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Project for Public Spaces

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SECTION ONE / BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND — SECTION

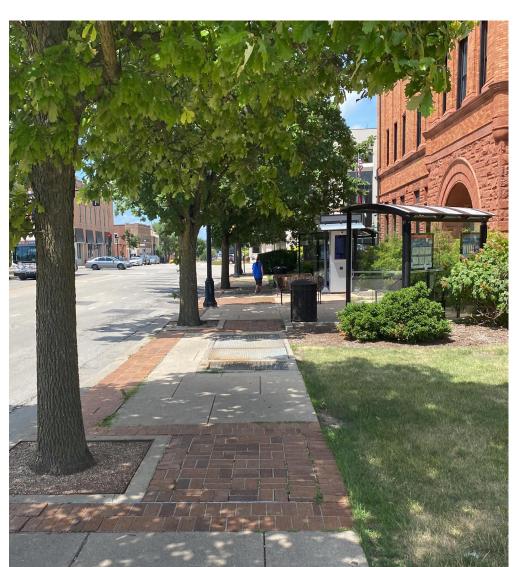
PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Downtown Urbana has been an important place for residents, students, and visitors over the years and recent investments in sidewalks, trees, and plantings have made the Downtown more attractive. However, the City realizes there is still work to be done to create a vibrant downtown that serves the surrounding residents, University community, and the whole of Urbana. This study is an opportunity to engage the community to create an actionable plan to improve the public realm in Downtown Urbana.

The overarching goals of this study are:

- 1. To evaluate and make recommendations to enhance the public realm.
- 2. To improve the appeal of Downtown Urbana as a place to live, visit, and do business.

The "public realm" is, in general, the space between buildings. It includes publicly-owned streets and sidewalks and other publicly-accessible spaces like parks, squares, plazas, courtyards, alleys, and all the spaces that host public uses, be they public or privately-owned."









URBANA DOWNTOWN PUBLIC REALM STUDY

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WHAT IS THE 'PUBLIC REALM'?

The public realm is, in essence, the space between buildings. It includes the streets, sidewalks, plazas, alleys, parking lots, transit stops, and natural areas, as well as all places that host public uses - be they public or privately owned. There is new excitement about reinvigorating the public realm of downtown as Urbana rebounds from the challenges of COVID-19. A lively downtown public realm must include places that people think of as their own outdoor living room, where they feel connected to their city and fellow citizens. In many communities such places have become increasingly rare. Nowhere was the public realm as essential as in historic downtowns like Urbana's. And though main street's importance has been challenged by malls, chain stores, auto-oriented retail, and fast traffic, there is still an appreciation for small, walkable downtowns and their architectural and cultural history and legacy.

Innovative larger cities that have seen what a vital downtown public realm can accomplish are now reaping tremendous rewards. At the heart of these revitalizations are key places that draw in people. Look to Ft. Worth, Texas, where Sundance Square has become the beating heart of a thriving downtown. Or consider how innovative parks and unique public spaces in New York City (the Highline, the Meatpacking District, Hudson River Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park) have rejuvenated and re-defined entire districts over recent decades. Or look to downtown Detroit, which has risen from bankruptcy with an intentional and vibrant network of public spaces and destinations.

While Downtown Urbana may not see the same levels of foot traffic as Ft. Worth or Detroit, the same principles apply. Urbana boasts a well-preserved historic district, an attractive main street, a downtown creek, a beloved farmer's market, and local businesses with the sort of character other parts of the country spend a lot of money to imitate. The raw materials of a dynamic public realm with a compelling network of public destinations are already in place in Downtown Urbana – all that remains is to weave the pieces (back) together.



THE PLACEMAKING APPROACH

Project for Public Spaces' pioneering Placemaking approach helps transform spaces into vital community places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation, and serve common needs. Placemaking allows communities to identify how places can be reshaped to attract local residents along with visitors, building economic and social benefits for all.

By looking at the "ground floor" of town – its streets, sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, corner stores, coffee shops, civic and cultural buildings – Placemaking focuses on livability and connectedness, improving quality of life, building social capital, and economic vitality. Creative collaboration and engagement allow for intentional programming, attractions, and partnerships to build vibrant places that strongly reflect community values and respond to local demands.

Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm to maximize shared values. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and economic characteristics that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. Placemaking will bring a number of benefits to the process including:

A COMMUNITY-POWERED PROCESS

By putting stakeholder engagement at the center of the planning process, it is possible to generate creativity and excitement about the planning process. User-friendly engagement tools and strong facilitation skills foster a constructive, creative relationship between decision-makers and stakeholders encouraging participation. Strategies include visioning workshops, interviews, focus groups, observations, and Placemaking events.

BUILDING CONSENSUS

Success relies on strong alignment and coordination across disciplines and sectors. It is necessary to ensure that the project team has access to all of the relevant information and approvals, to diverse perspectives and out-of-the-box ideas, and to a roster of future partners in implementation and management. Public space can serve as the literal common ground to bring these diverse groups together, and the focus on quick wins helps build trust among stakeholders and maintains momentum throughout the entire process.

INTEGRATING DESIGN, PROGRAMMING, AND MANAGEMENT

The approach doesn't stop at conceptual design. In planning or improving a public space, it is crucial to treat design, programming, and management as part of one integrated approach. Design provides an important foundation for a great community place, but is rarely enough on its own. All too often, traditional design professionals create an inflexible finished product without testing their assumptions and without room to adapt after ribbon-cutting. What sets the Placemaking Approach apart is that it starts by defining a vision for the public space's uses and activities throughout the day, week, and year. Then, you can develop a conceptual design, an activation plan, and a management plan to achieve that vision, and work iteratively and collaboratively with stakeholders and community partners to realize it.



ABOVE: THE BEACH AT CAMPUS MARTIUS IN DOWNTOWN DETROIT BEGAN AS A TEMPORARY ACTIVATION IN 2013 AND HAS GROWN TO BE A MAJOR DOWNTOWN ATTRACTION

LEFT: WITH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AT ITS CENTER, PLACEMAKING CAPITALIZES ON A LOCAL COMMUNITY'S ASSETS, INSPIRATION, AND POTENTIAL WHILE BUILDING SUPPORT

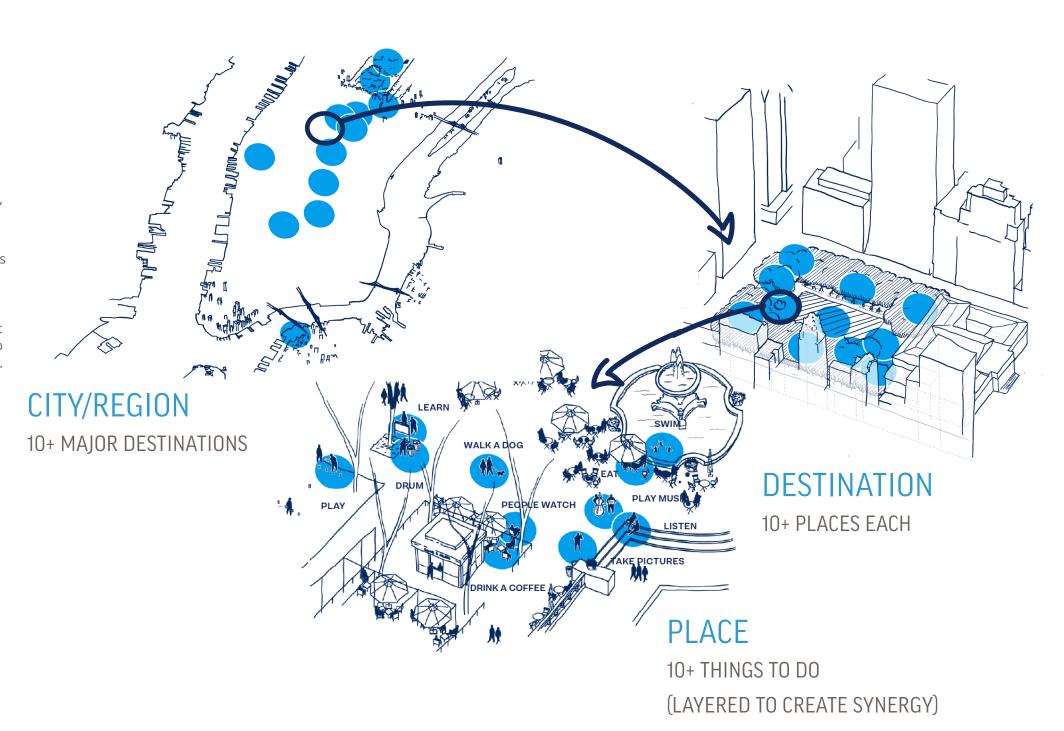
POWER OF TEN+

HOW REGIONS TRANSFORM THROUGH PLACEMAKING

What makes a place great? Simply put, it is offering a variety of things to do for a variety of people, resulting in a place that is more than the sum of its parts. A park is good. A park with a fountain, a playground, and a popcorn vendor is better. A library or a school across the street is even better, more so if the library has storytelling hours for children and exhibits on local history in the park. And if there's a sidewalk café nearby, a bus stop, a bike trail, and an ice cream parlor, this is what most people would consider a great place.

Project for Public Spaces calls this concept the Power of Ten, but there's no reason to get fixated on a particular number. Whether talking about places in a given district, or great neighborhoods within a town, "Ten" refers generally to the ultimate goals of variety and choice. When talking about the "Power of Ten," we want to always think of how Placemaking can be accomplished at different scales. When we build our communities around places, it is not enough to have one single use dominate a particular place—we need a diverse array of activities for a variety of people.

The Power of Ten offers an easy, scalable framework that motivates people to revitalize community life, and shows how to accomplish big things by starting at the smallest scale. The concept also provides people with something tangible to strive for and helps them visualize what it takes to make their community great.



BACKGROUND ———— SECTION 1

DOWNTOWN IDENTITY

The City of Urbana maintains its historic roots and iconic architectural structures while welcoming new trends and pushing social progress. Urbana has held the role of Champaign County Seat since 1833, with the historic Old County Courthouse known as an iconic landmark in the City since 1900. Rail service has connected travelers to Champaign-Urbana since 1850, and the City of Urbana experienced rapid construction in the late 19th century after establishment of the Illinois Industrial University – which became the University of Illinois – in 1867.

The second wave of construction occurred in the postwar years when the University needed to house its growing student body, spurring the conversion of large turn-of-the-century homes into multi-family housing. In the 1960s and 70s, this phase of growth continued as many historic single-family homes were replaced with large apartment buildings, and historic commercial structures were threatened to be replaced with parking lots.

Today, Urbana enjoys a reputation as a micro-urban community with a large university system, a diverse population, vibrant arts, and beautiful tree-lined streets.





ABOVE: VIEWS OF MAIN STREET AND CRANE ALLEY IN DOWNTOWN URBANA



ABOVE: A CURBANA PLACED ON MAIN STREET, URBANA

INFLUENCES

ARTS & CULTURE

From festivals and markets to mural-covered alleyways and concerts, Urbana has a thriving artistic scene. Artist of the Corridor displays local work at the City Building, the Urbana Free Library, and Art at the Market, and Boneyard Arts Festival's "Culture Fest!" presents local musicians and performing groups. The Art Coop is a beloved community hub for art supplies, and the Rose Bowl Tavern has been the soul of the music scene for nearly seven decades. However, despite the rich creativity present in this City, Urbana lacks a main public area downtown for everyday socializing, performances, and other community events.



AROVE: WALL ART IN DOWNTOWN LIRRANA

COVID-19 AND PUBLIC SPACE

When the COVID-19 pandemic made indoor dining a danger to public health, the City of Urbana brainstormed ways to help businesses recover from the economic blow. Their answer was to bring back the "Curbana," an idea they developed several years ago for an enclosed raised deck to offer outdoor seating on the sidewalk. From June to October in 2021 and 2022, these "Curbanas" were available for restaurants to rent through an application process.

The Rose Bowl Tavern, a longtime local favorite for music performances, had to change business models during COVID-19. In July 2020, the tavern opened an outdoor event space in the adjacent parking lot as a way to provide entertainment in a safe way. This proved to be such a popular space – with some even calling the Rose Bowl "Urbana's public square" – that the tavern continued the outdoor events the following two years, with residents calling for the tent to be a permanent feature downtown.



ABOVE: ROSE BOWL TAVERN'S TEMPORARY MUSIC AND EVENT SPACE

TREE COVERAGE AND GREEN SPACE DOWNTOWN

Urbana is proud of its ranking as one of 13 charter Tree City USA communities in the U.S. Nearly 100,000 trees within its City bounds give much of Urbana a tree equity score (based on whether there are enough trees in an area for everyone to experience the health, economic and climate benefits that trees provide) over 90 out of 100. While some portions of Urbana have a 50 percent tree canopy cover (far higher than the national average of 27 percent), Downtown Urbana has significantly fewer urban trees – only 14 percent tree canopy coverage – and a tree equity score of 71, much lower than other areas of the city.



ABOVE: TREE CANOPY ADJACENT TO BONEYARD CREEK TRAIL

BACKGROUND — SECTION

KEY PHYSICAL FACTORS

Downtown Urbana generally comprises seven blocks between Race and Vine Streets that are bounded by railroad tracks to the north and Illinois Street to the south. There are a number of large physical features in Downtown Urbana which impact its vitality today, including Lincoln Square Mall, the historic Hotel Royer, Market at the Square, and Boneyard Creek Crossing.

LINCOLN SQUARE MALL

Opening in 1964, Lincoln Square Mall was a response to Urbana City leaders trying to uplift a declining downtown economy, and was the first indoor shopping mall in downstate Illinois. Chicago-based Carson Pirie Scott & Co. agreed to open a department store Downtown on the condition that it would be part of a shopping mall, which was constructed after the demolition of several blocks of residences and small commercial buildings. The 230,000 sq-ft Lincoln Square Mall connects on the northwest corner to the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel (known today as the Hotel Royer), and is encircled on three sides by approximately 1,000 parking spaces.

The enthusiasm for the Mall lasted a brief 15 years before beginning its descent. It was too far from interstate highways to be a major regional attraction, and relied on parking meters for too many years, discouraging guests. In 1977, the larger Market Place Shopping Center opened in north Champaign, signaling the end of the reign of Lincoln Square Mall as the regional shopping hub.

Today, the Mall contains a quieter, but still relevant, nexus of community activity. Every Saturday from November to April, the Mall hosts the Champaign-Urbana Winter Farmers Market, the indoor version of the outdoor Market at the Square. The Common Ground Food Co-op draws grocery shoppers daily, Record Swap moved into the Mall in 2010 to continue its now 40-years of business, the Art Coop provides a welcoming community space for art supplies, and International Galleries offers a wide selection of gifts, artwork, and jewelry in addition to tarot readings. The Mall also houses a scattering of churches and a number of health and fitness-related enterprises, including martial arts, yoga, massage, and aerial arts.

"For all of central Illinois and western Indiana, this was the place for shopping, for food, for social gathering. It became a new kind of Downtown Urbana."

- FORMER CONGRESSMAN TIM JOHNSON, URBANA NATIVE



How do we bring back this social gathering space?



RIGHT: (1) HISTORIC INTERIOR VIEW OF LINCOLN SQUARE MALL
(2) ENTRYWAY INTO LINCOLN SQUARE MALL
(3) CONTEMPORARY INTERIOR VIEW OF LINCOLN SQUARE MALL

BACKGROUND

THE MARKET AT THE SQUARE

A beloved weekly event in Downtown Urbana since 1979, the Market at the Square connects community members with each other and local food growers and artisans every Saturday from May to October. In its nearly 180 stalls, the Market vendors offer produce, meat, dairy, honey, flowers, handmade arts and crafts, and more to the Urbana community. The Market sets up shop in the southeast corner of the Lincoln Square Mall parking lots, bringing life to what would otherwise be underutilized surface parking.

In the winter, the Market moves inside the Lincoln Square Mall as the Champaign-Urbana Winter Farmer's Market.















ABOVE: IMAGES OF THE MARKET AT THE SOUARE





THE HOTEL ROYER

The Tudor Revival Hotel Royer opened nearly a century ago in 1924. It was one of a series of buildings in the City designed by Urbana-native architect Joseph Royer. His work also includes the Urbana High School, the Champaign County Courthouse, and the Urbana Free Library. There have been a number of financial troubles over time for the Hotel: two mortgages, the Great Depression, and bankruptcy, all within its first 15 years. The owners kept it open despite the downturn and paid off the debt by 1949.

It closed in 1975, but reopened in 1977 after hotelier James Jumer bought and refurbished it in traditional German style, adding a portion to the original building and including it in his chain of Central Illinois hotels. He filed for bankruptcy in 1999, and the Hotel has exchanged hands and names many times over the past two decades. Now, Icon Hospitality has purchased the Hotel and plans to brand it as The Hotel Royer, part of the Hilton Tapestry Collection. The City of Urbana will reimburse Icon \$5.5 million from bond revenue, and expects to be repaid over ten years thanks to hotel, food-and-beverage, and boutique hotel taxes, and tax-increment-financing (TIF) district revenue.

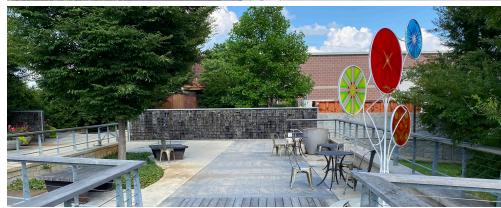




BONEYARD CREEK CROSSING

Boneyard Creek is a 7.45-mile-long stream that runs through Champaign, the University of Illinois campus, and Urbana before emptying into the Saline Branch watershed. Around three miles of the stream are located in Urbana, and the watershed is 100% developed. There have been flooding problems and concerns about water quality over the years, with the Boneyard Creek Master Plans of 1978 and 2008 addressing flood management and seeking to transform the Creek from a degraded source of destruction into a source of pride for the community.





ABOVE: VIEWS OF IMPROVEMENTS MADE TO THE BONEYARD CREEK TRAIL IN DOWNTOWN URBANA

The 2008 Master Plan put forth a 25-year vision striving to "transform Boneyard Creek from a highly urbanized drainage ditch into a place for people," offering recommendations to improve the physical appearance of the creek through naturalization and landscaping. Its five goals outline aspirations for creating community spaces, increasing connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle paths, promoting a healthy ecological habitat, improving flood control, and establishing outdoor gathering spaces for recreation.

THE PARKING GARAGE AT ELM STREET & BROADWAY AVENUE, AND OTHER CITY-OWNED PARKING

The City of Urbana owns 17 parking lots (surface and garages) throughout the City, totaling over 1,900 parking spaces in the Downtown alone. When considering all on-street and off-street parking in combination with off-street private parking, there are about 4,570 parking spaces downtown. The 2008 Downtown Parking Study determined there was a surplus of 1,357 parking stalls: this means that nearly a third of available parking spaces are underutilized. Of the nearly 750 parking spaces designated for the Mall, on average only half were full even at peak hours.

There is more than enough parking for daily Downtown traffic, with many parking lots remaining largely empty a majority of the time. A recent opinion piece in Champaign-Urbana's online magazine *Smile Politely* entitled, "On the non-issue of parking in Downtown Urbana," praises the Rose Bowl's usage of a City-owned parking lot as an outdoor event venue, and expresses hope that this trend of reconsidering public space will continue to breathe life into downtown areas.





