

Vision Plan and Specific Opportunities

This section begins to apply the vision, goals, and policies of this report to Downtown Ann Arbor. The section begins with a description of an Illustrative Vision Plan presented during Public Design Workshop #3 and finishes with a series of recommended opportunities for areas highlighted in the Structural Plan.

Illustrative Vision Plan

Calthorpe Associates designed an Illustrative Vision Plan to show one future development scenario for Downtown. The Illustrative Vision illustrates the vision, goals, and policies proposed within these recommendations and shows potential new building form and intensity derived from the Structural Plan. The plan demonstrates many best practices for planning and design.

The Illustrative Vision builds on several key features. First, the Vision reinforces the existing retail core areas and public spaces by organizing new development and streetscape amenities around the areas, linking them to each other and the surrounding residential areas. Second, the Vision proposes new development on opportunity sites (vacant, surface parking, and underutilized properties). Third, the Vision Plan recognizes the need of a Greenway Task Force to investigate the potential of a greenway along Allen Creek. The results of the process could alter the vision plan. This Vision Plan illustrates the balance between greenway corridor, public spaces, and edge-sensitive development.

The Illustrative Vision Plan highlights the following ideas:

- Create pedestrian scale development, building orientation, corner façade enhancements, entrances from street, and parking screened behind buildings;

- Consider large parking lots as catalyst sites for new development. The plan shows the existing Brown, Kline, and First & Washington parking structure potential locations;
- Maintain a future rail station option between Washington and William Street along the Ann Arbor ROW. Trains could connect the Downtown to the Amtrak Station on Depot Street and neighboring cities;
- Present design ideas for redevelopment of city-owned parcels at 721 North Main and 415 West Washington as well as Fingerle Lumber. The Illustrative Vision shows 721 North Main as an Artist Village providing an opportunity for local artists to reside and work and 415 West Washington as a mixed-intensity development. Fingerle Lumber is proposed as a neighborhood serving mixed use retail center; and
- Incorporate gateway elements announcing entrance into Downtown. These elements could include physical enhancements like historic and public area signage, area specific street paving, decorated banner lighting, and creative street planting and furniture.

