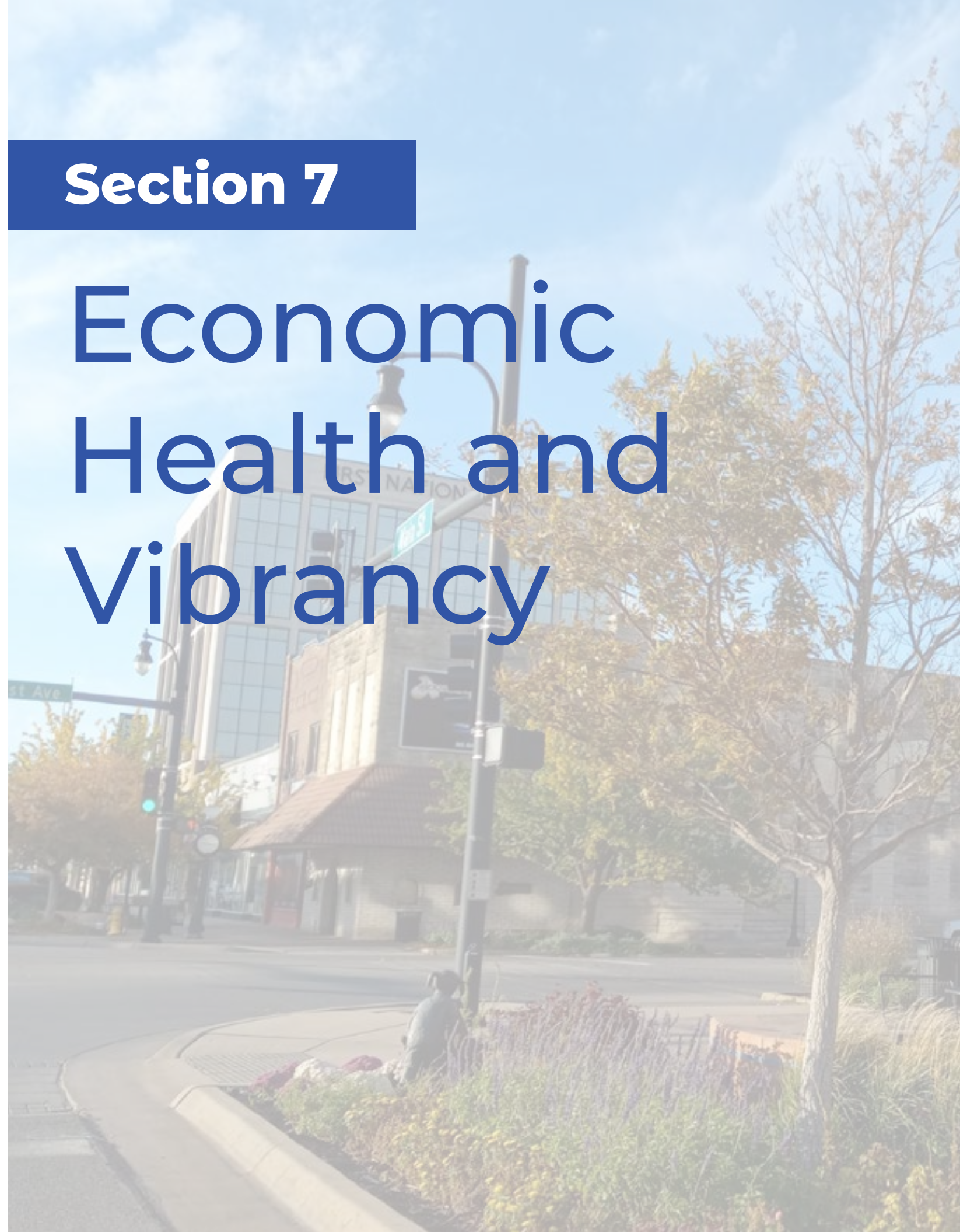


Section 7

Economic Health and Vibrancy

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Key Issues

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.

Goals

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**.

A vibrant downtown is composed of a variety of economic drivers that work with the physical and operational elements of downtown to drive economic growth. Creating and sustaining a healthy economic ecosystem takes considerable forethought and an array of strategies that help to make downtown distinct, diverse, and attractive, creating a critical mass of offerings strung together to prompt activity and enjoyment. It is critical that downtowns leverage a variety of resources to fund reinvestment and development within downtown, cultivate activity, generate revenue, and develop a healthy and vibrant economy.



Strategies

Strategy 7.1 – Leverage branded downtown districts to create pockets of unique but continuous economic activity throughout downtown

Strategy 7.2 – Identify downtown’s market niche to better attract downtown customers and activity

Strategy 7.3 – Leverage downtown’s history and culture to cultivate a dynamic and attractive market

Strategy 7.4 – Create a downtown that offers both permanent and temporary lodging, as well as attractive shopping, dining, and other destinations for full-time needs to provide options around the clock

Strategy 7.5 – Cultivate a critical mass of dining and entertainment destinations to make downtown a great place to spend time and money and experience a full night out

Strategy 7.6 – Create a greater concentration of walkable destinations, businesses, and greenspaces to encourage a more extended stay downtown

Strategy 7.7 – Lengthen operational hours, host regular events, and create a higher density of businesses and destinations to create regular activity and foot traffic downtown

Strategy 7.8 – Promote downtown as a great place to live and work, establishing a variety of businesses and housing types to create a full-time downtown

Strategy 7.9 – Expand the offerings of downtown attractions for all ages including families, young professionals, and seniors to make downtown more diverse and attractive for everyone

Strategy 7.10 – Create a downtown Business Improvement Association or District (BID) to establish a more united, vibrant, clean, and safe district

Strategy 7.11 – Employ numerous concurrent tactics to support downtown reinvestment and incentivize new business to make downtown an exciting and affordable place to start a business

Strategy 7.1

Leverage branded downtown districts to create pockets of unique but continuous economic activity throughout downtown

As described in Strategy 3.1, distinct downtown districts will be developed based on existing strengths and attractions downtown. Downtown should leverage and build upon the momentum of these districts to cultivate unique pockets of attractions that create varying atmospheres and aesthetics within the larger attraction of downtown. To leverage these districts effectively, downtown should invite and attract businesses and organizations that align with a shared purpose and aesthetic. Steps should be taken to actively market downtown’s districts through the City and Chamber of Commerce, as well as other appropriate channels.

Economic activity should largely align with the district definitions set forth in Strategy 3.1:

Downtown Core: Serves as the one of the main areas of economic activity within the city, offering diverse employment opportunities, businesses, and amenities. This district typically features a mix of mid-rise buildings, creating a dense and pedestrian-friendly landscape where professionals and workers can collaborate, innovate, and engage with a wide range of services and resources. It serves as a catalyst for economic growth, drawing talent, investment, and innovation while providing essential goods and services to residents and visitors alike.

North Rail District: This district is characterized by a diverse array of entertainment options, including theaters, music venues, nightclubs, and performance spaces, creating a dynamic atmosphere that comes alive after dark. It also features a mix of major retailers, restaurants, wine bars, and boutique shops that cater to both residents and visitors, fostering a vibrant local economy. Moreover, it showcases an array of artistic expressions, such as art galleries, and public art installations, providing a platform for creative exploration and cultural enrichment.