ABOVE: VIEWS OF PARKING GARAGE LOCATED BETWEEN MAIN STREET AND ELM STREET

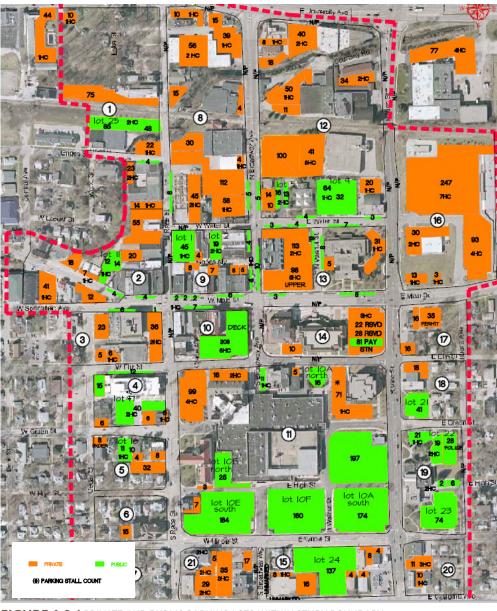


FIGURE 1.0 / PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARKING LOTS WITHIN STUDY BOUNDARY



ABOVE: AERIAL VIEW OF SURFACE PARKING LOTS SOUTH OF LINCOLN SQUARE MALL

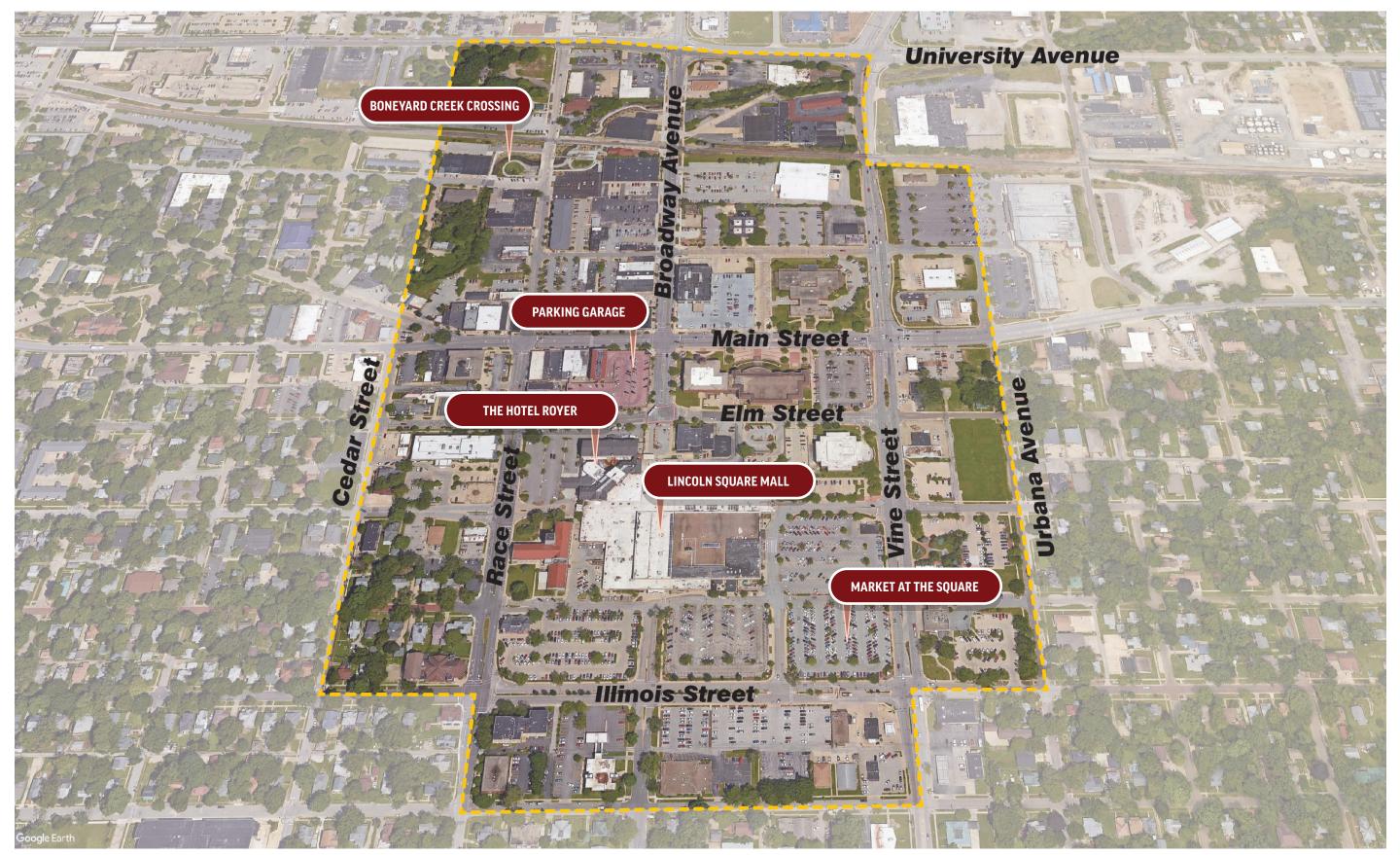


FIGURE 1.1 / PROJECT BOUNDARY AND KEY LOCATIONS

BACKGROUND ———— SECTION











- Main Street is characterized by historic architecture, a comfortable streetscape, and a variety of local businesses.
- Recent investments have established a trail along a short segment of Boneyard Creek in Downtown Urbana, but more accessible connections to the Downtown remain unestablished.
- Intersections around the periphery of Downtown Urbana are largely car-centric, presenting challenges for people to walk and bike safely and comfortably.
- Alleyways are a common feature of the downtown. They vary from being strictly functional for deliveries and trash collection, to being more suited to public use for restaurant seating and live events.
- The Green Street entrance of Lincoln Square Mall creates a western point of arrival into the downtown.
- This parking lot on Broadway Avenue north of Main Street offers an example of the plethora of mostly-empty impervious space which makes up a significant portion of downtown.

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SECTION TWO / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PROJECT PHASES

This study came together through an eight-month, transparent process. The planning team directly involved key stakeholders who were invaluable in this study's creation as experts with a wealth of experience in Downtown Urbana. They expressed challenges and opportunities facing Downtown, and helped guide the development of the overall themes and design strategies in this study.

The planning team also convened a 19-person advisory committee to act as an integral component of the process. The committee assisted with reviewing the study's progress, evaluating public input, and providing feedback on design options that ultimately made their way into the study's recommendations.

PART ONE: PUBLIC LIFE STUDY (THREE MONTHS)



PUBLIC LIFE STUDY

Evaluate the Public Realm
Assess Physical Conditions
Get Stakeholder Input
Summarize Findings



(FOUR-FIVE MONTHS)

Host Visioning Workshop
Get Stakeholder Input
Establish Future Vision
Identify Key Goals/

Principles

PART TWO: URBAN REALM MASTER STUDY



Develop Co Host Publi Hear Comr Get Stakeh

Develop Conceptual Ideas

Host Public Open House

Hear Committee Feedback

Get Stakeholder Input



Identify Preferred Concept Study

Develop Implementation

Review + Refine Study

Approve Study (Early 2023)

URBAN REALM MASTER STUDY



BACKGROUND — SECTION

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning team conducted several meetings with the study's Advisory Committee, city staff, and the general public. Meetings included presentations of research and findings as well as opportunities for input, feedback, and discussion. The following meetings were conducted during this process:

Project Kick-Off Meeting: July 18, 2022

Stakeholder/Focus Group Meetings: July 18 - August 17, 2022

Advisory Committee Meeting #1: July 20, 2022

Advisory Committee Meeting #2: September 21, 2022

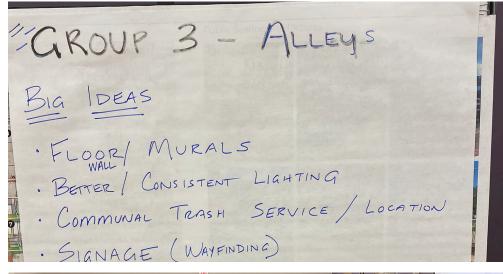
Public Meeting and Visioning Workshop #1: October 12, 2022

Advisory Committee Meeting #3: October 13, 2022

Public Meeting #2: November 9, 2022

Stakeholder/Focus Group Meetings: November 15, 2022







TOP LEFT: PROJECT KICK-OFF MEETING; TOP RIGHT: PRELIMINARY SKETCHES
MIDDLE LEFT: BRAINSTORMING; MIDDLE RIGHT: PUBLIC MEETING PRESENTATION
BOTTOM LEFT: VISIONING WORKSHOP; BOTTOM RIGHT: PREFERENCE BOARD EXERCISE







PROCESS OVERVIEW

The development of this study benefited from a robust public engagement process. The project's Advisory Committee supported the work of the planning team to gather public input through traditional public meetings as well as through an online interactive website. In both of these portals, a variety of input collection tools were utilized to gather a comprehensive body of views, opinions, and ideas. These included stakeholder interviews and focus groups, postcard exercises, walking tours, visual preferencing surveys, budgeting exercises, traditional surveys, and interactive mapping.

A high level summary of the input obtained is provided in this chapter.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The study's advisory committee was assembled with help from City staff, and represented a variety of community members ranging from business owners to elected leaders, university professionals to long-time residents. The advisory committee and the planning team met a total of four times, and this group of devoted individuals was instrumental to the development of this plan.

The role of the advisory committee was primarily to guide the planning team through the development of this study, review the public input received, verify certain findings, and champion this effort by spreading the word and getting more involvement from the community.

The planning team would like to thank the advisory committee members for all of their hard work, time and effort in developing this plan. This study reflects the collective body of information, insight, and opinions which they brought to the table.



ABOVE: KICK-OFF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING - JULY 20, 2022

ADVISORY COMMITTEE



PUBLIC MEETINGS



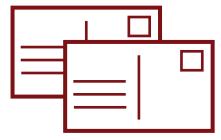
PROJECT WEBSITE



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS



POSTCARDS



WALKING TOURS



INTERACTIVE MAP



VISUAL PREFERENCING SURVEY



BUDGETING



SURVEYS



FIGURE 2.0 / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Over the course of the planning process, two public meetings were held at the Phillips Recreation Center. The meetings were widely advertised through social media posts, flyers around the city, and email blasts.

During the first public meeting, the planning team introduced the project, reviewed information that had been collected up until that point, summarized initial feedback received from the stakeholder interviews and interactive website, and described the ingredients that go into making a great urban environment. The team then facilitated audits of focus areas – walking tours – within the downtown utilizing Project for Public Spaces' Place Evaluation Form, and conducted visual preferencing exercises.

The second public meeting reviewed the newest public input that had been received, discussed the big ideas developed during the public engagement process, and introduced concept plan options for the focus areas within downtown. Participants at this meeting were able to review those concepts and provide feedback on their preferred options.





ABOVE: PRESENTATION AND SKETCH EXHIBIT FROM PUBLIC MEETING #1 - OCTOBER 12, 2022

PROJECT WEBSITE

In addition to the in-person public meetings, an interactive engagement website was utilized throughout the duration of this planning process. This tool provided the same activities that were present at the public meetings as well as a few additional engagement activities. Rather than relying solely on one or two evenings of public participation obtained through public meetings, the website allowed participation from the convenience and comfort of individual's homes or places of work.

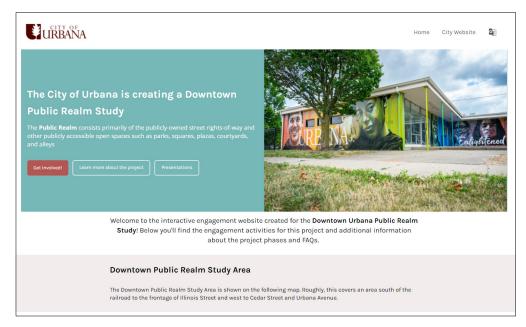
The website also hosted all of the presentations given to the advisory committee and general public, and displayed important meeting dates and other information to make this process as transparent and accessible as possible. The website was advertised through social media posts, QR code flyers dropped off at various downtown businesses, information distributed to 500 students at the University Welcome Expo, and through the use of yard signs.

Below are the metrics of public participation.



~ 400 MAP COMMENTS





ABOVE: HOME PAGE FOR THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WEBSITE

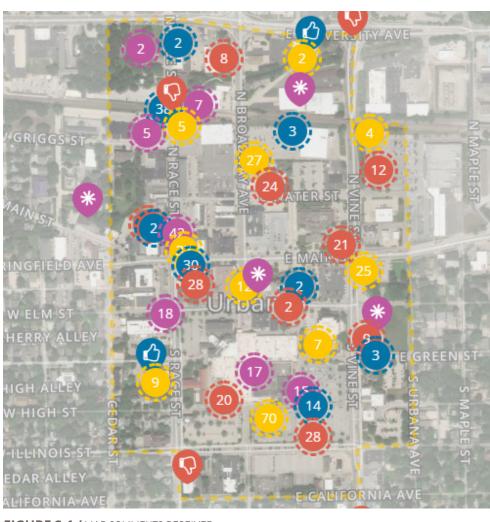
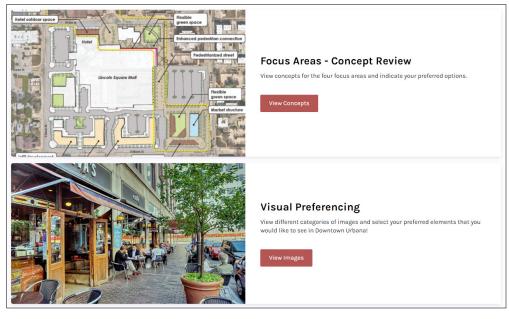


FIGURE 2.1 / MAP COMMENTS RECEIVED



ABOVE: WEBSITE ENGAGEMENT PORTALS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

During the initial visit to Urbana, as well as follow-up interviews and focus groups over Zoom, the planning team spoke with more than 45 community members and stakeholders to gain an inside perspective on Downtown Urbana as a place for business, culture, entertainment, and engagement. Community members are the experts, and these discussions allowed direct feedback from people who know their specialty areas best but may not be able to get into the necessary detail in a larger, more diverse meeting. These interviews included the following focus groups:

- Downtown Business Owners
- City Staff
- Property Owners
- County and Downtown Representatives
- Arts and Events Groups

OPPORTUNITIES

Based on these interviews, Downtown Urbana has numerous opportunities for growth: stakeholders feel that expanding and enhancing what already exists downtown is a way to redevelop its identity and vibrancy. The character of a creative, musical scene downtown is already there, it's just a matter of strengthening this identity into a marketable cohesive core, possibly through collaboration with local business owners. The excessive parking lots are opportune locations for new community gathering spaces. The popular Market at the Square could boost downtown activity if it were better connected to the downtown core potentially through activated pedestrian connections or relocation.

CHALLENGES

According to these interviews, Downtown Urbana faces challenges outwardly with its identity, internally with communication and relationships among various groups, and externally with its built environment. Regarding outwardfacing obstacles, the downtown area struggles to define itself within both fixed physical boundaries and a unique core character. There is an impression that Urbana is not attractive to a more diverse population of young people, students, families, and people of color. In terms of internal relationships, there are a few issues that seem present: municipal staff are often overworked with the task of running events, and residents feel that municipal rules are too restrictive on creativity. Additionally, the University is disconnected from the Downtown both physically and programmatically. In terms of the built environment, the overwhelming perception is of an overabundance of parking lots downtown and an absence of outdoor public gathering spaces and green areas. Stakeholders also noted a lack of housing and connections to Boneyard Creek.



VISUAL PREFERENCING **SURVEY**

Participants at the first public meeting, as well as visitors to the public engagement website, could vote on themed images related to:

- Community Parks/Gathering Spaces
- Streetscape Amenities
- Signage and Gateways
- Parking Garage Enhancements
- Street Redesign and Enhancement
- Tactical Urbanism
- Sidewalks and Alleyways

The exhibit below provides an example of the visual preferencing results. The total number of votes each image received is included with the top-voted character images highlighted. The photos below represent the survey results for community parks and gathering spaces.



options that are innovative and movable. Signage and Gateways - Well-lit signage that retains a classic look amidst

mature tree canopy was the dominant style.

garages with greenery and murals.

votes portray flexible spaces full of people, greenery, and activities.

Parking Garage Enhancements - The preferred images disguised parking

Community Parks/Gathering Spaces - The images that received the most

Streetscape - Voters tended to favor bicycle infrastructure and plentiful seating

Street Design - Voters showed a preference for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and avoided car-based streets.

Sidewalks and Alleyways - The most popular image across all the categories contains a vibrant pedestrian realm with outdoor dining and creative lighting.

Low-Cost/Temporary Treatments - People preferred greenery, mature trees, colorful paint, and creative uses of sidewalks and streets.













































During the first public meeting on October 12th, 2022, participants were split into four groups, with each group conducting a "walking audit" of a different area of Downtown. Each group used the Project for Public Spaces' Place Evaluation Form to rate each of the following areas:

- Downtown alleyways
- Connection between existing Farmer's Market and Main Street
- Boneyard Creek Trail
- The Triangle (Intersection of W Springfield Avenue and W Main Street)

The evaluation forms have the groups rate each place based on certain characteristics that are found in great places. This sparks discussion and makes it easier to realize what is missing or what works well in a space. Then, the group answers open-ended questions about the space together. Upon returning to the meeting room, groups continue to brainstorm and illustrate their ideas, before sharing them with the rest of the participants.

SUMMARY OF WALKING GROUP FINDINGS

Downtown Alleyways - The alleys could be improved with more murals, better lighting, communal trash service, signage, and wayfinding promoting connections to downtown attractions, and usage of food trucks.

Connection between Market & Main Street - The path from the Market at the Square to Main Street could be illuminated to Market-goers through wayfinding signs, a painted walkway, creative lighting, food vendors or musicians to enliven the space, and the activation of parking lots between the Market and the Downtown core.

Boneyard Creek Trail - The Trail could be better connected to downtown through the use of pedestrian bridges and wayfinding signs indicating access to nearby attractions, and there could be more welcoming entrances to the Creek that invite passersby to visit.

The Triangle - Streetscape changes could slow traffic through this area, and vacant storefronts and parking lots could be activated by adding seating and food trucks.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

In his studies of public space, William H. Whyte observed the key indicators of a great place. These places have a high proportion of people in groups and a wide variety of activities. People show affection to one another there, and a variety of users feel welcome.

When people describe such places, words like "safe," "fun," and "welcoming" come up repeatedly. These types of adjectives describe the intangible qualities of a particular space. Intangible qualities can be measured quantitatively by using existing statistics or by conducting new research.

In studying more than 3000 public spaces around the world, PPS has found four key qualities that generate these patterns of behavior, emotion, and measurable outcomes in public space (see Place Diagram, to the right.) Great places are sociable, have a variety of uses and activities, are well-connected to their surroundings, and are comfortable and welcoming. The most successful spaces always have all four characteristics.

ACCESS & LINKAGES

Access means how well a place is connected to its surroundings, both visually and physically. Accessible places are conveniently reached on foot or by bike. Transit should be nearby in communities that have it, and in those that don't, high-turnover parking can ensure access without sacrificing the area parking facilities.

USES & ACTIVITIES

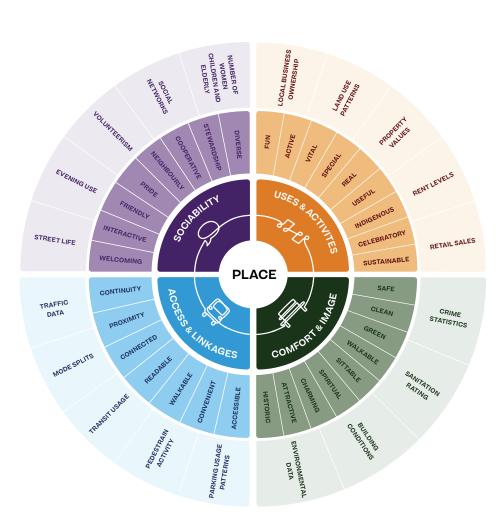
Activities are the basic building blocks of great places: They are the reason why people visit in the first place, and why they continue to return. They are also what makes a place special or unique. When there is nothing to do in a place, it will sit empty and unused, a sure sign something needs to change.

COMFORT & IMAGE

The success of a public space depends on whether people find it comfortable and maintain a positive image of it in their minds. This positive perception includes considerations of safety, cleanliness, and the availability of places to sit. The importance of giving people the choice to sit where they want cannot be overstated.

SOCIABILITY

There is something unmistakably special about a public space that fosters socialization. When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of space and attachment both to their community and to the public space.



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FIGURE 2.2 / WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE - DIAGRAM

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ————— SECTION 2



INTERACTIVE MAP

The public engagement website hosted an interactive mapping activity that allowed visitors to leave comments at specific locations within the Downtown Urbana study area. Comment types included:



More of This



Favorite Place



Needs Work



Idea!

Below are a few examples of comments provided. A full index of the comments can be found in the appendix.

"The library is the jewel of Downtown"

"Love the outdoor family-friendly shows at Rose Bowl"

"The farmer's market, both indoor and outdoor is lovely. Let's continue to find ways to expand!"

"Green spaces and open walking spaces are attractive and draw in people and families!"

"Crossing Vine Street at Elm Street is treacherous.

Please consider bump outs, crosswalks, etc."

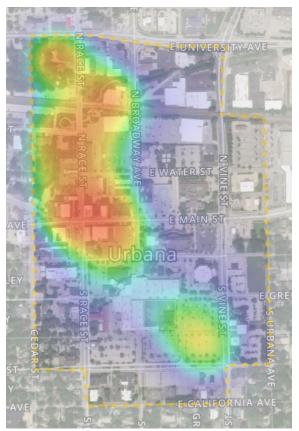
"Another parking lot that no one uses"

"No unifying visual indicators for Downtown. I propose decorative crosswalks and pedestrian islands."

"Lincoln Square should be completely remodeled. Make the outer walls permeable with storefronts."

MORE OF THIS

The 'More of This' comments were concentrated around the core of Downtown Urbana (intersection of Main Street and Race Street), north along Race Street towards Boneyard Creek, and the Market at the Square. These are the areas of Downtown that people enjoy spending time in today and visit on a regular basis. The Main Street environment is comfortable to walk in and hosts a variety of businesses, while activities associated with the Market and outdoor performances at the Rose Bowl help explain the concentration of favorable comments in those locations.



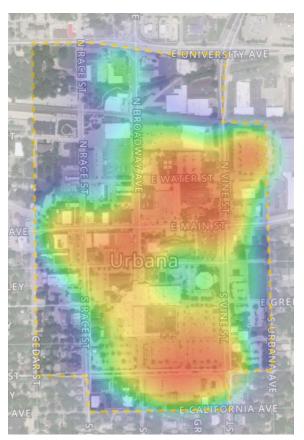
FAVORITE PLACE

The 'Favorite Place' comments align themselves with the locations of the 'More of This' comments, concentrating around the intersection of Main Street and Race Street, as well as Lincoln Square Mall. These locations have a variety of different businesses and restaurants that support the kind of activities residents and visitors to Downtown Urbana would like to see more of. Some favorite places mentioned include The Courier Cafe, Boneyard Creek, the Urbana Free Library, and the alleyways.



NEEDS WORK

Conversely, the 'Needs Work' comments are concentrated in most of the other areas not included in the above heat map. This makes sense, as the areas highlighted to the right are generally less comfortable to walk, lack cohesive shade, and are located where large surface parking lots are concentrated. In particular, the blocks where the current jail property is situated and the parking lots south of Lincoln Square Mall received the most comments for this category. This suggests that visitors to the website feel strongly that these areas of Downtown could support more active and vibrant land uses.



IDEA!

Visitors to the website had lots of great ideas, and as the heat map shows, they are spread across most of the downtown study area. This suggests that individuals have ideas on how to make already great places even better and also have concrete suggestions for how to improve those areas needing more work. Some ideas generated through this activity include expanding narrow sidewalks, reducing the number of surface parking lots by encouraging infill development, adding greenery to the streetscape environment, and adaptive reuse of buildings.





SURVEYS

In order to reach as many Downtown Urbana small businesses as possible, including those unable to attend a focus group, the planning team created a small online survey to gather more information. Through the 22 respondents, the team gathered information on building ownership, clientele, hours, business age, and how business operations have changed. This was also helpful for contact information to make future connections.

