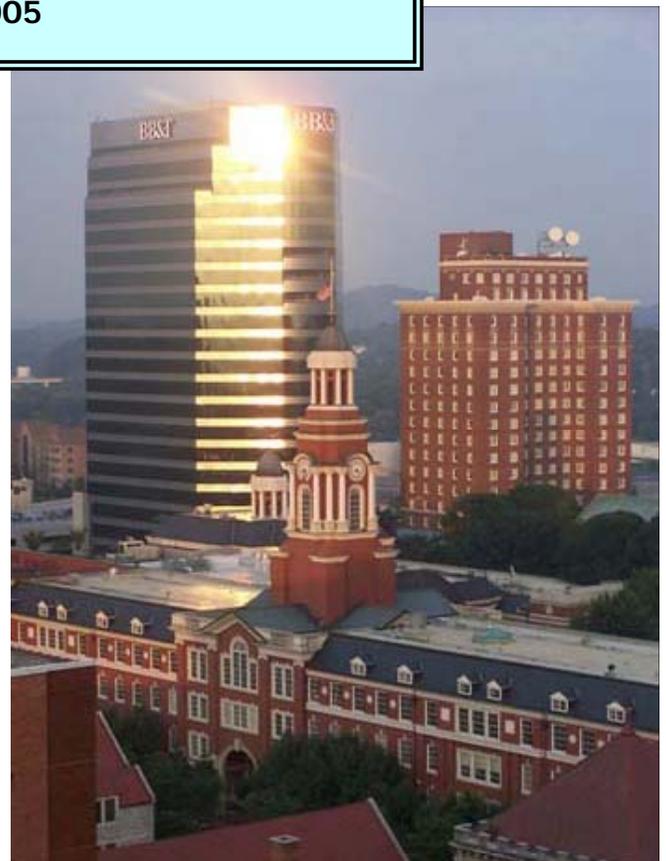


**DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY  
PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT**

*Prepared by the*  
**CITY OF KNOXVILLE**  
**DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 18, 2005**





## **DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT**

*Prepared by the*  
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The Improvement Strategy for Downtown Knoxville combines a vision of a vital and attractive downtown with recommendations to move from vision to reality. Simply planning for downtown will not lead to its success – concerted efforts will be required on the part of City leaders, county, state, and university partners, local businesses and residents, and new investors. Knoxville is fortunate to have several agencies and tools already in place to help in implementing the vision. We also know that strategic public investments and public / private partnerships will be needed to produce optimal results. An important aspect of this improvement strategy is to study and organize planning concepts and action strategies into a single comprehensive document. The strategic steps needed to revitalize downtown Knoxville are described in detail, with the knowledge that the strategy must be flexible and revisited frequently if it is to be relevant and valuable in the long term.

The Downtown Improvement Strategy is a two-part document:

**Part I is the long-term “Civic Vision”** and contains general downtown goals and objectives intended to guide short-term project and program decision-making. The framework for the Civic Vision was produced through the efforts of Nine Counties One Vision through the consultant services of George Crandall and Don Arambula.

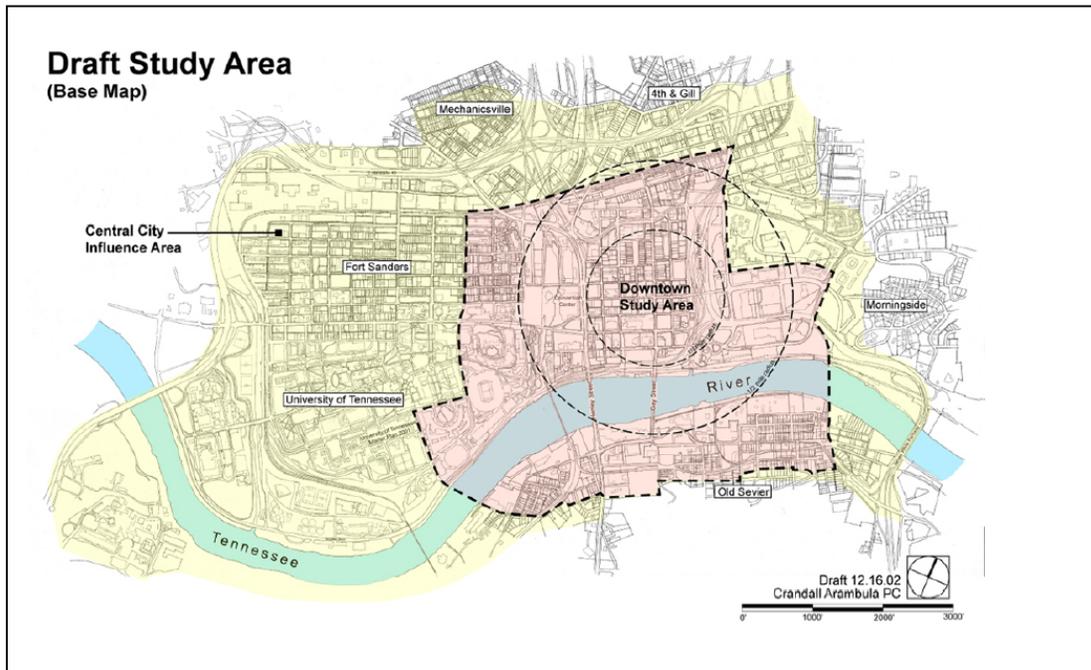
**Part II is a short-term “Action Plan”** intended to identify projects, programs, and activities that should be undertaken within the next five years to foster continued improvements and investment in the downtown. As with the Civic Vision, the Nine Counties One Vision effort was used as the starting point for the Action Plan.

### **The Strategy is a “Living Document”**

The recommendations contained in the Civic Vision and Action Plan, if implemented, will contribute significantly to the downtown’s image, attractiveness, and economic environment. At the same time, **it is critical to note that the priorities and implementation actions are considered flexible and subject to change.** The City of Knoxville and supporting agencies must be able to respond quickly and flexibly to market changes and private investment decisions as they arise.

## Study Area

The primary study area for the Downtown Improvement Strategy is shown on the map below:



## Public Review & Comment

This draft report has been prepared for public review and comment. Review and advisory recommendations will be requested from the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Historic Zoning Commission, with approval to be requested by the Knoxville City Council. A tentative schedule for the review process includes the following:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Draft Downtown Improvement Strategy Released | Friday, March 18 <sup>th</sup>                  |
| • Public Review & Comment Period               | March 18 <sup>th</sup> – April 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| • Metropolitan Planning Commission Review      | Thursday, April 14 <sup>th</sup>                |
| • Historic Zoning Commission Review            | Thursday, April 21 <sup>st</sup>                |
| • City Council Workshop (requested)            | Thursday, April 21 <sup>st</sup>                |
| • City Council Approval (initial request)      | Tuesday, April 26 <sup>th</sup>                 |

## RECENT SUCCESSES / ONGOING PROJECTS

The Downtown Improvement Strategy has been developed with the knowledge that a series of recent projects have been completed, and that several projects undergoing various stages of planning, design, and/or financing are being aggressively pursued.

