



Photo Credit: Springfield MO Convention & Visitors Bureau

CHAPTER 8

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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A strong economy provides employment opportunities for all area residents, strengthens the City's tax base, and establishes Springfield as an attractive place to live, work, and do business. By setting clear direction through a long-term economic development plan, revamping City policies and its approach, and fostering public-private collaboration, Springfield can better position itself in the region as a major competitor. This includes supporting a wide array of employment options for a diverse and well-trained workforce that is inclusive to young professionals, minority-owned and small businesses, and startups. The creation of complete neighborhoods anchored with local commercial hubs will be a major component of economic development, leading to the revitalization of Springfield's residential areas and surrounding city corridors. Through enhanced design standards, the quality of place of city corridors and employment areas can be elevated to draw new economic activity to Springfield and encourage people to stay and spend dollars within the City.

Look for these icons identifying theme-related strategies!

- COMMUNITY PHYSICAL IMAGE 
- ARTS, CULTURE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION 
- HEALTH & WELL-BEING 

GOAL 1: Redefine Springfield's narrative as a major competitor and leader in the regional market.

1.1 CREATE A LONG-TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Create a long-term plan for growing Springfield's economy as well as a cohesive community brand to market to prospective businesses.

The creation of a long-term economic development plan was identified as one of the top priorities for economic development by the community. Working with regional partners like the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Missouri Small Business Development Center at Missouri State University, Springfield Business Development Corporation, Multicultural Business Association, Springfield Regional Economic Partnership (SREP), City Utilities, and Greene County, the City should develop an action-oriented, long-term economic development plan to establish a clear framework for expanding the Springfield area's economy.

Focus should be placed on strategies for proactive regional economic development, workforce training, creating a business-friendly environment, enhancing Springfield's quality of place for business attraction, and constructing infrastructure necessary to support businesses. This plan should take into consideration other partner organization's efforts, balancing the business community's interests with those of the broader community.

The long-term economic development plan should also be used to:

- Showcase to residents and the local business community the City's willingness and active efforts to compete with peer communities.
- Develop a cohesive brand and identity to market the City to prospective businesses as a preferable location over its regional competitors.
- Identify target industries for recruitment and attraction and create a marketing strategy that highlights the benefits of locating to and doing business in Springfield.

KEY ISSUES

Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO), the Springfield region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), projects Greene County to gain nearly 21,000 jobs between 2018 and 2045, or 689 jobs annually. Springfield has consistently accounted for about 90 percent of total jobs in the County. If this trend is to continue, Springfield can anticipate adding 18,000 new jobs over the next 25 years. It will therefore be critical that the City strategically plans for economic growth through the proposed Long-Term Economic Development Plan. This should consider development strategies outlined in **Chapter 5: Land Use and Development**, which aim to support economic development while ensuring quality development and well-paying jobs through strategies outlined in this chapter. The Economic Development Plan should also consider the following key issues:

Shift In Retail

Paired with national shifts towards ecommerce and a decrease in traditional retail, Springfield's commercial areas were identified during the *Forward SGF* outreach process as unattractive, aging, and in need of rethinking. While city corridors contribute significantly to the local tax base, certain commercial areas are experiencing decline, and would benefit from a shift towards multifamily or other non-retail uses to reinvigorate the area and increase foot traffic. There is also a need to place greater emphasis on quality of place enhancements that improve the traditional local retail and service experience to keep pace with the digital marketplace.

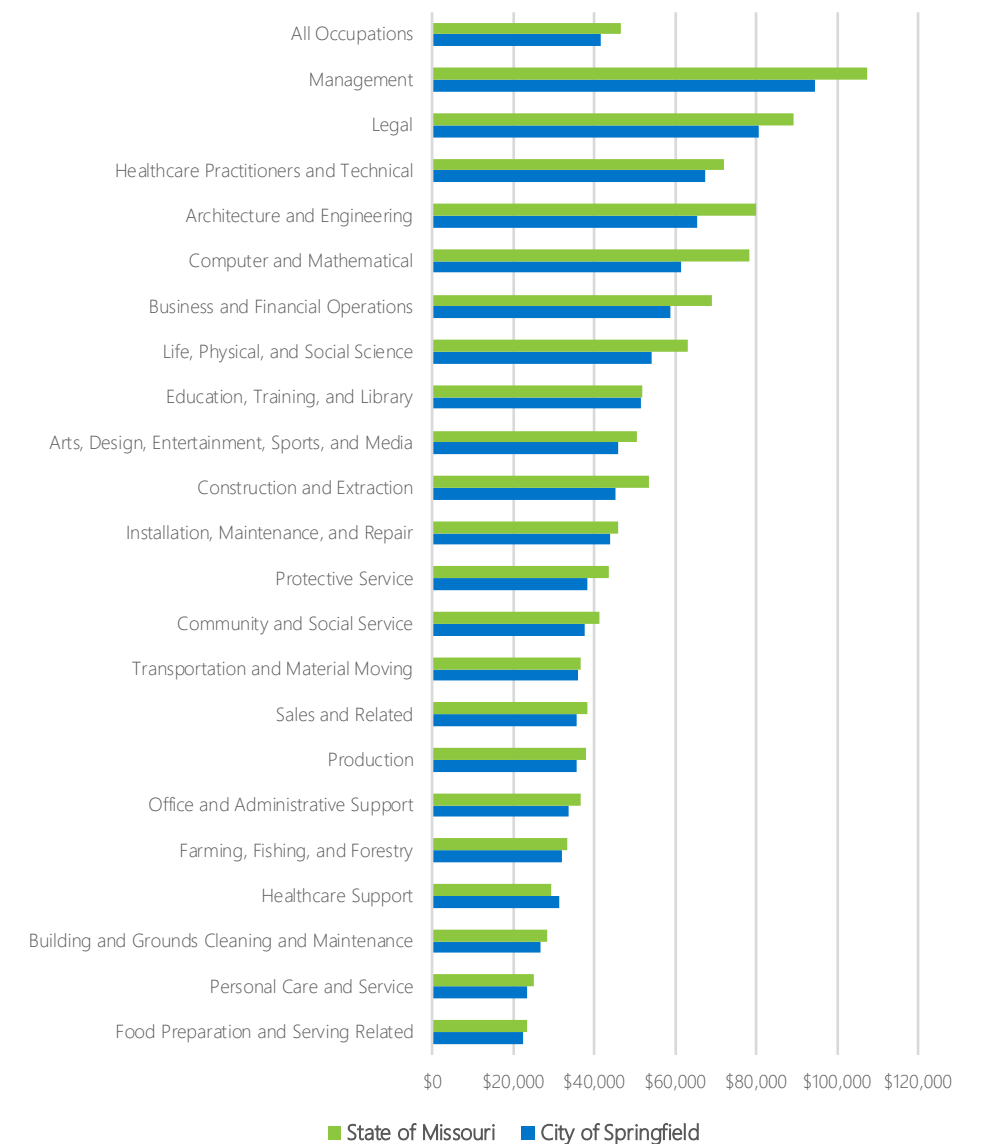
Low Wages

One of the key community issues identified during the *Forward SGF* outreach process was low wages, locally and in the region, which poses a barrier to increasing livability, household disposable income available to spend locally, and economic mobility, particularly for those living in poverty or experiencing homelessness. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Springfield Metropolitan Area has an annual mean wage of \$45,550, which is lower than the Missouri's at \$51,390 as of 2021. Improving Springfield's wages will require a holistic approach to local economic development, including attracting quality development and well-paying employers, workforce training, and facilitating entrepreneurship and small business development.

Daytime Population

Springfield experiences a significant increase in daytime population due to people traveling to the City for work, services, entertainment, and education. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this includes an increase in the local workforce by about 81,200 people. This daytime population increase supports Springfield's local economy and the sizeable commercial and employment footprint it has today. Through quality of place improvements outlined in *Forward SGF*, including beautification, corridor improvements, and high walkability, the City can capitalize on its large daytime population and create attractive places for people to enjoy, spend dollars locally, and support Springfield's economy. Quality of life improvements can also promote the City's desirability as a place to live, helping convert commuters to new residents.

