



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
COLUMBUS DOWNTOWN 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN
Columbus, Indiana Redevelopment Commission

Issue Date:

July 26, 2024

Submission Deadline:

September 16, 2024, by 5:00 EDT

Contact for Submissions and Questions:

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Section 1: Columbus History and Challenges

Founded in 1821, Columbus, Indiana, is centrally located on Interstate 65 between Indianapolis, Cincinnati, and Louisville. It is home to over 50,000 residents and is the Bartholomew County seat. Despite its size, Columbus generates significant out-of-state tourism, in large part due to its commitment to architecture and design. While situated squarely in the Midwest, the community is unique because 1 in 6 residents were born in another country.

Cummins Inc., a Fortune 200 company, was founded in Columbus in 1919 and continues to be headquartered in Downtown Columbus. Columbus and the surrounding region have become a central manufacturing hub, home to the headquarters and manufacturing sites of many other important companies such as Toyota Material Handling, NTN Driveshaft, and Enkei America. Healthcare, information technology, and tourism comprise the other key industry sectors of the local economy. In addition, Columbus serves as a regional retail and post-secondary education hub.

In the 1960s, Columbus community leaders articulated a clear and compelling vision: “We want to be the best community of our size in the country.” The community has devoted itself to achieving and maintaining that vision in all respects—educational offerings, economic strength, the design of public places, parks, and recreation facilities, and overall quality of life. In addition, the community strives to balance a heritage of Midwestern values with a tenacious practice of inclusivity for all who now live in and visit Columbus.

Columbus’ downtown is the heart of our city, a central gathering place, our community’s “living room.” While the vibrancy of our downtown is a specific goal, it also contributes to our community’s success. Downtown Columbus is critical to our overall quality of life and economic strength and must reflect our community’s best attributes and highest ambitions.

Over time, the downtown has been the subject of a series of redevelopment efforts to ensure that downtown evolves to remain relevant and vibrant. The Columbus Redevelopment Commission, along with the City and private entities, has been instrumental in the development of Downtown Columbus.

The City also recognizes challenges in our downtown that must be addressed through this strategic plan. In a post-pandemic world, the changes in return-to-work culture mean fewer office workers downtown. There are changes to the Cummins Inc. downtown campus, and large land parcels are becoming available for development and purchase. There was a fire causing significant damage to a block of historic buildings downtown, and there are fewer retail and experiential amenities downtown to attract residents and visitors. In addition, as available properties are developed, the aging infrastructure and barriers to entry must be addressed.

Section 2: Project Description and Goals

The City of Columbus seeks an updated downtown strategic development plan that recognizes the recent history of redevelopment, incorporates current initiatives, and provides a clear, comprehensive strategy for continued advancement. *Envision Columbus*, the most recent strategic plan, was completed in 2018. Some solutions provided were implemented, but many were affected by the pandemic. Columbus Downtown 2030 has a smaller footprint but includes more available buildings and spaces for consideration and should reflect a post-pandemic landscape.

The City has identified the following key questions to which we seek an outcome from an updated downtown strategic development plan:

- How do we build a downtown where people want to be?
- How do we maximize the use of the spaces and places downtown?
- What gaps do we have downtown, and how do we address those gaps?

Primary Objective of Columbus Downtown 2030 – The plan should consider the inventory of available, owned, or strategically positioned properties highlighted within the downtown included in Attachment 3. It should identify their best use for location, activation, community needs, and growth potential and provide an actionable approach to achieving these goals.

This plan should:

- Express a compelling, aspirational vision, which can be benchmarked or achieved within 5-10 years.
- Identify near-term recommendations for immediate execution that align with long-term benchmarking and goals.

We seek a plan that:

- Is rooted in the economic potential of our community.
- Recognizes the unique nature of the City of Columbus and its legacy and future.

The plan must:

- Be actionable.
- Include feedback from members of all available community demographics and key stakeholders.

Our Columbus community has a long tradition of collaborating with many stakeholders to solve thorny problems. In keeping with this legacy, through this plan, we seek to cement Downtown Columbus firmly as the vibrant and engaging heart of a strong community.

