City Council Agenda
City Council - Study Session
February 23, 2026
3:30 p.m.

Attending and Viewing the Meeting:
Attend the Meeting in Person: Government Center Council Chamber, 151 4th Street SE
View Meeting: Cable TV on Channels 180 or 188
Watch & Listen via YouTube: City of Rochester, MN - YouTube

If you require a reasonable accommodation to fully participate in the City Council meeting, please complete our reasonable accommodations form at least 2 business days prior to the Council meeting. You can also reach the City Clerk's Office via email (cityclerk@rochestermn.gov), telephone (507-328-2900), or TTY/TDD (507-328-2900) to discuss your accessibility needs.

A. Presentation Items

A.1. Public Realm Vision Plan - Downtown Commercial Historic District

A.2. 2025 Year-End Action Plan & KPI Update

A.3. Study Session Schedule

A.1

REQUEST FOR ACTION

Public Realm Vision Plan - Downtown Commercial Historic District

MEETING DATE:
February 23, 2026

ORIGINATING DEPT:
Community Development

AGENDA SECTION:
Presentation Items

PRESENTER:
Community Development Director Irene Woodward and Mend Collaborative

Report Narrative:

On January 22, 2024, when the City Council approved the local historic landmark designation for the Downtown Commercial Historic District, they also requested that the Community Development team bring back plans to support the property owners and stakeholders of the district. This discussion included developing a visioning plan to improve the district's public realm. Later that year, the team issued an RFP for this work and further explained a framework showing that the public realm is one of eight areas of support for the historic district, in collaboration with City partners. These include: Financial, Regulatory, Public Realm, Programming & Activation, Mobility, Business Recruitment & Retention, District Branding & Marketing, and Business Navigation.

Mend Collaborative was selected as the consultant for the project. Their team has worked closely with the City, DMC representatives, and historic district stakeholders to conduct extensive engagement and develop the attached draft plan. Representatives from Mend will join Community Development teammates in presenting the draft plan and providing an opportunity for questions and feedback.

Priorities & Foundational Principles:

Economic Resilience

Prepared By:

Molly Patterson-Lundgren

Attachments:

Presentation - Downtown Historic Public Realm

Draft Vision Plan - Downtown Historic Public Realm

DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PUBLIC REALM

VISION PLAN



CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

DMC Destination Medical Center

mend collaborative

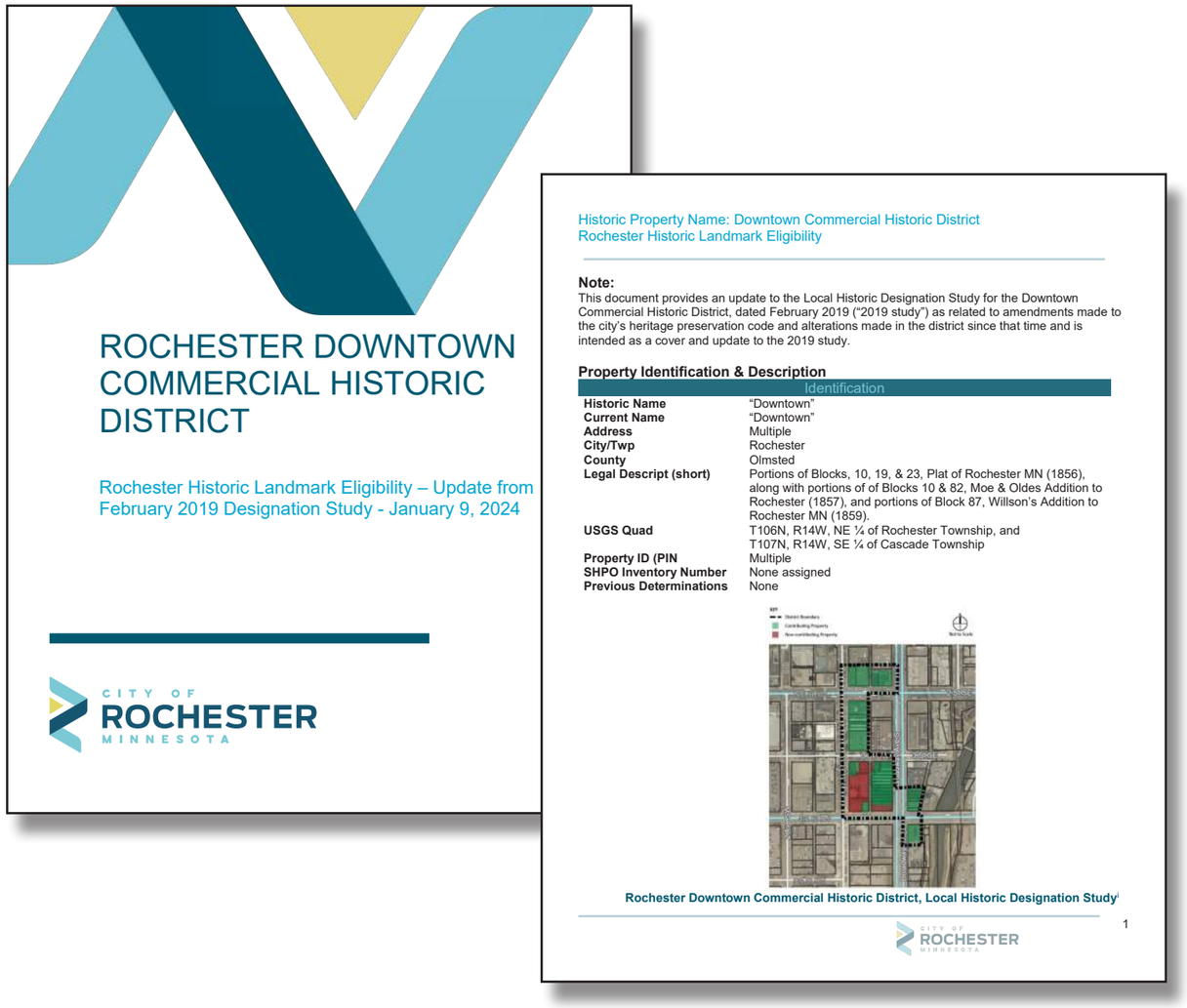
NEW HISTORY

ROCHESTER, MN

MARCH 2026

Project Overview | *Downtown Commercial Historic District*

On January 22, 2024, Rochester's City Council approved the designation of the Downtown Commercial Historic District due to its contributions to the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of the City of Rochester.



ROCHESTER DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Rochester Historic Landmark Eligibility – Update from February 2019 Designation Study - January 9, 2024

CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

Historic Property Name: Downtown Commercial Historic District
Rochester Historic Landmark Eligibility

Note:
This document provides an update to the Local Historic Designation Study for the Downtown Commercial Historic District, dated February 2019 ("2019 study") as related to amendments made to the city's heritage preservation code and alterations made in the district since that time and is intended as a cover and update to the 2019 study.

Property Identification & Description

Identification	
Historic Name	"Downtown"
Current Name	"Downtown"
Address	Multiple
City/Twp	Rochester
County	Olmsted
Legal Descript (short)	Portions of Blocks, 10, 19, & 23, Plat of Rochester MN (1856), along with portions of of Blocks 10 & 82, Moe & Oldes Addition to Rochester (1857), and portions of Block 87, Willson's Addition to Rochester MN (1859).
USGS Quad	T106N, R14W, NE ¼ of Rochester Township, and T107N, R14W, SE ¼ of Cascade Township
Property ID (PIN	Multiple
SHPO Inventory Number	None assigned
Previous Determinations	None

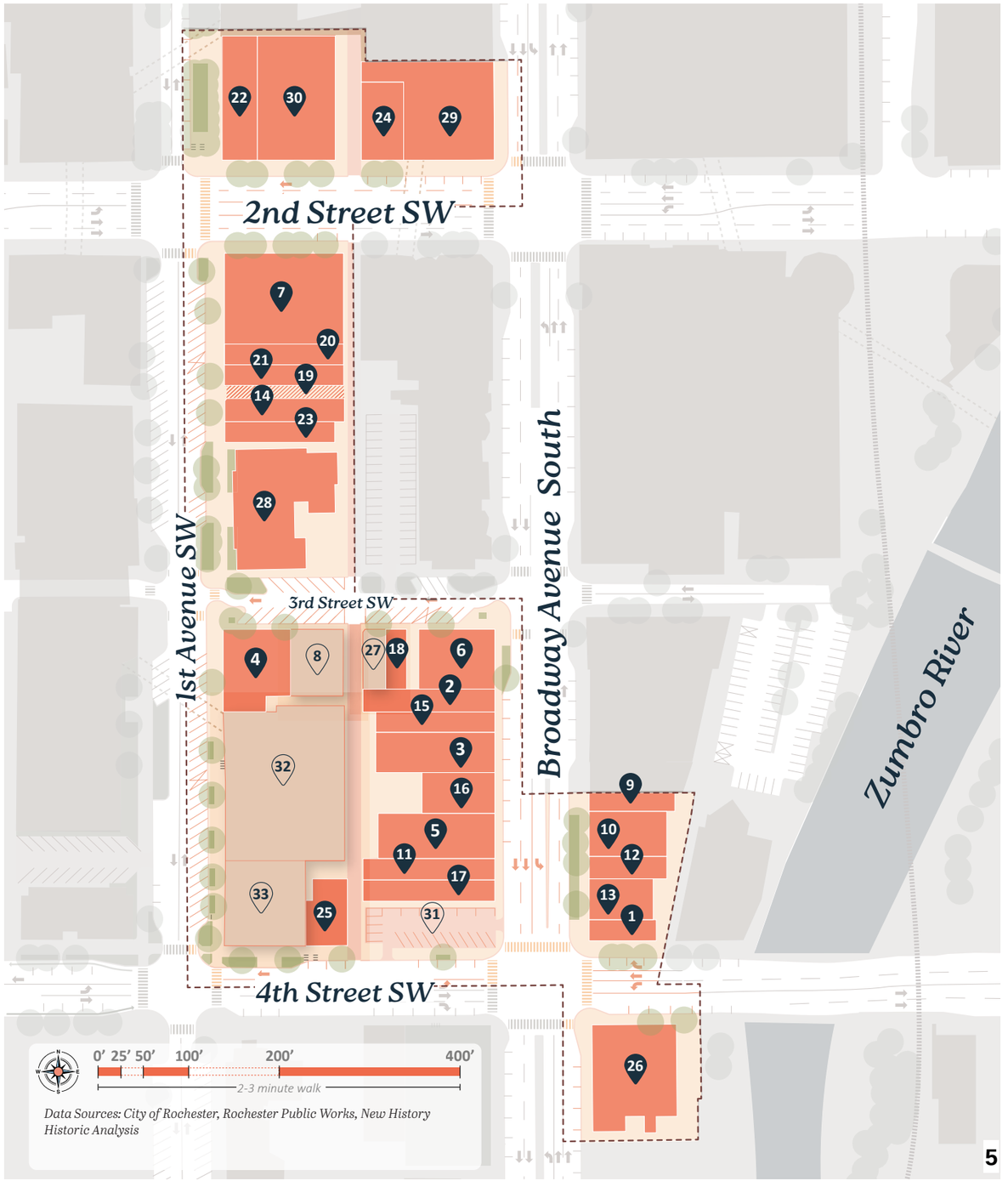
Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District, Local Historic Designation Study[i]

1

CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

The historic district is bounded by 1st Ave to the west, Broadway to the east, 2nd St to the north, and 4th St to the south.

1 Columbia Hotel (1858)
2 Clausen and Adler Hardware (1870)
3 F.J. Paine Company/Palace Block (1873)
4 Williams Block (1874)
5 Baker and Hanson/The Council Saloon (1875)
6 Union National Bank Building (1878)
7 C.F. Massey Co. (1880)
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28 City Hall (1931)
29 Dayton's Department Store (1954)
30 Northwestern National Bank of Rochester (1957)
31 Parking Lot (circa 1960)
32 318 Commons (2011)
33 The Hue Apartments (2020)



X Contributing Property

X Non-Contributing Property

Community Support

How other communities successfully support Historic Districts



DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PUBLIC REALM VISION PLAN

Project Overview | *Your project team*

CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

DMC Destination Medical Center

mend collaborative

Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture



Sandy Meulners-Comstock, PLA

Project Manager, Lead Designer



Zakcq Lockrem, AICP

Principal-in-charge, Lead Planner



Olivia Halsne

Assistant Project Manager, Designer

NEW HISTORY

Historical Consultant for Design Guidelines



Lauren Anderson

Director, Historic Consultant

DOWNTOWN
COMMERCIAL
HISTORIC DISTRICT
PUBLIC REALM
VISION PLAN

Project Overview | *Today's Discussion*

1. Project Background

2. Community Engagement

3. Vision Plan Walk-Through

4. Discussion

The City has identified eight focus areas to assist historic property owners and businesses in the district:

- Business Navigation
- Recruitment Retention
- Programming Activation
- Branding Marketing
- **Mobility**
- **Regulatory**
- **Financial**
- **Public Realm**

The City is working with partners on all eight areas but is currently focusing on the last four items in this list.



Project Overview

Public Realm

The Downtown Commercial Historic District's public realm is open for everyone to use and enjoy.



Project Overview | *What are we working towards?*

This process and project seeks to create a comprehensive **Vision Plan for the Historic District with a specific focus on the public realm.**

This new project aims to envision a future for the outdoor public spaces in the district and is a key step to improve the public realm.

It will provide a roadmap for creating cohesive, inclusive, and well-designed spaces that reflect the community needs and aspirations for the Historic District.









What We Have Heard | *Engagement Events*



Focus Group Discussions
June 25th, 2025

20 *interviewees*

Focused discussions were held with business owners, historians, property owners, and downtown-based organizations.



Door Knocking
July 2nd, 2025

12 *interviewees*

Door knocking at local businesses within the Downtown Commercial Historic District.



Stakeholder Workshop #1
July 16th, 2025

25 *attendees*

A 1.5-hour interactive presentation and input gathering session with stakeholders in the Downtown Commercial Historic District.



Pop Up
August 14, 2025

75 *booth visitors*

A 7.5-hour pop up at Thursdays Downtown at the corner of 1st and 3rd.



Stakeholder Workshop #2
September 17th, 2025

25 *attendees*

A 1.5-hour interactive session with stakeholders in the Downtown Commercial Historic District, informing attendees about project direction and components.



Project Website
https://engage.mendcollaborative.com/downtown-historic-district-vision

online mapping, image sharing, project information hub

What We Have Heard | *Engagement Takeaways*

1. The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.
2. There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
3. Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.
4. There are opportunities for improvement regarding accessibility and multi-modal connectivity.
5. Trust, collaboration, and follow-through are critical.
6. There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.

The Plan | *Overview*

Structure of the Vision Plan

Chapter 1: **Vision and Guiding Principals**

Chapter 2: **The Case for Action Summary**

Chapter 3: **Public Realm Framework**

Chapter 4: **Character Elements of the Public Realm**

Chapter 5: **Implementation Strategy**



The Plan | *Overview*

Chapter 1: **Vision and Guiding Principals**

Chapter 2: **The Case for Action Summary**

Chapter 3: **Public Realm Framework**

Chapter 4: **Character Elements of the Public Realm**

Chapter 5: **Implementation Strategy**



The Plan | **Chapter 1:** *Vision and Guiding Principals*

What we've heard from the community: aspirations for the historic district

1. **The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.**
2. **There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.**
3. **Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.**
4. **There are opportunities for improvement regarding accessibility and multi-modal connectivity.**
5. **Trust, collaboration, and follow-through are critical.**
6. **There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.**

The Plan | **Chapter 1:** *Vision and Guiding Principals*

Vision statement and goals

Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District is a vibrant and welcoming place where people gather, connect, and create new lasting memories among the core of Rochester's historical commercial spaces.

It is a place that resonates with excitement, culture, and energy of these historic blocks and the businesses within it. This is a destination full of life, where residents and visitors alike feel drawn to return again and again.

- **The public realm plan will help foster a sense of place.**
- **The public realm plan will help foster a sense of community.**
- **The public realm plan will support and incubate small businesses and local owners.**
- **The public realm plan will intentionally weave the Downtown Commercial Historic District into the greater fabric of Downtown Rochester.**
- **The public realm will help retain the historic character of the District.**

The Plan | *Overview*

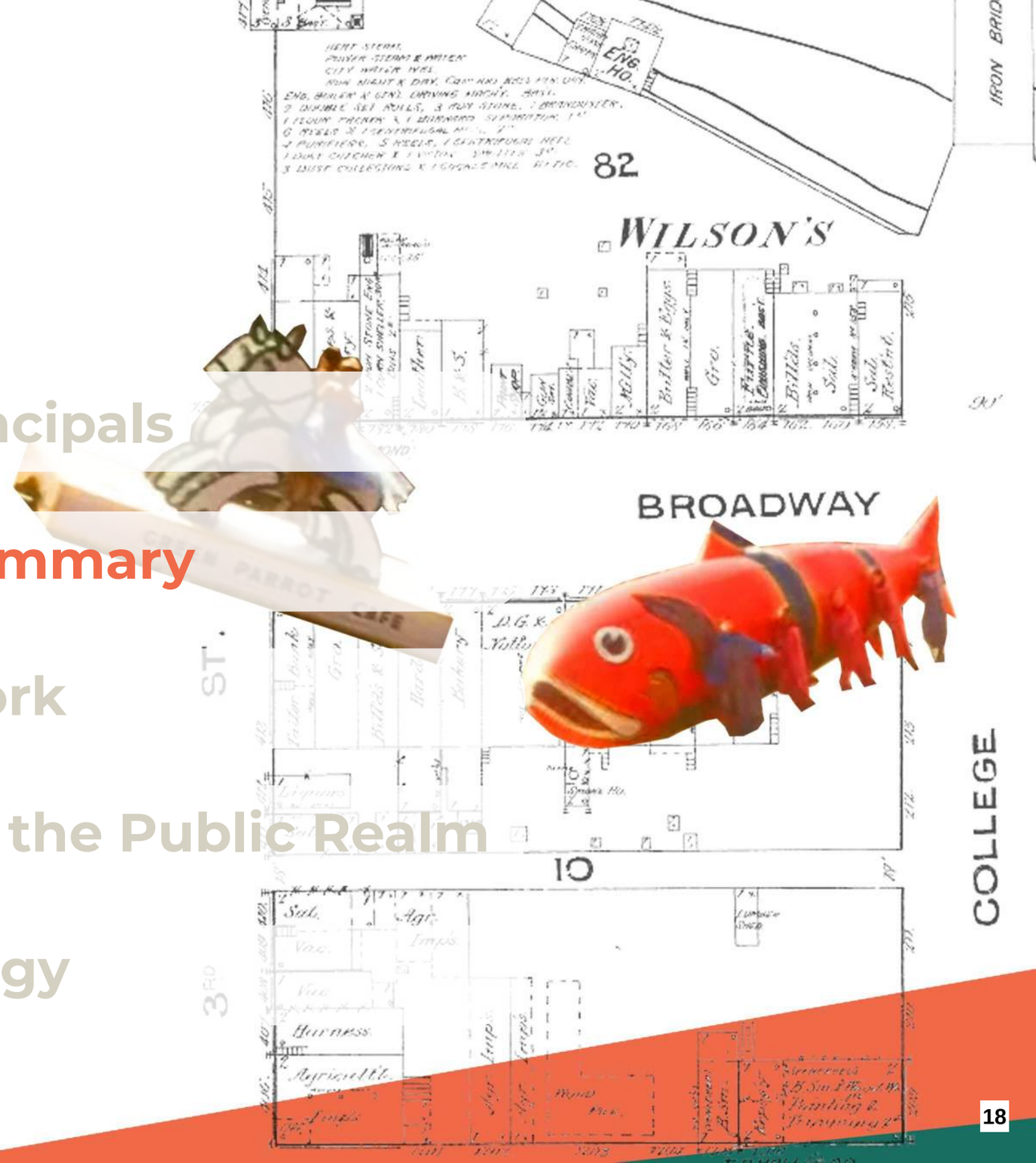
Chapter 1: Vision and Guiding Principals

Chapter 2: The Case for Action Summary

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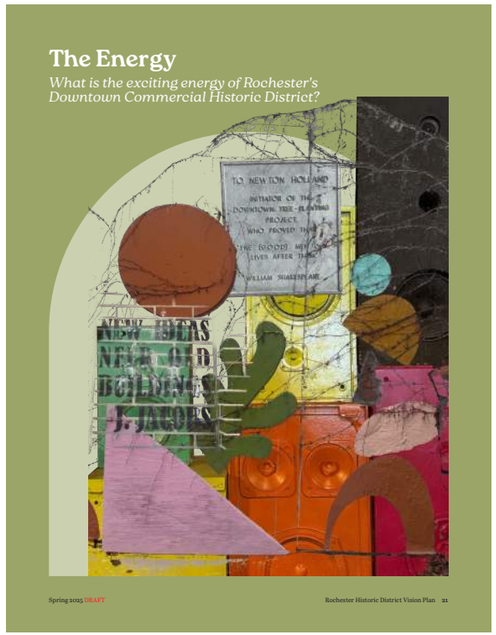


The Plan | **Chapter 2:** *Case for Action*



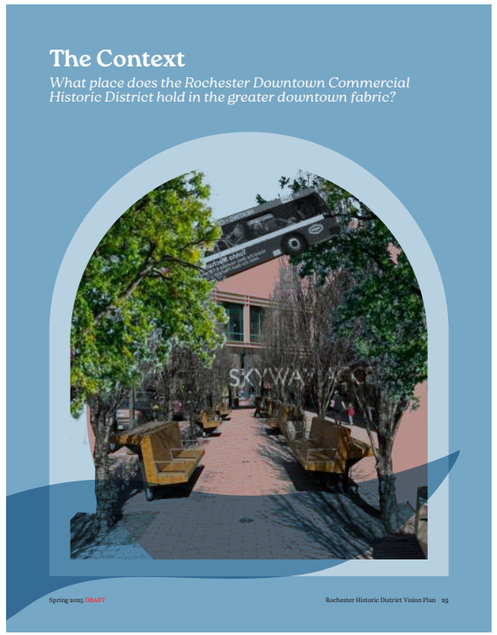
The Story .....

Historic Character & History
Historic Assets
Historic Asset Mapping
Ties to Rochester's History
Public Realm Analysis



The Energy.....

Live, Work, Play
Art & Design
Historical Interpretation



The Context .....

Connections to Previous Plans
Regulatory Analysis
Mobility Analysis

The Story

The District in Context

The story of Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District is closely tied to the history of the region as a whole, demonstrating how local, regional, and national trends and historic events shaped the social and design character of the District.

This history is organized into three broad themes:

Economic Development

Focuses on local industry and commercial activities, such as shopping and restaurants.

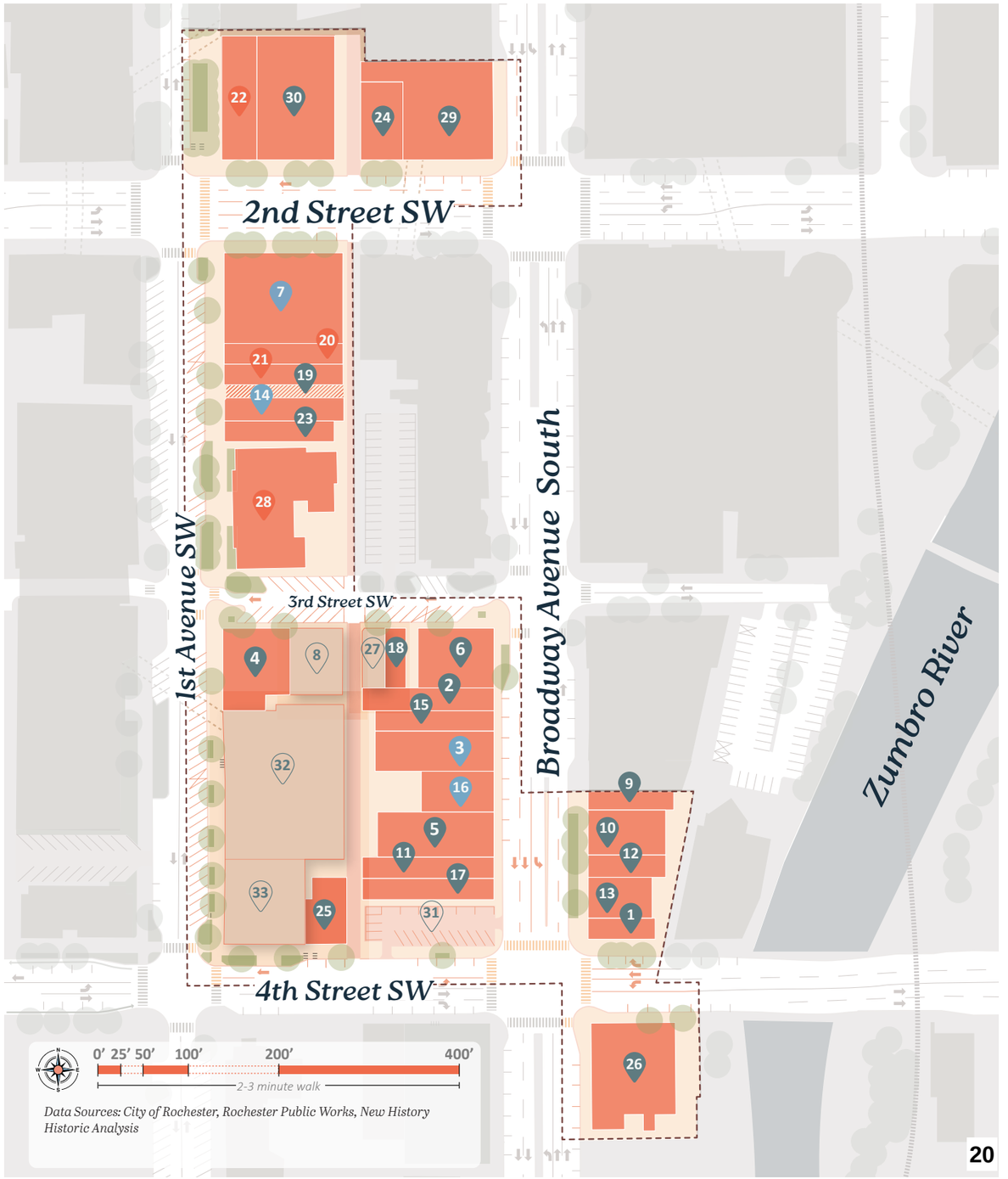
Public and Civic Life

Highlights the civic and public services within the district, as well as the District entities that shaped entertainment and culture.

People and Stories

Acknowledge on the diversity of voices and long-term cultural anchors within the district.

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The Story

Existing Conditions of the District's Public Realm

Character:

- Materials
- Scale
- Landscaping





Social Aspects:

- Interactions
- Economic Activities





Accessibility & Safety:

- Lighting
- ADA compliance
- Crosswalks

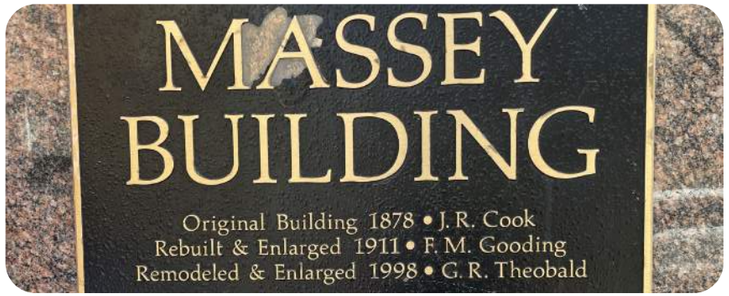




Wayfinding, Signage, & Storytelling:

- Character-defining signage
- Wayfinding signage





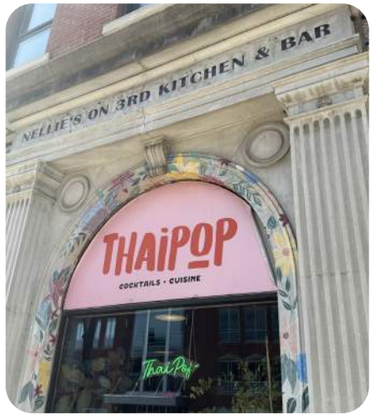
The Energy

People live, work and play in this district









The district is brought to life through public art and design









The Downtown Commercial Historic District's story is being told through individuals and their properties









The Context

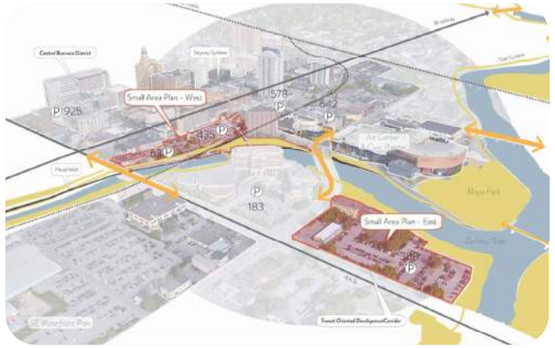
Connections to other planning work / efforts



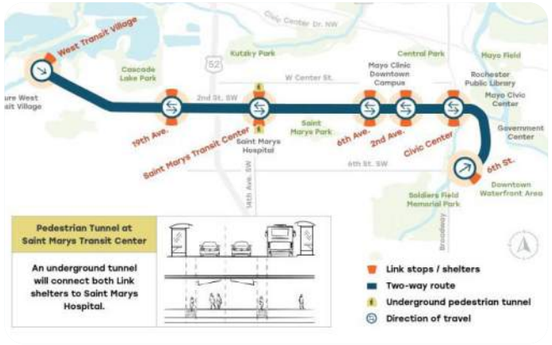
Destination Medical Center 5-Year Development Plan Update (2020)



Downtown Waterfront Southeast (DWSE) Small Area Plan (2021)



Riverfront Small Area Plan (2022)

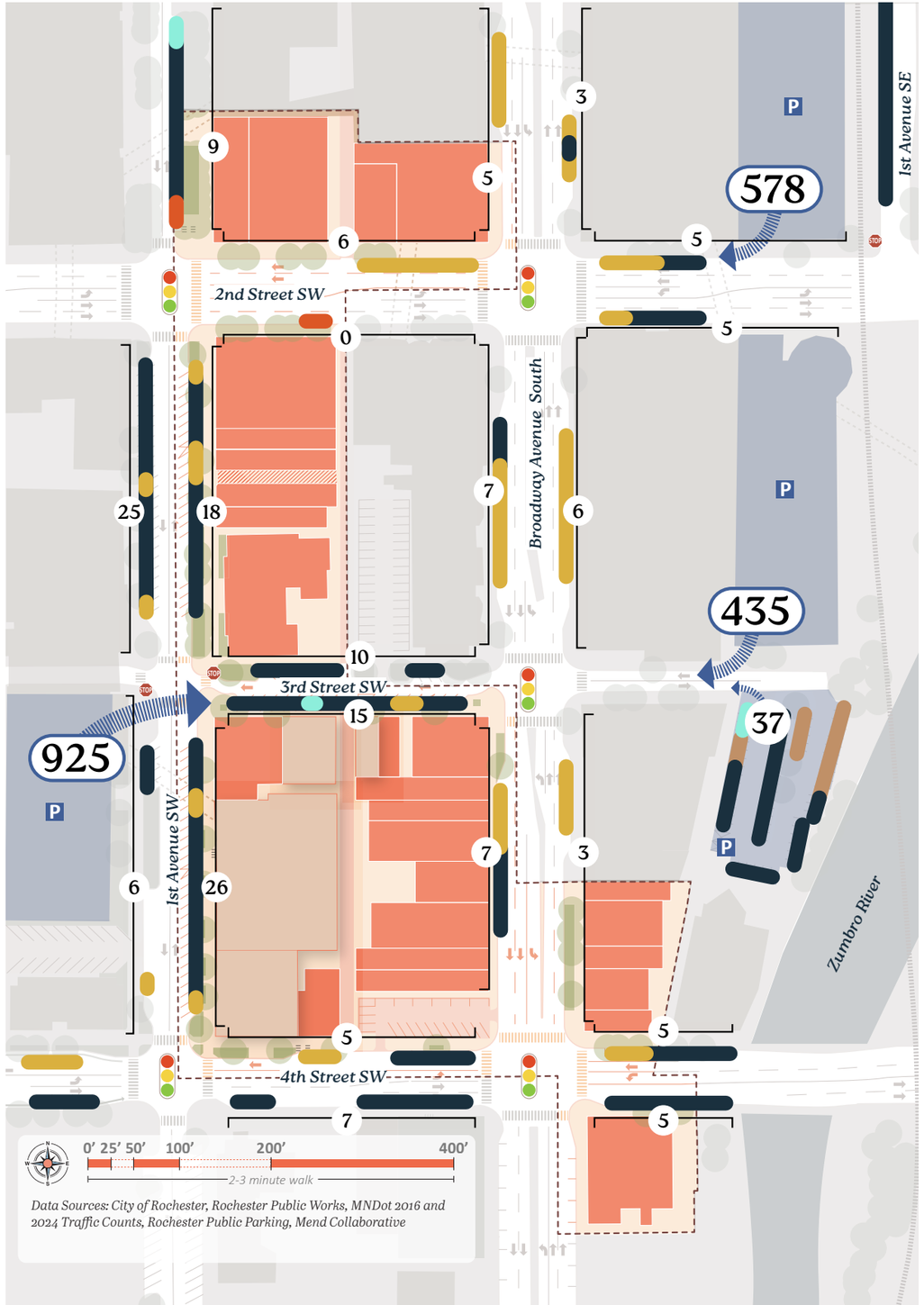


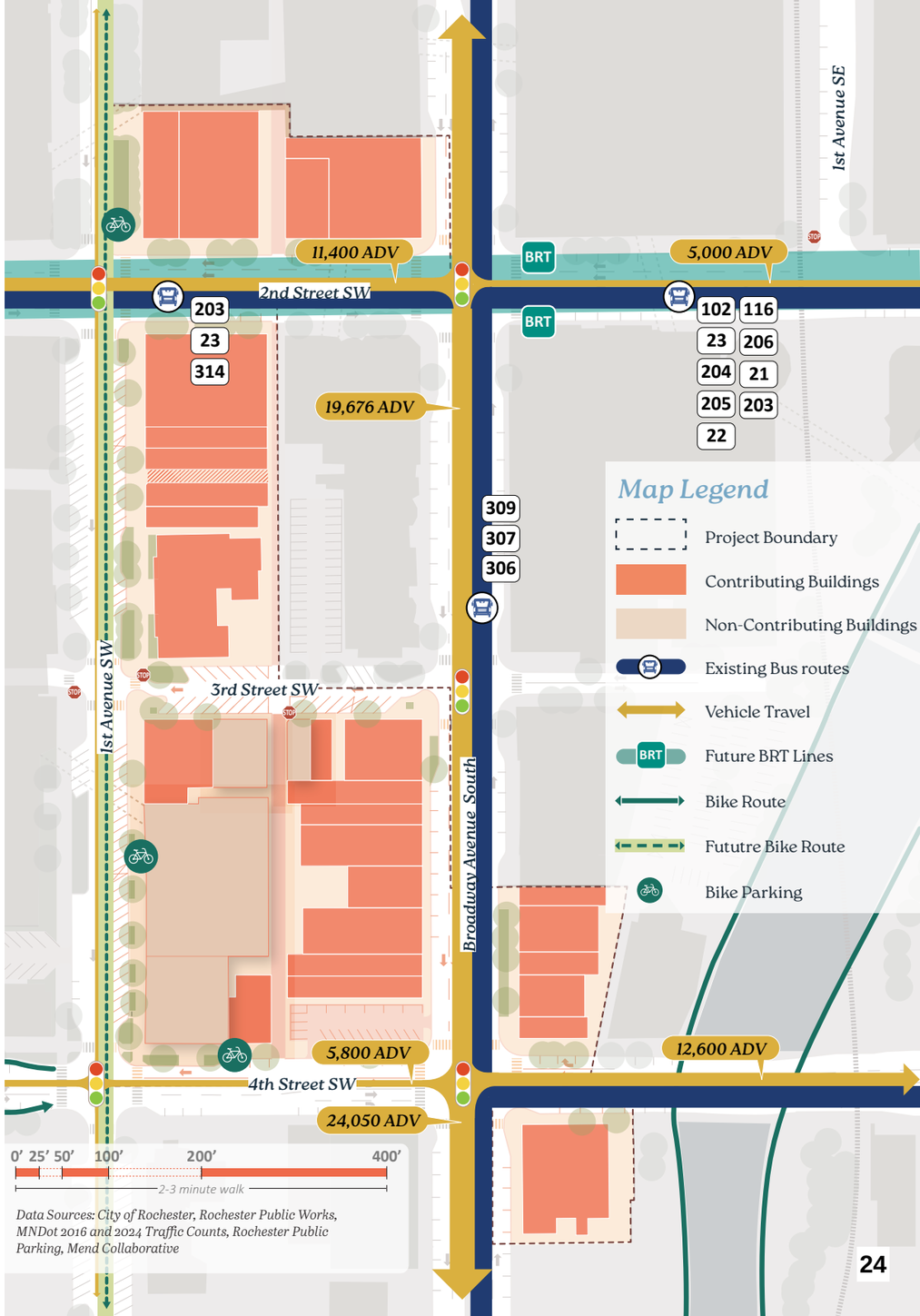
Link Bus Rapid Transit (coming 2027)



Downtown Rochester Master Plan Report (2010)

Mobility and Parking Studies





The Plan | *Overview*

Chapter 1: Vision and Guiding Principals

Chapter 2: The Case for Action Summary

Chapter 3: Public Realm Framework

Chapter 4: Character Elements of the Public Realm

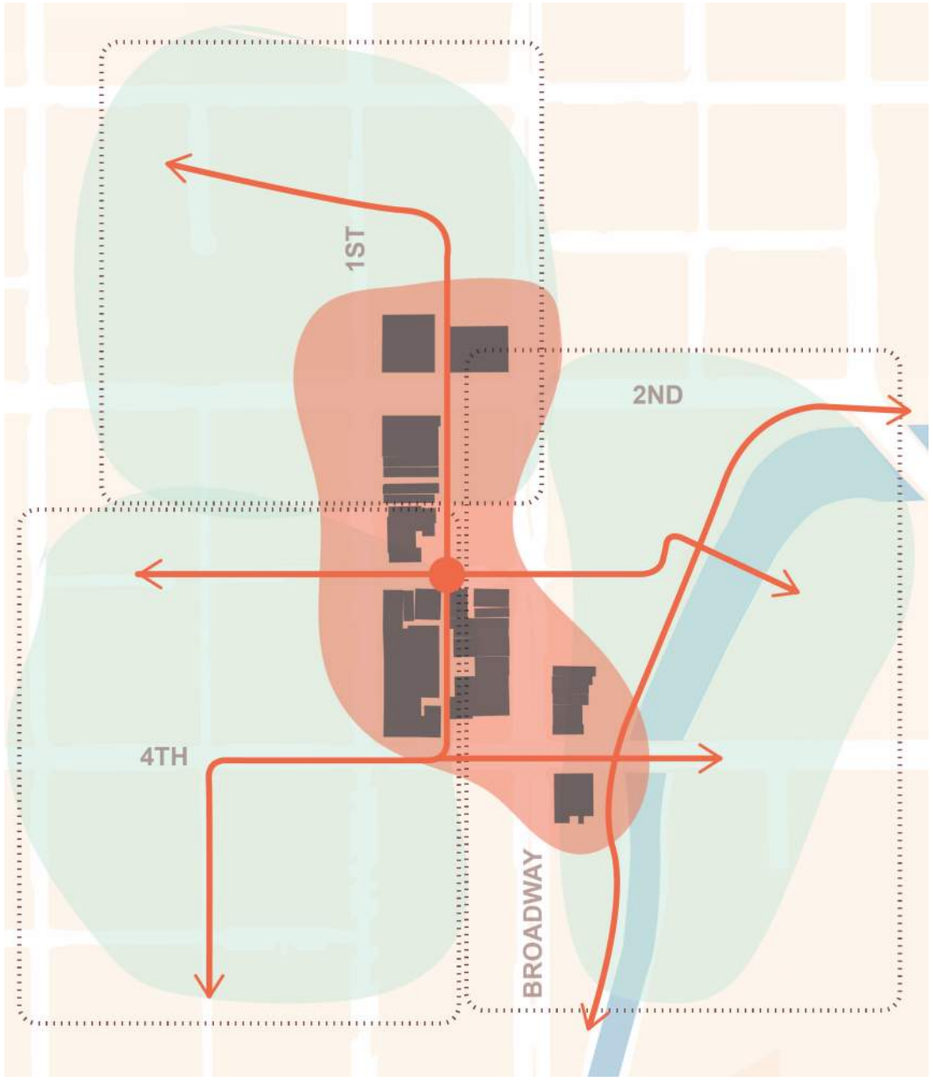
Chapter 5: Implementation Strategy



The Plan | Chapter 3: *Public Realm Framework*

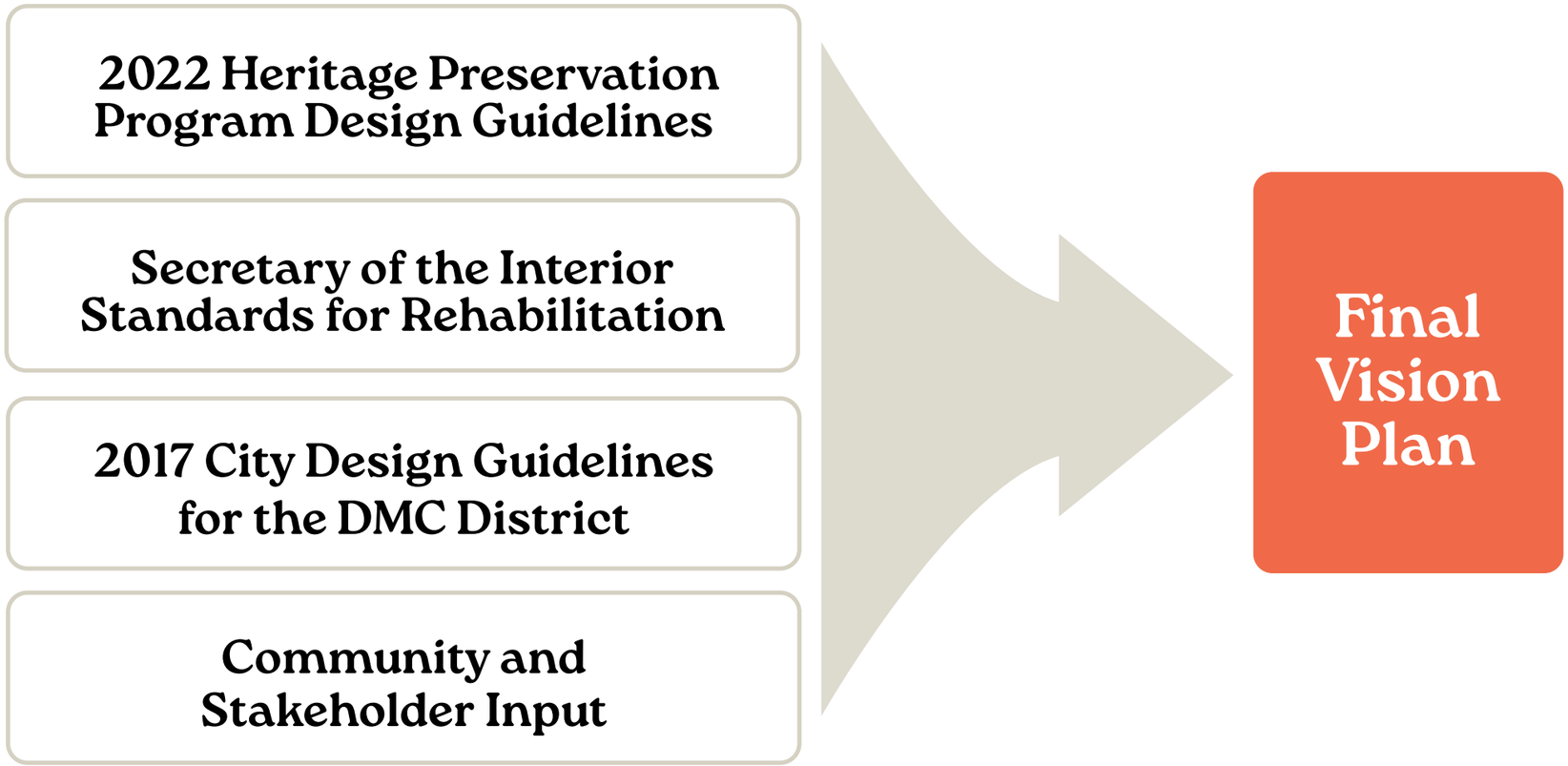
Emphasizing the role of the historic district in greater downtown and the history of Rochester's formation and growth.

The historic district is a key patch in the quilt of greater downtown - stitching history and districts together.



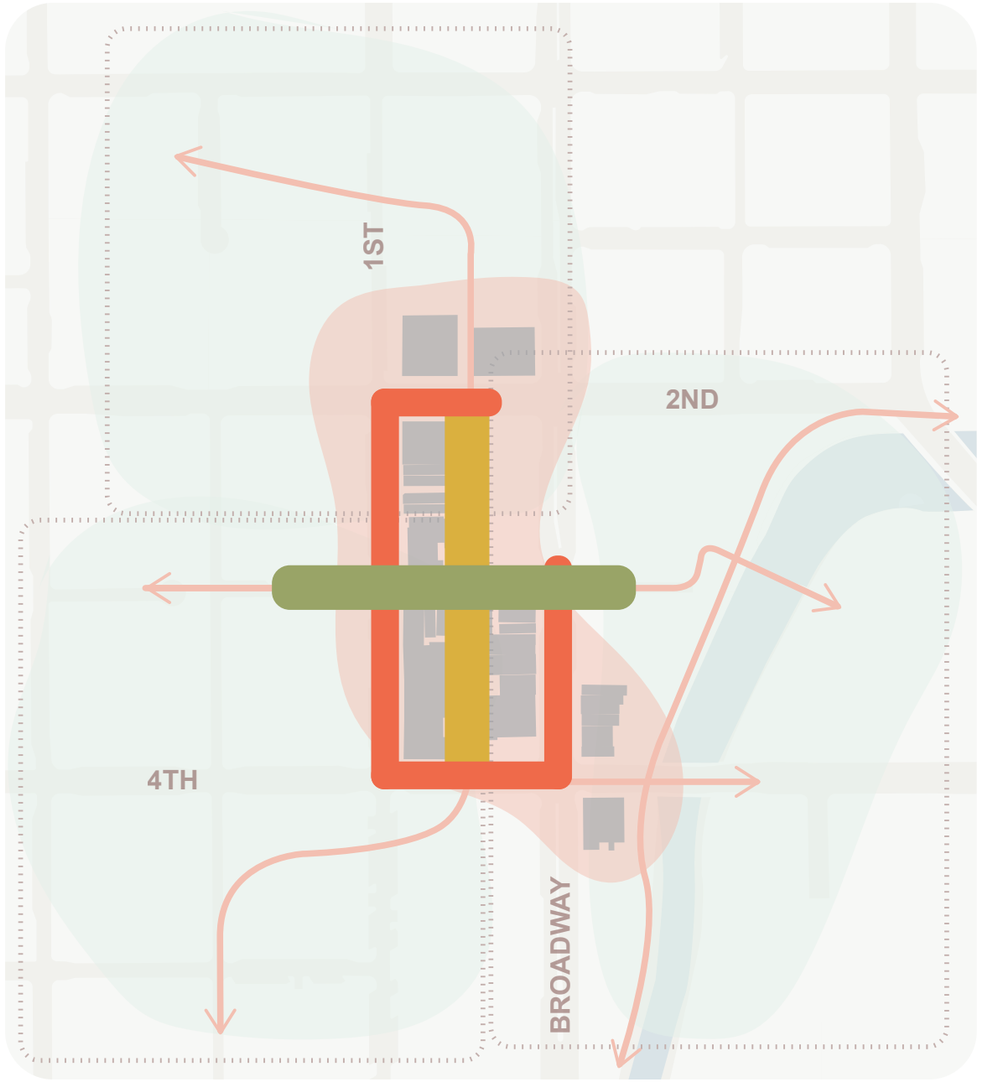
The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Public Realm Framework*

Finding the Balance



The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Public Realm Framework*

Framework Lenses



3.1: Infusing **storytelling** throughout the public realm

3.3: Re-visioning **3rd St SW** in the district

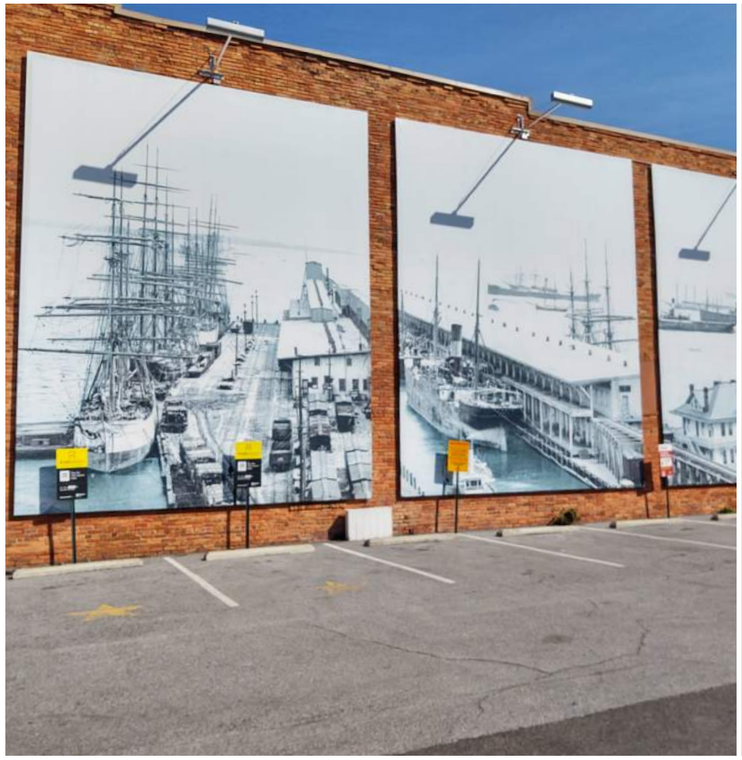
3.2: Re-imagined **streets** within the district

3.4: Convert the district's underutilized **alleyways** into vibrant third spaces

The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Storytelling*

3.1 Storytelling

- Revealing the story of the district through artwork, murals, sculpture, interpretive panels, etc.



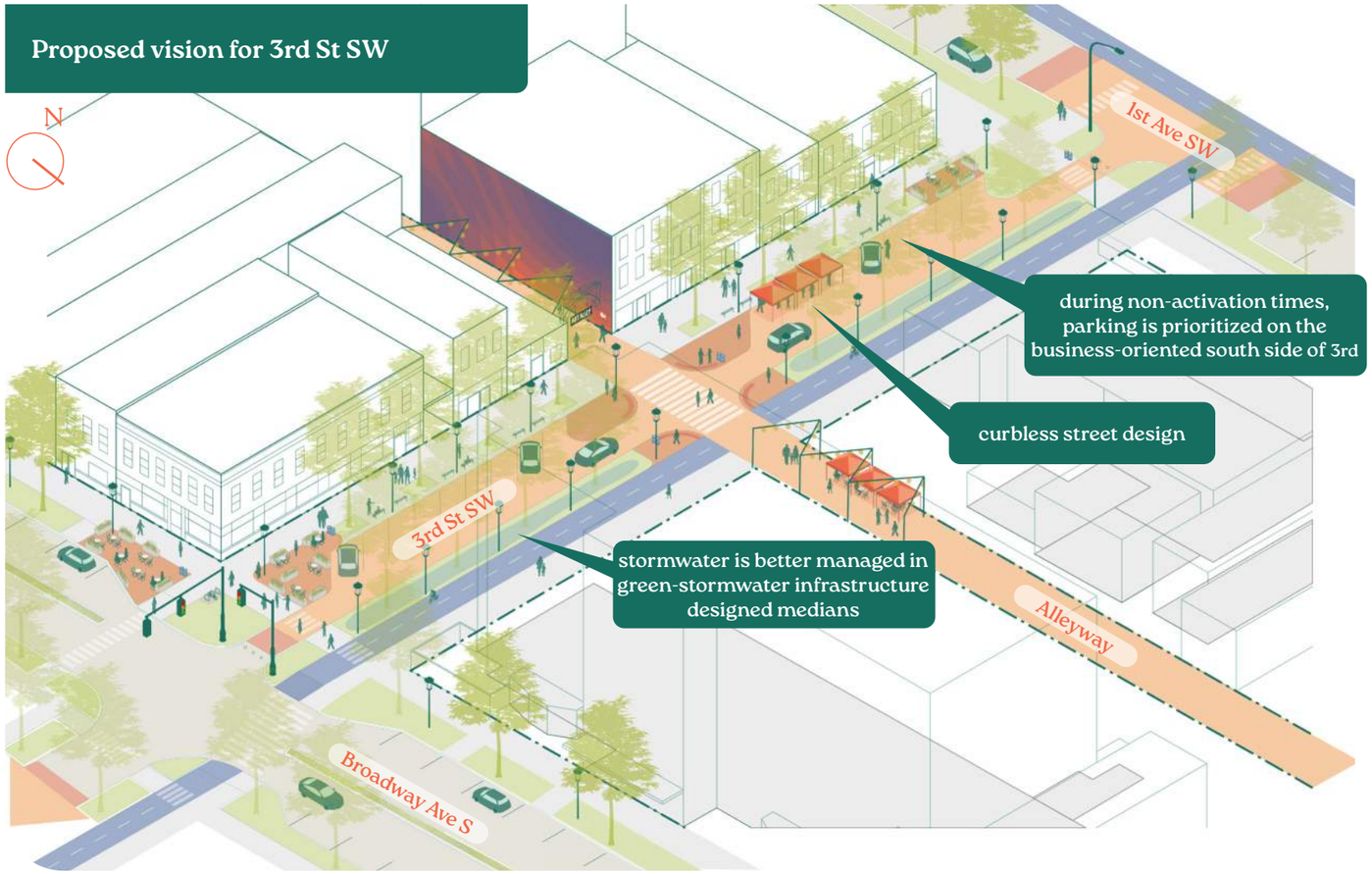


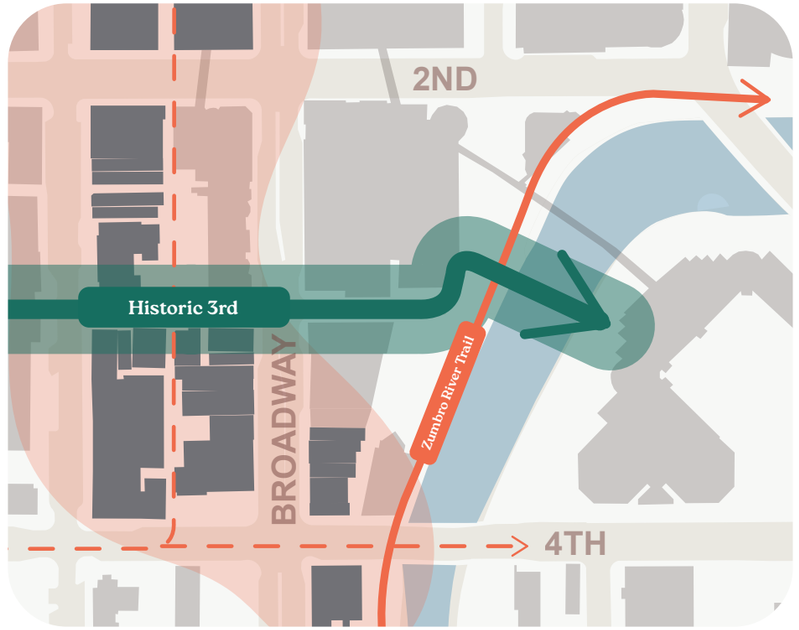


The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Green on 3rd*

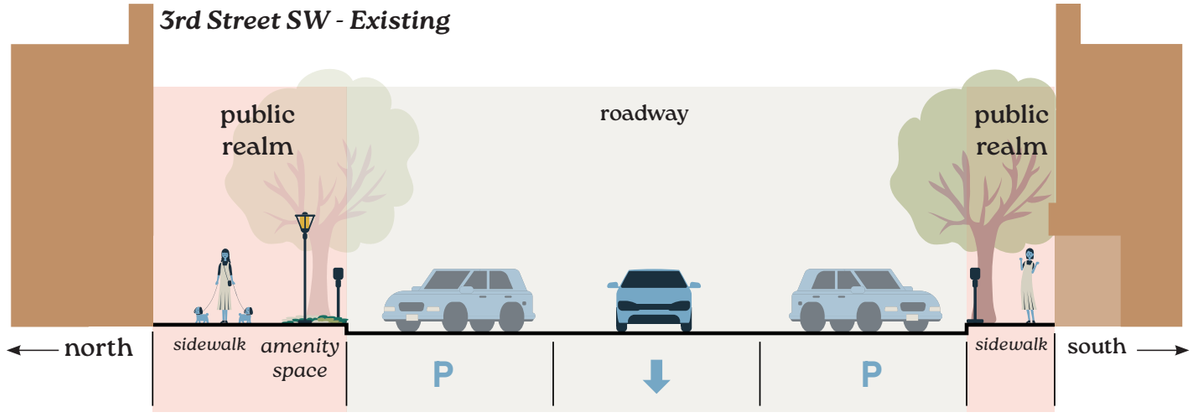
3.3 Green on Historic 3rd

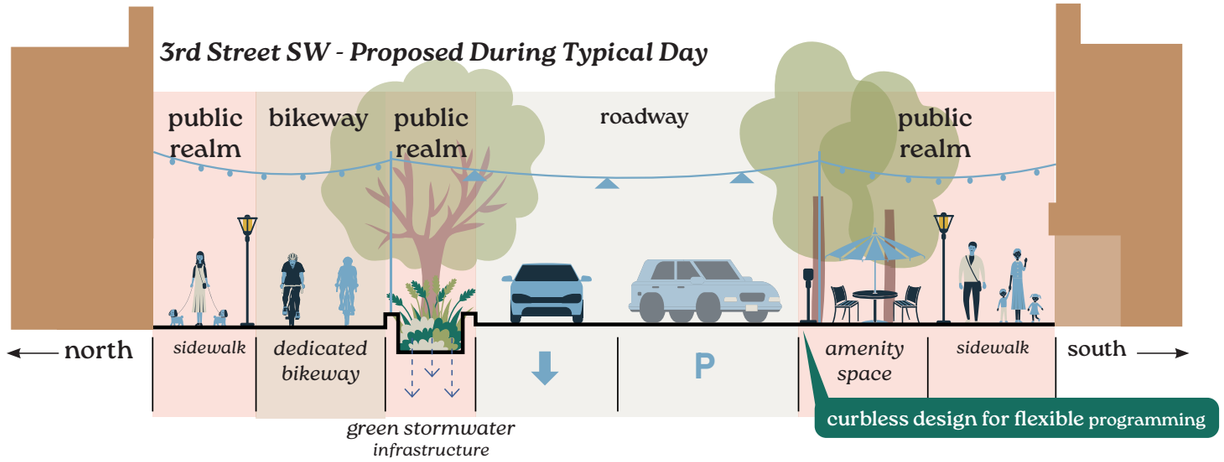
- Re-visioning this critical heart of the district

