



Downtown Madison Strategy and Downtown Area Plan

Public Open House
December 2, 2025

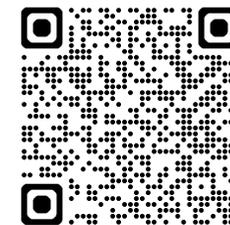


Program will start at 6:15

Please grab snacks, water, and network with the folks in the room!

Online folks – please join in on the ice-breaker!

Meeting Participant
Demographics:





Downtown Madison Strategy and Downtown Area Plan

Public Open House
December 2, 2025



Welcome Speakers

Mayor of Madison - Satya Rhodes-Conway



Downtown Madison, Inc.
President - Jason Ilstrup



Overview

- Welcome and Introductions
 - Speakers
- Envision Downtown
 - Downtown Overview
 - Downtown Plan
 - Downtown Strategy
- Engagement Opportunities
- Activities Overview



Downtown Overview

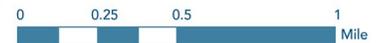


MADISON GREATER DOWNTOWN

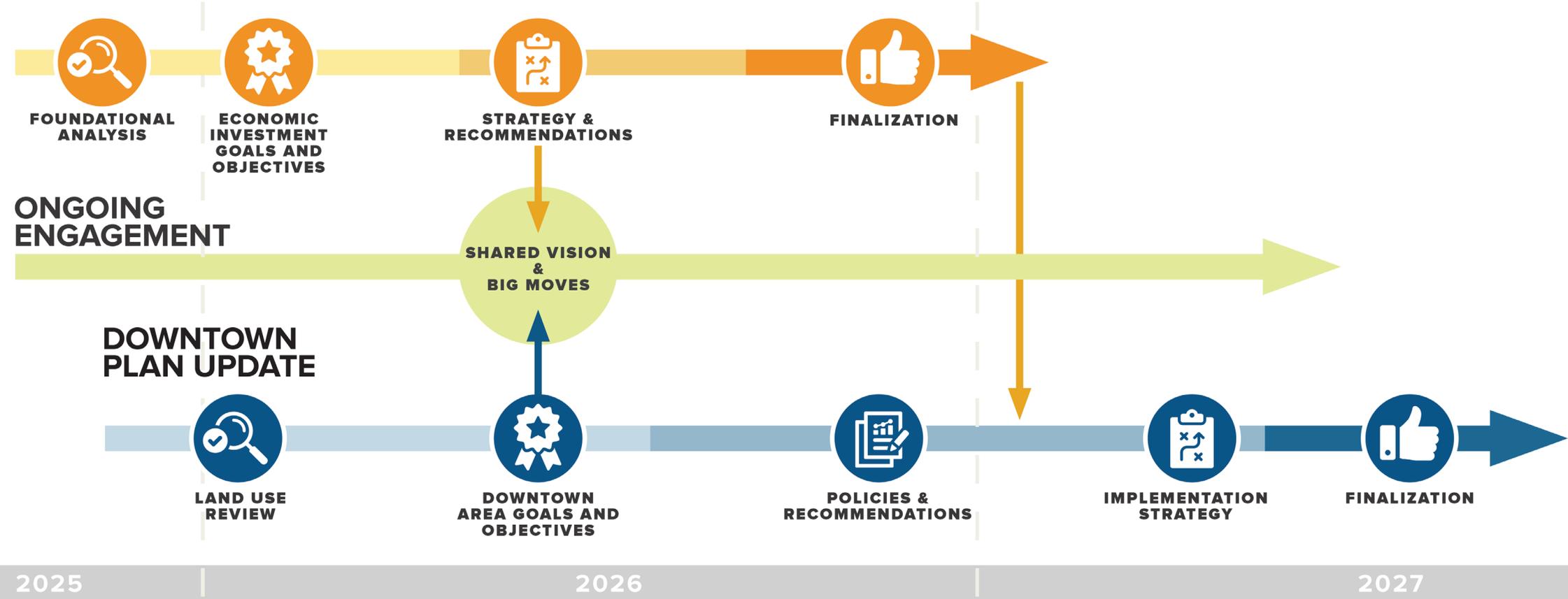
LOCATION

LEGEND

-  Greater Downtown Economic Investment Strategy Boundary
-  Downtown Area Plan Boundary



DOWNTOWN STRATEGY

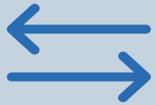


2025

2026

2027

Major Components of Envison Downtown



Vision and Big Moves: Through a shared vision and several “Big Moves” that set Downtown on the path to achieving the vision.