Downtown Development Strategies Project

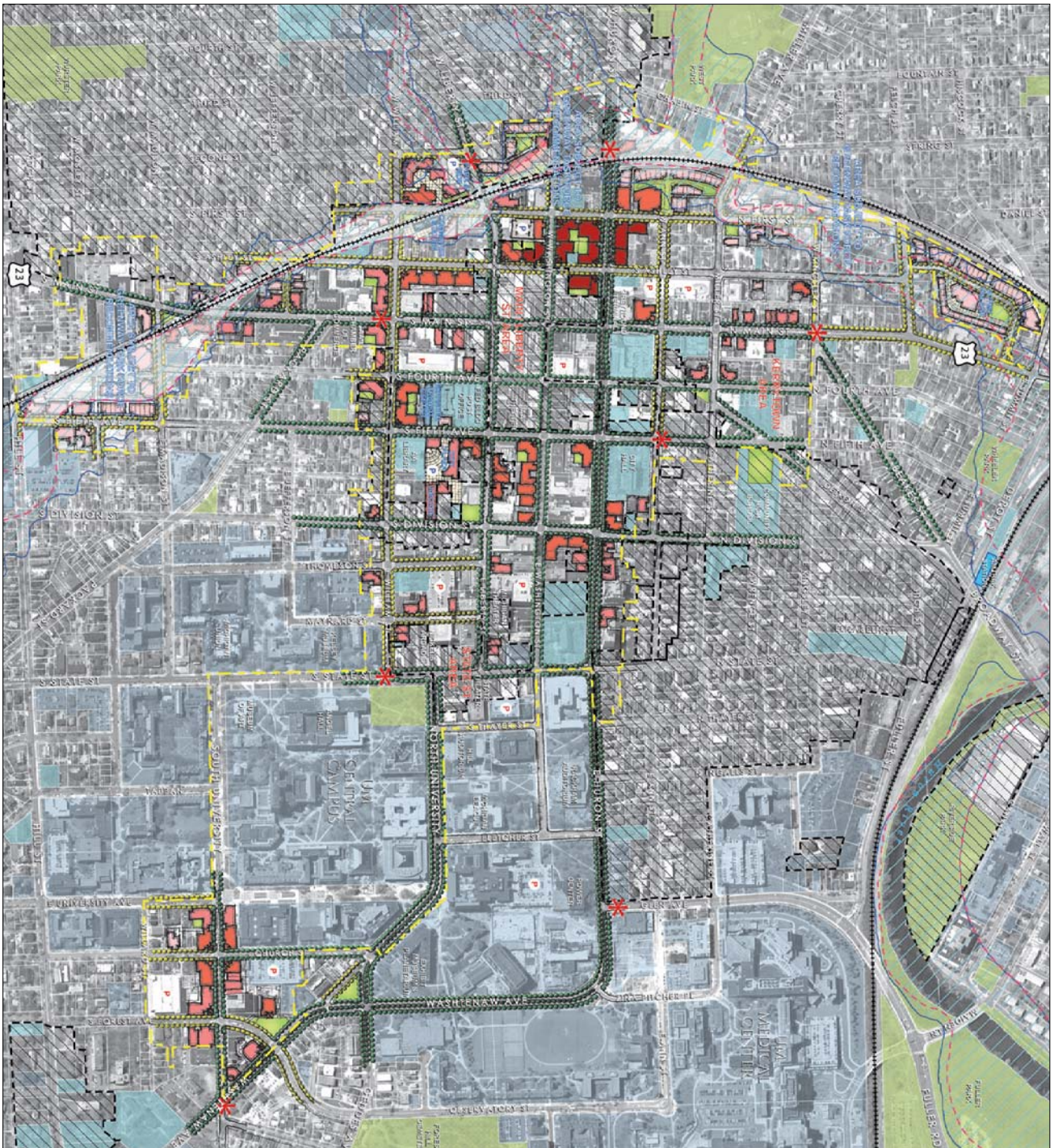


Fig. 44. Illustrative Vision Plan

Note: A larger version of the plan is included in the Appendix.

Vision Plan and Specific Opportunities

In tandem with the Illustrative Vision Plan, Calthorpe Associates created several building massing studies to analyze the physical conditions before and after the proposed new development. The four massing studies show the relationship between the proposed building, the street, and the Downtown as a whole.

Huron Street serves as a major gateway street to Downtown. Currently, the street is overwhelmed by a large curb-to-curb radius and many large surface parking lots. The Vision Plan attempts to bring the human-scale back into focus by encouraging pedestrian-friendly, high-density development. The development addresses the street and provides open space amenities as well as introducing traffic calming measures like pedestrian bulb-outs, on-street parking, and landscaped medians.

