

# **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION VISION PLAN**

## **PHASE ONE, INFILL CONCEPT PLAN**

**SEPTEMBER 2024**









## **FORWARD**

Greg Canuteson  
Mayor

Dear Friends,

Since 1822, Liberty's historic downtown has been the beating heart of the City of Liberty. Our community has been a great place to live, work, and raise a family for more than 200 years. Liberty is the perfect combination of history and modernity. With a historic downtown that hosts numerous festivals and special events throughout the year that attract thousands of visitors, the historic downtown square is the focal point for our community and region.

The Downtown Task Force was created to provide a vision for the historic downtown that preserves the history of Liberty, revitalizes vacant and underutilized properties, and encourages vibrant and dynamic development of restaurants, entertainment, specialty retail, and housing. We are so lucky to have a classic small-town square that anchors a downtown that is a tremendous starting point for sustaining and building a beautiful and attractive center of our community for the next 200 years!

It is our pleasure to provide you the Downtown Revitalization Vision Plan—Phase 1: Infill Concept Plan! This plan will detail specific efforts to encourage investment in our historic downtown. It includes our vision and recommendations on infill development in downtown Liberty and how we want to encourage more private sector development!

Our next phase of the Revitalization Plan for Downtown Liberty will include design criteria to ensure that new buildings are beautiful and include attractive landscaping

and amenities. This phase will also include our economic incentive packages to help spur this development.

I want to thank the amazing people who served on the Downtown Task Force since April of 2023 as well as the community who came out to share their thoughts and ideas. I am honored and thankful to serve as your Mayor and I am excited to bring this vision of a vibrant and dynamic downtown to you!

As I always say, this is the greatest city on planet Earth!

Sincerely,

Mayor Greg Canuteson

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

### **DOWNTOWN TASK FORCE**

Chair: Angela Castle  
Bobbi Chamberlain  
Charles Small  
Cindy Eggleston  
Conner Hazelrigg  
Craig Swanson  
Danelle O'Connell  
Derek Chapman  
Olivia Eggleston  
Jamiel Yameen  
Jeff Dema  
Robert Jones

### **CITY OF LIBERTY STAFF**

Mayor, Greg Canuteson  
Planning & Development Director, Katherine Sharp  
Planning & Zoning Manager/Assistant Director, Mike  
Peterman  
Planner, Kyle McGinnis

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The City of Liberty is a historic suburb of Kansas City and the Clay County seat, known for William Jewell College and its charming historic downtown. The City has an active daytime downtown economy driven by the institutional uses located downtown - including the Clay County Administration Building, Clay County Courthouse, and Liberty City Hall. Actively seeking to plan for future infill development, the City retained PGAV to create a Downtown Infill Concept Plan to promote and encourage the revitalization and growth of the downtown as a desirable high-density, mixed-use area by maximizing the use of all available resources, ensuring a high degree of compatibility between new and existing uses.

The process included a market analysis to understand the supply and demand dynamics, as well as an in-depth review of zoning and land-uses using municipal data. The project also included stakeholder engagement to understand the perspective of customers, business owners, and residents. In addition to Downtown-wide recommendations regarding urban design, pedestrian accessibility, code revisions, and overall market opportunities, the final plan also provided specific recommendations for key infill development opportunities. These infill sites were chosen following the existing conditions research and community engagement phases and in consultation with City Staff and the Downtown Task Force. Following the selection of sites, PGAV analyzed each site, performing additional analysis to determine the highest and best use given the broader Downtown environment.

## INTRODUCTION

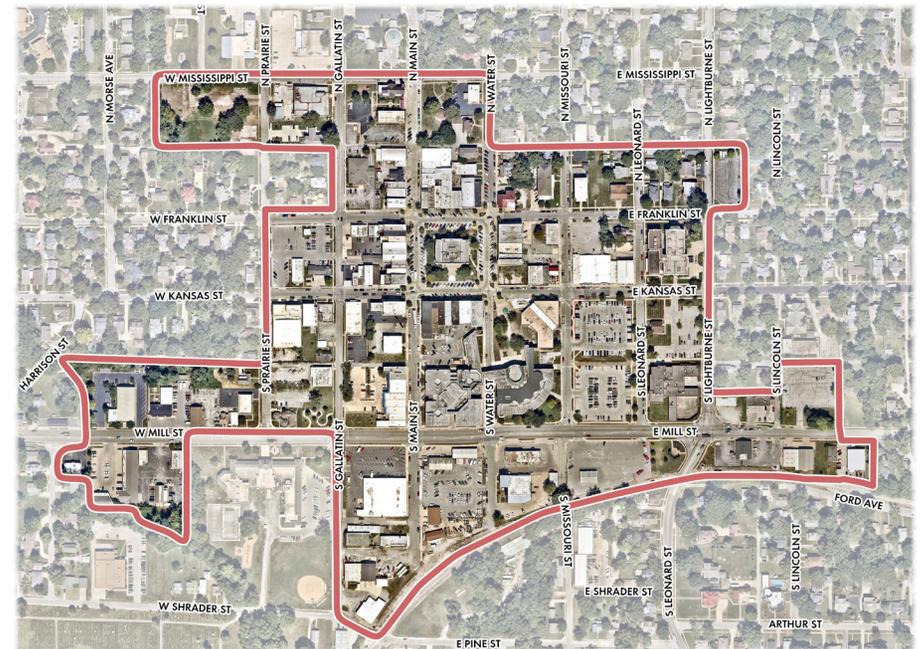
Downtown Liberty, MO is the heart of the community - the site for municipal and county government, arts, churches, and commerce. It is an important civic space, where members of all segments of the City can come together for festivals and community events. Downtown Liberty is also a tourist attraction - bringing thousands of visitors a year to experience its historical relevance.

Downtown Liberty is a symbol of community economic health, local quality of life, hometown pride, and civic history. It is home to independent businesses that support local families and the local community and serves as a good incubator for new small businesses. As a Downtown that is surrounded by quaint residential neighborhoods, investment in Downtown protects property values in surrounding residential

neighborhoods. Building on this foundation, this plan recommends infill development in Downtown Liberty that will promote and encourage the revitalization and growth of the downtown as a desirable, high density, mixed-use area.

Infill development is the process of developing vacant or underdeveloped parcels within areas that are already largely developed. Infill development can occur on a variety of scales, including the rehabilitation of an entire block or the construction of a single-family home on a vacant lot within a developed block. Encouraging infill development can positively impact a community in a variety of ways. Vacant and underdeveloped lots are typically integrated into existing infrastructure, including sewers, roads, and public transit services. This greatly reduces the cost of development and the need for additional resources associated with having to connect to these essential utilities.

## DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA



The study area chosen for this planning effort is depicted above and encompasses a majority of the commercial and institutional land uses in the area. Directly adjacent to the study area are historic neighborhoods mainly populated with single-family homes.

# HISTORY

In the early 1800s, American settlers began to arrive in the Liberty area. By 1822, the settlement had grown to become the County seat for Clay County. Incorporated in 1829, Liberty is the second oldest incorporated town west of the Mississippi River. With such a long history, the City of Liberty has a significant cultural heritage and many important landmarks.

During the 1830s, the Liberty Landing was one of several steamboat docks located along the Missouri River. As Liberty was the “jumping off” point for the frontier and westward expansionists, the Liberty Landing was a disembarking location for merchandise and early settlers for those coming from St. Louis and other points from the east. During this decade, as many as five “steamers” would move up the river daily and at least one would dock at the Liberty Landing.

The Liberty Jail, built in 1833, is known for its most famous prisoner, Joseph Smith, first president and prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. In October 1838, Governor Lilburn Boggs ordered the arrest of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith Jr. Immediately after the conclusion of the Mormon War, Smith and other Mormon leaders were incarcerated at the Liberty jail for the winter of 1839. From the late 1840s through the 1860s, an exodus of more than 70,000 Mormons passed through on their way to Salt Lake City, Utah.



The south side of the historic Liberty square circa 1952. (Courtesy Ralph Brant)

William Jewell College, one of the oldest private colleges in Missouri, was founded in 1849 with a \$10,000 donation from Dr. William Jewell of Columbia, Missouri. There was also the Liberty Female Institute (also known as the Liberty Ladies College) on the opposite side of town that provided a comparable education for women. The Clay County Savings Bank was the site of the first successful daylight bank robbery on February 13, 1866, - committed by the James-Younger Gang. The Interurban Railroad ran through Liberty, from Excelsior Springs to Kansas City, beginning in 1913. Several trains stopped each day at the depot located on Mill Street.

Due to this important history, Liberty was designated a Preserve America community in 2007. The Preserve America program is a White House effort to encourage and support communities that preserve and promote America’s cultural and natural heritage. This reinforces the commitment the City of Liberty and its residents have to honoring their important history.

# EXISTING PLANS & INITIATIVES

## EXISTING PLANS

### LEADING LIBERTY FORWARD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2023

Updating the previous Blueprint for Liberty Comprehensive Plan, this Comprehensive Plan provides Liberty with a vision for the future. It sets policies for land use decisions and articulates the community's vision of ongoing growth, development, and future investments. It also includes a set of goals and objectives aimed to guide future development decisions, strengthen neighborhoods through revitalization, and maintain a safe and efficient multimodal transportation system.

One of the goals in the plan is focused on promoting downtown as the social, civic, and small business heart of Liberty by encouraging the rehabilitation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of existing structures and historic buildings while also leaving opportunities for complementary infill. This goal and accompanying strategies are included to the right. The plan stated, "while the community supports preserving existing residential areas in and around the square, the expansion of commercial development into residential areas is frowned upon. The community supports downtown being reinvested and revitalized as opposed to fully redeveloped." The plan also recommends streetscape enhancements, mixed-use development, multi-family residential, as well as additional single-family residential on the edges of Downtown.



## DOWNTOWN GOALS & STRATEGIES FROM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### GOAL 2: PROMOTE DOWNTOWN AS THE SOCIAL, CIVIC AND SMALL BUSINESS HEART OF LIBERTY.

**Strategy 2.1** Reinforce the character of Downtown Liberty and the surrounding neighborhoods by encouraging the rehabilitation, restoration and adaptive reuse of existing structures and historic buildings while providing opportunities for complimentary infill, additions and redevelopment.

**Strategy 2.2** Continue to invest in improvements to facilities and amenities at Liberty's Historic Downtown Square, to expand opportunities for programmed community events, as well as informal community gatherings and day-to-day activities. Promote downtown as the social, civic and small business heart of Liberty.

**Strategy 2.3** Utilize the adopted Liberty Historic Preservation Plan in association to this Plan as future development and redevelopment opportunities occur.

**Strategy 2.4** To preserve existing residential areas around the Historic Square, utilization of properties on the Square and in nearby commercial areas are encouraged, but expansion of additional commercial into residential areas is discouraged.

### GOAL 4: DIVERSIFY AND EXPAND HOUSING STOCK TO CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.

**Strategy 4.1** Ensure that the Future Land Use Framework (see Figure 3.2) and Unified Development Ordinance provide opportunities for a mixture of detached, attached, and multi-family housing options at varying densities and price points.

**Strategy 4.2** Allow development of small attached and detached units that provide young families, singles, and others an opportunity to reside in Liberty.

**Strategy 4.3** Concentrate higher density housing near services and amenities.

## IMAGINE LIBERTY 2032 - PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER 2023

The Imagine Liberty 2032 Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to guide policy and decision making over program offerings, facility maintenance, facility construction and management, general capital improvements, parks amenities, parkland development, strategic land acquisition and budget and finance matters over the next decade.

The plan recommends a connection between the park system and downtown by installing a new sidewalk on the west side of Terrace Avenue. This would serve as a bridge to help individuals who would like to explore the rich historic and cultural identity of downtown Liberty, but also engage in the newly renovated community park with amenities at City Park, such as a baseball field, splashpad, play equipment, and nearly 20 picnic tables.

Establishing this connection would elevate the diverse experiences that Liberty provides for both residents and visitors.



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN FOR THE CITY OF LIBERTY, MO 2021

The Historic Preservation Plan outlines and celebrates the 40-year efforts of Liberty's historic preservation program, which began in the 1970's. The 2021 plan sought to review the City's current historic resources and identify tools and strategies to enhance and protect them. Liberty is unique in the fact that it has many historic districts and properties listed in the National Register for Historic Places. It also holds the desired Preserve America designation.

The plan includes a ten-year action plan with time designations and the organizations responsible for each step. This plan is well-designed to help its reader view historic preservation as a community, city-building effort as well as an economic development opportunity.

## LIBERTY DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN 2005

Liberty's 2005 Downtown Master Plan seeks to retain Liberty's historic buildings and small-town charm within the Downtown Square. The Downtown Master Plan was informed by two prior plans, Blueprint for Liberty – Future Land Use Plan and Blueprint for Liberty: Economic Development Plan. Both plans emphasized improving and maintaining the historic Square as the central core and community gathering space for Liberty.