Downtown Plan: The vision will direct policy and investment in land use, transportation, economic opportunities, cultural resources, housing, parks, health, safety and city operations.



Economic Investment Strategy: The vision will inform a framework for short-term actions and long-term strategies and key opportunities for investments that leverage public and private sector strengths to support and balance the economy, livability, and accessibility of Downtown.



Recommendations: The Downtown Plan and Strategy will each have a set of recommendations that speak to the **key opportunity sites** and dive into more specific **policy, regulatory or code, and programmatic changes** that will have broad-scale implications and support the Big Moves.

What makes Downtown a great place?



Recent Changes in the Downtown

**36% more
people living
Downtown**
Appx. 34,000 residents

Source: Census/ACS

Recent Changes in the Downtown

**Downtown is
younger and
more diverse
80% are 30 or younger**

Recent Changes in the Downtown

**7,500 homes
added
1/3 of all downtown
housing**

Source: Building Permit Data

Recent Changes in the Downtown

A multi-story apartment building under construction. The building has a modern design with light-colored siding and dark accents. A concrete pump truck is positioned to the right, with its long arm extended towards the top of the building. The scene is set in an urban environment with trees and a sidewalk in the foreground.

**...but housing is
less affordable**

43% spend half of
their income on rent

Recent Changes in the Downtown



**Over \$1.3 billion
of investment**

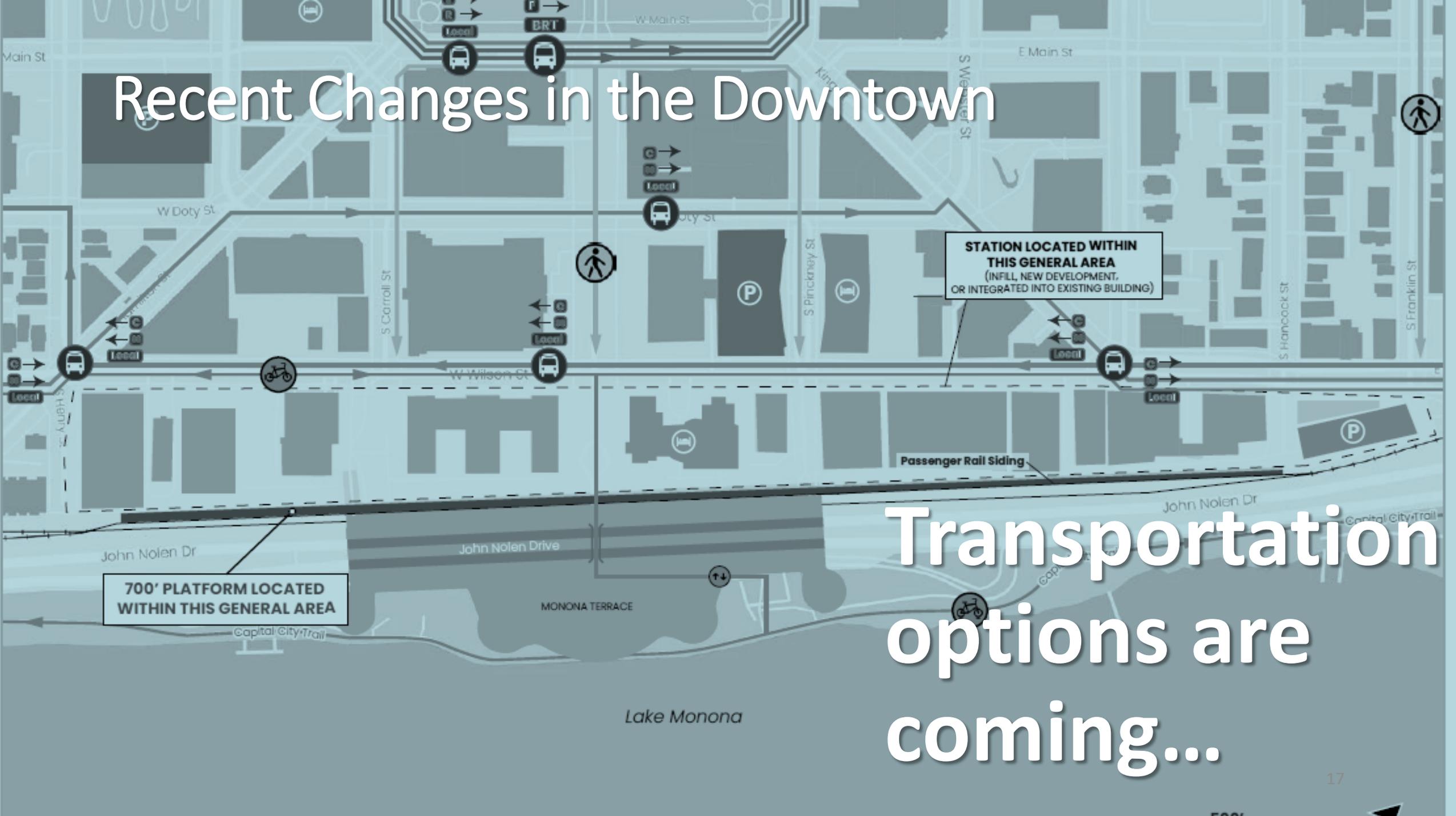
Recent Changes in the Downtown

**2020: Covid,
outdoor space
and WFH**

Recent Changes in the Downtown

**Downtown
transit use is up
22% since 2013**

Recent Changes in the Downtown



STATION LOCATED WITHIN THIS GENERAL AREA
(INFILL, NEW DEVELOPMENT, OR INTEGRATED INTO EXISTING BUILDING)

Passenger Rail Siding

700' PLATFORM LOCATED WITHIN THIS GENERAL AREA

Transportation options are coming...

