



# **EVANSVILLE DOWNTOWN**

MASTER PLAN UPDATE



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the many individuals from the Evansville community who helped develop this Plan:

## **City of Evansville**

Lloyd Winnecke, Mayor of Evansville  
Steve Schaefer, Mayor's Chief of Staff

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Jennifer Raibley; Dave Clark; Karen Ragland, EVSC Representative;  
Cheryl Musgrave, Former Commissioner

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The information and thoughts shared by the community informed many of the ideas contained within the Plan.

## **Consulting Team**

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# 01

## BACKGROUND AND GOALS







The Downtown Evansville Master Plan Update identifies priorities for downtown improvements, policies and actions for the next five-to-seven-year investment cycle. It was initiated in mid-2015 by the Evansville Redevelopment Commission (ERC).

The last Master Plan for Downtown Evansville was completed in 2001 by Kinzelman Kline Gossman, with additional implementation work in 2005 by HOK Planning Group. While these documents impacted downtown positively, they could not foresee the changes driving downtown in 2016 and beyond, and more importantly, what tools and strategies will facilitate downtown's success into the future.

Discussions around the need for an updated plan began in earnest in late 2014, with the announcement of Downtown Evansville as the selected location for the expanded Indiana University School of Medicine Evansville, and Evansville Multi-Institutional Academic Health Science Education & Research Campus (Medical Campus) and accelerated as a revamped incentive package was being put together for the DoubleTree by Hilton Convention Hotel.

*This Plan frames a way to capture the catalytic impact these two major projects can have in Downtown Evansville, while providing strategies to leverage and incentivize additional development and investment.*

Other factors were also top-of-mind as this Plan was developed. *Evansville is in a competition, a critical one, for population and workforce – particularly the young skilled millennials that create businesses and 'city-build' while they are doing so.* Millennials are being sought after from coast-to-coast. This Plan helps develop strategies to retain our homegrown talent, encourage those who graduate from our regional colleges and universities to stay, as well as bring back those who have already left Evansville for perceived greener pastures.





Other communities have shown the importance of a vital downtown as a tool for retaining and attracting the talent needed to keep their communities flourishing; Evansville can incorporate those lessons as it improves downtown. The notion of attracting talent through quality of place got a boost with the 2015 selection of Indiana's Great Southwest as an Indiana 'Regional City,' and the 2016 funding of \$42 million towards creating a talent-worthy community. Many of the Regional City programs are planned for Downtown Evansville and are incorporated into elements of the Plan.



The ERC contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), a Denver-based consulting firm specializing in downtown economic development, organizational and strategic planning. Other members of the consulting team include Hafer, an Evansville-based architecture and engineering firm providing design and local perspective, and Rundell Ernstberger Associates (REA), an Indianapolis-based firm providing additional design work, mapping, and graphics.

This Plan is different than previous efforts in several ways; perhaps most importantly it strives to build a downtown neighborhood through a series of strategies that include:

- *Framing Downtown Evansville as "an activated, innovative, connected neighborhood."*
- Being user-friendly, key ideas of the plan are drafted and presented in a manner that is easily accessible to the community that helped shape it.
- Offering an extensive market assessment that builds on Evansville's inherent strengths and identifies favorable demographic and lifestyle trends that can benefit downtown.
- Focusing on four "Transformative Ideas": Activating Main Street, activating the riverfront, developing a "Makers District" and improving public spaces.
- Demonstrating the importance of the creation of a sustainable downtown-focused management organization. The Evansville Downtown Alliance will be a sustainable organization with resources to effect the changes the Plan outlines, advocating for the implementation of the transformational ideas which will retain and attract the workforce and city-building talent needed for Evansville's continued transformation.



## The Evansville Regional Development Commission

President, Randy  
Alsman, summed  
up the overarching  
objectives for the plan  
in this way:

“Effective,  
Inspirational,  
Achievable.”

Together the preceding elements create a “Community Handbook to City Building”, providing the market grounding, innovative strategies and practical steps to enable all members of the Evansville community to join together and participate in improving downtown – from energetic millennials to seasoned corporate CEOs.

The planning process was guided by the following project goals:

- Build on prior planning efforts and engage city leadership, neighborhoods, and civic partners in a participatory process.
- Develop a strategic vision and investment plan to help guide Downtown Evansville’s evolution toward shared goals through the next five-to-seven-year investment cycle.
- Align resources with the priorities of the Master Plan Update to implement organizational and financial strategies.





# 02

## PLAN ELEMENTS

- 08. *Summary of Prior Plans*
- 08. *Market Assessment*
- 08. *Community Engagement*
- 08. *Planning Framework*
- 09. *Four Transformative Ideas*
- 10. *Action Plan*
- 10. *Implementation*





The planning process was designed to be an inclusive effort representative of the community's vision. The brief summaries of Plan components below are supported by detailed appendices, attached to this document.

### 1. Summary of Prior Plans

The consultants reviewed prior relevant and evolving plans to ensure that this process would build upon those efforts.

### 2. Market Assessment

A comprehensive market assessment identified specific market opportunities in the residential, office, retail, entertainment, and mobility sectors. Additionally, P.U.M.A.'s *Global Trends Affecting Downtowns* offered an overview of trends impacting Downtown Evansville. *Global Trends* information helps provide additional market context and supports the market conclusions and plan recommendations.

### 3. Community Engagement

A broad engagement effort was undertaken to involve the community in the planning effort. The outreach – which attracted more than 1,500 community voices – included a steering committee of downtown stakeholders, individual interviews, meetings with focus groups representing specific interest areas, an online survey, and community open houses. The core values that emerged from the outreach include:

**Activated** – A vibrant downtown, Main Street and Riverfront.

**Innovative** – A regional hub for jobs, innovation & unique businesses.

**Connected** – Safe, walkable & bikeable.

**Neighborhood** – A downtown for living with diverse housing options and amenities.

### 4. Planning Framework

Drawing on findings from previous plans, the market assessment, and community engagement, the consulting team developed a Planning Framework to guide physical investments in the public realm that support and enhance market opportunities. The Planning Framework concepts and maps are key components of this Plan.



## 5. Four Transformative Ideas

Aligning with the Planning Framework concepts, four catalytic ideas – those that could have the most transformative impact on Downtown Evansville – have emerged through the planning process:

"Downtown.  
Lights on  
buildings and  
everything  
that makes you  
wonder. And in  
that moment,  
I swear we are  
infinite."

- Stephen Chbosky  
*The Perks of Being a  
Wallflower*

### *A Thriving Main Street*

Channeling new investment to a few blocks along Main Street, including a newly redesigned 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Street Park, will create a hub of activity that radiates beyond Main Street to energize the entire Downtown core.



### *NoCo Makers District*

Designating the area North of Court Street as a “makers district” – a place where people live and work, where production ranges from fabricating to knitting to brewing and beyond, can enhance the diversity and appeal of Downtown Evansville.



### *An Active, Accessible Riverfront*

Enhancing the riverfront by including more amenities and better pedestrian access to create a more appealing and dynamic public space for the entire community to meet, play, and linger.



### *Public Space Improvements*

Where it is easy to move to and through by foot, bike, or car. Complete streets, wayfinding, and gateways can make moving through downtown intuitive and enjoyable. Parks and greenspace provide places to relax or play, and can guide future private development.





## 6. Action Plan

The Action Plan includes projects identified in other plans, and incorporates new ideas, prioritizing those that have the most potential to advance community vision and values. It is an actionable list of implementation strategies that will bring this plan to life. “Quick wins” – efforts that can begin immediately – are also identified.

## 7. Implementation - How the Plan Comes to Life

In order to advance implementation of this Plan and its priorities, a new downtown organization – the Evansville Downtown Alliance – is recommended. The Alliance will lead the charge to build a new Downtown Evansville and convene partners from throughout the community. Financing options, including a plan to form an Economic Improvement District (EID), and a leadership strategy are also outlined in the implementation section.



“It's really kind of hard to be a suburb of nothing. If you don't have a downtown, you really don't have anything. It's hard to build a community around parking lots and subdivisions.”

- Ed McMahon

# 03

## PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS



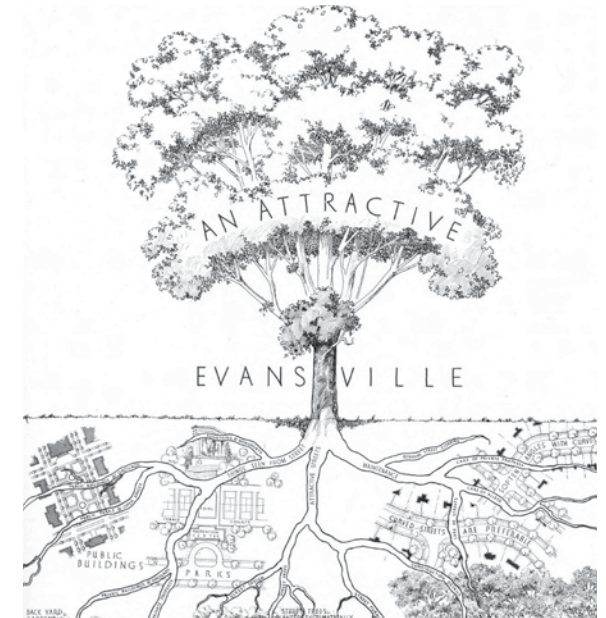




An important aspect of the Master Plan Update is to research and embrace the goals and values of many of the plans and projects that have come before this one. This Plan builds on the desire to activate the riverfront and promote a vibrant urban core that has been exhibited in many plans - dating back to 1927 when Harland Bartholomew and Associates completed one of the most comprehensive master plans for the City. Recent plans such as the initial Downtown Master Plan produced in 1984 inspired the establishment of Downtown Evansville as an event destination and contributed to the overall aesthetic enhancements to streets and the riverfront. Following this Plan was an update in 1995 that focused on integration of the new Casino Aztar campus into the riverfront dynamic. The 2001 Master Plan improved circulation downtown, expanded the entertainment district and called for residential development along Main Street.

In the past few years, Downtown Evansville has experienced exciting developments that have sparked an increased interest in downtown. These improvements include the construction of the new Ford Center, additional restaurants and retail developments, multi-unit housing and overall recreational enhancements. Current developments such as the Medical Campus, downtown hotel, and the land-based Tropicana casino and their resulting impact were also considered during the development of this plan.

In addition to actual development, at the grassroots level, excitement was built when a community-wide, citizen-driven visioning process, Evansville VOICE, was undertaken in 2013. Some 3,000 people took part in 32 visioning sessions that led Evansville VOICE volunteers to launch, organize and support collaborative projects. Three focus areas emerged including: City Core, Experiences, and Healthy Green Space. The data derived from these efforts has been an appreciated resource for development of this Master Plan.



1927 Plan for City's Appearance  
By Harland Bartholomew





Several additional recent planning efforts have also contributed to the excitement and vision of this Master Plan. These resources have been reviewed and incorporated. A summary, including their specific impact on downtown, of these planning efforts are as follows:

## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS FOR DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE

### Evansville Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Master Plan City of Evansville 2015

This plan analyzes bicycling and walking in Evansville and makes recommendations for future infrastructure and programming improvements to expand multimodal transportation options throughout the City. In particular, downtown would benefit from additional bike amenities and better connectivity across the Lloyd Expressway.



### Evansville and Vanderburgh County Comprehensive Plan Update City of Evansville and Vanderburgh County 2015

The plan targets growth in Evansville and Vanderburgh County by encouraging and supporting employment opportunities and livability. The plan calls out downtown as a major employment center for the region, but not as a shopping, entertainment and residential hub. Key downtown initiatives include reestablishing downtown as the urban core, development of particular amenities, and various redevelopment strategies.



### METS Comprehensive Operations Analysis Metropolitan Evansville Transit System (METS) 2015

This report summarizes findings and recommendations from the Evansville Transit Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) for improving METS bus service throughout Evansville. The report specifically calls for improved transit access to Downtown particularly from the USI campus, Warrick County and Eastside suburban development. Upgrades to the Transfer Center are planned for 2016/2017.



## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS FOR DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE

### Economic Impact of Evansville and Vanderburgh County's Tourism and Travel Industry

Evansville Convention and Visitor's Bureau  
2011 and 2013

This study assessed the economic impact of the Evansville and Vanderburgh County tourism and travel industry in 2013 and highlights industry changes since 2011. The study found that the majority of visitor attractions and destinations are downtown, including: the Ford Center, Tropicana, downtown Riverfront and Downtown Museums.



### Housing Needs Assessment

City of Evansville - Department of  
Metropolitan Development  
2014

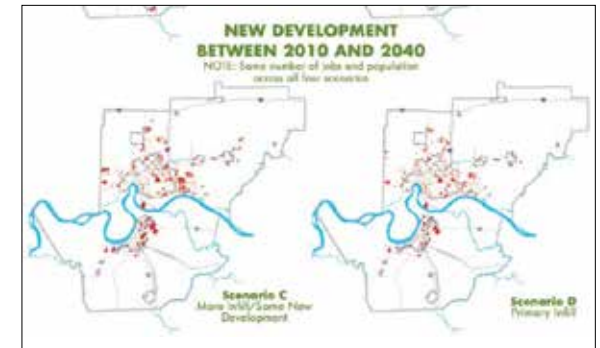
This assessment analyzes housing in Evansville and identifies suitable housing types. In downtown, the housing market is particularly strong due to consistent business expansions and revitalization efforts. The quantity, variety and quality of housing in downtown will need to increase in order to meet growing demand for rentals, studios and one bedroom apartments.



### Millennial Plan for 2040: A Regional Plan for Sustainable Development

Sustainable Evansville Area Coalition  
2014

This plan aims to counteract urban sprawl, low population density, and overconsumption of natural space and farmland with a focus on social equity, environmental sustainability, and clustering growth and development in urban areas. Downtown is prioritized as the best possible area to direct growth, development, and reinvestment. However, near-downtown's high concentration of poverty presents a barrier to growth. Several proposed projects in downtown were highlighted in the document.



## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS PLANS FOR DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE

### Bringing the Heart Back. Greater Evansville: The Place for Young Professionals City of Evansville 2011

This plan analyzes “brain drain” in the greater Evansville region and recommends strengthening downtown as the top strategy for attracting and retaining a young, skilled talent pool. Specifically, the plan recommends reinvesting in downtown to create a vibrant core that will appeal to the young, diverse workforce that has been leaving.



### A Deliberative on Downtown Evansville Streetscapes City of Evansville 2009

This planning effort was aimed at providing the City of Evansville a streetscape enhancement program specifically intended to encourage residents, shoppers, and visitors to utilize downtown for business and entertainment. The Deliberative reinforces the necessity of building a green public amenity infrastructure that forms the framework for private investment and creates the neighborhood culture desired by residents searching for urban living experiences.



Rendering provided by HOK

### A Report on Blight, Vacancy and Abandonment in Evansville, IN City of Evansville - Department of Metropolitan Development 2015

This report analyzes blight and vacancy in Evansville. The plan links blight to strong population decline in the urban core. Downtown is surrounded by a swath of blight. Recommended solutions include land banking as means to redevelopment and adding new and affordable housing options to serve existing low-income residents and future residents.



*\* A complete assessment of previous plans is located as Appendix I.*



# 04

## MARKET ASSESSMENT

- 17. *Global Trends Affecting  
Downtown Evansville*
- 18. *Key Market Opportunities*





As part of the strategic planning process, a market assessment was prepared to help inform recommendations for public and private investments that strengthen underlying market trends. The assessment summarizes current market conditions in Downtown Evansville and offers an educated overview and qualitative assessment of trends and market opportunities Downtown Evansville can leverage.

### Global Trends Affecting Downtown Evansville

Since 2006, P.U.M.A. has been conducting research into global trends affecting downtowns. The research adds insight that helps predict the direction and magnitude of local market influences. Many of these trends are in evidence in Downtown Evansville, and can be expected to increasingly contribute to a more thriving downtown. Some notable global trends that are beginning to impact Evansville include:

- Millennials and empty-nest Boomers are driving a resurgence in downtown living.
- A “rebound wave” of 25-to-34 year-olds being priced out of big cities like Chicago and Nashville is opening an opportunity for less expensive cities like Evansville to bring former residents back home.
- Skilled talent is in high demand, driving businesses to locate in the compact urban centers that these employees prefer.
- Walking and biking as forms of transportation are on the rise.
- Car ownership is decreasing.
- Healthy lifestyles, including fresh food and active living options, are driving choices in where to live and how to get around.
- Growing consumer preference for local retail and experience shopping, at all price points.

All of these trends favor Downtown Evansville and its ability to attract and retain a talented workforce and a reinvigorated downtown core.





## Key Market Opportunities

Based on both quantitative and qualitative data, P.U.M.A. identified key market opportunities in Downtown Evansville, they include:

### *Residential*

The downtown residential market is strong and currently underserved. There is opportunity for diverse and quality housing product at all price points – affordable, market rate and upscale.

### *Retail*

There is ample opportunity for additional restaurants, cafes, and specialty retail, particularly along Main Street. Downtown must appeal to skilled workers in order to fill office vacancies. One way to make it more appealing is through additional retail.

### *Office*

There is an oversupply of traditional office space which presents an opportunity to convert class B office space to residential units. Conversely, demand exists for affordable and creative office space which could fill street-level vacancies in downtown.

### *Hospitality*

The hotel market may be reaching short-term saturation with the new DoubleTree by Hilton anticipated to open in late 2016. However, there appears to be room for an additional boutique hotel.

### *Public Space*

Investments in the public realm such as complete streets, bike lanes and amenities, more open space and parks, intuitive connections throughout downtown, holiday or event lighting, street furniture, and safe pedestrian connections all add up to a more appealing, thriving, and exciting place to be. Public space investments and enhancements are a critical part of an appealing urban core that in turn attracts residential, retail, office, and hospitality investments throughout downtown.

*\* The entire Market Study can be found as Appendix II.*





# 05

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 21. *Community Survey*
- 22. *Core Values*





As part of the Downtown planning process, P.U.M.A. facilitated a community engagement process in which more than 1,500 stakeholders participated in the following ways:

- Focus groups: More than 80 participants met in a series of small group meetings.
- Online survey: 1,242 responses captured downtown impressions from residents, workers, and visitors.
- Community Open Houses: More than 200 participants attended two meetings open to the public to collect feedback to inform the Plan.
- A Steering Committee guided the overall direction for the process and consisted of 25 members who met monthly during the planning process.
- One-on-one and small group meetings were held with a variety of stakeholders.

Clear and consistent priorities emerged during the community outreach. Those priorities are listed below, in order of how frequently they were mentioned:

- Activate the riverfront & Main Street.
- Encourage more nightlife, restaurants, and clubs.
- Attract neighborhood-serving amenities and retail like dog parks and a grocery store.
- Promote a fresh image and brand for Downtown Evansville.
- Support and incentivize business startups, innovation, and entrepreneurs.
- Create strong pedestrian and bike connections throughout downtown and adjacent neighborhoods and destinations.
- Provide more housing options at diverse price points.





## Online Survey Responses

An online community survey was created and 1,242 responses were collected. The majority of respondents were greater Evansville residents, as well as downtown visitors, employees, residents, and business owners. A majority of respondents had household incomes in the \$50,000 to \$200,000 range, and were between the ages of 25 and 49.

When asked to choose the single most important action to achieve their vision for Downtown Evansville, respondents' top three choices were:

1. Activate the riverfront, make it more appealing, active, and user-friendly.
2. Activate Main Street with shops, events, restaurants, streetscape, public space enhancements.
3. Encourage more nightlife, restaurants and clubs, create an entertainment niche.

In an open response question, the survey asked respondents to list three words that describe their vision of a future Downtown Evansville. The resulting word cloud represents the most common words (the larger the word, the more often the word was used). Respondents see a future Downtown Evansville as:





## Core Values

Core values for Downtown Evansville emerged from a synthesis of all of the community engagement. The core values summarize the spirit of the Plan and describe how the community wants downtown to feel: **"An activated, innovative, connected neighborhood."**

<b>ACTIVATED</b>	A vibrant downtown, Main Street & riverfront with a multitude of recreational and cultural activities
<b>INNOVATIVE</b>	Regional hub for jobs, innovation, and support for new or expanding businesses
<b>CONNECTED</b>	Safe, walkable & bikeable, throughout downtown and to nearby areas; A downtown that is recognized as the 'center' of the region
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD</b>	A downtown for living, with diverse housing options and amenities – a place where residents know each other and enjoy a sense of community

*\* Results of the Online Survey may be found in Appendix III.*



# 06

## DOWNTOWN ZONES





Downtown Evansville is roughly defined by the Lloyd Expressway to the north, the Ohio River to the South, Mulberry to the east, and Fulton to the west. The 'study area' for this Strategic plan is indicated by the dotted line on the map below, and is larger than the Downtown Redevelopment District or the nearly contiguous 47708 zip code. This study area includes significant buildings and activity centers outside of the Redevelopment District including recent development along Walnut, more residential areas, and development opportunity areas.

