



FEBRUARY 2019

# CITY OF MOUNT VERNON DOWNTOWN PLAN

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The planning effort was guided by an active and engaged steering committee, which is listed below. The project steering committee reviewed draft ideas, concepts, and plans, and helped steer the project team in the direction of the final plan.*

**Bruce White**

Knox Community Hospital

**Carol Grubaugh**

Knox County Chamber of Commerce

**Carrie Hyman**

Main Street Mount Vernon

**Darrel Severns, Sharon Gearheart, Lori Totman**

Knox County

**Dr. Barney Cochran**

Mount Vernon Nazarene University

**Jan Reynolds**

Ariel Foundation

**Jeff Gottke**

Knox County Landmarks Foundation

**Jeffrey Harris**

Area Development Foundation

**Jennifer Odenweller**

Kenyon College / Ariel Foundation

**Jill Ballenger**

Happy Bean Coffee

**Kim M. Rose**

Critchfield, Critchfield & Johnston

**Lacie Blankenhorn, Brian Ball, Joel Daniels**

City of Mount Vernon

**Lisa Lloyd**

Community Foundation of Mount Vernon & Knox County

**Marilyn Davis, Stephen Rhoades, Debbie Boal**

Siemens Energy Inc.

**Mark Ramser**

Ohio Cumberland Gas

**Pat Crow, Justin Bauer-Cariens**

The Woodward Development Corporation

**Samantha Scoles**

Mount Vernon News

**Vickie Sant, Heather Brayshaw**

First Knox National Bank

**Vicki Maple**

Central Ohio Technical College

---

*This was graciously funded by a gift from the Ariel Foundation to preserve and enhance the quality of life for Mount Vernon residents.*

---

*This Plan was prepared by:*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
EXISTING CONDITIONS	15
TRENDS AND MARKET ANALYSIS	23
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS	33
PROJECT FOCUS AREAS	41
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	63
APPENDIX	81

An aerial photograph of a city intersection. In the center is a green space with several trees, some of which are yellow, suggesting autumn. Surrounding the green space are various buildings, including a large brick building with a clock tower on the right and a large white building on the left. The intersection is marked with white lines, and there are several cars and a truck visible. The text is overlaid on the central green space.

"BY FAR THE GREATEST AND MOST ADMIRABLE FORM OF  
WISDOM IS THAT NEED TO PLAN AND BEAUTIFY CITIES AND  
HUMAN COMMUNITIES."

- Socrates

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Downtown Mount Vernon continues to evolve over the next 10-20 years, this Plan can and should serve as its guiding blueprint. The planning team, in close collaboration with local stakeholders, city leadership, and residents, have worked hard to develop a Plan that will elevate the quality of life for all of Mount Vernon's residents, visitors, and employees.

Through the public engagement process, and existing conditions and market analysis, three project focus areas – West High Street, the Downtown Square, and the Southern Gateway – were determined to be spaces that would benefit significantly from an improved urban design. Each of the three focus areas in this Plan has an analysis of the urban design strengths and deficiencies, recommended design solutions that improve the walkability, comfort, and image of these spaces, along with projected cost estimates to give local leadership an informed understanding of the projects' feasibility.

Recommended design strategies are a critical component to improving Downtown's quality of life – a robust policy framework is equally as important. This plan contains a number of policy recommendations. The first is a recommended set of design guidelines. Design guidelines function as a supplement to the City's zoning code, while preserving and enhancing the recent investments in the Downtown. The second is a set of parking strategies. Safe, accessible parking is critical to supporting the businesses and activity of the Downtown; the recommended strategies will improve the ease and functionality of parking while ensuring that surface parking lots don't detract from the walkability and energy that already exists Downtown.

Through a technical analysis, robust engagement process, and close collaboration with those that know Mount Vernon best, this Plan serves as the vision for Downtown Mount Vernon over the next 10-20 years.



# INTRODUCTION

## WHY PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN?

Across the country, historic downtowns define the communities in which they are located. They are a home for residents, young and old, a focal point of work and culture, and a central gathering and event space. In short, downtowns are the hearts and souls of their communities.

In the past few years, Mount Vernon residents have witnessed exciting changes, including:

- The Kenyon College campus expansion to South Main Street,
- The opening of the Grand Hotel and Ariel-Foundation Park
- The ongoing development of the Knox Labs makerspace
- The restoration of Veterans Hall and Memorial Ballroom, Knox County Memorial Building

Now is the time for Downtown to think critically about its future. How can Downtown leverage this progress to attract future public and private development? What do Mount Vernon residents and employees want this future development to look like? And how might a strategy to move Downtown forward be implemented?

The Mount Vernon Downtown Plan reflects your answers to these questions. The planning process has yielded a strategy for the Downtown that is balanced, implementable, and supported by the local community, creating a unique and focused vision to move Downtown Mount Vernon forward in the next 10 to 20 years.

## PLAN INPUTS

To develop such a strategy, the planning effort encompassed four types of analysis. A review of existing conditions helped the planning team understanding the issues and opportunities facing Downtown development. A broad market analysis helped paint a realistic picture of the type of development Downtown Mount Vernon can expect. An examination of trends and best practices allowed the planning team to apply what has worked elsewhere to Mount Vernon. Finally, a thorough public engagement process helped generate ideas, educate the public, and develop a plan that has the support of the Mount Vernon community.



**Existing Conditions**



**Market Analysis**



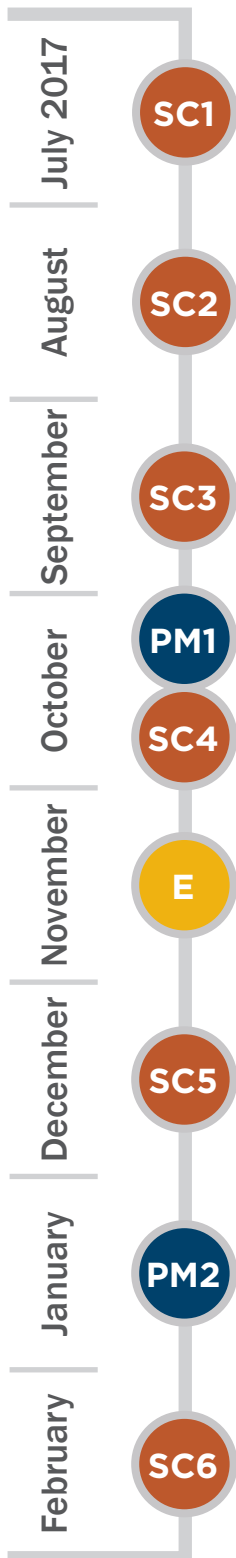
**Best Practices**



**Public Engagement**

# PLAN SCHEDULE & PARTNERS

## SCHEDULE



## PARTNERS

### The Local Leadership

The Area Development Foundation, Inc. and Mount Vernon city staff initiated and guided the planning effort.

### The Steering Committee

An engaged group of Downtown stakeholders, including elected officials, business owners, and employees, guided both the planning process and the Plan's recommendations.

### The General Public

The planning team held two public workshops to understand what the community would like to see as a project outcome. A snapshot of the public engagement summary is included in this Plan.

### The Planning Team

OHM Advisors and MS Consultants led the planning team. OHM Advisors is an integrated planning, architecture, and engineering firm specializing in community engagement and urban design. MS Consultants provided both market analysis and transportation engineering support and guidance throughout the development of the Plan's recommendations.

### *Engineering Collaboration with GPD Group*

Additionally, the Planning Team coordinated the project's efforts with a concurrent transportation study led by the GPD Group. This study sought to provide transportation solutions related to truck routing throughout the Downtown.

-  **Steering Committee Meetings**
-  **Public Meetings**
-  **Engineering Collaboration**

# HOW TO USE THE PLAN & PLAN PURPOSE

*The Plan is meant to serve as a working document to guide community stakeholders to create local change in Downtown Mount Vernon. Specifically, the Plan offers two different types of recommendations (capital improvements projects and policy tools), that have different forms of implementation.*

## PROJECT FOCUS AREAS CATALYST PROJECTS

Capital improvements projects give community leaders and the public a visual understanding of what catalyst projects may look like in the future. Many of the concepts in this Plan are designed to leverage further private development throughout Mount Vernon, while improving the Downtown's image, quality of life, and transportation network. These projects come with approximate cost estimates to help give City leaders an understanding of their feasibility.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A strong policy framework is critical to improving the quality of life in Downtown Mount Vernon--and helping to implement some of the catalyst projects outlined in this Plan. This Plan offers recommended design guidelines, action steps to improve the parking in Downtown, and other policies that will help strengthen and support the built environment and the functionality of Downtown.



## PLAN PURPOSE

### GUIDE...

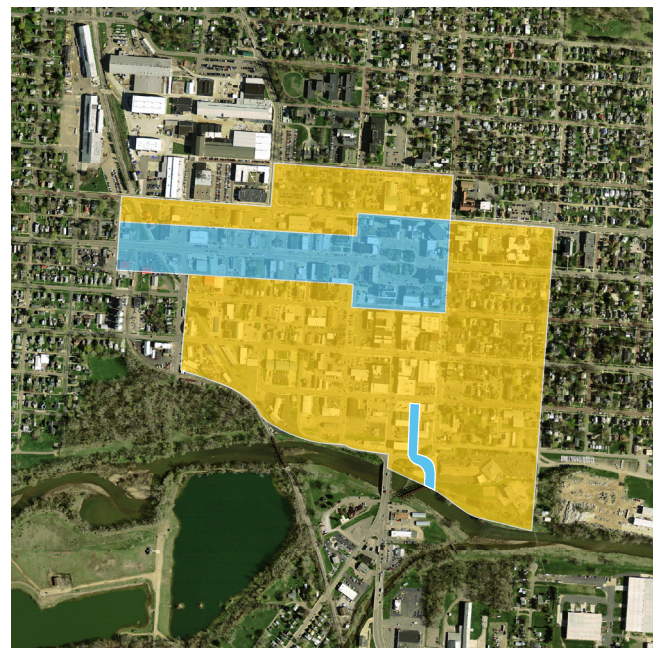
...the community in evaluating proposed public, private, or joint projects.

### INFORM...

...current and prospective property owners, as well as developers, on desirable growth patterns and catalyst projects.

### MEASURE...

...progress and effectiveness of projects in Downtown Mount Vernon to ensure they strengthen the quality of life in Downtown.



## REGIONAL CONTEXT

Downtown Mount Vernon is centrally located in Ohio and just a short drive to Ohio's major cities. Historically, this location has helped attract companies, like Siemens, to the City. Moving forward, Mount Vernon's location should continue to be used to attract business and residential development. Specifically, Mount Vernon and Knox County's geographic advantages include:

- Proximity to a Central Ohio region that continues to grow
- Relatively convenient access to the Interstate system



Figure 1 - Context

# LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

*Mount Vernon is home to a number of institutions and employers that contribute to the City's vibrancy, culture, and identity. Three institutions of higher education promote an environment of learning, creativity, and intellectual growth. The Ariel Corporation provides a manufacturing base for the community, and the planned repositioning of the Siemens industrial site is intended to attract new companies and employees in the industrial sector. Finally, Knox Community Hospital provides 900 well-paying jobs in the healthcare field, and their new office on South Main Street is symbolic of a renewed commitment to Downtown Mount Vernon.*



*Kenyon College's Wright Center recently opened a campus building on S. Main Street in Downtown. It is an important part of the southern gateway in Downtown, an area which is addressed with some preliminary design recommendations.*



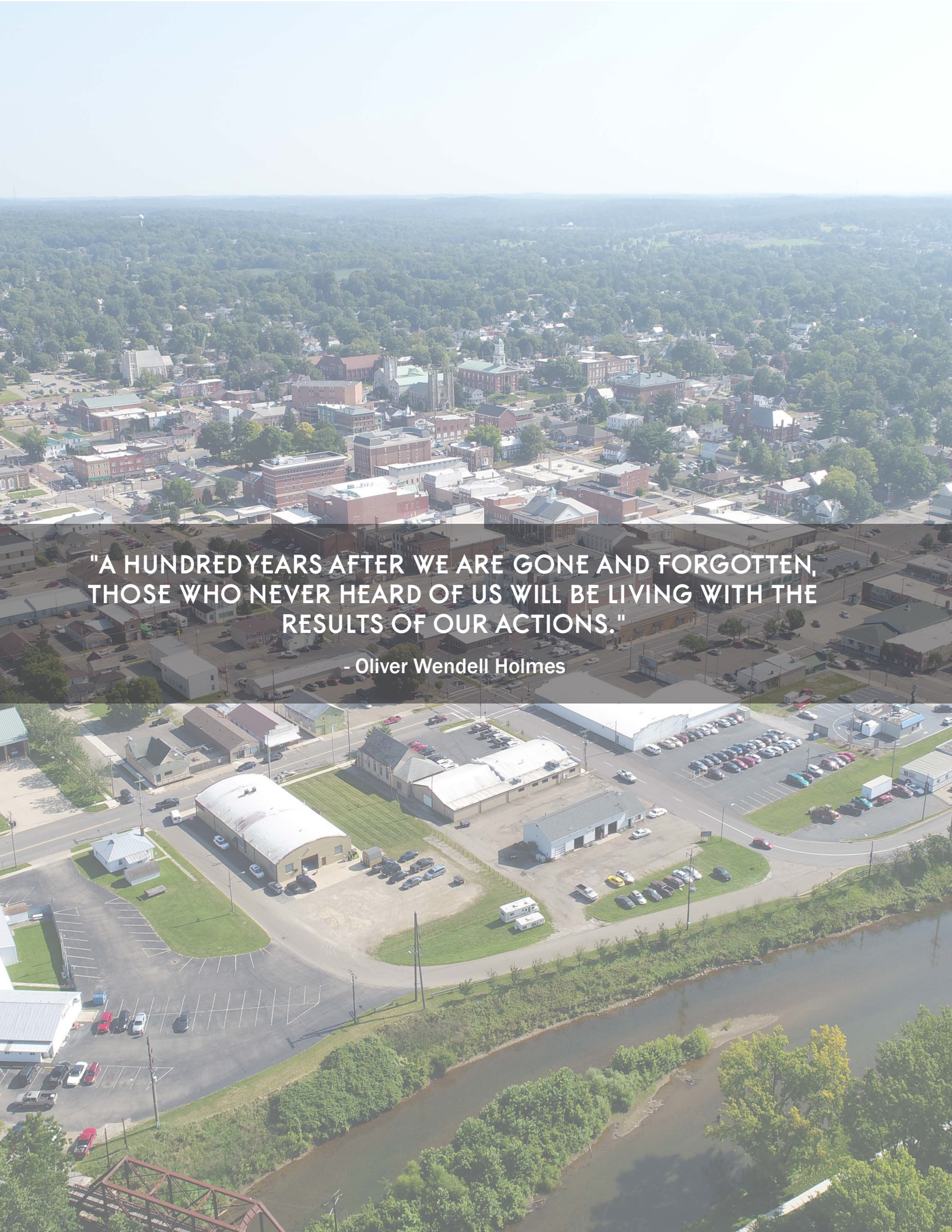
*Efforts are underway to reposition the Siemens industrial site as a hub for many companies and manufacturing activities. Recommendations for West High Street included in this Plan will help anchor development at this site.*



*Knox Community Hospital has approximately 900 employees in the Mount Vernon area. Finding ways to attract area employees to shop and live in Downtown is important to Downtown's success.*



*The new Grand Hotel on the Downtown Square plays host to out of town visitors. Design recommendations for the Downtown Square will bolster the urban environment around the hotel.*



"A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER WE ARE GONE AND FORGOTTEN,  
THOSE WHO NEVER HEARD OF US WILL BE LIVING WITH THE  
RESULTS OF OUR ACTIONS."