These responses confirmed cravings for more programming and, most importantly, improved communication between the City and local businesses. When asked how they would prioritize a series of potential improvements, the majority (60% or more) placed high priority on improving existing public spaces, more regular events/programming, and more seasonal events/festivals. They also largely (60%) report that Downtown Employees only make up about 10% of their primary clientele.

WHO DO YOU SEE AS YOUR PRIMARY CLIENTELE?

	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
Downtown employees	60%	20%	10%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Downtown (or near) residents	12.5%	43.8%	18.8%	6.2%	12.5%	6.2%	0%	0%	0%
Other Urbana residents	9.5%	23.8%	14.3%	19%	14.3%	4.8%	9.5%	4.8%	0%
Champaign residents	10.5%	31.6%	26.3%	21.1%	5.3%	0%	0%	5.3%	0%
Students	37.5%	25%	6.2%	12.5%	6.2%	6.2%	6.2%	0%	0%
Broader area residents	37.5%	31.2%	18.8%	0%	6.2%	0%	0%	6.2%	0%
Other	33.3%	50%	16.7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

FIGURE 2.3 / EXAMPLE QUESTION FROM MERCHANT SURVEY

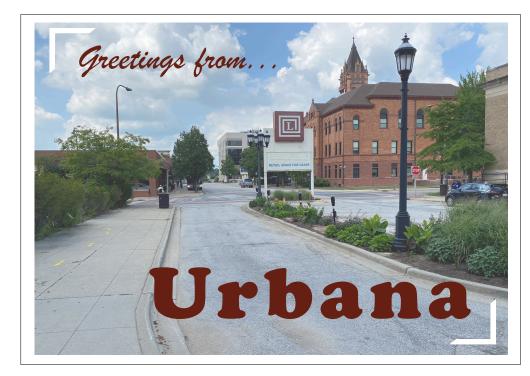
An additional survey was included on the public engagement website. A full set of results of this survey can be found in the appendix.



POSTCARD EXERCISE

Postcards were provided both at the public meetings as well as on the public engagement website. The postcard prompted participants with...

"It is the year 2032 and many exciting changes have taken place in Downtown Urbana over the last 10 years. Write to a friend and tell them about what has changed and why they should visit you!"



Some of the responses received can be found below:

Dear Friend/Family,

You should visit me here in Downtown Urbana because ...



Public art and murals; music; the great and varied businesses; green spaces for events.



The cool beautiful outdoor plaza has a splash pad, vendor kiosks, winter ice skating, and heaters. Great green space to bring friends and kids.



The night lighting down Main Street makes eating outside a whole mood!



BUDGETING

The public engagement website hosted an activity that encouraged visitors to think critically about how they would prioritize a limited amount of funding. It was important to convey that all of the ideas and recommendations to come from this planning process will ultimately take a considerable amount of investment and will not be able to come to fruition all at once.

The prompt was to divide an imaginary \$100,000 among various initiatives to benefit the public realm. The results of the survey are as follows, in order of most to least funds allocated in the imaginary scenario:



1

Add more pedestrian-oriented enhancements



2

Develop a Downtown Civic Green Space



3

Improve connectivity from the current Market at the Square location to Downtown Urbana (Main Street and Race Street)



4

Improve the area around the former civic center



URBANA

5

Improve Boneyard Creek



6

Build a permanent structure for the Market at the Square



7

Provide more gateway markers / signage / branding for Downtown Urbana

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ———— SECTION

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

As part of the initial inventory and analysis portion of the study process, members of the team conducted a conditions assessment for Downtown Urbana. Walking all of the corridors and spaces within the Downtown Study Boundary, data points were collected via paper survey and Survey 123, a platform developed by ArcGIS, based on a number of different environmental and physical conditions. The conditions and presence of the following elements were included in the analysis:

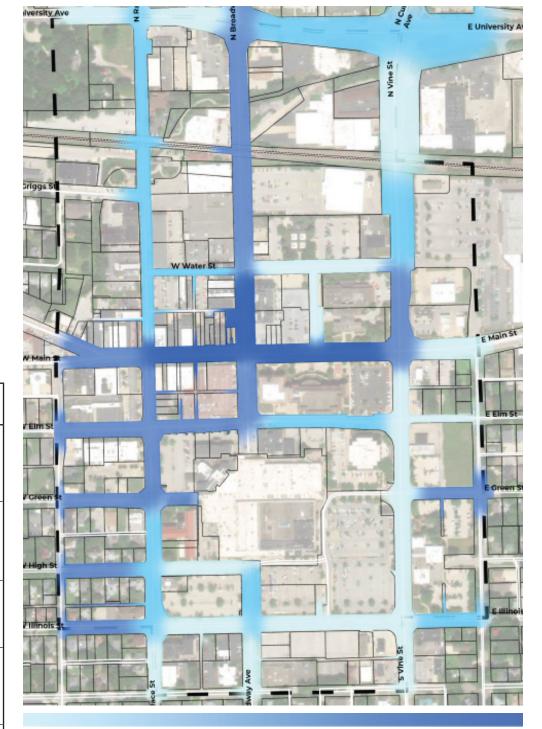
- Landscape
- Sidewalks
- Lighting Fixtures
- Public Seating
- Overall Cleanliness

For each of these categories, a rating of good, average, or bad was assigned to locations throughout the Downtown study area.

Figure 2.4 displays the compiled results of all the environmental and physical conditions analysis. The darker the blues, the better the compiled scores for those areas. Main Street, west of Vine Street, received the highest concentration of good ratings while Broadway Avenue, Race Street between Main Street and Green Street and the residential side streets to the west also rated high. This analysis directly correlates with the input received from the public engagement interactive mapping activity, where most of the positive comments were concentrated in these same areas.

Notably, Broadway Avenue (north of Main Street), while generally rating high, is slightly more average due to the abundance of surface parking lots along the corridor. The street is well designed and contains all of the elements associated with an urban streetscape, including on-street parking, bike lanes, landscaping, lighting, and seating, but because of the inconsistencies of density and building form adjacent to the street corridor, it lacks a general sense of place and lacks the benefits that street-oriented development offers including activity, shade and intrigue.

	Good	Average	Bad
Landscape	 Great variety of plants Well maintained Add to the overall street comfort level	 Good selection of landscape elements Need further development and maintenance 	Small in sizeUnmaintained plantings
Sidewalks	Well maintainedWideInclude design added downtown streetscape design elements	Acceptable conditionShow signs of wearDon't encourage pedestrians due to their condition	Poorly maintainedLacked definition from the adjacent street
Lighting Fixtures	Good selection of lighting fixtures presentOffers a greater sense of safety	Some light poles present but not enough to provide enough light	Streets with sparsely placed lightingAlmost no illuminationDiscourages walking at night
Public Seating	Streets with a good amount and variety of seating options to accommodate all kinds of pedestrians	Streets with some seating but placed far apart from each other	Streets with few seating options for pedestrians
Overall Cleanliness	Streets with no litter or offensive smells	Streets with moderate amounts of litter or offensive smells	Streets with areas of litter or offensive smells such as sewers or waste



GENERAL POOR CONDITION

OVERALL GOOD CONDITION

FIGURE 2.4 / OVERALL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT EXHIBIT

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Feedback from the community through all channels revealed several themes of sentiment regarding the quality and composition of Downtown Urbana. The message that was communicated loud and clear was that there is a strong desire for activated public spaces and enhanced connections, both physically and operationally, to support a variety of activities throughout Downtown that add vibrancy and meaningful social interactions to the public realm. In order to achieve that vision, several strategies emerged:

- Reduce the number of surface parking lots within Downtown
- Create outdoor music and event venues throughout Downtown
- Add green spaces and civic gathering areas that could host events or performances
- Support the Market at the Square and consider enhancing the current location or relocating within Downtown
- If the Market at the Square remains in its current location, enhance the connection between the Market and Main Street
- Prioritize the pedestrian and bicycle condition throughout Downtown to encourage walking and biking and reduce the need for surface parking
- Better define the boundary and brand of the Downtown district
- Encourage additional housing options, focusing on multi-family and affordable units













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SECTION THREE / PUBLIC REALM STUDY

BIG IDEAS

The planning team developed six big ideas that incorporate all of the strategies listed in Section 2. These big ideas form the framework for recommendations that this study will outline. For each of the ideas, the why, what and how are listed. These terms are defined as follows:

- WHY Why this is important
- WHAT Recommended initiatives
- HOW Elements and tactics being proposed



BIG IDEA ONE: CONNECT MARKET TO MAIN STREET



What urban design strategies

could be used?

BIG IDEA TWO: MUSIC/EVENT SPACE



WHY?

Currently, the Market at the Square is located in the southeast corner of the Lincoln Square Mall parking lot. The Mall obstructs easy access from the Market to the Downtown core at Main and Race Streets, leaving this weekly attraction with little connectivity to the rest of Downtown. Both the Market and the businesses located along Main Street would benefit from a stronger and more cohesive connection between the two destination areas.

WHAT?

Develop an attractive and effective pedestrian connection between the core of Downtown and the current location of the Market that reinforces the popularity and uniqueness that both areas have to offer. Other strategies include relocating the Market within Downtown Urbana, possibly closer to Main Street.

HOW?

Activate sidewalks and alleys with elements such as street furniture, seating areas, overhead lighting, specialty paving, and street trees, while also enhancing building facades that face the public realm, and work to provide a comfortable and interesting route for pedestrians.

WHY?

Urbana is known for its music scene and various events held throughout the year but despite that reputation, there is a lack of flexible event space in Downtown Urbana for those types of community events. Musical performances, outdoor movie screenings, festivals, and other performing arts have proven themselves to be sustained activators of the public realm. Urbana should support those types of events through designated and temporary outdoor venues that bring people together.

WHAT?

Create flexible spaces within the Downtown core that provide community venues for festivals, concerts, outdoor movie screenings, and other performing arts events.

HOW?

Several locations Downtown have the potential to support either temporary or permanent event venues. In particular, surface parking lots throughout Downtown should be analyzed for use as temporary gathering spaces while other opportunities for more permanent solutions should be explored.

WHY?

The community engagement process revealed a strong desire for more multi-family and affordable housing options in the Downtown area that are connected to public transit routes. More Downtown housing is a strategic way to add vitality to the district by adding more people Downtown at all times of the day.

WHAT?

Encourage multi-family housing options at various income levels, particularly in the lower bracket, to provide greater diversity in housing choices and more Downtown residents.

HOW?

There are many opportunities within Downtown Urbana for residential infill developments. Specifically, many of the underutilized surface parking lots would be well-suited for this type of development.

BIG IDEAS







BIG IDEA SIX: IDENTITY & WAYFINDING

WHY?

Despite Urbana's designation as a Tree City USA, there are few green civic spaces in the Downtown district. Numerous residents expressed a need for more of these types of places within Downtown.

WHAT?

Establish public plazas and gathering spaces in the Downtown that incorporate trees, native plantings, and amenities designed for events and passive recreation or social activities.

HOW?

As mentioned previously, the parking lots within the Downtown study area are ideal for a 'hardscape-to-nature' conversion. Specific areas of interest for the incorporation of a green gathering space include the parking lots south of Lincoln Square Mall, the corner of Main Street and Broadway Avenue, and the section of Boneyard Creek that curves from Race Street to Main Street.

WHY?

There is an established network of bike facilities in Downtown Urbana, but the network lacks the level of connection and efficiency to make it a viable option for transportation. This, coupled with the abundance of surface parking lots and streets designed to move traffic quickly, has increased residents' desire for pedestrian and bicycle access and connectivity within the Downtown and beyond.

WHAT?

Establish pleasant pedestrian and bicycle connections along strategic corridors to increase the number of people walking and biking to support local businesses, facilitate greater social activity, and connect existing and future civic gathering spaces. Reconstruct or reconfigure major and minor thoroughfares to widen sidewalks, add streetscape amenities, and create a more cohesive bicycle grid.

HOW?

Several corridors within the Downtown study area present an opportunity for a redesign or reconfiguration that would improve the experience for people walking and biking. Among these include Illinois Street, Vine Street, Race Street, and Broadway Avenue. Future projects should remove turn lanes where possible, widen sidewalks, and add new bike lanes. These strategies will help to slow down traffic and increase safety and comfort for everyone.

WHY?

There is currently an inconsistent network of identifying markers to announce the arrival into Downtown Urbana. The district should be celebrated, and establishing a system of gateways, wayfinding signage, and other markers can be an effective way to reinforce the boundary and branding for Downtown Urbana.

WHAT?

The implementation of a system of signs and/or gateway monuments indicating the core of the City of Urbana would help visitors and residents alike know they have arrived in a special and unique place. A strong signage and wayfinding system also reinforces the brand of Downtown and creates opportunities to advertise special events and holidays.

HOW?

Identity and wayfinding signs announcing arrival into Downtown Urbana can also direct visitors to attractions such as the Boneyard Creek Trail, Lincoln Square Mall, and the Urbana Free Library. Signage and gateway markers along University Avenue are especially important as that is a major corridor connecting Urbana and Champaign and is the means by which many travelers enter Downtown Urbana.

FRAMEWORK PLAN

Through stakeholder interviews, focus groups, walking tours, and online engagement with the Urbana community, the planning team developed a list of key locations that have the potential to activate the Downtown realm. The Focus Areas listed below have established levels of foot traffic and activity but with further planning, these areas can catalyze further enhancements and development in the Downtown.

FOCUS AREAS







FOCUS AREA A

DOWNTOWN CORE

The Downtown Core encompasses Lincoln Square Mall and is bordered by Broadway to the east, Goose Alley to the north, Cedar Street to the west and Green Street to the south.

FOCUS AREA B SOUTH LINCOLN SQUARE

The parking lots surrounding the south and east sides of the Lincoln Square Mall are blank canvasses for the community to illustrate the version of downtown they would like to see. Infill development of multi-family housing, community green space, and a permanent structure for the Market are all compelling uses of these mostly vacant concrete lots.

FOCUS AREA C

'THE TRIANGLE'

The configuration of the Main Street and Springfield Avenue intersection promotes higher-speeds for vehicular traffic and makes pedestrian crossings challenging. The triangular shape of this intersection, along with its proximity to Boneyard Creek and the downtown core, makes it an area of particular interest for reconfiguration and potential development into a community plaza.

PUBLIC REALM STUDY

OVERALL PUBLIC REALM STRATEGIES

LEGEND

Focus Areas

Reallocation (with possible

streetscape

Downtown

BIG IDEAS

Identification/ Wayfinding

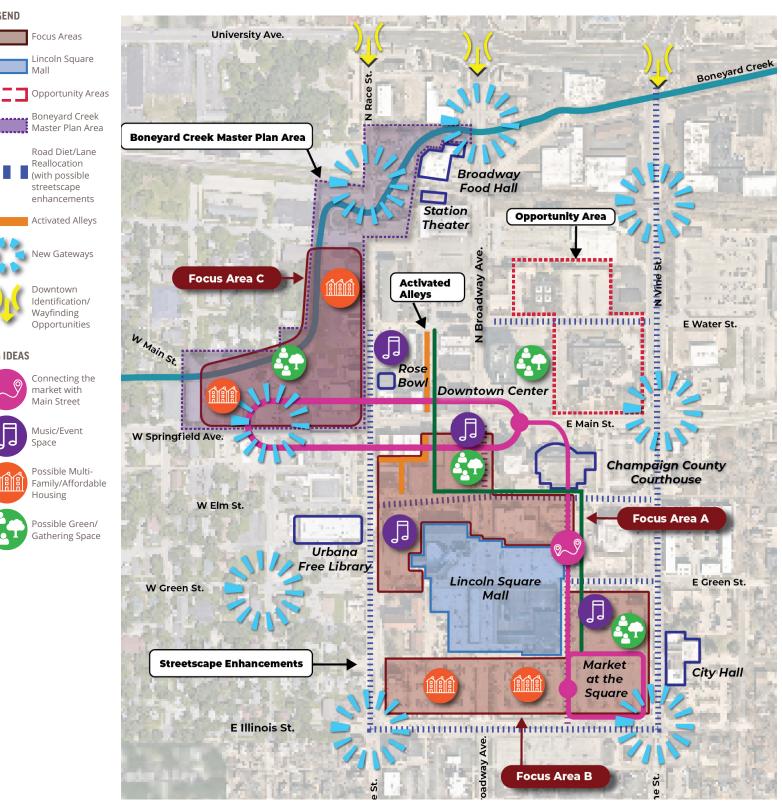
Opportunities

market with

Main Street

Music/Event

Possible Multi-



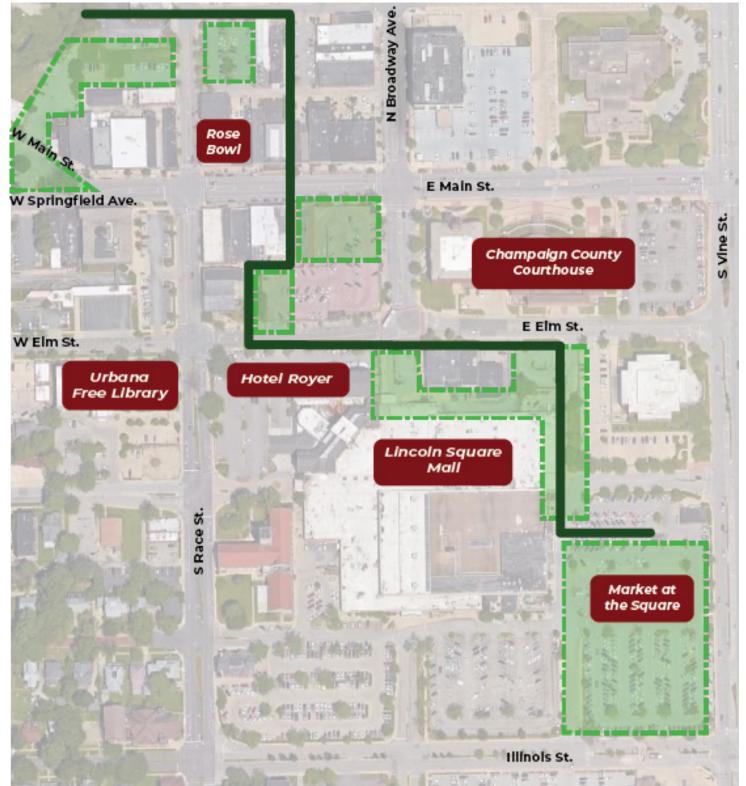


FIGURE 3.1 / CIVIC GATHERING AND GREEN/OPEN SPACES CONNECTED THROUGH DOWNTOWN

FIGURE 3.0 / OVERALL PUBLIC REALM STRATEGIES MAP

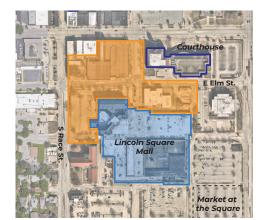
PUBLIC REALM STUDY ———— SECTION 3

CONCEPTS

The following pages illustrate multiple concepts for the Focus Areas previously presented.

FOCUS AREA A: DOWNTOWN CORE

Focus Area A is the area just north of Lincoln Square Mall, including Elm Street, Race Street, Broadway Avenue, the existing parking structure, and Crane and Fish Alleys.



CONCEPT ONE:GARAGE REMAINS

Concept One reimagines the area of Downtown near the Hotel Royer and surrounding the parking garage at Elm Street and Broadway Avenue. Broadway Avenue becomes a pedestrianized street with widened sidewalks, curb bumpouts, and more street furniture and trees. On-street parking on Broadway Avenue would provide a designated space to host food trucks regularly to activate the block. Crane and Fish Alleys are enhanced with new lighting and seating options, along with consolidation and coordination of trash pickup services. Northeast of the Hotel Royer would be an entry plaza for the Hotel with landscaping and public space. There would be infill development at Race Street and Elm Street that could provide new multi-family and affordable housing.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:









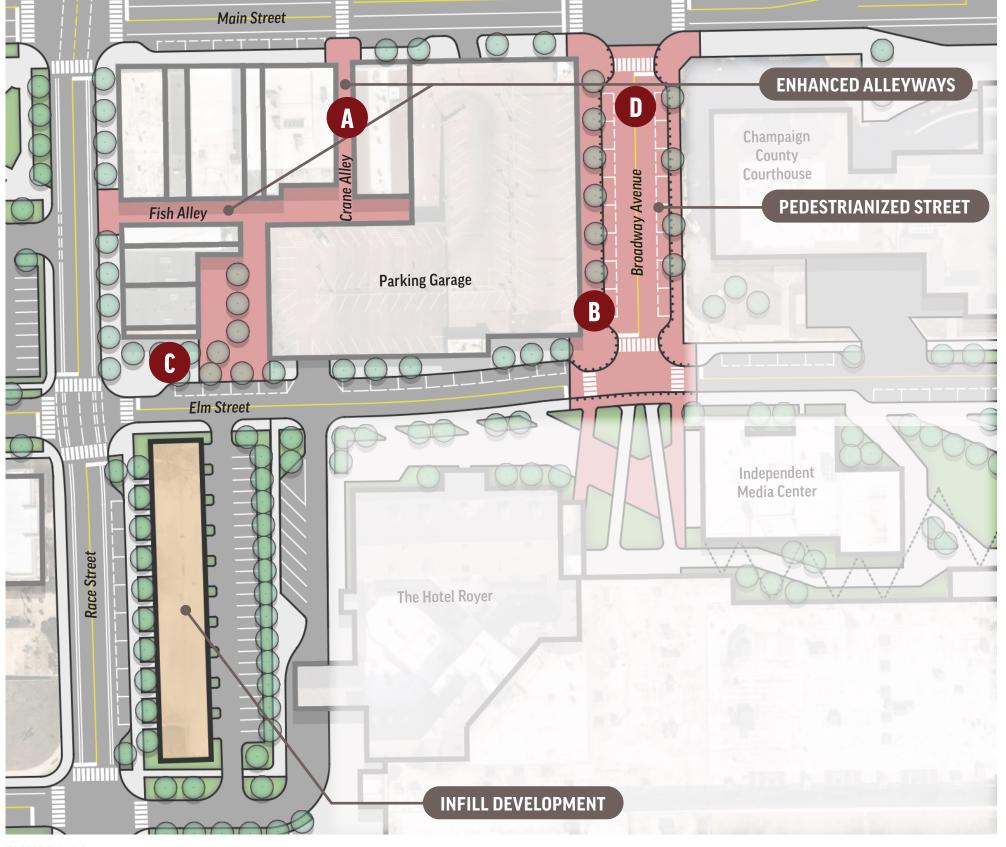


FIGURE 3.2 / DOWNTOWN CORE FOCUS AREA CONCEPT: GARAGE REMAINS

PRECEDENT IMAGERY FOR DOWNTOWN CORE CONCEPT ONE









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PUBLIC REALM STUDY SECTION

CONCEPTS

FOCUS AREA A: DOWNTOWN CORE (CONT.)

