



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together

Amazing Place

Six Cities Using the New Recipe
for Economic Development

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Executive Summary

Many companies—from Fortune 500 titans to lean startups to independent manufacturers—are moving to places that offer great quality of life for their employees. As Smart Growth America detailed in our 2015 report *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown*, these companies want vibrant neighborhoods with affordable housing options, restaurants, nightlife, and other amenities in walking distance, and a range of transportation options for their employees, among other things. This trend is already playing out in big cities like San Francisco and New York. It is also playing out in mid-size cities like Denver, CO and Minneapolis, MN, and small cities and towns like Greenville, SC. In each of these places, great walkable neighborhoods are helping to attract new residents, new jobs, and new investment.

This trend represents a marked shift in cities' economic development strategy. Where cities once relied principally on subsidies or low tax rates in hopes of luring big employers, now they are doing everything they can to create great places where people and companies want to be.

As a result, the old economic development tools are no longer sufficient: tax breaks and subsidies alone do not create great places. Smart growth strategies like zoning changes, incentives for infill development, policies to make a range of housing available, street improvements, investments in transit, support for public parks and gathering spaces, and creative reuse of historic buildings are among the new, innovative ways cities are creating places where people and companies want to be.

Amazing Place: Six Cities Using the New Recipe for Economic Development looks at how six cities are using smart growth and placemaking strategies to gain a competitive edge. Our case study examples—Boise, ID; Denver, CO; Greenville, SC; Minneapolis, MN; Nashville, TN; and Pittsburgh, PA—represent a diversity of geographies, locations, population sizes, industries, and development challenges. Despite their differences, all of these cities are using smart growth development to successfully attract new companies and new residents.

Communities everywhere and of all sizes can learn from these examples. This new approach to economic development can help communities create diverse and durable local economies that last beyond the lifecycle of any one employer. As this report shows, there are many ways to create vibrant walkable neighborhoods and regional centers. Cities that want to compete in today's economy can and should use many of these strategies to create places that are unique to their community.

Introduction

The old recipe for economic development

Over the last several decades, local economic development in the United States has usually involved cities, states, and regions battling against one another in an effort to attract new residents, companies, and jobs. This competition often comes in the form of tax breaks, subsidies, location incentives, and favorable tax rates.

This approach helped some communities attract companies that have anchored long-term economic activity. However, there is an extensive and well-documented history of unproductive and even harmful outcomes from these incentives. Neighboring jurisdictions often simply stole businesses from one another, moving economic activity around without increasing it—at taxpayer expense.¹ Predicted jobs sometimes failed to appear, or the jobs created went to people living outside the community.² Other times the outrageously high subsidies per job created raised questions about whether these tradeoffs were worthwhile.³ And too often businesses would leave once incentives expired⁴ or would threaten to leave if new incentives weren't offered.⁵ In many cases, communities won these companies at too high a cost—extending their finances at the expense of services for existing residents and businesses. But perhaps the biggest problem for economic development officials now is that this strategy often simply isn't working.



The old recipe: Enticing large employers with tax breaks and subsidies.

New research is finding that tax breaks are either ineffective or no longer a high priority for companies when considering a new location.⁶ A 2014 survey of corporate leaders found that “corporate tax rates” and “state and local incentives” ranked seventh and eighth, respectively, on the list of factors those companies consider when deciding on a new location.⁷ The number one most important factor on that list? “Availability of skilled labor.” And a 2013 survey of entrepreneurs found that low taxes and business-friendly regulations were rarely the reason for starting a business in a particular location. Rather they looked for “a great place to live plus a talented pool of potential employees, and excellent access to customers and suppliers.”⁸

The new recipe for economic development

If tax breaks were the old recipe for economic development, creating vibrant neighborhoods that can attract people from near and far is the new one.

Smart Growth America's 2015 report *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown* showed that hundreds of companies across the United States are moving to and investing in walkable downtown locations, in large part because these places help to attract and retain talented workers.⁹ These companies are looking for walkable, live/work/play neighborhoods and regional centers with nearby affordable housing for their employees, with a vibrant mix of restaurants, cafes, shops, entertainment venues, and cultural attractions all within easy walking distance of offices. Many of the neighborhoods these companies choose also include a wide range of home types, making them convenient places to live as well as affordable for households of all income levels. Companies have always wanted convenient transportation but now place a premium on providing employees with multiple transportation options, including the ability to walk, bike, or take transit to work and meetings. In cities with robust public transportation, companies consider the service a crucial part of their daily operations. In cities with lower levels of transit service, many companies express a desire to see it improve.¹⁰

In addition to attracting new companies, walkable neighborhoods can also foster the growth of existing local businesses and support entrepreneurs. Increased foot traffic can boost existing local businesses. And programs that create flexible office or coworking space can make it easier for entrepreneurs to start new businesses while also filling space downtown.



The new recipe: Creating vibrant neighborhoods that attract residents and companies.

What can cities do to create these places? Changes to zoning, incentives for infill development, policies to ensure housing for a full range of job types and income levels, street improvements, investments in transit and bike infrastructure, and support for public parks and gathering spaces are some of the specific actions that can lead to these kinds of neighborhoods.

This approach to economic development creates lasting assets for communities that continue to pay dividends long after their initial investment. Investments made in a community don't suddenly disappear if a business leaves. Unlike tax breaks for individual businesses, the same investment in walkable neighborhoods and regional centers can be used to

help attract new businesses again and again. This approach can also help existing businesses grow and create an environment for entrepreneurs to create brand new businesses.

Today, some cities that boast vibrant walkable neighborhoods are holdovers, capitalizing on infrastructure and design from previous eras. But many communities are intentionally building new high-quality places to capture economic development and to grow their economy. This report shows how six places are doing this, and demonstrates how cities big and small are using new development tools to compete in today's economy.

Strategies in action

To better understand a place-based approach to economic development, this report takes a closer look at six cities in particular that have grown successfully in recent years: Boise, ID; Denver, CO; Greenville, SC; Minneapolis, MN; Nashville, TN; and Pittsburgh, PA.

These cities represent a cross section of best practices in place-based economic development examples from across the country and a diversity of geographies, population sizes, and industrial history. We used a variety of metrics to profile the overall strength of each city's economic profile and talent attraction ability, including percentage of the population with bachelor's degree or higher, unemployment rates, population growth, job growth, median incomes, and job/residential density.

The cities were chosen for their relatability to other cities across the country. Denver and Nashville are growing rapidly and have added thousands and jobs and residents year after year for the last decade. Minneapolis and Pittsburgh saw population decline and net outmigration in recent years, but have turned that around and are now on gaining new residents. And Boise and Greenville offer lessons for smaller communities. These case studies are representative of a group of cities that have made a conscious effort to revitalize using a place-based approach and are thriving economically in terms of talent attraction, new development, and job and population growth. Here are their stories.



Boise, ID

Big city amenities in the Mountain West

Boise, ID, is one of the most remote metropolitan areas in the United States, a fact that fosters a unique and friendly sense of community. The city prides itself on friendly people, mild climate, good jobs, easy access to outdoor activities, and affordable costs of living. In 2016 alone, the city was included on U.S. News & World Report's Best Places to Live list, Forbes' list of America's Top 20 Fastest Growing Cities, and Livability's list of the Best Downtowns.¹¹

At the heart of the region is downtown Boise, one of the most bustling neighborhoods in the state. The Downtown Boise Association knows that the neighborhood's charm sets it apart from other places in the West, and works to nurture these attributes by making downtown "an active pedestrian-friendly place, a social and visual focal point for the community, providing opportunities for living, dining, entertainment, shopping and personal services, as well as providing areas for hosting community events."¹²

But that wasn't always the case. In the 1970s Boise embraced urban renewal and adopted an approach that prioritized mass demolition. In the 1980s the City pivoted to emphasize an approach that focused on incremental historic rehabilitation, the construction of a downtown convention center, and re-creating traditional downtown streetscapes.

Today Boise leaders are making a concerted effort to focus new development downtown by improving its centers, seeking walkability, prioritizing infill and mixed use, and creating housing. Their explicit intention was to create a city that attracts talented workers from across the country looking for world-class jobs and a balanced lifestyle with easy access to the region's outdoor amenities. Here are some of the ways the City is doing that.

1985: AIA Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team assessment

In 1985, Boise city leaders invited the American Institute of Architects' Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) to come and help "build a better Boise, and renew the sense of civic pride in Idaho's Capital city."¹³ The process laid out a blueprint for a redeveloped city core with business, entertainment, and recreational opportunities. Among the project's recommendations were ways to get neighborhood groups working together, design guidelines for Capitol Boulevard and the 8th Street Pedestrian Mall, and strategies to maintain and sustain the neighborhood for decades to come. In short, the R/UDAT process laid the groundwork for the vibrant downtown Boise boasts today.

1987: A BID for downtown

The Downtown Boise Business Improvement District (Boise BID) is a publicly sanctioned and privately directed organization created in 1987 that works to promote downtown as an attractive, safe and vibrant place in which to work, shop, live and play through regular events, street beautification, annual festivals, and marketing.

Its efforts are paying off: today, downtown Boise is home to 37,363 jobs—13.1 percent of all the jobs in the metro area—32 percent of which require at least some college education and 48.3 percent of which pay more than \$19/hour.¹⁴ Twenty-four new businesses opened in downtown Boise in 2015, and the office vacancy rate at the end of that year was just 6.93 percent.¹⁵ One of downtown's recent signature developments is Eighth & Main, an 18-story, 390,000 square foot, Class-A office and retail building constructed on one of the city's most blighted downtown properties that opened in 2014.



