



# CULTIVATE MIDTOWN

ANN ARBOR'S TALENT PLAN



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## GRANT ELEMENT 2

### MAP 1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

#### HEART OF THE REGION

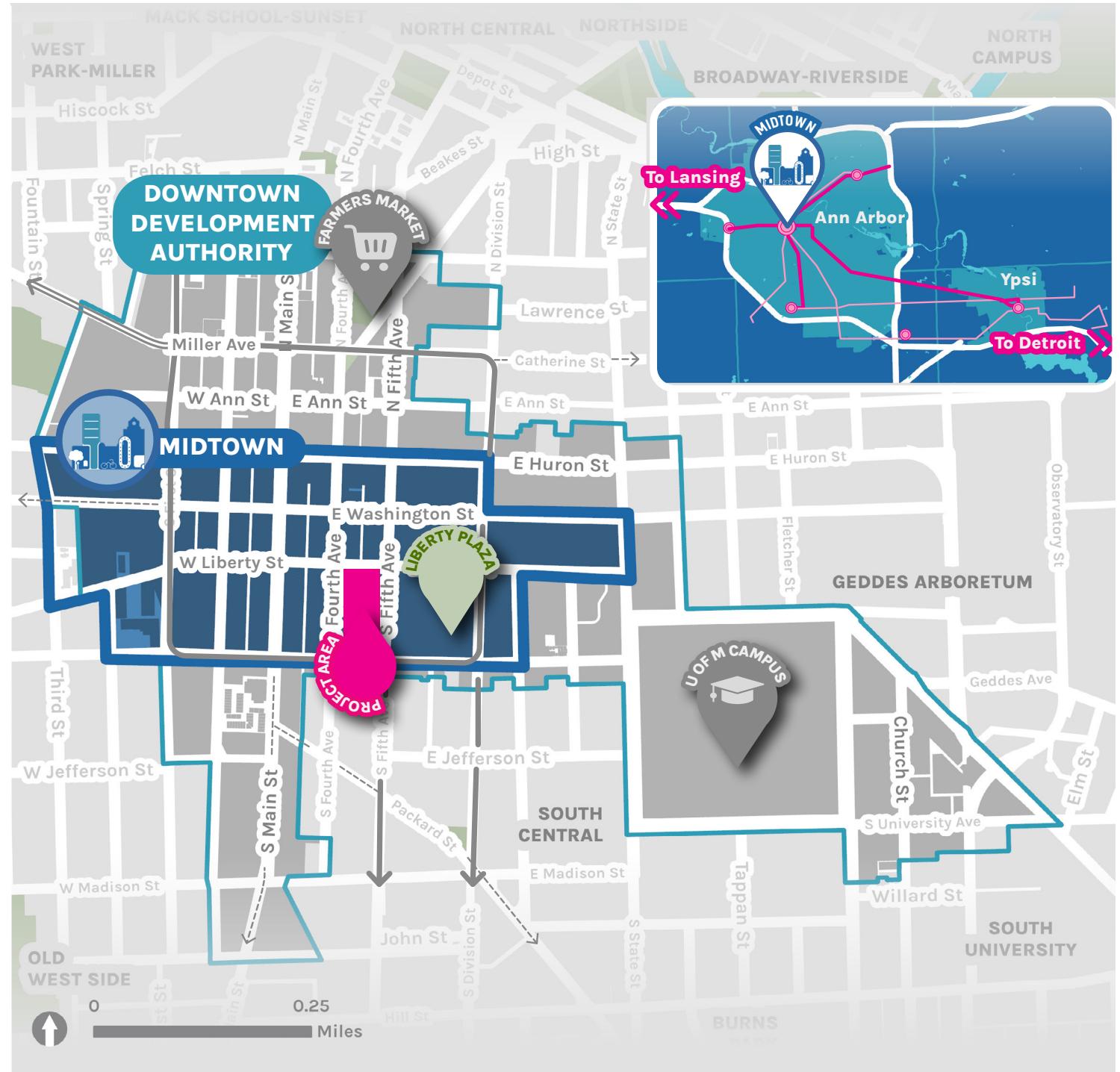
Ann Arbor is proud to be part of an extensive transit network that regularly connects some of the best talent in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and even Detroit through regular daily transit routes.

- Bus Rapid Transit Line
- Priority Bus Service Line
- Transit Hubs

#### ALL ROADS LEAD TO MIDTOWN

Locally, Midtown is at the center of both current and planned multi-model connections. Catalytic projects in this district will enhance connections for nearby talent to unparalleled downtown assets.

- ← Built Bikeways
- ←--- Planned Future Bikeways
- ← Bikeways Under Construction



# WHY CULTIVATE TALENT IN ANN ARBOR

## ANN ARBOR IS AT A PIVOTAL MOMENT

### THE ROAD TO MIDTOWN

Across the country and around the world, Ann Arbor is recognized as a magnet for thinkers, makers, and doers—a place where innovation meets intention. From Nobel laureates to startup founders, from muralists to mobility engineers, the City attracts people who believe in shaping the future together.