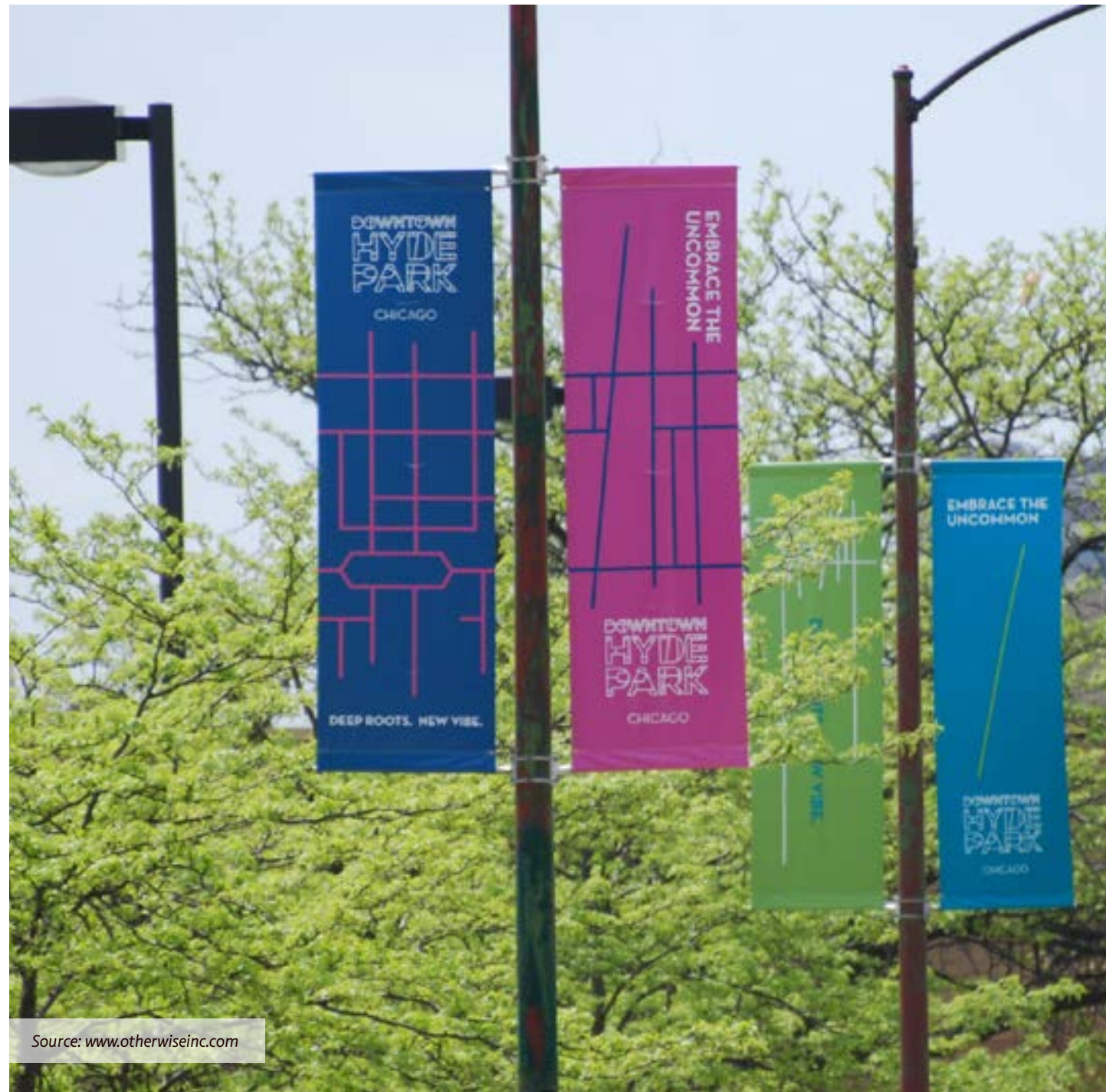
Civic/Business District: Encompasses a balanced blend of commercial office spaces, residential properties, conference centers, and hotels within a well-planned and interconnected environment. This district serves as a dynamic economic and social hub where professionals work, residents live, and conferences and events are hosted, all while providing convenient accommodations for visitors. It often features a mix of mid-rise buildings, as well as green spaces and public amenities, creating a harmonious and bustling urban landscape that fosters business, residential living, event tourism, and community interaction.

Garage District: This district is marked by the transformation of historic industrial structures and land into versatile spaces that accommodate a mix of uses. It provides a supportive environment for startups, entrepreneurs, and artists, offering a blend of production and studio spaces where innovation and creativity flourish. The garage district can foster a sense of community and urban vibrancy by offering dense live-workspaces, enabling residents to seamlessly integrate their work and living environments.

South Avenue: Combing residential, office, and recreational elements, South Avenue carefully maintains a layout that promotes a pedestrian-friendly and human-scale atmosphere. Typically featuring low to mid-rise buildings, medium and low-density residential, and accessible outdoor commercial spaces, it creates a welcoming urban environment that prioritizes quality of life, community engagement, and ease of movement. This district offers a mix of housing options, retail establishments, and open areas, encouraging a diverse range of activities and fostering a sense of place.

While these districts may bleed into one another, a continuous effort should be made to **create definition, distinction, and unique appeal within each district**. Local champions and downtown businesses should be encouraged to **take ownership of the unique appeal each district brings** to downtown.

Branding and marketing steps should be taken for each district, building upon existing attractions and the definitions above to create definition and excitement surrounding the districts. Marketing may even play into the physical environment of the downtown through banners, and changes in lighting, landscaping, seating, or other physical elements of each district's rights-of-way. Marketing may also involve creation of district sub-pages on the downtown website, cultivating a narrative and aesthetic that excites and attracts both visitors and businesses, resulting in compounded economic activity.



Source: www.otherwiseinc.com

Strategy 7.2

Identify downtown's market niche to better attract downtown customers and activity

A market niche is a pocket within the market wherein specialized economic activities gain dominance. Niche strategies help a downtown compete in the local and regional retail market. While a successful downtown should support more than one market niche, it is helpful to identify, prioritize, and market these pockets of commerce as prime attractions that create unique opportunities to engage with downtown.

Hutchinson should **leverage existing niches and identify additional desired market niches** within downtown. Some existing downtown niches present in Hutchinson today include **antiques, home décor and furniture, arts and culture, and government offices and related professional activities**. The niches may be expanded or added to, creating a market for diverse and compatible attractions within downtown.

When market niches are promoted and marketed to the community, other businesses are often attracted to the downtown in hopes of catering to the same targeted consumer segments, building momentum and compounding economic activity. A strong downtown niche provides consumers with a large selection of something within a somewhat limited range of merchandise and services. Hutchinson must evaluate these niches within the context of recommended districts to identify these opportunities.

A market niche can be focused on a **specific customer base**, such as college students, retirees, heritage tourists, artists and crafters, families, office workers, or other customer bases.

A market niche may also be focused on **specific goods and services**, such as antiques, jewelry, entertainment, breweries, home furnishings, arts and crafts, bookstores, or other goods and services.

Hutchinson may seek to better **capitalize on downtown's rich history and character**, distinguishing itself among regional downtowns and attracting investment, businesses, customers, and tourists. Cultivating an assemblage of cultural, entertainment, and recreation attractions will be key to downtown's continued revitalization.



Strategy 7.3

Leverage downtown's history and culture to cultivate a dynamic and attractive market

Tourism is lucrative to local, state, and national economies. In the past, tourists sought experiences that would allow them to visit monuments, museums, and other locally significant sites. While this form of tourism continues, people are increasingly seeking out cultural experiences, where individuals immerse themselves in the cuisine and lifestyle of a culture.