Produce at the Boise Farmers Market.

1994: Market place

Boise has gotten a lot tastier in recent years with the addition of the Boise Farmers Market, Capital City Public Market, and the Global Community Market. The Farmers Market and the Public Market are seasonal markets that specialize in locally harvested foods and artisanal and handcrafted products that are unique to Boise and surroundings. The Global Community Market features small businesses, many of which are owned by refugees who have settled in Boise or budding entrepreneurs aiming to transition into business ownership. The Public Market, started in 1994 with just 12 vendors, has steadily grown into a market of over 150 vendors and takes up four blocks of downtown Boise. According to the Farmers Market Coalition, the Public Market generated an estimated \$4.5 million in economic activity for Boise in 2011.¹⁶

2001 and 2015: Protecting recreational land

One of the major selling points for companies considering Boise (and the employees they hope to recruit) is the city's close proximity to outdoor recreation. City leaders take those assets seriously, and a series of tax levies have helped to protect open space in the region. In 2001, Boise residents passed a two-year, \$10 million levy that dedicated money for preservation of open space in the Boise Foothills. The money allowed the city to buy parcels, acquire easements across private property, and negotiate with other governments to protect land.¹⁷ In November 2015 voters approved a second levy—by a stunning 74 percent margin—to expand protected space as well as preserve wildlife and native plant habitat.¹⁸

2012: An engineering problem becomes a tourist attraction

A 100-year-old river diversion was dangerously out of date, and the neighborhood downriver of it was suffering from widespread disinvestment. Where other cities might have seen challenges, Boise saw a chance to solve multiple problems with one innovative solution.

Boise River Park, located just west of downtown Boise, is a fully automated dam that doubles as a dazzling whitewater kayaking park. The park has already become a tourist draw, attracting kayaking and surfing enthusiasts from across the country and the world.¹⁹ Businesses are also sitting up and taking notice: companies now tout the park, and the larger adjacent Esther Simplot Park opening later in 2016, when trying to attract employees from other regions. Several breweries, wineries, and a medical and office building have already opened near the parks. The College of Western Idaho has also announced plans for a new campus on a 10-acre parcel along the park. The new feature is also designed to help the city cope with and remain resilient in the face of future flooding.

The project was made possible through a collaboration of public and private entities, including the City of Boise, private companies, foundations, and individual donors. Boise expects development near the park to continue, and has designated the area as a tax-increment financing eligible district. The second phase of the park renovation is slated to add a wading area, habitat island, spectator overlook, and amphitheater-style lawn for events along the river.²⁰



Kayakers in Boise River Park.

2013: A plan to keep existing residents in the West End and to welcome new ones

Sandwiched between downtown and Boise River Park is the West End, a low-income, predominantly residential neighborhood. With major development and investment on either side—and a massive new park slated to open this summer in the area—Boise leaders realized early on that the challenge would not be how to drive investment to the West End, but rather how to keep the neighborhood affordable for the people currently living there.

Keeping neighborhoods affordable while they improve is important for several reasons. Housing affordability is often a key consideration for employers considering moving to or expanding in a city, and keeping housing affordable can make the entire region more competitive. And since companies usually employ people earning a wide range of salaries and at a variety of life stages, neighborhoods need housing options that are similarly diverse. Finally, economic and racial diversity are often part of what makes a neighborhood attractive in the first place, and retaining that diversity is important to the area's appeal.

In the West End, city leaders are working proactively to keep the neighborhood affordable with the help of the 30th Street Area Master Plan, designed to guide many aspects of development in the area over the next several years. The plan outlines the City's specific intent to increase workforce housing within the area including, but not limited to, apartments, condominiums, townhouses, live-work units, duplexes, and single-family homes.²¹ The plan also outlines ways city leaders can do that, including linking commercial development rights to residential development requirements; providing density bonuses for developers who include workforce housing units in their projects; and partnerships in which the public sector contributes public land or public funds to a private developer in exchange for the construction of workforce housing.

None of this would work, however, without input from the West End's current residents, and city leaders have held many community meetings over the last several years gathering ideas and feedback. The master plan's final proposal of a denser, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood reflects community members' preferences and concerns. As the area continues to grow over the next several years, the plan will help the City get the most out of new development and investment.



Condos are among the new housing options in downtown Boise.

zoning codes in priority areas, amortizing developer impact fees, expediting permitting, and exploring tax abatement, among others.

2015: Building housing downtown

Housing downtown is important for any city: "Housing brings needed vitality to downtown, supports the development of a strong retail core, provides housing options to attract and retain downtown workers, reduces auto-dependent commute trips, and increases the tax base."²² That's from Boise's Downtown Housing Strategy, released in 2015, which assesses the current state of housing downtown as well as market demand for new options, and outlines ways city leaders can support the construction of new housing downtown. Suggestions include revising

2015: Supporting entrepreneurs and attracting tech talent

Several years ago, a group of experienced entrepreneurs came together to make it easier for future entrepreneurs to get started in Boise. The result is Trailhead, a non-profit, community effort that helps entrepreneurs start and grow all kinds of small businesses.

In addition to resources for entrepreneurs, part of Trailhead's appeal is its location in the heart of a growing community. "It has a location walkable to the university and downtown," said Gordon Jones, who started Harvard's Innovation Lab and moved to Idaho to launch Boise State University's College of Innovation and Design.²³ "All of these are small but meaningful things I've seen in my work at Harvard and with many different players in these types of ecosystems."

Trailhead has been made possible in part by support from Mayor David Bieter, the City of Boise, and the Capital City Development Corporation. The project has helped nurture Boise's growing tech industry, and that in turn has helped attract major new employers like Paylocity, which in November announced plans to bring more than 500 jobs to downtown Boise. "With an expanding tech presence and a flourishing community and culture, Boise was the ideal choice for Paylocity's newest location," said Steve Beauchamp, the company's CEO.²⁴



An event at Trailhead.

2015: A five-year plan for public investment

Publicly stating where and how a city plans to invest in public works projects can give developers investing confidence and Boise has done just that with the Capital City Development Corporation's "5-Year Capital Improvement Plan," an outline of infrastructure, placemaking, parking, transit, and specialty projects in four special districts in and around downtown Boise.²⁵ The plan outlines specific projects the City plans to accomplish between 2016 and 2020, including things like protected bike lanes, new civic plazas, public art, park improvements, parking garages, streetscaping, and wayfinding signs. The plan makes city processes transparent and accountable for residents and developers alike.

2016: Setting a standard for streetscapes

To keep downtown beautiful and attractive, Boise's Streetscape Standards Manual sets guidelines for landscaping along public streets in the city. The standards help make sure streets are well-kept and attractive while also improving stormwater quality, reducing runoff, and promote a healthier and more extensive tree canopy in downtown.²⁶ The Manual is scheduled to be considered by the City Council later in 2016.



Denver, CO

Transit creates a magnet for Millennials

Founded in the mid-1800s as a mining hub during the gold rush, Denver, CO, has become a magnet for people seeking balance between city life and the great outdoors. The city's population grew 10.6 percent over between 2010 and 2014, including an influx of Millennials who make up 15.9 percent of Denver's total population—one of the highest percentages of any city in the country.²⁷ Denver set out to create a mixed use, mixed income community with transportation options. As a result of those initiatives, Denver has perhaps one of the most successful revitalization stories in the nation.

Denver has been so successful that today its challenge is figuring out ways to continue adding amenities while also remaining affordable. As in other cities, affordability in Denver is as much about keeping the city competitive as it is about protecting vulnerable populations. Here are some of the milestones in the city's efforts.

1971, 2014: Historic preservation fuels a retail powerhouse

It became Denver's first historic district in 1971, but there's nothing old fashioned about Larimer Square. The shopping district's buildings have, at different points in history, been home to saloons, a World War II machine shop, Denver's original City Hall, and the log cabin where Denver's founder, William Larimer, first settled.²⁸ Today the neighborhood is one of the most chic shopping destinations in the city, where boutiques, chef-driven restaurants, and cocktail bars make the most of the buildings' historic features. The district is made possible in part by the Larimer Square Historic Preservation & Restoration Fee, a mandatory one percent fee assessed on all purchases. The fee helps pay for external restoration, preservation, sidewalk improvements, historic building facades, street lamps and overhead lighting, as well as cultural, arts, and seasonal programming.

1994: Investing in a connected city

One of Denver's most significant public investments of the last 100 years is FasTracks, 122 miles of new light and commuter rail, 18 miles of bus rapid transit lanes, and 57 new transit stations. Paid for with a sales tax approved by voters in 2004 and the nation's first private investment in light rail, the system was designed to help people get between Denver's suburbs, the downtown core, and Denver International Airport conveniently and affordably. Denver's Regional Transportation District (RTD) operates seven rail lines—including the latest line to the airport which opened in 2016—more than 150 bus routes, many specialty services, and the Flatiron Flyer which provides new bus rapid transit service between Denver and Boulder.²⁹ The agency plans to expand its offerings even further later in 2016 with four additional new rail lines.

RTD estimates that the FasTracks initiative introduced nearly \$3 billion into the local economy between 2005 and 2013, and created approximately 12,000 full time jobs since 2005.³¹ Many of these jobs come with even bigger impacts: RTD has contracts with locally certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and Small Business Enterprises.

2007: An action plan for downtown

In 2007, the Downtown Denver Partnership and the City and County of Denver, with funding support from the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (BID) and numerous other public and private sector entities, created the Denver Downtown Area Plan, which provides a vision, strategy framework and action plan to guide the evolution of downtown Denver through 2027. The plan explicitly states the goals of making Denver more prosperous, walkable, diverse, distinctive, and green, and it outlines seven key strategies to accomplish those goals.

