



DOWNTOWN RALEIGH

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A Five Year Plan

AUGUST 2024



Acknowledgments

STEERING COMMITTEE

Pam Blondin, DECO Raleigh

Kenneth Bowers, City of Raleigh

Adrienne Cole, Raleigh Chamber

Dr. Paulette Dillard, Shaw University

Denny Edwards, Visit Raleigh

Johnny Hackett, Alley-Oop

Skip Hill, Highwoods

Bill King, Downtown Raleigh Alliance

David Meeker, Trophy Brewing and Carpenter Development

Sharon Moe, North State Bank

Brian O’Haver, Interior Elements

Danya Perry, Wake County

Evan Raleigh, City of Raleigh

Derrick Remer, Duke Energy

Ashton Smith Fisher, ShareFile

Kyle Touchstone, Raleigh Economic Development

PROJECT TEAM

City of Raleigh

Downtown Raleigh Alliance
Project Manager

Interface Studio
Urban Planning and Design

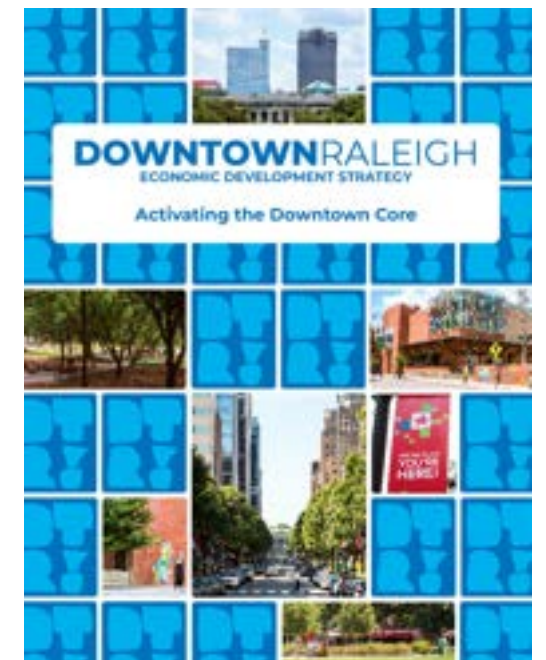
Ninigret Partners
Office Market Analysis & Strategy

&Access
Retail Market & MWBE Analysis & Strategy

Table of Contents

Introduction	01
Big Ideas for Downtown Raleigh	10
Let’s Get Started	44

* This document is accompanied by a separate, companion report: **“Downtown Raleigh Economic Development Strategy: Activating the Downtown Core”** - which provides more detail on recommendations for the downtown core composed of Fayetteville Street and surrounding streets. This report can be accessed from the Downtown Raleigh Alliance website: www.downtownraleigh.org/ed-strategy or by scanning the QR code:





Introduction

Positioning Downtown Raleigh for the Future

Downtown Raleigh has been steadily growing and gaining momentum - new housing and offices, open space investment, events and street life. However, like many cities across the country, the pandemic was a profoundly disruptive force to this trajectory and business as usual. This economic development strategy is an opportunity to evaluate the shifts in how we live and work to position Downtown Raleigh for the future. Specifically, the plan focused on four key areas:

Figure 1. Focus Areas



This document is accompanied by a separate but related document - **“Activating the Downtown Core”** - which was released in February 2024 and provides more detail on recommendations for the downtown core composed of Fayetteville Street and surrounding streets. This document can be found on the Downtown Raleigh Alliance website: www.downtownraleigh.org/ed-strategy



Between August 2023 and April 2024, the consultant team conducted over 60 stakeholder interviews and 15 focus groups with business and property owners, brokers, developers, employers, institutions, and government representatives and elected officials. The team also talked to residents and workers through downtown pop-ups, virtual and in-person residents groups, online activities and a Big Dream forum. The input and ideas from these conversations inform the vision, goals and ideas that follow.

—engagement—over **1000** participants!—



Targeted Stakeholder Engagement



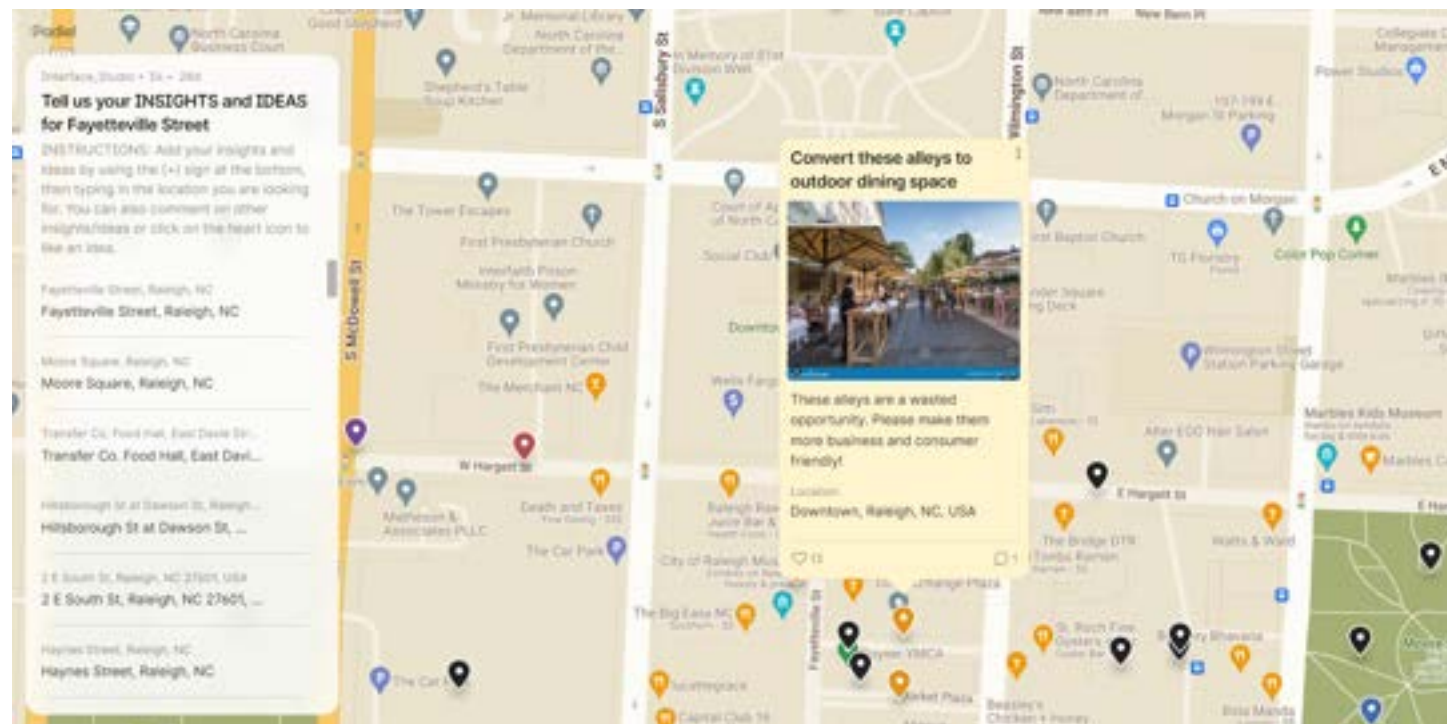
Public Meetings



DRA Annual Survey



Pop-up event in City Plaza, October 2023



Screenshot of online collaborative map. Source: Padlet.com



Big Dream Forum at Marbles Museum, April 2024

Public input and catalytic projects

Public input has shaped the strategies and catalytic projects presented in this plan. A broad set of ideas were formed through a series of conversations with stakeholders and engagement with the broader public over the course of the project. The public weighed in on their priorities through the DRA Annual Survey and a Big Dream Forum. Across various input platforms, there was consistency in the ideas that bubbled to the top.

These included:

- Redesign Fayetteville Street and City Plaza
- Implement downtown bike network and connect to broader greenway system
- Make downtown's major thoroughfares greener and more pedestrian-friendly boulevards
- Bring more housing to Fayetteville Street core
- Create a bold connection between downtown core and Dix Park
- Move the prison for a major new downtown investment
- Improve transit options to connect downtown destinations (bus, light rail)



Big Dream Forum at Marbles Museum, April 2024

In the DRA Annual Survey conducted in early 2024, participants were asked:

Which ideas would have the biggest impact on Downtown Raleigh?

- 1 REDESIGN FAYETTEVILLE STREET AND CITY PLAZA
- 2 CONNECT DOWNTOWN RALEIGH AND DIX PARK WITH A BOLD CONNECTION
- 3 ADD A BASEBALL STADIUM IN OR NEAR DOWNTOWN FOR EITHER MAJOR OR MINOR LEAGUE TEAM
- 4 IMPLEMENT ALL-AGES-AND-ABILITIES BIKE NETWORK
- 5 CONTINUE REDEVELOPMENT AND REPOSITIONING OF STATE GOVERNMENT CAMPUS SITES
- 6 MAKE DOWNTOWN'S MAJOR THOROUGHFARES MORE PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY, LOWER SPEED STREETS
- 7 ATTRACT MORE NATIONAL TOURING ACTS TO THE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Based on the survey results, the ideas were refined and participants of the Big Dream Forum were asked to consider costs in their prioritization of ideas.

How would you spend taxpayer dollars?

TOP 10 BY TOTAL VOTES/COST

- 1 BRING MORE HOUSING TO FAYETTEVILLE STREET
- 2 IMPLEMENT DOWNTOWN BIKE NETWORK AND CONNECT TO BROADER GREENWAY SYSTEM
- 3 REDESIGN FAYETTEVILLE STREET AND CITY PLAZA TO ALLOW FOR MORE YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITY (+11 CATALYTIC COINS)
- 4 DOWNTOWN CORE CONNECTION TO DIX PARK AS AN ON THE GROUND OFF-STREET CULTURAL TRAIL WITH ART
- 5 MAKE DOWNTOWN'S MAJOR THOROUGHFARES GREENER AND MORE PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY BOULEVARDS
- 6 IMPROVE TRANSIT OPTIONS TO CONNECT DOWNTOWN DESTINATIONS (BUS, LIGHT RAIL)
- 7 MOVE THE PRISON FOR A MAJOR NEW DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT (+19 CATALYTIC COINS)
- 8 CREATE A LIFE SCIENCES "INNOVATION TRIANGLE" TO BRING NEW COMPANIES AND JOBS TO DOWNTOWN RALEIGH
- 9 BUILD A MAJOR, SIGNATURE "MUST-SEE" PUBLIC ART PIECE
- 10 REDESIGN NASH SQUARE AS A MORE DYNAMIC PUBLIC SPACE

If cost were not a consideration, an aerial connection to Dix Park (either a bridge or tram) and a stadium would also be top choices.

What Are We Solving For?