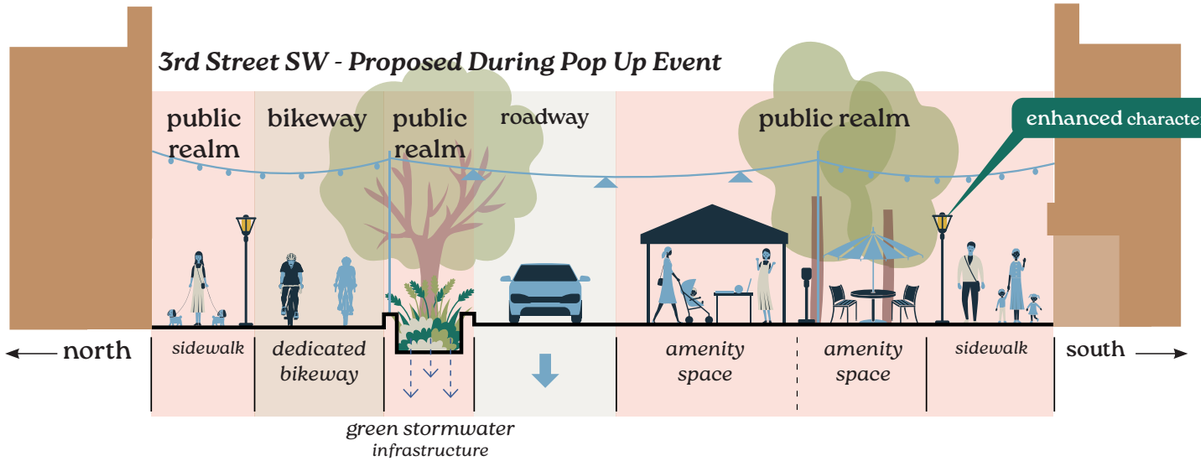


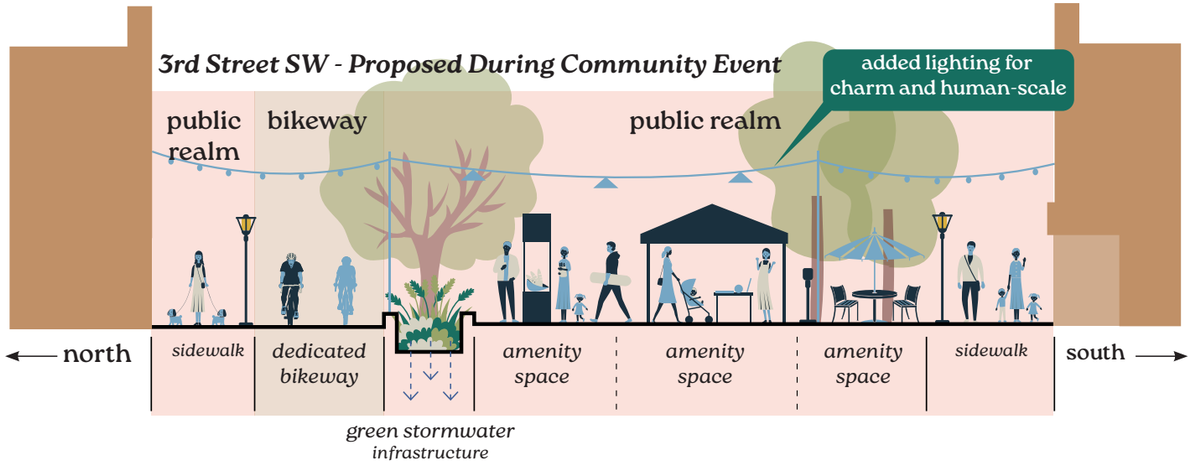


The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Green on 3rd*

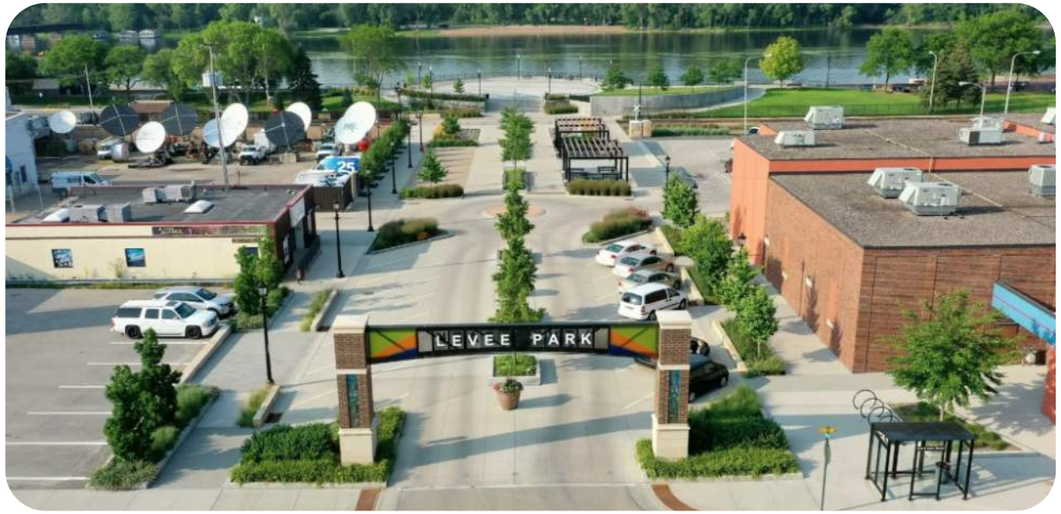








The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Green on 3rd*









The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Green on 3rd*





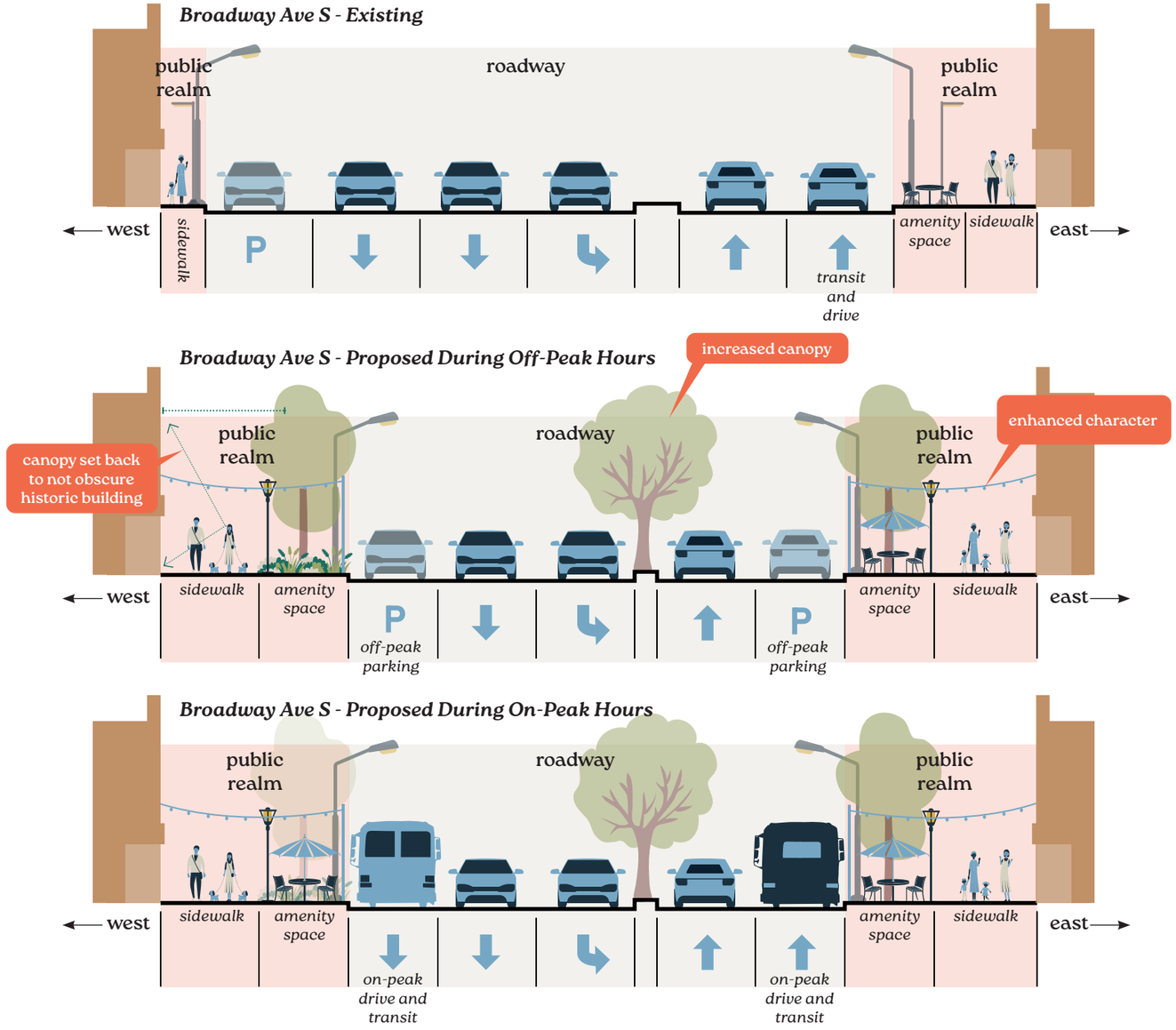


The Plan | Chapter 3: *Streets in the District*

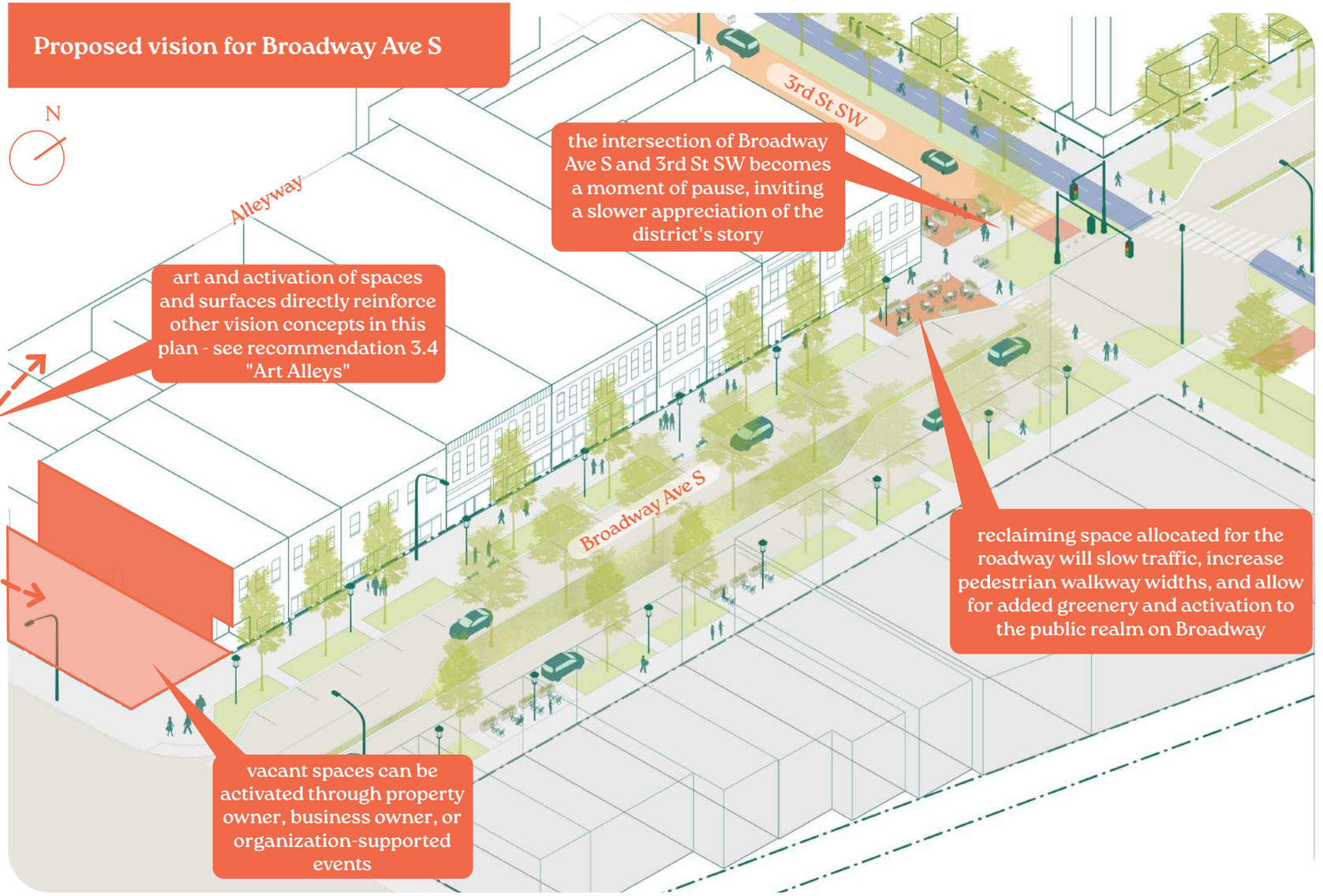
3.2 Broadway Ave & 1st Ave SW in the District

- Long-Term vision for Broadway Ave
  - the long-term vision slows traffic, supports mobility, and creates new space for amenities, greening, and placemaking
- Short-Term and Long-Term visions for 1st Ave SW
  - Short term: the vision is a balanced, multimodal street section that enhances safety and comfort for all users
  - Long term: the vision expands sidewalks and creates a buffered bikeway, generous pedestrian zones, wider planting zones, seating, areas of gathering, lighting, and amenities that contribute to a welcoming and accessible environment.

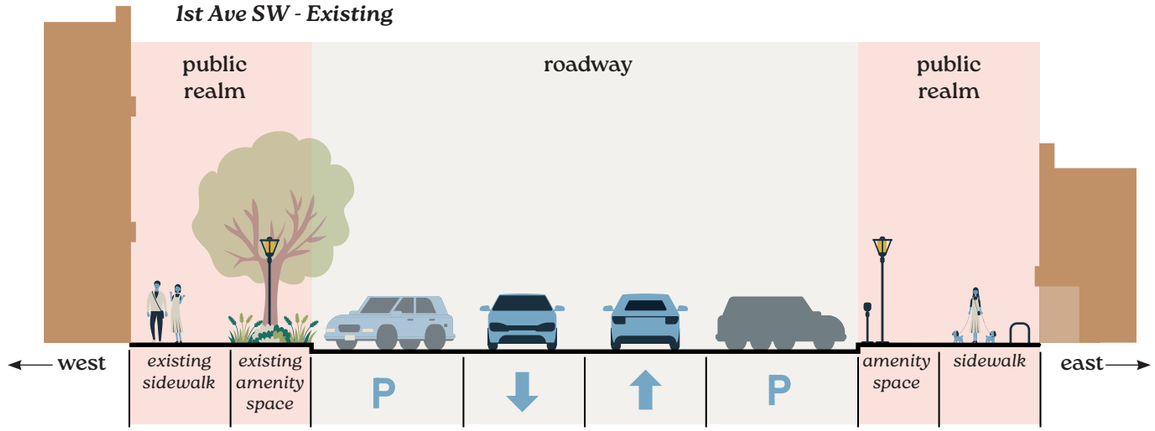
The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Broadway Ave*

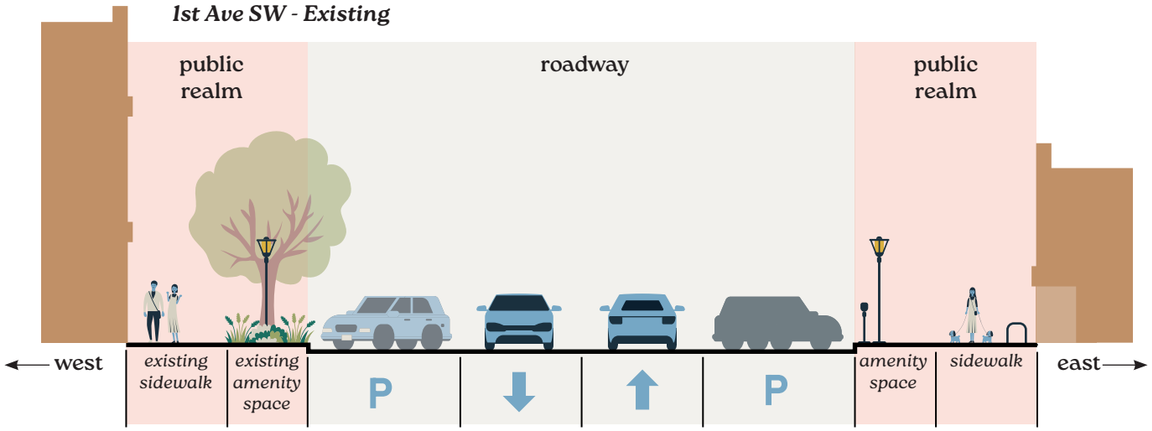


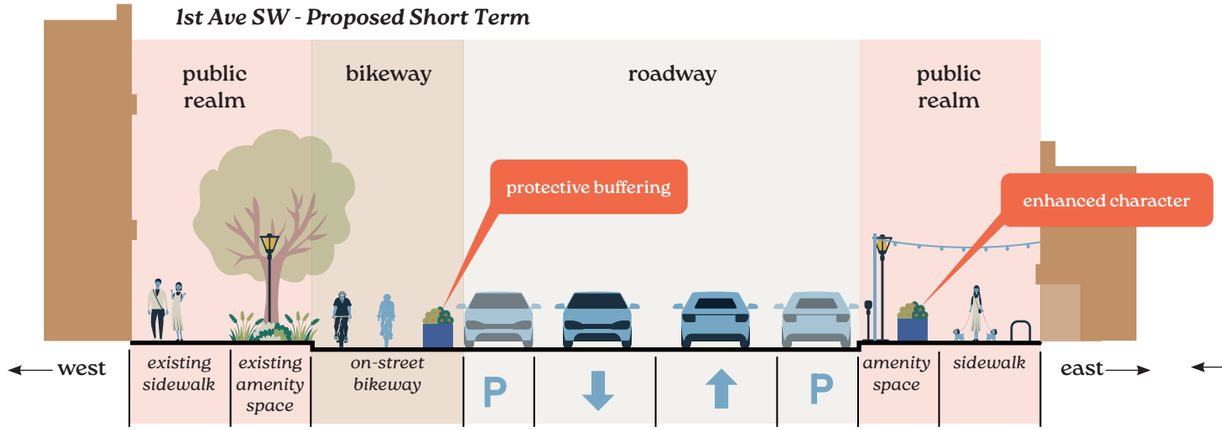
The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Broadway Ave*

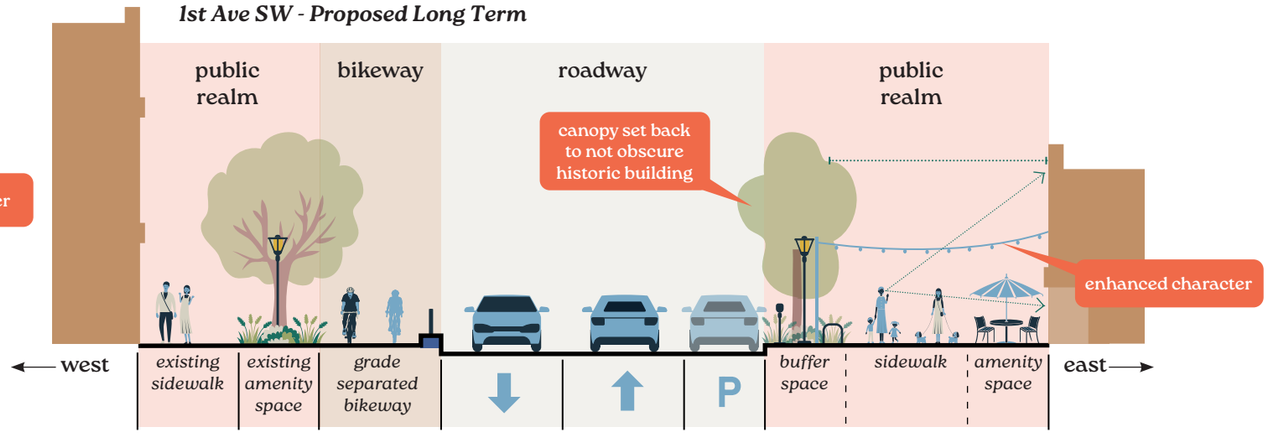


The Plan | Chapter 3: *1st Ave SW*

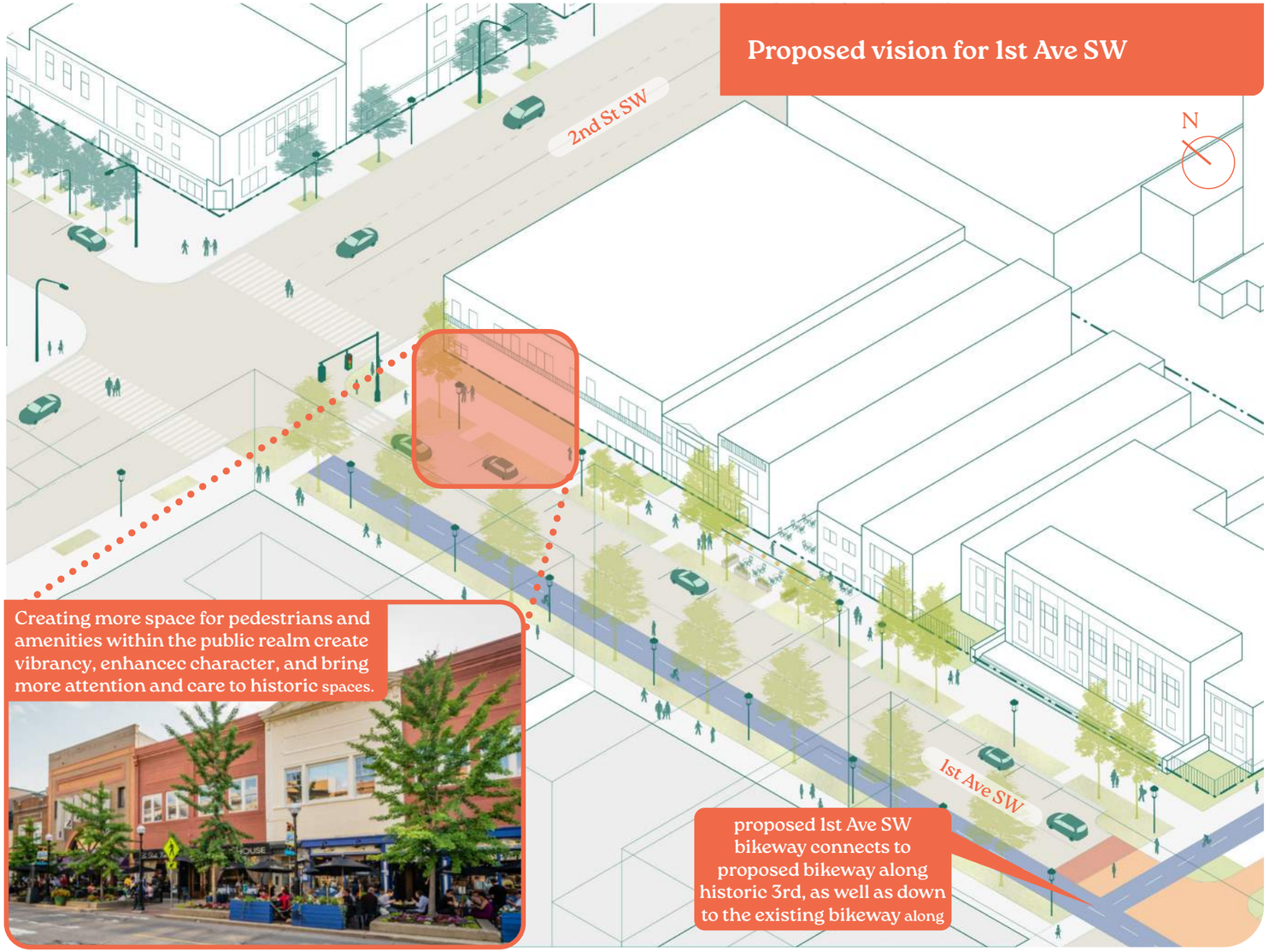








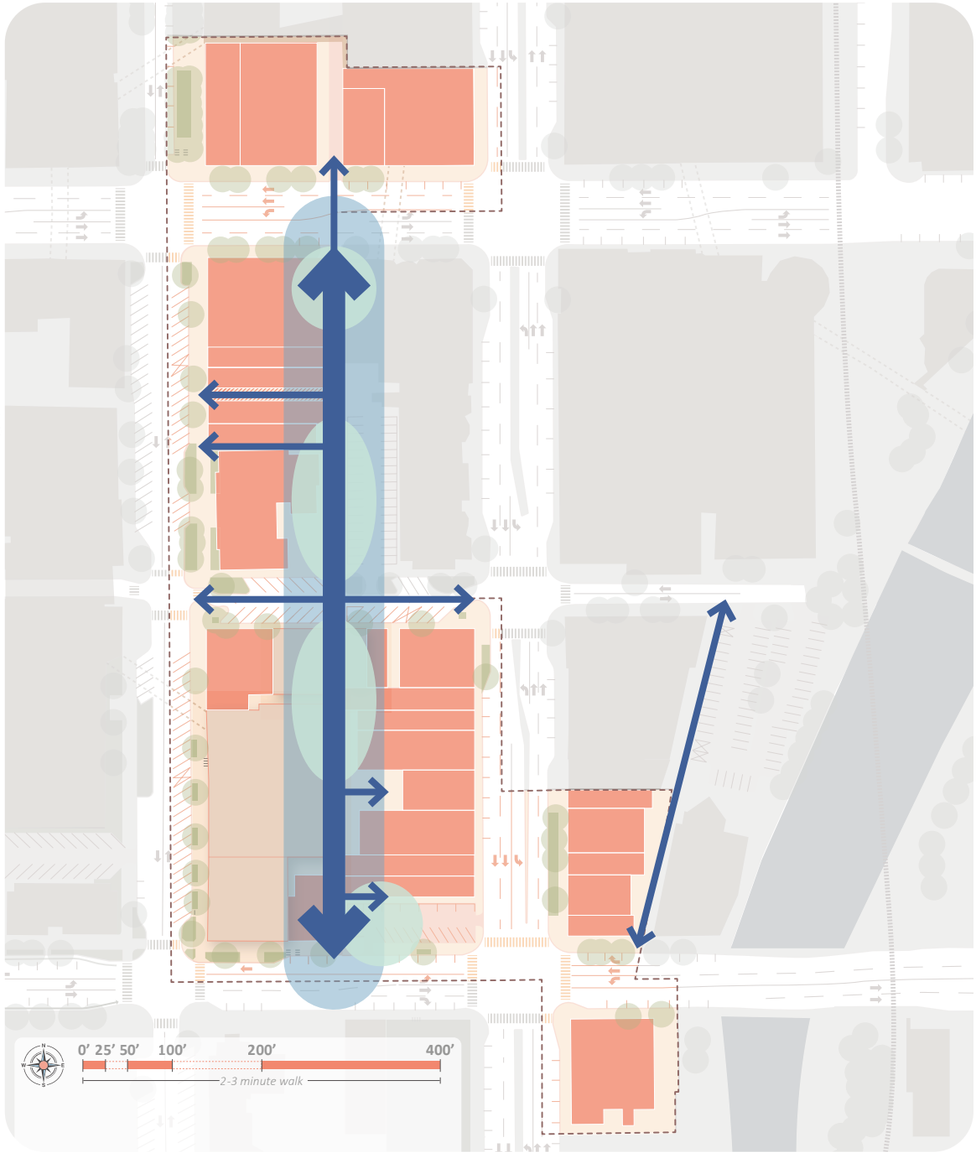
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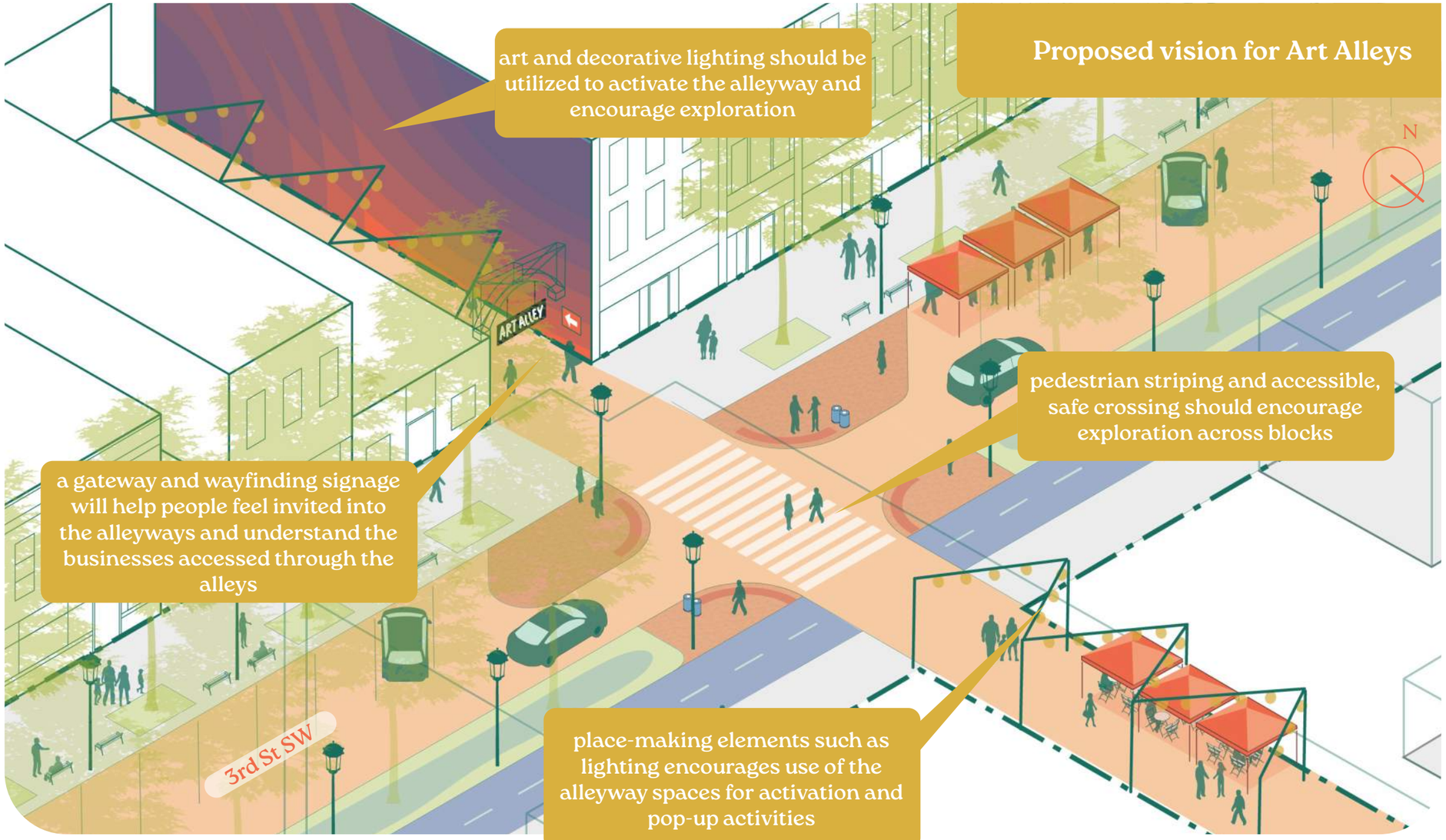
The Plan | Chapter 3: *Art Alleyways*

3.4 Art Alleyways

- Activating underutilized spaces
- Bringing the community's vision to life
- Increasing safety and access to small businesses



The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Art Alleyways*



The Plan | **Chapter 3:** *Art Alleyways*







The Plan | *Overview*

Chapter 1: Vision and Guiding Principals

Chapter 2: The Case for Action Summary

Chapter 3: Public Realm Framework

Chapter 4: Character Elements of the Public Realm

Chapter 5: Implementation Strategy



The Plan | **Chapter 4:** *Character Elements of the Public Realm*

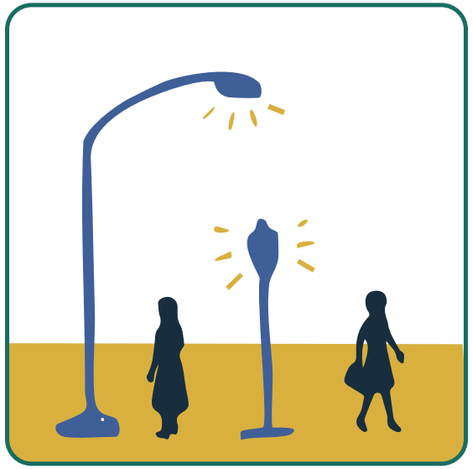
4.1 Plantings



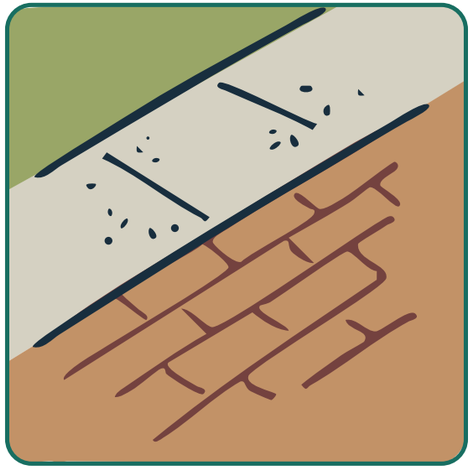
4.2 Furnishings



4.3 Lighting



4.4 Materials



4.5 Wayfinding



4.6 Parking



The Plan | *Overview*

Chapter 1: Vision and Guiding Principals

Chapter 2: The Case for Action Summary

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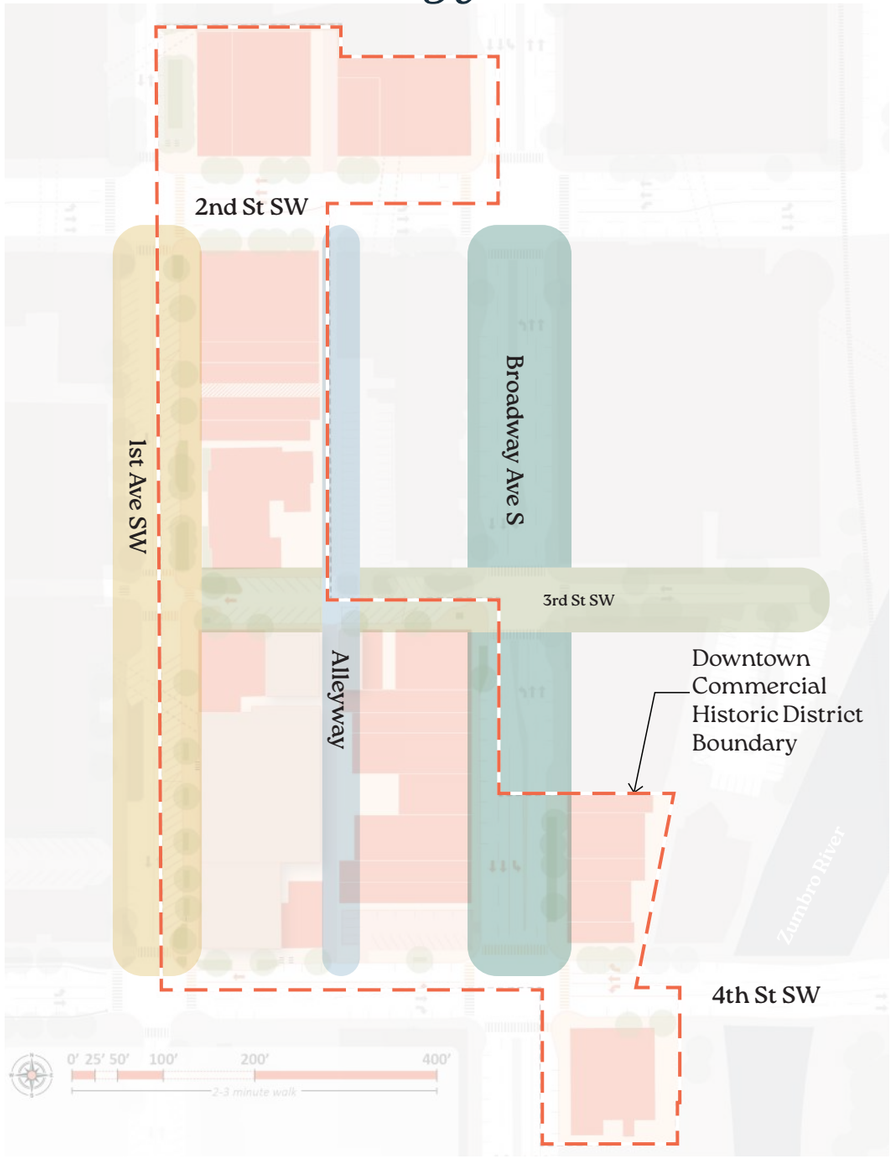


The Plan | **Chapter 5:** *Implementation Strategy*

This isn't a design concept plan, this is a vision to set up success for implementation in the future

Overall, the approach to implementation should consider:

- Starting small, learning fast, and scaling intentionally.
- Coordinating preservation review early and often.
- Pairing physical improvements with programming and partnerships, centering co-design with the community where possible.
- Aligning capital investments with broader downtown and infrastructure initiatives that are already in motion or in the planning process.





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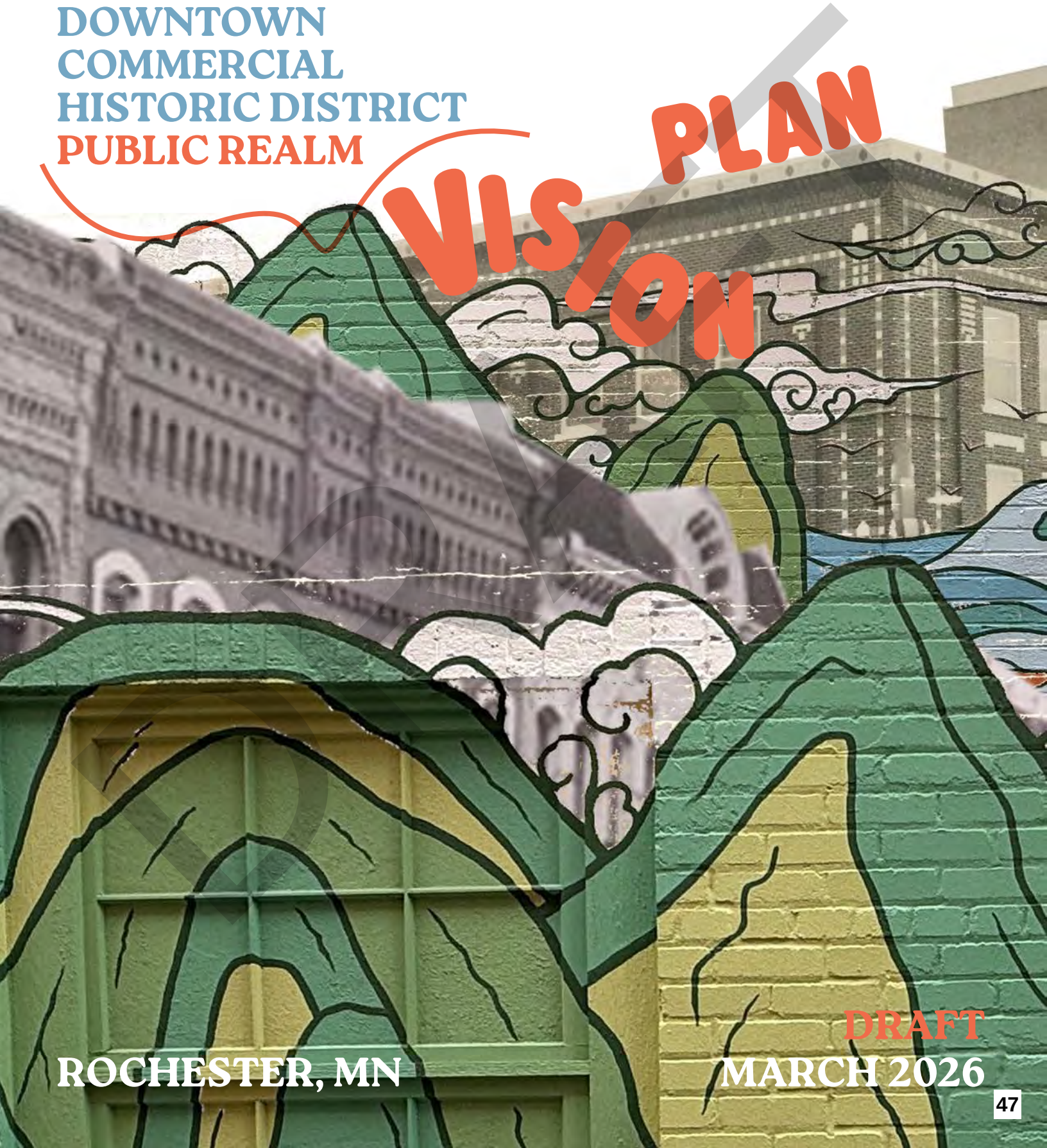
DMC Destination Medical Center

mend collaborative

NEW HISTORY

DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PUBLIC REALM

VISION PLAN



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ROCHESTER, MN

MARCH 2026

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Thank You

This Vision Plan is a guidebook for implementing a welcoming, unique, and safe public realm for the Downtown Commercial Historic District in downtown Rochester. This plan could not have been possible without the effort and guidance from the City of Rochester, Destination Medical Center, numerous downtown groups and organizations, and from the community and stakeholders who worked with the project team to ensure the following vision was rooted in community needs and aspirations. A special thanks to:

Numerous community stakeholders, local historians, organizers, and community members who participated in workshops, online activities, and pop up events

Rochester Downtown Alliance

Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce

Winona State University-Rochester

University of Minnesota Rochester

Rochester Heritage Preservation Commission

History Center of Olmsted County

Rochester, MN City Council at time of adoption:

Randy Schubring, *City Council President*
Patrick Keane, *City Council Member, 1st Ward*
Nick Miller, *City Council Member, 2nd Ward*
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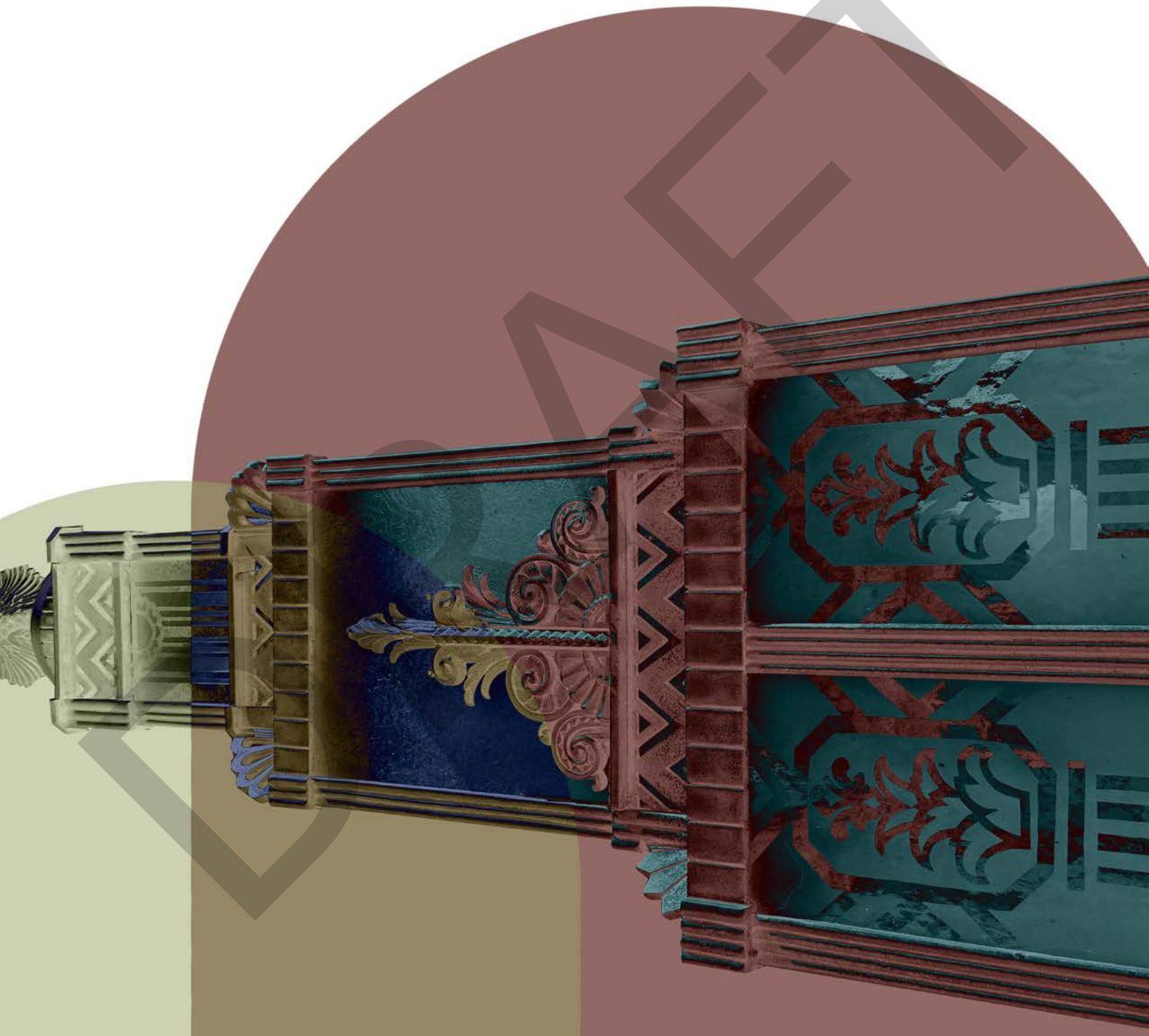
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Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District is the historic heart of downtown. It features a compact collection of streets, buildings, and public spaces that tell the story of Rochester's evolution from a 19th-century commercial center to a modern, growing regional destination. Designated as a local historic landmark in early 2024, the district now sits at a pivotal moment that the City is embracing as a time to honor this important history while ushering this place into the future of Rochester. As downtown experiences significant investment and change driven by institutional growth and re-development, the public realm of the historic district must evolve in a way that both protects its character and supports its continued vitality.

This Public Realm Vision Plan provides a cohesive framework to guide future improvements to the streets, sidewalks, alleys, and shared spaces within the Downtown Commercial Historic District. While the district's architecture conveys much of its history, the public realm shapes daily experience, supports local businesses, invites community life, and connects the district to the rest of downtown. This plan bridges preservation and progress by offering strategies that enhance walkability, comfort, safety, accessibility, and place identity while respecting the district's historic fabric and regulatory context.

Developed through extensive community and stakeholder engagement, the Vision Plan reflects the aspirations of residents, business owners, property owners, organizations, employees, and visitors who value the district's authenticity and also recognize the need for a more vibrant, inclusive, and connected public realm. Engagement efforts revealed strong support for public space activation, small business support, improved multimodal connectivity, increased environmental comfort, and visible follow-through for implementation.



The plan is grounded in a clear vision: Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District as a welcoming, energetic destination where people gather, connect, and create lasting memories within the city's historic commercial core.

To achieve this vision, the plan establishes guiding goals focused on fostering a strong sense of place and community, supporting small businesses, retaining historic character, and better weaving the district into the broader downtown fabric.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guiding framework for public realm improvements which typically are not regulated under other locally adopted heritage preservation regulations. The recommendations outlined in this Vision Plan were thoughtfully developed by aligning established standards and guidelines with community feedback and the City's goals and priorities for the Downtown Commercial Historic District.

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A central theme of the plan is that history stitches downtown together. The historic district functions as a connective seam, an overlapping "quilt patch", linking adjacent downtown districts and providing continuity amid change. This idea informs the plan's **public realm framework**, which is organized around four key lenses (see Chapter 3):

3.1 **Storytelling:** Embedding Rochester's layered history into the public realm through interpretive signage, public art, artifacts, and functional art that reveal stories without creating false history.

3.2 **Reimagined Streets:** Rebalancing key corridors, including 1st Avenue SW and Broadway Avenue S, to calm traffic, prioritize pedestrians, support biking and transit, and create space for placemaking and greenery while still allowing vehicular traffic.

3.3 **Green on Historic 3rd Street SW:** Transforming Historic 3rd Street into a curbless, flexible, green spine that supports everyday use, events, storytelling, and connections between the riverfront and downtown.

3.4 **Art Alleys:** Converting underutilized alleyways into safe, welcoming, and creative pedestrian spaces that support business operations while showcasing local art and culture.

Complementing this framework, the plan outlines recommendations for character elements such as plantings, furnishings, lighting, materials, wayfinding, and parking that establish a cohesive visual language for the district. These elements are designed to be durable, accessible, and compatible with historic features, while improving comfort, safety, and identity throughout the public realm.

The final chapter of the Vision Plan outlines how this plan isn't a single capital project, but a flexible implementation tool. This plan supports a phased approach that allows the City of Rochester to test ideas through short-term, low-cost interventions in coordination with community and historic groups, while planning for long-term, transformative investments.

Ultimately, this Public Realm Vision Plan re-frames the Downtown Commercial Historic District as a living, evolving place that honors Rochester's past, supports its present, and confidently welcomes its future.

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Chapter 1: Vision and Guiding Principals



Role of the Historic District

Historic districts play a crucial role in maintaining the identity and continuity of cities experiencing rapid change and development. In a place as unique as Rochester, Minnesota, where the urban core is evolving under the influence of major institutional growth and new development, the Downtown Commercial Historic District serves as an anchor of cultural and architectural heritage. This district represents the tangible reminders of the city's past, ensuring that as the skyline grows and the streetscape modernizes, the essence of what makes Rochester distinct and where it came from is not lost.

The best way to preserve this historic district and the unique, contributing historic structures within it, is to support the continued use of those buildings and the public realm.

Improvements within the public realm can help balance new investment with the integrity of existing historic fabric, encouraging renovation and adaptive reuse instead of demolition and displacement. This not only preserves the character and charm that makes downtown Rochester memorable, but also supports sustainability by extending the life of existing structures and maintaining walkable, human-scaled environments.

Equally important, this designated historic district fosters a sense of community and belonging. Here, residents and visitors feel connected to Rochester's layered story, from its early commercial core and medical heritage, to the evolving mix of civic, cultural, and social life that defines it today.



Historic streetscape of Broadway Avenue compared to today's public realm. Image sources: City of Rochester (left), Mend Collaborative (right).

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Importance of the Public Realm

This vision plan is essential for reinforcing the district's sense of place, celebrating its layered history, and ensuring its continued vitality in an era of monumental growth and change. While the district's architecture tells the story of Rochester's past, it is the streets, sidewalks, alleyways, and open spaces that provide a living experience. A thoughtful vision for this public realm will knit that story together encouraging both preservation and progress. The results will enhance how people move through, gather within, and connect to the historic district on a daily basis.

This plan provides the framework to elevate the district's historic character through cohesive design elements—lighting, materials, signage, and landscape—that highlight its architectural assets while creating a comfortable, inviting environment. It ensures that the public spaces reflect the district's authenticity, not by replicating the past, but by interpreting it in ways that feel relevant and engaging today. In doing so, the vision plan helps cultivate a stronger emotional and cultural connection between people and place.

Equally important, a public realm vision invites more people to experience and participate in the district's story. By improving accessibility, prioritizing pedestrians, and designing for gathering and social interaction, the plan can transform underutilized spaces into active destinations. It can also serve as a catalyst for small businesses, cultural programming, and events that draw residents and visitors alike—strengthening the economic and social fabric of downtown.

In Rochester, where the rapid pace of change is reshaping the city's core, a public realm vision plan becomes a tool not just for design, but for stewardship. It ensures that as new development emerges around it, the historic district remains a vibrant, connected, and distinctly Rochester place—one that honors its past while welcoming the future.



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Community Aspirations

Centering this visioning process with stakeholder input and participation was vital to creating this public realm vision plan. The district's character is defined not only by its blend of historic architecture, but also by its local businesses, community spirit, and the people who live, work, and invest here.

By engaging these voices throughout the process, improvements to the public realm better reflect shared community and stakeholder priorities while preserving the district's historic integrity. Meaningful collaboration not only leads to better design outcomes, but also builds trust, stewardship, and lasting community pride in Rochester's historic core.

Several community input sessions were held throughout the project, including:

- **Series of Four Focus Group Discussions**
  June 25th, 2025
- **District Door Knocking**
  July 2nd, 2025
- **Stakeholder Workshop #1**
  July 16th, 2025
- **Online Engagement**
  July 16th through August 31st, 2025
- **Thursdays Downtown Pop Up**
  August 14th, 2025
- **Stakeholder Workshop #2**
  Sept 17th, 2025

A more detailed look at these events, activities, and outcomes can be found in Appendix B: Engagement Summary.



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Vision and Goals

A vision statement provides a clear and inspiring foundation for the plan. It aligns goals and guides design decisions to reflect the community's values and aspirations.

This vision will be achieved by centering the recommendations within the plan around goals that will advance the vision to reality.

Vision Statement:



Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District is a vibrant and welcoming place where people gather, connect, and create new lasting memories among the core of Rochester's historical commercial spaces.

It is a place that resonates with excitement, culture, and energy of these historic blocks and the businesses within it. This is a destination full of life, where residents and visitors alike feel drawn to return again and again.

Goals:

- **The public realm will help foster a sense of place.**
- **The public realm will help foster a sense of community.**
- **The public realm will support and incubate small businesses and local owners.**
- **The public realm will intentionally weave the Downtown Commercial Historic District into the greater fabric of Downtown Rochester.**
- **The public realm will help retain the historic character of the District.**

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Chapter 2: The Case For Action



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Why a Vision Plan?

Case For Action

Completed in Summer 2025, the Case for Action report laid the groundwork for a vision plan for the public realm of Rochester's Downtown Historic District. The Case for Action analyzes the existing conditions and opportunities within the district from the perspective of:

- **The Story:** What narrative is the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District telling?
- **The Energy:** What is the energy of the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District?
- **The Context:** What place does the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District hold in the greater downtown fabric?

A main takeaway from the Case for Action is that, in general, the district lacks a cohesive visual identity for both period of significance elements (contributing features) due to the 92-year period of significance, as well as non-period of significance elements, as reflected in the inconsistent design of its public spaces. Because of this, the public realm has become a very important factor within the district to unify the district as a special place in the city. This Vision Plan is an opportunity to create a more cohesive vision for the district.

A more detailed look at the existing conditions analysis can be found in Appendix A: Case for Action.

Equity and Inclusion in the Public Realm

Indigenous Nations have long called the area of Rochester, Minnesota home, and Native American individuals and families continue to shape Rochester's cultural landscape, preserving their heritage and advocating for recognition and inclusion in the community. While residents of European descent remain the majority of Rochester's current population, racial and ethnic diversity within the city continues to grow with Black, Asian, and Native American residents living in Rochester.

Rochester's social and cultural fabric has benefited from meaningful contributions of underrepresented communities. BIPOC communities in the district are connected to the buildings and public spaces in and outside of the district through stories of resilience and discrimination, such as along Broadway Avenue, where the city's first Civil Rights March occurred in 1963.

Experiences and interactions in public spaces affect whether people feel welcome, safe, and represented, as public spaces can inadvertently exclude marginalized groups. This Vision Plan recognizes that public spaces have contributed to injustice and discrimination and actively recommends strategies that promote inclusion and equity to support a more resilient, just, and connected Rochester.

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Historic Designation

In early 2024, the City of Rochester designated the Downtown Commercial Historic District as a local historic landmark. Covering roughly three city blocks bounded by Broadway Avenue South, 1st Avenue Southwest, 2nd Street Southwest, and 4th Street Southwest, the district includes 28 contributing properties that define its historic character, along with several non-contributing properties.

A period of significance refers to the specific span of time during which the district gained its historical, architectural, or cultural importance. In other words, it identifies the era during which the properties within the district collectively gained the qualities that make the area historically significant today. For the downtown commercial historic district, the 1870-1962 period of significance corresponds to the time period when this area functioned as the city's primary commercial district.

The contributing properties in the Downtown Commercial Historic District represent some of the most intact buildings originating from the district's period of significance from 1870 to 1962.

This time frame serves as a guide for preservation and redevelopment decisions, helping ensure that any changes within the district respect and reinforce the architectural and cultural character of that period.

You can read the full Historic Landmark Eligibility Designation Study at the City of Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District website here:



Historic postcard originally published for the historic Rexall Store in Rochester, MN, now part of the collection of the Williams brothers at the Eagle Store located at 23 2nd St SW. Photo by Mend Collaborative.

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Historic Assets

1 Columbia Hotel (1858)
2 Clausen and Adler Hardware (1870)
3 F.J. Paine Company/Palace Block (1873)
4 Williams Block (1874)
5 Baker and Hanson/The Council Saloon (1875)
6 Union National Bank Building (1878)
7 C.F. Massey Co. (1880)
8 Commercial Building (1884)
9 A.J. Bjerring Barbershop/ Bjerring Hotel (1884)
10 Rochester Egg and Poultry Co. (1884)
11 Black's Lunch (1884)
12 C.H. Morrill and Son, Wholesale Grocery (1884)
13 Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. (1884)
14 Holland's Food Shop (1884)
15 F.J. Paine Company (1885)
16 Bach Music Company (1885)
17 F.A. Poole Building (1885)
18 Kennedy Building (1888)
19 Alley (1900)
20 Blakely Building (1902)
21 Rochester Commercial Club Building (1904)
22 I.O.O.F. Lodge #13 (1906)
23 Stebbins Building (1917)
24 Olmsted Country Bank and Trust Company (1918)
25 Hotel Francis (1918)
26 Riverside Building (1919)
27 Lawler Laundry Building Façade (1920)
28 City Hall (1931)
29 Dayton's Department Store (1954)
30 Northwestern National Bank of Rochester (1957)
31 Parking Lot (circa 1960)
32 318 Commons (2011)
33 The Hue Apartments (2020)

Contributing Buildings
Non-Contributing Buildings

Data Sources: City of Rochester, Rochester Public Works, New History Historic Analysis

The Story



History

The story of the district is reflected in its pattern of development. Downtown Rochester began as a thriving 19th-century trade center focused on agriculture with a mill at the river. It was rebuilt following the devastating 1883 tornado, and grew along with the up-and-coming Mayo Clinic. While it faced competition from outlying shopping centers during Rochester's suburban expansion after mid-20th century, it prevailed. Today, the district continues to feature buildings that embody its rich architectural and social heritage.

Public Realm Analysis

The Case For Action included an analysis of shared and accessible public realm areas such as streets, sidewalks, alleyways, and other gathering spaces of the historic district. Key takeaways include:

- Character
  - » There is a general inconsistent design of the public spaces. Materials such as benches, sidewalks, and plantings vary widely, and some modern developments contrast with the historic character of surrounding buildings, creating a sense of spatial imbalance.
- Social Value
  - » The unique character of the historic buildings in the district help support a thriving hub of charming and diverse businesses that attract customers.
  - » Visitors of the district do not generally have access to public gathering spaces. The public realm functions as a space to pass through rather than to linger and gather.
- Accessibility and Safety
  - » The front door of some contributing buildings have a step that prevents full accessible entry.
  - » Comfortable, wide, and well-lit sidewalks throughout the district provide safe and easy navigation for pedestrians, with the exception of Broadway Avenue, where sidewalks are narrow and lack a buffer from traffic.
  - » Pedestrian signals and ramps make crossings along Broadway Avenue safer, while crossing 1st Avenue at 3rd Street pose more risk without a traffic light or crosswalk signal.
- Wayfinding, Signage, and Storytelling
  - » Wayfinding and signage managed by the city mostly includes street signs and parking regulations with few downtown destination markers.
  - » Property owners use creative signs to share local history and culture.

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The Energy



Live, Work, Play

The buildings in the Downtown Commercial Historic District serve an important role in drawing people to the district for business, dining, shopping and living.

A variety of residential building types exist in both historic and new structures. Residences in the historic district ensure that the area has a core community to sustain the cultural vibrancy and economic vitality of the district. Furthermore, the varied housing types that exist in the district encourage racial and income diversity, supporting a more inclusive and resilient area capable of adapting to changing economic conditions.

Opportunities to shop abound, with vintage and antique stores, record stores, and art galleries occupying traditional storefronts. Businesses are an active part of daily life, providing locals and visitors services ranging from medical and dental care to photography, engineering, and architecture. The food and beverage scene attracts many to the district for its extensive options including small grocers, trendy cafes, sit-down restaurants, and watering holes.

The diverse array of building uses in the Rochester Downtown Historic District preserve the buildings through continued use, contribute to the vibrant culture and heritage of the area, and support regular activity in the district.

Art and Design

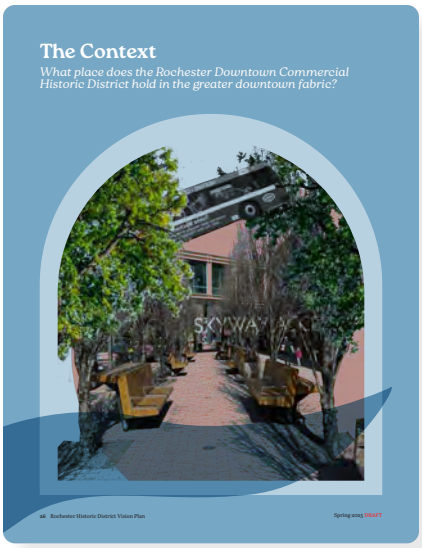
Public art throughout the district, from murals to small artistic discoveries, create lively public spaces that reveal and share the rich story of the district. Art studios, music shops, design consultants, and other businesses support active artistic expression and contribute to the district's reputation as a hub of public art. Through upholding cultural identity and expression to embracing inclusion and belonging, public art enriches the district.

Historical Interpretation

Property owners and businesses creatively interpret and promote the history of the district through signage, plaques, and graffiti. These stories and relics give the district a distinct charm and engage visitors in fun ways to learn about the area.

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The Context



Connections to Previous Plans

Multiple initiatives and plans are set to bring additional growth to Downtown Rochester. These recent projects highlight the city's investment in mobility and public realm infrastructure. Historic landmark designation established boundaries of the historic district. This Vision Plan emphasizes integrating the district into these broader downtown initiatives.

Regulatory Analysis

Zoning and preservation regulatory overlays shape future development within the district. Currently, the district's Mixed Use Downtown (MX-D) Business Subdistrict overlay allows for high-intensity mixed-use development that aligns with the Downtown Master Plan while the Heritage Preservation Overlay (HPO) supports protection of the district's historic identity through the 2022 Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines.

Mobility Analysis

Historically, the district accommodated both pedestrians and vehicular traffic, first horse-drawn vehicles and later automobiles. Today, the district continues to attract significant foot traffic, as indicated by data from tools such as Strava*. For more than a century, the district's streets have balanced pedestrian and vehicular access, supporting both local activity and broader city connections. Although the district's corridors are generally well-connected, there remains potential to further enhance pedestrian and transit-oriented development.

Broadway Avenue and 2nd Street SW handle the heaviest vehicular traffic and support significant transit, including the future Link Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line. Streets like 3rd Street SW and 1st Avenue SW support more local access, and provide room for pedestrians, parking, and flexible uses like events. 4th Street SW acts as an important east-west route, though its function may change with upcoming infrastructure upgrades. The district's alley network, while now mostly functional, holds untapped potential for walking and placemaking.

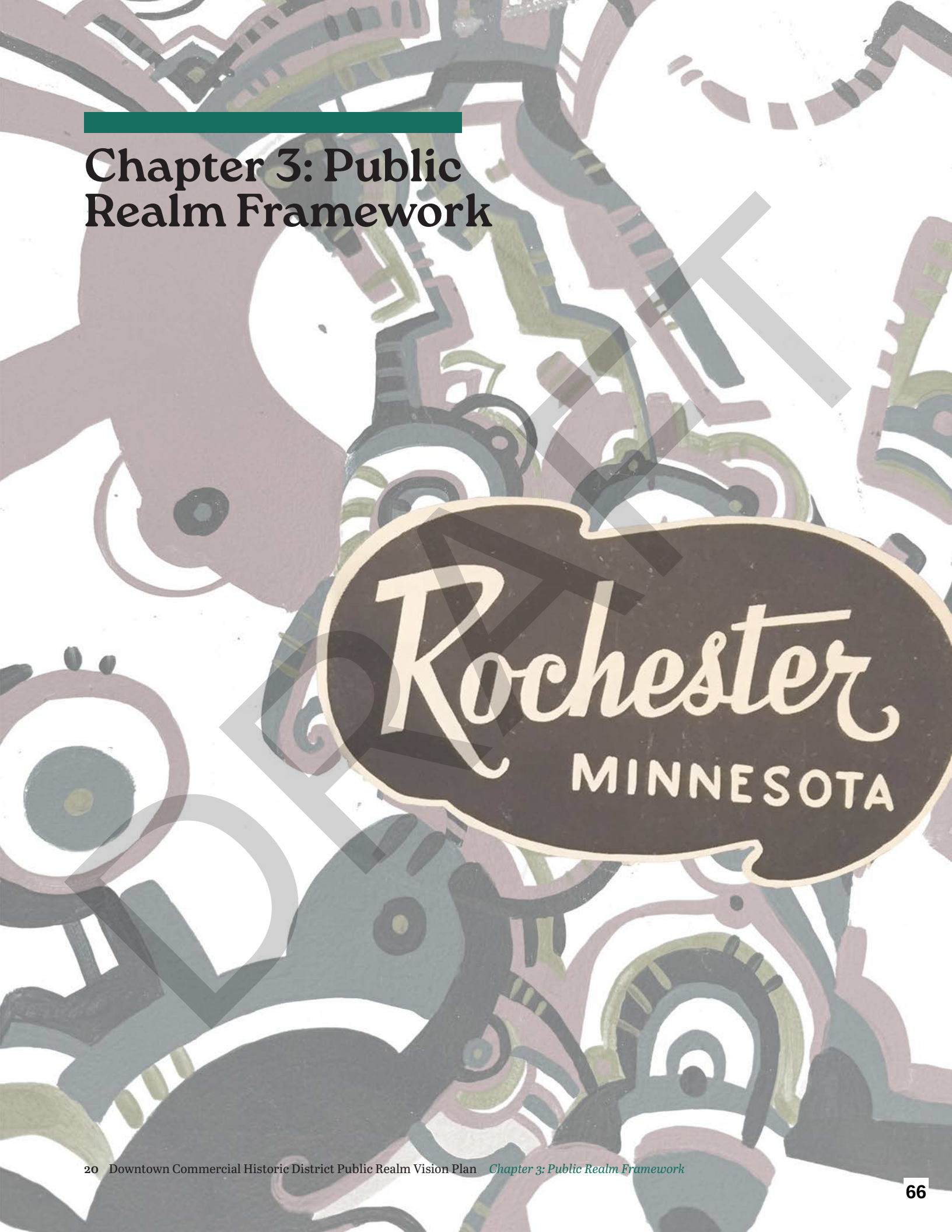
Parking

A mix of city-owned parking ramps and on-street spaces support local businesses by providing convenient access for customers. Since most parking is located in ramps, Rochester could prioritize them and reserve on-street spaces for short-term parking.