Annual Mean Wage Comparison (May 2018)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



1.2 REVAMP CITY POLICIES & APPROACH

Revamp City policies and staff interaction with business development and attraction.

Rather than focusing on what is not permitted by code, the City of Springfield should build the reputation of a collaborator, reinforcing the attitude that it would like to work with developers to create an attractive and livable community. Balancing the needs of the development community with the needs and expectations of the City's quality of place priorities will be key. This includes ensuring safety and high quality of development.

Such a proactive approach should be instilled in City staff to foster an efficient and competitive environment focused on excellent customer service. This includes providing guidance to developers throughout the development process and referrals to useful resources when facing challenges. City policies and processes should be optimized to eliminate undue delays and ensure regulations are being applied in a fair and consistent manner.

The Department of Economic Vitality's approval process for reviewing eligible projects for incentives should also be updated to compel projects to go above and beyond the City's design standards and regulations. This would help ensure the City attracts "placemaking" developments—those that complement the City's assets and feature attractive, pedestrian-friendly built forms that elevate the character of the community.

1.3 UPDATE THE CODE

Review and update the City's code to promote quality development, renovations, and placemaking improvements.

A key component to ensuring future development contributes to a high quality of place will be updating the Land Development and related city codes that represent the community's vision and development best practices outlined in this chapter. This may include codifying design standards as objective requirements to ensure they are followed. To facilitate improvement of existing development, triggers should be considered for nonconforming sites to be required to comply with current design requirements when a certain threshold of renovations and/or expansions is exceeded. Together with strategic code enforcement, the City can more effectively promote near term improvements and attractive development that will elevate the City's character and quality of place. For more information on updating the City's code, see **Chapter 15: Implementation**.

1.4 STREAMLINE THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Streamline the development process by creating an accelerated permitting system that allows projects with a high-level of positive community impact to efficiently advance through the development process.

During the development approval process, private developers must obtain the necessary approval(s) to gain the right to develop a property for a specific use. Approval is based on a variety of factors, including zoning code conformance, surrounding uses, and requests for variances which often relies on input from a variety of departments and agencies. This can lead to a time-consuming and complicated process that can deter developers from pursuing projects within Springfield.

PROJECT ACCELERATION SYSTEM

To help accelerate the processing of permits for highly desirable projects from the concept phase to construction, the City should consider developing a Project Acceleration System. This process can be used to expedite the review of high community impact projects that support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and adhere to the Land Development Code and other established standards. A checklist should be created to rank the level of community benefit and how well the project supports the system's perimeters. Examples of factors that could warrant accelerated permit processing could include high job creation, significant tax benefits, support of target industries, housing in strategic areas of need, and incorporation of environmentally responsible designs in sensitive areas.

Accelerated review of projects must not come at the cost of the quality of development. Rather, the City and developers must coordinate closely to ensure developments promote quality of place, facilitated through an efficient, transparent, and consistent application process.

Other strategies the City should consider to improve the development approval process include:

- Continue to review the approval process annually to identify and address where inefficiencies, inconsistencies, delays, and redundant or conflicting requirements exist. This should be done in coordination with local developers, permitting staff, and other stakeholders most familiar with the process, such as through public forums, roundtable meetings, and online surveys to gain feedback.
- Continue to support and enhance the pre-development review process that brings together representatives from all agencies and departments involved in the approval process in one place to support faster collaboration, improved communication, ability to address issues, and concurrent review.
- Continue to offer or require pre-application meetings with developers to identify any issues and clarify any misunderstandings before submission.
- Continue to examine peer cities for successful strategies for improving development processes and development incentives.

1.5 FOSTER PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS & INCENTIVES

COMMUNITY PHYSICAL IMAGE



Facilitate entry of new businesses and quality development through public-private partnerships and incentives.

Private investment and business growth should ultimately be stimulated by public investments made by the City, strong public-private partnerships, and attractive incentives. This includes the following:

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

To further a business-friendly environment, the City should seek to create public-private partnerships (P3s). P3s can be considered innovative collaborations between the City and the private sector to achieve a mutual goal, such as infrastructure improvements, placemaking, or job creation. The City should take an open-minded and creative approach to creating new P3s and work with local and regional agencies, such as the Chamber, healthcare providers, higher education institutions, and major employers to identify new partnership opportunities. New partnerships could also be instrumental in launching new endeavors with on the Bass Pro Shops, Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium Campus, or on the vacant lot at the University Plaza - Expo Center.

For example, developers, businesses, organizations, and even private citizens could partner with the City to enhance landscaping along public rights-of-ways. In exchange for their participation, partners would be awarded with a roadway sign dedicated to them, like in adopt-a-street/highway programs, and a tax deduction that could be claimed on income taxes. Such programs have been implemented in other cities and have substantially improved the character of major thoroughfares, while simultaneously promoting a spirit of community pride.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Springfield currently offers a variety of economic development incentives to facilitate new business investments and quality development, which are outlined in the Economic Development Incentives Policy Manual. Incentive types include:

- Special Taxing Districts
- Property Tax Abatement
- Tax Increment Financing
- Loan Programs
- Brownfields Assistance

Regular updates to this manual and the municipal website should be completed to ensure incentive policies are up to date and are clear to the business community as to what resources are active and available. The City should also research whether Springfield's existing incentives are competitive in comparison to other communities and adjust accordingly.

Explore New Incentives and Revamp Existing Incentives

The City should explore providing additional local and state incentives for new economic development strategies and tools that have proven successful in comparable peer communities with population similar to or slightly larger than Springfield's, such as Lexington, KY; Boise, ID; and Chattanooga, TN should be considered, as well as regional competitors like St. Louis, Kansas City, Northwest Arkansas, Columbia, and Joplin.

Examples of potential incentives include capital investment tax credits, qualified target industry tax refunds, sales tax exemptions, small business assistance programs, site development assistance, revolving loan funds for local infrastructure projects, and workforce training grants, as well as the following:

Streetscape Cost-Share Program

The City should consider establishing a Streetscape Cost-Share Program to incentivize public realm improvements through collaborative public-private investments. The tool can help fund streetscape amenities and site improvements that comply with the City's standards, which typically would not occur otherwise until a property is redeveloped. For example, the City could provide the labor and finance 50 percent of the materials. The program could also allow for property owners to spread their payments over a period, such as five years, with a property lien guarantee. Examples of private investments that could be supported by the program include consolidated driveways, perimeter landscaping, lighting, seating areas, bike parking stations, and stormwater green infrastructure.

Workable Program

The City should re-evaluate its former Workable Program—which was intended to establish a framework for the City to evaluate property tax abatement requests under the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority Act—and consider establishing a tax abatement program in which the degree of tax abatement is scaled to the quantity of community priority criteria met. Criteria could include investments that improve the character, safety, connectivity, housing affordability, job retention, and/or economic prosperity of an area.

1.6 SUPPORT LOCAL TOURISM

To attract new visitors to Springfield, the City should continue to work with partners like the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote community assets for tourism while improving quality of place through implementation of *Forward SGF*. Tourism efforts should be targeted to key assets in the City including sports tourism, Bass Pro Shops, Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium, the historic Route 66, recreational opportunities as the “Basecamp of the Ozarks,” reimagined Lake Springfield, Grant Avenue Parkway, Jordan Valley Creek, local events and festivals, and other attractions in Downtown and neighborhood commercial hubs. See **Chapter 11: Parks, Greenways and Natural Resources** for more information on recreation, sports tourism, and the “Basecamp of the Ozarks” concept.

NEW CONVENTION CENTER

Throughout the *Forward SGF* planning process, community members expressed the desire for a new convention center and hotel to draw large influxes of visitors to Springfield to stimulate the local economy and business development opportunities. Within Downtown, northeast of Downtown along Chestnut Expressway, and across from Bass Pro Shops at Campbell Avenue and Sunshine Street were some potential locations identified by the community.