Section 3: Downtown Columbus in Context

Downtown Columbus is our community’s “living room,” comprising restaurant and retail establishments, arts and entertainment districts, event venues, office space, and non-profit organizations – all contributing to our Downtown fabric. Columbus is proud of its downtown programming, which provides additional opportunities for residents and visitors alike to come downtown. Mill Race Park and riverfront access are immediately adjacent to the downtown corridor. While the Downtown may be the focus of this plan, it is just one of the centers of energy in our community. Others include:

Midtown – The anchor of Midtown is the NexusPark health, wellness, and recreation center. NexusPark, retrofitted from an outdated indoor shopping mall, is a 500,000-square-foot facility with a 150,000-square-foot fieldhouse, Parks offices, meeting spaces, a community center, a physician office complex, and multiple retail, restaurant, and activity spaces. The Columbus Regional Hospital main campus, Lincoln Park Fields, and Hamilton Ice Center are also located between 17th and 31st Streets in the center of town, referred to as Midtown. In addition to the focus on wellness and sports tourism, this city area is home to many franchise restaurants and retail establishments and has seen much growth over the last few years due to both public and private investment in NexusPark. Downtown Columbus could support these Midtown initiatives through better access to parks, entertainment, events, and hospitality venues downtown.

Columbus Parks System – The extensive pedestrian and biking system connects our parks and Downtown Columbus. In addition, in 2021, 175,000 visitors drove \$14.6 million in direct visitor spending on sports tourism in the Bartholomew County/Columbus area. Columbus boasts 24 parks, 1000 acres of parkland, 30 miles of people trails, 12 facilities, including the Commons, two golf courses, a dog park, and a skate park. A 2+ acre park and a one-mile walking trail are currently under construction on the NexusPark campus. [A full parks map can be found here.](#)

Columbus Municipal Airport and AirPark Columbus College Campus – The city airport and educational campus are on the north side of town. As the 4th busiest airport in Indiana, the Columbus Municipal Airport boasts active private air traffic, a restaurant, and a museum. Next door is the shared campus, home to three of Indiana’s leading educational institutions (Ivy Tech Community College, Purdue Polytechnic Columbus, Indiana University – Columbus) and the shared Columbus Learning Center. More recently, AirPark Columbus opened Columbus Propeller Inc., a maker space offering access to equipment

and classes. While pedestrian trails connect to Downtown Columbus, this link must be strengthened to encourage students and visitors to come downtown.

State Street Corridor – On the East side of Columbus, the State Street Corridor holds new growth potential and provides a lower cost of entry to new businesses. This area of Columbus is adjacent to the downtown area and provides for future redevelopment opportunities. In 2014, the State Street Corridor Plan proposed a long-term vision for enhancing the Corridor’s overall land use, economic vitality, and physical appearance and image. As a result, a trail connection was established to support connectivity to Downtown.

Westside – To the west of Downtown Columbus is a growing commercial and residential district. Currently, approximately 20% of Columbus’s population lives on the west side, and residents pass through Downtown to reach all other amenities in the community. This suburban area represents the highest property values and has been privately developed with minimal public incentive required. A new 700-acre development is in the planning stages. It will include a medical center and offices, 800+ housing units, and retail establishments.

Woodside – Southwest of Downtown Columbus is the Woodside Industrial Park, which features a multitude of manufacturing entities supporting thousands of Columbus jobs easily accessible from I-65. Cummins Inc., Enkei America, Toyota Material Handling, Claas of America, Ninth Avenue Foods, and Rightway Fasteners are a few companies located here. This area also features expansion opportunities for existing and new businesses via hundreds of acres of municipal-owned (developable) properties and recently annexed privately optioned parcels. Toyota Material Handling recently embarked on a \$100M expansion in Woodside. These critical employers will benefit from improvements made in Downtown Columbus as they provide improved quality of life standards.

Section 4: Scope of Services and Deliverables

An examination of possibilities for expansion of the downtown core, including the identification of opportunity sites, critical properties, and barriers to expansion. Particular emphasis should be placed on Downtown Critical Properties, included in Attachment 3. This analysis should clearly identify opportunities and needs, emphasizing the economic sustainability of a vibrant, dynamic downtown area.

