



Workshop Memo

To City of Airway Heights, City Council & Planning Commission
From: Rachel Granrath, Senior Planner SCJ Alliance
Date: September 23, 2020
Subject Downtown Strategic Plan Joint Commission Workshop

Overview

The City of Airway Heights received a \$50,000.00 grant from the Department of Commerce to enhance the housing and mixed use development downtown and along US Hwy 2. This funding will result in a Downtown Strategic Plan to guide new standards and development within the downtown core and US-2.

The City has completed a variety of outreach efforts including a visioning workshop, virtual studio, visual preference survey, story website, presentation to West Plains Chamber of Commerce, social media and website postings.

The purpose of the Council and Planning Commission workshop is to gather feedback and input from elected and appointed officials regarding the community's preferred scenario, transformational priorities, and implementation actions. If you haven't already please read the project story website and take the survey by clicking on the link, listed below:

- ◆ Project Story website: <https://arcg.is/1vCbu5>
- ◆ Visual Preference Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DLKWYVP>

Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Final Downtown Scenario and Context Area Descriptions

Exhibit B: Draft Actions & Implementation

Context

The downtown plan calls for change. It suggests a near complete reconfiguration of the area's land uses and transportation system to achieve the type of livable, attractive, and dynamic place envisioned in the comprehensive plan and US-2 corridor plan. The plan recognizes that the transformation will likely occur over time, be incremental and iterative, and will unfold as the product of individual investment decisions. The concept establishes a framework within which these decisions can occur, influencing them and coordinating them to produce the place Airway Heights needs.

Guiding principles

- **Identity:** Make this part of town feel like a hometown
- **Livability:** Provide a range of housing options that are affordable and convenient to current and new residents.
- **Traffic safety:** Keep people safe, not just drivers.
- **Traffic flow:** Ensure US-2 maintains flow & efficiency
- **Economic Development:** Help local businesses prosper, existing and new
- **Connections:** Invite northern neighborhoods into district
- **Use the space we have:** Take advantage of industrial landscape to the south
- **Placemaking:** Enhance the experience of being in the place, making it attractive as a residential choice
- **Multimodal:** Transportation system serves all modes
- **Transformation:** Downtown will experience a transformation that includes new mixed uses and a development intensity that creates a unique and livable downtown.