Downtown Raleigh faces several interconnected challenges:

- **Office utilization and reduced foot traffic are major concerns for the health of the office market and retail.** Hybrid work is becoming more entrenched; surveys by Deloitte and Conference Board asking about return to work for 2024 show 67% of CFOs expecting to offer hybrid arrangements, with only 4% of CEOs saying they will prioritize going back to the office full-time. The decline in foot traffic and shifts in commuting patterns can have a significant impact on storefront sales and leasing. We need to prepare for a permanent structural shift and plan for other forms of foot traffic and different types of visitation patterns.
- **Regional competition continues to be strong.** Downtown Raleigh is the largest urban center of the Research Triangle - a global brand and one of the fastest growing regions in the country. However, it faces stiff competition within the region, including other downtowns and lifestyle centers that offer pedestrian friendly, new urbanist environments with curated tenants and a public realm managed by a single owner.
- **Downtown is unique and growing, but also disconnected. New investment is happening but not equally across downtown.** Over time, downtown development has shifted west to areas like Hillsborough Street, the Warehouse District, Glenwood South, and now to the south around Dix Park, while the downtown core is disconnected from these investments.

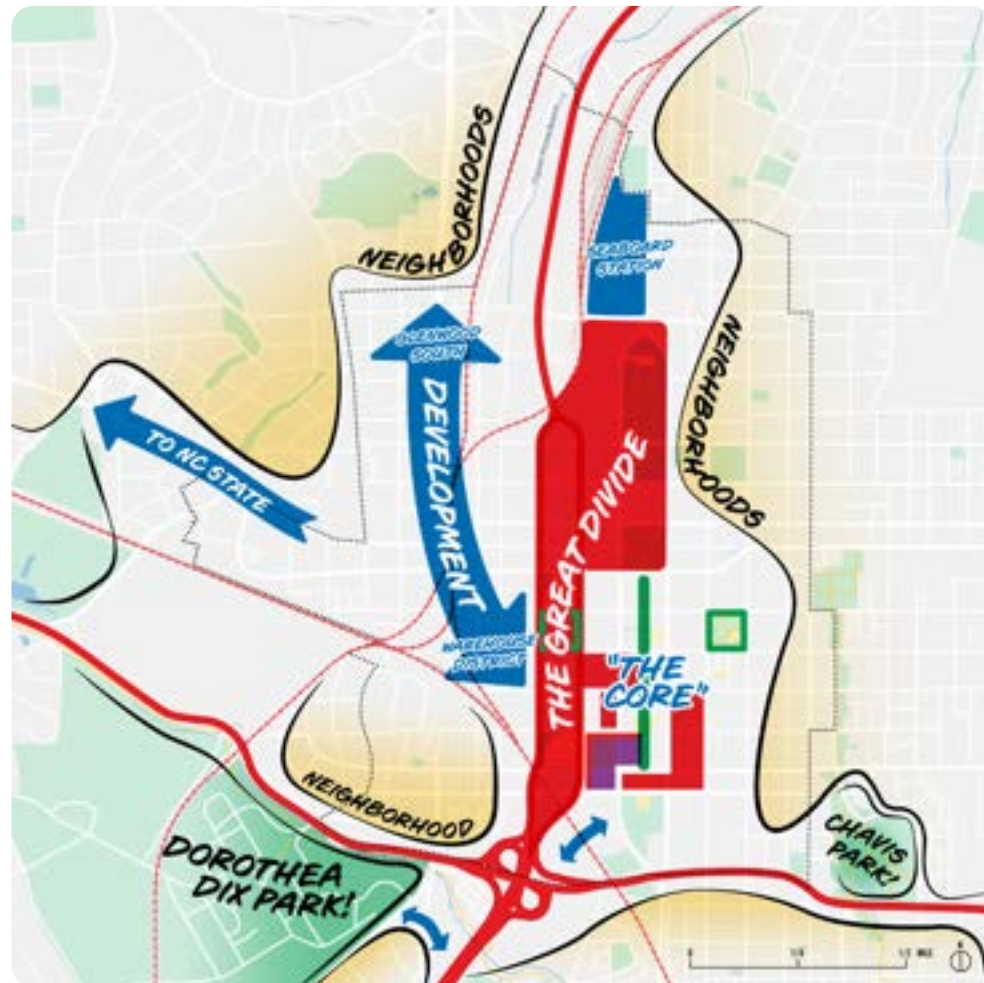


Figure 2. Downtown Barriers

And Downtown Raleigh has unique assets and opportunities:

- **Brand.** Downtown Raleigh is not a mall nor a lifestyle center; this is the opportunity to lean into the qualities that make it distinctive: its authenticity, local and independent businesses, its embodiment of all things North Carolina as the state capital, and its potential for innovation and risk taking
- **Design and creative firms.** Downtown Raleigh has the largest concentration of design and creative firms in the Triangle.
- **Dining scene.** Downtown Raleigh has an impressive array of dining and nightlife options with a strong showing of local destinations and James Beard-recognized chefs.
- **Museums.** There's plenty for families to do in the center of downtown: Marbles Kids Museum is a big draw, and the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and the North Carolina Museum of History offer free admission, contributing to Raleigh's reputation as the Smithsonian of the South.
- **Major investments.** Downtown Raleigh has a pipeline of \$7.1 billion in recent and planned developments and several high profile projects - the Convention Center expansion, Dix Park, and the Bus Rapid Transit system.

Finally, Downtown Raleigh has to be a **great place everyday** as well as a destination. Big ideas are important to generate excitement but we also need to lean into Downtown Raleigh's authenticity and the foundations of what makes for a great downtown experience for everyone. Safety must continue to be a major priority for downtown and more work is needed to provide services to those in need in the Downtown community.

Source (top to bottom): Interface Studio; Gensler Raleigh Office (Gensler); Morgan Street Food Hall (New City Design Group); State museums (Interface Studio); Dix Park Master Plan (Dix Park Conservancy)



What are we trying to accomplish?

- > **Champion a downtown for all** that is fun for families and kids, memorable to visitors, a beacon of civic pride and inclusive for people of all backgrounds.
- > **Diversify the economy and position downtown as the center of innovation and design** to cultivate economic development opportunities that capitalize on downtown's unique strengths.
- > **Bring more people downtown with an active and diverse core** that prioritizes street activity through design and programming, focused and differentiated retail districts, and more housing.
- > **Connect downtown to destinations and to the region** with an emphasis on downtown's inherent walkability and advancing its bike and transit infrastructure.

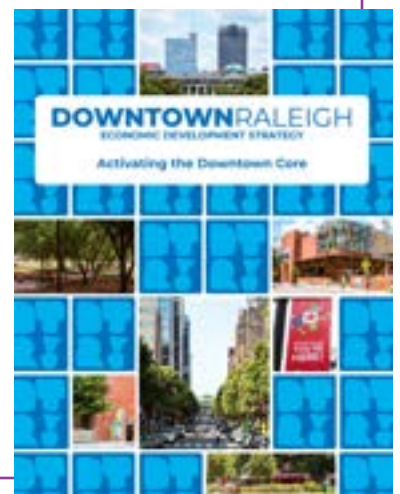
How to use this report

Each of the strategies that follow are related to the focus areas and indicated with an icon:

- RS** **Retail Strategy and Activating the Core** - a mix of retail strategies, physical improvements, and programming to connect and integrate the core with all of downtown. The strategies from the first report - *Activating the Downtown Core* - are integrated into this report under this focus area.
- OM** **Office Market** - strategies to position the downtown office market through marketing and branding, development, and programming
- MW** **Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)** - strategies to support minority- and women-owned businesses through capacity building, partnerships and resource development
- CP** **Catalytic Projects** are also identified to jumpstart each of the strategies. These projects range from policy actions to public space investments and vary in costs and timelines, but all have a large impact on the direction and experience of Downtown Raleigh.

Strategies from Activating the Downtown Core

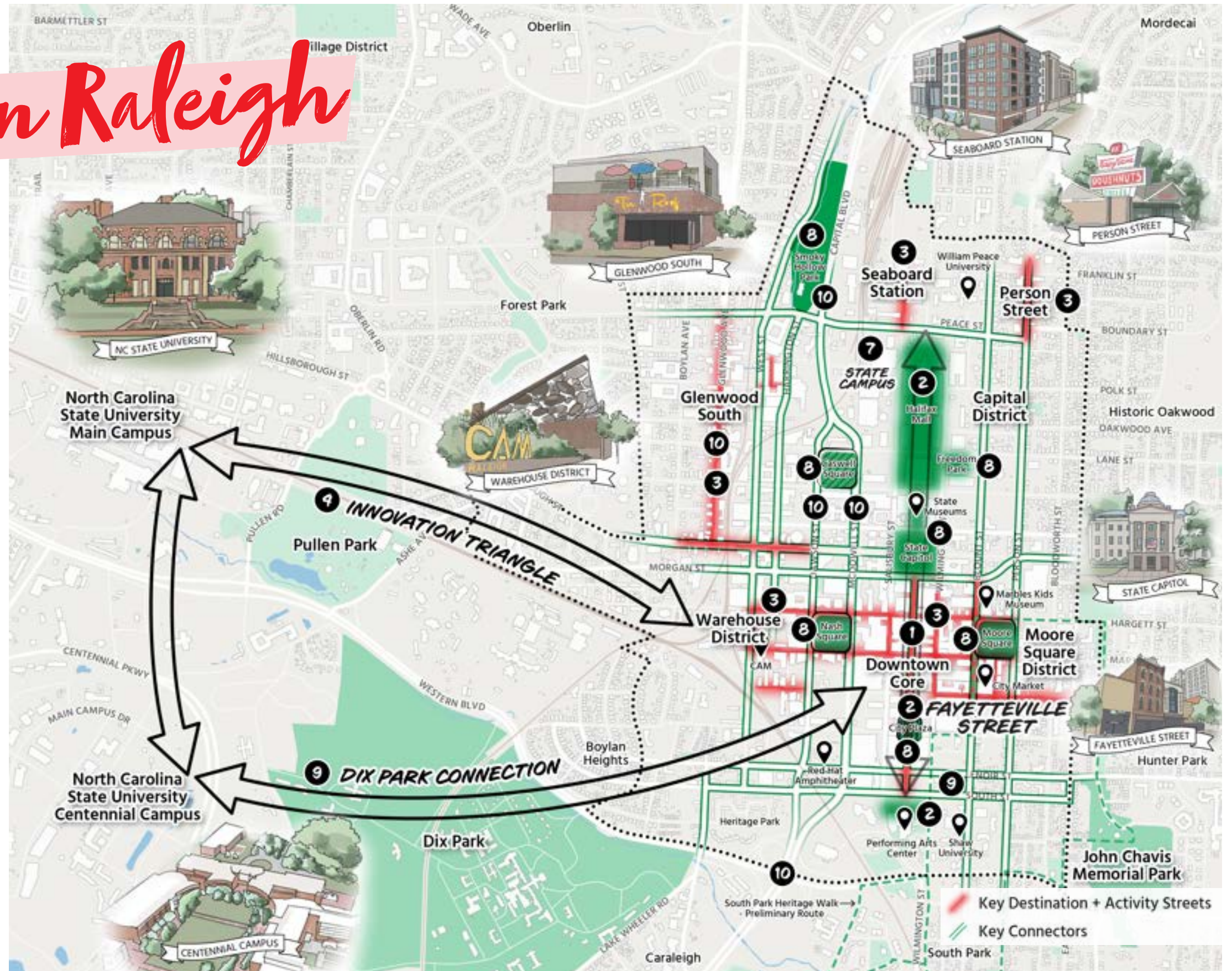
- Develop a **streetscape design for Fayetteville Street** that offers variations on a theme
- Build a strong foundation to ensure downtown is **clean, safe and vibrant**
- Develop a **family-friendly itinerary and route** around downtown core attractions
- Design and market the downtown core as **North Carolina's Main Street**
- Celebrate Raleigh's **Black Business District**
- Add **more housing** on and around Fayetteville Street
- Use **public space** to support neighborhood livability
- Reposition **City Plaza** as downtown's front porch
- Grow Raleigh's **arts and entertainment district**
- Create a **bold connection** south of downtown