- Oliver Wendell Holmes



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## PROJECT STUDY AREA

The project study area encompasses a large portion of the commercial areas of Downtown Mount Vernon. Lewis Street is the natural western boundary of Downtown, marking the transition from residential neighborhoods to commercial development. The project study area extends north to the vacant Mount

Vernon Middle School site and east to McKenzie Street. To the south, the study area extends across the Kokosing River to the Ariel-Foundation Park, in order to include the southern gateway into Downtown, and a future potential connection with Ariel-Foundation Park.



Figure 2 - Project Study Area



# EXISTING ZONING

Property within the project study area is largely zoned Central Business District or General Business District. Recommended design guidelines are intended to supplement the zoning code to strengthen the character of the district while respecting property rights.

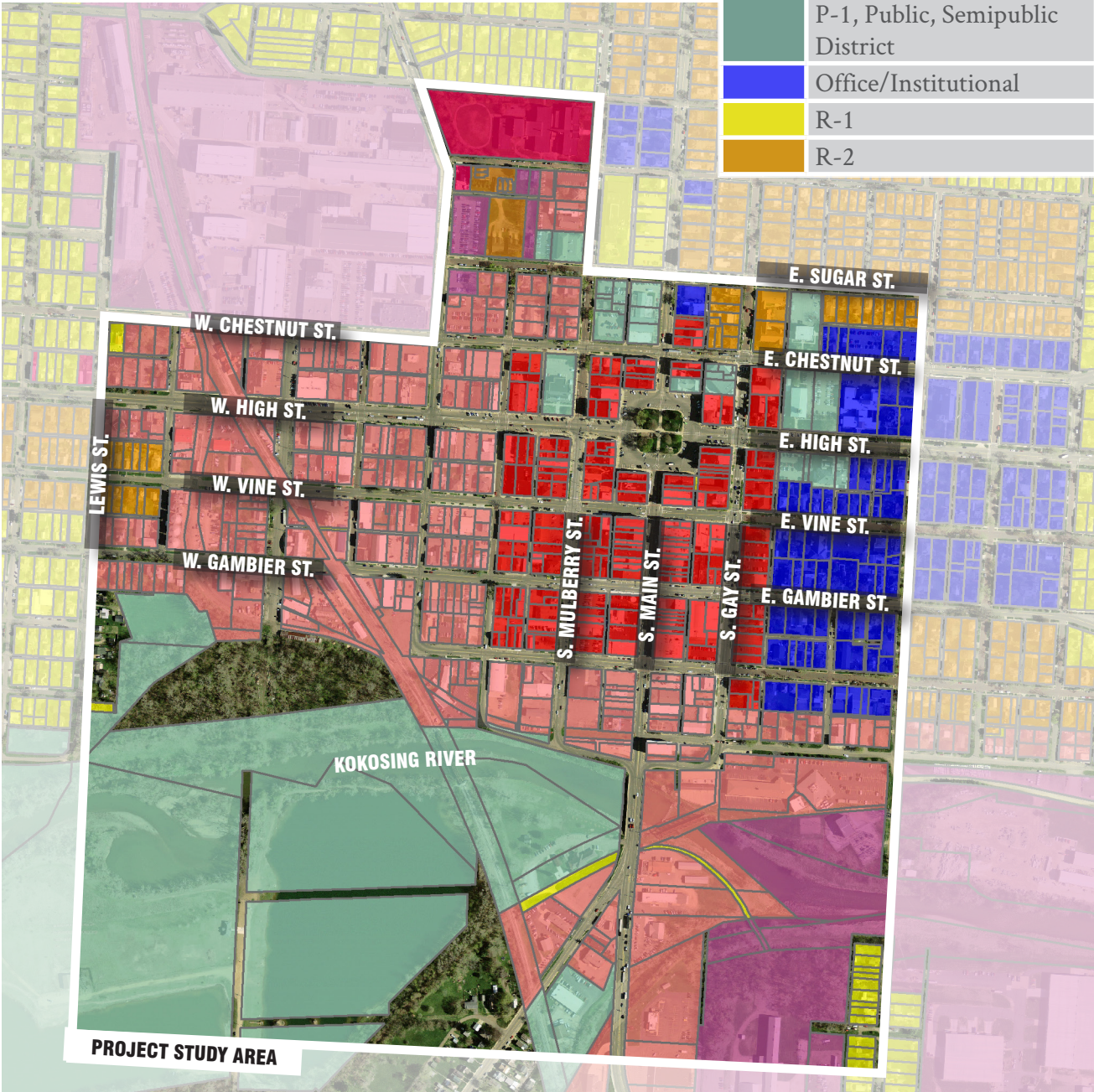


Figure 3 - Existing Zoning

## TRAFFIC AND GATEWAYS

There are three important gateway entrances into Downtown Mount Vernon. The southern and northern entrances, on South Main Street, and North Sandusky Street and North Main Street respectively, are significant truck routes that disperse truck traffic across the project study

area. West High Street facilitates traffic from the west and I-71. However, the approach on West High Street into the heart of Mount Vernon has significant gaps between businesses, suffers from poor urban design, and does not reflect the activity and energy present in the heart of Downtown.



Figure 4 - Traffic and Gateways



# TRUCK ROUTES

Mitigating the impacts of truck traffic is essential to improving the quality of life in Downtown Mount Vernon. Truck traffic is important to the health of the local economy, providing area businesses the opportunity to send and receive goods. However, truck traffic in the heart of

the Downtown can impact the quality of life on city streets for residents. Combined with a perceived lack of safety, noise, and congestion, this significantly deters pedestrian activity.



Figure 5 - Truck Routes

## URBAN FORM

### Sidewalk Conditions

Beyond South Main Street, sidewalks in Downtown Mount Vernon are frequently unsafe, uninviting, and unattractive. Specifically, the undifferentiated asphalt streets and sidewalks do little to define comfortable spaces for pedestrians. Strengthening the landscape and design of sidewalks and buffers will not only improve the comfort of pedestrians and drivers, it will significantly enhance the image of Downtown.



*Poorly maintained sidewalks, buffers, and tree lawns reflect poorly on the image of Downtown.*



*On West High street, the lack of defined space between auto uses, the sidewalk, and the street, discourage pedestrians.*

### Building Character and Redevelopment

Well-preserved, historic buildings is what establishes Main Street and High Street as Downtown. The renovation of the Woodward Opera House is symbolic of the character that attracts so many people to Downtown; it represents the City's proud heritage and commitment to culture, in the context of a vibrant, mixed-use corridor. However, the project study area contains many buildings in various stages of disrepair and obsolescence, reflecting poorly on the City's image. As the City redevelops, the strong commitment to historic preservation should continue. However, many older and obsolete buildings lacking historic significance dot the outer portions of Downtown. The difference in the urban character of the outer portions



*Recapturing the use of historic structures with intact facades is an opportunity to preserve the character of Downtown while promoting revitalization efforts.*



*Certain buildings on West High Street reflect poorly on the City's image. An enhanced streetscape design will help mitigate these issues.*

of Downtown is clear and distinct. This Plan stands for the notion the outer portions of Downtown clearly need a policy to guide quality infill site design. See the recommended design guidelines at the end of the Plan.

# Walkability

Walkable downtowns provide destinations to walk to and safe, comfortable, and visually interesting spaces to walk. These are the characteristics of South Main Street, which help make this street the heart of Downtown. However, much of the commercial portion of the project study area, west

of South Main Street, was built during a different era, with larger setbacks and low quality site design. The map below indicates surface parking lots and non-maintained greenspace, both of which contribute to poor walkability outside of the Downtown core.

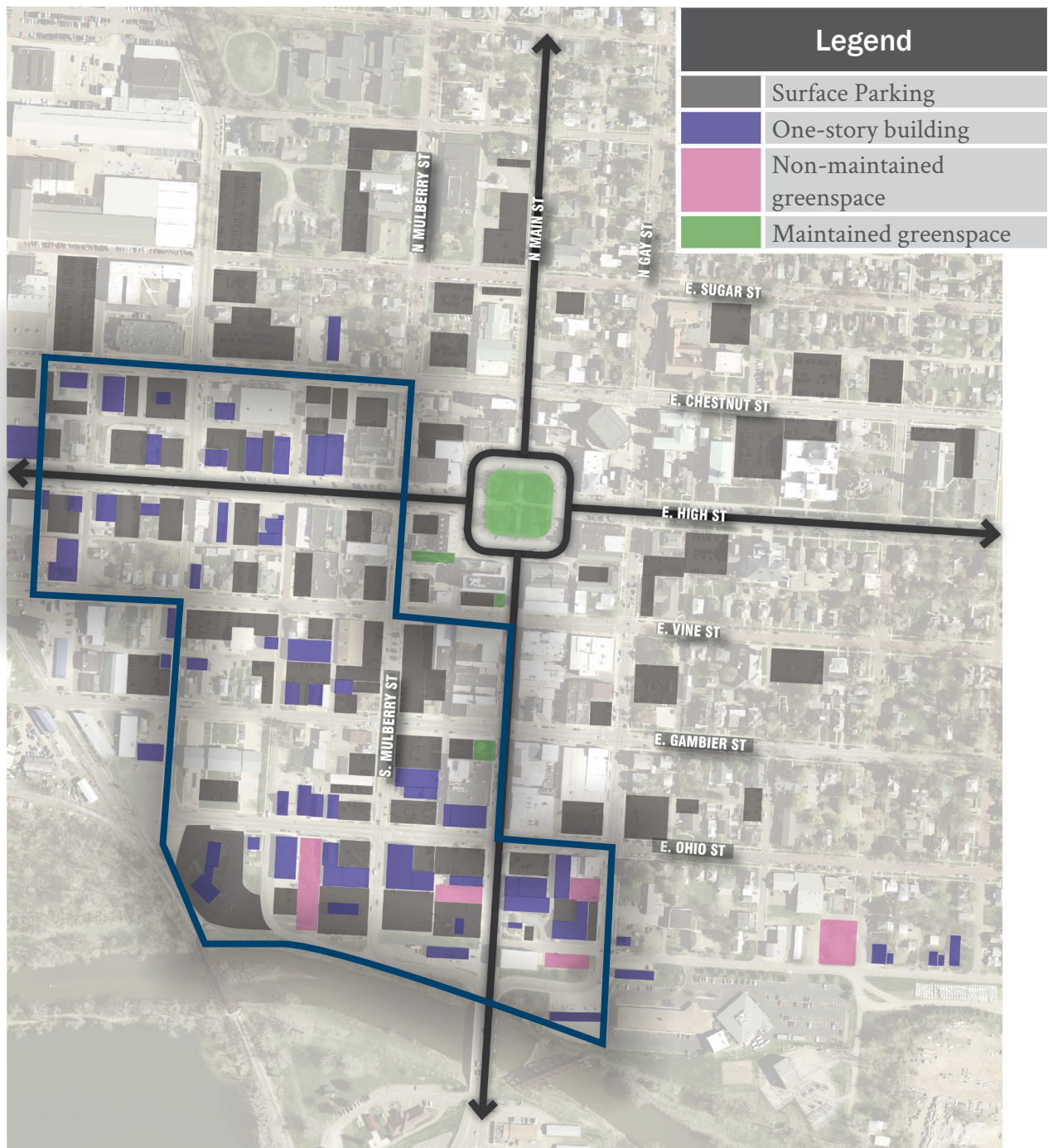


Figure 6 - Walkability





# TRENDS AND MARKET ANALYSIS

## LOCAL TRENDS

### A Growing Population

Knox County is increasing in population. According to the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Knox County is expected to add approximately 17,000 people by 2050, roughly the approximate size of Mount Vernon's current population. There is opportunity for Downtown Mount Vernon to accommodate some of this growth.

Currently, Mount Vernon's population distribution (see below) indicates that there is a large portion of residents between the ages of 50 and 64, along with a growing young adult population. These demographic cohorts tend to have smaller household sizes and therefore prefer different housing options compared to larger families. Downtown Mount Vernon is uniquely positioned to accommodate residential options for these smaller household sizes in the County.

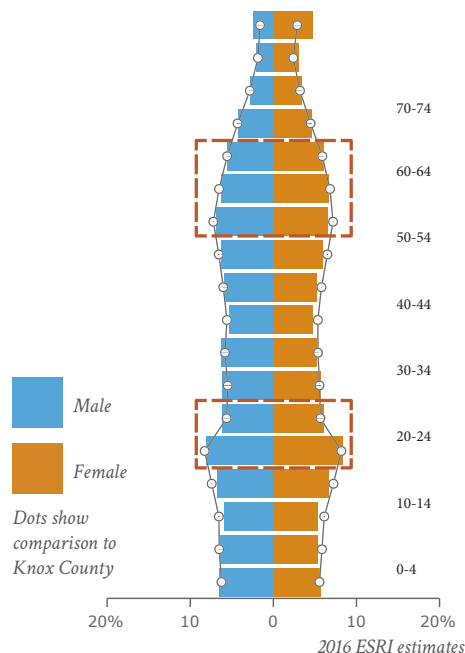
### Area Anchor Institutions

- Ariel Corporation (1,200 employees)
- Knox Community Hospital (~900 employees)
- Kenyon College (~575 employees)
- Mount Vernon Nazarene University (~370 employees)

### Institutional Investment

This Plan acknowledges the substantial, and recent, redevelopment and revitalization effort within the Central Business District of Mount Vernon. This 16,000 population county seat has experienced substantial investment since 2010 by private and non-profit entities along the entire spine of South Main Street. The county's three institutions of higher education (Kenyon College, Mount Vernon Nazarene University and Central Ohio Technical College) have all located large campus-like facilities along South Main Street in the past five years. Specifically, Kenyon College invested \$6.4M to complete a new film school inside the former Buckeye Candy warehouse, COTC invested approx. \$5M in its new Knox campus, and MVNU has invested a substantial amount in the downtown for its new art and nursing school facilities. Further, the Woodward Opera House, a 19th Century theater space, is undergoing a \$21MM redevelopment, financed in large part by New Markets Tax Credits and Historic Preservation Tax Credits (both federal and state). The independently owned and operated Knox Community Hospital is witnessing a significant investment to redevelop 12,000 square feet of space downtown to house up to 90 back-office support workers in new Class A office space. The final two pieces of this corridor enhancement is the private redevelopment of a white table cloth restaurant, The Alcove, and the creation of a community-focused / higher education-linked "makerspace" for adolescents and adults who have an interest in tinkering, designing, creating and making stuff, using 3-D printers and wood and metal workshops.