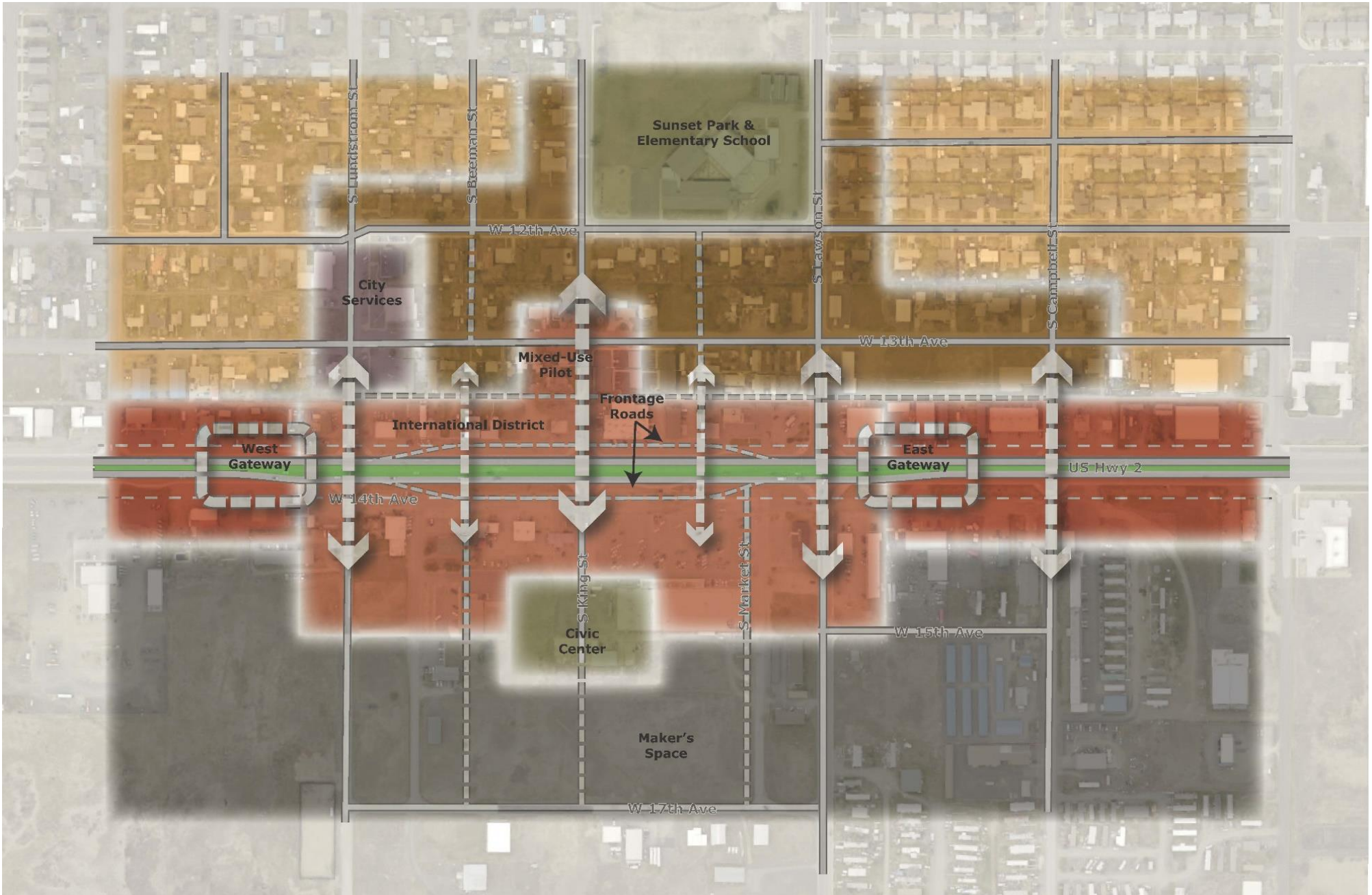


Figure 1: Downtown Airway Heights Final Scenario

Concept Map Areas/ Highlights

The major elements of this plan include some profound action, initiating changes to the landscape that will permit development responses in sync with this plan. The Concept Map shows where these major elements will be located, and approximations of how different land uses could be configured. The following sections describe each of these context areas and plan highlights.



Downtown Core

Key ideas: Density, economic core, cultural identity, mixed-use development, street transformations

US-2 corridor reconfiguration

Implementing Actions: 1.1, 3.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

As a refinement to Context Area 4 in the US-2 corridor plan, the downtown plan suggests that US-2 between Campbell and Lundstrom be completely reimagined, incorporating the 14th Ave right of way as needed to accommodate the roadway's requirements and offering the balance as available for development. The new design slows traffic speed on the four through-lanes but retains efficiency of flow, assuring necessary mobility while also accommodating street crossings by pedestrians and cyclists. The new roadway design includes frontage-style accesses for businesses lining the highway, with parking, landscaping and opportunities for outdoor dining and activities.



Pedestrian crossing enhancements

Implementing Actions: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3



Primary pedestrian crossings of US will be enhanced at the intersections of US-2 & Lundstrom St, US -2 & King St, and US-2 & Lawson St. All US-2 crossing treatments will depend on coordination with WSDOT, and treatments could range from flashing beacons with pedestrian islands, similar to existing mid-block crossings in the area, fully signalized intersections with traffic lights, and roundabouts with designated crosswalks.

Secondary pedestrian crossings will also be enhanced. Secondary crossings will consist of flashing overhead beacons, crosswalks, and a pedestrian island in the center turn lane or median. These will be offered mid-block between Lundstrom St and King St, and between King St and Lawson St. Crossing treatment will also be made to the intersection of US-2 and Campbell St.

King Street enhancement

Implementing Actions: 1.1, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 5.2, 5.3

King Street will transform into a mixed-use corridor on either side of US-2. To the north of US-2, King Street will serve as downtown’s “Main Street”, where higher-intensity and mixed use developments line the street and the pedestrian environment is made comfortable through the presence of outdoor restaurant patios and on-street parking. To the south of US-2, King Street will serve as an entrance to the new civic space which will offer community gathering spaces such as parks and plazas, and potentially a local market.

On King Street, local traffic circulates slowly but efficiently, requiring new intersection treatment at US-2 and King St. to not only ease traffic speed, but also allow better flow along King Street for both vehicles and pedestrians.

International District

Implementing Actions: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4

Airway Heights already consists of many great restaurants that specialize in international cuisines, and many of those businesses are a vital foundation to the city’s culture and economy. Establishing an international district in Downtown Airway Heights would both capitalize on the existing strengths of the area and provide a cohesive identity for downtown. The international district would line the north side of US-2 between King St and Lawson St, and potentially extend northward on King St.