With the plan's timeline now nearly halfway through, its impacts are already becoming clear. Between May 2014 and May 2016, 24 companies relocated their headquarters or expanded into downtown Denver. In 2015, 15 major development projects were completed in downtown, representing \$634 million of investment and as of May 2016, 18 projects under construction and 14 planned projects represent an additional \$2.4 billion worth of investment in downtown. One of the fastest growing cities in the United States, Denver's projected residential growth rate in downtown is 12.6 percent—compared with 3.7 percent nationally. To meet the needs of those future residents, 4,592 residential units are under construction or planned for development in downtown. And the area is home to 123,548 employees—nearly 60 percent of whom use transit, walk, bike, or share the ride to work.³²

What's next for downtown? Improvements to the city's 16th Street Mall, a master plan for downtown's outdoor spaces, and a new vision for the Denver Performing Arts Complex will all help downtown continue to grow in the coming years.

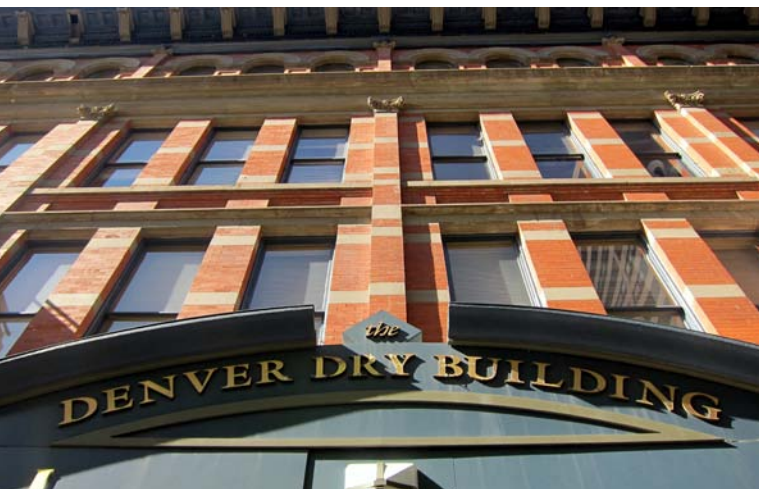
2010: Diverse housing in high-demand neighborhoods

The residential population of downtown Denver grew 86 percent from 2000 to 2012, and the population of neighborhoods within a 1.5-mile radius of downtown is projected to reach 73,877 by 2018.³³ With all this rising demand comes rising prices, and the City is working to make sure its most walkable areas remain affordable.



The H Line light rail, sometimes known as the Blue Line, operated by the Regional Transportation District.

City leaders see a clear economic case for this. Perhaps most compellingly, housing affordability is a key consideration for employers considering moving to or expanding in a city, meaning that keeping housing affordable can make the entire region more competitive. Developing or rehabilitating housing is also a direct investment in a neighborhood, generating construction jobs and local spending. These investments can catalyze neighborhood revitalization and private investment, and ultimately new residents bring new customers to neighborhood businesses.³⁴



The Dry Goods Building in downtown Denver includes a mix of affordable and market-rate housing as well as offices and shops.

Denver's affordable housing strategy is two-fold: to increase supply in high-demand neighborhoods in the downtown core and along transit lines, and to create sound affordable housing tools and funding policies to finance new opportunities for rental and ownership. To achieve the first, the City adopted new context-based zoning codes in 2010. The codes encourage development along transit corridors, protect historic assets, and provide clear and consistent procedures for appropriate and effective public involvement in land use and development decisions.³⁵ To achieve the second, the City's Revolving Housing Fund, an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, and Metro Mortgage Assistance Plus Program are all designed to help the

City build or rehabilitate 3,000 affordable housing units between 2015 and 2020. In March 2016, the City cut the ribbon on Westwood Crossing, an affordable, mixed-use rental development with 98 apartments for low- and moderate-income household. The project is one of the first developments funded through Denver's new Revolving Affordable Housing Loan Fund.³⁶

2010: Leveraging private investment for public good

When the economy is bad, property values are low and ripe for purchase—but access to capital is poor and affordable housing developers are scarce. By the time developers are interested, land values have risen too high for the city to afford to purchase it. To overcome that cycle, Denver created the country's first acquisition fund for affordable housing near transit in 2010. The Denver Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Fund is a revolving loan fund that makes capital available to purchase and hold sites for up to five years along current and future transit corridors in the Denver region. Originally capitalized at \$15 million, the Fund has grown to encompass nearly \$24 million in total loan capital.³⁷ To date, the Fund has acquired a total of 13 properties, which preserved or created 1,181 affordable homes and 120,000 square feet of commercial space for community assets such as a new public library, child care program, theater company and affordable space for nonprofits—all within short walking distance of transit. The project is estimated to have created over 700 jobs and leveraged almost \$200 million from public, private and nonprofits partners in only three years.³⁸

2011: Making bicycling safer and more convenient

Denver Moves, a plan passed in 2011 to improve on-street bike facilities, recommends a number of ways to make biking safer and easier in downtown Denver.⁴⁰ Four protected cycle tracks—on 15th Street, Bannock Street, Lawrence Street, and Arapahoe Street—are among the plan's first tangible results.⁴¹ Notably, the Arapahoe Street cycle track was crowdfunded with support from downtown businesses which recognized the need of bicycle infrastructure to attract and retain talent.

One of the plan's next major projects will be Knox Court, a bicycle boulevard which will make it easier to walk or bike from Denver's West Side to FasTracks' W Line, schools, parks, and businesses downtown. The City-run Denver Livability Partnership is currently gathering technical data about the corridor and working with the

adjacent property owners to assess the variability of Knox Court as a bicycle boulevard.⁴² Since 2011 the plan has been updated to include the addition of protected bike lanes within the network. Three protected lanes have been installed in downtown Denver, with two more slated to be completed by the end of 2016.

2014: Supporting development along transit

The FasTracks system unites 30 years worth of economic development projects, including Denver Union Station and Larimer Square as well as sports arenas and entertainment and cultural institutions. This wasn't an accident or chance: Denver's Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategic Plan unites many of the city's guiding documents (including the Comprehensive Plan 2000, Blueprint Denver, neighborhood plans, and station area plans) into one unified effort to direct growth and investment around rail stations.

2014: An economic centerpiece: Denver Union Station

A major part of the FasTracks plan included redeveloping Downtown Union Station, a historic train terminal built in 1881 and its accompanying 42 acres of rail yards in the neighborhood now known as Lower Downtown, or "LoDo".



A bike lane routes around a bus stop in Denver.



The Tattered Covered bookstore in LoDo, near Denver Union Station.

Planners aimed to make Union Station a multimodal hub from which all of FasTrack's light rail and bus lines would radiate. The hub now accommodates nine modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle traffic, a commuter rail line that connects directly to the international airport, and light rail lines across the city. In addition, the redevelopment plans outline new apartments, offices, and retail space that, if successful, would transform Union Station into an economic centerpiece of the city.

These plans would have been ambitious during economic boom times. But the Union Station project began in 2004, when Denver's economy was struggling. Other cities might have seen that as a time to shy away from public projects, but Denver increased its investment in infrastructure during this time, with the Union Station project as its focus. Investors and developers followed the City's lead and began building throughout the LoDo neighborhood. New employers,

office spaces, housing, hotels, and supermarkets all vied for spots around the Station and this new development has reshaped LoDo into a vibrant and in-demand place to live and work.

2015: Regional cooperation to create needed housing options

Part of Denver's sustained success is due to leaders thinking about the region as a cohesive whole and working cooperatively across jurisdictions. The Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation (Metro Denver EDC), a regional business group made up of 70 counties, cities, and economic development groups,

tackles problems that affect businesses and residents across the region. One priority area for the group is housing. Metro Denver EDC joined the Metro Mayors Caucus, Downtown Denver Partnership, housing advocates, and business and economic development groups to form the Homeownership Opportunity Alliance. The Alliance has worked to encourage construction of owner-occupied, attached housing, which had stalled due to construction defects-related lawsuits. In 2015, the effort gained widespread momentum with several cities, including Lakewood, Aurora, and Denver passing ordinances to make substantive changes to current laws and local government practices to provide diverse and attainable housing options.

Metro Denver EDC and their partners advocated strongly for increased first-time buyer housing options, which, the group explains, “are vital to the region’s workforce retention and attraction efforts.” They are continuing to work with state legislators for positive changes in housing construction statutes.⁴³

2016: Getting residents involved in a changing Arapahoe Square and Sun Valley

Close to Denver’s Central Business District and light rail but underdeveloped, the Arapahoe Square neighborhood has gained the attention of Denver’s development community. The 2007 Downtown Area Plan calls for the evolution of Arapahoe Square into a mixed-use residential district featuring mid-rise structures, public spaces, ground-floor retail, and pedestrian-oriented streets.⁴⁴ Now, the City Council is working with a task force of residents, business owners, land owners, developers, design professionals, and other stakeholders to guide the development of new zoning regulations for the area. In 2016, after more than a year of meetings and evaluation, the proposed Arapahoe Square zoning and design standards and guidelines are moving through the legislative process.⁴⁵

Sun Valley, Denver’s poorest neighborhood, is facing similar opportunities and challenges. The neighborhood once hampered by brownfields is now home to the Decatur-Federal Station on the FasTracks’ West Rail Line. The station has the potential to catalyze development in the area and make Sun Valley Denver’s next great neighborhood. The City’s Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan will guide this future growth and change in the Sun Valley neighborhood over the next 20 years. One of the plan’s most significant

areas of focus is public outreach and provides a variety of ways for residents to weigh in on the plans for the area. The City wants any revitalization to be “truly the neighborhood’s plan, rather than the City’s plan for the neighborhood.”⁴⁶



Community outreach meetings part of the Decatur-Federal Station Area Plan in Sun Valley.



