



fast forward spokane EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

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1.0 OVERVIEW

Downtown is truly the heart of Spokane. It provides a unique concentration of choices to live, work, visit, and play. The density and intensity of Downtown Spokane complements and enables the quaint urban character of surrounding neighborhoods and the natural beauty of the areas many parks and open spaces. As reaffirmed by residents and businesses during the community workshops, Downtown offers the benefits of a cosmopolitan city with the character and approachability of a smaller town. The Spokane River and Gorge, Riverfront Park, the area's historic architecture, and mix of local, regional, and national businesses help define the unique character of Downtown Spokane, which offers a vibrant urban experience.

Downtown is the major economic center for the Inland Northwest region. Many local, state, and federal government offices, as well as major businesses and institutions, are located in and around Downtown Spokane. Downtown's retail, entertainment, and convention sector is a major tax base for the City and attracts visitors from around the country and beyond. Spokane has quickly become a successful competitor for conventions and events on the largest of stages. Downtown is also the intellectual, scientific, and cultural center for the region. Events such as Hoopfest, Bloomsday, and First Night, along with other sports and cultural activities continue to bring residents and visitors together in a celebration of community.



Spokane benefits from a stunning natural setting in and around the Downtown area.

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Investing in Downtown is a wise fiscal practice that capitalizes on Downtown's infrastructure, built fabric, and history. Strengthening the urban core is perhaps the bedrock in embracing smart growth in the Spokane metropolitan area and is an urban planning imperative. Suburban sprawl is paid for in traffic jams, wasted time, gasoline, pollution, and higher taxes to support declining urban communities that can no longer support themselves.

Spokane is fortunate to have seen a decade of vibrant renewal in its urban core. *Fast Forward Spokane: Downtown Plan Update (Plan Update)* is devised to promote the livelihood of Downtown for future generations through a strategic, coordinated community effort, by providing a short and long-term structure for addressing issues and challenges facing the Downtown.

2.0 PLANNING AREA

The City adopted the Downtown Neighborhood boundaries as the Planning Area for the *1999 Plan*. A key task of the *Plan Update* was an assessment of the existing Downtown boundaries to determine if expansion is desirable and appropriate. As a result of community input, the *Plan Update* augments the Planning Area to include the eastern portion of Kendall Yards and a large portion of the University District.

The new Downtown Planning Area is bounded by Boone Avenue to the north, Interstate 90 to the south, Scott Street to the east, and Maple Street/Cedar Street/Adams Street to the west. The Planning Area includes nine functional and geographic sub-districts. The six sub-districts identified in the *1999 Plan* include the Downtown Core, West End, East End, North Bank, South Side, and Riverfront Park. Additional sub-districts include Kendall Yards, Riverpoint Campus, and South University District.

The *Plan Update* also addresses mutual Influence Areas, which are adjacent to Downtown, including the County Government Area, Medical District, and Gonzaga University. Spokane's neighborhoods, especially those adjacent to Downtown, are examined for economic, social and political linkages.

3.0 PLANNING PROCESS

The *Plan Update* is the product of a partnership between the City of Spokane and the Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP), a not-for-profit coalition of business, government, and community leaders. The City and DSP hired a consultant team led by MIG, Inc., in association with Economic and Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS), and Fehr & Peers Associates, Inc., to help facilitate the community involvement process, prepare the plan document, and provide technical assistance.

The *Plan Update* was developed over a 12-month period and included an extensive community involvement process. A fourteen-member Steering Committee was established to guide the planning process. The Steering Committee met frequently throughout the planning process



Community members updated the vision for Downtown at the Visioning Workshop held on November 29th, 2007.

to preview materials and provide direction concerning public input and community process.

A 47-member Task Force was established to provide input and feedback for the *Plan Update* planning process. The Downtown Task Force was comprised of business owners, property owners, residents, and community leaders. Over the course of the planning process, the Task Force helped to formulate the new plan framework and recommendations. The Task Force dedicated many hours to the planning process, including eight meetings and extensive assistance with document reviews, community workshops, listening posts, and an open house.

Two community workshops, four “listening posts” and one open house were held throughout the planning process. The first workshop was the Downtown Visioning Workshop, held on November 29, 2007 at the WSU Spokane South Campus Facility. The Vision for Down-

town Spokane, updated and detailed in Chapter Three of this *Plan Update*, is a direct result of this first workshop and Downtown Task Force assistance. The purpose of the second workshop on March 6, 2008 at the WSU Spokane Academic Center was to review the plan framework and major alternatives. Strategic policies were developed based on the input from this workshop. Participants were also asked to evaluate a draft vision statement developed from the previous workshop.

