

March 2023

An aerial photograph of Franklin, Ohio, showing a river with a bridge, a church with a prominent green steeple, and various residential and commercial buildings. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text. The circle is bordered by a blue and white dashed line.

# Downtown Franklin master plan

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# Acknowledgments

The Downtown Master Plan is, first and foremost, a product of this community. It could not have been possible without the voice and vision of the Franklin people. **We thank everyone that joined in envisioning and planning for tomorrow's Downtown!**

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March 20, 2023*

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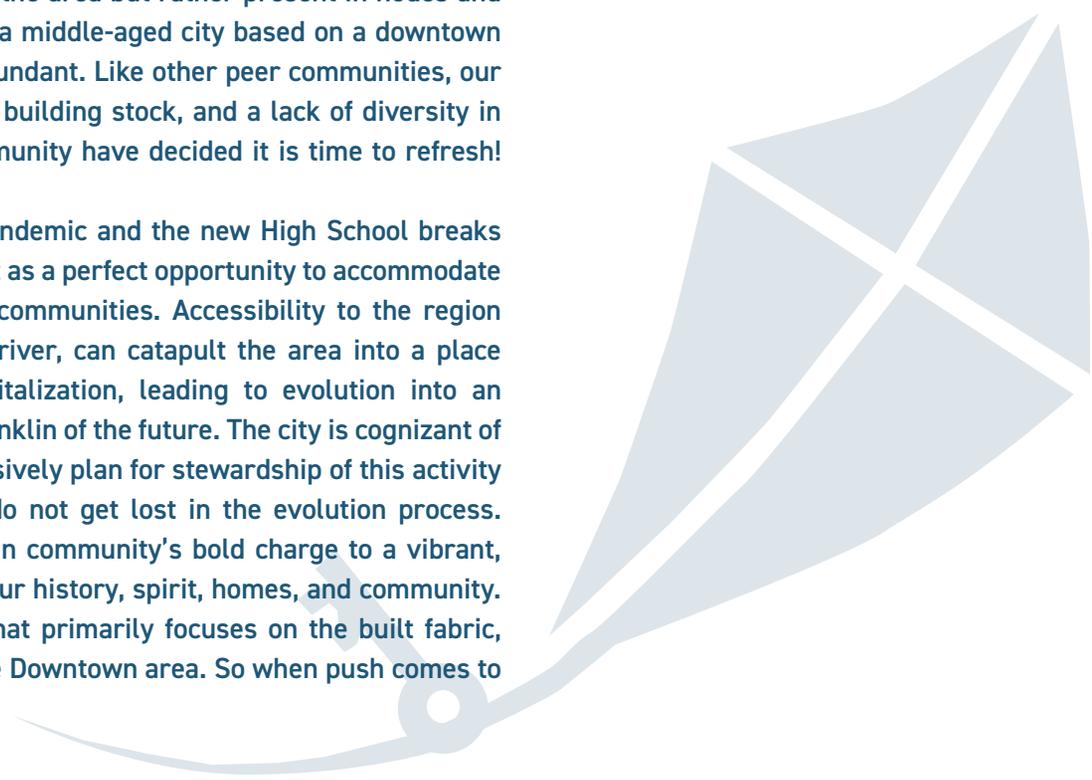
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# Executive Summary

## WHAT'S NEXT, FRANKLIN?

An outsider visiting Franklin for the first time might be surprised to discover the charm and unique history of the Downtown area. It is entirely walkable with pockets of quaint and exciting visual treats at unexpected turns, like a game of peek-a-boo with rich, historic architecture and vibrant murals. The Great Miami River lies only one block from Main Street and presents plentiful views and direct access to the highly popular Great Miami Riverway bike trail. The Downtown area hosts most of the city's civic services alongside the bulk of Franklin's commercial, office, and retail enterprises. An enthusiastic and invested community further supports these attributes. However, it also has to be noted that these strengths are not contiguous and absolute throughout the area but rather present in nodes and clusters around Downtown. It does not help that Franklin is a middle-aged city based on a downtown model that is slowly but steadily becoming outdated and redundant. Like other peer communities, our Downtown is troubled by vacancies, under-utilization, dated building stock, and a lack of diversity in dining and entertainment options. And so, the city and community have decided it is time to refresh!

In 2022, as the world moves forward from the COVID-19 pandemic and the new High School breaks ground, Downtown Franklin is fast coming under the spotlight as a perfect opportunity to accommodate recent, changing trends and desired lifestyles for modern communities. Accessibility to the region and affordable housing, along with access to the trail and river, can catapult the area into a place of tremendous potential for considerable growth and revitalization, leading to evolution into an increasingly desirable place to live, work, and play for the Franklin of the future. The city is cognizant of the forthcoming development interests and is looking to decisively plan for stewardship of this activity to ensure that Franklin's unique character and strengths do not get lost in the evolution process. This plan does just that and is the spearpoint in the Franklin community's bold charge to a vibrant, successful, and exciting future, a future that is built around our history, spirit, homes, and community. It presents various ideas and strategies for revitalization that primarily focuses on the built fabric, inter-local connections, and overall feel and experience of the Downtown area. So when push comes to shove, we are primed and ready for the future!



# Contents

Plan Context.....	2
Understanding Downtown.....	14
The Approach.....	28
Place.....	34
Connections.....	74
Experience.....	90
Take Action.....	102



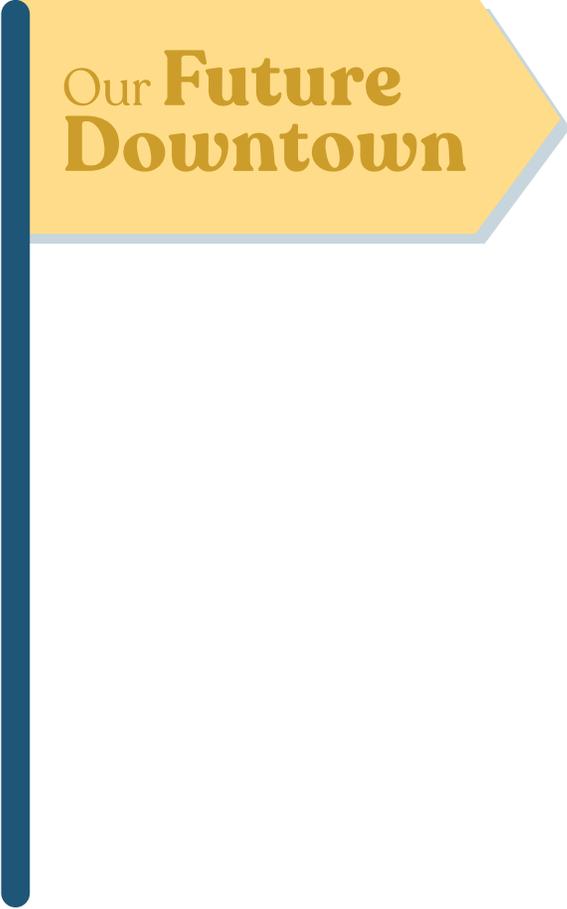
# **1 Plan Context**

# Introduction

This Downtown Master Plan establishes an aspirational vision for the future of Downtown Franklin. It addresses various aspects of the downtown fabric, such as the built environment and character, connectivity and access, and the area's experience, image, and perception. It represents the Franklin community's desire to remake Downtown into a vibrant and thriving ecosystem, with plentiful options for living, dining, shopping, working, and recreation while improving the overall experience of the area to become a safer, more comfortable, and inviting destination for families.

In 2020, the city of Franklin voted to officially establish a Downtown moratorium that would halt development and improvement projects within an identified Downtown boundary (which also serves as the focus extents of this plan). The purpose of this moratorium was to allow the city to pause and take stock of the current conditions and trends that influence growth in this area to determine the underlying issues, opportunities, and potential. This strategy allows the city and community to plan appropriately for the future by identifying innovative strategies to pursue bold changes. This Master Plan is a product of that initiative and seeks to present a daring approach to help Franklin grab hold of its opportunities and remake Downtown into a happening and exciting place.

It is important to note that the master plan only presents a vision and guidelines. Development might occur differently than it is envisioned here. The ideas and recommendations outlined in this document capture the horizon and extent of change desired by the community. **These are our BIG ideas. Our BIG dreams!**



Our **Future**  
**Downtown**

# WHAT IS THE **DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN?**

This Downtown Master Plan reflects the future vision for Downtown Franklin. It is an effort by the city and the community to build a bold vision and framework for revitalizing Downtown into a unique, attractive, and vibrant center for the city. It will help guide and direct developmental interests and steward the Downtown area's future growth and redevelopment efforts. It can also be used by residents, visitors, investors, developers, and other interest groups for increased awareness of local opportunities and to get actively involved in the future of Downtown.



# HOW WAS THE PLAN CREATED?

The community and you created the plan! This effort was initiated by the city of Franklin in late 2021 and culminated in December 2022. The city engaged the services of planning consultants McBride Dale Clarion to support the planning process, which includes a thorough analysis of the existing conditions of Downtown. The planning team also collected and dissected concerns and desires that the public voiced to help form the goals and strategic recommendations that are the crux of this plan. The process included a review of plan goals and direction at key points with the City Council, the Comprehensive Plan's Citizen's Advisory Committee, and the general public through an Open House event and an online survey.



## WE HEARD YOU THROUGH...

-  ONLINE SURVEYS
-  VISUAL PREFERENCE EXERCISES
-  COUNCIL & CAC DISCUSSIONS
-  THE OPEN HOUSE EVENT

JAN '22

### REINVENT FRANKLIN - SURVEY (380+ responses)

The Comprehensive Plan update process asked the community to provide input about key priorities for Franklin's future. The survey garnered more than 381 responses. The questionnaire asked respondents about various aspects of the city. 25% of respondents indicated that Downtown represents the image and reputation of the city, while an overwhelming 85.5% agreed that Downtown revitalization should be prioritized in Franklin's future. Many respondents also emphasized the need to improve riverfront access for walking, boating, and other recreational activities.

FEB '22

### COUNCIL RETREAT

The Downtown planning team was invited to the Council Retreat in February 2022 to present the initial findings, analysis, and preliminary recommendations for the approach and vision for Downtown. The Council participated in a review of the proposed Downtown Planning Areas and a detailed visual preference exercise to determine the density, heights, uses style, and other such aspects of desired future development.

APR '22

### CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING

The CAC meeting in April 2022 discussed the Downtown Master Plan. The presentation included a progress update and a discussion on the proposed Downtown Planning Areas. The committee also took visual preference surveys to provide further input on planning areas and potential build-out scenarios.

MAY '22

### OPEN HOUSE EVENT (40 + attendees)

Plan progress and recommendations for the different planning areas within Downtown were presented to the community at a Public Open House in May 2022. The event helped the team gather valuable input and gauge the community's response to the proposed plan recommendations. The public participated in reviewing ideas and strategies for Downtown improvements along with various visual preference exercises.

OCT '22

### COUNCIL RETREAT

The Downtown planning team was invited to another Council Retreat in October 2022 to review the findings and recommendations for the riverbank, the riverfront development, and the proposed Downtown zoning regulations.

# WHAT WE HEARD.

## MAKE DOWNTOWN A SAFE AND FUN DESTINATION.

The Franklin community enthusiastically engaged with the process and provided expansive input on needs, desires, and ideas for Downtown's future. The responses to the various surveys and visual preference exercises show that the community is primarily cohesive in the ideas, key priorities, and overarching vision for Downtown. Themes of making Downtown a destination with diverse dining options, safe and active public spaces, convenient parking and circulation, and a fun place for families resonated throughout the feedback received.

### We Like and Want

- > A FAMILY FRIENDLY DOWNTOWN
- > MORE RESTAURANTS, CAFES, & BREWERIES
- > AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT
- > A SAFER ENVIRONMENT
- > PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS
- > EXPANDED USE OF THE GREAT MIAMI RIVER AND BIKE TRAIL
- > MURALS AND PUBLIC ART
- > PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

### We Need to Address

- > VACANCY AND UNDERUTILIZATION
- > AGING NEIGHBORHOODS
- > PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE & CONNECTIVITY TO SURROUNDING AREAS
- > UNSAFE AND UNDESIRABLE ACTIVITIES SUCH AS DRUGS AND CRIME
- > GENTRIFICATION
- > ACCESSIBILITY



LET'S  
GO  
CATS

GO  
BIG  
RED



Wildcats



# PAST & CONCURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

The city of Franklin has engaged in various planning efforts in the past and in the present to evaluate and improve diverse aspects of the city's services and areas. These initiatives play a prominent role in the identity that Franklin is pursuing in the long term. They each provide insight into the conditions present in their study area and the recommended strategies to help realize Franklin's full potential.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

In 2021, the city began working with the Warren County Planning staff to update the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. The Reinvent Franklin Comprehensive Plan will address land use management, economic growth, transportation and infrastructure, parks and recreation, and city facilities. The planning process relies on public input and regular guidance from city staff and the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC is a group of community stakeholders, local business owners, and residents to represent the voice and will of the community in creating the overall vision and guiding principles for the City of Franklin.



## **MAIN STREET STREETSCAPING**

The City of Franklin has approved plans to update the water supply infrastructure layout below the Main St. corridor within the next few years. To fully utilize the time and other resources allocated to this reconfiguration, the city is also proposing to update the streetscaping of Main St. to reflect the community-identified vision established in the Downtown Master Plan. This streetscape plan will address pedestrian pathways, street trees, furniture, lights, crosswalks at intersections, and other such aspects of the pedestrian realm in detail and provide recommendations for the design and layout that can be incorporated into the future Main Street experience. A consultant group, Human Nature, is leading this project.

## **ZONING CODE UPDATE**

The city is pursuing an update to the city's Unified Development Ordinance in concurrence with the Downtown Master Plan to ensure swift and effective realization of the plan once the downtown moratorium expires. To this end, the development ordinance update has also been drafted by the team that worked on the Master Plan; this ensures that the code accurately reflects the overarching goals outlined in the plan. This code update focuses specifically on the Downtown area and the new zoning districts and standards that will implement the recommendations of this plan.

## **DOWNTOWN BUILDING ANALYSIS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING ANALYSIS**

In 2021, the city hired CT Consultants to study and evaluate the buildings' conditions in Downtown and adjacent residential neighborhoods. The study defines and presents the conditions of the buildings in the study area using nationally accepted metrics and standards for blight and underutilization. The Downtown Master Plan relies on the findings in this study to help identify development opportunities within Downtown.

## **RIVERFRONT FEASIBILITY STUDY**

The city commissioned Stantec in early 2022 to evaluate the river edge adjacent to Downtown and explore the feasibility of safe and convenient access to the water. The consultant is also tasked with presenting the capacity for development in the area between Fourth St. and Sixth St., bound by the river edge to the west and the alley between Main St. and River St. to the east. This study builds upon the general guiding principles set forth by the Downtown Master Plan and develops the capacity of the area in further detail to determine the best possible riverfront development scenarios.

# PLAN PRIORITIES

In the current context, Downtown Franklin stands poised to capture upon a variety of opportunities that can help re-brand and innovate itself into a new, improved, and exciting Downtown area. As the planning process evolved, key priorities were identified that can help create a critical mass of activity that supports retail and restaurants, fosters healthy social settings, provides a feeling of safety and security, and encourages people to live and work downtown with extensive amenities. These priorities resonate as underlying themes driving the focused recommendations offered in the following chapters.

1

## MAKE DOWNTOWN A DESTINATION

Create an environment with a variety of engaging places that encourages people to visit and spend time and money Downtown.

2

## EXPAND DINING & ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS

Incentivize new restaurants, breweries, and other similar uses Downtown to provide more dining options for the community.

3

## A FAMILY-FRIENDLY DOWNTOWN

Explore opportunities to establish Downtown as a family destination by incorporating amenities that cater to various age groups and interests.

4

## ADDRESS CRIMES AND DRUG ABUSE

Explore strategies to counter crime, drugs, and homelessness Downtown.

**5**

**HIGHLIGHT  
DOWNTOWN'S  
UNIQUENESS**

Discover and celebrate the character, culture, and unique elements that differentiate Franklin from other communities.

**6**

**PRESERVE  
LOCAL HISTORIC  
CHARACTER**

Protect the city's historic landmarks and create opportunities to highlight and celebrate local history.

**7**

**CREATE A  
SAFE & CLEAN  
ENVIRONMENT**

Improve safety and cleanliness within Downtown to present an inviting and comfortable experience for visitors and residents.

**8**

**SUPPORT &  
STRENGTHEN THE  
ECONOMY**

Provide support for local businesses and supplement the economy by attracting new investments and businesses into the area.

**9**

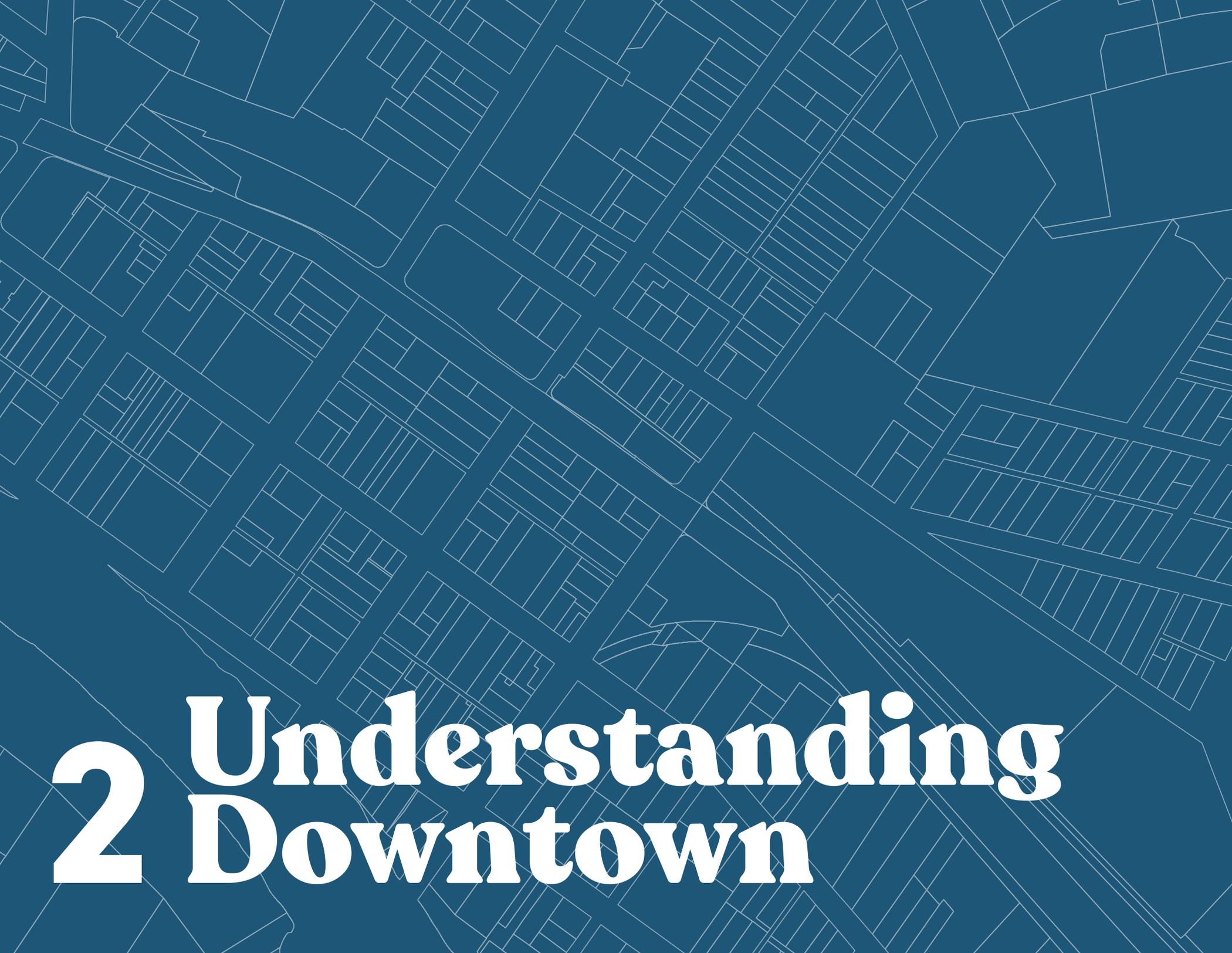
**PLAN  
REALISTICALLY**

Work towards a bold vision for the future with considerations for the practical and feasible realization of the identified goals.

