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Downtown Parks, Open Spaces, and Plazas

OVERVIEW

Downtown has experienced significant residential growth over the last 20 years, yet there have been relatively minor enhancements to the system of parks, plazas, and open spaces during that time, especially outside of the Downtown core. There are significant unmet needs for new public realm amenities and offerings to adequately serve all of Downtown's neighborhood residents. While opportunities are being explored to construct and provide programming for Barney Allis Plaza and the South Loop Deck Park projects, these facilities alone will not fully satisfy these needs.

The rest of Downtown's existing parks, plazas, and open spaces need to be reviewed, evaluated, and compared with the community's existing and anticipated future needs. Activation and programming of these spaces and features should also be explored, including establishing adequate funding sources to accommodate long-term operations and maintenance of these facilities.

PROJECTS

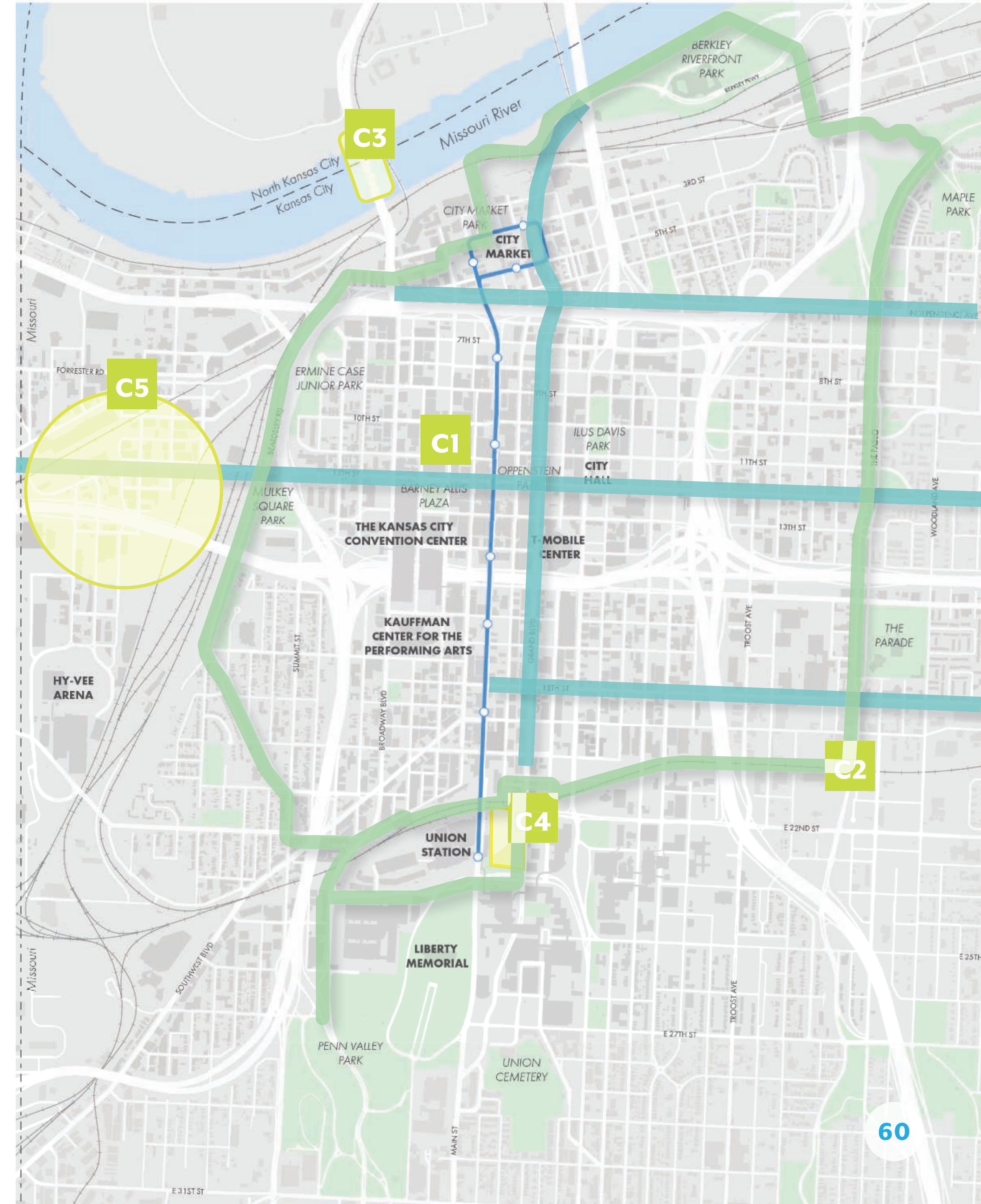
