



ADOPTED: MAY 5, 2026

2026
downtown
AUBURN
REVITALIZATION PLAN

RESOLUTION 07-2026

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE
2026 DOWNTOWN AUBURN REVITALIZATION PLAN**

SUMMARY

A Resolution adopting the 2026 Downtown Auburn Revitalization Plan. The 2026 Plan replaces the 2018 Downtown Revitalization Plan.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recorder's Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Publish Public Hearing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auditor's Office | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clerk's Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Publish O/R after Adoption |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building Department | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering Department | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DeKalb County Plan Commission | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Code Site – Council Ordinances | |

RESOLUTION 07-2026

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE
2026 DOWNTOWN AUBURN REVITALIZATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Common Council of the City of Auburn, Indiana, passed Resolution 04-2018 adopting the 2018 Downtown Auburn Revitalization Plan on May 2, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Downtown Auburn serves as the core of the community, thus there is adequate reason to maintain an updated Downtown Revitalization Plan to ensure continued progress towards a healthy and vibrant downtown business district; and

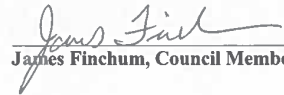
WHEREAS, HWC Engineering was selected to assist the City, Auburn Main Street Board of Directors, and the Steering Committee to prepare the 2026 Downtown Auburn Revitalization Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City of Auburn Plan Commission conducted a public hearing on April 14, 2026 as required by law and forward a favorable recommendation to the Auburn Common Council to adopt the plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of Auburn, DeKalb County, State of Indiana that:

The *2026 Downtown Auburn Revitalization Plan*, as attached hereto as Exhibit A, is hereby adopted as the guide to managing changes in downtown Auburn.

ADOPTED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUBURN, INDIANA ON THE 5th DAY OF May, 2026.


James Finchum, Council Member


ATTEST:


Lorrie K. Pontius, Clerk-Treasurer

Presented by me to the Mayor of the City of Auburn, Indiana, this 5th day of May, 2026.


LORRIE K. PONTIUS, Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED AND SIGNED by me this 5th day of May, 2026.


DAVID E. CLARK, Mayor

VOTING:

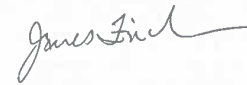
AYE

NAY

Natalie DeWitt, President



James Finchum



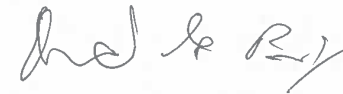
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THANK YOU!

A special thank you to the steering committee and community members that participated in this planning process.

Prepared by:



HWC
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Auburn Art Mural

Chapter

1

THE AUBURN COMMUNITY

OVERVIEW

The 2026 Auburn Downtown Revitalization Plan outlines a shared vision for Auburn's downtown area. This plan serves as a guidance document for elected and appointed officials, city staff, Auburn Main Street, and other local organizations to reference when making decisions related to future development, business attraction and retention, tourism, placemaking, and beautification.

The plan provides a baseline assessment of the current conditions including demographic, housing, and economic data along with an inventory of physical conditions. This plan also identifies the long-term vision and goals for the downtown and provides an action plan for how to achieve the vision. By building consensus around ongoing and emerging challenges, downtown revitalization plans enable communities to prioritize projects and make cohesive development decisions. Furthermore, through a robust public engagement process, this plan identifies strategies for leveraging strategic partnerships, exploring diverse funding sources, and transforming the downtown core to better meet the needs of residents and visitors.

This plan serves as an update to the 2018 City of Auburn Downtown Revitalization. The goal of this update was to confirm the overall vision and goals with the community, eliminate projects and recommendations that had been completed or no longer relevant, and provide additional guidance to local leaders on how to move forward based on community input.

This plan provides long-term guidance with a lifespan of 10+ years. With ever changing priorities and funding opportunities, it is important that Auburn revisit this plan every five years to ensure the plan remains relevant and updated based on the current needs of residents, businesses, and local leadership.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

In May 2025, The City of Auburn kicked off a nine-month planning process to update the downtown revitalization plan. The plan was completed using a four-phase planning process which included research and analysis, community engagement, visioning, and identification of recommendations. This process was designed to leverage the insight of city leaders, city staff, community partners, business owners, and residents.

The public engagement process and key findings is summarized in Chapter Three starting on page 48.

DOWNTOWN PLANNING PROCESS

PHASE 1

Kick-off and Plan Assessment

May – July 2025

1

KEY MILESTONES

Project Kickoff

Data Collection

Steering Committee

Meeting #1

PHASE 2
Reach a Consensus
July – August 2025

2

KEY MILESTONES

Online Public Survey
Focus Group Meetings
Public Workshop
Updated Vision, Goals,
and Objectives
Steering Committee
Meeting #2

PHASE 3
Update the Plan
September – October 2025

3

KEY MILESTONES

Big Ideas Open House
Steering Committee
Meeting #3
Draft Plan

PHASE 4
Practical Action Steps
November – February 2026

4

KEY MILESTONES

Draft Plan Review by the
Committee
Steering Committee
Meeting #4
Public Draft Plan
Public Presentation



DESTINATION SPOTLIGHT

DeKalb County Indiana is the ‘Hub of Transportation Heritage’ with ten, transit-oriented museums unique not just to the region but also nationally and internationally recognized.

Three of those museums are proudly stationed in Auburn – the city known as the “Home of the Classics”. These museums include the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum, the Early Ford V-8 Foundation Museum, and the National Auto & Truck Museum.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The City of Auburn is located in northeast Indiana just 14 miles north of Fort Wayne. With a 2024 population of 13,565, Auburn is the county seat of DeKalb County. Interstate 69 (I-69) provides north-south connectivity through northern Indiana and crosses through the western portion of the city just over a mile from the center of downtown. State Road (SR) 8 provides east-west connectivity for motorists connecting residents and visitors to the downtown core.

Auburn’s proximity to Fort Wayne has, and will continue to, play a significant role in the city’s growth and development. As Fort Wayne continues to expand northward, Auburn may experience an increase in development pressure. However, it provides an alternative to the metropolitan setting with a more suburban-style of living and quaint downtown within easy access to regional employment.

Auburn has also leveraged this proximity to support the downtown by investing in improvements that will draw visitors and customers from all over the region. Aside from the rich automobile history and culture, Auburn takes pride in its Downtown Historic Business and Arts Districts, which thrive with local businesses, restaurants, and civic uses.

The downtown serves as a regional hub for events and culture. Much of the tourism efforts have been centered around Auburn’s identity related to the automotive industry. It is home to Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum (ACDAM) and many themed events throughout the calendar year. While this identity still holds strong, Auburn has expanded its identity with an emphasis on arts and culture. The Auburn Arts District was established in 2021 and encompasses local boutiques, artisan and antique shops, and artist galleries. Hand-painted wall murals and other public art installations are sprinkled throughout the downtown enhancing the character and sense of place.



Regional Context Map

STUDY AREA

It was decided early in the process that the study area would be defined. The study area is largely bound by Fourth Street to the north, Twelfth Street to the south, Cedar Creek to the east, and Van Buren Street to the west. This encompasses roughly thirty city blocks within downtown including notable city landmarks such as City Hall and county landmarks like the DeKalb County Courthouse and a portion of the DeKalb County Fairgrounds.

Cedar Creek poses some issues with seasonal flooding along the eastern edge of the study area but is also the driving force behind the establishment of the Riverfront District. The realization of this district has encouraged further activation of downtown through expanded business opportunities.

The Arts District extends across the blocks north of Seventh Street with newer streetscape design and spaces activated with art to make a more pleasant pedestrian experience. This area is overall heavier in retail and commercial than the rest of downtown, except for portions of new and redeveloped buildings along the western block immediately adjacent to the Courthouse Square.

The blocks southeast of the Courthouse Square are dominated by governmental uses, including city and county offices, departments, and associated surface parking. City Hall is in need of substantial structural improvement to preserve the building. There will need to be considerations made for temporary relocation and adjusted workflow for the impacted governmental departments and processes.

Through discussions with the steering committee, stakeholders, and the public, it became apparent that the vision for downtown revitalization expands beyond the boundaries originally set in place. Destinations immediately south, including the DeKalb County Fairgrounds, Eckhart Public Library, and the DeKalb County Community Foundation buildings are all important assets in the downtown atmosphere. Even further south is the Museum District, which is connected to downtown through Eckhart Library and Park Historic District by way of the Poka-boche Connector Trail. Recommendations for revitalization as seen in this plan will reflect a broader reach, connecting to those important community assets just outside the boundary.



Auburn City Hall



EXISTING PLANS + STUDIES

Before making recommendations for the future, it is important to examine and evaluate any existing plans to gain an understanding of what has been completed to date, identify areas of improvement, and inform the development of this plan. The City of Auburn has a handful of existing plans that apply to the downtown district. The following section provides a brief description of each plan.

2018 City of Auburn Downtown Revitalization Plan

The 2018 Downtown Revitalization Plan is a strategic plan aimed at building the city's existing assets and leveraging the community's heritage. The plan assesses the current physical and economic conditions that result in a viable retail, business, entertainment, and government center. The focus is on preserving downtown character and emphasizing the importance of public spaces, including streetscapes, and walkability.

Auburn 2040: The Road Ahead

Auburn 2040: The Road Ahead is a comprehensive community-driven guide for future decision-making regarding the physical development and responsible growth of the community. Rooted in an understanding of local conditions, demographics, socio-economic factors, and community input, the plan outlines the community vision, objectives, goals, as well as strategies to achieve these goals.

Significant attention is paid to Auburn's Downtown. It's the community's favorite thing about Auburn and is considered a strong asset. The comprehensive plan outlines how past downtown revitalization efforts focused on the physical upgrades, economic revitalization,

and streetscape improvements. Through the public engagement process, the residents expressed a strong interest in adding more housing options to the downtown, continued investment into beautification and pedestrian-focused improvements, and linking other community assets to the downtown. As downtown is becoming a more popular destination, people would like to ensure adequate parking is available and protect the historical character and form of the downtown.

2022-2026 Auburn Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The 2022-2026 Auburn Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a strategic roadmap that guides the Parks Department in its improvements to the parks, recreation amenities, and programming that enhance the quality of life. When it comes to the downtown area, this plan supports the investment in activating the downtown parks and connecting the downtown to other parks and city amenities through sidewalks and trails.

2020 Auburn Strategic Investment Plan

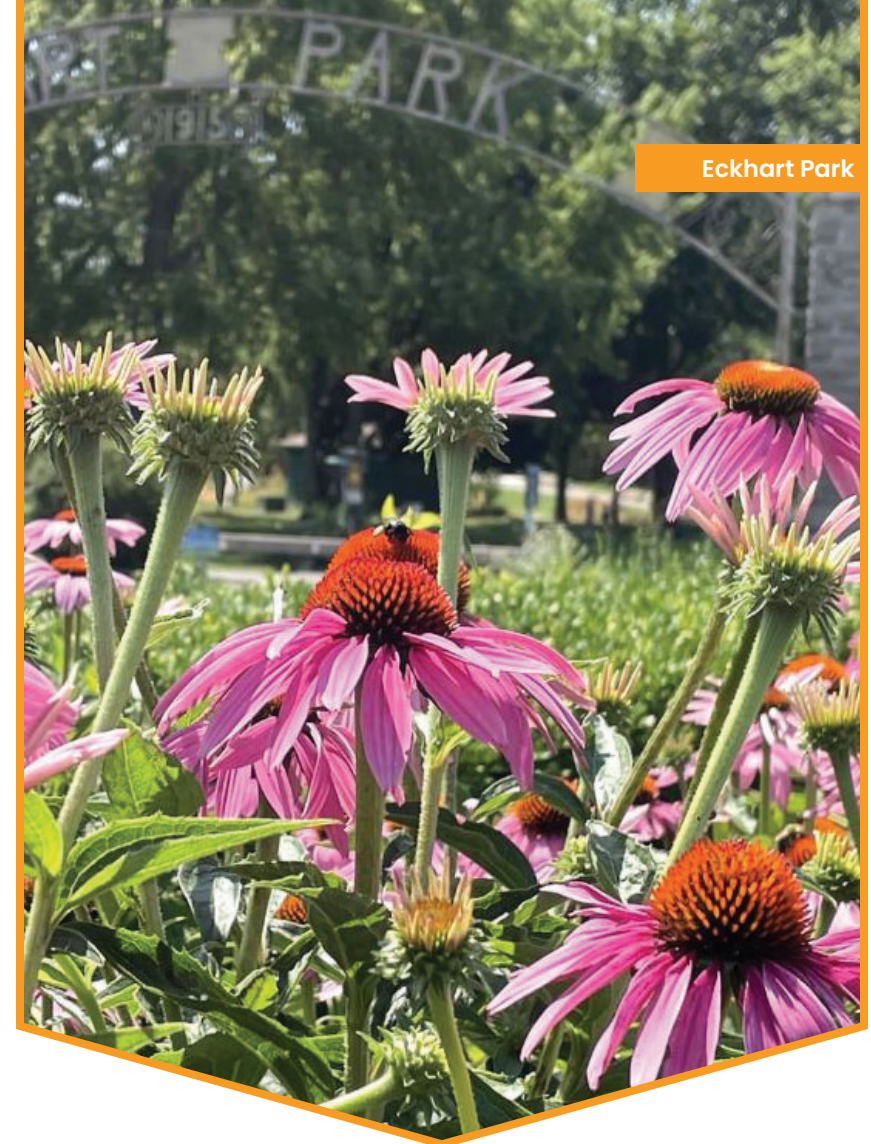
The City of Auburn Strategic Investment Plan focuses on the projects, initiatives, and programs that help the city achieve a higher quality of life, invite more businesses into the city, and encourage development and redevelopment. This planning effort was initiated through the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) created by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) in 2022.

While the Comprehensive Plan and Parks and Recreation Plan outline the ideas for the necessary projects in the city, this plan shows how some of these ideas have turned into concrete projects and programs funded by the city and other investors. This strategic plan includes projects related to implementing city-wide gateways and

wayfinding, downtown riverfront district improvements, blue zones aimed at improving the community's health and well-being, and improving access to high-speed internet.

2018 Auburn Trails and Sidewalk Plan

The Auburn Trails and Sidewalk Plan serves as a guide to direct the future growth of the City of Auburn's trails, sidewalks, and bikeways. Opportunities were provided throughout the planning process for residents to verbalize needs and concerns regarding trails and sidewalks, with a plan to focus on providing safe access and connectivity between points of interest. Since regional connectivity is an important feature, the City of Auburn will collaborate with DeKalb County Government and other municipalities within the county to implement this comprehensive trails and sidewalk plan.



CITY INITIATIVES

Auburn Main Street

Mission – “To have a vibrant and attractive downtown that is inclusive for all.”

Auburn Main Street was incorporated in 2011 as a means to address the physical decline of the downtown business district, spurred by increased vacancies and movement of business outside of downtown, and bring attention to the importance of preserving the historic character. It is a collaborative organization of people that live and work in Auburn including community members, business and property owners, residents, and visitors who all share the same vision for downtown Auburn. The organization has received many accolades for positive impact on the community including 2018 Non-Profit of the Year from DeKalb Chamber Partnership and 2025 National Main Street Accreditation from Main Street America.

One of their most notable contributions to the downtown is their collaborative effort with the Redevelopment Commission and the City of Auburn to offer a Façade Grant Program to property owners. “This program is designed to encourage both downtown businesses and/or building owners to improve the aesthetic appearance of their historical building façade to help stimulate commerce and enhance the overall business environment of the downtown’s historic corridor”. The program offers a 50% match of funds up to \$15,000 for improvements, with up to \$2,500 for architectural or engineering assistance, and grants can be requested by applicants once every twelve months.

In 2025, Auburn Main Street partnered with the City of Auburn and the Auburn Sons of the American Legion 97 to complete the DeKalb County Veterans Memorial in the downtown Riverfrton District. Furthermore, Auburn Main Street and Downtown Auburn Business Association (DABA) have a strong partnership hosting a multitude of events.

Downtown Auburn Business Association (DABA)

Mission “To foster and maintain a viable downtown business district through community price and awareness, promotion and marketing, and philanthropic endeavors.”

Downtown Auburn Business Association (DABA) is a collaborative organization amongst downtown business owners that has been focusing efforts to bring customers to downtown. It is one of Indiana’s oldest business associations established in the 1940s. The businesses that encompass this organization share the same goals for downtown.

DABA also spearheads downtown beautification efforts including the seasonal rotation of the street planters and streetscape art exhibits. From June through September, artists’ work is showcased through a series of pieces across downtown including 2025’s “Downtown in Full Swing” where twenty wooden porch swings were uniquely painted and placed around downtown.

