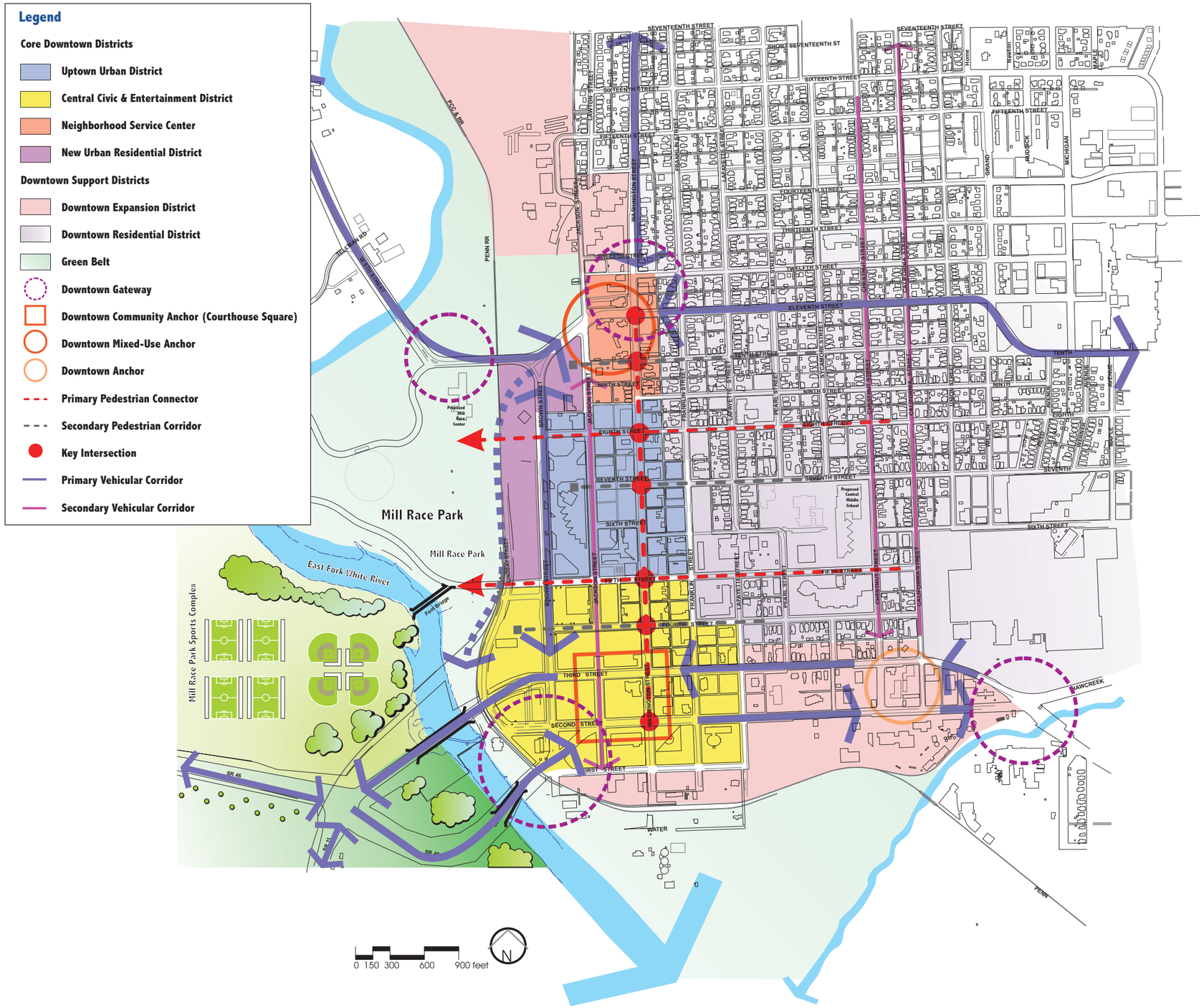
Downtown Districts



How to read the Downtown Districts Diagram

Districts
The four districts within the Downtown Core include:

- Uptown Urban District
- Central Civic & Entertainment District
- Neighborhood Service Center
- New Urban Residential District

These districts constitute the principal downtown core, centered about the primary commercial street, Washington Street.

