

# ERIE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



*One Vision...Endless Opportunities*

*Connecting our Vision and Resources  
for a new Downtown Erie*



## **Erie Downtown Partnership Board of Directors**

Chairman, **David Katovich**

Vice President of Underwriting & Claims,  
Erie Insurance Group

Vice President, **David Sherman**

Owner, Isaac Baker Menswear

Treasurer, **Chuck Scalise**

President and CEO, Housing and Neighborhood  
Development Services

Secretary, **Keith Taylor**, Ph.D.

President, Gannon University  
(Representative: Erika Ramalho)

**Joseph Sinnott**, ESQ.

Mayor, City of Erie (Representatives: Kim Green,  
Melanie Johnson)

**Tim Wachter**, ESQ.

Knox McLaughlin Gornall & Sennett

**Almitra Clerkin**

Executive Director, Erie Playhouse

**Shawnta Pulliam**

Executive Director, Nurturing Hearts

**Ray Massing**

Executive Director, Erie Parking Authority

**Ray Moluski**

Vice President, General Services,  
UPMC Hamot Medical Center

**Thomas “Tippy” Dworzanski**

Owner, Park Place/Sherlock’s

**Marci Honard**

Owner, Calamari’s Squid Row

**George Willis**, P.E.

Senior Vice President, Urban Engineers

## **Steering Committee**

**John Buchna**

**Chuck Scalise**

**George Willis**, P.E.

**Kim Green/Melanie Johnson**

**Scott Henry**

**David Katovich**

Special thanks to Scott Henry, Executive Director of the Erie Redevelopment Authority for his dedication and thorough review of plan elements throughout the process.

## **Staff**

**John Buchna**, Chief Executive Officer

**Christina Katen**, Assistant Director

**Kelly Hilling**, Accountant

**Gary Geisler**, Maintenance Technician

**David Little**, Maintenance Technician

## **Planning Team**

CMK Planning, LLC--**Charlene M. Kerr**, AICP

Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc.--**Randy A. Mielnik**,  
AICP, LEED AP

Land Design Studio--**Tad Krear**, RLA, Landscape  
Architect

**Eric James**, Landscape Architect

**Jacob Lloyd**, Landscape Architect

CMoore Creative -- **Charles Moore**, Layout/Design

## **Funding sources**

Funding for this project was provided by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)

## **Photo Credits**

The bulk of the photos within this document are courtesy of the Erie Downtown Partnership and VisitErie



## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3	Relationships to Other Key Plans and Studies.....	53
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	25	<b>Chapter 3: Transportation, Circulation, and Parking Analysis</b> .....	55
Erie Downtown Partnership .....	27	Vehicular Traffic.....	56
Vision Statement .....	28	Parking.....	58
Mission Statement .....	28	Transit .....	62
Project Purpose .....	29	Pedestrian and Bicycle.....	66
Planning Process .....	30	<b>Chapter 4: Market Review</b> .....	69
Downtown Boundaries .....	31	Sales Housing Market .....	70
Public Input Opportunities.....	32	Sales Market Potential.....	71
• Stakeholder Interviews .....	32	Rental Housing Market.....	71
• Public Sessions .....	32	Rental Housing Market Potential.....	71
• City Council Sessions.....	32	Retail Market.....	72
• Surveys.....	32	Trade Area Retail Supply.....	72
<b>Chapter 2: Existing Conditions</b> .....	33	Retail Demand.....	72
Brief History of Downtown .....	34	Retail Capture and Development Potential.....	73
Existing Land Use and Zoning.....	37	Office Market.....	73
Infrastructure.....	43	Office Market Potential.....	73
Safety Forces .....	44	Hotel Market .....	74
Adjacent Neighborhoods .....	44	Hotel Market Potential.....	74
• Bayfront East Side Taskforce (BEST).....	45	<b>Chapter 5: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies</b> .....	75
• Erie-GAINS--Our West Bayfront Neighborhood Coalition .....	45	Goal 1 Recognition of Four Distinct Districts and the design elements, redevelopment strategies, transportation enhancements and target markets for each.....	76
• Historic Little Italy (HLI) .....	46	Goal 2 Physical Environment of Downtown Erie...86	
• SSJNN Eastside Multicultural Community (EMC).....	46	Goal 3 Economic Development Opportunities...89	
• SNOOPS.....	47	Goal 4 Market-rate Housing.....	93
• Critical Areas outside the Downtown Improvement District.....	47	Goal 5 Transportation, Circulation, and Connectivity .....	95
Past Plans and Studies .....	48	Goal 6 Aggressive Promotional Campaign .....	99
Why Another Plan?.....	50		
Past Accomplishments.....	50		
Projects Underway.....	51		





**Chapter 6: Urban Design Plan**.....103

Streetscaping .....104

Building Facades and Site Improvements.....112

Bayfront District .....114

Perry Square District.....114

Renaissance District .....115

Union Square District.....115

An Emerging TOD.....119

**Chapter 7: Development Regulations**.....123

Zoning.....124

Zoning Issues and Recommendations .....127

Framework for Design Guidelines .....130

Form-Based Code .....133

Code Enforcement.....134

Blighted Properties.....134

Training and Education.....135

Panhandling .....135

**Plates**

Plate 1-1 Erie Downtown Master Plan Graphic.....7

Plate 1-2 Downtown Districts .....8

Plate 2-1 Existing Land Use Map.....36

Plate 2-2 Existing Zoning Map.....41

Plate 2-3 Neighborhoods Adjacent to Downtown ..45

Plate 2-4 Land use improvements .....49

Plate 3-1 Existing Parking Diagram.....59

Plate 3-2 Potential Parking Improvements .....60

Plate 3-3 Existing Public Transportation Routes and Stops.....63

Plate 3-4 Pedestrian/Bike Multi-Use Trails Diagram.....64

Plate 3-5 Bike Erie Proposed 20-30 Mile Bike Path.....66

Plate 5-2 Potential State Street Intersection Improvements .....80

Plate 6-1 Proposed Road Diets .....107

Plate 6-2 Street Classifications and Legend .....108

Plate 6-3 Ceremonial Street Graphic .....109

Plate 6-4 Facade Priority Examples .....113

Plate 6-5 Facade Improvement Priorities.....117

Plate 6-6 Proposed Bayfront Graphic.....116

Plate 6-7 Downtown Erie/EMTA Transit Center Design Principles.....121

**Appendices**

Appendix 1-1 List of Stakeholders Interviewed ...137

Appendix 1-2 Comments from Public Sessions...138

Appendix 1-3 Employee and Public Survey Results .....139

Appendix 1-3A Graphic Summary of Survey Results .....140

Appendix 2-1 Excerpts from Erie Waterfront Master Plan—Domokur Architects.....140

Appendix 2-2 Past Plans, Studies and Reports...141

Appendix 5-1 Existing Incentives.....142

Appendix 5-1A Map of Incentive Areas.....142

Appendix 5-2 Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) Initiative.....143

Appendix 6-1A thru E Streetscaping Scenarios—Downtown Streetscape Master Plan—Urban Engineers, AECOM, and Dahlkemper Landscaping .....144





• EXECUTIVE SUMMARY •

*One Vision...Endless Opportunities  
Connecting our Vision and Resources  
for a new Downtown Erie*



• EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Erie Downtown Master Plan* was commissioned by the Erie Downtown Partnership (EDP) to provide a road map for the EDP and its many partners for the continued revitalization of Downtown Erie. This Plan, when implemented, will achieve the EDP’s vision for Downtown Erie:

*Downtown Erie is the thriving center of civic, government, finance, arts and culture, history, retail, health care, education, entrepreneurship, dining and entertainment for the Erie region.... It is an exciting place to live, a viable place to work or do business, and a vibrant and enticing place to visit.*

As its Mission Statement addresses:

*The Erie Downtown Partnership is the lead non-profit economic development partner created to revitalize and enhance the 70-block area from the Bayfront to the railroad tracks and from Holland Street to Sassafra Street in terms of economic viability, housing choices, multi-modal transportation, arts and cultural activities and events, and retail and service opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment....*

To achieve this vision and meet its mission, the EDP has prepared this Erie Downtown Master Plan to direct its continued revitalization and redevelopment activities. However, as noted throughout this Plan, the EDP needs the assistance of its many private and public partners to make this vision a reality. The **EDP’s role is to initiate, facilitate, collaborate, and/or coordinate the efforts of government leaders, economic development and civic partners, businesses, and property owners to assure that this vision for Downtown Erie is achieved within the next ten years.** Other partners have missions beyond the revitalization of downtown--only the EDP has Downtown Erie as its number one priority.

Downtown Erie has witnessed, and is still witnessing today, many exciting projects that are bringing people and investment dollars into the area, including:

Exciting Project in Progress	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new Courtyard by Marriott and several plans for mixed-use developments on the Bayfront;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New technology facilities at the Center for Business Ingenuity, Erie Insurance Group’s Technical Learning Center, and the Renaissance Center;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued improvements to the campuses of UPMC Hamot, Gannon University, and Erie Insurance Group;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued growth in the cluster of entrepreneurs and support for entrepreneurship at the Innovation Collaborative and Radius CoWork;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued renovations and upgrades to Perry Square;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new Transit Center for the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority that includes plans for a Food Hub and retail services; and</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new sports arena and the planned expansion of the Warner Theater;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptive reuse of many historic buildings in downtown, to name a few.</li> </ul>



*Bicentennial Tower*

**It is obvious that people have recognized the value of investing in Downtown Erie. Downtown Erie is turning the corner!**

In addition, there is encouraging evidence that Erie's vital signs are getting stronger. By many measures, Erie and its downtown are better off today than they were just a few short years ago.

Per capita income is up, cost of living is lower than in most cities, the crime index is lower than the national average, higher education continues to grow in Erie County, and there has been a steady increase in tourism-related employment.

The challenge is to maintain this momentum, leveraging the benefits of an improving economy with a well-conceived plan for the future of Downtown Erie, creating synergies and opportunities for local businesses, entrepreneurs, civic groups, and residents.

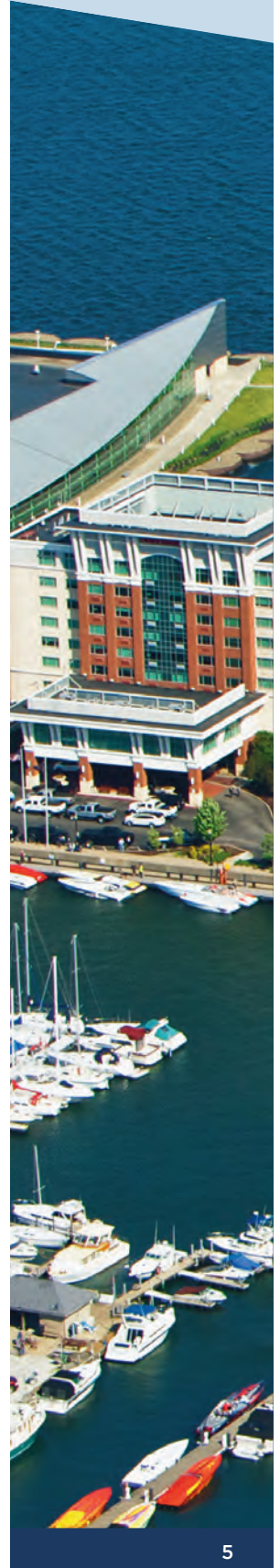
**The best way to generate this synergy is to establish Downtown Erie as an alliance of four unique and thriving districts:**

- A bustling Bayfront and medical district - Bayfront District.
- A thriving government and business district - Perry Square District.
- A robust hub for innovation, entertainment, and retail activity - Renaissance District, and
- A transit-oriented housing and office district - Union Square District.

Aligning complementary businesses, offices, entertainment venues, housing, and other activities within these four districts will allow each to benefit from the presence of others and the ability to capitalize on each other's target markets and promotional efforts.



Downtown Erie



Erie Bayfront



## • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Erie Downtown Master Plan** is not just another plan – it purposefully identifies specific goals and objectives, and provides realistic implementation strategies that will achieve a very basic and fundamental vision for Downtown Erie, rooted in the desire to attract people and investment. It includes creating new and better ways to attract people for shopping, entertainment, recreation, culture, and an urban experience. It also recognizes the importance of downtown as a home for people who want to be fully immersed in downtown amenities and the conveniences of urban living.

The planning process that took place over the past ten months has resulted in an overall design plan for Downtown Erie, illustrated on **Plate 1-1**, which shows existing buildings, parking facilities, green space and parks, as well as potential new parking garages, current proposed buildings, and suggested building projects.

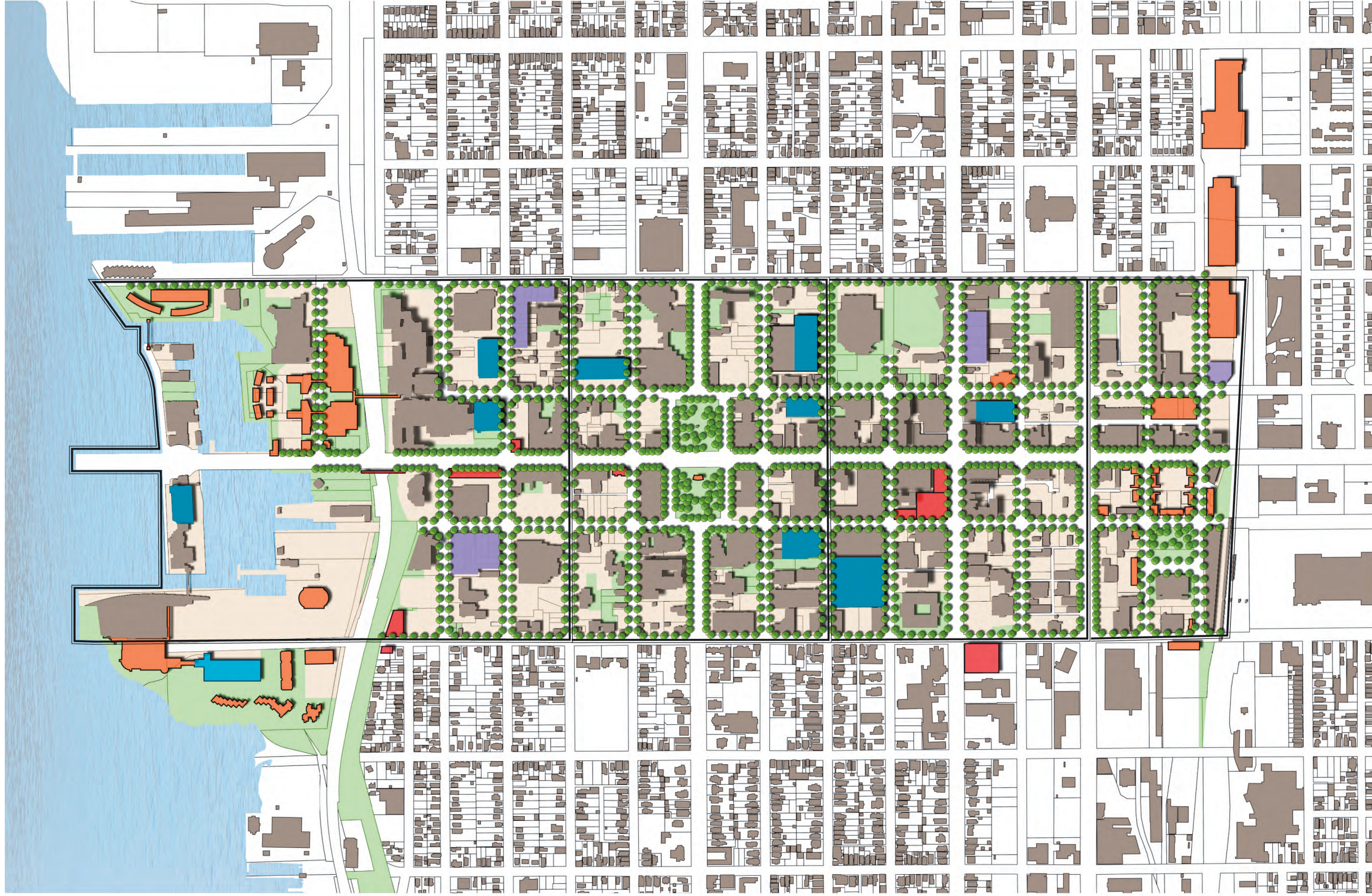
The planning process identified **six major goals**, with a number of objectives and strategies for each. Once again, the EDP cannot lead the charge on each of these recommendations; rather the EDP should assure that someone is designated as a lead agency and that Downtown Erie's vision is taken into serious consideration on each issue. These six goals and a brief discussion of their objectives and strategies are on the following pages.



*Celebrate Erie event*



*Inside Warner Theater*



**Plate 1-1: Erie Downtown Master Plan**

- = Existing Buildings
- = Current / Proposed Projects
- = Potential Building/Enhancement Projects
- = Existing Parking Garages
- = Potential New Parking Garages
- = Existing Green Space/Impervious Surfaces
- = Future/Enhanced Streetscape
- = Potential Elevated Pedestrian Bridges
- = District Boundaries

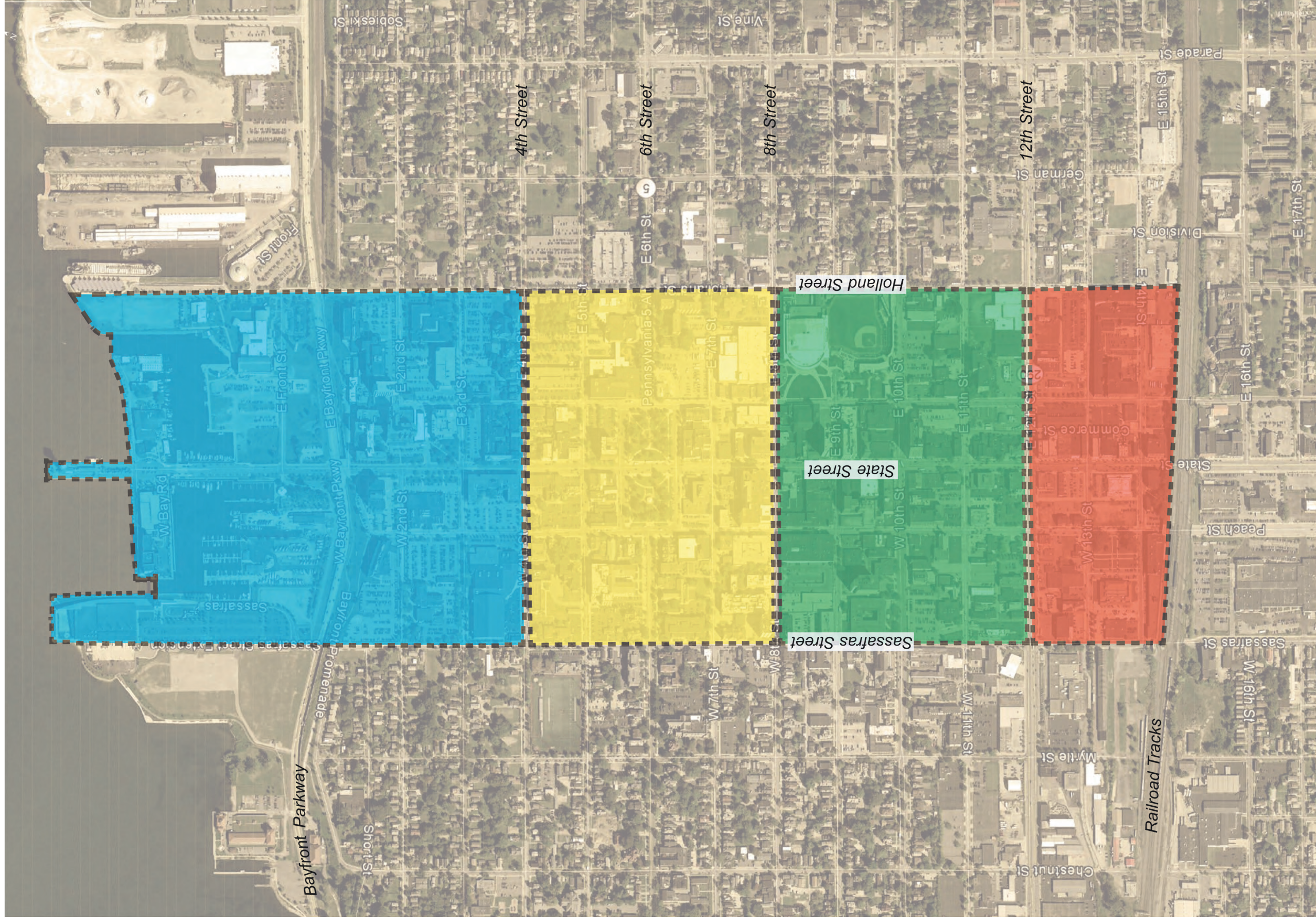


Plate 1-2: Erie Downtown District Boundaries

	= Bayfront District		= Renaissance District
	= Perry Square District		= Union Square District

**GOAL 1:**

*Recognize and promote four districts in Downtown Erie to help support social and economic synergy. Each district is a unique subarea of downtown, with different character and functions, as well as unique design elements, land use concentrations, clusters of business activity, and target markets. These four districts are shown on **Plate 1-2**.*

Working with key partners within each district, design elements, redevelopment strategies, and transportation enhancements will be identified and implemented, while the district remains true to its history, capitalizes on natural assets and existing resources, and targets identified markets and land uses.

**The four districts are:**

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Bayfront District     | • Renaissance District  |
| • Perry Square District | • Union Square District |



*Aerial of Bayfront*



*Perry Square stage*



*Renaissance businesses*



*Union Square streetscape*

*Water skiing on the bay*





## • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Bayfront District**, between the Bay and 4th Street, focuses on water-related and medical facilities, and providing services to water enthusiasts, conventioners, medical patients and their families. Visual and physical connections between the Bayfront (north of the Parkway) and the balance of the district (south of the Parkway) are high priorities for all future development plans, which should include pedestrian and bicycle connections over the Parkway.

A nautical theme is encouraged, building on the Convention Center design, and a signature project is recommended to bring people to the Bayfront. Greater connectivity, public access to the water, public art, historical and educational kiosks, and public amenities are required throughout the district. New housing should be relegated to upper floors of mixed-use buildings and the bluffs, and all buildings should be low-rise to not obstruct views of the Bay.

Surface parking lots should be minimized. Public retail spaces and landscaped areas should be provided on ground and top levels of parking garages. Access to Presque Isle State Park should be provided via additional water taxis, duck boats, and/or ferries, with bus or trolley service provided on the peninsula.



*Bayfront Convention Center*



*Proposed Bayfront District streetscape*

Bayfront Union Square district rendering is under development

- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perry Square Union Square district rendering is under development

The **Perry Square District**, between 4th and 8th Streets, is the hub of major outdoor events centered on Perry Square. It is home to the key government and private economic engines in downtown, including Erie Insurance Group (EIG) and Gannon University. Many historic structures, together with Perry Square, create the ambience for the district, which defines it as the historic and civic center of the City and the region.

The Perry Square Master Plan defined improvements to maintain and enhance Perry Square, many of which are completed or underway. To the east and west of Perry Square, EIG and Gannon continue to expand their footprints with first-class buildings and facilities. Meeting the needs of students, faculty, staff, employees, and clients of these entities and other existing businesses is a high priority for this district.

No new surface lots are recommended for this district so that high-density development can continue. Facade and streetscaping improvements should begin at Perry Square and extend outward, especially along State Street, to create the greatest impact. East and West 6th Streets, as key entranceways into downtown, should continue to be enhanced by both public and private sector partners.



*Perry Square proposed improvements Courtesy of Kidder Wachter Architects*





## • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The Renaissance District**, between 8th and 12th Streets, is the major recreation, entertainment and retail district in Downtown Erie, with great opportunities for retail growth and a boutique hotel to anchor it. The Innovation Collaborative, the Renaissance Center and Gannon’s Center for Business Ingenuity have created a niche for innovative entrepreneurship, providing office, co-working, and incubator space, ecosystem navigation and technical assistance, current technology, and other synergies for creative and entrepreneurial minds.

Critical to the continued resurgence of this district is the opportunity for an upscale boutique hotel to service families and friends of performers and athletes working in

the district along with Gannon alumni and parents of students. In addition, an upscale restaurant, specialty retail stores, and Class A office space will be recruited for this district. Building and facade improvements and infill development will continue to enhance the district. There are multiple groups of performers, athletes, entrepreneurs, small technology companies, and theater and sports patrons to target to enhance the viability of this district.

Parking is abundant in this district, but can be stressed during key events. Coordination and promotion of parking facilities, better signage, and the use of technology to locate and pay for parking are needed.



*Renaissance Center*



*Example of upscale boutique hotel*



*Erie Playhouse “Chicago”*



*Party on the patio*

Renaissance district rendering is under development



- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Union Square district rendering is under development

**The Union Square District**, between 12th Street and the railroad, is ripe for eclectic new residential and transportation opportunities. 12th Street has the opportunity to reclaim its former prominence as a viable business corridor, and the potential exists for more upscale and unique projects to service downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods.

Existing historic buildings and key businesses existing in this district are attracting the interests of developers to renovate vacant buildings into adaptive reuses including offices and housing, and to develop on vacant lots. The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority's (EMTA's) new Transit Center on East 14th Street can be the impetus for a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) for Erie, bringing a variety of housing types and retail services, as well as transportation alternatives to the southern end of Downtown



*Example of potential housing*

Erie. The Transit Center will provide Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and electric charging stations as alternatives for vehicles. The parking garage will provide ample parking for EMTA employees and a potential Food Hub on the ground floor of the garage, as well as adjacent businesses. Services such as bike sharing, repair and storage, a café, a business center, car sharing or taxi services, and similar retail opportunities will complement the transit service center provided at this facility.

Developers have already expressed interest in expanding the housing opportunities in this district. In addition to the Mercantile Building, Lovell Place, and the Union Square townhomes, housing for young professionals, empty nesters, retirees, seasonal athletes, millennials, and single-person households are needed to meet current demands and nationwide trends. As the district develops with this housing, additional restaurants and retail establishments will be needed to service residents.



*EMTA Parking ramp rendering*

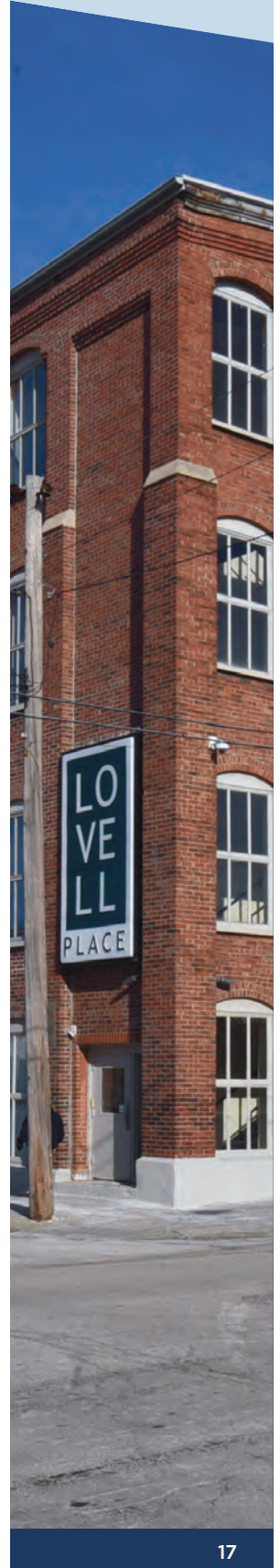


*Union Square housing*



*Potential bike path*

*Lovell Place market rate housing & offices*





## • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

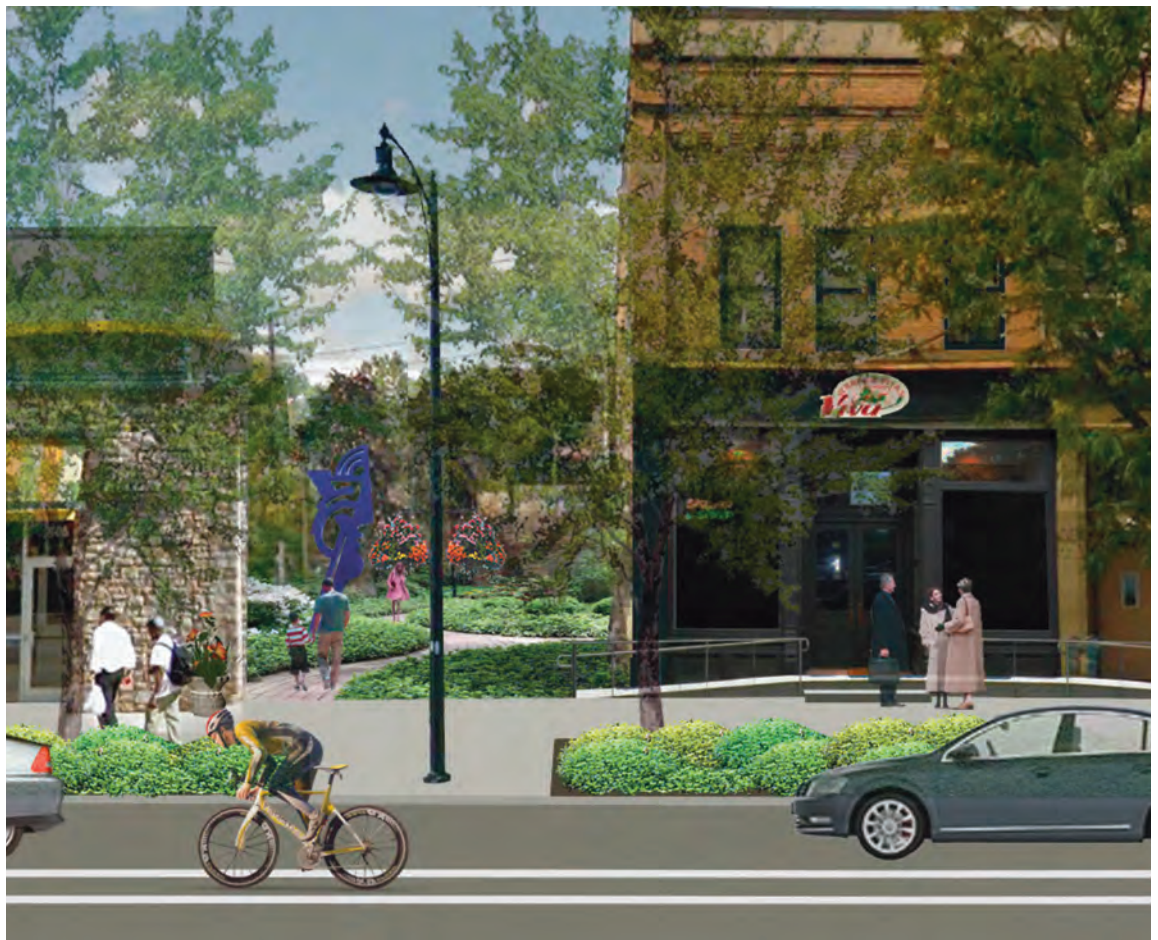
### GOAL 2:

*Improve the overall physical environment of Downtown Erie.*

As each of the districts in Downtown Erie continues to develop, the physical environment must be addressed. Adequate public infrastructure; a safe, clean, and healthy downtown environment; and a customer-friendly parking experience are all priorities.

Reducing the number of vacant lots and assuring that buildings throughout downtown are attractive, occupied, safe, and complementary to the historic and architectural character of downtown are critical as well. The existing Streetscape Master Plan needs to be fully implemented and landscape schemes should be continually added throughout downtown.

Efforts such as EDP's facade grant and external security camera program are critical to improving the physical environment of downtown. Streetscaping and park improvement projects, as well as the addition of flower baskets and pots, should be continued throughout Downtown Erie to enhance the overall perception of downtown.



*Proposed State Street streetscaping and facades*

*Streetscaping example*

**GOAL 3:**

*Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities for downtown including retail, office, technology, arts & cultural, and tourism businesses, coordinating closely with economic development partners.*

There are many agencies within the City of Erie and Erie County that address economic development strategies, incentives, financing programs, recruitment, retention and expansion of businesses and tourism. The EDP must keep these agencies aware of the needs of Downtown Erie, providing information on market statistics, available buildings and sites, and downtown needs.

Existing businesses must be serviced and their needs met, first and foremost. New businesses and entrepreneurs will continue to be recruited to locate downtown, and Class A office space must be provided to accommodate them. Downtown Erie will be promoted as the Arts & Culture and Regional Tourism hub as well as a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship, working with existing partners, such as VisitErie.

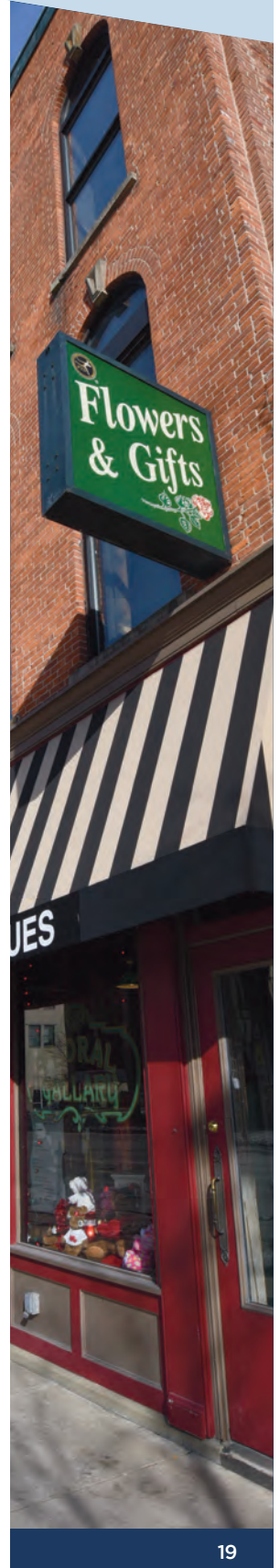
In order to implement many of the recommendations of this Plan, the EDP must work with the City to update the Zoning Code as it relates to downtown, possibly considering a Form-Based Code, and/or adopting Design Guidelines or an Overlay District.



Key State Street businesses



Erie Art Museum



Local Business



• EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**GOAL 4:**

*Increase market-rate housing in Downtown Erie.*

If Downtown Erie is going to succeed as envisioned in the Plan, market-rate housing must be provided and residents to occupy that housing must be attracted. Existing projects, such as the Mercantile Building and Union Square Townhomes, may need to be redefined to attract tenants.

Some of the existing subsidized housing complexes may be more viable if they were changed to market-rate housing. Additional developers may need to be recruited for construction of new market-rate housing projects, and additional and/or new housing programs and processes should be considered by EDP and its partners.



*Mercantile Building*

To support this market-rate housing, amenities such as a proposed EMTA Transit Center and Food Hub, and additional retail must be provided. In addition, transportation alternatives, streetscaping, lighting, and other amenities should be added to enhance all new development.



*Example of market-rate housing*



*Lovell Place market-rate housing and office complex*

*Potential Market-rate Housing*

**GOAL 5:**

*Improve transportation, circulation, and connectivity throughout downtown.*

Getting to and through downtown in a safe and efficient manner is critical to attracting businesses, visitors, and residents. Of primary importance to Downtown Erie is connecting downtown to the waterfront and to adjacent neighborhoods—that includes vehicular, bicycle, transit, and pedestrian connections.

Encouraging the City to adopt Complete Streets concepts for all new construction and major roadway renovation projects is also critical to enhancing transportation alternatives now and in the future. The Streetscaping Master Plan provides these concepts in great detail and is still relevant.

The EDP will continue to support EMTA's efforts to complete the Transit Center and improve ridership, and to encourage transportation alternatives with its many partners.

12th Street should continue to be promoted as a key business corridor and cross-town connector, in lieu of the Bayfront Parkway, for those who wish to get through downtown in the most expedient manner possible.

Upgrading parking facilities and services to better meet the needs of today's users, especially by introducing technology to pay for parking and to locate available parking spaces is important to attract and retain visitors, employees, students, customers, and residents.



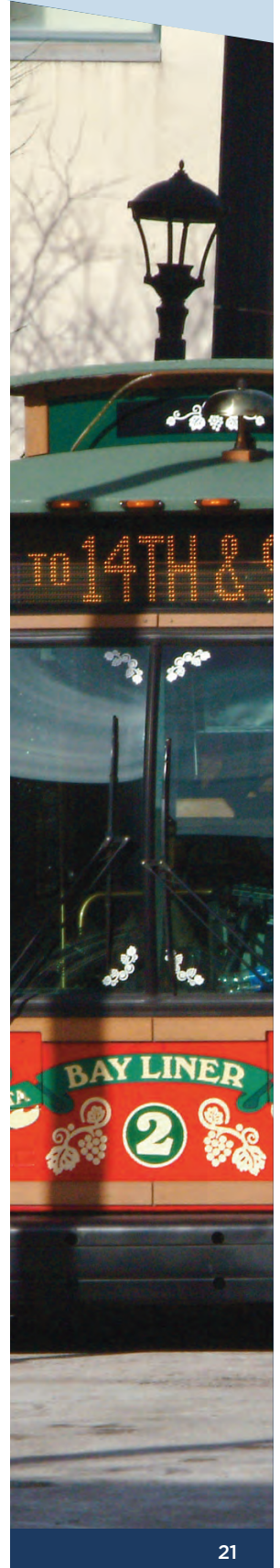
Potential auto-pay station



Potential bike service



Proposed EMTA transit center



Bay Liner trolley



## • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### GOAL 6:

*Design and implement an aggressive promotional campaign for Downtown Erie's businesses, partners, programs, and events.*

Downtown Erie is a great place, but people need to know about it. EDP should continue and expand existing joint marketing promotions with local businesses and partners, and with its partners, expand the marketing program regionally.

The amount of time consumed by the City, the Port Authority, EDP, Erie Events, and VisitErie to organize special events is immense. Each of these entities must acquire sponsors, raise funds, recruit performers, advertise, coordinate safety and clean-up activities, etc. To be more effective, these entities should consider consolidating the organization and implementation of these special events into one agency and/or one staff.

As technology changes, new marketing techniques and methods are needed to reach a broader audience and to do so more cost-effectively. New ways to reach the younger population, while still accommodating the senior generation, need to be implemented.



*Brig Niagara*



*Shop Small marketing*



*Downtown d'Lights event*

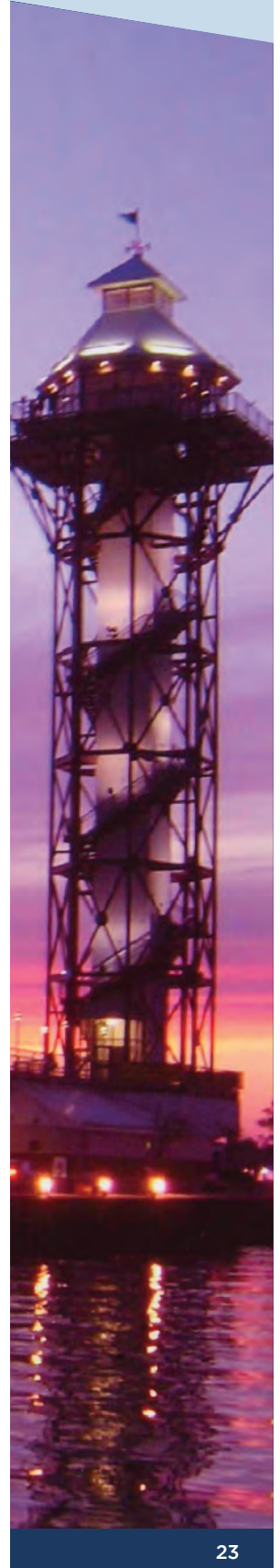
*Amerisala event*

Strategies to achieve these goals are discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6. It's a lot to do, but each year, the EDP should review this Downtown Master Plan and prepare an annual work program (as required by the Main Street program) to identify priorities for the coming year, as well as to phase priority projects over the next several years, when necessary.

Together with its many partners, the Erie Downtown Partnership intends to lead the effort to implement these goals and objectives, and their related strategies, by identifying partners and funding sources as needed to achieve this new vision for Downtown Erie. The EDP anticipates that all of its partners will be as committed as it is to helping Downtown Erie turn this next corner.



Erie Downtown Partners







## CHAPTER 1 • INTRODUCTION

*"We must welcome the future, remembering that soon it will be the past; and we must respect the past, remembering that it was once all that was humanly possible."*

*- George Satnayana*



Downtowns are constantly changing. Businesses open and close, buildings are built and demolished, roads are reconstructed and improved, and public spaces are changed. This Erie Downtown Master Plan was prepared to identify desired changes for the future of Downtown Erie. It requires a deep and lasting cooperation among many stakeholders and decision-makers—a complicated and complex challenge. However, meeting this challenge is well worth the effort, because what is at stake is the prosperity and health of a great American city.

Downtown is the heart of Erie, and with a vital and prosperous downtown, the whole region prospers. National evidence suggests that downtown resurgence, rebirth, and redevelopment are essential to overall community livability and survival in the 21st century. Demographic changes, technology, and social attitudes are driving spending patterns, investment decisions, and housing and transportation choices nationwide in powerful ways.

Many positive things are happening in Downtown Erie, as mentioned in the Executive Summary. In addition, Erie Vital Signs has recently reported some positive economic indicators for the Erie region, including:

**Positive Economic Indicators**

Erie's per capita income grew from 2012 to 2013, and is up 13.6% from the 2009 recession.	The 2013 crime index for the City was lower than the national average.
Erie's cost of living is 4.6% lower than the average for U.S. urban areas, especially in housing.	There is much international immigration, bringing new ideas and work ethic to Erie and helping to positively diversify the area.
Unemployment is way down since the recession, and is low by historical standards, as well as when compared to the entire U.S.	The labor force participation rate has increased since 1970.
The education industry, especially higher ed, continues to grow in Erie County, which is a good harbinger for our future.	There has been a steady increase in tourism-related employment over the past decade.

