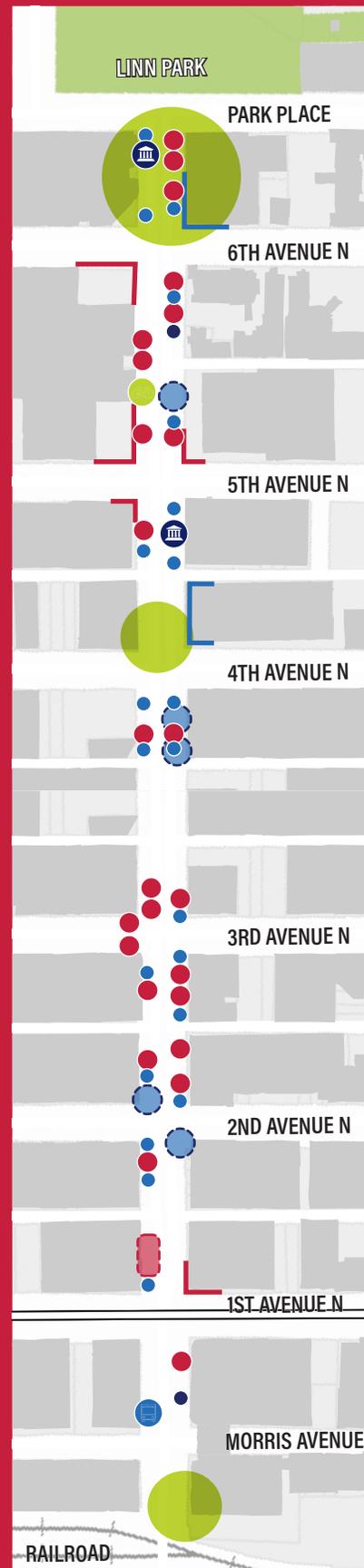
20th Street connects the northern half of the City Center to the southern half to create a spine of activity from which much of the vibrancy in the City Center emanates. In order to continue 20th Street as the economic and social activity hub of the City Center, proper investments should be made to improve the corridor for all users. On the the north end, the street is also known as the Birmingham Green for its lush vegetation. However, the landscaping is not well-maintained and is in need of renovations.

The inventory for 20th Street North includes:

-  Bench (concrete, metal, or wood)
-  Trash Can
-  Transformer
-  Kiosk/Historical Marker
-  Bike Share
-  Bus Shelter
-  Cafe Tables
-  Pavers
-  Key Corner
-  Good Tree Cover
-  Facade Enhancement Opportunity

### KEY OBSERVATIONS

- » While the overall look and feel of the streetscape design is consistent, the details are not: variety of bench types used, inconsistent layout patterns and spacing between elements (e.g., isolated areas of good tree cover, high concentration of benches in one block over another)
- » The overall design and furnishings palette is outdated
- » There are accessibility issues throughout the corridor



## 20th Street North Toolkit

While the current street design provides shade with beautiful trees, and a planted median, the design itself is showing age and could use updating. The dominating use of concrete could be exchanged for lighter, simpler materials and the evergreen shrubs could be substituted with softer, native plants with pops of color. The streetscape improvements should also extend past the railroad tracks along 20th Street South.

Opportunities along 20th Street North include:

- Public art
- Tree maintenance
- Furnishings
- Recycling
- Wayfinding

### KEY STRATEGIES

- » Use the existing inventory analysis on the previous page as a starting point for a more thorough analysis and documentation of the existing conditions
- » Use the toolkit on the following pages as a guide to update the overall streetscape design of 20th Street North and 20th Street South
- » Focus on creating vibrancy, branding, and identity for the City Center along the corridor; focus on consistency

*20th Street North existing facades and streetscape*



## Civil Rights - Innovation Connector (16th Street North) Toolkit

The Civil Rights and Innovation Districts are located in the northwest quadrant of the City Center and provide a similar opportunity as 20th Street to connect both districts with a north-to-south running spine along 16th Street North. Because the two districts merge the powerful history of Birmingham with the innovative optimism of the future, it is important to physically connect these two areas.

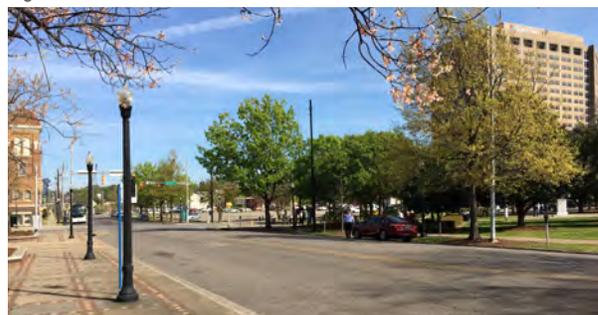
Opportunities along 16th Street North include:

- Seating
- Trees
- Shared street
- Lighting

### KEY STRATEGIES

- Improve connectivity from the Civil Rights District to Innovation District along 16th Street North, creating a north-south spine of activity and ease of access between the districts
- Use the toolkit on the following pages as a guide to create an overall design for the corridor and enhance the streetscape components
- Focus on creating vibrancy, branding, and identity for both districts along the corridor; focus on consistency

*16th Street North between Kelly Ingram Park and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute*



## Public Art

Art can be implemented throughout the City using existing infrastructure as a canvas. Blank walls become murals, manholes are differentiated as district branding, and crosswalks become opportunities for neighborhood expression. The possibilities are endless.



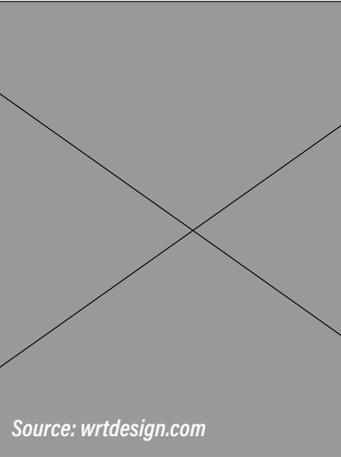
Source: mmacmonny.com



Source: porchlightvirtualtour.org



Source: ohio.org



Source: wrtdesign.com



Source: archifonic.com

## Tree Maintenance

Birmingham has great trees; however, in order to extend their useful life, they need to be maintained and kept healthy. Providing ample soil, pruning correctly, and not constricting trunk expansion are just a few ways that these amazing trees can continue to thrive.



Source: svrdesign.com



Source: visitphilly.com

## Furnishings

Furnishings are key for a great streetscape, but not just for their functionality. A good furniture palette provides an opportunity for branding of an area, pops of color, recycling and, pedestrian scaled lighting.



Source: sitescapesonline.com



Source: cityofkeywest-fl.gov



Source: skyscrapercity.com



Source: creativereview.com



Source: littleton.gov

## Wayfinding

Another element that does not always fit into the traditional components are wayfinding signs. These can have city-wide or district-specific branding. They are essential for any city with tourism, especially along 20th Street which should serve as the activity hub for visitors to use throughout their stay.

## Seating

Seating along a street includes benches, outdoor dining, moveable seating, walls, etc. The toolkit proposes using simple materials and lines to create a modern twist on traditional elements, such as wood and metal benches.



Source: [landscapeonline.com](http://landscapeonline.com)



Source: [rhaa.com](http://rhaa.com)



Source: [seattlerefined.com](http://seattlerefined.com)

## Trees

Any walkable street in the south should have large, deciduous trees along its sidewalks. They provide physical enhancements with shade in the summer, as well as atmospheric enhancements with color in the spring or fall, dappled light, and the sounds of nature as wind blows through the leaves.



Source: [popsci.com](http://popsci.com)



Source: [downtownyorkpa.com](http://downtownyorkpa.com)



Source: [rockcafe.info](http://rockcafe.info)

## Lighting

Pedestrian-scaled lighting creates a safer walking environment. Modern styles can help distinguish these districts from the standard lighting used in other areas. Uplighting on buildings, specifically historic buildings with details and high contrast textures, amplifies the distinct fabric of these districts.



Source: [urbanland.uli.org](http://urbanland.uli.org)



Source: [gml.ca](http://gml.ca)



Source: [foxcroftwine.com](http://foxcroftwine.com)

## Shared Street

Shared streets are curbsless areas that can be closed down to vehicular traffic with bollards or other separation devices. They typically work best where pedestrian volumes are the high and fluidity of activity passing across the street is important.



Source: [landzine.com](http://landzine.com)



Source: [rdgusa.com](http://rdgusa.com)



Source: [land8.com](http://land8.com)

## Placemaking

The plan thus far has addressed largely physical changes and improvements for the City Center. Vibrant, walkable places have their foundation in high quality environments but are influenced by programs and initiatives that address placemaking and operations – programmatic elements of the human experience. These are the layers of experience that go beyond brick materials, lighting conditions, and density and help people form opinions about whether the pedestrian experience is positive or negative. High quality pedestrian environments are comprised of two key components – the journey and the destination. Of these two, the journey is the element that is continually tested and evaluated with every step. Pedestrians receive external stimuli that they must process quickly to determine if an experience is safe or not.

Pedestrians tend to absorb more detail than if they were driving at 60 miles per hour. They look at brick patterns, lighting, and the faces of the people in our range of sight. They do this because their brain stem is constantly trying to determine whether every situation is a fight or flight scenario. In others, their feeling of safety determines what routes they take as a pedestrian and whether the destination is worth the journey.

In urban environments, busy sidewalks with a continuous wall of shops and restaurants are considered safe by most people than empty sidewalks with vacant storefronts. Pedestrians have this sense of security in crowds because they believe that in case of an emergency, there will be others to assist. They react negatively about vacant storefronts because of a similarly visceral reaction: Vacant = unoccupied = possible questionable environment ahead.

Not every decision pedestrians make is about safety. Many daily decisions are made to ensure a constant feed of entertainment. If people are entertained, they feel better about themselves and are more likely to continue what they are doing. In the urban environment, as it turns out, people must be entertained about every fifty feet in order to continue having positive experiences and thus be incentivized to continue their journey. It's the urban experiential equivalent of needing to check Instagram every 15 minutes.

These foundational elements about how human brains process information are critical to providing an environment that emanates a feeling of safety and entertainment. For positive urban experiences, this means that clean, well lit, busy sidewalks that are teeming with vitality along its edges are always judged to be more valuable, memorable, and easier to navigate.

Not every street in the City Center can be a "Main Street" teeming with retail, but there are several programmatic elements that can be layered in to make any distance feel safer, shorter, and more enjoyable. As defined by the Project for Public Spaces in their book, *How to Turn a Place Around* (1999), "the goal is to create a place that has both a strong sense of community and a comfortable image, as well as a setting and activities and uses that collectively add up to something more than the sum of its often simple parts."





## Establish a public art program in the City Center

Downtowns are places where an entire community can come together. Public art, in its many forms, is a prime expression of the confluence of a community's people, history, culture, and thoughts. The City Center has several important installations including an array of wall murals and interpretive trailblazing signage that help to communicate Birmingham's living legacy. The various sculptures in Kelly Ingram Park are equally inspirational for their artistic quality and their narrative and the underpass lighting is both utilitarian and beautiful.

The next step for public art in the City Center is a more fine-grained layering of artistic interventions - including temporary ones. This program can begin with small grants that encourage a variety of installations and ideas - some temporary and others more permanent. Ideally, a non-profit public art commission is established to help curate the work and raise money for a continuous grant program. Ties to the Art Museum and UAB are critical. Most of all, it's important that the City Center be open to experimentation and having fun!

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*"Public art is many things, but at its core, it is an intervention into space. It reclaims and recovers our public spaces from the grasp of homogeneous and mundane development. It battles against the often-demanding voices of consumerism, beckoning us to dream instead of just buy. It brightens our blight and champions our communities. Public art can showcase collective neighborhood identity and boost the growth of local economies. Public art is more than paint on a wall."*  
(Source: [blankspacebham.com](http://blankspacebham.com))

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## Encourage sidewalk displays

As a pedestrian, the attraction of a new element along a journey is a powerful motivator to continue walking. The display of merchandise on the sidewalk provides this important attraction as well as a layer of texture to the public realm that helps to soften its often hard edges. Many cities banned outdoor displays decades ago in the hopes of provide a more “clean and pristine” environment to help compete with their suburban counterparts. Unfortunately, what was lost in the translation was that while suburbia catered to auto-oriented convenience, the City Center reaches people when they are moving slowly on foot. This urban texture provides a visual transition from the public realm of the sidewalk into the private realm of store and are prime opportunities for a retailer to entice shoppers inside and helping to drive more sales.

The only real criteria for managing outdoor displays is that the pathway for a pedestrian must still be maintained, though its trajectory may meander. Displays should certainly rotate and be temporary. For most retailers, they will bring their goods inside when they are closed. After that, the storefronts should take over as well lit, high quality displays that encourage window shopping in the evening.

## Enliven sidewalks and public spaces with games, activities, and music

The role of the public realm in urban areas is to provide a transition from the expected hostility of the street to the presumed tranquility of the building. It is more than a landscaped transition – it is a place where people can interact both casually and formally with each other. Music and games are shared experiences where many people from different backgrounds can engage in these interactions.

Railroad Park currently provides some of these casual amenities near their pavilion. Linn Park, sidewalks along 20th Street (North and South), the BCRI playground, and Five Points South are ideal locations to further experiment with the introduction of mid-day and weekend whimsy and entertainment including corn hole, oversized chess sets, and interactive, temporary public art. Other communities have added rocking chairs, see saws, and

interactive light displays. Ideally, there is a nearby “sponsor” who is willing to manage the game elements daily.

Casual outdoor music or “busking” continues to grow in popularity in downtowns as well. Busking provides ambient music in retail areas by local artists throughout the day and into the evening as well. It is important to identify locations for buskers that are complimentary including near bars and restaurants and to prioritize acoustic over amplified music to mitigate against noise complaints.

## Establish a parks conservancy for the City Center and surrounding neighborhood parks

There is currently a non-profit parks conservancy in place to fund operations, maintenance, and programming for Railroad Road (Friends of Railroad Park) as well as a smaller one for Linn Park. This, along with city funding, has helped to deliver a high quality park experience for the entire community. Unfortunately no such organization exists for the other parks in the City Center and with city funding at a premium, it is hard to find dollars to maintain Kelly Ingram Park, Marconi Park, Brother Bryan Park and others, let alone make major renovation investments.

Parks conservancies have been effective organizations to help leverage public and private dollars to construct, renovate, and operate urban parks. They have been particularly effective where adequate public funding did not exist or to serve as third party recipients of private donations.

Today, all of the parks in the Center City have some level of deferred maintenance ranging from basic landscaping repair to major structural renovations. However, park maintenance and needs are not limited to the City Center - hence the need for a citywide Parks and Recreation Master Plan. It is important to consider the establishment of one or more organizations that can also address neighborhood park needs, particularly those neighborhoods adjacent to the City Center. This district-level approach to parks is necessary to help spread the vitality of the City Center across a larger geography.





  
**DISTRICT**  
1st Ave N

2  
8 AM  
6 PM





# 5 | Mobility & Parking Strategies

## Contents

- Contents
- Mobility Strategies
- Multi-Modal Mobility Options
- Parking Strategies
- Connected and Automated Technology Solutions

## Mobility Strategies

### Street Network Constraints

Birmingham's City Center street network is a nearly complete rectilinear grid, with few interruptions apart from the Norfolk Southern railroad corridor and the freeways along the City Center's north, west, and east sides. Although past conversion of many of these streets to one-way traffic was designed to increase capacity for traffic flow in and out of the City Center, traffic levels on the streets are well below this network capacity today. As a result, there is ample opportunity to repurpose these streets, even with low-cost changes, to better accommodate other travel modes than vehicles.

#### Currently in City Center

- » Most one-way pairs have no 'hard break' when connecting back to the street network outside the City Center: they are designed simply for freeway access
- » Most City Center streets have at least three travel lanes in their one-way configurations with parallel parking on both sides, with a typical total right-of-way of 60 feet

#### Strategic Focus

- » Accommodate multi-modal uses within the existing roadway
- » Selective two-way conversions based on light-touch engineering needs
- » Streetscape and right-of-way repurposing on other streets remaining one-way

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- » 4th Avenue North: terminates on the east, no ramp complexity on the west
- » 5th and 6th Avenues North: east-end ramps still accessible with two-way or lane reductions
- » 1st and 2nd Avenues South: not critical to network capacity
- » 3rd and 4th Avenues South: west-end ramps built for one-way pair

14

Existing one-way streets

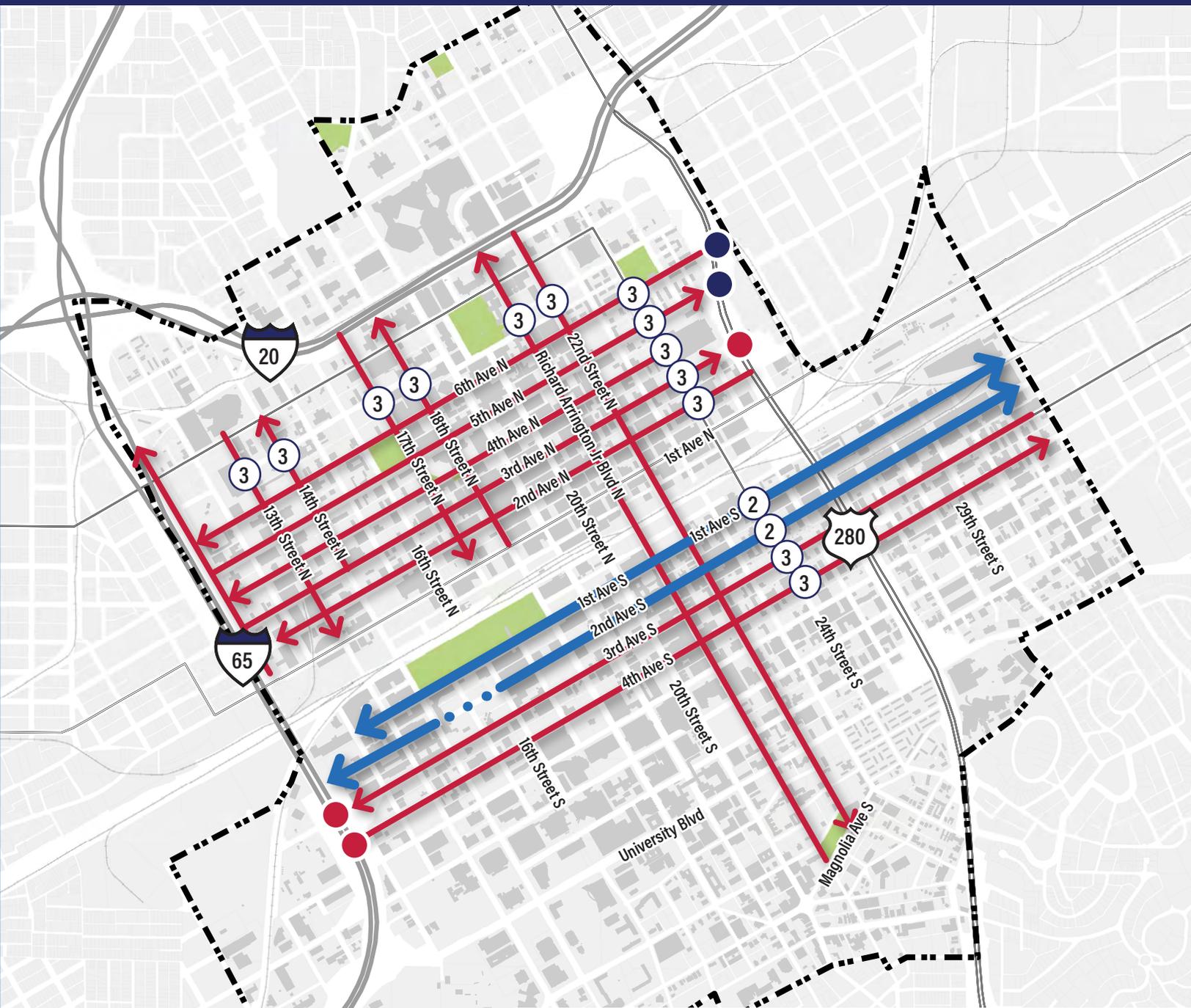
3

Freeway ramps with difficult ramp systems - not easy to convert to two-way

2

Freeway ramps with moderate systems that are easier to convert to two-way

# Street Network Constraints



## Map Legend

-  Significant existing 2-way street with number of lanes
-  Existing 1-way street with number of lanes and direction
-  Existing 3-lane street
-  Freeway ramps designed for one-way street pattern
-  Freeway ramps where surface street is striped to favor one-way patterns, but can be changed without reconstruction
-  Existing 2-lane street

## Street Network Opportunities

The street network has plentiful opportunity for repurposing space inside the curbs to serve multiple uses, create safer conditions for non-driving travel, and right-size the overall network's vehicle traffic capacity to contemporary traffic volumes. These repurposing opportunities include a combination of lane reductions, substitution with bicycle facilities, and enhancement of pedestrian space, two-way conversions, as well as streetscape enhancements in key pedestrian activity areas.

Because the City Center street network is so well connected and complete, most of these strategic projects are relatively low-cost efforts that work within existing right-of-way and make simple changes with marking and striping. None of these projects would involve substantial reconstruction, curb relocations, or utility relocations. Looking further into the future, select streets may advance to two-way conversions once funding and other resources become available. These are more involved efforts, as two-way conversion projects will involve retrofitting or replacing signals to control two directions of traffic.

For these reasons, the plan recommends a strategy of light-touch retrofits first to demonstrate that the City Center network can continue to function with some of its vehicle lanes repurposed for other modes—and indeed function more safely and harmoniously for all users of the transportation network. More advanced efforts such as two-way conversions should follow as these projects can be funded and programmed.

These projects are divided into three categories:

- » Street repurposing without directional changes, in which streets retain their same traffic flow pattern but reuse space within existing curbs to serve a different balance of transportation users and priorities
  - 2nd Avenue North
  - 3rd Avenue North
  - 14th Street

### Near-Term

# 6

## Street Repurposing Projects

# 5

## Priority Streetscape Projects (Signature Streets)

### Longer-Term

# 3

## Two-Way Conversion Projects

# Street Network Opportunities



## Map Legend

- | Shorter-Term Projects   | Longer-Term Projects  |
|---|---|
|  Street Repurposing Projects                       |  Two-way Conversion Projects (Long Term) |
|  Priority Streetscape Projects (Signature Streets) |   |

- » Streetscape projects with a focus on creating Signature Streets (more information provided in **Chapter 4: Public Realm and Streetscape Strategies**) with the highest priority being:
  - 20th Street
  - 16th Street North
  - 4th Avenue North
  - 1st Avenue South
  - Magnolia Avenue South
- » In the long term, two-way conversion of one-way streets
  - 4th Avenue North
  - Partial 5th and 6th Avenues North

## Street Repurposing

Even in the streets not proposed for two-way conversion, there are opportunities to reuse existing space between curbs to increase bicycle connections throughout the City Center and/or provide additional space for transit vehicles. To repurpose streets to support current BJCTA MAX transit service, these projects would apply only to a limited number of streets. However, the rise of new and emerging mobility services—such as Uber and Lyft, dockless mobility, microtransit, and potential future shared mobility services—could also take advantage of repurposed right-of-way and stronger management of curbside. Using space within existing right-of-way to manage and better serve these modes is an important part of an overall mobility strategy for the City Center.