The international district would encourage a culturally rich downtown, where diversity in Airway Heights is celebrated and reflected in a range of dining and cuisine options, public art, and cultural services such as a cultural center. The City could also explore the opportunity to create a Sister Cities relationship with a range of international cities, providing new opportunities for cross-cultural partnerships.

Mixed Use Pilot Project

Implementing Actions: 1.3, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4

New housing options will be provided in the form of mixed-use development within the downtown core zone, as allowed by current zoning and overlay restrictions. Mixed use development in downtown will help foster an active and vibrant city core where people both live and work, also helping to bolster public safety and the economy.

A mixed-use pilot project would help downtown transition toward the vision proposed in this plan. The City can partner with other local agencies and private entities to develop a mixed-use building in downtown Airway Heights that focuses on experience-based living.



This mixed-use, experience-based project should include easy access to businesses and services nearby, access to public transit, bike, and pedestrian routes, and access to public open space and parks. Therefore, it is important to locate such a project in a central, strategic location, such as along King St to the north of US-2, or along 13th Ave behind the International District.

A successful mixed-use pilot project would bring new energy and life to downtown Airway Heights and could spark further interest in more mixed-use development in the area.



Downtown Transitions

Key ideas: Traffic calming, increasing land use intensity, pedestrian improvements

Highway Commercial

Implementing Actions: 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 5.1, 5.3

These transition areas align with Context Areas 3 and 5 from the US-2 Corridor Plan, which call for a transition zone between the high-speed highway environment along US-2 and the downtown core between Lundstrom and Lawson. These transition zones will consist of changes to the roadway, where the highway becomes a boulevard with a median that could contain vegetation, trees, and public art as well as supply space for pedestrian islands that will continue through the downtown core.

Development density will increase through these transition zones into downtown. Businesses along the highway in these transition areas will line the street and have parking lots on the side or behind buildings.

Gateways

Implementing Actions: 1.2, 1.4, 1.5



Entering downtown Airway Heights will be clearly defined by two gateways on either side of downtown. These gateways will announce an arrival in downtown Airway Heights by incorporating signage, public art, and unique landscaping. It will also be at these locations that the character of US-2 changes even more, finalizing the transition from a more typical highway to a downtown boulevard. Traffic will slow at these points, and the street environment will change to prioritize pedestrians and bicycles and north-south movement across US-2.



Mixed Residential

Key ideas: Medium density, townhomes & apartments, street improvements

Implementing Actions: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 5.2

Increasing housing density and providing a range of housing options will play a vital role in a vibrant downtown atmosphere. This plan calls for higher-intensity housing types such as townhomes and apartments on the northern perimeter of the downtown commercial zone. These housing types will line 13th Avenue on either side of King Street and extend to the north, surrounding Sunset Park on both sides. This will provide for an easy transition between the higher intensity downtown development and the existing single-family neighborhoods to the north. Housing options should include opportunities for affordable housing.



Single-Family Residential

Key ideas: Low density development, improved connection, and access to downtown

Implementing Actions: 1.3, 1.5

Single-family residential zones are already established in the neighborhoods north of US-2. While portions of these neighborhoods are designated for more intense change, the outer edges of the downtown subarea will remain largely untouched. These neighborhoods will still play an active role for downtown because many of these homes are still within walking distance of downtown. These neighborhoods should maintain streets where traffic is slow and local, and maintain sidewalks with street crossings that provide safe routes for pedestrians.



City Services

Key ideas: City hall, library, fire station, other city services

Implementing Actions: 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 3.4

City services will remain where they are at, for now. The block along Lundstrom St between 12th and 13th is the location of City Hall, the public library, the fire department, the council chambers, and the municipal court. While much of this area will remain as it is, some considerations for improvement include new sidewalks and street trees along the west side of Lundstrom and development of the city-owned parcel just south of the fire department into a new public service building or public outdoor space. At some point in the future, some of these services may migrate to a new Civic Center on the south side of King Street.



Public Space

Key ideas: Schools, parks, plazas, and other public & community services

Sunset Park Master Plan

Implementing Actions: 4.2, 4.3

Sunset Park on the northern edge of downtown offers an opportunity for community open space that serves the higher intensity housing north of US-2. Already one of the city's major parks, Sunset has the potential to be a premiere feature of downtown Airway Heights. This plan recommends the city engage in a master planning project for Sunset Park to ensure facilities and levels of service are able to match the needs of the growing downtown population.