Erie, like most other communities, struggles to find adequate resources to implement significant transformative changes. So thoughtful planning is even more critical. Money and effort must be spent on projects that contribute to the grander vision for Downtown Erie, create productive synergies, and capitalize on other public and private investments. The Erie Downtown Partnership is charged with empowering local public and private partners to continue to invest in Downtown Erie as they have in the past, and this Downtown Master Plan provides the road map for that reinvestment and revitalization effort.



## The Erie Downtown Partnership

In 2004, key leaders acknowledged that a positive transformational change for Downtown Erie was needed and would require collective action. Merchants, property owners, businesses, and organizations dedicated to enhancing Erie's historic central business district agreed to create a Downtown Improvement District (DID) to help create that positive change. From the Bay to the railroad tracks (14th Street), and between Sassafras and Holland Streets, the DID was empowered to provide services, start initiatives, and implement projects to increase the vibrancy and vitality of Downtown Erie. Through the DID, property owners within the designated area contribute to the organization according to an assessment based on the value of their land and buildings. In addition, several tax-exempt partners agreed to make annual donations to help with various projects or events.

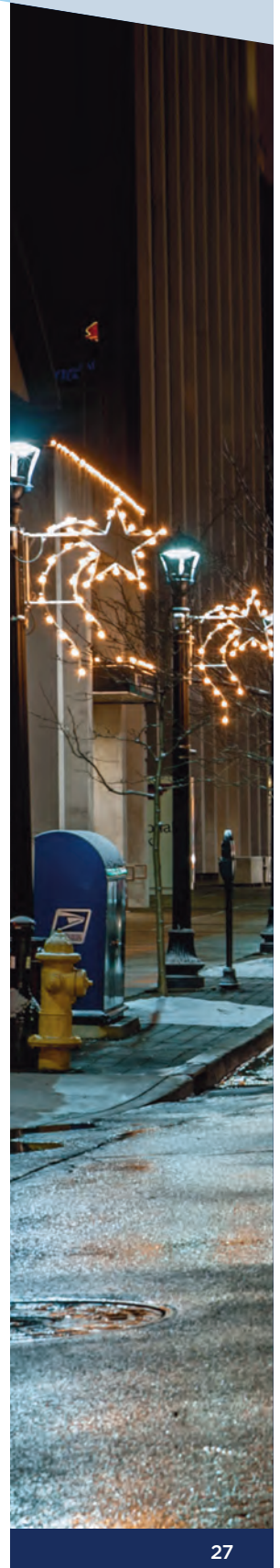


In 2009, the DID decided to change its image and went through a branding process, resulting in a name change to the “Erie Downtown Partnership” (EDP). The EDP is a certified 501c3 non-profit corporation representing about 200 members. It is governed by a Board of Directors, with a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, and ten other members representing City government, small businesses, civic organizations, and key downtown employers.

Over the past ten years, the EDP has focused on a wide variety of projects, including assisting property owners and businesses with building renovations, resulting in 29 facade improvements, funded in part through EDP's facade grant program. In addition, about 100 banners and numerous streets signs were installed, more than 366 trees were planted, and 120 trash cans were purchased and are maintained. Over 100 Block Parties were held, as well as many other events such as Bike Nights and Downtown d'Lights, which have brought more than a million people into downtown, and raised over \$250,000 for local charities.



*Facade improvement at Experience Children's Museum*



*Holiday Lights in Downtown Erie*



Downtown Erie is a certified national Main Street community, as designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as well as a Keystone Main Street community as designated by the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. These designations should open the door for additional state funding programs.



Main Street communities are required to adopt a five-year plan and an annual work program to direct the efforts of the Main Street organization. This Erie Downtown Master Plan, which spans an implementation period of five to ten years, serves as the overall vision for downtown, from which annual and five-year goals and strategies are selected as part of the work programs.



### Vision Statement

The EDP refined its Vision and Mission Statements in 2015, taking into consideration recommendations from the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. These statements reflect the exciting future that EDP sees for Downtown Erie and how the EDP intends to achieve it.

*Downtown Erie is the thriving center of civic, government, finance, arts and culture, history, retail, health care, education, dining and entertainment for the Erie region. Residents of all income levels and diverse backgrounds live and work in downtown; enjoy many multi-cultural events and sporting activities; shop for a wide variety of specialty goods, fresh foods and convenience items; have access to the Bay, Presque Isle, and multi-modal trails; and feel safe and secure in an aesthetically-pleasing and walkable environment encompassing 70 blocks from the Bayfront to the railroad tracks and from Holland Street to Sassafras Street. Major employers and small businesses, as well as young professionals, entrepreneurs, tourists, boaters, and conventioners enjoy the economic and social environment of downtown, which meets their technology needs and provides numerous opportunities for housing, transportation, shopping, recreation, dining, and recreation. Downtown Erie is an exciting place to live, a viable place to work or do business, and a vibrant and enticing place to visit.*

### Mission Statement

*The Erie Downtown Partnership (EDP) is the lead non-profit economic development partner created to revitalize and enhance the 70-block area from the Bayfront to the railroad tracks and from Holland Street to Sassafras Street in terms of economic viability, housing choices, multi-modal transportation, arts and cultural activities and events, and retail and service opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment. Our primary customers include residents and employees of downtown and the Erie region, tourists, business people, and college students.*



**The EDP Works To**

<p>Preserve and grow the downtown economy by assisting existing businesses, recruiting new businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship, and supporting new technology.</p>	<p>Enhance community partnerships by facilitating opportunities for collaboration and coordination among residents, private and public partners, institutions, and civic organizations to best promote the health and vitality of downtown.</p>
<p>Promote community pride and a positive image by creating an attractive, aesthetically-pleasing, and unique “place” that is safe, friendly, clean, affordable, exciting, entertaining, and economically viable.</p>	<p>Serve as the go-to resource for members and prospects by staying abreast of programs and incentives, regulations, available properties, demographic data, and other information needed by downtown residents and businesses, and by making this information available to members via electronic and traditional media.</p>
<p>Encourage design guidelines that reflect our cultural assets, promote green and sustainable development, preserve historic buildings and sites, promote connectivity, provide for safe pedestrian and bicycle access, and result in a safe and aesthetically-pleasing environment.</p>	<p>Maintain a sustainable membership-based organization by identifying and meeting the needs of all stakeholders in downtown, creating programs to benefit local property owners and businesses, marketing downtown, providing events and activities that attract people to downtown, and otherwise promoting the mission of the EDP to revitalize downtown, while continually pursuing additional membership.</p>

**Project Purpose**

The purpose of this downtown planning project was to prepare a Master Plan for the City downtown to use as a road map for the EDP and its partners--to capitalize on what is currently happening or planned in downtown, and to guide downtown partners to make smart development decisions to help achieve the vision for Downtown Erie. Those decisions should be based on a solid understanding of existing land uses, market conditions, infrastructure, public input, current planning principles, and other relevant planning efforts. The Downtown Master Plan will also help prioritize projects, and put the City and EDP in better positions to access available state, federal, regional, and local funds for improvement projects. This Downtown Master Plan will be adopted by the EDP Board of Directors and, ideally, by the City of Erie Council. It is hoped that other partners will accept the Plan as a guide for their organization’s decisions affecting downtown and plan their future activities accordingly.



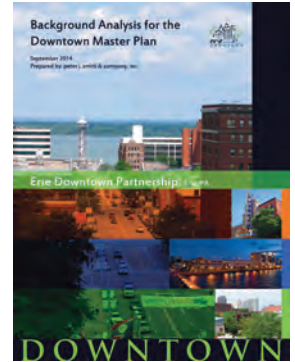


This planning effort is Phase 2 of the Downtown Erie planning process. Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc. completed Phase 1-- the Background Analysis for the Downtown Master Plan Update, in September 2014.

That analysis identified and reviewed 18 plans, studies, and reports pertaining to some aspect of development or redevelopment within Downtown Erie. It evaluated the availability of data and mapping, trends, gaps, impacts of regional context, community character, land use, population and housing, economic vitality, transportation and circulation, infrastructure and utilities, community facilities and services, environmental and natural resources, open space and recreation, and historic and cultural resources. The Phase 1 analysis also included interviews with key stakeholders, and identified opportunities for cooperation and funding sources.

Expanding on the result of Phase 1, Phase 2 started in early 2015 and extended the research into many additional documents, websites, and proposed projects in Downtown Erie. It began the process of identifying goals, objectives, and strategies to implement the vision and mission of the Erie Downtown Partnership.

Although the Erie Downtown Partnership is the lead organization whose mission is to revitalize and enhance the 70-block area comprising Downtown Erie, there are many government and civic partners that are also involved in various aspects of downtown revitalization. EDP staff members work to coordinate and collaborate efforts of all those partners for the betterment of Downtown Erie.



## Planning Process

After undertaking a consultant selection process, the Erie Downtown Partnership retained the services of the CMK Planning, LLC Team to assist with Phase 2 of this downtown planning process. The Team consisted of:

- CMK Planning, LLC from North East, PA as the lead consultant and Project Manager
  - Charlene M. Kerr, AICP, Owner
- Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc., of Bowling Green, OH and Monroe, MI as planning consultants
  - Randy A. Mielnik, AICP, LEED AP, Principal Owner
- CMoore Creative, from Erie, PA as Graphic Designer
  - Charles Moore, Principal Owner
- Land Design Studios, LLC of Southfield, MI as urban designers
  - Tad Krear, RLA, Owner
  - Eric James, Landscape Architect
  - Jacob Lloyd, Landscape Architect

Statue in Perry Square

This planning process researched, analyzed, and consolidated an enormous amount of data, reviewed existing plans, and incorporated or referenced relevant information from those plans into this document. The process also involved interviews or discussions with over 60 downtown stakeholders, public visioning sessions, meetings with Erie City Council, and several presentations to the EDP Board.

**Plate 1-1** (Ref. Executive Summary) summarizes the key physical recommendations of this Downtown Master Plan, illustrating existing buildings, surface parking lots, parking garages, parks and green space, as well as proposed or potential new parking garages, buildings, and buildings that should be rehabilitated. Plate 1-1 also illustrates the consistent streetscape throughout downtown. These elements are all discussed in detail in their respective chapters, including:

- Chapter 2 - Existing Conditions
- Chapter 3 - Transportation, Circulation and Parking
- Chapter 4 - Market Review
- Chapter 5 - Goals, Objectives, and Strategies
- Chapter 6 - Urban Design Plan
- Chapter 7 - Development Regulations

**Chapter 7** presents a framework for design guidelines to assist property and business owners with making design decisions that complement and enhance the historic and architectural integrity of downtown and to meet the vision and goals portrayed in this Plan.

## Downtown Boundaries

Downtown Erie consists of 70 blocks of primarily commercial properties extending from the Bayfront on the north to 14th Street and the railroad tracks on the south, and from Holland Street on the east to Sassafras Street on the west.

There are numerous key properties within downtown, discussed in **Chapter 2**. They include the campuses of Gannon University, UPMC Hamot and Erie Insurance Group (EIG), as well as Erie Insurance Arena, Jerry Uht Park, Perry Square, Griswold Park, the Erie Art Museum and Children's Museum, Warner Theater, Erie Playhouse, Blasco Library and Maritime Museum, the Intermodal Transportation Center, the Bayfront Erie Sheraton Hotel and Bayfront Convention Center, Dobbins Landing, Bicentennial Tower, the US Courthouse, and Erie County Courthouse.



*Courtyard Marriott hotel Rendering*

A variety of very exciting activities are happening in Downtown Erie (Ref. Chapter 2), as evidenced by the several construction projects underway and the many projects in the planning and preliminary design stages. All of this current and proposed activity makes it even more important for the EDP and its partners to have an agreed-upon Master Plan for the continued and comprehensive enhancement of Downtown Erie.

## Public Input Opportunities

The EDP wanted to assure that property and business owners, residents, employees, civic organizations, government agencies, and major employers had the opportunity to participate in this strategic planning initiative. Several methods to assure that the public was involved in the process were undertaken.

### Public Involvement Methods

**Stakeholder interviews** — Over 60 key downtown stakeholders were interviewed one-on-one, in a group meeting, or over the phone, including Mayor Joseph Sinnott of the City of Erie and County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper. A complete list of participating stakeholders is included in Appendix 1-1. The comments suggestions presented by these individuals have been incorporated, as appropriate into this Downtown Master Plan.

**Public Sessions** — Two public sessions were held on February 4, 2015, one in the morning at the UPMC Health Plan conference room at the Boston Store, and the second in the evening in Erie City Council Chambers. Over 50 people attended the two sessions. A PowerPoint presentation described the process, study area, past planning efforts, opportunities for public input, existing economic engines in downtown, and issues and opportunities identified to date. Feedback information acquired during those sessions is summarized in Appendix 1-2.

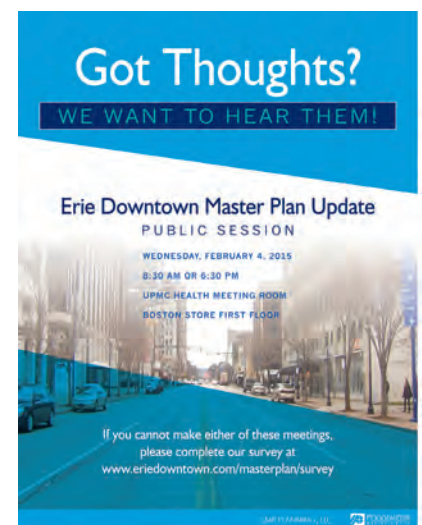
**City Council Sessions** — Since Council members were intentionally not invited to the public sessions (to allow the public to speak freely), a special session was held on March 12, 2015, with Council members to explain the same issues and opportunities discussed at the public session, as well as some of the suggestions made at those public sessions. An update to City Council was then provided on September 10, 2015.

**Surveys** — Discussions with some of the key employers during the stakeholder interviews resulted in an agreement to undertake an employee survey. A survey format was designed and distributed to all EDP members for them to distribute electronically to their employees. In addition, a survey was created for the public, and was placed on the EDP website and advertised with on-line ads at GoErie.com and on ErieReader.com. Results of these surveys are included in Appendix 1-3.

The results of all this public input were compiled and reviewed with the EDP, and incorporated, as appropriate, into the balance of the planning process and the development of the goals and objectives.



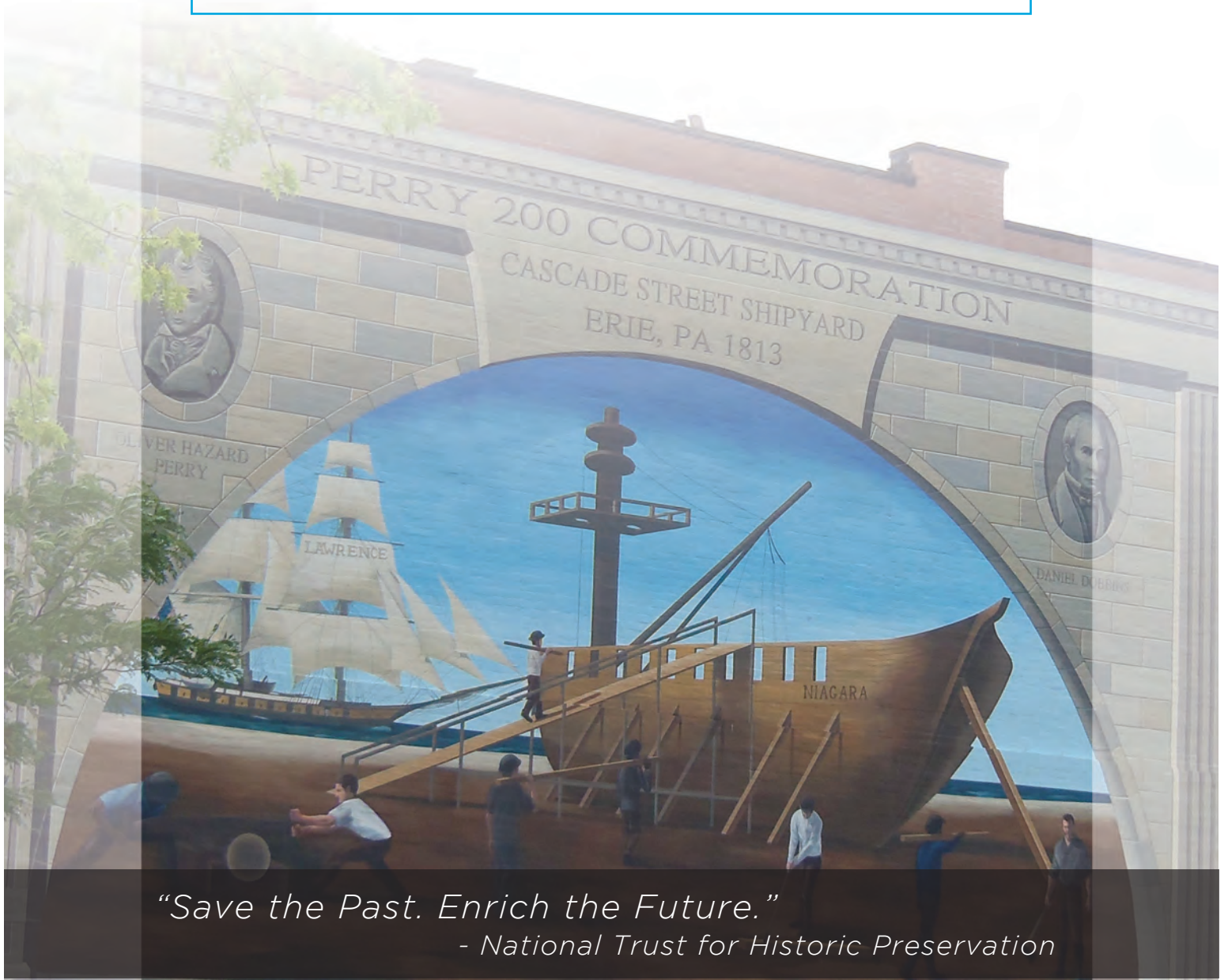
Public sessions



Public sessions ad



## CHAPTER 2 • EXISTING CONDITIONS



*“Save the Past. Enrich the Future.”*

*- National Trust for Historic Preservation*





### Brief History of Downtown

There are many more extensive sources of information regarding local history, but it is helpful to briefly mention a few key historical events to frame present-day conditions and provide context. Some historic events are associated with present-day names of sites and structures. Throughout history, the City of Erie and the downtown have been greatly influenced by Lake Erie. Whether in terms of commerce, or military-related activity, Lake Erie has been a major force for community development. All through its history and to this day, Erie remains Pennsylvania's primary access to Lake Erie and to the Saint Lawrence Seaway. This important access is still influential, providing numerous opportunities for commerce and distribution activities.

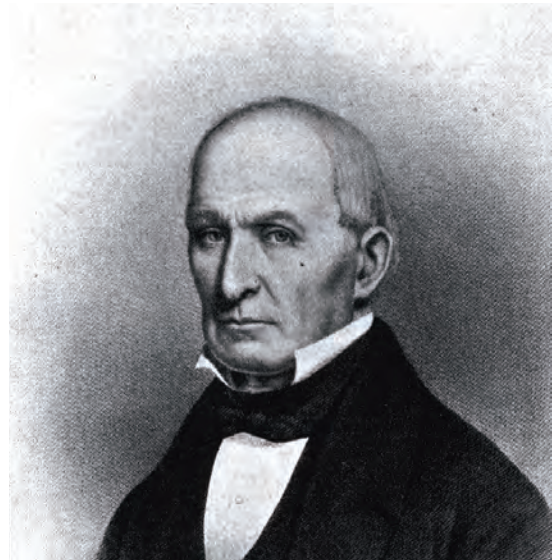
Going back to its earliest days, the City of Erie was originally occupied by six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. The French arrived in 1753 and built Fort Presque Isle in an attempt to defend the area against the British. After the French abandoned that Fort in 1760, the British occupied it for three years, until the end of the French and Indian War.

The Erie Triangle was a controversial piece of real estate claimed by four states and occupied by the Iroquois until 1789, when they released the lands to Pennsylvania. The Seneca Nation followed suit in 1791. The land officially became part of Pennsylvania in 1792. The first European settlers arrived in 1795, settling on Presque Isle.

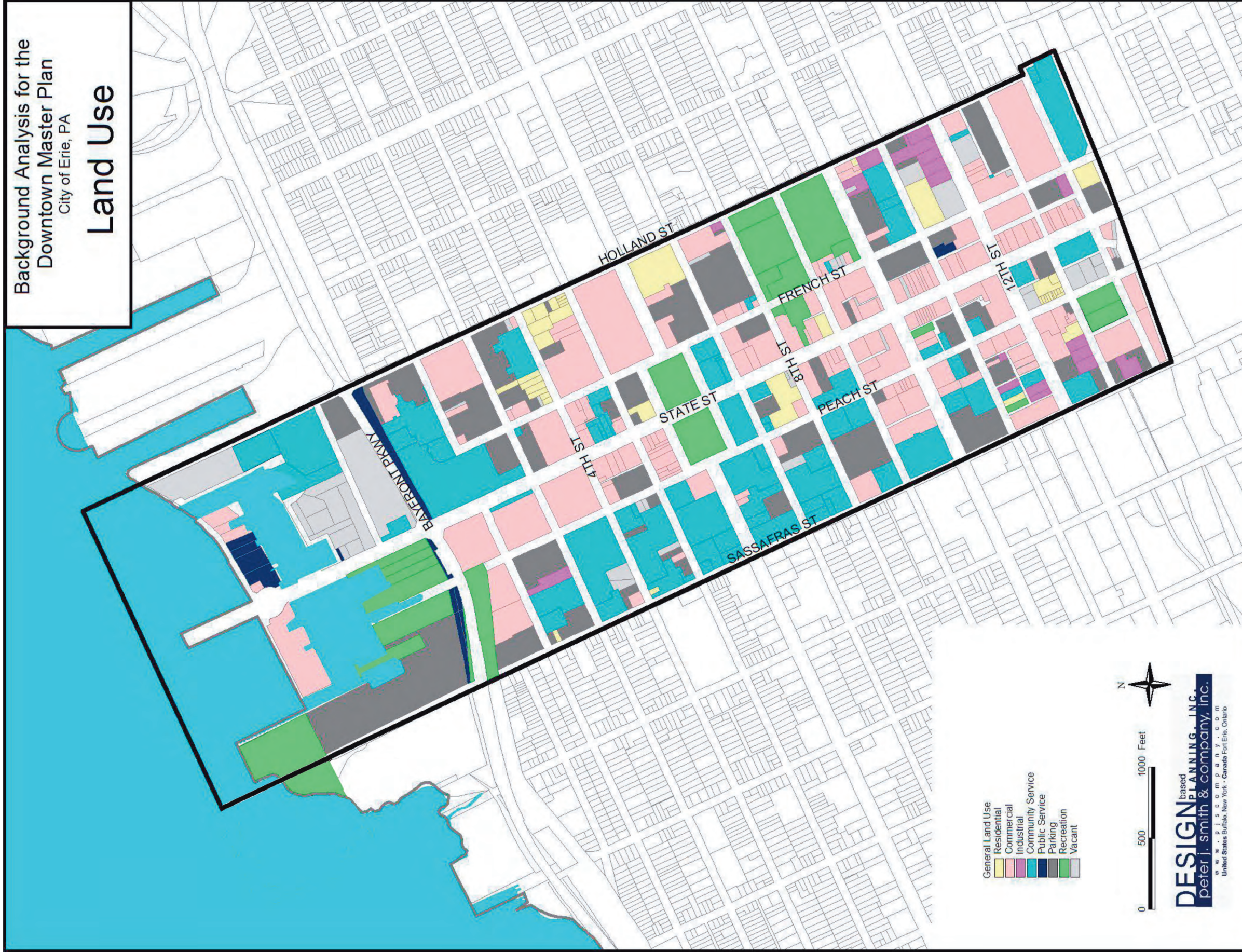
President James Madison authorized construction of a naval fleet in Erie to do battle in the War of 1812, and to take control of the Great Lakes from the British. Daniel Dobbins of Erie was a key member of the team of shipbuilders that constructed four gunboats and two brigs for the war. Oliver Hazard Perry came from Rhode Island to lead the squadron and successfully utilized these ships (one being the Brig Niagara) in winning the Battle of Lake Erie.

By the mid-19th century, Erie was a center for shipbuilding and fishing, and served as a railroad hub. Industry flourished in the area until later in the 20th century when deindustrialization began, and Erie began to experience more economic challenges. Like many mid-western industrial cities, the ill effects of plant closures and downsizing of industrial operations was made worse by increased suburban, auto-oriented development, and growing dependence on automobile travel. The automobile allowed residents to leave the center city for the suburbs, and the suburbs grew while the center city declined.

Downtown Erie has continued to reinvent itself through the dedication of many volunteers and community leaders. In 2006, the Erie Downtown Partnership (EDP), the City of Erie and the Erie Redevelopment Authority commissioned a Downtown Master Plan that addressed many revitalization initiatives, most of which have been completed. In 2014, the EDP authorized an update to that plan to identify strategies and initiatives to take downtown into the 21st century.



*Daniel Dobbins*



Background Analysis for the  
Downtown Master Plan  
City of Erie, PA

# Land Use

Plate 2-1A: Phase 1 Background Analysis

## LAND USE CATEGORIES

- Residential 4% Most of this is subsidized housing
- Commercial 29%
- Industrial 2% Mostly in the southern part of downtown
- Community Service 23% Includes Gannon, UPMC Hamot, EMTA, government offices, etc.
- Public Service 2%
- Parking 20% (excluding on-street parking) 29%
- Recreation 14% Includes Erie Insurance Arena, Jerry Uht Park, waterfront area of Convention Center, miniature golf and boating facilities, Perry Square, and Griswold Park
- Vacant 7%

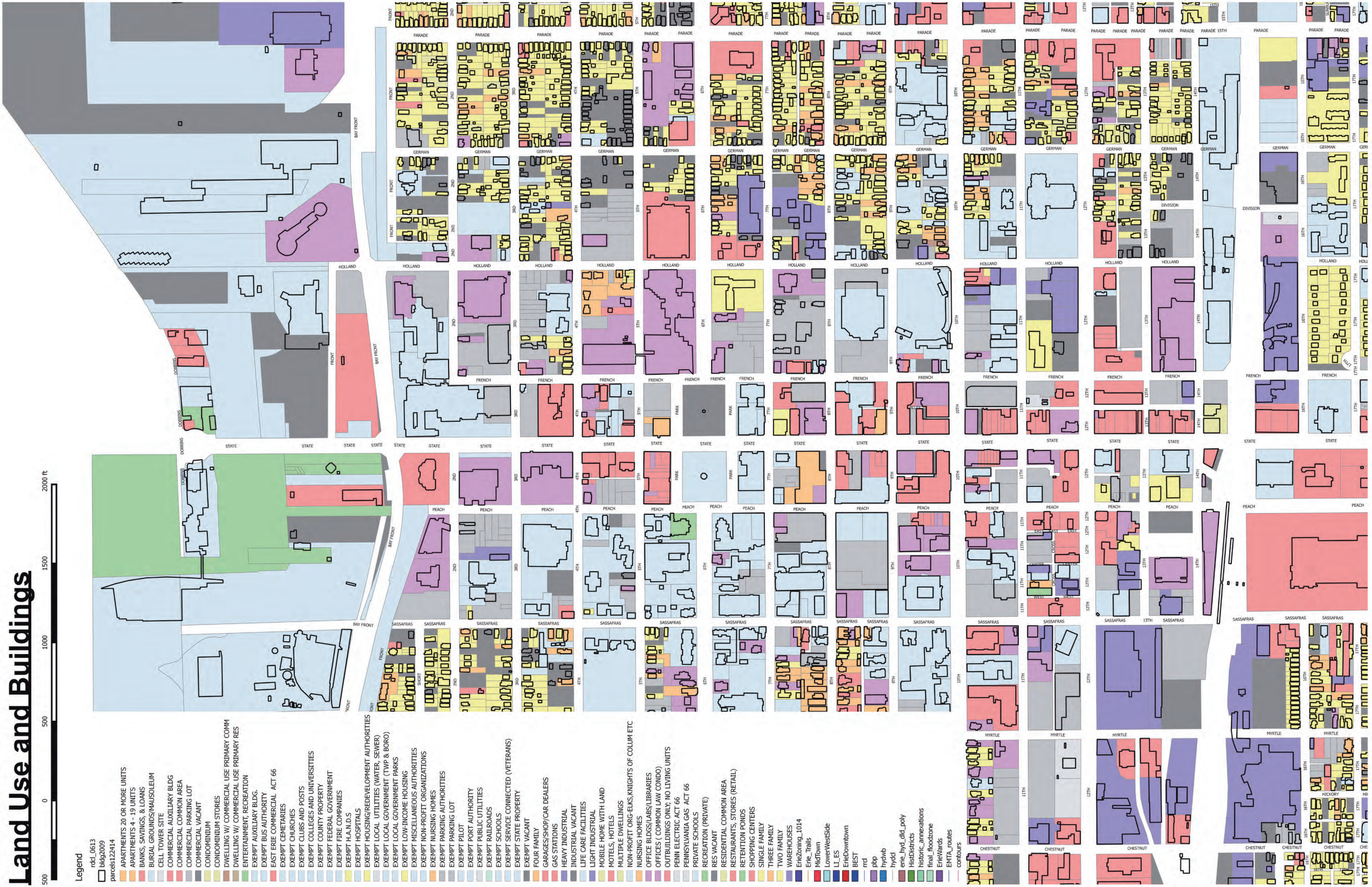


Plate 2-1B: Detailed land use

## Existing Land Use and Zoning

The physical design of downtown is shaped in part by the types of land uses located there. In turn, how land is used is dictated in part by zoning. Examining existing land uses is one way to analyze and understand the development of an area. The map contained in the Phase 1 report (**Plate 2-1A**) summarizes land uses in Downtown Erie. This map classified land uses into eight categories and indicated the percentages of each land use.

A much more detailed map of existing land uses compiled by Erie County Planning Department, and included in **Plate 2-1B**, includes significantly more specific land uses. For example, in lieu of “commercial,” it specifies if the property is a gas station, car dealer, life care facility, motel or hotel, office building, shopping center, etc. It also identifies tax-exempt parcels, differentiating between Port Authority, schools, utilities, state property, low-income housing, parks, local government, county government, colleges, churches, etc. Also, building shapes are indicated in addition to the lot lines.

Several issues have been raised regarding existing land uses in Downtown Erie:

### DOWNTOWN ISSUES

There is very little Class A office space available downtown—i.e. space that is modern, has open floor and lighting plans, can accommodate current technology, and is flexible and move-in ready. As a result, companies will locate outside downtown and maybe outside Erie. Generally, it is not feasible for companies to wait months to identify potential office space, purchase existing leases, relocate tenants, and remodel spaces when business is thriving and expansion is needed immediately.

Much of the land in Downtown Erie is occupied by tax-exempt organizations, making it difficult for the city to generate the revenues needed to upgrade and maintain public infrastructure and facilities.

There is an overabundance of subsidized housing and social services in Downtown Erie, and a corresponding lack of market-rate and upscale housing.

20% of the land in Downtown Erie is parking, both surface lots and garages. This percentage does not include on-street parking.

There are several properties remaining from prior industrial uses, especially along 12th Street, although only the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) site between French and Parade Streets south of 14th Street is zoned for heavy manufacturing.

There is a State Pre-release Facility on West 2nd Street (between Peach and Sassafras Streets). This land use poses potential conflicts with students of Gannon University and employees of other employers in downtown.



There are many key entertainment venues in downtown including Erie Insurance Arena, Jerry Uht Park, the Warner Theater, the Brig Niagara and Maritime Museum, the Erie Playhouse, the Erie Art Museum, the Children’s Museum, the Bayfront Convention Center, recreational facilities on the Bayfront, and several smaller art galleries and theaters in downtown and adjacent areas. These facilities are viewed as being the foundation for an arts and cultural hub, as well as a tourist destination. Arts and cultural land uses benefit from being next to each other in a “cluster.”

When arts and cultural establishments are scattered, opportunities to create synergies are diminished. When they are close to each other, the sum of their attractions can be much greater than that of the individual parts. The importance of arts and culture as a land use in Downtown Erie was reported by Destination Erie, which stated that \$18 million is generated annually by the arts and culture economy in the region. Further, the 2010 *CultureSpark* Master Plan identified a strategy for incorporating arts and culture into tourism and economic development efforts in Erie.

The **Bayfront District** includes the waterfront, which is home to the Convention Center, the Bayfront Sheraton Hotel, Blasco Library and Maritime Museum, and several restaurants. (Ref. The Waterfront Plan in Appendix 2-21) South of the Parkway is the UPMC Hamot Medical Center, a key economic engine in downtown. It and its affiliated and non-affiliated medical and office facilities need to be integrated as much as possible into future downtown revitalization efforts. These facilities attract thousands of visitors on a regular basis, and they all need places to eat and things to do. However, the change in elevation in the middle of the Bayfront District impedes visual and physical connectivity between the Bayfront and downtown; and the Bayfront Parkway, which was intended to connect parts of the region, actually serves as a dividing factor in this District.



*New UPMC Hamot entrance Photo: Bostwick Design Partnership*



*Smugglers Wharf*



*Bayfront Venues*

The **Perry Square District** includes Perry Square, City, County and federal government offices, and several small restaurants and retail businesses. Gannon University (GU) is a key property owner in the Bayfront District. It owns many buildings and properties, and leases several others. It has recently completed projects including a new Recreation and Wellness Center, the Center for Communications and the Arts, and the Forensic Investigation Center. Its campus extends to the west of the Downtown Improvement District.

Erie Insurance Group (EIG) owns several properties within the Perry Square District, and continues to expand its footprint by purchasing and renovating buildings, constructing new facilities, and demolishing deteriorated structures in this district and adjacent neighborhoods to the east. EIG recently completed its Technical Learning Center on East 7th Street, which is adjacent to, and north of, its parking structure on East 8th Street, as well as the renovation of its museum on East 6th Street. EIG is in the process of completing a new campus master plan to address future expansions.



Inside EIG's Technical Learning Center, Photo: Erie Insurance Group

EIG's new Technology Learning Center is a state-of-the-art, hands-on claims training facility that features 14 vehicle bays, a three-story model home made from 400 different building materials, and other training aides. According to a press release on January 14, 2015, "the 52,000 SF space will serve as a giant interactive classroom for employees and agents to get an up-close look at

property damage sustained to vehicles, homes and businesses. The center also features a full-size house with an attic and basement, as well as sprinkler and building material work stations. It also includes vehicle equipment stations with lifts, frame repair stations, wheel alignment machines, and prep and paint booths."

The historic George Carroll House (now a Bed and Breakfast), part of the West 6th Street Historic District, the Federal Row Historic District, and the West Park Row Historic District are historic assets in the Bayfront District, and are all listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (Refer to [www.eriebuildings.info](http://www.eriebuildings.info) for a complete listing of historic structures.) Glass Growers Gallery, a unique art gallery, is located on the north side of East 5th Street.

Much of the housing in the Perry Square District is owned by Gannon University, private property owners who rent primarily to students, and housing agencies or developers who rent them as subsidized housing. Both Gannon University and EIG define their campuses very effectively with banners, signage, lighting, and/or arches, creating streetscapes that are appealing and exciting.



Gannon University Recreation Center

Erie Insurance Group celebrated 90 years in 2015



The **Renaissance District** contains many of downtown’s entertainment venues such as the Warner Theater and the Erie Playhouse, Erie Insurance Arena and Jerry Uht Park, and the Renaissance Center and 900 State Street, which contain innovative entrepreneurial office space and entrepreneurial resources.



*Erie Insurance Arena*



*Jerry Uht Park*

In the **Union Square District**, the Mercantile Building (1401 State Street), a former commercial /industrial facility, has been converted to upscale, market-rate housing on the upper floors and commercial/retail on the first three floors. The housing floors are 100% occupied, while the second and third floors are still being marketed for commercial tenants. The Post Office relocated to a smaller facility on the first floor of the building, when it vacated its former facility.

The Turnpike Building on West 14th Street is being renovated into office space; and Rick Griffith Properties has purchased several parcels in the district from the Erie Redevelopment Authority for market-rate housing. The Union Square townhome development, which includes seven units, has five vacancies, three of which are live/work units. One commercial unit is also vacant. The southeast corner of 12th and Peach Street will be developed commercially.

Lovell Place, a residential complex with some office space, is a renovated industrial building providing market-rate housing to area residents. This successful housing project has a waiting list of people interested in living there.



*Lovell Place complex*



*Renovations on the Turnpike building*

The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) is in the process of consolidating its facilities at its site on 14th Street, north of the railroad, between French and Parade Streets. Planned expansions include a new paratransit and fixed-route bus maintenance and storage facilities, new administrative offices, a parking garage, and a compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station. Other options being discussed include electric car charging stations, and bike storage, sharing, and repair facilities, and first floor neighborhood retail space that could include a food hub. These \$60 million worth of improvements will be completed by 2017 with state and federal funding.

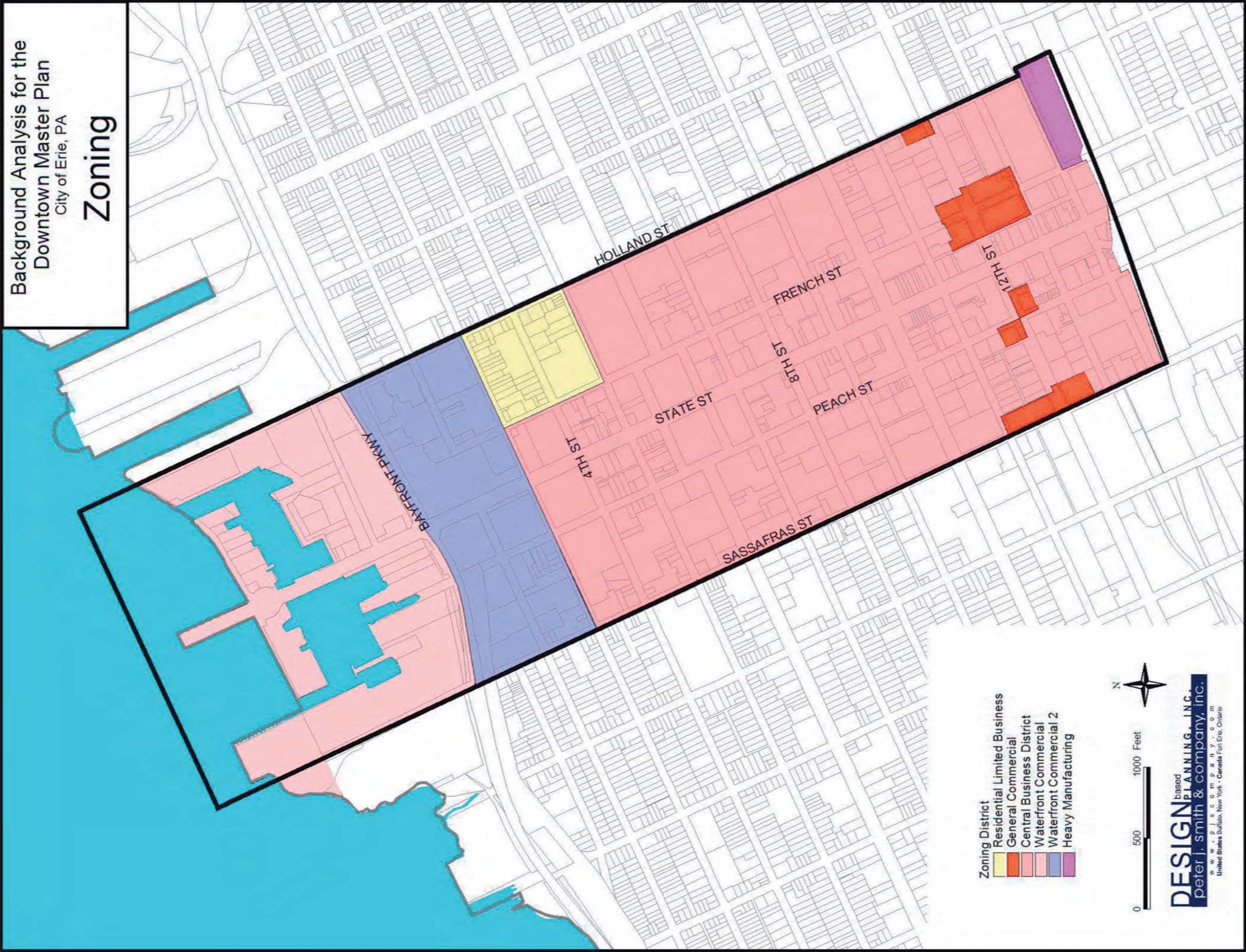


Plate 2-2: Phase 2 Zoning - Phase 1 Background Analysis



In addition to these land uses, there are many properties (vacant and/or former industrial or commercial) within downtown that could qualify as brownfield sites and may be eligible for remediation funds. Develop Erie is the lead agency on brownfield sites and coordinating with that agency is critical to begin the environmental process, especially for those sites with significant development potential.

The topic of land use relates to how property is actually used. Zoning, on the other hand, is the legal mechanism that dictates how land can legally be used and imposes limits on how property may be developed or redeveloped (size of buildings, placement on the lot, required landscaping or parking, etc.) Generally, how land is used and how property is zoned track closely together. However, variances, special exceptions, nonconforming uses, and grandfathered parcels can alter the similarities between maps that show land use and zoning (the latter map is part of the zoning ordinance itself).



*New EMTA Lift Facility*

The City's Zoning Map, as presented in the Phase 1 report (**Plate 2-2**) on previous page, indicates six (6) different zoning categories in downtown. Understanding the zoning of the land in downtown is especially important when recruiting new and encouraging expansion of existing businesses. For example, as the City and EDP were working with EMTA and considering locating a food hub on the ground level of its planned parking garage, it was noted that the M-2 zoning classification does not permit commercial enterprises. A zoning change will be needed to allow a food hub to be located at this site.