The plan emphasizes the need for additional parking downtown as well as traffic calming measures along Mill Street. Infill development on vacant blighted properties on the east and west on Mill Street and updating the streetscape within Liberty Square were also identified as key goals for the plan. The plan also provides details of potential development projects. Each development project is broken into short-term, medium-term and long-term. Each project identifies the location, a brief description, costs, and the responsible party.



DOWNTOWN LIBERTY INFILL CONCEPT PLAN

# EXISTING INITIATIVES

## HISTORIC DOWNTOWN LIBERTY, INC. (HDLI)

Historic Downtown Liberty, Inc. (HDLI), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to preserving the past and promoting the future of downtown Liberty, Missouri. HDLI follows the Main Street Four-Point Approach, which focuses revitalization efforts in four areas:

- Design,
- Economic Restructuring,
- Organization, and
- Promotions.



It is a comprehensive and balanced approach with an underlying goal of promoting and strengthening the downtown core and preserving its historic character. Support from local government, partner organizations, downtown property and business owners, and residents has helped this community-based initiative work in Historic Downtown Liberty.

**Mission Statement:** To foster a vibrant community in Historic Downtown Liberty as an exciting place to shop, dine, and invest through economic development, creative promotion, and historical preservation.

### Vision Statement

Historic Downtown Liberty will be a strong business community and an entertainment destination with:

- appealing storefronts occupied with a variety of inviting and interesting retail and service businesses.
- an inviting environment that highlights the historic architecture and enhances economic development, civic and cultural viability throughout the entire community.

HDLI operates with a volunteer board of directors and committee structure that includes the following:

- **Design Team:** Enhances the visual attractiveness of downtown. This includes technical assistance and encouragement to building owners toward the restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures, street and alley cleanup, colorful banners and landscaping.
- **Economic Vitality (EV) Team:** Involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions; recruiting new businesses and strengthening the existing competitiveness of the traditional merchants and service businesses, while diversifying the economic base; creatively converting unused space for new uses, and working closely with the Design Committee to seek appropriate solutions for historic commercial buildings that will ensure their continued occupancy, maintenance and preservation.
- **Organization (Org) Team:** Involves building a governing framework that includes a diverse representation of business and property owners, bankers, citizens, historians, public officials, chambers of commerce, and other preservation organizations.
- **Promotion (Promo) Team:** Projects a positive, unified image to identify downtown as a gathering place. Revitalization programs market the district and the community through a series of targeted activities such as special events and festivals, which highlight the local culture, art, music, dance and traditions that give each community its unique identity.
- **MainStreet53:** The MainStreet53 High School Intern Team represents Liberty and Liberty North High School and our community's youth. The team is dedicated to assisting Historic Downtown Liberty, Inc. teams with projects and events and helping to achieve a transformational strategy to be a residential and family-focused downtown.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

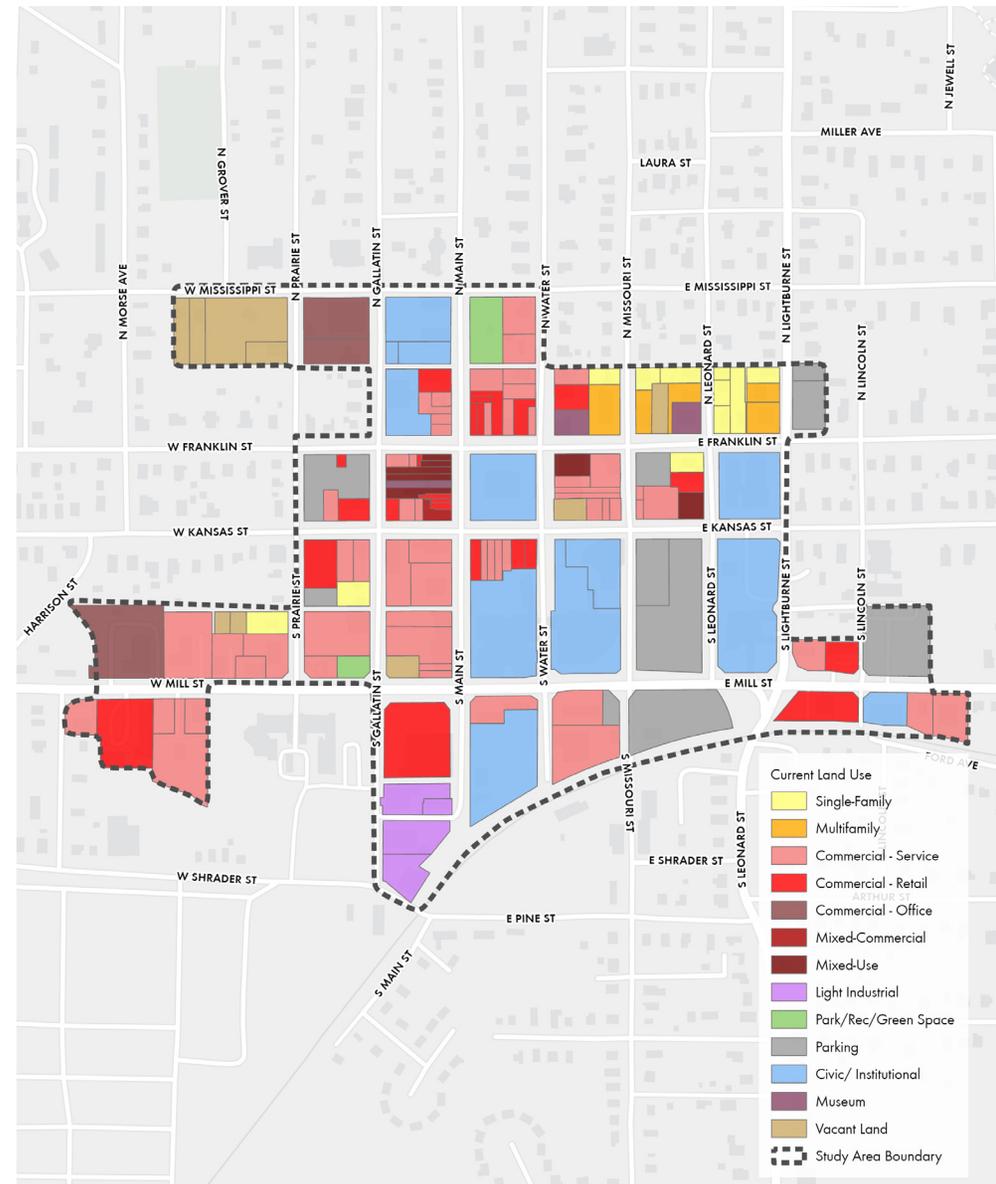
# EXISTING LAND USE

Evaluating existing land use patterns and opportunities is an important part of understanding a community and creating a vision for the future. The current land use of Downtown Liberty is similar to most historic Midwestern downtowns. The square surrounding the historic Clay County Courthouse (built in 1935-1936) is comprised of mostly two-story buildings built between 1868-1923. Downtown Liberty is home to many institutional uses, including churches and government buildings. Downtown is also home to commercial uses including retailers, service providers, such as law offices and accountants, and restaurants. Most of these commercial uses are open during daytime business hours.

## Institutional Uses:

- Liberty City Hall
- Liberty Municipal Court
- Clay County Archives
- Clay County Administration Building
- Clay County Courthouse
- Clay County Detention Department
- Clay County Family Court
- Clay County Historical Museum
- Clay County Juvenile Justice Center
- Second Baptist Church
- First Presbyterian Church

Further from the Courthouse Square, the Downtown blends into historic single-family residential neighborhoods, Lightburne Historic District on the north, Jewell Historic District on the east, and Dougherty Historic District and Prospect Heights Historic District on the west. The streets surrounding the historic courthouse are located within the Liberty Square Historic District. South of Mill Street and in pockets adjacent to Downtown on the north, east, and west, the Central Business Service District zoning designation identifies areas more suitable for services. The central business service district is retained within the development code to maintain the transitional commercial area around the central business district.



# ZONING

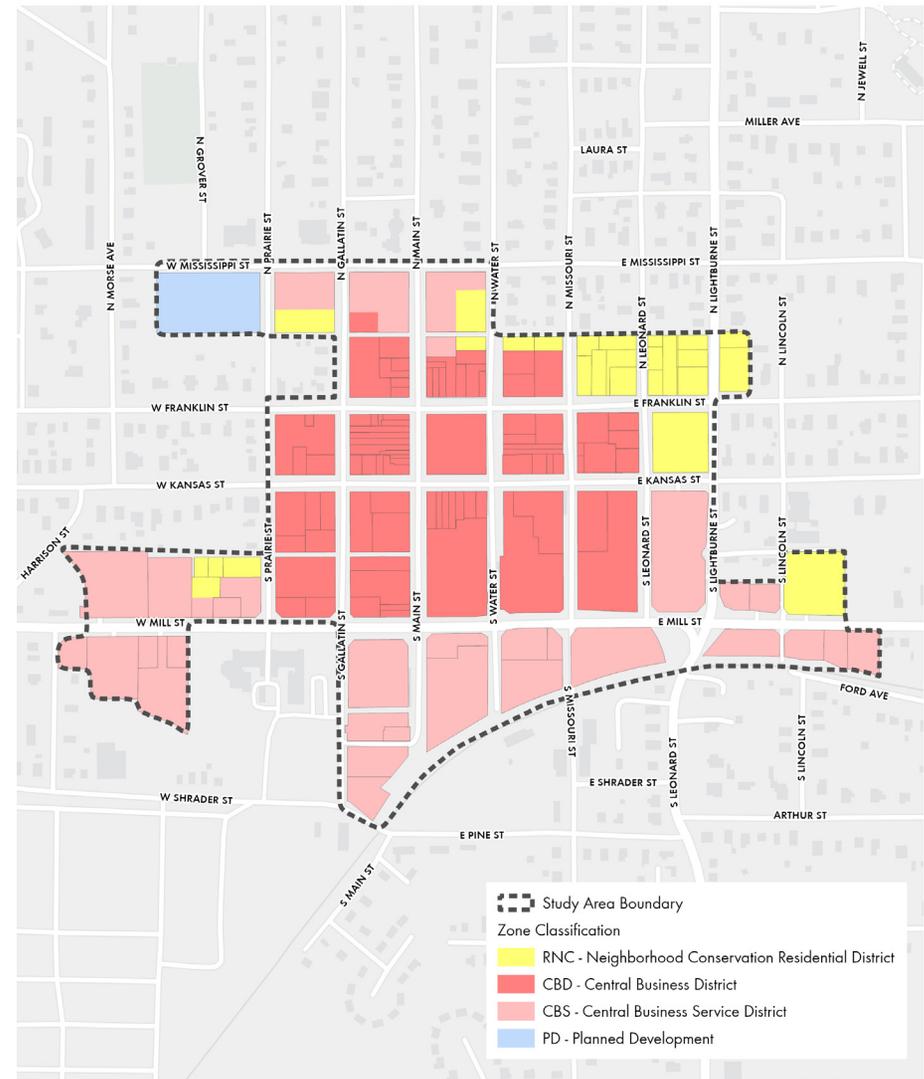
There are four zoning districts within the Downtown area. These include Neighborhood Conservation Residential District, Central Business District, Central Business Service District, and Planned Development.

The Neighborhood Conservation Residential District is concentrated on the fringes of Downtown, including or adjacent to historic neighborhoods. The residential neighborhood conservation district is to conserve the residential character of existing neighborhoods in the downtown area. It is intended to promote the preservation and maintenance of older single-family dwellings, while also allowing a variety of uses and density as was originally intended within the downtown area.

The Central Business District zoning district is concentrated in the middle of Downtown and includes the blocks immediately surrounding the Courthouse and north of Mill Street. The central business district is to provide for the development of high density, compact, pedestrian-oriented shopping, office, service, and entertainment areas. The district is intended to accommodate a wide range of retail, service, office and residential uses.

South of Mill Street and in pockets adjacent to Downtown on the north, east, and west, the Central Business Service District zoning designation identifies areas more suitable for services. The central business service district is retained within this UDO to maintain the transitional commercial area around the central business district.

One parcel on Mississippi Street at the northern edge of Downtown is a Planned Development. The purpose of the planned development district is to facilitate the development of unique, large scale or mixed-use developments, or for the development of difficult sites due to topographical or other environmental considerations. The PD district allows a mix of land uses, densities, setbacks, and building heights for a defined area. This zoning district is intended to encourage innovative and creative design and to facilitate a mix of uses in the development of a balanced community.



## PARKING

Downtown currently has 1,530 parking spots. Of these, 1,150 are located in surface parking lots, which include both large public lots and smaller surface parking spaces behind or adjacent to buildings. These smaller parking areas are generally used by business owners and employees, and less likely to be accessible to the general public. The remaining 380 spots are on the street. Street parking around the square is limited to two hours between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays, with clear signage indicating this restriction. For longer stays, there are public parking lots just off the square that offer unlimited, free parking.