Guiding Question: *How can we make a difference in our downtown starting tomorrow? What sustainable and economically friendly recommendations can we pursue immediately?*

1. **Planning Document Review:** A review of recent and ongoing planning efforts relevant to the downtown as listed in Attachment 5. Reviewing these documents is intended to be a 1–2 week commitment.
2. **Public Engagement and Partnerships:** The public engagement plan should be visible to the community to ensure broad public ownership and support of a shared, community-wide vision and plan for the downtown.
 - a. Public Engagement Process: A creative, well-designed process offering multiple opportunities to engage the public throughout the development of the downtown plan is required. The public engagement process should feature thoughtful methods for allowing the community to share thoughts and concerns, express ideas and preferences, respond to draft findings and recommendations, and actively contribute throughout the planning process.
 - b. Public/Private Partnerships: A recommendation for the potential roles of local public and private entities and public/private partnerships in supporting targeted downtown investments and advancing development opportunities. All projects should tie back to the economic assessment. Other similarly sized community comparables would be beneficial to understand successful applications.
3. **Economic Assessment:** An economic assessment of Downtown Columbus, identifying the economic forces directing development and the market-driven opportunities for its enhancement, is to be completed. The economic assessment should consider the priority properties in Attachment 3.

4. **Existing Condition Review, Update, and Analysis:** An exploration of the features of the downtown area is required. For some topic areas, previously completed inventories or analyses may be applicable with minor updates. For others, new information will need to be gathered. This investigation of existing conditions should include the following but not be limited to:

- Existing Land Use and Urban Form
- Property Ownership
- Assets
- Public Spaces
- Streetscapes
- Aging Infrastructure
- Traffic and Transportation
- Greenspaces
- Quality of Place

5. **Strategic Development Plan Creation:** The creation of an updated downtown strategic development plan document that includes the following:

- a. Implementation Strategy: The development of a realistic implementation strategy that provides priorities and options based on market-driven potential. The strategy should include an understanding of local resources and stakeholders. It should also include recommendations for potential community partners, public/private partnerships, targeted public investments, and options for the most effective leveraging of limited resources.
- b. Analysis: A thorough analysis of the downtown based on a coordinated assessment of the topic areas listed above.
- c. Vision Statement: The development of a clearly articulated and enduring vision statement for the downtown area that balances forward-thinking ideas with economically sustainable solutions.
- d. Flexible Framework: The plan shall provide a flexible framework of market-driven options and alternatives that can be applied to the downtown's evolving opportunities and needs in an economically responsible way.

- e. Guidelines and Recommendations: The development of general future land use and design guidelines for downtown development to ensure that new investments support the overall vision and recommendations derived from this plan, including infrastructure and streetscape improvements, public space enhancements, development projects, unique innovations, and other possibilities for advancing the downtown vision.

Section 5: Submission Requirements

Those intending to respond to the City of Columbus' Request for Proposals must submit the following items, not to exceed 20 single-sided pages, to be considered. The plan should be created for a broad audience, including both the public and those who will be directly responsible for its implementation. The plan should include a readable, inviting format and abundant graphics.

1. **Cover Letter** - Include the name and address of the project manager who will direct the firm's work.
2. **Introduction to the Consultant Firm(s)** - All firms in the submittal should include the following information.
 - a. Firm name and business address, including telephone number and email contact.
 - b. Type of ownership, and name and location of parent company and subsidiaries, if any.
 - c. Number of full-time employees. Part-time employees or consultants routinely engaged by the Respondent may be included if identified as such.
3. **Qualifications and Experience of the Consultant Firm(s)** - Describe recent experience relevant to this project with emphasis placed on projects managed by the key personnel to be assigned to this project. Submit three references with names, addresses, and phone numbers of those familiar with the consultant's ability, experience, and reliability in the performance and management of projects of a similar nature.
4. **Qualifications and Experience of Project Manager** - Identify the project manager to be assigned to this project. Provide a summary of experience emphasizing previous experience in a similar role on comparable projects. Examples should include previous experience involving solutions that consider diversity and inclusion opportunities and experiences in suburban communities with growing international populations.
5. **Project Understanding/Methodology** - Demonstrate the firm's understanding of the nature of the work and the approach to be taken. This should include addressing project objectives, scope of work, the proposed approach, and other pertinent elements. Creative alternative approaches are encouraged.
6. **Public Engagement Plan**—Describe the firm's plan to engage the public creatively in the planning process. Outline how you will work with the Guiding Team and engage with the public.

7. **Proposed Fees** - Provide an itemized proposed set of fees based on the stated Scope of Work. Include all reimbursable items, including travel costs and printing, which will be reimbursed at 100%. Once the desired consultant has been identified, the City reserves the right to negotiate the final fee.

8. **Proposed Timeline to Complete Plan** – Provide a proposed schedule for major phases of the project, along with a completion date.