A more detailed discussion of the differences among these zoning classifications, as well as recommendations for improvements to the Zoning Code, are included in **Chapter 7: Development Regulations**.

## Infrastructure

To support existing and future development, Downtown Erie must be equipped with the necessary infrastructure (roads, utility lines, and other public improvements) to accommodate the needs of businesses and residents. Since the late 1990s, the City of Erie has invested more than \$100 million into the sanitary sewer system and wastewater treatment plant. Much of the sanitary sewer construction took place in the downtown area, providing more than enough capacity in both the sewer system and wastewater treatment plant for almost any type of business that may desire to locate anywhere in Erie. If underground upgrades are needed for new development, trenchless technology alternatives are available that don't necessarily require excavation.

Erie Water Works, located on the Bayfront, provides potable water to the City of Erie. Since construction of the infrastructure started at Chestnut Street and grew outward over the decades, some of the oldest waterlines in the City are in downtown. Infrastructure upgrades are made routinely by Erie Water Works. There are large waterlines on 12th, State, and Peach Streets to service larger water users in those areas. There is excess water supply available due to the closing of several heavy water users in the past decade. The primary water treatment plant has been updated, providing more than adequate treatment capacity.

Erie Water Works has a robust Geographic Information System (GIS) and generally has no issues supplying water to businesses or residents in the City. In fact, Erie Water Works promotes an economic development policy that provides a 40% discount to new commercial and industrial users (not companies relocating within the City), especially those with high water usage, for five years (with some qualifications). Some requirements for fire suppression systems or unusually tall buildings may require larger lines than are currently available. Erie Water Works is willing to work with those situations to meet the needs of the projects.

The City of Erie developed a Stormwater Management Program in 2003 to meet the requirements of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the federal Clean Water Act. Stormwater is basically rain water that runs off property and is collected in a collection system. The need to manage stormwater results



*Example of storm water Drain*

from the pollutants that stormwater can carry into lakes and rivers, potentially damaging water sources and habitat. A permit program was created by the City to manage new construction and reduce pollutants to the maximum extent practicable. Almost all new construction must have a permit to assure that these current stormwater regulations are met by the proposed project. Green infrastructure (bio-swales, rain gardens, pervious pavements, etc.) is often considered as a preferred alternative for stormwater management.





Most electric, phone, and cable lines provided by private providers are strung from poles throughout downtown. Some newer developments have buried lines for a more aesthetically appealing presence. Burying lines is expensive and may require building owners to relocate utility connections to their buildings, which costs even more money. However, it is still the preferred alternative whenever possible, especially in redevelopment areas such as the 14th Street development for EMTA.

To assure that Downtown Erie is attractive for today's companies, the appropriate technology infrastructure—cable, fiber, etc.—is required. Although the situation is improving in downtown, there are still areas where the most current state-of-the-art technology is not readily available.

### Safety Forces

The City of Erie Police Department is operating with fewer police officers than it has in the past, and at a level below recommended standards. However, its headquarters are located at City Hall, a central location in downtown, providing a visible downtown presence on a regular basis.

Gannon University provides its own security force on campus and recently installed enhancements to improve safety. Erie Insurance Group and UPMC Hamot also provide their own security forces around their campuses and facilities. Marked patrol cars drive through the district on a regular basis. Combined, these four security forces provide a safe environment for employees, residents and visitors in Downtown Erie. Nonetheless, due primarily to frequent loitering and panhandling, the perception of safety in downtown is sometimes less than favorable.



*Erie Insurance Security patrol*

### Adjacent Neighborhoods

The success of Downtown Erie is partially dependent on attractive and strong neighborhoods that can be a source of customers for restaurants and retail establishments, as well as workers for downtown businesses. The appearances of adjacent neighborhoods contribute to the first impressions that people get when visiting the area and entering downtown.

Downtown is surrounded by five key neighborhoods, as indicated on **Plate 2-3**. These neighborhoods play critical roles in the revitalization of Downtown Erie, as they provide housing, community services, parks, and small businesses for residents that support downtown, and they are gateways into downtown. Their revitalization efforts are applauded, supported, and encouraged. Erie Downtown Partnership willingly coordinates and cooperates with its adjacent neighborhoods for the enhancement of the overall area.



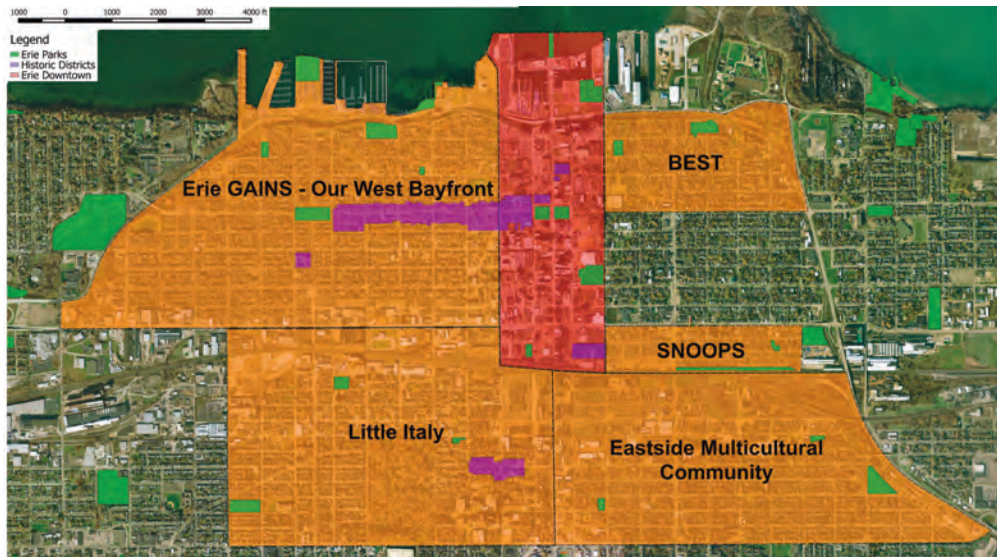


Plate 2-3: Erie Downtown Adjacent Neighborhoods

### Bayfront East Side Taskforce (BEST)

The BEST neighborhood consists of the area between the Bayfront Parkway, the Bayfront Connector, 6th Street, and Holland Street. This taskforce was the first non-profit in Erie to focus on the revitalization of a single neighborhood, which, coincidentally, is the place where Erie was founded over 200 years ago. It provides a wide variety of services, including new home construction, affordable rental housing, home repair and maintenance, commercial development, facade improvements, and acquisition and demolition of blighted properties. This neighborhood provides the east gateway into downtown from 6th Street and along the bluffs.



### Erie-GAINS--Our West Bayfront Neighborhood Coalition

Erie-GAINS, an intentional alignment of strategic initiatives between Gannon University and government agencies, neighbors and property owners, community organizations and businesses, has a goal to stimulate positive change and improve the sustainability and viability of neighborhoods surrounding the university, including Downtown Erie. Erie-GAINS established five focus areas: Education, Health and Wellness, Business and Economy, Environmental Sustainability, and Quality of Life. The focus area for “Quality of Life” is the “Our West Bayfront” project.



Our West Bayfront is a coalition of neighborhood watch groups, non-profit organizations, businesses, and Gannon University, with a mission to enhance the quality of life in Erie's West Bayfront neighborhood by “promoting civic involvement, thoughtful development, historic preservation, and neighborhood pride.” Its area is bounded by the Bayfront Parkway on the north, the Bayfront Connector on the west, 12th Street on the south, and Sassafra Street on the east, all key gateways affecting downtown Erie. Neighborhood residents provide a customer base for businesses and venues in Downtown Erie.

*Neighborhood surrounding Gannon University*



### Historic Little Italy (HLI)

Historic Little Italy is managed by the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN). Its boundaries have always been rather fluid. HLI's Elm Street-designated area includes approximately 18 blocks from Sassafra Street on the east to Liberty Street on the west, and from 16th Street on the north through 21st Street on the south. However, the larger area that it actually serves extends from West 12th Street on the north to Raspberry Street on the west, West 26th Street to the south, and State Street to the east.

HLI's history dates back to the 1880s when German and Italian immigrants settled in the area, opening many small family businesses. Today, HLI is home to immigrants from numerous countries, and the SSJNN provides

a wide variety of services to assist them and the neighborhood, including housing, education, a soup kitchen, a farmers market, community gardens, facade improvements, safety programs, and neighborhood events. These services, especially those provided to new immigrant populations, can benefit downtown businesses, and its mural program is a great example of public art.



*Little Italy logo & Mural*

### SSJNN Eastside Multicultural Community (EMC)

In 2014, the SSJNN decided to take on another ministry, the area due east of Historic Little Italy. The eastside neighborhood boundaries generally extend from the Bayfront Connector on the east, to 26th Street on the south, the railroad tracks on the north, and State Street on the west. A temporary office is being provided at St. John's School on East 26th Street, and a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy is currently being prepared.

Committees have been set up according to the PA Elm Street program, and many programs are already underway, including several bike programs. SSJNN will eventually provide the same services to this neighborhood that are offered in Historic Little Italy. Many key corridors from this neighborhood serve as gateways into downtown, especially State and French Streets. Assuring that these gateways are safe and attractive is critical to Downtown Erie.



*Combining Cultures to form a Community*

*SSJNN Bicycle Program*



*Zabawa 2015 Festival*

## SNOOPS

Formed in 1995, and designated as a 501c3 corporation in 1999, the SNOOPS Neighborhood Association has been actively addressing crime and also neighborhood deterioration in a small area bounded by Wayne Street on the east, the railroad tracks/East 15th Street on the south, French Street on the west, and East 12th Street on the north. Awarded the first Elm Street designation in the City of Erie in 2009, SNOOPS housed its neighborhood manager at EDP for a short time.

SNOOPS has actively assisted residents with roof replacements, facade renovations, installation of home alarm systems, emergency home repairs, and construction of new sidewalks, in addition to supporting an active Neighborhood Watch program. 12th Street serves as a key gateway into downtown from the east and provides a first impression to many downtown consumers.



### Critical Areas outside the Downtown Improvement District (DID)

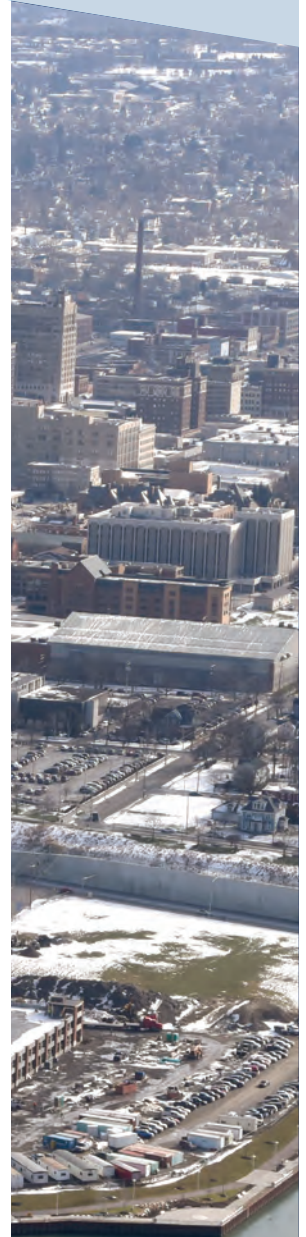
One critical area adjacent to downtown outside the official physical boundaries of the DID, is that portion of the Bayfront to the west of the Convention Center--the former GAF site (west of the Convention Center). As this property develops, its connection to Downtown Erie is critical. Participation in the DID would benefit both parties but would require a legal change to the DID boundaries.

Another critical area, and the only residential area adjacent to Downtown Erie not included in a neighborhood association, is the area between the BEST and SNOOPS neighborhoods —between East 6th and East 12th Streets; although the East Eagles Neighborhood Watch Group does provide some similar services. Erie Insurance has purchased several properties within this neighborhood and is demolishing deteriorated buildings and rehabilitating significant structures, such as the former Armory on the northwest corner of East 6th Street and Parade Street. Their most recent purchase includes 2.1 acres between East 7th and East 8th Streets, between Holland and German Streets.



*Former Armory rehabilitated by Erie Insurance Group*

It is critical to the revitalization and enhancement of downtown that its key gateways are attractive, safe, and inviting. These eastern gateways into downtown, especially 6th Street, need to be addressed as part of a neighborhood revitalization process, working with the existing Neighborhood Watch Group. The SNOOPS Neighborhood Organization has expressed an interest in sharing their staff, programs, and initiatives with this area.





### Past Plans and Studies

As part of this Phase 2 strategic planning process, resources in addition to those summarized in Phase 1, were reviewed. A commitment was made to utilize (not duplicate) information from those resources, incorporating those recommendations and initiatives that are still applicable and relevant. Those plans, studies, and reports are summarized in Appendix 2-1.

One past plan that is critical to the overall revitalization of downtown is the 2009 Erie Waterfront Master Plan by Domokur Architects. That plan identified existing opportunities, constraints, and solutions for the entire Bayfront area, many of which are still true today and are applicable to the portion of the Bayfront in the DID:



2008 Erie Downtown Master plan cover

#### Existing Opportunities:

Abundant public waterfront access	Variety of public and private boat launch locations
Generous amount of public spaces	Well-designed trails
Industrial/working port in remote location with space for expansion	

#### Existing Constraints:

Disconnected spaces	Lack of connections from the Bayfront to downtown and neighborhoods
Underutilized areas	Bayfront Parkway lacks “Parkway” feel
Limited east-west connections	Minimal housing/commercial/retail options

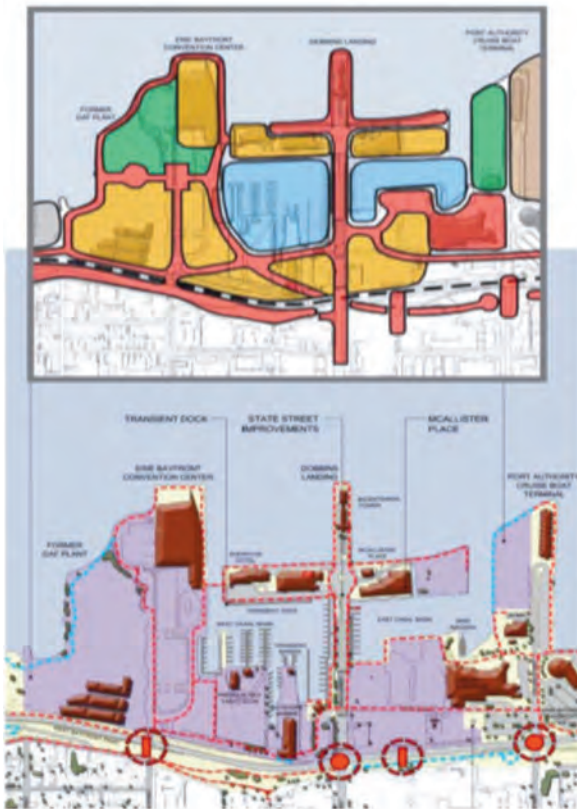
#### Proposed Land Use and Circulation Solutions:

Increase and enhance public spaces	Create mixed-use development areas, including a distinctive Central Bayfront District
Develop contiguous public space connections	Connect the Bayfront to Downtown Erie and nearby neighborhoods
Expand industrial/working port facilities as opportunities arise	Establish a true Parkway along the Bayfront
Maintain marina facilities along the Bayfront	Make the Bayfront Parkway a boulevard for safety and traffic calming elements



Port Authority Building

Land Use Improvements recommended for the downtown portion of Central Bayfront District in the Erie Waterfront Master Plan are shown in **Plate 2-4**. A Land Use Map of the entire Bayfront District is included in Appendix 2-4. This downtown planning process re-confirmed many of the same issues identified in the Erie Waterfront Master Plan.



## Land Use Improvements

### Central Bayfront District

- Integrated Mixed-use Development
  - Residential
  - Rental - Commercial
  - Entertainment and Civic Venues
- Continuous Public Waterfront Access
- **State Street as a Central Spine**
- **Strong Connections to Downtown**
- **Plan District as a Unified Whole**
- Maritime Character
  - Spaces, Structures, Site Furnishing
- Adaptive Reuse of Older Structures
- Collaborative Planning & Partnerships
  - City & county Government
  - Port Authority
  - Community
  - Local Business community
  - Developers
  - Bayfront Property Owners

**Plate 2-4: Land Use Improvements Central Bayfront: Provided by Domokur**

The Port Authority intends to update the Waterfront Master Plan in the near future, which is critical to several current planning processes. In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (Penn DOT) and the City are in the process of conducting a study of the Bayfront Parkway. As part of these efforts, it is extremely critical that the Bayfront be part of downtown, both visually and physically. Connectivity is key--traffic flow, pedestrian walkways, signage, streetscaping, street lighting, informational kiosks, street furniture, and public art must be improved and maintained to really connect downtown and the Bayfront. Furthermore, programming and events should be planned in part to reinforce that connection.



**Why another Plan?**

One might ask why another “plan” was needed, given the extensive list discussed above. This is a valid question that can be easily answered:

First, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) requires that designated Main Street communities maintain a current Five-Year Plan to guide the actions and decisions of the Main Street organization and to influence decisions of the Main Street Organization’s many partners.

Second, most of those plans addressed very specific issues, areas of operation, development projects, or agency plans, but few addressed the overall development or redevelopment of Downtown Erie in a comprehensive manner that could have linked the various reports and plans together.

Third, and most importantly, many of the recommendations of those past plans and studies have been accomplished by many partners, and Downtown Erie needs to look to the future and what needs to be done to continue enhancing the downtown experience for residents, visitors, businesses, and workers. Erie residents should be proud of all that the EDP and its public and private partners have accomplished over the past decade. The list is significant and includes:

**Past Accomplishments**

<b>Bayfront District:</b>	
Bayfront Convention Center and Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel	The 200 Peach Street medical and office building
Blasco Library, Maritime Museum, and the Brig Niagara	The Intermodal Center
UPMC Hamot’s new ownership, facilities and programs	

<b>Perry Square District:</b>	
Perry Square improvements	Erie Art Museum’s new entrance
Erie Insurance Group parking garage	Gannon University’s new facilities and renovation projects
State Street streetscaping improvements	Erie Insurance Group’s new Museum and Technical Learning Center

<b>Renaissance District:</b>	
Erie Insurance Arena	Radius CoWork’s shared entrepreneurial space in the Renaissance Center
Gannon University’s new Center for Business Ingenuity	Warner Theater improvements



**Union Square District:**

Griswold Park improvements	Redevelopment of the Mercantile Building
Adaptive reuse of the former Post Office	Union Square townhomes
Renovation of Erie Window & Glass building	Lovell Place adaptive reuse

**Throughout Downtown Erie:**

Decorative bike racks	EMTA smart phone app for Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL)
Over ten new dining establishments	New street furniture, street signs, trash receptacles, and banners
Parking ramp renovations	30+ facade renovations with EDP assistance

In addition to what Erie partners have accomplished in downtown, there are many significant projects, either currently under construction or in the planning stages, including:

**Projects Underway**

**Bayfront District**

The Courtyard by Marriott Hotel and parking ramp	Harbor Place proposed development
UPMC Hamot improvements on State Street	Conversion of the second floor of the Maritime Museum
Retention of a developer to redevelop the McAllister Place property on East Dobbins Landing	Proposed plans for redevelopment of the former GAF site by Erie Events
Acquisition and planned redevelopment of the east end of East Dobbins Landing	The Bayfront Parkway upgrade planning process

**Perry Square District**

Additional Perry Square improvements including a new multi-use pavilion adjacent to State Street and fountain upgrades	Ongoing Gannon University and Erie Insurance improvements
--	---

**Renaissance District**

Proposed Warner Theater Expansion	Jerry Uht Park improvements
Erie Playhouse renovations	





**Union Square District**

A new Transit Center and parking garage by the Erie Metropolitan Transportation Authority between 14th Street and the railroad, between Parade and French Streets	Proposed market-rate housing and commercial development
Renovation of the Turnpike Building	

**Throughout downtown**

The City of Erie's Comprehensive Plan process	The external security camera program
Planning for a Land Bank and a Housing/Blight Court	Parking ramp upgrades
Planning for bike lanes throughout the County, including Downtown Erie	Revitalization efforts in adjacent neighborhoods
Installing technology at parking lots and street meters	



*Many plans are underway for downtown developments*

*Example of security camera*

## Relationships to Other Key Plans and Studies

It is important that current planning processes coordinate activities and recommendations so that the results are clear and concise strategies that complement and reinforce each other. To that end, this planning process has been coordinated with others, including:

### Coordinated Activities

The City of Erie is working on a Comprehensive Plan that will be completed in 2016. EDP is represented on the Technical Advisory Committee to assure that the two plans are consistent with each other and that the results of the downtown planning process are incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan, as appropriate.

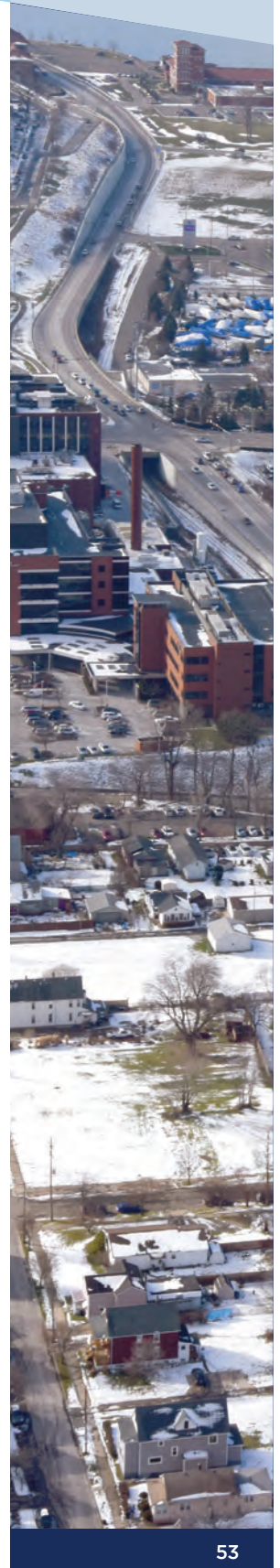
The Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority will soon be updating its Waterfront Master Plan. It is critical that the EDP be part of that planning process to assure that connectivity is enhanced between the Bayfront and downtown. Major proposed developments on the Bayfront need to reflect and enhance a relationship to downtown. Access—vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit--needs to be well planned and safe between the Bayfront and downtown.

The Port Authority, City of Erie, and Penn DOT are working jointly on plans to upgrade the Bayfront Parkway, which is more than 25 years old. EDP is involved in this process to assure that downtown concerns are addressed, including connectivity across the Parkway, pedestrian accessibility, traffic flow, left-turn signals, safety, signage to downtown, and other similar issues that are critical for Downtown Erie.

The Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership recently completed a three-year effort to create Destination Erie: A Regional Vision, a 25-year strategy for Erie County's future.

The vision resulting from the Destination Erie, a regional vision project is::

*“The Erie Region is a place where businesses, neighborhoods, and families thrive, where education is valued and seen as a pathway to success and fulfillment, where the natural environment is conserved for future generations, and where communities are livable and connected both within Erie County and with the larger Great Lakes region.”*





Several phases of the Destination Erie project emphasized the importance of downtowns in Erie County and especially Downtown Erie. For example:

### DESTINATION ERIE PROJECT

The Growth and Investment Framework Opportunities identified Downtown Erie as a key element of a regional tourism hub, as well as an entrepreneurial hub because of the proximity of Gannon University and Mercyhurst University. This document mentions the need to increase the range of housing in downtown, designated downtown as an investment area, and recommended urban infill development.

The Development Opportunities Areas Analysis of the Destination Erie planning process, completed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, stated that Downtown Erie possesses all the basic characteristics of “Opportunity Areas.” These areas include access to jobs, public transit, dense population, and housing, and a street system that accommodates both vehicular and pedestrian movement. Five Opportunity Areas were specifically identified in the downtown area; some just outside the EDP-designated downtown target area.

A 2013 draft of the Vision Report identified several themes for the regional vision. One of the key themes is to strengthen and revitalize city and town centers, including Downtown Erie. Other themes are to grow tourism and to maintain a creative cultural life. Both of these themes are highly visible in Downtown Erie and are goals of several of the civic groups engaged in downtown revitalization.

The Community Engagement segment of the Destination Erie process in August of 2013 identified a “focus on redevelopment” as a key issue, along with “creating walkable neighborhoods.” Both of these are very relevant to Downtown Erie and support the many revitalization efforts.

Emerge 2040, a newly-formed partnership, was created to implement Destination Erie for the region’s future. EDP’s participation in EmERGE 2040 will assure that Downtown Erie’s goals are adequately addressed.

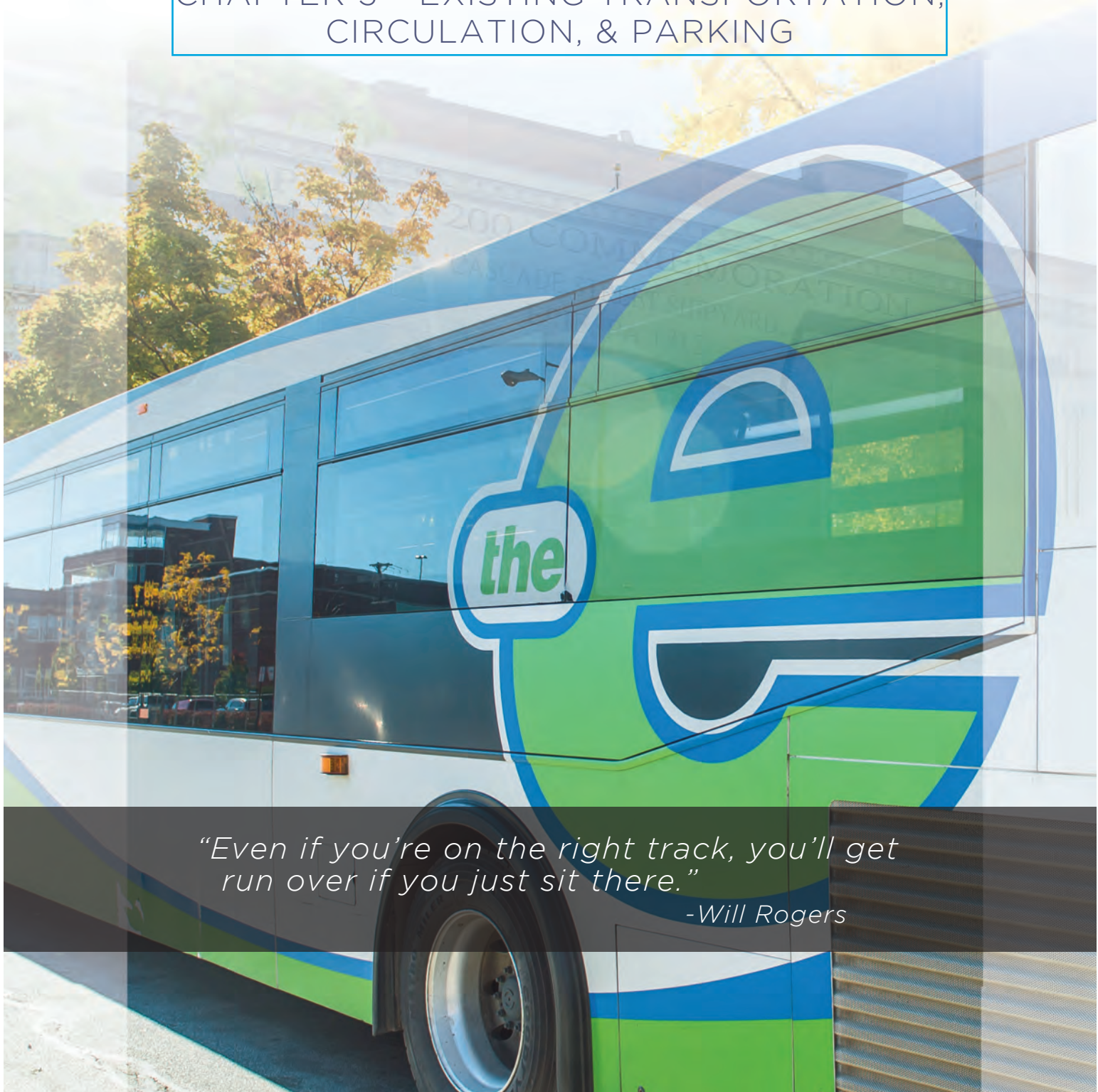


*We must keep young professionals in Erie*

*Gannon University provides entrepreneurial opportunities*



CHAPTER 3 • EXISTING TRANSPORTATION,  
CIRCULATION, & PARKING



*“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get  
run over if you just sit there.”*

*-Will Rogers*



This chapter summarizes existing conditions related to transportation and circulation, as well as parking in Downtown Erie. Understanding transportation and circulation through downtown, and knowing how parking affects downtown visitors, are important to creating solutions to improve existing conditions and attract more people into downtown. Chapter 5, Goal #5 presents recommended strategies and initiatives.

### Vehicular Traffic

Streets within Downtown Erie are in a grid pattern with numbered east-west streets starting at the Bayfront Parkway and heading south. State Street is the key north-south roadway and 6th and 12th Street are the key east-west roadways. There are several one-way streets in downtown, including French Street and Sassafras Street heading south, Peach Street heading north, North Park Row heading east and South Park Row heading west around Perry Square, and 8th Street heading east. Critical traffic issues in downtown identified as part of this planning process include:

#### Traffic Issues

Traffic congestion and speed-- Although some people would prefer to travel faster on the Parkway, most people feel that the Parkway should be a calm and pleasant drive along the Bay, and that traffic trying to get across town as quickly as possible should take an alternate route—most likely 12th Street.

Lack of exclusive left turn arrows from the Bayfront Parkway onto State and Holland Streets.

Lack of pedestrian crossings over the Parkway and pedestrian safety.

Poor synchronization of traffic signals--Traffic signals throughout downtown, according to the City's Traffic Engineer, are older models without the latest technology that would give the City the ability to better synchronize and control them. The lack of synchronized signals on 12th Street, as an example, requires drivers to stop repeatedly, lengthening trips, and creating stress for drivers.

Synchronization of traffic signals and addition of a bike lane on State Street.

One-way streets.

Lack of multi-modal paths and connectivity.



Traffic on Peach Street

Traffic on State Street

12th Street was improved a few years ago and underwent a “road diet” in which one lane in each direction was removed from traffic use. Streetscaping improvements were made as well to portions of 12th Street, State Street and around Perry Square.

The City is making strides to improve roadways and signalization throughout downtown and the City; however, the public is generally unaware of these efforts. Better education about what the City is doing will be a positive force for downtown business and City relations.

Several cities (Toledo, Ohio as an example) converted downtown streets to one-way to ease traffic congestion problems. More often than not, traffic congestion was helped, but downtown businesses suffered. The faster speeds of traffic on one-way streets deterred consumers from stopping and shopping at local businesses. Neighborhood and downtown groups have led movements to return one-way streets to two-way traffic to improve the economic viability of downtowns.

One-way streets are also very confusing to visitors to unfamiliar downtowns. Having several one-way streets makes the driving even more frustrating. Many communities are converting one-way streets back to two-way streets to revitalize their downtowns and to make the downtown much friendlier to outsiders.

As alternative energy plays a more significant role in our travel patterns, communities are initiating actions to provide for electric charging stations and compressed natural gas (CNG) stations, especially in the more heavily concentrated areas such as downtowns. Gannon University and Erie County are investigating the feasibility of adding electric charging stations on State Street, and EMTA is considering adding electric charging stations and CNG fueling stations to its proposed transit center on 14th Street.

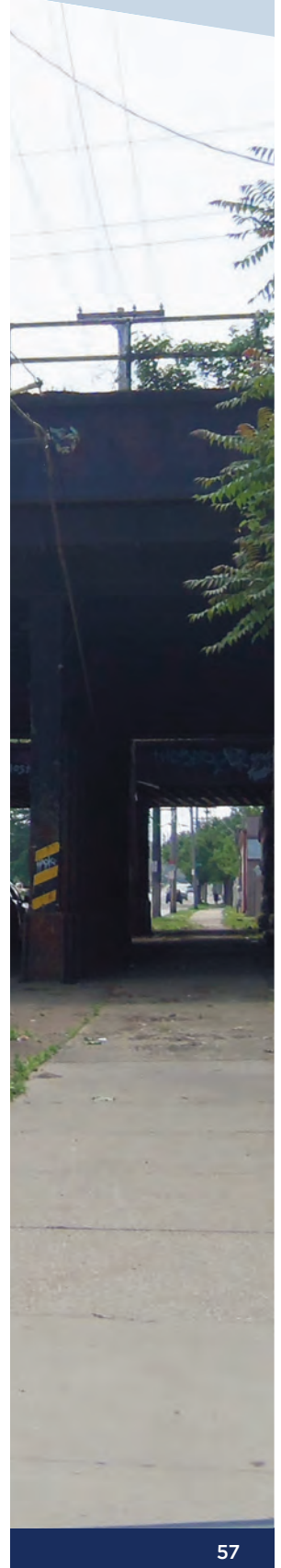


*Example of CNG gas station*



*Electric charging station example*

Underpasses at the southern boundary of downtown (specifically on Sassafras, State, and French Streets) are in poor condition, resulting in intimidating experiences for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Lack of adequate lighting, security cameras, safe pedestrian walkways separated from vehicular traffic, graffiti covered walls, and/or poor storm water drainage make these underpasses unpleasant places to travel, yet they are key gateways into downtown.



## Parking

No matter which city asks its consumers about parking, the answer is always the same—“There is not enough parking!” There are two types of parking deficiencies—real and perceived. Real parking deficiencies mean that the existing land uses in downtown warrant X number of parking spaces per the zoning code, and there are less than X. A perceived parking problem generally means that people do not feel comfortable walking around a corner or two blocks from their parking space to the front door of the business they are visiting, even though they would generally walk twice that distance at a mall. As County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper aptly noted “We do not have a parking problem in downtown, we have a walking problem.” However, perceptions about the lack of parking in downtowns can become real problems if consumers fail to go downtown because they think there is no place to park. This hurts businesses and attendance at activities, and hampers the economic viability of the downtown.

The Erie Parking Authority (EPA—[www.erieparking.com](http://www.erieparking.com)) owns and operates public parking garages and surface parking lots in downtown, and maintains parking meters on streets and in public lots. (**Plate 3-1**) There are a total of 3,423 parking spaces within EPA parking garages in downtown. Parking garages are spread throughout downtown, although there is a concentration in the southwestern portion, amounting to 1,455 parking spaces, or about 43% of all parking garage spaces. The EPA acquired funding in 2015 to

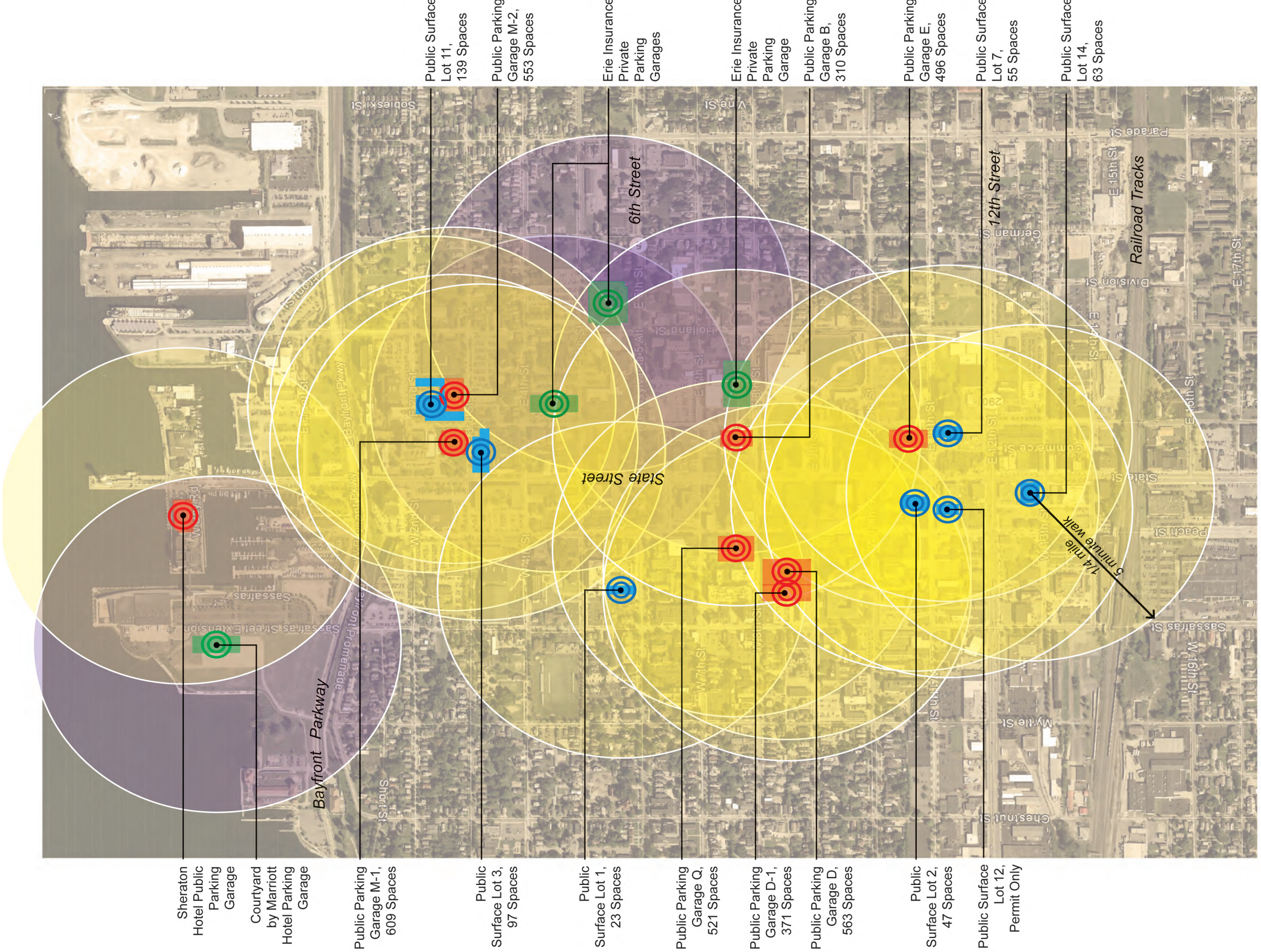


*Existing parking structures in Downtown Erie*

make improvements to the existing parking garages. There are a total of 424 parking spaces located within EPA surface parking lots in downtown. These lots are adequately spread throughout the area.

In addition, there are several privately-owned parking garages within downtown: Erie Insurance Group’s garage on French Street has 500 spaces, the Arena parking garage has 1,000 spaces, and just outside the DID, it’s Holland Street garage has 800 spaces. Erie Insurance Group also has three private surface lots with 795 spaces.

PNC Bank has a private parking garage at 9th and French Streets with about 50 spaces. The new parking garage under construction for the Courtyard at the Bayfront will have 287 spaces, which will be utilized by the public, similar to the Sheraton’s parking garage, which has 300 spaces.