### Recent Project Successes

Projects that have been completed within the recent past include the following:

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ▪ Emporium Building                     | ▪ Old US Post Office and Courthouse |
| ▪ Gay Street Bridge                     | ▪ Phoenix Building                  |
| ▪ Knoxville Convention Center           | ▪ Sterchi Lofts                     |
| ▪ Krutch Park and Krutch Park Extension | ▪ Tennessee Theatre                 |
| ▪ Lerner Lofts                          | ▪ World's Fair Park Enhancements    |
| ▪ Locust Street Garage                  | ▪ 100 Gay Street Block Renovations  |
| ▪ Market Square public space            | ▪ 700 Gay Street Block Renovations  |

## **Projects In Progress**

Public and/or private projects that are known to be underway, or to which public resources are being committed, are listed below. The Action Plan recommendations assume that some level of completion will occur with these projects in the short-term.

- Burwell Building
- Church Street Viaduct Replacement
- Jackson Flats
- Fire Street Lofts
- Gay Street Viaduct Replacement
- Hall of Fame Drive Construction
- Hampton Inn
- I-40/JWP improvements
- Keystone Place Condominiums
- Knoxville Station (Transit Station)
- Lower Second Creek Greenway
- James White Parkway Greenway
- Market Square Garage / New Union Lofts
- Movie Theater
- Former News Sentinel Bldg. Demolition
- Volunteer Landing Park Entryway Improvements
- Poplar Street Lot Redevelopment at Main Street
- White Store (Mast General Store / condominiums)
- World's Fair Park Structures
- Historic Structure Rehabilitation/Reuse
  - 8 Market Square
  - 29 Market Square
  - 36 Market Square
  - 100 North Broadway
- 412 South Gay Street
- 428 South Gay Street (Old Kimball's Building)
- TVA East Tower & Gay / Summit Parking Garage
- Crown Court Condominiums (YMCA)

## **Downtown Advisory Committee**

The Downtown Advisory Committee, appointed by Mayor Bill Haslam, met from November 2004 through March 2005. The committee members were selected to provide oversight and recommendations for the Downtown Improvement Strategy.

- Mike Arms, Vice-Chair
- Nicholas Arning
- Katie Bell
- Trey Benefield
- Don Bosch
- Gwen Brown
- Mark Brown
- Leigh Burch
- Linda Davidson
- Mike Edwards
- Pam Fansler
- Phil French
- Dave Hill, Chair
- Joe Petre
- Laurens Tullock
- Mahasti Vafaie
- Scott West

## **Technical Support Group**

The Technical Support Group members provided technical expertise to the Downtown Advisory Committee, and generated the options and data used to draft the strategy.

- Mike Carberry
- Cathy Chesney
- Marleen Davis
- Kevin DuBose
- Lynn Fugate
- Mark Hairr
- Jim Harrison
- Michele Hummel
- Buz Johnson
- Bill Lyons, Coordinator
- Alvin Nance
- Dale Smith
- Frank Sparkman
- Kim Trent
- Jill Van Beke
- Dave Watson
- Jeff Welch

## CITY OF KNOXVILLE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

# PART I: CIVIC VISION

Although many of the specific projects pursued in the downtown may change over time, the Guiding Principles and Urban Design Frameworks provide enduring goals for unanticipated downtown opportunities.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES For the Development of Downtown Knoxville

**Goal: Downtown Knoxville will be the economic and cultural heart of the region, a vibrant, walkable place where people congregate to live, work, shop and play.**

#### **1. Make downtown a regional destination that is vibrant and livable.**

- Promote overlapping activities and uses, including social, entertainment, shopping, cultural, civic, government, employment, and residential strengths.
- Develop memorable entrances and a unique identity for downtown.
- Plan for future growth.

#### **2. Respect the natural and historical setting.**

- Designate and maintain historic districts, such as the Old City, Market Square, and Gay Street.
- Enhance incentives to restore and reuse older buildings through measures such as tax abatement, specialized codes and public/private partnerships.
- Make the most of the area's natural beauty.
- Develop natural amenities, such as waterfronts, to encourage a wide variety of public uses.

#### **3. Create a vibrant social environment downtown.**

- Enhance downtown as the regional center for arts, culture, and learning.
- Devise a series of memorable public spaces well suited for public activities and interaction.
- Plan special events that coordinate efforts of the city, downtown churches, the university, and other organizations.
- Enhance the Old City as an entertainment destination.
- Accommodate both locals and visitors with these efforts.

#### **4. Establish and perpetuate the character and quality of downtown districts.**

- Devise and apply appropriate urban design standards and guidelines.
- Promote redevelopment using sustainable, efficient and adaptable construction.
- Encourage development that strongly defines streets, squares, and urban parks.

**5. Take appropriate advantage of opportunities for downtown housing.**

- Convert upper level spaces in historic commercial buildings for housing.
- Develop housing opportunities at the edges of downtown.
- Devise and enhance incentives to promote downtown housing, and publicize them to potential developers and homebuyers.
- Create housing in new mixed-use developments.
- Provide quality education opportunities for downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

**6. Invest significant resources in the commercial capacity of downtown.**

- Seek a range of incentives that will cause investment.
- Encourage a variety of commercial and retail uses throughout downtown.
- Focus on Market Square for community-oriented retail, and on Gay Street for specialized and regional retail.
- Foster economic development that expands tax roles and supports employment.

**7. Enhance downtown as a center for government while maintaining a balance with other uses.**

- Enliven public buildings and spaces through access and activities.
- Emphasize governmental uses that complement residential life, and de-emphasize those that don't.

**8. Design a pedestrian-friendly downtown, with appealing streets and public spaces.**

- Encourage uses at street level that are lively, visible and accessible.
- Set standards and inducements for public art, signage and directional graphics.
- Incorporate native trees and other landscape features.
- Have generous sidewalks, with well-designed benches, receptacles, and utilities.
- Ensure that all parts of downtown are readily accessible on foot.

**9. Create a transportation system that balances pedestrians, transit, and convenient parking.**

- Devise a comprehensive transit system, serving all of downtown, surrounding neighborhoods, and the region.
- Locate parking structures conveniently and unobtrusively.
- Provide long-term, short-term, and free parking where appropriate.
- Utilize public-private partnerships to build mixed-use parking for 24-hour use.

