

## Section 2

# Downtown Hutch Tomorrow: Vision and Values

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# Our Vision for Downtown

The vision for Hutchinson’s downtown is to create a people-centric place. The vision effectively establishes expectations for Downtown’s growth and improvement through public and private investments. Addressing revitalization is not easy, but the focus for the future will be to make Downtown a premier destination for investment, housing, work, and play within Hutchinson. The Hutchinson Downtown Master Plan vision depicts the 10- to 20-year direction Hutchinson wants its downtown to take and illustrates the community’s ideal future there. The vision is designed to inspire dedication and commitment from all community members while providing structure for future downtown planning and investment.

The vision statement was developed with community and stakeholder input. Extensive efforts were taken to engage and involve the community so that the voices of Hutchinson could be heard and reflected in this Plan. Multiple Avenues for community input were presented to allow for diversity of thought and the development of consensus, which lends to the credibility of the recommendations made in this document. The consensus building that took place during the planning process meant engaging discussions and the formulation of consensus surrounding what is possible, desirable, and appropriate for Downtown Hutchinson. The vision and values are born from the voices of the people of Hutchinson:

*“Downtown Hutch is a thriving and dynamic cultural hub at the heart of the community, home to vibrant retail, dining, entertainment, and business destinations; active indoor and outdoor spaces; downtown living, and community pride.”*

Critical to the downtown vision is the idea that Downtown Hutchinson is a dynamic central hub—a destination that presents an important sense of identity and culture for the entire community. Community culture is made up of many elements, including: the people, what they do (i.e., entertainment, leisure, activities), what they hold dear (i.e., history, heritage, traditions, values), and how they exist together. The people of Hutchinson are excited for the potential of downtown, while remaining proud of their culture, history, and heritage.

The vision for Downtown Hutchinson will guide the way for the rest of the Plan, serving as a lamp post to guide the strategies that will ultimately shape the future of downtown.

# Our Downtown Values

Building on the vision, downtown values have been identified throughout the planning process to capture Hutchinson’s ideals and guide the community throughout the Plan’s lifetime, regardless of evolving goals, strategies, or actions. The vision is supported by nine core values, detailed below. The values inform all aspects of this Plan, provide an organizing framework for this section, and highlight the layered approach necessary to achieve revitalization. Each value is supported by a discussion of where Hutch is today—including what is working and where there are opportunities for improvement—and a discussion of what the community would like Downtown Hutchinson to be in the future.

- 1. Historic and Cultural Preservation.** Protect, preserve, and enhance the wealth of the historic buildings, façades, and culture in downtown.
- 2. Lively Spaces.** Capitalize on redevelopment and rehabilitation throughout the downtown to provide for attractive and updated public and private spaces for all types of uses.
- 3. Unified Downtown Brand.** Establish a unified brand and vision for downtown that integrates the history, values, and composition of the community, capturing its uniqueness and cultivating a unified vision for an eclectic and multifaceted downtown.
- 4. Distinct but Cohesive Downtown Districts.** Unique subarea districts in downtown that allow and encourage variety in style, character, and uses within a cohesive downtown character that cultivates pockets of uniqueness and appeal.
- 5. Vibrant Economy.** Invest in the development and maintenance of high-quality public and private downtown spaces that provide inherent flexibility for multiple purposes, attract vital economic activity, create opportunities to establish and operate distinct businesses, adapt to changing market demands, and expand the potential economic base of downtown.
- 6. Connected Community.** Create an inclusive downtown through accessible infrastructure, safety improvements, connectivity enhancements, and diverse events and attractions that make downtown Hutchinson appealing and accessible to all.
- 7. Business Friendly.** Create an environment that invites, attracts, and retains downtown business, making it enjoyable to establish and operate a business, navigate local requirements, and benefit from a healthy network of knowledge and resources.
- 8. Full-Time Downtown.** Cultivate an environment where people can live, work, and play, offering all basic needs for visitors and downtown residents, alike, including residences, places of employment, restaurants, entertainment destinations, markets, shops, pharmacy, banking, recreational resources, and other needed services all hosted right downtown.
- 9. Diverse Downtown.** Establish an environment that attracts residents and visitors of all ages, ethnicities, cultures, and levels of ability, reflecting the values and interests of those people through diverse economic activity, business, festivals, and art.



# Key Issues Facing Downtown

The emerging issues facing Downtown were identified through community input, an analysis of the physical and cultural landscape of downtown, an economics and market analysis, and other means by which this plan was informed. Below are the key issues identified through the planning process, which will be addressed in the corresponding sections of this Plan.

See **Appendix A: Downtown Hutch Today** and **Appendix B: Stakeholder and Public Engagement Summary** to view findings from the existing conditions analysis and public engagement process.

## Land Use and Development

1. Vacant/underutilized properties that detract from the success and momentum of downtown.
2. Lack of flexible/programmable spaces.
3. Property owners leasing properties that are not up to date, placing burden on the tenants to make improvements.
4. Code compliance is difficult and expensive, especially related to life safety and bringing existing older buildings up to code.
5. Lack of diverse housing options to help support economic activity, identity, and success.
6. Lack of mixed-use spaces to accommodate flexible and adaptable downtown uses.
7. Limited outdoor gathering opportunities integrated into first-floor businesses, such as sidewalk cafes and restaurants that include outdoor seating space.
8. Limited downtown destination options such as entertainment, restaurants, shopping, and public gathering space.
9. Lack of physical transitions from commercial/office retail to industrial enterprises
10. Limited number and variety of downtown dining options.