CONCEPT TWO: HYBRID APPROACH

Concept Two retains half of the parking structure, removing the southwest section to use this space as additional civic plaza space. This plaza would have flexible seating options and canopy overhangs that would offer a space for community events and festivals. Fish and Crane Alleys would directly extend from this plaza space, helping to enhance those pedestrian corridors and providing a direct pedestrian connection from Main Street and South Race Street. Additional on-street parking is added along Elm Street, Race Street, and Broadway Avenue.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:









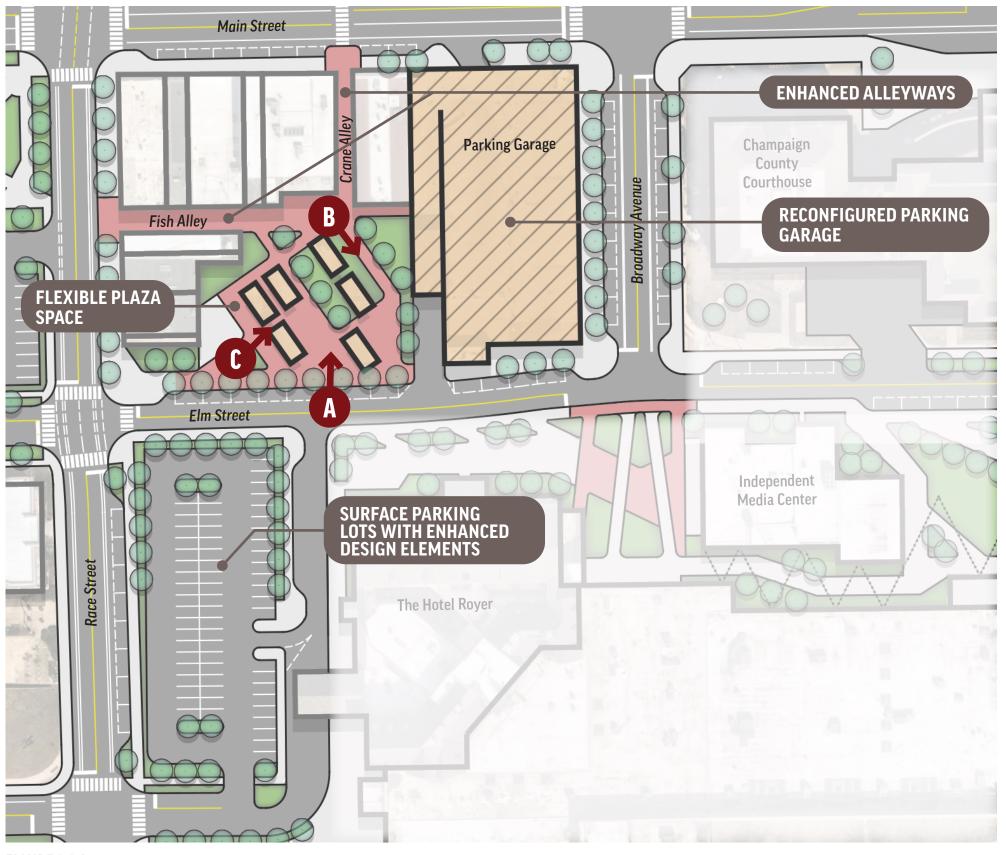


FIGURE 3.3 / DOWNTOWN CORE FOCUS AREA CONCEPT THREE: HYBRID APPROACH

PUBLIC REALM STUDY ———— SECTION



Left: A northern aerial view of Elm Street and Race Streets with a new civic plaza replacing half the parking garage. In the foreground, food trucks park on Elm Street, with canopied seating structures interspersed throughout the plaza for picnics, community events, and festivals. Crane Alley extends northward from the plaza in the background.

Bottom Left: Looking south at the plaza space toward Elm Street with the parking garage to the east. New seating, landscaping, and canopied shelters offer opportunities for activity even in inclement weather.

Below: A northeastern view of the plaza at night with creative lighting, a small performance stage, and space for a mixture of uses and social gatherings.





PUBLIC REALM STUDY SECTION

CONCEPTS

FOCUS AREA A: DOWNTOWN CORE (CONT.)

CONCEPT THREE: CIVIC SQUARE AND DEVELOPMENT

Concept Three explores the idea of the parking garage being completely removed. In its place, there could be infill development with front entrances on both Elm Street and along a prominent civic square located on the corner of Main Street and Broadway Avenue. This flexible space could host a multiuse structure near an existing Main Street building, providing a backdrop for performances and events. With the addition of a mural overlooking this civic square, this could be a prominent corner of Downtown.









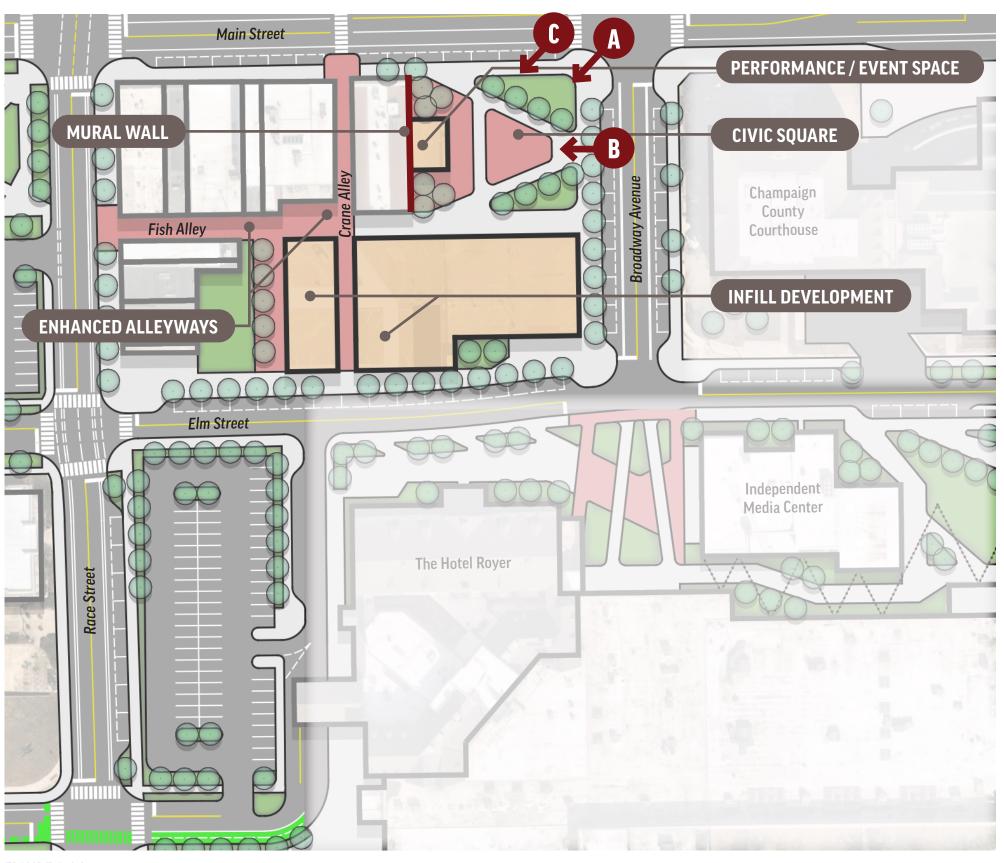


FIGURE 3.4 / DOWNTOWN CORE FOCUS AREA CONCEPT 3: CIVIC SQUARE AND DEVELOPMENT

PUBLIC REALM STUDY ————— SECTION



Left: The corner of Main Street and South Broadway Avenue is an important space within Downtown Urbana that has the ability to be an anchor for community activities and events. Concept Three for Focus Area A imagines this block of Downtown with the parking garage removed, and in its place, an active civic square defined by existing Downtown buildings and infill development. This space can be flexible in its design but still contain components that support a variety of activities from concerts and performances to food trucks and small festivals. The large blank wall on the existing Downtown building is a perfect canvas for a mural that in and of itself, would help define this space. A modest infill building could contain street level retail or restaurant space, further activating this civic square.

Bottom Left: An eye-level view of the performance space with the backdrop of a dramatic wall mural. A combination of hardscape and landscape areas allow for different activities in the space while being flexible to be used simultaneously.

Below: An iconic sign for this space becomes an identifiable feature for the entire Downtown. Regular food truck activities could take place at this location to help spur further entrepreneurial efforts. This location is also strategic for food trucks as their position on the street will not block views into existing businesses or restaurants.





CONCEPTS

FOCUS AREA B: SOUTH LINCOLN SQUARE

Focus Area B is the parking lots and area surrounding Lincoln Square Mall.



CONCEPT ONE: INCREMENTAL CHANGES

In Concept One of Focus Area B, the Market at the Square remains in its current location at the northwest corner of Illinois Street and Vine Street, with a plaza and green space for a variety of Market activities and community events. The two parking lots west of the Market area provide the opportunity for infill development that could include multi-family and affordable housing units with entrances on the street, and parking and amenity spaces in the back.

Walnut Street in front of Common Ground Food Co-Op is transformed into a pedestrian-oriented street that enhances the northern connection to the Downtown core. Other enhancements to this connection could include overhead lighting, wall murals on Lincoln Square Mall, and flexible plaza and green spaces on the east and west sides of the Independent Media Center. This strategy would bolster the existing elements of Downtown Urbana, such as the successful and beloved Market at the Square, while enhancing key pedestrian connections to facilitate a more cohesive and unified Downtown.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:









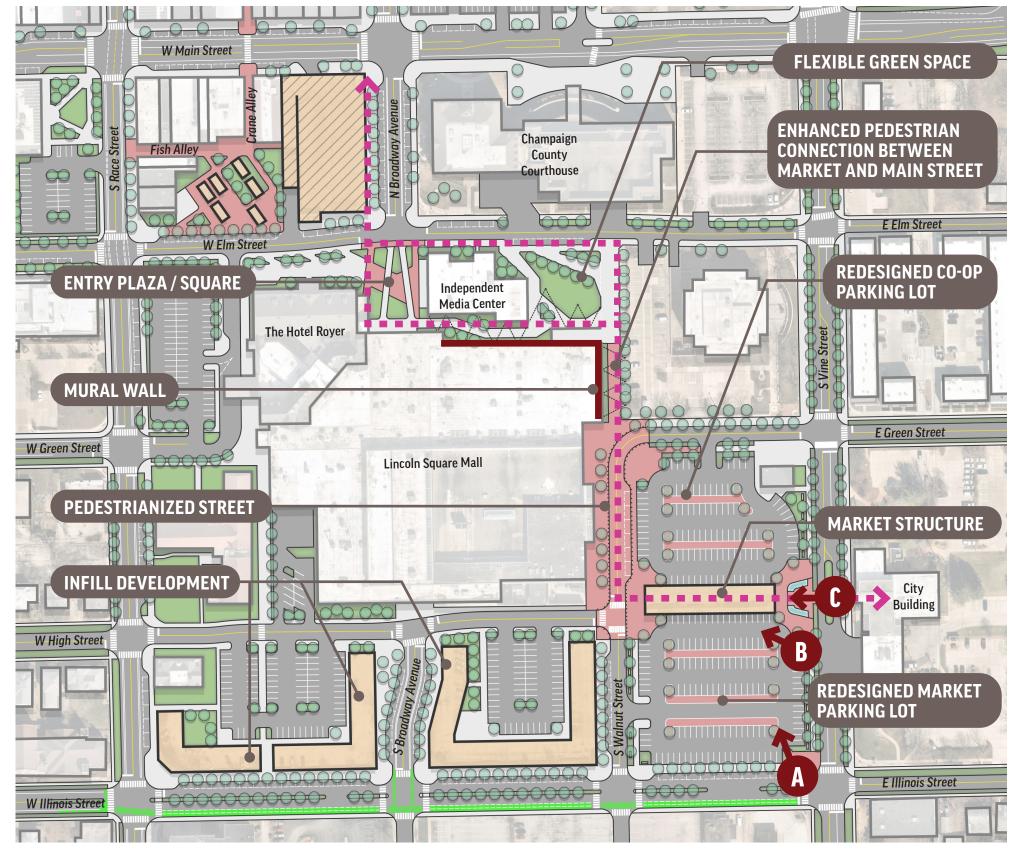


FIGURE 3.5 / LINCOLN SQUARE SOUTH FOCUS AREA CONCEPT 1: INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

PUBLIC REALM STUDY SECTION



Left: Should the Market remain where it is, Concept One and Concept Two on the following page illustrate potential enhancements to the existing Market location. Positioned along an axis with the City Building, the Market shed is located between the two existing parking lots on the east side of Lincoln Square Mall. The Market structure is not large enough to accommodate all of the Market vendors. Therefore, the parking lot to the south of the shed is designed to facilitate Market activities, while also supporting parking during other times of the week. Vendors can rotate on a regular basis to be located under the shed, with higher vendor fees associated with that location, if desired.

Bottom Left: This image shows how the design of the enhanced parking lot supports Market activities. The parking lot is illustrated with no curbs which allows for easier access and circulation by both vendors and patrons, while pavers differentiate drive lanes from parking stalls.

Below: This plaza space, directly across Vine Street from the City Building, acts as the front door to the market area. Seat walls, combined with landscaping and potential water features, would make this a nice spot to sit down for lunch or catch up with a friend. A mid-block crossing with a highly visual crosswalk and pedestrian refuge island reinforce the civic connection with the City Building, as well as the residential neighborhoods further to the east.





PUBLIC REALM STUDY ———— SECTION 3

CONCEPTS

FOCUS AREA B: SOUTH LINCOLN SQUARE (CONT.)

CONCEPT TWO:MALL REIMAGINED

Concept Two re-imagines Lincoln Square Mall and re-establishes the street grid that was removed for construction of the Mall decades ago. The site as a whole has long served as a public gathering space, but the Lincoln Square Mall and Hotel Royer are privately owned, while the majority of the parking lots are publicly-owned.

With approval and support from the property owners, along with the creation of public-private partnerships, the Mall could be deconstructed to expose the current pedestrian corridors located inside the Mall and transform them into traditional streets. South Broadway Avenue could then extend from Elm Street, where it currently ends, to the neighborhoods further south. Much of the existing Mall structure could be retained south of Green Street to provide street-oriented commercial spaces. Green Street could become a pedestrian and bike corridor while still accessible by vehicles if necessary. The northeast corner of the Mall could be replaced with infill development, with the possibility for multifamily and affordable housing, and parking behind the Independent Media Center. This strategy opens up the area southeast of the Hotel Royer for a plaza that the Hotel could showcase for its property. This overall strategy seeks to extend the urban fabric from the Downtown core of Urbana, along Main Street, to the Mall location, creating a unified downtown environment between the two currently detached areas.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:









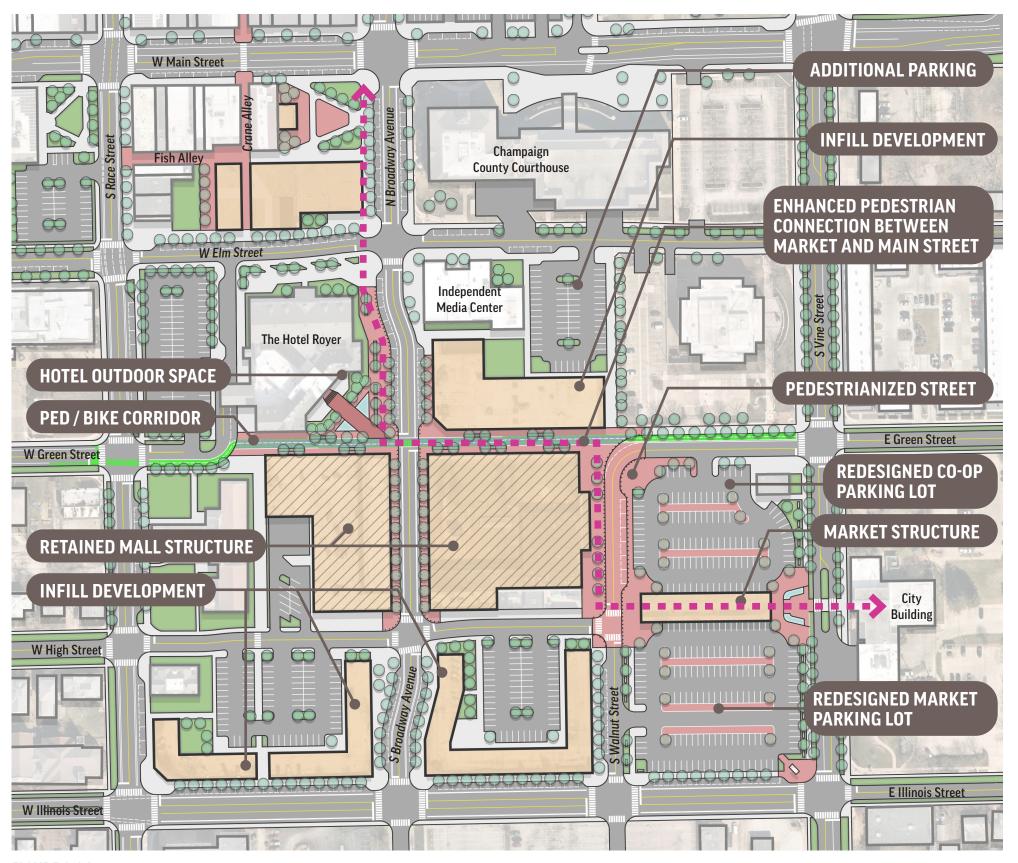


FIGURE 3.6 / LINCOLN SQUARE SOUTH FOCUS AREA CONCEPT 2: MALL REIMAGINED



Left: With Lincoln Square Mall reimagined, opportunities for exciting and active public spaces open up in the Mall's former footprint. This view is looking northwest towards the existing Hotel Royer. Currently enclosed within the Mall, the grand entrance to the Hotel is exposed and leads directly into a plaza filled with seating areas, rolling topography, and lush landscapes and water features. This image shows how a pedestrian and bicycle corridor extends through the site east/west, in alignment with Green Street, while also being accessible by emergency vehicles. Broadway Avenue extends through the site, north/south, with the facades of the Mall transforming into urban-oriented storefronts.

Bottom Left: An eye-level view of the pedestrian and bicycle corridor that traverses through the Lincoln Square Mall property. Paving materials or colors can easily differentiate areas designated for bicycles and pedestrians.

Below: This view is looking south on Broadway Avenue with The Hotel Royer located on the right-hand side. The building shown to the left is infill development and could support a mix of uses. Notably, the design of Broadway Avenue as shown includes travel lanes, on-street bike lanes, on-street parking, and ample sidewalk space. With those components, Broadway Avenue and the developments shown in this image extend the Downtown core fabric from Main Street to the south.





PUBLIC REALM STUDY ———— SECTION 3

CONCEPTS

FOCUS AREA C: THE TRIANGLE

Focus Area C looks at the location where Main Street and Springfield Avenue come together to form a triangle intersection, as well as the Boneyard Creek corridor between Main Street and Griggs Street.



CONCEPT:BONEYARD CREEK MASTER PLAN 2.0

Borrowing strategies from the Boneyard Creek Trail Master Plan, a trailway extends from Griggs Street to Main Street along the east side of the creek. The intersection of Main Street and Springfield Avenue is reconfigured to maximize the pedestrian space and create an iconic entry point for the Boneyard Creek Trail system.

A terraced landscape allows people to interact with the creek directly, and flexible hardscape and green space could host a variety of community events. Infill development along Race Street faces both the trailway and the street to activate both areas at the same time. An extension of Water Street would support a mixed-use development that introduces street-level commercial opportunities and outdoor patio spaces for cafes or restaurants.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:







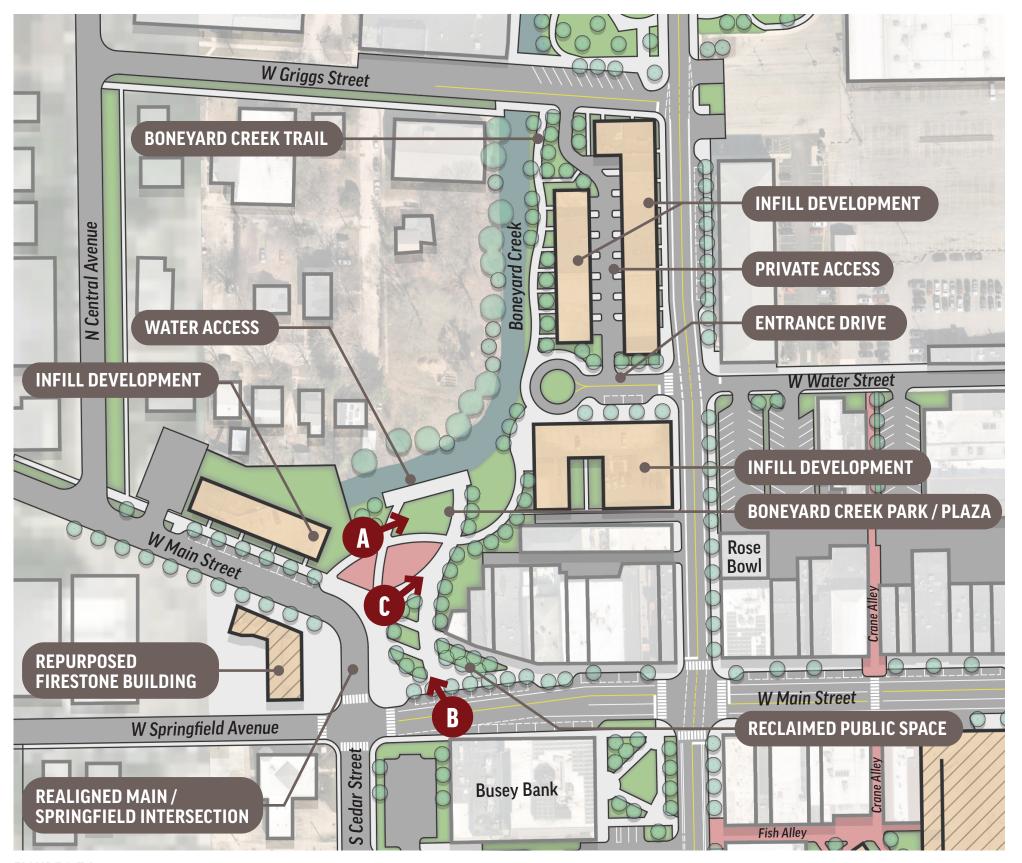


FIGURE 3.7 / THE TRIANGLE FOCUS AREA CONCEPT: BONEYARD CREEK MASTER PLAN 2.0





Left: A view looking northeast at Boneyard Creek. By removing and reimagining a city-owned parking lot, Boneyard Creek is transformed into a community amenity that supports a variety of public spaces suitable for hosting events and passive activities. This view shows how sloping topography forms an amphitheater space with the creek as a backdrop and low seat walls providing seating. The Boneyard Creek Trail would traverse through this space and continue both north and south.

