



Thanks to the following people for their support in making this panel possible:

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**The Rose Center**  
FOR PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

NATIONAL  
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of CITIES



Urban Land  
Institute



# Rochester, New York

## Activating Downtown



**The Rose Center**  
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Urban Land  
Institute

## Mission:

To encourage and support excellence in land use decision making.

"We should all be open-minded and constantly learning."

--Daniel Rose



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**Mission:**

Helping city leaders build better communities

**Elected officials and staff** from more than **19,000 US cities, towns and villages** are members of NLC or its 49 state municipal leagues







# Urban Land Institute

## Mission:

Providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide

## 37,000 members worldwide:

- Developers
- Investors, Bankers and Financiers
- Architects, Designers and Consultants
- Public officials
- Academics





# Rose Center Programming



- **Policy & Practice Forums**
- **Education for Public Officials: webinars, workshops, and scholarships to attend ULI conferences**





- Four cities selected for yearlong program of professional development, leadership training, assistance with a local land use challenge
- Mayor selects 3 fellows and team coordinator
- Participating cities to date:  
Austin, Boston, Charlotte, Detroit, Hartford, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Louisville, Memphis, Minneapolis, Nashville, Oakland, Omaha, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, Providence, Sacramento, Seattle, Tacoma & Tampa





## Daniel Rose Fellowship: alumni mayors

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# Daniel Rose Fellowship: class of 2016





# City Study Visits

- Assemble experts to study land use challenge
- Provides city's fellowship team with framework and ideas to start addressing their challenge
- Part of yearlong engagement with each city





# The Panel





# The Panel

- **Co-Chair:** Hilary Bertsch, Perkins Eastman, New York, NY
- **Co-Chair:** Nadine Fogarty, Strategic Economics, Berkeley, CA
- Phil Amthor, Department of Community Development, City of Birmingham, AL (Rose Fellow)
- Davon Barbour, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Inc., MD
- Lee Bey, Lee Bey Associates, Chicago, IL
- Deborah Bilek, ULI Washington, DC
- Jim Cloar, Downtown Advisory Services, Tampa, FL
- Charles Cross, Detroit Collaborative Design Center, University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, MI
- Evan Dreyer, Mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff, City & County of Denver, CO (Rose Fellow)
- Lev Gershman, Tideline Partners, Vista, CA
- Glenda Hood, Partner, triSect, LLC and former mayor of Orlando, FL (Rose Center Advisory Board)
- Senait Kassa, Billes Partners, New Orleans, LA
- Arturo Sanchez, Deputy City Manager, City of Long Beach, CA (Rose Fellow)



An aerial photograph of a city street intersection in Rochester, New York. The image shows a mix of architectural styles, including older brick buildings and modern high-rise hotels. A prominent white Hyatt hotel is visible in the center, and a red Radisson hotel is in the lower-left foreground. The street below has yellow lane markings and crosswalks. The overall scene depicts an urban environment with a focus on revitalization challenges.

# The Challenge

How can Rochester activate and revitalize Main Street, the Genesee River Corridor, and the Broad Street Aqueduct?



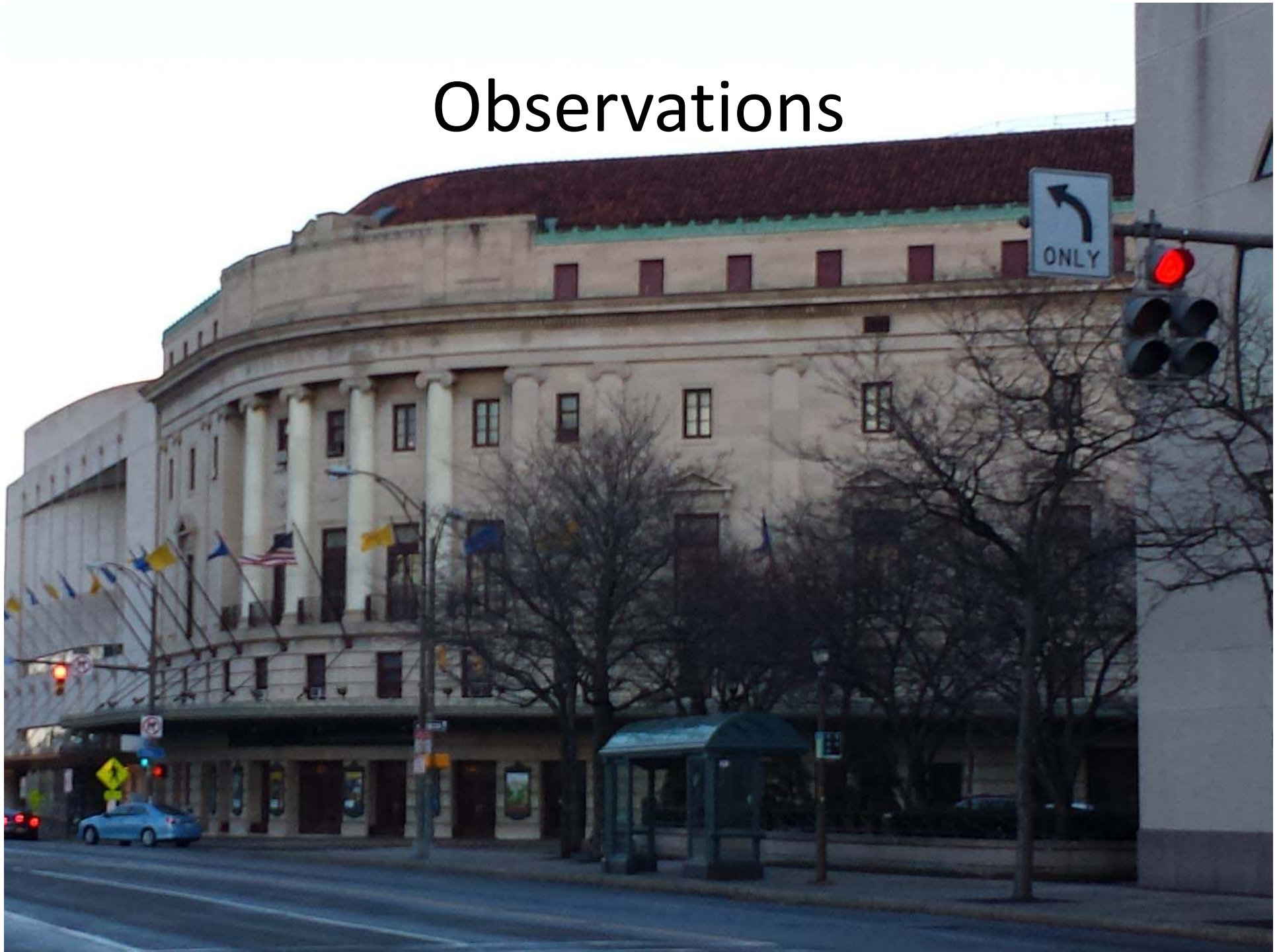


## Presentation Outline

1. **Observations**
2. Downtown Community
3. Retail/Commercial Development Strategy
4. Connectivity + Access
5. Placemaking
6. Governance + Leadership
7. Conclusion + Homework