The three supporting districts surrounding the Downtown core include:

- Downtown Expansion District
- Downtown Residential District
- Green Belt

The activities housed in these districts play an important supporting role for the core downtown including; recreation, neighborhoods, and growth.

Transportation
Getting around an active and vital downtown requires accommodating a mix of systems including vehicular infrastructure, in motion as well as parked, bicycles and pedestrian. The Downtown Districts diagram identifies key vehicular and pedestrian corridors. This includes future consideration of the role of one-way streets in concert with proposed districts. Existing one-way systems, especially the Lindsay and Brown Streets pair, could support a more vital development pattern. The implications of this redefinition should be explored along with "getting around downtown" issues presented in the Development Strategy diagram on page 12.

Since being walkable is a principal trait of an "urban" area, providing pedestrians direct connections to key destinations is a priority. To enhance the commercial viability of downtown, these pedestrian corridors should encourage travel past commercial development, assuring an animated and invigorating experience.

Destinations
Destinations are where opportunity converges for commerce and people gathering. Two prominent destinations anchoring either end of Washington Street include the Courthouse Square and Neighborhood Retail. Each of the numbered cross streets is also a key node, with potential flavor of its own. For example Fifth Street currently offers architectural prominence, Fourth Street could offer entertainment options, and Eighth Street could offer a neighborhood connection to Mill Race Park.

Case Study

Massachusetts Avenue Arts District

Riley Area Development Corporation and Indianapolis Downtown, Inc. commissioned a plan to further activate commercial growth along an already expanding Indianapolis corridor. The goal of the Massachusetts Avenue Commercial Development Plan was to 'create a dynamic and active place for interaction and discovery that is immediately distinguishable from other areas because of its diverse mix of uses and its celebration and promotion of the arts.'

As one of the more diverse areas in Indianapolis, the Northeast Quadrant and Mass Ave in particular, are positioned to capitalize on a growing interest in downtown living. The growing residential population combined with the daytime employment and visitor populations should allow Mass Ave to attract a wide range of retail, restaurant, and service uses.

With a solid base of entertainment/retail establishments, Mass Ave can create a 'destination' atmosphere through the assemblage of an appropriate mix of uses. A cluster of unique shops can be used to attract additional retailers and customers creating a larger niche market. The high visibility of Mass Ave's East End, due to the 150,000 vehicles that pass by daily on Interstate 65/70, is another asset of the corridor.

The arts are significant contributors to a community's ambiance, vitality, and economic health. In fact, the Urban Land Institute states that arts related institutions draw more visitors than sports-related activities. Without a doubt, Massachusetts Avenue is both officially and informally an arts district.

Overview

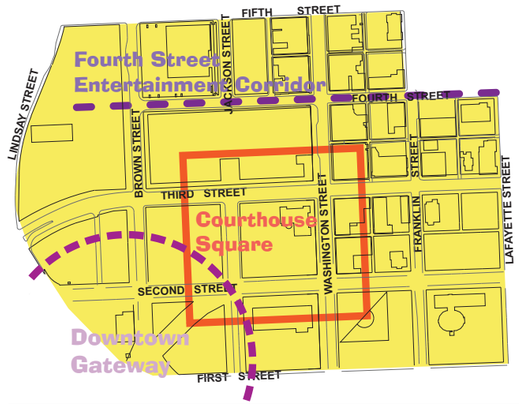
The Existing Conditions Diagram (see page 3) illustrates how Downtown land use and other physical elements are currently organized. A development goal of this plan is to "reinforce the existing physical fabric of downtown to better communicate a sense of place including stronger definition of districts". Most thriving communities have well established areas or districts that are recognized as a place to go for their unique mix of living, working, playing, or shopping; in other words a branded identity. The development strategy identifies four districts within the core of downtown; three supporting enhancement districts surrounding downtown, and one overarching support strategy. The Development Strategy addresses key corridors, gateway elements and gathering places that connect and provide a destination for districts to organize around.