The district map informs where Evansville should concentrate investment in the public realm and help leverage private investment. A zone framework, detailed in the following section, was then developed to define areas of emphasis, approaches, and connections throughout downtown. The downtown zones are:

- Downtown Core – the center of downtown including Main Street and the Tropicana Casino.
- Civic Center – the area surrounding City Hall.
- Riverfront Park – the greenway area and Riverside Drive.
- NoCo – a new “Makers District” intended to appeal to entrepreneurs and creatives, named for its location north of Court Street.
- Medical Campus – the area defined by the redevelopment of the IU medical campus.
- The Riverside Preservation Area lies to the south-east of the Core, and continues into the Arts District (outside the area of this study).





# 07

## FRAMEWORK

- 26. *Amenity Infrastructure*
- 29. *Public Spaces*
- 31. *Activity Centers*
- 34. *Development Opportunities*
- 36. *Regional Cities Sites*
- 37. *Full Framework Map*





Building upon the district map, a series of framework maps were developed to illustrate existing and future conditions in Downtown Evansville. Each map layer identifies opportunities for improvements, investment, activation, and programming. The map layers illustrate existing conditions and future opportunities. They are described in detail below.

### Amenity Infrastructure

The amenity infrastructure is a network of enhanced complete streets, park space, and signage that connects districts and destinations throughout Downtown Evansville. It is important because it helps define specific areas for investment that will help create a more walkable and livable downtown. While the exact configuration of each street will vary, common complete street elements may include:

- Wide, accessible, and easily walkable pedestrian sidewalks.
- Two-way dedicated bicycle facilities.
- Traffic calming features to reduce vehicle speeds.
- Green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff.
- More trees and increased tree canopy.
- Fourth Street improvements to maximize visual and physical connections between NoCo and the medical campus from Court to the Arts District area.



### *Downtown Evansville Gateway at Bee Slough*



Rendering provided by VPS Architecture

Gateways located along these complete streets will define and announce arrival into Downtown Evansville. They should be eye-catching, artistic, and informational. They may include signage, sculptural artwork, identity signs, light displays, plantings, and/or murals under overpasses. Proposed locations for gateways include:

- The Lloyd Expressway at:
  - Fulton Avenue
  - First Street
  - Mary Street
  - Main Street
- Walnut Street
- Sunset Park on Memorial Drive

### *Indiana University School of Medicine - Evansville*



Rendering provided by SLAM

The addition of the Medical Campus will create a completely new place within the city, improving six underutilized blocks and city streets adjacent to the development. This will announce entry into the Medical Campus, and serve as an introduction to the downtown core. Due to its width and terminating vista, Fourth Street provides ample opportunity for enhanced design features.

### *DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Evansville*



Rendering provided by HCW Evansville Hotel, LLC

Adjacent to the Medical Campus, the new DoubleTree by Hilton will activate the Old National Events Plaza and revitalize regional convention business in Evansville. The new streetscape will enhance the pedestrian experience adjacent to both the hotel and the Medical Campus along Walnut and Fourth.



## MAP IDENTIFYING AMENITY INFRASTRUCTURE



## Public Spaces

The public spaces framework layer identifies areas in Downtown Evansville that have the opportunity to improve and add public park space. Vibrant public spaces can be created using existing parks and infill development opportunities, and through improvements within the public right-of-way. Ownership of park space opportunities vary between public and private parties, and will require collaborative approaches to develop. Enhancing downtown's "outdoor living room" is a way to create a more appealing place that will attract more people, activity, and investment.

The existing Riverfront and the privately owned 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Street Park are critical components to downtown public space. They can be improved by adding amenities and features, consistent programming, and special events, as well as encouraging passive use. Upcoming development near the Old Post Office, Central Library, and the Medical Campus will create more publicly accessible outdoor space.



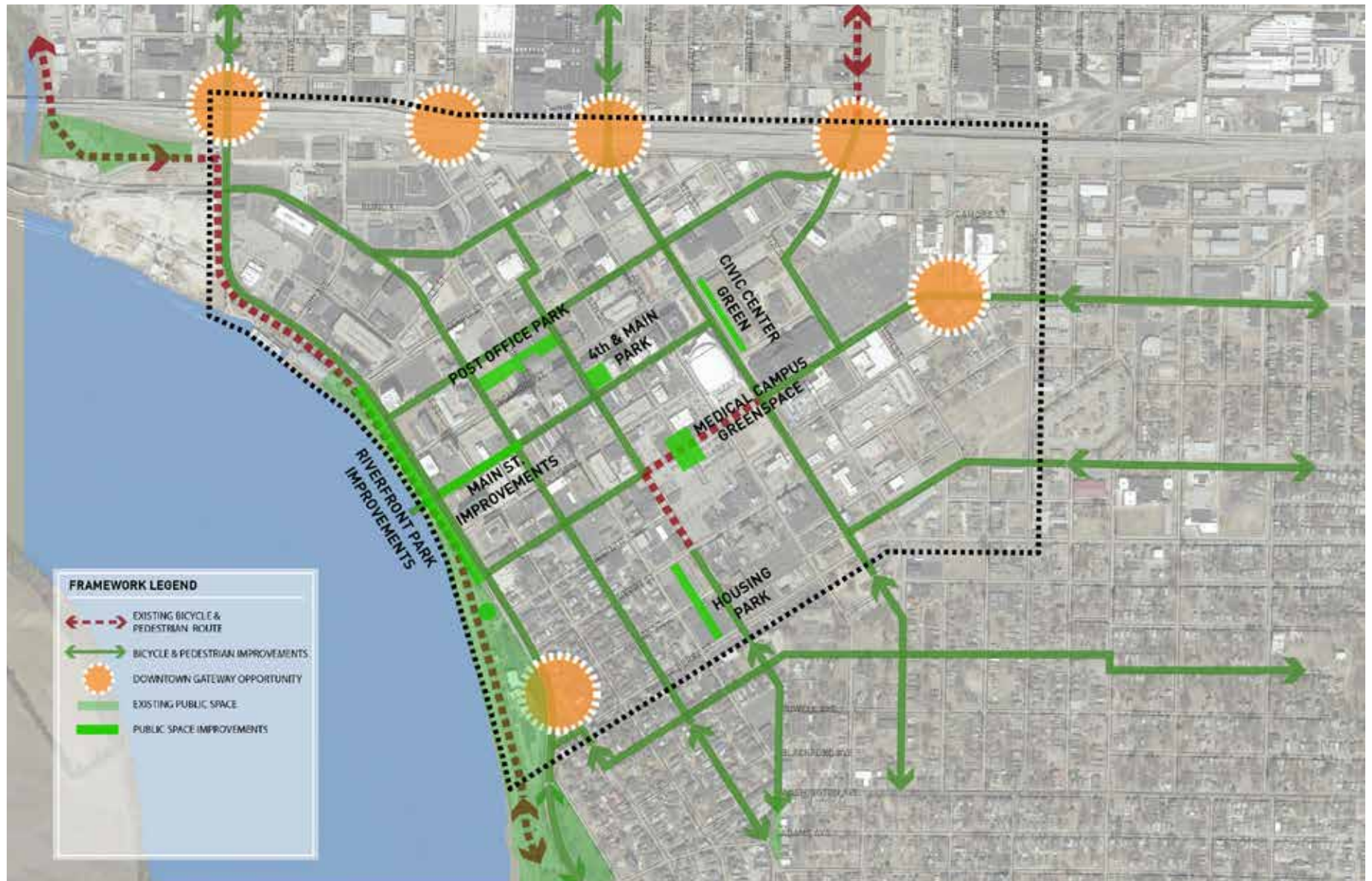
Images provided by Evansville Courier & Press

**"You've got this core development in the downtown area that is absolutely honing to boost our economy. It's going to boost downtown. It's going to create the need for downtown development."**

- Bob Warren, Executive Director  
Evansville Convention & Visitors Bureau  
*"Officials Hire Convention Hotel Manager"*  
Nexstar Broadcasting, Inc.



## MAP IDENTIFYING PUBLIC SPACES





## Activity Centers

Evansville has a variety of unique activity centers and cultural destinations. This framework layer identifies downtown destinations that can catalyze redevelopment and strengthen economic and cultural growth. The three activity centers that attract the most visitors annually serve as anchors that are located throughout downtown.

### *Tropicana Evansville Land Based Casino*



Rendering provided by SOSHarchitects

The Tropicana Casino attracts more than 1.1 million visitors every year. The casino has recently begun planning to move from its current riverboat location to a new land-based location. The new casino is expected to break ground in 2016 and be completed late 2017.

### *Evansville Vanderburgh Central Library*



The Evansville Vanderburgh Central Library is the second most visited attraction in downtown. With one million annual visitors, the library has tremendous catalytic potential. The library has plans to develop adjacent land for programming and performances downtown while providing space for community activities including a Farmer's Market.

### *Ford Center*



The Ford Center on Main Street is the third busiest downtown activity center and attracts about 425,000 visitors annually. The Ford Center can catalyze more investment and activity on Main Street. The market assessment reinforces the notion that there is ample opportunity for more restaurants, cafes, shops, and bars on Main Street – all of which are activities that can enhance a visit to any downtown attraction.

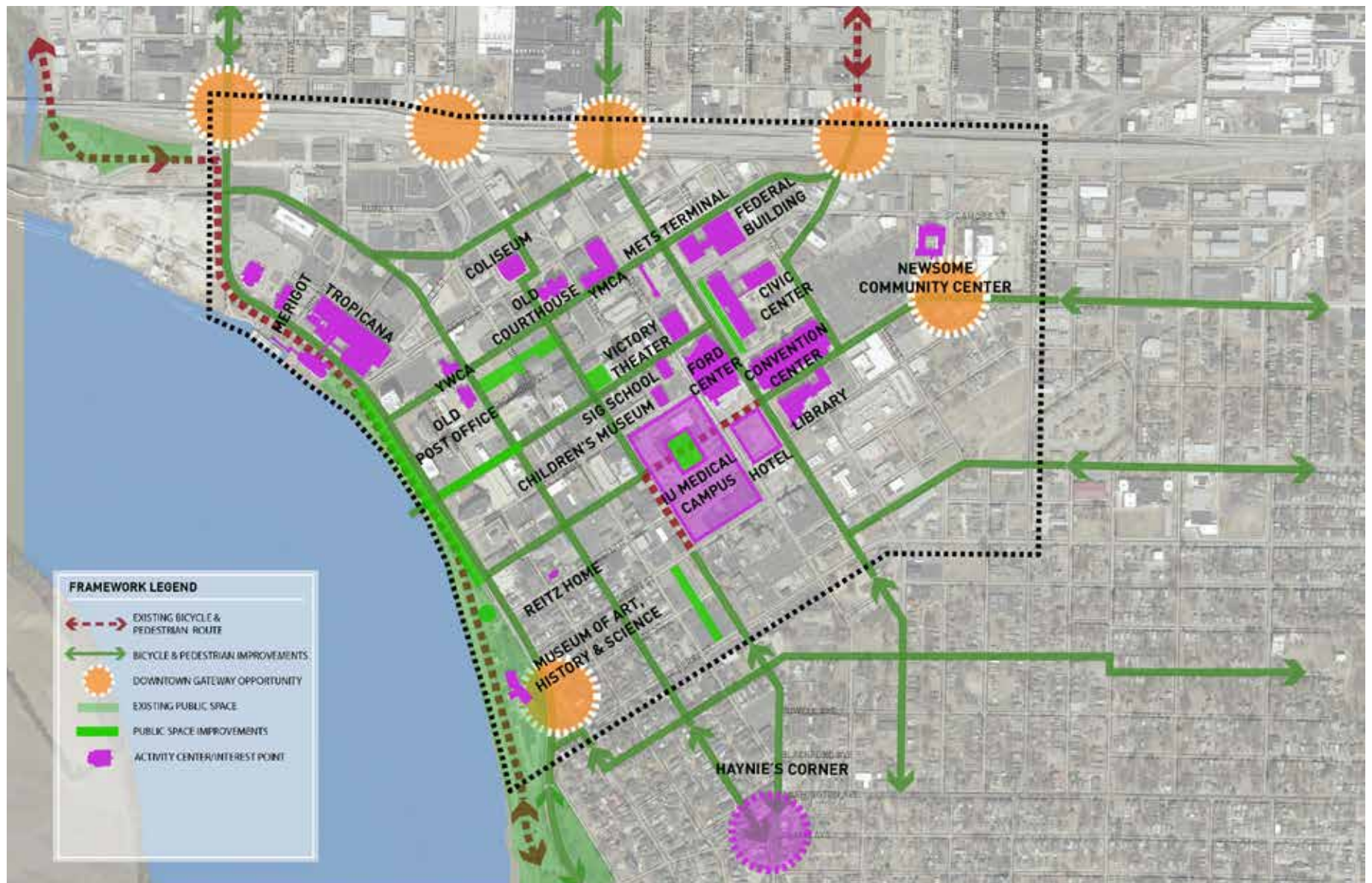


Other downtown activity centers include:

- The Civic Center containing City and County offices and courts; adjacent Federal Building with courthouse and U.S. Post Office.
- Cultural venues and institutions including the Victory Theatre (home of the Evansville Philharmonic), the Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Transportation, the Reitz Home Museum, the Old Court House, Koch Family Children's Museum of Evansville (cMoe), the Soldier and Sailor's Memorial Coliseum, the Hadi Shrine, and two institutions just outside the downtown study area: the LST 325 and the Evansville African American Museum.
- Places of worship include multiple churches, and a Catholic oratory.
- Recreation facilities including the YMCA, the YWCA, the riverfront, the Pigeon Creek Greenway Passage, and Sunset Park located just outside the downtown study area.
- Major employers including Old National Bank, Vectren Energy Deliver, Springleaf/One Main, as well as Berry Plastics, Koch Enterprises and Deaconess Health Systems located just outside the study area.
- Downtown Evansville is one of five nascent 'Cultural Districts' and lies in the center of these Districts: Haynie's Corner Arts District, North Main/Jacobsville, West Franklin and the University of Evansville campus and its environs.
- Major downtown festivals include July Fourth fireworks display, Shrinerfest, the Wine and Jazz Fest, and numerous runs and other events.



## MAP IDENTIFYING ACTIVITY CENTERS





## Development Opportunities

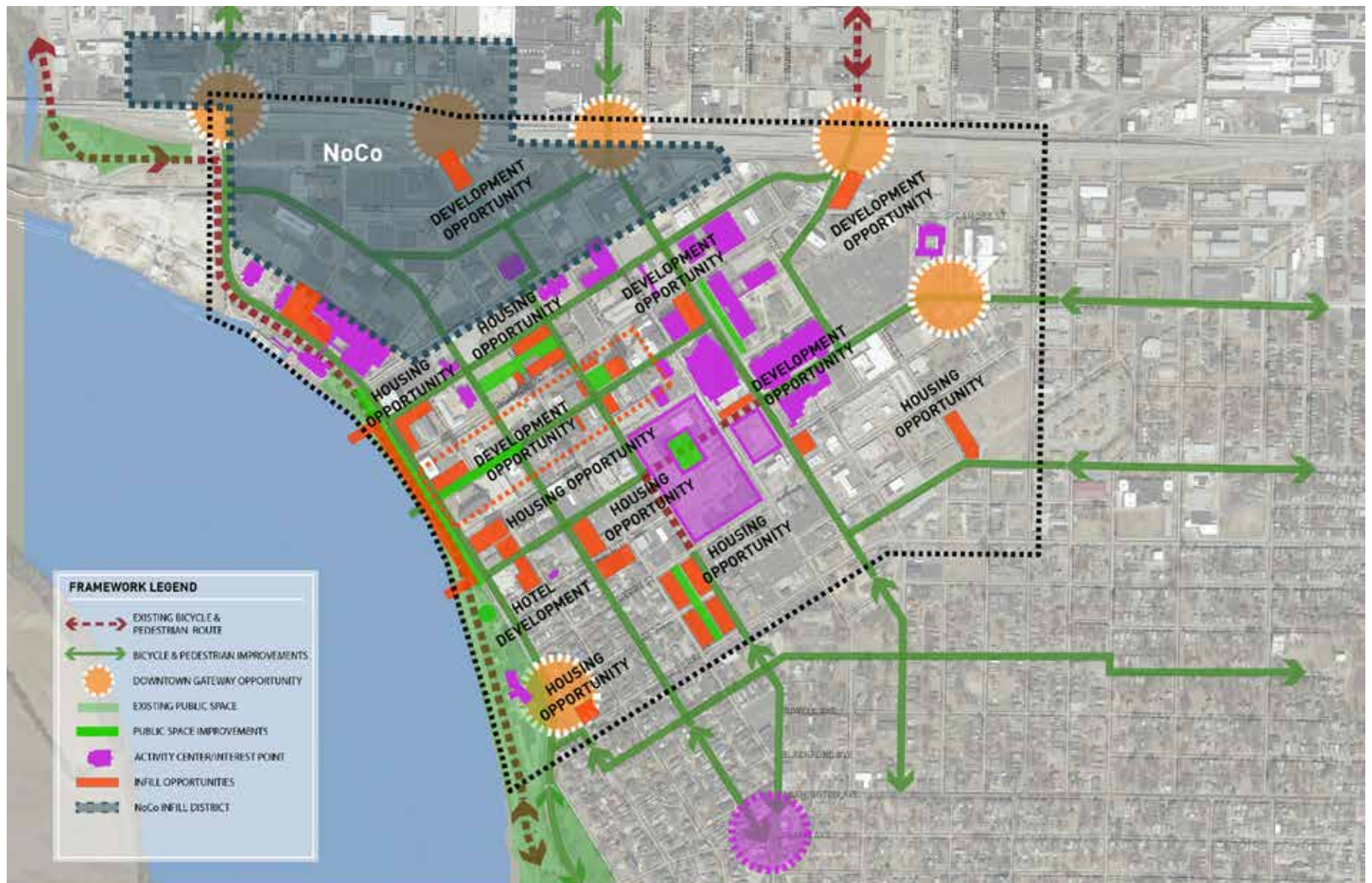
Review of previously completed studies, public forums, and discussions with private real estate entities and public planning departments identified numerous development opportunities that align with the vision of this Plan. The federally mandated Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) efforts that will be implemented by the Evansville Water and Sewer Department will not only improve the City's storm water management system, but also provide opportunities for attractive green improvements to the southern and western gateways into downtown. The need to collect and store storm water in the urban core will also provide opportunities to create urban parks and complete streets. This plan suggests concentrating these efforts along Fourth Street, Vine, and Walnut Streets to reinforce connections to the medical school site and the riverfront.

From a cultural perspective, the Plan embraces the desire to move the WWII vessel, the LST325, to Tropicana's former riverboat gaming facility dock. The Plan also promotes the efforts to connect the urban core with Haynie's Corner Arts District, the Jacobsville/North Main area (including some of the region's largest employers), West Franklin Street and the University of Evansville Area. To improve livability for downtown residents, the Plan suggests the need to establish a permanent home for a Farmer's Market and perhaps the development of a "Food Destination" style market, a convenience store and perhaps a gas station. Another focus that should be considered is the development of the gateways into downtown under the Lloyd Expressway - especially the linear property between the Third Street and Fifth Street transitions to First Avenue. Along with enhancing the Coliseum, this development would provide an excellent anchor for the new "Makers District" identified north of Court Street.



Jacobsville / New North Main Street  
Rendering provided by Rundell Ernstberger Associates

## MAP IDENTIFYING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES





## Regional Cities Sites

Aspects of the Downtown Master Plan have a tremendous opportunity to come to life through the recent state-awarded Regional Cities designation. The selection brings with it a \$42 million award intended to create an improved sense of place in Southwest Indiana and build infrastructure to support and attract a talented workforce, investment, and development. Evansville identified several downtown projects that were included in the Regional Cities application mixed-use housing and retail development: housing and redevelopment near the old Post Office (between Sycamore and Vine) and the YMCA (between 5th and Martin Luther King Boulevard); a science center integrated into Signature School; and additions to the Medical Campus.



Market @ Walnut  
Rendering provided by Thompson & Scott Brand Development



Signature School Addition  
Rendering provided by Hafer



Downtown Housing & Fitness Campus  
Rendering provided by PCI / Skanska

"The cities that capture the mobile, college-educated 'young and restless' are the ones who are most likely to revitalize their downtowns and accelerate economic progress in their cities."

- Lee Fisher, President  
CEOs for Cities



## Full Framework Map

The map below is a culmination of all of the preceding framework layers: amenity infrastructure + public spaces + activity centers + development opportunities + Regional Cities projects. This summary map illustrates the projects, potential and development planned or underway that this Plan recognizes, connects with and builds upon.