And people with the brightest minds and the deepest wells of energy have relocated to Ann Arbor to enjoy and contribute to its education and standard of living for decades. Ann Arbor is confronting changing times not by building walls but by opening doors and asking, how can we continue being a beacon for those who want to grow; how can we nurture the most creative solutions to the most insurmountable challenges? If numbers are anything to go by, people have responded. **IN 2024, DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR WELCOMED 3.1 MILLION DIFFERENT LOCAL AND NON-LOCAL VISITORS WHO MADE A COMBINED 19.2 MILLION VISITS, AND VISITORS REPRESENTED ALL 50 STATES.** All for just one area in a city with a total population of 120,000.

Ann Arbor attracts millions because of access to the University of Michigan, medical facilities, cultural centers, research resources, availability of connected trail systems, local businesses, and diverse dining scenes. Strategically positioned between Michigan's major industry hubs—Detroit and Lansing—Ann Arbor serves as a

regional anchor for innovation and mobility. Its transit infrastructure, research institutions, and entrepreneurial ecosystem make it a natural hub for collaboration across sectors and geographies.

These components and incalculable others, are necessary components of a resilient, thriving ecosystem that supports talent across all life stages and income levels: a robust and interconnected, multimodal transportation network; housing for all income levels; small business and entrepreneurship; reliable infrastructure; and vibrant events that show case arrays of rich experiences. **ANN ARBOR LEADS PEER CITIES LIKE BOULDER AND MADISON IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, WITH 77.2% OF RESIDENTS HOLDING A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER.**

However, while these amenities are available for some, talent is often priced out of living here. The City is home to the #1 public university for R&D in America, a thriving arts and culture scene, and a walkable downtown that blends historic charm with cutting-edge design, yet over half of renter households are cost-burdened, and the City's housing supply has not kept pace with demand. Vacancy rates are at historic lows, and land available for development is limited. Transportation challenges compound these issues. Ann Arbor remains heavily car-dependent, with **OVER 76,000 WORKERS COMMUTING INTO THE CITY, MOST FROM MORE THAN 10 MILES AWAY**, with few alternatives to driving. This contributes to congestion, high carbon emissions, safety

concerns, and infrastructure strain. For a City that is a regional and global magnet, increasingly serving as a regional transit hub, these structural challenges limit Ann Arbor's ability to be the incubator for talent it has been, the effects of which will have ramifications for the state and the region.

Rather than seeing affordability and infrastructure strain as limitations, Ann Arbor is addressing them as design challenges to solve creatively. The City's Draft Comprehensive Plan—centered on being Affordable, Equitable, Sustainable, and Dynamic—is not just aspirational; it's actionable. Ann Arbor's challenges—affordability, housing supply, and transportation equity—are not signs of failure. They are design challenges that the City is tackling with the same creativity and rigor that define its academic and entrepreneurial communities.



# CULTIVATE MIDTOWN

## WHERE TALENT GOES TO GROW

How can a small city hope to make a meaningful dent in systemic challenges like housing and transportation shortfalls that create very real barriers? How can Ann Arbor create access?

In the Ann Arbor tradition of fostering collaborative, intrepid solutions,

**“CULTIVATE MIDTOWN” IS A KEYSTONE STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES HEAD ON BY ALIGNING LAND USE WITH TRANSIT INVESTMENT TO CREATE: WELCOMING, TRANSIT-RICH DISTRICTS THAT SUPPORT WALKABILITY AND REDUCE CAR DEPENDENCY; ENERGIZE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS; AND MAKES RELIABLE, REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NOT ONLY Viable, BUT CELEBRATED.**

Increasing housing density and affordability within the Midtown district means more people live closer to where they work, shop, and socialize—strengthening community ties, reducing environmental impact, and nurturing the exchange of ideas. “Cultivate Midtown” is a blueprint for a more integrated, accessible, and resilient future—one where people of all backgrounds can thrive and contribute in a dynamic, forward-looking community.

Midtown was selected as the site of this Talent Plan because, in many ways, Midtown is representative of Ann Arbor. On any given evening, visitors could easily start with a dinner of Ethiopian food before hearing world class music at the Blue Llama Jazz Club or The Ark on Main Street, then finishing the night with ice

cream or a visit to one of many bookstores that are regional institutions. During the summer, Liberty Plaza on Liberty and Division is filled with crowds for Sonic Lunch: a weekly bill of local bands. The Downtown District Library is an anchor for the community between its 21st century approach and the Summer Games program. It is the 2nd highest destination in the City, with over 1 million visitors. USPS is right in the heart of Midtown. And spanning S 4th Ave and S 5th Ave is the Blake Transit Center, the hub of public transportation for the City and connection to our neighbor city, Ypsilanti. If families, University students, or visitors spend any time in Ann Arbor, no matter their destination, chances are they will intersect with Midtown.