9. **Additional Services** – Provide additional fees for developing and maintaining a website to communicate project status to stakeholders and community members.

Section 6: Project Timeline

July 26, 2024	Request for Proposals Issued
August 21, 2024	Optional Virtual meeting, 1:00 p.m. EDT
August 26, 2024	Last Day for Written Questions
August 30, 2024	Responses to Written Questions Delivered
September 16, 2024	Proposals Due, 5:00 p.m. EDT
October 2-4, 2024	Presentations/Interviews with Shortlisted Firms
October 14, 2024	Selection of Urban Planning Firm
June 2025	Final Report to the City of Columbus

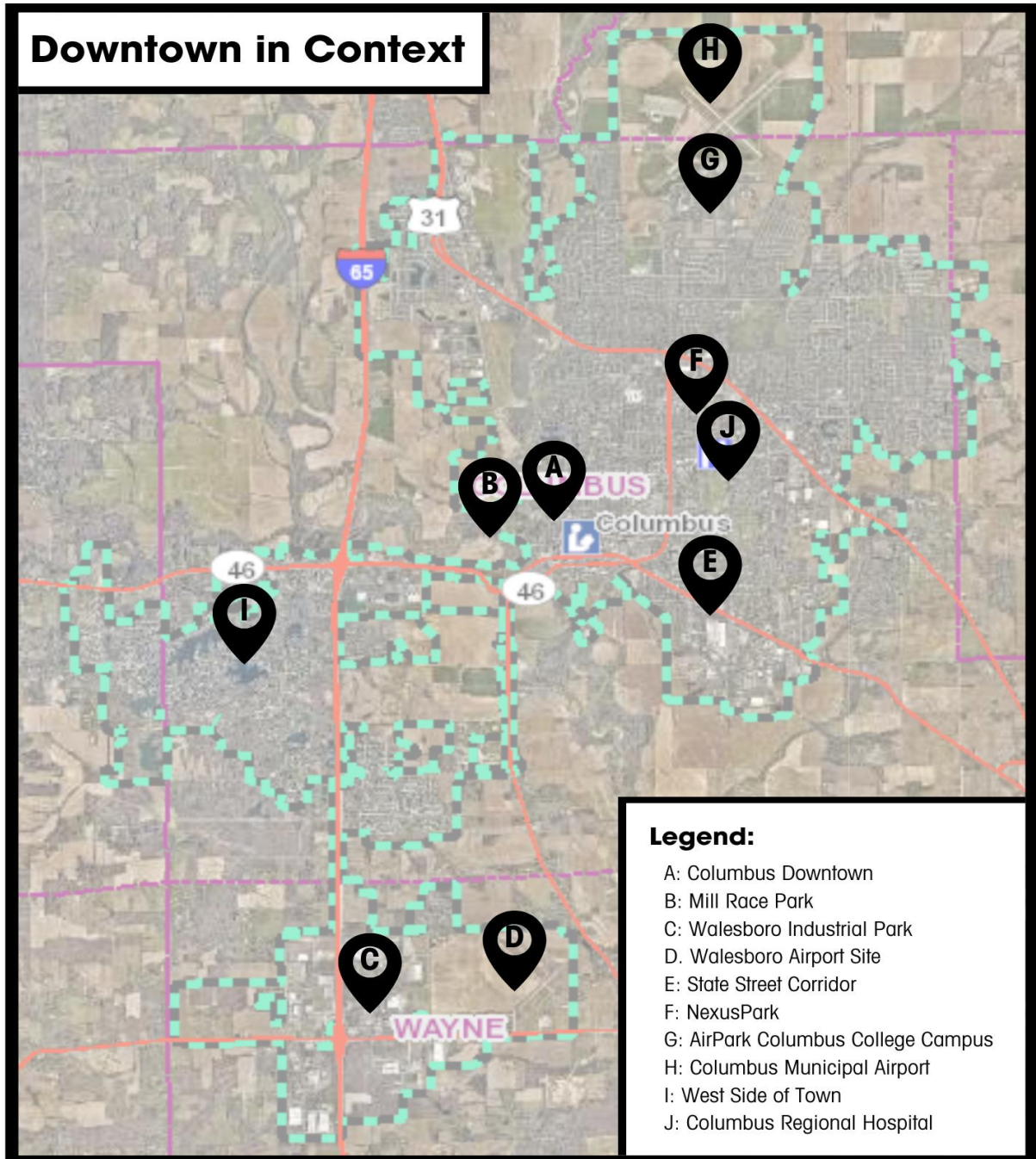
Section 7: Evaluation Criteria

A Selection Team consisting of Guiding Team members and City staff will evaluate all proposals received. Each proposal will be evaluated fairly and impartially, utilizing the following criteria:

