



Downtown Revitalization Vision Plan

Creating a Downtown Pittsburgh of the Future





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Letter from Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato, Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey, and Allegheny Conference on Community Development CEO, Stefani Pashman

Fellow Pittsburghers,

Downtown Pittsburgh is at a pivotal moment. Like many other downtowns across the nation, we have faltered post-pandemic. The Golden Triangle, while occupying only a one square mile radius in the geographic and emotional heart of southwestern Pennsylvania, has an enormous impact economically, socially and psychologically on the entire 10-county region. As our largest main street, and our region's calling card, whatever is happening downtown has ripple effects across the entire 10-county region.

So, we are doing what Pittsburghers have done for nearly 80 years: public and private sector leaders joining forces to overcome challenges and unlock opportunities. Business, philanthropic, nonprofit, university, and community leaders have worked diligently to develop a plan to reimagine Pittsburgh for the future. Together we have taken immediate action - stabilizing downtown through programmatic investments in health and public safety, identifying sustainable solutions to maintain programmatic investments, and engaging experts from inside and outside the region to guide us in developing a long-term reinvestment strategy that will foster a vibrant, thriving downtown for all.

This report outlines the current state of our downtown, the work being accomplished now, and the work that lies ahead. It also outlines the resources necessary to advance that work. The approach, we hope, will yield positive and transformative outcomes for downtown Pittsburgh, and will serve as a model for downtowns across the commonwealth.

As elected officials and leaders in the business community, we stand ready to support a comprehensive revitalization plan for our downtown. We are pleased to share this update with all stakeholders and look forward to working together to realize our vision and a bright future for downtown Pittsburgh.

Sincerely,

***Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato,
City of Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey,
Allegheny Conference on Community Development CEO Stefani Pashman***

► Our Downtown Matters

While all downtowns have historically been, and continue to be, strong foundations for cities, the pandemic forced the world to adapt in countless ways. Urban cores are experiencing similar issues and are responding creatively to how they attract and retain investment and people.

WE'VE RECOGNIZED SIX KEY TRENDS DRIVING OUR DOWNTOWN TODAY

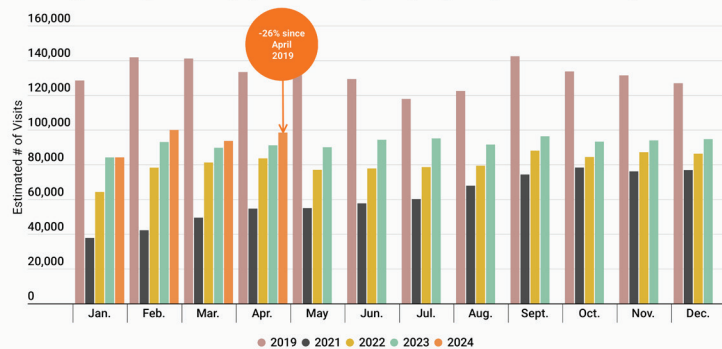
1 Downtown employment was shrinking prior to the pandemic

- Downtown employees have declined by 17% since 2002 due to the closure and/or relocation of call centers and other businesses. Our region's growing sectors (e.g., AI, advanced manufacturing and energy) are not seeking traditional upper floor commercial office space.

2 Downtown visitors have not reached pre-pandemic levels

- The average daily activity rate for residents, employees and visitors is still 26% below April 2019 as a benchmark month.

Average Daily Activity (Residents, Employees, and Visitors)



Source: Placer.ai
 Note: Data encompasses an aggregate average daily number of residents, employees, and visitors combined. Placer.ai data provides an estimate of foot traffic time, dwell time, and forms a large and representative panel of customers across the United States.

3 Downtown has not evolved from a business district to a true neighborhood

- Downtown Pittsburgh is far more dependent on the commercial real estate market than is the case in other metros. Pittsburgh is the 28th largest metro in the nation, yet we possess the fifth highest concentration of downtown office space. As tenants of these commercial properties adjust their footprints to accommodate fewer commuting workers or relocate to other submarkets, they pose a risk to building owners and taxing bodies as well.

4 Residential conversion is important, but only part of the solution

- More than 21,500 residents call Greater Downtown Pittsburgh home, with a more than 90% occupancy rate in about 9,000 residential units. There are more than 1,650 downtown units in the pipeline to come online in the coming years.
- People desire a true neighborhood with a walkable downtown with robust amenities, which has helped inform not only conversion projects, but also improvements in civic spaces and the public realm.