In support of parking availability for commerce and government business in the downtown area, City parking ordinances passed by the City Council were developed in conjunction with downtown merchants and civic leaders. Some provisions of current parking ordinances require the following:

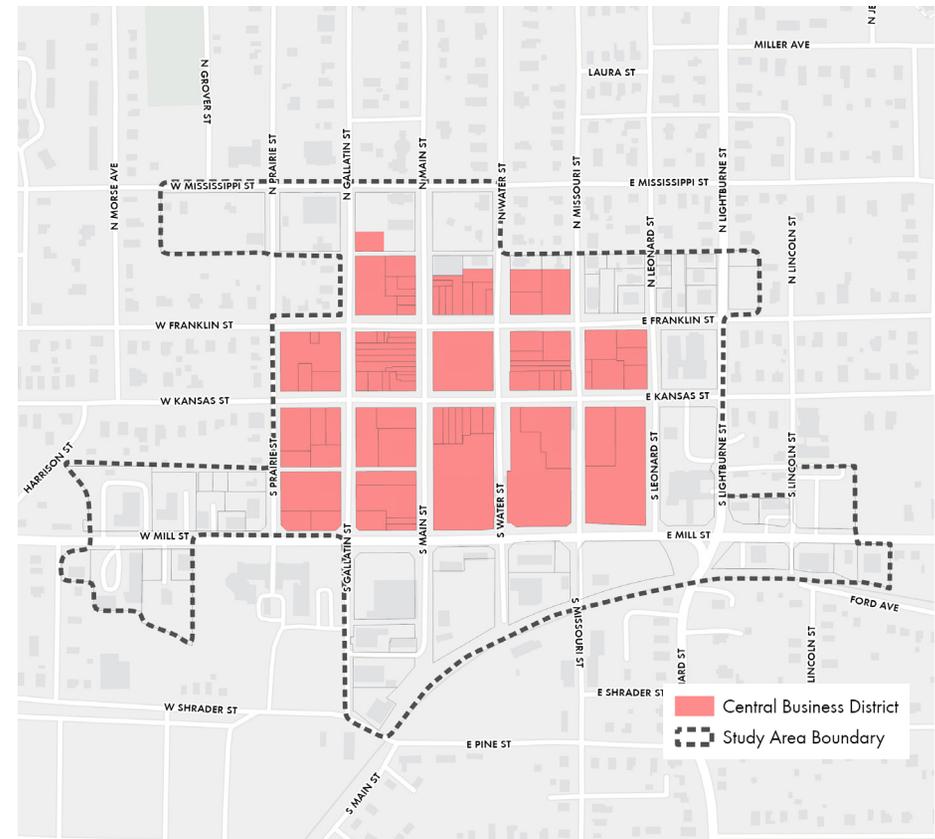
- No more than two consecutive hours of parking, 30 minutes of parking or 15 minutes of parking (as posted) on weekdays (except public holidays) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. in certain areas (Chapter 20, Section 182).
- Two warnings per calendar year will be issued for certain parking offenses before enforcement action which may result in a possible fine of \$15.50 (plus court costs) if guilty (Chapter 20, Section 167).
- Changing the position of a vehicle from one point to another within the Central Business District is deemed as one continuous parking period (Chapter 20, Section 134).
- Use of available public parking lots, which are not time limited, is encouraged for anyone who may need longer than the posted parking time limitations for street parking.

The City of Liberty employs a parking officer who enforces the regulations listed above. But given that the position is part time, there are occasions when long-term parkers, such as employees, business owners, and jurors park on the street downtown without limitations. This takes away spots from customers and visitors to Downtown. There are approximately 300 employees who work downtown, most of which work between the hours of 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday-Friday, which is a substantial number of people. Often on Municipal and County court days, the public parking lots, including the overflow juror lots, reach capacity thus spilling over into the on-street commercial spaces in front of the downtown shops and residential neighborhoods.

## PARKING REQUIREMENTS

The City of Liberty has no parking requirements in the Central Business District (CBD), which comprises most of the study area. Outside of the CBD, all non-apartment residential uses require two parking spaces per dwelling unit; all apartment buildings require one and seven-tenths spaces per unit; all assembly uses such as churches, theatres, and restaurants require one space per three seats; all lodging uses require one space per unit plus spaces for overnight staff; all mixed-use buildings and industrial uses, including warehouse facilities shall be determined on a case-by-case basis; and all other business uses require one space per two hundred fifty (250) square feet of floor area.

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT





# BUILDING AGE

Buildings in Downtown Liberty have been constructed throughout the last 150 years. Eleven percent of the buildings in downtown were built before 1900. Forty-three percent were built between 1900 – 1949 and another 43% were built between 1950 – 1999. Three percent of buildings have been built since 2000. The oldest buildings are centered around the historic square.

# BUILDING CONDITION

Given the age of most buildings in Downtown, the buildings are in good condition. Most have seen upgrades over the years, allowing them to transition to modern use and continue to be active. The Historic Preservation Plan and Historic District Review Commission have played a significant role in ensuring buildings have remained in good condition.





## WALKABILITY

Downtown Liberty is a walkable community with a density of mixed-use buildings whose first floors are occupied by retail or restaurant businesses. With the exception of Mill Street, most streets within downtown are narrow, with two total lanes of traffic and on-street parking. Mill Street has three-to-four total lanes of traffic at different points in the Downtown Study Area, which makes crossing the street from north-to-south as a pedestrian a challenge.

The infrastructure in Downtown generally supports walkability and includes sidewalks, crosswalks, and street furniture. Many of the sidewalks could be repaired to increase accessibility and safety. The owner of the property fronting the sidewalk is responsible for their repair. The pedestrian-oriented lighting exists in the core of downtown but is minimal in the areas between the Square and the residential neighborhoods, hindering pedestrian accessibility and safety in early morning or evening, and creating a perception that the area might not be walkable.

## TRAFFIC

Most people enter Downtown Liberty from the east via either Kansas Street or Mill Street. Kansas Street is a one-way street heading east, with an average daily traffic of 1,817 vehicles. In contrast, Mill Street, which runs east-west as a two-way street, experiences significantly higher traffic, averaging 5,029 vehicles eastbound and 6,279 vehicles westbound. With its heavier traffic flow, Mill Street presents strong opportunities for future development.

The north-south streets in Downtown include Lightburne Street and Gallatin Street. Lightburne Street has an average daily traffic of 3,869 vehicles in both the northbound and southbound directions. Gallatin Street sees 1,257 vehicles traveling north and 1,464 vehicles heading south. These streets complete the downtown grid, ensuring easy access for vehicles from all directions. For all streets in Downtown, peak travel times occur in the morning at 11 a.m. and in the afternoon/evening at 4 p.m.

## TRANSIT

Liberty is no longer served by the regional bus service, RideKC. Instead, people can use IRIS, an app-based, on-demand service that utilizes an on-demand dynamic routing model which picks up and drops off riders in locations within one quarter mile of their request. The service gets residents within a quarter mile of their destination for a minimal fee within a defined zone. Each service zone has a designated transit transfer hub. Transit use in Liberty is minimal as compared to larger cities nearby.

## RAILROAD

The Kaw River Railroad (KAW) traverses Downtown Liberty, running south of and generally parallel to Mill Street. Currently operated by Watco, the line primarily transports commodities such as chemicals, plastics, scrap metal, and industrial materials. Originally established in 2004, the 12-mile line was initially part of the Kansas City Southern Railroad, serving customers in the Kansas City, KS/MO area and the historic Union Station. In April 2005, the KAW expanded by adding a 16-mile segment from Birmingham, MO, to Kearney, MO. This expanded route passes through Liberty approximately two to three times a week.

The 2005 Downtown plan included a recommendation to work with the Regional Transit Alliance to bring commuter rail to Liberty. This recommendation no longer has the viability that it did in 2005, so the City should focus development to the north, allowing the current railroad traffic to continue. If the streetcar or other similar line is extended north, Liberty should work to be part of this rail-based network.

### MILL STREET MASTER PLAN

The Mill Street Master Plan was completed in 2001 and was a redesign of Mill Street to create an appealing, functional, and safe streetscape for all types of transportation. The plan included roundabouts along Mill Street to ensure a smooth, continuous flow of traffic and minimize delays. By reducing the need for multiple lanes between intersections, roundabouts also lower the risk of serious accidents caused by vehicles running stop signs or red lights. While the plan was never fully realized, the recommendations are still relevant considerations today.

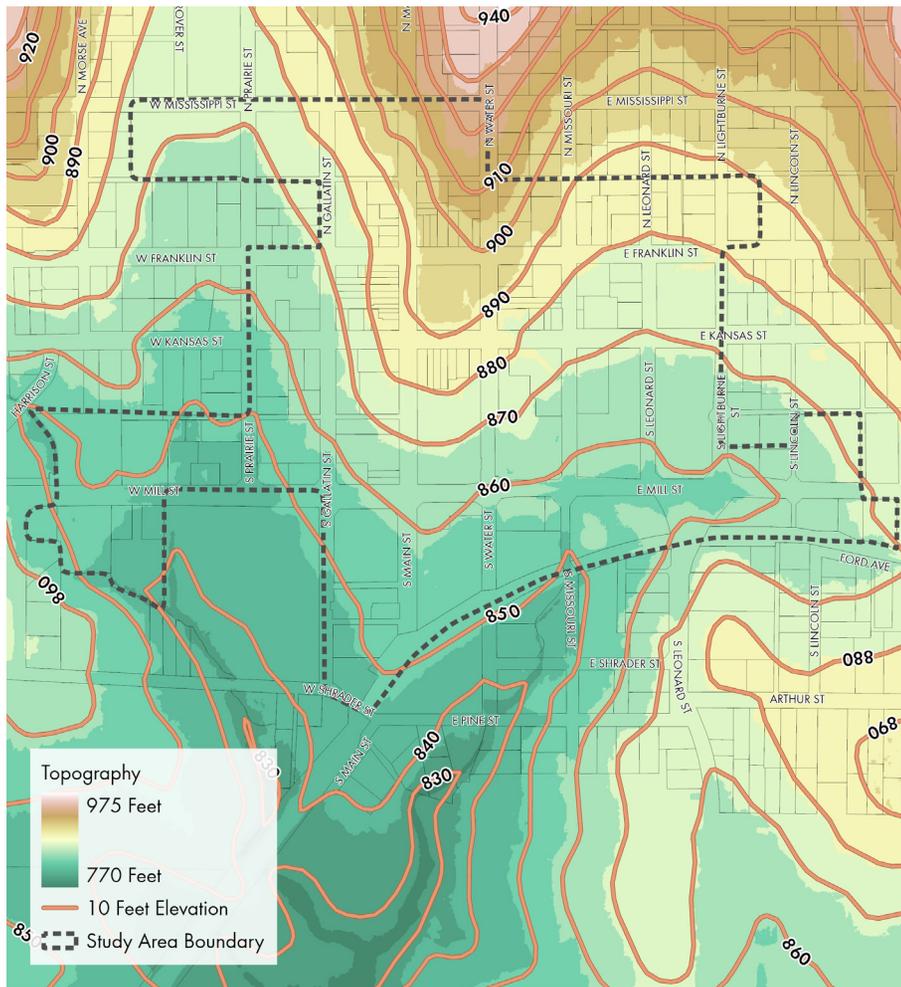
### MILL ST. EXPERIMENT

Historic Downtown Liberty, Inc. (HDLI) received a grant from Missouri Main Street Connection to implement the Mill Street Experiment in September 2023. It was a full-scale demonstration project that temporarily turned Mill Street into a complete street, which is an approach to planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Based on the current street design, residents, and visitors of Downtown often choose not to cross Mill Street because the lack of visibility, automobile traffic, poor lighting, and lack of safe crosswalks make the street unapproachable from a pedestrian perspective. This leaves the south side of Historic Liberty disconnected from the core of Downtown. The Mill Street Experiment sought to reimagine Mill Street as a place that functioned as both a roadway for vehicular traffic, but also an exciting public space that encourages activation and use.