Yearly, downtown activities organized by DABA include the Downtown Farmers Market from late spring into fall, Summer Cruise-In events, “Trick-or-Treat in Downtown”, “Lighting of Frosty the Snowman” and the “Downtown Auburn Christmas Parade.”

COUNTY-COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

Auburn Art Commission

Mission - "To promote the arts in DeKalb County, Indiana through volunteerism."

The Auburn Arts Commission was created in the mid-1980s to encourage arts in the local community. It now exists as a non-profit organization, since its incorporation in 1994, that focuses not only on efforts within the City of Auburn but also amongst broader DeKalb County. They focus on advocacy and programming in the areas of fine art, writing, music, drama, and theater.

Ongoing programs and events include the "Snowbound Writer's Contest" which has been awarding prizes in the areas of poetry and short story for the last 30+ years, "Medal of Arts" which has been bestowing honors since 1993 by acknowledging individuals who have contributed to arts and culture across the county, and the "Young Musicians Festival."

DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership

Mission - "To facilitate investment making DeKalb County a premier economic driver in Northwest Indiana and in the greater Midwest region of the United States."

The DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership is a non-profit organization that seeks to improve quality of life by growing business and industry in a responsible manner. They focus those efforts in the areas of attracting talent, strengthening business development, implementing rural broadband, fostering entrepreneurship, and realizing housing opportunities.

DeKalb County Chamber Partnership

Mission - "A champion for business, a convener for community, and a catalyst for education in DeKalb County."

The DeKalb County Chamber Partnership is located in Downtown Auburn in a space known as "The Hub" that offers co-working spaces, private offices for lease and meeting spaces. The organization boasts programs that realize their vision including the "Prism: Conference for Women" to bring together women for support in both professional and personal growth and the biannual "HR Summit" for professionals and leaders discussion on workplace impacts, culture, and growth.

DeKalb County Visitors Bureau

"DeKalb County has a unique culture and quality of life, and we want our differences to enhance the quality of our visitors' experiences!"

Tourism is an important part of DeKalb County's identity. This organization showcases all that makes the area unique particularly as it pertains to the classic car heritage and growing arts and culture scene. Auburn is home to four museums focused on automotive history including the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum, the DeKalb County Horsemen's Association and Draft Animal Museum, the Early Ford V-8 Foundation Museum, and the National Auto and Truck Museum. The DeKalb County Visitors Bureau promotes the area's largest, three-day festival - ACD Festival - which is held in downtown Auburn and attracts over 100,000 attendees annually.



Courtyard Park

Chapter 2

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

It is important to understand a community's current conditions and data trends to accurately plan for the future. The following existing conditions analysis includes four key sections: Demographics and Socioeconomics, Retail Market Conditions, Physical Conditions, and Social/Cultural Conditions. This analysis is intended to document current conditions, identify a series of opportunities and challenges, and help guide Auburn's staff and officials in how to best move forward given the existing conditions of the community.

The key findings from this chapter were used to inform the vision, goals, and recommendations found later within the plan.



POPULATION

11%
increase
since 2000

HOUSING

\$172,800
median home value



ECONOMICS

7.1% labor force increase
since 2010

5.3% unemployment
decrease since 2010

COMMUNITY MAKEUP

Unless otherwise specified, the data presented within this chapter was pulled from the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics. For comparison purposes, data was collected from both the 2013 and 2023 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. While the 2026 Auburn Downtown Revitalization Plan focuses on the downtown core, the following data is representative of the entire city.

Demographic Summary Auburn is growing at a steady pace.

The population of Auburn has been steadily growing over the years and reached 13,464 in 2023. Between 2000 and 2023, Auburn experienced an 11.1% increase in population. This rate of growth is similar to the one in Indiana and is slightly faster than that of DeKalb County (7.4%). When looking at the change between 2010 and 2023, Auburn has the highest percentage of growth compared to the state, county, and City of Fort Wayne.

Median age has gone down indicating the age structure is more stable compared to other communities.

In 2023, the median age in Auburn was 35.7, which is slightly younger than in 2010 (36.5). This trend is fairly unique for an Indiana community where it is more common to see an aging population. Auburn's median age is also younger compared to DeKalb County (38.4) or Indiana (38). In terms of racial distribution, the majority of Auburn's population is white, though its share went down from 98.4% in 2010 to 96.2% in 2023.

Housing Summary

The number of housing units is increasing but at a slower rate compared to the county and state.

As of 2023, Auburn had a total of 5,822 housing units. This is 129 more units than in 2010 representing a 2.3% increase in the total number of units. While the City of Fort Wayne had the same rate of growth in units, DeKalb County (4.7%) and the state (6.3%) grew by a larger percentage outpacing housing growth in Auburn.

The housing vacancy rate has decreased since 2010.

Occupancy data reveals that the housing market has shifted in Auburn. As the number of occupied units increased, the vacancy rate decreased. In 2023, 95% of all housing units were occupied, meaning less than 5% of units sit vacant.

Between 2010 and 2023, the number of occupied units increased by 8.7% which follows the same trend in the county, the state, and Fort Wayne. The number of vacant housing units decreased from 567 to 250. This low of a vacancy rate lends itself to a competitive housing market.

Auburn's housing stock is primary owner-occupied.

There was a slight decrease in owner-occupied housing between 2010 and 2023 (from 75.1% to 74.6%) and a consequent increase in the renter-occupied housing (from 24.9% to 25.4%).

The share of owner-occupied housing in Auburn (74.6%) is higher than in the state (70.4%), Fort Wayne (62.2%), Wabash (70.9%), or Huntington (62.1%). While there has been a slight increase in the number of renter-occupied units, this could indicate the need for some more rental options.

Auburn's housing stock is slightly more diverse than the other comparison communities.

In 2023, 68.9% of the housing units were single-family detached units, which is lower compared to the county (78.9%) and the state (72.9%). This indicates that Auburn has slightly more multi-family housing options available to current and future residents.

In terms of the housing unit breakdown, Auburn has a much higher share of mobile homes (10.7%) and large complexes with 20 or more units (7.5%) in comparison to the rest of the state and other surrounding cities.

Majority of housing units are older in age which could be impacting the median home value in Auburn.

In 2023, the median home value in Auburn was \$172,800 which reflects a 54% increase since 2010. DeKalb County has seen a similar increase in value by 58.4%, reaching \$177,900 median value. Both median home values are lower than in the state (\$201,600), which increased by 63.9%.

The distribution of houses built during different decades is spread relatively well. However, the rate of new unit additions has decreased: only 8% of all housing units in Auburn were built between 2010 and 2023, while 12% of all units were built during the 2000s, and 19% of all units were built during the 1990s. Fifty percent of all units were built before 1980, making half of the housing stock 45 years or older.

Economic Summary

While educational attainment is increasing, median household income is lower compared to the county and state.

Between 2010 and 2023, the median household income in Auburn increased by 45.4% from \$42,888 to \$62,339. The median income in Auburn is higher than in Fort Wayne, Wabash, or Huntington, and lower than in DeKalb County (\$70,080) and the state (\$70,051).

Often trends for median income and educational attainments are related. The share of Auburn residents (25+ years old) having a high school diploma or bachelor's degree or higher increased between 2010 and 2023. Ninety-five percent of Auburn residents (25+ years old) have at least a high school diploma. This share is higher than in the state, county, Fort Wayne, Wabash, and Huntington. Twenty-two percent of Auburn residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. This share is higher than in the county, Wabash and Huntington, but lower than in the state (28.8%) or Fort Wayne (28.5%). The share of people with a graduate degree in Auburn decreased from 8.4% to 6.6%.

Auburn's labor force is growing, and employment is on the rise.

In 2023 Auburn had a working population (16 and older) of 10,508. Of these, 65.2% were participating in the labor force. Compared to 2010, Auburn's population over the age of 16 was 9,603 with 5,582 (58.1%) enrolled in the labor force which indicated a 7.1% increase. During this same time period, unemployment dropped from 10.8% to 5.5%.

The commute time and primarily mode of travel for workers hasn't changed since 2010.

The mean travel time for workers is 18.2 minutes, which is lower than in the state (24), county (20.8), Fort Wayne (21.4), and Huntington (19.5). Compared to 2010, the commute time has not changed. The majority of Auburn residents (80.7%) drive a vehicle to work alone. Of the remaining labor force, 13.9% of residents carpool, 2.7% work from home, 1.9% walk, and the rest either use public transport (0.1%) or other means (0.7%).

The management, business, and science occupation employs the largest percentage of Auburn's labor force.

The occupation groups that employ the largest share of the civilian labor force are "Management, business, science, and arts" at 39.3% and "Production, transportation, and material moving" at 38.2%. Between 2010 and 2023, the only occupation group that has seen a decrease in employment is "sales and office": it went down from 27.7% to 19.9%. During this same time period, "natural resources, construction, and maintenance" experience the largest change (131.7%) going from 126 workers to 292 workers.

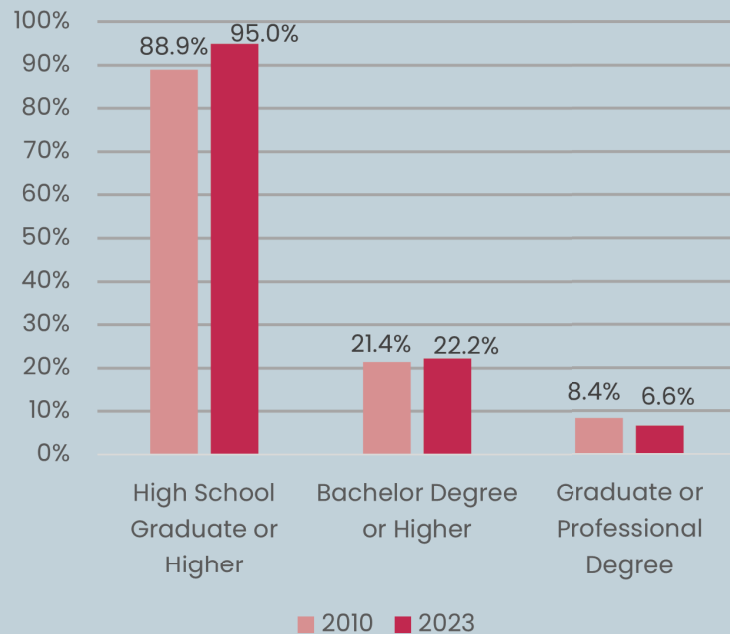
The manufacturing industry employs the largest percentage of Auburn's workforce.

The three top industries in 2023 were: manufacturing (34.2%), education services, healthcare, and social assistance (20.2%), and retail trade (11.5%), employing 65.9% of the labor force. These were also the top three employment industries in 2010 employing 57.1% of the labor force.

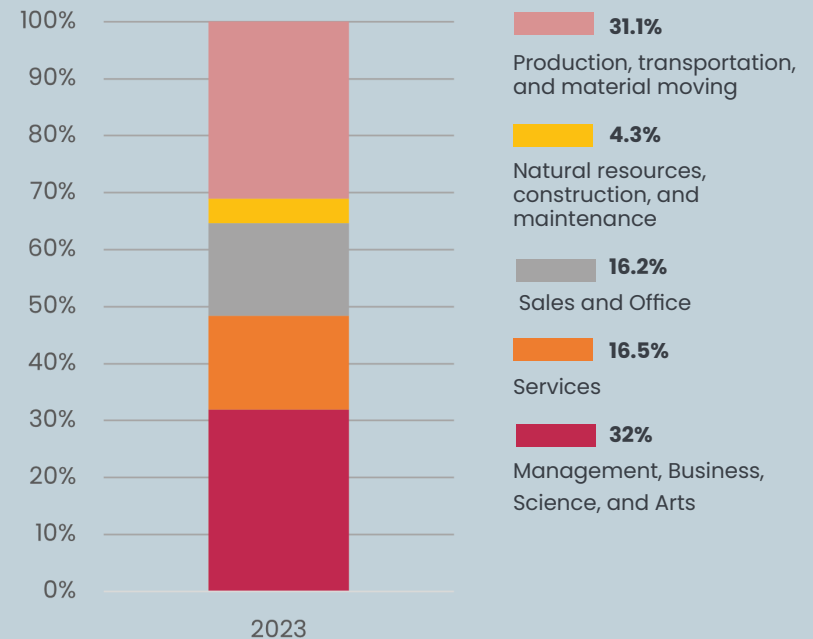
CITY OF AUBURN - HISTORICAL POPULATION CHANGE

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
3,396	3,919	4,650	5,088	5,415	5,879	6,350	7,388	8,122	9,379	12,074	12,731	13,412

CITY OF AUBURN CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



CITY OF AUBURN 2023 OCCUPATIONS



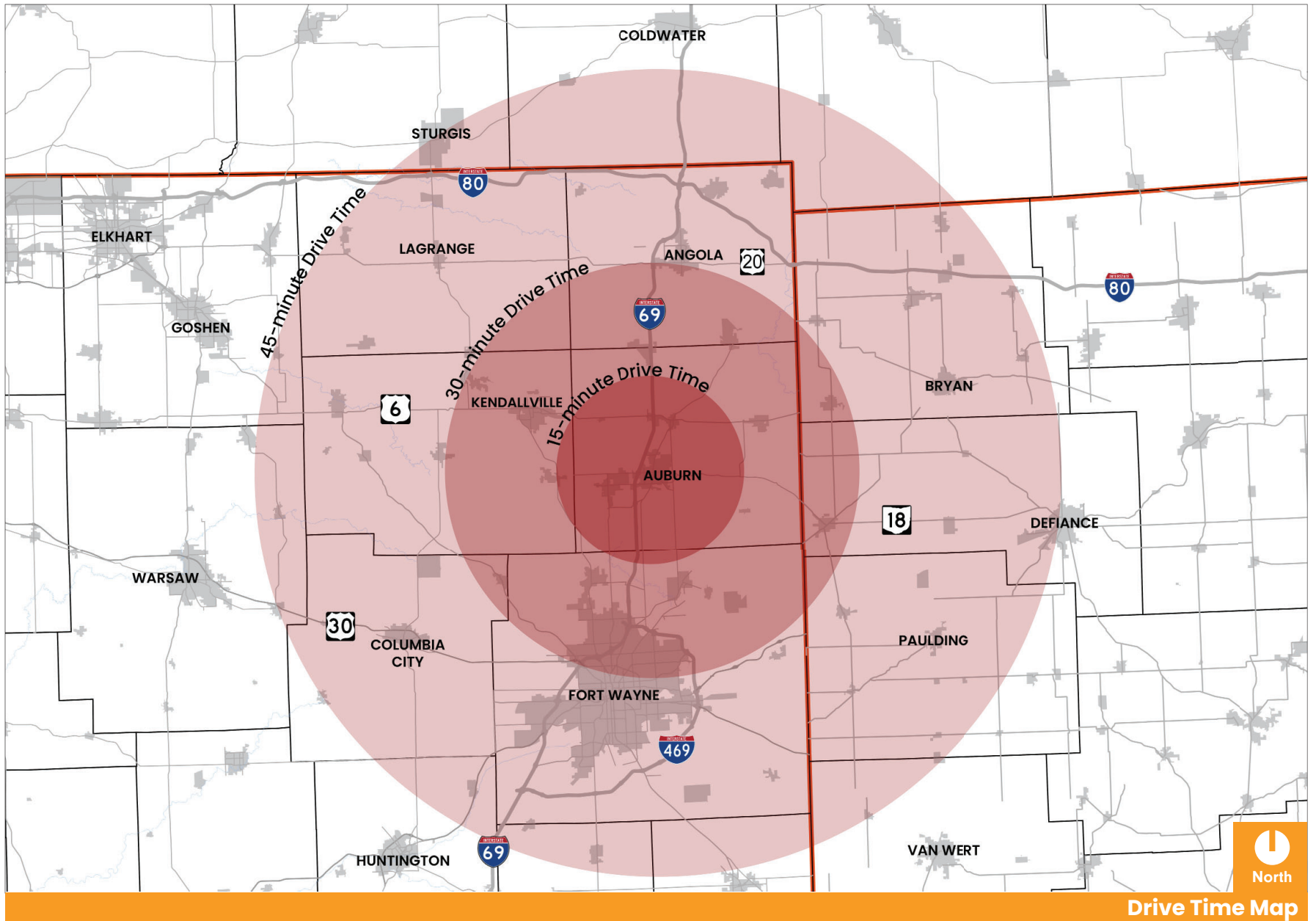
MARKET CONDITIONS

To create a strong downtown revitalization plan, it's critical to begin with a general understanding of the local business environment and market trends. The following summary is intended to document market conditions and was compiled using ESRI Business Analysis data. While most data is representative of 2025 estimates, there are some references to 2030 projections to help inform growth trends.