Bottom Left: An aerial view of a reconfigured Main Street and Springfield Avenue intersection. The current configuration of this intersection makes it challenging to walk or bike through this area and creates safety issues for all users. By realigning Main Street to form a four-way intersection with Springfield Avenue and Cedar Street, movements for all modes of transportation are clarified, and a sizable amount of real estate formerly designated for vehicles is reclaimed for pedestrian and plaza space.

Below: A view looking northeast on the new pedestrian plaza. The reconfiguration of the intersection at Main Street and Springfield Avenue opens up space for pedestrian access and landscaping.





STREET REDESIGN AND LANE REALLOCATION

Many of the transportation corridors in Downtown Urbana have been designed and engineered over the years to prioritize car traffic. Wide lanes, large turning radii at intersections, narrow sidewalks, and long crosswalks create unsafe and uncomfortable conditions for people walking and biking. These conditions challenge any efforts to foster a walkable environment. As part of this plan, a series of cross sections have been developed to show existing conditions and recommendations for reallocating existing lanes or redesigning streets to prioritize people over car traffic.

The images below depict a before and after scenario along Race Street between Main Street and Elm Street. Currently, the sidewalk along the east side of Race Street tapers to a very small width which is not conducive to any sidewalk activity and brings pedestrians uncomfortably close to car traffic. By removing the center lane, the overall roadway width is reduced, allowing the sidewalk to be expanded. By doing this, streetscape elements such as street trees, bike lanes, and outdoor seating are possible. These elements in turn help to support first-floor commercial activity and increase the vibrancy of this area of Downtown. This idea, as shown in Figure 3.8, and others are discussed further on the following pages.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:







FIGURE 3.8 / BEFORE AND AFTER VIEW - RACE STREET BETWEEN MAIN STREET AND ELM STREET WITH STREET REDESIGN

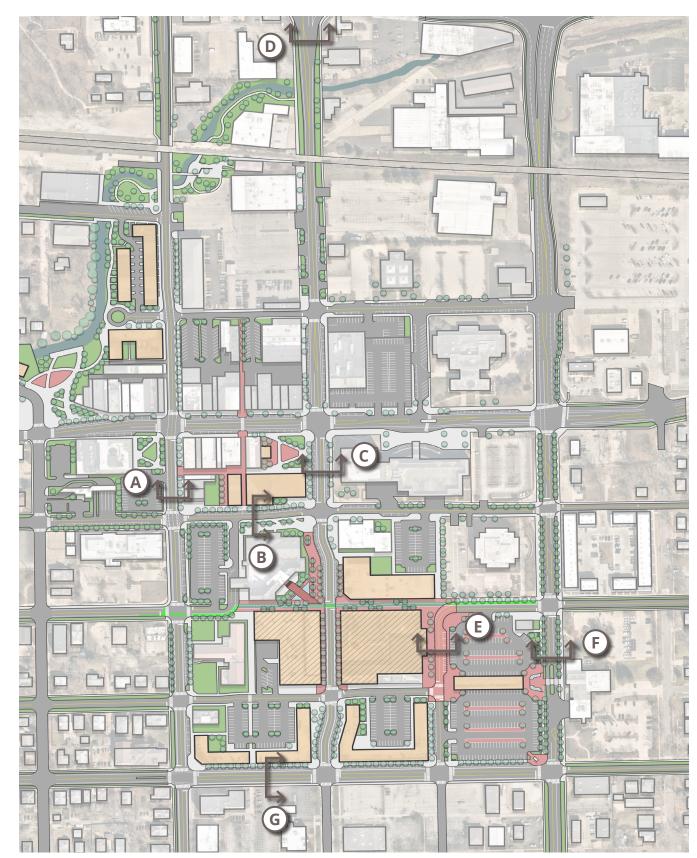


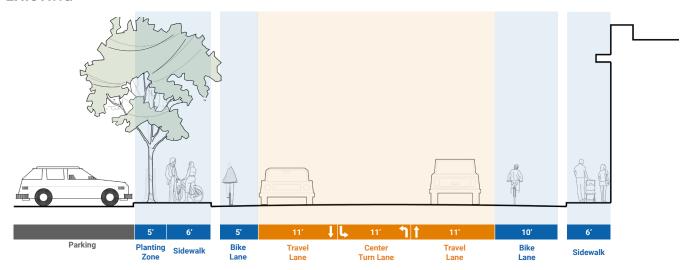
FIGURE 3.9 / STREET REDESIGN AND LANE REALLOCATION SECTION LOCATIONS



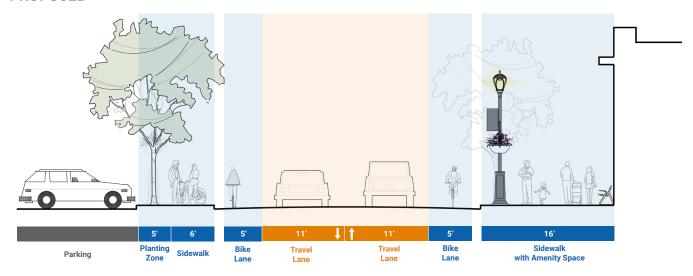
RACE STREET:

BETWEEN MAIN STREET AND ELM STREET

EXISTING



PROPOSED

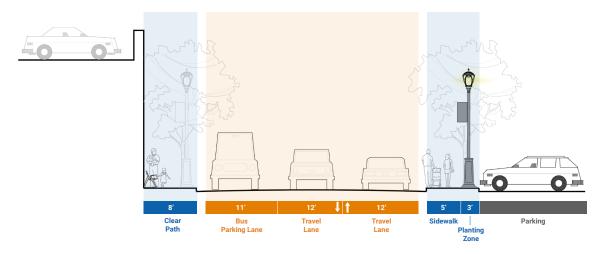


As shown on the previous page, the recommendation for Race Street includes reducing the total number of travel lanes from three to two, allowing for the expansion of sidewalk space along the east side of the street. An expanded sidewalk could support patio space, additional streetscape elements, and more pedestrian activity. A study for the Main Street/Race Street intersection is recommended to be completed to determine the feasibility of removing the center turn lane.

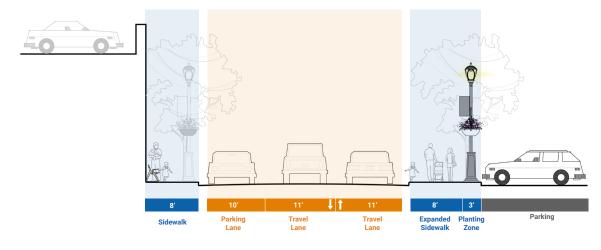


ELM STREET:BETWEEN RACE STREET AND BROADWAY AVENUE

EXISTING



PROPOSED

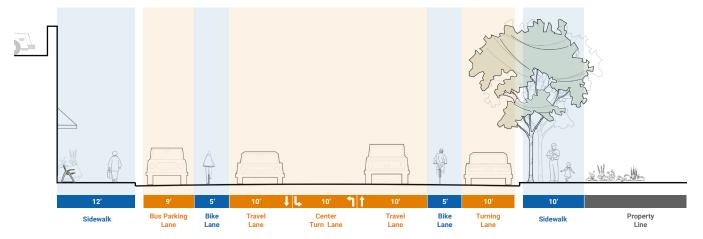


Currently, the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) uses the parking zone on the north side of Elm Street for bus parking at the transit center surrounding the parking garage. Through the planning process, the planning team learned of the potential relocation of the transit center, which would present an opportunity for the existing bus parking lane to be used as on-street parking. By narrowing the parking and travel lanes on Elm Street, the sidewalk on the south side of the street could be expanded from 5-feet to 8-feet, allowing easier access by pedestrians and better accommodating streetscape elements.

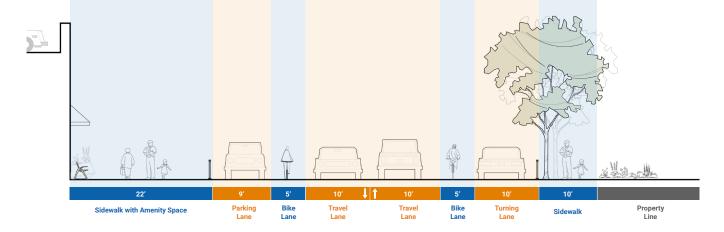


BROADWAY AVENUE:BETWEEN MAIN STREET AND ELM STREET

EXISTING



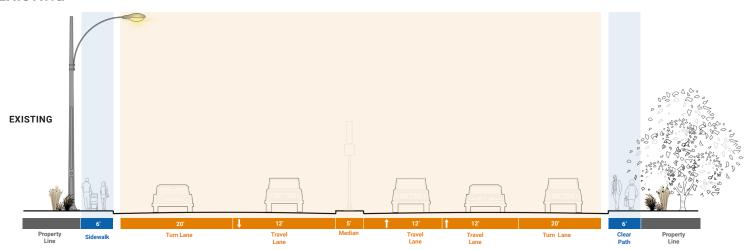
PROPOSED



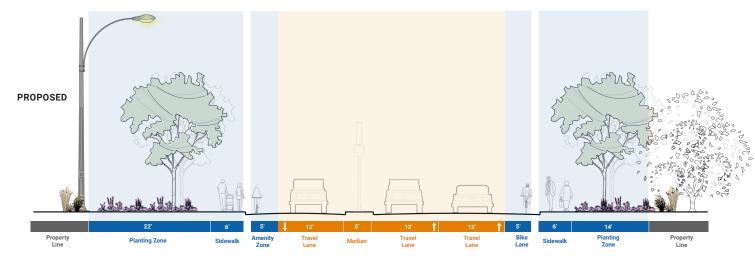
Currently, Broadway Avenue between Main Street and Elm Street is an oversized and underutilized road that primarily supports buses at the Downtown Urbana transit center. This study recommends redesigning this block of Broadway Avenue and transforming it into a pedestrianized street. This strategy entails raising the street to curb level, introducing pavers, and installing bollards on either side of the street to demarcate strictly vehicular areas from those for pedestrians. This block of Broadway Avenue could be closed off temporarily with removable bollards and function as an extension of the adjacent planned civic square. Bike lanes are also accommodated in the proposed section. More study should be completed to understand the cost versus benefit of a redesign of this magnitude. A redesign of this segment of Broadway Avenue is not inhibited by any future extension of Broadway Avenue to the south.



EXISTING



PROPOSED

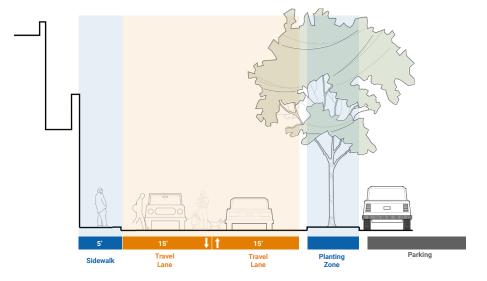


The Broadway Avenue and University Avenue intersection has highway-like features, which challenges any attempt to make walking feel safer and more pleasant at this location and strengthen this node as an entry point into Downtown Urbana. With the understanding that University Avenue is an IDOT corridor, this study recommends the removal of the slip lanes from Broadway Avenue to University Avenue, allowing for the ROW to be narrowed significantly. This would add space for wider sidewalks, landscaping, and gateway markers. Removing the slip lanes will also increase safety and comfort at this location.

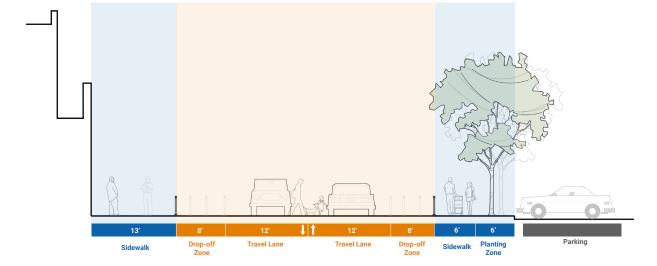


IN FRONT OF THE COMMON GROUND FOOD CO-OP: BETWEEN STOREFRONT AND PARKING LOT

EXISTING



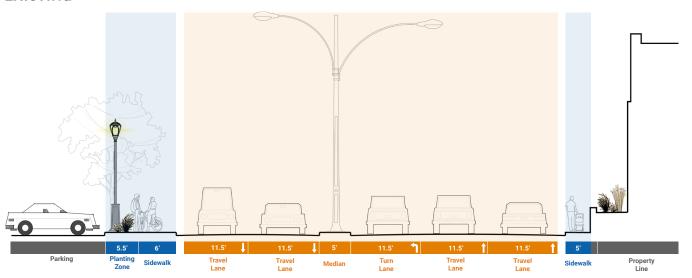
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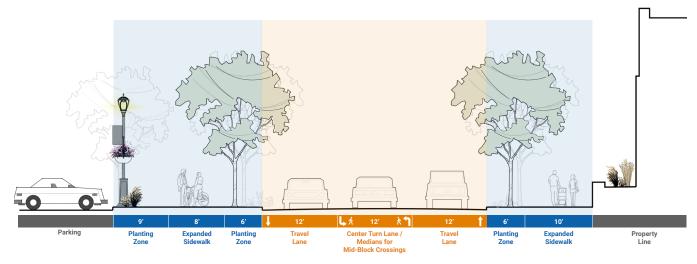
As part of the strategy to enhance the connection between the Market at the Square and Main Street, the street in front of Common Ground Co-Op is envisioned to be pedestrianized to facilitate a cohesive physical connection between those two destinations. Similar to Broadway Avenue between Main Street and Elm Street, the street would be raised to curb height, with the introduction of bollards to separate vehicular and pedestrian movements. Pavers consistent with those found in other proposed pedestrian areas would indicate to drivers that this is a shared space. This strategy also enhances the front door arrival to the Co-Op and offers a drop-off and pick-up location.



EXISTING



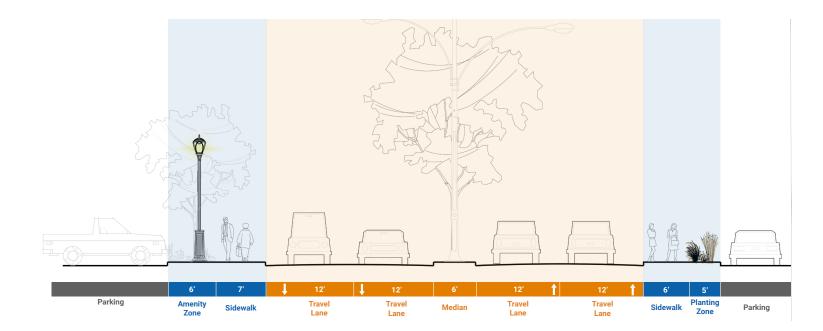
PROPOSED



The current design of Vine Street encourages fast vehicular traffic and makes crossing the street difficult for people on foot. The proposed section envisions a three-lane street with two travel lanes and a center turn lane. A center median is also proposed at strategic locations to facilitate safe pedestrian mid-block crossings. This redesign of the street allows for expanded pedestrian and amenity areas on both the west and east sides, and more closely resembles the character of Vine Street south of Illinois Street.



EXISTING

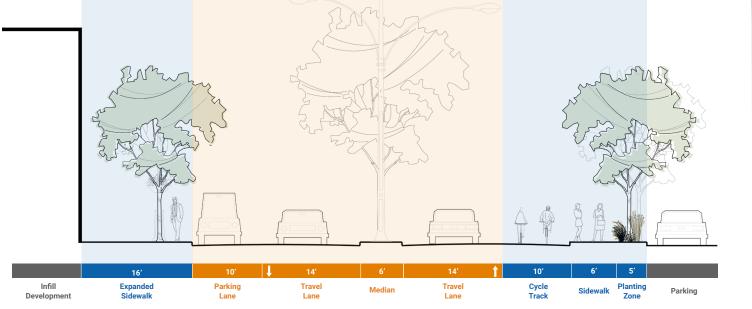


Illinois Street today, between Race Street and Vine Street, consists of two travel lanes in each direction and a center median with limited landscaping. The design of this street, like others, probably came about around the construction of Lincoln Square Mall to accommodate higher traffic volumes. While those traffic volumes may have been present in years past, they do not exist today, and Illinois Street between Race Street and Vine Street is oversized for current traffic volumes.

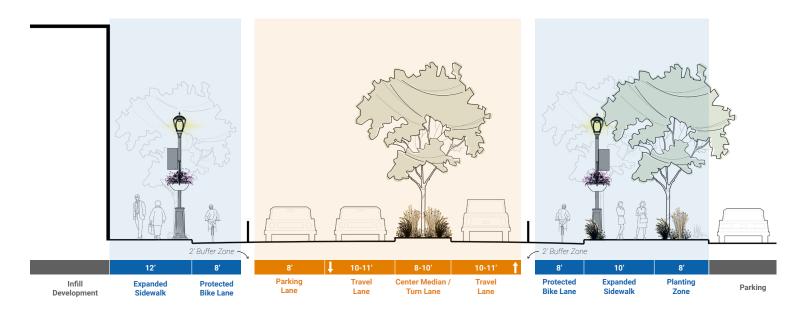
This study provides two possible options for consideration. Option One proposes leaving the median in place and reallocating the function of lanes with no relocation of curbs necessary. A travel lane and parking lane are located on the west-bound side while a travel lane and cycle track are located on the east-bound side. On-street parking would support infill development located immediately to the north, and the cycle track would extend existing bike lanes on Race Street to the neighborhoods east of Vine Street.

Option Two would redesign this four-lane street with a wider median, fewer travel lanes, protected bike lanes, and wider sidewalks. The goals of this design are to make Illinois Street safer and more pleasant people, whether they're walking, biking, or driving, and to add more landscaping and reduce pavement. Details such as the width and design of bike lanes, travel lanes, sidewalks, and planting areas would need to be determined during the design phase.

PROPOSED - OPTION ONE



PROPOSED - OPTION TWO



PUBLIC REALM STUDY _____ SECTION

IDENTITY AND WAYFINDING

While the unique character of Downtown signals a departure from surrounding areas and an arrival into Downtown, there is an opportunity for additional identity and wayfinding elements.

Urbana's established logo contains the icon of the oak leaf, a visual representation of the community's pride in being a 'Tree City USA.' Images A through C illustrate how that symbol of the oak leaf could be used in gateway and wayfinding signage.

BIG IDEAS SUPPORTED:





N VINE STREET - LOOKING SOUTH

Entering Downtown along Vine Street from University Avenue, there is a convenient location for gateway signage at the existing rail bridge. The structure itself serves as a defacto gateway, or moment of arrival, but lacks signage to truly serve that function. Image A illustrates a gateway element that arches over Vine Street. This sculptural element could include dynamic lighting elements, adding daily and seasonal variety to this main entry point into Downtown.



W GREEN STREET - LOOKING EAST

Green Street is an important east/west connector from Downtown Urbana to the University of Illinois campus. There is a significant change in character along Green Street between Race Street and Cedar Street, highlighting the difference between the Downtown district and the surrounding residential neighborhood. At the intersection of Green Street and Cedar Street, small columnar monuments - with the oak leaf etched into the stone - could be placed to demarcate that arrival point into Downtown.



N RACE STREET AT BONEYARD CREEK - LOOKING SOUTH

A strategic opportunity for gateway signage occurs where Boneyard Creek crosses under N Race Street. Existing limestone walls provide the foundation for the incorporation of the oak leaf and wayfinding signage. This strategy provides gateway signage for both the Downtown district as well as the Boneyard Creek trail system. This same opportunity also exists on Broadway Avenue.



INTERSECTION OF ILLINOIS STREET AND VINE STREET

It is important for the Market at the Square to have its own identifiable brand; a node within a district. Image D depicts the symbol of the rooster, currently used in the market's branding efforts. The oversized rooster could be an instagrammable moment for the market and become an icon for the greater community. Architectural wall segments around the periphery of the market also define it as a special place and could incorporate the rooster symbol as well.









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SECTION FOUR / SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

THE CURE FOR PLANNING FATIGUE IS ACTION

Over the years the City of Urbana has conducted multiple studies with findings and recommendations about downtown that have gone largely unfulfilled. While the intent of the current public realm study is to build off of all the previous work, it is also to make a difference by actively pursuing implementation.