## Toward a Long-Term Two-Way Conversion Strategy

While past plans for the City Center have called for a large-scale conversion of most streets to two-way operations, the scale and cost of implementing this comprehensively has been a significant barrier. The recommendations could be approached on a more incremental basis and pursue strategic two-way conversions on streets with key civic, cultural, or economic value, although repurposing the street network—both to achieve lower-cost opportunities that expand the street network’s multimodal capacity and to demonstrate that the network can be functional without the current vehicle capacity—is a key first step.

East-west streets without any freeway-related infrastructure were prioritized over those with ramps/connections. North of the railroad, the ramps connecting to I-65 are largely designed as a collector-distributor system with ramp traffic connecting to City Center streets through 10th and 11th Streets. On the east side of the City Center, the US 280 ramp terminating at 26th Street North and 6th Avenue North is currently designed to take advantage of 6th Avenue’s eastbound one-way traffic flow, although only one lane from the ramp sends traffic onto 6th Avenue and the street could be converted to two-way flow without changes to the ramp’s current configuration.

Any of these streets could be converted to two-way traffic while still preserving functionality of this ramp system, though subsequent traffic studies should be performed to determine



*Conceptual image of 4th Avenue North’s conversion back to two-way with a protected lane for scooters and cyclists*

traffic impact and recommendations for geometric changes to lanes and intersections. However, 3rd Avenue North at US 280, as well as 3rd and 4th Avenues South at I-65 are all designed with ramp connections that merge into or from the left sides of streets, keeping these streets in their current one-way configuration unless major ramp reconstruction occurs.

The conversions of these streets should also be coordinated with broader city-wide investments that will allow two-way City Center streets and traffic control to work efficiently. These include, but are not limited to:

- » A comprehensive City Center traffic study that gauges effects of new freeway access, especially from the I-20/59 reconstruction, on the City Center's street system; this study should also perform comprehensive warrants to determine any intersections where current signals could be removed
- » Organization of the City Center's signals into a coordinated system

## Future Major Investment Projects

### 4th Avenue North Two-Way Conversion

As the Civil Rights District's historic 'main' street, 4th Avenue North is a key corridor both for placemaking potential and economic development. It is also the east-west street north of the railroad with the least direct linkages to the freeway system. A full two-way conversion of 4th Avenue North from 24th Street North is recommended, where it terminates at the US Postal Service facility, to 9th Street North, where the one-way street resumes two-way operations.

**PROJECT FIRST STEPS:** Perform a detailed traffic study for feasibility of two-way conversion, striping and marking of intersection approaches, and warrants for traffic control. If signals are no longer warranted given current volumes, they should be removed and placed with stop control (either for one street or for all approaches, based on traffic study recommendations) to reduce the project cost based on signal replacement.

**KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS:** The project should include the following in its overall concept:

- » Access management west of 15th Street North to ensure that existing driveways, especially at the automobile dealership parcels, are not adversely affected by the two-way conversion
- » Infill of existing on-street parking spaces with planter islands similar to those already installed to allow streetscape to be added to constrained right-of-way
- » On select blocks where retail demand exists or increases as a result of redevelopment, a conversion of parallel parking spaces to angled spaces to increase parking supply

### 5th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North Partial Two-Way Conversion

5th and 6th Avenues North are also key connections in the Civil Rights District, especially for the district's well known visitor attractions. This plan recommends the conversion of both of these avenues from 9th to 19th Streets North. This would allow exiting freeway traffic from I-65 to enter the City Center at an additional location, using 6th Avenue North to access north destinations (such as the Social Security Administration) building from more direct routes—reducing the amount of commuter traffic simply passing through the City Center.

**PROJECT FIRST STEPS:** Perform a detailed traffic study for feasibility of two-way conversions, striping and marking of intersection approaches, and warrants for traffic control. If signals are no longer warranted given current volumes, they should be removed and placed with stop control (either for one street or for all approaches, based on traffic study recommendations) to reduce the project cost based on signal replacement.

**KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS:** The project should include the following in its overall concept:

- » Curb extensions and other spot-specific streetscape enhancements at or near key district destinations, such as the 16th Street Baptist Church, Civil Rights Institute, and Civil Rights Monument
- » Strategic use of the middle lane to be repurposed for left-turn storage lanes, but not only at intersections: the two-way conversion of these streets, especially 5th Avenue North, will require mid-block left turn storage for vehicles accessing the City Center parking garages

### Strategic Short-Term Parking Repurposing

As redevelopment in the Innovation District occurs, new buildings may replace existing surface parking supply and new uses, whether in new or existing buildings, will add to parking demand. The high cost of constructing structured parking for the area suggests that other approaches will be needed to meet short-term parking needs while allowing small-scale infill projects to revitalize the district.

This is intended to be a short-term approach that accommodates the friction of individual sites not able to meet off-street parking needs, whether from ordinance-based requirements or market-based demands. It provides

a stopgap approach until more comprehensive parking solutions (such as shared, leased facilities) can be provided for the district.

This concept would include:

- » Restriping of limited locations, such as those described for 2nd Avenue North, to fit more parking into the existing curb-to-curb dimensions
- » Additional signage and other necessary information to identify this parking

It would not include:

- » Leases of these on-street spaces for specific private uses: rather, parking users would use street spaces on a first-come, first-served basis
- » Reconstruction of curbs or other elements of the streetscape to make these angled spaces a permanent part of the streetscape, as long-term City policy objectives call for the ultimate reconfiguration of all on-street parking to parallel

2nd Avenue North is currently a one-way (westbound) street with no clear partner street in the City Center system. It has no direct access to I-65 ramps on the west, and on the east it resumes two-way traffic flow east of 26th Street North where the US 280 ramps intersect with it. Although it is a strong candidate for two-way conversion, this plan recommends



Existing condition of 14th Street North (Image Source: Google Streetview, 2019)

repurposing existing curb-to-curb space to maximize on-street parking in the Innovation District, specifically between 11th and 17th Streets North.

Currently, both 2nd and 3rd Avenues North are the alignment of several BJCTA MAX bus routes, and consideration should be given in project designs not to impede the ability of buses to operate. This will require leaving adequate width in at least one travel lane and ensuring that buses can reach curbside stop locations in a manner that meets accessibility requirements.

**PROJECT FIRST STEPS:** Create parking management tools to allow on-street spaces to be used to support Innovation District development with longer-term stays (refer to section on Parking Management Strategies).

**KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS:** The project should include the following in its overall concept:

- » Maximize on-street parking yield between 11th and 17th Streets North
- » Add a protected bicycle facility between 14th and 22nd Streets North, which allows east-west bicycle movement through the Innovation District between two of the existing railroad crossings

### 3rd Avenue North Street Repurposing

This street repurposing substitutes an existing travel lane with a protected bicycle facility to provide a partner bicycle facility to 2nd Avenue North. Both of these projects envision a single-direction bicycle lane on 2nd and 3rd Avenues North, and recommend fully buffered, protected facilities over two-way cycle tracks that would exhaust most of the width of one of the travel lanes. As noted in the description of the 2nd Avenue North Parking Repurposing, 3rd Avenue North is the inbound alignment for many MAX routes that travel along 2nd Avenue North for the outbound portions of their trip, and similar consideration must be given to transit vehicle and passenger access needs.

### 14th Street Repurposing Project

Most of 14th Street features a four-lane, undivided cross-section with shared-lane (sharrow) bicycle markings between 2nd Street North and 5th Avenue South. The same typical cross-section is continued south of 5th Avenue North, but at a wider dimension that allows on-street parking as well. This project repurposes it to feature three lanes (two travel lanes and a two-way left turn lane) between 2nd Avenue North and 5th Avenue South, with transitions in the typical section to allow a single travel lane and buffered bicycle lane in each half of the railroad underpass.

**PROJECT FIRST STEPS:** Perform event-based traffic studies to collect information on Regions Field event traffic; develop special event plans as needed to serve major stadium events on a two-lane typical section.

**KEY PROJECT COMPONENTS:** The project should include the following in its overall concept:

- » Dedicated bicycle lanes, with surface marked/striped buffers where space allows
- » Appropriate transition from three-lane typical section to two-lane section to pass under railroad bridge



6th Street Cycle Track, Charlotte; Source: ui.uncc.edu

## Multi-Modal Mobility Options

New mobility technologies are rapidly providing more choices and downtowns are taking advantage of these tools to support retail and attract employers and residents. This is an important development for American cities, which have faced challenges of meeting urban mobility needs without investment in highly costly services like public transit. In Birmingham in particular, access across the community to a variety of mobility options supports socio-economic diversity and equity, with the City Center and larger urban core (including UAB and the Avondale neighborhood) having a high concentration of employment.

Birmingham's principal multi-modal mobility initiatives include: the 2019 Active Transportation Plan for the Greater Birmingham Region (i.e., the B-Active Plan) that promotes active transportation throughout the region and the Birmingham Xpress Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, which will connect the City Center to destinations east and west via frequent express bus service. The City is also currently developing partnerships with new mobility service providers, such as microtransit providers or on-demand shuttle services to connect the City Center to surrounding neighborhoods. The planning projects outlined in this chapter (e.g., bike lanes along 2nd and 3rd Avenues North and 14th Street) should also be considered for implementation. The City Center's multi-modal mobility options should be enhanced further through emerging mobility products, such as dockless lightweight individual transportation (LIT) scooters and bicycles, as well as emerging technology including autonomous shuttles, buses, and cars. Because of the rapid change these technologies have brought to cities, they will require policy and legislative frameworks to be in place to allow appropriate regulation and operation for purposes of public safety. The City of Birmingham is already working toward this, drafting ordinances to allow scooters to operate in public right-of-way.

### Bicycle Network

The B-Active Plan lays out multiple bike lane options throughout the City Center and across the region, connecting Uptown to the UAB Campus from north to south and Pepper Place/Lakeview to the Civil Rights/Innovation Districts from east to west. These should be implemented where applicable, but with prioritization placed on the pieces of the network that overlap with the recommendations outlined in the previous Street Network Opportunities of this chapter. These overlapping routes include:

- » 2nd Avenue North
- » 3rd Avenue North
- » 14th Street North and South

There are additional routes also identified in the previous section of this document that are not shared with the B-Active Plan, but should equally be considered for implementation.

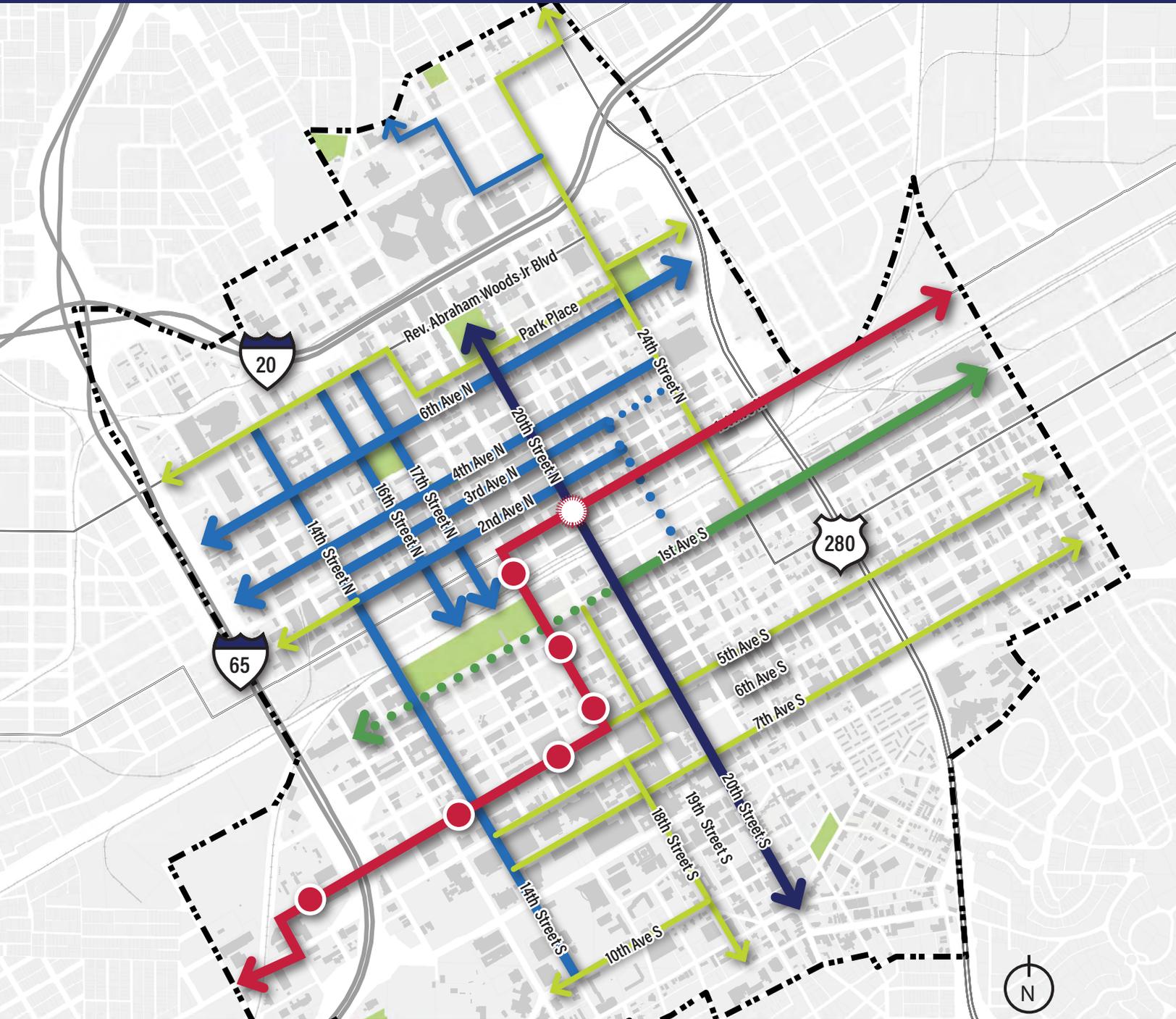
### Bus Rapid Transportation (BRT)

The Birmingham Xpress Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, currently in detailed planning and design, is planned to serve the City Center via the 1st Avenue North and 5th Avenue South corridors, connecting between these two on 18th Street and connecting to the Intermodal Station. The City Center stops include:

- » 1st Avenue North/18th Street North
- » 2nd Avenue South/18th Street South
- » 4th Avenue South/18th Street South
- » 16th Street South/5th Avenue South
- » 13th Street South/15th Street South
- » This plan recommends a proposed future stop, which is not currently shown in the BRT plan, at 20th Street North, to be added once 20th Street's recommended streetscape enhancement project is implemented

The implementation of the BRT project will impact streetscapes and any improvements for the route should also consider better access for pedestrians and cyclists at bus stops.

# Multi-Modal Mobility Options



## Map Legend

-  Future BRT Route with Stops  
(20th St Stop Proposed)
-  Proposed Bike Improvements
-  Additional Bike Improvements Recommendations
-  Proposed Smart Mobility/  
Multi-modal Route
-  Proposed B-Active Plan  
Bike Improvements
-  Existing Rotary Trail
-  Rotary Trail Extension  
Recommendation

## Parking Strategies

### Strategies for Consolidated Parking Management

Today, the City Center's parking is under ownership and management of several different entities. The City of Birmingham operates on-street parking within the city right-of-way and is responsible for enforcement and payment collection for regulated and metered spaces. The Birmingham Parking Authority (BPA) operates over 8,000 spaces in a series of parking garages and lots, and sets price and terms of access into the garages independently of the City. In addition, as with many cities, other off-street lots and garages are privately-owned and operated by numerous owners.

The City also has a limited amount of regulation on parking, still focused largely on business hours. Meters are in effect from 8 AM to 6 PM, resulting in most evening parking demand being met in on-street spaces (which are widely viewed by most parking customers as the most desirable and valuable). In addition, the City's parking meter system is outdated, with coin-only, single-space meters throughout the City Center and no pay stations or other technology-driven parking management and payment approaches.

BPA garages, as a result, tend to witness a largely uneven pattern of use, with occupancy highest during the business day but then decreasing significantly in evening and nighttime hours. This points to added potential for these garages to support new development, especially residential development with a demand for overnight parking through special lease arrangements directly with the development's tenants or occupants. And, as mentioned previously, locations such as the Innovation District that currently lack a large parking facility to help meet future demand will require innovative approaches to provide extra parking without the cost and complexity of constructing garages.

These conditions point to a need to harmonize the management approaches between the City and BPA to ensure that a combined, holistic strategy to parking management is used. This will allow available parking to best be positioned to serve the needs of surrounding development and economic activity.

This strategy involves three primary steps:

1. Establish a series of regulation and price zones relative to major redevelopment focus areas, treating parking in these locations as a high-demand asset. This will use regular monitoring and adjustment to ensure that regulation levels help preserve availability (discussed in more detail in subsequent paragraphs)
2. Establish a cooperation agreement between the City and BPA to set price levels with regard to preserving availability in high-demand locations and encouraging use of less desirable facilities, especially for longer-duration stays
3. Reset prices and regulations to maximize supply that is available to the general public, and to keep this supply utilized at a target rate of 85 percent

The last step is to consider an ongoing effort to monitor parking use and constantly adjust regulations to maintain levels of use and availability. This will require ongoing collection of utilization data to understand how on-street and off-street parking are performing at given times of the day. As part of the cooperation agreement, the City and BPA should determine who will have this data collection responsibility, understanding that a cost incurred in data collection should be reimbursed by both agencies.



**Map Legend**

-  Add parking supply through street repurposing
-  Coordinated pricing zones (on-street/off-street balance)
-  Public Space
-  Public Parking Facility

## Parking Policy Strategies by Redevelopment Area

### Innovation District

In the Innovation District, BPA does not have any parking inventory and much of the current land use and economic activity uses off-street parking on private properties. As redevelopment occurs and parking supply is reduced (all while new development adds demand to the remaining parking), this area will need new parking supply without relying on BPA investment in the area.

#### KEY STRATEGIES:

- » Repurpose existing street dimensions on 2nd Avenue North and potentially 3rd Avenue North to increase on-street parking supply
- » Lower or remove prices for street spaces that are currently underutilized

- » Revise parking requirements from zoning and other development ordinances to allow certain districts, such as Innovation District, to meet their off-street parking requirements through on-street spaces (even though these will not be dedicated to a particular use)

### Civil Rights District

This area can benefit from a limited amount of BPA parking (at Deck 7), but conversion of existing street right-of-way to additional parking supply (through angled or reverse angled parking) is also important to support visitor-based attractions and other commercial uses expected to support them (such as restaurants and retail uses).

#### KEY STRATEGIES:

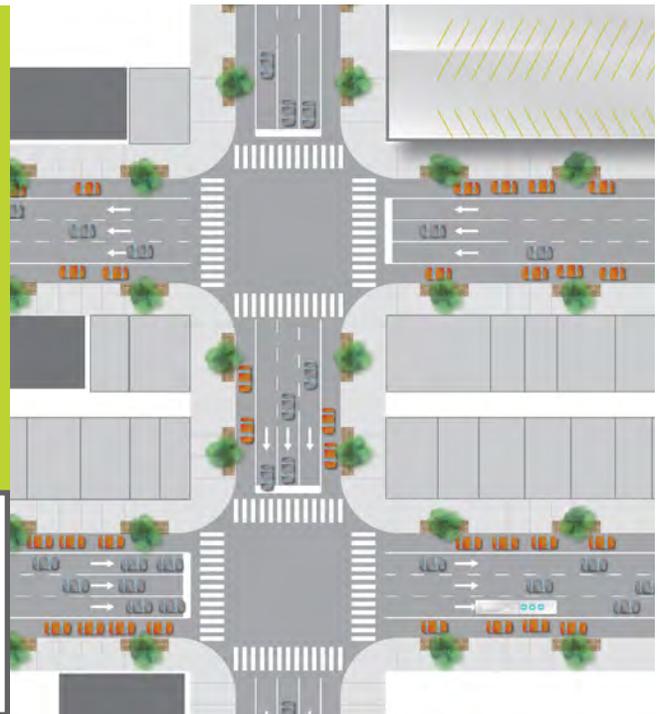
- » Review leases on parking in the BPA garage and move toward a greater amount of transient parking.
- » Increase street parking inventory on select streets, especially 5th and 6th Avenues North west of Kelly Ingram Park

### Snapshot of Parking Management Today

- » On-street and off-street systems largely separate, with no unified pricing, access, or regulations
- » City manages street parking; BPA manages specific garages in the City Center
- » Costs of adding new parking—for BPA or developers—a major challenge in promoting other revitalization strategies

#### Legend:

-  Existing buildings
-  Existing lots



- » Set prices and regulations in high-demand areas (such as 4th Avenue North) to encourage use of street parking for short stays and the use garage or off-street parking for stays of more than two hours

### City Center Core

With the most BPA parking in the immediate vicinity of the City Center, specifically around the Civic Center Hub, this district can take advantage of low levels of overnight parking use by changing the balance of its lease arrangements for office tenants and other current users to daytime-only occupancy. This increased flexibility would allow evening and overnight parking to serve at least some of the new residential uses as well as supporting additional hotels/hospitality/entertainment uses. In concert with this, street parking regulations and enforcement should continue past their current hours to ensure that street parking does not become de-facto free overnight parking.

### KEY STRATEGIES:

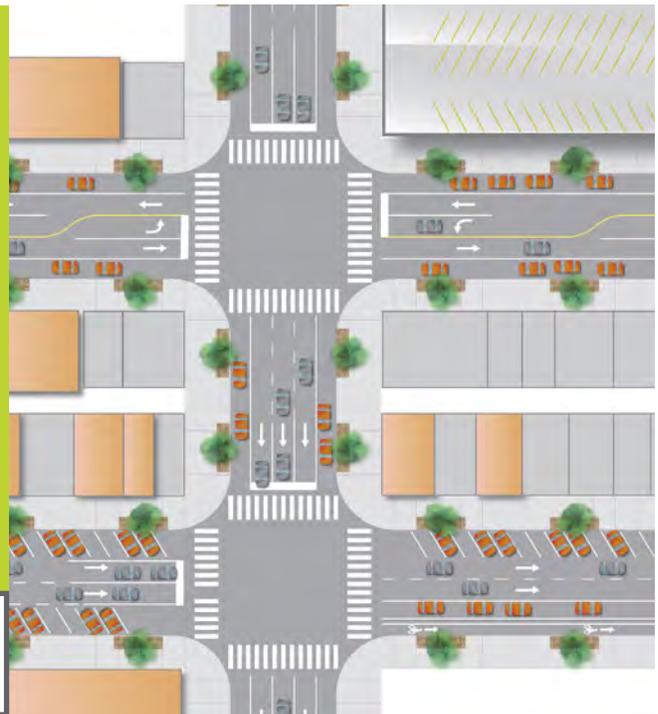
- » BPA to create a multi-tiered leasing program focused on daytime-only leases at lower prices. Overnight-only leases can also be offered and marketed to private development through city development review process
- » Extend on-street regulation and enforcement to 8 PM at a minimum, allowing longer-stays to use garage parking
- » Set prices to encourage garage parking for longer-term stays

### Snapshot of Proposed Parking Management for the Future

- » Coordinate with BPA for a combined pricing strategy
- » Repurpose streets in key focus areas to feature different parking configurations—including to supplement off-street parking
- » Set pricing for street parking to encourage availability in on retail streets
- » Open more BPA supply to transient parking use
- » Develop revenue-sharing model with BPA to help provide funding for multimodal investments

#### Legend:

 Redevelopment Opportunities



## Connected and Automated Technology Solutions

The new mobility technologies and solutions that have emerged in the market over the last ten years have come in five principal categories: Accessible, Autonomous, Connected, Electric, and Shared (AACES). While some solutions fall in all categories, each has potential benefits to consider when evaluating its overall mobility system.

