



DOWNTOWN  
**COLUMBUS**  
STRATEGIC  
PLAN



**COLUMBUS**  
DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
& CAPITOL SOUTH

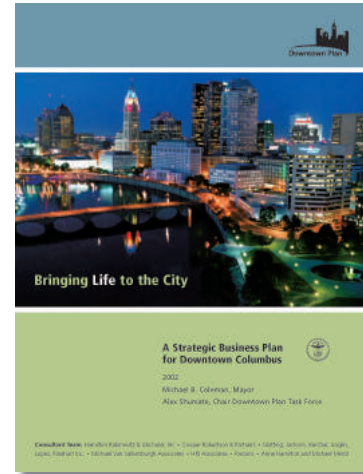
THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

**STEERING COMMITTEE**  
September 12, 2022



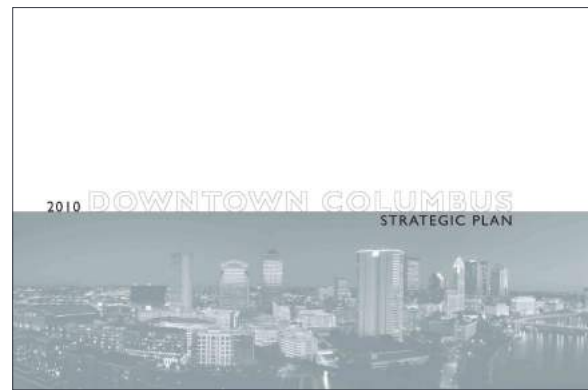
# COLUMBUS DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLANS

**2002**  
A STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN  
FOR DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS



**POLICY FOCUS**  
Established housing goal and abatements that aided in increase in downtown population for the first time since 1950

**2010**  
DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS  
STRATEGIC PLAN



**CATALYTIC PROJECT FOCUS**  
Set in motion the transformation of the riverfront and public realm that supported new urban development and growth

**2022**  
DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS  
STRATEGIC PLAN



**PEOPLE FOCUS**  
Mix of people-first policies, practices, and projects that make Downtown inviting for all.

# CROSS SECTION OF THE VOICES WE HEARD

## Engagement Methods

- One-on-one stakeholder interviews
- Neighborhood and stakeholder outreach
- Interactive online activities
- Virtual public workshop
- In-person public workshops
- Online surveys

**1,900+**

Community Members  
Engaged To-date

**340**

Public Workshop  
Attendees

**1,124**

Online Survey  
Respondents

**333**

Online Activity  
Participants

**120**

Stakeholders  
Interviewed

# OVERARCHING THEMES

## Stakeholder Groups

### Key Concerns

- Columbus **must not lose the Downtown momentum built over the past 20 years**...the city has had great success and ground cannot be lost.
- Downtown must be a leader in **equity and inclusion**, creating a place of belonging.
- Downtown must play a role in addressing the need for **housing** and **affordable housing in the region**.
- There are concerns about the **future of office space as a result of the pandemic**, and the economic impact this could have on Downtown and the city as a whole. Downtown must be maintained as a major employment center.
- Restaurant, entertainment, and cultural activity Downtown was improving until COVID, but the **retail, shopping, and arts experience** and has suffered and **should be so much more**.
- It is **imperative to address public safety issues and perceptions**. This includes working to deal with aggressive panhandling and a growing unhoused population.
- **Downtown must continue to be special and distinct in the region** and differentiated from the suburbs.
- Add density by **reducing surface parking**, currently representing 214 acres Downtown.



# MY BIG IDEA FOR DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS IS...

“Transforming Broad Street from a needlessly wide road into a complete street featuring BRT **infrastructure and protected bike lanes**”

“Fund local artists/muralists for **more art in public spaces**”

“**River-based outdoor activities and food stalls** like the Chicago Riverwalk.”

“1940 population by 2040!”

“**Make it family and kid friendly**—more green space, more parks, dog parks, playgrounds.”