Recent Changes in the Downtown

...and so is a
generational
investment in
public space



Envision Downtown: Downtown Plan



2012 Downtown Plan

Planning for the Future – Nine Keys

This plan articulates nine keys for ensuring the vision (see below) for the future of Downtown is achieved. Each key contains numerous objectives and recommendations that, when taken together, provide a comprehensive and strategic framework for the next twenty years. The framework includes bold long-term projects that can have highly visible and profound impacts on the Downtown of the future. It also includes smaller, less glamorous recommendations that may be easier to implement, but which cumulatively can also have profound positive impacts. Each key is briefly described below along with highlights of some of the most notable recommendations.



■ Key 1: Celebrate the Lakes

The number one priority during the planning process was to embrace the lakes and to make them more integral to Downtown. This plan lays out exciting concepts for reconnecting Downtown with its lakes. It proposes changes to the Lake Monona/John

Vision Downtown Madison will be a flourishing and visually exciting center for the arts, commerce, government and education. It will be a magnet for a diverse population working, living, visiting and enjoying an urban environment characterized by a sensitive blending of carefully preserved older structures, high-quality new construction, architectural gems, and engaging public spaces — all working together and integrated with surrounding neighborhoods, parks and the transportation system to create a unique and sustainable environment for the community, the region, and beyond.

Nolen Drive corridor that will greatly improve its appearance, provide a variety of recreational opportunities, and reconnect it into the fabric of Downtown. This plan also greatly increases public access to Lake Mendota by forwarding a concept for a lakefront pedestrian/bicycle path that will ultimately connect James Madison Park with the UW Memorial Union and Picnic Point.