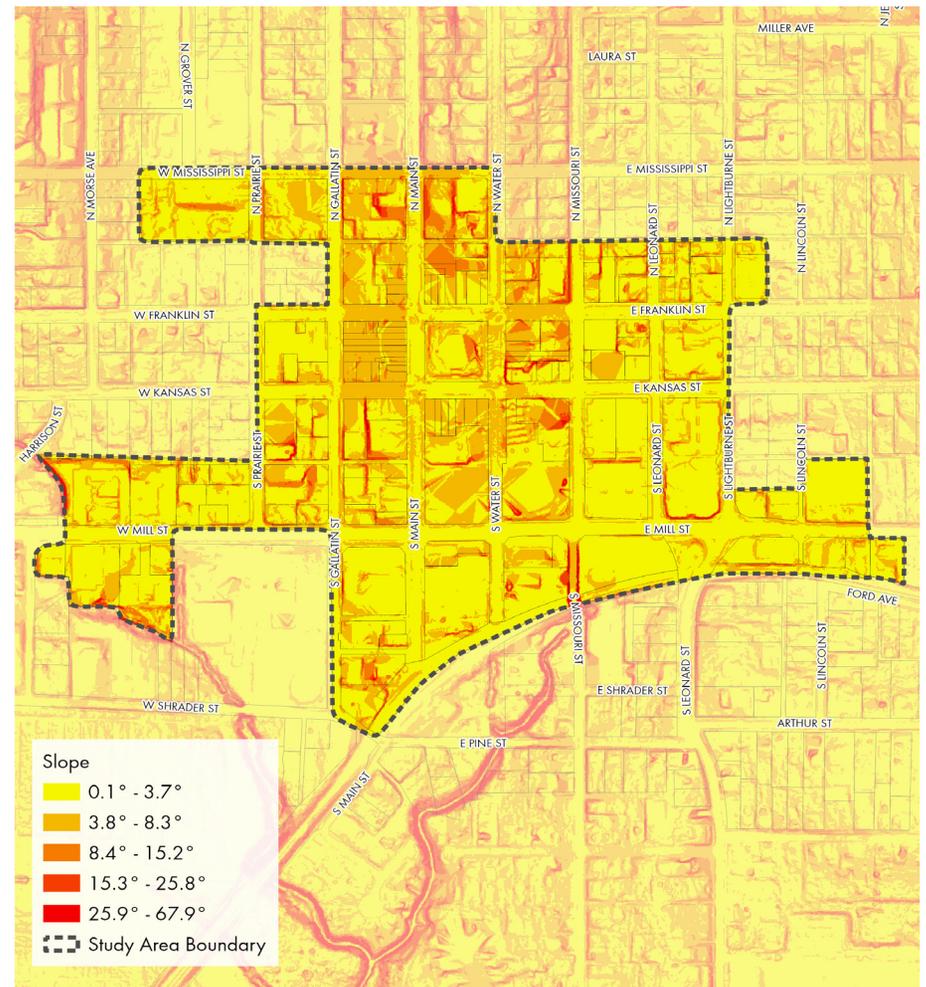
# TOPOGRAPHY

Unlike many Midwestern downtowns that occupy flat ground with the Courthouse sitting several stories above all other buildings, Downtown Liberty has a significant slope in areas. As shown on the map below, the northern parts of Downtown are nearly 50 feet higher than the Mill Street area, creating interest, but also contributing to a feeling of disconnection, drainage constraints, and sightlines. It can also make being a pedestrian challenging, as walking and biking up these inclines is not always easy depending on the range of mobility of the pedestrian.



# SLOPE

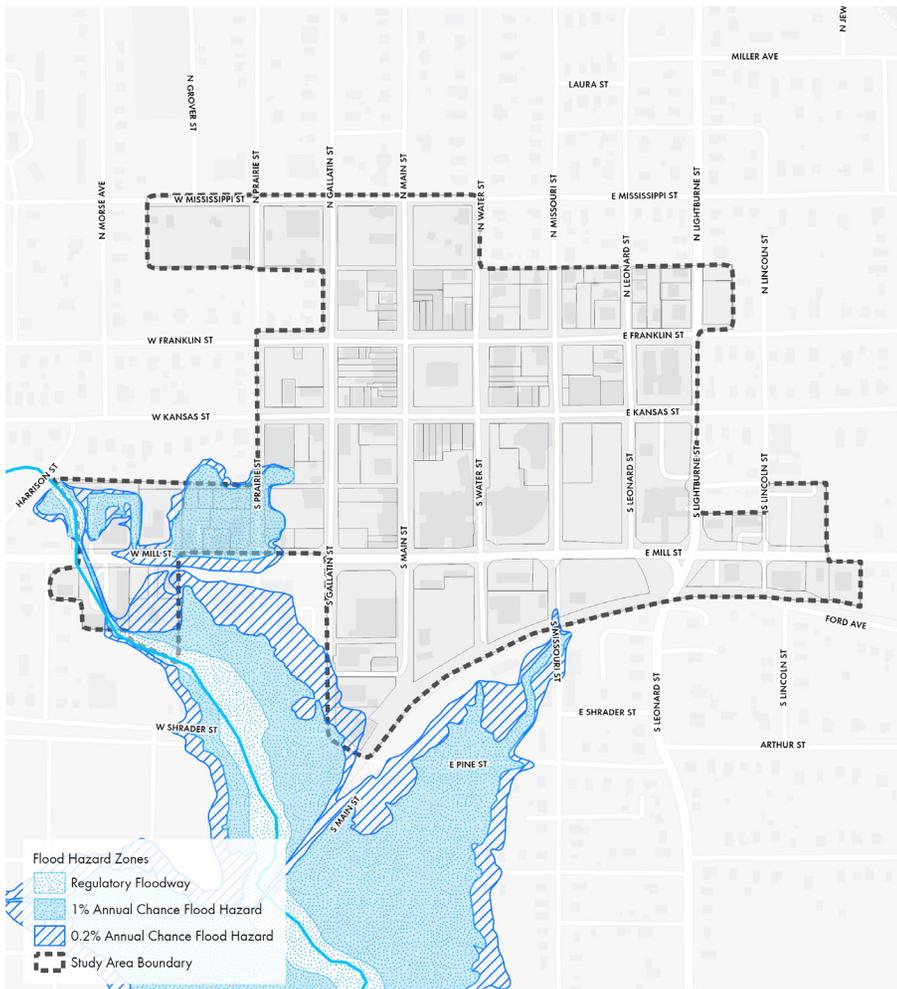
The slope map below displays the steepness or degree of incline of the terrain. The steeper the incline, the higher the degree. Areas in red on the map below are the most steep, with the areas in yellow being the least steep. The areas in red with the highest degree of incline will likely have some development challenges that would need to be addressed before any potential infill development could occur.



# FLOOD ZONE

The 1% annual chance flood hazard is also known as the 100-year flood and means in any given year, there is a 1% chance of flooding in this area. The 0.2% annual chance flood hazard is also known as the 500-year floodplain and means that in any given year there is a 0.2% chance of flooding in this area. Any new development in these areas will need to be raised above the base flood elevation.

Due to the significant slope of Downtown Liberty, a large majority of the study area is located outside of the floodplain. The exception being the southwest portion of the study area between the western boundary and just east of S. Prairie Street.





## **MARKET ANALYSIS**

The market analysis intends to provide a concise, data-driven analysis that tells the story of Downtown Liberty's position in the regional economy. The market analysis below will look at the existing inventory of commercial and multifamily residential properties in the Liberty area including characteristics such as rents and occupancy, and what the market says about the future land use environment in the community. This market analysis informed the infill development recommendations made in the Infill Vision section of the report.

## **MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

The Northland area, which is north of the Missouri river and encompasses parts of Platte and Clay counties, including Liberty, is the second-largest multifamily submarket in Kansas City with just over 28,000 units of multi-family housing. Slowing rental demand over the past year has caused the Northland's new supply to outpace demand in five of the past six quarters. This has resulted in the submarket's vacancy rate to rise to 8.0%, compared to 7.8% for the Kansas City market.

With 790 units under construction, representing 2.7% of inventory, the Northland area has one of the largest pipelines in Kansas City metro area, behind the submarkets of Johnson and Wyandotte County. While new development has been growing since 2019, Northland has been a consistent target for developers, averaging 640 new units annually for the past 10 years. A majority of the new development is coming in the southern portion of the submarket, just across the river from downtown Kansas City in the Lowell Place neighborhood, as developers focus on the area's proximity to Kansas City's central business district.

Nearly half of the Northland's units under construction are in Lowell Place. The area has been popular with developers due to its proximity to Downtown Kansas City, across the Missouri River. With an extensive construction pipeline and demand forecast to remain below recent highs, the vacancy rate across Northland is expected to rise over the next 12 months and settle just under 8% at the end of 2024 before falling, as fewer new projects will be finishing construction in 2025 and 2026.

Liberty's multifamily market has not seen significant growth in the last five years. There are 31 multifamily properties in Liberty that are home to 2,538 units. A majority (19 of 31) properties are classified as class C, meaning they are more than 30 years old and have less amenities and little significant rehabilitation work completed.

Copper Ridge, built in 2018, is Liberty's only Class A multi-family property not restricted to seniors and is home to 292 units. The Copper Ridge apartments include multiple one and two-bedroom floorplans and significant on-site amenities including a fitness center, pool, and garage parking. The development is located west of Downtown, near Interstate 35 and is able to capitalize on the easy access to transportation networks.

Since 2018, three multifamily buildings have been constructed or converted in Liberty. The Wellington Senior Living is located in Liberty and includes 91 units built in 2022. An additional multi-family senior development, Bonavia at Wither's Farm, which includes 190 units is currently under construction and slated to open in 2024. The Liberty View Apartments, a multifamily property just to the northwest of downtown built in 1971 is currently being renovated, which will add 93 newly renovated units to the near-downtown market.

In addition to the multifamily properties constructed since 2018, there is significant inventory in the area in historic properties and older, renovated buildings. These buildings vary from single-family homes on the market for rent to fourplex or 8-unit apartment buildings. Given the historic built environment of the area, there are few buildings between the historic small-scale properties and the larger-scale modern buildings in terms of unit number. Where the historic properties exist, many of them have been rehabilitated on a small-scale basis and provide more affordable rental options in closer proximity to Downtown.

## **SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**

While there is limited single family residential within the study area, the single-family neighborhoods surrounding downtown play a role in the market realities within the study area. Many of the homes near Downtown are historic, single-family structures.

According to Zillow, as of July 2024 in the City of Liberty, there were 38 single-family properties available for sale, and 16 homes available for rent, while 42 homes were sold within the past year. Single-family homes have been on the market of a median of 21 days which is less than the national average of 32 days. The single-family home price ranges from \$145,000 to \$2,500,000, with a median selling price of \$353,133, and 50.9% of homes were sold over list price. With only a four-day median until a home is pending, the housing market within the City is competitive. The median price per square foot is \$149 which is up 3.1% since last year.





# COMMERCIAL

In Downtown, there are 35 retail buildings totaling 158,264 square feet of rentable building area. In addition, there are 11 Class B office buildings totaling 55,820 square feet and 24 Class C office buildings totaling 102,444 square feet. The current vacancy rate is 10.28%, which is up from last year. The current market rent per square foot is \$15.22, which is up from both last year (\$14.92) and the 10-year average (\$13.17). Rents for Downtown spaces do not seem to be a barrier for businesses.

Across Liberty, there are 166 retail buildings totaling nearly 2 million square feet of rentable building area. Two of these buildings are Class A buildings totaling 24,791 square feet. An additional 66 buildings are Class B buildings totaling 1,144,418 square feet of rentable building area. The remaining 82 buildings are Class C buildings. The current retail vacancy rate in Liberty is 0.3%, down from the 10-year average of 2.05%. This vacancy rate is significantly lower than the rate in Downtown. The current market rent per square foot across the Liberty retail market is \$18.23, up from the 10-year average of \$15.57. This is significantly higher than in Downtown.



## OFFICE

Vacancy in the Clay County office market is 5.1% and has decreased 0.6% over the past 12 months. Meanwhile, the rate of increase in the broader Kansas City market was 1.3%, indicating Clay County is performing better than the Kansas City metro area. During this period, 69,000 square feet of office space were sold or rented, and 16,000 square feet have been delivered. Total availability, which includes sublease space, is 8.4% of all inventory.

Rents are estimated to average \$19.60 per square foot, which reflects a 1.4% increase from where they were a year ago. In the past three years, office rents have increased a cumulative 3.7%. This is also an affordable submarket, relative to Kansas City as a whole, where average rents are \$22.00 per square foot.

While there is nothing under construction in Clay County currently, there has been some recent activity. An estimated 140,000 square feet of office space has been brought online in the past three years.

In Downtown Liberty, there are 32 office buildings totaling 179,705 square feet of rentable building area. Seven of these buildings are Class B office space, totaling 44,574 square feet. The remaining 75% of office buildings in Downtown are considered Class C office space. The current vacancy rate is 1.9%, which is up from last year when it was 1.29% and down from the 10-year average of 2.14%. The current market rent per square foot of office space in Downtown Liberty is \$16.14, which is up from both last year (\$15.90) and the 10-year average (\$12.58).

Across the City of Liberty, there are 143 office buildings totaling 1,153,880 square feet of rentable building area. 81 of these buildings are Class B totaling 804,938 square feet of rentable building area. The remaining 59 are Class C buildings totaling 348,942 square feet, as well as one building that is un-classed. The current vacancy rate is 7.4%, up from the 10-year average of 4.93%. The current market rent per square foot is \$18.17, up from the 10-year average of \$16.52.