The public review draft of the *Plan Update* was unveiled at a series of listening posts and a public open house during the latter half of summer 2008. The community was invited to review the vision and recommendations and provide final comments on the *Plan Update*. The *Plan Update* was reviewed by the Plan Commission and City Council at working sessions during September through November 2008. It is anticipated that the City Council will vote to adopt the *Plan Update* under the existing City of Spokane *Comprehensive Plan*.

4.0 CONTEXT

While Downtown possesses numerous strengths that contribute to Spokane's position as a major regional center, it also faces major challenges in realizing its true potential. Downtown has been constrained by physical barriers created by transportation infrastructure including major arterials, the freeway, the railroad, and bridges. At the same time, it struggles with new developments in the valley and in neighboring jurisdictions that can offer large, undeveloped parcels with lower unit costs. Challenges to achieving Downtown revitalization, identified by the community, include image and character, slow growth, poor connections to surrounding neighborhoods, lack of financing, and difficulty gaining community support for large-scale projects. These highlight the importance of considering tangible and intangible influences on Downtown Spokane both locally and regionally.

While there are hurdles to cross, Downtown Spokane has numerous assets to leverage in the redevelopment process. Among Downtown's assets are Riverfront Park, the Convention Center, Downtown's regional context and proximity to the Spokane International Airport, regional retail center expansion, historic buildings, university and research opportunities, regional medical center, abundance of prime development sites, and community com-

mitment as evidenced through high attendance at community workshops.

This *Plan Update* leverages the following assets to take advantage of key opportunities in Spokane:

- *Spokane River and Riverfront Park:* Traditionally the heart of the community, the Spokane River and Riverfront Park offer valuable amenities to Downtown. In addition to its historic significance, the Spokane River provides a stunning backdrop and generates hydroelectric power for the community. The Park's events and attractions draw people to Downtown, and its recreational opportunities benefit residents and visitors.
- *Spokane River Centennial Trail:* The 37-mile Centennial Trail affords residents and visitors easy access to bicycling, running, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing opportunities. It also provides a safe and convenient non-motorized connection into Downtown Spokane.
- *Convention Center and Davenport Hotel:* The expanded Convention Center is a key economic engine for the City, helping to draw visitors to Spokane and to support additional restaurant, entertainment, and retail opportunities. The grand Davenport Hotel is an icon of the City and an architectural jewel which anchors the surrounding arts and entertainment district.
- *INB Performing Arts Center:* The INB Performing Arts Center, owned and operated by the Spokane Public Facilities District, serves as the premier entertainment venue and cultural icon for the Spokane Region. It is a major strength and asset of Downtown, which thousands of



The historic Davenport Hotel is an icon of the City and anchors the surrounding arts and entertainment district.

people visit each year to see Broadway shows, concerts, and other performing arts. The INB Performing Arts Center contributes significantly in the recruitment of people and businesses to the region.

- *Spokane Arena:* Opened in 1995, the Arena has enabled Spokane to draw national-level entertainment and sporting events to the Inland Northwest. The facility, which can accommodate as many as 12,638 attendees, is the permanent home of the Spokane Shock arena football team and the Spokane Chiefs hockey team.
- *Strategic Location:* Spokane is the regional hub of the Inland Northwest and is the largest city between Seattle and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Visitors can also take advantage of Spokane's proximity to the Rockies.
- *Downtown Regional Retail Center & River Park Square:* Major retailers have demonstrated a clear commitment to Downtown. River Park Square and national retailers such as Macy's, Nordstrom, Banana Republic, and Talbots are major assets.
- *Sense of History and Place:* With its historic buildings and unique setting along the Spokane Falls, Downtown Spokane possesses great character and a strong sense of place.
- *Universities and Research Opportunities:* Continued excellence in research, education, and entrepreneurship will establish Spokane as a respected academic center and desirable location for high-tech business. The proximity of Eastern Washington University Spokane, Gonzaga University, Washington State University Spokane, and Sirti to Downtown, is beneficial for all parties. These assets form the sustainable foundation for tapping the creativity, dreams, and inventions of all the citizens of the region.

5.0 VISION

The following vision for the future of Downtown Spokane was developed from community input through a series of community workshops from the fall of 2007 to spring of 2008. The Updated Vision Statement expresses how the citizens of Spokane envision Downtown Spokane's future over the next 20 years:

Downtown Spokane is nationally recognized as the hub of the Inland Northwest and as a sustainable destination. The River and surrounding development are interwoven, vibrant, and healthy. Residents and visitors participate in a seamless mix of shopping, working, living, recreation, education, and entertainment experiences. Internationally, Spokane is recognized as the gateway to many of the Inland Northwest's most sought after attractions.