Regional Influence

With any market analysis, it is important to understand that customer base goes beyond immediate proximity. It is common for people to drive a distance to receive a service or buy a product that they want. Drive time mapping is used to assess the audience size and identify the demographic characteristics of the people likely to consume the service and guide business decisions. Using the DeKalb County Courthouse as the center point, a 15-minute, 30-minute, and 45-minute drive time buffer zone was created.

This exercise illustrates that the customer base for downtown businesses is more than double (33,759) the size of Auburn's 2024 population (13,565) when considering the people that live within a 15-minute drive to downtown Auburn. This pool of people continues to get significantly larger when expanding the buffer zone to a 30-minute or 45-minute drive. The Drive-Time Map illustrates the geographic area of each buffer zone. Using the boundaries set forth by ESRI Business Analysis, the City of Auburn and local business owners can start to understand the characteristics of the customer base and how demographic make-up can impact economic preferences and retail supply and demand.



Population

In 2025, the regional influence ranged in total population of 33,759 people within 15-minute drive to 331,139 people within a 30-minute drive, and 624,965 people within a 45-minute buffer drive. Using 2030 projections, it is estimated that the 30-minute buffer zone will experience the greatest change (+2.1%) in population over the next five years.

Households

While the total number of households varies significantly across all three drive-time buffers, the average household size is similar with only a slight variation between 2.47 and 2.43 people per household. Like the population data, the 30-minute buffer zone is expected to see the most growth in the total number of households. Between 2025 and 2030, the number of households is expected to increase from 133,028 to 137,037 which represents a 3% increase.

Income

Median household income ranges from \$70,552 to \$74,668 which the 30-minute buffer zone having the highest median household income. Housing affordability index is a measure that compares a family's ability to purchase a home to the actual cost of buying a median-priced home. An index value of 100 means the median income is exactly enough to qualify for the mortgage on a median-priced home; a value over 100 indicates it is more affordable, while a value under 100 means it is less affordable.

2025 DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY			
	15-minute Drive Time	30-minute Drive Time	45-minute Drive Time
Population	33,759	331,139	624,965
Median Age	40.2	38.4	38.4
Households	13,540	133,028	249,473
Average Household Size	2.47	2.43	2.47
Median Household Income	\$72,921	\$74,668	\$70,552
Housing Affordability Index	126	115	110
Civilian Workforce	18,242	175,558	325,441
Unemployment Rate	4.8%	3.6%	4.3%
Leading Industry	Services (36.7%)	Services (44.2%)	Services (43.6%)

This data indicated that residents within the 15 or 30-minute buffer have more than enough money to qualify for a mortgage meaning the houses are more attainable than homes in the 45-minute buffer. This is likely due to the proximity of Fort Wayne and the increase in housing costs as you get closer to larger cities. Even so, an index of 110 indicates people have more than enough to qualify for the mortgage of a median-priced home.

Workforce

In 2025, the civilian population (ages 16+) enrolled in the labor force ranged from 18,242 people within 15-minute drive to 175,558 people within a 30-minute drive, and 325,441 people within a 45-minute buffer drive. Of these workers, 4.8% of the labor force within the 15-minute buffer zone were unemployed, making this buffer the area with the highest unemployment rate in 2025. In terms of major industries, the service industry employed the largest percentage of workers in each buffer zone making up 36.7%-44.2% of the labor force.

Retail Market Outlook

A key part of understanding the market is to understand how much money customers are spending and what they are spending it on. Consumer spending can be summarized into three overarching categories: Apparel and Services, Entertainment and Recreation, and Restaurants and Food. In 2025, people within the 15-minute drive time buffer spent an estimated \$25M on Apparel and Services, \$47M on Entertainment and Recreation, and \$125M on Restaurants and Food. Spending related to food makes up the largest category of spending in all three buffer zones.

Using 2030 ESRI Estimates, it is projected that spending will increase by 13.8% within the 15-minute buffer, 15.4% within the 30-minute buffer, and 14.4% within the 45-minute buffer. While the spending potential index varies across the buffer zones, all values indicate that people are spending less on goods and services compared to the national average.

RETAIL MARKET OUTLOOK		2025 SPENDING	PROJECTED GROWTH BETWEEN 2025-2030
15-minute Drive	Apparel and Services	\$25,649,634	13.8%
	Entertainment and Recreation	\$47,010,817	13.8%
	Restaurants and Food	\$125,966,387	13.8%
30-minute Drive	Apparel and Services	\$271,988,011	15.4%
	Entertainment and Recreation	\$479,215,080	15.4%
	Restaurants and Food	\$1,307,567,256	15.4%
45-minute Drive	Apparel and Services	\$490,866,536	14.4%
	Entertainment and Recreation	\$870,597,351	14.4%
	Restaurants and Food	\$2,375,028,812	14.4%

Local Customer Tapestry Segments

Tapestry data is used to compare customer behavior across different areas, create targeted outreach, and tailor strategies based on location. The methodology includes grouping residential areas into segments based on shared demographic, socioeconomic, and lifestyle characteristics.

There are two key tapestry segments found within the regional context for the downtown Auburn including Room to Room (K7) and Middle Ground (K2). Both segments fall under the same LifeMode Group K. This group consists of residents aged 45 years and older. Housing is predominantly single-family detached homes built before 2000, and home values tend to be above the national average. Labor force participation is high, with most households earning middle-tier incomes in professions such as social work, skilled trades, health care, and manufacturing. Residents commute alone by car.

Key Characteristics and Lifestyle Patterns of the Room to Room (K7) Segment

- » Aging and self-employed midwestern and southern suburbanites.
- » Consumers tend to use coupons and shop at department stores.
- » Residents purchase tools for home and yard maintenance, such as lawn mowers, trimmers, electric drills, and saws.
- » Radio remains a staple, with commuters subscribing to satellite and streaming channels. Television is widely used for news, entertainment, and major sports.
- » When traveling, domestic trips are common. Residents cook, bake, read, and walk their dogs. Residents tend to vote, and recycling is a routine practice.

Key Characteristics and Lifestyle Patterns of the Middle Ground (K2) Segment

- » Affordable midwestern and southern suburbs with a strong labor force.
- » Residents tend to shop at discount grocery chains and frequent fast-food restaurants.
- » Consumers tend to finance their vehicles with loans.
- » These individuals use social media as well as newspapers and magazines.
- » Recreational interests often include professional and college sports, fishing, and gardening.
- » Vacations are typically taken to nearby states, especially those offering beaches or sightseeing opportunities.

Retail Strategy Observations and Directions

The following retail strategy was created as part of the 2018 Downtown Revitalization Plan and was carried forward as many of the ideas are still relevant. The retail strategy places emphasis on the following components, believing these ideas will drive success in the downtown area.

- » Announce the entry to the Downtown Business District and welcome visitors. Successful places are coordinated with subtle design elements that provide a sense of identity. The elements include obvious things such as sign and wayfinding but also colors, textures and more quiet queues that give visitors a sense of familiarity and connection to the “places” – when you are there, you intuitively know it.
- » Provide obvious, safe and convenient parking. The transition from the automobile to the sidewalk shopping area must be carefully managed to demonstrate convenience, safety and visual interest.
- » Create engaging pedestrian circulation spaces. The quality of the shopping environment is critical. Make certain that shoppers are allowed easy and safe circulation on public spaces that encourage walking and shopping.
- » Provide an explorative shopping experience. The shopping experience in America’s malls and suburban strip centers has become extremely generic. Box retail – because of its very design – is the same in Portland and Poughkeepsie. Auburn’s Downtown Retail offers a variety of shops located throughout the district which encourages an “explorative” shopping experience.
- » Provide attractively merchandised goods and services. Encourage shopkeepers to creatively design and light store windows. Display goods with attention to detail to create a high-quality consumer shopping experience.
- » Coordinate efforts on advertising and hours. Work together to speak with one marketing voice and when possible, keep hours consistent. The success of individual merchants is influenced by the success of their shopkeeper neighbors.
- » Competition Matters – do not try to compete with big box retail but rather pick up where they leave off. Increased product assortment, high quality goods and services and a personalized shopping experience are what will keep customers coming back downtown.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The study area encompasses the 30+ city blocks identified within the Downtown Auburn Historic District spanning from Van Buren Street to the west to Union Street to the east and Fourth Street to the north to Twelfth Street to the south. The two main vehicular corridors through downtown – Main Street running north-south and Seventh Street (SR 8) running east-west, divide the downtown into four quadrants. Three of the four quadrants – northeast, northwest, and southwest – share more overlap in their land use and identity while the fourth has a stronger institutional presence with Auburn City Hall and the DeKalb County Courthouse as well as all as many accompanying governmental facilities. The existing physical conditions observed are outlined as they relate to the following categories: land use, zoning, structures, public space, pedestrian circulation, vehicular circulation, and parking.

Land Use

Land use refers to the type of activity that is occurring on the property or within the structure. The following analysis was completed using property tax code data for each property within the study area. The downtown is comprised of four primary land use categories including:

- » **Residential** – This land use provides living space for residents. Residential opportunities are very limited at the time this analysis was completed but there are ample opportunities to incorporate upper story residential in the future. Most of the existing housing units are single-family detached units located on the outskirts of the downtown.

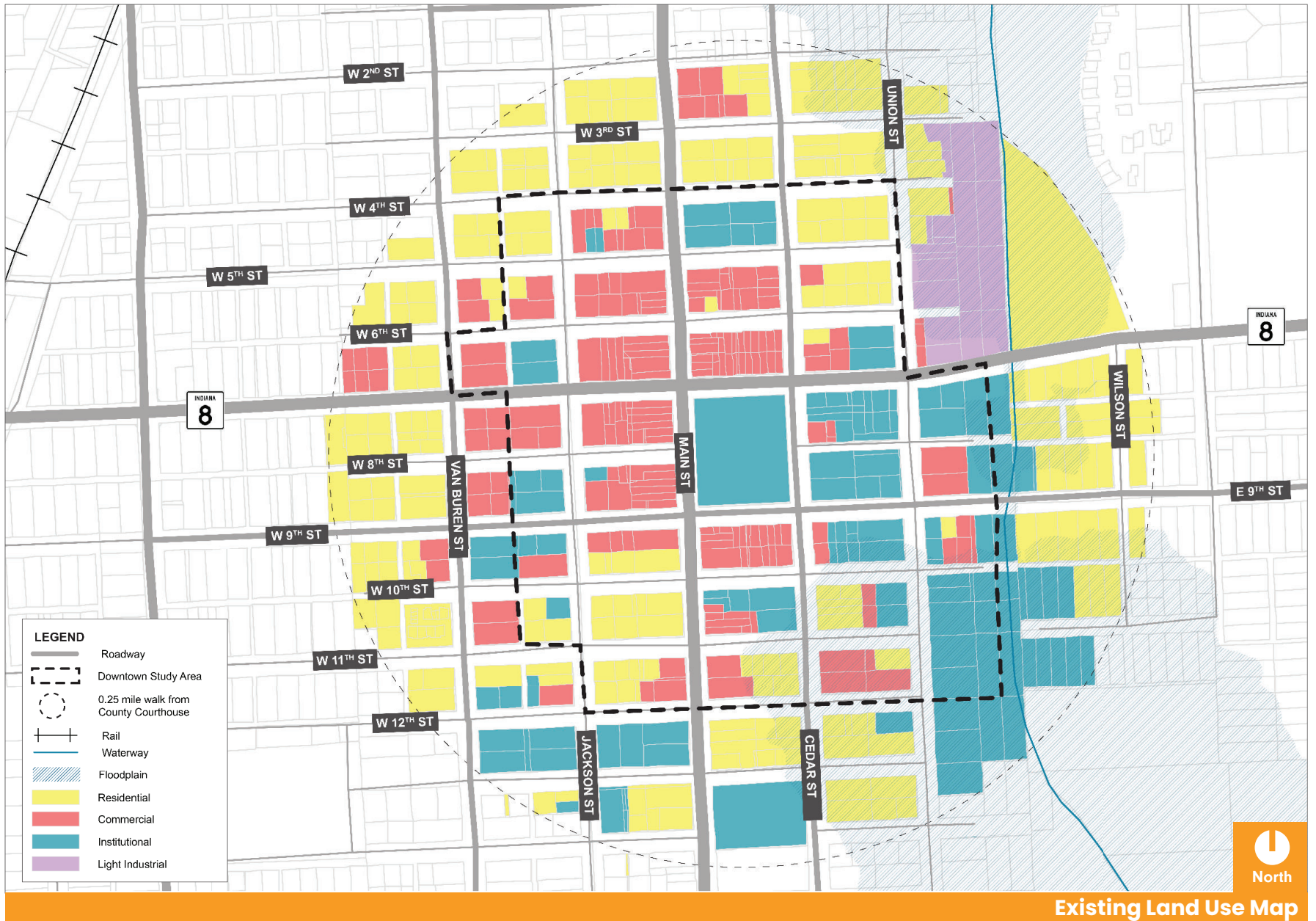
- » **Commercial** – Due to the nature of a downtown district, the primary land use is commercial. This category is intended to provide goods and services to the community and encompasses a wide range of business activities including retail, dining, and professional services.
- » **Institutional** – This land use category consists of civic, educational, religious facilities that serve the public. Because Auburn is the county seat, there is a significant amount of city and county-owned property within the downtown. This impacts Auburn’s tax base and how much revenue can be generated through property taxes in this area.
- » **Light Industrial** – There is only one light industrial use located near the downtown study area. Messenger LLC is a leading manufacturer of fine funeral stationary products.

Key Considerations

Expand Residential – There is an opportunity for additional residential opportunities on upper stories of downtown buildings.

Capitalize on Public Space – The amount of publicly owned property within the downtown impacts the tax base.

Evaluate Institutional Uses – A significant portion of the institutional uses are county-owned properties which limit the city’s ability to have any say in what is happening in and out those properties.



Zoning

The City of Auburn has a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) adopted in 2019 with recent amendments in 2024. The UDO is intended to guide the growth and development of Auburn in accordance with the city's comprehensive plan. This document regulates the intensity and use of buildings, structure, and land to ensure the protection of the health, safety, and general welfare of the people in Auburn.

Majority of the downtown study area falls within the Downtown Commercial (DC) district. The DC District is intended to promote traditional downtown uses including low to moderate intensity commercial retail, service, eating, and entertainment establishments. This district is also intended to promote a strong pedestrian-oriented downtown. Any future development and modifications should reflect the existing character of the downtown. Permitted uses range from retail, office, and dining to institutional facilities including community centers, government offices, libraries, museums, parks, and more. Residential uses are permitted on upper stories and should not be located on ground floors.