The long-term impacts of COVID-19 in relation to facility design and demand should be monitored. If feasible, the City should inform the public about the need for a dedicated funding source for the convention center. A modern facility should be considered that exceeds health and safety requirements and accommodates hybrid virtual event formats, serving as a prototype for others nationwide. The building design should be state-of-art and iconic, implementing sustainable building designs like green roofs, water conservation systems, and energy efficient building systems. Successful examples include the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, UT; Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, TN; and Oregon Convention Center in Portland, OR.

GOAL 2: Clearly define and strategically plan for new industrial and business park areas.

2.1 TARGET GROWTH AREAS

Strategically target future industrial and business park growth.

Future industrial, office, transportation-related uses, and other employment-generating businesses should be targeted to areas that have high accessibility, available land, economically viable infrastructure needs, and minimal land use conflicts. This should be done in accordance with the **Business Flex** and **Industry and Logistics** placetype locations identified in **Chapter 5: Land Use and Development**. These areas were determined based on surrounding context, transportation access, infrastructure network, and available development opportunities.

ASSESS MARKET POTENTIAL

Moving forward, the City should assess the projected need for industrial and business park square footage, then identify large opportunity sites where public-private investment should be directed. This should be done in close coordination with the Chamber, Springfield Regional Economic Partnership (SREP), Greene County, City Utilities, and private developers. According to SREP, the Springfield industrial market had a positive net absorption of 157,321 square feet and a vacancy rate of just 2.1% in the first quarter 2021, which showcases development potential.

INFILL AND EXPAND INDUSTRIAL PARKS

Infill of vacant lots within existing industrial and business park areas, such as Battlefield Business Center, Partnership Industrial Center West, and North Creek Business Park, should be prioritized. Growth should then be directed to adjacent areas to leverage existing infrastructure and reduce the need for costly and untimely infrastructure expansions. The development of two additional industrial parks should also be considered in the following areas:

- **Northeast Springfield** surrounding the intersection of I-44 and US 65, which features high roadway access and potential for improved rail access.
- **Northwest Springfield** east and west of Springfield-Branson National Airport, which could leverage airport and rail access, as well as high roadway connectivity via I-44, West Bypass, and Kearney Street.

Private investment and development should be incentivized in these areas through public realm enhancements, including roadway improvements, utility extensions, wayfinding improvements, and gateway features (see **Strategy 2.4: Enhance the Character of Industrial Districts**). In the near term, an annexation plan should be implemented to expand opportunities for new development around the airport, I-44, and James River Freeway. Funding should be identified to serve these areas with roadways and utilities.

2.2 LEVERAGE KEY DEVELOPMENT SITES

Leverage publicly owned land and key sites under private ownership that showcase high accessibility and visibility.

It is important that the City identifies and markets key development sites to connect businesses with development opportunities and facilitate economic growth. There are a variety of tools the City can use to facilitate (re)development of key sites with varying degrees of involvement. Each site would require an evaluation to determine which approach is most appropriate. All significant development should involve some component of community engagement to help guide the process. Tools include:

- **Assess and inventory available publicly-owned land** that can be sold and developed for commercial and industrial development, as well as targeted privately owned land in highly accessible and visible locations.
- **Identify land assemblage opportunities** to create sites eligible for the Missouri Department of Economic Development's Certified Sites program. This program pre-qualifies sites ripe for business use that meet industry requirements, including that the land is cleared and at least 25 acres, with a minimum eight-inch water main, industrial capacity sanitary sewer, and three-phase 12 kilovolts electric infrastructure.
- **Publicly map and list key development sites**, such as on the Small Business Development Center and Department of Economic Vitality's sites. Regularly update listings to be used as a resource for businesses looking to locate to Springfield and market them via mass marketing through paid and earned media.
- **Update Zoning.** Development regulations should align with the recommended land uses and development in *Forward SGF* or subsequent local planning efforts that provide more detailed direction. Zoning can be updated to incentivize more intense development. This can include changes to uses, setbacks, and building heights, to accommodate development not previously envisioned for the site.
- **Offer Incentive Packages.** In some cases, the City should offer incentives to entice highly desirable development or offset additional development costs for providing public amenities and improvements beyond what is typically required of a project as of right.
- **Engage in an RFP/RFQ Process** if the City owns a site, or needs significant support from property owners for projects that address key community priorities. This would help market the site, attract development interest, promote available incentives and zoning, and facilitate coordination between the property owner and developer to complete the project.

2.3 EXPAND INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY

Work with business partners and stakeholders to adopt clear policies and guidelines for the strategic expansion of City infrastructure.

To support business growth and development, the City must ensure that the necessary utility and transportation infrastructure is provided. Prioritizing key development sites described in **Strategy 2.2: Leverage Key Development Sites** and using a collaborative approach with business partners and regional stakeholders, the following strategies should be pursued within the **Business Flex** and **Industry and Logistics** placetypes:

- Maintain open communication with existing and prospective business partners and stakeholders in necessary infrastructure upgrades and desirable expansions to accommodate business improvements and new development.

- Use the infrastructure expansion framework in **Chapter 10: Infrastructure and Community Facilities** to guide future infrastructure expansions to serve businesses in a strategic and cost-effective manner.
- Work with City Utilities to ensure existing and future industrial, business, and commercial growth areas are well served with electricity, gas, water, and broadband infrastructure.
- Continue to work with the Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) to improve traffic flow around the City through implementation of its long-range transportation plan: Congestion Management Process and Destination 2045.
- Partner with BNSF Railway, OTO, and economic development partners to improve rail services to industrial parks and determine feasible locations for new spurs.
- Continue expansion and improvements at the Springfield-Branson National Airport as well as gateway enhancements along key routes to the airport to improve the City's image (see **Strategy 3.1: Prioritize Corridor Improvements**).
- Work with Springfield Regional Economic Partnership (SREP) to identify potential mega-sites (300 acres or more) for industrial development.

2.4 ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OF INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

COMMUNITY PHYSICAL IMAGE



HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Enhance the image and character of industrial districts by improving development standards and encouraging the modernization of existing industrial parks.

Springfield contains a mixture of older industrial development ranging from large warehouses and manufacturing facilities to smaller standalone businesses dispersed across the City. Examples include within the greater Downtown area, along Chestnut Expressway, and along the BNSF railway system. Newer industrial and business parks like North Creek Business Park and Partnership Industrial Center West also present the opportunity for infill development and offer development-ready sites.

While industrial areas and business parks are critical to Springfield's economy and employment base, they can also detract from the character of the City, particularly when located along major corridors. To ensure Springfield establishes itself as an attractive place to do business and improves quality of place for residents, the City should proactively promote reinvestment in older industrial areas while ensuring future development is of high quality. This includes updating zoning regulations and design requirements, and continuing incentives that promote the followings strategies:

LOT CONSOLIDATION

Opportunities to consolidate older industrial properties should be encouraged to facilitate comprehensive redevelopment and accommodate modern industrial buildings capable of attracting high quality tenants.

QUALITY FAÇADE DESIGN

Future redevelopment or renovations should reflect high quality design. It is important that the façades of industrial buildings are well designed when visible from public rights-of-way. This includes using attractive materials, windows and doors, and articulation to add visual interest and break up large bank walls.

CIRCULATION AND WAYFINDING

Circulation and wayfinding should be strengthened throughout industrial parks to ensure easy access and safety. Industrial and business parks should be well marked with monument signs, directing trucks, business partners, and visitors to the right location and creating a sense of place.

SCREENING AND LANDSCAPING

Quality fencing and landscaping should be promoted to screen utility areas, loading areas, and surface parking lots from roadway view. This includes perimeter and interior landscaping within parking lots.

SECURITY

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) approaches should be promoted to establish industrial areas as safe, secure, and well taken care of through site design and maintenance. This includes windows facing parking areas, light installations, street cleanings, security systems, and site upkeep. Buildings should be oriented in a manner that minimizes areas hidden from right-of-way view to support natural surveillance.