6.0 DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

The Concept for Downtown development is based upon the updated Vision Statement as well as other ideas from the community, Downtown Task Force meetings, and stakeholder interviews. The Concept forms a foundation that focuses on key activity nodes, supporting uses, and connectivity throughout Downtown.

The highlights include the following components:

Streetscape Improvements

A “complete streets” concept is outlined to supplant the “green streets” hierarchy included in the *1999 Plan*. That concept built on Spokane’s 1913 Master Park Plan, which called for large regional parks and local neighborhood parks connected by a system of beautiful parkways and boulevards. The original network was built of streets with additional tree plantings and landscaping designed for both walking and driving. The term “green streets” has recently been re-coined to describe a collection of sustainable storm water treatments applied to streets. The *Plan Update* recasts the previous network of green streets by establishing a hierarchy of complete streets centered on Howard Street, First Avenue, and Main Avenue.

Howard Street “String of Pearls”

Howard Street will be the “string” that links the “pearls” of Downtown, including the North Bank, the Arena, Riverfront Park, the Downtown retail core, Medical District, and the South Hill. It will be a pedestrian corridor, with amenities such as landscaping, wide sidewalks, street furniture, public art, outdoor restaurants, and improved sidewalk/building interfaces. The community envisions a streetcar connecting the north and south banks of the Spokane River; linking Kendall Yards and the Spokane Arena with the rest of Downtown Spokane.

East-West Links

While Spokane Falls Boulevard will remain a strong east/west pedestrian connection between the Convention Center/INB Performing Arts Center and the Downtown Core, First and Main Avenues will provide the major east-west links through Downtown, with Main extending to and through the University District as a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly corridor.

These connections will capitalize on burgeoning special districts including the Davenport District and the east end of West Main. They will extend from Browne’s Addition to the University District with pedestrian amenities, new development, and a streetcar. The Riverside extension project will extend Riverside Avenue east of Division

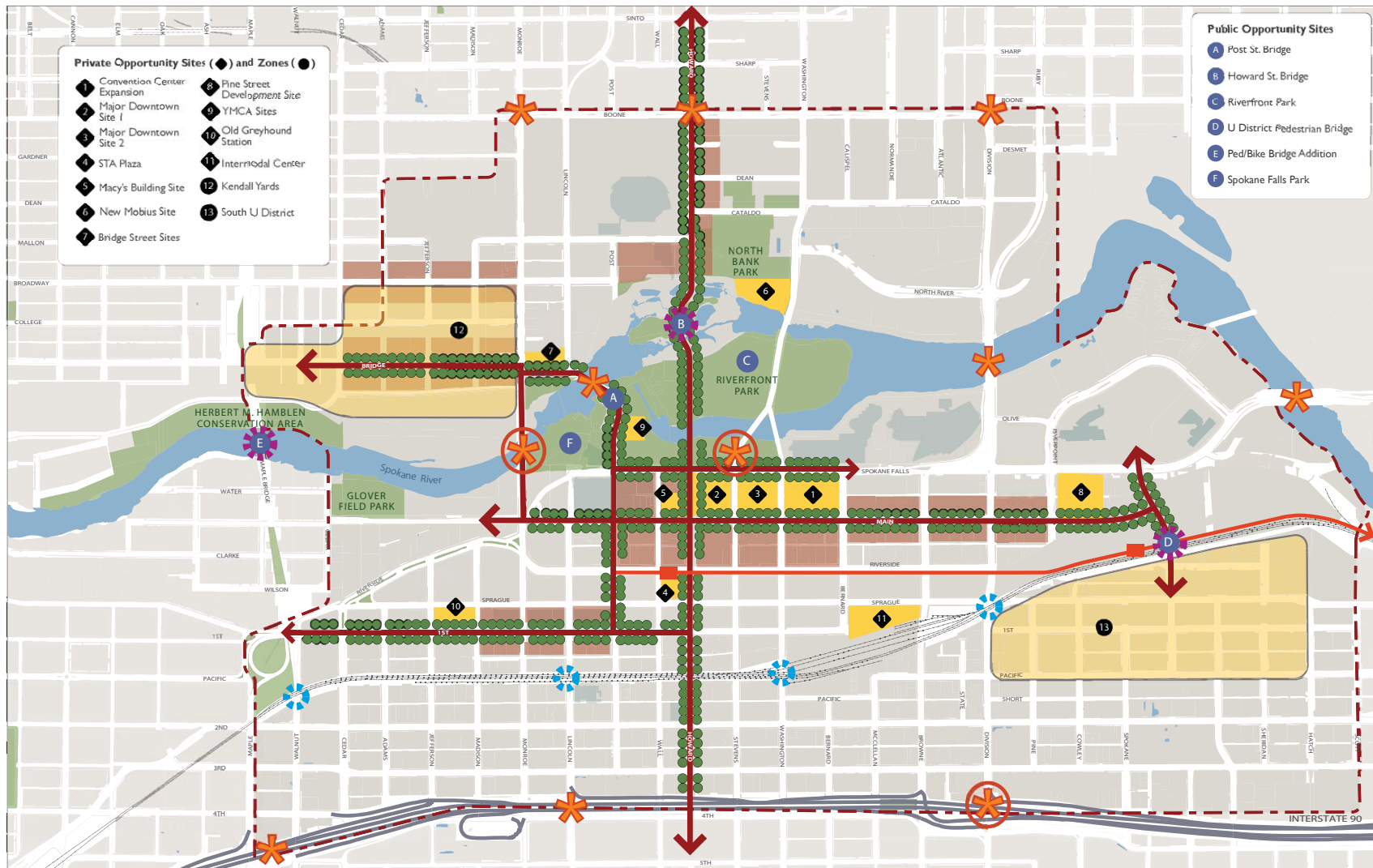
through the University District. The alignment, configuration, and urban design of the Riverside extension are critical to successful Downtown connectivity.