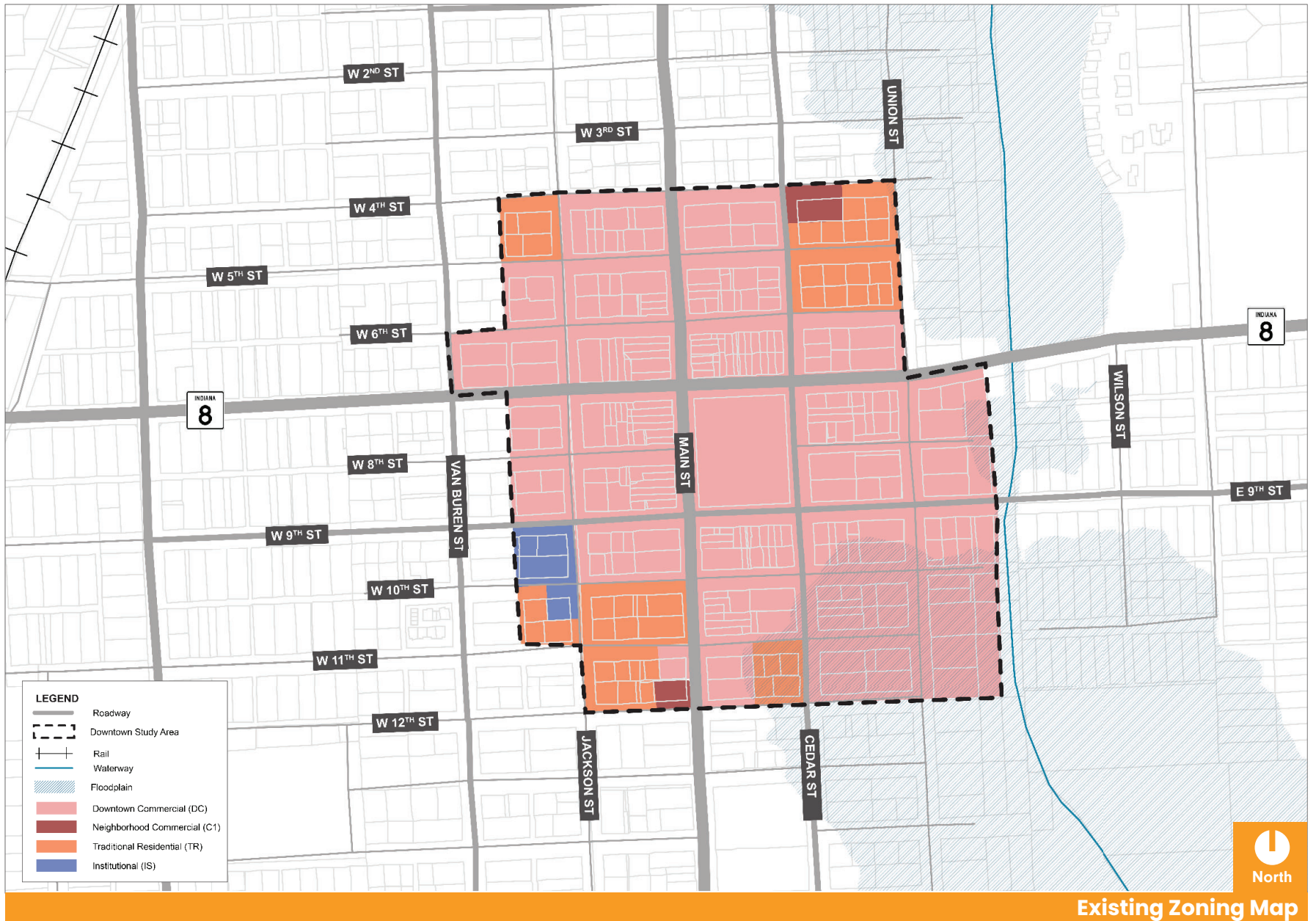
A few blocks on the north and south side of the downtown study area are zoned Traditional Residential (TR). This district is intended for single-family detached home on small to medium sized lots. Homes in this area should protect, maintain, and promote the "old residential" character of Auburn.

Two properties are zones Neighborhood Commercial (C1). The primary uses are intended to be low intensity retail and services that serve the adjacent neighborhoods.

Located near the intersection of Jackson Street and Tenth Street, there is a small cluster of properties zoned Institutional (IS). This district is intended for all intensities of institutionally owned lands including state, county, and city facilities. Public facilities and limited quasi-public uses are also permitted within this district. Currently, this area is home to local religious institutions, a privately-owned preschool, and an insurance company.

Key Considerations

Current Status - At a high level the current zoning districts seem appropriate for the downtown study area.



Structures

Overall, building façades within the study area are attractive and well-maintained. Historic preservation efforts are apparent as are efforts to blend new development with the feel of historic styles. It was no surprise to see that façades requiring improvement coincide with those that are vacant or seeing diminished interior use.

The strong commercial core of the blocks surrounding the courthouse on the south, west and north sides as well as those pushing further north into the Arts District include well-maintained and revamped historic façades as well as redevelopment that follows a design language that speaks to the feel of downtown. There is evidence of successful redevelopment and new development following this unspoken design language. The redevelopment of what is now Carve Market preserved a unique architectural piece in downtown.

The recent development of the mixed-use building along Jackson Street – housing the 1st Source Bank, Team Quality Services, DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership and McIntyre Place for example – nicely incorporates contemporary structures in a historic setting. Both of these examples were not currently dictated by any design guidelines but rather the result of conscientious developers. The establishment of such guidelines would ensure that future development aligns with the vision of downtown.

While there might be one-off buildings within the study area that could benefit from façade improvements or focused redevelopment efforts, there is a one-block stretch in particular that is in much need of attention

when it comes to activating the street front and matching the energy that surrounds it. This stretch includes several of the buildings facing the courthouse to the north along Seventh Street (SR 8) between Main Street and Cedar Street. Vacant storefronts and worn façades do not provide a strong first impression to motorists along this main corridor.

Building styles vary throughout the study area but the majority reflect architectural detailing from the peak period of development which occurred during the late 1800s into the early 1900s. There are some older, unique structures that break that period aesthetic such as the *Auburn Atrium Marketplace* building and the *Carve Market* structure.



Auburn Atrium Marketplace

Key Considerations

Design Guidelines - A method for the improvement/ update of privately-owned buildings to keep with the aesthetic of Downtown Auburn would be beneficial to historic preservation efforts.

Development Standards - A system to streamline the development process and hold those new and redeveloped sites accountable from characteristic, performance, and safety perspectives would alleviate concerns of undesired building types.

Both guidelines and standards would require some form of review board to uphold intent.



McIntyre Place



State Road 8

Public Space

Public or quasi-public spaces are important assets to any downtown area. These spaces provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and social gathering. Parks, plazas, and green space serve as anchors for downtown by creating a sense of place, supporting community health, and driving economic growth. Auburn's downtown is home to four key destinations that offer residents and visitors a place to socialize, rest, and/or recreate. Each of the four public spaces are distinct in their size, use, and ownership.

- » **Courtyard Park** – This is the smallest of the four public spaces existing as an approximately 5,000 square foot pocket located at the southeast corner of Cedar Street and Seventh Street. This city-owned park includes several benches, enhanced landscaping beds, and a water feature and a memorial sculpture.
- » **James Cultural Plaza** – This privately-owned plaza includes a small stage for events and concerts, shade structures, public art, moveable tables and chairs, and enhanced landscaping. It is a space created to cultivate and support cultural and community activities and can be rented out through The James Foundation.
- » **DeKalb County Courthouse Square** – The DeKalb County Courthouse is located across from Auburn City Hall and surrounded by green space featuring open lawn, mature trees, benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, and a historic monument.

- » **DeKalb County Fairgrounds** – A portion of the DeKalb County fairgrounds is located within the downtown study area. This regional asset offers a range of facilities and spaces to accommodate a variety of events and programs. While many local organizations use this facility for events, the most popular event is the DeKalb County Fair in late September.

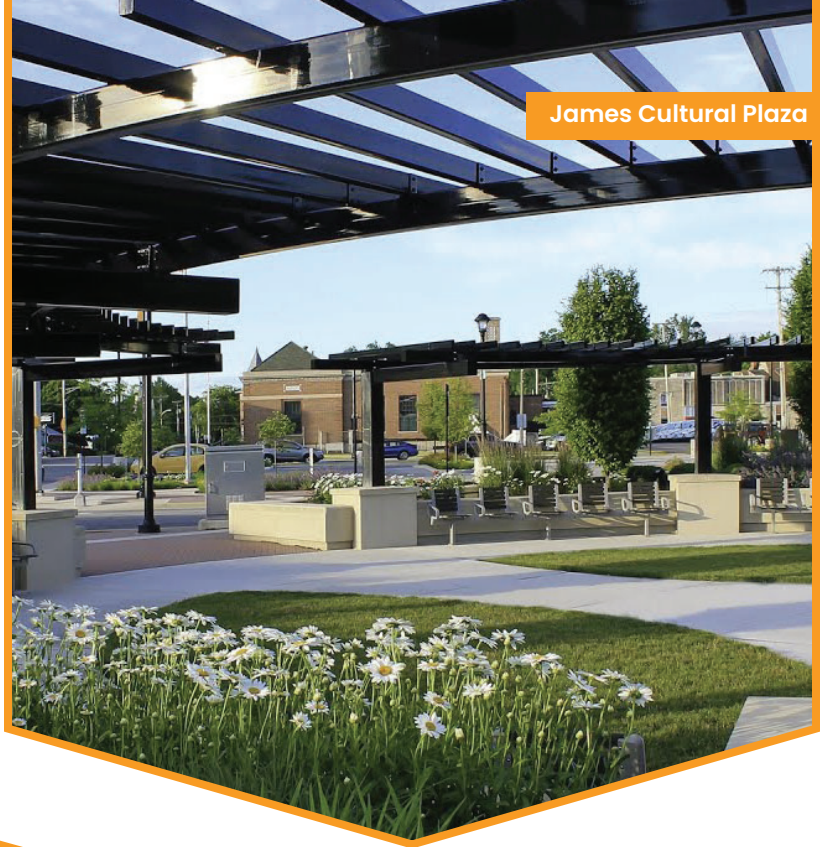
Key Considerations

City-Owned Spaces – The only public open space owned by the city within the downtown study area is Courtyard Park. All other spaces are by the county or a foundation.

Placemaking – The downtown lacks a central gathering space that serves as the focal point for events and gatherings. Because of this, events occur at different locations throughout the year.



Courtyard Park



James Cultural Plaza



DeKalb County Courthouse

Pedestrian Circulation

The design and layout of the streetscapes vary greatly within downtown and is largely contingent on the adjacent land use, the functional class of the roadways, and pedestrian accommodations.

The recent improvements to the streetscapes within the Arts District in the northern quadrants provide a strong identity and precedent for implementation across the remainder of downtown. The inclusion of amenities such as lower-mount lighting, plant beds, street trees, site furnishings, and wider sidewalks create a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

Pedestrian connectivity and safety are high priorities within the downtown. This is evident through the existing infrastructure that is in place. The width of existing sidewalks vary but in general all areas within the study area have either a standard concrete 5-foot-wide sidewalk, 6-foot-wide sidewalk in the segments identified as the Pufferbelly Trail or a wider 8-to-10-foot sidewalk as seen along building frontages of Seventh Street. In the heart of the downtown core, the sidewalks transition to a wide sidewalk with a brick paver inlay along the street edge. This wider path encourages walkability and allows for additional streetscape amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, and lighting.

The city is also testing the use of bump outs at the intersection of Main Street and Sixth Street. Bump outs create a safer experience for pedestrians by aligning them with the parking and reducing the crossing distance. These bump outs also add to the character of the streetscape by providing space for enhanced landscaping.

ADA accessibility appears good with detachable warning ramps and marked crosswalks at each intersection. Most intersections have signalized crosswalks that let the pedestrian know when it is safe to walk. Crosswalks are painted with standard 2-line or “piano key” striping across the intersection. All intersections are not complete in their application of crosswalks, as some only have them applied across one direction of travel. In many cases, the paint is starting to fade which limits the effectiveness of the crosswalk. Highly-visible crosswalks would increase safety by helping drivers see pedestrians sooner and give them more time to react.

Key Considerations

Aesthetics – The city has already taken strides to enhance the streetscapes and provide amenities for visitors.

Enhancements – There is an opportunity to enhance the pedestrian crosswalks through fresh paint or decorative materials.



Vehicular Circulation

The ownership and the function of roadways play a major role in types of improvements that could be appropriate. In terms of ownership, SR 8 (Seventh Street) is owned and operated by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). All other roadways within the downtown study area are locally owned roadways, meaning the City of Auburn is responsible for maintaining and upgrading the streets and sidewalks as necessary.

Functional classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Main Street and Seventh Street are both classified as a minor arterial meaning these roadways connect Auburn to other cities and towns and it facilitates moderate-length trips. Main Street, near the intersection of Seventh Street, has an annual average daily traffic (AADT) of 3,868. Seventh Street has an AADT ranging from 12,397 to 13,078 depending on the intersection.

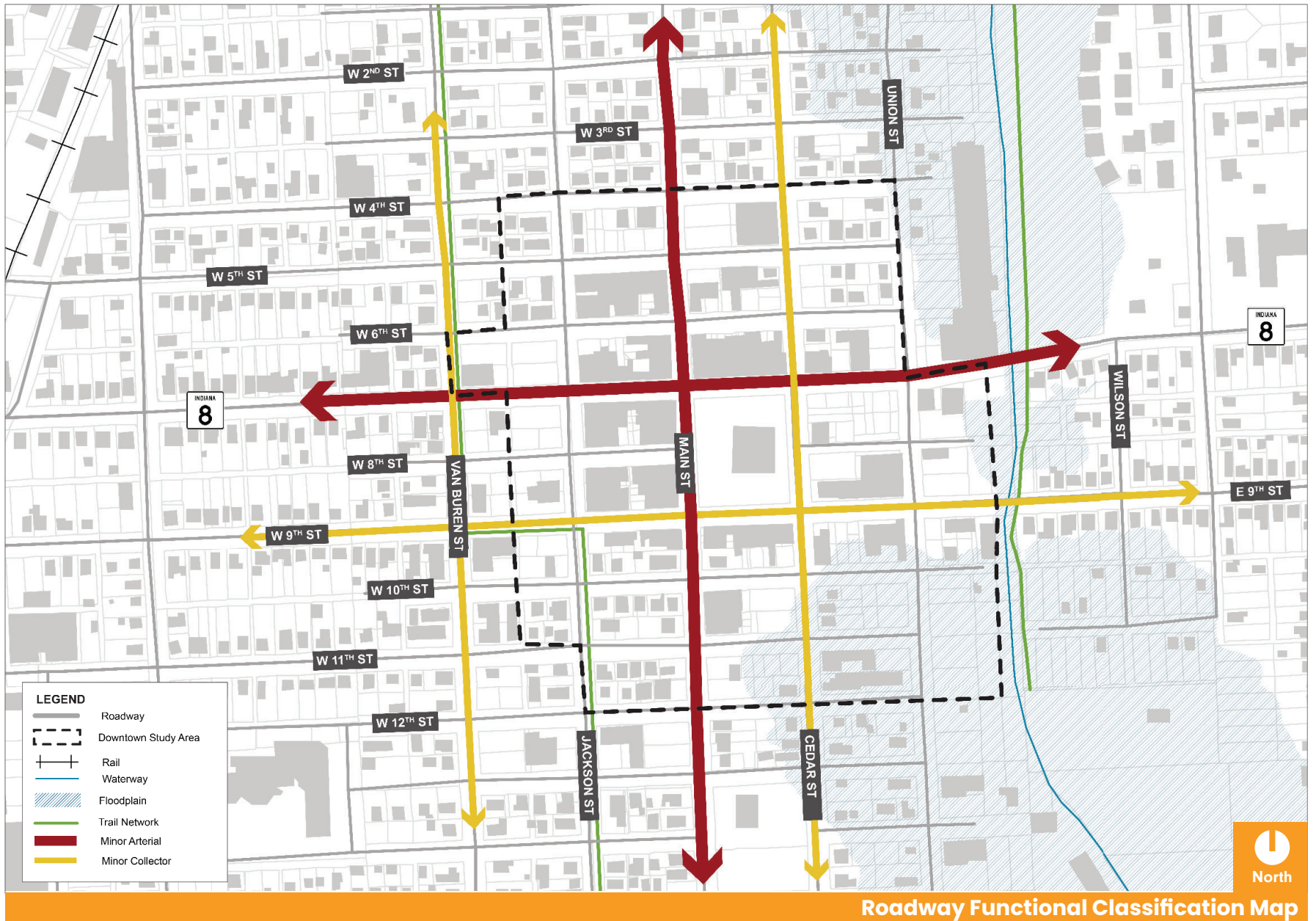
There are also three minor collectors within the downtown including Van Buren Street, Ninth Street, and Cedar Street. Minor collectors are used to connect motorists to arterials. These corridors typically have a lower speed limit and less travel lanes compared to other major collectors. Ninth Street provides east-west connectivity with an AADT ranging from 407-1,072 throughout the downtown. Van Buren Street and Cedar Street provide north-south connectivity with AADT counts of roughly 1,700.

Downtown is easy to navigate as the streets are laid out in a traditional grid pattern. The grid pattern creates rectangular blocks that are easy to develop and walkable for pedestrians. In general, most streets have one travel lane in each direction with a left turn lane at the intersection. On-street parking is provided in many areas offering both parallel and diagonal parking spaces. Wider sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, and site furnishings are present, creating a pedestrian-friendly environment throughout downtown.

Key Considerations

INDOT Collaboration - Any recommendations related to Seventh Street would require coordination and approval by INDOT.

Pedestrian Focus - The downtown has a fairly low level of traffic creating a safer pedestrian environment.