### Accessible

A mobility system's 'accessibility' refers to its effectiveness in serving people of different abilities including disabled persons, senior citizens, children, or even parents with strollers. This term is often used in conjunction with 'ADA-compliant' (Americans with Disabilities Act) and is interpreted as meaning 'wheelchair accessible' but it is much broader and inclusive in practice. Accessibility features can be built into all manner of vehicle systems and services from mobile applications to onboard human-machine interfaces to wheelchair ramps and securement devices. An accessible system will likely take queues from Universal Design principles. These principles seek to promote equity, flexibility, simplicity, and ease of use. An accessible design should improve the experience for all users.

### Automated

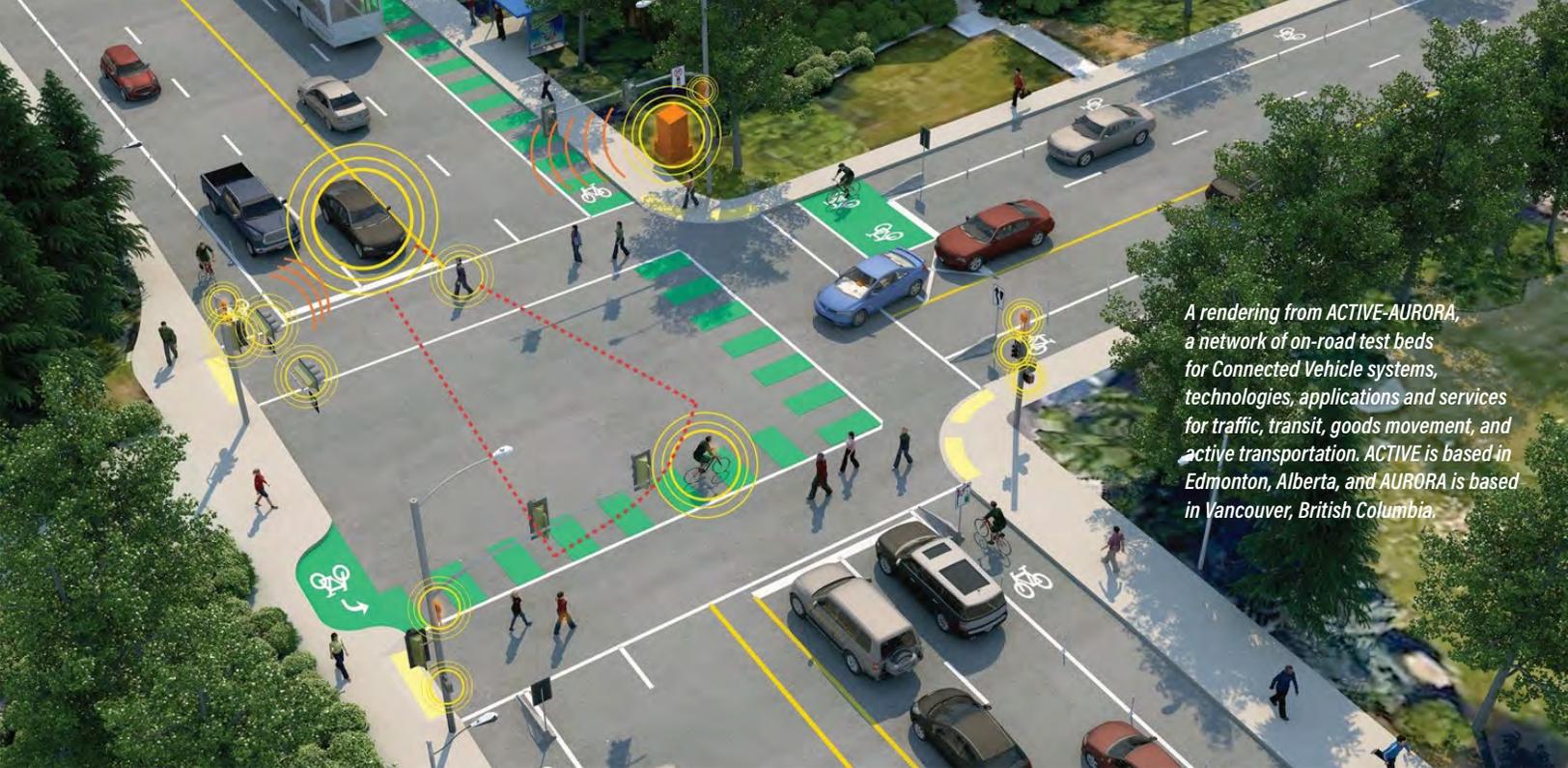
Perhaps the most popular in terms of mainstream attention, autonomous vehicles are those that operate independently and do not need a driver. Such vehicles depend on a sophisticated set of sensors and computing to construct a digital map of the world around them in real time and move accordingly. Trials and pilots of autonomous vehicles, particularly cars, have been occurring around the world for a number of years with millions of miles of successfully logged trips. Manufacturers include not just the legacy automobile manufacturers (e.g., General Motors, Ford, Volkswagen) but also include other technology-based firms including Google/Waymo, Uber, Lyft, and Apple who are developing fleets of cars, trucks, and even delivery vehicles to operate without a driver. Investment in autonomous technology has now become mainstream with billions of dollars in new investments being announced on a regular basis.

### Connected

The ability for a vehicle to speak to other vehicles (Vehicle to Vehicle - V2V), the surrounding infrastructure (Vehicle to Infrastructure - V2I), and to every other potential device (Vehicle to Everything - V2X) is made possible through a series of external devices and communications protocols. Connections provide additional information to the vehicle such as the location of potential accidents ahead, ride hailing by a passenger, location/availability of parking spaces, and location/availability of charging stations. At its most basic level, today's mapping applications on our phones are examples of how information is communicated through a connected system that pools information from other drivers to improve the experience for everyone. The infrastructure that permits this type of communication travels across the current 4G mobile networks, across local Wi-Fi, as well as with Digital Short-Range Communications (DSRC) devices mounted in the car and along the roadside. At present only, DSRC can provide fast enough communications for a car to react in real time – such as when the vehicle in front of you suddenly stops short. In the future, 5G mobile networks are expected to deliver similar if not faster communication speeds.

### Electric

The electric car has long been a technology that transportation planners have embraced as a mean to reduce the negative impacts of air and noise pollution emanated by the internal combustion engine. To date, the limited range (under 120 miles per full charge) and high cost have limited their general acceptance. That has changed in the past two years as dramatic advances in battery storage have more than doubled the range potential (240-300 miles per charge). Further, production technologies are reducing costs such that industry experts recently estimated that the cost of delivering an automobile with an electric engine will be cheaper than a similar model with an internal combustion engine within five years (2023). The limiting factor in widespread adoption of electric vehicles will be the charging network. Tesla and some regional power companies, are leading the way with the construction of a network of



*A rendering from ACTIVE-AURORA, a network of on-road test beds for Connected Vehicle systems, technologies, applications and services for traffic, transit, goods movement, and active transportation. ACTIVE is based in Edmonton, Alberta, and AURORA is based in Vancouver, British Columbia.*

super-charging stations across North America, but a more fine-grained network of local charging stations will need to be constructed.

## Shared

Shared mobility has historically taken the form of public transit – buses and trains – where many people share a vehicle to travel in similar directions. The great recession gave rise to a sharing economy that leveraged the power of social networking and mapping to rent out a variety of assets including extra bedrooms (AirBNB), office space (WeWork), and available car seats (Uber/Lyft). For vehicle trips, drivers share trips with a passenger through the use of a user-friendly app that rates both driver and passenger and simplifies the payment system.

This network has now extended to the shared use of other mobility services including bicycles (both docked and dockless) and electric scooters. Additionally, manufacturers and service providers have been developing new vehicle technologies like driverless shuttles to provide short distance connectivity – typically less than 2 miles in length – in business districts, office and college campuses, and in high tourist areas.



*Limebike's dockless bikes and electric scooters  
(Image Source: businessinsider.com)*

### Automated Shuttles

At this point in time, autonomous technology is making rapid advancements and is being tested around the world in diverse conditions including public streets, private office parks, and university campuses. The automated shuttle is one product being tested in dense, compact areas comparable to Birmingham's City Center. These connected, automated, and electric shuttles carry between 8-16 people and typically operate at a top speed of 25 mph. They are ideally suited for first/last mile solutions on quiet, lower speed streets and can operate in mixed-traffic. However, they can increase their travel efficiency if operated within a dedicated right of way, much like a light-rail or bus rapid transit vehicle, only at a fraction of the upfront capital costs. Given their low speeds and somewhat limited carrying capacity, they are not particularly suited for long distance trips nor higher speed roads or highways.

Most vehicles on the market today have a tight turning radius of about 13-15 feet with some able to operate in both directions, eliminating the need to turn around. They can work seamlessly with a mobile phone-based app, can be called on-demand, and monitored in real-time. Most are wheelchair accessible and are working to offer more accessibility features and comply with ADA regulations.

The aesthetic of the shuttles varies depending on the manufacturer, but the dimensions are generally 16' x 7' x 9'. However, some technology companies are modifying 6-passenger golf carts, offering a smaller platform for environments in which one is required. Yet another option is a "tram" type vehicle that connects and disconnects trailers to a drive-car for flexibility in carrying capacities.

A vehicle can typically operate between 3-10 hours on a single charge—depending on operational environment and deployment strategy—and recharge via induction or by physically plugging them in. Given the rapid advances in battery technology, this range is being extended with each new version.

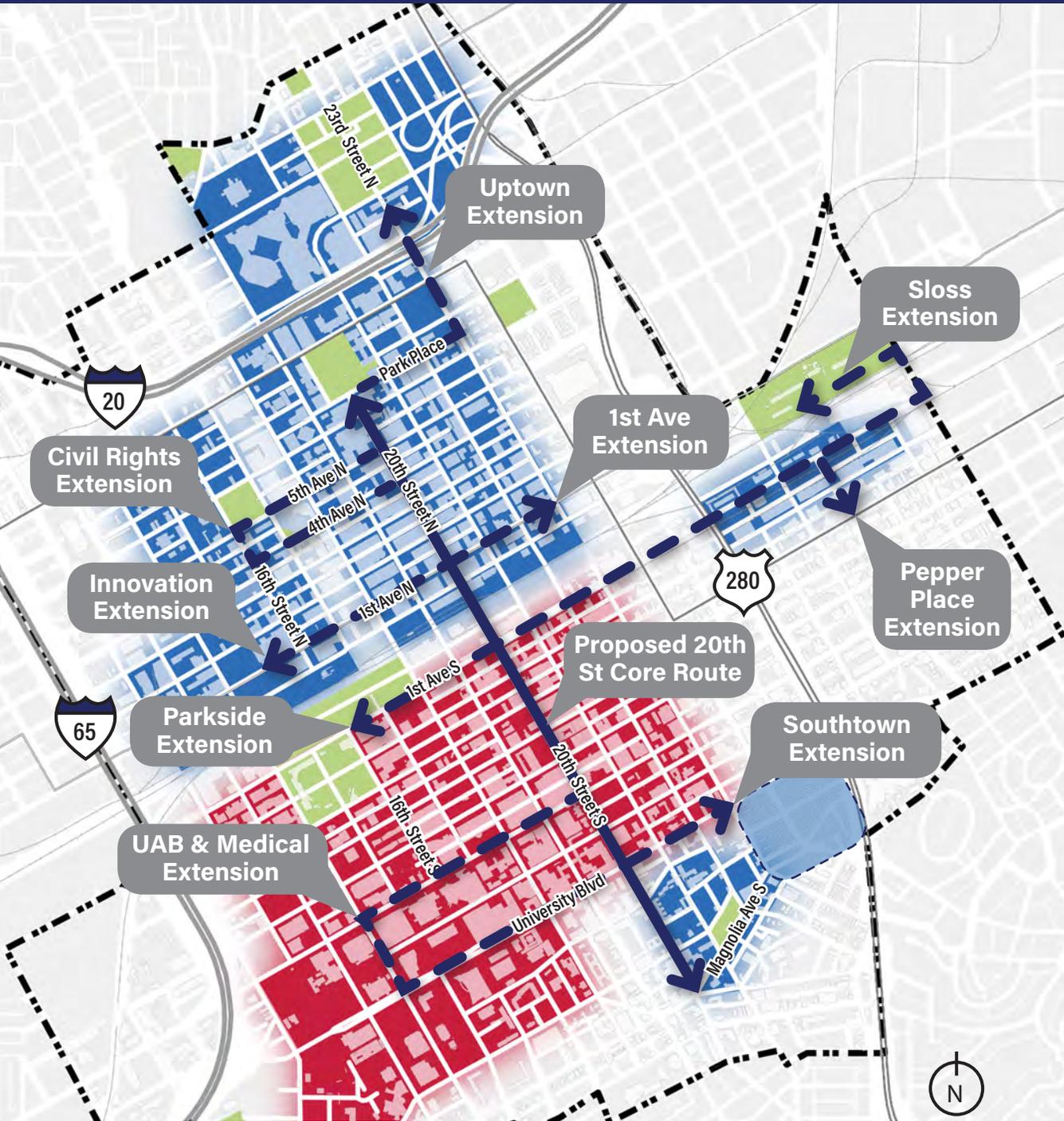
Supportive infrastructure is generally lighter than with most transit vehicles, they typically require a secure storage site, signalization or other intersection treatments, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) infrastructure, and priority signal and lane treatment depending on the alignment. In addition, if placemaking and permanency are important, installations would include fixed-point stations with interactive signage and fully dedicated lane(s).

Safety is paramount. Most of the vehicles have 3-4 redundant braking mechanisms in case one fails – including braking if the engine fails or loses power. Emergency stop buttons inside the vehicle and a direct telecom connection to a central command hub are usually featured inside for passengers. Additionally, manufacturers recommend the employment of an on-board steward during early deployments to act as a customer liaison to riders and an added layer of redundancy/safety.



Automated EasyMile shuttle in Denver, CO

# Automated Shuttle Route Alternatives



## Map Legend:

- |   |   |   |                                   |   |                        |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | Proposed Smart Mobility Core Route        |  | Established Districts or Campuses |  | Key Future Development |
|  | Optional Extensions to the Proposed Route |  | Strategic Opportunity Areas       |  | Public/Open Spaces     |



**BHM**
  
 Intermodal Station ↑
   
 Railroad Park
   
 Regions Field
   
 Innovation District →
   
 Theatre District
   
 McWane Center
   
 ← 
  
 Birmingham Green
   
 20th Street

**HAP**  
**HO**  
 MON THRU  
 4 PM TO 8  
 Half Price Appetizers • \$2.50  
 \$3 Well Drinks • \$3.50



# 6 | Strategic Opportunity Areas

## Contents

- Civil Rights District
- Innovation District
- City Center Core
- Uptown
- Five Points South
- Lakeview

## Civil Rights District

### Existing Conditions

The Civil Rights District is located in the upper northwest quadrant of the City Center, with a concentration of historic and cultural sites. It includes the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, comprised of key historic sites as the A.G. Gaston Motel, Kelly Ingram Park, 16th Street Baptist Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Bethel Baptist Church, and the Colored Masonic Temple. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the historic 4th Avenue Black Business District are nationally recognized significant resources. This district is rich with the history of the Civil Rights movement and serves as a destination for worldwide visitors and residents alike. Many of these important landmarks and the district itself are under consideration for World Heritage status by UNESCO.

Much of the fabric of the area, including Fountain Heights, a historically African-American neighborhood, and commercial district has been lost over time - some as a direct result of the bombings in the 1960's - and others as a result of poor policy decisions - ceding to surface parking lots largely in service to the commercial core. Housing in this area is largely limited to the Freedom Manor which was under renovation in 2019.

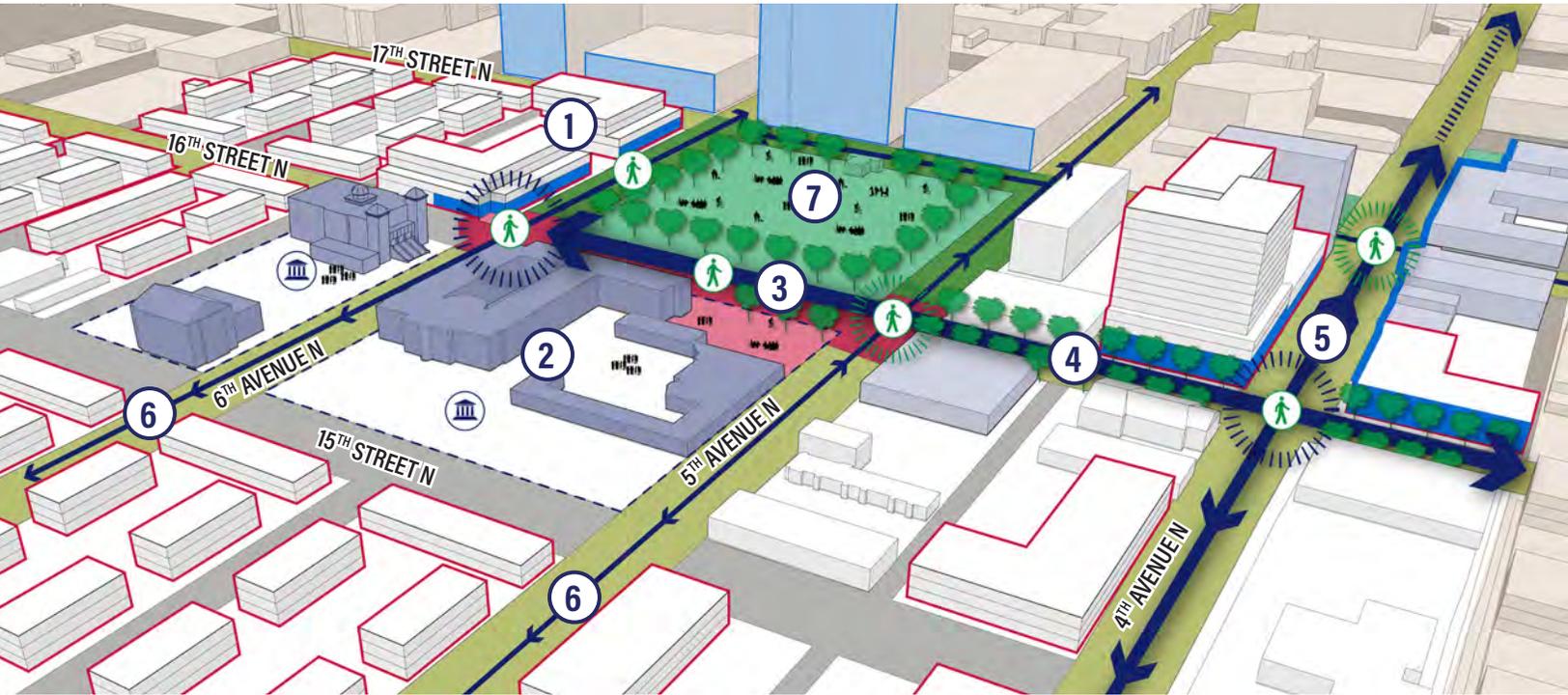
Kelly Ingram Park is a roughly 4-acre public space that has been used in recent decades as a contemplative space honoring the Civil Rights movement in public art. With the exception of the National Monument to the west and the Freedom Manor to the south, the park lacks the well-defined urban edge that nearby Linn Park enjoys. To add insult to injury, the eastern edge of the park has very disappointing views of a parking structure and the blank-walled AT&T building.

The district is bisected by three one-way streets running east-west serving commuter traffic and though it is within a five-minute walk of the Innovation District and the 20th Street/Birmingham Green corridor, it lacks safe and attractive pedestrian routes. Fourth Avenue North has the potential to blossom as a business district once again but is hampered by a lack of investment and the one-way network.

In recent years, there has been limited private-sector interest in the district though plans are underway for the adaptive reuse of the A.G. Gaston Building, the adjacent L.R. Hall Auditorium, and a new building within the same block.



*Tourists visiting the Civil Rights landmarks at the corner of Kelly Ingram Park with Sixteenth Baptist Church in the background*



New Buildings	Implied Connections	Pedestrian Connections	Open Space/Public Realm Opportunities
Adaptive Reuse	Two-way Conversions	Active Frontages	Culturally Significant Blocks
Key Destinations	Pedestrian Enhancements	Facade Improvements	
Improve Intersections for All Mobility Options	Improve Intersections for Pedestrians	Streetscape Improvements	
Strategic Connections			

**Key District Initiatives**

- 1** Three to four story mixed-use development replacing the surface parking lot to the north of Kelly Ingram Park that sensitively respects the 16th Street Baptist Church and reflects conditions existing during the period of historical significance of 1963 including a height transition and setback at the corner at 16th St North/6th Ave North with a public plaza (see the diagram on page 101)
- 2** Expanded Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and fully preserved and interpreted A.G. Gaston Motel
- 3** Enhancements to 16th Street North to better connect Kelly Ingram Park to the Civil Rights Institute including a renovated plaza and the possibility of a shared street

- 4** Streetscape improvements along 16th Street North to connect the Civil Rights District to the Innovation District
- 5** Fully restored 4th Avenue North as the “main street” for the district with streetscape improvements, one-way to two-way conversion, strategic infill, and re-activation of storefronts
- 6** Conversion of 5th and 6th Avenues North to two-way and improved streetscape detailing to 20th Street North
- 7** Renovated Kelly Ingram Park that respects the dignity of the current space while providing for its long term sustainability. (Note: A neighborhood-serving park will be needed elsewhere to serve the expected residential population)

## Street Improvements

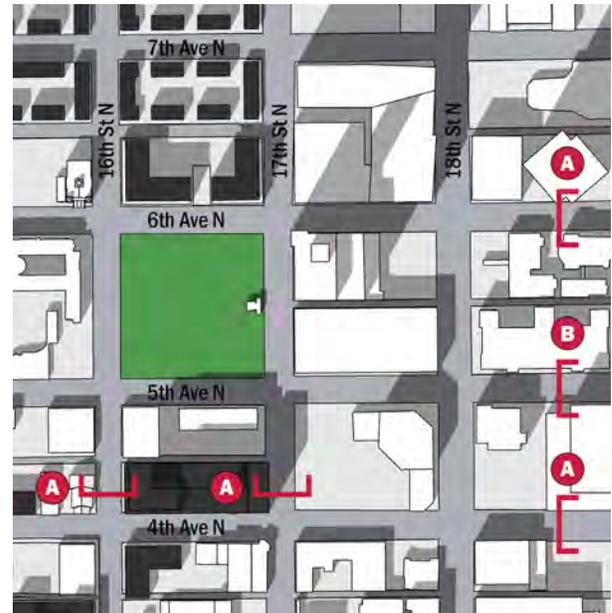
### 4th and 6th Avenues North and 16th and 17th Streets North (Existing) | Section A

The existing sections of 4th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North include three westbound travel lanes with parallel on-street parking on both sides of the street in roughly 50 feet curb-to-curb. 17th Street North shares the same curb-to-curb width and has three southbound travel lanes with on-street parking. 16th Street North shares the same curb-to-curb width as well with two travel lanes, one northbound and one southbound, with parallel on-street parking.