Downtown Liberty has a less attractive office stock, with a higher percentage of Class C buildings as compared to the City of Liberty and Clay County. With that being said, the buildings have a lower rent, potentially providing an opportunity for small or locally owned businesses.



# CHAPTER 353 PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT

## RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Chapter 353 Downtown Liberty Residential District Redevelopment Plan was approved by the City of Liberty City Council on July 14, 2014, and was amended on November 27, 2017. The Downtown Liberty Residential Chapter 353 District allows the Liberty Municipal Redevelopment Corporation to grant partial abatement of property taxes for properties within the redevelopment area that are rehabilitated or redeveloped in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan. The purpose of the corporation is to provide a streamlined, cost-effective means for individual property owners to obtain partial tax abatement on their properties in return for making improvements. Since the creation of the program, 56 residential property tax abatement projects have been completed.

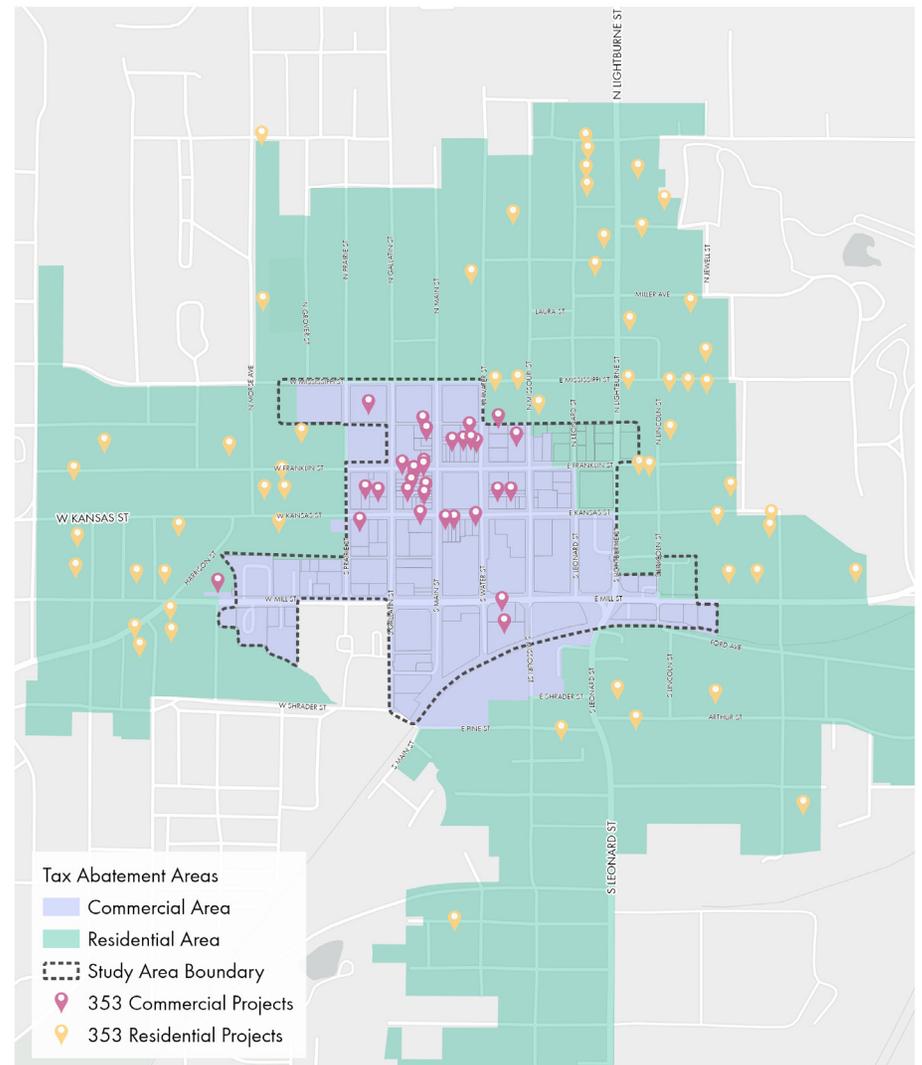
The purpose of this program is to provide the owners of specific parcels an incentive to rehabilitate their properties to remove any blighting influences, encourage reinvestment, encourage preservation as appropriate, and improve the value and appearance of neighborhoods.

The Chapter 353 Residential Tax Abatement program provides that under a standard 353 project, the property owner is only paying taxes on the value of the land during the first ten years of abatement. In addition, Missouri law allows for 50% abatement on the whole value of the property (land plus improvements) for up to an additional 15 years. Although Missouri law allows for an additional 15 years of abatement, the Liberty program guidelines only allow for an additional five-year abatement in certain circumstances. The abatement period will cease once the project cost has been reimbursed or the approved number of years of abatement has expired.

## COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

The Downtown Commercial Property Tax Abatement program allows a 100% tax abatement on the assessed value of the property improvements for a period of 10 years, meaning the property owner only pays taxes on the land value. Additional years of abatement can be approved based upon property investment. Since the creation of the program, 35 commercial property tax abatement projects have been completed.

The ultimate success of the downtown is dependent on private sector commitment. It is up to the merchants, building owners, professionals, and investors to improve the value of their properties and condition of their buildings. This incentive program is intended to stimulate improvements to the downtown area by providing an innovative financing mechanism. It presents an opportunity to preserve the community's heritage, and to enhance and promote the unique atmosphere of the Downtown. It also represents an opportunity for property owners to make improvements that allows their property to be competitive with other business locations.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## OPEN HOUSE

On December 7, 2023, more than 50 people attended an open house at Liberty City Hall to provide input and feedback on the future of Downtown Liberty. Attendees were asked to provide feedback on their vision for Downtown Liberty, participating in activities and sharing their opinions with City Staff and consultants.

The topic that attendees spoke about most frequently is that Downtown Liberty, specifically the Historic Square, is the “jewel” of Liberty and needs to be maintained, supported, and promoted. People spoke of the historic design and integrity of Downtown being a competitive advantage for the City. Attendees spoke of their interest in preserving the boundary between the single-family residential neighborhoods and the downtown district.

Parking is another topic that residents often spoke about during the engagement efforts. There is a strong perception that there is not currently enough parking in Downtown Liberty. People discussed their interest in the construction of a parking garage in Downtown and other innovative ways to reduce the current burden felt regarding parking in Downtown.

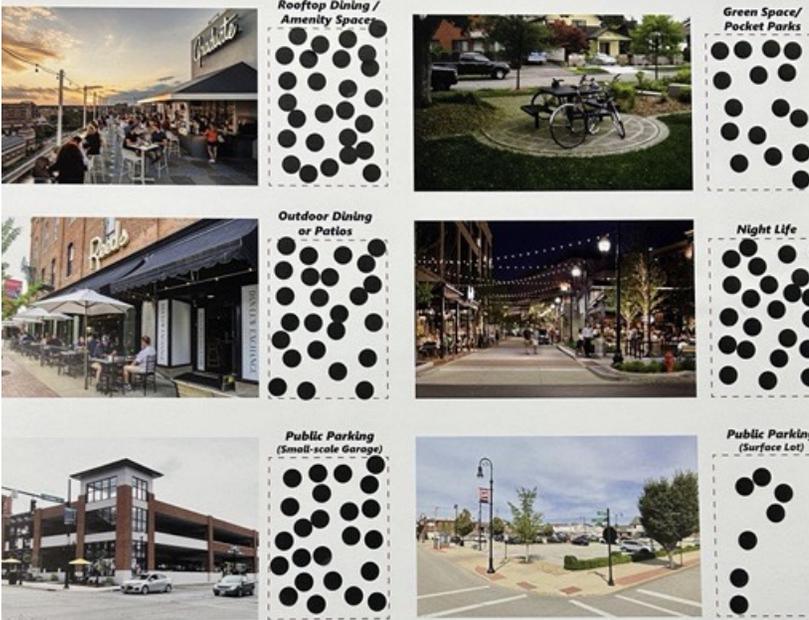
### OTHER FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED:

- Elimination of empty store fronts by proactively incentivizing property owners to fill them and recruiting new businesses.
- Improve the environment and infrastructure to more easily and more safely cross Mill Street.
- Sidewalks need to be improved and made safer and more accessible.
- Could use more restaurants and nightlife.
- When asked to consider future development in Downtown, people indicated the following developments would have the most positive impact on Downtown Liberty included bars and nightlife, retail stores, entertainment options, restaurants open for dinner, restaurants open for lunch, hotel, condominiums.
- The development characteristics that were most popular with attendees included rooftop dining and amenity spaces, outdoor dining or patios, public parking garage, nightlife, green space and pocket parks.



## What development characteristics would you like to see in downtown?

Use the dots to identify which types of amenities you would like to see in Downtown Liberty.



SHARE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BELOW...



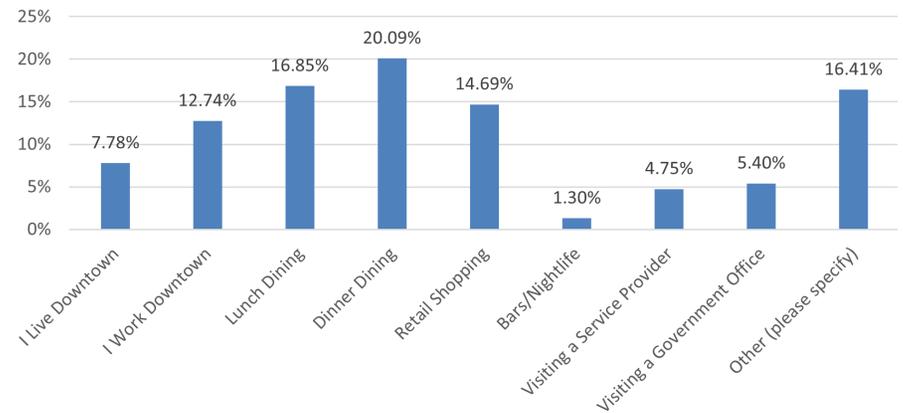
DOWNTOWN LIBERTY INFILL CONCEPT PLAN



## SURVEY

A community survey was disseminated during the process to get feedback from Liberty residents and stakeholders. This was distributed in both paper and electronic formats. The majority of survey respondents were 35- 49 years old, or older, live in Ward 3, and over 50% have lived in Liberty for over 20 years. While age and time spent living in Liberty had obvious majorities, the ward distribution was more even with the majority in Ward 3 at 21%, Wards 1 and 2 were each represented by around 18% of respondents and 16% of respondents live in Ward 4. This suggests a fairly equal spread of representation from across Liberty and could speak to widespread support for Downtown's development from across the city's residents.

### What is the main reason you go Downtown?

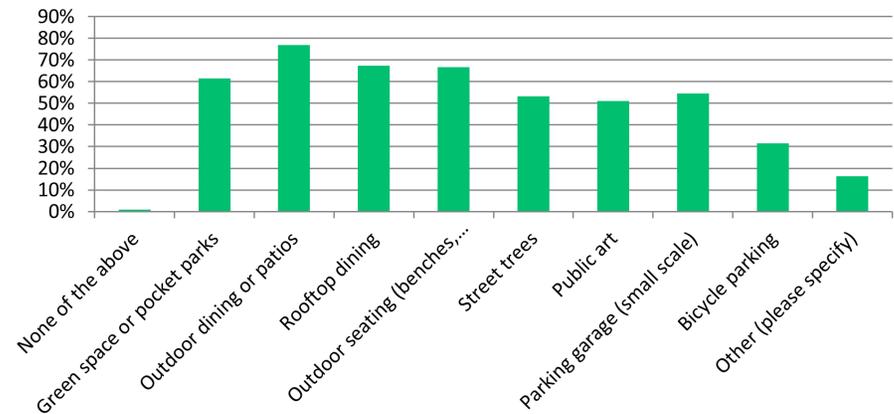


Dining was the most popular reason respondents went Downtown. Outdoor dining was identified as the most desired element for downtown development, followed closely by rooftop dining. Dining open during dinner hours was designated as having the potential for the most positive impact on downtown development with 80% of respondents detailing it would have a positive impact. These sentiments were mirrored in the long form answers with later hours and outdoor dining identified consistently as a desire for Downtown. Other specific dining requests from the long-form answers included both fine dining, affordable options, a pizza parlor, a breakfast spot, and healthy food options.

While dining is the main reason people are currently in Downtown, the charm and history were cited as the greatest strengths of Downtown Liberty. When asked about the greatest strengths, 45% of respondents mentioned the charm, specifically the small-town feel, and 25% of respondents mentioned the historical significance. When asked to select good examples of infill from nine images, over 60% of respondents who chose none of them cited a lack of historic preservation as their reasoning. The most consistent response to being asked for any last thoughts on Downtown Liberty was the desire for any future infill or development to preserve the historic nature of downtown.