Each of the districts illustrated in the *Downtown Districts* diagram (page 15), described in subsequent pages, will support its own brand of "vibrant urbanity" through a unique blend of investment in the four key markets explored in this strategic development plan: Live, Work, Play, and Shop. This blend helps to define each district's role in the Columbus and regional market. Once successfully implemented, this strategy will establish an engaging, active and vital mix that encourages an expanded and sustained community interest in Downtown Columbus.

Civic & Entertainment District (Core Downtown)

District Role:

An entertainment and governmental services destination that would serve residents and visitors of Columbus.



The Civic and Entertainment District will include a variety of uses as depicted in the adjacent images. Proposed uses include mixed-use residential, shops, restaurants, hotels, and office. The proposed blend of uses will create an active locus for Columbus residents and visitors.

The Civic and Entertainment District will be the locus of activity in Columbus and the region. The 24-hour district includes development of a vibrant mixed-use entertainment destination, rebirth of the Courthouse Square and enhance the downtown gateway. The Fourth Street corridor will become the nexus of entertainment and nightlife in Bartholomew and adjacent counties through cultural attractions assorted venues and up-market restaurants. The Courthouse Square will redefine and animate the center of government functions in Downtown Columbus by reconnecting the area to the broader downtown. The downtown gateway will give a presence to Second and Third Streets to visitors and residents.

Proposed Mix of Uses

The mix of uses, as illustrated in the graphic below, is predominantly in the play and shopping categories. This includes bars, restaurants and small shops. This Civic and Entertainment District will also include a small number of residential units and employment opportunities. The presence of entertainment, government and recreation alternatives make the district appropriate for hospitality functions. A hotel would support the proposed uses by increasing the number of visitors in Downtown Columbus.

The following comprise the elements necessary for successful implementation of the Civic and Entertainment District:

- Hospitality - A hotel with meeting facilities that would serve tourism, amateur sports events, festivals, and the business market.
- Arts, Heritage, and Learning - A grouping of venues serving a local, regional, and tourism market
- Dining - Cluster a wide variety of culinary venues along the blocks centered about the intersection of Fourth and Washington.
- Shopping - A retail center that includes lifestyle and anchor retail shopping intermingled with entertainment offerings.
- Office Reinforcement - Implement a retention and growth program for governmental agencies and service businesses.
- Limited Housing - Loft style/ condominium housing that may be integrated with other uses such as retail and hospitality.
- After-Hours - Lively entertainment corridor for gathering or catching a live performance.
- Parking - Where necessary, provide structured parking above the ground floor with first floor devoted to retail and dining use.

Initial Development Opportunities

- Develop the Fourth Street Entertainment Corridor
- Create the Courthouse Square
- Enhance the Downtown Gateway

Uptown Urban District (Core Downtown)

District Role:

A traditional retail & business district enhanced & reactivated with expanded residential & education opportunities, offering a live/work lifestyle.

The Uptown Urban District will be the hub of business activity and entrepreneurial functions in Bartholomew and surrounding counties. The district will include the bulk of downtown housing in the form of mixed-use lofts, condos and townhouses. The most prominent use will include the work component as demonstrated in the mix of uses diagram. The district will also offer fine dining and small shops in a more reserved atmosphere than the Civic and Entertainment District.

Initial Development Opportunities

- Redevelop empty blocks
- Reinforce connections to Mill Race Park
- Reuse existing upper floors for residences

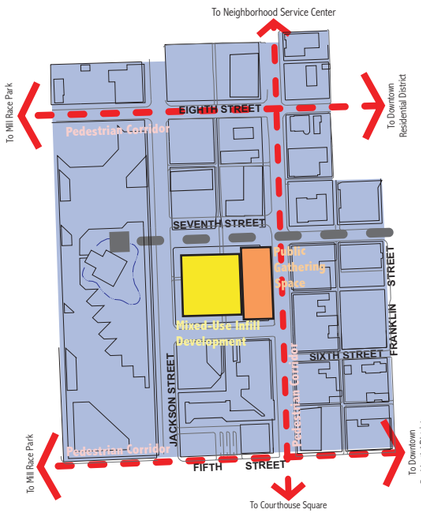
The primary approach to establishment of the Uptown Urban District includes offering new residential units. Repopulating the district will provide the base necessary for additional downtown development activities. Additional efforts include developing vacant properties with mixed-use building including the parking lot at Washington and Seventh Streets. Other efforts include reinforcing connections to and from Mill Race Park and adjacent neighborhoods.