5 Looming collapse ahead: real estate values and foreclosures threaten tax base.

- As tenants of commercial properties optimize footprints or move to other submarkets, downtown is experiencing new, large blocks of availability from significant corporate tenants.
- According to a 2020 study by the International Downtowns Association, established downtowns like Pittsburgh account for approximately 25% of a city's assessed value and property tax revenue and more than 40% of the hotel tax revenue.



6 Demands for health and human services increased in a post-pandemic Pittsburgh

- Throughout the past few years, experts from city and county offices have come together to tackle one of the most pressing concerns downtown – the increased need for human services, as well as emergency and post-emergency response.
- Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh have worked to address longstanding health, safety and justice issues in our downtown. They continue to work hand-in-hand with police, emergency response crews, social and outreach workers and program developers to assist community members with complex health and social needs. Through collaboration and public-private partnerships, human service programs continue to progress and evolve in downtown Pittsburgh.

Downtown Pittsburgh by the Numbers



Worker density of

74,000

workers representing nearly 7% of the region's workforce are employed downtown



2nd

largest employment center in Pennsylvania



1 square mile

physical footprint



100,000

people per square mile



7

out of the region's 10 largest employers maintain a primary office in the Golden Triangle.



► Collaborative Efforts to Move Downtown Forward

Since late 2023, more than 40 downtown-focused organizations, including business, academia, labor, non-profits, philanthropy, and elected officials, have been coming together to develop a vision and framework for downtown's future. Working diligently through collaborative efforts, these partners have:

- identified near-term stabilization efforts;
- established goals for the future of downtown; and
- are working to find sustainable funding solutions and strategies to support this work.

► Vision & Goals for the Future of Downtown Pittsburgh

Vision: Advance downtown Pittsburgh's revitalization of its real estate, public realm, and civic spaces to create a downtown of the future that is vibrant, attractive, and welcoming to all residents, employees, and visitors alike.

► Goals

Vibrancy & Safety

1. Downtown will be a clean, safe, accessible, inclusive, and inviting environment for all.
2. Downtown will embrace a dense and diverse range of commerce, arts, and cultural experiences that support vibrant day and nighttime economies, support a diverse workforce, and encourage all who live and work downtown to stay and play.

Strategic Redevelopment

1. Downtown will be an economically competitive business environment and will attract, retain, and encourage a diverse range of businesses – small and large.
2. Downtown will be a livable community that offers a range of housing choices for individuals and families with diverse social and economic backgrounds.
3. Downtown will offer an interconnected pattern of parks, public spaces, streets, and 21st century infrastructure that are vibrant, accessible, and instill a unique sense of place and community.

Working groups aligned to each of the goals above have been established and are working together to advance them.

► Long Term Investment Strategy

We have engaged experts from inside and outside the region to guide us in developing a long-term reinvestment strategy to achieve these goals for a vibrant, thriving downtown for all.

Field Operations, a New York-based landscape architecture and urban design firm responsible for such projects as Manhattan's High Line and Chicago's historic Navy Pier, is our partner in identifying catalytic projects that will reshape the downtown environment and create a different value proposition for the Golden Triangle.

In recent months, the firm's expertise has guided efforts to identify the assets that differentiate Pittsburgh and designed a framework to elevate these spaces into vibrant, inclusive areas that are available all year round, attracting people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to live, work and play.