However, while Midtown might be representative of this City, its current environment does not match its aspirations and regional need. Dominated by surface parking and low-rise buildings, the two hubs Midtown does have lack the energy and connectivity felt and seen in other parts of downtown. Midtown is an underutilized link between two established, vibrant hubs: Main Street on the west side and the University of Michigan University and State Street on the east, while remaining underdeveloped itself. Case in point, the 2009 Downtown Plan described Midtown as “lacking a clear identity.”

Midtown’s first hub, the City’s Blake Transit Center, is vital to daily commuters and residents, but it is aging and needs updates to meet the

future. The second hub, the adjacent lot at 350 S. 5th Ave is underutilized surface parking. These locations are exciting and ripe opportunities for Ann Arbor and the region, especially when considered as a whole rather than disparate parts. To that end, Ann Arbor’s first phase of the Cultivate Midtown Talent District is the 350 Transit Hub.

**4TH**

MOST ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT ON ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS IN THE COUNTRY AND MORE THAN 3X THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

**94K JOBS**

HOWEVER, ONLY 18% OF EMPLOYEES LIVE IN ANN ARBOR

**>50%**

NON-RESIDENT WORKERS WANT TO LIVE IN ANN ARBOR (A2 COMP PLAN SURVEY)



# 350 TRANSIT HUB

## THE HEART OF MIDTOWN

Ann Arbor's ability to attract and retain talent depends on creating a city where people can afford to live, move easily, and feel connected to their community. Midtown is envisioned as a place that offers authentic human experiences—where residents, students, and workers engage with arts, culture, and local businesses in a walkable, transit-accessible environment. By aligning land use with transit investments and increasing housing options, the City is building a resilient ecosystem that supports talent across all life stages and income levels.

### SUPPORTING MTP GOALS

While Cultivate Midtown is a multi-year effort, in this initial grant cycle Ann Arbor is requesting funding to help launch the cornerstone phase: the **350 TRANSIT HUB**. This phase transforms an aging, underutilized city block to simultaneously increase walkability and downtown vitality, expand affordable housing stock, and lead the state in regional transit connectivity.

Investment in this initial phase of the Cultivate Midtown project creates an outsized benefit-to-investment ratio by:

- Reconstructing the 4th Ave streetscape to support mobility, public art, and inclusive public growth,
- Adding 330 affordable units and redesigning the streetscape at 350 S. Fifth Ave,

- Revitalizing the Blake Transit Center, an established transit hub, so it can assume ridership loads associated with being the center of a transformative, regional bus rapid transit network.

Funding these three developments as a holistic, interwoven, single entity will directly meet the Talent Plan's goals for the region.

Ann Arbor's amenities—like its walkability, bikeability, markets, festivals, restaurants, parks, and support services—thrive when people can actively create and participate in them. But the City's high cost of living, limited housing, and commuter-heavy workforce make these experiences inaccessible for many, which affects everyone.



### THE 350 TRANSIT HUB AND CULTIVATE MIDTOWN ARE STRATEGIC EFFORTS TO BUILD ACCESS, VIBRANCY, AND TALENT THROUGH POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOPS.

They are nourished and guided by a consortium with a proven record of successful collaboration. The Downtown Development Authority, key staff across City departments, the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, the Ann Arbor Housing Commission, and remarkable representation of community partners and stakeholders share vision and commitment to see each phase of Cultivate Midtown succeed.

Ann Arbor's application for the Michigan Talent Partnership (MTP) program requests funding for transformational public space development projects, each designed to align with the program's overarching goals of increasing density, walkability, multimodal opportunities, vibrancy, talent attraction and retention, and fostering locally owned businesses. The City's broader vision, as defined by its policy commitments and emerging Comprehensive Plan, centers on being Affordable, Equitable, Sustainable, and Dynamic, with Downtown and Midtown Ann Arbor playing a key role in achieving these values.

The projects for which funding is being requested are:

1. *Fourth Avenue Transit Street*

2. *350 S. Fifth Avenue Streetscape and High Rise*

3. *Blake Transit Center Expansion*



# FOURTH AVE TRANSIT STREET

## IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

### STREETSCAPE REDESIGN SUPPORTING MOBILITY, PUBLIC ART, AND INCLUSIVE URBAN GROWTH

The 4th Avenue Transit Street project is a comprehensive reconstruction effort located between William Street and Liberty Street in downtown Ann Arbor. Spearheaded by the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in collaboration with City Engineering, the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC), and the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA), this initiative is a cornerstone of the DDA's People-Friendly Streets program.