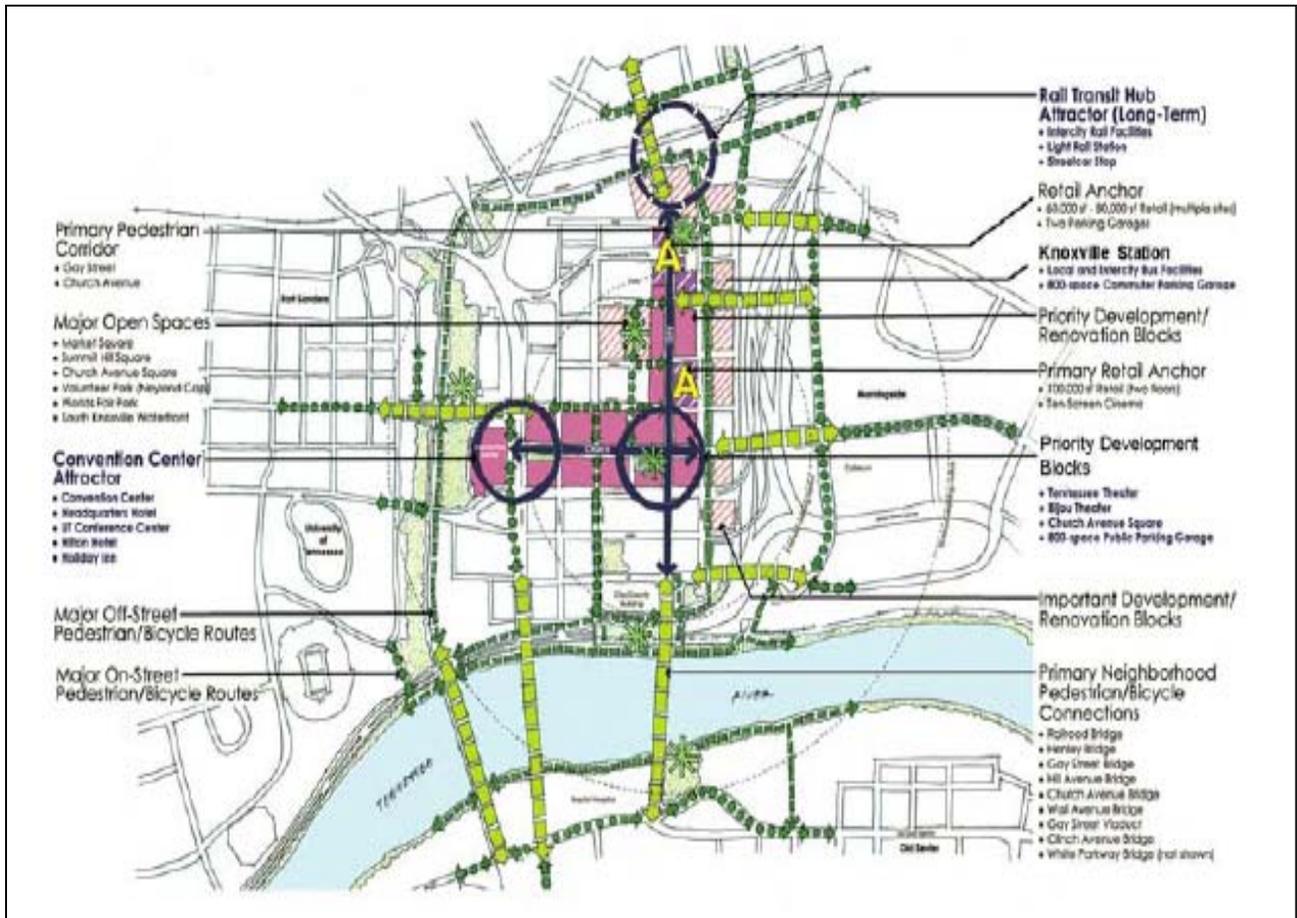
**10. Reconnect downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods, both functionally and visually.**

- Connect downtown to other neighborhoods with sidewalks, greenways, jogging trails and bikeways.
- Create landscape and design standards for arterial routes into downtown.
- Develop linkage innovations, such as utilization of air rights where appropriate.
- Devise a variety of strategies for linkages to adjacent neighborhoods in all directions.

# COMPOSITE DOWNTOWN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NINE COUNTIES ONE VISIONS STUDY (PRODUCED BY CRANDALL ARAMBULA)

The Composite diagram shown below describes the general long-term vision of the downtown.

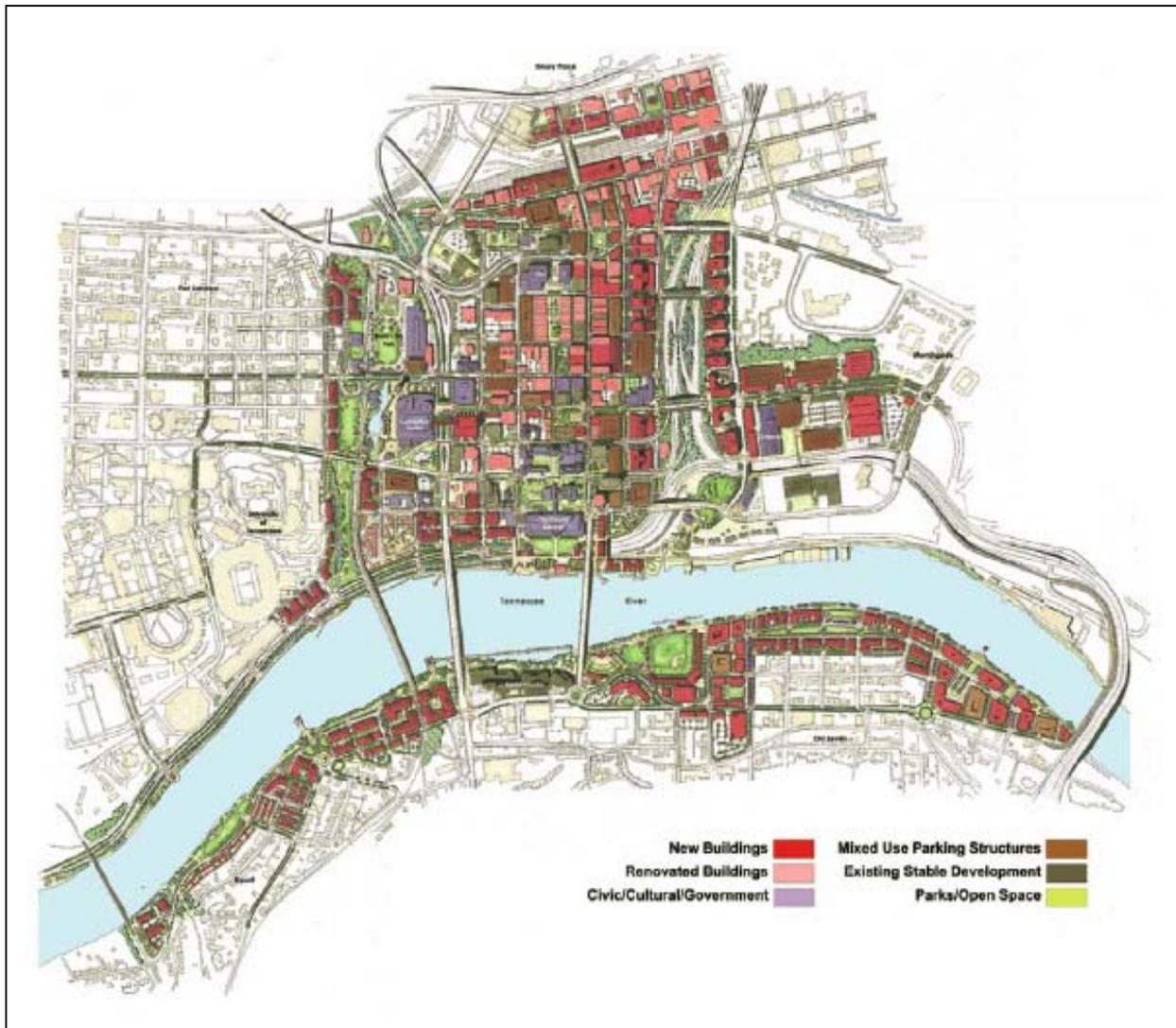
The composite has been revised and will be revised and updated at the conclusion of the public review process.



## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY FROM NINE COUNTIES ONE VISIONS STUDY (PRODUCED BY CRANDALL ARAMBULA)

The development capacity diagram shown below describes the general long-term vision of potential downtown build-out.

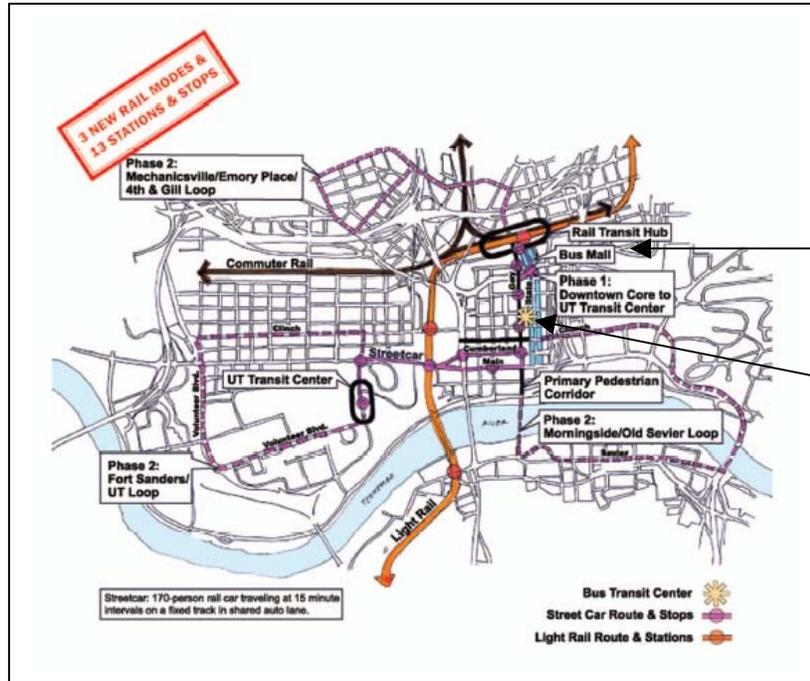
The development capacity diagram will be revised and updated at the conclusion of the public review process.



# URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORKS FROM NINE COUNTIES ONE VISIONS STUDY (PRODUCED BY CRANDALL ARAMBULA)

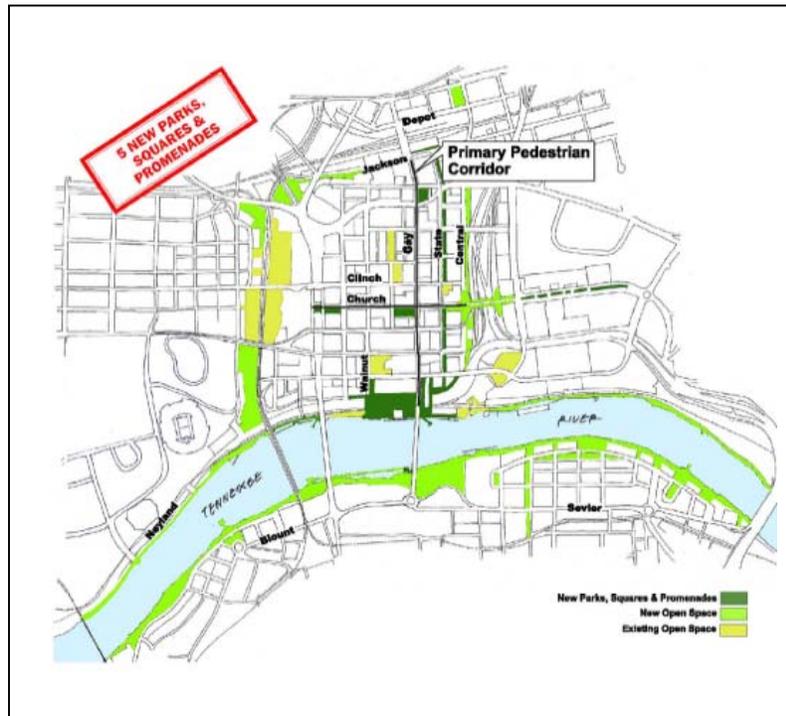
The Urban Design Frameworks describe several components vital to downtown revitalization. The frameworks will be revised and updated at the conclusion of the public review process.

## a. Transit Framework

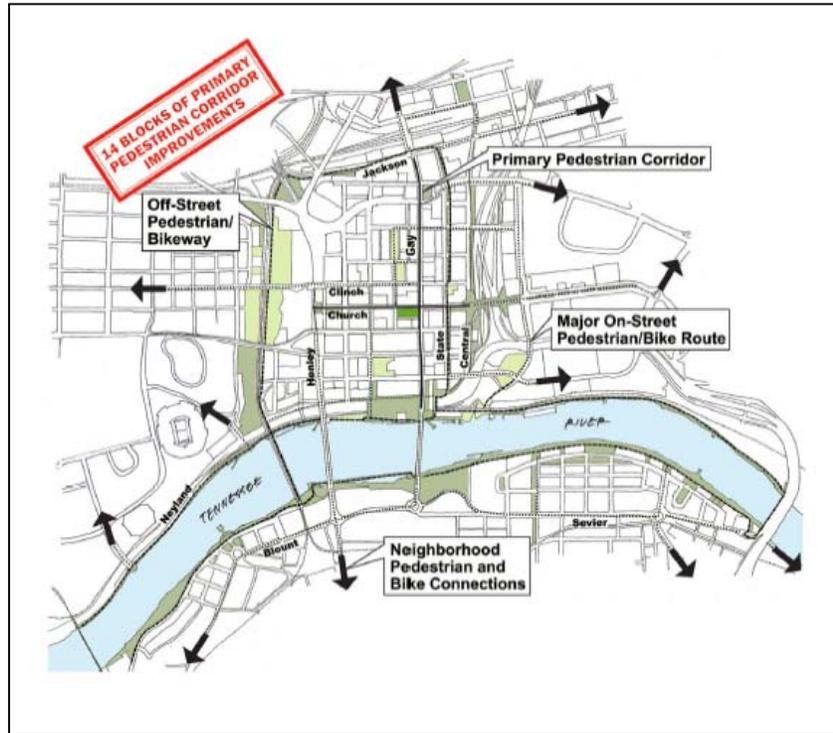


**Upcoming Revisions:** The Bus Transit Center site location will be changed to its current State Street site & the proposed Bus Mall will be deleted.