Historic preservation can help to rejuvenate downtowns through the growing realm of **cultural and heritage tourism**. These branches of tourism are oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring, bringing unique appeal to the destination. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past,” and defines cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.”

Downtown Hutchinson has the potential to **tap into the heritage and cultural tourism markets**, leveraging the historic building façades and unique attractions to create authentic and compelling experiences. Attractions such as **downtown walking tours, interactive plaques/historic markers, and community museums** may be established to attract visitors and create a dynamic and well-rounded experience for visitors and Hutchinson residents, alike.

Celebration of Hutchinson's **heritage and culture should be integrated into public spaces** and evident throughout downtown through both physical elements such as plaques, statues, and art, as well as through non-physical elements such as music, performance, and walking tours. These components should work together to create an environment that is interactive, exciting, and intriguing.



Source: www.travelks.com



Kansas City, KS
Source: www.visittheusa.com

Cultural Tourism

Americans for the Arts defines a cultural district as “a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a settlement in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction.” These facilities may include performance spaces, museums, galleries, artist studios, arts-related retail shops, music or media production studios, arts education venues, or green space. Cultural districts are traditionally mixed-use developments, integrating both commercial space and residential areas, often designed to revitalize neighborhoods or areas needing economic or societal stimulation—like Downtown Hutch. To attract residents, businesses, artists, other members of the creative economies, and visitors—cultural districts often utilize green space, architecture, and other authentic assets to establish a distinctive appearance or authentic sense of place.

Focusing on the economic opportunities generated by cultural tourism, cultural districts may combine specific visitor services (boutique hotels, local restaurants) or include venues (performing arts and convention centers) to attract groups to the area for a convention, group tour, business meeting, or special event. Creating a critical mass of activities available 24/7, the district can be marketed as a destination attraction with a creative environment.

However, tourism is a much more competitive industry than it was even a decade ago. Therefore, even the most successful cultural district must continuously seek out dynamic approaches to development. Focusing on authenticity and quality, city staff, the chamber of commerce, stakeholders, and future developers need to recognize and identify assets and elements that make the area attractive and distinct.



Source: www.travelks.com

Strategy 7.4

Create a downtown that offers both permanent and temporary lodging, as well as attractive shopping, dining, and other destinations for full-time needs to provide options around the clock

Critical to an effective downtown that attracts both residents and short-term visitors is its ability to provide for full-time needs including elements like a grocery store, pharmacy, dining, employment opportunities, and places to live or stay the night. **A person's basic needs should be met by a downtown**, offering a walkable environment where people can get what they need through local retail and services within a short distance from their homes or hotels.

More than meeting just basic needs, a full-time downtown also meets desires, offering exciting attractions such as dining, breweries and bars, entertainment destinations, enjoyable outdoor spaces, and places to socialize. Critical to building a full-time downtown is an array of housing options, as well as temporary lodging in the form of hotels or other short-term stays.

Housing should be varied in nature, with options for both owners and renters, different levels of density, varying character and aesthetics, and diverse offerings in price with a fair portion of affordable and market-rate housing. Diverse housing options attract downtown residents who can work downtown in both full-time and part-time roles, and who will frequent diverse local businesses and contribute to the local economy as a built-in customer base for all kinds of businesses downtown.

Temporary lodging should also be available downtown, offering a variety of unique stays that keep people coming back for more. Good additions to downtown may include hotels of varying shapes and sizes, offering high-end stays as well as affordable downtown options that make downtown attractive to a wide array of visitors. Other options including bed-and-breakfasts and short-term-rentals should be considered as downtown becomes an increasingly attractive place for short-term stays.

Along with varied housing and temporary lodging options comes a **built-in customer base** that will likely partake in a variety of economic activities to meet their needs and fulfill their interests. These offerings may create further momentum for the success of dining, retail, and entertainments destinations, making downtown a more successful full-time destination.

Existing residential development should be protected, and new residential development should be encouraged.

A variety of housing options should be developed and redeveloped downtown, including high-density mixed-use residential development above storefronts and offices throughout downtown, medium-density stand-alone apartments and condominiums, medium and low-density options such as townhomes, rowhomes, and duplexes, as well as a limited number of single family homes. Strategy 3.1 should be referred to for specific design recommendations for residential development within the districts, and Strategy 3.2 should be referred to for specific catalyst sites for residential development.

Funding sources should be established locally, to incentivize residential development, redevelopment, and purchase of residential properties. Additionally, regional, state, and national funding sources should be identified by the City and the Chamber of Commerce, and shared with the community to remove barriers and incentivize local stakeholders to invest and live in their downtown.

First-Time Homebuyer Program. The City and the Chamber of Commerce should engage local financial institutions, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations to create a first-time homebuyer program focused on downtown. This type of assistance will pique the interest of young professionals, young families, and other prospective residents by helping them purchase market-rate housing downtown.

Private Activity Bonds (PAB). These bond opportunities are issued by local or state governments to provide financing for special interests and qualified projects such as rental housing projects. The City and Chamber of Commerce should evaluate the potential of offering this form of municipal bond for the benefit of downtown livability. The Kansas Department of Commerce currently offers a federally exempt Private Activity Bonds that may be leveraged for the betterment of Downtown Hutchinson.

Rural Housing Incentive Districts (RHID). These district incentives offer reimbursements to developers who build housing in rural communities within an established district as adopted by a city with a population under 60,000 or county under 80,000. RHIDs finance housing development infrastructure or renovations of buildings or structures more than 25 years old, to be used for residential use in a central business district. RHID captures the incremental increase in real property taxes created by the development project for up to 25 years. The Kansas Department of Commerce has an established RHID program that may be leveraged to create more housing options in Downtown Hutchinson.



Strategy 7.5

Cultivate a critical mass of dining and entertainment destinations to make downtown a great place to spend time and money and experience a full night out

No matter the size of the city, downtowns should be characterized by relative density—including amenities, shops, restaurants, entertainment, and people. When downtown becomes a place for everyone, density is organically generated by diversity, and it becomes a place for all walks of life. Lack of density often means visitors will have to rely on personal vehicles or other forms of transportation to experience local offerings—thus, **walkability and a critical mass of destinations is crucial to creating attractive downtown places and spaces**. It's the critical mass of dining and entertainment destinations, as well as housing, retail, offices, and people that must exist before downtown can truly become a vibrant city core.

A downtown that does not cultivate an assemblage of destinations and attractions may face depopulation, a lack of critical infrastructure, and challenges with economic activity and growth. Sustainable economic development policy requires investment in local strategies that strengthen community assets and empowers local leadership to promote truly resilient economic opportunity.

Many comparable-sized communities have achieved economic revival by:

- Investing in downtown community assets with the long-term goal of supporting a cluster of locally owned small businesses
- Nurturing an accessible entrepreneurial network that results in a business-friendly atmosphere that attracts and retains both small and large business
- Taking varied efforts to improve quality of life in order to support and attract various forms of development, including residential and commercial
- Promoting an attractive sense of place that retains both residents and visitors

In partnership with local leaders, development organizations, Main Street programs, and other local organizations, downtown revitalization strategies can be locally-led, grassroots solutions rooted in local contexts, based in community strengths, and led by an alliance of people dedicated to enhancing economic opportunity for rural residents.