The detailed review of previous planning documents shows that the challenges to downtown revitalization have not changed dramatically, but the willingness to move forward is present. From a Placemaking perspective, it is crucial that small steps be taken right away to make changes downtown. We've seen that downtown enjoys the benefits of a dedicated citizenry, of engaged business owners, and of various downtown stakeholders seeking to make a positive impact. Advisory committee and focus groups meetings have been well attended, with public workshops and online participation helping to complete the vision for the public realm downtown. This sustained and enthusiastic support demands a strategic response demonstrating that the City is listening and actively working for change. The exceptional measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the fabrication and installation of "curbanas," and the Rose Bowl Outdoor Stage activation, are all steps in the right direction.

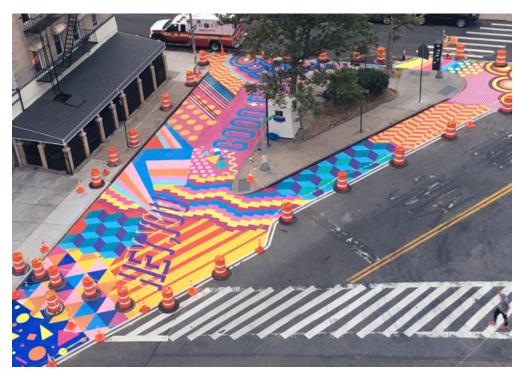
The Downtown Public Realm study seeks to provide a strong, people and place-oriented framework for improvements to the public realm, both in the short- and long-term. This framing will help stakeholders and residents better understand the strategic goals of the City's efforts, which may have been less clear with previous interventions.

This study recommends a two-pronged implementation approach that most importantly includes short-term, lower cost strategic improvements that will inform and help evaluate long-term plans.

Communities everywhere struggle to do more with less. People crave places of meaning and beauty, and it is important to find fast, creative, and efficient ways to capitalize on local ingenuity to turn public spaces into treasured community places. Many of the best, most authentic, and enduring destinations in a town — places that keep locals and visitors coming back again and again and that anchor quality, local jobs — were born out of a series of incremental, locally-based improvements. One by one, these interventions built places that were more than just the sum of their parts.

The time is right to rethink the way that planners do development in Urbana. Short-term, "lighter, quicker, cheaper" (LQC) interventions are key to the incremental yet transformative value of Placemaking. The LQC approach is based on taking immediate small steps, using low-cost experiments and tapping into local talents.

One of the greatest advantages of Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper is the ability to create and test ideas immediately.



ABOVE: LOC MURAL ACTIVATION THAT LED TO PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS BASED ON LESSONS LEARNED

LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER

These smaller-scale steps can be implemented in a variety of environments downtown, including on streets, sidewalks, parking lots, and even buildings. The goal is to use LQC projects to quickly translate the community's desire for a central gathering space into reality and keep momentum going for a permanent solution. In this way improvements can be implemented at modest costs, evaluated, then modified and evolved based upon the community's response. Although a lighter, quicker, cheaper approach is not for every situation, in downtown Urbana there is a clear opportunity to create a temporary, locally-powered community gathering space in preparation for and in consideration of long-term development plans.

The Short-Term Strategies section of this report illustrates four alternative locations for a lighter, quicker, cheaper, and temporary gathering space, and one proposal for creating a gateway at 'The Triangle' of W Main Street and Springfield Avenue. All of these short-term proposals aim to achieve the following:

- bring critical mass of activities as close to the heart of Main Street as possible, in order to enhance the energy of the Downtown core;
- transform an underused parking lot into an exciting laboratory that residents and stakeholders can start using right away and see evidence that change can happen;
- represent an "action planning process" that builds a shared understanding of a place and goes beyond the short-term changes that are made:
- leverage local partnerships to ensure the Urbana community has greater involvement, resulting in a more authentic place;
- pioneer and evolve a new, more efficient, less labor-intensive, simplified permitting and coordination process for City Departments to use with downtown events and activations;
- encourage an iterative approach and an opportunity to experiment, assess, and evolve a community's vision before launching into major construction and long term development;
- create local jobs and incubate local entrepreneurs;
- provide an efficient, creative, hyper-local way to leverage Urbana's assets;
- deploy a place-by-place strategy that, over time, can transform all of downtown.

There are four core principles to ensure the success of short-term/LQC interventions in Downtown Urbana:

• Location, location!

The main purpose of creating a temporary gathering space downtown is to bring people together and create a critical mass at the right location. The closer to the core of downtown the activation is, the better its chance to have a real impact.

• 80% of the success of any public space is in its management.

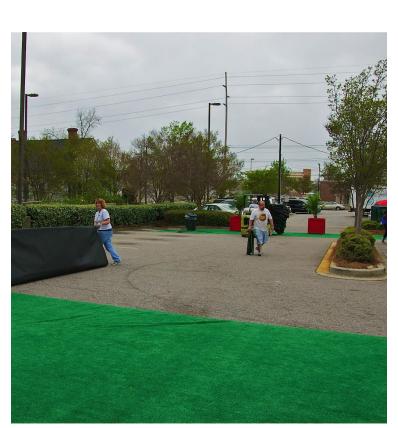
With a temporary gathering space programming will be key, and in particular ensuring a healthy mix of self-directed daily activity and high quality, exciting programs and events that take place according to a predictable schedule. Successful activation should focus on both daily uses and special events, with attention given to different age groups and seasonal diversity.

• Add high-quality amenities for enhanced comfort and image.

Temporary furniture can be both polished and creative. This is a great opportunity to continue partnering with local artists and fabricators, in addition to purchasing quality, attractive furniture. Using landscaping and seasonal plantings is a great opportunity to bring color, comfort, interest, and seasonal changes. In addition, it is a way to let the City's Public Works department truly shine with their outstanding landscaping work.

• Evaluate and improve constantly.

LQC improvements are intended to be an experiment, and it is paramount to observe closely, continuously evaluate ,and fine-tune the place. Don't be afraid to admit if something isn't working, and make changes!





ABOVE: PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES' OUTSIDE THE BOX PROGRAM WITH REDBOX, BROUGHT PROGRAMMING AND AMENITIES TO COMMUNITY LIBRARIES. PARKING LOTS WERE ACTIVATED WITH ARTIFICIAL TURF AND ACTIVITY TO TRANSFORM THE EMPTY SPACE INTO A PLACE FOR COMMUNITY GATHERING AND FUN.



Gathering Space



Painted Games



Temporary Games



Small Modular Stage



Lawn Games



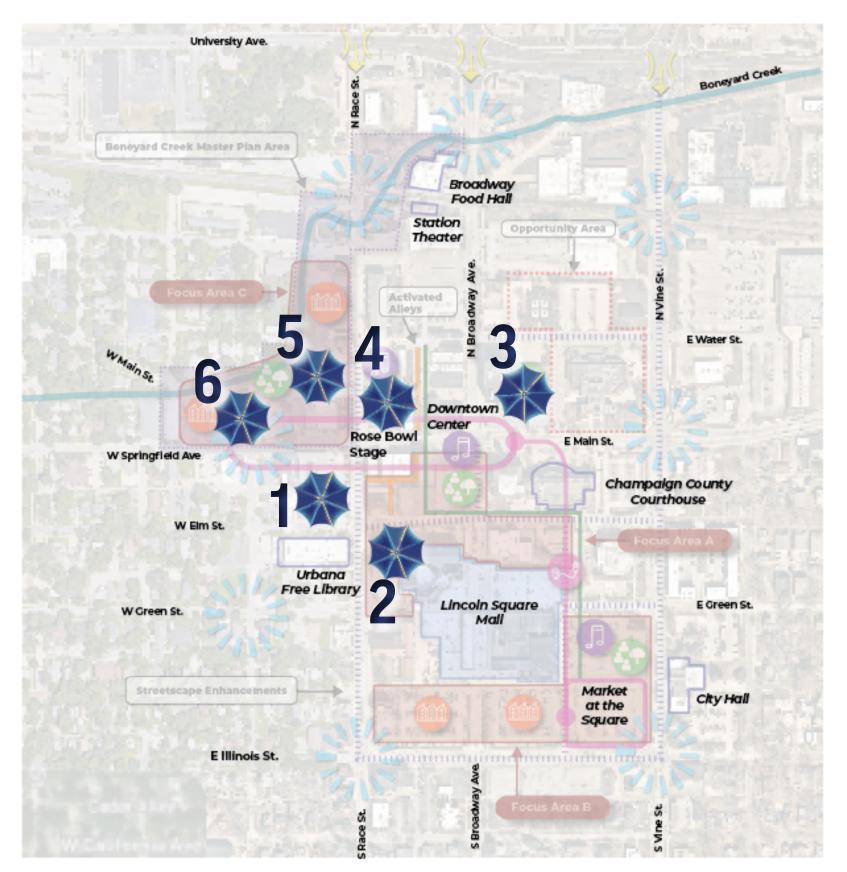
Temporary Green Space

53

RECOMMENDED TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACES



- OPPORTUNITY ONE:
 BUSEY BANK PARKING LOT
- 2 OPPORTUNITY TWO: HOTEL PARKING LOT
- **3** OPPORTUNITY THREE: COUNTY PLAZA PARKING LOT
- 4 OPPORTUNITY FOUR: ROSE BOWL STAGE
- **OPPORTUNITY FIVE:**OFF WEST MAIN
- 6 OPPORTUNITY SIX: TRIANGLE AT W. MAIN & SPRINGFIELD AVE



SECTION

FIGURE 4.1: RECOMMENDED TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACES OVERLAYED ON OVERALL PUBLIC REALM STRATEGIES MAP

TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE OPTION ONE:BUSEY BANK PARKING LOT

Option One proposes to create a temporary gathering space in the Busey Bank parking lot at the corner of Main Street and Race Street.

Location:

From a location perspective, this is the 100% corner of downtown Urbana, an ideal site for a community gathering place. The proximity of the Urbana Free Library and active businesses along both Main Street and Race Street make this a very attractive location. Clearly, the feasibility of this proposal depends on Busey Bank's interest and willingness to give up half of its parking lot for this temporary use. It is clear that Busey Bank has always been very community-minded and has welcomed events in its parking lot in the past. With that in mind, this proposal explores converting the north half of the parking lot into a gathering space, while keeping the south side as parking, including ADA, close to the front door.

Program and activities:

This transformation would focus on daily, self-guided activities, such as eating breakfast and lunch outdoors, as well as using lawn and painted games for entertainment and engagement. Programmed events would include small gatherings such as toss bag, foosball, chess games and tournaments, outdoor exercise like yoga or zumba, bike tours and rides, as well as potential activities spearheaded by the library like author readings, maker sessions, book club meetings, and other simple activities.

For larger programmed events — live music, outdoor movies, arts and crafts markets, and seasonal celebrations — the space would expand temporarily into the south side of the parking lot, locating the stage and support items on the days of these special events. This gathering place would not be large enough to accommodate the Farmers Market, and should be treated primarily as a community activated space.

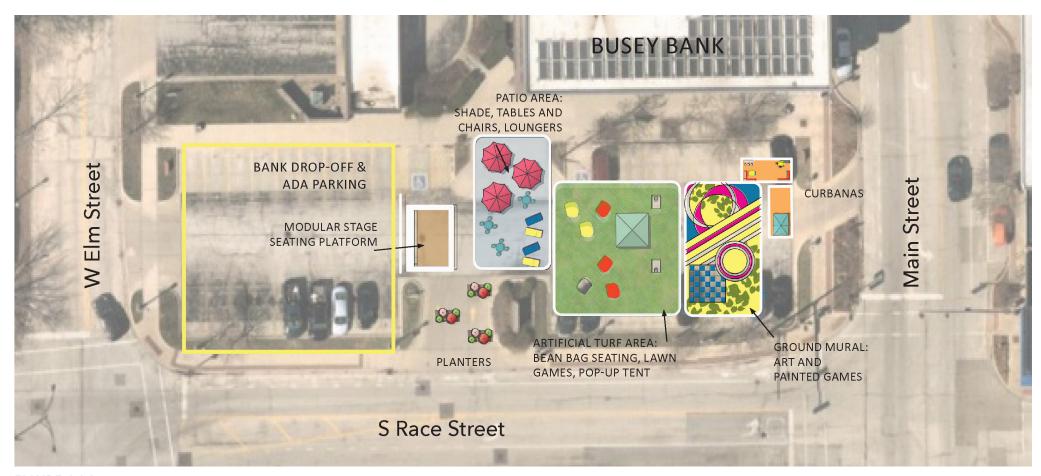


FIGURE 4.1 / TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE - OPTION ONE: BUSEY BANK PARKING LOT

Audiences:

Programs and daily activation should focus on the under-served groups that seek to engage with downtown - for example middle and high school students on weekday afternoons, graduate students in the evenings, families with children on weekends.

Amenities to support activities:

This LQC installation proposes to reuse the curbanas the City already owns, using them to create protected seating areas. In addition, a seating patio with movable tables, chairs, umbrellas for shade, and potentially loungers could create an inviting plaza near the Busy Bank building. The rest of the parking area should be transformed for activities with:

- a ground mural, that could include art, chess, hopscotch, and other painted elements;
- a small astro-turf area for informal seating, picnics, bean bags, hammocks, and other comfortable and creative amenities;
- part of the astro-turf could be used for lawn games like bag toss, lawn bowling, etc. with the games made available at the library next door;
- the turf can also be used as a seating area for small events, with or without a stage;
- a portable or modular stage can be used for events.



TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE OPTION TWO: HOTEL PARKING LOT

Option Two locates a temporary gathering space in the Hotel parking lot, near the intersection of Race Street and W Elm Street.

Location:

While this location is a block away from downtown's 100% corner, it is still a central location that would add critical mass to Main Street. The proximity of the Urbana Free Library directly across Race Street is a plus, and can help enhance the pedestrian connection to the Library. The feasibility of this proposal depends on the Hotel's needs, and could explore an exchange with the City. Specifically, an agreement with the City could allow the Hotel to use the parking garage for its guests. Such an activation would create an attractive public space at the Hotel's front door instead of a boring parking lot. ADA parking and drop off would still be available on the south side of the lot.

Program and activities:

Daily, self guided activities would be the foundation of this activation, similarly to Option One. The location closer to the library offers an opportunity for more library-related activities, either by library staff, or informally by library users. The space allows for larger programmed events, like live music, outdoor movies, arts and crafts markets, and seasonal celebrations to take place within the temporary space.

This gathering place may also be able to accommodate the Market at the Square if the entire parking lot is used; further study could assess that potential. It may be appropriate to experiment with specialty markets such as Flower and Plants Market, or Arts and Crafts first to evaluate functionality and feasibility.



FIGURE 4.2 / TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE - OPTION TWO: HOTEL PARKING LOT

Amenities to support activities:

This LQC installation proposes to reuse both the large and small curbanas the City already owns, locating them to create protected seating areas. The parking area should be transformed for activities by incorporating:

- a large chess or checkers board either painted on the ground or installed on a simple platform;
- two small astro-turf area for informal seating, picnics, bean bags, hammocks, and other comfortable and creative amenities;
- an astro-turf/or painted area to be used for lawn games like bag toss, giant jenga, connect 4, etc. with the games made available at the library (the turf could also be used as a seating area for small events, with or without a stage);
- · permanent outdoor ping pong and/or foosball tables;
- potential for a simple skateboard rail or portable ramp to attract teens;
- a portable or modular stage for events;
- a food truck dining area with picnic tables and umbrellas.
- As an experiment, this site also allows for an area permanently dedicated to engaging group games like mini-golf (lawn bowling or bocce/petanque could also be used instead) to provide lasting attraction.



ABOVE: TYPES OF TEMPORARY USES

TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE OPTION THREE: COUNTY PLAZA PARKING LOT

Option Three locates a temporary gathering space in the County Plaza parking lot, at the intersection of Main Street and Broadway Avenue.

Location:

This is a highly visible, central location that would add critical mass to Main Street, albeit a block away from its main corner. An important benefit of this location is that County Plaza and its parking lot is publicly owned, and the County will be moving employees back into the building in the next year. The feasibility of this proposal depends on the County's needs, but as an experiment this location could function well at least for a year, until renovations of the building are completed and all employees have moved into their downtown offices.

The scale of the space allows for the parking lot near the corner of Main Street and Broadway Avenue to be transformed into a gathering space, while the west side of the parking lot would only be used for special events requiring "expanded" activity space like concerts, movie nights, food truck rallies, and specialty markets. Outside of these events, parking on the west side will be available.

FOOD TRUCK AREA WITH PATIO, **COUNTY PLAZA** SHADE, PICNIC TABLES - REGULAR AND SPECIAL EVENTS PATIO AREA: MOVEABLE SHADE, TABLES AND STAGE CHAIRS, LOUNGERS **Broadway Ave GROUND MURAL** AREA USED PAINTED GAME **ONLY FOR** SPECIAL **EVENTS** SEATING AREA FOR SPECIAL EVENT GAMES FUSSBALL, ARTIFICIAL TURF AREA: PINGPONG BEAN BAG SEATING, CURBANAS LAWN GAMES PAINTED **CROSSWALKS** Main Street

FIGURE 4.3 / TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE - OPTION THREE: COUNTY PLAZA PARKING LOT

TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE OPTION FOUR:ROSE BOWL STAGE

Option Four locates a temporary gathering space in the parking lot next to the Rose Bowl Stage Area, at the intersection of Race and Water Streets.

Location:

This is a smaller space than the others proposed, and is one block away from Main Street. The location reduces visibility from the center of activity, but does have some advantages as well:

- The parking lot is City property and would not require negotiations with other entities or substantial parking swaps;
- There is great potential for synergies and seamless programmatic and physical connections with the Rose Bowl Stage, which is already a great success downtown.

The size of the lot would not allow for larger events, but modest events such as food truck rallies could use curbside parking and the open seating available in the space. This location is a good place to experiment with activities and simple amenities for families with children (such as an imagination playground, or kid-oriented programming) building specifically off the music and entertainment scene, and offering an appropriate space for young families and youth. While connections with the Library are not as direct here, opportunities should be explored for daily self-directed programming.

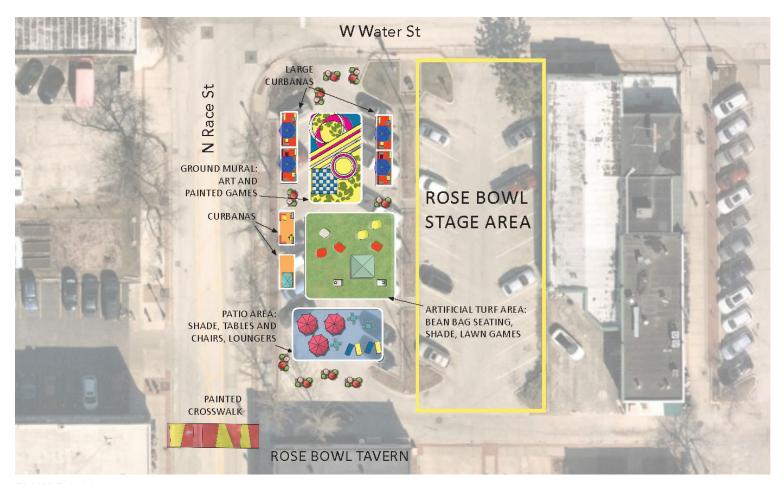


FIGURE 4.4 / TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE - OPTION FOUR: ROSE BOWL STAGE

TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE OPTION FIVE:OFF WEST MAIN STREET

Option Five locates a temporary gathering space in the parking lot off W Main Street next to 300 W Main Street.

Location:

This is a long narrow space with reduced visibility from the center of activity on Main Street. The site's advantages include:

- The parking lot is City property and would not require negotiations with other entities or substantial parking swaps;
- The site abuts Boneyard Creek and has been shown in multiple plans as a potential gateway to the area;
- The site can also provide a connection to the proposed triangle gateway at W Main and Springfield, creating in the long term a true sense of entry and departure for Downtown in the long term.

The size and shape of this space would not allow for all the larger events that could be accommodated at other locations, but there is strong potential to use it in conjunction with the triangle gateway. The potential for greening, gardening, and environmentally friendly features using the existing green space leading to the creek also adds some advantage. If this site were selected, special effort would have to be made to assure good visibility to expand the space's presence onto Main Street.

TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE OPTION SIX: TRIANGLE AT WEST MAIN STREET AND SPRINGFIELD AVENUE

A temporary gateway triangle at W Main Street and W Springfield Avenue could function as a proof of concept for a larger gathering space. Transportation and public works departments around the country have been creating such spaces in recent years, so there are many exciting examples to use for inspiration. This proposal would require redirecting Main Street westbound traffic onto Springfield Avenue, and potentially relocating eastbound turns through the Firestone building's parking lot. This area could use all the existing curbanas to create protection from traffic and should highlight the work of local artists with an exciting ground mural to delineate the space. The existing islands with mature trees can offer natural shade making for a pleasant seating area. The space would function as a gateway into downtown from the west, and as a gateway into the residential neighborhood from the east.

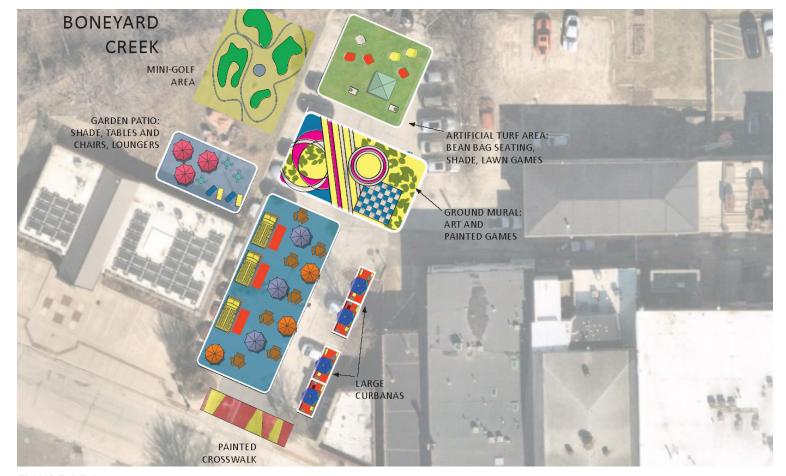


FIGURE 4.5 / TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE - OPTION FIVE: OFF WEST MAIN STREET



FIGURE 4.6 / TEMPORARY GATHERING SPACE - OPTION SIX: TRIANGLE AT WEST MAIN STREET AND SPRINGFIELD AVENUE

SECTION FIVE / IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Urbana Downtown Public Realm Study envisions a future for Urbana that emphasizes the best parts of the city - the alleys, the Market at the Square, music venues, and the artistic community - while reactivating spaces that need extra attention. However, with any large-scale changes to a cityscape, the coordination of people and resources to realize this vision will also require a certain amount of financial support as well. The individual pieces will harmonize into a cohesive orchestration of downtown life, but the components will occur in phases depending upon where energy and funds are channeled.