Sheraton  
Hotel Public  
Parking  
Garage

Courtyard  
by Marriott  
Hotel Parking  
Garage

Public Parking  
Garage M-1,  
609 Spaces

Public  
Surface Lot 3,  
97 Spaces

Public  
Surface Lot 1,  
23 Spaces

Public Parking  
Garage Q,  
521 Spaces

Public Parking  
Garage D-1,  
371 Spaces

Public Parking  
Garage D,  
563 Spaces

Public  
Surface Lot 2,  
47 Spaces

Public Surface  
Lot 12,  
Permit Only

Public Surface  
Lot 11,  
139 Spaces

Public Parking  
Garage M-2,  
553 Spaces

Erie Insurance  
Private  
Parking  
Garages

Erie Insurance  
Private  
Parking  
Garage






Public Parking  
Garage B,  
310 Spaces

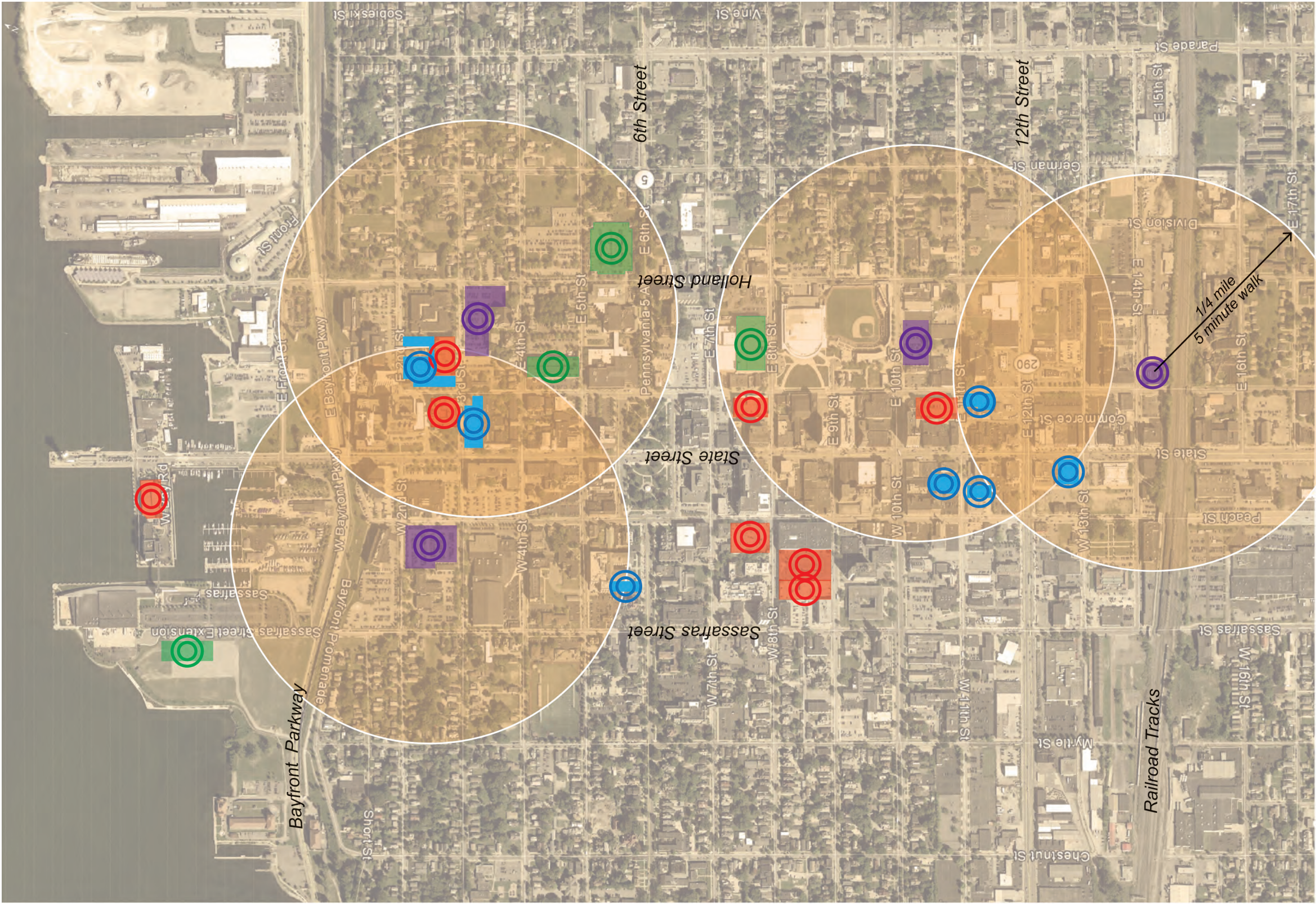
Public Parking  
Garage E,  
496 Spaces

Public Surface  
Lot 7,  
55 Spaces

Public Surface  
Lot 14,  
63 Spaces

Plate 3-1: Existing Parking Diagram

-  = Parking Garages Owned/  
Operated by Erie Parking  
Authority
-  = Surface Lots Owned/  
Operated by Erie Parking  
Authority
-  = Parking Garages Owned/  
Operated by Private Entity  
or Business
-  = 1/4 Mile Walking Radius  
from Existing Public  
Parking Garages/Lots
-  = 1/4 Mile Walking  
Radius from Existing  
Private Parking  
Garages



**Plate 3-2: Potential Parking Improvements**

-  = Parking Garages Owned/Operated by Erie Parking Authority
-  = Surface Lots Owned/Operated by Erie Parking Authority
-  = Parking Garages Owned/Operated by Private Entity or Business
-  = Potential Parking Garages on Existing Surface Lots (Private and Public)
-  = 1/4 Mile Walking Radius from Potential Parking Garages

There are several pockets of concentrated public parking—one near UPMC Hamot in the northeastern portion of downtown, the aforementioned cluster of parking garages in the southwestern portion, and West 8th Street near Gannon University. The walkability of each public parking garage and parking lot (shown in yellow on **Plate 3-2**) provides significant coverage of downtown, assuming a 1/4 mile walking radius. There are no designated parking spaces for scooters or motorcycles in downtown.

The walkability of each privately-held parking garage (shown in purple on **Plate 3-1**), along with Bayfront parking, greatly increases downtown-neighborhood walkability.

With the availability of public parking and the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority (EMTA) system currently in place, there are many ways for people to travel through downtown by automobile.

There may be activities downtown that require intense amounts of parking at a given time that may not be provided (e.g. sporting events, downtown holiday celebrations, theatrical events, etc.), but these are limited in number. There is the potential to convert existing surface parking lots into parking garages, as indicated by purple circles on **Plate 3-2**, when the need arises and funding is available, in lieu of creating additional surface lots. These proposed parking garages would solve identified parking deficiencies in the UPMC Hamot /Gannon University area and the southern part of downtown.

Parking in the Renaissance District can be critical at times, since so many visitors come to the district at the same time for BayHawks, Otters, or Sea Wolves games, or for productions at the Warner Theater or Erie Playhouse. In addition to the Erie Insurance parking garage, which is used for events at the Erie Insurance Arena, the Erie Parking Authority owns additional garages, one of which also houses the Parking Authority offices. There are three additional public surface lots in the Renaissance District, as well as several small private parking lots and on-street parking. In addition, there are three garages just west of Peach Street, a mere 2.5 blocks away.

Parking in the Union Square district has been cited as a problem. There are three existing public surface lots but no parking garages in the district. On-street parking is available, as is parking in front of Union Station and its adjacent small businesses.

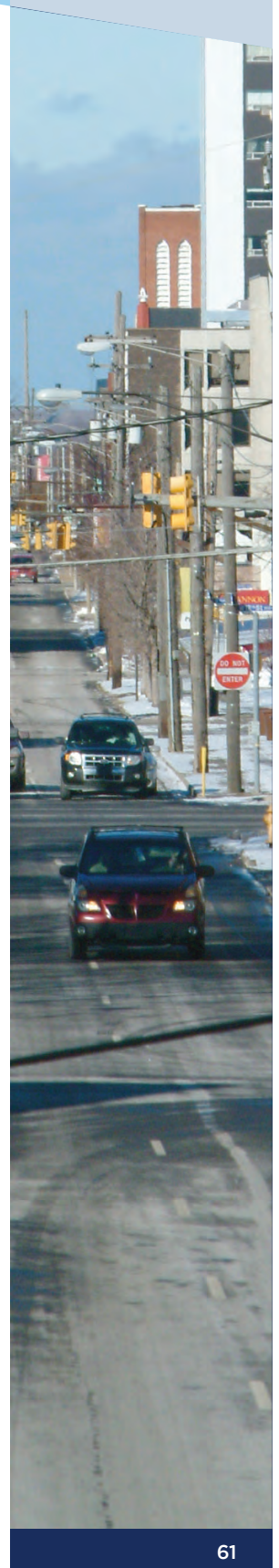


*Erie Insurance Arena event*



EMTA is constructing a new parking garage just east of French Street between 14th Street and the railroad in the Union Square District. The first level of the parking garage will be provided for public parking, with the upper floors reserved for EMTA employees. This may address concerns about inadequate parking in this district, provided that

lighting, utilities, pedestrian access, and safety are addressed and that people are adequately informed of the availability of the parking garage.



*One-way street in downtown*



There are two Park & Ride facilities west of downtown—Liberty Park and Lincoln. EMTA provides shuttle services from these Park & Rides to State Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets and to the Intermodal Center.

The EPA offers special programs related to parking: discounts for jury duty at the County Courthouse, monthly leases at several of the parking facilities, permits for contractors and Gannon University students, special passes for conventions, and Park & Shop stamps for 100 hours of parking. Validation passes are available to businesses for customer use at the garages at West 7th and Peach and West 9th between Peach and Sassafras Streets, and monthly parking passes are available, as well as permits for residential parking.

A common problem regarding parking throughout downtown is the age of the meters and the outdated payment and fine systems. Quarters are needed for most meters, with no ability to pay by credit card or smart phone, and fines must be paid in person or mailed to city offices.

### Transit

*“We must connect our assets through public transportation.”*

John Buchna

The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority is the designated agency to provide fixed route bus services to Erie County (the “e” or transit buses), as well as paratransit services for handicapped or elderly individuals (the “Lift”), and service up and down State Street (the “Bay Liner Trolley”). ([www.ride-the-e.com](http://www.ride-the-e.com)). Service is provided every day except for seven holidays a year. The transit buses travel State Street in downtown, except for the area between North Park Row and 10th Streets, where it uses Peach and French Streets. Buses on this route travel to the Bicentennial Tower and the Intermodal Center.

The Liberty Park & Ride Shuttle and the Lincoln Park & Ride Shuttle take riders to the Intermodal Center and to the bus shelters on State Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets. There is also a Courthouse Shuttle that travels between the Intermodal Center and the Courthouse, as well as a bus to the airport. EMTA offers free (to the users) transit services to many organizations that have entered into agreements with them. These include Erie County, UPMC Hamot, Gannon University, Penn State Behrend, Edinboro University, and Mercyhurst University. These entities reimburse EMTA for a portion of the costs of their riders, as incentives for their employees/students to ride the bus. In addition, seniors with proper passes can ride for free, and handicapped individuals with proper passes can ride the Lift for a discounted rate.

During non-winter months, EMTA provides bike racks on transit buses as part of the “Bike on the Bus” program. Bikers are responsible for placing the bikes on the racks, a process that takes less than 60 seconds. Lessons are available to teach bike riders how to do this.



Existing EMTA bus shelter

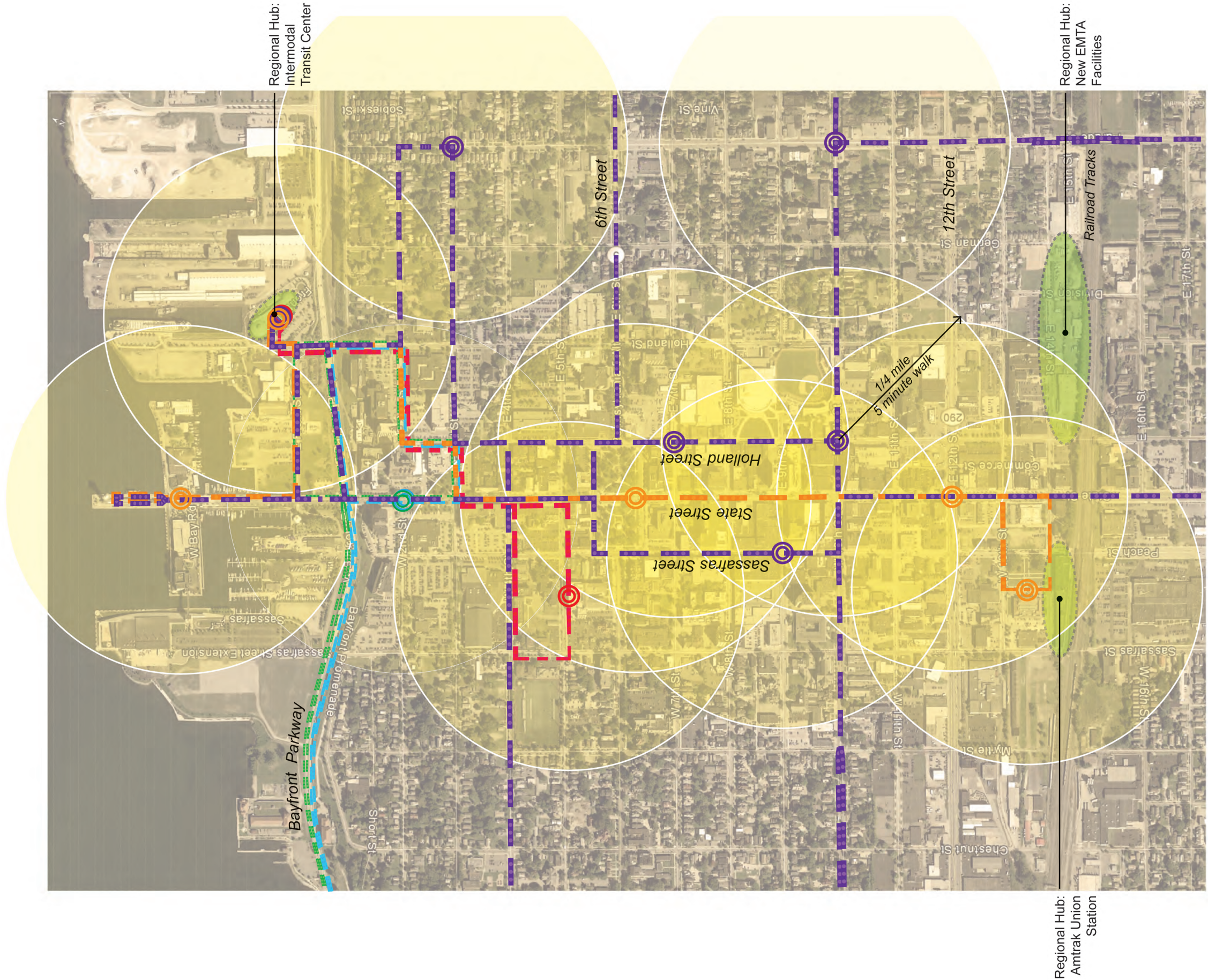
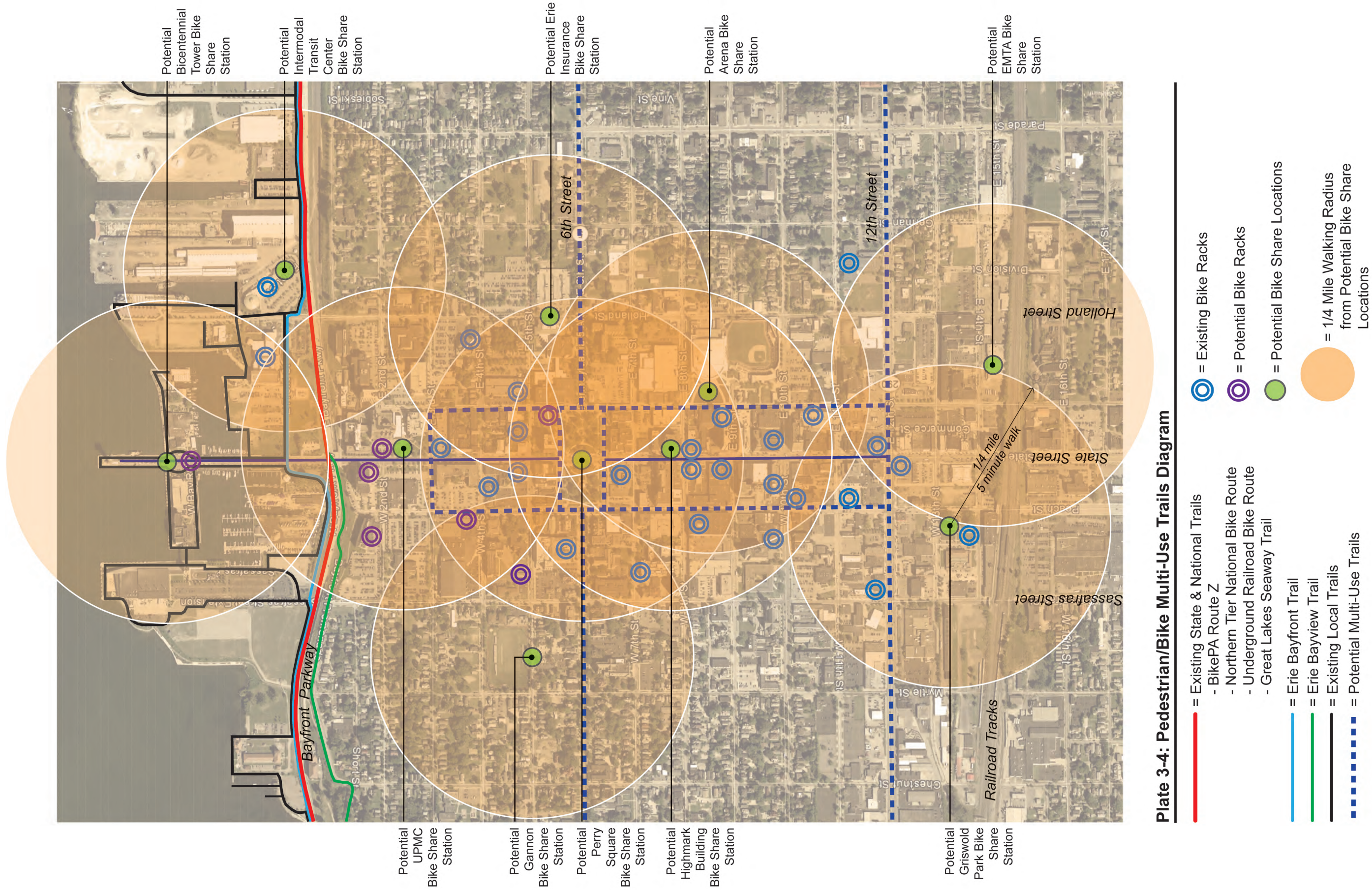


Plate 3-3: Existing Public Transportation Routes & Stops

- = The "e" Buses
- = The Bayliner Trolley
- = The Lincoln Park & Ride Shuttle
- = The Liberty Park & Ride Shuttle
- = The Courthouse Trolley
- = Scheduled Transit Stops along Corresponding Routes
- 
- 
- 

● = 1/4 Mile Walking Radius from Existing Transportation Stops



**Plate 3-4: Pedestrian/Bike Multi-Use Trails Diagram**

The Intermodal Center on the Bayfront Parkway, the proposed EMTA Transit Center at 14th and French Streets (which is close to Union Station), and Union Station are integral transportation hubs through which people enter Erie via alternative venues such as Amtrak and Greyhound. Greyhound Bus services are accessible at the Intermodal Center and Amtrak is available at Union Station on West 14th Street. An EMTA customer service window is provided at the Intermodal Center.

There are a variety of fixed routes throughout downtown and the City, providing adequate coverage of the area. Bus stops and transit routes are located throughout downtown, as indicated on

**Plate 3-3.** Existing bus stops may include a shelter such as the ones on State Street by UPMC Hamot, or they may be a sign noting a bus stop.

Improvements to the EMTA facility at 14th and French Streets include new storage and maintenance facilities for both the transit buses and the Lift buses, new administrative offices, a new parking garage, and a new transit riders service center. The new Lift facilities on the Parade Street side of the site will be completed in 2015. The balance of the project will be completed by 2017.

EMTA owns the water taxi that provides service to Presque Isle from Dobbins Landing, and the Port Authority manages the service. Research indicates that additional water taxis, or other methods to cross the Bay, are desired. The Bayfront includes several public and private marinas and yacht clubs, some that include transient boat dockage ([www.porterie.org](http://www.porterie.org)). The Port attracts large freighters at the industrial port, and Donjon Ship Building & Repair brings in huge freighters for repair at its facility just east of the Port Authority offices.

In addition to EMTA transit service, there is only one taxi cab company in Erie. This could present a unique opportunity for additional taxi-type services for an enterprising entrepreneur, especially in light of the new EMTA transit center.

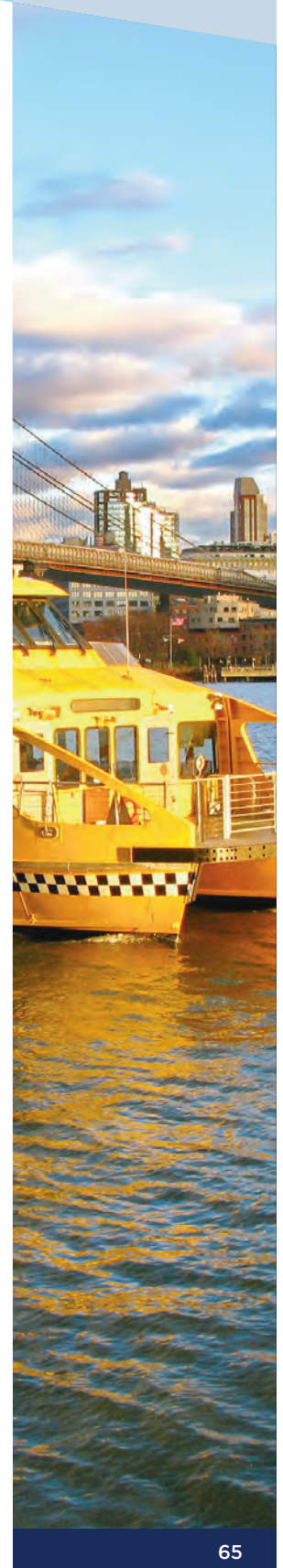
The area near the UPMC Hamot campus lacks a bus/trolley stop and a slight gap exists in the walkability of the area. This is an area of great development potential and will need the transit system to support it. In addition, more consistent transit service on weekends could be beneficial.



*EMTA downtown service*



*A freighter near Port Authority offices*



*Example of water taxi*

## Pedestrian and Bicycle

There is a national movement toward healthier life styles, including increasing walking and biking as both transportation and recreational activities. High obesity rates among all Americans, and especially among younger adults and children, emphasize the need to address more physical activity in our daily lives.

**Plate 3-4** compiles data from past plans and current materials, and illustrates existing state and national trails, which include the BikePA Route, the Northern Tier National Bike Route, the Underground Railroad Bike Trail, and the Great Lakes Seaway Trail, all of which follow the Bayfront Parkway through downtown. The proposed Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail would likely culminate at the Bayfront. In addition, **Plate 3-4** identifies the Erie Bayfront Trail, the Erie Bayview Trail, and existing local trails through the Bayfront. Existing bike racks are also shown.

There are many individuals and groups interested in an expanded multi-use trail system throughout downtown. The Erie County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), BikeErie, the City of Erie Traffic Engineering Department, EDP, Erie Insurance, GAINS-Our West Bayfront, and Gannon University have been meeting to discuss potential routes through downtown, the rest of the City and the County, as well as types of routes, costs, funding, and other issues. BikeErie has proposed a 20-30 mile bike route, as illustrated on **Plate 3-5**.



Potential bike path design and separation



Existing pathway at top of bluffs

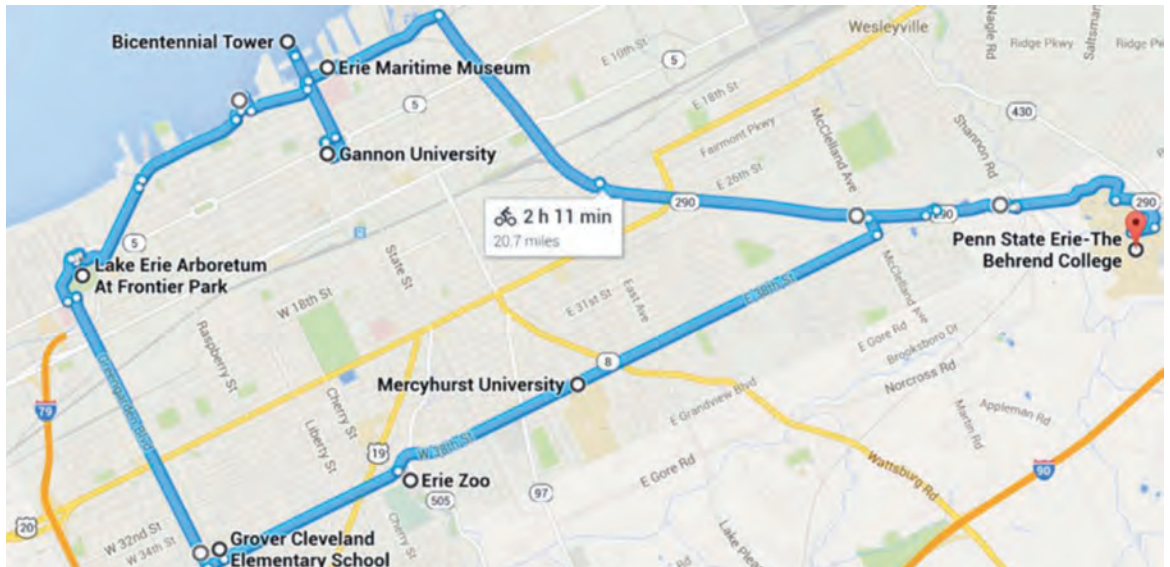


Plate 3-5 Bike Erie Proposed 20 - 30 Mile Bike Route

Potential bike sharing service



The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan completed in 2010 stated that travel lanes throughout downtown are excessively wide and have enough room to include bike lanes. The inclusion of bike lanes would separate pedestrians and bikers on the already crowded sidewalks, making travel safer for both.

There are already an excessive amount of signs in downtown, so delineation of bike lanes/trails could use an alternative means of delineation. There are a variety of bike racks in downtown, many of which are also artwork.

The potential exists to create a low-cost Bike Share Program in at least ten areas (identified on **Plate 3-4**) including the Bayfront, Perry Square, Erie Insurance Arena, the EMTA Transit Center, Griswold Park, and Gannon University. This would greatly increase the number and mobility of pedestrians visiting either the Bayfront or downtown, and it is something that BikeErie is looking at accomplishing. Bike storage stations will be needed for a successful bicycling program and there are a wide variety of bike storage stations as illustrated.



Potential bike storage options

The MPO/BikeErie/City group working on bike lanes through the County will likely identify and prioritize streets for bike lanes. However, past plans have recommended that bike



Potential bike storage facility



Potential bike path design using color

lanes should start with restriping State Street, 6th Street, and 12th Street. These make the most sense, as they are key arteries with adequate space for bike lanes, and they serve as key transportation routes for workers and students. Studies also suggest using alternative means of delineating bike or multi-use trails--line painting on the roadway or use of textured or colored pavement (in lieu of signs).



Sample designated bike lane



## Like Millennials, More Older Americans Steering Away From Driving

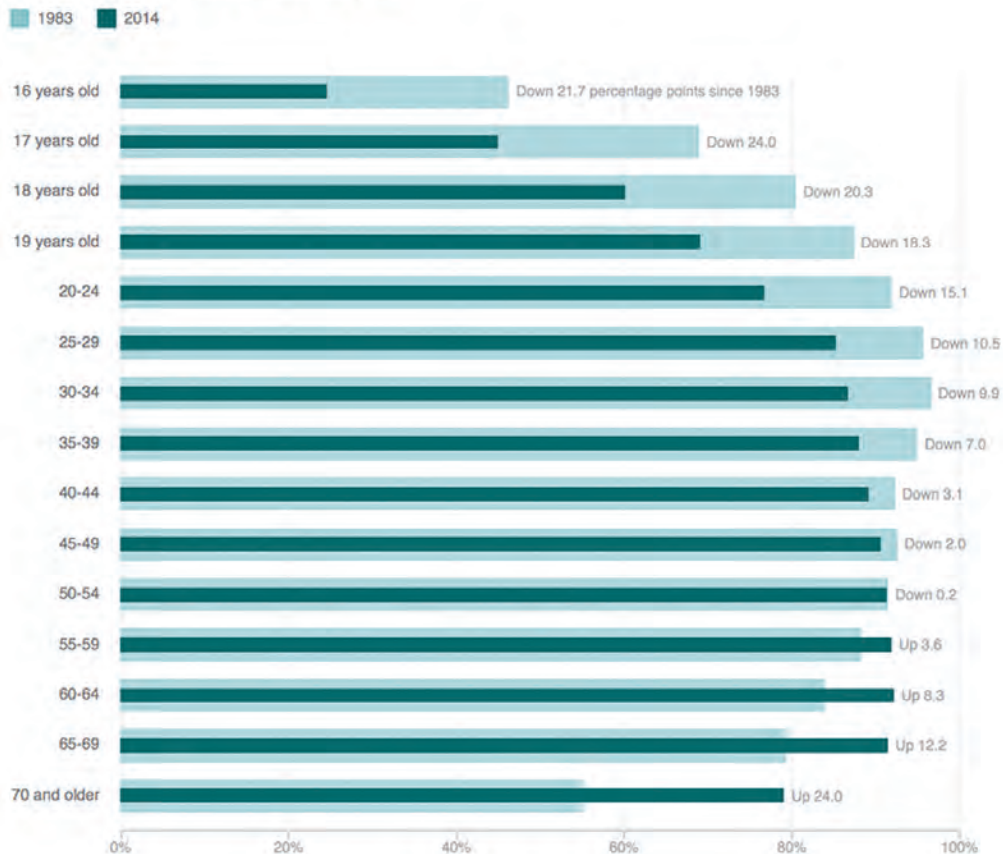
“Over the past several decades, particularly for the youngest age groups, there’s been a pretty large decrease in the number of people who have been getting driver’s licenses,” says Brandon Schoettle, a researcher at the University of Michigan.

He led a new study published by University of Michigan’s Transportation Research Institute that studied the proportion of people with driver’s licenses over the years.

According to the study, only 69 percent of 19-year-olds have a driver’s license in 2014, compared with almost 90 percent in 1983. The percentage of 20-somethings with driver’s licenses has also fallen by 13 percent over the past three decades, and fewer Americans in their 30s and 40s now have driver’s licenses.

### Fewer Drivers Among Younger Generations

Proportion of licensed drivers in 1983 and 2014, by age



Source: University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute

Credit: Katie Park/NPR

<http://www.npr.org/2016/02/11/466178523/like-millennials-more-older-americans-steering-away-from-driving>

As a growing trend across America, Erie needs look into and prepare for a change in driving habits.



## CHAPTER 4 • MARKET REVIEW



*"If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."  
-Milton Berle*





The Market Analysis for Erie Downtown was completed in April 2012 by Urban Partners to update the market component of the Erie Downtown Master Plan completed in 2006. This Market Analysis looked at the Downtown Improvement District (DID) boundaries, as well as the greater downtown, which extends to Cranberry Street on the west, East Avenue on the east and 26th Street to the south, and Erie City and Erie County as well. Demographics were examined for population, households, and housing unit changes and trends over the past two decades.

### Sales Housing Market

Key points regarding housing sales and the market for housing included in the Market Analysis include:

#### Housing Market Analysis

Sales activity was modest in 2011 with an approximately 50% decline from 2005.

Median sales prices ranged from \$49,000 in the greater downtown to \$77,000 in the City and \$112,000 in the County.

35 homes in the greater downtown were purchased by investors.

Median sale prices for condos ranged from \$147,900 in the DID and greater downtown to \$170,000 in the City and \$177,000 in the County.

The Union Square mixed-use market-rate development was proposed to include 140 residential units, retail, off-street parking, and Griswold Park improvements. Prices were expected to range from \$170,000 to \$259,000.

Urban Partners conducted an on-line survey to assess the market for housing in Downtown Erie. Results indicated that 42% of the 144 respondents would be interested in living in Downtown Erie if attractive, affordable housing was available, and an additional 9% said they would be interested in living in downtown if financial incentives were available.



*Union Square town homes*



*The Boston Store offers market-rate and subsidized housing options*

## Sales Market Potential

According to the Market Analysis, several niche-oriented developments would be successful in downtown if situated to most effectively build upon the strengths of downtown. For example:

### Downtown Strengths

There is the potential for sales of 50 to 60 new housing units over the next five years targeted to “young relocating owners” and first-time home buyers. This would complete the Mercantile Building, advance the Union Square development, and provide for one loft conversion. These might be priced in the \$140,000 to \$170,000 range.

There is potential for another 50 to 60 sales units targeted to “older relocating owners” and “homeowners with incomes over \$100,000” in the form of a luxury condominium development with condos in a mid-rise building, selling between \$130,000 and \$250,000 or more.



*Mercantile building market-rate housing on upper floors*

## Rental Housing Market

The Market Analysis also stated that rental housing represented 33% of the housing market in Erie County and 48% of the market in the City of Erie in 2010, up from 31% and 44% respectively since 2000. The rental market is concentrated in the greater downtown area, where 71% of housing units were rental, which accounted for 29% of all County rental housing. There was a 5% increase in rental units in the greater downtown since 2000, while rental housing grew by 11% in the DID. As in 2000, 99% of housing in the DID in 2012 remained rental.

### Urban Partners divided rental housing into three categories:

University student housing--\$265 to \$350 per person per month, plus utilities,

Subsidized rental housing--\$450 to \$650 per month depending on size and amenities, and

Market-rate housing--\$650 to \$1,000 per month—most complexes had units available.

### Rental Housing Market Potential

The demand for subsidized rentals remains strong with significant waiting lists.

The potential for further growth in the university market will be limited due to anticipated enrollment stabilization over the next few years.

There is an increasing interest in market-rate rentals, particularly townhomes and historic loft conversions.

Housing opportunities and development strategies in Downtown Erie are discussed in **Chapter 5 Goal #4**.



## Retail Market

Urban Partners conducted a retail market analysis to identify the performance of retailers within and near downtown and to identify opportunities for future retailing in the DID. Data included:

### Retailing Opportunities

Downtown stores provided services and products in 25 different retail categories.

Downtown stores service at least five distinct retail markets:

- Downtown residents, including Gannon University students
- Downtown employees
- Residents of the greater downtown area extending one mile beyond the DID boundaries
- Attendees at the many downtown cultural and sporting events
- A broader Erie County-wide (or larger) regional customer base

All of these markets offer possibilities for expanded retailing in downtown.

## Trade Area Retail Supply

### As of April 2012, Downtown Erie included:

106 operating retail businesses occupying nearly 457,700 square feet of store space and generating about \$91 million in annual sales.

Over 50% (58) were restaurants and bars.

### At this same time:

About 300 retail establishments offered goods and services in the greater downtown area, occupying about 1.05 million square feet, and generating almost \$228 million in annual sales.

Of these, 117 were eating and drinking establishments.

## Retail Demand

To quantify potential demand, Urban Partners focused on three demand segments: residents of the greater downtown area, downtown employees, and the broader Erie County area. It was concluded that a total potential retail demand of over \$358 million in goods and services could be captured annually by greater downtown area retailers. This includes:

### Retail Demand Segments

\$210 million of retail purchases made by of the greater downtown area residents (approximately 38,000),

More than \$52 million in purchases by downtown employees,

About \$87 million in purchases in selected retail categories that could be brought to Downtown Erie, and

\$8 million from a 15% capture of specialty sales under-represented in the Erie region.



Existing businesses in Downtown

## Retail Capture and Development Potential

### Urban Partners identified the following potential areas for additional sales capture:

- A supermarket of up to 55,000 SF (Square Feet).
- Up to 54,000 SF of additional full-service restaurants.
- Up to 25,000 SF of specialty apparel retailing.
- Up to 28,000 SF of new stores in categories of severe supply shortage.
- Up to 21,000 SF of specialty stores.
- Up to 15,000 SF of leisure-oriented specialty products.

This would collectively increase Downtown Erie's capture of the retail market by more than \$70 million, increasing total sales by 80%.

Retail opportunities and development strategies in Downtown Erie are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.



Gannon University's Center for Business Ingenuity

### Office Market

Urban Partner's analysis of the downtown office market noted a variety of buildings of various sizes, ages, and levels of quality. The highest quality space is mostly in owner-occupied, single-user buildings of major employers, including Erie Insurance Group, Gannon University, and UPMC Hamot Medical Center, in addition to banks and insurance companies. Rents range between \$15 and \$19 per SF net (tenant paying utilities, insurance, and/or maintenance) for Class A space. Rents for Class B space range between \$8 and \$12 per SF net.

### Office Market Potential

Urban Partners noted that the primary drivers for economic activity in downtown are the large employers that occupy single-user buildings. In order to maintain this market strength, they suggest:

### Economic Activity Drivers

- Assuring that these businesses have adequate potential for expansion.
- Developing the capacity to market to external users by identifying specific sites for new Class A space.
- Upgrading and converting warehouse and/or Class B space to office condominiums for smaller professional firms, especially near the medical complex.
- Aggressively converting Class B space to other uses to tighten up the market and encourage improved maintenance.

Office opportunities and development strategies in Downtown Erie are discussed in Chapter 5, Goal #3 (Obj. 3.4).



The Renaissance Center offers Class A office space



## Hotel Market

The hotel market analysis focused on an area extending about five miles from downtown, which includes the Interstate 90 exits and those hotels near Presque Isle. Urban Partners obtained data on 30 hotels within the study area with a total of 3,224 rooms. Some facts presented:

### Hotel Market Analysis

Hotel room demand for the Erie area grew by 24% between 2005 and 2011, while supply grew by 27%.

Occupancy was 61.3% in 2011.

Average room rates rose by 21% between 2005 and 2011, exceeding inflation.

In 2010 and 2011, summer demand (June through August) was 33% of the entire year's demand.

Off-season demand increased by 4% between 2005 and 2011.

The spring season increased 18% and the fall season 24%.



*Potential Boutique Hotel*

## Hotel Market Potential

Urban Partners noted that the annual growth in demand from 2007 to 2011 was 22,000 room-nights per year, indicating that the improved supply and quality triggered some demand response, including:

### Improved Supply and Quality

The potential to add 90 to 100 rooms annually to capture continued demand,

An opportunity to support convention business with a second, more price-sensitive, hotel of about 100 rooms within walking distance of the Bayfront Convention Center, and

Encouraging reinvestment and/or repurposing of older, less-competitive existing hotels.

Hotel opportunities and redevelopment strategies in Downtown Erie are discussed in **Chapters 5 and 6**.

*The Sheraton provides upscale hotel opportunities*



## CHAPTER 5 • GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

*“Empty pockets never held anyone back, only empty heads and empty hearts can do that.”*  
- Norman Vincent Peale





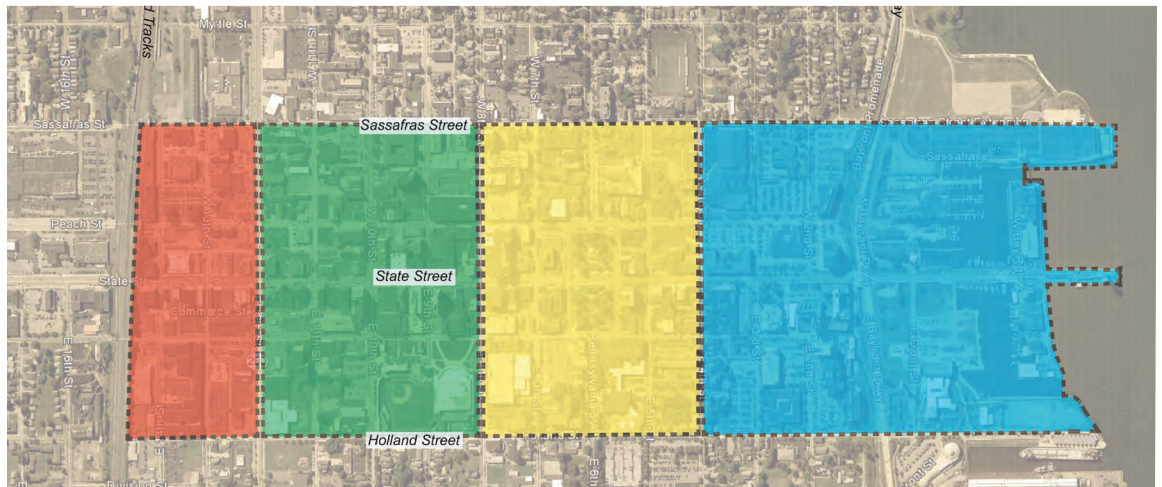
In order to improve the overall experience of Downtown Erie, encourage reinvestment, and create the downtown described in the Vision and Mission Statements in Chapter 1, the following goals, objectives, and strategies need to be implemented. Much of the implementation responsibility aligns with functions and activities associated with the Erie Downtown Partnership (EDP). EDP is the only agency specifically chartered to improve Downtown Erie. Its role is that of initiator, facilitator, collaborator, and/or coordinator, and it is the principal entity with its finger on the pulse of downtown progress. Together with its partners, the EDP should work toward these goals:

**GOAL 1:**

*Recognize and promote four districts in Downtown Erie to help support social and economic synergies. Each district is a unique subarea of downtown, with different character and functions, as well as unique design elements, land use concentrations, clusters of business activity and target markets. These four districts are (Ref. Plate 1-2):*

- *Bayfront District (The Bay to 4th Street)*
- *Perry Square District (4th Street to 8th Street)*
- *Renaissance District (8th Street to 12th Street)*
- *Union Square District (12th Street to the railroad tracks)*

There has been much discussion and enthusiasm about dividing Downtown Erie into several districts in order to concentrate specific activities and business types, as well as to make the coordination of downtown activities and projects more manageable. Seventy blocks is a very large area for effective and impactful downtown revitalization efforts. Identifying these four districts and defining objectives and strategies specific for each district will simplify the continuing revitalization process by making each district unique, distinct, and recognizable to the public.



**Plate 1-2: Erie Downtown District Boundaries**



**Objective 1.1:**

*For each district, identify their unique and distinct design elements, redevelopment strategies, and transportation enhancements to create four districts true to their history, capitalizing on their natural assets and existing resources, and targeting their specific markets and land uses.*

**Strategies:**

- 1.1.1 Convene meetings of key property owners, businesses, and residents in each district to coordinate district activities and decisions and educate people about the district concept. (Ref. **Goal 6**)
- 1.1.2 Pursue design elements and themes specific to each district: colors, furniture styles, signage, sidewalk patterns, bus shelters, flower pots, streetscaping, historic and cultural markers, and public art. (Ref. Objectives 1.2 to 1.5 and **Chapter 6**)
  - a) Add district identification to signage consistent with the existing signage system.
  - b) Educate the media about the four districts and their significance.
- 1.1.3 Design kiosks for each district with information and directions regarding district assets, parking and transit options, and emergency contacts, as well as benches, trash receptacles, and signage. Place kiosks at the State Street corners of each district.
- 1.1.4 Identify available buildings and sites with property owner information, as well as target market information for each district. (Ref. Objectives 1.2 to 1.5). Provide this information to Develop Erie and the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership for assistance in recruiting businesses and matching those businesses with appropriate buildings or sites.
  - a) Provide current information on available incentives and financial programs to prospects.
  - b) Some projects may require the Erie Downtown Partnership to pursue site control in order to facilitate appropriate development.
- 1.1.5 Target specific future land uses for each district. (Ref. Obj. 1.2 to 1.5 and **Goals 3 & 4.**)
- 1.1.6 Identify and pursue opportunities for appropriate in-fill and upper floor development within each district and discuss with building owners. (Ref. **Goals 3 & 4.**)
- 1.1.7 Encourage renovation and preservation of historically-significant buildings. Demolition should be discouraged if economically-feasible alternatives exist.