### 4th & 6th Avenues North and 16th and 17th Streets North (Proposed) | Section A

The proposed section maintains the curb location but converts from one-way to two-way operations for 4th and 6th Avenues North and 17th Street North. 16th Street North remains two-way and open to traffic but its lanes narrow to 10 feet in width to accommodate other street components. The parallel on-street parking would remain on both sides of each street. This section also includes buffered bike lanes on both sides and wider sidewalks with street trees and space for outdoor dining, although limited. The inclusion of two-way operations, on-street parking, multi-modal facilities, shade,

and space for sidewalk activity are all crucial for facilitating vibrancy and successful ground-floor retail, especially on 4th Avenue North and 16th Street North which have been designated as Signature Streets for priority investment.



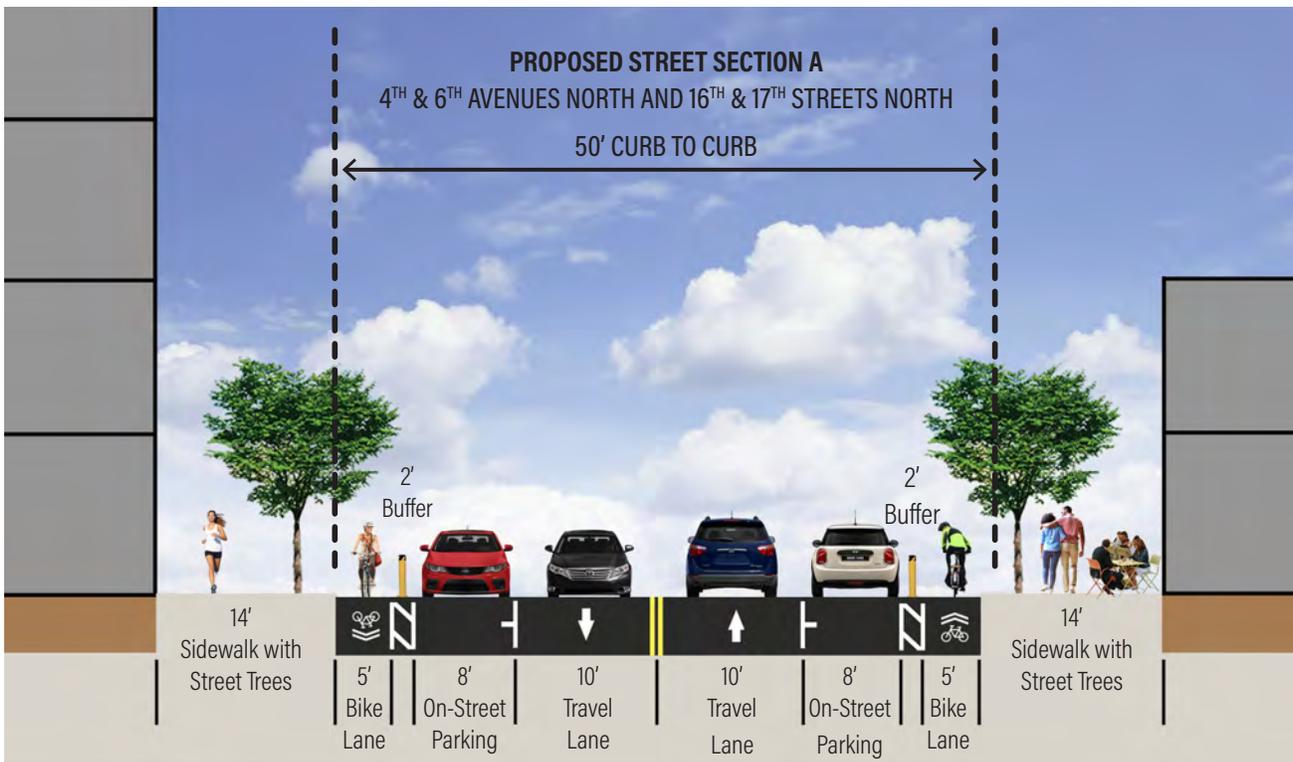
Key Plan for proposed street improvements in the Civil Rights District along 4th Avenue N, 6th Avenue N, 16th Street N and 17th Street N



Left: Existing conditions along 4th Ave North Source: Google Street View, 2019



Left: Existing conditions of 16th Street North Source: Google Street View, 2019



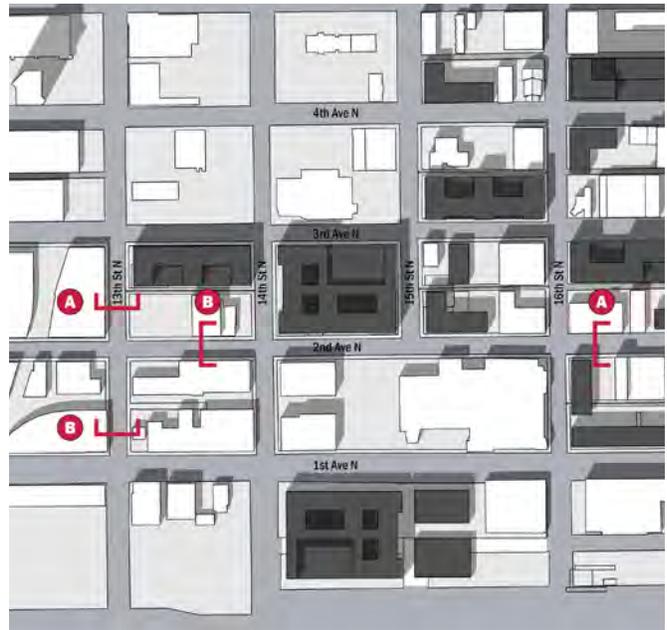
## Street Improvements

### 5th Avenue North (Existing) | Section B

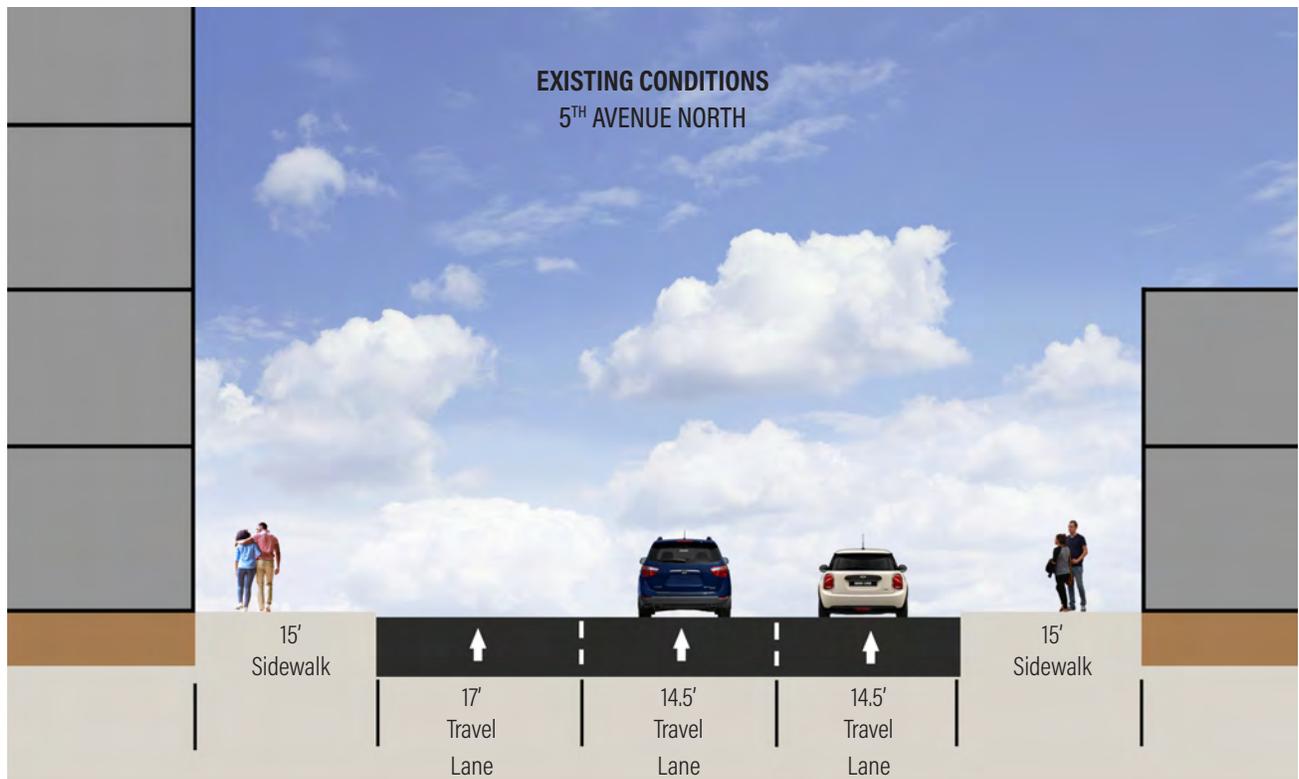
5th Avenue North has a narrower existing curb-to-curb width at only 46 feet with three eastbound travel lanes and parallel on-street parking on both sides of the street.

### 5th Avenue North (Proposed) | Section B

Since not every component of a Signature Street can fit into every existing street in the City Center, some compromises have to be made. In the case of 5th Avenue North, it is determined that a center turn lane may be a more useful component to provide better access management into existing parking decks and parking lots. The proposed section still includes wide sidewalks with street trees, a conversion from one-way to two-way operations, and parallel on-street parking on both sides of the street.

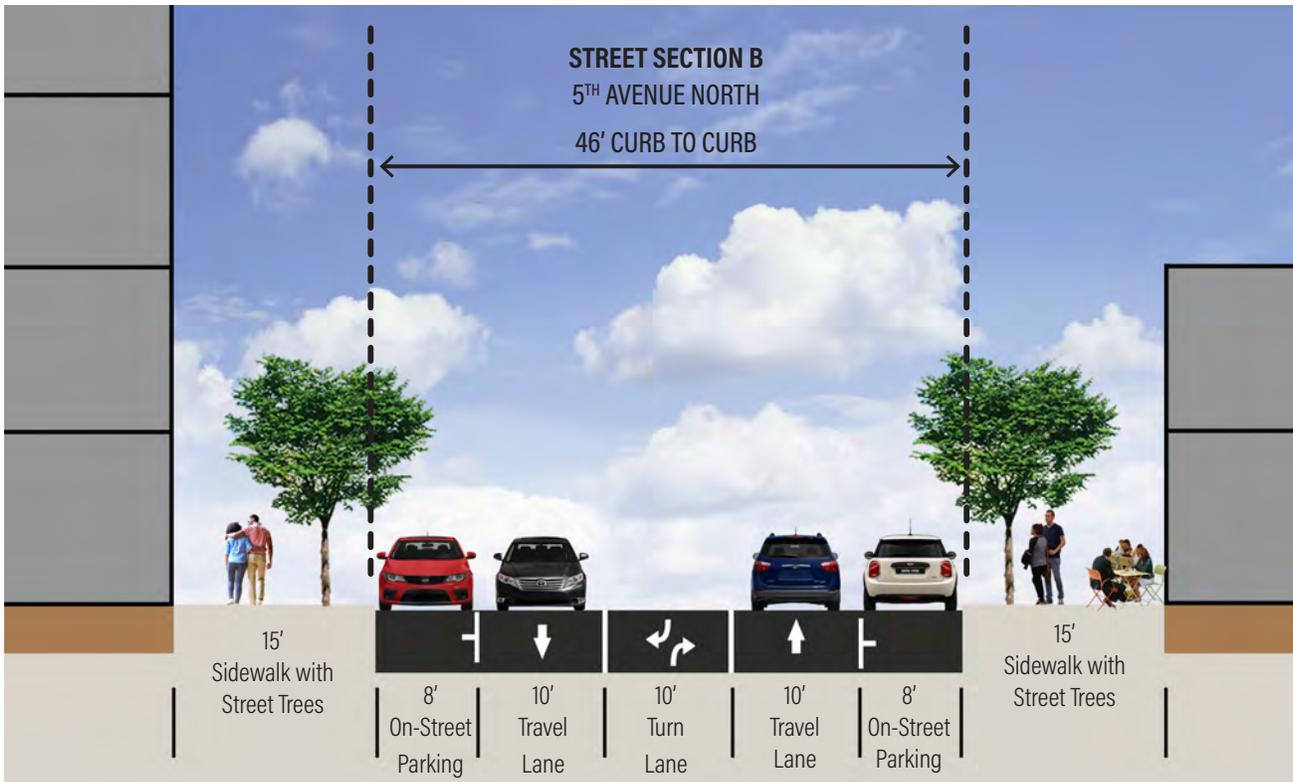


Key Plan for proposed street section B in the Innovation District: 5th Avenue North





Left: Existing conditions of 5th Avenue North  
Source: Google Street View, 2019



## Civil Rights District “Main Street”

### 4th Avenue North Enhancements

The Historic Fourth Avenue North Business District, recently designated as a Main Street community by the state, was once the “main street” of the African American business community in Birmingham. Over the years the vibrancy and level of activity has plateaued as existing businesses have remained with little influx of new businesses. Many historic buildings sit vacant or lack ground-floor activity. The conceptual illustration to the right shows the opportunity for the Historic 4th Avenue North Business District if proper investment is made to revitalize the corridor as a neighborhood-scaled activity center.

The beautiful historic buildings should remain, although facades improved and ground-floor tenants encouraged to facilitate activity that spills onto the sidewalks, such as restaurants and shops. New development should respect the scale of the district and provide a variety of shopping and dining options, along with a mix of housing to accommodate a diversity of incomes. The streetscape should be improved with Signature Street elements, including but not limited to: multi-use lanes for bikes and scooters, two-way traffic operations, on-street parking, street trees, outdoor seating and dining, and wide sidewalks.



*Above: Existing conditions*

*Right: Conceptual illustration of proposed enhancements and investments along 4th Avenue North as a revitalized “main street” for the Civil Rights District*





## Kelly Ingram Park

Kelly Ingram Park, as a key piece of the civil rights story of Birmingham, has been designed as a quiet, contemplative space filled with interpretive sculptures and artwork that record the history of the Civil Rights movement. It's also a public space, like Linn Park, that has lacked on-going maintenance funding. As a result there is a long list of deferred maintenance needs through the park.

### Strengths

- The park's history and memorials make it a destination for visitors and residents of Birmingham
- The park's orthogonal layout creates sub-spaces, allowing visitors to feel safe to reflect on their own in different places in the park
- The large trees in the park create shade, provide fall color, and sound when the wind blows
- The size of the park is substantial, so it can accommodate multiple uses at different times of the year, and even different days of the week

### Key Strategies

- Consider a larger, more formalized open space that permits civic gatherings and other public events appropriate to the park
- Replace the fountains with new water elements that deliver beneficial sound while providing an interpretive element
- Develop a comprehensive plan for Kelly Ingram Park and the public realm (streetscape and other public spaces) for the entire Civil Rights District to accommodate operations and maintenance, future improvements, placement of future sculptures, memorials and interpretive signage, and management



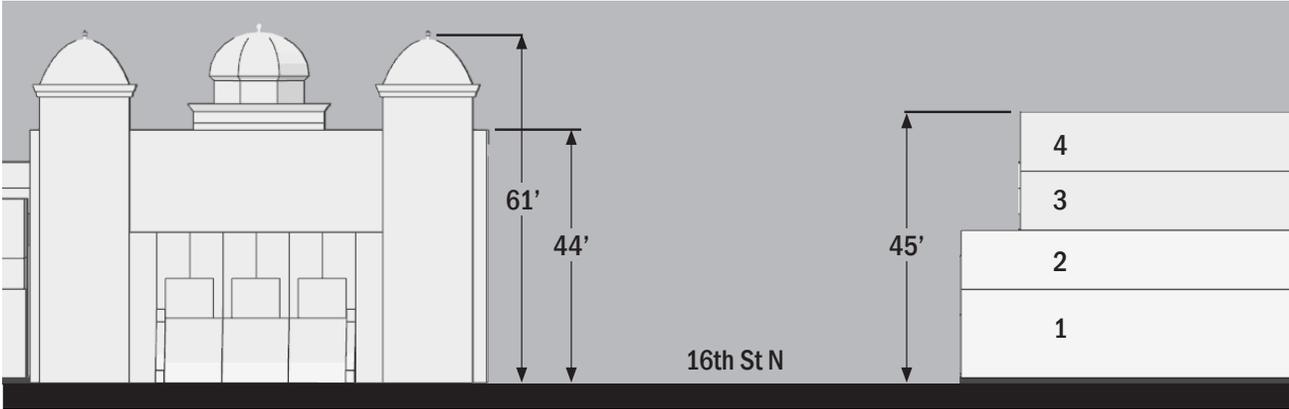
*Sculpture in Kelly Ingram Park (top); one of four quadrants of the existing water feature (middle); Sculpture at one of the entrances of the park (bottom)*

## Respecting the Scale and Dignity of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is a historic landmark that deserves respect, both socially and physically. To physically respect the church, any adjacent new development should make special effort not to overshadow the height of the church and utilize setbacks and upper story recesses to preserve the line-of-sight to the landmark from across the district.

The maximum height to the top of the tower's cupolas is 61 feet, but the height of the building itself is 44 feet. A typical four-story mixed-use building with a commercial or office ground floor and residential floors above is approximately 45 feet tall. This height respects the scale of the church and the corner during its period of historical significance of 1963.

Recesses should be reserved for the upper floors of the development. Urban buildings are most successful when they create a strong street edge and meet the sidewalk directly, therefore, the ground floor and possibly second floor should directly engage the sidewalk like any other commercial building in the City Center; however, there can be strategic setbacks to create dynamic spaces along the ground floor, such as courtyards or corner plazas. Including a setback at the corner adjacent to the church to help reduce the perceived scale of new development.



Above: Scale Comparison, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church compared to a four-story building

## Civil Rights District New Development

### Bringing an active edge to Kelly Ingram Park

Sixth Avenue North is prioritized for conversion to two-way traffic operations along with streetscape enhancements that support an improved visitor experience as well as new development. The current one-way street serves only high-speed commuter traffic and does not respect the dignity and historical context of the corridor. The reallocation of travel lanes in favor of dedicated pathways for bikes and scooters along 6th Avenue North is also recommended.

As noted on the previous page, care should be taken with new development to respect the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church's architectural prominence from a range of vantage points. The same is true of Kelly Ingram Park. While it is a public park, it's primary role is one of dignified repose and respite. Active programming is recommended in a new neighborhood park elsewhere in the area (location to be determined).



*Above: Existing conditions along 6th Avenue North (above)*

*Right: Conceptual illustration of development filling in the surface parking lot and enhancements along 6th Avenue North and Kelly Ingram Park's street edge*





## Innovation District

### Existing Conditions

The Innovation District, so named because of the presence of Innovation Depot, is located in the lower northwest quadrant of the City Center amidst a concentration of older commercial and industrial buildings and surface parking lots. Innovation Depot was formed when a partnership of community leaders including the City and the University of Alabama at Birmingham came together to incubate a community of startups and entrepreneurs in a 145,000 square foot former Sears building.