Greenville, SC

The Main Street attraction

People in Greenville, SC used to joke that downtown was so quiet, you could fire off a cannon and not hit anyone. That's not the case any more. Greenville—population 62,000—is now home to over 100 restaurants, which spill out in the evenings onto oversized sidewalks. The City's population has increased 11 percent since 2000, and 42 percent of residents 25 years or older holds at least a bachelor's degree—a 13 percent increase from 2009 to 2014.⁴⁷ Between 2002 and 2014, the city gained 16,700 full time jobs.⁴⁸

Greenville's economy originally centered around supplying cotton to nearby textile mills, thus earning the city its nickname "The Textile Capital of the World." When the textile industry began to move overseas, the city shifted its economic focus toward making Greenville's Main Street an economic centerpiece. They started modestly, by planting trees and improving sidewalks. Support for retail stores and small businesses helped Main Street grow more vibrant over the decades.

Today, Greenville's Main Street is a super-regional cultural entertainment and arts hub with national renown. It attracts visitors from across the region—and businesses from across the world. Greenville boasts the highest level of foreign capital investment per capita in the nation and is home to more than 250 international firms from 26 nations, including BMW and Michelin.⁴⁹ The city was also named the "#1 American Microcity of the future" by fDi Intelligence in 2015.⁵⁰ Here's how they've come so far.

1979: Creating one of America's greatest Main Streets

Travel + Leisure calls Greenville's Main Street one of the nation's best but this wasn't always the case.⁵¹ Main Street was originally built as a four-lane highway with narrow sidewalks that made walking unsafe, and vacant storefronts dotted the street as a result.

Greenville's leaders knew that if they wanted to attract visitors downtown, they would have to make the street safer and more welcoming for people walking. In the 1970s the City redesigned the street, transforming the fast-moving highway into a two-lane, pedestrian-focused boulevard with wide sidewalks and angled parking. The City also financed structured parking garages, freeing up land that had previously been used for parking lots for new development. And the City planted hundreds of street trees, which are now a signature of downtown Greenville.

Greenville deliberately focused on details that enhance visitors' experience, including art, lighting, signage, seating, events, and a mix of building uses. All these efforts along with the street improvements have made Main Street a fantastic place to walk, bike, shop, sit at a café, or spend an afternoon.

1982: Partnering with the private sector to develop downtown

Greenville's Main Street project was the first example of what would come to define the City's panache in the art of public private partnerships (PPPs). Since 1982 Greenville has leveraged \$170 million in public investment to complete nearly a half billion dollars worth of catalytic PPP development projects including hotels, office and retail space, sports and entertainment venues, condos, apartments, artist

lofts, parking garages, and public parks.⁵²

The City has creatively used a variety of tools to accomplish these projects, including tax increment financing, a Section 108 loan from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, New Markets Tax Credits, hospitality and accommodation taxes, foundation grants, city general fund dollars, and land write downs.

1989: Setting a course for downtown's growth

In April 1989, the City and its private sector partner, Greenville Central Area Partnership, went through a strategic planning exercise that resulted in a new Downtown Strategic Plan for the city. The exercise and the plan aimed to create by the year 2000, "A thriving downtown which is recognized nationally as an example of a 'state-of-the-art' community in which to

The 1982 Downtown Strategic Plan recommended building on downtown's existing assets, including the Greenville Performing Arts Center.

live, work, and play...which serves in itself as a national attraction."⁵³ The plan inventoried the city's assets and challenges at the time, as well as its land use, and recommended steps for the City to take in the next 90 days, 1-2 years, and 5 years to achieve its stated goal. Many of the plan's recommendations were successfully implemented and can be seen in Greenville today.

1997: Checking in on progress

In 1997 Greenville checked in on its progress from the 1989 Downtown Strategic Plan.⁵⁴ Through a facilitated public meeting, small group meetings, more than 30 individual interviews, and a visual assessment of downtown, the report card determined that the city had made significant progress toward its stated goal to create "a thriving downtown."

More noteworthy than the report card's (very positive) findings is the fact that the City undertook this type of assessment in the first place. Setting a goal, determining a plan to achieve it, and then checking in over the course of several years can help any city make substantive progress on its objectives.



2000: Brownfield redevelopment for a revitalized West End

Greenville's West End neighborhood is a former industrial district once home to cotton and fertilizer warehouses, textile mills, and bottling factories. As those industries waned and left behind industrial properties with known or suspected environmental problems, the West End became one of the most blighted areas of Greenville.

The neighborhood's location close to downtown as well as its unique building stock made the West End an early focus of redevelopment efforts. And over the past 15 years, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has helped the City identify, remediate, and redevelop parcels of contaminated land in the West End. Thanks to EPA grants and technical assistance awards, the City has cleaned up several parcels of contaminated land and created catalytic neighborhood assets in the West End, including a large-scale community center; the only elementary school in the state with an engineering-based curriculum; a residential complex for mentally disabled individuals who were chronically homeless; and a network of trails and parks that connects the neighborhood to the rest of the city.⁵⁵

Those public investments have spurred private remediation and redevelopment in the broader area, including The Lofts at Mills Mill, an upscale condo complex built in a former textile mill; the Shops at Mills Mill, a 13,000-square foot multi-store retail space on former milling parcel; Fluor Field, a minor league baseball park built on the site of an old lumber yard; the Field House at the West End, a mixed-use development that includes office, retail, restaurant, and residential space; and West End Market, a 40,000 square foot historic warehouse located that has been renovated to accommodate retail and office space.

Today the West End is known as one of the arts and entertainment centers of the city, home to local restaurants, art studios, unique shops and playhouses. Since 2000, the City of Greenville has received approximately \$1.4 million in EPA brownfield grants, which have been leveraged into more than \$60 million in economic development and more than 176 jobs in the city.⁵⁶

2001: Beautifying building façades

In 2001 the City created a Commercial Corridors Façade Improvement Program that helps commercial property owners improve the appearance of buildings and properties and eliminate blight. Painting, decorative awnings, window or door replacements, storefront enhancements, landscaping, irrigation, streetscaping, outdoor patios and decks, exterior wall lighting, decorative post lighting and architectural features are all eligible under the program.⁵⁷

2004: Reclaiming the Reedy River

Running through Greenville is the Reedy River, which cascades into a picturesque waterfall in the heart of downtown. For decades, the river was a neglected afterthought: in the city's textile days, it was nicknamed "Rainbow Reedy" for the fabric dyes that washed downstream and contaminated the water. And in 1960, the Camperdown Way Bridge—a four-lane highway overpass—was built across the river, obstructing views of the falls and public access to the water.

In the 1980s, as other parts of the city's renaissance began to take hold, local leaders recognized the



Fluor Field in Greenville's West End was built on the site of a former lumberyard.

river's potential as a community gathering space. The city worked with the South Carolina Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to evaluate and eventually demolish the



The Reedy River “Duck Derby” has become a local tradition since the park’s opening.

Camperdown Way Bridge. In its place, the City planned an ambitious riverfront park and pedestrian bridge. Through a combination of support by the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, individual donations, corporate pledges, and the city’s hospitality tax, Greenville renovated the riverfront park and built Liberty Bridge in 2004, a stunning walkway across the falls that is now a Greenville landmark. The \$13.5 million project has already spurred millions of dollars of investment in riverfront hotels, housing, offices, and retail space.⁵⁸

2005: Supporting entrepreneurs

By the mid-2000s, several technology companies had moved to downtown Greenville—and they wanted to support an even more robust community. Company leaders and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce came together to form Greenville NEXT, an initiative that helps entrepreneurs, startups, and small technology businesses build successful companies through an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The project includes flexible and collaborative spaces in three privately owned facilities—NEXT Technology Center,

NEXT on Main and NEXT Manufacturing Center—all providing a home to dozens of startups and established tech companies. And with groups like The Iron Yard coding academy and Greenville’s NEXT high school, NEXT is also helping to grow Greenville’s future generations of tech entrepreneurs.

2006: Making room for bicycles

A Bicycle Master Plan, Complete Streets policy, bikeshare system, and interactive bike map are all part of Greenville’s effort to make biking in the city easy and convenient. In 2013 the League of American Bicyclists honored Greenville with its prestigious Bicycle Friendly Community award for the second time, in recognition of the City’s “tremendous efforts to create a truly Bicycle Friendly Community.”⁵⁹

2008: Keeping housing affordable

As downtown Greenville’s renaissance took root in the late 1980s and early 1990s, housing downtown became more sought-after—and more expensive. Rising costs were displacing many of the people who had lived downtown for decades and the issue was becoming a concern for private employers, who pointed to Greenville’s low cost of living as a benefit for potential employees.

Today, the City is working to keep housing affordable, and to balance of all types of housing in and around Main Street. CommunityWorks Carolina, a non-profit, started in 2008 as a housing fund, works to promote affordable housing, financial wellness, and community economic development to empower low wealth families and communities. The organization helps families secure housing in Greenville through Individual Development Accounts, homebuyer assistance, micro business loans, consumer loans, and community loans.⁶⁰ Similarly the city is working on an affordable housing strategy to identify the steps necessary to maintain a variety of housing options.