C1 BARNEY ALLIS PLAZA

C2 GREENLINE

C3 BUCK O'NEIL BRIDGE PARK

C4 WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK

C5 WEST BOTTOMS OPEN SPACE



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C1 BARNEY ALLIS PLAZA

Situated adjacent to the Convention Center and the Municipal Auditorium, Barney Allis Plaza is a large public space in the heart of Downtown KC. Evoking a park design from a bygone era, Barney Allis Plaza has long been underutilized and structural issues with its underground garage have beset the city with high maintenance costs. Downtown lacks a large open programmable space for festivals and community gatherings. If revitalized in the right way, Barney Allis Plaza could play this role.

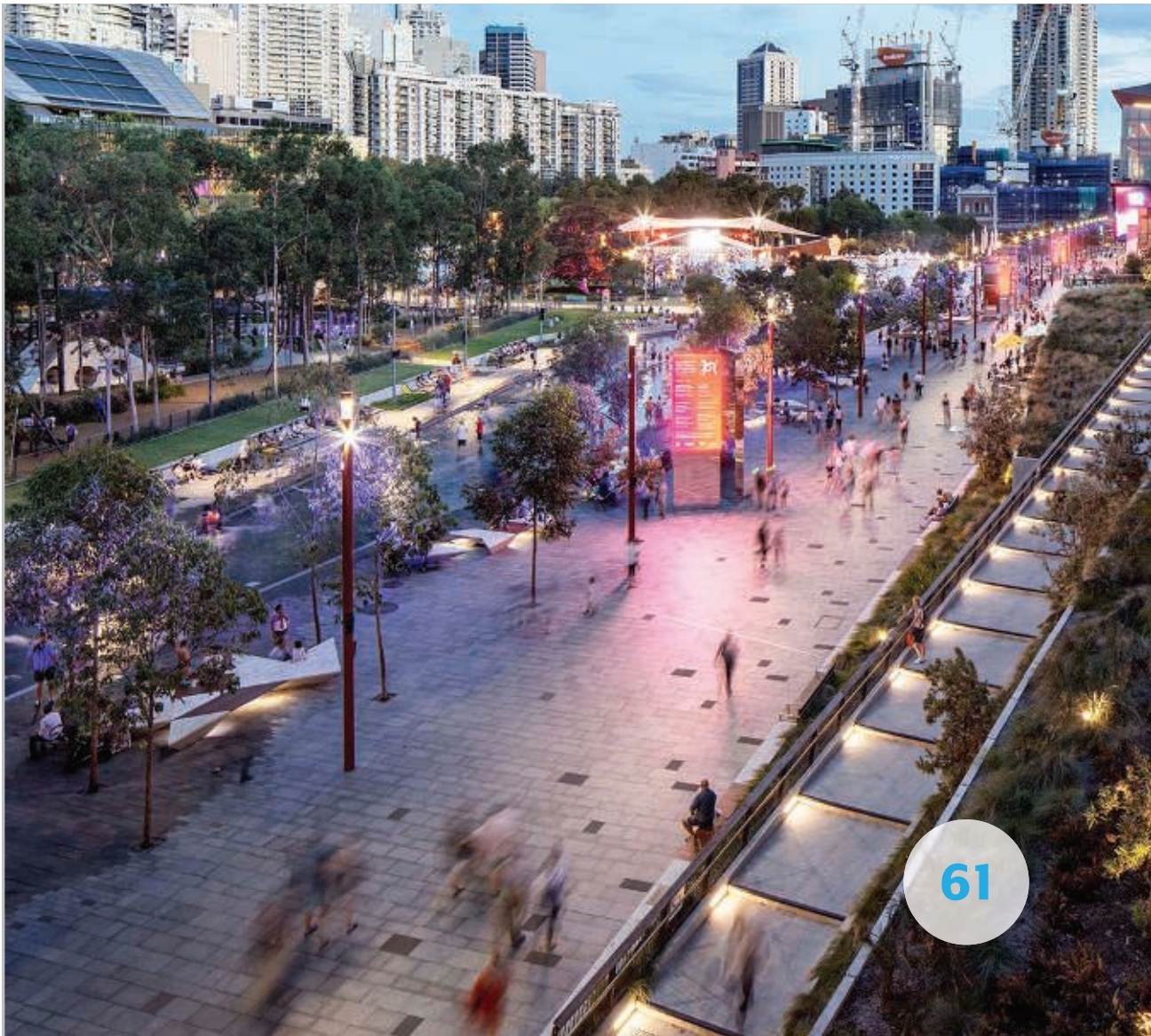
With the Kansas City Convention Center, Municipal Auditorium, and many convention hotels directly adjacent to the space, Barney Allis Plaza could leverage a multi-block revitalization around the site to help anchor a new and vibrant district in Downtown. The renovation plans for the Plaza must include a strong activation strategy with a variety of consistent programming, including concerts, festivals, and recreational activities for it to become a brandable and high-quality public space for workers, residents, and visitors.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- C1a. Advocate for Federal, State, and local funding to complete current plans for the garage and Plaza.
- C1b. Encourage ground floor retail uses in surrounding buildings that would support Plaza activation.
- C1c. Require a robust woman and minority-owned business enterprise (WMBE) and local hire program for the garage and plaza construction and procurement.
- C1d. Ensure that the Plaza design is a beautiful multifunctional park and festival location and has features that will make it well used and well loved by the community.
- C1e. Retain the underground parking structure in a form that complements the above-ground park design and activities.
- C1f. Include stormwater retention systems as part of the design.
- C1g. Develop a strong and well-funded management plan to provide the necessary programming and maintenance resources.