Strava is a fitness tracking platform that logs walks, runs and cycling.

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Chapter 3: Public Realm Framework



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Factors Influencing the Vision Plan

Finding the Balance

The district's 92-year period of significance from 1870 to 1962 was a time when modern priorities such as sustainable design practices, urban heat island cooling, or accessibility were not common. Today, however, creating an inclusive and resilient downtown demands that we thoughtfully integrate features like accessible spaces, green infrastructure, and sustainability considerations.

This wide range of the period of significance also explains the breadth of design language within the district. The ornate decorative brickwork on the 19th century buildings contrasts with post-WWII sleeker mid-century architecture, contributing to a non-cohesive vernacular within the district. Within the historic features themselves there is contrast, opening the door for a Vision Plan to center the district in a unifying design language for the public realm.

The challenge and opportunity lies in balancing contemporary needs with the preservation of historic character, ensuring that new interventions are compatible in scale, material, and design language while enhancing the district's functionality and appeal. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and a framework where there is not a standardized regulatory permitting process, as the city does not require a permit for work done by the city in the public right of way (public realm).

The recommendations in this Vision Plan were carefully developed by weighing key factors of already adopted standards and guidelines with community and city goals and priorities for the Downtown Commercial Historic District.

By combining these perspectives, the public realm in the district can honor its historic roots while evolving into an inviting, equitable, and sustainable environment for all:

2022 Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation

2017 City Design Guidelines for the DMC District

Community and Stakeholder Input

Final Vision Plan

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Historic Requirements | As a designated historic district, historic preservation considerations must be applied to the plan's strategies to ensure that future improvements respect and enhance the district's unique architectural character and cultural heritage.

City Requirements | The Downtown Commercial Historic District lies within the DMC boundaries and is therefore subject to the City's DMC design requirements.

Community Requirements | This vision plan must also reflect the voices of the community and key stakeholders.

Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Guidelines

In 2022, the City adopted Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines that apply to all local historic landmarks. These reflect a commitment to stewarding historic properties as part of the City's broader mission to enhance community quality and pride, and ensure that changes to properties are in alignment with both historic preservation standards and the City's foundational principles. This approach emphasizes collaboration and balanced decision-making for historic properties.

Historic Considerations Influenced by Secretary of the Interior Standards

As part of this Vision Plan process, historic design considerations specific to the Downtown Commercial Historic District were developed that are influenced by the Secretary of the Interior Standards (SOIS) for Rehabilitation. However, not all recommendations within this vision plan meet the SOIS requirements. The team worked closely with the City of Rochester, the DMC, and the community to establish a shared vision for the district's public realm that takes into account the SOIS, while balancing a public realm that works for today's community.

Adopted DMC District Design Guidelines

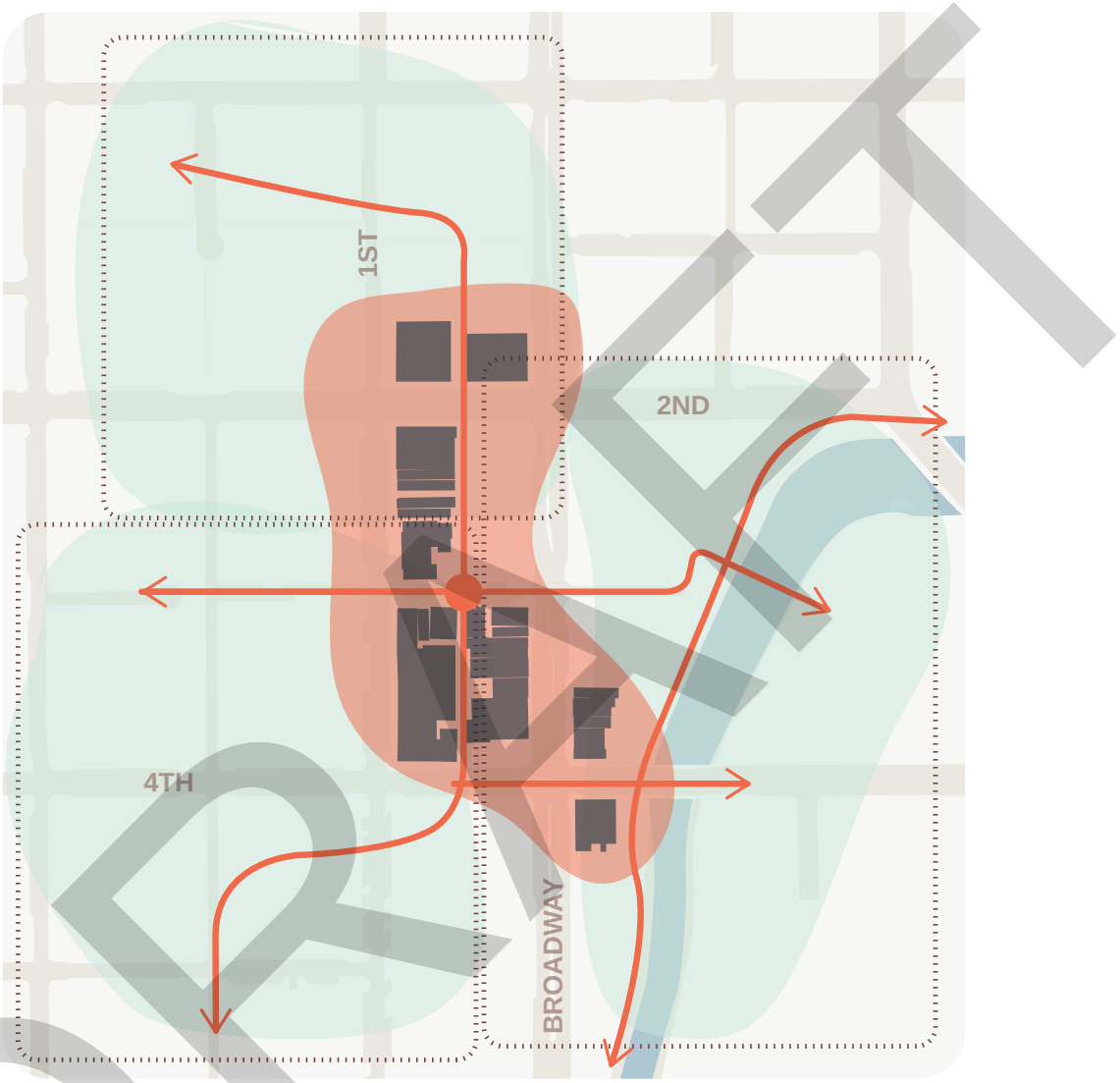
The City of Rochester formally adopted the design guidelines for the DMC District in 2017. These guidelines center health-oriented principles in the public realm, and introduce ways to enhance these critical "third places" where people can gather, where social and economic opportunities thrive, physical activity increases, and the general environment of the urban core is improved.

Stakeholder and Community Input

Community members and district stakeholders were instrumental in ensuring that the recommendations in this plan are based in the realities of living, working, visiting, and doing business in this district. Whether through day-to-day business or visitor experience, historical knowledge, or other personal relationship to this district, each recommendation in this vision plan is tied to a desired outcome from the people most impacted by this plan. Several meetings, workshops, and online touchpoints provided key insight into community desires for the district.

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Guiding Framework



History Stitches Downtown Rochester Together

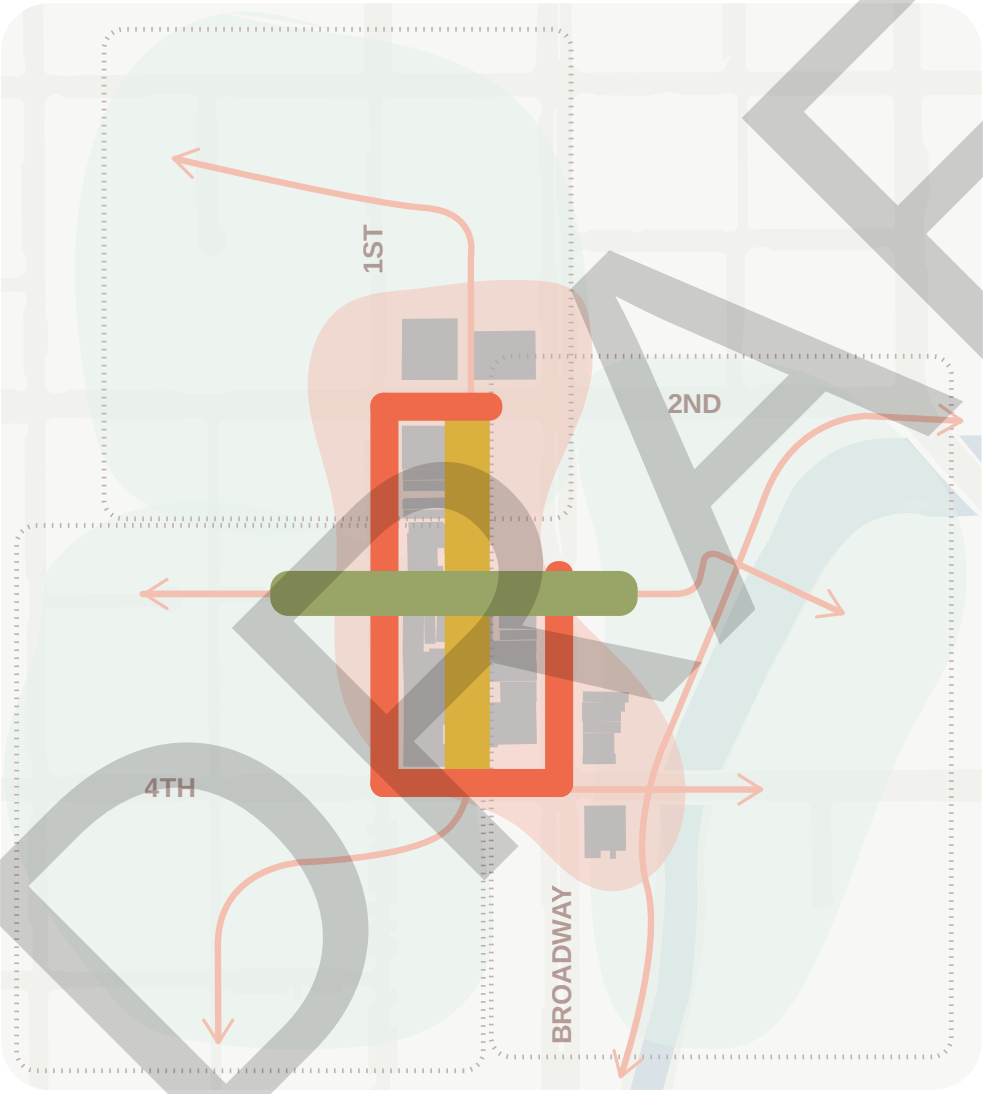
The Downtown Commercial Historic District sits at the heart of the city's center, intersecting numerous downtown districts and serving as a connective seam that binds them together. Its historic buildings, layered stories, and long-standing commercial corridors act like an overlapping quilt patch that stitches downtown together.

As each adjacent district continues to evolve through new development, infrastructure updates, and shifting uses, the historic district provides continuity, grounding downtown in a shared heritage that transcends individual projects or boundaries.

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Framework Lenses

This public realm vision plan for the Downtown Commercial Historic District balances broad aspirations with practical design guidance that honors the district's history by establishing a framework for how streets, alleys, and shared spaces should function, look, and feel through four key lenses:



3.1: Infusing **storytelling** throughout the public realm to establish a sense of place, a unique identity for the district, and to provide insight into the history and importance of the district.

3.2: Re-imagined **streets** within the district to increase public realm space, calm traffic, support alternative transportation initiatives, and provide placemaking opportunities.

3.3: Re-visioning **3rd St SW** in the district to provide a programmable, green, and anchored core that assists in better connecting to regional assets.

3.4: Formalizing a community-driven vision to convert the district's underutilized **alleyways** into vibrant third spaces for community and art.

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3.1 Storytelling

Storytelling features in the public realm play a vital role in revealing the layered history of a place. These elements help translate buildings, streets, and landscapes into living narratives, offering visitors a window into the people, events, and cultural forces that shaped the historic district. By embedding stories of Rochester's history directly into the public realm, they spark curiosity, deepen understanding, and elevate the district's significance beyond its architectural character.

Ultimately, storytelling features can reinforce the district's identity, strengthen its sense of place, and remind residents and visitors alike why the preservation and celebration of historic districts, especially the Downtown Commercial Historic District, matter. These elements should enhance the quality and continuity of the streetscape, encourage exploration, and create memorable, human-scaled experiences that celebrate the district's legacy and ongoing vitality.

Storytelling elements, such as interpretive panels, artwork, sculpture, and other installations should be integrated into the district's public realm in areas that are visually or physically accessible, yet out of clear walking paths, bikeways, and roadways. While their designs should act as a visual foil to the historic character of the district and avoid a sense of false history, it is important that these features complement rather than overwhelm the district and features they sit adjacent to.

All storytelling features in the public realm, and all elements affixed to any structure in the district should be vetted by the City of Rochester to assess compliance with existing ordinances, accuracy, alignment with this Vision Plan's intents, and for review to deem if a Certificate of Appropriateness is required.



Storytelling can take shape through many styles and methods, such as these affixed panel murals in a historic port in Pensacola, Florida.

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Art & Storytelling Feature Types

Integrated



Artwork is integrated into public infrastructure or non-contributing architecture, such as mosaics in a sidewalk.

Murals



Artwork oriented on a building, such as a mural painted to a canvas or panel or a building wrapping.

Artifacts



Integration of historic materials, such as neon signs, into the public realm. These may nor may not be from the District's period of significance.

Standalone



Artworks, typically sculptures or structures that are freestanding and not integrated into a larger building or site.

Signage



Text and image based panels of varying sizes that communicate specific histories from the district. *Note: this category is specific to historic interpretive signage, not business or directional signage.*

Functional



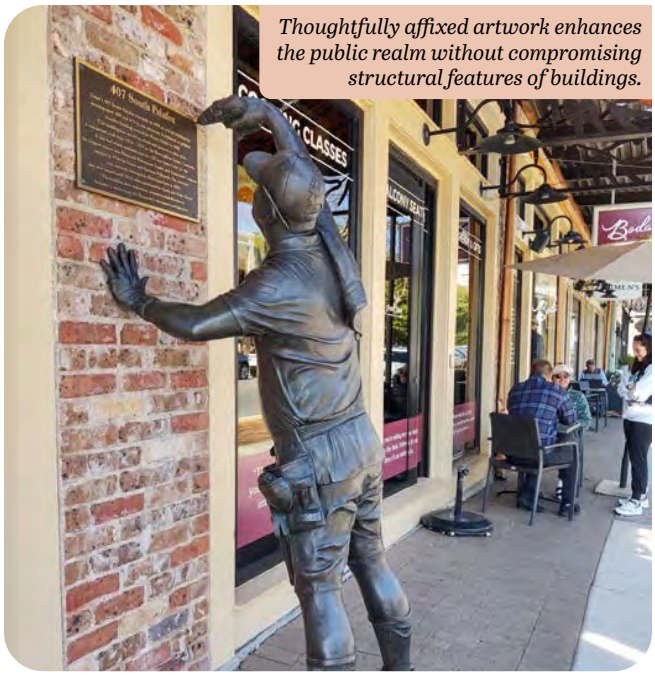
Objects that are both functional and practical and artistic expressions. Streetscape amenities, including lights and storytelling signage, may be functional art elements.

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Art & Storytelling Feature Matrix

Type	Storytelling	Locations	Historic Considerations
Integrated	Interpretations of local heritage, local businesses, or natural systems.	Building entrances, railings, stairways, plazas, crosswalks, skyways, and along primary pedestrian corridors.	Integrated art should be compatible in material, color, and scale with surrounding historic context. Installations should be reversible and not obscure or damage historic features. Designs should read as contemporary but respectful, emphasizing craftsmanship and detail.
Murals	Storytelling through color, words, and images capturing community identity, notable figures, or local themes such as innovation, industry, or the riverfront.	Buildings, alleyways, parking structures, and secondary facades facing pedestrian routes.	Murals should not obstruct historic building features and should be prioritized for non-contributing buildings. They may be affixed on the side of historic buildings via canvas or panels that will not damage historic materials. It is not appropriate to paint unpainted masonry.
Artifacts	Communicates the district and Rochester's cultural history.	Gateways, alleys, courtyards, plazas, sidewalks, or interpretive walking routes.	Original artifacts should be stabilized and displayed in ways that prevent deterioration. Mounting should be reversible and accompanied by interpretive signage. New installations should differentiate between original and contemporary materials.
Standalone	Represents the district's spirit of innovation, commerce, community, and continuity between past and present.	Edges of wider sidewalks, open spaces, near transit stops, or nodes at street intersections.	Freestanding works should not obstruct sightlines to historic buildings or detract from architectural character. Scale should relate to the surrounding context.
Signage	Significant people, businesses, and events that occurred in the district during the period of significance.	Smaller individual panels at each contributing building, larger panels at wider public spaces.	Storytelling or interpretive signage should be simple in design. Content should be fully vetted and researched through an accredited historic professional or historical society.
Functional	Combines beauty and use to tell stories through craft and detail. Patterns referencing local motifs or historic materials.	Any location where site furnishings are currently located where they could be replaced with functional art. Additionally, sidewalks, open spaces, near transit stops, or nodes at street intersections	Functional artworks should be integrated sparingly into the public realm to not distract from historic features.

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Thoughtfully affixed artwork enhances the public realm without compromising structural features of buildings.



Carefully located interpretive signage can tell curated and unique stories.

Framework Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- See "Art & Storytelling Feature Matrix" on following page.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

- Establish district and sub-district identity
- Create a safe, inviting, and connected public realm
- Strengthen gateways
- Establish signature open spaces
- Design streets for pedestrians
- Infuse the city with public art
- Design smart streets

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.
- Attachments to structures must be reviewed by the city to determine whether a certificate of appropriateness is required.

What we heard

- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.
- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.

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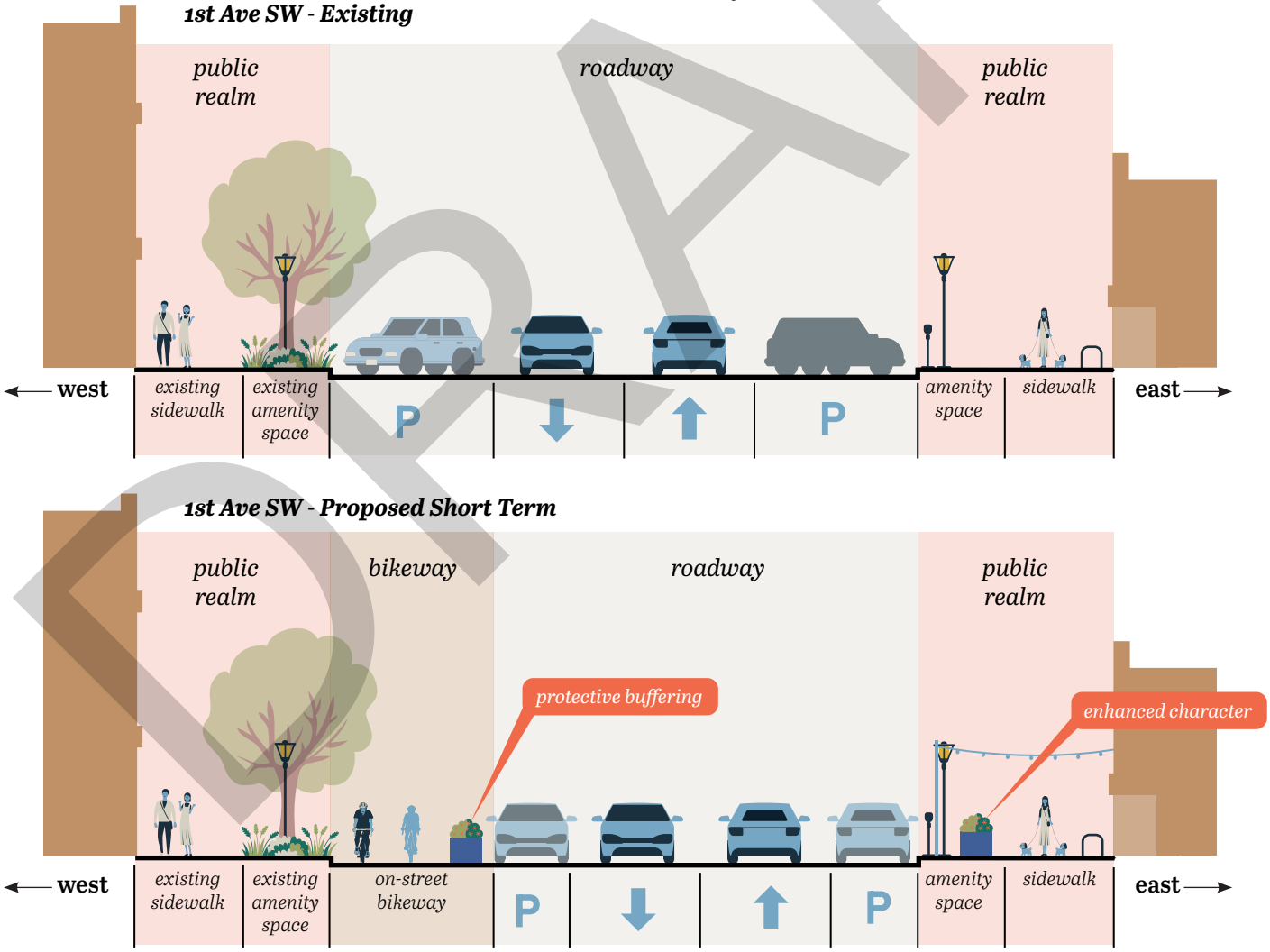
3.2 1st Ave SW & Broadway Ave in the District

1st Avenue Southwest

1st Avenue SW is an important corridor through downtown, connecting beloved parts of the community and providing access to local businesses. This roadway is under review for improvements, and this Vision Plan approaches a short term and long term vision for 1st Ave SW. The short term vision focuses on low-cost design interventions that can be implemented quickly to enhance the public streetscape, allowing for the opportunity to test and refine the proposed redesign before committing to a permanent design. In contrast, a long term vision explores more extensive redevelopment of the right of way that requires greater time and investment to implement, but creates a lasting, high-quality public realm that better serves the corridor's future.

Short Term Vision

The short term proposed design for 1st Avenue Southwest introduces a balanced, multimodal street section that enhances safety and comfort for all users without

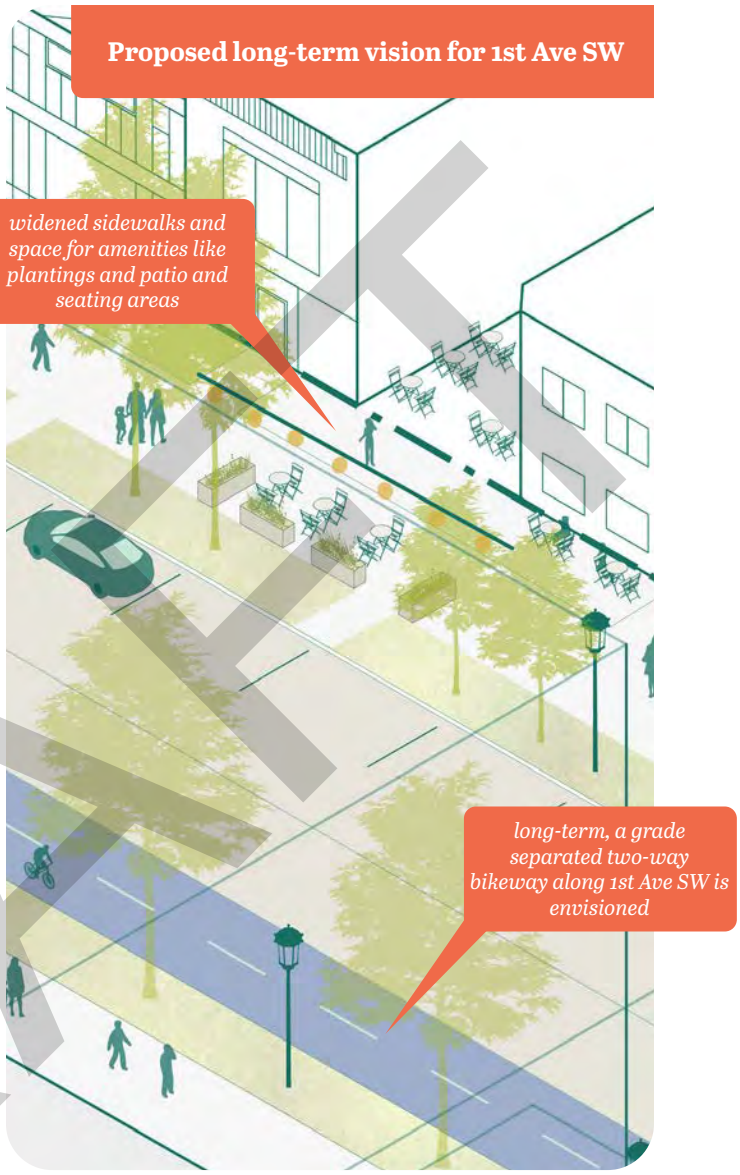


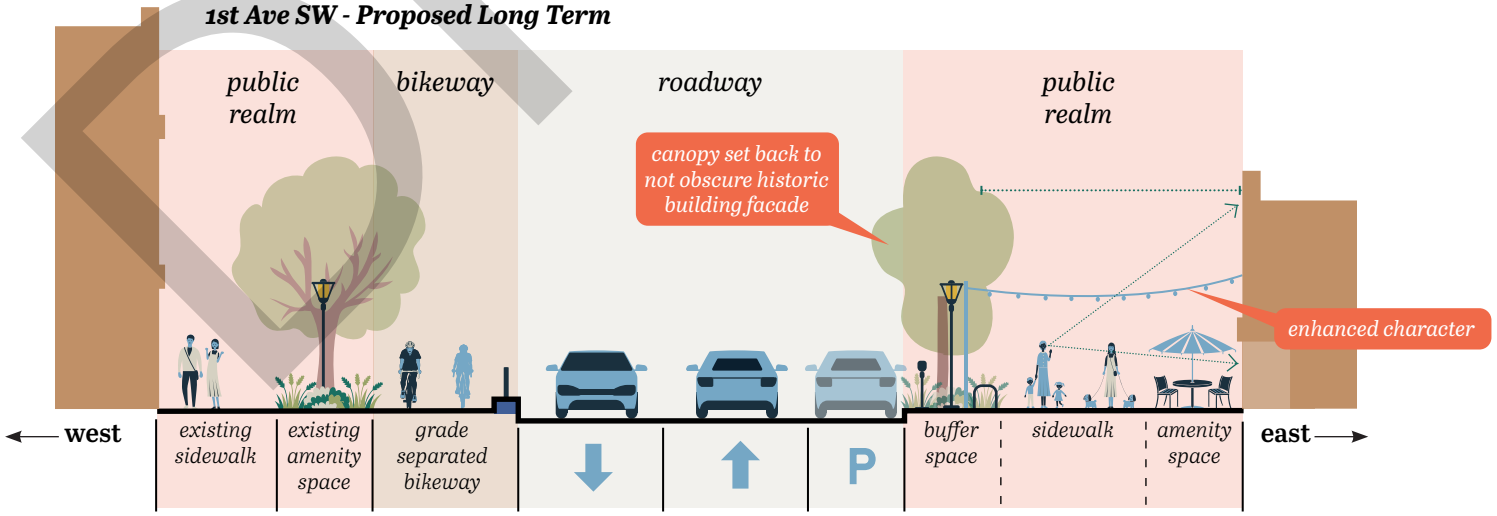
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requiring major reconstruction or curb relocation. The design reallocates existing roadway space to add dedicated bike lanes on the west side of the street. This concept achieves a vibrant, multimodal streetscape through strategic striping as a cost-effective transformation that does not require altering existing curbs or major infrastructure.

Long Term Vision

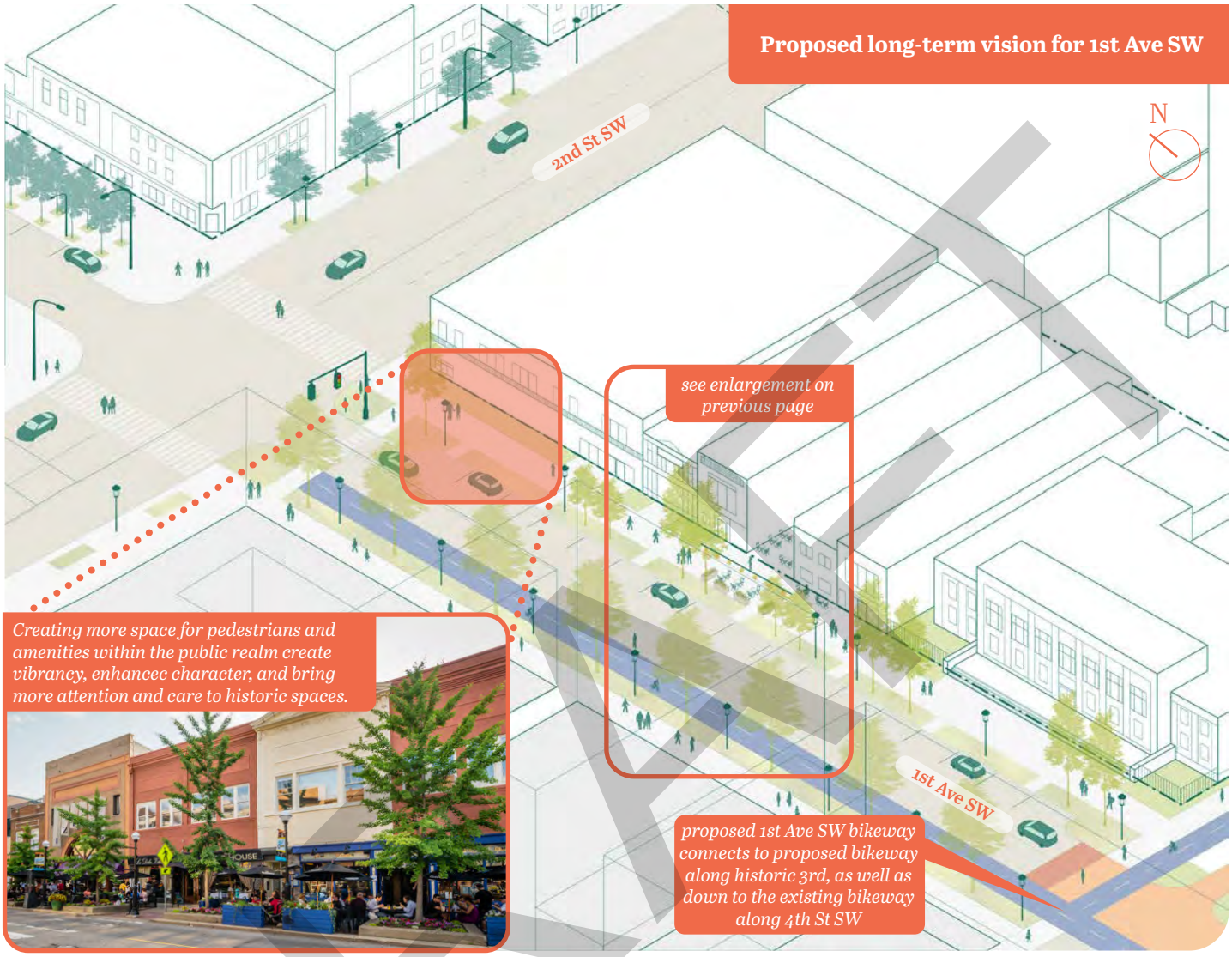
Investing in a redesigned street section that includes adjusting curb locations offers a transformative opportunity to enhance both pedestrian comfort and public realm quality within the historic district. By shifting curbs to expand sidewalks and create a buffered safe bikeway, this design creates more generous pedestrian zones that can accommodate wider planting zones, seating or areas of gathering, lighting, and other amenities that contribute to a welcoming and accessible environment. In a historic district, this investment not only supports modern mobility and accessibility goals but also provides the framework for context-sensitive enhancements that celebrate the area's heritage while ensuring its streets function as inviting, people-oriented public spaces.





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Proposed long-term vision for 1st Ave SW



Creating more space for pedestrians and amenities within the public realm create vibrancy, enhancec character, and bring more attention and care to historic spaces.

Short term vision with a protected, on-street, two-way bikeway. Utilize landscape planters for added greenery and comfort in the public realm.



Long term vision with a grade separated two-way bikeway that is buffered from the pedestrian sidewalk with amenity space such as landscape or patio area.

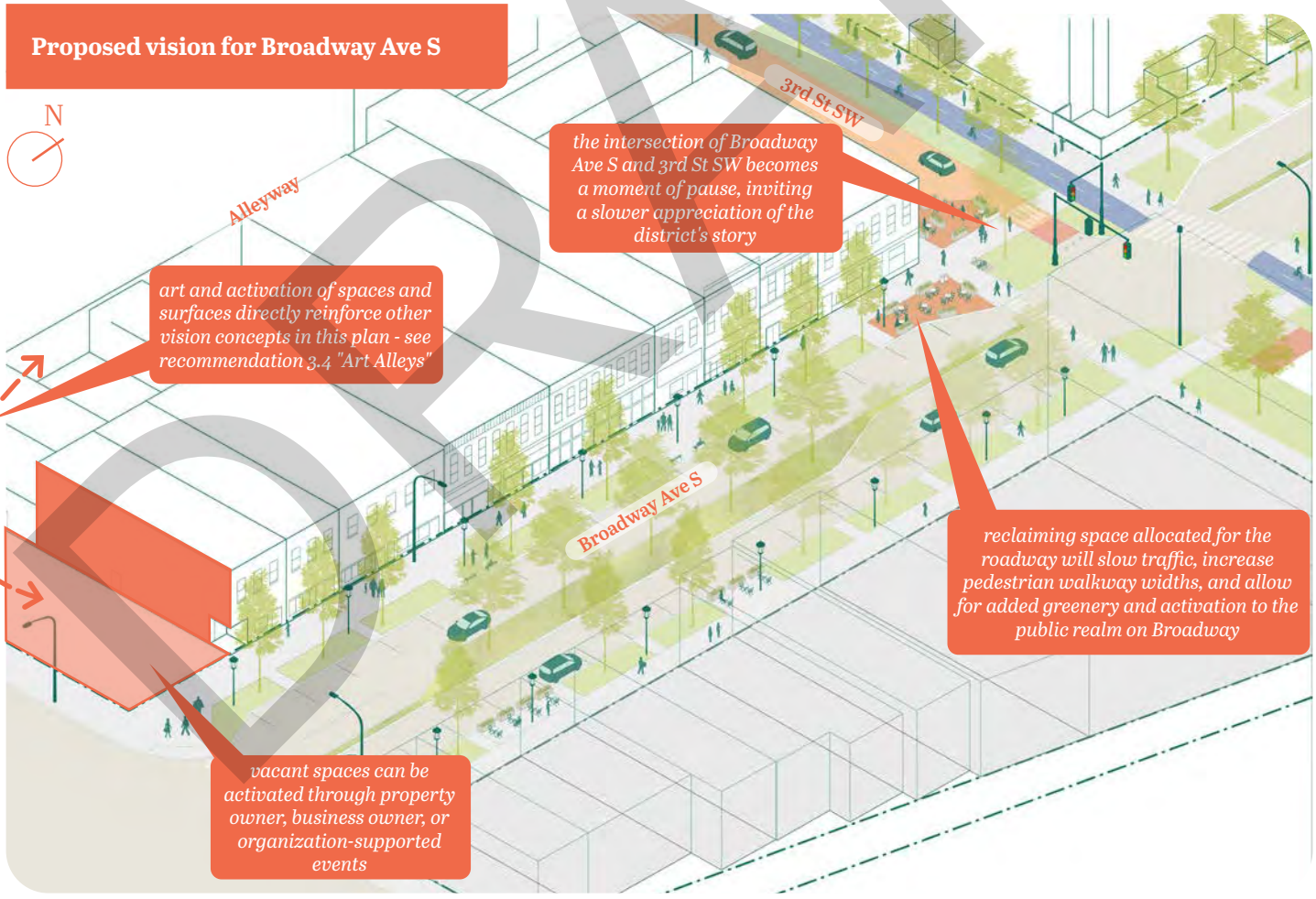


Broadway Avenue South

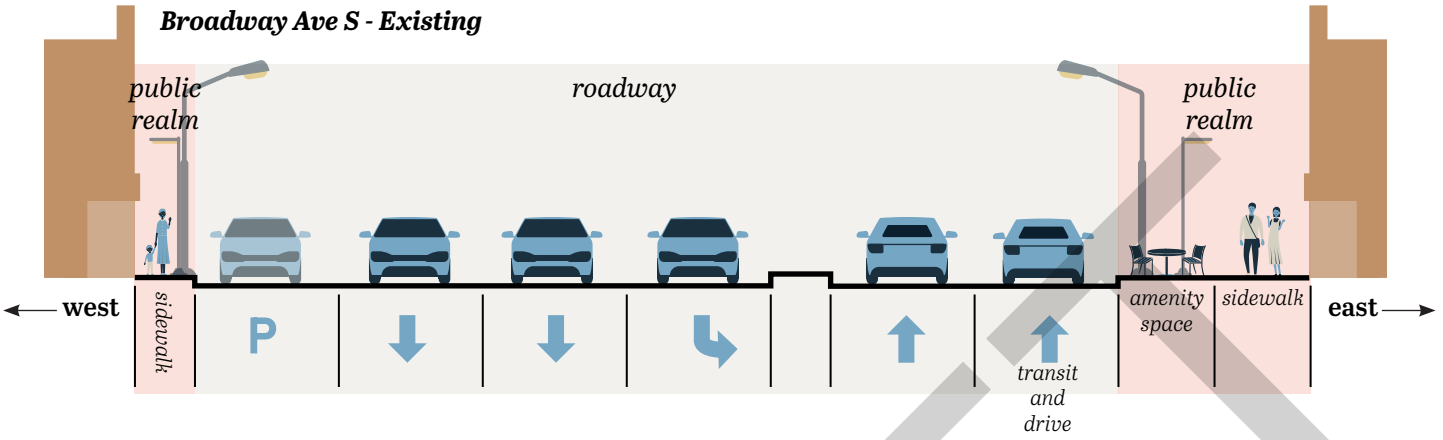
During the community and stakeholder engagement process for this Vision Plan, it was of general perception from the public that Broadway Ave South is too fast, too unsafe, and too dedicated to through traffic with no consideration to the pedestrian experience. This vision plan reimagines Broadway Ave S as a rebalanced street to prioritize safety, comfort, and a more vibrant public realm by reducing overall traffic speed and expanding space for people and planting.

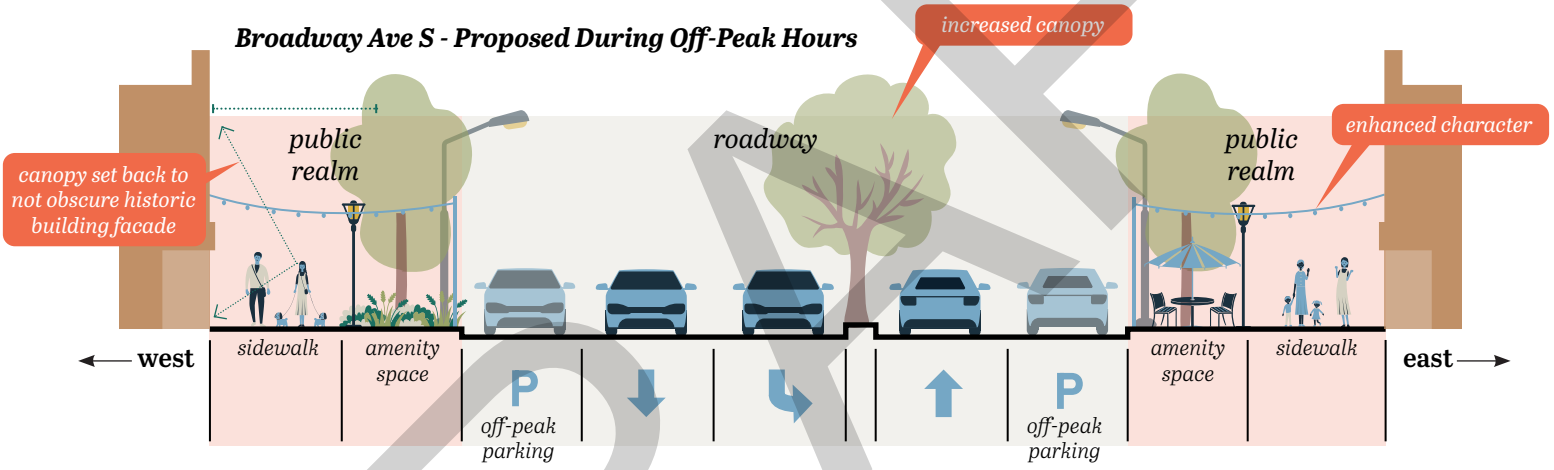
By reconfiguring the corridor into two through lanes, a central turn lane, and flexible on/off parking and transit lanes, the design simplifies and slows vehicle movement while creating new opportunities for amenity space, greening, and placemaking. The revised layout re-dedicates the existing parking lanes to amenity zones. These spaces can accommodate café seating, parklets, bike parking, or seasonal planting. During peak transit hours, the most outward lane is travel and transit oriented, and during off peak hours the most outward lane flexes to parking only. This flexible design approach supports both mobility and activation, transforming Broadway Ave S into a greener, calmer, and more people-focused street that enhances the character and livability of the downtown district.

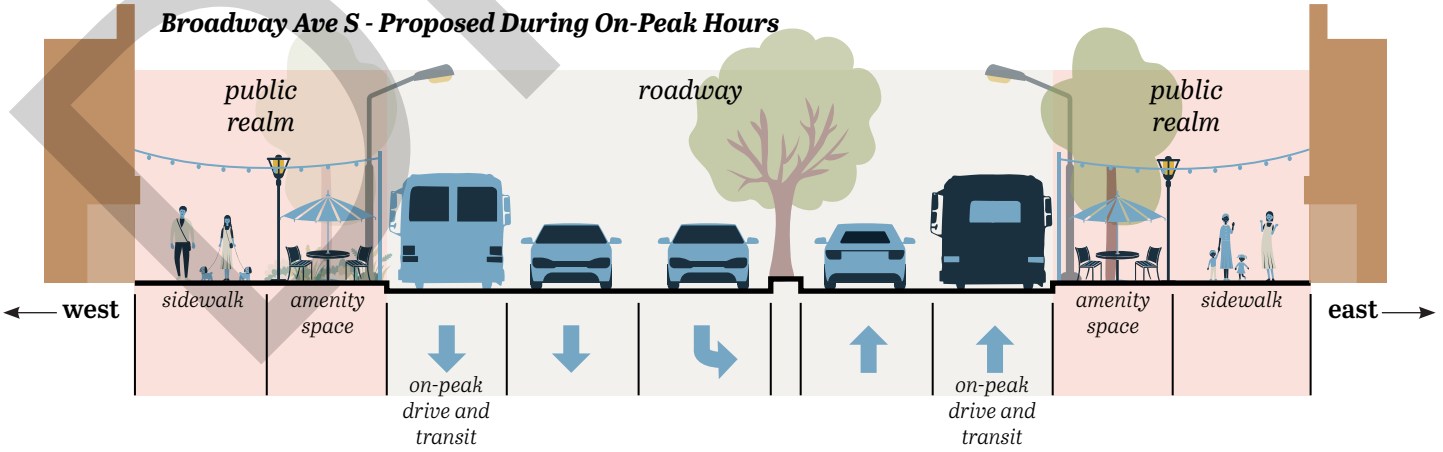
Proposed vision for Broadway Ave S



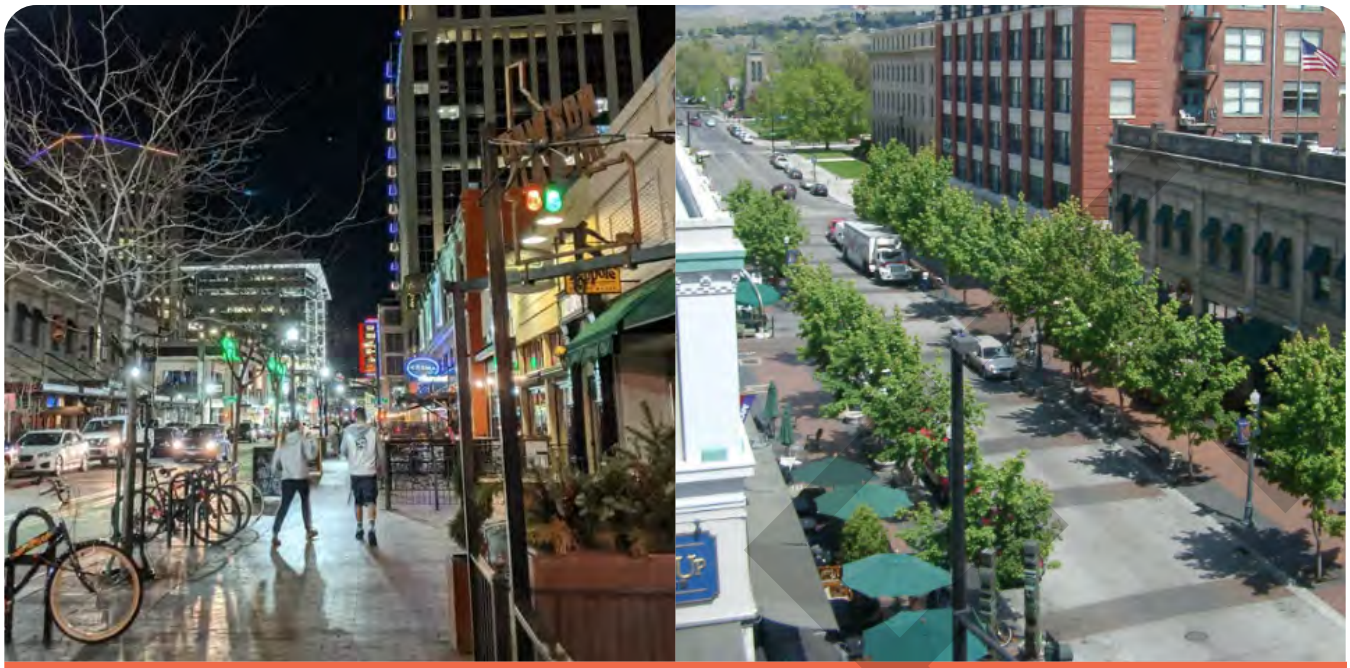
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Broadway Ave S - Existing
public realm
roadway
public realm
west
sidewalk
P
amenity space
sidewalk
east
transit and drive


Broadway Ave S - Proposed During Off-Peak Hours
increased canopy
canopy set back to not obscure historic building facade
public realm
roadway
public realm
enhanced character
west
sidewalk
amenity space
P
off-peak parking
P
off-peak parking
amenity space
sidewalk
east


Broadway Ave S - Proposed During On-Peak Hours
public realm
roadway
public realm
west
sidewalk
amenity space
on-peak drive and transit
on-peak drive and transit
amenity space
sidewalk
east

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8th Street in Boise, Idaho provides a successful example of balancing historic character with enhancing the vibrancy and comfort of the public realm in a downtown setting. With a calmed roadway, added comfort elements such as shade, seating, and pedestrian-scale lighting, and space for businesses to activate public areas, this streetscape is comfortable and vibrant year-round.

Framework Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- Retain the street grid pattern with rectangular blocks divided by north-south alleys.
- Retain the urban, walkable character of the district. Maintain sidewalks between buildings and traffic/parking lanes.
- Delineating traffic/parking lanes from sidewalks with a curb while meeting accessibility requirements is preferred.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

- Create a safe, inviting, and connected public realm
- Enhance connections to nature and natural systems
- Create sustainable community infrastructure
- Create a healthy community
- Design streets for pedestrians
- Establish the urban forest
- Develop sustainable water management strategies

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.

What we heard

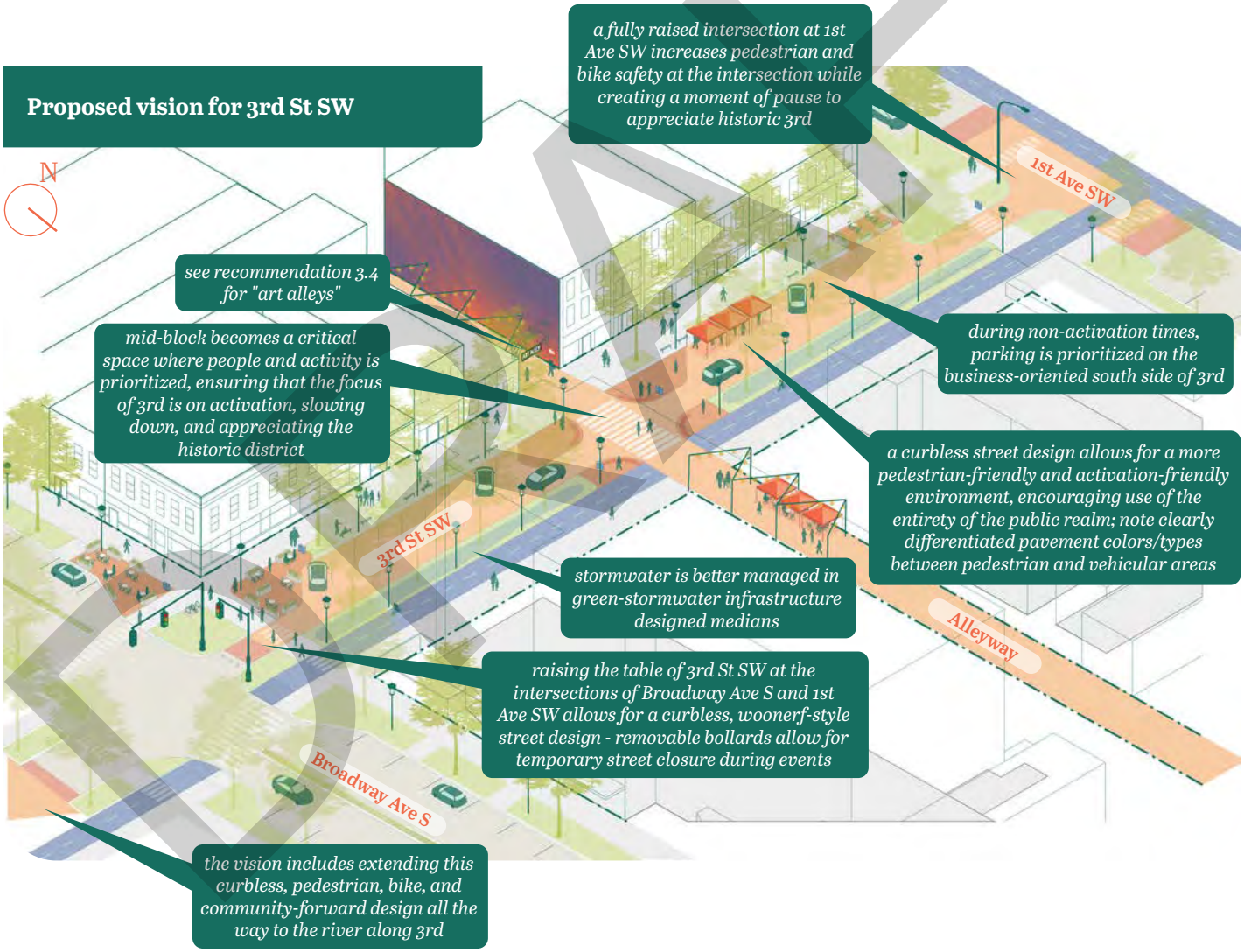
- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.
- The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.
- There are opportunities for improvement regarding accessibility and multimodal connectivity.

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3.3 Green on Historic 3rd

Historic 3rd St SW plays a defining role in connecting the district's past and present, and should continue to embody the character and charm that makes it the heart of the Historic District while balancing its role as a functional downtown street and a welcoming public space.

Streetscape improvements should slow traffic, prioritize pedestrian comfort, and create an inviting setting for daily use and community gatherings. With its one-way nature, active storefronts, and walkable scale, 3rd St SW has the potential to be a key corridor for events, gatherings, and everyday downtown life, and a place where history and community activity meet.



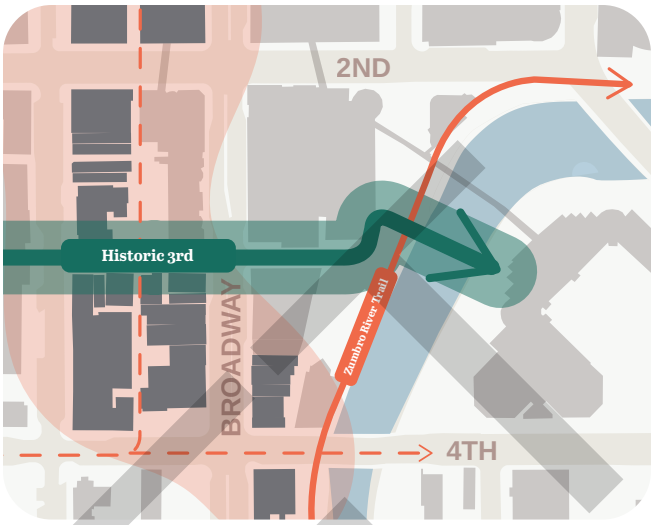
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Historic 3rd St SW has the potential to act as a spine that connects the district to the greater city, with a clear opportunity to connect downtown to the riverfront, and be an alternative transportation connection between the trails along the riverfront and future bikeways along 1st Ave SW and other parts of downtown.

3rd St SW serves as a special defining destination within the Historic District. To use Historic 3rd St SW to tell the stories of the past and connect visitors to the heritage of Rochester's earliest beginnings and commercial heydays is an opportunity the community is excited about. Storytelling panels, interpretive signage, artwork, and artifacts can find home here to support this vision.

Already a one-way street with wider sidewalks, the vision for the streetscape design for Historic 3rd St SW supports pedestrian comfort through improved lighting, clear crossings, and universal accessibility while an enhanced tree canopy, green infrastructure, and native plantings will provide shade, enhance comfort, and support urban habitat.

Finally, an improved design for Historic 3rd St SW can be designed in a way that is flexible for community-centered programming while supporting day-to-day small business activity.



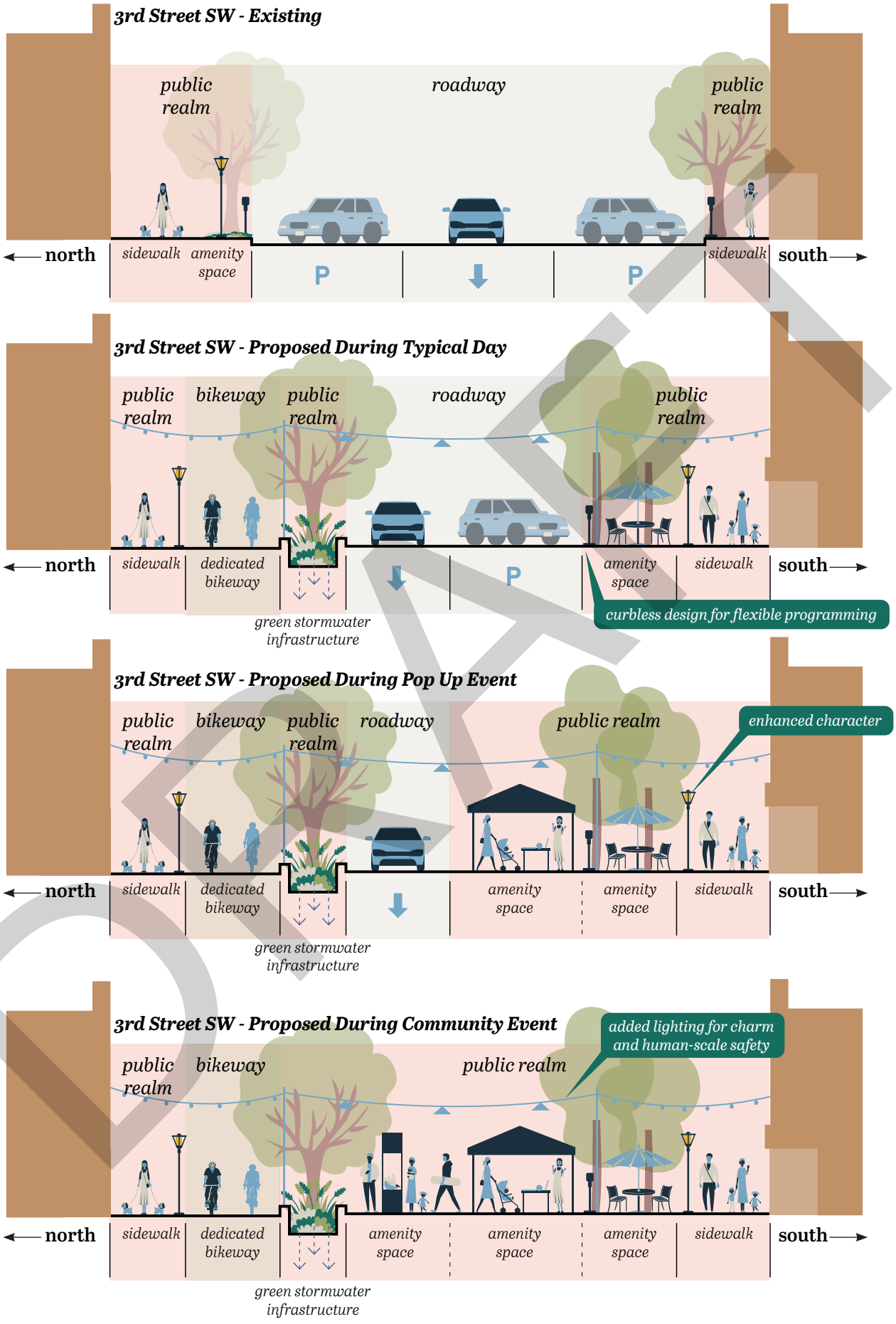


With increased amenity space, Green on Historic 3rd becomes a place for sharing history and potentially hosting historical artifacts within the public realm.



A curbless street design feels comfortable for people when this space is being used for events.

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3rd Street SW - Existing
public realm
roadway
public realm
north
sidewalk
amenity space
P
P
sidewalk
south
3rd Street SW - Proposed During Typical Day
public realm
bikeway
public realm
roadway
public realm
north
sidewalk
dedicated bikeway
P
amenity space
sidewalk
south
curbless design for flexible programming
green stormwater infrastructure
3rd Street SW - Proposed During Pop Up Event
public realm
bikeway
public realm
roadway
public realm
enhanced character
north
sidewalk
dedicated bikeway
amenity space
amenity space
sidewalk
south
green stormwater infrastructure
3rd Street SW - Proposed During Community Event
added lighting for charm and human-scale safety
public realm
bikeway
public realm
north
sidewalk
dedicated bikeway
amenity space
amenity space
amenity space
sidewalk
south
green stormwater infrastructure

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A fully successful and visionary public realm for Historic 3rd St SW can be achieved through the following steps:

Prioritize pedestrian movement by:

- Raising the table of the street to remove curbs and prioritize pedestrian movement and slow down traffic.
- Creating distinctive pedestrian crossings at the ends of the block on either side, as well as mid-block where pedestrians will cross to access businesses and access newly activated alleyways (see Recommendation 3.4).
- Clearly differentiate the pavement materials between the pedestrian and vehicle areas of the street.

Enhance shade and comfort by:

- Incorporating additional street trees for shade and cooling, and understory landscape enhancements for buffering and comfort.

Rebalance parking to support businesses and people by:

- Allocating parking to the southern portion of the block.
- Creating reserved one-hour spaces for business patrons who need to access local businesses.
- Relocating employee parking to one of the many parking ramps surrounding the district.

Create a welcoming atmosphere for events during the day and into the evening by:

- Creating a parking space reservation system for local businesses and organizations to be able to "rent" parking spaces along 3rd St SW for events or pop-up activities.
- Providing overhead lighting to create a warm, public square ambiance into the evening.
- Supporting events on 3rd St SW by adding temporary bollards to shut down the street to provide a safe gathering place.
- Provide power and potable water access for events.



Levee Park in Winona, MN is designed to allow for flexibility between day-to-day parking and roadway circulation and pop-up activation and event programming.