Big Ideas Downtown Raleigh

- 1 Energize downtown core with daily activation and placemaking to bring more people downtown
- 2 Elevate public art to create a unique experience that celebrates Raleigh and North Carolina
- 3 Diversify retail opportunities to address downtown needs
- 4 Support growth and diversification of innovation sector downtown
- 5 Position Downtown Raleigh as the Creative + Design Center of the Triangle *
- 6 Expand capacity of MWBE entrepreneurial ecosystem to support downtown and citywide needs *
- 7 Integrate the government campus with the downtown core
- 8 Create exceptional public spaces for everyone
- 9 Create a bold connection to Dix Park
- 10 Design streets that encourage walking, biking and public transit

* Starred indicate study area / city wide strategies



Strategy #1

RS

Energize downtown core with daily activation and placemaking to bring more people downtown

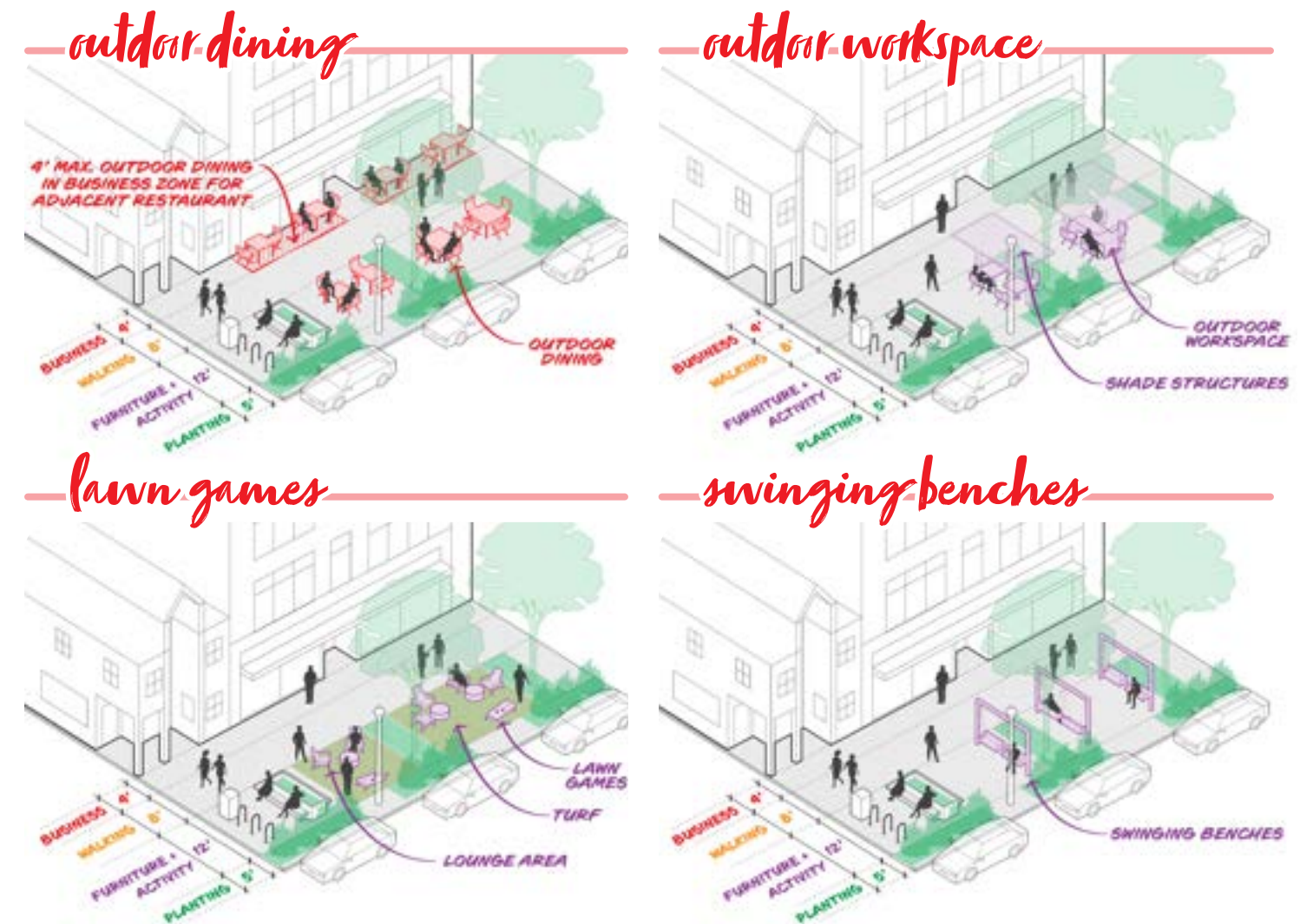
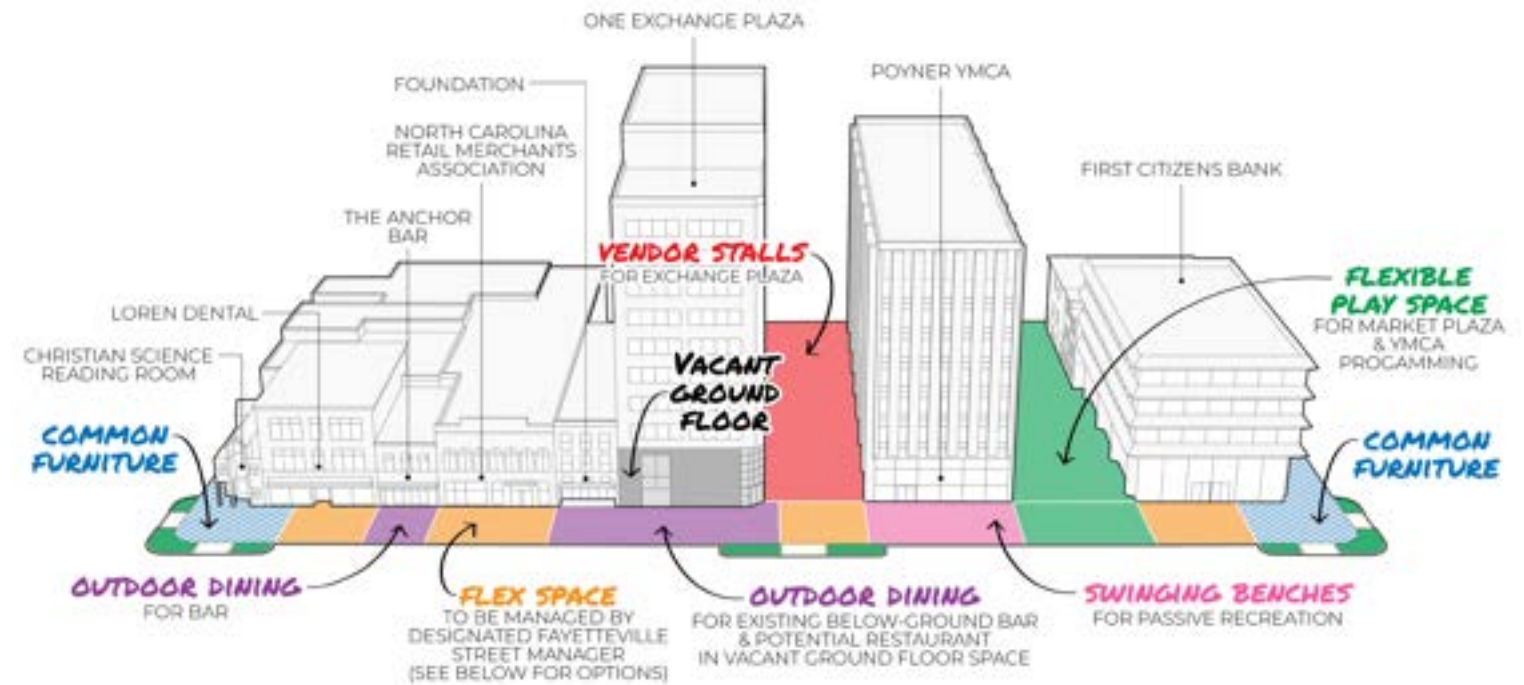
The core of downtown centered around Fayetteville Street is disconnected from investments in other districts downtown and lacks some of the color and vibrancy of these newer districts. To thrive, the core needs a compelling vision that prioritizes street activity, improves connections to nearby assets and attracts a variety of different people - not just office workers. The earlier Downtown Raleigh Economic Development Strategy document - *Activating the Downtown Core* - laid out a mix of retail strategies, physical improvements, programming and policies all with an eye to further activating Fayetteville Street and surrounding streets to create new and varied experiences to attract new businesses, residents and visitors. A few highlights include:

Actions

1. Develop a streetscape design for Fayetteville Street that allows for flexibility while still maintaining an overarching look and feel [see also Strategy #2, 8 and 10]
2. Redesign and program City Plaza for year round activity as Raleigh's front porch and its stage [see also Strategy #2]
3. Elevate the customer experience in the core through enhanced public realm maintenance and more accessible parking
4. Market local assets and position downtown as a daily destination
5. Celebrate Raleigh's Black Business District through public art, programming and implementation of the South Park Heritage Walk [see also Strategy #2 and 8]
6. Develop a family-friendly itinerary and route around downtown attractions through marketing, public realm improvements, public art and programming
7. Add more housing in and around the downtown core through redevelopment of strategic sites, parking lots, and City-owned parking decks
8. Maximize planned investment of Red Hat Amphitheater relocation, convention center expansion and future convention hotel to anchor an arts and entertainment district on the southern end of downtown and support nearby businesses [see also Strategy #3]

For additional detail, see *Activating the Downtown Core* report: www.downtownraleigh.org/ed-strategy