**10**

**PROVIDE SAFE &  
CONVENIENT  
CIRCULATION**

Study and improve parking availability and circulation to provide convenient access Downtown for cars and pedestrians.



# **2 Understanding Downtown**

# WHAT WE ARE TODAY.

This section reflects upon the past and how that has impacted the city's current framework in Downtown Franklin. An analysis of the present conditions serves as the foundation for the adopted approach for revitalization and guides the recommendations proposed within the plan. It includes an overview of the community engagement opportunities utilized in the planning process and key highlights of what the public desires to see in Downtown. It also provides the study of existing patterns, conditions, and other factors that can influence future development in this area. Specific aspects focused on for the existing conditions analysis include developed to undeveloped lands ratio, walkability in Downtown, vehicular circulation patterns, available surface parking, current vacancy, and other factors. This section's findings help us identify the opportunities and inform the strategies in the coming chapters.



*Aerial view of Main St (looking North)*

# Our History

Our past shapes our present and future. Franklin has a rich history that molded the city into what it is today; with an emphasis on history and highlighting existing landmarks that define present day Downtown.



**1796**

Franklin was founded as a small collection of cabins along the Great Miami River.



**1805**

Franklin became home to one of the first four post offices in Warren County. The original Franklin Post Office still stands today.

**1814**

Franklin was established as a Village.



**1872**

Franklin's industries, and manufacturing began booming with Downtown's new rail line.



**1897**

One of Ohio's first electric trains began running on Franklin's Main Street, eventually running to Cincinnati and Detroit.



**1829**

The first industries were established with the completion of the Miami-Erie Canal.



**Early 1890s**

The population of the village grew exponentially during this time, as workers migrated to work in the many Paper Making factories.



**1901**

Miami Valley Chautauqua, a popular summer and tourist institution of over 60 cottages, opened on the West-side of the Great Miami River. Chautauqua made it through the Great Depression and two world wars before closing in 1968.

### 1934-1940

Feeling the pressure from the growing popularity of the passenger car, the tracks that ran down the middle of Main Street were removed. The new “modern” Main Street was part of U.S. Route 25, known as the Dixie Highway, which ran from Michigan to Florida. The Miami-Eie Canal was drained and filled for free parking.



### 1932

Lion Bridge was built.

### 1978

The former Miami-Erie Canal was officially transformed into a highway, State Route 73, connecting Oxford and Portsmouth, Ohio.



### 1960

Interstate-75 opened and replaced U.S. Route 25. The opening of Interstate-75 took the through traffic out of downtown Franklin, and the businesses and industries that relied on the highway slowing began to migrate east and away from downtown to be closer to the I-75 exits.

### 1984

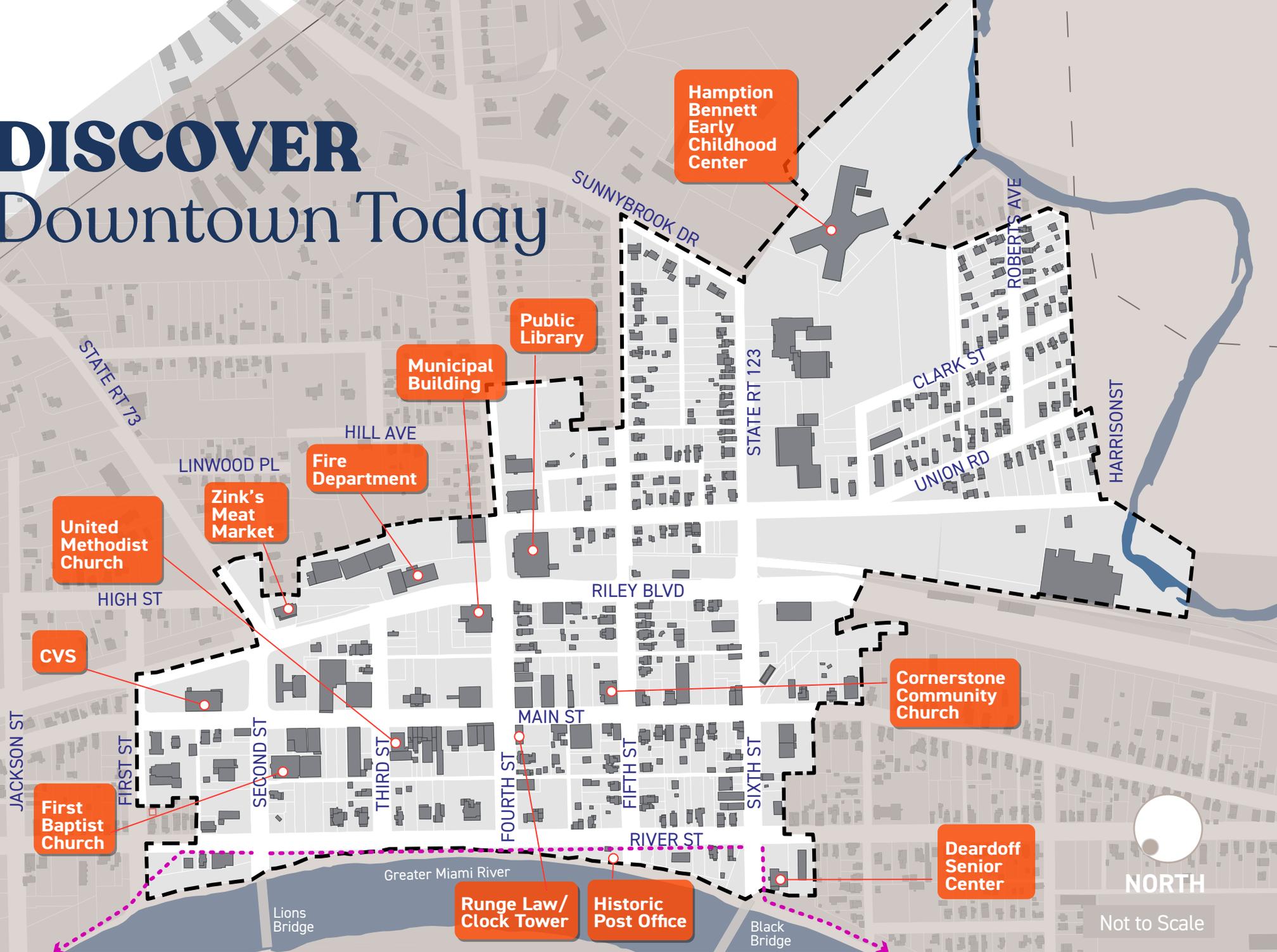
Franklin became a charter municipality.



# Downtown Franklin Master Plan

The past has led us and greatly contributed to the planning process the city and residents participated in to form this document. The plan's approach and actions will help guide Franklin's future landmarks and growth.

# DISCOVER Downtown Today





United Methodist Church



Huntington Bank Mural



Great Miami Bike Trail



Clock Tower on Main



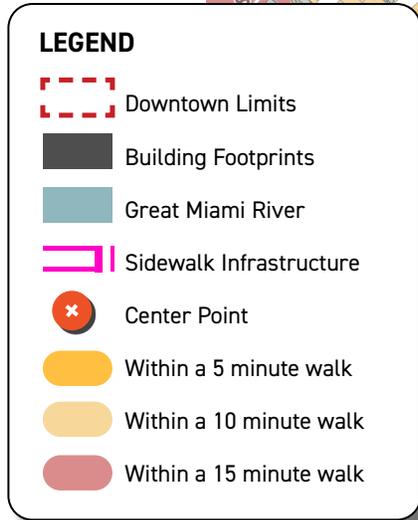
Historic Building on River



Franklin Library

## DOWNTOWN IS VERY WALKABLE!

Our study indicates that Downtown is exceptionally walkable, with most areas walkable in under 5 minutes. The existing sidewalk infrastructure map showcases the walkable radius if one starts at the Fourth St. and Main St. intersections. Most Downtown is accessible within a 5-10 minute walk, with the remaining portions accessible in a little over 10 minutes. Walkability plays a vital role in successfully functioning an active commercial and recreational core as it encourages people to get onto the streets and into stores and restaurants. The increased pedestrian activity supports local businesses and other commercial interests.



## THERE ARE STEADY VOLUMES OF TRAFFIC & CIRCULATION HERE.

Traffic primarily enters downtown at Riley Boulevard through SR-73 and SR-123 (Second St and Sixth St, respectively). These corridors support the largest daily traffic volumes with a combined AADT exceeding 30,000 vehicle trips. From here, the traffic trickles into the local street network with a marked increase in volume at the Lion Bridge. It is also important to note that Main and River Street are currently one-way, with studies underway to revert them to two-way traffic; this justifies the limited traffic volumes along these streets. Overall, vehicular flow through the downtown is consistent enough to support current demand and uses in the area.

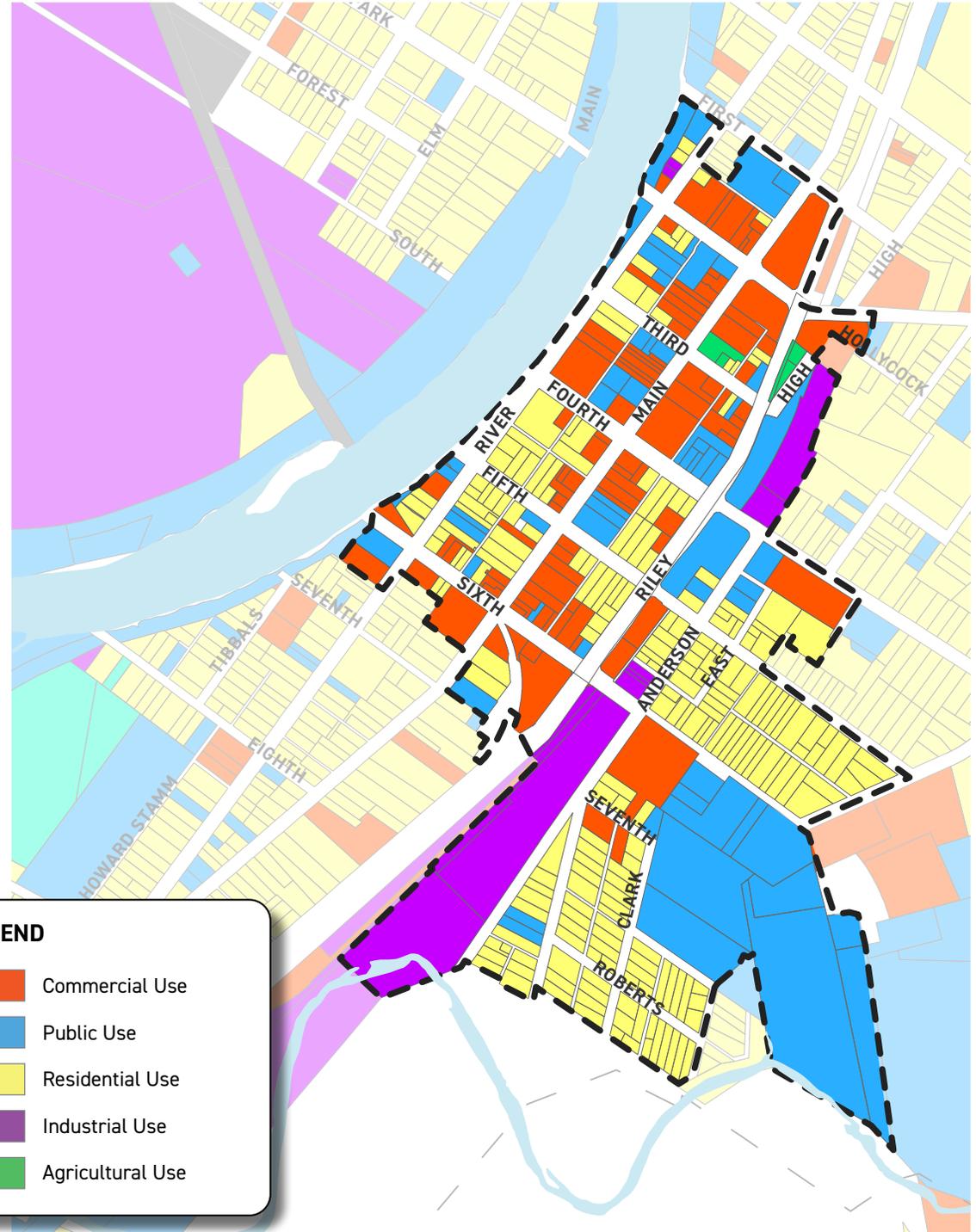


**LEGEND**

- Downtown Limits
- Building Footprints
- Great Miami River
- Major Thoroughfare
- Minor Arterials
- Collector Roads

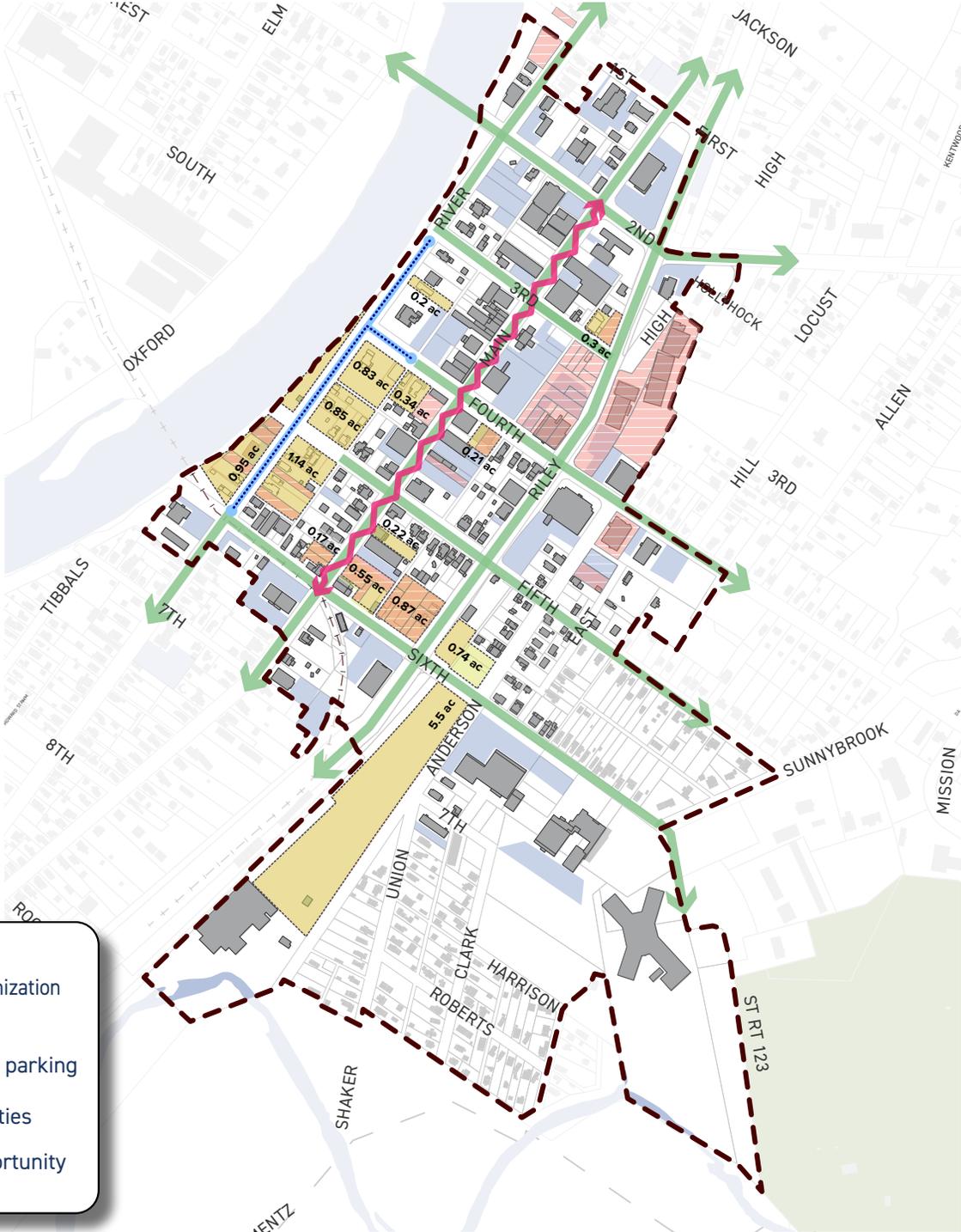
## DOWNTOWN IS CURRENTLY COMPOSED OF MOSTLY LOW INTENSITY USES.

Downtown's current land use distribution is divided between commercial, public, and residential uses. The commercial is primarily centered around Main Street. Public uses encompass civic buildings and institutions, including the high school and religious properties. The residential uses are scattered throughout Downtown and are composed of aging, low-density single-family housing. Industrial use is also prominent Downtown, although only two clusters of parcels are dedicated to this use. It includes the recently torn-down box board factory and ancillary use areas for the fire station.