MULTIMODAL ACCESS FOR EMPLOYEES

Industrial and business areas should be accessible for employees via transit, walking, and biking. The City should work with City Utilities to extend transit routes and service times to key employment areas identified by the **Business Flex** and **Industry and Logistics** placetypes. For example, service times for the 35 – Industrial Express Purple bus line should be considered for extension past typical work hours to serve employees leaving the workday. The City should work with private developers to incorporate internal paths that connect to the City's growing sidewalk network and support last-mile connections.

OUTDOOR AMENITIES

Industrial Developments with a large workforce and significant geography should be required to include natural features, such as trails and outdoor recreation areas to be used as amenities by employees. These trails should connect to the City's sidewalk network and regional trail system to increase bicycle/pedestrian connectivity to employment areas.

REPURPOSED BUILDINGS

The redevelopment or repurposing of deteriorating industrial properties should be prioritized in disinvested industrial areas to foster revitalization. This includes repurposing as live-work spaces, maker spaces, art studios, and other creative uses. Available incentives should be promoted to enhance the interior and exterior of these properties.

RETROFIT STANDARDS

The City currently requires a Certificate of Occupancy to mark completed inspection of the property for compliance with zoning regulations. It is not required, however, if the use of the land or structure remains the same (no matter if construction, reconstruction, enlargement, structural alteration or moving is involved). The City should instead consider requiring property owners through modified development standards to obtain certificates each time a building is occupied by a new tenant or if (re)construction, alterations, and retrofits occur. Bonuses to requirements like maximum sign area could be offered, while ensuring high quality development standards are maintained. This will increase touchpoints for the City to ensure properties are improved to meet current zoning regulations, including compliance with parking lot and landscaping standards and the installation of needed screening and sign enhancements.

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

In addition to updating the Land Development Code to reflect best practices and design standards for industrial areas outlined in this chapter (see **Strategy 1.3: Update the Code**), the City should create a design guidelines document specifically for industrial and business districts. This document should be highly illustrative with diagrams and photo examples of quality industrial development, to be used as a resource for staff and developers alike. It should provide guidelines for site layout, access management, landscaping, screening, and lighting requirements, in alignment with the updated code regulations.

Sustainable designs should be promoted where possible, such as permeable paving and bioretention systems. Façade design guidelines should reflect the community's expectations for quality character, with recommendations for preferred materials, fenestration, and articulation. A successful example is the City of Los Angeles' Industrial Citywide Design Guidelines.



CREATING SENSE OF PLACE

The City should work towards enhancing quality of place along priority corridors, investing in key public infrastructure to attract and encourage private investment. In the next three to five years, targeted area plans for placemaking should be created that incorporates community input on desired image, themes, and improvements. Working with existing businesses and stakeholders, consensus should be formed addressing the question, “What do we want to achieve along each of these corridors?” Associated cost estimates should be identified for future inclusion in the City’s CIP. Investments should extend beyond regular maintenance and connectivity improvements, rather pursuing beautification initiatives that elevate local image and sense of place. Examples include:

- Burying or relocating overhead utilities
- Providing pedestrian-scale lighting
- Planting trees
- Adding landscaping in medians
- Incorporating linear parks and green infrastructure
- Constructing decorative retaining walls
- Incorporating public art and gateway features
- Offering incentives to consolidate driveways

INTEGRATE MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT ALONG COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

In accordance with the Forward SGF Placetypes framework, multifamily development should be encouraged along Springfield’s commercial corridors (City Corridor Placetype), where housing can be used to reposition underutilized or underperforming commercial properties and increase activity in adjacent portions of the corridors (see **Chapter 7: Housing and Neighborhoods** for more information).

PUBLIC-PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

Private investments will also play a major role in increasing placemaking efforts and improving quality of place. The City should take a creative approach to partnering with property owners, developers, corporations, and organizations that want to invest in high-profile projects that boost the community’s image. For example, the City could create a program where businesses, organizations, and individuals partner with the City on sponsoring beautification projects along public roadways. This could help beautify the City’s corridors while providing an opportunity to promote civic pride.

GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Entryways and gateways along the identified priority corridors should be enhanced as they provide the first and last impression of the City. The City should engage the public in planning for gateway improvements, eliciting pride and a sense of community ownership.

Improvements could include archway signs, monument signs, public art, decorative lighting, landscaping, green infrastructure, water features, and pedestrian comfort and safety improvements. Such improvements at key gateway points could significantly improve how Springfield is outwardly perceived while elevating local community pride.

PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

Springfield’s commercial corridors contain many expansive surface parking lots that detract from the overall appearance of the City and add to the urban heat island effect. Certain measures can be taken to reduce their negative impact, including the following:

- Re-evaluate parking minimums to reduce excessive requirements for parking and consider establishing parking maximums when the City makes future updates to development codes.
- Strictly require internal and perimeter landscaping that screen parking areas from right-of-way view, provide shade to mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improve overall corridor appearance.
- Incentivize permeable surfaces and low impact development (LID) infrastructure for improved stormwater management.
- Encourage future development to locate parking to the rear and buildings near the property line to foster more pedestrian-friendly environments.
- Promote shared parking agreements and cross access between businesses to reduce the amount of land dedicated to surface parking.
- Encourage pedestrian pathways and crosswalks to improve pedestrian circulation.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (CID)

Springfield relies heavily on the use of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), which are political subdivisions or non-profit corporations that can finance public improvements, public services, or blight removal within a defined area. CIDs have the power to levy sales taxes, property taxes, and special assessments. The City should explore establishing new Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) along priority corridors to fund corridor beautification efforts.

SALES REVENUE ASSESSMENT

The City should undertake an analysis of historic sales revenue and other relevant data to identify areas in potential need of assistance. For example, a city-wide intensity map of retail sales could be created to identify economically prosperous versus declining commercial areas, ensuring compliance with confidentiality requirements. Other factors to examine include land uses with highest revenue generation and revenue generation compared to public costs associated with the development. Data may be compared to three and five years prior to identify areas with greatest growth and loss in revenue. Based on the analysis, investments should be targeted to areas with the greatest need of investment to ensure equitable distribution of public resources.

CORRIDOR PROTECTION PROGRAM

To support the beautification of the front door of the community and key corridors leading to/from Springfield-Branson National Airport, as well as better guide the type of development to occur along the routes, the City should consider establishing a Corridor Protection Program. This program would result in an overlay zoning district that would set form-based standards for development along target airport corridors within City limits. Guidelines would be established to protect the key gateway corridors from unsightly and undesirable development, such as industrial uses that feature outdoor storage, large, front-loaded parking lots, or significant freight activity. The City should also work with the County to apply the program to existing unincorporated land along the corridors and/or consider the annexation of such properties to better manage them. The need for this program will become increasingly important with the ongoing industrial growth on the west side of Springfield and the Amazon fulfillment center in Republic, MO.

AIRPORT GATEWAY CORRIDORS

During community outreach, improving the character of key travel routes leading to and from Springfield Branson National Airport was identified as a community priority. Primary routes include Division Street and Chestnut Expressway, particularly heading to the Downtown. Secondary connector routes include Farm Road 266, West Bypass, and Kearney Street.

As these roadways are the first and last impression of many visitors, their enhancement will play a major role in improving the image and outward perception of the City. Improvements include:

- Maintain roadway shoulders and ditches along primary and secondary routes, including removal of debris and cutting of grass.
- Plant native plants and wildflowers along roadside ditches to beautify the roadway while increasing pollinator habitats.
- Incorporate landscaping and/or gateway signs at key intersections like the Airport Boulevard traffic circle, Airport Boulevard and Chestnut Expressway, Division Street and West Bypass, and Kearney Street and West Bypass.
- Install public art near the airport, such as at the Division Street and Airport Boulevard traffic circle or along Airport Boulevard. Successful examples of public art installations include at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and the seasonal Christmas lighting at O’Hare International Airport.
- Update the City code to guide high quality (re)development as outlined in this chapter.
- Establish corridor sponsorship as a process for cultivating private investments and naming opportunities for corridor and gateway enhancements.

3.2 INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY OF COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Improve the safety of commercial corridors for all modes of transportation to enhance access to businesses.

It is important that Springfield's shopping areas are accessible not only by car but also by walking and biking. This would help alleviate roadway congestion and increase connectivity equitably for those who may not have access to a car, including individuals of lower income groups or older age.