A reimagined Barney Allis Plaza as a vibrant open space with diverse programmed uses and iconic design, elevating its status as one of the great American downtown parks.



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C2 GREENLINE

In 2019, the Downtown Council adopted an exciting concept for a “Greenline” around the city center. The Greenline, like similar projects around the country, proposes to connect people to a green multi-use pedestrian/bicycle/park network throughout Downtown. It will connect and leverage open spaces, support family recreation needs, provide shade and respite from the weather, promote opportunities for green infrastructure, create a more cohesive urban fabric, and catalyze adjacent development. It will also provide a stage for communities to express their

unique culture and heritage along the path, fostering cross-cultural interaction and appreciation.

The Plan is an important tool for implementing the Greenline plan. This Plan connects the dots between Downtown open spaces and parks, provides links between neighborhoods, and provides access and connections in new and exciting ways that will help focus implementation steps for each Greenline segment as funding opportunities develop.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- C2a. Ensure an inclusive and proactive planning process designed to connect neighborhoods and fulfill the goals of various neighborhood plans while creating a destination in and of itself.
- i. Identify and prioritize elements of the Greenline Plan that would have the most immediate benefit for each Downtown neighborhood.
 - ii. Work in partnership with the City, adjacent property owners, businesses, and Downtown neighborhoods, especially the east and west neighborhoods. Involve neighborhood leaders, organizations, and stakeholders in a grassroots planning process that is neighborhood-driven and includes neighborhood history and stories.
 - iii. Develop a strategy to prevent displacement due to new development that occurs along the Greenline.
- C2b. Develop comprehensive designs that have immediately implementable projects, quick wins with sustainable impact.
- i. Prioritize connecting the neighborhoods to the east and west of the Downtown core.
 - ii. Support the development of detailed designs for the Greenline so that the community is prepared to leverage potential stimulus funding, private funders, and adjacent development projects.
 - iii. Identify all the major infrastructure and public redevelopment projects that are adjacent to potential connections and work to make Greenline improvements a part of their design.
 - iv. Educate the developers about the Greenline and how they can contribute to its implementation by including Greenline segments as part of their development plans or community benefits package.