# THERE IS TREMENDOUS REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL HERE.

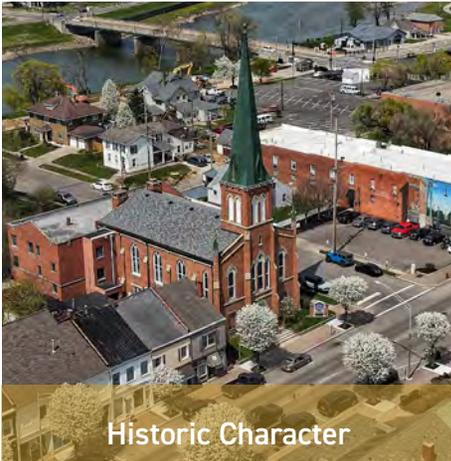
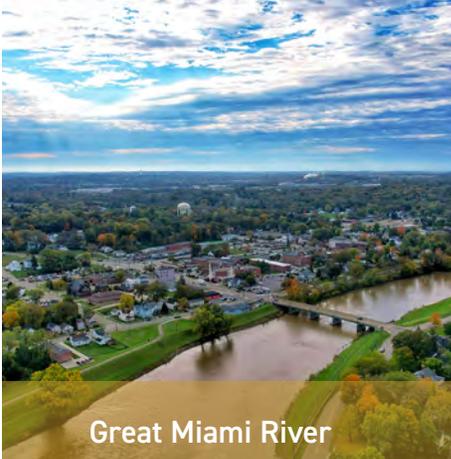
This map showcases a compilation of factors that can be used to evaluate suitability for redevelopment. It indicates the location of all city-owned parcels within the Downtown area, along with vacant and blighted properties. The Development opportunity parcels identified on the map are a combination of vacant properties, blighted lots, and numerous city-owned parcels. The map also demonstrates the surface lots designated for parking as they are a very low-intensity use that could be reconfigured for a healthier urban fabric. The findings indicate that Downtown currently offers more than 10 acres of land prime for development and infill. The ample parking also shows a need to consolidate resources and explore opportunities for the densification of uses.



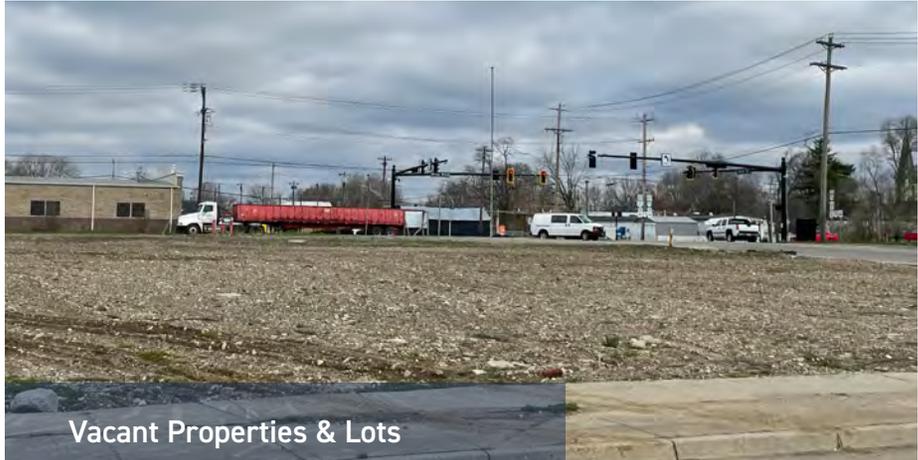
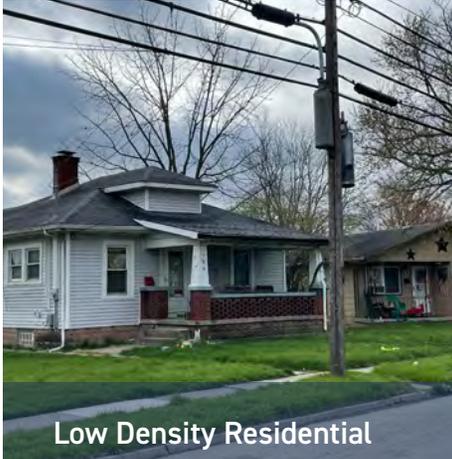
**LEGEND**

	Great Miami River		Proposed Pedestrianization of River St
	Downtown Limits		Downtown surface parking
	Building Footprints		City owned properties
	Vehicular Circulation		Development Opportunity Areas

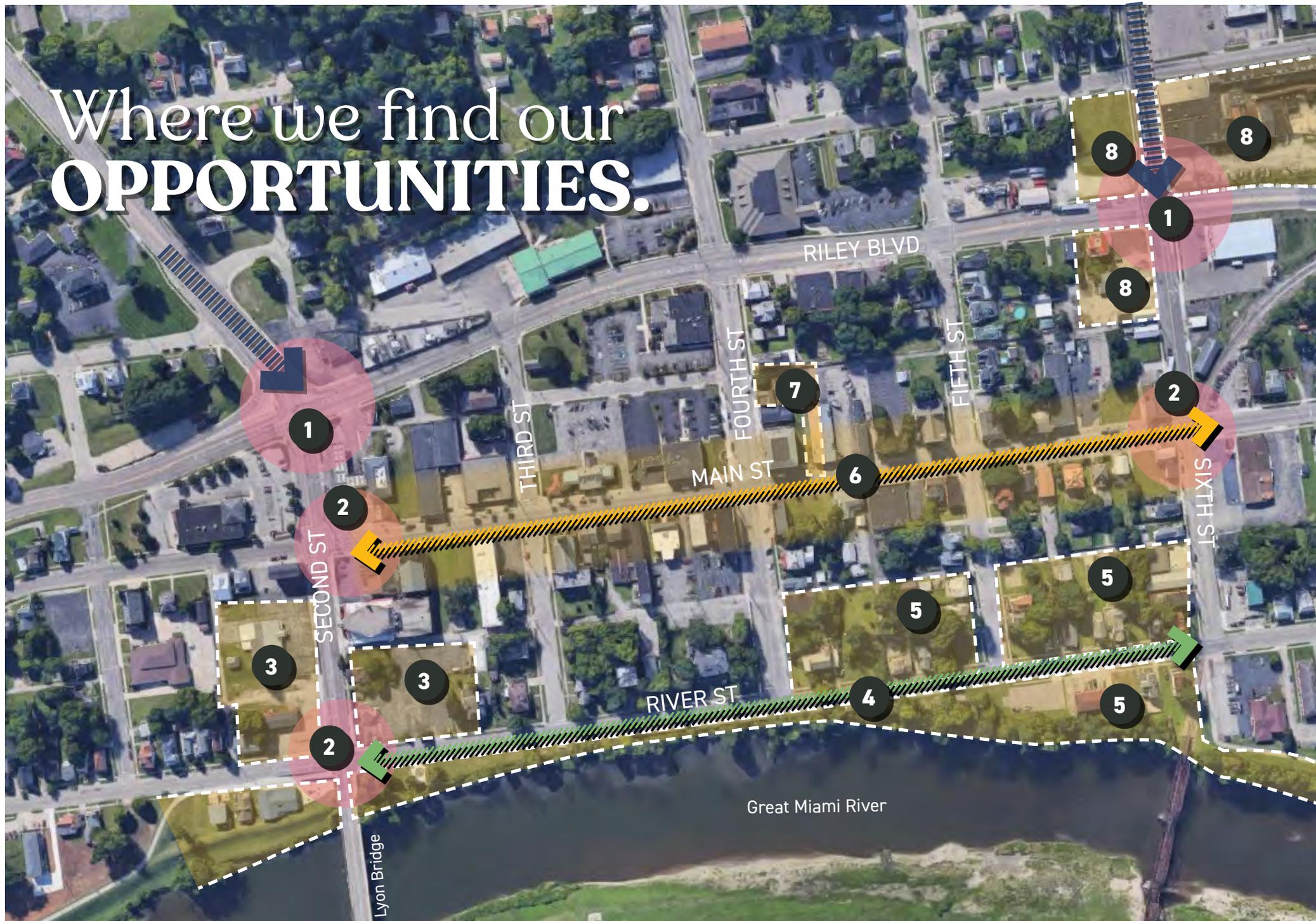
# OUR STRENGTHS



# OUR WEAKNESSES



# Where we find our OPPORTUNITIES.





## OPPORTUNITIES KEY

1

### MAJOR VEHICULAR GATEWAYS

These areas represent the face of Downtown for automobile visitors.

2

### PEDESTRIAN GATEWAYS

These areas represent key nodes into and within Downtown for pedestrians and bicyclists.

3

### DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY ON SECOND STREET

This identifies properties offering future redevelopment potential along Second Street.

4

### RECONFIGURATION OF RIVER STREET

Based on the potential of future growth along the river, the right-of-way of River Street could either be partially or completely vacated to allow for a comprehensive redevelopment of the riverfront.

5

### DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY ALONG RIVER STREET

Parcels along River Street that offer direct access and contain redevelopment potential for the future.

6

### REDEVELOPMENT & STREETSCAPING ON MAIN STREET

Specified focus for infill and reinvestment along the Main Street corridor along with proposed streetscaping to enhance user experience.

7

### FOOD TRUCK PAD SITE & OUTDOOR DINING AMENITIES

This identifies the recent investment into the food truck site and identifies potential for further development with outdoor dining and plaza facilities.

8

### DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AT SIXTH STREET & RILEY BOULEVARD

This indicates the development opportunity resulting from the vacant sites present here, along with their strategic location at a key gateway.



# **3 The Approach**

# Making Downtown HAPPEN.

The school development, demolition of the box board building, and various other events have catalyzed developmental and investment interests in Downtown Franklin and present diverse opportunities for growth and development for the community to consider. The passionate and engaged local community is enthusiastic about dreaming big and seeing the right changes happen in this area.

It is crucial to determine and achieve the envisioned future without compromising on inherent core values and character that defines Franklin. As development and investment interests grow, it is essential to define Downtown's future goals and vision, to have an approach in place to harness the tremendous potential, and to guide the growth to best suit the community's interests. This section identifies broad-stroke aspirational goals to realize a healthy and successful downtown; this is followed by the plan's recommended approach to revitalizing the Downtown and seizing opportunities while protecting the best interests of the city and people of Franklin.



# ASPIRATIONAL GOALS

## 1. Plan for an economically sound and investable Downtown

### Revitalize the Economy through :

- › Supporting local businesses through facade improvements programs & other improvement grants
- › Attracting and incentivizing new business interests
- › Promoting infill and redevelopment of existing structures
- › Encouraging contiguous commercial/office uses at street level
- › Updating and diversifying the housing stock, and promoting Downtown as an ideal place to live and work
- › Establishing entertainment districts including Community Entertainment District's (CED) and Designated Outdoor refreshment Areas (DORA).

## 2. Facilitate a safe and engaging experience

### Strengthen the experience of Downtown through :

- › Refocusing on the pedestrian experience
- › Developing the public realm by creating engaging outdoor places and activated areas
- › Providing expanded dining and entertainment options
- › Creating a safer environment through adopting an 'Eyes on the Street' strategy and installing consistent street lighting
- › Establishing clear connections (vehicular, pedestrian, and bike)
- › Providing convenient access to parking along with a comprehensive parking strategy for Downtown.

### 3. Pursue a flexible Downtown that caters to changing needs while protecting our inherent character and style

#### **Celebrate our uniqueness and spirit through:**

- › Blending the new with the existing and treasured character and history
- › Preserve and protect key historic landmarks
- › Celebrating our history and culture (through signage and other educational elements)
- › Creating attractions that can invite new people into Downtown (co-working spaces, recreation facilities, riverfront parks, etc)
- › Responding to regional and national trends in technology

### 4. Discover and grow into the 'Franklin' brand

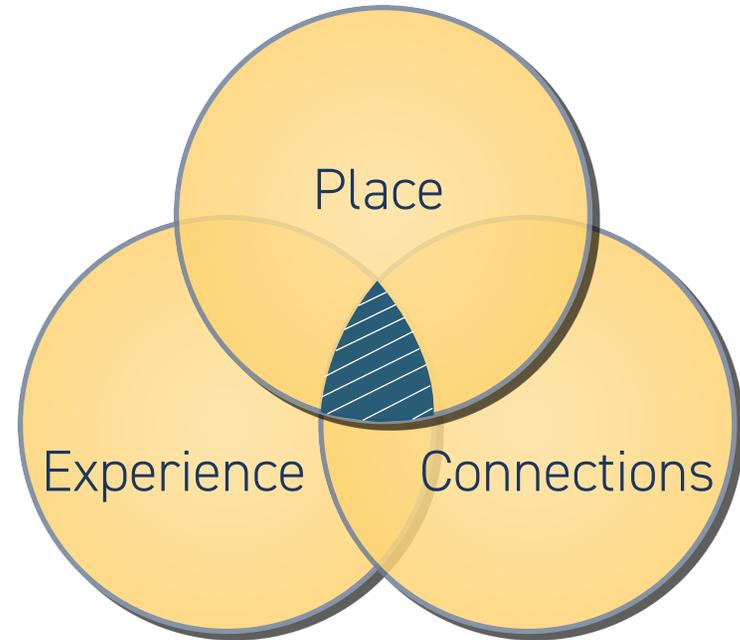
#### **Become a regional destination through :**

- › Installing distinct style of streetscapes, gateways, and branding
- › Encouraging unique experiences that invite people to visit Downtown
- › Establishing views and recreational opportunities along the riverfront
- › Making Downtown family friendly (with play spaces, interactive elements, music, and art)
- › Presenting opportunities for a live-work-play culture
- › Attracting a younger demographic to invest and settle here

# A **three** part approach.

The plan seeks to create a framework for the future of Downtown by addressing the three main components that define it: Place, Connections, and Experience. These attributes work as tangible and distinguishable factors influencing how Downtown can be used and enjoyed by the community. 'Place' denotes the physical framework that embodies the built fabric. It includes the style, character, and use of these buildings. 'Connections' is used to showcase the capacity and ease of mobility and access here, while 'Experience' is centered around the quality of the Downtown experience for residents and visitors and how it impacts their perception of the area.

Each component is addressed in the following chapters with specified objectives and action items that can help the city direct improvement efforts in the future. The plan provides detailed guidelines for 'Place' supported by the concurrent zone code update and policy recommendations for Connections and Experience.



**Finding the Perfect Balance!**



# 1. Place

The physical form of an area vastly impacts how an area is used and perceived. Here, 'Place' denotes the physical and built framework, such as the buildings Downtown. It includes the style, character, and use of these buildings.

# 2. Connections

Mobility and ease of access help encourage an area's safe and full utilization. Here, 'Connections' will focus on the Downtown's vehicular, pedestrian, and bike connections present or possible.

# 3. Experience

The impression an area creates on its users goes beyond the elements that form the total physical makeup of the area (buildings, roads, etc.) Here, 'Experience' is centered around the visual cues and efforts that contribute to a safe and pleasing experience that adds significant value to the enjoyment of Downtown.

# Place



# Planning for a **strong & cohesive downtown fabric.**

The built fabric plays the most prominent role in how residents and visitors perceive and use an area. There is much scope to improve, protect, and strengthen 'Place' in downtown Franklin. Presently, the area offers a variety of buildings and uses that primarily represent stand-alone commercial, residential and civic uses. To reinvent into a destination and to help bring energy, interest, and investment into the area, it is crucial to fill in missing gaps and create a robust and contiguous fabric with thriving uses. The analysis and feedback from the community seek to protect the local architectural style and character while focusing investment and redevelopment into aging structures, underutilized properties, and vacant lots. Growth and infill that complement the historic styles unique to Franklin while providing an expanded variety of use typologies and scales are desired. New adaptive reuse of existing historic properties is encouraged.

## **When the growth occurs, what should it look like?**

The community's general consensus is that Downtown should encourage mixed-use growth in coming years. A healthy and balanced mix of uses can help the area become economically sustainable and meet the needs of the current and future local populace. Vertical mixed-uses with commercial, retail, and entertainment-centric uses at the street level and more passive uses such as residential, office, and service on upper floors are desired.



# Places for the Future

Based on feedback from the community, the plan seeks to improve 'place' through infill and redevelopment that can bolster the existing fabric and attract new investment into the area. New and in-demand uses are encouraged. The city can strengthen the local economy by continuing to offer incentives and support to local and prospective businesses ranging from facade improvement grants to collaboration at public events. Another strategy would be to prioritize underutilized, vacant, or blighted structures for reinvestment and new uses that can bring new opportunities and elevate the downtown experience for the community. Activation at the street level with active uses and engaging facades, outdoor dining, pocket parks, plazas, public art, and other elements that can invite more users into the area is desirable. Passive uses such as residential and office can be located on upper levels. The primary objective is to strengthen the downtown area and bring interest and vitality here, and this can be achieved by promoting a live-work-play culture supported by a thriving commercial area and recreational amenities on the riverfront. Expanded housing stock that offers wide-ranging options in typologies and price points is essential to attract new residents and stabilize downtown.

The plan proposes to implement these strategies and guide future development in downtown Franklin by spatially classifying it into five unique and distinct planning areas. While mixed-use remains the primary use desired in downtown, the planning areas allow us to signify the details of development type, scale, intensity, and character that would be appropriate for the different areas within downtown. These vary based on location, existing use patterns, proximity to key landmarks, and availability of redevelopment potential.