1. Qualifications of the firm and personnel (including any subcontractors) to be assigned to this project **5 points**
2. Similar projects completed by the firm **10 points**
3. Understanding of the project and the community of Columbus **20 points**
4. Clarity of the proposal and creativity/thoroughness in addressing the tasks required **25 points**
5. Public Engagement Plan **25 points**
6. Time needed to complete the study **10 points**
7. Completeness of submitted proposal with all elements required by the RFP **5 points**

Attachments

Attachment 1 – City of Columbus Map



Attachment 2 – Columbus Downtown 2030 Study Map

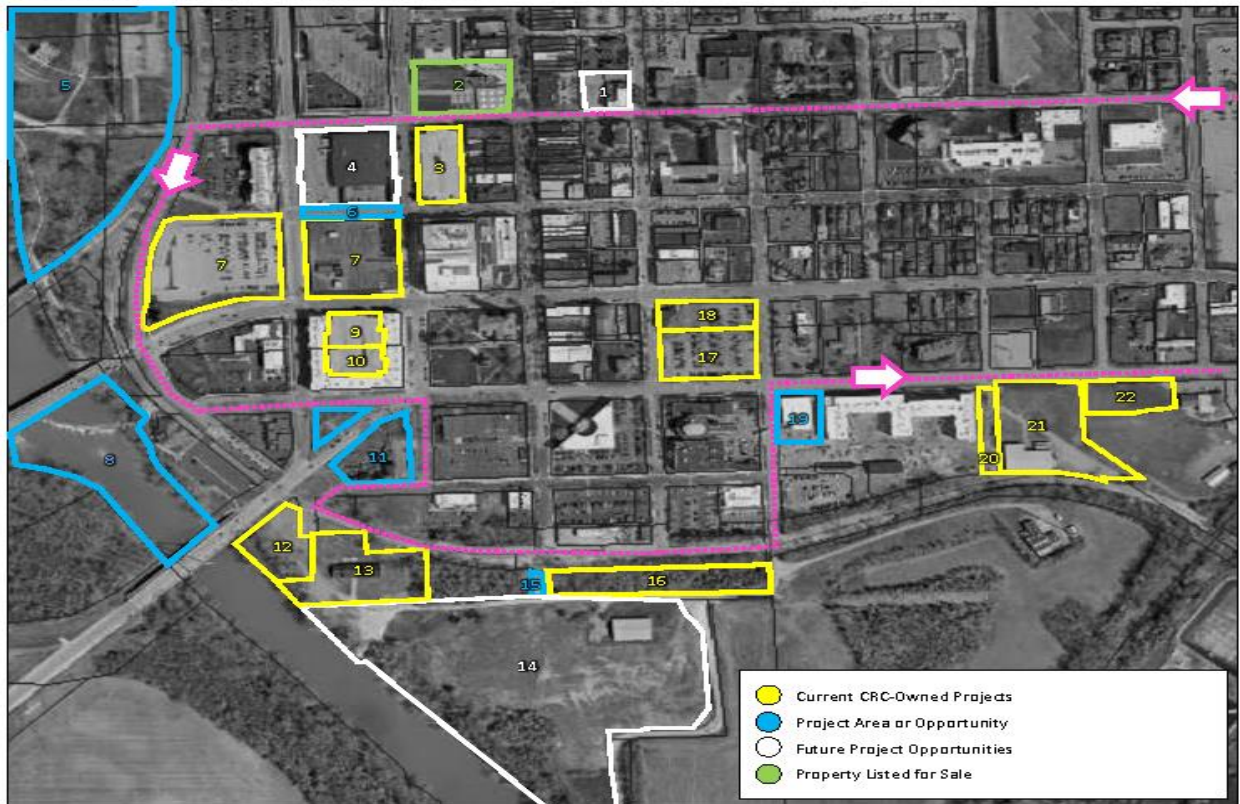
Columbus Downtown 2030 Plan – Boundary Map



Updated July 10, 2024

Attachment 3 – Downtown Critical Properties Identified

Strategic Downtown Planning (updated 7.23.2024)