Paso Robles, CA - Downtown Dining and Parklets

Source: pasoroblespress.com

The following development objectives should be considered with development applications to help **maintain both density and sense-of-place** downtown:--

- Nurture an economic environment that is regionally connected, innovative, and founded in the cultural, historic, and entertainment-based assets of the community
- Foster a vibrant, cohesive business environment that is forward-thinking and collaborative
- Encourage civic structures that are locally organized, inclusive, and support network building
- Limit infrastructure expansion for personal vehicles, focusing investments on walkability and public spaces
- Invest in multimodal transportation including accessible and affordable public transit services
- Develop infill housing, including allowing office-to-residential conversions
- Encouraging and incentivize a diverse mix of land uses, mobility resources, public spaces, and aesthetics

While downtown should include a critical mass of dining, retail, and entertainment options throughout, the districts as defined in Strategy 3.1 provide recommendations for the distinctions that may appear from one area of downtown to the next. Some areas within downtown most easily lend themselves to a higher concentration of entertainment, commerce, and arts with lively nightlife and great venues/destinations. These portions of downtown provide optimal opportunity for a concentration of regionally servicing retail and entertainment uses—including major retailers that have a regional draw, as well as concentrations of retail that draw visitors from outside of the City. Uses that generate sales-tax are a priority throughout the entirety of downtown. Complementary uses such as office, entertainment, medium or high-density housing, and services are also appropriate to build towards density and diversity of use.

Sales Tax and Revenue (STAR) Bonds. Bond financing is available for Kansas municipalities to develop major commercial, entertainment, and tourism destinations. STAR Bonds are a financing tool that allows cities to issue bonds to finance the development of major commercial, entertainment and tourism projects. The bonds are then paid off through the sales tax revenue generated by the development. In metropolitan areas, STAR Bonds can be used only for projects with an anticipated capital investment of \$75 million and with at least \$75 million in projected gross annual sales. In rural areas, STAR Bond projects have no specific financial threshold, but must be of major regional or statewide significance. The creation of a STAR Bond district requires approval by the Kansas Secretary of Commerce. The intent is to increase regional and national visitation to Kansas. STAR Bonds should be actively pursued to achieve the objectives of this Plan.

Broadband as a Tool for Economic Development

The Kansas Office of Broadband Development Investment Programs has a Broadband Acceleration Grant Program available to Kansas communities.

Launched in 2020, the state's only broadband investment program, the Broadband Acceleration Grant Program, is investing \$85 million over 10 years toward bridging the digital divide in Kansas. The broadband infrastructure construction and modernization funding is provided through the Kansas Department of Transportation's Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program (IKE).

Currently in the third of ten funding years, this competitive grant program will invest \$5 million in grant awards for years one through three, and \$10 million in funding awards for years four through ten. The program prioritizes bringing access to unserved and underserved areas through the construction of broadband infrastructure across Kansas.

Source: Kansas Department of Commerce

Tourism as a Catalyst for Creating Dynamic Places

Benefits for regional and rural economies.

Tourism can promote the development of activities and attractions, infrastructure, and equipment to accommodate and attract all types of visitors. In rural areas, tourism can be a catalyst for economic development and growth—often highlighting local cuisine, farming, culture (arts and crafts), and outdoor activities—and provides significant opportunities for local businesses to diversify income streams and participate in local supply chains.

Opportunities for innovative small-scale business operations.

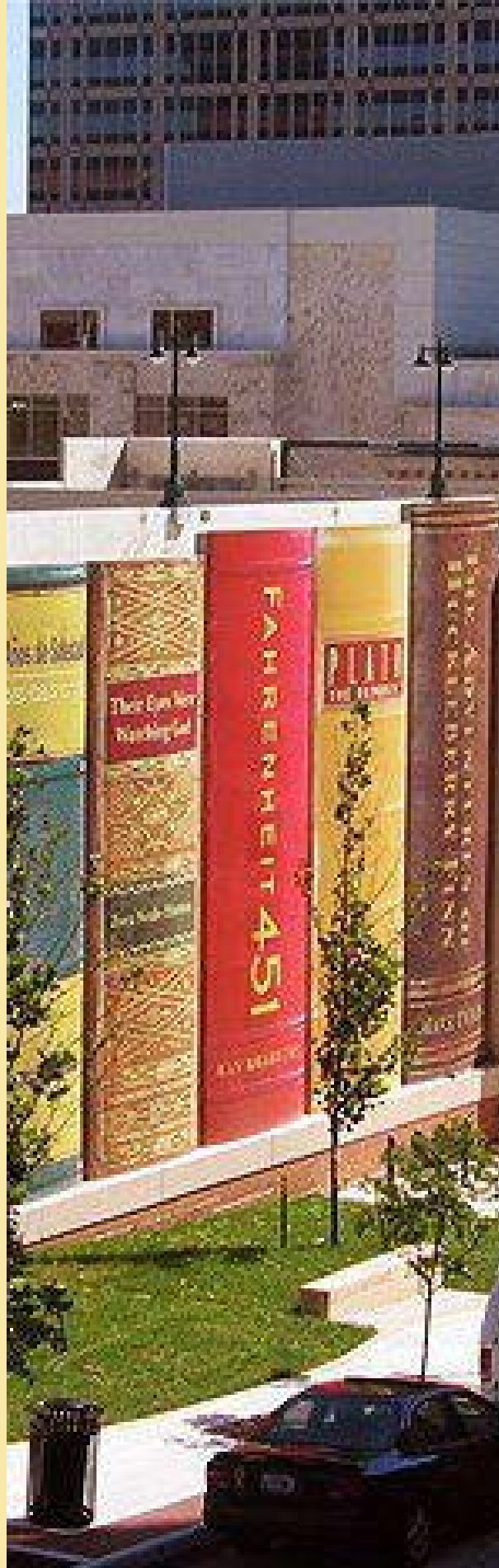
Tourism creates demand for specific goods and specialized services, including transport, accommodation, travel, and supporting services to meet the needs of niche and emerging travel markets (e.g., adventure, health, and wellness, creative and sports tourism). When local businesses and the economy respond to opportunities to meet the specific needs of travelers (e.g., accommodation, food services, entertainment, tours, etc.), the cumulative effect on local communities and economies can be significant.

Support for the promotion of cultural authenticity and natural assets.

Cultural authenticity and natural assets are important tools for destinations to attract tourists. When built upon stakeholder engagement and sustainable development principles, tourism can raise awareness of cultural and environmental values, and help finance the protection and management of these local resources. Tourism can also play an important role in demonstrating the economic value of environmental and cultural heritage conservation and authenticity of a destination, primarily through the level of activity that it can stimulate in the local economy.

Support for infrastructure-related development and maintenance.

Improved transportation and mobility infrastructure plays a significant role in attracting tourists, as well as in improving the quality of life of the local population. Furthermore, it promotes the distribution of socio-economic benefits related to the tourists' expenses (e.g. incomes, jobs) and interactions with local residents. Tourism can also generate additional funding for the development and maintenance of transportation and mobility systems, public spaces, cultural attractions, and entertainment centers, which all contribute to the attractiveness of destinations.



Kansas City, MO
Source: www.pinterest.cl/pin/370561875559555863/

Strategy 7.6

Create a greater concentration of walkable destinations, businesses, and greenspaces to encourage a more extended stay downtown

It is important to prioritize the creation of a greater concentration of walkable destinations, businesses, and greenspaces to encourage extended stays in Downtown Hutchinson. Walkability must be fostered by prioritizing human scale design and quality of life through development and redevelopment efforts. Concentrating walkable destinations and places, including government and business activities will increase downtown's role as a central hub for the entirety of Hutchinson. There is ample opportunity to provide unique and compelling open spaces that create and spur economic activity downtown.