Many factors will determine the implementation order of the various strategies. This study serves as a guide for the City to follow in order to bring the community's collective vision for Downtown Urbana to fruition. Implementation will require strategies for four key factors:

- Consistency of leadership
- Funding
- Partnerships
- Phasing

LEADERSHIP

One of the biggest challenges for the successful implementation of a long-range study like this is maintaining support and momentum through the changes of leadership that could occur over the time needed to fully implement the vision. In gathering public support, political will, partnerships, and funding options, it is crucial that a designated staff member or City department consistently manages the process, monitors the various moving parts, coordinates with Downtown residents and businesses, and remains the long-term champion of the study to maintain forward momentum.

FUNDING

Traditional funding sources such as TIF and BID districts and CDBG grants are outlets the City should explore for funding the various elements presented in this plan. Public space improvements, roadway realignment projects, streetscape enhancements, and general maintenance of streetscape environs can all benefit from the funding provided by these strategies. However, more creative outlets will likely be necessary to acquire funds to implement this plan. For example, there are resources designated for active transportation-related projects that should be explored. Public/private partnerships would help ease the public financial burden of projects such as the options for the Downtown parking garage coupled with private development.

It is important to note that the infill development illustrated in the concept plans will be privately constructed, and the ultimate scale and type of those developments will depend greatly on economic and market forces. The City should consider partnering with developers when strategically advantageous for all parties involved.

PARTNERSHIPS

This study is for Downtown Urbana as a whole, and will take the cooperation and coordination of all interested businesses, property owners, community members, and other leaders within the City to become fully realized. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders such as business leaders, City Council members, and community leaders have been engaged and part of the discussions and concept-building. Partners include the Urbana Free Library, the Rose Bowl, the Urbana City Council, Champaign County, Cinema Gallery, University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign, Norden at Home, Urbana First United Methodist Church, Baldarotta's, H20 Salon, Cafe & Co, etc., Folk n Roots Festival, Applied Pavement Technology, Inc., and Cloud Mountain Kombucha. Discussions were also conducted with Busey Bank, Lincoln Square Mall, and Market on the Square.

The City of Urbana can collaborate with key property owners to develop partnership agreements. Options include:

- Long term leases
- Use of public easements
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Agreements on specific days/months/weeks set aside for regular or special uses and activities the partner needs
- Maintenance agreements
- Notification of closed streets, temporary parking measures, signage, etc. for special events

PHASING

It is likely that opportunities to act on each concept will not happen in a linear, orderly fashion, and the various strategies of this project will not occur simultaneously. In the following section, each concept is broken down into its component parts with a rough cost estimate of each in order to gauge the feasibility of individual pieces. Each of these parts can be constructed separately, making it possible for an overall transformation to occur gradually as different resources are gathered.

This study can be used as a marketing tool to encourage outside funding of the proposed concepts. The City can also identify parts of each concept which require public funds, and develop a funding strategy for those through the existing budgeting process, or other means. **IMPLEMENTATION SECTION**

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

FOCUS AREA A: DOWNTOWN CORE

There are three concepts outlined for Focus Area A — the blocks just north of Lincoln Square Mall — including Elm Street, Race Street, Broadway Avenue, the existing parking structure, and Crane and Fish Alleys. These concepts center around the parking garage at Broadway Avenue and Elm Street, examining the possibilities and explore the following considerations:

- The garage remaining
- The removal of half of it
- Its entire demolition.

In all three concepts, there would be new pedestrian access, plaza space, and new street furniture with varying degrees of activation opportunities. With the complete removal of the garage, there would be space for a new outdoor performance and event venue.

FISH & CRANE ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS

- Alleyway improvements
- Landscaping/Lighting
- Seating

BROADWAY PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

- Pedestrianized street
- New sidewalks

- Streetscape/Lighting/Landscaping

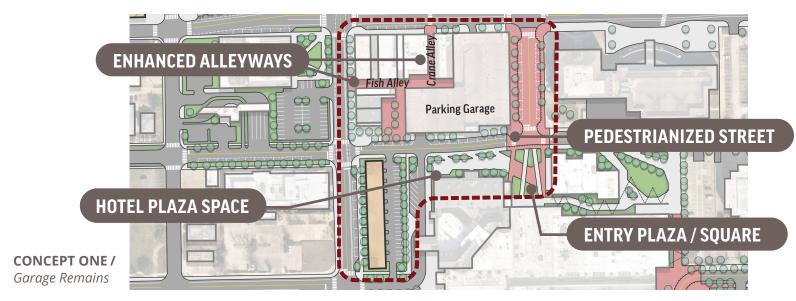
CIVIC SQUARE

- Alleyway improvements
- Flexible plaza space w/seating

HYBRID/CENTRAL PLAZA

- Partial parking garage removal
- Landscaping/Lighting
- Shade structures

- Alleyway improvements
- Entire parking garage removal
- Stage/Performance Area
- Civic square w/seating and signage
- Landscaping/Lighting







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Civic Square and

IMPLEMENTATION

SECTION

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

FOCUS AREA B: **SOUTH LINCOLN SQUARE**

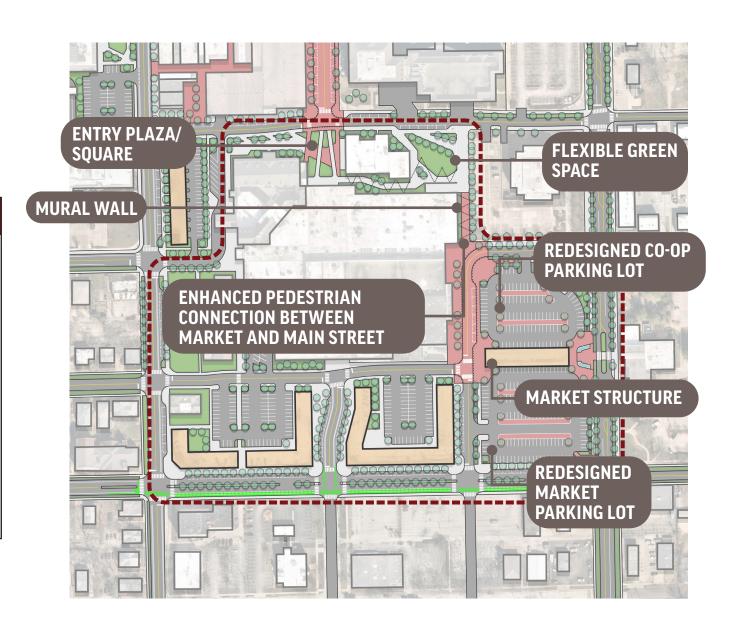
Focus Area B concentrates on the parking lots surrounding the south and east sides of Lincoln Square Mall, imagining the addition of multi-family housing, a community green space, and a permanent space for the Market in place of the underutilized surface parking lots.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER IMPROVEMENTS

- Demolition
- IMC Plaza improvements (paving, seating, etc.)
- IMC flexible green space
- Landscaping
- Lighting
- Murals

MARKET/PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

- Demolition
- Market shed structure w/ability to enclose
- Pedestrian street in front of Common Ground
- Redesigned market parking lot
- New sidewalks and streetscapes
- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Iconic sculpture and signage



IMPLEMENTATION

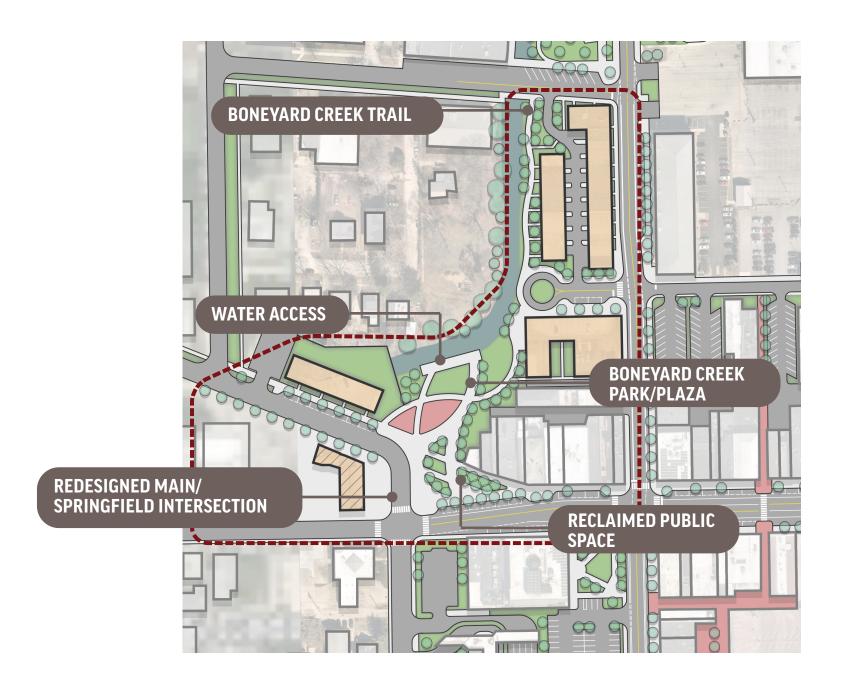
IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

FOCUS AREA C: THE TRIANGLE

The intersection of W Main Street and W Springfield Avenue, known as 'The Triangle', along with its proximity to Boneyard Creek, offers an opportunity for spatial reconfiguration and the potential development of a terraced landscape and an outdoor patio dining space on a new plaza.

THE TRIANGLE

- Realigned intersection of Main and Springfield
- New sidewalks and streetscape
- Reclaimed public space (outdoor patio dining space)
- Boneyard Creek Improvements (seating, activation, etc.)
- Landscaping/Lighting



FUNDING SOURCES - FOCUS AREAS

AREA	CONCEPT		EST. COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	PARTICIPANTS	
FOCUS AREA A	1	FISH AND CRANE ALLEY IMPROVEMENTS	\$500,000-600,000		City and Public/Private Partnerships	
	2	BROADWAY AVENUE PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS	\$1,500,000-2,000,000		City, MTD*, County	
	3	HYBRID/CENTRAL PLAZA	\$3,000,000-3,500,000	AARP**	City, MTD*, Public/Private Partnerships	
	4	CIVIC SQUARE	\$5,500,000-6,500,000	AARP**	City, MTD*, Public/Private Partnerships	
FOCUS AREA B	1	IMC*** IMPROVEMENTS	\$1,800,000-2,200,000		City, IMC***, Lincoln Square Mall	
	2	MARKET/PARKING IMPROVEMENTS	\$8,800,000-9,400,000		City, Market at the Square, Lincoln Square Mall	
FOCUS AREA C	THE TRIANGLE		\$4,000,000-4,500,000	AARP**	City, Public/Private Partnerships, Property Owners	

^{*}Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District

STREETSCAPE RECOMMENDATIONS

A dense and walkable urban environment in Downtown Urbana is possible with changes such as widening sidewalks, reducing turn lane radii at intersections, and improving the pedestrian realm with street furniture, lighting, and trees. This study proposes a series of street modifications to reallocate lanes or redesign streets to balance the needs of automobile traffic with pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Prior to moving forward with any major street/streetscape improvements, a comprehensive streetscape master plan should be developed. Many of the streets currently consist of attractive streetscape elements. However, some landscaping and seating could be added or replaced.

Additionally, the Public Realm Study recommends widening sidewalks in some locations to allow more space for pedestrian activation of storefronts in the form of café seating and expanded walking space. The costs associated with such improvements vary widely based on the extent of above grade improvements, as well as any resultant underground utility or storm sewer modifications.

Until such evaluation and conceptual study is completed, it is difficult to determine an order of magnitude cost. However, historic cost data indicates basic streetscape improvements such as added landscaping and street furnishings can range from \$300,000 to \$500,00 per city block (based on the approximate length of blocks in Downtown Urbana).

When projects incur sidewalk and curb improvements, street lighting, and other improvements, the costs vary widely and can range from \$1,000,000 to \$1,5000,000 depending upon unknown underground improvements and other street repairs that may be incurred.

^{**}American Association of Retired Persons

^{***}Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center

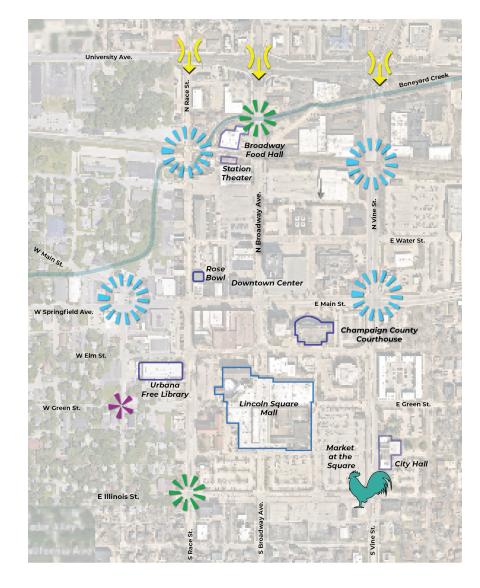
FUNDING SOURCES - IDENTITY & WAYFINDING

Physical markers such as gateways, columns, and public art can emphasize a cohesive downtown identity for Urbana. On the periphery of the Downtown core, there is opportunity for identity and wayfinding elements that will indicate an arrival into the central node of the city. These would build upon the wayfinding opportunities outlined in the 2012 Wayfinding & Signage Plan.

These features can vary significantly in design style, scale, and materials. Similarly, costs will vary, depending upon the ultimate design for the locations identified in the plan. While each location can be designed with unique features to fit the context, there should be a level of consistency throughout to reinforce the image and identity of Downtown.

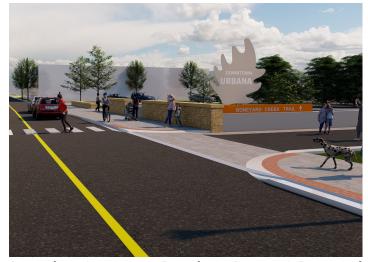
LEGEN	LEGEND						
The state of the s	Primary Gateway						
兴	Secondary Gateway						
*	Small/Neighborhood Gateway						
	Signature Market Sculpture						
)†(Identification/Wayfinding						

ELEMENT		EST. COST	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	PARTICIPANTS
PRIMARY GATEWAY		\$350,000-500,000		City, Public/Private Partnership, Artistic Collaboration
SECONDARY GATEWAY	兴	\$125,000-150,000		City, Public Works
SMALL/NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAY	*	\$15,000-20,000 each		City, Public Works
SIGNATURE MARKET SCULPTURE		\$350,000-500,000		City, Artist, Market at the Square
IDENTIFICATION/ WAYFINDING SIGNS)1(City, Public Works, Local Organizations





Primary Gateway



Secondary Gateway at Broadway Avenue & Boneyard Creek



Small/Neighborhood Gateway



Signature Market Sculpture

LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER **DECISION MATRIX**

In order to guide the City of Urbana's decision-making, we've developed the following evaluation matrix weighing each of the potential sites where a temporary, low-cost, high-impact public gathering place could be created with some modest investments in amenities and site repair. The matrix takes into account a number of factors including site size, location, edge uses, linkages to other destinations, ownership, potential for converting into a long-term capital improvement, and so on.

The matrix is color coded with a numeric rating ranging from 4 (green) - excellent engages residents and visitors, supports the businesses in the commercial opportunity to 1 (dark yellow) - poor opportunity. This rating system generates a score to guide the city's choice, but other factors are also listed in the matrix that are not included in the scoring section of the matrix but should be taken into account.

This matrix will assist the City with selecting the site, or sites, for "lighter, quicker, cheaper" improvements to create an experimental public gathering space that

core, and strengthens the linkages between Main Street and the Market at the Square in the Lincoln Square Mall parking lot. It is recommended that one site be selected for a public gathering space and most investments be made in that site to get the biggest "bang for your buck," while additional locations could be considered for larger, spill-over events, or special weekend uses.

SITE	SITE SIZE (SQ. FT.)	LOCATION	EDGE USES	LINKAGES TO OTHER DESTINATIONS (EXISTING & PROPOSED)	POTENTIAL FOR LONG-TERM CONVERSION	GATEWAY	SITE OWNERSHIP
BUSEY BANK PARKING LOT	10,000	At 100% corner	Street & Bank. Active uses across Main Street and Race Street.	Excellent connectivity, could become central hub	Moderate, will involve purchase, land swap or POPS* arrangement with bank.	Major gateway to Downtown	Busey Bank
HOTEL ROYER PARKING LOT	18,500	One block off Main Street, limited visibility	Streets & Hotel. Parking garage & alley across Elm Street. UFL** across Race Street.	Moderate connectivity	Moderate, will involve purchase, land swap or POPS* arrangement with Hotel.	No	Hotel Royer
LOT NEXT TO ROSE BOWL STAGE	7,200	One short block off Main Street	Street, Alley & Rose Bowl Stage.	Moderate connectivity	High	Gateway to entertainment	City of Urbana
COUNTY PLAZA PARKING LOT	22,000	On Main Street - Main Street & Broadway Avenue	Streets & County Plaza. Courthouse across Main Street.	Good connectivity, could re-center hub & connect better to the Mall	Low, County will probably keep ownership	Gateway to commercial core	Champaign County
OFF WEST MAIN PARKING LOT	11,000	W Main Street, limited visibility		Limited connectivity, mostly to future improvements to Boneyard Creek	High, desirable with potential improvements to Boneyard Creek	No	City of Urbana
WEST MAIN STREET TRIANGLE	6,000	W Main Street & Springfield Avenue	W Main Street & Springfield Avenue	Good connectivity	High	Major gateway to Downtown	City of Urbana/ State DOT?
URBANA FREE LIBRARY GARDEN LOT	10,000	Two blocks off Main Street, @ Race Street & Green Street, limited visibility	UFL, Race Street	Moderate connectivity, could capitalize on street infrastructure and connection to Campus, but visibility from Main Street is limited.	High	Major gateway to Green Street and to Campus	UFL**/ City of Urbana



* Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces

**Urbana Free Library

LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER (CONT.)

SITE	REQUIRES PARKING SWAP FROM CITY	SCORE	SITE ACCESS	IMMEDIATE PROGRAMMING PARTNERS	SITE PREP NEEDED	COMMENTS (FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND OTHERS)
BUSEY BANK PARKING LOT	Possibly	20	Good if Bank interested		Minimal	Space could expand for larger events to around 18,000 sq ft including both sides of the existing parking lot along Race Street. Available for special events outside of business hours.
HOTEL ROYER PARKING LOT	Yes	10	Good if Hotel Royer interested	UFL	Minimal	
LOT NEXT TO ROSE BOWL STAGE	No	23	Good	Rose Bowl	Minimal	Possibility for overflow with Matt Cho's space across the street.
COUNTY PLAZA PARKING LOT	Possibly	17	Conflict with building renovation schedule	County?	Minimal	Space may become available for use after building renovation is complete in late summer 2024.
OFF WEST MAIN PARKING LOT	No	18	Good		Minimal & moderate for dirt areas	Space could expand into grass area leading to the creek to about 15,000 sq ft. Ownership of grassy area?
WEST MAIN TRIANGLE	No				Minimal	
URBANA FREE LIBRARY GARDEN LOT	No	24		UFL	Moderate for grass lot, bike rack area will need to be redesigned as well.	Good size space with potential to expand for larger event to 17,000 sq ft by taking over the rest of the parking on the east side of the driveway.

* Privately Owned Publicly-Accessible Spaces

**Urbana Free Library



LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER AMENITY SAMPLE BUDGETS

The following spreadsheet is broken down into three levels of activation to guide budgeting. The same amenities are priced for each level with differing quantities. These sample budgets used lower-priced amenities to kick-off a Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper activation. Descriptions and links for each piece, as well as more permanent higher-end options, are available to view and utilize in the airtable link found at the bottom of this page. You can also use these pieces for inspiration to fabricate locally. This activation is a partnership-building opportunity to engage local creators, artists, and the university. They can paint cornhole games and picnic tables, build stage modules, and craft custom signage. Making the project a community effort will build local buy-in and foster stewardship.