Strategies to ensure the City's commercial areas are safe and accessible for all modes of transportation include the following:

- Work with Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO), MoDOT, and other transportation agencies to implement the Transportation Improvement Projects identified in the Destination 2045 Plan. Improvements should address traffic congestion, unsafe roadways with high crash rates, and roadway expansions needed based on traffic growth projections.
- Fill in gaps in the sidewalk network, upgrade sidewalks in poor condition, and provide sufficient buffering between the sidewalk and travel lane.
- Explore cost-share opportunities with private developers to provide sidewalks and trails.

- Improve bike access to commercial corridors by expanding bike routes, particularly to underserved areas, such as along the Kearney Street, Glenstone Avenue, and Campbell Avenue corridors.
- Require large-scale businesses to include bike parking stations on their properties.
- Install LED pedestrian-scale lighting along commercial corridors to support walkability, as well as pedestrian comfort and safety during evening hours.
- Encourage trail connections within the **City Corridor** and **Mixed Use** placetypes to the City's trail network.
- Find opportunities to consolidate driveways and direct traffic flow to reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.
- Require pedestrian access plans to provide safe pedestrian access from the sidewalk to business' entrances.

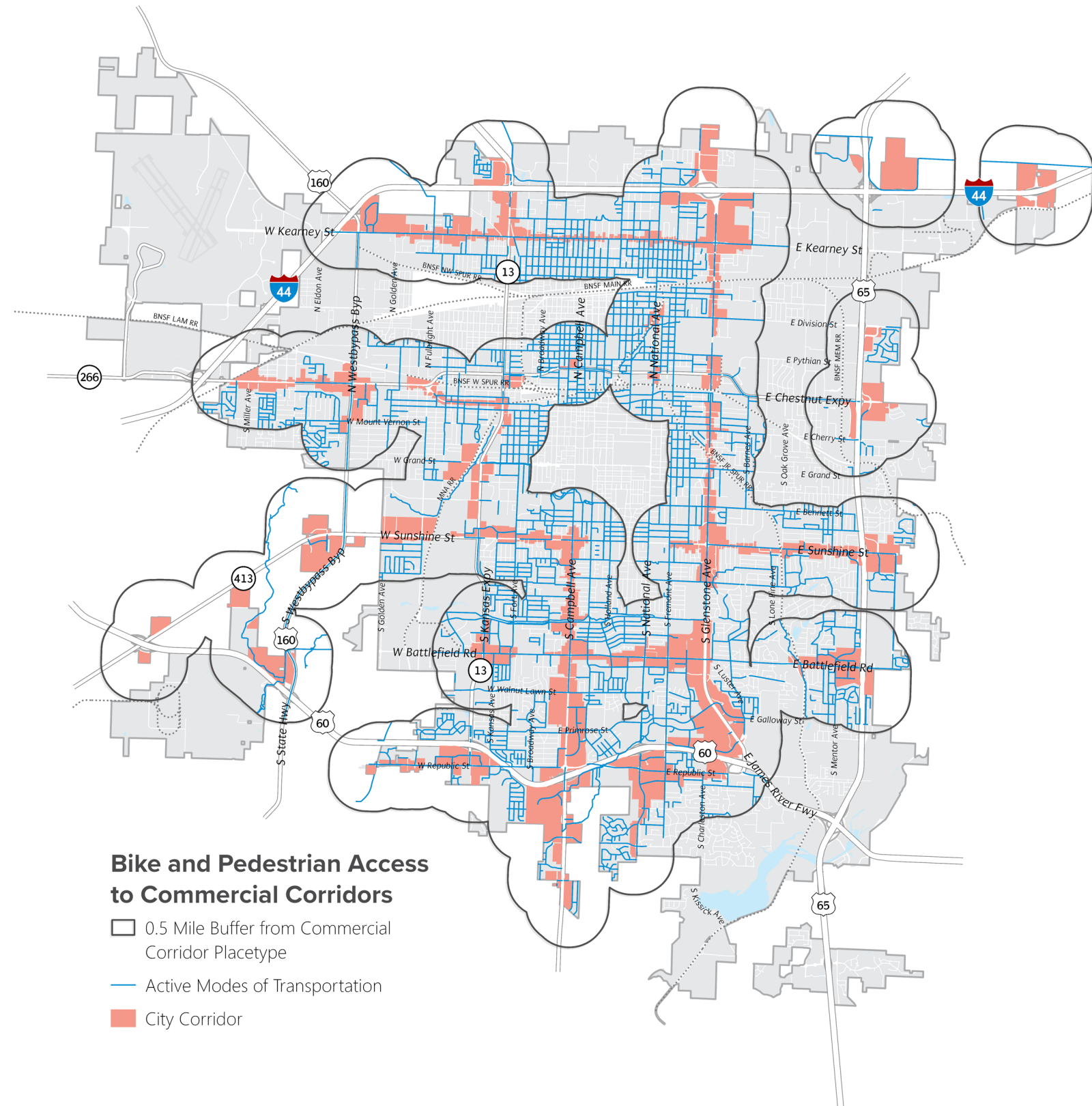
3.3 SECURE FUNDING SOURCES

Identify and secure public and private funding sources, including grants and loans, for visual enhancement efforts along the City's corridors and at key gateways.

Identifying and securing funding will be key in implementing the commercial corridor and gateway enhancements desired by the community. The City should explore a diverse range of both public and private resources and ensure sufficient allocation of funds to provide for quality improvements.

A shift in the mindset of "value engineering," or completing improvements at the lowest cost possible to meet practical infrastructure upgrade needs, should take place to instead supporting visual enhancement efforts that foster quality of place. The following strategies should be pursued:

- Assess the City's current distribution of tax revenue to consider increased funding for corridor and gateway improvements.
- Research available county, state, and federal grants and loans to fund corridor and gateway improvement projects, such as the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program, Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program, or Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program.
- Identify funding sources for visual enhancements projects that could be included in the City's CIP.
- Coordinate with Public Works to determine maintenance costs for visual enhancements projects to inform budgeting needs.
- Examine comparable communities to explore opportunities for new dedicated taxes to help generate revenue for improvements.
- Establish corridor sponsorship process for cultivating private investments and naming opportunities for corridor and gateway enhancements.



GOAL 4: Support reinvestment in and the growth of neighborhood commercial hubs and Downtown.

Forward SGF Top 10 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL HUBS AND PLANNING



Neighborhood commercial hubs like Cherry and Pickwick are highly beneficial to residential areas as they provide convenient access to day-to-day goods, personal services, and dining options for surrounding residents. They function as small-scale activity centers where community members can meet, socialize, pass time, and support local businesses. Ultimately, they help create complete neighborhoods, adding to neighborhood vibrancy, character, and economic vitality. Existing concentrations of neighborhood-serving commercial uses in the **Mixed Use** placetype, or as supporting uses in the **Residential Neighborhoods** placetypes should be expanded on and enhanced to create defined commercial nodes. The growth of new neighborhood commercial hub locations should be encouraged in appropriate locations within **Residential Neighborhoods** as a result of engagement with neighborhood groups or through a formal neighborhood planning process. Potential locations where neighborhood commercial nodes could develop would include:

- Low-intensity, neighborhood-scale commercial nodes could potentially be located at former trolley or streetcar stops where non-residential structures, sites, and neighborhood fabric still exist.
- At intersections of key corridors, where transit and other multimodal, trail, or greenway connections can be enhanced with increased housing and neighborhood scale services, shops, and dining.
- At locations where community facilities and amenities or other informal neighborhood hubs already exist. Neighborhood parks, community centers, greenway or trailheads, museums, gardens, schools, and churches can serve as anchors.

4.1 SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

Support smaller-scale commercial development and local businesses in neighborhoods.

As Springfield has a significant number of commercial corridors that are auto-oriented in nature and contain an abundance of strip centers and big box retail occupied by national chains and franchises, supporting smaller-scale, local businesses was identified as a top priority by the community during public engagement. A great example that was highlighted frequently by community members are the small businesses at Cherry and Pickwick located in Rountree neighborhood, which feature locally owned restaurants, cafes, and shops in a charming, pedestrian-friendly setting.