Reclaiming and enhancing waterfront to spur economic growth. A small area planning process should be initiated to determine the potential enhancements that can be made surrounding the river that traverses and runs underneath portions of downtown. This asset can potentially be transformed into a huge community asset that may serve as a market catalyst, attracting a critical mass of visitors and public investment to stimulate demand for new residential, commercial, and mixed-use development.



Gardiner, ME
Source: Benjamin M. Williamson Photography

Greenspace improvements throughout downtown should be implemented to enhance the existing natural amenities and cultivating unique community destinations that supplement and catalyze activity in and around downtown. Specific strategies for downtown character and public space beautification and are listed in Strategy 5.2 and specific opportunities for new or improved public gathering spaces are listed in Strategy 5.6. These opportunities should be implemented in tandem with economic development strategies that prioritize economic density, activity, and accessibility.

Physical barriers between the greenspace and commercial development should be removed and pedestrian connectivity improvements developed to support economic development in surrounding areas. This Plan focuses on creating resilient elements to support year-round activities and opportunities for both residents and visitors. Specific recommendations for creating physical continuity can be found in Strategy 5.7.

Programming should leverage public spaces to spur economic activity and enjoyment, potentially including areas for food trucks, institutional/civic buildings, new public restrooms, an amphitheater, and flexible multi-generational playground or activity area. Linear parks are incorporated to equip the waterfront for use by pedestrians and bicyclists traveling to and from places like the transit center, City Hall, Memorial Hall, George Pyle Park, etc.



Rockville, MD
Source: montgomeryplanning.org

Strategy 7.7

Lengthen operational hours, host regular events, and create a higher density of businesses and destinations to create regular activity and foot traffic downtown

Since Downtown Hutchinson seeks to become an area that is vibrant and accessible for many different populations and purposes, it is critical that it create a dense and active environment that has operational uses and hours extending beyond the normal workday. Creating foot traffic and activity requires **longer operational hours, regular events, and a greater concentration of attractions**. To host successful community events, local retail and commercial businesses must adequately serve their populations, including restaurants, coffee shops, late-night dining, and bars for people to utilize before and after events downtown.

Downtown establishments should work to stay open longer and more targeted hours. Coffee shops should be available for early morning coffee runs and afternoon meetings. Restaurants and bars should have longer hours from one establishment to the next, working together to serve varying hours throughout the day based on target audience or offerings. There should be options for breakfast diners and quick eats, cafes and lunch spots, casual and upscale dining options during regular dinner hours, and breweries and bars open later into the evening. Retail and commercial options should similarly be available outside of business hours, with boutiques, bookstores, salons, movie theaters, and other establishments open on evenings and weekends to provide an attractive place for visitors as well as Hutchinson residents to frequent.

A wide array of events and festivals should be available downtown. Hutchinson currently hosts about 30 advertised attractions and events downtown throughout the year, including one of its most popular attractions, Third Thursdays. The Reno County Farmer's Market, which opens two days per week, also helps to draw people downtown. Additional outdoor programming or events are available at established venues like the Fox Theater, the Family and Children's Theatre, Stage 9, and Memorial Hall and should coordinate with local businesses to extend operational hours at targeted times to provide dedicated goods and services centered around these events. This collaboration would generate regular activity and foot traffic along dedicated Festival Streets to create destinations where people can remain active and spend time and patron local business for longer stints of time, contributing to a more vibrant and sustainable economy for Downtown Hutchinson.

A culmination of culinary experiences, entertainment venues, and local attractions is extremely valuable to a downtown—attracting visitor and serving downtown workers and residents. These destinations are critical to helping downtown maintain its role as a cultural and entertainment hub of Hutchinson, offering unique destinations for an evening out on the town. Entertainment options should be diverse and reflective of community interests. Restaurants should include a mix of independent and chain restaurants including casual dining, family style restaurants, and fine dining.

Restaurants can create a culinary niche for downtown, especially if dining options build upon unique and locally sourced foods. Local food products from area bakeries, meat markets, seafood markets, fruit and vegetable markets, and wines all add to the local dining experience. Connections to nearby farms and farmers markets also add to that experience.

Strategy 7.8

Promote downtown as a great place to live and work, establishing a variety of businesses and housing types to create a full-time downtown

Downtown should be a great place to live, work, and play. To have a live-work environment, employment and residential options must be present within a walkable area. In addition to adding a variety of housing types as described in Strategy 7.4, there will need to be employment opportunities and space for businesses to operate provided as well. Dining and entertainment are critical to a healthy nightlife as has been discussed in previous strategies, but it's important that a downtown also offer daytime uses and destinations including business offices, civic uses, banks, production spaces, and flexible workplaces.

Both the Civic/Business District and the Garage District are positioned to offer an array of live-work spaces and mixed-use office/residential development. The Civic/Business District will boast the civic core, conventions, and hotels, while the Garage District will utilize adaptive reuse of industrial buildings to house startup businesses, production spaces, and studios. The Civic/Business District will house a concentration of economic generating jobs and employment opportunities, while the Garage District provides for true live-work environments in Hutchinson by allowing artisanal and small manufacturing, fabrication, assembly, and workshop uses compatible with housing and retail.



Source: www.phillymag.com

What are live-work spaces?

Live-work spaces blend residential and professional life into a single environment. These spaces are designed to provide individuals with the convenience of living where they work, offering numerous benefits to both residents and the broader community. This arrangement creates unique opportunities for downtown living, prompts economic activity, and reduces carbon footprints, aligning with a variety of downtown goals.

By re-purposing and revitalizing existing buildings, such as warehouses or factories, live-work spaces contribute to the revitalization of a downtown, which can lead to increased foot traffic, attracting more people to the area, and subsequently benefiting local businesses. Live-work spaces are versatile and adaptable, accommodating a variety of professions. They often feature open floor plans, high ceilings, and abundant natural light, creating conducive environments for creativity and productivity. These spaces can serve as studios, galleries, offices, or small businesses, fostering innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. This flexibility encourages local economic development and supports the growth of small businesses. Live-work space occupants are more likely to invest in their communities due to their increased commitment to the area's success.

Economic and demographic trends that affect life and employment in Downtown Hutchinson include:

- **Job Growth.** Through 2040, Reno County is projected to add an estimated 1,561 to 2,646 new jobs. Hutchinson is forecast to capture approximately three-quarters of Reno County's employment growth, equating to 1,170 to 1,984 new jobs.
- **Population Growth.** Prompted by this projected job growth, from 2023 to 2040, Hutchinson is expected to support population growth of 2,234 to 3,969 new residents—which will generate the need for additional retail goods and services, commercial and industrial space, and new residential housing units across the Planning Area.
- **Educational Attainment Levels.** Hutchinson's population has slightly lower levels of educational attainment than the overall Kansas population with 35.6 percent of the population attaining an associate degree or higher compared to 43.4 percent statewide. Conversely, 38.3 percent Hutchinson residents attained a high school diploma or less compared to 34.4 percent of the statewide population.
- **Household Income.** Hutchinson's median household income of \$51,229 compares to \$61,084 for Kansas, with a much greater rate of households earning less than \$25,000 and a much lower rate of high-income households earning \$100,000 or more.