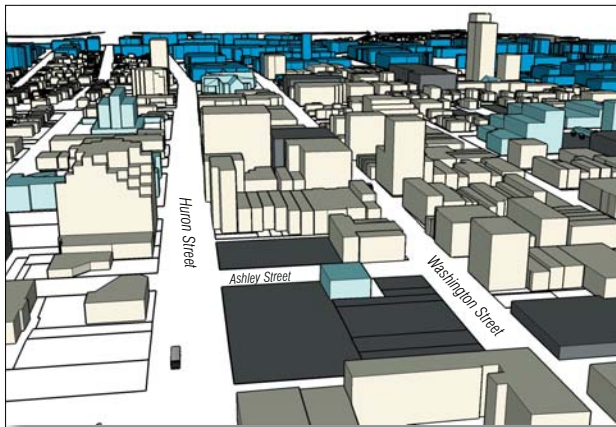


Fig. 45. Huron Street - Current Conditions

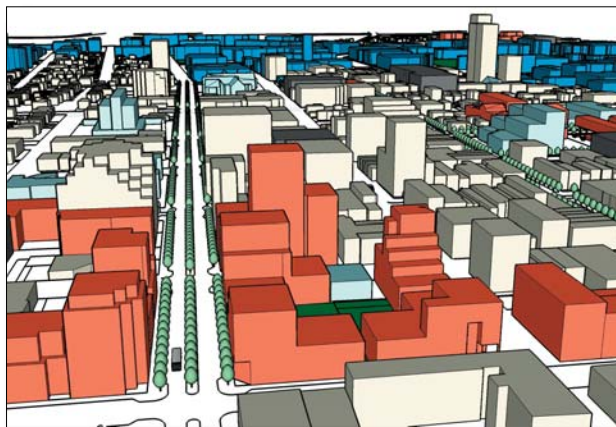


Fig. 46. Huron Street - Illustrative Vision

Existing South Main and William Streets have expansive surface parking lots and long, unbroken blocks that degrade the pedestrian environment. The Vision Plan illustrates one-way to reenforce the pedestrian environment by adding new buildings to surface parking lots and orienting those new buildings to street.

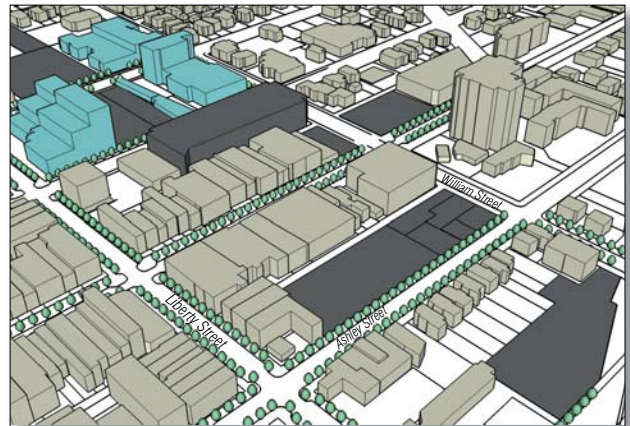


Fig. 47. Liberty Street / Ashley Street - Current Conditions



Fig. 48. Liberty Street / Ashley Street - Illustrative Vision

Downtown Development Strategies Project

South University is one of the most important gateways to the University and Downtown accessed by Washtenaw Avenue. The area contains low-rise, student-oriented retail facilities. The Vision Plan illustrates higher intensity development along the South University corridor that caters not only to the needs of the students but also the community as a whole.



Fig. 49. South University - Current Conditions



Fig. 50. South University - Illustrative Vision

The Fifth Avenue civic core within the downtown is dominated by surface parking lots and inhuman building scale. The Vision plan demonstrates how the City might add a much needed “Town Square” or central plaza. A combination of civic uses including an outdoor amphitheatre as well as mixed-use retail and office with upper-floor residential would add much needed housing, pedestrian activity, and safety to the area. The Vision also shows an improved Blake Transit Center and a redeveloped YMCA site that should retain affordability.



Fig. 51. Fifth Avenue Civic Center - Current Conditions



Fig. 52. Fifth Avenue Civic Center- Illustrative Vision

Focus Area Opportunities and Challenges

The following section lists recommended interventions for the areas illustrated in the Structural Plan. For the purposes of this report, these opportunities and projects listed in the following section met the goals and vision and are extensions of the recommended policies listed above. City Council should consider these as potential first steps in implementing these policies.

Downtown Core / Liberty Street Area

- Maintain and enhance the mixed-use focus of the area. New residential and entertainment uses should be encouraged within the area.
- Strengthen the connection between Main Street and State Street retail cores. Consider street interventions such as widening the sidewalks, adding bicycle lanes, and creating flexible parking/sidewalk space. Frequent east-west circulator service should reinforce this connection. Target new mid to high-rise development along the street, particularly between 5th and State Streets, requiring ground floor retail.
- Consider moving or rehabilitating historic buildings in the East Liberty Historic District.
- Consider the Old YMCA site redevelopment proposal. The project meets or exceeds many of community goals (including provision of affordable housing, open space, ground floor retail, slender tower form, and underground parking) described during the public workshop series.
- Redevelop the library parking lot. This lot might be appropriate for a design competition and should include a central “town square,” underground parking, and residential uses.