# Observations





# Observations

- Lots of recent investment in downtown
- Nostalgia for the past may be inhibiting new ideas; past failures have left scars
- Attitudes are changing about Rochester's future but negative perceptions remain
- Successes are a model of the value of organic growth
- Active, entrepreneurial artist community
- Sustained interest and investment from local development
- Impressive number of world-class arts and educational institutions



# Observations





The background image shows a city street scene. On the left, a brick building with arched windows is visible. A traffic light is mounted on a pole in the foreground. A blue street sign with the word "Mortimer" and an arrow pointing right is visible. On the right, a brick building with a "DO NOT" sign is partially visible. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey box containing text.

# Observations

- Dearth of retail and walkable amenities to support 18 hours of activity
- As downtown becomes more successful, access needs will change (i.e., parking)
- New downtown transit center, but transit not currently viewed as an amenity – not attracting choice riders
- Removal of Inner Loop East segment is impressive accomplishment that will connect eastside to downtown



# What We Heard

- “Rochester is a great place to raise a family; people move back here if they leave”
- “The aqueduct is the frosting, but we don’t have a cake yet”
- “City isn’t easy to work with when you have creative ideas”
- “None of my employees can go anywhere to eat downtown so they eat at their desks”
- “We need to focus on small victories instead of swinging for the fences”
- “We want a stronger voice in Rochester’s future”





An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Pittsburgh, featuring a prominent brick building with a clock tower and a large, modern glass skyscraper. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey box containing a presentation outline.

## Presentation Outline

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*Downtown is a critical piece of the  
entire city's future*

*Now is the time to move beyond  
individual projects*

# Recent Downtown Development





# Recent Downtown Development

- Lots of new housing units coming on the market
  - Millennials/empty nesters
  - Expensive apartments
  - 95% occupancy
  - Mostly rental with limited opportunity for ownership
- Conversion of office buildings
- Main Street retail on the horizon?



# Downtown for All





# Downtown for All

- A place for all Rochesterians
- Family friendly
- Celebrate “authentic” Rochester and the arts
- A mix of uses that supports 24/7 activity
- A safe neighborhood
- An economic engine for the city





# Actions

- Encourage more varied housing options (2 BR+, condos, affordable)
- Integrate youth organizations and schools within the vision for the downtown community
- Focus economic development efforts on Main Street and Downtown vs. regional interests
- Promote local hiring through development process
- Leverage development to create jobs
- Nurture Rochester's creativity





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# National Retail Landscape

- Retail is moving away from commodity shopping and towards experiential (internet)
- Big box retail is consolidating/shrinking
- Organic home grown products and brands are increasingly popular (i.e., craft beer)
- Cultural shift towards shop local and farm local
- Food is the new anchor
- Healthy fast casual and focus on fitness
- Main Street is a social experience (i.e. premium on customer experience)



# Key Considerations

- How does Main Street fit into the broader Downtown experience
- Define the value proposition of Main Street
- Retail leasing is expensive
- Can the retail experience be both in the store and on the street?
- What are sites/opportunity areas to cultivate momentum?
- Branding the experience
- Don't dilute efforts to solidify Main Street's long term success as primary retail corridor
- Be mindful that streetscape renovation will disrupt retail businesses and leasing efforts



# Short-Term Recommendations





# Short-Term Recommendations

- Know thy self and get the word out
  - Demographics
  - Parking options
  - Building inventory, ascertain individual ownership
  - Existing tenant inventory
  - Plans renderings of planned streetscape improvements
  - Distribute to community (e.g. brokers, architects, wall therapy, food truck alliance, etc.)



# Short-Term Recommendations, continued





# Short-Term Recommendations, continued

Use programming to generate foot traffic and establish awareness

- Partner with existing events and draw programming to Main St

- Partner with existing groups, non-profit, incubator, university (e.g. food truck alliance)

- Promote a competition to award funding and enable permitting for a public event on Main St.

- Encourage pop-up retail/art

Consider code enforcement as mechanism to get owners to comply where appropriate

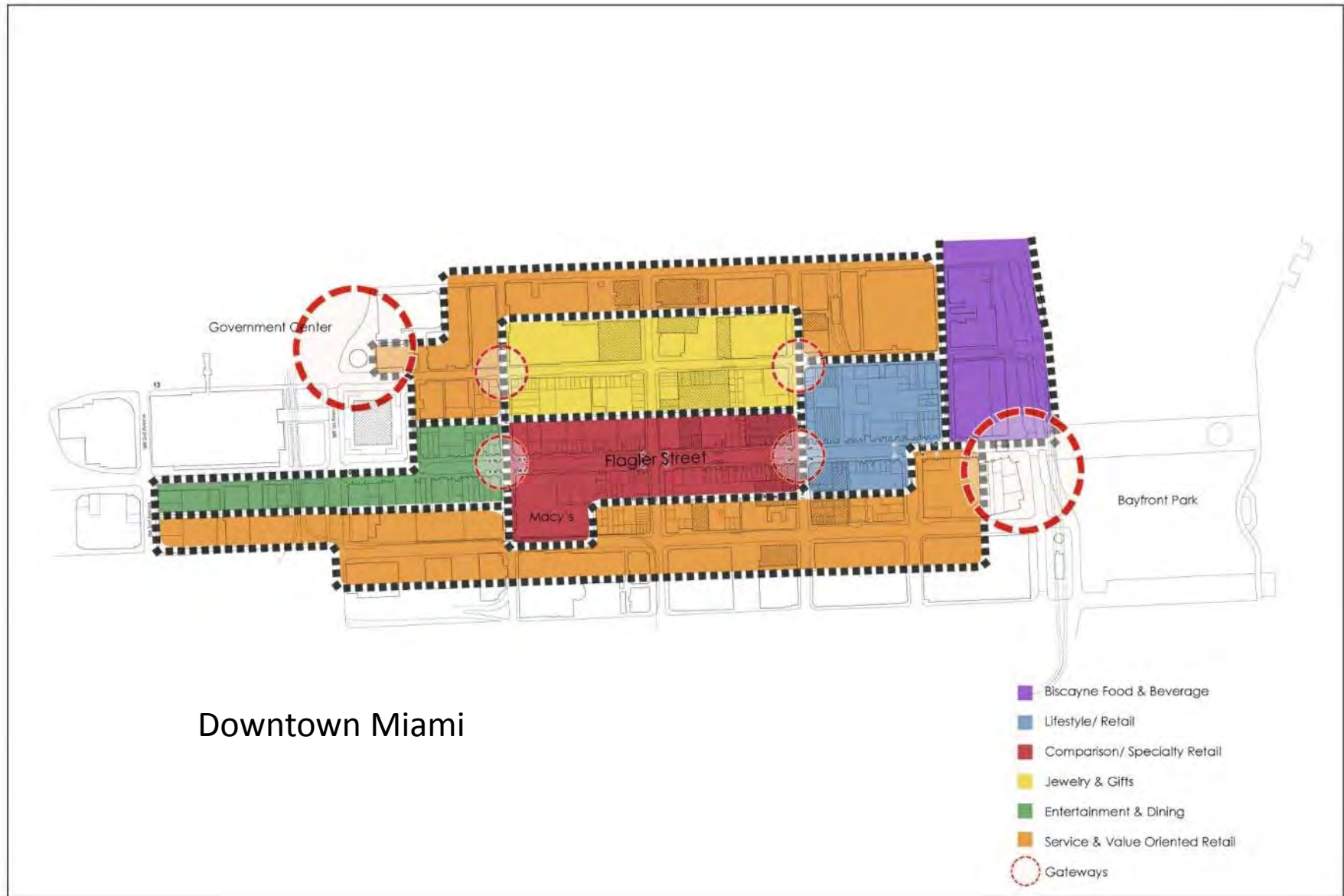
Assign public and private champions to lead revitalization effort