■ Key 2: Strengthen the Region's Economic Engine

Attracting and retaining large and small employers, providing a thriving retail and service environment, and supporting activities that attract visitors and tourists are important components of Downtown's continued role as the region's economic center. This includes accommodating new growth opportunities within Downtown. This plan sets the stage for a significant amount of new development, conservatively accommodating well over 4,000 to 5,000 new dwelling units and 4 to 5 million square feet of new commercial development over the next twenty

years. This represents approximately 2 billion to 2 ½ billion dollars in new investment. Much of the anticipated development is in areas recommended for change over time with significantly increased density and a more engaging mix of uses.



■ Key 3: Ensure a Quality Urban Environment

Preserving Downtown's unique identity and building on the qualities that make it special is critical in continuing to attract new jobs, residents, and visitors. This plan seeks to enhance these qualities and makes recommendations on preserving important views, setting expectations for integrating new development, enhancing the design of streets and public ways, and other elements.



■ Key 4: Maintain Strong Neighborhoods and Districts

This plan seeks to enhance the variety of special neighborhoods, districts, and smaller nodes that, although

unique places in their own rite, in aggregate truly make Downtown more than simply a sum of its parts.



■ Key 5: Enhance Livability

Downtown is a great place to live. Since the adoption of Downtown 2000 (1990), Downtown has attracted a much more diverse population in age, income, and other characteristics. It grew by approximately nine percent between 1990 and 2010. This plan makes recommendations to ensure that Downtown remains an attractive living environment by providing a diversity of living options and a safe environment. It includes recommendations for workforce housing, low- and moderate-income households, students, seniors, special needs populations, and families with children.



■ Key 6: Increase Transportation Choices

It is critical to have a downtown that is easily accessible for employers, residents, and visitors. This plan makes recommendations for improvements to Downtown's transportation network

and also provides a framework for a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation study that will examine in detail future transportation options. It recommends enhancing inter-city connections, establishing two multi-modal transportation centers, extending East Campus Mall to connect to Monona Bay, creating a mid-block walkway paralleling Langdon Street, developing a new Downtown circulator, improving wayfinding, and exploring the conversion of some one-way streets to two-way.



■ Key 7: Build on Historic Resources

One of the building blocks that helps frame a direction for Downtown's future is its historic buildings and districts. The plan includes recommendations for elevating these historic resources and making them a more prominent part of the Downtown environment through a more holistic approach that includes steps such as enhancing historic districts' identities, considering new districts, providing preservation incentives, and addressing property maintenance.

■ Key 8: Expand Recreational, Cultural and Entertainment Offerings

As Downtown continues to grow, it must continue to provide parks and recreational facilities to meet the needs of its residents. This plan recommends enhancements to existing parks and the development of a new



neighborhood park in the vicinity of Bassett and Dayton Streets. It recommends incorporating public art in public and private projects. An arts, culture and entertainment corridor is also proposed along State Street connecting the facilities near Capitol Square to facilities on the UW campus.