Since the 2004 Birmingham City Center Master Plan, which first identified this area as an “Entrepreneurial Area,” progress in adapting other buildings has been slow. Little investment has occurred in the public realm and the nearby car dealerships combined with vacant and surface parking lots

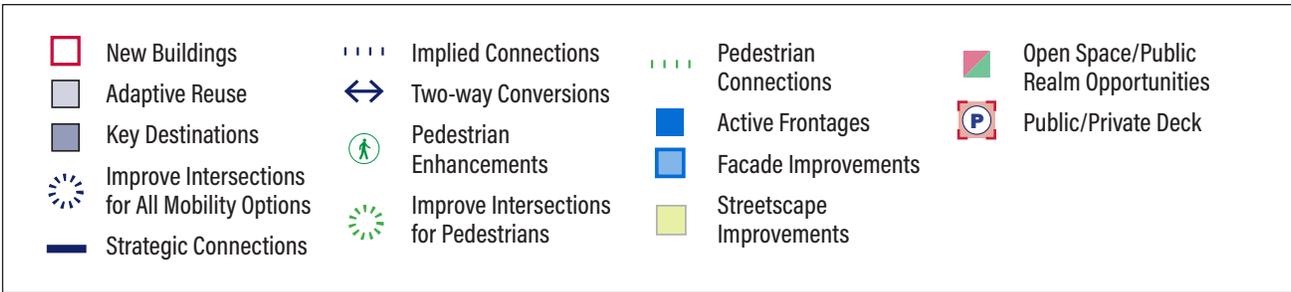
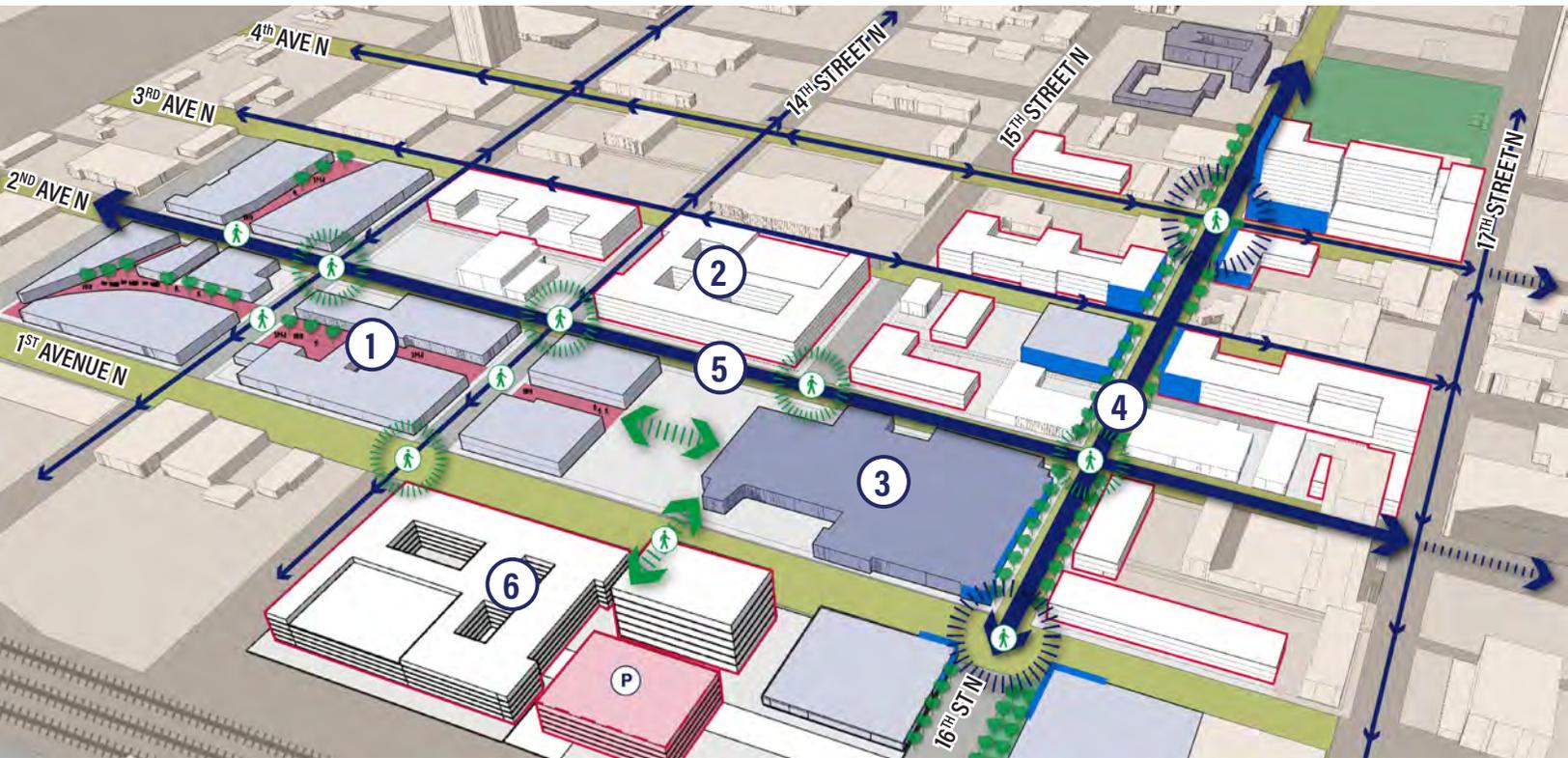
provide minimal pedestrian interest. The preponderance of one and two story buildings of different dimensions are ideal for a wide range of tenants.

The restoration and re-use of buildings along 17th Street North have begun to extend the nightlife of 20th Street North closer towards Innovation Depot though a substantial amount of vacancy immediately surrounds it. The only housing of note in the area is the 100 unit, 19 story Thomas Jefferson Tower apartments, a 2017 adaptive reuse of the 1929 Thomas Jefferson Hotel.

While the district is quite close to Railroad Park, the walk along 14th Street North passing parking lots and through the railroad underpass is not a very pleasant journey.



*The main entrance of Innovation Depot as seen from across 1st Avenue North*



### Key District Initiatives

- 1** Adaptive re-use of Wholesale Warehouse Loop buildings for Innovation Depot spin-offs, which could include shared, hardscaped, festival-style public space along the former railroad spur
- 2** High-density mixed-use/housing opportunities along 2nd Avenue North and 1st Avenue North
- 3** Enhancements to Innovation Depot including urban trail and public space connections and storefront activation on the 16th Street North facade
- 4** Creation of a north-south spine connecting Innovation District to the Civil Rights District along 16th Street North with substantial streetscape improvements and infill
- 5** Improvement of 2nd Avenue North as a “main street” for the district, repurposing existing lanes for additional parking and providing high quality pedestrian connections to 20th Street North
- 6** Adaptive re-use of existing structures and construction of new housing on the existing surface parking lots with parking being moved closer to the tracks and, if necessary, into a shared parking structure

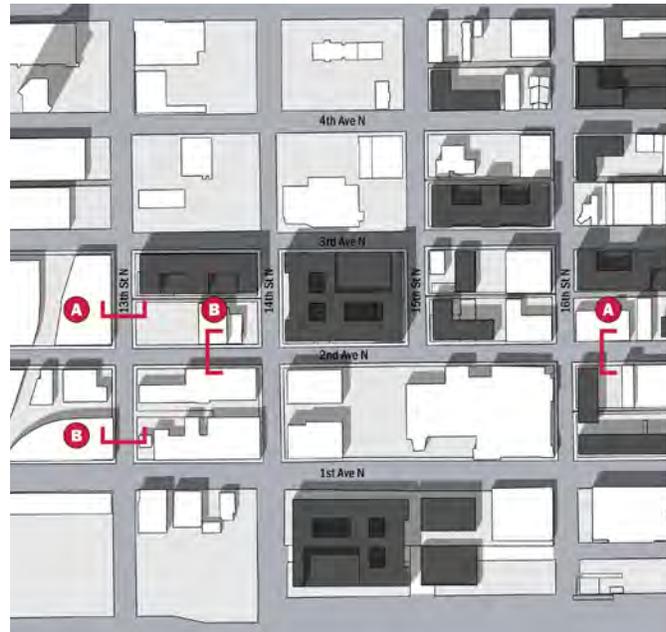
## Street Improvements

### 2nd Avenue North and 13th Street North (Existing) | Section A

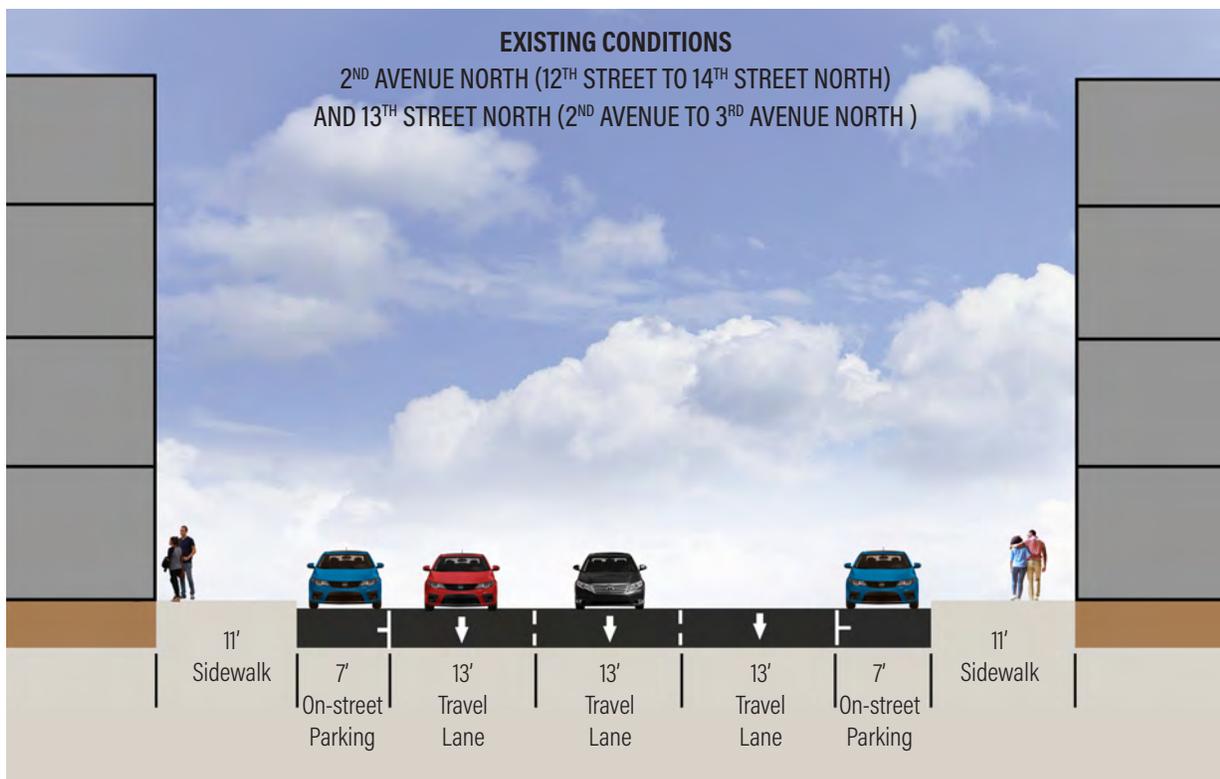
2nd Avenue North (from 12th Street North to 14th Street North) and 13th Street North (from 2nd Avenue North to 3rd Avenue North) are both three travel lanes with one-way operations inside a 54 feet curb-to-curb dimension with parallel parking on both sides of the street.

### 2nd Avenue North and 13th Street North (Proposed) | Section A

The proposed section maintains the same curb-to-curb dimension, but focuses on parking optimization. The streets are shown with only two travel lanes and reverse-angle parking on both sides of each street. The travel lane widths vary with the right-of-way but there is sufficient dimension to maintain a minimum travel lane width of 10 feet. The back of curb varies in width, but is consistently wide enough to accommodate street trees.



Key Plan for proposed sections A and B in Innovation District: 2nd Avenue North and 13th Street North

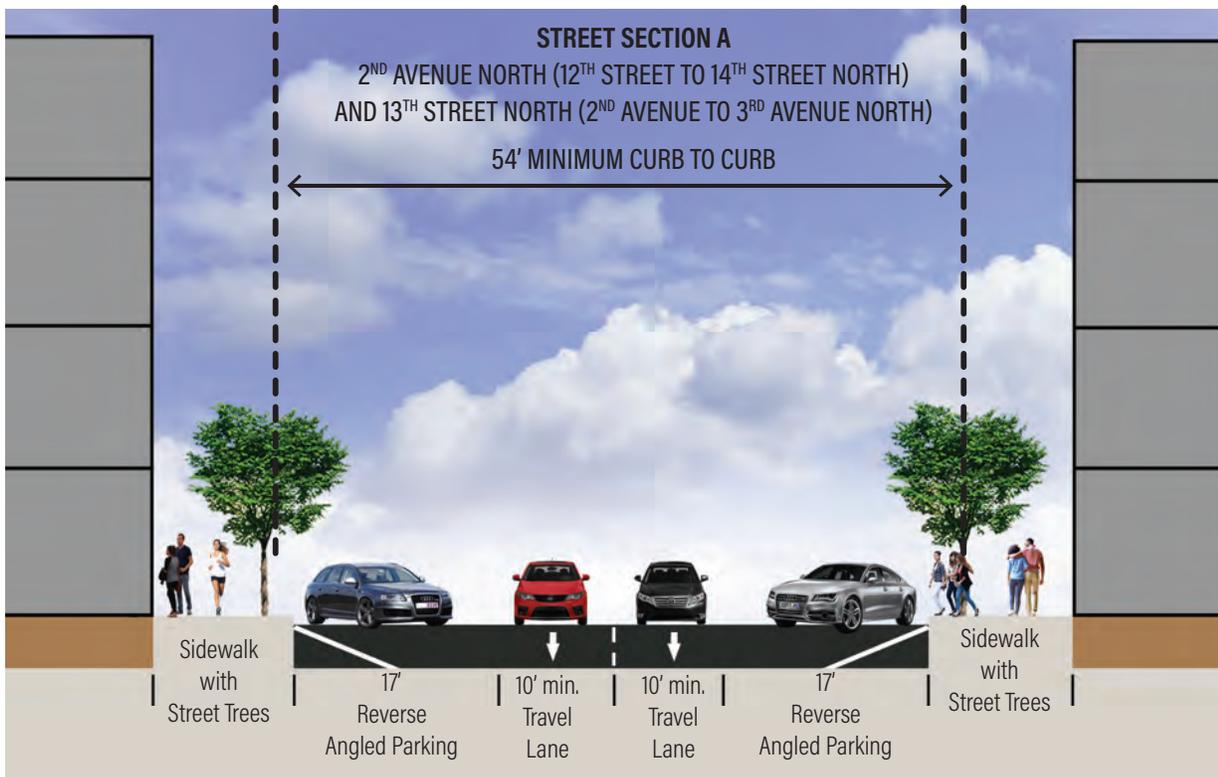




Left: Existing conditions of 2nd Avenue North  
Source: Google Street View, 2019



Left: Existing conditions of 13th Street North  
Source: Google Street View, 2019

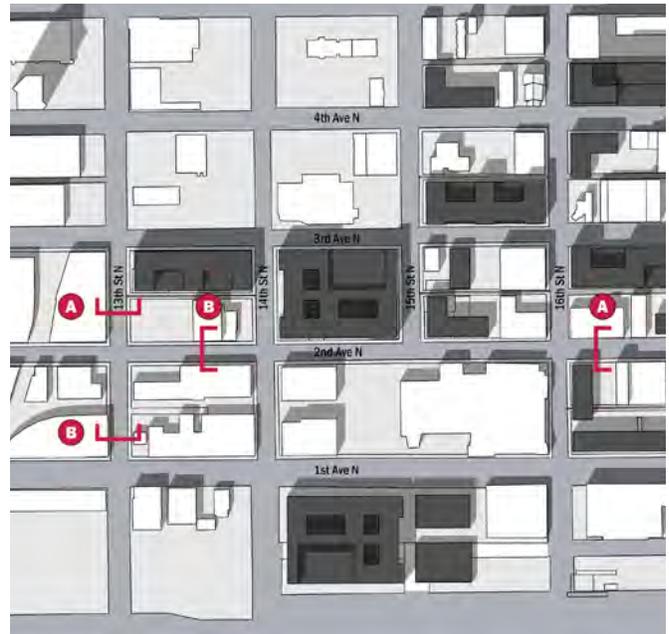


**2nd Avenue North and 13th Street North (Existing) | Section B**

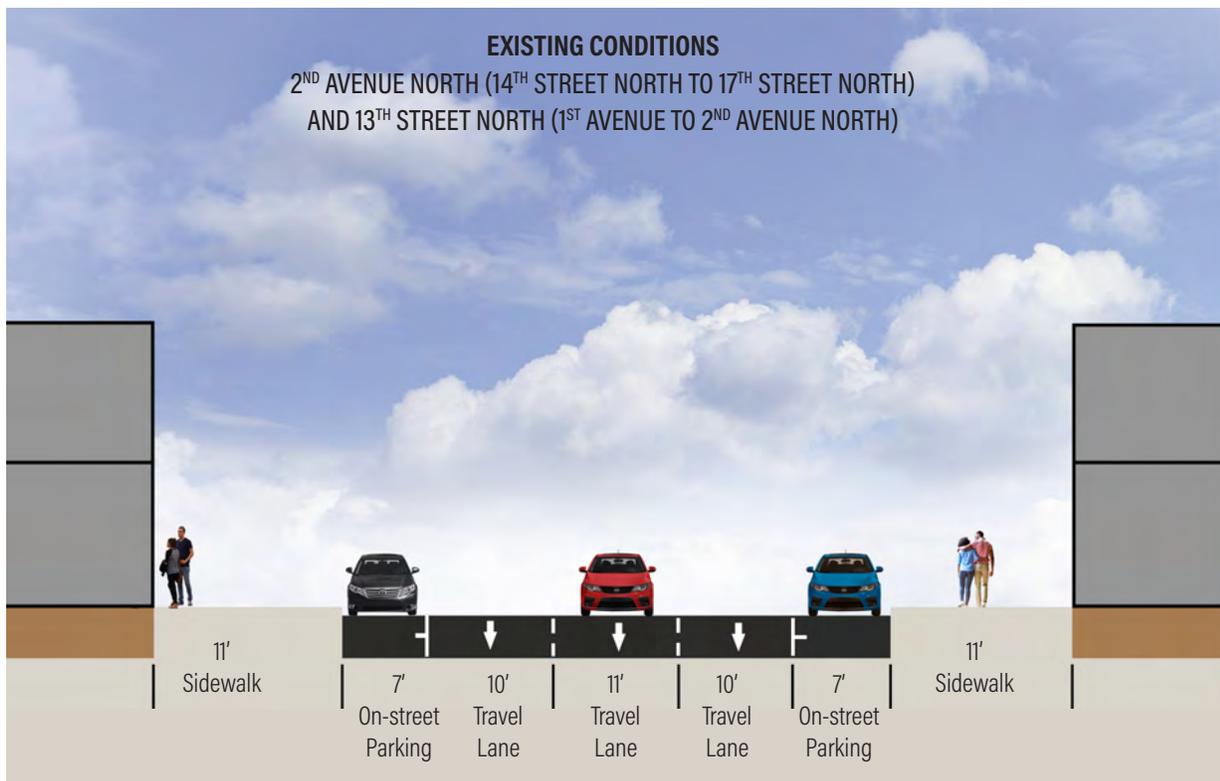
The existing sections for 2nd Avenue North (from 14th Street to 17th Street) and 13th Street North (from 1st Avenue to 2nd Avenue) are the same as the previous section, but are 45 feet curb-to-curb.

**2nd Avenue North and 13th Street North (Proposed) | Section B**

The proposed section maintains the same curb-to-curb dimension and continues to focus on parking optimization. The streets are shown with only two travel lanes, reverse angle parking on one side of the street, and parallel parking on the other. The travel lane widths vary as the right-of-way differs slightly along the corridors, but there is always enough space to provide a minimum travel lane width of 10 feet. The back of curb varies in width, but is consistently wide enough to accommodate street trees.



*Key Plan for proposed sections A and B in Innovation District: 2nd Avenue North and 13th Street North*

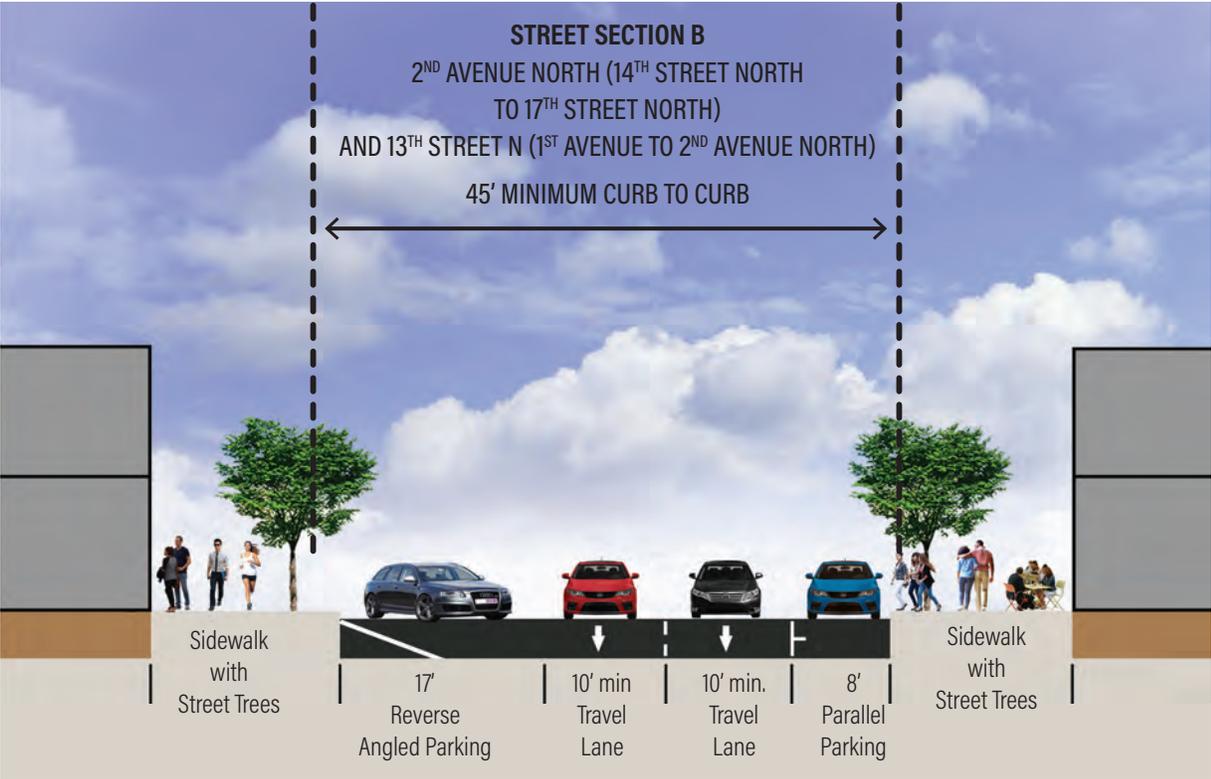




Left: Existing conditions of 2nd Avenue North  
Source: Google Street View, 2019



Left: Existing conditions of 13th Street North  
Source: Google Street View, 2019



## Adaptive Re-Use Opportunities

Much of the existing structures in the Innovation District and elsewhere throughout the City Center are vacant warehouses and simple commercial structures that have fallen into disrepair over the years. These buildings, with their flexible interiors and varied sizes, make them prime candidates for adaptive re-use for businesses that outgrow the Innovation Depot or as additional incubator spaces to support innovation throughout the district.

The following images illustrate these opportunities through:

- Interior renovations, as expressed by active storefronts and interior lighting
- Facade improvements with decorative awnings, enhanced storefronts, and signage
- Streetscape and other active outdoor spaces to add to the vibrancy including street trees, outdoor dining, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and a rooftop terrace



*Left: Existing conditions at the northwest corner of 14th Street North and 1st Avenue North*

*Below: Conceptual illustration depicting new tenants, streetscape enhancements, and facade improvements: continuous planting strip with street trees, outdoor dining, storefronts, signage, and a partial redevelopment opportunity*





*Above: Conceptual illustration depicting the adaptive re-use and restoration of the historic facade: rooftop terrace, signage, facade improvements, public art, street trees, outdoor dining, etc.*

*Left: Existing conditions at the southwest corner of 16th Street North and 3rd Avenue North*



## Innovation District Housing

### Activating the Intersection of 1st Avenue North and 16th Street North

As identified in the housing market analysis, the potential for new housing in this area is substantial and critical to encouraging additional “cool space” development. There are a number of large tracts assembled under single ownership that can be easily developed with urban apartments similar to those completed on the south side of Railroad Park. The presence of housing provides an “18 hour” environment to a district that currently rolls up for the day at 5 pm by generating a sustainable demand for restaurant options, convenience retail, and additional mobility choices. Housing also fills in vacant blocks, which currently impede pedestrian activity, and helps to connect this area to the Civil Rights District less than 5 minutes away.