# Long-Term Recommendations

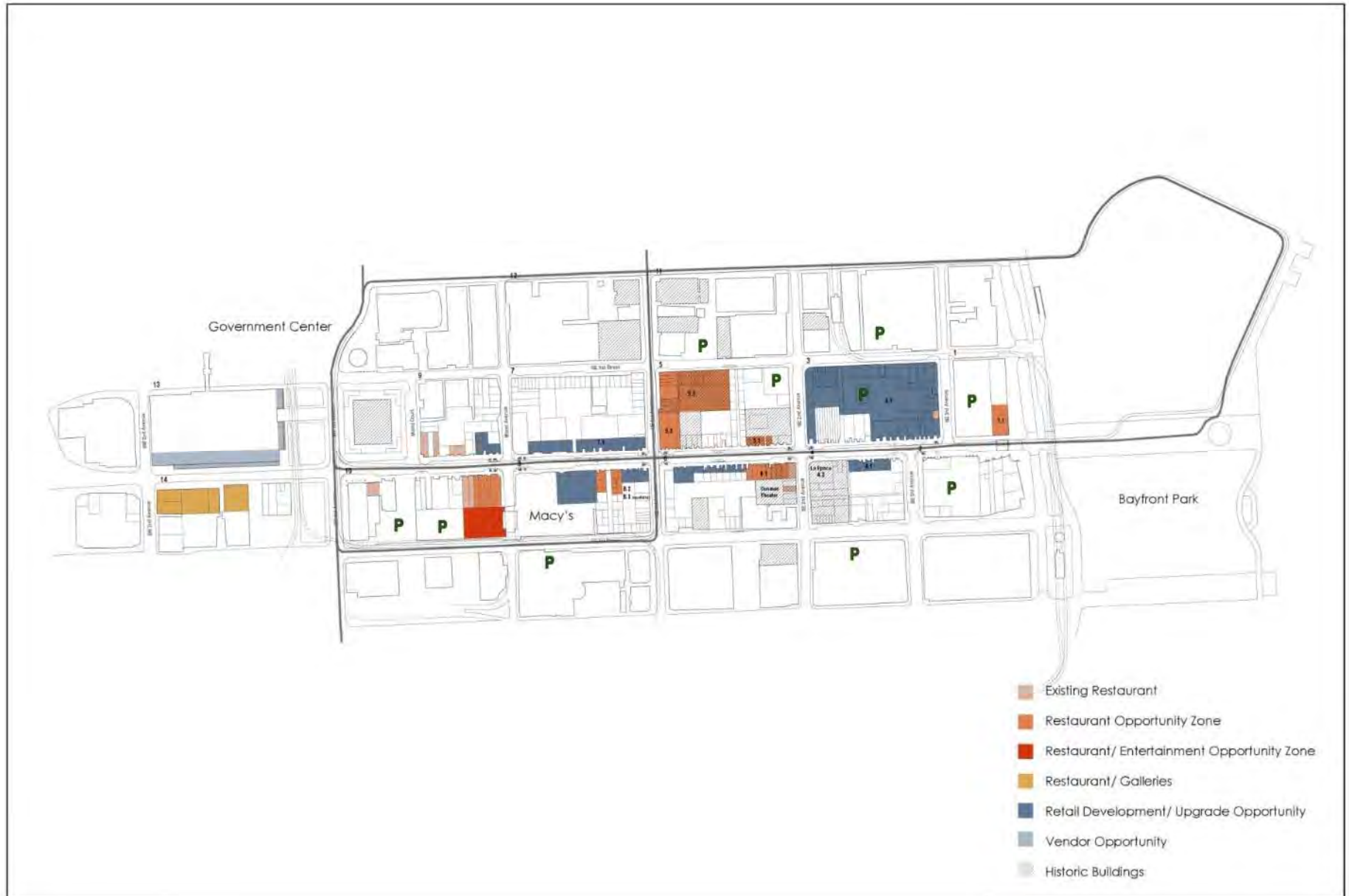
- Create management entity to coordinate retail efforts
- Develop and sustain marketing program (social media, advertising, etc.)
  - Examples (Center City Philadelphia, Downtown Orlando, etc.)
- Develop targeted retail incentive program(s)
  - Examples: Façade Improvement Grant, Tenant Improvement Allowance, Attraction Incentive)
- Maintain sustained focus on business recruitment and retention
- Develop workforce development program (National Retail Federation Customer Service certification, culinary/hospitality)

# Develop Merchandising Plan





# Develop Leasing Plan





# Market! Market! Market!

**BE IN ON IT** PHILADELPHIA RETAIL

WHO WE ARE CONTACT US

WHY PHILADELPHIA DEMOGRAPHICS RETAIL NEIGHBORHOODS SUCCESS STORIES AVAILABLE SPACE STARTING A BUSINESS NEWS

"You have a really large customer base; within 50 miles of Center City there are millions and millions of people...You can really reach a lot of people."