2008, 2010: Building on Main Street’s success

Adopted in 2008, Greenville’s Downtown Master Plan outlines the city’s effort to build on the success of Main Street and achieve a more robust downtown neighborhood.⁶¹ The plan focuses on five areas within

downtown that are currently underutilized—the Broad & River District, Gateway District, Heritage Green, County Square, and Warehouse District. Most of those areas are within a 10-minute walk of Main Street and all already contain cultural attractions. The Master Plan outlines ways for visual and physical improvements that enhances the walk between these destinations, connecting the five neighborhoods’ streets as well as economic activity.

Augmenting the Downtown Master Plan is a Downtown Streetscape Master Plan. Adopted in 2010, two years after the Downtown plan, the Master Plan contains more specific steps for turning “nondescript and vehicular dominant roads into successful streets that accommodate all users, create a strong sense of place, foster economic development and improve quality of life.”⁶²

2010: Old rail beds become the Swamp Rabbit Trail

Opened in 2010, the Greenville Swamp Rabbit Trail is a 21-mile multi-use greenway that runs along the Reedy River connecting with schools, parks, homes, and local businesses along the way. Built on a former rail bed, the Greenville County Council purchased the land for the trail to help “improve recreation, active transportation, and quality of life in Greenville County.”⁶³

A 2014 study of the trail found its use was up 24.28 percent between 2012 and 2013, including among minority populations. The study also estimates the trail’s total economic impact at \$6.7 million—a combination of tourism revenue (25 percent of trail users are tourists) and increased revenue of bicycling businesses and businesses along the trail.⁶⁴



People bicycling and walking along portions of Greenville's Swamp Rabbit Trail.



Minneapolis, MN

Where mid-career talent puts down roots

Minneapolis, MN started because of a waterfall in the middle of nowhere. The Mississippi River's only major waterfall is in the heart of Minneapolis and it made the city a prime location for the milling industry in the mid-1800s. Combined with its relative isolation from other cities, Minneapolis became an early magnet for talented workers and companies.

In 1955 an array of interests worried about the future of the downtown came together to create a place that could compete against the suburbs. From this effort sprung a series of institutions such as the Guthrie Theater and the Walker Art Center. Their work continues to this day. Minneapolis' investments in public spaces, retail districts, transit, and the arts have helped make the city a place where people want to stay. It is also uniquely affordable among the nation's major metropolitan areas, further boosting its long-term appeal. "Our strategy is to sell the ability to be in Minneapolis," said David Frank, Director of Economic Policy and Development for the City of Minneapolis. "We're proud of what we have to offer, which is a terrific quality of life." That quality of life has helped attract and retain talented workers from across the country and the world. The city has one of the highest retention rates for college-educated talent, and one of the highest percentages of college-educated workers overall.⁶⁵ And those workers are diverse—360,000 residents within greater Minneapolis/Saint Paul are from another country.⁶⁶

Today Minneapolis is home to 19 Fortune 500 companies—more than any other metro its size—and is among the country's top 10 metropolitan areas for job opportunities and median earnings.⁶⁷ And the city has a unique knack for growing medium-size companies into giants, a trend which some researchers directly attribute to the talented workers who live there.⁶⁸ The city wants to continue making Minneapolis a place where talented people want to be. Here's how they've come so far.

1968, 2011: Updating a downtown centerpiece

Built in 1968 as part of a public/private partnership to support real estate values, downtown Minneapolis's Nicollet Mall was the nation's first transit and pedestrian mall.⁶⁹ Today the Mall is a beautiful and inviting place for people to stroll or sit, with wide sidewalks, tree-lined streets, and outdoor seating. It's also home



Peavey Plaza on the Nicollet Mall.

to 140,000 jobs, boasting the densest concentration of jobs and market values in the state. Nicollet is home to offices, retail, restaurants, and a growing residential population, and offers access to concerts, farmers markets, public performances, and other programming. This unique mix of amenities is part of why three Fortune 500 companies—Target, U.S. Bancorp, and Xcel Energy—have chosen to locate their headquarters on the Mall.

The City wants to keep Nicollet dynamic for decades to come and in 2011 launched the Nicollet Mall Project which will add new outdoor seating, public art, green infrastructure, improved lighting and pedestrian circulation, trees, flower gardens, water features, and public gathering spaces.⁷⁰ The reconstruction process phase began in early 2016, with substantial completion scheduled by the end of 2017. According

to a city-commissioned study, a reinvigorated Nicollet Mall will generate an estimated \$106 million in additional annual consumer spending and 860 new jobs.⁷¹ To make the project possible, the Minneapolis Downtown Council partnered with the City of Minneapolis and the State of Minnesota, resulting in the creation of a 50-50 private-public partnership. The private sector will fund half the project costs through property owner assessments, and the City and State the other half, totaling \$50 million in secured funds.

2000: An industrial remnant becomes a development magnet

Most cities would consider a neglected railroad corridor to be an economic liability, not an opportunity. But with a significant investment from Hennepin County, Minneapolis has transformed this remainder of its grain-milling era into a catalytic infrastructure investment. The 5.5-mile Midtown Greenway is a “bicycle highway” built on the former industrial rail right-of-way that connects to popular destinations such as the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, Uptown, Midtown Exchange, and the Mississippi River, and runs parallel to the Lake Street commercial corridor with hundreds of retailers, restaurants, and other businesses. Lit at night, plowed in the winter, and open 24/7, the Greenway is enjoyed by several thousand people every day. Since the Greenway's launch in 2000, more than 2,700 housing units and over 1 million square feet of commercial space have been constructed along the trail. From 2005 to 2014, \$750 million of building permit activity occurred within a quarter-mile of the Greenway, and property values increased 98 percent from 2001 to 2013.⁷²



Minneapolis' Midtown Greenway.

2011: Bike-friendliness becomes a point of local pride

Minneapolis took the top spot on Redfin's 2015 list of the most bikeable cities in the United States, with an impressive 118 miles of on-street and 92 miles of off-street bikeways.⁷³ The City of Minneapolis' Bicycle

Master Plan has helped make all of this possible. Adopted by the City Council in 2011, the plan sets goals, objectives, and benchmarks to improve safety and mobility for bicyclists and increase the number of trips taken by bicycle.⁷⁴

2012: The mighty Mississippi takes center stage

Remember that waterfall in the middle of nowhere? The Mississippi River runs right through Minneapolis, and RiverFirst is a 20-year vision to create riverfront parks throughout the city. Riverfront trails, biohavens, and the creation or expansion of six parks on the water are all part of RiverFirst's plan.⁷⁵ The plan lays out five years of priority projects, a long-term vision, strategies for funding capital projects as well as operations and maintenance, governance, and suggested next steps. All of this would be done with the goals of creating a unified engine for economic development along the river, knitting together both sides of the riverfront with their surrounding communities (and transforming what is now a barrier into a connector), and creating an "extraordinary environmental amenity that defines Minneapolis' civic identity—past, present and future."



2013: The art of economic development

Performing arts, fine arts, design, writing, and publishing are a huge part of what makes Minneapolis an attractive place to live. The city is home to world-class museums, galleries and performing arts venues. The Northeast Minneapolis Arts District was named the best in the country by USA Today readers in 2015.⁷⁶ And the city is actively working to create an Arts Corridor with street-level galleries, studio spaces, performances and public installations along Hennepin Avenue, from the Walker Art Center to the Riverfront.⁷⁷



Installations and activities part of the *Irrigate* project.

Minneapolis has also pioneered the inclusion of artists in planning and economic development effort. *Creative Citymaking*—a partnership between the City of Minneapolis and Intermedia Arts started in 2013 and expanded in 2015—places artists in city agencies to creatively approach these agencies' everyday challenges.⁷⁸ And meanwhile, along the Green Line light rail, the City of Minneapolis' Arts, Culture and Creative Economy program partnered with Springboard for the Arts, a nationally-recognized local arts nonprofit, to produce *Irrigate*. This creative placemaking project trained artists to produce artistic interventions along the Green Line to alleviate the impact of its construction, ensuring that the Green Line produced the desired economic development outcomes even before its completion.⁷⁹

2013: A new way to measure the impact of the arts

Anyone who has ever been to an arts festival knows the energy these kinds of events can generate. But how does a city begin to measure the impact of that industry? The Minneapolis Creative Vitality Index (CVI) provides one way of capturing the impact of the creative sector. By measuring the share of creative jobs, arts spending, and creative for-profit and nonprofit organizations in a given city or region, the CVI captures nuances of the creative sector that many other measures miss. The city's first CVI report, published in 2013

by the City of Minneapolis' Arts, Culture and Creative Economy Program, found that the creative sector makes up 5 percent of jobs in the city and contributes an average of \$700 million to region's economy each year, and that Minneapolis has the sixth-highest CVI score in the nation.⁸⁰

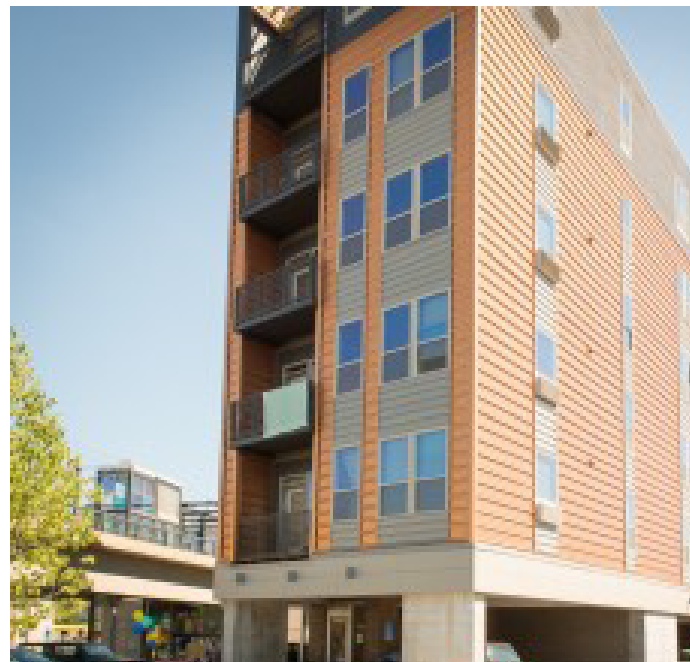
2014: Regional planning for diverse prosperity: Thrive MSP