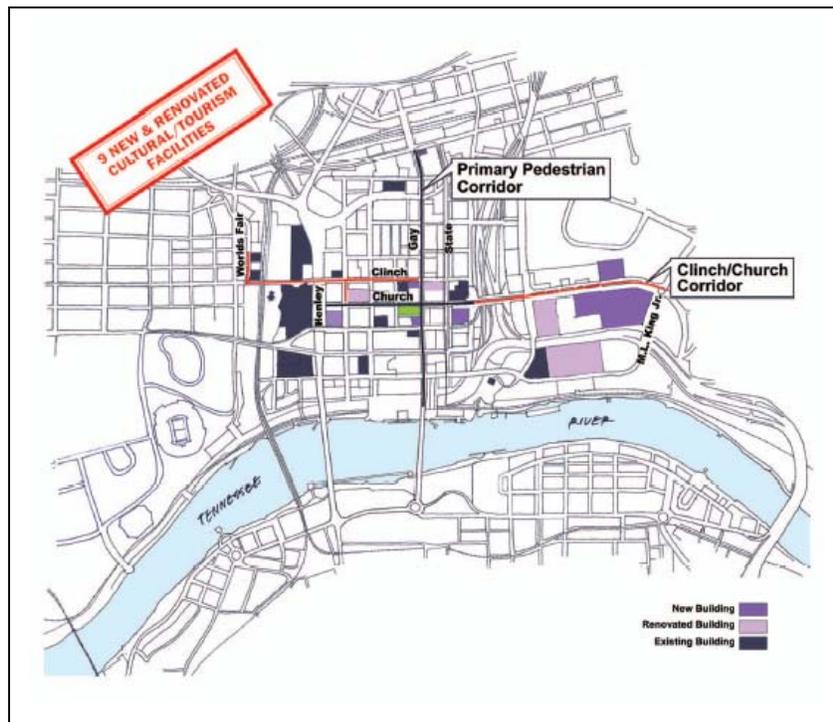
## b. Open Space Framework



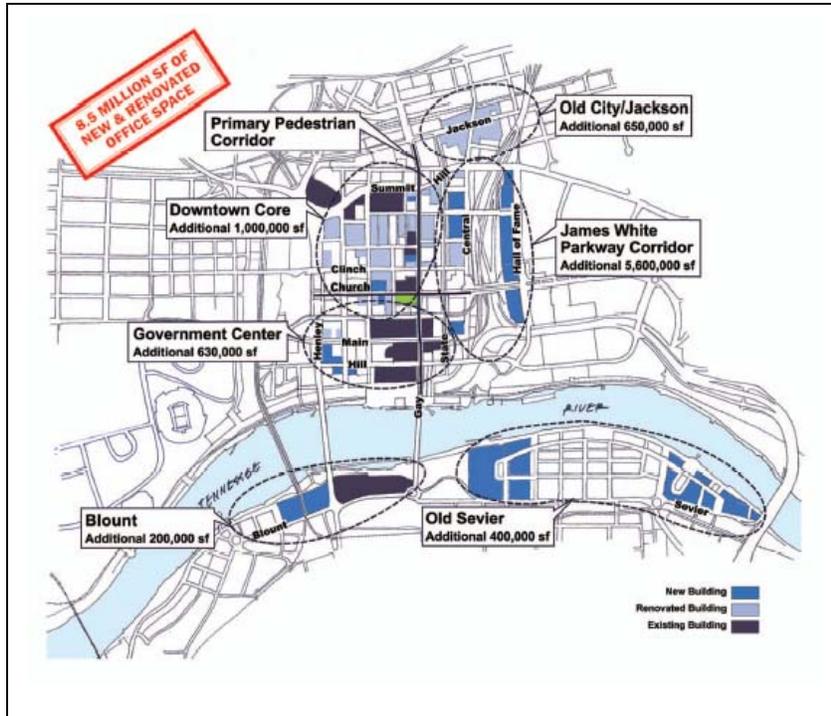
c. Pedestrian / Bike Framework



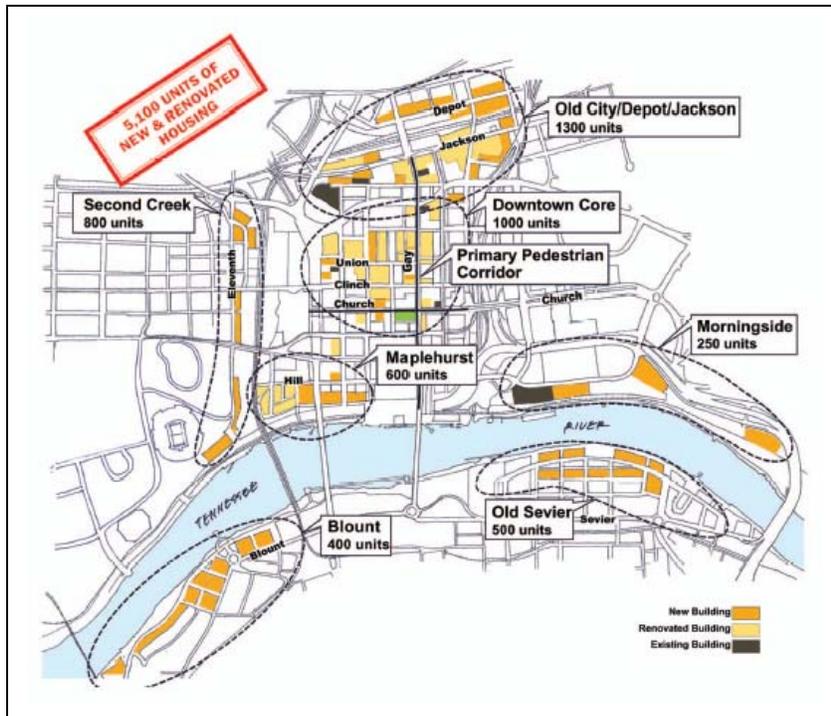
d. Cultural / Tourism Framework



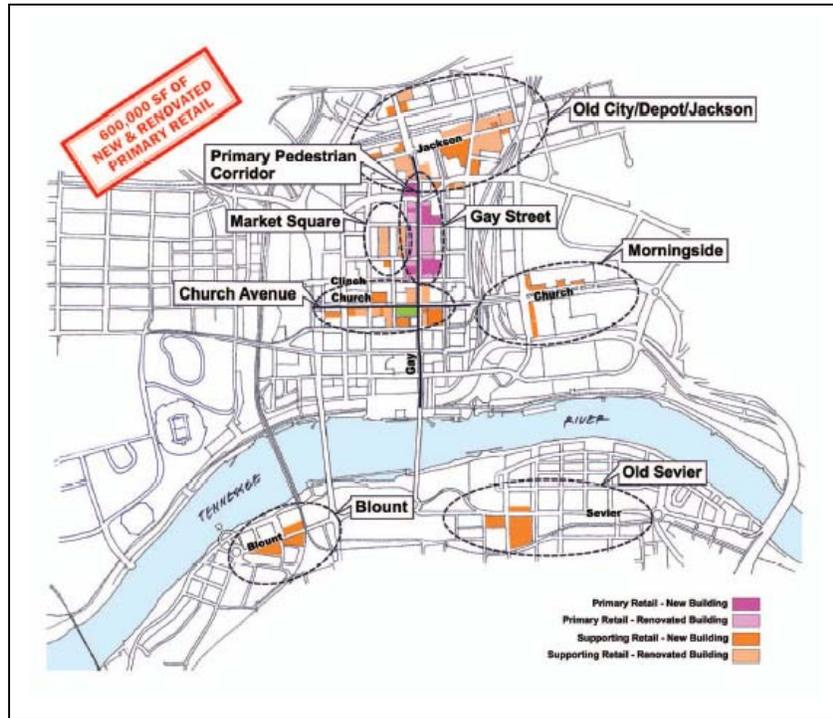
e. Employment Framework



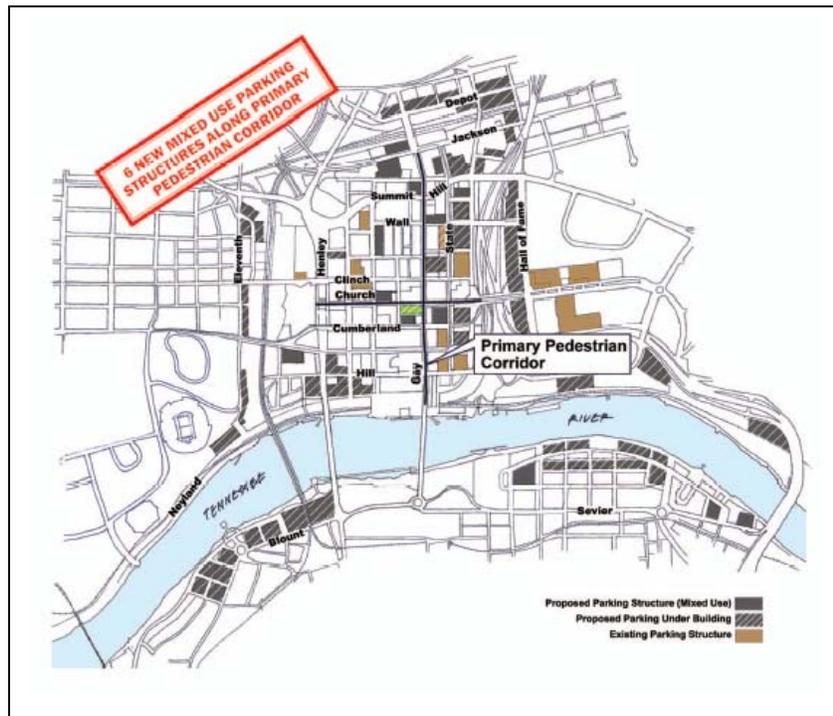
f. Housing Framework



g. Retail Framework



h. Parking Framework



# DOWNTOWN CONNECTIVITY & ADJACENCY

Areas adjacent to the downtown, included within the "Central City Influence Area", are connected to the downtown and should have mutually beneficial relationships with downtown improvements. Brief comments are provided for these areas in this section of the Civic Vision.

## 1. South Waterfront

The South Waterfront is a significantly underutilized community resource. Reuse and redevelopment opportunities could convert this area into a higher density mix of uses, supporting a high level of activity and bolstering the local economy. A South Waterfront Feasibility Study was commissioned in January 2005, and will be completed by the end of March 2005.

The products of the study will include:

- Description of three alternative development scenarios, what makes them plausible options and the conditions under which they would occur;
- Detailed assumptions behind the scenarios;
- Sketch maps and visualizations of the developments showing building massing including basic 3-D computer modeling;
- Results of evaluation measures comparing the scenarios;
- Analysis of the feasibility of each scenario; and
- Recommended next steps to continue toward project implementation.

## 2. Fort Sanders

Objectives for the Fort Sanders area include:

- Preservation/renovation of historic buildings
- Allow larger site development to occur between Cumberland Avenue and White Ave utilizing the full block instead of only parcels fronting Cumberland Avenue.

## 3. University of Tennessee

The City of Knoxville and the University of Tennessee should improve connectivity between the campus and the downtown. Opportunities to strengthen transit connections should be explored, and downtown student housing would enhance 24-hour downtown activity and energy levels.

## 4. Cumberland Avenue Retail Corridor

A draft scope of work, supported by the University of Tennessee and Cumberland Avenue merchants, has been submitted to the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) by the City of Knoxville. If conducted, the study will produce:

- Cumberland Avenue cross section and plan view drawings, depicting the alternatives to support mixed use, pedestrian-friendly environment, including a three lane cross-section with wider sidewalks and other alternatives that should be considered (a three-lane model that might be considered is the Euclid Avenue project near the University of Kentucky, a context sensitive design derived with Lexington residents)
- Pros and cons of the alternatives, including travel times, accident reduction and pedestrian/bicycle safety associated with the alternatives
- Estimated cost of the alternatives, including utility relocation
- Potential sources of funding
- Overall traffic, transit and pedestrian circulation plan and the estimated costs of improvements that are recommended for the adjoining street network
- Evaluation of the longer-term traffic implications regarding flow and capacity of Cumberland Ave. relative to the surrounding freeway and street network, following completion of the I-40 project.

## **5. Fourth & Gill Historic District and Old North Knoxville**

- Ensure that the I-40 project addresses negative impacts and improves downtown connections
- Relocate and redevelop the KCDC maintenance facility, located next to Guy Love Tower