- Steven Lagos,  
Owner/Designer,  
Lagos Jewelry

**IT'S A FACT:**  
\$491,530,000 in demand for shoppers' goods within 1 mile of Philadelphia City Hall

play video

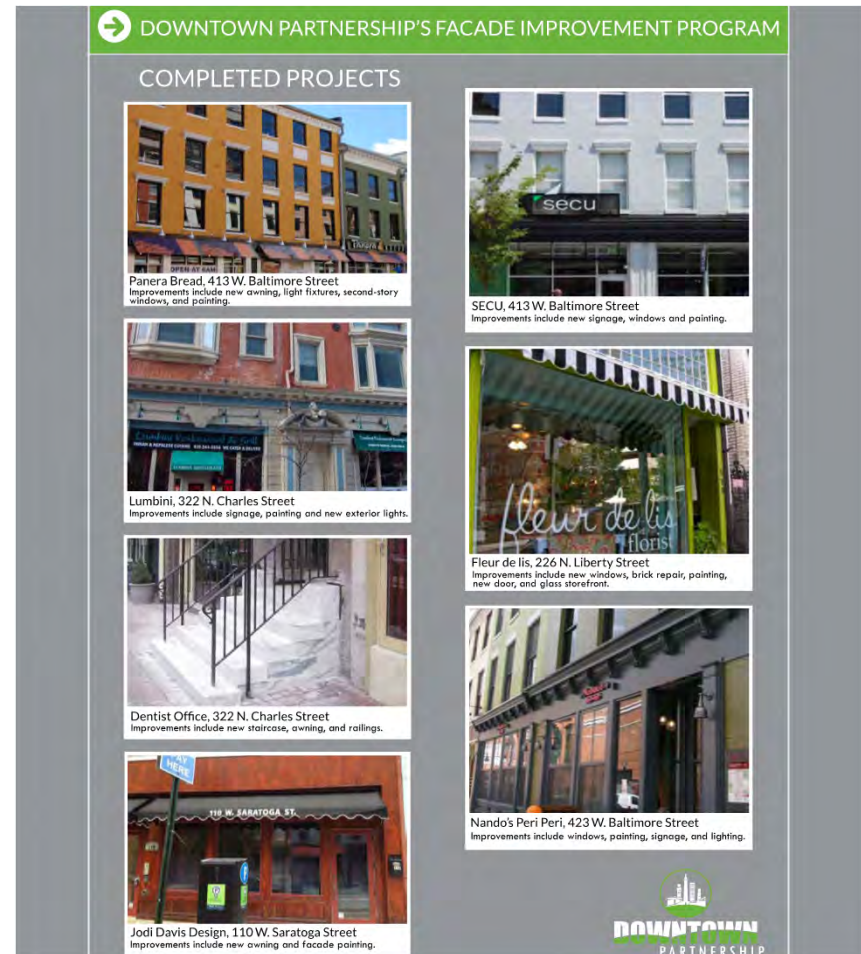
1901 Walnut St.





# Develop Retail Incentives

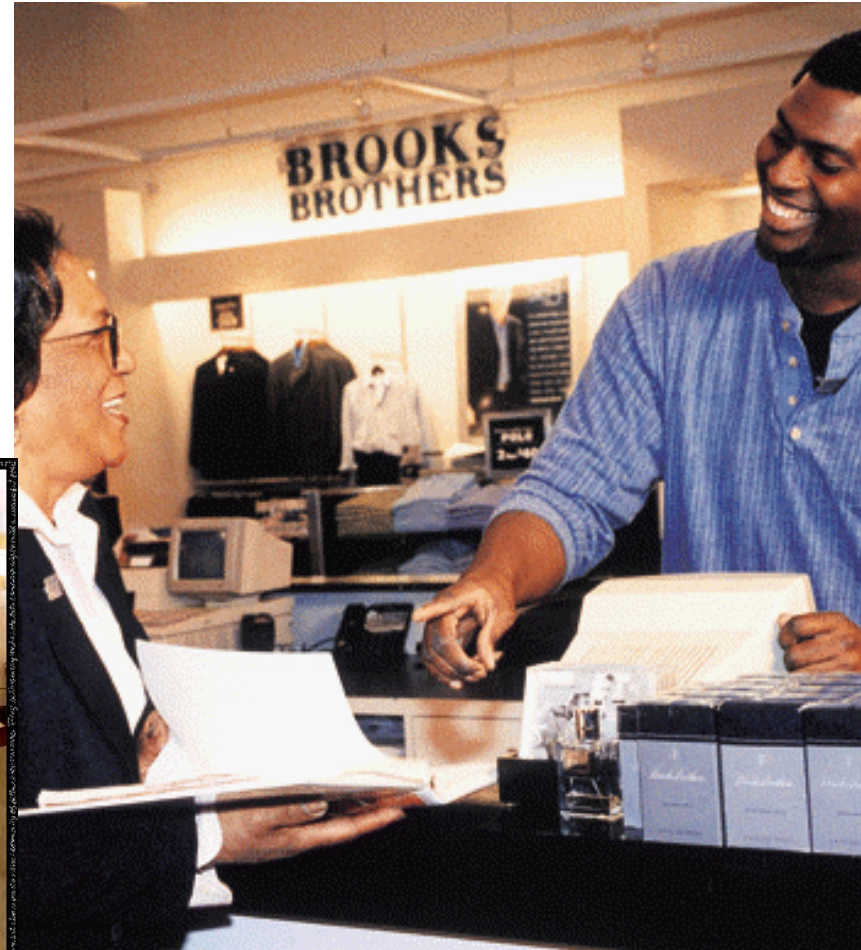
- Façade Improvement Grants
- Tenant Improvement Allowance
- Tenant Attraction Incentive





# Workforce Development

- Retail/Customer Service Training
- Culinary/Hospitality
- Entrepreneurship





# Long Term Recommendations

- Divide Main Street into manageable nodes for leasing/construction
- Leverage City-owned property to facilitate retail development
- Help retail tenants and landlords create buzz!
- Create management entity to coordinate retail efforts



# Downtown Denver: Larimer Square





An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely Pittsburgh, featuring various brick buildings, a prominent clock tower, and a large industrial-style building. A semi-transparent grey text box is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

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# Connectivity + Access

- Big Ideas
  - Excess capacity in the existing system
    - Decommissioning subway
    - Removal of Inner Loop
    - “This place has no traffic!”
  - Parking culture: perception vs. reality
    - Parking is easy and cheap (but may not be EXACTLY where users want it to be)
    - Public vs. private garages
    - Bureau of Parking