“A **cultural trail connecting the Scioto Mile to cultural institutions** and landmarks”

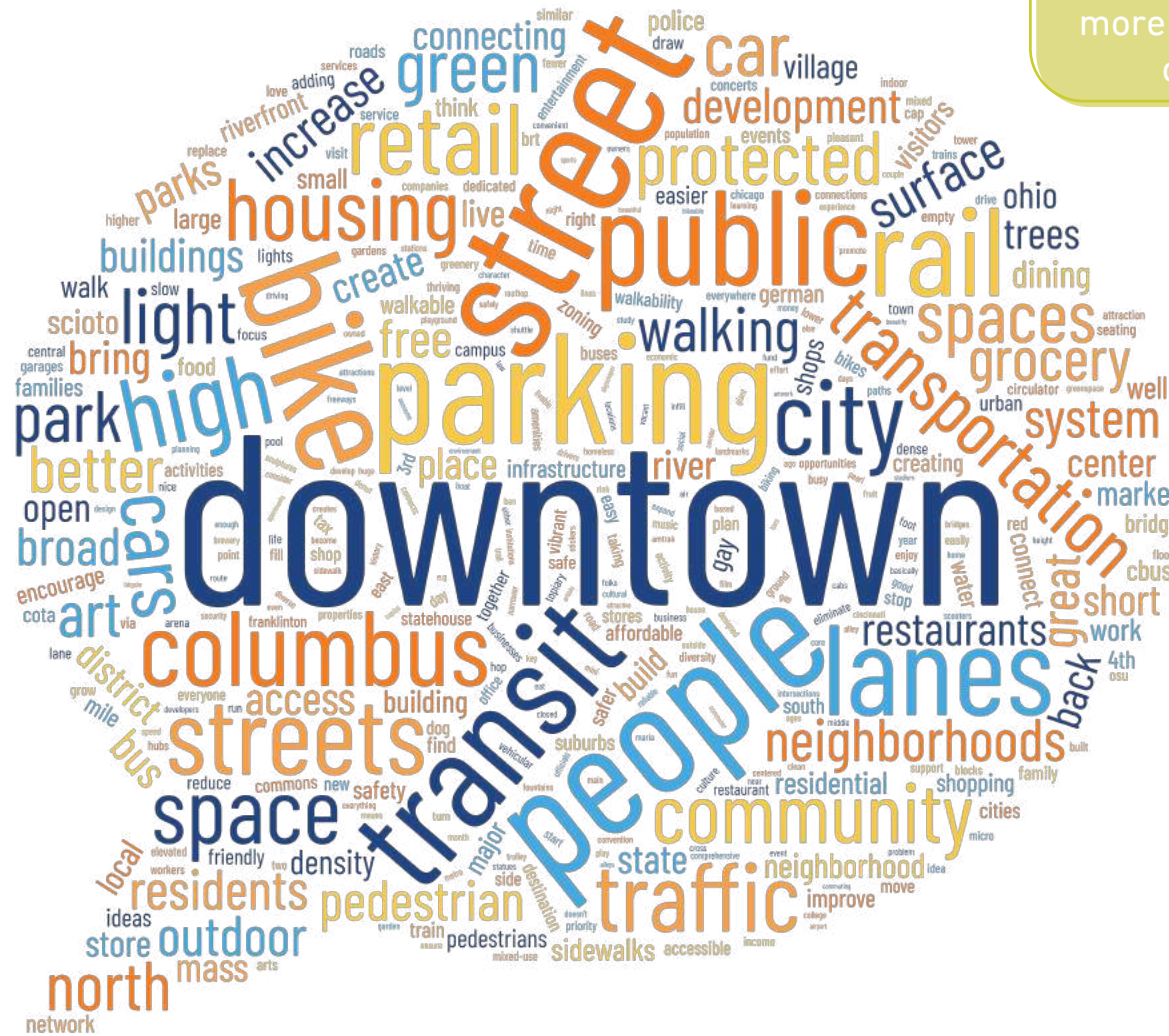
“Make **Downtown a true cultural crossroads**, bringing pieces of different cultures that are around the city — embrace more diverse representations of community members”

“**Storefronts should feature black-owned businesses** like a black-owned Jazz club”

“Consider retail tax abatement to incentivize first-floor activity”

“**Bring back the CBUS**. Add another CBUS to go east and west. Simplify the bus routes.”

