



10. DOWNTOWN

Direction for the civic, social, and economic hub of the community.

INTRODUCTION

Downtown Hopkins is a strong and vibrant district. A combination of preservation, reinvention, investment, and community pride over the past decades has strengthened its role as a unique and livable place. It has helped form the identity for the city as a whole, while serving as a center for social, economic, and civic interactions. Traditional downtowns like Hopkins have had to be resilient to survive, as major changes in how people live, work, and travel have challenged the original assumptions on which they were built. Today's Downtown Hopkins – with a healthy mix of retail, restaurants, services, and entertainment and an appealing character – did not happen by accident. The area's success reflects the work of many over the years, and future planning is needed to ensure that can continue. Downtown Hopkins is currently one of the city's strongest marketing tools, and it keeps getting better.

MAJOR FACTORS

Major factors to consider while planning for the downtown in Hopkins include:

- **Remaining unique.** This is an essential part of Downtown's charm. Redevelopment should avoid homogenization, and allow for authentic character and organic growth.
- **Role of central social district.** Of particular importance at this time is Downtown's role as the city's central social district. This concept reflects a change in focus from the economic role of this area towards one which emphasize gathering places for people to live, interact, connect, and have fun. Features of central social districts include housing, restaurants, bars, entertainment, and civic/institutional uses. A successful central social district increases the livability for residents, and provides an attractive destination for visitors.
- **Opportunity of regional connections.** The development of new regional transportation corridors nearby – namely regional trails and the Green Line Extension – have the ability to bring more people and investment to the area, further supporting the central social district role. The future of downtown will leverage these opportunities and others to bring in more investment and growth, while still maintaining character.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

CHANGING FACE OF RETAIL



Retail uses everywhere are being impacted by changing patterns in how people shop, particularly as online, delivery, and take-out business gains in popularity. The future of successful retail districts will depend on creating a unique shopping, dining and entertainment experiences that bring people together in shared public environments rather than remaining in individual private spaces. Downtown Hopkins already demonstrates this vision in its unique environment as a destination shopping district.



AGING BUILDING STOCK

While the older buildings of Downtown Hopkins have character and charm, they also provide some challenges for reuse. Older facilities are often not up to current standards for accessibility, and may have some deferred maintenance. This may limit how the buildings can be used, or raise questions regarding the amount of investment needed to improve them.



SMALL BUSINESS TURNOVER

Small local businesses like those found throughout Downtown can be a tremendous asset. However, they also can pose challenges – particularly with regards to stability and turnover. While a certain amount of turnover can be healthy and normal, there will be a continued need for support for businesses, both at the individual and district scale.



PARKING

Any traditional historic downtown must at some point address the fact that it was built before the wide prevalence of automobiles that is common today. There must be a balance between ensuring adequate parking for customers and employees, with a desire to ensure that surface parking lots do not dominate the landscape, and that nearby neighborhoods are not overwhelmed by on street parking. There should also be ample parking for non-auto modes, such as bicycles.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The direction for Downtown Hopkins addresses both its role as a central social district and hub of the community, and the potential for the area to accommodate new growth and development. Small, locally owned businesses are an important component of this, as well as of the identity of Downtown Hopkins.

Central Social District

Policies:

- Recognize Downtown’s unique role as the center for daily activities, all within proximity to each other, as well as the home of cultural and civic institutions that support the entire city.
- Encourage creative placemaking throughout Downtown that expresses the identity of the entire community of Hopkins.
- Consider ways in which Central Park can be more integrated into the community through flexible spaces, passive recreational spaces, plazas, and increased connectivity.
- Continue the active management of public parking as a means of promoting efficient land use and creating high quality urban form.
- Foster communication between the City, Hopkins Business and Civic Association (HBCA), Twin West, and owners and managers of commercial properties on issues that concern Downtown.
- Identify ways to recognize, protect, preserve and interpret historic resources and districts in Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, and explore listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Promote public places and Mainstreet in Downtown as places of business, social activity and gathering, thereby creating a Downtown that embodies the inclusive and welcoming goals of the City.
- Expand joint advertising and promotions for the businesses in the district. Promote Mainstreet via special events.
- Support the presence of the arts throughout Downtown, through such programs as Art Street.

GOAL 1

Maintain a viable downtown core that serves as an economic and social center for the community.



Accommodating Growth

Policies:

- Target development efforts that encourage growth and expansion of commercial establishments that address two market orientations: (1) the destination specialty market (e.g. entertainment, arts, and experiential businesses), and (2) the local convenience market (e.g. food, social services, and other daily needs).
- Monitor the market and enhance where possible, including influencing impressions with marketing.
- Attract specialty retail and destination uses including arts, entertainment, recreation, antiques, hobbies and crafts, gifts, and family-oriented uses.
- Encourage the growth of Downtown's share of housing and employment and continue its growth as the city's center for innovation and exchange through commerce, employment, arts, culture, entertainment, education and government.
- Encourage commercial development to be clustered along Mainstreet where it reinforces and is consistent with existing establishment types.
- Continue to expand medium density residential opportunities in Downtown to support businesses and provide housing options.
- Create a neighborhood retail node at 17th Avenue and Mainstreet.
- Create a public realm throughout Downtown, the Avenues, and Excelsior Boulevard that is human scaled, pedestrian oriented and welcoming to all.
- Encourage an anchor development at the east end of Mainstreet that supports transit and complements Downtown Hopkins.
- Emphasize 17th Avenue and 11th Avenue as community connectors between Downtown, the Avenues, and neighborhoods south of Excelsior Boulevard. This includes considering changes to intersections to improve safety and comfort of crossing Excelsior Boulevard.
- Target financial incentives toward catalytic development that meets multiple city goals.

GOAL 2

Continue to grow
Downtown's population
and jobs base.