BEFORE/AFTER

McGee Street
looking north
toward 20th St.



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For decades, the Buck O’Neil Bridge has served as an important and iconic gateway feature leading into Downtown from the Northland. It is currently slated to be entirely removed as part of the Missouri Department of Transportation’s (MoDOT) approved plan to replace the bridge with a new bridge and interchange ramps. There is an opportunity to preserve the two southernmost spans of the existing three-span Buck O’Neil bridge structure and transform it into a dynamic new urban park destination overlooking the Missouri River.

C3 HISTORIC BUCK O’NEIL BRIDGE PARK

This project will take significant investment (estimated at \$50 million) for structural repairs to the existing structure and construction of this park amenity. It will also require a public-private partnership to be formed and led by the private sector to advance this concept. Prompt coordination and momentum toward the realization of this project are paramount. The new bridge, scheduled to begin construction in 2021, will require significant coordination efforts between the city, US Army Corp of Engineers, MoDOT and other regulatory agencies. These efforts will oversee the design and transfer of ownership and establish funding and revenue sources for the long-term maintenance and operation required to construct this critical piece of infrastructure.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- C3a. Support the private sector and City efforts to explore saving and transforming this structure into an urban park amenity.
- C3b. Advocate that MoDOT explore additional funding sources and pursue an alternate plan that supports Downtown sustainability goals.



The Buck O’Neil Bridge provides an opportunity to set a new standard for open space design for the Downtown and the region. This vision calls for a restoration of the bridge with active uses featured along the span of a redesigned linear park.



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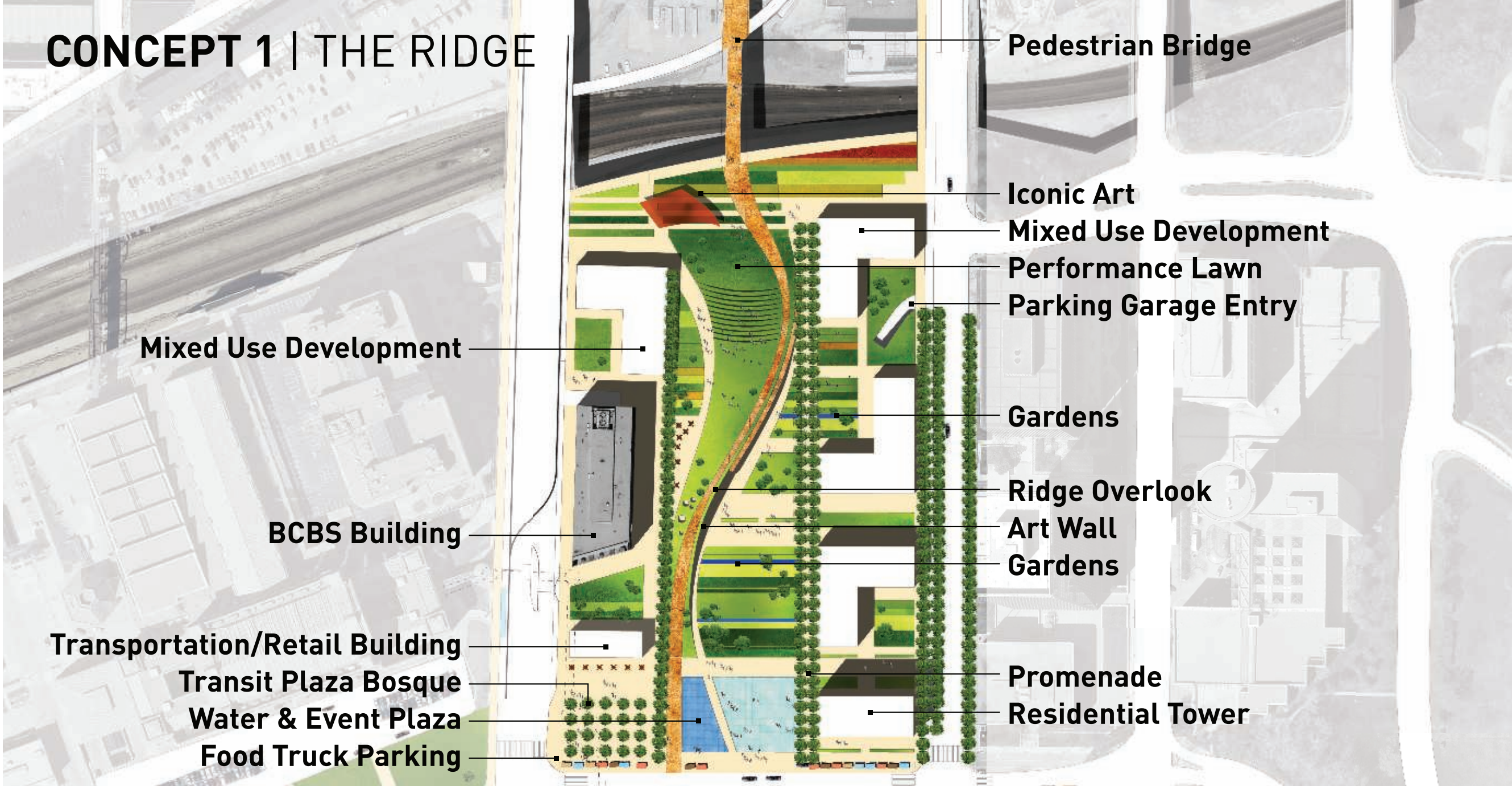
C4 WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK

Washington Square Park is an underutilized and unprogrammed green space brimming with potential. Located adjacent to the Union Station Streetcar stop and surrounded by high-rise residential, hotel and office buildings, the park is perfectly positioned as an urban oasis for pedestrian activity. The Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department engaged a design team to develop a vision that expands the current footprint of the park and leverages a public-private

partnership with neighboring property owners to sensitively create future development opportunities. The vision includes a flexible grand lawn, reflecting pool, water features, a playground, outdoor gathering spaces, terraced seating overlooking the rail corridor, and a pedestrian bridge connecting north of the tracks.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- C4a. Reconvene the major park stakeholders, including Crown Center and Union Station to drive the implementation of the park vision developed by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- C4b. Leverage the opportunity to use the park as an activity zone for the 2023 NFL Draft event at Union Station to catalyze the park rehabilitation strategy.



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Historically, the West Bottoms, along the flat floodplain of the Kansas (Kaw) and Missouri rivers, has been a hub for industry and transportation, due to its central location within the city, region, and country. As industrial practices have shifted, so have the activities in the West Bottoms. New retail, housing, and family amenities like the Hy-Vee Arena have been developed in recent years, capitalizing on the neighborhood's unique history and character.

C5 WEST BOTTOMS OPEN SPACE

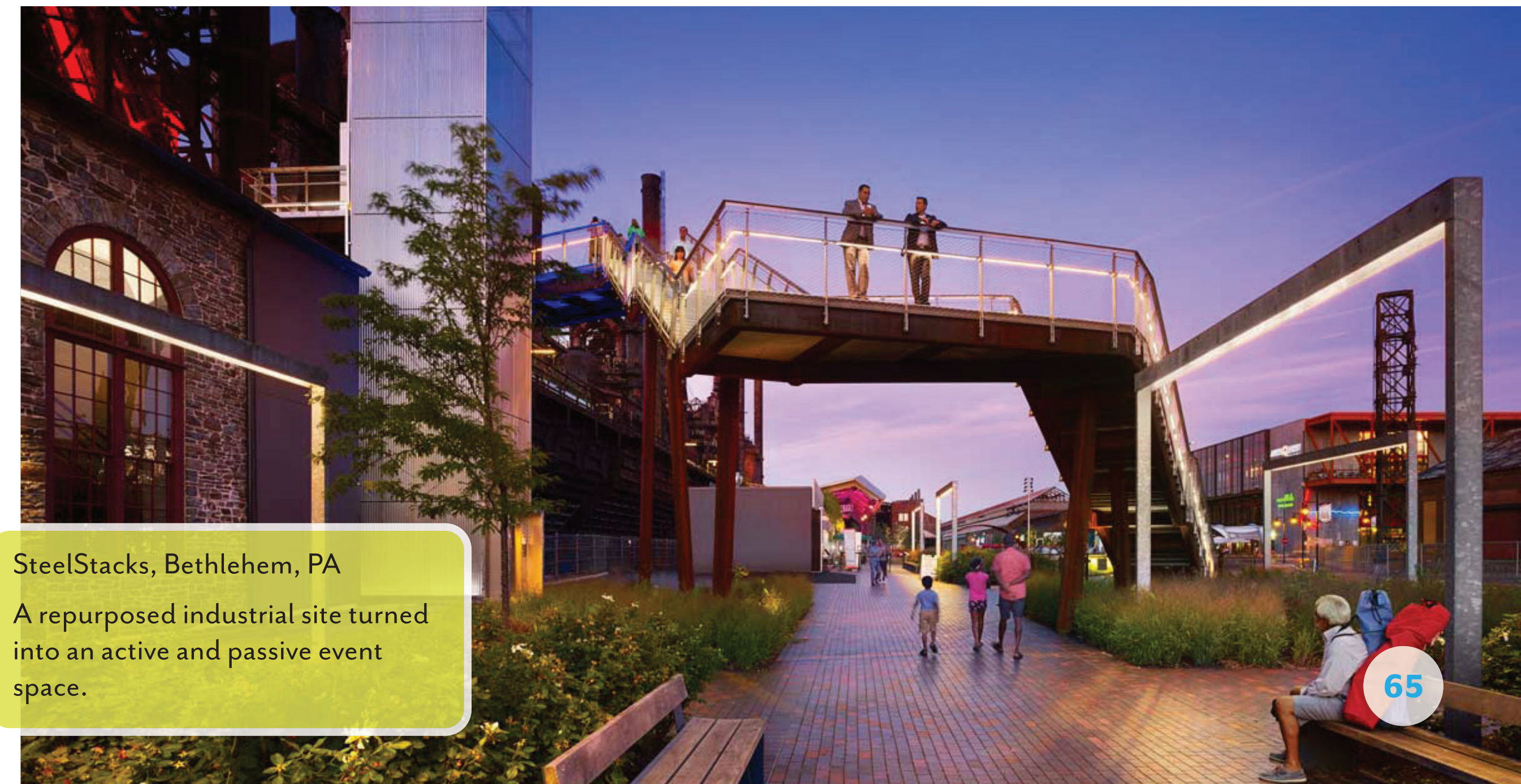
As the West Bottoms neighborhood evolves, there is an opportunity to address several related neighborhood desires and challenges, including the need to remove a large number of impermeable surfaces, the need for new public gathering and green spaces, and the opportunity to reduce stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows into the adjacent riverways.

TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD

- C5a. Identify an area within the West Bottoms to develop an innovative open space with green infrastructure elements that reduce the negative impacts of the combined sewer overflow into the Kansas and Missouri rivers.
- C5b. Encourage redevelopment of historic buildings to retain the qualities and historic character that make the West Bottoms unique.
- C5c. Reclaim the Rock Island Railroad Bridge as a destination and trail amenity connecting the West Bottoms across the Kaw River to Kansas City, Kansas.



The Rock Island Bridge will span the Kaw River and will be repurposed with active uses. On the banks of the West Bottoms, there are further opportunities to build off of the character of the area in creating new passive open spaces.



SteelStacks, Bethlehem, PA
A repurposed industrial site turned into an active and passive event space.