*Above: Conceptual illustration depicting new housing on an existing surface lot across from Innovation Depot, a 16th Street North entrance into the Innovation Depot building, as well as streetscape improvements to 16th Street North including, street trees in planting strips, wide sidewalks, outdoor dining, on-street parking, and an autonomous shuttle route*

*Left: Existing conditions at the intersection of 1st Avenue North and 16 Street North*

## The Switch Trail

Interstitial, festival-style public spaces  
in between Wholesale Warehouse Loop  
buildings along a former rail spur

Because the old Wholesale Warehouse Loop buildings were built around a railroad spur, their geometries respond to the curvature of the tracks. Now that the railroad spur is abandoned, this space can be reclaimed for public or semi-public use - turning a back-of-house area for trash and utilities into a gathering space uniting the block. The quirky atmosphere offers numerous opportunities for enhancements with temporary and semi-permanent tactical interventions that might change from season-to-season to accommodate different activities in the community (e.g., festivals, markets, or concerts).



*Above: Existing conditions of the former railroad spur in the block between 1st Avenue North and 2nd Avenue North*

*Right: Conceptual illustration depicting tactical interventions including a mid-block crosswalk along 14th Street North from the Innovation Depot, opportunities for public art, seating, lighting, and a small stage for informal music to create the Switch Trail*





## City Center Core

### Existing Conditions

The City Center Core, approximately 6 blocks wide centered on 20th Street North from I-20/59 to the railroad, is the city's most densely developed and most valuable land per acre. It is home to a number of historic districts and distinctive architecture including the Theater District, the Heaviest Corner on Earth, and a large number of individually notable structures in its boundary. While it continues to be the largest concentration of employment in the region, a number of buildings have been converted in recent years from office to housing and hotels when the anchor tenant downsized or relocated.

Twentieth Street North, also known as the Birmingham Green, was so designated after a major rehabilitation project in the 1970's installed the expansive landscaping that is present today. Unfortunately, like Linn Park, there has been little maintenance or renovations and both public spaces are now in need of substantial investments. In spite of this deferred maintenance, ground floor activity is beginning to return to 20th Street North on its southern edge. Twentieth Street North is also home to two parking structures and their driveway entrances along the corridor, north of 4th Avenue North, creating a dampening effect on vibrant commercial activity. And, like other areas in the City Center, this area has seen significant loss in its urban fabric to accommodate surface parking on the edges over the decades.

Regardless of the current vibrancy along the corridor, the community reveres 20th Street North as their "main street," connecting the City Center to UAB on the south side. It's economic strength and density remains a major asset for the City.

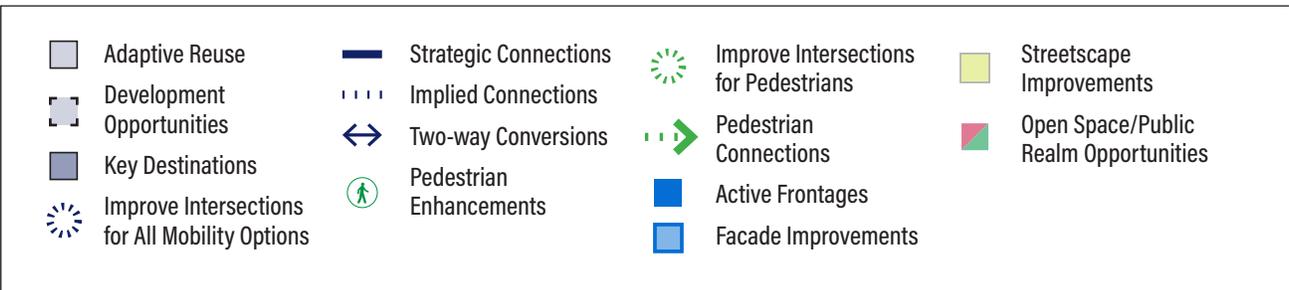
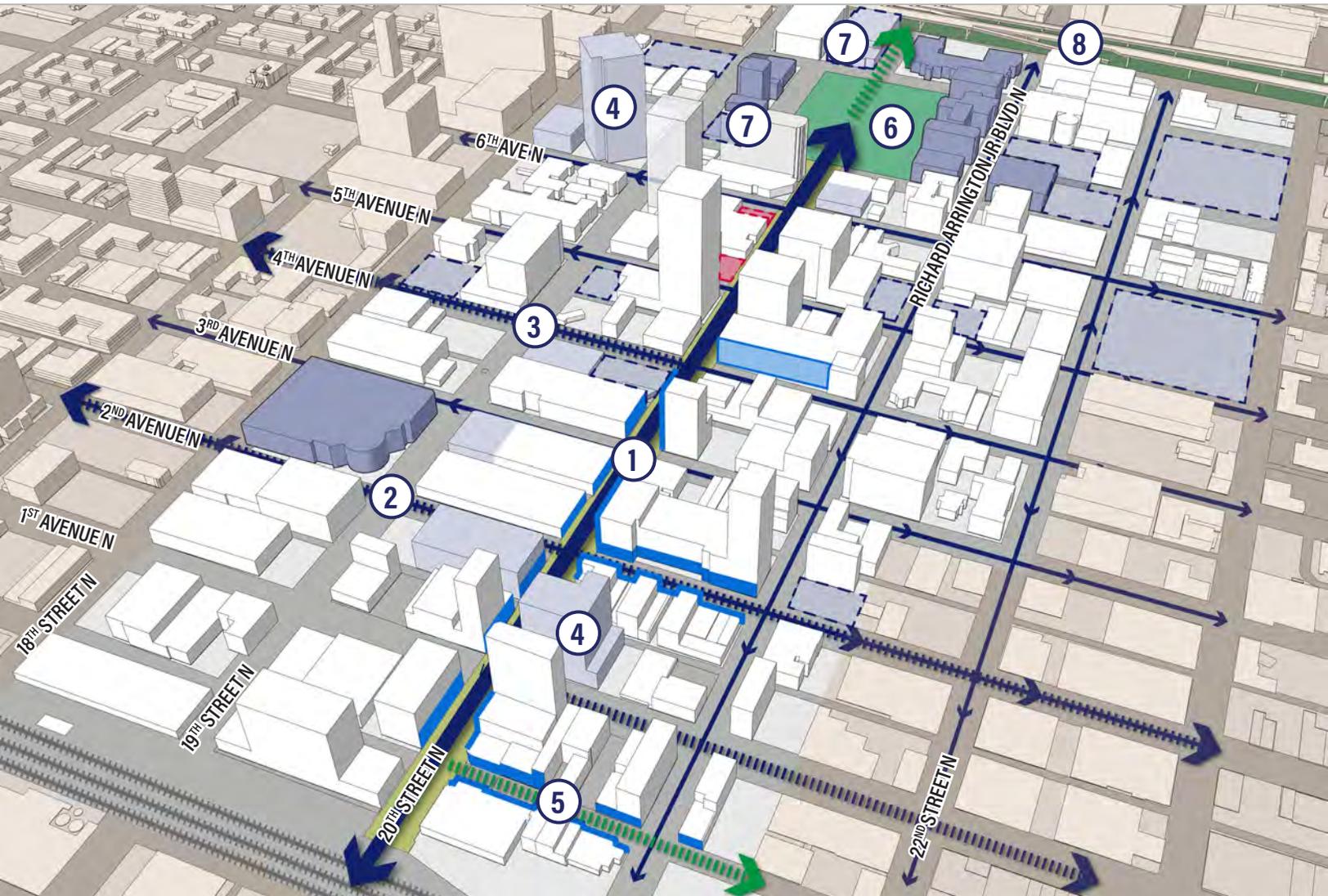
In the last decade, housing has begun to find its place in core and more is expected to follow. Yet, in the evenings, most streets remain largely devoid of activity. Getting a critical mass of housing and hotels near Linn Park will help to balance the daytime activity and be well supported by the Citywalk BHAM project to illuminate and activate the underside of the Interstate.

### Key District Initiatives

- ① Enhancements along 20th Street North to re-invigorate its 50-year-old landscaping including rethinking the public realm and key intersections like 4th Avenue North and 2nd Avenue North, improving public spaces along the corridor including plazas in front of Regions Center, and activating storefronts from 4th Avenue North to Morris Avenue
- ② Connect 20th Street North and the City Center Core to the Innovation District along 2nd Avenue North
- ③ Connect 20th Street and the City Center Core to the Civil Rights District along 4th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North
- ④ New housing, hotel, and other mixed-use redevelopment and/or adaptive re-use opportunities in vacant and underutilized parcels or buildings
- ⑤ Morris Ave enhanced as a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented street with improved storefronts and pedestrian connections, specifically at intersections
- ⑥ Linn Park is renovated and new mixed-use development in immediate proximity help to support its programming and safety
- ⑦ Consider releasing an RFP for the redevelopment of the City Hall Parking structure and Boutwell Auditorium
- ⑧ Complete the Citywalk BHAM project



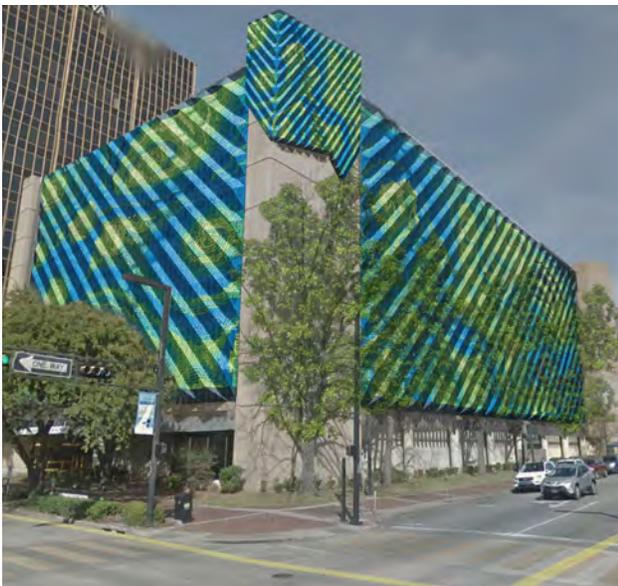
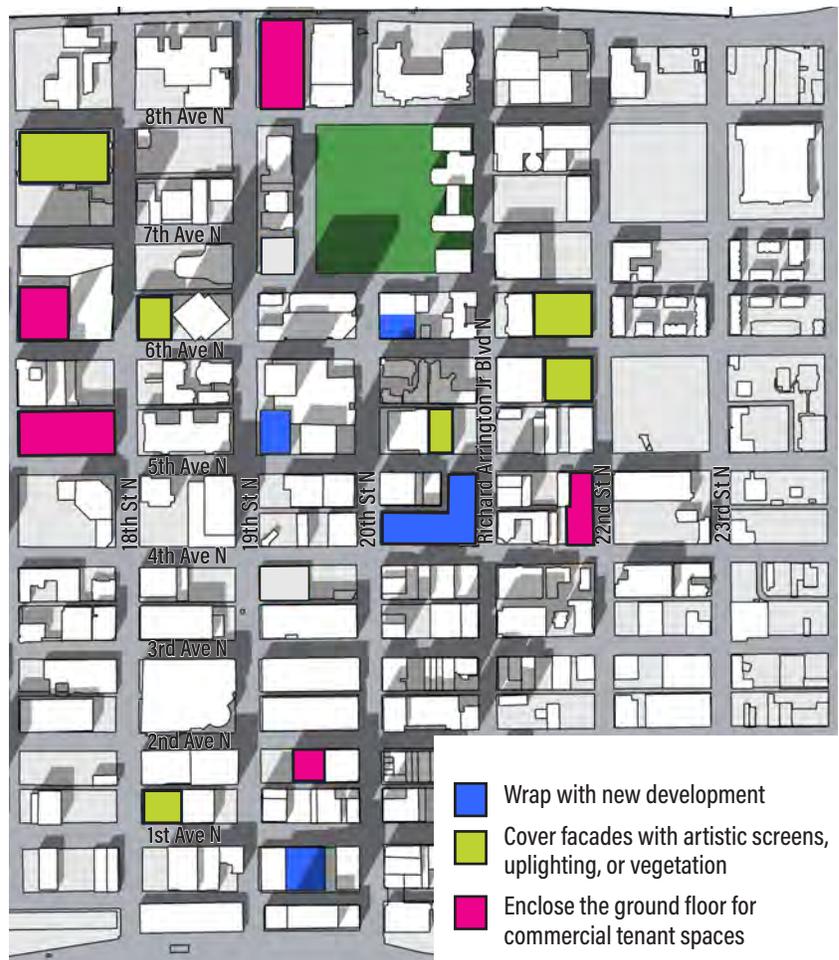
*Image of 20th Street North with accommodations for people, wide sidewalks and outdoor dining.*



## Parking Deck Improvements

Improving walkability through improved aesthetics

Today, parking decks are a necessity in downtowns as most employees in Birmingham arrive for work each day by car. As the City Center adds more housing options and as it becomes more walkable, bikeable, and introduces other mobility options (e.g., scooters, autonomous shuttles, BRT) the need for these decks will decline. However, until they are demolished for redevelopment, the parking deck facades and ground floors should be enhanced to improve the pedestrian experience and ground floor tenant spaces should be actively marketed. The diagram on the right identifies parking decks in the City Center in need of changes.



*Proposed facade screen for the parking structure at 20th St N and 4th Ave North (B'ham Parking Authority Deck 3)*



*The same screening material with nighttime illumination*

## Development/Redevelopment Opportunities

Development, redevelopment, renovation, and adaptive re-use opportunities include:

1. Parking lot at the corner of 8th Avenue North and 19th Street North
2. The Greyhound Station (recently purchased for redevelopment)
3. AT&T building and parking deck (under construction)
4. Parking lot at the corner of 4th Avenue North and 18th Street North
5. Boutwell Auditorium
6. City parking deck, adjacent to City Hall
7. Parking lot at the corner of 5th Avenue North and 19th Street North
8. FedEx, parking lot, and deck along 4th Avenue North between 19th Street North and 20th Street North
9. Vacant California Fashion Mall at the corner of 3rd Avenue North and 19th Street North
10. Historic Birmingham Trust and surrounding buildings, parking lot, and deck along 2nd Avenue North between 19th Street and 20th Street North
11. Birmingham Board of Education enclosed parking lot
12. The Brown Marx building
13. Jefferson County building parking deck
14. The Public Library parking lot
15. Parking lot behind former Energen building
16. Surface parking lots at Richard Arrington Jr Blvd North and 5th Avenue North
17. Parking lot at the corner of 2nd Avenue North and Richard Arrington Jr Blvd North
18. Vacant block/Parking lot: 7th and 8th Avenue North and 22nd and 23rd Street North
19. Regions Bank/Parking lots block: 5th and 6th Avenue North and 22nd and 23rd Street North
20. Underutilized parcels along 8th Avenue North between 23rd Street & 24th Street North



AT&T building



The Brown Marx building

## 20th Street Streetscape

As the overall “main street” for all of the City Center, the streetscape along 20th Street North requires special attention to detail. This plan reinforces the need for 20th Street North to serve as the City Center’s spine to which everything connects. Connectivity to get people to the “main street” is important, but what people find once they arrive is even more so. People must have a positive experience while walking along the sidewalk - it must be wide, attractive, safe, clean, and well lit - to enable them to further explore shops, try a new restaurant, or meet a friend for a drink after work at a sidewalk cafe. Signature Street elements and those in the 20th Street Toolkit are represented in the illustration to the right, including:

- Street trees in bioswales with other vegetation that also provide a pop of color
- Wide sidewalks with space for outdoor dining and temporary signage
- Pedestrian-scaled lighting, potentially unique to this corridor
- Wayfinding signage for locals and visitors alike
- Benches, bike racks, and garbage and recycling bins

Most important is a sense of consistency from block to block along the entire length of the corridor.



*Above: Existing conditions*

*Right: Conceptual illustration of a 20th Street streetscape renovation*





BHM Intermodal Station ↑
   
 Railroad Park
   
 Regions Field
   
 Innovation District →
   
 Theatre District
   
 McWane Center
   
 ← 
  
 Birmingham Green
   
 20th Street

**HAPPY HOUR**
  
 MON THRU FRI
   
 4 PM TO 6 PM
   
 Half Price Appetizers • \$2.50 Domestic
   
 \$3 Well Drinks • \$3.50 Margaritas

## 20th Street North Mobility Corridor

### Planning for the next generation of urban mobility

As the City Center's primary spine, 20th Street North (and South) should contemplate how it provides mobility solutions for the next fifty years with any renovation. Connecting Linn Park to Five Points South via high quality, frequent transit services would help to unite both ends of the City Center. Once established, this transit service could be expanded to include other key destinations in the City Center including UAB, the Civil Rights District, Uptown, Railroad Park, and Regions Field.

In addition to dedicated facilities for cyclists and people using scooters, new autonomous technologies such as automated shuttles can be evaluated. Some amenities and infrastructure modifications to consider are:

- Shuttle stops with benches, concrete landing pads for ADA accessibility, and informational signage (static or interactive)
- Lane striping and advisory signage along the length of the route to designate a 'smart lane' and raise awareness for those using other transportation modes
- Connected infrastructure, especially at controlled intersections with traffic signals or stop signs



*Above: Existing conditions of 20th Street North at 2nd Avenue North looking south*

*Right: Conceptual illustration of a connected, automated shuttle using the 20th Street corridor*





ONE WAY

AUTOMATED SHUTTLE ROUTE DE KANGAROO

## Uptown

### Existing Conditions

Located north of I-20/59, Uptown includes the Birmingham/ Jefferson Convention Center (BJCC), a number of hotels, Top Golf, the future UAB stadium, and a small but lively entertainment district with dining and drinking establishments.

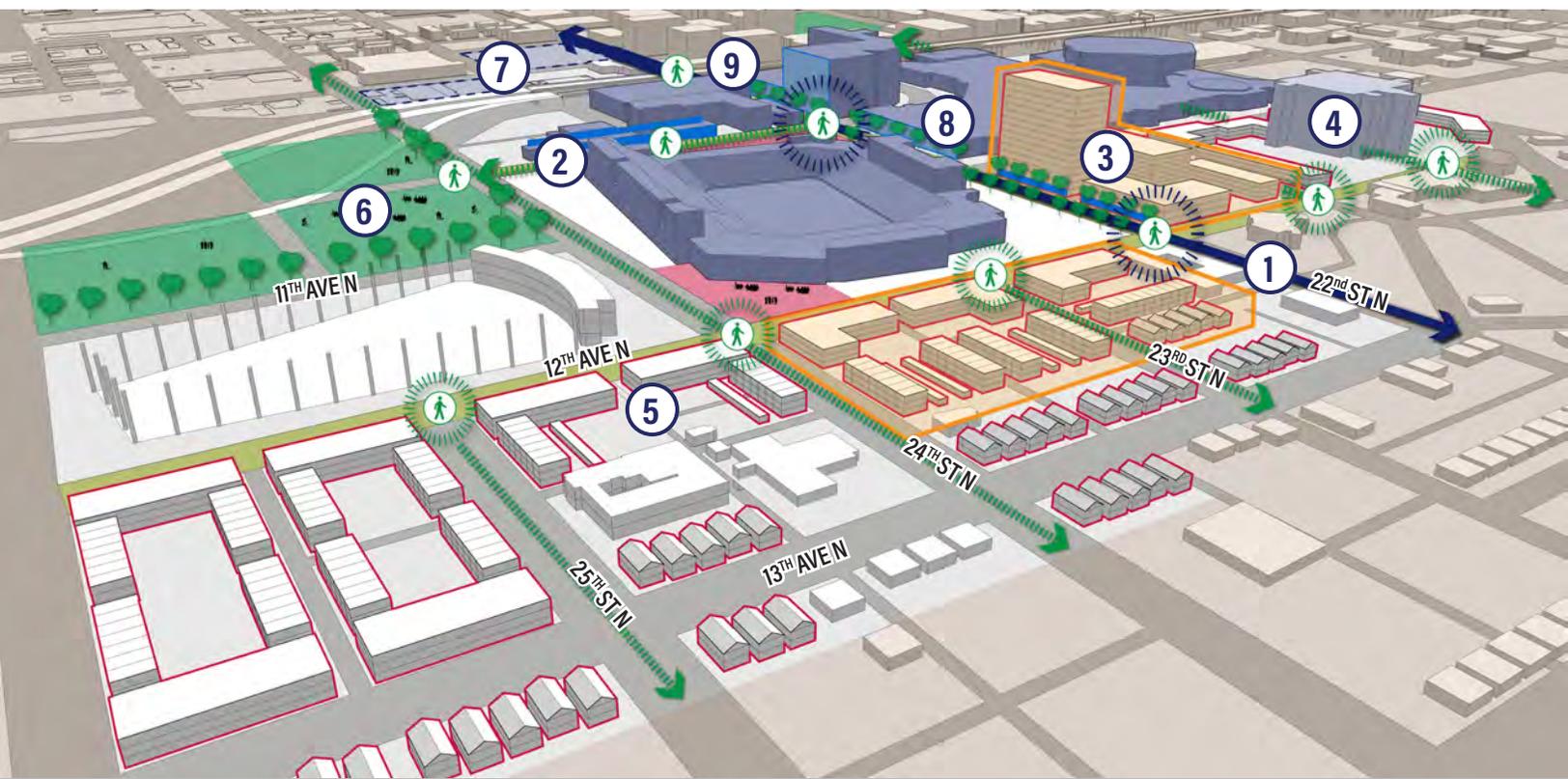
It is also an area that is visually dominated by surface parking lots, and vacant or otherwise underutilized buildings - the most notable of these is the 1974 Patriot Center building and its surrounding 2,000 car parking "structure," left largely vacant when the Social Security Administration moved to a new facility in 2008.

The reconstruction of I-20/59 is expected to provide enhanced spaces underneath the highway deck with public art, streetscaping, lighting, and other amenities to better connect Uptown to the core (Citywalk BHAM), though it will continue to remain a physical barrier nonetheless. On a brighter note, since the I-20/59 exit ramp in this area is being realigned, there will be leftover greenspace available for public use. Both Top Golf and the proposed stadium have large "green spaces," but they aren't accessible to the public. Providing a neighborhood park space would benefit those who live in and visit this area.

The planned football stadium will occupy four blocks of open land and surface parking lots. No new parking is contemplated.