Urban Refuge

Riverfront Park will be enhanced as a peaceful urban refuge in the center of a bustling Downtown. Planned improvements include opening new vistas to appreciate the beauty of Spokane River and Falls and a new activity center with buildings oriented toward the Howard Street corridor.

Increased Public Transportation

A rapid transit corridor will help ensure smooth traffic flow through Downtown from the east side of the City. Eventually, light rail will run along Riverside Avenue, with stops in the University District at the Riverpoint campus, at Bernard, and terminate near the STA Plaza. Downtown streetcar routes envisioned by the community include a north-south route connecting Kendall Yards, the Arena, Riverfront Park, South Hill, and the Medical District; and an initial east-west route connecting the University District, West Main, the Downtown Core, Davenport District, and Browne’s Addition. Bus service will continue to improve with shorter wait times, new and more



efficient routes, improvements to the STA Plaza, and additional Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes.

Smart Growth

The Downtown will be growing out and up. The expansion of the Downtown boundary to include portions of Kendall Yards and the University District will ensure that critical connections (physical, programmatic, and otherwise) are strengthened and maintained. As demand continues to grow for housing, offices, retail and entertainment options in Downtown, density will continue to

increase. The need and desire for added density must be balanced with the historic character and livability Spokane residents value so much.

7.0 STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

The Strategy Framework maps the multi-faceted, multi-layered approach necessary for success. The framework prioritizes action categories into a four-tiered hierarchy. This hierarchy identifies:

1. **Primary Land Uses:** the existing and future land uses most important for achieving the vision and goals for Downtown Spokane;
2. **Desired Built Form:** a combination of public and private buildings and open spaces that provide the envelope for future development;
3. **Catalytic Opportunity Sites and Zones** that contribute to the desired built form and set the groundwork for additional development in those land use categories; and
4. **Downtown Requisite Strategies** that reinforce the primary land uses, desired built form, and development opportunities.

8.0 STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES

Downtown strategies were developed based on the following objectives to guide the future development of Downtown Spokane. A set of district strategies are intended to create distinctive districts within the Downtown, each with its own character; and to provide connections within

and between the districts. Strategies for each district promote land use objectives and identify Opportunity Sites where appropriate.

CATALYTIC OPPORTUNITIES

“Opportunity Sites” are sites with a high potential to act as a catalyst for further infill development in the area due to their key locations or roles in the Downtown district. Nine catalytic Opportunity Sites and two catalytic Opportunity Zones were identified for development, and will be instrumental for stimulating future private investment in Downtown Spokane. The catalytic Opportunity Sites identified by the *Plan Update* represent an array of development potential on some of the most dynamic sites in the Downtown. They take into account recent and planned improvements and other important initiatives so that each site:

1. Builds on existing and future development, and
2. Is aligned with the primary land uses, desired built form, and requisite strategies of the Strategy Framework.

STRATEGIC ACTION PROJECTS

Priority projects were identified to catalyze revitalization of the Downtown. The priority projects form a catalytic network of actions that support additional public and private investment and development.