Figure 3. Fayetteville Street Improvements



Strategy #1

How To Get Started

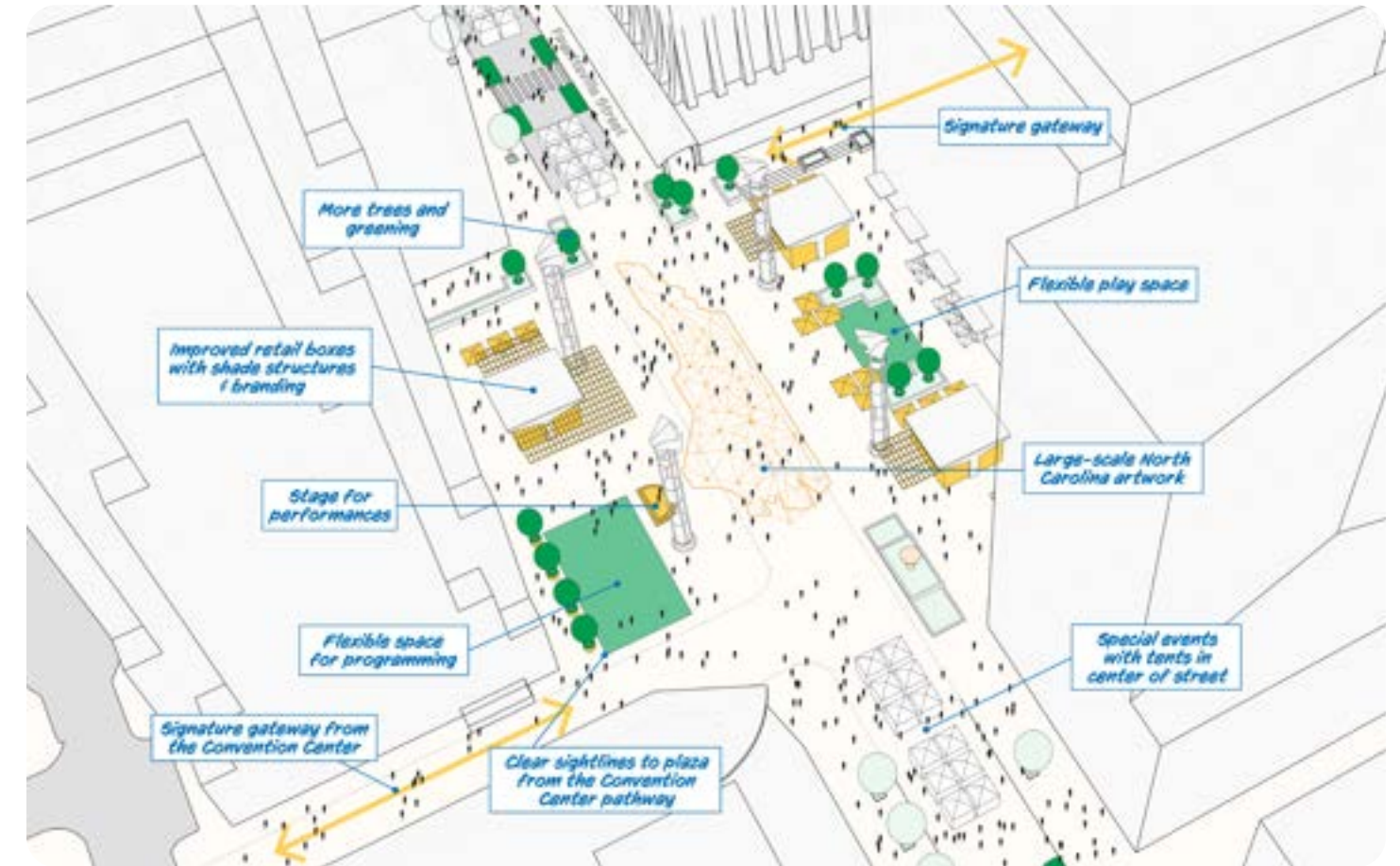
NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Convene a working group of relevant City departments, public safety officials and other stakeholders to update Fayetteville Street standards
- Empower one City department to carry forward Fayetteville Street recommendations and hire an engineer / landscape architect to develop a strategy for furniture removal, paving repair and selective plantings
- Finalize MOU for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department to oversee City Plaza
- Develop a programming plan and budget for City Plaza that includes major events as well smaller-scale and seasonal events
- Convene a working group to develop activation, partnerships and cross-marketing opportunities with family-friendly attractions and businesses in the downtown core
- Advance disposition of City-owned parking lot north of PAC for housing

INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

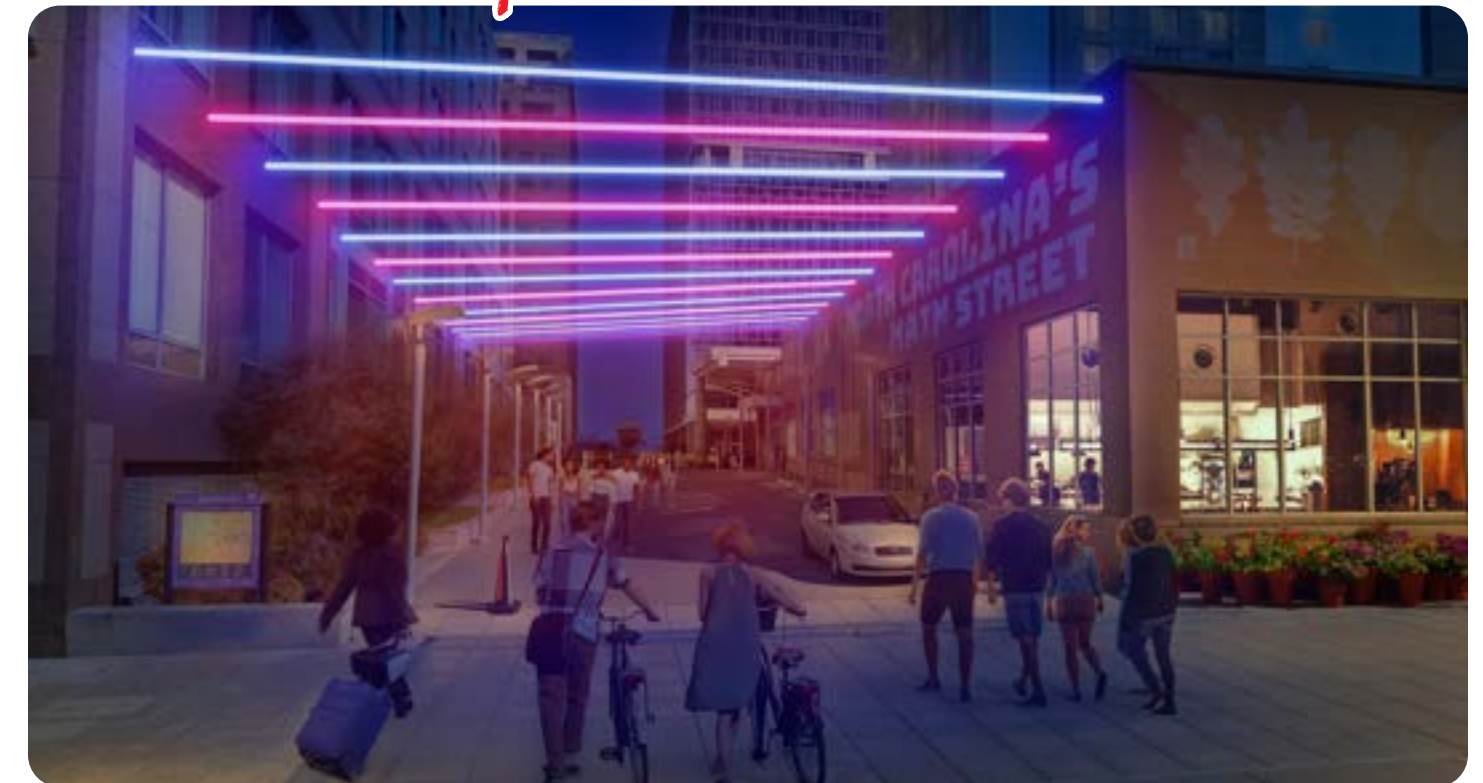
- Advance disposition of One Exchange Plaza for housing
- Implement the streetscape transformation for Fayetteville Street and City Plaza
- Allocate financial and technical assistance for street activation and lighting by property owners, including retaining lighting designers, landscape architects and architects to develop concepts
- Engage stakeholders to determine tenancing and design for City Plaza

Figure 4. City Plaza Redesign



NOTE: For illustrative purposes only.

signature gateway



Strategy #2 RS

Elevate public art to create a unique experience that celebrates Raleigh and North Carolina

Art can elevate a downtown and Raleigh has a history of creative arts and artists. Downtown includes examples of the city's creativity but there is more that can be done to support local artists and create a distinctive downtown experience. Music and art should be a focus and opportunities exist across this plan's recommendations to integrate more visible and engaging works of art.

Actions

1. Introduce smaller scale but more frequent programming, such as live music, outdoor performing arts, and more culturally diverse events on the street and public spaces, especially on Fayetteville Street, plazas, and squares [see also Strategy #1]
2. Commission distinctive public art for the Black Business District and for City Plaza and Halifax Mall that speak to Raleigh as North Carolina's Main Street [see also Strategy #1 and 7]
3. Use creative art, branding and wayfinding as part of the streetscape, windows and lobbies to highlight Raleigh as the Creative & Design hub of the region and activate key corridors and routes [see also Strategies #1 and #5]
4. Bring special exhibits from area museums as temporary and rotating exhibits in downtown core
5. Attract more national touring acts to the Performing Arts Center

For additional detail, see *Activating the Downtown Core* report: www.downtownraleigh.org/ed-strategy

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Meet with Performing Arts Center and other local arts organizations to develop regular outdoor programming for downtown public spaces (especially Fayetteville Street and City Plaza) with a focus on smaller-scale more frequent events
- Work with design community to initiate art, branding and design elements for key corridors
- Initiate discussion with office building owners about activating lobbies
- Conduct a market study for the Performing Arts Center

public art & wayfinding



events & programming



Source (top left to bottom right): City Thread (Garey Gomez); PLD Magazine (Dr. Elham Souiri); Lawrence Connector (KMDG); Tarneit Wayfinding (MAMAM); Downtown Macon (Interface Studio); AFRIBEMBÉ Festival (Downtown Brooklyn Partnership); The Plaza at 300 Ashland (Downtown Brooklyn Partnership); Raleigh Illuminate Art Walk (Downtown Raleigh Alliance)

Strategy #3

- 2. Ensure a diversity of space opportunities to better meet the needs of businesses across industries, including through micro business options, preserving older and architecturally significant buildings, master lease agreements, and new incubator spaces
- 3. Re-tool policies and processes to support businesses and activation downtown and city wide, such as expanding City of Raleigh Upfit Grant, bringing back expedited permitting, and reviewing change-of-use permits

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Host a workshop with City, retail brokers, developers, and other retail real estate professionals to delineate districts and prioritize blocks for ground-floor retail storefronts
- Convene a working group with the City of Raleigh, property owners, and real estate professionals to develop innovative real estate solutions for hard-to-lease, legacy properties in the urban core, such as large spaces in older buildings on Fayetteville Street
- Explore feasibility of funding placemaking interventions through Facade Rehabilitation Program
- Execute master leases for businesses seeking space after participation in the Pop Up Shops and others desiring an opportunity to test the viability of a downtown location.
- Engage organizations to identify a partner to manage tenant recruitment and management of master leased spaces.

INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- Expand mobile retail and vending carts by redefining allowable zones and reviewing licensing
- Strategize for new incubator spaces along Exchange Plaza

vibrant dining



market-hall



entertainment-district



Source (top left to bottom right): Commonwealth Restaurant & Skybar, Charlottesville, VA (Alloy Workshop); St. Anselm, Washington, D.C. (Rey Lopez/Eater DC); South City Kitchen Buckhead, Atlanta, GA (ASD|SKY); Backyard Band; Movement Cafe, London (Morag Myerscough)

Strategy #4 OM MW

Support growth and diversification of innovation sector downtown

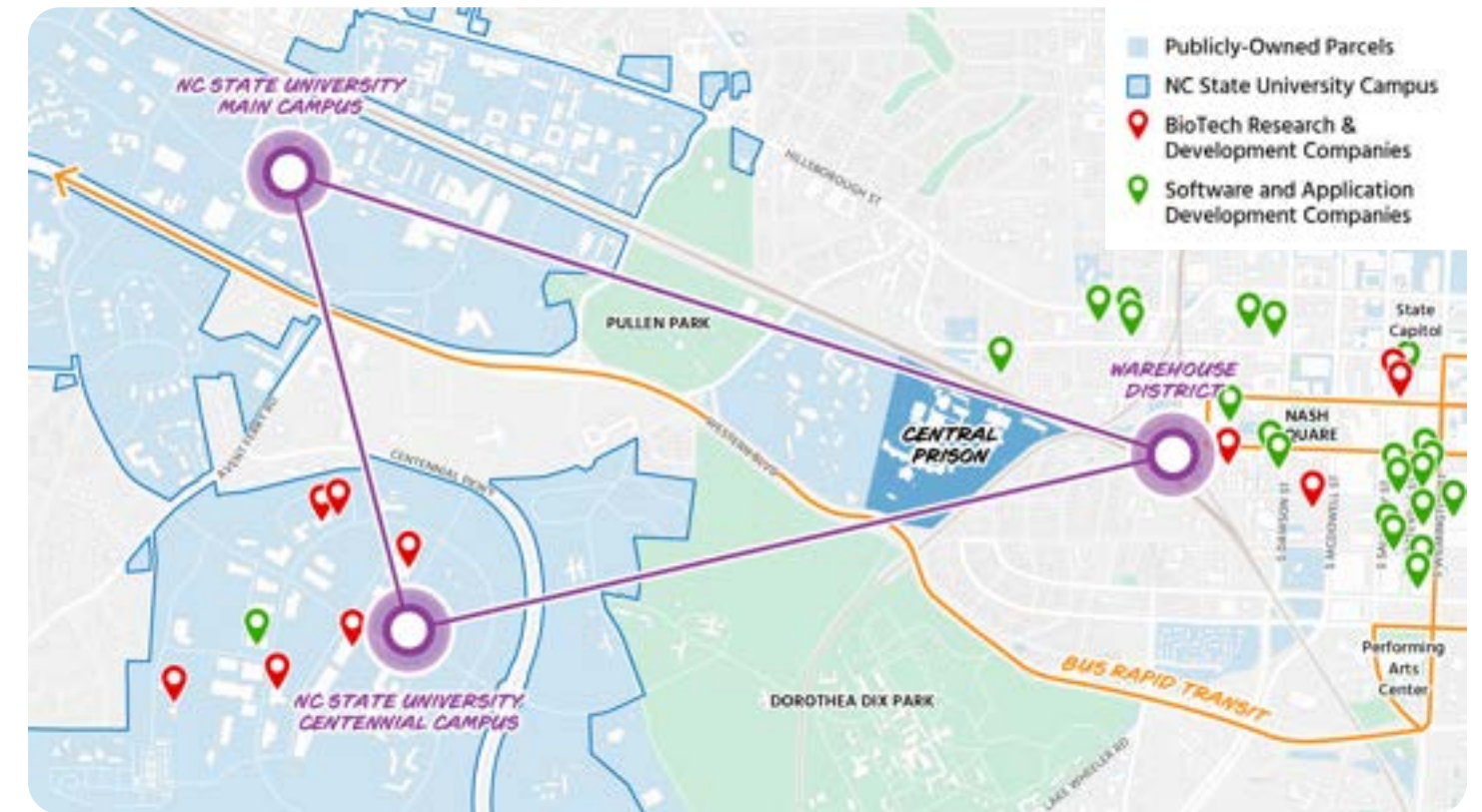
The Research Triangle region is a global brand location for the innovation economy. Downtown Raleigh is already home to a significant software and digital technology presence as well as a number of co-working spaces with a large number of smaller companies. The city's incentive policies should be reviewed to ensure they are supportive of new businesses, including later stage start ups, in the target sectors. The review should include eligibility requirements such as the number of jobs, and capital investment levels and definitions.

Moreover, the Research Triangle is also the home to a growing biotech R&D presence. These companies tend to congregate in urban locations. While Raleigh is not the major regional force on biotech R&D, it is perhaps best positioned for future growth in this sector with its access to office space and the potential to host lab space as companies elsewhere in the Triangle grow.

Actions

1. Consider revisions to Business Investment Grant policy to create healthy startup companies by moving to a per job grant with a potential additional grant for meeting certain product development and fundraising goals, and add consideration for Downtown Priority Area
2. Form group to evaluate speculative life science wet lab space options to stimulate development of biotech industry growth downtown
 - Group should consider potential for new construction or redevelopment opportunities, institutional partners to absorb some of the space, and financing mechanisms to manage the risk of speculative development
3. Work with local informal associations like Downtown Techies, RDU AI, and other similar groups and the downtown hospitality community on creating events and activities to help reinforce innovation community and connection to Downtown Raleigh
4. Begin the process of creating the "Innovation Triangle in the Triangle"
 - Link Centennial Campus and Downtown as complimentary innovation centers that can increase the competitiveness of both locations through joint marketing efforts, joint pitches on opportunities as appropriate
 - Improve physical and transportation connections that allow workers to move easily between the two locations [see also Strategy #9 and 10]
5. Explore a downtown campus for local academic institutions to add more synergy with the research and workforce opportunities coming out of these institutions

Figure 6. Innovation Triangle



RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC/PRIVATE ANCHOR INSTITUTION PARTNERSHIP

It is common for initial life science buildings in communities with uncertain demand for lab space to have several partners enabling its construction. An example of state and institutions coming together is the development and construction of a 212,000 square foot lab building in downtown Providence. This building is a public-private anchor institution partnership. The state of RI is moving health and forensic labs into this building, and provided a key part of the financing. The state will control approximately 80,000 square feet. Brown University will lease 20,000 square feet of lab space. The balance of the building is available for commercial tenants or other institutions to lease.



New Rhode Island Public Health Laboratory Building
Source: HOK

Strategy #4

How To Get Started

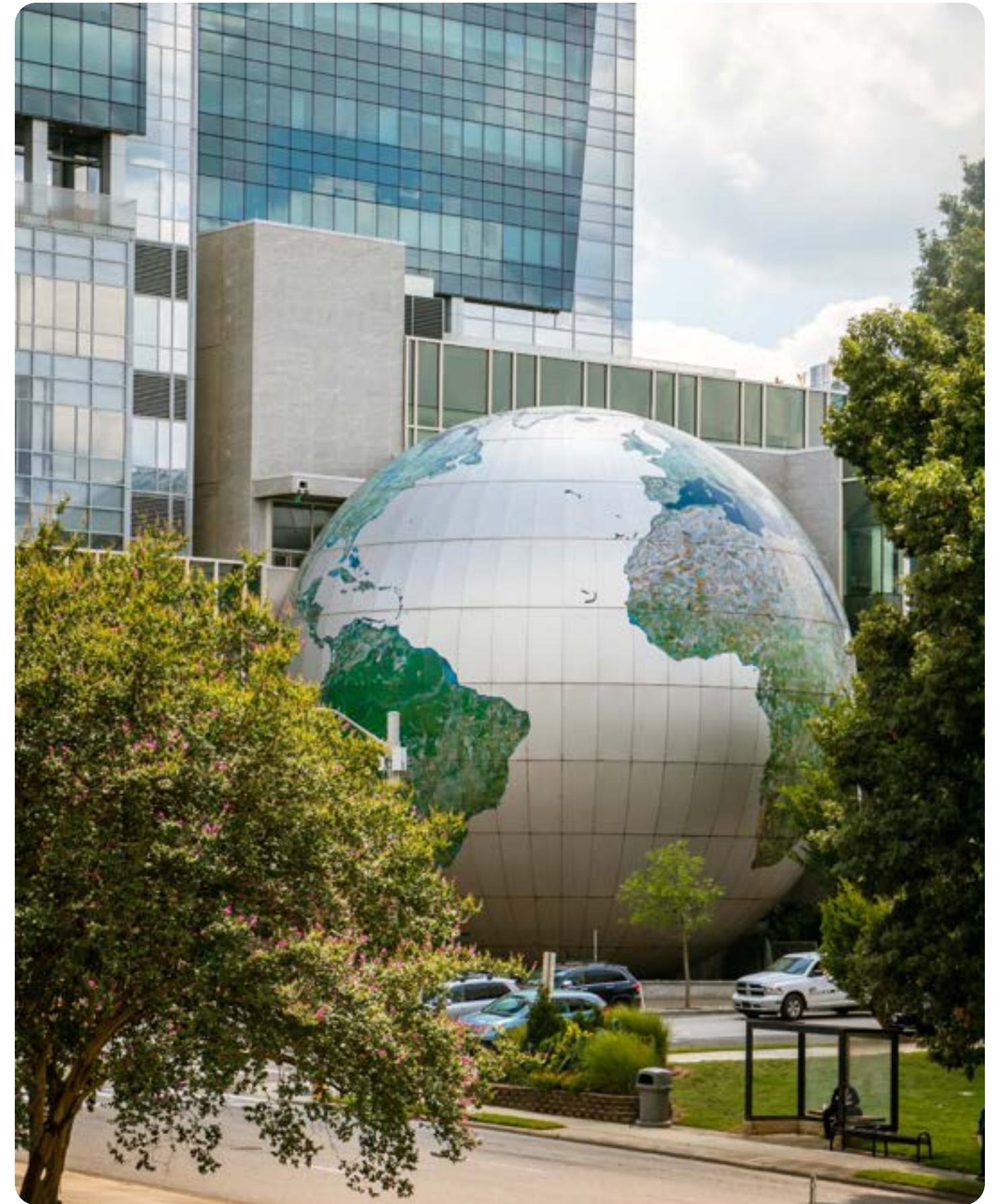
NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Initiate revisions to City business grant policy
- Create a life science task force to consider development options, including:
 - Engaging institutional partners (hospitals, colleges, universities, community colleges, county and state health departments) to determine lab space needs and potential for serving as anchor tenants
 - Exploring financing and partnerships that can work within state legal limits to provide credit support and/or capital to help with financing a speculative building including Tax Increment Grant

- Work with informal associations to host more events downtown

INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- Work with Dix Park Conservancy, NCSU and City to improve connectivity between downtown and Centennial Campus through Dix Park via extended shuttle service, clear signage and marketing, and a potential new bicycle/pedestrian connection
- Engage academic institutions to gauge interest in adding a downtown presence



Downtown Raleigh has a number of different innovation, technology, and life science assets, like the Nature Research Center (shown above), which can form the base of a thriving downtown innovation hub.

Strategy #5



Position Downtown Raleigh as the Creative+Design Center of the Triangle

Downtown Raleigh is home to the largest concentration of architectural, design, digital marketing, and similar firms in Wake County as well as across the Triangle. Creating a series of initiatives that highlight this important sector of the economy broadens the overall business brand and appeal of Downtown Raleigh.