Civic Center Concept

Implementing Actions: 4.1, 4.2

The Civic Center located at the southern end of downtown will provide a central gathering and public space for Airway Heights. This space will incorporate a central plaza for hosting events, a community garden, a multi-purpose space that could host a local market, an art display space, or an indoor event space. This would also be an ideal location for a future City Hall complex, providing an opportunity for a more central and accessible location for city services.

The Civic Center's central location between the downtown core and the maker's space make it an ideal location for bringing a community and its economy together. This space will represent the best that the community has to offer, both bringing together various economic sectors and offering a comfortable space where all are welcome to linger and talk with their neighbors.



Creative Industrial/Manufacturing

Key ideas: Larger lot sizes, creative economy, artisan space, light industrial

Maker's Space

Implementing Actions: 1.2, 2.1

The Maker's Space is located south of the downtown core and Civic Space. Following King Street to the south, the downtown area will make a transition to the established light industrial nature representing much of the south side of town.

The Maker's Space will provide an ideal location close to downtown, the highway, and the local market, for innovative businesses that need larger spaces to create and produce. This space will be an ideal location for artist studios, artisan food production, wineries & craft breweries, and light manufacturing.



Other/General

Utilities & Infrastructure

Implementing Actions: 3.3, 3.5

To support the intensified development, Airway Heights must start improving utility availability and capacity in the downtown area. For example, the lack of availability of sanitary sewer on the south side of US-2 is an impediment to development. Additionally, water, wastewater, and storm drainage systems will need improvement to accommodate more intense development.

This plan suggests the city engage in a utility improvement program to map out where utilities are needed, what improvements would help support more intense development, and when such improvements can be made. The utility improvement program should be coordinated with the city's transportation improvement program to coordinate funding between utility and transportation improvements so improving one will improve the other.

This study and subsequent program schedule will allow development to occur in planned phases and will allow the city to prioritize where more intense development occurs first. This phasing will be important to creating a vibrant downtown core that slowly transitions to less intense development on all sides.

Business Empowerment Program

Implementing Actions: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

This plan recommends that the City engage in a business development and empowerment program to help foster a vibrant business community in Downtown Airway Heights. This program should explore ways to help existing businesses prosper in the new downtown environment. Providing incentives to improve façades, creating assistance programs for improving buildings and street fronts, and connecting businesses with opportunities can help empower local businesses and support them through the changes that will occur in downtown. A program like this will also attract new businesses that want to take advantage of the prosperous, opportunity-filled business market in downtown Airway Heights.



Actions & Implementation

Any good plan needs to have a way to ‘get it done.’ The following pages illustrate implementation measures for the five subsequent ‘transformational priorities.’ Through community outreach, surveys, workshops, studios and visioning exercises the following priorities were identified as transformative measures to create a thriving downtown for Airway Heights.

Transformational priorities

1. Invest in drastic streetscape improvements and beautification efforts.
2. Integrate a mixture of housing options including affordable housing options.
3. Strengthen existing businesses and support reinvestment downtown
4. Create and improve collaborative, inclusive and safe public spaces
5. Develop safe crossings, multi-modal options, and improve US-2 to slow traffic through downtown.

Implementation Table Key:

The following tables are organized into the following sections:

#	Action Recommendation	Action Required	Policy Reference	Lead	Key Partners	Funding Sources	Cost	Timing
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- # is the Action #
- **Action Recommendation** is the recommendation description and details
- **Action Required** is a high level direction of the required action
- **Policy Reference** refers to adopted city plans that have informed the downtown strategic planning efforts and guide city and elected officials. The following plans have been incorporated and referenced as follows:
 - Comprehensive Plan Policy Directives = (CP)
 - US-2 Corridor Plan = (US2)
 - Airway Heights Art Plan = (AP)
- **Lead:** who leads the efforts? This is typically the city or city staff.
- **Key Partners:** who are the key partners on the efforts?
- **Funding Sources:** Examples for funding opportunities such as grants, partnerships, or programs.
- **Cost:** Organized into categories based on cost, in-kind, or policy initiatives.
 - \$ - \$0 (Policy)
 - \$ \$ - \$1–\$1,000,000
 - \$ \$ \$ - \$1,000,001–\$10,000,000
 - \$ \$ \$ \$ - \$10,000,00+
- **Timing:** organized on a sliding scape from short term to long term (left to right).