*Photo of Uptown's main entrance from Richard Arrington Jr. Boulevard North*



New Buildings	Improve Intersections for All Mobility Options	Improve Intersections for Pedestrians	Streetscape Improvements
Adaptive Reuse	Strategic Connections	Pedestrian Connections	Open Space/Public Realm Opportunities
Key Destinations	Implied Connections	Active Frontages	
Proposed Phase 1 of New Development	Pedestrian Enhancements	Facade Improvements	

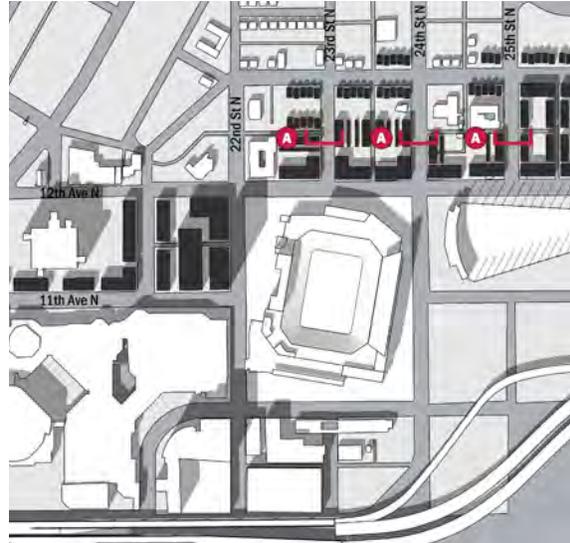
### Key District Initiatives

- 1** Improved connections from 22nd Street North to the existing neighborhoods  
Richard Arrington Jr Blvd North connected to the potential open space and enhance the pedestrian realm adjacent to the stadium
- 2** Medium-density, mixed-use development opportunities on larger blocks of underutilized land, including ground floor commercial, along active streets, such as 22nd Street North
- 3** Redevelopment opportunities in partially vacant Patriot Center (former Social Security Administration building) and surrounding parking deck
- 4** Lower-density housing opportunities on larger vacant and/or underutilized land, along less active, neighborhood scale streets. Use this area to stitch Uptowns impeding development with the existing residential neighborhood
- 5** Open space opportunities under and around the interstate exit ramps
- 6** Redevelopment and connection opportunities using Citywalk BHAM to the City Center Core and Civic Center around Linn Park
- 7** BICC facade improvements
- 8** Citywalk BHAM
- 9**

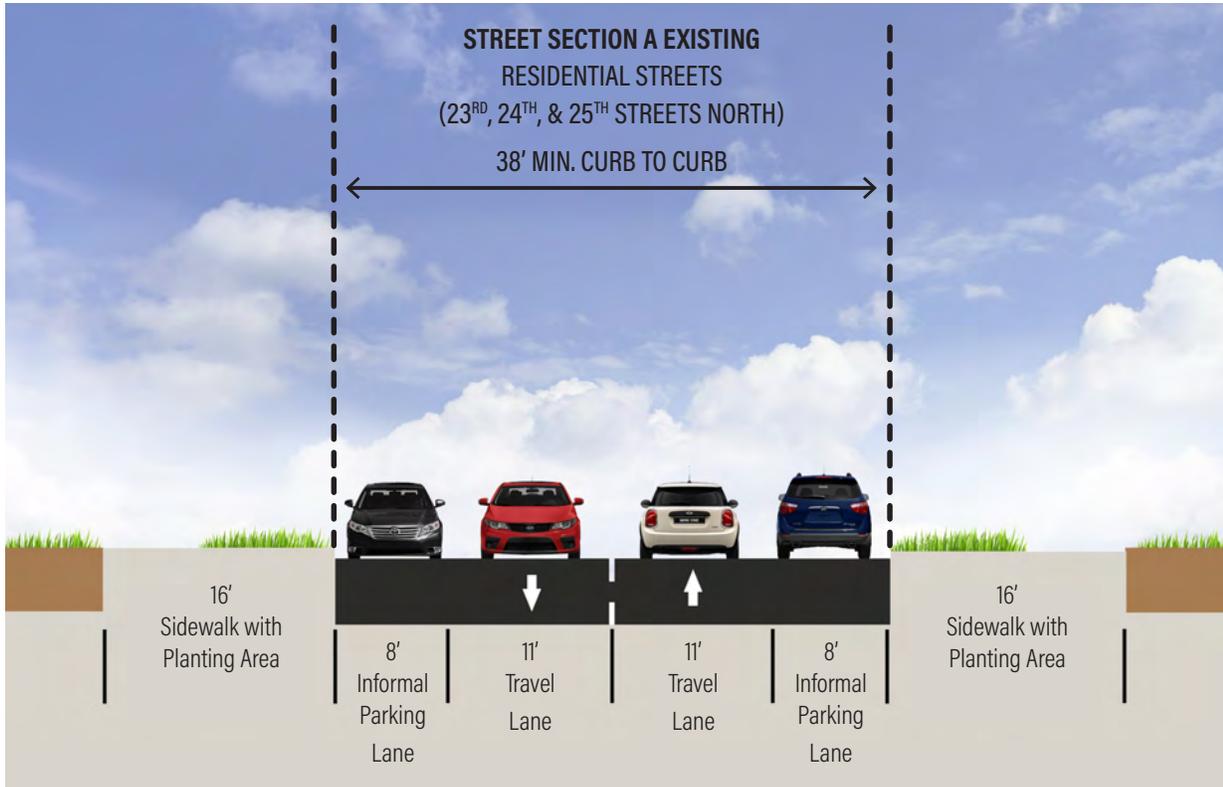
## Street Improvements

### Typical Residential Street (Existing) | Section A

Residential streets in Uptown include 23rd, 24th, and 25th Streets North. The existing sections include two extra-wide travel lanes, one in either direction, with a dashed centerline and informal parallel on-street parking on both sides of the streets. The curb-to-curb varies, but maintains a 38 feet width. Behind the curb, the sidewalks are fairly wide averaging 8 feet; however, the overgrown planting areas intrude on the sidewalk causing it to appear more narrow. Development is set back far from the street and the topography varies greatly, which could cause issues for future development in the area, especially for larger buildings.



Key Plan for proposed street section A in Uptown: 23rd, 24th, and 25th Streets North

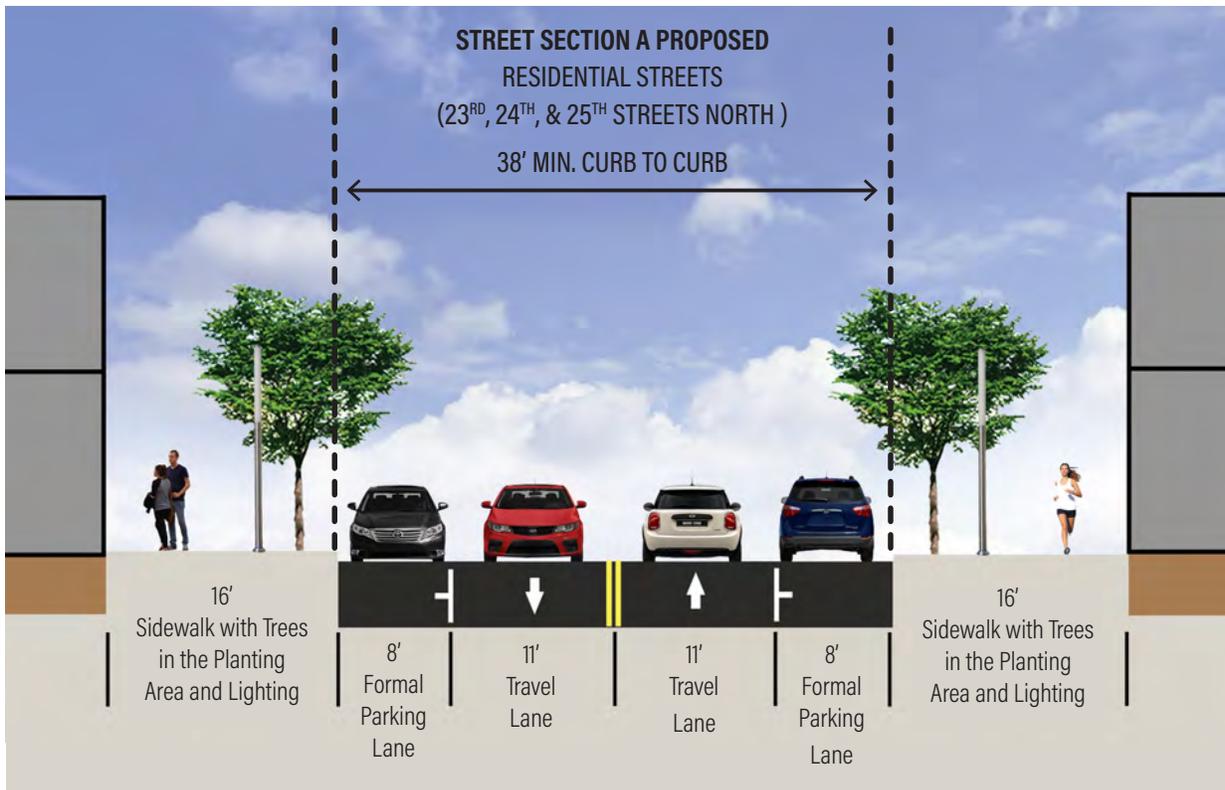


**Typical Residential Street (Proposed) | Section A**

The proposed sections for the residential streets maintain the same 38 foot minimum width from curb-to-curb but with the parking lanes formalized in their own 8 foot lanes. The centerline changes from a dashed white line to a double yellow line and the planting strip behind the curb is more well-maintained to have more regular street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting.



*Existing conditions of 23rd Street North; Source: Google Street View, 2019*

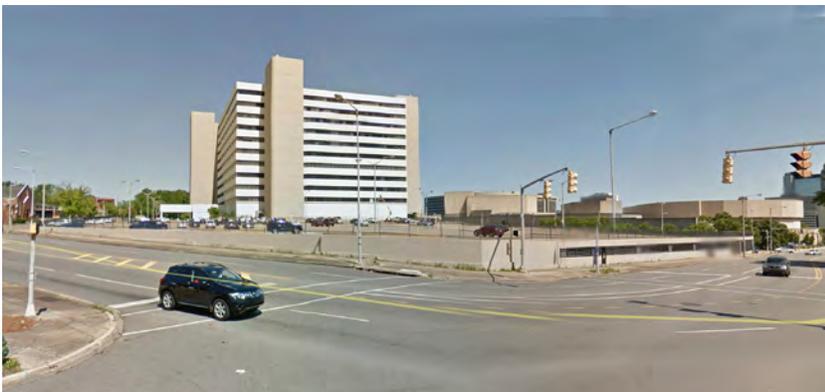




## **Uptown Re-Use and Redevelopment Opportunities**

### **Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse of the Patriot Center (former Social Security Administration building)**

Over the past several years, Uptown has seen development expanding around the BJCC campus. The completion of the I-20/59 reconstruction and the addition of the football stadium will change the landscape of this area fairly dramatically. Development in Uptown thus far has meant the demolition of other buildings, specifically single-family homes. Future development should consider a mix of uses and building typologies, including housing to replace some of the residential population that has been displaced in the area and recreate a lively neighborhood. Redevelopment of existing buildings and infill around existing single-family homes are options in addition to new construction. One example of this approach is shown in the illustration above at the intersection of 11th Avenue North and 21st Street North with the partial redevelopment and adaptive re-use and minimal facade improvements of the Patriot Center (former Social Security Administration building) as well as the redevelopment of the surrounding parking deck for new housing. The illustration also shows necessary intersection and streetscape improvements to provide safe environments for pedestrians and cyclists.



*Above: Conceptual illustration depicting the redevelopment and re-use of the Patriot Center, as well as intersection improvements at 11th Avenue North and 21st Street North*

*Left: Existing conditions*

## Five Points South

### Introduction

The Five Points South neighborhood is one of the southernmost neighborhoods in the City Center, bounded by UAB and the medical campuses to the west and Highway 280 to the east. This is one of the oldest and liveliest neighborhoods in the City Center with a successful entertainment district at its core.

Five Points South is only 1.7 miles from Linn Park, straight down 20th Street, however, at 36 minutes on foot, it's a long and uncomfortable walk. The lack of pedestrian focus makes it a walk that no ones want to take, even on a perfect day.

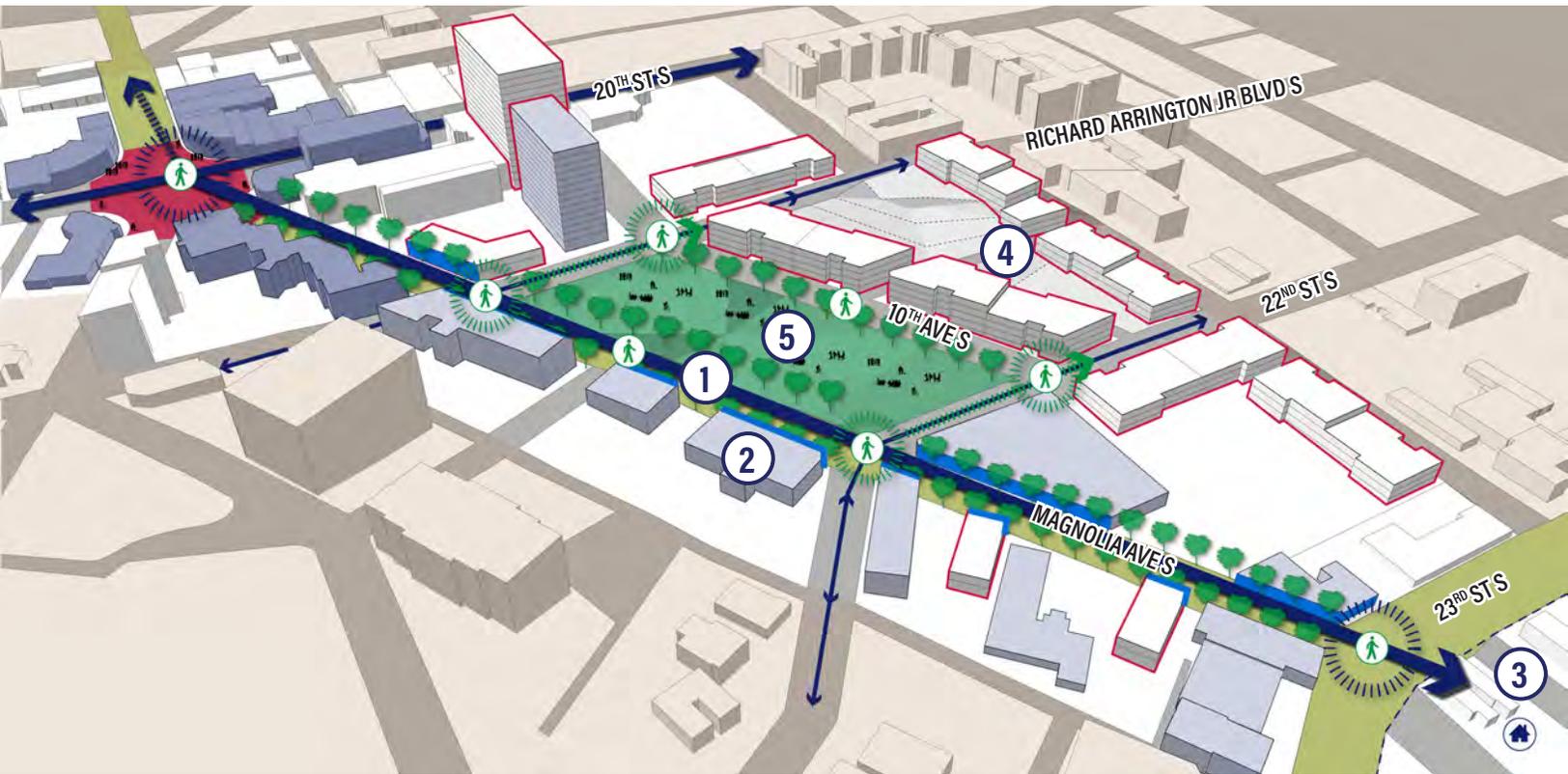
While the Five Points South intersection of 20th Street South, Magnolia Avenue, and 11th Avenue South is vibrant, this experience ends two blocks to the east as Magnolia Avenue crosses Richard Arrington Boulevard South. Moreover, Brother Bryan Park is an under-maintained public space

surrounded on all four sides by vacant and underutilized lots and buildings. The size of the park is adequate, but currently under-utilized, and should be renovated and programmed as a neighborhood park, anchored by mixed-use and/or residential along its edges.

Traveling one additional block up Magnolia Avenue, the 1941 Southtown Court housing complex is proposed to be redeveloped by a consortium of private developers and the Housing Authority into a large mixed-use, mixed-income development in the coming years. The sizable development will put pressure on Magnolia Avenue as the connector between it and Five Points South to be safe, attractive, and fully energized.



*Five Points South*



New Buildings	Implied Connections	Pedestrian Connections	Open Space/Public Realm Opportunities
Adaptive Reuse	Two-way Conversions	Active Frontages	New Housing Development
Key Destinations	Pedestrian Enhancements	Streetscape Improvements	
Improve Intersections for All Mobility Options	Improve Intersections for Pedestrians		
Strategic Connections			

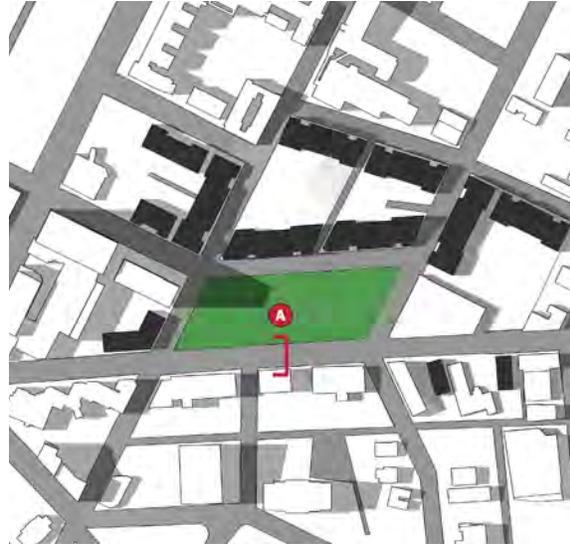
### Key District Initiatives

- 1** Streetscape improvements along Magnolia Avenue, connecting the existing activity node at Five Points South with Brother Bryan Park and the proposed Southtown development
- 2** Adaptive re-use and/or ground floor activation opportunities along Magnolia Avenue create a complete active storefront
- 3** Proposed Southtown redevelopment
- 4** Residential and/or mixed-use development opportunities on the blocks north of Brother Bryan Park
- 5** Renovated Brother Bryan Park including a range of programmatic elements such as a dog park, open green, and shade areas

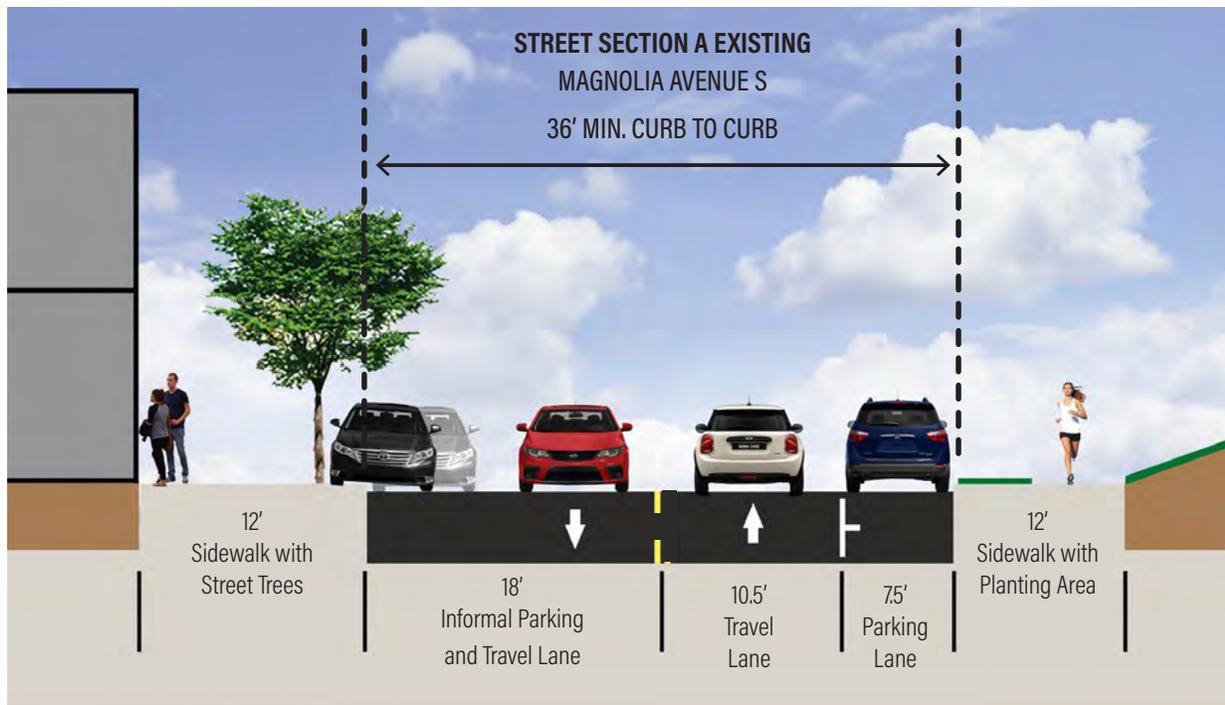
## Street Improvements

### Magnolia Avenue South (Existing) | Section A

Magnolia Avenue South is the main connection between the existing Five Points activity hub and the future Southtown redevelopment site. The existing section includes two travel lanes, one in either direction, with a dashed centerline, informal parking on one side of the street, and formal parallel, on-street parking on the other side, changing sides all along the corridor. The pavement width varies, but maintains a minimum of 36 feet. Behind the curb, the streetscape is inconsistent. For the most part, the north/west side of Magnolia Avenue South has narrow sidewalks with a planting strip and the south/east side has wide sidewalks with sparse trees in grates. The most important part of the existing streetscape to address is the informal parking. While the width is sufficient to accommodate both a parking and a travel lane, given the opportunity drivers will park on the sidewalk to avoid sticking out into the travel lane too much.