The responses given for the greatest opportunity for improvement Downtown was overwhelmingly parking, with 30% of respondents mentioning a desire for more. The next most common response was to add more shops and dining, mentioned in 17% of responses. Respondents were asked if a small-scale parking garage would have a positive or negative impact downtown and 76% responded that a parking garage would have a somewhat positive or very positive impact. Other critiques of parking include a lack of parking enforcement, especially on those who work downtown, a lack of marked spots making street parking inefficient and awkwardly spaced, and a lack of available handicap parking.

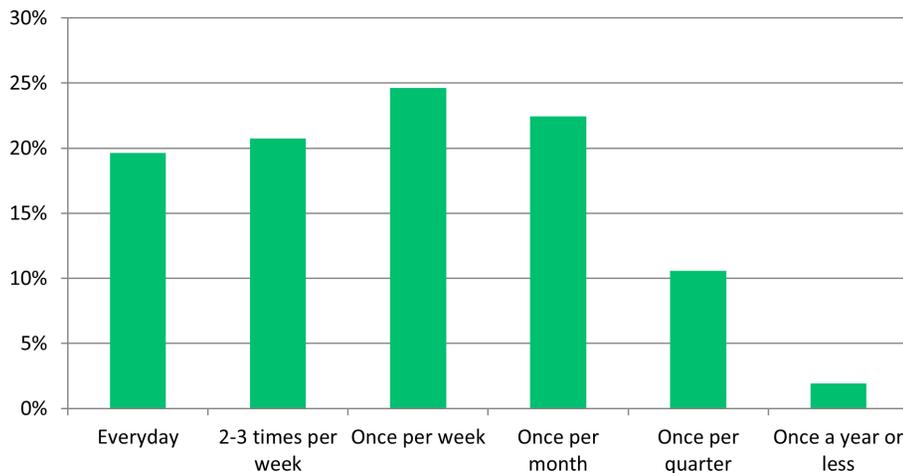
## What elements do you think Downtown development should include?



Respondents were split on residential development downtown. Respondents in support of Downtown residential development frequently mentioned the desire for mixed use or upper-floor residential units to support local businesses.

Other opportunities for Downtown development that were often requested in the survey were more entertainment options, like bowling, arcades, or board game stores, but especially a theater or venue for live music and other performances. Respondents also wanted to see more nightlife opportunities, mentioned often in long-form answers as well as identified by 77% of respondents as having a positive impact on Downtown. Over 60% of respondents desire future development to include outdoor seating or green space, mirrored in long form answers with frequent requests for outdoor gathering spaces. A consistent theme throughout the engagement was a desire for increased activity in Downtown Liberty.

## How often do you visit Downtown Liberty?



# INFILL VISION

## VISION FOR DOWNTOWN INFILL

As the heart of the community, the site for municipal and county government, historic landmarks, churches, and commerce, Downtown Liberty is a symbol of community economic health, local quality of life, hometown pride, and civic history. Building on this foundation, this plan recommends infill development in Downtown Liberty that will promote and encourage the revitalization and growth of the downtown as a desirable high density, mixed-use area.

Based on the findings from the existing conditions research, as well as feedback from the community during engagement activities, a vision of infill development in Downtown Liberty was crafted. The vision for infill development in Downtown Liberty includes:

- a prioritization matrix to prioritize parcels most in need of investment or redevelopment,
- a future land use map to provide the recommended use for each parcel,
- a detailed recommendation for five areas with the most opportunity for investment and redevelopment,
- phasing recommendations for three phases of infill development, and
- parking and connectivity recommendations intended to ensure the success of new infill development.



# FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Map depicts the future state of the downtown, should the Downtown Infill Plan’s vision come to life. As shown in the map, the future land use breakdown would include the following:

## COMMERCIAL (37.4%)

Commercial land use is the largest category, encompassing 37.4% of the proposed downtown infill design. This category includes a variety of businesses such as retail stores, restaurants, offices, and service-oriented establishments. The goal is to create a vibrant commercial area that attracts both residents and visitors, fostering economic growth and providing essential services.

## MIXED-USE (36.4%)

Mixed-use developments account for 36.4% of the proposed land use. These areas integrate residential, commercial, and sometimes office uses within a single development or area. The aim is to create dynamic, walkable neighborhoods where people can live, work, and play without needing to travel far. Mixed-use areas often feature ground-floor retail or office space with residential units above, promoting a lively streetscape and enhancing the urban experience.

## INSTITUTIONAL (17.1%)

This category, making up 17.1% of the proposed land use, includes institutional buildings such as government buildings, schools, religious uses, and public parks. These spaces are essential for community building, providing places for education, worship, recreation, and social gatherings.

## SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL (3.9%)

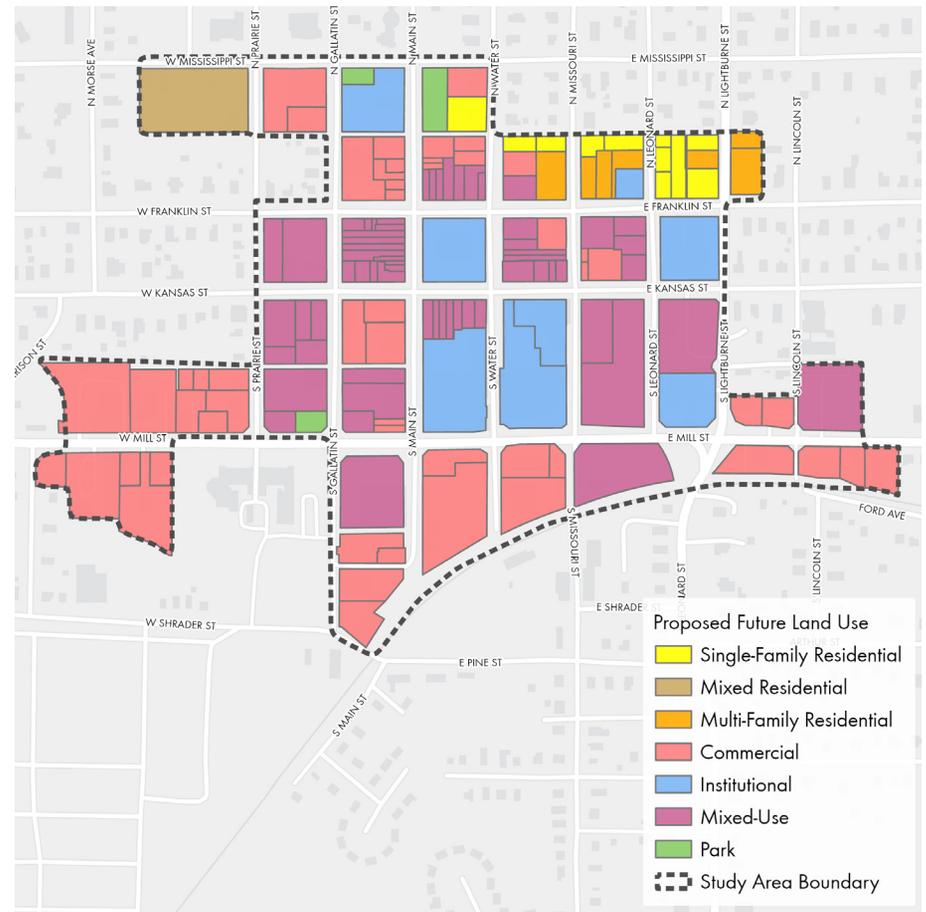
Single-family residential areas constitute 3.9% of the proposed land use. Single-family homes contribute to the diversity of housing types available in downtown Liberty, catering to different lifestyle preferences and needs.

## PARK (1.6%)

Parks make up 1.6% of the proposed land use and include green spaces, communal open space and pocket parks. These designated green spaces are crucial for providing recreational opportunities and enhancing the urban environment.

## MULTI-FAMILY AND MIXED RESIDENTIAL (3.5%)

Multi-family and mixed residential land use, covering 3.5% of the proposed area. Multi-family lots are occupied by a small-scale multi-family residential structure, with buildings with 12 units or less. These developments offer higher-density housing options, which are essential for accommodating a growing population and providing affordable living options. Mixed residential allows for a mixture of single family detached housing lots, as well as complementary, small-scale, and low density attached housing. It is often in areas that provide a buffer between traditional subdivision-oriented single-family neighborhoods to more intense uses, such as multifamily residential, commercial corridors, or mixed uses.



## RECOMMENDED MASSING

When developed, infill development in Downtown Liberty should be between three and four stories tall with minimal gaps along the street except at intersections. This will create consistency with the current buildings, maintain the historic feel of the district, and transition seamlessly to the single-family residential neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown. The consistent “wall” of mid-rise buildings creates a pleasant streetscape that do not tower over pedestrians, but rather, create an intimate, small-scale experience that feels like a neighborhood. Along Mill Street, five story buildings can be implemented to add density, but there must be a focus on maintaining an intimate streetscape that blends with the existing historic architecture and feels pedestrian-scale. Consideration should be given to the existing slopes when contemplating the height of future developments to ensure buildings feel compatible with the overall density of Downtown. The proposed massing will contribute to the historic urban fabric found in the area and provides crucial connection from a pedestrian standpoint. Similarly, while some buildings may be entirely residential, others mixed use, and others for commercial purposes, the appearance of these buildings from a scale perspective should be similar.

## URBAN DESIGN AND PLACEMAKING

A mix of land uses and consistent building massing are two of the main components that make neighborhoods vibrant. This consistency helps to create an environment that feels cohesive and contributes to a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. Downtown Liberty is already a vibrant district with street-level activity. Downtown Liberty already has a strong identity and should be maintained through placemaking efforts. In 2017, the Liberty Art Commission established an annual sculpture program that brings new sculptures to downtown Liberty each year. In addition to the City sculpture program, private entities such as the Great Americans Sculpture Program and Clay County have public sculptures and murals in the downtown area.

As Downtown continues to grow, it will be important that placemaking is a key component of future development. Placemaking amenities to be considered for implementation include:

- Pedestrian-oriented lighting: to increase sense of safety, aid in geographic orientation, and highlight the identity and history of an area.

- Street furnishings: such as benches, planters, trash cans, and water fountains play a role in making pedestrians feel like this is a district for them with all the amenities needed.
- Public art: Downtowns gain value and are invigorated through public art. It can reflect a community’s history, as well as add meaning and uniqueness. Public art is often site-specific, meaning it is uniquely created for its location. Public art can take a wide range of forms, sizes, and scales—and can be temporary or permanent. It can include murals, sculpture, memorials, architectural work, community art, digital new media, performances, and festivals.
- Wayfinding signage: aids in geographic orientation and helps visitors understand their environment. It encourages people to discover unique events, attractions, and destinations on their own. In Downtown Liberty, wayfinding signage should be focused on important landmarks and public parking.
- Branding elements in the built environment: It helps people feel an emotional attachment to a place. This branding can help Liberty identify the target audience and communicate its unique value proposition through the physical environment. Visual representations of the brand could include logos, imagery, or taglines, on banners, marketing materials, or other infrastructure elements.



# INFILL PRIORITIZATION MATRIX

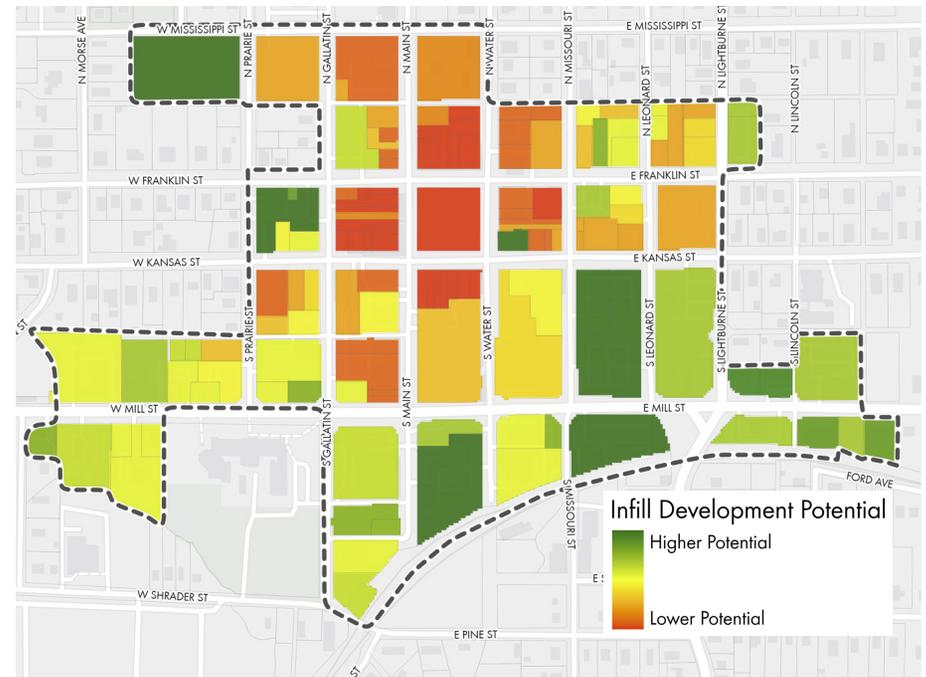
A prioritization matrix is a tool used to score and rank various geographic features based on their importance or suitability for a specific objective. In Liberty, this matrix was employed to identify potential redevelopment opportunities early in the planning process. By highlighting areas with high redevelopment potential, the matrix guided where to direct further research and analysis. The matrix evaluated seven key factors, including environmental considerations, socio-economic data, proximity to infrastructure, and risk assessment. Each factor was measured through specific indicators, with weights assigned to reflect their relative importance. These indicators were then combined to compute a composite score for each feature, facilitating a clear and objective evaluation. The colors indicated on this map are not recommendations for redevelopment, but rather a starting point for our process to identify priority infill development sites.