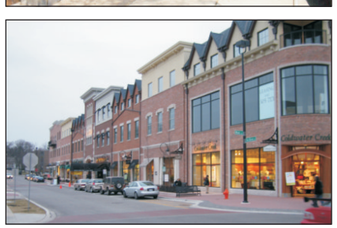
The following comprise the elements necessary for successful implementation of the Uptown Urban District:

Uptown Urban District

- Lofts - Increase offering of upper story loft housing.
- New Housing - New empty nester and young professional housing at “the Block”.
- Learning - IUPUC and other learning venues in an education center, possibly adaptive reuse of the old Post Office.
- Retail - Business support services, apparel, and personal care.
- Dining - Mid-market café, coffee shops, and fresh goods/produce.
- Parking - Where necessary, provide structured parking above the ground floor with first floor devoted to retail and dining use.

Proposed Mix of Uses





The Uptown Urban District will include a mix of businesses and residential uses. The character will remain principally small traditional “Main Street” style mixed-use structures with office and residential above commercial storefronts as depicted in the adjacent photos. Efforts should be targeted toward redeveloping empty lots or surface parking into mixed-use buildings.

Neighborhood Service Center (Core Downtown)

District Role:

A daily goods mixed-use retail center that serves the needs of downtown area residents.

Initial Development Opportunities

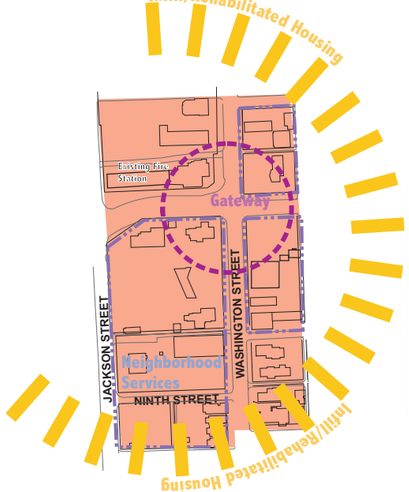
- Infill vacant lots with housing and rehabilitate existing housing to reinforce neighborhood
- Cluster daily goods retail at 11th & Washington Streets
- Create downtown/neighborhood gateway statement

The Neighborhood Service Center will provide downtown and surrounding households with a commercial center and neighborhood gathering place. The center will provide clear and defined identity while serving the daily needs of nearby residents. The approach includes clustering retail around the intersection of Washington and Eleventh Street and rehabilitating the surrounding single-family housing stock and developing vacant lots with multi-family housing adjacent to the retail center. The new center will also define a gateway to downtown from the north.

The center’s mix of uses is roughly split between housing and daily goods and services as depicted in the Mix of Uses diagram. Work and play are only a small portion of the center. The following comprise the elements necessary for successful implementation of the Neighborhood Service Center:

- Retail - Grocery (small market style), drug store, and other convenience retail.
- Housing - Cluster multi-family housing around retail.
- Parking - Surface parking as required to support uses.
- Definition of Place - Development should incorporate a “key place” identifying element.
- Parking - Primarily surface parking as required to support uses.

Proposed Mix of Uses



The Neighborhood Service Center will be a place for surrounding residents to purchase daily goods and a place for gathering. The center will create an identity and gateway into Downtown Columbus focused on Washington and Eleventh Streets. The area surrounding the center will be the focus of rejuvenated housing and include the development of infill multi-family units. The new near downtown housing will support downtown development.

New Urban Residential District (Core Downtown)

District Role:

The Urban Residential District should offer new downtown residential development with a range of multi-family housing options.