Parking

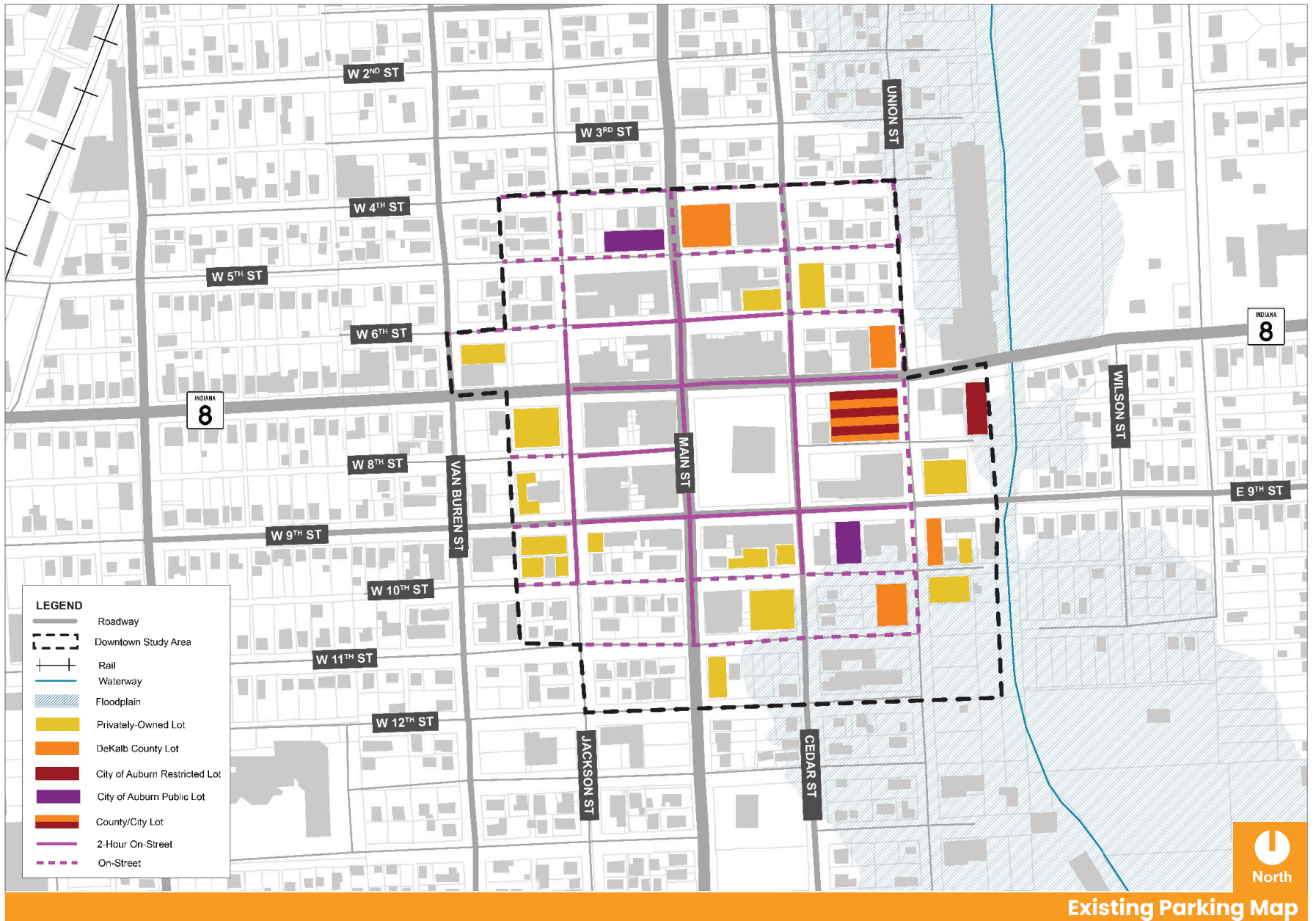
The location and availability of parking in a downtown is sometimes a challenging topic to consider. There is a balance between ensuring convenient parking is available and providing too much parking that takes up valuable real estate within a downtown district.

Auburn's downtown is unique in that most of its public parking is on-street parking. Within the heart of the downtown, 2-hour parking is strictly enforced to ensure businesses have customer parking available. Free unlimited parking is offered on-street on the outskirts of the downtown district. In most areas, parallel parking is present except for the courthouse square where diagonal parking spaces are offered. The only off-street public parking lot is located near the intersection of 5th Street and Main Street.

Key Considerations

Timed Parking - Two-hour parking is great for quick trips but could cause frustration for visitors wanting to stay for an extended amount of time.

Public Parking - As the downtown grows and becomes more of a destination, there could be a need for additional public parking lots."



SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS

Downtown Auburn has a number of buildings, establishments, and landmarks that are historically significant to the city. The charm and character of historic buildings are part of the draw to Downtown Auburn. Identified within the city's comprehensive plan, the preservation of historic buildings should be a priority with the understanding that the cost of preservation increases substantially, and sometimes it is no longer financially feasible to protect and maintain the structure.

There are two notable areas listed in the National Register of Historic Places including the Downtown Auburn Historic District and the Eckhart Public Library and Park Historic District.

Downtown Auburn Historic District

Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986, the Downtown Auburn Historic District includes most of Auburn's central business district. It's roughly bound by Fourth Street, Cedar Street, Twelfth Street, and Jackson Street. The historic district encompasses 52 contributing buildings. Many of the structures were developed between about 1870 and 1935, and include notable examples of Victorian, Classical Revival, Romanesque Revival, and Colonial Revival style architecture. A few of the well-known contributing buildings include the DeKalb County Courthouse, Henry Opera House, Auburn City Hall, South Interurban Station, YMCA building, U.S. Post Office, and Masonic Temple.

Eckhart Public Library + Park Historic District

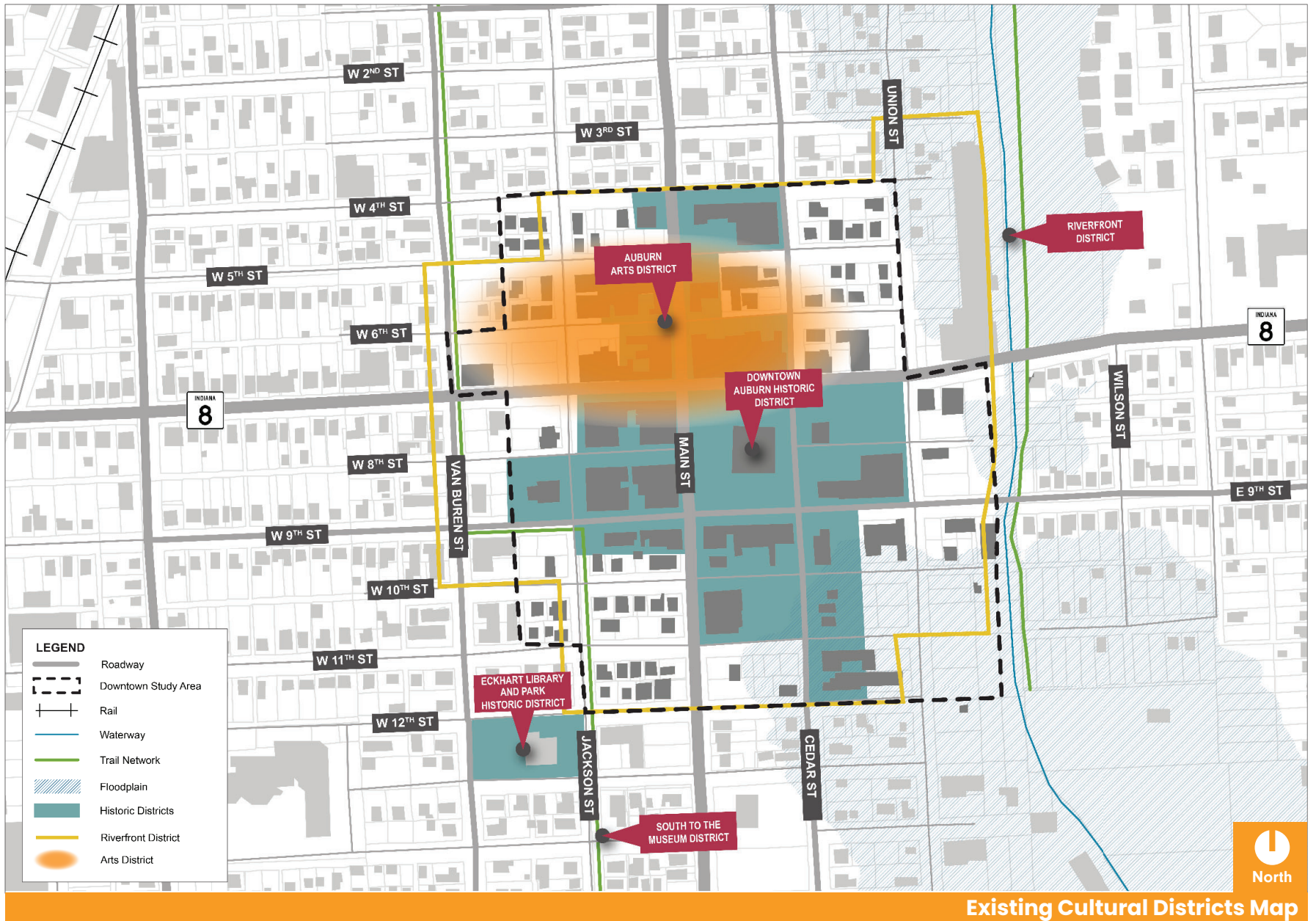
Located just slightly outside of the Main Street downtown boundary, the Eckhart Public Library and Park were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981 as a historic site. The library was constructed in 1911 as a two-story brick building with craftsman design elements including a gable roof, round arched windows, and a raised basement faced with Bedford limestone. The park that surrounds the library has mature trees, a nature trail, an enclosed pavilion, and a skate park. Its historic significance ties back to a fountain added in 1918.

Auburn is home to three other districts that, while not historically recognized, have been identified with the intent of preserving local and regional history as well as promoting arts and culture in and around Auburn. The Riverfront District is the only one with defined boundaries, as they relate to code compliance in accordance with receiving funding and benefiting from special permit opportunities pertaining to the distribution of alcohol.

Museum District

Auburn is home to four museums focused on automotive history including the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile (ACDA) Museum, the National Auto and Truck Museum the DeKalb County Horsemen's Association and Draft Animal Museum, and the Early Ford V-8 Foundation Museum.

The ACDA and National Auto and Truck museums are walking distance from downtown (just under a mile) making it a great attraction for downtown visitors who wish to walk or ride a bike to engage with some of the city's history.



These museums are grounded by an outdoor plaza space for hosting events including car shows and concerts as well as displaying historical features. This space largely embodies the “Museum District”.

The DeKalb County Horsemen’s Association and Draft Animal Museum and the Early Ford V-8 Foundation Museum both sit in more rural settings further from downtown at 7 miles and 4.5 miles, respectively.

Auburn Arts District

While art initiatives are seen across downtown, the area encompassing most of the “feel” associated with the district includes the northern quadrants, particularly the blocks in the northwest and directly north of the DeKalb County Courthouse. The incorporation of the Auburn Art Commission in the mid-90s was the driving factor behind the establishment of this district. It has continued to flourish with improvements along the streetscapes in the aforementioned areas to allow for more pedestrian amenities and the inclusion of art installations such as Murals by Auburn Main Street as well as programming efforts across downtown to incorporate seasonal art installations by DABA (Downtown Auburn Business Association) to engage visitors.

Riverfront District

Created to promote growth in the restaurant and entertainment industries, the Riverfront District was established in conjunction Indiana Code 7.1-3-20-16.1 that has special provisions allowing for the issuance of additional and non-transferable liquor licenses in areas that have been designated “municipal riverfront districts.” In 2019, the Auburn City Council passed a Riverfront Development Ordinance designating two areas near Cedar Creek as Riverfront Development Districts. Auburn’s Riverfront Development Districts are within 1,500 feet of the Cedar Creek floodplain and focus primarily on properties in downtown Auburn and properties near the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile (ACDA) Museum that are zoned commercial or have the potential to be redeveloped for commercial and/or uses that support the museum district.

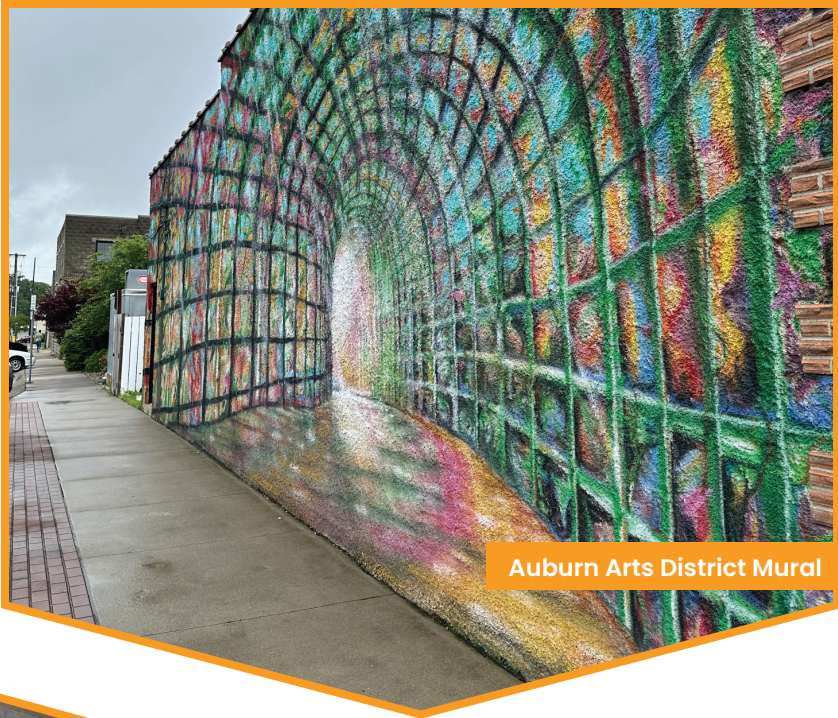
Key Considerations

Historic Preservation Commission - The addition of this group to downtown would help to preserve current assets, identify potential assets, and educate the public.

Local Historic Preservation Ordinance - This would help enforce any guidelines or requirements to retain the character and architecturally significant structures within Auburn.



Eckhart Public Library



Auburn Arts District Mural



Auburn Car Show

Public Workshop



Chapter 3

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

Integral to plan development was the collaboration with the Auburn community to gain a deeper understanding of how this plan can positively impact future initiatives and build upon recent successes. An initial project kick-off meeting was held with city leadership to confirm plan process, including final product, as well as establish various methods for public participation. Public feedback was gathered throughout the entire planning process via input initiatives focusing on various community groups and stakeholders. This feedback was collected during steering committee meetings, focus group discussions, a public workshop, an online survey, and a big ideas open house. A summary of the feedback collected by each of these public input opportunities is included within this chapter.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE #s



STEERING COMMITTEE

13 members
and **3** meetings

FOCUS GROUPS

4 groups with
20+ attendees



PUBLIC EVENTS

2 events with
30+ attendees



PUBLIC SURVEY

140+ responses
in **1** month



STEERING COMMITTEE

A group of 13 representatives guided the planning process. The steering committee included:

Andy Barrand

Auburn Business Development

Tracy Bell

DeKalb Chamber Partnership

Amber Caccamo

DeKalb County Visitors Bureau

Jim Cadoret

Auburn Building, Planning & Development

Dave Clark

Mayor for City of Auburn

Brandy Coburn

Mayor's Executive Assistant

Natalie Dewitt

Auburn City Council

Eric Ditmars

Auburn Parks and Recreation

Ann Finchum

Auburn Main Street

Anton King

FCI Construction

Mike Littlejohn

Downtown Auburn Business Association

Daryl McConnell

Auburn Director of Engineering

Ryan Shambaugh

Auburn Building, Planning, & Development

Steering Committee Meeting #1 June 19, 2025 in City Hall

This meeting was split into three segments: introductions, project overview, and feedback exercises. Introductions included getting to know the planning team and identifying steering committee members and their roles within the community. The steering committee guided plan priorities and provided review of plan development over the course of the nine-month planning process. Project overview included a review of the plan purpose, immediate past planning efforts, and existing conditions.

A series of exercises helped the planning team collect further information on existing conditions as well as anticipate needs of the community. The first exercise included a worksheet asking participants to identify recent wins and assets to leverage as well as current challenges and desired improvements. Below is a summary of those results.

What's working well?

- » Improved marketing efforts and investment in the downtown core with such as the façade improvement program.
- » Support for the Arts District by way of public art programs including mural installations.
- » Growth of unique tourist destinations that support downtown including locales in the Historic District and Museum District.
- » Establishment of a Riverfront District and completion of Memorial Park.

What needs work?

- » Develop methods for enforcing historic preservation initiatives.
- » Hold property owners accountable for maintenance and vacancies, both retail/commercial, and residential.
- » Improve pedestrian amenities including creating a wayfinding package, expanding sidewalk connections, and providing public restrooms.
- » Attract a wider variety of retail businesses to appeal to broader demographics.

What needs to be prioritized?

- » Address vacancies.
- » Identify potential housing opportunities downtown.
- » Attract a wider variety of retail businesses.
- » Continued burial of overhead utilities.