Actions

1. Spotlight industry by hosting a Design Week-type event
2. Create the iconography, catch phrases, and communication presence to brand Downtown Raleigh as the Creative + Design Center to recruit additional firms in this space to downtown
3. Utilize creative and design community to create visual representations, window presence and lobby activation along key corridors: Hillsborough, Hargett, Martin and Fayetteville Streets [see also Strategy #2 and 10]
4. Maintain a range of building typologies and characteristics to attract these types of firms by preserving some of the older 2 and 3 story buildings
5. Work with North Carolina State University, Shaw University, and William Peace University to maintain a “Design Hub” in Downtown Raleigh that initially showcases faculty and student work but may over time evolve into a community design showcase

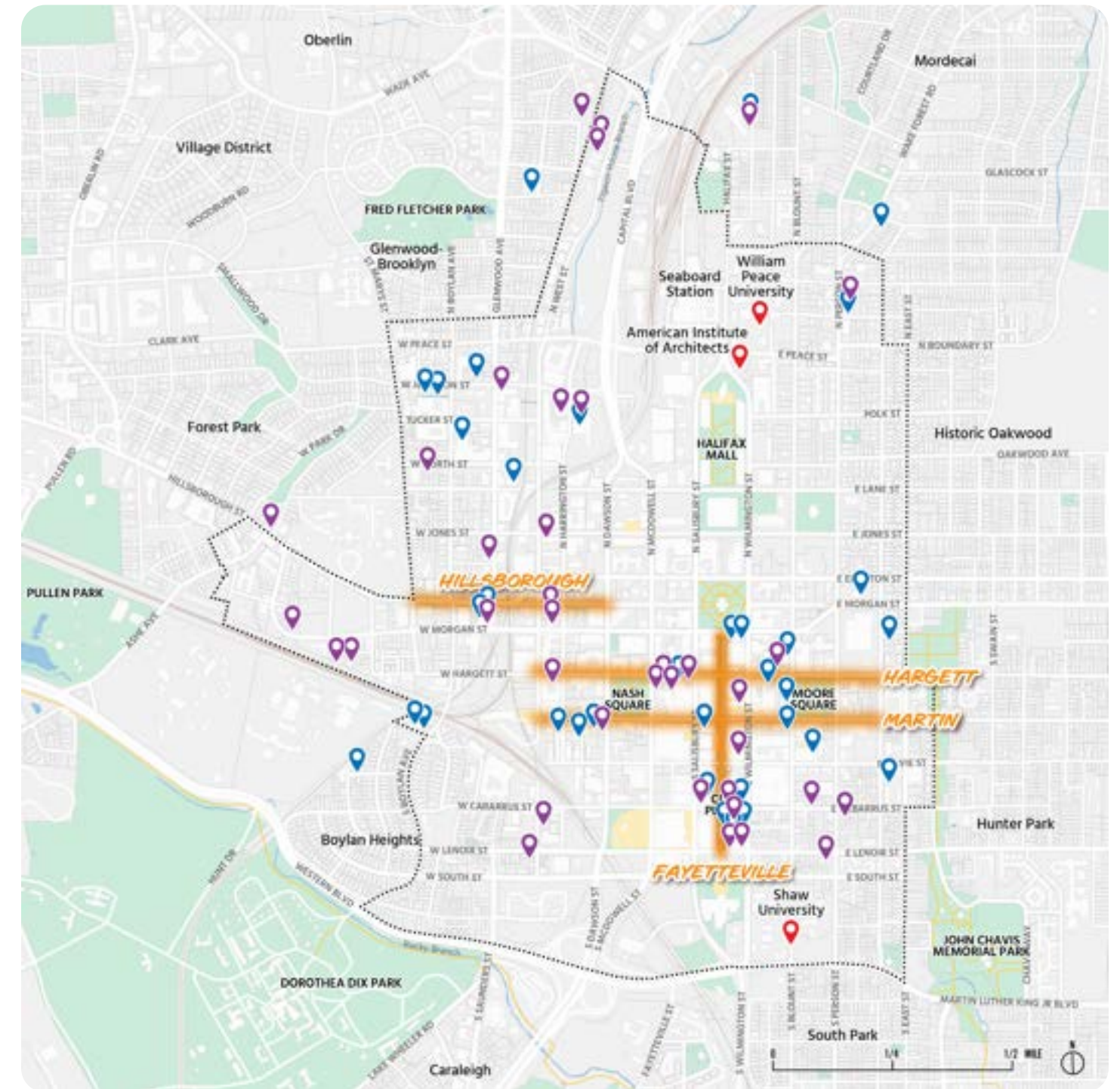
DESIGNPHILADELPHIA

DesignPhiladelphia is the evolution of the Center for Architecture and Design. It now represents a cross-section of design fields. It offers K through Career educational programming, houses a variety of organizations, and facilitates community conversations regarding important design issues in Philadelphia.



Source: DesignPhiladelphia

Figure 7. Creative / Tech Companies and Institutions



Downtown Raleigh share of creative and design firms in Wake County:

- 46% of social media firms
- 71% of advertising firms
- 36% of architecture and design firms (including 12 of the largest 25 in the region)

Key Design Corridor

Creative Firms (Social/Digital Media, Design, Advertising)

Architecture, Landscape Design, Interior Design Firms

Relevant Institutions

Strategy #5

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Convene key creative / design firm leadership plus NC State College of Design, Shaw University Department of Mass Communication and Digital Technology, and William Peace University design and arts programs to explore potential initiatives such as corridor presence initiative, marketing/branding, Design Week/industry spotlight opportunities. A desired outcome would be the creative / design community takes over this initiative.
- Develop marketing materials for leasing community

INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- Approach city academic institutions, including NC State, Shaw University and William Peace University, about a potential downtown Design Hub including examples and potential storefront locations
- Engage the city and the development community on the value and importance of older, smaller buildings in providing low cost space to support local retail, the role of building character in attracting specific types of tenants, and potential models of assistance to restore and renovate these spaces
- Consider a “Downtown Raleigh by Design” annual event using design, architecture, engineering community and students in related programs from nearby institutions to address specific downtown issues

creative districts



Source (top left to bottom right): Beatrice Creative Art District, Beatrice, NE (MainStreet Beatrice); ViBe Creative District, Virginia Beach (ViBe); Port Townsend Creative District (ArtsWA)

Strategy #6

Expand capacity of MWBE entrepreneurial ecosystem to support downtown and citywide needs

Over the past decade, entrepreneurship in Raleigh has flourished with substantial new business starts across races, ethnicities, and genders. Many business support organizations launched and university programs expanded in response. Yet, there is a need to address overlapping services, revenue disparities, and unmet needs for businesses aiming to scale, pivot, or exit. However, most organizations working with MWBEs regionally do not have a downtown-only scope, yet downtown businesses rely on collaborations to address resource limitations. Downtown Raleigh can have a specific value proposition in developing a specialized ecosystem for MWBEs in industries with existing concentrations, such as storefront merchants and downtown office users in healthcare, administration, and professional services. These businesses can benefit from internship and job placement pathways in partnership with local higher education institutions that address staff limitations of micro businesses without dedicated recruitment teams. Some of these efforts may require new and redesigned inclusive and non-discriminatory solutions to comply with the Civil Rights Acts.

Actions

1. Convene a partnership of ecosystem organizations to explore options to fill programmatic, organizational, and fiduciary gaps downtown to enable ongoing support, increase business engagement, and track progress
2. Develop and fund new partnerships and resources, including programmatic and funding opportunities with downtown universities (see Buncombe County grant precedent)
3. Evaluate the feasibility of revolving loan funds for new and existing business needs
4. Strengthen the pipeline between downtown employers and local institutions, particularly Shaw University and William Peace University
 - Ensure downtown MWBE and micro businesses are represented in career/ entrepreneurship fair and workshops at local institutions
 - Identify several downtown employers to establish an internship program and pipeline to nearby HBCUs and diverse student populations
5. Pilot a small business services storefront downtown to co-locate business support organizations hosting downtown office hours, educational and networking events, and resources with retail space in the storefront for emerging businesses.

precedents

BUNCOMBE COUNTY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Provide grants to nonprofit organizations the County partners with to achieve outcomes of its Strategic Plan across four categories, including creating a vibrant economy across topics of financial wellbeing, small business and workforce. This program highlights an opportunity to explore City funding opportunities to ESOs to support the strategy.

WILMINGTON DOWNTOWN, INC. MICROLOAN PROGRAM

For profit business owners in targeted geographic areas are eligible for loans up to \$20,000 for an up to 5 year term at $\frac{3}{4}$ the NY prime rate to cover a range of expenditures including inventory, furniture, rent/mortgage payments, and expanding e-commerce capabilities, among others; expenses related to personnel, renovations, moving, and vehicles are ineligible.

LIFE SCIENCES SPRINTS

This industry-led group helps bring awareness to the resources and workforce available in Connecticut for life-science companies and offers internship opportunities in both emerging and established companies across the life-science industry in Connecticut.

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Survey ecosystem organizations with goals of understanding resources and recruit organizations to meet regularly to address resource gaps
- Meet with vacant storefront owners to identify opportunities for small business support storefront
- Initiate discussions with university career development departments for internships and career opportunities
- Identify and connect with affinity groups and community organizations to host events and tours downtown to increase engagement with businesses and entrepreneurs

INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- Develop separate working groups to evaluate the feasibility of two revolving loan funds

Strategy #7

RS OM

Integrate the government campus with the downtown core

The State Government Complex is undergoing a gradual redeployment of space and workers as the needs of state government change. These are opportunities to bring the downtown and government campuses together in ways that enhance the vibrancy of downtown, demonstrate Downtown Raleigh as the Main Street of North Carolina, and reposition Peace Street as a connector from Glenwood South to Person Street. Integration with the state government campus would also add more connectivity and vibrancy through the northern part of Downtown Raleigh by better connecting with new development at Seaboard Station and existing & future activity along Person Street and Peace Street.

Actions

1. Create new northern gateway to downtown from Peace Street

- Commission a design for Archdale gateway and connection to Halifax Mall (with potential major, signature “must-see” public art piece that celebrates downtown as the capital of North Carolina) [see also Strategy #2]
- Improve Peace Street and rail bridge

underpasses with lighting, signage, art [see also Strategy #2 and 10]

- Encourage Peace Street mixed use redevelopment through a public-private partnership

2. Encourage other public-private partnership (P3) opportunities as state government campus plans evolve

3. Restore Caswell Square as open space [see also Strategy #8]

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Continue dialogue with the state government on key planning and design issues of how the state campus interfaces with the downtown