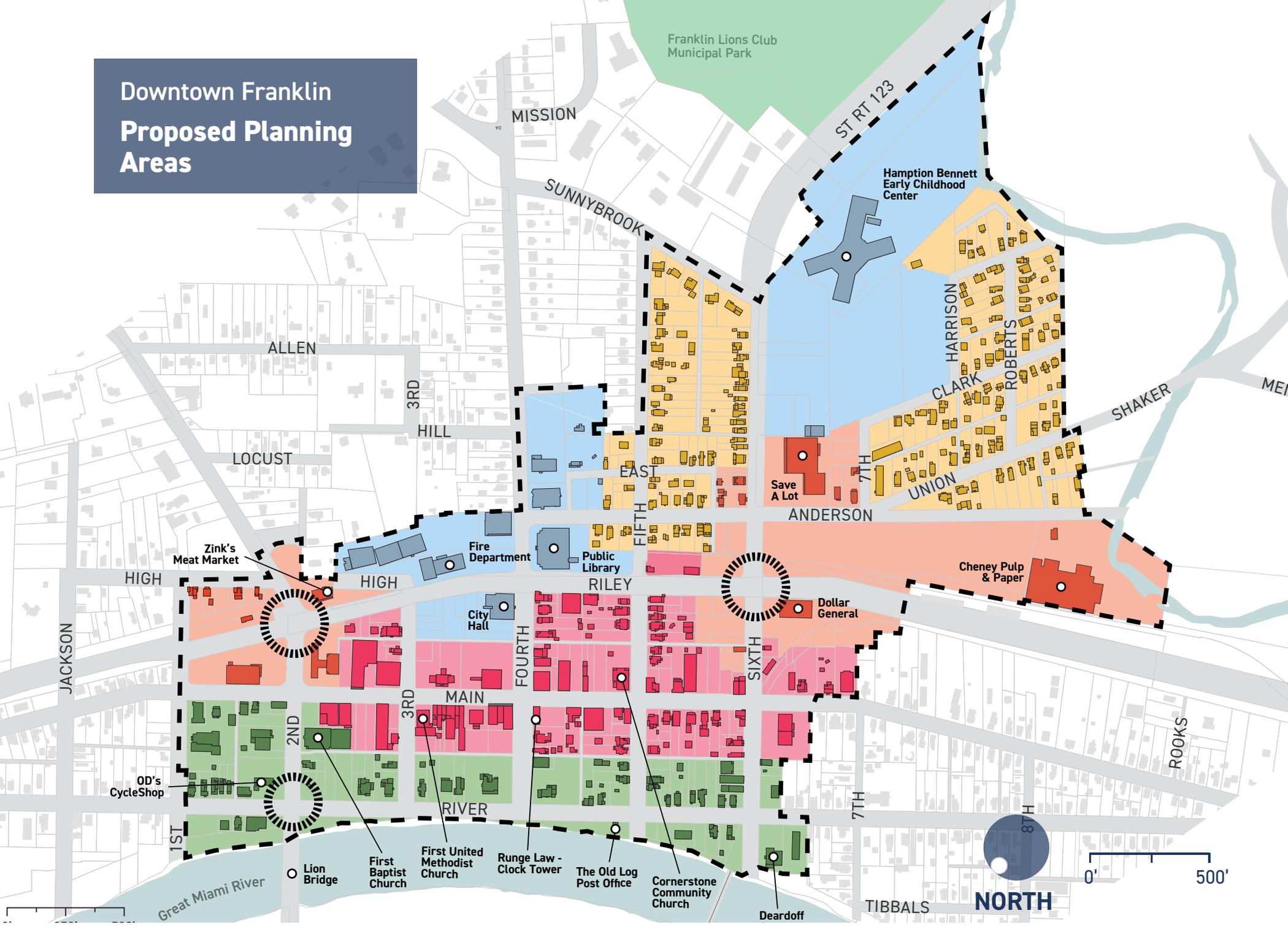
## LEGEND

-  **Downtown Core (DC-1)**
-  **Mixed Use (MU )**
-  **Riverfront Mixed Use (RMU)**
-  **Civic (CV-1 )**
-  **Transitional Neighborhood (TN-1 )**
-  **Key Gateways**

## Key Priorities for Place:

- > INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT
- > ADDRESSING BLIGHT
- > SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES
- > URBAN OPEN SPACES IN THE PUBLIC REALM
- > DIVERSE MIX OF USES
- > BLEND NEW WITH THE OLD
- > EXPAND HOUSING STOCK

# Downtown Franklin Proposed Planning Areas



# Downtown Core Planning Area

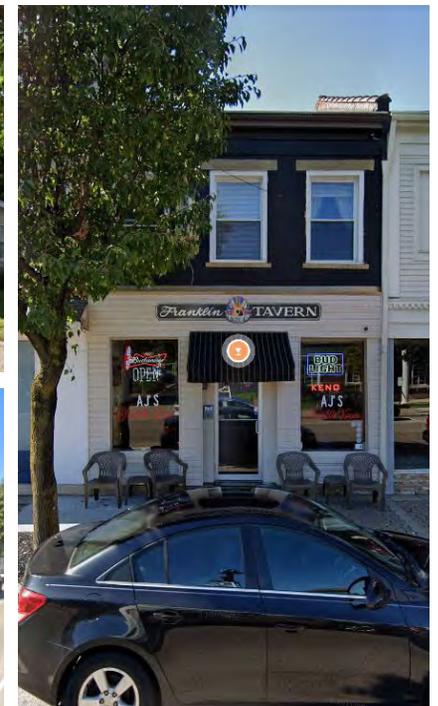


**Our Vision:** A pedestrian-focused commercial core anchored around a revitalized and thriving Main street and invites interest and investment into downtown.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Downtown Core area spans the blocks directly adjacent to Main Street and a perpendicular stretch along 6th Street. It is the core of Franklin's commercial and office activity and offers unique charm and appeal through the local historic buildings, walkable scale, and plentiful parking options. It is currently characterized by small-scale commercial and retail uses such as banks, laundry services, restaurants and taverns, and community churches.

This area is underdeveloped and contains many aging, underutilized, or vacant properties. Our study identified that the 124 existing parcels in this area combine for 20.7 acres. The average parcel size is a conservative 0.2 acres. Building density is relatively low as large, dedicated parking lots fringe most commercial building footprints. The building footprint occupies only 28% of the total area, or approximately 256,000 square feet. This indicates that the horizontal development density is relatively low for a core downtown area. Another finding demonstrates that surface parking lots take up 22% of the total land. The remaining 50% of the land area combines setbacks, front and rear yards, private driveways, and undeveloped or vacant parcels.



## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES for the Downtown Core Planning Area :

1. **Highlight and celebrate** unique historical architectural buildings
2. Encourage new development that **complements the existing character**
3. Create signage and wayfinding that highlight landmarks Downtown by **connecting a 'Culture Trail'**
4. **Encourage infill** of vacant and underutilized properties to create a more vibrant downtown. Contiguous active storefronts also **increase pedestrian safety and activity**
5. Pursue opportunities for **pop-up/ temporary plazas** or event spaces within vacant and available areas
6. Pursue **new business** interests that can spur more development in Downtown
7. Present marketing strategies and **bolster local businesses** with grants, funding support, and consistent patronage
8. Improve the **streetscaping of Main Street** to present more organized and easily accessible parking
9. Create an **enjoyable Main Street experience** that brings more people, revenue, and development interests into Downtown





# PROPOSED DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

## Building and Lot Layout

- › New development should uphold high standards of design and build quality
- › Development can employ a mix of modern and traditional styles and materials but should remain complementary to adjacent local architecture
- › High-quality building materials should be utilized on all new development, which could include a mix of brick, wood, stone, tile, decorative blocks, and cement board siding
- › New buildings should not exceed 3 stories in height
- › Structures can utilize step-backs on upper floors to provide outdoor dining overlooking Main Street
- › Front setbacks for outdoor dining/ public gathering uses can be adopted here based on case-by-case approval from the city
- › Vehicular entry and exit points should be clearly demarcated through design, signage and well maintained.

## Facades and Street Interface

- › Attractive facade designs distinguished by horizontal and vertical projections and tasteful use of cladding materials that remain visually complimentary with adjacent buildings should be encouraged here
- › Facades along street level should remain pedestrian scale in terms of aperture height and scale, and accessible entryways
- › A mix of signage, including projected, illuminated marquee, and wall-painted signs, can be encouraged here if they remain consistent with the architectural character of Main Street
- › Entryways, display windows, outdoor seating, or otherwise engaging elements should be utilized to avoid uninterrupted lengths of blank walls
- › Shade elements such as awnings and canopies can be projected over outdoor dining on sidewalks
- › Any setbacks for outdoor dining/ public gathering spaces should be paved or hardscaped with durable materials that mesh with the style and design of the public sidewalks

## Parking and Landscaping

- › Vertical 'green' walls and well-maintained shrubbery in planters can be encouraged along facades fronting Main Street
- › Surface lot parking should be oriented towards the rear of Main Street buildings, with primary access provided off the alleyways
- › Signage and directions for parking can be incorporated onto facades

### NOTE:

*Refer to the Main Street Streetscaping Plan for guidelines regarding street elements, materials and additional amenities.*

## FUTURE RECOMMENDED USES :

- **Commercial** uses of varying scales and intensities, such as banks and grocery stores, should be encouraged here. Such uses bring revenue and steady activity into this area.
  - **Retail** uses of varying scales are desired to support those who live, work or visit here. Boutique stores, ice cream vendors, and record shops help create a unique character for the area.
  - **Restaurants and Breweries** that offer various cuisines and experiences should be encouraged to support those who live, work or visit downtown.
  - **Cafes** that provide coffee, refreshments, and social meeting opportunities are desired here. Such uses can encourage more people to visit and enjoy spending time in the downtown area.
  - **Professional Offices/Services** that can bring more people downtown on a regular basis are desired. Adaptable workspaces such as co-working spaces and start-up incubators should be encouraged here.
  - **Art Gallery/ Studio** uses that support and emphasizes Franklin's cultural identity can be encouraged here.
  - **Residential** uses are a key proponent for a safe and active Downtown core. However, such uses in this area should be dedicated only to the upper floors of other uses to support active and vibrant use of street frontage.
  - **Urban plazas** that can encourage and support pedestrian activity along Main Street are desired. Outdoor seating, gathering, and celebration spaces lend character and opportunities to Downtown.
- *Primary Recommended Use*  
● *Secondary Recommended Use*



# INFILL WITH OUTDOOR DINING OPPORTUNITIES

As Downtown continues to grow, it is important to carve out spaces for outdoor gathering spaces to support a rich and balanced downtown experience. Urban plazas, parklets, food truck pads, and outdoor dining areas provide visual respite from the building fabric and presents opportunities for social gathering, engagement, and fun. They can attract all age groups and demographics and contribute positively to the perception of Downtown as a comfortable and inviting destination. Such spaces can also attract more visitors Downtown and support the local businesses and services around the area.

The Main Street corridor presently houses a few vacant properties that could be redeveloped into a plaza or pocket park spaces. The city recently established a plaza space with provisions for a food truck, a fire pit, and outdoor dining at the intersection of Fourth and Main. Other opportunities to develop plazas, mini parks, and similar initiatives supporting outdoor dining, performances, and events should be encouraged along Main Street.

## Guidelines to consider :

- › Ensure high-quality, durable materials for surfacing
- › Install pedestrian-scale lighting and plentiful seating arrangements
- › Utilize landscaping and vegetation for shade and visual appeal
- › Add interesting art installation elements to bring focus to the area
- › Provide safe and convenient access to the space through crosswalks and lit sidewalks



Food truck Pad with Dining



Urban Plaza



Alley Dining with Canopy Lights



**Please note: This image depicts only a conceptual illustration of opportunities in Downtown Franklin.**  
Image produced by: *McBride Dale Clarion*

# Mixed Use Planning Area

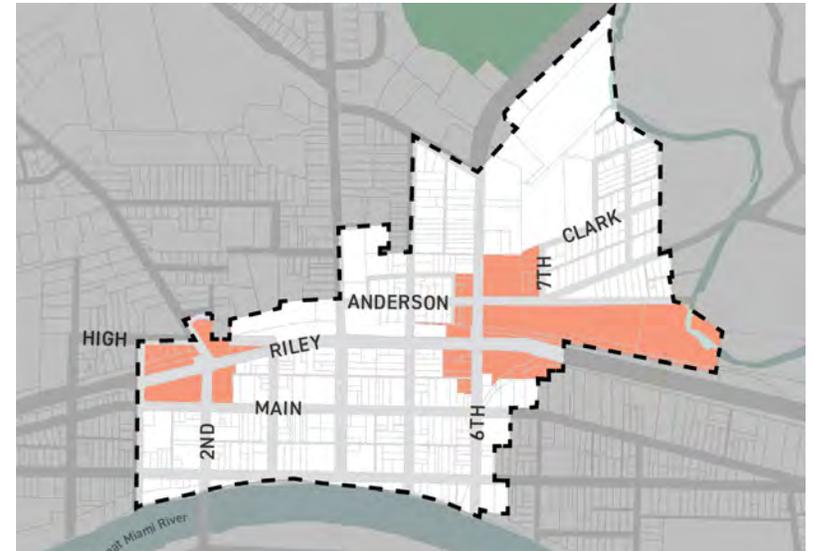


**Our Vision:** A mixed-use anchor areas that include a diverse mix of uses at an intensity to catalyze development throughout Downtown Franklin.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

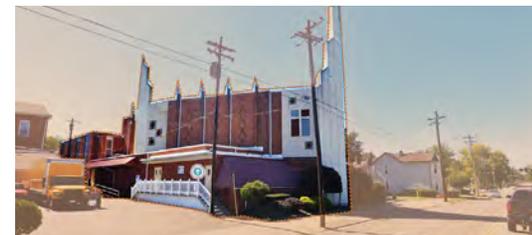
The Mixed Use planning area comprises three key nodes in Downtown Franklin. The extents include numerous identified properties at the Sixth St and Riley boulevard intersection, properties along Second St including the area up to the northern downtown extents, and a half block at the junction of River and Sixth St. These three nodes can also be identified as key gateways as they are located along high traffic corridors and prominently contribute to people's first impression of Downtown. These areas are currently composed of commercial, residential, industrial, public, and exempt uses. Although relatively developed, a considerable number of vacant and blighted properties are also located here. As important gateways, they offer tremendous opportunities for redevelopment, pedestrianization, and use intensification that can present Downtown Franklin in a new, attractive and exciting light for visitors and residents.

The Mixed-Use area should look to evolve into successful anchor spots Downtown that offer visitors and residents a variety of high-quality options for living, dining, recreation, and entertainment.



## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES for the Mixed Use Planning Area :

- 1. Incorporate Gateway elements** such as arches, monument signs, etc., to highlight the entryways into Downtown
- 2. Infill and develop** vacant lots. Greenfield development should be prioritized in this planning area
- 3. Encourage good quality, high-intensity mixed use** that can strengthen activity around Downtown fringes and bring further investment into downtown
- 4. Under-utilized properties** can be infilled with new uses that offer unique experiences, such as niche dining or boutique retail. **Adaptive Re-use** can be used to help activate empty spaces and bring people into Downtown
- 5. Pedestrian connectivity is a significant priority here.** Street furniture, buffers from the street edge, even and well-maintained sidewalks, and interesting facades can encourage and support walkability
- 6. Pursue wide, inviting sidewalks** with clear wayfinding to support parking in these areas and walking into Downtown
- 7. Discourage street front open parking lots!** They are a hindrance to active & walkable downtown streets. Orient parking in this area away from the street edge
- 8. Explore options to turn existing front parking lots into open plazas or dining spaces**





# PROPOSED DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

## Building and Lot Layout

- › Newly developed structures within this area should uphold high standards of design and build quality
- › Development can employ a mix of modern and traditional styles and materials but should remain complementary to adjacent local architecture
- › High-quality building materials should be utilized on all new development, which could include a mix of brick, wood, stone, tile, decorative blocks, and cement board siding
- › Multi-story buildings are preferred that do not exceed 75ft in height
- › Structures can provide wide setbacks for streetside dining or utilize step-backs on upper floors to offer outdoor dining overlooking roadways
- › Front setbacks of up to 15ft depth from the right of way for outdoor dining/ public gathering uses can be adopted here
- › Higher lot coverage with minimum side setbacks is encouraged in this area
- › Entryways and exits for each lot should be clearly demarcated through design and signage, and they should remain well maintained

## Facades and Street Interface

- › Interesting facade designs distinguished by horizontal and vertical projections and tasteful use of cladding materials that mesh well with adjacent buildings should be encouraged here
- › Facades along street level should remain pedestrian scale in terms of height, accessibility, and visual appeal
- › A mix of signage, including projected, illuminated marquee and wall-painted signs, can be encouraged here if they remain consistent with the architectural character of Main Street
- › Entryways, display windows, outdoor seating, or otherwise engaging elements should be utilized to avoid uninterrupted lengths of blank walls in this area
- › Shade elements such as awnings and canopies can be projected over outdoor dining areas that partially extend into the sidewalks in this area
- › Setbacks for outdoor dining/ public gathering spaces should be paved or hardscaped with durable materials that aesthetically complement the public sidewalks

## Parking and Landscaping

- › Road front surface parking lots should be discouraged in this area
- › Gateways and city-branded wayfinding should be incorporated here
- › Vertical 'green' walls and well-maintained shrubbery in planters can be established along front facades in this area

## FUTURE RECOMMENDED USES :

- **Commercial** uses of varying scales and intensities, such as grocery stores and banks, should be encouraged here. These can support residents and regional visitors.
  - **Retail** uses of varying scales are desired to support those who live, work or visit here. Boutique stores, ice cream vendors, and record shops help create a unique character for the area.
  - **Residential** uses are a key proponent for a safe and active Downtown. A variety of residential uses are appropriate in this area including townhomes, multi-family, and mixed use developments.
  - **Restaurants and Breweries** that offer various cuisines and experiences should be encouraged to support those who live, work or visit downtown.
  - **Fitness Center** and other recreational amenities that cater to residents and users in the region can be located here.
  - **Professional Offices/Services** that can bring more people downtown on a regular basis are desired. Adaptable workspaces such as co-working spaces and start-up incubators should be encouraged here.
  - **Cafes** that provide coffee, refreshments, and social meeting opportunities are desired here. Such uses can encourage more people to visit and enjoy spending time in the downtown area.
  - **Art Gallery/ Studio** uses that support and emphasizes Franklin's cultural identity can be encouraged here.
  - **Urban plazas** that can encourage and support pedestrian activity along the street fronts are desired. Outdoor seating, gathering, and celebration spaces lend character and opportunities to Downtown.
- *Primary Recommended Use*  
● *Secondary Recommended Use*

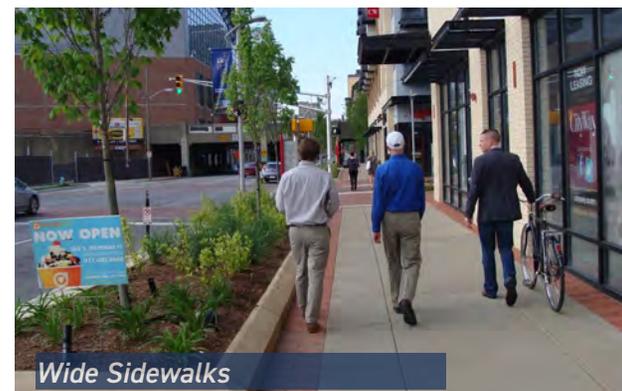
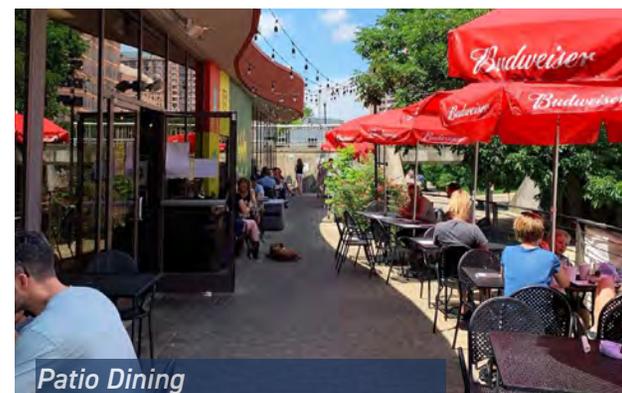


## KEY GATEWAY AT 6TH ST. & RILEY BOULEVARD

The intersection of 6th Street and Riley Boulevard is a key gateway opportunity for Downtown. This junction enjoys consistently large volumes of daily traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian. Both roadways are State Routes and serve as thoroughfares for large volumes of traffic going through Franklin. The new High School, Lion's Club Municipal Park, and many residential neighborhoods also lie along Sixth going south-east. This intersection currently offers large, vacant sites on three corners and presents a unique opportunity for Franklin to encourage development that can serve as the face of the future Downtown. This area can give visitors and passersby an impactful first impression of Downtown Franklin. High-intensity mixed use with plenty of outdoor dining, plaza spaces, and street-level activation through contiguous commercial or retail facades should be pursued here. Special attention should be paid to the pedestrian experience to encourage complete and comfortable walkability and access to Downtown.