03-95-24-430-009.400-005
03-95-24-430-009.300-005
Known as the "Irwin Block"
422 5th Street / 440 5th Street
Note: Owned by Irwin Block LLC 1

03-95-24-340-000.700-005
Former Irwin Bank and Conference Center
525 Jackson Street
Note: Owned by Cummins Inc 2

03-95-24-340-001.500-005
Jackson Street Parking Garage
401 Jackson Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 3

03-95-24-340-001.600-005
US Post Office
450 Jackson Street
Note: Owned by 450 Jackson Street LLC 4

03-95-24-320-000.500-005
Mill Race Park and Amphitheatre
Note: City-owned park 5

4th Street Entertainment Corridor
Note: Opportunities to expand west along the
Former Sears 4th Street Frontage. 6

03-95-24-340-001.400-005
03-95-24-340-002.100-005
Former Sears Building and Parking Lot
328 Brown Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 7

Riverfront Development Project
Note: CRC pursuing trail connectivity and
inspiring quality of place via added amenities. 8

03-95-24-340-002.500-005
Second Street Parking Garage
208 3rd Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 9

03-95-25-210-001.500-005
Second Street Parking Garage
200 Jackson Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 10

03-95-25-210-001.400-005
03-95-25-210-001.401-005
Downtown Entrance Plaza
Note: Owned by the City of Columbus.
Currently being redesigned. 11

03-95-25-210-000.901-005
Water Street Property
46 E Water Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 12

03-95-25-210-000.900-005
Water Street Property
15 Brown Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 13

03-95-25-000-000.400-005
327 Water Street
Former Waste Water Treatment Plant
Note: Owned by CCU 14

Washington Street Terminus
Note: Opportunity to break through to Water
Street for Riverfront connectivity. 15

03-95-25-120-006.000-005
Corner of Water & Lafayette St
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 16

03-95-25-120-001.100-005
Parking Lot at 2nd & Franklin Streets
215 Franklin Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 17

03-95-24-430-011.500-005
Former Probation Center
3rd & Franklin Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 18

03-95-25-000-000.200-005
Commercial Building at 2nd & Lafayette
702 2nd Street
Note: Owned by Taylor RC LLC 19

03-95-25-110-000.901-005
2nd Street Property Basement
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 20

03-95-25-110-000.900-005
2nd Street Property – Former REMC Building
801 2nd Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 21

03-95-25-110-001.101-005
2nd Street Property – Former Gas Station
867 2nd Street
Note: Owned by Columbus Redevelopment 22

Attachment 4 – Downtown Critical Properties Defined

Attachment #3 identifies significant properties in our downtown that should be prioritized in our Columbus Downtown 2030 Plan. A top consideration for our stakeholders is the maximum utilization of these properties. The list below helps define the background and current use for some of the available/critical properties referenced via their corresponding numbering values above.

1. Irwin Block at 422 and 440 5th Street – These buildings were originally built in the late 1800s and were damaged by a fire in December 2022. They were used primarily for office space. The vacant land and remaining structure provide great potential.
2. Former Irwin Bank and Conference Center at 525 Jackson Street – This National Historic Landmark former bank and conference center includes an attached office building for up to 500 employees. Cummins is currently selling these buildings.
4. U.S. Post Office at 450 Jackson Street – Designed by Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo in 1970, the land is currently owned by a local holding company. The U.S. Post Office owns the underutilized yet centrally located building.
5. Mill Race Park and Amphitheater – Set at the confluence of two rivers, Mill Race Park was designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh in 1992. It includes trails, a two-sided amphitheater, Round Lake, a historic covered bridge, and flood-resistant plantings. The amphitheater’s electronics are outdated, and the park is underutilized. Although positioned at the front steps of downtown, Mill Race Park lacks integration into our Downtown Core.
6. 4th Street Entertainment Corridor - Beginning in 2012, two blocks of Downtown were transformed into the 4th Street Entertainment Corridor, the heart of Downtown’s dining, nightlife, and festival activities, which focuses on pedestrian-friendly orientation, Greenstreet features, gate closures, retail frontages, landscaping, and parklets for events and activities.
7. Former Sears Building and Parking Lot at 323 Brown Street - The Columbus Redevelopment Commission recently purchased this 90,000-square-foot mostly vacant building, which occupies approximately 6 acres, including adjacent parking along the final, underdeveloped stretch of the 4th Street Entertainment Corridor (see above). Its only tenant is YES Cinema! which occupies 8400 square feet.