► Making Connections Across Downtown

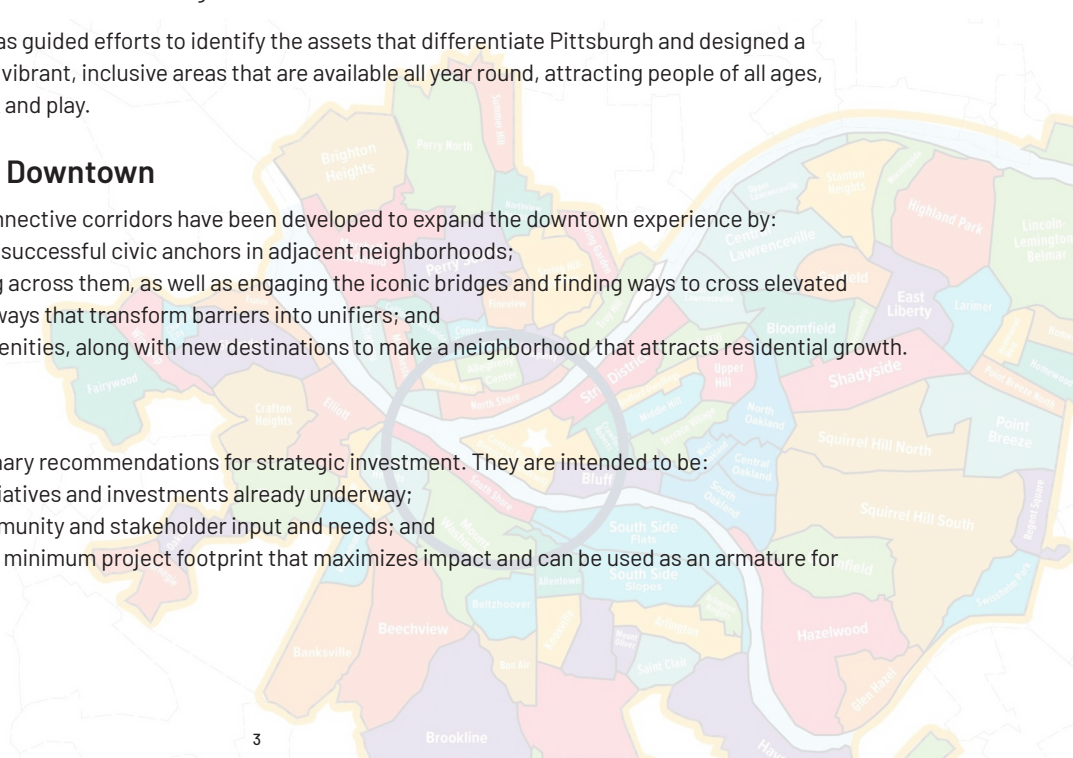
As part of this work, three proposed connective corridors have been developed to expand the downtown experience by:

- creating thematic connections to successful civic anchors in adjacent neighborhoods;
- embracing our rivers and reaching across them, as well as engaging the iconic bridges and finding ways to cross elevated highways, ramps and railroads in ways that transform barriers into unifiers; and
- leveraging existing assets and amenities, along with new destinations to make a neighborhood that attracts residential growth.

► Three Connective Corridors

These connective corridors are preliminary recommendations for strategic investment. They are intended to be:

- **Additive** – building on or off of initiatives and investments already underway;
- **Flexible** – changing based on community and stakeholder input and needs; and
- **Incremental** – representing a core minimum project footprint that maximizes impact and can be used as an armature for future projects.



► Conceptual, High-Impact Projects to Reinvent Downtown

Through collaboration with downtown organizations and careful evaluation of current and proposed plans, Field Operations has built off existing plans, overlaid with recommended projects to revitalize our downtown civic and public spaces. The interplay between public realm projects and real estate is important – both needing the other to succeed. For this reason, proposed public realm projects have been developed in relation to proposed and anticipated commercial conversion projects in order to create a true neighborhood in downtown Pittsburgh.