**Figure 7 - Mount Vernon Population Distribution**



# STATE AND NATIONAL TRENDS

## A Changing Household Structure

Household structure, including household size and age of residents, has changed significantly nationwide since the 1970’s (see right). These trends have also become evident throughout the Central Ohio region, as evidenced in the Insight 2050 study. This trend toward smaller household sizes will continue to have a significant impact on residential development in communities such as Mount Vernon. Smaller housing units, such as apartments, condominiums, and flats, will be in demand to accommodate both smaller household sizes and an aging population. Downtown Mount Vernon can and should attract this type of development to help bolster its local economy.

Figure 8 - U.S. Household Structure

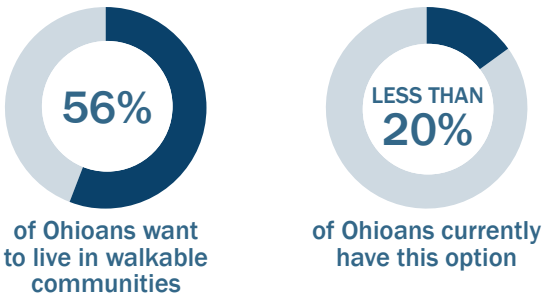
	Households with Children	Households without Children
1970	45%	55%
2000	33%	67%
2015	28%	72%
2030	27%	73%

U.S. Census Bureau

## A Growing Preference for Walkable Communities

Americans are increasingly attracted to places and spaces designed with the pedestrian in mind. Walkable communities provide safe and easy access for movement of all people, promote social and economic activity, and make a healthier, more vibrant Downtown. Survey data supports this movement toward walkable communities, whether it’s residential neighborhoods where kids can comfortably walk to school, or downtowns where residents and employees can enjoy shops and restaurants.

Figure 9 - Walkability Preferences in Ohio



National Association of Realtors 2013 Stated-Preference Survey

## Retail Follows Rooftops

Residential density is critical to the sustained success of neighborhood retail. Providing a steady customer base after area employees go home, not only contributes to increased activity and energy Downtown, but provides a much needed source of revenue to area businesses in evening hours.



Renovating existing buildings for residential use on the upper-stories of multi-story buildings creates an opportunity to increase the resident population Downtown.

# MARKET ANALYSIS

## OVERVIEW

The market analysis conducted for Mount Vernon's downtown focused on three sectors important to any downtown's vibrancy and economy: housing, retail, and food sales. More detail will follow, but a summary of the findings and next steps are included here:

**Housing:** There is a latent demand for downtown residential housing. Incentives, such as Community Reinvestment Area tax abatements, are likely needed to induce initial development. These incentives should be offered to specific residential development projects marketing to certain demographics to demonstrate empirical market evidence for demand.

**Retail and Food Sales:** Despite limitations in collecting and analyzing data sets to estimate future conditions, we conclude that there is a significant margin of sales that could be captured by way of supplying more food sales options in Downtown Mount Vernon.

## Housing Demand Analysis

Insight 2050, a scenario planning exercise conducted two years ago to plan for growth in Central Ohio, predicts an additional 500,000 new residents in Central Ohio over the next three decades. Where will these people live? Unlike the rest of the State of Ohio which will see a slight population decline, Central Ohio will see a relatively large population increase. The primary driver for demand for housing is projected population growth. As Central Ohio grows, Mount Vernon will benefit, and there is potential for some of the greatest impact to be in downtown.

There is little to no true downtown housing in Mount Vernon, but due to growth calculations for Central Ohio, and market trends observed in nearly every other downtown of a county seat in surrounding counties, there is a latent demand for downtown housing. Due to the frequent anecdotal requests we've learned through this study, the potential exists for faculty and staff from MVNU and Kenyon to be a good first market

## Market Analysis Summary



### Market Needs



### Implementation

**Housing:** With virtually no Downtown housing, but favorable market and demographic trends, Mount Vernon has a significant opportunity to add residential capacity in its Downtown.

**Retail:** There is an opportunity to capture existing retail sales that are leaving Knox County. Furthermore, additional residential development Downtown will help support retail growth.

**Incentives:** Value capturing incentives, like CRA, can raise revenue from existing economic activity within Downtown to help support new economic development.

**Funding and Grants:** Pursuing different grants and funding opportunities can help leverage the value capture tools described on the following pages.

for new downtown residents. We recommend certain real property tax incentives and other potential incentives should be offered to induce initial residential projects. From these projects, and potentially data gathered as a condition to those incentives, market demand can be proven downtown and incentives can then be reduced or taken away completely after initial catalyst projects.



















Downtown residents also can act as consumption gap fillers if a downtown is working towards a longer daily time span of vibrancy. As demonstrated in Figure 11 below, downtown residents can act as supports for businesses at times of slack demand such as weekday evenings, and weekends that lack strong visitor and tourist





justifications. Although “First Fridays” and farmers markets are great for marketing downtown and creating an initial sense of place, ultimately a vibrant downtown must function at higher capacity at all times of the week.





### Trade Area Retail and Food Sales Demand and Supply Analysis

With the limitations of any market analysis, we selected Knox County as our trade area to be able to capture census level data while also aggregating it with retail sales receipts from county sales taxes. Comparisons to surrounding counties were used to draw out supply and demand margins while estimating likeliest supply and demand

Figure 11 - Downtown User Matrix

	WEEKDAYS		WEEKENDS	
DAYTIME	Gov't Employees Office Employees Industrial Campus Employees College students Truckers	  	Residents Tourists	     
NIGHTTIME	Residents College students	    	Residents Tourists	   

 Coffee
  Quick Lunch
  Daily Retail
  Niche Retail

 Bars and Breweries
  Restaurants
  Recreation
  Shows and Events

destinations. Using this methodology we estimate retail and food sales leakage of approximately \$16 million for retail sales and \$10 million for food sales. This equates to an estimate of approximately 70,000 square feet of brick-and-mortar space that could be accommodated, conceivably, in Downtown Mount Vernon to serve the area.

Caution must be applied to any estimating methodology and market analysis as it only explains the statistics and not the psychological and sociological decisions implied in consumption. Also, the statistics themselves can be misconstrued. Thus, most likely, only a margin of the 70,000 square feet estimate should be used as an analysis for Mount Vernon's downtown. First, the trade area has been expanded to Knox County, not just Mount Vernon; secondly, the factor of magnitude of for the retail sales, despite there being \$16 million in leakage, is relatively small compared to the \$600 million in potential retail sales demand within the County, so despite a leakage in sales, recapturing those sales would most likely only be marginal. The \$10 million in food sales leakage is much more significant in relation to the \$70 million in potential demand within the County. Therefore, a more nuanced conclusion would be that there is a much greater potential for expanded food sales and restaurant business in Mount Vernon's downtown than what there is currently. This coincides with trends observed in other downtowns and walkable commercial districts nationwide, as revitalization and infill is being lead more by onsite food and beverage consumption than traditional brick-and-mortar retail.

## INCENTIVES AND FUNDING STRATEGY

The following section addresses a few examples and calculations to structure funding packages to implement these recommended improvements.

A traditional but highly efficient and equitable way to generate local revenue from downtown areas is by value capture. Value capture is simply capturing

by way of taxes, fees, or charges, a portion of the incremental increase in property value from an area. Many times a common or publicly financed infrastructure improvement catalyzes an increase in property value. So therefore, in certain cases an equitable way to pay for a portion or all of those public infrastructure improvements is by capturing value from the surrounding or adjacent property owners.

Value capture can also be considered an incentive for development, as a value capture technique guarantees that increased investment is captured to benefit the area of the investment, rather than being spread out across the entire city or county.

In terms of value capture recommendations for Mount Vernon's downtown, we've split recommendations into two sections: the core downtown area as depicted in Figure 12 within the Downtown TIF; and the periphery surrounding it.

### Core Downtown TIF District

This district as depicted in Figure 12 as the Downtown TIF is the most established section of downtown.

**TIF:** The area already has a designated 30 year 100% "non-school" TIF (tax increment financing) District overlaying the area. This allows for all non-school increases in taxes from new increment real property investment to be captured, and diverted as a "PILOT" (payment in lieu of taxes) into a TIF Fund. This fund can then pay for public infrastructure which benefits the downtown.

**SID:** In addition to the TIF District, it is a recommendation of this plan that the TIF District boundaries also serve as an initial discussion area for implementation of an Ohio special improvement district.

A Special Improvement District (SID) has property owners pay an additional assessment, beyond their current property taxes, for services or improvements specified by a SID Plan. Government and church property are exempt unless these

properties request in writing to be included.

Owners of real property within the proposed SID, petition the City in order to create the SID. Creation is initiated in one of two ways: owners of at least 60 percent of the front footage (excluding church or government property) petition the appropriate legislative authority, or owners of at least 75 percent of the land area within the proposed SID petition the appropriate legislative authority.

A sample of eligible improvements and services includes lighting, signage, parking, special displays, snow removal and landscaping, maintenance, etc. Every property owner in the SID (excluding government and churches, unless they request in writing to participate) is assessed whether they signed the petition or not. Assessments can be determined by overall square footage or by linear (front) footage and last for ten years after the initial improvement plan is approved.

**Ohio Downtown Revitalization District:** DRDs are very similar to tax increment financing (“TIF”) areas, but the proceeds generated within DRDs can be used for a much broader portfolio of eligible uses including operating downtown marketing groups and loans and grants for downtown building revitalization. The DRD must have an historic building currently or in the process of being rehabbed to trigger a DRD. Also, if the DRD has access to 100 gigabytes-per-second broadband internet downloading speeds, an Ohio Innovation District can also be applied. This allows for partial operating funding of technology incubators and makerspaces.

**NCA:** An Ohio New Community Authority (NCA) is a separate political subdivision set up as an agreement between a master developer and the City. The NCA’s purpose is to allow for a developer of a new development to place a special community charge on new incremental property millage to pay for public improvements but also for community facilities – a definition that is relatively broad. There are no existing NCA’s within Knox County, but

for a new development or mixed-use structure in downtown this could be a valuable tool.

**CRA:** An Ohio Community Reinvestment Area is the oldest and most traditional of Ohio’s property incentive laws. In the case of Mount Vernon’s downtown, a large “Central Business District” CRA exists, as well as “Northside” CRA, which encompasses the old school property and adjacent land. These CRA’s allow for up to 100% 15 year tax abatement for new incremental real property improvements.

**Knox County Land Bank:** Another recently added tool for redevelopment in Mount Vernon is the Knox County Land Bank. The Land Bank can use state and federal government pass-through grants, as well as locally generated revenues from delinquent tax and assessment collection fees to purchase, demo, rehab, or sell, tax delinquent properties. The Land Bank’s powers via the Ohio Revised Code are broad, but also flexible to fit the needs of the local communities. For Mount Vernon, the Land Bank could be used to coordinate certain redevelopment efforts in partnership with other public and private entities especially when dealing with tax delinquent parcels.

**Federal Qualified Opportunity Zone:** Opportunity Zones were part of the 2017 Federal Tax Reform Bill. The Qualified Opportunity Zone legislation allows investors to temporarily defer Capital Gains recognition from the sale of an appreciated asset, but only if they reinvest the gains into a Qualified Opportunity Fund, that then in turn invests into a Qualified Opportunity Zone. The Federal government presented a grouping of distressed census tracts from which each state could nominate as eligible. The Area Development Foundation’s due diligence resulted in the Governor of Ohio nominating the census tract that encompasses the northwest corner of the square and includes all of the Siemens site and former American National Can brownfield industrial site. This additional tool should help “set the table” for renewed investment in the downtown periphery.

## Development Incentive Example

Below is one theoretical example to structure these incentive tools to gain maximum benefit:

**Downtown Residential Development:** A developer might propose a redevelopment of the school site with a partial tear down, and new housing/condo units on the eastern portion of the site for an investment of \$5,000,000. The developer would like to offset a shared community facility of \$300,000 and would also eventually like to recoup demolition costs of \$200,000. The developer and the City also agree State Route 13 is a priority and the developer would like to see the City invest in a multi-million dollar improvement for the Route.

The Downtown CRA is already in place for the development which abates all new incremental property value at 100% for 15 years. This would then be strategically coupled with two value capture strategies: a New Community Authority overlay charging 50% of property tax millage that had been abated; and a 30 year 100% non-school tax increment financing district that would go into place after the 15 year CRA was exhausted, as a TIF cannot divert taxes that have already been abated by a CRA.

Below, Table 1 demonstrates an estimated approximation of the net present value and annual amounts of revenue either abated or generated from each incentive tool:

### Results:

- The developer would be able to recoup the \$300,000 in costs of a shared community facility from the NCA fees;
- This while leaving approximately \$170,000 to use for leveraging improvements along State Route 13.
- The developer could recoup 75% of their demolition costs (\$151,000 of \$200,000);
- These incentives could spur the developer to go forward with the development;
- This while also still leaving a net 50% property tax abatement for new home/condo owners.

Table 2 demonstrates a possible scenario for using the remaining NCA assessment revenue from the development example above to leverage a \$2,000,000 State Route 13 improvement project, where the City would leverage \$50,000 to generate \$2,000,000 in total project funding.