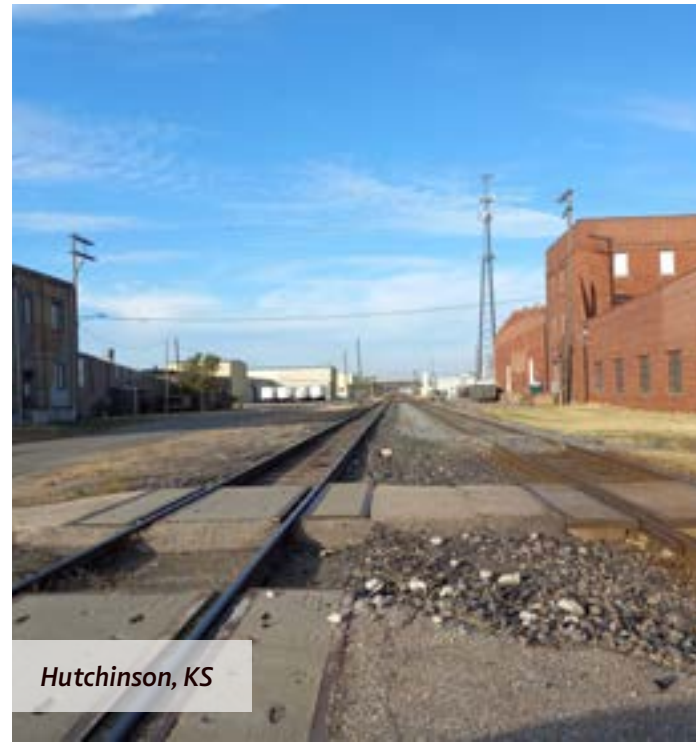
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Downtown Hutchinson Planning & Design Charrette took place at Memorial Hall on April 12, 2023.



## Transportation and Mobility

1. Maintenance of downtown streets, sidewalks, and public spaces is lacking in portions of downtown.
2. Need for safer pedestrian infrastructure downtown including sidewalks and intersections.
3. The multimodal connectivity of downtown destinations is lacking and in need of enhancements to promote safety and ease.
4. Downtown signage and wayfinding lacks attraction and appeal to promote local destinations and capture the attention of drivers and visitors.
5. Downtown needs improved transit and mobility opportunities for all.
6. Additional maintenance and improvements are needed to uphold the quality and function of downtown alleyways.
7. Downtown lacks lighting, seating, and safety features that enhance the pedestrian experience.
8. Infrastructure needed for bicycle ridership to and through downtown is lacking.
9. Traffic signals need to be modernized and synchronized to ensure more smooth flow of multimodal traffic.
10. Railroad tracks can create physical and audible interruptions as well as safety concerns downtown.



## Character and Public Spaces

1. Historic architecture, building façades, and culture of downtown are at risk as incompatible development takes place and buildings deteriorate over time.
2. Some building stock is aged and deteriorating.
3. There is a lack of green spaces, open spaces, and public gathering spaces for festivals, performances, etc.
4. There is a lack of a distinct, unified downtown brand.
5. The overall first impression of downtown could be improved.
6. There is demand for comfortable outdoor seating and outdoor dining options.
7. There is a strong desire for an outdoor venue or amphitheater and more events and festivals.
8. There is a need for additional downtown signage, wayfinding, and lighting downtown.
9. Beautification efforts need to be continued and expanded downtown.
10. There are a number of vacant properties and spaces on the first and second floors of buildings in downtown.
11. There is limited shade, seating, landscaping, and wind protection exists along streets and sidewalks.
12. Downtown has limited public art.

## Programming and Operations

1. Limited funding is available for downtown marketing and promotion.
2. There is limited quantity and quality of public spaces within downtown.
3. Downtown destinations do not appeal to all ages, demographics, and levels of ability.
4. Outdoor spaces are underutilized or not as well-maintained as they could be.
5. There are limited activity generators outside of Monday through Friday normal business hours.
6. There are limited resources for promotion of downtown activities and programs.
7. Downtown spaces could be better leveraged for events, festivals, and programs.
8. It is often challenging to navigate city codes to establish and maintain a downtown business.
9. Parking spaces along storefronts are often taken up by respective business owners and staff, reducing the number of available spaces for customers and visitors downtown.

## Economic Health and Vibrancy

1. There are limited number and variety of dining, entertainment, and destination uses that cause people to come and stay downtown.
2. Several downtown businesses have limited operating hours, reducing foot traffic and downtown's ability to build critical mass of activity.
3. There are negative perceptions of downtown safety due to homelessness or lack of people and activity.
4. There is a lack of workforce for new and existing businesses limits growth.
5. There is a lack of grants, incentives, training, and funding programs to make it easier to start a business downtown.
6. Downtown funding is limited and only allows for basic maintenance and high priority projects.
7. Downtown offers limited activity generators including employment and destination activities to create daytime and nighttime activity.
8. There is a need for a greater concentration of walkable destinations, businesses, and greenspaces.
9. Downtown attractions accommodate a limited variety of interests, ages, and levels of ability.