Despite Minneapolis' overall prosperity and high percentage of educated workers, the Twin Cities region faces some of the largest disparities in the country in terms of poverty, homeownership, employment, and level of education.⁸¹ That's bad for people of color and for the region as a whole. Neighborhoods and transportation options are both linked to income, race, and opportunity, and the Metropolitan Council, the region's planning agency, has made an active effort to address these factors in its broader work.⁸² Equity is one of five key regional outcomes included in the Council's Thrive MSP 2040 long-range plan. "For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity," Thrive MSP states. "Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life."⁸³

The Council is taking a multi-tiered approach to addressing the problem, including investing in and encouraging a mix of housing affordability along the region's transit corridors; offering targeted subsidies for market-rate housing in areas that lack those options; and partnering with neighborhood revitalization efforts, among many, many others. Collectively, these efforts are intended to help all families in the Minneapolis region share the opportunities that come from the city's growth and change.

2014: Diversifying housing region-wide

Like a diversified portfolio, a diversity of housing types can help local governments remain resilient through changing economic climates. It can also keep a region affordable for families of all income levels. And even though Minneapolis currently prides itself on its affordability, the region is projected to need significantly more affordable housing in the coming decades than it is currently building. For all these reasons and more, the Metropolitan Council's 2040 Housing Policy Plan outlines how the region will create more diverse housing over the next 25 years. Strategies include directly funding development of affordable housing, providing technical assistance to local governments, and collaborating with and convening partners and stakeholders to elevate and expand the regional housing dialogue.⁸⁴



Lake Street Station, directly adjacent to the Green Line light rail, provides affordable apartments for seniors.

2014, 2015: Connecting great places and companies with transit

Expanding their transportation system is a top priority for the Twin Cities over the next 10 years, and leaders are setting an aggressive pace to achieve that goal. The Metropolitan Council's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan lays out steps to preserve and maintain the existing system while improving and expanding service to support economic growth, promote development that benefits communities, and expand access to opportunity.⁸⁵

The Council's plan builds on already-robust transit service in the region. Metro Transit, the region's largest transportation provider, opened the Green Line light rail in June 2014. The 11-mile line has exceeded predicted ridership, at time surpassing 40,000 average weekday rides.⁸⁶ The Green Line has served more than 11.1 million riders in its first year, and already generated about \$3 billion in development along the corridor since its construction with more development in the works. ⁸⁷ Metro Transit plans to extend of

the Green Line an additional 14.5 miles from downtown Minneapolis to several suburban communities in the southwest part of the region, increasing the number of people and jobs that can easily connect to the system.

Metro Transit also launched its first arterial rapid bus line—the A Line—in June 2016. Faster, more frequent bus service along with transit signal priority and enhanced stations are planned for a dozen corridors with high bus ridership. It's a context-sensitive solution for high-traffic corridors where there are many riders but

the streets are too narrow or the area too developed for light rail to be considered feasible. The next line in the rapid bus network is now beginning detailed design and engineering and is expected to open by 2019. By 2030, Minneapolis' rapid bus network is slated to span more than 100 miles, including more than 400 stations and providing approximately one-third of the region's average weekday rides.



The Green Line as it runs through the campus of the University of Minnesota.

These aren't the only ways Metro Transit is improving commutes. The agency is also embracing technology and shared mobility, introducing tools that help customers access real-time information, quickly plan trips and purchase fares using a smart phone or access car sharing services with fare cards.

Minneapolis' robust and growing transit services are a major perk for area companies and their employees. The Downtown Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization (TMO), a non-profit founded in 1991 by the Minneapolis City Council, helps make this case to companies from outside the region, and makes company relocations less stressful by providing an overview of the city's full "range of transportation options that are economical, fast, environmentally friendly, and avoid traffic congestion."⁸⁸ In 2015, Metro Transit provided 85.8 million rides, the highest ridership in three decades. About 40 percent of peak-hour commuters arrive in downtown Minneapolis on transit.

2015: Building on the past, a Gateway for the future

In the early part of the 20th century the Nicollet Hotel was a grand feature of downtown Minneapolis where a young John F. Kennedy, Dwight Eisenhower, Harry Truman and Eleanor Roosevelt all stayed. In the 1950s and 60s however, the hotel declined, closed, and was eventually demolished. After years of languishing as a parking lot, in 2014 the City of Minneapolis solicited proposals to redevelop the block and in 2015, the City selected United Properties to build a new complex on the site. Named "The Gateway," the new development project is slated to include a 36-story residential tower, a Hilton hotel, retail and office space, and a public plaza—all in the heart of downtown Minneapolis.⁸⁹

2016: Activating space with parklets

To support local businesses, make streets more welcoming for people walking, and to make the most of underutilized parking spots, the City of Minneapolis offers easy permitting for parklets—pedestrian seating areas in the parking lane adjacent to a sidewalk or curb. The City even created a manual about the program to guide applicants through the process and procedures for applying to install a parklet.⁹⁰ Starting in 2016 the program will also help to create street cafes—which, unlike parklets, are extensions of private restaurants, rather than public spaces. The cafes offer a way for restaurants to easily expand their outdoor dining space, or to free up sidewalks for people walking while retaining an outdoor dining option for restaurants.⁹¹

In making these processes more strategic and more transparent, the Framework will also help the City, the

private sector, and nonprofits to get the most out of their investments. The Framework, which focuses on developing City policy for streets, is one half of a two-part initiative called Pathways to Places. A sister plan is being developed concurrently by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, focused on parks and trails downtown. Together, these two plans create a holistic vision for the entire downtown public realm. The Framework is scheduled to be considered for approval by City Council in August 2016. It is currently out for public comment.⁹²

2016: A development boom in Downtown East

A new football stadium, rail service from St. Paul and the Mall of America, massive new offices for Wells Fargo, and a centerpiece park known as The Commons are just some of the new projects fueling a development boom in Minneapolis' Downtown East neighborhood.⁹³ Once the heart of the city's historic Mill District, in recent years Downtown East had become "a geographical no-man's land."⁹⁴ Today, the slate of proposed and under-construction projects is formidable: more than 1,000 condos and apartments are being planned, along with an upscale grocery store, and smaller commercial spaces. The neighborhood is now home to innovative firms like the creative agency Humdinger & Sons, the online publisher Periscope, and the design-friendly paint firm Valspar—as well as the young, educated people who want to work there. The City, for its part, is working to support the new neighborhood with public space improvements like street trees and plantings, wayfinding signs, placemaking projects like parklets, and improvements to infrastructure designed for people biking and walking.



An outdoor cafe made possible as part of Minneapolis' parklets program.

2016: A citywide commitment to making streets work for everyone

Building on the City's transportation plan and other planning policies, in May 2016 Minneapolis passed a Complete Streets policy to "ensure that everyone can travel safely and comfortably along and across a street regardless of whether they are walking, biking, taking transit, or driving."⁹⁵ The City cites several reasons for passing the policy: "the health of Minneapolis residents, workers, and visitors...the environment, both in terms of local air and water quality and in terms of global impacts like climate change...and the local economy [which] will be supported and strengthened." Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota both have Complete Streets policies in place. Minneapolis' city-wide policy means transportation officials at all levels of government can work together to make streets safe and convenient for everyone.



Nashville, TN

Capitalizing on cool

In 2015, an average of 30 people moved to Nashville every day—and they weren't all budding country singers. Nashville-Davidson County, TN is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. Since 2000 the city has gained 73,000 residents—a 13 percent increase in its total population—and the region is expected to grow by another 1 million residents in the next 15 years. Roughly 60 percent of graduates from the region's 21 four-year colleges end up staying⁹⁶ and in 2012, the city ranked first in the nation among large metro regions for fastest job growth.⁹⁷ Perhaps most tellingly, the city's gross metropolitan product—the regional GDP—grew by 4.2 percent in 2013, double the national average; the city ranked third in economic growth after booming Austin and San Jose.

For decades music has been the backbone of Nashville's economy. Music writing, production, performance, tour logistics, legal services, business management, and public relations continue to be some of the city's flagship industries. The city's music heritage has a spillover effect, and today companies like Warby Parker and tech startups are moving to Nashville to capitalize on the city's reputation for creative, authentic cool.

Nashville's leaders are taking this momentum and running with it, making sure they reinvest in and expand what is making the city so attractive to begin with. Here's how they're doing that.

1998: Rebuilding East Nashville in the wake of disaster

On April 15 and 16, 1998, an outbreak of over a dozen tornados tore through Middle Tennessee. Two of them touched down in Nashville and much of East Nashville, a mostly residential neighborhood bordered by the Cumberland River, was damaged or destroyed.

As East Nashville rebuilt over the coming years, it grew into a unique neighborhood that today is one of the city's most sought-after. The area's development style is eclectic and distinctive, with coffee shops,

boutiques, and art galleries interwoven within the residential streets. Small, independent businesses have abounded, helping to create a vibrant and artistic culture that is attracting young professionals and families alike.