This project aims to transform a key urban corridor into a safer, more accessible, and welcoming public space, aligning closely with the principles of Transit-Oriented Design (TOD). The reconstruction will feature widened sidewalks that accommodate expanded outdoor dining for local business use, larger transit waiting areas, upgraded lighting, and enhanced pedestrian amenities. These transit enhancements include upgraded real-time information systems, improved seating, enhanced shelters dedicated bus lanes to visually separate traffic and improve safety, and a mid-block crossing to further enhance pedestrian safety.

Additionally, the project emphasizes the integration of public art, particularly on the adjacent parking garage and at transit stops, contributing to a vibrant and culturally enriched

streetscape. The initiative also supports the utility and streetscape improvements for the high-density, mixed income development at 350 S. Fifth, reinforcing the district's role as a hub for talent attraction and retention within the Midtown neighborhood.

Overall, the Fourth Avenue Transit Street project represents a holistic approach to urban design that fosters community connection, supports sustainable transit, and enhances the aesthetic and functional quality of the public realm.



# 350 S. FIFTH AVE STREETSCAPE

## BUILDING LIVABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

### FIFTH AVENUE'S ROLE IN ANN ARBOR'S INCLUSIVE GROWTH

The 350 S. Fifth Avenue Streetscape project advances key goals of the MTP by enhancing urban density, walkability, vibrancy, and local business opportunities. The project directly supports the adjacent 350 S. Fifth Avenue development—a 20-story tower with 330 affordable housing units—**BY IMPROVING THE SURROUNDING PUBLIC REALM AND MAKING THE AREA MORE LIVABLE.**

The development is expected to be completed by 2028 and will include a mix of income targets ranging from 30% to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI). This will provide housing for households earning \$25,000 (1-person) to \$33,000 (3-person), depending on household size. The property was sold by the City to the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC) at below-market rate, demonstrating the City's strong support for the project.

The building will be highly energy efficient, featuring geothermal heating and cooling and all-electric appliances. It is being developed through a public-private partnership with Related Midwest, who serves as co-developer and co-owner alongside AAHC.

Streetscape improvements—such as wider sidewalks, upgraded lighting, pedestrian amenities, and enhanced transit boarding areas—promote walkability and safety, aligning

with MTP's vision for transit-rich, pedestrian-friendly districts. By creating a more inviting and comfortable environment, the project fosters public engagement and foot traffic, contributing to a vibrant urban atmosphere.

These enhancements support talent attraction and retention by improving quality of life for residents and workers. Additionally, 6,500 square feet of retail and office space in the adjacent development, combined with increased foot traffic from the streetscape improvements, will create meaningful opportunities for local entrepreneurs and help activate the Midtown district's commercial corridors.



# BLAKE TRANSIT CENTER EXPANSION

## ENHANCING CONNECTIVITY AND CAPACITY

### EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENABLE BUS RAPID TRANSIT AND RIDER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

The Blake Transit Center (BTC) is an essential asset in expanding access to public transportation and enhancing the urban landscape in downtown Ann Arbor. As the City's primary transit hub for over 35 years, BTC anchors a network of transformational projects that promote regional connectivity, inclusive development, and talent attraction. Local businesses regularly cite improved transit as a key factor in talent attraction.

The BTC expansion project will construct four new bus bays on the south side of the building. This will allow BTC to accommodate articulated 60-foot buses, which are ideal for high-capacity transit such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Riders will benefit from easier access to indoor waiting areas, customer services, fewer transfers, and an overall improved transit experience.

Of particular note: BTC platform expansion and bus lane addition is the result of a unique, public-private partnership between the AAHC and developer; prime real estate that could otherwise be developed will instead be used for public good.

National research shows that BRT systems consistently lead to increased ridership, which will put pressure on BTC's current Midtown infrastructure. A Federal Transit Administration study found that after BRT implementation,

ridership rose significantly—up to one-third of new riders were entirely new to transit, and another third began riding more frequently.

These gains are attributed to BRT's faster service, modern vehicle design, and improved reliability. In Ann Arbor, the AAATA's 2045 Long Range Plan calls for BRT on key corridors such as Huron/Washtenaw, Plymouth, and S. State. An enhanced BTC enables this service to originate from Midtown.

Strategically located in the heart of downtown, BTC is closely linked to two major initiatives: the

Fourth Avenue Street & Transit Improvements and the adjacent 350 S. Fifth Avenue affordable housing development. Together, these projects represent a unified vision for placemaking access and mobility. Additionally, reliable, more frequent transit service enables the City's density goals and a high quality of life.

**THE BTC PROJECT EXEMPLIFIES THE MICHIGAN TALENT PLAN COMMITMENT TO INVEST IN VIBRANT, PEOPLE-CENTERED INFRASTRUCTURE.** By enhancing the transit experience and service - the initiative supports the creation of a City that attracts and retains top talent.