ITEM	PRICE (PER UNIT)	QUANTITIES FOR SMALL LQC SITE	SMALL TOTAL	QUANTITIES FOR MEDIUM LQC SITE	MEDIUM TOTAL	QUANTITIES FOR LARGE LQC SITE	LARGE TOTAL
SHADE	\$590	3	\$1,770	3	\$1,770	9	\$5,310
BISTRO SET (TABLE+2 CHAIRS)	\$119	8	\$952	8	\$952	12	\$1,428
LOUNGERS	\$595	4	\$2,380	4	\$2,380	4	\$2,380
INFLATABLE LOUNGER (BEANBAG-ESQUE)	\$89		\$0.00	5	\$445	6	\$534
ARTIFICIAL TURF (12'X18' ROLL)	\$496		\$0.00	1	\$496	2	\$992
GROUND PAINT (PER SQ FT)	\$3.50	2,000	\$7,000	3,000	\$10,500	6000	\$21,000
LAWN GAMES	\$100.00		\$0.00	4	\$400	8	\$800
PICNIC TABLES	\$515.00		\$0.00		\$0.00	13	\$6,695
MOVABLE STAGE	\$10,324		\$0.00	1	\$10,324	1	\$10,324
PLANTERS	\$116	6	\$696	4	\$464	9	\$1,044
POP UP TENT	\$200		\$0.00	1	\$200	1	\$200
MARKET LIGHTS	\$30	1	\$30	1	\$30	2	\$60
TOTAL			\$12,828		\$27,961		\$50,767

https://airtable.com/shrMMYY3yGSpEN8wi/tblgRx0SyUltxbvrt

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

During the initial visit to Urbana, as well as follow up interviews and focus groups over zoom, the planning team spoke with more than 45 community members and stakeholders to gain an inside perspective on Downtown Urbana as a place for business, culture, entertainment, and engagement. The community is the expert, and these discussions allowed direct feedback from people that know their specialty areas best, and that may not be able to get into the necessary detail in a larger, more diverse meeting. These interviews included the following focus groups:

- Downtown Business Focus Group
- City Focus Group
- Property Owners Focus Group
- County/District Focus Group
- Three Arts and Events Focus Groups

DISCUSSION FINDINGS

CHALLENGES

Outward facing

- Downtown needs to re-assert its identity and define itself
- Was known for art and live music venues, but venues have dwindled
- It is not attractive to a younger, more diverse audience, students, young professionals, young families with kids, people of color
- The Market doesn't have the impact on Downtown it should have
- Difficult to know operating hours of shops

Internal

- Lack of organized relationship between Downtown merchants and city
- Municipal rules and regulations are seen as cumbersome and impeding creativity and new ideas
- Municipal staff feels overwhelmed by the work of organizing/regulating/ running events
- The University is separate, siloed, and does not connect to Downtown physically nor programmatically

Built environment

- Too much surface parking owned by the City
- Lack of housing
- Lack of a Downtown gathering space outdoors and indoors
- Poor or insufficient connections to Boneyard Creek and other parks

OPPORTUNITIES

- Capitalize on what is already Downtown
- Capitalize on public ownership of parking lots to create a Downtown gathering space
- Fresh wave of new bar owners bring innovation to bar and music scene
- Lunch/daytime food and beverage options can get better with city, county, and student audiences
- Identify and market an identity for Urbana (potentially around arts, live music, creativity, and a Downtown incubator for small businesses to start and experiment in a bureaucracy-free zone)
- Reconnect with and recruit Downtown businesses that support the new identity
- Capitalize on low barrier to entry business opportunities for experimentation
- Develop a stronger connection with the University, including:
 - Physical gateways into Downtown; Green Street; transit
 - Programmatic authentic events, food, coffee shops
- Develop a strategy to capitalize on the popular Market on the Square, including:
 - Consider relocation
 - Improvements of current location
 - Linkages to Main Street and Coordination with Main Street businesses to ensure they are open during Market hours
 - LQC: Consider a pilot program with temporary staff (i.e. students) that focuses on programming on Main Street that connects to the Market on Saturdays (i.e. Detroit chalk festival, immersive street performances leading people to Main Street, treasure hunts, etc.)
- Do not lose momentum on arts and events
- Consider a carefully selected program of events, potential to focus on regular events
- Improve fantastic existing arts program and arts with DEI for the city, and better educate public works on the arts program
- Create and simplify clear guidance and process for permitting

BENEFITS OF GREAT PLACES

A downtown public realm with great places makes good business sense when they are creatively used and managed. A vibrant plaza or an active, pedestrian-friendly Main Street contribute directly to customer satisfaction and ultimately enhance the experience of downtown.

A successful public space can help reduce downtown vacancy rates. Collaborating with tenants and community partners around programming and management of downtown spaces helps build trust and strong ties with potential funders, merchants and stakeholders. Eventually it can help to offset operational costs.

Successful, active public spaces have been shown to increase the property value of surrounding buildings, and can have substantial long-term effects. Thus investment in creating and managing such an attractive downtown destination is also an investment in preserving and enhancing the value of downtown long into the future.

BENEFITS OF GREAT PLACES



EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

As part of the initial inventory and analysis portion of the planning process, members of the planning team conducted a conditions assessment for Downtown Urbana. Walking all of the corridors and spaces within the Downtown Study Boundary, data points were collected via paper survey and Survey 123, a platform developed by ArcGIS, based on a number of different environmental and physical conditions. The conditions and presence of the following elements were included in the analysis:

- Landscape
- Sidewalks
- Lighting Fixtures
- Public Seating
- Overall Cleanliness

For each of these categories, a rating of good, average, or bad was assigned to locations throughout the Downtown study area.

Figure 2.4 displays the compiled results of all the environmental and physical conditions analysis. The darker the blues, the better the compiled scores for those areas. Main Street, west of Vine Street, received the highest concentration of good ratings while Broadway Avenue, Race Street between Main Street and Green Street and the residential side streets to the west also rated high. This analysis directly correlates with the input received from the public engagement interactive mapping activity, where most of the positive comments were concentrated in these same areas.

Notably, Broadway Avenue (north of Main Street), while generally rating high, is slightly more average due to the abundance of surface parking lots along the corridor. The street is well designed and contains all of the elements associated with an urban streetscape, including on-street parking, bike lanes, landscaping, lighting, and seating, but because of the inconsistencies of density and building form adjacent to the street corridor, it lacks a general sense of place and lacks the benefits that street-oriented development offers including activity, shade and intrigue.

	Good	Average	Bad
Landscape	 Great variety of plants Well maintained Add to the overall street comfort level	 Good selection of landscape elements Need further development and maintenance 	Small in sizeUnmaintained plantings
Sidewalks	Well maintainedWideInclude design added downtown streetscape design elements	Acceptable conditionShow signs of wearDon't encourage pedestrians due to their condition	 Poorly maintained Lacked definition from the adjacent street
Lighting Fixtures	Good selection of lighting fixtures presentOffers a greater sense of safety	Some light poles present but not enough to provide enough light	Streets with sparsely placed lightingAlmost no illuminationDiscourages walking at night
Public Seating	Streets with a good amount and variety of seating options to accommodate all kinds of pedestrians	Streets with some seating but placed far apart from each other	Streets with few seating options for pedestrians
Overall Cleanliness	Streets with no litter or offensive smells	Streets with moderate amounts of litter or offensive smells	Streets with areas of litter or offensive smells such as sewers or waste



GENERAL POOR CONDITION

OVERALL GOOD CONDITION

FIGURE 2.4 / OVERALL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT EXHIBIT



ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

WALKING GROUP BIG IDEAS

THE TRIANGLE

- Become a food truck space
- Address missing sections of sidewalk
- Improve connection/gateway to Boneyard Creek
- Improve vacant storefronts and utilize empty lots
- Slow down traffic
- Become two-way gateway downtown and neighborhood connection to campus

ALLEYS

- Add floor and wall murals
- Add better and more consistent lighting
- Create communal trash service at better locations
- Add signage and wayfinding
- Promote connections, especially to the Hotel
- Use as an area for food trucks

CONNECTION BETWEEN MARKET ON THE SQUARE AND DOWNTOWN

- Add wayfinding/visibility to promote this easy, short route
- Paint a walkway and murals to make this feel less like a "glorified wide alleyway" through the backs of buildings
- Clean up "visual junk"
- Add lighting along on the 'yoga walk' connection to the parking lot
- Use music, food, and other vendors along the route after Market hours to connect the spaces
- Use parking lots as temporary activation spaces

BONEYARD CREEK TRAIL

- Add a flexible storage space
- Host more events
- Add welcoming entrances
- Improve access from Broadway Food Hall
- Create walking path to Campus and Leal Park
- Create an established Founder's Park
- Add a pedestrian bridge over the Creek near Patterson Park



1. THE ROSE BOWL

- We love the parking lot outdoor music venue during the summer that is inclusive and family-friendly.
- Great gathering space that feels aligned to community with so many different events
- Love the events, the parking lot tent, and the people!
- The Rose Bowl has done more to invigorate downtown Urbana than anything else.
- Rose Bowl is a huge asset to Urbana.

2. THE LIBRARY

- The library is an incredible community resource and, from a purely aesthetic standpoint, stunning.
- The library is the jewel of downtown.
- My family loves the library, and we can always find bike parking!



3. THE MALL

- I love Lincoln Square! It is the heart of downtown Urbana.
- This whole mall is fantastic.
- I love Lincoln Square Mall! It's such a cozy space for creatives on campus.

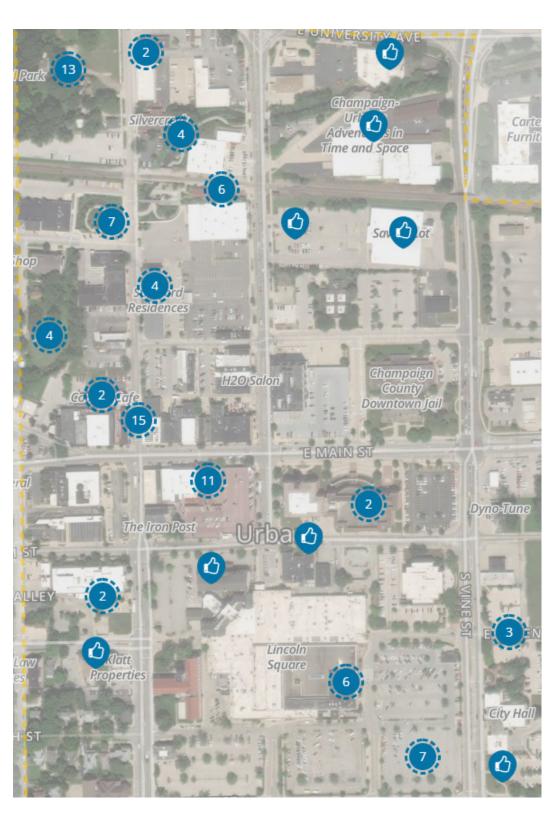
4. THE MARKET AT THE SQUARE

- The Urbana Market at the Square brings in people from everywhere/nurture it.
- Great farmer's market!
- Market at the Square is a favorite!



1. GREEN SPACE

- More green space!
- Having more trees and plants will help with the air quality and the heat. The emotional health of the citizens will also be helped because they will have a relaxing outlet.
- Green space allows visitors and residents to be involved with the environment and be a part of a healthy, greener, eco-friendly community. This can also increase the biodiversity, wildlife, and plants.
- There should be more parks like these. They are environmentally friendly and an efficient use of space. They attract more people and would be great for the city.
- More green infrastructure and native vegetation is great.
- Green spaces and open walking spaces like this is attractive and draws in people and families.



2. OUTDOOR GATHERING SPACE

- More outdoor patio spaces for people to be able to sit outside like at the Rose Bowl.
- It would be nice to see more alleys/outdoor seating areas with string lights above.
- The covered outdoor dining space at the food co-op is great.

3. RESTAURANTS

- We need a new Crane Alley type gastropub.
- More cafes, restaurants or shops to make downtown more lively.
- More restaurants in the Broadway Food Hall!

4. RESIDENCES

- Having residences like these are a good idea to attract more young people looking for places to stay.
- It's great that they have these residences to help promote the welfare of locals.

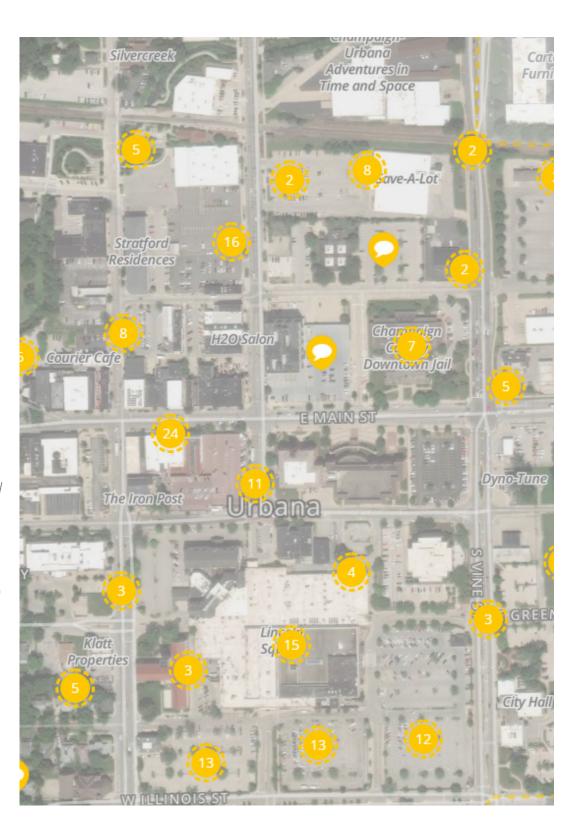


1. GREEN SPACE

- Mostly I would like to see greater green space. And trees!
- Let's put in a park with space to play, relax, and appreciate the peace of downtown Urbana!
- Downtown needs green space! Create a nice park in some of these expansive parking lots that aren't filled.
- Accessible green space could be turned into the Market space on Saturday's and used as a public park throughout the rest of the week. More trees and impervious surface would also be beneficial for Market Saturdays, to provide more shade and relief from the heat.

2. OUTDOOR EVENT SPACE

- I think these parking lots have a lot of potential as outdoor space for bars and restaurants.
- Better dining options and outdoor seating on Main Street.
- Removing the parking lots and making a permanent outdoor seating area with greenery



- Food truck plaza with plants, tables and chairs and space for food trucks and vendors.
- Have open streets for live music, restaurants to have the ability to sprawl in the street.

3. HOUSING

- I think that welcoming more housing near downtown would be great for our businesses and desirable to potential renters!
- A great place for some affordable housing!

4. PEDESTRIAN/BIKE ACCESSIBILITY

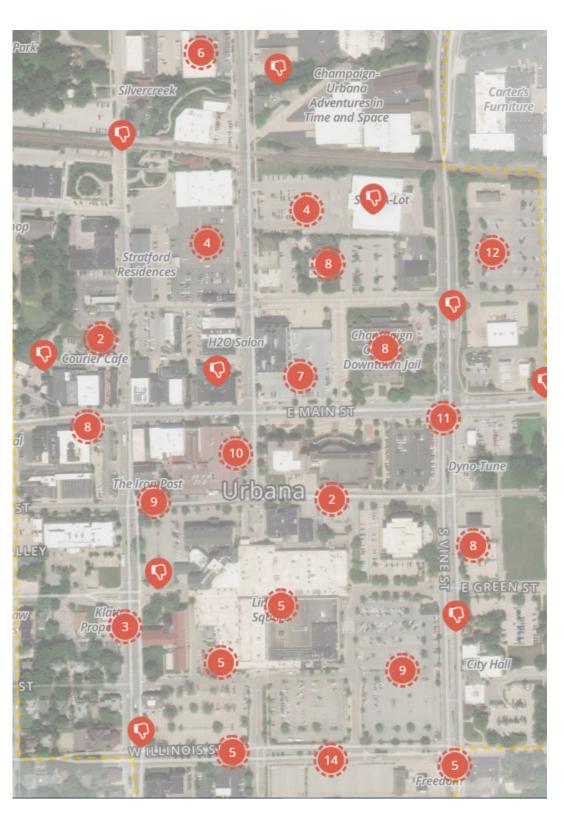
- Would love to see fewer car lanes and more protected bike lanes.
- Creating a dedicated bike/walking path that is separate from roads would be amazing for the community.
- A road diet with safe crossings from the east side of Main Street to Lincoln Square are very badly needed.

URBANA DOWNTOWN PUBLIC REALM STUDY



PEDESTRIAN/ BIKE REALM

- Pedestrian crossing at Vine Street anywhere between Main Street and California Avenue is often confusing and dangerous.
- Part of the problem of Downtown Urbana is it's catering to cars, not to people. There is no reason the have all four sides of downtown bound by four roads five or six lanes wide.
- It would be so much nicer to just have the roads for bikes and people, not cars.
- Putting pedestrians first is crucial to revitalizing the connection between downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. People want to go downtown and not have to think about being hit by cars.
- People want to walk in their communities, not dodge cars to survive it.
- The intersection of Illinois Street and Vine Street is treacherous for pedestrians.
- If we really want downtown to thrive, we have to treat it like a place to BE, not a place to drive THROUGH.



- This parking garage is little-used and sucks a bit of the soul out of downtown.
- The city needs fewer parking lots.
- Imagine the space and parks and restaurants that could be here instead of parking lots!
- The amount of parking in downtown
 Urbana is absurd. Get rid of it!
- Converting one of these parking lots to grass with pockets of native vegetation would increase the quality of life for many people in the area and can act as a community gathering place or a place to recreate.
- It's really a shame that the north side
 of Downtown Urbana seems to be 75%
 parking lots, it feels isolating/desolate and
 really no reason to venture over here.
- All of these parking lots take up an enormous amount of space that could be used for just about anything else. Parking is good for now but Ideally Urbana becomes a beacon of anti-car urban design.

SURVEY RESPONSES

What do you like best about Downtown Urbana?

restaurants

music place nice

people town

go

town

area really city favorite close

available around

your community

around

space feel time

variety

just campus

street

stores

buildings

different

stores

makes

What are the top three reasons you come to Downtown Urbana?



MUSIC



RESTAURANTS



SHOPPING

SURVEY RESPONSES

If you could change one thing about Downtown Urbana, what would it be?

streets think walk rid look lots square outside feel mall environment near add big restaurants city area areas people empty cars something bus wish better town thing nice spaces around believe places little

What is missing that would bring you to Downtown Urbana more often?

OUTDOOR GREEN GATHERING SPACE

AFTER WORK/EVENING ACTIVITIES

CONCERTS & PERFORMANCES

RETAIL

FAMILY-ORIENTED ENTERTAINMENT

HOUSING OPTIONS

VISUAL PREFERENCING SURVEY

SIDEWALKS AND ALLEYS



Board 1 Sidewalks and Alleyways

Downtown Public Realm Study

CONFLUENCE Project for Public Spaces

Project
FLUENCE for Public



Voters preferred images with vibrant areas full of people and activity. Favored images included interesting street-level stimulus on sidewalks such as street furniture, welcoming store facades, flowers, native plants, and mature trees. The most popular scenes also featured ample outdoor seating on sidewalks and in plazas, and creative lighting such as string lights overhead.

This was the most popular image across all the categories

Creative lighting

Note the lack of cars, the prioritization of the pedestrian

Outdoor dining and seating options

Plenty of activity and people

SIGNAGE & GATEWAYS



Board 2 Signage and Gateways

Downtown Public Realm Study

URBANA CONFL

CONFLUENCE For Public Spaces







The most-voted images contained classic signage that was well-lit and against a backdrop of mature trees and green space. Voters avoided large boulevards containing only cars and not people, and bright modern lighting.



URBANA DOWNTOWN PUBLIC REALM STUDY

Board 3

COMMUNITY PARKS AND GATHERING SPACES





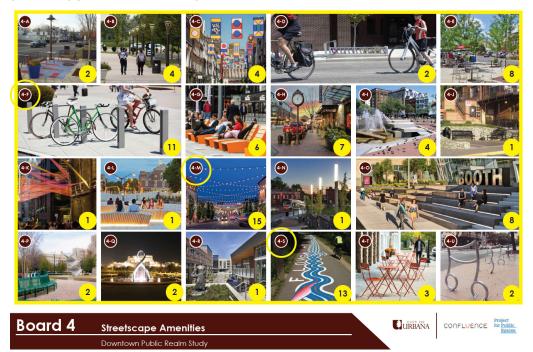
Community Parks / Gathering Spaces





Voters selected images containing vibrant public spaces such as plazas with food trucks, outdoor stages, and flexible green space. They tended to avoid images with bare open areas, especially large civic areas that are underutilized.

STREETSCAPE AMENITIES









Preferred images depicted protected bicycle infrastructure and pedestrian space with street furniture, trees, and outdoor seating options.

GARAGE ENHANCEMENTS

STREET REDESIGN AND ENHANCEMENT









The images with the most votes contained well-protected bicycle lanes and pedestrian walkways that are demarcated from the automobile spaces with bright paint, native plants, grade changes, and bollards.



Board 6 Garage Enhancements

Downtown Public Realm Study

Voters preferred parking garages that were disguised with plants and brightly-colored murals rather than large concrete structures or garages with modern lighting.

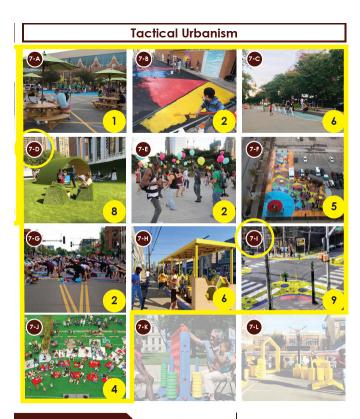




APPENDIX

SECTION 6

TACTICAL URBANISM



banism Tactical Urbanism

CONFLUENCE Froject for Public Spaces

The most eye-catching features of the tactical urbanism images contained colorful paint, creative uses of sidewalks and streets, mature trees, and greenery.







On the website, visitors had the opportunity to allocate imaginary funds to different projects. The prompt was to divide up \$100,000 among various initiatives to benefit the public realm:

- 1) Develop a Downtown Civic Green Space
- 2) Improve Boneyard Creek
- 3) Improve connectivity from the current Market at the Square location to Downtown Urbana (Main Street and Race Street)
- 4) Improve the area around the former civic center
- 5) Build a permanent structure for the Market at the Square
- 6) Add more pedestrian-oriented enhancements
- 7) Provide more gateway markers / signage / branding for Downtown Urbana

The results of the survey are as follows, in order of most to least funds allocated in the imaginary scenario:



, 1

Add more pedestrian-oriented enhancements



2

Develop a Downtown Civic Green Space



3

Improve connectivity from the current Market at the Square location to Downtown Urbana (Main Street and Race Street)



4

Improve the area around the former civic center



5

Improve Boneyard Creek



6

Build a permanent structure for the Market at the Square



7

Provide more gateway markers / signage / branding for Downtown Urbana

URBANA DOWNTOWN PUBLIC REALM STUDY