- 8. Riverfront and Water Street** – (Includes parcels 8,12,13,14, and 16.) Critical environmental and safety work is underway with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to allow the city to activate the waterfront. This area has floodplain challenges, accessibility opportunities, and infrastructure improvement needs. Progress and plans can be found on the [Riverfront website](#).

- 11. Downtown Entrance Plaza** – Designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh in 1991, the Downtown Entrance Plaza serves as our main entrance to Downtown from the west side of Columbus. The entry is designed to frame our Courthouse and memorialize those Columbus residents who lost their lives in foreign wars. The Downtown Entrance Plaza, which encompasses the POW/MIA/Law Enforcement Plaza and Robert D. Garton Veterans Plaza, is currently being redesigned by Merritt Chase for improved utilization.

- 15. Washington Street from the Riverfront to 11th Street** - This is the main corridor of Downtown Columbus. There are opportunities for improved walkability, wayfinding, and riverfront connectivity. Currently, Washington Street abruptly terminates south of 1st Street, as it meets a rail line and service rock pit interrupting its intersection with Water Street. Conversations have been held with the rail line owner regarding relocating the service rock pit further to the east to connect Washington and Water Streets. This connection could be an opportunity to grow downtown, to engage more with the Riverfront and unite existing assets into a more cohesive experience.

- 17. Parking Lot at 2nd & Franklin Streets** – This property (including parcels 17 and 18), owned by the Redevelopment Commission, is a large, empty city block north of the jail currently used as a surface parking lot for Bartholomew County employees. This lot was identified pre-pandemic as a location for a future hotel conference center and parking structure, which has completed the Schematic Design Phase. There is an agreement between Bartholomew County and the Redevelopment Commission to dedicate 100 parking spaces for county employee parking, regardless of future use.

- 19. Commercial Building at 2nd and Lafayette Streets** - This 10,000-square-foot commercial shell building with associated parking is shared by the Taylor, a newly constructed 200-unit market-rate apartment building with amenities. This building is on the periphery of Downtown, along the 2nd Street Corridor (State Road 46), and provides an opportunity to expand our downtown.

20. Redevelopment Commission-Owned 2nd Street Properties – (Includes parcels 20, 21, and 22.) Parcel 20 is a dedicated access easement to serve The Taylor (a 200-unit apartment complex to the west) and Parcel 21, which has been optioned for a future housing development. Parcel 22 was previously a gas station, has been remediated, and is ready to be included in an adjoining property development.

Attachment 5 – Recent Community Plans and Projects

Envision Columbus 2018	<i>Completed 2018</i>
The City of Columbus Comprehensive Plan	<i>Completed 1999+</i>
• Land Use Plan / Map	<i>Updated 2023</i>
• Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan / Maps	<i>Updated 2022</i>
• Columbus Central Neighborhood Plan	<i>Updated 2018</i>
Columbus Infill Site Profiles and Strategic Growth Study	<i>Updated 2022</i>
City of Columbus, Indiana Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan	<i>Completed 2022</i>
Columbus Riverfront Economic Benefits Analysis	<i>Completed 2023</i>
Downtown Columbus Parking Study Update	<i>Completed 2022</i>
Hotel Conference Center Feasibility Study	<i>Completed 2022</i>
AirPark Columbus College Campus Framework Plan	<i>Completed 2021</i>
Columbus Performance Arts Center Study	<i>Completed 2024</i>
ColumBUS Transit System Study	<i>In Process</i>
City of Columbus Housing Study	<i>In Process</i>
2nd Street Thoroughfare Project	<i>In Process</i>
Indiana University Capstone Study – Revitalizing Downtown Columbus	<i>In Process</i>
Columbus Area Visitors Center Destination Marketing Study	<i>In Process</i>
Columbus Area Visitors Center Wayfinding Study	<i>In Process</i>
The Commons Facility Utilization Study	<i>In Process</i>

Attachment 6 – Useful Links

[Other Columbus Redevelopment Activities](#)

[Columbus Riverfront Redevelopment Project](#)

[Columbus Area Visitors Center](#)

[Columbus Area Visitors Center Calendar of Events](#)

[Columbus Area Arts Council](#)

[Office of Downtown Development \(ODD\)](#)

[J. Irwin Miller Architecture Program](#)

[AirPark Columbus College Campus](#)