These types of small businesses should continue to be supported throughout the City, particularly within the **Residential** and **Mixed Residential** placetypes. A highly walkable urban core represents the best environment for small, local, start-ups to get a footing and thrive. The City must continue to invest in projects like the Grant Avenue Parkway and Renew Jordan Creek to foster new investment, especially in Downtown (see **Chapter 13: Downtown Plan**). While Downtown should serve as the main focal point of mixed-use development and activity, other smaller-scale, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood commercial hubs should be supported within residential areas. This will also help promote Springfield as an attractive place to live and work. As detailed in **Chapter 7: Housing and Neighborhoods**, Adaptive reuse of older and underutilized homes, industrial, or commercial buildings that are dispersed within or along the perimeter of neighborhoods should be supported as a strategy to support the development of neighborhood commercial hubs.

NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

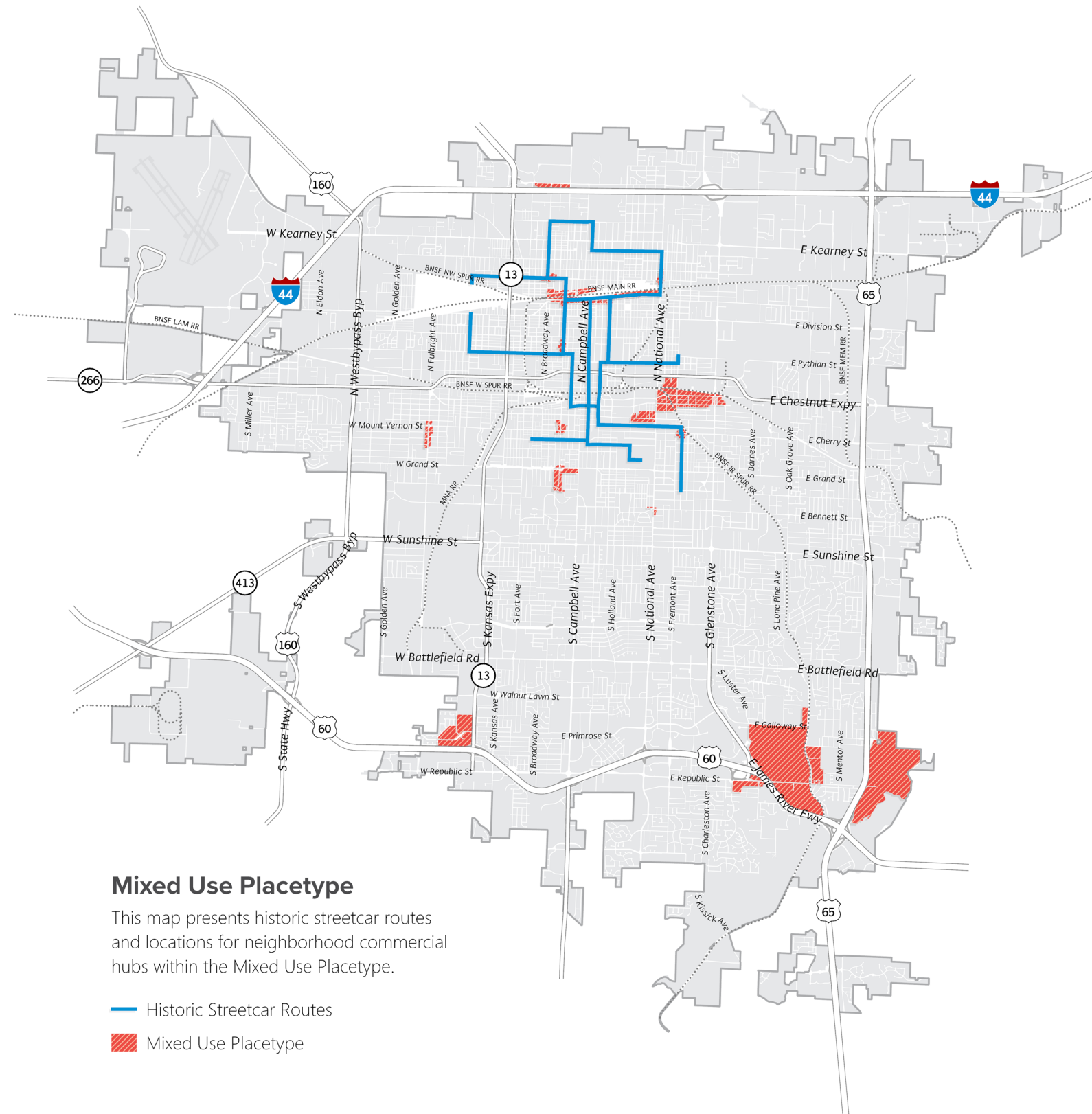
Neighborhood commercial hubs should be unique to each neighborhood and reflect its local culture and identity. Involvement of neighborhood associations, local business owners and organizations, and residents in the placemaking and development process will be essential in creating authentic neighborhood commercial hubs. The “experience” and character of the hubs should be enhanced with public gathering spaces, outdoor seating, and streetscaping elements like planters, street trees, and public art.

WALKABLE/BIKEABLE CENTERS

Residents should be able to take an easy stroll or bike ride to their nearby neighborhood commercial hub. High pedestrian and bicycle access should be established through a well-connected sidewalk, bicycle, and trail network and supporting infrastructure, such as bike racks, benches, and pedestrian-scaled lighting.

Transportation improvements like traffic calming measures and safe intersections can help reinforce walkable environments. Good examples are speed humps, bulb outs, landscape treatments, and texturized crosswalks constructed at Cherry and Pickwick. OTO’s Destination 2045 Plan’s assessment on congested areas, problem intersections, and traffic growth projections can be used to inform necessary roadway improvements.

The City should consider flexible ways to address vehicular parking during development or redevelopment of neighborhood commercial hubs. Parking ratios should be reduced or eliminated to ensure human scaled development and to create pedestrian centered walkable places that this plan champions.



Mixed Use Placetype

This map presents historic streetcar routes and locations for neighborhood commercial hubs within the Mixed Use Placetype.

- Historic Streetcar Routes
- Mixed Use Placetype



DESIGN STANDARDS

Based in-part on neighborhood input, the City should consider establishing design standards for neighborhood commercial hubs and redevelopment located on neighborhood edges. Context sensitive design standards should help to guide the development of pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use activity hubs and activity centers along neighborhood edges. These standards should dictate aspects like landscaping, setbacks, building height, scale, percentage of open space, and transparency standards on façades. They should also remain flexible enough for neighborhood commercial to form uniquely to each neighborhood. Public engagement should be conducted during the development of the design standards to foster a sense of community ownership and integration. Existing zoning regulations and district boundaries should also be updated to allow a diverse range of uses and levels of activity, as by the Placetype.

Some design considerations include the following:

- **Siting** – New development should hold the corner with a prominent well-designed structure and provide a pedestrian-oriented and activated ground level. Developments should provide walkable service and amenity-oriented commercial spaces

- **Orientation** – Buildings should be oriented toward the primary roadway, but should also maximize connections with the surrounding area and create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere
- **Façades** – Greater transparency on façades should be promoted to generate a stronger inside-outside connection with “eyes on the street”. Development should minimize significant contrasts in scale, massing and design, particularly along the edges of historic areas and neighborhoods
- **Parking** – Any parking lots should be located behind or beside buildings and accessed from the alley or higher classification street. Parking should be primarily provided by on-street parking, where possible
- **Screening** – Parking lots, trash disposal areas, and delivery drop off areas should be well screened from adjacent residential uses
- **Buffering** – Walls or fencing and landscaping should be used to create clear separation between residential and nonresidential uses
- **Streetwall** – Buildings should be sited to create a continuous streetwall along the primary roadway

INTEGRATED HIGHER DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

As discussed in **Strategy 2.1: Support Context-Sensitive Higher Density Development** in **Chapter 7: Housing and Neighborhoods**, context-sensitive higher density residential development should also be encouraged along neighborhood edges and around neighborhood centers to help generate activity and provide a transition to surrounding lower density residential properties. Relationships with these properties should further be improved with the following:

- Sensitive design of parking, trash collection, and exterior lighting elements
- Promoting use of landscaped buffers and screening
- Enforcing nuisance regulations
- Considering the reduction of commercial noise within quiet zones (e.g., delivery trucks)
- Applying National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) speed limit standards to reduce traffic speeds and help lessen noise
- Minimizing significant contrasts in scale, massing and design, particularly along the edges of historic areas and neighborhoods

- Providing a well-connected multimodal network to adjacent neighborhoods, greenspaces, developments, and complementary uses
- Where greenspace, open space, or parks are not located within walking distance of a new development, encourage incorporation of those amenities into the site

4.2 IMPLEMENT THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Implement the Downtown Plan to support economic development within Springfield’s Downtown.