### Guidelines to consider :

- › Ensure that buildings and facades are engaging and welcoming to pedestrians
- › Expand sidewalk width and invest in improving the pedestrian experience by incorporating street furniture, landscaping, and wayfinding amenities
- › Develop plazas or buffer spaces at the intersection corner to house gateway elements and signify a friendly and welcoming entrance into downtown
- › Invest in murals, art installations, lighting, and landscaping to enhance activity and visual appeal of the area





**Please note: This image depicts only a conceptual illustration of opportunities in Downtown Franklin.**  
Image produced by: *McBride Dale Clarion*

# Riverfront Mixed Use Planning Area

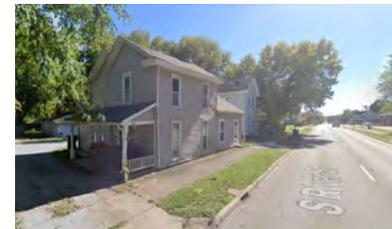


**Our Vision:** A multi-use destination along the Great Miami River that attracts people for commercial, recreation, and leisure activities.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

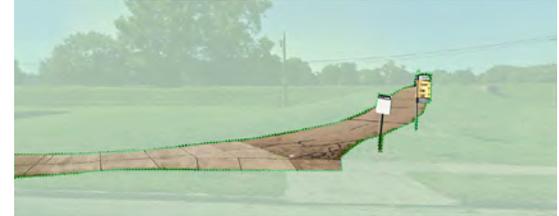
The Great Miami river is a tremendous asset to the City of Franklin. It offers beautiful views and vistas and is home to the Great Miami River trail, which is highly successful and brings many visitors directly through Downtown every year. In addition to attracting bike traffic, this riverfront area also presents numerous recreation and passive leisure opportunities from which the community can benefit.

Currently, few established attractions encourage people to visit and enjoy the Riverfront. The thick brush along the river edge provides ample shade for the bike path and obstructs clear views of the water. Another missed opportunity is the bike path that only cuts through the edge of the river without checkpoints that might guide people Downtown. Public surveys indicate that the community would like to see the Riverfront grow into a safe environment that is family-friendly and evolves from a private corridor to a public campus-like development. While Main Street should remain the commercial core of Downtown, the Riverfront can flourish as the heart of Franklin's social life with access to the water, breweries and outdoor dining overlooking the water, various public amenities, and programmed events to set Franklin apart from other communities in the region.



## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES for the Riverfront Mixed-Use Planning Area :

- 1. Incorporate Gateway elements** such as arches, monument signs, etc., to highlight the entryways into Downtown
- 2. Infill and develop** vacant lots. Greenfield development should be prioritized in this planning area
- 3. Encourage good quality, high-intensity mixed use** that can strengthen activity around Downtown fringes and bring further investment into downtown
- 4. Under-utilized properties** can be infilled with new uses that offer unique experiences, such as niche dining or boutique retail. **Adaptive Re-use** can be used to help activate empty spaces and bring people into Downtown
- 5. Pedestrian connectivity is a significant priority here.** Street furniture, buffers from the street edge, even and well-maintained sidewalks, and interesting facades can encourage and support walkability
- 6. Pursue wide, inviting sidewalks** with clear wayfinding to support parking in these areas and walking into Downtown
- 7. Discourage street front open parking lots!** They are a hindrance to active & walkable downtown streets. Orient parking in this area away from the street edge
- 8. Explore options to turn existing front parking lots into open plazas or dining spaces**





# PROPOSED DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

## Building and Lot Layout

- › Campus-style development should be prioritized here to create public areas along the riverfront and rehabilitate existing historic assets in the area.
- › Redevelopment should uphold high standards of design and build quality
- › Development can employ a mix of modern and traditional styles and materials but should remain complementary to adjacent local architecture
- › High-quality building materials should be utilized in all redevelopment efforts, which could include a mix of brick, wood, stone, tile, decorative blocks, and cement board siding
- › Buildings with stepped heights is preferred to maximize views of the riverfront with lower buildings closer to the river and taller buildings towards Main Street
- › Structures can utilize step-backs on upper floors to provide outdoor dining overlooking the river
- › Entryways and exits for each lot should be clearly demarcated through design and signage, and they should remain well maintained

## Facades and Street Interface

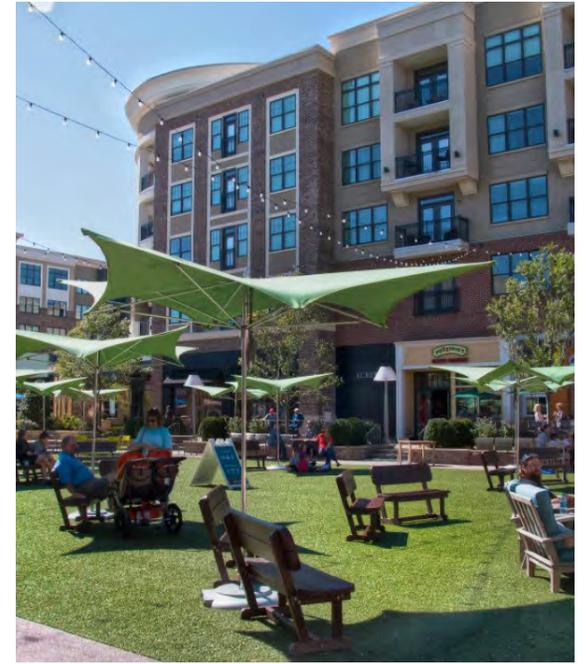
- › Interesting facade designs distinguished by horizontal and vertical projections and tasteful use of cladding materials that mesh well with adjacent buildings should be encouraged here
- › Facades along street level should remain pedestrian scale in terms of height, accessibility, and visual appeal.
- › A mix of signage, including projected, illuminated marquee and wall-painted signs, can be encouraged here if they remain consistent with the architectural character of Downtown
- › Entryways, display windows, outdoor seating, or otherwise engaging elements should be utilized to avoid uninterrupted lengths of blank walls in this area
- › Shade elements such as awnings and canopies can be projected over outdoor dining areas
- › Setbacks for outdoor dining/ public gathering spaces should be paved or hardscaped with durable materials that aesthetically complement the public sidewalks

## Parking and Landscaping

- › Surface lot parking should be oriented towards the rear of River Street buildings with primary access to the alleyways
- › Wayfinding and signage should be incorporated into the area

## FUTURE RECOMMENDED USES :

- **Restaurants and Breweries** that offer various cuisines and experiences should be encouraged to support those who live, work or visit Downtown.
  - **Commercial** uses of varying scales and intensities, such as banks and grocery stores, should be encouraged here. Such uses bring revenue and steady activity into this area.
  - **Retail** uses of varying scales are desired to support those who live, work or visit here. Boutique stores, ice cream vendors, and record shops help create a unique character for the area.
  - **Cafes** that provide coffee, refreshments, and social meeting opportunities are desired here. Such uses can encourage more people to visit and enjoy spending time in the Downtown area.
  - **Residential** uses are a key proponent for a safe and active Downtown. Residential uses in this area should be incorporated into mixed use buildings or to serve as a transition from higher intensity to lower intensity uses.
  - **Plazas and Parks** that encourage and support pedestrian activity along the riverfront is desired. Outdoor seating, gathering, interactive elements, bandstands, and celebration spaces bring opportunity and life to the riverfront.
  - **Professional Offices/Services** that can bring more people Downtown on a regular basis are desired. Adaptable workspaces such as co-working spaces and start-up incubators should be encouraged here.
  - **Art Gallery/ Studio** uses that support and emphasizes Franklin's cultural identity can be encouraged here.
- *Primary Recommended Use*  
● *Secondary Recommended Use*



# RIVERFRONT AT SIXTH & RIVER

The riverfront area is of particular interest to the community as a significant public asset with opportunities for direct access to the Great Miami Riverway. The city commissioned the riverfront redesign plan that prioritizes re-balancing this area's private and public uses to create a campus-style development that offers plenty of public spaces and can become the heart of the Downtown's social heart. The proposed vision recommends intense landscaping and reconfiguration of the river trail to present a more organic and engaging experience for the community and visitors. New development can be high intensity with multi-family residential options and should look to integrate with the public river experience. Future growth in this area should seek to align with the recommendations provided in the riverfront vision.

## Guidelines to consider :

- › Ensure high-quality, durable paving materials for surfacing
- › Install pedestrian scale lights and plenty of seating arrangements
- › Utilize landscaping and vegetation for shade and visual appeal
- › Add interesting art or installation elements to add focus to the area, such as swings and splash pads
- › Provide safe and convenient access to the space through crosswalks and lit sidewalks



Rooftop Dining



Interactive Seating/ Shade Elements



**Please note: This image depicts only a conceptual illustration of opportunities in Downtown Franklin.**  
Image produced by: *Human Nature*

## KEY GATEWAY AT 2ND ST. & RIVER ST

The intersection at Second Street and River Street is a key gateway for downtown that supports regular traffic to and from Lion's bridge and bike traffic from the riverway trail. As it is primarily local traffic leading to the residential areas around downtown, this gateway can focus on pedestrian-scale elements and urban plazas to create an inviting experience for pedestrians and bike users. Higher intensity mixed-use development interspersed with wide sidewalks, mini parks and plazas, and other public amenities are desired here. Development should capitalize on the river views by intentionally orienting buildings and public spaces to capture the existing view sheds.

### Guidelines to consider :

- › Install pedestrian scale lights and plenty of seating arrangements, and other facilities to support bike users
- › Develop existing plazas and create additional plazas to encourage street-level activation
- › Ensure high-quality, durable paving materials for surfacing
- › Utilize landscaping and vegetation for shade and visual appeal
- › Add interesting art or installation elements to add focus to the area
- › Provide safe and convenient access to the space through crosswalks and lit sidewalks





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Image produced by: *McBride Dale Clarion*

# Civic Planning Area

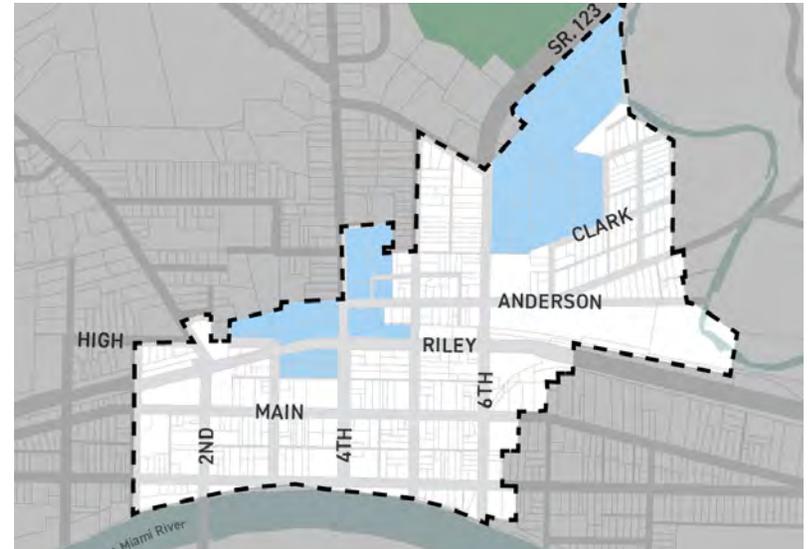


**Our Vision:** Civic destinations in Downtown that provide a variety of key services to Franklin residents and the region.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Civic planning area embodies the public resources and facilities present Downtown. The new Franklin High school, municipal building, firehouse, public library, and other such properties are included in this area. The community does not envision drastic change occurring here in the next decade. Instead, the focus lies on maintaining the public service facilities and exploring possibilities for expanding pedestrian-focused activity around them. The intent is to activate these areas for active public use through programming and infrastructure that can promote and support increased activity. This area offers much potential for supporting a thriving Main St with supplementary parking and event spillover spaces such as plazas, outdoor dining areas, etc.

The current uses bring a steady stream of workers and visitors into this area. As a focal point for many visitors to Downtown, we should encourage strong attractions and connections to encourage people to spend more time here. The new High school, in particular, is a huge opportunity to help generate more foot traffic and interest Downtown. There is much scope to effectively capitalize upon this potential by strengthening pedestrian connections within and around this area.



## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES for the Civic Planning Area :

1. Pursue opportunities to create spaces and infrastructure that can support **social events and programmed activities** within this area
2. Municipal building **parking lots can be consolidated** with alleyway parking and offered for public parking after work hours and on weekdays to encourage people to spend more time in Downtown
3. **Adapt redundant parking or vacant lots for pop-up events.** Promote the use of vacant lots for temporary parks and other activities that support the regular use of these areas and thereby discourage littering or other undesirable activities from occurring here
4. Provide **provisions for bike parking** and other conveniences to incentivize bikers on the river trail into Downtown. Strategically located parking areas and other amenities such as bike racks can ensure bike users are encouraged to enter and spend time in downtown
5. **Improve pedestrian connections** around and into Downtown. Invest in vibrant crosswalks and mending broken links in the sidewalk network to encourage regular foot traffic in the area.



# PROPOSED GUIDELINES

## Public Areas

- › Public areas should be designed to be accessible by all
- › Public services and facilities within the Downtown should be a resource for the community and a beacon to attract people to the area
- › Any redevelopment here should uphold high standards of design and build quality
- › High-quality building materials should be utilized in all redevelopment efforts, which could include a mix of brick, wood, stone, tile, decorative blocks, and cement board siding
- › The City should continue to host a variety of community events in Downtown to bring residents and non-residents into Franklin
- › Wayfinding and signage should be incorporated into the area

## Other

- › New public facilities and structures should support the the design and form of the vision for Downtown
- › New buildings should not exceed 2 stories in height



# Transition Planning Area

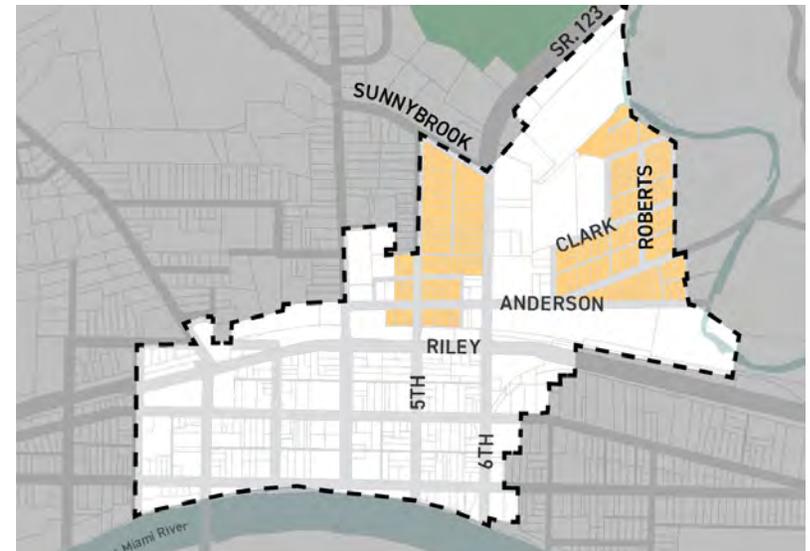


**Our Vision:** Residential developments that cater to existing Franklin residents, while also attracting new residents into the city.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Transition planning area encompasses the established residential neighborhoods within the downtown area. This area is primarily located east of Riley Boulevard along Sixth Street. Buildings here are characterized by aging single-family homes with the occasional retail or office use. The area is fairly dense as most of these narrow lots and homes are laid close together with minimal side yards. These homes are mostly small in size and often have detached garages offset to the rear of the main building. Many of these homes are also outdated and were constructed before the 1980s. The primary concerns in these neighborhoods are aging stock, dilapidated housing, unkempt properties with ill-maintained front yards, and a lack of pedestrian infrastructure to connect the neighborhoods with the rest of downtown and the city.

Community input shows there is a will to update and modernize the housing stock in the downtown area as growth occurs and these properties become available for redevelopment. An increased density of residential typologies such as townhomes and newer single-family homes are desired here.



## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES for the Transition Planning Area :

- 1. Walkability** within and around the transition residential neighborhoods should be improved. There is a need for treating **uneven pavements**, and **traffic speed control mechanisms** along neighborhood streets
- 2.** The aging housing stock in Downtown Franklin **needs to be updated and bolstered**. As new development occurs, it should focus on meeting the housing demand with **high-quality, modern residential options**
- 3. Incentives to increase standards of property maintenance and encourage property owners to invest in improving building conditions are required**
- 4. Infill and redevelopment** that focuses on updating and expanding the housing stock should be pursued in these areas. New development can include **townhomes and other low-density attached residential options** to serve a growing community



# PROPOSED GUIDELINES

## Building and Lot Layout

- › Residential redevelopment here can encourage both updating aging housing stock and new development of low-density multi-family units
- › Single-family homes, townhomes, and duplexes can be encouraged here
- › Any redevelopment here should uphold high standards of design and build quality
- › High-quality building materials should be utilized in all redevelopment efforts, which could include a mix of brick, wood, stone, tile, decorative blocks, and cement board siding
- › Single-family homes and duplexes should not exceed 2 stories in height, and townhomes should not exceed 3 stories in height

## Other

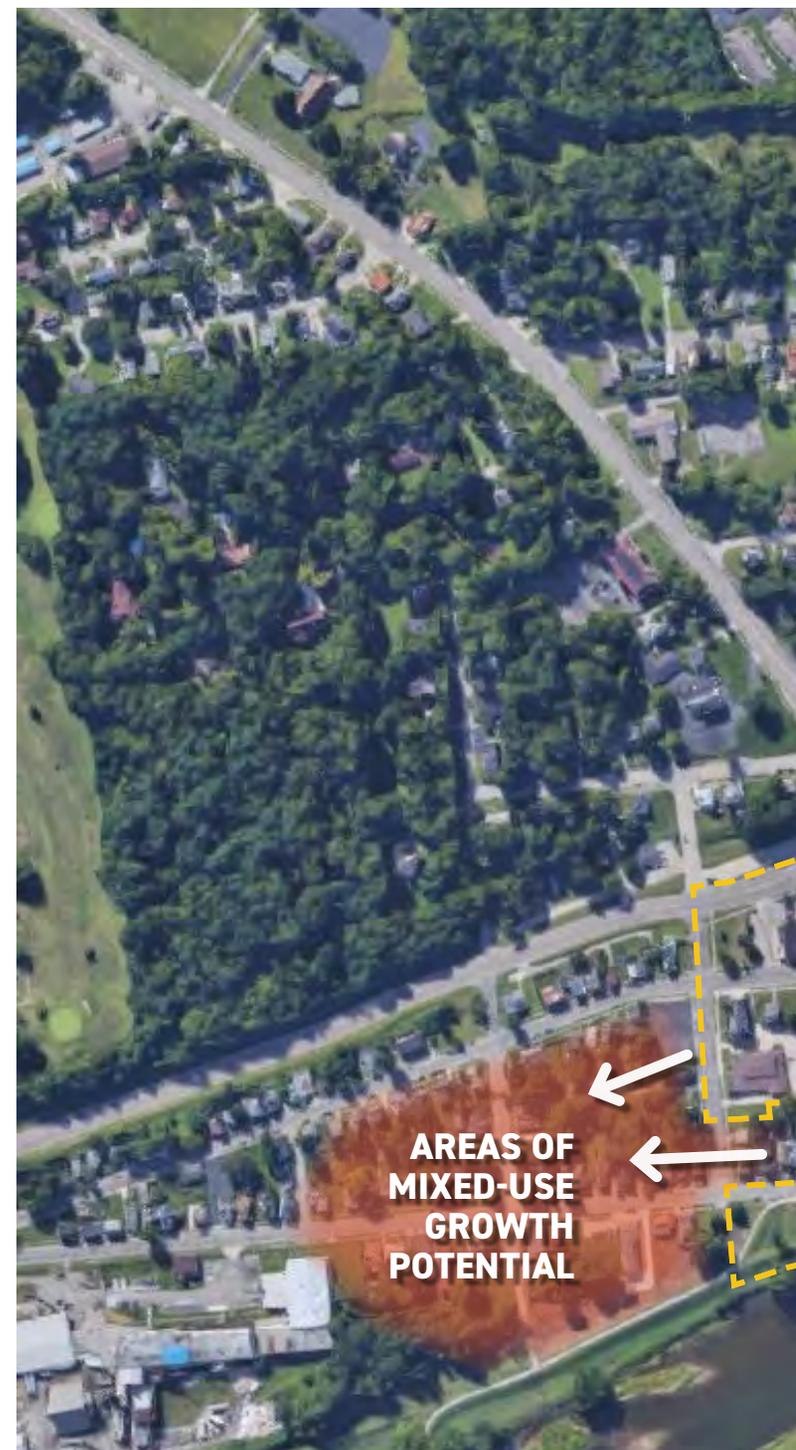
- › Sidewalks in transition neighborhoods should be well-connected and maintained
- › High standards of property maintenance and upkeep should be encouraged
- › Green space should be provided within a neighborhood, including street trees, screening, entry features, and common gathering spaces

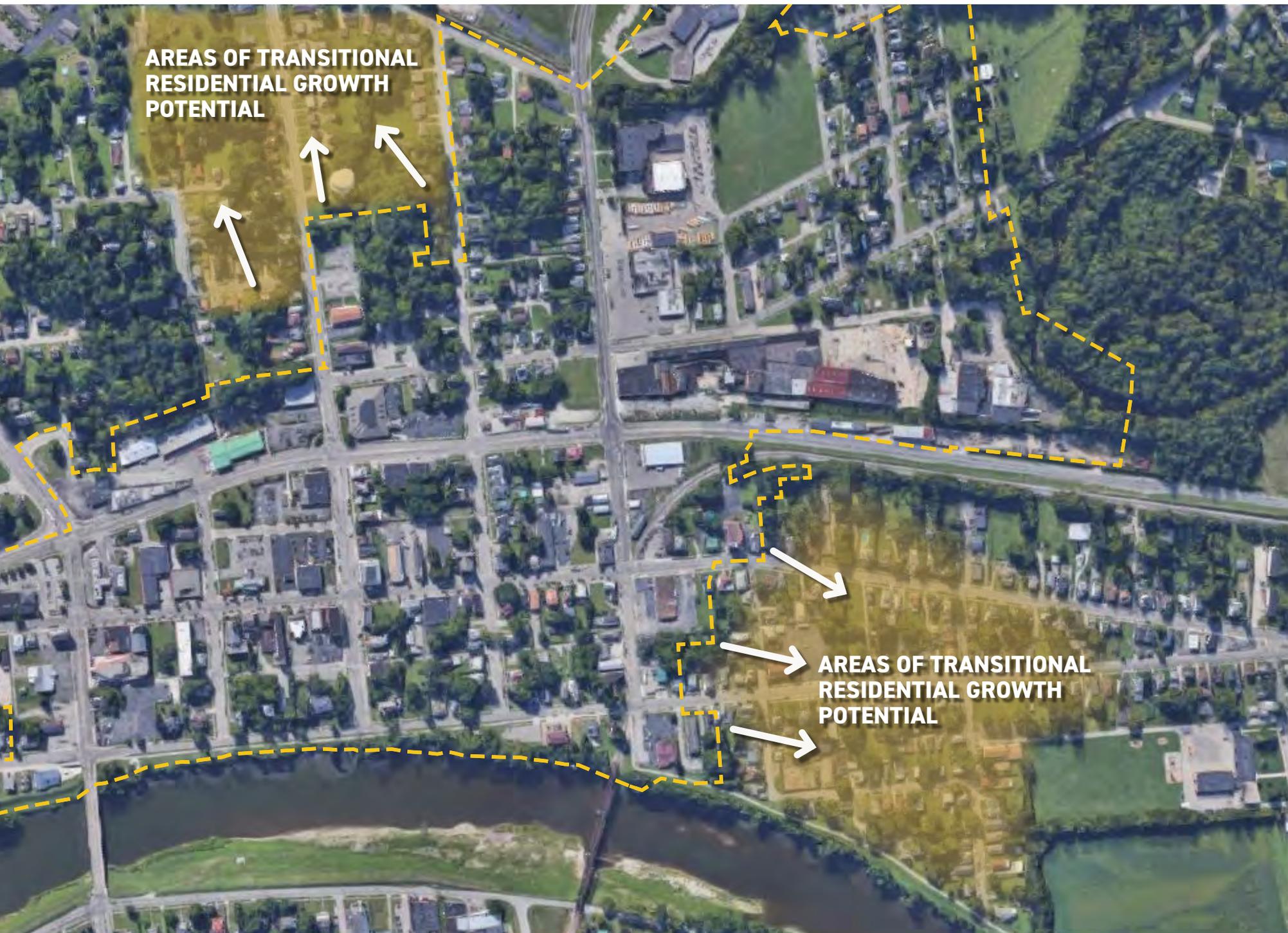


# Future Growth

The plan recognizes that development will soon expand beyond Downtown limits and other city areas. When this occurs, it is important to steward the growth to ensure that it remains complementary to the vision established here to maintain cohesiveness and ensure an organic experience for the community. Any such growth should rely primarily on the recommendations provided in the City of Franklin Comprehensive Plan. In the future, Downtown will remain the mixed-use core of Franklin, and development at the fringes can complement the established mix of uses with transitional areas of milder intensity and density. Residential growth can be encouraged to the east of Riley boulevard between Sixth Street and Fourth Street and can draw upon the guidelines established in the Transitional Planning Area. These guidelines can also be applied if redevelopment opportunities arise in the residential areas south of Sixth Street (along Main Street and Tibbals Street).

Future development potential extends north from the Downtown extent along River Street. As that edge of the Downtown is proposed to develop as Riverfront Mixed-Use with a comparatively high intensity of uses and density, it is recommended that future growth (if and when it occurs) between Second and Jackson along River Street should embody the guidelines provided in the Riverfront Mixed-Use Planning Area. As expansion continues, the city can help streamline the growth to maintain consistency with the community's needs and vision while anchoring upon a strong downtown core.





**AREAS OF TRANSITIONAL  
RESIDENTIAL GROWTH  
POTENTIAL**

**AREAS OF TRANSITIONAL  
RESIDENTIAL GROWTH  
POTENTIAL**

# Connections



# Establish a strong network of Connections.

Convenient and easily navigable networks are necessary to create comfortable and safe circulation for vehicle users, pedestrians, and bike riders. A comprehensive connectivity network can also support regional interest and encourage more visitors. Well-designed streets with strategically located wayfinding, signage, and other amenities can create a convenient user experience. Franklin Downtown offers streets designed to prioritize vehicles, with aging and limited pedestrian infrastructure. As the Downtown grows, it is essential to look into the existing infrastructure to determine a scope for improvement and potential expansions that can support changing demands for the present and future Franklin.

Connectivity and circulation that are inviting for diverse modes of travel are key components of a thriving downtown area. In the plan engagement, the community indicated a clear desire to focus on pedestrian amenities to elevate internal circulation within Downtown along with connectivity to the new High School and other neighborhoods in the city. Another important factor that was emphasized is safety in mobility for all users.

This section provides various strategies Franklin can adopt to improve internal and external connections Downtown. Key goals representing the community vision are established, and different focus areas, such as vehicular and pedestrian circulation, parking, gateway nodes, and bike infrastructure, are discussed. Recommendations for strategic investment that can aid improvement in these aspects are presented.



## Key Issues That Influence Existing Circulation:

- › AUTO-ORIENTED STREETS
- › MISSING CONNECTIONS AND OUTDATED SIDEWALK INFRASTRUCTURE
- › LIMITED MEASURES FOR PEDESTRIAN SAFETY
- › LACK OF WAYFINDING SIGNAGE
- › LACK OF BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE
- › NEGATIVE EDGES (EXPANSIVE PARKING STREET EDGES)

# Street Network

Franklin offers an extensive network of streets and alleyways that connect downtown to the rest of the city and the region. Regional traffic primarily enters the area from Interstate 75 through high-activity roadways such as Riley Blvd (SR 73), Second St., and Sixth St. (SR 123). These corridors regularly support large volumes of through traffic and are typically wider than other local streets. From here, traffic dissipates into local streets that connect downtown internally and to various other parts of the city. These streets serve residents, businesses, and visitors and support relatively lower volumes of use. These streets are predominantly two lanes with turn lanes located at high-traffic intersections. The key priority for vehicular users on these streets is to elevate safety, accessibility, and convenience within the downtown area.

While the streets currently provide plenty of support for vehicular mobility, the infrastructure for pedestrians is aging and needs improvements. Most downtown streets have existing sidewalks along one or both edges to support pedestrians and are often buffered from the curb by a narrow green buffer. However, these networks are not usually supported by additional amenities such as street trees for shade, pedestrian scale lighting, or other elements that provide a comfortable experience for pedestrians. The following section classifies the local streets based on character and intensity of use to provide recommendations for improvements that can make downtown more walkable and accessible for all.

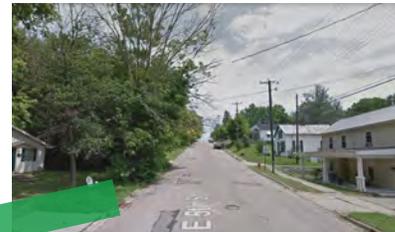
## Hierarchy Classification



High-Intensity Vehicle Corridors



Primary Connectors



Residential streets

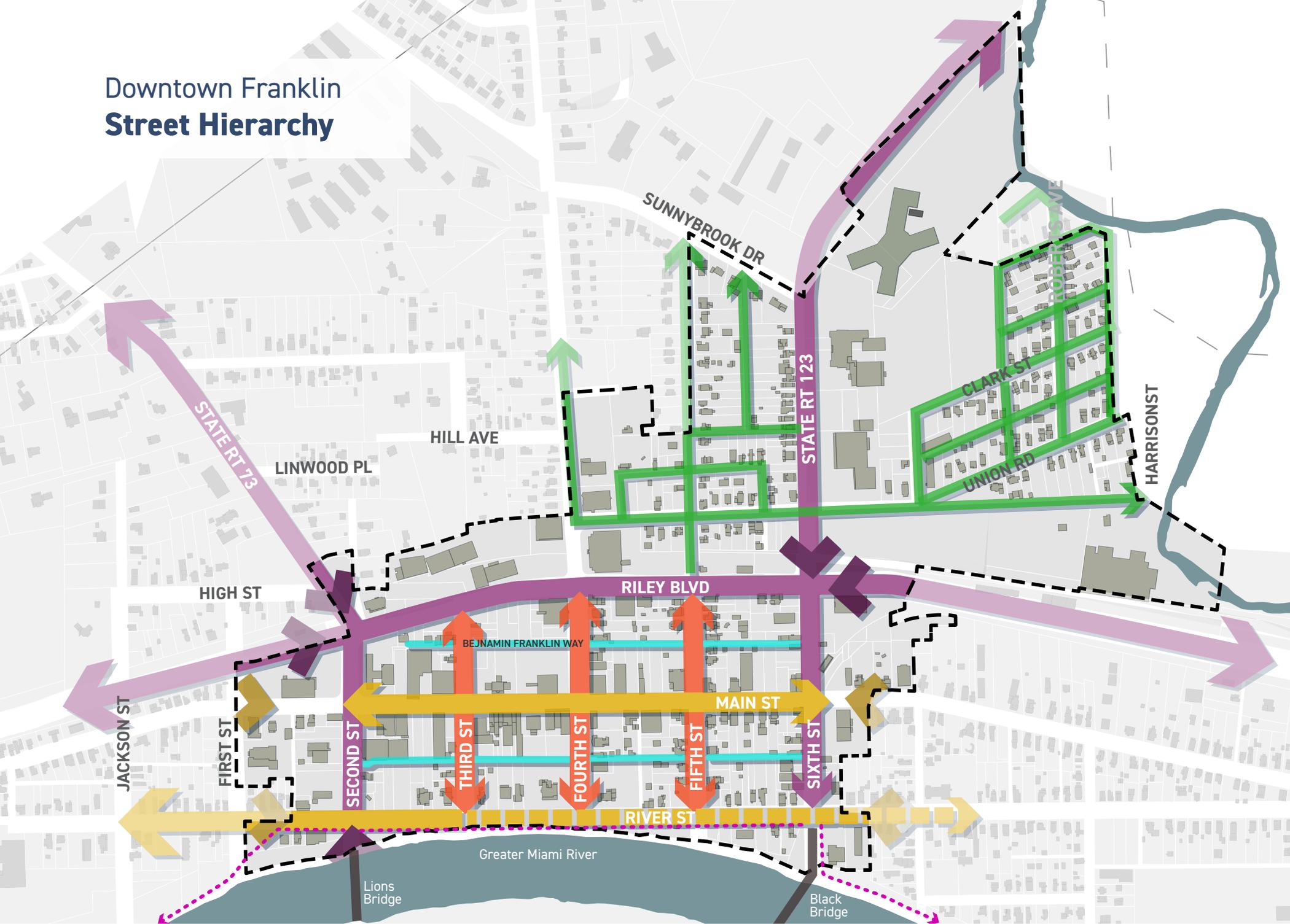


Special Interest Corridors



Alleyways

# Downtown Franklin Street Hierarchy



# STREET CHARACTER & PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

## High-Intensity Vehicle Corridors

These roads are the primary traffic corridors downtown and exceed 10,000 in annual average daily traffic vehicle counts. This heavy traffic is due mainly to the roadways' significance, as SR 73 (Riley and Second St) and SR 123 (Sixth St) connect to Interstate 75. Riley Blvd. is the widest, with four lanes and dedicated turn lanes at the larger intersections. Wide sidewalks fringe these roads along both edges for continuous pedestrian connectivity. They also serve as key gateways into the downtown area through the intersections along Riley Boulevard at Sixth Street and Second Street.

As high-traffic corridors with significant visibility and gateway value, it is vital to update the existing amenities and expand infrastructure by enhancing the visual and aesthetic quality of the corridors. Installing street lights with city branding, well-maintained landscaping, and clear signage for wayfinding with frequent pedestrian crossings can elevate the experience of these corridors for users.

## Primary Connectors

This classification represents the east-west connectors that bridge Riley Boulevard and River Street, namely Third, Fourth, and Fifth Streets. These streets support internal circulation within downtown and establish east-west connections that link the riverfront to the residential and civic uses Downtown and beyond. Plenty of street parking is available along these street edges that support the commercial uses along Main Street. While this parking is primarily parallel to the curbs, Fourth Street offers angled parking.

As wide streets with plenty of frontage along active downtown uses, there is tremendous scope to widen the sidewalks and explore opportunities to establish shared streets that can support various modes of transit. The priority here should be to update pedestrian facilities by widening the sidewalks and installing street lights, trees, and other pedestrian amenities. Vibrant and well-maintained crosswalks and pedestrian crossing lights should be installed at intersections. Retractable bollards can be employed to close the street for events temporarily.

## Residential Streets

These streets serve the residential neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown. They offer parking along the curbs on both sides and are supported by narrow sidewalk infrastructure. The pavement is heavily worn in certain areas and missing in others, creating gaps in the network and impeding contiguous circulation. Public input indicates a desire to maintain and improve these streets to control vehicular speed and make the area safer for pedestrians.

It is important to improve these streets and make them safer and more convenient by installing signage and other traffic calming measures such as speed humps. There is also a need to widen sidewalks and fill in missing gaps in the network. Landscape buffers and infrastructure to appropriately direct stormwater runoff should also be encouraged here.

## Special Interest Corridors

### Main Street

As the core commercial corridor, Main Street represents the heart of downtown Franklin. The city has proposed to invest in new water main lines below the roadway in the coming years. As part of this process, a complete redesign of Main street through improvements that include reconfiguring the roadway from one-way to two-way traffic and streetscaping with new pavement and widened sidewalks that can support outdoor dining, street furniture, and landscaping has been proposed. The city recently engaged with external consultants to help guide this process. This process also addresses the intersection with the rail crossing at Sixth Street and presents feasible methods to direct traffic and minimize accidents or confusion for drivers when two-way traffic is initiated.

Various options for pavement materials, street furniture styles and designs, and other elements for this redesign were presented to the community at the Public Open House in May 2022 for input and preferences. This feedback influenced the final recommendations provided in the Main Street Streetscape project. Improvements along the corridor should rely on this streetscape plan for development guidelines.



**Please note: This image depicts only a conceptual illustration of opportunities in Downtown Franklin.** Image produced by: *Human Nature*

## Special Interest Corridors

### River Street

River street presently supports one-way traffic (north-to-south traffic flow) and provides direct access to single-family homes and other private uses along the riverfront. The Great Miami River trail lies adjacent to the right of way and supports regular bike and pedestrian traffic. As established previously, the community envisions a more public-oriented utilization of the riverfront. It seeks a redesign that supports an area of passive recreation by building upon the river trail and introducing uses interspersed with public parks and amenities. To this end, the city is planning to reconfigure the right of way between Third Street and Sixth Street by rerouting traffic from these intersections into Main Street. A proposed alternative is to expand the alleyways to support through traffic. The new vision for this area seeks to replace a segment of River Street with a new and organic alignment of the bike trail through the envisioned campus-style development along the riverfront. This path will be accompanied by pedestrian scale lights, seating, and landscaping to present an inviting experience for visitors. The city has developed this vision for the area in collaboration with planning consultants by drawing upon the community input gathered in the downtown master plan process.