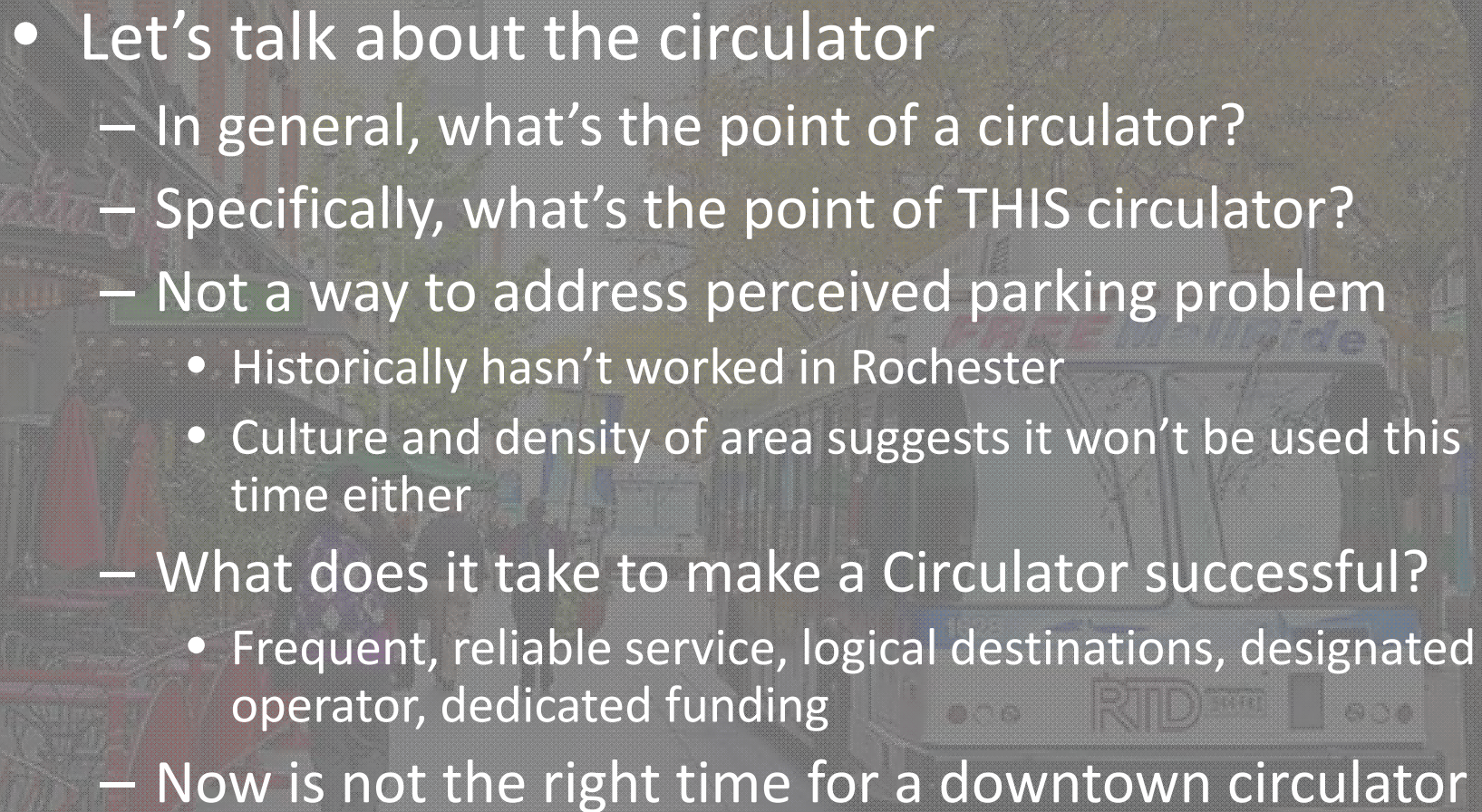






Connectivity + Access



- 
- Let's talk about the circulator
    - In general, what's the point of a circulator?
    - Specifically, what's the point of THIS circulator?
    - Not a way to address perceived parking problem
      - Historically hasn't worked in Rochester
      - Culture and density of area suggests it won't be used this time either
    - What does it take to make a Circulator successful?
      - Frequent, reliable service, logical destinations, designated operator, dedicated funding
    - Now is not the right time for a downtown circulator

**Connectivity + Access**



# Connectivity + Access







# Connectivity + Access

- Consider alternatives and refocus efforts: TDM strategies that reduced demand for auto trips, such as:
  - Ride sharing (we know this is contentious at the state level)
    - Provides safe rides home
    - Creates employment options
  - Attract more choice transit riders
  - Car sharing (e.g., zipcar)
  - Bike sharing
    - Accelerate Bike Master Plan
    - Millennials, millennials, millennials!
    - Gets people on the street, on paths, etc.
  - Walkability, friendlier pedestrian infrastructure and design





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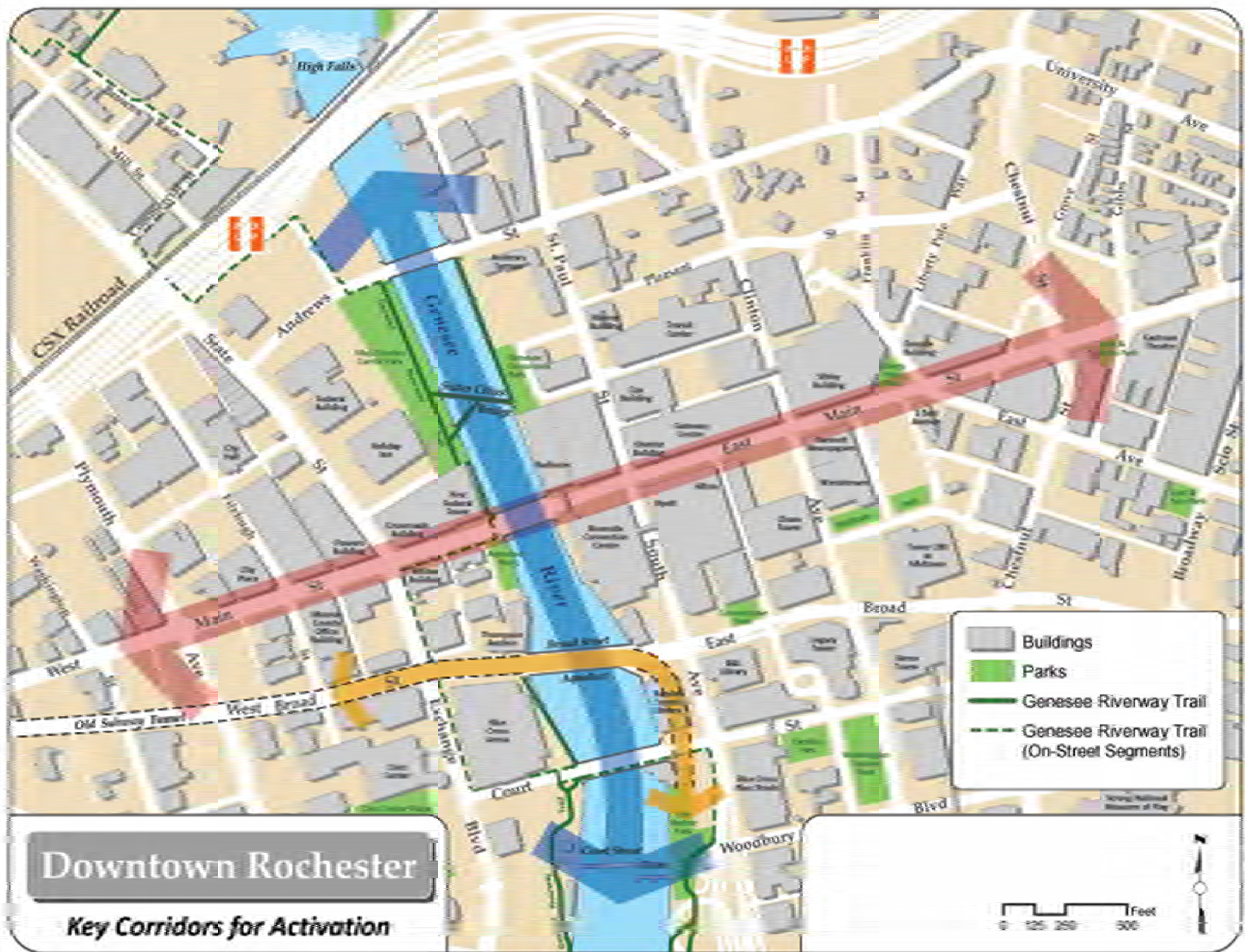


