# WALKABILITY AND TRANSIT RICH AREAS

## BUILDING A TRANSIT-RICH TALENT DISTRICT

### KEY INVESTMENTS IN WALKABILITY AND REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Over the past decade, the City of Ann Arbor, in partnership with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (TheRide), has emerged as a statewide leader in transforming transportation infrastructure from car-centric design to multimodal, people-focused systems. The City's ambitious A<sup>2</sup>ZERO climate plan aims to cut vehicle miles traveled in half through investments in multimodal infrastructure and transit-oriented development.

Nonetheless, Ann Arbor remains heavily car-dependent, with over 76,000 workers commuting into the City—most from more than 10 miles away. Regional projections put 154,545 jobs in Ann Arbor by 2050, with the effect that over 120,000 workers could be commuting into the City, underscoring the need for improved infrastructure and housing. (SEMCOG)

Recent investments totaling over \$25 million by the City and Downtown Development Authority (DDA) have transformed key corridors, spurring mode shift and increasing foot traffic. Bikeway corridors have seen an 80-200% increase in ridership due to the inclusion of separated bike lanes, with over 620,000 bike trips counted since fall 2023. The DDA's Elevate program is bringing

immersive public art installations to Midtown, turning streets into flexible community spaces. Within the Talent District, the Downtown Area Circulation (DAC) Study will guide Ann Arbor's efforts to support a multimodal lifestyle. The DAC Study is a collaborative effort between the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the City of Ann Arbor, designed to address the growing demand for limited downtown street space. In addition to improving mobility and access for all users, it is aligned with Vision Zero goals (no traffic fatalities by 2025) and carbon neutrality targets.

Projects underway include the Fourth Avenue Transit Street Enhancements, which will reconstruct the corridor as a dedicated transit street, and renewal of the Blake Transit Center, which will be the center of southeast Michigan's Bus Rapid Transit system. All three components of the 350 Transit Hub site will increase walkability and resilient travel modalities in ways that are direct, immediate, and measurable.

The Blake Transit Center (BTC), located in Midtown, currently anchors the City's multimodal network. Serving 17 of TheRide's 31 routes, BTC offers indoor waiting areas, restrooms, bike parking, and real-time transit information. All buses are equipped with front-mounted bike racks, and BTC connects riders to regional destinations including Detroit and Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW).



## HIGH DENSITY DISTRICT

### ADVANCING EQUITY, DENSITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

#### BUILDING VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT

Over the past 20 years, Ann Arbor has seen significant growth in downtown multi-family housing. Since 2010 alone, over 3,120 units have been built, are under construction, approved, or in review as of July 2024. However, only 114 units are designated as affordable, with just 18 completed and 96 still under construction—highlighting the need for deeper equitable integration. To address this, the City is implementing city-wide strategies, starting with Midtown.

In alignment with the MSHDA-supported Regional Housing Partnership Plan, Ann Arbor is expanding access to mixed-income housing. Diverse typologies—including family-sized units and barrier-free designs—are prioritized to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of residents. Each site is eligible for layered financing through Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), HUD, and MSHDA programs, and is being designed to integrate housing with retail, public space, and community services.

The City's infrastructure coordination is a key strategy. The DDA's Development Plan identifies nearly \$33 million in water and sewer upsizing to support high density development. Planned in coordination, the Fourth Avenue Transit Street Project is installing new water mains, stormwater infrastructure, and streetscape restoration to support this development. Construction timelines are aligned with roadwork and utility upgrades to minimize disruption and maximize efficiency.



# QUALITY OF LIFE

## ARTS, CULTURE, AND PUBLIC SPACE

The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has long prioritized a high quality of life in the downtown area through transformative public realm and placemaking initiatives. These efforts have created vibrant, inclusive spaces that support cultural expression, recreation, and community connection.

Most recently, the DDA launched Elevate, an Art in Public Spaces Program, with active projects in Midtown and the broader Talent District. Elevate supports both temporary and permanent installations, helping to embed cultural arts into the fabric of everyday life.



### PLANNED ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE TALENT DISTRICT INCLUDE:

- **DOWNTOWN DISTRICT LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT:** Downtown District Library Redevelopment: Following voter approval in August 2025, the library site will be reconstructed as the street-level anchor of a new high-rise multi-family building, featuring a public plaza that integrates cultural programming and community gathering.
- **LIBERTY PLAZA PHASE 1 AND 2:** Phase 1 includes repairs, landscaping, and an immersive mural; Phase 2 improves accessibility and accommodates a performance stage and large crowds.
- **EVENT BOLLARDS:** Event Bollards: These enable safer, lower-cost street closures, supporting flexible use of streets for cultural events and performances.
- **LIBERTY AND WASHINGTON STREETSCAPES:** Curbless, flexible street designs will expand community space and support outdoor arts and recreation.
- **ONGOING ARTS & CULTURE PROGRAMMING:** Ongoing Arts & Culture Programming: supported by partners such as Sonic Lunch, The Ark, Michigan Theater, Art Fairs, Main Street Summer Streets, and the Ann Arbor Summer Festival.
- **MAINTENANCE INVESTMENTS:** Maintenance Investments: The DDA continues to fund repairs and has established an Elevate maintenance fund and Downtown Service Team to sustain these improvements.