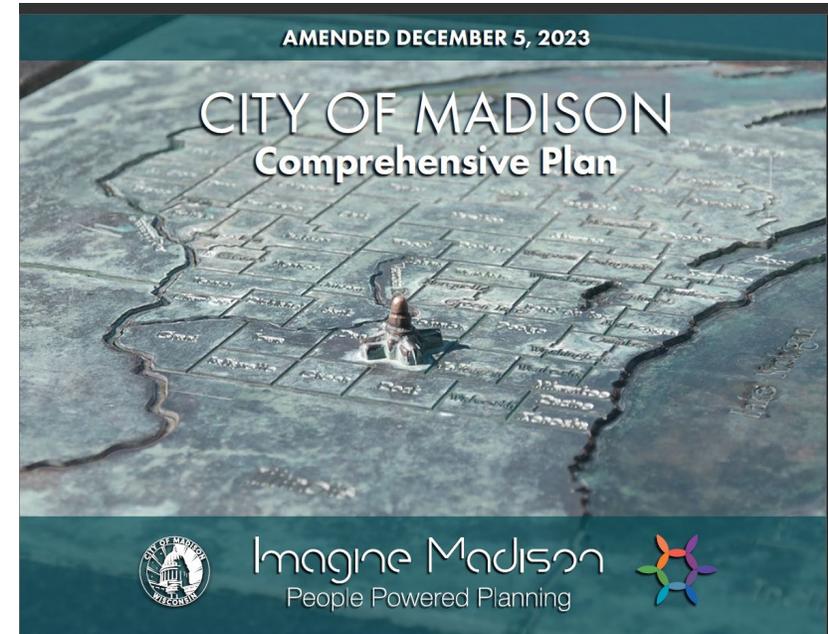


■ Key 9: Become a Model of Sustainability

Downtowns are inherently the most sustainable part of a community. They usually have higher residential densities, more jobs in close proximity to workers, a wider variety of transportation options, and more goods, services, and activities that are integrated into the urban fabric. This plan recognizes the interrelationships among these and other "urban systems" and the objectives and recommendations in each theme area advance the goal of having Downtown become a leader in sustainability. The symbol indicates objectives and recommendations directly related to the sustainability goals of this plan.

Area Plans and Comprehensive Plan

- **Maintain downtown Madison as a major activity center**
- Concentrate the **highest intensity development along transit and downtown**
- **Support small businesses** and cultivate entrepreneurship
- **Vibrant and inviting places**; preserve historic and special places that **tell the story of Madison**
- Preserve **defining views**
- Improve **access to the lakes**