**Please note: This image depicts only a conceptual illustration of opportunities in Downtown Franklin.** Image produced by: *Human Nature*

## Alleyways

The alleys in Downtown run parallel to Main Street and helps narrow the block widths while allowing secondary access to the properties in the area. This is particularly useful for businesses along Main Street that use the alleyways for service access and parking. Many private residences also use these pathways to drive into their properties. However, it is important to note that the alleyways offer much potential for active use that contributes to a more efficient and full downtown experience.

Businesses such as restaurants and bars can offer outdoor dining facilities and shared parking amenities to the rear of their properties so they can be accessed off the alleys. New surfacing or paving can elevate these paths' usability and make them more usable for pedestrians and vehicles. Installation of new lighting and landscaping, along with regular upkeep efforts, can integrate these paths into the existing street network and present expanded opportunities for development. Signage that marks entryways into these paths can help establish the identity of these alleyways and promote their use. Based on future growth patterns and the community's evolving needs, these alleyways can even be designated for pedestrian use, vehicular use, service access, or dedicated ride-share pick-up and drop-off.



# GATEWAYS

Traffic patterns indicate a regular and steady inflow of vehicles into the downtown area. Currently, no distinguishing markers signify or celebrate the entrance for visitors. Establishing gateway elements that can facilitate a strong and attractive impression for those entering the area is important. Potential access locations for highlighting gateways include the intersections on Riley Boulevard at Sixth Street and Second Street and the potential for another smaller-scale gateway at the intersection of Second Street and River Street. While the gateways along Riley Boulevard signify heavy vehicle traffic and should utilize highly visible and prominent elements like street arches and monument signage, the River Street intersection represents the entry point for bike traffic on the Great Miami River trail and can be highlighted using pedestrian scale signage that incorporates the Franklin logo and brand. All three nodes have been identified for special focus in the planning areas and should be supported by the considerations listed here to create a strong image that visitors can associate with downtown Franklin.

## Considerations for Gateways :

- › Gateway elements should incorporate the Franklin logo and colors to emphasize and solidify the impression of Downtown on visitors
- › The city is planning another gateway on Sixth Street closer to Interstate 75. Care should be taken to ensure consistency between the style and design utilized for all gateways in the city
- › The community prefers street arches and traditional monument signage to signify vehicular entryways, and plazas and pedestrian scale signage to highlight the bike gateway into downtown
- › Gateway elements should be and utilize heightened streetscaping, painted crosswalks, art installations, and other elements that can encourage visitors to enjoy and spend more time in the area



*Monument Signage*



*Monument Signage*



*Street Arch*

# WAYFINDING

## Vehicular Signage

Feedback from the community emphasized the need to provide clear directions and wayfinding to help guide traffic through the downtown streets. Appropriately located and well-designed signage is required to minimize the occurrence of accidents and support efficient traffic circulation. Signage for vehicle users needs to be larger with bright colors to ensure visibility and legibility from a distance. These signs should also be strategically located on regular frequency along high-intensity corridors such as Riley Boulevard and Main Street, where frequent intersections and shifts in one-way to two-way traffic cause accidents and compromises the safety of drivers and pedestrians alike.

## Pedestrian Signage

Downtown also requires wayfinding that can help guide visitors and provide directions to key landmarks and often frequented buildings. Amenities such as the river trail, civic facilities, restaurants and bars, and various historical and religious landmarks can be highlighted by providing signs to help visitors place themselves and conveniently mobilize within the area. These facilities can also help direct users toward public restrooms, parking areas, or recreational amenities such as bike & kayak rentals. Such signage can elevate the Downtown experience for visitors and encourage more pedestrian activity in the area.



## Considerations for Signage :

- › Signage should maintain a cohesive style with the streetscaping and other elements such as the street lights, furniture, trash receptacles, etc.
- › Such infrastructure should utilize the Franklin colors, logo, and brand style
- › Signs should be strategically located at intersections and gateways to ensure ease of use for visitors

# PARKING

Input from the community indicated that parking is not currently an issue Downtown as there is sufficient availability of spaces to support current use volumes. However, the city and community agree that as Downtown grows and new residential uses locate here, leading to increased traffic and circulation, parking could become a potential problem. The city has commissioned a consultant to evaluate demand and needs based on future projects and seeks to optimize parking in the area to ensure efficient use of space.

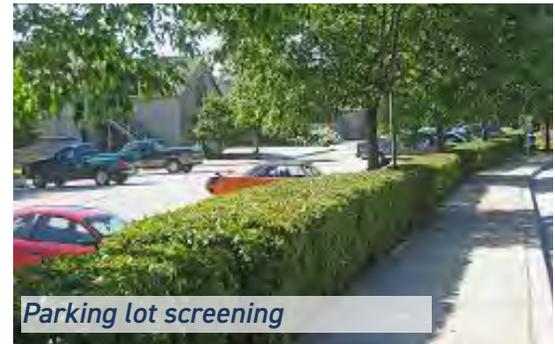
Street parking is desirable in this area and should be retained to support local stores and to help slow through traffic. Many businesses and private enterprises have adjacent surface lots that can be consolidated to provide increased capacity. Eventually, when Downtown grows to its full potential, the city can pursue a parking structure that can be located along the downtown edge and allow for complete redevelopment within Downtown.

## Considerations for Parking :

- › Identify opportunities to consolidate parking lots along Main Street
- › Discover opportunities for bike parking
- › Work with property owners to offer private lots for after-hours public parking that can support active nightlife in the area
- › Minimize street frontage for parking lots and encourage screening through fencing and vegetation to discourage inactive street edges
- › Support parking with clear signage and wayfinding that indicate public lots
- › Underutilized or redundant lots can be repurposed for pop-up events or mini-parks to support the urban fabric
- › Consider the opportunity for a public parking garage along the edges of downtown to support future demand



Pocket Park

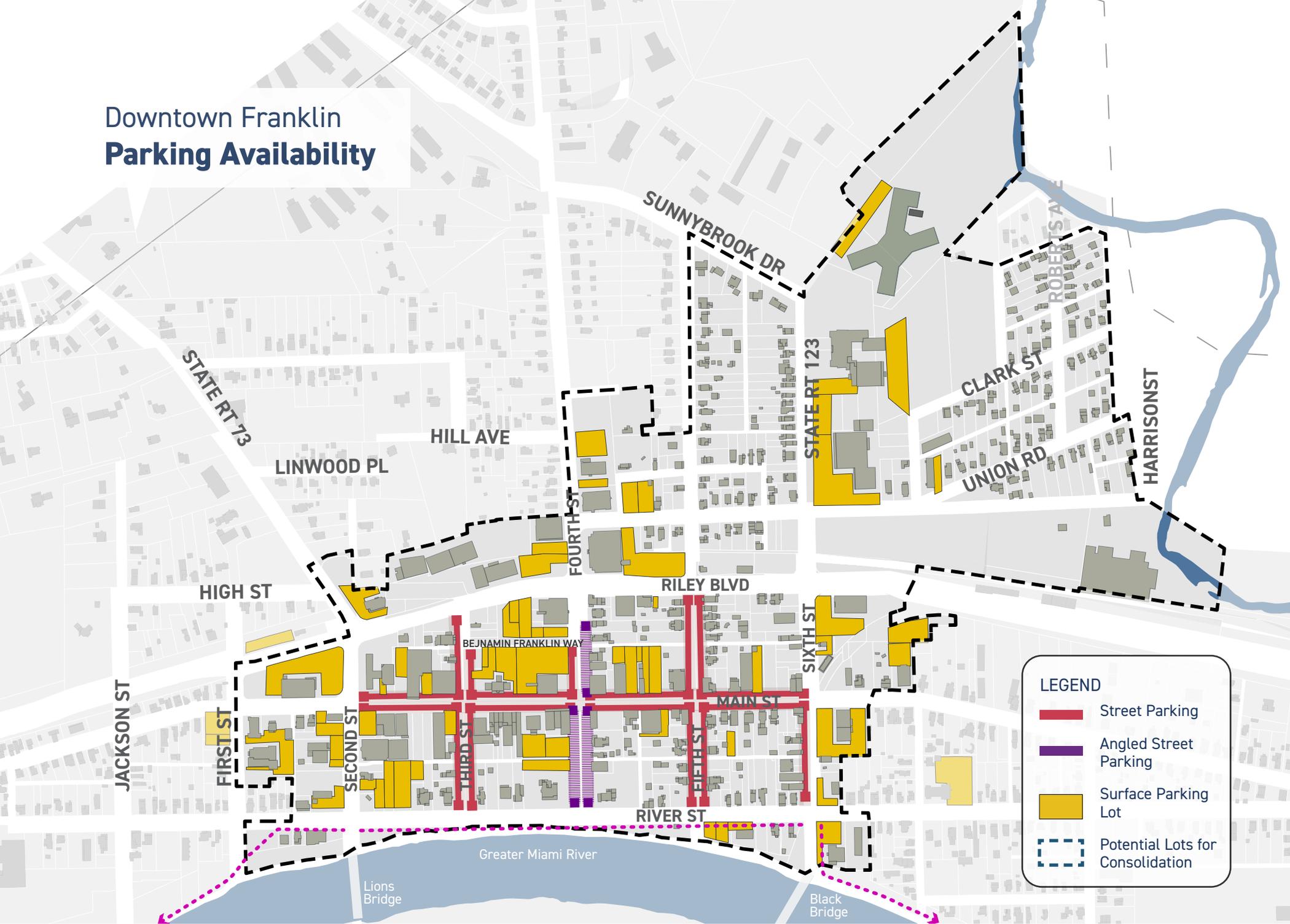


Parking lot screening



Garage Parking

# Downtown Franklin Parking Availability



# Pedestrian & Bike Network

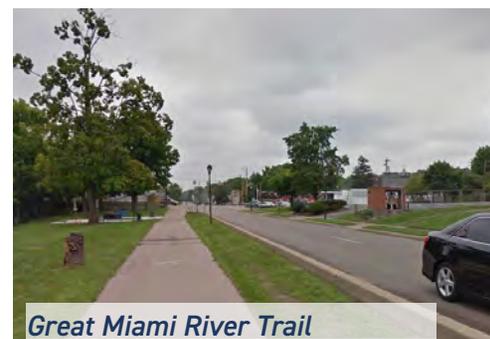
## Pedestrian Infrastructure

Results from the public input indicate an overwhelming desire for a walkable downtown. There is particular interest in connecting the riverfront with the new Franklin High School, civic facilities, and adjacent residential neighborhoods through contiguous and safe walk paths. A strong pedestrian network should also be established to encourage future residential growth within the area. Sidewalks and the Great Miami River trail adequately support the downtown. However, most of this infrastructure is aging, narrow, and missing in sections. It is crucial to building upon the existing amenities through sidewalk expansions and the addition of pedestrian amenities such as street trees, green buffers, pedestrian scale lighting, and seating to encourage walkability in the area. ADA accessibility was also identified as a key priority for the community and should be addressed in all future improvements proposed in this area.

## Bike Connectivity

Presently, downtown Franklin offers very little dedicated infrastructure for bike users. The Great Miami River trail spans the length of the downtown extents and experiences regular use volumes. However, minimal encouragement or facilities are available to invite this traffic to stop at or enter the downtown area. It is highly desirable to encourage bike users in the region to enter Downtown and patronize the various local establishments here; this can be achieved by encouraging bike-friendly streets that utilize sharrow signage to indicate shared roadways for automobile vehicles and bicycles. Pedestrian scale gateways, easily accessible bike racks and parking facilities, bike-friendly bars and restaurants, rentals, and repair shops are additional amenities that can encourage more people to bike into and spend money and time in downtown Franklin.

## Existing Conditions



## Considerations for improved Pedestrian accessibility

- › **Expanded Sidewalks** that are wide and well-maintained invite increased pedestrian activity and allow Downtown to become a walkable experience
- › **Street Trees** that can provide shade without obstructing viewsheds of business facades can encourage pedestrians to explore Downtown on foot and enjoy outdoor dining opportunities with natural shade
- › **Street Furniture**, including benches and trash receptacles, amplifies the pedestrian experience and can support users with diverse needs
- › **Pedestrian Scale Lighting** that is placed in regular intervals can help users feel safe and encourage more foot traffic in Downtown
- › **Crosswalks** that are well-maintained or vibrantly painted and located at frequent intervals help slow traffic and make connectivity more convenient for pedestrians. They can also be accompanied by crossing lights to elevate safety
- › **Bike lanes and amenities** that include sharrows, bike racks, rentals, red bike stands, and other bike-friendly uses, such as outdoor dining/bar that has provisions for customers on bikes, can encourage more biking in Downtown
- › **ADA Accessibility** is a major concern and should be addressed through ramps at intersections and other required areas to ensure that Downtown is truly accessible to everyone



# Strategic Recommendations

## for improving Connectivity in Downtown

1. Establish safe and convenient circulation by installing clear wayfinding and signage for pedestrian and vehicle use.
2. Employ traffic calming measures such as bump-outs, mid-block crossings, street-side parking, etc. Slower vehicular traffic promotes pedestrian safety and contributes to more active usage and enjoyment of the Downtown area.
3. Reconfigure available parking away from active corridors such as Main St and Fourth St. Explore options to adapt underutilized street-facing parking lots for pop-up uses such as plazas, interactive play areas, and other such uses.
4. Promote full use of alleyways by heightening visibility and accessibility. Encourage parking, outdoor dining, and active facades along the alleys.
5. Incorporate elements from the Main St. streetscape design throughout Downtown to maintain visual and experiential cohesion for users; this can include street trees, pavers, lighting, and furniture elements that contribute to a comfortable pedestrian experience.
6. Install arch gateways and monument signs at the intersection of Sixth St & Riley Blvd. and Second St & Riley Blvd. to signify major vehicular entry points into Downtown.
7. Create smaller gateways or gathering nodes at Second St & River St., and Main St & Fourth St to serve as significant anchors for pedestrians and bike users; this creates public destinations and can encourage increased bike and foot traffic from the trail.
8. Promote an active bike culture in Franklin by pursuing opportunities to incorporate bike infrastructure such as shared bike lanes, 'sharrow' signage, bike racks, etc., into the Downtown fabric.





# Experience

# Remake Downtown into an exciting, safe and comfortable place.

The experiential component of a place can play a significant role in how the area is perceived, how inviting it is and how successful it can be. Downtown Franklin has a slow charm and interesting character that stems from the historic architecture, murals, and events in the area. There is scope to significantly elevate these attributes and improve other aspects of the area to create an exciting, safe, and comfortable downtown that encourages people, particularly families, to live, work and play there.

A recurring concern through the public engagement for this plan was the desire to discover and celebrate Franklin's unique identity. The community seeks to reinvent downtown into an inviting and happening area with distinct characteristics that represent the local history and culture. The area currently has significant untapped potential in its historic resources, murals, art, the Great Miami Riverway, and the local culture and events that set Franklin apart from its regional counterparts. The plan recommends celebrating these characteristics and using this as a foundation to build a new brand and image for downtown Franklin. Another key concern is the issue of safety and comfortable experiences for residents and visitors in the area. Undesirable activities such as littering, drugs, squatting, and other similar issues plague the area and discourage the full use of public spaces. Such issues must be addressed to improve overall conditions and make Downtown enjoyable for people to spend time.



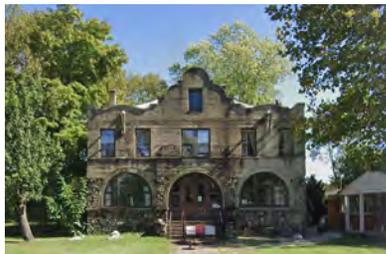
## Key Issues That Influence the Current Experience of Downtown:

- › SAFETY IN DOWNTOWN
- › A NEED TO DISTINGUISH FRANKLIN FROM OTHER SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES
- › CELEBRATION/PROTECTION OF OUR HISTORIC LANDMARKS
- › PROGRAMMING AND SOCIAL ACTIVATION
- › NEW BRAND FOR DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN!

# Identity & Character

## Historic Landmarks

The downtown Franklin area has many historic resources and landmarks scattered throughout. There are beautiful churches and religious landmarks that flaunt historic architectural styles. The old log post office building, train post building, the Alamo, and many other historic homes add rich value and character to the Franklin downtown. The community is excited to promote opportunities to highlight and celebrate these assets while preserving their built integrity. These buildings can be protected while allowing infill and adaptive reuse that supports full use of the structure and property. Landmark callouts and signage that provide information can be utilized to highlight these assets and raise awareness of their cultural significance with residents and visitors.



## Art & Cultural Identity

Also known as the 'City of Murals,' Franklin houses various stunning murals painted by Eric Henn that artistically depict the town's history. The murals are painted on multiple street-facing facades in the area, adding color and character to the user's experience. One mural that has particular significance is the arches on the Huntington Bank property on Fourth Street. A landscaped plaza supports this with stone benches and lighting to encourage social gathering around the mural. The recently opened food truck site is also located directly opposite the mural and encourages social activation in the area. As a unique aspect that celebrates Franklin's individuality, it is important to highlight these murals and add to them going forward. Strategies to help the city blend the past with the future and emphasize our uniqueness through art should be encouraged.