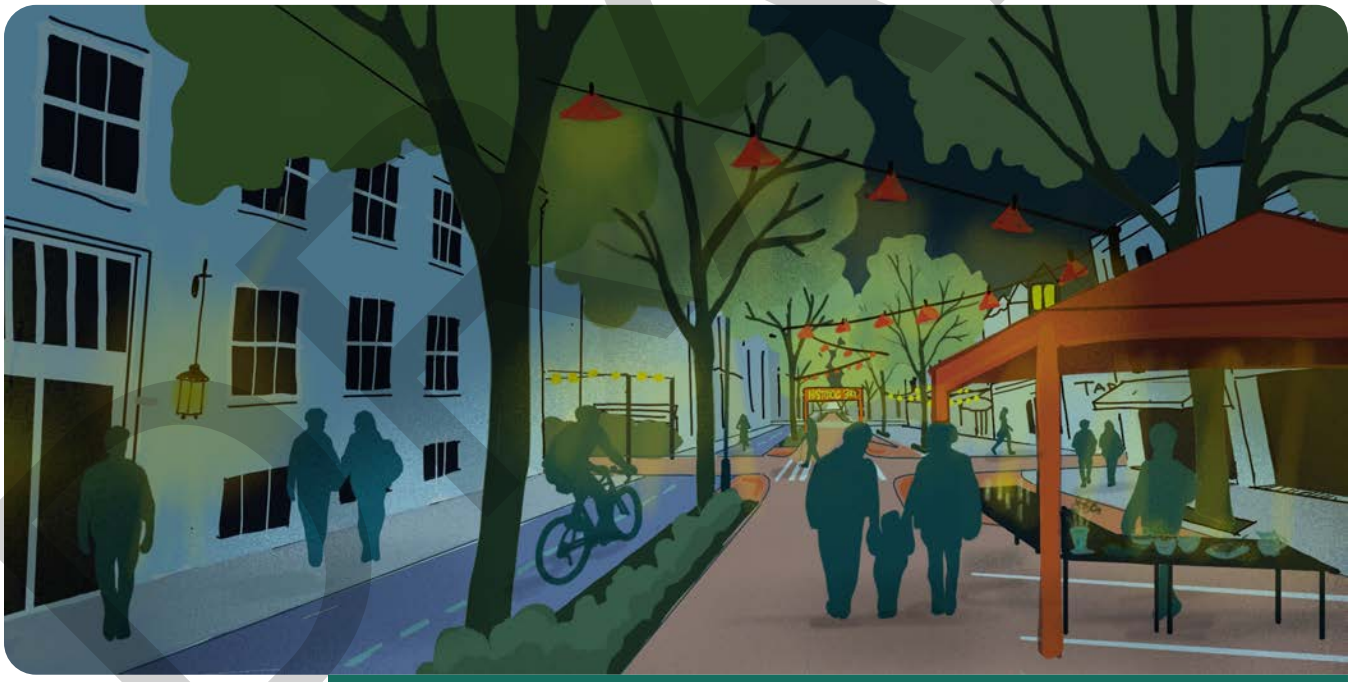
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Celebrate history and culture by:

- Integrating public art, displaying historic artifacts, and highlighting the stories of historic buildings to reinforce the district's sense of place.

Connect to the river by:

- Incorporating a two-way bike route on the north side of the street that connects to the riverfront trail and to the new bikeway on 1st Ave SW.
- Strengthening both the visual and physical connection between 3rd St SW and the riverfront by enhancing pedestrian routes, adding wayfinding, and aligning design elements with the city's planned riverfront improvements to create a seamless downtown-to-river experience.



The vision for Historic 3rd creates a green spine through the district, connecting to the river and prioritizing alternative transportation, and urban health. A curbless design allows for community events at all scales, and unique lighting and placemaking features create a special sense of place for the district.

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Framework Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- Retain the street grid pattern with rectangular blocks divided by north-south alleys.
- Retain the urban, walkable character of the district. Maintain sidewalks between buildings and traffic/parking lanes.
- Keep alleys unobstructed. Maintain existing alley access points.
- Simple/subtle variations in pavement material, pattern, and orientation can be used to define public spaces such as plazas and reinforce their distinct identity.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines specifically identify Historic 3rd St SW as a destination street and encourages:

- bike infrastructure,
- a curbless, more pedestrian friendly design,
- narrow travel lanes and slowed traffic,
- bollards and speciality lighting, and
- growing the urban forest and integrating more stormwater infrastructure.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.
- Attachments to structures must be reviewed by the city to determine whether a certificate of appropriateness is required.

What we heard

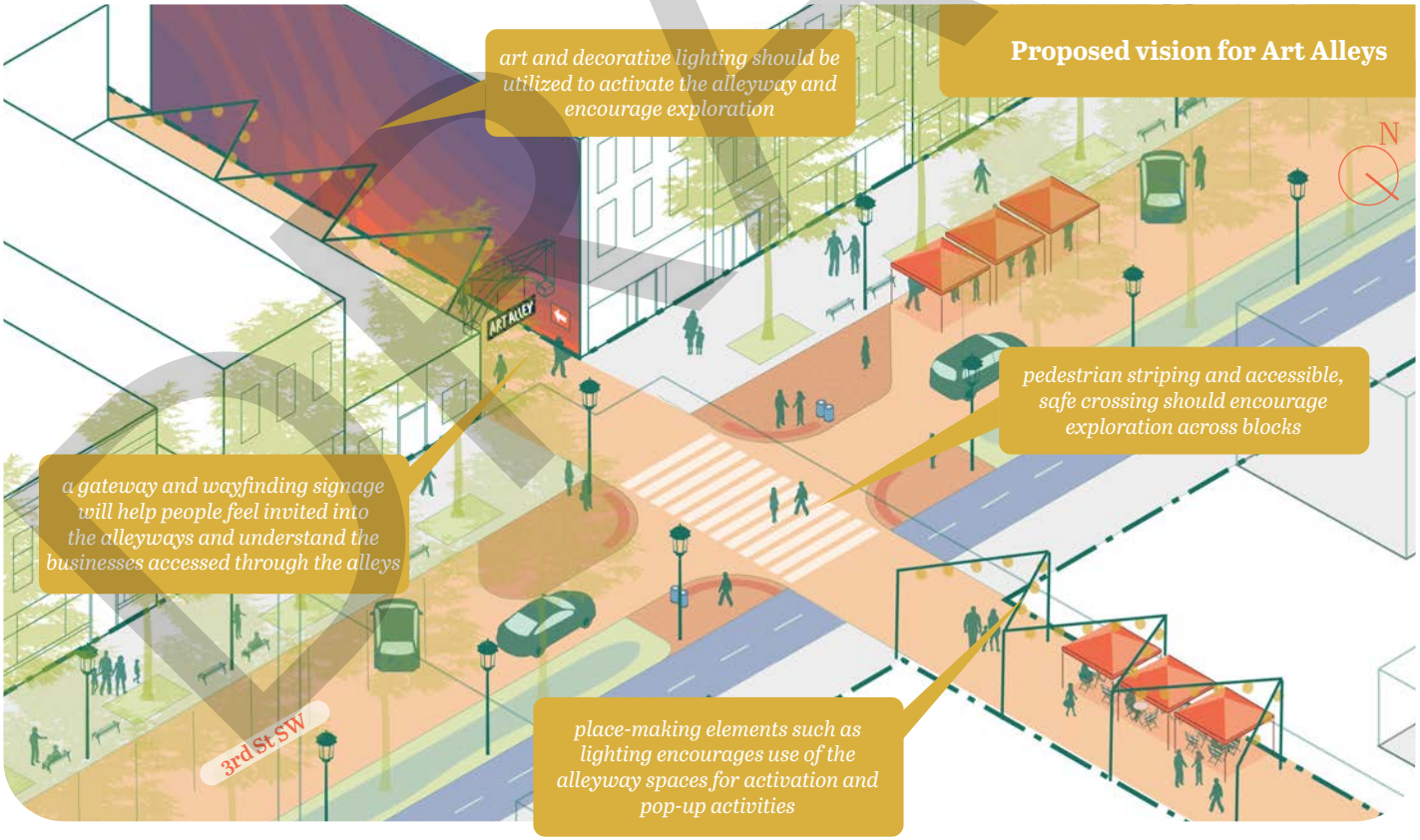
- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.
- Trust, collaboration, and follow-through are critical.
- Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.

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3.4 Art Alleys

Alleys in the Historic District have the potential to be welcoming, walkable connections that reveal the district's creative energy and architectural charm. While buildings tell the story of the district's historic identity through their preserved facades, the alleys could showcase artistic expression and the creativity of local businesses, reflecting the district's modern commercial character. By enhancing safety, accessibility, and comfort while supporting business operations, these corridors can transform from back-of-house spaces into dynamic extensions of downtown life, to places that invite exploration, connection, and occasional celebration.

Years ago, the idea of Art Alleys emerged in Rochester's historic district, inspired by the area's mix of historic charm and modern creative businesses, some of which are accessed through the alleys. This vision plan aims to turn that idea into an actionable framework within the broader plan for the Historic District. The goal is to transform the alleys into welcoming, accessible pedestrian spaces that showcase the district's creative energy while supporting the functional needs of nearby businesses. Specific strategies that will realize the vision for Art Alleys are outlined on the following pages.



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Showcasing modern artistic identity

Alleys should highlight the district's creative energy and serve as platforms for local artists and makers.

Potential elements include:

- Artist-designed signage, murals, or pavement treatments
- Flexibility for pop-up maker markets and celebrations

Aesthetic and Functional Improvements

Alleys are an extension of public space and should be clean and inviting.

Key strategies include:

- Screen garbage receptacles and service areas to maintain a clean and welcoming environment
- Implement a neighborhood clean-up and debris control program, with regular monitoring and policing to ensure alleys remain tidy and inviting



unique artwork will encourage exploration and create a sense of intentional belonging in the alleyways



pedestrian-scale lighting and signage creates an inviting atmosphere in the alleyways





Providing Comfort, Safety, and Accessibility

Alleys should be designed as comfortable, inclusive, and well-lit pedestrian spaces that feel safe and accessible for everyone.

Key strategies include:

- Ensure all buildings providing public alley access meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements through the alleyway
- Encourage active pedestrian use to increase "eyes on the street"
- Incorporate pedestrian-scale or unique lighting that is dynamic and engaging
- Install movable seating and planters to improve the comfort and visual appeal of the alleys
- Install clear signage at all alley entry points to indicate they are publicly accessible and to encourage exploration
- Limit vehicular access within alleys to the hours of 6 a.m. - 9 a.m. to increase safety for pedestrians at other hours of the day
- Install cameras to monitor behavior within the alleys

Supporting Business Logistics

Alleys should continue to accommodate essential services and operations for downtown businesses while minimizing conflicts with pedestrian use.

Key strategies include:

- Form agreements between several business to share trash, recycling and delivery services
- Coordinate service schedules with trash collectors to occur between 6 a.m. - 9 a.m.
- Coordinate with business that any drop-offs or delivers outside of those hours occur along Broadway Ave S, 1st Ave SW, or 3rd St SW



Delano, Minnesota launched a "Spirit of Community" Trail within their historic downtown core, utilizing unique district branding, signage, and wayfinding as a way to brand the district and encourage exploration while providing visitors a sense of direction.

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Framework Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- Retain the street grid pattern with rectangular blocks divided by north-south alleys.
- Retain the urban, walkable character of the district. Maintain sidewalks between buildings and traffic/parking lanes.
- Keep alleys unobstructed. Maintain existing alley access points.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines specifically identify alleyways as activation opportunities and encourages:

- Safe and dynamic pedestrian movement.
- Opportunities to support small businesses.
- One-way travel.
- Greening as space allows.
- Collaboration with local owners.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

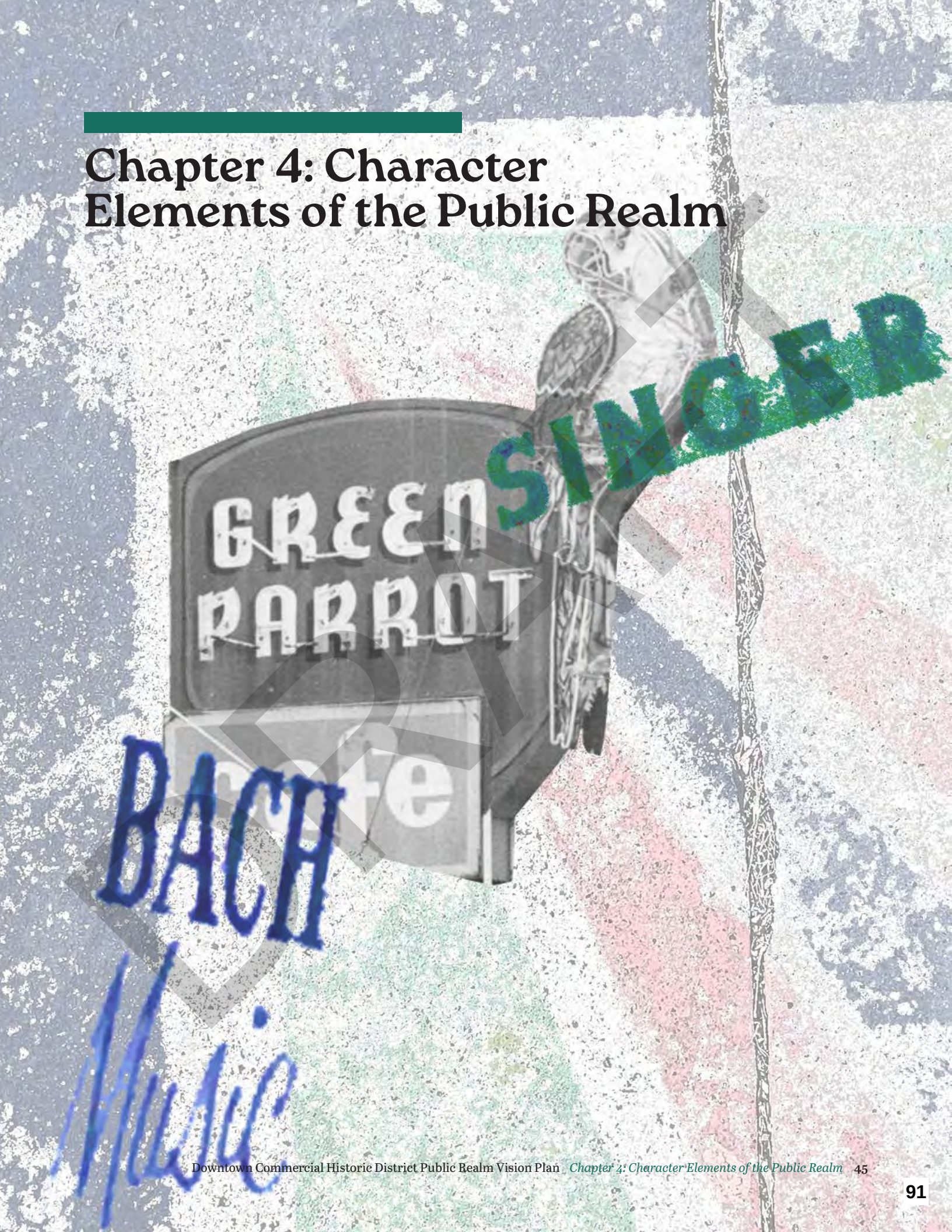
- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.
- Attachments to structures must be reviewed by the city to determine whether a certificate of appropriateness is required.

What we heard:

- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.
- Trust, collaboration, and follow-through are critical.
- Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.

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Chapter 4: Character Elements of the Public Realm



How Character Elements Enhance the Public Realm

Character in the public realm comes from the thoughtful layering of elements that shape how a place feels, functions, and invites people in. Plantings soften and frame public areas, and support mental health and wellbeing. Lighting creates mood and safety, furniture encourages gathering and comfort, and materials convey identity and durability. Signage helps people navigate while reinforcing a shared visual language. Art brings culture, moments of pause, and promotes community connection and belonging. The following recommendations outline ways the character of the historic district can be further strengthened with these types of elements within the public realm, through the lens of creating a safe, welcoming, and unique character for the Downtown Commercial Historic District.

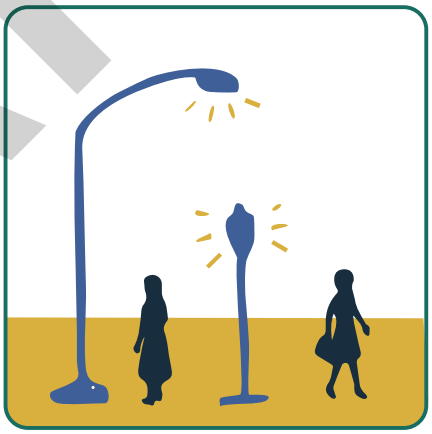
4.1 Plantings



4.2 Furnishings



4.3 Lighting



4.4 Materials



4.5 Wayfinding

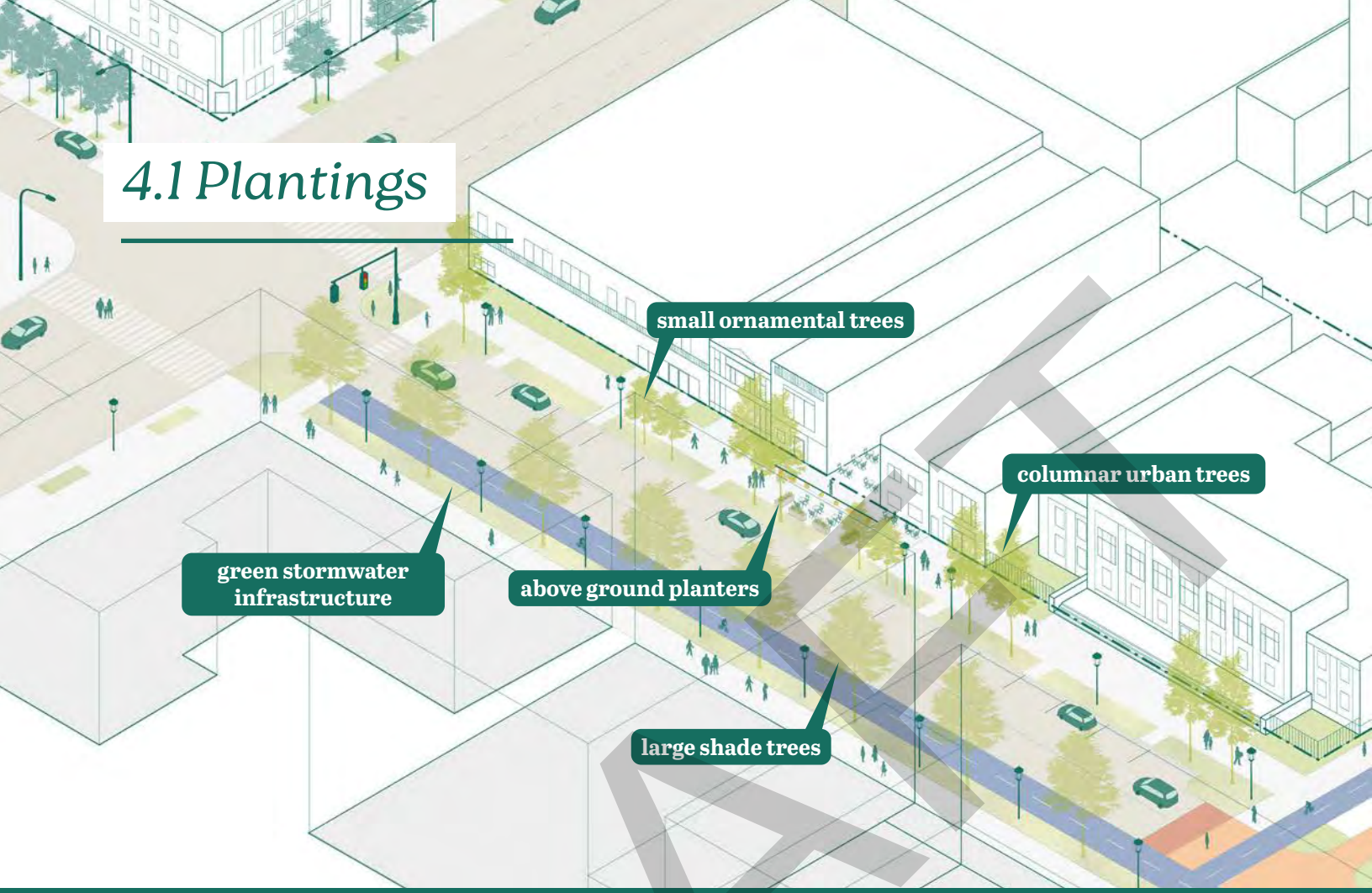


4.6 Parking



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4.1 Plantings



Role in the Public Realm

Landscaping is essential for creating healthy urban environments by providing a foundation for passive green design strategies that improve both ecological and human well-being. Especially in a historic district, we must look to the public realm and landscaping to enhance the health of our urban environment.

By strategically placing vegetation to provide shade, channel breezes, and buffer noise, landscaping can support passive cooling and comfort, reducing energy demand in these older buildings and public spaces. Beyond environmental performance, a green public realm also fosters mental and physical health, offering restorative green spaces that connect people to their surroundings while making cities more resilient and sustainable.



Without landscaping, winds either tunnel uncomfortably through buildings or pass over buildings completely, creating pockets of uncirculated air.



Landscaping, including trees and shrubbery, slows wind down and forces various circulation routes to create a more comfortable urban environment.

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Recommendation

Incorporate intentionally located landscaping that that enhances the Downtown Commercial Historic District visitor experience with trees, planted beds, and decorative planters while maintaining the visibility of historic building features with trees, planted beds, and decorative planters.

Planted Beds

- Planted landscape beds and planters are to be semi-formal in their planting, utilizing native plant species.
- In-ground planters should be designed in a way to provide green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) services.
- Above-ground planters should be designed in a way to allow for seasonal and holiday displays, taking advantage of the various cultures that can be celebrated in this global city.





Plant beds should be simple in nature while still providing ecosystem services by being planted with native plants that may also function to capture stormwater.

Standalone planters should be simple in design, consistently spaced throughout the district, and be of one singular design throughout the district. These types of planters allow for seasonal displays, providing the opportunity to celebrate various cultures in the district.

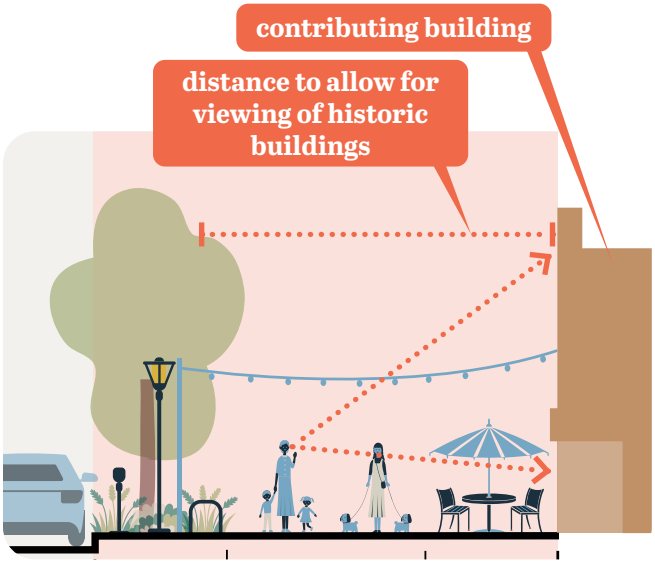
Trees

Non-Contributing Buildings: Sidewalks and right-of-ways will receive shade trees to provide the full spectrum of shade, stormwater, social, and aesthetic value that these trees provide.

Contributing Buildings: Trees and landscaping may not conceal historic building features. Buildings must be able to be fully viewed from a maximum of two viewpoints/ sightlines along the sidewalk. Sidewalks and rights-of-ways may utilize one of two options:

- Incorporate columnar urban trees with loose leaf structure planted in linear planting beds between historic buildings. Trees should be planted as far as possible from the buildings to preserve sightlines.
- Plant smaller ornamental trees.

Green on Historic 3rd St SW: Will receive large shade trees to provide the full spectrum of shade, stormwater, social, and aesthetic value that these trees provide and to encourage the “urban forest”.



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Recommendation Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- New landscaping should be sensitively located to avoid concealing historic building features.
- At contributing structures, building entrances, storefronts, and windows should not be obstructed.
- Subtle incorporation of vegetation can be considered to enhance downtown revitalization efforts while respecting the district's predominantly hardscaped, urban character.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

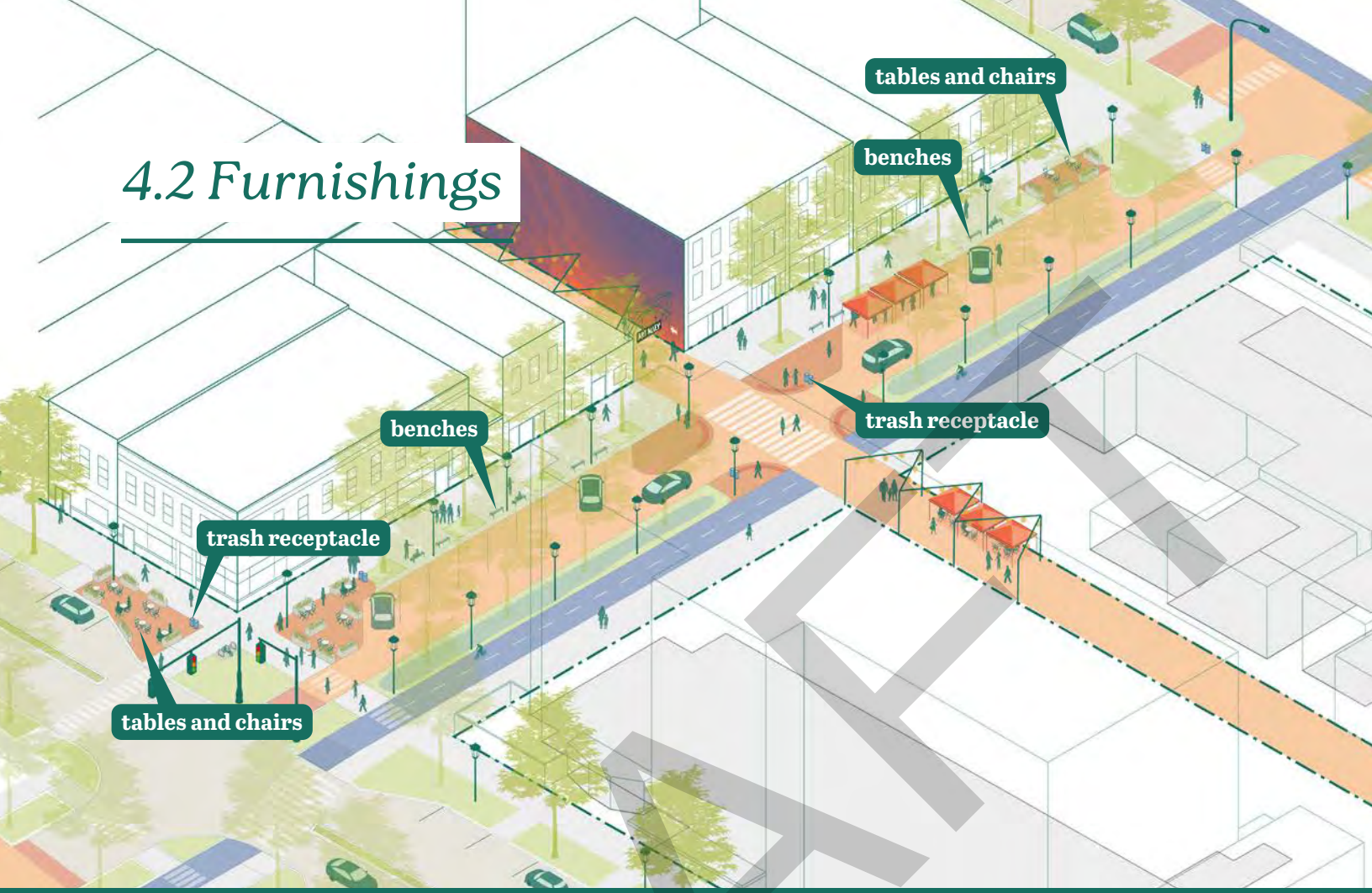
- Enhance connections to nature and natural systems.
- Create sustainable community infrastructure.
- Create a healthy community.
- Design streets for pedestrians.
- Establish the urban forest.
- Develop sustainable water management strategies.

What we heard

- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern need.

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4.2 Furnishings



Role in the Public Realm

Coherent street furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, and bike racks, are essential for reinforcing the identity of the Downtown Commercial Historic District by creating a consistent and recognizable visual language in the public realm within the district. When thoughtfully coordinated, these elements not only provide comfort and convenience for daily use, but also communicate a sense of care, investment, and pride in the district. Consistency in materials, colors, and forms help distinguish the historic district from surrounding areas and strengthens a sense of place.

Beyond aesthetics, cohesive furnishings contribute to a more welcoming, functional, and memorable urban environment that invites people to linger, gather, and engage with the district. Especially in a medical care-focused community like Rochester, ensuring that the street furnishings are ADA accessible and friendly for all users is a critical consideration.



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Recommendation

Establish a cohesive package of street furnishings that are unique to the Downtown Commercial Historic District and take into account the Secretary of the Interiors Standards, to reinforce the character and identity of the district. Furnishings to be considered for standardizing in this unique context include:

- benches
- trash receptacles
- bike racks
- tables and chairs

This package of furnishings should be simple in design and color as to not detract from the historic character of the district. Additionally, these furnishings should be of high quality and construction, ensuring durability and a demonstration of investment in the public realm of the historic district.





Examples of character of the furnishing package illustrated above, featuring simple design and simple colors.

Recommendation Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- New site furnishings and objects, like bus or shade shelters, benches, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, parking meters or artwork should be simple in design, modest in scale and height, and use compatible materials (like metal, wood, and masonry).
- New site furnishings and objects should not damage historic masonry or other historic materials at adjacent contributing buildings.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

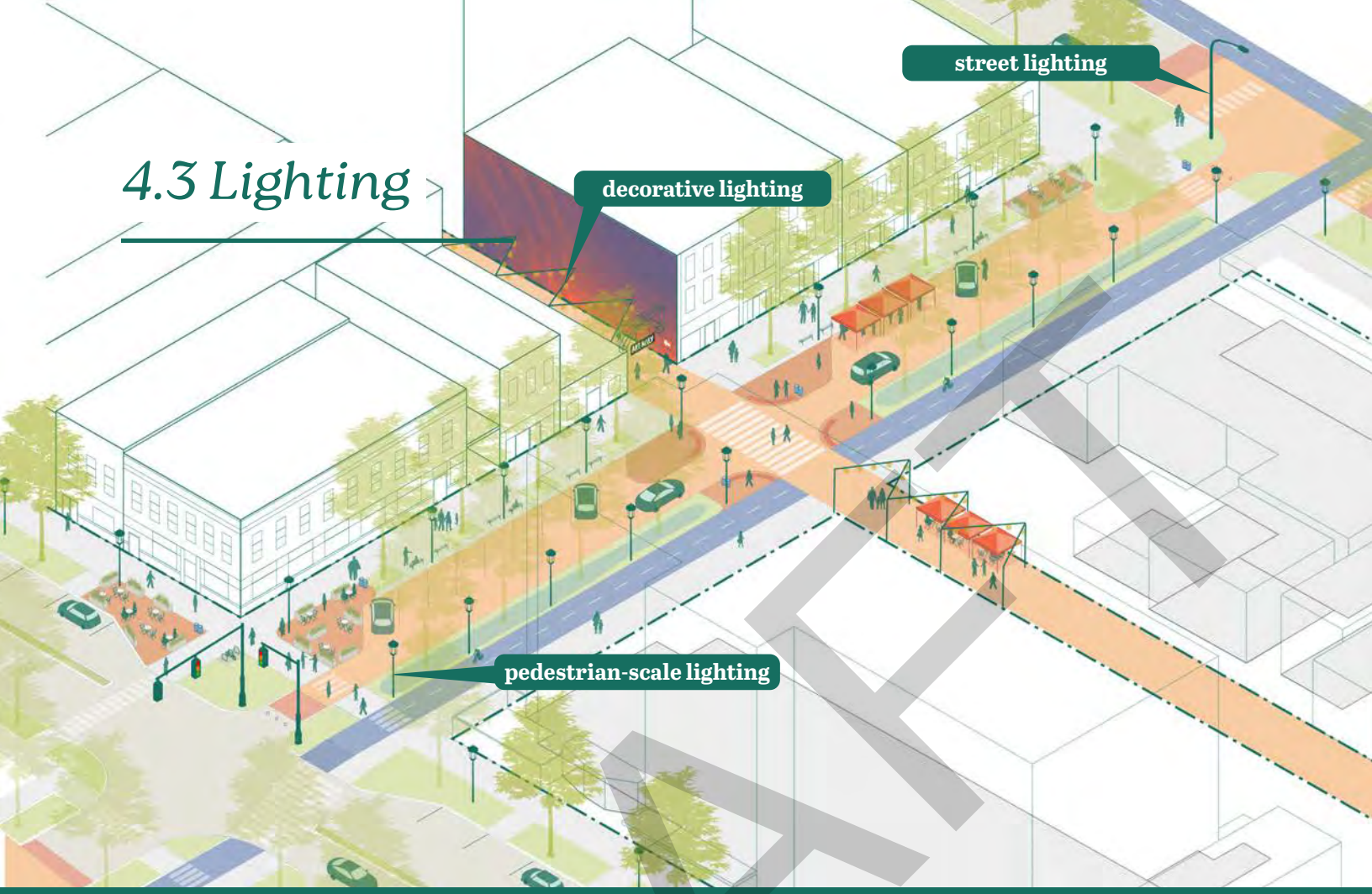
- Create sustainable community infrastructure
- Create a healthy community
- Design streets for pedestrians

What we heard

- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.

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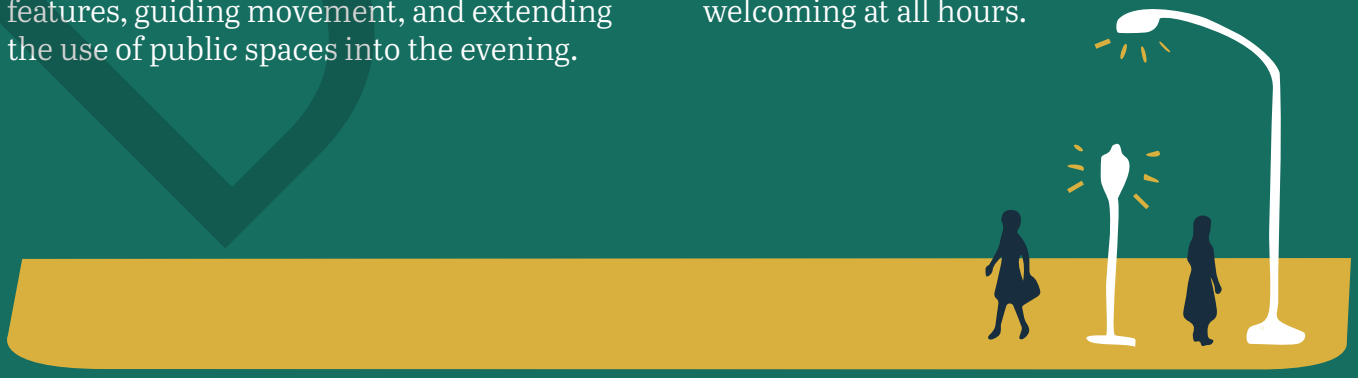
4.3 Lighting



Role in the Public Realm

Lighting in the public realm is essential not only for safety but also for shaping the character and atmosphere of downtown spaces. Adequate illumination ensures that streets and sidewalks are comfortable and secure after dark, meeting required lighting standards for visibility and accessibility. Beyond its utility, lighting helps define a district's identity—highlighting architectural features, guiding movement, and extending the use of public spaces into the evening.

In the Historic District, there is an opportunity for lighting to reinforce both a sense of place and a connection to history. Warm, ambient lighting can complement the character of historic facades, enhance storefront visibility, and create an inviting environment for evening gatherings and events. Thoughtful lighting design can make the district feel cohesive, active, and welcoming at all hours.



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Recommendation:

Enhance the historic district with pedestrian-scale, architecturally sensitive lighting that highlights the area's unique character, reinforces a sense of place, supports evening activity, and contributes to a safe, vibrant, and welcoming public realm.

Street Lighting

City standard roadway lighting should be maintained to provide primary illumination to the streets within the district.

Pedestrian-Scale lighting

Regularly spaced pedestrian scale lights should be located within the district to ensure even, uniform lighting coverage along all sidewalks and public spaces. City standard pedestrian lighting can be utilized, or a unique fixture to characterize the district can be considered.

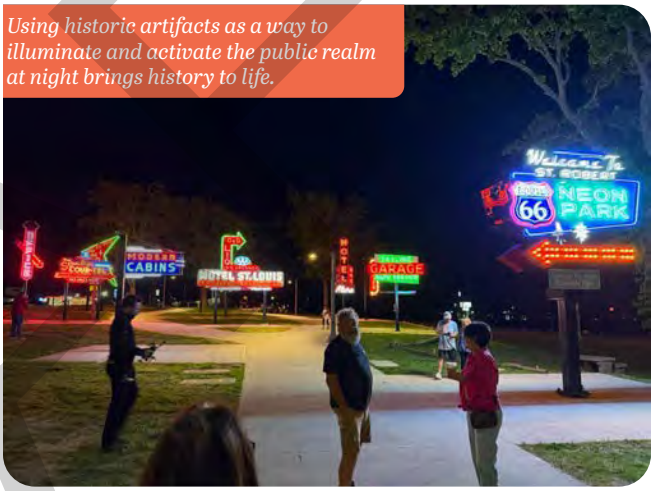
Decorative and Special Lighting

Unique lighting within the district should be located at areas and spaces of intention, including Historic 3rd St SW, Art Alleys, and at moments of art and cultural interpretation and storytelling.

- **Green on Historic 3rd St SW:** Lighting should be intimate and expand beyond just pole lighting. Catenary overhead lighting is encouraged to provide a feeling of a comfortable and warming special place. Unique lighting at moments of art, storytelling, and artifact features should be provided.
- **Art Alley:** String or catenary lighting is encouraged as an overhead lighting treatment in the alleyways to ensure a sense of safety after dark, but also not impede on trash collection or truck delivery needs.



Local businesses use overhead bulb lighting to add comfort in front of their buildings. City standard pedestrian lighting also helps make the public realm more comfortable and safe.



Using historic artifacts as a way to illuminate and activate the public realm at night brings history to life.



Ambient lighting in areas where people are encouraged to gather provide a comfortable and welcoming environment.

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Recommendation Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- New street, traffic, and pedestrian lighting can be provided. New light fixtures can be similar to the lighting that was present historically or be contemporary in style.
- Downlighting is preferred to uplighting. For new street and pedestrian lighting, softened and subtle light quality is generally more favorable to blinking or flashing lights, which are not recommended.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.
- Attachments to structures must be reviewed by the HPC for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

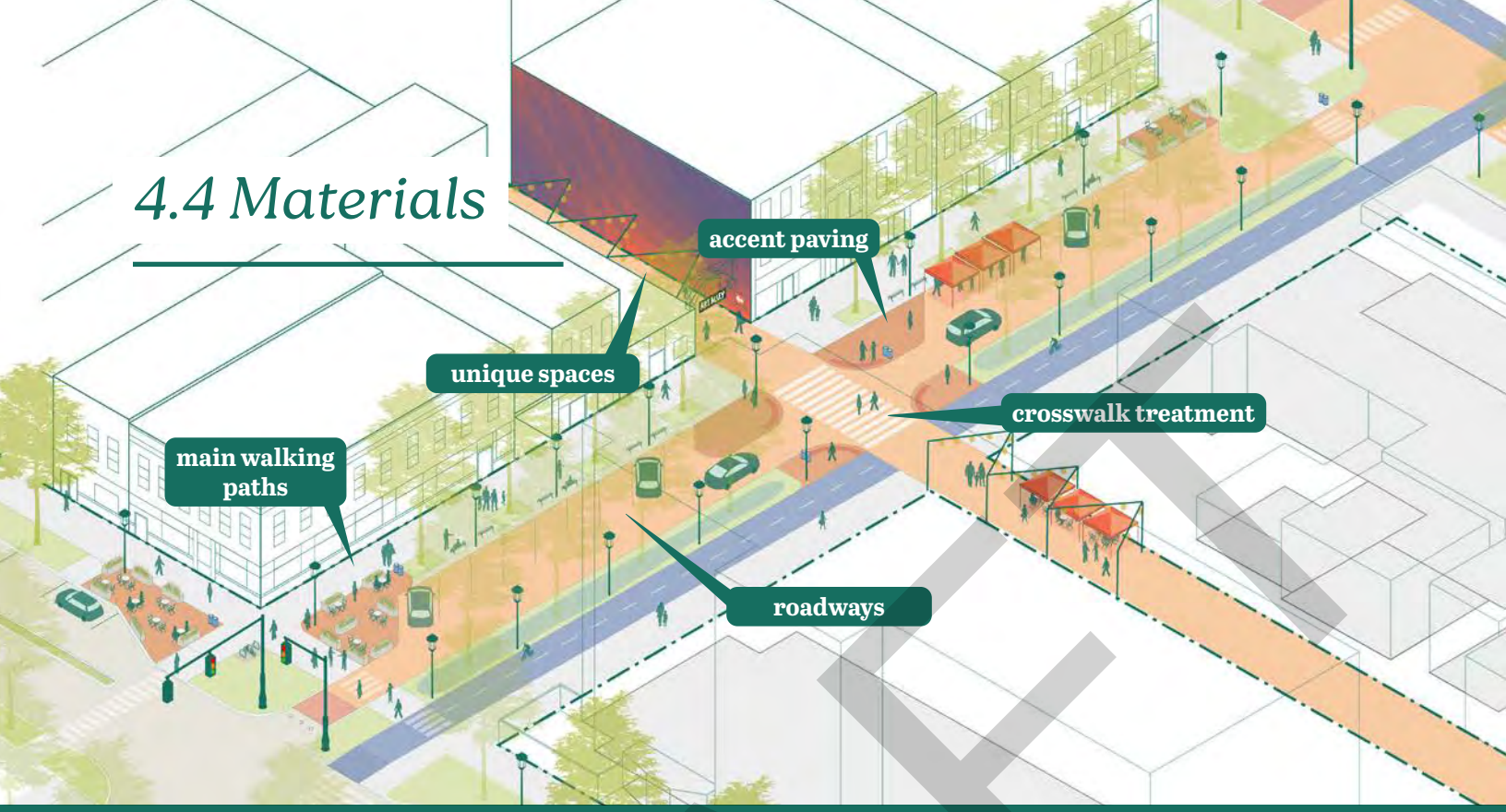
- Create a safe, inviting, and connected public realm
- Establish district and sub-district identity

What we heard

- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.
- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.

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4.4 Materials



Role in the Public Realm

Hardscape materials in the public realm create a significant visual impact and shape the pedestrian experience along sidewalks and streets. Beyond aesthetics, they provide essential accessibility and safety, guiding movement and supporting diverse uses. Currently, ADA upgrades are needed, and there are many pathways that are in need of resurfacing.

In the Historic District, thoughtfully selected materials can reinforce a sense of arrival to a distinct downtown area, highlight historic character, and accentuate spaces for gathering, walking, dining, or engaging with interpretive and historical elements. By carefully balancing durability, functionality, and design, hardscape materials can unify the district's streetscape while celebrating its unique architectural and cultural history.



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Recommendation

Resurface all sidewalks and special spaces in the district to meet ADA standards and enhance a unique identity in the district. Establish a cohesive suite of hardscape materials that are unique to the Downtown Commercial Historic District and take into account the Secretary of the Interior Standards to reinforce the character and identity of the district.

Main Walking Path

Main walking pathways should be made of a light broom finished concrete in a typical portland grey color, as it is a continuous, accessible material that is easy for the City to maintain and make repairs in a cohesive manner. The main walking path should be a minimum of 6' wide.

Accent Paving

On 2' strips on either side of the main walking path, an integral colored concrete in a broom finished brick red color should be utilized to provide a unique touch to the district, reinforcing the historic identity, while maintaining an easy-to-navigate surface without creating false sense of historic materials.

Roadways

Roadway paving should follow the city standard material with the exception of Historic 3rd St SW, where pavers in the vehicular areas can be considered.

Crosswalks

The historic district is intended to be a predominantly pedestrian space and encourages foot traffic to support the small local businesses in the district. Crosswalks at all intersections should be improved to meet ADA requirements in all directions of movement, and feature brightly-colored crossing markings. At the intersection of Historic 3rd St SW and 1st Ave SW, a signed rapid flashing beacon should be considered to increase safety for pedestrians where there is a lack of a vehicular stoplight system, especially where many people access the district by parking in the ramp across 1st Ave SW and cross mid-block.

Unique Spaces

Art Alleys and Green on Historic 3rd St SW should have a more unique hardscape treatment that builds from the typical sidewalks and accent paving elsewhere in the district. The curbless design of Green on Historic 3rd St SW can be defined using various pavement treatments and markings, including alternating integral colored concrete shades to both define parking spaces and also add visual intrigue to the ground plane next to a consistent typical concrete treatment to the drive lane. Where the Art Alley crosses Green on Historic 3rd St SW, extending the color on the ground plane to define that crossing would indicate a safe place to cross mid-block.

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Recommendation Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- Retain the urban, walkable character of the district. Maintain sidewalks between buildings and traffic/parking lanes.
- New pavement can match the historic (if known) or consist of a new simple design and material that is compatible with the character of the historic district. At sidewalks, material should generally be one continuous material; pavers could be considered at streets if desired.
- Faux finishes like stamped brick/stone (that give the appearance of being a historic material) should be avoided as they could create a "false sense of history."
- Highly decorative and/or brightly colored pavers are generally not recommended. Small areas of (decorative) pavers may be introduced in selective areas (such as a border or accent pavers).
- Simple/subtle variations in pavement material, pattern, and orientation can be used to define public spaces such as plazas and reinforce their distinct identity.
- ADA improvements such as low-sloped ramps and detectable warning surfaces can be incorporated in the design while minimizing visual and physical impact to the character of the historic district.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

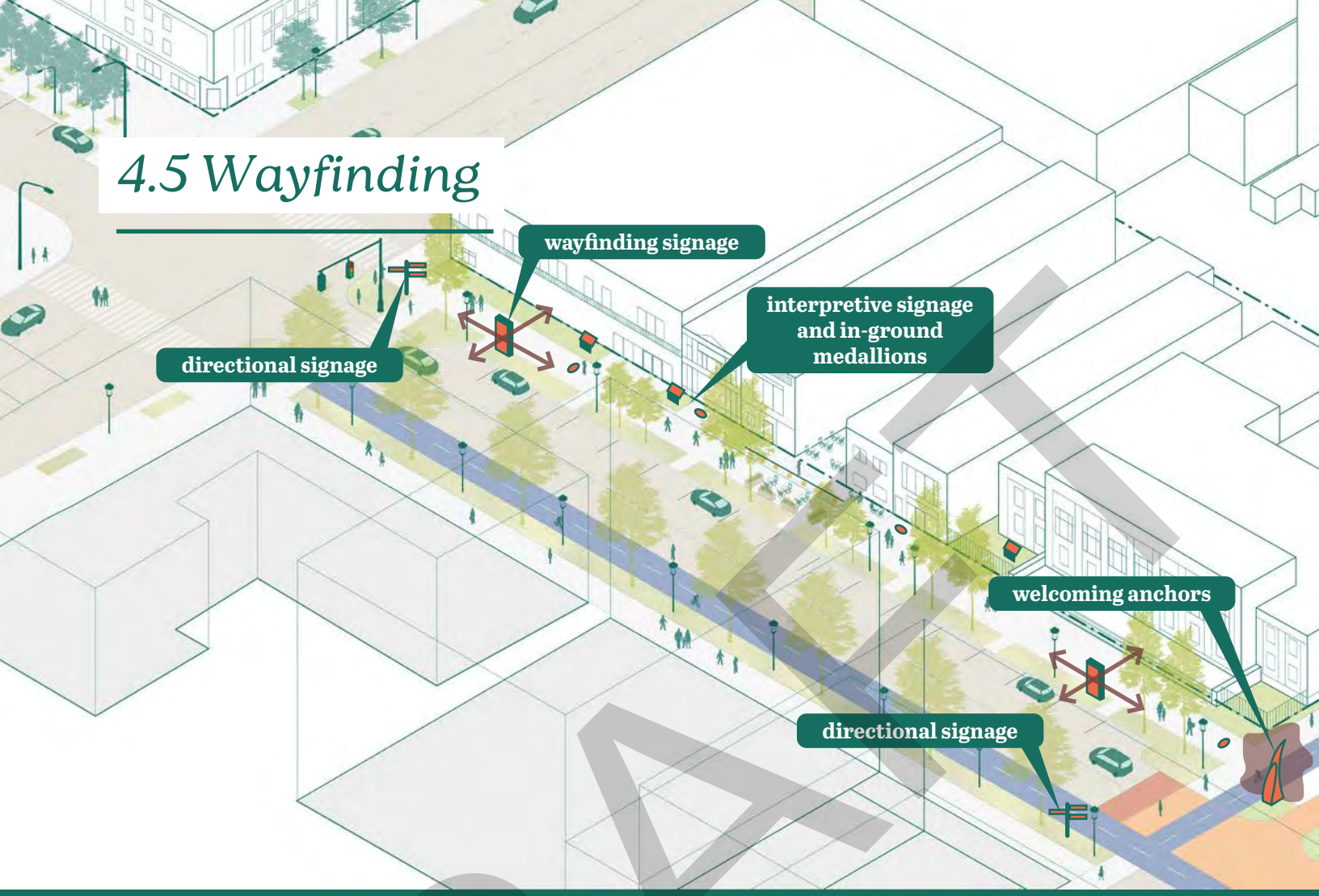
- Establish district and sub-district identity
- Create a safe, inviting, and connected public realm
- Strengthen gateways
- Establish signature open spaces
- Design streets for pedestrians
- Historic 3rd St SW as a destination street

What we heard

- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.
- There are opportunities for improvement regarding accessibility and multimodal connectivity.
- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.

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4.5 Wayfinding



Role in the Public Realm

A cohesive wayfinding system helps people navigate a downtown historic district easily while reinforcing its unique character. Consistent signage enhances the visitor experience, encourages exploration, and supports local businesses by directing people to key destinations. By integrating historic cues and clear, accessible information, wayfinding strengthens both the district's identity and the overall quality of the public realm.



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Recommendation

Wayfinding signage will be contemporary, bright, and colorful as a visual foil to the historic character of the district and to avoid a sense of false history. All elements will be branded with the district's identified character. Wayfinding elements will integrate the past and present by highlighting both contemporary destinations and major historic buildings within the district. Note that these wayfinding efforts need to be coordinated with any other City-led downtown-wide wayfinding efforts.

Wayfinding Signage

Contemporary Destinations

- Nearby civic institutions
- Nearby parks (Soldiers Field, etc.)
- River and riverfront (trails, etc.)
- Bikeways
- Major transitways
- Parking
- Green on Historic 3rd St SW
- Art Alleys
- Local Businesses, especially those located through alleyways

Historic Destinations

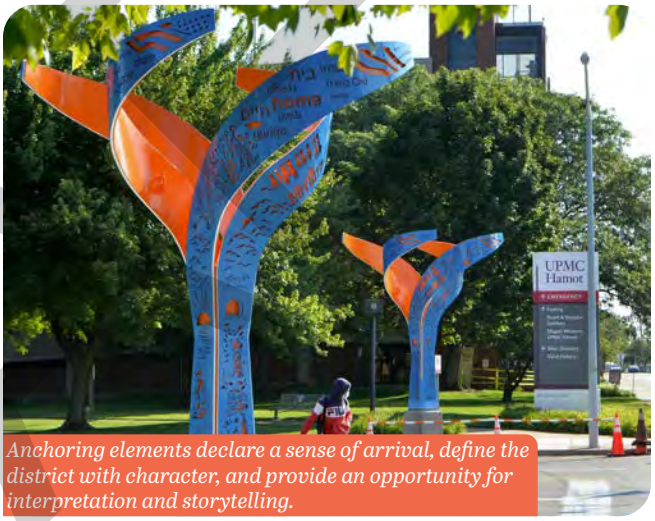
- Buildings within the district that highlight various aspects of the district's history
- Buildings outside of the district that contribute to the overall historic storytelling of Rochester (Chauteau Theater, Red Owl, etc.)



Secondary spaces such as alleyways should have wayfinding signage indicating the businesses and destinations accessed through the alleyways.



Downtown Akron, Ohio has a cohesive set of wayfinding and monument/gateway elements to create a sense of place and identity for their downtown district.



Anchoring elements declare a sense of arrival, define the district with character, and provide an opportunity for interpretation and storytelling.

Welcoming Anchors

A welcoming anchor is a signature gesture to create a sense of arrival and identity for the district, to encourage people to come explore and realize they have arrived at a special place in downtown. This feature should be compatible with the district's historic character but contemporary in design, so that it is not mistaken for a historic feature. The wecloming anchors should incorporate district information and create a sense of arrival. The welcoming anchor should be located at all major intersection corners of the district as a standalone vertical district identifier.

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Directional Signage

- All major intersections
- Transit stops
- At the perimeter of nearby parking lots and ramps

In-Ground Medallion

- In front of contributing buildings where signage may obscure historic elements

Interpretive Signage

- May be integrated with Directional Signage
- Or, independently placed in front of or mounted to contributing buildings



Downtown Akron, Ohio has a cohesive set of wayfinding and monument/gateway elements to create a sense of place and identity for their downtown district.



In-ground medallions can demarcate historic spaces and places without obscuring historic structures.



Signage panels can convey narrative information as well as historic images.

Recommendation Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- New free-standing signage for traffic, direction, or other purposes can be provided. New contemporary and simple-in-design signage is recommended.
- It is recommended to make district signage freestanding rather than attaching to building façades.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.
- Attachments to structures must be reviewed by the HPC for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

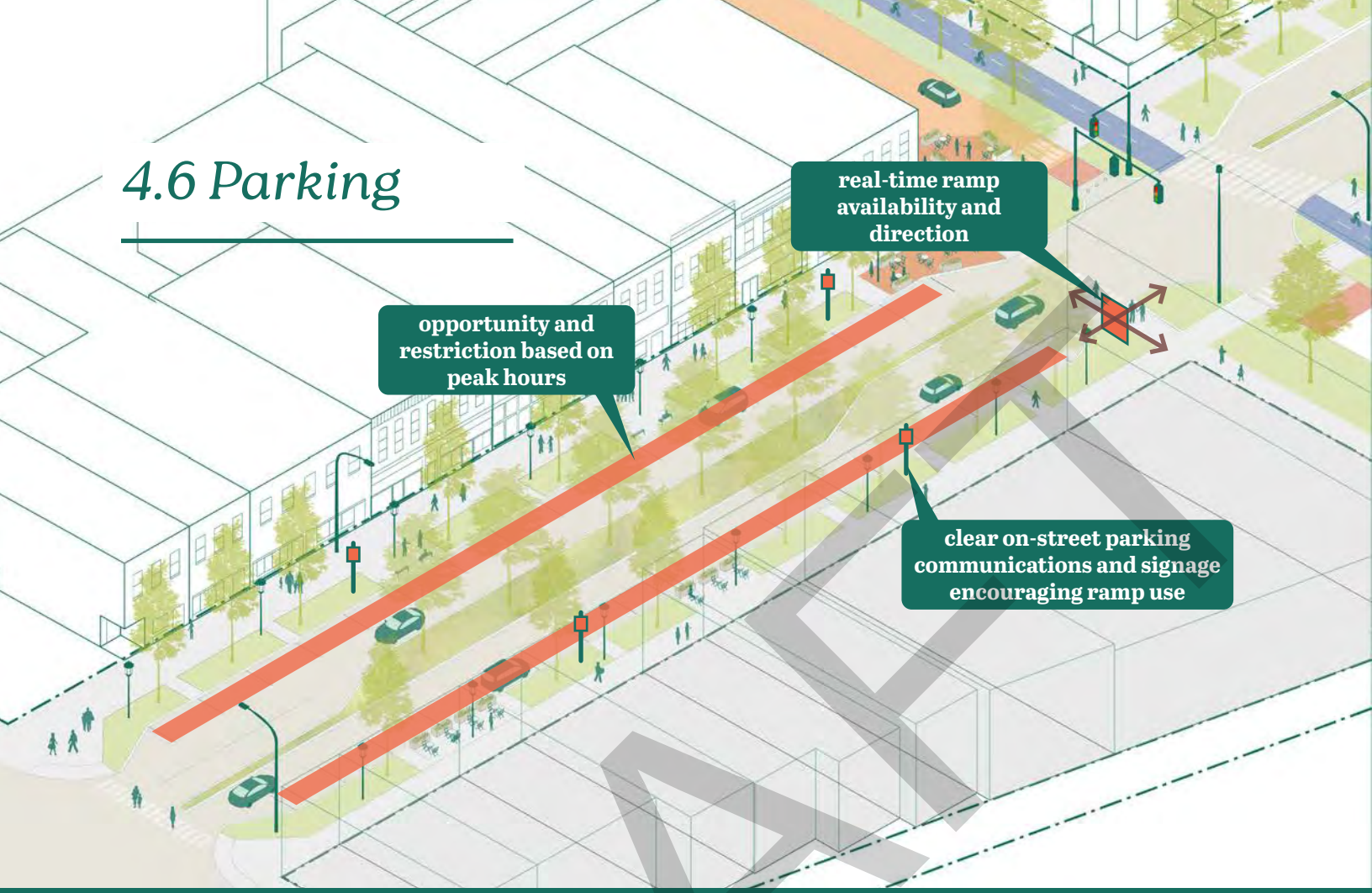
- Establish sub-district identity
- Strengthen gateways
- Infuse the city with public art
- Design smart streets

What we heard

- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.
- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.
- The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.
- Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.

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4.6 Parking



Role in the Public Realm

The Downtown Commercial Historic District has a significant supply of off-street parking within a short walking distance. Most spaces within two blocks of the district are located in ramps or lots rather than along the curb. As redevelopment continues and the area becomes a key node in the future Link BRT and expanded bikeway systems, a coordinated parking management strategy is needed to ensure spaces are used efficiently, equitably, and in support of broader mobility goals.

Effective parking management is essential to supporting a vibrant and accessible downtown. It is important to encourage use of the available downtown ramps because they are cost-effective, user-friendly, and are located in close proximity to downtown amenities. By directing employees and long-term visitors to ramps, using clear signage, the City can free up convenient curbside spaces for customers and people with mobility needs, improving business visibility and access. This also reduces congestion from vehicles circling for on-street spaces, and enhances pedestrian safety and comfort.

These strategies also advance Rochester's broader sustainability and transportation goals. As the downtown becomes a focal point of the Link BRT network and added bikeways, managing parking demand will help shift trips toward transit, walking, and bicycling. By aligning parking pricing, signage, and access with these goals, the City can ensure that parking supports, rather than competes with, its vision for a thriving, multimodal downtown.

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Recommendation

Prioritize the use of on-street spaces for short-term customers and those with accessibility needs, while encouraging employees and long-term visitors to use off-street parking ramps. At the same time, parking management should complement the City's goals for mode shift, making it easier and more appealing for downtown visitors and employees to arrive by transit, walking, or bicycling.

Incentivize Ramp Use for Employees

- Partner with downtown employers to create a discounted employee parking program in nearby ramps.
- Offer monthly passes at reduced rates or through shared business accounts to make off-street parking the most affordable option.
- Include communication materials that emphasize how ramp use keeps curbside spaces open for customers.

Make Ramps the Default for Visitors

- Adjust rate structures to ensure ramp parking is cheaper than on-street spaces.
- Increase free parking in ramp incentive from first one hour free to first two hours free, either automatically or through store-validated parking.

Improve Wayfinding and Real-Time Information

- Install digital signage and wayfinding at key downtown gateways showing real-time ramp availability and rates.
- Include clear pedestrian routes from ramps to major destinations in signage and maps.
- Integrate parking data into city apps and navigation platforms.



Smart signage helps direct people to nearby parking and provides insight into the amount of parking available in each nearby parking area.

Manage On-Street Parking for Access and Turnover

- Implement time limits (e.g. 2 hours) on most on-street spaces to ensure turnover.
- Retain a share of curbside spaces for accessible and short-duration parking (pick-up/drop-off, deliveries, and ADA).
- Evaluate the potential for dynamic pricing in the future if demand and congestion remain high.

Support Mode Shift and Reduce Demand

- Coordinate parking policies with Link BRT implementation and bicycle infrastructure to reduce the need for parking overall.
- Implement peak and off-peak parking opportunities and restrictions on busier roadways such as Broadway Avenue.
- Encourage employers to offer commuter benefits (e.g., transit passes, bike stipends).
- Promote "Park Once and Walk" messaging through downtown marketing campaigns and wayfinding.

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Recommendation Informed By

Select Historic Considerations

- The non-contributing parking lot at the corner of 4th St SW and Broadway Ave S can be used as a public district parking lot or accommodate new construction that is compatible in scale, massing, design, and materials with the district and adjacent contributing buildings.
- An overall straight configuration is preferred for new traffic/side parking/ bike lanes and sidewalks. Curved layouts, roundabouts, and medians should be avoided unless required for safety or other considerations.
- Delineating traffic/parking lanes from sidewalks with a curb while meeting accessibility requirements is preferred.

Heritage Preservation Program Design Guidelines

- Changes to the district must balance historic preservation standards with other City priorities.

Rochester Destination Medical Center District Design Guidelines

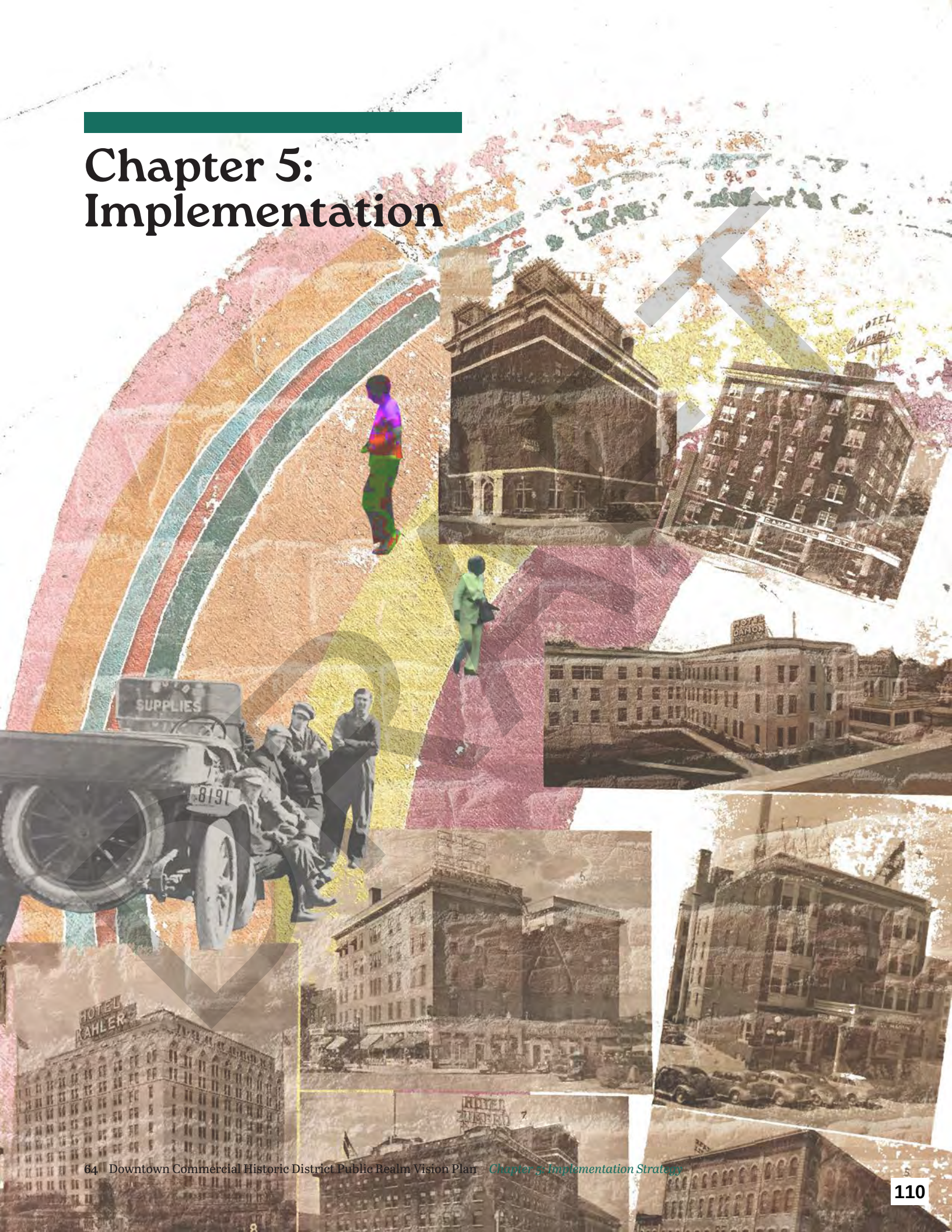
- Design smart streets
- Design streets for pedestrians
- Design streets for bicycles
- Design streets for mass transit
- Design safe efficient roadways
- Design safe multimodal intersections
- Design streets with flexibility and adaptability for future uses

What we heard

- There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.
- There are opportunities for improvement regarding accessibility and multimodal connectivity.
- There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.