7 Comprehensive Plan Elements



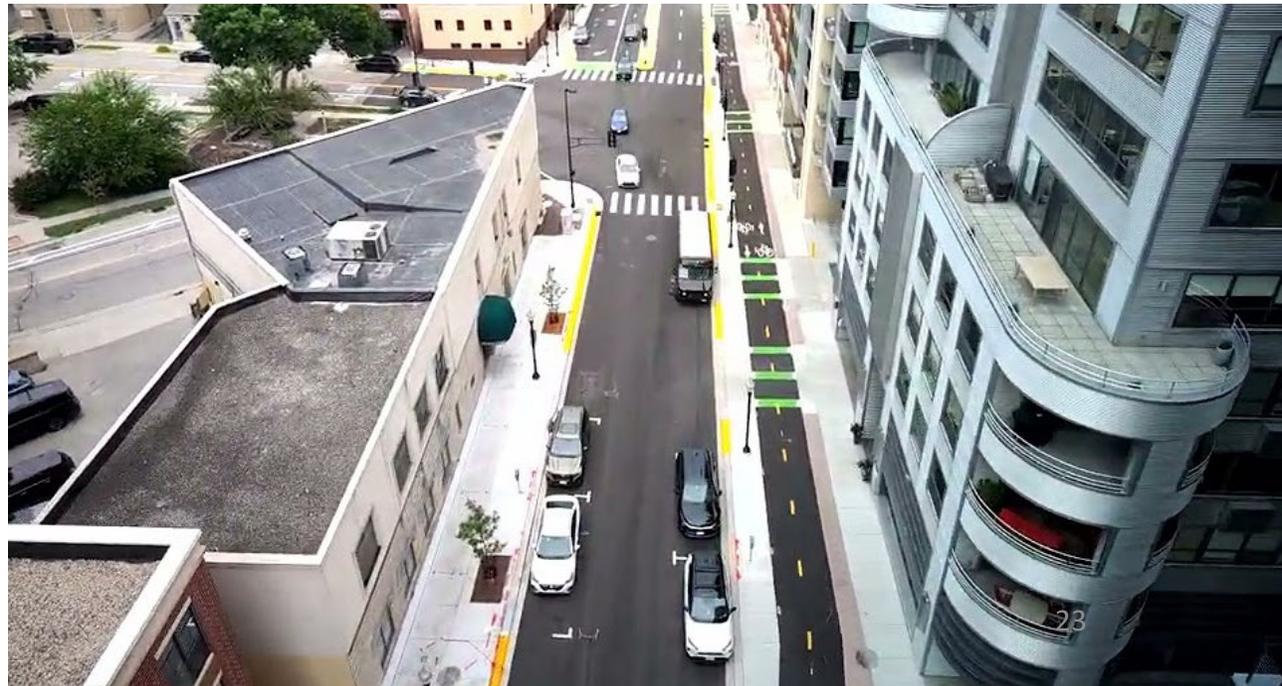
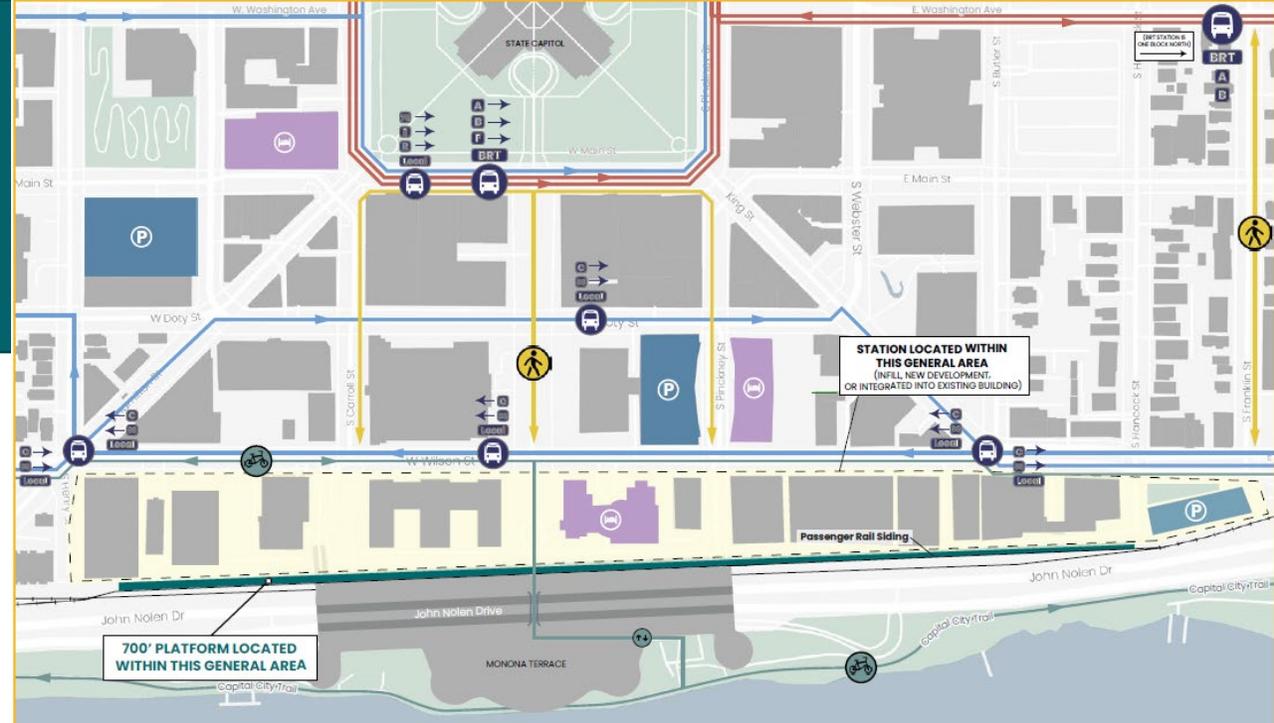
Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Improve livability, vibrancy and resiliency by **updating land use and development framework** of the Downtown to ensure it **accommodates anticipated growth**



Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Improve connections,
accessibility and efficiency by
evaluating the **transportation
systems** operating in the
Downtown



Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Support the **uniqueness of downtown**, its neighborhoods, and **sense of place**.