The second exercise split the committee members into three groups, each with a map of downtown. The groups were asked to mark areas of desired improvement on the map and suggestions for new amenities downtown. Overall, the groups decided that downtown needed the following improvements:

- » Expanded sidewalk connections.
- » Wayfinding and public parking identifiers.
- » Redevelopment opportunities, particularly within buildings, identified along Seventh Street north of the DeKalb County Courthouse.
- » Expanded pedestrian/plaza spaces in tandem with existing street closure networks during large events.

Steering Committee Meeting #2 August 21, 2025 in City Hall

Up until this point in time, public engagement include interviewing of over 20 focus group participants during four meetings over the course of a business day, collaborating with over twenty Public Workshop participants in an open-house-style setting, and collecting 146 individual responses on the online survey that was active for over two months. A summary of the feedback received during each of these interactions can be found in the following pages as part of the respective sections for public engagement.

A review of the draft vision and goals with associated objectives included an explanation of the “hierarchy of plan elements”. The hierarchy outlines how plan recommendations evolved through a process that starts with the broader visioning for downtown’s future and transitions into a series of specific action items for improvements that align with that vision. Plan elements are outlined below:

- » **Vision** outlines downtown growth over the next ten to fifteen years.
- » **Goals** represent the big ideas or desired outcomes for downtown growth.
- » **Objectives** outline the steps for how downtown will achieve said goals.
- » **Action Items** identify implementation of objectives, the realization of the plan.

A draft vision statement was provided to the steering committee for feedback. Discussion followed on how some edits could strengthen the statement, better reflecting downtown Auburn and guiding

recommendations. These edits included condensing the statement in favor of a more simplified narrative, speaking to physical improvements in terms of beautification efforts, and including words like “progress” and “innovation” which harken back to Auburn’s history in the automotive industry and how that history formed the community seen today.

Draft goals were reviewed as categorical “themes” that grouped objectives by likeness, bringing order to the recommendations. These themes included the following:

- » **Dynamic Development**
- » **Thriving Businesses**
- » **Memorable Visitor Experience**
- » **Vibrant and Welcoming Spaces**



This meeting was split into two segments: presentation of additional public input gathered at the Big Ideas Open House and review of draft action plan and the document outline.

The Big Ideas Open House saw participation by around ten people and, overall, everyone agreed with the vision statement and goals with associated objectives. A summary of the feedback received during this event can be found in the following pages as part of the respective section for public engagement.

Draft action items were provided to the steering committee prior to the meeting for review so that feedback could be discussed as a group during the in-person meeting. Several topics were discussed for consideration as the action items continued to be edited for the final plan. These topics included:

- » Enforcing and designating historic preservation efforts as a phased approach including design guidelines, public-private partnerships for assisting with improvements (supporting the façade grant) and providing resources to owners, and clearing defining the city versus owner's roles in preservation expectations.
- » Developing a land bank for the city to acquire properties for future development or public-private partnership opportunities.
- » Considering the future implementation of a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) district as it pertains to impact on the downtown and operations.

- » Debating incentives for longer/flexed business hours to promote buying local, provide extended shopping opportunities on certain days of the week (weekend) or times of the year (holidays), and promote an active environment and, in turn, encourage more housing downtown.
- » Evaluating the Cedar Creek Trail relationship to downtown and the connectivity of parks and recreation spaces to downtown.

Steering Committee Meeting #3

October 25, 2025 in City Hall

The third committee meeting was held on October 25 with 8 committee members in attendance. The meeting focused on providing a summary of feedback collected at the Big Ideas Open House and discussion the action plan. The project team explained the hierarchy of plan elements including the vision, goals, objectives, and action items. The committee reviewed the vision, goals, and objectives in previous meetings. The project team distributed a list of draft action items to the committee prior to the meeting via email.

The committee reviewed the draft action items as a group and responded well to the recommendations. The committee discussed the following topics:

- » The idea of a phased approach for historic preservation designation.
- » The need for a Land Bank to acquire properties.
- » The feasibility of establishing a DORA.
- » The importance of consistent business hours in the downtown.

Steering Committee Meeting #4

January 29, 2026 on Microsoft Teams

The fourth committee meeting for the Auburn Downtown Revitalization Plan was held on January 29. The meeting was held virtually from 1:00pm to 2:00pm on Microsoft Teams. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an overview of the draft plan and allow committee members to share their feedback. The HWC project team provided an overview of each chapter. The overview included an outline of each chapter. Overall, the committee responded well to the draft plan and had positive feedback for the project team. The committee shared minor suggestions that were addressed after the meeting.



FOCUS GROUPS

Discussions with local community groups and stakeholders were held throughout the day on July 17, 2025 at City Hall. Over 20 participants attended one of four interest groups: Events and Programming, Local Businesses, Quality of Life, and Infrastructure and Public Safety. During these discussions, planning team members provided prompts for discussion in each area based upon feedback received thus far in the process. The following are summaries of each focus group discussion.

Events and Programming

This focus group included representatives from the Auburn local government, DeKalb County Visitors Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Auburn Business Association, Auburn Main Street, and the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum to name a few. Discussion revolved around existing events and programming efforts, desired event and programming efforts, barriers to hosting events and programs, and marketing events and programs.

Existing Efforts

- » Second Saturdays (formerly First Fridays) events
- » Heritage Days and the ACD Festival
- » DABA and Auburn Main Street initiatives

Desired Efforts

- » Downtown Food Truck events
- » Fourth of July parade
- » New Year celebration

Barriers to Hosting

- » No downtown theater space
- » Lack of public restroom facilities

Marketing

- » Lack of a truly synchronized calendar
- » Capitalize on “City of Auburn, Indiana” mobile application
- » Opportunities with DeKalb County Visitors Bureau

Local Businesses

This focus group included representatives from the Auburn local government and owners of businesses located within the downtown study area. Discussion revolved around how to address occupancy versus vacancy in storefronts, barriers keeping businesses from establishing and/or growing, and the perceived lack incentives/support for business owners.

Occupancy Versus Vacancy

- » Vacancies in areas along Seventh Streets north of DeKalb County Courthouse
- » Occupancy seems steady as turnover rates are not quick
- » Retail is mostly destination-oriented but needs more variety
- » Perceived lack of parking in certain parts of downtown to access storefronts

Barriers to Business

- » Limited resources to assist with business-related or physical constraints
- » Lack of local patronage
- » Lack of diverse housing options proximate to and within downtown

Incentives/Support

- » Limited business startup resources
- » Expand collaborative spaces
- » Limited options for affordable rent
- » Establish solid communication between downtown groups
- » Encourage owner participation with DABA and Main Street efforts
- » Opportunities with DeKalb County Visitors Bureau

Quality of Life

This focus group included representatives from the Auburn local government, representatives from the city and county community, and professionals from areas including education and real estate. Discussion revolved around the challenges and opportunities downtown relating to housing, community, work, education, and recreation.

Housing and Community

- » Lack of diverse housing options proximate to and within downtown
- » Lack of diverse retail and dining options
- » Limited potential for unique overnight and weekend stays
- » Establish a permanent setting for the farmer's market

Work and Education

- » Close geographic proximity to Fort Wayne and Angola
- » Potential local partnership with the Impact Institute or trade schools
- » Large county presence in downtown with the DeKalb County Courthouse

Recreation

- » Expand and connect both local and regional trails
- » Limited downtown green space
- » Limited formalized gathering space in downtown
- » Capitalize on recreation opportunities with districts in and around downtown

Infrastructure and Public Safety

This focus group included representatives from the Auburn local government as well as various City of Auburn municipal departments. Discussion revolved around concerns as they pertained to different scales in modes of transportation, utility challenges within roadways and right of ways, and ongoing safety measures.

Transportation

- » Mitigating effects of semi-truck traffic on Seventh Street with law enforcement
- » Provide the infrastructure for bikes and more recently popularized electric scooters
- » Consider golf carts on local roadways as an acceptable form of transit
- » Perceived lack of parking

Utility

- » Prioritize the replacement of lead waterlines
- » Anticipate work associated with the ten-year scoped combined sewer overflow separation project
- » Continue burying overhead electrical lines

Safety Measures

- » Continue installation of updated pedestrian lighting / crossing amenities
- » Incorporate a downtown sound system
- » Expand resources for downtown festivals both in preparation and operation
- » Recently launched priority phone line for first responders
- » Promote use of the “City of Auburn, Indiana” mobile app



PUBLIC EVENTS

Two public events were held to exchange ideas with and collect input from the Auburn community regarding the future of downtown. The first was a Public Workshop that included a series of boards prompting participants to provide feedback on various topics. The second was a Big Ideas Open House that included a series of boards outlining proposed vision and draft goals in categorical “themes” for the revitalization of downtown.

Public Workshop July 17, 2025 in City Hall

Over 20 participants attended the event and reviewed boards focusing on downtown culture, activity, and enhancements. Detailed board feedback can be found as part of the appendix.

To understand the culture of downtown, participants were asked to define its perceived current identity as well as the desired future identity for Auburn. They were also asked to consider how tourism impacts this culture and can help bolster the presence of downtown. The following are feedback highlights of the associated input boards:

- » Auburn is seen as a place for car enthusiasts, art lovers, and families.
- » People enjoy the architectural charm of downtown with a mix of design styles that respect historic façades.
- » More recreational opportunities and social events would draw people downtown, particularly younger demographics and families.

Downtown activity was largely defined by existing programming, events, and businesses as well as identified opportunities for further activation. The following are feedback highlights of the associated input boards:

- » The hosting of more seasonal events – particularly in the wintertime – would increase energy in downtown.
- » The incorporation of more outdoor dining would activate street fronts and increase restaurant footprints.
- » Programming evening events like musical performances and art exhibitions would increase foot traffic and encourage extended business hours.

Desired enhancements were identified using imagery boards that asked participants about public spaces, streetscape amenities, and pedestrian elements. Public spaces looked at recreation, programming, and experiential opportunities. Streetscape amenities considered façades, signage, and activation opportunities.

The following are feedback highlights of the associated input boards:

- » Street front design elements, such as planters, temporary art installations, and programmed seasonal gathering spaces, could enhance downtown character.
- » The addition of specialty features, such as an interactive water feature and a theatrical performance space, could increase foot traffic and strengthen downtown identity.



Big Ideas Open House **October 8, 2025 in City Hall**

The Big Ideas Open House was held on Wednesday, October 8, 2025 in City Hall. Over ten participants attended the event and reviewed boards focusing on vision and draft goals. Detailed board feedback can be found as part of the appendix.

All participants agreed on the proposed vision statement and thematic goals, setting the framework for downtown revitalization.

Theme 1: Dynamic Development – *Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.*

Participants agreed with the goal and associated objectives. They identified potential establishments that would be advantageous to bring people downtown including a variety of housing options, services such as a health clinic and day care, and additional entertainment and dining options.

Theme 2: Thriving Businesses – *Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.*

Participants agreed with the goal and associated objectives. One objective was identified as being key to revitalization success: “Work with property owners to maintain an inventory of high-quality buildings.”

Theme 3: Memorable Visitor Experience – *Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.*

Participants agreed with the goal and associated objectives. One objective was identified as being key to revitalization success: “Ensure appropriate signage is in place to direct people to nearby destinations.” It was noted that tourists and programming for downtown events would benefit from improved wayfinding, including directional to destinations and identifiers for parking, and public restrooms.

Theme 4: Vibrant and Welcoming Spaces – *Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.*

Participants agreed with the goal and associated objectives. One objective was identified as being key to revitalization success: “Expand recreational facilities to offer unique experiences for people of all ages and abilities.”

When asked “What is missing in downtown,” participants noted that much of the space is retail driven and entertainment spaces should be incorporated such as an arcade or gaming lounge and an outdoor play space.

Big Idea Open House Map Exercise



Big Idea Open Vision Exercise



Big Ideas Open House Goals + Objectives Exercises

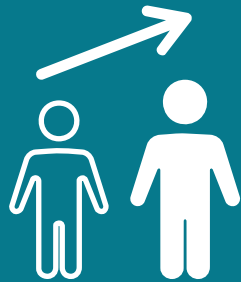


SURVEY OVERVIEW



73% of respondents live **WITHIN** city limits

zero respondents were under the age of 18 with a majority **OVER** the age of 31



7 downtown business owners completed the survey

ONLINE SURVEY

Open for the month of July with 140+ responses received

The online survey was distributed via the city's web presence (City of Auburn's website and associated social media) as well as through websites and social media outlets of active stakeholder groups that took part in the planning process. Detailed survey response data can be found as part of the appendix.

The following is a summary of feedback received from the public survey.

When asked why people come downtown, the top responses included dining (69%) and community events (66%) with only about half (45%) identifying shopping. This means that most residents venture downtown during hours of dining, which is likely evening focused, and for scheduled/seasonal programming. The lower percentage of shoppers may indicate a need to go elsewhere to fulfill day-to-day needs and/or the retail establishments cater to specific demographics such as visitors or boutique clientele. This is reflected in most survey responses which indicate that "business variety", "retail environment", and "business growth" of downtown are perceived to "fair" to "average". Diversification of offerings may raise these perceptions and draw residents downtown for daily shopping.

People get downtown mostly by car (82%) with only around half (52%) identifying walking as their form of transit. These findings are not uncommon in cities like Auburn where downtown housing options are limited and suburban development of single-family homes is more prevalent. However, majority of participants noted that the pedestrian access in downtown is "good" with appropriate connections and ample bicycle routes and trail connections. Increasing housing options and providing a variety of price points in downtown would lead to more foot traffic and a varied demographic of consumers. This, in turn, would increase activity downtown as only 59% of respondents believe downtown to be a somewhat active and exciting place.

When asked about downtown from a design perspective, majority of respondents believe the space to be in “good” condition providing adequate streetscapes and public spaces amongst the historic buildings. This was somewhat at odds with feedback received during public events, noting a desire for increased public spaces for gathering, programming and recreation opportunities.

There is little perceived concern regarding safety and wellbeing in downtown Auburn as 93% of survey participants noted that they somewhat agree with the statement that “downtown Auburn is safe.”



Downtown Auburn Revitalization Public Survey

The Downtown Auburn Revitalization Plan is a collaborative planning effort between the City of Auburn and HWC Engineering. It is a community-led process to shape the future of the downtown area. The plan will document the long-term vision, build on existing assets and recent successes, and identify strategic improvements and ways to build capacity.

The planning process kicked off in May 2025. It is anticipated that draft plans will be available to the public in January 2026.

Please take some time to fill out this survey to provide feedback and share your thoughts about the future of Downtown Auburn!

[SurveyMonkey online Public Survey](#)

1. Where do you live?

within city limits



Holiday Parade

Chapter

4

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Using the key findings from the existing conditions assessment and public engagement, a downtown-specific vision statement and complementary sets of goals and objectives were developed. A vision statement identifies what the community would like the downtown to do or become in the future. It is intended to be aspirational and forward-thinking. Ultimately, the city is striving to balance the needs of residents and visitors, help businesses succeed, create memorable experiences, and provide vibrant and welcoming spaces for all to enjoy.

Four overarching themes were identified to guide local leaders and city staff on how to partner to achieve the long-term vision for the downtown. The goal statements identify a desired outcome which is further supported by a series of objectives. Objectives break down the goal into smaller, more manageable parts by identifying an action or stance the community wants to take to achieve the goal. The vision, goals, and objectives form an organizational framework or hierarchy that starts with high-level concepts and becomes more detailed as you work your way through the framework.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The following vision statement is what the community desires downtown Auburn to be like in 15+ years. A vision statement isn't about current conditions or challenges; it is intended to conceptualize what the community hopes the downtown will be in the coming years. The vision was identified, crafted, and vetted through the public engagement process to ensure the statement adequately reflected the interests and values of current residents, business owners, and leaders.

Downtown Today

Through public engagement, the project team was able to gauge the current perceptions and needs of the community. These key findings were used to create a baseline assessment of the downtown and inform the vision for the future.

- » Majority of participants (52%) visit the downtown area monthly or every few months to shop.
- » When asked how often they come downtown for dining or entertainment, people responded either monthly (30%) or weekly (27%).
- » Most people visit the downtown for community events (66%) or dining (70%).
- » Participants rated the availability of downtown housing opportunities as poor or fair (54%), indicating the need for increasing downtown residential opportunities.
- » Respondents rated the current variety of business establishments as poor or fair (40%), indicating there is a desire for a mix of uses.
- » Participants feel it is very important (48%) to prioritize more events and activities for the future of the downtown.

- » Survey respondents feel it is very important (61%) to restore historic buildings and promote infill of vacant sites.
- » When asked to identify improvements to attract visitors and residents to the downtown, four common themes reemerged including parking and traffic management, retail expansion, family-friendly activities, and building maintenance.