*Example of information kiosk*





- 1.1.8 Continue to add greenery in public rights-of-way and on public and private properties, but not necessarily as front lawns. In existing front lawns, brick or wrought iron fences, shrubbery, and public art would help continue the desired line of downtown building facades. (Ref. **Chapter 6.**)
- 1.1.9 Pursue transportation enhancements such as: new bus stops, routes, and/or artistic bus shelters; bike facilities (lanes, storage, sharing, and service); new or improved parking facilities; new sidewalks or pathways; etc. (Ref. **Chapter 3** and **Goal 5.**)
- 1.1.10 Target identified markets for new businesses, residents, and tourists for each district, as described in Chapter 4 and Goals 2-5.
- a) Begin recruitment efforts. (Ref. **Goal 3.**)
  - b) Begin promotional efforts. (Ref. **Goal 6.**)
  - c) Encourage more joint advertising among businesses within each district.
- 1.1.11 Assure that public and private plans for future improvements are complimentary to each other and enhance each other's viability and sustainability. Be sensitive to the needs of key partners in downtown and plan in ways that complement and support their needs for growth and expansion.

### **Objective 1.2:**

*Institute urban design projects and economic development programs that capitalize on and expand existing resources in the Bayfront District.*

The vision for this district, between the Bay and 4th Street, includes water-related and medical facilities focusing on the Bay, and providing services and amenities for water-enthusiasts and conventioners, as well as medical patients and their families. This district has significant potential for immediate growth and development. Several parcels of prime waterfront properties are vacant, and many private and public partners already have development plans underway.

### **The Bayfront District includes these key downtown destinations:**

The Bayfront Convention Center and Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel

Bicentennial Tower, East Dobbins Landing, and several restaurants

Blasco Library, the Maritime Museum and the U.S. Brig Niagara

Wolverine Park with miniature golf and restrooms; marinas, boat dockage, fishing charters, the Victorian Princess, and the water taxi

UPMC Hamot Medical Center and several other significant medical and office buildings

Adjacent to the Downtown Improvement District (DID) boundaries on the Bayfront to the west are the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, parking garage, the proposed mixed-use development on the former GAF site and, to the east, the Intermodal Transportation Center and Port Authority offices.



*Intermodal Transportation Center*



*Blasco Library and Maritime Museum*

The 2009 Erie Waterfront Master Plan by Domokur Architects identified existing opportunities, constraints and solutions for the entire Bayfront area, many of which are still true today and are applicable to the portion of the Bayfront in the DID, as discussed in Chapter 2. It is extremely critical that the Bayfront remain part of downtown, both visually and physically. Connectivity is key--traffic flow, pedestrian walkways, signage, streetscaping, street lighting, informational kiosks, street furniture and public art, must be improved and maintained to really connect downtown and the Bayfront. Furthermore, programming and events should be planned in part to reinforce the connection.

*“We have but one chance to do it right.”*

*Several planning participants*

**Strategies:**

- 1.2.1 Adopt a nautical theme to tie the Bayfront and the Convention Center design into an identifiable water-related district.
- 1.2.2 Create a signature project on the Bayfront to connect the Bayfront and downtown visually and physically. This project should generate a significant



*Nautical theme possibilities*



*Example of a district banner*



level of excitement to draw people to downtown. The City's Comprehensive Plan process identified Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle, Penn's Landing in Philadelphia, and Ross's Landing Park in Chattanooga as examples of signature waterfront projects that "provide a high-quality transitional experience for pedestrians and bicyclists between downtown and the Bayfront by separating them from traffic and taking advantage of the dramatic change in elevation."

- 1.2.3 Provide pedestrian bridges and crossings to connect downtown and the Bayfront as interim measures until a larger, final project is constructed. (Ref. Waterfront Master Plan and 2015 Penn DOT Parkway Study.) Possible locations for such connections include from the bluffs to the Convention Center, State Street (Ref. Plate 5-2), and from UPMC Hamot to the Scott Enterprises property. Also, enhance the existing pedestrian at-grade crossing at Holland Street.

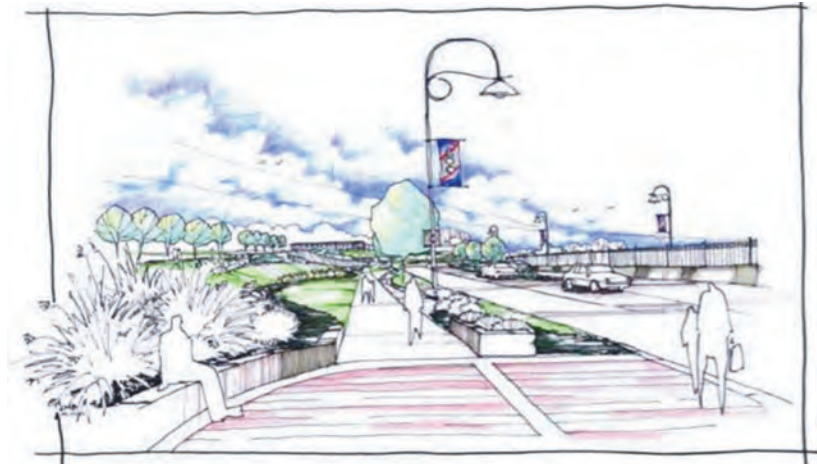


Plate 5-2 Potential State Street intersection improvements Waterfront Master Plan

- 1.2.4 Provide connections east-west through the Bayfront (Ref. Waterfront Master Plan) for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, public access to the water, and public green space.
- 1.2.5 Add public art, benches, and other design elements in the lawns along the first blocks of State Street to entice pedestrians into downtown. Add kiosks that highlight the history of Lake Erie, the Bay, and early transportation industries, as well as information on businesses and facilities within the Bayfront District.
- 1.2.6 Concentrate new housing in this district on the bluffs and in upper floors of existing and future mixed-use buildings.
- 1.2.7 Encourage developers to build low-rise buildings along the waterfront to maintain views of the Bay and Presque Isle.



Sample kiosks from other cities

- 1.2.8 Minimize the amount of surface parking facilities; provide gardens, restaurants, lounges, and public green areas on upper floors of parking garages where views of the Bay are significant; and encourage shared parking among facilities. As additional parking is required, convert surface lots to low-rise garages when feasible.
- 1.2.9 Target and pursue businesses that appeal to conventioners, water recreation enthusiasts, and medical facility visitors. These include, but are not necessarily limited to: themed restaurants (e.g. Nascar, Legoland, etc.), local product shops, unique boutiques, small corporate headquarters, “eds and meds,” water equipment rentals, souvenir and gift shops, art galleries, and other venues that will complement but not compete with existing downtown businesses.
- 1.2.10 Maintain and enhance existing recreational opportunities along the Bayfront, add bike rentals at Wolverine Park, space for programming and winter activities, public viewing stations, more public amenities and pedestrian level lighting. Capitalize on the presence of the Brig Niagara when it is in port.
- 1.2.11 Consider adding more water taxis, duck boats (vehicles that can travel on both land and water), and ferries to provide greater access to Presque Isle from downtown. Bus service on Presque Isle might then be needed for transportation throughout the peninsula.
- 1.2.12 Expand the Downtown Improvement District to include the former GAF property, Port authority offices, and the Intermodal Center.

**Objective 1.3:**

*Institute urban design projects and economic development programs that capitalize on and expand existing resources in the Perry Square District.*

This district, between 4th and 8th Streets, is envisioned as the hub for major outdoor events such as “Roar on the Shore” and “Celebrate Erie.” Key government and private companies have their offices here including the City of Erie, Erie County, the Federal Courthouse, Gannon University (GU), and Erie Insurance Group (EIG). These all combine to provide a huge employment base and robust target market for downtown. The Erie Art Museum and the expERIENCE Children’s Museum, the Erie Club, and several historic structures and districts, also provide a vibrant market for the Perry Square District.



*Perry Square is central landmark in this district*

Perry Square is the historic and civic center of the City and downtown. A Master Plan for Perry Square was completed in 2008 by Burt Hill. When the Master Plan was authorized in 2006, the Perry Square Alliance was formed to raise funds and oversee Park improvements. Recent improvements include four lighted brick structures on State Street, new lighting and sidewalks, and back-in angle parking. 2015 improvements include construction of a new stage near State Street and fountain upgrades.



*Perry Square District assets*



*Erie County Courthouse is a landmark in the Perry Square District*

**Strategies:**

- 1.3.1 Complete improvements to Perry Square as presented in the Perry Square Master Plan.
- 1.3.2 Recruit businesses related to government, university, and insurance to this district, including small businesses and corporate offices that could provide services or products to these entities (including breakfast venues and food trucks), as well as Class A office space. Full occupancy in this district is critical.
- 1.3.3 Pursue businesses that cater to district employees and students such as unique retail boutiques, art galleries, gift shops, a business center, and electronics, while targeting more general retail businesses to the Renaissance District.
- 1.3.4 Discourage additional surface parking lots in this district to preserve and enhance high-density development.
- 1.3.5 Encourage and incentivize the large existing downtown employment base to become more active downtown patrons and live downtown; target activities that attract them.
- 1.3.6 Enable continued expansions of major employers within the district, while minimizing further erosion of the tax base.
- 1.3.7 Work with property owners to identify appropriate facade and building improvements that best reflect the historical and architectural character of the district.
- 1.3.8 Upgrade east and west gateways along 6th Street, including public infrastructure, streetscaping, and private property, to create an exciting and inviting entrance into downtown. At a minimum, public improvements should coincide with significant private improvements.

**Objective 1.4:**

*Institute urban design projects and economic development programs that capitalize on and expand existing resources in the Renaissance District.*

The vision for this district, which extends from 8th Street to 12th Street, is that it becomes the major recreation, entertainment, and retail district in Downtown Erie, with prime opportunities for retail growth and an upscale boutique hotel to anchor it. Key community assets such as Erie Insurance Arena, Jerry Uht Park, the Warner Theater, and the Erie Playhouse, already draw thousands of visitors to the district. This is the place where people will want to bring visitors; meet friends; attend exciting concerts, sporting events and plays; and dine in upscale restaurants with the best uniquely-Erie menus and beverages.



*The Erie Playhouse features many theatrical events*

The Renaissance Center, from which this district takes its name, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It has been renovated to include specialty retail on the first floor and both traditional professional office space and more modern shared work space on the upper floors. New retail and other businesses can provide services and products to existing businesses and entertainment venues.

*The Warner Theater is a Renaissance District asset*



Also, Gannon University has several facilities within this district, including its new Center for Business Ingenuity that houses the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the University’s Business School, the Erie Technology Incubator, as well as entrepreneurial office space--all in a state-of-the-art facility--an excellent example of renovating an older building to serve modern entrepreneurial needs.

**Strategies:**

1.4.1 Identify opportunities to develop an upscale boutique hotel to service families and friends of performers and athletes working in the district. Specialty retail and services, especially those required by performers and athletes; restaurants and drinking establishments; and Class A office space on the first floor, could provide an anchor facility in a landmark building in this district. The market study provides support for these types of facilities. (Ref. **Chapter 4**.) Such a facility could also provide provisions for athletes participating in our local sports programs.



*Potential boutique hotel with retail stores*

1.4.2 Upgrade retail facades and businesses throughout the district, and infill where needed with additional retail facilities in accordance with the market study (**Chapter 4**) and the urban design plan (**Chapter 6**).

1.4.3 Recruit small technology businesses that would benefit from the entrepreneurial models already existing in the Center for Business Ingenuity and the Renaissance Center, as well as existing services and focused retail for entrepreneurs and theater/sports enthusiasts, including children’s stores, pet supplies, specialty sports, and convenience stores.

1.4.4 Accommodate and support expansions to the Warner Theater and other key recreation and entertainment venues in this district.

1.4.5 Target and pursue performers and athletes, as well as patrons of these events in advertising and promotional campaigns.



*The Erie Otters provide entertainment at the Erie Insurance Arena*

1.4.6 Coordinate the promotion of parking and amenities among entertainment venues, facilities, and businesses within this district.





**Objective 1.5:**

*Institute urban design projects and economic development programs that capitalize on and expand existing resources in the Union Square District.*

This district, from 12th Street south to the railroad, is the area that is ripe for eclectic new residential and transportation opportunities and a modern grocery store. In addition, 12th Street has the potential to regain its former prominence as a strong and viable business corridor. Many former industrial properties in this district have already been renovated into adaptive new uses (e.g. Lovell Place and the Mercantile Building), and the potential exists for more upscale, unique projects to service downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods.

Other key assets in this district include Griswold Park, the former Post Office building, Union Station, the Brewerie at Union Station, JR’s Last Laugh Comedy Club, the Turnpike Building, Union Square townhomes, and the EMTA facilities, as well as several unique and locally-owned eateries and shops. There are also several historic structures in this district (Refer to [www.eriebuildings.info](http://www.eriebuildings.info)). Griswold Park was improved a few years ago and remains an attractive and safe green space.

This district has the potential to be the place where everyone wants to live with a variety of housing types and price points. Much of this potential is in existing historic structures that are already close to transit and existing entertainment venues, and could house amenities such as: parking, bike-sharing facilities, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and electric charging stations, upscale bars, and restaurants. This district could easily become the “In Place” to live in Erie.

**Strategies:**

- 1.5.1 Convert the vacant 2nd and 3rd floors of the Mercantile Building to upscale or market-rate housing, similar to that already on the 4th and 5th floors. This may require some concessions with funding agencies, but the need for housing in this district appears to outweigh the need for more office or commercial space.
- 1.5.2 Complete the Union Square townhomes project to provide homeownership opportunities in the heart of downtown.
- 1.5.3 Convert the upper floors of the McGarvey Building (JR’s Last Laugh Comedy Club and Restaurant) to market-rate loft apartments and/or office space.
- 1.5.4 Recruit additional developers to add new market-rate and upscale housing throughout the district, primarily rental units, to meet the demands of current and potential residents as supported by the market study.
- 1.5.5 Sustain and enhance the 12th Street business corridor by providing in-fill development and adaptive re-use of existing buildings to include retail, manufacturing and technology, and fast food establishments.



McGarvey Building

Brewerie in Union Square District

- 1.5.6 Complete the planning for a food hub (indoor market) on the street level of the proposed EMTA parking garage. This food hub is envisioned as a multi-tenant facility on a transit-oriented site that provides parking and accessibility from both residential and commercial neighborhoods in a facility that meets the needs of these types of vendors. This hub would create an access point for producers marketing their goods to residents through direct retail activity, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), would also serve as a wholesale distribution site for corner stores and restaurants to purchase local produce.
- 1.5.7 Support additional streetscaping in the district, especially around the proposed food hub, to include brick or wrought iron fence along the south side of 14th Street, sidewalks, pedestrian level lighting, landscaping, and 24/7 security (all to be provided by EMTA).



Potential Food Hub

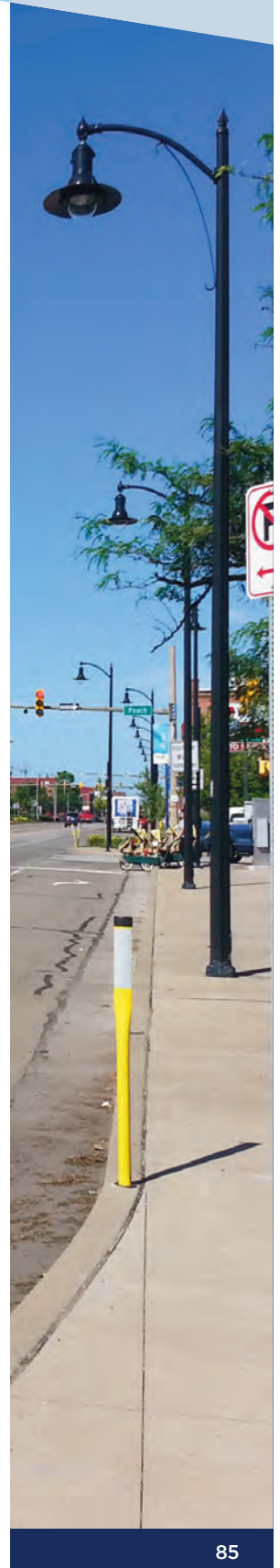


Potential CNG Fueling Station

- 1.5.8 Target empty nesters, retirees, young entrepreneurs, seasonal athletes, and millennials as potential new residents in this district.
- 1.5.9 Promote more activities and events in Griswold Park.
- 1.5.10 Upgrade underpasses to include lighting, security cameras, and public art to create safe and welcoming gateways into downtown.
- 1.5.11 Study the potential for an indoor recreational facility, which could include one or more of the following: bowling, tennis, paintball, running track, exercise gym, cafes, or lounges, to meet the needs and desires of district residents.
- 1.5.12 As the district develops with housing, recruit additional complimentary restaurants (possibilities include a chocolate bar, seafood restaurant, breakfast place, etc.), as well as businesses such as a health food shop, car wash, blues and jazz club, creative café, juice bar, etc., plus loft apartments on upper floors.



Sample design for underpasses



**GOAL 2:**

*Improve the overall physical environment of Downtown Erie.*

An aesthetically-pleasing, safe, and customer-friendly downtown environment is critical to the economic vitality of any downtown.

Critical issues to achieve this in Downtown Erie are: adequate public infrastructure; an environment that is safe, clean and green; safe and accessible walking, biking, and other transportation alternatives; healthy living choices; buildings that enhance the architectural and historic character of downtown; easily accessible smart technology, and amenities. Adjacent neighborhoods and key gateways into downtown must also address these critical issues.



*Pocket parks add green space and calm to a busy downtown*

**Objective 2.1:**

*Provide adequate public infrastructure throughout downtown.*

Assuring that utilities and adequate capacity are available is fundamental to any downtown redevelopment process. Upgrading underground utilities before constructing any improvements on the surface is critical to cost-effective revitalization. Understanding where utilities are located, their capacity and condition, is information that City staff can provide as part of any pre-development planning project.

Signalization improvements (including synchronization and pedestrian crossings) are priority projects for downtown. Sidewalks are also critical. They are generally the responsibility of the property owners, although the City maintains and upgrades handicapped accessible ramps at intersections. Green infrastructure projects to address stormwater regulations, such as rain gardens and pervious surfaces, are encouraged by the City of Erie.

**Strategies:**

- 2.1.1 Assure that public infrastructure improvements are adequate for proposed projects by coordinating closely and regularly with City and Authority staff, and developers or businesses.
- 2.1.2 Encourage public infrastructure improvement projects to be undertaken simultaneously with significant private improvements and investment. Leveraging of such funds could encourage additional investment.
- 2.1.3 Work with private providers of electric, gas, phone, cable, and fiber to upgrade services throughout downtown - especially cable and fiber, and help coordinate their upgrading processes and projects.
- 2.1.4 Encourage green infrastructure designs when possible to meet stormwater regulations.



*Sample storm water retention area*

*Lovell Place is a perfect example of redevelopment, providing housing and offices in a former industrial building*

**Objective 2.2:**

*Provide a safe, clean, and healthy downtown environment.*

For downtowns to be economically viable they must be clean and healthy places, and they must be safe. More and more emphasis is being placed on healthy environments, emphasizing walking and bicycling, eating healthy, supporting local farmers by purchasing locally-grown produce, recycling waste products and using recycled materials. Essentially getting down to some very basic healthy practices.

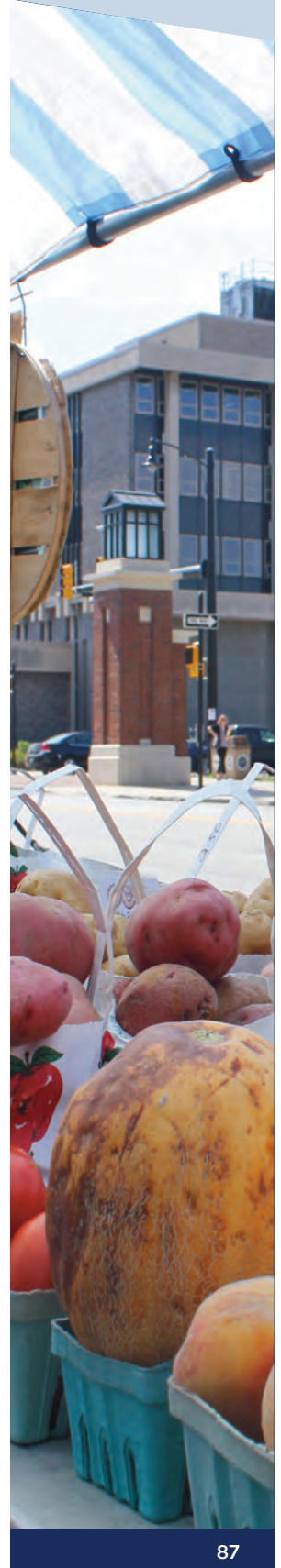
Most people closely attuned to downtown know that Downtown Erie is a safe place; however, that is not necessarily the general perception. The number of social service agencies, mental health facilities, soup kitchens, the pre-release facility, and the abundance of subsidized housing foster negative perceptions about Downtown Erie.

**Strategies:**

- 2.2.1 Continue to collaborate with local partners to develop a formal Food Policy Council to address issues such as access to fresh and healthy foods.
- 2.2.2 Enable alternatives to vehicular transportation, including walking and bicycling. (Ref. **Goal 5**.)
- 2.2.3 Promote recycling in all activities and events.
- 2.2.4 Identify opportunities for development of small community gardens on rooftops or on small lots convenient to residential complexes or employment centers.
- 2.2.5 Continue coordination with the City of Erie Police Department to provide adequate police patrols 24/7, but especially during special events. Also, continue coordination with the security forces of major employers.
- 2.2.6 Continue to pursue funding for the external security camera program.
- 2.2.7 Work with the State to relocate the Community Pre-Release Facility from West 2nd Street to a location better suited to its function and tenants.
- 2.2.8 Spearhead discussions with social service providers to consolidate facilities at a greener location that provides more comprehensive and convenient services to their clients, to provide cost savings and efficiencies at a location outside downtown.
- 2.2.9 Discourage any additional subsidized housing downtown.
- 2.2.10 Lobby the City to undertake a comprehensive street lighting study to assure that all areas of downtown are well-lit for safety.
- 2.2.11 Continue to provide, and expand when possible, maintenance services by the Erie Downtown Partnership.
- 2.2.12 Aggressively encourage property owners to better maintain their properties.
- 2.2.13 Support adjacent neighborhood associations in their efforts to engage residents in neighborhood revitalization processes, especially those that serve as gateways into downtown.



*Erie Insurance security*





### Objective 2.3:

*Provide a customer-friendly parking experience.*

Improve the downtown parking experience to incorporate smart technology payment options, better signage, and improved real and perceived safety in garages, in order to encourage maximum utilization of Erie's public parking facilities. (See **Goal 5**)

### Objective 2.4:

*Reduce the number of vacant lots and assure that buildings throughout downtown are attractive, occupied, safe, and complementary to the historic and architectural character of downtown.*

Buildings and their facades are key factors in creating the desired pedestrian experience. The majority of buildings in Downtown Erie have great character, but need a little bit of help to truly be pedestrian-inviting buildings. There are many historic buildings that are in great shape and can continue to be preserved. However, there are a number of buildings that do not fit the character of an urban building, and there are many buildings that simply need a facelift or restoration for them to fit into the desired urban aesthetic.

(Ref. **Chapter 6**)

### Strategies:

- 2.4.1 Create, adopt, and enforce Design Guidelines or an Overlay District to better address design issues with buildings in downtown. (Ref. **Chapters 6 & 7**)
- 2.4.2 Continue the facade grant program and retain an architect to assist building owners with appropriate design solutions and permitting processes if funds are available. This could include seminars and educational forums for property owners.
- 2.4.3 Work with building owners who are planning improvements to assure that their proposals are consistent with desired historic and architectural features and design guidelines.
- 2.4.4 Work with economic development partners to target vacant lots and/or brownfield sites for identification, analysis, remediation, sale, and re-use.



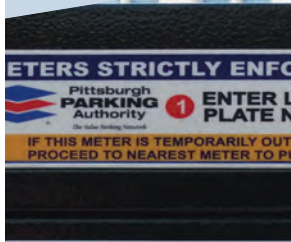
*Vacant lots in Union Square District*

### Objective 2.5:

*Implement the existing Streetscape Master Plan and continue to add landscaping schemes to downtown.*

The Streetscape Master Plan (Ref. **Chapter 6**) provides extensive and detailed information on Complete Streets concepts, design schemes for Downtown Erie by type of street, sidewalk and pavement textures, street tree varieties, and other recommendations that are still relevant today. Some streetscaping improvements have been made already, but many more are needed.

*Potential auto-pay station*



**Strategies:**

- 2.5.1 Implement the Streetscape Master Plan by prioritizing streetscaping projects on State Street, 6th Street, and 12th Street (completing and maintaining those already started), and then address the balance of the targeted streets, starting with the Perry Square District and working outward, as funds become available.
- 2.5.2 Leverage private investment projects with public streetscaping to encourage additional private investment and increase the overall impact of the redevelopment project.
- 2.5.3 Add landscaping schemes where possible, but preferably not as large front yards that are atypical of downtown settings.
- 2.5.4 Identify and recruit a gardening group to add and maintain hanging baskets, flower pots, window boxes and other flower treatments to downtown.

**GOAL 3:**

*Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities for downtown including retail, office, technology, arts & cultural, and tourism businesses, coordinating closely with economic development partners.*

As emphasized in the City of Erie's 2015 comprehensive planning process, downtown is a key area for reinvestment. Providing assistance to existing businesses and recruiting new businesses for downtown are critical for the economic vitality of the entire City. Retail businesses in older industrial cities nationwide have shifted out of downtowns over the past decades, and in Erie's case, this includes all grocery stores. This trend, however, is beginning



*Outside dining space is critical to an attractive and inviting streetscape*

to reverse, as people are becoming more interested in living in thriving downtowns that are pedestrian-friendly, safe, multi-modal, aesthetically attractive, and offer a variety of housing and shopping choices, as well as ample dining and entertainment venues. Erie is on the cusp of this trend, and it is time to prepare Downtown Erie to take a giant leap into the 21st century.

Downtown Erie could be home to young entrepreneurs, as evidenced by recent projects including: Gannon's Center for Business Ingenuity, the Renaissance Center's shared office space, and Erie Insurance Group's new Technology Learning Center. In addition, some studies have stated that arts and culture is the key to revitalization of Downtown Erie, since most of the County's major art and cultural assets, as well as many key entertainment venues, are located here. Access to arts and cultural assets and entertainment activities, and a safe environment in which to enjoy them, are certainly critical to Erie's continued economic restructuring.



**Objective 3.1:**

*Understand and utilize the existing economic development process and agencies.*

**Strategies:**

- 3.1.1 Have regular meetings with economic development partners regarding available buildings, office space, real estate, and incentives in Downtown Erie, as well as target markets and needed businesses in each downtown district.
- 3.1.2 Provide current information to those agencies through the LEAD team.

**Objective 3.2:**

*Retain and/or expand existing businesses.*

**Strategies:**

- 3.2.1 Implement a Retention and Expansion Program to help existing businesses and encourage membership in the Erie Downtown Partnership.
- 3.2.2 Sustain and enhance economic engines already in downtown.
- 3.2.3 Assist existing retailers to become more viable businesses, including technology improvements to become more competitive.
- 3.2.4 Coordinate business forums to assist small businesses on topics such as human resources, succession planning, government regulations and incentives.

**Objective 3.3:**

*Recruit new businesses and entrepreneurs.*

**Strategies:**

- 3.3.1 Recruit retail, service, and office businesses as needed in the designated districts and as supported by the market study (Ref. **Chapter 4**).
- 3.3.2 Encourage restaurants to offer outdoor dining during summer months.
- 3.3.3 Work with the Innovation Collaborative, the Small Business Development Corporation, the Erie Technology Incubator, and other partners to identify and assist entrepreneurs.
- 3.3.4 Recruit entrepreneurs for services needed in downtown, e.g. bike and car sharing, retail shops, customer services, and/or a Bayfront trolley.
- 3.3.5 Identify spaces that could be occupied by new entrepreneurs in downtown and help entrepreneurs open offices and/or businesses here.



*The 1201 Kitchen is a new establishment in Downtown*



*Existing Plymouth Tavern*



*Enterprising downtown entrepreneurs*

- 3.3.6 Consolidate workforce training within a downtown location, possibly at 900 State Street.
- 3.3.7 Encourage mixed-use developments whenever possible.
- 3.3.8 In addition to businesses identified in the respective districts, also pursue:
  - a) Small businesses involved with the Natural Gas industry,
  - b) Women-owned and minority-owned businesses, e.g. Glass Growers Gallery,
  - c) Businesses that serve our target markets (Ref. **Chapter 4**), and
  - d) Projects utilizing graduates from the Erie Technology Incubator.

**Objective 3.4:**

*Develop Class A office space.*

**Strategies:**

- 3.4.1 Pursue developers and/or develop office space, primarily in the Perry Square and Renaissance Districts, that has an open floor and lighting plan, is flexible, contains the most current technology, allows for co-work space, and is move-in ready. With a little creativity, existing buildings and vacant lots can be converted into innovative and exciting work environments.
- 3.4.2 Consider both new construction and renovation of existing buildings.

**Objective 3.5:**

*Promote Downtown Erie as an Arts & Culture and Regional Tourism Hub.*

**Strategies:**

- 3.5.1 Coordinate activities with Erie Arts & Culture, Preservation Erie, and other partners as they relate to Downtown Erie.
- 3.5.2 Support the goals of CultureSparks that relate to downtown venues.
- 3.5.3 Focus on job creation through arts & culture (art galleries, museum docents, tour guides, etc.) and recreation (class instructors, nature interpreters, etc.) as ways to engage and employ people living in neighborhoods near downtown, including new immigrant populations.
- 3.5.4 Promote artisan live/work facilities in vacant buildings.
- 3.5.5 Promote programs supporting the purposeful use of public art - such as the bike rack program, and add historic and cultural markers, as well as public art and amenities to trails, sidewalks, and key areas throughout downtown.
- 3.5.6 Sustain and enhance the Cultural Loop program, adding daytime buses when affordable.



Maritime Museum Gift Shop





### Objective 3.6:

*Better understand, promote and utilize incentive and loan/grant programs to entice businesses to locate or expand in Downtown Erie.*

#### Strategies:

- 3.6.1 With the City, explore the potential of reinstating the 100%, 10-year LERTA for a designated period of time (e.g. five years), to help stimulate immediate development. Review and streamline the LERTA process, including job creation requirements.
- 3.6.2 Promote existing incentives to existing and potential businesses. (Ref. Appendix 5-1.)
- 3.6.3 Consider offering new incentives to spur development of market-rate housing in downtown, and to entice artists from outside the area (preferably large cities) to locate and live downtown and to open small businesses, similar to what Oil City, PA has done very successfully.

### Artist Relocation Program

Oil City, PA offers working artists a number of incentives for relocating, including:

- Affordable housing with potential 100% financing
- Possibility to work, display, and sell within your own home, as well as rent affordable studio space
- Easy access to urban markets in Erie, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Buffalo, as well as a thriving community of local artists, galleries, and events
- Beautiful natural setting that enjoys all four seasons
- Low cost of living in a safe, low crime community

- 3.6.4 Pursue other sources of funding such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), creating a new or enhancing an existing Community Development Corporation (CDC), and/or creating a Lender Commitment Program, through which local lenders commit \$X to loan to property owners at low-interest rates for building improvement projects in downtown, provided they meet the required design guidelines.
- 3.6.5 Create innovative incentives to live, shop, and work downtown, such as Downtown Erie Bucks, discounted parking with purchases, etc., and promote existing programs such as the City's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for loans to small businesses.

### Objective 3.7:

*Update the City's Zoning Code as it relates to downtown and adopt Design Guidelines or an Overlay District.*

#### Strategies:

- 3.7.1 Work with the City to update the Zoning Code (Ref. **Chapter 7**).
- 3.7.2 Work with the City to create and adopt Design Guidelines or an Overlay District for downtown (Ref. **Chapter 7**).

**GOAL 4:**

*Increase market-rate housing in Downtown Erie.*

The supply of market-rate and upscale housing in Downtown Erie is minimal, even though the few existing facilities, such as Lovell Place and the Mercantile Building are filled. The Union Square Town homes have shown promise, but may be more marketable as rentals than as owner-occupied units. In addition to recruiting more market-rate housing in the Union Square District, additional market-rate housing throughout downtown would provide more “eyes on the street” and the foot traffic needed to help sustain a viable retail market. (Ref. **Chapter 4**)

**Objective 4.1:**

*Make the necessary adjustments to complete key existing housing projects.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.1.1 Convert the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Mercantile Building to upscale residential. (Ref. Obj. 1.5.1.)
- 4.1.2 Consider converting the Union Square town homes to rentals, which may be more marketable.

**Objective 4.2:**

*Convert selected existing subsidized housing complexes to market-rate housing.*

**Strategies:**

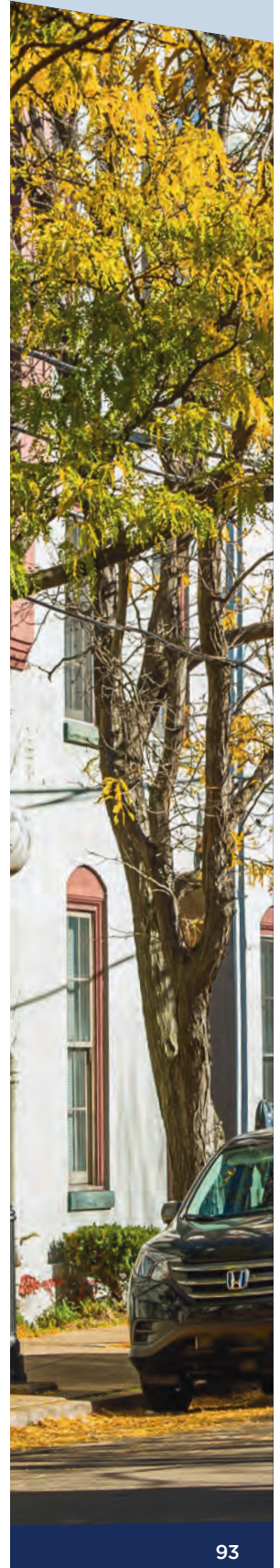
- 4.2.1 Meet with subsidized housing owners to determine interest. (The Boston Store might be an option.)
- 4.2.2 Conduct feasibility studies and select projects and identify financing scenarios.
- 4.2.3 Address relocation of existing tenants.
- 4.2.4 Promote positive media coverage.



*Complete the Union Square Town homes project*



*Convert vacant floors of the Mercantile building to market-rate housing*



*Existing market-rate housing in Downtown*

**Objective 4.3:**

*Recruit additional developers for construction of new market-rate housing projects.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.3.1 Target the Union Square District for new housing.
- 4.3.2 Target vacant upper floors of existing retail and office buildings throughout downtown.
- 4.3.3 Encourage market-rate housing on upper floors of mixed-use buildings in the Bayfront District, and on vacant property on the bluffs just west of downtown.
- 4.3.4 Promote adaptive reuse of vacant/underutilized former industrial or commercial buildings or warehouses into market-rate housing.



*Potential market-rate housing*

**Objective 4.4:**

*Develop additional/new housing programs and processes.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.4.1 Encourage Gannon University, UPMC Hamot, Erie Insurance Group, and other large employers to create and offer employee-assisted housing programs for their employees to entice them to live downtown where they work. (Ref. Appendix 5-2.)
- 4.4.2 Promote the LIVE-WORK-ERIE Home buyer Assistance Grant program administered by the Erie Redevelopment Authority.
- 4.4.3 Support the Land Bank concept to speed up the property control issue.
- 4.4.4 Support the Housing/Blight Court to obtain greater control and faster action on blighted property issues.
- 4.4.5 Support adjacent neighborhood groups in their efforts to rehabilitate existing housing, demolish deteriorated housing and structures, and revitalize their neighborhoods, especially those that are gateways into downtown.

*Potential conversion of top floors to market-rate housing*



**GOAL 5:**

*Improve transportation, circulation, and connectivity throughout downtown.*



*It is critical to connect the Bayfront and downtown*

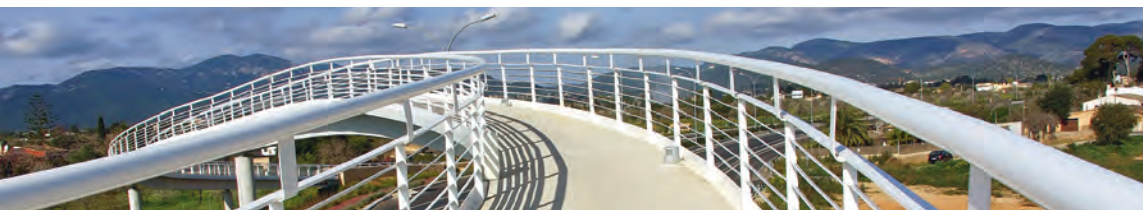
Several past plans and studies discussed various aspects of vehicular traffic, parking, bike trails, public transit, upgrades to the Bayfront Parkway, streetscaping, and “Complete Streets.” Complete Streets policies direct transportation planners and engineers to design roadway systems with all users in mind—drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, handicapped individuals, and transit riders. Concepts to incorporate the needs of these users include sidewalks, bike lanes, wide shoulders, distinctive crosswalks (possibly raised), refuge medians, bus pullouts, designated bus lanes, audible pedestrian signals, sidewalk bump-outs, and special transit lanes.

**Objective 5.1:**

*Connect downtown to the Bayfront and adjacent neighborhoods.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.1.1 Coordinate with partners to assure that the Waterfront Plan update, the 2015 Bayfront Parkway Study, the City’s Comprehensive Plan, and private development plans, provide very clear and accessible connections between the Bayfront and downtown, as well as between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.
- 5.1.2 Explore with partners the potential to construct safe pedestrian crossings and/or bridges as discussed above and in several prior studies, as well as appropriate signage.
- 5.1.3 Address the “Hamot wall” by adding public art, benches, kiosks, and other items of interest, to entice pedestrians to visit downtown from the Bayfront.
- 5.1.4 Explore additional options to get to Presque Isle from Dobbins Landing. (Ref. Goal 2.)
- 5.1.5 Encourage Penn DOT to make short-term improvements to the Parkway, while a more in-depth study is underway, specifically, left turn signals onto State and Holland Streets, and pedestrian crossings, as mentioned earlier.



*Potential pedestrian connector over Bayfront Parkway*

*Connect the Bayfront and Downtown to Presque Isle with more ferries or duck boats*



**Objective 5.2:**



*Biking is becoming increasingly popular as a sport and as a means of transportation*

*Encourage the City to adopt the Complete Streets concepts for all new construction and major renovation projects.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.2.1 Encourage the City to implement road diets (a reduction in the number of traffic lanes) and incorporate bike lanes per the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan. (Ref. Chapter 6.)
- 5.2.2 Encourage major employers to provide bike storage facilities and amenities to encourage more bike riding by their employees.
- 5.2.3 Aggressively pursue streetscaping projects according to the Streetscape Master Plan. (Ref. **Chapter 6.**)

**Objective 5.3:**

*Support EMTA's efforts to complete the Transit Center and improve ridership.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.3.1 Regularly review bus routes, stops, and shelters throughout downtown with EMTA and suggest needed changes.
- 5.3.2 Encourage bus routes that connect area neighborhoods to downtown.
- 5.3.3 When appropriate and funding is available, design and construct artistic bus shelters for each district. Consider recruiting corporate sponsors to fund a portion of the costs in exchange for advertising rights.
- 5.3.4 Encourage improvements to 14th Street when the Transit Center project is completed, as well as intersection improvements at 14th and French Streets for safety.

**Objective 5.4:**

*Encourage transportation alternatives.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.4.1 Encourage the use of compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicles, electric vehicles, taxis, and car sharing, and work with partners to provide the appropriate facilities and locations to promote their usage.
- 5.4.2 Incentivize students, employees, and staffs of downtown businesses, to utilize the Park and Ride facilities in lieu of driving into downtown.
- 5.4.3 Support partners in their quest for bike lanes, storage facilities, repair stations and shops, and bike sharing facilities.
- 5.4.4 Encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the Cultural Loop.

*Designate safe bike lanes throughout Downtown*



**Objective 5.5:**

*Promote 12th Street as a key business corridor and cross-town connector.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.5.1 Strongly encourage the City and PennDOT to improve 12th Street by synchronizing traffic signals to improve traffic flow at an appropriate speed, provide separate lanes for bicycles, and complete and maintain the streetscaping.
- 5.5.2 Assure that 12th Street can accommodate retail stores, fast food establishments, technology companies, manufacturing companies, and off-street parking.

**Objective 5.6:**

*Consider other specific transportation improvements.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.6.1 Lobby the City to convert one-way streets in downtown back to two-way streets (with the exception of North and South Park Row) to create a calmer downtown environment by slowing traffic and providing greater access to businesses and shops.

*(Toledo, Ohio converted downtown streets to one-way in the 1970s, making travel through downtown so efficient that vehicles failed to see or stop at local businesses, negatively affecting sales. In the early 2000s, after significant lobbying by neighborhood groups, the Downtown Improvement District, the Warehouse District, the Toledo Mudhens, and the Planning Commission, the streets were converted back to two-way with designated bus lanes, as part of a successful on-going effort to revitalize their downtown.)*

- 5.6.2 Improve all underpasses to provide safe, well-lit, attractive, and inviting gateways into downtown from the south.
- 5.6.3 Address key gateways into downtown from all directions. (Ref. Chapter 6.)
- 5.6.4 Upgrade traffic signals with smart technology, especially along State and Peach Streets (in addition to 12th Street), providing better synchronization of signals for smoother traffic flow, while also accommodating pedestrian crossings.