**Table 1 - Sample Revenue Generated Through Value Capture Tools**

New Real Property Incremental Improvement Value		\$5,000,000
Incentive Type and Structure	Present Value	Annual Revenue
CRA abatement @ 100% for 15 years	\$(940,425.00)	\$(85,750.00)
NCA capture @ 50% for 15 years	\$470,200.00	\$42,875.00
TIF capture @ 100 % non-school for years 16-30	\$151,254.00	\$24,500.00

**Table 2 - Method To Use Remaining NCA Money to Leverage Grant Opportunities**

MAJOR STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT	\$2,000,000
Mount Vernon Capital Improvement Budget	\$50,000.00
NCA Bond/Loan	\$150,000.00
OPWC Grant - 10% project ask, with 50% local match from CIP & NCA	\$200,000.00
Federal Small Cities Grant - 80% project ask, with 20% required local match	\$1,600,000.00

## State Grants:

### Ohio Public Works Commission

The City of Mount Vernon has been a fairly frequent awardee of Ohio Public Works Commission grants, receiving a total of just under \$6,000,000 since 1989. This averages approximately \$215,000 a year. These funds can be used as the local match to federally funded projects like the ODOT Small Cities program (described below) or the Economic Development Administration program to “climb the leverage ladder” by using local grant awards as a match for federal funds.

### Ohio Department of Transportation – Small Cities Program

This program provides federal funds for construction and construction administration for projects in cities with populations between 5,000 and 24,999. This fund was tapped by the City of Mount Vernon in 2016 for State Route 13 improvements.

### Ohio Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives

This is a great state-level grant resource for trail, pedestrian, and historic-transportation facilities for downtown. Recently, Mount Vernon was awarded a \$700,000 grant for the replacement of the Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge (SFN 4232712) over the Kokosing River.

### Ohio History Connection – Certified Local Government

A certified local government is a voluntary program that aligns communities having historic preservation and resource boards and ordinances with a small but valuable source of grant funds. These grant funds can be used to update design guidelines, stabilize historic structures, along with many other uses. Delaware, Newark, and Wooster have obtained grants between \$10,000 and \$20,000 through the Certified Local Government program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. *Incentivize downtown residential with the Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) abatements – the original CRAs were set up to incentivize residential development and they still work best in encouraging a reintroduction or rehabilitation of residential housing in and adjacent to downtown areas.*
2. *Condition the CRA incentives for residential with reporting requirements to be able to demonstrate proof of market rates and demographics.*
3. *Look to layer additional “value capture” strategies – TIF and NCA – on top, or “underneath” CRA abatements to capture additional revenue for infrastructure and development improvements.*
4. *Establish a Special Improvement District within the already established TIF District to generate event, wayfinding, and parking revenue sources within the established corridor of downtown that no longer needs incentivized for major redevelopment.*
5. *Explore the establishing of an Ohio Downtown Redevelopment District and the accompanying Ohio Innovation District. This vehicle could potentially capture additional revenues to help offset operating revenue needs for downtown activities and possibly to help fund a technological incubator or makerspace.*
6. *Look to set-aside a portion of TIF, SID and NCA value capture revenues to use as local match for larger grants from the Ohio Public Works Commission, Ohio Department of Transportation, etc. All locally generated revenue should be evaluated to explore if it can be leveraged via grants and loans for a larger and more efficiently conducted project. This includes leveraging the Ohio Public Works Commission, which is often viewed as an “end source” of grant funding, but due to its completely state funded origin, can be used to leverage much larger federal funding.*



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

## ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The project team hosted its first open house at the Memorial Building in Downtown Mount Vernon. Approximately 60 attendees provided their feedback on the activities below. Additionally, the project team hosted a table at a First Friday event, in order to engage a different group of residents, and heard from over 40 people at the event. Draft plan concepts were presented at the annual Main Street Mount Vernon meeting.

» OPEN HOUSE  
 » FIRST FRIDAY  
 » DOWNTOWN MAIN STREET MEETING  
**150+** RESIDENTS & STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

## Meeting Activities



### Prioritizing Plan Principles

Meeting attendees were asked to prioritize initiatives for the Plan; giving Downtown leaders and stakeholders an understanding of where efforts and priorities should be focused.

#### Votes

19	14	14	7	5	5
<i>Economic Development Through a Mix of Uses</i>	<i>Implement a Coordinated Transportation Strategy</i>	<i>Enhance Downtown as a Culture and Educational Hub</i>	<i>Promote Downtown Redevelopment</i>	<i>Connect Parks and Public Space</i>	<i>Celebrate Mount Vernon's History</i>



Public meeting attendees were asked to rank initiatives in the Plan that should be a high priority, giving the planning team and city staff guidance on prioritizing efforts and resources.

# THE RESULTS

## B

### Focus Areas

The project team solicited ideas on specific focus areas throughout Downtown Mount Vernon. Specific ideas are highlighted below:

#### WEST HIGH STREET

- Overall beautification
- Tear down or repurpose abandoned/ vacant buildings
- Maintain historic character

#### THE DOWNTOWN SQUARE

- Improve safety
- Less vehicular traffic
- More local events
- Better connectivity
- More retail

#### THE SCHOOL SITE

- Residential- condos, affordable housing
- Park/recreation facility
- Commercial- shops, office space

#### THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY

- Pedestrian-friendly bridge
- Develop/clean up the riverfront
- Bike-friendly paths/bridge

## C

### Big Ideas

Meeting attendees were asked to share BIG ideas and small changes they would like to see in the Downtown. Below are some common responses that the community provided.



**Add** furniture, trees, and plants on the street.

**Connect** Ariel-Foundation Park to Downtown!

**Enforce** design review standards.

**Utilize** the riverfront.

**Increase** Downtown apartment space!

**Improve** sidewalks from Siemens to Downtown!

**Bring** in new local restaurants.



# D

## Mapping Exercise

The project team wanted to gain a geographic understanding of the issues and opportunities facing Downtown Mount Vernon. Residents were asked to identify areas in Downtown Mount Vernon that should be preserved, locations that could be improved or enhanced, and places that should be completely transformed. A brief summary is below.

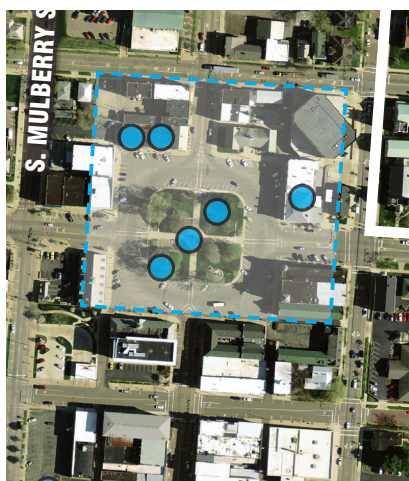


Figure 12 - Mapping Exercise



## PRESERVE

*The Downtown Square should be a place that is preserved and strengthened.  
(See pages 47-53 for recommendations)*



EXISTING

## ENHANCE

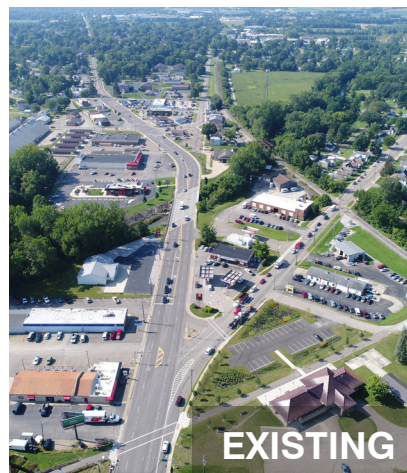
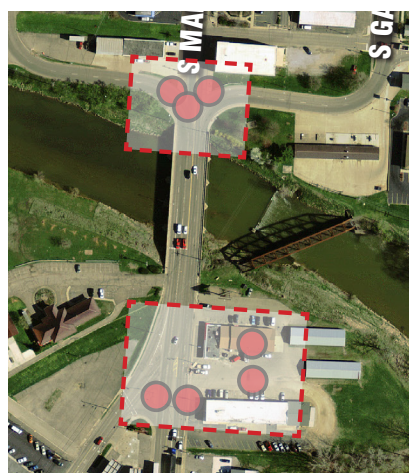
*The southern entrance on the north side of the river should be enhanced, particularly the area between the bike trail and the new Kenyon College building.  
(See pages 59-63 for recommendations).*



EXISTING

## TRANSFORM

*The southside of Downtown, both north and south of the river, have significant safety and design issues, and would benefit from a new development approach.  
(See pages 59-63 for recommendations).*



EXISTING

# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

## OVERVIEW

An in-depth analysis of existing conditions, trends, market analysis, and public engagement guided the planning team's final recommendations. Below are high-level summary points that guide the plan's final recommendations, outlined in the Project Focus Areas and Policy Recommendations section of this Plan.



### Existing Conditions

- Truck routes and truck traffic significantly hinder the quality of life Downtown.
- Natural gateways into Downtown, including on West High Street and South Main Street, are important spaces for design improvements.
- Beyond South Main Street, walkability is limited, unsafe, and uninviting.
- The Downtown square is the heart of Downtown. Its historic center must be preserved and enhanced while changing the poor and unsafe design of the pavement and roadways.



### Local and National Trends

- Shifting demographics in Knox County indicate that young adult and senior populations may be in need of different housing.
- Nationally, the number of households without children is rising, and downtowns are uniquely positioned to accommodate this type of development.
- "Retail follows rooftops"; residential development in downtowns are a key ingredient to the success of commercial development in downtowns.



### Market Analysis

- There is a latent demand for residential housing Downtown.
- The demand for residential housing will help support a vibrant neighborhood restaurant/retail environment desired by the public.
- A combination of value-capture strategies and grant opportunities can help this vision be implemented.



### Public Engagement

- Reimagining the southern gateway on S. Main Street is critical to the continued development of Downtown Mount Vernon.
- The abandoned Middle School site is a detriment to the neighborhood, and should be redeveloped.
- The riverfront is a neglected part of Downtown, but could be reutilized, and the connection to Ariel-Foundation Park can be strengthened.

A photograph of a four-story red brick building with a light-colored stone or concrete base and cornice. The building features multiple windows, some with arched tops and others rectangular. A tree is planted in front of the building, and a street lamp with an American flag is visible on the left. The sky is blue with some clouds.

"YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE  
YOU'RE GOING, BECAUSE YOU MIGHT NOT GET THERE."

- Yogi Berra



# PROJECT FOCUS AREAS

## PROJECT FOCUS AREAS

The four areas below are the main project focus areas of the plan. Selected based on a walking tour, existing conditions analysis, and public feedback, it was determined that each of the four focus areas plays an important role in the day-to-day function of Downtown. Each of the focus areas

have a review of the urban design challenges, design concepts for consideration, and projected cost estimates where appropriate. These concepts provide City leadership and stakeholders with a vision for specific public and private projects throughout the Downtown.

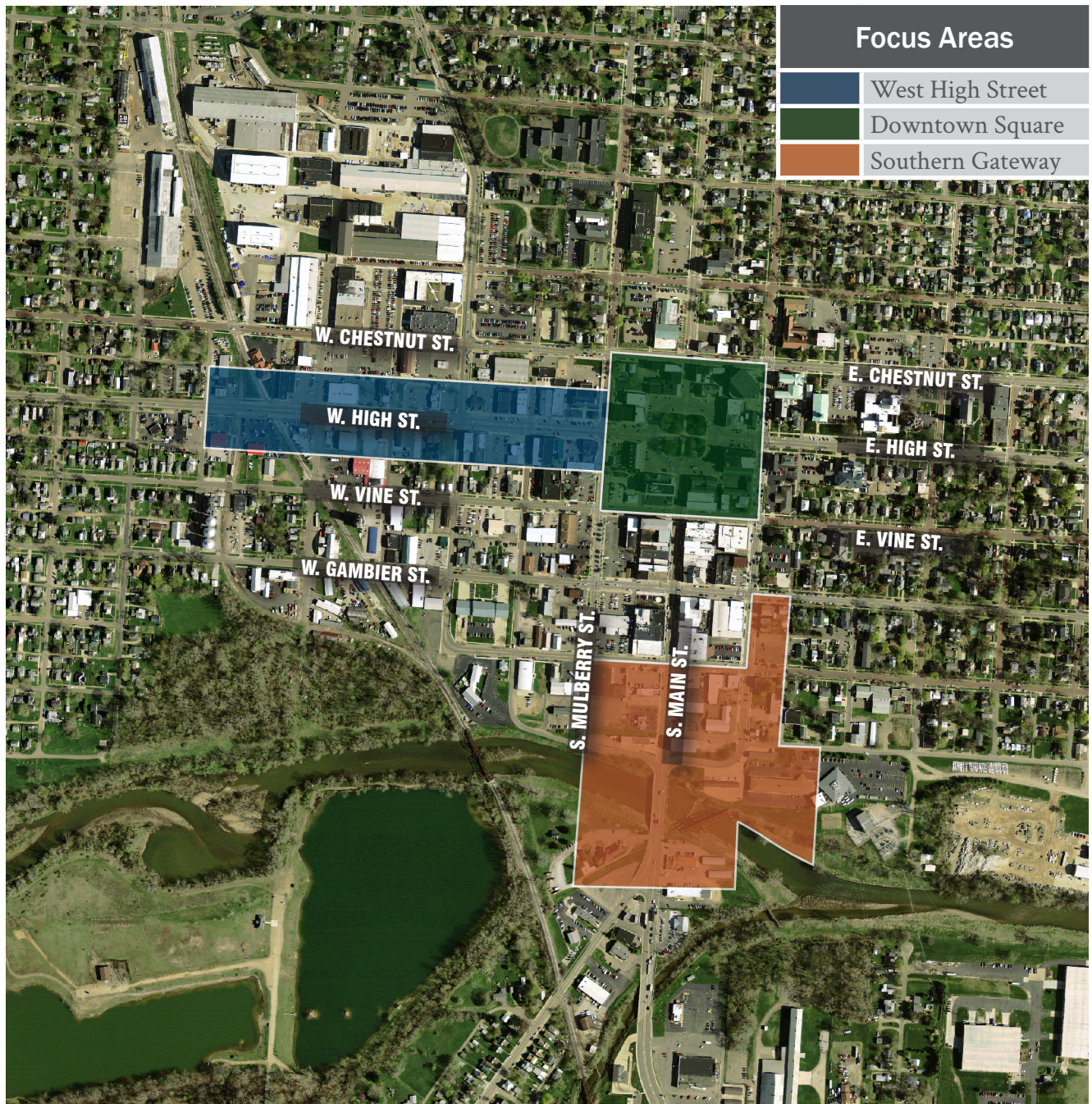


Figure 13 - Project Focus Areas



# WEST HIGH STREET



---

*West High Street is one of the primary entrances to Downtown. It is an important entrance to Downtown, the primary entrance for visitors from the Central Ohio region traveling to or from I-71. The design, safety, and image of the street should reflect the character and energy felt throughout the heart of Downtown.*

---

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

As West High Street transitions from residential development in the west, to commercial, industrial, and mixed uses in Downtown, the urban fabric of the street breaks down. Three basic, but unique, conditions can be found along the street. Poor conditions can be alleviated by landscaping and improved design that occur almost exclusively in the public right-of-way.