### MAP IDENTIFYING ALL FRAMEWORK LAYERS



# 08

## TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS

- 40. A Thriving Main Street*
- 43. An Active Riverfront*
- 50. NoCo Makers District*
- 52. Public Space Improvements*







# TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS

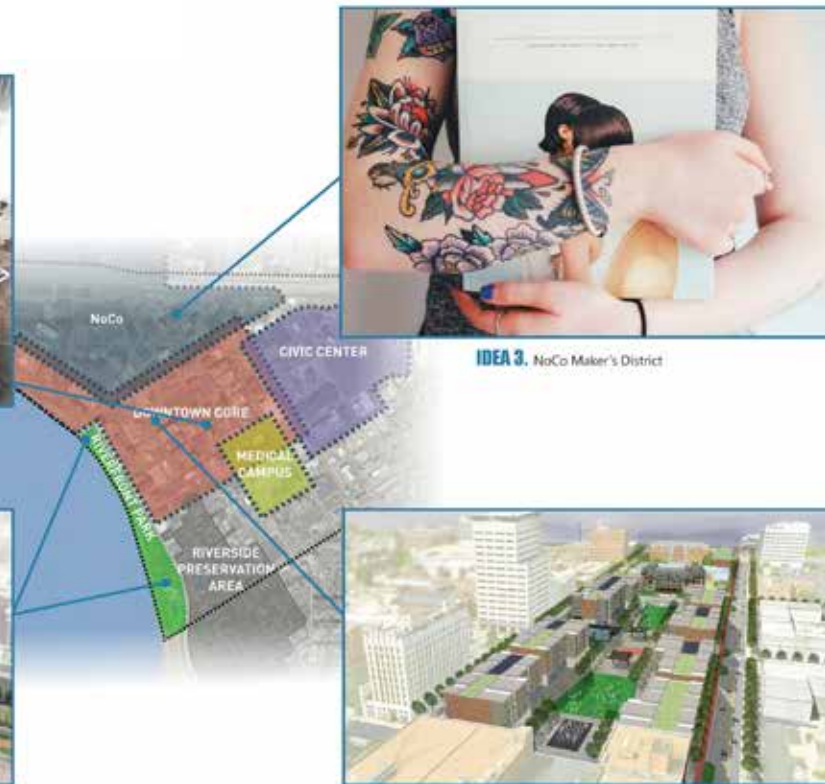
Four catalytic ideas emerged during the planning process. The application of these four ideas collectively create the downtown - wide transformation of becoming 'an activated, innovative, connected neighborhood.' These ideas are highlighted in the Community Handbook for City Building, a Master Plan summary document designed to inform and encourage community involvement to bring the Plan to life. The handbook also contains perspectives of Evansville residents who live, work and play in downtown.



**IDEA 1.** Thriving Main Street



**IDEA 2.** The Riverfront + Riverside Drive



**IDEA 3.** NoCo Maker's District



**IDEA 4.** Public Space Improvements



# 1: A THRIVING MAIN STREET

*An active Main Street is the spine of a thriving downtown.* Designating key blocks as an 'entertainment district' – initially from 2nd to 6th and ultimately extending from Riverside to Martin Luther King once a critical mass of activity is established - will create a cluster of energy that will radiate out to adjacent blocks on Main Street and throughout downtown to create a thriving city core. The park at 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Street can be transformed into a thriving and active space that can serve as an "anchor" for Main Street much in the same way Nordstrom or Macy's is an anchor in a shopping mall – creating a center of activity that positively influences the shops and spaces adjacent to it. The market assessment indicates there is significant demand for more downtown housing and room for additional restaurants, bars, shops, and attractions along Main Street (and throughout downtown in general). Key elements of an energized Main Street include:

- Activating ground floor retail space.
- Designating an "entertainment district" through incentives and regulatory relief for new businesses, restaurants, and retail.
- Reinforcing existing, and attracting more, local businesses.
- Adding outdoor café space.
- Enhancing the pedestrian realm.
- Activating 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Street Park through a new design and year-round programming and events.



# A THRIVING MAIN STREET

BEFORE IMAGE OF 4<sup>TH</sup> & MAIN STREET PARK





# A THRIVING MAIN STREET

AFTER IMAGE OF 4<sup>TH</sup> & MAIN STREET PARK



4<sup>th</sup> & Main Street Park brings life to the core of downtown with a rich mixture of programming and flexibility. As the center of a new "entertainment district," the park is equipped with a large outdoor performance space that is surrounded by vibrant ground floor retail. Amenities like urban swings, a playful water feature, bicycle accessibility, and space for street vendors ensure the park's daily use.



## 2: AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

A riverfront with activities that appeal to kids and seniors and everyone in between will create one of the finest gathering places in the region. Calming traffic on Riverside Drive and making it feel safer and easier to navigate on foot or bike will draw people naturally to the riverfront. Ideas include:

- Extending existing park space with cantilevered shelves over existing piers along the river.
- Enhancing park design including landscape, lighting, monuments and play equipment.
- Adding new park features – swings, shade structures and furnishings.
- Making it easier and safer to cross Riverside Drive to access the riverwalk and Greenway.
- Slowing vehicular traffic to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and enjoyment.
- Separating pedestrian activity from vehicular traffic with landscaping and other treatments.
- Creating a small destination area for dogs and pet caretakers.
- Physical improvements such as landscaping, parking enhancements, streetscape or other enhancements along Main Street, between 2nd and Riverside Drive to establish a stronger connection between the downtown core and the Riverfront.
- Creating visual connections from Main Street and other key locations to the river via design elements and features such as fountains, lights, and signage.



# AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

BEFORE IMAGE OF RIVERSIDE PROMENADE IMPROVEMENTS





# AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

AFTER IMAGE OF RIVERSIDE PROMENADE IMPROVEMENTS



A series of landmarks and public gathering spaces reinvent the Evansville riverfront as a regional destination with multi-generational appeal. Piers at Vine Street and Walnut Street draw users through downtown and along the Promenade with unique architecture that can be seen from a distance.



# AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

BEFORE IMAGE OF RIVERSIDE PROMENADE IMPROVEMENTS





# AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

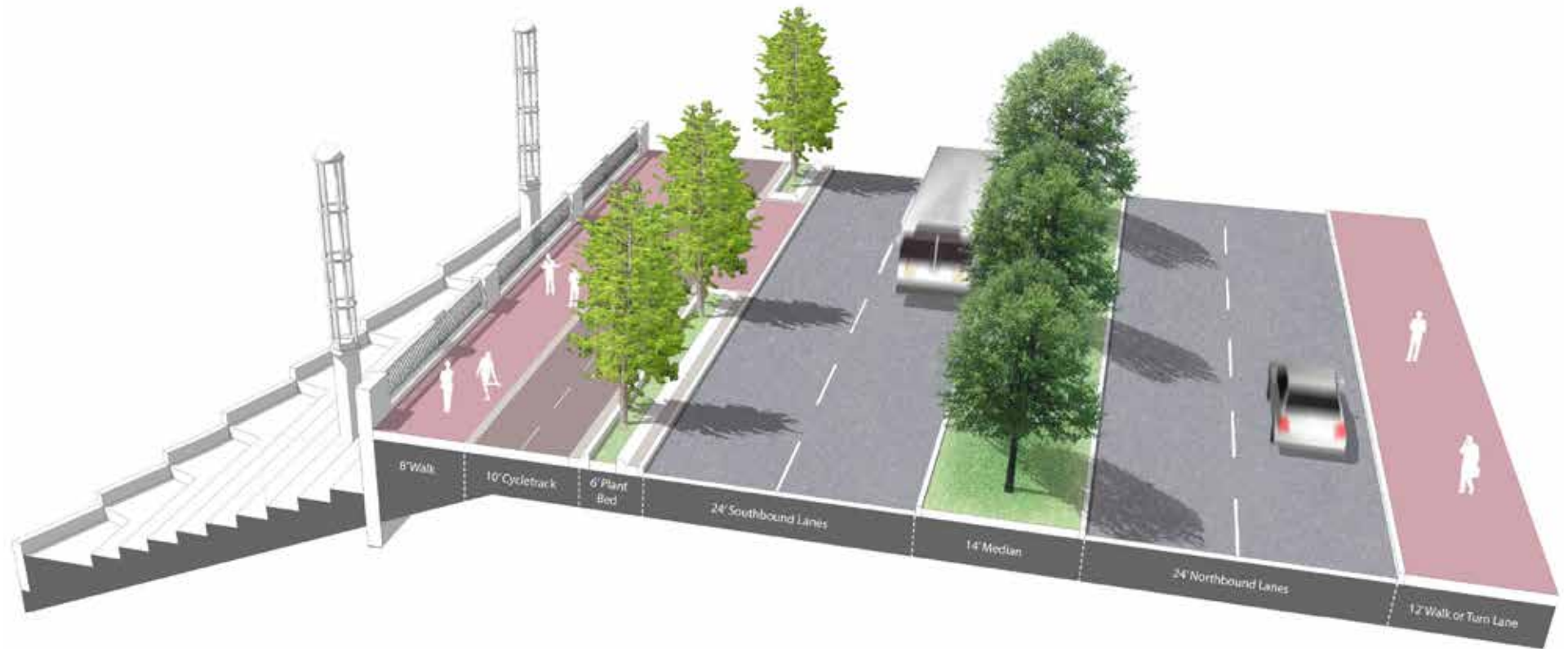
AFTER IMAGE OF RIVERSIDE PROMENADE IMPROVEMENTS



Expanding public space along the riverfront creates opportunities to reinvigorate this critical piece of downtown infrastructure. Monumental public art at the intersection of Riverside and Main becomes a visual landmark that draws users down the Main Street corridor to the river. Mixed-use development along Riverside Drive benefit from the increase in pedestrian traffic.

# AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

BEFORE IMAGE OF RIVERSIDE PROMENADE IMPROVEMENTS





# AN ACTIVE RIVERFRONT

AFTER IMAGE OF RIVERSIDE PROMENADE IMPROVEMENTS



Making a more active Riverside Promenade involves creating a cantilever to add public space along the riverfront as well as eliminating the median on Riverside to expand pedestrian space on both sides of the road. The new public space is activated with a variety of amenities that include: bicycle access, urban swings, festival space, street vending, ground floor retail, and on-street parking.

# 3: NOCO MAKERS DISTRICT

A place to live and work and create. 'NoCo' will be an eclectic mix of creative pursuits where a variety of uses and building types are not only welcome, but encouraged. The district can leverage Evansville's rich history of manufacturing and production in a 21st century model.

Envisioned as a place that will attract both start-ups and established businesses, entrepreneurs of all kinds, and cohorts ranging from millennials to Baby Boomers, the District (named for "North of Court") is a geographic area that is bound roughly by Fulton, the Lloyd Expressway, and Court. Key NoCo elements can include:

- A mix of uses – manufacturing, production, art, fabrication, digitization.
- A mix of building types – industrial, residential, commercial, and mixed use.
- Relaxed zoning – to attract and encourage diverse uses, building styles, and materiality.
- Incentives to attract businesses, residents, and development, including expedited permitting, tax abatements, and others as appropriate.
- Unique branding, signage, wayfinding and banners.





# NOCO MAKERS DISTRICT



\*Graphics created by Jessica Will

Evansville makes **LINGUINE.**  
 Evansville makes **STATEMENTS.**  
 Evansville makes **TECH.**  
 Evansville makes **SPECTACLES.**  
 Evansville makes **FASHION.**  
 Evansville makes **CRAFTS.**  
 Evansville makes **CHANGES.**  
 Evansville makes **HISTORY.**  
 Evansville makes **SUSHI.**  
 Evansville makes **ROCK 'N' ROLL.**  
 Evansville makes **ART.**  
 Evansville makes **A DIFFERENCE.**





# 4: PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Will enhance the overall downtown experience, as well as provide mobility options for people who don't or can't drive, while creating a more interesting and fun place to be. Moving through downtown should be intuitive and safe. Improving the public realm should result in increased development and investment. Ideas include:

- New wayfinding and directional signage.
- Redesigning Post Office Park to provide a linear green space for daily use and special events.
- Implementing recommendations from the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan and SEAC 2020 Millennial Plan.
- Designating, designing, and implementing complete street treatments such as wider sidewalks, protected bike lanes and cycle tracks, traffic calming features and more trees.
- Enhancing pedestrian safety and access.
- Adding pet relief areas.

These public space investments are important because they help define specific areas for investment that will help create a more walkable and livable downtown.

"...young professionals prefer to live in tight-knit urban areas that are close to work and provide entertainment and shopping options within an easy walk. We must be proactive in building this type of environment."

-Scott Evernham, President  
Old National Insurance



# PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

BEFORE IMAGE OF POST OFFICE PARK DEVELOPMENT





# PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

AFTER IMAGE OF POST OFFICE PARK DEVELOPMENT



A new tech park/mixed-use development is oriented along a central public space that begins at the historic post office on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and extends two blocks to 4<sup>th</sup> Street. A flexible open space program provides users with space to play, gather, and host events.



# 09

## ACTION PLAN

57. *Economy*

59. *Experience*

61. *Environment*





The action plan prioritizes the ideas with the most potential to advance the community's vision for downtown, "an activated, innovative, connected neighborhood."

The chart below frames the major action areas in three categories: Economy, Experience, and Environment. The construct is designed to provide a straightforward way to describe the initiatives that will shape the future of Downtown Evansville through efforts designed to attract investment and development; create a more attractive, livable downtown; and activate public spaces with events and amenities.

LEADERSHIP:	EVANSVILLE DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE		
	ECONOMY	EXPERIENCE	ENVIRONMENT
PRIORITY 1	Main Street Activation*	Fourth and Main Park	Public Space Improvements*
PRIORITY 2	NoCo Makers District*	Riverfront Activation*	Riverfront Connections
PRIORITY 3	Incentives & Policies	Downtown for Living	Active Public Spaces

*\*High Priority Transformative Idea*



# ECONOMY

## MAIN STREET ACTIVATION

## NOCO MAKERS DISTRICT

## INCENTIVES & POLICIES

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

A vital Main Street is a crucial component of a thriving downtown that attracts people, activity, a skilled workforce, investment, and residents to create a 24/7 neighborhood. A vital Main Street will create energy that expands throughout the downtown core.

A district dedicated to manufacturing, producing, and creating technology, goods and services will create a distinct asset in Evansville attracting innovation and a creative workforce.

Policies and incentives will attract new investment to geographic areas, meet unmet needs such as additional housing units, and align with today's market opportunities.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

A thriving Main Street is an important element of a downtown neighborhood where people want to live, gather, and socialize. An appealing downtown core will attract more housing development and more residents will encourage investment in amenities – grocery, dog park, and other services that create a 24/7 neighborhood.

A makers district, building on our historic manufacturing roots, will capture the fledgling innovative culture in Evansville, allow a place for a variety of creative activities and uses, and help brand Evansville as a destination for skilled workers and business creation.

Policies such as regulatory relief, financial incentives, and tax abatement will be required to implement plan recommendations including NoCo and Main Street.

### GOAL

From Riverfront to MLK, create incentives and policies to support and encourage more housing development, retail, restaurants, nightlife, and neighborhood-serving goods and amenities.

Create a live/work makers district building on Evansville's manufacturing legacy and laying the groundwork for its future.

Encourage and incentivize new investment, development, shops, and endeavors on Main Street and in NoCo. Update existing and create new incentives to address current and anticipated market opportunities in housing, mixed use development and entertainment. Incentives and regulatory relief will play a critical role in bringing to reality these transformative ideas.

# ECONOMY

## MAIN STREET ACTIVATION

### STRATEGIES

- Designate an “entertainment district” where regulatory and financial incentives encourage investment of all kinds. Initially concentrate on the blocks between 2nd and 6th and extend to Riverside and MLK once a critical mass of activity is established.
- Develop the park at 4<sup>th</sup> & Main Street to drive activity and investment (see “Experience section for more complete description).
- Repair and maintenance of street furniture, lighting, and other amenities to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Develop strategies to recruit new culinary talent and nightlife options to the downtown core.
- Public Art.

## NOCO MAKERS DISTRICT

- Relax zoning code regulations within the district so a mix of uses and building styles and types is encouraged; Determine applications/ criteria for tax phase-in.
- Explore partnerships with the Medical Campus, Ivy Technical College, University of Evansville and the University of Southern Indiana to nurture local talent and collaboration.
- Outreach to the manufacturing industry and the community at large to determine the level of interest in pioneering within the District.
- Develop marketing strategies for NoCo properties with owners and commercial brokers.

## INCENTIVES & POLICIES

Develop an incentives tool box and identify what tools and resources are best suited to specific projects. Tools can include:

- Regulatory relief.
- Relaxed design guidelines where appropriate.
- Tax phase-in to support and incentivize housing development, an active entertainment district and bring NoCo to life.
- Liquor license reform .
- TIF.
- Incentivize housing development.
- Façade loans/grants.
- City process assistance and simplification.
- Marketing support and Downtown Evansville ‘branding’ through the Evansville Downtown Alliance/ EID.
- Encourage the creation of a ‘model’ creative office to encourage leasing of class B office space.

### PARTNERS/POTENTIAL:

ERC, City of Evansville, Downtown Alliance/EID, Business community and downtown property owners, Regional Cities, Arts Council, TIF, financial/regulatory incentives TBD

### QUICK WINS:

Revise tax phase-in criteria to incentivize residential and other investment; revise land use regulations for activation districts to allow for mixed use, greater density and more flexibility.





# EXPERIENCE

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

### 4TH AND MAIN STREET PARK

There is currently no gathering space downtown that is widely used for concerts, programming, socializing, and lingering. The 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Park will be an amenity that will attract more residents, shops, and investment to the area. It is a critical location in the heart of Evansville and can serve as an anchor for new investment and overall revitalization.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

Establishing a gathering space that serves as “downtown’s living room” will create a more appealing and enjoyable space that will ultimately attract more people, investment, and residents. Activated green space is a key element of a successful downtown.

### RIVERFRONT ACTIVATION

The riverfront is a unique and appealing asset that has potential to be a great space. Like a thriving Main Street, a thriving riverfront sets the stage for more investment and development of all kinds to follow.

The riverfront has the potential to be a world class gathering space unequalled in the region. It enhances quality of life, access to nature, and is a gathering place for the community. When the riverfront and downtown core are seamlessly connected, Evansville will become more regionally competitive.

### DOWNTOWN FOR LIVING

Residents – both young and old – will be drawn downtown because of the riverfront, Main Street, and nearby work and business creation opportunities. Downtown housing options will increase City population and make Evansville more attractive to relocating people and employers looking for workforce.

When all of the Plan elements come together, an activated, innovative, connected neighborhood will emerge.



# EXPERIENCE

## 4TH AND MAIN STREET PARK

### GOAL

Transform the park space at 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Street into an active, thriving gathering space through design, enhancements, and programming. Public restrooms, solar-powered phone charging stations, and wifi capability should be considered in the overall planning and design.

### STRATEGIES

- Identify funding to acquire site.
- Redesign to be more accessible and versatile space.
- Develop year-round programming to activate the park (including concerts, ice skating, holiday festivals, etc.,) develop maintenance budget and plan.
- Source carriage and pedicab rides.
- Simplify downtown events process.

## RIVERFRONT ACTIVATION

Expand, enhance and program the greenway to create a more active and inviting space, connect to and celebrate the Ohio River, Evansville's defining natural asset.

- Commission a riverfront design process to look at ways to comprehensively enhance the greenway.
- Establish feasibility of extending cantilevered "shelves" over existing piers to create more useable space.
- Add amenities like children's play equipment, adult swings, shade structures, etc.
- Create programming to attract people to the space.
- Source merchants for kiosks, carts, pop-up vendors, bike and surrey rentals, outdoor wine-bars, etc.
- Recruit seasonal Dress Plaza merchants: 'toy' rentals, pop-up events, etc.

## DOWNTOWN FOR LIVING

Strengthen the appeal of downtown to developers and investors and residents alike as a 24/7 neighborhood by attracting more restaurants, coffee shops, and retail.

- Realign incentives for housing investment and development (see "Economy" section).
- Identify locations in downtown for pet relief areas and urban-scale dog parks.
- Encourage local restaurateurs, retailers, and others who are interested in locating in the downtown core.
- Develop and install wayfinding signage.
- Determine what pedestrian-scale amenities can easily be added to create a stronger sense of place: banners, lights, planters, holiday and seasonal displays, etc.

### PARTNERS/POTENTIAL:

Tropicana, EID, Southwest Indiana Chamber, Regional Cities, Army Corps of Engineers, Evansville Parks Department, Evansville Street Maintenance, Evansville Building Authority, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Evansville VOICE, regional events, MPO, LST 325, Freedom Heritage Museum, Evansville Museum of Arts, History and Science, Wessleman Woods Nature Preserve, Canoe Evansville, Area Plan Commission, YMCA, ECHO Community Housing, Evansville Housing Authority

### QUICK WINS:

Acquire 4<sup>th</sup> and Main site; redesign Main Street Square; install bike facilities; wayfinding signage; designate pet relief areas; add traffic-calming study for Riverside Drive; repair electrical outlets in tree wells on Main Street for holiday or other lighting



# ENVIRONMENT

## MOBILITY & CONNECTIONS

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Getting around by bike and on foot is an increasingly important quality of life consideration. Millennials are much more likely to move to and work in places that are easy to access and move through without a car. Pedestrian enhancements will improve visitor experience.

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

More appealing and accessible biking and walking options appeal to Millennials and Boomers alike and enhance downtown as a livable destination in the region.

### GOAL

Enhance and expand biking and walking connections to and through downtown; Develop the amenity infrastructure – complete streets, wayfinding and gateways – to attract more investment to specific downtown corridors.

## RIVERFRONT CONNECTIONS

The riverfront is a unique and appealing asset that has potential to be a great space, but getting there is difficult and not always safe. Ensuring pedestrian and bicycle safety through enhanced street crossings, lights, and strategies to attract all ages to enjoy the riverfront.