“Downtown can’t be just ‘diverse’; **it has to be believable belongingness**”





# VISION

## A DOWNTOWN FOR ALL

Embark on the next stage of Downtown's urban revival and transformation into a world class city by **enhancing equity, expanding accessibility, creating connectivity, supporting local, and improving inclusion** so that Downtown is a welcoming destination where the prosperity of our city can be enjoyed by all.



# GOALS

**IN 10 YEARS,  
DOWNTOWN  
WILL BE...**



**A  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
FOR ALL**



**A THRIVING AND  
ATTRACTIVE  
PLACE TO WORK**



**A VIBRANT AND  
DISTINCTIVE  
DESTINATION**



**THE CULTURAL  
HEART  
OF THE CITY**



**A GREEN AND  
SUSTAINABLE  
CAPITAL**



**A HUB FOR  
URBAN  
MOBILITY**



**A TAPESTRY OF  
LIVABLE URBAN  
DISTRICTS**

# A NEIGHBORHOOD FOR ALL | HOUSING & LIVABILITY

**FOCUS:** Make Downtown a neighborhood for all that provides a significant, broad spectrum of housing with the services and infrastructure that help a neighborhood thrive.

## STRATEGIES:

- **Create a 15-minute Downtown**, where people do not need a car to accomplish the basic needs for living (grocery, pharmacy, daycare, shopping, etc.).
- As part of the 15-minute Downtown, **provide park space in, and multimodal linkages to**, each district within Downtown.
- **Identify focus areas for growing Downtown** urban districts to concentrate public and private investment for short, intermediate, and long-term success.
- **Require and approve high density** urban residential development Downtown to grow the Downtown population.
- Ensure that Downtown **plays a role in the city's affordable housing strategy** so that people of a variety of income levels have the opportunity to live Downtown.
- **Convert outdated office space** Downtown into contributing housing.
- Develop and connect programs to **address the unhoused population**.
- Better **connect Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods** to strengthen and re-establish the urban fabric.

**OUTCOME:** Achieve 40,000 residents living Downtown by 2040







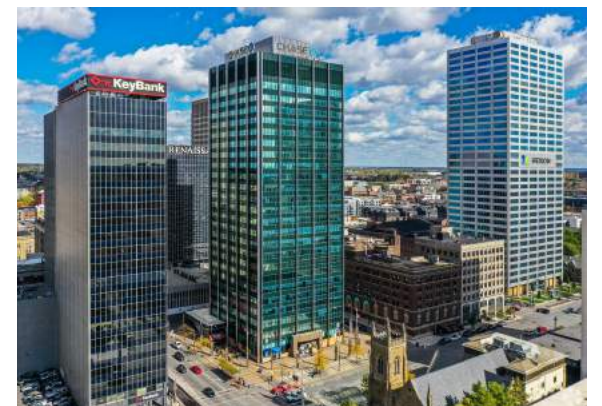
# A THRIVING AND ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO WORK | OFFICE & EMPLOYMENT

**FOCUS:** Maintain Downtown Columbus as the center of employment for the region and a thriving and attractive place to work that confidently addresses the future of the office environment.