## Considerations for expanding arts & culture

- › **Landmark signage** that is well-designed and strategically placed to provide information and raise awareness of these local assets
- › **Ensure accessibility** and support facilities such as **benches, shade, and parking** that can encourage visitors to visit and enjoy the local landmarks
- › Franklin's unique assets are located across the downtown, and a **cultural trail** that maps all these landmarks can add an exciting activity for visitors
- › **Pursue new art initiatives** that can engage diverse age groups and communities
- › **Expand on murals** and explore opportunities to collaborate with more artists to commemorate Franklin's identity through murals

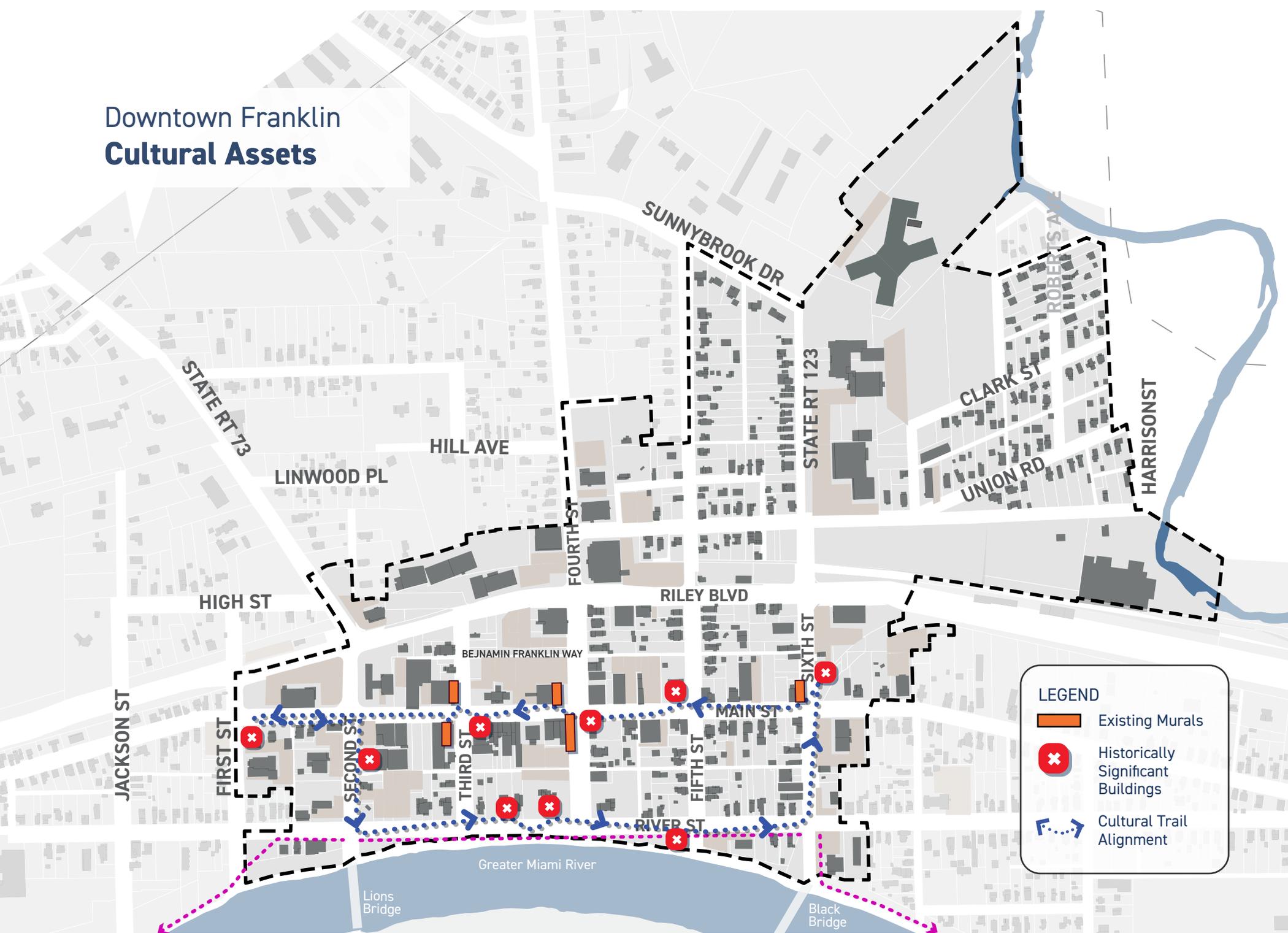
## Contemporary Arts Culture

Art and installations are a fun and interesting way to create a rich Downtown experience for a diverse range of residents and visitors. People of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy interactive art and play elements scattered around Downtown. Such additions bring vibrancy and fresh appeal and elevate the area's visual character. Many cities and downtowns across the country have encouraged an art culture to bring the community together and promote better use and enjoyment of the area.

Initiatives can include :



# Downtown Franklin Cultural Assets



**LEGEND**

-  Existing Murals
-  Historically Significant Buildings
-  Cultural Trail Alignment

## SOCIAL PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

Various events, such as the kite festival or a car show, happen in the downtown Franklin area and attract regional attention. Expanding upon the programming to create more unique festivals and experiences can strengthen the Franklin brand and leave a lasting impression on visitors. Fostering a healthy culture of outdoor events and activities such as weekly yoga in the park, plays and theater, music festivals, and other regular attractions can help develop full and consistent activity while encouraging further interest in the area. Developing nodes or pockets of public space, such as the food truck site on Main Street, can provide amenities for visitors and support events. Temporary closing of streets such as Third, Fourth, and Fifth streets for significant public events can help accommodate larger crowds and regulate space demands for these attractions. Regular and intentional programming that can attract diverse user groups and families with children can market Franklin as an exciting and desirable place for visitors.

### Considerations for Social Activation

- › Expand programming that is unique to Franklin, such as the Fourth of July Parade and Fireworks, Franklin In Lights Christmas Event, and Food Truck Park
- › Plan events that can be scheduled throughout the year and support morning and evening events
- › Prioritize programming that attracts families through the inclusion of kid-friendly activities



## SAFETY IN DOWNTOWN

Well-lit and clean spaces encourage positive impressions and incentivize more of the community to walk and enjoy downtown. Pedestrian-scale streetlights and inground lights for pathways provide clear visibility. Similarly, clean and organized public spaces give the impression of a well-maintained and frequently used space and encourage more foot traffic. Higher property maintenance and stricter enforcement standards can also be established to improve a secure pedestrian experience in the Transition areas; this can be supplemented by new housing that can attract additional residents and increase the passive presence of watching eyes that discourages unsavory activities and promotes a more comfortable downtown experience. Feedback from the community indicates a desire for an increase in the frequency of the police patrols that are currently offered by the city. Community watch groups can further supplement this. Install security cameras at public plazas and along the riverfront to provide a higher standard of safety and security and discourage littering, crime, and other undesired activities. Private properties can also be encouraged to install security systems, including surveillance cameras and alarms.

### Considerations for Increased Safety in Downtown

- › Emphasize lighting and cleanliness in downtown to foster a safer environment for pedestrians and bike users
- › Create an active environment through programming & Increased housing that adds to 'eyes on the street' and encourages safety
- › Increase police patrols and work with community groups to create community watch groups



# PLACEMAKING

Creating third places that encourage locals and visitors to enjoy downtown and spend more time here are important to present an inviting experience of the area. Downtown has opportunities for such amenities through the potential development of the various vacant and underutilized lots in the vicinity that can be reinvented into pop-up event spaces, pocket parks, landscaped plazas, container parks, mini splash pads sites, etc. Low-cost initiatives can be pursued to understand demand and viability for further investments. The community can also be engaged in creating and activating such spaces, a strategy that has been highly successful in other communities. Focus features with supporting facilities such as seating, shade, interactive installations, community gardens, or outdoor dining infrastructure can contribute to the social value of downtown and make it an enjoyable destination without the necessity for users to spend large sums of money while enjoying the area.

## Considerations for Placemaking

- › Explore the potential to establish a downtown DORA district; this can be proposed along the riverfront mixed-use area to capitalize on the campus-style development proposed there
- › Identify potential congregation areas for plazas, park space, and other smaller social gathering events
- › Establishing a unique style of gateway elements at the identified gateway areas should be a priority
- › Install retractable bollards or other similar measures to block streets for events temporarily



## THE FRANKLIN BRAND

A unique downtown brand that captures the area's essence and represents the community's culture, history, and charm can help define the area and serve as an identifier for visitors. Consistent colors, typography, and style in signage, wayfinding, and other distinguishing features will support a cohesive look and feel of downtown. The branding can also be used for downtown coalition groups and to market events and social programming. The unique style can also be incorporated into streetscape elements and other public amenities in the area.



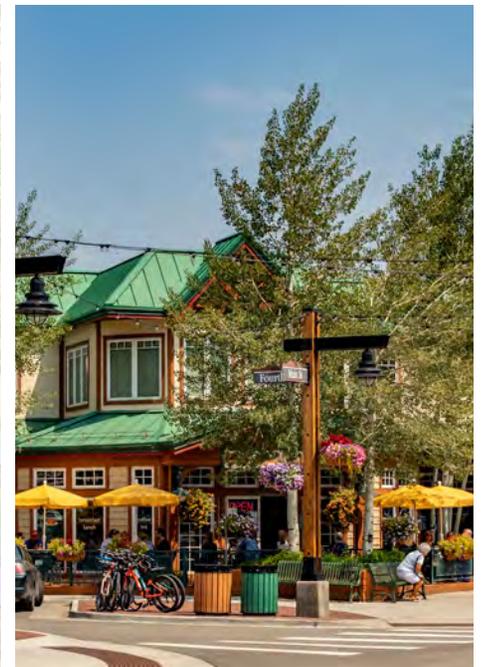
### Considerations for Branding

- › Develop brand guidelines for Downtown that build upon the city logo and colors. The new brand font, colors, and standards can be applied to street furnishings, banners, gateway elements, etc., and serve to solidify Downtown's identity for visitors
- › Create an online presence for Downtown that presents highlights of local landmarks, event schedules, amenities, restaurants, etc.; This can allow locals and visitors to stay updated on happenings and encourage more engagement

# Strategic Recommendations

## for improving Experiences in Downtown

- 1.** Create a Cultural Trail that highlights and celebrates local history and identity. Install signage and markers to call out historic architecture and local murals for visitors.
- 2.** Create an online website that provides information on attractions, amenities, and Downtown events; this can promote visitor interest and raise awareness of Franklin's identity in the region.
- 3.** Prioritize safety by installing regularly spaced pedestrian scale lights and continued patrol efforts to help establish a safe and comfortable environment for residents and visitors through day and night.
- 4.** Pursue a brand and signage plan that creates a unique visual style that complements local character.
- 5.** Pursue bold and engaging placemaking strategies such as repurposing available vacant areas for pocket parks, interactive art, lighting installations, play equipment, etc.
- 6.** Utilize retractable bollards and other temporary blockage measures to close Main St and Fourth St for outdoor events. The public parking can further support this at the Municipal Building, the recently constructed food truck site, and the riverfront area.
- 7.** Collaborate with the local community and interest groups to expand programming and create regularly scheduled events unique to Franklin. Frequent and successful social events can unite the community, elevate local pride and image, and boost regional interest in the Downtown Franklin area.





# **4 Take Action**

# HOW DO WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

## Downtown is changing now!

This section establishes a list of actions the city and community can follow to best achieve the recommendations outlined in this plan. The action items are categorized by which of the five downtown planning areas the item applies to: Downtown Core, Mixed Use, Riverfront Mixed Use, Civic, and Transition; or if it applies to the entire Downtown district. Additionally, each action item is supported by the following:

- › An identification of which of the three primary tenants the item supports: Place, Connectivity, and/or Experience. Items can support more than one of the primary tenants.
- › An approximate timeframe for the item's completion: short term (0-2 years), medium term (3-5 years), long term (more than 5 years), or ongoing.
- › A priority level for each item to provide the city with a direction on which order the items should be completed.

These action items will serve as a checkpoint for the city as Downtown continues to grow and evolve. This action plan should be reviewed and updated frequently (~2 years) to ensure that the overall intent is valid and relevant for Downtown's growth.

### Icon Legend



place



connections



experience

## DOWNTOWN CORE action items

Topic	Action Item	Timeframe	Priority
	<b>Upgrade the Main Street Streetscape.</b> Implement a new streetscape for Main Street in conjunction with utility upgrades.	SHORT	HIGH
	<b>Promote the Adaptive Re-Use of Existing Structures.</b> When feasible, encourage the rehabilitation and re-use of existing structures to retain Franklin's legacy pre-20th century historic charm.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Encourage Infill and Redevelopment Projects.</b> Vacant and underutilized lots and buildings within the district should be evaluated for the feasibility of constructing new infill buildings. Encourage small lots to be consolidated for redevelopment purposes.	ONGOING	MEDIUM
	<b>Streamline Available Parking off Alleyways.</b> The current off-street parking areas that are accessed off the alleyways are underutilized due to individual access points and configurations. Encourage cross-access agreements between property owners in order to establish organized parking areas.	SHORT-MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	<b>Improve Main Street's Vibrancy.</b> Support infill and reinvestment along the corridor accompanied with the completion of the updated streetscape.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Establish 100% occupancy along Main Street.</b> New businesses should be encouraged to open along Main Street, the community's anchor.	ONGOING	MEDIUM
	<b>Install Retractable Bollards.</b> Establish infrastructure that makes temporarily blocking 4th St. and Main St. for community events easier.	SHORT	MEDIUM
	<b>Establish More Outdoor Dining Amenities.</b> Incentivize restaurants to incorporate and increase capacity by including sidewalk and highly-visible patios that engage with the public realm.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Expand Murals and Public Art.</b> Continue to grow the Downtown mural collection and incorporate new public art pieces as new development occurs.	ONGOING	MEDIUM

Short = 0-2 years | Medium = 3-5 years | Long = 5+ years

## MIXED USE action items

Topic	Action Item	Timeframe	Priority
	<b>Encourage New Mixed-Use Development.</b> Continue to encourage and recruit new mixed use buildings and developments with entertainment-centric uses at the street level and more passive uses on the upper floors such as residential or office.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Discourage Street Front Parking Area.</b> As new development, redevelopment, and infill development occurs within the district, promote active street fronts with parking areas to the side and rear of the building.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Attract Developers to Key Opportunity Areas.</b> Promote Downtown Franklin's charm and potential by establishing strong community anchors at 6th St. and Riley Blvd., 2nd St. and River St., and River St. between 4th St. and 6th St.	SHORT-MEDIUM	HIGH
	<b>Amplify Downtown Gateways.</b> Design and construct new gateways at 2nd St. and Riley Blvd., 6th St. and Riley Blvd., and 2nd St. and River St. Gateways can fortify the Downtown Franklin image and brand, giving residents pride coming into Downtown and welcoming visitors with an inspiring first impression.	SHORT	MEDIUM

## TRANSITION action items

	<b>Promote the Adaptive Re-use of Existing Structures.</b> When feasible, encourage the rehabilitation and re-use of existing structures to retain Franklin's legacy pre-20th century historic charm.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Update Housing Stock.</b> Set a community-wide precedent for a clean and beautiful Franklin. Organize neighborhood cleanup days, educate homeowners on federal home improvement loan options, and require new developments to meet quality design standards along with multiple unit types to provide a variety of housing options for current and potential residents.	LONG	MEDIUM

Short = 0-2 years | Medium = 3-5 years | Long = 5+ years

## RIVERFRONT MIXED USE action items

Topic	Action Item	Timeframe	Priority
	<b>Reconfigure River Street.</b> Transition River St. from either 2nd St. or 3rd St. to 6th St. as a riverfront oriented pedestrian corridor.	SHORT-MEDIUM	HIGH
	<b>Establish a Riverfront Plaza.</b> Bring residents and visitors to the river's edge with a campus-style environment complete with mixed-use developments, breweries, outdoor and roof-top dining, retail shops, residential uses, overlook seating, improved bike and pedestrian paths, scenic landscaping, and entertainment uses.	MEDIUM	HIGH
	<b>Improve the Riverfront and Main Street Connection.</b> Promote 4th St. as the gateway from Main St. to the riverfront by using landscaping and wayfinding to ensure each place encourages people to flow from one area to the other.	MEDIUM-LONG	HIGH
	<b>Improve Bike Infrastructure.</b> Installing signage, parking, and bike lanes can collect visitors from the Great Miami River trail and bring bikers Downtown.	SHORT-MEDIUM	HIGH

## CIVIC action items

	<b>Create Public Outdoor Dining Opportunities.</b> Create new and continue using appropriate City land to create public outdoor dining spaces and promote the City of Franklin Food Truck Pad.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Expand Community Programming.</b> Curate additional community events like the popular Kite Festival, car shows, and art-based events. Increase the frequency of events and showcase key areas.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Establish Community Watch Groups.</b> Encourage community members to take an 'eyes on the street' strategy to protect themselves and their neighbors.	ONGOING	MEDIUM

Short = 0-2 years | Medium = 3-5 years | Long = 5+ years

## DOWNTOWN action items

Topic	Action Item	Timeframe	Priority
	<b>Preserve and Protect Key Historic Landmarks.</b> Research and identify opportunities for the city and local property owners to protect local historic buildings.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Foster a Healthy Public Realm.</b> Establish public spaces that encourage community engagement, promote pedestrian mobility, and are family friendly.	SHORT-MEDIUM	HIGH
	<b>Establish Parking at the Periphery of Downtown.</b> Parking should be located to the periphery of Downtown and not adjacent to the primary roadways. Existing lots should be consolidated, buffered, or transformed into public spaces or infilled to improve pedestrian viewsheds and experience.	LONG	MEDIUM
	<b>Establish a DORA and a CED.</b> Create a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) in Downtown where people can visit multiple establishments and public spaces with adult beverages to increase and promote pedestrian activity; and a Community Entertainment District (CED) which would allow an increased number of liquor licenses in the designated area to promote an active and fun district.	SHORT	HIGH
	<b>Improve Street Lighting.</b> Ensure key corridors are well-lit, accessible, and safe for pedestrians navigating Downtown at any time of day. Creative lighting elements should also be considered that add unique, artistic elements to Downtown.	SHORT-ONGOING	MEDIUM
	<b>Build a Live-Work-Play Culture.</b> Ensure Downtown Franklin allows for residents and visitors the opportunity to fulfill professional and leisure activities through community programming, housing opportunities, job opportunities, vibrant economic areas and corridors, and active public spaces.	ONGOING	HIGH
	<b>Adopt New Downtown Zoning Regulations.</b> The existing C-3 zoning regulations do not accurately reflect the envisioned development for Downtown Franklin. New zoning regulations should be drafted and approved by the City to ensure that new and redevelopment projects align with the recommendations and vision established in this plan.	SHORT	HIGH

Short = 0-2 years | Medium = 3-5 years | Long = 5+ years

## DOWNTOWN action items

Topic	Action Item	Timeframe	Priority
	<b>Establish a 'Culture Trail'.</b> Research locations and create wayfinding that highlights landmarks in Downtown Franklin. The trail should encourage people to navigate Downtown, seeing the uniqueness of the past and being amazed by the present.	SHORT-MEDIUM	LOW
	<b>Activate Under-Utilized Front Parking Areas.</b> Existing developments that have parking areas in the front of the lot should consider transforming such areas into community gathering spaces such as open plazas or dining areas, taking into consideration district-wide parking availability.	ONGOING	LOW
	<b>Implement Downtown Wayfinding.</b> Design wayfinding signage that brands Downtown, differentiates multi-modal navigation (walking, biking, driving), and encourages people to visit key areas.	SHORT	HIGH
	<b>Add Vibrancy and Character to Key Pedestrian Crosswalks.</b> Design crosswalks to beautify intersections, improve pedestrian safety, and signify key areas in Downtown.	SHORT	MEDIUM

Short = 0-2 years | Medium = 3-5 years | Long = 5+ years