Downtown Tomorrow

The vision for tomorrow is rooted in public participation and built around the shared values that were heard in community conversations. The statement is intended to shed light on the city's recent efforts while echoing the importance of collaboration in achieving long-term goals for the future. The statement also includes a nod to Auburn's automobile history while committing to progress and innovation moving forward.

Envision this...

Downtown Auburn is THE destination in northeast Indiana.

It is bustling with pride with all it has to offer. Local leaders have built a strong foundation by investing in beautification efforts and public art initiatives. Community collaboration cultivates a unique sense of place for the visitor while balancing needs of local residents.

The City of Auburn known as the "Home of the Classics" has become just that; a timeless model for progress and innovation.





UNDERSTANDING THE PLAN ELEMENTS

VISION

How do you envision the downtown in the next 10–15 years?

GOALS

What are the big ideas or desired outcomes?

OBJECTIVES

What are the general steps to take to achieve the desired outcome?

ACTION ITEMS

How do I begin implementing the ideas in this plan? What exactly does the community need to do?

PLAN THEMES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Building on the vision of being a timeless model for progress and innovation, four planning themes were identified. These four themes serve as an organizational framework for achieving the vision and goals for the downtown. With a solid foundation in place, the community strives to create a destination where residents gather, businesses succeed, and visitors thrive. A destination that other communities look at for guidance and view as the precedent.

The City of Auburn, and its partners, are striving to cultivate a dynamic development pattern that supports thriving businesses, creates memorable visitor experiences, and provides vibrant and welcoming spaces. The following section provides an overview of each theme and how it contributes to the overall vision for the downtown.

Each theme has a two-page spread that identifies a supporting goal and list of objectives, provides a brief description, and includes an Opportunities and Constraints Map. The maps were generated during the public engagement process as an approach to highlighting physical elements within the built environment that contribute to the corresponding goal and objectives. The elements highlighted on the maps should be considered as the community works to implement this plan.

Theme

1

Dynamic Development

GOAL

Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.

Theme

2

Thriving Businesses

GOAL

Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.

Theme

3

Memorable Visitor Experience

GOAL

Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.

Theme

4

Vibrant and Welcoming Spaces

GOAL

Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.



Description

This theme emphasizes the relationship between land use patterns and the transportation network to achieve long-term economic growth. The built environment includes a mix of uses, structures, and infrastructure that work together to create a sense of place. The community envisions dynamic development that balances the needs of residents and visitors. For the purpose of this plan, dynamic development includes diverse retail, dining, and residential opportunities that generate foot traffic and boost the city’s tax base. As the civic center of Auburn and DeKalb County, the downtown will continue to provide critical services and serve as an employment center for city and county staff. Key components to a dynamic development pattern include the preservation of historic sites and structures and well-connected pedestrian infrastructure.

GOAL #1

Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.

OBJECTIVE 1: COMMERCIAL USE

Broaden retail and dining opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 2: RESIDENTIAL

Expand upper story residential opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 3: OWNERSHIP

Ensure publicly-owned properties are being utilized to their best fit and highest use.

OBJECTIVE 4: PRESERVATION

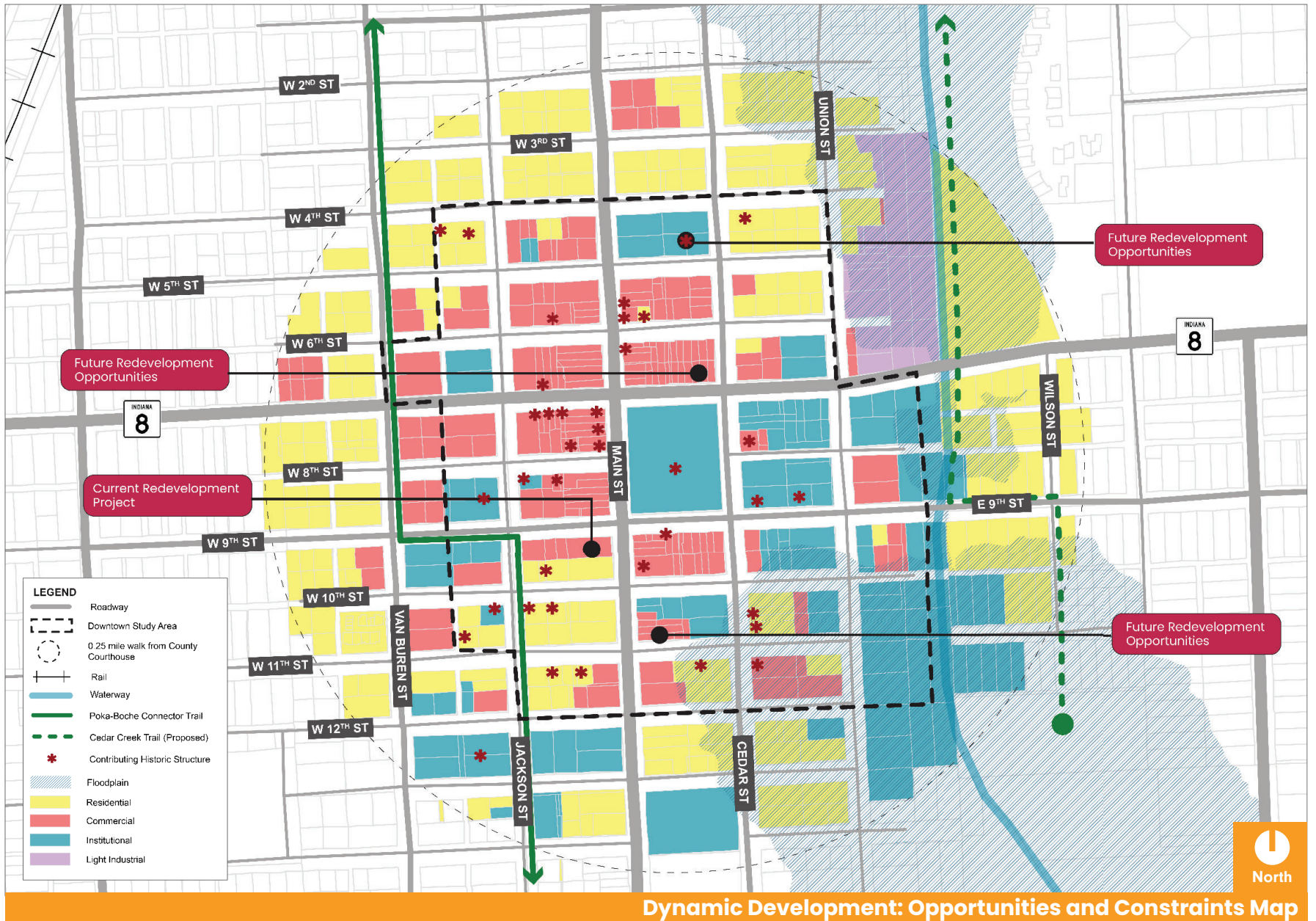
Support the preservation of historically significant sites and structures.

OBJECTIVE 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

Continue to coordinate investments in public infrastructure to accommodate for future growth.

OBJECTIVE 6: PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

Continue to expand pedestrian infrastructure to support recreation and active transportation.



Description

A downtown isn't much without the presence of thriving businesses. This theme explores strategies for creating a resilient environment where businesses succeed. Similar to other downtowns across the midwest, downtown Auburn experiences turnover in businesses, building vacancies, and has underutilized properties. While the business environment is strong in much of the downtown area, there are pockets that have struggled in recent years. While the city can't drive business growth on its own, the city and its partners can support businesses by providing programs and incentives and connecting business owners to available resources. Behind each thriving business is a network of support that helps build capacity, align efforts, and leverage existing assets. Auburn has several local organizations such as Auburn Main Street, Downtown Auburn Business Association, DeKalb Chamber Partnership, and Visit DeKalb that can help existing and future businesses succeed.

GOAL #2

Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.

OBJECTIVE 1: ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Support innovation, entrepreneurship, and small business development through collaboration and partnership.

OBJECTIVE 2: COMMUNICATION

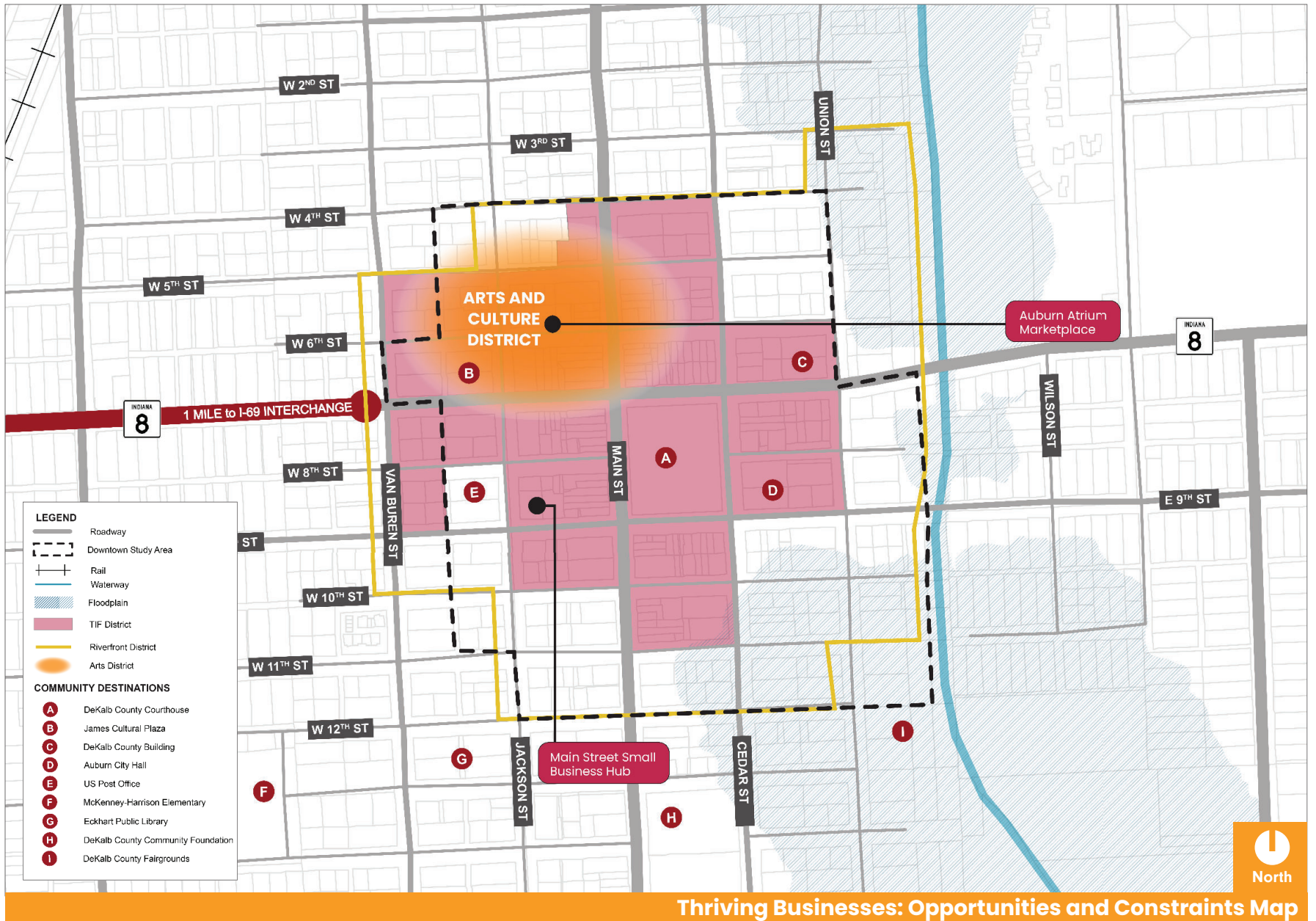
Maintain open channels of communication between the city, local organizations, and business owners.

OBJECTIVE 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Prioritize business attraction and expansion by leveraging incentives.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUILDING SUPPLY

Work with property owners to maintain an inventory of high-quality buildings.



Description

As a regional destination, the city is committed to enhancing and improving visitors' experiences. This theme focuses on strategies for creating a positive and memorable experience from the moment a visitor arrives. Streetscape enhancements, downtown policies, and marketing can impact the duration and frequency of visit for tourists. Between popular community events, local businesses, and unique experiences, the downtown has a solid foundation in place for things to do. This theme ensures that visitors can easily find their destination, access convenient parking, patronize the local businesses because of consistent hours of operation, and easily recognize the downtown through marketing and branding efforts.

GOAL #3

Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.

OBJECTIVE 1: SIGNAGE

Ensure appropriate signage in place to direct people to nearby destinations.

OBJECTIVE 2: HOURS OF OPERATION

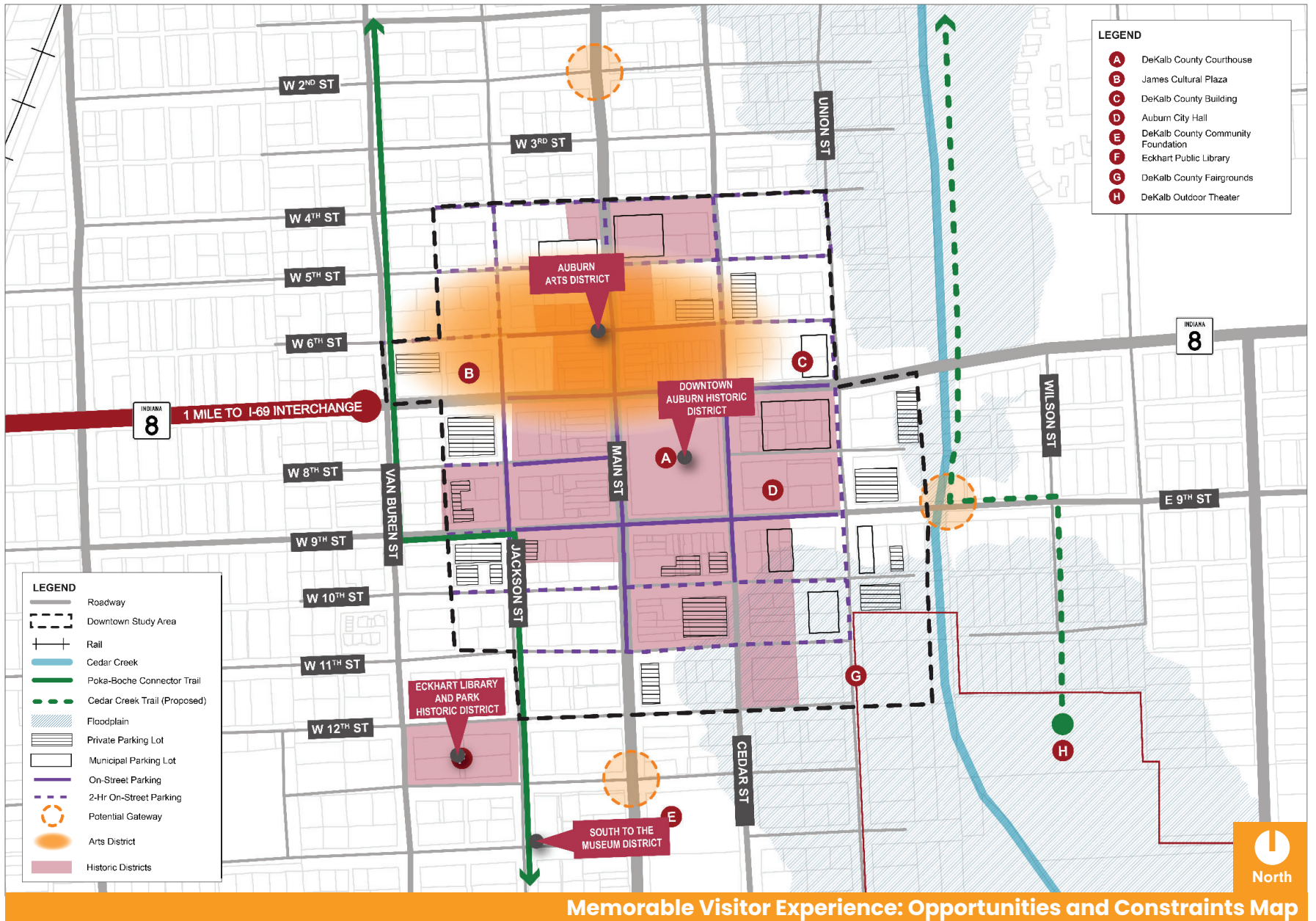
Promote expanded and consistent hours of operation of retail and dining to increase economic activity.

OBJECTIVE 3: FACILITIES

Provide visitor services and facilities needed to increase the duration of stay.