- Improve the physical appearance of the Blake Transit Center and encourage integration of the Greyhound Station into one transit center (this could be integrated into the old YMCA site proposal).



Fig. 53. Old YMCA Site

- Redesign Liberty Plaza to encourage greater use.
- Provide better signage and connection between South University and the Downtown Core across the University Diag. Work with the University to provide benches and seating areas at the northwest corner of the Diag to encourage community use of the park facility.
- Redevelop the structured parking lot at 1st and Washington.

Huron Corridor Area

- Work with the Michigan Department of Transportation to calm automobile traffic along Huron Street. Timed lights, central medians, and bulb-outs could slow traffic and make pedestrian crossings significantly easier.
- With the appropriate corridor improvements, target higher density residential development along Huron Street.

Downtown Development Strategies Project

- Develop the Brown Lot at 1st and Huron Street as a gateway feature for the Downtown. The development proposal should include a mix of uses.
- Incrementally develop surface parking lots along Huron Street with more intense uses – this includes surface lots at City Hall and at the Washtenaw County building.
- Work to integrate the new YMCA with Downtown and the potential new residents along Huron.
- Work with the owners of the Division and Huron Street node to develop a 3 site redevelopment proposal.

Kerrytown / North Main Street Area

- Improve physical connections between Kerrytown to the Downtown Core. Frequent waits and mid-block crossings along Huron Street put pedestrians, particularly high school students, at risk. Consideration should be given to street interventions including a central median, bulb-outs at specific intersections, and timed pedestrian crossings.
- Promote small, residential infill projects like Kingsley Lane lofts that relate well to the surrounding neighbors and topographic environment.



Fig. 54. Kerrytown Grocery

- Nurture small neighborhood businesses like the People's Co-Op and Zingermann's and attempt to expand these small, locally-owned businesses along Main Street and around the Kerrytown central area.
- Encourage the rehabilitation or redevelopment of older buildings and housing stock along North Main Street and create a distinctive gateway into Downtown.
- Provide additional signage and wayfinding devices to the Huron River Greenway. Consideration should be given for the appropriate bicycle and pedestrian routes to the river.
- Restrict additional gas stations in the areas and work to redevelop the station at the corner of Main Street and Miller Street.

South Main Street / William Street Area

- Target mid-rise residential development in the area to provide a transition between higher density Downtown uses and adjacent multi-family neighborhoods.
- Incrementally redevelop surface parking lots along South Main Street.
- Restrict additional gas stations in the area and work to redevelop the gas station at the corner of Main Street and William Street.
- Enhance the appearance of South Main Street.

West Downtown / Ann Arbor Railroad

- Encourage infill with small-scale office, live-work, and residential uses within the areas. Target areas outside the floodway for new residential development.
- Work with the New Greenway Task Force to finalize plans for the Allen Creek Greenway.

- Work with the appropriate agencies to implement rail service along the Ann Arbor Railroad ROW. Provide land use and urban design flexibility that will allow current uses and buildings to mature over time to more intense uses. A central transit node should be located between Washington and Liberty Street.



Fig. 55. Ann Arbor Railroad Right-of-Way at Liberty Street

- Work with developers/public to create development proposals for 415 West Washington and 721 North Main that include the potential greenway and small public spaces on floodway land as well as residential, commercial, and community uses.
- Target the Madison Street and Main Street intersection for a neighborhood-serving mixed use node.
- Work with owners of Fingerle Lumber to create concept plans for future redevelopment of the site.



Fig. 56. Fingerle Lumber Yard

South University Area

- Focus new mixed-use development along the South University corridor.
- Provide building façade incentives to business owners along South University and work to create longer-term redevelopment plans for the low intensity retail uses.
- Provide a gateway feature into the City and University along Washtenaw Avenue. Consider holding a design competition within the University for this gateway element.



Fig. 57. Entrance to South University from the Diag