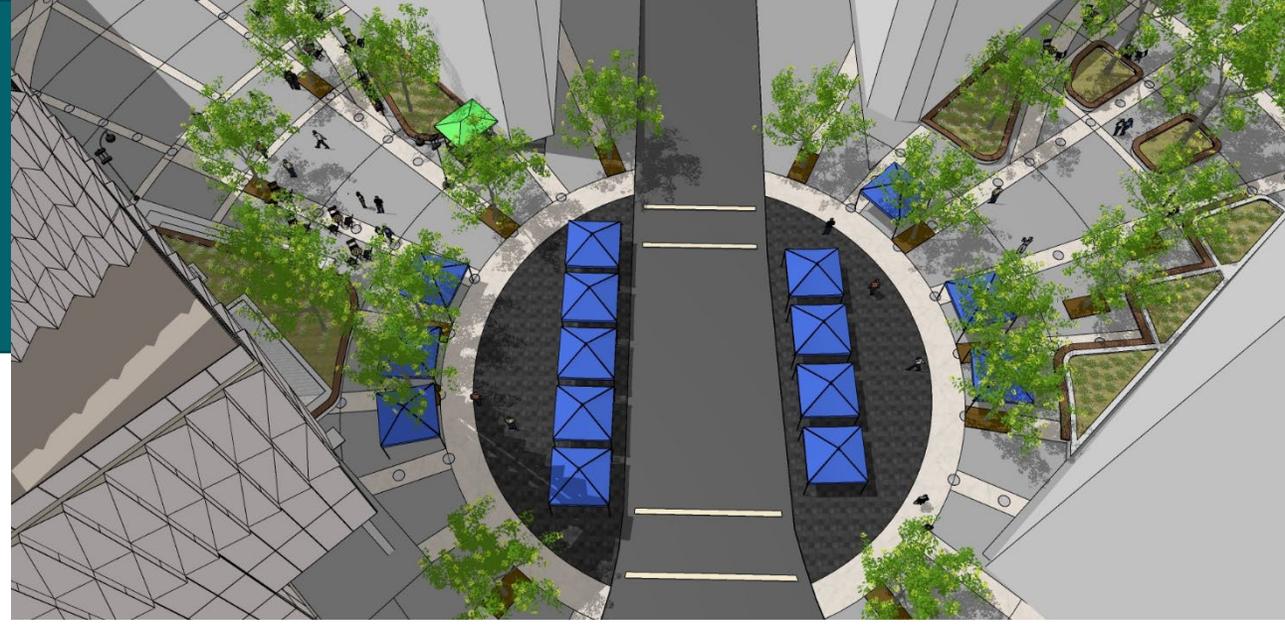
Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Envision Downtown Madison as
Everyone's Downtown Madison



Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Elevate **Urban Design, Placemaking and public spaces**, and determine the future of **State Street**



Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Provide additional **active and passive recreational opportunities** to support a growing and diversifying population, and keep downtown on a pathway toward sustainability



Downtown Area Plan: Goals

Make sure the **nuts and bolts of City infrastructure and operations** continue to meet the needs a vibrant downtown.





Envision Downtown: Downtown Strategy





Downtown Strategy: Overview

- Focused on short and long-term investments in Greater Downtown
 - Viable, sustainable, inclusive growth
- 3 part strategy:
 - Economic Development, Funding, Governance/Management
- Complement to Downtown Plan
 - Shared vision and big moves

Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Understand and
**communicate the
value of Downtown**
to the city, region,
and state



Photo from Destination Madison; by Nick Berard

Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Align public and private interests to **ensure coordinated investments** in the next chapter of Downtown Madison

Photo from Destination Madison; by Nick Berard



Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Determine how to
**support and grow
existing industries
and businesses** of
all sizes

Photo from Destination Madison; by Valerio Dewalt Train



Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Identify opportunities
for new industries
and businesses and
**develop strategies
to fill gaps**



Photo from Destination Madison; by OVJ Photography

Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Set **targets for the mix of development and land uses** that will better activate the Greater Downtown area and will help to **ensure mid- to long-term economic sustainability and resiliency**

Photo from Destination Madison; by Sharon Vanorny



Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Identify **potential amenities and infrastructure investments** that will support the growth and vibrancy of downtown businesses, employees, residents, and visitors