### Strengthen existing landscape design around buildings close to the street

Buildings with minimal setbacks on main streets are ideal for pedestrian comfort and interest. Simple landscaping, street trees, and consistent sidewalks can greatly strengthen the appeal of businesses and improve the comfort of pedestrians.



### Define space between automobile and pedestrian uses on West High Street

The parking lots, auto dealers, and car rental agencies that abut West High Street have virtually no screening or barrier between their property and the pedestrian space. Limiting points of access for automobiles to one or two entry points per parking lot, while strengthening screening along the corridor, would significantly improve safety and comfort of the street.



### Improve screening between gas stations, garages, and pedestrian spaces

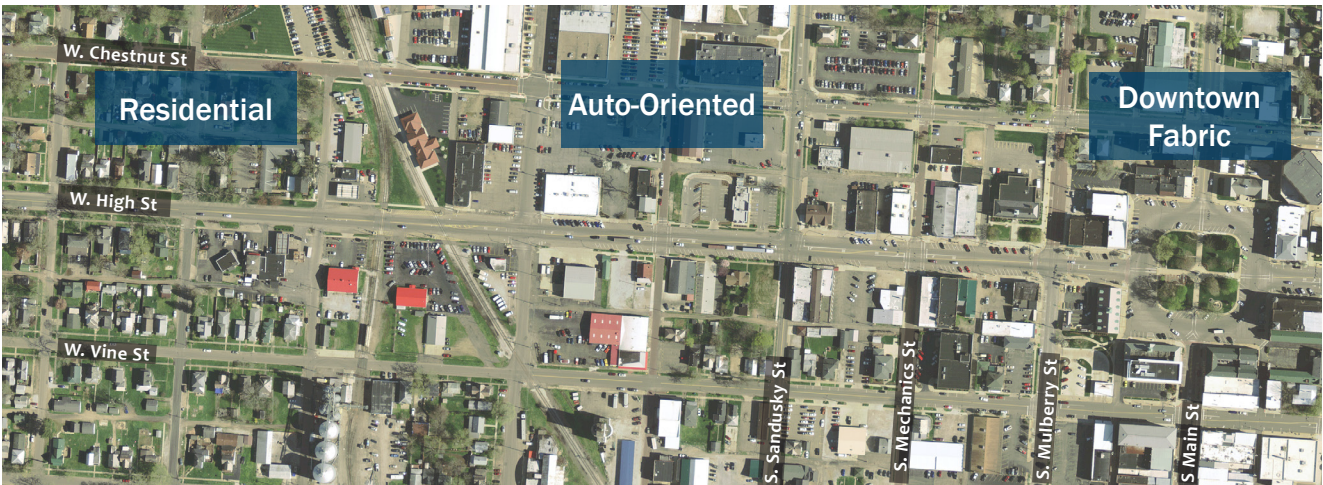
Development along West High Street is in a variety of stages: including newly built, transitioning, and obsolete. Transitioning and obsolete uses often include large building setbacks. These can be mitigated with stone wall screening, street trees, and planting.



# West High Street Section

The image below highlights the stark transition between residential development and the mix of uses closer to Downtown. The Siemens site just north of West High Street is a priority site to

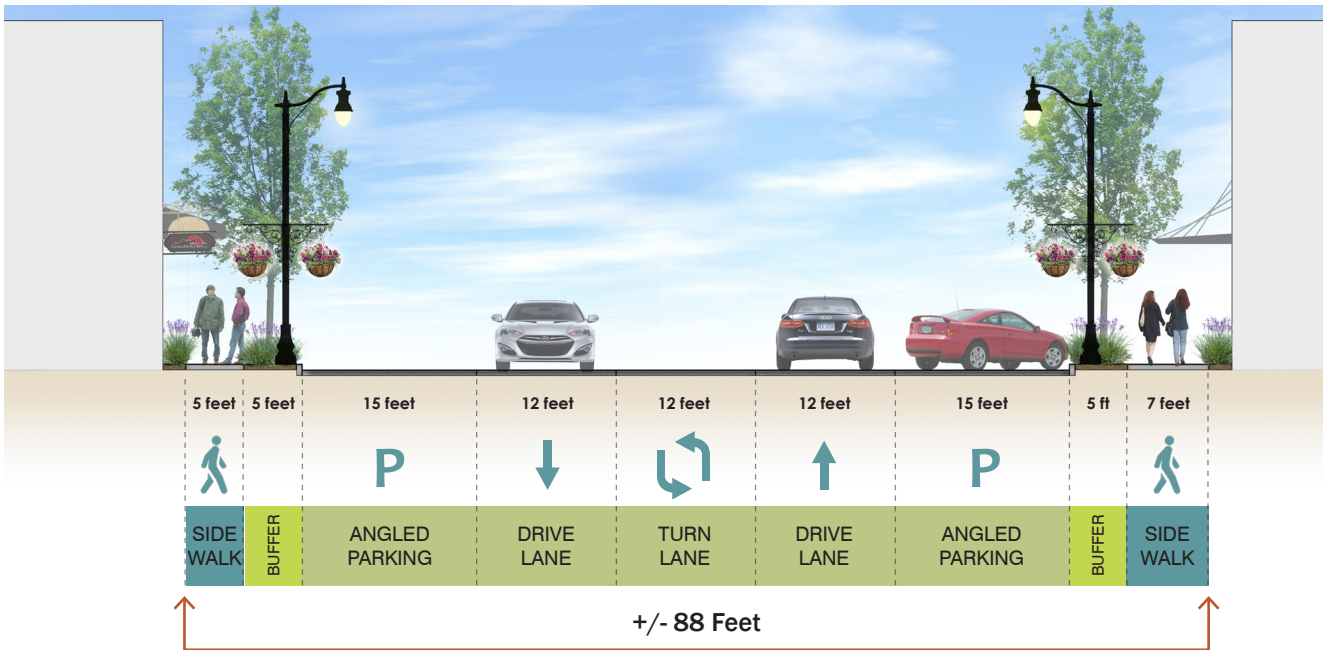
attract new industrial companies into the area. A public sector commitment to redesign the West High Street public right-of-way can help make the area more attractive to incoming companies.



*An inconsistent urban fabric along West High Street, one dominated by surface parking lots and older buildings with large setbacks, has ample opportunity for design improvements.*

# West High Street Section

Suggested improvements should occur within the existing right-of-way. With approximately 88 feet of right-of-way along the corridor, the opportunity exists to strengthen the sidewalks and buffer edges while maintaining angled parking on both sides of the street. Alternative parking scenarios could allow for a stretch of parking to accommodate small commercial trucks or smaller vehicles that often need, and cannot find, a place to park in the area.



## THE VISION

West High Street is Mount Vernon's primary connection to Interstate 71. It should serve as a worthy entrance to Downtown, with a design and presence that gives visitors a reason to continue moving toward the heart of the city. Furthermore, the street should bolster connections to other important uses in or near the downtown, including the Siemens site and Ariel-Foundation Park.

### Overall Street Concept



### West High Street



**Improve Appearance  
and Safety**



**Accommodate Trucks**



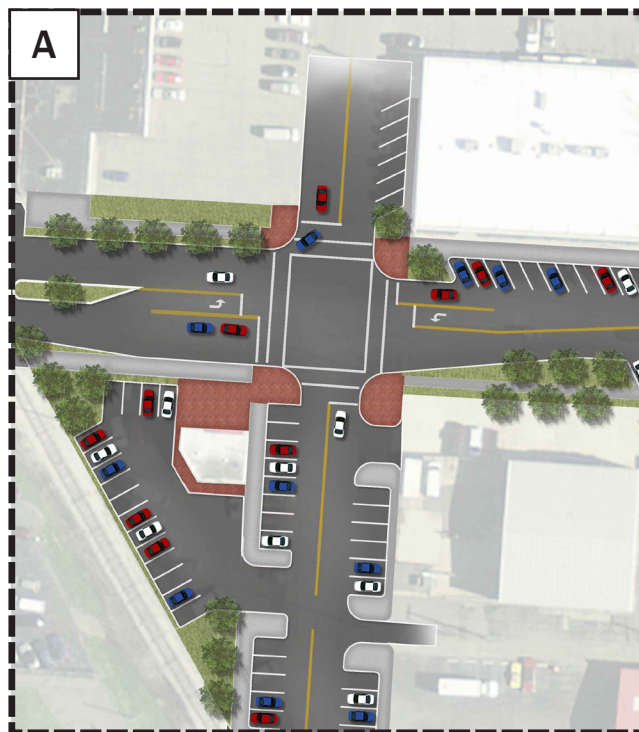
**Strengthen the Entrance  
to the Square**

## FOCUS AREAS

### Intersection of West High Street and South Norton Street

The intersection of West High Street and South Norton Street is a critical intersection in Downtown. It's the first logical opportunity to define the entrance into Downtown on West High Street.

The existing right-of-way has an opportunity for a median to place a gateway feature on the street. Furthermore, this intersection can enhance the entrance into the Cooper Works Industrial Site.

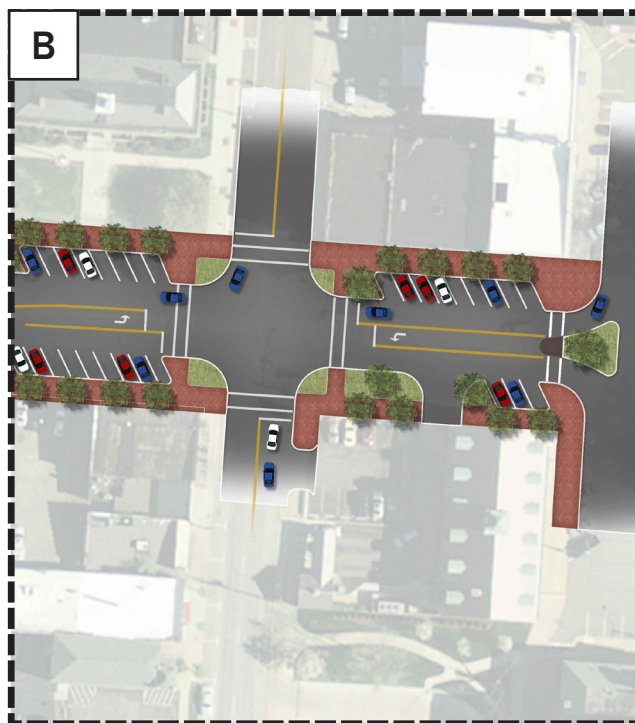


*The intersection functions as a gateway to the Downtown and a strengthened entrance into the Cooper Works Industrial Site.*

### Entrance into the Square

The design along West High Street does not have to be uniform. As cars and pedestrians move closer to important places along the street, such as the Downtown Square, different paving materials, landscaping, or street lights can indicate that visitors have arrived at a place of significance.

There may be current limitations with applying brick pavers to the sidewalks, based on recent rehabilitation of the sidewalks. Different street trees, furniture and other materials are a subtle, but important, design move in order to indicate a transition into Downtown.



*The approach to the Downtown Square should have different design, sidewalk, and paving materials, setting it apart from other street sections.*

# THE DOWNTOWN SQUARE



---

*The Public Square is the heart and soul of Downtown Mount Vernon, hosting First Friday events, farmers markets, and other community gatherings. However, the current design of the square is unsafe for pedestrians, and limits residents' ability to enjoy the space. Proposed design concepts for the Square aim to improve the form and function of the Square, repositioning it as an anchor of Downtown Mount Vernon.*

---

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The current design of the Square suffers from three significant constraints. The first is the poorly marked pedestrian crosswalks, which guide pedestrians into the center of traffic with little or no protection. The second is the continuous flow of truck traffic. The third is the significant amount

of unused/unneeded asphalt in the Square. This is highlighted by the wear-and-tear shown on the aerial below. Despite the Square technically being a two-lane affair, trucks and cars only use one lane of traffic, indicating excess pavement.

### Current Constraints

- A** *The distance required to cross from any one of the street corners to the Square is up to 100 feet, the equivalent of crossing 8 to 10 lanes of traffic. This is a significant deterrent to fully utilizing the Square.*
- B** *A continuous flow of semi-truck traffic through the Square discourages activities such as outdoor dining that are important to creating energy and vibrancy in a downtown.*
- C** *The current design of the Square functionally allows for only one lane of traffic, leaving large swaths of asphalt in the Square completely underutilized.*



Figure 14 - Existing Square



## THE VISION

One concept for reimagining the Square is shown below. The redesign of the square addresses the constraints described on the previous page, improving pedestrian visibility, safely accommodating truck traffic when necessary, and reclaiming unused space. As the City begins more detailed process of redesigning the Square, this

concept should be used as a guiding vision moving forward.

*(Note: The design below is conceptual. Additional surface parking can be reclaimed, if desired, by reducing the turning radii onto the Square, along with the pavement space dedicated to parking).*

### Square Features and Data

- +/- 65-70 parking spots, down from 80 existing parking spots. (See note above on reclaiming surface parking spaces if desired).
- Interior parking on the square switches from angled parking to parallel parking.
- Turning radii can accommodate 62' truck. (For context, the redesign of the square in downtown

*Newark is built to accommodate a 50' truck).*

- Concrete corners provide flexibility for trucks to roll over the corner edges of the pavement if necessary.
- Removable bollards on the alleys at the Northwest corner and the Southwest corner. This will allow for continued access to parking lots, but for special events, specific corners of the Square can be shut down.



Figure 15 - Future Square Concept



## NORTHWEST QUADRANT: "THE CORNER ALLEYS"

The current design of the Square creates accessible alleyways that have an opportunity to be reimagined. In its current design, each of the four corners have surface parking in the front, with a drive-lane that provides automobile access either to an alley or a parking lot. Converting unused pavement into planted activity areas reduces the physical and visual impact of traffic, while maintaining utility for access and parking. Pop-up bollards provide an option to close down the alleys, transforming the corners into temporary event spaces or outdoor seating, where appropriate. The corner parking areas can be defined with different pavement and landscaping treatments help to break up the monotony of asphalt throughout the Square.