Initial Development Opportunities

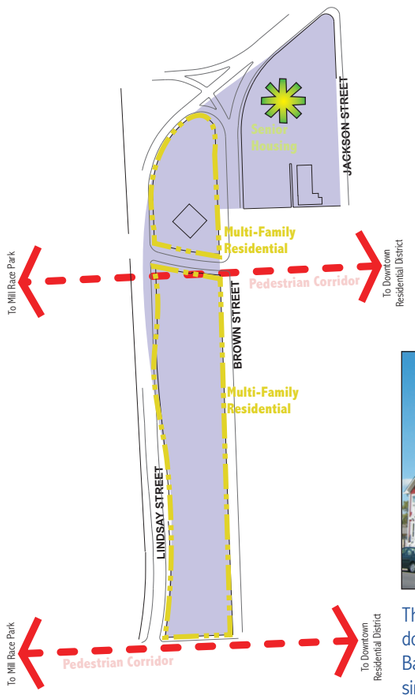
- Develop senior housing linked to Mill Race Center
- Create market rate multi-family housing
- Enhance pedestrian connections to downtown and Mill Race Park

The New Urban Residential District will bring new market rate multi-family housing to Downtown Columbus with emphasis on connecting downtown to Mill Race Park. The district will be principally comprised of housing, as depicted in the Mix of Uses diagram, but will also include some retail below residential. A major component of the district is the development of senior housing that directly relates to the proposed Mill Race Adult Community Center.

The following comprise the elements necessary for successful implementation of the New Urban Residential District.

- Brown & Lindsay Corridor - Multi-family market rate housing with connections to downtown and Mill Race Park.
- North Jackson Street - A seniors housing "community" with linkages to the Mill Race Adult Community Center and easy access to neighborhood service center.
- Parking - Resident parking close to or connected to units and designated visitor parking.

Proposed Mix of Uses



The New Urban Residential District will offer downtown housing options currently not available in Bartholomew County. Housing will be targeted to singles, young couples, empty nesters and seniors. The district will also serve as a critical link to and from downtown and Mill Race Park. Housing will include an assortment of multi-family units that directly connect to downtown and Mill Race Park as depicted in the adjacent diagram and supporting images.

Near Downtown Residential District (Downtown Support)

Enhancement Role:

The Downtown Residential District should remain a predominantly single-family neighborhood, promoting & protecting the existing historic fabric & ensuring well-designed infill development.

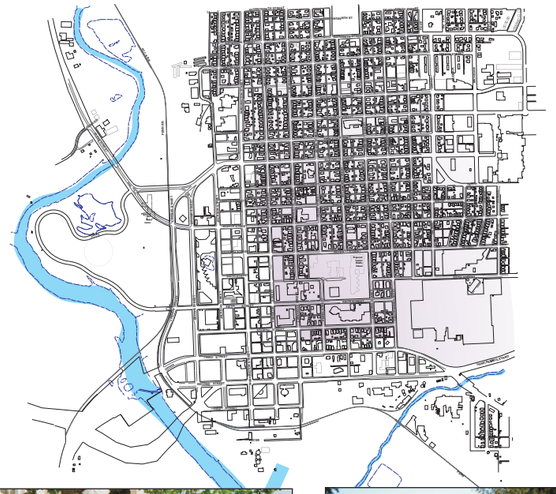
Initial Development Opportunities

- Infill vacant single-family lots
- Rehabilitate historic properties
- Enhance streetscapes through public investment
- Create clear distinctions between neighborhoods

In recent years, near downtown neighborhoods have discovered and utilized the many assets that their suburban counterparts do not posses. The character; proximity to community resources; historic housing stocks and urban charm can be used to attract new investment that would otherwise be directed toward suburban developments. The Near Downtown Residential District possesses these same characteristics. It is comprised of a number of older historic single-family neighborhoods immediately northeast of Downtown Columbus. Near downtown neighborhoods should provide the density and spending potential necessary to support downtown businesses and redevelopment efforts. Because housing is important to a vital and healthy downtown reinvestment in Downtown Columbus' surrounding neighborhoods is critical.

The following comprise the elements necessary for successful redevelopment of the Near Downtown Residential District:

- Reinvestment - Target near downtown housing for reinvestment incentive programs
- Ownership - Implement programs that encourage & facilitate home ownership over renting
- Infill - Identify available land near downtown for infill development, possibly townhouses
- Enhancements - Utilize thematic enhancements of neighborhoods such as unique signage, street furnishings & gateway markers
- Linkages - Eighth Street as the neighborhood "pedestrian" corridor to Mill Race Park for the "core" downtown residential district
- Parking - Resident parking as required by zoning with possible permit or managed on-street parking



Rejuvenation of the Near Downtown Residential District is an integral component of a successful Downtown Columbus. As depicted in the adjacent images, rehabilitated historic structures, and redeveloped vacant lots are important to reestablishing the character of urban neighborhoods. Streetscape elements like sidewalks, fences, trees and lighting are all important to the uniqueness of each neigborhood.