## **6. Mechanicsville**

- Continue to market available Hope VI residential lots
- Implement projects associated with Maynard School, Stevens Square, and the Mechanicsville grocery store
- Continue investment into Maynard School as a neighborhood school

## **7. Morningside**

- Develop a higher intensity and mix of land uses west of park.

## **8. Old Sevier Neighborhood**

- Address neighborhood conservation objectives and mixed-use opportunities as part of the South Waterfront Feasibility Study and possible master plan effort

## **9. Corridor Connections**

- Develop better infrastructure, particularly storm water, sidewalk, lighting and street improvements
- Strategically reinvest in key intersections along the corridors that connect to neighborhoods
- Develop better design standards for signs and address enforcement issues.
- Target areas along corridors to reintroduce higher intensity residential uses that will support nearby commercial and transit

## CITY OF KNOXVILLE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

# PART II: ACTION PLAN

### SUMMARY

#### Downtown Economic Development Policy

The downtown economic strategy must involve the strategic use of incentives to maximize the downtown's office, retail, and residential potential in concert with historic and urban design guidelines. These incentives should be applied in conformity with the civic vision, which allows sufficient flexibility to meet unforeseen opportunities. Designation of the greater downtown area as a redevelopment district would enhance the city's ability to utilize its incentives.

Public sector incentives should include both the aggressive use of tax policies and the strategic development of infrastructure as well as active programming and marketing for the downtown area in a coordinated and planned manner. The long term CIP budget should reflect planned capital outlays in reference to the civic vision and priority projects.

The city will commit to providing organizational capacity, coordination, and clear designation of responsibilities sufficient to ensure implementation of the vision within the constraints of available financial resources.

#### IN THE SHORT-TERM (1-5 YEARS), THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN:

- ❖ **Initiate designation of the Central Business District as a redevelopment district. This action is recommended to extend the potential use of Tax Increment Financing throughout the downtown.**
- ❖ **Set the policy and parameters for the use of eminent domain / condemnation authority within the downtown redevelopment district.**
- ❖ **Establish a performance-based set of eligibility criteria for economic development assistance, with consideration of:**
  - **Conformity with Civic Vision;**
  - **Conformity with Design Guidelines;**
  - **Demonstration that "gap" financing is necessary; and**
  - **Favorable analysis of return on investment.**
- ❖ **Initiate a process to develop downtown urban design guidelines. Density expectations for new development should be addressed to maximize investment and respect the character of surrounding buildings.**
- ❖ **Initiate a streetscape design program, with Gay Street and connectors to Market Square as initial priorities.**
- ❖ **Establish a capital program for downtown streetscape & infrastructure improvements.**
- ❖ **Designate a "Downtown Director" with coordination responsibilities related to several facets of downtown operations and management.**

- **Priority #1: Gay Street / Market Square Retail Strategy**

**Goal** Rebuild the retail capacity of Gay Street and Market Square. Strengthened retail activity in the downtown's core would provide a more attractive array of downtown destinations for workers, residents, and visitors.