# Barriers





# Opportunities









# Goals

- Livability
- Economic Development
- Retail Development
- Security
- Safety
- Connectivity & Access
- Authenticity & Identity



# Issues

- River is a barrier and underutilized asset
- Architecture has turned its back on the river and key public spaces
- Aqueduct not accessible, seen as not safe
- Public spaces and trails are fragmented
- Barren streets















Program these assets as a short-term strategy to invigorate and energize

Invest in design and renovation of assets

Prioritize and focus resources and energy



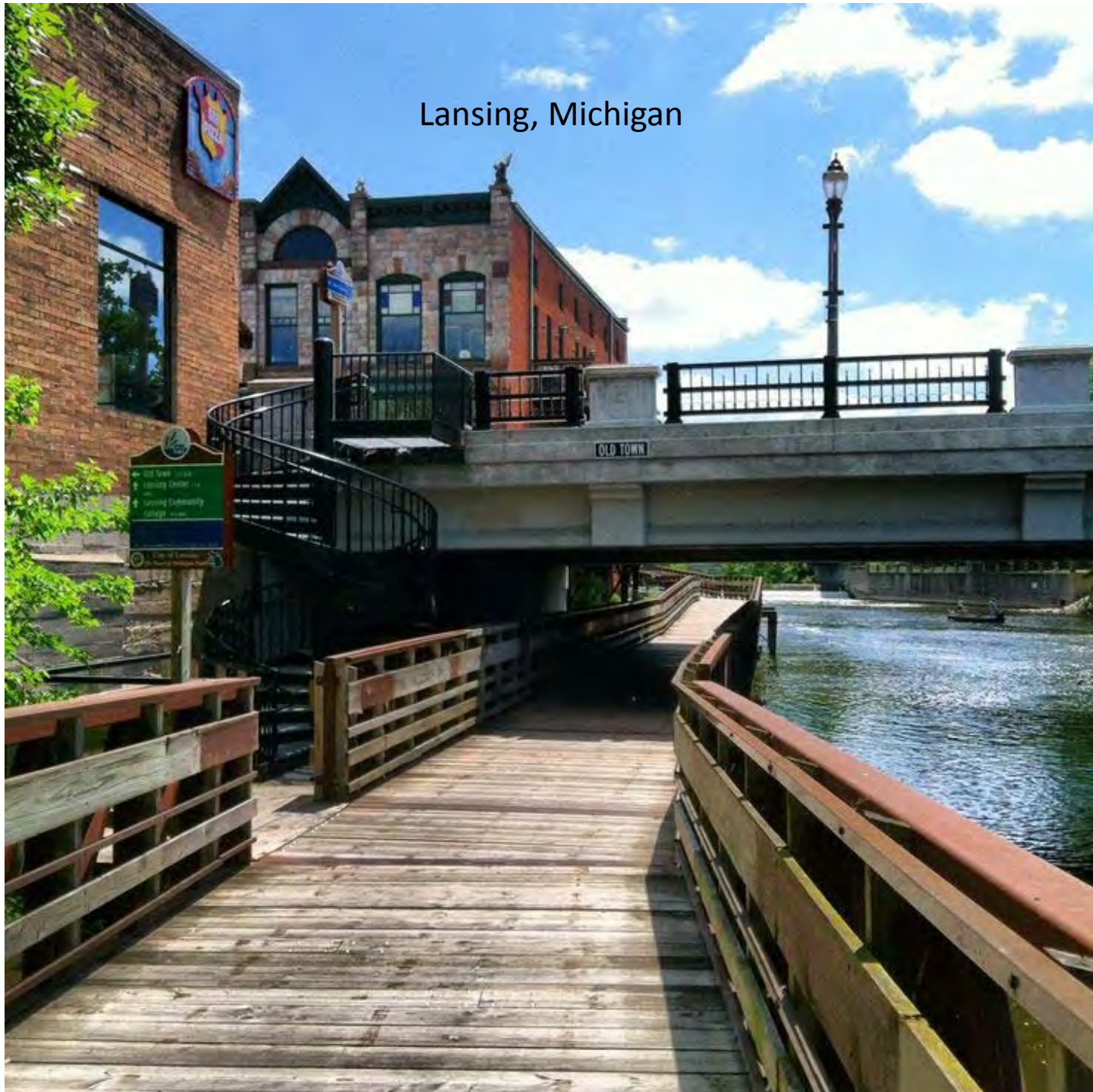


Philadelphia





Lansing, Michigan



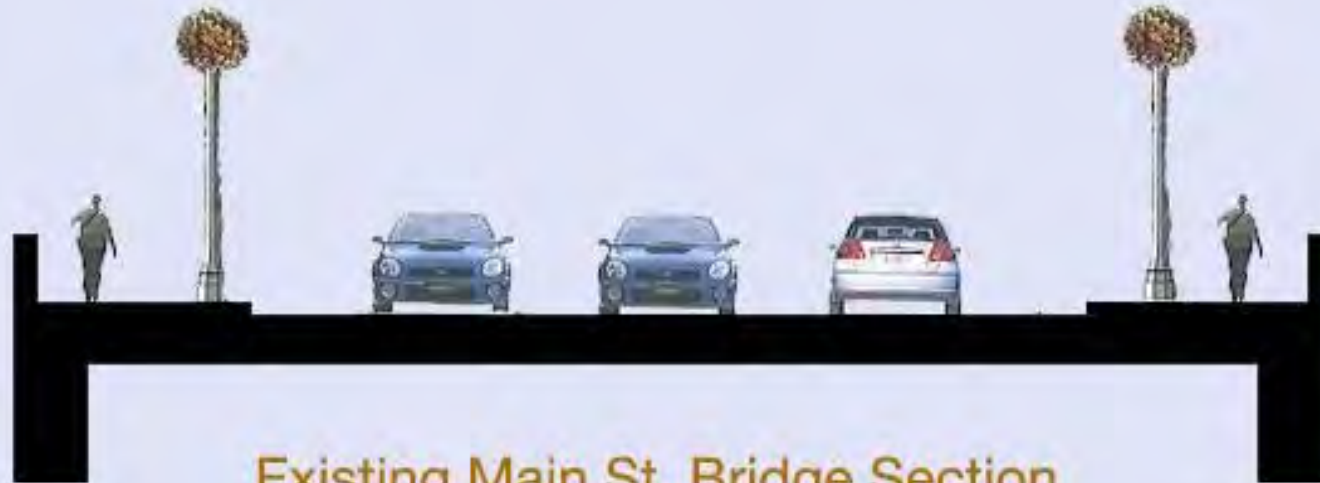




Tampa Riverwalk







Existing Main St. Bridge Section



Proposed Main St. Bridge Section























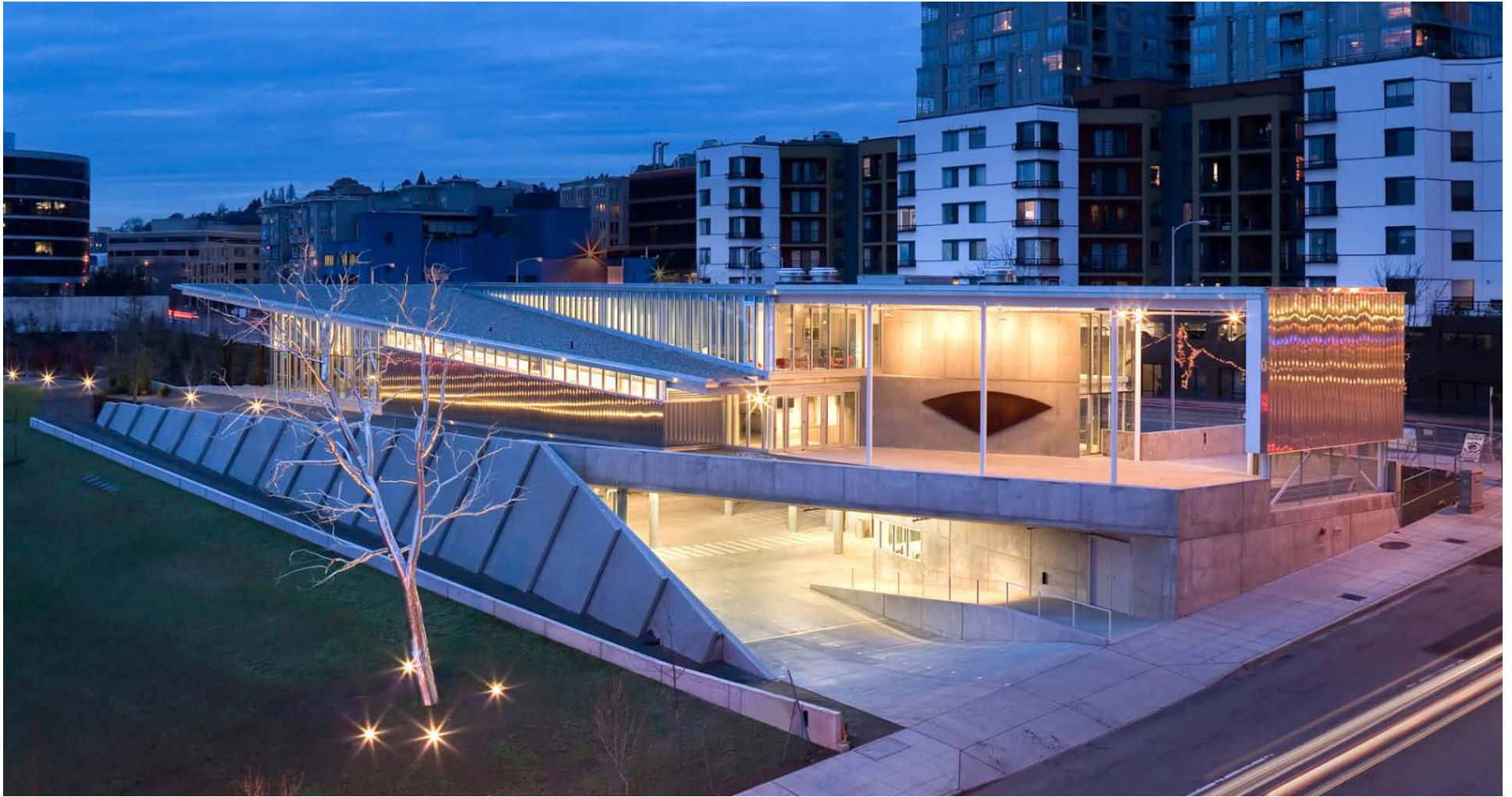




## Olympic Park, Seattle



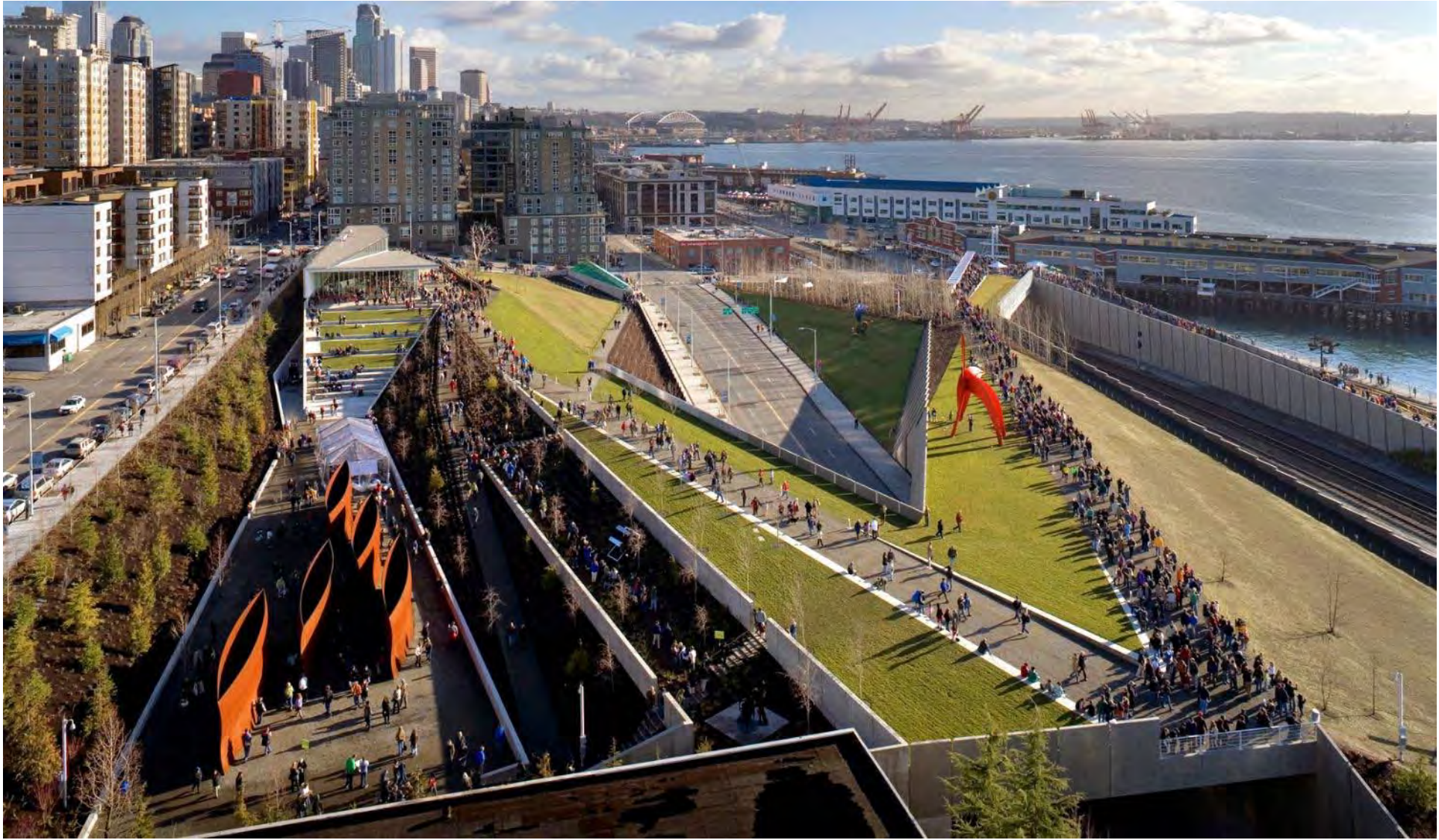






















Marseille, France





# WaterFire -- Providence, RI







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# Vision for Downtown is Not Clearly Understood by all Stakeholders

- Leadership
- Champions of change
- Valued partners
- Financial foundation



# Leadership

- Courage, Commitment and Collaboration
  - Define the issue
  - Do the research
  - Identify the stakeholders
  - Engage the community