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Chapter 5: Implementation



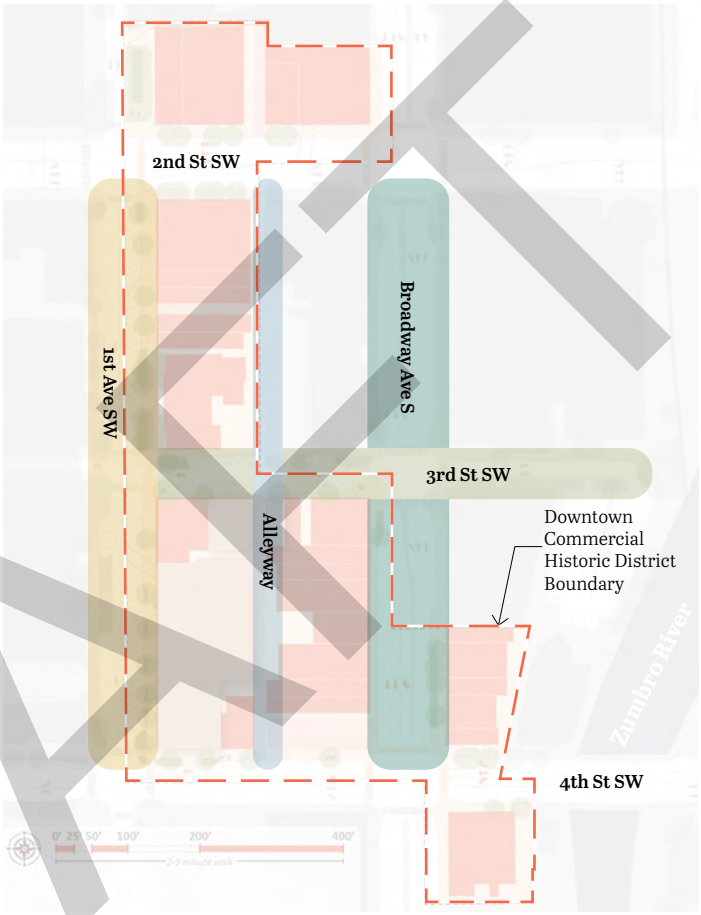
Cost Estimation

Cost Estimation Organization

The capital cost estimations are organized around the main areas of impact within the district along each major corridor of improvement:

- 1st Ave SW Long-Term Vision
- Broadway Ave S
- 3rd St SW
- Art Alleys (between 4th St SW and 2nd St SW)

Cost estimations assume improvements to these corridors within the district itself, as indicated in the adjacent map. The cost estimations include general contractor conditions and overhead, electrical, earthwork, pavement, site furnishings, signage, artwork, and utility considerations. Cost estimates do not include the potential reconstruction of public utilities.



Estimations for each major corridor area are assumed at low-end, medium, and high-end cost numbers. These estimates are for the final vision for the public realm improvements, and do not include assumptions for interim or short-term projects.

Estimates are as follows:

Focus Area	Low Cost Estimate	Medium Cost Estimate	High Cost Estimate
1st Ave SW (Long-Term)	$1,740,000	$1,930,000	$2,120,000
Broadway Ave S	$1,100,000	$1,230,000	$1,350,000
3rd St SW	$850,000	$950,000	$1,050,000
Art Alleys (between 4th St SW and 2nd St SW)	$1,450,000	$1,600,000	$1,750,000

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Implementation Strategy

Overall, the approach to implementation should consider:

- Starting small, learning fast, and scaling intentionally.
- Coordinating preservation review early and often.
- Pairing physical improvements with programming and partnerships, centering co-design with the community where possible.
- Aligning capital investments with broader downtown and infrastructure initiatives that are already in motion or in the planning process.

By sequencing improvements thoughtfully, Rochester can honor the Downtown Commercial Historic District's past while confidently investing in a public realm that supports community life, small businesses, and long-term downtown vitality.

The City should consider pilot efforts to introduce and implement improvements in the public realm, such as pop-up programming, call for art and installation ideas, and continuing conversations with district stakeholders to continue refining priorities for investment. This approach is intended to balance urgency, stewardship, and feasibility, allowing the City to build momentum through early, visible improvements while laying the groundwork for transformative, long-term change.

Temporary test installations can be low-cost, reversible, and highly visible interventions that allow the City to test and refine improvements before committing to permanent construction.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Case for Action

Appendix B: Engagement Summary

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Appendix A: Case for Action

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Downtown Commercial Historic District
Public Realm Vision Plan

Case For Action
Summer 2025

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CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA
DMC Destination Medical Center
mend collaborative
NEW HISTORY

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For the Love of Historic Places

This public realm plan aims to celebrate historic landmarks and how the preservation of these places create unique public realm experiences.



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For the Love of Historic Places

The Downtown Commercial Historic District has the potential to act as a hub connecting unique places throughout Downtown. It is the collective buildings within this district, the exterior spaces in-between and around them, and how they interact with each other that creates this "historic district". Preserving the historic character of this special place enhances the public realm and streetlife of Downtown Rochester.

The district's well-preserved early 20th-century architecture, with its detailed brick façades, large display windows, and human-scale proportions, creates a welcoming streetscape that encourages pedestrian activity and community interaction. These historic buildings house a mix of local shops, restaurants, and offices, supporting a diverse and resilient downtown economy.

Historic places serve as tangible reminders of a city's cultural richness and layered history. Whether showcasing distinctive architectural styles, tied to significant events, or related to the development and cultural characteristics of the City, these structures allow both visitors and longtime residents to experience the visual and cultural narrative of a place. Preserving and reusing older buildings helps maintain a sense of continuity and identity, grounding a city in its heritage while reinforcing its unique character.

Old Buildings Support Diversity

Old buildings often have a mix of uses, which can create more vibrant and interesting neighborhoods. Old buildings are often located in areas with good walkability, which can encourage social interaction and community engagement. Old buildings also provide a sense of place and identity, which can be important for attracting residents and businesses.

Old Buildings are Regenerative

Reusing existing buildings is a sustainable practice that reduces waste and energy consumption. Old buildings can be adapted to meet changing needs, making them a more flexible and resilient asset.



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This is a Case for Action

Creating a vision plan for the public realm in Rochester's Downtown Historic District is essential to guide thoughtful, inclusive, and cohesive development that honors the area's rich heritage while addressing the needs of a changing district as well as a growing and diversifying population. As the district evolves, a clear vision will help balance historic preservation with modern functionality—ensuring that streets, sidewalks, parks, and gathering spaces are accessible, welcoming, and vibrant for all.

A public realm vision plan provides a framework for aligning future investments with community values, supporting small businesses, enhancing walkability, and fostering cultural expression. It also ensures that the district remains not just a place of the past, but a dynamic center of civic life that reflects Rochester's identity, diversity, quirks, character, and aspirations for the future.

This Case for Action is essentially a holistic analysis of the complexities of the existing conditions and opportunities that lie within the public realm of the Downtown Commercial Historic District. The Case for Action is broken into three parts:

1. The Story: What narrative is the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District telling?

2. The Energy: What is the exciting energy of the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District?

and

3. The Context: What place does the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District hold in the greater downtown fabric?

In these storytelling parts, we will understand why this district is important, from the connections is makes, to the stories it holds. These indicators will build our case for why a public realm vision plan is needed.



Part 1: The Story



Part 2: The Energy



Part 3: The Context

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Equity and Inclusion in the Public Realm

Long before the establishment of Rochester, Minnesota, the land was home to Indigenous peoples, primarily the Dakota (Sioux), Ojibway, and Winnebago Nations who lived throughout the region for centuries. The Zumbro River and surrounding prairies played a vital role in their way of life. Treaties in the 19th century, including the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851, led to the forced cession of vast Indigenous lands and the displacement of Native communities from the area. Despite this, Indigenous presence and influence continue today, as Native American individuals and families remain part of Rochester's cultural landscape, working to preserve their heritage and advocate for recognition and inclusion within the community.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Rochester's population has been predominantly of European descent, with BIPOC communities in the minority; however, the city's diversity steadily increased through the 21st century. Buildings within and around the Downtown Commercial Historic District reflect the complex history of both discrimination faced by non-European communities and their resilience in the face of adversity. Notably, Rochester's first civil rights march took place along Broadway Avenue in 1963, marking a significant moment in the city's pursuit of equity. Buildings in Downtown appear in the Green Book. George W. Gibbs Jr., the first African American to step foot in Antarctica, found his home working at IBM in Rochester for many decades after his expedition.

Underrepresented communities have played vital roles as entrepreneurs, leaders, and organizers, contributing meaningfully to Rochester's social and cultural fabric. It is imperative that this Vision Plan acknowledges the role that public space has played in injustice and discrimination, and that this plan must actively and intentionally make recommendations that result in inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Being intentional about inclusion in the public realm is essential. Public spaces shape how people experience and interact with their communities. Inclusive design and planning ensure that everyone—regardless of race, age, ability, gender, or socioeconomic status—feels welcome, safe, and represented. Without intentionality, public spaces can inadvertently exclude marginalized groups, reinforcing systemic inequities and limiting access to civic life. Inclusive public realms foster a stronger sense of belonging, encourage diverse social interaction, and support equitable access to resources and opportunities. By consciously creating spaces that reflect and serve all members of a community, cities can build more resilient, just, and connected societies.



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Case for Action Summary

This Case for Action presents a comprehensive case for revitalizing the public realm of Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District based on the importance of the district's heritage. Designated as a local historic landmark in 2024, this three-block area contains 33 buildings, most of which contribute significantly to the district's historic character. The district encapsulates Rochester's development from a river town in the 1870s to a regional hub for commerce and medicine, particularly through the growth of the Mayo Clinic.

The plan divides the area's history into three key development phases—its emergence as a bustling 19th-century trade center, transformation following a devastating 1883 tornado, and eventual commercial decline in the mid-20th century due to suburban expansion. Despite this decline, the district retained vitality due to medical tourism and remains rich with buildings that reflect diverse architectural and social histories.

This public realm analysis reveals that while the district's buildings are well preserved, its streets, sidewalks, and public amenities lack coherence, accessibility, and a distinct identity. Comfort and aesthetic amenities are inconsistent, and public gathering spaces are limited. There is great opportunity to enhance the district's environmental character, social value, accessibility, safety, and storytelling through better design and infrastructure.

Strategically, the vision plan for the public realm should seek to align with broader downtown development efforts, including the Destination Medical Center (DMC) initiative and related small area plans. The findings in this Case for Action underscore the importance of integrating the historic district into the city's future growth by improving walkability, fostering small businesses, and connecting with nearby neighborhoods and public spaces, current and future.

Overall, the vision plan should seek a balanced approach—preserving the district's historic essence while adapting to modern urban needs. Topics that could be considered include strategic zoning, design sensitivity, and community engagement to ensure the district remains a dynamic, inclusive, and integral part of Rochester's urban landscape.



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The Story

What narrative is Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District telling?



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Historic Character & History

Historic Designation

In 2024, the City of Rochester, Minnesota designated the Downtown Commercial Historic District as a local historic landmark. This decision followed a public hearing and an updated study that highlighted the area's historical significance.The district includes about three city blocks, bounded roughly by South Broadway Avenue on the east, 1st Avenue Southwest on the west, 2nd Street Southwest to the north, and 4th Street Southwest to the south. Within this area are 33 properties, 28 of which contribute to the historic character of the district.

Although the designated area represents only a portion of Rochester's original commercial core, it contains the most intact grouping of historic buildings from the district's period of significance, which spans from 1870 to 1962. Many other historic buildings were lost in the late 20th and early 21st centuries due to redevelopment. While architectural styles of the buildings vary greatly, this pattern is by no means distinct to Rochester, and the buildings in the district are united by a physical development pattern that is typical of Midwestern commercial centers. Characterized by street-facing primary facades, zero lot line construction, and rectangular block plats, the streetscape reflects a longstanding pattern of civic and commercial development in Rochester. This shared historic context and spatial organization are what qualified the area as a cohesive historic district.

Eras of Development

1870-1889: A Growing River Town

The development of downtown Rochester was closely tied to its emergence as a regional hub in the mid-19th century. After the town was platted in 1854 by settlers from upstate New York, early infrastructure—such as bridges over the Zumbro River and the arrival of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad—accelerated its growth. By the



Postcard depicting Broadway Avenue South circa 1890. Source: City of Rochester

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1860s and 1870s, Rochester's downtown had begun to take shape as a commercial and civic center, supported by a growing population, milling industries, and its designation as the Olmsted County seat. Booster literature from the era noted Rochester's rapid expansion, and by the 1890s, Broadway Avenue had become a bustling main street lined with a variety of retail establishments and service providers.

The buildings designed and constructed in this period are characterized by one- and two-story masonry structures featuring flat roofs, punched upper-story windows, and period revival detailing. These buildings are densely situated in contiguous rows reflecting the architectural pattern common in Minnesota's southern river towns. They are significant for their historical associations with Rochester's early commercial growth and represent 19th-century small-city commercial architecture. Together, they tell the story of how Rochester evolved from a small settlement into a thriving trade and cultural center in southeastern Minnesota.



The I.O.O.F Lodge #13 building was built in 1906.
Source: Alan Calavano

1890-1945: Evolution of the Commercial Core

During the late 19th and early 20th century, Rochester's downtown commercial core evolved significantly, spurred by both tragedy and transformation. The devastating 1883 tornado cleared large swaths of the original downtown, setting the stage for a period of reconstruction and reinvention. In the wake of this disaster, the founding of Saint Marys Hospital by the Sisters of Saint Francis and the Mayo family marked the beginning of Rochester's rise as a national center for medicine. As the Mayo Clinic rapidly expanded—culminating in the construction of purpose-built medical facilities like the 1914 clinic building and the iconic 1928 Plummer Building—the city's physical and economic landscape changed. Although these landmark medical buildings were located just outside the commercial district, their presence catalyzed broader downtown growth.

Architecturally, this period introduced a shift from the uniform, multipurpose brick storefronts that had previously defined the commercial district to a more varied and specialized urban fabric. While some infill buildings continued the pattern of simple, adaptable one- and two-story structures along Broadway and 1st Avenue, others took the form of larger, freestanding commercial and institutional buildings, often more distinctive in both form and function. These structures contrasted with the earlier contiguous blocks, signaling a new phase in the architectural development of Rochester's downtown—one that reflected both its economic diversification and growing prominence as a regional medical destination.

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1946-1963: Decline of Downtown's Growth

In the decades following World War II, downtown Rochester's commercial core experienced a period of relative stasis. While other American cities saw widespread decline in their central business districts during the 1950s and 60s, Rochester maintained a level of vitality thanks to the continued prominence of the Mayo Clinic. Retail and hospitality businesses in the downtown area shifted to orient more services toward the transient population of clinic visitors rather than relying on regional shoppers. Though new construction within the historic commercial district was limited, a few buildings—such as the Northwestern National Bank and Dayton's Department Store—reflected broader national trends toward modern architecture. These structures embraced midcentury styles, like the International Style, which projected corporate strength and modernity. At the same time, some older buildings received stylistic updates to align with contemporary tastes, trading elaborate revival detailing for minimalist surfaces and geometric accents.

Despite these efforts to modernize, downtown Rochester eventually faced the same pressures of decentralization that affected urban centers nationwide. The development of strip malls like Miracle Mile (1952) and Northgate (1960), followed by the more ambitious Crossroads Shopping Center (1963) and Apache Mall (1969), drew commerce to the city's periphery. Still, downtown retained its role as a retail district into the early 1960s, bolstered by Mayo Clinic expansions, new hotels, and connectivity through skyways and underground arcades. However, as retail increasingly migrated outward, downtown construction shifted focus from general commerce to service-oriented development closely tied to the clinic. This transition ushered in a new era in which portions of the historic commercial core—particularly along Broadway and 1st Avenue—were razed to accommodate larger-scale medical and hospitality developments, marking the beginning of a physical and functional transformation of Rochester's downtown landscape.



Northwestern National Bank, located at 15-21 2nd Street SW and built in 1957, is an example of the International style of architecture. Source: City of Rochester

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Historic Streetscapes

While the street grid pattern remained the same in the historic district from the 1870s through the end of the period of significance in 1962, historic photographs show an evolution of materials and features in the public streetscape. Streets evolved from dirt to masonry pavers to asphalt pavement.

As cars became popular, hitching posts for carriage parking were replaced by parking meters, and the city experimented with automobile parking at the center of the streets as well as parallel and diagonal parking along the curb. Wooden telephone and/or power poles and several iterations of metal street lights are visible on historic photos. Signage was a consistent feature of the district, with flat or projecting wall signs mounted to building façades and occasionally mounted to the roof alongside rooftop flag poles.

A significant change related to streets occurred in 1918, when the city's streets were renamed. As longtime Rochester resident Paul D. Scanlon explains, "the new system used Cartesian coordinates with four quadrants and axial dividing streets at Broadway and the former Fifth Street, now renamed Center Street. Streets are numbered in sequence as a function of distance from the center. North-south streets are called avenues and east-west streets are called streets." Within the historic district, north-south Main Street was renamed 1st Avenue Southwest; east-west College Street was renamed 4th Street and Zumbro Street was renamed 2nd Street.

The District in Context

The story of Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District is closely tied to the history of the region as a whole, demonstrating how local, regional, and national trends and historic events shaped the social and design character of the District.

This history is organized into three broad themes:

Economic Development

Focuses on local industry and commercial activities, such as shopping and restaurants.

Public and Civic Life

Highlights the civic and public services within the District, as well as the District entities that shaped entertainment and culture.

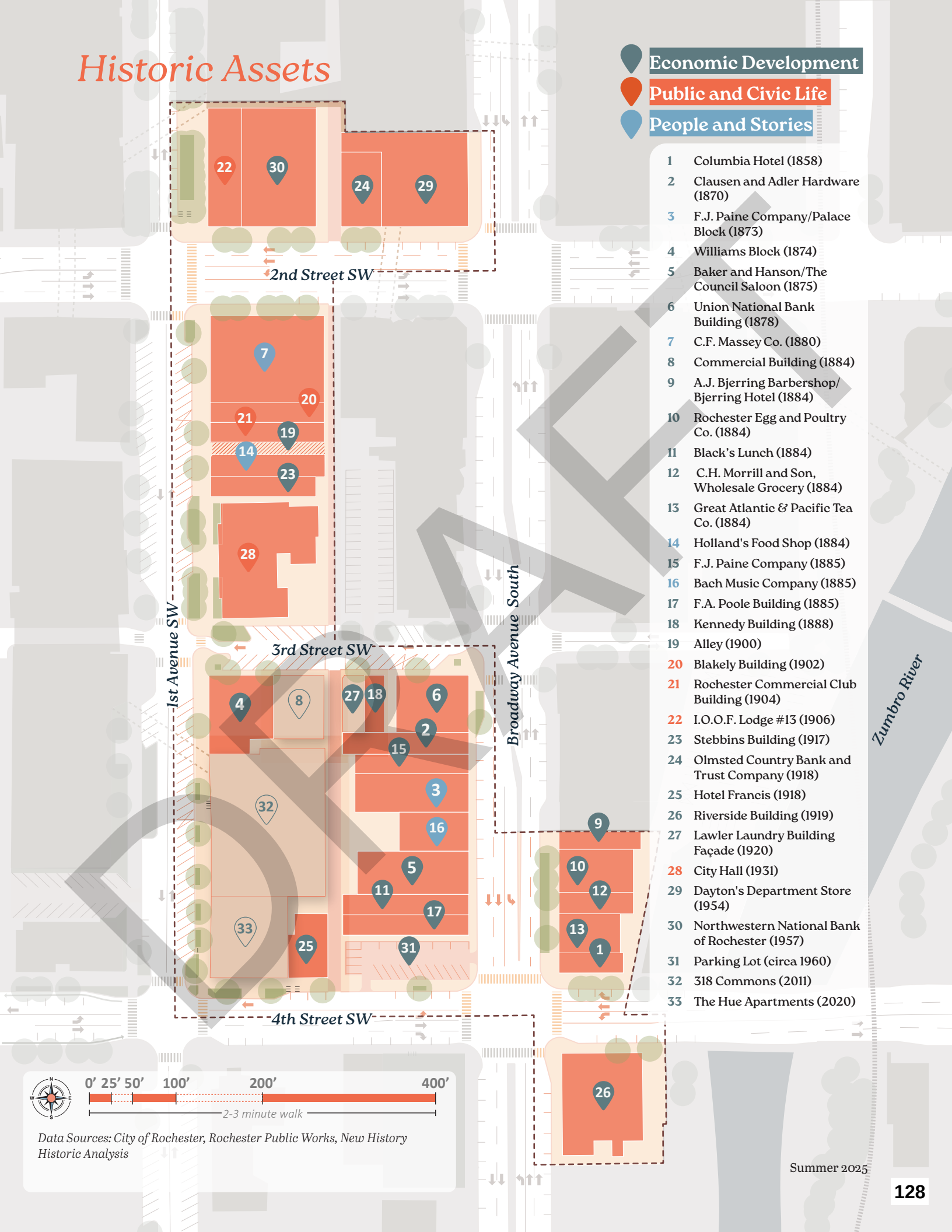
People and Stories

Acknowledge on the diversity of voices and long-term cultural anchors within the District.

These themes are discussed in greater detail in the following "Ties to Rochester's History" section. Each contributing historic building within the District is loosely affiliated with a theme, and is noted in the Historic Assets map. The building's name and date of construction can be found on the Historic Building Timeline on pages 9-11 of this document.

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Historic Assets



1 Columbia Hotel (1858)
2 Clausen and Adler Hardware (1870)
3 F.J. Paine Company/Palace Block (1873)
4 Williams Block (1874)
5 Baker and Hanson/The Council Saloon (1875)
6 Union National Bank Building (1878)
7 C.F. Massey Co. (1880)
8 Commercial Building (1884)
9 A.J. Bjerring Barbershop/ Bjerring Hotel (1884)
10 Rochester Egg and Poultry Co. (1884)
11 Black's Lunch (1884)
12 C.H. Morrill and Son, Wholesale Grocery (1884)
13 Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. (1884)
14 Holland's Food Shop (1884)
15 F.J. Paine Company (1885)
16 Bach Music Company (1885)
17 F.A. Poole Building (1885)
18 Kennedy Building (1888)
19 Alley (1900)
20 Blakely Building (1902)
21 Rochester Commercial Club Building (1904)
22 I.O.O.F. Lodge #13 (1906)
23 Stebbins Building (1917)
24 Olmsted Country Bank and Trust Company (1918)
25 Hotel Francis (1918)
26 Riverside Building (1919)
27 Lawler Laundry Building Façade (1920)
28 City Hall (1931)
29 Dayton's Department Store (1954)
30 Northwestern National Bank of Rochester (1957)
31 Parking Lot (circa 1960)
32 318 Commons (2011)
33 The Hue Apartments (2020)

Data Sources: City of Rochester, Rochester Public Works, New History Historic Analysis

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Historic Asset Mapping

1870-1889: A Growing River Town

1858 1 **Columbia Hotel**
330 Broadway Avenue South

1870 2 **Clausen and Adler Hardware**
307 Broadway Avenue South

1873 3 **F.J. Paine Company/Palace Block**
311-313 Broadway Avenue South

The F. J. Paine Company, a long-time local furniture dealer, operated at this location from 1902 until 2007.





1874 4 **Williams Block**
304 1st Avenue Southwest

This store was established by Dennis Hogan Williams (1832-1911), who arrived in Rochester in 1868 and began a farm implement business first in partnership with J. Franklin Van Dooser and later on his own. He was an alderman and mayor of the city from 1873-1875 and 1878-1888. His son Frank E. Williams (1860-1932) worked alongside his father at the firm before selling the business in 1912. In his will, Williams left his property to the city for the purpose of developing and maintaining playgrounds; the F. E. Williams Trust continues to exist for this purpose today. The Williams store reflects Rochester's history as a community founded on agriculture.

1875 5 **Baker and Hanson/The Council Saloon**
319-321 Broadway Avenue South

1878 6 **Union National Bank Building**
4 3rd Street Southwest

1880 7 **C.F. Massey Co.**
202 1st Avenue Southwest (also 20 2nd Street Southwest)

Between 1883 and 1901, Dr. William Worrall Mayo, Dr. Charles Horace Mayo, Dr. Williams James Mayo, Dr. Augustus W. Stinchfield, and Dr. Christopher Graham had their medical offices at 202 1st Avenue Southwest. The doctors' offices, consulting rooms, and operating rooms were located on the first floor, while the second floor housed their medical laboratories. In 1901, the doctors moved their offices to the Masonic Temple at the northwest corner of this same intersection. From 1912 until 1991, the building was occupied by C. F. Massey, an upscale department store.

1884 8 **Commercial Building***
16-20 3rd Street Southwest

Wong's Café was a well-known Rochester dining establishment was founded in 1952 by brothers Neil and Ben Wong and their wives Poya and Mae Wong. The restaurant was located at 20 3rd street until 1983, when it moved to the Union National Bank Building at 4 3rd Street Southwest and served traditional Cantonese as well as American food.

9 **A.J. Bjerring Barbershop/Bjerring Hotel**
318 Broadway Avenue South

**Building does not contribute to Historic District status.*

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1870-1889
A Growing River Town

1890-1945
Commercial Core

1884

10 **Rochester Egg and Poultry Co.**
320-322 Broadway Avenue South

Between 1891 and 1970, 320 Broadway was occupied by several businesses, including the Crescent Creamery, W. J. Eaton Egg Company, the Rochester Egg & Poultry Co., and Stoppel's Eggs, Poultry, and Seed Company (later known as Stoppel's Feed and Seed). Stoppel's sold farm supplies such as seed corn, field seed, fertilizer, and animal feeds, and eventually expanded into items for urban residents like pet food and lawn supplies. They continued at this location until at least 1974.

11 **Black's Lunch**
323 Broadway Avenue South

12 **C.H. Morrill and Son, Wholesale Grocery**
324 Broadway Avenue South

13 **Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co.**
326-328 Broadway Avenue South





14 **Holland's Food Shop**
216 1st Avenue Southwest

Holland's Food Shop moved into this building in 1931. Founded by Ernest Holland in 1907 and taken over by his son Newton in 1925, the grocery store became a cafeteria and art gallery in the 1930s or '40s, showcasing local artists and playing pipe organ radio broadcasts for patrons.

1885

15 **F.J. Paine Company**
309 Broadway Avenue South

16 **Bach Music Company**
315-317 Broadway Avenue South

Beginning in 1948, the Bach Music Co. occupied the building. During its tenure at this location, the business grew to encompass three storefronts and a large auditorium.



17 **F.A. Poole Building**
325 Broadway Avenue South

1888

18 **Kennedy Building**
10 3rd Street Southwest

1900

19 **Alley**
214 1st Avenue Southwest

1902

20 **Blakely Building**
210 1st Avenue Southwest

1904

21 **Rochester Commercial Club Building**
212 1st Avenue Southwest

1906

22 **I.O.O.F. Lodge #13**
23 2nd Street Southwest



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1890-1945 Evolution of the Commercial Core

1917 23 **Stebbins Building**
220 1st Avenue Southwest

Founded by William H. Knapp after his 1875 arrival in Rochester, China Hall was taken over by his sisters Matie and Nellie in 1890. They hired Winkle in 1903, who bought the business in 1914 and moved it to 220 1st Avenue SW around 1930, where it remained in operation through 1962.

1918 24 **Olmsted County Bank and Trust Company**
7 2nd Street Southwest

The Olmsted County Bank and Trust Company purchased 7 2nd Street Southwest from the First State Bank of Rochester in 1936 and continued to occupy it through at least 1962.

25 **Hotel Francis**
17 4th Street Southwest

The Hotel Francis was constructed in 1918 and represents the booming hospitality industry that developed in Rochester to serve the needs of Mayo Clinic patients and their families.

1919 26 **Riverside Building**
400 Broadway Avenue South

1920 27 **Lawler Laundry Building Façade***
14 3rd Street Southwest

(Building constructed 1920, façade relocated from building outside district in 2007).



1931 28 **City Hall**
224 1st Avenue Southwest

1946-1963 Decline of Downtown's Growth

1954 29 **Dayton's Department Store**
195 Broadway Avenue South

Constructed in 1954, this store was the Minneapolis retail giant's first branch store. Dayton's decision to build in downtown Rochester reflects downtown's prominence into the mid-twentieth century, despite the growth of retail development in suburban areas.

1957 30 **Northwestern National Bank of Rochester**
15-21 2nd Street Southwest

The Union National Bank moved into the building at 4 3rd Street Southwest in 1875, just a few years after it was incorporated. In 1956, it became the Northwestern National Bank of Rochester and constructed a new building at 21 2nd Street Southwest. The bank building was known for its "Weatherball" icon, which used different colored lighting to provide the weather forecast.



circa 1960 31 **Parking Lot***
corner 4th St and Broadway

2011 32 **318 Commons***
318 1st Avenue Southwest

2020 33 **The Hue Apartments***
324 1st Avenue Southwest

**Building does not contribute to Historic District status.*

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Ties to Rochester's History

Economic Development

Rochester was a city of westward expansion.

Some of the oldest buildings in the district were built as part of an early pioneer settlement, founded in 1854 as a stop on a stagecoach line from Dubuque, Iowa to St. Paul, MN. Soon after, Rochester developed into a regional urban center connected to Chicago by rail.

Rochester has historically been a leader in agriculture, food production, and distribution.

As a center of transport and with fertile land, settlers started farms, focusing first on wheat production, then dairy, livestock and other crops. Several flour mills, a dairy cooperative, and canning facilities were built, making Rochester a food distribution center, which evolved as technology and scale in farming increased. Businesses in the historic district serviced the farming community.

With simple origins, the Mayo Clinic expanded its influence through partnerships and teaching.

In the 1860s, Dr. William Worrell Mayo opened a medical practice in Rochester, today known as Mayo Clinic, that would grow to become a key part of the city's economy. The Mayo offices were located in the historic district during the late 1800s. In 1883, a devastating tornado, which impacted the historic district, exposed the community's need for a local hospital.

Many local companies innovated and grew within Rochester's downtown.

Schuster Brewery, located adjacent to the historic district, was established in the 1860s and remained in operation until 1922. Other notable companies innovating in tandem with Mayo Clinic at the turn of the twentieth century included the Conley Camera Company and Maass and McAndrew Plumbing and Heating, which diversified their services to support the Mayo Clinic.

Within the district, many businesses have been long-standing tenants of the community

Hundreds of businesses and companies were located in the historic district from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century.

The District lost some of its economic steam as the city expanded outwards in the 20th century.

In the mid-1900's the district faced competition from outlying shopping centers constructed as residential and commercial development spread outward. The establishment of International Business Machines (IBM) in Rochester as a major employer also became a reason for outward expansion of the City.

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Public and Civic Life

Rochester's downtown has a strong connection with municipal and county government.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Rochester's elected officials included a mayor and aldermen. The city built two consecutive city halls within the historic district, in 1884 and then 1931. Olmsted County government has also been based in Rochester since the mid-nineteenth century.

The city has high standards for taking care of its citizens through resilient municipal services.

The district represents some of the history of municipal infrastructure and services like fire protection, the postal service, and electric power generation. Below-grade utilities beneath district streets were one of the Great Depression Era public works projects sponsored by federal agencies. Rochester's Franklin Heating Station, just outside the historic district, was notable for its efficient Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system.

Downtown Rochester is the historic central social district for the region.

Downtown Rochester has long been a place for recreation, with theaters, event spaces, and other places of entertainment. The district buildings included social gathering spaces like saloons and meeting halls, and the public realm was used for parades and celebrations, specifically Broadway Avenue.

People and Stories

Rochester is founded on Dakota land and remains a home for Dakota people.

The 1851 Treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux as well as forced removal of the Dakota following the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 provided the premise for the United States government and Euro-Americans to stake claims to land in the Rochester area. Despite this tragic history, the Dakota have persisted in Rochester. During the late twentieth century, the Dakota community established strong organizations to serve the community's needs, preserve Indigenous culture, and educate the public.

Rochester's underrepresented communities, including Black, Asian American, and Native American residents, have included resilient entrepreneurs and community organizers.

Ethnically, the majority of Rochester's residents have been those of European descent and BIPOC residents have been in the minority, though the city's diversity continues to grow into the 21st century. Buildings in and adjacent to the district help to tell the story of both discrimination against and the resilience of non-European communities. The city's first Civil Rights March occurred along Broadway Avenue in 1963.

Mayo clinic contributes to Rochester's international reputation.

By 1978, it was estimated that Mayo visitors from other countries made up between 2 and 4 percent of the clinic's 250,000 annual patient registration, from approximately 70 countries, including Mexico, Spain, and Saudi Arabia.

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Public Realm Analysis

Defining the Public Realm

The public realm in the context of the Downtown Commercial Historic District refers to the shared spaces that are accessible to everyone and form the setting for community life. In the district, this includes streets, sidewalks, alleyways, and the features that characterize these spaces that support everyday interactions, movement, rest, and activities. In Rochester, especially with its focus on health and innovation through the Destination Medical Center initiative, the public realm plays a critical role in fostering a welcoming, walkable, and vibrant urban environment. The public realm supports both locals and visitors by encouraging social connection, cultural expression, and economic activity while contributing to the overall quality of life and identity of the city.

The analysis of the current public realm in the district will focus on four categories:

1. Environmental Character

2. Social Value

3. Accessibility and Safety

4. Wayfinding, Signage, and Storytelling

Each of these categories will be considered through three lenses:

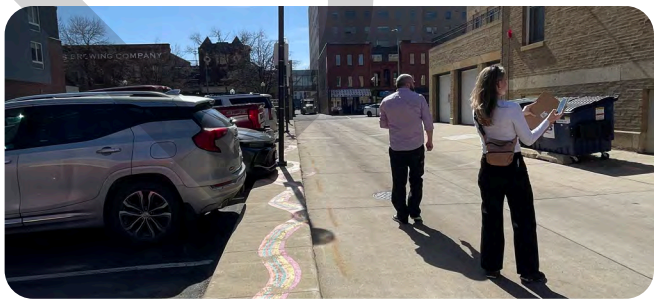
Quality - How well are the spaces that make up the public realm designed from a durability, maintenance, and aesthetics perspective?

Function - How well are people able to use the public spaces in the district, through passive use, active use, or finding their way through the district?

Impact - How much are the public spaces in the district contributing to a special public realm identity, inclusion, and sense of place?

These lenses will be scored on a scale of 1 through 3, with 1 indicating "in near-term need of significant revisioning and improvement", 2 indicating "in need of some work but is generally sufficient", and 3 indicating "excellent for contributing to the public realm environment".

The following pages provide a breakdown of these public realm categories and lenses, with supporting imagery of the current condition of the public realm. Note that each image is labeled with an icon that correlates with a location map on page 18.





Project team conducting the visual site assessment of the Downtown Commercial Historic District.

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Character

2 **Quality**

1 **Function**

1 **Impact**

Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District holds deep history as the original heart of commerce in the city. Today, things have changed a bit, with commercial hubs diversifying throughout Rochester to serve the expanded population. Through the preservation efforts of building owners over time, many historic properties in this district have maintained their historic character, as emphasized in the 2019-2024 Rochester Historic Landmark Eligibility Designation Study. However, beyond the buildings themselves, the public realm leaves much to be desired in the sense of holding a character that is unique to the historic district.

Sense of Place: There is currently no cohesive district-wide identity or character to the Downtown Commercial Historic District. It is unclear where the district boundaries are, and the character of the public realm changes many times even on the same block. One is not sure if they have "arrived", if they are aware that they are in a historic district at all. Looking at precedents within Rochester, including Heart of the City and Discovery Square, there is great opportunity to find the character of the Downtown Commercial Historic District within the public realm.

Materials: Sidewalk materials vary greatly throughout the district, and seem to be dictated by disconnected piecemeal projects completed over time or by individual property owner interventions. Fixed amenities such as benches, planters, and street and sidewalk lighting also vary widely throughout the district.

Scale: Though the historic buildings feel human-scale, surrounding modern development varies in impact on the feeling of being in the district. Large several-story monolithic developments dwarf the buildings in the historic district, impacting the balance and transition between the district and other parts of downtown. On the other hand, some modern development has more successfully contextualized itself within the district, attempting to match scale, materials, and facade style with the general character of the historic structures.

Landscaping: There is no consistent treatment to landscaping within the district. Street verges (planted areas between the sidewalk and roadway) appear in most bump-outs and on most blocks of the district, but show planting success inconsistently, with some verges being heavily planted and some being barren areas of mulch. Raised planters are of varying designs and styles, most likely a result of City-standard and owner/tenant-installed.

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Materials - Current examples within the district



Various types of concrete are the predominant surface material throughout the district



However, some areas within and adjacent to the district boundaries show opportunities to infuse character using the materiality

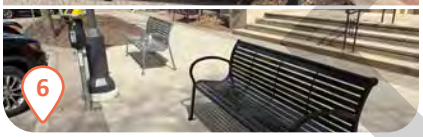


Remnants of different materials indicate different owners, property lines, and eras of change in a rough way



Inconsistency in material usage can indicate unorganized improvement efforts and detracts from a unified character





Different bench types and colors detract from an overall sense of place and cohesive district character



Different lighting styles indicate various eras of improvements implemented without a cohesive district vision

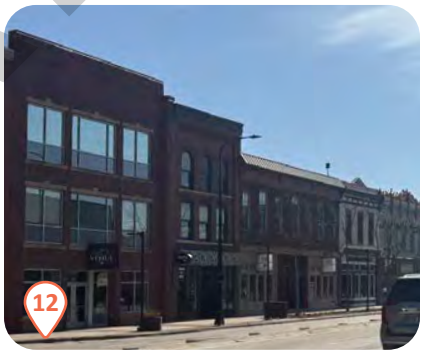
Scale - Current examples within the district



Modern development looking across 1st Ave SW from the historic district include full glass facades and overhead masses

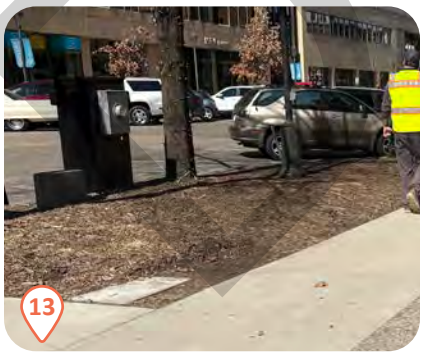


The historic district buildings seem dwarfed by the several-story nearby BioBusiness Center and parking ramp

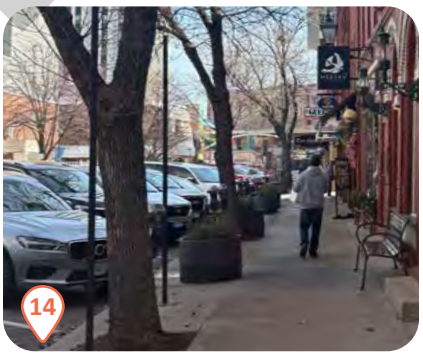


Though modern, the newer development beginning at 316 Broadway and north acknowledges the district's scale and style

Landscaping - Current examples within the district



Wide plant beds offer opportunity for lush landscaping, but have degraded into areas of wood mulch



Mature street trees provide a comfortable pedestrian experience, but are not consistently present throughout the district



Even when dormant, landscape plantings add texture and softness to the public realm

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Social Value

2 Quality

1 Function

1 Impact

The social value lens evaluates the influence of the public spaces in the district on social interactions, economic activity, and overall community vibrancy. Does the public realm in the Downtown Commercial Historic District promote opportunities for people to connect and interact in public spaces?

Interactions: In general, there are no public gathering spaces available for folks occupying or visiting the district unless you are a customer of a business who has elected to set up an outdoor sidewalk cafe. Much of the public realm is a pass-through space, facilitating movement through the district but not necessarily encouraging visitors to stop, rest, and gather. Benches throughout the district appear where there is enough space on the sidewalks, but generally face traffic or are singularly placed. Heart of the City and Discovery Square showcase successful ways to encourage social interactions through seating and other comfort and entertainment elements that can inform the historic district's future public realm.



Single benches facing non-social elements, located near trash receptacles and buzzing utilities isn't the best set up for a meaningful social interaction

Economic activity: The business makeup of the district is diverse and vibrant. From new start-up shops to long-standing businesses and everything in-between, the district is a happening place where you can come to enjoy a meal, visit an art shop, purchase some antiques, or conduct business in one of the many office buildings. This economic vibrancy is in part largely due to the unique character that the historic structures inherently hold, and the public realm should reflect this vibrancy by supporting the various businesses to not only attract new customers, but provide a place to grow and thrive economically.









Small, local businesses are thriving in the district, drawing visitors both locally and from out of town for their unique charm and diverse offerings.

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Accessibility and Safety

2 **Quality**

2 **Function**

2 **Impact**

Looking at the accessibility and safety of an outdoor public realm is critical in ensuring that people feel like they can trust being in the place, feel like they belong, and that they can safely move through the district. Considerations include visibility, lighting, Americans with Disabilities Act compliant designs, and inclusive practices.

Especially in Rochester, where people from all over the world come for medical support just blocks from the Downtown Commercial Historic District, accessible and inclusive spaces are imperative to do very well in this district.

Some businesses in the historic buildings have an immediate barrier at their front door with a step up to enter their space. Sometimes folks in need of a more accessible transition are required to go to the rear of the building, through an alleyway that is currently not an inviting or comfortable space to be. Some businesses have addressed this issue by adding a short ramp, which a more thorough assessment of compliant accessible grade should be conducted.

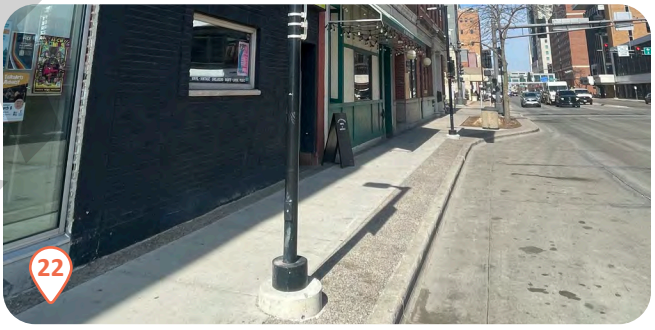


Steps up to businesses are barriers to some, and back-of-house entries feel unsafe and too far a distance to travel

Sidewalks are comfortable and wide throughout the district, allowing for ease of navigating folks passing by, with the exception of along Broadway Ave where the narrow sidewalk and lack of buffer from the busy roadway make feeling safe here challenging.

Sidewalks and streets are well-lit, with light poles and building-mounted lighting supporting a safe evening environment.

Controlled pedestrian crossings and sloped ramps facilitate safer crossings along Broadway Ave, but crossing over 1st Ave along 3rd St is a bit riskier without a controlled or signalled intersection there.



Creating comfortable spaces for folks to pass each other without pinch points or directly along busy roadways improves safety, accessibility, and comfort in the public realm



Crosswalk improvements will lend to a better feeling of safety and comfort crossing roadways

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Wayfinding, Signage, and Storytelling

1 **Quality**

1 **Function**

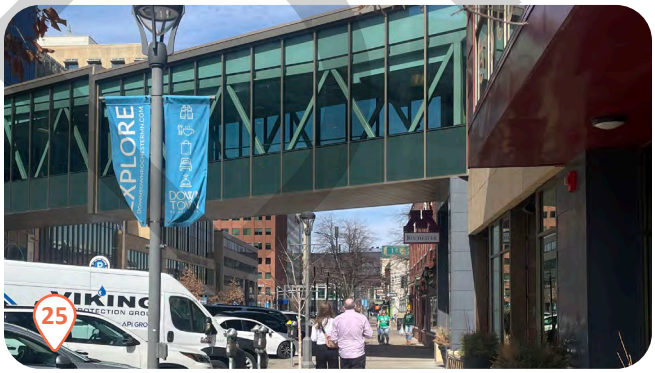
1 **Impact**

One of the most impactful elements of a historic public realm is telling the stories of that place. Signage, wayfinding, and storytelling can work together to reveal histories, tell stories, and help people confidently get from one place to another, discovering new and exciting histories along the way.

Current City-placed signage and wayfinding within the district is generally limited to typical parking regulations and street signs, with an occasional banner identifying downtown in general in a few locations.

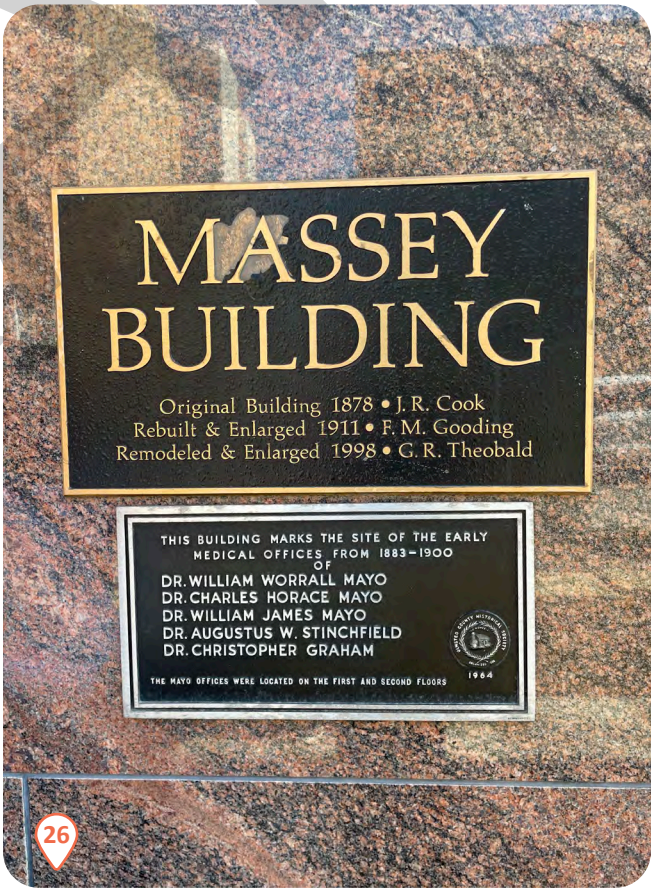


Small artistic spots of wayfinding help people access important connections, but where is the destination?



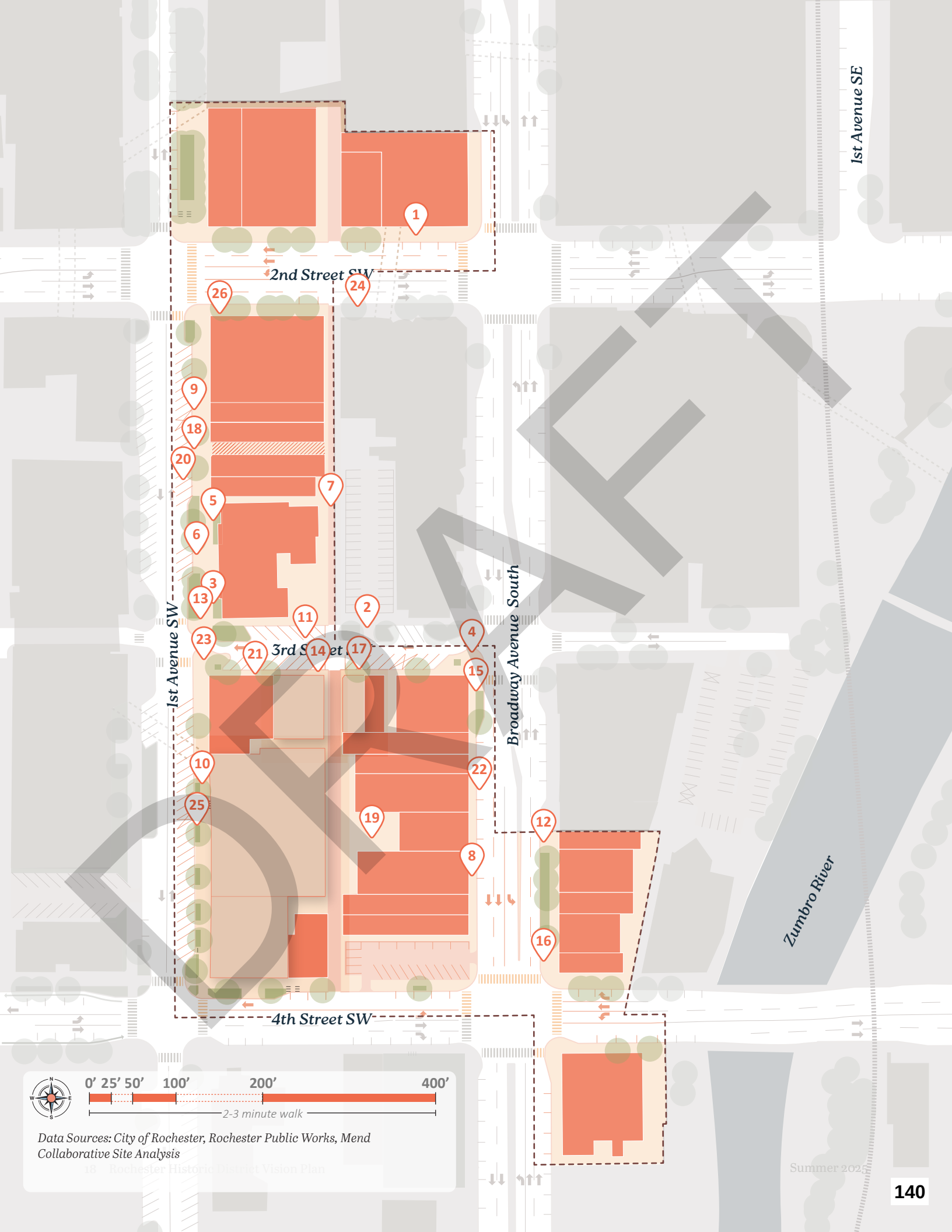
City-mounted banners have the opportunity be customized to the historic district to contribute to a sense of place

Property owners have found clever and unique ways to infuse storytelling into signage within their properties, whether that be about the history of businesses over time, important people, or modern cultural anecdotes. There is incredible opportunity to leverage the combination of signage, wayfinding, and storytelling in this district to emphasize a sense of place and reveal Rochester's stories.



Building owners often take up the effort to tell the story of the historic spaces within the district

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Data Sources: City of Rochester, Rochester Public Works, Mend Collaborative Site Analysis

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The Evolution of the Public Realm Over Time

Studying Broadway Ave, looking northwest from 4th St:



1890

- Original building facades
- Slower traffic, one lane each way
- Shade, decor, and facade differentiation
- Angled parking as buffer from traffic

57 Years



1947

- Traffic control signalling
- Signage as decor and placemaking
- Lighting for safety
- Angled parking as buffer from traffic
- Quickening traffic, one lane each way
- Cyclists and "jaywalkers" comfortably using street

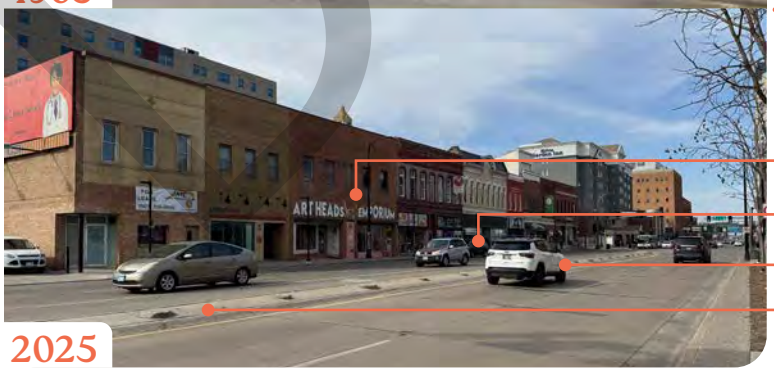
18 Years



1965

- Added layers of lighting for safety
- Building face simplification
- Parallel parking provides less buffer from traffic
- Quickening traffic, two lanes each way

60 Years



2025

- Signage diminished but still there
- Parallel parking provides less buffer from traffic
- Very quick traffic, two lanes each way
- Median maintains car-focused roadway

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The Energy

What is the exciting energy of Rochester's Downtown Commercial Historic District?



Live, Work, Play

People live, work and play in this historic district

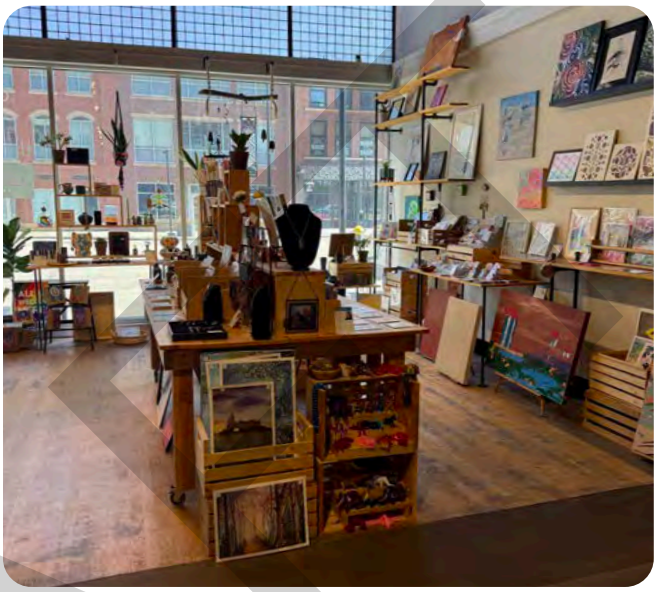
The Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District has an incredible and diverse array of building uses. These businesses are inherently preserving the buildings through adaptive reuse and drawing people into the district to dine, shop, do business, and live. The uses of these buildings contribute to a vibrant culture within the district that speaks to its heritage while introducing global and multi-cultural experiences for those living, working, and visiting the district.

Residences

From the residences at Old City Hall, to newer apartment complexes, to people living on upper levels of some buildings, there is a variety of residences between historic and non-historic structures within the district. Student focused housing anchors the newer developments, and traditional apartments are scattered throughout the district. Short-term rentals also house folks spending just a few nights downtown.

Shopping

The Downtown Commercial Historic District stays true to its historic purpose for drawing people here with many shops occupying the traditional storefronts. Art galleries, record stores, tobacco shops, vintage and antique stores, and more provide residents and visitors with a variety of unique shopping experiences.



Working

Many types of businesses call the district home, where they have offices, headquarters, or showrooms. Architecture and engineering firms, dental offices, photography studios, Destination Medical Center's headquarters, and more all contribute to the day-to-day life of the district.

Food and Beverage

The district is a great place to find a variety of dining and beverage options. Small grocers offer quick take-out options, nice shops offer delicacies like gourmet popcorn and boba teas, sit-down restaurants span global palettes, and watering holes offer libations for those in need of winding down.

All images in this section are from a district analysis process courtesy of Mend Collaborative.

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Art & Design

The Downtown Commercial Historic District is brought to life through public art and design

Aside from the stunning architecture of historic buildings, the district is vibrant with colorful artwork, murals, and small discoveries. Art in the public realm is important for several reasons, including:

- **Cultural identity and expression**
- **Inclusion and belonging**
- **Social and civic engagement**
- **Aesthetic and environmental enhancement**
- **Economic and touristic value**
- **Educational opportunities**
- **Encouragement of creativity and innovation**

In essence, public artwork isn't just decoration—it plays a vital role in shaping meaningful, dynamic, and inclusive public spaces, especially in a historic district where there is a rich story to reveal and share.

The district has become a hub of public art, as well as companies that support art and design. Local photography studios, art studios, music shops, and design consultants are sprinkled throughout the district. Not only is there passive art displayed on the walls and ground, but active artistic expression is being created here.













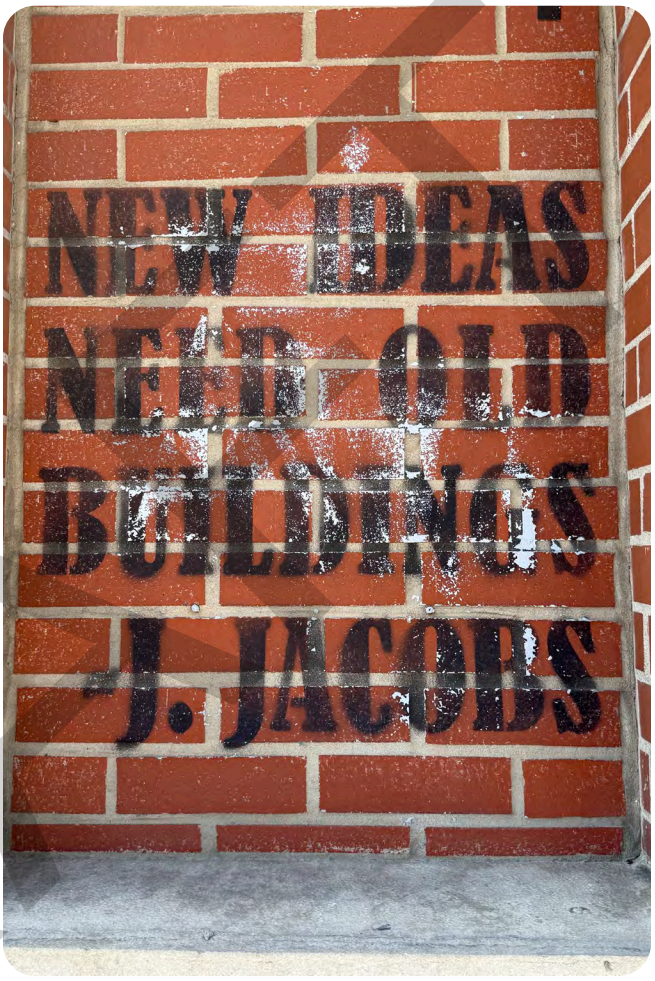
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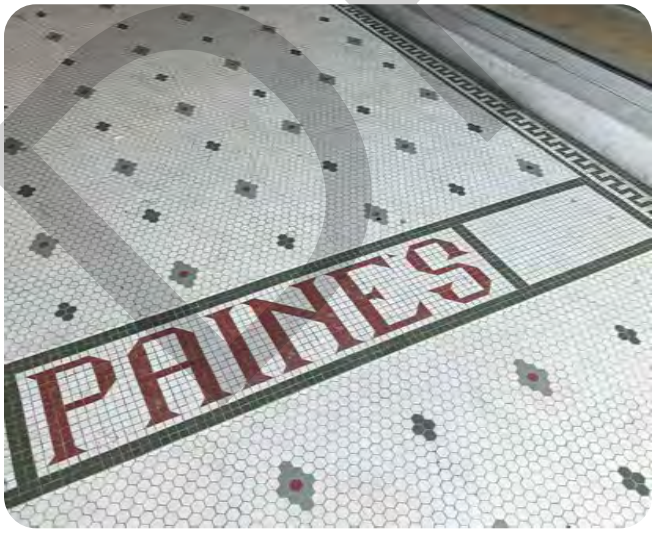
Historical Interpretation

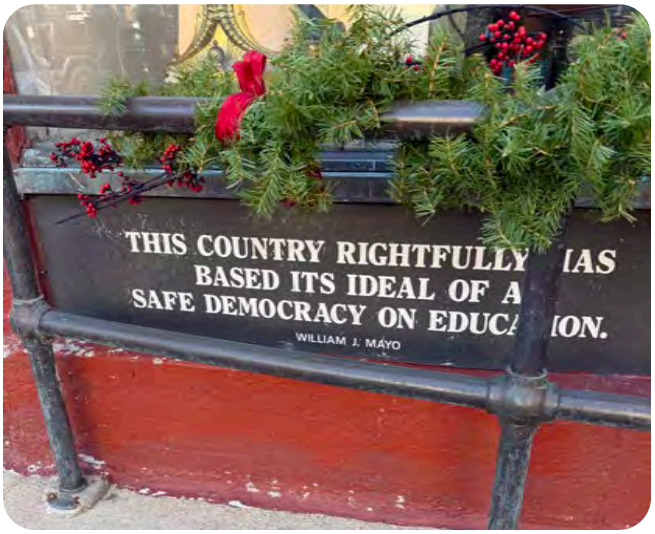
The Downtown Commercial Historic District's story is being told through individuals and their properties

It is clear that some property owners and business owners have a strong passion for the history of the district. Various types of signage, plaques, and graffiti art, whether new or preserved, express the understanding of this place's history through the lens of those who have a stake in this part of downtown. This expression of historical interpretation has become a charming characteristic of the district, and although isn't consistent from building to building, is a fun way to stumble across big and small stories.

Through this public realm vision plan process, there is opportunity to coordinate with these passionate stakeholders who bear these stories and relics to discover new and more expansive ways to embrace the history of the district in public spaces.







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The Context

What place does the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District hold in the greater downtown fabric?