Jobs and housing are critical to a healthy full-time downtown. Growth is coming to Downtown Hutchinson, and it will be important to capitalize on it by taking strategic steps that provide sustainable job opportunities for Hutchinson residents while empowering a skilled local workforce that will attract new businesses. Local leadership must work with downtown employment centers to create diverse and plentiful opportunities for a workforce of varying levels of education. Hutchinson's relatively low household income levels place a constraint on potential retail sales, housing values, and residential rents. **Downtown housing should be accessible to and attainable by the local population.** Additional educational opportunities, workforce training programs, and a variety of employment options (attracted to the potential for skilled labor) will become a driver for economic revitalization and stability in Downtown Hutchinson. Additional socioeconomic characteristics that impact these factors are detailed in **Appendix D: Economic and Market Analysis**.

The Kansas Industrial training (KIT) program may be used to assist firms involved in net new job creation. Training can include subjects that provide knowledge and specific skills necessary for job entry including instruction on the company's own production equipment on the plant floor or on similar machinery in a classroom setting.



Source: www.probuilder.com/live-work-housing-design-solutions

Strategy 7.9

Expand the offerings of downtown attractions for all ages including families, young professionals, and seniors to make downtown more diverse and attractive for everyone

Hutchinson should serve not only its current population, but those it hopes to attract and retain in the future. As compared to the State of Kansas, Hutchinson's household composition possesses well below average rates for both of families and married couples with children and above average householders living alone and senior households ages 65 years and over living alone. The characteristic of Hutchinson's average household composition suggest a propensity for detached single-family housing and a large population of seniors aging in place. Simplified, Hutchinson has a large senior population aging in place and fewer families, children, and family/working adult populations. However, there are still a number of active young families and young professionals in Hutchinson, for whom downtown should suit.

It makes good economic sense for a downtown to be diverse in its array of attractions and offerings. Not only does this better position Hutchinson to adapt to changing market demands and stay economically resilient, it makes for a more attractive downtown.

Like the rest of the country, future development and redevelopment efforts and local programming should ensure **inclusivity, accessibility, and the special needs of a diverse and changing population.** What is good for older adults is good for communities in general, including a variety of affordable housing choices, walkable density of uses, and accessible employment opportunities. Age-friendly communities typically have, for example: accessible and safe road and transport infrastructure, barrier-free access to buildings and houses, and public seating and sanitary facilities, among others. These communities also enable people to stay active; keep connected; and contribute to their community's economic, social, and cultural life.

Transportation must evolve to suit the whole community. Automobile-dependent environments disenfranchise and endanger those who are physically unable, too young, too old, or too poor to own a car. It is not equitable, sustainable, or economically smart to design communities for only one primary mode of transportation.

Housing variety makes good economic sense. Downtown should offer a variety of housing options to suit both current demographics and demand, as well as accommodate potential growth of young professionals and young families to downtown. A significant majority of adults want to age in place, but most homes aren't ready for the reality of older residents. Few homes include the basic access for people with limited mobility with features like single floor living with no steps and extra-wide doors and ramps to accommodate wheelchairs. Affordability is critical in the provision of variable housing types, as seniors are often living on fixed incomes.

Diverse places to work and things to do in downtown. Downtown Hutchinson desires to become a destination with something for everyone to enjoy. This means offering employment opportunities for young professionals, seniors, and everyone in between. Downtown should also offer attractions and amenities for families, young adults, seniors, students, and the like.



Source: www.redfin.com/blog/parks-in-omaha-ne/

Attracting Young Professionals to Downtown Hutchinson

Fundamental to the area's vitality and economic development is the recruitment and retention of young professionals in Downtown Hutchinson. Investing in affordable, modern housing options within or close to the Planning Area will attract the interest of young professionals. Developing trendy apartments, lofts, and mixed-use spaces can make it simpler for young professionals to become involved in the downtown community by providing them with convenient and attractive living arrangements. Many smaller U.S. cities are able to set their rent prices slightly below those of the nation's largest cities, which could incentivize recent college graduates to come or stay in Hutchinson in their early careers.

By promoting young professional to become involved in the local economy, many small to mid-sized cities have also been able to retain their graduates. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, for instance, a group known as "Tulsa's Young Professionals" funds programs that engage young professionals in economic development and "placemaking" initiatives, which re-imagine public spaces to enhance the health, contentment, and well-being of residents. Hutchinson should prioritize regularly hosting cultural events, art exhibits, and live performances. Collaborating with local artists and musicians can contribute to the development of an ambiance that appeals to the artistic sensibilities of young professionals.



Source: www.5280.com/denver-best-all-day-coffee-cafe-bars/

Strategy 7.10

Create a downtown Business Improvement District (BID) to establish a more united, vibrant, clean, and safe district

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a geographical area where local stakeholders oversee and fund the maintenance, improvement, and promotion of their commercial district. Downtown Hutchinson should collaborate with downtown business owners to develop **an improvement association** (i.e., voluntary private nonprofit with dues) or a **business improvement district** (i.e., mandatory public agency with assessments). The organization will lead and facilitate capital improvements, maintenance, and programming for the downtown area.

BIDs create vibrant, clean, and safe districts by delivering services and improvements beyond those typically provided by the City. However, BID services do not replace those provided by the City; by law, City services cannot be reduced because of the existence of a BID. Potential services of a BID include:

- Street cleaning and maintenance
- Public safety and hospitality
- Marketing and events
- Capital improvements
- Beautification
- Advocacy
- Business development

BIDs help to brand a district and market small businesses on key corridors. They facilitate networking among local merchants, host community events, and advocate for improvements across the district. BIDs also serve as a liaison between local businesses, stakeholders, and the City government. In doing so, BIDs provide a collective voice for the neighborhood and inform city policy based on their unique local insight.

BIDs are typically run by a not-for-profit organization with a Board of Directors. Elected by members in the district, the Board must include property owners, merchants, residents, and representatives of local elected office. The Board is responsible for making key decisions about programs and services, budget, goals, policies, and staffing.

BID programs and services are **funded by a special assessment billed to property owners** within a designated district. Assessments are unique to each BID and decided upon by the BID's stakeholders. The City of Hutchinson would assist with the collection of the special assessment, and then distribute 100 percent of the collected money directly back out to the BID. On average, assessments make up 75 percent of BID budgets with the rest resulting from fundraising, grant applications, and revenue generation from programs to support the services they provide.

Hutchinson should carefully evaluate the value that this approach could bring to downtown, and consider implementation of an improvement association or business improvement district.



Strategy 7.11

Employ numerous concurrent tactics to support downtown reinvestment and incentivize new business to make downtown an exciting and affordable place to start a business

Businesses and consumers have begun to rediscover the beauty and intrigue of historic downtowns. Independent businesses are often willing and excited to rent or own spaces in historic buildings that corporate chains and franchises might avoid. Market forces are revealing that there is demand among individuals and families who value historic downtown living, even in relatively small places.

Unfortunately, this changing market landscape cannot be fully supported if beautiful, historic buildings are facing advanced deterioration and the need for significant capital investment to meet code compliance and allow for legal occupancy. Historic buildings require regular maintenance and investment to unlock their potential within the modern market. This can be one of many challenges that create barriers to economic growth and the creation of new business.

Downtown Hutchinson should employ numerous concurrent efforts to support downtown reinvestment, incentivize business growth, and promote downtown business opportunities. Below are several tactics that should be evaluated, considered, and potentially implemented:

Leverage Business Finance Programs. Partner with area financial and educational institutions and the Hutchinson/Reno County Economic Development Corporation to expand the range of economic development programs available to downtown businesses. Examples of such programs include revolving loan funds, micro-lending program, and enhanced business counseling and technical services.

