



STRATEGIC GOAL

Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development

“The future of downtown will not look like its past—and that’s a good thing,” Sarah Harris, author of *Downtown Next: An Action Strategy for Downtown Minneapolis*.

Like many cities across the nation, downtown Minneapolis is experiencing an evolution. Destination planning is critical in shifting from a corporate-centric 9-to-5 design to a revitalized community-centric hub for living. Resident survey responses highlight this need, as the majority indicated they visit downtown only once every few months for non-work-related reasons.

Transitioning Nicollet Mall to a pedestrian-only zone and repurposing vacant commercial buildings are the most significant opportunities to establish downtown Minneapolis as a central convenor. The adoption of an open streets model has seen success in downtowns and main streets across the nation by establishing a sense of place that transforms the area from a throughway to a destination. The investment in physical infrastructure for public events and entertainment, unique retail and dining, and other ancillary amenities elevates the location and further aids leisurely exploration, allowing visitors to stay longer and ultimately generating greater spending. Additionally, consistent programming on the street level, skyway, and various rotating pop-up experiences can create anticipation and drive the overall appeal of coming downtown outside of game days and visits to the office.

As beneficial as these tactics are, they are only worthwhile if safety concerns are addressed. Ensuring the safety of residents and visitors is paramount to the success of our revitalization efforts and repeat visitation. While the notion of increased police presence has received mixed reception, a more balanced approach involving

trained and informed downtown ambassadors working in tandem with the Minneapolis Police Department can provide the necessary uniform presence and local insight. These ambassadors can act as welcoming guides, offering assistance and information while enhancing the sense of security. Their collaboration with law enforcement ensures a coordinated effort to maintain safety, address concerns promptly, and create a welcoming environment. This strategy not only helps to mitigate safety issues but also fosters a positive perception of downtown, encouraging more frequent visits and contributing to the overall success of the revitalization efforts.

This plan envisions downtown Minneapolis as a dynamic hub, with neighboring cultural districts, the New Nicollet Redevelopment, the Post Office, and the Riverfront as equally vibrant spokes. The goal is not only to develop these sites through thoughtful placemaking on and around the river but also to ensure a seamless and intuitive transition to these destinations through comprehensive wayfinding strategies. This includes well-placed physical signage, QR codes that provide additional information, integrated maps, and detailed itineraries. By enhancing both physical and digital navigation tools, visitors can easily explore and connect with various attractions, fostering greater connectivity and engagement throughout the urban landscape.

By integrating downtown revitalization with mixed-use riverfront development, cities can cultivate thriving urban centers that are both economically sustainable and culturally dynamic. These initiatives not only breathe new life into neglected areas but also enhance residents’ quality of life and attract significant new investment.



INITIATIVES

Increase downtown vibrancy and expand mixed-use riverfront development

Future of Downtown & Nicollet Mall

- a. Remove buses from Nicollet Mall and transition to an open streets/pedestrian mall model to establish a place to gather and to serve as a venue for public events (festivals and events, art installations, live music, expanded outdoor dining, etc.)
- b. Repurpose empty commercial buildings in unconventional ways (indoor BMX park, indoor golf, pickleball, etc.)
- c. Support office-to-residential conversions in downtown to allow for population growth and increase foot traffic
- d. Increase unique retail offerings to support the local maker community (e.g., chameleon shops, small/local luxury vendors, rotating pop-up shops)
- e. Increase frequency of downtown events (concert series, film screenings, block parties, sporting competitions, etc.)
- f. Address concerns and optics regarding public safety by increasing, ambassadors, and lighting at key areas downtown (e.g. light rail stations, surface parking lots, etc.)
- g. Support the New Nicollet Redevelopment (10-acre former Kmart site) to allow for more integration and connectivity between downtown and south Minneapolis

Skyway Activation

- h. Engage Skyway committee to establish universal governance to allow for consistent hours of operation, beautification (public art installation, live music, greenery, etc.), and maintenance
- i. Incorporate responsive digital wayfinding communication to aid navigation and serve as an additional security measure
- j. Create a seasonal strategy to activate both Skyways and street-level through pop-ups retail and culinary, events, contests, etc.

Central Riverfront Redevelopment

- k. Work with appropriate stakeholders to consider the future of the Post Office (possibly as a premier venue with both indoor and outdoor facilities, capable of hosting large-scale events and festivals year-round with a seamless connection from downtown to the river)
- l. Develop and promote digital and physical wayfinding to allow for a seamless and experiential transition to the waterfront (interactive signage, QR codes, etc.)
- m. Enhance year-round placemaking around the entire river (retail, dining, Instagramable signage/public art, green space, etc.)
- n. Develop new water-based experiences (water taxi service, swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, river tubing, zipline/gondola across the river, etc.)