OBJECTIVE 4: MARKETING

Ensure tourism-related information is regularly updated and easy to find.



Description

The downtown area is the heart of the community – a place for social interaction, community gathering, and entertainment. This theme emphasizes the importance of providing a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces. Providing access to variety of events, programs, recreational opportunities contribute to overall quality of life and creates a strong sense of place. The idea is to leverage existing assets such as the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum and Festival, Farmers Markets, Arts District, Cedar Creek to continue developing and enhancing spaces and activities for residents and visitors to experience. These placemaking efforts will lead to a strong sense of pride and help promote the identity of downtown Auburn.

GOAL #1

Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.

OBJECTIVE 1: EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

Continue to offer a variety of community-wide events and programming.

OBJECTIVE 2: RECREATION

Expand recreational facilities to offer unique experiences to people of all ages and abilities.

OBJECTIVE 3: ARTS AND CULTURE

Continue expanding the presence of arts, culture, and entertainment.

OBJECTIVE 4: ALLEY ACTIVATION

Explore ways to activate alleys and service entrance through beautification and placemaking efforts.





Decorative Crosswalks

Chapter 5

IMPLEMENTATION

ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

The following pages provide a summary of the action items that were identified to support the goals and objectives. These action items serve as the to-do list for Auburn and its partners and should be referenced when making decisions related to the downtown core. By implementing the recommended action items, the city will be working to achieve the vision outlined in Chapter 4.

The implementation matrix identifies the action items, priority level, and implementation partners. Each action item is classified as a short, (0-3 years) mid (3-5 years), or long-term (5+ years) priority.

For implementation partners, each action item has a project leader identified first in bold text. This is the entity that will likely champion the implementation of that specific action item based on roles and responsibilities. The other partners identified as entities, organizations, or individuals that should be involved or could serve as a resource for implementation.

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #1 Commercial Use</i> Broaden retail and dining opportunities.					
1. Complete a Comprehensive Retail Market Analysis to understand the gaps in retail supply and demand.	X				DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Economic Development Commission Auburn Main Street
2. Survey the local community to identify the desire for specific retail services and dining experiences.		X			Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association Building, Planning, and Development DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
3. Develop retail and leasing support programs to attract and retain new businesses.		X			Economic Development Commission Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
4. Connect with the owners of successful locally-owned restaurants and retail stores across the state to discuss the opportunity to expand in the downtown area.				X	Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
5. Market the downtown to regional business owners and entrepreneurs looking to establish a new business or expand their existing business with a new location.				X	DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #2 Residential Use</i> Expand upper story residential opportunities.					
1. Research and promote the benefits of activating the upper floors of downtown buildings.	X				Downtown Auburn Business Association Auburn Main Street DeKalb County Chamber Partnership DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership
2. Explore the feasibility of creating a “Building Assessment Grant Program” that supports property owners in completing a physical assessment of the interior and/or exterior to guide future improvements.		X			Auburn Main Street Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association
3. Create and maintain an inventory of infill and redevelopment opportunities including the size, number of floors, condition, and special features of the structure.				X	Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development Economic Development Commission DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership
4. Review and update the zoning ordinance to eliminate any barriers to residential development in the downtown.	X				Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council
5. Incentivize property owners to revitalize buildings through tax credits, tax abatements, grant programs, public-private partnerships, and/or zoning incentives.		X			Common Council Plan Commission Redevelopment Commission Economic Development Commission Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #3 Institutional Use</i> Ensure publicly-owned properties are being utilized to their best fit and highest use.					
1. Educate local leaders and key stakeholders on the impact of transitioning institutional uses to mixed use development on the city's tax base.	X				Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Redevelopment Commission DeKalb County Council and Commissioners
2. Advocate for the strategic sale of publicly-owned property to private developers to support redevelopment.			X		Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Redevelopment Commission DeKalb County Council and Commissioners DeKalb County Planning and Zoning

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #4 Preservation</i> Support the preservation of historically significant sites and structures.					
1. Establish a Historic Preservation Commission to oversee the protection, maintenance, and reuse of historic structures.		X			Common Council Plan Commission Building, Planning, and Development Indiana Landmarks
2. Create an evaluation process with criteria to assess the historic significance and preservation feasibility of structures.		X			Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Auburn Main Street
3. Establish design guidelines to preserve the character of Auburn’s traditional commercial district.		X			Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Auburn Main Street
4. Consider adopting a historic preservation ordinance to preserve and protect historic and architecturally worthy buildings, structures, sites, monuments, streetscapes, and neighborhoods.			X		Historic Preservation Commission - <i>Once established</i> Plan Commission Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Indiana Landmarks

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #5 Infrastructure</i> Continue to coordinate investments in public infrastructure to accommodate for future growth.					
1. Create and maintain a capital improvement plan to plan for and prioritize infrastructure improvements.		X			Street Department Municipal Utilities Department Auburn Building, Planning, and Development Engineering Department
2. Continue investing in relocating overhead utilities underground throughout downtown.				X	Municipal Utilities Department Common Council Street Department Engineering Department
3. Coordinate the downtown vision and needs with INDOT as projects pertain to circulation, maintenance, and beautification of state roads.				X	Street Department Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) Building, Planning, and Development

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #6 Pedestrian Connectivity</i> Continue to expand pedestrian infrastructure to support recreation and active transportation.					
1. Ensure a complete sidewalk network, with appropriate crosswalks, is provided within downtown and to adjacent neighborhoods.			X		Street Department Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)
2. Work with the county and other regional entities to improve regional pedestrian connectivity.			X		DeKalb County Community Foundation Building, Planning, and Development Street Department DeKalb County Council and Commissioners DeKalb County Planning and Zoning Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC)
3. Work with the county to understand the city's role in implementing the DeKalb County Trails Plan.	X				Parks and Recreation Department Building, Planning, and Development Street Department DeKalb County Commissioners DeKalb County Planning and Zoning DeKalb County Highway Department
4. Implement signage and other visual cues to increase awareness of the Poka-Bache Connector Trail route through downtown.	X				DeKalb County Community Foundation Street Department Building, Planning, and Development Parks and Recreation Department Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association
5. Explore potential routes to improve pedestrian access across Cedar Creek and to the fairgrounds.		X			DeKalb County Community Foundation Street Department Building, Planning, and Development Parks and Recreation Department Parks and Recreation Board DeKalb County Drainage Board

THEME 1: DYNAMIC DEVELOPMENT Goal: Cultivate a development pattern that benefits both residents and visitors.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #6 Pedestrian Connectivity (Continued)</i> Continue to expand pedestrian infrastructure to support recreation and active transportation.					
6. Continue to explore the feasibility of a trail along Cedar Creek.		X			DeKalb County Community Foundation Street Department Building, Planning, and Development Parks and Recreation Department Parks and Recreation Board DeKalb County Drainage Board
7. Implement the “Future Throughfare Plan - Trails and Sidewalks” identified within the 2022 Auburn Comprehensive Plan.				X	Street Department Plan Commission Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC)
8. Develop a city-wide Trails Master Plan to inventory existing infrastructure, identify gaps in connectivity, and prioritize future trail segments.		X			Parks and Recreation Department Street Department Plan Commission Common Council Building, Planning, and Development DeKalb County Community Foundation Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC)

THEME 2: THRIVING BUSINESSES Goal: Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #1 Entrepreneurship</i> Support innovation, entrepreneurship, and small business development through collaboration and partnership.					
1. Connect existing and future business owners with training and support resources related to business modeling, finances, and marketing.				X	Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership
2. Establish business incubator space at affordable rent to test new business ideas.			X		Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership Elevate Ventures
3. Publicize the support and opportunities offered to existing and future businesses through collaboration with the Downtown Auburn Business Association (DABA), Auburn Main Street (AMS), and the DeKalb County Chamber Partnership.				X	Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership
4. Encourage tourism-related business owners to utilize Visit DeKalb as a marketing resource.				X	Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau DeKalb County Chamber Partnership DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership

THEME 2: THRIVING BUSINESSES Goal: Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #2 Communication</i> Maintain open channels of communication between the city, local organizations, and business owners.					
1. Establish quarterly meetings with representatives from key downtown organizations to discuss opportunities, challenges, and upcoming events.	X				Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association Building, Planning, and Development DeKalb County Visitors Bureau DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
2. Ensure event coordinators are communicating with impacted business owners prior to any official public marketing efforts are launched.				X	Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association Building, Planning, and Development DeKalb County Visitors Bureau DeKalb County Chamber Partnership

THEME 2: THRIVING BUSINESSES Goal: Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #3 Economic Development</i> Prioritize business attraction and expansion by leveraging incentives.					
1. Leverage the Riverfront District to attract and retain unique dining establishments and entertainment destinations.				X	DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership Economic Development Commission Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
2. Consider establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) to support local restaurants and bars and encourage outdoor socialization.	X				Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association
3. Continue using the downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and Façade Grant Program to encourage public and private reinvestment.				X	Common Council Auburn Main Street Economic Development Commission Building, Planning, and Development
4. Identify a preferred method, such as a land bank, for acquiring properties that have been vacant for a significant period of time.		X			Common Council Plan Commission Economic Development Commission Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development
5. Explore the creation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to help facilitate economic growth.		X			Common Council Plan Commission Economic Development Commission Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development

THEME 2: THRIVING BUSINESSES Goal: Create a resilient environment where businesses can succeed.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #4 Building Supply</i> Work with property owners to maintain an inventory of high-quality buildings.					
1. Create and maintain an inventory of vacant and underutilized properties to inform marketing efforts and business attraction strategies.				X	DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership Economic Development Commission Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development
2. Partner with a trusted local realtor to host monthly tours of available spaces for prospective business owners.	X				Downtown Auburn Business Association Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street
3. Promote the use of pop-up shops to increase activity in vacant retail spaces. Adopt a vacant property ordinance to encourage timely reinvestment.	X				Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
4. Utilize Auburns' Unsafe Building Code as a tool to support the rehabilitation or safe removal of hazardous structures that impact community wellbeing.				X	Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council

THEME 3: MEMORABLE VISITOR EXPERIENCE Goal: Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #1 Signage</i> Ensure appropriate signage in place to direct people to nearby destinations.					
1. Create a committee to oversee the gateway and wayfinding initiative.	X				Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)
2. Complete a wayfinding study that identifies desired locations, branding, and signage standards.		X			Auburn Main Street Plan Commission Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Street Department Downtown Auburn Business Association

THEME 3: MEMORABLE VISITOR EXPERIENCE Goal: Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #2 Hours of Operation</i> Promote expanded and consistent hours of operation of retail and dining to increase economic activity.					
1. Facilitate discussions with business owners to communicate the advantages of consistent hours of operation.	X				Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
2. Encourage Auburn Main street to work with business owners to extend hours during specific events.	X				Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
3. Identify a preferred strategy for implementing consistent hours of operation that balances the needs of business owners and customers.			X		Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau DeKalb County Chamber Partnership

<p>THEME 3: MEMORABLE VISITOR EXPERIENCE Goal: Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.</p>	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<p><i>Objective #3 Facilities</i> Provide visitor services and facilities needed to increase the duration of stay.</p>					
<p>1. Explore ways to tailor the Auburn city app to enhance the visitor experience.</p>		X			<p>Mayor's Office Plan Commission Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street DeKalb County Visitors Bureau</p>
<p>2. Explore the use of a publicly-owned facility to provide restroom facilities during events.</p>	X				<p>Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Parks and Recreation Board Redevelopment Commission Auburn Main Street</p>
<p>3. Incorporate a public restroom facility into the design of any future public space.</p>			X		<p>Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Parks and Recreation Board Redevelopment Commission Auburn Main Street</p>
<p>4. Complete an updated parking study to identify a strategy that best aligns with current supply and demand.</p>	X				<p>Building, Planning, and Development Plan Commission Common Council Street Department Auburn Main Street</p>
<p>5. Consider implementing a shared parking policy to limit the amount of real estate being used for parking.</p>		X			<p>Common Council Plan Commission Building, Planning, and Development</p>
<p>6. Encourage property owners to establish shared parking agreements with neighboring businesses in areas where peak demand times don't overlap.</p>	X				<p>Building, Planning, and Development Common Council Plan Commission</p>

THEME 3: MEMORABLE VISITOR EXPERIENCE Goal: Create positive and memorable experiences from the moment visitors arrive.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #4 Marketing</i> Ensure tourism-related information is regularly updated and easy to find.					
1. Encourage business owners and event coordinators to partner with Auburn Main Street and Downtown Auburn Business Association to sponsor joint promotion and marketing efforts.				X	DeKalb County Chamber Partnership Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau
2. Work with a marketing firm to expand the reach of efforts and strengthen the promotion of Auburns downtown events and businesses.		X			Auburn Main Street Visit DeKalb County Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
3. Establish a comprehensive source for downtown information including a comprehensive community calendar.	X				Auburn Main Street Visit DeKalb County Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
4. Install directory signage as part of the wayfinding initiative to guide visitors to nearby destinations and businesses		X			Building, Planning, and Development Common Council Street Department Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association
5. Complete an annual review of downtown affiliated websites to evaluate their marketing value and ensure information is up to date.				X	Downtown Auburn Business Association Auburn Main Street Visit DeKalb County Building, Planning, and Development DeKalb County Chamber Partnership
6. Ensure consistent branding is used on all promotional and marketing materials.				X	Auburn Main Street Visit DeKalb County Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Chamber Partnership

THEME 4: VIBRANT AND WELCOMING SPACES Goal: Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #1 Events and Programming</i> Continue to offer a variety of community-wide events and programming.					
1. Partner to host new events such as a Fourth of July Parade.		X			Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Street Department Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau
2. Work with DeKalb County Visitors Bureau to create new “themed” trails and tours to attract visitors.	X				Downtown Auburn Business Association Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Visit DeKalb County
3. Identify a permanent location for the farmers market in the downtown area.			X		Downtown Auburn Business Association Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development
4. Partner to implement unique seasonal programming such as winter globes for outdoor dining.	X				Downtown Auburn Business Association Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Businesses
5. Leverage the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile (ACDA) Museum and event as opportunities to market other tourism offerings to visitors.				X	Downtown Auburn Business Association Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Businesses Auburn Cord Duesenberg Festival Board of Directors

THEME 4: VIBRANT AND WELCOMING SPACES Goal: Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #2 Recreation</i> Expand recreational facilities to offer unique experiences to people of all ages and abilities.					
1. Complete a Cedar Creek Activation Plan to explore how the waterway can be utilized as a recreational amenity.		X			Parks and Recreation Common Council Parks and Recreation Board Building, Planning, and Development Municipal Utilities Department DeKalb County Drainage Board
2. Explore the feasibility of installing an interactive water feature or other youth-focused amenities within the downtown.		X			Parks and Recreation Common Council Parks and Recreation Board Building, Planning, and Development Municipal Utilities Department DeKalb County Drainage Board

THEME 4: VIBRANT AND WELCOMING SPACES Goal: Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #3 Arts and Culture</i> Continue expanding the presence of arts, culture, and entertainment.					
1. Prioritize the Downtown Arts District in allocating public funding for art and venues to concentrate on a strong and vibrant arts cluster.				X	Common Council Building, Planning, and Development Auburn Main Street
2. Support the establishment of a performing arts space within the downtown.		X			Auburn Main Street Common Council Parks and Recreation Board Redevelopment Commission Building, Planning, and Development Downtown Auburn Business Association
3. Expand upon the existing Arts District character by using landscape, street furnishings, and signage to enhance the sense of arrival and positive experience of being downtown.			X		Street Department Building, Planning, and Development Common Council Municipal Utilities Department Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association
4. Continue to experiment with new art initiatives (such as a Rotating Art Sculpture Program) to promote downtown as an arts destination.				X	Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association DeKalb County Visitors Bureau
5. Expand the Main Street District to include the library, community foundation, outdoor theatre, and the fairgrounds to leverage resources for expanding arts and culture.	X				Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association

THEME 4: VIBRANT AND WELCOMING SPACES Goal: Provide a mix of amenities, activities, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and create a strong sense of place.	SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM	ONGOING	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
<i>Objective #4 Alley Activation</i> Explore ways to activate alleys and service entrance through beautification and placemaking efforts.					
1. Complete an inventory of alley and service areas that could be enhanced through lighter, quicker, cheaper projects.	X				Building, Planning, and Development Street Department Auburn Main Street Downtown Auburn Business Association
2. Survey the community to gather ideas on how the community would like to see alleys utilized.	X				Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Street Department Downtown Auburn Business Association Residents and Business Owners
3. Create an Alley Art Program that includes engaging the community in an art competition.		X			Auburn Main Street Building, Planning, and Development Street Department Downtown Auburn Business Association Residents and Business Owners Local Artists

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2026 AUBURN DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

ADOPTED: MAY 5, 2026