The Downtown Plan was developed as a component of the *Forward SGF* planning process, focusing on urban design and development, transportation and circulation, and placemaking and streetscaping within Downtown Springfield. It highlights the need for the City to follow-through with soliciting redevelopment plans for key sites in Downtown around Renew Jordan Creek, Jubilee Park, and the Commons (northwest corner of National and Trafficway) for higher and better uses that leverage the existing or planned investments and redevelopment

plans already underway Downtown. The City should implement the Plan to guide Downtown investment and foster economic vitality and business attraction. See **Chapter 13: Downtown Plan** for more information.

4.3 PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURIAL STEWARDSHIP

Cultivate opportunities for entrepreneurship, start-ups, and live-work areas.

The City should take a creative approach in facilitating local entrepreneurship and small business development. It should foster a culture of makerspaces, coworking spaces, and live-work opportunities, reducing excessive barriers to small business spaces.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO SMALL BUSINESSES

The City should identify and work to remove barriers to small business development, which will allow for the accomplishment of the City’s and business’ goals. This should be done by maintaining open dialogue with business owners and developers and conducting a local survey to identify issues.

Overly complex and time-consuming permitting and licensing processes are often identified as barriers to small business at the local government level. Embracing the idea that “time is money” to entrepreneurs, the City should pursue the following strategies to facilitate small business development:

- Review existing permits, licenses, and other approvals needed for entrepreneurs to start a business. Identify and remove any cost-prohibitive fees, administrative processing delays, or overly complex requirements to fast track the process.
- Review and update land use and zoning regulations to align with and support the Mixed Use placetype. For example, chain stores should be restricted in this placetype while uses like food trucks, corner stores, breweries, and temporary pop-up shops should be permitted by right.
- Continue to support Business Retention and Expansion programs and work with efactory to help local businesses identify and resolve challenges they are facing.
- Review and update the Land Development Code to support live-work opportunities, small start-ups, and artisan-related businesses (see **Strategy 4.3: Promote Entrepreneurship**).

Forward SGF Top 10

ENTREPRENEURIAL STEWARDSHIP



Providing an environment that is supportive of entrepreneurs and small businesses is critical to promoting economic mobility for residents, neighborhood revitalization, and the overall economic success of the City. This key initiative focuses on removing barriers to small businesses and encouraging creative work opportunities that build on Springfield's existing assets, industries, and context. This includes live-work districts, maker space, co-working spaces, and innovation districts that support arts-oriented, collaborative, and/or self-starter business opportunities. Expanding access to capital and City programs will also be key in helping businesses of all backgrounds get a more equitable chance at success in the community.

LIVE-WORK DISTRICTS

Moon City is a local example of a live-work district, supported through a zoning overlay that allows artists to operate studios in their homes with limited retail uses. Located near Commercial Street and its attractive amenities, the district includes 10 square blocks of residential, commercial, and industrial properties where residents can both live and work in the district. Other opportunities for live-work districts in Springfield should be explored and promoted, like those along College Street, Grant Avenue, and West Meadows. The City should ensure infrastructure capacity is sufficient or improved to support live-work uses. The Land Development Code should also be reviewed and updated to encourage opportunities for appropriate, non-invasive, home-based occupations in residential areas to increase opportunities for small business growth.



“MAKER CULTURE”

“Maker culture” should be promoted within neighborhood commercial hubs to revitalize the local economy and neighborhoods. This means supporting creative, small-scale manufacturing and art businesses, from microbrewers and jewelry makers to small-scale fabricators and 3D print shops, which can work to foster entrepreneurship, well-paying job opportunities, and the growth of locally-owned businesses. Such businesses can bring vitality, foot traffic, and revitalization to neighborhoods as well as Downtown. Maker spaces should be small in scale and with minimal noise impacts to avoid detracting from the neighborhood character.

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPACES

Cost can be the number one reason a great idea never becomes a business. Incubators, coworking spaces, and other entrepreneurial spaces can help mitigate this financial barrier by providing low or no-cost spaces for entrepreneurs to start their company. The City should continue to partner with local educational institutions, the developer community, the Chamber, and other economic development agencies to identify new opportunities for entrepreneurial spaces in Springfield. Facilities should be located in strategic, highly accessible locations, such as Downtown, Historic Commercial Street, business parks, and university campuses. They could also build off existing assets like efactory and the Jordan Valley Innovation Center. Workshops and training programs could also be hosted at these facilities to help connect them to the public.

INNOVATION DISTRICTS

IDEA Commons is an exemplary center of innovation, design, arts, and entrepreneurship located in Downtown Springfield. The 88-acre urban innovation district was created by MSU in collaboration with the City of Springfield, Chamber, Urban Districts Alliance, and numerous other area groups. Innovation Districts like IDEA Commons act as hubs for business development and local entrepreneurship and should continue to be leveraged as important assets to the Springfield community. This includes supporting MSU in completing the IDEA Commons master plan.

Opportunities for new innovation districts should be explored in a manner that does not distract from IDEA Commons, such as by focusing on different industries (see the Trafficway Street Subarea Framework in **Chapter 12: Subarea Plans** for discussion of the Trafficway Arts District). A unique vision and character for each of these districts should be established, with investments in common spaces, technological resources, transit access, and high-speed internet. New incentives could be explored to encourage innovation district-related development in target areas.

PROMOTING MINORITY-OWNED, WOMEN-OWNED, AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

The City has a Minority-owned, Women-owned, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Opportunity Statement that encourages businesses and property owners to consider evaluating approaches that encourages minority contractors and subcontractors to bid their project. To shift Springfield's economic development focus in a direction that is more supportive of locally owned, minority-owned, and disadvantaged businesses, the City should consider evaluating approaches that encourages businesses and property owners to bid based on enhanced outreach and notification procedures.

The city is also home to the Multicultural Business Association (MBA), a local non-profit organization developed to promote economic development and business opportunities through advocacy, networking, and capacity building for women- and minority-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. The City should work with partners like MBA to continue to increase equitable economic opportunities for these populations. This includes expanding programs to instill an inclusive culture in workplaces and increasing access to resources for business and professional development for minorities and women. These programs should be supported with grassroots community engagement to identify key issues and barriers to address.

EXPAND ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Available incentives, such as the Micro Enterprise Loans and the Business Development Loan Program, should be proactively promoted within the **Mixed Use** placetype. This includes reaching out to existing businesses to encourage usage of available resources to improve their properties. The City's current loan programs generally require businesses receiving the loans to provide a community benefit in return such as new job creation. Consideration should be given to providing a second tier of programs with lesser community benefit requirements, but with less attractive terms as the current programs.

Adaptive Reuse Program

New programs should be explored, such as an Adaptive Reuse Program to help small businesses repurpose existing industrial or residential properties into new thriving businesses within the **Mixed Use** placetype. Each building should be inspected to assess feasibility of reuse. The City of Phoenix, AZ successfully created such a program that offers development guidance, streamlined processes, reduced time frame, and permit-fee waivers for eligible projects looking to adapt older buildings for new businesses.

GOAL 5: Support innovation, entrepreneurship, and workforce development.