Revolving loan funds. These funds can help fill financial gaps by providing capital to one property or business owner, who pays back the loan over time to replenish the funds which can then be lent to others who are working on another building or commercial space. This often takes place when local investors and businesses do not have the amount of capital on hand to address property rehabilitation and renovation costs. These loan funds can be provided by local governments, private financial institutions, federal grant programs, or local organizations.

Modify development codes. Local building and zoning codes can create insurmountable barriers to establishing a downtown business. Inflexible and seemingly unattainable standards can create significant hurdles to adapting and reusing historic buildings. Rigid restrictions can also make downtown redevelopment unappealing. For example, if regulations were to prohibit or limit the conversion of upper floors of buildings to residential uses, developers may be less likely to choose downtown Hutchinson for their next investment, limiting downtown's potential for a successful mixed-use district. Having standards to protect health and safety is essential, but outdated or inflexible municipal codes should be modified to make adaptive reuse doable and affordable, branding Hutchinson as a more business-friendly community.

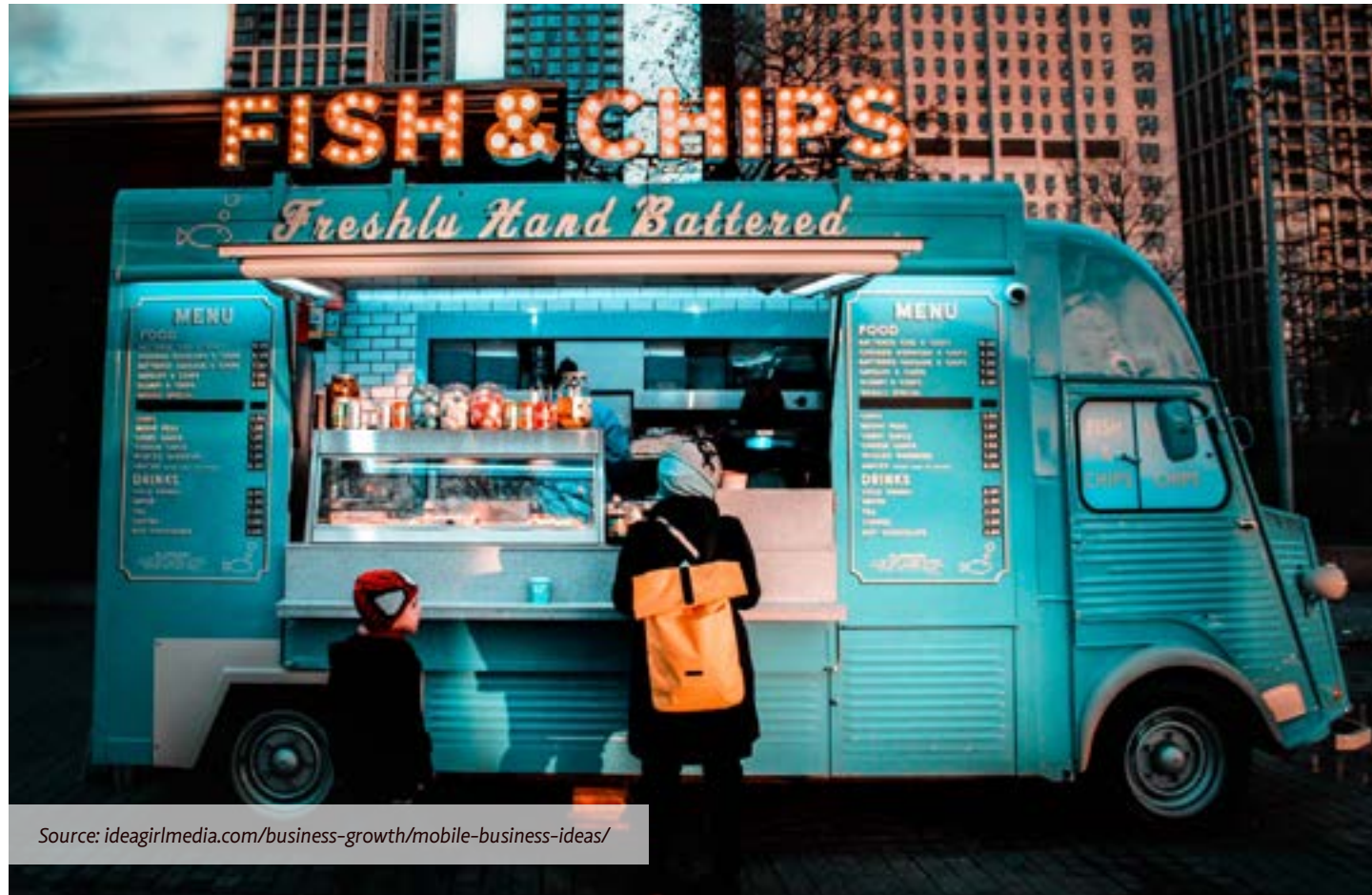
Establish Business Incubator Programs. A major challenge for small businesses is having sufficient operating capital to make it through the first year. Many businesses and startups experience challenges or do not have the resources to operate in the second and third years, greatly limiting their ability to succeed in initiating a successful business. One way to mitigate this challenge is to establish business incubator programs to remove or lower the businesses' occupancy expenses. Downtown organizations and local governments can work with building owners to accommodate these startups, who can become permanent rent-paying and tax-producing establishments that contribute to the financial success of a downtown.



Create Co-Working Spaces. A recent trend for more office-oriented business startups is co-working. Similar in theory to business incubator programs that often help retail establishments get off the ground, co-working spaces can be huge incubators for professional business, often serving as office spaces for corporations looking to open a new branch or kickstart a new business. Communities can subsidize or facilitate co-working spaces just as they do retail incubators. More than just a communal space for professionals, co-working spaces contribute to the flexibility and appeal of downtown office life. They can be well-suited for older buildings and are like incubators in that they lower the space rental and overhead expenses for small businesses.



Encourage Public Private Partnerships. Revitalizing downtown will require the formation of public-private partnerships. The public sector, and private property owners and businesses must each be willing to expend time, money, and effort to contribute to efforts that work together to cultivate economic activity. Oftentimes, before risking capital, the private sector must believe in the public sector's commitment to implementing change and providing resources where and when appropriate. However, public sector efforts and expenditures will have little impact if downtown's private sector interests are not committed to the revitalization objectives. The two must work in tandem to build off mutual successes and investments toward a healthy economic future downtown. More information on Public-Private Partnerships is detailed in Strategy 3.4.



Source: ideagirlmedia.com/business-growth/mobile-business-ideas/

Invite Pop-ups and Temporary Businesses. The City, the Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, and community volunteers can work with property owners to accommodate pop-up businesses, which might be startups or new secondary locations of existing businesses. These pop-up businesses can occupy empty commercial spaces or vacant lots during peak hours, weekends, or holidays. Small-scale events may include concerts, food truck gatherings, wine/beer tastings, or craft fairs and farmers markets. Additional empty spaces can host unique attractions by local artists or students. Increased foot traffic from these temporary attractions benefits the downtown as a whole and often leads to new private investment and new long-term tenants.

Utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Tax increment financing is one of the most powerful redevelopment tools available to municipalities throughout the country. Tax Increment Financing can be used by City Council to attract new investment in an area. TIFs help finance costs of redevelopment and promote growth in areas that would otherwise not attract sufficient market development in a timely manner. Taxes attributable to new improvements (tax increments) are set-aside to finance public improvements within the boundaries of the zone. When used effectively, TIFs are an effective way to partially fund infrastructure and lessen taxpayer burdens. TIFs can fund hard and soft costs associated with redevelopment, including land purchase, relocation costs, public infrastructure, streetscape amenities, recreational facilities, developer cash incentives, developer financing, marketing and brokerage fees, consultant fees, and staff salaries. TIFs have transformed downtowns and should be considered for Downtown Hutchinson.

Utilize Property Tax Abatement Assistance. Tax abatements are designed to incentivize investment by reducing tax payments for a company. Tax abatements can attract investment, increase employment, catalyze the development of research and technology, and drive investment to less developed areas. Tax abatements can stimulate economic growth and tax revenue (after the expiration of the tax holiday/incentive period) resulting in a healthier downtown economy. Unlike grants or loans, which can help with need for immediate capital, tax abatements offset property and other taxes as an incentive to establish your business in a given city or expand existing operations there. Business owners can then use those savings to invest back into the business, increasing potential for long-term economic success.

The Kansas Chamber of Commerce provides technical assistance for entities interested in property tax abatement. The Board of Tax Appeals (BOTA) Liaison provides instruction and technical assistance for entities applying for economic and industrial revenue bond tax abatements on real estate property. The BOTA Liaison works with the Board of Tax Appeals to facilitate tax exemptions. In addition, the Liaison provides support with applications and related documents, explains policies and procedures, and assists in certification completion. This tax abatement assistance is available at no charge. These opportunities should be leveraged in Downtown Hutchinson to incentivize economic activity and build upon existing successes.

Leverage Downtown Redevelopment Tax Rebates. By offering tax incentives to property developers and business owners, Hutchinson can encourage private investment in downtown areas that may have been overlooked in the past. These incentives can take various forms, such as property tax abatements or credits, which help offset development costs and provide a strong financial incentive for investors. Through the Downtown Redevelopment Act, areas designated by the Secretary of Commerce can receive a rebate of property tax collected on properties that have undergone approved improvements (Source: Kansas Department of Commerce). For five years, a rebate of the incremental tax increase between the assessment previous to the modifications and the current assessed valuation is offered. For the sixth year, 80 percent of the tax increase is refundable. The percentage of the tax increment that is not subject to refund will increase by 20% each year in the seventh, eighth, and ninth years. No reimbursement is provided after the ninth year. Hutchinson can encourage economic growth, improve the city's aesthetics, attract new businesses, and create a more appealing and dynamic downtown area by taking advantage of the downtown redevelopment tax rebates.

Pursue Grant Opportunities. To accelerate the implementation of recommendations in this Plan and reduce the direct cost to Hutchinson, regional, state and federal grant opportunities should be identified and pursued to finance major public investments and private development projects. Receiving and leveraging these funding sources can create enough activity to catalyze the interests of other public and private investors. Grant opportunities can provide financial assistance for things like infrastructure, parks and recreation, environmental remediation, stormwater management, transportation enhancements, and other efforts that can transform a downtown. Many of these sources support multiple project types such as streetscapes, signage, trees, and public parks. Depending on local staff and association partner capacity, the City or Chamber should **dedicate a proactive individual to research, pursue, draft, and submit grant proposals** on behalf of Downtown Hutchinson.

Use Tax Increment Financing (TIF). This real estate redevelopment tool can be leveraged for industrial, commercial, and residential projects. Increases in real estate tax revenues and local sales tax revenues are used to reimburse the developers or retire bonds sold to finance redevelopment projects. TIF funds may be used toward projects costs for the redevelopment of public buildings, such as land acquisition, site preparation, and infrastructure. TIF cannot be used for the construction of privately-owned buildings, but these funds can be used to finance other improvements within the district and can also extend to certain infrastructure improvements outside the designated district—if those improvements are connected to the district and deemed necessary to implementation of the development plan.

Financing is available from the proceeds of city-issued bonds or on a pay-as-you-go reimbursement. The bonds are primarily secured by the incremental increase in property taxes within the redevelopment district because of the new construction or rehabilitation but may also be general obligations of the City. The City may also use franchise fees and local sales taxes generated within the redevelopment district to pay the bonds or finance the project costs. TIF works for the sale of both privately and publicly owned land for redevelopment. Having commitments from the developer(s) to construct the project is essential to prove that the TIF revenues will be sufficient for success (Source: Kansas Department of Commerce).

Businesses have found that TIF offers several distinct advantages. Using TIF generally allows the financing of land acquisition and other eligible costs with tax-free borrowing at generally lower interest costs. To receive the benefits of TIF, generally the site must be in a blighted area, conservation area, pre-1992 enterprise zone, intermodal transportation area, or other eligible area. (Source: Kansas Department of Commerce).

Historic Economic Asset Lifeline (HEAL) Program. Realizing the need to rehabilitate downtown buildings with funding that can be disbursed quickly and efficiently, the Kansas Department of Commerce has partnered with the Patterson Family Foundation to create the Historic Economic Asset Lifeline (HEAL) program. HEAL focuses on projects that revitalize underutilized, vacant, and dilapidated downtown buildings that show potential as economic drivers in rural Kansas communities. The HEAL grant program is designed to bring downtown buildings back into productive use as spaces for new or expanding businesses, housing, arts and culture, civic engagement, childcare, or entrepreneurship. The matching grants will help address emergency needs for neglected buildings and assist building owners with eligible expenses for the revitalization of historic properties. Projects submitted must show potential as economic drivers in the community.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding. “The CDBG program, facilitated and administered by the Kansas Department of Commerce Community Development Division, is a federal grant program that funds various local projects. In 2023, \$7,897,922 will be matched with local funding, allowing more than \$16.9 million to be available in Kansas communities across the state” (Source: Kansas Office of the Governor). The program provides federal funds to local governments to develop viable communities by addressing their housing, public facilities, and economic needs specifically for projects that help low- to moderate-income neighborhoods thrive. To be awarded funds, projects must meet at least one of three program objectives:

- The grant will benefit low- and moderate-income persons.
- The grant will prevent or eliminate slums and blight.
- The grant will resolve an urgent need that communities are not able to do on their own.

The CDBG funds are one of the Department of Commerce’s primary tools in supporting the state’s smaller, predominantly rural communities. Projects include sidewalks and trails, community centers, parks, libraries, community centers, youth job training programs, ADA improvements, and more.

Kansas Main Street Program. “Main Street is a self-help, technical assistance program that targets revitalization and preservation of downtown districts through the development of a comprehensive strategy. From 1985 to 2012, more than \$600 million in redevelopment took place in participating Kansas communities. This included the opening or expansion of 3,800 small businesses, creating more than 8,600 new jobs. With the return of the state program in 2020, 25 previously participating communities and new programs have the resources and tools needed to revitalize their communities and historic commercial districts” (Source: Kansas Department of Commerce).

The Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce is a designated Kansas Main Street Program and provides promotion, design, business enhancement, and organization services to current and potential downtown businesses. It helps to connect businesses to various federal, state, and local funding sources, including:

- Zero-interest loan programs from the Kansas Department of Commerce; the privately funded Trusler Foundation; and Network Kansas, a statewide organization established by the Kansas legislature to provide entrepreneurial support.
- Historic preservation tax credits and competitive grant programs.
- Loan guarantee programs.
- Tax-increment financing.



Source: www.kansascommerce.gov