Key Plan for street section A in Five Points: Magnolia Avenue South



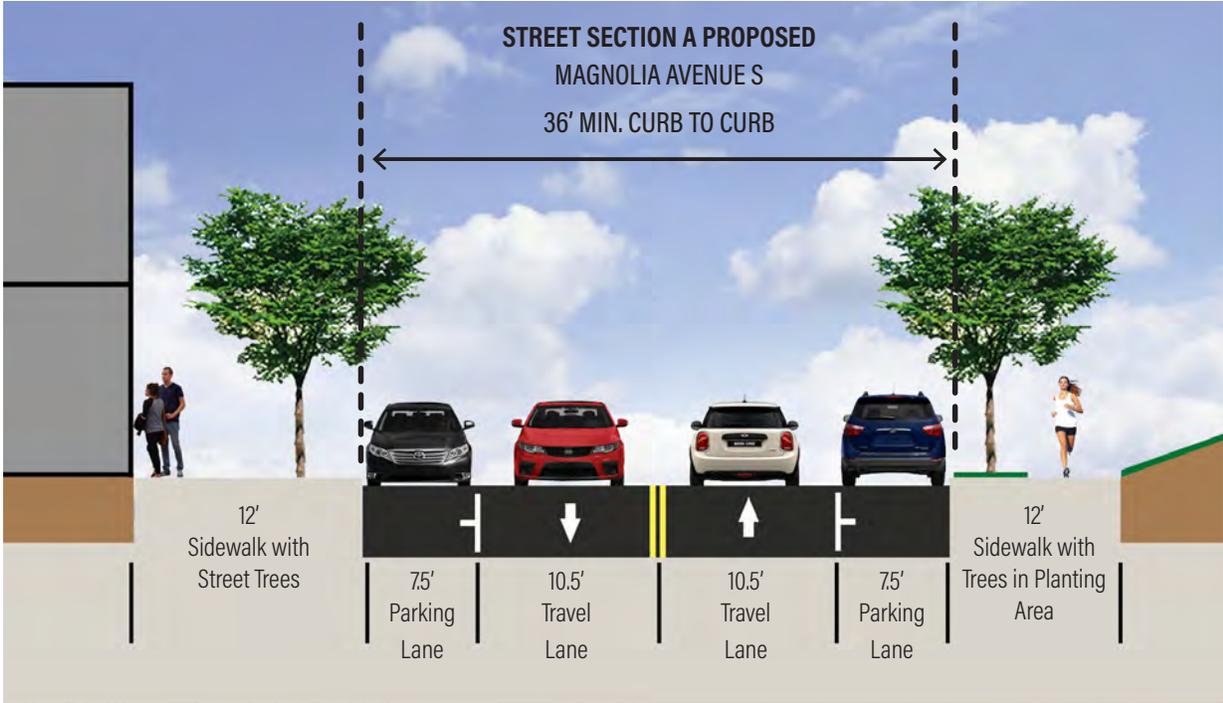
Existing street section with wide sidewalks without consistent street trees, informal on-street parking on one side and formal parking on the other, and two-way operations

**Magnolia Avenue South (Proposed) | Section A**

The proposed section for Magnolia Avenue South maintains the same 36 foot minimum pavement width but formalizes parallel, on-street parking along the length of the corridor on both sides of the street. It also proposes that the centerline change from dashed to double solid lines. The streetscape behind the curb should also be made consistent with wide sidewalks and street trees, either street trees or in planting areas.



Google streetview snapshot of Magnolia Avenue South



Proposed street section with wide sidewalks with consistent street trees, formalized on-street parking on both sides of the street, and more clearly marked lanes



## Streetscape and Park Improvements

### Magnolia Avenue South and Brother Bryan Park Improvements

The illustration above shows improvements for Magnolia Avenue South and Brother Bryan Park, as well as some new development opportunities shown behind the park to help anchor the edges. The streetscape improvements along Magnolia Avenue South include: formalized on-street parking throughout the corridor, consistent street trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting, wide sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks, and an artistic intersection treatment.

The improvements to Brother Bryan Park include:

- » A pavilion at the corner of the intersection to exemplify the activity in the park and draw other users in
- » Formalized entrance into the park with stairs, vegetation, and signage
- » Subdivided into programmed areas for active and passive uses, which could include a fenced in dog park

The new development along 10th Avenue South helps anchor the edge of the park to make it feel less overwhelming in scale, offers ground floor retail opportunities to help activate the edge, and provides more daily users to reinforce Brother Bryan as a neighborhood park.



*Above: Conceptual illustration of proposed improvements to Magnolia Avenue South and Brother Bryan Park*

*Left: Existing conditions*

## Lakeview

### Introduction

The Lakeview neighborhood is east of U.S. 31/U.S. 280, but still within the City Center. The specific portion of the neighborhood focused on in this section is along 1st Avenue South, north of the popular Pepper Place. Pepper Place is a popular entertainment district centered around the former Dr. Pepper Building on 2nd Avenue South.

The largely industrial area is situated near the successful Rotary Trail. The most notable housing are townhomes along Powell Avenue.

There are a number of vacant parcels along 1st Avenue South, some of which are attached to other uses, from US 31 to 32nd Street South. While the block depth is too narrow to efficiently facilitate large-scale developments with large parking requirements, they are able to accommodate smaller scale infill housing.

### Key District Initiatives

- 1 Streetscape connections to Pepper Place activity node along 29th Street South
- 2 Medium-density infill housing opportunity along 1st Avenue South and existing multi-use path
- 3 Enhance 1st Avenue South streetscape from 25th Street South to 32nd Street South with continuous sidewalks (on the north side of the street) pedestrian lighting, street trees, and wayfinding signage
- 4 Green streetscape along 2nd Avenue South





*Above: Conceptual illustration depicting new housing and the extension of the Rotary Trail along 1st Avenue South*

*Left: Existing conditions*





NASA

How many people would you speak to today?

Equity Check

Equity Check



# 7 | Moving Forward - Implementing the Plan

## Contents

- Operations and Management Strategies
- Minimum Development Program
- TIF Analysis Based on Expected Development Activity
- Priority Initiatives
- Implementation Matrix

## Operations and Management Strategies



### Dedicate a person to focus on retail tenant attraction and retention

Great retailing environments rarely happen organically especially when the ownership is so fragmented. They require a steward that wakes up every morning with the mission of tenant recruitment and retention. Because of their unique needs, retail and restaurant tenants are quite different from their office counterparts and therefore require a completely different strategy. Great business districts have people on their staff to help coordinate and lead leasing activities, often hand in hand with commercial brokers.

This position would be responsible for maintaining an inventory of available spaces and providing tour events to local brokers and property owners. They can also provide expertise on the front-end of new construction or renovation activities to provide expertise with tenant requirements including space demising, electrical and other utility services, and solid waste disposal (particularly grease traps and venting).



### Prioritize retail/restaurant recruitment along the Birmingham Green (20th Street North) and adjacent blocks

Vacant spaces, blank walls, broken windows, and boarded up buildings are considered negative elements – so much so that they can visually ruin an otherwise good street experience. Twentieth Street North, as the City Center’s “main street” and its adjacent blocks have too many gaps along its length, primarily in the four blocks from 3rd Avenue North to Linn Park but also interspersed from 3rd Avenue North to Morris Avenue. These gaps create negative images that discourage pedestrian activity and suppress additional economic activity particularly in the evening hours.

It currently has an array of frontages including traditional shop spaces, tower lobbies, and parking garages. Each space may require a unique strategy to help enliven it – with some temporary interventions necessary before a longer-term tenant is secured. The more that this street can be lined from end to end with a continuous shopfront experience, the more that it will be perceived as safe and attractive.

There are a lot of other blocks in need of commercial revitalization, but none are quite as important to the city’s overall character as 20th Street North. Once this area has revitalized, activity will naturally seep into other locations.



## Establish a pop-up retail program

To help fill some of the currently vacant or otherwise underutilized storefronts, a pop-up retail program can be initiated to fill tenant spaces on a short basis. This program serves two goals – it fills vacant spaces and it helps to incubate new shops that could ultimately expand into a permanent location. These programs usually involve an entity who is willing to take on a master lease and the responsibility for its subleasing and management.

In general, successful pop-up retail tenants are conventional retailers selling various products and services (e.g., women’s clothing, local crafts, nail salons). However, artist studios and other “maker-spaces” can also make good pop-up tenants so long as they are able to maintain regular hours, particularly into the evening. Ideally, the spaces are offered to the tenant at no cost on a month to month basis with the simple goal of nurturing a successful start-up to both occupy and enliven the space as well as to thrive in the City Center. A pop-up program is also an excellent way to help incubate minority business to expand the diversity of offerings in the downtown.

## Build 600 units of workforce housing

To ensure diversity, it is critical to remain focused on constructing new housing for those earning 80% or less of the area median income (AMI). Ideally the level of affordability is stratified across income levels to include 60% or less of AMI and 30% or less of AMI. This diversity covers low wage workers, families as well as those who are retired or are otherwise unable to work (e.g, disabled). Ideally, below-market housing is at least 15% of the housing stock. Given the anticipated 4,105 units of market-rate housing anticipated over 10 years in the City Center, it is

appropriate to establish a goal of constructing at least 600 units of below market-rate housing during that same period.

Depending on project and its financing arrangements, it may be advantageous to include mixed-income opportunities within the development - by building, by floor, or by room. More likely, individual projects will be constructed adjacent or nearby market rate units. Regardless of whether this mix is integral to a project, the greatest benefit is in having this diversity within distance.

## Light or secure empty spaces



Any inset area that prevents a pedestrian from seeing beyond it sparks a “fight or flight” instinct to be wary of what might lie behind it. In downtowns, empty storefronts with recessed entries, interstitial spaces between buildings, alleys, and driveway entries into parking decks all present themselves as voids that might be hiding something or someone questionable behind them. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) – principles developed by law enforcement to cut down on real and perceived safety issues.

The most common treatments are to secure smaller gaps such as those in between buildings with wrought iron fences and gates and to light and clean up larger spaces such as alleys and driveways. In general, enhanced lighting of the sidewalk area is a critical component to help improve perceptions of safety. The best lighting of the sidewalk comes from illuminated storefronts followed by pedestrian-scale, full cutoff fixtures. Because street lighting typically only lights the roadway and casts shadows on the sidewalk, it is considered the lowest priority for enhancement.

## Expand the Business Improvement District services and its boundary

The current Business Improvement District (BID) boundary has served the historic core of the City Center for many years but as success continues to spread, so too is the need to expand the geography of the place management services. While the northern and southern boundaries remain logical, there is clearly a need in the near future to expand the eastern boundary to 24th Street to encompass new development on both the north and south sides. Expansion to the west to 13th Street is proposed to include Regions Field, the entire Civil Rights District, and the Innovation District – all areas needing a heightened level of attention.

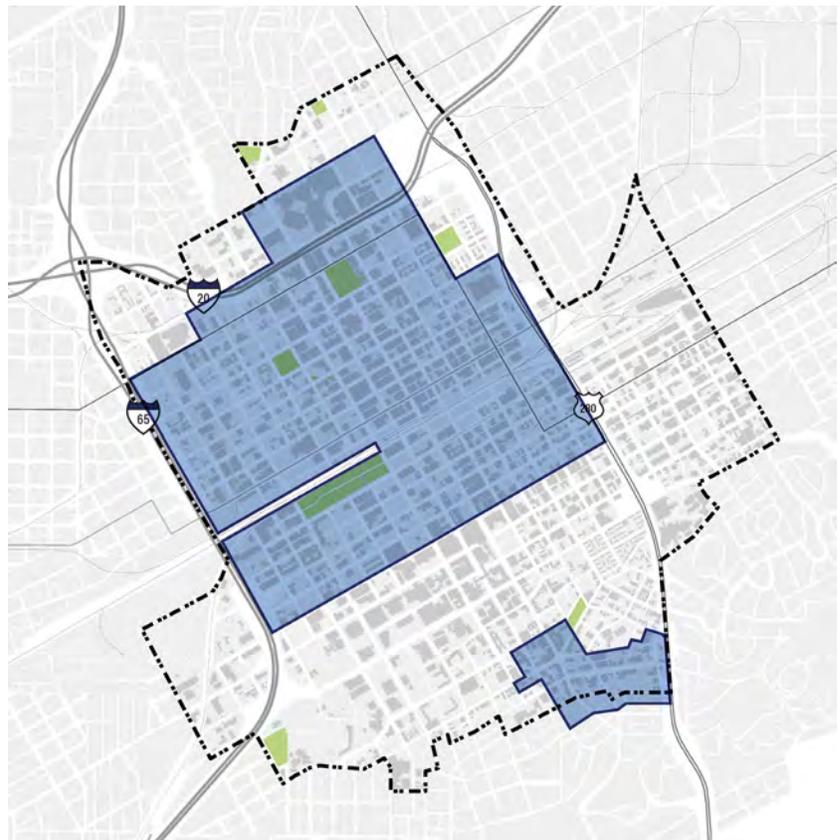
In addition, now is the time to re-evaluate the current assessment in the District to better support an enhancement. Along with this expansion in the boundary comes a need to increase the revenue stream to support not just an enhancement in services but also the ability to support a number of capital projects identified in this plan that are beyond the capacity of the current Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district. Service enhancements should include but are not limited to:

- » Expansion of the CAP program, particularly in the evening hours to cover a larger geography
- » Enhanced seasonal color, signage, and landscaping
- » Public art
- » Site furnishings
- » Promotions
- » Programming - music, events, games, and activities

The specific boundary line and millage rate will be subject to a lot of discussion but are necessary to be able to tackle the efforts outlined in this plan.



*Existing BID Boundary*



*Proposed BID boundary with expansions to include the walkable, urban areas of the City Center including the Civil Rights District, the Innovation District, Parkside, and Five Points South*

## Care for the homeless and eliminate panhandling

Of all the complaints lodged during this planning process, the negative perceptions of those populations experiencing homelessness rose consistently to the top. While there is in fact a population experiencing homelessness, the much greater problems are those individuals who aggressively panhandle throughout the City Center. There is a concentration around Linn Park and the northern half of 20th Street North – likely because of the concentration of hotels and entertainment venues (places that attract visitors) and a lack of a resident population to increase pedestrian traffic in the evenings and to self-police the area.

Panhandling is illegal in Birmingham and the city's law enforcement in partnership with CAP (City Action Partnership) have been proactively acting to stamp this out. The challenge is that the City Center area is a larger geography and it is difficult to cover even the entire Business Improvement District with basic foot patrols. Panhandling is a fact of life in city centers, but it remains more perceptively pervasive in Birmingham simply because of the lack of other positive activity in the evenings in a number of locations. A general increase in vitality and activity will help to tamp this down. Until then, consistent, zero-tolerance enforcement will be necessary across a broader area.

Every city has a population of people experiencing homelessness. Though it appears much more pervasive, the actual population of those experiencing homelessness is not any larger than in other places. The issue is one of perception. In other words, if all you see are people who appear to be homeless on a sidewalk because the sidewalk is otherwise empty, it will appear worse. When pedestrian volumes increase on a particular street, the ratio of homeless to pedestrians will drop along with the perceptions.

Homelessness does in fact carry a stigma – often well founded – of illicit behavior including panhandling, loitering, trespassing, petty theft, littering, and bathroom incivility. While there is some equating of homelessness to these behaviors in Birmingham, the perception is far greater than the actual incidence.

Historically, homelessness was addressed using various physical and architectural strategies such as those promulgated by Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) practitioners including laws or regulations that prevent panhandling, sleeping in doorways; special enforcement to remove people from trespassing in parks after dusk; fences and screening to limit access to private and semi-private areas; laws to remove abandoned properties such as gathering places; and laws that discourage public food distribution areas without compliance to safety and health code regulations.

These strategies may be effective in the short run, but typically only displace individuals rather than solving the root issues. A second generation of strategies are necessary to better address the underlying social issues including housing programs with wraparound social and counseling services and accessible and free services for drug and substance abuse rehabilitation services. There are already service providers in Birmingham who offer these comprehensive services and have reported success in addressing these issues though further financial support is always required and consideration for new transitional housing should be a part of the larger housing discussion. Key strategies in the City Center include:

- » Continue to support a housing first model
- » Work with the City Action Partnership (CAP), One Roof, the faith-based community, and other service providers to promote and update the Hand to Hand Resource Guide to ensure that services are accessible and easier to navigate.
- » Support and expand One Roof's outreach street team program which includes police officers, health and social service providers, case managers, community health paramedics (EMS).
- » Develop a comprehensive public awareness campaign aimed to educate the community on the difference between those that panhandle and those that experience homelessness.
- » Partner with the Veterans Affairs to identify a 1.75-acre site within 1.5 miles of the Birmingham City Center for an outpatient surgical center as well as affordable housing solutions for veterans.

## Minimum Development Program

	Housing 	Office 	Retail 	Hotel 	
Strategic Opportunity Areas	Innovation District	850 units	200,000 sf	20,000 sf	
	Civil Rights District	850 units	50,000 sf	20,000 sf	210 keys
	20th Street North	750 units	50,000 sf	20,000 sf	210 keys
	Uptown	150 units	50,000 sf		
	Five Points South	850 units	50,000 sf	20,000 sf	

Additional Areas	Pepper Place	60 units			
	2nd Ave East	not included*			
	Parkside District	500 units		20,000 sf	
	Medical District	250 units		20,000 sf	
	UAB Campus Core	250 units		20,000 sf	
	Sloss Furnances	not included*			
	Southside	not included*			
	St. Vincent's Hospital	not included*			

Total 10 Year Program	4,510 units	400,000 sf	140,000 sf	420 keys
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\* Development in these areas was not included in the baseline development program. It is assumed that any development program in these areas would be deducted from the overall program for the City Center should it be realized in the ten year time horizon.

## TIF Analysis Based on Expected Development Activity

	Housing 	Office 	Retail 	Hotel 
<b>Value per Unit</b>	<b>\$150,000/unit</b>	<b>\$200/sf</b>		
<b>Value Per Unit/Square Foot</b>				
<b>Sales Per Square Foot</b>			<b>\$400/sf</b>	
<b>Sales Per Room Night</b>				<b>\$80/room night</b>

<b>Tax Rate Per Unit</b>				
<b>Property Tax Rate</b>	<b>\$0.75%</b>	<b>\$0.75%</b>		
<b>City Sales Tax Rate</b>			<b>4%</b>	
<b>Hotel/Hospitality Tax</b>				<b>17.5%</b>

<b>Total 10 Year Program</b>	<b>4,510 units</b>	<b>400,000 sf</b>	<b>140,000 sf</b>	<b>420 keys</b>
<b>Annual Revenue (at build-out)</b>	<b>\$5,073,750</b>	<b>\$600,750</b>	<b>\$2,240,750</b>	<b>\$2,146,200</b>

<b>Total Annual Incremental Revenue</b>	<b>\$10,059,950</b>
<b>Bondable Interest Rate</b>	<b>9%</b>

<b>Bondable Value (20 Year Term)</b>	<b>\$91,832,713</b>
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\* A TIF is a Tax Increment Financing district that allows municipalities to capture the increased tax value of a parcel for various public investments including, but not limited to, parking, street improvements, and parks.

## Priority Initiatives

**1** Create a master public realm plan for the Civil Rights District that includes the renovation of Kelly Ingram Park

**2** Renovate/modernize the Birmingham Green/20th Street North

**3** Convert streets back to two-way operations - prioritize 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues North

**4** Activate empty/under-utilized storefronts along 20th Street North, 4th Avenue North (west of 20th Street North), and 2nd Avenue North (east of 20th Street North)

**5** Build 600 units of workforce housing (80% of AMI and below) over 10 years

**6** Renovate Brother Bryan Park and install a new streetscape along Magnolia Avenue South

**7** Install 5 miles of protected bike/scooter lanes

**8** Establish a create placemaking program to spread temporary and permanent art throughout the City Center





**9** Consider an RFP for the redevelopment of Boutwell Auditorium and the City Hall Parking Garage

**10** Install a new streetscape along 16th Street North to connect the Civil Rights District and the Innovation District

**11** Expand the success of Innovation Depot throughout the district to create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood

**12** Renovate Linn Park

**13** Focus incentives and leadership to encourage new housing and mixed-use development in the City Center Core, the Civil Rights District, the Innovation District, and in Five Points South

**14** Complete the Rotary Trail connection to Railroad Park and the Switch Trail in the Innovation District

**15** Eliminate aggressive panhandling

**16** Implement the Character Code to set best practices for new development

Image Credit: SeanPavonePhoto/Adobe Stock

## Implementation Matrix

In order for the vision and recommendations expressed in this plan to move forward, specific action items will need to be implemented by a number of partners with interests in the City Center. Many of the action items seek to provide the conditions under which the vision can be achieved, by way of providing sensible land use regulation, necessary public investments, the development of appropriate programs and policies, encouraging catalyst projects and other actions.

The action items in the table are prioritized based on the legend noted above. The funding is listed as an order of magnitude as way to evaluate the relative costs of one action over another. As a means of attempting to quantify these relative costs over a twenty year period, the table below summarizes an estimated range of cost values that may be used.

Order of Magnitude	Estimated Cost Range
\$	\$1 - \$50,000
\$\$	\$50,000 - \$250,000
\$\$\$	\$250,000 - \$1 million
\$\$\$\$	\$1 million+

The execution of the implementation steps will likely be phased and is subject to a variety of factors, which determine their timing. These include:

- » The availability of personnel and financial resources necessary to implement specific proposals;
- » Whether an implementation step is a necessary precursor to or component of the rational evaluation of a new development project;
- » The interdependence of the various implementation tasks, in particular, the degree to which implementing one item is dependent upon the successful completion of another item; and,
- » The relative severity of the challenge which a particular implementation task is designed to remedy.

In view of these factors, it is not possible to put forward a precise timetable for the various implementation items. The priority for implementation will be listed by the period in which items should be completed. Year 1-5 items and certain on-going items are the highest priority while Year 6-20+ projects could be completed as resources allow.

Task Number	Project/Task	Page Number(s)	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Code/Policy
<b>PRIORITY INITIATIVES (PI)</b>									
PI-1	Create a master public realm plan for the Civil Rights District that includes the restoration of Kelly Ingram Park	47, 60, 95, 102	\$\$\$	Capital	Public		X		
PI-2	Renovate/modernize the Birmingham Green/20th Street North	65, 118, 122	\$\$\$	Capital	Public		X		
PI-3	Convert streets back to two-way operations - prioritize 4th, 5th, and 6th Avenues North	79, 96	\$	Capital	Public			X	
PI-4	Activate empty/under-utilized storefronts along 20th Street North, 4th Avenue North (west of 20th Street North), and 2nd Avenue North (east of 20th Street North)	95, 118, 142	\$	Operating	Public/Private	X			
PI-5	Build 600 units of workforce housing (80% of Average Median Income (AMI) and below) over 10 years	43, 49, 143	\$	Capital	Public/Private	X	X	X	X
PI-6	Renovate Brother Bryan Park and install a new streetscape along Magnolia Avenue South	62, 133, 136	\$\$\$	Capital	Public				
PI-7	Utilize excess road capacity for mobility that prioritizes, walking, biking (and other slow-speed vehicles) and enhanced transit	51, 81, 82	\$\$\$	Capital	Public	X			X
PI-8	Establish a creative placemaking program to spread temporary and permanent art throughout the City Center	45, 69	\$	Operating	Public	X			
PI-9	Consider an RFP for the redevelopment of Boutwell Auditorium and the City Hall Parking Garage	43, 118	\$		Public/Private			X	X
PI-10	Install a new streetscape along 16th Street North to connect the Civil Rights District and the Innovation District	65, 96, 107	\$\$\$	Capital	Public		X		
PI-11	Expand the success of Innovation Depot throughout the district to create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood	49, 107	\$	Operating/Capital	Public/Private	X			
PI-12	Renovate Linn Park	46, 51, 58, 68, 116, 140	\$\$\$	Capital	Public		X		
PI-13	Focus incentives and leadership to encourage new housing and mixed-use development in the City Center Core, the Civil Rights District, the Innovation District, and in Five Points South	54	\$	Operating	Public/Private	X			
PI-14	Complete the Rotary Trail connection to Railroad Park and the Switch Trail in the Innovation District	83	\$	Capital	Public/Private		X		
PI-15	Eliminate aggressive panhandling	45, 145	\$	Operating	Public	X			X
PI-16	Implement the Character Code to set best practices for new development	44	\$	Operating	Public		X		X