Downtown Expansion District (Downtown Support)

Enhancement Role:

The Downtown Expansion District should offer uses that accompany or support basic functions of downtown & surrounding neighborhoods. This district should also offer space for additional business & office growth in Downtown Columbus.

Initial Development Opportunities

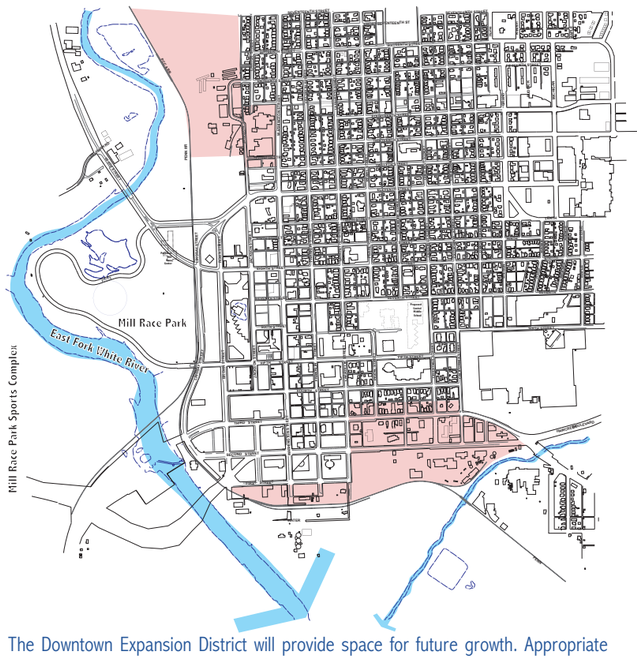
- Reinforce downtown gateways from the north and east
- Explore potential for technology oriented industry
- Acquire key properties for future development

Downtown Columbus is on the cusp of reinvestment and a renewed community interest. As downtown continues to attract new investment and vacant lots are filled, additional area will be needed to accommodate future growth. Because downtown is surrounded by a significant natural floodway to the west and south and a valuable residential neighborhood to the north and east careful consideration must be given to future downtown expansion. Planning for growth will help avoid loss of historic properties while identifying opportunities and enhancing access to natural features.

As such, the Downtown Expansion District offers several acres of land to the north and to the east of downtown to accommodate future growth. This land is currently comprised of transitional commercial uses, vacant land and parking lots. Future planning is necessary to determine the best development options as downtown grows and evolves.

The following elements are important to future planning of the Downtown Expansion District:

- Gateway - Anchor development at east end of Chestnut & California block
- Retail - Commuter driven retail at eastern end of district
- Office Expansion - West end of district adjacent to the Civic & Entertainment District
- Industrial - Light technology oriented industrial park south of Second Street
- Entertainment - Celebrate NASCAR & motor sports/industry heritage
- First & Water Street - Reserve area for development after relocation of the sewage plant and improvements to existing sites



The Downtown Expansion District will provide space for future growth. Appropriate Interim uses may include downtown business support and commuter services. Long-term use could include multi-family housing and technology oriented businesses.

Green Belt (Downtown Support)

Enhancement Role:

A community recreation corridor connected to Downtown Columbus & celebrating the City's proximity to the East Fork of the White River, Flatrock River & Hawcreek.