Connections to Previous Plans

Connecting the District to the Future of Downtown Rochester

The historic district sits at the intersection of several transformative initiatives shaping the future of downtown Rochester. **The Destination Medical Center (DMC) 5-Year Development Plan Update** (2020), the **Downtown Waterfront Southeast (DWSE) Small Area Plan** (2021), the **Riverfront Small Area Plan** (2022), the upcoming **Link Bus Rapid Transit Project**, and the **Rochester Downtown Master Plan** (2010) together represent a substantial investment in mobility, development, and public realm infrastructure in the surrounding area.

As these plans move into implementation, they are expected to bring thousands of new residents, workers, and visitors into the area. This plan recognizes the importance of not treating the historic district as a standalone entity, but as a vital connector within a broader downtown framework. It is essential that development, access, and placemaking strategies within the district align with adjacent plans to create a cohesive and active urban environment. This includes strengthening physical connections, reinforcing shared public realm qualities, and ensuring complementary uses and experiences that encourage seamless movement between areas. This plan builds on the priorities of these previous planning efforts by ensuring that the historic district does not stand apart, but instead functions as an integral part of a growing and evolving downtown core.



Destination Medical Center 5-Year Development Plan Update (2020)

The DMC Development Plan is a 20-year vision guiding the transformation of downtown Rochester through public-private investment, with the goal of positioning the city as a global destination for health and wellness. The plan includes mobility improvements, public realm investment, and catalytic private development. DMC is currently undergoing the 2025 update to this plan, to be completed fall of 2025. The DMC district overlaps the historic district boundary, creating a direct relationship between the two plans.

Key priorities include:

- **Mobility**: Investment in a high-frequency electric Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, expanded pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and a pilot program for autonomous shuttles.
- **Public Realm**: Construction of signature spaces such as Heart of the City and Discovery Walk, and initial design work for new downtown waterfront spaces.

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- **Development**: Continued focus on the Discovery Square innovation district, expansion of housing options, and support for local retail and entrepreneurship.

Relevance to This Plan:
This plan recognizes the historic district's strategic location within the DMC geography and builds on its potential to support DMC goals. By enhancing walkability, improving public space design, and supporting small businesses, the district can serve as a key node that supports the broader vision of a vibrant, connected, and people-centered downtown.



Downtown Waterfront Southeast (DWSE) Small Area Plan (2021)

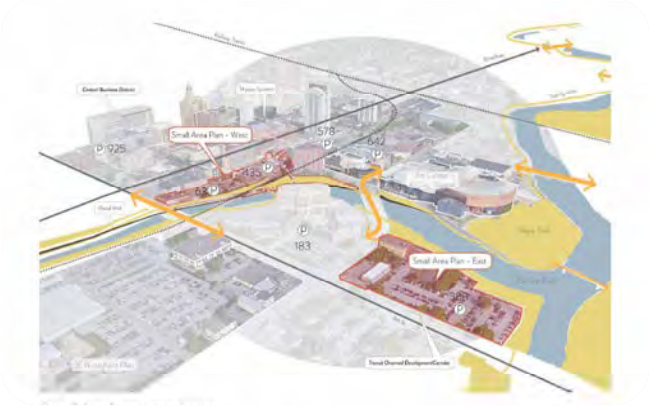
The DWSE Small Area Plan provides a framework for revitalizing 60 acres of underutilized land immediately southeast of the historic district. Anchored by the former AMPI site, the plan envisions the creation of a new urban neighborhood with a mix of housing, local retail, open space, and civic destinations. The project area is located between downtown, Slatterly Park, and Sunnyside neighborhoods, and is directly connected to Soldiers Field and the Zumbro River.

Key features of the plan include:

- **Equity-Focused Development:** New housing at a variety of price points, commercial space for start-ups, and accessible public spaces designed for all abilities.
- **Public Realm Improvements:** A new riverfront promenade, plaza, and green corridors that extend into adjacent neighborhoods.
- **Multimodal Connectivity:** A connected street grid, new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and integration with future BRT service.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Enhanced stormwater systems, increased tree canopy, and reduced impervious surfaces.

Relevance to This Plan:
This plan acknowledges that 4th Street SE and adjacent corridors will become important east-west connectors as development in DWSE progresses. The historic district must be designed to receive and direct this new activity, especially by strengthening pedestrian and transit connections, enhancing wayfinding, and aligning with public realm improvements that flow from the east. The result should be a seamless transition between character areas, ensuring that the district supports and benefits from new investment in adjacent neighborhoods.

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Riverfront Small Area Plan (2022)

The Riverfront Small Area Plan addresses the future of two city-owned sites totaling 5.5 acres along the Zumbro River between 2nd and 4th Streets. The western site includes the former Red Owl Grocery and Time Theater buildings, a surface parking lot, and a deteriorating city-owned parking ramp. The eastern site is primarily used for surface parking and is located adjacent to major civic destinations including the Mayo Civic Center, the library, and Mayo Park.

The plan proposes:

- 500,000–700,000 square feet of new mixed-use development, including housing and ground-floor commercial uses aimed at local businesses.
- Substantial public realm investments, such as terraced riverfront open space, new parks, and trail enhancements.
- Adaptive reuse of historic buildings and reinterpretation of Rochester's milling and industrial past.
- Enhanced connections to downtown via 3rd Street and 4th Avenue SE, as well as integration with future BRT service.

The Riverfront SAP emphasizes equity, sustainability, and placemaking, positioning the river as a civic destination and community asset. It also aligns closely with the city's comprehensive plan and builds upon investments in Discovery Walk and Heart of the City.

Relevance to This Plan:
This plan views the historic district as an essential link between civic anchors and the emerging riverfront. 3rd and 4th Streets, in particular, are key corridors for creating continuity between these areas. Enhancements to sidewalks, lighting, signage, and activation strategies in the district can strengthen its role as a connector and gateway. Additionally, programming and business development strategies in the district can complement new activity along the riverfront, reinforcing both areas as vibrant downtown destinations.

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Link Bus Rapid Transit project (current)

The Link Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project is a transformative 2.8-mile corridor along 2nd Street that will provide high-frequency, fare-free transit service between key destinations in Rochester, including downtown, the Mayo Civic Center, Mayo Clinic campuses, and the Downtown Waterfront Southeast area. As one of the city's busiest corridors—with over 21,800 vehicles and 13,000 transit riders daily—2nd Street is a critical spine for future mobility and growth. Link is a collaborative effort between the City of Rochester, Destination Medical Center (DMC), Mayo Clinic, Olmsted County and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Key features of the plan include:

- Frequent, All-Day Service: Electric buses will run every 5 minutes during peak hours and every 10–15 minutes off-peak, from 5 a.m. to midnight on weekdays and 8 a.m. to midnight on weekends.
- High-Quality Stations: 12 modern, accessible stations at 7 locations will offer real-time information and enhanced amenities to improve the rider experience.
- Sustainable Operations: The system will be fully electric and fare-free, supporting city goals for equity, climate resilience, and clean mobility.
- Integrated Partnerships: Led by the City with support from Mayo Clinic and DMC, Link demonstrates the power of coordinated investment in public infrastructure.
- Construction Timeline: Groundbreaking occurred in June 2025, with service scheduled to begin in 2027.

Relevance to This Plan:
Link BRT will directly shape mobility and development patterns within the Historic District. By anchoring one of its stations near the district and dramatically improving access to 2nd Street, Link offers an opportunity to strengthen east-west connections and reduce car dependence. The investment aligns with public realm improvements envisioned in other plan and helps ensure that the Historic District remains well-integrated with a rapidly evolving downtown core.

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Downtown Rochester Master Plan (2010)

The Rochester Downtown Master Plan presented a comprehensive vision for downtown as a vibrant, walkable, and economically resilient core. Developed through a collaboration among the City of Rochester, Mayo Clinic, University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR), the Rochester Downtown Alliance, and the Rochester Area Foundation, the plan lays out a flexible framework to guide growth, mobility, and design over a 20-year horizon. It builds on key assets—Mayo Clinic, UMR, historic buildings, civic and cultural institutions, and the Zumbro River—while promoting a more connected and livable downtown.

Key features of the plan include:

- District-Based Framework: Defines four mixed-use districts—Main Street, Arts and Riverfront, Education and Research, and Medical/Clinical—each designed to promote synergy, walkability, and diverse activity.
- Public Realm and Open Space Investments: Establishes an interconnected open space network including enhanced riverfront areas, civic plazas, linear parks, and complete streets.
- Multimodal Mobility Strategy: Integrates land use with active transportation, prioritizing walking, biking, transit, and reduced dependence on cars.
- Sustainability Principles: Promotes energy-efficient buildings, climate-sensitive urban design, and resilient infrastructure systems.
- Catalytic Development Opportunities: Identifies opportunity sites in each district to spur private investment and model high-quality, urban development.

Relevance to This Plan:
The Downtown Master Plan remains a foundational policy document for the Historic District. Its emphasis on walkable urban form, integration with regional anchors like Mayo and UMR, and a high-quality public realm all directly support strategies to preserve and activate the Historic District. The plan's call to strengthen pedestrian corridors such as 1st Avenue, enhance riverfront connections, and invest in streetscapes and public space are especially relevant. Implementation of these elements will help position the Historic District as a central and welcoming part of a growing, mixed-use downtown.

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Regulatory Analysis

The regulatory framework shaping the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District is defined by a combination of zoning and preservation overlays. Understanding these layers is essential to identifying both the opportunities and constraints for future development, business activity, and public realm improvements. This section summarizes the applicable regulations and their implications for design and implementation within the district.

Zoning Summary

The historic district is located within the MX-D (Mixed Use Downtown) Business Subdistrict, which is intended to support a vibrant, high-intensity mix of retail, office, residential, and entertainment uses in alignment with the Downtown Master Plan. This zoning allows for flexible, pedestrian-oriented development with no minimum lot size or setbacks, and building heights of up to 235 feet. The district encourages active ground-floor uses, multimodal access, and high-quality urban design to reinforce downtown as the city's commercial and cultural core.

The area is also subject to a Heritage Preservation Overlay (HPO), which provides additional protections for properties recognized as historically or architecturally significant. Within the HPO, exterior alterations, demolitions, and new construction are subject to design review and require a Certificate of Appropriateness to ensure compatibility with the district's historic character.

Together, these layers of regulation support both dynamic urban development and the preservation of Rochester's architectural heritage, requiring thoughtful design that honors the past while embracing the future.

Why This is Important

The regulatory context of the district offers considerable flexibility for high-intensity, mixed-use development while establishing safeguards to protect its historic identity. Future improvements must navigate this balance—leveraging the potential of the MX-D Business zoning to support economic vitality, while respecting the design standards and preservation goals embedded in the Heritage Preservation Overlay. This dual framework ensures that growth within the district can be both ambitious and context-sensitive.

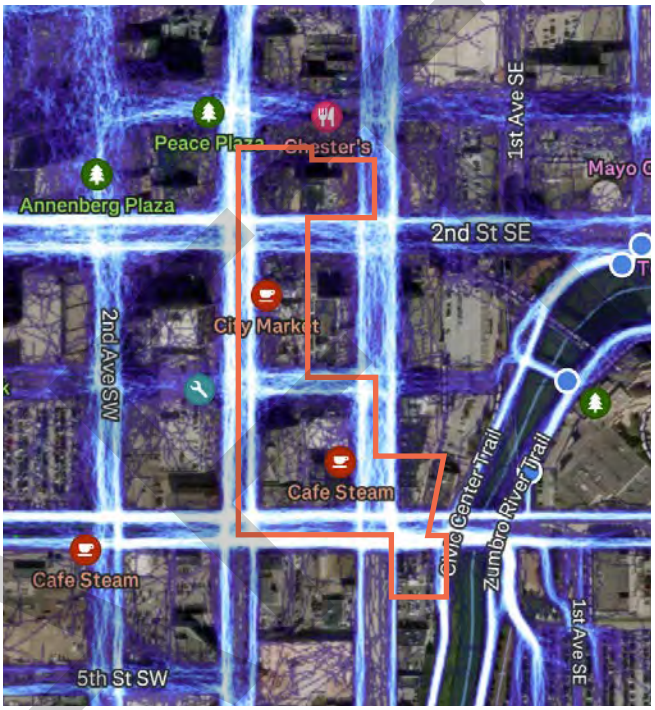
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Mobility Analysis

How are people moving?

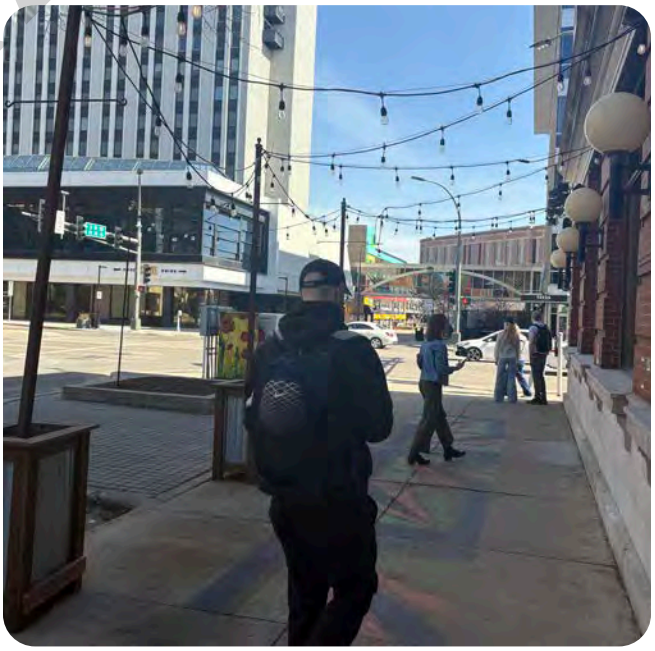
As Rochester's largest collection of late nineteenth-century commercial buildings, the historic district was originally designed with pedestrians in mind. Today, using twenty-first-century tools like Strava, we can clearly see that it remains a major pedestrian destination within Downtown.

At the same time, the district has been accommodating vehicle traffic for over a century. The streets that run through and alongside it now serve a dual role—providing essential access to the district itself and functioning as key connectors to the broader city for those passing through.



A "heat map" from Strava shows pedestrian movement. The district stands out as being especially trafficked by walking and running compared to adjacent areas of downtown.







Data Sources: City of Rochester, Rochester Public Works, MNDot 2016 and 2024 Traffic Counts, Rochester Public Parking, Mend Collaborative

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Corridor Priorities

Broadway Avenue South

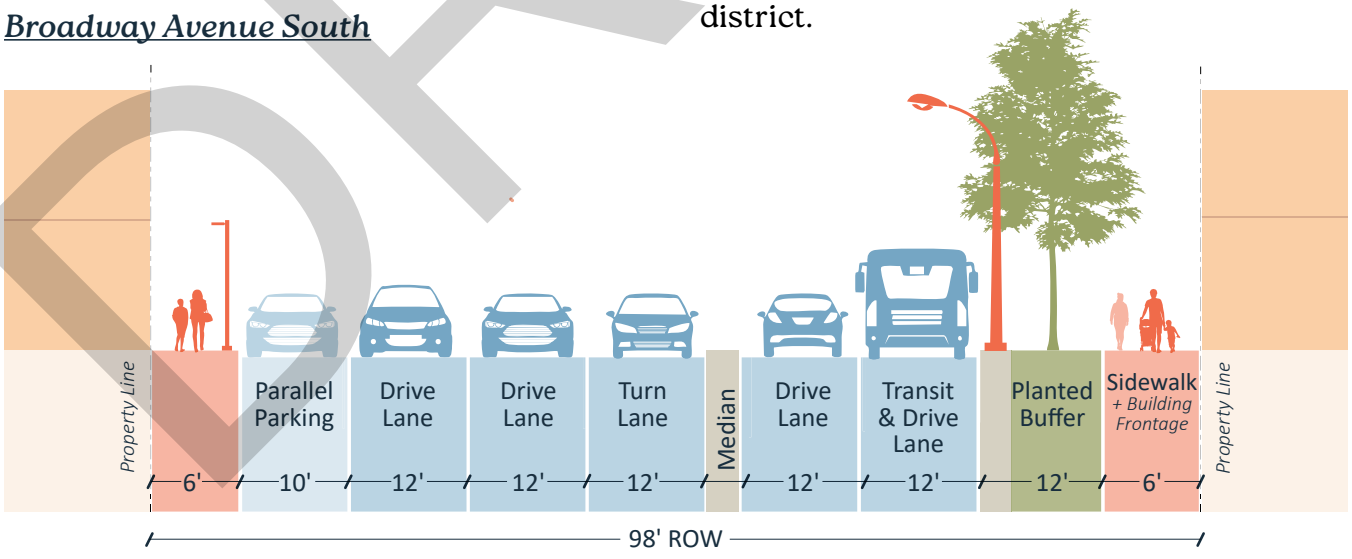
Broadway is one of Rochester's most important north-south corridors, carrying more than 19,000 vehicles per day—by far the highest volume of any street in the district. While much of this traffic is passing through to destinations north and south, data from intersecting east-west streets suggests that many drivers use this stretch of Broadway for short trips before turning east onto 2nd Street SW or west onto 4th Street SE. Broadway also functions as a key transit spine, with several bus routes running along it daily. Despite this multimodal activity, the majority of the public right-of-way is dedicated to vehicle movement or parking, leaving only narrow sidewalks for pedestrians.

2nd Street South

2nd Street South forms the northern edge of the district, running east-west and linking key destinations across downtown. To the west, it connects the district with the Mayo Clinic's main campus; to the east, it provides access to the Rochester Public Library, Rochester Art Center, Mayo Civic Center, St. Marys, Highway 52, and Mayo Park.

Traffic volumes on 2nd Street South vary significantly: west of Broadway, the corridor sees just over 11,000 vehicles per day, while east of Broadway, that number drops to about 5,000. In addition to its role in vehicle circulation, 2nd Street South is a vital transit corridor—one that will become even more important with the introduction of Link, Rochester's new 2.8-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line. Expected to serve around 11,000 passengers daily, Link will likely bring transit ridership along 2nd Street South to levels equal to or surpassing personal vehicle use. The Civic Center Station, located along 2nd, will directly serve the district.

Broadway Avenue South



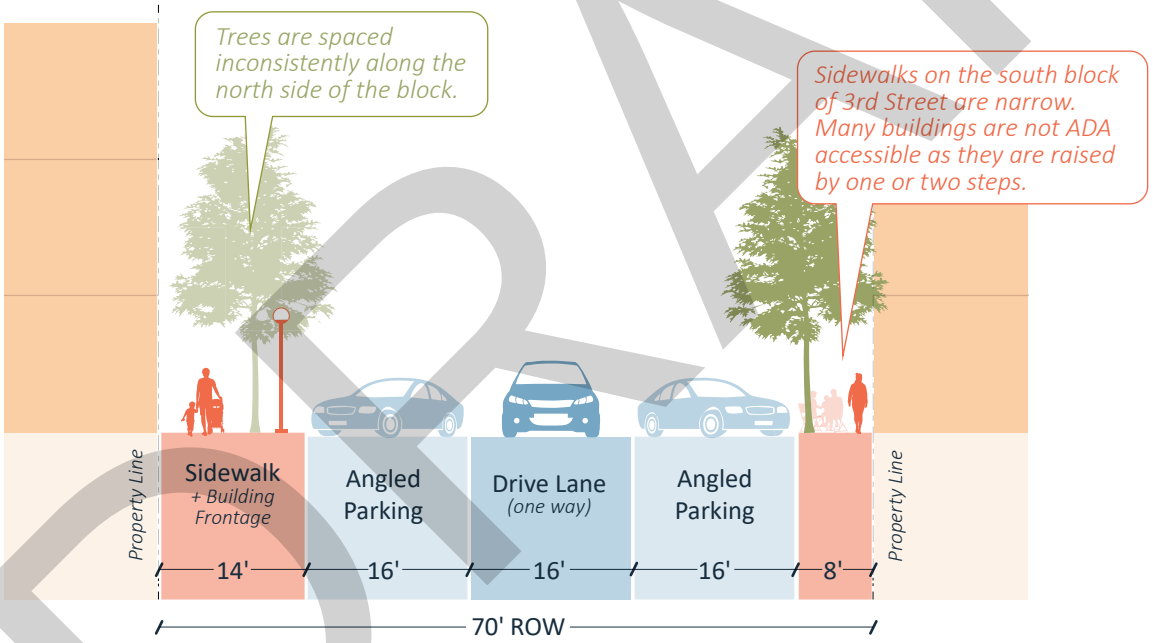
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3rd Street South

3rd Street South runs east-west through the heart of the district and functions primarily as a local access street, with minimal through traffic. Most drivers using 3rd Street South are headed to destinations within the district itself. The street features wide sidewalks and generous on-street parking, making it both pedestrian-friendly and convenient for visitors.

Because it plays a limited role in the broader mobility network, 3rd Street South is well-suited for temporary full or partial closures to support events and activations. One of its key functions is providing access to major city-owned parking structures located on both the east and west ends of the district. Additionally, on its eastern end, 3rd Street South offers an attractive pedestrian and bicycle connection to the Zumbro River, its trail network, and the historic site of Rochester's first mill.

3rd Street South Section



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4th Street South

4th Street South runs east-west along the southern edge of the district. To the east, it serves as a critical river crossing, currently carrying over 12,000 vehicles per day. In contrast, west of Broadway, traffic drops to just under 6,000 vehicles daily. However, the construction of a new bridge over the Zumbro River at 6th Street—two blocks south—will likely reduce traffic volumes on 4th in the future.

Key destinations along 4th include the Government Center complex to the east and the rapidly growing Discovery Square Innovation District to the west. As traffic patterns shift with the new bridge, 4th Street South may present new opportunities to reimagine the use of public right-of-way. Currently, the street does not serve any bus routes and lacks bicycle facilities within the historic district itself, though west of the district, 4th has good bike facilities, leading up to and past Discovery Square and Discovery Walk.

1st Avenue SW

Like 3rd Street, lst Avenue is a low-traffic corridor that primarily serves local access needs, including key access to the City-owned 3rd Street Parking Ramp. The street features wide sidewalks and a substantial amount of angled parking that supports nearby businesses. While it currently lacks dedicated bicycle facilities, there is potential here for a future bicycle route, positioning it for improved multimodal use over time.

Alleys

In addition to the primary transportation corridors, one of the district's distinguishing features is its network of alleys. While these alleys currently serve functional roles—primarily for waste collection and access to parking—they also present unique opportunities to enhance pedestrian connectivity and expand the public realm. With thoughtful design and solutions for maintaining necessary building access, these spaces could be an integral part and defining feature of the future of the public realm in the district.

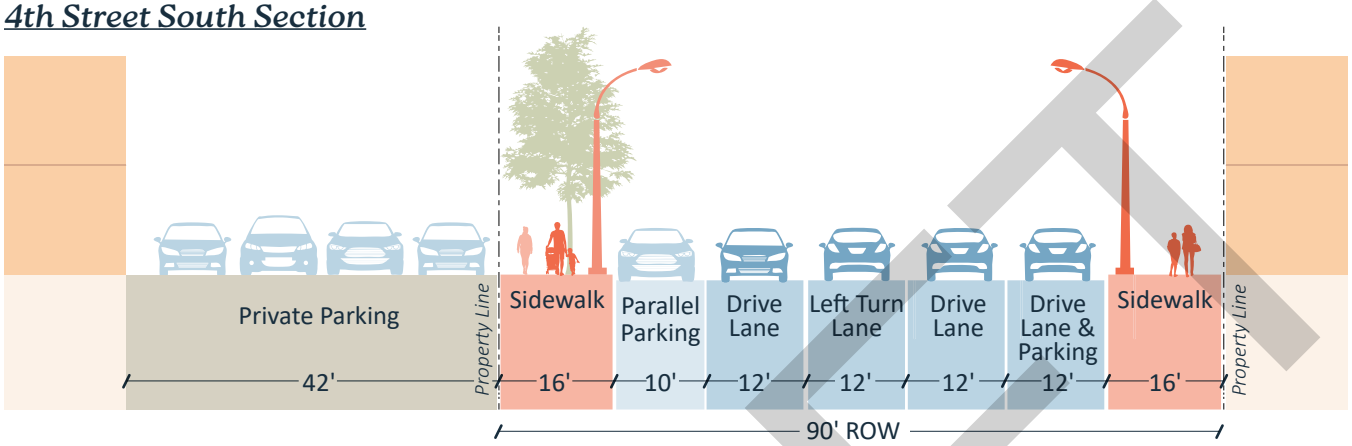
Why Studying This is Important

Mobility within the historic district reflects a dynamic blend of past and present. Originally designed for pedestrians, the district remains a major walking destination. At the same time, the district has evolved to support multiple modes of transportation, balancing local access with regional connectivity.

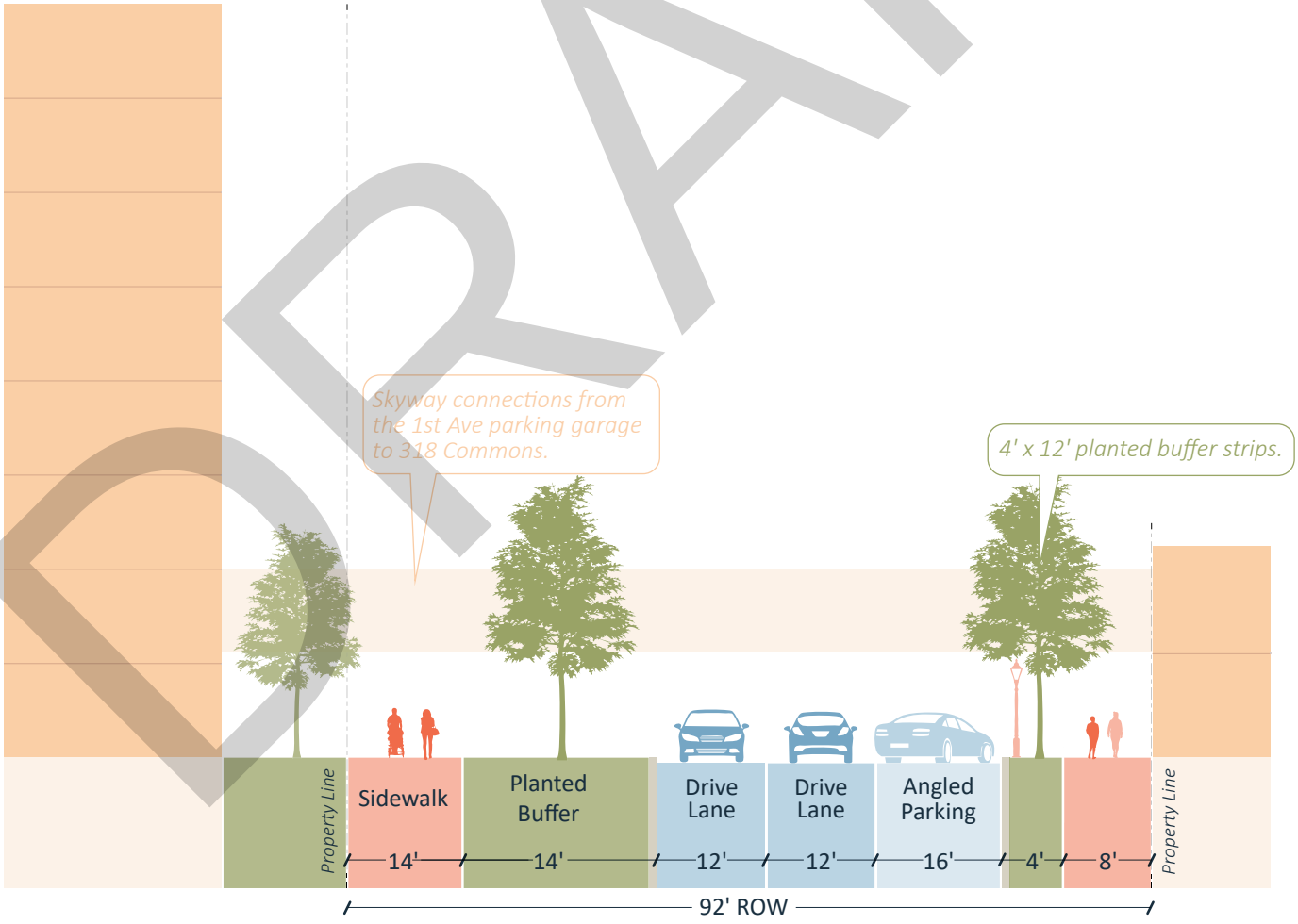
Major corridors like Broadway and 2nd Street carry the highest traffic volumes and support significant transit use, including the future Link BRT line. Other streets, like 3rd Street and lst Avenue, serve primarily local needs, offering space for pedestrians, parking, and flexible uses such as events. 4th Street functions as a key east-west connector, though its role may shift as new infrastructure comes online. Meanwhile, the district's alley network—though currently utilitarian—offers untapped potential to support walking and placemaking. Together, these layered systems shape a district that is both well-connected and primed for a more pedestrian- and transit-oriented future.

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4th Street South Section



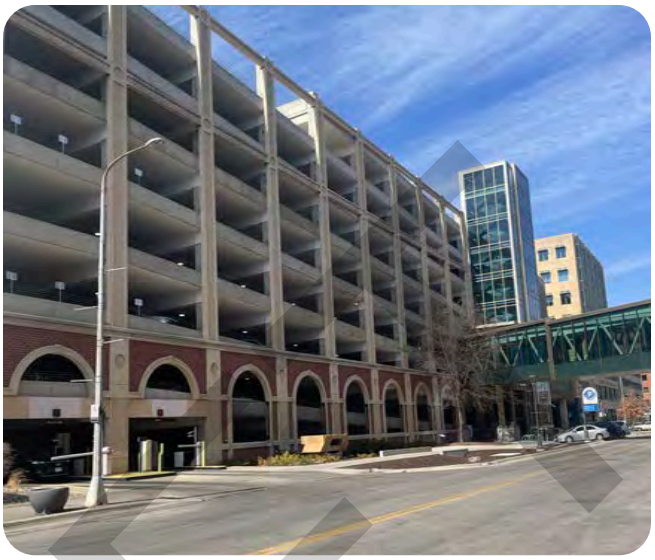
1st Avenue South Section

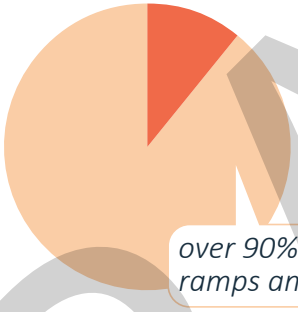


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Parking

As a district centered around retail, dining, and other customer-focused activities, parking plays a crucial role—second only to foot traffic—in supporting the local business economy. The area is served by a combination of large city-owned parking garages and on-street parking. Striking the right balance between these options, and effectively managing parking availability, will be essential to any public realm strategy. A well-managed system can support access without overwhelming the pedestrian experience vital to the district's success.





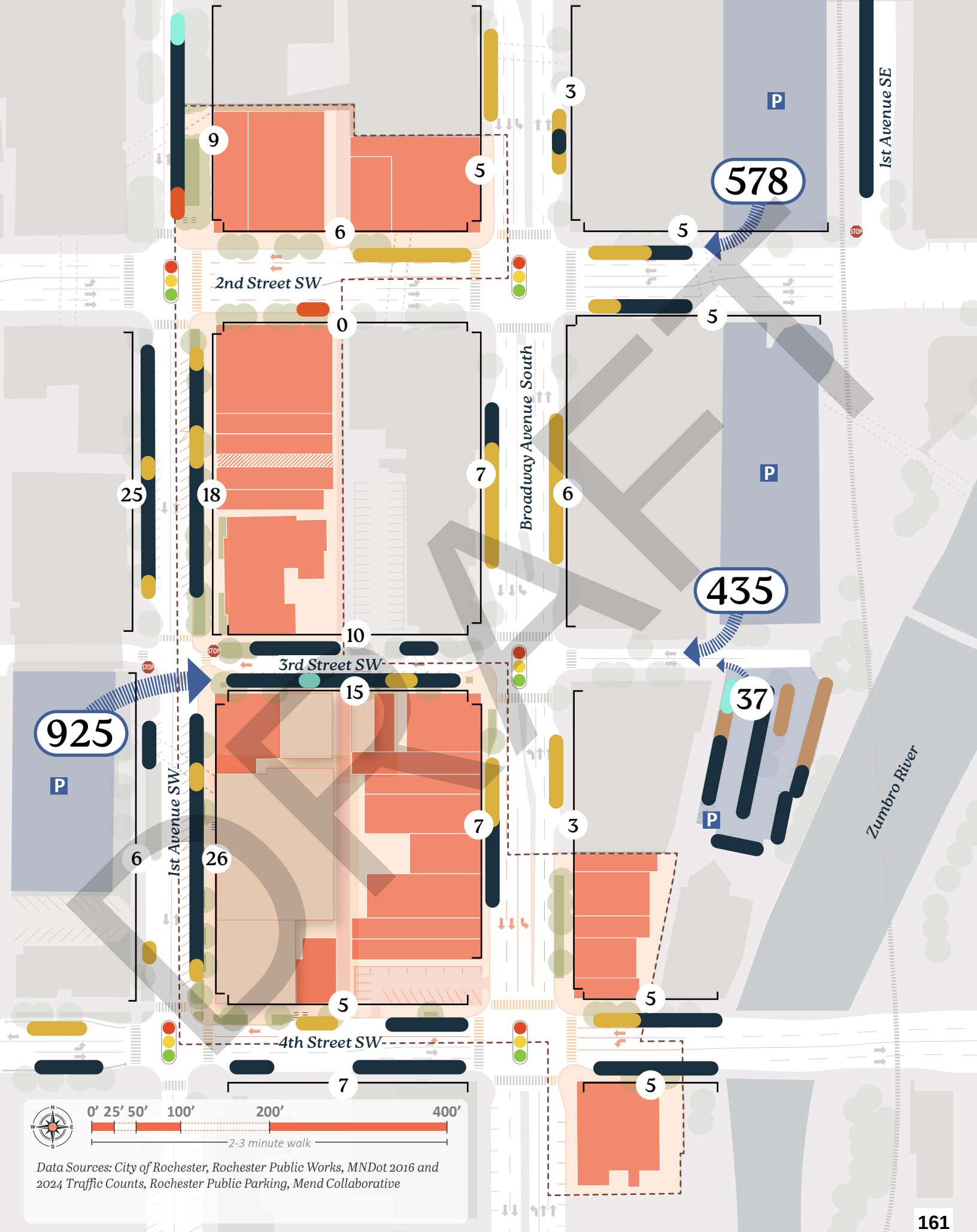
On-Street Parking

On-street parking is the most visible and directly accessible form of parking in the district. While a small number of spaces are reserved for handicap parking and several are designated loading zones, most are metered. These spots have a three-hour maximum limit and are priced at $2 per hour. In total, there are 178 on-street parking spaces within the district and on surrounding blocks.

City Owned Ramps and Parking Lots

The district is also served by several city-owned and operated parking ramps and surface lots nearby. These facilities offer 1,975 spaces and are accessible 24/7. Weekday pricing generally matches the on-street meter rate, with the exception of the ramps offering free parking for visits less than an hour, and anytime after 5pm. Weekends in the ramps are free. Ramps also offer monthly rates, making them convenient for employees who work in or near the district.

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Data Sources: City of Rochester, Rochester Public Works, MNDot 2016 and 2024 Traffic Counts, Rochester Public Parking, Mend Collaborative

Parking Prices			
Parking Type	**Address**	**Weekly Rates**	**Weekend Rates**
City-Owned Ramps	14 2nd St SE Rochester, MN 55904 100 3rd St SW Rochester MN, 55902 13 2nd St SE Rochester, MN 55904	0-1 hour | $0 1-1.5 hours | $2.00 2-2.5 hours | $4.00 3-3.5 hours | $6.00 4-4.5 hours | $8.00 5-5.5 hours | $12.00 6-12 hours | $16.00 free 5pm-2:30am	free 6:30am-2:30am
City-Owned Parking Lot	99 3rd St SE Rochester MN 55904	$2.50/hour, two hour max	$2.50/hour, two hour max
City-Owned On-Street Meters	n/a	$2.00 per hour for a maximum of 3 hours 8am-5pm, free after 5pm	free

Map Legend (pg 38)

- Project Boundary
- Contributing Buildings
- Non-Contributing Buildings
- Metered Parking
- Loading Zone
- Handicap Parking
- Public Safety Vehicle Parking
- Permit Parking
- Parking Ramp
- Parking Ramp Exit/Entry
- Key Pedestrian Routes from Parking Ramps

Why Studying This is Important

Effectively managing the balance between on-street and off-street parking is one of the district's biggest opportunities. With over 90% of parking located in ramps, the City should aim to maximize their use—reserving on-street spaces for short-term, high-turnover needs. Achieving this balance will require thoughtful coordination of pricing, signage, and wayfinding.

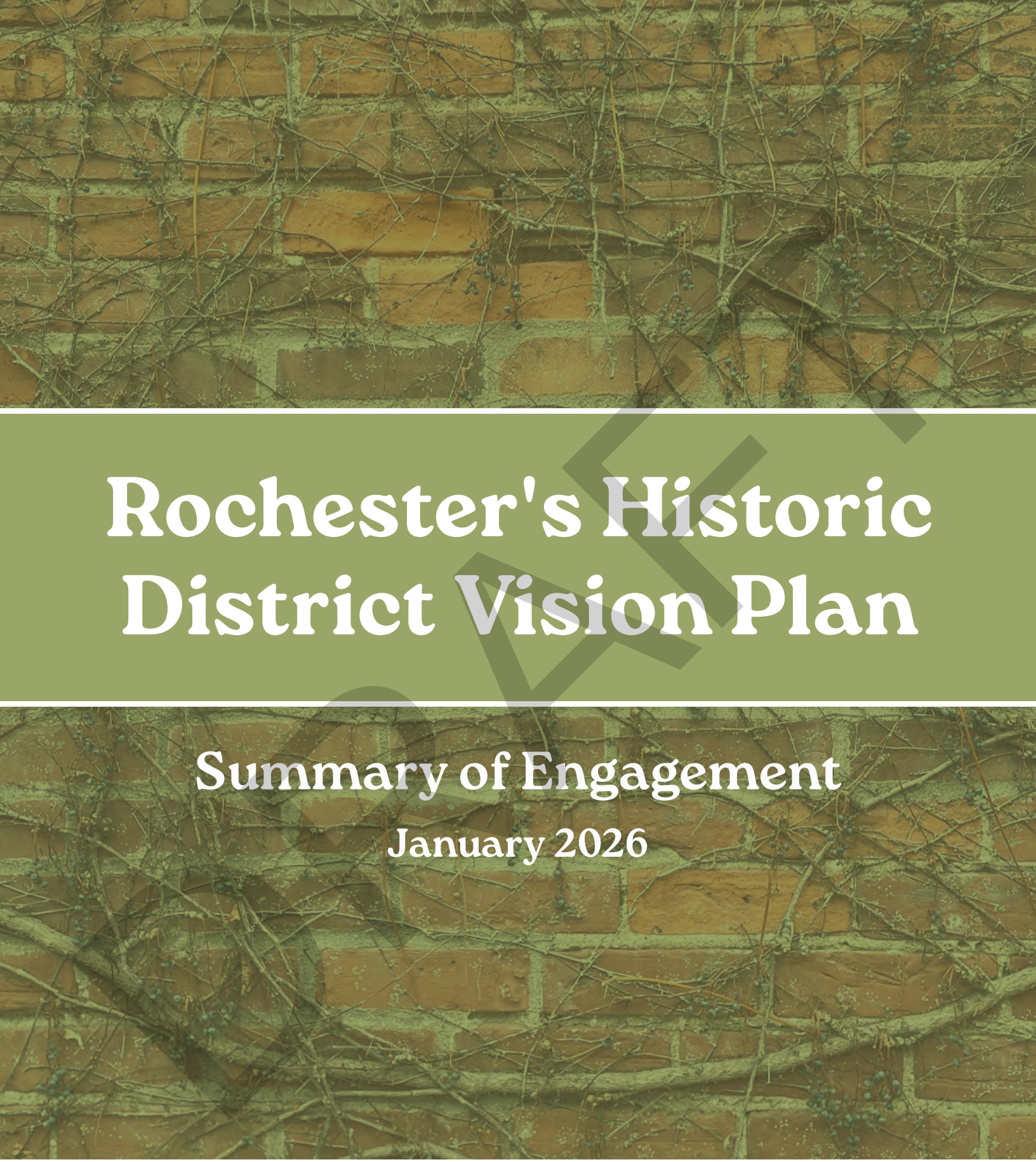
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End of Case for Action.

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Appendix B: Engagement Summary

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Rochester's Historic District Vision Plan

Summary of Engagement

January 2026

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CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

DMC Destination Medical Center

mend collaborative

NEW HISTORY

Summarizing What We Heard

Key Engagement Takeaways

1	**The district has a strong historic identity, but needs improved visibility and connection.**	Stakeholders value the district's architecture, stories, and role as a cultural anchor, but feel many residents don't know where the district is or what it represents. Lack of unified branding, wayfinding, and signage makes it hard for visitors to orient themselves or understand its history.
2	**There is a strong desire for a more vibrant, inclusive, and walkable public realm.**	There is a need for people-focused streetscapes with wide sidewalks, shade, seating, public art, gathering spaces, and safe pedestrian areas. Broadway's speed and noise are barriers, and there's interest in slowing traffic and activating alleys and underused spaces.
3	**Activation and small business support are keys to revitalization.**	Desire to see more events in the district, creative storefronts, pop-ups, and incentives to fill empty spaces. There is a desire to see support for local ownership through reduced barriers, financial programs, and better visibility for businesses.
4	**There are opportunities for improvement regarding accessibility and multi-modal connectivity.**	There is a perception that parking is a challenge, with a need for better wayfinding signage from parking areas such as ramps. Physical accessibility for all users needs better conformity to ADA standards. There is a need for better connections to other areas of downtown. Additional multi-modal connectivity is valued, including biking and public transportation infrastructure.
5	**Trust, collaboration, and follow-through are critical.**	Previous plans are perceived as being unfulfilled and have caused skepticism in planning processes. Stakeholders want transparency, accountability, and measurable outcomes that happen in timely fashion. There's a call for a shared, inclusive vision built on genuine collaboration between businesses, property owners, and the city.
6	**There needs to be a balance between preservation and modern needs.**	Preservation is seen as more than saving buildings—it's about keeping them active, relevant, and part of daily life. Stakeholders want to blend historic preservation character with modern amenities and creative uses to make the district appealing to all generations.

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Engagement Events

In-Person and Online Activities



Focus Group Discussions

June 25th, 2025
Pages 4-7

20 *interviewees*

Focused discussions were held with business owners, historians, property owners, and downtown-based organizations.



Door Knocking

July 2nd, 2025
Page 8

12 *interviewees*

Door knocking at local businesses within the Downtown Commercial Historic District.



Stakeholder Workshop #1

July 16th, 2025
Pages 9-16

25 *attendees*

A 1.5-hour interactive presentation and input gathering session with stakeholders in the Commercial Historic District.

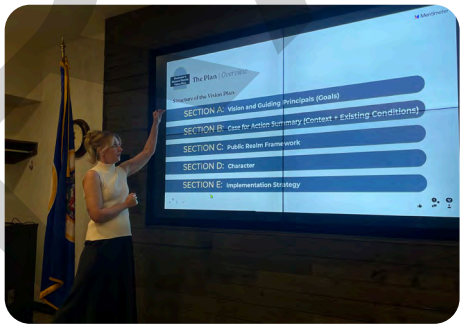


Pop Up

August 14, 2025
Pages 17-19

75 *booth visitors*

A 7.5-hour pop up at Thursdays Downtown at the corner of 1st and 3rd.

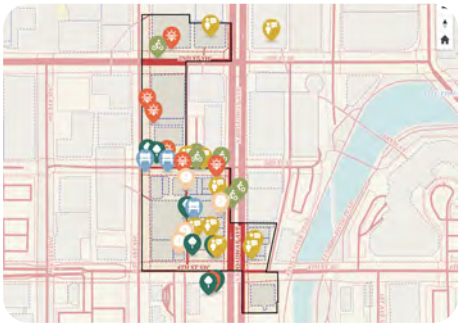


Stakeholder Workshop #2

Sept 17th, 2025
Pages 20-21

15 *attendees*

A 1-hour interactive presentation and discussion with stakeholders in the Commercial Historic District.



Online Engagement

July 16 through August 31, 2025
Pages 22-23

Interactive district comment map — 40 *contributions*

District image submission — 12 *contributions*

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Focus Group Discussions

Downtown Organizations Discussion Recap

Role of the Historic District in the Broader Community:

Participants highlighted that the Historic District serves as a vital link to the city's origins and architectural history. It preserves a sense of place and offers a connection to the past, even as surrounding development has led to the loss of other older structures. While the area is charming and unique, there are barriers to access—especially for those with mobility challenges—and a general perception that the district lacks vibrancy and is difficult to navigate. Enhancing the public realm could strengthen its role in the community.

Challenges Identified:

Accessibility: Students and visitors with mobility needs find it difficult to navigate the district, and there are limited no- or low-cost destinations.

Perception + Engagement: There's a prevailing sense that the district is disconnected from the rest of downtown.

Parking: Parking and employee access are persistent concerns, though discounted programs are being explored.

Identity: Many residents would struggle to define where the district actually begins or ends.

Affordability: Cost of living, especially for students, is a deterrent to spending time in the district.

Opportunities and Ideas:

Wayfinding + Signage: Unique-to-the-district signage could reinforce the identity of the district and provide a stronger sense of arrival.

Programming + Public Space: Flexible, people-focused design features like wide sidewalks, seating, shade, and public art are seen as important tools. Temporary events and pop-up performances are being tested to better activate downtown spaces.

Student Involvement: The presence of multiple universities in downtown offers potential for deeper engagement and co-design efforts, with a focus on creating inclusive, low-cost public experiences.

Business + Stewardship: There's interest in strengthening existing local businesses, welcoming new ones, and fostering a sense of generational stewardship over the district.

Inspirational Models: Other cities with successful historic districts were mentioned as references, with an emphasis on balancing modern function with historic character.

Key Takeaway: Balance Historic Preservation and Modern Needs

Participants supported maintaining the district's architectural integrity while modernizing public spaces and amenities to meet present-day needs. The key is to design with flexibility, accessibility, and inclusivity in mind, ensuring that the district remains relevant and welcoming to all users.

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Focus Group Discussions

Property Owners Discussion Recap

Perceptions and What Makes the Historic District Special:

Participants described the district as full of character, community, and potential. Its charm comes not only from the architecture but from the sense of place and neighborhood identity it provides. Several individuals emphasized that it's a place people want to be part of. There's a shared belief that the district could become even more vibrant by blending its historic fabric with fresh, creative experiences.

The district is seen as a cultural anchor for the city, with historic significance and unique spaces that make it ideal for small business growth and community-building. It's viewed as a kind of incubator where local entrepreneurs can support each other.

Challenges Identified:

Public Realm + Streetscape: Broadway is seen as too fast-paced and undesirable to be alongside, with others noting an overall disconnect between the various characters of streetscapes within the district. Cars dominate this part of downtown, making pedestrian movement and visibility difficult. There's strong interest in slowing traffic and potentially pedestrianizing certain areas to improve comfort and encourage gathering.

Maintenance + Stewardship: Several participants noted issues with a lack of routine maintenance (weeds, upkeep, neglected spaces) and called for more care and attention to public and private spaces to signal pride and investment.

Parking + Accessibility: Short-term parking was noted as essential, especially for businesses reliant on customer turnover. Accessibility for all building users—including owners, tenants, and customers—was emphasized.

Perception + Identity: Downtown struggles with public perception in regard to wayfinding and places for locals to want to come and hang out. The district often functions more as a daily pass-through space than a destination. There's a need to elevate its identity and encourage people to want to stop here, especially compared to other vibrant neighborhoods in nearby cities.

Opportunities and Ideas:

Events + Activation: Hosting small, local events or activations, especially in alleys or underutilized spaces, can highlight the district's personality. Existing murals and artistic elements offer a good foundation to build upon.

Creative Storefronts: Building on RDA's initiative to fill empty spaces with creative pop-up uses could further draw people in.

Village Mentality: There's an emerging vision of cultivating a "village" atmosphere where personality, heritage, and the public realm support a tight-knit, entrepreneurial community.

Historic Preservation with Purpose: Maintaining the buildings isn't just about preserving the past—it's about keeping them alive and relevant for today. When buildings fall into disuse or lose activity, they lose their value and meaning. Investments in preservation must be matched with activation.

Key Takeaway: People Invest in the Historic District out of passion

Those who have chosen to own or operate businesses in the district often describe it as a personal dream—to own a brick building downtown or be part of a longer story. The area's cultural richness make it an appealing place to invest, even as it requires creativity and commitment to thrive.

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Focus Group Discussions

Local Historians Discussion Recap

The Role of the Historic District in the Broader Community

Participants expressed a concern that the historic district lacks stability, identity, and support. There's a prevailing sense that the district is undervalued and in need of strategic activation to re-establish its place in the city's cultural and economic life.

Many noted that the district represents the origin of Rochester, however the historic core has been eroded over time through redevelopment and the migration of commerce and investment elsewhere in the city. Participants emphasized that the district should be recognized for its commercial, milling, and civic history.

There was a strong call to ground efforts for the district in authenticity.

Challenges Identified

Fractured Vision: A lack of unified direction for the district has left it without momentum. Businesses that left downtown were never interviewed upon their exit, and there's no clear process for learning from past departures why businesses have moved elsewhere. There is a need for an improved business/economic environment downtown, as that is foundational to supporting any public realm changes that come out of this plan.

Distrust in the Process: Multiple voices noted a deep skepticism toward planning processes, noting the need for a transparent and authentic process that results in meaningful action.

Loss of Historic Identity: Many expressed grief and frustration over the loss of early buildings throughout the greater downtown area.

Lack of Public Awareness: There's a significant disconnect between the public and the historic district. Many don't know it exists, or what it represents. There is little signage, storytelling, or visibility to help people understand what came before.

Opportunities and Ideas:

Activate the Edges: Participants stressed the importance of activating adjacent assets like the Chateau Theatre and Red Owl/Time Theater as they are bookends to the district that can draw people in.

Interpretive Signage and Tours: There is strong support for better signage, digital or self-guided walking tours, and the use of tools like QR codes or mobile apps (e.g., Pocket Sights). These tools can bring to life the district's stories, especially for younger or newer residents.

Use the Archives: The History Center of Olmsted County (HCOC) was mentioned as a resource for storytelling, events, and materials to support interpretation efforts. Stakeholders want to showcase the rich archive of photos, maps, and documents to help the public reconnect with downtown's past.

Historic and Cultural Tourism: Ideas like trolley tours, micro-events, and neighborhood grants were shared as means to reinvest in the character of the area and foster pride in place.

Storytelling Through Design: From murals to small-scale restorations, there's opportunity to embed historic references and narratives into the public realm, and to ensure people feel part of a shared story. Other cities like Milwaukee and Decorah were cited as effective models.

Key Takeaway: Create an actionable vision for the future

The group called for a return to stewardship, encouraging residents and institutions alike to take responsibility for downtown's future. There's hope that by aligning many varied voices around a cohesive vision grounded in history and community, the district can shift toward preservation and reinvention.

Historic preservation isn't just about saving buildings—it's about creating a place people want to be, where small businesses can thrive, stories are visible, and the legacy of the city is respected and celebrated. People want to be part of the story of where they live, and this vision plan is an opportunity to embrace that.

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Focus Group Discussions

Business Owners Discussion Recap

Perceptions of the Historic District: What Makes It Special?

Participants described the historic district as creative, lively, walkable, and possessing strong potential, particularly around 3rd Street. The area is valued for its historic architecture, human scale, and potential for cultural activation. Elements like bistro seating, shade, and art opportunities were cited as some of the district's more special and unique features.

There's a shared sense that the district has creative energy, and that back entrances, alleys, and hidden corners could become defining public assets if properly activated and maintained. However, there's also an awareness that the area currently feels more like a working zone than a destination, and lacks cohesive identity or direction.

Challenges Identified

Parking: Visitors and customers frequently experience confusion over where to park. Ramps can be hard to navigate, and though there are many large ramps surrounding the district, ease of navigating parking isn't clearly communicated.

Safety + Behavior Issues: In the evening, sidewalk crowding, and disruptive behavior near late-night venues were reported.

Lack of Infrastructure: There's a lack of bike parking, and basic infrastructure, such as sidewalks, is deteriorating. It was noted that decorative elements such as bricks in the sidewalks are disliked by many business owners for maintenance and accessibility reasons.

Noise + Traffic: Broadway is seen as too fast and loud, which disrupts the more relaxed atmosphere of commercial spaces that want to take advantage of the outdoors. The tension between cars and people was a recurring theme, with interest in shifting priorities toward public space.

Opportunities and Ideas

Activate the Alleys: There is strong interest in transforming alleys into safe, vibrant third spaces. With many businesses accessed from the rear, these spaces are already used but under-supported. Suggestions included better lighting, murals, surveillance, signage, and art programming—drawing inspiration from art alley districts in places like Milwaukee.

Re-imagine Parking + Public Space: While parking is important, especially for customers unfamiliar with downtown, several participants emphasized a preference for public space over excessive car space, especially on streets like 3rd where walkability is key.

Strengthen Wayfinding + Branding: There's a need for clearer wayfinding for parking but also for orienting visitors within the district. There's no shared name or identity for the area, with some using different variations of "Historic District" and others just using addresses. Participants agreed that branding should avoid clichés, and instead reflect the character, creativity, and cultural roots of the area.

Key Takeaway: Root the district in a unique identity

There's strong interest in building on the area's creative energy through art installations, better lighting, and thoughtful branding that avoids a commercial feel. Participants emphasized the potential to create a cohesive identity for the district, one rooted in culture, local business, and human-centered design, while also making better use of the adjacent waterfront to connect people more deeply to the space.

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Door Knocking Summary

Door Knocking

Goal: Discuss the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District with business owners, property owners, and employees.

Reach: 12 Interviewees

Feedback:

1. Unique Character + Local Pride

Stakeholders see Rochester as a place unlike anywhere else, a place that deeply cares for its people and is full of potential beyond its identity as a medical destination. There's strong appreciation for historic spaces like 3rd Street, and a desire for future development to reflect Rochester's unique character and historic assets.

2. Barriers for Local Ownership + Business

While there's local ambition and entrepreneurial spirit, many feel unsupported by current systems. High costs—including property values, taxes, and insurance—create barriers for small business and local building ownership downtown. Stakeholders want to see more local ownership and structures that provide opportunity, not obstacles.

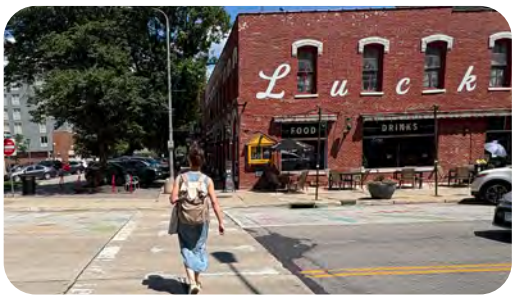
3. Public Realm + Amenities

There's strong desire for more landscaping, colorful plantings, parks along the river, and community spaces that invite people in and encourage lingering. Stakeholders would also like to see more coffee shops, lunch spots, and public art to make downtown feel lively and welcoming, especially on weekends, which currently feel empty.

4. Parking + Access

Limited and costly parking continues to be a concern. Participants emphasized the need for more free parking to help support downtown businesses and draw in both locals and visitors.

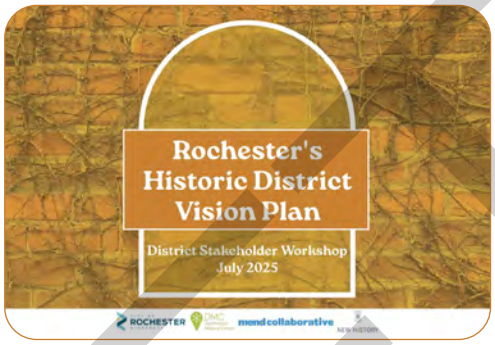




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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Stakeholder Workshop #1 Presentation



Goal: Update District stakeholders on project research to date, and gather input through an interactive presentation that captured live responses.

Reach: 25 Attendees/Participants

Feedback:

Q1: What elements of a public realm do you think are important to the historic district?

1. walkability and access
2. safety
3. signage
4. art
5. lighting

Q2: What will help foster a stronger sense of place for the district?



Q3: What elements of a public realm do you think are important to the historic district?



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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Q4: What will help reinforce the sense of community within the district?

1. Community-centered Storytelling and Local Leadership
    - Local expertise at the helm of storytelling
    - Interpretive signage that tells the history of individual buildings and people
    - Signage that expands on the history of the district

2. Equity, Trust + Collaboration
    - Trust, true equitable collaboration
    - Transparency throughout the process and about outcomes
    - Unity among stakeholders where all voices are heard and diverse ideas are respected
    - Collaboration

3. Vibrant Public Realm + Gathering Spaces
    - Public art
    - Play and interaction
    - Entertainment options
    - Welcoming areas for a variety of people to connect
    - Gathering space with a variety of adjacent amenities (businesses, entertainment)

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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Q4 CONT.: What will help reinforce the sense of community within the district?

4. Economic Vitality + Small Business Support
    - Stable, unique businesses
    - Programs to fill empty storefronts with new businesses
    - Creating spaces that are easy to access and full of life
    - Placekeeping for locals, not just visitors

5. Identity + Visual Cohesion
    - Visibility from afar (driving, skyway, etc.)
    - Cohesive visual identity to visitors
    - Well-designed structures, creative storefronts, sculpture, quality architecture

6. Accessibility + Inclusion
    - Easy access
    - Universal design/accessibility
    - Keep it interesting for a broad audience (visitors, locals, students, workforce)
    - Integration, Imagination, Diversity

7. Destination Value + Sense of Place
    - Create a reason for people to want to come through people and places
    - Inspired by places like Little Italy and Chinatown—districts full of life and culture
    - Authenticity
    - Increased housing options to support full-time community presence

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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Q5: What can the public realm do to better support small businesses and local ownership?

1. Visibility + Wayfinding
    - Clear and creative signage to direct pedestrians to businesses
    - Visuals that attract and inform walkers of what businesses are nearby
    - Connectivity to surrounding areas through clear signage and wayfinding
    - Let people know what's available—inside and outside—so they're encouraged to stop

2. Inviting + Walkable Environment
    - Pedestrian-only areas
    - Better pedestrian flow and engagement along walkways
    - Slow traffic on Broadway; prioritize walkability
    - Safe, accessible, comfortable corridors to move between businesses
    - Support for a live-work environment with inviting landscape and transportation options

3. Vibrancy + Placemaking
    - Murals and public art
    - Inviting spaces with music, art, and interesting businesses
    - Culturally relevant spaces
    - Spaces that spark joy and offer indoor/outdoor interest

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Q5 CONT.: What can the public realm do to better support small businesses and local ownership?

4. Support + Incentives for Local Businesses
   - Creative incentives for small/local businesses
   - Real financial support: subsidies for street-level occupancy
   - Offset risks and disruption through phased construction, shared burdens
   - Staff-dedicated parking
   - Promote businesses and locals first
   - Ask local business owners to show up and be part of shaping the vision

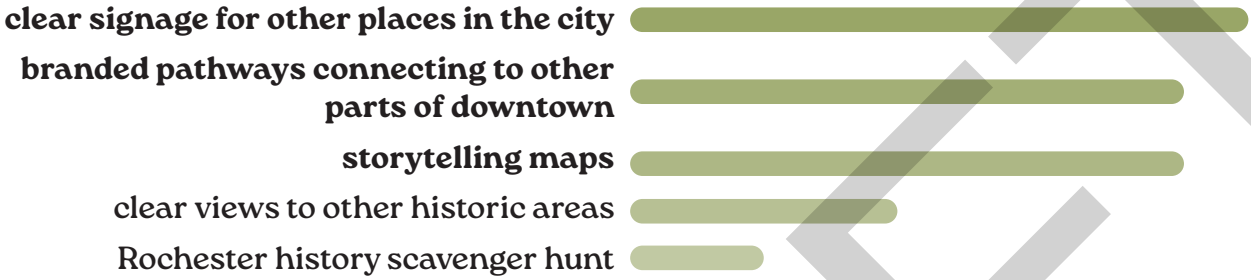
5. Accessibility + Parking
   - Easy parking options that work for both locals and visitors
   - Street parking near business entries
   - Transit and transportation options that link people directly to small businesses
   - Rethink car-centric design—shift from Broadway funnel to more distributed, accessible entry points

6. Institutional + Government Partnership
   - Collaboration between City of Rochester, Mayo Clinic, and business/property owners
   - Encourage property owners to activate vacant buildings (e.g. 201 Building)
   - Phase public realm construction with businesses in mind
   - Avoid duplicating past planning work without implementation ("not reinventing the wheel")

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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Q6: What can happen through the public realm to create better connections throughout downtown to the district?



Q7: What public realm elements that can reflect historic character most excites you?



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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Q8: What is missing from these goals? What do you want to see as an outcome of this planning process?

1. Accountability + Follow-Through
    - Concerns about unfulfilled past plans led to calls for concrete, actionable steps
    - Avoid "planning fatigue"—ensure this results in real implementation and impact

2. Measurable Outcomes + Investment Support
    - Call for financial clarity: who funds what? Are resources in place?
    - Outcomes should attract local residents, not just visitors

3. Inclusive + Intergenerational Vision
    - Ensure inclusive engagement, including diverse voices
    - Plan should reflect needs of all ages, especially younger generations, who tend to prefer modern elements

4. Unity + Collaboration
    - Stakeholders want a shared vision built through true collaboration, open dialogue, and mutual trust
    - A unified approach is essential to overcome current disconnection between key areas

5. Place-Based Experience + Energy
    - Prioritize walkability, connectivity, and design that invites people in
    - Balance historic character with modern, engaging experiences

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Stakeholder Workshop #1 Summary

Hands-on-Activities

These activities were used at the end of the Stakeholder Workshop as a hands-on way for participants to give input on specific styles of character, public realm layouts, defining important connections, and telling their story.

Due to the interactive presentation taking priority for the meeting, there was little time remaining for stakeholders to engage with the hands-on activities after the presentation. However, a few attendees were able to participate and contribute to the activities, providing valuable input. Key ideas provided were activation of underutilized areas such as alleyways, and enhancing important connections to the greater downtown fabric. There were also interesting ideas of pop-up programming in public spaces and how this process can help support more community-driven programs like that.