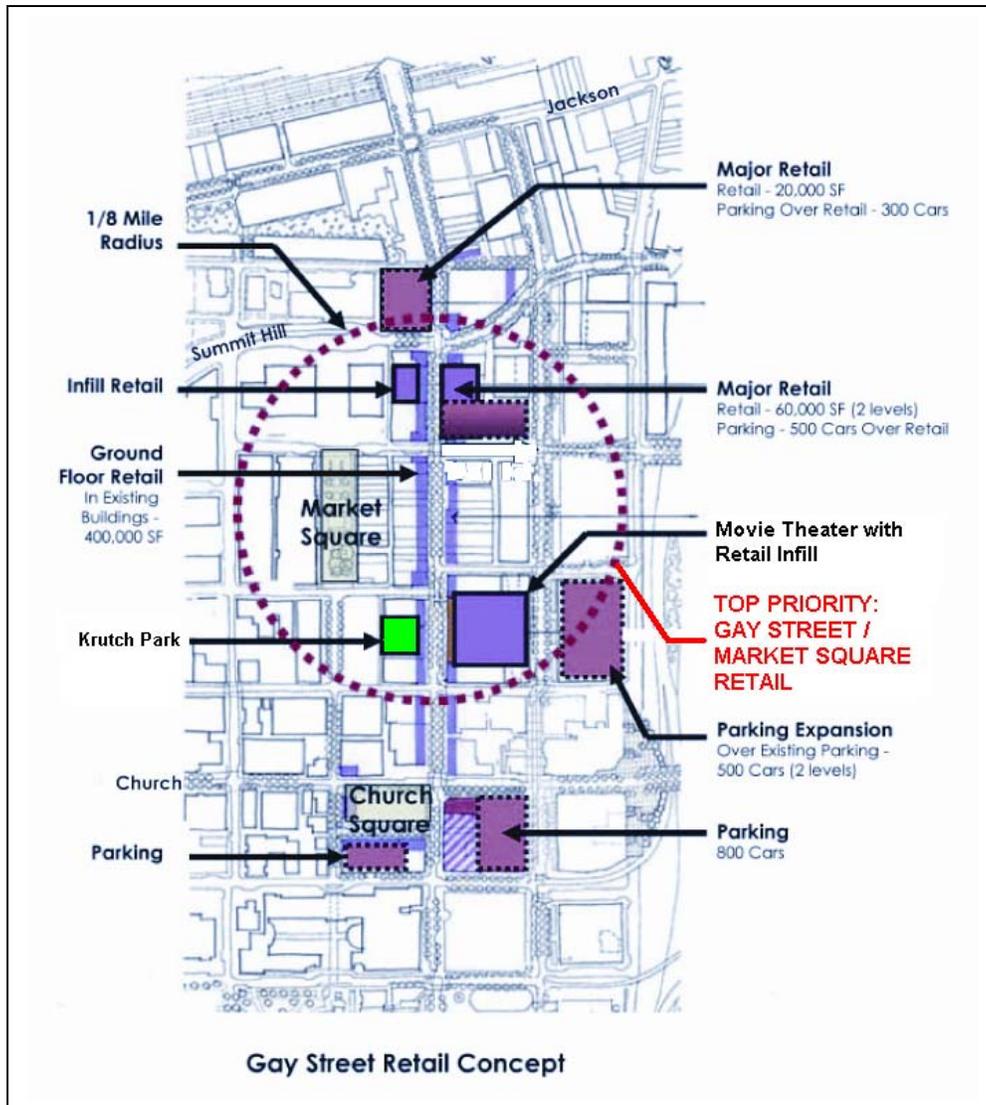
**Purpose** Implementation of a focused downtown retail strategy for Gay Street and Market Square is an essential priority for the economic vitality of downtown. In addition, the convention center / sales tax recapture act allows the city to recapture the increased sales tax in the CBID which will help reduce convention center debt.

**Current Status** Retail business activity on Market Square has improved recently and continuing support is needed. Current efforts to site the movie theater and Mast General Store on Gay Street will improve retail momentum. Recruitment of retail anchor tenants and smaller retail establishments is not coordinated as well it could be. City Council is approached on a case-by-case basis for approval of economic development incentives. Public assistance in the form of streetscape or infrastructure improvements to support private investment is not consistently available.

**Recommendations** The city should develop and implement a Downtown Retail Strategy, including marketing and recruitment, administration of incentives, and management of retail efforts. Completion of the movie theater complex and Mast General Store projects should be used advantageously to maintain investment momentum on Gay Street between Church Street and Summit Hill Drive, and in the Market Square area. The strategy should establish a set of economic development tools consistently available for prospective retailers, with a commitment of funds adequate to aggressively pursue prospects.

"Infill" retail recruitment efforts on Gay Street should focus on filling structural gaps in the street blocks between Church Street and Summit Hill Drive. Redevelopment of Krutch Park is not recommended as part of the short-term Action Plan. Surface parking lots should be converted to building sites, with displaced parking accommodated in parking structures. The redevelopment or reuse of existing Gay Street structures currently vacant or underutilized should be specifically targeted as street level retail opportunities eligible for economic development assistance.

Public streetscapes connecting Market Square to Gay Street, particularly Wall Avenue and Union Avenue, should be improved. Streetscape and lighting improvements designed to make the pedestrian environment safer and more inviting would strengthen tie functional ties between Gay Street and Market Square.



## • Priority #2: Priority Projects

- Goal** A reasonable number of downtown sites or structures should be selected as priority project candidates, based on current level of underutilization, magnitude of impact if redeveloped, and feasibility of short-term action.
- Purpose** It is important to prioritize resources for maximum benefit, with specific emphasis on the use of public funds to realize a positive return on investment.
- Current Status** A Priority Projects list has been prepared (using project lists generated by Crandall-Arambula) that addresses several project categories:
- Public Capital-Related Projects
    - Parking
    - Streetscape & Infrastructure Improvements
    - Bridges
    - Public & Private projects
  - Program-Related Projects
    - Marketing
    - Transportation Strategy
    - Housing Strategy
    - Activity Programming

**Recommendations** Priority projects should be based on economic viability, investment leverage, time constraints, community needs, and consistency with Civic Vision principles and frameworks.

Four short-term project priorities are recommended:

- Gay Street & Market Square Retail Infill and Reuse Sites
- Former News Sentinel Site
- Gay Street Block between Church Street & Cumberland Avenue
- Jackson-Depot Redevelopment District

Although these priority properties, if redeveloped, would contribute significantly to the downtown's image, attractiveness, and economic environment, it is critical to note that the short-term project priorities are considered flexible and subject to change. The City of Knoxville and supporting agencies must be able to respond quickly and flexibly to market changes and private investment interests.

A downtown parking program, aimed at providing information regarding availability, with consistent signage, rate structures, hours of operation, and collection mechanisms should be developed and marketed. Parking commitments arranged with downtown businesses and residents should be tracked and coordinated carefully. New parking garages should be part of a mixed-use development, preferably with street level retail uses, and comply with design guidelines recommended for the downtown. The existing State Street parking garage should be expanded.

