



Strategic Plan Initiative

DOWNTOWN CENTRAL: the 2018 Update to the Downtown Plan

A theme and schematic scope . . .

Background

The City of Spokane has maintained a Downtown Plan for the last 20 years. Many exciting opportunities have arisen downtown over the years and the Downtown Plan has been a key part of those opportunities becoming distinct successes for the downtown. The newly upgraded and expanded Convention Center was envisioned and supported by the Downtown Plan. The establishment and continued vitality of the University District was likewise a part of the overall vision and strategies provided by the Downtown Plan. These successes continue today and new opportunities are rising up every day—like the fact that the trolley idea in past Downtown Plans has morphed over time into the Central City Line.

The Downtown plan is updated approximately every ten years and the last update was concluded in 2009. As such, 2018 is the next scheduled update the plan. Because of its key place in the growth and development of downtown, the Downtown Plan Update was identified as one of the strategic initiatives in the Joint Administration-Council 6-Year Strategic Plan, adopted by the City in 2017. Under the umbrella of the Urban Experience Committee, the Downtown Plan Update is scheduled to be completed and adopted by the end of 2018.

Theme and Message

Perhaps unlike any other time in the Downtown since the years leading up to the 1974 World's Fair in Spokane, the downtown is seeing robust growth in demand and development—both public and private—and is enjoying the benefits of that growth. Many significant new projects are coming online, all of which can help develop the downtown into the Regional Center envisioned by the City in the Comprehensive Plan. Those efforts include:

- The ongoing multi-million dollar update to Riverfront Park;
- STA's Central City Line implementation;
- The rebuild and reconfiguration of Riverside Boulevard downtown;
- PFD plans for a new Sportsplex facility on the north bank; and,
- The Downtown and U-District comprehensive Parking Studies.

When these efforts are considered along with the intense multi-family demand evident in the downtown, the ongoing need for Class-A office space, and continuing growth in activity centers such as Main Avenue and the planned development on the north bank, the downtown is in a unique place where the right efforts at the right time will result in significant successes and benefits to all Spokane residents. During many discussions with stakeholders and the various City departments involved in these efforts, a unifying theme has arisen, one which will shape the efforts of the 2018 Downtown Plan Update . . .

"As the center of the city and a regional hub for commerce, entertainment, urban living, and education in the City of Spokane, Downtown Spokane provides not only a destination but also a key connection to the surrounding neighborhoods, districts, and activity centers and the city as a whole—bringing people and commerce together and ensuring the success of all."

Major Topics

As with any planning process like this, there is far more opportunity for action than there is time or budget to do so. As such, the Downtown Plan Update must be targeted to address the most essential activities and those that are most timely. Accordingly, the update will focus the most significant efforts on the following two topics:

- Central City Line Integration: The Central City Line is moving towards implementation at a fast clip—it will be operational by 2021. While regional and local transit has been addressed by the Downtown Plan in the past, the previous versions considered trolleys and light rail, not bus rapid transit like the Central City Line. This inconsistency must be addressed. The greater opportunity, however, is to accommodate and plan for the changes to development and use of the downtown that can occur as a result of the Central City Line. Options and programs for transit-oriented development should be developed as well as strategies to address the inevitable change in transportation and circulation that will occur as a result of the Central City Line and additional planned high-performance transit options through and to the Downtown.
- The Future of the North Bank: What started with Kendall Yards has spread eastward into a new direction and development pressure for the north bank of the Spokane River. As Riverfront Park redevelops and the multi-million dollar update is completed, the pressure for increased urban development—both commercial and multi-family—will potentially change the needs and opportunities of this unique part of the downtown. The ongoing planning for a new Sportsplex and recent development proposals for the area further highlight its potential to be a major growth center for downtown. As such, the Downtown Plan Update will focus on strategies to guide and accommodate this growth to ensure that the goals and dreams of the residents, visitors, and employees in the Downtown are maximized.

Strategic Planning for the Future

Because there is so much happening downtown, many additional topics deserve attention. For those that cannot be fully analyzed and addressed at this time, the Downtown Plan will lay out a strategic plan going forward, for programs and studies on those topics and to apply the goals and intent of the Downtown Plan in those efforts in the future. These strategic topics include:

- The “Medical District,” south of the Interstate but still interrelated with the Downtown;
- The South U-District, a near term sub-area planning effort;
- A code/standards update to the North Bank Overlay;
- District naming and standards;
- Activated alleyways;
- Vacant office space;
- And others . . .

Each of these strategic efforts will be outlined and assigned to a timeframe for analysis and update: Short Term (0-1 years); Mid-Term (2-5 years); and Long-Term (6+ years).