5.1 NEIGHBORHOODS AS ECONOMIC ENGINES

Amenity-rich residential areas with high quality of place can work to attract a remote workforce and entrepreneurs. Springfield has a competitive advantage within its core neighborhoods compared to its suburban counterparts for fostering unique neighborhoods and employment opportunities. By implementing strategies outlined in **Goal 4** of this chapter for business growth and reinvestment in **Mixed Use** placetypes and neighborhood commercial hubs, and the neighborhood revitalization and complete neighborhoods initiatives in **Chapter 7: Housing and Neighborhoods**, Springfield's neighborhoods can act as economic engines that creatively grow local job opportunities and attract higher income residents that generate wealth.

5.2 ENGAGE DIVERSE PROFESSIONALS & ENTREPRENEURS

Engage young professionals and minorities in business development workshops and networking events.

Business workshops and networking events are important for connecting prospective businesses to the local business community. They build relationships, encourage exchange of information, and facilitate new business opportunities. A variety of workshops are currently offered in Springfield for Chamber members, such as the Chamber's 60 Minutes to Success Workshop Series, Biz Blitz, and Business After Hours. To support business development and networking, the City should:

- Continue to work with local economic development partners, major employers, and young and minority professional networks to explore opportunities for new workshops and networking events.
- Ensure workshops and events are centrally located for equitable access from all areas of Springfield. Potential locations include within Downtown, IDEA Commons, efactory, MSU, and Drury University.
- Actively promote workshops and events online and at locations where young professionals, minority entrepreneurs, students, and others are seeking professional opportunities. Examples include on college campuses, throughout Downtown, IDEA Commons, and neighborhood commercial hubs.

5.3 PROVIDE WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Implement and support programs to build a skilled workforce through technical training/retraining, talent recruiting, and retention programs.

A skilled workforce is a decisive factor for employers looking to locate in a community. Successful companies hire employees based on their skills and education relative to their industry. Springfield can help to ensure that its residents have the skills and education to appeal to new employers, as well as prepare the local workforce for higher paying jobs. Strategic partnerships between local major employers and universities can produce skilled workers who live and work in Springfield. The City should have an open dialogue with employers to inventory workforce gaps that can guide educational, technical (re)training, recruiting, and talent retention needs.

Some of the existing workforce training resources include:

- City of Springfield Department of Workforce Development's Missouri Job Center
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program
- Chamber's Talent Attraction Initiative
- Chamber's The Network for Springfield's Young Professionals
- Chamber's P-20 Council of the Ozarks
- Chamber's R-12 Partnership
- Ozark Technical Community College Center for Workforce Development
- Green for Greene EPA Program

The City should continue to work with local universities, the Chamber, SREP, and the City's Department of Workforce Development to support these programs and ensure local professional development and ongoing education opportunities are available to Springfield's residents and employees.

TRAIN FOR TARGET INDUSTRIES

Workforce development programs should be aligned with Springfield's economic development pursuits and aimed at higher paying industries. This will require identifying skill sets and workforce attributes specifically needed to support the types of businesses and industries the City is targeting. This includes specialized training for high-need and high-wage jobs, such as information technology, as well as general training for leadership and management skills.

For example, opportunities for advanced manufacturing training, such as for stainless steel fabrication and remanufacturing, could be provided in partnership with the Center for Advanced Manufacturing and local manufacturing businesses. A great existing example is the aircraft mechanic training program for airline maintenance base opportunities, which was collaboratively formed by the Airport, Chamber, and Ozarks Technical Community College.

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Workforce Development, located at the Missouri Job Center, aims to connect people to jobs. The Department works with a variety of job seekers and employers to strengthen the local workforce through short-term trainings, workshops, and job connections. It also provides grants that fund job training for lower income individuals. The City should continue to support the Department while identifying additional sources of funding for expanded workforce development programs and broadening of industries served.

RE-ENTRY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

In 2021, the Department of Workforce Development was awarded a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, to provide job training and career readiness to incarcerated individuals who are set to be released back into the Southern Missouri area. Building on this accomplishment, the City should consider working with the Department and the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness (OAEH) to create an employment program that provides job opportunities for those experiencing homelessness, the formerly incarcerated, and non-skilled labor population. Work hours could be performed in exchange for room and board at OAEH facilities, medical services, or job training programs. Job tasks could include trash pickup, street power washing, park and vacant lot maintenance, and snow removal, which would work to improve quality of place in the City while connecting higher-barrier populations with essential resources.

5.4 LEVERAGE NEARBY UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

COMMUNITY PHYSICAL IMAGE



HEALTH & WELL-BEING



Leverage the student population and activity generated by the City's universities and colleges to facilitate economic development and placemaking.

Springfield is home to about 50,000 college students from its local higher education institutions like Missouri State University (MSU), Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC), Drury University, and Evangel University. Nearly 1,500 higher education students replied to an online *Forward SGF* questionnaire and only 29% indicated that they were likely to live in Springfield after graduation.

There is major potential to mitigate "brain drain" and increase connections between students and local businesses. Better connecting students to attractive, off-campus community destinations and improving overall quality of place will provide a superior "Springfield experience." This will help increase the chances graduates will remain or return to the City to live and work.

Many factors will come into play, including multimodal connectivity, placemaking initiatives, and marketing strategies. Strategies the City can pursue to better leverage universities and their student population for local economic growth include:

- Continue to support the Small Business Development Center's Talent Attraction Initiative in surveying students on their perspective of Downtown and neighborhood commercial hubs and desired amenities. Use the collected data to inform and prioritize improvements within these areas for student attraction.
- Promote uses attractive to students in Downtown and neighborhood commercial hubs, such as entertainment, cafes, restaurants, yoga and fitness studios, and boutiques.
- Work with the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau to market neighborhood commercial hubs to students. Examples include pamphlets distributed at universities, advertisements posted in buses, and articles in student e-newsletters that promote local destinations and businesses.
- Improve connectivity between campuses and commercial areas via transit, sidewalks, and safe bike routes. Convenient, multimodal access is essential to drawing student populations who may not own a car but wish to patronize local businesses.
- Enhance key gateways in university districts with branding and signage to better identify entry into campus areas.
- Target placemaking initiatives to **City Corridor** and **Mixed Use** placetypes located near campuses (as shown in the adjacent map) to create attractive shopping areas near students and improve their perception of Springfield.

- Strengthen connections between university campuses and Downtown through multimodal, gateway, and streetscaping improvements along preferred routes (see Downtown Plan for further discussion).
- Conduct an analysis of workforce training provided by local colleges to inform future recruitment of businesses that require related industry skills.

STUDENT DISCOUNT PROGRAM

The City should consider spearheading a partnership between local colleges and small businesses to create a student discount program that incentivizes students to shop locally. The program may include the creation of an app that advertises ongoing deals and sales and allows students to collect points for rewards. One example of a student discount program is the Hooked Discount App at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

ACCELERATOR PROGRAMS

The City should consider partnering with local colleges and universities and establish a pooled accelerator fund to aid students looking to start local businesses. Grant opportunities should be identified to fund the program. MSU's efactory's Accelerator Program is a great local example that helps connect entrepreneurs and startup founders with industry experts, corporate partners, university resources, and communities. This program should be used as a model for programs at Springfield's other universities or be expanded to include additional local institutions. The University of Arkansas Gap Fund is a good example of a program created to provide financial support for researchers at the University working to launch startups.

HOOKED DISCOUNT APP AT UIUC

Hooked is a food and beverage discount app that offers real-time discounts for restaurants within walking distance of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's (UIUC) campus in Champaign, IL. The app started with a partnership of 32 restaurants and now has approximately 5,000 active users. The app team works directly with local restaurants near UIUC's campus to refresh and improve their promotional specials and remained aligned with student demographics.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS GAP FUND

University of Arkansas' Gap Fund in Fayetteville, AR was created to provide financial support for researchers at the university working to launch startups. The fund distributes up to \$400,000 per year for teams composed of faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral students after they complete the National Science Foundation's seven-week National I-Corps training program. The Gap Fund's funding pools can be used for business prototype development and testing and for post-doctoral fellowships in commercialization.