  - Develop the action plan
  - Monitor and evaluate progress
  - CELEBRATE SUCCESSES!



# Inside Game



# Inside Game

- Instruments of change
  - Staff with decision making authority
- Fearless policy development
- Clear, consistent, and moving in the same direction
- Know your lane, stay in your lane, respect where you're going
- Be creative!
  - Zoning should be permissive not just prescriptive
  - Reimagine the Downtown Enhancement District



# Outside Game

- Community partners – build a culture of collaboration
  - Private Sector
  - Non-Profit Sector
  - Community Organizations

# Value Your Partners





# Value Your Partners

- They can do things the City cannot:
  - Advocate for proposals
  - Take the heat
  - Funding sources
  - A trusting constituency
  - Timing



# Partnership Examples





# Partnership Examples

- Dallas Arts District – land assembly
- Tampa Sports/Arena – pre-development studies
- St. Louis Park – development/management
- Downtown Management – enhanced services

# Financial Foundation

- Increase parking fees
  - Enhance downtown improvements
  - Fund transportation needs
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
  - Create new funding mechanism for downtown
  - Provides community benefits (e.g., workforce development, daycare, etc.)
  - Fund innovative projects (e.g., Chicago 606 Trail)
  - Fund traditional main street projects (e.g., State Street)



# Financial Foundation

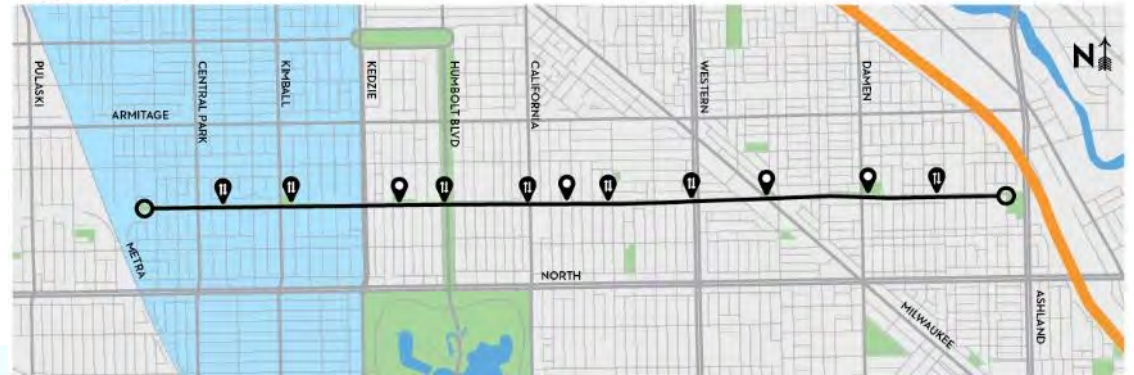


State Street – Chicago Loop



# Bloomingtondale Trail

The 606





# Bloomington Trail







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# Conclusions

- Downtown should be a place for all Rochesterians
- Embrace incremental retail success on Main Street today with a laser focus on long-term diversity
- Downtown has a parking allocation and culture challenge to solve for, not a capacity challenge
- Focus first on access, programming and design priorities to connect and activate the riverfront and Main Street
- Transformative success can only be achieved through bold leadership that creates a new culture of collaboration -- for a new Rochester



# Homework

1. Take an inventory of existing retail businesses and vacant locations on Main Street
2. Bring together stakeholders to explore potential expansion of Downtown Enhancement District and what additional services they need
3. Identify code and administrative changes to allow creative activities that encourage use of private and public spaces
4. Prioritize near-term actions geared toward activating Main Street for everyone

**Next check-in:**

Rose Fellowship Retreat  
Philadelphia, April 19

**ALL GREAT CHANGES ARE PRECEDED BY CHAOS**





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