## STRATEGIES:

- **Reinforce the value of Downtown as the economic engine of the city** and region, and thus a critical place in which to invest.
- Help building owners identify and **prioritize improvements that create healthy and inviting office and work environments** in a post-COVID Downtown (ex. open, flexible, collaborative).
- **Amenitize Downtown** to create dynamic, high-quality environments **to attract workers back to the office** (ex. first floor activation, third places, recreation leagues/events/social activities).
- **Add Class A office space as well as leverage and re-imagine Downtown building assets** for their best use (ex. identify new mixed-use office sites, convert outdated office to residential).
- Explore strategies to **reduce the 214 acres of surface parking throughout Downtown**, adding structured parking where need to support employment centers.
- **Improve mobility options to connect and circulate** between employment centers and Downtown amenities.
- **Work with major Downtown educational and medical institutions** to continue their investment in their campuses and better integrate them into Downtown.
- **Continue the Downtown Columbus Comeback campaign**, reminding people of Downtown's many assets and developing buzz about post-COVID Downtown opportunities, garnering buy-in from regional partners.
- **Invest in safety policies and programs** Downtown, including the creation of a Safety Plan.

**OUTCOME:** Achieve 120,000 people working Downtown by 2040





# A VIBRANT AND DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION | RETAIL & ENTERTAINMENT

**FOCUS:** Grow Downtown retail, service, and entertainment businesses and Columbus brands—with a focus on small and minority- and women-owned businesses—to create a foundation of commercial services that supports a thriving 15-minute Downtown.

## STRATEGIES:

- Develop a program to **incentivize and support MWBE-owned retail and neighborhood service businesses** in targeted, complementary nodes of retail to serve employment and neighborhood districts.
- Look at retail incentive toolkit including flexible lease terms, adding retail to the tax abatement policy and master leasing options.
- Consider “activity” more broadly, rather than only traditional retail, to **activate first floors** via art displays, pop-up retail, incubator programs, community spaces, nonprofit services, etc.
- Continue what COVID policies started by **allowing for robust outdoor dining areas**.
- Promote and support what Columbus does well—fashion, food and beverage, and hospitality—to **make Downtown a hub for local and unique offerings**.
- **Create or support small business education and training programs**, like a business boot-camp to help small businesses be successful Downtown and beyond.
- **Develop a Vacant Storefront Registration policy** for commercial buildings to ensure they are maintained and help with activation.

**OUTCOME:** Grow local, diverse small businesses Downtown by 20% by 2040.





# THE CULTURAL HEART OF THE CITY | ARTS, SPORTS, & CULTURE

**FOCUS:** Continue to reinforce Downtown as the cultural heart of the city by supporting and celebrating the breadth, diversity, and interests of the community through art, music, history, sport, and cultural venues, districts, performances, and events.

## STRATEGIES:

- **Develop and promote clear differentiators for Downtown**, including its role as a regional center, the densest core of activity, cultural/sports/entertainment destination, hub of innovation, and cross-section of the community.
- Collaborate with arts leaders to **fund a study for public art and entertainment** for Columbus, one focus of which is to determine and implement the right model for highlighting Downtown.
- **Connect and activate civic assets that are already in place**—especially the riverfront, around Capitol Square, and along Broad Street.
- **Support the implementation of designated outdoor refreshment areas (DORAs)** in strategic locations Downtown, such as along the riverfront connecting east & west bank activity centers.
- **Create a supportive environment for Art** where it is installed, performed, and experienced Downtown in unique and surprising ways.
- **Enhance Downtown as a welcoming cultural crossroads** by continuing to support, improve, and add events representative of and attractive to the many cultures and communities of Columbus.
- Invest in a public realm campaign to **transform the pedestrian environment into a dynamic and seamless experience** with activities, public art, beautiful landscapes, and first floor activation
- **Invest in safety policies and programs** Downtown, including the creation of a Safety Plan.

**OUTCOME:** Create an actionable Cultural HeART plan for Downtown by 2025.



# A GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE CAPITAL | PARKS & RESILIENCY

**FOCUS:** Build upon efforts to “green” Downtown to meet the needs of and attract residents, workers, and visitors, and integrate sustainability and resiliency into Downtown streets, structures, and systems.