Streetscape improvements recommended for Gay Street, Wall Avenue, Union Avenue, Clinch Avenue, Church Avenue, Central Street, and Summit Hill Drive should be pursued through a dedicated capital program. A comprehensively designed streetscape system should be implemented as funding allows, particularly in support of new private development projects.

Downtown activity programming and marketing should be pursued more aggressively to build on recent visitor attraction successes. The designation of the "Downtown Director" position should allow pursuit of these objectives in the short-term.

• **Priority #3: Downtown Urban Design Guidelines**

**Goal** The appearance and design of both private and public property in the downtown should be improved to attract more shoppers and visitors. Consistent expectations of quality, through proper establishment of design guidelines and streetscape improvement programs, will restore developer confidence and stimulate new investment.

**Purpose** Flexible design guidelines ensure quality in design and development. Good guidelines are flexible and assure predictability in the development process.

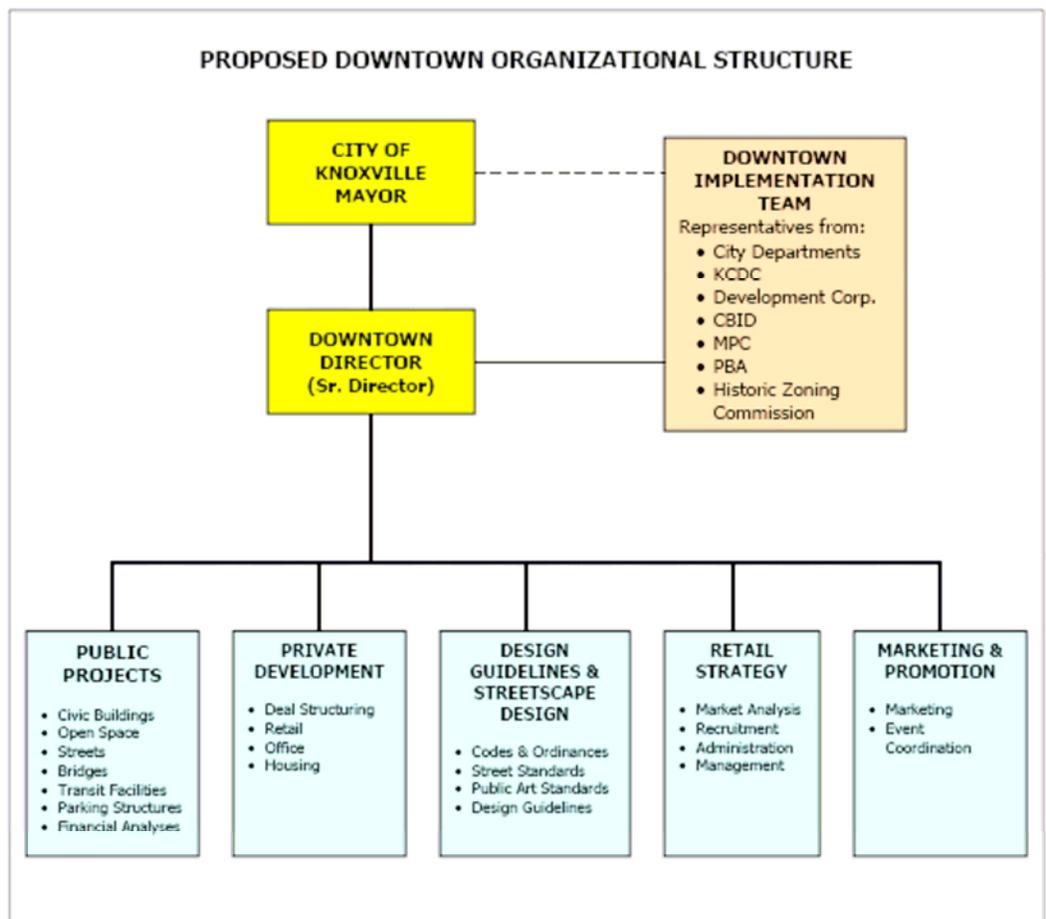
**Current Status** Current historic designations affect some properties through design review by the Historic Zoning Commission. Design guidelines do not exist for the entire downtown, although some design guidelines do exist for Market Square. Design guidelines used in other cities have successfully improved their downtowns' aesthetic image and pedestrian activity patterns, yet still allowed freedom in design decisions.

**Recommendations** The city should initiate a process to develop and adopt appropriate design guidelines, and should address public rights-of-way and streetscape design issues. The downtown design guidelines should take into account the design review responsibilities of the Historic Zoning Commission with regard to Certificates of Appropriateness required for alterations of historic properties. Emphasis should be on the pedestrian experience and the streetscape environment, and should not focus on architectural design. The process for review and approval should be simple and straightforward.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission, in consultation with the Historic Zoning Commission, should lead the process for development and implementation of downtown design guidelines, with consultant contract management performed by MPC staff as needed to assist in the development of guidelines.

• **Priority #4: Organizational Structure**

- Goal** Form an organization with authority to oversee downtown design and development.
- Purpose** Coordination of public/civic downtown activities should be improved. There is no single person or entity responsible for downtown business recruitment, marketing, design and development.
- Current Status** Several public and civic entities play a role in the design and development of downtown Knoxville, including the Mayor’s Office, city departments and the City Council, the Knox County Mayor’s Office and County Commission, the Knox County Development Corporation, the Knoxville Area Chamber Partnership, the Central Business Improvement District, the Development Corporation, the Knoxville Industrial Development Board, the Public Building Authority, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and the Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission.
- Recommendations** A “Downtown Director” should be designated as the coordinator dedicated solely to downtown-related activities. This position should be broad-based in expertise, and should be a Senior Director with a direct reporting relationship to the Mayor. An “Implementation Team” should be formed to facilitate interdepartmental and interagency coordination of downtown activities. A recommended organizational structure is shown in the diagram below.



- **Priority #5: Final Plan Document**

<b>Goal</b>	A document is needed that describes the community's longer-term vision of downtown Knoxville in the future, with a series of short-term actions that will be undertaken to implement the vision. Otherwise, the vision becomes an ignored shelf document. The document should be a concise and clear summary policies, priorities, and plans.
<b>Purpose</b>	The city needs a concise summary of downtown concepts, principles, frameworks, and priorities to establish a basis for future decisions. The last plan formally approved for the city was the 1988 Downtown Plan. The city has dozens of separate reports, studies, and plans, but no comprehensive statement addressing downtown Knoxville's future.
<b>Current Status</b>	This document, pending public review and formal approval, is the draft of the comprehensive statement for downtown, and contains two components: (1) the Civic Vision, using products from the Crandall Arambula recommendations to describe the long-term goals for the downtown; and (2) the 5-Year Action Plan, using the Crandall Arambula recommendations and Downtown Advisory Committee discussions to propose short-term actions that should be pursued. The Metropolitan Planning Commission has adopted the Civic Vision Principles in its downtown sector plan.
<b>Recommendations</b>	The City Council should adopt the Downtown Improvement Strategy by resolution, with the understanding that the Action Plan will need to be revisited on a minimum 5-year cycle. A concise summary of the strategy should be made available for broad public circulation, in the form of a flyer, brochure, or poster.