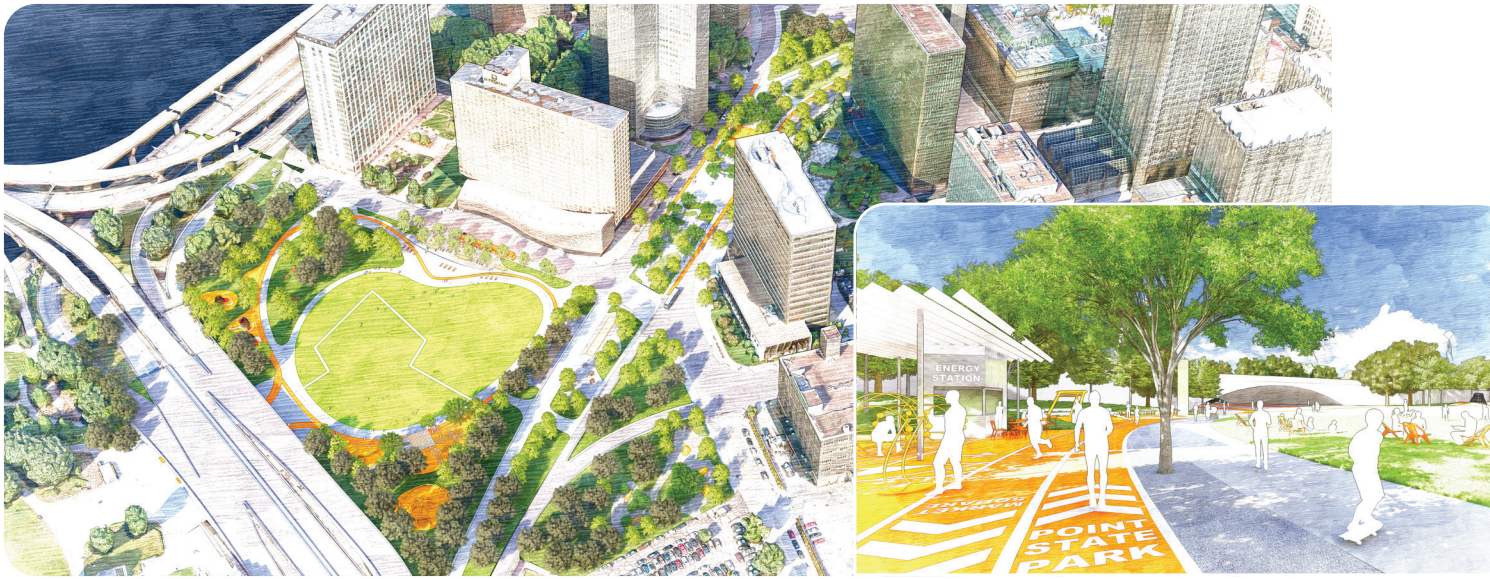
Three high impact, high priority civic and public realm projects have emerged including:

8TH STREET BLOCK & ALLEGHENY DESCENT



This proposed civic space could create a dramatic destination downtown, energized by the Cultural District and the river, and nestled among the Three Sister Bridges. With the ability to offer a variety of civic spaces and programs, the 8th Street Block could include a large, flexible lawn, cafe, outdoor amphitheater, water play, a backyard area with outdoor games, food trucks, and moveable furnishings. Another proposed portion of this project could utilize Fort Duquesne Boulevard to create more activated civic space, including a balcony over the river, which could lead to the Allegheny Descent, a lush walkway to the water, creating a strong pedestrian connection to one of our beautiful rivers.

POINT STATE PARK



The eastern portion of Point State Park, the area before the underpass walkway, could be transformed into a welcoming gateway to downtown and a park for the neighborhood, with strategic upgrades and amenities concentrated along its perimeter to attract more residential growth. The conceptual design, as well as a more in-depth design phase, has been and will continue to be thoughtful, so as not to disturb the native species near the Point. Evaluating innovative approaches to traffic patterns, including a “road diet” or “right-sizing” of a road, could be implemented on Liberty Avenue with active programs in the medians to directly connect Point State Park to Market Square, the heart of downtown.

MARKET SQUARE



A renovated Market Square could include new paving, furnishing, and other features that support both everyday use and events such as farmers’ markets and smaller gatherings to reemphasize it as downtown’s civic heart and crossing. Restricting vehicular entry and exit points would provide Market Square with more space for people, allowing it to expand from building face to building face, engaging the restaurant frontages and increasing its use and capacity.

Each of these projects are visionary and conceptually designed in a way that can lead to a more robust future design phase, which would include coordination with the appropriate local, state and federal agencies, as well as a public input process to guide the revitalization of each space. Working in tandem with Allegheny County, the city of Pittsburgh, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, and developers across downtown, conversion projects and revitalization of each space will cohesively create a neighborhood in downtown Pittsburgh, delivering diverse housing options and robust economic growth to create and retain jobs.

► Investment Plan

Borrowing from the best practices of other regions and cities, we have identified a blend of public and private tools and funds to bring this vision and the projects that can anchor it to life. Some of those tools, like the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Act (LERTA), the recent passage of the enhanced LERTA, and the Urban Redevelopment Authority's Downtown Conversion Program, have been successfully put in place. Other tools to come will also revitalize downtown and main streets regionwide.

We are exploring additional public financing options to provide sustainable funding streams for the reimaged downtown Pittsburgh of the future.

► What's Next

In the days and weeks ahead, we will share the vision and concepts for downtown in more detail. We encourage you to activate your organizational and professional networks to share these plans and engage in conversation. Moving forward, we will need input from all of you and the community broadly on the design and execution of these transformational projects.



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