# Our Goals for Downtown

In response to the key issues facing downtown, goals have been developed for each section of this Plan, responding to findings from community engagement and the overall vision for downtown.

See **Appendix A: Downtown Hutch Today** and **Appendix B: Stakeholder and Public Engagement Summary** to view findings from the existing conditions analysis and public engagement process.

## Land Use and Development

1. Create a physical environment that supports activated and varied land uses in a dynamic mixed-use environment.
2. Support diverse and attractive housing types that accommodate additional downtown living for people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.
3. Encourage redevelopment, reinvestment, and re-purposing of targeted downtown properties to maximize economic and aesthetic potential and spark further investment.
4. Develop a vibrant downtown atmosphere that has a variety of activities and destinations, as well as a strong sense of place.
5. Facilitate strategic improvements to vacant buildings and parcels to encourage use and reuse that fits the downtown market.
6. Expand the quantity and functionality of indoor and outdoor flexible spaces that can be used to host programmed events and a variety of downtown attractions over time.
7. Build a critical mass of social and economic activity that results in activated streets and thriving businesses.



## Transportation and Mobility

1. Enhance the overall safety of downtown mobility through physical and operational improvements for all existing modes of transportation.
2. Facilitate easy access to and through downtown for all existing modes of transportation.
3. Implement and improve wayfinding and navigation tools to make downtown mobility safe and intuitive, connecting people to key destinations.
4. Maintain high quality health and safety of the downtown public right-of-way through infrastructure repairs and street clean-up.
5. Leverage downtown mobility assets including the Amtrak station and RCAT Transfer Station to enhance and improve downtown's functionality as a multimodal hub.
6. Create and strengthen downtown infrastructure that makes downtown a safe, enjoyable, and intuitive place to walk, bike, and park.
7. Construct a multimodal environment that encourages economic activity, social connectivity, and accessibility.
8. Integrate new and innovative technology and future-oriented infrastructure to accommodate future growth and demand downtown.

## Character and Public Spaces

1. Create a distinct brand that establishes the general identity, character, and aesthetics of downtown, integrating both its historic culture and its desire for the future.
2. Promote improvements to the public realm, creating spaces that offer additional programmable environments for social activities, festivals, and related attractions.
3. Preserve and maintain historic elements of downtown including the historic architecture, building façades, and cultural remnants.
4. Establish downtown as a primary public activity center of the community.
5. Integrate and enhance elements of a safe and thriving public realm including street trees, landscaping, flowers, shade structures, signage, outdoor seating, lighting, and public art.
6. Create pockets of uniqueness within downtown that attract residents and visitors and create an assemblage of interesting and interactive destinations and an overarching character for downtown.
7. Cultivate a striking first impression for downtown including defined gateways and iconic street features that make downtown appealing, exciting, and memorable.
8. Encourage, foster, and develop a quality public realm that highlights the uniqueness of new and historic destinations.



## Programming and Operations

1. Enhance and invest in downtown marketing efforts, promoting activities, destinations, and improvements using an established downtown brand.
2. Create partnerships and open channels of communication with established community organizations and governmental entities, creating more local and regional awareness and excitement for downtown and solidify relationships that will benefit the community as a whole.
3. Foster unity and excitement for downtown through intentional efforts to organize activities and events.
4. Attract and incentivize new business downtown.
5. Encourage a more active and open business environment with longer operational hours and a critical mass of activity downtown.
6. Create and leverage funding opportunities for downtown investment.
7. Improve the day-to-day maintenance and clean-up operations of downtown.
8. Implement solutions to reduce the presence of homelessness downtown.
9. Create easier navigation of complicated regulatory requirements that does not minimize the importance of health, safety, and welfare of the community.

## Economic Health and Vibrancy

1. Attract and retain new development including retail, dining, and entertainment attractions to create a critical mass of economic activity downtown.
2. Capitalize on existing downtown market strengths to cultivate a niche destination within local and regional markets.
3. Establish an array of downtown activities that serve a variety of interests and demographics, including attractions for young professionals, families, and seniors.
4. Make downtown an exciting destination for every day of the week.
5. Establish downtown as a great live-work environment and eclectic employment hub, offering an attractive and walkable space that easily transitions into further economic activity.
6. Increase the variety of businesses and public spaces within downtown that make it easy and enjoyable to visit multiple establishments in a trip downtown.
7. Leverage a unified downtown brand to establish diversity and continuity in the market and attract a unique customer base.
8. Offer short-term lodging and residential options for people to live downtown and visit over-night, creating an appealing environment that meets 24-hour needs.



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*Residents and stakeholders provide input at the public Open House on April 11, 2023. The input exercises included questions related to land use, transportation and mobility, character and public spaces, programming and operations, and economic health and vibrancy. Results of the exercises were used as the foundation for the Master Plan's recommendations.*



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