Actions/ Implementation Matrix

1. INVEST IN DRASTIC STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS AND BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS.								
#	Action Recommendation	Action Required	Policy Reference	Lead	Key Partners	Funding Sources	Cost	Timing
1.1	Develop green space along US-2 and King Street as a multi-purpose, safe public space.	Streetscape design efforts	US2; AP; CP	City	WSDOT; STA; SRTC	SRTS; CERB; Commerce; WSDOT	\$\$\$\$	← ● →
1.2	Establish a public art program with a downtown focus area. Investigate the feasibility of a public art on loan program.	Establish art program	AP; US2	City	Spokane Tribe; Kalispel Tribe; Schools	City; Tribes; Development improvements	\$\$-\$\$\$	← ● →
1.3	Review and update zoning overlay districts, such as an opportunity zone, to ensure design standards contribute to downtown development and success.	Code Review & Amendments	US2; CP	City	City Departments; development community	Commerce	\$\$	← ● →
1.4	Incorporate wayfinding and gateway signs to include art elements, environmental knowledge, and communicate a sense of arrival.	Wayfinding & gateway elements	AP; US2	City	City Departments; public art groups	City; Tribes; Community groups	\$\$\$	← ● →
1.5	Concentrate density in the downtown core while allowing surrounding areas to develop at a more moderate density.	Encourage transitions to downtown	CP; US2	City	City departments; property owners; development community	City	\$	← ● →



Figure 1: Examples of streetscape improvements and beautification efforts in downtowns

2. INTEGRATE A MIXTURE OF HOUSING OPTIONS INCLUDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS.

#	Action Recommendation	Action Required	Policy Reference	Lead	Key Partners	Funding Sources	Cost	Timing
2.1	Promote new development concepts in housing, retail, restaurants, and the arts, such as mixed use development, incubators, makers spaces, and other lower cost start up spaces for local entrepreneurs.	Establish flexibility for different development types	CP; US2; AP	City	City; Businesses; Chamber; Developers	Commerce; Better Block; CERB; Art non-profits	\$-\$\$	← ● →
2.2	Actively pursue and define housing developments within the downtown district and along US-2 that support young professionals, first-time homebuyers, and downsizing households.	Define and encourage diverse housing options	CP; US2; AP	City	City; Developers; Community	Commerce; Better Block; CERB; Art non-profits	\$-\$\$	← ● →
2.3	Ensure land use designations, zoning, subdivision, and development standards are supportive of mixed housing and downtown redevelopment.	Code amendments	CP; US2	City	City; Developers; Community	Commerce	\$\$	← ● →
2.4	Evaluate the feasibility for a mixed Use housing pilot project.	Mixed use feasibility study	CP; US2	City	City; Chamber; Developers; Community	CERB; Commerce; Art non-profits	\$-\$\$	← ● →



Figure 2: Examples of housing options and mixed use

3. STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES AND SUPPORT REINVESTMENT DOWNTOWN.

#	Action Recommendation	Action Required	Policy Reference	Lead	Key Partners	Funding Sources	Cost	Timing
3.1	Capitalize and invest in existing business diversity and culture such as the variety of restaurants, colors, and ethnicity. Support an international district, colorful buildings, and use of public art downtown.	Support and enhance the diverse businesses & cultures	CP; US2	City	Chamber; Businesses	SBDA; CERB; Historic Preservation Trust; Main Street	\$-\$\$	← ● →
3.2	Evaluate parking strategies, surface lots, and opportunities for infill and redevelopment as appropriate.	Redevelop and enhance parking opportunities	CP; US2	City	City; Businesses; Developers	SBDA; CERB; Historic Preservation Trust; Main Street	\$	← ● →
3.3	Study infrastructure needs and funding for the downtown area south of US-2.	Funding infrastructure	CP; US2	City	City Departments	CERB grant; Commerce	\$-\$\$	← ● →
3.4	Leverage investment with grants, city funds, partnerships, and collaborate to foster downtown development, can be utilized for storefront improvement grants to local businesses.	Fund downtown improvements & establish storefront grants	US2; AP; CP	City	City Departments; Chamber; Businesses	SBDA; CERB; Historic Preservation Trust; Main Street	\$	← ● →
3.5	Study the benefits of vacating 14 th avenue as a stimulus to private redevelopment along US-2.	City led redevelopment	US2	City	City Departments; Developers; Businesses	CERB; Commerce; STA; SRTC; WSDOT	\$-\$\$\$	← ● →