The riverfront is Evansville's greatest natural asset. Enlivening the greenspace and creating a community gathering space enhances downtown's appeal and livability.

Strengthen Main Street and downtown as a place for living. Make connecting to the riverfront easy, appealing, and intuitive. Create more pedestrian crossings and calm traffic along Riverside. Create visual connections to draw people to the river.

## PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

There is a great deal of hardscape in the downtown core and not many opportunities to enjoy public spaces. Encouraging people to linger and enjoy a place is an important aspect of creating a neighborhood.

Clearly defined and appealing public spaces will encourage new investment and development to capitalize on those amenities.

Strengthen the appeal of downtown as both a residential neighborhood and employment center by creating more park spaces and opportunities to relax, convene, and linger throughout the downtown core.



# ENVIRONMENT

## MOBILITY & CONNECTIONS

### STRATEGIES

- Treat 4<sup>th</sup> Street as a primary east/west corridor that extends from the Coliseum on the west end to the IU Medical Campus and into the Riverside Neighborhood on the east end. The street enhancements that are planned for the Campus will be an opportunity to build upon. The Coliseum will serve as a gateway to NoCo and is an important landmark on the street.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is an important east/west connection from Haynie's Corner to NoCo via the Tropicana Casino.
- Identify locations for wayfinding and gateways to announce and identify downtown.
- Reinforce and build on the recent bike and pedestrian master planning strategies.
- Prioritize streets (per the Amenity Infrastructure map) throughout downtown for complete street treatments.
- Incorporate bike rental system.

### PARTNERS/POTENTIAL:

Evansville Trails Coalition, CSO Consent Decree funds, Tropicana Casino, EID, Regional Cities, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Redevelopment Commission/TIF, MPO, Area Plan Commission, Parks Department, ECHO Community Housing

### QUICK WINS:

Undertake a traffic calming feasibility study along Riverside; identify locations for enhanced street furnishings; design & install wayfinding, source bike rental system, trolley line modifications and trolley stop signage/stations

## RIVERFRONT CONNECTIONS

- Commission a traffic study on Riverside Drive to determine traffic calming strategies.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience to and along the greenway through design and better access.
- Install more pedestrian crossings along Riverside Drive.
- Develop bike rentals, amenities and linkages.
- Create cues such as fountains, lighting, and art to make a visual connection to the river to draw pedestrians along Main Street from Riverside to 2nd Street.

## PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

- Identify additional locations for bike racks throughout downtown and partner with property owners to purchase and install them.
- Activate downtown greenspace with informal recreation and leisure opportunities such as kite flying, kickball, lawn chess, and similar.
- Attract local retail and restaurants at a variety of price points.
- Develop Post Office Park, as a festival space and as a quotidian recreation space for residents and workers, as an amenity to incentivize new housing development. Must include restrooms, phone charging station, wifi is critical for events.



# 10

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

- 64. *Evansville Downtown Alliance*
- 66. *EvansvilleDowntown Alliance Staff*
- 66. *Alliance Operating Board*
- 66. *Plan Implementation Committees*
- 67. *Economic Improvement District (EID)*
- 68. *EID Board*
- 68. *Southwest Indiana Chamber*
- 69. *Moving Forward / Next Steps*
- 70. *Long Term Aspirations*
- 72. *Looking Backwards, for a Plan for Tomorrow*







Implementation will take dedicated leadership, staff and revenue. This final section looks at how Downtown Evansville can align resources and efforts to bring this Plan to life. Forming an organization specifically focused on improving downtown and a revenue stream to support that organization are critical ingredients for the success of this Plan.

### Evansville Downtown Alliance

A new organization called the Evansville Downtown Alliance (“EDA” or “Alliance”) is envisioned to be the self-sustaining, private sector champion for implementing Plan recommendations and convening efforts to support, develop, and create downtown improvements. It is recommended the Alliance incorporate as a 501(C)(6) and that it is initially hosted within the Southwest Indiana Chamber.

While there have been downtown-focused entities in Evansville in the past, ***today Evansville may be one of the largest cities in the U.S. without a downtown-focused management organization.*** It is envisioned the Alliance will have a reliable source of revenue through an Economic Improvement District (EID) – a finance mechanism that allows downtown property owners to assess themselves to pay for downtown improvements. (The EID is described in more detail below.)

Throughout the country, downtown organizations have been very successful in advancing downtown advocacy and improvements. Like those existing organizations, the Alliance can lead the charge in creating lasting change in Evansville, including:

- Focusing on the management, marketing, activation, beautification and maintenance of downtown.
- Attracting strategic development and investment.
- Organizing and advocating to align the resources necessary to implement this Plan and others.
- Being a unified voice and champion for all downtown stakeholders.

"In Cleveland, I have seen first-hand the power of a private sector program to drive positive change in a downtown. The change was visible in terms of improved atmosphere, safety, appearance...but the greatest change was attitudinal. The power of this program to drive positive change in how the community as a whole viewed itself was incredible."

- Bob Jones, President & CEO  
Old National Bancorp



The Alliance will be guided by a board of downtown stakeholders representing a variety of interests, an Executive Director, and support staff. There will be ample opportunities for the community to engage with the Alliance on efforts through Plan Implementation Committees. These committees will be organized around creating an activated, innovative, connected neighborhood. The Alliance will lead downtown advocacy and be positioned to align organizations, resources and energy focused on implementing this Plan and leveraging new investments, projects, and resources. The Alliance will drive Evansville as a regionally competitive destination for investment and development.

### Evansville Downtown Alliance Staff

The Alliance is envisioned to have 2 to 3 staff members, including an Executive Director and staff to focus on areas to include marketing, communications, events, and daily management of the district. In addition, contract employee(s) may be appropriate to fulfill specific tasks and skill sets.

### Alliance Operating Board

The board of the Alliance will consist of downtown stakeholders representing business and property owners, civic leaders, the Southwest Indiana Chamber, Downtown Neighborhood Association, city leadership and others as appropriate. It is envisioned to have 15 to 17 board members. The Alliance Operating Board will provide policy direction and oversight for the Alliance, including interaction with the EID and other stakeholders. It is envisioned the Operating Board will meet regularly, on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

### Plan Implementation Committees

The community will be able to be involved through the Plan Implementation Committees. Downtown stakeholders interested in implementing the ideas outlined in this plan and rolling up their sleeves will be a critical part of the effort to bring this Plan to fruition. The committees will be organized around the Four Transformative projects:

- Activating Main Street
- Activating the Riverfront
- Developing the NoCo Makers District
- Public Space Improvements

It is envisioned Plan Implementation Committees will meet on an ad-hoc basis in order to advance the transformative projects and specific projects related to the Transformative Ideas.

The Alliance can also serve as a clearing house for volunteer activities including events, festivals, special projects or more which will take place in the downtown by providing resources, security, permitting, insurance, and other needs for these activities.







## Economic Improvement District (EID)

Primary funding for the Alliance will come from an Economic Improvement District (EID). EIDs are mechanisms whereby property owners within a specific geographic area agree to assess themselves in order to pay for enhancements to that same area.

An EID is the critical component in implementing this Plan – it will provide the funding to bring the Plan recommendations to life, including Alliance staffing, Plan activation, programming and oversight to make the Plan and its recommendations successful. The EID will facilitate a reliable, multi-year funding stream that will allow the Alliance to be singularly focused on creating a vibrant, economically healthy and activated downtown.

EID funds can pay for a wide variety of improvements and activities downtown, including:

- Special events and programming.
- Maintenance of downtown improvements and green spaces.
- Downtown advocacy.
- Economic development.
- Attracting new investment and development.
- Small business support and recruitment.
- Marketing and image.
- Street beautification.
- Capital Improvements.

The revenue generated by the EID can leverage other sources of funding, resources and partnerships. EID Revenues can match grant funding, accelerate public projects and investments, and attract private investment. Investors are often attracted to downtowns that have EIDs as they generally represent a cooperative, forward-looking spirit and vision among diverse stakeholders and property owners.

There are more than 1,000 EIDs in North America. Regional EIDs include downtown districts in Fort Wayne, Louisville, and Cincinnati. In order to form an EID in Indiana, formation steps include gathering petitions representing more than 50% of property owners who collectively own more than 50% of property value in the designated district boundaries. Upon the successful conclusion of the petition drive, City Council then holds a hearing and passes an ordinance creating the EID.

## EID Board

- The EID board will consist of 5 to 7 property owners who are ratepayers within the EID. It will provide direction with regard to EID assessment allocation and budgeting, and general representation of EID ratepayers. It is recommended the board is made up of a diverse cross-section of ratepayers including large and small property owners representing geographic diversity within the district. The EID will be a budget and policy oversight board, as opposed to an operating board, and therefore it is recommended the EID board meet relatively infrequently, either quarterly or biannually.
- It is envisioned that one or two members of the EID board also sit on the Alliance Operating board to ensure smooth communication, transparency and accountability to EID ratepayers.

## Southwest Indiana Chamber

To maximize the effectiveness of the Alliance it is recommended that it be hosted in the Southwest Indiana Chamber. The Chamber would allow the Alliance to focus on Plan implementation immediately upon its formation and avoid logistical and administrative complexities usually undertaken by fledgling non-profit organizations. The Chamber would offer a nascent downtown group a built-in structure by offering:

- Financial resources during the Alliance start-up (Once established, it is expected the EID property taxes to flow to the district in spring of 2018).
- Close working relationships with like-minded organizations including the Chamber, the Economic Development Coalition, the Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville, and the Indiana Small Business Development Center.
- The Chamber could provide logistical support for payroll, benefits, taxes, and other bookkeeping services – lessening the need for duplicative administrative resources.
- The Chamber's Public Policy Director can provide ongoing advocacy support at a local, state and federal level.

Ensuring clear separation between the Alliance and the Chamber so that the Alliance is held to a high degree of accountability and transparency will be critical to minimize any real or perceived conflicts between the two organizations and their missions.

"At the heart of every vibrant city is a thriving urban core offering a diverse mix of commercial, residential and cultural activities. That is why it's essential for our community to make every effort to revitalize our downtown. The Evansville Downtown Master Plan Update will help guide future development over the next five-to seven years and ensure we are on a right path for positive progress and long-term success."

- Lloyd Winnecke, Mayor  
City of Evansville

## Moving Forward / Next Steps

The notion of forming an EID has been discussed during the planning process and has been greeted with some enthusiasm. In order to move the effort forward, a formal EID initiative should be undertaken. The initiative should be guided by private sector property owners in the downtown core who want to see progress, investment and vitality. A significant aspect of that initiative should include a concerted outreach and communication effort to engage as many downtown stakeholders as possible to gauge willingness to pursue an EID.



Image provided by Joshua Cornelius





## Long Term Aspirations

As this plan unfolds and progress is made toward implementing its recommendations, new, longer-term opportunities will arise and be embraced by the community. Several longer term aspirations have been brought up during this planning effort. While some are ten or more years off, others might become realistic more quickly. Some of those aspirational goals include:

- Enhancing the spaces adjacent to Mulzer Crushed Stone on Fulton with landscape improvements and play enhancements to embrace its utilitarian function while encouraging community awareness and interaction.
- Attract boat cabs from Owensboro, Newburgh, Henderson and Mt. Vernon.
- Build a protected cycle track from Main Street to Haynie's Corner area.
- Create a parkour course and skate park along the river.
- Encouraging mixed use development as an integral part of parking structures; automate garages.
- Develop sports facilities in the 'North Forty' Civic Center Parking Lot which could include:
  - A Natatorium combined with a public pool and water play facility.
  - A Velodrome for regional and national biking competitions.
  - An indoor/outdoor soccer field for minor league soccer and for final games in tournament play already happening in the market.
  - A Dog Park and outdoor dog agility training course.
  - Ballpark.
  - Outdoor volleyball courts, pickleball courts, tennis facilities.
- Temporary use of INDOT owned parcels along Lloyd Expressway for orchards, urban farming or community gardens.
- Developing an 'Adult Playground' near the Medical Campus, with outdoor ping-pong, shuffleboard, bocce, and other stress-relieving activities including a beer garden.
- Attract commercial development at the Sunset Park tennis courts for a collection of landmark restaurants, condominiums and apartments.



- Developing a riverfront restaurant at the Evansville Museum.
- Changing the existing METS trolley line to run a more direct route between Downtown, Haynie's Corner, North Main, Garvin Park and West Franklin with extended hours.
- Add a 'Civic Center Garden' in front of the Civic Center to enhance views of the building and provide space for events in conjunction with Ford Center uses.
- Investigate floating development along Pigeon Creek, and connection to downtown.
- Further discussions for 'wharf' development in gravel yard, containing residential, retail, restaurants and entertainment opportunities.
- Upscale outlet store recruitment to take advantage of the community's status as a regional shopping destination.
- Establish a 'satellite' branch of the Indiana State Museum.





## Looking Backwards, for a Plan for Tomorrow

In 1927, the Harland Bartholomew Plan also had this to say about moving forward:

"The advantages of Evansville's position are obvious. It remains now to be seen whether the city itself has been made fit for the responsibilities which attend the exploitation of these resources. Despite the stimulus of first-class transportation, unlimited fuel and food supplies and an abundance of raw materials for manufacturing, the growth of Evansville will be slow and uncertain so long as living and working conditions in the city are unsatisfactory. Such handicaps to future growth will not disappear unless greater interest is taken by the public in the very real and serious problems attending the upbuilding of a large city."

Ninety years later, the city again is at a time of upbuilding. The Plan has demonstrated the need to change our approach to Downtown Evansville, the need to build an activated, innovated connected neighborhood as a tool to retain and attract the talent needed to 'upbuild' the City of Evansville, the whole Southwest Indiana region. The Plan is a bit different from our previous ones: this Plan is based upon a series of actions, efforts, collaborations and strategic goals aligned to develop population growth to which the market will respond with appropriate projects and buildings. *In a nutshell, the Plan says 'let's put people first.'* Evidence of the success of 'people first' development is currently at work in Downtown Evansville with local developers responding to the community's desire for urban living with over 130 units of housing under construction in Downtown Evansville.

The day after a master plan is released, the market will continue with properties being bought and sold and businesses and families moving in and out of the target area. It is unlikely that the images presented in this Plan will come to fruition as they are depicted. The people of the City, officials, CEO's, residents and workers, can start the wheel turning for community-oriented downtown which will yield development similar to, or superior to the images presented here. Here are some ways to bring this Plan to life:

- Support Downtown Evansville by shopping and dining here; enjoy our sidewalks and paths.
- Advocate with your City Council, your Mayor and your civic officials in support of implementation of the Plan.
- Support the formation of the EID if you own, rent or manage property in Downtown Evansville.
- Get involved in a Plan Implementation Committee.
- Buy or rent a home in Downtown Evansville; or move your business here.

Thank you, in advance, for the part you will play in advancing this Plan.



Image provided by Evansville Courier & Press





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## APPENDICES

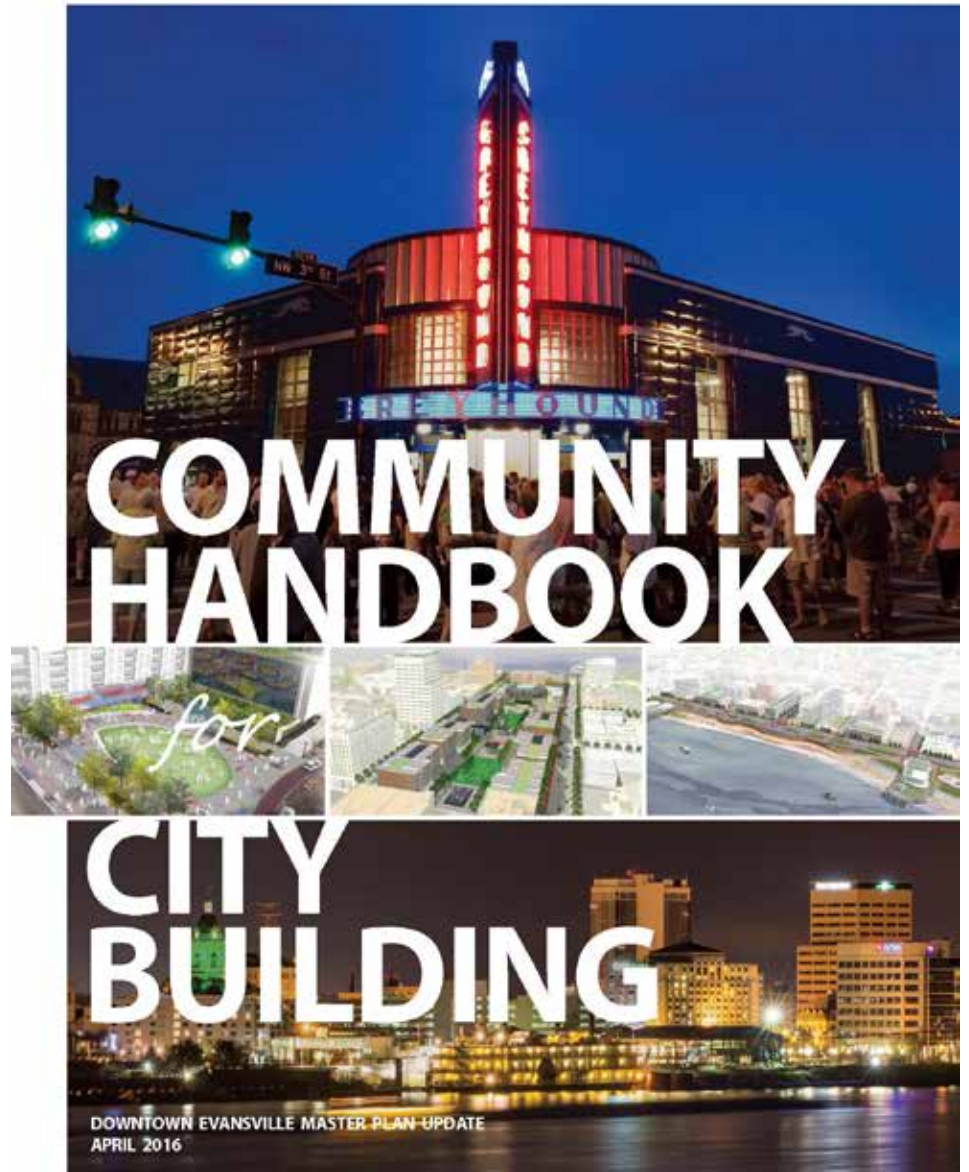
- 74. *Community Handbook for City Building*
- 80. *Summary of Previous Plans for Downtown Evansville*
- 84. *Downtown Evansville Market Profile*
- 118. *Downtown Evansville Survey Summary*





# **APPENDIX I**

## Community Handbook for City Building





## DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE MASTER PLAN UPDATE: GOALS & OVERVIEW

This Master Plan Update is inspired by the community's vision for the future of Evansville. It outlines strategies for revitalizing Downtown Evansville economically and culturally. It is our roadmap for attracting a new generation of young talent, vitality and investment. Revitalizing Main Street, activating the riverfront, creating the NoCo Makers District and enhancing public spaces are four Transformative Ideas that will usher in a new era for a thriving, mixed use downtown that is a regional and national destination.

### MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

There are a variety of notable economic and real estate development opportunities in Downtown Evansville. Targeted investment in each of these market sectors will facilitate the creation of a diverse and vibrant Downtown experience where life, work and play happen.



#### RESIDENTIAL

The Downtown residential market has opportunities for diverse and quality housing product at all price points.



#### RETAIL

There is ample opportunity for restaurants, cafes, and specialty retail, particularly along Main Street.



#### HOSPITALITY

The addition of a boutique hotel should meet long-term demand in Downtown.



#### PUBLIC SPACE

These improvements will attract investment and make Downtown a more appealing, playful and energetic place.



#### OFFICE

Affordable and creative office space is in demand and can fill street-level vacancies in Downtown.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCESS

As part of the Master Plan Update, over 1,500 stakeholders shared their aspirations and expertise about Downtown Evansville.

**FOCUS GROUPS**  
**MORE THAN 80**  
PARTICIPANTS MET IN A SERIES OF SMALL GROUP MEETINGS.

**ONLINE SURVEYS**  
**1,242 RESPONSES CAPTURED**



**DOWNTOWN IMPRESSIONS FROM RESIDENTS, WORKERS, AND VISITORS.**

**COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES**  
**MORE THAN 200**  
ATTENDED TWO PUBLIC MEETINGS.

**1 ON 1** AND SMALL GROUP MEETINGS WERE HELD WITH A VARIETY OF STAKEHOLDERS.

**A STEERING COMMITTEE OF 25 MEMBERS MET MONTHLY AND GUIDED THE PROCESS.**



EVANSVILLE COMMUNITY HANDBOOK



### CORE VALUES

Core values for Downtown Evansville emerged from a synthesis of all of the community engagement. The core values summarize the spirit of the Plan and describe how Evansvillians want their Downtown to feel.