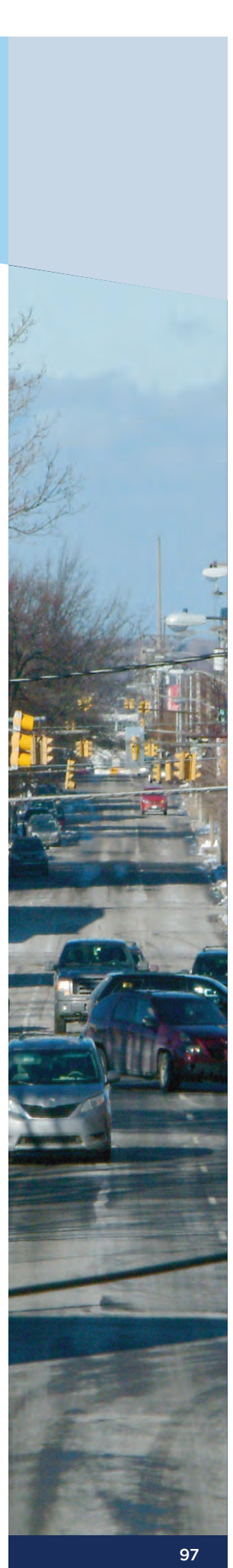
**Objective 5.7:**

*Upgrade parking facilities and services as needed to better meet the needs of today's users.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.7.1 When additional parking is needed, convert surface lots to multi-level garages if/when financially feasible, and incorporate landscaping schemes and/or rooftop gardens as much as possible.
- 5.7.2 Continue safety and lighting improvements at all garages and surface lots.
- 5.7.3 Install technology improvements at all parking facilities and on-street parking meters to enhance and simplify the parking experience, and encourage owners of private parking lots to do the same. The goal is to be able to pay by phone or credit card in addition to quarters.
- 5.7.4 Explore the possibility of residential parking passes for residents of downtown.
- 5.7.5 Support an increase in parking rates and fines, if needed, to finance technology improvements.

*Sassafras Street could be converted to a two way street*



*(Redwood City, Ventura and San Francisco, CA; Oak Park and Chicago, IL; and Washington DC adopted smart parking management techniques that included price tiers; high tech, multi space meters (some solar-powered) that allow users to pay by coin, credit card, or cell phone; eliminating time limits; extensive parking permit systems; resident-only restrictions; and increased rates in areas closest to retail centers as ways to make their parking experience friendlier and fairer, with success AND increased revenues.)*

- 5.7.6 Provide better signage regarding parking locations, costs, hours, etc., including “You are here” kiosk maps.
- 5.7.7 Prepare and distribute maps of parking facilities in downtown.
- 5.7.8 Assure that adequate transient boat docks and facilities are provided in the Bay.



Samples of information Kiosks



Sample map of parking facilities

Roar on the Shore brings thousands of people into downtown

**GOAL 6:**

*Design and implement an aggressive promotional campaign for Downtown Erie's businesses, partners, programs, and events.*

In order to achieve the vision adopted by the Erie Downtown Partnership for a revitalized and economically-viable Downtown Erie, a comprehensive umbrella marketing campaign is needed. It should mesh with marketing campaigns of the downtown's many partners for maximum benefits.

Many past plans and studies presented a variety of suggestions for promotional efforts for Downtown Erie. Destination Erie: A Regional Vision, now known as Emerge2040, presents a vision and road map for the County:

The Erie Region is a place where businesses, neighborhoods, and families THRIVE, where EDUCATION is valued and seen as a pathway to success and fulfillment, where the natural ENVIRONMENT is conserved for future generations, and where communities are LIVABLE and CONNECTED, both within Erie County and with the larger Great Lakes region.

CultureSparks, the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, the Waterfront Master Plan, and the Seaway Trail Master Plan, provide numerous ideas for marketing and promoting Downtown Erie. Those suggestions, along with marketing programs of local businesses, provide many opportunities for a cooperative umbrella marketing program.

**Objective 6.1:**

*Continue and expand existing joint marketing promotions with local businesses and partners.*

**Strategies:**

- 6.1.1 Promote the four districts within downtown and include district designations in all brochures and promotional materials to educate the community about the district concept and provide greater clarity as to the locations of specific businesses and events.
- 6.1.2 Coordinate with Erie Events, VisitErie, and other partners to maximize marketing efforts and dollars.
- 6.1.3 Promote local services and assets and educate the public, using informational kiosks, signage, written materials, and social media.



*LEFT: The Rib Cook Off attracts restaurateurs and visitors to Downtown Erie. RIGHT: Banner promoting Shop Small event in downtown*



*Downtown Erie's banner program*



**Objective 6.2:**

*Expand the marketing program regionally.*

**Strategies:**

- 6.2.1 Work with neighboring counties and states to create a regional marketing program to attract a wider range of visitors to the area, capitalizing on regional assets, such as Presque Isle State Park.



*Thousands of people celebrate Erie*

- 6.2.2 Expand the target markets to include those discussed in each district, as well as:

- a) Various immigrant groups, young professionals, unique audiences, and empty nesters for programs and activities,
- b) Canadian shoppers,
- c) Bus tours,
- d) Clientele of local business and attractions, e.g. Glass Growers, Waldameer, The Tom Ridge Center, and Presque Isle,
- e) EIG's employees, especially visiting personnel,
- f) Gannon's students, parents, and alumni,
- g) Families and friends of performers and athletes working in Erie,
- h) Wine and bike trail participants,
- i) Volunteers who assist with events and activities in downtown, and
- j) People who visit downtown only for events.

**Objective 6.3:**

*Consolidate the planning and implementation of special events.*

**Strategies:**

- 6.3.1 Work with event sponsors and partners to coordinate the existing processes for special events.
- 6.3.2 Evaluate the possibility of consolidating events under one umbrella organization with a small staff, and pooling resources (human and financial) to relieve the City, the Downtown Partnership, the Port Authority, and others from duplicating activities, such as contacting sponsors and vendors, coordinating marketing

*Bicentennial Tower firework display*



activities, contacting bands and performers, coordinating street closures and police patrols, renting portable restroom facilities, etc.

- 6.3.3 Plan events more strategically and equally among the four districts, and add more family-friendly events.
- 6.3.4 Add winter-time and year-round events and encourage private sponsors to undertake activities such as ice fishing events, ice skating, laser shows, and ice hockey contests on the Bay, cross-country skiing on the Bay and Presque Isle, fishing tournaments, winter fest, ice sculptures, etc.



*More Winter activities should be explored*

**Objective 6.4:**

*Utilize improved and new marketing technologies to reach a broader audience more cost effectively.*

**Strategies:**

- 6.4.1 Promote the new downtown mobile app and better utilize social media.
- 6.4.2 Keep the website information current and continue to link to other appropriate sites.
- 6.4.3 Consider creating audio tours for trolleys and buses that discuss historical and cultural assets along key routes. These could also be used as apps for personal or group tours.

**Objective 6.5:**

*Expand marketing methods.*

**Strategies:**

- 6.5.1 Create a catchy tagline for downtown and incorporate it into marketing and promotional materials.
- 6.5.2 Utilize exciting signage that incorporates the EDP logo and tagline as a common thread, while adding district themes.
- 6.5.3 More aggressively market existing cultural and arts events and programs.
- 6.5.4 Work with businesses to expand business hours of operation into evenings, possibly on one or two consistent days per week.
- 6.5.5 Explore avenues to capitalize on existing captive audiences of existing businesses and attractions, such as Presque Isle State Park, the Casino, UPMC Hamot, Gannon, etc.



*The Color Run attracted hundreds of participants*

*“Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.”  
Mark Twain*

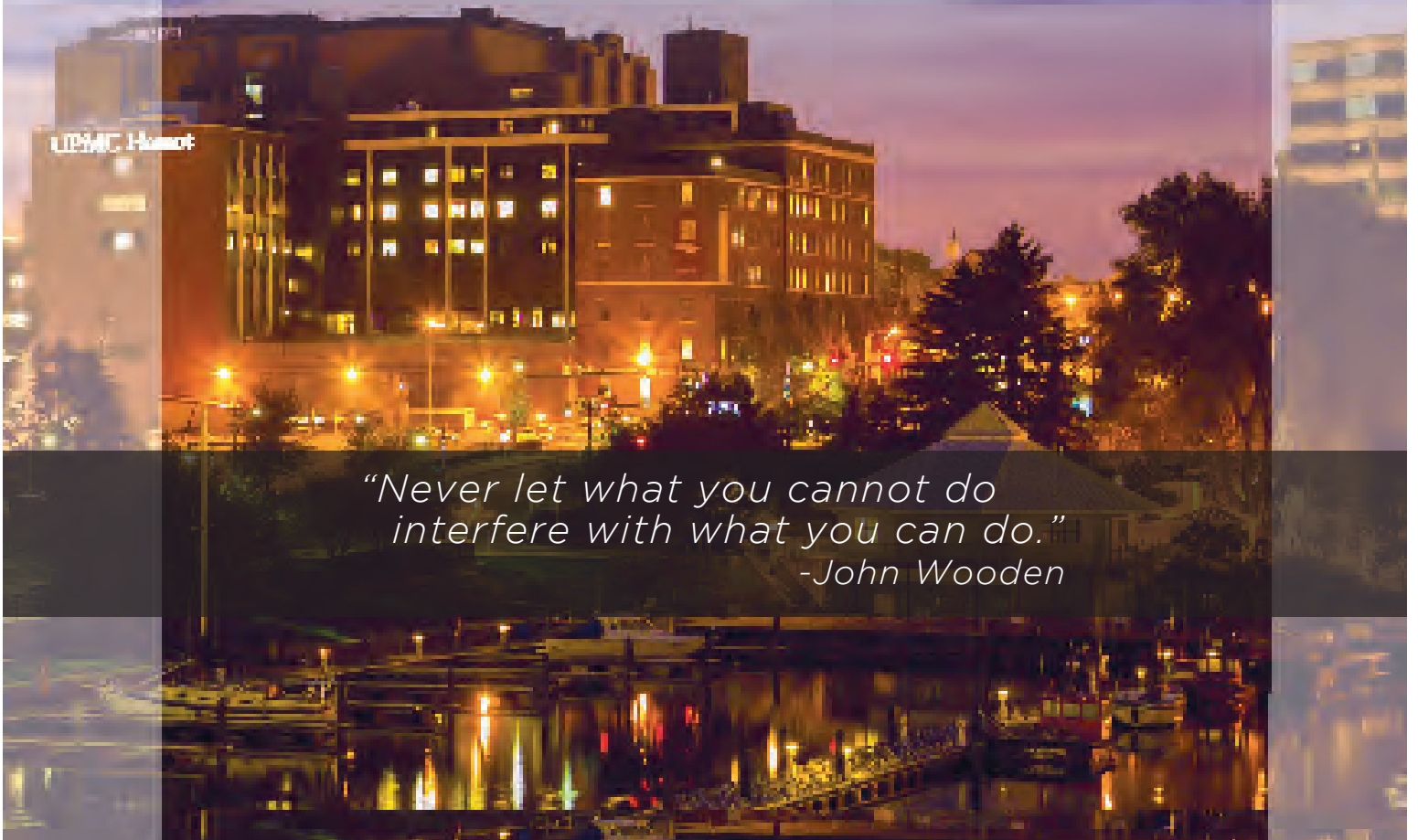






## CHAPTER 6 • URBAN DESIGN PLAN

*“Never let what you cannot do  
interfere with what you can do.”  
-John Wooden*





This Downtown Erie Master Plan includes an urban design plan that addresses streetscaping, facade and building designs, in-fill development, parking facilities, and green space. **Plate 1-1** summarizes the design elements that are discussed in this chapter.

### Streetscaping

Much of the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan that was completed in 2010 by Urban Engineers, AECOM, and Dahlkemper Landscaping is still relevant today. Recommendations from that project are referenced and incorporated into this Urban Design Plan. The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan can be accessed in its entirety on the EDP website at [www.eriedowntown.com/important-docs](http://www.eriedowntown.com/important-docs).

The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan promotes the Complete Streets concept, as mentioned in Chapter 3, and recommends that, when infrastructure is modernized, Complete Streets principles should be incorporated into improvements. It identifies roadways that could be treated with “road diets,” decreasing the number of travel lanes (**Plate 6-1**), which would provide room for bike lanes or multi-modal paths. These roadways include State Street, all roads adjacent to Perry Square, and 12th Street, as well as French and Peach Streets south of 12th Street, many of which have been completed. Given the EMTA facility that is now under construction on 14th and French Streets, the recommendation for the road diet in that area should be studied further with updated traffic projections.

#### The Master Plan categorizes streets into various types:

- “Civic Streets” that celebrate arrival and place,
- “Mobility Streets” that move people through the area, and
- “Community Streets” that are multi-purpose.

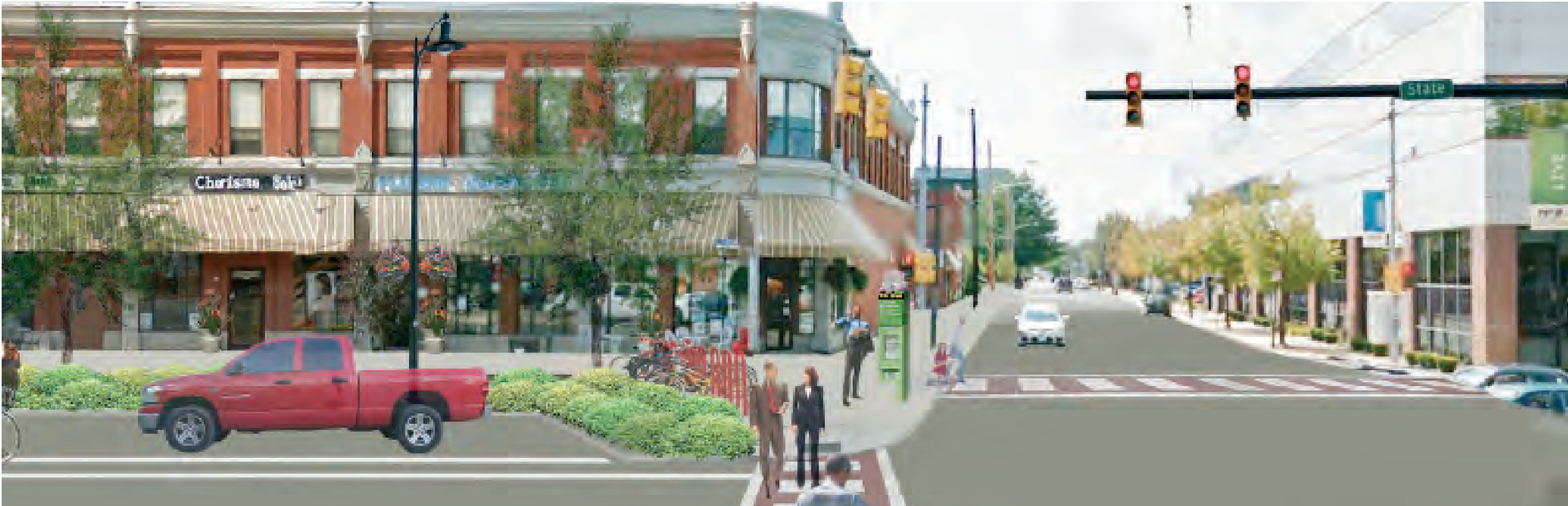
#### Civic Streets were further divided into two categories:

- “Ceremonial Streets” or the “Main Streets” of a community with a high level of civic space and uses—State and 6th Streets, and
- “Park Streets” or those streets fronting on civic spaces and parks—all streets adjacent to Perry Square

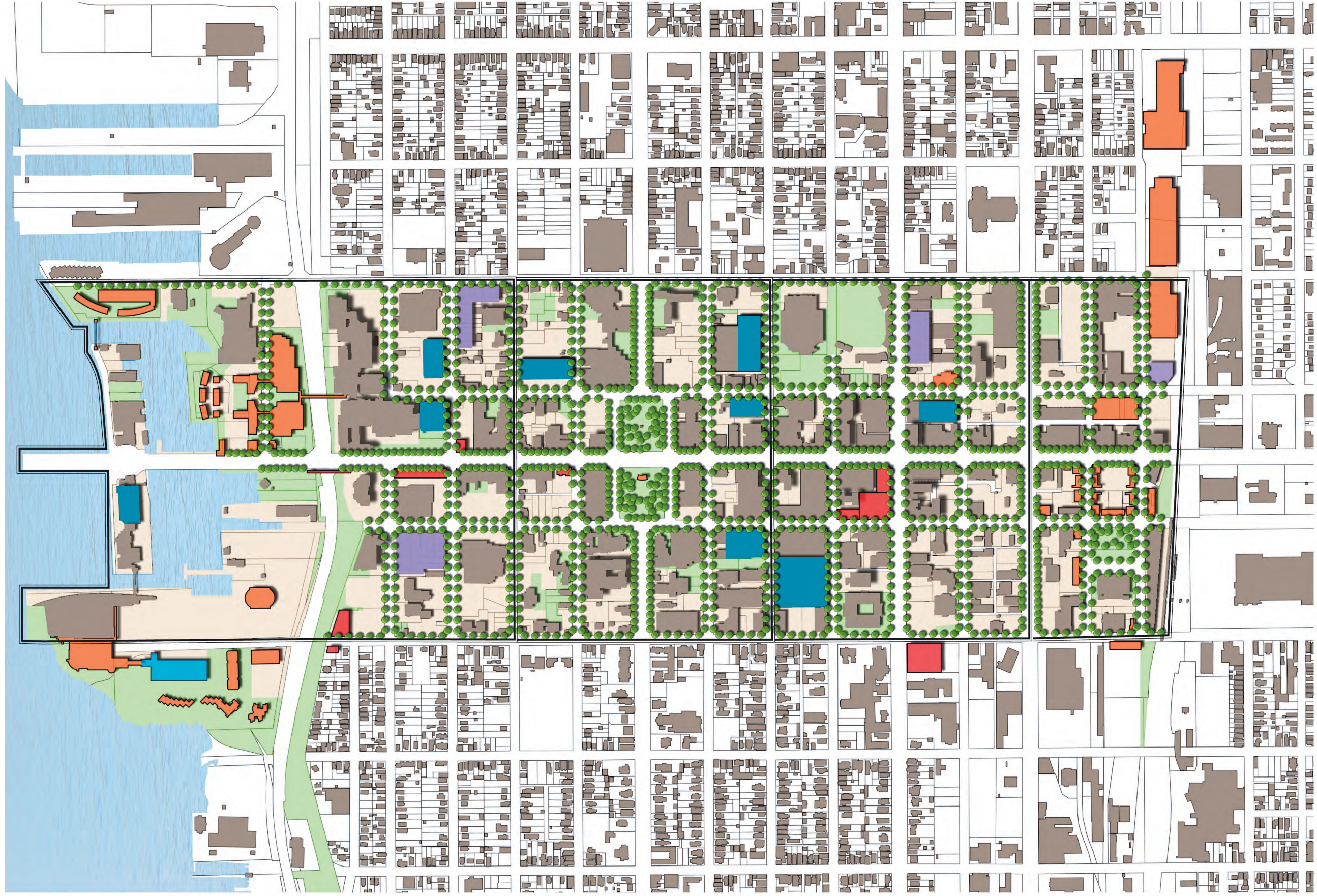
Mobility streets were identified as the major traffic movers through downtown and within areas of downtown. 12th Street was identified as a two-way mobility street and Peach and French Streets were identified as one-way mobility streets. Community Streets, or non-framework streets, form the majority of the network of roadways in downtown and include Sassafra, Holland, and all the numbered streets except 6th and 12th Streets. (Ref. **Plate 6-2**.)



Existing Streetscape



Potential Streetscape

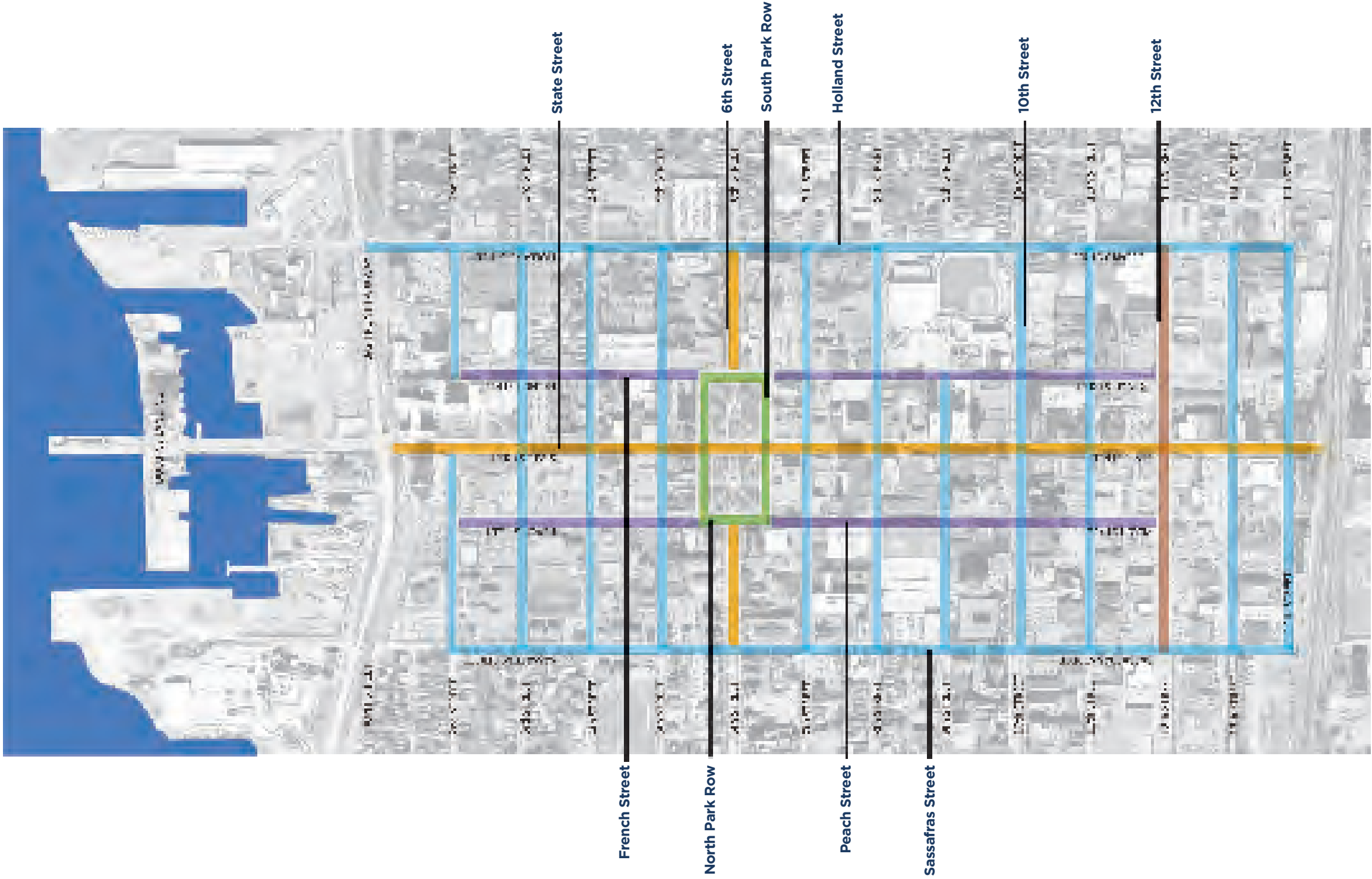


ate 1-1: Erie Downtown Master Plan

- = Existing Buildings
- = Current / Proposed Projects
- = Potential Building/Enhancement Projects
- = Existing Parking Garages
- = Potential New Parking Garages
- = Existing Green Space/Impervious Surfaces
- = Future/Enhanced Streetscape:
- = Potential Elevated Pedestrian Bridges
- = District Boundaries



Plate 6-1 Proposed Road Diets  
Downtown Streetscape Master Plan - Urban Engineers, AECOM, and Dahlkemper



<p><b>Civic - Celebrating Arrival and Place</b></p> <p><b>Ceremonial Streets:</b> "Main Streets" of a community with a high level of civic space and uses. State and 6th Street</p> <p><b>Park Streets:</b> Streets fronting civic spaces and parks. North Park Row, South Park Row, French, and Peach Street</p>	<p><b>Mobility Streets - Moving People</b></p> <p><b>Two-Way Mobility Street:</b> Framework streets mainly used for moving traffic through an area. 12th Street</p> <p><b>One-Way Mobility Streets:</b> Framework streets moving traffic within an area. Peach and French Street</p>	<p><b>Community Streets - Multi-Purpose</b></p> <p><b>Non-Framework Streets:</b> Streets that form the majority of the network Sassafras, Holland, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 14th</p>
---	--	--

Plate 6-2 Street Classifications  
 Downtown Streetscape Master Plan - Urban Engineers, AECOM, and  
 Dahlkemper

The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan provides exceptional graphic illustrations for each of these categories of streets, including recommended traffic lanes, turn lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks, planting strips or furnishing zones, curbs, etc., as well as proposed types of hard surface treatments, trees and furnishings. (Ref. **Plate 6-3.**)

The main focus and highest priority should be State Street in its entirety— from Dobbins Landing to the railroad. As the “Main Street” of Downtown Erie, State Street must be an attractive, landscaped, safe, and inviting artery with appropriate signage, bus shelters, lighting, and street furniture.

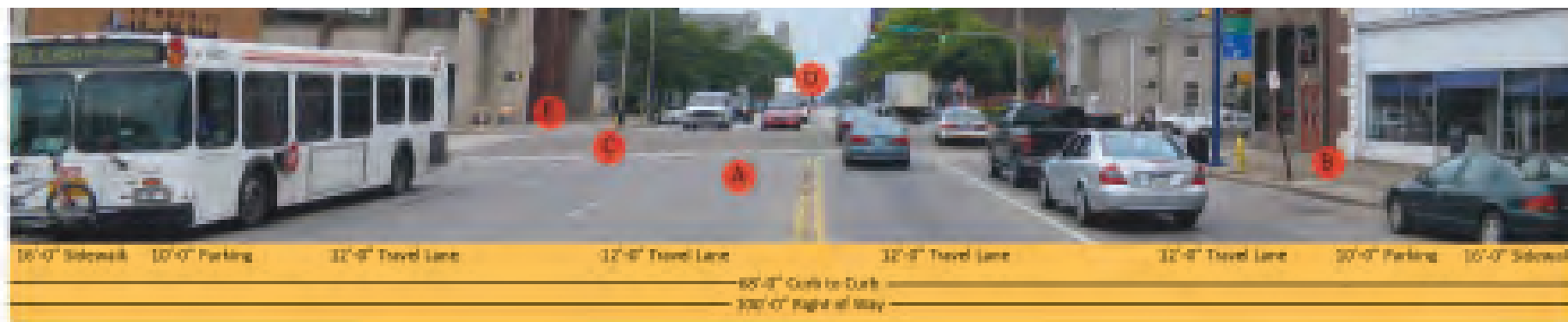
Graphics for Park Streets, Two-Way Mobility Streets, One-Way Mobility Streets, and Community Streets from the Master Streetscape Plan are included in **Appendix 6-1.**

It should be noted that, in the previous ten years, EDP and its partners spent almost \$260,000 on streetscaping improvements, planted 366 trees, installed 98 banners, and purchased 120 trash receptacles. These efforts have had positive impacts on the downtown environment.



Streetscaping elements are critical

Ceremonial Street  
State Street



- A** Excessively wide travel lanes
- B** Lack of street trees
- C** Long pedestrian crossing distances
- D** Unnecessary amount of travel lanes
- E** Narrow sidewalk widths in some areas



Proposed Improvements:

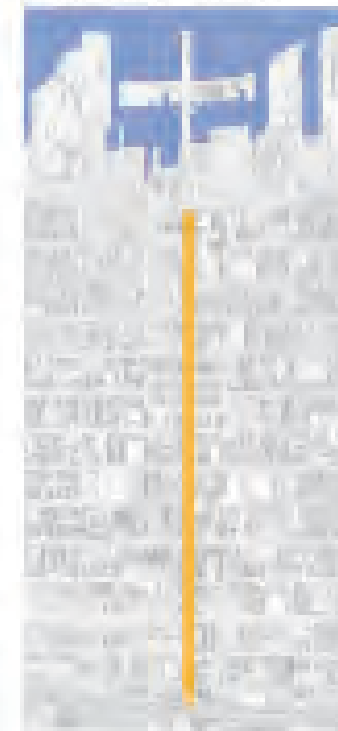


Plate 6-3 Ceremonial Street Graphic  
Downtown Streetscape Master Plan - Urban Engineers, AECOM, and Dahlkemper

Proposed Improvements:

- A** Center turn lane with brick pavers to provide a tactile driving surface and slow motorists
- B** On-street parking to provide easy access to retail and restaurants
- C** Concrete bicycle lanes
- D** Canopy trees in large open planters to provide shade and comfort to the street environment
- E** Broad concrete sidewalks to facilitate multiple functions: street furnishings, outdoor dining and pedestrian access
- F** Paver or cobble furnishing zone to consolidate benches, trash receptacles, light poles, newspaper boxes, transit shelters, etc.



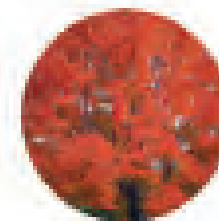
Eye level perspective view of streetscape



Type 1 pedestrian crossing treatment



Acolade Elm



Red Maple



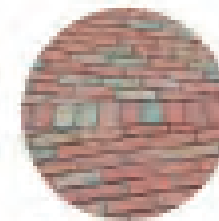
Cultural Corner Street



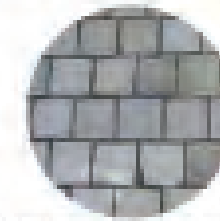
Vehicle Scale Light



Type A Bench



Brick Street Paving



Cobblestone Furnishing Zone



Green Street

It is critical that the City and other partners implement the recommendations of The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan and the priorities identified therein as soon as financially feasible. Funds should be sought through all potential avenues. Cost estimates are provided in the Master Plan, but should be updated to reflect current dollars.

One of the key issues mentioned several times during this planning process was the fact that the City of Erie needs a comprehensive street lighting study to determine where lighting should be placed, in what priority, and in what styles. A standard pedestrian level lighting fixture within downtown is needed both for safety and to enhance the downtown environment. If different districts want to use different light fixtures to identify their district, approval from the City should be acquired. It is important to keep the City Department of Traffic Engineering involved in any discussions regarding lighting fixtures, since lighting maintenance and replacement of parts is that department's responsibility.

The current banners will require replacement soon, and history has shown how expensive it is to maintain and replace the current number of banners throughout downtown. A more selective use of banners, possibly only at the corners of each district, would allow for fewer banners and would still be effective. Each district could have its own design, while incorporating the EDP logo for consistency. If the City amended its policy restricting advertising by private companies on these types of banners, a source of funding from private companies could become available.

Erie County has recently appointed a person to be in charge of recycling, and efforts are being made to encourage greater use of recycled products, especially in public projects. There are ample opportunities for using recycled materials in streetscaping projects, especially when purchasing street furniture. In addition, projects should include provisions for people to recycle bottles, cans, paper, etc., especially in public parks and during special events in downtown.

The placement of flower baskets, pots, and/or window and planter boxes, would provide additional color, greenery, and excitement to downtown. If a garden or other civic club could be recruited to assist with this project, it should start with the Perry Square district and work outward. Various sources of funding could be sought and should include a maintenance plan. Selling chocolate bars with local logos has helped raise flower funds in other communities, such as the Lift Bridge Community Association in Ashtabula, Ohio, where the chocolate bars were made by a local chocolatier and were sold in every store on Bridge Street. A local garden center was retained there to plant, hang, water, and maintain the flower pots.



*Potential use of flowers. Lift Bridge Community Association Ashtabula Ohio—Bridge Street.*



*Existing street lighting on South Park Row*

## Building Facades and Site Improvements

This section evaluates the existing building facades and site conditions, and the pedestrian experience at the street level to better understand how consumers and visitors perceive downtown, and to consider potential opportunities to enhance that experience. The majority of buildings have great architectural character, but need a little bit of help to truly be pedestrian-inviting buildings. Many historic buildings are in great shape and can continue to be preserved. However, there are several buildings that do not fit the character of an “urban” building, and other buildings that simply need a facade redesign or restoration for them to fit into the desired urban aesthetic. There are also vacant or underutilized sites that are detrimental to the overall perception of a vibrant and healthy downtown.

### Plates 6-5 identifies priority facade and site improvement projects as follows:

Buildings and sites outlined in yellow should be the primary focus of facade improvement programs and infill development, as these would have an immediate impact for a relatively low cost.

If money becomes available for larger, infill and/or redevelopment opportunities, the focus should be on the buildings or sites identified in red. Improvements to these sites will dramatically improve the pedestrian experience in the downtown area.

Small projects that could also be targeted are identified in green. These involve low-impact changes that will fine-tune the downtown image instead of altering it drastically.

If at all possible, building facade restorations and infill development should be coordinated with streetscape improvements to improve building--streetscape connections and result in the greatest overall impact.

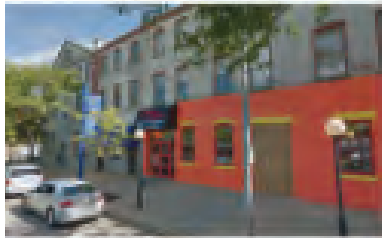
Facades of long buildings adjacent to key pedestrian streets should be broken up with doors, windows, varying textures, setbacks, landscaping, lightings, etc., to make them more pedestrian friendly. These types of issues are generally addressed in design guidelines, as discussed in **Chapter 7**.

Once again, the highest priority should always be buildings facing State Street to assure that the “Main Street” is attractive and inviting, from the Bay to Perry Square, and from Perry Square to the railroad tracks.



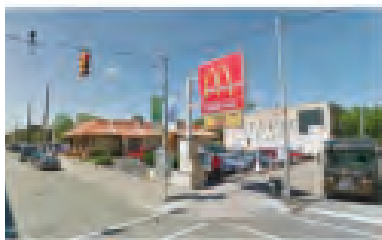
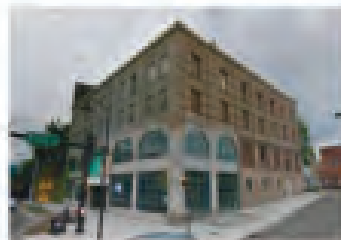
Current downtown facades, many improved with EDP facade grants

Existing downtown facade



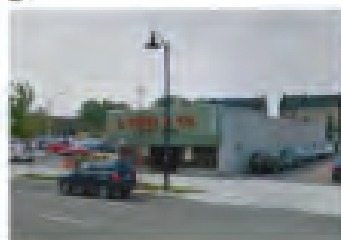
**PRIORITY 1:  
Immediate Attention / Low Hanging Fruit**

- Good Architectural Structure (Bones)
- Good Relationship to the Streets
- In Need of Facade Improvements
- In Need of Street-Level Glazing
- In Need of Signage Improvements



**PRIORITY 2:  
Complete Redevelopment / Infill Development**

- Lack of Building Edges to the Street
- Poor Pedestrian Relationship
- Abandoned / Vacant Buildings
- Parking Lots in Strategic Locations
- Suburban Model Building



**PRIORITY 3:  
Stable**

- Good Architectural Structure
- Great Relationship with the Street
- Facade is Well Maintained
- Outdoor Pedestrian Amenities
- Street-Level Glazing
- Urban Model Building

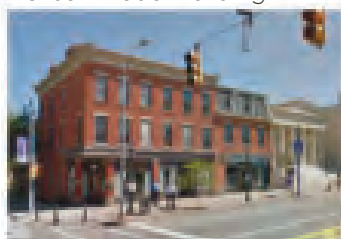


Plate 6-4 Facade Priority Examples

### Bayfront District

Buildings and sites in the Bayfront District are critical to the overall experience of travelers on the Bayfront Parkway as well as visitors to the medical and recreational facilities in this key area of downtown. This area serves as a vital gateway between the Bayfront and downtown and improving this connection, both physically and aesthetically, is a major priority.

A large amount of prime real estate on the Bayfront is currently vacant. Development on vacant land along State Street is critical to the overall health and vitality of the Bayfront, as well as downtown. The developments proposed for the Scott Enterprises property (northeast corner of the intersection of State Street and the Parkway), as well as redevelopment plans for the McAllister property and the eastern-most property on Dobbins Landing will dramatically improve the aesthetics and vitality of the Bayfront and serve as major attractions for visitors and residents. The frontage of Wolverine Park could also be developed to a higher use, with recreational facilities further west. These projects are critical to Downtown Erie’s future.

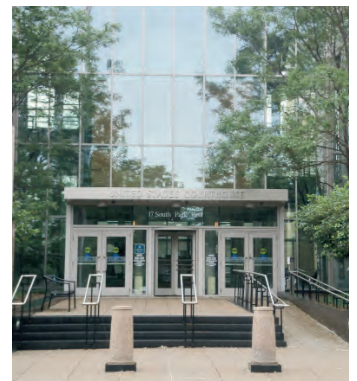


*Buildings and facades can provide an attractive night scene*

### Perry Square District

The Perry Square District, centered on Perry Square, is a major focal point of downtown at the intersection of State and 6th Streets (aka North and South Park Row). Due to its historical development as the center of the City, this area has good building character, although there are some buildings that could use facade upgrades to enhance them, as indicated on **Plate 6-5**. There is a minimal amount of vacant land in this district, mostly owned by Erie Insurance Group and planned for future campus facilities around its renovated Museum. Due to the high value of real estate in this district, there should be few, if any, surface parking lots directly adjacent to Perry Square.

The visual aesthetics of this district rapidly deteriorates as one travels east along 6th beyond Parade Street. This corridor should instead be an attractive approach or transition into the core of downtown from the east and requires significant attention.



*Buildings with strong architectural character in the Perry Square District*

*UPMC Hamot green space complements the district*

## Renaissance District

This district, between 8th and 12th Streets, has several buildings that do not properly fit into an urban landscape, as outlined in yellow and red on **Plate 6-4**. Renovations and upgrades of these buildings would have a dramatic positive impact on the downtown streetscape. Recent improvements to 900 State Street illustrate how older buildings can be updated to meet today’s business needs.

With future building upgrades, a minimum of two stories would be desirable, with building fronts brought forward to the sidewalk, and parking lots and drive through facilities located to the backs of buildings whenever possible. Offices or loft apartments could be planned for upper floors. A consistent signage theme for private signage (which may require City Sign Code updates) would help create a more artistic streetscape design.



Retail shops on State Street



Could they look like this?



Existing hotel today



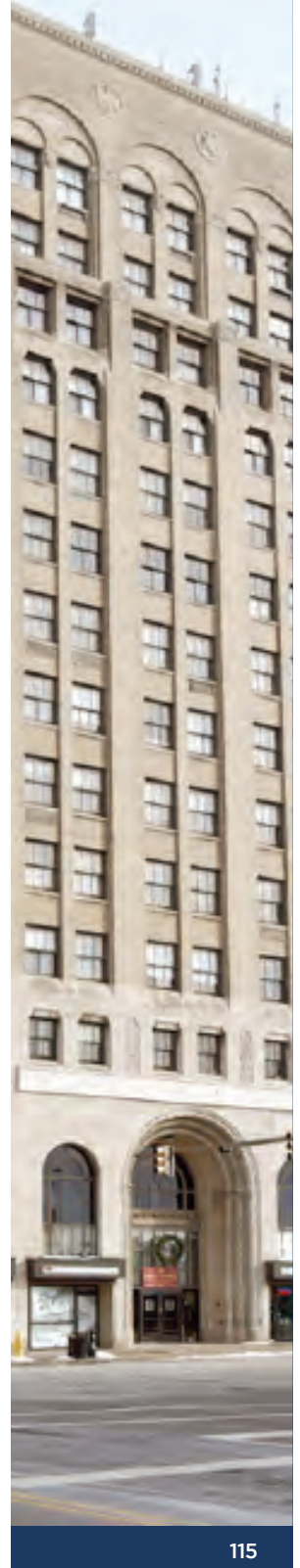
Could it look like this?

## Union Square District

This district between 12th Street and the railroad was formerly a large industrial and manufacturing area in the City of Erie, and is now less dense than the rest of downtown as a result. Many buildings, especially along 12th Street and the railroad, were former industrial facilities, some of which have been renovated into new commercial uses. There are several structures with priority 1 and 2 frontages as outlined in red and yellow on **Plate 6-5**.

Union Station, JR’s Last Laugh Comedy Club, and the Mercantile Building have undergone adaptive reuses that attract people into this district for entertainment, dining, and living. The former Post Office has been transformed into offices, and the Turnpike Building is undergoing a similar renovation. Former commercial buildings along State Street have been converted to new dining and drinking establishments. The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority is demolishing existing buildings on its site between 14th Street and the railroad, and is constructing new facilities. The remaining vacant buildings in the district need similar adaptive reuses and building upgrades to provide positive book ends to downtown from the south.

*The historic Renaissance Center provides a strong and solid facade in this district*



The Waterfront Master Plan completed in 2009 by Domokur Architects provided proposed land uses for the entire Bayfront, many of which are still relevant today. This information is included in **Appendix 6-2**.

Bayfront developments that would best complement the natural aspects of the Bay and protect views from the bluffs, are low-rise, mixed-use buildings with minimal surface parking and multi-modal access to the waterfront and downtown, with public green space and other amenities included.

The main UPMC Hamot building on State Street and the 100 State Street office building create a visual boundary between the Bayfront and downtown, which is accentuated by the drastic change in elevation. Steps need to be taken to minimize the visual disconnect and soften the pedestrian experience to encourage Bayfront visitors to enter and enjoy downtown businesses and assets. (Ref. **Chapter 5, Goal #1, Objective #1-2**.)

The green space and parking lot in front of the medical facility south of 100 State Street and the green space in front of UPMC Hamot could accommodate buildings at the sidewalk to continue the desired building facade line. The same is true of McDonald's, which should be built to the sidewalk with parking and drive through facilities on the west side.