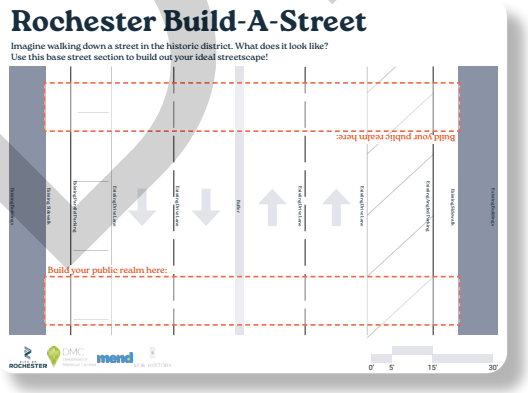
What is in a name?
What should the Rochester Commercial Historic District be named?



History Wall
Record personal histories about your connection to Rochester.



Visual Preferences
What streetscape images could fit well into the Rochester Commercial Historic District?



Build-A-Street
What would you like streets downtown to look and feel like?



Design-A-Public Realm
Design your own public realm and draw connections from the Historic District to broader downtown.

DRAFT

Pop-up Event Summary

Pop-up Event

Goal: Discuss the Rochester Downtown Commercial Historic District with the community.

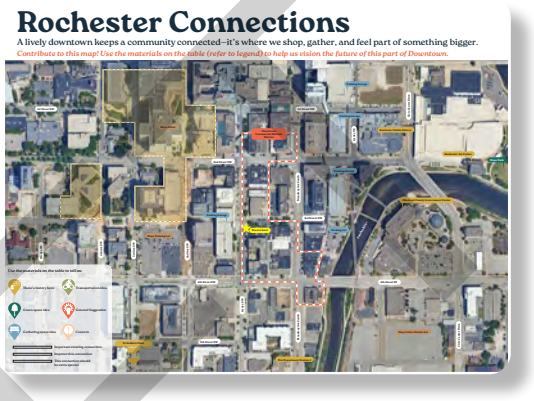
Reach: 75 booth visitors

Hands-on-Activities

These activities were used at the pop-up event to understand public realm preferences, layout suggestions, important connections to make, historic knowledge and name ideas.



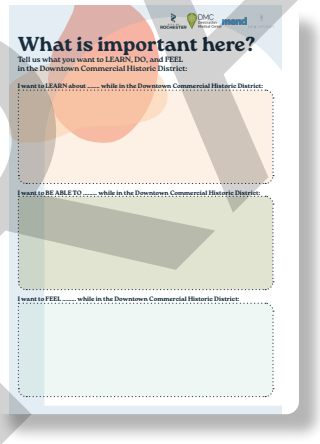
Project Overview
Introduction to the project and timeline.



Mapping Activity
Share streetscape design ideas, opportunities and concerns about downtown Rochester!



Public Realm Elements
What public realm elements are importat for you to see downtown?



What do you want to do in the Commercial Historic District?
What is important for you to learn, feel and do downtown?



What is in a name?
What should the Rochester Commercial Historic District be named?

DRAFT

Pop-up Event Summary

Mapping Activity Feedback



1. Green space ideas
   - more trees
   - more greenery

2. Gathering space idea
   - more public seating
   - more spaces to connect and talk

2. Transportation ideas
   - slow down traffic
   - expand transit (more times/days, consistency)
   - make 3rd street completely pedestrian
   - activate corners

3. There's history here
   - Susan B Anthony spoke in the Rosa Parks building
   - Follow precedents like: La Crosse, Eau Claire, The Freedom Trail (Boston)

4. General suggestion
   - more activities for children (theatre)
   - access to drinking water

5. Concern
   - Prioritize walkability, connectivity, and design that invites people in
   - Balance historic character with modern, engaging experiences

What is in a name?

People generally refer to the historic district area simply as "Downtown." Some participants expressed interest in the name "Historic Downtown," but felt this would only be appropriate if the area presented a more cohesive historic character. At present, only 3rd Street is perceived as having a distinctly historic feel.

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Pop-up Event Summary

What is important for this public realm?

- **healthy environment**
- **shade and warmth**
- **food, shopping, things to learn**
- **activation of spaces**
- lighting for safety & ambiance
- group gathering space
- universal accessibility
- wayfinding
- gathering for individuals

Additional Ideas

+ Farmers market downtown
+ More riverside destinations
+ More tables and seating, and more greenspace
+ More options for sober individuals
+ More S/W bike lanes, maintain bike parking
+ More community events (free)
+ Extend Thursdays downtown into the schoolyear

What do you want to do in the Commercial Historic District?

I want to learn...

- About each historic building
- Rochester history outside of Mayo
- History museum building (small museum/building about the history of Rochester)

I want to be able to...

- Attend more events (Christmas Market)
- Have better access downtown
- Hangout without paying money
- Little library for kids
- Listen to live music

I want to feel...

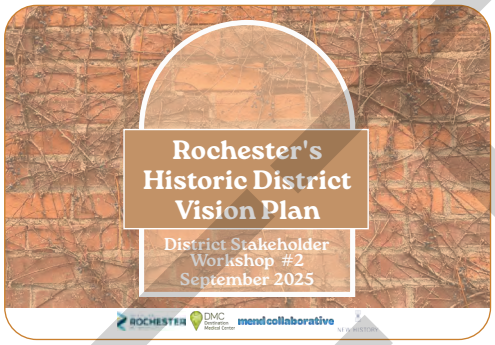
- Safe
- Fun
- Welcomed (bilingual access)



DRAFT

Stakeholder Workshop #2 Summary

Stakeholder Workshop #2 Presentation



Goal: Update District stakeholders on project research to date, and gather input through an interactive presentation that captured live responses.

Reach: 15 Attendees/Participants

Feedback:

Q1: Provide your thoughts for the vision for 3rd street:

Needs: bright lighting, safety, shade, seating, parking to slow traffic, wifi, restrooms and water fountains.

Not needed: constant events, offices on the main street level, private parking

Q2: Provide your thoughts on this vision for activating alleys:

Needs: art that provides intrigue to a variety of people (not all historical in nature), a diversity of artists, a plan for waste streams and deliveries to businesses, and a plan for the alley East of Broadway as well.

Not needed: parking for businesses and tenants at 318 commons (they should be given permanent spot in a ramp instead).

Q3: Which era within the period of significance is most important to reflect in the district's character in the future?

pre-1900	
1900-mid century	
1950's-1960's	*(none)*
all of them!	*(none)*

Q4: Should new art within the district be reflective of the district/ city's history, of-the-moment artistic creations, or a blend of both?

art and stories from the period of significance	*(none)*
modern art	
both!	

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Stakeholder Workshop #2 Summary

Additional Questions + Answers

Note: Questions are from stakeholders as submitted through the Q&A input option during the meeting presentation. Questions have not been edited and are listed below as-submitted. Answers to questions are provided below each question. These questions were discussed in-depth at the stakeholder meeting, and the answers herein are intended to capture the general conversation around each question.

Q1: Consider pedestrian serving lighting as a priority if we are trying to create a walkable district.

A: Pedestrian-scale lighting will be a key priority in the vision plan, enhancing both safety and walkability throughout the district.

Q2: It is important that "economic vitality" means that locals are at the helm of benefiting from the district aka paid for construction, imagination, culture bearing, etc. Can it be included that all RFPs and jobs are fun through the local economy AND historic district prop/bus owners are given first refusal to these opportunities? This would be a trust & energy building conscious action.

A: Working towards increasing local representation and leadership on projects, as appropriate, is an aspiration. Balancing requirements for procurement, and other existing policies currently in place will also be needed. In this process, we will make a recommendation to move toward this direction but also acknowledge that this will likely take extra resources and navigation of the existing policies to change what has been common practice.

Q3: How does this plan benefit the residential population of the historical district?

A: A vibrant public realm will provide residents a neighborhood with unique character, cohesive design, and critical third spaces to spend time right outside their front door. Vibrant public realms contribute to safe neighborhoods, healthier places to live with trees and landscaping, and supports having pride in one's community.

Q4: What's the time frame for when this plan would begin development? And how long would development take?

A: The final Vision Plan for the public realm is aimed to be completed around the end of 2025. Projects that come out of, or are implemented, from the Vision Plan are not yet planned. Projects will happen on different timelines depending on complexity, level of additional planning and design, and processes (such as if an RFP for design/development needs to happen, or if the City can implement something internally on a different timeline).

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Stakeholder Workshop #2 Summary

Q5: Please consider the alley to the east of Broadway too!!

A: The plan will address how additional spaces near the district can be integrated into the greater vision, including the alley east of Broadway. By looking at these "tendrils" that have a strong connection physically and experientially to the district are important to ensure the district truly weaves into the greater context of downtown.

Q6: I'd love to feel reassured that this vision will be different than all the other spaces that have been proposed over the years and still are not "activated" as brought up by a stakeholder right now.

A: This project is an opportunity to formally integrate these previous efforts into a cohesive, adopted City plan that will outline steps for implementation.

Q7: How can all these efforts be built into medium and long term maintenance plans so that concepts are built into future care and collaboration when DMC is no longer here?

A: As individual projects are implemented from this Vision Plan, it is recommended that maintenance plans be a part of those next step processes. Maintenance plans are heavily dependent on specific details of a design, and will be much more effectively done during the implementation phase.

Q8: Murals- they enhance buildings- and I don't believe they damage them. They don't need to be standalone, right?

A: While murals can enhance buildings, painting historic brick with the wrong type of paint can trap moisture and prevent the brick from "breathing", which accelerates deterioration. Because these buildings are important historic landmarks, painting *unpainted* masonry generally does not meet the Standards for Rehabilitation, even with paints formulated for masonry, due to potential damage to the masonry. However, repainting *already painted* masonry with paints specially formulated for masonry is generally acceptable, though any new murals must follow the building alteration standards and signage / artwork standards as currently outlined in city policy.

Q9: How can the vision strike a balance between diff types of district bus. & prop. owners? Eg service oriented (hair, photography, office) have different necessities than retail (st. poking, enticing pay.cust?

A: The vibrant businesses within the district all have different needs, and it is a critical goal in this plan to balance all of the needs of these businesses to best support everyone.

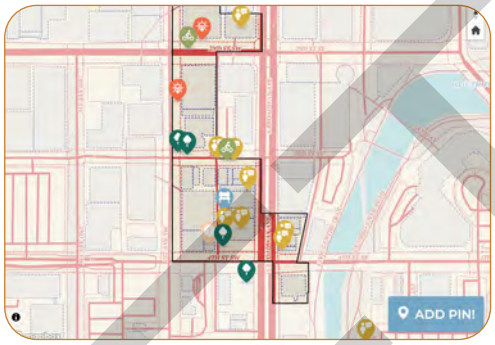
Q10: So, at the end of the day, the entire vision in concept will be entirely up to city council and HPC, when/if/how it/which elements might be implemented?

A: As an effort that was initiated by the City Council at the time of historic district designation, this is a City (organizational) planning effort. Our focus on the public realm is primarily related to the fact that the City must maintain this for all the public. We encourage other stakeholders to work with us to bring the concepts to reality. We acknowledge that private property and business owners might also adopt the vision from this effort and move forward with projects under their authority as well.

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Online Engagement

Online Mapping and Image Sharing



Goal: Collect place-based comments on an online map and gather district-realted modern and historic imagery and videos from the community.

Reach: 40 map contributions, 12 image/video contributions

Feedback:

Key Takeaways from Map Comments

Business mix and character

- Affordable and local businesses that serve both residents and visitors.
- Revitalization of empty/neglected buildings is important.

Pedestrian, bike, and accessibility improvements

- Expand the pedestrian realm while balancing some short-term parking for customers.
- Improve ADA accessibility and provide more accessible parking.
- Consider consistent, safe bike infrastructure (lanes, bollards, connections to trails).
- Reduce speeding and cut-through traffic; consider pedestrian-only or slow-traffic hours/zones.

Safety and comfort

- Better pedestrian-scale lighting.
- Safer pedestrian crossings with buffers, improved visibility, and traffic calming.

Public space and greening

- More trees, native plants, and landscaped areas.
- Desire for plazas, mini-parks, and outdoor gathering spaces.

Activation and vibrancy

- Interest in more cultural activation, live music, events, and finding ways to activate specific spaces like alleys and empty storefronts.
- Murals and public art suggested to enhance identity.

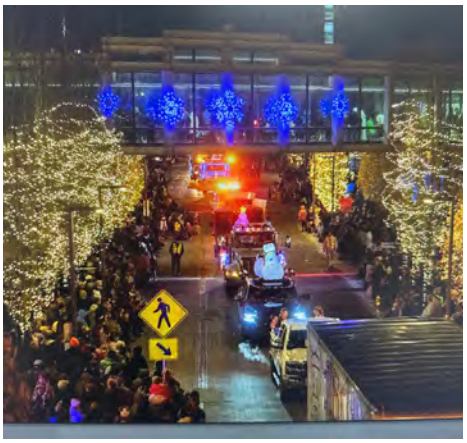
Historic preservation

- Protect and celebrate historic buildings.
- Use Rochester's historic architecture to create a unique, walkable district.

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Online Engagement

Shared Images from the Community



















CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

REQUEST FOR ACTION

2025 Year-End Action Plan & KPI Update

MEETING DATE:
February 23, 2026

ORIGINATING DEPT:
City Administration

AGENDA SECTION:
Presentation Items

PRESENTER:
Jessica Schuler

Report Narrative:

The Action Plan is Rochester's roadmap for success, outlining initiatives aimed at advancing City Council's strategic priorities which are currently: Economic Resilience, Housing Access, Inclusive Growth Management, Responsible Environmental Stewardship, and Transformational Capital Projects. Its purpose is to share our vision, promote communication and collaboration, foster accountability, and build transparency. Additionally, it informs our Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan.

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Report is a new report, which showcases key metrics that reflect progress on City Council's strategic priorities. Its purpose is to provide a clear, transparent view of progress and outcomes that support accountability and informed decision-making. The report will be updated annually.

Today's presentation will include:

- A brief overview and history of the Action Plan
- A brief overview of the KPI Report
- Highlights from the 2025 Year-End Update
- An overview and timeline of next steps

Priorities & Foundational Principles:

Quality Services

Prepared By:

Jessica Schuler

Attachments:

Presentation - Action Plan & KPI Update (2025 Year-End)

Report - Action Plan (2025 Year-End)

Report - Key Performance Indicators (2025 Year-End)

CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

Action Plan Update

February 23, 2026

Action Plan: Our Roadmap for Success

The action plan is our roadmap for success, outlining current initiatives aimed at advancing City Council's Strategic Priorities:

- Economic Resilience
- Housing Access
- Inclusive Growth Management
- Responsible Environmental Stewardship
- Transformational Capital Projects

Benefits:

- Shared Vision
- Communication & Collaboration
- Accountability & Transparency



Action Plan History

Date	Event
December 6, 2021	• City Council adopted the first-ever Citywide Action Plan
June 6, 2025	• Adoption of new Strategic Priorities
September 8, 2025	• Adoption of new Action Plan and KPI
February 23, 2026	• 2025 End-of-Year Action Plan Update • Introduction of KPI Dashboard
August 2026	• 2026 Mid-Year Action Plan Update (featuring ERP project)
February 2027	• 2026 Year-End Action Plan Update • KPI Dashboard Update



Priorities & Principles

Strategic Priorities

We will focus our resources and initiatives to drive progress in these areas:

- Economic Resilience
- Housing Access
- Inclusive Growth Management
- Responsible Environmental Stewardship
- Transformational Capital Projects

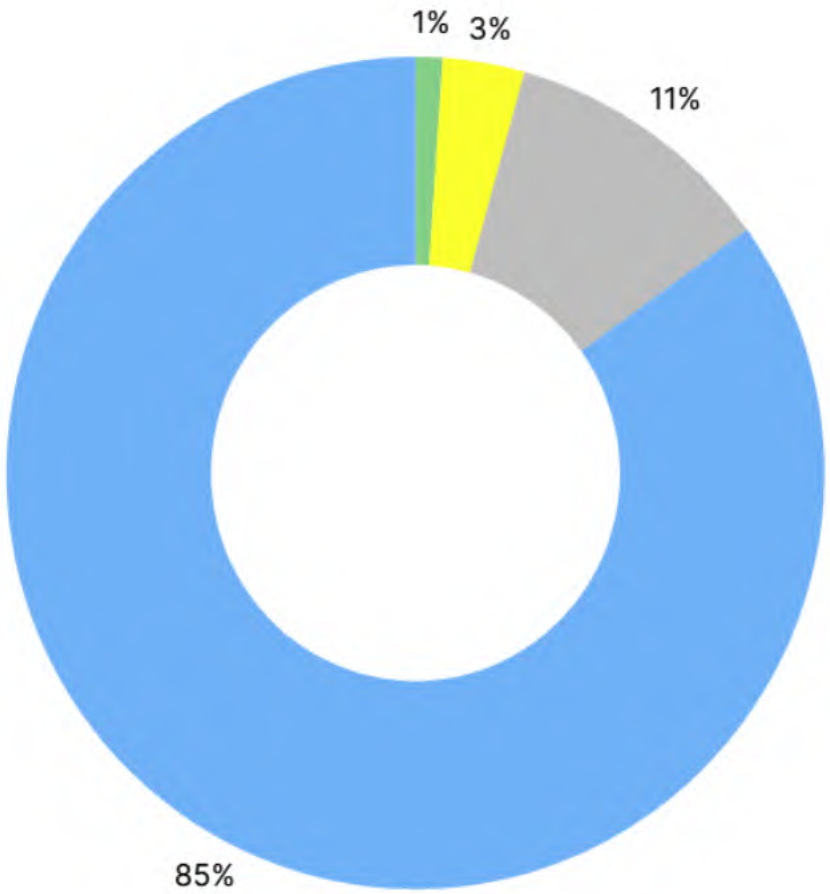
Foundational Principles

We will approach every action and decision through a lens of:

- Compassion
- Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainability
- Inclusive Decision-Making
- Public Safety
- Quality Services
- Social Equity

CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

Action Plan Progress Summary



Completed: 1

On Target: 79

Delayed: 3

Off Target: 0

Not Started: 11

Total: 93

Action Plan Highlights

Economic Resilience

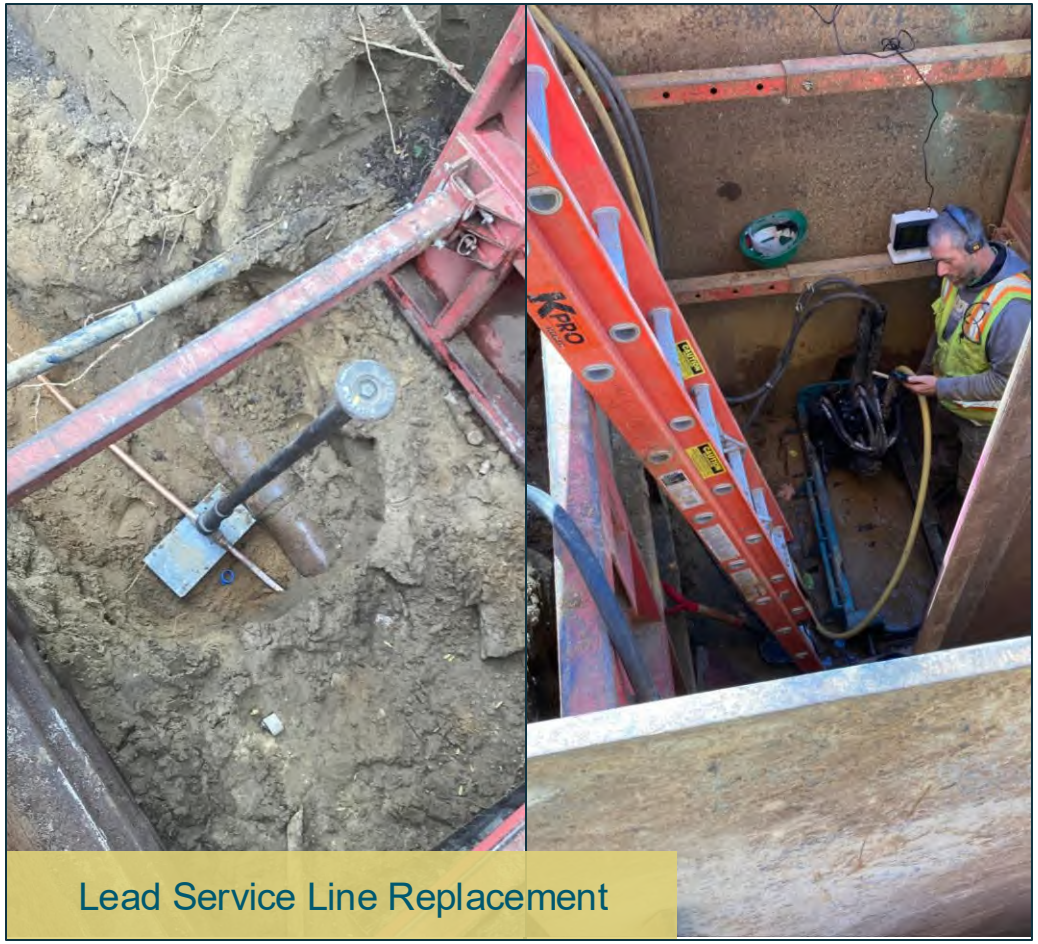


Chateau Theatre

Updates:

- **Permitting Modernization:** Accela moved to the Cloud + new roofing and siding permit implemented.
- **Regulatory Improvements:** Administrative Fee Ordinance implemented + Film Permit license in development.
- **Chateau Theatre:** Operating Analysis competed + City Council direction received; operational strategy and renovation estimates underway.
- **Equitable Procurement:** Disparity Study actions incorporated into purchasing policy with improved tracking tools advancing.

Housing Access

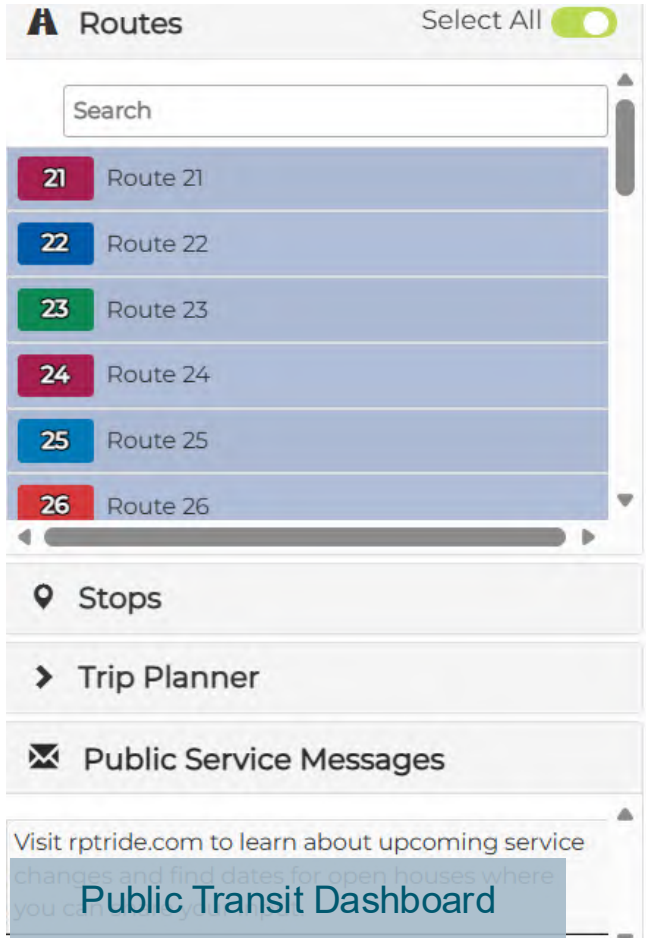


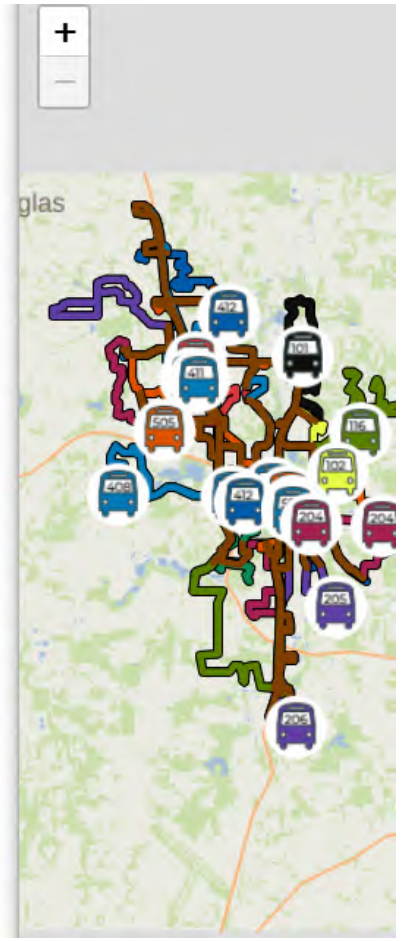
Lead Service Line Replacement

Updates:

- **Housing Stability:** 15 rehabilitation loans completed + 378 housing units created or preserved.
- **Lead Service Line Replacement:** First construction contract awarded + 20 lines replaced; next phase bidding May 2026.
- **Permitting Efficiency:** 88% of residential permit reviews completed within two weeks.
- **Homeless Outreach:** Outreach navigator connected 26 individuals to housing, treatment, and support services.

Inclusive Growth Management

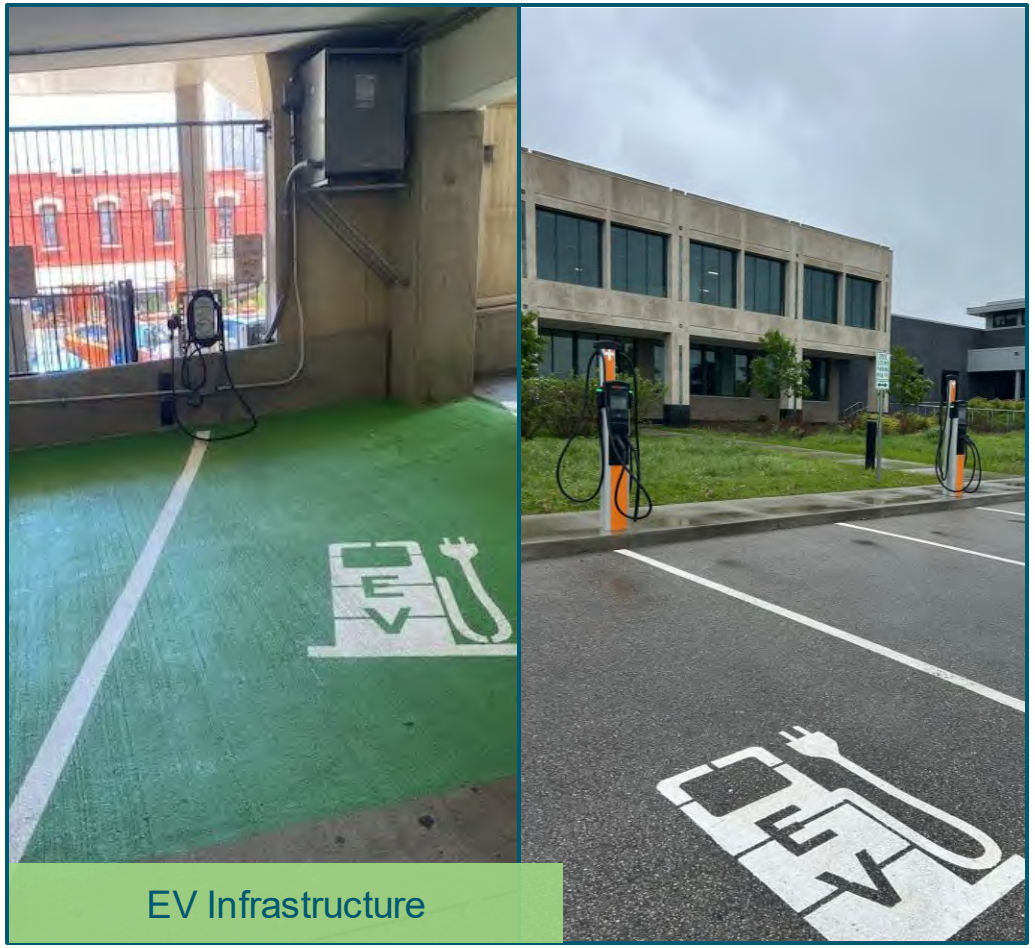




Updates:

- **Transportation Planning:** Mode Shift Coordinator position filled.
- **Transit Optimization:** Increased route frequency + redesigned routes + improved rider guide usability.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Secured $1M in federal funding for East Zumbro sewer improvements.
- **TIF Modernization:** Comprehensive TIF Management Plan underway + policy updates expected summer 2026.

Responsible Environmental Stewardship



EV Infrastructure

Updates:

- **Renewable Energy Progress:** Wind power agreements executed (~2-3 energy supply) + 20MW battery storage authorized.
- **Advanced Metering:** System launched Jan 2026 + pilot deployment underway.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Exceeded MN ECO Act targeted with 17.4M kWh saved in 2025.
- **EV Infrastructure:** Charging rate policy implemented + regional grant partnerships advancing.

Transformational Capital Projects



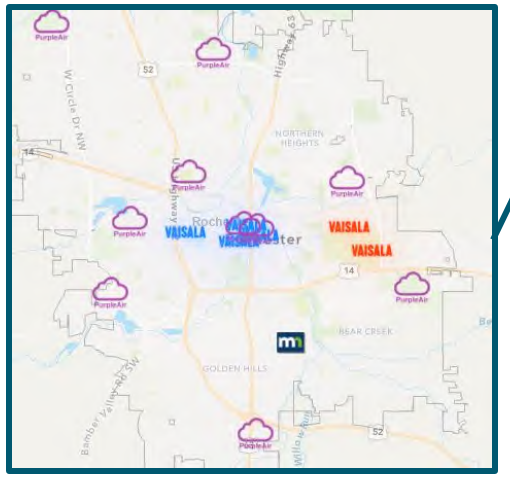
6th Street Bridge Rendering

Updates:

- **LINK Bus Rapid Transit:** Construction ~27% complete + fleet delivery expected late 2026.
- **6th Street Bridge + Riverfront:** Design nearing 90% + major permits advancing.
- **Downtown Geothermal Project:** Wells installed + system startup completed with early energy reductions (48% City Hall | 69% Art Center | 63% Library | 10% Civic Center) + final work continuing into 2026.
- **North Broadway Phase 2:** Construction ahead of schedule + completion anticipated June 2026.

Other Highlights





- **Language Line + Pay Differential Program:** Expanded language access services + language line now available across six departments and 311.
- **Organizational Services Integration:** Fleet integration nearing completion + enterprise IT and Safety recommendations being finalized for leadership review.
- **Air Quality Monitoring:** Public-facing sensor network established with citizen science component + standardized maintenance procedures implemented.
- **Urban Forestry Program:** New arborist position added to accelerate pruning efforts + Boulevard Tree Master Plan grant secured.
- **RCTC Recreation Partnerships:** Expanded community access with new morning pickleball + basketball programming options. Community engagement and enhanced Rochester Sports Center partnership to be considered Spring of 2026.

KPI Tracker

The arrow next to each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) indicates the preferred direction of change (e.g., ↑ = increase preferred). The following icons reflect the difference between the two most recent measurements:



Aligned with the preferred direction



Change not aligned with the preferred direction

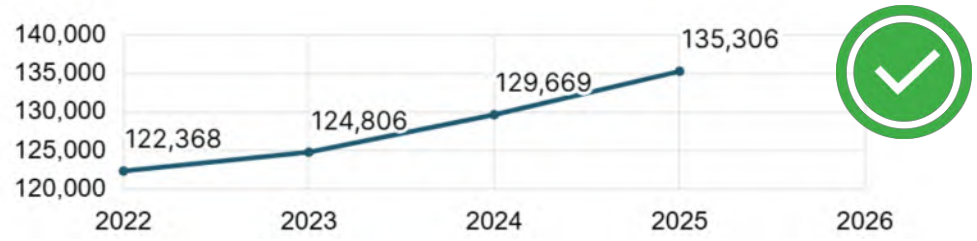
Minimal or mixed change



No historical data available for comparison

Economic Resilience p.1

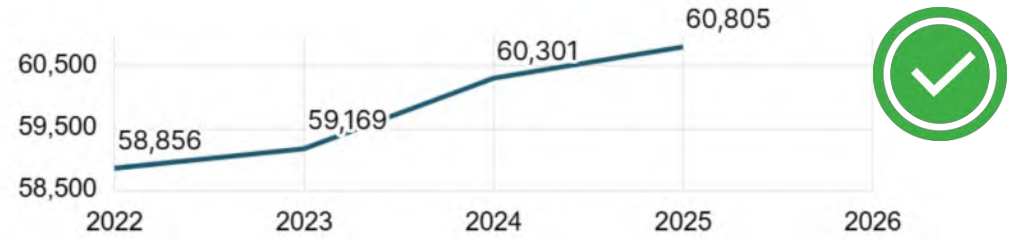
Jobs ↑



KPI Description: Total number of jobs located within the City.

KPI Importance: Reflect overall economic health and the City's ability to attract and retain employers. Growth indicates more employment opportunities and a stronger economy.

Non-Healthcare, Non-Hospitality Jobs ↑

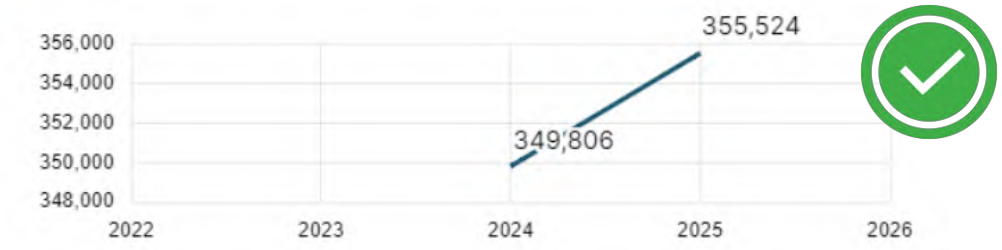


KPI Description: Total number of jobs located within the City in sectors other than healthcare or hospitality.

KPI Importance: Indicates diversification of the local economy and growth in more stable, higher-wage industries. Growth strengthens long-term economic resilience.

Economic Resilience p.2

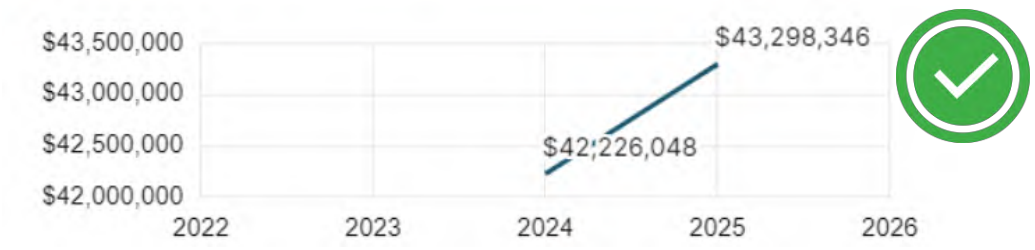
Weekend Hotel Room Demand/Occupancy ↑



KPI Description: Total number of hotel rooms occupied from Friday and Saturday stays.

KPI Importance: Measures visitor volume and travel patterns, helping assess how effectively Rochester attracts overnight guests during peak leisure periods. Higher demand signals increased tourism activity and economic impact.

Weekend Hotel Room Revenue ↑



KPI Description: Total hotel room revenue generated from Friday and Saturday stays.

KPI Importance: Reflects the strength of Rochester's weekend tourism economy, including events, conventions, and leisure travel. Higher weekend revenue indicates stronger visitor spending and supports local businesses and downtown vitality.

Economic Resilience p.3

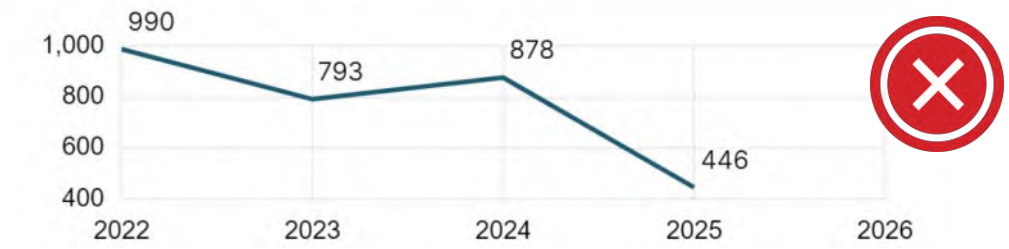


KPI Description: Total net local sales tax revenue collected, indicating consumer spending activity and local economic health.

KPI Importance: Represents a key source of funding for City services and reflects consumer confidence. Higher collections signal stronger local commerce and economic vitality.

Housing Access p.1

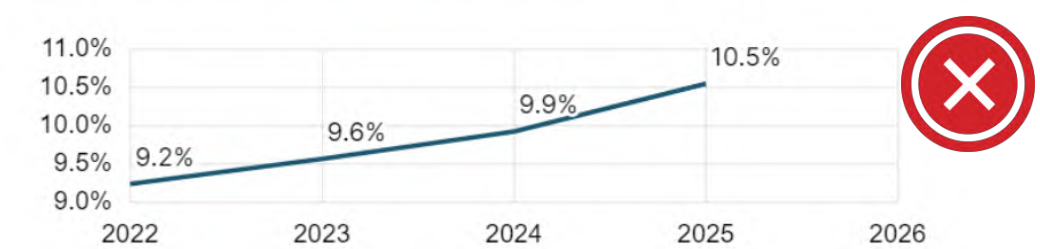
New Housing Units ↑



KPI Description: Total number of new residential housing units completed by private developers.

KPI Importance: Indicates housing market activity and the City's ability to support population growth. Higher numbers improve housing access and affordability.

Single Family Homes as Rentals →



KPI Description: Percentage of single-family homes used as rental properties.

KPI Importance: Indicates balanced housing options and neighborhood stability. A stable percentage reflects sustainable growth.

Housing Access p.2

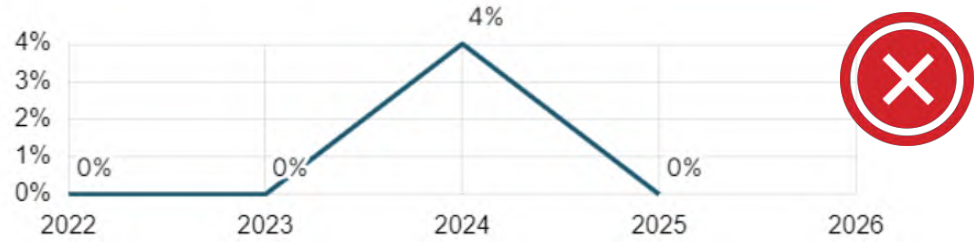


KPI Description: Acreage zoned or designated for residential use that is currently vacant, based on the City's GIS land use inventory. May include parcels without infrastructure in place.

KPI Importance: Indicates residential development capacity; stability over time reflects balanced growth and infrastructure alignment.

Inclusive Growth Management p.1

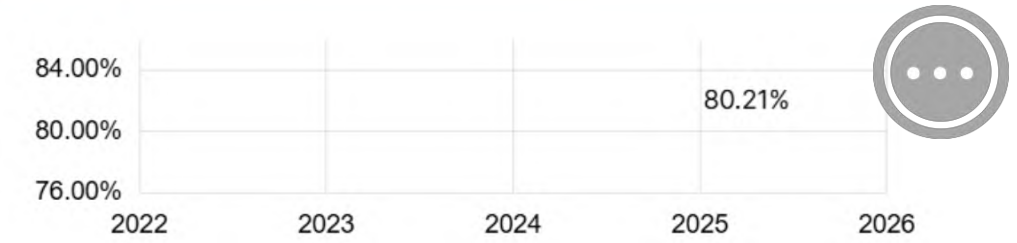
Residential Units Developed as Infill ↑



KPI Description: Percentage of new development occurring within the downtown zoning district and R2X district.

KPI Importance: Promotes efficient land use, reduces infrastructure costs, and supports walkable neighborhoods. A higher percentage reflects efficient land use and reduced sprawl.

Urban Service Area Undeveloped →



KPI Description: Portion of the urban service area not impacted by early development.

KPI Importance: Preserves flexibility for future planning and limits premature infrastructure costs. A higher percentage reflects more controlled, sustainable growth.

Inclusive Growth Management p.2

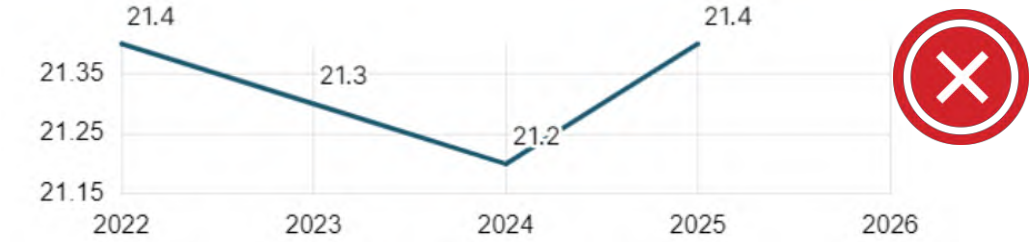
Undeveloped Lots with Full Infrastructure ↑



KPI Description: Land not yet developed but served by full public infrastructure.

KPI Importance: Represents potential for near-term development with minimal additional investment. More lots means greater capacity for growth without high new costs.

Road Miles Per Capita in Feet ↓



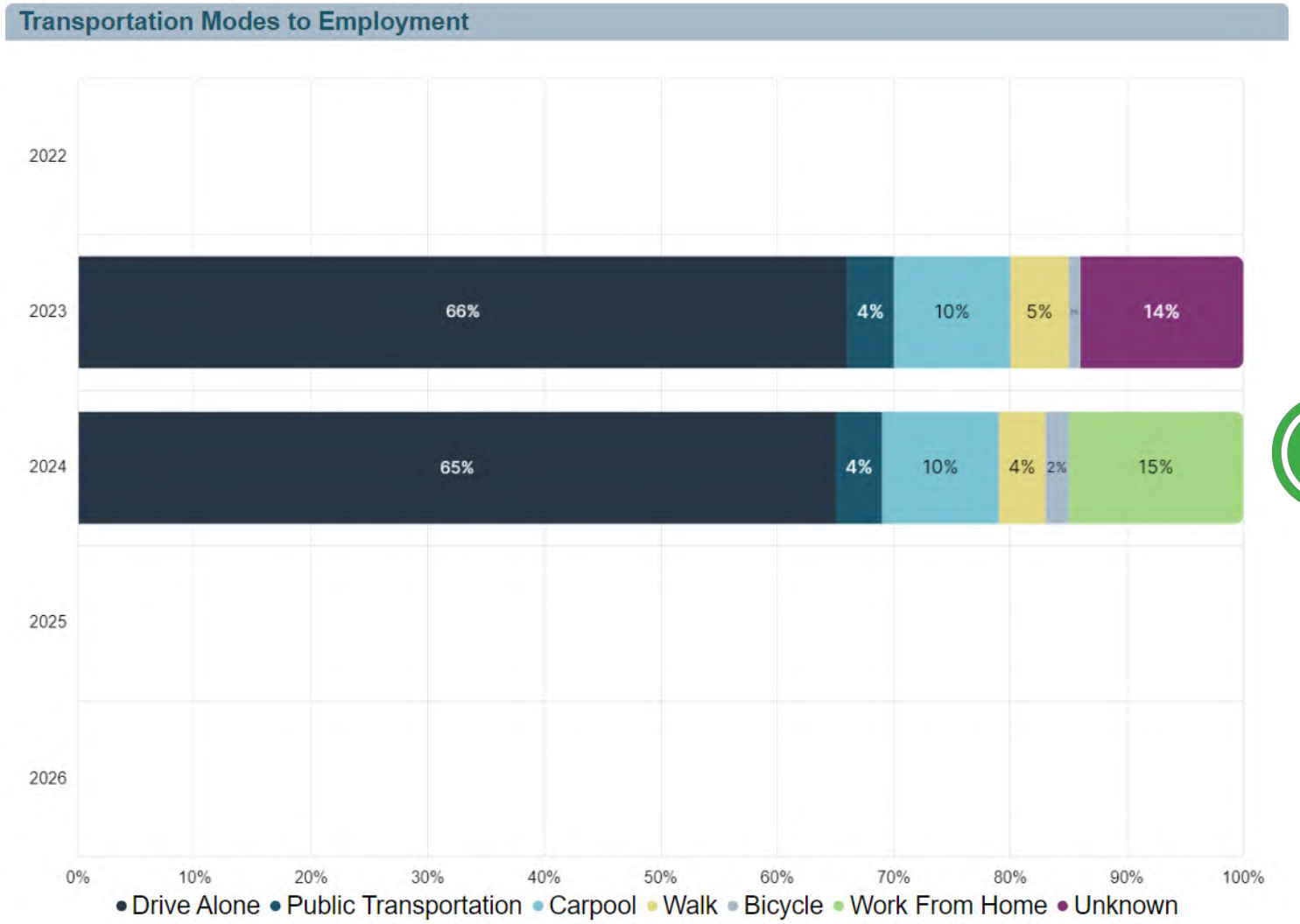
KPI Description: Ratio of total roadway miles maintained by the City to the population, converted to feet for easier year-over-year comparison (note: 0.0004 miles = 21 feet per person).

KPI Importance: Indicates infrastructure burden per resident. A lower ratio reflects more efficient land use and reduced long-term maintenance costs.

Inclusive Growth Management p.3

Description: Distribution of transportation methods used by residents to reach work.

KPI Importance: Informs transportation planning and infrastructure investment priorities. A decrease in commuters driving alone and a higher share of alternative modes (transit, biking, walking) reflects improved sustainability and accessibility.



Inclusive Growth Management p.4

City Employees Per Acre Served ↑



KPI Description: The total number of employees within the City divided by the total developed acreage.

KPI Importance: Measures employment density needed to support the economy and tax base. A higher number reflects efficient land use, strong workforce concentration, and maximized infrastructure investment.

Property Tax Capacity per Acre ↑

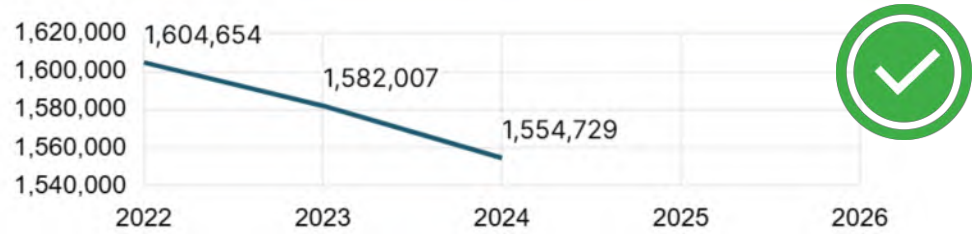


KPI Description: The total taxable property value, expressed in terms of the City's property tax capacity, divided by the number of acres of land.

KPI Importance: Measures the revenue-generating potential of land on a per-acre basis. Higher values indicate more productive land use and stronger fiscal sustainability.

Responsible Environmental Stewardship p.1

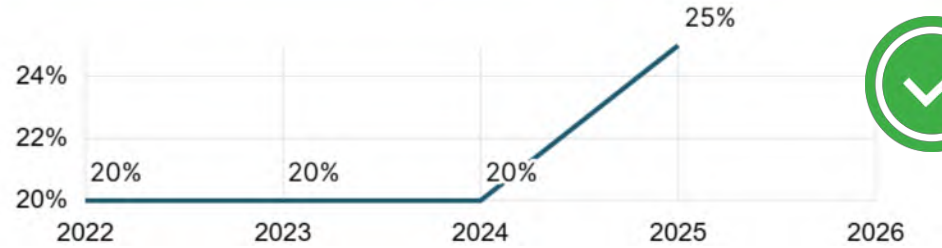
Community GHG Emissions (CO2e) ↓



KPI Description: Total estimated Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions generated within the community measured in Metric Tons CO2e).

KPI Importance: Measures the City's progress toward environmental and climate goals. Lower emissions reflect success in reducing the community's environmental footprint.

Renewable Community Electricity ↑

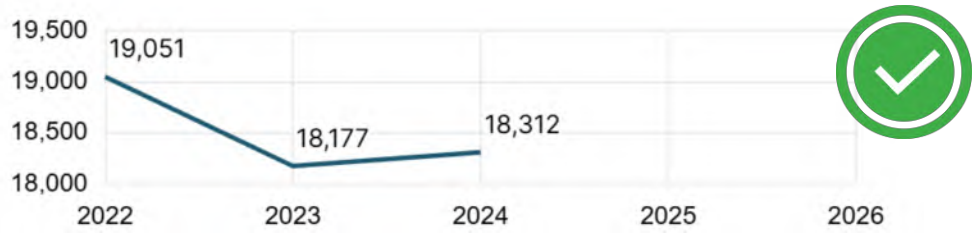


KPI Description: Share of electricity used in the community that comes from renewable or carbon-free sources.

KPI Importance: Indicates community commitment to clean energy and climate action. Higher percentages reflect progress toward sustainable energy goals.

Responsible Environmental Stewardship p.2

City Organization GHG Emissions (CO2e) ↓



KPI Description: Total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions generated by municipal operations.

KPI Importance: Monitors the City's own progress in reducing its environmental footprint. Lower emissions demonstrate organizational leadership in sustainability.

City Organization Energy Consumption per SqFt ↓



KPI Description: Average energy use by City-owned buildings measured by kBtu/sf. Benchmark (2018)=80.78 kBtu/sf.

KPI Importance: Tracks energy efficiency of municipal operations and facility performance. Lower consumption reflects greater efficiency and cost savings.

Transformational Capital Projects p.1

Capital Projects Completed On Budget ↑



KPI Description: Percentage of capital projects completed within or below initial schematic cost estimates.

KPI Importance: Shows effective budgeting and cost control during planning. Higher percentages indicate stronger fiscal discipline.

Capital Project Completed on Schedule ↑



KPI Description: Proportion of capital projects completed as scheduled and within budget.

KPI Importance: Indicates project management effectiveness and reliability. Higher percentages reflect accountability and efficiency in delivering capital projects.

Transformational Capital Projects p.2

Grant and Outside Funding Received ↑



KPI Description: Total external funds (e.g., grants) obtained to support City projects.

KPI Importance: Expands the City's capacity to complete projects while reducing reliance on local taxes and funds. Higher amounts reflect stronger partnerships and greater return on local investment.

Moving Forward



What's Next?

August 2026:

- 2026 Mid-Year Action Plan Update

February 2027:

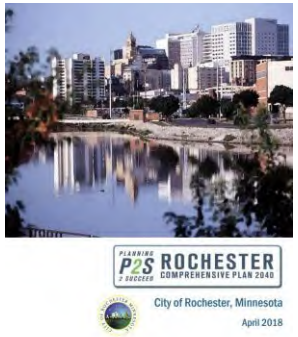
- 2026 Year-End Action Plan Update
- KPI Dashboard Update

2026

- **Jan**
- **Feb** — 2025 Year End Action Plan and KPI Tracker Updates
- **Mar**
- **Apr** — Factors influencing the budget & council priorities
- **Jun** — 2026-2031 Capital Improvement Plan
- **Jul**
- **Aug** — City Administrator recommends 2026-2027 operating budget
- **Sep** — Council adopts preliminary 2026-2027 operating budget
- **Oct**
- **Nov**
- **Dec** — Council adopts 2026-2027 operating budget & levy

2026 & Beyond

Continuous Action Plan Alignment



2026-2027 Comprehensive Plan Update



2026-2027 DMC Development Plan Update



2026 Confirmation of Strategic Priorities with 2025 City Council

2026 Action Plan Update and 2026-2027 Budget



DISCUSSION, QUESTIONS, & FEEDBACK

CITY OF
ROCHESTER
MINNESOTA

Action Plan

2025 Year-End Update



Action Plan Overview

The City of Rochester's Action Plan, first implemented in 2021, serves as our roadmap for success. It outlines current initiatives aimed at advancing City Council's Strategic Priorities:

- Economic Resilience
- Housing Access
- Inclusive Growth Management
- Responsible Environmental Stewardship
- Transformational Capital Projects

Benefits of the Action Plan include:

- Shared Vision
- Communication & Collaboration
- Accountability & Transparency

Completed: 1

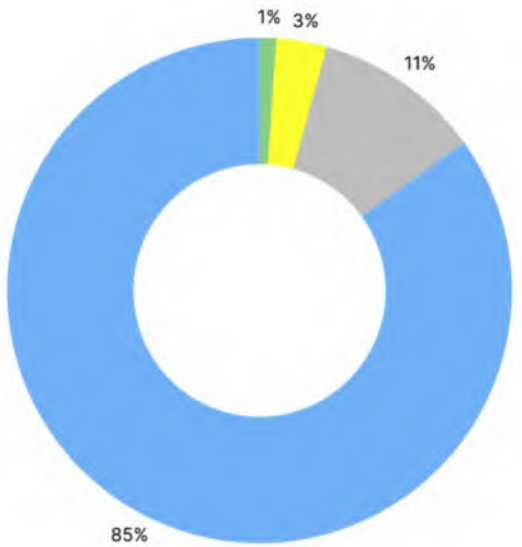
On Target: 79

Delayed: 3

Off Target: 0

Not Started: 11

Total: 93



Action Plan Alignment

Our Action Plan supports the City's Strategic Priorities by translating them into specific, actionable steps. Each action item aligns with a priority, ensuring coordinated efforts across all departments. This alignment allows us to effectively track progress, measure success, and adapt to new challenges and opportunities, driving meaningful improvements in our community.



Action Plan Highlights

Economic Resilience



Chateau Theatre

Updates:

- **Permitting Modernization:** Accela moved to the Cloud + new roofing and siding permit implemented.
- **Regulatory Improvements**: Administrative Fee Ordinance implemented + Film Permit license in development.
- **Chateau Theatre:** Operating Analysis competed + City Council direction received; operational strategy and renovation estimates underway.
- **Equitable Procurement:** Disparity Study actions incorporated into purchasing policy with improved tracking tools advancing.

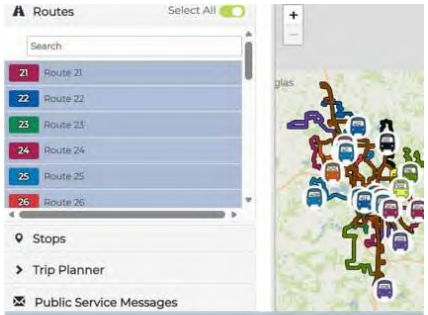
Housing Access


Lead Service Line Replacement

Updates:

- **Housing Stability:** 15 rehabilitation loans completed + 378 housing units created or preserved.
- **Lead Service Line Replacement:** First construction contract awarded + 20 lines replaced; next phase bidding May 2026.
- **Permitting Efficiency:** 88% of residential permit reviews completed within two weeks.
- **Homeless Outreach:** Outreach navigator connected 26 individuals to housing, treatment, and support services.

Inclusive Growth Management



Public Transit Dashboard

Updates:

- **Transportation Planning:** Mode Shift Coordinator position filled.
- **Transit Optimization:** Increased route frequency + redesigned routes + improved rider guide usability.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Secured $1M in federal funding for East Zumbro sewer improvements.
- **TIF Modernization:** Comprehensive Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Management Plan underway + policy updates expected summer 2026.

Responsible Environmental Stewardship


EV Infrastructure

Updates:

- **Renewable Energy Progress:** Wind power agreements executed (~2-3 energy supply) + 20MW battery storage authorized.
- **Advanced Metering:** System launched Jan 2026 + pilot deployment underway.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Exceeded MN ECO Act targeted with 17.4M kWh saved in 2025.
- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure:** Charging rate policy implemented + regional grant partnerships advancing.

Transformational Capital Projects



6th Street Bridge Rendering

Updates:

- **LINK Bus Rapid Transit:** Construction ~27% complete + fleet delivery expected late 2026.
- **6th Street Bridge + Riverfront:** Design nearing 90% + major permits advancing.
- **Downtown Geothermal Project:** Wells installed + system startup completed with early energy reductions (48% City Hall | 69% Art Center | 63% Library | 10% Civic Center) + final work continuing into 2026.
- **North Broadway Phase 2:** Construction ahead of schedule + completion anticipated June 2026.

Other Highlights

- **Language Line + Pay Differential Program:** Expanded language access services + language line now available across six departments and 311.
- **Organizational Services Integration:** Fleet integration nearing completion + enterprise IT and Safety recommendations being finalized for leadership review.
- **Air Quality Monitoring:** Public-facing sensor network established with citizen science component + standardized maintenance procedures implemented.
- **Urban Forestry Program:** New arborist position added to accelerate pruning efforts + Boulevard Tree Master Plan grant secured.
- **RCTC Recreation Partnerships:** Expanded community access with new morning pickleball + basketball programming options. Community engagement and enhanced Rochester Sports Center partnership to be considered Spring of 2026.





Full Action Plan

The following pages include a comprehensive table of our full action plan. Items are organized by Strategic Priority, by goals, and then tactics.

Want to learn more? Explore our website at www.rochestermn.gov/priorities for details on our Strategic Priorities, past Action Plan updates, DEI Action Plan, and Legislative Priorities.