### GRANT ELEMENT 3



## LOCAL BUSINESSES ADVANCING EQUITY, DENSITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

The City of Ann Arbor is actively supporting local businesses with programs and quality of place efforts. This is particularly pressing post-pandemic, as downtown Ann Arbor has lost 1 million employee visits annually, significantly reducing daytime foot traffic and impacting daytime businesses. In 2024, downtown Ann Arbor recorded 600,000 fewer annual trips compared to pre-pandemic data.

While the downtown area's recovery is slow, overall visits have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Downtown residential population and visitors have increased post-pandemic, and activity has shifted to the evening, favoring evening businesses, which consequently creates challenges for daytime businesses. The City of Ann Arbor, Downtown Development Authority, and others are working to cultivate reasons for people to live and visit downtown. Placemaking, events,

activation, and a downtown service team are all strategies in parallel development.

Support post-pandemic requires a range of strategies, especially in a high rent, low vacancy downtown. Within and immediately adjacent to Midtown, this requires creating low-rent retail opportunities. The Downtown Library has launched low rent retail spaces, and the 350 S. Fifth Avenue project is constructing 6,500 square feet commercial space - both designed to lower barriers to entry for local entrepreneurs. Another strategy is to create more opportunities for local businesses to affordably expand their operations. This can most easily be achieved through repurposing the public realm. Outdoor event and sidewalk occupancy permits offer the most affordable rents in the City at \$1 per square foot.

These efforts are reinforced by the DDA's

broader strategy to grow foot traffic and support business longevity. Programs like the golpass provide a free transit pass for all downtown employees and data tools help businesses understand customer behavior and adapt to changing patterns. Ann Arbor SPARK plays a central role in this ecosystem with services and programs focused on business development and expansion. In addition, the DDA will launch a Downtown Service Team in 2026 to provide front door support for cleaning and beautification.

**IN THE AREA IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDING THE 350 TRANSIT HUB SITE**, there are two commercial restaurants and dozens of commercial businesses located within .25 mile of the project, ranging from small cafes and shops to high-tech start-ups. Businesses located directly along Fourth Avenue will benefit directly from the project.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

## IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING ANN ARBOR'S TALENT PLAN LONGTERM

The City of Ann Arbor ensures the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of its projects—including those supported by grants such as the Michigan Talent Partnership (MTP)—through a strategic, integrated approach grounded in city values. These values and the ability to implement the Project is reflected in the adopted City Capital Improvement Plan, Department Budgets, and new DDA Development Plan. Ongoing maintenance funding is also secure, with established, funded programs and the introduction of a new Downtown Service Team in 2026.

### LIBERTY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- Maintenance & Repairs: Sustainability is led by DDA-funded programs, including an Elevate maintenance fund, sidewalk repair program, and the new Downtown Service Team.
- Infrastructure Upgrades: Led by DDA and City Engineering
- Streetscape improvements (Fourth Avenue, Liberty, Washington)
- Transit upgrades (Blake Transit Center expansion, bus rapid transit)
- Enhanced bike lanes and pedestrian features
- Public art installations via Elevate program

### LIBERTY HOUSING & MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

- Led by AAHC and partners like Related Midwest
- Projects include affordable housing (e.g., 350 S. Fifth Avenue), retail spaces, and energy-efficient buildings

### INTEGRATED PLANNING

- Infrastructure upgrades (water, sewer, energy) are timed with development to reduce disruption and improve efficiency

### LIBERTY COMMUNITY ACTIVATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

- Placemaking & Events: Public spaces are activated through events like Art Fair, Sonic Lunch, and Summer Streets.
- Business Support: SPARK and others offer technical help.
- Programs like SBS and go!pass help small businesses grow and stay in the area

### OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

- Elevate maintenance fund and DDA repairs
- Downtown Service Team
- AAATA for transit and multimodal access
- AAHC for property management and resident services

### FUNDING & LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE

- Major projects are included in the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), which is updated annually by evaluating projects' alignment with the four values
- The downtown TIF district is being re-established and expanded to fund infrastructure
- Maintenance plans are reviewed annually to adapt to changing needs

### LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

- Promote infill development and mixed-use neighborhoods
- Support "complete neighborhoods" where daily needs are met locally
- Align land use and infrastructure to reduce car travel and emissions



# PROJECT CONSORTIUM INFORMATION

## CONSORTIUM ENTITIES AND ORGANIZATION ROLE OR CONTRIBUTION

### PROJECT CONSORTIUM AND SUPPORT

The DDA will continue to serve as the city's entity that coordinates public agencies, transportation authorities, housing organizations, downtown businesses, and other community stakeholders to ensure a strategic and inclusive approach to long-term urban development.