2000: Public-private partnerships help create The Gulch

In the late 1990s, the land between downtown Nashville and Music Row was a dilapidated former rail yard, sparsely populated despite its prime location. The City and developers both saw its potential and starting in the early 2000s, a series of public and private sector initiatives set out to redevelop the area and turn it in to a mixed-use neighborhood. The City realigned streets, made streetscape improvements, and appointed MarketStreet Enterprises as the master developer to oversee a multi-phase process with multiple focus areas and priorities.

Today the Gulch has become one of Nashville's most dramatic transformation stories. Over 1,500 shops, restaurants, bars, homes, and music venues are located within the Gulch's 60 acres. The neighborhood adds diversity to the city's housing stock, providing mid-rise and high-rise apartments to complement single family homes in Hope Gardens and townhomes in Rutledge Hill.⁹⁸ And development in the area hasn't stopped: the most recent addition to the skyline was the Twelve Twelve residential tower and Gulch Crossing, a new class "A" office building.⁹⁹

To help make sure the neighborhood thrives for years to come, area residents, business and property owners came together in 2006 to create the Gulch Business Improvement District, which helps keep the neighborhood attractive, interactive, and appealing to people in the broader region.¹⁰⁰

2001: Helping residents design their neighborhoods

In 2001, the Nashville Planning Department introduced new zoning codes and a new way to help residents use them. The City switched to form-based codes, which consider how buildings are shaped and how they relate to each other and their communities rather than how they are used. Form-based zoning can help preserve the existing character of a neighborhood or encourage a new type of neighborhood character.

At roughly the same time, the City launched Design Studio, a program to help individual property owners, developers, and design professionals create great site layouts, select appropriate building types and details, and incorporate appropriate streetscape elements into their projects.¹⁰¹ Design Studio staff help lead initial public participation and review, create official code, and oversee development review. The services are available to property owners contemplating a new development project anywhere in the city, as well as those in current form-based zoning districts.

2005-2016: Diverse partners unite for better transportation options

Nashville's transit system is still in its infancy, and leaders from across the region are working together to change that. The Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is working to include transportation in its land use work. In 2005, the organization adopted the region's first long-range transportation plan, which aimed to better connect land use and transportation decisions, create multimodal transportation options, reduce congestion, and better manage financial resources.¹⁰² Ten years later, in early 2016, the MPO adopted its latest unified plan for transportation: Middle Tennessee Connected assesses the current state of transportation in the region and lays out new goals to achieve between now and 2040.¹⁰³



Sunset over The Gulch neighborhood.

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority and Regional Transit Authority are contributing to the effort through the nMotion Strategic Plan, a 25-year comprehensive plan designed to meet the Nashville area's vision for transit.¹⁰⁴ The project is collecting ideas from the region's residents about how their transit system works today and how it could be better in decades to come.

Private businesses are part of the effort as well. In 2009, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce took a group of local leaders to Denver, CO to see how that city has created a robust transit system—and a network of champions that helped make it happen. The trip helped inspire the creation of the Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee as well as a spirit of cooperation among leaders in the region.¹⁰⁵

2010: Zoning changes unleash development downtown

Until the mid-1990s, residential development simply wasn't allowed in downtown Nashville—zoning codes restricted it.¹⁰⁶ After adopting form-based codes in 2001, in 2010 the City put those codes to work to help create a "Downtown that doesn't close at 5 p.m. or even after the concert ends or the restaurants close, but is instead a welcoming home for a diverse residential population."¹⁰⁷

The new codes made types of development possible that had not been before, and made project permitting more transparent and predictable. Developers didn't hesitate to take advantage. The value of downtown

building permits increased from \$176 million in 2010 to \$544 million in 2013.¹⁰⁸ As of 2016, more than 100 new projects are underway or in the pipeline downtown, their combined value estimated at \$2 billion.¹⁰⁹ And for Nashville at least, if you built it they will come. From 2000 through 2014, Nashville's downtown population has grown 300 percent. And as of 2014, rental occupancy was at 97 percent for the fourth consecutive year.¹¹⁰



Cumberland Park.

2010, 2016: Achieving multiple goals with a Complete Streets approach

In 2010, Nashville passed a citywide Complete Streets policy that directs transportation planners and engineers to make sure streets are designed and built for everyone, no matter their age, race, ability, or how they choose to travel. The City updated its policy in May 2016, adding a focus on green-street infrastructure, a call for standardized engineering dimensions, and a direction to set measures of

implementation success, including an equity measure to help address Nashville's rising health disparities in low- to moderate-income communities.¹¹¹

One example of that policy in action is 11th Avenue in the Gulch. Completed in June 2015, the project added wide sidewalks, separate bike paths, signalized pedestrian crossings, roadside bioretention zones, street trees, and a greenway and urban mini-park with fitness course.¹¹²

2010, 2012: Cumberland Park showcases the river

Located on the Cumberland River's east bank under the Shelby Street Bridge, the 6.5 acre Cumberland Park and adjacent Bridge Building are a special place that gives Nashville residents many more reasons to enjoy downtown. Opened in 2012, the park is a flagship project of the New Riverfront Revitalization Plan endorsed by the community in 2010. The park was developed by the Metropolitan Housing and Development Agency, designed by Hargreaves Associates, and built by Hardaway Construction Corp. The park is part of the larger Riverfront Revitalization Plan, which includes development of The Lawn, an open space for recreation and

events, and the Bridge Building Landing. Detailed design for The Lawn & Landing is underway.¹¹³

2015: Supporting a community of small businesses

Nashville's small business community won national attention in 2015 when the U.S. Small Business Administration selected the city to participate in its ScaleUp America Initiative, a program designed to assist high growth potential businesses in a wide range of industries.¹¹⁴ The attention came for good reason. The Nashville Chamber runs Business Studio, a resource center that provides entrepreneurs with mentoring, financing, education, and strategic planning assistance. And that's hardly the only resource for entrepreneurs. Refinery Nashville and the Nashville Entrepreneur Center both provides office space, resources, and mentorship for entrepreneurs—in rehabilitated industrial buildings, no less.



Participants in NashvilleNext.

2015: Planning for Nashville's future

Nashville is growing fast and projected to grow even more over the next 25 years. The 10-county Cumberland Region was home to 1.7 million residents in 2008, and will be home to an estimated 2.6 million people by 2035.¹¹⁵ Those new residents are expected to be more diverse in age, ethnicity, and income than Nashville's current population.

To meet the needs of these future residents and to keep Nashville a great place for everyone who lives there now, the City of Nashville led the development of NashvilleNext, a 25-year development plan for the city.¹¹⁶ Over the course of three years and more than 400 community meetings, the City collected feedback

from more than 18,500 participants. The final plan, adopted in 2015, outlines how land use, transportation, infrastructure, the arts, economic development, education, health care, housing, and natural resources can all contribute to Nashville's prosperity and well-being between 2015 and 2040.¹¹⁷

Based on the project's meticulously collected public feedback, NashvilleNext recommends a number of strategies to preserve Nashville's unique sense of place while continuing to grow, including prioritizing infill development, encouraging development around transit stations and activity centers, creating streets that work well for people biking and walking, support for diverse housing types, and incentives for mixed-use development.



Pittsburgh, PA

The Steel City recasts itself for the digital age

Pittsburgh's economy today represents a significant departure from the city's historic job generators. Heavy manufacturing and industrial companies were long the centerpiece of Pittsburgh's economy, and as that industry declined, city leaders looked for new ways to pivot the local economy. Early in that process, leaders recognized the city's walkable and compact greater downtown as an asset to build on.

Over the past decade Pittsburgh has transformed its economy from industrial to technology- and knowledge-based, and transformed its downtown from a sleepy area that emptied out at 5 p.m. to an "18-hour" neighborhood with restaurants, entertainment, shops and homes, in addition to offices and jobs.

The downtown office market is now bursting at the seams, with a 94 percent occupancy rate. Pittsburgh is home to five Fortune 500 companies and a growing number of innovative startups. Anchor institutions like the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC)'s downtown headquarters are within a short walk of small tech companies like 4moms and Carnegie Learning, which are making inroads downtown after outgrowing their original spaces.

Some notable newcomers have expanded to Pittsburgh in recent years including offices of the tech giants Google, Facebook, Apple, Bosch, and Uber. These companies are opting for Pittsburgh's burgeoning urban neighborhoods—many of which are adjacent to downtown—where their employees want to live and work. And today, Pittsburgh is positioning itself as a place where companies and talented workers want to be. Here's how they made that transition, and what they're doing to sustain it going forward.

1940s: Setting the stage for redevelopment

With an industrial past and history of pollution, the downtown Pittsburgh of today has been decades in

the making. Two organizations—the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)—have been instrumental to these efforts. Founded in 1944, the Allegheny Conference was an early supporter of brownfields regulation in Pennsylvania that helped to accelerate redevelopment of old industrial sites, among many of its initiatives.¹¹⁸ And founded just two years later in 1946, the URA has constructed and rehabilitated tens of thousands of homes, reclaimed thousands of acres of contaminated brownfield and riverfront sites, and assisted hundreds of businesses in neighborhoods throughout the City of Pittsburgh.¹¹⁹ In the 1960s the URA, like many urban renewal programs at the time, took a problematic approach to community redevelopment. Today, however, the URA offers a variety of programs to help low income clients buy their first homes, reclaim brownfields, and help communities reinvent themselves equitably and sustainably. The Authority also supports small local businesses through its LaunchPGH program, which helps small businesses find funding and resources, maps the city’s startup community, and connects talented workers to small businesses.¹²⁰

1984: A comprehensive approach to the Cultural District

Pittsburgh’s steel barons built dozens of beautiful theaters in the 1800s, but by the early 1980s the city’s once-thriving theater neighborhood had fallen into disrepair and become a seedy red-light district. The non-profit Pittsburgh Cultural Trust set out to change that, and beginning in 1984 began working to restore downtown Pittsburgh to its former status as a cultural powerhouse. Realizing that a piecemeal approach to rehabilitation would not achieve their goals for the area, they developed a robust suite of services including real estate development, historic restoration, public space beautification, and public art projects. The Trust also invested directly in the neighborhood and now owns and maintains several theaters, galleries, and additional mixed-use properties in the neighborhood.¹²¹ Today, the Cultural District is the backbone for the City’s performing arts and culture scenes, which in 2015 hosted more than 4,700 exhibits and 1.9 million event attendees.¹²²



An evening concert with the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust at Agnes R. Katz Plaza in the Cultural District.