#### ACTIVATED



A vibrant Downtown, Main Street & Riverfront

#### INNOVATIVE



A regional hub for jobs, innovation & unique businesses

#### CONNECTED



Safe, walkable and bikeable

#### NEIGHBORHOOD



A Downtown with diverse housing and amenities

### ACTION PLAN

The action plan prioritizes the ideas with the most potential to advance the community's vision for Downtown. The major action areas fall into three categories: Economy, Experience, and Environment. These are the initiatives that will shape the future of Downtown Evansville.

#### LEADERSHIP / CHAMPION: EVANSVILLE DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

ECONOMY	EXPERIENCE	ENVIRONMENT
1. Main Street Activation	1. 4 <sup>th</sup> and Main Park	1. Public Space Improvements
2. NoCo Makers District	2. Riverfront Activation	2. Riverfront Connections
3. Incentives & Policies	3. Downtown for Living	3. Active Public Spaces

EVANSVILLE COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

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#### Acknowledgments:

Mayor Lloyd Winnecke, Evansville Redevelopment members Randy Alzman, Mike Schopmeyer, Stan Wheeler, Jennifer Raibley, and Dave Clark

# THE 4 TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS



**IDEA 1.** Thriving Main Street



**IDEA 2.** The Riverfront + Riverside Drive



**IDEA 3.** NoCo Maker's District



**IDEA 4.** Public Space Improvements





I can bike from my door to the riverfront, or walk a block right or left to grab a beer. Having the coworking space directly across the street as home to my business has been incredible. Hello convenience! With the Ford Center next door, I've enjoyed season tickets to the Evansville Aces and often host friends before and after concerts and events.

In a community like Downtown Evansville residents have multiple amenities – which are growing – and right outside our doors! We also have the pleasure of knowing our neighbors and the local business owners. My favorite thing about living downtown is the community of active, engaged folks of all ages that our Downtown attracts.

Alissa Fricke, Main Street Resident  
Owner, Thrive Marketing  
President, Downtown Neighborhood Association

## THRIVING MAIN STREET

Main Street, the core of downtown, can be more active and vital with additional local, independent retail, shops and restaurants. The park at 4<sup>th</sup> and Main will serve as an anchor for an activated Main Street.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA

Creating a more pedestrian and bike-friendly environment with wider spaces and upgraded amenities along the greenway will make the riverfront a great destination for recreation. Encouraging mixed-use development on the north side of Riverside Drive will make access to the river safer and more appealing.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA

### THE RIVERFRONT + RIVERSIDE DRIVE

"We are interested in seeing a multifunctional area on or near the riverfront. This multipurpose area would somewhat be a plaza, and ideally be used for community events and activities. It would attract families and millennials, while also making a more culturally diverse audience feel welcome...as this must be key.

El paseo del río debería ser un área multifuncional semejante a una plaza, donde podamos celebrar en familia eventos que reflejen las distintas culturas y diversidad que componen a nuestra ciudad."

Darin Lander and Maytes Rivera, hosts of WEDA's "Soul & Salsa" broadcast from Downtown Evansville



EVANSVILLE COMMUNITY HANDBOOK



"Evansville used to do everything on its own: we made all our furniture, our food and our beer, and exported these products around the globe. We would love to see us get back to those roots. We're off to a really good start right now with the makers' community, and with a good push I think there's a lot of potential. We would completely embrace it: a creative district. For us, we like working with our friends and neighbors, that's the ultimate sense of community."

Brothers Kory and Kyle Miller  
Owners, Miller Made Collective

## NoCo MAKERS DISTRICT

Incentives designed to attract businesses, development and investment in NoCo will include regulatory reforms to make it easier to build and do business, tax incentives and others.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA

Moving through and around downtown by foot or bike should be safe, easy and fun. Upgrading key streets and corridors with a complete amenity infrastructure can make this happen. Greenspace and other improvements will draw development and activity.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IDEA

### PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

"Our goal is to grow from this, we see the trails and paths we have as just the beginning of something that could be really spectacular. Imagine a whole network of trails and bike paths that would connect our neighborhoods, where we live, with our schools, our parks, our work places, and ultimately with each other."

Roberta Heiman  
Past President, Evansville Area Trails Coalition



EVANSVILLE COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

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## MOVING AHEAD...

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement will be welcome and encouraged in bringing this plan to life. Downtown advocates interested in implementing the ideas outlined in this plan and rolling up their sleeves will be a critical part of the effort to bring this plan to fruition.

### EVANSVILLE DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

Bringing this plan to life will take dedicated leadership, staff and revenue. A new organization called the Evansville Downtown Alliance is envisioned to be the self-sustaining, private sector champion for implementing plan recommendations and convening efforts to support, develop, and create Downtown improvements.

The Alliance can lead the charge in creating lasting and meaningful change in Evansville, including:

- Focusing on the management, marketing and maintenance of Downtown
- Attracting strategic and thoughtful development and investment
- Organizing and advocating to align the resources necessary to implement this plan and others
- Being a unified voice for all Downtown stakeholders

### ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Initial primary funding for the Alliance will come from an Economic Improvement District (EID). EIDs are mechanisms whereby property owners within a specific geographic area, such as a ZIP code or neighborhood, agree to assess themselves in order to pay for enhancements to that same area.

An EID is a critical component in implementing this plan – it will provide the funding to bring the plan recommendations to life.

The EID will fund Alliance staffing, plan activation, programming and oversight to make the plan and its recommendations successful.

It will facilitate a reliable, multi-year funding stream that will allow the Alliance to be singularly focused on creating a vibrant, economically healthy and activated Downtown.





## **APPENDIX II**

### Summary of Previous Plans for Downtown Evansville

## Summary of Previous Plans for Downtown Evansville

(DRAFT DOCUMENT Prepared by P.U.M.A. 11/16/15)

Plan Name and Year Adopted	Plan Description and Purpose	Downtown Specific Issues
<b>2015</b>   Evansville Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity Master Plan, DRAFT  City of Evansville	This plan analyzes bicycling and walking in Evansville and makes recommendations for future infrastructure and programming improvements to expand multimodal transportation options throughout the City. Goals for future bike/pedestrian infrastructure include economic development, attracting tourism activity, and increasing transportation equity via the Create-A-Commuter program that equips low-income residents with bicycles. The Plan calls for a number of bike/pedestrian improvements at key locations throughout Evansville, including: more and better bike amenities and programming; better connectivity between bicycling, walking, transit, and other modes; a comprehensive Complete Streets policy, additional safe routes to school, traffic calming, streetscape enhancements, wayfinding, and increased safety. Ensuring equitable access to bike/pedestrian amenities is central to the plan.	This plan calls out Downtown as being particularly bike and pedestrian friendly. A major challenge is the lack of bike-and-pedestrian-friendly infrastructure moving outside of Downtown, which discourages biking and walking into Downtown from elsewhere in the city. Downtown would benefit from additional bike amenities including additional bicycle lanes, cycle tracks, and bike parking. Poor connectivity across Lloyd Expressway creates a barrier for bikers and pedestrians.
<b>2015</b>   A Report on Blight, Vacancy, and Abandonment in Evansville, Indiana  Department of Metropolitan Development	This report analyzes blight and vacancy in Evansville. The plan links blight to massive population decline in the urban core, loss of manufacturing jobs, urban sprawl, absentee landlords, and unqualified home buying. Solutions to combat blight include: a better tax sale process to quickly sell abandoned properties; land banking as a way to redevelop blighted properties; reducing crime; using code enforcement to prevent future blight; and increasing the quality of neighborhoods and sense of security for homeowners.	This report calls out Downtown as an area of concentrated blight. Recommended solutions specific to Downtown include land banking as means to redevelopment and adding new and affordable housing options to serve existing low-income residents and future residents.
<b>2015</b>   Evansville Place Branding  City of Evansville	This report is a guide to branding the City of Evansville as a destination by calling attention to the city's unique characteristics, defining its identity, and promoting Evansville to visitors and potential residents. The Evansville "brand" promises "a fruitful, enabling and diverse environment to grow an idea, a business, and a family." The brand will be distributed via digital media, traditional advertising, public relations campaigns, and corporate communications.	This report calls out Downtown as lacking identity and vibrancy. Downtown has suffered from urban sprawl, the "donut" effect, and young people leaving the region. Successful branding will further Downtown revitalization by retaining and attracting residents and employers.



<p><b>2015   Indiana's Great Southwest Regional Development Plan, Regional Cities Program</b></p> <p>Southwest Indiana Regional Development Authority</p>	<p>As part of Indiana's statewide Regional Cities Initiative, this plan makes recommendations aimed at retaining and growing the population of southwest Indiana, specifically retaining and attracting skilled young talent to power the workforce and drive the economy. The plan takes a regional approach to economic development by proposing a number of projects that will strengthen both the core of the region (Downtown Evansville) and the wider region. Proposed projects include: updating the Evansville Regional Airport; revitalizing and investing in Downtown Evansville; investing in public infrastructure to support international USGA and PGA events; local food and arts projects; regional bike and pedestrian trails; developing clusters of medical and wellness services; new gaming and casino amenities; and supporting emerging and innovative industries.</p>	<p>The plan proposes Downtown projects that will strengthen the region, with a goal of adding 2,500 residents and transforming Downtown into a 24/7 urban event center by 2025. Recommended projects include: an IU Medical School &amp; Research Facility; an Urban Living Research Facility via partnerships with Haier and Vectren; a Downtown YMCA Housing &amp; Fitness Campus; new housing; a regional trails system; and a new Evansville Signature School Science Center.</p>
<p><b>2015   Evansville and Vanderburgh County Comprehensive Plan Update</b></p> <p>City of Evansville and Vanderburgh County</p>	<p>The Comprehensive Plan targets growth in Evansville and Vanderburgh County by encouraging and supporting employment opportunities and livability. The plan proposes infrastructure and program solutions to attract and retain a young skilled workforce and foster continued job opportunities in the region. Recommendations include: implementing high speed internet; adding full service office and industrial sites; modernizing outdated industrial sites and infrastructure to meet the needs of smaller tenants and new manufacturing types; adding education and training programs to create a more qualified workforce; increasing the number of jobs paying a living wage; encouraging new business start-ups at facilities like Innovation Pointe and in vacant or underutilized industrial facilities; providing technical assistance, counseling and financing assistance to small businesses; and developing diverse and affordable housing.</p>	<p>The plan calls out Downtown as a major employment center for the region, but not a shopping, entertainment, and residential hub. Reestablishing Downtown as the urban core with distinctive shopping, entertainment, residential, social, cultural, and service experiences will be key. Strategies for accomplishing Downtown revitalization include developing amenities like a grocery store, green space, and public spaces. Key Downtown redevelopment strategies include: prioritizing adaptive reuse and infill; developing new multifamily housing; attracting residents and visitors from surrounding neighborhoods by improving multimodal linkages and reducing crime rates; and supporting physical enhancement programs.</p>
<p><b>2015   METS Comprehensive Operations Analysis, DRAFT Final Report</b></p> <p>Metropolitan Evansville Transit System (METS)</p>	<p>This report summarizes findings and recommendations from the Evansville Transit Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) for improving METS bus service throughout Evansville. Planned changes include: longer operating hours; more frequent service, particularly on Saturday night and Sunday; new and consolidated routes; improved buses and facilities; and more frequent service to large employers and major attractions. Current challenges include: aging infrastructure and buses; lack of connectivity to bus stops and stations; and safety issues on buses and near stations. The report includes long-term funding and ridership projections and policies to guide future improvements.</p>	<p>This report calls for improved transit access to Downtown, particularly from USI campus, Warrick County, and Lawndale. Upgrades to the Downtown Transfer Center are planned for 2016/2017. Downtown Trolley service upgrades will include route realignment. User-friendly upgrades will include live tracking of buses via smartphone apps, using Twitter for delays and rider updates, and signage improvements.</p>

<p><b>2012   Evansville Downtown Convention Hotel Feasibility and Impact Analysis</b></p> <p>Evansville Redevelopment Commission</p>	<p>This analysis evaluates local market demand for a Downtown convention hotel. The study found that the optimal hotel would be of high quality with full-service amenities and offer between 240 and 270 rooms. The analysis found that Evansville was not competitive as a convention host in 2012 compared to larger nearby cities. The analysis identified local demand for corporate training events and meetings, tradeshow, and other events from within the region. Critical factors for success include a top hotel brand, adjacency to the convention center, and full-service amenities.</p>	<p>The convention hotel would serve the Ford Arena and the Old National Events Plaza, bringing corporate events, tradeshow, and other meetings and events to Downtown Evansville.</p>
<p><b>2012   Evansville Consumer Awareness and Perception Study</b></p> <p>Evansville Convention and Visitor's Bureau</p>	<p>This survey and study was conducted to investigate consumer awareness, perceptions, and visitation patterns in Evansville. The survey found four primary visitor groups: family and friends visitors; family getaway visitors; casino visitors; and amenities visitors. Visitors are generally a drive market from surrounding metro areas. Evansville tends to exceed visitor expectations and generates return visits. The City is considered to be accessible with small town charm and big city amenities.</p>	<p>Top visitor activities include dining, shopping, recreating along the Riverfront, and visiting the casino, all of which are most likely done in Downtown.</p>
<p><b>2011   Bringing the Heart Back. Greater Evansville: The Place for Young Professionals</b></p> <p>City of Evansville</p>	<p>This plan analyzes "brain drain" in the greater Evansville region and recommends strengthening Downtown as the top strategy for attracting and retaining a young, skilled talent pool. Specifically, the plan recommends reinvesting in Downtown to create a vibrant core that will appeal to the young, diverse workforce that has been leaving the area.</p>	<p>Downtown is called out as the heart, soul, and core of Evansville. The report identifies the Riverwalk and corridor from Main Street to the Ford Center as the epicenter of Downtown revitalization. Downtown redevelopment and infill activities should build upon the success of these two public spaces, encouraging retail amenities to fill in the gaps. Specific recommendations include: developing a can't-miss experience for visitors; prioritizing housing affordability to meet the needs of young professionals; and identifying strong advocates to take ownership of Downtown revitalization.</p>
<p><b>2009   A Deliberative on Downtown Evansville</b></p> <p>City of Evansville</p>	<p>The planning effort was aimed at providing the City of Evansville a streetscape enhancement program. Specifically intended to encourage residents, shoppers, and visitors to utilize downtown for business and entertainment. The development plan prioritized incorporation of improvements such as cohesive streetscape hardscapes, furnishings, lighting, plazas, landscaping and street trees, fountains and public art. The development plan recommended pedestrian linkages to activity centers than enhance the brand of the entire downtown area.</p>	<p>The deliberative reinforces the necessity of building a green public amenity infrastructure that forms the framework for private investment and creates the neighborhood culture desired by residents searching for urban living experiences.</p>
<p><b>2015   Bringing Together Local Food Production in the Southwest Indiana Region: The Case for a Food Hub in Southern Indiana</b></p> <p>Downtown Alliance, Southwest Indiana Chamber</p>	<p>This plan lays out a strategy to increase local food production, distribution and access in the southwest Indiana region. The goal is to establish retail space for the food hub that offers food sales and related activities like restaurants, bars, or art galleries as well as a public gathering space outdoors.</p>	<p>Downtown is called out as an ideal location for a regional food hub due to its central location, walkability, bikeability, proximity to transit, and general accessibility to everyone in the region.</p>



# **APPENDIX III**

## Downtown Evansville Market Profile



# Downtown Evansville Market Profile



*Prepared by:*

PROGRESSIVE URBAN MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES

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March 25, 2016

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## INTRODUCTION



This document has been prepared for the Evansville Redevelopment Commission as part of a Downtown Strategic Master Plan. The Plan will identify a community vision for Downtown as well as tactics, policy changes, partnerships and revenue structures needed to fully accomplish the Plan's vision. The Plan will be used to guide public and private investments in Downtown through the next five-to-seven year market cycle.

An understanding of market opportunities will help guide the selection of investment tactics for the Plan. This understanding can also illuminate areas where market forces are highly unlikely to deliver certain types of development. If such development types are desired by the community, then resources must be identified and allocated to deliver them, or the community must decide to wait until a future market cycle can deliver it.

Data was compiled using primary and secondary sources such as existing City and County planning documents and studies, ESRI's Business Analyst Online, the U.S. Census Bureau, real estate market reports, Convention & Visitors Bureau and lodging reports, and Evansville Redevelopment Commission and City and County data. Additionally, interviews were collected to gain other information from property and business owners, developers, brokers, residents, entrepreneurs, and City and County department staff. Data sources are cited throughout the document.

### IN THIS DOCUMENT

#### 1. KEY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

This section of the document summarizes notable economic and real estate opportunities for Downtown Evansville and its Market Areas.

#### 2. GLOBAL TRENDS

P.U.M.A.'s award winning research on Global Trends Affecting Downtowns underpins an overview of trends that are affecting Downtown Evansville. Sidebars throughout the document interpret the data in context of these trends.

#### 3. MARKET OVERVIEW & PROFILE

This section of the document presents key demographic and land use data that lay the contextual foundation for the assessment.



## STUDY AREAS

This Market Profile compares and analyzes market data across four geographies: Downtown, the In-Place Market Area, the City of Evansville and a commute market. These geographies are described below.

### DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA

Many different boundaries for downtown have been used in past plans, including the Downtown Redevelopment Area boundary, the downtown zip code 47708, and census tract number 18.

The Downtown study area boundary defined in this profile is shown in blue on the map to the right. The area is bounded to the north by the W. Lloyd Expressway, to the east by S. Governor Street, to the south by Mulberry Street, to the southwest by the Indiana-Kentucky state line, and to the west by Fulton Avenue.

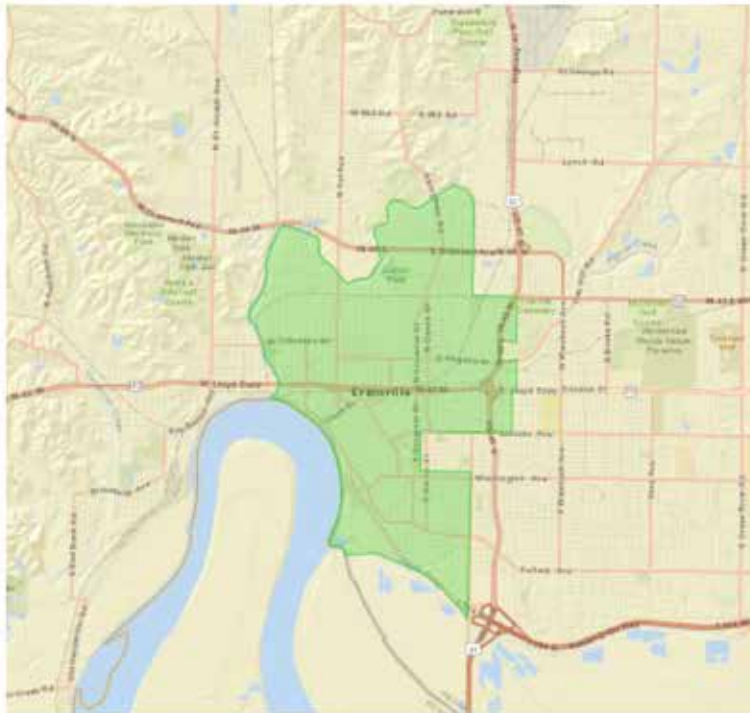
Throughout this Market Profile, the Downtown study area is referred to as “Downtown”. Where downtown data is available from other plans, it will be referred to with the specific boundary used and will be indicated with a lower case “d” in downtown.



## IN-PLACE MARKET AREA

To better analyze market opportunities and market demand in Downtown, P.U.M.A., with input from City of Evansville staff, defined an in-place market area boundary for Downtown.

The in-place market area includes the neighborhoods surrounding Downtown, where residents are readily able to access and support Downtown establishments with desired offerings. The “Central” subarea boundary outlined in the 2014 Evansville Housing Needs Assessment was replicated as the In-Place Market Area. Throughout the Market Profile the in-place market area is referred to as the “Market Area”, which is shown in green on the map below.

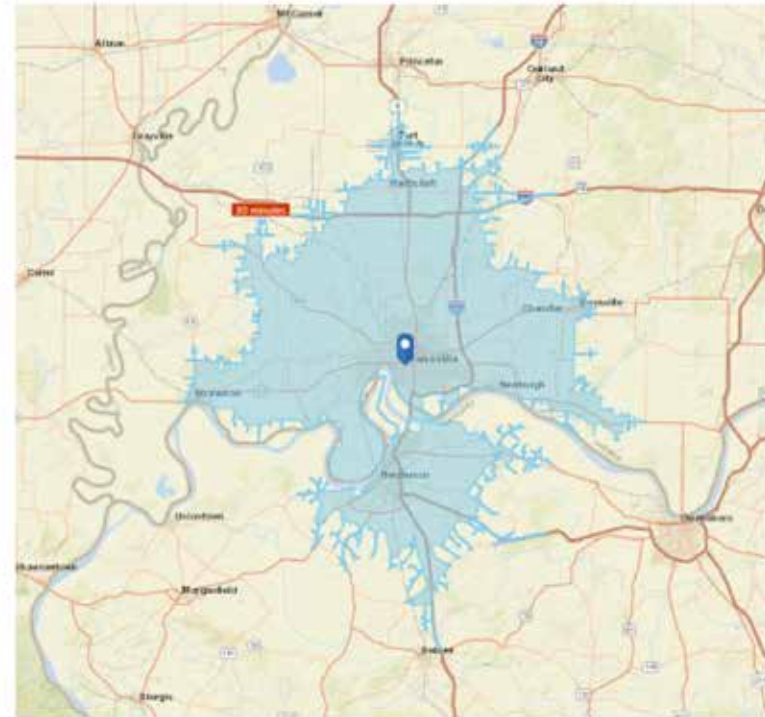


Downtown Evansville Market Profile 3.25.2016

## COMMUTE MARKET AREA

Downtown is a unique asset in the greater Evansville area. Many homeowners that have left the city limits continue to frequent Downtown to patronize services, entertainment venues and other amenities not available elsewhere.