With these types of improvements, the downtown-Bayfront connection could resemble what is illustrated in **Plate 6-6**.



Plate 6-6 Proposed Bayfront Graphic





Example of Priority Buildings (State Street between 4th and 5th Streets)--Before



Example of Priority Buildings (State Street between 4th and 5th Streets)--After

There are a large number of surface parking lots in this district that could be developed for income-generating businesses that would serve a better purpose for downtown, so long as alternative parking solutions are provided. This may happen with the EMTA's proposed parking garage at 14th and French Streets.

Since this district is the gateway into downtown from the south, well-designed gateway entrances could be provided to welcome visitors and guide them toward their destinations in an efficient and artistic manner. Signage should also identify the Union Square District and where parking is located. The Erie Regional Sign Trust is in charge of directional signage and should therefore be included in any signage decisions.

The transition from the south under the railroad and into the Union Square District could be enhanced with improvements to all underpasses, including street resurfacing, safe and separated pedestrian crossings, better lighting, security cameras, public art, or murals on the walls, and greening of the underpass approaches.

Erie is fortunate that local developers are interested in pursuing redevelopment activities within this district. Developers are needed for infill development and redevelopment of underutilized buildings and lots, and upgrading of existing retail facilities and fast food establishments.



*Sample gateway signage from other cities*

### **An Emerging Transit-Oriented Development District**

Given the existing characteristics of the Union Square District, and the fact that EMTA is constructing new facilities, longer-term possibilities exist to develop this area with a greater orientation to transit. Elsewhere in the United States (particularly on the east and west coasts), transit-oriented development (TOD) has emerged as an organizing principle for urban redevelopment near transit facilities. TOD areas are pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use developments within walking distance of a rail or other forms of transit.

TOD planning principles generally place an emphasis on higher-density residential development and mixed land uses (residential, office, and/or commercial) within a quarter mile of the transit center. Conversely, auto-oriented land uses, such as gas stations or restaurants with drive-through windows, are discouraged in this area. A quarter mile (about a five-minute walk) is generally regarded as a comfortable walking distance. Increased residential density within such a radius helps to aggregate potential transit riders near (walking distance) transit facilities. Low-density residential development leads to fewer existing or potential transit riders in close proximity to transit stations, and diminishes ridership potential. Low-density residential can also add to vehicular congestion. The Union Square Area may ultimately support residential densities of 20 units per acre, or more.





TOD also encourages a select mix of community amenities, such as childcare centers, schools, libraries, public services, local government offices, and community parks. When such public facilities are located near transit, they become instantly more accessible to a wider range of residents. Along with these mixed uses, TODs encourage alternate modes of transportation such as transit, walking, and biking, and deemphasize vehicular travel. TOD areas, therefore, have low parking ratios (spaces per housing unit or spaces per square feet of commercial space) compared to suburban areas. Shared parking is often utilized, along with on-street parking, parking behind buildings, parking underground, and parking in carefully designed and located parking structures—as opposed to parking in large at-grade surface lots.

The relevance of this material to Downtown Erie (and the Union Square District in particular) is the need to view this area in light of TOD principles. Most TOD areas in the nation developed intentionally with supportive planning policies, design guidelines and zoning. This downtown planning process has helped identify an opportunity to consider a TOD district in the Union Square District and further consideration of this idea is warranted in a more focused manner.

**Future steps should include:**

Analysis of the potential boundaries of a TOD district (generally recognizing a 1/4 mile radius as a comfortable pedestrian trip) from the EMTA facilities.

Identification of specific development and redevelopment properties.

Review of zoning code provisions that limit or restrict desirable residential densities or a desirable level of mixed uses. This step is naturally followed by drafting necessary amendments.

Review of parking standards with an eye toward relaxing standards that mandate excessive parking (if applicable).

Consideration of non-motorized mobility in the area—along with the identification of non-motorized transportation enhancements that allow for reduced auto-oriented travel and mobility. These issues may relate to better pedestrian area lighting, traffic calming, dedicated bike lanes, bike parking, bump-outs, landscape treatments, sidewalk widening, etc. These improvements are directed toward assuring that people can walk comfortably and safely between residences and a transit center



Downtown Erie / EMTA Transit Center Design Principles


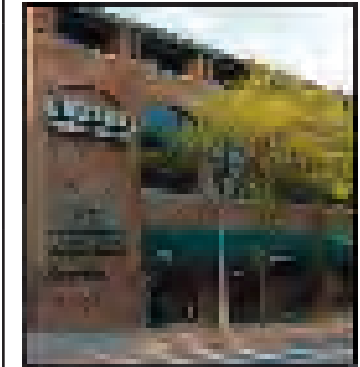




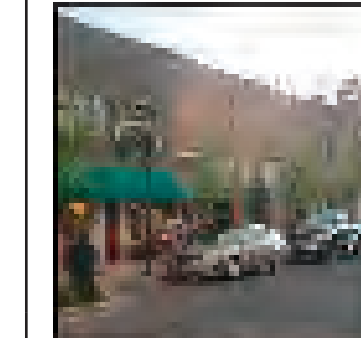
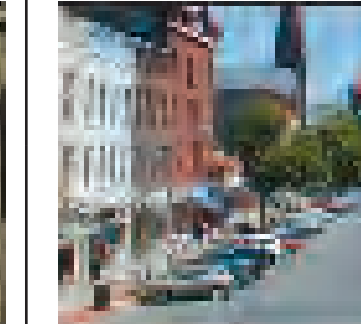
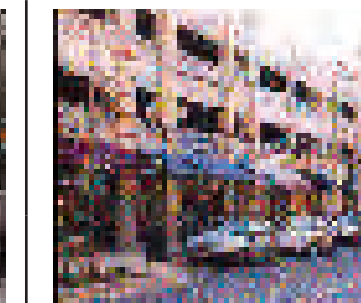

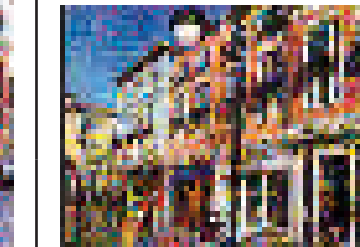
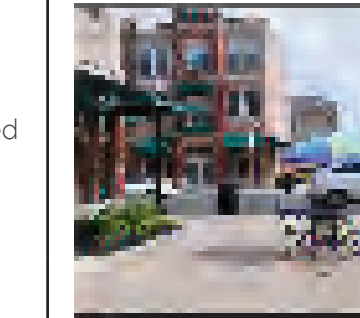
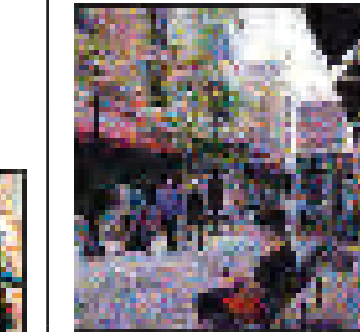
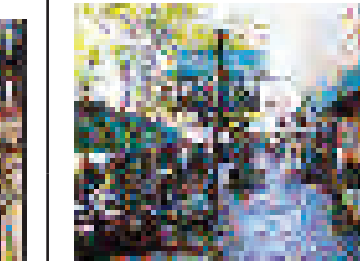

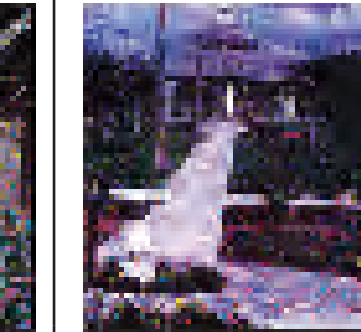

Mixture of Complementary Uses	Increase Land use Intensity	Pedestrian and Bicycle System	Street Network	Parking	Building and Site Design	Streetscape	Open Space
<p>Provide a range of higher intensity uses including residential, office, and retail uses.</p> <p>Disallow automobile -dependent uses.</p> <p>Provide uses that attract / generate pedestrian activity</p> <p>Encourage Multi-use developments.</p> <p>Encourage a mixture of housing types.</p> <p>Encourage development of workforce / affordable housing.</p> <p>Encourage upgrading of exiting uses to make them more pedestrian friendly.</p> 	<p>Encourage higher densities for new development near the Transit Center.</p> <p>Ensure minimum densities for new residential development within 1/4 mile walk from the Transit Center are 20 Units per acre or greater, where appropriate.</p> <p>Ensure non- residential intensities with 1/4 mile walk from the Transit Center with be, at a minimum, 0.75 FAR, where appropriate.</p>  	<p>Provide an extensive pedestrian system throughout the Transit Center area to minimize walking distances.</p> <p>Establish pedestrian and bicycle connections between transit areas and the downtown district.</p> <p>Design the pedestrian system to be accessible, safe, and attractive for all users.</p> <p>Ensure that the pedestrian network will accommodate large groups of pedestrians.</p> <p>Utilize planting strips / street trees, onstreet parking, and / or bicycle lanes to separate pedestrians from vehicles.</p> <p>Encourage the provision of bicycle amenities, especially bicycle parking.</p> 	<p>Design streets to be multi-modal with emphasis on pedestrian circulation.</p> <p>Design existing street intersections with greater emphasis on pedestrian crossing.</p> <p>Develop an interconnected street network designed around a block system.</p> <p>Consider mid-block street crosswalks.</p> <p>Incorporate traffic calming into the design of streets.</p>  	<p>Reduce parking requirements in Transit Center areas and establish parking maximums.</p> <p>Minimize large surface parking lots for private development.</p> <p>Encourage shared parking facilities.</p>   	<p>Design buildings to front on public streets or on open spaces, with windows and doors at street level.</p> <p>Locate building entrances to minimize walking distance between Transit stations and the buildings.</p> <p>Located surface parking to the rear of the buildings.</p> <p>Limit building heights to 50' with the tallest and most intensely developed structures located near the Transit Center.</p> <p>Screen unsightly elements, such as dumpsters, loading docks, service entrances, and other outdoor storage.</p>  	<p>Design the streetscape to encourage pedestrian activity.</p> <p>Include elements such as street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and benches in streetscape design.</p> <p>Place utilities underground whenever possible.</p>   	<p>Establish public open spaces.</p> <p>Design open spaces to be centers of activity.</p> <p>Orient surrounding buildings onto the open spaces.</p>   

Plate 6-7 Downtown Erie/EMTA Transit Center Design Principles





## CHAPTER 7 • DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

*"Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go."*

*- T.S. Elliot*



## Zoning

Development in Downtown Erie is shaped by the City of Erie's Zoning Code. Zoning is a local law that mandates how land may be used and prescribes basic building requirements. Each zoning district contains a list of permitted land uses along with specific development standards related to matters such as building size, placement, height, etc. The Downtown Erie that we see today is largely the product of existing zoning requirements (or absence thereof). As mentioned in Chapter 6, there are six different zoning districts in downtown. These include the following, which correspond to areas shown on the Zoning Map (Plate 7-1).

### RLB - Residential Limited Business (yellow)

The RLB Zoning District is essentially a transitional zoning district that allows a mix of residential and commercial activity. More specifically, and according to Section 202.20 of the Zoning Code, "This district is designated for medium-density residential developments, limited local retail commercial activities, and many other limited commercial activities, especially those associated with the owner's home. Also, several public and semi-public uses are included. This designation broadens the use of properties on the periphery of intense use areas or along major transportation corridors while seeking to minimize incompatibility problems with existing uses."

#### Some important development standards applicable in the RLB Zoning District include:

Minimum Lot Area per Family (Square Feet): 1,500

Maximum Lot Coverage by Buildings: 50%

Maximum Height of Structure (Feet): 35

Front Yard Setback (Feet): Varies - The required depth of front yard for the proposed structure shall be the average depth of the existing structures located between two intersecting streets within a tolerance of +/- five (5) feet.

Off-Street Parking Required: Yes

### C-2 - General Commercial (red)

The C-2 Zoning District is a very broad and inclusive commercial zone assigned to many areas throughout the City of Erie. In Downtown Erie, it applies to areas along 12th Street, and elsewhere it applies to large areas south of Downtown Erie, often along major commercial thoroughfares. More specifically, and according to Section 202.32 of the Zoning Code, "General Commercial Districts are for all retail establishments without a size restriction, which normally occur within shopping centers. Also included in this district are automobile-oriented businesses and services, and other corporate and commercial activities."

#### Some important development standards applicable in the C-2 Zoning District include:

Minimum Lot Area per Family (Square Feet): 1,000

Maximum Lot Coverage by Buildings: 50%

Maximum Height of Structure (Feet): 45

Front Yard Setback: Generally 0.

Off-Street Parking Required: Yes

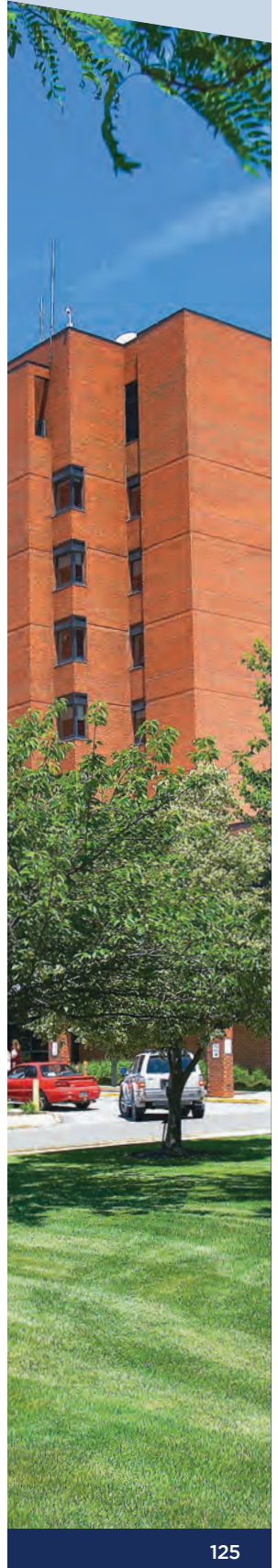
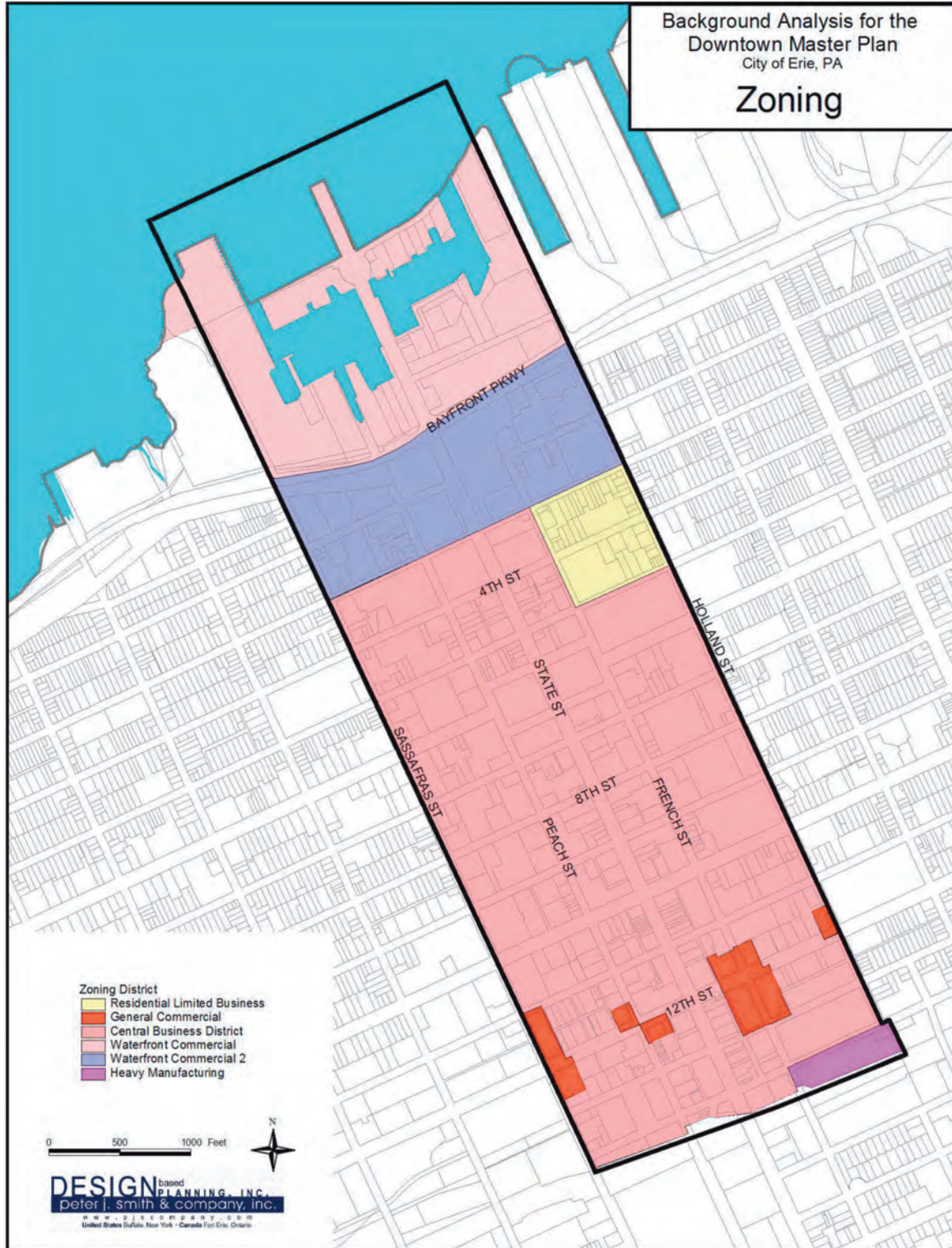


Plate 7-1



**C-3 - Central Commercial District (dark pink)**

The C-3 Central Commercial District applies to the majority of Downtown Erie. More specifically, and according to Section 202.33 of the Zoning Code, “C-3 Central Commercial District is for major shopping facilities, offices, entertainment facilities, and related uses which serve the entire Erie area. The primary purpose of this district is to satisfy the unique needs and to promote the sound development of the Central Commercial District. In addition, this district may be applied to other large land areas to permit comprehensive commercial development.”

**Some important development standards applicable in the C-3 Zoning District include:**

Minimum Lot Area per Family (Square Feet): 1,000

Maximum Lot Coverage by Buildings: 100%

Maximum Height of Structure (Feet): NA (subject to Airport Zoning)

Front Yard Setback: “In C-3 Districts, no building may be set back in any degree from the front property line, exclusive of the public right-of-way.” It is important to note that this language is different from saying the minimum front setback is 0 as in the case of C-2. In C-3, buildings must be located at the front property line. In C-2, buildings are simply not required to be setback from the front property line and may or may not be set back.

Off-Street Parking Required: No

**W-C - Waterfront Commercial (light pink) and W-C2 - Waterfront Commercial 2 (purple)**

The Waterfront Commercial District includes several zoning categories applicable to the waterfront and downtown, including both W-C and W-C2. W-C applies to downtown areas between the Bayfront Parkway and Lake Erie. W-C2 applies to areas between the Bayfront Parkway and 3rd Street. According to Section 202.50 of the Zoning Code, the “Waterfront District is to provide a framework to guide and control the development of the Erie Bayfront. This district is intended to coordinate future public and private improvements in a mixed-land-use concept.” Both W-C and W-C2 are therefore mixed-use Zoning Districts, but the major differences between the two Waterfront Commercial Districts in terms of permitted land uses is that W-C2 permits Custodial Care Facilities and Group Care Facilities and W-C does not.

**Some important development standards applicable to W-C and W-C2 include:**

	W-C - Waterfront Commercial	W-C2 - Waterfront Commercial
Minimum Lot Area per Family (Square Feet):	1,000	1,000
Maximum Lot Coverage by Buildings:	65%	65%
Maximum Height of Structure (Feet):	50 (Generally)	100
Front Yard Setback	0 (Generally)	0 (Generally)
Off-Street Parking Required	Yes	Yes (but only 50% of requirements per Section 302)



## M-2 - Heavy Manufacturing (magenta)

The M-2 Zoning District applies to a small area at the southeast edge of downtown. This area relates to the EMTA facility. M-2 is one of three industrial zoning districts in the City. M-1 is a light Industrial District and I-P is an Industrial Park District intended to be more restrictive. According to Section 202.42 of the Zoning Code, “Heavy Manufacturing Districts are for a wider range of manufacturing activities under conditions and standards which protect adjacent properties from adverse or objectionable influences.”

### Some important development standards applicable in the M-2 Zoning District include:

Minimum Lot Area per Family (Square Feet): NA  
 Maximum Lot Coverage by Buildings: 100%  
 Maximum Height of Structure (Feet): 100  
 Front Yard Setback: Generally 0.  
 Off-Street Parking Required: Yes

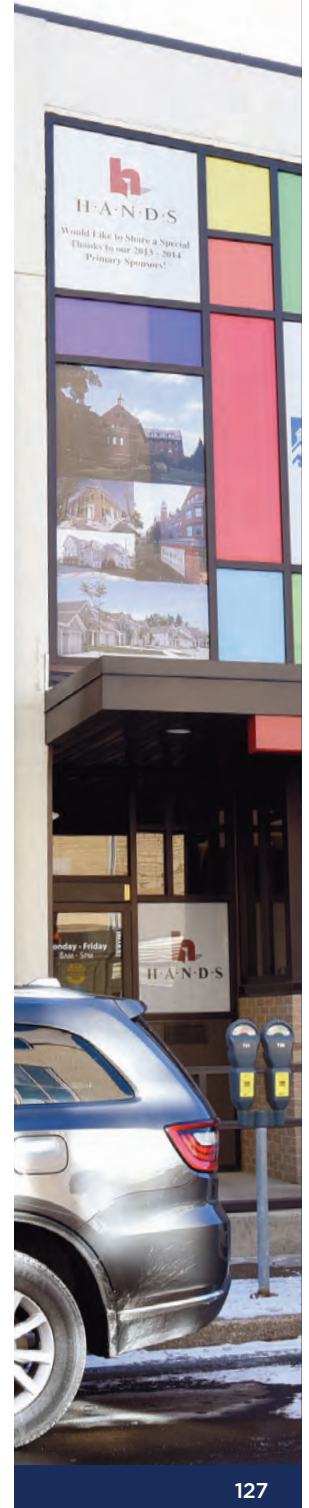
## Zoning Issues and Recommendations

A number of general zoning issues become apparent from a broad review of zoning requirements, and as a result of this planning process. These issues and recommendations fall into four categories as described below.

### 1. Review the appropriateness of existing zoning districts as they apply to specific property.

The appropriateness of General Commercial Zoning (C-2) is questioned. C-2 is common along commercial corridors throughout the City. It includes permitted uses and development standards commonly associated with a suburban commercial strip along thoroughfares with high traffic volumes. This type of urban form is less appropriate downtown, where a more walkable, human scale, mixed-use development pattern is desired. The choices to address this include steps to create a new zoning district for downtown properties that are now zoned C-2, or to apply C-3 zoning to these properties. Rezoning existing C-2 parcels to C-3 (or a new zoning district) is a significant step. However, all existing development is “grandfathered” and such an action would only impact new development activity. It should be noted that simply changing C-2 requirements to align closer to C-3 is likely not a desirable option because, as mentioned, C-2 exists throughout the City of Erie. Therefore, such a change would have potentially negative impacts elsewhere in the City.

Similarly, rezoning the area now zoned M-2 should be considered. Commercial uses are not permitted in M-2, and for the most part, the full range of permitted uses in M-2 are not likely to be compatible with surrounding development—specifically Lovell Place and new homes constructed by HANDS. Permitted uses in M-2 include heavy manufacturing, asphalt manufacturing and storage, solid waste transfer facilities, etc. Again, simply changing the permitted uses allowed in M-2 could be an option, but such an action would impact property zoned M-2 throughout the City. In addition, plans for retail establishments on the first level of the proposed EMTA parking ramp will require a zoning change that permits these uses. Possibly a new zoning district could be recreated to permit the transit-oriented development uses that EMTA is proposing for this site.



*H.A.N.D.S. office building*



### 2. Review Existing Permitted Uses in All Downtown Zoning Districts

A comprehensive review of all permitted and conditionally-permitted uses in the Zoning Districts is warranted to make sure that desirable land uses in downtown are not unintentionally excluded. Some examples include:

#### Permitted & Conditionally-Permitted Uses

Live/Work housing units

Manufacturing activity limited to the production of crafts, arts, sculpture, and jewelry that is displayed and sold on the premises

Outdoor dining

Microbreweries

Personal electronic service and repair establishments

### 3. Review Development Standards in All Downtown Zoning Districts

A thorough review of development standards is warranted to make sure that requirements are logical and decisively included to achieve performance levels associated with new development. Some specific examples include:

Consider relaxing the “build to” line in C-3 to indicate that a building must be located within 10 feet of the right-of-way line (rather than exactly to the right-of-way). Small recesses in building form along the right-of-way line can add visual interest and allow for outdoor dining and cafes.

### 4. Consider Creation of Design Guidelines or Overlay District

At this time, there are no specific design guidelines that apply to downtown, other than very general guidelines related to the Erie Downtown Partnership’s Facade Grant Program. Often in downtowns, a set of design guidelines is created to go beyond basic zoning requirements and address a long list of building and site design issues. A new building can generally be built with one exterior material and few if any architectural details and still meet zoning requirements. Design guidelines would address a wide range of architectural details aimed at making sure the building is compatible and contextual with its surroundings.



*Results from the Facade grant program*

While it is possible to address some design issues in the actual zoning code, design issues are typically much more subjective. Therefore, Design Guidelines or an Overlay District are more likely to describe elements to be encouraged and elements to be avoided (rather than legally required or prohibited). Good design guidelines define general parameters for building design and stop far short of mandating architectural details so that the design professional has the flexibility to create unique building character within general parameters. Zoning code language, on the other hand, is typically definitive, measurable, and specific. Because of the more subjective nature of Design Guidelines, design review requirements typically include some type of review process that includes a

*Shops in Union Square District*

Design Review Board. The Design Review Board considers proposed development in light of the requirements described in the Design Guidelines or the Overlay District.

It is beyond the scope of this plan to provide an adoptable set of Design Guidelines or Overlay District for Downtown Erie. The development of such guidelines should include a number of steps to engage the public and property owners in conversations about specific elements of the guidelines and the process to be used to enforce them. What is possible, however, is to offer a framework from which to begin work on this issue. This framework is intended to be a starting point for more detailed work that engages stakeholders and municipal officials in extensive dialog on a wide range of issues.

It should also be noted that future Design Guidelines or Overlay District should divide the downtown area into sub-areas as a way to address variations in urban character and building form. The waterfront area of downtown is obviously much different than the core of downtown. These sub-areas could be the “districts” described in **Chapter 6**.

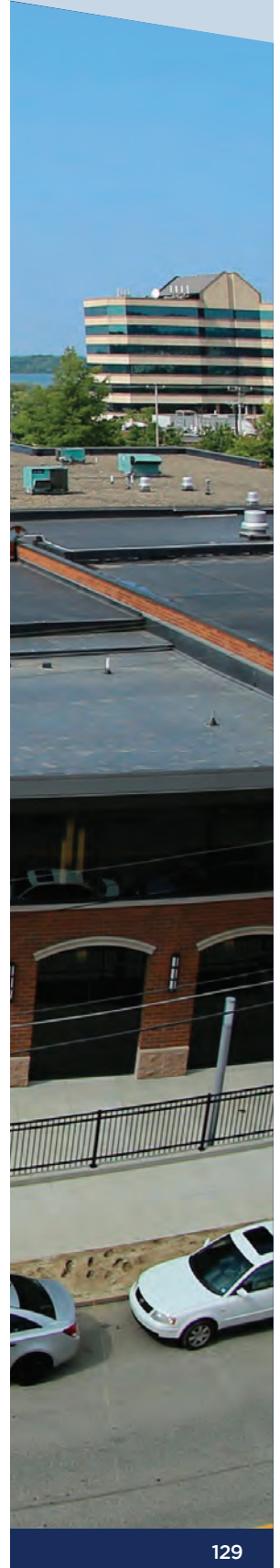


*Gannon University North Hall Exterior Design*



*Existing residential building in downtown*

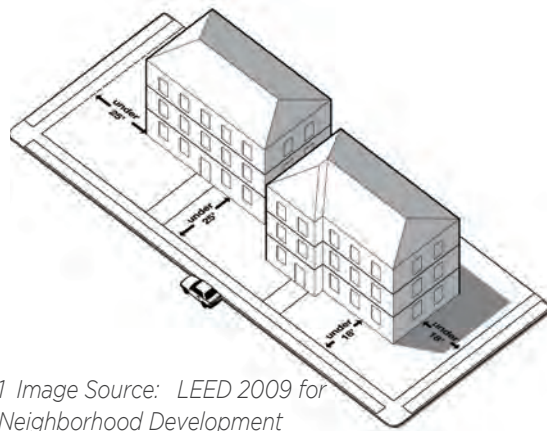
*Gannon University Recreation Center*



### Framework for Design Guidelines

A framework of issues to address in future Design Guidelines or an Overlay District includes the following:

- **New Building Form.** New building construction should be multiple stories with buildings pulled forward toward the street to match existing building form. Modest recesses created by setting the building back no more than ten feet may be desirable when an outdoor plaza or semi-public space is incorporated into the building design. A small amount of building setback may also be appropriate to allow for some outdoor seating or outdoor dining. This issue was mentioned previously in the context of zoning changes, which should mirror requirements in the Design Guidelines. The Design Guidelines could express more fully the desired character of outdoor spaces between the right-of-way and the building in terms of semi-public uses in this space (such as dining, art display, outdoor seating/gathering space, etc.) as shown in these images.



1 Image Source: LEED 2009 for Neighborhood Development



2 Example of Semi-Public Outdoor Space between the ROW and Building

- **Building mass** should generally match the scale and placement of surrounding structures, and the preference is to maintain building mass toward the street to preserve a strong connection between the pedestrian and adjacent businesses at the street level. For the most part, a minimum ratio of 1 to 3 is desired. This ratio expresses the relationship between the building height and road right-of-way width (pictured below). A 1 to 3 ratio is regarded as the minimum necessary to begin to create a sense of enclosure and a feeling that one is within an “outdoor room.” A ratio of 1 to 4 or more is regarded as preferable.



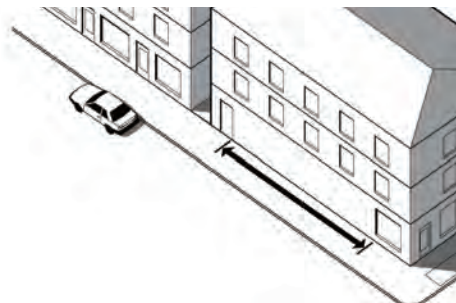
Downtown Residential

Building mass ratio

- Facades that extend the full width of the lot. To maintain full pedestrian experience at the street wall, gaps between buildings without visual or functional appeal is discouraged. Gaps between buildings may be appropriate if they are designed to offer an attractive pedestrian connection between rear parking areas and front façade entrances, or if such gaps serve some other public space function.
- Windows and Doors. Buildings with ample window areas and building entries are preferred. Windows and doors create functional connections between the pedestrian and the interior spaces of buildings. Buildings with larger “blank” wall surfaces that face a street “dehumanize” areas and create places that are not inviting. Ample window area and defined building entrances at close intervals help to blend the public pedestrian spaces with the private interior spaces, as well as help to make the downtown environment feel richer, more visually interesting, and more vibrant. Buildings should have no less than 60% window glazing on the first floor for all facades that front on a public street. Upper floor facades should have approximately 40% window glazing. Facades related to larger buildings that front on a public street should have at least one entrance every 50 feet. This entrance should be a public entrance, not a service entrance.



3 LEED 2009 for Neighborhood Development



4 LEED 2009 for Neighborhood Development

- Building Wall Articulation. Large expanses of uniform building walls with singular materials do not contribute to the visual interest of a building or place. While less common in traditional downtowns, expansive walls uninterrupted by windows, entryways, or even variations in materials or textures can occur with newer construction. Building designs should incorporate some methods to break up walls that extend for specific distances. Buildings with large uninterrupted wall surfaces with uniform materials that are visible from a public street “dehumanize” areas and create the appearance of excessive building mass. Generally, all wall planes visible from a public street should not extend more than 30 feet without some type of break to add visual interest. Breaks may include off-sets or changes in exterior materials, columns, wall plane shifts, recesses, etc. Breaks may also include public entrances or substantive window areas.



Example of successful building wall articulation

No doors on a block in Downtown Erie



**Building Design – Materials.** The use of multiple exterior materials makes a building more complex and visually interesting. New construction should incorporate variations in exterior materials and renovation activity should seek to maintain (or add to) the visual complexity of the building. While exterior brick and similar materials are generally preferred, these guidelines do not advocate the use of specific materials, or combinations thereof. However, the use of vinyl siding, aluminum siding, dryvit or exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS) may be discouraged in downtown, especially in terms of the front facade. The designer and property owner are challenged to creatively organize multiple materials to express individual character, while complimenting adjacent buildings.

**Building Illumination.** Building illumination is encouraged to accentuate the building facade or signage. The lighting source should generally be separate from the building with light washing onto the structure itself to highlight signage or architectural elements of the building. Only low-intensity light should be used to accent signage or building elements, without light “spillover” onto adjacent property. The light source affixed to a building should not direct light outward toward the street or any public space.

**Other Building Elements.** Utility connections and trash collection equipment should not be visible from the right-of-way. Where possible, trash collection equipment should be designed to integrate with the building. If a standalone dumpster is the only practical alternative, it should be fully screened and not visible. All utility connections should be located behind the building and should not be visible from a public street. Loading and service areas should be located behind buildings and screened from view.

**Motorized and Non-motorized mobility.** In strong downtowns, safe and comfortable pedestrian movement is critical to success, so site design choices should be very attentive to the pedestrian experience. It is essential to pay close attention to the intersection of motorized and non-motorized travel paths and achieve a better balance between pedestrian and vehicular movement. Parking lots located adjacent to the street right-of-way are discouraged. Alternatively, parking areas should normally be located behind buildings, or otherwise internalized to the block.

Areas assigned to pedestrian movement in parking areas should be defined with pavement markings using paint, stamped surfaces, or different materials to identify pedestrian spaces. Wherever a parking area must abut a public street, a landscaped strip (5-10 feet wide) should be provided to help separate the pedestrian from surfaces designed for vehicles. This landscaped strip should include a combination of man-made materials (such as fences or masonry columns) along with plant material that screens at least 40% of the imaginary plane that is vertical to the parking surface to a height of four feet (at the time of planting). Shared parking arrangements should be encouraged.



*Example of alternate mode of transportation*

*Example of crosswalk*



## Form-Based Code

Long-term, the City of Erie should consider the development of a form-based code (FBC). FBCs are gaining popularity across the nation as a regulatory tool in downtowns and along major corridors. Large cities such as Cincinnati, Ohio and Denver, Colorado have adopted FBCs along with many smaller communities around the nation in many states. According to the Form Based Code Institute (FBCI), a form-based code focuses primarily on:

### Form-based code focuses primarily on:

- The relationship between building facades and the public realm,
- The form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and
- The scale and types of streets and blocks.

The regulations and standards in the FBC are presented in both words and clearly-drawn diagrams and other visuals. They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This approach contrasts with conventional zoning's focus on permitted land uses and control of development intensity through requirements such as maximum building heights, minimum setbacks, dwellings per acre, parking requirements, etc.

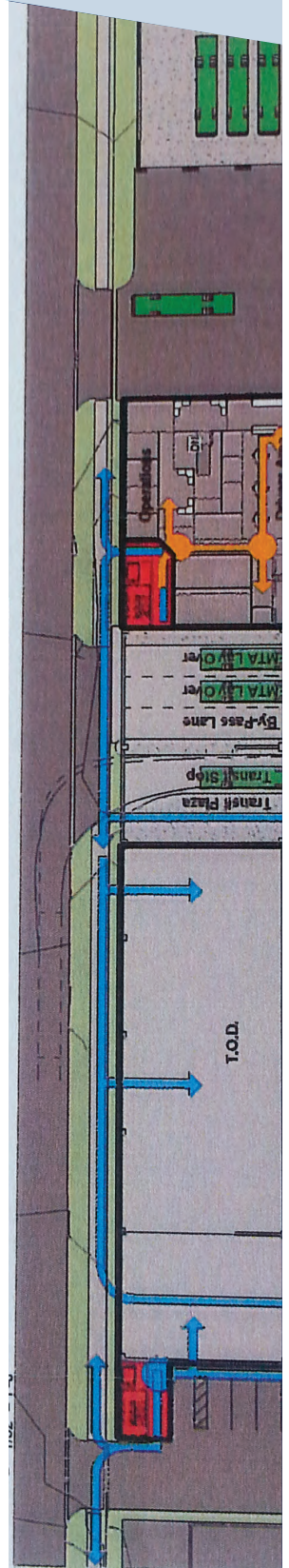
Conventional zoning is generally about listing what can't happen (using land for purposes not listed in the zoning district, building too close to lot lines, etc.), while FBCs describe in greater detail what must be built in fuller consideration of the adjacent public realm (primarily street right-of-way). FBCs are regulatory and legal instruments (not advisory guidelines) that clearly describe what is required in terms of new building form. They are drafted to implement a community plan. They try to achieve a community vision based on time-tested forms of urbanism. Ultimately, a form-based code is a tool; the quality of development outcomes depends on the quality and objectives of the community plan that a code implements.

The need to consider a FBC in downtown Erie stems from a desire to be far more prescriptive about the form and character of new development and redevelopment. It is believed that existing zoning tools (augmented with design guidelines or an overlay district) will take Downtown Erie only so far toward desired goals.

### Typically, a FBC includes:

- A Regulating Plan (a plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply),
- A Public Standards Plan (specifies elements in the public realm: sidewalk, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees and furniture, etc.),
- Building Standards (regulations controlling the features, configurations, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm),
- An Administration Element (a clearly defined and streamlined application and project review process), and
- A Definitions Section (a glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms).

A FBC can also include an Illustrative Plan to show an area at "build out," and a series of supportive documents to address topics such as signage, landscaping, architectural design, etc.





### **Code Enforcement**

Building code enforcement is undertaken by the same department within the City that administers the Zoning Code. Enforcement officers enforce the statewide building code—the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) as adopted by the City in July 2004. The International Building Code (IBC) is used for commercial structures. Updates are provided to this code every three years. All downtown buildings must meet both the IBC and the UCC. Residential housing projects with only one or two units are controlled by the Residential Building Code.

One of the major issues in Erie is that building and property owners are not pulling permits prior to starting construction of their improvements. In addition, many are not utilizing the services of a certified professional or licensed contractor, who would know that these permits are required and can provide the required documentation. The City's website provides information on when permits are needed and how to obtain them, as well as the cost and how/where to pay. Many individuals do not want to retain professionals or certified firms to help them because of the cost. However, plans must be certified for approval, so it is difficult, if not impossible, to bypass this step.

Erie adopted the latest updates to the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) in 2006 and has been enforcing the IPMC for the past 50 years. The City has five Property Maintenance Inspectors, but needs ten to get the job done most efficiently and effectively. Also, at this time, fines go to the State as opposed to going to the City to help fund the operations. The City also has a Rental Inspection Program for housing, with a \$40 fee per year per unit. Facilities are inspected once every two years.

Building Inspection Underwriters (BIU) contracts with the City to review plans for approval by the City. The City believes that BIU operates in a timely manner; however, some members of the public expressed concerns that their review periods were unreasonable at times, costing them time and money.

### **Blighted Properties**

When taxes become delinquent for two years, the County holds an “Upset Sale” - this is an auction at which a minimum bid is established to cover all the delinquent taxes, together with any interest, fees, and costs that have been incurred. At the Upset Sale, properties are sold ‘as is’ - meaning any existing liens, etc. remain with the property. (Buying at an Upset Sale is very risky!) Properties remaining unsold after the Upset Sale are then (usually a year later) exposed to a “Judicial Sale” auction (aka free and clear sale). At the Judicial Sale, there is a minimum bid amount established (currently \$1,000 in the City); titles are researched and, through the courts, liens are divested. Those properties that don't sell at Judicial Sale are then held with the County's “Repository for Unsold Properties.” Properties from the Repository can be purchased for as little as \$250 and are sold via written bids (not an auction).

The day after the Judicial Sale, City staff members contact purchasers to determine what the purchaser intends to do with the property. Purchasers are not permitted to sit on the property-- they must begin rehabilitation in a timely manner. If action is not taken, a notice is sent to them outlining the tasks that must be accomplished and the timeframes for doing so. If the purchaser does not comply, they are cited, and must go to Common Pleas Court.

Additionally, the Erie Redevelopment Authority (ERA) notifies purchasers of any properties that have previously been declared blighted. Typically, when property owners are cited by Code Enforcement, those actions go to the Magisterial District Courts.



*Empty lot in Union Square District*

The City's Blighted Property Review Committee (BPRC) declares properties to be blighted in accordance with PA's Urban Redevelopment Law. This declaration of blight is the first step in the process that can lead to the Redevelopment Authority using eminent domain to acquire the property and typically subsequent demolition by the City. Establishment of a Land Bank would provide an alternate method for acquisition, in that properties could be acquired during the Judicial Sale process, but prior to the actual auction (the benefit being that the liens are still divested by the Judicial Sale process and the acquisition may be more cost effective than utilizing eminent domain).

There is a general consensus that establishment of a Housing Court would provide a framework to building code violations in a more timely and uniform manner than the current system.