Initial Development Opportunities

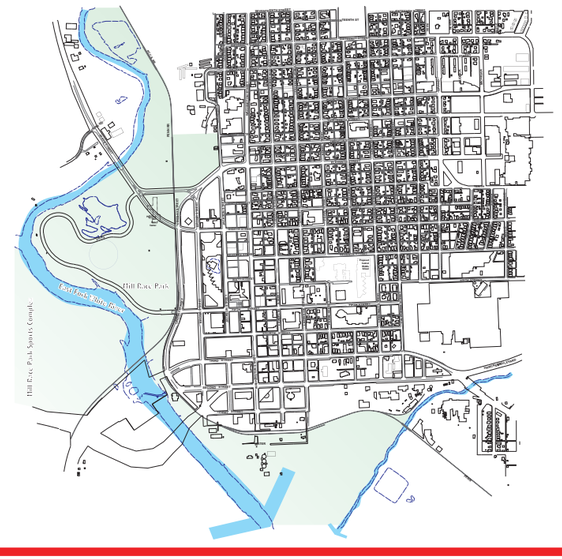
- Develop the proposed Mill Race Adult Community Center
- Connect and expand the people trail throughout the Greenbelt
- Develop the proposed Mill Race Park Sports Complex

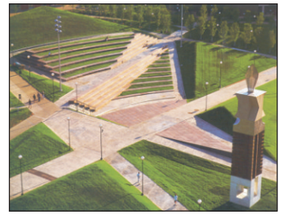
As previously mentioned, Downtown Columbus is surrounded by valuable natural wetlands including rivers and streams. This watershed system is comprised of areas that naturally flood and slowly discharge water during times of heavy rain. While typically not advantageous for development, their natural features are becoming popular for communities as development tools as residents seek to locate near wooded areas and other geological features. Communities can further enhance these features by providing access and creating settings that encourage recreation.

The Greenbelt proposes the addition of a network trails and public spaces and amateur sports venues that connect the community to its surrounding natural heritage. These could also include facilities for people to learn about the value and importance of natural resources and systems. The Greenbelt should offer spaces and activities for people of all ages. The Mill Race Adult Community Center is one example of how the community can utilize the Greenbelt for community purposes.

The following comprise elements that should be considered when planning the Greenbelt:

- Historic Power House - Adaptive reuse of the Power House as a unique dining & entertainment experience
- People Trail - Expand this network to further connect downtown & other neighborhoods
- Venues - Reinforce festivals & event venues to better serve current & anticipated programming
- Gateway - Further invest in the riverfront along the SR 46 & Indianapolis Road gateways to Downtown
- Sports - Expand the amateur sports to better serve the growing regional & national sport festival market
- Interpretative Center - Develop a “natural resources” interpretive center that celebrates sustainability & explores “the land” as an economic force
- Mill Race Adult Community Center - Develop an activity and gathering center for the adult Columbus population
- Parking - Utilize structured & surface parking in Downtown near Washington Street improving access to downtown amenities for Green Belt visitors





The Mill Race Adult Community Center (depicted above) is one step in reconnecting Columbus to its surrounding natural environment. Other efforts could include additional community gathering spaces people trails and landscaped parks.

Case Study
Fort Wayne Indiana Downtown Improvement District

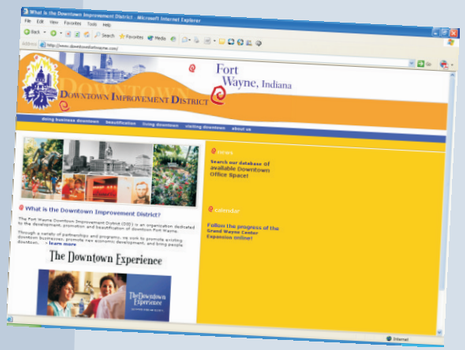
Who We Are
The Downtown Improvement District was created in 1995 when a group of property owners in the downtown area voluntarily united and agreed to pay an annual assessment based on property value. The proceeds are earmarked, by statute, for promotion of downtown, beautification projects, and other improvements in the district.

What We Do
The three main activities of the District include:

1. Supporting existing business and property by:
- Supporting current businesses and attractions through cooperative promotions
- Beautifying public areas within the District
- Providing a safe environment
- Ensuring that services are provided to maintain improvement efforts

2. Supporting Economic Development by:
- Encouraging business growth
- Attracting new businesses to downtown

3. Bringing People to Downtown by:
- Addressing and improving perception of downtown as a safe area in which to live and do business
- Hosting events in the District
- Promoting downtown as a destination within the city



The Downtown Improvement District undertook the process of producing a Streetscape Plan. The plan evaluated buildings, streets, landscaping, parking lots and every other facet of the downtown streetscape. The results were broken into individual phases and priorities for improving Downtown Fort Wayne. The plan included 62 signs in the Central Business District with graphic logos to create a strong visual impact.