The “Commute Market” is described by estimating a 30-minute drive time from Downtown. The area, shown below, encompasses all of the City as well as portions of multiple counties and in some cases crosses into Kentucky.



P.U.M.A. 5

## KEY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES



McCurdy Hotel, Brandon Bartoszek

### LIVE

The strongest market opportunity in Downtown today is in quality, one- and two-bedroom rental housing units. Very high downtown rental occupancy rates and significant rent premiums provide a data basis that reiterates anecdotal evidence from area realtors of strong demand. Units with upscale interior finishes and secure parking best target the young professionals and empty nesters that most desire urban living. Centrally located vacant or underutilized parcels with riverfront views are optimal locations to command the rents needed to attract developers.

The McCurdy Hotel renovation will deliver approximately 100 units at rents of over \$1 per square foot.<sup>2</sup> **The McCurdy Hotel project is very important to prove and catalyze the Downtown Evansville housing market,** and will be closely watched. There may also be opportunity in conversion of all or most floors of one of the mostly vacant office towers in the Downtown core to residential units. This might be an avenue to deliver mid-priced units for students, faculty, and others. However, without specific building analysis, it is difficult to predict the resulting rents.

Certainly there is demand for rental units affordable for low-to-moderate income households that are currently living in Downtown and are expected to increase. Due to the cost to construct or retrofit existing buildings, **units with monthly rents below \$500 are unlikely to be delivered** in adequate quantity to meet demand without substantial subsidies. The City recently approved RAD bonds and a RAD conversion program to upgrade and keep two Evansville Housing Authority buildings in the affordable market for the next 25 years.

### ENHANCING MARKET CONDITIONS:

Small open spaces for pets can improve the desirability of nearby downtown multifamily units.

Strong bike and walking links to other cultural and entertainment areas strengthen Downtown as a place to live and visit.

<sup>2</sup> City Has Big Investment in McCurdy" Evansville Courier & Press. February 22, 2015. Currently, the McCurdy Hotel is being renovated and is expected to deliver approximately 113 units at rents of \$1 per square foot or about \$2000 per unit. The renovation received historic tax credits and City redevelopment dollars.





## WORK

The Downtown office market is currently stronger than the suburbs but still shows significant vacancy and slow absorption. With light industrial manufacturing clusters in surrounding areas, Downtown would be an excellent location for the sales or research staff of larger companies, or for smaller businesses that serve them. Historic buildings have attracted investment and tenants based on their unique and lasting stature and the availability of historic tax credits. However, many office properties built in the mid- to late 20th century are outdated and lack unique appeal; this is where vacancy is clustered and absorption is particularly slow.

High occupancy at Innovation Pointe shows demand for modern office space and formats, of which there is limited supply in Downtown. With vacancy more than 25%, new build leasable office construction is unlikely in the near term. There may be opportunity to accelerate absorption in existing, largely vacant office towers by proactively demonstrating modern tenant finish options. Owners of commercial towers in other markets have upgraded existing Class B space to create more open format layouts with light, glass, and color while leaving HVAC and other mechanical systems unchanged. By proactively taking on a demonstration floor and showing these spaces filled with fun, modern furnishings, they are attracting tenants and upgrading their buildings.

While there is limited opportunity for industrial in Downtown, a few properties near the Lloyd Expressway lend themselves to advanced manufacture/light industrial similar to other areas near Downtown that have attracted new industrial uses. This potential is strongly tied to creating an economy of agglomeration by attracting related research and development companies or branches to the office space in Downtown.

## ENHANCING MARKET CONDITIONS:

Many tech and professional companies are choosing their location based on enhancing the ability to attract skilled talent. As such, creating an appealing Downtown is now an important condition for attracting workers and filling vacant office space.

Clean, well-maintained streets and sidewalks are foundational for an inviting atmosphere in Downtown.

Bike racks, lanes, and bike share signal to young talent that Downtown aligns with their values.



Bitterman Building

## SHOP

There is ample opportunity for additional restaurants, cafes and bars in Downtown particularly clustered along Main Street and in close proximity to the event center and convention center. A centrally-located coffee shop that serves office users is currently lacking. There appears to be available street level space that could accommodate such uses, albeit possibly requiring significant investment to bring historic structures up to food service standards. Another seasonal food service opportunity that would enhance Downtown may be a small café or ice cream shop oriented to the riverfront to serve weekend users. If visible, it could help to invite visitors to cross Riverside Drive and begin a journey along Main Street.

Despite a historic and pleasant environment, Downtown does not have a reputation or enough critical mass to be seen as a retail shopping destination in the region. Modest occupancy on Main Street and significant vacancy in blocks between Sycamore and Vine Streets near The Old Post Office and Customs House discourage any new retail construction. Evansville's visitor types (casino, conference, and business) are not as strong of shoppers as leisure travelers. Longer term, the success of the retail market will be determined by how successful Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods are at adding residents.

## ENHANCING MARKET CONDITIONS:

Authentic and appealing environments are best for attracting shoppers. Main Street offers an appealing physical environment but needs to develop a distinctive niche of local restaurants and shops.

Convenient amenities for daily living such as food market, pharmacy, dry cleaning, can accelerate the residential market.

More restaurants and bars can enhance Downtown's appeal as a neighborhood, and serve workers, students, and event attendees.

"Third Spaces" - non work, non home places that invite patrons to linger and interact add appeal to urban living and experience.

## PLAY

The new convention center and hotel is an important investment for Downtown. **Additional new hotel construction appears unlikely** in the near term in the wake of this significant addition, but will be very difficult to be certain until the new hotel comes on line and its effect on room occupancy rates and RevPAR become apparent. There does appear to be some potential for a small scale, limited-service hotel in an historic building that could cater to younger visitors and those attracted to the impressive history of Downtown Evansville.



## GO

Active mobility options, such as walking and biking, are a high priority for Downtown residents and workers. Improvements to pedestrian and bicycle amenities will be key to attracting and retaining young talent. A variety of transit infrastructure exists in Downtown Evansville, but the transit system is underutilized. The proposed expansion of the METS bus system, along with a realignment of the trolley routes, should increase ridership in the near future.





## GLOBAL TRENDS AFFECTING DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE

Global and national trends continue to promote the growth of vibrant downtowns. Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) has been tracking and reporting global trends affecting downtowns for nearly a decade and applying that knowledge to specific cities and downtown markets. P.U.M.A.'s latest update to the report was released in spring 2014 in collaboration with research from the University of Colorado Denver. This section of the Market Profile summarizes the trends that are currently most relevant to Downtown Evansville.



### CHANGING WORKFORCE & THE REBOUND WAVE

The national workforce is changing in myriad ways that are, for the most part, positive for downtowns. Boomers (over 50) are retiring in greater numbers while Generation X (35 to 50) is taking the reins, and Millennials (18 to 35) are aiming to build careers with their sought-after talent and skills. Both Boomers and Millennials have fueled downtown population growth over the past decade and are poised to continue to populate urban environments. Companies are under increased pressure to consider operating in city centers that have a high concentration of skilled talent. In keeping with national trends, Downtown Evansville has a slightly larger percentage of residents 25 to 34 and a significantly larger percentage of residents over 55, compared to nearby neighborhoods and the City. However, jobs, housing and amenities that appeal to young talent could be further cultivated to entice more young people to live and work Downtown.

College-educated young adults age 25 to 34 are twice as likely as other age groups to live within three miles of a city's downtown but an increasing number can no longer afford to live in or near the downtown of superstar cities, such as New York and Los Angeles. The rising real estate prices in these cities have priced out the very demographic that will be the main driver of economic growth. This opens an opportunity for smaller more affordable downtowns, such as Evansville, to attract young, educated workers who are moving out of the big cities in search of smaller, less expensive cities with desirable urban characteristics. Downtown community forums, led by P.U.M.A., revealed that many young professionals, who grew up in Evansville, are now returning after a stint in a larger city such as Chicago or Indianapolis. These Millennials are looking not only for an affordable urban environment but a place where they can take their passion for city building and make a notable impact.

## URBAN RESIDENTIAL RENAISSANCE

With national trends in their favor, many downtowns are experiencing an economic renaissance that is attracting new investment and higher income households. Vibrant downtowns are well positioned to capitalize on economic opportunities and deepen the demand for downtown housing by offering jobs, entertainment, culture, education, recreation, and healthy lifestyles. Walkable urban environments in both large and small cities generally command a housing premium over their suburban counterparts. A rent premium study for a mid-size city in Colorado that currently does not have robust downtown housing found that new downtown rental units could achieve an average 40% premium over new suburban units outside the city. Although Downtown housing in Evansville lags behind national trends, there are indicators for future growth. An existing premium on rents and low vacancy rates suggest demand for quality housing units that could command significant premiums above the Evansville average.

## SHIFTS IN TRANSPORTATION

Vehicle expense and demographic changes are shifting behaviors away from cars and towards alternative modes such as walking, biking and transit and sharing programs. Today, over 600 cities in 49 countries host modern bike share programs, the fastest growing mode of transport in history. America's two largest demographic groups – Boomers and Millennials – are primarily responsible for changing transportation habits. Boomers are simplifying and downsizing households, often moving to walkable downtown areas. Millennials too are seeking walkable/bikeable environments in proximity to jobs and lifestyle amenities. The share of automobile miles driven by people in their 20s has dropped precipitously over the past 15 years.

Although a large majority of residents and visitors still opt to drive in Evansville, efforts are underway to make the city more bicycle, pedestrian and transit friendly. A recent Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Master Plan contains a number of recommendations to this effect, including enhanced pedestrian crossings, new bike lanes and shared use paths, and additional wayfinding signage. The METS transit system has also proposed significant expansion of service that is projected to increase overall ridership. Downtown Evansville is fortunate to have many physical attributes, such as a compact scale, flat grade and wide roadways that set the stage for increased walking and biking if infrastructure is enhanced.

## REGIONALISM

Recognizing the polarized political climate in Washington and limited federal capacity to address regional needs in infrastructure, education and innovation, cities and counties are working together to achieve common goals. This emerging trend of regional collaboration and investment marks a historical shift in local governments taking on responsibilities once reserved for higher levels of government. Cities and counties are also partnering with private companies, universities, hospitals, and other institutions to make regional investments.

Understanding the importance of regional collaboration, Indiana recently launched the Regional Cities Initiative, which encouraged regional development plans for economic growth, innovation and place-making to attract and retain talent. Southwest Indiana, including Evansville, was one of the seven regions to apply. One of the region's core projects is the new Indiana University School of Medicine campus that will leverage the region's existing expertise in medical manufacturing and become a catalyst for new life science start-ups. As a result of this initiative, the region has laid the groundwork for continued collaboration and investment.

In December of 2015, The Indiana Regional Development Corp voted to award the Southwest Indiana Region with a \$42 million grant that will be used to fund several economic development projects in the Evansville area. Notable downtown projects include a mixed-use residential/retail/commercial facility along the Riverfront, and an urban living research center sponsored by Vectren and Haier America. Plans also include an expansion of the Downtown YMCA fitness facility with the inclusion of affordable housing, and a proposed expansion of the Signature School.

## ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY

Advances in technology, such as 3D printing, have the potential to radically change manufacturing processes and add another advantage to clusters of innovation in cities. Outside of Downtown, Evansville has a robust manufacturing niche in plastic fabrication and machining/tooling for the automotive, consumer appliances, electronics, medical, and defense industries among others.

With a continuing trend toward lean manufacturing, research and development companies are critical for seeking new ways to improve products and systems, increase profitability and fill unmet market demands. Downtown Evansville could tap into this need and create a R&D cluster that supports the area's existing manufacturing as well as regionally targeted industries such as health and life sciences. New, high-paying R&D jobs would help to attract skilled innovators to Downtown.





## MARKET OVERVIEW

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Residents Snapshot, 2015								
	2015 Population	Avg. HH Size	Median Age	Ratio women : men	Median HH Income	Median Net Worth	Annual Per Capita Retail Spending	Bachelor's or Advanced Degree
Downtown	1,722	1.5	48	46% : 54%	\$27,318	\$11,231	\$7,637	25%
Market Area	27,314	2.3	37	51% : 49%	\$25,981	\$12,500	\$5,480	10%
Evansville	118,859	2.2	37	52% : 48%	\$34,573	\$22,476	\$7,768	19%

Sources: ESRI BAO; community profile & retail marketplace profile & net worth profile

#### Nascent Neighborhood

To date, Downtown Evansville has not seen the resurgence in residential living that has been seen nationally. While Downtown has some of the amenities that would make it a desirable residential address – such as a safe, compact, walkable environment with notable recreation amenities along the riverfront – just 1,722 people (1.4% of city residents) live in Downtown. Stakeholder interviews, conducted by P.U.M.A., revealed pent up demand for residential housing and identified a lack of available housing as a key reason for there being few Downtown residents. Current Downtown residents are on average older, living in small households, and are somewhat more likely to be male.

### Population by age

A report in December of 2011 highlighted issues affecting downtown and the region. Downtown has suffered due to young people fleeing the region, causing Evansville to become older and less diverse. Between 2000 and 2010, greater Evansville lost over 5,000 people between the ages of 20 and 34, gained over 3,000 people over the age of 60, and lost 2% of its non-white population.<sup>3</sup> Population by age data demonstrates that Downtown has fewer children, but somewhat more young adults (25 to 34) and older adults than the Market Area or Evansville.

### Population by Age, 2015

Source: ESRI BAO; Community Profile

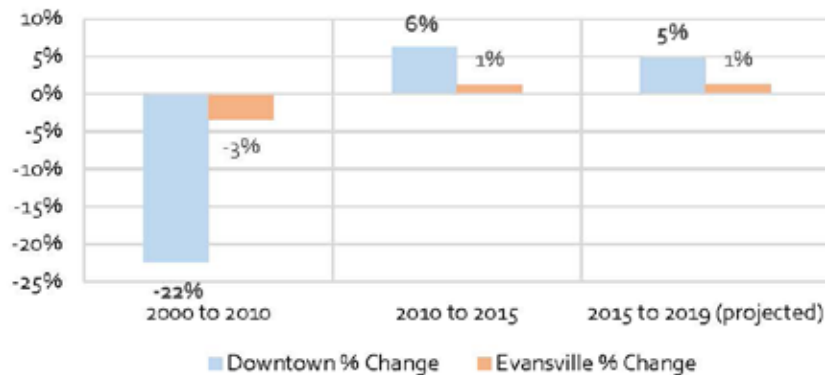


### Population and growth

Both Evansville and Downtown experienced population decline between 2000 and 2010, with Downtown losing a significantly larger share of its population; 22% compared to 3% in Evansville. Since 2010, Downtown has seen modest gains, a trend that is projected to slow somewhat. By 2020 the population will still be less than in 2000.

### Population Growth Rate, 2000 to 2020

Source: ESRI BAO; Community Profile



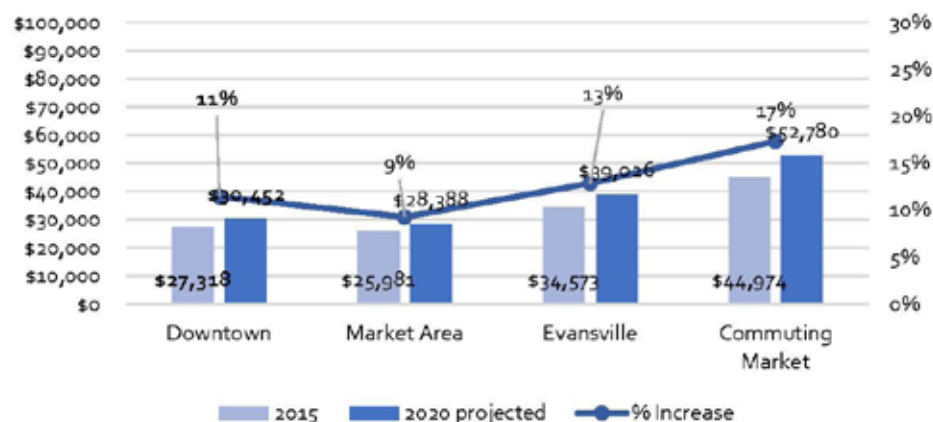
<sup>3</sup>SEAC 2010 Plan p. 175

### Income and wealth

Average Downtown household incomes are lower than Evansville though somewhat higher than the Market Area, and Downtown households have the lowest average net worth of the three areas. Despite these indicators, average retail spending per capita is on par with Evansville residents. Downtown averages are a mix of less affluent households in subsidized housing and wealthier households. Residents include groups such as students and retirees, both of whom spend disproportionately to income. Downtown's currently low median income is expected to increase 11% by 2020, with Evansville's projected increase at 13%.

### Median Household Income 2015 to 2020

Source: ESRI BAO; Community Profile



### Race and ethnicity

Downtown and Evansville have a similar racial make-up, with respect to their proportions of White, Black and other races. 2010 U.S. Census data shows that Vanderburgh County, while less racially diverse than the U.S. average, is the most diverse county in the region with 15% of the population being non-white. However, the segments of non-white population are not equally distributed throughout the county, with Black and Hispanic/Latino populations clustered in specific areas. This clustering results in a lack of racial diversity in Downtown Evansville, as well as a lack of mixed-race and mixed-ethnicity neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> Evansville has a number of neighborhoods near Downtown that appear to have retained a strong ethnic identity.

### Comfort and safety

Crime data show what residents know: Evansville, including downtown, is very safe.<sup>5</sup> However, due to the lack of people and activity after work-day hours, some residents and visitors report feeling uncomfortable enjoying the riverfront or walking in areas of downtown other than Main Street after dark.

<sup>4</sup> SEAC 2000 Plan p. 129 to 30

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dty-data.com/city/evansville-indiana.html>

### KEY IDEAS:

Downtown median income lags significantly behind Evansville and the Commuting Market.

Skilled talent is increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, and prefers environments where diversity is present and embraced. Downtown is the natural meeting ground for people from all of Vanderburgh County and neighbors' races, ethnicities, and income levels.

As the skilled talent pool becomes increasingly female, safety perceptions become a high priority for the office market as well as for residents and visitors.

Safety issues, both real and perceived, can affect the strength of the residential and hospitality real estate markets.



## LAND USE

There are 190 acres in the Downtown study area, which accounts for less than one percent (0.8%) of the total land area of Evansville. More than half of Downtown acres are in commercial use and a third in civic/community use, with the remaining few acres in industrial, residential-only, or vacant use.

### Land and Improvements Value

Per acre, Downtown has six times more assessed value than the Evansville average. Downtown also demonstrates more investment by property owners per acre, with a land to improvements ratio that is higher than the Evansville average.

### Redevelopment

While only 6 acres are currently classified as undeveloped, Downtown Evansville has a number of properties that are outdated, failing, dilapidated, and underused real estate assets that are sometimes referred to as greyfields. These include the city block where the Historic Greyhound Bus Station is located at 3rd and Sycamore. Other properties include multiple paved parking areas in the Downtown that are underutilized and could accommodate infill redevelopment projects.<sup>6</sup>

### Zoning

The majority of Downtown is zoned as Central Business District (C-3). This zoning district allows a wide range of commercial and residential uses. The C-3 district has no bulk, height, or massing requirements. There are no parking requirements for most uses, although residential and certain listed uses such as hotel and schools do require parking.

Assessed Land & Improvements Values			
	Assesed Value	Value Per Acre	Land: Improvements Value Ratio
Downtown	\$257,679,300	\$1,356,207	4.5
Evansville	\$5,411,150,000	\$221,614	3.5

Source: City & County of Evansville

Acres by Land Use Type , 2015	
Land Use	Downtown #
Commercial	109
Community/Civic Use	65
Vacant Land	6
Residential	4
Industrial	6
Agricultural	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>190</b>

Source: City of Evansville

### KEY IDEAS:

Downtown is less than 1% of Evansville by land area, yet has six times the assessed value per acre.

Existing land use and value patterns impact the potential for new development and redevelopment.

There are numerous redevelopment opportunities in Downtown.

Downtown zoning allows a wide and vibrant mix of uses.

<sup>6</sup> SEAC 2040 Plan p. 109

#### *Downtown Design Review*

The Growth Alliance provides technical assistance for property owners within the Downtown Redevelopment Area (where the downtown design guidelines apply) who wish to make exterior renovations or changes. Exterior changes include: new construction, demolition, building additions, façade renovations, changes in parking lots, landscaping, curb cuts, drainage and new signage or changes to signage. The redevelopment approval process includes the proposed exterior changes being reviewed by the Design Review Committee.