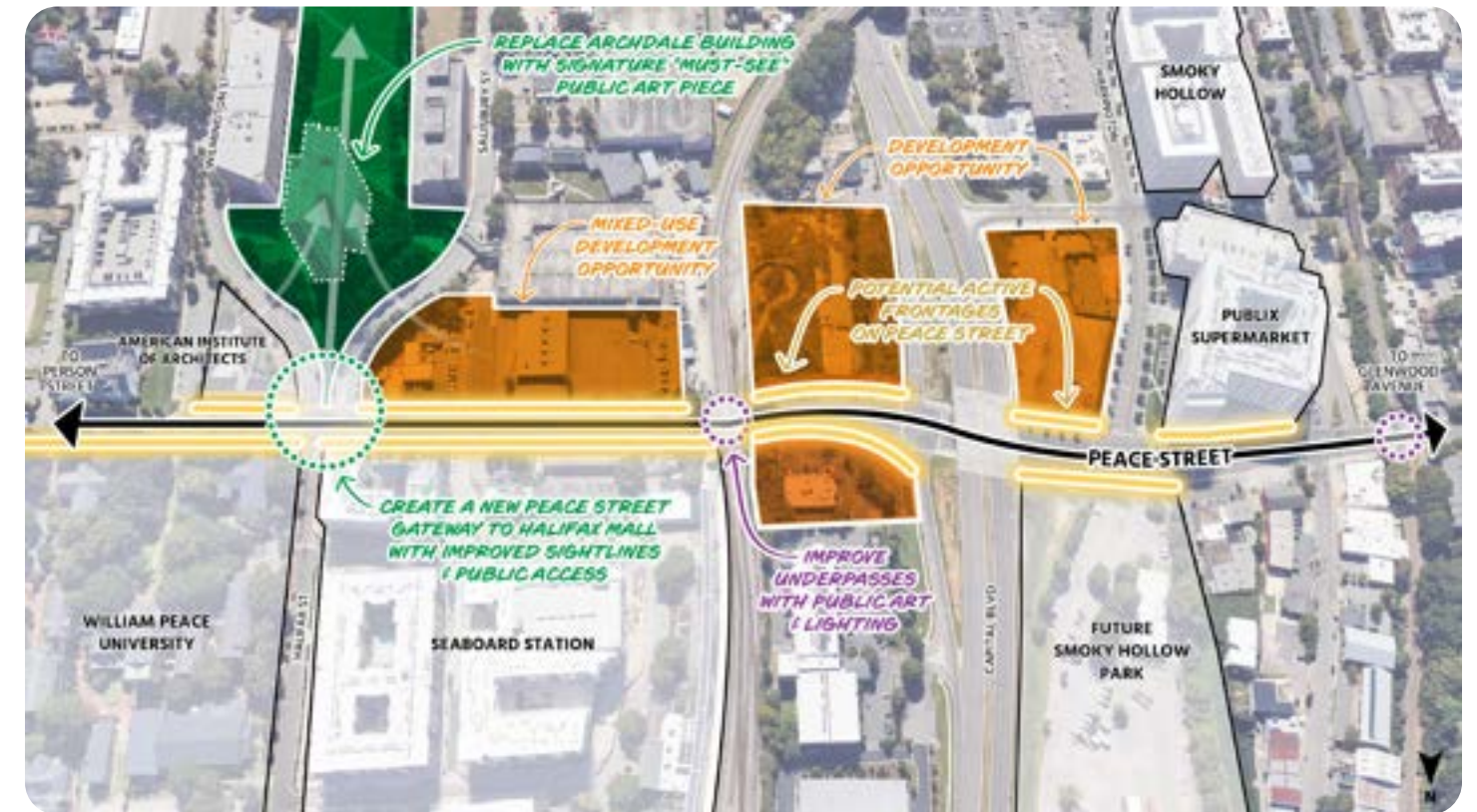
INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- As northern gateway decisions emerge, work with State and Raleigh design community on creating a signature gateway

LONG TERM

- Promote and support as appropriate additional P3 opportunities with State properties that are in strategic locations downtown

Figure 8. Peace Street Gateway



Demolishing the Archdale building (shown in the middle of the photo) would create an opportunity to reimagine Halifax Mall and its connection to Peace Street and Seaboard Station.

Strategy #8 RS

Create exceptional public spaces for everyone

Downtown public spaces should be inviting to all: residents, visitors, workers, students, families. As downtown grows, the City of Raleigh and partners will need to continue to invest in creating a range of exceptional public spaces - everything from the once-in-a-generation transformation of Dix Park into a major destination to quiet shady neighborhood spots to slow down and relax.

Actions

1. Invest in a downtown open space network that serves everyone, specifically:

- • Redesign Nash Square as a more dynamic public space that is nature-oriented and distinct from Moore Square, but adds enhanced furnishing, landscaping and daily uses and activation
- Redesign Market Plaza for play and exercise
- • Enhance Moore Square with additional family-friendly amenities and programming [see also Strategy #1]
- Enhance Fayetteville Street as a linear park through additional greening [see also Strategy #1]
- Add family-friendly public art and amenities to activate the State Capitol grounds and create a pedestrian connection between the museums and downtown businesses [see also Strategy #1]
- Restore Caswell Square as open space to serve the Educational Campus and preserve and reuse the Old Health Building [see also Strategy #7]
- Ensure Smoky Hollow Park has bicycle and pedestrian connections to downtown and the greenway network [see also Strategy #10]
- Implement the South Park Heritage Walk to better physically and culturally connect and tell the history of East Raleigh-South Park, Raleigh's largest historic African American neighborhood
- Implement the Strollway and improve the on-the-ground pedestrian and bicycle connection with placemaking and potential pocket parks [see also Strategy #9]

Figure 9. Downtown Open Space Network



Strategy #8

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Develop small-scale, pilot improvements around the State Capitol grounds designed for families with kids
State, DRA, City of Raleigh
- Partner with Marbles to further improve Moore Square with family-focused activities and events / work with the City to evaluate the possibility for a large raised crosswalk between Marbles and Moore Square
City of Raleigh, DRA

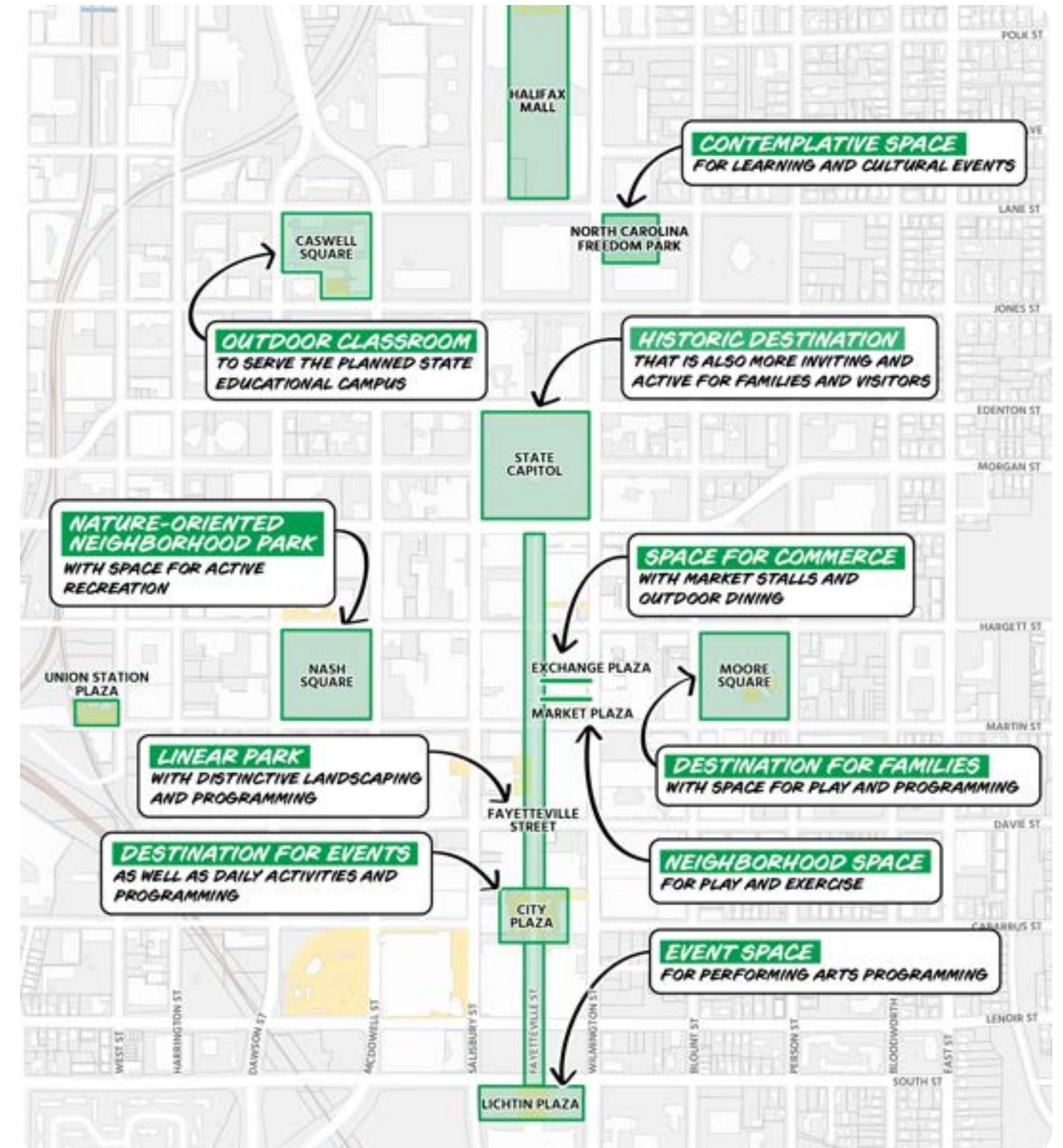
INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- Engage designers to upgrade Nash Square concurrent with the redevelopment of the Municipal Campus, considering new furnishings, landscaping, and space for active recreation such as a small field or play area to support nearby students and the growing residential population
City of Raleigh, DRA
- Engage a designer to repurpose Market Plaza as a neighborhood park and dog park to support downtown residents
City of Raleigh, Marbles Museum, DRA

LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)

- Coordinate with the State on a design for a renewed Caswell Square as a part of the State's educational campus
State, City of Raleigh, DRA

Figure 10. Downtown Squares & Plazas



Strategy #9 RS

Create a bold connection to Dix Park

Investment and growth in the south of downtown will be important to connect to the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods. A number of large investments are planned and under construction just south of the downtown core, including Dix Park, Heritage Park and several mixed use developments. It will be important not just to connect Dix Park to the Downtown Core but also to neighborhoods and destinations along the way.

Actions

1. Implement the Strollway and improve the on-the-ground pedestrian and bicycle connection
 - Incorporate distinctive placemaking elements in addition to the bicycle facility, such as wayfinding and interpretive signage, enhanced tree cover, landscaping, and public art and lighting at the underpass
 - Celebrate the historic Fourth Ward neighborhood by adding cultural trail elements and markers to tell the story of this community
2. Explore and choose a preferred option and route for an aerial or bridge connection to Dix Park:
 - Conduct a formal study to choose among the options below to connect the park to downtown in a way that makes movement between the two easy and adds a new destination to downtown
 - Option 1: Aerial bridge from Rocky Branch Trail in Dix Park along Western/MLK Boulevard and 401 with a connection to the Strollway
 - Option 2: Aerial tram from Dix Park along public right-of-way

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Work with stakeholders to implement the Strollway route to maximize connections between neighborhoods and destinations
- Conduct a feasibility study weighing the costs and benefits of larger investments including a pedestrian bridge and an aerial tram

LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)

- Identify preferred connection and seek funding sources, including federal funds and grants

Figure 11. Dix Park Connection - Example for Pedestrian Bridge Option



NOTE: For illustrative purposes only.

The Dix Park connection route still requires study but should link important destinations and neighborhoods along the way, including Heritage Park, the Red Hat Amphitheater, Convention Center, the Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts and Shaw University.



Strategy #10 RS

Design streets that encourage walking, biking and public transit

As the city grows, encouraging more people to walk, bike and take public transit will be needed to maintain a high quality of life, cut down on emissions, and reduce congestion. Downtown Raleigh has the bones for a great walkable and bikeable experience but there are gaps that must be addressed. Areas of activity are not far from each other - everything downtown is within a 10 minute bike ride - but feel disconnected. Major thoroughfares create barriers throughout downtown: Dawson and McDowell Streets effectively cut downtown in half and create challenging conditions for open spaces such as Nash Square and the future Caswell Square with multiple lanes of fast-moving traffic, while Western and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevards separate downtown from Dix Park and growing development momentum around it. Other major corridors with increasing development and residential activity, such as Glenwood Avenue and its adjacent side streets, lack appropriate pedestrian infrastructure and need to be redesigned for a denser and more active downtown. Connecting all that downtown has to offer will be critical in creating a vibrant and cohesive experience.