Factors used in the Downtown Liberty Infill Prioritization Matrix include:

- **Adjacency to flood zones:** This factor prioritizes parcels based on their proximity to flood zones. This prioritization ensures that areas less susceptible to flooding are given higher consideration for planned activities or interventions and promoting sustainable urban development in downtown Liberty.
- **Ownership:** Ownership identifies parcels based on whether they are owned by the City, County, or other public entities. This factor aims to prioritize parcels under public ownership to facilitate coordination efforts and leverage public resources for community-oriented projects.
- **Vacancy Pattern:** Vacancy pattern assesses parcels based on the concentration of vacant properties within a block or area. This prioritization strategy aims to target areas with higher vacancy rates for revitalization or redevelopment efforts.
- **Structure Condition:** Structure condition evaluates parcels based on the state of their buildings. This factor directs attention to parcels requiring structural improvement or redevelopment to enhance safety and aesthetic appeal.
- **Historical Significance:** Historical significance considers parcels based on their association with historic buildings or districts. This factor helps prioritize parcels that do not pose historical preservation challenges.
- **Building Height:** Building height assesses parcels based on their current density in terms of building height. This factor aims to identify parcels suitable for increasing density or adjusting building heights for more efficient use of land.

- **Site Layout:** Site layout evaluates parcels based on their compatibility with surrounding developments, urban design principles, and potential for development. Parcels with undesirable site layouts, poor land utilization, and the presence of large parking lots, especially if located in front of buildings receive a high score. In contrast, parcels with more compatible and desirable site layouts, conducive to efficient land use and urban aesthetics, receive a lower score. This factor guides prioritization efforts toward parcels that can best support cohesive urban planning and development goals in downtown Liberty.

In reviewing the final prioritization matrix for selecting parcels for further research and analysis, we relied on the color-coded indicators to streamline our decision-making. Red parcels, marked as unsuitable for redevelopment due to various negative factors, were excluded from consideration. Orange parcels were also not ideal for redevelopment. Yellow parcels, while presenting some challenges, were less favorable but still under consideration. Conversely, the green and light green parcels stood out as the most promising opportunities, with factors that highlighted their potential as priority infill sites. As a result, the green and light green parcels received the most attention and were rigorously analyzed as high-value redevelopment prospects.





# SITE A

## RECOMMENDATION 1

Site A is located at the northwest corner of the study area at W. Mississippi Street and N. Prairie Street. The site is currently cleared and ready for development. A multifamily development was previously proposed at this location, but never came to fruition.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: POCKET NEIGHBORHOOD

A recommendation for this site is a pocket neighborhood. A pocket neighborhood is a type of planned community that consists of a high-density grouping of single-family residences, often with shared open space, designed to promote a sense of community. The homes are designed to maximize space and usually “nest” together so that the open side of one house faces the closed side of the next.

This recommendation would yield approximately 13 housing units ranging in size from 1,200 – 1,600 square feet, bringing 33 new residents to downtown. Surface parking would be in the center of the housing units with access from N. Prairie Street. This recommendation is less dense and more consistent with the existing residential to the north and west of Downtown.





# SITE A

RECOMMENDATION 1

# SITE A

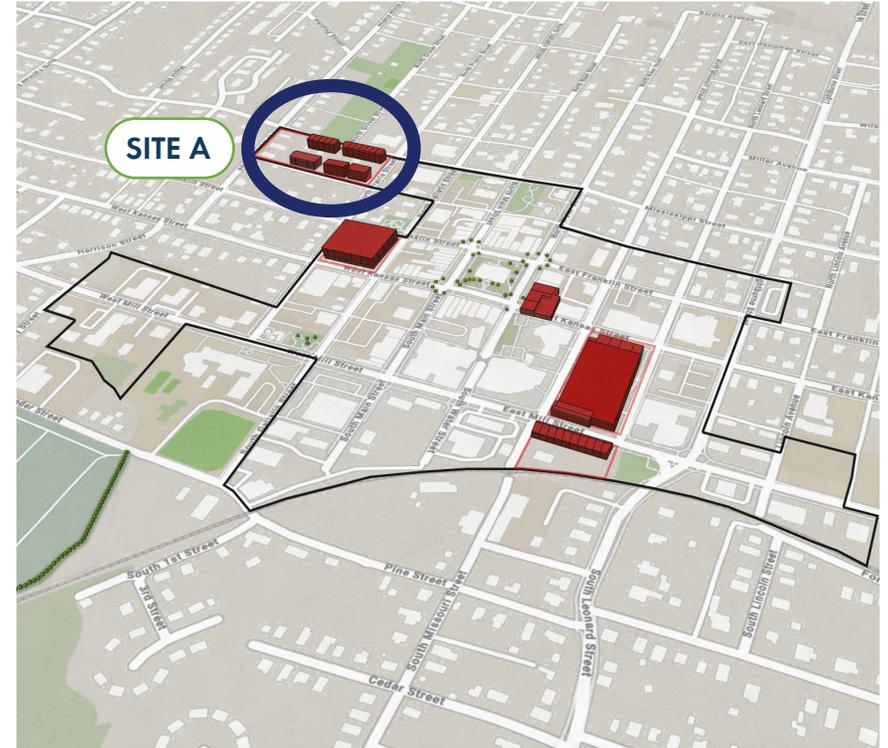
## RECOMMENDATION 2

Site A is located at the northwest corner of the study area at W. Mississippi Street and N. Prairie Street. The site is currently cleared and ready for development. A multifamily development was previously proposed at this location, but never came to fruition.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

In an effort to build residential density downtown that will support future commercial uses, a recommendation for Site A is for multi-family housing with hidden interior surface parking between the residential buildings with access from N. Prairie Street. These residential units should be a mix of owner-occupied rowhouses or townhomes and rental units. This recommendation takes into consideration the current housing market in Liberty, as well as the adjacent uses, which includes single-family housing, a fire station, and an office building. The diversity of uses present within this residential development will also help ensure it is financially viable in an area where little multi-family has been developed recently.

The current code requires that this recommendation would require screening and buffering between the multifamily development and single-family homes to the west. This recommendation would add significant population density to Downtown, creating a new audience for businesses in the area and added vitality through additional residents.





# SITE A

RECOMMENDATION 2

# SITE B

Site B is the block surrounded by W. Franklin Street, Gallatin Street, W. Kansas Street, and N. Prairie Street. Currently there are three one-story commercial buildings on the block, as well as City-owned surface parking lot comprised of 77 spaces. Many people use W. Kansas St., an eastbound thoroughfare, as an entry point to downtown.

## RECOMMENDATION: THREE STORY MIXED-USE BUILDING

Topography in this area plays a significant role in potential development options. West of Site B is up a substantial slope, which allows for the potential accommodation of up to four stories on Site B. Conversely, to the east of Site B across N. Prairie Street, is the Dougherty Historic District making it directly adjacent to two-story single-family homes, which is also a consideration.

The recommendation for this site is a three-story mixed-use building with first-floor retail and second-and third-floor residential. The second and third floor residential would yield approximately 38 units, bringing 57 new residents downtown. While often cost-prohibitive, underground parking would be ideal here, not only to replace the 77 surface parking spaces, but also to add the additional 150-200 spaces required to accommodate residents and retail shoppers.

Because of Site B's role as an entry point to downtown, the southwest corner of the building at W. Kansas Street and N. Prairie Street should be considered as a gateway that includes amenities that feel welcoming and give visitors a sense of place. These amenities could include signage, wayfinding, and other placemaking efforts.





# SITE B







# SITE C

# SITE D

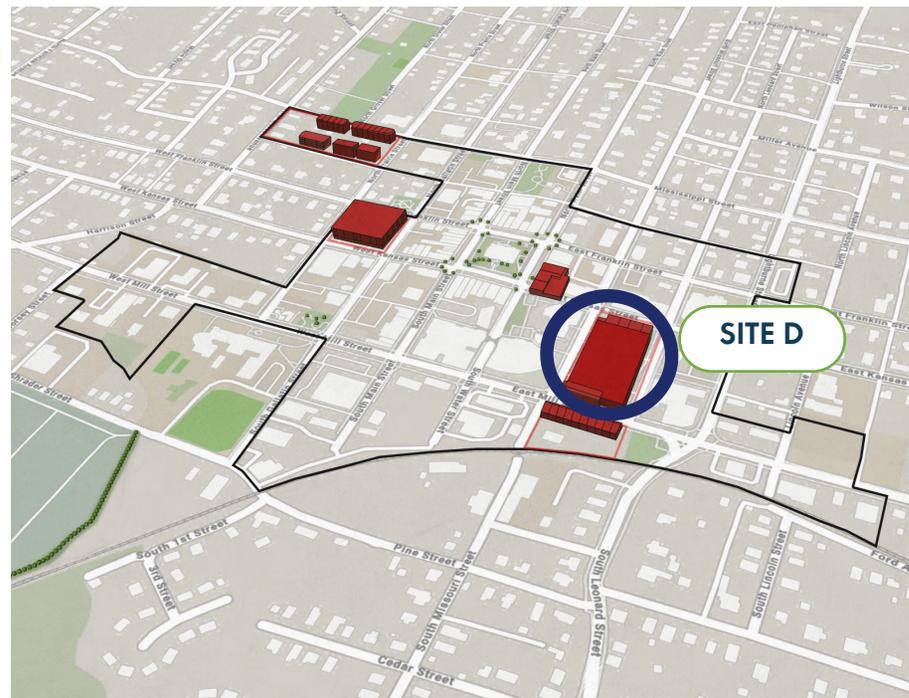
Site D is currently a surface parking lot comprised of 200 public parking spaces. The north third of the parking lot is owned by the City of Liberty and the south two-thirds of the lot is owned by Clay County. While open to the public, these parking spaces are used mainly by the City of Liberty and Clay County staff, which includes members of law enforcement, judges, and jurors. Overflow parking is available to jurors on days court is in session in a surface parking lot south of Mill Street (Site E).

## RECOMMENDATION: PUBLIC PARKING GARAGE

Being that Site D is fully publicly owned, it is an ideal location for a public parking structure that would substantially increase the amount of parking available downtown. The site could accommodate a three-to-five story structure holding at least 575 parking spaces.

Because this parking structure would be used for parking for judicial personnel, the garage should include features to ensure the safety of these employees. Things like additional lighting, a raised and painted crosswalk connecting the government complex to the parking structure, and other placemaking amenities should be included. Additional descriptions of these types of amenities are included in the parking section that follows.

Included in the parking garage should also be commercial spaces on both the north and south sides of the structure to house retail shops or restaurants. Site D also offers the opportunity for a public plaza at the northeast corner of the site at E. Kansas St. and S. Missouri St. and will provide a community space to gather and host events, as well as a space for restaurants located within Site D to use for outdoor dining. This public space can also be activated in the evening and play a role in transitioning Downtown to a day-and-night district. This increased outdoor activation will encourage new residents to spend time outside, which will result in more active streetscape. This desire was stated by many during the engagement phase of this planning process and providing a public space for these types of events would create a multi-purpose vision for the site. Site D could also be home to a public restroom maintained by the City of Liberty that is available for use during certain advertised hours and public events.