### The Northwest Corner



*Potential improvements to northwest corner.*

### Existing Character



*Existing northwest corner.*

### Site Features

- Well-defined parking lots, with different pavement treatments, separate pedestrians and cars.
- Removable bollards allow access to back parking lots to be closed, allowing for an opportunity to create an event space.
- Honeylocust trees with a full canopy of about 40 feet, (pictured here in the fall). Silva cells (or equivalent underground structures) significantly help the full growth of trees, particularly in compacted soil.

## SOUTHEAST QUADRANT: THE PLAZA AND HOTEL

The southeast quadrant of the Square is anchored by the new Grand Hotel, which will continue to play a strong role in attracting visitors to the community.

Any redesign of the Square should accommodate the unique needs of the hotel. This includes a pick-up and drop-off zone for the hotel that fits seamlessly into the design of the Square. The foreground of the rendering below, highlights new medians and crosswalks around the square. The design of these crosswalks provides several spaces for pedestrian refuge throughout the square, shortening the distance that pedestrians have to walk, while improving the visibility of pedestrians to automobiles.

### Existing Character



*Existing southeast corner.*

### Site Features

- *Safe, well-defined valet zone for the Grand Hotel.*
- *Medians that limit pedestrian exposure to automobiles as they access the Square.*
- *New configurations discourage trucks from turning onto South Main Street, but still provide a safe turning radius.*

### The Southeast Corner



*Proposed improvements to southeast corner.*

## COST ESTIMATES

Description	Qty.	Unit	Unit Cost	Total
<b>Site/Demolition Prep</b>				
Tree/Shrub Removal	1	Allow	\$3,000	\$3,000
Concrete Curb Removal	1400	LF	\$6	\$8,400
Concrete Pavement Removal	18,200	SF	\$2.50	\$45,500
Asphalt Drive Removal	4400	SY	\$11	\$48,400
<b>Site Hardscape</b>				
Concrete Curb	3,200	LF	\$22	\$70,400
Concrete Walk - Pedestrian	22,200	SF	\$6	\$133,200
Concrete - Vehicular	8,700	SF	\$13	\$113,100
Clay Brick Pavers - Pedestrian	1,700	SF	\$20	\$34,000
Clay Brick Pavers - Vehicular	25,300	SF	\$25.00	\$632,500
Curb Ramps	8	EA	\$1,000	\$8,000
Bollards	40	EA	\$1,200	\$48,000
<b>Landscape Package</b>				
Deciduous Tree	15	EA	\$550	\$8,250
Ornamental Tree	10	EA	\$250	\$2,500
Perennial/Ornamental Grasses	3,300	SF	\$3.50	\$11,550
Low Evergreen Planting	1,100	SF	\$7	\$7,700
Groundcover - 10" Height	1,100	SF	\$3	\$3,300
Mulch	55	CY	\$70	\$3,850
Planting Soil Mixture	5,500	CY	\$60	\$330,000
<b>Signage</b>				
Wayfinding / Informational Signs	1	Allow	\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>Site Furnishing and Amenities</b>				
Bench	16	EA	\$1,500	\$24,000
Bicycle Rack	2	EA	\$400	\$800
Tables	8	EA	\$1,200	\$9,600
Chairs	32	EA	\$500	\$16,000
Tree Grate	15	EA	\$350	\$5,250
Trash Receptacle	4	EA	\$1,500	\$6,000
<b>Summary</b>				
Site Demolition/Prep				\$105,300
Site Hardscape				\$1,039,200
Landscape Package				\$367,150
Signage				\$10,000
Site Furnishings and Amenities				\$61,650
Budget Costs				\$1,583,300
20% Contingency				\$316,660
<b>Project Construction Costs</b>				<b>\$1,899,960</b>

## CASE STUDIES

### NEWARK, OH

South of Mount Vernon, the City of Newark has taken steps to improve the functionality of its Square. Taking advantage of the need to address Combined Sewer Overflow issues in the Downtown, Newark took steps to revitalize how the streets function for cars and pedestrians. A strengthened and improved design have helped spur \$80 million in private investment around the Square in the past five years.

#### Pedestrian Improvements



*The City of Newark faced a similar design challenge as Mount Vernon; an inability for pedestrians to safely access the Downtown Square. By adding medians around the square, pedestrians now have a shorter distance where they are exposed to traffic.*



*Simple, but clear treatments throughout Downtown Newark, including using a different brick material for crosswalks, is important for defining space within the square, and for calling attention to pedestrians.*

### CARROLLTON, GA

Carrollton, Georgia has made its Downtown Square more comfortable by activating its corners for pedestrians. By extending well-defined sidewalks in front of corner parking lots, the Square has succeeded in activating the corners, maintaining sufficient parking within the Square, and reducing the exposure that pedestrians have to automobile traffic.

#### “Activating the Corners”



*Carrollton, Georgia has a downtown square with a diverse range of small stores. As shown above, the different paving material and elevated parking lot helps define spaces for automobiles and pedestrians, an important design feature currently absent in Mount Vernon.*



*An emphasis on walkability in Carrollton, Georgia’s square is critical to support a healthy neighborhood retail environment.*



---

**"IF YOU CAN TELL A MAN BY HIS SHOES, YOU CAN TELL A CITY  
BY ITS PAVEMENTS."**

**- Rowan Moore, journalist**

---

# THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY



---

*The Southern Gateway is an important focus area in Downtown Mount Vernon. The majority of north-south truck traffic passes through the area. The area is also an ideal space for future development, with the Kokosing River, the Ohio-to-Erie trail, and access to Ariel-Foundation Park in close proximity to this part of Downtown. Striking a balance between accommodating trucks and promoting redevelopment opportunities will define the success of the Southern Gateway.*

---

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

*For a complete existing conditions analysis, consult the truck study completed by the GPD Group in 2018. This report examines a number of scenarios for accommodating truck traffic throughout Downtown Mount Vernon. The Downtown Plan coordinated with this study to develop a feasible design proposal for the Southern Gateway.*

Currently, north and south bound truck traffic on State Route 13 cross over the South Main Street bridge (pictured in the Truck Routes diagram to the right). This pinch point of truck traffic significantly limits development along the riverfront, which could be quite a desirable area with access to the riverfront and the Ohio-to-Erie multi-use trail.

Below are three development opportunities that could become marketable with changed truck routes and improved quality of life along the river. The following page illustrates an improved traffic flow concept, based on rerouting State Route 13.



*This site just off of the bicycle-pedestrian bridge is an underwhelming gateway from the trail to Downtown.*

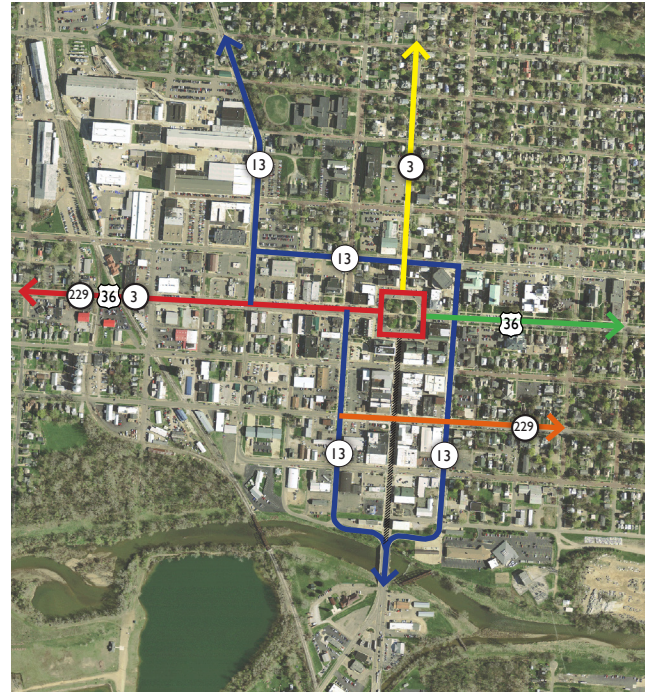


*Just north of Site A sits a large gravel parking lot that fronts South Gay Street and northbound State Route 13 traffic.*



*Over the long-term, as redevelopment occurs, other sites along the river may naturally transition to different uses.*

## Truck Routes



*Reorganizing the truck routes throughout Mount Vernon, (picture above) should prioritize maximizing development on the riverfront.*

## Southern Gateway



*Two potential redevelopment sites (A,B) are short-term opportunities that would be enhanced by moving the north leg of State Route 13, (an alternative scenario is pictured on the following page).*

# DESIGN CONCEPT: THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY

The following concept is one way to reimagine the roadway network and future development in the Southern Gateway. This study, and design proposal, was developed in coordination with GPD Group, which completed a study to analyze improving truck traffic flow throughout Mount Vernon. One of the recommendations of the GPD study was to reroute northbound traffic on State Route 13 to the west of South Main Street, as illustrated below.

The concept below promotes redevelopment opportunities while accommodating truck traffic within Downtown. By moving truck traffic to the west of Downtown, South Gay Street becomes a safer public space for pedestrians and automobiles, while providing an improved connection to the Ohio-to-Erie Trail. Furthermore, the new approach into Downtown discourages truck traffic from traveling up South Main Street, which will improve the quality of life Downtown while opening up the opportunity for a signature gateway plaza in front of the recently restored Kenyon College facility. Finally, this reconfigured traffic flow can help open up redevelopment opportunities along South Gay Street, close to the Ohio-to-Erie Trail head, and along the north side of the new approach to State Route 13 (indicated with the letter F).

Legend	
A	“Welcome to Mount Vernon” Gateway Sculpture and Plaza
B	New extension of brick plaza on Howard Street
C	New State Route 13 with median
D	Extended Treelawns
E	Traffic Triangles
F	Proposed Future Development



The significant challenge in the Southern Gateway is that both northern and southern truck is funneled toward the South Main Street bridge (pictured above).

## GREEN BIKE ALLEYWAY

Currently, the Ohio-to-Erie multi-use trail runs along the southern edge of Downtown, with no physical connection into Downtown. An existing bike-pedestrian bridge creates access over the river, but once over, users arrive at a parking lot with no readily apparent access to the immediately adjacent Downtown. A safe and attractive alleyway could help bring bike and pedestrian traffic from the trail into Downtown Mount Vernon, while creating a pedestrian entrance that is unique to the area.

Below are renderings for how a “green bike alleyway” can incorporate public art, lighting, green infrastructure, and street furnishings to develop an energetic public space that is unique to Mount Vernon and supports local businesses.

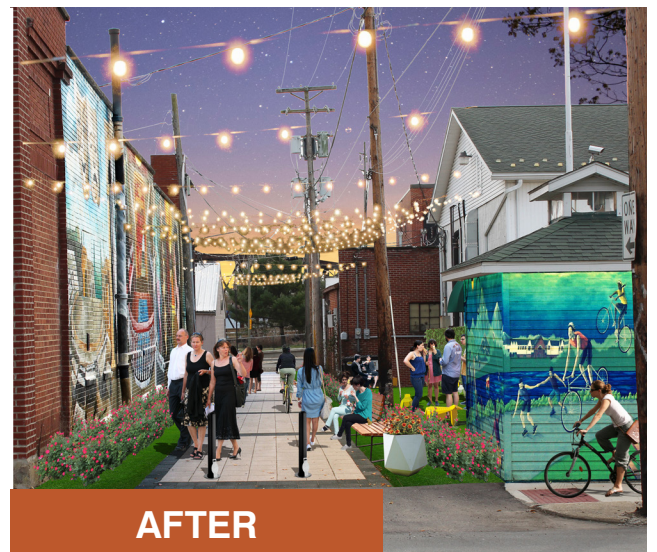
### Site Context



*The bicycle-pedestrian bridge over the Kokosing River offers users off-road access from the Ohio to Erie multi-use trail to Downtown Mount Vernon.*



## EAST OHIO AVE. FACING SOUTH



## PROJECTED COST ESTIMATES

The following table is a cost estimate of the alley between South Main Street and South Gay Street and extends from the trailhead to East Ohio Ave. It is based on the renderings provided to the left and a similar alleyway project recently completed by the project team. This number should be used as a benchmark when planning for the alley's redevelopment.

Description	Qty.	Unit	Unit Cost	Total
Demo	2	Allow	\$8,000.00	\$16,000.00
Pavement	9,255	SF	\$15.00	\$138,825.00
Benches	12	EA	\$2,000.00	\$24,000.00
Bike Racks	8	EA	\$400.00	\$3,200.00
Trash Receptacles	4	EA	\$800.00	\$3,200.00
Bollards	12	EA	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Art Installation	4	Allow	\$10,000.00	\$40,000.00
Site Civil (Drainage)	1	Allow	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
Tables/Chairs	8	EA	\$3,000.00	\$24,000.00
Landscaping	2	Allow	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00
Lighting	2	Allow	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00
Utility Relocation/Removal	2	Allow	\$3,000.00	\$6,000.00
			<b>Total Costs:</b>	<b>\$295,225.00</b>
			20% Contingency	\$59,045.00
			4% General Conditions / Mobilization	\$11,809.00
			Subtotal Including Incidentals:	\$366,079.00
			12% Preliminary Engineering / Detailed Design Fees (soft costs):	\$43,929.48
			<b>Total Project Cost Including Soft and Hard Costs</b>	<b>\$410,008.48</b>



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## POLICY OVERVIEW

In concurrence with physical improvements, policies can be put in place to guide the direction of Downtown development, including character and function of buildings and streets. While policies may require a change in approach, overtime, they can significantly improve quality of development and public space Downtown. The following is an overview of policies that are recommended for Downtown Mount Vernon.

### Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are a policy tool that gives guidance on the aesthetic and function of development in a defined area like a neighborhood or district. Although design guidelines are not a mandatory ordinance, like zoning, they are well-defined recommendations, created with local leadership and the public, that developers should consult when building within an area. As part

of this policy tool, a local body would perform a design review on proposed projects and provide comments and recommendations based on the design guidelines to the applicant.

Implementing both design guidelines and a related, local review body would help preserve and enhance the character of Downtown as new development occurs. It would also protect Downtown from incompatible development (i.e. suburban site patterns; demolition of historic structures, etc.), which is not currently discouraged. As part of this Plan, basic design guidelines have been included for potential use and reference in Downtown development. To fully implement design guidelines, a review body, like a planning commission, would need to take responsibly of reviewing potential development for adherence to design guidelines.

---

**"DESTINY IS NOT A MATTER OF CHANCE, BUT A MATTER OF CHOICE. IT IS NOT A THING TO BE WAITED FOR, IT IS A THING TO BE ACHIEVED."**

**- William Jennings Bryan**

---

## DESIGN GUIDELINES

### Overview

In order to guide retrofitting of existing sites and future redevelopment, basic design guidelines are suggested for Downtown Mount Vernon. For locations along the Square, Main Street and High Street, the most rigorous application of these standards should be used. For the other emerging redevelopment areas, design of each site will be dependent on balancing a number of factors. In all areas, there are some key design guidelines that are vital for quality development outcomes and are highlighted below.