Actions

1. Make downtown's major thoroughfares greener and more pedestrian-friendly

- Implement Glenwood South streetscape improvements to support a walkable and bikeable district
- Redesign Dawson and McDowell Streets, and other NCDOT corridors, so they function like other downtown streets with safer pedestrian and bike infrastructure that supports this rapidly growing district
- Explore opportunities to green and enhance pedestrian accessibility on Western, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Capitol Boulevards and create at-grade intersections at Western/Saunders and Martin Luther King, Jr./401
- Improve Peace Street and rail bridge underpasses with lighting, signage, art [see also Strategy #2 and 7]

2. Improve transit options to connect downtown destinations and the region, including:

- Improve bus station experience
- Explore potential location of additional bus terminals throughout the system's service area and accompanying route adjustments if needed to support the city's growth and to alleviate pressure on central terminal in downtown
- Create better branding for shuttles like the R-Line
- Push for inter-local routes to connect downtown to destinations such as PNC Arena, RDU Airport
- Implement the railroad quiet zone

Figure 12. Street Improvements for a Pedestrian-Friendly Boulevard



dawson street



I-40 has the same number of travel lanes as parts of Dawson Street and McDowell Street, but carries **5-6 times** the amount of daily traffic.

bus art



Source: Getting to Green: Routes to Roots (Mural Arts Philadelphia)

Strategy #10

3. Improve key corridors to support mobility and connect areas of activity

- **Destination Streets:** high visibility, destination streets in the heart of a shopping and dining district. These streets should have high-quality streetscapes, including trees and landscaping, decorative lighting, street furnishings and active ground floor retail, restaurant and entertainment uses.
- **Activity Streets:** key walkable, pedestrian-focused streets in activity hubs. These streets should have high-quality streetscapes, building entrances and active ground floor uses.
- **Connector Streets:** multimodal streets that connect downtown to adjacent neighborhoods, trails and parks. These streets should be designed to provide safe walkable connections as well as bike and/or transit options.

How To Get Started

NEAR TERM (0-1 YEARS)

- Work with RDOT and NCDOT to identify key corridors to focus on for improvement
- Continue to ensure the bus station and surrounding streets are clean, safe and well maintained
- Conduct feasibility study for Western/Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard improvements and at-grade intersections - coordinate this work with the downtown to Dix feasibility study
- Complete Glenwood South streetscape study and determine funding source for improvements

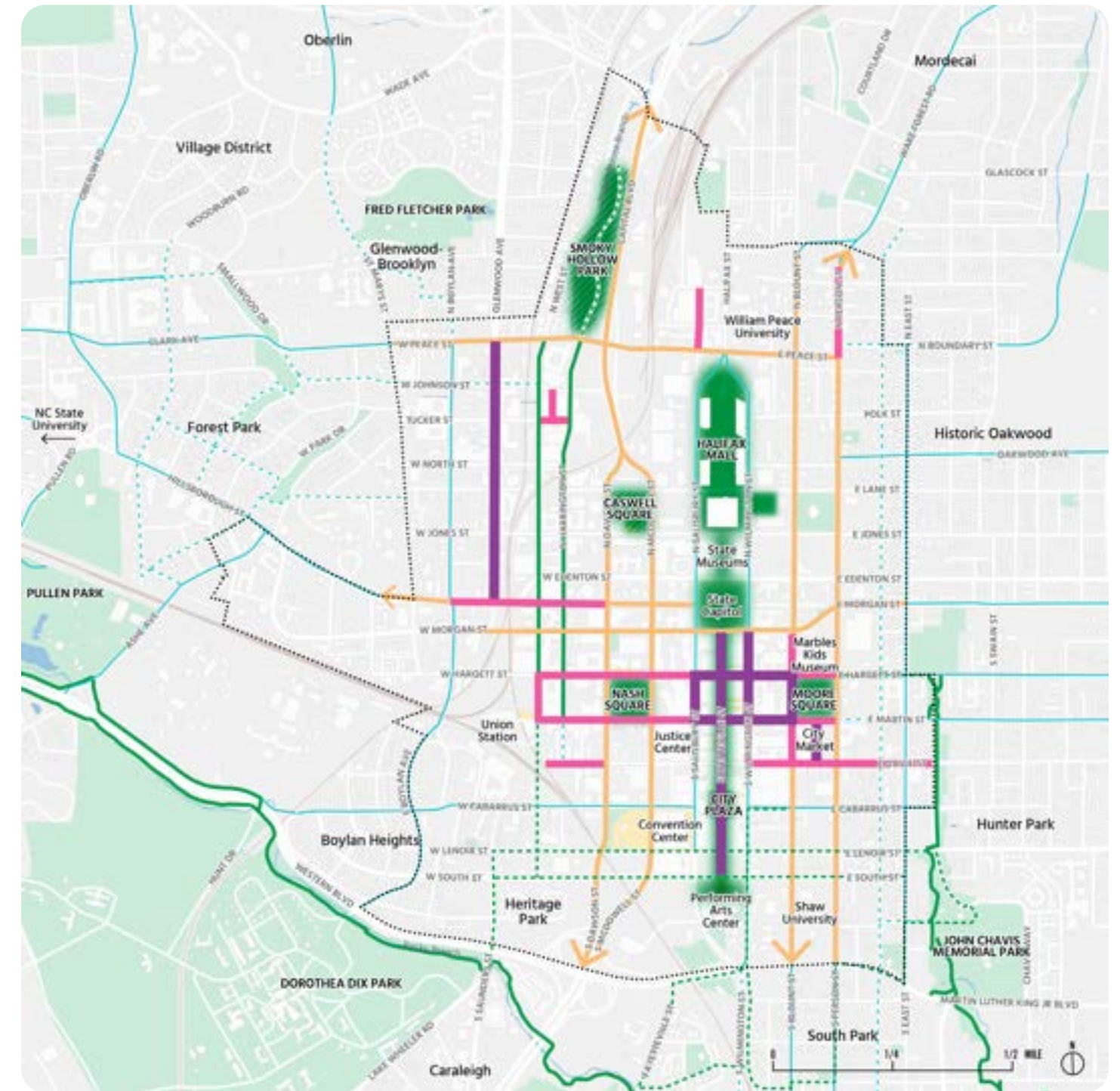
INTERMEDIATE TERM (2-3 YEARS)

- Begin work on Glenwood South streetscape improvements
- Implement the priority recommendations of the Downtown Mobility Study to build out the downtown bicycle network and connect to the larger greenway system and include opportunities to connect to Iron Works, East End and Five Points

LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)

- Obtain City control over Dawson and McDowell Streets to implement a road diet
- Obtain City control over one-way pairs to integrate them better into the downtown street network, particularly Blount, Person and Morgan

Figure 13. Key Downtown Corridors



Let's Get Started!

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

#1 ENERGIZE DOWNTOWN CORE WITH DAILY ACTIVATION AND PLACEMAKING TO BRING MORE PEOPLE DOWNTOWN

- Develop a streetscape design for Fayetteville Street
 - Redesign and program City Plaza for year round activity
-

#2 ELEVATE PUBLIC ART TO CREATE A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE THAT CELEBRATES RALEIGH AND NORTH CAROLINA

- Use creative art, branding and wayfinding to highlight Raleigh as the region's Creative & Design hub
-

#3 DIVERSIFY RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS THE RANGE OF MERCHANT NEEDS

- Ensure a diversity of space opportunities that better meet the needs of businesses across industries
 - Re-tool policies and processes to support businesses and activation
-

#4 SUPPORT GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION OF INNOVATION SECTOR DOWNTOWN

- Form group to evaluate speculative life science wet lab space options
 - Begin the process of creating the "Innovation Triangle in the Triangle"
-

#5 POSITION DOWNTOWN RALEIGH AS THE CREATIVE+DESIGN CENTER OF THE TRIANGLE

- Work with universities to maintain a "Design Hub" in Downtown Raleigh
-

CATALYTIC PROJECTS

#6 EXPAND CAPACITY OF MWBE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM TO SUPPORT DOWNTOWN AND CITYWIDE NEEDS

- Develop and fund new partnerships and resources
 - Evaluate the feasibility of revolving loan funds for new and existing business needs
-

#7 INTEGRATE THE GOVERNMENT CAMPUS WITH THE DOWNTOWN CORE

- Create new northern gateway to Downtown from Peace Street
-

#8 CREATE EXCEPTIONAL PUBLIC SPACES FOR EVERYONE

- Redesign Nash Square as a more dynamic public space
 - Enhance Moore Square with additional family-friendly amenities and programming
-

#9 CREATE A BOLD CONNECTION TO DIX PARK

- Implement the Strollway and incorporate distinctive placemaking elements
 - Explore options for aerial or bridge connections from Dix Park
-

#10 DESIGN STREETS THAT ENCOURAGE WALKING, BIKING AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

- Make downtown's major thoroughfares greener and more pedestrian-friendly
-

Keep Looking Forward

Raleigh is founded on big ideas. Some ideas require a lot of planning and coalition building to bring to fruition over time. While these ideas will take time, if we do not start working toward achieving them, we will continue to see little progress.

Several additional big ideas surfaced time and time again during public discussions around downtown's future. These warrant continued discussion, coordination and planning. These include:

- **Work toward creating a downtown sports venue**

A downtown arena or stadium has long been a local dream. Recognizing the success of having a professional hockey team, residents and leaders are hopeful for an additional sports franchise and one that can help to bring more activity to downtown. Work on multiple fronts is necessary to bring this to fruition including identifying potential sites but also outreach with different leagues around franchise opportunities.

- **Engage in a long term plan to consider eventually moving the prison**

The central prison, originally built on the fringe of the city, is now a major publicly-owned property in the middle of downtown, NC State's main campus and the Centennial Campus. As with all older buildings, the facility will need a major investment for general maintenance and upgrades at some point in the future. At that time, consider relocation in an effort to free up valuable land for a major new downtown amenity. This could include a new sports stadium / arena or an entire innovation campus for new jobs and healthcare (note: the Central Prison site is the same size as the original Kendall Square in Cambridge which is the most cited innovation district in the world). Coordinate with the State on the condition and future plans for the prison and discuss potential public/private partnerships as appropriate.

- **Create a new, modern downtown library**

The library system is a valuable asset and new libraries have brought significant benefits to cities across the country. Currently, Downtown Raleigh lacks a major, visible and modern downtown library that can serve as a community center and beacon for the larger educational system. New libraries are expensive undertakings but on the right site, this could bring added interest and activity to a growing downtown neighborhood. Work with the library around facility planning and library needs for new spaces and programs and explore collaboration opportunities with the redevelopment of the Civic Campus and other community sites.

- **Conduct an in-depth analysis of ways to improve housing choice and affordability in the downtown area**

Downtown is delivering a significant amount of apartment units, but work is needed to find ways to add housing that enters the market at a lower price point that works within the regulatory framework of the state. This could include use of new financing tools as well as continuing to look at City-owned land being sold or land leased for affordable housing.