# SITE D





# SITE E

# PHASING

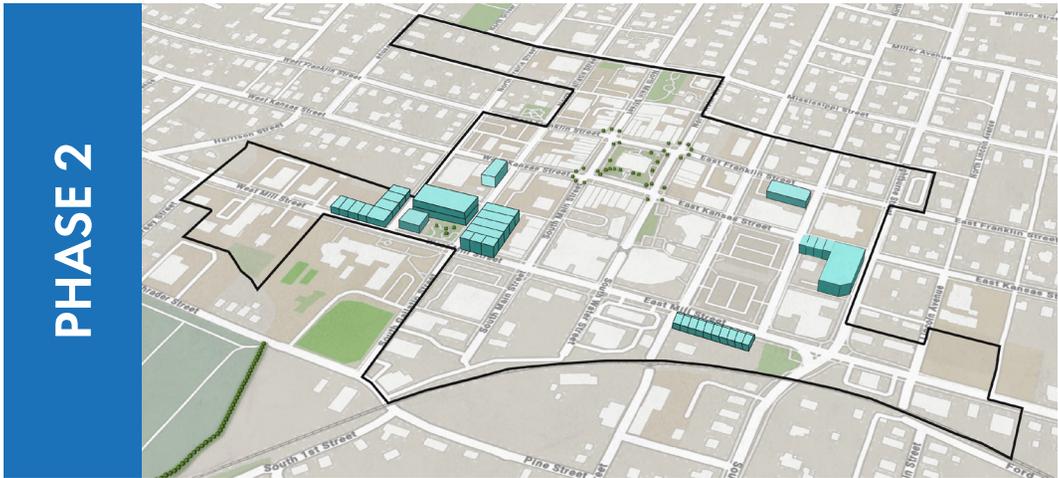
The phasing plan recommends a strategy that takes advantage of current property ownership and momentum, as well as considers parking replacement to ensure enough public parking is available throughout the infill development process. Future phases rely on the completion of the infill development projects in the first phase and the assumption that these early phase projects generate a certain degree of interest and success. Projects can occur out of order based on market demand, though an effort to build residential density should be prioritized as the additional residents will help to support future commercial development. If additional infill opportunities arise due to the demolition of a building or other market factors, future development throughout the Downtown area should be constructed in a way that is compatible with the overall vision for Downtown.

The first phase is comprised of catalytic projects on parcels owned by the City, County or a motivated developer. These areas are ready for development and with effort and investment, will likely redevelop in the next five years. These are projects that are in high traffic, highly visible areas of Downtown. Most of these first phase projects are focused on building residential density to increase the number of people in the Downtown area on a daily basis. This new population of people will be necessary to support commercial uses developed in future phases.



Infill projects recommended in the second phase allow for some surface parking to be maintained while phase one projects are completed. To accomplish these projects, there is some additional work, related to either land clearance or acquisition of parcels before infill development can occur. There was also consideration around grouping projects for density and maximum impact. Like Phase 1 projects, these projects are also in high-traffic, highly visible areas of downtown.

The third phase includes areas that are susceptible to long range change. As infill development occurs in phase one and two, there will be more economic pressure to redevelop additional areas of downtown. These are areas that make sense for redevelopment due to their incompatibility with downtown's long-term goals. This incompatibility includes things like surface parking lots in front of the buildings, a lack of historic architecture, or subpar building quality.



# PARKING

There are currently 1,530 parking spots downtown. 1,150 of these parking spots are on surface parking lots and 380 of these parking spots are on the street. Infill development recommended in Phase 1 would replace 277 surface parking spaces, but through the development of two parking structures and surface parking for Site A, approximately 900 parking spaces would be added, which is a net gain of approximately 623 additional parking spaces in the Downtown. This will increase the total number of parking spaces to approximately 2,153, which is a 40% increase in parking that should accommodate the increased residential density and visitation trends recommended in this plan.

The City of Liberty has no parking requirements in the Central Business District (CBD), which encompasses most of the study area. No matter the number of spaces, the parking supply should be managed, and limits enforced to give visitors ample opportunity to visit the unique stores and restaurants around the square or take care of business with the County, City, or area businesses. This will decrease long-term on-street parking by employees, business owners, and residents and ensures a well-managed parking network. Time limits or pricing of parking can be used to limit long-term on-street parking and incentivize parking in garages that offer longer and less expensive parking options.

If limits on the amount of time is the approach selected by the City, it is recommended that a parking attendant monitor parking and write parking tickets for cars not in compliance with the stated provisions.

If pricing of parking is the approach selected by the City, "smart parking technology" can provide users with a variety of payment options and options for extending their stay. Making the process of paying for parking as simple as possible is important. Real-time information can help drivers locate spaces efficiently. While some people will try to avoid paying for parking, there are people who value their time and would prefer to pay to park if it means that they can get to their destination more quickly.

Once parking structures are built, they should be available to use for a longer period and/or for a lesser cost than on-street parking. Wayfinding signs should be added around downtown to ensure people know that there are other parking options more conducive to long-term parking than on-street parking. Real-time signage can be added to the entrances of parking garages to let potential customers know how many spots are available and on what floor they are located.



## PARKING SAFETY

Since the proposed parking structure will mainly accommodate judicial personnel, it is crucial to incorporate safety features tailored to their needs. Considerations should include enhanced lighting, a raised and painted crosswalk linking the government complex to the parking facility, and various placemaking amenities designed to bolster security. Further details on these safety features and amenities can be found listed below.

- **Lighting:** Install overhead light posts, lighting at crosswalks, and low-level pedestrian lighting to ensure visibility 24 hours a day. This lighting should cover the entire crosswalk and sidewalk to ensure pedestrian safety. The city should also consider light posts equipped with emergency help buttons.
- **Bollards:** Use remote-controlled or manual bollards to provide a protected buffer for the crosswalk during specific times. These bollards can stop traffic entirely and are removable, allowing for road access when needed or easy replacement if damaged.
- **Raised Pedestrian Crossings:** Install raised pedestrian crossings to enhance visibility for pedestrians. The design should feature striped markings, lighting, and traffic-calming elements like curb bump-outs to boost driver awareness of the crossing.
- **Pedestrian Bridges:** Construct either enclosed or open pedestrian bridges to provide direct access between structures without disrupting traffic flow below.
- **Security Grill Gates:** Use security grills or façade screens on all parking floors to conceal the structure and offer protection. Consider options such as remote-controlled entrance systems, guarded entries, or card readers for added security.
- **Security Cameras:** Install both interior and exterior security cameras for comprehensive surveillance.
- **Separate Secure Parking:** Designate a separate entrance and parking spots with additional security measures for enhanced protection for judicial personnel. This area should have a secure gated entrance.



## CONNECTIVITY

Downtown Liberty is a dense, compact town center, which makes it inherently walkable. As Liberty contemplates infill development in Downtown that will build the residential density and increase the number of residents in the area, the infrastructure that supports connectivity, walkability, and accessibility needs to be maintained and, in some cases, improved. Sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian-lighting, and street furniture all need to be assessed and improved where needed to ensure safe passage from one location to another. The infrastructure to safely bike downtown also needs to be considered and improved. This includes amenities like bike lanes, bike racks, and repair stations that allow riders to maintain their bike and add air to the tires.

As development occurs to the south of Mill Street, traffic calming efforts and additions to the infrastructure that increase the safety and perception of safety for pedestrians trying to cross the street. Learnings from the Mill Street Experiment can be applied to better connect the side of the study area south of Mill Street.

The topography of downtown also makes efforts to build a walkable and accessible community, a challenge due to changes in slope in places. Included below are some recommendations to address the topography.

- **Sloped Walkways and Stairs:** Create sloped walkways, stairs, or ramps that blend with the landscape, making it easier for pedestrians to navigate the hills. Ensure these paths are well-lit, properly maintained, and accessible to people of all abilities.
- **Landscaping and Green Infrastructure:** Incorporate greenery, pocket parks, or rest areas along the pathways. Utilize landscaping to create terraced areas, providing visual interest while offering spots for pedestrians to rest.
- **Mixed-Use Development and Destination Points:** Encourage mixed-use development to concentrate amenities, shops, restaurants, and workplaces in accessible clusters. Design these areas as destination points to attract pedestrians and reduce the need for uphill walks for daily needs.
- **Plazas and Gathering Spaces:** Design plazas and gathering spaces at strategic points along the hilly areas. These spaces can serve as meeting points, resting areas, or venues for community events, enhancing the overall pedestrian experience.

- **Wayfinding and Signage:** Implement clear and visible signage, maps, and wayfinding tools to guide pedestrians through the downtown area. Use signage to highlight accessible routes and points of interest.
- **Traffic Management and Calming:** Implement traffic calming measures, such as bump outs, raised crosswalks, or narrower streets, to slow down vehicular traffic (especially on downhill) and prioritize pedestrian safety.
- **Bicycle Infrastructure:** Develop bike lanes or bike-sharing programs to encourage cycling as an alternative mode of transportation for navigating hilly terrain.

Downtown Liberty is currently comprised of many one-way streets, which can encourage drivers to travel faster and can play a role in traffic confusion and impact pedestrian safety. As the residential density grows Downtown, additional study is recommended to understand if roadway design configurations need to be adjusted.



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LAY COUNTY

MAIN STREET  
Goods AND Goodies

Huey's  
On The Border

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# INFILL GOALS & STRATEGIES

# OVERVIEW

This plan uses a goals and strategies framework to support implementation of the recommendations included. To this end, goals and strategies intended to inform and guide decisions that further plan implementation are included. Goals are the “what” to be achieved to successfully achieve and sustain infill development in Downtown Liberty. The strategies are the “how” to achieve the goals.

<b>GOAL 1: DOWNTOWN LIBERTY HAS A WELL-MAINTAINED HISTORIC CORE.</b>	
<b>STRATEGY 1.1</b>	Promote the process and benefits of historic rehabilitation and continued property maintenance.
<b>STRATEGY 1.2</b>	Leverage existing incentives and explore creation of new incentives to improve Downtown facades and facilitate other building improvements.

<b>GOAL 2: DOWNTOWN LIBERTY ENCOURAGES NEW DEVELOPMENT THAT BLENDS SEAMLESSLY INTO HISTORIC CORE AND NEIGHBORING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.</b>	
<b>STRATEGY 2.1</b>	Update zoning to encourage infill development in alignment with future land use plan and to ensure new infill development is compatible with the aesthetics of a historic downtown.
<b>STRATEGY 2.2</b>	Create design guidelines that allow for infill development that compliments the existing historic character of Downtown and neighboring residential neighborhoods, while promoting inclusion of modern amenities (e.g., rooftop activation, build outs that support the needs of modern restaurants).
<b>STRATEGY 2.3</b>	Consider implementing height regulations for properties adjacent to historic residential neighborhoods.

**GOAL 3: DOWNTOWN LIBERTY HAS INCREASED RESIDENTIAL DENSITY AND AMENITIES TO SERVE THAT RESIDENTIAL POPULATION.**

<b>STRATEGY 3.1</b>	Encourage development on the upper floors of Downtown buildings.
<b>STRATEGY 3.2</b>	Support new infill development that includes an active first floor and residential uses above.
<b>STRATEGY 3.3</b>	Encourage development that includes retail or other services for Downtown and near-neighborhood residents.
<b>STRATEGY 3.4</b>	Encourage infill development of multi-family housing options.

**GOAL 4: DOWNTOWN LIBERTY IS AN ATTRACTIVE LOCATION FOR NEW BUSINESSES, DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS.**

<b>STRATEGY 4.1</b>	Incentivize improvements to properties by increasing the promotion and use of the existing 353 Downtown Commercial Property Tax Abatement Program.
<b>STRATEGY 4.2</b>	Explore the creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District to capture increases in property and sales taxes from new development in advance of new development.
<b>STRATEGY 4.3</b>	Leverage the current Community Improvement District (CID) to provide a wider variety of marketing and business attraction services.

**GOAL 5: DOWNTOWN WILL HAVE SUFFICIENT PARKING TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES, RESIDENTS, AND VISITORS DAY-TO-DAY, AND DURING EVENTS.**

<b>STRATEGY 5.1</b>	Investigate the cost and potential partnerships for building one-to-two parking structures in identified areas.
<b>STRATEGY 5.2</b>	Explore the creation of a Transportation Development District (TDD) to fund parking infrastructure.
<b>STRATEGY 5.3</b>	Implement ways to ensure judges and public officials are safe between their offices and parking structure.
<b>STRATEGY 5.4</b>	Utilize wayfinding to direct people to and from available parking areas and their destinations.
<b>STRATEGY 5.5</b>	Add signage on public parking facilities to maximize visibility.
<b>STRATEGY 5.6</b>	Implement a parking enforcement process to decrease long-term on-street parking and ensure a well managed parking network.

**GOAL 6: DOWNTOWN IS A VIBRANT MIXED-USE DISTRICT THAT IS SAFE AND INVITING FROM DAY TO NIGHT.**

<b>STRATEGY 6.1</b>	Offer incentives to encourage outdoor dining and entertainment spaces as part of new development or redevelopment projects.
<b>STRATEGY 6.2</b>	Construct a community plaza at the southeast corner of E. Kansas St. and S. Missouri St. to facilitate outdoor dining and community gatherings.
<b>STRATEGY 6.3</b>	Attract new restaurants to Downtown, striving for a diverse mix of daytime and evening options.
<b>STRATEGY 6.4</b>	Consider future options for public restrooms in Downtown including a city-built facility or partnerships with building owners to allow public access.
<b>STRATEGY 6.5</b>	Improve wayfinding and lighting to increase walkability, safety, accessibility, especially in periods of low light.
<b>STRATEGY 6.6</b>	Improve the pedestrian connection and traffic calming measures across Mill Street to better connect the north and south nodes of Downtown and ensure safe crossing experience for all users, including students.



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