Figure 3: Strengthen businesses and reinvest in downtown

4. CREATE AND IMPROVE COLLABORATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND SAFE PUBLIC SPACES.

#	Action Recommendation	Action Required	Policy Reference	Lead	Key Partners	Funding Sources	Cost	Timing
4.1	Study the development of a civic campus, non-profit or institutions development south of US-2.	Civic campus feasibility study	CP; AP; US2	Developer/ City	City; Development Community	CERB; Commerce; CBDG	\$-\$\$\$\$	←—————●————→
4.2	Encourage activation of more downtown public spaces, examples could include community gardens, trails, pocket parks, etc.	Public spaces as downtown develops	CP; AP; US2	City	Community; Tribes; City Departments	CBDG; CERB;	\$-\$\$	←●————→
4.3	Re-envision Sunset Park as a northern downtown anchor.	Revitalize Community park	US2	City	City Departments; Community	Commerce	\$\$	←●————→

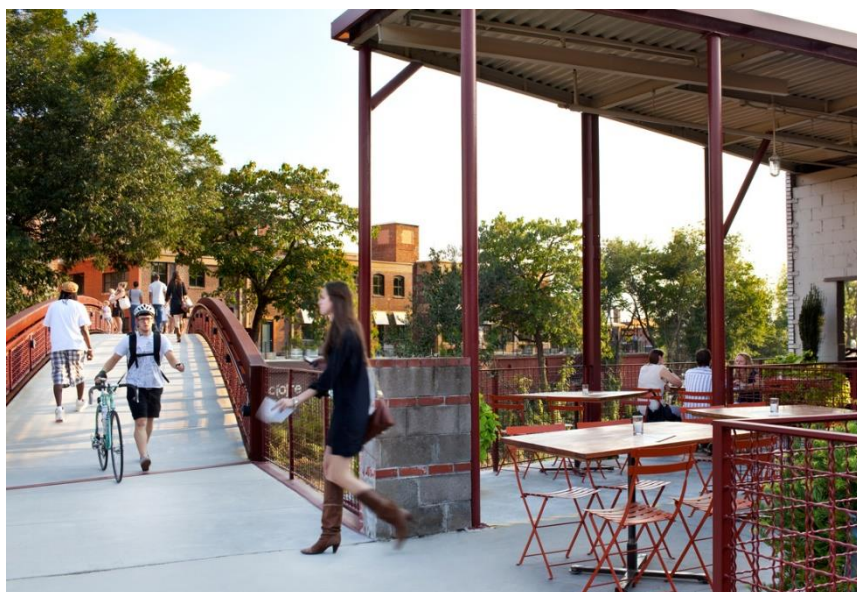


Figure 4: Examples of collaborative safe public spaces

5. DEVELOP SAFE CROSSINGS, MULTI-MODAL OPTIONS, AND IMPROVE US-2 TO SLOW TRAFFIC THROUGH DOWNTOWN.

#	Action Recommendation	Action Required	Policy Reference	Lead	Key Partners	Funding Sources	Cost	Timing
5.1	Collaborate with WSDOT on US-2 design to ensure slower traffic and multi-modal opportunities in the downtown core and corridor.	Streetscape design to slow traffic	CP; US2	City; WSDOT	WSDOT; STA; SRTC	SRTS; WSDOT funds	\$\$\$\$	← ● →
5.2	Establish connectivity and walkability north and south of US-2 so residents and visitors can safely explore both sides of downtown.	Design & develop safe crossings	CP; US2	City; WSDOT	City Departments; WSDOT; Community	SRTS; WSDOT funds; CERB	\$\$\$\$	← ● →
5.3	Utilize greenspace, bollards, and safe crossing elements to separate the street from sidewalks, open spaces, and trails.	Design & install green pedestrian spaces	CP; US2; AP	City	City Departments; WSDOT; Community	SRTS; WSDOT funds; CERB	\$\$\$\$	← ● →



Figure 5: Examples of multi-modal improvements and safe crossings

Example Funding Sources

- <https://www.betterblock.org/> “Better Block”
- ArtSpace <https://www.artspace.org/> “makers space/ affordable artist housing”
- Safe Routes to School (SRTS)
- Washington Main Street Program
- Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) Grant
- Department of Commerce Grants
- Certified Local Government (CLG) Washington Trust for Historic Preservation
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Historic Tax Credits
- Building for the Arts Grants
- CDBG (Community Development Grant Programs)
- Indian Community Development Block Grant
- Brownfield Redevelopment Grants
- Downtown Improvement Districts
- Washington Small Business Development Center: WSBDC
- WSDOT public transportation grants