## **STRATEGIES:**

- **Activate existing civic park assets** like the Scioto Riverfront, Capitol Square Green, Topiary Park, and others.
- Transform Downtown **streets to also serve as linear parks**.
- Establish a Downtown tree canopy goal and work to **increase and maintain the tree canopy within Downtown**, with particular focus on street trees.
- **Encourage the creation of pocket parks and neighborhood parks** as part of new development.
- **Increase the development and operation of recreation opportunities Downtown** to promote health, wellness, and social gathering (ex. recreation sports leagues, yoga, kayak rental, skating, etc.).
- Study how Downtown can **play a role in mitigating the climate crisis** (ex. encouraging tree plantings, green roofs, solar panels, stormwater capture, mode shift, freeway caps, charging stations, energy retrofits, reduction in nonpermeable surfaces, etc.).

**OUTCOME:** Improve the urban tree canopy in Downtown to at least 15% (22% is the city average) by 2040 via parks and street trees.





# A HUB FOR URBAN MOBILITY | TRANSPORTATION

**FOCUS:** Advance Downtown mobility projects to create a complete streets network that provides many safe, inviting, and efficient means to travel within Downtown and to encourage travel from other neighborhoods, cities, and states with an emphasis on desired but underrepresented modes.

## STRATEGIES:

- Establish Downtown Street typologies that **promote the right-sizing and activation of streets.**
- **Support and assist the LinkUS project** to create high-frequency transit connections between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Prioritize the pedestrian-level experience and safety** so that people go TO Downtown rather than THROUGH Downtown, including implementation of thoughtful tactical urbanism techniques to demonstrate the value of pedestrian-focused experience.
- **Create a low-stress bike network** with a focus on safe and inviting transportation.
- Continue to **find methods of providing public parking structures** with city support to unlock Downtown redevelopment potential.
- **Support an AMTRAK passenger rail station** at the Convention Center.
- **Support freeway caps** that connect Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Connect the Arena District to The Peninsula and Confluence** area via pedestrian bridges.
- **Examine ingress and egress of Downtown districts** as they connect to the freeway system.
- Work to **transform identified one-way streets to two-way streets.**
- Continue to **study and integrate new modes of mobility into Downtown** that protect the pedestrian environment and ground floor activation while promoting ease of use and access.

**OUTCOME:** Expand non-vehicular mobility options Downtown—including high-frequency transit, physically separated bike lanes, and improved pedestrian experiences—creating a mobility network by 2030 that serves as a model for the region.





# A TAPESTRY OF LIVABLE URBAN DISTRICTS | CONNECTIVITY & DENSITY

## FOCUS

Build enabling infrastructure to enhance connectivity between Downtown districts and near Downtown neighborhoods, increasing density and reducing surface parking.

## STRATEGIES

- **Incentivize the conversion of surface lots to create active storefronts and liveable mixed use districts.**
- Encourage Transit Oriented development
- New Columbus Housing incentives to aid in providing affordable units.
- Transformational Mixed-Use Development Program tax credits support office creation.
- New Small Business Retail Program supports retail node.
- Linear Park Street Program, Public Art Program, etc, create attractive, healthy environment.
- Focus on key corridors to bring live-work opportunities to Downtown including Front Street, Confluence and East Gateway.