#### *Downtown Tax Generation*

The amount of property tax revenue generated per acre is much higher in downtown than any other area of Evansville. This is due to the higher population densities, which means more buildings are being taxed on every acre. Property tax revenue is 11 times higher per acre in downtown Evansville than in suburban and rural areas of the region.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Tax Phase-In Program*

Evansville's Tax Phase-In program allows taxpayers to gradually pay increased or new property tax over time. Any incremental tax that has occurred due to construction, building improvements, or purchase of necessary equipment can be paid in increasing amounts over an allotted phase-in period. This program ensures that property and business owners can make improvements and upgrades and not be burdened by both the cost of improvements and the new cost of increased taxes due to an increase in assessed value.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF)*

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a financing tool that sets aside property taxes generated from new construction within a designated area (TIF district) and leverages those set-aside funds in the area to promote development.<sup>9</sup> Downtown's TIF district area is the same as the Downtown Redevelopment Area boundary from the map below.



<sup>7</sup>SEAC 2010 Plan Vol. 2 p. 108

<sup>8</sup>"Tax Phase-In Assistance." Growth Alliance: Greater Evansville Economic Development website.

<sup>9</sup>Vanderburgh County Auditor's Office. [http://www.vanderburgh.org/auditor/tbil\\_tif.html](http://www.vanderburgh.org/auditor/tbil_tif.html)

## MARKET PROFILE

### LIVE

Housing Snapshot 2015						
	Total Units	New Units Since 2000	Single Family Units	Multi-Family Units	Renter-Occupied <sup>10</sup>	Owner-Occupied <sup>10</sup>
Downtown	991	-89	18%	82%	62%	25%
Market Area	14,204	-903	63%	37%	45%	35%
Evansville	58,691	1,661	64%	36%	40%	48%
Commute Market	130,702	13,698	76%	24%	30%	61%

Source: ESRI BAO Community Profile and Housing Profile

### Percentage of Income Paid Toward Housing

Despite a stable economy, the majority of employment opportunities in Evansville are low wage, leading to a majority of low-income households. Population growth through 2019 is projected to be in low-income households, adding to a growing need for more affordable housing.<sup>11</sup> With over 50% of renters in the Market Area and citywide spending 30% or more of their income on housing, renters are more likely than home owners to be over-burdened by housing costs. This likely indicates a need for more affordable rental units throughout Evansville, including the Market Area and Downtown.

Households by Percent of Income Paid Toward Housing				
	Renter-Occupied		Owner-Occupied	
Percent of Income	Market Area	Evansville	Market Area	Evansville
<20%	19%	21%	45%	52%
20% to 30%	21%	22%	28%	24%
30%+	53%	51%	26%	22%
Unknown	7%	5%	2%	1%

Source: American Community Survey (2006-2010); ESRI; Urban Decision Group; Bowen National Research as cited in the Evansville Housing Needs Assessment

<sup>10</sup> Percentages may not total 100% due to housing vacancy  
<sup>11</sup> Evansville Housing Needs Assessment p. IV-26 to IV-27 and II-4.

### KEY IDEAS:

Downtown residential growth lags behind national trends, however, rent premiums, low vacancy rates and anecdotal evidence from community forums suggests there is strong demand for a variety of housing types.

The 2014 Needs Assessment shows demand for attainable rental product.

Data also suggests demand for quality housing units at significant rent premiums above Evansville averages.

One bedroom units would best serve many of those most likely to move to Downtown, including young professionals, students, and empty nest couples.



### Housing Market

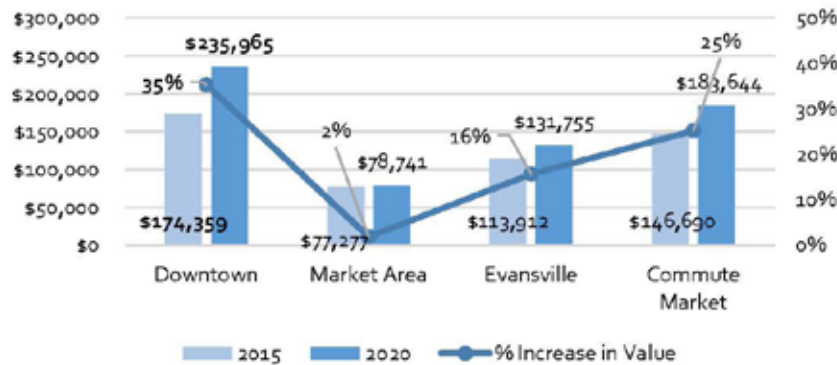
Downtown has fewer than 1,000 housing units, less than 2% of all units in Evansville. The large majority of these housing units (82%) are rentals.<sup>12</sup> Downtown Evansville has recently seen modest growth in housing units. Several projects are currently under way that will add new housing units in renovated existing buildings, notably the McCurdy Hotel building and Owen Block.

### Needs

A 2014 Housing Needs Assessment, confirmed by a 2015 update, provides important findings for downtown. A key finding is significant demonstrated need among existing and anticipated new residents for rental housing that is affordable to households with annual incomes under \$20,000.<sup>13</sup> Monthly rent considered affordable, by utilizing 30% of a \$20,000 income, is \$500. The assessment acknowledges that it is quite difficult to build new units that are affordable to the workforce and calls out a range of housing partners that may be able to provide some of the needed affordable units.

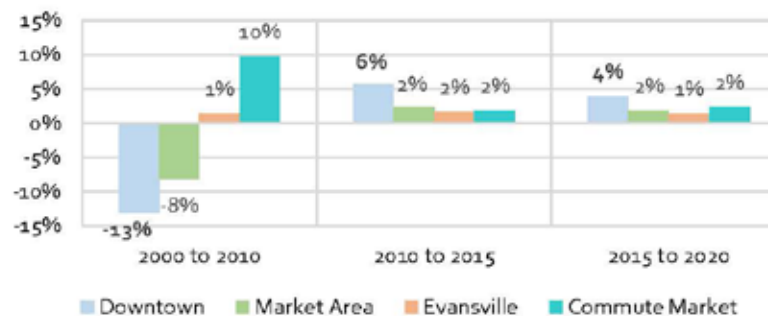
### Median Home Values, 2015 to 2020

Source: ESRI BAO, Community Profile



### Growth in Housing Units, 2000 to 2020

Source: ESRI Community Profile



<sup>12</sup> ESRI Housing Profile

<sup>13</sup> Evansville Housing Needs Assessment, Bowen National Research, 2014. This study uses the downtown TIF district boundary, however findings can readily be understood to apply to the Downtown boundary of this Market profile.

### *Market Demand*

Rents, vacancy rates, and other anecdotal evidence all signal market demand for housing at mid-to-higher price points in downtown as well. Existing downtown units command rent premiums of 30-55%: the 2014 Housing Needs Assessment cites median rents of \$700 for one-bedroom and \$950 for two-bedroom market rate units in downtown compared to \$540 and \$610 city-wide. Citywide, the highest rents are around \$1,000 per month for newly constructed or renovated units.<sup>14</sup>

A 2015 survey of residential rental properties in downtown found rental vacancy rates ranging from 2% to 7%.<sup>15</sup> There were zero vacancies and lengthy wait lists in the downtown multifamily rental product surveyed for the 2014 Housing Needs Assessment.<sup>16</sup>

### *Schools*

Quality education is an asset that can be built on. In many markets, the low ratings of downtown public schools are a detractor for attracting workers to live in downtown. In Evansville, many families who can afford it choose to pay for schooling outside the public system. Downtown offers one of the top high schools in the state and perhaps the nation in the Signature School. Many families establish themselves in other neighborhoods during the primary school years and most students commute to the Signature School. However, the school is among the factors that may stimulate demand for quality family housing in Downtown and nearby neighborhoods, such as the Arts District.



<sup>14</sup> David Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter, p. 9  
<sup>15</sup> David Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter, p. 6  
<sup>16</sup> Evansville Housing Needs Assessment p. XI-6 & XI-8

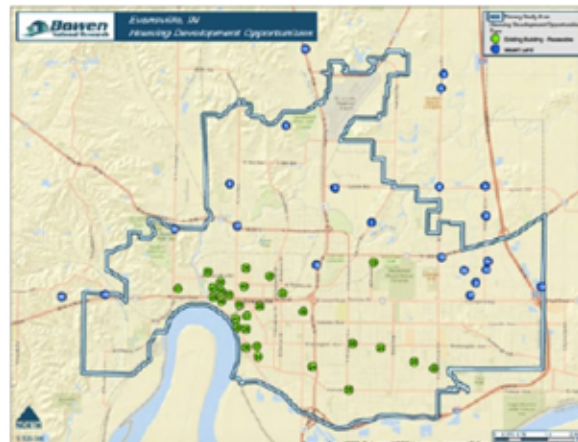
### Development Opportunities

ESRI data estimates show that both rental and for-sale Downtown housing vacancy rates have diminished several points over the last decade. Low rental vacancy rates indicate that for-sale housing is driving housing vacancy, yet for-sale housing continues to command price premiums. There are fewer than 200 homes, with median value at \$174,359. This is 35% higher than median value in Evansville and 26% higher than the 30-minute Commuting Market. The value of Downtown homes is also projected to increase substantially over the next five years by 35%, at a pace faster than Evansville, (16%) or the Commuting Market (25%). Meanwhile, the relatively low value of homes in the surrounding Market Area is anticipated to stagnate (2%). Nearby, in the Arts District, there has been a recent resurgence of investment restoring historic homes to good repair and single family use.

The 2014 Housing Needs Assessment cites housing market analysis from Bowen National Research, that estimated potential housing development opportunities in Evansville. Of the total 4,787 potential units in the Housing Needs Assessment study area, 531 (11%) fall within the Market Area.<sup>17</sup> While a specific count for downtown was not called out in the report, the excerpted map shows a number of the sites in and near downtown. Central Business District Zoning, which covers the majority of the Downtown, allows for multi-family residential development by right.

Due to the slow pace of Downtown housing development, it is somewhat difficult to assess the depth of the market. There are numerous accounts of childless professionals who earn higher incomes and retirees with accumulated wealth who are interested in living in a more compact urban setting if high-quality 1 and 2 bedroom units were available for rent or for sale. Students, faculty, and employees of the under-construction IU School of Medicine are expected to generate additional demand in Downtown across a range of price points.

However, much of the regional growth in housing in the last two decades has occurred outside the city in the Commute Market, with many affluent households taking advantage of the easy and quick commutes to buy larger homes further from the center. This is expected to slow, while Downtown is showing stronger housing growth since 2010 and is projected to continue through 2020.



<sup>17</sup> Evansville Housing Needs Assessment p. XI-6 & XI-8

### KEY IDEAS:

After losing units in the previous decade, Downtown has been and is expected to continue adding units. In comparison, the Evansville and Commute Market area are expected to grow more slowly in the next five years.

To continue to support a multi-skilled workforce and economically mixed demographics, diverse housing price points and unit types are needed.



## WORK

Employment Snapshot, 2015							
	Businesses	Jobs/ Employees	Area in Square Miles	Businesses per Square Mile	Jobs per Square Mile	Employee to Resident Ratio	Unemploy- ment Rate
Downtown	781	11,991	0.8	930	14,275	7 to 1	
Market Area	2,021	49,168	7.7	262	6,385	2 to 1	3.7%
Evansville	6,443	116,796	44.6	144	2,619	1 to 1	3.8%

Source: ESRI BAO; Business Summary except where noted

### Employment Center

Downtown is a hub for employment and job opportunities in Evansville. Downtown and surrounding areas offer the greatest job density in the City.

A workforce of nearly 50,000 employees reside in the surrounding Market Area. Nearly 12,000 employees commute from elsewhere in the city and region to fill jobs in the downtown 47708 zip code. Downtown currently has about 12,000 jobs in 781 businesses. Trend data from the downtown zip code, which may demonstrate trends relevant to all of Downtown, show that the number of businesses has increased since 2005, but is still less than in 1995.<sup>18</sup>

Evansville's unemployment rate of 3.8% is on par with the county rate of 3.8% and is lower than the national average of 5.0%. Average wages in Evansville are \$40,090 – nearly on par with the statewide average.<sup>19</sup>

This suggests that Evansville would be an attractive destination for job seekers, yet Downtown employers report that Evansville struggles to attract and keep skilled talent.

### Payroll Contributions

Though the Downtown Evansville zip code (47708) only accounts for one-quarter of one percent of the total land area in Vanderburgh County, the payroll generated in Downtown makes up 7.62% of the county's total.

The dense concentration of employment in Downtown is illustrated in the table below. Downtown Evansville's payroll per acre is more than 30 times that of Vanderburgh County as a whole, highlighting the importance of the economic agglomeration in Downtown and its beneficial returns to the area.

Payroll Snapshot		
	Downtown	Vanderburgh County
Payroll / Acre	\$905,313	\$30,156

Source: Evansville Downtown Alliance

### KEY IDEAS:

As a strong employment center, Downtown continues to be a major economic driver for Evansville and the region, generating more than 30 times the county average payroll per acre.

Among industries that compete for skilled talent, vibrant downtown environments are increasingly important to regional business and talent attraction and retention.

<sup>18</sup> Comp Plan, Economic Development, p. 12-1 to 12-2

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_22780.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_22780.htm)

#### Employment Inflow/Outflow (i.e. where residents live vs. work)

Based on data from the downtown zip code 47708, only 127 employed persons live in downtown. Of those who live downtown, 25% work downtown and 75% work elsewhere. Most of downtown's workers, nearly 14,000, live elsewhere and commute.



#### KEY IDEAS:

Downtown workers have historically driven much of downtown housing demand. There may be an opportunity to capture more workers as residents if housing is matched to their needs.

Hospitals anchor Downtown's employment base and add to the area's stability, as health services are less vulnerable to economic downturns than many other sectors. The IU School of Medicine, currently being built in Downtown Evansville, is expected to be completed in 2017 and attract approximately 1,500 students and up to 1,000 faculty, staff and regional support jobs.<sup>20</sup>

In 2014, Evansville successfully attracted several new technology-based businesses, including a division of the multinational Haier Group, the world's #1 major appliance brand and a global leader in consumer electronics. However businesses new to the area largely have not located in Downtown, preferring locations nearby.

Downtown Area Top Employers, 2013		
Name	Description	Employees
SKANSKA Industrial Contractors	Construction	2,425
Vectren Fuels, Inc.	Utility: gas and electric	1,200
Old National Bancorp	Banking	1,022
Tropicana Evansville	Gaming and entertainment	860

Source: <http://www.growthallianceevv.com/site-selection/leading-employers>

<sup>20</sup> Evansville Housing Needs Assessment, p. XI-5

### *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*

Innovation Pointe, a high-tech business incubator located in Downtown, assists in creating and growing new business start-ups in Downtown and throughout Evansville. As of 2014, the organization had assisted in the creation of four new companies, had 200+ tenants, and office space was at 99% occupancy.<sup>21</sup> Innovation Pointe is also home to a co-working space called The Station which launched in April of 2014 and is Evansville's first co-working space. The Station offers 24-hour secure access, high speed internet, conference room facilities, and access to business counseling and mentoring. As of 2014, The Station had 23 registered co-workers.

The University of Southern Indiana (USI) is a major asset to the entrepreneurial and economic development culture of the region. USI provides educational programming, access to university resources and economic development tools, and has constructed a state-of-the-art Innovation Space and Idea Lab at Innovation Pointe, which are available to regional businesses and boards.<sup>22</sup>

Office Snapshot, 2014		
	CBD	Suburban
Total Office Square Footage	1,863,000	1,112,000
Vacancy	Class A: 9.26%	Class A: 25%
	Class B: 34.39%	Class B: 20%
	Class C: 31%	Class C: 24%
Average Lease Rate	Class A: \$15-\$24	Class A: \$12-\$18
	Class B: \$10-\$14	Class B: \$8-\$12
	Class C: \$7.50-\$10	Class C: \$4-\$8
Source: David Matthews Associates, Downtown Evansville Alliance		

### **Office Market**

The Evansville office market is made up of two submarkets; the Central Business District (CBD),<sup>23</sup> which is in downtown, and the suburban market. In 2014, David Matthews Associates surveyed 1,863,000 square feet of office space in the CBD. The overall vacancy rate was 25.7%, with Class A at 27% vacancy. Class B at 24% and Class C at 31%. Rents ranged from \$7.50/SF to \$10/SF for class C, \$10 to \$14 for Class B, and \$15 to \$24 for Class A. The CBD office space has slightly higher vacancy rates but also commands somewhat higher average rents than suburban office space.

### **KEY IDEAS:**

Regional efforts to attract new technology-based business to Evansville have been fruitful, however most businesses have not located Downtown.

Downtown is an ideal location for innovation, research and development companies related to the area's key industries.

The IU School of Medicine will create quality new jobs Downtown and an opportunity to attract new Downtown residents, if the housing product and amenities exist that meet their needs.

With substantial vacancy in downtown, construction of new leasable office space is unlikely.

<sup>21</sup> The Growth Alliance 2014 Annual Report, p. 9

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.growthallianceevv.com/technology-and-education/usl-partnership>

<sup>23</sup> No specific boundary is provided for the CBD in the David Matthews Associates report – the only source that currently breaks out real estate data for the Downtown area of Evansville.



Most office space in downtown is in multi-tenant buildings or single tenant space like the Civic Center and other small buildings.<sup>24</sup> A January 2014 building-by-building vacancy report by David Matthews shows downtown vacancy clustered heavily in several of the buildings where vacancy rates exceed 60%. While specific tenantry has shifted somewhat since that report, stakeholder interviews indicate that the pattern remains. There is an opportunity to convert some floors in these towers to more open layouts that could be desirable to creative talent and businesses. In addition, rehabilitation of one of these heavily vacant office towers to residential units could benefit downtown if it were to upgrade and repopulate the structure. Such a conversion would not only reduce overall office vacancy rates, it would also increase the downtown residential population.

The old Sterling Brewery at Fulton and Lloyd is being converted into new Class A office called Sterling Square. Other than this conversion project, there have been no new office buildings in the past several years in downtown.

The Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana is targeting four industries as part of its regional economic development initiative: advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution, health and life sciences, and plastics.<sup>25</sup> The Downtown office market is well-positioned to capitalize on regional recruitment in the health and life sciences cluster, with two hospitals, the new IU School of Medicine, and Mead Johnson and Covance Laboratories located nearby.



#### KEY IDEAS:

Small and entrepreneurial office users can likely find affordable space in Downtown, although desirable open formats are in short supply.

Evansville office towers may need upgrade finishes to reflect the preferences of young skilled talent and certain industries for collaborative and flexible environments.

Downtown can be attractive to build-to-own office users - particularly for businesses in established industry clusters - that are ready to make a long term commitment to Evansville.

Downtown is well positioned to capitalize on the emerging health and life sciences cluster, and should consider what type of office space is desired by this industry.

<sup>24</sup> Dave Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter p. 13

<sup>25</sup> The Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana. <http://www.southwestindiana.org/site-selector/target-industries/>

### Industrial Market

The industrial sector is a key segment of the citywide economy, though the 2008 recession hit industrial real estate particularly hard in Vanderburgh County. The market has since rebounded with the average number of sales between 2012 and 2014 reaching similar levels of pre-recession average sales.<sup>26</sup> For-sale industrial properties range from 10,000 SF to 1,200,000 SF. Properties under 20,000 SF are experiencing the greatest market demand and properties 60,000 to 100,000 SF are experiencing the least demand.<sup>26</sup>

Downtown currently has just 6 acres in industrial use.<sup>27</sup> The core of Downtown has a character and scale of land development pattern that is not compatible with industrial use.<sup>27</sup> There are some existing buildings in close proximity to the Lloyd Expressway that could house small-scale light industrial uses.

Downtown offers limited space for the light industrial use such as advanced manufacturing — an industry targeted by Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana. However, with Downtown's appeal to skilled talent and close proximity of advanced manufacturing clusters nearby, it could be a location of choice for management and/or research and development offices of such industries.

Evansville Industrial Snapshot, August 2014	
Vacancy	14%
Average Rent	\$2.75/SF
Average Sales Price	\$18.6
Number of Properties*	26
Source: ICREX, Loopnet.com, and Costart.com as cited in the David	
*Listings under 20,000 SF were excluded	

### KEY IDEAS:

Industrial sectors such as advanced manufacturing and plastics are located outside the Downtown core. However some underutilized Downtown properties with good access to the Lloyd expressway could be suitable for clean, small-scale industrial uses.

With national trends showing a preference by young, skilled talent for urban environments, Downtown is the most likely location for innovative, research and development companies associated with Evansville's industrial clusters.

<sup>26</sup> David Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter p. 14 to 15

<sup>27</sup> Vanderburgh County

## SHOP

### *Demand in Downtown*

Retail spending by Downtown residents is on par with citywide spending, but the downtown residential population alone is not enough to support many businesses. Other groups that help support business in Downtown include office workers, local and regional visitors, students, and residents of Downtown's Market Areas.

ESRI analyzes which retail types and goods residents spend on within an area versus outside. When residents spend outside their area, this is called "retail leakage" and indicates an opportunity to provide the goods closer to residents. Market Area residents have modest spending potential overall, they show above-average spending potential in just a few retail categories including convenience stores and bars/nightclubs.