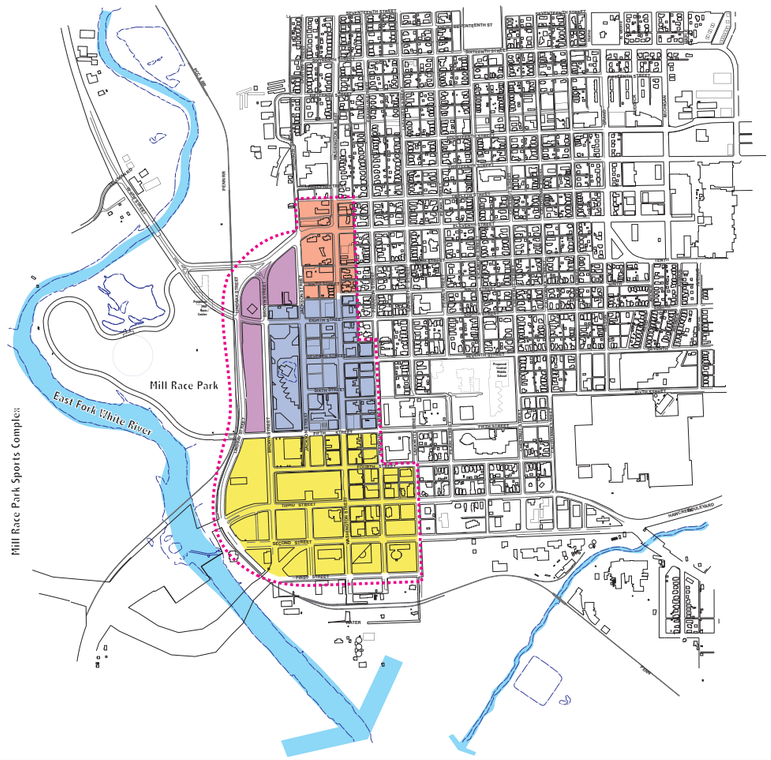
Source: Fort Wayne Downtown Improvement District

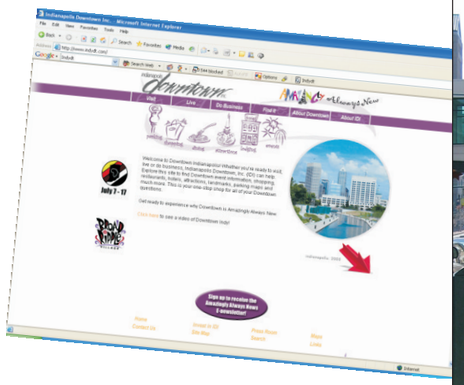
Downtown Advocate

Enhancement Role:
A coordinating entity charged with supporting businesses, bringing people downtown, facilitating redevelopment efforts & seeking continued downtown growth.

Downtowns are often comprised of many different groups that have various agendas but similar goals for improving their community. In order to unify, organize and mobilize the numerous downtown interests, many communities establish special districts called downtown improvement districts or form separate organizations known as downtown advocates. The downtown advocates and districts often take on many roles which vary based on each community's needs. Typically, these groups make certain that downtown is first and foremost hospitable and easy to navigate. They may also act as liaisons between downtown businesses and city government. Many established organizations focus on economic development efforts and attracting investment into their respective domains. In almost every instance, downtown advocates take on some sort of marketing or public relations role to better improve downtowns image in the broader community.

The following roles are important and should be considered when creating an advocate for Downtown Columbus:
- Market Activator - Promoter of available opportunities
- Business Champion - Information clearing house
- Programming Coordinator - Keeper of the downtown plan
- Interface Between Local Government - Downtown organizations & businesses
- Economic Development - Business retention/expansion & facilitator of redevelopment





Large and small communities have discovered the need for Downtown Advocates. Downtown advocates have many roles including ensuring that downtown is friendly and easy to navigate. The Downtown Columbus Advocate could effectively function over the core downtown area including the four core districts as depicted in the adjacent diagram.