These guidelines do not supersede the Zoning Code, but supplement those standards in a more flexible format, being rapidly adjustable to site-specific issues.

### Site Development

- Buildings should be located adjacent to the public rights-of-way.
- Parking should be located to the rear (preferred) or the side of buildings. No parking or drive aisles should be located between the building frontage and the right-of-way.
- Where parking is located on the side, it must be fully screened to a height of 42" by either masonry walls or decorative and opaque landscaping.
- Impacts of site lighting on adjacent residential areas should be reduced through the use of cut-off light fixtures.
- Service functions (loading docks, dumpster enclosures, etc.) should be strategically placed to minimize negative impacts on the public rights-of-way and adjacent residential uses.
- Drive-through should be located to the rear of the primary structure and screened from the primary public right-of-way.



*Building adjacent to the public right-of-way with parking to the side.*



*Brick building adjacent to the public right-of-way with corner entry and parking to the rear.*

- Fencing should be used to screen commercial uses from residential uses at the rear property line where appropriate.
- Landscaping along roadway edges should be in keeping with an urban street character, and include street trees where possible, to provide a rhythm and identifiable character for the road.
- Sidewalks and/or multi-use paths should be located along the right-of-way, in keeping with the identified streetscape typology for that area.
- Bicycle access should be accommodated and encouraged in site design.

## Site Access

- Sites should be designed to share vehicular access with adjacent sites/as part of a larger access strategy.
- Individual entrances are discouraged in favor of collaborative site designs.
- Excessive curb-cuts and driveways should be avoided.
- Vehicular access should be provided from the alleys where possible, reducing or eliminating street frontage curb-cuts.
- Site access shall be oriented in a grid-like street pattern, whether public streets or private on-site drives.

## Parking

- Shared parking across joint sites is highly encouraged.
- Encourage the use of alternative transportation through site design, to lower parking demand.
- Emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles could lower parking ratios and should be closely monitored.



*Permeable pavers and green infrastructure in parking area.*



*Dedicated bicycle facilities.*

- The use of permeable paving materials is encouraged.
- Small landscape islands within parking lots are discouraged in favor of larger sustainable-practice planting areas.
- Incorporating sustainable practices within parking areas is encouraged, including:
  - Pervious paving
  - Bioswales, rain gardens and other stormwater controls
  - Solar shades
- Parking areas should be well-lit.



*Linear landscaping along the street edge can create a buffer between pedestrians and automobile traffic, while providing stormwater benefits.*

## Active Transportation

- Bicycle racks should be installed near primary building entrances.
- Sidewalks and/or multi-use paths should link sites and extend into each site to provide direct access to buildings.

## Open Space

- Usable open space should be incorporated in as close proximity to uses as possible.
- Sidewalk and/or multi-use paths should link development to nearby parks and open space.
- Open space should include multi-use paths, seating, and other passive and limited active recreation uses.



*First floor office and retail space should have large windows, to create an element of visual interest along the street.*

## Landscaping

- Site landscaping should be consolidated into areas large enough to support successful plant growth. Small landscape islands within parking lots are discouraged.

- Larger, linear landscape islands are encouraged, particularly those integrated into an overall stormwater quality and control system.
- Landscape areas may be curb-less, as needed, to contribute to stormwater quality and controls.
- Landscape screening adjacent to the public right-of-way and adjacent to parking lots should allow pedestrian access.
- Regular maintenance of landscaping is encouraged. This includes limiting hedgerows to heights low enough to see above when walking, street tree pruning, and regular maintenance of screening along the rights-of-way.

## Buildings

- Entrances shall be located along the public rights-of way in order to create a “front door” character for the pedestrian corridors.
- Building lighting may be used to enhance architectural features and to indicate the location of entries.
- Multi-use buildings are encouraged.
- **Scale and Massing**
  - Scale should be considered in the overall context of the district and based on site location.
  - Massing of the buildings should create an urban street edge.
  - Buildings of 2-story to 5-story heights are encouraged.
  - Buildings should have a 1 and 1/2-story appearance, at a minimum.
- **Transparency**
  - A high degree of transparency is encouraged, utilizing storefront windows on the first floors.



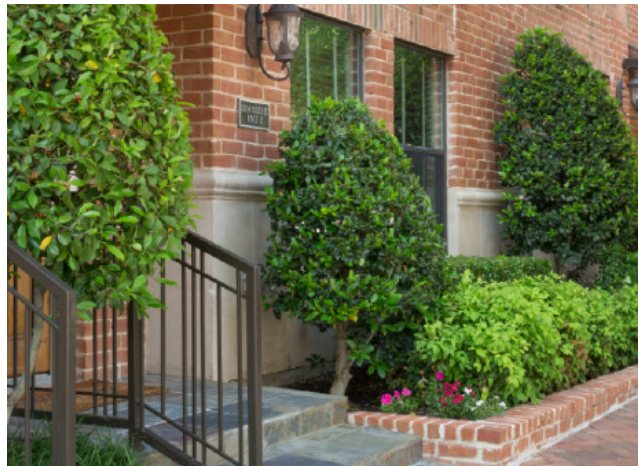
*High-quality materials and design should be used on all four sides of a building, and ideally, parking should be located in the rear.*



*Glass and outdoor seating can add a sense of vibrancy and energy to the street.*

## Buildings: Exterior Materials

- Natural materials are encouraged; materials that emulate a different material are discouraged.
- **Glass**
  - Glass on the first floor should be transparent to allow views into the building.
  - Use of transparent (non-opaque) glass is encouraged throughout.
- **Metal**
  - Metal can be used as an accent and as overall framing for glass elements. Metal should be more “solid” in character with a minimum thickness of ¼” – break metal and other easily warped metal applications should be avoided.
- **Brick**
  - Natural brick is encouraged as an external material on all floors.
  - Brick veneer may be used if installed and dimensioned to give the appearance of true brick.
  - Brick can be used in conjunction with stone sills and lintels.
  - Other clay products such as terracotta tiles may be used, as appropriate.
- **Stone**
  - Natural stone or natural stone veneer is appropriate based on scale and location.
  - Stone is most appropriate on lower facades.
  - Stone may be used in conjunction with other materials such as glass and brick.
  - Stone sills and lintels are an effective external building component when incorporated into facades with other materials, such as brick.
- **Wood**
  - Wood is a possible exterior material depending on its application and the scale of the structure.



*Complementary use of natural materials ensures quality and aesthetic are maintained.*

- Wood can be used as an accent material or a framing around building features.
- Traditional wood siding profiles should be used only on smaller-scale and traditionally designed structures.

## Signage

### • General

- The scale and proportions of a sign should fit with the scale of the individual building on which it resides. Signs shall not cover windows, roof shapes, or dominate trim.
- The scale of signs on primary streets should cater to the pedestrian.
- The copy of the sign should be restricted to the name, address, function, and logo of the establishment. Phone numbers, web sites, rates, and advertising of commodities or ancillary services should not be posted
- It is expected that each storefront will have a combination of two of the following as their primary and secondary sign: a wall sign, an awning sign, a projecting sign, or a window sign. The standard primary sign should be a wall sign above the storefront and the standard secondary sign should be a projecting sign for easy view of pedestrians along the sidewalk.
- Only one projecting sign should be permitted per storefront on primary streets.
- Only one primary sign is permitted. The maximum number of business name signs should be two per business on the front or side (or combination) of the building and one sign in the rear.
- No new freestanding pole signs should be permitted. Those that exist will become nonconforming signs. Existing pole signs can be replaced with ground-mounted signs.
- For second (rear) entrances, locate signs above the door or window. These signs should be no larger than 25 percent of the allowable size of the main sign on the front façade. Vivid colors and striking signage can highlight the rear store entrance from parking lots. Service entrances should be clearly marked, but not emphasized.
- Sidewalk signs must not obstruct pedestrian movements along public walkways or view triangles.
- The maximum number of sidewalk signs is one per business, may only be displayed during business hours, and must be taken inside overnight every night.
- Banners and cloth signs shall be used primarily for special, festive occasions. If such signs are used on a permanent basis, a condition of their initial approval is agreement to replace them when they show wear. A banner shall be considered a permanent sign if it displays content or identification of any kind which relates to the business or service establishment of the building to which the banner is attached.



*Branded signage adds to the feeling of place, while easily directing visitors to areas of interest.*

### • **Sign Materials and Colors**

- Sign materials should coordinate and complement those of the building.
- Materials to be avoided include sheet metal, plastic panels, and vinyl wherever possible.
- Colors should coordinate with each other and the building to which the sign is attached and should contribute to legibility and design quality.

### • **Sign Lighting**

- Signs may be lighted from exterior sources, provided the light source is cut-off so as to only illuminate the sign face. Ground-mounted light sources must be screened from public view, preferably with landscaping. Wall-mounted light sources should be architecturally appropriate for the building.
- Signs should not be backlit unless it is from lights located within individual channel-type letters.
- Interior lighted signs are not encouraged except for the those that with individually illuminated letters and graphic(s). The entire sign and background should not be internally illuminated.

### **Exemption Criteria**

Under certain conditions, existing signs can be exempted from portions of the Sign Design Guidelines.

Considerations for these exceptions include:

- Significantly historic sign that is important to the history of the community.
- A sign that contributes significantly to the positive character of the a primary street (“sign of merit”).
- National or state historic sign.

## PARKING STRATEGY

Parking is a typical concern in traditional downtowns like Mount Vernon. In specific areas, there is a lack of parking spaces available. Usually, the challenge is in regard to the specific location or use of existing parking spaces. Often times, the actual number of existing parking spaces are in excess of the need to support existing demand.

### Factors Shaping Parking in Downtown Mount Vernon:

**1. Land Use:** Some uses have a higher ratio of parking per square foot than others. Typically, high-turnover food service (example: popular fast-casual restaurant chains) has the highest demand, followed by other restaurant uses (example: typical sit-down dining), large scale event spaces (example: concert venue), then office, retail and residential.

*Current Conditions:* Downtown Mount Vernon is beginning to establish a mix of uses, with the exception of residential.

**2. Peak Usage:** If an area has all of the same type of use (example: all restaurants or all residential) then the peak times of uses will be the same. For instance, restaurants have peak parking demand at lunchtime and again during the evening, while residential uses peak in the evening, and remain overnight until the morning. Office uses peak during the day.

*Current Conditions:* The mix of uses in Downtown Mount Vernon have complementary parking needs and usage. Office and educational uses complement restaurant and retail.

**3. Parking Location:** The habit of drivers is to look for a spot closest to their destination. Drivers will also defer to a parking space somewhat further away if it is perceived as easy, safe and reliable.

*Current Conditions:* Many paved parking spaces exist near the core. However, with a lack of significant shared and well-marked parking around the district, many of these spaces are largely inaccessible.

### 4. Alternative Transportation Options:

Linkages and proximity to alternative transportation methods can have direct impacts on parking demand. In particular, regional public transit options and a network of bicycle facilities (bike lanes/trails) play a large role. A walkable Downtown Mount Vernon with nearby residential can also reduce parking needs.

*Downtown Conditions:* Limited access to trail and bike parking.

### How Far Will People Walk From Parking?

Adjacent Uses (Less than 100 ft)	Short (Less than 80 feet)	Medium (Less than 1200 feet)	Long (Less than 1600 feet)
People with disabilities Deliveries and loading Emergency services Convenience store	Grocery stores Professional services Medical clinics Residents	General retail Restaurant Employees Entertainment center Religious institution	Airport parking Major sport or cultural event Overflow parking

Victoria Transport Policy Institute TDM Encyclopedia,  
(December 2015)

**5. Ease of Parking:** While the first factor in parking is proximity to the destination, ease of parking plays a huge role in traditional downtown areas where development is more dense and several destinations may be part of a single trip. Ease of parking includes a perception that there are typically spaces available in that area, that the parking area is clean, well-lit and maintained and that the walk from the parking area will not add significant time.

*Downtown Conditions:* City-owned lots are generally maintained, private lots range from very well-maintained to dilapidated, and the walk to-and-from the lots is an uneven experience. In addition, it is difficult to ascertain which parking lots are public, which are private, and the overall parking situation Downtown lacks any kind of wayfinding or complimentary signage.

**6. Access/(Un)certainity:** Technically, people in Downtown can park a car in any paved space that exists. But all drivers know that public spaces often have limits that can lead to a traffic ticket if misunderstood, and private spaces typically come with scores of restrictions that could lead to a towing. No one wants to risk that! Providing clear access and easily understood rules for parking removes true and perceived obstacles.

*Downtown Conditions:* Many underused private parking lots could alleviate the concern of parking in unmarked spaces.

**7. Wayfinding:** Having both signage to guide drivers to parking and signage to guide visitors once they have left their cars is a key component in widening parking options. Knowing where, when and how to park in an area, greatly increases comfort levels and expands the distance for viable parking.

*Downtown Conditions:* Limited signage and only for drivers. Pedestrians lack guidance after parking. No routing for bikers to find parking.