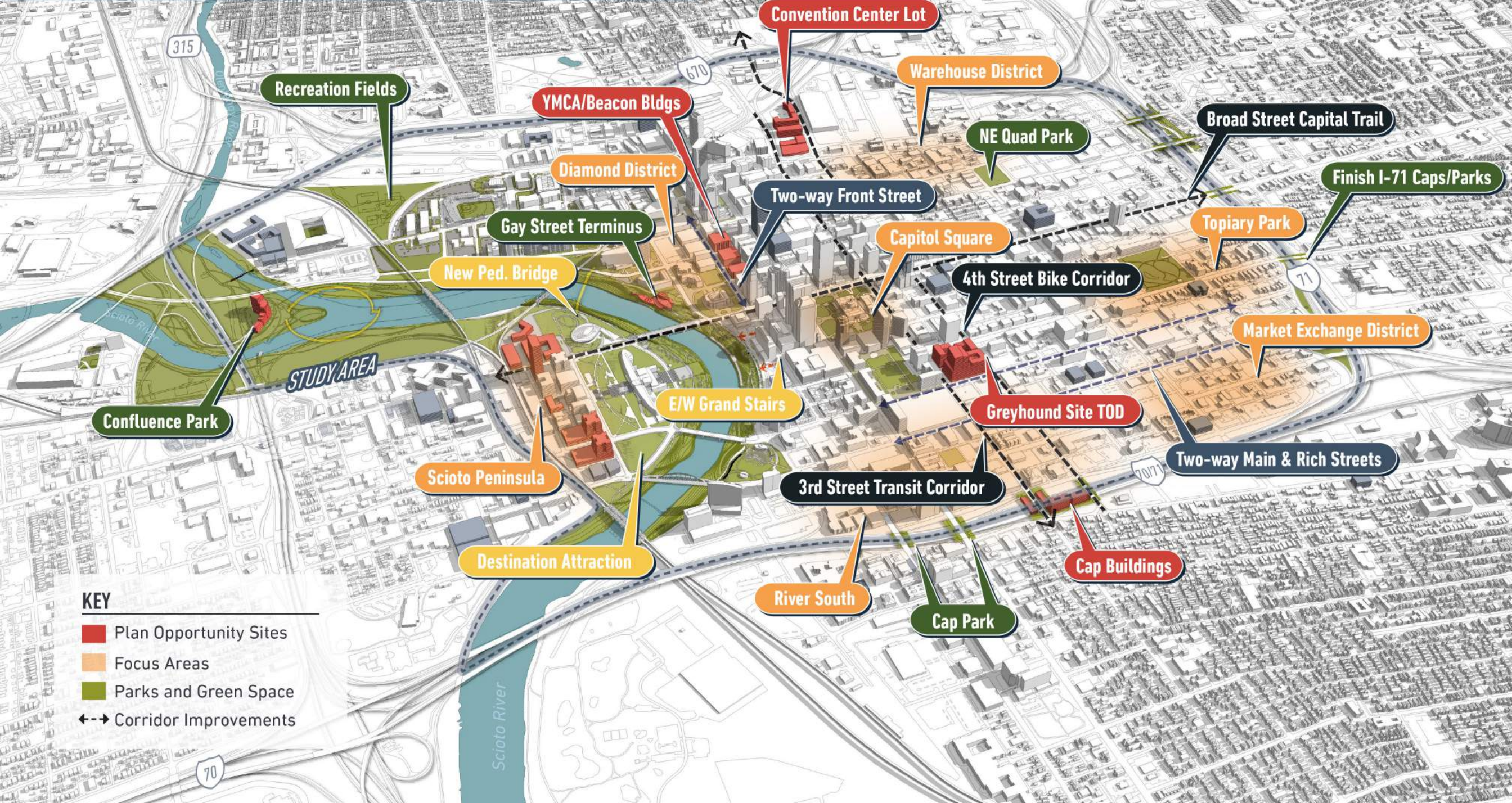
## OUTCOME

Mix of uses encouraged that provides spectrum of housing, corner retail spaces, creation of third places, and dynamic office environments.





# DOWNTOWN COLUMBUS | POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES





# RECOMMENDED IMMEDIATE CDDC PRIORITIES

- Support the City's **Downtown traffic study** to enhancing mobility ease and options.
- Conduct a **Downtown retail support & growth study** to develop strategies to create a more diverse and inclusive retail environment
- Analyze **surface parking reduction strategies**
- Explore **partnerships to increasing economic diversity in Downtown housing** to allow individuals at more income levels to live Downtown
- Create and execute a **Riverfront Activation Plan**
- Develop a **Public Realm Campaign** to activate and invigorate the Downtown pedestrian experience
- Evaluate how districts like The Peninsula and Front Street can **grow the live/work environment Downtown**
- Explore opportunities for Downtown to **leverage the Intel investment**
- Develop and execute an ongoing **marketing strategy to garner buy-in from residents and regional leaders** about the value of Downtown.







THANK YOU!



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**COLUMBUS**  
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