Photo from Destination Madison; by Focal Flame Photography



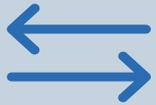
Downtown Strategy: Project Goals

Provide **data- and stakeholder-driven inputs** for the update to the Downtown Area Plan



Photo from Destination Madison; by Sharon Vanorny

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DOWNTOWN STRATEGY



ONGOING ENGAGEMENT



DOWNTOWN PLAN UPDATE

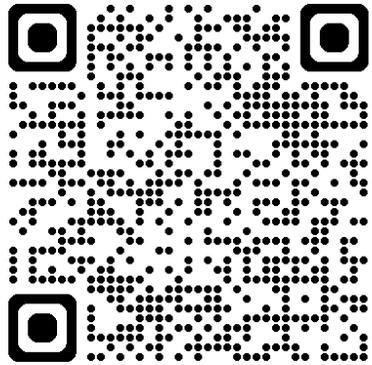


How can you get involved?

Information and Updates

Downtown Area Plan

www.cityofmadison.com/downtownplan



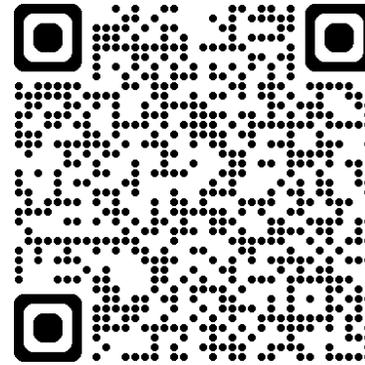
Contact:

Dan McAuliffe or Rebecca Cnare
City of Madison Planning

downtownplan@cityofmadison.com

Downtown Strategy

downtownmadison.org/greater-downtown-economic-investment-strategy/



Contact:

Emily DeVore or Jason Ilstrup
Downtown Madison, Inc.

edevore@downtownmadison.org
jilstrup@downtownmadison.org

Opportunities to Participate

- Online engagement
- Pop-up events
- Joint Meeting #2 (Spring 2026)
 - Downtown Plan: Issues and Opportunities and Big Ideas
 - Downtown Strategy: Preliminary Vision and Big Moves
- Joint Meeting #3 (Summer 2026)
 - Downtown Strategy + Downtown Plan: Shared Vision and Big Moves
 - Downtown Plan: Draft Recommendations (part 1)
 - Downtown Strategy: Key Findings and Draft Recommendations
- Joint Meeting #4 (Fall 2026)
 - Downtown Plan: Draft Recommendations (part 2)
 - Downtown Strategy: Draft Strategy (Economic, Funding, and Governance)



Questions





Activities



Activity #1 - A Thriving Downtown

Downtown is about more than just buildings and businesses – it's about people, opportunity, and place. We want to know what a thriving downtown means to you.

Thoughts to Consider:

- *A thriving Downtown Madison is a place where people can...*
- *One thing that will help downtown businesses succeed is...*
- *The key economic drivers for Downtown in the future will be...*
- *Downtown becomes more welcoming by...*
- *Downtown would be more livable if...*
- *My big idea for Downtown is...*

Activity #2 – Invest in Downtown’s Future

Imagine you have \$100 of private dollars and \$100 of public dollars to invest in Downtown Madison. **How would you spend your dollars?**

Private Investment Categories:

- *Local business growth*
- *Large employer investment and innovation*
- *Arts, culture, and preservation*
- *Building renovation*
- *Workforce development*
- *Marketing, branding, promotion*

Public Investment Categories:

- *Mobility and transportation*
- *Public spaces, art, placemaking*
- *Public health and human services*
- *Affordable housing*
- *Sustainability*
- *City operations and public safety*

Activity #3 – Map Your Downtown Experience

Show us how you experience and imagine the future of Downtown – where do you spend time, see investment potential, or think improvements could strengthen certain places

Use different color dots to respond to the map prompts:

- *Places I spend money*
- *Places I play, exercise, or relax*
- *Areas that could be improved, reimaged, or redeveloped*
- *Special places that are meaningful to me*
- *Places where I feel that I belong*