## PARKING INVENTORY:

In Mount Vernon, a parking inventory was completed immediately prior to this Plan to understand the demand versus the supply of parking, both overall and in proximity to key areas. The general results found:

- *Quantity of overall parking is in excess of current demand.*
- *Quantity of publicly available parking is adequate for current demand.*
- *Location of publicly available parking is only partially effective.*
- *Large quantities of parking are designated as “private” and should be explored as options for shared parking.*
- *Restricting on-street parking to daytime or early evening hours may allow for longer parking overnight.*
- *Parking wayfinding is ineffective for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.*
- *Apply a shared use parking strategy for new uses in Downtown, including the Knox Community Hospital offices and the completed Woodward Opera House theater.*
- *Trucks continue to play an important role in the Downtown Mount Vernon economy. As truck routes get reconsidered and realigned, consider adding truck and RV parking in strategic locations to allow these users to shop and enjoy Downtown Mount Vernon.*

## PARKING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Category	Description	Recommended Action Steps
<b>Land Use and Peak Usage</b>	The ideal way to balance demand (overall and peak) is to create a mix of uses that have complementary parking demands. This can be aided by a regulatory framework that encourages traditional downtown mixed-use development types. In particular, buildings that contain different uses within the same structure, such as residential or office above retail or restaurant, should be encouraged. Sharing of lots with complementary uses can accommodate most demands, other than specialized high-volume needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design guidelines and code modifications to encourage mixed-use development.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentivization for multi-use structures.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage/allow shared parking.</li> </ul>
<b>Ease of Parking</b>	The perception of parking as easy, safe and available can be accomplished in two general ways. From an education and information side, the most effective approach will be to provide mapping info in the form of online parking availability maps, to create printed parking availability maps for downtown businesses to distribute, and including mapping in the wayfinding stations installed throughout downtown. From a project improvement side, upgrades to the physical characteristics of the parking areas will show evidence of investment and increase safety and improve the perception of parking areas for users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create parking maps for downtown.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with the local Main Street organization with information to update online parking mapping.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with local Main Street organization of printed parking maps – updated regularly.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create site improvements to city lots, and coordinate improvements with shared private lots, including the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Sidewalks</li> <li>• Curbing</li> <li>• Landscaping</li> <li>• Pavement repairs</li> <li>• Re-striping</li> <li>• Wayfinding signage (see Wayfinding below)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## PARKING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Category	Description	Recommended Action Steps
<b>Parking Location, Access/(Un)certainty</b>	Existing lots must be coordinated to serve as parking during underutilized periods. For instance, lots designated for daytime office parking can be double-purposed to serve restaurant and concert-goers in the evenings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate public/private use of parking lot. (This may involve the use of the Special Improvement District (“SID”) discussed in market analysis section.)</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with private owners of parking areas together or individually to provide information on the following opportunities:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential improvements.</li> <li>Installation of pay kiosks.</li> <li>Landscaping.</li> <li>Signage.</li> <li>Negotiate with owners for use of public parking in after-hours public lease.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop additional temporary public parking lots on land acquired in target zone. (See page 78)</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Transportation Options:</b>	The bike trail adjacent to downtown is part of a trail system that functions as a regional visitor destination. This gives Mount Vernon a unique opportunity to capture significant bike riders throughout three seasons, further increasing patronage of downtown uses, without adding any cars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create direct linkages from downtown to the trail system along the river. This will allow direct access to the commercial core.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install public bike racks at key locations along the corridor and in public parking areas.</li> </ul>

## PARKING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Category	Description	Recommended Action Steps
<b>Wayfinding:</b>	<p>A complete wayfinding strategy will incorporate the practical elements of signage, along with more tactile and visual cues related to streetscape elements and landscaping. Establishing a strong and simple vernacular will establish and encourage links to parking as well as between Downtown elements including the riverfront, Ariel-Foundation Park, the Square, Memorial Building, and Main Street.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the local Main Street organization to create parking maps for downtown (see above in Ease of Parking).</li> <li>• Create comprehensive wayfinding scheme for downtown.</li> <li>• Expand existing wayfinding signage for parking.</li> <li>• Establish wayfinding signage for pedestrian routing to and from parking.</li> <li>• Design streetscape/walkway elements to reinforce visual and experiential cues.</li> <li>• Create larger downtown wayfinding scheme to encourage links between riverfront, Ariel-Foundation Park, Square, Main Street, etc.</li> </ul>

## PARKING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Category	Recommended Action Steps
<b>Additional Parking Recommendations (Immediate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourage business owners from taking up Main Street spaces.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review where areas of currently enforced parking time-limits are enforced and what should be included.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend some streetscapes that have “extra room” to accommodate smaller delivery/work trucks, easing workers’ access to downtown businesses</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add “protected” on-street parking where possible as part of new streetscapes. This includes reducing unneeded curb cuts and access points from primary streets, encouraging access from alleys where possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Parking Recommendations (Long-term)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider likely impacts of coming Autonomous Vehicle technology</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the coming decades, it is likely that driving will fundamentally change. The advent of autonomous (driverless) vehicles will account for some significant percentage of cars on the road. This will have significant impacts for downtown.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of parking – AV technology will reduce the need to for nearby parking as riders can be dropped at the location of their destination. This will allow parking to occur outside of the downtown core, allowing further density and development on current parking areas.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development approach – Traditional mixed-use development will be the best way to take advantage of transportation changes while guarding against obsolete development patterns.</li> </ul>

## Temporary Parking Capacity and Added Signage

There are a few opportunities to add additional parking capacity in the Downtown. These spaces will add capacity for day-time employees and for those who want to access evening entertainment. They are indicated on the map below.

Furthermore, one of the small, but effective

interventions that Mount Vernon can implement to ease parking concerns in the Downtown is by installing clear, visible parking signs. Below is a map of recommended locations for installing parking signs to guide people to existing public lots. As shared parking scenarios develop, additional parking signage will likely be necessary.



Figure 14 - Public Parking Signage Locations

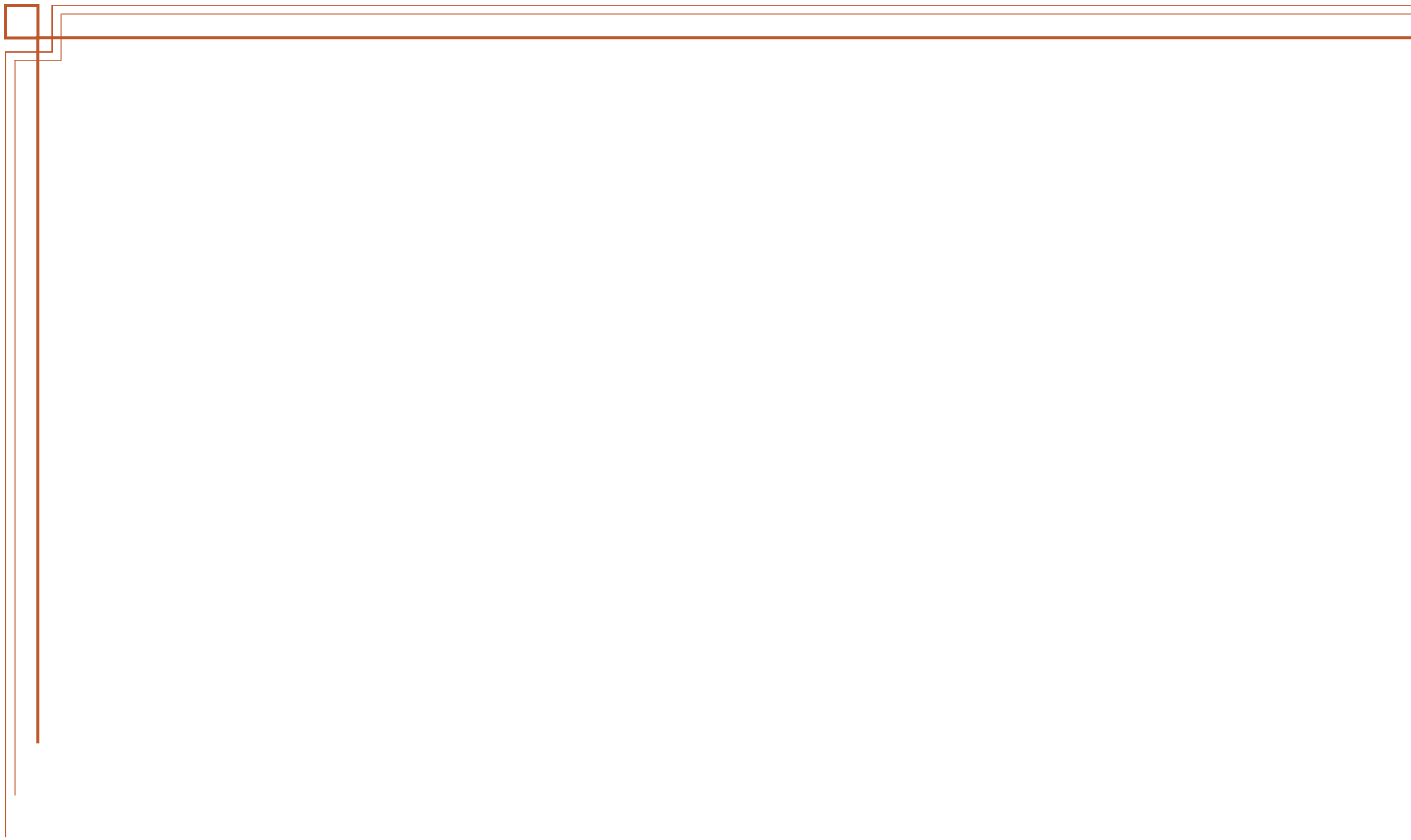
## POLICY SUMMARY

Throughout the Plan, a series of recommendations have been made on subjects including: specific capital improvements projects, leveraging finance mechanisms, implementing policy tools, including design guidelines and parking recommendations. The following is a summary policy and implementation table to help move the vision of the plan into progress for Mount Vernon.

Projects	Responsible Party
<b>Capital Improvements Projects (Pgs. 41-61)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategy to redesign the Downtown Square.</li> <li>• Develop a strategy to implement and program the “Green Bike Alleyway.”</li> <li>• Continue to coordinate with the findings of the GPD truck study before making capital improvements decisions in the southern gateway.</li> <li>• Develop a strategy to redesign the public right-of-way for West High Street.</li> </ul>	
<b>Design Guidelines (Pgs. 65-71)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Design Guidelines to strengthen and preserve the historic building stock Downtown.</li> </ul>	
<b>Parking Strategy (Pgs. 74-77)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and implement action steps outlined in the Parking Strategy to ensure that parking meets the needs of Downtown businesses.</li> </ul>	
<b>Districts and Commissions (Pgs. 65-71)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the appropriate local commissions, including a planning commission, have the authority to review development applications.</li> </ul>	
<b>Financing and Implementation (Pgs. 26-31)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentivize downtown residential offerings with appropriate tax abatements.</li> <li>• Use existing “value capture” strategies (outlined in Market Analysis section) to leverage future development.</li> <li>• Establish a Special Improvement District as a method of raising additional revenue in order to pay for downtown programming.</li> <li>• Leverage different value capture strategies as a local match for additional grant funding.</li> </ul>	



# APPENDIX A



# THE MIDDLE SCHOOL



---

*The vacant Middle School sits on a five-acre site adjacent to the Cooper Works Industrial Site. The site presents a unique opportunity to add new residential development in close proximity to Downtown, while preserving part of Mount Vernon's history.*

---

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Middle School Site presents several challenges for redevelopment. The grade change from North Sandusky Street, by Siemens, up toward North Mulberry Street, is significant, rendering approximately 20% of the site as undevelopable.

Furthermore, the existing footprint of the school is large, and the back half of the building is not ideally configured for residential development. However, the reuse of the front-third of the building will preserve a historic asset on the street.

### Site Context



*Preserving the front of the middle school would maintain the character of North Mulberry Street, while still providing opportunities for residential development.*



*The western two-thirds of the existing building is not conducive to residential development and may not be a priority to be preserved.*



*The Living Center, a retirement home, is next to the existing site. Future site plans should consider how development might complement this facility.*

## THE MIDDLE SCHOOL SITE CONCEPTS

### Concept 1: Single-Family Homes

The first concept centers around the development of single-family homes, with apartments in the front half of the school building. Due to the topography of the site, access to the single family homes is through a central rear alley, with garages facing the alleyway. This option with single-family homes blends well with the residential development along West Burgess Street and West Hamtramck Street.

- 14 single family homes, accessed through an alleyway
- 36 apartments in existing building



### Concept 2: Multi-Family Apartments

An option for significantly increasing the residential capacity on the site is to build multi-family apartments. By reusing the front of the school building, and adding four three-story buildings, 151 apartments units can be accommodated on the site, accessed through a central parking lot. While this site plan may be more than the market can accommodate, slight deviations from this site plan can be used to meet market needs.

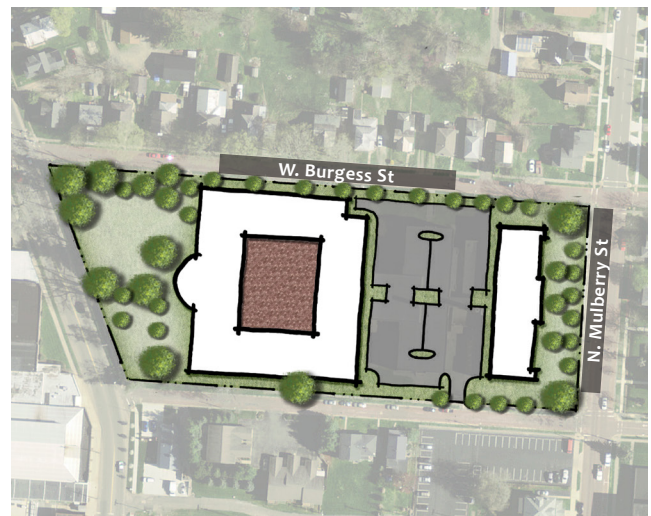
- 4 new multifamily buildings (3 floors)
- 151 total units (includes reusing the school)



### Concept 3: An Assisted Living Facility

The school site sits across the street from the Living Center, an existing independent retirement home. An aging population may lead to increased demand for such facilities in the future. A new, 1-story assisted living facility, centered around a courtyard, could help spur complementary uses in the area and meet the needs of an aging population, such as healthcare facilities.

- 36 apartments in existing building
- 41 units, centered around a courtyard



## CASE STUDIES

### THE BARRETT SCHOOL, COLUMBUS, OH

The Barrett School was built in 1896 in the Merion Village neighborhood of Columbus. Recently, the school and its surrounding property have been transformed into a residential development. The old school has been transformed into 52 apartments, while preserving features of the schools such as the school hallways and locker rooms. The school's old playground and athletic fields have been converted into a mix of apartments and single-family homes. This site has many parallels to the Middle School site, from the size of the site to the successful preservation of an existing school building.



*The Barrett School site has brought a residential, and thus, a consumer base to help anchor the Merion Village neighborhood of Columbus. It is an appropriate model for future development in Mount Vernon.*

### SANDS SENIOR APARTMENTS, CINCINNATI, OH

Originally built in 1912 as George F. Sands School and converted in 1975 to the nation's first public Montessori elementary school, Sands Montessori school, in Cincinnati's West End neighborhood, was recently given new life as an affordable senior housing community. The historic structure was transformed into Sands Senior Apartments and includes 65 studio, one, and two bedroom units. Much of the architectural character was preserved and the original auditorium and gymnasium were retained to provide opportunities for programming and community events. Supported living is one type of housing that could work on the Middle School site in Mount Vernon.



*Due to its close proximity to downtown Cincinnati, residents of this senior housing facility have access to amenities throughout the city, a model that could be replicated at the school site near Downtown Mount Vernon.*

# APPENDIX B

# DISTRICT BOUNDARIES MAP