### **Training and Education**

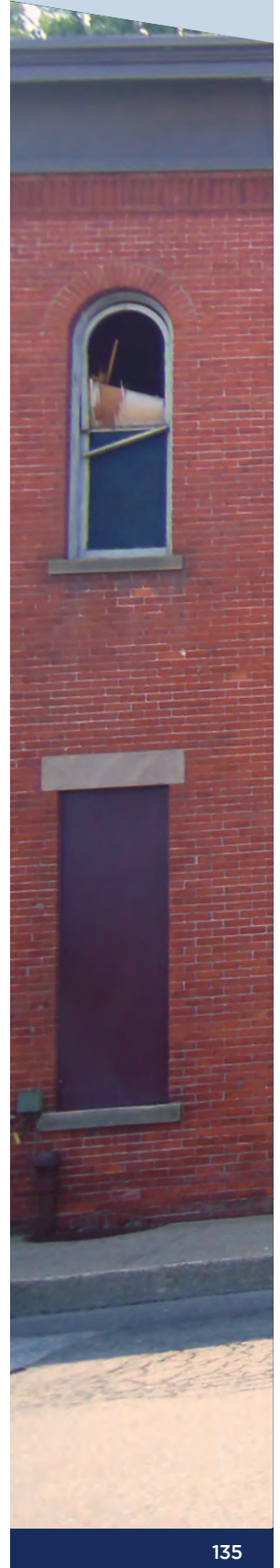
City staff members conduct seminars occasionally and on request regarding the permitting and code review and approval processes. They are more than willing to work with developers and property owners to get permits processed and plans reviewed in a timely manner.

The City of Erie has no actual planning department. Establishing one, possibly in conjunction with Economic Development, could help assure that citywide plans are implemented and updated. As an option, planning responsibilities could be outsourced to the County Planning Department under a mutual agreement.

### **Panhandling**

Panhandling in Downtown Erie was mentioned as a key factor in creating the perception that downtown is unsafe. The plethora of social service agencies and subsidized housing in downtown result in a substantial number of people panhandling for money at bus stops, business entrances, parking garage, and other locations.

The perception that downtown is unsafe becomes a reality when people stop shopping or visiting downtown. A Salt Lake City survey reported that 20% of those who avoided going downtown said it was because of aggressive panhandling. Other cities harbor similar fears ("The Panhandler Dilemma" by Alan Ehrenhalt, *Governing*, September 2015). Ehrenhalt emphasized caution to cities considering legislation to address panhandling, because legislation must not violate the rights provided to individuals under the First Amendment.





Worcester, MA recently enacted one of the nation's toughest and most comprehensive panhandling laws, outlawing panhandling within 20 feet of "any place of public assembly." One cannot ask for money after sundown or before sunrise. Keeping its law content-neutral so as not to discriminate on the basis of content, meant that the Girls Scouts, Salvation Army and local sports teams are subject to the same restrictions as a homeless person seeking money. Lowell, MA, Tampa, FL, and Muskogee, OK have passed similar anti-panhandling legislation. It will be several months at least before these pieces of legislation are fully tested in court. Erie may need to adopt similar legislation to control panhandling downtown, and should stay abreast of the progress in these communities.

As a quick alternative, the City of Erie should consider updating Article 705 Disorderly Conduct, which addresses congregating, loitering, stationing oneself on public streets for the purpose of soliciting alms, causing disturbances in buses, wandering about the streets, etc. Clearer and more succinct language concerning soliciting money should be added, and penalties should be stated very clearly. This ordinance should then be publicized, provided to social service agencies for discussion with their clients, posted at housing complexes, and otherwise made available to the applicable offenders. Then, the City should aggressively enforce this ordinance to reduce panhandling and make Downtown Erie a more visitor-friendly experience.

Also, the Police Chief should be encouraged to make sure that the beat cops discourage panhandling. Increasing the number of police officers available in the City and downtown would also be helpful in eliminating this problem.

# Appendix 1-1

## List of stakeholders interviewed or involved in meetings

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PA Department of Community &amp; Economic Development—Kim Thomas, Director, NW Regional Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie County—Kathy Dahlkemper, County Executive</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Erie—Mayor Joseph E. Sinnott; Jill Beck, Assistant to the Mayor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Erie—David Brennan, City Council President and Council Members</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Erie--Kim Green, Director—Dept. of Economic &amp; Community Development; Melanie Johnson—Assistant Director; Chris Groner—Economic Development Specialist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Erie--Matthew Puz, Jr., Zoning Officer; Andy Zimmerman, Manager of Code Enforcement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Erie--Leann Parmeter, Traffic Engineer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Altair Real Estate Services—Chuck Peters, Managing Partner, Altair Property Management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CZB—Charles Buki, City Comprehensive Plan Consultant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination Erie/Emerge 2040—Anna Frantz, Project Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Erie PA—Katrina J. Smith, Director; Bob Grice (re: brownfields)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Arts &amp; Culture—Amanda Brown-Sissen, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Community Foundation, George Epsy, Vice President community Impact, Erie Community Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority—Perry N. Wood, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie County Planning/MPO—John Morgan, Planner; Mike Baker, Planner/GIS (re: maps)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Events—John A. “Casey” Wells, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Insurance Group—Jeff Brinling, Senior VP, Corporate Services; Cheryl Mitchell, VP, Workplace Services; William J. Matrogran, VP, Corporate Services Division; David Katovich, VP, Underwriting &amp; Claims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Metropolitan Transportation Authority—Michael C. Tann, Executive Director; Amy Majczyk, Planning Manager; and CDM Smith representatives (EMTA Consultants)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Parking Authority—Raymond Massing, Executive Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Playhouse—Almitra Clerkin, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Redevelopment Authority—Scott Henry, Executive Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership—Barbara Chaffee, President/CEO; Ben Pratt, Executive Director-Growth Partnership</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Technology Council—Sean Fedorko, Executive Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Technology Incubator--Jeffrey Parnell, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie Vital Signs—Dr. James Kurre, Consultant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erie-Western PA Port Authority—Brenda A. Sandberg, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gannon University—Erika Ramalho, Director of Government &amp; Community Affairs; Dr. Linda Wagner, Vice President; Les Fetterman, Assistant Director of Campus Police and Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing And Neighborhood Development Services—Charles G. Scalise, Executive Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovation Collaborative—Beth Zimmer, Director</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kidder Wachter Architecture &amp; Design—Jeff Kidder, AIA</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knox Law Firm—Timothy S. Wachter, Esq.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McCormick Taylor—John Petulla, Highway &amp; Transportation Engineer; John M. Sada; Highway and Transportation Engineer; Jennifer B. Threats, Public Involvement Specialist; Dana E. Sklack, Communications Specialist</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PennDOT—Mark A. Nicholson, Civil Engineer Manager—Transportation; Thomas J. McClelland, Design Services Engineer; Brian S. Yedinak, Assistant District Executive—Design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pennsylvania Downtown Center—Bill Fontana, Director; Julie Fitzpatrick, Assistant Director</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performing Artists Collective Alliance—Mark Tanenbaum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preservation Erie--Melinda Meyer, Board President, Preservation Erie and Sue Moyer, Elm Street Manager, SNOOPS Neighborhood Association</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional Development Associates, Inc. (Cobblestone Hotels)—Tom Kennedy, CEO; Melani Scott, Director of Operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rick Griffith Properties—Rick Griffith, Michelle Griffith-Aresco</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tim Sedney and Gary Liebel—Owners of property on Dobbins Landing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UPMC Hamot—Ray Moluski, VP, General Services; Brian V. Iavarone, Director of Facilities, Planning &amp; Construction</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit Erie—John F. Oliver, President/CEO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voices of Independence—Shona Eakin, Executive Director</li> </ul>

# Appendix 1-2

## Public Sessions

After the presentations, participants were asked to visit one or all of five stations to discuss their concerns regarding key areas:

Key Areas Discussed	
• The Bayfront	• Arts, Culture, Dining & Entertainment
• Office, Retail and Entrepreneurs	• Residential and Lodging

Information provided by participants was summarized, presented to the EDP, and incorporated, as appropriate, into the balance of the planning process.

Key issues presented by participants include:	
• Good schools are critical to downtown redevelopment	• 900 State Street provides space and technical assistance for small businesses
• Financial assistance is required for building renovations	• A grocery store is needed
• Winter activities are needed on the Bayfront	• More parking is needed around the Mercantile Building
• Lovell Place should serve as a model for more urban living	• There are too many indigent people walking through downtown
• Parking passes are needed for downtown workers	• Variances should be granted to encourage upper floor renovations
• An overlay district or design guidelines are needed	• Funds should be provided to help restore/save historic buildings
• Historic interpretive signs should be added along trails and in key spots	• More connectivity is needed between neighborhoods, Bayfront, and downtown
• Mixed-use development is needed on the Bayfront	• A grand statement is needed along the Bayfront
• Erie needs a bike sharing program	

# Appendix 1-3

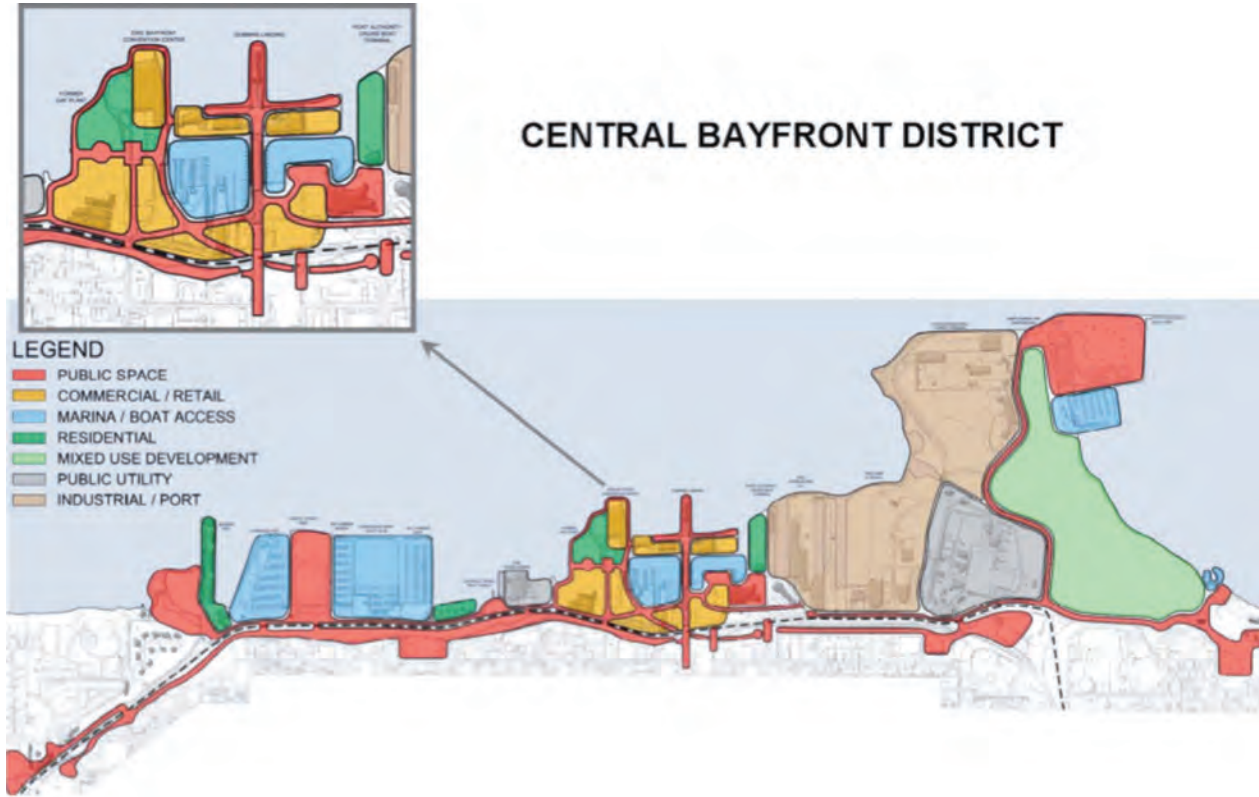
## Employee and Public Survey Results

Demographics results indicate of the 288 people responding to the survey, 60% of them were male, over half were between the ages of 36 and 55, and 65% had college or graduate degrees. Also, 36% of the respondents visit downtown daily and 32% visit one or more times per week; 88% spend less than \$50 per visit, 92% drive their own car to downtown; and only 12% used Park and Ride. The most important concerns for the future of Erie's downtown were, in order of importance:

Future Concerns	
• Adding new businesses	• Promoting existing businesses
• A greater selection of goods and services	• A downtown grocery/indoor market
• Better connectivity to the Bayfront	• Encouraging tourism
• Increased security	• Renovation of commercial properties
• More entertainment and cultural activities	• More special events
• Developing businesses on the Bayfront	• WiFi available throughout downtown
• Fishing and boating events to attract tourists	• Better traffic flow
• More accessible parking	

# Appendix 2-1

## CENTRAL BAYFRONT DISTRICT



## Appendix 2-2

### Past Plans & Studies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Erie: A Regional Vision, Peter J. Smith &amp; Company, Inc., March 2015 (This includes numerous drafts and special reports)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bayfront Parkway Study Drafts, PennDOT and McCormick Taylor, March 2015</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Erie Consolidated Plan, DECD, March 2015</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed Business Plan for Erie Land Bank, Housing Alliance of PA, John Kromer, Consultant, 2014</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County-wide Historic Resource Inventory Progress Report, Wise Preservation Planning LLC, October 2014</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background Analysis for the Downtown Master Plan Update, Peter J. Smith &amp; Company, Inc., September 2014</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie Leading Index, various editions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pennsylvania Downtown Center Regional Data Sheets, Northwest Region, August 2014</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie's Bayfront Urban Trail, Bike Erie, 2013</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EMTA Downtown Public Transportation Report, Gannett Fleming, 2013</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McAllister Place Development 2013</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harbor Place Illustrative Plan</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bayfront Place Concept Plan Report, Erie County Convention Center Authority, 2012</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market Analysis for Erie Downtown, Urban Partners, April 2012</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Erie Vision Report 2011-12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown Erie Retail Memorandum 2011</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, Urban Engineers, AECOM, and Dahlkemper Landscaping, 2010</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CultureSpark Master Plan, Creative Planning, Inc. and Decision Support Partners, May 2010</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie Waterfront Master Plan, Domokur Architects, 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie County Greenways Plan, Pashek and Associates, May 2009</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie County Comprehensive Plan—2030 Transportation Plan, Rogers &amp; Associates, Urban Engineers, KMJ Consulting, Urbitran, October 2009; County Housing Plan—GCCA, October 2008; Community Facilities &amp; Utilities Plan, GGCA, December 2003; County Natural &amp; Historic Resources Plan, GCCA, December 2003; Erie County Land Use Plan, GGCA, December 2003</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perry Square Master Plan, Burt, Hill, 2008</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie Downtown Master Plan, Kise Straw Kolodner and Urban Planners, 2007</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie Mid-Town Master Plan Charrette Summary, Kise Straw Kolodner and Urban Planners, 2007</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seaway Trail Corridor Management Plan, Peter J. Smith &amp; Company, May 2007</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown Erie Market Conditions Analysis, Urban Partners, July 2006</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Erie Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy for Center City Neighborhoods, City of Erie DECD, February 2006</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown On-Street Parking Study 2006</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bayfront Parkway Corridor Design Workshop, Glatting Jackson, January 2005</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie PA Central City Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Capital Access, September 2004</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment Report For Strategic Planning, Capital Access, April 2003</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie Civic Center Complex—Erie Entertainment District Master Plan 2002</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Towards an Economic Development Strategy for Erie, The FutureWorks Company and Regional Technology Strategies, Inc., October 16, 2001</li> </ul>	

# Appendix 5-1

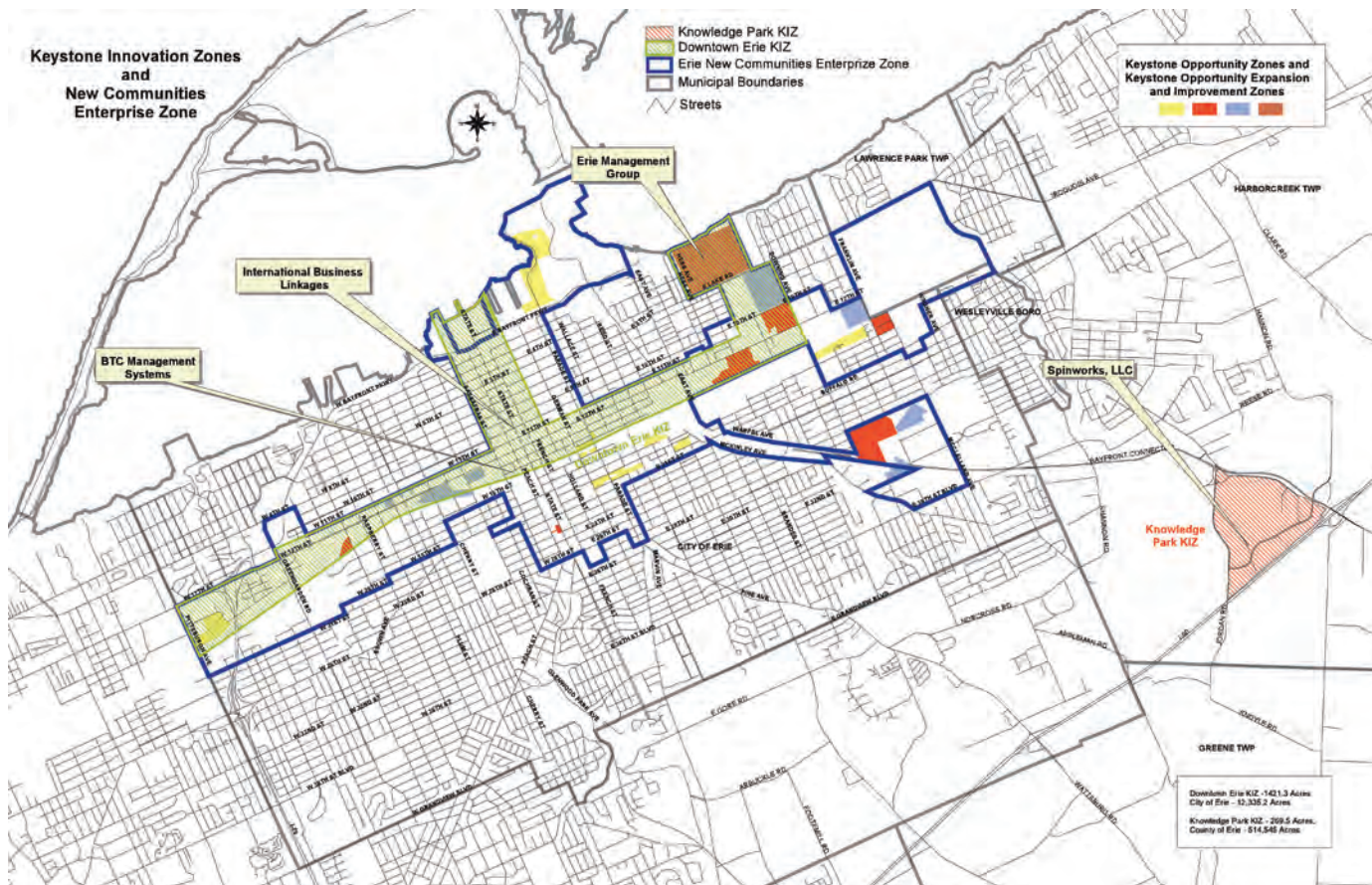
## Incentives

Existing incentives such as the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program, which allows municipalities, school districts and counties to offer tax abatements for up to ten years. Currently in Downtown Erie, tax abatements are offered on a declining scale over a ten-year period. This program can help incentivize entrepreneurs to open businesses in downtown.

Erie also has several Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZ's) in place, including one that covers all of Downtown Erie. The KIZ provides for "grant funds to community/university partnerships to generate economic and job growth around the campuses and the property around colleges and universities. Eligible partnerships receive priority review from other eligible DCED programs for projects and companies that locate in the KIZ." (DCED is the PA Department of Community and Economic Development.) Tax credits may also be available for The State and federal governments offer historic preservation tax credits for eligible projects that involve renovating historic structures. Develop Erie has an Economic Development Fund available to help businesses on State Street in Downtown Erie. The City and its partners are pursuing a City Revitalization & Improvement Zone (CRIZ) for about 130 acres of the Bayfront to encourage development of vacant land and redevelopment of existing facilities on the waterfront. The CRIZ allows state and local tax dollars collected from the approved projects to be used to pay the debt service on infrastructure projects that will stimulate economic development and create jobs. Several developers are waiting on CRIZ approval to start their projects.

The EDP has acquired funds from various sources to offer grants to small businesses and property owners in downtown for façade improvements and to purchase and install security cameras. These programs have been very successful to date. The state and federal governments have a collection of programs that can help local businesses, as well as neighborhood associations such as EDP.

## Appendix 5-1A



## Appendix 5-2

### **Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) Initiative**

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency is pleased to offer an Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) Initiative to help address the issues regarding the lack of affordable housing for low- to moderate-income workers. Throughout the country and certainly throughout Pennsylvania, homeownership is beyond the reach of core community employees, medical personnel, school employees, police and fire personnel, county workers, laborers, service industry staff, etc. Participating Employers who offer a monetary home purchase benefit to their staff, partner with PHFA to stretch their employees' home buying dollars even further. Although the employers' benefits do not have to be contingent on a PHFA mortgage, if the employee is approved for a PHFA mortgage, through a participating lender, the borrower will receive additional financial advantages, at no cost to the employer! An Employer Assisted Housing program benefits everyone--the employee, the employer and the local communities. See more at: [http://www.phfa.org/consumers/homebuyers/employer\\_assisted\\_housing](http://www.phfa.org/consumers/homebuyers/employer_assisted_housing).

# Appendix 6-1A

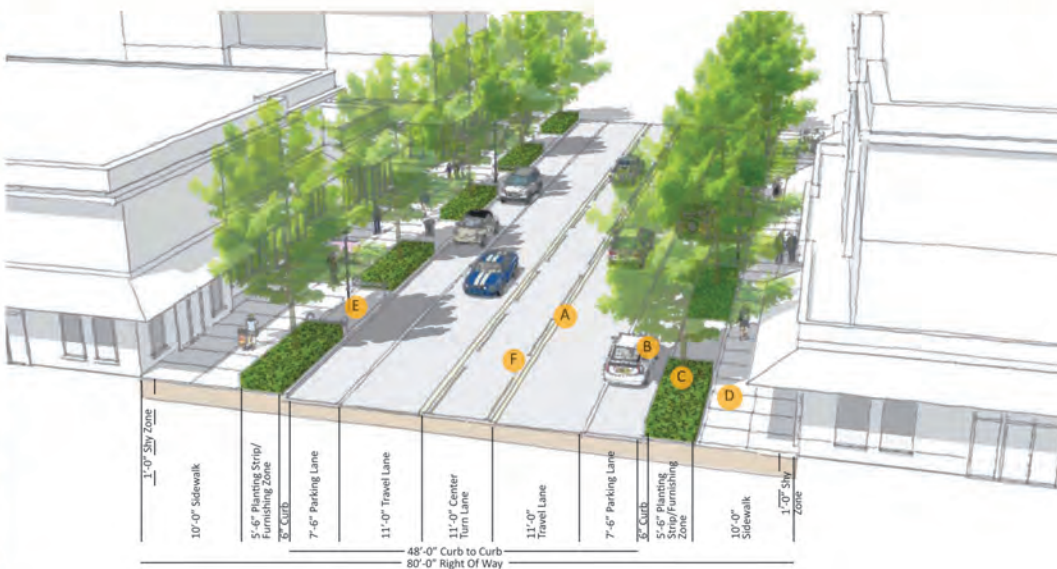
## Downtown Streetscape Plan—Urban engineers, AECOM, and Dahlkemper Landscaping

Ceremonial Street  
6th Street



Existing Conditions:

- A** Excessively wide travel lanes
- B** Lack of street trees
- C** No buffer between traffic and pedestrians

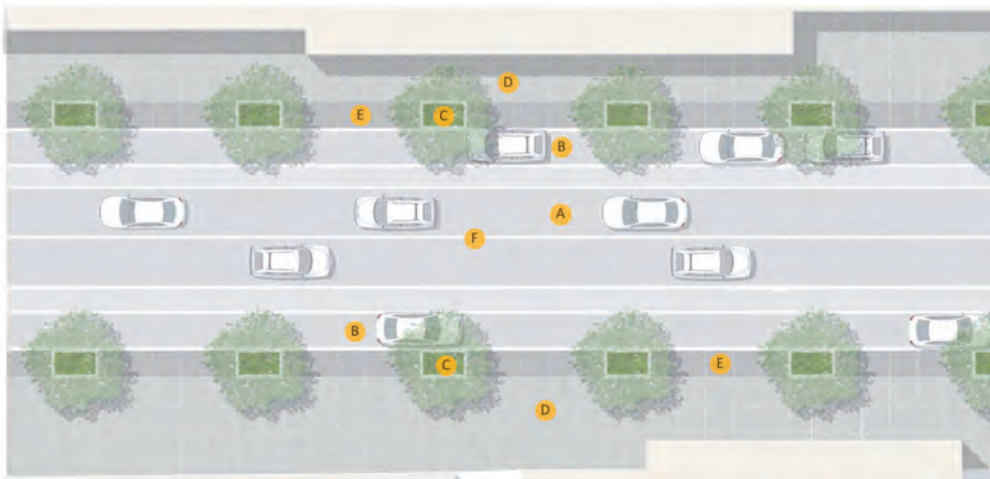


Proposed Improvements:



Proposed Improvements:

- A** Reduce travel lane widths to slow traffic speeds.
- B** On-street parking to provide easy access to retail and restaurants
- C** Canopy trees in large open planters to provide shade and comfort to the street environment
- D** Broad concrete sidewalks to facilitate multiple functions: street furnishings, outdoor dining and pedestrian access
- E** Paver or cobble furnishing zone to consolidate benches, trash receptacles, light poles, newspaper boxes, transit shelters, etc.
- F** Middle turn lane to provide a safe left turn and keep traffic lanes flowing



Eye level perspective view of streetscape



Type 2 pedestrian crossing treatment



Pin Oak



Red Maple



Pedestrian Scale Light



Type A Bench

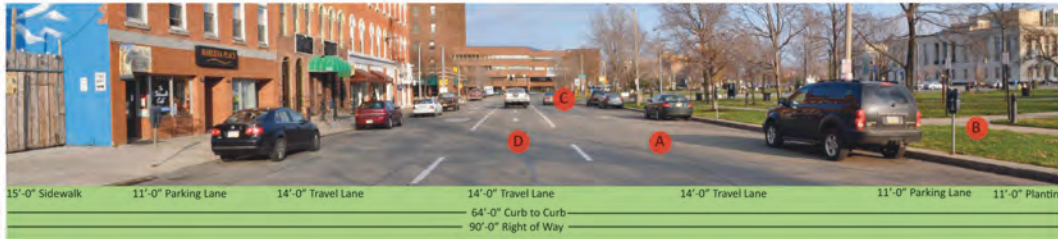


Cobblestone Furnishing Zone

# Appendix 6-1B

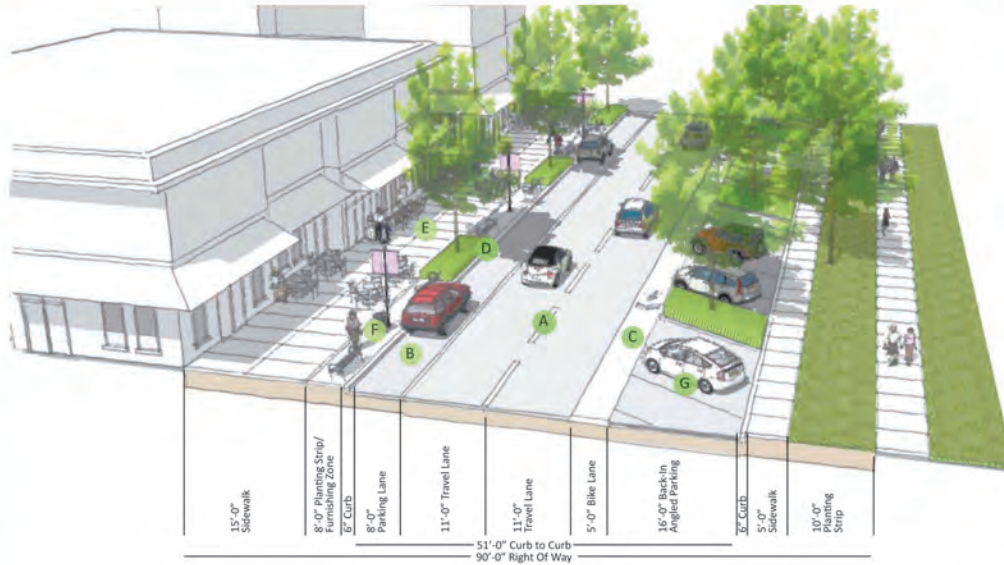
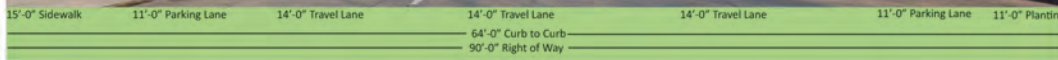
## North and South Park Row, Peachy, and French Streets

### Park Streets



Existing Conditions:

- A** Excessively wide travel lanes
- B** Lack of street trees
- C** Long pedestrian crossing distances
- D** Unnecessary amount of travel lanes



Proposed Improvements:



Proposed Improvements:

- A** Reduce number of travel lanes and reduce their width to accommodate the correct traffic flow and slow traffic speeds.
- B** On-street parking to provide easy access to retail and restaurants
- C** Bicycle lanes
- D** Canopy trees in large open planters to provide shade and comfort to the street environment
- E** Broad concrete sidewalks to facilitate multiple functions: street furnishings, outdoor dining and pedestrian access
- F** Paver or cobble furnishing zone to consolidate benches, trash receptacles, light poles, newspaper boxes, transit shelters, etc.
- G** Back-in angled parking along park edge to accommodate a higher volume of cars during park events and create a safer parking scenario by lessening vehicle and pedestrian conflict.
- H** Optional 5' plant bed in lieu of dining areas where facades are inactive. Planting bed can be utilized to lessen pavement.



Eye level perspective view of streetscape



Type 2 pedestrian crossing treatment



Honey Locust



Red Maple



Cultural Corner Street



Vehicular Scale Light



Type B Bench



Bike Lane



Cobblestone Furnishing Zone



Green Street

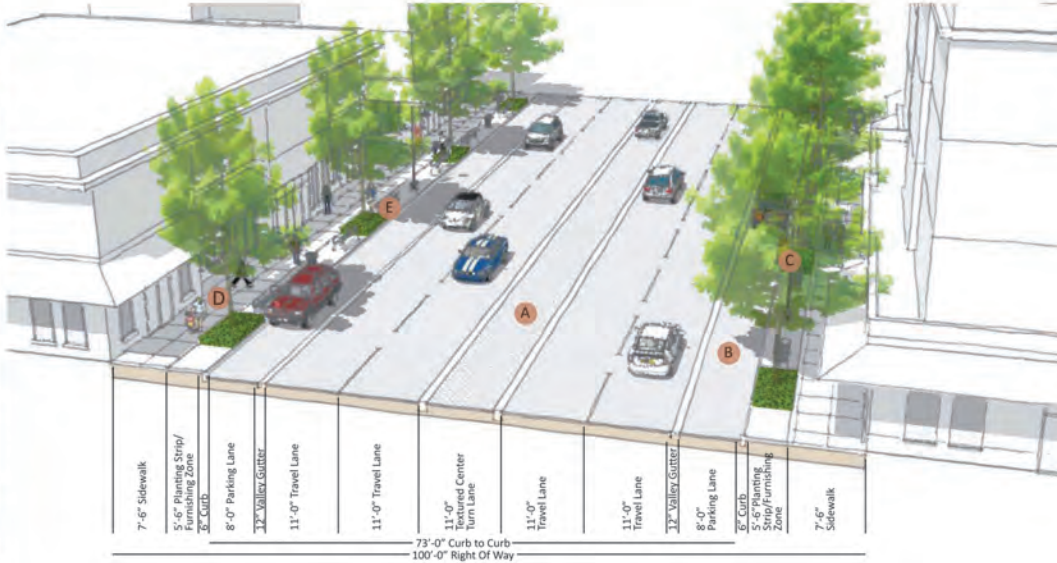
# Appendix 6-1C

## Two-Way Mobility Street



Existing Conditions:

- A** Excessively wide travel lanes
- B** Lack of street trees
- C** Long pedestrian crossing distances
- D** Excessive driveway openings

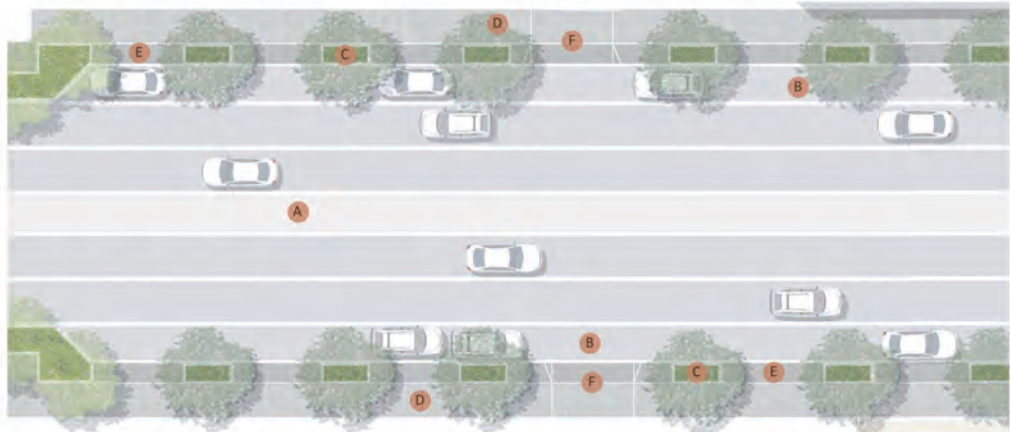


Proposed Improvements:



Proposed Improvements:

- A** Center turn lane with brick pavers to provide a tactile driving surface and slow motorists
- B** On-street parking
- C** Canopy trees in large open planters to provide shade and comfort to the street environment
- D** Broad concrete sidewalks to facilitate multiple functions: street furnishings, outdoor dining and pedestrian access
- E** Dedicated furnishing zone to consolidate benches, trash receptacles, light poles, newspaper boxes, transit shelters, etc.
- F** Combine driveways where possible, maximizing driveway widths to 24'.



Eye level perspective view of streetscape



Type 2 pedestrian crossing treatment



Sweetgum



Ginkgo



Vehicular Scale Light



Type A Bench



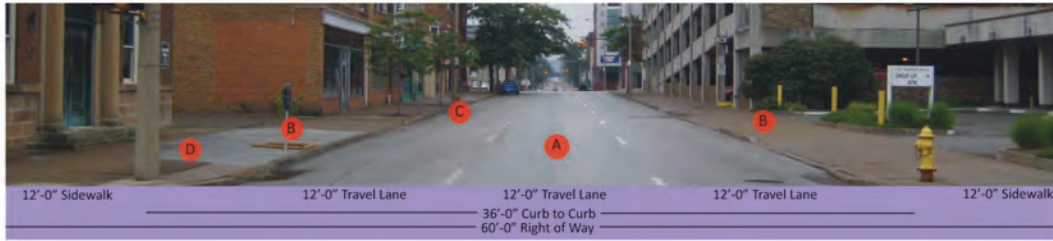
Specialty Paving Crosswalk



Cobblestone Furnishing Zone

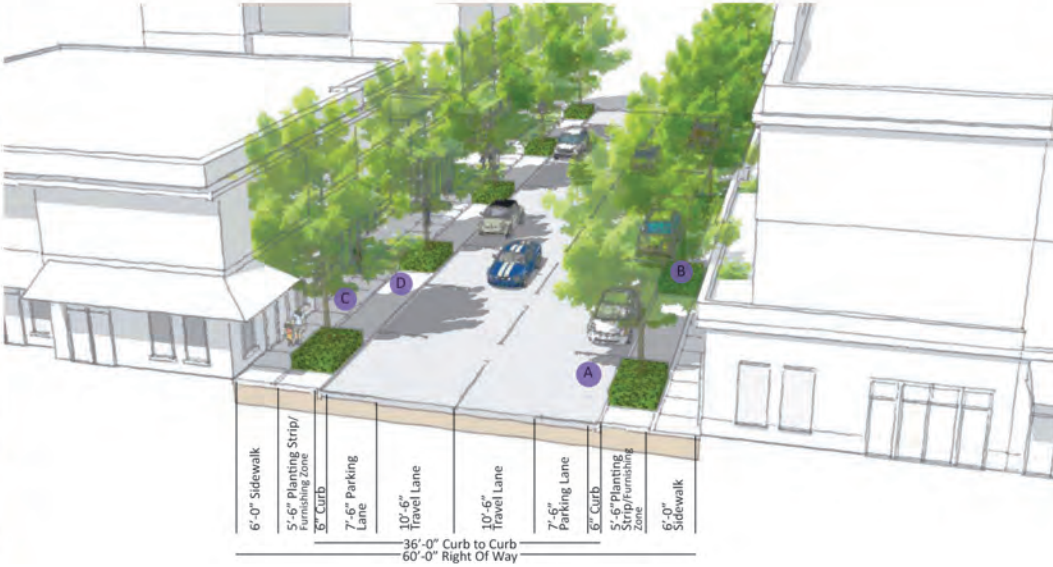
# Appendix 6-1D

## Peach and French Streets One-Way Mobility Streets



Existing Conditions:

- A** Wide travel lanes
- B** Lack of street trees
- C** Lack of on-street parking
- D** Excessive sidewalk damage



Proposed Improvements:



Proposed Improvements:

- A** On-street parking
- B** Canopy trees in planters to provide shade and comfort to the street environment
- C** Upgraded concrete sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian access
- D** Dedicated furnishing zone to consolidate benches, trash receptacles, light poles, etc.



Eye level perspective view of streetscape



Type 2 pedestrian crossing treatment



Hackberry



Cobblestone Furnishing Zone



Pedestrian Scale Light



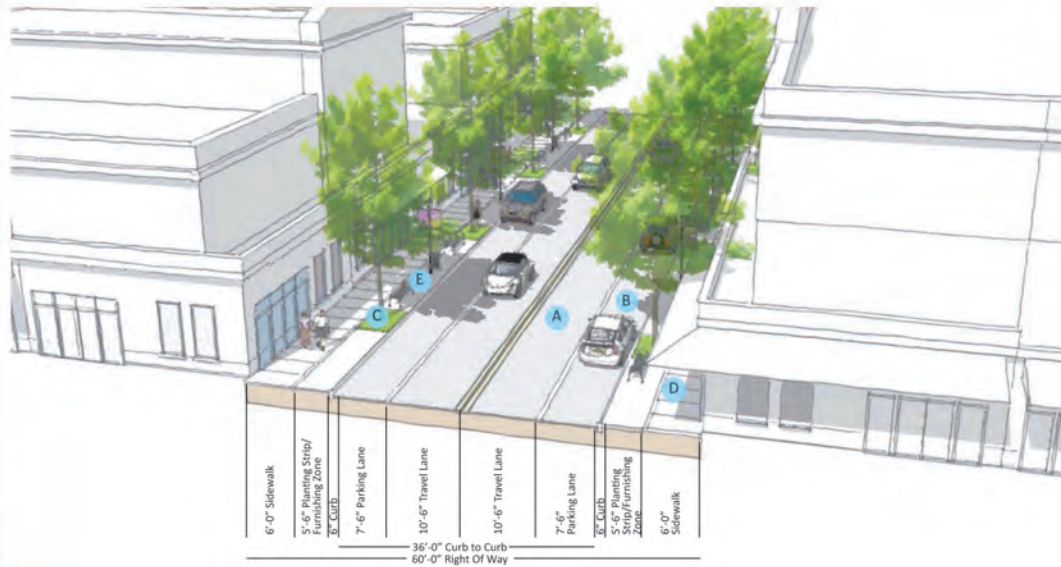
Type A Bench

# Appendix 6-1E



Existing Conditions:

- A** Excessively wide travel lanes
- B** Lack of street trees
- C** No buffer between traffic and pedestrians
- D** No on-street parking

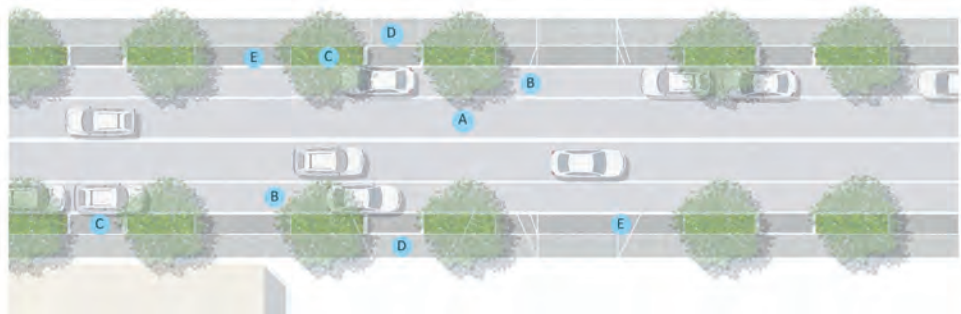


Proposed Improvements:



Proposed Improvements:

- A** Reduce travel lane widths to slow traffic speeds.
- B** On-street parking to provide easy access to retail and restaurants
- C** Canopy trees in large open planters to provide shade and comfort to the street environment
- D** Broad concrete sidewalks to facilitate multiple functions: street furnishings, outdoor dining and pedestrian access
- E** Paver or cobble furnishing zone to consolidate benches, trash receptacles, light poles, newspaper boxes, transit shelters, etc.



Eye level perspective view of streetscape



Type 3 pedestrian crossing treatment



Honey Locust



Cobblestone Furnishing Zone



Type A Bench



Pedestrian Scale Light