The Market Area shows numerous areas of retail leakage, suggesting that these residents could be attracted to patronize new Downtown establishments that are closer or more desirable than retail offerings to which they are currently driving. Retail types showing leakage include: electronics and appliances, sporting goods, clothing and shoe stores, office supplies, quick-serve eating establishments, and general merchandise.

Residents of the Commute Market have the highest per capita incomes of the four study areas and the highest spending on retail. Many Downtown workers commute in from this geography. The Commute Market is experiencing retail leakage in a number of areas, indicating unmet demand for goods and services. Residents show higher than average spending on technology and electronics; convenience store goods; entertainment, including live theater, bars and nightclubs; pet goods and services; and dining out in restaurants.

CBD Retail Snapshot	
	Downtown
Building Count	108
Total Gross Leasable Area (SF)	957,205
Vacant Square Footage	104,144
Vacancy Rate	11%
Average Asking Rent	\$7.56
Source: David Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter	

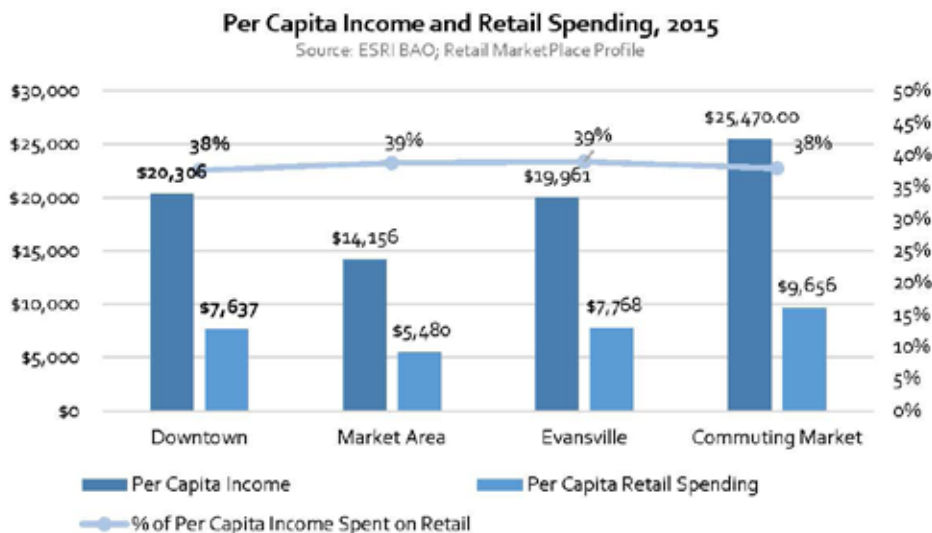
### KEY IDEAS:

Compared to benchmark cities, retail spending is impressively strong in downtown and Evansville despite relatively modest income numbers.

Despite lower average incomes, Downtown residential retail spending is on par with Evansville average.

Counter to storefront retail contraction trends nationally, pleasant walkable retail environments such as Main Street tend to fare favorably in many markets. However, Downtown is not currently a significant retail destination or tax generator compared to other areas of Evansville.





### Retail Market

The Evansville retail real estate market is improving, with rental rates increasing, vacancy rates decreasing, and several proposed projects on the horizon. The vacancy rate for Evansville's over 20 million square feet of retail has been declining since early 2014, from 7% in 2014 to 6.1% in the first quarter of 2015.<sup>28</sup> Average retail rents in Evansville are increasing, from \$7.91/SF at the beginning of 2014 to \$9.16/SF in the first quarter of 2015. It has a 50-mile radius retail shopping draw, resulting in highly competitive sales statistics. Compared to cities and counties of similar size and character across the United States, Evansville had the highest retail sales per capita - ahead of Seattle and Nashville - and the third highest hotel and food sales per capita behind San Diego and Cape Cod<sup>29</sup>, evidence of the city's regional pull. Between 2009 and 2014, retail sales in Vanderburgh County grew 27.8%, compared to 31.3% in the Tri-State Region and 37.7% statewide.<sup>30</sup>

However, downtown is a softer market for retail than Evansville as a whole and the majority of retail growth is not occurring in the central business district (CBD - mostly zip code 47708). In the CBD, lease rates are lower and vacancy is higher at 11%. Typical tenants are locally owned businesses and a few national chains<sup>31</sup> with significant street level space on Main Street occupied by office uses.

### KEY IDEAS:

Retail is a residential amenity that can help strengthen the housing market. In particular, residents typically want hardware, pet stores, and grocery - all of which residents currently have to leave Downtown Evansville to find.

Residents within the 30-min Commute Market have higher incomes and spending habits that support retail. Downtown could capture a larger piece of this market's spending potential by offering goods and services for which there is unmet demand.

<sup>28</sup> David Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter p. 11

<sup>29</sup> David Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter, p.12

<sup>30</sup> Moody's economy.com as cited by The Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana. <http://www.southwestindiana.org/data-center/statistics/business-dynamics/retail-sales-growth/>

<sup>31</sup> Dave Matthews Associates 2015 Newsletter p. 13

## PLAY

### Visitor Draw

Downtown Evansville is a significant destination for both local and regional visitors due to its cultural, civic, and entertainment facilities. Cultural and entertainment destinations include the Ford Center Arena, Old National Events Plaza, Victory Theatre, The Tropicana Casino and District After Dark, the Koch Family Children's Museum of Evansville, the Ohio River and Riverfront Park, The Pagoda and Visitor's Center, the Evansville Museum, the Arts Council of Southwestern Indiana Bower-Surheinrich Gallery, and the Reitz Home Museum.<sup>32</sup> Major civic assets that generate trips into Downtown include city, federal and local government offices and justice system facilities, and the public library.<sup>33</sup>

According to a survey conducted for Visit Evansville, the most common activities visitors engaged in were: dining at a restaurant (65%); shopping at a mall or shopping center (42%); riding, running, or walking along the riverfront (25%); and visiting Casino Aztar (20%).<sup>34</sup>

#### Types of visitors:

According to the Visit Evansville survey, the most common visitor type (29% of those surveyed) is someone visiting friends and family. Additional visitor types include families on vacation or weekend getaway, casino visitors, business travelers, amenity visitors from rural locations, or those who are passing through on their way to another destination.<sup>35</sup> Family Getaway Visitors tend to spend the most during their visit, with 21% spending over \$1,000. This segment is also more likely to stay overnight at a hotel than Friends and Family Visitors, Amenity Visitors or Casino Visitors.

Evansville Regional Airport offers 28 daily flights to 5 major hub airports. However, most visitors arrive by car. According to the Visit Evansville survey, 91% used a car to travel to Evansville and only 4% took a flight. The major feeder markets for Evansville visitors include the regional cities of: Indianapolis; Louisville; St. Louis; Nashville; and Cincinnati.<sup>35</sup>

Number of Attendees per Year at Downtown Attractions & Events	
Event/Attraction Name	Average Attendees
Tropicana Casino & District After Dark	1,153,316
Evansville Central Public Library	1,000,000
Ford Center Arena	425,000
Riverfront	~130,000
Visitor's Center	90,000
Children's Museum	56,415
ShrinersFest	45,000
Reitz Home Museum	12,970
Source: City of Evansville, 2014 estimates	

### KEY IDEAS:

Downtown institutions draw numerous visitors for entertainment and civic purposes. Visitors, whether regional or local, support downtown businesses and contribute to the tax base.

One quarter of visitors surveyed by Visit Evansville reported riding, running or walking along the riverfront on their most recent trip.

Attendance numbers at local attractions and venues demonstrate that Downtown successfully generates more than two million visitors per year. A critical mass of dining and drinking venues with hours matched to visitation patterns are needed to keep them in Downtown.

<sup>32</sup> The Evansville Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Visit Evansville Indiana 2015 Visitors Guide."

<sup>33</sup> Google Maps

<sup>34</sup> Visit Evansville, Evansville Consumer Awareness and Perception Study, North Star

<sup>35</sup> Visit Evansville, Evansville Consumer Awareness and Perception Study, North Star

### Hospitality Market

Evansville has a number of hotels, two of which are currently located Downtown; Le Merigot and Casino Aztar, located in the Tropicana Casino. In addition, a Hilton DoubleTree convention hotel is currently being built Downtown. Once the convention hotel is complete, Downtown will offer a total of 587 hotel rooms in the mid-to-upper class ranges. Le Merigot and Casino Aztar Hotel primarily cater to the casino crowd, while the new convention hotel will cater to Downtown convention attendees and business travelers.<sup>36</sup>

The Downtown Convention Hotel is a \$60 million investment. The hotel will be five stories and 240 rooms with a parking garage that will serve both the convention hotel and new IU School of Medicine. The hotel is slated to be finished by October of 2016.

The project includes pedestrian sky bridges that will link the new hotel with the Ford Center and Old National Events Plaza. The hotel will include a ground-floor restaurant and bar, conference space, and an outdoor swimming pool.<sup>37</sup>

In 2011, a hotel feasibility and economic impact study was conducted that affirmed that the Evansville market could sustain the new convention hotel. The study analyzed a "competitive set" of hotels throughout Evansville that would be the new convention hotel's likely competitors based on coverage area, similarity of product and services, and shared customer demographics. The study looked at the number of available rooms and the annual revenue per available room for the hotels in the competitive set. These numbers remain informative about the hospitality real estate market.

In November 2015 Tropicana announced its plans for a \$50 million land-based casino facility to replace the existing riverboat. This upgrade is anticipated to increase casino visitors, increasing occupancy and RevPar and could ultimately drive demand for additional hotel rooms.

**Downtown Hotel Rooms and RevPAR, 2011**

Name	Rooms	RevPAR
The Le Merigot*	97	\$74
Casino Aztar Hotel*	250	\$47
Competitive Market*	940	\$44

Source: HSP as cited in Hunden Downtown Convention Hotel Feasibility and Economic Impact Study, 2012

The inclusion or exclusion of "comped" rooms may affect calculation of ADRs and RevPAR

### KEY IDEAS:

The new Doubletree by Hilton convention hotel fulfills the need for a hotel oriented to business and conference travelers and will attract new clientele to Downtown.

The recently announced Tropicana land based casino facility may drive more hotel demand in the mid-term.

There may be opportunity for a small, boutique hotel particularly in a historic building Downtown.

<sup>36</sup> Hunden Downtown Convention Hotel Feasibility and Economic Impact Study 2012 p. 5 to 6

<sup>37</sup> Financing closes for Evansville convention hotel project." Evansville Courier and Press, Aug. 29, 2015. Accessed 9/18/15.



## GO

### Getting In & Around

Downtown is easy to get to by car with good transportation access via Interstates 64 and 69 and Highway 41 and short drive times. More than 90% of Evansville residents use a car – either alone or in a carpool - to get to work. It takes 10 minutes or less to get to Downtown from most places in the City of Evansville, and no more than 15 minutes from any location citywide. Easy commutes have contributed to the pattern of out-migration and housing growth in the county outside of Evansville.

### Transit

METS transit system currently offers 13 routes that span the city and stop at the downtown transfer center six days per week. More than half of ridership on all of these routes -- and as much as 90% -- originates or terminates in downtown. However, the bus system is not considered to be a mode of choice and only 3% of Evansville residents, and 6% of Market Area residents commute by transit. METS has proposed significant expansion of service that would add two additional downtown-serving routes, an hourly direct bus between downtown and UIC, improve the downtown transfer center, and add weekend and Saturday evening service until midnight in downtown. These and many other proposed changes are projected to increase overall system ridership by more than 150% in 2017.<sup>38</sup> The availability of transit not only helps bring people in and out of Downtown, it is also an important amenity and attractor for Downtown residents and workers.

### Walking

According to the DRAFT 2015 Evansville Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Master Plan, downtown has many attributes that make it extremely walkable, such as flat grade, compact area, and many comfortable sidewalks. Using these criteria, the Plan maps pedestrian level of stress as shown in the map excerpt of downtown on the following page. The Plan makes recommendations to increase both walkability and bikeability in downtown and throughout Evansville.



<sup>38</sup> ESRI BAO commute times data and mapping

According to the rating website WalkScore®, downtown is the 3rd most walkable neighborhood in Evansville with a rating of 65. WalkScore® states that “downtown is somewhat walkable, some errands can be done on foot.” Downtown is significantly more walkable than the City of Evansville as a whole. While downtown fares relatively poorly on Walkscore®, this is more a reflection of the lack of amenities for residential living in downtown than on physical barriers to walking. Compared to a selection of peer cities, Evansville’s downtown neighborhood falls in the middle, more walkable than some and less walkable than others.

The DRAFT 2015 Evansville Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Master Plan recommends improvements for walkability that include: adding missing sidewalks, crosswalks, building shared use paths; improving pedestrian crossings at high-priority locations; maintaining and expanding Evansville’s existing network of pedestrian wayfinding signage; and using downtown’s Main Street streetscape enhancement as an example for improving the pedestrian experience citywide.

To encourage residents and visitors to walk in downtown, the Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville (GAGE) worked with Lieberman Technologies in 2013 to develop the Downtown Evansville Walking Map, an app for mobile devices. The app is a virtual wayfinding tool that consists of an interactive map of citywide destinations and offers the option to filter map results for a custom map that shows users only the type of amenities they are looking for, like restaurants, hotels, or arts and culture.

#### KEY IDEAS:

Convenient transportation has always been essential to bring people in and out of downtowns for work and play.

Active mobility options, such as walking and biking, as well as transit, are increasingly important to attract and retain downtown residents and workers – and were expressed as a priority during community outreach.

Walk Score Comparison		
City	Citywide	Downtown Neighborhood
Syracuse, NY	57	85
Dayton, OH	45	76
Evansville, IN	42	65
Lansing, MI	40	59
Owensboro, KY	35	60
Topeka, KS	33	45

Source: Walk Score



Great strides have been made to improve Evansville’s bike network. However, more can still be done including: additional bike facilities and amenities and improved connections between Downtown, surrounding neighborhoods, educational institutions, the river front and other key amenities.

### Trolley

METS operates a downtown trolley circulator. Downtown Trolley ridership is currently low; a total of 85 riders were counted using the service during ride counts conducted in September, 2014.<sup>39</sup> Proposed trolley realignment will fix the route's confusing service pattern and is forecasted to attract 1,300 additional riders annually.<sup>40</sup>

### Bicycling

Evansville and the larger region have made significant improvements to their existing bicycle networks in the last several years, with Evansville adding 20 miles of urban signed bike routes. Downtown's bike network connects to many other areas citywide. A downtown bike route runs along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard with connections to the riverfront, Pigeon Creek Greenway, and north to the Bellemeade Ave. route.<sup>41</sup> The DRAFT 2015 Evansville Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Master Plan indicates, as shown in the map on the right, that most streets in downtown are comfortable for most adult cyclists.

There is capacity on many Downtown roadways to integrate bike facilities. These could link surrounding neighborhoods to Downtown as well as the existing riverfront trail, which is an excellent recreational biking asset.

The DRAFT 2015 Evansville Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity Master Plan makes specific recommendations to increase bikeability and to encourage biking in Evansville including: increasing the number of bicycle lanes and paths; implementing wayfinding signage and markings that direct users toward bike facilities and to major attractions; and adding bicycle parking at popular end-of-trip locations.

Bicycle Level of Stress Map



<sup>39</sup> METS Transit Study  
<sup>40</sup> METS Transit Study p. 43  
<sup>41</sup> SEAC 2010 Plan p. 59





# **APPENDIX IV**

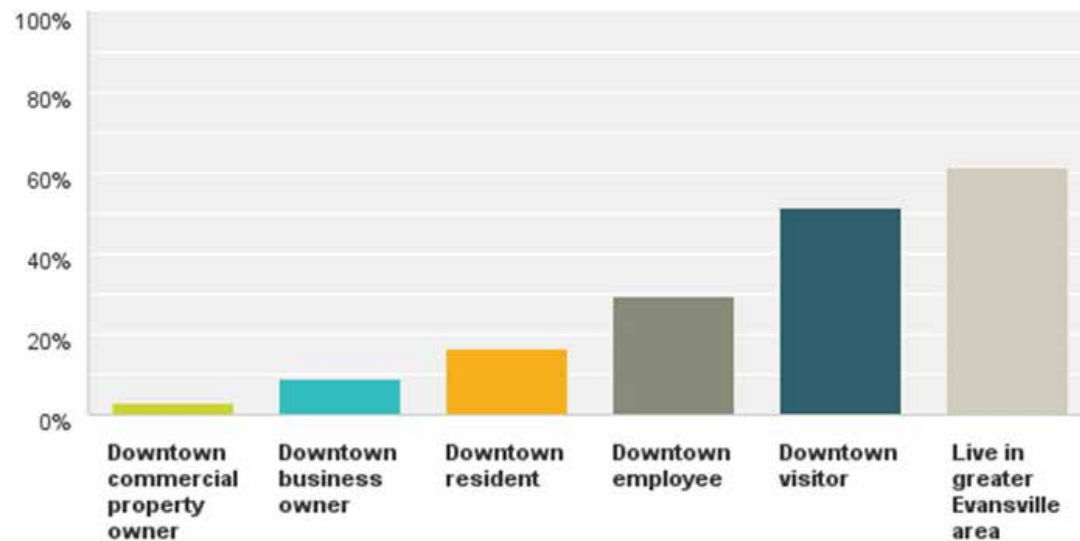
## Downtown Evansville Survey Summary

## DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE SURVEY SUMMARY

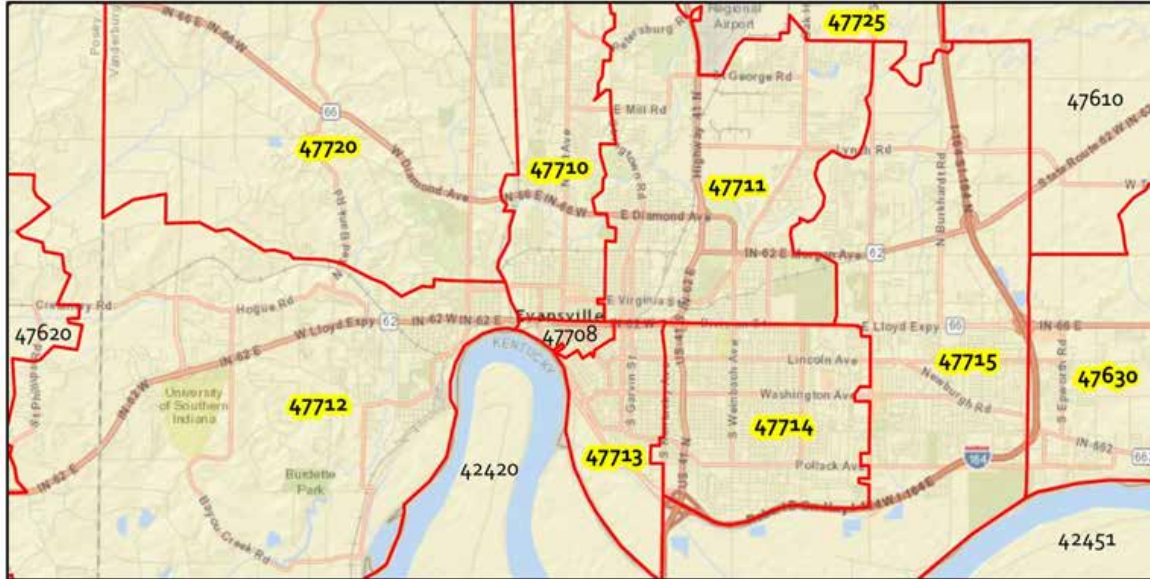
As part of the Master Plan Update, an online survey was developed to collect broad stakeholder input on priorities and improvements to Downtown Evansville over the next 5 to 10 years. There were a total of 1,242 responses.

### RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Survey respondents were asked to select up to two responses that characterized their primary interest(s) in Downtown. The majority of survey respondents categorized themselves as living within the greater Evansville area and/or as a Downtown visitor.



- Female (53.3%); Male (46.7%)
- Over 50 (30.2%); Under 50 (69.8%)
- White (93.9%); Other (2.6%); African American (2.2%); Asian or Pacific Islander (0.5%); Hispanic (0.4%)
- Less than \$50k (27.5%); \$50-\$200K (65.5%); More than \$200K (7%)
- Most common home zip codes: 47630, 47710, 47711, 47712, 47713, 47714, 47715, 47720; 47725



## SURVEY RESPONSES

**Q1: Over the past five years, which factors have been important in improving Downtown Evansville?**

The top five most important factors were:

1. New restaurants and retail
2. New businesses and jobs
3. Plans for the School of Medicine campus/Convention Center
4. Festivals and events/farmer's market
5. Improved Main Street

**Q2: In the next ten years (by 2025), what three words would you hope to use to accurately describe your vision for Downtown Evansville?**

The Word Cloud below shows that survey respondents would like to see Downtown Evansville become a place that is *vibrant, safe, fun, thriving and active*.





- Q5: If you could suggest one specific improvement to enhance Downtown Evansville, what would it be? (Open Ended)

- APPENDIX IV 122



HAFER