2004: Measuring progress

Like many cities, Pittsburgh is ambitious. The City wants to attract new residents and businesses, and improve the lives of current Pittsburghers. To understand how Pittsburgh compares to similar cities and how it can better compete, a group of private industry leaders and university heads came together in 2004 to launch Pittsburgh Today, a 15-year project

to track key economic, demographic, and social metrics of Pittsburgh.¹²³ The project measures how Pittsburgh is performing over time, and how it compares to peer cities based on indicators like year-over-year job growth, annual educational attainment, government finances, and growth in gross domestic product. Measuring progress this way has helped Pittsburgh’s leaders understand what’s working and what’s not.

2007: Showcasing a world-class food scene

In 2014, 23 food-related establishments opened in greater downtown and the following year, Zagat ranked Pittsburgh the number one food scene in the country.¹²⁴ With food that good, why hide it indoors? The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership’s “Paris to Pittsburgh” program, started in 2007, has helped dozens of restaurants downtown add outdoor dining elements such as retractable awnings, tables and chairs, new lighting and landscaping.¹²⁵ Nearly half of the restaurants that have opened since 2010 have included outdoor seating elements like sidewalk cafes, many of which were aided by matching grants provided by the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership. More than 95 restaurants in downtown have outdoor dining. One restaurant experienced a 30 percent uptick in business after installing operable over-head windows in its sidewalk-facing storefront.¹²⁶ The program initially helped improve only

ground floor façades. In the years since it has expanded to help improve full building façades and better support overall neighborhood improvements.

2007-2010: Creating a home for the tech industry

The Nabisco Bakery produced cookies and crackers in Pittsburgh throughout the 20th century. But by 2004, the hulking and abandoned former factory was declared “blighted” by the City of Pittsburgh. In 2007, with the help of a Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection grant, environmental contaminants were removed from the site and construction began on a project to rehabilitate the complex.

The result is Bakery Square, a mixed-use development completed in 2010.¹²⁷ It includes 380,000 square feet of office and retail space, a hotel, residential units, fitness center, and parking garage and has attracted big name tech employers such as Google and Autodesk as well as research facilities for the University of Pittsburgh. Projects like Bakery Square—as well as similar efforts in the Strip District and Station Square—are helping to create a home for the tech industry in Pittsburgh, and retain graduates from the region’s renowned universities.¹²⁸



Bakery Square.

2008: Short-term actions lead to long-term transformation in Market Square

Market Square is a unique open space in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh originally built as a public commons in the 1700s. By the mid-2000s, the Square was becoming clogged by car traffic, businesses around the square were declining, and crime was on the rise. In 2007, the City partnered with the Project for Public Spaces to reinvent the Square through a mix of short-term actions and more substantial redesigns.¹²⁹

Today the Square is a unified, cobblestoned piazza where people can walk, sit, dine, and gather. “Neighborhoods throughout the City are experiencing record growth, and Downtown is at the forefront,” then-Mayor Luke Ravenstahl said when the redeveloped Square opened in 2010. “Market Square is at the center of much of this development and investing in this asset is critical to Downtown’s continued growth.”¹³⁰

2015: Making the most of space downtown with the help of data

The prospect of finding parking downtown can be daunting for visitors in any city. Pittsburgh wanted to make that process as easy as possible—and to make best use of a finite resource at the same time. It did so with the help of data. A Carnegie Mellon pilot study in 2013 analyzed parking supply and demand in the city, and used basic economic principles to figure out optimum parking rates.¹³¹ With that information in hand, the City launched a pay-by-phone parking payment system in 2015. And the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust launched ParkPGH, which offers real-time information about parking availability downtown.¹³² Together these programs have helped increase revenue for the city while also making more parking available to visitors.

2015: Citywide Complete Streets passes

In addition to making its parking more efficient, Pittsburgh is working to make biking, walking, and transit better options for people of all ages and abilities. As part of that effort, Mayor Bill Peduto issued an Executive Order in April 2015 calling on all city departments, authorities, and agencies to develop a Complete Streets policy and framework to guide the design, construction, maintenance, and use of the city’s public rights of way. The policy is one part of the City’s commitment to investing in infrastructure that benefits all residents, businesses, and visitors equitably. “Investing in smart, multimodal transportation infrastructure is among the greatest needs facing Pittsburgh, and will not only support economic growth, but the health and safety of everyone in the city,” Mayor Peduto said in a statement.¹³³

2015: Twentieth century industry becomes a home for twenty-first century innovation

In 2002, four southwestern Pennsylvania foundations formed a limited partnership with the Regional Industrial Development Corporation of Southwestern Pennsylvania and purchased a 178-acre former steel mill site on the Monongahela River. After years of planning, community engagement, and site preparation, construction began in 2015 on what's now known as the Almono riverfront project, an effort to redevelop



Mill 19 at Almono, slated to become a new home for the tech industry in Pittsburgh.

the site and transform it into an environmentally sustainable tax generator for the City and economic engine for local residents.¹³⁴

The project already includes a riverfront trail and will eventually connect to the Pittsburgh Technology Center and knit into the surrounding Hazelwood neighborhood with a mixed-use housing and retail area.¹³⁵ The most recent addition to the site? Ride hailing startup Uber, which announced in February 2016 that it will house its autonomous vehicle research center at Almono.¹³⁶ The company has already hired 50 robotics engineers from nearby Carnegie Mellon University, and plans to turn an old locomotive roundhouse into its new research facility—literally transforming a Rust Belt symbol into a space for 21st century innovation.

2015: EcoInnovation in Uptown and West Oakland

EcoDistricts emphasizes a bottom-up model of planning and development to create a resilient and sustainable city. Innovation Districts are focused on job growth and economic opportunity. Pittsburgh's EcoInnovation District combines the best of both to create a new model for urban growth that is inclusive, innovative, and environmentally sound.¹³⁷ Focused on the Uptown and West Oakland communities, the project will bring together neighborhood residents and city leaders to outline a vision and strategies to improve Uptown and West Oakland. Data collection about the neighborhoods' current residents, how traffic moves through the area, the location of empty buildings and lots, the range of local businesses, and the impacts of stormwater and energy are all part of the project's current work. The EcoInnovation District is a collaboration between Uptown Partners of Pittsburgh, Oakland Planning and Development Corporation, the City of Pittsburgh, Sustainable Pittsburgh, the URA, Allegheny County Economic Development, 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, neighborhood groups, universities, and other partners.

2015: Envisioning Pittsburgh's next decade

Envision Downtown, a public/private partnership between the Mayor's Office and the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, formed to accelerate Downtown's economic growth and competitiveness, and to advance mobility and livability in Pittsburgh's central neighborhoods by making it safer, more attractive and convenient for everyone to get to, through, and around Downtown.

"We're going to have a community process over these next five years to figure out how we can make our streets not a part of the industrial age, not a part of the age that's all sprawl and decline, but of the age that's going to bring the people from the suburbs back in," Mayor Bill Peduto said at the program's launch in 2015.¹³⁸ "Not just the kids but their parents too, ones that will want to live downtown and businesses that want to be downtown."

Since kicking off in March 2015, the project has surveyed Pittsburgh residents, collected comments and feedback online, and hosted public forums. The project's first street changes—including pedestrian improvements along Strawberry Way and transit infrastructure on Smithfield Street—are opening in 2016.¹³⁹

Conclusion

Cities have always looked for new ways to attract residents, visitors, and employers, as well as ways to help their current residents and businesses prosper. To achieve these goals in today's economy, many cities are creating attractive, walkable, affordable, and diverse mixed-use neighborhoods.

Cities are using a number of strategies to create these kinds of places. Projects like waterfront parks, pedestrian plazas, diverse housing types, Complete Streets policies, mixed-use development, infill construction, brownfield remediation, and others are being brought together through community input and long-range plans to create places that are unique, authentic, and inclusive.

The six cities described here showcase some of the ways communities can put those ideas into action. Boise's thriving downtown is enhanced by a world-class waterpark that doubles as a functional dam and flood protection. Denver's investments in transit decades ago have catalyzed its current development boom, and its commitment to affordability will give its renaissance staying power. Greenville's innovative thinking about its Main Street has created a beautiful promenade that's the foundation of its local economy. Minneapolis' focus on quality of life has helped it retain one of the most educated workforces in the country. Nashville is building on its music industry heritage to create some of the coolest neighborhoods in the country. And in Pittsburgh, former steel mills are forming the backdrop of a new industrial revolution.

Communities everywhere can learn from these examples. This new approach to economic development can help cities and towns anywhere and of all sizes create diverse and durable local economies that last beyond the lifecycle of any one employer. Communities can take the ideas outlined here and create unique places of their own that can help them compete in this 21st century economy.

Acknowledgments

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