### ANN ARBOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)

The DDA spearheads strategic planning, placemaking, and infrastructure improvements, including support for affordable housing initiatives such as 350 S. Fifth Avenue.

### CITY OF ANN ARBOR DEPARTMENTS

The Economic Development, Planning, Public Services, and Parks departments contribute policy alignment, technical expertise, and operational support. Their involvement ensures integration with the city's Future Land Use Plan and broader sustainability goals.

### ANN ARBOR AREA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (AAATA/ TheRide)

Operates 31 transit routes in the greater Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, as well as paratransit, on-demand, and vanpool services. Provides transit planning and operational coordination to enhance mobility and walkability within the district, locally, and regionally. AAATA's role is critical in supporting multimodal infrastructure and reducing car dependency.

### ANN ARBOR HOUSING COMMISSION (AAHC)

Leads expansion of housing access and affordability. AAHC collaborates with the DDA and city departments to identify development opportunities and align housing strategies with district goals.

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Many local business associations, arts organizations, the University of Michigan, SPARK, Neutral Zone, and other civic groups contribute to programming, outreach, and cultural activation of the district that reflects Ann Arbor's values of equity, sustainability, and creativity.

### CONSORTIUM STRUCTURE

Convened by the DDA, the consortium meets quarterly (or more frequently as needed) to:

- Coordinate activities across agencies
- Review progress toward district goals
- Troubleshoot implementation challenges

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The planning process for the projects identified in the talent plan involved extensive stakeholder engagement, including:

- Online and in-person public workshops and open houses
- Surveys and public comment opportunities

- Focus groups with stakeholder groups such as business associations (Main Street, State Street, Kerrytown, South University), the Business Improvement Zone, and area residents—including low income and Washtenaw County Shelter residents.
- Presentations to City Council, Planning Commission, and Transportation Commission
- Interdepartmental coordination and collaboration
- DDA Board meetings
- And many other engagement efforts

This inclusive approach ensured that the plan reflects the needs and aspirations of a broad cross-section of the community.

# ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT READINESS

## IDENTIFIED ACTIVITIES

The proposal is comprehensive; integrating housing, transportation, public space, business support, and sustainability. It aligns with City values of Affordability, Equity, Sustainability, and Dynamism. Project readiness is demonstrated through updated zoning and codes, a clear implementation timeline, and layered financing strategies.

- 1. PLANNING, ENGINEERING, PERMITTING REVIEW, AND LOCAL ASSESSMENTS:** The project involves detailed design, engineering, and permitting work to support new infrastructure and housing development.
- 2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT:** Public input has shaped the project through meetings, surveys, and outreach, ensuring it reflects community needs and values.
- 3. UTILIZATION OF MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY:** Plans include new commercial space alongside housing, supporting a vibrant, walkable neighborhood.
- 4. IMPROVE UTILIZATION OF MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY:** Plans include Fourth Avenue commercial support (see comment on page 7 if more content is needed).
- 5. SITE IMPROVEMENTS:** access (including ADA improvements) and streetscaping; Investments in plazas, streetscapes, and public art will create welcoming outdoor spaces and support local artists.



- 7. PLANS TO ENHANCE PARKS, GREEN SPACE, ART, AND OUTDOOR SOCIAL SPACES:** The Fourth Ave, and William Street elements create welcoming outdoor social spaces, create art, and welcome artists.
- 8. LONG-TERM FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY:** The project combines local millages, grants, and other funding sources to ensure long-term success and sustainability.



# ZONING AND CODE RESTRICTIONS

## HOW THE ZONING AND CODE SUPPORT HIGH DENSITY

Ann Arbor's approach to zoning and land use is undergoing revisions, guided by the imminent adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, which prioritizes equity, affordability, sustainability, and the creation of vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. The city's zoning code and recent policy updates have made it easier to advance high-density residential and mixed-use projects, particularly in the downtown core and transit-rich corridors.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan (2025 update in progress) calls for increased housing diversity and density to address affordability and sustainability challenges. The plan emphasizes the need to modernize land use policies, reduce exclusionary zoning, and unlock new opportunities for compact, mixed-use development. It also supports the removal of barriers to multifamily housing and encourages incremental increases in density, especially near employment centers and transit hubs. These zoning updates will begin upon adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan, but the following describes how current zoning already supports density.

### DOWNTOWN CORE (D1) ZONING DISTRICT

The D1 Downtown Core zoning district allows for the highest intensity of development in Ann Arbor, supporting tall buildings, mixed-use projects, and proximity to major transit

assets. This district is designed to encourage residential towers, ground-floor commercial space, and walkable urban environments. The D1 district's flexible dimensional standards and high allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) make it ideal for projects like the 350 S. Fifth Avenue development, which will deliver over 300 affordable housing units in a 20-story tower.

### PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) FLEXIBILITY

To enable transformative projects, Ann Arbor has used Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning to provide additional flexibility for sites with unique opportunities or constraints. The 350 S. Fifth Avenue site was rezoned to PUD in 2022, allowing the project to meet ambitious housing and design goals without requiring further zoning changes. The PUD ordinance for this site includes requirements for affordable housing, sustainability benchmarks, and enhanced transit integration.

### REMOVAL OF PARKING MINIMUMS

In 2022, Ann Arbor eliminated parking minimums citywide, supporting infill development and mixed-use projects. This policy change reduces the cost and complexity of new housing, frees up land for alternative uses, and encourages sustainable transportation choices. The city is also exploring maximum parking ratios in transit-rich areas to further align parking supply with real-world demand.

### UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE (UDC)

Ann Arbor's Unified Development Code (UDC) consolidates all zoning districts and development standards, streamlining the approval process for new construction and redevelopment. The UDC provides clear guidance on permitted uses, setbacks, height regulations, and approval procedures, making it easier for applicants to navigate the system and for the city to implement its Comprehensive Plan goals.

### TRANSIT CORRIDOR (TC1) ZONING:

The TC1 Transit Corridor district supports mid-rise, mixed-use, transit-oriented development along key inbound corridors. This district is designed to promote density, walkability, and multimodal access, aligning with the city's goals for sustainable growth and talent attraction.

### RECENT COUNCIL ACTIONS

City Council has approved multiple ordinances to rezone properties, including the Downtown Library site, which is slated for redevelopment as a mixed-use project with housing above the library branch.

# PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The Cultivate Midtown initiative will progress through several key phases over the next three years. In late fall 2025, the project will complete conceptual design and city review, followed by construction documentation and bidding. Major construction activities are scheduled for the 2026 season, with additional site plan reviews and phased construction continuing through 2027. The 350 S. Fifth Avenue development is expected to be completed by 2028, alongside streetscape and transit improvements. This timeline ensures coordinated delivery of housing, infrastructure, and public space enhancements, supporting long-term sustainability and alignment with Ann Arbor's strategic goals. The broader neighborhood vision and additional projects will be implemented beyond this timeframe through the City's Capital Improvement Plan and DDA Development Plan.

350 TRANSIT HUB PROJECT	2023				2024				2025				2026				2027				2028				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4																					
Conceptual and Design Development																									
Engagement																									
Finalize Construction Documentation																									
City Review																									
Bid																									
Construction																									



Blake Transit Center Expansion

350 S. Fifth Avenue Streetscape and High Rise

Fourth Avenue Transit Street

# MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

## GOALS AND OUTCOMES

To track progress of the Cultivate Midtown vision and related projects, the following goals and outcomes will be used:

### MOBILITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

*Goal: Improve multimodal access, safety, and connectivity across key corridors*

- Increased transit ridership and bikeway usage (from improved transit stops, bike lanes, walkable infrastructure)
- Customer satisfaction (via on-board surveys every 2-3 years, including questions about transit centers)
- Transit customer safety and reliability of bus operations (reduction in bus and safety incidents: near misses with pedestrians, bus swipes, damaged mirrors, etc.)
- Accessibility to destinations, especially with high-capacity/high-frequency service and for those with disabilities
- Linear/square feet of stormwater and green infrastructure improvements (e.g., upgrades along Fourth Avenue)
- Pedestrian and visitor counts

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*Goal: Activate commercial corridors to support local business growth*

- Amount of new or improved commercial space

- Number of local business opening and closings
- Visitation and foot traffic

### HOUSING & MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

*Goal: Deliver new housing units and promote mixed-use buildings*

- Number of housing units supported or created

### QUALITY OF LIFE & CULTURE

*Goal: Enhance public spaces and cultural amenities*

- Linear feet or active storefronts

*Goal: Grow community programming*

- Number of event permits granted
- Number of special events

*Goal: Strengthen Ann Arbor's identity through placemaking*

- Number of public art installations and placemaking projects (e.g., Elevate – Art in Public Spaces program)

These metrics will help the Cultivate Midtown team monitor progress toward stated goals and adapt programs and focus as needed to ensure successful implementation.

### BUDGET

### 12 TOTAL PROJECT COST AND FUNDING REQUEST

See Appendix D

### 13 PROJECT MATCH FUNDING

See Appendix D and E

### 14 ADDITIONAL MATCH FUNDS

See Appendix D and E

### APPENDICES

**Appendix A: Local Planning Documents**

**Appendix B: Existing Conditions**

**Appendix C: Chief Administrator Letter**

**Appendix D: Budget**

**Appendix E: Letters of Evidence**

**Appendix F: Letters of Support**