Action Plan (2025 Year-End Update)

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
1	Economic Resilience					
2	Develop a cohesive city economic development strategy and staffing model that complements key economic development partners					
3	Role & Staffing: Clarify the City's economic development role and explore staffing that supports the City's role. Review how we can enhance collaboration with Rochester's existing economic development ecosystem, including Destination Medical Center, Rochester Area Economic Development Inc., Small Business Development Center, Collider, the emerging biolab, Mayo Clinic Accelerator, Discovery Square, and others.	Admin	On Target	We began meeting with community partners in August 2025 to map Rochester's economic development ecosystem. This work will document existing programs, identify gaps, and define shared goals between the City and community partners.	11/03/25	Ongoing
4	Regulatory Commitment: Evaluate existing and future regulations and licensing to reflect community needs, support the City's strategic priorities, and encourage investment in Rochester.	City Clerk	On Target	In 2025, we implemented a new Administrative Fee Ordinance that brings all license types under the Administrative Citation process and establishes a framework for regulation through hearing officers. The process governs fines for licensing violations and creates a more proactive regulatory approach that aligns with City standards while minimizing disruption to license holders' operations. We also began developing a new Film Permit license class to support Rochester's goal of becoming a film-ready community and promote tourism through film production.	10/01/25	Ongoing
5	Business Retention and Expansion: Develop a proactive business retention strategy focused on small, minority and locally-owned businesses.	Admin	On Target	Beginning February 1, 2026, we will advance this work through the City's Economic Mobility efforts. In Q1 & Q2 2026, we will collaborate to establish a formal business retention framework and implementation strategy focused on outreach, data tracking, and support tools for small, minority-, and locally owned businesses.	06/01/26	Ongoing
6	Equitable Economic Development: Implement recommendations from the Disparity Study with a focus on actions that will increase small, minority and locally-owned business participation that is more reflective of contractor availability. Continue to evaluate city procurement goals and policies to address contracting disparity.	Admin	On Target	We prioritized actions that can be implemented immediately and incorporated them into the purchasing policy in collaboration with the Finance Department. We are also transitioning to new software that will improve tracking of Targeted Business Utilization and make it easier for contractors to access certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises.	Ongoing	Ongoing
7	Implement a tourism strategy that enhances evening and weekend economic activity					
8	Events: Support free and inclusive cultural experiences that bring people together, strengthen Rochester's evening and weekend economy, and foster community vitality. Continuously refine event offerings to ensure strong public engagement and activation of community spaces.	Public Music	On Target	We expanded and refined our event offerings to increase public engagement, focusing on free and inclusive programs that activate parks and downtown spaces. Attendance, community participation, and partner interest continue to grow as we strengthen Rochester's evening and weekend economy.	Ongoing	Ongoing
9	Trails: Develop a strategy to plan, prioritize, fund, construct and maintain local and regional trail connections.	Parks & Rec	Delayed	We planned to evaluate trail conditions to help prioritize funding and integrate the results into the annual work plan; however, the Public Works assessment has been delayed. Routine trail maintenance has continued as scheduled.	04/01/26	12/01/26
10	Park Development and Investment: Complete an update to the Parks Master Plan that prioritizes park features and amenities that enhance positive user experiences for community members and visitors. Review parkland dedication to ensure sustainable park and trail investment and other financing options that allow investment in parks to support implementation of the plan. Review existing partnerships and policies with different associations to ensure community access, sliding fee schedules, and a balanced financial partnership. Evaluate programmatic gaps and solutions for meeting those gaps in new or existing facilities.	Parks & Rec	On Target	The Parks and Recreation System Plan update was reviewed as part of the 2026–2027 budget planning process. Over the next three quarters, we will develop the project scope of work, with a request for proposals anticipated in early 2027 and plan updates occurring throughout 2027.	06/01/26	12/31/27

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
11	Regional Sports and Recreation Assets: Develop final cost estimates and financing options for Phase Two of the Regional Sports and Recreation Complex. Evaluate utilization and renovation needs of existing assets such as the Rec Center, Sports Center located at RCTC, National Volleyball Center, and others to maximize community and visitor use concurrent with progress on the new complex.	Parks & Rec	On Target	We have seen increased attendance in Parks & Recreation drop-in programming following focused marketing and awareness efforts. We continue to meet with RCTC to update agreements and expand community access, and RCTC is now offering morning drop-in pickleball and basketball for the community.	12/08/25	Ongoing
12	Marketing: Consider expanding destination marketing efforts through our Destination Marketing Organization. Evaluate the best approach to market sports centric tourism and passive recreation-based tourism, emphasizing Rochester's historic district.	Admin	Not Started	Internal coordination is underway to develop a clear plan and timeline for advancing this work. Discussions are focused on defining next steps, roles, and milestones to support effective implementation.	Ongoing	Ongoing
13	Chateau: Develop final strategy for needed renovations, programmatic evolution, and preferred approach to operations needed to support this goal.	Admin	On Target	We completed an operating analysis in 2025, with recommendations for capital investments and operator partnerships presented at the February 12, 2026 Study Session. City Council provided direction on next steps. We are now working with the current operator and Experience Rochester to refine a programmatic and operational proposal while securing construction cost estimates for targeted building renovations.		
14	Optimize City services and assets to support Economic Resilience					
15	Bio Business Center: Evaluate the long-term future of the Bio Business Center for economic resilience or potential adaptive reuse.	Admin	On Target	In Q1 2026, we are releasing an RFQ for leasing services and reviewing upcoming lease renewals. At the same time, we will evaluate market conditions and analyze options to inform recommendations on long-term use, economic resilience, and potential adaptive reuse strategies.	02/01/26	09/01/26
16	Economic Vitality Investments: Ensure that the Economic Vitality Fund investments targeted toward economic development support the Economic Resilience strategic priority. Focus partner investment efforts on economic diversification.	Community Development	On Target	We began meeting with community partners in August 2025 to map Rochester's economic development ecosystem. Once completed, this work will support partners in identifying shared goals to inform a cohesive economic development strategy, including future funding recommendations.	08/06/25	05/01/26
17	Housing Access					
18	Promote construction of owner occupied homes					
19	Regulatory Environment: Continue to evaluate regulatory alignment around single family home construction to mitigate cost while still ensuring neighborhood quality. Initial areas of evaluation include boulevard trees, connection charges, and other items learned as part of the affordable single family home initiative in Northwest Rochester.	Community Development	On Target	Permit review timelines remain strong: a. 88% of residential permit reviews were completed in two weeks or less b. 89% of commercial permit reviews were completed in three weeks or less	09/18/25	Ongoing
20	Home Ownership Innovation: Explore condos and small-scale ownership models as alternatives to traditional single-family homes. Support efforts to construct multigenerational housing within newly constructed single family homes.	Community Development	Not Started	Housing outcomes for this period include: a. 0 condominium units constructed by the private sector b. 0 multigenerational housing units financially supported c. 58 for-sale townhome units constructed by the private sector	03/01/26	03/01/27
21	Legislative Environment: Pursue state legislative solutions that align state and local priorities for housing with state investment in local infrastructure. Engage legislatively to reduce tax disincentives to platting lots.	Legislative	On Target	We partnered with the League of Minnesota Cities housing task force and policy committees to advance housing priorities within the 2026 legislative platform and continue coordinating with partners on strategic legislative pathways.	06/02/25	05/18/26
22	Ensure vital neighborhoods that support infill, adaptive reuse, and accessible housing					
23	Accessory Dwelling Units: Reevaluate ADU program requirements and barriers (e.g., connection fees, owner occupancy).	Community Development	On Target	We continued evaluating Accessory Dwelling Unit requirements and potential barriers. Current metrics include: a.0 new ADU units constructed by priivate sector b. 0 ADUs financially supported	01/01/26	01/01/27

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
24	Short Term Rentals: Evaluate existing short term rental requirements including geographic dispersion, tax classification, lodging tax contribution, and other areas while balancing economic and neighborhood impacts.	Community Development	On Target	We are preparing updates to mapping tools to better illustrate geographic dispersion, ownership patterns, and property values for single-family rentals and short-term rentals. The updated mapping application has not yet launched. Current metrics include: a. 557 short-term rental units b. Short-term rentals represent 2% of total rental units c. Single-family rentals represent 14% of total rental units d. 55% of single-family rental units are owned by a company e. 6% of single-family rental units are owned by a non-local company	06/01/26	12/31/26
25	TIF Policy & Accessible Housing: Align Tax Increment Financing (TIF) policy and related incentives to encourage the development of accessible housing. Create a framework for reliably classifying and tracking accessible units.	Admin	On Target	City Council approved an agreement with Ehlers to develop a comprehensive Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Management Plan. The plan will evaluate each active district's key dates, obligations, cash flow and amortization, administrative and pooling impacts, effects on the general tax base, compliance requirements, and opportunities to optimize TIF use. Updates and policy recommendations are anticipated in summer 2026. Internal coordination and external discussions have begun to establish a framework for classifying and tracking accessible housing units. Development of a formal inventory, including review of units identified through the Electronic Plan Review system, is expected to begin in 2026.	09/01/26	Ongoing
26	Rental Inspections and Code Enforcement: Evaluate the potential for proactive code enforcement, integrated code enforcement, efficiency in rental inspections, tall grass and weeds policy, and other innovations.	Community Development	On Target	We have not yet launched the pilot neighborhood courtesy inspection sweep. Rental licenses are currently distributed across inspection cycles: a. 1-Year Cycle: 341 licenses (14.60%) b. 2-Year Cycle: 927 licenses (39.70%) c. 3-Year Cycle: 373 licenses (15.97%) d. 4-Year Cycle: 694 licenses (29.72%)	06/01/26	Ongoing
27	Lead Service Line Replacement: Continue implementation of the Lead Service Line Replacement Program to help homeowners replace lead service lines and reduce potential lead exposure in drinking water.	RPU	On Target	In 2025, we began the first phase of the multi-year replacement program, awarding the first construction contract in September 2025. To date, 20 service lines have been replaced, with work under this contract anticipated to be completed in June 2026. We are preparing plans and construction documents for a second replacement project anticipated to bid in May 2026. Currently, about 1.2% of water services are identified as lead or galvanized and require replacement, while 5.9% remain classified as "Unknown" and are actively being investigated.	01/06/25	11/10/28
28	Wastewater Lateral Replacement: Explore programs similar to service assured that take into account the complexities of sewer system liability.	Public Works	On Target	We conducted research on programs used in other cities and evaluated options available to the City. A report summarizing findings and recommendations is currently being drafted.	09/01/25	12/31/26
29	Housing Financing: Better understand micro- and macro-level financing challenges as it related to the purchase, renovation, and construction of housing. Identify relevant solutions that can be implemented locally.	Community Development	Not Started	Work on this initiative has not yet begun. Staff plan to establish key market data metrics, including interest rates, average home prices, renovation costs, construction costs, and lending trends. Stakeholder engagement with local banks, credit unions, housing developers, and nonprofit partners will be initiated to identify barriers and opportunities. Trend-tracking metrics will also be developed to compare local construction costs and housing market conditions with regional, state, and national trends.	05/01/26	01/31/27
30	Support County and non-profit efforts to effectively provide resources to persons experiencing housing instability					
31	Facilities: Support County and non-profit service provider efforts to align services and thoughtfully locate facilities.	Community Development	On Target	We have not yet initiated a formal review of new facilities locations.	09/18/25	Ongoing
32	Public Safety: Focus on the City's role as a public safety provider to create a safe and welcoming community for all to support Housing Access, Economic Resilience, and Inclusive Growth Management.	Police	On Target	In March 2025, we added a homeless outreach navigator focused on assisting individuals experiencing homelessness who have frequent interactions with police. To date, the navigator has helped 26 individuals transition into substance use treatment, housing, court-ordered treatment, and/or mental health services.	Ongoing	Ongoing
33	Support Individual Housing Stability Efforts: Provide options to mitigate housing instability through utility programs, housing rehab, engagement in Any Path Home, Housing Coalition, HRA, and related efforts.	Community Development	On Target	We advanced coordination through Any Path Home by helping establish formal Case Conferencing, a multi-organization review of a By Name List, and a shared guidebook for consistent intake practices. In 2025, we completed 15 single-family rehabilitation loans and supported the creation or preservation of 378 housing units through Housing Coalition funding.	09/18/25	Ongoing

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
34	Optimize City services and assets to support Housing Access					
35	City Parcels: Evaluate city parcels for disposition that supports economic resilience and housing access. Key parcels include the Regional Sports and Recreation Center (north outlot for residential, South outlots for commercial), various Riverfront properties, Badger Farms, Silver Lake Power Plant, and the Traffic Operations Building.	Admin	On Target	In 2025, two near-term parcels were disposed of through right-of-way vacation. Excess land at Fire Station #2 advanced through an RFP process for broker services and is now moving forward with marketing and sale. We continue planning and evaluation for other priority parcels, including the Regional Sports and Recreation Center outlots and Riverfront properties.	03/01/27	05/01/28
36	Permitting: Focus on continuous improvement to streamline enterprise-wide permitting, inspections, licensing, development review, housing construction, and business navigation.	Community Development	On Target	In 2025, we migrated the Accela permitting and licensing platform from on-premises servers to Accela's cloud environment to ensure continued compatibility with future system updates. We also introduced new permit types for residential window, roof, and siding replacements, with a streamlined application and inspection process that includes same-day approvals for roofing and siding and options for virtual inspections. Prior to implementation, we hosted Business Forward seminars to gather input and help onboard businesses new to the permitting process.	10/20/25	Ongoing
37	Economic Vitality Investments: Ensure that the Economic Vitality Fund investments focused on housing support the Housing Access strategic priority.	Community Development	On Target	We supported 286 housing units through Economic Vitality Fund investments.	09/18/25	Ongoing
38	Inclusive Growth Management					
39	Integrate active transportation, transportation, and transit efforts to support Inclusive Growth Management					
40	Staffing: Work to build transportation planning capacity and coordination within the Development Services and Infrastructure Team. Utilize 311 and the community survey to better understand resident transportation needs and perceptions.	Community Development	On Target	The Mode Shift Coordinator position has been filled and relocated to the Community Development Department.	11/01/25	Ongoing
41	Mode Shift and Travel Demand Management: Focus on coordination with Mayo Clinic to ensure that the goals of LINK Rapid Transit are realized. Develop a travel demand management framework in partnership with Mayo Clinic that can be extended to other employers.	Community Development	On Target	We identified data indicators by reviewing existing transportation tools and secured outside funding to install two additional pedestrian and bicycle counters. We are also pursuing a State grant to support development of a Travel Demand Management framework in partnership with Mayo Clinic.	01/01/26	09/30/26
42	Transit Optimization: Evaluate and prioritize our existing transit services in the context of significant post-pandemic ridership decline, declining external funding, ability to influence Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, and promote inclusive growth management. Ensure that this optimization is reflected in future Transit Development Plan updates and the forthcoming request for proposals for transit operations.	Transit & Parking	On Target	Spring service changes reflect a high level of external collaboration and include increased route frequency, conversion from loop to two-way service, and route realignments. Budget analysis is ongoing to reduce capital project costs while maintaining efficient service delivery. The rider transit guide is being updated to improve usability, with a shift to a condensed booklet format that can be easily adapted for online use to enhance the overall rider experience.	Ongoing	Ongoing
43	ADA Transition Plan: Update the 2013 ADA Transition Plan to align with this strategic priority.	Public Works	On Target	Work to update the Transition Plan is ongoing. We are currently updating data sets to provide an accurate status snapshot and are developing communication and engagement tools to support implementation. In addition, we will be reviewing all parking lots within the park system for compliance with striping standards and signage requirements.	09/01/25	07/15/26
44	Ensure strategic investments are integrated with inclusive land use planning to support development that is land, tax, and service efficient					

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
45	Infrastructure: Annually review and align electric, water, sewer, storm sewer, and transportation infrastructure to ensure that investments are maximized and construction impact is minimized. Prioritize investments in the East and West Zumbro Sewer Areas. Advocate for the state bonding request for the East Zumbro Sewer Area.	Public Works	On Target	East Zumbro: Coordination across City teams secured $1,000,000 in federal funding to support sewer and water improvements in the East Zumbro Sewershed. State bonding assistance remains a top legislative priority for 2026. West Zumbro: Phases 1 and 2 are complete, Phase 3 is under construction, and Phase 4 is in design and permitting with construction anticipated in 2026–2027. Infrastructure Coordination: Engineering teams continue meeting regularly to prioritize capital improvement projects and coordinate schedules across City infrastructure work.	09/01/25	07/01/27
46	Growth Areas: Regularly review and assess growth areas to inform land use and infrastructure investments.	Community Development	On Target	We completed updates to the Comprehensive Plan and Growth Management Map in 2025.	09/01/25	12/31/26
47	Annexation: Develop annexation priorities that align with existing market need and approved plans. Evolve existing or develop new orderly annexation agreements with surrounding townships.	Community Development	On Target	We mapped existing Orderly Annexation Agreements and confirmed five active township agreements.	12/01/25	02/01/27
48	Financial: Discuss and evaluate tools to help the community understand the fiscal and service impacts of development.	Community Development	On Target	Improved Action Plan Update: We engaged Urban3 to complete a Fiscal Impacts Analysis to better understand how development patterns influence infrastructure costs. The analysis will build on the Revenue Analysis that began in fall 2025.	10/01/25	12/01/26
49	Services: Develop a plan to finance, construct, and operate Fire Station 6, provide final direction on the implementation of the Library's Master Plan, and address deferred maintenance on existing police training facilities with a focus on shared training spaces.	Fire	On Target	The Library Master Plan was approved by the Library Board in August 2025 and adopted by City Council in November 2025. Site analysis has been completed at the Badger Site for a potential Fire Station 6 location, with the Rochester Fire Department reviewing operational metrics and plans underway to market excess land to developers in 2026. Police training updates are also progressing, with City Council scheduled to consider a purchase agreement for the Heartland Gun Club on March 2, 2026. If approved, closing is anticipated in July 2026, and the facility would replace the current outdoor range while supporting expanded partnerships for regional law enforcement training.	07/01/25	Ongoing
50	Maintenance: Consider ongoing and one-time investments to support the maintenance of existing infrastructure particularly for City facilities, public spaces, and streets.	Admin	On Target	The 2026 budget process included additional funding for facility replacement through the Capital Improvement Program and the allocation of excess lodging tax revenues beyond the City's commitment to operate the Mayo Civic Center.	Ongoing	Ongoing
51	Support Infill and Transit Oriented Development					
52	Incentives and Policies: In addition to aligning the TIF policy, create additional financial and non-financial incentives to help prioritize infill and transit oriented development. Evaluate other policies that prioritize development in areas with existing infrastructure (e.g. parking minimums).	Community Development	Not Started	We eliminated downtown parking minimum requirements to encourage infill development and support transit-oriented growth.	04/01/26	12/31/26
53	Maximize Link Investment: Prioritize development in and around LINK stations including the West Transit Village and East Terminus. Ensure that existing and future development are effectively connected to the stations. Review the potential for an updated traffic study two years after the project is implemented to assess any future improvements needed.	Community Development	Not Started	The Link Bus Rapid Transit route is not yet constructed, so this work has not started. Once implemented, we will track development near station areas such as the West Transit Village and East Terminus and evaluate the need for a follow-up traffic study.	01/01/26	12/31/26
54	Optimize City services to support Inclusive Growth Management					
55	One Water, One Team: Consider further integration of water reclamation, sewer collection, water treatment, water distribution, flood control, and stormwater services into one team.	Admin	Not Started	This project has not yet started.	01/01/27	Ongoing
56	Integrated Utility Planning: Ensure ongoing planning and collaboration to ensure that power supply planning, sewer, wastewater, and water supply planning maximizes investments and ensures efficient future growth.	Public Works	On Target	We are coordinating across departments to align utility planning efforts, including collaboration with RPU's Water Plan and Community Development's Growth Management Map amendments. Current work includes planning for a coordinated sewer and water extension along Country Club Road SW to support future development and improve system capacity.	09/01/25	12/31/26

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
57	Organizational Services: Align and integrate organizational services such as Finance, Information Technology, Communications, Facilities, Safety, GIS, Fleet, and similar functions across the enterprise. The focus will be on enhancing services provided to the public; making the best use of public dollars; reducing duplicative or low-impact work; increasing clarity and consistency across departments; and allowing departments to focus more on strategy and people.	Admin	On Target	Fleet integration is nearing completion. At the Forward Team's request, City IT and RPU IT are developing a recommendation for integrating IT, which is being finalized for leadership review. Additional evaluations are underway related to safety and One Water. The Forward Team is also preparing a recommendation to City Council to update the City's financial policies, including potential integration of organizational services.	Ongoing	Ongoing
58	Toolkit Optimization: Move toward full use and integration of the change management, project management, and communications & engagement tool kits within the organization.	Admin	Not Started	We are conducting preliminary discussions to optimize the organization's toolkit. A survey will be distributed to gather input and identify opportunities to expand toolkit use, including virtual and in-person trainings.	01/01/26	12/31/26
59	Responsible Environmental Stewardship					
60	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation					
61	Active Transportation: Encourage the use of active transportation options for both commuting and recreational trips. Create support facilities to help meet the needs of active commuters. Continue to refine the framework for the responsible use of private scooters and Lime Scooters including designated corrals in the Downtown area. Evaluate a variety of financial strategies to invest in trails including reviewing our park dedication ordinance to allow investments in both park and trail development.	Community Development	On Target	Park dedication review is anticipated in 2027 concurrent with the Park System Plan update, with information gathering underway in 2026 to support future trail investment discussions. We are also transitioning Lime scooter coordination to the new Mode Shift Coordinator and have begun working with Lime to establish a parking pin audit and designated downtown corral plan.	12/01/25	Ongoing
62	City Fleet Electrification: Identify resources and implementation strategies to electrify the City's fleet while ensuring the financial viability of the Equipment Revolving Fund.	Public Works	On Target	We are advancing plans to electrify the City's fleet while protecting the long-term health of the Equipment Revolving Fund. Near-term work includes developing a Citywide EV Charging Rates Policy and completing an internal plan to guide how chargers are installed, used, and expanded. About $40,000 in federal funding remains, and we are evaluating options that meet grant requirements and operational needs. To support long-term sustainability, we added a fleet management percentage fee and continue coordinating across departments to advance responsible fleet electrification.	09/01/25	12/31/26
63	Community Transportation Electrification: Work to encourage private electric vehicle charging infrastructure solution to make charging convenient. Monitor the implementation and adjust as public and private vehicle electrification infrastructure evolves.	Public Works	On Target	We applied for electric vehicle charging grants in partnership with Olmsted County and Rochester Community and Technical College to expand charging infrastructure. In 2025, we conducted research on charging rates, usage, and availability and drafted an electric vehicle charging rate policy, which was approved by City Council and implemented in January 2026.	09/01/25	12/31/26
64	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with building energy consumption					
65	Power Supply Resource Plan: Monitor and support the implementation of the RPU 100% Net Renewable Energy by 2030 resource plan goal. Determine acceptable risk mitigation measures that might be necessary with the changing tax credit environment; evolving financial viability; and ability to build or contract enough locally produced renewable energy to meet the community's needs.	RPU	On Target	We made significant progress toward the 2030 renewable energy target by executing power purchase agreements with three wind projects that will provide approximately two-thirds of our energy needs and allow us to bank Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs). We also secured about two-thirds of our capacity needs, including City Council authorization for 20 megawatts (MW) of battery storage. We continue monitoring risks related to tax credits, project viability, and contract performance while pursuing additional renewable energy opportunities beyond 2030.	07/29/24	12/31/30

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
66	Energy Savings: Continue to explore energy efficiency and decarbonization projects that have a reasonable return on time and capital.	Facilities	On Target	Phase 2 of the Downtown Building Energy Transition project came online in December 2025, connecting the Mayo Civic Center, Rochester Public Library, Rochester Civic Theatre, and Rochester Art Center to an electrified geothermal thermal energy network. These facilities are now aligned with Rochester Public Utilities' renewable and carbon-neutral goals, with natural gas systems retained only as backup. Early results show significant reductions in energy use intensity across key facilities, including a 48% reduction at City Hall, 69% at the Rochester Art Center, 63% at the Rochester Public Library, and 10% at the Mayo Civic Center (through April 1, 2025). The new Maintenance Center will be fully electrified using Darcy Geothermal systems, and Fire Station 3 is currently out to bid, with plans to fully electrify the HVAC system if approved.	Ongoing	Ongoing
67	Advanced Metering: Successfully complete the implementation of advanced metering. Facilitate training and education on how customers can best use the information to manage their energy footprint.	RPU	On Target	This project remains on track for budget and schedule. Configuration, integration, and testing were completed in 2025, and the system successfully went live on January 10, 2026. The next phase includes a three-month pilot deployment of 500 electric meters and 50 water meters in Northwest Rochester to evaluate technical performance, operations, customer experience, security, and communication network coverage. If successful, mass deployment is anticipated to begin in May 2026, with electric meter replacement occurring over approximately two years and water meter replacement over three years.	N/A	06/01/29
68	Commercial Benchmarking: Continue to refine the data collection and dissemination for commercial buildings over 50,000 square feet.	RPU	On Target	Buildings over 100,000 square feet were required to submit energy benchmarking data through the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager platform by June 1, 2025, supported by implementation of the MyMeter benchmarking tool. Extensive outreach included virtual presentations, targeted communications, onsite visits, and one-on-one support to help customers connect accounts and submit data. Of the 137 required buildings, 86 complied, with 57 remaining outstanding. In 2026, the State requirement expands to buildings over 50,000 square feet, adding an estimated 126 additional properties.	01/02/26	07/01/26
69	Commercial and Residential Energy Efficiency and Beneficial Electrification: Maximize programming and direct investments through RPU's Energy Advisors in alignment with the MN Eco Act, Sustainability Division, and City partners to support carbon free options including geothermal, heat pumps, and energy efficient appliances.	RPU	On Target	We achieved the 1.5% energy savings target required by the MN ECO Act in 2025, reaching 17,432,734 kWh in savings compared to a goal of 17,219,195 kWh. These results were driven by strong participation in Conserve & Save rebate programs led by RPU Energy Advisors, including incentives for heat pumps, geothermal systems, and energy-efficient appliances.	01/02/26	12/31/26
70	City Facilities: Integrate B3 and Energy Star standards during new construction or material renovation of City facilities to the maximum extent possible. Ensure that projects are designed in conjunction with the facilities team to ensure that building automation, energy efficiency, and other standards are reflected.	Facilities	On Target	The Maintenance Center continues to follow the Sustainable Buildings program, and Fire Station 3 is being designed with electrified systems and high-performance equipment. We are also refining standard specifications to strengthen energy efficiency requirements.	Ongoing	Ongoing
71	Enhance and Effectively Maintain Rochester's Natural Resources					
72	Urban Forest: Implement options to maintain our urban tree canopy through accelerated pruning, empowering property owners to maintain trees, rethinking boulevard trees, and substantial tree planting initiatives.	Parks & Rec	On Target	In 2025, we offered educational opportunities to help homeowners adopt proper tree care practices. In 2026, a new arborist will join the team to accelerate pruning efforts, and a grant-funded Boulevard Tree Master Plan will be developed to guide long-term boulevard tree management.	Ongoing	Ongoing
73	Air Quality: Ensure real-time air quality data continues to be publicly available, monitored, and is actionable.	Public Works	Complete	We drafted a memorandum of agreement with Air Quality Action members and developed a citizen science component. We also created standard operating procedures to maintain air quality sensors and the public website, ensuring equipment is calibrated, deployed, and data is shared with the community.	09/01/25	12/31/26
74	Water Quality: Finalize the Comprehensive Surface Water Master plan and prioritization of its recommendations.	Public Works	Delayed	This project has been postponed to prioritize higher-priority work aligned with City Council goals, including development reviews, Bold Forward Unbound coordination, and Capital Improvement Program projects.		12/31/25

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
75	Drinking Water Supply & Water Quality: Finalize the RPU Groundwater Management Study and RPU Water System Master Plan. As we continue to better understand the regulatory landscape and our municipal water supply, explore the need and costs for additional water appropriation and treatment.	RPU	On Target	We began the Water System Master Planning study in July 2025 to evaluate long-term drinking water supply options following State limits on additional groundwater pumping from the Jordan Aquifer. Current work includes development of a regional groundwater model to assess future demand through 2065 and evaluation of potential surface water alternatives, including the Mississippi River and the South Fork and Middle Fork of the Zumbro River. Initial findings are anticipated in July 2026, with final study completion expected in the first quarter of 2027.	07/22/25	04/05/27
76	Optimize City services and assets to support Environmental Stewardship					
77	Natural Gas Franchise Fee: Explore the implementation of a natural gas franchise fee to fund the adopted strategic priorities and foundational principles.	Public Works	On Target	We are conducting public engagement from December 2025 through April 2026, with results and recommendations scheduled for presentation to City Council in May 2026.	09/01/25	12/31/27
78	Waste Management: Monitor Olmsted County's development and construction of a material recovery facility (MERF). As county level waste and material management becomes clearer, discuss options to evolve organizational recycling, residential collection, organics, yard waste, and woody waste. Study peer-implemented best practices for single use plastic bags.	Public Works	On Target	We met with Olmsted County to review the project scope and timeline. Design was completed in September 2025, with the construction contract awarded in October 2025. The project is currently in the equipment procurement phase, with construction scheduled to begin in April 2026.	09/01/25	06/01/27
79	Data Driven Decision Making: Launch a public-facing dashboard tracking emissions, waste, water, and city fleet.	Public Works	On Target	This work is partially complete. A dashboard for building greenhouse gas emissions has been developed, while progress on other focus areas is currently paused to ensure compliance with State accessibility requirements before public release. All data remains available internally as accessibility updates are completed.	09/01/25	06/30/26
80	Transformational Capital Projects					
81	Focus on Excellence in the Delivery of Transformational Capital Projects					
82	Timely and Effective Projects: Ensure that the following projects are delivered on time and on budget, with risks and challenges effectively managed and outcomes the community can be proud of.					
83	18th Avenue SW Reconstruction: Reconstruct the road from Mayowood Road SW to 40th St SW to address deteriorating pavement and calm traffic.	Public Works	On Target	The first bid package for winter tree removal has been approved. The full project is anticipated to be bid in March/April, with construction planned for 2026/2027.	05/01/24	11/30/27
84	4th Street Roundabout: Construct a roundabout in place of the current intersection to increase safety for all roadway users, act as a traffic calming device, and improve current traffic flow conditions at the intersection	Public Works	On Target	Construction experienced a winter delay but remains on track for completion in spring 2026, with an estimated completion date of June 30, 2026.	07/13/22	06/17/26
85	6th Street Bridge, Roadway Safety, and Riverfront Improvements: Construct a bridge over the Zumbro River that connects East and West 6th Street South to improve access to neighborhoods, riverfront, and key destinations and redevelop the existing flood control system into an accessible riverfront space.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	Design plans are nearing 90% completion. Right-of-way acquisition, environmental review, and permit applications remain on schedule, with CLOMR, FEMA, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permitting anticipated for submission in February 2026. The draft RAISE Grant agreement has been submitted to the Minnesota Department of Transportation for review and is expected to be executed later in 2026 following completion of required permitting.	08/21/23	03/10/28
86	Airport Runway Expansion: Reconstruct and upgrade Runway 2/20 and associated airfield infrastructure at Rochester International Airport to ensure safe, reliable, 24/7 operations for air ambulance providers, cargo carriers transporting medical supplies, and patient travelers. This multi-year project will replace aging infrastructure, enhance safety and efficiency, and maintain uninterrupted air access critical to the region's healthcare and economic needs.	Admin	On Target	The project began in May 2021 and is anticipated to be completed in late 2027 or early 2028. While the schedule is slightly behind initial projections, the project remains on track for completion by early 2028. The runway designation has been updated from 02/20 to 03/21 to reflect changes in magnetic declination since the project began.	05/01/21	03/31/28

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
87	Downtown Building Energy Transition: Transition from Olmsted County Waste to Energy Steam to a sustainable, renewable geothermal central plant system and thermal energy network to serve the heating and cooling needs of 5 downtown public Facilities (City Hall, Rochester Public Library, Mayo Civic Center, Rochester Civic Theatre and Rochester Art Center) as well as support for future private connection to the thermal energy network	Facilities	On Target	Project is nearing completion. System startup took place in December 2025, with sitework completion expected in early 2026. Submission for federal Inflation Reduction Act reimbursement is anticipated in 2026. The identified facilities are now operating fully on the geothermal heating and cooling systems	01/01/22	03/01/26
88	Downtown Waterfront Project: Redevelop underused riverfront land into a vibrant mixed-use district, positioning the riverfront-adjacent area as a vibrant, connected, and accessible space with interim site activations and improved public access to natural and cultural amenities.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	We are advancing short-term improvements with the Destination Medical Center team to increase everyday use of the downtown riverfront trail and shift public perceptions of the space. Seasonal programming is planned for the West Site, consistent with the 2024 design studies, and a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency grant will support trailhead improvements to enhance access and activation. A request for qualifications has been drafted and will be released when market conditions are appropriate to seek a development partner and advance the Small Area Plan concepts toward implementation.	Ongoing	Ongoing
89	East and West Zumbro Trunk Sewer Projects: Increase sanitary sewer capacity and extend trunk mains into newly developable areas, enabling future growth and supporting the City's industrial, commercial, and housing development objectives.	Public Works	On Target	East Zumbro: Coordination across City teams secured $1,000,000 in federal funding to support sewer and water improvements in the East Zumbro Sewershed. State bonding assistance remains a top legislative priority for 2026. West Zumbro: Phases 1 and 2 are complete, Phase 3 is under construction, and Phase 4 is in design and permitting with construction anticipated in 2026–2027.	07/12/23	01/01/30
90	Economic Vitality Sales Tax Investments: Support investments that address the shortage of middle- and low-income housing, preserve existing affordable options in neighborhoods, and develop workforce programs that create more job opportunities for residents.	Community Development	On Target	We continued supporting housing and preservation efforts through Economic Vitality Sales Tax investments. Current metrics include: a. 269 new for-sale units supported through Economic Vitality funding b. 0 Community Land Trust homes supported through Economic Vitality funding c. 356 rental units supported through Coalition/Economic Vitality funding d. 5 historic properties supported through Economic Vitality funding	09/18/25	12/31/26
91	Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Software Conversion: Implement a new ERP system to modernize business processes, including tracking and issuing payments, human capital management, payroll, project accounting, work orders, capital assets, etc.	Information Technology	On Target	All associated contracts have been negotiated and executed, and supplemental staffing plans are in place. Project planning and technical groundwork are underway. The Steering Committee and Technical Team held kickoff meetings on February 9, 2026, with the Main Core Team kickoff scheduled for April 9, 2026.	01/01/26	12/31/27
92	LINK Bus Rapid Transit: Implement a 2.8-mile transit option along 2nd Street that will connect downtown Rochester, Mayo Civic Center, Mayo Clinic campuses, and the Downtown Waterfront Southeast area, enhancing mobility, easing congestion, and supporting the continued growth of Rochester.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	Link construction projects are collectively at 27% complete. In 2025, significant work occurred near St. Marys, at 6th Street SE and 3rd Avenue SE, and at the West Transit Village, with construction now underway on vertical circulators and the pedestrian tunnel at St. Marys. Major construction in 2026 will focus on areas adjacent to St. Marys, at 6th Avenue SW and 2nd Street SW, 2nd Avenue SW and 2nd Street SW, and the West Transit Village. The new Link bus fleet is expected to be delivered in the second half of 2026.		12/31/26
93	Maintenance Center: Establish a new Maintenance Center for Parks & Forestry that will strengthen collaboration between Parks & Forestry and Public Works teams.	Facilities	On Target	Construction is underway, project is nearing the 50% completion milestone. Interior rough in is complete and inspections are currently being completed. Project is on schedule for completion in September 2026	01/01/24	01/31/27
94	Martin Luther King Park Renovations: Enhance park facilities, including restrooms, a splash pad water playground, basketball courts, playground, picnic shelters, and community gardens.	Parks & Rec	On Target	Final design is underway following delays in the grant process. Construction is anticipated to begin in spring or early summer 2026 and continue through the year, with the splash pad planned to open in June 2027.	10/01/25	06/01/27
95	North Broadway Park and Ride: Construct a new park-and-ride facility to reduce congestion, lower emissions, and support better land use.	Transit & Parking	On Target	Bids for the project were opened on Wednesday, February 4, 2026. We are awaiting final documentation from our two funding sources, which must be completed before we can award the contract. Construction is still planned to begin in spring 2026.	03/01/26	12/31/26
96	North Broadway Phase 2: Reconstruct Broadway Ave N from Silver Lake Bridge to Elton Hills Drive NW to improve traffic operations and safety, upgrade transit facilities, increase accessibility, and improve access to recreational opportunities along the river.	Public Works	On Target	The project is ahead of schedule, with construction anticipated to be completed in June 2026.	07/20/22	07/01/26

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
97	Public improvements associated with Mayo Bold Forward Unbound: As Mayo Clinic plans and initiates its transformative private Bold Forward Unbound, coordinate with DMC on public infrastructure improvements to ensure maximum public benefit with minimum public disruption.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	In 2025, we established strong coordination with Mayo Clinic's Bold Forward Unbound project team to align public infrastructure work and minimize construction impacts. Ongoing collaboration includes regular design, logistics, traffic, and construction coordination to support safe and efficient project delivery, which will continue into 2026. Temporary pedestrian wayfinding improvements have been implemented downtown, with additional installations planned. We are also advancing approximately $38 million in Destination Medical Center–funded infrastructure by defining individual projects, assigning project managers, and sequencing work to align with ongoing Bold Forward Unbound construction.	07/01/25	03/01/30
98	Regional Sports and Recreation Complex: Develop a regional sports destination that remains accessible to the entire Rochester community.	Parks & Rec	On Target	Construction documents are currently in design, with delivery to City Council anticipated in October 2025 for review and authorization to solicit bids.		
99	RPU Power Supply Resource Plan Investments: Develop and enter into contracts for firm dispatchable generation, energy storage, wind and solar projects to help achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals.	RPU	On Target	We made significant progress toward the 2030 renewable energy goal this year. We executed power purchase agreements with three wind projects that will provide approximately two-thirds of our energy needs and secured contracts early to bank renewable energy credits toward the 2030 target. We have also secured about two-thirds of our capacity needs, including City Council authorization for 20 megawatts of battery storage. We will continue monitoring contract risks and pursuing additional renewable energy opportunities to support non-carbon energy beyond 2030.	01/01/24	12/31/30
100	Silver Lake Dam Modification and Replacement: Dredge the lake, modify the dam, and implement trail connections to reduce long-term operation and maintenance costs associated with the dam, improve safety and accessibility, improve fish habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities.	Public Works	Delayed	The project is experiencing schedule impacts due to delays in State and federal permitting, including extended review timelines caused by federal staffing challenges. The wave pool and rock arch rapids feature is the first design of its kind in Minnesota, which has required additional review by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The current schedule anticipates permit approvals and bidding in April 2026, with a goal of bringing the project to City Council for consideration in May 2026; however, overall timing will depend on permit approvals.	01/01/23	07/01/27
101	South Broadway planning: Redesign South Broadway Avenue between 4th and 9th Streets and upgrade the intersection to improve safety and mobility.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	We are working with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to finalize the grant agreement. Once the agreement is executed, we will release a request for proposals for planning, design, and engineering services, anticipated in March 2026.	07/01/25	07/01/28
102	Water Reclamation Plant: Upgrade equipment and update the treatment process to meet higher standards and reduce operational demands.	Public Works	On Target	Construction is approximately 18 months underway. The schedule may extend into 2027 due to equipment manufacturing delays.	01/01/24	12/31/26
103	West Transit Village: Develop a mixed-use community and Link Bus Rapid Transit hub to provide retail, housing, parking, and other park amenities.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	Construction has begun at West Transit Village for the Link Bus Rapid Transit project, coordinated with adjacent work and on track for completion ahead of planned operations in 2027.	06/01/25	08/01/27
104	Willow Creek Trail & Safety Connection: Establish a trail and underpass beneath Highways 52/63 to connect Gamehaven Regional Park with the broader City trail system, improving access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists.	Public Works	On Target	We are currently evaluating feasibility and identifying a preferred alignment. The project faces potential budget challenges because a pedestrian bridge over the County highway was not included in the original bonding request. We are advocating for a grade-separated crossing to improve safety, as an at-grade crossing along a 55-mph roadway would present significant risks.	01/01/25	07/01/28
105	Reporting: Use tracking tools and regular reports to ensure project timelines, budgets, and dependencies stay on track. Provide an integrated quarterly report reflecting the status of the projects above to the City Council.	Admin	On Target	We are aligning project schedules, milestones, and dependencies for approximately $38 million in downtown infrastructure investments approved by the Destination Medical Center Corporation and City Council. Current work focuses on defining timelines, budgets, and sequencing to keep implementation on track, with a coordinated roadmap and schedule targeted for completion by January 2026. Progress will be monitored through regular check-ins and shared tracking tools, with integrated quarterly status updates provided to City Council.		
106	Neighborhood Impact: Deliver transformational projects in a context-sensitive manner using co-design, business forward, neighborhood engagement, and effective project communication.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	We continue delivering project-specific outreach and engagement to help minimize neighborhood and business impacts during construction. Current efforts focus on the Link bus rapid transit project, including tunnel work near St. Marys, as well as the 6th Street project and downtown wayfinding improvements. Engagement includes direct meetings with affected businesses and residents, participation in neighborhood meetings, and regular updates through the Downtown Construction Weekly Update and the Link newsletter. Looking ahead, we will work with community partners, including Destination Medical Center and Mayo Clinic, to develop a coordinated communications and outreach workplan for 2026.		

	Items	Lead Department	Current: Status	Current: Update	Start Date	End Date
107	Selectively prioritize projects where planning now will ensure potential funding delivery post 2030					
108	Effective Planning: Explore early planning, engagement and financing strategies for Civic Center Drive Reconstruction, South Broadway Reconstruction and Phase 2 Bus Rapid Transit Planning.	Admin	Not Started	Early planning has not yet begun. These projects are largely dependent on future funding and coordination with partners such as the Minnesota Department of Transportation. We continue to monitor progress and watch for opportunities that would allow planning and engagement work to move forward.	Ongoing	Ongoing
109	Connected Parks and Trails: Explore options for additional park and trail investments. Provide a specific evaluation of enhancing the Park Levy focused on additional investment and indexing with inflation.	Parks & Rec	On Target	This work is planned to occur alongside the Park System update, with targeted reviews of specific trail segments conducted as opportunities arise. We also continue coordinating with County and regional partners to explore expansion of the regional trail network.	11/07/25	12/01/27
110	DMC 2.0: Begin discussion on evolving the Destination Medical Center legislation to consider what options might exist beyond the 20-year project duration.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	The Destination Medical Center initiative has reached its 10-year milestone, marking the midpoint of the original 20-year legislation. We are working with DMC partners to develop a 10-year update outlining priorities and investments for the next phase and informing potential legislative renewal. The update, along with a related five-year plan, is scheduled for City Council consideration in January 2026 and will be forwarded to the DMC Board following Council approval. This work will guide future discussions with state partners on the long-term direction of DMC.		
111	Optimize City services to effectively deliver and support transformational capital projects					
112	Optimize Services: Replicate an internally focused process similar to predevelopment for City projects.	Admin	Not Started	This project has not yet started.	10/01/26	07/01/27
113	Talent Attraction: Recruit and retain employees that have strong implementation strengths, leveraging new technologies and approaches.	HR	On Target	In 2025, we hired 100 new employees and promoted 36 employees into new roles. We are in the final approval stages for an assessment software platform that will enable us to evaluate candidates' skill levels across key technical areas, including Microsoft Office applications, accounting, and customer service. In addition, we use behavioral-based interview questions to assess candidates' execution and implementation strengths.	01/01/26	12/31/27
114	Financial Management: Update the City's financial policies to ensure project accountability and efficiency.	Finance	On Target	The Finance Team met with the Forward Team on January 28, 2026, to review recommended updates to the City's financial policies and will incorporate the proposed changes into revised policy drafts.	10/14/24	04/27/26
115	Project Efficiency: Develop systems and strategies to ensure that to the maximum extent possible we "dig once." Ensure that we effectively communicate construction and mitigate the impact to the maximum extent possible within the resources provided.	DMC & BFUiR	On Target	We are coordinating across departments to align construction schedules and advance the City's "dig once" approach. This work focuses on sequencing the City's $38 million in public infrastructure investments alongside ongoing Mayo Clinic construction and major City projects, including Link Bus Rapid Transit. A coordinated construction timeline through 2030 is being developed, along with supporting maps, to minimize disruption and improve efficiency. In parallel, the City has implemented a temporary pedestrian wayfinding program to help residents and visitors navigate construction areas and support downtown businesses. This coordination effort will be shared with City Council at an upcoming Study Session on Supporting Transformation.	Ongoing	Ongoing
116	Optimize Operationalization: Balance programmatic objectives on transformational projects with a long-term stewardship perspective.	Admin	On Target	Recent construction projects, including the Maintenance Center and Regional Sports and Recreation Complex, have prioritized program needs while advancing operational efficiency and long-term sustainability.	Ongoing	Ongoing
117	Visualize Project Impact: Evolve the existing project mapping framework to the multi-year Capital Improvement Plan	Community Development	Not Started	This project has not yet started.	05/01/26	11/01/27
118	Glidepath: As project charters are developed and Action Plan updates are completed, clearly articulate an inclusive decision making strategy and specific points of community engagement. Articulate specific project milestones, City Council updates, and City Council approvals that allow for time for policy input and evolution.	Communications & Engagement	Not Started	Internal coordination is underway to develop a clear plan and timeline for advancing this work. Discussions are focused on defining next steps, roles, and milestones to support effective implementation.	01/01/26	TBD

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
2025 Year-End Update

Overview

This report tracks KPI aligned with City Council's strategic priorities: Economic Vibrancy, Housing Access, Inclusive Growth Management, Responsible Environmental Stewardship, and Transformational Capital Projects.

The KPIs provide standardized measures used to track conditions, trends, and outcomes related to these priorities over time. When reviewed alongside the Action Plan, this report supports a broader understanding of how observed trends relate to planned initiatives and policy objectives.

This report is updated annually in January and shared with City Council to support decision-making and accountability. For more information, visit www.rochestermn.gov/priorities.

How to read this report

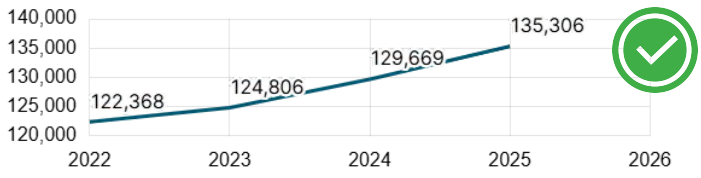
The arrow next to each metric indicates the preferred directional movement of the metric (e.g. ↑ indicates an increase is preferred).

The following icons reflect the difference between the two most recent measurements:

- Aligned with the preferred direction
- Change not aligned with the preferred direction
- Minimal or mixed change
- No historical data available for comparison

Economic Resilience

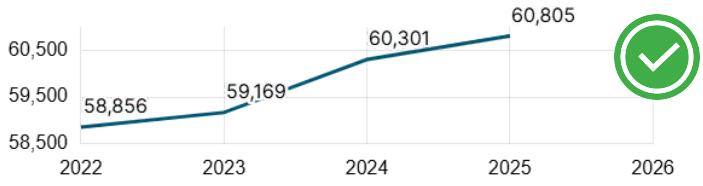
Jobs ↑



KPI Description: Total number of jobs located within the City.

KPI Importance: Reflect overall economic health and the City's ability to attract and retain employers. Growth indicates more employment opportunities and a stronger economy.

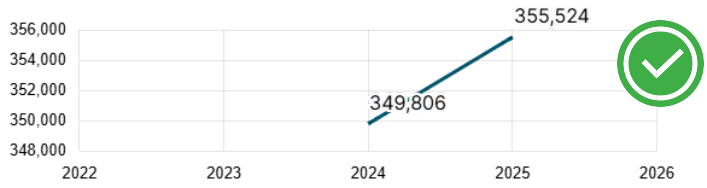
Non-Healthcare, Non-Hospitality Jobs ↑



KPI Description: Total number of jobs located within the City in sectors other than healthcare or hospitality.

KPI Importance: Indicates diversification of the local economy and growth in more stable, higher-wage industries. Growth strengthens long-term economic resilience.

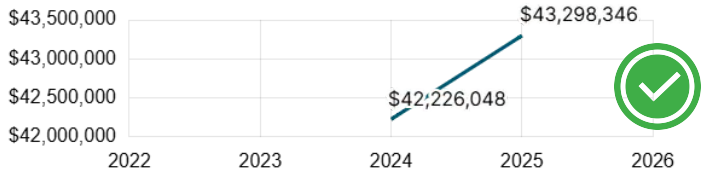
Weekend Hotel Room Demand/Occupancy ↑



KPI Description: Total number of hotel rooms occupied from Friday and Saturday stays.

KPI Importance: Measures visitor volume and travel patterns, helping assess how effectively Rochester attracts overnight guests during peak leisure periods. Higher demand signals increased tourism activity and economic impact.

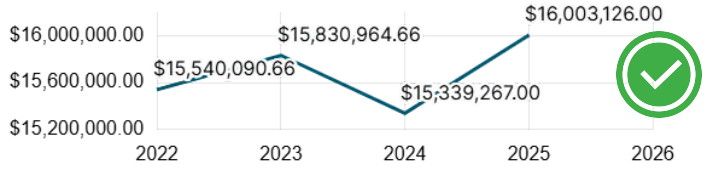
Weekend Hotel Room Revenue ↑



KPI Description: Total hotel room revenue generated from Friday and Saturday stays.

KPI Importance: Reflects the strength of Rochester's weekend tourism economy, including events, conventions, and leisure travel. Higher weekend revenue indicates stronger visitor spending and supports local businesses and downtown vitality.

Sales Tax Collection ↑

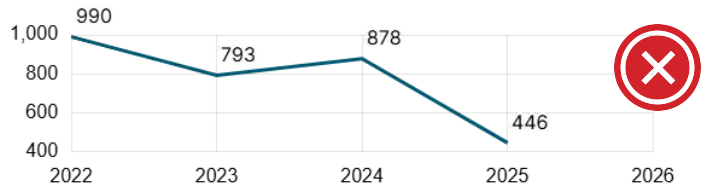


KPI Description: Total net local sales tax revenue collected, indicating consumer spending activity and local economic health.

KPI Importance: Represents a key source of funding for City services and reflects consumer confidence. Higher collections signal stronger local commerce and economic vitality.

Housing Access

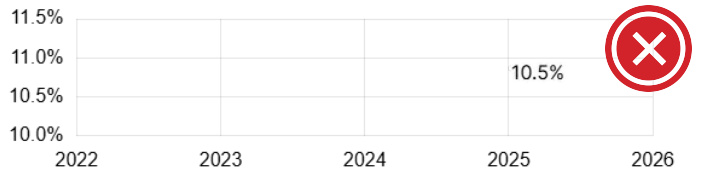
New Housing Units ↑



KPI Description: Total number of new residential housing units completed by private developers.

KPI Importance: Indicates housing market activity and the City's ability to support population growth. Higher numbers improve housing access and affordability.

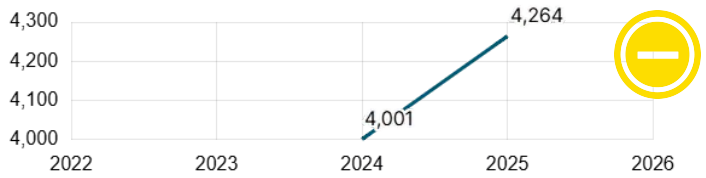
Single Family Homes as Rentals →



KPI Description: Percentage of single-family homes used as rental properties.

KPI Importance: Indicates balanced housing options and neighborhood stability. A stable percentage reflects sustainable growth.

Acres of Vacant Residential Land →

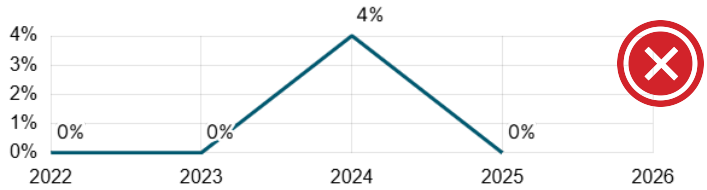


KPI Description: Acreage zoned or designated for residential use that is currently vacant, based on the City's GIS land use inventory. May include parcels without infrastructure in place.

KPI Importance: Indicates residential development capacity; stability over time reflects balanced growth and infrastructure alignment.

Inclusive Growth Management

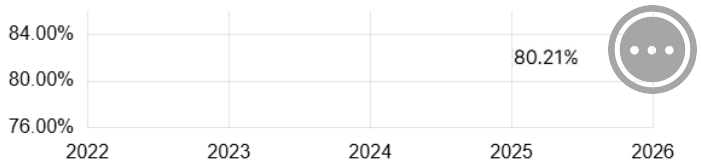
Residential Units Developed as Infill ↑



KPI Description: Percentage of new development occurring within the downtown zoning district and R2X district.

KPI Importance: Promotes efficient land use, reduces infrastructure costs, and supports walkable neighborhoods. A higher percentage reflects efficient land use and reduced sprawl.

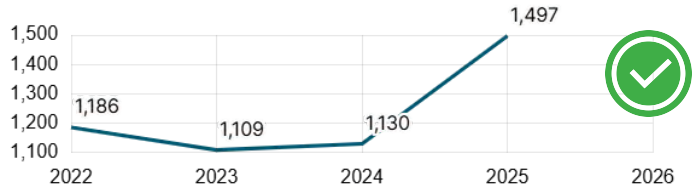
Urban Service Area Undeveloped →



KPI Description: Portion of the urban service area not impacted by early development.

KPI Importance: Preserves flexibility for future planning and limits premature infrastructure costs. A higher percentage reflects more controlled, sustainable growth.

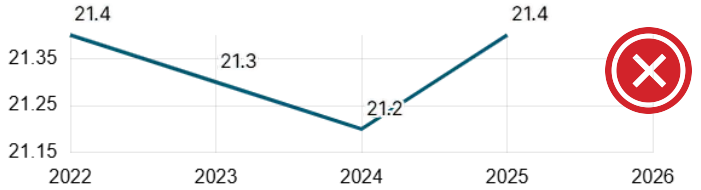
Undeveloped Lots with Full Infrastructure ↑



KPI Description: Land not yet developed but served by full public infrastructure.

KPI Importance: Represents potential for near-term development with minimal additional investment. More lots means greater capacity for growth without high new costs.

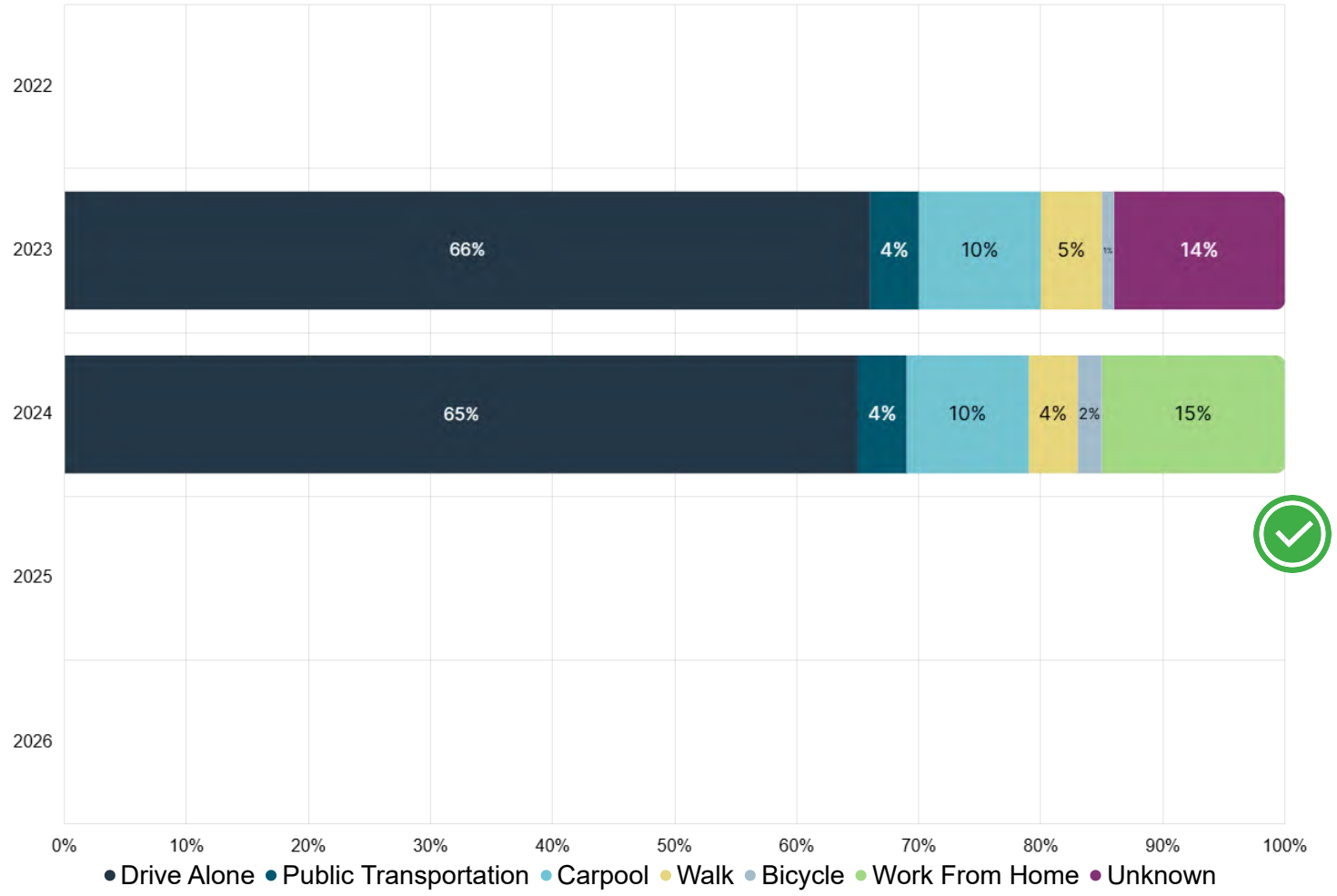
Road Miles Per Capita in Feet ↓



KPI Description: Ratio of total roadway miles maintained by the City to the population, converted to feet for easier year-over-year comparison (note: 0.0004 miles = 21 feet per person).

KPI Importance: Indicates infrastructure burden per resident. A lower ratio reflects more efficient land use and reduced long-term maintenance costs.

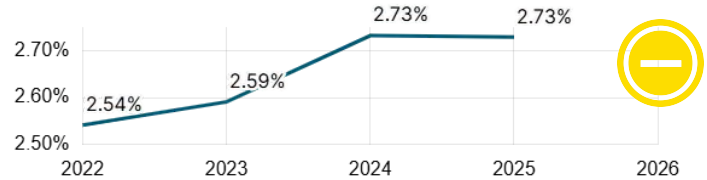
Transportation Modes to Employment



KPI Description: Distribution of transportation methods used by residents to reach work.

KPI Importance: Informs transportation planning and infrastructure investment priorities. A decrease in commuters driving alone and a higher share of alternative modes (transit, biking, walking) reflects improved sustainability and accessibility.

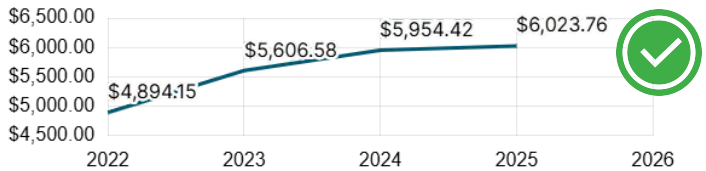
City Employees Per Acre Served ↑



KPI Description: The total number of employees within the City divided by the total developed acreage.

KPI Importance: Measures employment density needed to support the economy and tax base. A higher number reflects efficient land use, strong workforce concentration, and maximized infrastructure investment.

Property Tax Capacity per Acre ↑

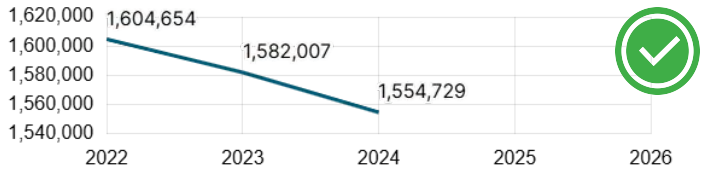


KPI Description: The total taxable property value, expressed in terms of the City's property tax capacity, divided by the number of acres of land.

KPI Importance: Measures the revenue-generating potential of land on a per-acre basis. Higher values indicate more productive land use and stronger fiscal sustainability.

Responsible Environmental Stewardship

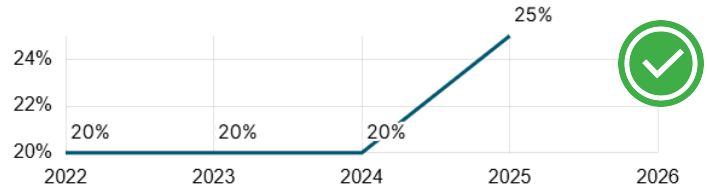
Community GHG Emissions (CO2e) ↓



KPI Description: Total estimated Green House Gas (GHG) emissions generated within the community measured in Metric Tons CO2e).

KPI Importance: Measures the City's progress toward environmental and climate goals. Lower emissions reflect success in reducing the community's environmental footprint.

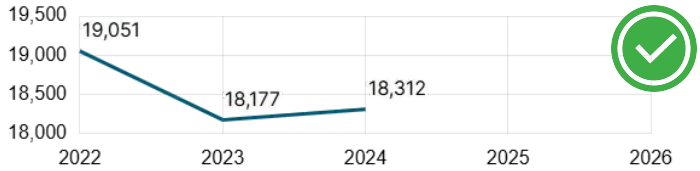
Renewable Community Electricity ↑



KPI Description: Share of electricity used in the community that comes from renewable or carbon-free sources.

KPI Importance: Indicates community commitment to clean energy and climate action. Higher percentages reflect progress toward sustainable energy goals.

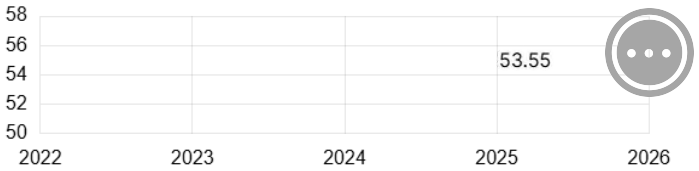
City Organization GHG Emissions (CO2e) ↓



KPI Description: Total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions generated by municipal operations.

KPI Importance: Monitors the City's own progress in reducing its environmental footprint. Lower emissions demonstrate organizational leadership in sustainability.

City Organization Energy Consumption per SqFt ↓

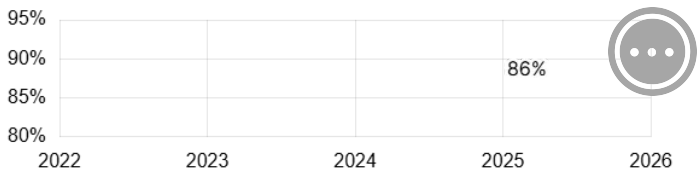


KPI Description: Average energy use by City-owned buildings measured by kBtu/sf. Benchmark (2018)=80.78 kBtu/sf.

KPI Importance: Tracks energy efficiency of municipal operations and facility performance. Lower consumption reflects greater efficiency and cost savings.

Transformational Capital Projects

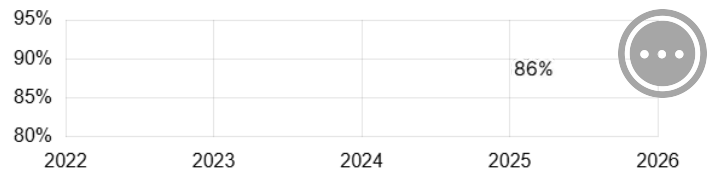
Capital Projects Completed On Budget ↑



KPI Description: Percentage of capital projects completed within or below initial cost estimates.

KPI Importance: Shows effective budgeting and cost control during planning. Higher percentages indicate stronger fiscal discipline.

Capital Project Completed on Schedule ↑



KPI Description: Percentage of capital projects completed on schedule.

KPI Importance: Indicates project management effectiveness. Higher percentages reflect accountability and efficiency.

Grant and Outside Funding Received ↑



KPI Description: Total external funds (e.g., grants) obtained to support City projects.

KPI Importance: Expands the City's capacity to complete projects while reducing reliance on local taxes and funds. Higher amounts reflect stronger partnerships and greater return on local investment.

CITY OF ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

REQUEST FOR ACTION

Study Session Schedule

MEETING DATE:
February 23, 2026

ORIGINATING DEPT:
City Administration

AGENDA SECTION:
Presentation Items

PRESENTER:
Alison Zelms

Report Narrative:
The Study Session Schedule as of February 17, 2026.

Priorities & Foundational Principles:
Quality Services for Quality Living

Prepared By:
Emily Blahnik

Attachments:
Study Session Calendar as of February 17, 2026

Study Session Calendar

Topic	Estimated Time in Minutes	Meeting Location	Responsible Department	Meeting Date
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		02/18/26
Study Session (90 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		02/23/26
Historic District Public Realm Plan	45	Council Chambers	Community Development	02/23/26
Action Plan & KPI Update	45	Council Chambers	Administration	02/23/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		03/02/26
Study Session (15 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		03/09/26
Supporting Transformation Update	90	Council Chambers	Administration	03/09/26
Spongy Moth Treatment Plan Update from MN Department of Agriculture	45	Council Chambers	Parks and Recreation	03/09/26
Housing Code Update	30	Council Chambers	Community Development	03/09/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		03/16/26
Study Session (0 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		03/23/26
City Council Learning Session	120	Rochester Sports Center All American Room	Administration	03/23/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		04/06/26
Study Session (60 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		04/13/26
Natural Gas Franchise Fee Engagement	60	Council Chambers	Public Works	04/13/26
Factors Influencing the Supplemental Budget	60	Council Chambers	Administration	04/13/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		04/20/26
Study Session (90 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		04/27/26
UMR Campus Expansion Vision and Plan	60	Council Chambers	Administration	04/27/26
Council Initiated Action (CIA) Update	30	Council Chambers	Administration	04/27/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		05/04/26
Study Session (0 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		05/11/26
City Council Bus Tour	180	Council Chambers	Administration	05/11/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		05/18/26
Study Session (180 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		05/27/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		06/01/26
Study Session (60 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		06/08/26
RPU Water Supply Plan Update	60	Council Chambers	RPU	06/08/26
2026 Legislative Session Update	60	Council Chambers	Administration	06/08/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		06/15/26
Study Session (120 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		06/22/26
Tax Increment Financing Update	60	Council Chambers	Administration	06/22/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		07/06/26
Study Session (30 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		07/13/26
Fee Schedule and 2027 Supplemental Baseline Budget	90	Council Chambers	Administration	07/13/26
Audit	60	Council Chambers	Administration	07/13/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		07/20/26
Study Session (75 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		07/27/26
Disposition of City Real Estate Update	45	Council Chambers	Administration	07/27/26
RPU Power Supply Plan Update	60	Council Chambers	RPU	07/27/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		08/03/26
Study Session (135 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		08/10/26
Action Plan Update	45	Council Chambers	Administration	08/10/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		08/17/26
Study Session (0 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		08/24/26
City Administrator's Recommended Supplemental Budget	180	Council Chambers	Administration	08/24/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		09/09/26

Topic	Estimated Time in Minutes	Meeting Location	Responsible Department	Meeting Date
Study Session (0 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		09/14/26
City Administrator's Recommended Supplemental Budget	180	Council Chambers	Administration	09/14/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		09/21/26
Study Session (180 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		09/28/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		10/05/26
Study Session (135 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		10/12/26
RPU Electric Line Extension & Water Development Fees (preview for 2027)	45	Council Chambers	RPU	10/12/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		10/19/26
Study Session (180 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		10/26/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		11/02/26
Study Session (120 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		11/09/26
2027 Legislative Priorities	60	Council Chambers	Administration	11/09/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		11/16/26
Study Session (180 Minutes Available)		Council Chambers		11/23/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		12/07/26
Council Meeting		Council Chambers		12/14/26